

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA ANNOUNCES THE FIRST US RETROSPECTIVE IN 40 YEARS DEDICATED TO MULTIFACETED ABSTRACT ARTIST SOPHIE TAEUBER-ARP

Bringing Together Some 300 Works, the Exhibition Will Open at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in Fall 2021

NEW YORK, February 11, 2020 [Updated June 24, 2021]—The Museum of Modern Art announces *Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Living Abstraction*, the first major US exhibition in 40 years to survey this multifaceted abstract artist’s innovative and wide-ranging body of work. On view November 21, 2021, to March 12, 2022, the exhibition will explore the artist’s interdisciplinary approach to abstraction through some 300 works assembled from over 50 public and private collections in Europe and the US, including textiles, beadwork, polychrome marionettes, architectural and interior designs, stained glass windows, works on paper, paintings, and relief sculptures. *Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Living Abstraction* is organized by The Museum of Modern Art, Kunstmuseum Basel, and Tate Modern, by Anne Umland, the Blanchette Hooker Rockefeller Senior Curator of Painting and Sculpture, MoMA; Walburga Krupp, independent curator; Eva Reifert, Curator of Nineteenth-Century and Modern Art, Kunstmuseum Basel; and Natalia Sidlina, Curator, International Art, Tate Modern; with Laura Braverman, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, MoMA. Prior to its presentation at MoMA, the exhibition will be shown at the Kunstmuseum Basel (March 19–June 20, 2021) in Taeuber-Arp’s native Switzerland, and at Tate Modern in London (July 13–October 17, 2021), where it will be the first-ever retrospective of the artist in the United Kingdom.

Sophie Taeuber-Arp will be organized chronologically, beginning with works produced soon after the artist’s move to Zurich in 1914, and ending with those created during World War II, in the months immediately preceding her untimely death in 1943. Related works across disciplines will be placed in proximity to one another to explore the artist’s distinctive cross-pollinating approach to composition, form, and color. Among the significant bodies of work included in the exhibition will be Taeuber-Arp’s vividly colored, abstract textile studies; her decorative art objects, such as beaded bags and necklaces, rugs, embroidered tablecloths and pillow cases, and turned-wood containers; the polychrome marionettes she designed in 1918 for the puppet play *King Stag*; and a remarkable group of small, stylized sculptural heads associated with Dada. The exhibition will also present works related to the various interior design projects that Taeuber-Arp carried out in the late 1920s in Strasbourg, most notably the decorative program for the Aubette entertainment complex; furniture and working drawings for the interior design and furnishing commissions she received after moving to Paris in 1929; abstract paintings and painted wood reliefs that employ a reduced geometric vocabulary, done in the 1930s, when Taeuber-Arp participated in avant-garde artists’ groups such as *Cercle et Carré* and *Abstraction-Création*; and precisely controlled yet seemingly free line drawings made during World War II, while Taeuber-Arp was living in exile in the South of France.

“With this exhibition, we aim to advance the understanding of what abstraction meant to Taeuber-Arp, and of how she contributed to its history through her steady commitment to innovation and experimentation,” said Umland. “The model she provides of a ‘living abstraction’—by which we mean one

that relates to the body, to the applied arts, to architectural interiors, and to her contemporary circumstances—encourages a more open- ended and generative approach to the history of modern art.”

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, to be published in English and German, that examines the full sweep of Sophie Taeuber-Arp’s career. Edited by Anne Umland and Walburga Krupp, with Charlotte Healy, research assistant at MoMA, it will include 15 essays, by the exhibition’s curators and noted scholars Leah Dickerman, Briony Fer, Mark Franko, Maria Gough, Jodi Hauptman, Medea Hoch, Juliet Kinchin, T’ai Smith, Adrian Sudhalter, Jana Teuscher, and Michael White. The essays will closely follow the exhibition’s sections, outlining the scope of Taeuber-Arp’s creative production at different points in time. A comprehensive illustrated chronology; the first essay on Taeuber-Arp’s materials and techniques, written by MoMA paper conservator Annie Wilker; and a scholarly exhibition checklist based on new research and analysis detail the expansive nature of Taeuber-Arp’s production.

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