Sophie Taeuber-Arp

Today Is Tomorrow

23 August – 16 November 2014
Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau (CH)

Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889–1943) ranks among the most important Swiss artists of the twentieth century. A woman of many talents and a master of form, colour and material, she created an oeuvre combining the highest demands on quality and consistency in the fields of design, painting, textiles, drawing, sculpture, architecture, dance and scenography. Including more than 300 exhibits, the exhibition Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Today Is Tomorrow provides the opportunity to explore, in unprecedented depth and breadth, the artist’s way of thinking and working across art forms and thus to fully appreciate her achievement as a pioneer of modernism.

The exhibition Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Today Is Tomorrow offers the largest and most comprehensive survey to date of the work of the Swiss avant-garde artist. On view are larger groups of works from all her fields of activity that provide a basis for understanding Sophie Taeuber-Arps artistic methodology. What makes this presentation particularly fascinating are the interrelationships between works, which show the problem-oriented and analytical, parallel and integrated way in which she realised artistic aspirations. In a kind of cross-linked creativity, her works look alternately back at and ahead to existing approaches. Both formal and content-related connections are in subtle, yet reconstructable ways interwoven in Sophie Taeuber-Arp’s works: today’s creative process always already held a solution for tomorrow.

A documentary film on Sophie Taeuber-Arp’s life and work that was first shown on Swiss television in 2012 was aptly titled «Die bekannte Unbekannte» (The Familiar Unknown One; the next broadcast will be on...
Sunday, 24 August, at 11.55 am, on SRF 1). Sophie Taeuber-Arp is indeed very familiar to us: for the past twenty years she has been looking up at us from the 50 Swiss francs bill. She is known as the wife of Hans (Jean) Arp, one of the foremost Dada artists, as his ally and muse – and, of course, as an artist. However, the true nature of her work remains little explored. The image we have of Sophie Taeuber-Arp has been shaped by one-sided art historiography and was crucially influenced by the posthumous statements of Hans Arp, in which he presented his wife to posterity as a dreamer and an artist working in a predominantly intuitive manner. By contrast, the exhibition at the Aargauer Kunsthaus looks at Sophie Taeuber-Arp's work in its entirety and considers the known and the unknown on a par; one pioneer achievement of Sophie Taeuber-Arp indeed consists in her cross-genre, relaxed and very deliberate use of creative media.

In its retrospective approach, the selection of works from all creative periods takes Sophie Taeuber-Arp’s distinctive understanding of art into account. Added to the substantial holdings of her work in the collection of the Aargauer Kunsthaus are top-quality loans from international and national museums, all of the institutes managing the estate, as well as various private collections. Among these are works that met with acclaim during her lifetime or that were subsequently recognized by art history, such as a series of oil paintings, reliefs and paper works that had a profound influence on the concrete/constructive visual language during the 1930s. Also included, however, are less noted works: textile and costume designs, woven objects, and jewellery whose radical visual solutions already drew attention in the 1910s. Although ahead of its time, her work in the applied arts was long neglected in the fine art context. Within the exhibition at the Aargauer Kunsthaus applied and autonomous artworks are displayed side by side, thus rendering palpable formal correspondences and anticipations between art forms. Serially mounted works dealing with subjects such as movement, line, circle or square show how Sophie Taeuber-Arp continuously developed her simple, yet flexible formal language across disciplines – as exemplified by the series of so-called Echelonnements (staggerings) whose precise, yet modifiable form seems to be influenced by technical processes, specifically woodturning. Other highlights of the exhibition are the original and rarely shown string puppets that Sophie Taeuber-Arp designed for Carlo Gozzi’s play The Stag King Hirsch in 1918, the Hopi costumes (c. 1922) and the wood-turned and painted Portrait Dada de Hans Arp (1915–1916).

Digitalised notebooks of the artist that can be consulted via touchscreen displays offer a more in-depth look at her creative processes. Finally, the exhibition is accompanied by a rich and diverse programme of supporting

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events that includes, among other things, performances, film screenings and an academic symposium.

At the same time with the exhibition *Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Today Is Tomorrow*, a presentation of works from the collection of the Aargauer Kunsthaus will be on view in the galleries on the museum’s lower floor. The emphasis of this presentation is on constructive/concrete tendencies within the collection that over the past twenty years have been a primary focus of our collecting activities and that define the artistic context in which – from a Swiss perspective – Sophie Taeuber-Arp is to be situated.

After its presentation in Aarau, the exhibition will travel to Bielefeld where it will be on view at the Kunsthalle Bielefeld from 12 December 2014 until 15 March 2015.

**Biography**

Born in Davos in 1889, Sophie Taeuber-Arp grew up in an emancipated and culturally open-minded milieu in Trogen in the Canton of Appenzell. Artistically gifted, she enrolled in the Stauffacher School in St. Gallen, a private school for drawing and design, at the age of 15. From 1912 until 1914 Sophie Taeuber-Arp studied at the renowned Teaching and Experimental Studios for Applied Art in Munich, interrupted by an intermediate year at the State School of Applied Arts in Hamburg. Back in Zurich, she stayed afloat by accepting applied art commissions, until in 1916 she was offered a position teaching textile design at the Zurich School of Applied Arts. She continued to teach there until 1929, setting new standards in textile design. In 1915 she met Hans Arp whom she married in 1922. Both were active in the context of the Zurich-based Dada movement. Sophie Taeuber-Arp appeared as a dancer both at the Cabaret Voltaire and later at the Galerie Dada. She attended the Laban School in Zurich and through it met dancers such as Mary Wigman and Katja Wulff. As a 27 year-old, Sophie Taeuber-Arp received her first major commission as an interior architect, which involved decorating the Aubette, a modern entertainment centre in Strasbourg, together with Hans Arp and Theo van Doesburg. In 1929 Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Hans Arp moved to France where they lived in a house conceived by Taeuber-Arp in Clamart-Meudon near Paris. Even more than in Zurich and stimulated by the close contact to the Paris art scene, Sophie Taeuber-Arp from then on focused on her artistic work. When the Germans marched into Paris in 1940 the couple was forced to flee to Grasse in the south of France and later back to Switzerland. In 1943 when she was only 54 years old, Sophie Taeuber-Arp died of carbon monoxide poisoning at the home of fellow artist Max Bill.

Sophie Taeuber-Arp was a member of major avant-garde artists’ associations such as *Cercle et Carré* (1929-1931), *Abstraction-Création* (1931-1936) in Paris as well as the Swiss *Allianz* and a co-founder of and contributor to the art magazine *Plastique-Plastic* (Paris and New York, 1937-1939, five issues appeared). The Swiss artist is considered a pioneer of constructive,
concrete and abstract art, although she never entirely rejected the figurative.

Curator
Thomas Schmutz, Curator / Dep. Director, Aargauer Kunsthau

Curatorial Assistance
Rahel Beyerle, Project Assistant

Accompanying Publication
In conjunction with the large-scale survey _Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Today Is Tomorrow_ a comprehensive accompanying volume is published (1st edition German; 2nd edition English). This volume will be a definitive work that equally considers all areas of Taeuber-Arp's creativity and points out the constant interconnections within her oeuvre. In addition to numerous illustrations, the publication includes scholarly essays by Rahel Beyerle, Sarah Burkharter, Medea Hoch, Brigitte Maier, Walburga Krupp, Sigrid Schade, Thomas Schmutz, Maike Steinkamp and Rudolf Suter and reflects the various work techniques and creative disciplines that were important to Sophie Taeuber-Arp. The volume will be published jointly by the Aargauer Kunsthau and the Kunsthalle Bielefeld in August 2014. Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess, Zurich, 2014, ca. 300 pages. ISBN 978-3-85881-757-0

Preview for the Media
Thursday, 21 August 2014, 10 am
Introduction and tour of the exhibition with Thomas Schmutz, Curator. Followed by a reception in the foyer

Exhibition Opening
Friday, 22 August 2014, 6 pm
6.15 pm Speakers: Madeleine Schuppli, Director, Thomas Schmutz, Curator / Dep. Director, Councillor Alex Hürzeler, and Isabelle Chassot, Director, Federal Office of Culture. Followed by a reception in the foyer; starting at 7.30 pm, food will be served in the tent on the Kunsthau roof.
5 – 6 pm Preview for sponsors and members of the Aargauischer Kunstverein

Film Screenings
Daily at 11 am
*Vom Cabaret Voltaire zur Banknote – Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (1993 – 94), by Christoph Kühn (45', in German and French)

Daily at 1 pm and 3 pm
*Die bekannte Unbekannte: Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, by Marina Rumjanzewa, in-house production Sternstunde Kunst, SRF (52', in German)
The Swiss TV channel SRF 1 will broadcast the film on Sunday, 24 August 2014, at 11.55 am.

Dada on Tour
Sunday, 31 August 2014, 11 am
In 1916 Sophie Taeuber-Arp was present when Dada was launched at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich. In 2016 Dada celebrates its 100th anniversary. The "Dada on Tour" is going on a world tour and makes a stop at the.

Tour of the exhibition with Adrian Notz, Director, Cabaret Voltaire, Juri Steiner, dara 100, and Thomas Schmutz, Curator. Admission + CHF 8.-

*Aargauer Kunsthau*
Reading featuring Albert Freuler
"Sophie Taeuber-Arp among the Dadaists and Surrealists"
Thursday, 4 September 2014, 7.30 pm and Sunday, 9 November 2014, 12.30 pm
Hans Arp, Hugo Ball, Richard Huelsenbeck, Kurt Schwitters, Marcel Duchamp, Wassily Kandinsky, Max Ernst, Paul Klee et al. Stories and poems by her friends and companions, read by the well-known Swiss actor Albert Freuler. Admission + CHF 10.–; advance sale through www.aargauerkunsthaus.ch/de/shop or at the museum desk of the Aargauer Kunsthau

Performance "Sophie danced and dreamed"
A dance and text performance by Nelly Bütikofer for three dancers and an actor, featuring texts by Hans Arp, Kurt Schwitters and Max Bill
Thursday, 18 September and Thursday, 16 October 2014
6.30 pm Public guided tour of the Sophie Taeuber-Arp exhibition
8 – 8.30 pm Dance performance based on choreography by Nelly Bütikofer, in the foyer

Sunday, 16 November 2014
11 am and 1 pm Public guided tour of the Sophie Taeuber-Arp exhibition
5 – 5.30 pm Dance performance based on choreography by Nelly Bütikofer, in the foyer
Advance sale through www.aargauerkunsthaus.ch/de/shop or at the museum desk of the Aargauer Kunsthau

International Conference
Friday, 24 October 2014, 1.30 – 6 pm
Saturday, 25 October 2014, 9.30 am – 12.15 pm
The exhibition Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Today Is Tomorrow provides the occasion for a scholarly conference that, appealing to a broad public, aims to further the art historical analysis and categorisation of Sophie Taeuber-Arp’s oeuvre and promote critical reflection on the reception of her work. Co-organised by the Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstgeschichte SIK-ISEA, conference participants include experts as well as representatives of the various institutes that manage the artist’s estate. The Aargauer Kunsthau invites all those interested in attending a major international exchange in the midst of the extensive work survey. Programme and reservations starting mid-August on our website at www.aargauerkunsthaus.ch

Tour and Talk
Thursday, 11 September 2014 and Thursday, 30 October 2014, at 6.30 pm
with Elisabeth Grossmann, art historian, and Thomas Schmutz, Curator, Aargauer Kunsthau. Admission + CHF 8.–; followed by a reception

Guided Tours
Thursday 6.30 pm
4 Sep. with Madeleine Schuppli, 18 Sep. with Astrid Näff, 16 Oct. with Dorothee Noever

Sunday 11 am

*Aargauer Kunsthau
Guided Tours

Sunday 1 pm

Art Education

Children's Opening
Friday, 22 August 2014, 6 pm
For children ages 5 and older; meet at the studio in the basement

Family Sunday
Sunday, 14 September / 12 October / 9 November 2014, 11 am, 1 pm and 3 pm
Interactive guided tour and workshop with Nelly Bütikofer, dancer and choreographer

Art Picnic
Thursday, 11 September 2014, 12 – 1 pm
Noontime tour, sandwich included.

Rendez-vous
Saturday, 20 September 2014 / 15 November 2014, 11 am – 12.30 pm
with Agatha von Däniken, art historian and textile designer, and Christin Bugarski, head of the art education department

Saturday, 18 October 2014, 11 am – 12.30 pm with Nelly Bütikofer, dancer and choreographer, and Christin Bugarski, head of the art education department

Art Workshops (school classes) and Art Meets (Adults) upon request:
tel.: +41 (0)62 835 23 31; kunstvermittlung@ag.ch

Opening Hours
Tuesday – Sunday 10 am – 5 pm, Thursday 10 am – 8 pm

Images for the media
Images are available for downloading on our website www.aargauerkunsthaus.ch> Media. Please consider the copyright.

For additional information please contact

Thomas Schmutz, Curator
tel. +41 (0)62 835 23 22, email: thomas.schmutz@ag.ch

Filomena Colecchia, Communication
tel. +41 (0)62 835 23 34, email: filomena.colecchia@ag.ch

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