

Press Release

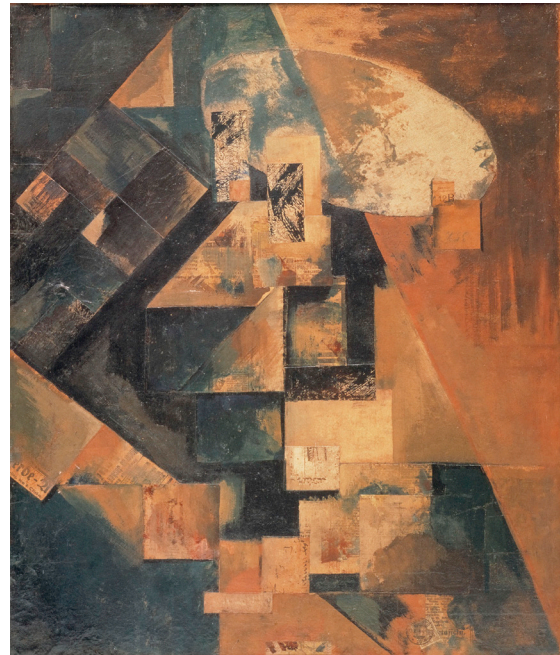
Schwitters Miró Arp

Curated by Dieter Buchhart

Hauser Wirth & Schimmel

16 October 2016 – 8 January 2017

Opening: Saturday 15 October 2016, 6 – 8 pm



Los Angeles... Beginning 16 October, Hauser Wirth & Schimmel will present a comprehensive exhibition of the renowned Dadaists Kurt Schwitters (1887 – 1948) and Hans Arp (1886 – 1966), in the context of works by the Spanish painter, graphic artist and sculptor Joan Miró (1893 – 1983). ‘Schwitters Miró Arp’ was first curated for Hauser & Wirth Zürich in Summer 2016 to celebrate the centenary of the Dada movement in the city of its birth. The new iteration of this group show will include a significant addition of works by Hans Arp – the first large-scale treatment of works by Arp in Los Angeles.

On view through 8 January 2017, ‘Schwitters Miró Arp’ is dedicated to the re-evaluation and rediscovery of three fascinating figures who instigated a material language that continues to inform contemporary art today. From the turn of the century, this trio of artists was united by the impulse to renew and transform artistic expression. Building on the achievements of Cubism, they pursued this goal through experimentation with collage and assemblage, generating radical new ideas to confront a Europe characterised by the catastrophe of war.

Comprising over 90 key works from American and European museums and major international private collections, the exhibition offers fresh perspectives on Schwitters, Miró and Arp, as well as deeper insights into the movements of Dada and Surrealism. ‘Schwitters Miró Arp’ also calls to mind the special role that Los Angeles played as a generative hub for European artists – and particularly Surrealists – in the 1920s and 1930s. A local German emigré network of creative luminaries (known as ‘Weimar on the Pacific’) advanced

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European ideas across music, theatre, and film in Los Angeles. Walter and Louise Arensberg, avid collectors and early patrons of Dada and Surrealist artists, fostered a mutually supportive community in Los Angeles, opening their prized art collection to any visitor who inquired.

'This selection represents a fresh approach to radical works that impacted future generations of artists on an international scale. In collaboration with the artists' foundations, we have identified masterworks that conjure the formal, political and discursive impulses of artistic production one hundred years ago, and inspire the relevance of these works today.' – Iwan Wirth

About the Exhibition

In 1918, Schwitters and Arp developed a close friendship founded on a lively exchange of artistic ideas. In 1926, Miró and Arp shared a home in the Les Fusains artists' colony at Rue de Tourlaque 22 in Paris, where Schwitters also travelled each year, and most frequently between 1929 and 1932. Arp had first become acquainted with collage in 1914 in the studio of Picasso; he conveyed the new technique to Schwitters during their time together in Paris and it went on to become an essential facet of Schwitters' oeuvre. In turn, Miró's experiments with the assemblage of everyday objects in the late 1920s were strongly influenced by Schwitters, Arp and the Dada movement.



Each of these artists shared an interest in the fusion of painting and sculpture through the art of assemblage. While Schwitters dramatically expanded the artistic frame of reference with his 'Merzbilder,' particularly through the use of materials found on the street, and Arp continued to develop his abstract organic reliefs, Miró found his own raw yet poetic way of engaging with the material. Miró's play with geometric and organic forms can be interpreted as a link between the artistic expression of Schwitters, who had already begun to distance himself from the reproduction of natural forms in 1918, and the biomorphic compositions created by Arp. Their mutual influence upon one another resonated throughout their careers and into their late works.

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Highlights include Schwitters' collage, 'Untitled (ABLE)' (1947); an early example of Schwitters' Merzbilder – 'Merzbild 1B Bild mit rotem Kreuz' (Merzpicture 1B Picture with Red Cross) (1919), and Arp's 'Tête; Lèvres écossaises' (Head; Scottish Lips) (1927). Arp's painting find its source in Dada's idealistic concept of redemption through primitive, abstract forms, yet its biomorphic shapes are characteristic of the new formal language the artist developed by abstracting elements from the natural landscape. It belongs to the remarkable series of painted reliefs that signalled his return to figuration in the 1920s – he turned to a simplified figurative style and a new iconography of faces and objects to create critical and humorous images. Arp often focused obsessively on one body part such as a nose or moustache – or in this case, a navel – to the extent of overwhelming the perception of the entire figure. In attacking human folly directly, through parody or objectification of the body, Arp adopted Dada's embrace of the irrational and absurd.

'Métamorphose' (Metamorphosis) (1936) is from a series of outlandish and poetic collages that mark a period of fervent experimentation in Miró's career. Interlaced lyrical and biomorphic figures drawn in fine pencil are punctuated with outmoded and eclectic imagery in the form of old postcards, newspapers scraps, anatomy albums or art nouveau motifs. The meeting of instinctive, delicate line and crude imagery lend the works a distinct sense of humour in accord with the Dada sensibility.

The exhibition is curated by art historian Dieter Buchhart, who has organized seminal exhibitions on major figures such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Georges Braque, Otto Dix, Keith Haring, Edvard Munch and Andy Warhol in renowned museums such as Albertina, Vienna, Austria; Fondation Beyeler, Basel, Switzerland; Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain; Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris, France and De Young Museum, San Francisco CA.

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Gallery hours:
Wednesday – Sunday
11 am – 6 pm
Thursday 11 am – 8 pm

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Hans Arp
Tête; Lèvres écossaises
(Head; Scottish Lips)
1927
Cardboard and paint
73.5 x 61 cm / 28 7/8 x 24 in
© Stiftung Arp e.V. Berlin/Rolandswerth /
2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Courtesy Hauser & Wirth

Kurt Schwitters
Merzbild 1B Bild mit rotem Kreuz
(Merzpicture 1B Picture with Red Cross)
1919
Collage, oil, gouache, paper, cardboard, and
canvas on paperboard
64.5 x 54.2 cm / 25 3/8 x 21 3/8 in
© 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Courtesy Kurt and Ernst Schwitters Foundation,
Sammlung Deutsche Bank and Hauser & Wirth

Kurt Schwitters
Untitled (ABLE)
1947
Collage, paper, cardboard, and photography on
paper, fixed under passepartout
16.8 x 13.3 cm / 6 5/8 x 5 1/4 in
(Original underlay: 29.8 x 25.5 cm / 11 3/4 x 10 in)
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and Hauser & Wirth

Joan Miró
Métamorphose
(Metamorphosis)
1936
Pencil, India ink, decal, and watercolor on paper
62 x 46 cm / 24 3/8 x 18 1/8 in
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Courtesy Hauser & Wirth