

TITLE: The *Neue Frau* and the Significance of Beetle Imagery in the Photomontages of Hannah Höch

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Hannah Höch obscurely incorporated the image of a beetle into several of her photomontages. By analyzing three of her works, *Untitled* (c. 1920), *From Above* (c. 1922), and *The Coquette* (1923-25), I propose Höch's beetle to be a response to the archeological understanding of the Egyptian scarab's meaning of rebirth, which directly relates to the contemporary social phenomenon of the *neue Frau*, or New Woman. Thus, by removing the beetle from the focal points of these works, Höch represents the society's rejection of the *neue Frau* as well as the Berlin Dadaists' denial of her.

To evaluate the significance of these beetles, this paper examines the social constructs produced by the Weimar Republic, specifically the idea of the New Woman. The New Woman was epitomized by a financially independent woman who had no legal ties to a man. While this idea was glorified within the media, the average New Woman was generally ostracized and disdained.

By deconstructing the photomontages, this paper emphasizes the importance of the beetle and its correlation to the scarab based on visual comparisons to the dung beetle and Höch's ties to non-western art, including the ethnographic museums she was known to frequent. Reviewing Egyptian archeological records from the era reveals that the scarab was already associated with ideas of rebirth. By including the beetle within these compositions, Höch consciously makes the connection to the scarab's meaning of rebirth. Simultaneously, the female gender role is reborn within German society. Therefore, the beetle is directly correlated to the New Woman.

It is important to note the obscure fashion in which Höch incorporates the beetle. While the beetle is never directly hidden, it generally exists outside of the central arrangement. This subordination of the beetle to the often male imagery reflects the unrealized ideal of the New Woman. Höch fit the mold for the New Woman, yet nonetheless was scorned by her male counterparts within the Dadaist group. Therefore, the beetle not only represents the idea of the New Woman, but also stands as a self-representation of Höch.

Key Words: Hannah Höch, Beetle, Neue Frau, New Woman, Scarab