

10.11.
2023

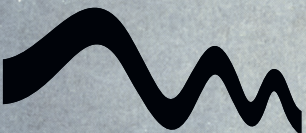
25.2.
2024



*assembled
worlds*

Hannah Höch

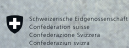
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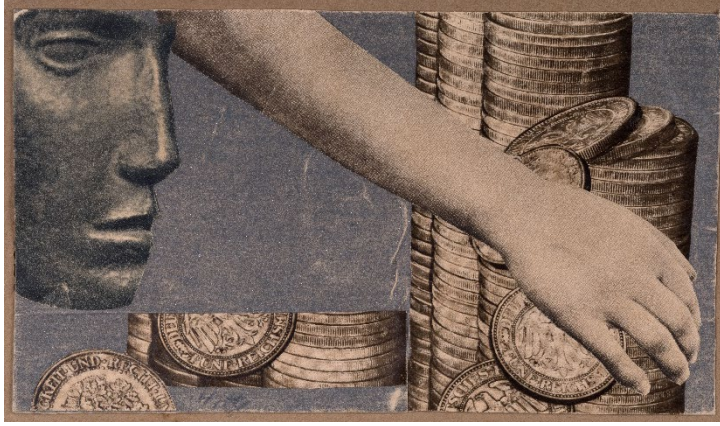


Zentrum Paul Klee
Bern

Founded by
Maurice E. and Martha Müller
and the heirs of Paul Klee

With the support of:





The German Dadaist Hannah Höch (1889–1978) is one of the inventors of modern collage and considered a major protagonist of the art of the 1920s. From 10 November 2023 until 25 February 2024 the Zentrum Paul Klee is devoting a comprehensive exhibition to her, which focuses for the first time on Höch’s engagement with the visual culture of the modern age and with film in particular. A unique panorama of the avant-garde unfolds around Hannah Höch.

At the centre of the autumn exhibition in the Zentrum Paul Klee are some 60 photomontages by Hannah Höch. The works extend from her artistic beginnings in the 1910s via her time among the Berlin Dadaists to the Surrealist tendencies after the Second World War. In 15 thematically arranged rooms, the works are shown in their contemporary historical context, and juxtaposed with major works by artists such as Pablo Picasso, Kurt Schwitters, Fernand Léger and Wassily Kandinsky. Among them are 15 works from the collection of the Kunstmuseum Bern. The arrangement by theme brings out the originality and thematic diversity but also the historical significance of Höch’s oeuvre. Prominence is also given to the *Album*, the artist’s unique and extensive collection of pictures which gives an impressive account of her response to the pictorial world of her time.

‘Montage’ and the power of images

Höch was one of the first artists to make the media and the power of images the subject of her art. She composed her photomontages out of cuttings from newspapers and magazines – a technique that she developed from 1918 onwards, and to which she remained faithful until the end of her life. She was the only woman within the circle of Berlin Dadaists. In the spirit of a new beginning and rapid technological progress after the First World War these artists assembled (*montieren*) their works from the fragments of mass culture. They described their works as ‘montages’. At their centre was the revolutionary idea of breaking down the world into its components and creating new worlds out of them. Montage was soon applied not only in art but also in graphic design, advertising and political propaganda, and in this way developed into a central principle of the avant-garde.

Films on paper

As well as works by contemporaries, the exhibition also includes eleven historical film projections which clearly reveal Höch's intense engagement with film. These include works by Hans Richter and László Moholy-Nagy, both friends of the artist. In the interwar years the still new medium of film exerted a strong fascination on many artists. Höch too saw her photomontages as lying 'in the border zone of film'. Like film, photomontage uses editing and montage to connect individual shots into complex narratives. The films shown are based on the results of the latest research into Hannah Höch and at the same time offer a media experience of the avant-garde world of images of the 1920s.

From wounded faces to a wild garden

With a great deal of irony, Höch's early photomontages reflect social or political themes such as the power of the mass media, the relationship between human and machine, gender roles or the rise of National Socialism. Höch literally 'emasculated' supposedly strong men with her scissors, or else sent them fleeing, and her montaged portraits of people recall the new use of prostheses in World War I.

After World War II, nature became increasingly central to her work. In the works produced during this time, abstract and figurative motifs flow together into dreamlike, Surrealist-looking landscapes. The garden of her house in the outer Berlin suburb of Heiligensee, in which she had survived the Second World War in 'internal emigration', became an important source of inspiration. After 1945, Höch developed photomontage into a poetic method of breaking out of the conventions of the everyday and repeatedly seeing the world from a new perspective:

'I would like to erase the fixed boundaries that we humans have confidently drawn around everything (...) Today I would like to reflect the world from the viewpoint of an ant and tomorrow as the moon might see it.' Hannah Höch

Even though Höch barely changed her montage technique in her lifetime, her works reveal a great thematic diversity. In most cases – despite their narrative character – they remain mysterious and invite new interpretations.

Opening

The opening of the exhibition will take place on
Thursday, 9 November 2023, from 6 pm.
Admission to the exhibition is free on this evening.

Curator

Martin Waldmeier

Assistant Curators

Kai-Inga Dost, Alyssa Pasquier

Publication

To coincide with the exhibition, a publication focusing on Hannah Höch's engagement with the visual culture of modernism will be published.

Cooperation

An exhibition of the Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, and the Belvedere, Wien, where the show will be on display from 21 June until 6 October 2024.

With the support of

Kanton Bern, Burgergemeinde Bern, Bundesamt für Kultur BAK, Dr. Georg und Josi Guggenheim-Stiftung

Media preview

We cordially invite you to the media preview with curator Martin Waldmeier on **Thursday, 9 November 2023 at 10 am** at the Zentrum Paul Klee.

Please register via press@zpk.org.

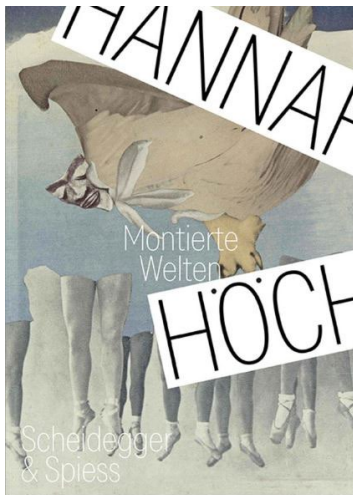
Contact

Martina Witschi, Communication & Media relations
press@zpk.org, +41 31 328 09 93

Individual visit of the exhibition



We are looking forward to your individual visit to the exhibition. Admission to all exhibitions at the Zentrum Paul Klee is free for media representatives with a valid press card. Please fill in the digital accreditation form which you can either access via zpk.org/press or by screening the QR-Code before your visit.



Publication

Hannah Höch. Assembled Worlds Hannah Höch. Montierte Welten

Published by Martin Waldmeier, Stella Rollig and Nina Zimmer with contributions by Hannah Höch, Kristin Makholm, Martin Waldmeier and others as well as a preface by Nina Zimmer and Stella Rollig

200 pages, 130 illustrations in colour and 20 illustrations in black and white

English edition: ISBN 978-3-03942-172-5

German edition: ISBN 978-3-03942-172-5

Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess
CHF 39

Accompanying programme

Zoom Talk (online)

Sunday, **10 December 2023**, 5 pm (CET)

Hannah Höch and the visual culture of modernity. With Dr Kristin Makholm, art historian and Hannah Höch expert, and Martin Waldmeier, curator

Public guided tours in English

Sunday, 19 November 2023, 3 pm

Sunday, 18 February 2024, 3 pm



Biography

1889

Hannah Höch was born in Gotha, Germany, in 1889 and grew up as the eldest of five siblings in a middle-class family. At just fifteen, she had to drop out of school to take care of her younger sisters. In her free time, she liked to draw and it was at this time that she began to make her first collages.

1912

At the age of twenty-two, she enrolled in a glass design class at the Kunstgewerbeschule Charlottenburg (Charlottenburg School of Applied Arts). Her dream had always been to study at an art academy.

1914

Her studies were interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War, and she was temporarily forced to return to Gotha.

1915

She transferred to the Königliches Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin, joining the Jugendstil artist Emil Orlik's class on graphic arts and book design. It was around this time that she started creating abstract compositions in the style of Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc.

She met the painter Raoul Hausmann, likely during a visit to Herwarth Walden's Galerie Sturm in Berlin. Much like Höch, Hausmann was passionate about Expressionism. This encounter led to an artistically stimulating yet fraught relationship between the two of them, which was to last until 1922.

1916

Höch took on a position in the editorial department at Ullstein Verlag, Germany's largest magazine publisher at the time. Here, she designed embroidery patterns for the handicraft sections of various magazines and enjoyed access to photographic material from publications like *Uhu*, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, and *Der Querschnitt*. In her spare time, she created woodcut collages and abstract watercolours, as well as her first experiments with oil painting.

1918

After returning from vacation to the Baltic region, Höch and Hausmann created their first photomontages. However, Höch did not attend the first Berlin Dada Club soirée on April 12, due to a dispute with Hausmann.

Following the war's end and the fall of the monarchy in the German Empire, she joined the revolutionary November Group, an association that brought together the trends of Expressionism, Cubism, and Constructivism. It was here that she established connections with Kurt Schwitters and Hans Arp.

1919

She participated in the inaugural Dada exhibition in Berlin, held at I.B. Neumann's small gallery space, marking her first-ever involvement in a Dada event.

June–August 1920

Despite opposition from her colleagues John Heartfield and George Grosz, she participated with at least eight works in the most important exhibition of the Berlin Dada movement, the *First International Dada Fair* at the gallery of Dr. Otto Burchard. Artists such as Raoul Hausmann, Hans Arp, Max Ernst, Francis Picabia, Otto Dix also showed their work. Höch presented her

monumental photomontage *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* (1919–1920), a photomontage-panorama reflecting the economic and political instability and turmoil of the early Weimar Republic. However, when it came to the exhibitions of the November Group – which the Dadaists soon criticized as being too apolitical and bourgeois – she exhibited paintings and watercolours.

Early 1920s

The Berlin Dada movement dissolved. Höch visited the Bauhaus in Weimar and formed close friendships with Kurt and Helma Schwitters, as well as with László and Lucia Moholy-Nagy.

1924

She travelled to Paris and established connections with Theo and Nelly van Doesburg. She also met Tristan Tzara, Man Ray, Constantin Brâncuși, Piet Mondrian, Marcel Duchamp, and Fernand Léger in the city.

Through their inclusion in exhibitions held by the November Group and in publications by her acquaintances, her artworks began to gain recognition. At the same time, Höch was also collecting works by her friends and traveling, including a trip to the Netherlands, where she explored the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden alongside Kurt Schwitters.

1926

She met the Dutch writer Til Brugman. Together, the two women travelled throughout France and began a relationship. She subsequently left her job at Ullstein Verlag and moved with Brugman to The Hague, from where she embarked on numerous other trips, including ones to Belgium. She also travelled to Monte Verità in Ascona, Switzerland, where she came across Eduard von der Heydt's ethnographic art collection.

1928

She joined the film leagues in The Hague and Rotterdam, both of which advocated for the recognition of film as an artistic medium and showcased experimental works by Man Ray, Walter Ruttmann, Alexander Dovzhenko, and Germaine Dulac.

1929

Höch achieved her biggest exhibition success up to that point: not only did she receive recognition with a solo exhibition at Kunstzaal De Bron in The Hague, where she showcased paintings, watercolours, and drawings, though no photomontages; she also presented at least eighteen photomontages at the pioneering Werkbund exhibition *Film und Foto* in Stuttgart, and was acknowledged as a representative of experimental photography.

1931

Höch returned to Berlin with Brugman. There she joined the Berlin Film League and the Reichsverband bildender Künstler, continued to exhibit her work, and became politically active in the struggles against film censorship and in support of reproductive rights.

1932

Höch planned on exhibiting at the Bauhaus, but the event was cancelled due to the school being shut down by the Nazis.

1933

As a former Dadaist, from 1933 on, Höch's works were considered politically suspicious and written off as 'culturally Bolshevik.' Her last major exhibition before the war was in Brno in 1934. The exhibition featured over forty

photomontages, and was held at the invitation of the architect František Kalivoda, who, as editor of the magazine *Ekran*, was actively involved in promoting new developments in art, film, and photography. Shortly afterwards, Höch fell seriously ill with autoimmune hyperthyroidism, which forced her to significantly reduce her artistic activities.

1935

She met Kurt Heinz Matthies, a sales representative and pianist who was over twenty years her junior. She left Til Brugman and entered a relationship with Matthies. The two of them travelled across Nazi Germany in a caravan for several years. They visited the Degenerate Art Exhibition in Munich and Berlin several times, where many of Höch's friends' works were exhibited, though none of her own. Höch's relationship with Matthies suffered due to his psychological instability and inappropriate behaviour, which led to Matthies being temporarily imprisoned as a sexual offender. Although Höch spoke resolutely in his defense, he eventually left her in 1942.

1939–1945

Höch was practically the only former Dadaist left in Germany at the time, and she increasingly retreated into a state of 'inner emigration.' From 1939, she completely withdrew from urban life and moved into a small house with a large garden in Heiligensee, on the western outskirts of Berlin, where nobody knew her. The garden became a refuge for Höch. Throughout the war years, she grappled with profound loneliness and deep depression, leading to limited artistic output. In her most desperate times, her garden served as a source of sustenance. She even buried some of her belongings there, to protect them from being seized.

After the end of the war, Höch began to show her work again and reconnected with her friends in exile. She also created new photomontages and published *Bilderbuch*, her only illustrated children's book.

From 1946

In an exhibition catalogue, she described her photomontages as 'Fantastic Art,' drawing parallels with Surrealism. As an artist, she received financial support from the Allies. She made new contacts in the Berlin art scene, participated in exhibitions, gave lectures, and resumed her travels. In 1956, she visited Bern, where her works were shown at the Kornfeld und Klipstein gallery.

Höch increasingly took part in international exhibitions, including ones at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1948 and 1968. In 1968, Heinz Ohff published the first comprehensive monograph on the artist.

1971

She reflected on her life and artistic career through a monumental photomontage titled *Lebensbild*, using photographs and reproductions made of her and her works in the course of her exhibition activities.

1974

She was honoured with a retrospective exhibition at the National Museum of Modern Art in Kyoto. In the same year, her 1925 paintings *Roma* and *Journalisten* were purchased by the Berlinische Galerie. Höch, who continued to live modestly even in the postwar period, was astonished by the international success of her art.

1978

She passed away in Berlin at the age of eighty-eight.

Press images

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01

Höch Hannah
Flucht [Flight], 1931
Collage
23 x 18,4 cm
Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.
V., Stuttgart
© 2023, ProLitteris, Zurich



02

Hannah Höch
Der Vater [The Father], 1920
Collage
34 x 27,5 cm
Galerie Berinson, Berlin
© 2023, ProLitteris, Zurich



03

Hannah Höch
Geld [Money], um 1922
Collage
11 x 18,3 cm
Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.
V., Stuttgart
© 2023, ProLitteris, Zurich



04

Hannah Höch
Hochfinanz [High finance], 1923
Collage
35,1 x 30,1 cm
Galerie Berinson, Berlin
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05

Hannah Höch
Der Melancholiker [The Melancholic],
1925

Collage

16,8 x 13 cm

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.
V., Stuttgart

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06

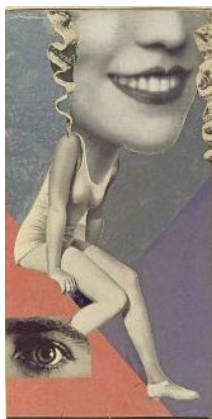
Höch Hannah
Untitled (from an ethnographic
museum), 1929

Collage

22,3 x 15,3 cm

Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe,
Hamburg

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07

Höch Hannah
Für ein Fest gemacht [Prepared for a
celebration], 1936

Collage

36 x 19,8 cm

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.
V., Stuttgart

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08

Hannah Höch
Eule mit Lupe [Owl with Magnifying
Glass], 1945

Collage on cardboard

19,5 x 25,2 cm

Private collection

© 2023, ProLitteris, Zurich

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09

Hannah Höch
Fata Morgana, 1957
Collage
21,2 x 28,2 cm
Private collection
© 2023, ProLitteris, Zurich



10

Hannah Höch
Friedensengel [Angel of Peace],
around 1958
Collage on cardboard
22,2 x 17,5 cm
Berlinische Galerie – Landesmuseum
für Moderne Kunst, Fotografie und
Architektur / Repro: Kai-Annett
Becker / Berlinische Galerie
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11

Hannah Höch
Um einen Roten Mund [Around a Red
Mouth], around 1967
Collage
20,5 x 16,5 cm
Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.
V., Stuttgart
© 2023, ProLitteris, Zurich



12

Untitled (Hannah Höch. Double-
exposed portrait), n. d.
Silver gelatine print
12 x 8,5 cm
Berlinische Galerie – Landesmuseum
für Moderne Kunst, Fotografie und
Architektur / Repro: Anja Elisabeth
Witte / Berlinische Galerie

Social Media Assets

Text proposal:

The Zentrum Paul Klee is devoting a comprehensive exhibition to the German Dadaist Hannah Höch (1889–1978), which will focus for the first time on Höch's engagement with the visual culture of the modern age and with film in particular.

Hannah Höch is one of the inventors of modern collage and considered a major protagonist of the art of the 1920s. Her photomontages are shown in their contemporary historical context, and juxtaposed with major works by artists such as Pablo Picasso, Kurt Schwitters, Fernand Léger and Wassily Kandinsky as well as eleven historical film projections. The exhibition thus offers a media experience of the avant-garde world of images of the 1920s.

Hannah Höch. Assembled Worlds
10.11.2023–25.2.2024

SAVE THE DATE

Opening: Thursday, 9 November 2023, 6.30 p.m.–9 p.m. (door opening at 6pm)

Curator: Martin Waldmeier

Assistant curator: Kai-Inga Dost, Alyssa Pasquier

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#ZentrumPaulKlee #HannahHöch

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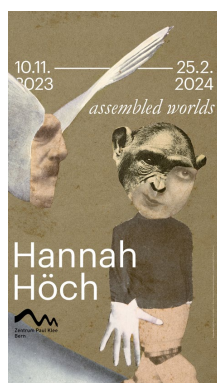
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01

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Hannah-Hoech_Instagram_1-1_12s.mp4



02

Hannah-Hoech_Instagram_9-16_1080x1920px.jpg

Hannah-Hoech_Instagram_9-16_12s.mp4



03

Hannah-Hoech_Instagram_16-9_1920x1080px.jpg

Hannah-Hoech_Instagram_16-9_12s.mp4



04

Hannah-Hoech_X_1500x500px



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