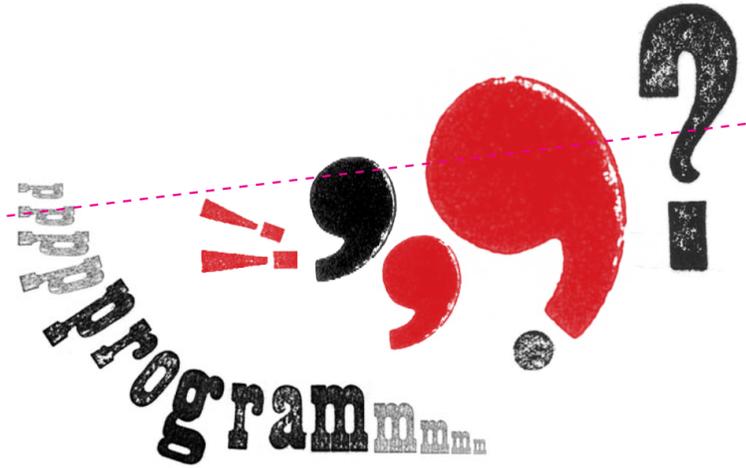


A BREF HISTORY OF FUTURISM AND THE MANIFESTO

The first Futurist Manifesto, written by the poet and politician Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and published on the front page of the French newspaper *Le Figaro* on February 20, 1909, proclaimed a burning desire—fueled by industry, war, and the machine—to race into the future. Tired of resting on the laurels of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance, and disdainful of their uneventful present, the Futurists called for a new aesthetic language embracing modernity. Instead of continuing to define their cultural glory through the lens of the ancient, weighty, and static, they exalted the moment. The present would be a time for discovery and forging ahead through violent movement, feverish activity, and unrelenting speed.

Marinetti's obsession with the revolutionary potential of industry and machines was shared by the movement's founding protagonists—Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrá, Luigi Russolo, and Gino Severini—who imagined that motion inspired by the machine would become a part of everyday life and would take the place of old institutions that once defined Italian culture. Such hopes came to life in the new aesthetic language they conceived in paintings, sculptures, art journals and books, poetry, performances, and even cuisine.

Throughout the life of the movement (1909–44), the Futurists used manifestos to disseminate their vision. With this political, entrepreneurial gesture, they promoted Futurism as a weapon against the academic and bourgeois classes. The artists published countless dynamic texts in newspapers and journals in Italy and abroad, addressing topics from painting and sculpture to literature, dance, theater, music, and even the role of women in society. Incendiary and avant-garde, the Futurists interacted with and set the stage for the experimental and interdisciplinary nature of many artistic forms to come.



In recognition of the one hundredth anniversary of the publication of *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*, poets recite historical and contemporary manifestos in the Museum's Agnes Gund Garden Lobby. To express the continuing legacy of Futurism and the profound impact the movement continues to have on the arts today, MoMA and *Poetry* magazine commissioned today's participants to write their own manifestos in the spirit of Futurism. They will read these original works along with the Futurists' manifestos throughout the course of the day.

Artist Luca Buvoli simultaneously projects excerpts from his live-action and animated video *Velocity Zero* (2007), in which the slow reading of the tenets of the Futurist Manifesto by people with aphasia (the loss of ability to understand or express speech) contrasts with the frenetic speed that characterized the movement. Buvoli will also be distributing a new version of the 1909 Manifesto throughout the day. This work juxtaposes the original manifesto with a handwritten version of the same text, created by various people affected by the writing disability agraphia. Like *Velocity Zero*, this new manifesto examines the relationship between history and the present, speed and slowness, and mechanical and human ability, while also highlighting the potential of language.

Modern Poets is supported by The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art. This program is a collaboration with *Poetry* magazine.

READINGSSSSSSSS

- 11:00A.M.** F. T. Marinetti, **The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism** (1909). Read by Charles Bernstein
- F. T. Marinetti, **Destruction of Syntax/Imagination without Strings/Words-in-Freedom** (1913). Read by A. E. Stallings
- 11:30A.M.** Carlo Carrá, **The Painting of Sounds, Noises, and Smells** (1913). Read by A. E. Stallings
- Mina Loy, **Aphorisms on Futurism** (1914). Read by Charles Bernstein
- 12:00P.M.** Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrá, F. T. Marinetti, Luigi Russolo, Ugo Piatti, **Futurist Synthesis of the War** (1914). Read by Joshua Mehigan
- Giacomo Balla and Fortunato Depero, **The Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe** (1915). Read by Joshua Mehigan
- 12:30P.M.** F. T. Marinetti, **Multipled Man and the Religion of the Machine** (1911–15). Read by Thomas Sayers Ellis
- F. T. Marinetti, **Manifesto of the Futurist Dance** (1917). Read by Thomas Sayers Ellis
- 2:00P.M.** Charles Bernstein, **Manifest Aversions, Conceptual Conundrums & Implausibly Deniable Links** (2008). Read by the poet
- A. E. Stallings, **Presto Manifesto!** (2008). Read by the poet
- 2:30P.M.** Thomas Sayers Ellis, **The New Perform-A-Form** (2008). Read by the poet
- Joshua Mehigan, **The Final Manifesto** (2008). Read by the poet

WHO'S WHO

a. e. stallings

A. E. Stallings studied classics in Athens, Georgia, and has lived since 1999 in Athens, Greece. She has published two books of poetry: *Archaic Smile* (1999), which won the Richard Wilbur Award, and *Hapax* (2006), which received the Poets' Prize. Her new verse translation of Lucretius (in rhyming fourteeners!), *The Nature of Things*, is out from Penguin Classics. She lives with her husband, John Psaropoulos, editor of the *Athens News*, and their small argonaut, Jason.

thomas
sayers
ellis

Thomas Sayers Ellis is the author of *The Maverick Room* (Graywolf, 2005) and a chaplet, *Song On* (WinteRed Press, 2005). He lives in Brooklyn and teaches at Sarah Lawrence College and in the Lesley University low-residency creative writing program.

luca buvoli

Luca Buvoli is an artist working with animated film and video, installation, sculpture, drawing, and artist's books. His work has been shown in solo and group shows, at national and international institutions, including the Second Johannesburg Biennale, South Africa (1997); the M.I.T. List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge (2000); P.S.1, New York (2000); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2004); The Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2007); and the Fifty-second Venice Biennale (2007), among other places.

charles
bernstein

Charles Bernstein's most recent books are *Blind Witness: Three American Operas* (Factory School) and *Girly Man* (University of Chicago Press). He codirects PennSound (writing.upenn.edu/pennsound) and is Donald T. Regan Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania.

TO LEARN

To learn more about the Futurists' exploration and exploitation of words and language, visit the exhibition **Words in Freedom: Futurism at 100** (on view through April 6, 2009) on the mezzanine level in The Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Education and Research Building (across The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden).

TO SEE

To see some of The Museum of Modern Art's Futurist paintings and sculptures, visit the fifth-floor galleries.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Sally Berger, Klaus Biesenbach, Emily Braun, Fimbar Byam, Emma Enderby, Samantha Friedman, Kevin Gafford, Amy Gordon, Lucas Gonzalez, Kathy Halbreich, Jodi Hauptman, Pablo Helguera, Hallie Hobson, Charlie Kalinowski, Barbara London, Glenn Lowry, Carmen Martínez, Eric Meier, Melanie Monios, Jessica Palmieri, Lynn Parish, Christine Poggi, Peter Reed, Veronica Roberts, Rajendra Roy, Jennifer Russell, Yasmeen Siddiqui, Ron Simoncini, Anne Umland, and Wendy Woon.

This program is organized by Laura Beiles, Associate Educator, Adult and Academic Programs, The Museum of Modern Art, and Fred Sasaki, Associate Editor, *Poetry* magazine.

about POETRY MAGAZINE

Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, *Poetry* is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. Harriet Monroe's "Open Door" policy, set forth in Volume I of the magazine, remains the most succinct statement of *Poetry's* mission: to print the best poetry written today, in whatever style, genre, or approach. The magazine established its reputation early by publishing the first important poems of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, H. D., William Carlos Williams, Carl Sandburg, and other now-classic authors. In succeeding decades it has presented, often for the first time, works by virtually every major contemporary poet. *Poetry* has always been independent, unaffiliated with any institution or university, or with any single poetic or critical movement or aesthetic school.

THE POETRY FOUNDATION

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine and one of the largest literary organizations in the world, exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs. For more information, please visit www.poetryfoundation.org.

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THE FOUNDING & MANIFESTO OF FUTURISM !!

We had stayed up all night, my friends and I, under hanging mosque lamps with domes of filigreed brass, domes starred like our spirits, shining like them with the prisoned radiance of electric hearts. For hours we had trampled our atavistic ennui into rich oriental rugs, arguing up to the last confines of logic and blackening many reams of paper with our frenzied scribbling.

An immense pride was buoying us up, because we felt ourselves alone at that hour, alone, awake, and on our feet, like proud beacons or forward sentries against an army of hostile stars glaring down at us from their celestial encampments. Alone with stokers feeding the hellish fires of great ships, alone with the black spectres who grope in the red-hot bellies of locomotives launched on their crazy courses, alone with drunkards reeling like wounded birds along the city walls.

Suddenly we jumped, hearing the mighty noise of the huge double-decker trams that rumbled by outside, ablaze with colored lights, like villages on holiday suddenly struck and uprooted by the flooding Po and dragged over falls and through gorges to the sea.

Then the silence deepened. But, as we listened to the old canal muttering its feeble prayers and the creaking bones of sickly palaces above their damp green beards, under the windows we suddenly heard the famished roar of automobiles.

'Let's go!' I said. 'Friends, away! Let's go! Mythology and the Mystic Ideal are defeated at last. We're about to see the Centaur's birth and, soon after, the first flight of Angels!... We must shake at life, test the bolts and hinges. Let's go! Look there, on the earth, the very first dawn! There's nothing to match the splendor of the sun's red sword, slashing for the first time through our millennial gloom!'

We went up to the three snorting beasts, to lay amorous hands on their torrid breasts. I stretched out on my car like a corpse on its bier, but revived at once under the steering wheel, a guillotine blade that threatened my stomach.

The raging broom of madness swept us out of ourselves and drove us through streets as rough and deep as the beds of torrents. Here and there, sick lamplight through window glass taught us to distrust the deceitful mathematics of our perishing eyes.

I cried, 'The scent, the scent alone is enough for our beasts.'

And like young lions we ran after Death, its dark pelt blotched with pale crosses as it escaped down the vast violet living and throbbing sky.

But we had no ideal Mistress raising her divine form to the clouds, nor any cruel Queen to whom to offer our bodies, twisted like Byzantine rings! There was nothing to make us wish for death, unless the wish to be free at last from the weight of our courage!

And on we raced, hurling watchdogs against doorsteps, curling them under our burning tires like collars under a flatiron. Death, domesticated, met me at every turn, gracefully holding out a paw, or once in a while hunkering down, making velvety caressing eyes at me from every puddle.

'Let's break out of the horrible shell of wisdom and throw ourselves like pride-ripened fruit into the wide, contorted mouth of the wind! Let's give ourselves utterly to the Unknown, not in desperation but only to replenish the deep wells of the Absurd!'

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when I spun my car around with the frenzy of a dog trying to bite its tail, and there, suddenly, were two cyclists coming towards me, shaking their fists, wobbling like two equally convincing but nevertheless contradictory arguments. Their stupid dilemma was blocking my way—Damn! Ouch!... I stopped short and to my disgust rolled over into a ditch with my wheels in the air...

O maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! Fair factory drain! I gulped down your nourishing sludge; and I remembered the blessed black breast of my Sudanese nurse... When I came up—torn, filthy, and stinking—from under the capsized car, I felt the white-hot iron of joy deliciously pass through my heart!

A crowd of fishermen with handlines and gouty naturalists were already swarming around the prodigy. With patient, loving care those people rigged a tall derrick and iron grapnels to fish out my car, like a big, beached shark. Up it came from the ditch, slowly, leaving in the bottom, like scales, its heavy framework of good sense and its soft upholstery of comfort.

They thought it was dead, my beautiful shark, but a caress from me was enough to revive it; and there it was, alive again, running on its powerful fins!

And so, faces smeared with good factory muck—plastered with metallic waste, with senseless sweat, with celestial soot—we, bruised, our arms in slings, but unafraid, declared our high intentions to all the *living* of the earth:

MANIFESTO OF FUTURISM

1. We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness.

2. Courage, audacity, and revolt will be essential elements of our poetry.

3. Up to now literature has exalted a pensive immobility, ecstasy, and sleep. We intend to exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia, the racer's stride, the mortal leap, the punch and the slap.

4. We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath—a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*.

5. We want to hymn the man at the wheel, who hurls the lance of his spirit across the Earth, along the circle of its orbit.

6. The poet must spend himself with ardor, splendor, and generosity, to swell the enthusiastic fervor of the primordial elements.

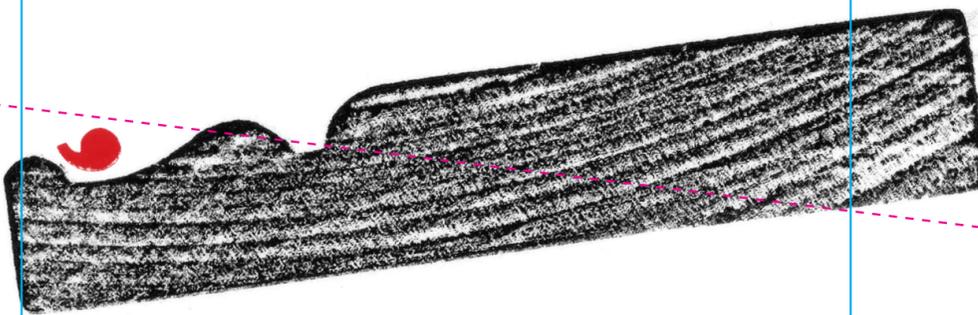
7. Except in struggle, there is no more beauty. No work without an aggressive character can be a masterpiece. Poetry must be conceived as a violent attack on unknown forces, to reduce and prostrate them before man.

8. We stand on the last promontory of the centuries! ... Why should we look back, when what we want is to break down the mysterious doors of the Impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have created eternal, omnipresent speed.

9. We will glorify war—the world's only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for woman.

10. We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind, will fight moralism, feminism, every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice.

11. We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervor of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives whose wheels paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd.



It is from Italy that we launch through the world this violently upsetting incendiary manifesto of ours. With it, today, we establish *Futurism*, because we want to free this land from its smelly gangrene of professors, archaeologists, *ciceroni* and antiquarians. For too long has Italy been a dealer in second-hand clothes. We mean to free her from the numberless museums that cover her like so many graveyards.

Museums: cemeteries! ... Identical, surely, in the sinister promiscuity of so many bodies unknown to one another. Museums: public dormitories where one lies forever beside hated or unknown beings. Museums: absurd abattoirs of painters and sculptors ferociously slaughtering each other with color-blows and line-blows, the length of the fought-over walls!

That one should make an annual pilgrimage, just as one goes to the graveyard on All Souls' Day—that I grant. That once a year one should leave a floral tribute beneath the *Gioconda*, I grant you that. ... But I don't admit that our sorrows, our fragile courage, our morbid restlessness should be given a daily conducted tour through the museums. Why poison ourselves? Why rot?

And what is there to see in an old picture except the laborious contortions of an artist throwing himself against the barriers that thwart his desire to express his dream completely? ... Admiring an old picture is the same as pouring our sensibility into a funerary urn instead of hurtling it far off, in violent spasms of action and creation.

Do you, then, wish to waste all your best powers in this eternal and futile worship of the past, from which you emerge fatally exhausted, shrunken, beaten down?

In truth I tell you that daily visits to museums, libraries, and academies (cemeteries of empty exertion, calvaries of crucified dreams, registries of aborted beginnings!) are, for artists, as damaging as the prolonged supervision by parents of certain young people drunk with their talent and their ambitious wills. When the future is barred to them, the admirable past may be a solace for the ills of the moribund, the sickly, the prisoner. ... But we want no part of it, the past, we the young and strong *Futurists*!

So let them come, the gay incendiaries with charred fingers! Here they are! Here they are! ... Come on! Set fire to the library shelves! Turn aside the canals to flood the museums! ... Oh, the joy of seeing the glorious old canvases bobbing adrift on those waters, discolored and shredded! ... Take up your pickaxes, your axes and hammers and wreck, wreck the venerable cities, pitilessly!

The oldest of us is thirty: so we have at least a decade for finishing our work. When we are forty, other younger and stronger men will probably throw us in the wastebasket like useless manuscripts—we want it to happen!

They will come against us, our successors, will come from far away, from every quarter, dancing to the winged cadence of their first songs, flexing the hooked claws of predators,

sniffing doglike at the academy doors the strong odor of our decaying minds, which will have already been promised to the literary catacombs.

But we won't be there. ... At last they'll find us—one winter's night—in open country, beneath a sad roof drummed by a monotonous rain. They'll see us crouched beside our trembling airplanes in the act of warming our hands at the poor little blaze that our books of today will give out when they take fire from the flight of our images.

They'll storm around us, panting with scorn and anguish, and all of them, exasperated by our proud daring, will hurtle to kill us, driven by a hatred the more implacable the more their hearts will be drunk with love and admiration for us.

Injustice, strong and sane, will break out radiantly in their eyes.

Art, in fact, can be nothing but violence, cruelty, and injustice.

The oldest of us is thirty: even so we have already scattered treasures, a thousand treasures of force, love, courage, astuteness, and raw will-power; have thrown them impatiently away, with fury, carelessly, unhesitatingly, breathless, and unrelenting. ... Look at us! We are still untired! Our hearts know no weariness because they are fed with fire, hatred, and speed! ... Does that amaze you? It should, because you can never remember having lived! Erect on the summit of the world, once again we hurl our defiance at the stars!

You have objections? — Enough! Enough! We know them. ... We've understood! ... Our fine deceitful intelligence tells us that we are the revival and extension of our ancestors—Perhaps! ... If only it were so! — But who cares? We don't want to understand! ... Woe to anyone who says those infamous words to us again!

Lift up your heads!

Erect on the summit of the world, once again we hurl defiance to the stars!



Original publication in French: *Le Figaro*, Paris, February 20, 1909. Source for translation by R. W. Flint reproduced above: Flint, R. W. (ed.). *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings / F. T. Marinetti*. Translated from the Italian by R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli. Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press, 1991, pgs. 47–52

FFF FUTURISM MM AND THE NEW !! MANIFESTO

Celebrating 100 years of the FOUNDING & MANIFESTO OF FUTURISM

February 20, 1909/2009 MoMA