

Ditha Moser (née Editha Mautner von Markhof; Austrian. 1883–1969)
Deck of “Sezessions-Tarock” (Secession Tarot) cards, Vienna: Albert Berger and Josef Glanz, 1906
Full set of fifty-four cards. Each: lithograph, 4 1/2 x 2” (11.6 x 5.5 cm)

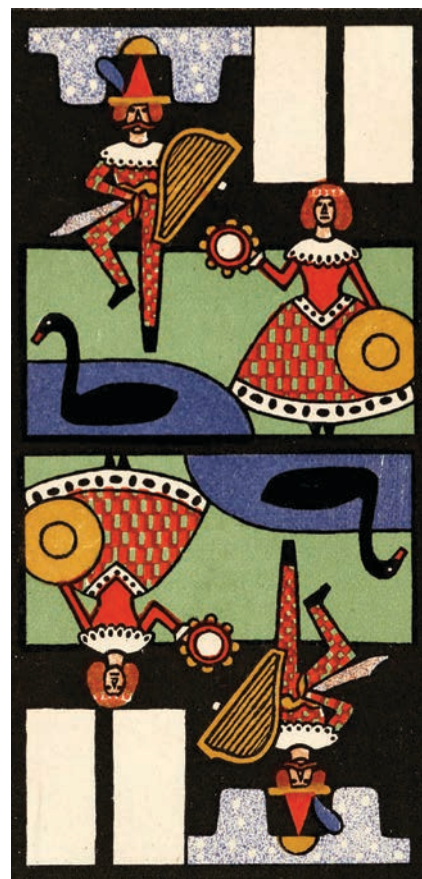
This hybrid deck comprises the four suits of regular playing cards (hearts, clubs, diamonds, and spades), plus an extra “suit” based on the iconography of the traditional tarot deck (twenty-one cards marked I-XXI). The front and back of the first tarot card is reproduced at right. Images of the full set of fifty-four cards are pictured below.

Title: The colophon that apparently accompanied some copies of the deck (though not ours) simply noted designer (Moser) and producer (Berger and Glanz). The slightly misleading title “Sezessions-Tarock” was coined by Ludwig von Hevesi in his article on the set, “Sezessions-Tarock” *Fremden-Blatt*, no. 1 (January 1, 1907).

Production: The cards were printed by Albert Berger and then varnished, cut, and collated, and packaged by Josef Glanz. The printing process involved repeating the square grid on both the back and face sides of the cards, then the imagery on the face side was overprinted.

Edition: It is unclear how many copies were printed, some sources estimate 300, others only 100. Original designs for the set are in the collection of Museum für Angewandte Kunst (MAK; Museum of Applied Art), Vienna.

Reprint: Moser’s deck was reprinted as “Jugendstil-Tarock” by Platnik Edition, Vienna in 1972 and again in 1982. The reprint includes a detailed commentary volume, edited by Ernst Rudolf Ragg, summarized here.

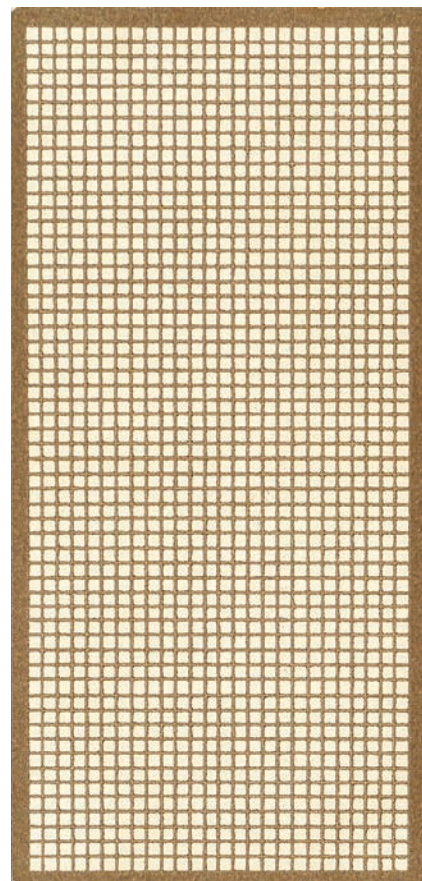


Moser’s 1906 deck of “Sezessions-Tarock” (Secession Tarot) cards was produced as a Christmas offering for friends. Proceeds from the sale of the cards are said to have been intended to benefit a Viennese orphanage at Christmas time. By combining traditional playing cards and tarot cards, the artist created a new hybrid set. As a result, the deck was difficult to use, and the pack was more likely considered an unusual and attractive novelty.

The cards depict toy wooden soldiers partaking of events and impressions experienced by the families of Ditha and her husband Koloman Moser. Moser’s flattened, childlike visual style broke with established rules of perspective and academic tradition. The designs are characteristic of Jugendstil, the German and Austrian counterpart to Art Nouveau.

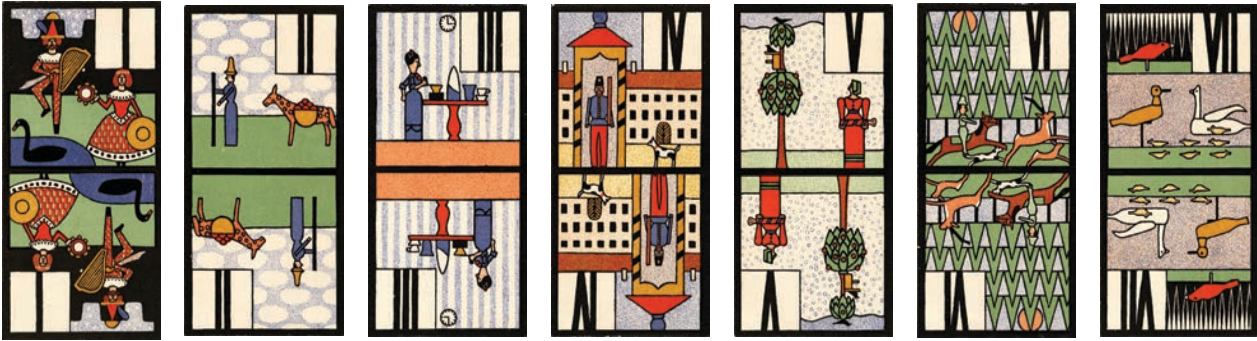
Moser’s cards are intricately linked to the aesthetics of untutored children’s drawings and folk art in both concept and style. They are reminiscent of the toys brought as presents for the Mautner von Markhof family by Josef Hoffmann. Ditha was inspired by the primitive rawness and stylized forms of these toys. Defining characteristics of her Jugendstil-style cards were bold primary colors, expressive contrast patterns, rigid black outlines evoking mosaic or stained glass, negation of spatial perspective, stiffly posed figures, and the reduction of motifs to the essential.

Beside including the imagery of toy soldiers throughout the deck, Moser was further influenced by a family story surrounding the 1881 golden wedding anniversary of Adolf Ignaz and Marcelline Mautner Markhof, who are said to have had at least seventy-two grandchildren. At the couple’s anniversary celebration, each of the grandchildren was dressed as a different tarock card and the game was played with living figures.



Actual size

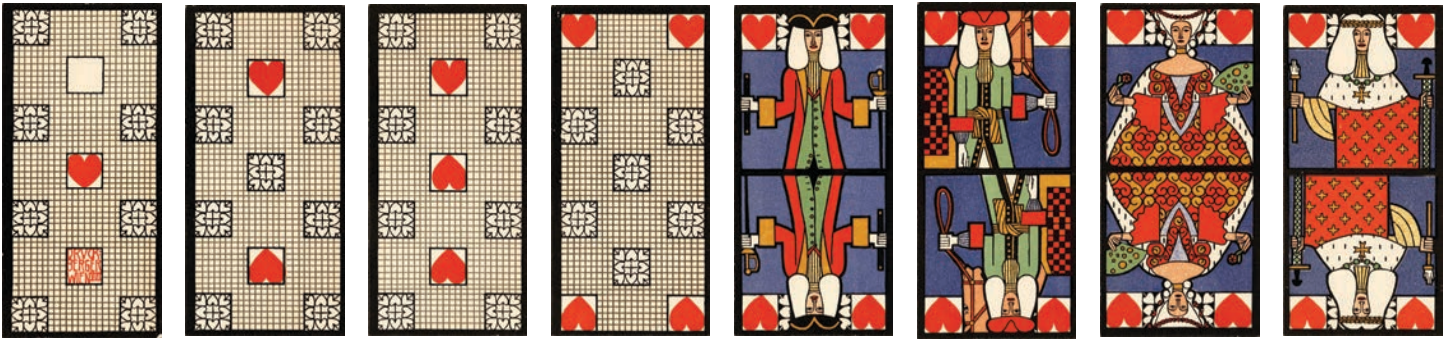
Tarock (Tarot) cards I-XXI



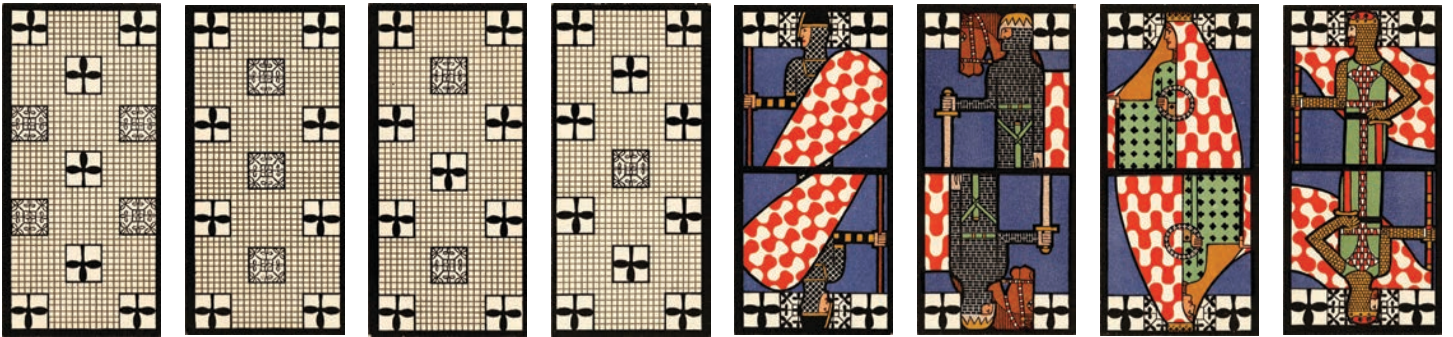
Joker



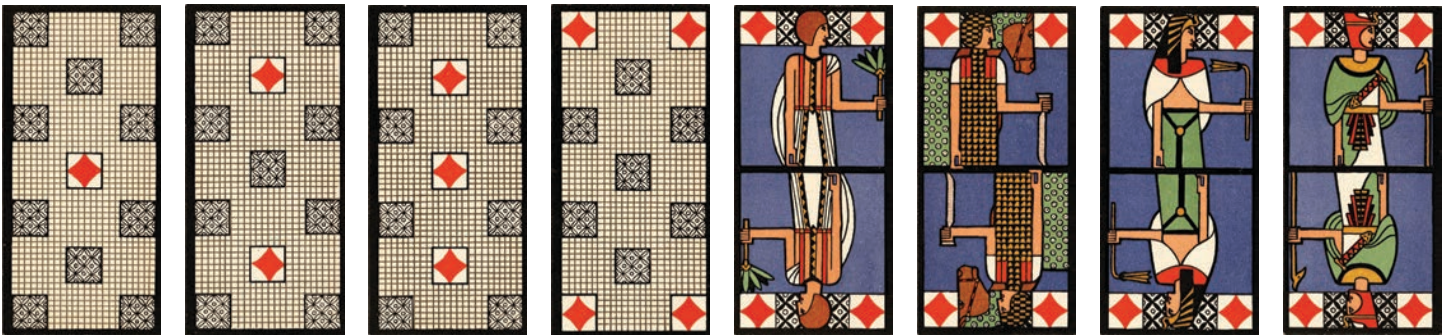
Suits



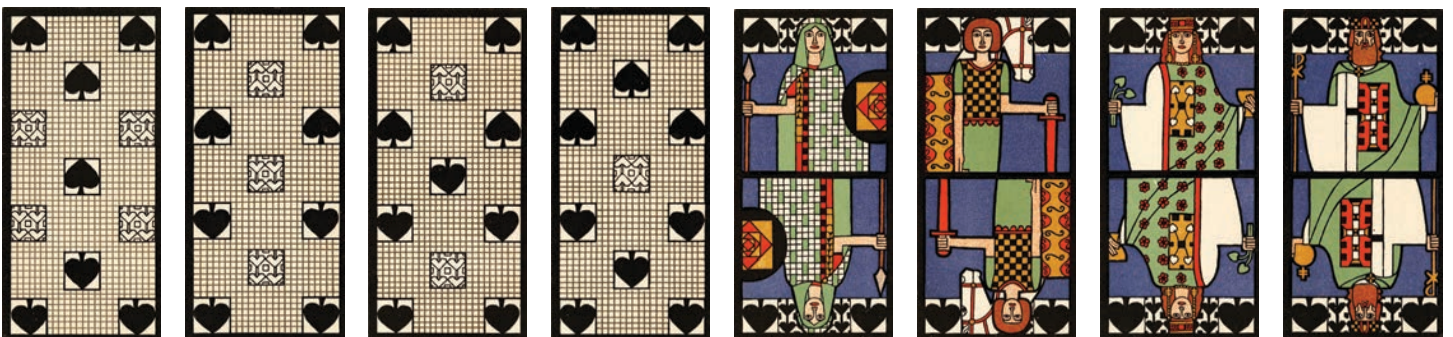
Hearts



Clubs



Diamonds



Spades