

## LA BELLE EPOQUE

1900-1914

by  
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### INTRODUCTION

Some historians consider La Belle Époque as a period in French history starting in 1871 and ending in 1914. Others are more concise and consider 1900 as its starting point. It was named, in retrospect, in contrast to the horrors of World War I. The Third French Republic began in 1870. It was a period characterised by optimism, peace at home and in Europe, new technology and scientific discoveries.

Paris had been profoundly changed by the French Second Empire reforms to the city's architecture. Haussmann changed its housing, street layouts, and green spaces.

French imperialism was in its prime. It was a cultural centre of global influence, and its educational, scientific and medical institutions were at the leading edge of Europe. The peace and prosperity in Paris allowed the arts to flourish.

The Parisian bourgeoisie as well as the successful industrialists called 'nouveau-riches' were drawn towards new forms of light entertainment.

The 'Casino de Paris' opened in 1890. Contrary to what the name might suggest, it is a performance venue, not a gambling house. Cabarets, bistros and music halls provided entertainment. A 'cabaret' is a form of entertainment featuring music, comedy, song, dance, recitation or drama where the audience sits at tables, often dining or drinking. The Moulin Rouge cabaret was a Paris landmark and it is still open today. The

Folies Bergère was another landmark venue. Burlesque performer Liane de Pougy, was well known in Paris top cabarets. Bohemian lifestyles gained a different glamour, pursued in the cabarets of Montmartre.

Belle Époque dancers such as La Goulue and Jane Avril were Paris celebrities, who modelled for Toulouse-Lautrec's iconic poster art. The Can-Can dance was a popular 19th-century cabaret style that appears in Henri Toulouse-Lautrec's posters from the era. Modern dance began to emerge as a powerful artistic development in cabarets.

Isadora Duncan distinct style and inspired visual artists, such as Antoine Bourdelle, Auguste Rodin, and Abraham Walkowitz, to create works based on her movements.

Paris' popular bourgeois theatre was dominated by the lively farces of Georges Feydeau: he is probably the most famous bedroom farceur.

The Eiffel Tower, built to serve as the grand entrance to the 1889 World's Fair became a symbol of Paris. Paris hosted another successful World's Fair in 1900, the Exposition Universelle.

The so called "haute couture" was invented in Paris, the centre of the Belle Époque, where fashion began to move in a yearly cycle.

In Paris, Maxim's was the city's most exclusive restaurant. The Bouillon became hugely popular with Parisians in the years before the First World

War. The artist Paul Gauguin was among its customers.

The word "ritzy" was invented during this era, referring to the posh atmosphere and clientele of the Hôtel Ritz Paris. The head chef and co-owner of the Ritz, Auguste Escoffier, was the pre-eminent French chef during the Belle Époque. French cuisine started to climb in the esteem of European gourmets. Champagne was perfected during the Belle Époque.

The Opera House was inaugurated on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1875 and named after Charles Garnier.

After the mid-19th century, railways linked all the major cities of Europe. Their carriages were rigorously divided into first-class and second-class, but the super rich now began to commission private railway coaches, as display of opulence.

French automobile manufacturers such as Peugeot, Renault, Daimler were already pioneers in automobile manufacturing. Edouard Michelin invented removable pneumatic tires for bicycles and automobiles in the 1890s.

After the telephone joined the telegraph as a vehicle for rapid communication, Édouard Belin developed the 'Belinograph', or Wire-photo, to transmit photos by telephone. The electric light began to supersede gas lighting, and neon lights were invented in France.

The 'cinématographe' was invented in France by Léon Bouly and used by Auguste and Louis Lumière, two brothers from Lyon who held the first

film screenings in the world. It was during this era that the motion pictures were developed, though these did not become common until after World War I.

France was a leader in aviation. Two French inventors, Louis Breguet and Paul Cornu, experimented with the first flying helicopters in 1907.

It was during the Belle Époque when biologists and physicians finally came to understand the germ theory of disease, and bacteriology was established. Louis Pasteur developed antibiotics and a rabies vaccine. Marie Curie won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1903, and the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1911.

#### ART AND LITERATURE

Reactions against the Impressionists characterised visual arts during the Belle Époque. Although Impressionism in painting began well before the Belle Époque, a public used to enjoy the figurative art approved by the Academy, received it with scepticism.

Paul Cézanne is the bridge between late 19th-century Impressionism and the early 20th century's Cubism. Toulouse-Lautrec, along with Cézanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin, is among the most well known painters of the Post-Impressionist period in Paris. Among the post-Impressionist movements in Paris were the Nabis, the Salon de la Rose Croix, the Symbolist Movement, Fauvism, and Early Modernism. Between 1900 and 1914, Expressionism took hold of many artists in Paris and Vienna.

Realism gradually developed into modernism, which emerged in the 1890s and came to dominate European literature during the Belle Époque's final years. Early works of Cubism and Abstraction were exhibited. Exhibits of African art also captured the imagination of Parisian artists at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup>. century. Japanese printmaking changed forever-graphic design and book illustration: The British Aubrey Beardsley is a very good example of this phenomenon.

Art Nouveau is the most popularly recognised art movement to emerge from this period. This largely decorative style is characterised by its curvilinear forms, and became prominent from the mid-1890s progressively dominating design throughout Europe.

The architecture of Victor Horta and the poster designs of Alphonse Mucha are some of the most familiar examples of the Art Nouveau style. Art Nouveau can be seen at Paris Metro stations, as a synonym of the city.

The alcoholic spirit absinthe was cited by many Art Nouveau artists as a muse and inspiration and can be seen in much of the artwork of the time. Many successful examples of Art Nouveau, with notable regional variations, were built in France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Austria, Hungary, Bohemia and Latvia. It soon spread around the world, including to Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and U.S. Charles Rennie Mackintosh was a Scottish architect and artist. He was a designer in the 'Arts and Crafts' movement. He is the main

representative of Art Nouveau in the UK.

Literary realism and naturalism achieved new heights. Among the most famous French realist or naturalist authors are Guy de Maupassant and Émile Zola. Paul Cezanne and him were friends since they were children.

Marcel Proust began the Modernist classic "In Search of Lost Time" in 1909, to be published after World War I. Colette shocked France with the publication of the sexually frank Claudine novel series, and other works. Colette was the surname of the French novelist and performer well known for her novel "Gigi" upon which Lerner and Loewe based the stage and film musical.

Guillaume Apollinaire was a French poet, playwright, short story writer, novelist, and art critic. He is credited with coining the word Surrealism. His poetry introduced themes and imagery from modern life to readers.

## MUSIC

Musically, the Belle Époque was characterised by salon music. The Belle Époque was famous for its large repertory of songs. Waltzes also flourished. Operettas were very popular, with composers such as Oscar Strauss, Emmerich Kalman, and Franz Lehár. Operetta is a genre of the performing arts related to opera but lighter.

Many Belle Époque composers working in Paris are still popular today: Eric Satie, Claude Debussy, Lili Boulanger, Jules Massenet, Gabriel

Fauré, and Camille Saint-Saëns and his pupil, Maurice Ravel.

Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes brought fame to Nijinsky and established modern ballet technique. Igor Stravinsky's "*The Rite of Spring*" was shown on 1913 in Paris. Nijinsky was its choreographer provoking a riot among the audience incapable to grasp the event.

In the early 1900s wealthy sons of Argentine society families made their way to Paris. The tango was introduced into a society eager for innovation and not entirely averse to the risqué nature of the dance or dancing with young, wealthy Latin men.

By 1912, tango dancers and musicians from Buenos Aires travelled to Europe. It was for Paris and the Tango that the French dance frocks were made. The first European tango craze took place in Paris, soon followed by London, Berlin, and other capitals.

#### EPILOGUE

Conflicts between the government and the Roman Catholic Church were regular and some artists and writers saw the 'Fin de Siècle' in a very deep pessimistic light. The "Dreyfus Affair" exposed the dark realities of French anti-Semitism and government corruption.

France had a large economic underclass that never experienced much of the Belle Époque. Poverty remained endemic in Paris' urban slums and rural peasantry for many decades after the Belle Époque ended. The year was 1914. This date marked

the end of a golden age in France that we now know as "La Belle Époque," and the start of the First World War.

#### BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO 1900-1914 ART MOVEMENTS

According to Spanish contemporary philosopher **Ortega y Gasset** : "*In the 20th century, we assist to the dehumanization of art*". At the beginning of the 20th century a new art movement was labeled with the term "**avant-garde**" until the word "**modernism**" prevailed. The "modernist movement" was a set of cultural tendencies in Western society. It was a revolt against the conservative Victorian values of Realism.

**Modern Art** includes paintings produced from 1860 and begins with the heritage of painters such as van Gogh; Cezanne; Gauguin; Seurat and Toulouse - Lautrec.

The Impressionists studied the light. Light became their favourite subject. At the same time, **Seurat** and **Signac** also tried to study the light creating a movement called "POINTILLISM" which is an optical mixing of colours. Then "symbolists" painters used symbolic colours to express their emotions.

**Post-Impressionism** as well as **Art Nouveau** from 19th century led to the first 20th century movement called **Fauvism** in France and **Die Brücke** (The Bridge) in Germany. **Die Brücke** /The Bridge from Germany strove for emotional **Expressionism**. **Der Blaue Reiter** (The Blue Rider) was another group of non-

figurative artists, led by **Kandinsky** in Munich.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century **Henri Matisse** and several other young artists, revolutionized Paris with wild, bright coloured, and expressive paintings: **Matisse** two versions of "The Dancers" are vital in the development of Modern Art. The critics called this movement **Fauvism** (from fauve: furious in French).

Japanese art and African art were of great influence in those days.

**Cubism** generated by **Picasso** rejected the plastic norms of Renaissance by introducing multiple perspectives into a two-dimensional image on canvas. **Pablo Picasso's** Cubist paintings were based on Cezanne's ideas that all depiction from Nature can be reduced to three solids: cube, sphere and cone.

When examining the photographs that **Picasso** took in the Spanish village of Horta de Ebro, it is possible to give photography its proper due in the development of the movement now known as Cubism. Photography and painting overlap as **Picasso** proved during 1909's summer. Arne Glimcher's film, "*Picasso and Braque Go to the Movies*," focuses on the influence of early film on the cubism of **Picasso** and **Braque**.

Both artists were well known to be ardent supporters and fans of film.

To them, film was an extension of photography in that it can capture multiple "actions" within one frame. After **Picasso's** Cubism, **Braque** created the so-called "analytic cubism". **Picasso**, **Leger** and **Gris** produced the so-called "synthetic

cubism" by using mixed techniques, textures and collage.

**Futurism** incorporated movement and machines from an increasingly industrialized modern society. **Futurist** artists like **Boccioni** and **Balla**, studied moving objects. By examining the relationship between photography and painting at the turn of the 1900, it is clear that the two mediums have more in common than art historians acknowledge. The two share obvious formal qualities such as form, perspective, depth, and spatial relationships.

**Ezra Pound's** 1934 injunction to "Make it new!" was paradigmatic to contemporary art. **Pound** began writing for Lewis's literary magazine *BLAST* in which he discussed "*Cubism, Futurism, and all Vital Forms of Modern Art*." He said: "*The artist is always beginning, any work of art which is not a beginning, an invention, a discovery is of little worth. The name "troubadour" means finder, one who discovers*"

## ART NOUVEAU

The early 1890s saw the birth of a new style in European art and design. From the United States to Russia, from England to Italy, Art Nouveau had become the first international decorative style of the modern age. The origins of Art Nouveau are found in the "Arts and Crafts" movement founded by the British artist William Morris. The complex 'arabesque' designs of the Middle East also had considerable influence, as did ancient European forms such as the Celtic decoration. About the same time, the flat perspective of Japanese wood

block prints, especially those of Katsushika Hokusai, had a strong effect on the formulation of Art Nouveau. With its bare, minimal style of drawing and flattened space, Japanese printmaking is an obvious ancestor of the graphic works of Art Nouveau.

The name itself: "Art Nouveau" came from Siegfried Bing's gallery called Maison de l'Art Nouveau in Paris. The fame of his gallery was increased at the 1900 Exposition Universelle, where he presented coordinated installations of modern furniture, tapestries and objects d'art. The Paris International Exhibition in 1900 marked the heyday of Art Nouveau.

**Art Nouveau** achieved further recognition at the 'Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte Decorativa Moderna' of 1902 in Turin, Italy. "Jugendstil", instead, came from the magazine "Jugend" in Munich. **Art Nouveau** is viewed as the first self-conscious attempt to create a modern style. **Art Nouveau** is considered a "total" art style, embracing architecture, graphic art, interior design, and most of the decorative arts including jewellery, furniture, textiles, household silver and other utensils and lighting, as well as the fine arts.

The most important outcome of this drive towards the new was the characteristic Art Nouveau form: the 'whiplash' line. A description published in Pan magazine of Hermann Obrist's wall hanging Cyclamen (1894) described it as "*sudden violent curves generated by the crack of a whip*" which became well known during the early spread of Art Nouveau. The

whiplash form can be seen as a metaphor. It displays in graphic form the radical drive to break away from the constraints of tradition.

**Art Nouveau** influence can be found in painting, sculpture, architecture, jewellery, metalwork, glass and ceramics. In architecture, hyperbolas and parabolas in windows, arches, and doors are common, and decorative iron mouldings 'grow' into plant-derived forms. The text above the Paris Metro entrance uses the qualities of the rest of the ironwork in the structure.

**Arthur Mackmurdo's** book-cover for "*Wren's City Churches*" (1883), with its rhythmic floral patterns, is often considered the first realisation of Art Nouveau. But we also find Art Nouveau in the drawings of **Aubrey Beardsley**...and in the architecture of **Victor Horta** and **Paul Hankar**...Many Art Nouveau poster designers used a veiled but highly charged eroticism **Alphonse Mucha**, created images that epitomised the sophisticated and decorative Art Nouveau woman. His strategy of combining women with products sold a lifestyle dream, just as lifestyle became an issue for a growing metropolitan middle class with a disposable income.

The erotic nature of many Art Nouveau works is one of the most prevalent features of the style. Small-scale decorative objects such as inkwells, carafes, centrepieces, candelabra, lamps and figurines were disseminated widely into any middle-class household. These erotically charged objects, unlike most sculpture, demanded physical contact. Carafes where the handles are naked

women that must be grasped...Vessels that metamorphose into women inviting touch...Lamps that provocatively pose women in suggestive positions...although many Art Nouveau objects were mildly erotic, some were much more direct and in some instances pornographic.

**Rupert Carabin** produced some of the most explicit objects of the period. His chair of 1898 plays with the physical restraint of the body. Some objects, such as **Max Blondat's** doorknocker designed for a Parisian brothel, employ a more humorous symbolism. The scale of the production of these kinds of objects denoted a widespread 'taste for the erotic', not only among the upper class but also by the middle classes. Erotic imagery in advertising did not always focus on the female body. The perfect male body emerged in many images of the period, most often when the subject matter demanded a 'serious' approach. Designers used the male body to promote industry and technology, while the female body was used for product and entertainment.

**Leopoldo Metlicovitz, Gustav Klimt and Adolf Munzer:** the three of them created images that used the male body to denote virility and action. La Belle Époque not only witnessed the formation of various constructions of female sexuality, but also the crystallisation of attitudes towards male sexuality. Homoeroticism within Art Nouveau, although present, was often sublimated.

Photography became a particularly rich area for homoerotic depiction in the period. **Baron von Gloeden** and **Fred Holland Day** concentrated on

representing the nude male body, both adult and child, often in erotic poses. An important element in homoerotic depiction was androgyny. The androgyny could be both man and woman, adult or child, and became the fin de siècle enigmatic erotic symbol, providing endless erotic possibilities.

The **Oscar Wilde** trials of 1895 were tremendously significant, spectacularly bringing the reality of homosexuality into the open. For some, Wilde became a martyr, a pivotal figure around whom homosexual identity was formed, while for many others he became the symbol of unhealthy decadence. Art Nouveau association with decadence in the public mind contributed to the rejection of the style in the new century.

Art Nouveau style was short-lived, collapsing finally in the years prior to the First World War. The erotic content of so many Art Nouveau objects was undoubtedly a significant factor in its demise.

#### ART NOUVEAU IN THE UK – RENNIE MACKINTOSH

By the end of the 19th century Glasgow School of Art was one of the leading art academies in Europe. The late 1890s saw Glasgow's reputation in architecture and the decorative arts reach an exceptional good fame.

At the very heart of this success was a talented young architect and designer, **Charles Rennie Mackintosh**. Born in Glasgow on 7<sup>th</sup>. June 1868, **Mackintosh** was apprenticed to a local architect John Hutchison. To

complement his architectural apprenticeship, Mackintosh enrolled for evening classes at the Glasgow School of Art. In the Art School Library, he was able to consult the latest architecture and design journals. He won the prestigious Alexander Thomson Travelling Studentship in 1890 that allowed him to undertake an architectural tour of Italy.

Back in Glasgow, Mackintosh's projects for Honeyman and Keppie during the early 1890s displayed an increased maturity. His design for the Glasgow Herald Building (1894) incorporated some cutting-edge technology including a hydro-pneumatic lift and fire-resistant diatomite concrete flooring. He also began to experiment with a range of decorative forms, producing designs for furniture, metalwork and the graphic arts, including stylised posters and watercolours.

In 1896 Mackintosh gained his most substantial commission, to design a new building for the Glasgow School of Art: this was to be his masterwork. Most dramatic of all the interiors was the new Library (completed in 1909), which was a complex space of timber posts and beams. (Fire broke out at the listed building at about 12:30 on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup>. May 2014, completely destroying his work).

In Europe the originality of Mackintosh's style was quickly appreciated especially in Germany and also in Austria. He entered an open competition to design 'A House for an Art Lover', put forward by a German design journal, 'Zeitschrift für Innendekoration', in 1900.

Back in Scotland, the publisher Walter Blackie commissioned Mackintosh to design a substantial family home at The Hill House in Helensburgh (1904). Externally, The Hill House was notable for its simple and solid forms with little ornamentation, yet internally the rooms exuded light and space, and the use of colour and decoration was carefully conceived.

Throughout his career Mackintosh relied on just a handful of patrons and supporters: Glasgow businesswoman Catherine Cranston was one of them and her series of tearoom interiors (designed and furnished between 1896-1917) gave him freedom to experiment. Mackintosh provided the tearooms with furniture including the dramatic high-back chairs, light fittings, wall decorations and even the cutlery.

Despite his success in Europe, Mackintosh's work met with considerable indifference at home and his career soon declined. Few private clients were sufficiently sympathetic to want his 'total design' of house and interior. In an attempt to resurrect his career, Mackintosh resigned from the practice and with his wife Margaret Macdonald moved to London.

This was an unfortunate timing, for with the onset of the First World War all building work was severely restricted. Later on, W. J. Bassett-Lowke commissioned Mackintosh to redecorate a number of the building's interiors including the Guest's Bedroom in 1919. These designs show him working in a bold new style of decoration using primary colours and

geometric motifs with an extraordinary vitality and originality.

A move to the South of France in 1923 signalled the end of Mackintosh's three-dimensional career and the last years of his life were spent painting. He died in Spain on 10<sup>th</sup>. December 1928. He was 59 years old.

#### FAUVISM - 1905

Between 1901 and 1906, art exhibitions held in Paris made the work of **Vincent van Gogh**, **Paul Gauguin** and **Paul Cézanne** accessible to the general public for the first time. These three great artists were of deep influence in others.

**Vincent van Gogh**, said of his own work: *'Instead of trying to render what I see before me, I use colour in a completely arbitrary way to express myself powerfully'*.

The advent of **Modernism** is often dated by the appearance of the **Fauves** in Paris at the **Salon d'Automne** in 1905. **Fauvism** was the first movement of modern times, in which colour ruled supreme.

Art critic **Louis Vauxcelles** saw their paintings surrounding a Donatello sculpture of a boy, and he said: *"Donatello au milieu les fauves"* (wild beasts). The artists themselves gladly accepted the name. Painters using vivid, non-naturalistic and exuberant colours characterized fauvism.

The **Fauvist** movement rejected the idea of three-dimensional space in paintings, preferring a two-dimensional surface of intense colours and vigorous brush-marks.

The **Fauve** painters were the first to break with **Impressionism** as well as with more older, traditional methods of perception. Their art seemed brasher than anything seen before.

The leading artists were **Matisse**, **Rouault**, **Derain**, **Vlaminck**, **Braque** and **Dufy**. FAUVE artists began to experiment with radical new styles. Their use of non-naturalistic colours was considered "the avant-garde" in European art. The **Fauves** translated their feelings into colours with a rough, almost clumsy style. The **Fauvists** believed absolutely in colour as an emotional force.

The movement began to gain respect when major art buyers took an interest: **Gertrude Stein** was an avant-garde, eccentric and self-styled genius American writer.

Her salon in Paris was a magnet for the leading artists and writers of the period between World Wars I and II.

**Alice Babette Toklas** was **Gertrude Stein's** confidante, lover, cook, secretary, muse, editor, critic, and general organizer. **Toklas** lived in the shadow of **Stein**, until **Stein** published her *memoirs* in 1933 under the teasing title *"The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas"*. It became Stein's bestselling book. The two were a couple until Gertrude Stein's death in 1946.

#### HENRI MATISSE

**Matisse** was a dominant figure in the Fauve movement. He had to make colour serve his art, rather as **Gauguin** needed to paint the island sand pink to express an emotion. **Matisse** had arrived at the **Fauve** style after earlier experimenting with the various **Post-Impressionist** styles of **Van Gogh**, **Gauguin**, **Cézanne**, and the **Neo-Impressionism** of **Seurat**, **Cross** and

**Signac.** He found his main inspiration in **Cézanne's** sense of pictorial structure and colour. These influences made him to reject three-dimensional space by creating a new space defined by planes of colour

His first solo exhibition was at **Ambroise Vollard's** gallery in 1904. **Vollard** (1866-1939) was an art dealer and writer who championed Modernists painters during their economic emergence in the early 20th century. In return, many of them painted his portrait. Matisse's paintings encountered vehement criticism. His Controversial "**Nu bleu**" was burned in Chicago in 1913.

In 1910, **Henri Matisse** created "La Dance" and "La Musique" for the multimillionaire Russian art collector **Sergei Shchukin**.

MAURICE VLAMINCK – ANDRE DERAÏN

With the Fauve painters **Maurice de Vlaminck** and **André Derain**, colour became more luminous, creating light rather than imitating it. **Maurice de Vlaminck** (French, 1876–1958), was an almost "natural" **Fauve** because of his use of intense colour and exuberant nature. **Vlaminck** had a touch of his internal moods: even if *The River* (c. 1910) looks absolutely at peace, we feel a storm is coming. A self-professed "primitive" **Vlaminck** ignored the wealth of art in the Louvre, preferring to collect African masks that became so important to early 20th-century art.

**Derain** occupied a place midway between the impetuous **Vlaminck** and the more controlled and organized **Matisse**. He had worked with

**Vlaminck** in Chatou, near Paris, intermittently from 1900 on ("*School of Chatou*"), and spent the summer of 1905 with **Matisse** in Collioure. **Derain** shared a studio with **Vlaminck** for a while.

**Derain** also showed a primitive wildness in his **Fauve** period "*Charing Cross Bridge*" (1906) in bestrides a strangely tropical London though as he aged he quenched his fire to a classic calm. In 1906, he also painted some fifteen scenes of London in a more restrained palette. The style was essentially expressionist, and generally featured distorted landscapes.

In 1906 **Georges Braque** and **Raoul Dufy** also adopted the Fauve style.

#### DECLINE

**Fauvism** was a short-lived movement, lasting only as long as its creator, **Henri Matisse** (1869-1954), fought to find the artistic freedom he needed. **Fauvism** (1905-8) was extremely influential in the evolution of 20<sup>th</sup>.century art. The **Fauves** did not form a cohesive group: by 1908 some of them had seceded to **Cubism**. For most of these artists, Fauvism was a transitional, learning stage. Only **Matisse** pursued the course he had pioneered, achieving a balance between his own emotions and the world he painted.

The **Fauvist** movement has been compared to **German Expressionism**, both projecting brilliant colours and spontaneous brushwork, and indebted to the same late nineteenth-century sources, especially **Vincent Van Gogh**. The *Artistes Indépendants* remained

active between wars in the basement of the Grand Palais, in Paris.

#### CUBISM – 1907

During the early 1900s, the aesthetics of traditional African sculpture became a powerful influence among European artists who formed an avant-garde in the development of modern art. **Avant-garde** artists, art-dealers, and art critics were among the first Europeans to collect these African sculptures for their aesthetic value. Since 1870, thousands of African sculptures arrived in Europe after the colonial conquest and various exploratory expeditions. African masks were showed at the Musée d' Ethnographie in Paris, and other museums in Europe such as in Berlin, Munich, and London. Early Cubism have been linked to Primitivism.

**Cubism** was one of the most influential visual art styles of the early 20th century. It was also partly influenced by the late work of **Cézanne** in which he started to reflect different points of view in his paintings.

The **Cubist** art movement began in Paris around 1907. Led by **Pablo Picasso** and **Georges Braque**, the Cubists broke from centuries of tradition in their painting by rejecting the single viewpoint. **Cubists** painted three-dimensional subjects fragmented and redefined from several different points of view simultaneously. This new way of representing the world assimilated outside influences, such as African art and the very new **Einstein's** "Theory of Relativity".

**Cubism** is divided into two phases: the **Analytic Phase** (1907/12) and later on, the **Synthetic Phase** (1913/20). **Pablo Picasso** (Spanish, 1881–1973) and **Georges Braque** (French, 1882–1963) were the first painters creating the later called Analytic Phase (1907-1914).

Once again, it was the French art critic **Louis Vauxcelles** who coined the term **Cubism** after seeing the landscapes **Braque** had painted in 1908 at L'Estaque in emulation of **Cézanne**. **Vauxcelles** called the geometric forms in the highly abstracted works "cubes."

GEORGES BRAQUE

In 1907 **Braque** saw the work of Cézanne and in the same year met Picasso who had just completed '*Les Femmes d'Alger*' (1907). **Braque** began experimenting with a fragmented style, eventually completing '*Nude*' (1907-1908) one of the earliest works in Cubism. He worked closely with Picasso particularly between 1910 and 1912, experimenting with this new technique used to represent form and space.

Musical instruments were frequently depicted such as in '*Man with a Guitar*' (1911) and also a number of still-lives for example, '*Still-Life with Pipe and Glass*' (1912).

**Braque** abandoned cubism in 1912. In 1914, he enlisted in the French army and fought in the First World War where he was wounded in the head. Returning to the studio in 1917 his work began to change as he adopted a more graceful style, using curves and muted colours.

The work that **Braque** produced in collaboration with **Picasso** is varied in quality though impressive in the radical experiments with technique. Despite working closely together, their approaches were quite different with **Braque** proving more considered and **Picasso** more spontaneous. **Braque** was also concerned with representing a subject in his own way, conveying more than just the image before him.

#### PABLO PICASSO

In 1907, after hundreds of preparatory sketches, **Picasso** completed *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)*, in which faceted female bodies and mask faces gave birth to **Cubism**, defining the course of modern art.

The stylization and distortion of **Picasso's** groundbreaking *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J. Version O)* (1907) came from African art. He continued painting, and sculpting mask-faced figures influenced by African Art using **geometric volumes** throughout his Cubist period. From this cubist stage is *Bust of a Man* (1908) as well as *Woman's Head* (1909), and *Woman in an Armchair* (1910).

His work now classified as **Analytical Cubism**, clearly show recognizable forms dissected and reconstructed using overlapping translucent planes. Objects, landscapes and people are represented as many faceted solids. *Woman with a Guitar* is a clear example of this. From **Analytic Cubism** produced in monochromatic greys and browns, colour reappeared in the final phase of Cubism known today as **Synthetic Cubism**. Picasso also worked on designs for many of Diaghilev's Ballet Russes. After Cubism, his major

contribution to modern art is the total freedom in every aspect of his painting, sculpture, ceramics and graphic work.

#### JUAN GRIS

Jose Victoriano Gonzalez, adopted the pseudonym of **Juan Gris** after moving into Paris in 1906, where Picasso was his neighbour. **Gris** painted full-time from 1910 and by 1912 was exhibiting his works in the Cubist style at the Section d'Or exhibition with **Picasso** and **Braque**. In 1912, Juan **Gris** exhibited his *Homage to Picasso*.

By 1913 Gris developed his own distinctive style by using 'papier collé'. He worked close to **Picasso** and **Braque** until the outbreak of World War I. As well as paintings, Gris also worked on sculptures, drawings and set and costume designs for the ballets of Sergei Diaghilev. **Juan Gris** was the Third Musketeer of Cubism; he pushed **cubism** further to its logical conclusion until his untimely death in 1927 at the age of 39.

#### ANALYTIC CUBISM

**Analytic Cubism** (1910–12), reduced figures to just a series of overlapping planes and facets mostly in near-monochromatic browns, greys, or blacks. In their Analytic Cubism period, **Picasso** and **Braque** used letters in their work. Their favourite motifs were still lifes with musical instruments, bottles, pitchers, glasses, newspapers, playing cards and the human figure. Landscapes were rare. *'A head', said Picasso, 'is a matter of eyes, nose, mouth, which can be distributed in any way you like. The head remains a head.'*

## SYNTHETIC CUBISM

**Synthetic Cubism** was initiated with the *papiers collés* introduced by **Juan Gris**. Papier colles (pasted paper) is a form of collage that is closer to drawing than painting. During the winter of 1912–13, **Picasso** executed a great number of *papiers collés*. With this new technique the last vestiges of 3D space in their Analytic Cubism was gone. With collage, their work became a real three dimensional construction. The idea of using different materials in a composition had a big impact in modern art.

## EPILOGUE

**Cubism** was new visual language created by **Gris**, **Braque** and **Picasso** and many painters, including **Diego Rivera** in Mexico, adopted it. **Rivera** continued his travels in Europe experimenting more techniques and styles of painting. The series of works he produced between 1913 and 1917 are cubistic. **Cubism** was the starting point for abstract art including **Constructivism** and **Neo-Plasticism**. **Cubism** also had a profound influence on sculpture and architecture. **Archipenko**, **Duchamp-Villon** and **Lipchitz** were Cubist sculptors. **Cubism** also had an influence on **Dada** and **Surrealism**, as well as on artists pursuing abstraction in Europe America, and Russia. The impact of Cubism on the history of European painting and sculpture is immeasurable. After **Cubism**, the world never looked the same again: it was one of the most influential and revolutionary movements in art.

## A BELLE EPOQUE PRODUCT: MARCHESA LUISA CASATI

*"I want to be a living work of art"*

Luisa, known as 'Marchesa Casati', was an eccentric Italian heiress, as well as a muse, and a patroness of the arts in early 20th century Europe. Luisa Adele Rosa Maria Amman was born in Milan on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1881. Luisa's father – Albert Amman - was of Austrian descent, while her mother was Italian. King Umberto I made Luisa's father a count. Countess Amman died when Luisa was thirteen, and Count Amman died two years later, making his daughters, Luisa and Francesca the wealthiest women in Italy. She married Camillo, Marchese Casati Stampa di Soncino in 1900. The couple had only one daughter, Cristina Casati Stampa di Soncino (1901–1953), who married Francis John Clarence Western Plantagenet Hastings, known as Viscount Hastings.

Luisa became a celebrated society hostess, muse and patroness to innumerable artists, the lover of Gabriele D'Annunzio. she was an eccentric and a 'femme fatale': not because of her looks and sexy attractiveness but for her hypnotic personality, her energy and her influence in art.

She commissioned portraits or sculptures of herself by Giovanni Boldini, Paolo Troubetzkoy, Romaine Brooks,, Kees van Dongen, and Man Ray. With her dyed hair, kohl-rimmed eyes and outlandish outfits, Marchesa Casati turned herself into a "living work of art" and was captured by some of the 20<sup>th</sup>.century's greatest artists including Man Ray and August

John. The Welsh painter Augustus John said: "Luisa Casati should be shot, stuffed and displayed in a glass case".

For the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup>.century, the fabled Marchesa Luisa Casati (1881-1957) triumphed as the brightest star in European society. Before the WWI War, Luisa took up residence in at the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, on the Grand Canal in Venice where she held fabulous parties.

Nijinsky invited Isadora Duncan to dance in her Venetian Palazzo. Nude servants gilded in gold leaf served her. She was the perfect concept of a 'dandy' (the word "dandy" refers to men who consider themselves to be arbiters of culture and refinement and wit). Oscar Wilde's is perhaps the most famous example of a dandy.

Léon Bakst, Paul Poiret, Mariano Fortuny and Erté dressed her.

*"She was so different from other women that ordinary clothes were impossible for her. Long Persian trousers of heavy gold brocade, fastened tightly, held by diamond bangles... feet encased in gold sandals with high diamond heels, she smoked cigarettes out of a long black holder, studded with diamonds" Paul Poiret*

Pet cheetahs, séances and dresses made from light bulbs, the heiress, socialite and artist's muse Marchesa Casati led a life every bit as unusual as her outfits. She wore live snakes as jewellery. Accompanied by her pet boa constrictor, she checked into the Ritz Hotel in Paris... She was famous for her evening walks completely nude and only wearing her furs parading

cheetahs and diamond studded leashes.

Lalique adorned her and she directly inspired the famed Cartier's Panther design.

Her life inspired "La Contessa" a film with Vivien Leigh (1965) and also in the film "A matter of time" with Ingrid Bergman (1976).

By 1930, Luisa's fortune was gone and she had debts for more than \$25 million dollars. She was forced into bankruptcy and the houses, villas, paintings, jewels, exotic animals, and haute couture shop were all sold off to pay her debts. She rummaged in the bins outside the Chelsea Palace Music hall and came away with scraps of monkey fur, fabric and feathers to tart up her outré costumes. Because she could no longer afford kohl she ringed her eyes with boot polish.

In the late 1950s, when she was living in a one-bedroom flat near Harrods, the Marchesa Luisa Casati believed she was capable of communicating by telepathy. She stopped writing cards and letters, and spent her last days indulging in spiritualist sessions with her few loyal remaining friends.

She died at her last residence, 32 Beaufort Gardens in Knightsbridge, on 1<sup>st</sup>. June 1957, aged 76. Her funeral finery consisted of her best black dress, a leopard skin coat that had seen better days and a new pair of false eyelashes. An old friend from former days, a stuffed pet Pekingese, joined her in the coffin. Harrods handled the funeral arrangements, laying her out in their chapel before the interment at Brompton Cemetery.

## THE ORIGINS OF CINEMA

The cinema industry was founded during the Belle Époque in France. The first pioneers were **Louis Lumiere**, **Georges Melies**, **Charles Pathe** and **Leon Gaumont**.

The history of the cinema began on December 28<sup>th</sup>. 1895. On that day, the first paid public performance of motion pictures taken by Louis Lumiere was shown.

It is believed their first film was actually recorded that same year 1895 with Léon Bouly's cinématographe device, which was patented the previous year. Léon Bouly patented the original cinématographe on 12<sup>th</sup>. February 1892. The Lumières further developed the cinématographe: a three-in-one device that could record, develop, and project motion pictures.

The first cinematograph session was held in the Indian Salon of the Grand Café, 14 Boulevard des Capucines, in Paris. In spring and summer of 1896, Lumière made a lot of short films e.g.: *L'arroseur arrosé*, *Partie des cartes*, *Arrivée d'un train à la Ciotat*, *Barque sortant du port* and *Repas de bébé*.

Each film is 17 meters long, which, when hand cranked through a projector, runs for 50 seconds. *The sprinkler sprinkled* (1895) is considered the first comedy film. Each film lasted only a minute or even less and showed short scenes in the daily life of a citizen and nothing else. Lumiere interest was not in the film itself, but rather in selling his cinematograph. At the end of the 19th century 1,424 short films figured in his lists!

**Georges Méliès** was a French illusionist and filmmaker famous for leading many technical and narrative developments in the earliest days of cinema. Georges Melies\_(1861-1938) originally worked as an illusionist in Robert Houdini's theatre. In 1896, he started to film the conjuring-tricks: One of the most famous is "*Escamotage d'une dame chez Robert Houdin*" (The Vanishing of a Lady at Robert Houdin's).

Like Lumière, he also made many short films, but instead of showing realistic scenes, he often created fantastic spectacles. Realism and miracles - the two grand axes of cinema - are already present with "*Lumière du jour*" and "*Méliès de la nuit*".

Méliès did not profit his work because he couldn't distribute the films himself. He depended on others. Foreign companies not paying him anything for it exploited his films. He was also an early pioneer of horror cinema, which can be traced back to his '*The Haunted Castle*' (1897).

**Charles Pathé** (1863 –1957) was a major French pioneer of the film and recording industries. In 1894, together with his brother Émile, he formed Pathé Records. In 1896, the Société Pathé Frères entered the motion picture production and distribution business. Both companies would become a dominant international force in their respective industries.

In 1908, he controlled a third of the global film market. He was mainly interested in production and commercial aspects. The direction of his films has been made by a series of

directors. The first one was Ferdinand Zecca (1864-1947) who initially started as an actor. Under Zecca's direction, a first version of *Quo Vadis* (1901) was made. Also, daily life dramas like "*Les victimes de l'alcoolisme*" (1902) and *Passion* (1902/03) were filmed.

**Leon Gaumont** (1864-1946) worked focusing on the economic aspects of the industry and let his secretary, **Alice Guy** (1875-1968), direct his films. She was the first female director worldwide. Between 1897 and 1906, she made 301 films!

Léon Gaumont's company sold camera equipment and film, but in 1897 inaugurated a motion picture production business. At that time, the artistic aspect of the films was not of great importance yet.

Cinema was not of importance regarding art but economy: Filmmaking had not to be expensive and the directors were told to work quickly. In the early 20<sup>th</sup>.century, the story line of a film became important. Literature classics served as plots. *L'Assommoir* (1909) and *Germinal* (1913) were adapted from novels by Emile Zola. Also *Notre Dame de Paris* (1911) and *Les Misérables* (1912) of Victor Hugo were filmed. *Les Misérables* was the longest film of the epoch playing 3 ½ hours!

It was also the beginning of comedies and burlesques. The actor Max Linder (1883-1925) was famous for his comical character in a series of Pathé films; he played his first role in Zecca's film *La vie de Polichinelle* (1905). Victorin Jasset

(1862-1913) started to make detective films based on short stories from popular newspapers.

In 1908, Emile Cohl produced the first animated cartoon, *Fantasmagorie*. Still more famous became Louis Feuillade (1874-1925), director at Gaumont's, who started with realistic daily life dramas like in his series "*La vie telle qu'elle est*" (1911-13). Feuillade big success came when he made a series film about the ingenious gentleman-bandit called *Fantômas* (1913/14). He also succeeded later on with series such as *Les vampires* (1915) and *Judex* (1916/17).

Although we usually imagine the films of that time black and white and silent, they often were coloured. There were several techniques to colour films: the tingeing of the whole film or the handmade painting by tiny pencils. The sound in the theatres was not of good quality but it existed.

The film industry was far more advanced than we imagine today: Raoul Grimoin-Sanson's constructed a "Cinéorama" for the World Fair in 1900: ten synchronous projectors generated a circular panorama of 360 degrees. It was a "balloon ride": 200 visitors at a time could enter the "basket", and could then see a film presented by 10 synchronized 70mm projectors...

But everything stopped in 1914...Paris could not keep its position of being the centre of the cinematic world. The French film industry stopped and Hollywood big industry was born...

## FUTURISM

**Futurism** was an Italian art movement that took speed, technology and modernity as its inspiration. It portrayed the dynamic character of the 20th century life, glorifying war and machines, and favoured the growth of Fascism. **Futurism** was inspired by the **Cubism** and went beyond its techniques. The **Futurist** painters made the rhythm of their repetition of lines.

The Italian poet **Filippo Tommaso Marinetti** launched futurism. He produced a "manifesto" of their artistic philosophy in 1909. **Marinetti's** manifesto was printed on the front page of *Le Figaro*. It was bombastic and inflammatory in tone: "*set fire to the library shelves... flood the museums*" suggesting that he was more interested in shocking the public than exploring Futurism's themes. Contrary to any other art movement before, the idea of Futurism came first, followed by a fanfare of publicity; it was only afterwards that artists could find a means to express it.

**Marinetti's** manifesto attracted the attention of painters in Milan, who wanted to translate the Futurist ideas to the visual arts. **Marinetti's** impassioned polemic immediately attracted the support of the young Milanese **Boccioni, Carra, and Russolo** who wanted to extend **Marinetti's** ideas to the visual arts.

Painters did have a serious intent beyond **Marinetti's** bombastic Manifest. This led in 1910 to the publication of the 'Manifesto of the Futurist Painters'. It followed **Marinetti's** original in tone: "*We will*

*fight with all our might the fanatical, senseless and snobbish religion of the past, a religion encouraged by the vicious existence of museums. We rebel against that spineless worshipping of old canvases, old statues and old bric-a-brac, against everything, which is filthy and worm-ridden and corroded by time. We consider the habitual contempt for everything which is young, new and burning with life to be unjust and even criminal."*

**Futurist's** mixed activism and artistic research. They organized events that caused scandal. They wanted to portray sensations as a "*synthesis of what one remembers and one sees*" capturing the 'force lines' of objects. The car, the plane, the industrial town were representing the motion in modern life and the technological triumph of man over nature.

But it was only after seeing the work of **Cubist** painters in Paris in 1911 that the **Futurists** adopted the techniques of the **Cubist** artists. Despite learning lessons from the **Cubists**, the paintings of the **Futurist** art movement were very different to those of **Picasso** and **Braque**.

The **Futurists** typical subjects were urban scenes and vehicles in motion. The new style broke with old traditions by expressing the dynamism of modern life. Inspired by photography they were breaking motion into small sequences. **Futurism** was unique in that it was a self-invented art movement. Bright colours and flowing brush strokes also created the illusion of movement.

Futurism breaks down form by eliminating horizontals and verticals and instead using whirling lines, forcing a reaction of forms, movement, and colour to light and shade. Certain Futurists vehemently promoted themselves to try to join forces with the Fascists, who were coming to power at the time. But Mussolini showed a preference for the "Novecento Italiano", a movement of artists who identified themselves with the classical order and Italian heritage.

#### GIACOMO BALLA

*"All things move, all things run, all things are rapidly changing"*

In 1910 **Balla** and other Italian artists published the *Manifesto of Futurist Painters*. He was a lyrical painter, unconcerned with modern machines or violence. *"The Street Light - Study of Light"* (1909) is a dynamic depiction of light. One of his best-known works, *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* (1912), shows an almost "frame-by-frame" picture of a woman walking a dog.

During World War I, **Balla** tried to convey the impression of movement using planes of colour. These paintings are the most abstract of all Futurist paintings. After the war he remained faithful to the Futurist style. **Balla** had a great impact on his contemporaries and other young talented students such as **Boccioni** and **Severini**.

He explored stage design, graphic design, and even acting. At the end of his career he abandoned his lifelong pursuit of near abstraction and reverted to a more traditional style.

#### UMBERTO BOCCIONI

**Umberto Boccioni** was a painter and a sculptor. His earliest work was romantic and strongly influenced by the floral arabesques of Art Nouveau. In 1901, **Boccioni** and his friend **Gino Severini** studied Divisionism with Balla. **Boccioni** moved to Milan and met **Marinetti** the leader of the literary Futurist movement. By 1912, **Boccioni**, **Severini**, **Balla**, **Carra**, and **Russolo**, signed the "Painters Manifesto"

**Boccioni's** painting moved rapidly to abstraction, combining lines and planes to suggest both the recognizable object and its movement through space. In 1915, **Boccioni** joined the Italian Army as a volunteer cyclist. **Boccioni's** career was unfortunately cut short when he died of a fall from a horse.

#### CARLO CARRA

**Carlo Carrà**, was one of the most influential Italian painters of the 20<sup>th</sup>. century. In 1909 he met the poet **Filippo Marinetti** and the artist **Umberto Boccioni**. His famous painting, *The Funeral of the Anarchist Galli* (1911), embodies Futurist ideals with its portrayal of dynamic action, power, and violence. During the War I period, his work was based on Futurist concepts such as the collage *Patriotic Celebration*, *Free Word Painting* (1914).

**Carra's** new style was crystallized in 1917 when he met **Giorgio de Chirico**, who taught him to paint everyday objects imbued with a sense of eeriness. **Carra** and **de Chirico** called their style '*pittura metafisica*', and

their works of this period have a superficial similarity. After De Chirico he started his famous style of **Metaphysical painting**. Throughout the 1920s and '30s, he painted figurative works based on the monumental realism of the 15th-century Italian painter **Masaccio**. After his many years of teaching at the Milan Academy, **Carra** greatly influenced the course of Italian art between the World Wars.

#### GINO SEVERINI

**Severini** began his painting career in 1900 as a student of **Giacomo Balla**. Stimulated by **Balla**, **Severini** moved to Paris in 1906 and met leading members of the French avant-garde, **Braque**, **Picasso** and the writer **Guillaume Apollinaire**.

**Severini** painted in the pointillist manner until 1910, when he signed the "Futurist Painters Manifesto". He usually portrayed the human figure as the source of motion in his paintings. He liked painting nightclub scenes, incorporating the Cubist technique of **collage**.

Only briefly, in wartime works such as *Red Cross Train Passing a Village* (1914), did **Severini** paint subjects according to the Futurist ideal of mechanized war. He turned increasingly to Cubism but retaining elements of pointillism and Futurism. In 1916 **Severini** embraced a more formal approach to composition. He painted still lifes deconstructing objects using Synthetic Cubism. In portraits such as *Maternity* (1916), he began to experiment with a **Neo-Classical** figurative style, a conservative approach that he

embraced more fully in the 1920's. He published a book, ***Du cubisme au classicisme*** (1921) in which he discussed his theories about the rules of composition and proportion. His autobiography, "*Tutta la vita di un pittore*" was published in 1946.

#### LITERATURE: MARCEL PROUST

Proust's life and work embody the Belle Époque: the sophisticated, hedonistic world of pre-WW1 Paris. Valentine Louis Georges Eugene Marcel Proust was born in Auteuil, at the home of his great-uncle on 10<sup>th</sup>. July 1871, two months after the end of the Franco-Prussian War. Proust never lived in Auteuil, despite the memorable childhood scenes set there in his work. For most of his life Proust lived at 9 boulevard Malesherbes, near the Madeleine church, where the family moved in 1873 after his brother Robert was born. His childhood corresponded with the consolidation of the French Third Republic. He lived the decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the middle classes that occurred in France during the "Third Republic" and the fin de siècle.

**Proust** would have seen the arrival of electricity, running water, elevators and the telephone. He must also have seen the replacement of horse-drawn tramways by steam, and then by electricity; and the arrival of the automobile. He lived through the golden age of Universal Expositions. He witnessed the construction of the Eiffel Tower in 1889, and the Grand and the Petit Palais, the Gare d'Orsay and the first Métro line, all in 1900.

Proust's father, Achille Adrien Proust, was a prominent pathologist and

epidemiologist, becoming an authority on cholera in Europe and Asia. Proust's mother, Jeanne Clémence Weil, was the daughter of a wealthy Jewish family from Alsace. Jeanne was a sensitive, very intelligent, and well-educated young woman who had a deep understanding of music and literature. Proust had a close relationship with his mother.

**Proust** spent long holidays in the village of Illiers, which became the model for the fictional town of Combray, where some of the most important scenes of *"In Search of Lost Time"* take place. In 1971, Illiers was renamed Illiers-Combray in his honour.

At the age of 9 he had his first asthma attack while returning from the Bois de Boulogne. In 1882, at the age of eleven, Proust became a pupil at the Lycée Condorcet. It was an excellent school with a multitude of famous brainy alumni. Poet Stéphane Mallarmé taught English, and composer Georges Bizet's son Jacques was a classmate. At the Lycée Condorcet (1882–89) he wrote for class magazines.

In 1900 the family moved to 45 rue de Courcelles, near the Parc Monceau. Known as "la plaine Monceau", it was the city's wealthiest neighbourhood. Proust frequented the salons of the Paris Belle Époque, and there he encountered the figures upon which he would model his characters. thanks to the bourgeois salons of Mmes. Straus, Arman de Caillavet, Aubernon, and Madeleine Lemaire, he became an observant habitué of the most exclusive gatherings of the nobility.

Despite his poor health, Proust served a year (1889–90) enlisted in the French army, stationed at Coligny Barracks in Orléans. Proust studied at the School of Political Sciences, taking licences in law (1893) and in literature (1895).

During these student days he was influenced by the philosophers Henri Bergson (his cousin), Paul Desjardins and also by the historian Albert Sorel. In 1896 he published *"Les Plaisirs et les jours"*, a collection of precious and profound short stories most of which were previously published in "Le Banquet" and "La Revue Blanche". From 1895 to 1899 he wrote *Jean Santeuil*, an autobiographical novel that, showed awakening genius and foreshadowed *"À la recherche du temps perdue"*

A gradual disengagement from social life coincided with growing ill health and with his active involvement in the Dreyfus affair of 1897–99. Proust organized petitions and assisted Dreyfus's lawyer Labori, courageously defying the risk of social ostracism. Proust wrote the essay *"Contre Sainte-Beuve"* (published 1954), attacking the French critic's view of literature as "a pastime of the cultivated intelligence". Instead, Proust thought that the artist's task is to release from the buried world of unconscious memory the ever-living reality to which habit makes us blind.

The death of Proust's father in 1903 and of his mother in 1905 left him financially independent and free to attempt his great novel. By 1906, Proust's parents had died, his brother had married, and he felt that the family residence was too big.

He moved to 102 Boulevard Haussmann, a building owned by his Uncle Louis, where he wrote the bulk of his work, mostly in bed. Proust daily bought a fresh cattleya orchid as a boutonnière. He also kept a room, which now bears his name, at the nearby Hôtel Ritz. Today the CIC bank has restored his bedroom, famously lined in cork for soundproofing.

Proust's novel, *Remembrance of Things Past* is a 3,000 pages long autobiography. The first volume, '*Du côté de chez Swann*' (Swann's Way), was refused by the publishers. It was finally issued at the author's expense in November 1913. "*Swann's way*" was published by the progressive young publisher Bernard Grasset and met with some success.

In January 1909 occurred the real-life incident of an involuntary revival of a childhood memory through the taste of tea and a rusk biscuit (madeleine)... Marcel Proust uses "*madeleines*" to contrast involuntary memory with voluntary memory. Eventually Proust realized that the subject of his novel was his own struggle to write.

The novel was published in successive volumes from 1913 to 1927. "*In Search of Lost Time*" is a chronic of the lives of privileged Parisians at the fin de siècle. It has seven volumes, each of which contains two or more novel-length subsections.

Like Einstein, Marcel Proust was, in his own way, a theorist of time and space. "*An hour is not merely an hour,*" Proust wrote, "*it is a vase full of scents and sounds and projects and climates.*" William Carter, Proust biographer, said: "*In the novel he*

*really traces the effects of modern inventions, machines of mass transit, on our perceptions of time and space.*" In "*Remembrance of Things Past,*" the narrator catches sight of an aviator flying and sees him as a symbol of the artist with the power to conquer time and space.

Proust was the first novelist exploring the entire spectrum of human sexuality. Characters could be homosexual in the first part of their lives and heterosexual later, or the reverse. In his youth, Proust struggled with his homosexuality. In an effort to turn him into a "normal man," his father sent him to a brothel. We know Proust loved many men, including the composer Reynaldo Hahn and his own chauffeur, Alfred Agostinelli, and Jacques Bizet, son of the composer Georges Bizet.

Proust based the character of Swann on Charles Haas and Charles Ephrussi, the founder and editor of the "*Gazette des Beaux-Arts*". There was Comte Robert de Montesquiou, who became the Baron de Charlus. Sarah Bernhardt became the actress La Berma. Geneviève Straus and the Comtesse Élisabeth Greffulhe, were melted into one character: the dominant, exquisite, mundane and witty Duchesse de Guermantes. Proust also heard the music of Saint-Saëns and César Franck, which would become Vinteuil's famous sonata and septet in the novel.

Proust planned two further volumes but the flight and death of his secretary and chauffeur Alfred Agostinelli and the outbreak of World War I, postponed his projects. During WWI he revised his novel, enriching

and deepening its feeling, texture, and construction, increasing the realistic and satirical elements, and tripling its length.

In June 1919 "*À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*" was published simultaneously with a reprint of *Swann*. In December 1919, through Léon Daudet's recommendation, "*À l'ombre...*" received the Prix Goncourt, and Proust suddenly became world famous. Two more books appeared in his lifetime, with the benefit of his final revision: "*Le Côté de Guermantes*" (1920–21) and "*Sodome et Gomorrhe*" (1921–22). Graham Greene called Proust the "greatest novelist of the 20th century"

In 1919 Proust's widowed aunt sold the Hausmann building, and he moved to 44 rue Hamelin in the 16<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, where he died not far from where he was born. Proust died before he could review the proofs of the last three volumes, which were published posthumously and edited by his brother, Robert. He died in Paris of pneumonia, succumbing to a weakness of the lungs that many had mistaken for a form of hypochondria.

His funeral Mass was held in the Saint Pierre de Chaillot chapel on Avenue Marceau. Like so many residents of the beaux quartiers, including his parents, his brother and sister-in-law, Proust was buried in Père Lachaise cemetery.

Between 1922 and 1931, C. K. Scott Moncrieff, appearing under the title "Remembrance of Things Past", translated the book into English. When Scott Moncrieff's translation was later revised by Terence Kilmartin,

and by D. J. Enright the title of the novel was changed to the more literal "*In Search of Lost Time*". In 1995 Penguin undertook a fresh translation of the book by editor Christopher Prendergast: Its six volumes, were published in Britain in 2002.

"*À la recherche du temps perdu*" is Proust's own life, told as an allegorical search for truth. Marcel Proust's novel has a circular construction and must be considered in the light of the revelation with which it ends.

#### LES BALLETS RUSSES

The Ballets Russes was a ballet company established in 1909 by the Russian impresario **Serge Diaghilev**. He was born into a wealthy Russian family of vodka distillers. He was accustomed to moving in the upper-class circles that provided the company's patrons and benefactors. From childhood, Diaghilev had been passionately interested in music. His ambition to become a composer was dashed when (in 1894) Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov told him he had no talent.

In 1890 he enrolled at the Faculty of Law, St. Petersburg: there he was introduced to artists and intellectuals. In 1898, several members of The Pickwickians founded the journal "*Mir iskusstva*" (World of Art) under the editorship of Diaghilev. As early as 1902, *Mir iskusstva* included reviews of concerts, operas, and ballets in Russia. Alexandre Benois, who exerted a considerable influence on Diaghilev's thinking, chiefly wrote the latter.

In 1906 Diaghilev organized the ground-breaking Paris Exhibition of Russian Art at the Petit Palais, the first

major showing of Russian art in the West. Its enormous success created a Parisian fascination with all things Russian. Diaghilev organized a 1907 season of Russian music at the Paris Opéra.

In 1908, Diaghilev returned to the Paris Opéra with six performances of Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*, starring basso Fyodor Chaliapin. Sergei Diaghilev had already enjoyed success in Paris in 1908, when he presented a season of Russian art, music, and opera. In 1909, Diaghilev presented his first Paris "Saison Russe" devoted exclusively to ballet.

It was an itinerant ballet company based in Paris that performed between 1909 and 1929 throughout Europe and on tours to North and South America. The company was initially in residence at the Théâtre Mogador and Théâtre du Châtelet, in Paris years later moving to Monte Carlo.

In 1911 it was presented under "Diaghilev's Ballets Russes" and made its debut in London. Its' original members were from the Tsar's Imperial Ballet of St. Petersburg, Russia where all its dancers were associated and trained. The company never performed in Russia, where the Revolution disrupted society. The company consisted of 13 members, all attaining a very high standard of dance.

The company featured and premiered works by the great choreographers Marius Petipa, Michel Fokine, Bronislava Nijinska, Leonide Massine, Vaslav Nijinsky, and a very young George Balanchine at the start of his

career. Diaghilev commissioned works from composers such as Igor Stravinsky and Claude Debussy, and artists such as Léon Bakst, Picasso, Matisse, and designer Coco Chanel.

It created a sensation in Western Europe because of the great vitality of Russian ballet compared to French dance. Diaghilev's Ballets Russes became one of the most influential ballet companies of the 20<sup>th</sup>. century, in part because of the collaboration of contemporary choreographers, composers, artists, dancers and designers. Its works were part of the avant-garde culture in Paris and the rest of Europe.

In 1914, Leonide Massine joined Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. He emerged as a talented new choreographer, drawing on influences from the countries of his travels, notably Italy and Spain.

On April 16<sup>th</sup>. 1914 was the premiere of the one-act ballet, *Papillons* choreographed by Fokine. It was also the premiere of another of Fokine's one-act ballet, *La Légende de Joseph*. Only a month later, on May 24<sup>th</sup>. it was Fokine's opera premiere *Le Coq d'Or*.

A few days later, on May 26<sup>th</sup>. it was the premiere performance of *Le Rossignol* (The Nightingale) choreographed by Boris Romanov. Finishing off the summer season in June, Fokine premiered his newest choreographed piece, *Midas*.

As the driving force of the company, Diaghilev gathered a wide range of composers, choreographers, designers and performers. He maintained

ultimate control over every aspect of the productions. His greatest achievement was to ensure the close integration of story, music, choreography and design. From the start, Diaghilev's ambition was to generate entirely new ballets rather than repeat others' successes. Each Ballets Russes season might include two or three new productions. The Ballets Russes appeared revolutionary, but they drew on existing traditions of ballet production. Ballet uses the human body to express story and emotion.

When war broke out, the Ballets Russes had five successful years and were just dispersing for their summer holidays. The First World War (1914-18) nearly destroyed the Ballets Russes. The First World War saw the collapse of the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires.

In 1914 Diaghilev and Stravinsky were successful citizens of imperial Russia. By 1918 they were stateless exiles from a Bolshevik Russia wracked by civil war. After a brutal civil war, Russia came under Communist control and Diaghilev never returned.

The company did not reform until May 1915, when Diaghilev rebuilt it for the first North American tour. The belle époque that had seen the birth of the Ballets Russes had been shattered forever.

#### LES BALLETS RUSSES IN AMERICA

Diaghilev's Ballets Russes went to America in 1916. That was the only tour that Diaghilev's Ballets Russes ever danced as a company in the

United States. They opened on January 17<sup>th</sup>. 1916 with *The Firebird*, *La Princesse Enchantée*, *Le Soleil de Nuit* and *Schéhérézade*. Nijinsky didn't join the tour until the second half; Leonide Massine had been dancing his roles.

The American public, except those who travelled abroad, had never seen a Russian ballet before. The Ballets Russes toured popular works to new audiences in North and South America

The tour wound up back in New York on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. 1916, at the Metropolitan Opera House. On May 6<sup>th</sup>. they set sail back to Europe on the *Dante Alighieri* ship, loaded with a cargo of ammunition, horses and the Diaghilev Ballets Russes dancers. World War I was in full swing and, the main threat to their welfare while sailing home was from German submarines lurking off the Spanish coast.

#### EPILOGUE

The final season for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes was in 1929. On July 26<sup>th</sup>., 1929, Diaghilev's Ballets Russes gave its final performance at Covent Garden Theatre in London. Diaghilev died in Venice, Italy, on August 19<sup>th</sup>. 1929. He is buried on the nearby island of San Michele in the San Michele Cemetery. Diaghilev's achievements continue to inspire the worlds of art, theatre, music and dance.

#### LEGACY

The designs and colours used in Ballets Russes productions forged a new aesthetic in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. century. The revolutionary ballets

filtered through to theatre, fashion and interior design. Diaghilev's created a notable strand of Russian style. Perhaps the most evident legacy is the music Diaghilev commissioned. Ballet scores by Stravinsky, de Falla and others continue to be performed in concert halls around the world.

The repertoire of the Ballets Russes remains an invaluable resource for choreographers today. Over 200 different versions of The Rite of Spring have been choreographed since Diaghilev commissioned it.

