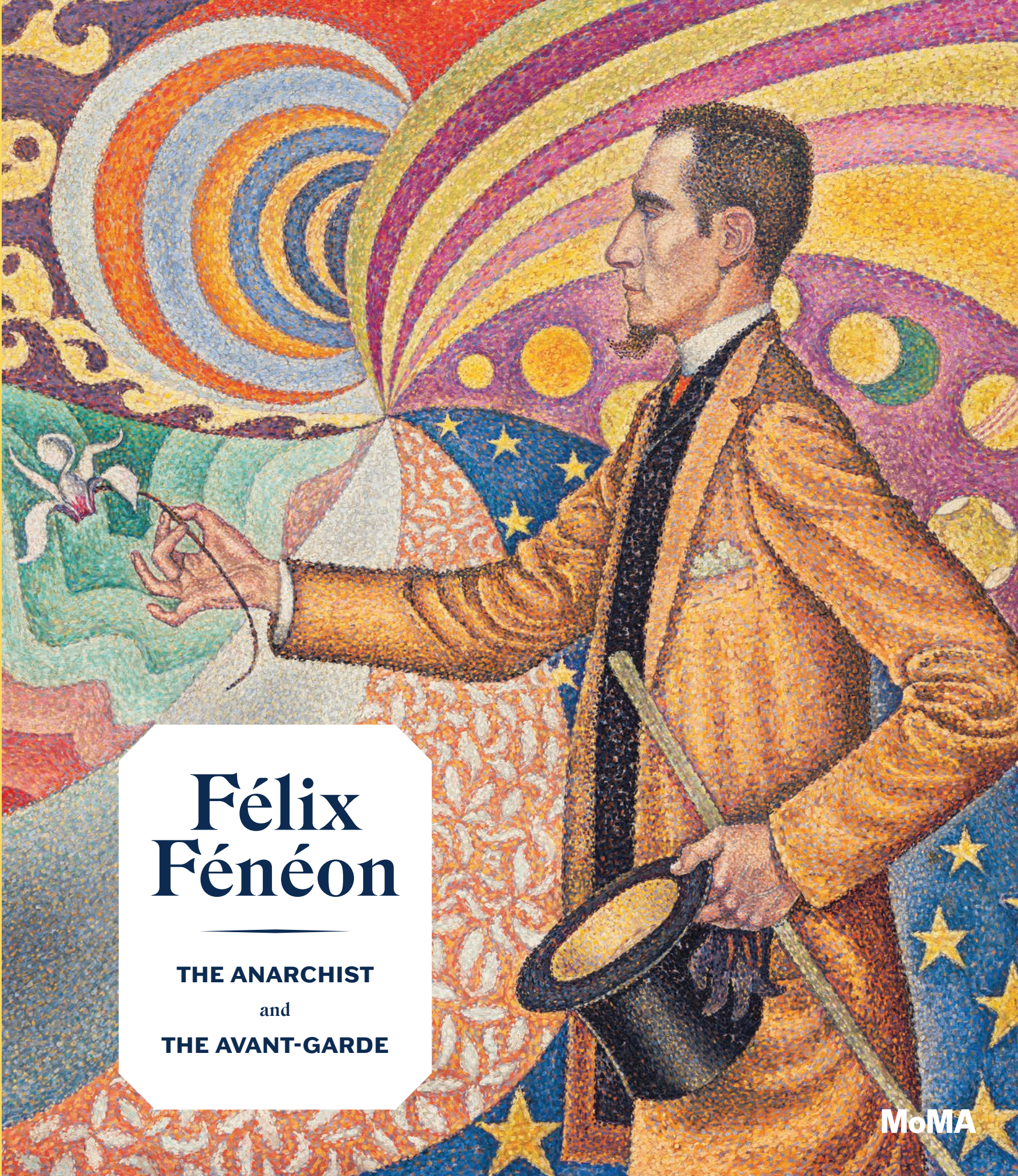


Félix Fénéon

THE ANARCHIST and THE AVANT-GARDE

MoMA

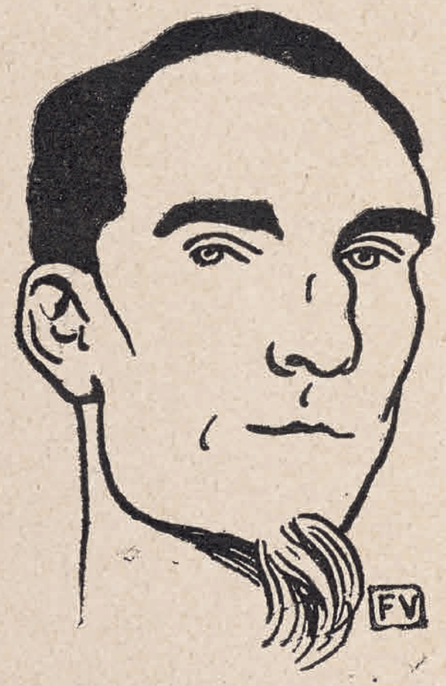
Félix Fénéon

THE ANARCHIST and THE AVANT-GARDE

STARR FIGURA, ISABELLE CAHN,
and PHILIPPE PELTIER

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
NEW YORK

CONTENTS



FOREWORD

The Museum of Modern Art is honored to present *Félix Fénéon: The Anarchist and the Avant-Garde—From Signac to Matisse and Beyond*, the first exhibition devoted to the influential French art critic, editor, publisher, dealer, collector, and anarchist Félix Fénéon (1861–1944). Though largely unknown today and always discreetly behind the scenes in his own era, Fénéon played a key role in the careers of leading artists from Georges-Pierre Seurat and Paul Signac to Pierre Bonnard and Henri Matisse. In addition to championing and collecting the work of these and other artists he befriended in the burgeoning Paris art world from the 1880s through the 1930s, Fénéon was also one of the first European collectors of art from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, and he endeavored to bring new recognition to such works. As a fervent anarchist during a period of dramatic social change and political turmoil, he believed that art could play a fundamental role in the formation of a more harmonious, egalitarian world.

The exhibition is produced in collaboration with the Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie and the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac in Paris, and it is the third in a trio of complementary exhibitions devoted to Fénéon in 2019–20. We are grateful to Laurence des Cars, President, Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie; Cécile Debray, Director, Musée de l'Orangerie; and Stéphane Martin, former President, Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, for making possible this fruitful partnership among our respective institutions.

In Paris, the first iteration of the exhibition took place at the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac from May 28 through September 29, 2019, and it focused primarily on Fénéon's engagement with non-Western art. The second iteration took place at the Musée de l'Orangerie from October 16, 2019, through January 27, 2020, and it focused primarily on Fénéon's engagement with European art. The MoMA exhibition, on view from March 22 through July 25, 2020, combines, distills, and augments elements from both of those exhibitions to present a concentrated survey of Fénéon's multifaceted career. The two Paris exhibitions were organized by Isabelle Cahn, Senior Curator of Paintings, Musée d'Orsay, and Philippe Peltier, former Head, Oceania and Insulindia Unit, Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac. Starr Figura, Curator of Drawings and Prints at The Museum of Modern Art, organized the New York presentation and this catalogue, working closely with Cahn and Peltier and with curatorial assistant Anna Blaha.

The idea for a Fénéon exhibition was first suggested some twenty years ago by Françoise Cachin, then Director of the Musées de France. Cachin—the

granddaughter of Paul Signac, Fénéon's great friend and portraitist—had edited a selection of Fénéon's art criticism in 1966. Also familiar with the publications by Fénéon's pioneering biographers, Jean Paulhan and Joan U. Halperin, she understood that Fénéon's support for the artistic innovations of the late nineteenth century made him a crucial figure in the history of the Musée d'Orsay (now the Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie). Fénéon was also recognized as a critically important figure at the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, which opened its doors in 2006 to display and celebrate the arts of the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania (combining the collections of two previously existing institutions dedicated to this material). Amid the heated debates sparked by the new institution, one of the texts cited most often was a 1920 article edited by Fénéon: "Survey on Arts from Remote Places: Will They Be Admitted to the Louvre?" The two institutions eventually decided to combine their efforts to organize a tribute to him.

At MoMA, the exhibition offers a singular opportunity to look closely at a masterpiece in our collection—Signac's *Opus 217. Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones, and Tints, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890* (1890)—and explore the extraordinary significance of its subject. An icon of Neo-Impressionism, the painting remained with Fénéon until he died; it was later owned by David and Peggy Rockefeller, among the most generous benefactors in MoMA's history, who ultimately donated it to the Museum. In the course of organizing this exhibition, we learned that many other works and documents in our collection—including some thirty-eight of the approximately 130 objects in the exhibition—once belonged to Fénéon or have other meaningful connections to his career. More broadly, as this exhibition and catalogue amply demonstrate, the history of modern art—this museum's raison d'être—is deeply informed by his faithful, prescient actions on behalf of the avant-garde.

The exhibition would not be possible without the major financial support of The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, Jack Shear, and Denise Littlefield Sobel. We also appreciate the support of the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities, which has provided a generous indemnity. We extend our profound thanks to the lenders to the exhibition. In generously sharing their treasured works, they have made it possible for a nuanced visual portrait of one of the most fascinating but hidden figures in the history of modernism to finally emerge.

GLENN D. LOWRY
The David Rockefeller Director,
The Museum of Modern Art

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This catalogue and the exhibition it accompanies owe their existence to the talent and dedication of many people within and outside of The Museum of Modern Art. We must first thank our colleagues at the Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie and the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac for initiating the project in Paris and inviting MoMA to join them as a partner institution. We extend our warmest appreciation to Laurence des Cars, President, Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie; Cécile Debray, Director, Musée de l'Orangerie; Stéphane Martin, former President, and Jérôme Bastianelli, acting President, Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, for their generous collaboration. I am profoundly grateful to Isabelle Cahn, Senior Curator of Paintings at the Musée d'Orsay, and Philippe Peltier, former Head of the Oceania and Insulindia Unit at the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, the cocurators of the two complementary Fénéon exhibitions that took place at the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac and the Musée de l'Orangerie in 2019, for warmly welcoming me to the project and working closely with me to realize its final iteration at MoMA. Their curatorial acumen, intellectual acuity, and generous collegiality have made every aspect of the collaboration a pleasure and an inspiration.

We are indebted to the Fénéon teams at the Paris museums for their gracious assistance and advice at every turn. At the Musée d'Orsay, we thank Sylvie Patry, Director of Collections and Curatorial Affairs; Hélène Flon, Director of Exhibitions; Pascale Desriac, Exhibitions Manager; Elodie Tamburrini, Head of Legal Affairs and Public Contracts; Rachel Scrivo, Financial and Legal Coordinator for Exhibitions; Elise Dubreuil, Curator of Decorative Arts; Stéphane Bayard, Assistant to the Loan Committee; Annie Dufour, Director of Publications, Marie Leimbacher, Publication Manager, and Nadège Plan; and Scarlett Reliquet, Head of Courses, Colloquia, and Conferences. At the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, we thank Laurence Dubaut, Director of Loans, Deposits, and Acquisitions; Christine Drouin, Director of Cultural Development; Chih-Chia Chung, Assistant to the Director of Cultural Development; Isabelle Laine, Exhibition Manager; Marie Ormevil, Assistant to the Head of the Exhibitions Department; Marine Martineau, Registrar for Exhibitions; Jonathan Astoul and Sarah Puech, Registrars for Loans; Valérie Eyene, Administrative Assistant; and the Publishing Department.

At MoMA, I thank Glenn D. Lowry, The David Rockefeller Director, for enthusiastically embracing this project from the very beginning. I am deeply

grateful to Ramona Bannayan, Senior Deputy Director for Exhibitions and Collections, for her always wise and essential guidance, and to Peter Reed, Senior Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs, for his thoughtful support. My profound thanks go to Ann Temkin, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, and Christophe Cherix, The Robert Lehman Foundation Chief Curator of Drawings and Prints, for entrusting me with this project and providing vital support at every stage. Anna Blaha, Curatorial Assistant, has been my closest curatorial collaborator, and I am extremely grateful to her for the efficiency, diplomacy, intelligence, and good will she has brought to every task. Angelique Rosales Salgado, Joint Fellow at MoMA and the Studio Museum, Harlem, joined the project in the crucial months leading up to the exhibition opening, and she quickly became an esteemed member of the Fénéon team.

The exhibition planning ran smoothly thanks to the superlative efforts of Rachel Kim, Senior Exhibition Manager, who oversaw complex logistical and budgetary details. I also thank Erik Patton, Director of Exhibition Planning and Administration, and Jennifer Cohen, Associate Director of Exhibition Planning and Administration, for their guidance and oversight. Victoria Manning, Assistant Registrar, masterfully organized international and domestic loans and shipments; I am grateful as well to Stefanii Ruta Atkins, Head Registrar, for her support. Numerous internal loans were facilitated by Lily Goldberg, Collection Specialist in the Department of Paintings and Sculpture; Juliette Kinchin, Curator, and Paul Galloway, Collection Specialist, in the Department of Architecture and Design; Emily Cushman, Collection Specialist in the Department of Drawings and Prints; and Michelle Elligott, Chief of Archives, Library, and Research Collections, Jennifer Tobias, Librarian, and Elisabeth Thomas, Assistant Archivist. Lana Hum, Director of Exhibition Design and Production, was an indispensable partner who designed a superb installation with her team, including Michele Arms, Alexandra Diczok, and Benjamin Akhavan. Peter Perez and his colleagues in the Museum's frame shop were responsible for framing many of the works on display, and, as usual, they attended to this task with unparalleled skill and creativity. Aaron Harrow and Aaron Louis deftly oversaw the audiovisual aspects of the exhibition. Rob Jung, Tom Krueger, and Sarah Wood led our team of art handlers to install the artworks with meticulous care.

In the Department of Conservation, led by Kate Lewis, The Agnes Gund Chief Conservator, I extend my sincere appreciation to Michael Duffy, Lynda Zycherman, Laura Neufeld, Annie Wilker, and Ana Martins for their dedicated care and treatment of the works on view. Thanks also go to Ursula Mitra, independent conservator, who treated selected volumes from the Museum's Library. I am grateful as well to Tunji Adeniji, Chief Facilities and Safety Officer, Daniel Platt, Director of Security, and their staff for ensuring the safety of the Museum and the objects in the exhibition.

In the Department of Drawings and Prints, I am particularly grateful to my fellow curators Jodi Hauptman, Sarah Suzuki, Esther Adler, and Samantha Friedman for lending their advice and moral support whenever it was needed. Tara Keny, Kiko Aebi, Sewon Kang, and Madeline Bank provided outstanding research and organizational assistance at key moments. The administrative team, led by John Prochilo and including Bernadette Fitzgerald and Alicia Russo, helped in countless ways to facilitate the planning of the exhibition. David Moreno and Jeff White helpfully transported works and facilitated viewings.

On the Museum's Creative team, I thank Leah Dickerman, Director of Editorial and Content Strategy, Rob Baker, Director of Marketing and Creative Strategy, Rob Giampietro, Director of Design, and H. Y. Ingrid Chou, Creative Director, as well as Prudence Peiffer, Natasha Giliberti, Manuel Barenboim, Rebecca Stokes, Wendy Olson, and Lama Makarem for their innovative contributions to shaping and promoting the exhibition. I am grateful to Claire Corey, Kevin Ballon, and Harrison Carter for their inspired approach to the exhibition's graphics, and to Jacqueline Cruz for overseeing the production of digital media for the exhibition.

In the Departments of Development and Institutional Giving, I thank Caralynn Sandorf, Meagan Johnson, Jessica Smith, Erica Bibby, and Nora Webb for their efforts to secure the funding of this project. In Communications and Public Affairs, I am grateful to Amanda Hicks, Director, and Meg Montgoris, Public Relations Manager, for their superb work to publicize the exhibition. In the Department of Education, Pablo Helguera, Jess Van Nostrand, Adelia Gregory, and Sarah Kennedy organized an exciting series of educational programs in conjunction with the show; I am grateful as well to Sara Bodinson and Jenna Madison, for their work on the audio tour, interpretive labels, and other materials. Christine Murray and Allison Dufty of Antenna International created an engaging audio tour. My sincere thanks go to Nancy Adelson, Deputy General Counsel, Lynn Rother, former Senior Provenance Specialist, and James De Leon, Paralegal/Department Manager, for their assiduous attention to provenance and copyright. In the Department of Collection and Exhibition Information, Ian Eckert, Kathryn Ryan, and Allison LaPlatney have kindly facilitated our access to records in the Museum's exhibitions and collections database. Jay Levenson, Director of the International Program, and his team have facilitated many of our efforts. In the Office of the Director, Diana Pulling, Chief of Staff, and Madeleine Casella, Sara Moinian, and Megan Horn have kindly assisted our team throughout the process.

This catalogue has been prepared by the Museum's Department of Publications. Christopher Hudson, Publisher, Curtis R. Scott, Associate Publisher, Don McMahon, Editorial Director, and Marc Sapir, Production Director, provided essential guidance. Exhibiting consummate professionalism while working under extreme time pressure, Rebecca Roberts, Editor, scrupulously clarified and improved the contents of the book; Maria Marchenkova and Jaclyn Neudorf ably assisted her in editing selected texts; and Oriana Tang provided crucial research, proofreading, and other support. Matthew Pimm, Production Manager, expertly supervised the production of the book and ensured the quality of printing on every page. Amanda Washburn, Senior Designer, designed the book with remarkable creativity, sensitivity, and clarity. Hannah Kim, Business and Marketing Director, Sophie Golub, Department Manager, and Naomi Falk, Rights Coordinator,

helped manage many additional details. In the Department of Imaging and Visual Resources, Robert Kastler, Director, Kurt Heumiller, Studio Production Manager, and photographers Jonathan Muzikar, Robert Gerhardt, John Wronn, Dennis Doorly, and Cait Carouge generated the beautiful images of works in MoMA's collection that appear in these pages; Roberto Rivera and Jennifer Sellar facilitated our access to these images. Ten of the fifteen essays in this volume were originally commissioned for the French version of the catalogue, published by our partner institutions in Paris. We are grateful to the Publications Department at the Musée d'Orsay for making these texts available to us and for providing the image files for some ninety works illustrated here. We thank Jeanine Herman for her careful translation of the French texts.

Because Fénéon's career was so multifaceted and parts of it have been virtually unknown, it was necessary to enlist a range of scholars to address the various moments in his biography for this catalogue. For their excellent contributions, I am grateful to my cocurators Isabelle Cahn and Philippe Peltier and to Cécile Bargues, Yaëlle Biro, Megan Fontanella, Claudine Grammont, Joan U. Halperin, Charlotte Hellman, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, Patricia Leighten, Léa Saint-Raymond, Élodie Vaudry, and Marnin Young. Several of these writers also gave freely of their knowledge and expertise to inform various aspects of the publication and the exhibition, and for that I extend my additional thanks. A debt of gratitude is also due to Joshua I. Cohen and Margaret Werth for their thoughtful queries and suggestions as peer reviewers of this catalogue.

Fénéon's legacy today rests largely on the life's work of Joan U. Halperin, Fénéon's pioneering biographer, and all of our efforts are fundamentally indebted to her brilliant research. I want to thank her as well for the warmth, generosity, and modesty with which she has embraced this project and made herself available to us. As she would be the first to point out, the Fénéon literature is also bolstered by the earlier, groundbreaking work of Jean Paulhan, John Rewald, and Françoise Cachin, to which we are also beholden.

I wish to echo Glenn D. Lowry in expressing my deepest appreciation to The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, Jack Shear, and Denise Littlefield Sobel for their generous support of this project. I reiterate as well his profound thanks to the lenders who graciously allowed their works to be included in this exhibition. I must single out our partners in Paris at the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, as well as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, for being especially generous in lending numerous key works. The staff members at these institutions have been very considerate in responding to our queries and requests. I thank Max Hollein, Susan Alyson Stein, Dita Amory, Alisa LaGamma, Nadine Orenstein, Jeff Rosenheim, Yaëlle Biro, Ashley E. Dunn, and Nesta Alexander at the Met, and Richard Armstrong, Tracey Baschkoff, Megan Fontanella, Vivien Greene, and Carol Nesemann at the Guggenheim.

At other museums and public institutions, we are indebted to the following individuals, who facilitated our access to their holdings and responded helpfully to our inquiries: Jay A. Clarke, Anna Simonovic, and Natasha Derrickson at The Art Institute of Chicago; Christophe Langlois at the Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris; Marielle Bonnand at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris; Marcia Reed and Lora Chin Derrien at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; Allison Demailly at the Institut mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC); Frans Peterse and Ap Gewald at the Kunstmuseum den Haag; Nigel Walsh and Sarah Murray at the Leeds Art Gallery; Caroline Kaspar-Nebel at the Musée Barbier-Mueller, Geneva; Anne Archenoul at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris; Marjorie Dugerdil Klein at the Musée du Petit Palais, Geneva; Daphné Castano and Juliette Faivre-Préda at the Musée d'art moderne, Troyes; Alana Topham and Marie Ohlinger at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Liam Crowe at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Michele De Shazo at the Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Dorthe Aagesen and Karoline Hvalsøe at the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; Lisa Hodermarsky and L.Lynne Addison at Yale University Art Gallery; and Christine Giviskos and Margaret Molnar at the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Other scholars, curators, collectors, dealers, specialists, researchers, and colleagues who deserve special thanks for their time and assistance include: Mitchell Abidor, Bernard Bassette, Mathias Chivot, Joshua I. Cohen, Sophie Derrot, Marcel Fleiss, Martina Fouquet, Megan Fox Kelly, Matthew Gale, Elise Grace, Peter Henle, Diana Howard, Maurice Imbert, Jennifer Jones, Mark Kernohan, Sandrine Ladrière, Nicolas Langlois, Thomas Lax, Jessica Lewis, Nathalie Minart, Nathalie Muller, Angela Novacek, Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, Vlasta Odell, Claire Paulhan, Marguerite de Sabran, Quinn Schoen, Simon Shaw, Rodica Sibleyras, Francesca Spano, Nathalie Strasser, Elizabeth Szancer Kujawski, and Jennifer Tonkovich. We are also very grateful to our colleagues at Christie's for reviewing the checklist for our U.S. Government Arts and Artifacts Indemnity Program application, including Conor Jordan, Jessica Fertig, Vanessa Fusco, Takaaki Murakami, Allegra Bettini, Susan Kloman, Adam McCoy, Shlomi Rabi, Christina Geiger, Rhiannon Knol, Katherine Drake, and Amy Indyke.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the loved ones on the home front who supported the members of the Fénéon team during the course of this complex project. Among them, I thank my own family, especially Owen, Luther, and Quentin Dugan, for their encouragement and sacrifice. Like everyone listed here, they have, perhaps without even realizing it, paid appropriate homage to an extraordinary and almost forgotten figure who made an art of brilliantly and selflessly making things happen from behind the scenes.

STARR FIGURA
Curator
Department of Drawings and Prints

PREFACE

Portraits of Félix Fénéon

JOAN U. HALPERIN

Félix Fénéon famously chose to remain in the shadows, while his art and literary criticism, along with his work as publisher and art dealer, shaped the world of art and letters not only in France but elsewhere in Europe and in the United States. He spoke of himself as a simple "hyphen" between the artist and the public. Yet he did not avoid being portrayed by artists and writers who knew him. He collaborated on some of these portraits, sitting—or standing—for the pose. Photographs of him as a young dandy (fig. 8) or improvising a Mephistophelean mask after his acquittal in the Trial of the Thirty (plate 1) reveal that in his younger years he enjoyed self-representation. Caricatures by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and fictional renditions of him in romans à clef by fellow writers depict him as striking but strange, elusive but strongly present. Each of these portraits is, of course, an interpretation. Each reflects the creator as well as the subject of the image. The exhibitions honoring Fénéon in Paris and New York in 2019–20 form a pluri-portrait of this multifaceted man. Yet the image we receive is partial, omitting most of his literary and editorial work;[1] it is also partial in another sense, for Fénéon is necessarily seen through the sensibilities of the curators and the catalogue authors.

What are we looking for in a portrait? A likeness of some sort: "It's the spitting image of him!" On a deeper level, we seek a kinship. Although the portrait is not the person, it connects the viewer to the artist's subject. That figure is absent, yet the portrait meets the viewer on shared ground, where the paths in our common existence cross. It can thus also be said to function as a "hyphen." (The French term, *trait d'union*, says it better: "a connecting [por] trait.") In fact, the anarchist ideal that Fénéon espoused carried this notion yet further: the interconnectedness of all beings.

A portrait image is a construct that can take many forms. It can picture its subject in profile, in three-quarter view, in full face or from behind, head only, bust only, or whole body. It can be formulaic, realistic, symbolic, or abstract. It can be sketched, drawn, painted, collaged, carved in stone or wood or bone, photographed, or filmed. And it can be written. My 1988 biography of Fénéon is a portrait.[2] To encompass his multiple activities, I broke his life, artificially, into segments.[3] Indeed, all portraits are prismatic, falsifying in order to clarify, focusing the lens from one angle or another, never taking in the whole.

The portraits in the exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, along with others in this volume, allow viewers to see Fénéon in various contexts. Presented in profile, for example, he appears in his professional milieu, as editor or critic. In portraits by Félix Vallotton (plate 51) and Édouard Vuillard (plate 54) and in sketches by Pierre Bonnard (fig. 55) and Kees van Dongen, he is pictured leaning over his desk at a thirty-degree angle, immersed in his work. The viewer of these portraits is solely an observer; there is no sensation of a mutual gaze. The profile Paul Signac presents in his quintessential Neo-Impressionist portrait of Fénéon (plate 4) emphasizes Fénéon's role in validating the science and symbolism of color prized by the "new" Impressionists. His verticality contrasts with the giant pinwheel of color in the background, and, clad in yellow, he glows like a Byzantine icon. He holds a flower in his extended hand, recalling portraits of the Mughal rulers of India, who carry a blossom for their own contemplation. Here, however, the flower is proffered to someone beyond the frame, perhaps in homage. Although Fénéon stands alone, the portrait places him in a specific social and aesthetic milieu. It also conveys a certain amount of influence and power.[4] It is what I would call an emblem portrait, reminiscent of the effigies of kings and queens—often in profile—that appear on coins and stamps.

In contrast, power and clarity may retreat in a frontal portrait, giving way to a different relationship—slippery, uncertain, possibly penetrating—engaging simultaneously the viewer and the person represented. In a self-portrait Fénéon sketched in spring or summer 1894 while in prison awaiting trial for anarchist activity, his head, equipped with a hook, hangs from a nail (fig. 1), his gaze intense as he faces the viewer—or his interrogator. Indecipherable words appear on the nail; on the hook one can make out "Nidularium," a flower native to Brazil, one of whose subspecies is called *innocentii*. One could jokingly remark that Fénéon depicted his head as a hanging plant; this becomes piquant when one recalls that he was likely the perpetrator of an anarchist bombing, for which the explosive had been placed in a flowerpot. It was a serious matter to be accused of anarchism in the 1890s.[5] Heads of the guillotined were no longer displayed in public, but the hook and nail in Fénéon's drawing evoke that practice. The gaze, on the other hand, opens to human terror, rage, and inquiry in a way that creates both anxiety and a sense of intense connection for the viewer. Though focused outward, it also has a strong internal power, as if Fénéon were fearlessly questioning himself.

The form and force of any portrait is governed by the relationship between the artist and the sitter. A small drawing in Conté crayon by Georges-Pierre Seurat (fig. 25) presents a spectator, elegant in top hat, elusive, facing away. This sketch is thought to be a portrayal of Fénéon, and if so it would be the artist's only representation of the critic who championed him. Does it suggest Seurat's fear that Fénéon's detailed analysis of his technique was allowing other painters to copy his carefully crafted invention? Portraits by other artists indicate an easier rapport. A drawing of Fénéon by Severino Rappa, a close friend

Fig. 1. Félix Fénéon (French, born Italy. 1861–1944). *Self-Portrait*. 1894. Ink on paper. Location unknown

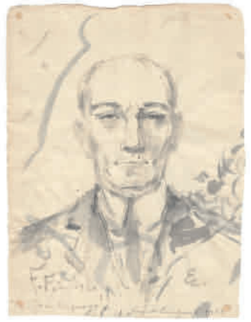


Fig. 2. Severino Rappa (Italian, 1866–1945). *Félix Fénéon*. 1904. Pencil on paper. Location unknown

Fig. 3. Émile Compard (French, 1900–1977). *Félix Fénéon*. 1926. Ink wash on paper, 9 ⅞ × 8 ¼ in. (25 × 21 cm). Collection Joan U. Halperin

and fellow anarchist, is a full-face portrait (fig. 2): wide-eyed, Fénéon is there *en soi*. Shed of his persona, he is vulnerable, receptive. Far from an emblem portrait, the image penetrates the mystery of the other and touches us in a vital point: our own vulnerability. Fénéon has dropped his mask, has chosen mutual trust. A similar trust can be sensed in a portrait of an older Fénéon by Émile Compard (fig. 3), a delicate ink-wash sketch in which the direct gaze of the older man exudes a benevolent rapport with the young artist.

On the other hand, a definite lack of trust between photographer and subject is in evidence in the two-part mug shot made of Fénéon by the Paris police anthropometry bureau, run by Alphonse Bertillon himself,[6] when Fénéon was arrested in April 1894 (plate 30). The profile presents the subject's strong, distinct traits, which could signal, according to the new anthropometric "science," that he was a dangerous subject. The full-face view is impassive, expressing integrity albeit with a hint of fear. In the hostile environment of the police station, Fénéon was vulnerable in a new way. He was at that point only a suspect, but the photographs cast him as a criminal.

Thanks in large part to his witty responses to the court in the Trial of the Thirty, Fénéon was acquitted that summer along with nearly all of his codefendants. Subsequently, he at times assumed the right to reinvent his own image, to choose an attitude or to create a myth, even as he retreated from his public position as a foremost writer on contemporary art and social movements. Nicknamed the "Yankee" or "Mephistopheles," Fénéon had distinctive features that were perfect fodder for caricature: his goatee, close-cropped hair, and plain-cut clothes set him apart from other men of his milieu and generation, as did his slow speech and caustic wit. Vallotton's woodcut portrait of a truculent Fénéon (page 6) and Toulouse-Lautrec's face-stretching sketch (plate 52) and depiction of a sulfurous-yellow Fénéon in a painting made to decorate a carnival booth for the cancan dancer La Goulue (fig. 9) each playfully emphasize a particular aspect of Fénéon's multiple personae.

The power of a portrait resides in its ability to re-present the existence of a person. Yet once the portrait exists, it implies absence. As Jean-Luc Nancy has written, this loss contains a mystery, for the "disappearance" of the model creates a special kind of communion between sitter and viewer: "The person portrayed in the work of art withdraws and disappears in its depths, and the echo of that absence resounds in me."[7] Communion between human beings through art was a guiding motif of Fénéon's life. While he would never deny human difference, the idea of connection was even more powerful to him: he was guided by a strong belief in human commonality and community. His conception of community, however, was not one in which the individual is bound to others by convention, territory, or ideology. It was, rather, an openness, embracing the possibility of an ungoverned society based on trust in the worth and the "belongingness" of all. In the exhibition, the same notion is stated visually in Signac's painting *Au temps d'harmonie: L'Âge d'or n'est pas dans le passé; il est dans l'avenir* (*In the Time of Harmony: The Golden Age Has Not Passed; It Is Still to Come*, 1893–95; fig. 44 and plate 37), which was created at the height of the anarchist movement in France. The egalitarian society envisaged by the anarchists and depicted by Signac embodies the principles Fénéon lived by: respect for oneself and for others, enjoyment of beauty and pleasure, support of those in need, and solidarity among all. Through contemplation of Fénéon's portraits, viewers can enter into this concept of community, where being together is the foundation of the individual.

Notes

1. Isabelle Cahn and Philippe Peltier explain why in their essay "Félix Fénéon, l'insaisissable," in *Félix Fénéon: Critique, collectionneur, anarchiste*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux/Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie/Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, 2019), 21. In organizing the exhibitions at their respective museums, they write, they soon became aware that, given the multiplicity of Fénéon's interests, activities, and professional labors, it would be impossible to fully represent their subject: "Making a portrait is always a choice. We could have presented this paradoxical character in a thousand different ways. . . . Faced with these choices and with material constraints, we privileged aspects of Fénéon that seemed important to us." Unless otherwise noted, translations from the French are by the author.
2. Joan U. Halperin, *Félix Fénéon: Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1988). As indicated by the title, this "biography" addresses a specific place and time, not an entire life.
3. In the book I discuss Fénéon's enigmatic character, his writing about art, his literary activity, his engagement in the anarchist movement for social justice, and his love life—all of which were unfolding more or less simultaneously.
4. Fénéon agreed to pose for Paul Signac, but he requested that the portrait be an "effigy absolutely full-face." Fénéon to Signac, July 30, 1890, Archives Signac; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 143–44. Did he, out of vanity, consider his nose too prominent? Or did he—who preferred to remain behind the scenes—wish to avoid the emblematic power of a profile view? Signac's refusal to honor his subject's request is even more significant.
5. The bombing in which Fénéon was implicated took place a week after his young friend Émile Henry was arrested for devices he had exploded in public places, ostensibly to speak for silenced workers. The twenty-one-year-old declared in his trial, before being sentenced to death, "The assassins behind the massacres of Bloody Week [the end of the Paris Commune, May 1871] and Fourmies [troops firing on workers demonstrating for an eight-hour work day, May 1891] have no right to call others assassins. . . . What about these victims: Children dying of anemia in the slums . . . ? Women turning pallid in your sweatshops, lucky that poverty has not yet forced them into prostitution? Old people you have turned into machines for production all their lives and then cast on the garbage dump . . . ? You have hanged men in Chicago, decapitated them in Germany, garroted them in Jerez, shot them in Barcelona, guillotined them in Montbrison and Paris, but you can never destroy Anarchism. Its roots are too deep." Henry, extracts from his "Déclaration" to the court, April 27, 1894, repr. in Jean Maitron, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France* (Paris: Société universitaire d'éditions et de librairie, 1951), 533.
6. Alphonse Bertillon (1853–1914), a police officer and biometrics researcher, standardized the physical description of criminals and in 1888 invented the mug shot. The "bertillonage" of the anarchist Ravachol in 1890 led to his arrest and execution in 1892 (fig. 45).
7. Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'Autre Portrait* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2014), 21. See also p. 11: "What's at stake with portraits . . . is the representation . . . of the Other, who is both distant and very close to us. When we respond to a portrait . . . the possibility for us to be present occurs quite literally under our eyes."

I am indebted to Helga Lenart-Cheng for introducing me to Nancy's concept of community.

1. Louis-Alfred Natanson (French, 1873–1932)
Portrait de Félix Fénéon (**Portrait of Félix Fénéon**). 1894
Photograph
Archives Vuillard, Paris

Félix Fénéon
The Anarchist and the Avant-Garde

STARR FIGURA, ISABELLE CAHN,
and **PHILIPPE PELTIER**

"It would not be a commonplace portrait at all, but a carefully composed picture, with very carefully arranged colors and lines. A rhythmic and angular pose. A decorative Félix, entering with his hat or a flower in his hand."

PAUL SIGNAC TO FÉLIX FÉNÉON, JULY 21, 1890[1]

Signac's portrait, *Opus 217. Sur l'émail d'un fond rythmique des mesures et d'angles, de tons et des teintes, portrait de M. Félix Fénéon en 1890* (*Opus 217. Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones, and Tints, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890*, 1890; plate 4), is indeed far from commonplace. It is one of the most extraordinary portraits ever painted, an icon of Neo-Impressionism that seduces us by virtue of both its swirling patterns of rainbow-colored dots in the background and the enigmatic, magician-like presence of the dandy who strides across the foreground. The painting's vibrant pinwheel sets into motion the nineteenth-century color theories that Signac and his fellow Neo-Impressionists admired—and the excessively long title is their inside-joking nod to the pedantic titles given to those scientific studies (see figs. 32 and 90 and the essay by Starr Figura on pages 59–65 of this volume). We might also see it as a symbol of the hypnotic, splendiferous atmosphere of Paris in the 1890s, through which Fénéon's sharp and placid figure was ever calmly advancing. Proffering a flower with his right hand and holding his top hat, gloves, and cane in the left, he strides through the transformational currents of that era and greets the unknown with an unflappable grace.

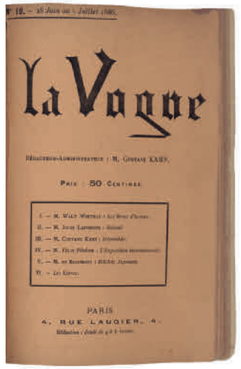
Félix Fénéon—this implacable, inscrutable, meticulous, and mysterious man—is the subject of the present exhibition and catalogue. Though little known today, and always discreetly behind the scenes during his own era, Fénéon had a decisive and wide-ranging impact on the development of modernism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By turns an art critic, editor, publisher, curator, journalist, dealer, and gallerist, he played a key role in the careers of leading artists from Signac and Georges-Pierre Seurat to Pierre Bonnard and Henri Matisse, among many others. In tandem with his various professional involvements, he was also a collector of both contemporary European art and art from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. And he was an anarchist. All of these engagements were informed by an extraordinarily radical, forward-looking worldview in which avant-garde art and radical politics were two sides of the same coin, both having the potential to transform the world for the better. As his biographer Joan U. Halperin has written, "His influence in these areas helped to shape the modern age."[2]

Fénéon was born in Turin, Italy, in 1861, and he grew up in Burgundy. His father was a traveling salesman. At the age of twenty he moved to Paris after placing first on the competitive exam for jobs at the French Ministry of War. He worked there for thirteen years, from 1881 to 1894, rising quickly to the position of chief clerk. He also plunged himself into Paris's avant-garde artistic and literary circles. He was a regular at Stéphane Mallarmé's Tuesday-evening salons. He rescued Arthur Rimbaud's manuscript for *Les Illuminations* from obscurity, editing and publishing it in 1886 through Éditions de La Vogue, an imprint he collaborated on with the poet Gustave Kahn, founder of the journal *La Vogue* (fig. 4).[3] In the 1880s he also cofounded three short-lived journals—*La Libre Revue*, 1883–84 (fig. 5); *La Revue indépendante*, 1884–85 (fig. 6); and *La Cravache*, 1888–89—and he contributed essays and criticism on art, literature, and politics to more than a dozen other periodicals. His art criticism is particularly distinctive (though difficult to translate) for its unique combination of rigor and allusiveness, as Marnin Young relates on pages 33–45.

Fig. 4. *La Vogue*, no. 10 (June 28–July 5, 1886). Periodical. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Fig. 5. *La Libre Revue*, no. 1 (October 1–15, 1883). Periodical. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

Fig. 6. *La Revue indépendante*. 1885. Periodical. Bibliothèque du Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Though Fénéon stopped writing art criticism in 1893, he continued to be involved with publishing and editorial work over the next three decades. He never published any novels or books of his own—only a variety of shorter texts and essays—but he was nevertheless one of the most daring, industrious, and talented of the writers, editors, and publishers who contributed to the golden era of print journalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when advances in printing technologies and the advent of cheap paper led to a modern communications revolution involving the proliferation of thousands of small journals (*petites revues*) and newspapers.

In 1886 Fénéon coined the term Neo-Impressionism in a review of the eighth and final exhibition of the Impressionists. He was the first to understand and articulate the significance of the Pointillist technique, developed by Seurat and adopted by Signac, Camille Pissarro, Henri-Edmond Cross, Albert Dubois-Pillet, and others, which involved the use of tiny dabs of color that mixed in the eye of the viewer to create a harmonious whole. After Seurat died prematurely in 1891, he spent decades working to establish the painter's legacy, as Isabelle Cahn explains on pages 47–57, by inventorying his estate, organizing exhibitions of his work, providing (anonymously) the meticulous documentation for the first catalogues raisonnés, and strategically helping to place many of the artist's paintings and drawings in major museums and important private collections. He remained an ardent champion of the Neo-Impressionist artists for the rest of his career and shared an especially close, life-long friendship with Signac, as Charlotte Hellman recounts on pages 66–69.

During the early years of his career, however, Fénéon led a double life, working furtively to undermine the government's authority and contributing anonymous articles to a number of anarchist journals in the 1890s. The shocking irony that Fénéon—apparently a model employee at that most nationalist and authoritarian of government institutions, the Ministry of War—would be arrested on April 25, 1894, in connection with a slew of anarchist bombings, was not lost on the French press. The sensational story was the subject of massive journalistic attention (fig. 7). Fénéon, whose name was on a list of suspected anarchists maintained by the police, was picked up in a sweep following the bombing of Restaurant Foyot on April 4. He was imprisoned for more than three months, at which time the government mounted a case against him and twenty-nine others. Fénéon's wit and nerve served him well at the so-called Trial of the Thirty that August. In one exchange with the judge he exhibited a characteristically ruthless logic that was surreal before its time:

The judge: You were seen talking to anarchists behind a lamppost.
Fénéon: Can you tell me, Your Honor, where behind a lamppost is?

The reporter could not help but note: "Loud, prolonged laughter. The judge calls to order."[4]

Anarchism was a political ideology that flourished throughout Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Anti-

Fig. 7. Headlines announcing an arrest at the Ministry of War, April 17, 1894. Newspaper clipping from *Dossier sur le procès des Trente* (Scrapbook on the Trial of the Thirty), 1894, compiled by Marie-Louise Fénéon, page: 10 ⅝ × 8 ¼ in. (27 × 21 cm). Chancellerie des Universités de Paris, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet

government, anticlerical, anticapitalist, and anticolonial, it was a reaction to the economic and political injustices wrought by the Industrial Revolution and the rise of nation states. In Paris, in particular, anarchism developed in the wake of the Paris Commune of 1871, nurtured by the unshakable bitterness caused by its bloody suppression. "The common point is the negation of the principle of Authority in social organization," wrote the anarchist Sébastien Faure, "and a hatred of all the constraints imposed by the institutions that are based upon that principle."[5]

Fénéon distrusted government authority and institutions and believed that without them the extreme economic inequities of the era would be ameliorated: artistic freedom and creativity would flourish, and, as a result, social harmony and justice would reign—a utopian attitude he shared with many late-nineteenth-century idealists including the Neo-Impressionist and Symbolist painters and writers that he counted among his closest friends. Signac, Pissarro, and Maximilien Luce were all committed anarchists, as were Bonnard, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Félix Vallotton. Many of Fénéon's fellow writers and journalists, including Kahn, Alfred Jarry, and Octave Mirbeau, were similarly radicalized.

The butte of Montmartre, whose bohemian cafes, theaters, and cabarets were the primary stomping grounds for Fénéon and his creative friends (plates 43, 44, and 46), was located at the north end of Paris, adjacent to the industrialized suburbs where the working-class poor lived in the shadows of smokestacks belching toxic soot from the production of rubber, chemicals, and steel (see plates 25 and 26).[6] As John Merriman has vividly described, the period known as the Belle Époque—though celebrated for its extraordinary cultural achievements and rapid modernization—was an era of horrendous economic devastation for a large swath of the population. Paris was divided between the chic and wealthy neighborhoods to the west and the working-class neighborhoods to the north and east, where poor health and hygiene, unemployment, and oppressive working conditions took a terrible toll: tuberculosis, alcoholism, and suicide were widespread social ills.[7] For those who lived in these conditions, and those, like Fénéon, who sympathized with them, the growth and consolidation of capitalism and nationalism in the nineteenth century was understood to favor the wealthy and powerful, leaving those at the other end of the economic spectrum in an inexorable state of poverty and powerlessness.

As Patricia Leighten explains on pages 93–107, Fénéon exalted the creative innovators of his day for their role in overturning the stultifying bourgeois traditions of the past and embodying a new vision for the future. For him, an innovative and distinctly modern aesthetic went hand in hand with the aspiration for a world in which humankind lived in harmony with its natural and social environment. He also believed in the possibility of training the proletariat in artistic labor, and in the potential of modern art to serve as a boon to ordinary life. "Day'll come, Goddam, when art will fit into the life of ordinary Joes, just like steak and vino," he wrote, using the proletarian patois of the anarchist press. "Then plates, spoons, chairs, bed—the whole works, what d'ya think! . . .

"Day'll come, Goddam, when art will fit into the life of ordinary Joes, just like steak and vino."

Everything, great guns, will have nifty shapes and fabulous colors. When that happens, the artisse [*sic*] won't look down his nose at the worker: they will be united. But before we get to that point, the old Union will have to get up some steam and we gotta be slap-dab in the middle of anarcho civilization."[8]

Fénéon and most of his codefendants at the Trial of the Thirty were eventually acquitted, but his culpability remains a point of question. Halperin argues that he was guilty of the Restaurant Foyot bombing,[9] and it is certainly true that he believed in propaganda by deed—revolutionary struggle that involved direct action, or violence, against the institutions of the state and the bourgeoisie. While he also shared in the creative intelligentsia's attachment to propaganda by the word, he reportedly felt that "anarchist acts of terrorism have done a lot more for propaganda than twenty years of pamphlets by [Élisée] Reclus or [Peter] Kropotkin."[10]

Fénéon lost his position at the Ministry of War, but Thadée Natanson—who, though he had not met Fénéon, provided him with a defense attorney for the trial—offered him a job as editorial secretary at his journal, *La Revue blanche*. In 1896 he became editor in chief, and, as Cahn outlines on pages 110–13, he helped turn the publication into the preeminent journal of its day for art, literature, and politics. He published Jarry, Marcel Proust, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Léon Blum, along with many other luminaries of the era, often early in their careers. The Nabi artists—Bonnard, Valloton, and Édouard Vuillard—along with Toulouse-Lautrec, were part of the inner circle at *La Revue blanche*, and Fénéon drew close to them during this period. His politics made their way into the magazine too; he published a survey on the memory and effects of the Paris Commune, a series of editorials challenging the principles of colonialism, and, during the Dreyfus affair, a number of pro-Dreyfusard essays.

After *La Revue blanche* folded in 1903, Fénéon worked briefly at the center-right newspaper *Le Figaro*, contributing anonymous copy until 1906, when he moved to the less conservative *Le Matin*. There he wrote anonymously the three-line filler stories describing small-town tragedies and travesties that were common in newspapers of the era, transforming the genre into a disarmingly radical poetry that was, as Luc Sante has characterized it, a "milestone in the history of modernism" (see fig. 11 and pages 134–35).[11]

Toward the end of 1906, Fénéon took a job at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, one of the leading art galleries in Paris, where he was tasked with bringing new talent into a program that had until then played it safe. In 1908 he was promoted to artistic director, a position he maintained until his retirement in 1924. Fénéon played an important role in the internationalization of the market for modern art, particularly Fauvism, as Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel explains on pages 139–47. He was a diligent employee, committed to both his employers and his artists.

An anarchist turned Communist, Fénéon surprised many of his friends when he joined the commercial side of the art world, but for him it was another way of pursuing his commitment to modern painting. "Fénéon, as a good anarchist, planted Matisses among the bourgeoisie from the back room at Bernheim-Jeune as he might have planted bombs," wrote Maurice Boudot-Lamotte, a

painter and collector.[12] Signac signaled his initial skepticism in a letter to fellow Neo-Impressionist Charles Angrand: "Fénéon has joined Monkey-nut Bernheim. . . . I don't see our friend winning out over the boorishness of those industrialists. But the struggle will be interesting."[13] But within two months Signac's paintings were selling "beyond our expectations," and the artist was delighted.[14]

Fénéon quickly signed Signac, Cross, and Luce to contracts, giving them enhanced public visibility and a hitherto unknown financial security. In the ensuing years he would sign contracts with other artists, including Kees van Dongen and Matisse, whose crucial relationship with Fénéon is described by Claudine Grammont on pages 148–53. He was equally faithful to Bonnard and Vuillard. Although they had already been showing at Bernheim-Jeune, Fénéon strengthened their ties to the gallery, mounting solo exhibitions for Bonnard, in particular, nearly every year for the next two decades. The most sensational of the shows Fénéon staged at Bernheim-Jeune was the first exhibition of the Italian Futurists in Paris in 1912. It marked a milestone in the history of modernism, as Figura relates on pages 154–57.

THE ELUSIVE F.F.

Implicit in Signac's fantastical portrait is not only the respect and admiration the artist felt for the critic who had helped to launch his career, but also the aura of mystery and fascination that enveloped him. Fénéon deliberately fashioned an unusual look. Tall, slender, and elegant to the point of dandyism, he played on his physical traits in order to distinguish himself (fig. 8).

Many of Fénéon's friends and acquaintances remarked on his enigmatic personality and the surprising contradictions he embodied. His wispy goatee (not a commonplace style at the time) reminded them of Uncle Sam, and the devilish air that he actively cultivated was unmistakable (plate 1). The Symbolist writer Remy de Gourmont described him as "a Yankee Mephistopheles,"[15] and a generation later Guillaume Apollinaire nicknamed him "the fake Yankee of rue Richepanse" (the street where Bernheim-Jeune was located).[16] For Jarry he was "a satyr born in Brooklyn (U.S.A.)."[17] Another writer, Annette Vaillant, noticed in him an amusing conflation of angel and animal: "Fénéon, an *enigmatic* personage, with the look of an angelic goat with his light eyes and his threadbare Mandarin's beard, did everything exactly, scrutinized everything with the thoroughness of a certified public accountant. The painters came [to Galerie Bernheim-Jeune] to see the aesthete, their friend, the discerning art critic, now a clever dealer, mischievous as well as cultivated, who had lost none of his whimsy."[18]

His discretion led him to publish a number of texts anonymously, especially the reviews he wrote in the anarchist press in the early 1890s. Sometimes he used the byline "F.F.," which would have been recognizable to insiders, and sometimes his chameleon side led him to use a variety of whimsical pseudonyms, including feminine names like Félicie, Thérèse, or Denise. Such noms de plume were not simply fanciful: Mallarmé and Apollinaire used them as well, to express a more secret, subversively feminine aspect of their sensibilities.

Fig. 8. Eugène Pirou (French, 1841–1909). *Félix Fénéon en 1886* (*Félix Fénéon in 1886*). 1886. Photograph, 5 7/8 × 3 15/16 in. (15 × 10 cm). Collection Jean Paulhan, Paris

Many artists in addition to Signac could not resist the chance to capture something of the elusive Fénéon in a portrait. Toulouse-Lautrec exaggerated his eccentric appearance when he painted Fénéon together with Oscar Wilde in a massive canvas that decorated the outside of the fairgrounds booth for the cancan dancer La Goulue's traveling show (fig. 9). La Goulue, or "the glutton," was Louise Weber, a famously outrageous cancan dancer whose stage name referred to her habit of drinking from her customers' glasses while she performed. The association of these three personalities, who at the time were far from any form of social respectability—a cancan dancer, a homosexual writer, and an anarchist critic—could be interpreted as the manifesto of an assumed nonconformity.

In *La Lecture par Émile Verhaeren* (*The Lecture by Émile Verhaeren*, 1903; fig. 10), the Belgian Neo-Impressionist Théo van Rysselberghe paid homage to the detached yet dominant force of Fénéon's personality. Among a cohort of eight French and Belgian writers, Fénéon is shown leaning against a mantelpiece with an air of wry nonchalance, a cigarette dangling carelessly between his fingers. He stands slightly behind and apart from the others, who lean in at the table, yet his position within the composition's loose pyramid is clearly superior. Vallotton (plate 51) and Vuillard (plate 54) also created reverential portraits, in both cases depicting Fénéon hunched over his desk at *La Revue blanche*,

Fig. 9. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (French, 1864–1901). *Panneau pour la baraque de la Goulue, à la Foire du Trône à Paris* (*Panel for La Goulue's Booth at the Foire du Trône, Paris*). 1895. Oil on canvas, 9 ft. 9 3/8 in. × 10 ft. 4 7/16 in. (298 × 316 cm). Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Fig. 10. Théo van Rysselberghe (Belgian, 1862–1926). *La Lecture par Émile Verhaeren* (*The Lecture by Émile Verhaeren*). 1903. Oil on canvas, 71 ¼ in. × 7 ft. 10 ⅞ in. (181 × 241 cm). Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent

thoroughly absorbed in the work of readying manuscripts for publication. Luce painted his portrait at least four times (see page 180) and created numerous renderings of his friend in drawing and print (plate 49). And, as Joan U. Halperin elaborates in her preface to this volume, there are many other portraits that attest to his beloved status in the art world.

Though he cultivated a style that stood out from the crowd, Fénéon, ironically, shunned the limelight and the public eye. He was, as one admirer put it, a "secret animator."[19] He worked assiduously to promote others, pulling strings behind the scenes, encouraging writers to publish, providing opportunities for painters to exhibit, and pushing them all into the spotlight, whereas for himself he had only contempt for recognition and glory. Toward the end of his life, when he was asked to publish an anthology of his writing, Fénéon replied, characteristically, "I aspire only to silence."[20]

Contradictory statements describe a Fénéon admirable in conversation but more often silent to the point of mutism. His attitude earned him the nickname Father Laconic from the writer Willy (Henry Gauthier-Villars), for whom he was a ghostwriter.[21] Jarry called him "the one who silences" (*celui qui silence*),[22] "meaning both that he silences the nonsense of others and that he himself practices an active form of silence," as Luc Sante has astutely put it.[23]

Fénéon's quick wit and mordant humor were similarly devastating. Their stealth efficiency is on full display in the column he wrote for *Le Matin* in 1906 (fig. 11). He used a percussive style, at times writing in the form of an alexandrine and playing on the violent collision of images: "For fun, Justin Barbier was scattering pistol shots in all directions, in Stains. Jules Corbier, a roofer, caught one."[24] As Sante has perfectly summarized, "They demonstrate in miniature his epigrammatic flair, his exquisite timing, his pinpoint precision of language, his exceedingly dry humor, his calculated effrontery, his tenderness and cruelty, his contained outrage."[25]

NOUVELLES EN TROIS LIGNES

PARIS

— L'infirmière Elis Bachmann, dont c'était hier le jour de sortie, s'est manifestée folle dans la rue.

— Un de nos collaborateurs a été renversé, à bicyclette, par l'automobile de M. de Maindreville, et gravement contusionné.

— Plainte a été portée par le médecin persan Djaï Khan contre un sien compatriote qui lui vola une tiare.

BANLIEUE PARISIENNE

— Une auto a culbuté, à Croissy-Beaubourg, la moto du Parisien Petitdemange, dessinateur, lequel se fractura la jambe.

— Des bûcherons ont trouvé dans sa cabane, à L'Hay, Picard, mort de misère, mangé aux rats et couvert de mouches.

— Le repris de justice Poirier a été arrêté, au Parc-Saint-Maur, cependant qu'il cambriolait l'appartement du rentier Dorlier.

— Albert Petit, 20 ans, marinier à bord d'un dragueur amarré à Puteaux, s'est laissé broyer par un engrenage.

— Dans sa cabine de la péniche *Coquette*, amarrée à Puteaux, le marinier Martin s'est pendu.

— M. Jules Bourin, de la Varenne-Saint-Hilaire, qui souffrait du cœur, s'est tué de deux balles dans la tête.

— En montant une machine agricole, à Mayen-Multien (S.-et-M.), Alb. Gibert a fait une chute de 12 mètres. Fracture des bras.

— Près de Meaux, des ouvriers agricoles en grève ont coupé les traits d'un chariot que conduisait un négociant en fourrages.

Fig. 11. Félix Fénéon (French, born Italy. 1861–1944). Excerpt from the column "Nouvelles en trois lignes" (News in three lines), *Le Matin*, May 16, 1906. Newspaper. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

COLLECTION FÉLIX FÉNÉON

For some fifty years, from the beginning of his career in the 1880s until at least the early 1930s, Fénéon collected paintings, drawings, and posters by the artists he admired. Stuffed into a succession of modest Paris apartments were scores of works by the Neo-Impressionists, including Seurat, Signac, Pissarro, Luce, Cross, Angrand, van Rysselberghe, and Ker-Xavier Roussel; by Nabis such as Bonnard, Vuillard, and Vallotton; and by twentieth-century Fauves including Matisse, van Dongen, André Derain, and Raoul Dufy. Mixed in with these famous names were less-familiar artists whose work and friendship he also valued: Lucie Cousturier, Émile Compard, Marcel Gromaire, and Severino Rappa, among many others. Toward the end of his career, in the 1920s, he became enchanted by Amedeo Modigliani, acquiring at least eight major paintings. He also came to own a few works by the Surrealists André Masson and Max Ernst, whom he probably met through his work as editor at yet another progressive publishing venture, Éditions de La Sirène, between 1920 and 1924 (where, among other things, he published the first French translation of James Joyce). If there is one quality that unites most of these works, it is a bold, modernist approach to color.

Sharing the Fénéons' crowded homes was an equally astonishing assortment of objects from Africa, Oceania and the Americas (fig. 12). As Philippe Peltier explains on pages 183–95, it is unclear exactly when Fénéon began acquiring these works, but it may have been as early as 1904 (two years earlier than Matisse, Derain, and Pablo Picasso first began to pay serious attention to them). Fénéon was part of the ever-widening circle of artists, dealers, and collectors who were passionately engaged with these objects in the early twentieth century. Most approached them with a romanticizing view that reduced them to the embodiments of an idealized, precivilized state. Fénéon's interest also stemmed from his anarchist anticolonialism. He was one of the first Europeans to launch an inquiry into the issue of the proper status and disposition of the artworks that had been brought into Europe through colonial channels and were, at that time, exhibited primarily in ethnographic museums, according to the hierarchies of European colonial culture. In 1920, he published an article in *Le Bulletin de la vie artistique*—yet another journal he founded—entitled "Enquête sur des arts lointains: Seront-ils admis au Louvre?" (Survey on arts from remote places: Will they be admitted to the Louvre?). In it, as Cécile Bargues explains on pages 196–99, he asked a number of artists, collectors, dealers, and intellectuals to respond to his prescient question. He also sought to advance the understanding of these works by lending them generously to exhibitions, including MoMA's *African Negro Art* in 1935, as Yaëlle Biro, Léa Saint-Raymond, and Élodie Vaudry recount on pages 200–203.

The breadth and quality of Fénéon's collection is only partially suggested by the total number of works put up for sale in the five auctions dedicated to them in 1941 and 1947. The first was a means of raising funds to pay his cancer-related hospital bills. The other four took place after he and his wife, Fanny, had both died (he in 1944 and she in 1946). Together these auctions comprised some 475 drawings and paintings by more than fifty European artists as well as at least four hundred non-Western works. The number of items that passed through Fénéon's hands was much greater than this, however, as he regularly sold or gave away paintings, drawings, and other objects. In the case of Seurat, for example, some twenty paintings and fifty-four drawings were sold at the auctions, yet the provenance information published in the 1961 catalogue raisonné (which was based, crucially, on Fénéon's detailed notes), reveals that there were some fifty-three paintings and 180 drawings by Seurat in Fénéon's collection at one point or another.[26] In most cases, we do not know what prompted him to part with certain works at certain moments, but we do know that he made occasional efforts to place specific works in important collections, such as that of Solomon R. Guggenheim in the 1930s, as Megan Fontanella relates on pages 158–63. Fénéon was known for his generosity, and he sometimes gave smaller works away. He gave a small study for Signac's *Opus 217* (fig. 35) to the art historian John Rewald in the 1930s; Rewald, in turn, gave it to The Museum of Modern Art.

Fénéon did not come from wealth. He was able to amass such a collection in part because he appreciated the artworks before others did and because he had such close relationships with the artists. Some works he bought as a way of helping less fortunate artists.[27] Others, it is safe to assume, he felt he could not live without. Modern art was a priority in his life, both for the great visual pleasure it gave him and for the ideals of freedom, revolution, and a more liberated future that he felt it represented. And so, as his assistant at Bernheim-Jeune, Francis de Miomandre, explained, "piece by piece and depriving himself of everything, like a Balzacian hero, he put together the most beautiful collection of modern paintings in Paris" as well as a major collection "of objects of African art (statuettes, masks, weapons, etc.), because he was the first to discover their classic beauty beneath their appearance of foreignness and exoticism."[28]

A Communist in the later decades of his life, Fénéon thought of bequeathing his collection to the Russian people, partly to support their struggle and partly because he was wary of the reactionary tastes of French museums, especially the Musée du Luxembourg, which presented the work of living artists.[29] This idea arose in a political context that was particularly troubled by the rise of fascism in Europe and against a backdrop of violent manifestations by the far-right Croix-de-Feu league in Paris. André Gide's *Return from the U.S.S.R.* (1936) and the signing of the German-Soviet pact in 1939 probably signaled the end of his illusions.

By refusing to give the collection to an institution, Fénéon asserted his desire not to leave his name to posterity, in conformance with his anarchist convictions. He even went to the point of destroying his private documents. "It was

Fig. 12. Félix and Fanny Fénéon in their apartment. c. 1926–28. Photograph, 6 ½ × 4 ⅜ in. (16.5 × 11 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York

pathetic," wrote Rewald, "and yet admirable to see his efforts to leave nothing behind him but admiration in the hearts of those who had known and loved him. Perhaps he would have wanted to destroy that admiration too if he knew how."[30]

The 1941 sale brought in six million francs, providing financially for the Fénéons until their deaths. The final sales, in 1947, brought a total of twenty million francs (fig. 13). Per Fénéon's instructions, the money was used to create a literary and artistic prize at the Université de Paris known as the Prix Fénéon.

The auctions, lauded for their record-setting sales by the French press, make any attempt at the reconstruction of Fénéon's collection a daunting prospect today, as the works were dispersed in many different and unknown directions. The auction catalogues, moreover, include only a cursory listing of the objects, accompanied by very few illustrations. Still, these works—a selection of which forms the spine of this exhibition—together compose a portrait of their former owner. In a short unpublished introduction for the 1941 sale catalogue, Fénéon wrote a biographical note in the third person that points to his deep identification with his collection: "We will not insist on either his incursions into the literary field or his taste for the sculpture of the Tropics, or on other forms of his activity, for it is expressly in the collection promised to the hammer of M. Alphonse Bellier that one finds the image of his personality, faithful, complete, and singular."[31]

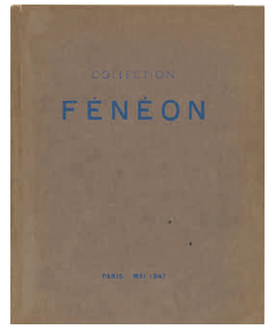
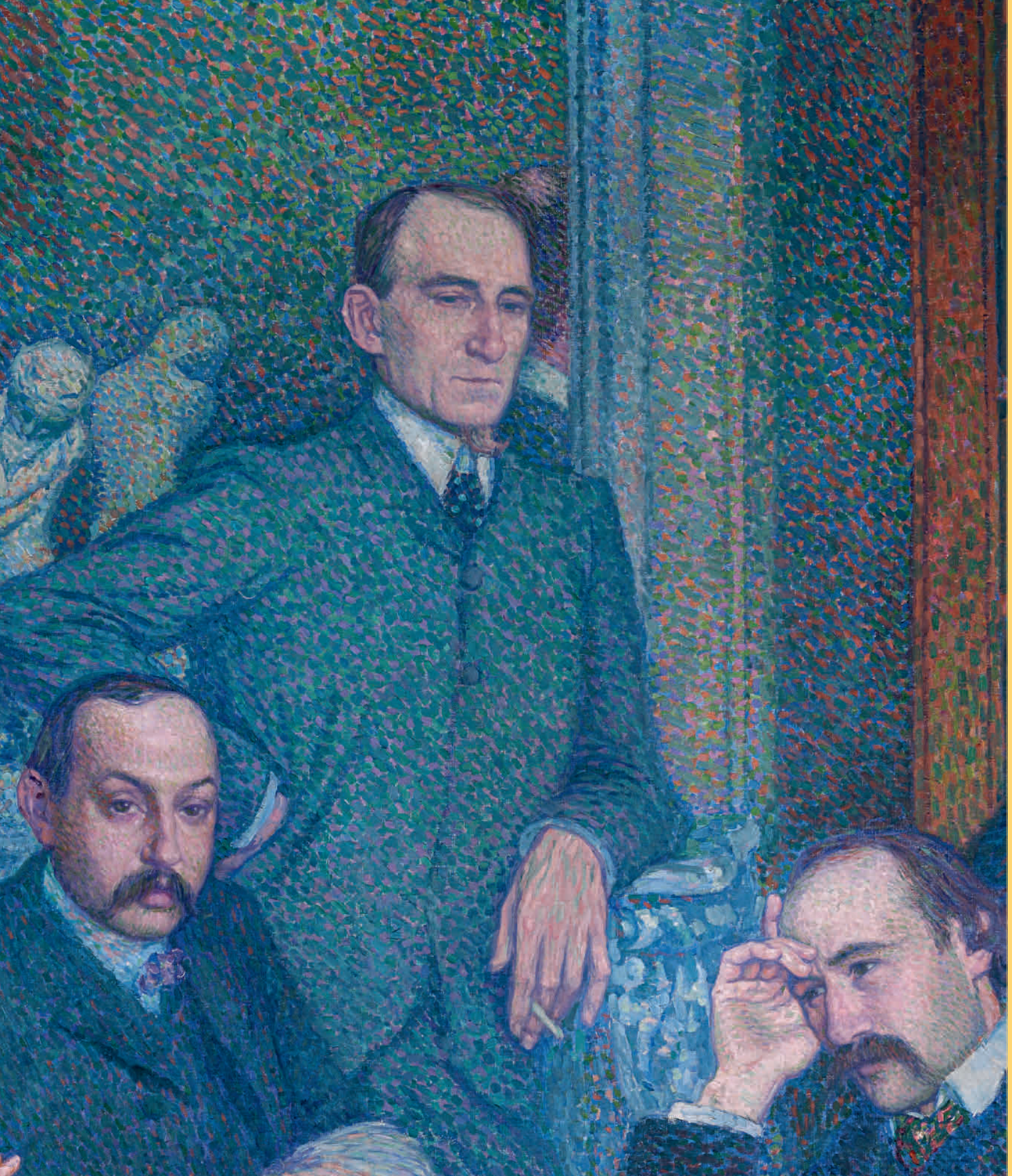


Fig. 13. *Collection Fénéon*. 1947. Catalogue for the auction at Hôtel Drouot, Paris, May 30, 1947, page: 10 ⅝ × 8 ½ in. (27 × 21.5 cm). Publisher: Hôtel Drouot, Paris. The Museum of Modern Art Library, New York

Notes

1. Paul Signac to Félix Fénéon, July 21, 1890, Archives Signac, Paris; trans. in Joan U. Halperin, *Félix Fénéon: Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 143.
2. Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, xiv.
3. Ibid., 66–69.
4. *Gazette des tribunaux*, August 8, 1894. Unless otherwise noted, translations from the French are by the authors.
5. Sébastien Faure, *Encyclopédie anarchiste* (Paris: Librairie internationale, 1934), 1:83; trans. in Luc Sante, introduction to Fénéon, *Novels in Three Lines* (New York: New York Review Books, 2007), xii.
6. See John Merriman, *The Dynamite Club: How a Bombing in Fin-de-Siècle Paris Ignited the Age of Modern Terror* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 2009), esp. 7–24.
7. Ibid., 20.
8. See Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 259.
9. Ibid., 276.
10. Ibid., 274. This entry from Signac's diary (December 26, 1894) is also cited in Fénéon, *Œuvres plus que complètes*, ed. Halperin (Geneva and Paris: Librairie Droz, 1970), 1:lxv.
11. Sante, introduction, xxxi.
12. Maurice Boudot-Lamotte, "Souvenirs, 1897–1902" (unpublished memoir, 1950), Archives Marie-Thérèse Laurenge, Paris; quoted and trans. in Hilary Spurling, *The Unknown Matisse: A Life of Henri Matisse, The Early Years, 1869–1908* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 328.
13. Signac to Charles Angrand, November 21, 1906; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 359.
14. Signac to Angrand, January, 1907; trans. in ibid.
15. Remy de Gourmont, "Félix Fénéon," *Le IIme Livre des masques* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1898), 43.
16. Guillaume Apollinaire, "Chroniques: Félix Fénéon," *Mercure de France*, March 14, 1914.
17. Alfred Jarry, *L'Omnibus de Corinthe*, no. 5 (October 15, 1897): 32; trans. in Sante, introduction, ix.
18. Annette Vaillant, *Bonnard ou le bonheur de voir* (Neuchâtel: Éditions Ides et Calendes, 1965), 110.
19. Édouard Déverin, "Fénéon l'énigmatique," *Mercure de France*, February 15, 1934, 69.
20. Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 364.
21. Jean Arlin, "Deux Bourses annuelles en souvenir de Félix Fénéon," *Arts*, March 12, 1948.
22. Jarry, *Almanach illustré du Père Ubu*, January–March 1899, 76.
23. Sante, introduction, xxi.
24. See Fénéon, *Novels in Three Lines*, 96.
25. Sante, introduction, viii.
26. See César Mange de Hauke, *Seurat et son œuvre*, 2 vols (Paris: Gründ, 1961).
27. John Rewald, "Félix Fénéon: II," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 33 (February 1948): 116–17.
28. Francis de Miomandre, "Souvenirs sur Félix Fénéon," *La Tunisie française*, January 31, 1942.
29. Fénéon to Maurice Girardin, December 10, 1941, quoted by Blaise Gauthier in the introduction to the Girardin sale catalogue, Galerie Charpentier, Paris, December 10, 1953.
30. Rewald, "Félix Fénéon: II," 125.
31. Fénéon, handwritten note, Fonds Alphonse Bellier, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris.



FÉNÉON AND NEO-IMPRESSIONISM

**“Anyone can err, especially a critic.
But to express without frivolity or
insincerity what one feels—I admire that.”**

4. Paul Signac (French, 1863-1935)
Opus 217. Sur l'émail d'un fond rythmique des mesures et d'angles, de tons et des teintes, portrait de M. Félix Fénéon en 1890 (**Opus 217. Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones, and Tints, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890**). 1890
Oil on canvas, 29 × 36½ in. (73.5 × 92.5 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller, 1991

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

Signac's *Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890*

STARR FIGURA

It was Félix Fénéon who inspired Paul Signac to create what is arguably his greatest painting: *Opus 217. Sur l'émail d'un fond rythmique des mesures et d'angles, de tons et des teintes, portrait de M. Félix Fénéon en 1890* (*Opus 217. Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones, and Tints, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890*, 1890; plate 4).[1] Apotheosizing his brilliant friend and most fervent champion, Signac placed Fénéon's hieratic figure against a swirling, kaleidoscopic background. The sheer boldness of the painting—the unprecedented way that it marshals color, pattern, and brushstroke to bridge representation and abstraction—marks a crescendo in the history of Neo-Impressionism, born in part from the symbiotic friendship between the painter and the critic. It stands not only as the quintessential portrait of Fénéon but also as a visual manifesto for Neo-Impressionism and its basis in nineteenth-century color theory, and, ultimately, as a radiant signal of the advent of modernism.

FÉNÉON AND SIGNAC

Fénéon and Signac first met around 1884, when they were both in their early twenties and gaining entrée to the heady world of avant-garde culture by frequenting the same Symbolist literary salons. By 1886, Signac had begun applying paint to his canvases in tiny dots—an approach deeply influenced by his good friend Georges-Pierre Seurat. That same year, Fénéon christened Signac's and Seurat's work "néo-impressionniste" in his review of the eighth and final Impressionist exhibition. Fénéon quickly became the Neo-Impressionists' most ardent and perceptive advocate in the press, and Signac, who was naturally sociable and outspoken (in contrast to the quiet, austere Seurat), became the chief spokesperson

for the artists in their circle, which soon included Camille Pissarro, Albert Dubois-Pillet, Maximilien Luce, and others.

Among the articles Fénéon wrote as the Neo-Impressionists' foremost apologist was the first biography of Signac, published as a four-page issue of the journal *Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui* in the spring of 1890; Seurat's charcoal portrait of Signac graced the cover (fig. 40). Fénéon opened the text by calling Signac "the young glory of Neo-Impressionism," then went on to explain the premises that underlay the artist's approach to color: "Two adjacent colors exert a mutual influence, each imposing its own complementary on the other; for green a purple, for red a blue green, for yellow an ultramarine, for violet a greenish yellow, for orange a cyan blue: contrast of hues. The lightest one becomes lighter; the darkest one darker: contrast of values."[2]

Fénéon's writing was informed by his enthusiasm for contemporary color theories, which he shared with Signac and Seurat. Of particular interest to all three was the work of their friend Charles Henry, a mathematician, poet, librarian, and amateur scientist. Henry's "Introduction à une esthétique scientifique" (Introduction to a scientific aesthetics, 1885) strongly influenced the Neo-Impressionists, who sought to apply his principles of the emotive potential of specific colors, lines, and directions and their combinations.[3] Signac collaborated closely with Henry on his later publications, providing charts and diagrams to illustrate his aesthetic theories. As Joan U. Halperin has noted, Henry's ideas about the physiology of sensations appealed to Fénéon because their basis in science offered ways not only "to counteract superstitions and prejudices embedded in religious and moral codes, but also to understand and explore new literary and art forms."[4] But Fénéon also playfully mocked his efforts to quantify art and poetry, describing Henry thus in his entry in the satirical *Petit Bottin des lettres et des arts* (Little directory of literature and arts, 1886): "Measures the power of a metaphor of Mallarmé on the dynamograph, analyzes the verses of Jules Laforgue on the blackboard, makes charts of illnesses, reduces the paintings of Degas to equations."[5]

Henry's theories built upon the work of other scientists; Fénéon and the Neo-Impressionists studied them as well. The American physicist Ogden Nicholas Rood's *Modern Chromatics, with Applications to Art and Industry* (1879; fig. 32) advised painters to create an optical mixture of colors by "placing a quantity of small dots of two colors very near each other, and allowing them to be blended by the eye placed at the proper distance."[6] Doing so, he proclaimed, would result in greater luminosity than is achievable through mixing pigments. The French chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul's *Exposé d'un moyen de définir et de nommer les couleurs*… (Analysis of a means of defining and naming colors . . . , 1861; fig. 90), a copy of which was in Signac's personal library, established a precise nomenclature and classification system for colors; Chevreul had earlier identified the law of simultaneous contrast, which describes how the perception of a color is necessarily influenced by adjacent colors.

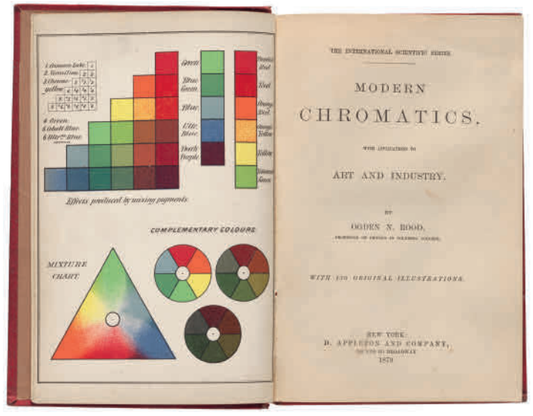


Fig. 32. *Modern Chromatics, with Applications to Art and Industry*, by Ogden Nicholas Rood. 1879. Book, page: 7 ¾ × 5 ⅜ in. (19.5 × 13.5 cm). Publisher: D. Appleton & Co., New York. The Museum of Modern Art Library, New York

In a letter he sent to Signac along with a first draft of his biography, Fénéon expressed mild dismay at having to rely too heavily on Henry's scientific language to describe the Neo-Impressionist technique: "The terminological constraints of H[enry] seem excessive to me. We are in a studio, not a laboratory."[7] Signac replied with reassurance: "Oh, how happy I am about your text. It is a perfect exposition of the technique, incomparable in its charm and accuracy. Do not worry too much about our Henry's criticism."[8] In the end, Fénéon advised against applying Henry's method too literally in the creation of a painting but acknowledged its role in Signac's harmonious approach to color and line.

Delighted with Fénéon's article, Signac invited the critic to sit for a portrait: "I have it in mind this winter to do a painted, life-size biography of Félix Fénéon. What do you think?"[9] With a characteristic blend of support and self-effacement, Fénéon replied a week later: "This idea of a portrait, ah, my dear Paul: I am only too willing to be your accomplice. If, one of these winters, my performance is good enough, I would not mind having it eternalized for the walls of the museums of the future, whose catalogue will read: Paul Signac (1863—1963) / Portrait of an Unknown Young Man H. 2 m 30 – L. 1 m 05 / Do you already have an idea for the pose, dress, and decor?"[10] They continued to exchange letters about the portrait, and by July it was clear Signac was beginning to envision something extraordinary: "It would not be a commonplace portrait at all, but a carefully composed picture, with very carefully arranged colors and lines. A rhythmic and angular pose. A decorative Félix, entering with his hat or a flower in his hand . . . on a very high, very narrow canvas. A well-defined background composed of two complementary colors, and a suit blending with them. . . . You will not have to put up with much posing: just long enough to make a sketch from which—a painting."[11] Fénéon wrote back to accept with "fervor" and to request that the portrait be an "effigy absolutely full-face."[12] Finally, on September 21, 1890, Signac summoned his friend: "I think that the time is nigh: as soon as you have a minute, be so gracious as to come to the studio in a light yellow overcoat. We will search together."[13] The letter, written in colored pencil, begins in yellow and shades gradually through orange, red, purple, blue, and green, prefiguring the chromatic arrangement of the painting to come (fig. 33).

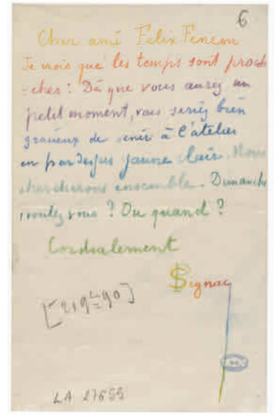


Fig. 33. Letter from Paul Signac to Félix Fénéon. September 21, 1890. Colored pencil on paper, 6 ¾ × 4 ⅜ in. (17.2 × 11.1 cm). Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris. Bibliothèque centrale des musées nationaux

Signac was true to his word about requiring little of Fénéon's time for sitting. He made just three known drawings to consult while painting: an oil sketch of the full composition on wood (fig. 34), a small sketch of the head in profile (fig. 35), and a gouache study for the background (fig. 36). The last reveals that Signac made extensive revisions to the sequence of patterns in the composition's backdrop; several layers of corrections were pasted over different segments. The plan for a vertical canvas changed, apparently when Signac decided to base the portrait's pinwheel background on a horizontally oriented illustration in a book with Japanese kimono patterns (fig. 37).[14]

Fig. 34. Paul Signac (French, 1863–1935). Sketch for *Opus 217*. 1890. Oil on wood, 9 1/16 × 13 9/16 in. (23 × 34.5 cm). Private collection

Fig. 35. Paul Signac. *Félix Fénéon*. 1890. Conté crayon on paper, 3 7/8 × 3 1/4 in. (9.8 × 8.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. John Rewald Bequest, 1994. Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

A "DECORATIVE FÉLIX"

Signac's depiction of Fénéon emphasizes the critic's reputation as a dandy. Dandies, as Charles Baudelaire famously wrote, "have no other calling but to cultivate the idea of beauty in their persons, to satisfy their passions, to feel and to think. . . . Dandyism does not even consist . . . in an immoderate taste for the toilet and material elegance. For the perfect dandy, these things are no more than symbols of his aristocratic superiority of mind. . . . At certain points, dandyism borders upon the spiritual and the stoical."[15] Fénéon's dandyism expressed itself in the aestheticism of his writing, his love of art, his stoic reserve, his disdain for the bourgeoisie, and the refined and slightly eccentric way in which he dressed and groomed himself.

The yellow jacket that Signac specifically asked him to wear is one of a number of details that speak to the critic's dandyism in the portrait. Signac accentuated Fénéon's tall, trim figure, elegant in the overcoat that he wears with a black vest, red tie, and starched white shirt. In the lapel pocket is a perfectly folded handkerchief. In his left hand, he carries the walking stick, gloves, and top hat that he was known to take with him whenever he went out. With a gesture of formality, generosity, and grace, he extends his right hand to offer a flower—a cyclamen—to someone outside the picture. Against Fénéon's stated wishes, Signac depicted his friend in profile, highlighting his distinctive nose and goatee—the strangely provocative, almost devilishly nonconformist wisp of facial hair that was a personal trademark.

Fig. 36. Paul Signac. Study for *Opus 217*. 1890–91. Cut-and-pasted paper with gouache and ink on paper, 11 × 16 15/16 in. (28 × 43 cm). Private collection

Fig. 37. Unknown artist (Japanese). Study of kimono motifs. c. 1866–80. Woodblock print from an illustrated book, 8 5/8 × 11 3/16 in. (21.9 × 28.4 cm) (open). Private collection

A "WELL-DEFINED BACKGROUND"

While Fénéon's figure is remarkable by itself, it is the unusual abstract background and the way it merges with the figure in the foreground that give the painting its mysterious power. Radiating out from a point just slightly above and to the left of the center of the canvas are eight curved segments. Each features a different pattern made up of complementary hues: purple is inflected with yellow arabesques, orange stripes alternate with blue, planetary disks in shades of yellow are surrounded by violet, deep blue is peppered with yellow-orange stars, orange is patterned with pale blue petals, strips of red abut strips of green. One of the segments gradually shifts from almost white at the center to dark blue at the outer edge, creating a sense of visual flow. The entire painting is composed of tiny Pointillist patches of color—many of them not dots but small rectangular brushstrokes—variously oriented to follow the shape or thrust of the pattern they are being used to describe (fig. 38). Upon close inspection, we can see that each passage is composed not just from a mass of brushstrokes in the main color but also from a smaller number of strokes in a complementary color. As Rood and Henry prescribed, these colors blend in the eye to a certain degree when viewed from a distance and, in the process of doing so, generate a shimmering luminosity. The subtle charges given off by the complementary colors and the directional brushstrokes enhance the sense of swirling motion generated by the pinwheel pattern, which also suggests infinite expansion.

The painting pays homage to Henry's idea of "continual auto-genesis," the self-perpetuating energy of the arabesque.[16] Whether in musical or visual form, the arabesque is, as José Argüelles has characterized it, "often intricate, repetitive, self-reproductive, and, ideally, self-mutative."[17] This ornamental motif and its variants, including the meander, the spiral, and the zigzag, can be found

across cultures and in most tribal and decorative arts. In *Opus 217*, the lines of Fénéon's nose, elbow, and cane descend in a zigzag pattern. His bent arms, the upturned curl of his goatee, the arrangement of the fingers of his right hand, and the cyclamen he holds (its very name signaling the circular or cyclical) all echo the clockwise spin of the background. This visual rhyming brings the contradiction between foreground and background—Fénéon's vertical, static figure (a representation) and the pinwheel's decorative and optical patterning (an abstraction)—into harmony. Although the dabs of paint used for Fénéon's face and hair are a bit smaller and more closely compacted than those used in other areas, the general uniformity of Signac's Pointillism across the canvas reinforces the synthesis. As Fénéon had written in his biography of Signac, "The flight of each color is free, and the solidarity of all is strict: the canvas is unified under their surge."[18]

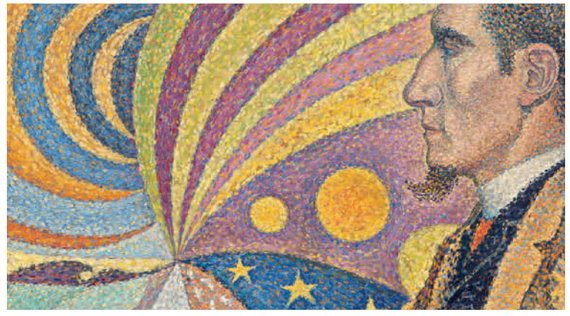


Fig. 38. Detail of *Opus 217*.

Signac's wordy title is a spoof on the long and pedantic titles that Henry and scientists like Chevreul gave to their studies. An in-joke, it endows the painting with both seriousness and, paradoxically, self-parody. The title also signals that Signac, like Henry and other Symbolist writers, saw painting and music as analogous. Signac included opus numbers in the titles of all his paintings from 1886 to the early 1890s, but only in *Opus 217* did he attempt to make this analogy explicit by creating a background "rhythmic with beats and angles, tones, and tints."

RECEPTION

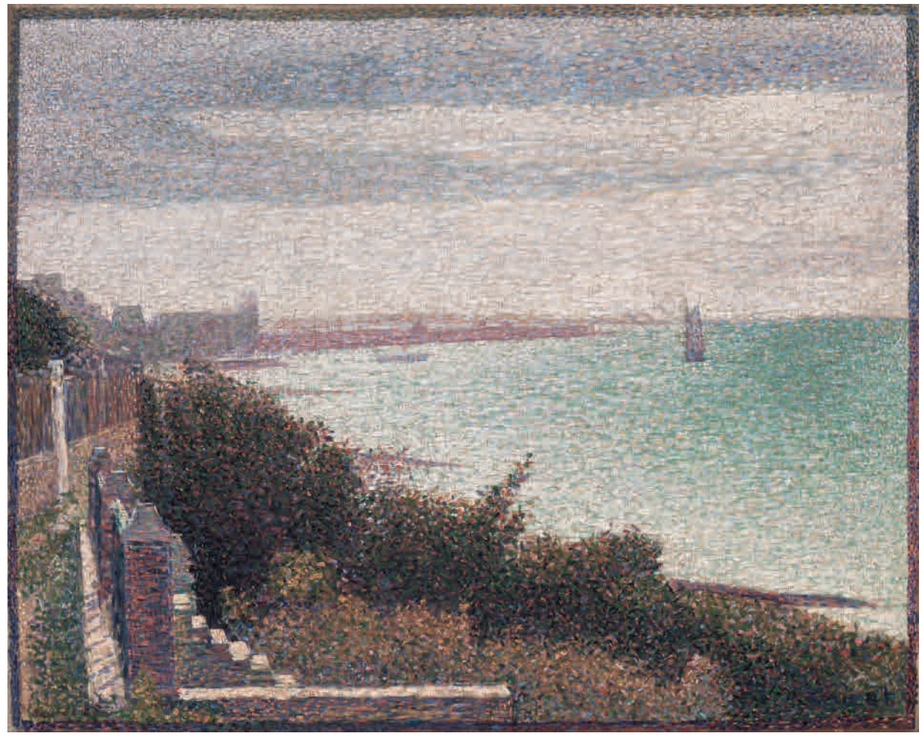
Opus 217 was first exhibited at the Salon des indépendants in the spring of 1891. Visitors, even those close to Signac and Fénéon, were surprised and troubled by the painting. The art critic Gustave Geffroy wrote, "My taste for explication stops short in front of [this] painting,"[19] and the Belgian poet Émile Verhaeren declared, "This cold and dry portrait can hardly please us as much as the landscapes by the same painter."[20] Another critic, Jules Antoine, called the portrait "curious" and lamented that Fénéon's figure was sacrificed to the background.[21] Pissarro expressed his disappointment in this "bizarre portrait of Fénéon, standing, holding a lily, against a background of interlacing ribbons of color which are neither decorative nor comprehensible in terms of feeling, and do not even give the work decorative beauty."[22] Arsène Alexandre was the only critic who seemed to understand the painting, though his words suggest that he may have been briefed by Signac or Fénéon: "M. Signac, who is very fervent and bold, has portrayed a model against a synthetic background of curves and associated tones, in which one must see, not the simple caprice of a colorist, but an experimental demonstration of the theories on color and line which will soon be published in a work by the artist in collaboration with M. Charles Henry."[23] Fénéon himself disliked the painting, though his response was likely colored by modesty.[24]

Fig. 39. Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890). *Portrait of Joseph Roulin*. 1889. Oil on canvas, 25 ⅜ × 21 ¾ in. (64.4 × 55.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Rosenberg, Nelson A. Rockefeller, Mr. and Mrs. Armand P. Bartos, The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection, Mr. and Mrs. Werner E. Josten, and Loula D. Lasker Bequest (all by exchange), 1989

The uncomprehending reviews indicate how radical the painting was. While a number of Signac's avant-garde peers, including Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh (fig. 39), had begun to set their portrait subjects against decorative backgrounds that emphasize the flat surface of the picture plane, Signac's stylized portrait is in some respects even more radically abstract and forward-looking. Its argument for the primacy of color and color relationships—as theorized by Henry and proselytized by Fénéon—would come to be one of the cornerstones of modernism in the twentieth century, as exemplified by a number of artists that Fénéon himself would later promote, from Henri Matisse and Kees van Dongen to the Futurists, as well as other key modernists, from Vasily Kandinsky and Sonia Delaunay-Terk to Josef Albers and Ellsworth Kelly. In this sense, perhaps, the painting offers a precocious vision of the modern encapsulated in the magician-like figure of Fénéon, who had done and would continue to do as much as anyone to coax it into existence.

Notes

1. This essay is indebted to the following texts: José Argüelles, "Paul Signac's 'Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones and Colors, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890, Opus 217,'" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 1969): 49–53; Kirk Varnedoe, commentary on the painting in *Masterpieces from the David and Peggy Rockefeller Collection: Manet to Picasso*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 77–80; and Marina Ferretti-Bocquillon, "Portrait of Félix Fénéon, Opus 217," in Ferretti-Bocquillon et al., *Signac, 1863-1935*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 159–63.
2. Félix Fénéon, "Signac," *Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui*, no. 373 (1890): [2], repr. in Fénéon, *Œuvres plus que complètes*, ed. Joan U. Halperin (Geneva and Paris: Librairie Droz, 1970), 1:174–75; trans. in Ferretti-Bocquillon, "Portrait of Félix Fénéon," 160–61.
3. Charles Henry, "Introduction à une esthétique scientifique," *La Revue contemporaine* 2 (August 1885): 441–69.
4. Halperin, *Félix Fénéon: Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 65.
5. Fénéon, "Henry," in Paul Adam et al., *Petit Bottin des lettres et des arts* (Paris: E. Giraud, 1886), 68, repr. in Fénéon, *Œuvres plus que complètes*, 2:542; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 65.
6. Ogden Nicholas Rood, *Modern Chromatics, with Applications to Art and Industry* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1879).
7. Fénéon to Signac, April 1890, Archives Signac, Paris; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 134.
8. Signac to Fénéon, April 29, 1890, Archives Signac, partially repr. in Françoise Cachin, "Le Portrait de Fénéon par Signac: Une source inédite," *La Revue de l'art*, no. 6 (1969), 90–91; trans. in Ferretti-Bocquillon, "Portrait of Félix Fénéon," 160.
9. Signac to Fénéon, June 18, 1890, MS 408, Bibliothèque centrale des musées nationaux, Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA), Paris; trans. in Ferretti-Bocquillon, "Portrait of Félix Fénéon," 161.
10. Fénéon to Signac, June 25, 1890, Archives Signac; trans. in Ferretti-Bocquillon, "Portrait of Félix Fénéon," 161.
11. Signac to Fénéon, July 21, 1890, Archives Signac; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 143.
12. Fénéon to Signac, July 30, 1890, Archives Signac; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 143–44.
13. Signac to Fénéon, September 21, 1890, MS 408, Bibliothèque centrale des musées nationaux, INHA; trans. in Ferretti-Bocquillon, "Portrait of Félix Fénéon," 162.
14. Cachin, "Portrait de Fénéon par Signac," 90–91.
15. Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Phaidon, 1995), 27–28.
16. Argüelles makes this argument in "Paul Signac's 'Against the Enamel.'"
17. Ibid., 49.
18. Fénéon, "Signac," quoted and trans. in Robyn S. Roslak, "The Politics of Aesthetic Harmony: Neo-Impressionism, Science, and Anarchism," *Art Bulletin* 73, no. 3 (September 1991), 382.
19. Gustave Geffroy, "Chronique artistique—Les Indépendants," *La Justice* 11, no. 4104 (April 10, 1891), 1; trans. in *Masterpieces from the Rockefeller Collection*, 77.
20. Émile Verhaeren, "Le Salon des indépendants," *L'Art moderne* 11, no. 14 (April 5, 1891): 111.
21. Jules Antoine, "Exposition des artistes indépendants," *La Plume* 3, no. 49 (May 1, 1891): 157.
22. Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, March 30, 1891, quoted in Marie-Thérèse Lemoyne de Forges, *Paul Signac*, exh. cat. (Paris: Ministère d'état, Affaires culturelles, 1963), 42; trans. in *Masterpieces from the Rockefeller Collection*, 77.
23. Arsène Alexandre, "L'Exposition des indépendants," *Paris*, March 20, 1891, quoted and trans. in ibid.
24. See Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 147



5. Georges-Pierre Seurat (French, 1859-1891)
Grandcamp, un soir (**Grandcamp, Evening**).
1885, painted border c. 1888-89
Oil on canvas, 26 × 32½ in. (66.2 × 82.4 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Estate of John Hay Whitney, 1983

6. Georges-Pierre Seurat
Le Bec du Hoc, Grandcamp. 1885
Oil on canvas, 25½ × 32⅛ in. (64.5 × 81.5 cm)
Tate

"M. Seurat's seascapes expand, calm and melancholic. They ripple monotonously towards the distant horizon where the sky falls. One rock rules over them—the Bec du Hoc." —F. F.

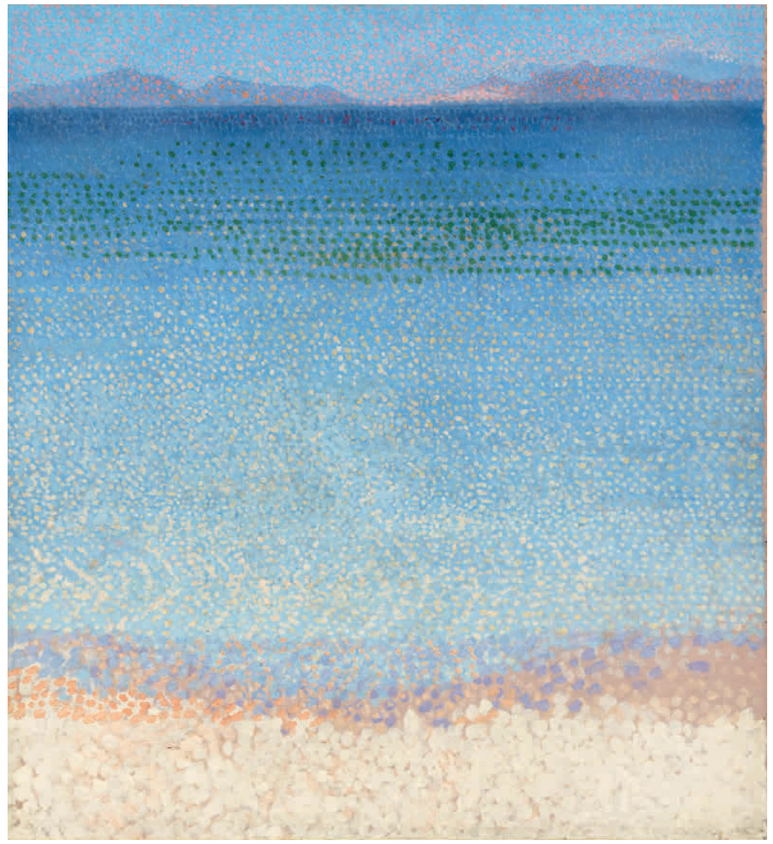
7. Paul Signac (French, 1863–1935)
La Route Pontoise (**L'Embranchement de Bois-Colombes, Opus 130**) (**The Junction at Bois-Colombes, Opus 130**). 1886
Oil on canvas, 13 × 18⅛ in. (33 × 47 cm)
Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, England

"M. Paul Signac is drawn towards suburban landscapes. The canvases of his that date from this year are painted with tonal division; they achieve a frenzied intensity of light . . . in The Junction at Bois-Colombes *(April–May 1886), the trees are scorched and wilt."* —F. F.

8. Paul Signac
Les Gazomètres. Clichy (**Gasometers at Clichy**). 1886
Oil on canvas, 25 9/16 × 31⅞ in. (65 × 81 cm)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Felton Bequest, 1948

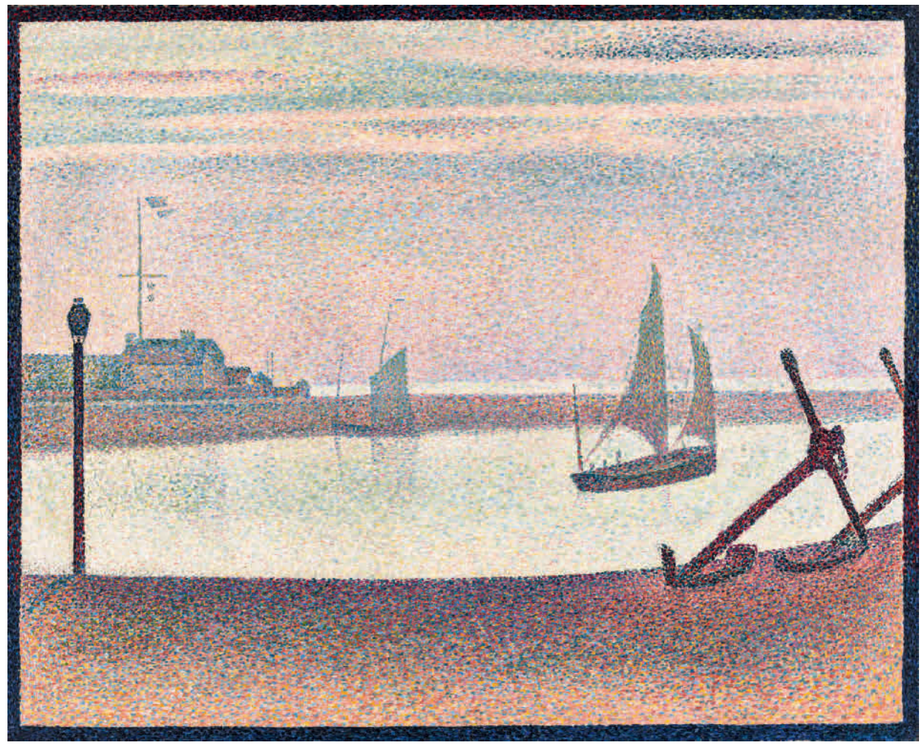
*"*Gasometers at Clichy *. . . with its picket fences laden with work trousers and jackets set out to dry, the desolation of its peeling walls, its scorched grass and its incandescent roofs in an atmosphere that asserts itself and darkens as it rises, hollowing out an abyss of blinding blue."* —F. F.

9. Albert Dubois-Pillet (French, 1846-1890)
Forges à Ivry (**The Forges of Ivry**). 1888-89
Oil on canvas, 8 11/16 × 13 in. (22 × 33 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



10. Henri-Edmond Cross (French, 1856-1910)
Les Îles d'or (**The Golden Isles**). 1891-92
Oil on canvas, 23¼ × 21¼ in. (59 × 54 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon



11. Georges-Pierre Seurat (French, 1859–1891)
Le Chenal de Gravelines, un soir
(**The Channel at Gravelines, Evening**). 1890
Oil on canvas, 25 ¾ × 32 ¼ in. (65.4 × 81.9 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of
Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden, 1963

12. Paul Signac (French, 1863–1935)
Soleil couchant. Pêche à la sardine. Adagio. Opus 221
(**Setting Sun. Sardine Fishing. Adagio. Opus 221**)
from the series La Mer, les Barques, Concarneau (The Sea, the Boats, Concarneau). 1891
Oil on canvas, 25 ⅝ × 31 ⅞ in. (65 × 81 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Mrs. John Hay Whitney Bequest, 1998

"Illustrating with their progress sluggish skies with graded harmonies, the boats here fan out in the morning, there, in calm weather, align the parallels of bare masts and oars in a distant Egyptian procession." —F. F.

13. Georges-Pierre Seurat (French, 1859–1891)
Lisière de bois au printemps (**Edge of the Wood, Springtime**). 1882–83
Oil on wood, 6½ × 10¼ in. (16.5 × 26 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Gift of Max and Rosy Kaganovitch, 1973

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

14. Georges-Pierre Seurat
Arbres, hiver (**Trees, Winter**). 1883
Oil on wood, 6 1/16 × 9 13/16 in. (15.4 × 25 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Gift of Philippe Meyer, 2000

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

15. Georges-Pierre Seurat
Le Petit Paysan en bleu (**Young Peasant in Blue**). 1882
Oil on canvas, 18 1/8 × 14 15/16 in. (46 × 38 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Gift of Robert Schmit, 1982

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

16. Georges-Pierre Seurat (French, 1859-1891)
Le Faucheur (**The Mower**). 1881-82
Oil on wood, 6½ × 9⅞ in. (16.5 × 25.1 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

17. Georges-Pierre Seurat
Le Poulain (**Foal**). c. 1882-83
Conté crayon on paper, 9¾ × 12½ in.
(24.8 × 31.8 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
Robert Lehman Collection, 1975

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

18. Georges-Pierre Seurat
Les Meules (**Haystacks**). c. 1882-83
Conté crayon on paper, 9½ × 12¾ in.
(24.1 × 32.4 cm)
Private collection

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

19. Georges-Pierre Seurat (French, 1859–1891)
Paysannes au travail (**Farm Women at Work**). 1882–83
Oil on canvas, 15½ × 18⅛ in. (38.7 × 46 cm)
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Solomon R. Guggenheim Founding Collection, by gift

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

20. Georges-Pierre Seurat
Paysanne assise dans l'herbe (**Peasant Woman Seated in the Grass**). 1883
Oil on canvas, 15 × 18 3/16 in. (38.1 × 46.2 cm)
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Solomon R. Guggenheim Founding Collection, by gift

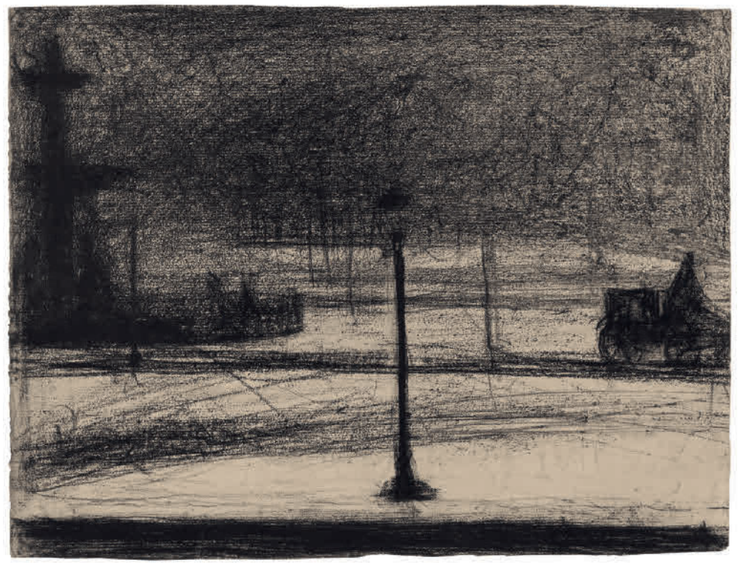
Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

21. Georges-Pierre Seurat (French, 1859–1891)
La Carriole et le chien (**Carriage and Dog**). c. 1882–84
Conté crayon on paper, 12 × 9 in. (30.5 × 22.9 cm)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Louise Reinhardt Smith Bequest, 1996

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

22. Georges-Pierre Seurat
Au crépuscule (**At Dusk**). c. 1882–83
Conté crayon on paper, 12 × 9 7/16 in. (30.5 × 24 cm)
Private collection

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon



23. Georges-Pierre Seurat
Place de la Concorde, l'hiver (**Place de la Concorde, Winter**). c. 1882–83
Conté crayon on paper, 9 1/8 × 12 1/8 in. (23.2 × 30.8 cm)
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Solomon R. Guggenheim Founding Collection, by gift

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

24. Georges-Pierre Seurat (French, 1859–1891)
Buste du dormeur (L'Homme au chapeau melon)
(**Man in a Bowler Hat**). 1883
Conté crayon on paper, 9½ × 11¾ in. (24.1 × 29.8 cm)
Private collection

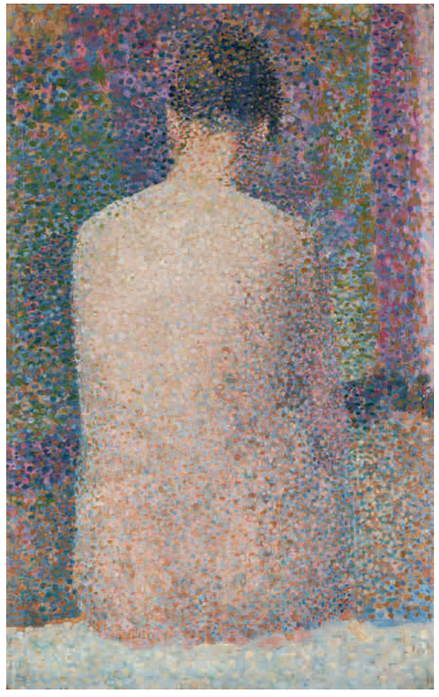
Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

25. Georges-Pierre Seurat
La Zone (Fillette dans la neige—La Grève)
(**The Zone [Outside the City Walls]**). 1882–83
Conté crayon on paper, 9½ × 12⅜ in. (24.1 × 31.5 cm)
The Art Institute of Chicago. Harry B. and Bessie K. Braude Memorial Fund, 2018

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

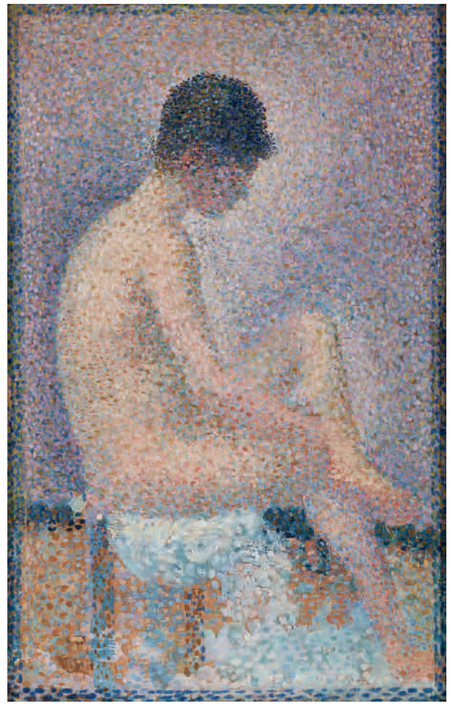
26. Georges-Pierre Seurat
La Lune à Courbevoie: Usines sous la lune
(**Courbevoie: Factories by Moonlight**). c. 1882–83
Conté crayon on paper, 9⁵⁄₁₆ × 12¼ in. (23.7 × 31.1 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Alexander and Grégoire Tarnopol, 1976

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon



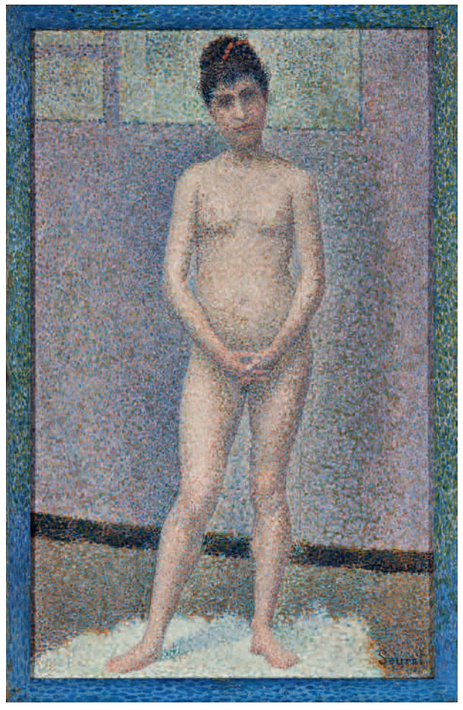
27. Georges-Pierre Seurat (French, 1859–1891)
Poseuse de dos (**Model from the Back**). 1886
Oil on wood, 9⅝ × 6⅛ in. (24.4 × 15.6 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon



28. Georges-Pierre Seurat
Poseuse de profil (**Model in Profile**). 1886
Oil on wood, 9 13/16 × 6 5/16 in. (25 × 16 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon



29. Georges-Pierre Seurat
Poseuse de face (**Model. Facing Front**). 1886-87
Oil on wood, 9 13/16 × 6 5/16 in. (25 × 16 cm)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Formerly Collection Félix Fénéon

PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

Individual works of art appearing in this book may be protected by copyright in the United States and in other countries and may not be reproduced without the permission of the rights holders. In reproducing the images contained in this publication, the Museum obtained the permission of the rights holders whenever possible. Should the Museum have been unable to locate a rights holder, notwithstanding good-faith efforts, it requests that any contact information concerning such rights holders be forwarded, so that they may be contacted for future editions.

The credit lines listed below are in some instances provided at the request of the rights holders.

Adoc-photos/Art Resource, NY: jacket back; plate 30. Photo akg-images: fig. 70. © Photo Archives Bernheim-Jeune: figs. 57, 63, 101. © Archives Fondation Dapper, photo Gérard Berjonneau: fig. 78. Archives de la Préfecture de police, Paris: figs. 50, 51. Archives Vuillard, Paris: plate 1; fig. 99. Art Digital Studio/Damien Perronnet: fig. 77. The Art Institute of Chicago: fig. 19. The Art Institute of Chicago/Art Resource, NY: plates 3, 25. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris: jacket front, endsheets, page 180; plates 4, 7, 8, 12, 35–38, 49, 50, 54–58, 73, 74; figs. 3, 24, 33–36, 38, 41, 42, 44, 55, 88, 99, 103. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome: plate 68. © Association des Amis du Petit Palais, Geneva, photo Studio Monique Bernaz, Geneva: plate 35. The Barnes Foundation: fig. 22. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University: fig. 4. Bibliothèque de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris: collections de la Bibliothèque centrale des Musées nationaux, Paris, BCMN MS 408: fig. 33; Collections Jacques Doucet, Paris, Archives 36/4/1/4: frontispiece. © Bibliothèque nationale de France: plate 39; figs. 5, 11, 46, 89, 94, 96. Collection Jean Bonna: plates 31–34. © 2020 Carlo Carrà/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome: plate 66. © Central-Photos/BHVP/Roger-Viollet: fig. 66. Christophe Champion, Librairie Faustroll, Paris: fig. 91. Chancellerie des Universités de Paris, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet: fig. 7. Photo © Christie's Images/Bridgeman Images: fig. 59. The Courtauld Gallery: fig. 29. © Eric Emo/Musée d'art moderne/Roger-Viollet: plate 84. © Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art: figs. 80, 81. © Field Museum of Natural History—CC BY-NC, photo John Weinstein: fig. 76. © Fondation Musée Barbier-Mueller, photo Studio Ferrazzini-Bouchet: plate 76. France-Archives nationales, Institut français d'histoire sociale (14 AS 41 1), Paris: fig. 24. Photo courtesy Galerie 1900-2000, Paris: fig. 103. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles: cover stamping, page 6; figs. 41, 56, 79. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation: figs. 12, 68, 69. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation/Art Resource, NY: plates 19, 20, 23, 54, 71, 72. © Albert Harlingue/ Roger-Viollet: fig. 100. IMEC/Fonds Félix Fénéon: figs. 65, 73. Photo by Peter Jacobs: plates 45, 46; figs. 23, 52, 53, 93. © Kasser Mochary Foundation, photo Nikolai Dobrowolskij: plate 37. Kunstmuseum den Haag: plate 67. Leeds Museums and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery), U.K./Bridgeman Images: plate 7. Library of Congress Digital Collections: fig. 92. Photo Jean-Charles Louiset: fig. 102. MAD, Paris/Cyrille Bernard: fig. 75. © 2020 Succession H. Matisse/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York: plates 59–64; figs. 59, 61, 62, 64. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art: plates 2, 16, 17, 26, 47; fig. 28. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, image source Art Resource, NY: plates 48, 83; figs. 21, 45. © Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/ Art Resource, NY: figs. 80, 81, 84; Claude Germain: plates 77, 78; Patrick Gries: plate 92; Patrick Gries and Bruno Descoings: plate 91; Pauline Guyon: fig. 72. © Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac/Pauline Guyon: plates 79–81, 89, 90; fig. 83. Museum of Fine Arts Ghent, www.lukasweb.be—Art in Flanders, photo Hugo Maertens: page 30; fig. 10. © The Museum of Modern Art Archives, photo Soichi Sunami: figs. 86, 104. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art, Department of Imaging and Visual Resources: fig. 27; Cait Carouge: figs. 58, 85, 90; Denis Doorly: plates 12, 43, 50; Robert Gerhardt: page 136, plates 21, 40–42, 49, 52, fig. 35; Thomas Griesel: plate 5, 59, figs. 48, 54, 62; Kate Keller: plate 68; Paige Knight: fig. 74; Jonathan Muzikar: plates 4, 44, 61–64, 66, 70, figs. 38, 39; John Wronn: plates 11, 69, figs. 13, 32, 67, 82. © Nancy, Musée des beaux-arts, photo Claude Philippot: fig. 15. The National Gallery, London: fig. 17. Photo National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne: plate 8. New York Public Library Digital Collections: fig. 87. Photo NGC: plate 65. Photo Kevin Noble: plate 18. Philadelphia Art Alliance, courtesy Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: fig. 71. Philadelphia Museum of Art: fig. 64. The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C.: plate 55. © 2020 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York: fig. 74. Princeton University Art Museum: fig. 47. Private collection, courtesy Stephen Ongpin Fine Art: fig. 20. © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY: plate 10, fig. 88; Adrien Didierjean: page 180, plates 14, 27–29; Thierry Le Mage: fig. 55; Hervé Lewandowski: plates 13, 15, 38, 74, figs. 9, 16, 18; Tony Querrec: fig. 31; Patrice Schmidt: plates 9, 57, figs. 30, 40. Photo Patrice Schmidt: endsheets; plate 36; figs. 34, 36, 37, 97. © 2020 Gino Severini/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris: plate 65. SMK Photo/Jacob Schou-Hansen: plate 60; fig. 61. Sotheby's/private collection, courtesy Beaumont Nathan Art Advisory: fig. 25. © 2020 Estate of Fred Stein: fig. 27. Studio-Photo Gerard: plate 88. Photo J. L. Tabuteau: fig. 44. © Tate: plate 6. Ville de Troyes/Carole Bell: plate 86. University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center, Joseph A. Labadie Collection): fig. 43. Yale University Art Gallery: plate 53.

Quotations by Fénéon:

Page 31: "La Pica," *La Cravache* 8, no. 386 (July 14, 1888): n.p.; trans. in Joan U. Halperin, *Félix Fénéon: Aesthete and Anarchist in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 17.

Page 91: Quoted in Will-Furet, "La Soirée parisienne—Les Anarchistes," *Le Gaulois* 28, no. 515 (April 28, 1894): 3; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 281.

Page 137: "Chronique d'art," *La Libre Revue* 1, no. 6 (December 16, 1883): 143; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 42.

Page 181: "Sur Georges Seurat," *Le Bulletin de la vie artistique* 7, no. 22 (November 15, 1926), 348; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 208.

Plate 7: *Les Impressionnistes en 1886* (Paris: Éditions de La Vogue, 1886), 23; trans. Belinda Thomson, "The Impressionists in 1886," *Art in Translation* 6, no. 3 (2014): 280.

Plate 8: *Les Impressionnistes en 1886*, 23–24; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 88.

Plate 12: "Au pavillon de la Ville de Paris: Société des artistes indépendants," *Le Chat noir* 11, no. 533 (April 2, 1892): 1932; trans. Marina Ferretti-Bocquillon in Ferretti-Bocquillon et al., *Signac, 1863–1935*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 166.

Plate 35: "L'Impressionnisme," *L'Emancipation sociale* (Narbonne) 8, no. 938 (April 3, 1887): n.p.; trans. in Halperin, *Félix Fénéon*, 112.

Plate 36: "Le Néo-impressionnisme," *L'Art moderne* 7, no. 18 (May 1, 1887): 140; trans. Jeanine Herman.

Plate 43: "Chez les barbouilleurs: Les Affiches en couleurs," *Le Père peinard* 5, no. 215 (April 30, 1893): 5; trans. Jeanine Herman.

Plate 57: "Designation des tableaux," *Collection Thadée Natanson*, catalogue for the auction at Hôtel Drouot, Paris, June 13, 1908, repr. in Fénéon, *Œuvres plus que complètes*, ed. Halperin (Geneva and Paris: Librairie Droz, 1970), 1:251; trans. Jeanine Herman.

Plate 82: *Collection Fénéon: Afrique, Océanie, Amérique*, catalogue for the auction at Hôtel Drouot, Paris, June 11 and 13, 1947 (no. 57); trans. Jeanine Herman.

Images of Fénéon:

Cover stamping and page 6: Félix Vallotton (French, 1865–1925). *Félix Fénéon* from *Le II^me^ Livre des masques* (*The Second Book of Masks*), by Remy de Gourmont (detail). 1898. One from an illustrated book with twenty-three relief prints, page: 7 ½ x 4 ¾ in. (19 x 12 cm). Publisher: Mercure de France, Paris. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

Front endsheet: Paul Signac (French, 1863–1935). Sketch for *Opus 217. Sur l'émail d'un fond rythmique des mesures et d'angles, de tons et des teintes, portrait de M. Félix Fénéon en 1890* (*Opus 217. Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones, and Tints, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890*) (detail). 1890. See fig. 34.

Frontispiece: Wilhelm Benque (French, 1843–1903). *Félix Fénéon* (detail). c. 1890–1900. Photograph, 55 11/16 x 3 15/16 in. (14.5 x 10 cm). Bibliothèque de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris. Collections Jacques Doucet, Fonds de Hauke

Page 30: Théo van Rysselberghe (Belgian, 1862–1926). *La Lecture par Émile Verhaeren* (*The Lecture by Émile Verhaeren*) (detail). 1903. See fig. 10.

Page 90: Félix Vallotton (French, 1865–1925). *Félix Fénéon dans le bureau de La Revue blanche* (*Félix Fénéon at La Revue blanche*) (detail). 1896. See plate 51.

Page 136: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (French, 1864–1901). *Caricature de Félix Fénéon* (*Caricature of Félix Fénéon*) (detail). c. 1895–96. See plate 52.

Page 180: Maximilien Luce (French, 1858–1941). *Félix Fénéon* (detail). 1901. Oil on cardboard, 17 15/16 × 15 3/8 in. (45.5 × 39 cm). Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Back endsheet: Paul Signac. Study for *Opus 217* (detail). 1890–91. See fig. 36.

Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Félix Fénéon: The Anarchist and the Avant-Garde—From Signac to Matisse and Beyond*, March 22–July 25, 2020. Organized by Starr Figura, Curator, Department of Drawings and Prints, The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Isabelle Cahn, Senior Curator of Paintings, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; and Philippe Peltier, former Head, Oceania and Insulindia Unit, Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris; with Anna Blaha, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Drawings and Prints, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Major support for the exhibition is provided by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art, Jack Shear, and Denise Littlefield Sobel.

In association with the exhibitions:

Félix Fénéon (1861–1944): Les Arts lointains, Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris, May 28–September 29, 2019

Félix Fénéon: Les Temps nouveaux, de Seurat à Matisse, Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, October 16, 2019–January 27, 2020

Exhibition organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Paris, and the Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie, Paris

MoMA

MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY JACQUES CHIRAC

Produced by the Department of Publications,
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Christopher Hudson, Publisher
Curtis R. Scott, Associate Publisher
Hannah Kim, Business and Marketing Director
Don McMahon, Editorial Director
Marc Sapir, Production Director

Edited by Rebecca Roberts with Maria Marchenkova and Jaclyn Neudorf
Designed by Amanda Washburn
Production by Matthew Pimm
Proofread by Oriana Tang with Aimery Dunlap-Smith
Color separations by t'ink, Brussels
Printed and bound by Graphius, Belgium

This book is typeset in DXAngelusMediaval, Armitage, and Ronaldson. The paper is Condat matt perigord 150 gsm.

The essays by Cécile Bargues, Isabelle Cahn, Claudine Grammont, Charlotte Hellman, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, and Philippe Peltier were translated from the French by Jeanine Herman. These essays, "The Futurist Exhibition of 1912" by Starr Figura, and the essays by Joan U. Halperin and Marnin Young were first published in French in Isabelle Cahn and Philippe Peltier, eds., *Félix Fénéon: Critique, collectionneur, anarchiste*, exh. cat. (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux/Musées d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie/Musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, 2019).

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020930820
ISBN: 978-1-63345-101-8

Published by The Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53 Street
New York, New York 10019-5497
www.moma.org

Distributed in the United States and Canada by
Artbook | D.A.P.
75 Broad Street, Suite 630
New York, New York 10004
www.artbook.com

Distributed outside the United States and Canada by
Thames & Hudson Ltd
181A High Holborn, London WC1V 7QX
www.thamesandhudson.com

Printed in Belgium