

EXHIBITION LEARNING NOTES:

Verena Loewensberg

This resource has been produced to accompany the exhibition 'Verena Loewensberg' at Hauser & Wirth London from Tuesday 25 February – Thursday 17 April 2025.



Verena Loewensberg, 1970 © 2025 Verena Loewensberg Stiftung, Zurich. Photo: Stephan Coray, Zurich

About Verena Loewensberg

Verena Loewensberg (1912 – 1986) was a Swiss artist and leading figure of the Zurich school of concrete artists. The only female member of the group, which also included Max Bill, Camille Graeser and Richard Paul Lohse, Loewensberg distinguished herself through her oeuvre's formal and chromatic flair. In her work, structured oil compositions are animated by wide-ranging and precise colors and shapes.

Loewensberg was born and lived in Zurich, Switzerland. Her education began at the Gewerbeschule Basel in textile, design and color theory. She left the school in 1929 and continued training with the weaver Martha Guggenbühl, while also starting dance training in Zurich with Trudi Schoop. She took various roles and commissions in the applied arts and learned to paint from a textbook she found in Ascona, Switzerland. Loewensberg became acquainted with artists Max Bill and Binia Bill in 1934, whom she accompanied to Paris, France, several times. There, she was introduced by Bill to the Paris-based abstraction-cr ation group, meeting Georges Vantongerloo, who would have a lasting impact on her work. Loewensberg began artmaking in 1936, exhibiting her work for the first time later that same year with abstraction-cr ation at the Kunsthaus Zurich, Switzerland.

In 1981, five years before her passing, Loewensberg was celebrated with a retrospective at the Kunsthaus Zurich—the museum's first exhibition on a female artist. Subsequent exhibitions of Loewensberg's work have taken place at the Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau, Switzerland (1992); Haus Konstruktiv, Zurich, Switzerland (1998 and 2006); and Kunst Museum, Winterthur, Switzerland (2012). In 2022, MAMCO (Mus e d'art moderne et contemporain) in Geneva, Switzerland held a major retrospective.

What does the exhibition look like?

This is the gallery's first solo exhibition in the UK dedicated to this singular 20th-Century figure.

Opening with a wallpaper section in the gallery displaying a design by Loewensberg, the exhibition features striking paintings from the 1960s to 1980s, in which the artist departed from the strictures of concrete art, which was popular within the Swiss art scene until the end of the 1960s. The exhibition also includes early works from the 1940s and late 1950s.

Many of the oil paintings display the artist's bold patterning and use of primary colors, common in much of her work from the 1960s. Loewensberg's work from the 1970s and 1980s includes bold, two-toned monochromatic paintings. The only sculpture the artist ever made is also on view.



Installation view, 'Verena Loewensberg,' Hauser & Wirth London, 2025 © 2025 Verena Loewensberg Stiftung, Zurich. Photo: Alex Delfanne



Verena Loewensberg, Ohne Titel (Untitled), 1968 © 2025 Verena Loewensberg Stiftung, Zurich. Photo: Alex Delfanne



Verena Loewensberg, Ohne Titel (Untitled), 1967 © 2025 Verena Loewensberg Stiftung, Zurich. Photo: Alex Delfanne

What are the major themes within Loewensberg's work?

Contemporaneous international art movements

Many of the paintings on view focus on Loewensberg's shift towards international art movements such as color field, hard-edge and minimalism. Although Loewensberg was inspired by the concretists throughout her career, in the mid-1970s, Loewensberg described her sense of independence as she established a distinct creative language. The artist's work and creative outlook was also greatly influenced by Geometric abstraction.

Open interpretation

Each of Loewensberg's works are untitled in this exhibition, mirroring her relative silence on her work and private life. As the artist wanted to create a sense of autonomy around her practice and invite free interpretation to her art, she did not attach specific theories or concepts to her work and abstracted many elements of her personal life.

Ancient forms

Ancient forms creatively influenced the artist. In 1980, at the age of 68, Loewensberg traveled to Sicily, Italy, to visit the Greek temples, which inspired the production of a new series of paintings. An example from 1983 is accompanied by the only sculpture she would ever make, produced in 1982. Comprised of five pairs of parallelepipeds constructed out of wood, the untitled work is one of very few by Loewensberg that allude to existing structures.



Verena Loewensberg, Ohne Titel (Untitled), 1982 / 2023 © 2025 Verena Loewensberg Stiftung, Zurich.
Photo: Alex Delfanne

What inspired Loewensberg's work?

As Loewensberg studied weaving, embroidery, design and color theory, the artist worked in applied arts and design throughout her career. As these backgrounds inspired much of her work, Loewensberg believed geometric abstraction could be applied to everyday life and ways of seeing the world around her.

Although the concretists were of great personal importance to Loewensberg, her later paintings took on an atmospheric quality, an effect that she called 'Stimmung,' which refers to their overall mood.

How does Loewensberg make her work?

Many of the paintings on view reveal Loewensberg's technical mastery of free-hand painting. Working from preparatory sketches and transferring the final design to the canvas with light construction lines, the artist developed a liberated creative approach. The works also show the artist's ability to champion the color white, taking neutral tones from their role as a base and bringing them to the fore to produce circular shapes in the middle of these compositions.

Loewensberg also used closely related colors to create monochromatic works. A multi-color version is also featured which brings a sense of movement and energy both through the color scheme and by fragmenting the grid—a structuring system she would often play with.

Loewensberg didn't produce theoretical writings, and her preparatory sketches never reached the public realm. This may have been intended to avoid the essentialization of her work, particularly by a global and local art world that systematically marginalized female artists.



Installation view, 'Verena Loewensberg,' Hauser & Wirth London, 2025 © 2025 Verena Loewensberg Stiftung, Zurich. Photo: Alex Delfanne



Verena Loewensberg, Ohne Titel (Untitled), 1971 © 2025 Verena Loewensberg Stiftung, Zurich. Photo: Alex Delfanne

What other artists does his work relate to?

Max Bill (1908 – 1994) was a Swiss artist, architect, industrial designer, graphic designer and teacher.

Sonia Delaunay (1885 – 1979) was a French artist focused on painting, design and fashion.

Sophie Tauber – Arp (1889 – 1943) was a Swiss artist who defied categorization during her brief career as a painter, sculptor, architect, performer, choreographer, teacher, writer and designer of textiles, stage sets and interiors. She is considered a pioneer of Constructivist art.

Georges Vantongerloo (1886 – 1965) was a Belgian sculptor, painter and designer. He was a founding member of the De Stijl group.

Glossary

Chromatic

Relating to or produced by color.

Concrete art

An art movement focused on geometric abstraction and non-representational forms.

Essentialization

The act of reducing something down to its essence; to misrepresent something by oversimplifying its essence.

Minimalism

An art movement that emerged in the post-war era in Western art, focused on conceptual, non-representational forms.

Geometric abstraction

A form of abstract art that uses geometric shapes to portray non-objective compositions.

Color field

A style of abstract painting in which large portions of the canvas are covered with a single, flat color. The style emerged in New York City throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

Hard edge

A style of abstract painting that includes abrupt transitions between areas of color.

Supplementary research

[Hauser & Wirth: 'Verena Loewensberg. Kind of Blue'](#)

[Hauser & Wirth: 'Verena Loewensberg'](#)

[Hauser & Wirth: Curator Walkthrough: Lionel Bovier on 'Verena Loewensberg. Kind of Blue'](#)