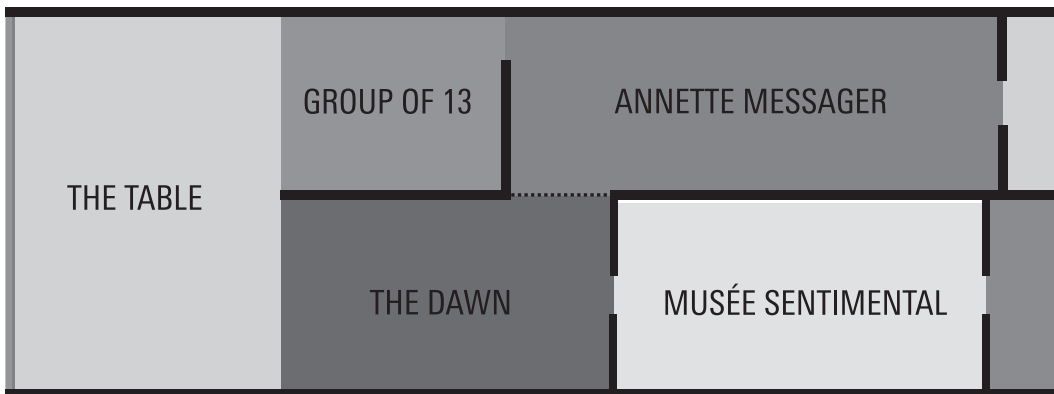


*LE MUSÉE  
SENTIMENTAL  
D'EVA AEPPLI*

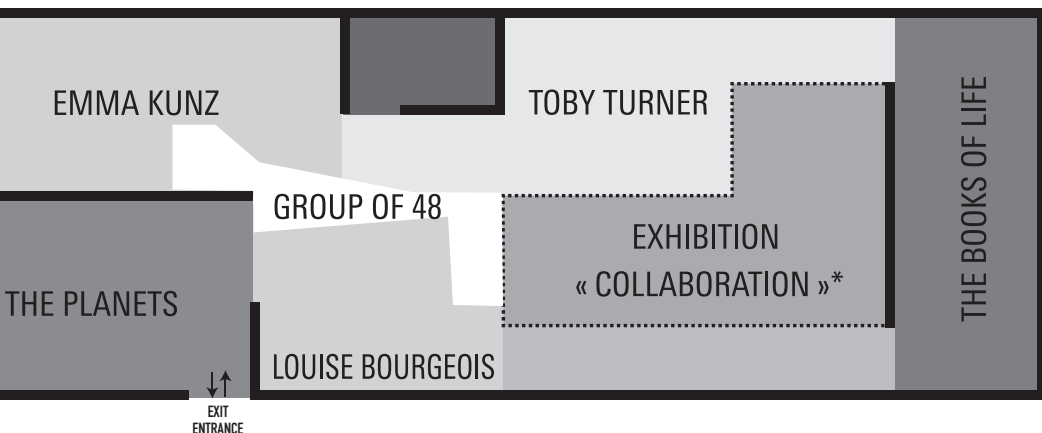


# GALERIE 1



The many visiting cards that Eva Aeppli (Zofingen, 1925 – Honfleur, 2015) gave to her friends – in which we discover she was a “Catologist”, an “Acrobat between Heaven and Earth” and a “Traffic Warden for Felines” – reveal the humour and imagination of this artist for whom the Centre Pompidou-Metz is organising her first retrospective exhibition in France.

Eva Aeppli grew up in Basel, where she followed the anthroposophical teachings of the Rudolf Steiner School. The trauma of the Second World War, which she experienced at first hand on the Swiss-German border, gave rise to her tireless quest for human dignity. She settled in France permanently in 1952 with Jean Tinguely, her husband at the time, and they later joined the artists’ colony in the impasse Ronsin, where Constantin Brancusi also lived. With her connections to the Paris



art world, Eva Aeppli developed loyal friendships and collaborations with artists of the time, such as Daniel Spoerri, Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Pierre Raynaud and Pontus Hultén. Nevertheless, she refused to join the movements in vogue at the time – Nouveau Réalisme, Pop Art and Abstraction Lyrique – creating a profoundly original body of work that culminated in the human-sized fabric sculptures.

Like the “Musée sentimental” created by Daniel Spoerri at the Centre Pompidou in 1977, the exhibition brings together “fetishistic relics of art”, from Brancusi’s nail clippers to Édith Piaf’s dress, creating a dialogue between Eva Aeppli’s works and those of her close circle, as well as contemporary art, which continues to examine her legacy. The exhibition experience resonates with Eva Aeppli’s expressionistic spirit.

*\* Be patient, the works come to life regularly.*



A question to ask or the desire to chat?  
Our facilitators are at your disposal.

# BIOGRAPHY

## 1925

Eva Aeppli is born on 2 May in Zofingen (Switzerland). Her father was a co-founder of the Steiner School in Basel and she attends classes there.

## 1939–1945

During the Second World War, Eva Aeppli's family takes in Jewish children. Between 1941 and 1943, Aeppli attends classes at the Basel design school (*Allgemeine Gewerbeschule*).

## 1946–1948

The traumatic experience of the war and the birth of her first child – Felix Leu, who would become a famous tattoo artist – leaves Eva Aeppli deeply distressed. The first drawings that she made at the Nyon psychiatric clinic have not survived.

## 1949–1951

Eva Aeppli and Jean Tinguely marry and their daughter Myriam is born. Eva sews small dolls that she sells in various shops to meet the household needs. She encounters Daniel Spoerri at a party in Basel and they become firm friends.

## 1952–1959

Eva Aeppli settles in France with Jean Tinguely. Her first exhibition in 1954, at the Galerie Maurice Hajje in Paris, marks the beginning of her most important work: the *Books of Life*. Eva and Jean join the artists' colony in the impasse Ronsin, where they share a studio from 1955.

## 1960

Eva Aeppli leaves Jean Tinguely, pushing him into the arms of Niki de Saint Phalle. The three artists would remain friends for the rest of their lives. That same year she marries the lawyer Samuel Mercer.

## **1961–1975**

Eva Aeppli devotes herself for several years to producing large oil paintings, before focusing on making human-sized fabric figures, which seem to have escaped from her canvases. Sometimes she assembles them in groups, of which the main ones are *The Table* (1965–67), the *Group of 13*, *Homage to Amnesty International* (1968) and the *Group of 48* (1969–70).

## **1976–1978**

Eva Aeppli completes the first cycle inspired by her passion for astrology: *The Planets*. After they are exhibited at the ARC in Paris, she discards the bodies and robes of ten of the sculptures, keeping only the heads and hands.

## **1979–1986**

*The Planets* are the first works that she has cast in bronze, followed by her other cycles of “heads” (*The Erinye*, the *Astrological Aspects* and the *Zodiac*). She installs them in the Garden of the Zodiac in Omaha (Nebraska), where her astrological works have been brought together.

## **1987**

She invites 100 friends and people she knows to join the “Universal Movement of Acrobats between Heaven and Earth”, by sending them a braid that she has made, to “rise higher in the sky and bring back the food that terrestrials need so badly”.

## **1993–1994**

Eva Aeppli produces her last cycle of sculptures, *Some Human Weaknesses*.

## **2002**

She completes her *Books of Life*, the culmination of her career, which occupied her for nearly 50 years and was her sole artistic activity around that time.

## **2015**

Two years after her husband Samuel Mercer, Eva Aeppli dies in Honfleur, where she spent the last fifteen years of her life.

This letter written in 1999 to Małgorzata Białoń-Treit, who was writing a thesis on her work, is Eva Aeppli's only statement about her work. It can serve as a touchstone as you wander around the exhibition exploring her art.

My dearest Malgós,

As promised, here is the letter explaining certain things about my work.

As we know only too well, errors that can be written about an artist's work tend to be endlessly repeated and end up creating false ideas. Most people (for example critics, etc.) are happy to read what has already been written about the artist instead of looking and thinking for themselves.

So this is what I have to say:

In the beginning, with the wool and fabric collages and puppets without strings, and then with the charcoal drawings, I expressed my personal feelings. You could say that these are often self-portraits in a way.



Eva Aeppli, impasse Ronsin, ca 1958  
Photography Hansjörg Stoecklin  
Musée Tinguely, Bâle

I reused the technique of the marionettes for the first three-dimensional figures, and in particular for "The Table" which I'll talk about further on.

Later, with the oil paintings, I began to express feelings and thoughts that were inspired by the human world around me.



Eva Aeppli in front of *Le Strip-Tease*, 1959. Photography Hansjörg Stoecklin. Musée Tinguely, Bâle

The three-dimensional figures are an extension of my oil paintings. You could say that they actually grew out of the paintings. There is an example with the "Group of Seven Figures" - or "The Judges" - in front of the painting "Dawn", which have been in the Ludwig collection in Germany for a long time.





*The Table, 1965-1967*

“The Table” occupies a special place in my work. It was the first of the groups that I created, but unlike the others, each figure is an individual (embroidered faces, various costumes). However, none of them have a name, unlike the individual figures that came before and after. And none of them are portraits of a real person, which I make from time to time.

In Western culture, thirteen people around a table evoke the Last Supper. But in my “Table”, you can’t recognise Christ or any of the apostles. The men and women brought together in it represent the human condition. And this is not, as has been said, a transposition of the danses macabres of the Middle Ages, in which you can see kings, bishops, good and bad people . . .

I placed death in the centre of this group of figures to show the crimes that have been committed in the 20th century. And this idea returns very frequently in my work (example The Judges).

Analysis of this work would rather be the message of the love and tolerance of Christ (who would normally be in the position of Death in this group) that has not entered the hearts of men.

The following period in my work, with the “Heads” - most of which were cast in bronze - is quite distinct from the previous ones. I took the technique further in order to express different human personalities.



In reality, this is an attempt to show the principles behind the human physiognomy.

To express the different physiognomic categories of the human head, I adopted the language of Astrology, which is essentially based on Greek mythology. I used this language, I chose it, because it makes it possible to describe different human personalities in a richer way than others.

It would be a mistake to believe that my work in bronze is a general illustration of astrology. It is of no importance to know if the human characteristic really corresponds to the conjunction of celestial bodies at a given moment and time. It is only important to know that in this language, certain qualities are attributed to each sign of the Zodiac as well as the planets. They are like algebraic symbols and other symbols that can be combined in an abstract way. It is a tool for thinking, virtual and unreal. In fact, an individual never corresponds to the qualities attributed to a single sign. Each individual can be described by a range of elements.



Eva Aeppli and *The Erinyes*. Photography Brigitte Helgoth. Gallery Samy Kinge, Paris



Eva Aeppli, textile sculpture from *Livre de vie* no. 8 (détail). Photography Heidi Meister. Soleure, Kunstmuseum Solothurn

What are called "the bronze astrological sculptures" were for me purely intellectual exercises. These bronze sculptures are not imbued with emotions like my previous works. Indeed, in so-called astrological sculpture, all thought is concentrated in the expression of the head; the body has become superfluous.

Dear Malgós, this is the skeleton of my work and your thesis.

Now buy some wool and knitting needles in order to knit around it.

Best wishes

Your Eva who loves you



Eva Aeppli in 1959. Photography Christer Strömholm

# VISITOR INFORMATION

## OPENING HOURS

Every day, except Tuesdays and 1st May

### 1st April to 31 October

Monday → Thursday: 10-18:00

Friday → Sunday: 10-19:00

### 1st November to 31 March

Monday → Sunday: 10-18:00

## TICKETS

On sale at desks and on-site

at Centre Pompidou-Metz

and [centrepompidou-metz.fr](http://centrepompidou-metz.fr), Digitick,

TicketNet and France Billet networks

## PASS-M and PASS-M Jeune

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## GROUP RESERVATIONS

Tel.: +33 (0)3 87 15 17 17

Email: [reservation@centrepompidou-metz.fr](mailto:reservation@centrepompidou-metz.fr)

## HANDICAP-ACCESSIBLE

Information:

[accessibilite@centrepompidou-metz.fr](mailto:accessibilite@centrepompidou-metz.fr)

## Centre Pompidou-Metz

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