

# The Power of the Avant- Garde

*Now  
and Then*

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Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels  
29 September 2016–22 January 2017

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# Visitor's guide

*The Power of the Avant-garde* is part of a series of exhibitions that BOZAR organised in 2016 around the meaning and after effect of avant-garde. It harmonises directly with *Theo van Doesburg: A new view on art, life and technology* (spring 2016). Theo van Doesburg is best known as theorist and promoter of De Stijl. He believed in the communality of the arts and was in Weimar during the early days of the Bauhaus, a historic benchmark with which *The Power of the Avant-garde* closes. The travelling exhibition *Facing the Future: Art in Europe 1945-1968* (2016 > 2017 – Brussels, Karlsruhe, Moscow) continues from halfway through the historic avant-garde to the present day. World War II reset the counter again. Throughout Europe, new trends found expression that draw upon the pioneers of abstract art and these trends broadened the definition of art and opened the doors to pop art and conceptual art. The Cold War cooled off the artistic relationships between the West and the East much more than the trans-Atlantic propaganda would have people believe. The exhibition **PICASSO. SCULPTURES**, which covers the period between the wars, is our second major event of the autumn. With Picasso leading the way, Western art of the twentieth century explores other continents. The Spanish artist's sculptures enter into dialogue with his paintings, his ceramics, and his collection of African sculptures. The avant-garde

helps to generate a growing interaction between different cultures. With strong ties to the Zero movement in Düsseldorf, the Gutai movement surfaced in Kyoto in 1954 and went on to be a home for performance art. Gutai is one of the central movements in *A Feverish Era in Japanese Art. Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s and 1960s* (autumn 2017).

## Introduction

The exhibition *The Power of the Avant-Garde* begins by addressing the very concept of the avant-garde. It has come to be synonymous with the break with outlived artistic traditions and the bold departure towards a new understanding of art in the accelerated world of the twentieth century. With the help of around 120 exhibited works, the Brussels exhibition examines the impact of the art movements of modernity right through to the present day. The idea of the exhibition subsists in the contradiction that is inherent in the original military conception of the avant-garde. In warfare, as in art, the 'vanguard' does not represent the full might of all the firepower available for battle, but rather employs subtle and intelligent strategies to pursue effective and long-lasting results. The power of the avant-garde goes almost unnoticed on the stage of world history, but it works in ways that are decisive and enduring, and so in retrospect, it develops a tremendous influence.

The experience of a world in transition, changing slowly at first and then ever more rapidly, as cross-border industrialization gathers pace – and the machine gains supremacy – grants artists the opportunity to set out in radical new directions. New thematic fields, such as apocalypse and prophecy, also call for a new language of form. Artists become

seismographs, whose kaleidoscopic vision brings as yet unidentified ruptures into view. Their pictures serve as the accompaniment to social change. The entrenched relationships that once bound society together come falling apart. That which was already fragmented before the conflict, is now broken by the war. After the battle comes the attempt to design and build a new society, epitomized by the Bauhaus, but radiating in all directions as formal innovations, such as abstraction, the simultaneous image, and above all the new medium of film – with its potential for the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) – allow the power of the avant-garde to shine.

*The Power of the Avant-Garde* examines the significance of the artistic avant-garde by means of two interwoven narratives.

1. A fragmented review sketches the canon of the historical avant-garde and its central powerhouses. Setting out with James Ensor and Edvard Munch, who were among the forerunners with their roots in the nineteenth century, a kind of obstacle course unfolds that leads the visitor past the Italian Futurist and Russian Cubo-Futurist movements, the German Expressionists, and numerous singular positions, to arrive at the Bauhaus – symbol of a new, ideological concept of art for a modern society. Regardless of their formal diversity, the movements of the avant-garde are united

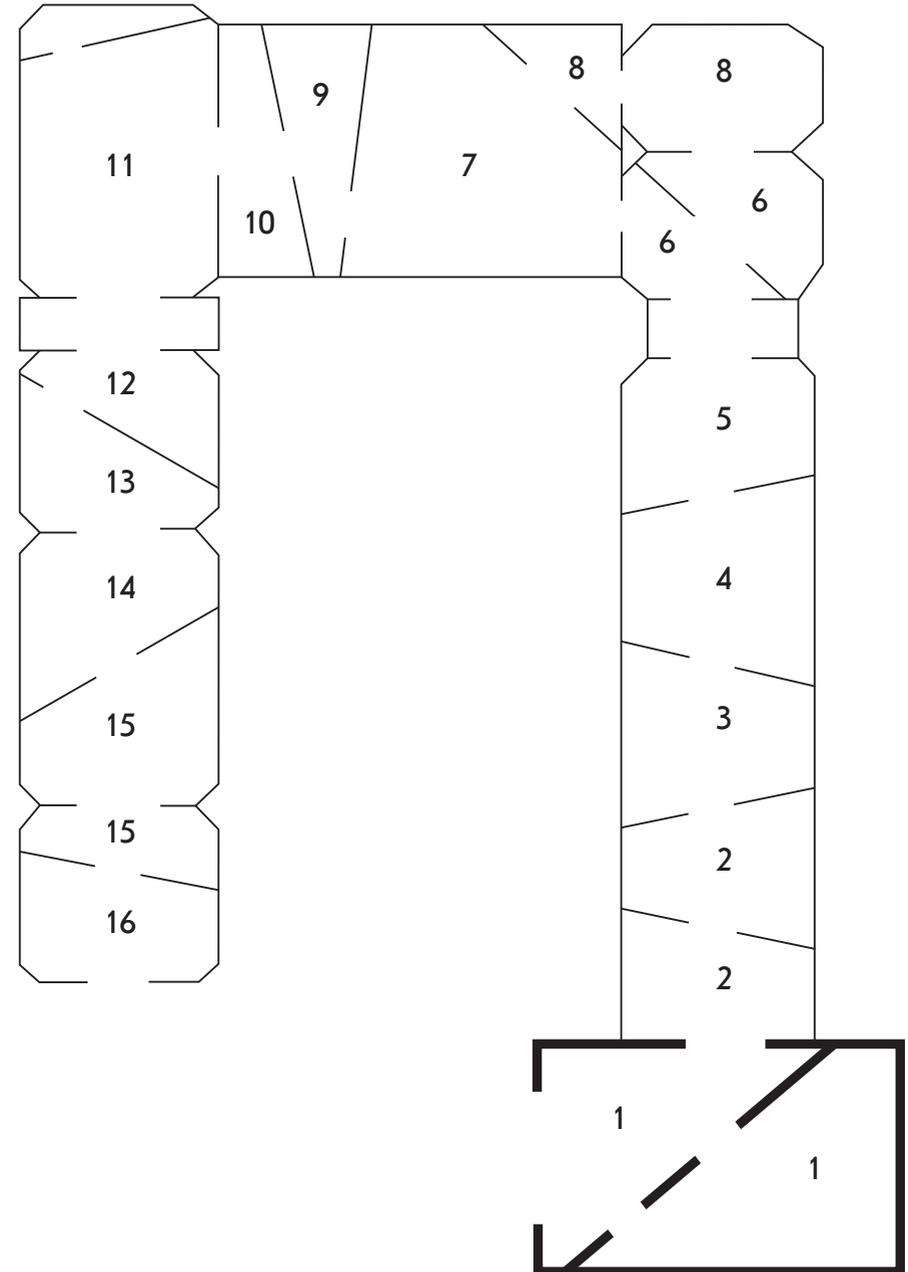
in their resolution to pursue an active break with artistic traditions, and the bold search for new forms of design.

## 2. Tandems

The historical narrative is repeatedly interrupted by contemporary artists giving their own subjective views on historic modernism. At the invitation of the curator, they place their own works in dialogue with the historical works and positions, and thereby examine the relevance of these artistic ideas for the twenty-first century.

\*All quotes of living artists that appear in the guide are excerpts from their statement that they wrote for the catalogue. The curator asked them to write something about the work or artist from the historical avant-garde that they chose as tandem and the reason why it is still important and relevant for their work today.

# 1



01

## Olafur Eliasson

(1967, Copenhagen, DM; lives and works in Berlin, DE, and Copenhagen)

### Ventilator

1997

In 1997 Olafur Eliasson was awarded the Bremen Art Prize for the recently completed work *Ventilator*, a ready-made with an astonishing and precisely calculated mode of action. It swings in the wind as if overpowered by the effects of its own function, surprisingly transformed into a pendulum by its own uncontrollable force, drawing a random flight path through the air. Against the background of dramatic climate change, this mechanical whirlwind becomes an omen for an approaching threat.

Olafur Eliasson's art is driven by his interest in perception, movement, embodied experience, and feelings of self. Eliasson strives to make the concerns of art relevant to society at large. Not limited to the confines of the museum and gallery, his practice engages the broader public sphere through architectural projects and interventions in civic space.

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*'What is so fascinating about Alexander Archipenko's Woman Walking is how the sculpture offers the viewer the option to 'complete' the narra-*

*tive of the artwork. It encourages us to become a co-producer — when we move around it, we take in the sculpture in its entirety, and this perception-over-time creates a little celebration of movement. My work, Ventilator, dances about the room and, through its movement, charts out space. It addresses the air that we take for granted, the feeling of a space, and like Woman Walking, Ventilator makes space tangible, turning the negative space into a positive space.'*

—Olafur Eliasson on  
Alexander Archipenko

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02

## Alexander Archipenko

(1887, Kiev, UA —  
1964, New York, US)

### Woman Walking 1912

In the years just prior to World War I, Archipenko courageously personified a revolutionary break from traditional values in the European avant-garde, to an even greater extent than the sculptors Brancusi or Duchamp-Villon, who were barely noticed at the time. Archipenko created *Woman Walking* in 1912 and saw it as the big breakthrough in his career. His decision to introduce in sculpture the entangle-

ment and contrast of positive and negative forms, one of the most important formal achievements of the cubists, was of great historical importance. Convex and concave shapes intertwine. Space pierces the figure — not through the arms and legs, as previously customary — but through the essential parts: the head and the torso.

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03

## Gerhard Richter

(1932, Dresden; lives and works in Cologne)

### 48 Portraits

1972 (1998)

Gerhard Richter was the sole artist representing the Federal Republic of Germany at the Venice Biennale in 1972. He painted a series of 48 portraits for the central hall of the exhibition pavilion, executing a project he had planned for many years, but which, he later claimed, could only have been realized in the specific architectural and historical setting of Venice.

Intended to serve as a Nazi showcase, the German exhibition building for the Art Biennale of 1938 was remodelled in the neoclassical style, gaining a colossal row of columns at its entrance. Since the 1970s, numerous artists have referenced this architecture, including Joseph Beuys (1976) and Georg

Baselitz (1980), and perhaps most radically, the German-American, Hans Haacke, who smashed up the entire marble floor of the building for his installation *Germania* (1993).

Gerhard Richter found a more subtle way of confronting this historically loaded site. Developed specifically for the site, the 48 images ostensibly elude any ideology, meaningfulness, and interpretability. Richter employed exclusively formal selection criteria. He painted the pictures in shades of grey, after black-and-white photographs of individuals commonly recognizable for their scientific or cultural achievements. He eventually reduced an initial selection of more than 300 to just 48 heads, whose identities no longer seem to play a specific role. He also unified the depictions by cropping all the portraits the same way, avoiding extreme head poses and showy clothing, taking care to use a neutral, light background, and by omitting representations of women — a decision that later drew criticism. Richter presented *48 Portraits* as an encircling frieze, plainly installed above the heads of observers. He sequenced the images such that the position of the portraits gradually moves from profile view to frontal, and back again.

Richter did everything possible to make his motifs appear neutral, indifferent, and equalized. He thus conceals the historical and political dimension of his image cycle, which connects the depiction of generations

and family history. Not all the individuals are familiar to the viewer, but all achieved excellence in their field. Gerhard Richter belongs to a generation that was forced to grow up without fathers in the war years and was later unable to accept its fathers as moral role models, a generational conflict that led to voicelessness, alienation, criticism, and rejection. Richter painted in opposition to this loss, portraying alternative, identity-affirming leaders, such as Einstein, Rilke, Tchaikovsky, and Wilde. In an interview three decades later, Richter announced: "I would much rather have the father problem be visible. And it is after all a typically German post-war problem that the fathers were absent in many respects — that is, were gone entirely, or damaged, and had certainly lost their status and value. That creates restlessness and uncertainty, which surely contributed to my painting the 48 men."

— Dietmar Elgar

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## 04

### Military Avant-Garde

The exhibition narrative for the *The Power of the Avant-Garde* begins in the first room, with the prologue, where the focus is on the dazzling concept of the avant-garde and the exercise and experience of violence

in the twentieth century. The concept of 'the avant-garde' originally comes from the military. It refers to a smaller military unit that was employed in advance of the main mass of troops, so the latter would have the time and space it needed in which to act. Since the early twentieth century, the term has increasingly been used for political movements seen as aggressive and progressive. Even as this idea of the military avant-garde quickly lost much sense of meaning in the trenches of the First World War, the term was at the same time evolving as a synonym for radical new ideas in the visual arts, as well as architecture, literature, and music.

It is not only in terms of how the concept of the avant-garde is understood that the First World War constitutes a turning point. In the first mechanized war to be conducted on an industrial scale, the art of killing was perfected, anonymized, and bureaucratized in a way that was hitherto unimaginable. One typical example is the destructive power of the artillery, which can claim responsibility for almost two thirds of all the soldiers killed and wounded in the war. In this violent domination of Man by materials, dynamics, acceleration, and time played a decisive role. Armaments were being produced increasingly quickly, messages delivered ever more rapidly, and a couple of seconds could be a matter of life and death in the event of sudden attack from gas grenades. It took precision timing for the infantry and artillery to be able

to combine effectively. Reducing the individual to the level of 'human material' and the gradual loss of any temporal and spatial order led to an increasing sense of psychosocial upheaval. The loss of familiar reference points and the enormous acceleration of all the forces of violence are factors that led to the fragmentation of civil and political society after the end of the First World War, and ultimately paved the way for the second great disaster of the twentieth century to follow.

The scenography of the prologue picks up on this context of violent experience and socio-political fragmentation. In the centre of the room is an exploding grenade, in the instant after ignition. The different-sized fragments are suspended on invisible nylon threads and give the impression of a sculpture floating in space. The way the piece is staged refers to the military roots of the concept of the avant-garde, and the destructive force of arms, but also to the artistic expressions of the avant-garde that made a radical break with the old order, such as Deconstructivism, for example. Two further exhibits complete the presentation: First, a converted pocket watch, which was transformed, probably in 1915, by a German soldier who needed a watch on which he could read the time directly from his wrist. Second, a time fuse. The nose fuse "K.Z. 11" belongs to a grenade from German production and was cut open for training purposes. The detonator could be set to the

exact second, so that the grenade could unleash its full impact. This exhibit also stands for the measurement of time in the First World War. With a little imagination, the form might also be seen as something reminiscent of an avant-garde Futurist sculpture.

— Matthias Rogg

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# 2

## Rodin, Ensor, Munch, Dumas, Odenbach: Fragment and Transparency

Representations of the isolated torso — the sculpture as fragment — ushered in the 'bronze age' in the work of Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) at a time when the strict rules of bourgeois society were also being shaken up, rearranged, and fragmented. The French sculptor had already eschewed gestural language in the torso *The Walking Man* (1907), which presented only the body in motion, and in his *Clenched Right Hand* (after 1900), he expresses tension and human frailty by focusing solely on an upturned hand and forearm.

The paintings of James Ensor (1860–1949) depict a social panorama in which the artist's contemporaries seek to conceal their pretension and the darker side of their nature behind masks and costumes.

The contemporary artist Marcel Odenbach is drawn to Ensor's visualization of the human wickedness that is hidden behind masks. In his collaged works on paper, Odenbach (who is known in Europe primarily for his video works) cuts through the surface and façade of the motifs and reveals a view in close-up of the layers of meaning that lie beneath.

The Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (1863–1944) clashed with the academic rules of painting from early

on in his development, as he pursued his art in adversity, first in Christiania (Oslo) and later in Berlin. Intensely troubled by early family tragedy and shadowed by a deep sense of anxiety, Munch became a significant model of modernity, a lone wolf par excellence, and a major figure of the avant-garde from the turn of the twentieth century. The series of lithographs for *Alpha and Omega* (1909) was produced during a stay in Dr Jacobsen's psychiatric clinic in Copenhagen. For Munch's portrait of Käte Perls — the wife of the lawyer, writer and later art dealer, Hugo Perls — the artist proposed the title *The Penitent Magdalene*. Painted directly onto canvas, the portrait was developed from a colourful preparatory drawing of her eyes, mouth and nose. Munch's artistry lies in the exact, penetrating characterization of the psychic nature of his subject, without recourse to naturalistic embellishments. Marlene Dumas is fascinated by Munch's particular manner of painting in which anxiety is tangible.

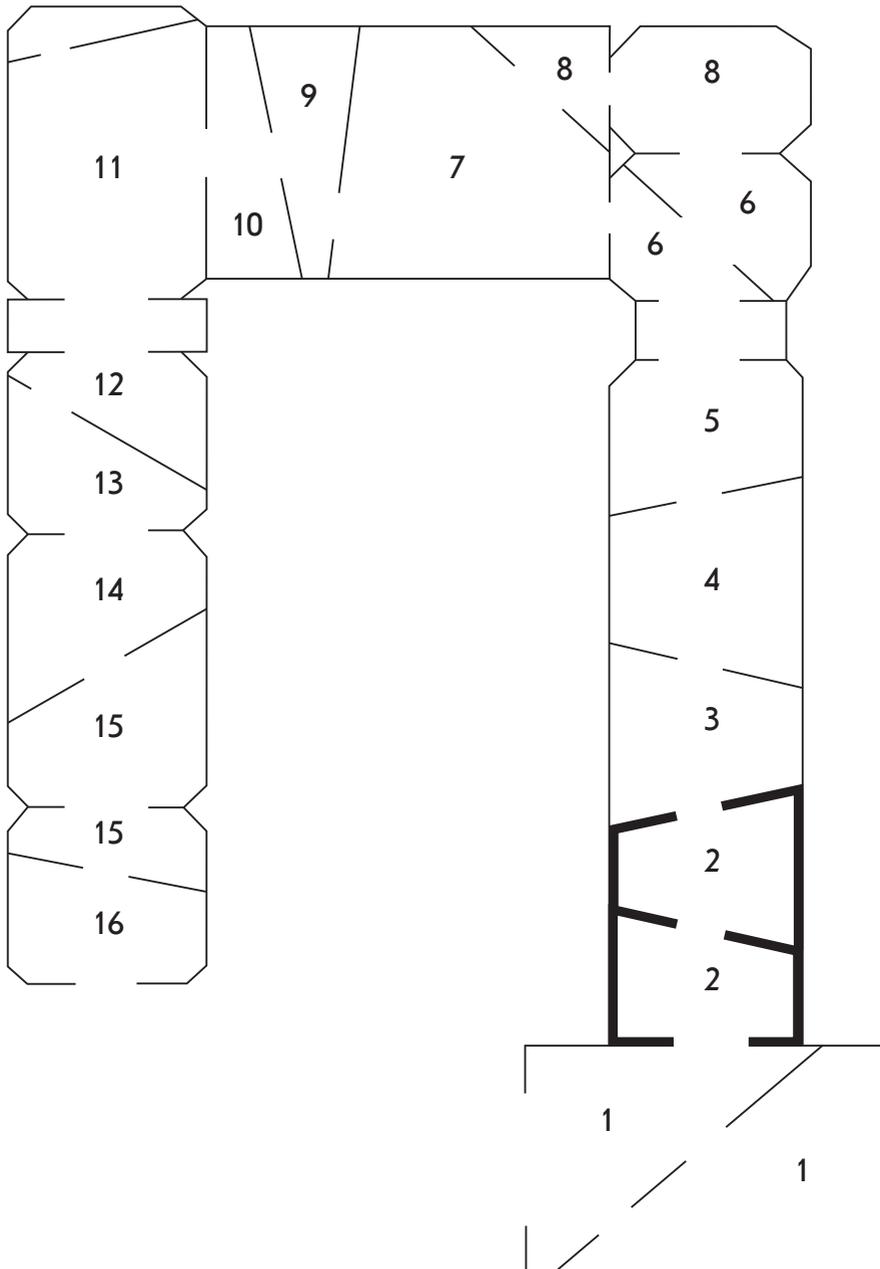
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05

**Marcel Odenbach**  
(1953, Cologne, DE;  
lives and works in Cologne, DE)

**Closed and Hanged**  
2013

Four red judges' robes and matching velvet berets hang from branded



designer hangers on a metal clothes rack, while traces of red ink drip down the walls beneath the gowns. Upon closer inspection, one discovers the assortment of collaged pieces of paper that supplement this scene from the changing rooms of Germany's Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe with scraps of historical documents. Twelve visual intervals between the clothes hooks display black-and-white images from the famous trials for Nazi crimes against humanity and the Eichmann trial.

Snippets of other pictures incorporated into the work also recall show trials from the Nazi era. This work was inspired by Odenbach's post as a professor at the Kunstakademie in Karlsruhe, from where he would have a daily view of the Higher Regional Court. *Closed and Hanged* is directly connected to previous works that thematically deal with the process of coming to terms with the past in the Federal Republic of Germany.

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*'For a child from Cologne who grew up between the cathedral and the carnival, it was perhaps not so surprising that I should come across James Ensor in my youth. At first it was his style and humour that persuaded me. Later it was his critical, independent, and arguably political position.*

*Ensor's environment was very narrow. He rarely left tiny Ostend. Nevertheless, the great themes of the twentieth century played an almost visionary role for him. Themes like the Church, the State, justice, and death were reflected again and again in his*

*paintings and graphic works. Perhaps the sea — the view into the distance — opened up his view onto the world. The family home with the souvenir shop became the mirror of time in his pictures. That encouraged me as an artist! Through Ensor I understood that the burden of autobiography can become a rich source for one's own work.'*

— Marcel Odenbach  
on James Ensor

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06

**James Ensor**  
(1860, Ostend, BE — 1949, Ostend)

**The Assassination  
Wizards in a Squall  
The Bad Doctors**  
1888, 1888, 1895

Ensor's etching *The Assassination* depicts a horrible scene. On a table lies a man whose arm is being sawn off. The blood trickles into a bucket. The four men at the table are wearing marvellous Oriental attire and look like the Persian physicians Iston, Pouffamatus, Cracozie, and Transmouffe from the 1886 etching of the same name. The inspiration for the painting has been linked to suitably gory tales by a number of writers, including Edgar Allan Poe, Iwan Gilkin, and Georges Eekhoud.

The satiric etching *The Bad Doctors* is based on his 1892 painting of the

same name (collection of the Université Libre de Bruxelles). The theme is in keeping with an old visual arts tradition in which doctors were characterized as greedy caricatures and charlatans, closely associated with death.

The etching *Wizards in a Squall* is a striking illustration of James Ensor's fantastic imagery. During a raging storm, a huge, strange-looking witch gives birth to a succession of naked, deformed witches.

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07

**Marlene Dumas**  
(1953, Cape Town, ZA —  
lives and works in Amsterdam, NL)

**The Blonde,  
The Brunette and  
the Black Woman**  
1992

As is so often the case in her groundbreaking oeuvre, the female body is the theme in Marlene Dumas' three-part work, *The Blonde, The Brunette and the Black Woman*. This piece consists of three female upper bodies all presented from the same — slightly voyeuristic — perspective, quoting the Christian painting format of the painting triptych. As a matter of fact, Marlene Dumas used the same snapshot of herself as photographic source material for all canvases. Her work therefore goes way beyond

the conventions of self-portraiture: "it alludes to the politics of colour and the colour of paintings", as Dumas herself states in her 1998 book, *Sweet Nothings*. By autobiographically commenting on painterly and racial stereotyping, this work undermines a male-dominated art history as well as the politics of today.

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*'Munch to me means modernism and Existentialism, the farewell to naturalism. Subjectivity favoured over realism. Doubt rules.*

*What I especially admire in Munch is that each brushstroke can be traced. I can specifically relate to the themes Munch addresses and expresses by his titles. He is both patient and therapist. He is a painter and a thinker. Alpha and Omega — a poem or fable written and illustrated by Munch — is a beautiful and sensitive work. He paints modern love stories, not only between men and women, but also between us and nature, revealing how we all struggle with affection, alienation and dying. See how tenderly the bear and Omega embrace, and how he writes about her eyes changing from blue to black when she looked at her lover(s). It makes me jealous, too.*

*Munch understands the night with its shadows. Yet his works are bright with light.'*

— Marlene Dumas  
on Edvard Munch

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## Edvard Munch

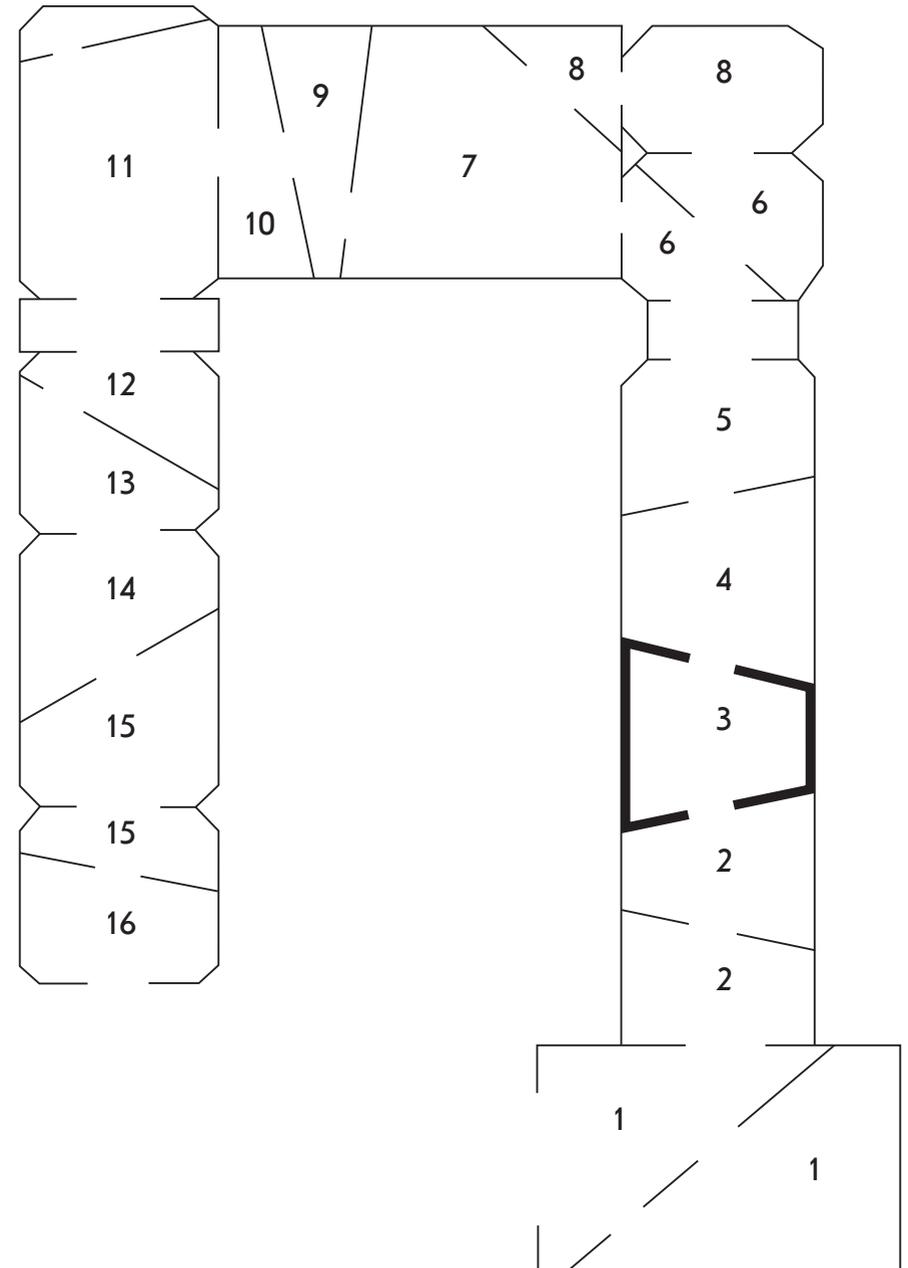
(1863, Ådalsbruk, NO—  
1944, Oslo, NO)

### Alpha and Omega 1909

The portfolio *Alpha and Omega* was produced in 1909 in Copenhagen, where Munch had been undergoing treatment at the clinic of Dr Jacobson since the autumn of 1908, following a severe physical and mental breakdown. Twenty-two lithographs illustrate Munch's fable, which relates an ironic perspective on the sexes. Omega, the mate of the man, Alpha, betrays her partner with various animals and in the process begets a whole new race. In the end, in deep despair, Alpha slays Omega, whose progeny, together with the half-animal, half-human mongrels, avenge her death by killing Alpha. Animal studies conducted at the Copenhagen Zoo during Munch's stay at the clinic served as the immediate models for some of the sheets in the portfolio.

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# 3



# Die Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter

There was no standardized style or formal consistency unifying the artist groups *Die Brücke* (The Bridge) and *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider). What the international members and associated artists shared in common was the claim to truthfulness in artistic expression, the harmonization of art and life, and the turn away from the antiquated conventions of the academies and salons. The immediate experience of everyday life — the studio, community, and life in the city — provided the subjects that the Dresden-based Brücke painters captured on canvas with swift, agitated brushstrokes and in highly expressive, unmixed colours. Heckel's *Bathers* and Schmidt-Rottluff's existential scene *Conversation about Death* bear witness to the search for the essential. Kirchner evokes their progressive self-understanding and ideological claim in "The Manifesto of Die Brücke" (1906): "With faith in evolution, in a new generation of artists and supporters, we call all youth together, and as the youth on whom the future rests, we seek to free ourselves in life and limb from the old, established powers. All those stand with us who directly and authentically express that which drives them to create".

*Der Blaue Reiter* comprised a loose alliance of international artists. Its inner circle was mainly active in

Munich and included Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky, as well as Gabriele Münter, August Macke, and Alexej von Jawlensky. The deeply symbolic concept of the Blaue Reiter was originally used as the title for the publications and exhibitions that Marc and Kandinsky began to initiate in 1911, but it soon became synonymous with progressive painting and a characteristic artistic attitude.

In his 1911 art theory treatise, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky had already proclaimed the permeation of the world by the spiritual. The artists of the Blaue Reiter believed themselves to be living in an epoch of societal upheaval, in which renewed art, like August Macke's *Coloured Forms I*, or Heinrich Campendonk's *Yellow and White Cow in Front of Houses* — expressive art produced without regard for formal conventions, and detached from the materiality of the subject — might become the driving force of a spiritual age.

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09

## Emil Nolde

(1867, Nolde near Burkal, DK — 1956, Seebüll, near Neukirchen, DE)

## Fetishes (Exotic Figures I)

1911

Like the European avant-garde as a whole in the period prior to World

War I, Emil Nolde was fascinated by primitive and non-European art, and found inspiration for his own work therein. He made numerous sketches during his frequent visits to the Volkskunde Museum in Berlin, including the drawings of two North American *kachina* figures that form the basis for *Fetishes*. Nolde's painting emphasizes the figures' reduction of colour and form through an austere, flat composition.

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10

## Karl Schmidt-Rottluff

(1884, Rottluff, Chemnitz, DE — 1976, Berlin, DE)

## Conversation about Death

1920

In a darkened, reddish-brown room, a man and woman carry on a conversation. With their oversized heads, the two figures have a primitive monumentality that suggests the archetypes of African and South Pacific sculpture, which were an early discovery for the artists of Die Brücke. As an illustration of a dialogue about the end of human existence, Schmidt-Rottluff's work follows the example of a painting by Erich Heckel from 1912, which shows two men talking beneath an image of the Crucifixion. There are no comparable Christian

symbols present here, yet there is a yellow, oval form with a black grid between the heads of the speakers. Objectively, it can perhaps be explained as a lamp or sunlit window. In the context of a conversation about human frailty, however, this form may also be understood as a sign of consolation from beyond. In a letter to a friend, dated 28 August 1919, Schmidt-Rottluff wrote: "All the agony of the war years lingered..."

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11

## August Macke

(1887, Meschede, DE — 1914, Perthes-lès-Hurlus, FR)

## Cathedral at Fribourg in Switzerland

1914

August Macke produced this composition in early 1914, during a lengthy stay in Switzerland. At the time, he was struggling to distinguish his artistic work from that of the members of the Blaue Reiter, particularly Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc. Macke based his painting on the direct impression of what is seen. This image of the cathedral draws on sketches that originated during a stay in Fribourg. Inspired by impressionistic principles of composition, the gaze looks out onto the imaginary space towards the

cathedral tower. The steel tower at the centre of the image is not based on the actual Fribourg skyline, but instead recalls details of the Eiffel Tower series by Robert Delaunay, whose painting Macke especially admired. The restrained palette of blue, grey, red, and brown has a completely different character to Delaunay's work, however, which combined deliberately dissonant colours independent of the object.

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12

## Gabriele Münter

(1877, Berlin, DE – 1962,  
Murnau am Staffelsee, DE)

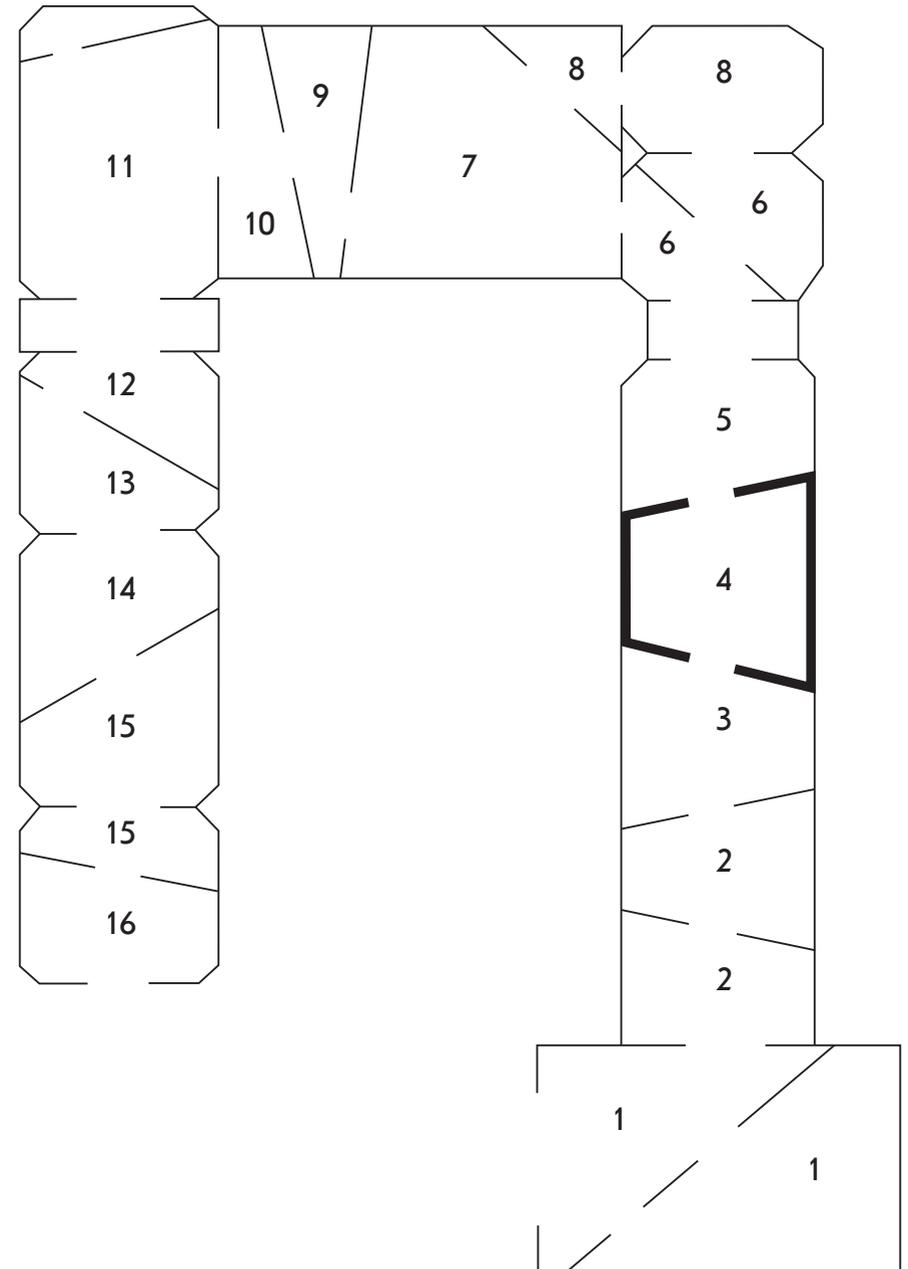
### Black Mask with Pink ca. 1912

Gabriele Münter was a co-founder of the Blaue Reiter group and was until 1914 the long-time partner of Wassily Kandinsky. Having produced a series of figure ensembles in the style of religious folk art (1910–11) that made a significant contribution to the art of the Blaue Reiter, her *Black Mask with Pink* was perhaps the first great entirely 'profane' still life. Masks crop up in several of Münter's still lifes, in various combinations. Here, she depicts a single, powerfully expressive black mask with a lifelike, modelled face that lies amidst pink-white sachets and fabrics. This work was obviously important to Münter.

In 1913, she selected it to present at the First German Autumn Salon in Herwarth Walden's gallery Der Sturm.

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4



# Futurism and the Russian Avant-Garde

"Time and space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have created eternal, omnipresent speed."

This Futurist credo was proclaimed by the movement's spiritual father, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, in his "Manifesto of Futurism". Writing in the conservative French daily *Le Figaro* in 1909, Marinetti not only vehemently demanded disengagement from an obsolete culture, but also made its destruction a condition for establishing a new, modern society.

An absolute belief in progress and its symptoms — including the machine, boundless energy, and speed, but also aggression and danger — marked the industrialized present as the stage for a new form of human existence. Illustrated by the architectural visions of Mario Chiattoni and Antonio Sant'Elia, the metropolis became the utopian design of the new society. Life in the booming cities constituted the themes and motifs of contemporary art: industry, machines, speed, societies in upheaval, violence, war, anarchy, nationalism, and youth — a synthesis that art was supposed to bring back to life. From the pulsating mass culture in Severini's *The Bear Dance at the Moulin Rouge* to the rebellion of new social forces in *Russolo's Revolt*, Futurist artists

devoted their efforts to examining the living conditions of a volatile, urgent present. Dynamics and simultaneity became the keywords of a new visual language that reacted to the reality of life and the cognitive potential of the new human being, leading to a necessary break with obsolete aesthetic principles. In accordance with a new sense of the world influenced by acceleration, mobilization, simultaneity, and the fracturing of space and time, the Futurists abandoned static representations of the world. Bodies and objects dissolve in powerful lines that define them in their relation to the surrounding reality. They expand outward into space, and the image stirs reality up into a whirlwind.

The radical artistic ideas emanating from Italy caught on further afield, particularly in the Russian Empire, where political and social upheavals exploded in the Revolution of 1917. Progressive artist groups developed, centred around figures like Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, and Kazimir Malevich, and influenced by the developments of so-called Cubo-Futurism in Paris and Milan, as artists moved their focus beyond the purely analytical deconstruction of surfaces.

In the two metropolises of St Petersburg and Moscow, the Russian avant-garde depicted both the mechanized, accelerated life of the city centre — its movement, machinery, and modes of transportation (Malevich, *Woman at the Tram Stop*, 1913) — and the primitive rural population,

whose way of life remained largely stuck in the nineteenth century (Goncharova, *Bathing the Horses*, 1911). From the polar realities of life in the Russian Empire — with rural life, poverty, war, and social rebellion on the one hand, and accelerated mechanization, and the fusion of man and machine on the other — a tension emerged that was ultimately to shape the *Zeitgeist* of the whole of early twentieth-century Europe.

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## 13

**Umberto Boccioni**  
(1882, Reggio Calabria, IT — 1916, Verona, IT)

**Unique Forms of Continuity in Space**  
1913, cast 2004

Alongside its instigator, Marinetti, the painter, sculptor, and theoretician, Umberto Boccioni was perhaps Futurism's leading exponent. *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* is his sculptural masterpiece, the work that fully embodies the theories on plastic dynamism that he himself formulated in the "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture" (1912). Completed in early 1913, the original plaster sculpture was exhibited that June as part of the artist's solo show at Galerie La Boétie in Paris. Rodin's *The Walking Man* (1907) and Eadweard Muybridge's

photos of athletes in motion were surely a source of inspiration for Boccioni, although he gave up any form of descriptive naturalism or cinematic reproduction of movement to embrace a more abstract rendition. The outcome is this figure of formidable force, with its mighty, muscular structure transfigured by motion.

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## 14

**Gino Severini**  
(1883, Cortona, IT — 1966, Paris, FR)

**The Bear Dance at the Moulin Rouge**  
1913

Gino Severini loved to visit the popular dance bars, cabarets, and vaudeville theatres of Paris: Le Moulin Rouge, Le Bar Tabarin, Le Chat Noir, and Le Monico. *The Bear Dance at the Moulin Rouge* refers to a ragtime dance imported from the United States in 1911 — the Grizzly Bear dance — which brought a new sense of speed, fun, and excitement to the dance floor. The *pas de l'ours* was somewhat awkward: deep steps and sideways motions led to clumsy movements, accompanied by yells of "It's a bear!" This was completely in line with the Futurist Severini's taste. He was, essentially, in search of a form of 'total painting' — indeed, a visual realization of all

sensory impressions, such as smell, warmth, sound, speed, and the dissolution of mass. *The Bear Dance at the Moulin Rouge* demonstrates a reduction of stylistic means — few colours, a clear compositional structure, and an uncluttered pictorial space.

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15

## Kazimir Malevich

(1879, Kiev, UA —  
1935, St Petersburg, RU)

### Woman at the Tram Stop 1913

Kazimir Malevich studied at the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. He developed quickly, leaving behind Impressionism and Symbolism and absorbing the work of Cézanne and Matisse, before finally moving in the direction of Cubism. The year 1913 became a crucial year for him because of his contacts with the Futurist poets who led the new, transrational poetry in which sounds were completely stripped of meaning, an approach to which Malevich would discover the painterly complement. In early 1914, when the Cubo-Futurist *Lady on a Tram Station* was exhibited with the work of Picasso and Braque during the fourth Bubnovy Valet exhibition, he denounced every form of rea-

sonable logic and let himself be led by pure intuition. In his own words, he felt surfaces rising in him. In 1915, this feeling led him to create a new, objectless art: Suprematism.

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16

## Natalia Goncharova

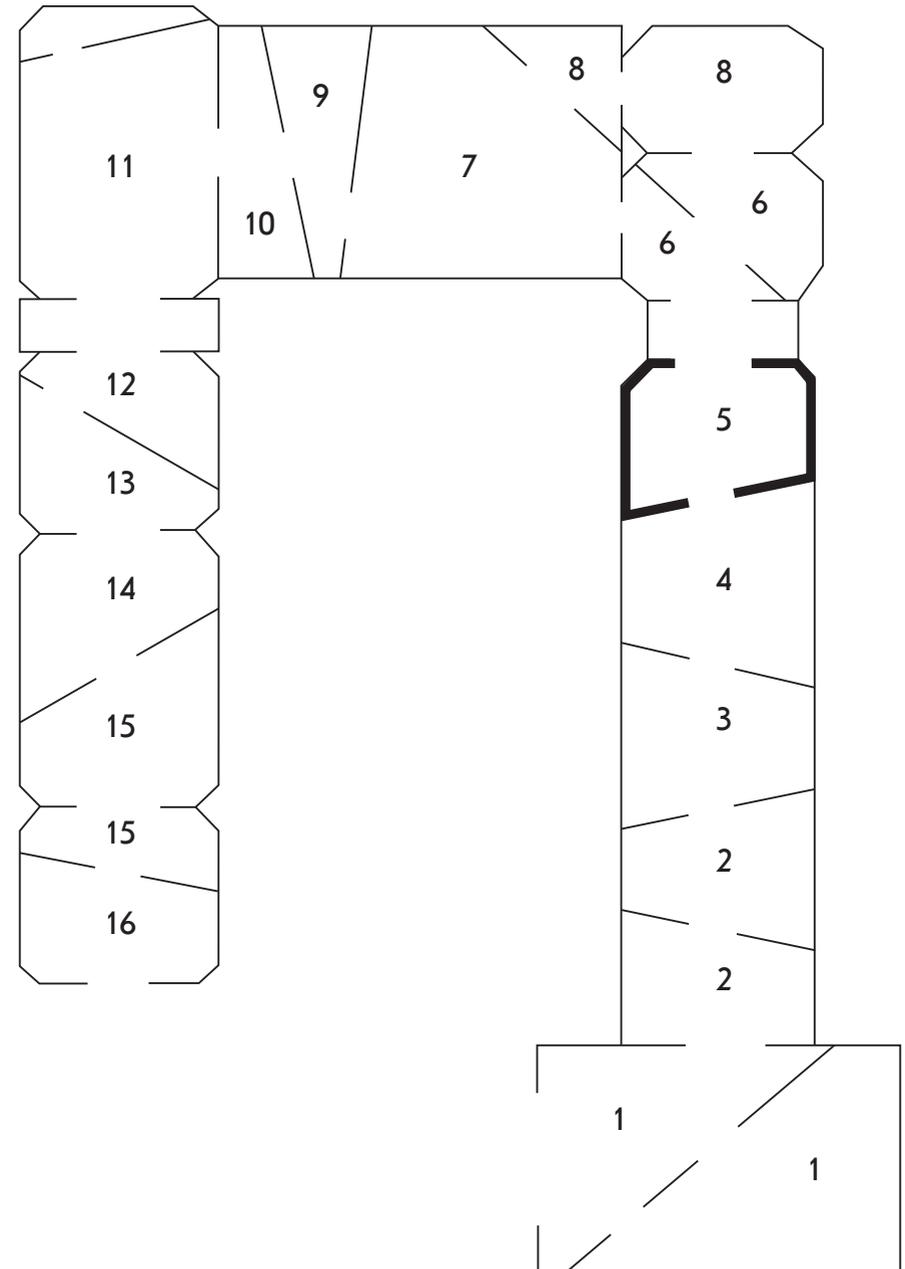
(1881, Negaievo, RU — 1962, Paris, FR)

### Bathing the Horses 1911

*Bathing the Horses* was first shown at the *Donkey's Tail* exhibition in 1912, along with a group of other works on the themes of peasant labour. The sincerity with which the artist expresses her feelings links her canvas to the works of the anonymous masters of *lubok* art (hand-made Russian folk pictures), and at the same time saves the image from the stylization that would be incompatible with authentic artistic production. Professional artists use the techniques of primitive style to feed on their naive energy and the joy of pure colour. Goncharova's peasants are static figures — angular and awkward — but at the same time endowed with primal power and energy.

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5



# Communication: The Severed Thread: John Baldessari, Jeff Wall, Franz Kafka

The exhibited works *Telephone* (for Kafka) by John Baldessari (1991) and *Odradek* by Jeff Wall (1994) both contain intense, but somewhat cryptic references to Franz Kafka. Kafka's close friend Max Brod discusses the Czech writer's literary interests: "he rejected anything that was planned for effect, intellectual or artificially thought up... as an example — of what he himself liked — Kafka quoted a passage from Hofmannsthal, 'the smell of damp flagstones in a hall'. And he kept silent for a long time, said no more, as if this hidden, improbable thing must speak for itself." It may well be that this quotation served as a signpost for Jeff Wall's *Odradek*.

*Telephone* (for Kafka) is a montage of two pictorial details, producing a new narrative that deviates from the original significance of those components. The starting materials for Los Angeles artist John Baldessari were cast-off film-strips from the studios of the Hollywood dream factory. The completely decontextualized film clips are assembled into a new story by means of the title. The focal point is the first, brick-sized mobile phone, which radiates an unpleasant ambience, echoed in the wide-open eyes of the 'interlocutor'. Baldessari selected the Belgian Marcel Broodthaers as his chosen artist.

Broodthaers' vitrine *The Artist's Signature* from 1972 fits very nicely with the classical museum furniture in the exhibition gallery that he had earlier used so often. The black hat and the address book (with Kafka's telephone number) are a big part of the artist's identity.

Spurred by Franz Kafka's story "The Cares of a Family Man" (1917), Jeff Wall headed to Prague in search of the mysterious figure known as Odradek. Wall's *Odradek* celebrates with great precision an everyday scene that presents, in a more or less monumental style, a banal but nevertheless puzzling and unexplained event: Where did Odradek hide? What Baldessari articulated in an interview with Hugh M. Davies on the occasion of an exhibition in San Diego applies to all three artists — Franz Kafka, John Baldessari, and Jeff Wall: "The purpose of art is to keep us perpetually off balance."

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17

## John Baldessari

(1931, National City, US —  
lives and works in Santa Monica, US)

### Telephone (for Kafka) 1991

Two motifs from the film world are situated in a striking image field: a boomerang-shaped scene with a man and woman in a swimming pool on the left-hand side, and a passport-photo style profile of a man's head on the lower right edge of

the image. The head of the nearly topless beauty in the pool is cut off. A painted spot of colour covers the face of the man. When one asks what kind of relationship exists between the two motifs, the answer is: the blank space, the white wall behind them, and the gap between. Baldessari gives the inquisitive viewer a small clue toward a possible interpretation in the image's title, *Telephone* (for Kafka). The cause of the man's look of shock and wide-open eyes is the ringing of the telephone, the clash of the Hollywood dream factory, and Kafka's puzzling stories from the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute in old Prague.

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*'I selected Marcel Broodthaers as my tandem artist. His work has been very influential on me and I was lucky enough to meet him. The breadth and diversity of his work is a model I have tried to follow myself.'*

— John Baldessari on  
Marcel Broodthaers

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18

## Marcel Broodthaers

(1924, Brussels, BE —  
1976, Cologne, DE)

### The Artist's Signature 1972

By signing a work, an artist completes it, thereby witnessing his own authorship

and the authenticity of the work. Since the early twentieth century, signing has also served the purpose of declaring something to be a work of art. In the case of Broodthaers' work, *The Artist's Signature*, the handwritten characters of the signature are replaced by an arrangement of objects, each alluding to the artist in its own special way. This occupation with different sign systems is characteristic of Broodthaers' entire oeuvre. Having worked previously as an author and poet, he moved into visual art in 1964. *The Artist's Signature* does not completely forego linguistic devices. Broodthaers listed and signed the inventory of the showcase on the first page of the address book.

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19

## Jeff Wall

(1946, Vancouver, CA —  
lives and works in Vancouver)

### Odradek, Táboristská 8, Prague, 18 July 1994

1994

Wall's work realized the concrete facts and puzzling fictional content of Kafka's story "The Cares of a Family Man" (1920) and interpreted its milieu and atmosphere — at an actual place (Nr. 8 Táboritská Street) and at a specific time (18 July 1994). Various perspectives

on time, place, and action interlace in his shot in a way that is similar to film or theatre. Past and present are superimposed, and an open space of meaning is generated within the text. Kafka's text conveys the influence of the subconscious, the hidden, and the repressed on our imagination and understanding of reality. Wall's cinematographic image corresponds to this, with a fluent exchange between the documentary and the fictional, between light and shadow, between what is in focus and what is blurred, between what can be seen and what only seems to be.

*tion of the concept of Modernism and modern art, too. I feel I'm working within and with dialectic of capitalism and anti-capitalism, both of which have continuous histories within, and as, modernity.'*

—Jeff Wall, Interview with T.J. Clark, Serge Guilbaut and Anne Wagner (1990), in: Jeff Wall, eds. Thierry de Duve, Arielle Pelenc and Boris Groys, Phaidon Press, 1996.

20

## Franz Kafka

(1883, Prague, CZ – 1924, Klosterneuburg, AT)

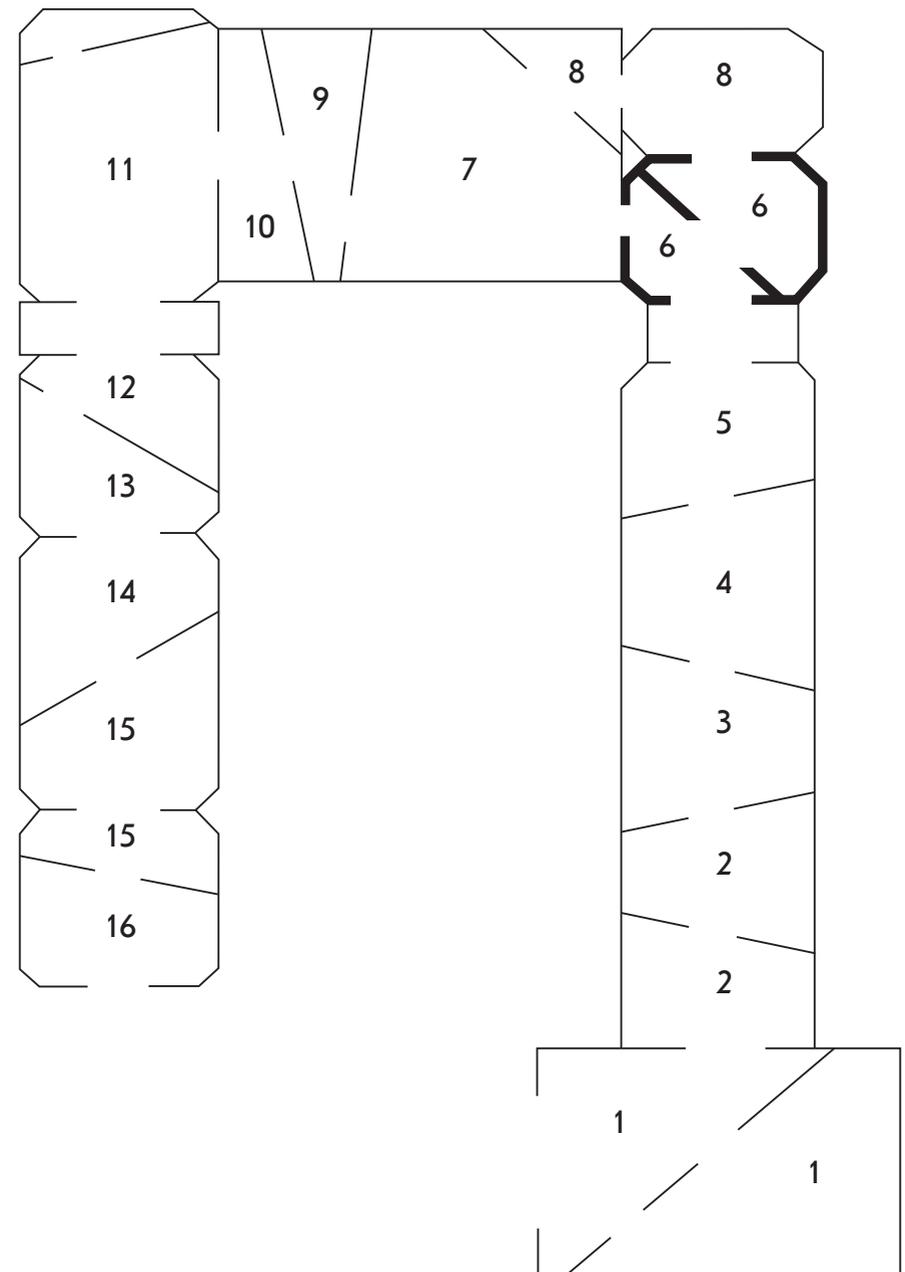
### "The Cares of a Family Man"

1917

The short text, "The Cares of a Family Man" first appeared in 1920 in the collection *A Country Doctor: Brief Stories*, and so unlike the majority of Kafka's literary output, it was published before the author's early death. In the story, the family man tells of a strange form — Odradek — that haunts his house. The attempt to capture the figure remains unsuccessful and ultimately fails. Neither its name, nor its form, nor its behaviour patterns provide much information about the meaning of its existence. To humans, Odradek remains a riddle.

*'Discounting does not exist in isolation from what seems to be its polar opposite, so I think it is just as valid to talk about reinventions and rediscoveries, not to mention preservations. Some of the problem set in motion in culture not only in the 1920s, but in the 1820s and even in the 1750s, are still being played out, are still unresolved, we are still engaged in them. I guess that's why, at a certain point, I felt that a return to the idea of la peinture de la vie moderne was legitimate. Between the moment of Baudelaire's positioning this as a programme and now, there is a continuity which is that of capitalism itself. There have been so many theories about how capitalism has changed; it has changed but it still continues, changed, renewed, decayed, and opposed in new ways. The opposition to and critique of capitalism — the whole of what could be called 'anti-capitalist culture' — has also emerged and become a founda-*

6



# Between Image and Symbol: Léon Spilliaert, Koen Vermeule, Louise Lawler

Léon Spilliaert produced the pastel, *Young Woman with Dog*, in 1913, just before the outbreak of World War I. At the time, the Belgian artist was living in the metropolis of Brussels, but his subjects harked back to life in the coastal city of Ostend, which had previously been his home. A young woman appears in a beach landscape in the diffuse light of night. Her direct, but distant gaze evokes a sense of inescapable discomfort.

Almost a century later, Koen Vermeule painted *Tokyo Dreamer*. This larger-than-life painting shows a Japanese tourist who seems to be resting on a bench, exhausted. Vermeule positions the visitor like a sculpture in the centre of the image. *Tokyo Dreamer* counteracts international cultural tourism, which profits from the limitless mobility of people. The art viewer's attention is not infinite, however, and thus the visit to the museum is exposed in this work as a mandatory cultural programme, from which the dreamer deftly withdraws. In Vermeule's recent work, the main focus is on introverted individuals who frequently seem isolated from their environment, particularly within the context of the increasing mechanization of everyday life.

In *Woman with Picasso*, it is not the art museum that Louise Lawler portrays as a public space of culture, but rather the world of the auction house. In the four-part photographic work, Lawler focuses on the hand of a woman who is presenting Pablo Picasso's work *Guitar*. The focus is neither on the artwork nor on the woman, but rather on the motif of presentation. Art becomes a commodity. As is also the case with Picasso's cubist view of reality, there is a sense that perception is ambivalent and dependent on time and the perspective of the beholder. With her fourfold repetition of the same motif, Lawler subtly traces the increasing similarity between the art market and the world of products and advertising.

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21

**Koen Vermeule**  
(1965, Goes, NL; lives and works in Amsterdam, NL)

**Tokyo Dreamer**  
2010

In the centre of a huge, very square picture, the youthful figure of the *Tokyo Dreamer* sits in summer clothes, with a backpack. His upper body is slumped over, his elbows rest on his knees, and his dark head of hair falls like a hood over his face. The light that penetrates the scene and its reflection on the shiny museum floor add to the impression of drama and melancholy. The image opens

up insights into modern life. In its staggering of the everyday, the dramatic, and the metaphysical, Koen Vermeule's art combines subjects and themes with a painterly approach. People in cities feel isolated. Nevertheless, a thirst for life can still be detected in this fatigue.

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*'My subjects come from a world close to me, like Spilliaert, for whom Ostend – at the border between land and water – was a 'mer à boire'. His work is also about time, but is not bound to time. I look at it as if it was created yesterday. I wanted to catch a moment of the day like a still from a movie. We don't know what happened before, just as we don't know what is about to happen. Time stands still, for just a second, like in a painting by Léon Spilliaert.'*

– Koen Vermeule  
on Léon Spilliaert

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22

**Léon Spilliaert**

(1881, Ostend, BE –  
1946, Brussels, BE)

**Young Woman  
with Dog**  
1913

Having pursued a deep, introspective search for the essence of being through

a series of dramatic self-portraits (1907–08), and after participating in exhibitions in Brussels, Léon Spilliaert then distanced himself from the symbolic atmosphere of his early work and sought to translate the artistic tendencies of his time. He introduced something new on a visual, formal, and pictorial level, in a number of experimental compositions. A more expressionistic technique allowed him to depict another reality. He experimented with space division and depth constructions by drawing a simple figure on a neutral background: *Young Woman with Dog*. Contrasting with the horizontal waterline, the form of the young woman flows over into the powerful body of the animal; the same exceptional vitality connects them.

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23

**Louise Lawler**

(1947, Bronxville, US ;  
lives and works in New York, US)

**Woman with Picasso**  
1986

In the centre of the display of photographs (four in succession, mounted on a wall), one sees that the title declares: 'Woman with Picasso.' A young woman in a smocked white blouse and a delicate coral necklace holds in her left hand a Cubist sculpture by Pablo Picasso, from 1912. This diminutive and fragile 'guitar' made out of cut cardboard, pasted

paper, canvas, string, and oil paint belongs to the core collection of early twentieth-century avant-garde sculpture. The photograph shows only the young woman's slightly open mouth and her blurred right hand captured in movement, in its gesture of exhibition. Lawler's work is concerned with the presentation of artworks, the site and social situation of exhibition—perhaps in an auction house.

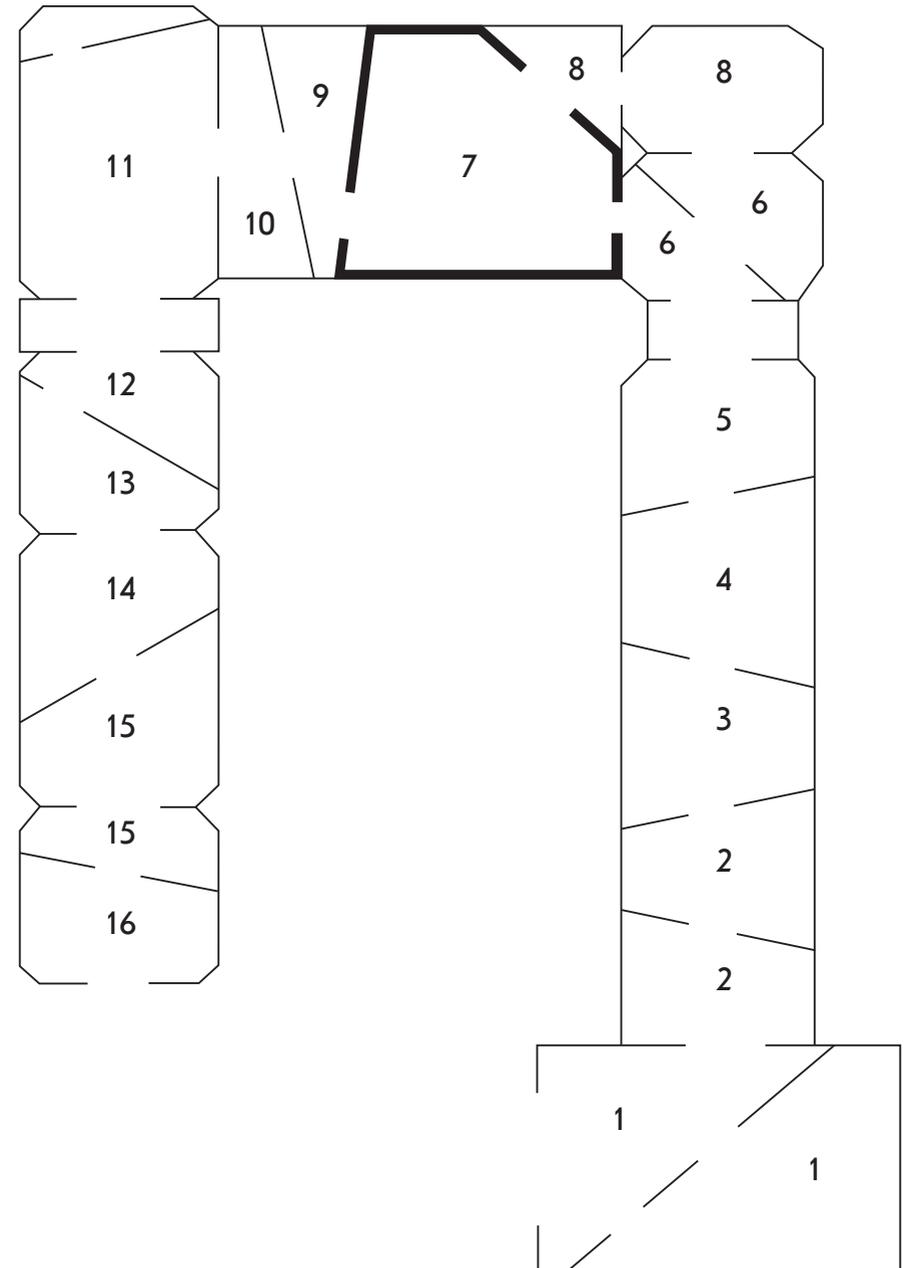
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*'The work can never be determined just by what I do or say, its comprehension is facilitated by the work of other artists and critics and just by what's going on at the time.'*

— Louise Lawler in: Douglas Crimp, 'Prominence Given, Authority Taken, Interview with Louise Lawler', in: *October Files*, ed. Helen Molesworth with Taylor Walsh, vol. 14, Cambridge, MA 2013.

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# 7



# Imperilled Self-Assertion: A Look at the Workshop of the Avant-Garde

The continuous involvement of avant-garde artists with the characteristics of the new man serves the exploration of his physical and spiritual potential. Athletic activities, such as gymnastics and boxing, Promethean imagery, the representation of the heart as the seat of empathy, all feature in the toolkit of the avant-garde.

The room is dominated by Bogomir Ecker's *Marionette*, a symbol for the lack of autonomy, and by the various masks and costumes behind which the figure of modern Man emerges. Fortunato Depero's collages for Diaghilev's choreography of Stravinsky's *The Song of the Nightingale* (1916–17), structurally built from colourful shapes and volumes, refer to a central futurist topic dear to Ecker: the relation between the human and the mechanical figure.

An array of heroic figures emerged from the 'workshop of the avant-garde' including *Prometheus* (1911), as portrayed by Antonín Procházka (1882–1945), a god of disobedience in fragmented form, and *The Acrobat IX* (ca. 1913) by Georges Rouault (1871–1958). While the mythological hero Prometheus gave Man fire, against the express prohibition of Zeus, the father of the gods, the acrobat and

strongman demonstrates the inhuman feats that he is capable of, and Alexander Archipenko's sculpture *The Boxers* (1914) depicts similar feats of strength and bravado.

The Cubo-Futurist sculptural portrait of Herwarth Walden by William Wauer (1866–1962) depicts the great German impresario of modernism. Walden (1878–1941), from Berlin, was a pivotal patron of artists from France, Germany, and other neighbouring European countries. His journal, *Der Sturm*, and above all his exhibition, the *First German Autumn Salon* (1913), were among the most important platforms for the modernist avant-gardes of Expressionism, Cubism, Futurism, and beyond.

The bronze bust of the French visionary poet Charles Baudelaire (1821–67) produced by the French sculptor Raymond Duchamp-Villon (1876–1918) in 1911, serves as a vivid demonstration of how the poet served as both standard and guide for so many avant-garde artists that were to follow.

## 24

### Roman Signer

(1938, Appenzell, CH; lives and works in St Gallen, CH)

### Hat

1997

This short film portrays a puzzling activity that is carried out with great precision.

One quickly realizes that this is a performance executed in accordance with an exact score. Roman Signer's video work *Hat*, which is also about the vital tension of success and failure, vividly exemplifies the way in which the playful idea of catching a hat becomes a masterful one-act performance with a deep metaphysical impact. When the hat finally rests on Signer's head and the Romantic figure (seen from behind) assumes a pensive pose by the window, the mystery is solved, though many questions still remain.

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*'The first time I visited Poland was in 1971. One of the first places I visited was Łódź. I went there because I had heard of the city's great Sztuki Museum. That is where I saw sculptures by Kobro for the first time. I was just naturally attracted to her sculptures, and in particular, I was immediately fascinated by her "Spatial Compositions".'*

*Sculpture has always interested me and I used to work as a draughts-man in an architecture office. I even thought that maybe I would become an architect one day. But, of course, I didn't mistake Kobro's "Spatial Compositions" for architectural models. They are sculptures.*

*I later read that Kobro went to the Academy in St Petersburg and that she was in contact with the constructivists. But she developed a language of her own.'*

— Roman Signer on  
Katarzyna Kobro

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## 25

### Katarzyna Kobro

(1898, Moscow, RU – 1951, Łódź, PL)

### Abstract Sculpture

(3)

1924 (replica 1976)

*Abstract Sculpture (3)* is one of Katarzyna Kobro's early works, executed after her arrival in Poland in the first half of the 1920s. It was probably shown as early as 1924, at the exhibition of the avant-garde group Blok, in Warsaw and Riga, and subsequently lost or destroyed during World War II. Dating from the 1970s, the reconstruction by Bolesław Utkin was based on iconographic material from illustrations in periodicals. The geometric and organic form of the sculpture, together with its composition, which follows from the contrasting forms and materials, places this work among the artist's other early works inspired by Constructivism and Suprematism. These represented an important stage in Kobro's passage to the Spatial Sculptures and Spatial Compositions that she later produced with reference to the theory of sculpture she expounded together with Władysław Strzemiński in their book *Composition of Space: Calculations of Space-Time Rhythm* (1931).

## Bogomir Ecker

(1950, Maribor, SI;  
lives and works in Düsseldorf, DE)

### Marionette

1995

The starting point for Bogomir Ecker's sculptural works are objects observed in everyday life that are shaped and collected like prototypes in an archive, waiting to be shown. Like an oversized Ubu Roi from the eponymous marionette show created in its earliest version by Alfred Jarry in 1888, the hollow red sculpture dominates the centre of the room, expecting the unforeseen. The steel sculpture hangs on cords and has holes that could function as ears and a mouthpiece. It was preceded by sketches of figurines that clearly indicate a dependence on threads for their movement. In Brussels, the monumental yellow steel sculpture *Longitudi /* has watched over public life on Place Flagey since 2009.

*'Robots, marionettes, and tools. The enthusiastic faith in machinery displayed by that whole troupe of Italian men from Boccioni, Russolo, Marinetti, and Balla to Depero, really does smell a bit too much of machine oil. The invocation of this lubricant in the service of constant movement and ever-increasing speed, the euphoria of mechanization, the countless Futurist manifestos to*

*change the world, the non-conformist audacity, incredibly fresh and comprehensive... For some of these protagonists and machinists, as we have seen, it all ended up dramatically — and sadly — in the ideology of fascism. Nowhere is the ambition and the failure of the utopian potential of art greater than here. For me, there is no greater and more brutal collision between the striving for artistic expansion and its misguided breakdown. Nowhere else do artistic and social utopias and their collapse stand so close together. It seems to me as if, in their fury, the Italian Futurists simply made themselves anticipate, in their own artistic failure, the later collapse of the great twentieth-century European political utopias and totalitarianism before its time.'*

—Bogomir Ecker on  
Fortunato Depero

## Fortunato Depero

(1892, Fondo, IT —  
1960, Rovereto, IT)

### Collages for 'The Song of the Nightingale'

1916/1917

In November 1916, the Ballets Russes impresario Sergei Diaghilev tasked the

24-year-old Fortunato Depero with the design of sets and costumes for *The Song of the Nightingale*, a show based on a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, with music composed by Igor Stravinsky. In his studio in Rome, Depero constructed a large set designed to represent fantastic vegetation. The artist also finalized a number of costume designs revealing startling, colourful outfits with the most bizarre and irregular silhouettes. These costumes were supposed to be made with the cloth produced by the Lenci firm in Turin and sewn on to an iron wireframe. The dancers wearing such costumes were intended to move mechanically, with stiff movements like those of an automaton. However, Depero's designs never saw the light of day. For reasons yet unknown, Diaghilev suddenly relieved Depero of his duties in 1917.

## Otto Freundlich

(1878, Slupsk, PL —  
1943, Majdanek, PL)

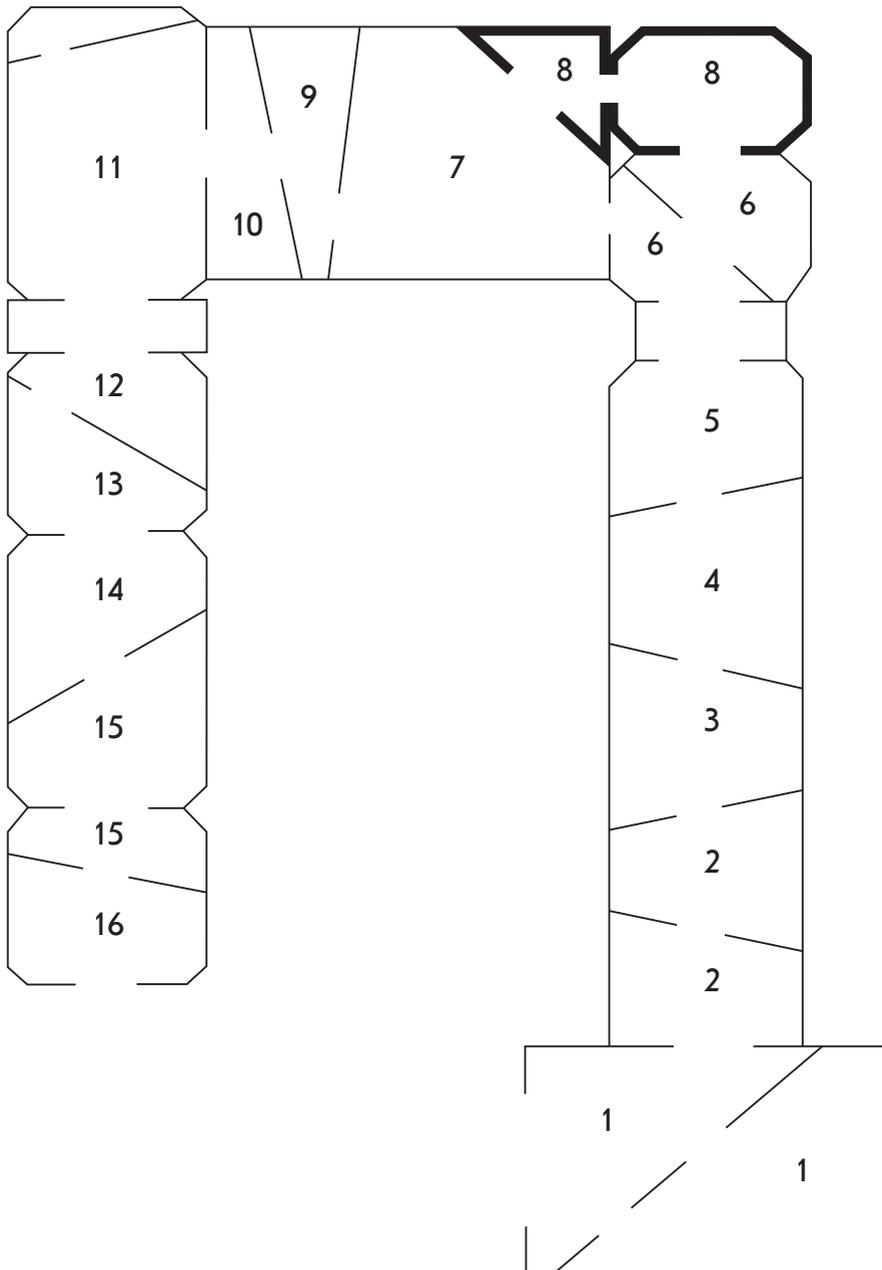
### Male Mask

1911

Otto Freundlich is regarded as one of the first creators of non-figurative art. Freundlich moved into the Bateau-Lavoir in March 1908, where he started to develop an art auton-

mous from Cubism, an art that tapped into the sources of Expressionism, Paul Cézanne and Vincent van Gogh, and the so-called primitive arts. This mask dates from 1911 and marks a stage in a series of studies begun in 1906. For Freundlich, the human head is the site where the human being and the cosmos interact. This work was supposed to have concluded in 1912 with the large, and now destroyed sculpture *The New Man* — a monumental primitivist head that was reproduced on the cover of the catalogue for the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition, which the Nazis organized in 1937.

# 8



# 29

## David Claerbout

(1969, Kortrijk, BE;  
lives and works in Antwerp, BE)

## Four Persons Standing

1999

David Claerbout employs a protracted process to construct lyrical images that inhabit a hybrid state between photo and film. The conditions in which his visual and sound installations are received allow fields of vision to emerge in which past, present, and future seem to wait for a meditative appropriation.

The installation, *Four Persons Standing*, is based on an appropriated image that the artist has altered slightly. It is one of a few of his works that include sound. Here, the monotonous audio content comes from two seconds taken from a 1980s television series at a point when a transition between two scenes was needed with no particular dramatic outcome. He limits the movement to the nervous grain of a video still. That is to say, the projected picture is just a still, and the sound is also a still. At any moment, however, the characters — two men and two women — could interrupt the composition and move on with their lives. The picture's elements are dynamically imprisoned in their own composedness.

*'The associative bringing together of one of my early works and a work by Piet Mondrian came to me as I was thinking about two key aspects of modern art and modern life: asceticism and discipline, in that order.'*

*The setting in Four Persons Standing is distinctly bourgeois, in a manner that is almost at odds with the ascetic reduction in Mondrian's work. I have always been struck by the fact that the revolutions of modern art were often carried out on canvases that could have been painted at the dinner table of a bourgeois house. Four Persons Standing is endlessly oscillating between discipline and hesitation, and is therefore a picture that refuses definitions in much the same way as interbellum modern art would have been a project of resistance.'*

—David Claerbout on  
Piet Mondriaan

# 30

## Piet Mondriaan

(1872, Amersfoort, NL —  
1944, New York, US)

## Composition D

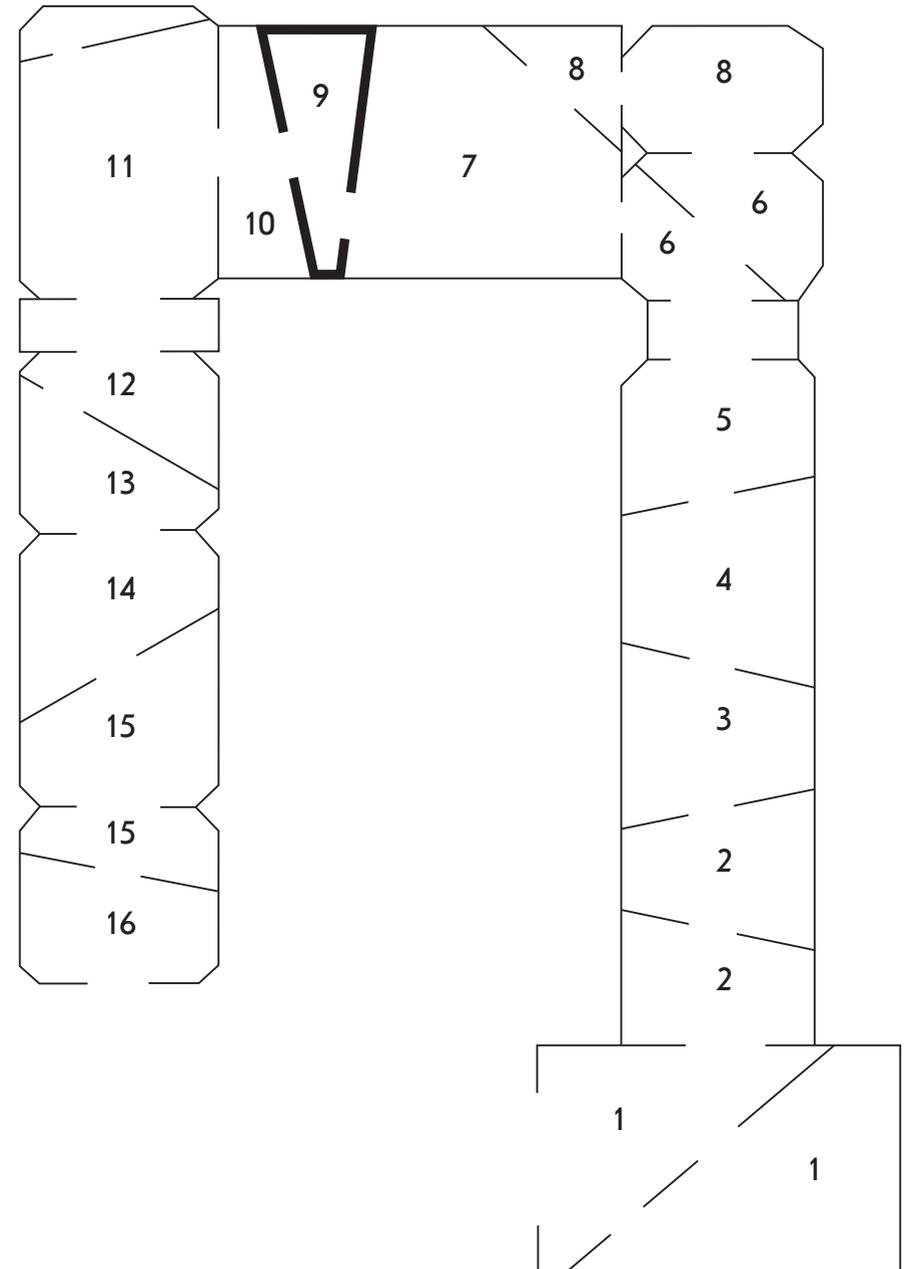
1932 (1973, Print: 67 / 150)

This screen print based on Mondrian's 1932 painting *Composition D* was created in 1973. It was part of an album with a very small print run — 150

copies — containing the work of 30 artists who had all belonged to the international group Abstraction-Création (1931–1936), formed in Paris by Theo van Doesburg. The screen print condemns both the impact, still very much alive, of Mondrian's art on modern and contemporary artists, and the vicissitudes of that impact in the "age of mechanical reproducibility", which Benjamin describes as the loss of the "aura". With its concise style and its linear, asymmetrical composition, and strengthened by the distribution of the three primary colours, *Composition D* is an emblematic example of Mondrian's work in the period from 1921 to 1932.

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# 9



31

## Marijke van Warmerdam

(1959, Nieuwer Amstel, NL — lives and works in Amsterdam, NL)

### Fast Forward 2016

Marijke van Warmerdam chose Robert Flaherty's film *Nanook of the North* as her 'tandem' and made it the starting point for a new film project: *Fast Forward*. Fluctuating horizons and open movements are key themes in the Amsterdam artist's moving images, such as *Handstand* (1992) and *Hands free* (2004). In her early sculptural works, the theme of openness as an ever-present struggle for a new beginning in human life coalesced in the form of a loop. In Van Warmerdam's new work — in another 'rabbit-from-the-hat-moment' — the young girl emerges from a suitcase.

*'In the fall of 1995 I took the History of Documentary course at the New School in New York. I could hardly believe what I was seeing during the first lectures: Lumière, Flaherty, Vertov, and so on. It was somehow so close to what I had been making in the preceding years, and yet I had never even heard of them until that moment. It was quite a shock! There was one scene in particular in Robert Flaherty's Nanook of the North. A canoeist and*

*a mother with children emerge from a canoe — followed by more children, and still more children, and finally a dog. They all appear like wonderful rabbits of various sizes emerging from a magician's hat! It's a never-ending scene. It's impressive in a practical sense: how did they all fit in there? It's quite a comical scene, too. It seemed exaggerated or manipulated, but it was indeed real. Nanook of the North made a deep impression on me at the time, and also when I recently watched this scene again. It even led me to make a new film, Fast Forward, in which the journey itself is more important than the final destination.'*

—Marijke van Warmerdam on Robert Flaherty

32

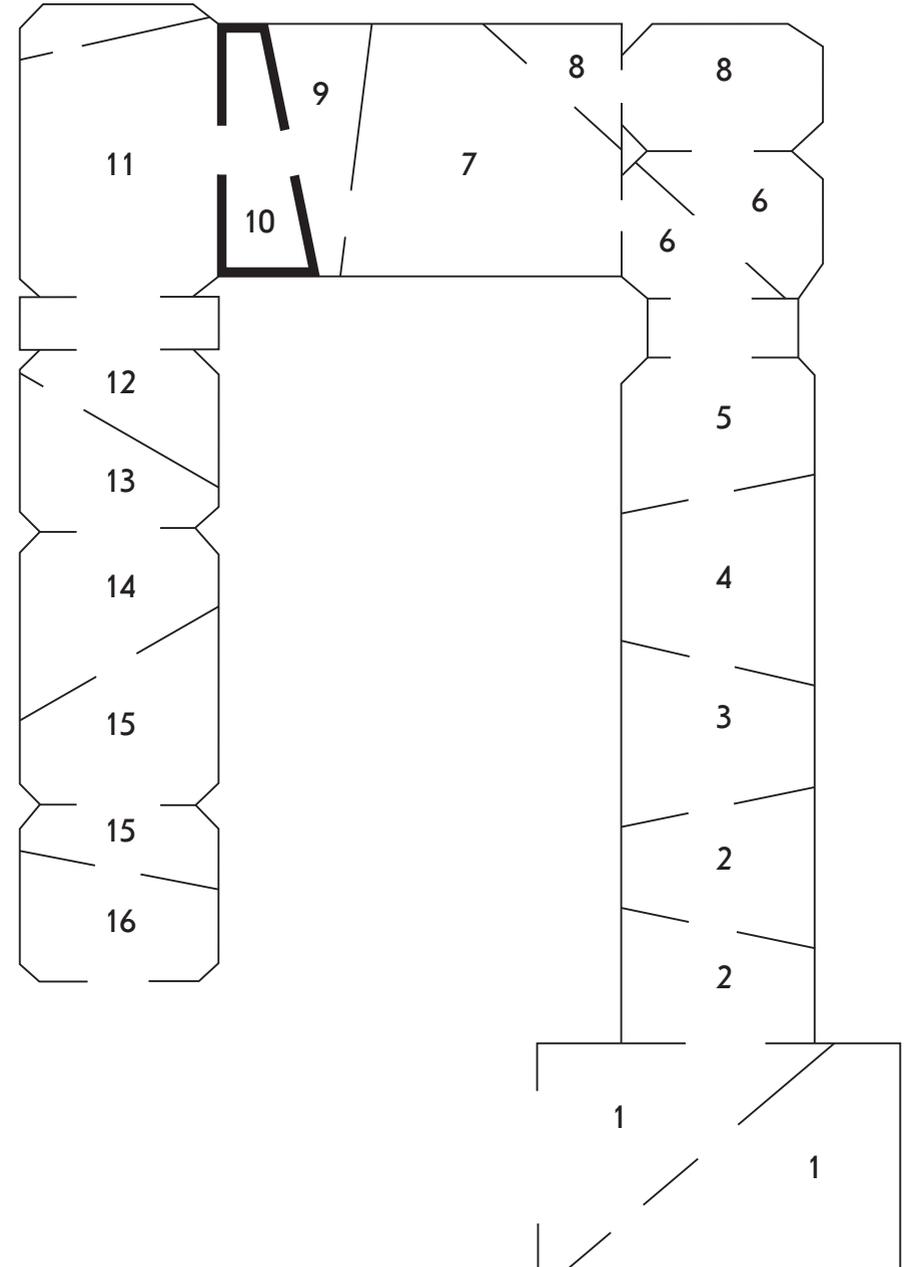
## Robert Flaherty

(1884, Iron Mountain, US — 1951, Dummerston, US)

### Nanook of the North 1922, 76'35" (excerpt: 3')

Sled dogs, fishing, hunting for seals... Such is the life of an Inuit family over the course of the seasons in the Canadian North. Flaherty was a pioneer of ethnographic film and *Nanook* was the genre's first masterpiece. Ultimately, it is a work of real humanity and great plastic beauty.

10



# The Belgian Avant-Garde

In Belgium, the avant-garde only really emerged as a group phenomenon after the First World War. Artists like Marthe Donas and Georges Vantongerloo were abroad during the war and came into direct contact with the new movements. On the home front, the phenomenon largely went unnoticed. At the end of the war, artists who were in Belgium or who had returned to Belgium yearned for new stimuli. In Antwerp, a group of artists became part of the entourage of the writer and poet Paul van Ostaijen, including the brothers Oscar and Floris Jaspers, Paul Joostens, and Prosper De Troyer.

The late response to the 'constructivist schools' and the Flemish demand for emancipation reinforced and sustained each other. In the summer of 1918, the Museum of Modern Art in Brussels held an exhibition of the *Doe Stil Voort* group of artists under the patronage of the Council of Flanders, which had declared the political independence of Flanders at the end of 1917. After the signing of the armistice in November 1918, many of those participating in the exhibition emerged as the first abstract artists in Belgium, including Jozef Peeters, Victor Servranckx, Prosper De Troyer, Felix De Boeck, and Edmond van Dooren. As if in a pressure cooker, the move-

ments from before the war converged with the new art that surfaced in the neutral countries. This resulted in highly diverse oeuvres, which for a while explored different directions.

In 1919, Brussels joined Antwerp as a centre for the avant-garde. *The Centre d'art* on the Coudenberg hill — near the current Centre for Fine Arts — featured painting, architecture, literature, and the applied arts. It was there on 13 March 1920 that Van Doesburg gave a lecture about the *De Stijl* movement in the presence of a small audience of some 15 people, including René Magritte, Pierre-Louis Flouquet, Victor Servranckx, and Georges Vantongerloo. According to the poet Pierre Bourgeois, the lecture was "*the beginning of everything*". Belgium now had its own 'Bauhaus', which synthesized architecture, visual art, graphic art, the applied arts, literature, and theatre.

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## 33

**Marthe Donas**  
(1885, Antwerp, BE —  
1967, Audregnies, BE)

**Cubist Head**  
1917

During the 1920s, the name Tour Donas regularly appeared in various exhibitions in Europe and even in the United States. The artist behind this mysterious and genderless pseudonym

was Marthe Donas, from Antwerp. Based in Paris, she was, along with her partner Alexander Archipenko, part of an international network of artists, and her work was published in avant-garde magazines such as *De Stijl*, *Noi*, *Mécano*, *Sélection*, and *Der Sturm*.

The play with volume and emptiness in convex and concave shapes, the ingenious reflection of radiance, and the curves of pleated metal show how quickly she entered her own individual dialogue with Archipenko — whom she met in Nice in 1917.

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## 34

**Prosper De Troyer**  
(1880, Destelbergen, BE —  
1961, Duffel, BE)

**Animated Toilet VI**  
1920

Prosper De Troyer was the respected 'Nestor-figure' of Belgian art innovators from around 1919. From his paint shop in Mechelen, he soon created an active link between the avant-garde groups in Antwerp and Brussels. In late 1919 he contacted Theo van Doesburg to obtain the most important pieces of work of the new movement. "Now I want to see the strong human being of our times appear. The flying human being. The electric man and woman", he wrote to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti on 20 January 1920. De Troyer soon created his own

personal synthesis of Cubism and Futurism. He captured the new beauty of movement and technique in dynamic paintings and drawings. Domestic motifs explored in his impressionistic period were given a futuristic touch: women who play music, sew, or comb their hair. From 1922 onwards, after producing several pure abstract compositions, he found a figurative style with geometrically constructed characters.

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## 35

**Paul van Ostaijen**  
(1896, Antwerp, BE —  
1928, Miavoye-Anthée, BE)

**Oscar Jaspers**  
(1887, Borgerhout, BE —  
1970, Brussels, BE)

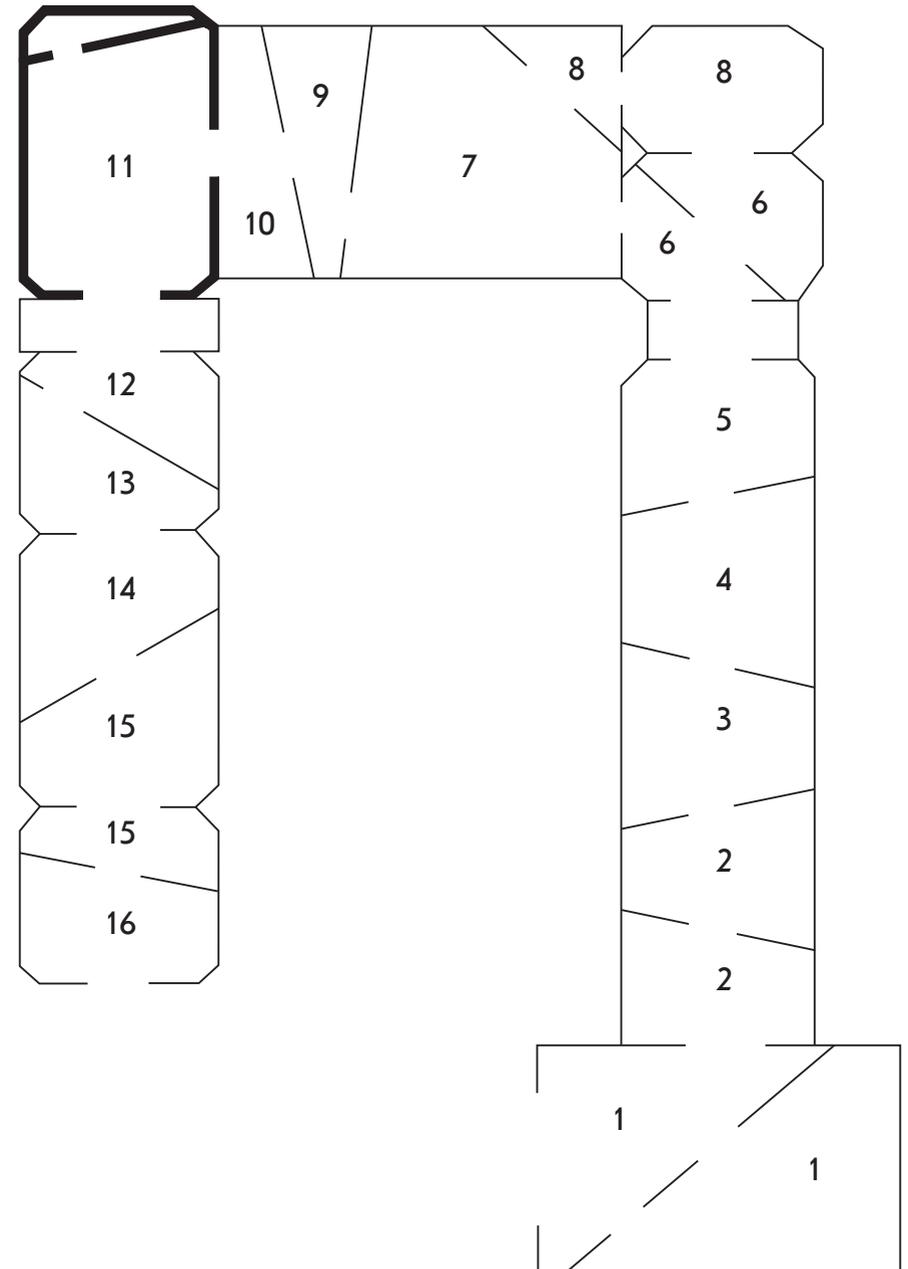
**Occupied City**  
1921

*Occupied City* is a visual and auditory language score. In a fragmented yet scrupulously constructed poem, Paul van Ostaijen looks back (from Berlin) on the occupation of Antwerp. Van Ostaijen does not write narrative poetry, but cries out over the disaster of war with a collage of songs, advertising slogans, and subtle puns. In Antwerp, the sculptor Oscar Jaspers — who also made the bronze *Frieda* that can be seen in this room — created the rhythmic typography,

following instructions by van Ostaïjen. Jespers designed the cover, added four abstract woodcuts and personally cut the big letters and titles. "*Printed poetry is printed word art*", Van Ostaïjen wrote in 1920, in the prospectus for the (never published) art magazine *Sienjaal*.

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# 11



### 14 – 18. Rupture or Continuity

Simultaneously with *The Power of the Avant-garde*, the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium explore avant-garde in Belgium further and exhibit a selection from their own collection. For more info, see colophon.

36

## William Forsythe

(1949, Manhasset, New York, US — lives and works in Frankfurt, DE & Vermont, US)

### Doing and Undergoing

2016

This site-specific work, conceived for the exhibition, presents several steel chains that are freely arranged in space. A guideline by the author, which invites visitors to place the chains in space by simply using their feet, clarifies that this is not about a static installation, but an open structure. Aesthetic composition and physical experience are directly intertwined.

William Forsythe, who in past decades redefined contemporary dance, turns intensely in his latest works toward the limits and gateways of art and choreography. In his *choreographic objects*, Forsythe plumbs the fundamental principles of the organization of movement in space.

The performative level, which opens up interaction with visitors, characterizes his installations. The use of objects makes them performers in an ever new, individualized choreography.

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*'To my mind, the method of generating choreographic material finds a procedural antecedent in Marcel Duchamp's*

*Three Standard Stoppages (1913–4).*

*I consider the actions specified by Duchamp for the realization of this work to be the very first instance of a conceptual choreographic act. Our relationship to Three Standard Stoppages is mediated by the knowledge of Duchamp's procedural actions in the creation of the work: hold a metre of string one metre above the floor and release the string, letting it fall to the floor, apparently preserving the identity of the metre, but no longer as a straight line. Duchamp then rendered these no-longer-straight 'metres' as wooden templates for exhibition. The undertaking of this original but ordinary action produced unique, discursive objects. What then comes to my mind is a simple isometric translation that establishes the relationship between these works: specific actions that produce objects versus objects that produce specific actions — the former being Duchamp's, the latter my own.'*

— William Forsythe on  
Marcel Duchamp

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37

## Marcel Duchamp

(1887, Blainville-Crevon, FR — 1968, Neuilly-sur-Seine, FR)

### Three Standard Stoppages

1913–14 (replica from 1964)

How long is a metre? Marcel Duchamp experimented with the ready-made by placing this measurement in question. For *Three Standard Stoppages*, he dropped metre-long threads to the floor and captured the resulting visualization of randomness, using it to create a new measure. Placing the corresponding wooden templates in a toolbox, he took the idea of measurement and its specification *ad absurdum* and likewise parodied the fixed standards of science. Duchamp called his work "A joke about the metre". The newly created, undulating 'rulers' call into question not only the unit of length, but also the standardization of chance.

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38

## Luc Tuymans

(1958, Mortsel, Belgium, BE — lives and works in Antwerp, BE)

### Soldier

1999

Luc Tuymans' quiet, elegiac paintings, usually conceived from old photographs, films, or television, draw upon the notion of remembrance and the function of collective memory. Describing his process, Tuymans explained: "Pictures, if they are to have an effect, must have the tremendous intensity of silence. It is not about developing feelings of melancholy, but about a certain form of *déjà vu*." His canvases often refer to his experience of growing up

in Belgium, a country torn by war and haunted by its history of colonial oppression in Africa. Based on a photograph of a World War I soldier, this work is a haunting, strangely ambiguous partial portrait that suggests the history of war is more forgotten than remembered.

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*'I think it's obvious why I picked Raymond Duchamp-Villon's work, The Large Horse. It represents the premonition and the foreboding of the marriage of nature, man, and machine and the cataclysm that was to follow.'*

The Large Horse was born out of a similar, multifaceted predilection — induced by Cubism — to Umberto Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (produced one year earlier in 1913), but where Boccioni's work was a product of Futurism celebrating speed and motion, The Large Horse is indefinitely frozen in time. The work is monumental. In a way that almost seems to work like stop-motion animation, it shows us the metamorphosis of an object as an act of violent transgression. It is this compiled energy depicting a form of ultimate urgency and violence that makes it so threatening and enigmatic, as if inside this solid structure there is a pulsating cavity, not unlike a heart, which might somehow detonate like a bomb and propel the structure into some sort of expanded mega-structure.'

— Luc Tuymans on  
Raymond Duchamp-Villon

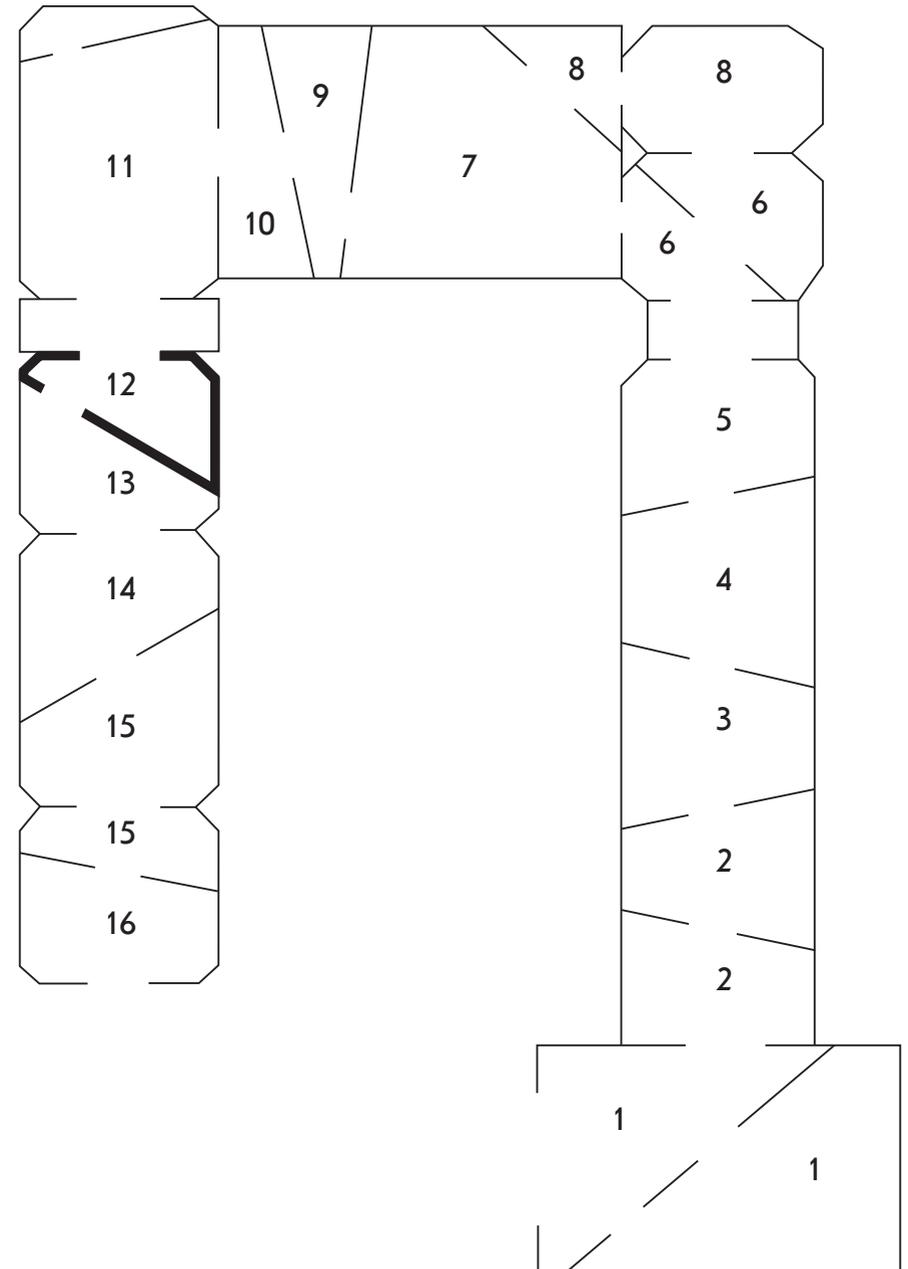
## Raymond Duchamp-Villon

(1876, Damville, FR –  
1918, Cannes, FR)

### The Large Horse 1914

In the encounter between organic reality and the machine, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, a passionate horseman, found a symbol for the power that represented his times: this dynamic vision, the power of the animal turned into a unit in the power of the machine, is crystallized in shapes that encapsulate the space and thus suggest aspects of movement and speed. He made various versions and preliminary sketches before conceiving the final version of this big horse, which he never saw fully realized, as he died in 1918, shortly before the end of the Great War.

# 12



# Cinema = Avant-Garde

Born as it was from the new Gods of mechanics, optics, and chemistry, cinema was never just a device of modernity; it was its purest embodiment. It was also the only medium, technology, or art form able to fully represent modernity in its entirety: the speed and mobility of its trains, cars, and airplanes (Boccioni); the new, 'impossible' and multiple points of view, such as airborne, underwater, microscopic, and superimposed (Braque); the uncharted world of the 'psyche' — of dreams, hallucinations, the unconscious, and our fragmented and multiple selves (Freud); and the breaking down of the narrative and the figurative (from Loie Fuller to Malevich and back again).

Cinema's revolutionary ability to re/produce — and therefore manipulate — time and space was almost immediately amplified by new domains of marvel: the colour and sound that cinema introduced, virtually single-handedly, to the lives of millions of spectators. At very little cost, the masses could leave their grey, silent universe, and enter completely new sensorial territories.

For all of this (and more), while other art forms are still struggling to break open the boundaries that limit them (the frame and the stage, or tonality and figurativism), cinema just jumps in and tears the hinges away.

In the early years of the twentieth century, cinema was still inventing itself and so it had no avant-garde tendency: it was the avant-garde.

Unconstrained by pre-existing norms, and ignored by the 'good folk of the bourgeoisie', cinema spreads like a social virus or savannah fire among the masses of the urban proletariat. At the same time, it reaches the members of the most advanced intelligentsia who are quick to recognize its revolutionary content and potential.

It is only in the nineteenth-twenties that we can talk about an avant-garde in cinema. With the general normalization of cinema and the dictatorship of feature-length, narrative fiction comes the need for an avant-garde. It is *Faust*, *Metropolis*, *The Crowd*, and *The Three Musketeers* that create the need for Buñuel, Richter, Man Ray and Léger.

Before then, however, in the period that roughly corresponds with the timeframe of this exhibition, there is no avant-garde cinema, simply because *all* cinema is avant-garde, and *all* cinema *talks* to the other avant-gardes.

This is the cinema that we have chosen to expose in this exhibition: the cinema that *precedes* the avant-garde, the cinema that was *around* the avant-garde — the cinema that *is* the avant-garde.

—Nicola Mazzanti

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## 40

List of film fragments selected by Nicola Mazzanti, conservator of Cinematek. Total duration: 34 minuten

Étienne-Jules Marey, *Escrime*, 1890

Gebroeders Lumière, *Bataille de neige*, Vue Num 101, 1897

Edison Motion Picture Co., *Sandow*, 1894

Gebroeders Lumière, *Danse Serpentine*, Vue Num 765, 1897

Emile Cohl, *Les aventures du baron du Crac*, 1910

Gaston Velle, *La fée aux fleurs*, 1905

Fernando Segundo De Chomon, *Le scarabée d'or*, 1907

Georges Méliès, *Le royaume des fées*, 1903

Jean Painlevé, *Hyas arenea et Sténorinques*, 1928

Anoniem, *Voyage aérien de Londres à Bruxelles*, Ca. 1920

Anoniem, *Vues de Wuppertal*, Ca 1920

Anoniem, *'Round Brussels in Ten Minutes*, 1908

Anoniem, *Traversée des Alpes françaises en automobile*, 1911

Anoniem, *'Round Brussels In Ten Minutes*, 1908

Victorin-Hyppolite Jasset, *Bandits en automobile*, 1912

Louis Feuillade, *Fantomas*, 1913

Alfred Machin, *De Molens die juichen en weenen*, 1912

Alfred Machin, *Maudite soit la guerre*, 1914

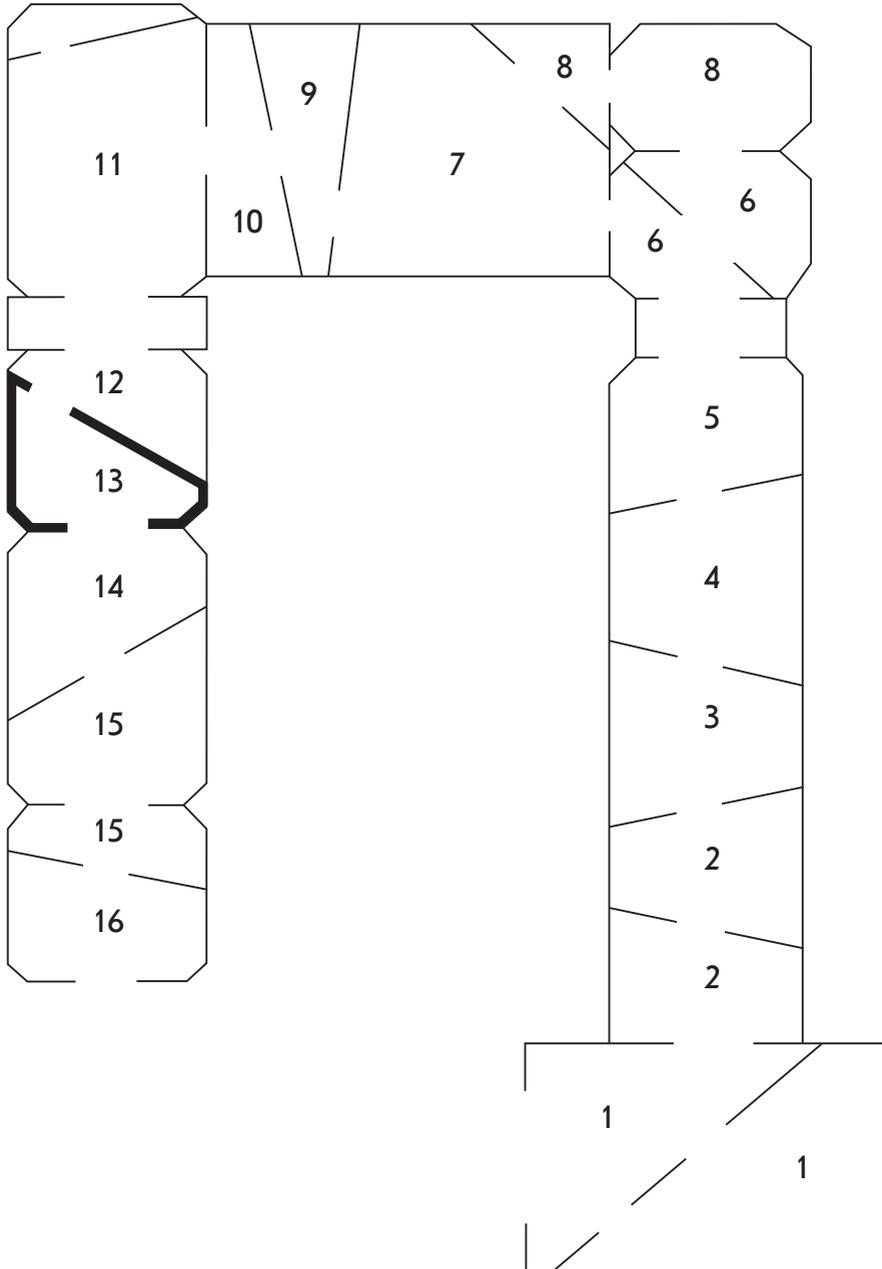
Nino Oxilia, *Rapsodia satanica*, 1914

Buster Keaton, Eddie Cline, *One Week*, 1920

Edwin S. Porter, *The Great Train Robbery*, 1903

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# 13



# 41

## William Kentridge

(1955, Johannesburg, ZA;  
lives and works in Johannesburg)

## Egyptus Inferior

(from the series "The Nose")  
2008

William Kentridge is a South African artist, internationally acclaimed for his drawings, films, and theatre and opera productions. Over the past 23 years, he has worked with the Stephens Tapestry studio in Johannesburg to create over 35 different tapestries. The series of horse and nose tapestries was created while Kentridge was working on a production of Shostakovich's opera *The Nose*. The project is a doomed one about trying to find unheroic equestrian figures, while the horses and riders go in search of a promised land, any promised land: a hopeless crusade through history in search of Utopia.

*'The great boon is an absence of tradition — the possibilities of a world finding itself, in which every mundane object is looked at for the first time. Man with a Movie Camera is a film with no plot — a film without the psychology expected of a cinematic drama, but one which holds us with its delight in the everyday around us — the view of a world before cynicism, irony, or melodrama had overtaken it — and holds us with its view of the*

*possibilities of the camera and what that suggests to us. In contemporary film, one feels every edit is a business decision. Godard describes the edits of Nouvelle Vague films as a series of ethical decisions. For Dziga Vertov, edits are acts of discovery; finding in the camera eyepiece and in the hum of the editing table, a new world — a world made new.'*

—William Kentridge on Dziga Vertov

# 42

## Vertov Dziga

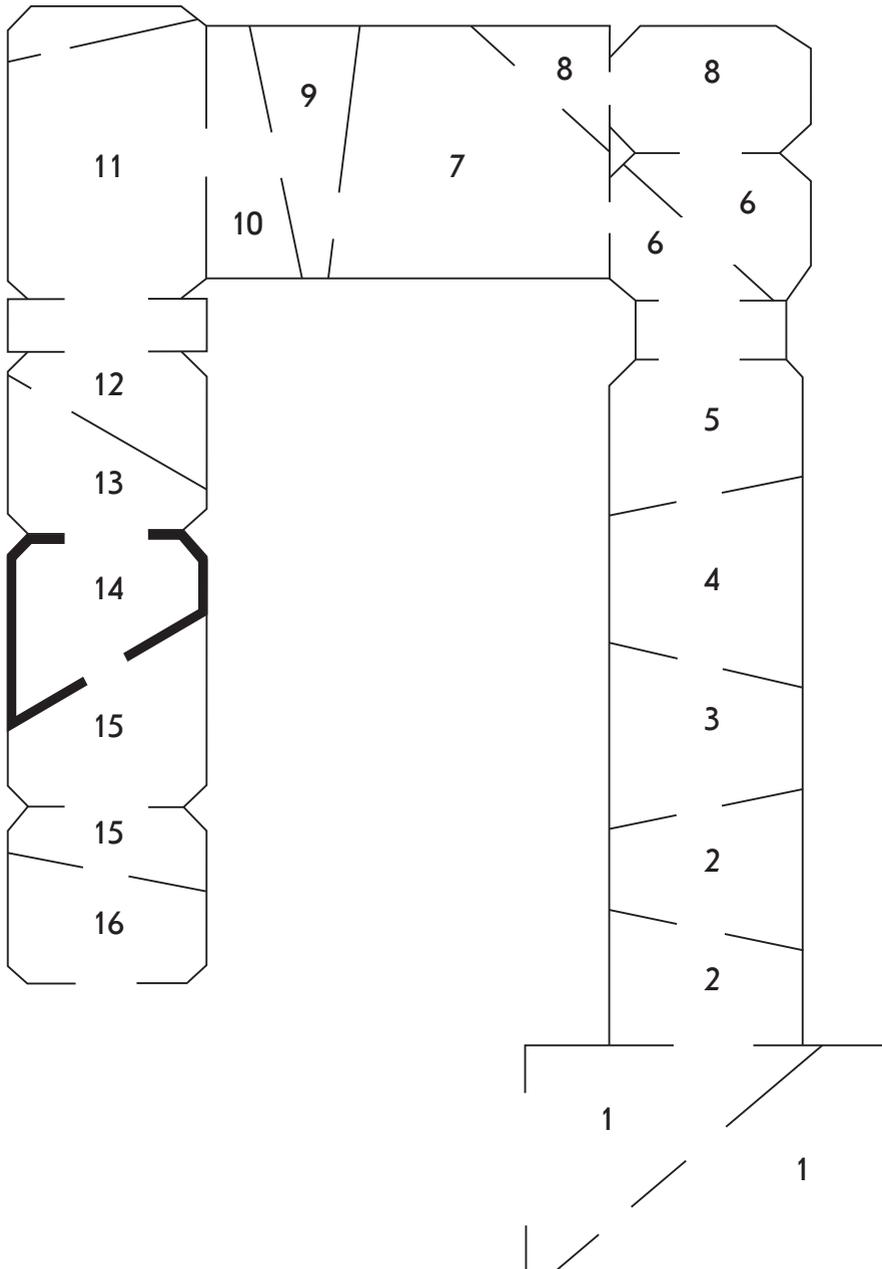
(1896, Bialystok, PL —  
1954, Moscow, RU)

## Man with a Movie Camera

1929, 99'49" (excerpt: 3')

Through the use of montage, Dziga Vertov — one of the great filmmakers of Soviet cinema — explores all the possibilities that modern technology offers for observing the city. Modernity reinvents the world (here in socialist guise), and the results are recorded and interpreted through the very medium of modernity — the cinematographic camera, which, via Vertov's 'Kino-Eye', almost seems to take on a life of its own.

# 14



# 43

## Sean Scully

(1945, Ireland; lives and works in New York, US, Barcelona, ESP and Königsdorf, DE)

## Slope

2014

Four powerful wings form an almost impenetrable wall, constructed from more or less horizontal bands of super-imposed colours that clearly manifest the painter's hand. While the two outer wings are like open blinds, consisting of restrained, almost cloudy green-white and pink-blue tones, at the centre — the 'window' — a vivid contrast of yellow-ochre and blue-red unfolds. We stand before a large gate that only permits a view through glazed layers of colour. The work is in the tradition of a great series of paintings that are based on Irish stone walls and bear the title "Wall of Light". The rhythmic alterations of the wings create a sense of movement that brings the eye in motion, as though it were looking at a curving horizontal line. The structure of the painting and the transparent application of colour make it possible for the sensory perception of the landscape 'slope' to be retained and traceable in the abstract form.

*'I started out making portraits. But very soon, and early on, I connected art and the avant-garde with*

*the great political upheavals of the twentieth century. When I saw the paintings of Matisse, Léger, Picasso, and Kirchner, I was set free, and I became an abstract painter, because I too wanted my work to touch the people globally. Art now has an influence and a transforming power that it has never had before in the history of art. When I take my work to China, and participate in its burgeoning openness, I am aware that I stand on the shoulders of the avant-garde of the early twentieth century, when art became a free agent. Now we build on that, as a transforming force for good and understanding.'*

— Sean Scully on  
Fernand Léger

# 44

## Fernand Léger

(1881, Argentan, FR — 1955, Gif-sur-Yvette, FR)

## Still Life with a Bottle

1927

In the period between 1923 and 1928, Fernand Léger objectified the contrasts he had used in the past with his decision to work by opposing close-ups instead. The free undulations of the vase, a plant, the profile of a human face, or a balustrade are confronted with the geometric rigour of an industri-

alized object: ball bearings, a compass or, as is here the case, a bottle. The spatial opposition of objects left and right is overlaid with a contrast between a rendering of the volume that undercuts perspective — highlighted by the shadow on the bottle's neck — and the flat rectangles of pure colours. These colours divide the composition anew; more importantly, however, they invite the eye to seek out a deeper fictive depth. This way of proceeding — by means of close-ups, zooms, and the spatial partitioning of the pictorial plane — combines the influence of cinema (*Ballet mécanique*, 1924) and the concomitant explorations linked to Léger's so-called "Mural paintings" (1925).

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45

## Robert Delaunay

(1885, Paris, FR —  
1941, Montpellier, FR)

### Circular Forms,

### Sun no. 1

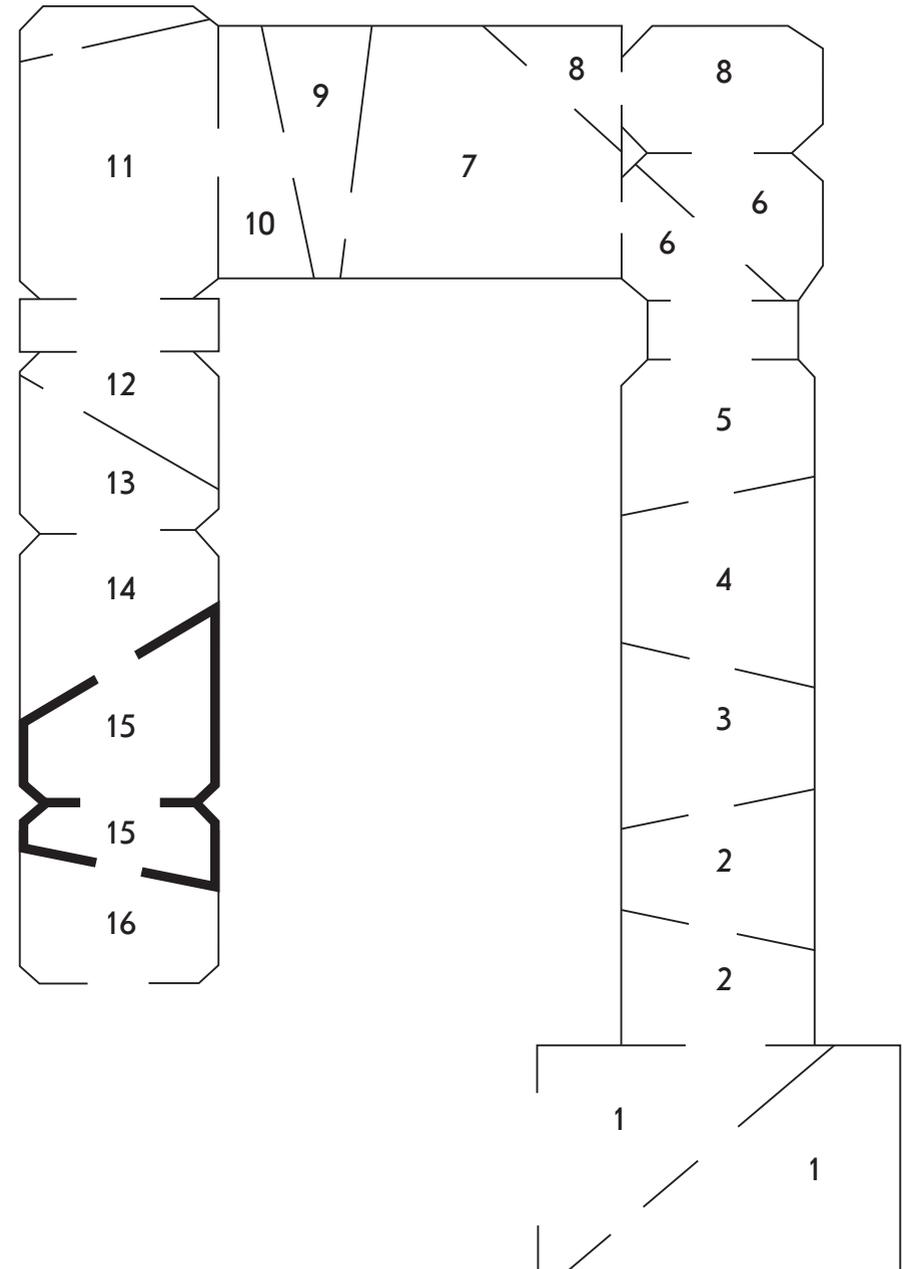
1912–13

In the summer of 1913, the French painter Robert Delaunay spent a great deal of time in Louveciennes, near Paris. Fifteen paintings were produced there, including *Circular Forms, Sun no. 1*, in which he grappled with the light of the moon and sun. Yellow, blue, green, and purple segments fan out from a bright yellow circle at

the centre. Basing his work on optical experiments, Delaunay explores the spectral structure and vibrating movement of sunlight. At the same time, *Circular Forms* marks a pivotal step in the development of a purely abstract painting, a *peinture pure*.

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# 15



# The Storm Penetrates the City

The affinity and enthusiasm with which the artists of the avant-garde greeted the earliest days of the twentieth century were not without mitigation. The new sense of mobility and the advance of the metropolis became symbols of technological and civilizational progress, and thus of modernity as a whole, but the fascination with the power of machines, the potential of the masses, and the blossoming of culture and industry — as seen so strikingly in the works of Sigríd Hjertén — were always mixed with a deep uncertainty about an age that was advancing so suddenly, and without warning. In the works of Ignaz Epper, Egon Schiele, and Jacob Steinhardt shown here, the images of cities make this ambivalent relation particularly visible, like complex psychograms of their inhabitants, depicting signs of progress and liberalism, yet also revealing an explosive sense of chaos, and the anonymity and loneliness churned up by the machinations of a rapidly expanding, ever faster, ever louder urban organism.

The conflict of humanity in times of upheaval becomes a common theme of the avant-garde. Repeatedly, artists turn in their images to modern Man, conceive him anew, and reflect the psychological complexity of the time in these images of the human, as seen in the beautiful and intimate portraits by

Amadeo de Souza Cardoso, Oscar Kokoschka, Egon Schiele, and Karl Caspar. They reflect the key questions and social moods of the early twentieth century: on the one hand, the longed-for and yet feared collapse of the old world (present in Emmy Klinker's work), and on the other, a euphoria and belief in the future. In this redefinition of the individual and society, they repeatedly return to primal images of the human, like Wilhelm Morgner's *Clayworker*, which serve to reassure in times of a search for identity.

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## 46

**Sigríd Hjertén**  
(1885, Sundsvall, SW —  
1948, Stockholm, SW)

**The Pier**  
1915

Having returned to Sweden after studying with Henri Matisse in Paris, Sigríd Hjertén painted a number of dramatic views captured through the window of her family home and studio in central Stockholm. The motifs often illustrate technological development and movement: here a train puffs out clouds of smoke, cyclists speed along playfully, and a ship has docked at the pier to be loaded or unloaded. The ship's hull elegantly follows the softly rounded edge of the pier. In an interplay of warm and cool colours,

the whole constitutes a powerful expressionistic composition. Together with her spouse, Isaac Grünewald, Sigríd Hjertén set the tone during the 1910s among artists advancing Expressionism in Sweden.

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## 47

**Egon Schiele**  
(1890, Tulln an der Donau, AT —  
1918, Vienna, AT)

**Dead City**  
1912

Starting in 1910 in Crumlaw (Český Krumlov), South Bohemia — the birthplace of his mother — Egon Schiele produced a series of cityscapes and landscape paintings that are not characterized by a romanticized idyll, but instead break with it by means of sombre colouring. In all, Schiele made six versions of the 'dead city' motif. They seem strangely unfamiliar and compressed, and make the houses appear otherworldly. The sad, desolate mood of this picture provides a window onto the hidden, forbidden side of a small town from which Schiele was eventually banished. The residents took offence to him living unmarried with his muse, Wally Neuzil. They were also upset by the erotic subjects — often young girls — that he pursued in his work.

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# 16

## From the Cathedral to the Bauhaus

The fragmentation of form in art as a response to the fragmentation of previously valid worldviews resulted in a kaleidoscope of movements and attitudes at the beginning of the twentieth century. In many ways, fragmentation became a key formal and ideological concept, signifying not only destruction, but also reorganization: an inorganically increasing force that led to the concept of the crystal. The ambivalent materiality of crystal — simultaneously permeable and hard, at once a solid form and a growing organism — evokes some of the images by Feininger, Picasso, and Matyushin exhibited here, and is well suited as a metaphor for explaining avant-garde conceptions of art in a fragmented world.

For the manifesto that Walter Gropius penned for the newly founded experimental Bauhaus school in Weimar (1919), Feininger created a woodcut of a cathedral rising as a single crystalline form into the sky, which became a symbol for the concept of art as social utopia that developed there. Against the background of the lost war, which had as an additional consequence the upheaval of artistic disciplines and categories, the protagonists of the Bauhaus in Weimar demanded a radical reorientation of all art production. The cathedral is here not only representative of build-

ing as the highest form of art, but it becomes the emblem of a society. As an academy for both the fine arts and the decorative arts, the Bauhaus opened itself up to the very latest possibilities enabled by industrial forms of production. By means of the contemporary and functional language of form that it succeeded in developing, the Bauhaus strove to shape all areas of human life — work, play, and joy.

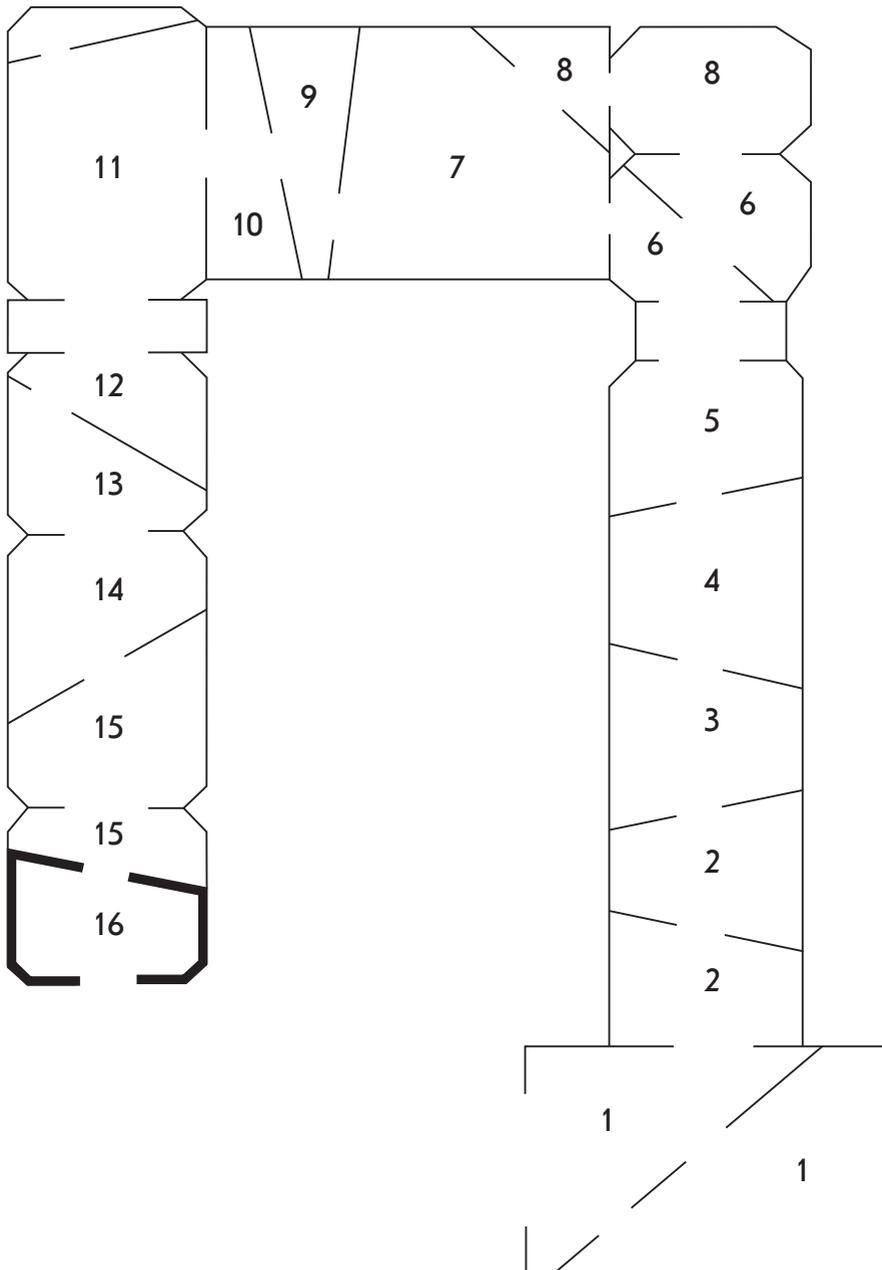
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48

**Lyonel Feininger**  
(1871, New York, US —  
1956, New York, US)

**Cathedral of the Future. Title Page of the Bauhaus Manifesto and Programme**  
1919

In April 1919, in his first year as master of the printmaking department at the Bauhaus school in Weimar, Lyonel Feininger produced the title woodcut for the Bauhaus manifesto and programme — a depiction of the *Cathedral* as a crystalline structure. In the text, Walter Gropius (director of the Bauhaus) and Feininger both made reference to the “miracle of the Gothic cathedral”. It seemed to them to be an exemplary



*Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) and also led to Gropius choosing to name his institution Bauhaus, after the medieval stonemasons' guild, the *Bauhütten*. Analogously, the faculty members were also designated as 'masters' and 'masters of form'. Gropius defined the school's objective as follows: "*The Bauhaus attempts [...] the reunification of all artistic handwork disciplines — sculpture, painting, the applied arts and crafts — as indissoluble elements of a new art of building.*"

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49

## Rudolf Lutz

(1895–1966, Heilbronn, DE)

### Our Game. Our Party. Our Work

1919 (Facsimile)

*Our Game. Our Party. Our Work* was the title of the introductory lecture by Johannes Itten, a master who directed the preliminary course at the Bauhaus in Weimar from 1919 to 1923. As one of the first instructors, Itten's teaching focused on each student as an individual with an integrated mind, body, and soul. The poster that Rudolf Lutz designed, which takes its title from that of the lecture, reflects the interconnectedness of these three elements. The three building blocks are visually distinguished by their varying colours and shapes, yet their forms also

intersect. 'Game' illustrates the liberation of all kinds of creative potential. 'Party' refers to the collective mode of work. Finally, 'Work' corresponds to the physically and intellectually demanding fields of education. The inclusion of physical force as an aspect of artistic production was unique, and revolutionized teaching methods in a lasting way.

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50

## Karl Peter Röhl

(1890, Kiel, DE — 1975, Kiel)

### Hand-Puppet Heads (Court Usher, Doctor, Death)

c. 1920

The three hand-puppet heads by Karl Peter Röhl symbolize the concept of the Bauhaus. Its focus was not so much on individual disciplines, but rather consisted of a more comprehensive concept of education. Thus, theatre, music, dance, and performance were all part of daily life and work. The hand puppets are references to the stage workshop, and illustrate the classical attributes of their respective occupations through exaggerated expressions. With a moustache, hat, and open mouth, the bumbling court usher follows his orders. The restrained, stiff expres-

sion of the doctor, who wears glasses and is crowned with a top hat, suggests an intelligent spirit. The colourful wooden skull of Death, on the other hand, stands out, recalling the main features of Expressionism. After 1922, Röhl distanced himself from the Bauhaus, moving increasingly towards Constructivism.

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51

## Fritz Lang's film Metropolis as focus and forecast

The few excerpts from *Metropolis* illustrate the enthusiasm and fascination for all-powerful technology: cogwheels interlocking with each other, elevators leading down toward the centre of the earth, planes circling around up among the skyscrapers, and railway tracks and automobiles making perpetual communication possible on elevated highways. These are all the products of ingenious inventors, of people who, like artists, have become the epitome of creativity. Fragmented by rapid industrial development, big-city life is revealed to us once again in *Metropolis* through the medium of film. The metaphor of the cathedral serves as a leitmotif throughout the film and the use of the craftsmen's guild of stonemasons as a unifying force in the construction of the cathedral — that

is, of the State — hints at the ambivalent and double-edged role of the avant-garde as a spearhead for the modern movement. The medium of film succeeds in bringing together the various arts in the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or 'total work of art', but in this reconciliation of the progressive technologies with the idea of nationhood, with the construction of a monumental, *völkisch* (national/nationalistic) total body, it is already possible to see the turn towards fascism: National Socialism. In the love of Freder (the aristocratic son of the ruler of Metropolis) for the worker's daughter, Maria, the conflict between rich and poor, domination and oppression, and capital and labour appears to be set aside, and the inventor, with his people-enslaving machines, is rejected. The new *Reich* can begin.

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# The Power of the Avant-Garde. Now and Then

## BO ZAR

This visitors' guide is published on the occasion of the exhibition *The Power of the Avant-Garde. Now and Then*, organised by the Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels (BOZAR).

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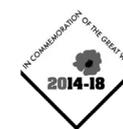
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Flemish Government



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Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique

## CINEMATEK

Marijke van Warmerdam would like to thank the following people for the realization of her new film:  
Actress: Sil Koster / Director of Photography:

Guido van Gennep / Editor: Sander Snoep  
/ Drone team: Alessandro Bolognesi, Daniele Proietti, Marco Fabriziani / Precision driver: Franco Salamon / Grip: Stefano Biscaro  
/ Special effects: Frank Hietbrink / Scout, production & location manager: Joseph Geminal: Assistant: Isabel da Costa / Colourist: John Thorborg / Post-production: De Lodge Amsterdam / Ton Peters for his commitment / Film Commission Valle d'Aosta: Igor Tonino, Andrea Carcavallo / Cervino s.p.a.: Daniele Herin, Davide Enrico / Soc. Coop. Rhêmes-Notre-Dame: Sandro Martin, Jean Paul Lauvin / Special thanks to Sander Snoep for bringing together this excellent crew. Many thanks to Mondriaan Fund for their generous support.

M  
mondriaan  
fund

## Around The Power Of The Avant-Garde

### Cinema

Line describing a cone — Anthony McCall  
Family-Friendly Film — 02.10.2016 — 11:00  
In the context of: Visual Voices  
Peggy Guggenheim. Art Addict — Documentary  
14.10.2016 — 20:00 (Tbc)  
Partner: Jap  
@ Cinematek  
Film programme in the context of the exhibition. See: [www.cinematek.be](http://www.cinematek.be)

### Music

Concerts on Thursday late night openings of the soloists of the Queen Elizabeth Music Chapel  
3 - 17- 24.11.2016, 1 — 15.12.2016,  
12.01.2017 — 19:00  
Program dedicated to the avant-garde with works by Ysaye, Britten, Schönberg, Berio, Shostakovich, a.o.  
Partner: Queen Elizabeth Music Chapel  
Support: Pianos Maene  
Joachim Badenhorst  
Clarinete solo  
19.01.2017 — hour tbc  
Everything Changes But the Avant-Garde  
Lecture-Performance by David Ramael & the Boho4 string Quartet  
Date tbc

### Litterature

Avant-Garde? Readings & artist talks  
23.11.2016 — 10:00 > 22:00  
Free admission  
Partners: mdrn-instituut/KULeuven,  
nY publication  
A day with lectures, debates and artist talks on how relevant the avant-garde is for artists and writers today. With: David Claerbout,  
Lisa Robertson, Mia You, a.o.

### Theatre

50 Grades Of Shame  
She She Pop  
13 & 14.01.2017 - 20:30  
A play based on Frank Wedekind's Spring Awakening of 1891 by the performance collective  
She She Pop from Berlin and Hamburg  
Support: Goethe-Institut Brussels

### Studios

Guided tours in signed language  
(for adults and high schools)  
Guided tours for adults  
Interactive tours (for high schools)  
Lunch tours on Friday

### Other Exhibitions

@ Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium  
In the frame of the Commemoration of the Centenary of the Great War:  
14 — 18. Rupture or Continuity  
29.09.16 — 22.01.17  
€ 8 — 6 — 2  
[www.fine-arts-museum.be](http://www.fine-arts-museum.be)  
Belgian art is booming in the early twentieth century. From 1914 onwards, the occupation, exile and horror of the battlefields strengthen the style of some while revolutionizing that of others. Through the rich collection of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, the exhibition 14-18 — Rupture or Continuity immerses the visitor in an artistically and politically shocking time.  
The exhibition is accompanied by an international symposium examining this Belgian artistic plurality with World War I as a backdrop (24 & 25.11.2016)

### @ Bozar This Fall:

Congo Art Works. Popular Painting  
(07.10.16 — 22.01.17)  
A Feverish Era In Japanese Art. Expressionism  
In The 50'S And 60'S  
(14.10.16 — 22.01.17)  
Picasso. Sculptures  
(26.10.16 — 05.03.17)

### Info & Tickets

#### Access

Rue Ravensteinstraat 23, 1000 Brussels  
Tue > Sun: 10:00 > 18:00  
Thu: 10:00 > 21:00  
+32 2 507 82 00 — [www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)

#### Tickets

The Power of the Avant-Garde. Now and Then:  
€ 16 — 14 (Bozar Friends)  
Day Pass Autumn: € 30 tbc

On presentation of your ticket The Power of the Avant-Garde. Now and Then you receive a 2euro discount on the full price at the exhibitions of our partners\* and vice versa.

\* @ Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium :  
14 - 18 Rupture or Continuity  
\* @ ING Art Center :  
Guggenheim. Full Abstraction in Brussels

#### Guided tours

Groups, schools and families on request:  
+32 2 507 83 36 — [groups@bozar.be](mailto:groups@bozar.be)

#### Lunch Tour:

Thu — 18:00: 7&21.10—4 & 25.11—16.12—6.01  
No reservation.  
Buy your ticket online or at the box office.

#### Bozar Friends

Join Bozar Friends and enjoy exclusive benefits.  
[www.bozar.be/friends](http://www.bozar.be/friends)

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