

ARTFORUM

Sonia Delaunay

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS (MAM)
11 avenue du Président Wilson
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This comprehensive, chronological retrospective traces Sonia Delaunay's artistic trajectory over a diversity of media: paintings, decorative mosaics, gouaches, garments, tapestries. More than four hundred works showcase her expertise with shapes and color—a patchwork applied almost rhythmically. Odessa-born, St. Petersburg-raised, and Germany-trained, Delaunay arrived in Paris in 1906, where Fauvism and post-Impressionism were in vogue. The first galleries present her early portraits, executed in the style of the time. But intense, audacious color soon became the subject itself. Robert Delaunay, whom she married in 1910, introduced her to abstraction, yet she unquestionably repossessed the tropes as her own, both during their partnership (until his death in 1941) and through her own lifetime (until 1979). They collaborated regularly on productions, such as the Ballets Russes, for which Robert conceived the set decor and Sonia fashioned the costumes.

Concepts from painting were readily applied to other domains: Art was frontierless for Delaunay. This is evident in the epic, two-meter-long document for which she teamed with Blaise Cendrars in 1913, fusing his poetic verse with her resplendent flourishes. Graphic power and beauty are also celebrated in textile form: arguably the star medium of Delaunay's oeuvre. A magical room is dedicated to fabrics—vibrant, cheery, rich, chromatic—from swathes covered with squiggles and harlequin triangles to patterned silk bowties for Metz & Co (1933) to her striking embroidered wool coat made for Gloria Swanson (ca. 1924) to a set of striped beachwear (1928), including a matching tunic, shorts, bag, and parasol. Her "*robes simultanées*" (simultaneous dresses), orchestrated in thoughtful juxtapositions of color, were her signature. Created mainly between 1924 and 1925, they built upon the repertoire she'd established a few years prior with her Madrid-based boutique, Casa Sonia. The exhibition concludes with an assemblage of video clips. In televised interviews, Delaunay expressed the importance of being attuned to one's own "interior poetry" and confidently stated: "As long as I'm alive, I hope to be at the service of my mind."



Sonia Delaunay's coat for Gloria Swanson, ca. 1924, wool, embroidery.

— Sarah Moroz

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