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| Delaunay, Sonia (1885-1979) |
| Delaunay-Terk, Sonia |
| Sonia Delaunay, lately often referred to as Delaunay-Terk, was a painter and textile designer, who together with her husband Robert Delaunay, was the precursor of a movement described as *Orphism* by the poet and critic Guillaume Apollinaire. Sonia Delaunay was born as Sarah Stern in Gradizhsk in the Russian Empire, which is now part of the Ukraine. She was the youngest child of a poor Jewish couple. At the age of five, she was adopted by her mother’s brother Henri Terk, who worked as a lawyer in Saint Petersburg, and renamed Sonia Terk. She then had the opportunity to grow up in an environment surrounded by music and art and to learn several languages. |
| Sonia Delaunay, lately often referred to as Delaunay-Terk, was a painter and textile designer, who together with her husband Robert Delaunay, was the precursor of a movement described as *Orphism* by the poet and critic Guillaume Apollinaire.  *I am attracted by pure colours. Colours from my childhood, from the Ukraine.*  *Memories of peasant weddings in my country,*  *in which the red and green dresses decorated with many ribbons, billowed in dance.*  (quoted in Sonia Delaunay: a retrospective. Exh.cat. Albright – Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, 1980. p.213)  Sonia Delaunay was born as Sarah Stern in Gradizhsk in the Russian Empire, which is now part of the Ukraine. She was the youngest child of a poor Jewish couple. At the age of five, she was adopted by her mother’s brother Henri Terk, who worked as a lawyer in Saint Petersburg, and renamed Sonia Terk. She then had the opportunity to grow up in an environment surrounded by music and art and to learn several languages.  File: SoniaDelaunayTimeline.jpg  Figure . Timeline of life an Works (Schroder).  Source: Contributor’s own image; I took a screenshot of text in the original MS Word document so that the format could be preserved.  Already at a young age, she demonstrated an aptitude for the arts and at the age of 18 she was sent to Germany to study at the Karlsruhe Academy of Fine Arts where she developed a strong stylistic foundation. After two years she decided to move to Paris where she had an active social life and developed a serious academic career at the Académie de la Palette in Montparnasse. During this period she was trying to find her own style, but her paintings, such as *Finnish Landscape* (1906) and *Three Nudes* (1908), exhibited a perceptible influence of Van Gogh, Gauguin and Matisse. While in Paris, Sonia Terk met the German art dealer and collector Wilhelm Uhde, with whom she had a marriage of convenience in1908. Through Uhde she had her first solo exhibition and got introduced to the Parisian artistic elite.  In 1910 she divorced Uhde and married Robert Delaunay. Sonia shared with Robert the interest in colors and what they later called *Simultaneous Contrast,* the idea that contrasting colors create movement and take on a life and meaning of their own. However, she never separated the decorative arts from the fine arts and expanded her explorations of colors and luminosity to new possibilities in objects and fashion design. After her son Charles was born in 1911, Sonia deepened her interest for dressmaking and interior design, creating different pieces of clothing for the family, numerous everyday objects of contrasting and complementary colors and painting the walls of their home. In 1912-13 she designed her first *Simultaneous Dresses*, which were mixes of squares and triangles of taffeta, flannelette, moiré, and corded silk, produced following the same color research she developed on her paintings of the same time, as one of her first large scale works *Bal Bullier*.  During the World War I Sonia and Robert were living between Spain and Portugal. In Madrid the couple designed the costumes and stage sets for Sergei Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes* and Sonia encouraged by the experiences with fashion design opened the store *Casa Sonia* dedicated to fashion and interior design. When they moved back to Paris in 1920, Sonia started working closely with Tristan Tzara, producing the famous *Poem-Dresses*, ‘words and colors in ever new relationships through body movement’. In 1925 Sonia featured her simultaneous fashion designs in the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, which brought her designs to a wider audience.  In the 1930’s, with the Great Depression, the Delaunays could not rely only on painting and Sonia had her work divided between fashion and interior design, the writing of articles for magazines and projects for window displays. Some of Sonia’s best works were showcased in the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans La Vie Moderne* in 1937.  After Robert’s death in 1941, Sonia organized retrospectives of his work as a continuous tribute to his life. Only after spending years fighting to re-establish Robert’s artistic reputation, by the 1950’s she focused on producing and exhibiting her own work again. During this decade she had many exhibitions mainly in France, Italy and Germany and in 1964 she was the first woman artist to have a retrospective exhibition in the *Louvre*.  By the 1960’s she began a very strong friendship with the poet Jacques Damase, who coordinated one of the most important retrospectives of her work held in the *Musée National d’Art Moderne* in 1967. And during the 1970’s Delaunay-Terk received the *Légion d’honneur* and painted the poster for the *International Women’s Year* of UNESCO.  Sonia died peacefully in her studio at the age of 94 in December 1979. Her body was buried close to Robert’s in Gambais. |
| Further reading:  (Baron)  (Buckberrough)  (Düchting)  (Rendell)  (Turner) |