

Sophie Taeuber-Arp's
Letters to
Annie and
Oskar Müller-Widmann

SCHEIDEGGER & SPIESS



FONDAZIONE
MARGUERITE
ARP

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Translator's Note

The epistolary exchange is an intimate form: language embodied in a delicate object belonging most typically to an audience of two. I've often considered translation to be a kind of love letter to the act of writing and reading, re-sounding one voice in another tongue as a dispatch to the broader world.

So it is with great care that I've translated Sophie Taeuber-Arp's letters to Annie and Oskar Müller-Widmann, which are, as Walburga Krupp and Simona Martinoli note, a record of the rich relationship between the artist and collector couple.

Idiosyncrasies in spelling and style that are particular to Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Jean/Hans Arp have been carried over in this translation (Sophie's calling the duo Anni and Oscar, for example, or Jean Arp's proclivity for writing sentences entirely in lowercase); where these idiosyncrasies are particular to the German language and its conventions in letter writing (lack of punctuation in signing off on a letter, for example, or using a period the way one does a colon in English), these have been converted appropriately to generate an equivalent effect.

My translations of the thirty-five letters in this volume are from the German (with reference to the letters in the original French for those Sophie Taeuber-Arp wrote during the war years). Even if the English language effaces distinctions such as the shift in Sophie Taeuber-Arp's letters from the formal *Sie* to the informal *Du* in addressing Annie Müller-Widmann, one finds ways in tone to bring forth the shift in intimacy as their relationship deepened. In reading and re-writing her voice, what comes through is the evident affection between the two women, the sincerity of their bond, as well as Sophie Taeuber-Arp's tremendous courage and resilience amid the horrors of war in remaining dedicated to her art and finding beauty in natural forms.

Kathleen Heil, Berlin
June 2021

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