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| Brandt, Marianne (1893-1983) |
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| Best remembered for her metal designs, Marianne Brandt created the small tea extract pot that set a record in 2007 for the highest sum ever paid for a Bauhaus object. While her work in metal has become iconic, other aspects of Brandt’s diverse œuvre and her influence on the Bauhaus still remain little studied.  Born Marianne Liebe to an upper-middle class family in the industrial city of Chemnitz, she received her diploma as a painter in 1918 from Weimar’s Grand Ducal Saxon College of Fine Art [*Grossherzogliche-Sächsische Hochschule für Bildende Kunst*]. She married the Norwegian artist Erik Brandt, and they spent the next two years in Norway and France. Brandt had begun a new course of study in sculpture at the College of Fine Artsin Weimar in 1923 when she saw the State Bauhaus Exhibition [*Staatliches Bauhaus Ausstellung*] and was inspired to begin her studies anew at the Bauhaus. Brandt completed the Preliminary Course [*Vorkurs*] under the direction of Josef Albers and László Moholy-Nagy. At the latter’s suggestion she apprenticed at the Metal Workshop, one of the most male-dominated divisions of the school. Brandt experienced some hazing but also had immediate success with the sleek designs and pure forms of her metal tea services and other household items. |
| Best remembered for her metal designs, Marianne Brandt created the small tea extract pot that set a record in 2007 for the highest sum ever paid for a Bauhaus object. While her work in metal has become iconic, other aspects of Brandt’s diverse œuvre and her influence on the Bauhaus still remain little studied.  Born Marianne Liebe to an upper-middle class family in the industrial city of Chemnitz, she received her diploma as a painter in 1918 from Weimar’s Grand Ducal Saxon College of Fine Art [*Grossherzogliche-Sächsische Hochschule für Bildende Kunst*]. She married the Norwegian artist Erik Brandt, and they spent the next two years in Norway and France. Brandt had begun a new course of study in sculpture at the College of Fine Artsin Weimar in 1923 when she saw the State Bauhaus Exhibition [*Staatliches Bauhaus Ausstellung*] and was inspired to begin her studies anew at the Bauhaus. Brandt completed the Preliminary Course [*Vorkurs*] under the direction of Josef Albers and László Moholy-Nagy. At the latter’s suggestion she apprenticed at the Metal Workshop, one of the most male-dominated divisions of the school. Brandt experienced some hazing but also had immediate success with the sleek designs and pure forms of her metal tea services and other household items. These epitomized the school’s turn away from craft to a spirit of ‘Art and Technology, a New Unity,’ in Walter Gropius’s words. The esteem in which Gropius held Brandt’s work is evidenced by the selection of her lighting fixtures in much of the school’s second home, the Gropius-designed Bauhaus Dessau, to which it moved in 1926.  The melding of art and technology is evident in other aspects of Brandt’s work as well, particularly her photographs in experimental, New Vision modes. She also made at least forty-five complex and culturally critical photomontages during her Bauhaus years. She worked particularly intensely in this medium while on a yearlong sabbatical from the Bauhaus in Paris between 1926–27.  Over the span of her association with the Metal Workshop, Brandt rose quickly through its ranks. She became the shop’s assistant [*Mitarbeiter*] in 1927, and, when Moholy-Nagy left the Bauhaus in 1928, Brandt became acting director. She negotiated numerous contracts for the production of her and others’ lamp designs with the Berlin firm of Schwinzer & Gräff and Leipzig’s Körting & Mathiesen. Brandt was the only woman to receive her diploma from the Metal Workshop, which she did upon leaving the Bauhaus in the summer of 1929.  After half a year working in Gropius’s Berlin office, Brandt became head of design for the division of household goods at the Ruppelwerk in Gotha. She overhauled their entire product line, yet she would later express frustration at how little creative freedom she had in this work. Ruppel’s fortunes worsened through the ongoing financial crisis, and Brandt lost her position late in 1932. After her initial attempts to secure work in Hamburg or Oslo proved fruitless, she returned home to Chemnitz at her family’s request in 1933. Brandt was unable to obtain steady work during the National Socialist period, but she did continue to paint and photograph. When an Allied bomb raid in World War II severely damaged her family home, Brandt spent the next years redesigning and rebuilding it. Multitalented Bauhäusler that she was, she completed much of the construction herself.  As in the Nazi period, Brandt’s life in East Germany was not easy, but through her teaching she was an important conduit of Bauhaus ideas and philosophy. From 1949–51, she taught at the Dresden College of Arts and Crafts (*Hochschule für Werkkunst*) under the direction of Mart Stam, and spent the next three years in Berlin-Weißensee as an industrial designer at the College for Applied Arts (*Hochschule für angewandte Kunst*). She travelled to Beijing and Shanghai with her exhibition ‘German Applied Arts of the GDR’ in 1954. Brandt lived the rest of her life in or near Chemnitz (then Karl-Marx Stadt). As the East German regime slowly began to recognize the significance of the Bauhaus, Brandt’s work likewise began to be a source of interest and the subject of a few group exhibitions. Today, a number of Brandt’s metal designs are in production once again, and her original designs and photomontages are prized possessions in many major collections of modern art. |
| Further reading:  (Brandt)  (Droste)  (Müller)  (Otto, Tempo, Tempo! The Bauhaus Photomontages of Marianne Brandt)  (Otto, ’A Schooling of the Senses’: Post Dada Visual Experiments in the Bauhaus Photomontages of László Moholy-Nagy and Marianne Brandt)  (Weber)  (Weise)  (Witkovsky)  (Wynhoff) |