Press Release

Exhibition: « Marcelle Cahn. In Search of Space »
From 29 April to 31 July 2022
Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art

The MAMCS presents the first major retrospective dedicated to Marcelle Cahn (1895-1981). In terms of the history of 20th century art, this artist’s career began on the margins of the Expressionist and Purist tendencies and flourished in the 1950s with a lyrical yet highly rigorous free abstraction, from which emerged the remarkable achievement of the relief paintings and spatial paintings of the 1960s. From the infinitely small to the quest for an architectural space, Marcelle Cahn (who never renounced figuration, considering her "lyrical things" as a "recreation") developed a singular language of purified and sensitive abstraction, devoid of dogmatism.

Organized with the Saint-Étienne Métropole Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MAMC+) and in partnership with the Rennes Museum of Fine Arts, this exhibition illustrates the richness and uniqueness of Marcelle Cahn's work. It revisits the different creative contexts in which this artist developed, from German Expressionism at the beginning of the 20th century to the main currents of geometric and lyrical abstraction. This chronological display brings together more than 400 artworks, covering all the techniques used by the artist, including paintings, graphic pieces, sculptures, photographs and collages. These are on loan from cultural institutions and French and foreign private collections, including the Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, to which the artist donated her studio collection and archives in 1980.

An Alsatian born in Strasbourg, where she spent most of her youth, Marcelle Cahn trained in Berlin during the Great War under Lovis Corinth and Eugen Spiro, then with Fernand Léger and Amédée Ozenfant in Paris (where she chose to spend the last thirty-five years of her life). During the interwar period Marcelle Cahn participated in large events and movements in support of abstract art. Although supported and appreciated by influential artists and critics of her time, in the last years of her life she only rarely had solo exhibitions and lived in a rather isolated state, increased by periods of withdrawal from the art world. For material and health reasons, collage was the dominant technique practiced for the last fifteen years of the career of an artist inclined to rely on the minimum of resources at her disposal. This reflects the appetite of an artist driven all her life by the freedom and poetry of gesture, as well as the play of infinite variations.

General curator: Cécile Godefroy, art historian and independent curator.
Associate curators: Barbara Forest, Chief Curator of Heritage at MAMCS and Alexandre Quoi, Head of the Technical Department at MAMC+.

This exhibition, also presented at MAMC+ (Saint-Étienne) and at the Rennes Museum of Fine Arts, will vary in format at each stage depending on the site.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain (MAMCS)
1 Place Hans-Jean-Arp, Strasbourg
Open every day from 10 am to 6 pm (closed on Mondays)
tel : +33 (0)3 68 98 50 00
www.musees.strasbourg.eu

Press Contact: Julie Barth – 03 68 98 74 78 – julie.barth@strasbourg.eu