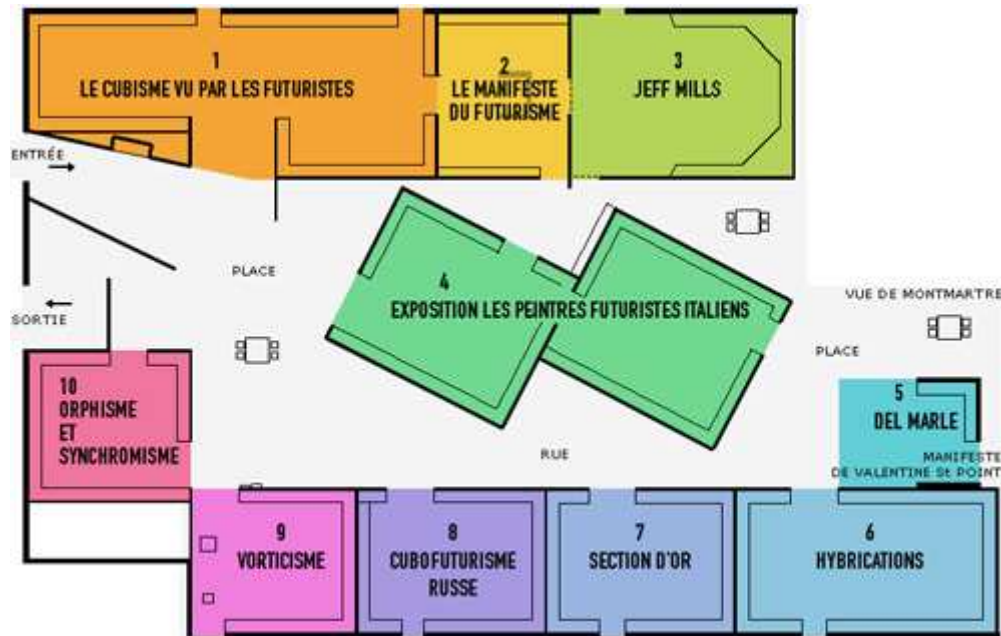


Le Futurisme à Paris. Une avant-garde explosive

Exhibition map



1/ Le cubisme vu par les futuristes

The Manifesto of the Futurist Painters, co-signed by Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla and Gino Severini in February 1910, called Cubism into question and contested its supremacy. By stating that it was combating the Nude in painting, the very validity of the research initiated by *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) by Pablo Picasso came under attack in this manifesto. Extolling the heritage of Impressionism, the Italian painters denounced the “tarry tints” and the restricted palette of the earliest Cubist paintings. Their assaults on “archaism” and “the linear technique of the Egyptians” were aimed at the Cubism influenced by a marked interest in “primitive” arts, especially in Picasso’s work. The modernity upheld by Futurist painting was an iconography inspired by large modern cities, their electric lighting and their hectic pace. In spite of these reproaches, the Italian painters went on to modify their paintings after discovering Cubism in more depth. In October 1911, Boccioni and Carrà, guided by Severini who lived in Paris, discovered the paintings of Georges Braque and Picasso in the Kahnweiler Gallery, and those of Albert Gleizes, Jean Metzinger and Fernand Léger at the Salon d’automne. Back in Milan, Boccioni subjected the second version of his *Stati d’animo* to a Cubism-inspired crystallography.

2/ Manifeste du futurisme de F.T. Marinetti

The publication date of the Manifesto of Futurism (February 20th 1909) overlaps with the birth of the avant-garde itself. Never, before the publication of the text by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, had such a definitive rejection been made of the past and its heritage. To reconcile the art of his time with the values of the society in which it flourished, Charles Baudelaire invented a form of “modernity”: a sentiment specific to the present time, “the epoch, fashion, ethics, passion”, which he did not imagine could be dissociated from a respect for the “unchanging eternal”, from taking into account the lessons of the past. Futurism broke with this balance. Its championing of qualities specific to its period (mechanization, metropolises, urban crowds, etc.) became exclusive. However, this was not limited to seeking to renew artistic iconography. Emancipating the creation of classical models, Futurism soon reinvented the very notion of form. It opposed dynamism and speed to the cardinal value of stability, inherited from the tradition. For this stability, this balance, it substituted the movement that breaks up forms, the “simultaneity” that opens them up to their

surroundings. Futurism rejected the regular proportions of the traditional canon in favour of the energy of the machine or of crowds which distends forms and makes them elastic. Beyond the desire to break with the past, what the Manifesto of Futurism announced was a reinvention of the categories on which classical aesthetics were based.

3/ Jeff Mills, Critical Arrangements

The city of Detroit (Michigan), for many years the American capital of the automobile industry (Ford, General Motors), was the source of two original musical forms. In 1959, it saw the emergence of the Motown label (a contraction of " Motor Town "). In the early 1980s, techno music emerged on its scene. The musical styles of Detroit are strongly marked by the context of a city where the machine is omnipresent. Motown applied the efficiency and precision of industrial assembly lines to the music industry. Their method and technical mechanisms in turn inspired techno music, of which Jeff Mills is one of the pioneers. The former student of architecture has a longstanding interest in science-fiction

films which explore the future and its mythology. In 2000, Jeff Mills composed the soundtrack for Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). His passion for the film *2001: a Space Odyssey* (1968) led him to design a sculpture-installation in homage to Stanley Kubrick's film in 2001. Technology, mechanization, utopias and "futuristic" thinking nourish the imagination of Jeff Mills, shaping his music and the images that he conceives.

4/ Exposition « Les Peintres futuristes italiens », 5-24 février 1912

The exhibition organised in February 1912 by the Bernheim-Jeune & Cie Gallery was a major event in the history of Futurism. The movement's Italian painters were exhibited collectively for the first time in Paris. The principles that they expressed in their Manifesto of the Futurist Painters of February 1910 were put to the test in their pictorial application. The paintings on view illustrated the movement and energy of modern cities. Railway stations – places displaying the concentration of forces and merchandise, geometric spaces where crowds and machines intersect – offered them their most revealing subjects. To mark their desire to break with the sentimentality inherited from Romanticism, the Futurist painters applied the slogan of Marinetti's manifesto inviting artists to "kill moonlight!" to the letter and depicted the city at night broken up by the lighting of street lamps. In the name of the same modernity, they painted a woman on the way to become an "electric doll" – as portrayed by Marinetti, the heroine of colourful cafés glittering with sharp and artificial brightness.

Crowds made their entrance into modern painting. Police charges, riots and street demonstrations illustrate the Futurist painters' sympathy for anarchist ideas. These anarchist sympathies were shared by Félix Fénéon, artistic director of the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery. It was in their reinvention of the concept of form that the Futurist painters showed themselves to be true innovators. Drawing on the principles of the philosophy of Henri Bergson, they applied the notions of « dynamism », « duration » and « simultaneity » to the representation of form. The depiction of movement, and the dislocation of forms that it produces, is one of the expressions of this dynamism. Another application is the inclusion of the traces left by memory in the representation. This search for a polysensorial transcription of experience also opens the way for new pictorial experimentation. After being presented in Paris, the complete exhibition travelled to London (The Sackville Gallery), Berlin (Der Sturm Gallery), and Brussels (Georges Giroux Gallery), and then a smaller version went on view in the principal European capitals.

5/ Félix Del Marle, Valentine de Saint-Point

Félix Del Marle was the only French painter to join the Futurist movement. On July 10th 1913, he launched his Futurist Manifesto in Montmartre which was soon published in *Paris-Journal* and *Comoedia*. The text received official Futurist approval in August: it was reproduced in French in the Florentine review *Lacerba*. After paying his tribute to Futurist iconoclasm, "GO TO IT, DEMOLITION MEN!!! / GET YOUR PICKAXES!!! / MONTMARTRE MUST BE DESTROYED!!!", Del Marle set out the philosophical bases of the movement he was joining: "Everything is moving and being quickly transformed. As the philosopher Bergson put it, 'Everything is becoming and fleeting'". Filled with the zeal of the proselyte, Del Marle turned his guns on the Cubists: "Beyond the Synthetists and Cubists, whose aesthetic stance, through the negation of colour and the subject, reveals their hidden academicism, we seek a style of movement, which has never been attempted before us". Valentine de Saint-Point, another figure of French Futurism, author of the Manifesto of the Futurist Woman (25 March 1912), stated in her Futurist Manifesto of Lechery (11 January 1913) that "Lechery, regarded outside of any moral concept and as an essential element of the dynamics of

life, is a force. [...] Lechery incites Energies and releases Forces", and the time has come at last to destroy "the sinister rags of Romanticism".

6/ Hybridations

Starting in 1912, Cubism took on Futurist aspects and Futurism adopted Cubist approaches. The publication of the Manifesto of the Futurist Painters in Parisian newspapers, the presence of Italian artists in Parisian painters' studios and the Salons, and the exhibition of the Futurist painters presented in the Bernheim-Jeune & Cie Gallery contributed to the emergence of a style of painting at the intersection of Cubism and Futurism. Their respective conception of colour radically opposed Futurists and Cubists initially. The former upheld the heritage of Impressionism and the Divisionism of Georges Seurat, while the rejection of Impressionism had been the rallying argument of the first Cubists. After 1912, the Cubist palette grew brighter, while at the same time the works of the Futurists adopted the ochre and grey tones of Cubist paintings.

Two conceptions of form likewise opposed Cubists and Futurists. To the balance and stability of the former, the Italian painters responded by seeking to depict "dynamism", "duration" and "simultaneity" in representations which diffract objects and bodies, ruining their formal coherence. While the Cubists became devoted to scenes of dancing and sports in which movement is a central component, still lifes began to appear in the Futurist compositions. Umberto Boccioni explored a primitivism that recalls the pioneering phase of Cubism. A transmitter of pictorial innovations between Paris and Milan, Gino Severini composed a still life into which he introduced the latest Cubist research in the use of papier collé, by incorporating a page of the Florentine review *Lacerba*, the official review of the Futurist movement.

7/ La Section d'or

Organised in October 1912 by the Cubist painters, the Salon de la Section d'or appears like a response to the exhibition « The Italian Futurist Painters », presented a few months earlier in the Bernheim-Jeune & Cie Gallery. To take into account the diversity of the pictorial trends presented in it, Guillaume Apollinaire evoked a "breaking up Cubism". The new path taken by these painters was the search for a synthesis between Cubism and Futurism. It is illustrated by the presence of *Nu descendant l'escalier n° 2* by Marcel Duchamp, which he himself presented as the "Cubist interpretation of a Futurist formula". The title adopted by the Salon de la Section d'or refers to the "divine proportion" and geometry, in the classical sense of balance and regularity, of Cubist painting. The fact that the philosopher Henri Bergson was approached to preface the exhibition's catalogue illustrates how the Section d'or artists were drawn to the values of "dynamism" and "simultaneity" on which the Futurists based their theories. The parallel goals of depicting pure formal geometry and simultaneity make the Section d'or the first "Cubofuturist" Salon.

8/ Cubofuturisme russe

One month after its publication on the front page of *Le Figaro* on February 20th 1909, the Manifesto of Futurism was published in the Russian daily *Le Soir*. This appeared in a cultural context already well informed about the developments of Parisian Cubism. Two years later, a literary movement called Ego-Futurism, which explicitly claimed the influence of Italian Futurism, was founded in Saint Petersburg. Initially a literary style, Russian Futurism branched out to include painters such as David Burliuk, Velimir Khlebnikov, Alexei Kruchenykh, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Mikhail Matyushin who came together to found a movement called "Cubofuturism" in 1913. In the same year, Kasimir Malevich formulated the theory of "Cubofuturism" which he saw as the fulfilment of Futurism. In their paintings, Natalya Goncharova, Liubov Popova and Ivan Klyun submitted a mechanized, dynamic and urban iconography to the rules of Cubist construction. Alexandra Exter who, in 1914, shared a Paris studio with the Italian painter and writer Ardengo Soffici, was at the centre of the debates between Cubism and Futurism. When Marinetti visited Russia in early 1914, he was astonished to discover an artistic milieu in which Futurism was not only perfectly assimilated but had already moved on, to the Cubofuturism already theorized by Malevich.

9/ Vorticisme

When Marinetti travelled to England in April 1910 to deliver his "Futurist Speech to the English" he found, facing him, a number of young painters well informed about the latest developments of the Paris art scene. Lewis, the leader of the British avant-garde, had lived in Paris where he became aware of the changes brought about in avant-garde circles by the appearance of the first Cubist works. The exhibition "The Italian Futurist Painters", which travelled from Paris to The Sackville

Gallery in London in March 1912, was such a success – albeit a rather scandalous one – that Futurism became a generic term describing any avant-garde expression. When Marinetti returned to England in June 1914, he was imprudent enough to enrol all the British avant-garde painters as Futurists, without informing them of it. Wyndham Lewis seized the pretext to bring together these painters in a movement that soon had its very own very Futurist-sounding review: *Blast*. The poet Ezra Pound coined the name of the new avant-garde group, « Vorticism », from 'vortex'. Its aesthetic programme was a Cubofuturism that reconciled Futurist mechanized dynamism and Cubist formalism. After visiting the first public exhibition of the Vorticist works, the *Times* critic referred to the exhibitors as "Cubist – Futurist – Vorticist Artists".

10/ Orphisme

In one of his articles devoted to the Salon des indépendants in 1913, Guillaume Apollinaire celebrated the arrival of Orphism. "This trend [...] is the slow and logical evolution of Impressionism, Divisionism, the Fauves and Cubist schools". Orphism, which he described as "pure painting, simultaneity", reconciles two notions that up until then appeared irreconcilable: "pure painting" was, according to the norms established by Apollinaire himself, the exclusive monopoly of Cubism; while "simultaneity" belonged to Futurism, the self-proclaimed heir of Postimpressionism. Orphism, Apollinaire pointed out, is an art "which no longer vibrates with only the contrast of complementarities discovered by Seurat, but is one in which each tone calls up all the other colours of the prism and lets them glow. This is simultaneity". The new form of painting announced the reconciliation of the Cubists with Impressionism, whose rejection had been the first unifying plank of the new movement's programme. By referring to a chromaticism derived from the research of Seurat, and to the "simultaneity" hitherto claimed by the Futurist painters, Orphism forms a possible variant of Cubofuturism.

Boccioni reacted vigorously to this Cubist assimilation of the founding principles of Futurism: "And here we have a series of obvious plagiarisms of what formed, right from its first manifestations, the essence of Futurist painting and sculpture. [...] Orphism, let us say it right away, is nothing but an elegant travesty of the fundamental principles of Futurist painting". The Salon des Indépendants of 1914 marked the high point of the dialogue established in Paris between Cubism and Futurism: "This year, Futurism began to invade the Salon and, while the Italian Futurists, judging by the reproductions that they publish, seem to be increasingly absorbing the influence of Parisian innovators (Picasso, Braque), it appears that a certain number of Parisian artists are allowing themselves to be influenced by the theories of the Futurists", Apollinaire wrote.