

Georges Braque (French, 1882–1963)

Le Tapis vert [The Green Carpet], 1929

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Friends of the Academy, 1941 (4952)

In 1907, after seven years of study at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, Georges Braque met Pablo Picasso and together they revolutionized painting. Working alongside each other, Braque and Picasso developed analytical Cubism (exemplified in Picasso's *Fan, Pipe, and Glass*). After service in World War I, however, Braque turned to Cubism's later "synthetic" phase, refining the monochromatic palette and structural complexity associated with analytical Cubism through the reintroduction of color, the simplification of form, and the use of collage, whether actual or, as in this case, suggested in painterly texture.

In this still life, flat planes of neutral color advance and recede against the picture plane, emphasizing its two-dimensionality even as they overlap, merge, and collide to suggest three-dimensional objects arranged on a precariously tipped table. Analytical Cubism's dissolution of form has been replaced by the build-up of shapes into an easily readable composition that represents rather than replicates nature, as indicated in the trompe l'oeil frame that just barely contains the grapes, glass, apple, pipe, and bowl within its borders.

Robert Delaunay (French, 1885–1941)

The Rainbow, 1913

Oil on canvas

Purchase, 1966 (3417.1)

Inspired by Eugène Chevreul's highly influential 1855 treatise on the law of simultaneous contrasts, Robert Delaunay reinterpreted Cubism in terms of color. Delaunay drew impetus from Chevreul's theory that colors in the spectrum resonate according to their juxtaposition to liberate color and empower it with the articulation of depth, sensation, and movement in a painting. "These colored planes are the structure of the picture, and nature is no longer a subject for description but a pretext," he wrote, seeking to abandon altogether the "images or reality that come to corrupt the order of color."

One of several Paris scenes Delaunay did between 1910 and 1913, *The Rainbow* represents a step along the way to this pure abstraction. The Eiffel Tower's distinctive shape emerges ghost-like through the arc of the rainbow at right, while the dome of the Sacré Coeur is just visible on the horizon. But the painting's real subject is its vivid, riotous color, which transcends its descriptive role to operate as an energizing and even spiritualizing force. Christened "Orphism" by the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, Delaunay's style is one of several adaptations of Cubism developed in France in the second decade of the 20th century.

Yves Tanguy (French, 1900–1955)

The Long Rain, 1942

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Friends of the Academy, 1943 (262.1)

Yves Tanguy started painting in 1923 without any formal training, and by 1925 he had joined the Surrealist Movement. Today he is known for haunting dreamscapes such as this scene of a bleak, empty plain stretching toward a distant horizon and populated with irrational, vaguely biomorphic shapes. The harsh, hard-edged shadows cast by these disquieting forms seem to take on a life of their own, blatantly disregarding the distorting effects of the landscape or the clouded sky. Of all the Surrealists, Tanguy made the fewest references to the everyday world of the five senses, thus creating works that plumb the depths of the imagination and the subconscious mind.

Fernand Léger (French, 1881–1955)

Abstraction, 1926

Oil on canvas

Gift of Robert Allerton through Friends of the
Academy, 1945 (311.1)

Ferdinand Léger had great confidence in modern technology, and he incorporated machinery parts and robotic human forms into complex compositions inspired by Cubism. This work, however, is one of the few truly nonrepresentational paintings in his oeuvre. In it, Léger has built up planes of color to suggest the flatness of a wall, even as he hints at a third dimension by allowing these rectangles to overlap. Space is further evoked in the white ovoid form in the center of the canvas and the curved shape below it, both of which seem to emerge from the shadows thanks to an unseen—and ambiguous—light source.

Henri Matisse (French, 1869–1954)

Annelies, White Tulips, and Anemones, 1944

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Friends of the Academy, 1946 (376.1)

In *Annelies, White Tulips, and Anemones*, Henri Matisse has fabricated a private world of calm, repose, grace, and ease, domesticating the sensual and decorative pastoral themes of his earlier paintings. To create these sumptuous interiors, Matisse worked with a succession of favorite models; in this case, the sitter is Annelies, a young woman whom Matisse took on as a student. The luxurious and safe haven Matisse imagines in this work bears no hint of the turmoil in his personal life at the time: in the spring of 1944, his wife and daughter, who had been working for the French Resistance, were taken prisoner by the Nazis.

Amédée Ozenfant (French, 1886–1966)

Accords, 1922

Oil on canvas

Gift of John Gregg Allerton, 1967 (3478.1)

At the close of World War I, Amédée Ozenfant met the Swiss painter and architect Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (later known as Le Corbusier), and together they developed Purism. Conceived as an ordering system based on classical proportion and modeled after technological standardization, this new art form was designed to give structure to synthetic Cubism, then perceived as a scattershot style with no clear trajectory or focus. It was also devised in direct opposition to Dada, whose use of humor and chance as powerful strategies of subversion was denounced by the Purists as a destructive obstacle to their agenda.

In *Accords*, Ozenfant has siphoned all individualizing flourishes from the bottles, glasses, guitars, and pitchers associated with the Cubist visual vocabulary, and he has rendered these objects in terms of the circles, cylinders, spheres, and cones on which they are fundamentally based. Interpreting ordinary things as multiple iterations of essential geometric forms, Ozenfant has subordinated a complex interlace of vessels and volumes to its Platonic ideal.

Giorgio de Chirico (Italian, 1888–1978)

The Great Machine, 1925

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Friends of the Academy, 1945 (309.1)

Born in Greece, Giorgio de Chirico moved to Italy in 1909 and to Paris two years later. After serving in the Italian military, he co-founded the Scuola Metafisica, an informal school of painting that advanced a “metaphysical” agenda by subjecting Renaissance aesthetic strategies to 20th-century irrationalism. De Chirico’s desolate architectural spaces are typically illogical, largely unpopulated, and disturbingly rich in enigmatic juxtapositions. Indeed, perspective is used emotionally rather than structurally, and dramatic light and shadow conspire to convey a sense of mystery.

The Great Machine rises like a tower from the center of an Italianate square. The monumental construction is composed of irregular two- and three-dimensional forms, stacked precariously and topped by a white bust with a featureless, egg-shaped head. De Chirico often used mannequins and tailor’s dummies in place of the human model, liquidating his paintings of warmth and emotion. Influencing the work of the later Surrealists, de Chirico was, by extension, an important precursor to Abstract Expressionism.

Amedeo Modigliani (Italian, 1884–1920)

Seated Nude, c. 1918

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Carter Galt, 1960 (2895.1)

Living in extreme poverty, plagued by addiction, and obsessed with the creation of art that went largely unacknowledged in his lifetime, Amedeo Modigliani is celebrated today as the personification of the genius, bohemian artist. Modigliani attended art school in Venice and moved to Paris in 1906, where he spent the remainder of his life. After producing a small body of sculpture during the first decade of the 20th century, he turned to painting in 1914, creating the portraits of his lovers and artist friends for which he is best known.

Seated Nude is one of several controversial nudes that Modigliani painted between 1917 and 1919. Sensuous in its extreme simplicity—the sitter's voluptuous form described in a reduced palette of peach tones and contained within a meandering line—this work has more in common with the lyrical curvilinearity practiced by the Italian Renaissance master Sandro Botticelli than with the formal rupture brought forth by Modigliani's avant-garde contemporaries.

Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881–1973)

Fan, Pipe, and Glass, 1911

Oil on canvas

Purchase, Academy Fund and gift of the Friends of the Academy, by exchange, 1969 (3576.1)

Between 1907, the year of his revolutionary work *Les Femmes d'Alger* (O.J. No. 115) (The Museum of Modern Art, New York), and 1916, Pablo Picasso, together with Georges Braque, worked on solutions to the problems inherent in Cubism. He was concerned not only with the two-dimensional depiction of the three-dimensional aspects of reality but also with a world in constant flux, and he sought to portray multiple aspects of objects by simultaneously breaking them down and reconstituting them.

An abstraction of a traditional still life, this painting is representative of Cubism's early, "analytical" phase, in which color was suppressed and form was translated into lines and shapes that signify objects in their many aspects. To the left, a white clay pipe hovers above a folded fan resting on a table; two reassembled glasses and schematic references to stringed instruments complete the composition. In works such as this Picasso has attempted to balance signs of external reality—inanimate objects—with a new spatial structure. By introducing a fresh way of depicting the increasingly complex world, he altered the course of Western art.