

Zurich, 6 March 2023
Press Release

“Friedl Dicker-Brandeis. A Modern Artist”

29 March to 18 June 2023, Opening: Tuesday, 28 March 2023, 6 p.m.

It is a revelation: the work of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis (1898–1944) has never before been presented in a solo exhibition in Switzerland. In Europe as a whole, it is only since the 1990s that her work has been attracting wider attention. Like many of her generation, her oeuvre did not find its way into the history of modern European art for decades. That is in part due to the destruction of her architectural work and also due to her persecution and murder as a left-wing Jewish artist. The Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich has teamed up with the Art Collection and Archive of the University of Applied Arts Vienna to introduce this important artist to Switzerland.

The sheer range of media and genres that Dicker-Brandeis' oeuvre encompasses in both visual and applied art is impressive. Shaped by her studies at the Vienna Kunstgewerbeschule, Johannes Itten's private school and the Bauhaus in Weimar, she worked as a painter, printmaker, set designer, architect and designer in Vienna and Berlin, while in exile and following deportation. This presentation of her diverse oeuvre is based on the uniquely comprehensive holdings and documentary material held in the Art Collection and Archive of the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Works from every important phase of her career can be discovered here, casting light on the artist's thematic and cross-media diversity, from portraits, nudes, nature studies, floral still lifes and political photocolleages to textile designs and stage sets, furniture and interiors.

Moreover, through her works and by way of documentary material, the exhibition places Dicker-Brandeis within the political and historical context of the time. It also sheds light on the various intellectual and artistic circles she moved in, by reconstructing the artist's network of contacts and exploring her engagement with contemporary developments in art and theory. The exhibition clearly shows that, in the course of her brief career, Dicker-Brandeis worked continuously in a variety of different constellations and situations, creating an exceptionally interdisciplinary oeuvre. For instance, she co-founded the Werkstätten Bildender Kunst GmbH together with Viennese architect Franz Singer, who had attended the Bauhaus with her. The company, which continued to operate until 1926, was also involved in stage and set design. On her return to Vienna in 1925, Dicker established a studio with Martha Hauska, which Singer also joined. The following year, she and Franz Singer founded a studio together – Atelier Friedl Dicker und Franz Singer – with a focus on architecture, furniture and textile design. She also worked for a number of different textile companies. These examples alone indicate just how collaborative and cross-genre her work was, which in itself has

made it difficult to classify her as an artist, given the art historical tendency to define the canon of twentieth century art along the lines of distinct and separate media.

As a Jewish and communist artist, Dicker's sphere of activity was increasingly narrowed by the political developments of the day. In 1933, she went into exile in Prague, got married, and worked with her husband for a textile factory in Hronov from 1938 until they both, as Jews, lost the right to work. In recent times, Dicker-Brandeis was rediscovered with regard to her activity as a teacher of art in the Theresienstadt ghetto camp, to which she had been deported from 1942-1944, before she was murdered in Auschwitz in October 1944. The exhibition in Zurich brings the quality of her artistic work to the fore, showing that Friedl Dicker-Brandeis was an artist who, in spite of her often precarious life and working situation, developed diverse, unconventional and politically resistant works.

Practical Information

Curated by Dr. Linda Schädler, Head of Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, in collaboration with Cosima Rainer and Stephanie Kitzberger, Art Collection and Archive of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, and Robert Müller, artist.

A collaboration with the Art Collection and Archive of the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

Publication The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive and richly illustrated catalogue published by Verlag De Gruyter: «Friedl Dicker-Brandeis. Works from the Collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna», edited by Stefanie Kietzberger, Cosima Rainer and Linda Schädler (ENG / DE). CHF 49.95 / EUR 49.95

Opening hours Daily, 10 a.m. – 4.45 p.m.

Admission free

Press contact Julia Burckhardt, Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich, Tel +41 44 632 40 46; presse@gs.ethz.ch

Website www.gs.ethz.ch