

press release



VIS-A-VIS: FERNAND LÉGER AND FRIENDS

Archipenko, Arp, Calder, Csaky, Delaunay,
Gris, Laurens, Le Corbusier, Lipchitz, Ozenfant

6 May to 30 October 2017

Opening on 6 May 2017 at 11 am

Musée national Fernand Léger
Chemin du Val de Pôme
06410 Biot (France)

Exhibition organised by the National Museum
of the 20th Century of Alpes-Maritimes

An independent soul in both his life and art, Fernand Léger (1881-1955) had his finger firmly on the pulse of the times. Throughout his career, he forged ties with his contemporaries and nurtured a deep curiosity for the work of the painters, sculptors, poets and architects around him.

The exhibition "*Vis-à-vis: Fernand Léger and Friends. Alexandre Archipenko, Jean Arp, Alexander Calder, Joseph Csaky, Robert Delaunay, Juan Gris, Henri Laurens, Le Corbusier, Jacques Lipchitz, Amédée Ozenfant*" is the first instalment in an art and culture programme that looks at the friendships and collaborative relationships that painter Fernand Léger forged with his contemporaries.

This exhibition is part of a broader initiative running throughout 2017 in celebration of Fernand Léger's work, with the Centre Pompidou - Metz showcasing a large-scale retrospective from 20 May to 30 October 2017 entitled "*Fernand Léger: Beauty everywhere*", in a tribute to the painter's multi-faceted personality and life. For the retrospective exhibition in Metz, organised in celebration of the Centre Pompidou's 40th anniversary, the Musée National Fernand Léger agreed to an exceptional loan of numerous masterpieces such as *Les Toits de Paris (Roofs in Paris, 1912)* and the iconic *Les Constructeurs, définitif (Construction Workers, Final State, 1950)* painting.

In parallel to this, the Musée National d'Art Moderne - Centre Pompidou in Paris also agreed to an exceptional loan of twelve masterpieces, including paintings and sculptures, through which the Musée National Fernand Léger will be offering a fresh take on Fernand Léger's legacy in an unprecedented glimpse of the museum's extremely comprehensive collections.

Each painting or sculpture from the Musée National d'Art Moderne will be positioned facing ('vis-à-vis') a piece by Fernand Léger, thus creating unique and original relationships between the artworks. Inspired by countless enriching artistic friendships, Fernand Léger's work was consistently renewed and replenished through his relationships with other artists and the major artistic movements of the early 20th Century.

This first chapter opens with Fernand Léger's move to La Ruche in Montparnasse in 1908, an artistic hotbed and community where the young painter was to meet a plethora of artists, such as the sculptors Alexandre Archipenko, Henri Laurens, Jacques Lipchitz and Joseph Csaky, who were experimenting to extend pictorial cubism to sculpture.

It was through cubism in the early 1920s that Fernand Léger met Amédée Ozenfant and Le Corbusier, the founders of purism, with whom he forged close friendships, nurtured throughout his lifetime. The artistic approach he shared with Ozenfant led to the two men to share a common teaching experience at the Académie Moderne in Paris.

Set within the context of a pared-back pictorial style, reduced to its essence, featuring purity of line and understated colours, Léger developed his own, more personal, version of purism, creating new relationships with objects, as seen in his experimental film, *Ballet Mécanique* (1924).

Later, in the 1930s, having moved away from the geometric shapes of the previous period, Fernand Léger's work evolved in a new, biomorphic register, drawing on the flexible, random shapes found in nature. His work establishes interactions of form with organic pieces *Sculpture automatique (Hommage à Rodin)* (1938) and *Torse-fruit* (1960) by sculptor Jean Arp.

From 1912 on, Fernand Léger began the 'fight for colour' with painter Robert Delaunay. In 1937, the two took part in the Universal Exposition, joining forces with the shared aim of surpassing the boundaries of the canvas to experiment with architectural possibilities in painting. *Rythmes sans fin* (Endless Rhythm, 1934) by Robert Delaunay, with its unusual format and entirely abstract composition, illustrates this quest for lending paintings mural proportions and a decorative dimension, and introducing artwork into the public sphere.

Fernand Léger and American sculptor Alexander Calder enjoyed a long friendship that began in 1930. The two artists first met in Paris through their shared love of the circus, and strived towards the same goal of creating movement in their work and embracing freedom of form and colour, albeit both through their own unique forms of expression. To illustrate how this friendship endured after World War 2 and Fernand Léger's return from exile in the United States, the exhibition positions the abstract pictorial forms of Léger's later-year works next to the monumental mobile/stabile statue by Alexander Calder, *Empennage* (1953), an exceptional loan from the Fondation Maeght de Saint-Paul-de-Vence.

This exhibition paints the portrait of an artist who drew on his wide circle of friends to nourish his own thoughts and ideas, while contributing to modernism. Fernand Léger made his own personal and original contribution to the various artistic movements that flourished in the first half of the 20th Century.

General curator: Anne Dopffer, General Curator, Director of the National Museums of the 20th Century of Alpes-Maritimes

Curators: Julie Guttierrez, Curator at the Fernand Léger National Museum
Nelly Maillard, Head of Collections at the Fernand Léger National Museum



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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www.musee-fernandleger.fr

Opening hours

Every day, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., from November to April; and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. from May to October. Closed on Tuesdays, December 25th, January 1st, May 1st

Ticket prices

Admission includes access to the permanent collection and an audio guide (available in French, English, Italian, German, Russian, Japanese and Chinese, ID required).

€7.50, reduced rate €6, groups €7 (groups of 10 or more) including the permanent collection for the duration of the exhibition

Free for under-26s (European Union citizens), visitors with a disability (MDPH disability card) and teachers.

Free admission for all, every first Sunday of the month.

How to get there

By train: Train Station SNCF, Biot

By bus: Bus lines Envibus n°10 and 21 (stop musée Fernand Léger)

By motorway : turn off at the Villeneuve-Loubet exit, the RN7, then after 2 km turn off to Antibes for 2 km and follow the signs for Biot

By plane: Nice-Côte d'Azur, airport, 15 km

Disabled access, disabled toilets

Parking: free for buses and cars

Audioguides

Individual adult in English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Chinese

Individual children in French and English

Videoguides in LSF

For audio guides and visio guides, ID required

Booking visits with speakers and workshops

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Reservations visits without guide

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