

Synthetic Cubism at War: New Necessities, New Challenges. Concerning the Consequences of the Great War in the Elaboration of a Synthetic-Cubist Syntax

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Abstract

When we talk about the Synthetic Cubism period, what exactly are we referring to? What aesthetic possibilities and considerations define it insofar as its origin and later evolution are concerned? To what extent did the disorder that the Great War unleashed, with all its political, sociological and moral demands, influence the reformulation of a purely synthetic syntax? This article attempts to answer these and other questions relating to the sociological-aesthetic interferences that would influence the Parisian Cubist style of the war years, and in particular the works of Juan Gris, María Blanchard, Jacques Lipchitz and Jean Metzinger during the spring and summer that they shared with one another in 1918, until it consolidated into what we now know as Crystal Cubism.

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Cubism and war. The beginning of the end or infinite renewal?

[1] The exhibition "Cubism and War: the Crystal in the Flame", held in the Picasso Museum in Barcelona in 2016,¹ highlighted the renewed production undertaken in Paris during the war years by a small circle of artists who succeeded in taking Synthetic Cubism to its ultimate consequences.

¹ *Cubism and War: the Crystal in the Flame*, ed. Christopher Green, exh. cat., Museo Picasso, Barcelona, Barcelona 2016.

[2] Linking the concepts of war and the avant-garde, or rather, the effects that the former had on the latter, is by no means novel. Undoubtedly a pioneering work on this issue, Kenneth Silver's well-known publication² laid the foundations for a deeper understanding of the dismemberment of the very idea of a Parisian avant-garde in those years. Silver's work examined how the avant-garde was undermined by the disruption of the conditions that had made it possible, namely the cosmopolitanism and artistic-cultural liberalism that the French capital had boasted from the end of the 19th century; these had allowed impressionists and post-impressionists to disassociate themselves from the established art circuit, and had opened the doors to the avid – and for the most part, destitute – foreign bohemians who gradually began congregating in the area between the Bateau Lavoir of Montmartre and the Ruche of Montparnasse.

[3] Silver's initial contribution was subsequently followed by others which have delved into the consequences of the First World War insofar as the arts are concerned. It is an idea that is always present in the texts of Christopher Green,³ the curator of the exhibition at the Picasso Museum; his in-depth exploration of certain particularly relevant questions in that exhibition deserves further consideration.

[4] The first and most obvious one is the title of the exhibition and what it alludes to. The metaphor of the crystalline to refer to certain Cubist works is by no means novel; Maurice Raynal, Amedée Ozenfant and Jeanneret – Le Corbusier – made use of it to allude to the work of Braque and Picasso in 1912, which seemed to shatter into small shards of glass.⁴ Green however, ever since his early texts and following in the footsteps of Maurice Raynal and Albert Gleizes, has recycled the term in order to refer to the very specific production of Cubist art by a group of artists in Paris during the war years, whose coming together is an intrinsic result and consequence of the armed conflict.⁵ On one

² Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de corps: the Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925*, Princeton, N.J. 1989.

³ Particularly in Christopher Green, *Cubism and its Enemies. Modern Movements and Reaction in French Art 1916-1918*, New Haven / London 1987, and id., *Art in France 1900-1940*, New Haven / London 2000. I would not wish to fail to mention the contributions in this regard by Philippe Dagen, *Le silence des peintres. Les artistes face à la Grande Guerre*, Paris 1976 and by Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde*, Princeton 1993, both of which are fundamental, I believe, to any approach to these issues.

⁴ Amedée Ozenfant and Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, "Vers le cristal", in: *L'Esprit Nouveau* 25 (July 1924), n.p.

⁵ By 1925, Gleizes was already claiming that it was Gris and Metzinger who made the greatest effort to delve into the possibilities offered by this new path, in a text that was however published a few years later: Albert Gleizes, "L'Epopée, de la forme immobile à la forme mobile", in: *Le Rouge et le noir*, (October 1929), 81. Raynal himself, in a

hand, the term refers to the perception of their works as having "a sharp clarity and the serene balance of a crystalline structure".⁶ At the same time, the title "crystal in the flame" refers to a Cubism scorched by the war disaster, and looking for a new starting point.

[5] I cannot agree more. In previous texts I have already defended the idea that Cubism did not end with Picasso leaving for Avignon and Braque marching off to the front, and that the production of Cubist art before the war was not something unique to Kahnweiler's four inescapable artists. I have also maintained – and I believe that this is the most important point – that Synthetic Cubism can in no way be limited to the meagre production created by Braque, Picasso and Gris in 1913 and 1914, which by and large involved transferring to the canvas what they had learned from collages and *papiers collés*.⁷ Not only

somewhat later publication, would affirm that as far as Metzinger was concerned, Crystal Cubism represented a return to a simpler and more emphatic art; Maurice Raynal, *Modern French Painters*, New York 1934, 125. Green uses the analogy for the first time in Christopher Green, *Léger and the Avant-Garde*, New Haven / London 1976, 130-131. He then retrieves it for *Cubism and its Enemies*, 25-37 and then again in "The Crystal in the Flame. Cubism and the First World War", in: *Cubism and War: the Crystal in the Flame*, ed. Christopher Green, exh. cat., Museo Picasso, Barcelona, Barcelona 2016, 9-33.

⁶ Green, "The Crystal in the Flame", 9.

⁷ The division between Analytic and Synthetic Cubism, with the latter understood as a double and simultaneous creative process, arises in the first place from the writings of Maurice Raynal, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler and Juan Gris in the early 1920s; s. Maurice Raynal, *Quelques intentions du cubisme*, Paris 1919; Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *Der Weg zum Kubismus*, Munich 1920, 39-40; and Vauvrecy [Juan Gris], "Juan Gris", in: *L'Esprit Nouveau* 5 (February 1921), 533-534. A few months later, Waldemar Georges took up this same idea when talking about Gris' work, s. Waldemar Georges, "Juan Gris", in: *L'amour de l'art* (November 1921), 351-352: 352. The writings of that same year by Léonce Rosenberg, *Cubisme et empirisme*, Paris 1921, or Elie Faure, *Histoire de l'art*, 3, Paris 1921, 458, consolidate the idea of this double process which, through contamination, began to be used to distinguish the artistic production of two different chronological periods: the analytical one between 1907 and 1912 and the synthetic one between 1913 and 1914. This distinction appeared for the first time in an anonymous letter dedicated to Picasso, which already alluded to "les années heroïques du cubisme": Anonymous, "Hommage à Picasso", in: *Documents* 2 (1930), 180-182, and which Gamwell attributes to Carl Einstein. See Lynn Gamwell, *Cubism Criticism*, Michigan 1980, 106. The division is consolidated in the collective imaginary based on Alfred Barr's paradigmatic writing for the exhibition catalogue on cubism and abstract art at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, *Cubism & Abstract Art*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York 1936. The writings for the exhibitions organised in later years by the Museum of Modern Art itself and dedicated to Kahnweiler's cubists, such as *Picasso, Forty Years of his Art*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York 1939, 21; *Picasso, Fifty Years of his Art*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York 1946, 66 and

did Cubism have a second life, but it was during that second life that Cubism went from being apparent to fully synthetic; that it took on this crystalline appearance, as discussed below.

[6] This claim, which grants Synthetic Cubism a greater depth and sophistication than is apparent at first glance, requires taking into account another paramount issue, without which it is unlikely that this development would ever have occurred. With the outbreak of the First World War, the groups of artists who were apparently consolidated around a dealer, a movement or a gallery, dissolved, obliging those who remained in what was by now a sadly dilapidated Paris, to reorganise. And that is what happened to Cubism. On the eve of the war, Braque's and Picasso's absence from the Parisian art scene had made their work less questioned in the art press, as happened also with Gris and Léger after their alliance with Kahnweiler. The art critics close to them, like Salmon and Allard, championed them as leaders of Cubism, while the Salon Cubists, generally reviled by the press, were considered to be of lower rank. In truth, the press did not take into account that Gris was in many ways closer to the premises of the Salon Cubists than he was to Braque and Picasso, while it labelled Léger a Cubist even though his work did not necessarily have much to do with that of his peers in the gallery.⁸ But suddenly, overnight, Braque and Léger are enlisted, Kahnweiler exiled and the galleries and salons closed. Whatever separated their alleged respective camps disappeared and, as Aeschylus would say, the force of necessity became irresistible.

[7] Someone whom the Cubists who stayed in Paris found irresistible, plagued as they were by the necessities of having to live, work and sell, was the art dealer Léonce Rosenberg. Having followed developments in Cubism for a number of years, Rosenberg took advantage of Kahnweiler's departure to set himself up as the leader of the movement. His intention was to inaugurate an exclusively Cubist gallery at the end of the war, which would be proudly called L'Effort Moderne; he did not hesitate to sign contracts as early as 1916 with those artists whom Picasso and Gris suggested to him, and with others whose

82; *Georges Braque*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York 1949, 10; *Juan Gris*, exh. cat., Museum of Modern Art, New York 1958, 17 and 22, would to a large extent lay the foundation for this chronological-aesthetic division in cubist historiography from the 1950s onwards. In this respect, see Daniel Robbins, "Abbreviated Historiography of Cubism", in: *Art Journal* 4 (winter 1988), 277-283.

⁸ From the early days, the fact that Léger's work was considered to be strictly speaking Cubist caused certain perplexity, as can be seen in texts dedicated to the painter, see "La Vie artistique: La Curiosité", in: *La Libre Plume* (25 February 1919), n.p.; Christian Zervós, "Fernand Léger. Est-il Cubiste?", in: *Cahiers d'art* 3-4 (1933), 85-91; Anonymous, "Peintres et sculpteurs vous racontent leur première exposition: la critique fut impitoyable par Fernand Léger", in: *Les Lettres françaises* 532 (2-9 September 1954), 8.

work appeared to have a certain Cubist air.⁹ His bench, as he liked to call it, consisted of those previously hired by Kahnweiler, namely, Gris, Léger, Braque and Picasso – the latter without a contract with the dealer – and a few more names such as Jean Metzinger, Diego Rivera, Auguste Herbin, Gino Severini, María Blanchard, Jacques Lipchitz and Henri Laurens. The war, however, did not end as quickly as some voices had predicted, and the dealer's plans had to be delayed for some time yet. Enlisted at the front, like some of the artists in his future gallery, and distant from those who had fled Paris during these years, he had no choice but to maintain an epistolary relationship¹⁰ with them, pending

⁹ All the commercial contracts signed between Rosenberg and these artists can be found in the Fonds Léonce Rosenberg in the Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (hereinafter: MNAM), with the exception of those signed by Jacques Lipchitz, Gino Severini and María Blanchard. The figure of Rosenberg has been highly criticized (see note 10). Christian Derouet is particularly critical of him in his articles and texts in exhibition catalogues, for example in "De la voix et de la plume. Les émois 'cubistes' d'un marchand de tableaux", in: *Europe. Revue littéraire mensuelle* 638-639 (June-July 1982), 51-58, and "Le Cubisme 'bleu horizon' ou le prix de la guerre", in: *Revue de l'art* 113 (1996), 40-64. Giovanni Casini was also quite critical in: "A Dealer's 'Dictatorship'? Giorgio de Chirico, Léonce Rosenberg, and the Parisian Art Market in the Late 1920s", Annual Third Year Postgraduate Symposium, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London, 8-9 June 2017, proceedings not published. On this subject, see Belén Atencia Conde-Pumpido, "Léonce Rosenberg y la idea de un cubismo colectivo en la Galería L'Effort Moderne durante la Gran Guerra", in: *Arte, Individuo y Sociedad* 32 (2020), no. 3, 625-640, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5209/aris.64156>.

¹⁰ The correspondence exchanged between the dealer and the artists of l'Effort Moderne is preserved in various centres. The first and most important is that discussed in the Léonce Rosenberg Fonds of the Bibliothèque Kandinsky in the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. Additional Léonce Rosenberg papers are: correspondence relating to Cubism, 1914-1932, in the Museum of Modern Art in New York; major private archives such as the Louise Leiris Archives in Paris or the Archivio Romana Severini in the Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento in Rovereto; Cooper papers preserved at The Getty Institute, perhaps somewhat more secondary, but nonetheless impressive in relation to the publication of the letters of Juan Gris by the art critic; and the Fonds Jules Romains of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, which preserves some of Metzinger's letters of the time that could be interesting for the reconstruction of some episodes. Fortunately, not all of this documentation has remained unpublished. In addition to the early contribution by Douglas Cooper, *Letters of Juan Gris 1913-1927*, London 1956, we need to add the editions of the correspondence exchanged between Juan Gris and Fernand Léger with the dealer, by Christian Derouet, *Juan Gris. Correspondances avec Léonce Rosenberg, 1915-1927*, Paris 1990; *Correspondances Fernand Leger – Léonce Rosenberg, 1917-1937. Une correspondance d'affaires*, Paris: Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne 1996; as well as the more recent compilation by M. D. Jiménez Blanco, *Juan Gris. Correspondencias y escritos*, Barcelona 2008. A new compilation of most of this

the long-awaited inauguration of the Galerie de l'Effort Moderne, which would only happen in March 1918. Denying all of them the chance to participate in the extremely few exhibitions that were held in Paris during those years,¹¹ with the excuse of preserving the impact, that a battery of personal Cubist exhibitions would generate, for after the war,¹² Rosenberg and his circle saw clearly from the very outset that this new Cubism, which sought to rid itself of the flames of war, would have to be reformulated from head to toe.

documentation is forthcoming, s. Belén Atencia Conde-Pumpido, *El cubismo durante la Primera Guerra Mundial en la Galería L'Effort Moderne. Historia y Correspondencias*, Madrid: Tirant lo Blanch 2020.

¹¹ The first opportunity that the public had to return to an avant-garde art exhibition was at the end of 1915 in the atelier of Mme Bongard, the sister of Paul Poiret, whose associate Ozenfant was in charge of selecting the works. A total of three exhibitions were held in the sewing lounge of Mme Bongard. In 1917, the Bongard-Ozenfant association became known as *Les Soirées de Paris* and held at least another two exhibitions. Several galleries remained active, albeit with scant activity, for example, the Weill Gallery, the Boutet de Monvel, the Paul Guillaume and the Bernheim Jeune. We should not forget the equally fundamental role played by the artistic associations, Art et Liberté and Lyre et Palette, in the recovery of the art scene during these years. The most significant attempt to restore Paris' exhibition network was that of André Salmon who, sponsored by Poiret, organised the most important exhibition of those years, at the Salon d'Antin, in Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré 109, under the title of "Art Moderne en France". In this respect, see, Mark Roskill, *The Interpretation of Cubism*, London 1985, 97-98 and Etienne Alain Hubert, "Pierre Reverdy et le cubisme en mars 1917", in: *Revue de l'art* 43 (1979), 59-66: 61. All these issues are comprehensively treated by Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market between 1910 and 1930*, New York 1981, and by Pierre Cabanne, *Les grands collectionneurs*, vol. 2: *Être collectionneur au XXe siècle*, Paris 2004.

¹² Some letters exchanged between the artists of the future gallery and Rosenberg in the summer of 1916, as well as a confidential circular sent by the art dealer to all of these artists in September 1917, show that, from a commercial point of view, they considered that not exhibiting during the war and to present all their work within a single gallery, would be more impressive to the public and would help in the defense of the much disrespected Cubism; see Juan Gris to Léonce Rosenberg, Paris, 24 May 1916, MNAM, Paris, 9600-377, cfr. Derouet, *Juan Gris*, 26; Juan Gris to Léonce Rosenberg, Paris, 22 July 1916, MNAM, Paris, 9600-433, cfr. Derouet, *Juan Gris*, 34; Henri Laurens to Léonce Rosenberg, Etang la Ville, 1916, MNAM, Paris, C47 9600, 538; Jean Metzinger to Léonce Rosenberg, Paris, 20 July 1916, MNAM, Paris, 10422. 727; Léonce Rosenberg to Juan Gris, 3 September 1917, Archives Gonzalez-Gris, cfr. Derouet, *Juan Gris*, 67-68. From an aesthetic point of view, Rosenberg's suggestions and interference in the creative work of these artists is evident in Georges Braque to Léonce Rosenberg, 16 September 1917, MNAM, Paris, C23 9600. 38; Fernand Léger to Léonce Rosenberg, 16

[8] And this brings us to the other fundamental issue addressed by Green in Barcelona, intended to be the central premise of this article. The issue of how Synthetic Cubism struggled to position itself in the face of two very strong poles of attraction generated during the war: on the one hand, the *rappel à l'ordre*, a consequence of the natural yet no less frightening conviction that the road to salvation was to be found in multidisciplinary protectionism and in a return to traditional and deeply patriotic values rather than in strange and incomprehensible modernity; on the other hand, abstraction, a result of the simultaneous rejection of realism and reality, of the dehumanizing nature of war. The temptation of both roads opened up to the Cubists in the following years, causing them to oscillate between them. Of all the members of Rosenberg's gallery, only a few would ever manage to shrewdly implement these two possibilities, in what we might consider a fully synthetic Cubism, a Crystal Cubism. And even in these cases, assertion was not immediate.

At a crossroads: tradition, figuration, synthesis and abstraction

[9] What became obvious to the Cubists, almost contemporaneously with the outbreak of war, was that the collages of the pre-war period – altogether too chaotic and extra-pictorial for a society that was demanding a return to French tradition –, were no longer satisfactory.¹³ The combination of avant-garde and tradition was making its presence felt with increasing and ever greater lucidity as the only plausible alternative to the theoretical organ of the future gallery. With the skilful and resourceful Pierre Reverdy and his newly released magazine *Nord Sud* to the fore, they would strive to fervently defend the syncretism between Cubism and tradition, based not so much on the final appearance of the work, unequivocally avant-garde, as on its creative process.¹⁴ And this idea is in itself already revealing when we observe the

March 1918 and 10 May 1918, edited in: Derouet, *Correspondances Fernand Leger – Léonce Rosenberg*, 29 and 31-32.

¹³ These two affirmations are present in the writing of Mark Rosenthal, *Juan Gris*, New York 1983, 65, and also in Green's, particularly in the catalogue of the Barcelona exhibition, *Cubism and War*, 28-29, and in *Cubism and its Enemies*, 13-18. For the idea of the return to order in French society during the war and its implication in art, see note 2.

¹⁴ Throughout the war years and those immediately after it, some of the artists at the gallery, in addition to the supporters of Rosenberg's Cubist movement, particularly Pierre Reverdy, Paul Dermée and Maurice Raynal, not to mention the dealer himself of course, published a series of texts that specifically linked the concepts of Cubism and tradition. Examples of this are texts by Gino Severini, "La Peinture d'avant-garde", in: *Mercure de France* (1 June 1917), 451-466; Pierre Reverdy, "Sur le Cubisme", in: *Nord-Sud* 1 (15 March 1917), 5-7; id., "L'image", in: *Nord-Sud* 13 (March 1918), 1; id., "Le Cubisme, poésie plastique", in: *L'Art* (February 1919), 142; Paul Dermée, "Quand le

emphasis that the Cubists placed on the modern effort to build, in the face of the palpable destruction that was asphyxiating them. For Reverdy, the "purification of forms" involved selecting from nature only those forms that were immutable, avoiding the accidental. With the help of these immutable forms, the artists would be able to build a new pictorial language. The construction of this new pictorial syntax would be progressively translated by those artists into the construction of a series of pre-conceived abstract forms that could be used in their canvases, like puzzle pieces, regardless of the object to be represented. But let us see how these ideas 'crystallized', from a practical point of view.

[10] The first and most obvious solution for artists at the beginning of the war was to transpose the possibilities of collages and *papiers peints* to oil, that is to say, 'to paint the collages'. This resource had already been used by Gris in 1914 in works such as *Verre et paquet de tabac* (Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris),¹⁵ or *Tabac, journal et bouteille de vin rosé* (private collection),¹⁶ whose final compositions, as was the case with the collages, underscore the two-dimensional nature of the canvas, thus diminishing the sense of volume. In this device, quite a few authors have perceived relationships analogous to those found in the Baroque art of Zurbarán.¹⁷

[11] Though most of the historiography that places the end of Cubism in 1914 has considered this procedure to be justifiably synthetic, Cubism would actually still need some time to become fully so, to be not simply a search for a synthetic result, but rather the materialization of a synthetic conception and implementation. Crucially, as argued by Reverdy,¹⁸ this would not necessarily entail the free and indistinct manipulation of the abstract drawings that

Symbolisme fut mort...", in: *Nord-Sud* 1 (15 March 1917), 2-4; id., "Intelligence et création", in: *Nord-Sud* 7 (August/September 1917), 6-7; Georges Braque, "Pensées et réflexions sur la peinture", in: *Nord-Sud* 10 (December 1917), 3-5; Maurice Raynal, *Quelques intentions du Cubisme*, Paris 1919; Léonce Rosenberg, "Introduzione", in: *Valori Plastici* 2-3 (February-March 1919); id., *Cubisme et tradition*, Paris 1920; id., *Cubisme et empirisme*, Paris 1921.

¹⁵ See <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/resource/cAbokBr/rqGeM6x> (accessed 05 August 2020).

¹⁶ See <http://www.sothebys.com/es/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/impressionist-modern-art-evening-sale-n09035/lot.6.html> (accessed 05 August 2020).

¹⁷ Mark Rosenthal, *Juan Gris*, New York 1983, 77; Silver, *Esprit de corps*, 49; Christopher Green, "Juan Gris, el cubismo y la idea de tradición", in: *Juan Gris 1887-1927*, exh. cat., Salas Pablo Ruiz Picasso, Madrid, Madrid 1985, 92-104: 93. See also Kenneth Silver, "Juan Gris. Between Cubism and Classicism", in: *Cubism. The Leonard A. Lauder Collection*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York 2014, 196-201.

¹⁸ Reverdy, "Le Cubisme, poésie plastique".

structured the compositions. This approach would justify the capacity, allegedly immanent to the Cubism of those years, to configure, to create a new artistic language, thereby simultaneously dissociating itself from the denial and the mere imitation of reality.

[12] Taking as an example Gris' representation of the wine glasses that are to be found in his works in 1915 and 1916, we will see how most of them, albeit fragmented and made up of various planes, do nevertheless maintain their individual corporeal entity. In *Compotier sur un tapis*, 1916 (Moderna Museet, Stockholm),¹⁹ the inner fragmentation of the glass, which combines views of the same from the front, the side and the top, is framed by the actual contour of the glass, represented in a more or less realistic way. This device becomes even more evident in other examples such as *Compotier, verre et citron* (Phillips Collection, Washington, DC)²⁰ or *Compotier, verre et journal* (private collection), both from the same year. In these, the inner fragmentation of the object, and even the multiplicity of perspectives, are practically cancelled out, making it therefore possible to individualize – even to eliminate, metaphorically speaking – the object-glass from the rest of the composition without prejudice to the latter. Even when the interior structure and the multiplicity of planes of these works becomes complicated, as is the case in *Le paquet de tabac*, 1916 (private collection), Gris' wine glasses continue to have an identity of their own.

[13] But let us not focus our attention on Gris alone; other artists such as María Blanchard, Jean Metzinger and Jacques Lipchitz explored similar possibilities around this same time. And they were not the only ones. Diego Rivera, Henri Laurens and Gino Severini, fellow gallery colleagues and Cubists, were also interested in these matters. However, as we shall see, from these opening years of the war, and more precisely between 1917 and 1918, the solutions that the former arrived at share specific similarities.

[14] If we analyse the works by Blanchard from the same period and compare them to the above-mentioned works by Gris, such as *Composition cubiste. Nature morte verte à la lampe* (LL-A Collection, Madrid)²¹ or *Nature morte* (private collection), both from 1916, we will see how the conceptual procedure she developed to represent her wine glasses is similar to that of Gris. In both cases, the facetation and multiplicity of inner points of view of the glass are not

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See [https://sis.modernamuseet.se/view/objects/asitem/artist\\$004092/0/primaryMaker-asc?t:state:flow=9f9a0930-e349-4fca-8792-58c5db797636](https://sis.modernamuseet.se/view/objects/asitem/artist$004092/0/primaryMaker-asc?t:state:flow=9f9a0930-e349-4fca-8792-58c5db797636) (accessed 05 August 2020).

²⁰ See <https://www.phillipscollection.org/collection/browse-the-collection?id=0856> (accessed 05 August 2020).

²¹ See <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/exposiciones/maria-blanchard> (accessed 05 August 2020).

called into doubt; however it would appear that they are all enclosed within the interior of the now defined silhouette of the wine glass.

[15] Metzinger, having been conscripted to serve in a telegraph station where he spent all of 1914 and 1915, was discharged after he developed a heart condition that returned him to civilian life, but not before having spent quite some time in a hospital during 1916.²² In the meagre output that such a situation allowed him, one can appreciate the gradual abandonment of decorative models, textured surfaces, geometric shapes, and rectilinear grids that had marked his work in previous years, all of which gave way to a more simplified and synthetic form of Cubism.

[16] The evolution produced in three of his 1916 works confirms these advances.²³ In *L'Été* (Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen),²⁴ the presence of decorative elements is more than evident in the botanical backgrounds and in the details of the protagonist's costume. At the same time, an interesting analogy is created between object and plane, very much akin to what Gris and Blanchard were doing that same year, for example in the representation of the fruit in the bowl, whose frontal and manifestly naturalist vision is framed within a single plane.

[17] In my opinion, *Fruits et pichet sur une table* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)²⁵ and *Nature morte à la lampe* (Museum of Modern Art, New York), both painted that same year, mark an indisputable progress with respect to *L'Été*. Although in many cases they still maintain the object-plane affinity, and although they resort to such decorative elements as tablecloths and wallpapers,²⁶ the possibilities offered by conceding one single abstract plane to different elements simultaneously constitute a gigantic step in their own right. The glass of wine, the bottle of Banyuls, and the fruit bowl in *Fruits et pichet*

²² This is what the painter himself tells Rosenberg in a letter, see Jean Metzinger to Léonce Rosenberg, Paris, 16 August 1916, MNAM, Paris, 10422. 729.

²³ To gain a somewhat better understanding of Metzinger's artistic concerns during 1916, it is interesting to read two letters that he wrote in July that year to Albert Gleizes, in Barcelona at that time, with whom the painter shared his progress and concerns. Both can be found in the Fonds Gleizes, MNAM, Paris. Some excerpts from them have been published in Peter Brook, "Metzinger. Cubism as Realism", in: *Cubism* 8 (spring 1985), 1-7.

²⁴ See <https://collection.smk.dk/#/en/detail/KMSr191> (accessed 05 August 2020).

²⁵ Jean Metzinger, *Fruits et pichet sur une table*, 1916, oil and sand on canvas, 115.9 x 81cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/33578> (accessed 05 August 2020).

²⁶ On the use of decorative elements and more specifically the pointillist resources in the Cubism of these years, see Rebecca Rabinow, "Confetti Cubism", in: *Cubism. The Leonard A. Lauder Collection*, 156-163.

sur une table, which not only share the same plane but in fact confuse realities – particularly evident in the coinciding representation of the neck of the bottle and the foot of the fruit bowl –, already anticipate the subsequent development of Cubism in 1917 and 1918.

[18] Lipchitz was also immersed in similar issues. The possibility of starting off from indistinct abstract forms to arrive at the representation of a specific object had seduced him from the outbreak of war. *Sculpture* (Tate Modern, London)²⁷ arises precisely from these problems. Also known as *Tête*, it is a work that would end up being irreversibly included in the Cubist movement and would successfully bring to fruition a large part of the cabals that had troubled him in sculptural matters, related to the creation of a genuinely sculptural formula, that owed nothing whatsoever to painting.²⁸ Paradoxically, it also plunged the artist into a major crisis.

[19] The genius of *Sculpture* lies in the fact that, as Lipchitz himself said, it was entirely conceived from purely abstract forms which, when combined, created something that we might well identify with a head without such a thing being actually all that clear. In other words, compared to other Cubist working methods, which started from abstract forms to become recognizable forms, in the case of *Sculpture* this possibility did not exist, so the subsequent anatomical similarity was something of a surprise for the artist himself.²⁹ However, *Sculpture* did contain within itself an irresolvable problem: despite the great formal, conceptual and material achievements,³⁰ Lipchitz saw how he

²⁷ Jacques Lipchitz, *Sculpture*, 1915, bronze sur socle en bois, 71 x 26.2 x 21.5 cm, Tate Modern, London, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/lipchitz-sculpture-t03397> (accessed 05 August 2020).

²⁸ In this regard, see Catherine Pütz, *Jacques Lipchitz. The First Cubist Sculptor*, London 2002, 7-10. Please also refer to Jacques Lipchitz, *My Life in Sculpture*, with Hjoervardur Harvard Arnason, New York 1972.

²⁹ See the letter by Jacques Lipchitz to Deborah Stott, Pavia, 20 May 1970, in: Frits Lugt Archives, Fondation Custodia, Paris. Unfortunately for Lipchitz this fact was contested by Cooper and Tinterow, who, basing themselves on statements made by Rubin Lipchitz, Jacques' brother, claimed that *Sculpture* had been conceived by using George Landau as a model; in: *The Essential Cubism. Braque, Picasso & Their Friends 1907-1920*, exh. cat., The Tate Gallery, London, London 1983, 402.

³⁰ From a formal point of view, Lipchitz had replaced the human form with an architectural one, thanks to a procedure based on mathematical theories that tried to free the sculpture from extravagant compositions and symbologies. Some authors who discussed Lipchitz' Cubist production, deduced certain concepts from his exercise: From the "constructive character" of Paul Dermée, "Lipchitz", in: *L'Esprit Nouveau* 2 (1920), 169-182, to "art re-humanized" in Jean Cocteau, "The Technique of Jacques Lipchitz", in: *Broom* 3 (June 1922) 218, *Sculpture* is understood as a dual aspect work that combines the architectural-dehumanized and the anatomic-humanized.

was hopelessly distancing himself from the subject and was in fact entering the realm of pure abstraction.

[20] The possibilities raised by a work created just a little later, *Homme à la guitare*, 1916 (Museum of Modern Art, New York),³¹ represent a new step forward for Lipchitz. With a more complicated structure than the removable figures of 1915 and early 1916,³² this work consists of varied and intricate rectangular planes, complex shapes that suggest, as did its predecessors, the human form. The key factor of this piece lies in the importance that negative space acquires in it, framed as it is in the very centre of the figure, clarifying it, giving it unity, but above all rendering it independent of nature.³³ From a structural point of view, the ploy between the representative and the abstract is becoming increasingly mature.

[21] Therefore, by 1916 Metzinger, Blanchard, Gris and Lipchitz had already set off down that road. Their 1913 and 1914 works had been based on the mere transposition to canvas of the possibilities of collages and *papiers peints*, giving the appearance of synthesis, as opposed to the profound decay of the planes that made up works prior to these years. Now, these artists, grouped together more or less haphazardly in the promise of a future gallery following the signing of the armistice, delved into similar issues around the idea of re-conceiving the concepts of abstraction, figuration and synthesis. The possibilities suggested by the creation of a new reality, configured through abstract drawings that evoke a figurative element in the mind of the spectator, began to seduce these artists. And it was even more the case for the defenders of the renovated Cubism of wartime, who now, more than ever before, had to align themselves with the ideas of order and tradition. However, the process had not yet reached its zenith. For this, we must wait until the spring of 1918, when Gris, Blanchard, Metzinger and Lipchitz met in Beaulieu-près-Loches, fleeing from 'Big Bertha', as a German howitzer gun type was referred to at the time.

³¹ See https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81524?sov_referrer=artist&artist_id=3563&page=1 (accessed 05 August 2020).

³² If *Sculpture* was still analytical in terms of its resistance to space and its compact nature, the removable figures, which were included in the space, simulated a figure without imitating it. The work thus achieved the filtered figuration that Lipchitz was seeking, while implying the use of a construction process, see Deborah Stott, *Jacques Lipchitz and Cubism*, New York / London 1978, 119-120.

³³ See Christian Canivez, "Quand le vide devient forme", in: *Journal regional du Nord* (21 December 1992), 75-83.

The Beaulieu group, the purification of shape and the crystallization of Cubism in 1918 and 1919

[22] If throughout 1916, Gris, Blanchard, Metzinger and Lipchitz had been exploring the possibilities offered by the manipulation of abstract planes for the configuration of their works, still in many cases maintaining the equivalences between object-plane, a change began however to take root in Gris' work in early 1917.³⁴ In *Comptoir et fruits sur un guéridon*, of January of that year (private collection), the corporeality of the glass in the lower right corner slowly begins to fade. However, even though we come across elements that were still in debt to a figurative conception – for example, the pears on the left side of the canvas –, the configuration of some of them, as is the case of the glass of wine in question, reveals a change with respect to his 1916 work. The object cannot now be removed from the composition without prejudice to other compositional planes that allude in turn to other objects.

[23] Other works by Gris, from September of that same year, confirm that the process of purification of the forms referred to by Reverdy in his texts,³⁵ was not immediate. Although in works such as *Nature morte: le verre* (Philadelphia Museum of Art), or *Verre et as de trèfle* (private collection), he once again identifies the abstract plane with the figurative, in *Bouteille et verre* (private collection) he yet again questions himself about the inverse ploy. By November he is making rather bolder proposals similar to those of *Violon et journal* (Alicia Koplowitz Collection, Bilbao), where the planes are now virtually indivisible.

[24] The possibilities suggested by the creation of a single reality, by means of several abstract planes, do however persuade Gris, particularly so as of the spring of 1918, when he and his wife Josette flee to Beaulieu-près-Loches to escape the explosions generated by the German howitzer shells, which were terrifying Paris. The two *Le Verre*, created in April (Glasgow Art Gallery and Richard S. Zeisler Collection, New York City), *Carafe, verre et pipe*, from June (Art Gallery of Toronto), and above all, *Pipe et blague à tabac*, probably from July (private collection), reveal the compositional and purely synthetic process that we would be perfectly right to call Crystal Cubism.

³⁴ On this process see Christopher Green, "Synthesis and the 'Synthetic Process' in the Painting of Juan Gris 1915-1919", in: *Art History* 1 (March 1982), 87-105, and "Purity, Poetry and the Painting of Juan Gris", in: *Art History* 2 (June 1982), 180-204.

³⁵ See Reverdy, "Sur le Cubisme" (1917); "L'image" (1918); "Le Cubisme, poésie plastique" (1919). Also see Michel Collot, "La syntaxe du visible: Reverdy et l'esthétique cubiste", in: *Reverdy aujourd'hui*, ed. Michel Collot et Jean-Claude Mathieu, Paris 1991, 67-76.

[25] In Beaulieu-près-Loches, Gris is visited by Metzinger,³⁶ Lipchitz and Blanchard, and, accompanying them all, Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro.³⁷ While each one of them had simultaneously managed to arrive at similar solutions, the discussions, exchanges and borrowings they shared during those months would mark a turning point in their works. Once the previous meditations had been overcome, the plane was finally the protagonist, the element that shaped the final object, which made it possible to use it indefinitely regardless of the object being represented. Gris himself realized this; he writes to Rosenberg: "Without being happy with what I am doing, at least I think that these two things mark a quite remarkable advance over what I have done before."³⁸ Based on the catalogue raisonné by Cooper,³⁹ Gris is probably referring to *Harlequin* (Telefónica Collection, Madrid) and *Le Meunier* (Louise Leiris Gallery, Paris), both from May 1918. If we compare *Harlequin* with *Maisons de Beaulieu* (Krölller-Müller Museum, Otterlo), finished just a month earlier, we will see how certain abstract planes appear in both works. This formal elasticity is total from the point and moment when the theme ceases to have a dominant role; the exchange of forms is made indiscriminately possible between landscapes, still lifes or figures.

³⁶ We know the date Metzinger arrived in Beaulieu-près-Loches thanks to a letter Gris sent to Dermée, dated July 12, in which he tells the poet that "Metzinger arrived on Thursday"; Juan Gris to Paul Dermée, Beaulieu-près-Loches, 12 June 1918, in: *Juan Gris. Correspondencias y textos*, ed. María Dolores Jiménez Blanco, Barcelona 2008, 206.

³⁷ Vicente Huidobro arrived in Paris in 1916 at the age of 23, deeply affected by the war. Speaking very little French, he quickly fell in with the Spanish and Latin American community that he encountered there. Among them were some members of L'Effort Moderne such as Blanchard, Rivera and Gris, with whom he built a great friendship that would flourish in such professional collaborations as *Horizon carré*, a work by the Chilean with illustrations by Gris; Keith Ellis, "Vicente Huidobro and the First World War", in: *Hispanic Review* 3 (summer 1999), 333-346. For more on the relationship between the two artists, see "Juan Gris 1887-1927: to Vicente Huidobro", in: *Litoral* 248 (2009), 184-185. Gris' collaboration with the literary world was not an isolated occurrence, in fact he frequently embarked on projects with several poets. On this subject, see René de Costa, "Juan Gris and Literary Cubism", an unpublished lecture given at the University Art Museum in Berkeley, California in February 1984 on the occasion of the exhibition devoted to the artist from Madrid and curated by Rosenthal. A Spanish version of this lecture was published under the title "Juan Gris y la poesía", in: *Juan Gris 1887-1927*, exh. cat., ed. Gary Tinterow, Madrid 1985, 73-92. The article was subsequently revised and expanded, see René de Costa, "Juan Gris and Poetry: From Illustration to Creation", in: *The Art Bulletin* 71 (December 1989), 674-692.

³⁸ Juan Gris to Léonce Rosenberg, Beaulieu-près-Loches, 20 May 1918, Paul Getty Archives, Los Angeles, 803; ed. by Derouet, *Juan Gris*, 76.

³⁹ Douglas Cooper, *Juan Gris, catalogue raisonné de l'œuvre peint*, Paris 1977, 100-101.

[26] As far as Lipchitz was concerned, from the outset, the primary issue had revolved around the elaboration of an autonomous and sensitive sculptural-artistic language, able at the same time to enter into a dialogue between the figurative and the abstract. This road had already been opened by *Homme à la mandoline*, 1916 (private collection), and its use of negative space, but it would be after 1917, when his relationship with Gris had grown more intense,⁴⁰ and more particularly in 1918, during his stay in Beaulieu, that his syntax would achieve greater maturity. In 1917, the Lithuanian artist resorted to combining techniques akin to those of Cézanne, reinterpreted from new constructive and spatial perspectives, with iconographic sources borrowed from such masters of French art as Ingres or Poussin;⁴¹ this reached its culmination in his famous

⁴⁰ We know from Wilkinson that Lipchitz got to know Gris through Modigliani, and that it is thanks to the Madrid-born artist that he came into contact with Rosenberg and L'Effort Moderne; Alan Wilkinson, *The Sculpture of Jacques Lipchitz: a Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1: *The Paris Years (1910-1930)*, London 1996, 14. Thanks to some of the letters that Gris sent to Rosenberg, we know that Gris and Lipchitz were both strongly attracted to the occult sciences, alchemy and the transmutation of matter found in Eliphas Levi's *Treatise* or in Hermes Trismegisto's *Emerald Tablet*; see Juan Gris to Léonce Rosenberg, Paris, 22 February 1917, MNAM, Paris, ed. by Derouet, *Juan Gris*, 49. The relationship between the two, as Lipchitz himself would afterwards say, played a decisive role in his production: "I met Gris sometime afterwards, also in 1916, at a time when I was rather too mature to accept the taboos and limitations of the orthodox Cubists." Jacques Lipchitz, 27 May 1947, in: *Letters to Lipchitz and Some Personal Notes by the Artist*, eds. José Francisco Yvars and Lucia Ybarra, Madrid 1997, 237-249. Lipchitz perceived his relationship with Gris to be so intense that he did not hesitate to accuse Kahnweiler of conceding too little importance to him in the biography of Gris that the dealer published in 1946: "Nothing will diminish the pure glory of Gris; if we take into account that the years of 1916 to 1919, which were creative for us both, were fertilized by our enthusiastic energies that intermingled in a fraternal way. For my part, I bless heaven for having given me this privilege. Do you really think that a friendship such as ours, between two creative artists, had nothing more than unilateral effects, to such an extent that in your book you feel able devote to me nothing more than this modest, tiny mention on page 234: 'There was a sculptor, Jacques Lipchitz, who was a friend of Gris.' I have demonstrated above that I was more than that. I hope that the future does not ratify your sentence", in: *Letters to Lipchitz*, eds. Yvars and Ybarra, 249. For more on this relationship, see Christopher Green, "Lipchitz and Gris: The Cubisms of a Painter and Sculptor", in: *Lipchitz. Un mundo sorprendido en el espacio*, exh. cat., Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Madrid 1997, 27-38. Certain similar work methods used by Gris and Lipchitz and related to the golden section are highlighted in: Stott, *Jacques Lipchitz*, 137.

⁴¹ The Cubist revision during the war years of the great French masters of the 19th century and the possibilities they offered, was not exclusive to Lipchitz. Back in 1916, Gris had already revisited Corot's *Femme à la mandoline*, borrowing from him its compositional structure, an idea that was also adopted by some of his colleagues in the gallery. Silver posited that Picasso, drawing inspiration from Gris' *Femme à la*

series of *Bathers*. While in *Homme à la mandoline* his desire to configure this new sculptural language complicated the identification of the subject, the *Bathers* would make a 180 degree turn to recover it.

[27] A good example of this is *Bather III*, 1917 (Tate Modern, London): though conceived through non-representational forms, when taken as a whole, these suggest the figure of a bather drying herself. This is a decisive breakthrough in Lipchitz's work: if on the one hand it combined the achievements of the manipulation of abstract drawings without renouncing the subject, on the other hand the result, even apparently more abstract than *Homme à la mandoline*, proclaimed itself to be profoundly naturalist and classic. The achievement, therefore, of the manipulation of abstract planes that suggest a concrete subject was already a reality in Lipchitz's work from 1917. Moreover, in works such as *Bas relief I* (National Gallery of Art, Washington),⁴² from the period spent in Beaulieu, we can see the recovery of the same representative plane of the head and shoulders of *Baigneuse assise* (private collection)⁴³ and the bottle of *Bas relief I*. This reveals the possibility, available from then on, of interchanging the planes of his works,⁴⁴ which is just what Gris was doing.

[28] In Green's opinion, Metzinger began working in a manner akin to that of Gris and Lipchitz toward the end of 1917.⁴⁵ The new method translated into the visible management of geometric frames that would take structural

mandoline, would go on to paint *L'Italienne* in 1917, also based on Corot; see Kenneth Silver, "Juan Gris y su arte en la Gran Guerra, 1914-1918", in: *Juan Gris 1887-1927*, exh. cat., ed. Gary Tinterow, Madrid 1985, 45-52: 49. However, both Daix and Carandente claim that the influence came from Severini and not from Gris, by way of a small 1916 woodcut entitled *Femme au sac* which was in Apollinaire's studio. At the same time, and to close the circle, *L'Italienne* would be shown to Severini by Picasso on his return from Italy, and this would influence the former when creating his *La Ciociara* in 1918. See Pierre Daix, *La vie de peintre de Pablo Picasso*, Paris 1977, 155 and 159; *Picasso. Opere dal 1895 al 1971 dalla Collezione Marina Picasso*, exh. cat., Palazzo Grassi, Venice, eds. Giovanni Carandente and Werner Spies, Florence 1981, 48. For more on these latter relationships, also see Caterina Zappia, "Severini, Picasso e i frères Rosenberg: arte e mercato negli anni della Grande Guerra", in: *Commentari d'arte* 7-8 (2001-2002) [2005], nos. 20-23, 119-130.

⁴² Jacques Lipchitz, *Bas relief I*, 1918, polychrome stone, 55.7 x 35.7 x 4.4 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.56309.html> (accessed 05 August 2020).

⁴³ Jacques Lipchitz, *Baigneuse assise*, 1917, bronze, 83.5 cm, private collection, <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/jacques-lipchitz-1891-1973-baigneuse-assise-2044763-details.aspx> (accessed 05 August 2020).

⁴⁴ In this regard, see Jerrold Lanes, "Work from the Cubist Period at Marlborough-Gerson Gallery", in: *Burlington Magazine* 110 (1968), no. 782, 295-296.

⁴⁵ Green, *Cubism and its Enemies*, 29.

integrations to the limit and would imbue the exchange of forms with great flexibility. The progress is confirmed by the artist himself in his correspondence of that same year. Thus in February, he announced to his dealer that he had just "finished a series of paintings that mark a real progress, at least this is the opinion of my comrades",⁴⁶ and in March, he assured him that he was endeavouring to "paint in an increasingly simple and aesthetic manner".⁴⁷ Previously, Metzinger had told Gleizes that his painting was "more complicated than ever before, even though it looked simpler",⁴⁸ an impression that he would go on to ratify to Rosenberg: "I try to cast aside certain accidental minutiae and an excessive use of colour that had previously ruined the greatness and unity of my paintings. I am trying to paint in a simpler and more solid way."⁴⁹

[29] The exchange of abstract forms is also evident in his work in 1918, despite the fact that his stay in Beaulieu was brief in comparison to that of his companions. If we take *Homme assis devant une table* as an example (private collection), we will see how the plane of the figure in the top left corner is very similar to the right side of the face of the main character, if this is turned around. And not only that, it is also similar to the one used to represent the bottle on the table. The plane itself is recurrent in Metzinger, who uses it again in *Nature morte à la bouteille et poires* (private collection)⁵⁰ from the same year. That the manipulation of abstract planes is analogous to what Gris and Lipchitz were doing is a fact, but there is more to it than that. All these abstract planes, very similar in the works of Metzinger in 1918, are also very similar to those used by Lipchitz in his works, and more specifically to those found in *Homme à la mandoline* from 1916. It is not the only allusion that Metzinger makes; clearly aware of how to use circular shapes to recreate the mouths of glasses and bottles, this device was in turn used by Laurens, also a member of L'Effort Moderne and with whom Metzinger would play with the ambiguity between the shape of an eye and an olive on more than one occasion.⁵¹ He also

⁴⁶ Letter of Jean Metzinger to Léonce Rosenberg, Paris, 28 February 1917, MNAM 10422. 738.

⁴⁷ Letter of Jean Metzinger to Léonce Rosenberg, 26 March 1917, MNAM 10422. 739.

⁴⁸ Letter of Jean Metzinger to Albert Gleizes, 4 December 1916, MNAM.

⁴⁹ Letter of Jean Metzinger to Léonce Rosenberg, 26 May 1917, MNAM 10422. 740.

⁵⁰ Jean Metzinger, *Nature morte à la bouteille et poires*, 1918, oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm, private collection, <http://www.artnet.com/artists/jean-metzingers/nature-morte-à-la-bouteille-et-aux-poires-x6V8OpDvOG6g6Nd0HLrjyQ2> (accessed 05 August 2020).

⁵¹ The interchanges between Laurens' and Gris' *Bottles* between 1916 and 1917 explore the ambiguities between content and contingency that are intended to be reinterpreted by the viewer, see Christine Poggi, "Braque/Laurens: les collages et constructions", in: *Braque & Laurens. Un dialogue autour des collections du Centre Pompidou*, exh. cat., eds. Isabelle Monod-Fontaine and Sylvie Ramond, Paris 2005, 24-31: 27. Contaminations subsequently appear in the work of the sculptor between the

exchanged with Gris, with whom he would go on to explore the possibilities of playing with space through the representation of mirrors and windows, present in the works of both between 1917 and 1918, and indeed the basis of Gris' later work.

[30] Metzinger was not the only one involved in these ploys and exchanges. If we look at such works as *Nature morte cubiste* by María Blanchard, dated 1918 (Guillermo de Osma Collection, Madrid), we will see how her representation of the wine glass, as was the case with Gris' wine glasses around the same time, loses corporeality. The now fuller abstract lines become independent of the figurative, and the plastic language becomes more versatile. In addition to this, Blanchard uses similar permutations to those of Metzinger, for example, in the light blue plane that forms part of the wine glass and which is very similar to that used for the same purpose by Lipchitz in *Bas Relief I*.

Epilogue

[31] In light of the above, it seems clear that much of what Cubism meant during these years would not have had any *raison d'être* without the war. Without it, many of the artists that formed the second wave of Cubism would not have worked together around Rosenberg, forced by their need to be commercially protected by a dealer. Without the war, the imperatives of returning to tradition – thematic, stylistic and material – would not have coerced the avant-garde movements in such a way; neither would artists have been obliged to dissociate themselves from reality, from representation itself, to immerse themselves in a coma of the senses that would protect them from everything that surrounded them.

[32] The commitment of the second wave of Cubism not to give up their avant-garde essence was unwavering. In the central point of Reverdy's passionate defences lies the key to understanding their eagerness to attach themselves to tradition without betraying themselves. Their limitless passion for the chattels of their everyday lives – the desk, the bottle and the wine glass, the packet of tobacco, the pipe – prevented them from turning toward non-figuration. Instead, they preferred integrating the possibilities of abstraction through the purification of shapes, which once they had been abstractly recycled, were used in the preparation of their works. In the face of war, their commitment to the creation of a new language was their modern effort to transcend the conflict.

[33] All these efforts, which they had all cultivated from the beginning of the war, with greater or lesser fortune, would very probably not have reached the

theme of the bottle and that of the figure or the column, just as the mouth of the bottle itself was becoming an eye, which is exactly what Metzinger was doing.

climax that Crystal Cubism entailed – or that climax would have been reached in different ways –, if the German howitzer shells had not tormented Paris between March and August 1918, forcing Gris, Metzinger, Blanchard and Lipchitz to take refuge in Beaulieu. Not only did these artists manage to develop a language all of their own, they actually developed a common, collective language.

[34] I emphasize the concept of collective art because the idea of the collective was clearly present in the Cubist proposal during the war years. Are not the search for a common language and the apparent perception of family protection a consequence of the war?⁵² Rosenberg in particular had sought to highlight this idea in his texts, and Dermée, Reverdy and Raynal had also alluded to it. It was also the opinion of certain Parisian critics when personal exhibitions finally took place in L'Effort Moderne after the war. Yet, I believe that the work carried out during these years by all of them was at first independent, comparable and similar, a result of their meetings, exchanges and personal friendships. Then, between those who shared the experience of Beaulieu, it evolved into an appreciation of identical plastic communication, which we now know as Crystal Cubism. And all of this, regrettably, would not have been possible without the war.

About the Author

Belén Atencia Conde-Pumpido holds a Ph.D. in Art History from the University of Málaga. Her (unpublished) doctoral thesis, *El cubismo durante la Primera Guerra Mundial en la Galería L'Effort Moderne*, 2010, earned her an extraordinary doctorate award from her university. While working on it she was part of the research group "Cubism. Epistemological development and historiographic interpretations", funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain between 2006 and 2010. Since 2010 she has lectured at the Department of Art History of the University of Málaga. With parallel training in Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, she has participated actively in recent years in the restoration of various pieces registered as Assets of Cultural Interest (BIC). Her in-depth study of the survival of Cubism during the First World War, including several research stays at the Bibliothèque Kandinsky of the Musée d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, has also resulted in a number of scholarly articles published in Spanish and international journals.

Reviewers

⁵² See Green's connections between the political association of Union Sacrée in France during the war and their notion of collective effort and the 'contamination' of these ideas in the cubist group; Green, "The Crystal in the Flame", 28-29.

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