

The Cubist imprint : the Museum of Modern Art, August 17-November 7, 1989

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THE CUBIST IMPRINT

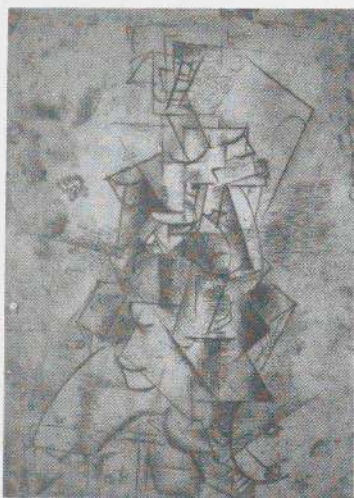


THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

August 17–November 7, 1989

"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 Picasso¹

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 Femmes d'Alger*. Inspired by the painting's composition, in which natural forms are broken up "into a semi-abstract all-over design of tilting, shifting planes



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



Alexander Archipenko, *Bathing*, 1920

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

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.

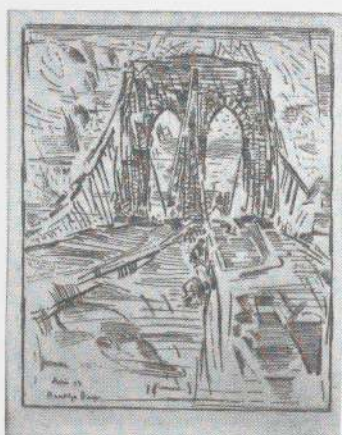
The beginning of World War I marked the end of



Jacques Villon, *The Dinner Table*. 1913

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-



John Marin, *Brooklyn Bridge (Mosaic)*. 1913



Robert Delaunay, *The Eiffel Tower*. 1926

ground bearing a coat of arms, Apollinaire's original Polish surname "Kostrowicki," and the titles of three of his books. The Ukrainian-born sculptor Alexander Archipenko, in Paris since 1908, made prints related to his "sculpto-paintings," multi-colored relief sculptures. His luminous drypoint *Bath-*

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 peintres* (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

¹William Rubin, *Picasso in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1972), p. 72, Picasso in conversation with the author.

²Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946), p. 56.

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 13/16" (24.8 x 14.8 cm). Gift of Mrs. Frances Archipenko, 1969

Still Life with 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

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 1/16 x 5 1/8" (17.9 x 13 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

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

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Marcel Duchamp American, born France, 1887–1968

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The Gate. 1912. Etching and drypoint, 10 11/16 x 7 13/16" (27.2 x 19.9 cm). Gift of Mrs. Donald B. Straus, 1959

Street in Paris. (1918). Woodcut, 21 3/8 x 16 3/16" (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. Linoleum cut, 14 1/16 x 10 1/2" (35.9 x 26.6 cm). Purchase, 1944

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

City Landscape. 1915. Etching, 6 1/4 x 4 1/2" (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 33.1 cm). Purchase Fund, 1944

Jean-Emile Laboureur French, 1877–1943

The Canadian Window. Paris, Société Française des Amis des Arts, (1914). Etching, 6 7/16 x 7 9/16" (16.4 x 19.3 cm). Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund, 1986

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 x 27 cm). Lent anonymously, 1968

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Woman at the Mirror from the portfolio *Das Kunstblatt*, IV annual. (1920). Lithograph, 9 7/16 x 7 3/4" (24 x 19.6 cm). Transferred from the Museum Library, 1974

Composition with Two Persons from the portfolio *Die Schaffenden*, vol. II. Potsdam, Gustav Kliepenheuer, 1920. Lithograph, 11 1/4 x 9 5/16" (28.6 x 23.7 cm). Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., 1951

The Vase (Abstraction: Still Life). Paris, Galerie Simon (Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler), (1927). Lithograph, printed in color, 20 15/16 x 17 1/16" (53.3 x 43.3 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1940

after Léger

Plate (executed 1945) from *Du Cubisme* by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Paris, Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, (1947). Aquatint and engraving, 7 1/16 x 5 1/8" (17.9 x 13 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

Kasimir Malevich Russian, 1878–1935

Simultaneous Death of a Man in an Airplane and at a Railway from Vzorval (Explodity) by Alexei Kruchenykh. St. Petersburg, (1913). Lithograph, 3 9/16 x 5 1/2" (9.1 x 14 cm). Gift of Celeste Bartos, 1974

Three Pedagogical Designs from O novykh sistemakh v iskusstve (On New Systems In Art) by Kasimir Malevich. Vitebsk, Art Labour Cooperative, (1919). Lithograph, 5 3/4 x 8 3/8" (14.6 x 21.3 cm). Fractional gift of The Riklis Collection of McCrory Corporation, 1983

Louis Marcoussis Polish, 1883–1941. To France 1903

Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire. 1912–1920. Etching and drypoint, 19 9/16 x 10 15/16" (49.7 x 27.8 cm). Given anonymously, 1947

Bar. (c. 1920). Etching and drypoint, printed in color, 7 5/16 x 5 5/8" (18.5 x 14.3 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bareiss, 1956

Still Life: Zither and Sea Shell. (1922). Etching and aquatint, 20 1/2 x 27 7/8" (52.1 x 70.8 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1971

Table with Still Life. (c. 1927). Engraving and etching, printed in color, 9 11/16 x 7" (24.7 x 17.8 cm). Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld, 1948

Plates I and II from *Planches de salut*, preface by Tristan Tzara. Paris, Editions Jeanne Bucher, (1931). Engraving and etching, each 8 1/16 x 9 1/2" (20.4 x 24.1 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1940

John Marin American, 1870–1953

Brooklyn Bridge (Mosaic). New York, Alfred Stieglitz, 1913. Etching and drypoint, 11 1/4 x 8 7/8" (28.6 x 22.5 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1940

Woolworth Building (The Dance). New York, Alfred Stieglitz, 1913. Etching, 13 1/16 x 10 5/8" (33.2 x 27 cm). Edward M. M. Warburg Fund, 1955

Grain Elevator, Weehawken. New York, Alfred Stieglitz, 1915. Etching, 11 1/8 x 8 7/8" (28.3 x 22.6 cm). Given anonymously, 1975

Downtown, The El. New York, Alfred Stieglitz, 1921. Etching, 6 7/8 x 8 13/16" (17.5 x 22.4 cm). Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1940

Jan Matulka American, born Czechoslovakia, 1890–1972

Cityscape. 1923. Etching, printed in color, 10 1/4 x 7 3/4" (26.1 x 19.7 cm). Gift of Mrs. Jan Matulka, 1981

New York. (1924). Lithograph, 16 5/16 x 12 9/16" (41.4 x 31.9 cm). John B. Turner Fund, 1975

Jean Metzinger French, 1883–1956

Plate from *Du Cubisme* by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Paris, Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, (1947). Drypoint, 7 1/8 x 5 1/8" (18.1 x 13.1 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

Elie Nadelman American, born Poland, 1882–1946

Female Head (executed 1920) from the portfolio *The Drypoints of Elie Nadelman*. New York, Curt Valentin, (1952). Drypoint, 7 x 5 15/16" (17.7 x 15.1 cm). Curt Valentin Bequest, 1956

Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson British, 1889–1946

Troops Resting. 1916. Drypoint, printed in color, 8 3/8 x 10 5/16" (21.3 x 26.2 cm). Purchase, 1980

Francis Picabia French, 1879–1953

Plate (executed 1907) from *Du Cubisme* by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Paris, Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, (1947). Drypoint, 7 1/16 x 5 1/8" (17.9 x 13 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

Pablo Picasso Spanish, 1881–1973. To France 1904

Two Nude Figures. Paris, [Daniel-] Henry Kahnweiler, (1909). Drypoint, 5 1/8 x 4 5/16" (13 x 11 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1949

Still Life, Fruit Dish. Paris, [Daniel-] Henry Kahnweiler, (1909). Drypoint, 5 1/8 x 4 5/16" (13 x 11 cm). Gift of Victor S. Riesenfeld, 1948

Mademoiselle Léonie, plate I from *Saint Matorel* by Max Jacob. Paris, [Daniel-] Henry Kahnweiler, (1911). Etching, 7 7/8 x 5 9/16" (20 x 14.1 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1949

Man in a Hat (executed 1914) from *Du Cubisme* by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Paris, Compagnie Française des Arts Graphiques, (1947). Etching, 2 11/16 x 2 1/4" (6.8 x 5.6 cm). Louis E. Stern Collection, 1964

Man with a Guitar (executed 1915). Paris, Marcel Guiot, (1929). Engraving, 6 1/16 x 4 9/16" (15.5 x 11.5 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bareiss, 1954

Jacques Villon French, 1875–1963

Renée, three-quarters view. (1911). Drypoint, 21 5/8 x 16 5/16" (55 x 41.5 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1951

Musicians at a Café. (1912). Etching and aquatint, 10 1/2 x 9 1/4" (26.8 x 23.5 cm). Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1952

Portrait of E. D. (1913). Drypoint and etching, 9 1/4 x 6 5/16" (23.5 x 16 cm). Gift of the Curt Valentin Estate, 1957

Yvonne D. in Profile. (1913). Drypoint, 21 9/16 x 16 1/4" (54.8 x 41.3 cm). Given in memory of Peter H. Deitsch, 1971

Front View of Yvonne D. (1913). Drypoint, 21 3/4 x 16 5/16" (55.2 x 41.3 cm). Given in memory of Peter H. Deitsch, 1971

Portrait of a Young Woman. (1913). Drypoint, 21 9/16 x 16 1/4" (54.8 x 41.3 cm). Given in memory of Peter H. Deitsch, 1971

Portrait of an Actor (Felix Barré). (1913). Drypoint, 15 3/4 x 12 3/8" (40.1 x 31.4 cm). Given in memory of Peter H. Deitsch, 1971

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