

Places

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The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—
from our founding in 1929 to the present—is
available online. It includes exhibition catalogues,
primary documents, installation views, and an
index of participating artists.

PIAQUES



modernstarts comprises three exhibitions principally devoted to the visual arts in the period 1880–1920 and drawn from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. This is the period in which the modern—that is to say, modern art—starts, insofar as the Museum's collection is mainly concerned. And it is a period of many modern starts, many different beginnings or initiatives, the most influential of which are represented in these exhibitions.

PEOPLE is devoted to the representation of the human figure; **PLACES** to particular parts of space, represented or real; and **THINGS** to objects, again both represented and real. All three exhibitions include selected works of art made after 1920, including contemporary works, in order to demonstrate the persistence of ideas and themes broached in the period of *ModernStarts*.

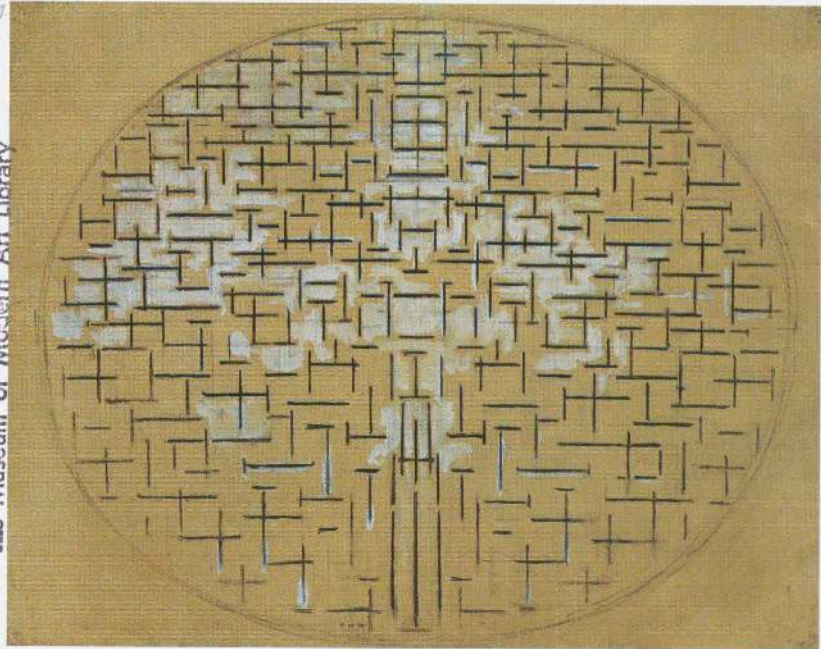
PLACES has eight parts, as described in this brochure, which is an invitation to see selected works of art in these installations indicated by the  icon on the wall labels.

The cover illustration shows André Derain's *Bridge over the Riou* (1906) which is exhibited in the installation *Changing Visions: French Landscape, 1880–1920* in **PLACES**. The picture depicts a landscape in the Mediterranean village of L'Estaque where Derain spent the summer in 1906. Drawn by the intensity of the brilliant light and local color, Derain transformed the trees, rocks, and architecture into a canvas of wild colors. Other artists also visited L'Estaque, including Paul Cézanne and Georges Braque whose landscapes of the area are also on view in the exhibition. These works and others illustrate the dynamic relationship between landscape as painting and landscape as place—a crucial issue that colors our perception of the environment.

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The Museum of Modern Art Library



Piet Mondrian. *Pier and Ocean 5*. 1915. Charcoal and white gouache on buff paper, 34% x 44" (87.9 x 111.8 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

Places is an exhibition about how particular sections of space, both real and imaginary, were conceived and represented in the period 1880–1920. With respect to depictions of places, this forty-year period divides roughly into two. The first twenty years are dominated by pictures of the country; the second twenty years by depictions of the city. In practice, though, the situation is not as simple as this division makes it seem.

Piet Mondrian's *Pier and Ocean 5* was made in 1915, therefore, in the second half of this period. It was inspired by his experience of walking at night on the beach at Domburg, on the North Sea coast of the Netherlands, and seeing the stars reflected in the water. Mondrian reduced the ocean's waves and reflections into a pattern of vertical and horizontal lines, and the pier leads up vertically at the bottom of the painting from our view "above" the scene. Since nature itself is not geometrical in this way, it seems reasonable to assume that this account of it is informed by an urban experience, that the "country" is being viewed through city eyes and with a city vocabulary. This is, in fact, the case. Mondrian had been living in Paris,

where he had been painting the building facades in a style influenced by the Cubism of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, which was itself a style formed in the city and devoted to the urban environment. At the same time, *Pier and Ocean*⁵ shows how a city viewpoint and language have been extended through the experience of open vistas, an experience largely unavailable to people living in cities. There is a sense of unboundedness to this work, which would have been even more evident before the color of the paper faded from white to brown, causing Mondrian's white-out corrections to interrupt the overall pattern of the surface.

Umberto Boccioni's *The City Rises* was painted in 1910, five years before the Mondrian. If Mondrian's work shows an abstracted version of something organic in an urban vocabulary, then Boccioni's shows an abstracted version of something urban in an organic vocabulary. The bustle and the struggle of city life—the crowds, buildings, steam engine, and enormous red horse galloping into the construction site in the foreground—are conveyed in energetic, swirling forms derived from the organic patterns of nature. Given that the ocean has been used as a metaphor to describe the ebb and flow of busy crowds in the city, Boccioni's painting is more like an ocean, in this respect, than Mondrian's.



Umberto Boccioni. *The City Rises*. 1910. Oil on canvas, 6'6½" x 9'10½" (199.4 x 301 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

THE ARMORY SHOW



"As Seen by Photographer and Cubist." Newspaper clipping from *The New York Times*, Sunday, May 11, 1913. In *Modern Art in America, 1912-1941*. . . A Scrapbook of Newspaper Clippings by Aline Farrelly. c. 1940. The Museum of Modern Art Library

These two images of a young Parisian actress confronted the reader of the Sunday *New York Times* in May 1913. In the photograph at left, the woman appears formally posed, as for a traditional portrait, in her early spring dress. Though we know little about the actress (there is no related text), we glimpse her personality in a slight smile and open stance. We sense lightness in the pale frills of her dress and the arc of feathers in her wide-brimmed hat. A similar feeling is conveyed in the unidentified painting at right, but without directly representing the actress. Again one senses lightness, openness, and feathery edges; again the eye is drawn upward to a cluster of curves at the top of the image.

These images reference an exhibition that confronted viewers in a very similar way. The 1913 *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, best known as *The Armory Show*, was organized by American artists eager to view the "new spirit" of European avant-garde art. Installed in a newly constructed armory in downtown New York City, the exhibition juxtaposed representation and abstraction, tradition and the avant-garde, America and Europe, old century and new. *The Armory Show* helped to displace traditional notions about what art can be, a debate that continues today.

LANDSCAPE AS RETREAT: GAUGUIN TO NOLDE



Edvard Munch. *Evening (Melancholy: On the Beach)*. 1896. Woodcut, comp.: 16^{15/16} x 20^{15/16}" (43 x 53.3 cm). Edition: approx. 50. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund



Max Pechstein. *Hunting Game* from the journal *Der Sturm*. 1911, published 1912. Woodcut, comp.: 8^{7/8} x 10^{13/16}" (22.6 x 25.9 cm). Publisher: *Der Sturm*, Berlin. Edition: 100. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase

Many artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries disparaged the processes of modernization and industrialization then occurring in European society. Fleeing the commercial urban centers for rural, even exotic locales, they sought a more direct, authentic expression and a greater unity with nature. Their art, however, often reveals a murky ambivalence to these polarities of city and country as they carried their "modern" influences to their remote retreats and created sophisticated, "civilized" images of unrefined nature.

To evoke the natural world with greater spontaneity and honesty, many artists, from Post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin to the radical German Expressionist group *Die Brücke*, turned to the simplified, often crude vocabulary of printmaking, woodcut in particular. Norwegian Edvard Munch followed Gauguin's innovations with the medium and revolutionized the approach to the woodcut. Munch's inventive technique in *Evening (Melancholy: On the Beach)* involved carving the woodblock into several pieces with a jigsaw, inking the various pieces in their appropriate colors, and reassembling the puzzle for printing. The resulting "parts" and "wholes" of the composition firmly root the figure on the beach in one block, and physically detach him from the block depicting the sea with the couple on a boat in the distance. In fact the work depicts his friend, Danish art critic Jappe Nilssen, sitting despondently on a beach as his paramour departs with her husband by boat in the far distance. Munch set the scene on the rocky coastline of Åsgårdstrand, the small town on the Oslo fjord where he spent summers, and transformed his friend's plight into a universal image about the melancholy brought on by ill-fated love.

The young rebellious artists of the *Brücke* group, including Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel, and Max Pechstein, made frequent communal escapes from the city with their models to the Moritzburg lakes outside Dresden to swim, sunbathe, and sketch in the nude. In the color woodcut *Hunting Game* Pechstein seeks to express the group's unity with nature by echoing the curves of the women's bodies in those of the tree and the russet earth. This depiction of an Arcadian sojourn actually derives from an African bronze relief in a local ethnological museum, an artifact no doubt chosen for its primitive, anti-urban connotations. However, it also makes clear that these seemingly unposed representations of frolicking nudes in the landscape, in fact, evidence a highly cultivated spontaneity.

HECTOR GUIMARD AND THE ART NOUVEAU INTERIOR

The French painter Paul Signac, one of the first occupants of Hector Guimard's fantastic Castel Béranger apartment building in Paris, wrote to the art critic Félix Fénéon: "Do you know that in the house we are going to have our nest—'Eccentric House' for the passersby but gay, practical, and bright for the tenants—there is even a telephone!" He also invited Fénéon to visit soon: "the blue staircase will amuse you."

The staircase, as seen in this photographic print from a portfolio documenting the Castel Béranger, is characteristic of the bold "new art" that drew inspiration from the "vitalist" forms of nature. The all-over quality of the irregular, curvilinear forms and ornament that spreads so effortlessly from one medium and surface to another—from wall to floor to carpet to banister—creates a total work of art.



Hector Guimard. *Le Castel Béranger*. Staircase, detail. 1898. Collotype and pochoir, 17 x 12½" (43 x 32 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Lillian Nassau



Hector Guimard. Side Table. c. 1904–07. Pear wood, 29 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (79.9 x 52.1 x 45.6 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mme Hector Guimard

Guimard was one of the most original designers of the quintessentially urban and cosmopolitan style in France known as Art Nouveau. He consciously aimed to modernize all aspects of design; every detail of his buildings and their furnishings is infused with his idiosyncratic vision, which the public not surprisingly considered "eccentric." Guimard created phantasmagorical interiors that evoked the natural world and were a place of retreat not only from quotidian urban realities, but also an antidote to the plethora of historical revival styles.

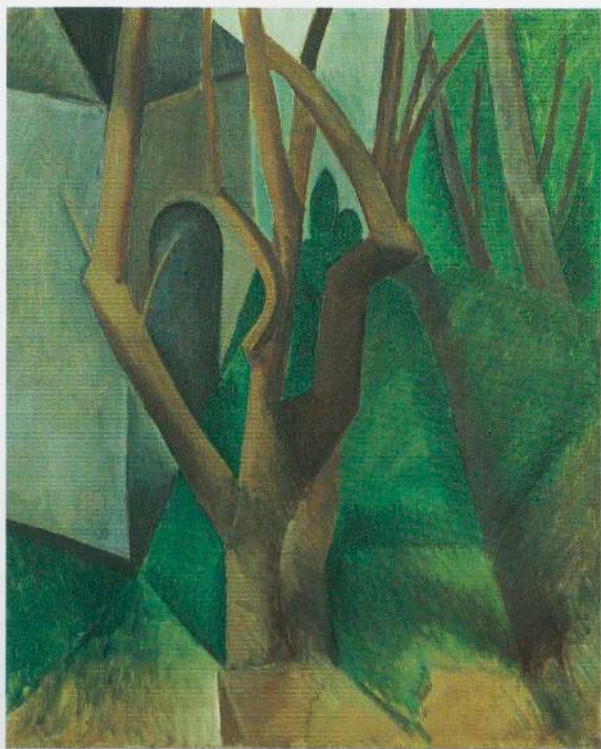
It is significant that Guimard once described the act of design as sculpting, which suggests that wood, cast iron, and other materials were molded and shaped in a manner that makes us fully aware of the artist's expressive hand. The legs and overall contours of the wood Side Table, for example, suggest femurs and other skeletal forms. As in all his work, he eschewed the regularity of the right angle in favor of exuberantly curved, biomorphic abstractions that tread carefully between symmetry and asymmetry.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Guimard unabashedly preferred what he called feminine taste. With a preponderance of swelling curvatures, many of the formal qualities of Art Nouveau have a decidedly "feminine" character, as exemplified in images of the femme fatale, whose erotic locks of wispy hair and flowing dress permeate the art of the period. The Dionysian fervor and exploration of psychological states and emotions complements the sense of interior retreat in the Art Nouveau environment.

CHANGING VISIONS: FRENCH LANDSCAPE, 1880–1920

Between 1880 and 1920 landscape painting became the principal mode of expression for some modernist painters. As travel was made easier by the growth of a dense network of railroads, artists and tourists alike were able to journey more easily through France, discovering new regions and new motifs, often in an effort to escape the chaotic life in Paris. The varied character of the French regions provided artists with an appropriate subject with which to experiment using early modern painting styles, push the limits of representation, and explore varied modes of personal expression.

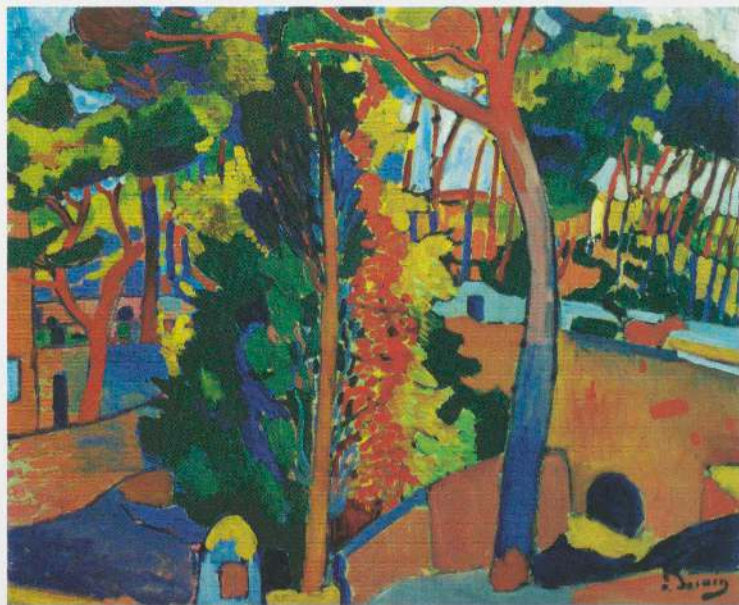
Pablo Picasso's *Landscape* and André Derain's *Bridge over the Riou* testify to the essential role played by landscape painting in the development of modern art. In 1908 Picasso left Paris after a period of illness.



Pablo Picasso. *Landscape*. 1908. Oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 32" (100.8 x 81.3 cm).
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller

He settled with his lover Fernande Olivier for a few months in a small village north of Paris along the Oise River called Rue-des-Bois. The village's only street was bordered on one side by houses and on the other by the ancient forest of Halatte. In his depiction of these immediate surroundings Picasso was not truly concerned with the town's actual layout. Rather, his picture manifests his struggle with how to deal with expressions of space using simplified forms. The result was a painting that captured the tranquil atmosphere of the rural village while it tackled a new visual language.

In 1906 Derain settled in L'Estaque, a town near Marseilles, which had undergone a rapid transformation due to the development of the chemical industry, and because of tourism. In *Bridge over the Riou* Derain imposed a strong and varied rhythm of verticals and diagonals. But compared to the Picasso, most noticeable is Derain's choice of vibrant colors to represent lights and darks—bright orange for light and deep blue for shadow—instead of simply employing different tones or shades of the same paint. The resulting image captures the strong heat and bright light of the South of France.



André Derain. *Bridge over the Riou*. 1906. Oil on canvas, 32½" x 40" (82.5 x 101.6 cm).
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The William S. Paley Collection

RISE OF THE MODERN WORLD

During the Age of Industrialization, the great inventions and advances in technology—telephone and radio communication, transportation, and progress in medical science—offered promises for a better future, promises in stark contrast to the toll these technologies often took on human lives. In Europe and the United States at the turn of the century, people moved from the countryside into cities to work in new factories, building and serving new industries while suffering great hardships. Additionally, the U.S. received a major influx of European immigrants, a wave of displaced laborers who endured low wages and terrible living conditions.

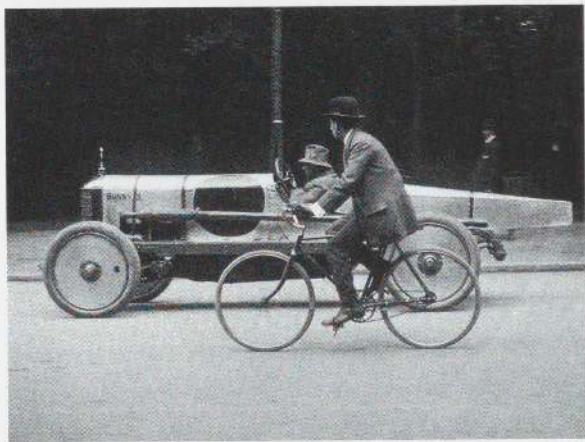
Jacob Riis, a New York journalist who worked for the *New York Tribune* and the *Evening Sun*, became a photographer in order to expose the everyday misery of the despairing and often unseen poor. Riis's book *How the Other Half Lives* was published in 1890 and remains a landmark in the documentation of social justice. In *Rise of the Modern World*, Riis's photograph titled "I Scrubs"—*Katie Who Keeps House in West Forty-Ninth Street* shows a diminutive girl selected and photographed by Riis. Her sorrowful expression and exposed hands (those which do the scrubbing) dominate the picture. Riis customarily interviewed his subjects; the following account of his encounter with Katie was published in *The Children of the Poor* in 1892:

"What kind of work do you do?" I asked. "I scrubs," she replied promptly, and her look guaranteed that what she scrubbed came out clean. Katie was one of the little mothers whose work never ends. Very early the cross of her sex had been laid upon the little shoulders that bore it so stoutly. On the top floor of the tenement . . . she was keeping house for her older sister and two brothers, all of whom worked. Katie . . . scrubbed and swept and went to school all as a matter of course and ran the house generally with an occasional lift from the neighbors, who were poorer than they. . . ."

In contrast, Jacques-Henri Lartigue's serendipitous photograph *Paris, avenue des Acacias* shows an early automobile (cutely named Bunny III) and a bicycle—a race between the old and the new, with the new inexorably winning. The automobile driver bears steadily ahead as the cyclist helplessly watches him pass. The picture carries a comic aspect, a gentle joke acknowledging our unceasing vulnerability in the face of the onrush of progress.



Jacob Riis. "I Scrubs"—*Katie Who Keeps House in West Forty-Ninth Street*. c. 1890. Gelatin silver print, 4 x 5" (10.2 x 12.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Courtesy of The Museum of the City of New York



Jacques-Henri Lartigue. *Paris, avenue des Acacias*. 1912. Gelatin silver print, 11 1/4 x 15 1/2" (29.8 x 39.4 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the photographer

Lartigue began photographing at age eleven, taking pictures of his wealthy family and friends, a leisure class enjoying the pleasures of "modern" Paris. When he took this picture at age eighteen, he may have found this spontaneous juxtaposition merely amusing. Surely, there was no way to anticipate that by 1917—just five years later—with the invention of the assembly line, Henry Ford would produce his millionth car, or that the proliferation of these cars would forever change the landscapes and lives documented by Lartigue's camera.

The acknowledgment through photography of the price paid by some for the benefit of many was one of the multiple uses of the medium during the Age of Industrialization.

UNREAL CITY

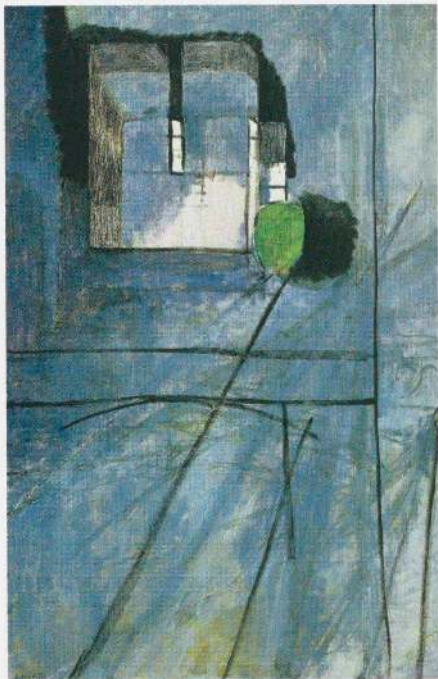


Giorgio de Chirico, *Gare Montparnasse (The Melancholy of Departure)*. 1914. Oil on canvas, 55½ x 66" (140 x 184.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of James Thrall Soby

The art created in Paris around the time of World War I is characterized by instability and visual disorientation. The Great War rendered the world unreal: the French landscape was torn asunder by relentless trench warfare, a population was uprooted, and the once familiar was made unrecognizable. The astounding physical destruction of the war fostered a sense of insecurity and loss of confidence in the way the world was perceived.

The wartime era was witness to artistic representations expressed in an urban context that embodied the crisis in confidence of the period. As expressed by Fernand Léger in 1914: "A new criterion has appeared in response to a new state of things. Innumerable examples of rupture and change crop up unexpectedly in our visual awareness." Paris sustained concurrent yet vastly different responses to this "new criterion," evidenced in abstract renderings of the metropolis created in 1914.

One of the consequences of the visual disorientation that took place around the beginning of the war was the challenge to the authority of



Henri Matisse. *View of Notre Dame*. 1914. Oil on canvas, 58 x 37½" (147.3 x 94.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest and the Henry H. L. A. Conger Goodyear, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sinclair Funds, and the Anna Erickson Levene Bequest given in memory of her husband, Dr. Phoebus Aaron Theodor Levene

vision, as those who were witness to its destruction literally "could not believe their eyes." In painting, this rupture prompted a return to perspective with the sole purpose of subverting its system of rational organization. Two such examples include Henri Matisse's *View of Notre Dame* and Giorgio de Chirico's *Gare Montparnasse (The Melancholy of Departure)*.

In *View of Notre Dame*, the window, street, cathedral, and recession of space, are economically inscribed, schematically demarcating the view from Matisse's studio. The strong black lines lead our eye back into the picture yet simultaneously call the space they define into question through

their expressive gesture and uncertain function.

De Chirico also deliberately manipulates perspective, obscuring and dramatically exaggerating its illusionistic strategies. Created in his studio near the Gare Montparnasse, the painting's foreboding shadowed passages and eerily elongated street emphasize the uncanny desolation of an abandoned city and its deserted train station. Perspective is used to create what seems to be a plausible notion of reality, but closer inspection shows a very puzzling scene whose composition is illogical.

Although these images and many of those represented in the *Unreal City* installation do not illustrate contemporary events, their pictorial strategies integrate the challenges to security and structure presented by the wartime period and respond to the need for a new language that could represent this unreal world.

MARIA FERNANDA CARDOSO

In the 1880–1920 period of *ModernStarts*, representations of places reflected, first, an escapist attraction to the countryside and, second, the forms of the modern city. But the countryside was often viewed through city eyes, while images of the city reflected vocabularies of expression inherited from the rural past. Thus, country and city were intimately entwined in the early modern period.

Maria Fernanda Cardoso's 1992 installation *Cementerio—Vertical Garden*, in the Garden Hall, offers a representation of nature in plastic, a vertical "garden" planted with industrially produced components. With clusters of plastic lilies emerging out of a wall marked with subtle pencil drawings of arches, this is a garden that never decays. The work also refers to a cemetery, specifically to cemeteries traditional to Latin America and Southern Europe, whose gravestones often have arched niches for vases of artificial flowers. This work is presented as an introduction to *Places* not only for its poetic, unashamedly beautiful evocation of the theme of the idealized garden, but also for its specific combination of natural imagery with the industrial and mass-produced. It stands as a contemporary extension of the motifs of country and city that dominates the early modern period, and this present exhibition.

Maria Fernanda Cardoso. *Cementerio—Vertical Garden*. 1992. Artificial flowers and pencil on wall, dimensions variable; 11'7" high x 112' wide (353.1 cm high x 3,413.8 cm wide) in current installation. Collection the artist



PUBLIC PROGRAMS

For information about Brown Bag Lunch Lectures, Conversations with Contemporary Artists, Adult Courses, and other special exhibition programs being held in conjunction with the exhibition *ModernStarts* please refer to the Museum Web site at www.moma.org, or you may visit The Edward John Noble Education Center. For further information about Public Programs, please call the Department of Education at 212 708-9781.

PUBLICATIONS

ModernStarts: People, Places, Things. Edited by John Elderfield, Peter Reed, Mary Chan, María del Carmen González. 360 pages. 9½ x 12". 456 illustrations, including 235 in color. \$55.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.

Body Language. By M. Darsie Alexander, Mary Chan, Starr Figura, Sarah Ganz, María del Carmen González; introduction by John Elderfield. 144 pages. 7 x 10". 115 illustrations, including 51 in color and 64 in duotone. \$24.95 paper; \$19.95 in The MoMA Book Store.

French Landscapes: The Modern Vision 1880–1920. By Magdalena Dabrowski. 144 pages. 9½ x 11½". 136 illustrations, including 45 in color and 28 in duotone. \$24.95 paper; \$19.95 in The MoMA Book Store.

Viewers with the *ModernStarts* catalogue at hand should know that the contents of the exhibitions that comprise PLACES vary somewhat from the contents of the similarly named chapters in the PLACES section of the catalogue; one of the chapters in the catalogue does not have a corresponding installation. These alterations have been made because what works best in the layout of a catalogue and of an exhibition are not necessarily the same, and because we wanted to emphasize the interrelatability of the themes presented in both.

This brochure was written by Véronique Burke (*Changing Visions: French Landscape*), John Elderfield (*Seasons and Moments*), Sarah Ganz (*Unreal City*), María del Carmen González (*María Fernanda Cardoso*), Susan Kismaric (*Rise of the Modern World*), Peter Reed (*Hector Guimard*), Jenny Tobias (*The Armory Show*), and Wendy Weitman (*Landscape as Retreat*). *ModernStarts* was conceived and organized by John Elderfield and Peter Reed with Mary Chan and María del Carmen González. Elizabeth Levine replaced Mary Chan in the final few months of the project. Administrative support was provided by Sharon Dec and George Bareford.

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modernstarts | PLACES

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