

The Museum of Modern Art Archives

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

LÉGER

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The Museum of Modern Art Archives was established in 1987 by resolution of the Board of Trustees as an independent Museum program to preserve and make accessible the Museum's historical records to Museum staff, outside scholars, and researchers. Additionally, the Museum Archives is the custodian of primary source material and other historical documentation related to the history of twentieth-century art. Documents in this exhibition, on view February 26 through May 12, 1998, were selected by the Museum Archives staff from the holdings of the Museum Archives for display in conjunction with the current exhibition *Fernand Léger*.

1. Lecture; photograph

Translation in English by Harold Rosenberg of the lecture *The New Realism* presented by Léger at the time of the retrospective, *Fernand Léger: Paintings and Drawings*, September 30, 1935 to October 24, 1935; published in *Art Front*, December 1935. Photograph of Léger, "Seated Cubist," published in *Vanity Fair*, November, 1935.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Public Information Scrapbook #22.

2. Photograph

At the time of the 1935 Léger retrospective, the Museum was located in a five-story townhouse at 11 West 53 Street, leased to the Museum from May 1932 until June 1937 by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The mobile by Alexander Calder, served to announce a later exhibition in 1936, *Cubism and Abstract Art* in which five works by Léger were included.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Slide Collection.

3. Newsclipping

An article based on an interview with Léger, *New York Herald Tribune*, October 5, 1935.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: A. Conger Goodyear Scrapbook #36. A. Conger Goodyear (1877-1964), was President of The Museum of Modern Art, 1929-1939.

4. Typescript notes

Summary in English of Léger's lecture on *The New Realism*, delivered at MoMA on October 4, 1935.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, X.38. Alfred H. Barr, Jr. (1902-1981) was the founding Director of the Museum until 1943 when he was named Advisory Director. In 1944, Barr was appointed Director of Research in Painting and Sculpture. From 1947 until his retirement in 1967, Barr was the Director of Museum Collections.

5. Invitation

The Museum of Modern Art Film Library sponsored a program on October 18, 1935, which included a screening of *Ballet mécanique* and a lecture by Léger in French on *Painting and Advance Guard Films*.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Alan R. Blackburn, Jr. Papers, Scrapbook #1. Blackburn held several positions from 1932 through 1934: Assistant Treasurer, Executive Secretary and Executive Director.

6. Photographs

Film stills from Léger's *Ballet mécanique*, screened at MoMA on October 18, 1935. This film is being screened in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater I Lobby in conjunction with the current *Fernand Léger* exhibition.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, X.38.

7. Financial ledger

\$300.00 was provided by A. Conger Goodyear for the Museum's 1936 purchase of Léger's *Breakfast*.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: General Ledger, December 1929 – June 1940.

8. Guestbook

Léger visited the Museum on the occasion of his 1935 retrospective and signed the Museum Guestbook. His signature is the second from the bottom on the left-hand side of the left page. From this Guestbook, on an earlier page, we learn that Léger's first visit to the Museum was in 1931 when he viewed *Henri Matisse*, November 2, 1931- December 6, 1931, the first exhibition that The Museum of Modern Art devoted to a foreign artist.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Museum Guestbook, 1929-1944.

9. Attendance ledger

9,374 people visited the Museum during the 1935 Léger retrospective.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Attendance Records for Exhibitions, November, 1929 – April, 1936.

10. ALS Fernand Léger – Léonce Rosenberg, August 23, 1918

Léger expresses excitement about his acrobats and writes about “un projet de cirque énorme [a plan for a huge circus]... vera-t-il le jour? [will it ever see the light of day?]”.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Léonce Rosenberg Papers. Rosenberg (1879-1947) was Léger's most important dealer in the 1910s and 1920s.

11. TLS Katherine S. Dreier - Frederick P. Keppel, February 8, 1929

Katherine S. Dreier, President of the Société Anonyme, appealed to Frederick P. Keppel of the Carnegie Corporation in 1929 for assistance in the Société Anonyme's efforts to exhibit and advocate modern art; Léger is one of the artists mentioned.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Katherine S. Dreier Papers, 1.

12. Exhibition catalogue

Five works by Léger were included in the Museum's exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art*, March 2, 1936 to April 19, 1936; lenders of works by Léger included Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Léonce Rosenberg and the Société Anonyme.

The Museum of Modern Art Library, NY: MoMA #46.

13. TLS Alfred H. Barr, Jr. – Fernand Léger, November 9, 1942 and June 9, 1942

Barr and Léger correspond about the title of the artist's painting *Three Women*, originally called *Le Grand Déjeuner*. From this letter we learn that Barr was partially responsible for giving the work a new title.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, 1.50.

14. TLS Fernand Léger – Curt Valentin, n.d.

Correspondence from Léger to the dealer, Curt Valentin, requesting information on a future exhibition:

“My dear friend,

Finding myself in the midst of various exhibition proposals for the next trimester, I would be grateful to you, if at all possible, to confirm the dates, and an approximate number of drawings, gouaches and paintings, for the exhibition in London for which you have engaged me.

Amigo and have a nice vacation

/S/ Léger”.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Curt Valentin Papers, 18. Curt Valentin (1902-1954), emigrated from Hamburg to New York in 1937 where he opened the Buchholz Gallery, renamed after 1951 the Curt Valentin Gallery. He showed the work of Léger in addition to other modern masters.

15. Itinerary, press release, exhibition brochure

Under the auspices of the Museum's Circulating Exhibitions Department *Léger's Le Cirque*, an exhibition of a book of lithographs, traveled to 23 venues around the country from 1951 to 1955. Léger expressed interest in the depiction of a circus and acrobats thirty years earlier in his letter to his dealer, Léonce Rosenberg. *Le Cirque* is currently on view in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater I Lobby in conjunction with *Fernand Léger*.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Records of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, II.1/71(6).

16. Congressional House Record, August 16, 1949; July 20, 1956

During the late 1940s and 1950s George A. Dondero, a Republican Congressman from Michigan, attacked modern art as being part of a communist conspiracy to corrupt American moral standards. In the *Congressional House Record* Léger and The Museum of Modern Art are mentioned. An excerpt from one of the Records:

"Léger and Duchanp are now in the United States to aid in the destruction of our standards and traditions. The former has been a contributor to the Communist cause in America; the latter is now fancied by the neurotics as a surrealist." *Congressional House Record*, August 16, 1949.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers VII.9.b.

17. Announcements, price lists, and press releases

Materials from select Léger exhibitions held at the Buchholz Gallery, 1942 and 1951.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Curt Valentin Papers, 4.

18. Exhibition announcements and study photographs

Documentation from the research files of James Thrall Soby.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: James Thrall Soby Papers, 1.21.12. James Thrall Soby (1906-1979), author, critic, collector and patron of arts, was also a Museum Trustee from 1942-1979.

19. Lecture

Audio recording of lecture delivered by James Johnson Sweeney at the Museum on November 18, 1953 at the time of the Museum's exhibition *Léger*, October 20, 1953 to January 3, 1954. Recording can be heard through DADABASE. Please contact Museum Archives staff for appointment.

The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY: Sound Recordings of Museum-Related Events, Subgroup A: #53.8. James Johnson Sweeney (1900-1986) was Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture from January 1945 to September 1946.