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"It's not a reality you can take in your hand. It's more like a perfume—in front of you, to the sides. The scent is everywhere, but you don't quite know where it comes from." —Pablo Picasso

Pablo Picasso’s poetic description of Cubism aptly characterizes the 1911 etching Mademoiselle Léonie in a Chaise Longue, one of his first prints in the Analytical Cubist style. In this illustration from Max Jacob’s novel Saint Matorel, multiple viewpoints and planes and a handful of well-placed anatomical clues produce a complex, schematized human form that emerges from a mesh of diagonal lines and cross-hatching. Picasso and Georges Braque developed Analytic Cubism during the period following their meeting in 1907, the year Picasso executed his audacious painting Les Demoiselles d’Avignon. Inspired by the painting’s composition, in which natural forms are broken up “into a semi-abstract all-over design of tilting, shifting planes compressed into a shallow space,”2 the two artists embarked on a search for a new pictorial mode. Their revolutionary invention of Cubism subsequently influenced an entire generation of artists.

That Picasso and Braque came to create Cubist prints can be credited largely to the courageous art dealer and publisher Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, who commissioned their major prints of the period. Although Cubism was not primarily a printmaking movement, the strict linearity of etching and drypoint made them ideal vehicles for the examination of compositional structure. In Picasso’s proto-Cubist drypoint Two Nude Figures (1909), the awkward proportions of the figures delineated by a combination of rough incisions with light scratchings gives the composition an unfinished look despite its considerable linear energy. It was not until 1911, in his etchings for Kahnweiler’s publication of Saint Matorel, that Picasso’s graphic conception of Analytic Cubism came to full fruition. Published by Kahnweiler in

Pablo Picasso. Mademoiselle Léonie in a Chaise Longue from Saint Matorel by Max Jacob. 1911

Alexander Archipenko. Bathing. 1920
1912, Braque’s largest and most important Cubist print Fox (1911) is named for a Parisian café. This drypoint incorporates words and numbers that aid the viewer’s visual decoding and stress the two-dimensionality of the picture plane. (Braque’s Cubist prints from the Museum collection are currently on view in the exhibition “Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism.”) Perhaps because of supply shortages caused by World War I, Picasso and Braque executed a relatively small number of Cubist prints—Picasso only twenty-eight and Braque a mere ten—and these were often recapitulations of paintings. Yet Picasso’s etchings for Saint Matorel, shown at the second Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider) exhibition in Munich in early 1912, were influential and encouraged many artists working in the Cubist idiom to make prints.

By 1910, news of the revolutionary style of Picasso and Braque was circulating, and artists and writers began to meet regularly to debate their avant-garde concepts. One of the key groups gathered in Jacques Villon’s studio in Puteaux outside Paris to discuss the broader ramifications of contemporary science, technology, and mathematical theory on art and culture. Included were Alexander Archipenko, Marcel Duchamp, Juan Gris, Fernand Léger, Louis Marcoussis, and Francis Picabia. Several of them exhibited Cubist works as early as 1911 in the Salon des Indépendants in Paris and Brussels and in the first Blue Rider exhibition in Munich.

Jacques Villon, the most prolific of all the Cubist printmakers, had been making etchings since 1891 and brought an unrivaled expertise to the intaglio mediums. His most concentrated Cubist printmaking activity occurred in 1913 and is epitomized by his drypoint of that year The Dinner Table. Its unusual combination of strong diagonals and obsessive curves sets up rhythmic counterpoints, while the profusion of parallel lines used to denote shading, the forced compression of foreground and background, and the choice of the subject remain typical Cubist devices.

Many artists, both in Europe and America, produced a variety of Cubist prints during the pre-World War I years. Soon after the publication of Saint Matorel, Kasimir Malevich executed Three Pedagogical Designs, didactic studies after Picasso’s Mademoiselle Léonie, which were later included in his treatise On New Systems in Art (1919). John Marin, who was aware of European trends through visits to Alfred Steiglitz’s “291” Gallery and the renowned Armory Show of 1913 in Manhattan, integrated Cubist theory into his depictions of New York’s dynamic architecture. The intense energy and movement in his 1913 etching Brooklyn Bridge (Mosaic) is generated by a multitude of vigorously slashed lines that together impart the unique vitality of this engineering triumph. In 1912, after seeing Cubist works at the first Blue Rider exhibition, the Swiss Paul Klee went to France, and in 1915 and 1916, he completed City Landscape and Destruction and Hope, respectively. Although not Cubist in the strictest sense, the fractured compositions of these prints reflect a Cubist sensibility. The cityscape had become another popular Cubist subject.

The beginning of World War I marked the end of
Cubism's early phase. By 1920, however, the movement attained commercial success, and the demand for prints increased. Some artists, like Robert Delaunay, Juan Gris, and Fernand Léger, turned to lithography. By then, Picasso and Braque had developed Synthetic Cubism, which reassembles rather than dissects the subject. This more decorative style of solid, geometric depictions reflects the buoyant postwar era.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Louis Marcoussis, who was from Poland, executed numerous intaglio prints. His etching and drypoint Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire (1912–20) is considered one of the most important Cubist printed images. In this second printed version of the portrait, Marcoussis depicts the author and champion of Cubism before a back-
ing (1920) portrays a bending female figure composed of delicately incised lines and interlocking, merged planes. Robert Delaunay, whose lithographs derive from his paintings, executed a total of thirty prints of the Eiffel Tower, using the tower's complex structure as a monumental point of departure for Cubist exploration. Fernand Léger's 1927 color lithograph The Vase (Abstraction: Still Life) embodies the dense geometry and decorative qualities of post-World War I Cubism. This frontal image of generous proportions stands as an emblem for the quintessential Cubist subject, the still life.

From Cubism's inception, the community of artists associated with it maintained a stimulating relationship with writers and composers such as Max Jacob, Alfred Jarry, Pierre Reverdy, and Erik Satie. The production of an impressive number of livres de peintures (limited edition books containing original prints) was engendered as much by their ongoing dialogue as by Kahnweiler's visionary publishing program. Georges Braque executed woodcut vignettes for Satie's play Le Piège de Méduse, published by Kahnweiler in 1921 and the only illustrated book of Braque's Cubist period. The majority of Juan Gris' prints are contained in five illustrated books commissioned by Kahnweiler between 1921 and 1926. Gris not only executed his first original print for a book—Max Jacob's Ne coupez pas Mademoiselle ou Les erreurs des P.T.T. (1921)—but also illustrated the first French publication of an original work by Gertrude Stein—A Book Concluding with as a Wife Has a Cow (1926). In 1947, Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger's Du Cubisme was published. It included their 1912 text, which was the first critical analysis of the new movement, and prints by eleven of the movement's major participants.

Although their style originated in painting, the Cubists' diverse body of printed works attests to the medium's capacity to foster artistic imagination. The widespread circulation of multiple copies possible with printed art made it a significant conveyer of the most revolutionary artistic development of the twentieth century.

Audrey Isselbacher
Associate Curator
Department of Prints and Illustrated Books


This brochure has been made possible through the generosity of The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Cover: Louis Marcoussis. Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire. 1912-1920
Checklist

All works are from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. Dimensions are given in inches and centimeters, height preceding width, composition or plate size for prints and page size for illustrated books. Dates enclosed in parentheses do not appear on the works.

Prints

Alexander Archipenko
American, born Ukraine, 1887-1964

Bathing. (1920, printed 1967). Drypoint, 9 3/4 x 5 15/16" (25.4 x 15.1 cm). Gift of Mrs. Frances Archipenko, 1969

Still Life with Vase from the portfolio Thirteen Lithographs. Berlin, Ernst Wasmuth, 1921. Lithograph, 17 9/16 x 9 3/8" (43.1 x 23.9 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1950

after Georges Braque
French, 1882-1963


Josef Capek
Czechoslovakian, 1887-1945

Cubist Figure. 1913. Hand-colored linoleum cut, 8 3/16 x 4" (20.7 x 10.2 cm). Gift of John Torson, 1966

Marc Chagall
French, born Russia, 1887-1985

The Grandfathers from Mein Leben. Berlin, Paul Cassirer, (1922-23). Etching and drypoint, 11 1/16 x 8 9/16" (28.1 x 21.8 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

Stuart Davis
American, 1892-1964

Barber Shop Chord. (1931). Lithograph, 14 x 19" (35.5 x 48.2 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1940

Robert Delaunay
French, 1885-1941

The Eiffel Tower. 1926. Lithograph, 24 1/16 x 17 13/16" (61.6 x 45.1 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1935

André Derain
French, 1880-1954

Head. (c. 1910). Drypoint, 12 3/16 x 8 9/16" (31.5 x 21.8 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1949

after Derain

Plate from Du Cablome by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Paris, Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, (1947). Etching and engraving, 7 13/16 x 5 15/16" (19 x 15 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

Marcel Duchamp
American, born France, 1887-1968


Lyonel Feininger
American, 1871-1956

The Gates. 1912. Etching and drypoint, 10 1/8 x 7 3/16" (25.7 x 19.0 cm). Gift of Mrs. Donald B. Straus, 1959

Street in Paris. (1918). Woodcut, 21 3/16 x 16 3/4" (54.3 x 42.1 cm). Gift of Jolla Feininger, 1955

Alberto Giacometti
Swiss, 1901-1966

Cubist Head. (1933). Engraving, 12 13/16 x 10" (32.6 x 25.4 cm). Gift of Mr. Stanley W. Hayter, 1968

Albert Gleizes
French, 1881-1953

Still Life. Berlin, Paul Westheim, 1921. Linoleum cut, 14 9/16 x 10 15/16" (35.9 x 26.6 cm). Purchase, 1944

Plate (executed 1946) from Du Cablome by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Paris, Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, (1947). Drypoint, 7 3/8 x 5 15/16" (18.7 x 15 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

after Jean Gris
Spanish, 1887-1927. To France 1906


Paul Klee
German, born and died Switzerland, 1879-1940

City Landscape. 1915. Eiting, 6 1/4 x 4 1/2" (15.3 x 11.5 cm). Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld, 1948

Destruction and Hope. 1916. Lithograph with watercolor additions, 18 3/16 x 13 1/2" (46.7 x 33.1 cm). Purchase Fund, 1944

Jean-Emile Laboureur
French, 1877-1943


after Roger de La Fresnaye
French, 1885-1925

The Conquest of the Air. (1913). Wood engraving, printed in color, 13 x 10 5/8" (33.2 x 27 cm). Lent anonymously, 1968

Marie Laurencin
French, 1885-1956


Henri Laurens
French, 1885-1954

Valencia. 1927. Eiting, 6 7/8 x 8 3/4" (17.3 x 22.2 cm). Gift of Curt Valentin, 1947

Fernand Léger
French, 1881-1955

Woman at the Mirror from the portfolio Das Kunstblatt. IV annual. (1920). Lithograph, 9 7/16 x 7 3/4" (24.6 x 19.6 cm). Transferred from the Museum Library, 1934

Composition with Two Persons from the portfolio Die Schaffenden, vol. II. Petermann, Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1920. Lithograph, 11 1/16 x 9 7/8" (28.6 x 24.7 cm). Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., 1951
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after Georges Braque French, 1882-1963
Plate from Du Cubisme by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Paris, Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, (1947). Aquatint and engraving, 7 7/8 x 5 15/16" (17.9 x 13 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

Josef Capek Czechoslovakian, 1887-1945
Still Life. Berlin, Paul Westheim, (1921). Linocut, 14 3/8 x 10 1/2" (35.9 x 26.6 cm). Purchase, 1944

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Barber Shop Chow. (1913). Lithograph, 14 x 19" (35.5 x 48.2 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1940

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Andre Derain French, 1880-1954
Head. (c. 1910). Drypoint, 12 3/8 x 8 9/16" (31.5 x 21.8 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1949

after Derain
Plate from Du Cubisme by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Paris, Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, (1947). Etching and engraving, 7 7/8 x 3 1/4" (17.9 x 8.2 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

Marcel Duchamp American, born France, 1887-1968
Still Life. Berlin, Paul Westheim, (1921). Linocut, 14 1/16 x 10 1/2" (35.9 x 26.6 cm). Purchase, 1944

Lyonel Feininger American, 1871-1956
The Gate. 1912. Etching and drypoint, 10 3/8 x 7 7/8" (27.2 x 19.9 cm). Gift of Mrs. Donald B. Straus, 1959

Street in Paris. (1918). Woodcut, 21 3/8 x 16 3/8" (54.3 x 41.1 cm). Gift of Julia Feininger, 1955

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Albert Gleizes French, 1881-1953
Still Life. Berlin, Paul Westheim, 1921. Linocut, cut, 14 1/4 x 10 1/2" (35.9 x 26.6 cm). Purchase, 1944

Jean-Émile Laboureur French, 1877-1943
The Canadian Window. Paris, Société Française des Amis des Arts, (1914). Etching, 6 7/8 x 5 15/16" (17.4 x 15 cm). Gift of Mrs. Donald B. Straus, 1959

Paul Klee German, born and died Switzerland, 1879-1940
Cirque. 1915. Etching, 6 3/8 x 4 7/8" (15.9 x 11.5 cm). Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld, 1948

Destruction and Hope. 1916. Lithograph with watercolor additions, 18 3/8 x 13" (46.7 x 32.1 cm). Purchase Fund, 1944

Jean-Emile Laboureur French, 1877-1943
The Canadian Window. Paris, Société Française des Amis des Arts, (1914). Etching, 6 7/8 x 5 15/16" (17.4 x 15 cm). Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund, 1966

after Roger de La Fresnaye French, 1885-1925
The Compact of the Art. (1913). Wood engraving, printed in color, 13 x 10 3/8" (33 x 27 cm). Lent anonymously, 1966

Jeanne Lemaire French, 1883-1956
Woman at the Mirror from the portfolio Das Kunstblatt. IV annual. (1920). Lithograph, 9 7/16 x 7 3/4" (24.6 x 19.3 cm). Transferred from the Museum Library, 1974

Compositions with Two Persons from the portfolio Der Sturmblatt. vol. II. Potsdam, Gustav Kleeblatt, 1920. Lithograph, 11 1/4 x 9 7/8" (28.6 x 23.7 cm). Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., 1951

 violation. The Museum of Modern Art, 1969
Stilte mit Vase from the portfolio Thirteen Lithographs. Berlin, Ernst Wasmuth, 1921. Lithograph, 17 x 9 7/16" (43.1 x 23.9 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1950

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Plate from Du Cubisme by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Paris, Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, (1947). Aquatint and engraving, 7 7/8 x 5 15/16" (17.9 x 13 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

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