

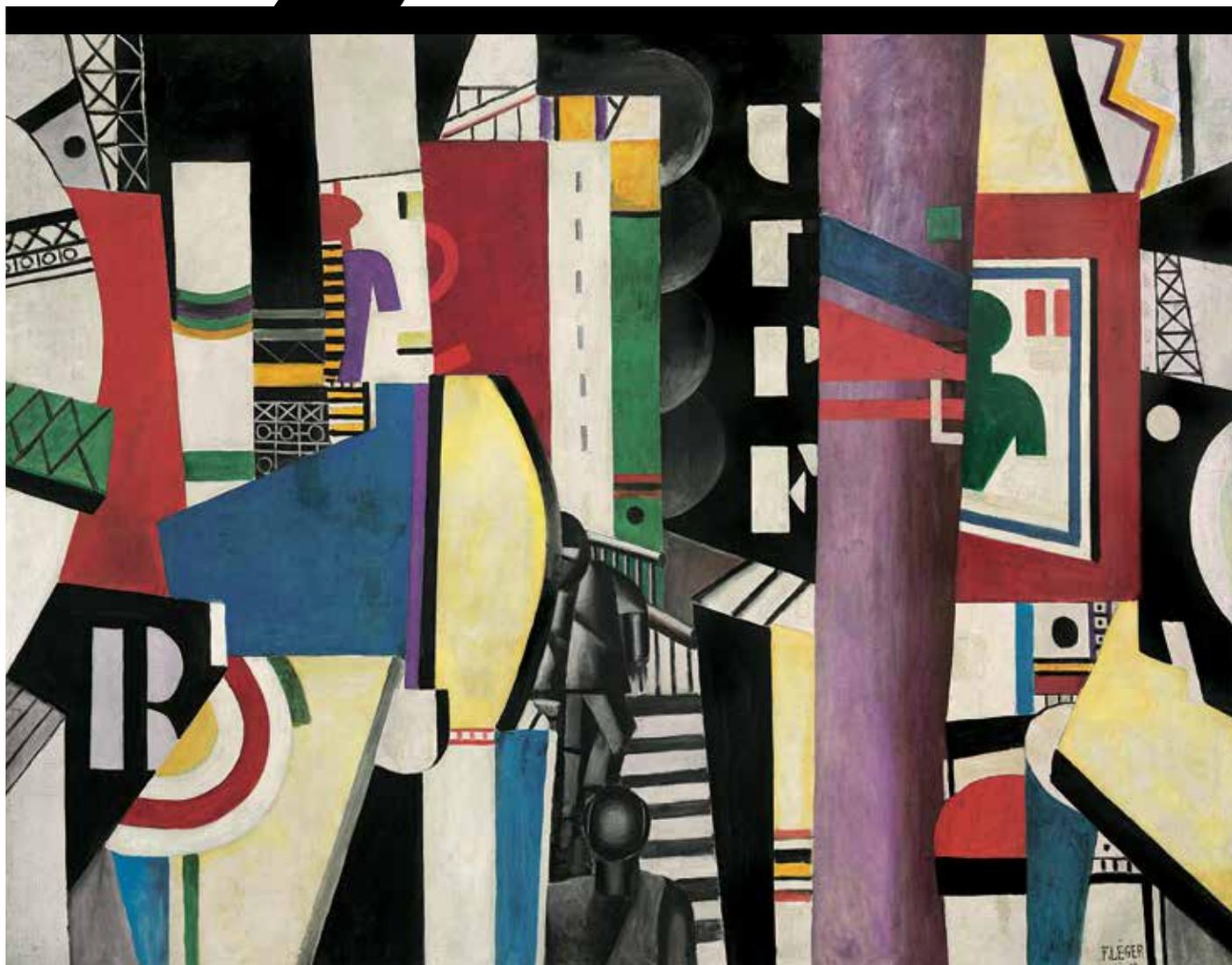


PHILADELPHIA  
MUSEUM OF ART

# Léger

Modern Art and  
the Metropolis

October 14, 2013–January 5, 2014



A Guide for Students and Teachers



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# INTRODUCTION

*Léger: Modern Art and the Metropolis*, on view at the Philadelphia Museum of Art from October 14, 2013, to January 5, 2014, captures the adventurous spirit of Paris in the 1920s. It provides a broad context for *The City*, which was painted by the French artist Fernand Léger (fair-NAHND LE-zhey) in 1919. *The City* is a landmark of modern art as well as a cornerstone of the Museum's collection.

This exhibition shows how artists participated in the complexity and excitement of the modern city. Its four main themes are: The City in Painting, Advertising, The Performing Arts, and Architecture. It features more than 160 works by Léger and his contemporaries, such as Robert Delaunay and Jacques Lipchitz.

## THIS PACKET INCLUDES:

This **Guide for Students and Teachers**, which features twelve works of art by Léger and his contemporaries selected from the exhibition. Following the main themes of the exhibition, this guide was developed primarily for classroom teachers in grades 5–12 for use with their students before, after, or instead of a visit to *Léger: Modern Art and the Metropolis*. It contains curriculum connections with suggested classroom activities that teachers may adapt for use with younger students.

A **teaching poster** that has a large image of *The City* on one side and information about the artist and the painting on the back.

A **PowerPoint presentation** on a CD that contains digital images of the artworks and related discussion questions, comparison images, and background information. The CD also includes a PDF of this Guide for Students and Teachers and a PDF of the PowerPoint presentation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This resource was written by James Stein, Museum Educator and Coordinator for Art Speaks. I would like to thank my colleagues at the Museum who helped to develop this resource, especially Barbara Bassett, The Constance Williams Curator of Education, School and Teacher Programs. Museum educators Rebecca Hoenig, Rebecca Mitchell, Ilene Poses, and Jean Woodley also offered valuable suggestions. The exhibition's curator, Anna Vallye, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art, suggested objects for this teaching resource and reviewed the texts for accuracy. Members of the Editorial and Graphic Design Department, including Amy Hewitt, Associate Editor; Jacqui Baldrige, Graphic Designer; and Janette Krauss and Jennifer Zahorbenski, Production Managers, worked diligently to edit, design, and produce these materials.

# CONNECTIONS TO EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

Both national and Pennsylvania educational standards served as guidelines throughout the development of this teaching resource and helped determine the suggested classroom activities. In particular, the activities align with the following Common Core State Standards (see [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)):

## COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARD FOR READING

**Standard 7:** Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

## COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR WRITING

**Standard 1:** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

**Standard 2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**Standard 3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**Standard 10:** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING AND LISTENING

**Standard 1:** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**Standard 2:** Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**Standard 4:** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR ARTS EDUCATION

The activities also align with the following National Standards for Arts Education (see [www.arteducators.org](http://www.arteducators.org)):

**Standard 2:** Using knowledge of structures and functions. (Students know the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas, and describe how different expressive features and organizational principles cause different responses.)

**Standard 3:** Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

**Standard 4:** Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

**Standard 6:** Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

## TIMELINE: FERNAND LÉGER

- 1881** Born in Argentan in northwestern France
- 1897–99** Serves as apprentice to an architect in Caen, France
- 1900** Moves to Paris and works as architectural draftsman
- 1909** Takes a studio at La Ruche (French for “the beehive”), an art-studio complex in Paris, where he befriends artists such as Robert Delaunay and Jacques Lipchitz, and the writer Blaise Cendrars
- 1911** Moves to a studio in another part of Paris, where he paints *Smoke over Rooftops* (page 6)
- 1914–18** Serves in World War I
- 1919** Paints *The City* (page 8)
- 1919** Illustrates *La fin du monde (The End of the World)*, a book written by Blaise Cendrars (page 12)
- 1921–22** Designs stage curtain, sets, and costumes for *Skating Rink*, a production by Ballet Suédois (page 14)
- 1923** Designs sets and costumes for *Creation of the World* for Ballet Suédois
- 1923** Paints *The Large Tugboat* (page 19)
- 1923–24** Collaborates with other artists to produce his only film, *Ballet mécanique (Mechanical Ballet)* (page 11)
- 1924** Visits several cities in Italy, including Venice, with his art dealer; paints *Animated Landscape* (page 17) after returning to France
- 1924** Starts an art school in Paris
- 1931** Makes first trip to the United States
- 1935** Makes second trip to the United States
- 1938–39** Makes third trip to the United States; creates studies for cinematic mural to be installed in the lobby of Radio City Music Hall in Midtown Manhattan (page 20)
- 1940–45** Lives in New York City during World War II
- 1945–55** Works and resides in France
- 1955** Dies in Gif-sur-Yvette, France
- 1960** Musée National Fernand Léger opens in Biot, France

## THEME 1: THE CITY IN PAINTING



*View from the top floor of 13, rue de l'Ancienne Comédié, summer 1972, 1972,*  
by Christopher Green

This section shows how Fernand Léger and his friend Robert Delaunay (deh-low-NAY) depicted urban scenes before Léger painted *The City* in 1919.



Fernand Léger  
French, 1881–1955  
**Smoke over Rooftops**  
1911  
Oil on canvas

## ABOUT THIS PAINTING

Léger based this painting on the view he could see from his studio on the top floor of a building in Paris. Using warm gray and brown tones, he depicted nearby row houses on narrow streets leading up to the distant towers of Notre-Dame Cathedral in the upper right. The photograph on page 5, taken in 1972, shows that the cityscape has changed little since Léger's time.

This is one of several paintings of smoke over rooftops that Léger made between 1910 and 1912. He wrote that the contrast between the free-form, shifting shapes of smoke and the hard-edged outlines of the buildings enlivened these compositions:

**Contrast = dissonance, and hence a maximum expressive effect. I will take as an example a commonplace subject: the visual effect of curled and round puffs of smoke rising between houses. . . . Concentrate your curves with the greatest possible variety without breaking up their mass; frame them by means of the hard, dry relationship of the surfaces of the houses, dead surfaces that will acquire movement by being colored in contrast to the central mass and being opposed by live forms; you will obtain a maximum effect.**

Even at this early stage of his career, before he adopted the bright colors and vivid contrasts of *The City* (1919)—the centerpiece of this exhibition—Léger's paintings of his Parisian neighborhood show his fascination with the city as an artistic subject.

## LET'S LOOK

- ▶ What geometric shapes can you find? What do you think they might be?
- ▶ Where do you see contrasts, such as warm and cool colors? Curved and straight lines?



## ABOUT THIS PAINTING

A kaleidoscope of colors dazzle the eye, as if we're looking at sunlight through a prism. Robert Delaunay used rich shades of blue and magenta, as well as splashes of yellow and green, to create this three-part view through a window. This is one of a series of "windows" paintings Delaunay made between 1912 and 1914 in which he investigated ways to depict sunlight in abstract works.

Although at first glance nothing seems solid, one shape reappears in each of the three sections of this painting: the Eiffel Tower. Look for its tall spire above a triangular base. Delaunay loved this symbol of modern Paris and painted it throughout his career.

Léger and Delaunay, who lived near each other in 1911–12, were artistic colleagues and friends. Delaunay shared with the Impressionist artists of the late nineteenth century an interest in light. While the earlier artists sought to render fleeting effects of sunlight on a landscape, Delaunay tried to capture light itself as his subject.

Delaunay's experiments in the use of color interested Léger, but the two had artistic differences. As Léger said of his friend:

*Delaunay continued in the wake of the Impressionists by placing two complementary colors, red and green, side by side. I aimed at obtaining tints that isolated themselves, a very red red, a very blue blue. . . . So Delaunay tended to nuances, while I sought the total emancipation of color and volume, namely contrast.*

## LET'S LOOK

- ▶ Describe the colors and shapes you see. Which ones are repeated?
- ▶ One of Delaunay's goals was to paint sunlight. Where do you see rays of light in this painting?

Robert Delaunay

French, 1885–1941

### **Three-Part Windows**

1912

Oil on canvas



Fernand Léger  
French, 1881–1955

### **The City**

1919

Oil on canvas

## **ABOUT THIS PAINTING**

Léger was inspired by the modern city and celebrated its vitality in his art. He filled his painting *The City* with geometric shapes and patterns that remind us of lights, shopwindows, street signs, buildings, scaffolding, and other city sights. Unlike a traditional landscape painting in which space recedes into the background, many shapes and colors push toward the foreground.

Léger described modern urban life as “more fragmented and faster moving than life in previous eras.” He captured this exciting, fast-paced movement with striking colors, eye-catching patterns, and overlapping shapes that compete for our attention. Our eyes jump from one place to the next as if moving through busy city streets. With so many interesting things to see, we seem to catch only glimpses of each.

Living in the vibrant city of Paris, Léger admired the bold text and graphics on billboards and posters, and was fascinated by the power of train engines and airplane propellers. He also enjoyed movies, then a relatively new form of popular entertainment, and appreciated the way that film quickly moves from one scene to the next. All of these sources of inspiration are reflected in *The City*, such as in the white letters (including Léger’s initials), flat colors, mechanical people, and its cinematic quality. The painting’s size—more than seven feet tall and almost ten feet wide—is also similar to a billboard or movie screen, encouraging viewers to feel as though they can easily enter this lively and colorful city.

## **LET’S LOOK**

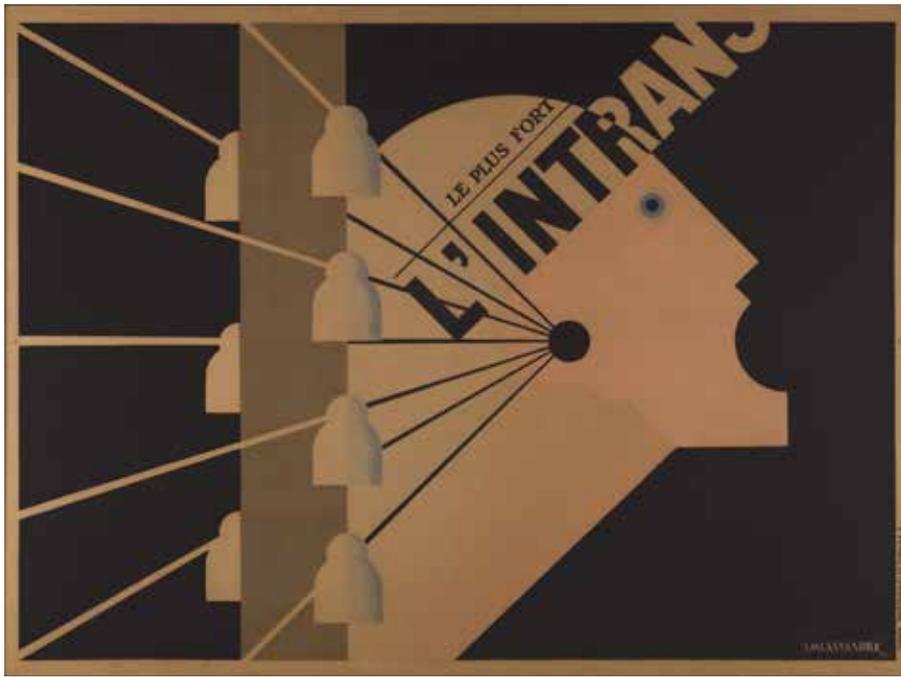
- ▶ Describe the shapes, patterns, and colors you see. What do they remind you of?
- ▶ What letters can you find? Why might they be there?
- ▶ How does this painting’s title relate to what you see?
- ▶ What do you think the artist is saying about the experience of being in the city?

## THEME 2: ADVERTISING



*The Intransigent*, 1925, by Cassandre

This section includes an advertisement by Cassandre as well as two works by Fernand Léger that show the influence of advertising: a film he directed and a book he illustrated.



Cassandre

French (born Russia), 1901–1968

### **The Intransigent**

1925

Color lithograph

## **ABOUT THIS POSTER**

Léger recognized that artists who created advertisements were “the first to draw lessons from” his 1919 painting, *The City*. Compare this advertisement by Cassandre to Léger’s painting: both artists used bold capital letters, clearly defined geometric shapes, strong contrasts, and a vertical pole that bisects the composition.

Cassandre designed this poster for the delivery trucks of a Parisian newspaper called *The Intransigent* (*L’Intransigeant*), here shortened to “L’Intrans.” *L’Intransigeant* means “the intransigent (or uncompromising) one,” and refers to the paper’s strong commitment to its principles. The artist’s goals were to grab the viewer’s attention and promote the brand’s name.

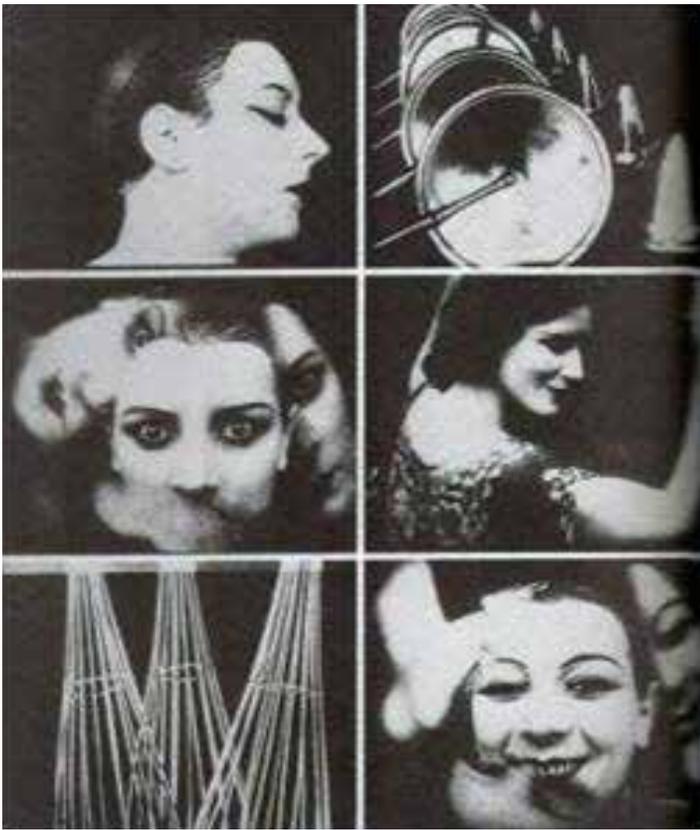
The graphic punch of Cassandre’s radically simple image still captivates us today. Seven telegraph wires converge on a shouting figure’s ear. The message? *The Intransigent* delivers the latest news! The artist masterfully integrated text and image, placing words at the heart of his poster design. He commented:

**The word commands the viewer’s attention: it conditions and quickens the entire scene of the poster. Only the word—the word around which the graphic elements are organized—has the power to give the poster its meaning, its unity.**

Cassandre knew he had to tell a product’s story quickly in terms that everyone could understand: “Designing a poster . . . means communicating with the masses in a language that can be instantly understood by the common man . . . . It means telling the crowd a story,” he said.

## **LET’S LOOK**

- ▶ How does Cassandre use lines and shapes to direct your eye?
- ▶ Do you think this figure is shouting or whispering? How can you tell?
- ▶ Advertisements try to grab your attention and promote the brand’s name. How does Cassandre do that here?



## ABOUT THIS FILM

When Léger made his only film, *Ballet mécanique* (may-cah-neek), or *Mechanical Ballet* (1923–24), movies usually told a dramatic story. The artist said that this film, which has no story line or script, was an experiment in “the interactions of moving images.”

The quickly changing scenes in *Ballet mécanique* include close-ups of a smiling mouth, a woman carrying a basket of laundry up a staircase, and mass-produced objects such as kitchen utensils. Léger wrote that he intended to make a visually interesting film using “a mechanical element, of rhythmic repetitions copied from certain objects of a commonplace nature and ‘artistic’ in the least possible degree.” The title comes from Léger’s carefully planned sequences of moving images, suggesting a rhythmic ballet of mechanical objects.

American composer George Antheil created a radical musical accompaniment for the film that was not scored for human performers but for sixteen player pianos, three airplane propellers, a siren, and seven electric bells. Although Léger loved the music, it could not be synchronized with the film footage at the time. An excerpt that was synchronized in 1999 can be played on the enclosed CD.

Fernand Léger  
French, 1881–1955

Dudley Murphy  
American, 1897–1968

**Ballet mécanique**  
**(Mechanical Ballet)**

1923–24

35 mm black-and-white film, silent

12 minutes

Restored with color tints by Bruce Posner, 2001 and 2005, and George Antheil’s 1924 music score adapted and arranged for performance by Paul D. Lehrman, 1999. Film and music © 2005 Anthology Film Archives. Music score © Estate of George Antheil/G. Schirmer’s Music Publishers. Sound recording © 1999 Paul D. Lehrman. All rights reserved



## ABOUT THIS BOOK

Léger expanded his artistic repertoire beyond painting by collaborating with other artists on many types of projects. He illustrated his friend Blaise Cendrars's 1919 book *La fin du monde* (*The End of the World*). Cendrars (sahn-DRAR) intended his text to be a screenplay, but when it was not produced as a movie he published it as a book with twenty-two illustrations by Léger. The story is a fantasy about the end of the world as filmed by a stone sculpture of an angel atop Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris.

Léger kept up with the latest innovations in graphic design, which can be seen in his use of many different typefaces to remind viewers of advertising. In his illustrations for *The End of the World*, he incorporated stenciled text alongside flat blocks of color to mimic commercial signs. For example, the red letters in this image saying “English Spoken” recall signs in Parisian shopwindows. Throughout Cendrars's book Léger used boldly colored block letters, numbers, advertising slogans, and quotations that evoke the chaos of city life. When seen in sequence as the pages of the book are turned, his dynamic illustrations bring to mind the moving images of a film.

## LET'S LOOK

- ▶ What do you notice first? What else can you find?
- ▶ How many sizes and colors of type do you see?

Fernand Léger

French, 1881–1955

**La fin du monde**  
**(The End of the World)**

1919

Book with illustrations (color stencil prints)

## THEME 3: PERFORMING ARTS



A 1922 performance of *Skating Rink* in Paris. Photograph from a 1923 review that appeared in the journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*.

Fernand Léger designed sets and costumes for two ballets: *Skating Rink* (1921–22) and *Creation of the World* (1923). This section features one of his designs for *Skating Rink* as well as marionettes that his colleague Alexandra Exter created for a film.



## ABOUT THIS ARTWORK

Throughout the 1920s, Léger eagerly experimented in a wide range of artistic media. He was especially interested in the performing arts, and designed sets and costumes for two ballets for the Ballets Suédois (sway-DWAH): *Skating Rink* (1921–22) and *Creation of the World* (1923).

Léger created this watercolor sketch as his design for *Skating Rink's* stage curtain. Audiences would see the curtain closed across the stage as they entered the theater, offering them a preview of the ballet. In this playful image, large-eyed faces peek out from behind colorful geometric shapes, while carefully posed feet on diagonal lines near the bottom suggest that these figures are dancers on a stage. As shown in this sketch, the costumed dancers (Léger called them “moving scenery”) would bring the painted scenery to life, combining moving pieces with his set design to create an animated, abstract composition.

*Skating Rink* was inspired by the films of Charlie Chaplin, who was a great comedian and one of the most important directors of the silent movie era. In the ballet, a young man called the Poet longs for a girl he sees at a public skating rink. The girl returns his interest but a bully, called the Madman, scares the Poet away and wins the girl. Devastated, the Poet disappears into the crowd. Léger enjoyed Chaplin’s films and other forms of popular entertainment such as skating rinks, which brought together people of different social classes.

## WHAT WAS THE BALLETS SUÉDOIS?

Rolf de Maré, the founder of the Ballets Suédois (Swedish Ballet), collected paintings by many modern artists. De Maré and Jean Börlin, the company’s principal male dancer and choreographer, shared a vision of dance as a way to bring paintings to life. Although the Ballets Suédois was called a dance company, its productions were multimedia events, “a harmony of song, speech, dance, costumes, scenery, music,” as Börlin phrased it.

De Maré and Börlin were Swedish, as were many of the company’s dancers. De Maré based his company in Paris, because he thought that audiences there would be more receptive to his avant-garde productions than the conservative Swedish public.

## LET’S LOOK

- ▶ What patterns and geometric shapes do you see?
- ▶ How many dancers can you find?
- ▶ Based on this drawing, what do you think the ballet would be like?

Fernand Léger

French, 1881–1955

### Scenic Design for *Skating Rink*

1921

Watercolor, gouache, graphite, and ink on paper



## ABOUT THESE PUPPETS

In 1924 Léger and other artists started an art school in Paris. Alexandra Exter, an artist who taught theater design at the school, created these marionettes for an unrealized animated film. The puppets, whose actions could be controlled by someone pulling their strings, were intended to be actors in the film.

Like Léger, Exter was a painter who experimented in a wide range of artistic media. Both artists created abstract, geometrical set designs and costumes for the performing arts—Léger focused primarily on dance, while Exter worked on modern theatrical productions in both Russia and Paris. At a time when few women played a professional role in the arts, Alexandra Exter pursued a career in the world of stage design and also worked as a fashion designer. These lively marionettes reflect her accomplishments in both of these fields.

## LET'S LOOK

- ▶ What do the costumes tell us about these figures?
- ▶ If you made up a story using these three characters, what would happen?

Alexandra Exter

Russian (born Ukraine), 1882–1949

**Lady in Red**

**Harlequin**

**Policeman**

1926

Painted wood, fabric, felt, metal, tin, thread, yarn, plastic, and ribbon

## THEME 4: ARCHITECTURE



*Animated Landscape*, 1924, by Fernand Léger

Fernand Léger studied architecture before becoming a painter. This section includes several works showing buildings and structures that he painted after *The City*, as well as a sculpture made by Jacques Lipchitz, who was also interested in architecture.



## ABOUT THIS PAINTING

Léger's artistic style continued to evolve after he painted *The City* in 1919. In this 1924 painting, two men dressed in gray suits look at us from an abstract cityscape. The background is painted in black, white, and gray tones, with a bright red rectangle behind the standing man. We can make out the curved bow of a boat pointing toward the large red shape. The buildings, windows, and a railing are painted in precise geometric forms with sharply defined edges. While Léger painted a scene full of color in *The City*, here he used a relatively limited range of colors and defined the city in a grid of straight lines.

Léger painted *Animated Landscape* soon after returning to France from a trip to Venice, Italy, with his art dealer, Léonce Rosenberg. In this picture, Léger is the seated figure and Rosenberg is standing beside him. The boat is a reminder of Venice, where many people travel by boat along the city's canals. This is one of several paintings that Léger referred to as "animated landscapes" because the figures animate—or bring to life—the static landscape around them. These images recall his set designs for ballets because they contain figures in a stage-like setting, much like the dancers in *Skating Rink* (page 14), whose performance brought his painted scenery to life.

## LET'S LOOK

- ▶ Which parts of the painting appear close to us? Which are farther away? How can you tell?
- ▶ How does the artist make the two figures stand out?

Fernand Léger

French, 1881–1955

**Animated Landscape**

1924

Oil on canvas



## ABOUT THIS SCULPTURE

The sculptor Jacques Lipchitz met Léger in 1909 when they lived at La Ruche (French for “the beehive”), an art-studio complex in Paris. Both artists were interested in how their works interacted with architectural spaces. Lipchitz, who was born in Lithuania, said that he “frequently thought of the relationship of Cubist sculpture to architecture, remembering my father’s insistence that architecture was really the mother of the arts.”

Lipchitz’s sculptures invite viewers to experience them in relation to the surrounding space. He said, “I want my sculpture to give the effect of seeming to turn—to impel the spectator to walk around it. In other words, it is the illusion of movement that I seek.”

Often called the first Cubist sculptor, Lipchitz intended this abstract sculpture to be seen from all sides. *The Bather’s* interlocking forms offer a variety of angles and perspectives, recalling the effect of Cubist paintings. By breaking up the sculpture into intersecting planes whose facets catch the light, he created a dynamic sense of motion:

I had to work toward Cubism in sculpture entirely on my own; and perhaps the greatest revelation that led me in this direction was the importance of light for sculpture. . . . When the forms of the sculpture are angular, when the surface is broken by deep interpenetrations and contrasts, light can work to bring out the truly sculptural qualities.

—JACQUES LIPCHITZ

## LET’S LOOK

- ▶ Can you identify any parts of the figure’s body, such as head, torso, and legs?
- ▶ What do you notice about this sculpture as you view it from different angles?

Jacques Lipchitz

American (born Lithuania),  
1891–1973

**Bather**

1917

Bronze



## ABOUT THIS PAINTING

Léger enjoyed watching tugboats at work on the Seine River, which flows through Paris and its suburbs. Here he shows a boat moving along the river past factories and other buildings. In this lively composition, he contrasts the flat, brightly colored areas in the center with the curved, gray shapes above and below that form a kind of oval frame around them. The pale, gently flowing lines near the bottom suggest the river's current, while the darker shapes above remind us of hills dotted with trees. Other parts of the painting recall machinery or mechanical objects, such as the carefully outlined stack of rectangles at the right. Léger balanced these opposing forces to evoke a large boat sailing through a natural environment transformed by the work of mankind.

Some writers have compared this painting to Léger's set designs for ballets, such as his stage curtain for *Skating Rink* (1921; page 14). In both of these works the artist used overlapping geometric shapes, bold colors, and patterns painted in black and white. They also share a sense of movement within a shallow space. In addition, *The Large Tugboat* echoes works that Léger designed for architectural settings, in part because of its wall-filling size: it is about four feet high and six feet wide.

Musée National Fernand Léger, Biot, Musées Nationaux du XX<sup>ème</sup> Siècle des Alpes-Maritime, France © 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Photography: Gerard Blot © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, New York

## LET'S LOOK

- ▶ What do you see in the foreground? The background?
- ▶ Which parts look man-made or mechanical?
- ▶ Which parts remind you of nature? How can you tell?

Fernand Léger

French, 1881–1955

### The Large Tugboat

1923

Oil on canvas



## ABOUT THESE STUDIES

Léger, who visited the United States several times during the 1930s, called New York City “the most colossal spectacle in the world.” In the late 1930s he met one of the architects for Rockefeller Center, a complex of buildings in Midtown Manhattan. Léger proposed a “cinematic mural” to be installed in the center’s Radio City Music Hall, a building he hailed as “the true expression of modern America.”

Léger created seven studies for this mural, three of which are shown here. These images were meant to be displayed on a marble wall near an escalator in Radio City’s lobby, so that visitors would pass by them in sequence as they rode up the moving staircase. Unfortunately, the project was never realized.

These colorful, cartoon-like studies capture the experience of approaching Manhattan on a boat sailing through New York Harbor:

*The ocean liner, cruising slowly, shifts the perspectives gently; one looks for the Statue of Liberty, France’s gift. . . . [Wall Street] dominates this new world from its vast height. After six days of crossing the water, fluid and elusive, moving, yielding, you arrive in front of this steep mountain, the work of men, which slowly emerges and becomes sharper, takes shape, with its sharp angles, its ordered rows of windows, its metallic color. —FERNAND LÉGER*

This mural, which would have been seen by thousands of people each week in Radio City Music Hall, shows Léger’s lifelong interest in bringing his art about the modern city into the world of everyday life.

## LET’S LOOK

- ▶ Where do you see the Statue of Liberty in each of these three drawings? What else do you see?
- ▶ What sounds would you hear?
- ▶ What do you think these drawings say about Léger’s response to New York?

Fernand Léger

French, 1881–1955

**Study for Cinematic Mural, Studies I–III**

1938–39

Gouache, graphite on board

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

These classroom activities correlate to the PowerPoint presentation enclosed with this teaching resource. They are arranged thematically, and present activities for elementary, middle, and high school students in visual arts, language arts, mathematics, and social studies.

## Introduction

### CHANGES IN SOCIETY

*Middle and High School  
Social Studies*

Fernand Léger described modern urban life as “more fragmented and faster moving than life in previous eras.” Research and discuss changes in transportation and communications that occurred during his lifetime (1881–1955). Compare them to the recent past: explore changes that have occurred in one generation by interviewing adults, at home or at school, about how life has changed since they were children. Write about what you think will change in the next generation. (Slide 3)

### TIME TRAVEL

*Middle and High School  
Social Studies*

If you had the opportunity to go back in time, would you want to visit Paris during the 1920s? Write a short essay to explain the reasons for your thoughts. (The 2011 movie *Midnight in Paris*, directed by Woody Allen, explores this theme.) (Slide 4)

## Theme 1: The City in Painting

### GEOMETRIC CITY

*Elementary School  
Art, Language Arts, Mathematics*

Cut several colors of construction paper into geometric shapes (such as circles, semicircles, rectangles, and triangles) of various sizes. Divide students into groups of four or five. Give each group a set of 20–25 pieces of the cut paper shapes and one large (approximately 16 x 20 inch) rectangle of black construction paper to use as a background. Students select shapes from their set (no need to use them all) and work together in groups to design a city by laying the geometric shapes on the black background. (They may glue the pieces down or simply place them on top.) Each group discusses what they want to include, such as parks, houses, and apartment buildings. They present their city to the rest of the class and explain their choices. (Slide 13)

## CITY STORIES

*Elementary through High School*  
*Art, Language Arts*

Both Fernand Léger and his friend Robert Delaunay were inspired to paint views of Paris. Write about, draw, and/or take photographs of a cityscape you know. It could be the view from a classroom window, a landscape you can see from your home, scenes you pass each day, or a place you have visited often. Combine images and words to tell a unique story about a place you know well. *This activity can be done individually or in small groups.* (Slides 6–15)

## CITY GUIDES

*Middle and High School*  
*Art, Language Arts, Social Studies*

Robert Delaunay painted the Eiffel Tower (Slide 11), a familiar symbol of Paris. When Léger visited New York City, he painted the Statue of Liberty (Slide 37), a symbol of New York. Divide the class into two groups to create paper or digital city guides for tourists. Ask one group to create a guide about Paris and the other to create one about New York, Philadelphia, or another city. Conduct research to identify the landmarks of the city assigned to each group. How will you communicate its attractions to potential tourists and entice them to visit? Use images and maps from online sources, magazines, or create your own. Write texts to explain the images and place them in context. (Slides 11 and 37)

## Theme 2: Advertising

### TEXT AND IMAGE IN ADVERTISEMENTS

*Elementary through High School*  
*Art, Language Arts*

Consider Cassandre's 1925 poster for the newspaper *The Intransigent*. Collect other advertisements, as well as logos for products and sports teams, from printed or online sources that also use text and image. How does the ad's designer grab the viewer's attention and promote the brand's name? Design your own ad, such as for your school or neighborhood, using eye-catching images and text. (Slides 17–19)

### MECHANICAL MUSIC

*Elementary and Middle School*  
*Music*

Choose a mechanical object at home that makes a sound and bring it into class. Play the film *Ballet mécanique* with the sound turned off and use the mechanical objects to make a group soundscape to accompany the silent film. Then play the film with the sound turned on to see how it compares to your music. (Slide 21)

## PROFILES IN ART

*High School*

*Art, Social Studies*

Cassandre used a profile in his advertisement for the newspaper *The Intransigent*. Research other uses of profiles in the history of art, such as portrait miniatures, cameos, coins, and paper money, going back to ancient Roman times. What were the original contexts for these profile portraits? (Slide 19)

## Theme 3: Performing Arts

### PUPPET STORIES

*Elementary School*

*Art, Language Arts*

The artist Alexandra Exter created three marionettes for an animated film (Slide 27). *Sesame Street* and the cartoon version of *Pinocchio* include examples of marionettes and puppets as characters in a story. Make sock puppets or paper bag puppets from small paper lunch bags. Working in small groups, create a collaborative story involving your puppets as characters. What adventures will they have together? Where will they go? (Slide 27)

### ARTISTS AND DANCE

*Middle and High School*

*Social Studies*

Léger and other painters, such as Pierre Bonnard and Giorgio de Chirico, designed sets and costumes for Ballets Suédois productions. (For an example of art created for a ballet in the Philadelphia Museum of Art's collection, see *A Wheatfield on a Summer's Afternoon* (1942) by Marc Chagall, which was a backdrop for a production of the ballet *Aleko* staged by the Ballet Theatre of New York.) Other visual artists worked for the Ballets Russes in Paris. Select an artist who designed sets or costumes for dance productions and research his or her involvement in the performing arts. (Slides 24–26)

### STAGE CURTAIN

*Middle and High School*

*Art, Language Arts*

Léger's design for the stage curtain of *Skating Rink* was seen closed across the stage and gave audiences a preview of the ballet performance. Choose a film, ballet, or play and design a stage curtain that gives the audience a preview of the show. Write a brief text explaining how your curtain design relates to the show you chose. Fold the flat curtain like an accordion. How does it look when it's stretched flat across the stage and when it's folded up and pulled to the side? (Slide 25)

## **Theme 4: Architecture**

### **CREATE A SYMBOL**

*Middle and High School  
Art, Language Arts, Social Studies*

The Eiffel Tower (Slide 11) is a symbol of Paris, just as the Statue of Liberty (Slide 37) is a symbol of New York City. Research the stories behind these two urban symbols, including what they express and how they were built. Create an icon to serve as a symbol of your town or school or one of its athletic teams. Write a brief text to explain your choice. (Slides 11 and 37)

### **CITY PLANS**

*Middle and High School  
Social Studies, Geography*

Some aspects of Philadelphia's city plan, such as the Benjamin Franklin Parkway linking City Hall and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, were modeled on the city plan of Paris, where the Avenue des Champs-Élysées connects landmark structures. Compare maps or photographs of Philadelphia to Paris, noticing similarities and differences in the layout of city streets, location of landmark buildings, and the rivers that flow through each city.