

# CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

## HONOUR CROSS OF GERMAN MOTHERS

Bronze and enamel

H 4, 5 x W 3, 5 cm

MAHR20163259

The *Ehrenkreuz der deutschen Mutter* (Honour Cross of the German Mother), commonly known as *Mutterkreuz*, Mother's Cross, was created in 1938, by Adolf Hitler. His intention was to encourage birth, being this a preparation measure for the war and population growth. Along with eugenics and the use of the sterilization for the racially "unwanted", it points to the great attention of the Nazis to the biological nation's well-being.

It was a long cross, blue gazed and with a white contour, to be hang at the neck. In the middle, it had a circle with a black glazed swastika, framed by the words *Der Deutschen Mutter* (To the German Mother), surrounded by several golden rays.

In the backside, the medal creation date – 1938, December 16th – and Hitler's signature were engraved. Some would call it, in a scornful way, the *Kaninchenorden*, "Rabbit's Order".

At a first glance, the criteria to award the *Mutterkreuz* were perfectly maternal: it had three classes – bronze, silver and gold – for the women with four, six and eight or more children. There even was a golden medal, studded with diamonds, awarded to a small number of women, who had twelve to fourteen children. The conditions for awarding, however, would reflect the Nazis' racist and social prejudices: Jews and Gipsies were not eligible and the awarded German women and their husbands as well, had to be of Aryan origin and could not show any signs of hereditary diseases. Other mandatory aspects to be awarded the medal implied that both members of the couple should deserve the award, meaning that they should be faithful to each other, hard workers and present solid moral principles. The investigation about the candidate's eligibility was exhaustive and around 5% of the candidates were refused.

The first awarded, at May 21th, 1939, was Louise Weidenfeller, aged 61, from Munich, who had raised eight kids and she received the golden *Mutterkreuz*. In the following years, accordingly to an estimate, more than four millions of Germans received the medal in ceremonies that were programmed by local Nazi Party leaders and usually scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup> of August (Hitler's mother birthday) or for the second Sunday of May (Mother's Day).

The awarded would know a preferential treatment, not just from the Nazi State but also from their compatriots: the boys from Hitlerian Youth were forced to salute them and a formal order granted them some privileges identical to those granted to the war injuries.