Making Sense of Modern Art
Class 5:

Breaking the Picture Plane: Cubism and Early Abstraction

11/5/2026

Helpful tidbits



- Du Cubisme 1912 Treatise defined Cubism
- Artists were social and successful
- 1910 Salon d’Automne
- Salon de Independants Spring 1910, 1911,1912
- Bateau Lavoir – Montmartre ballroom and piano factory that became 20 art studios, then Picasso’s home (1904-1911) and unofficial hang out for many artists.
- Section d’Or (Golden Section) 1911-14 - Duchamp home and gathering place
- Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) – writer and art critic. Big fan of Cubism.

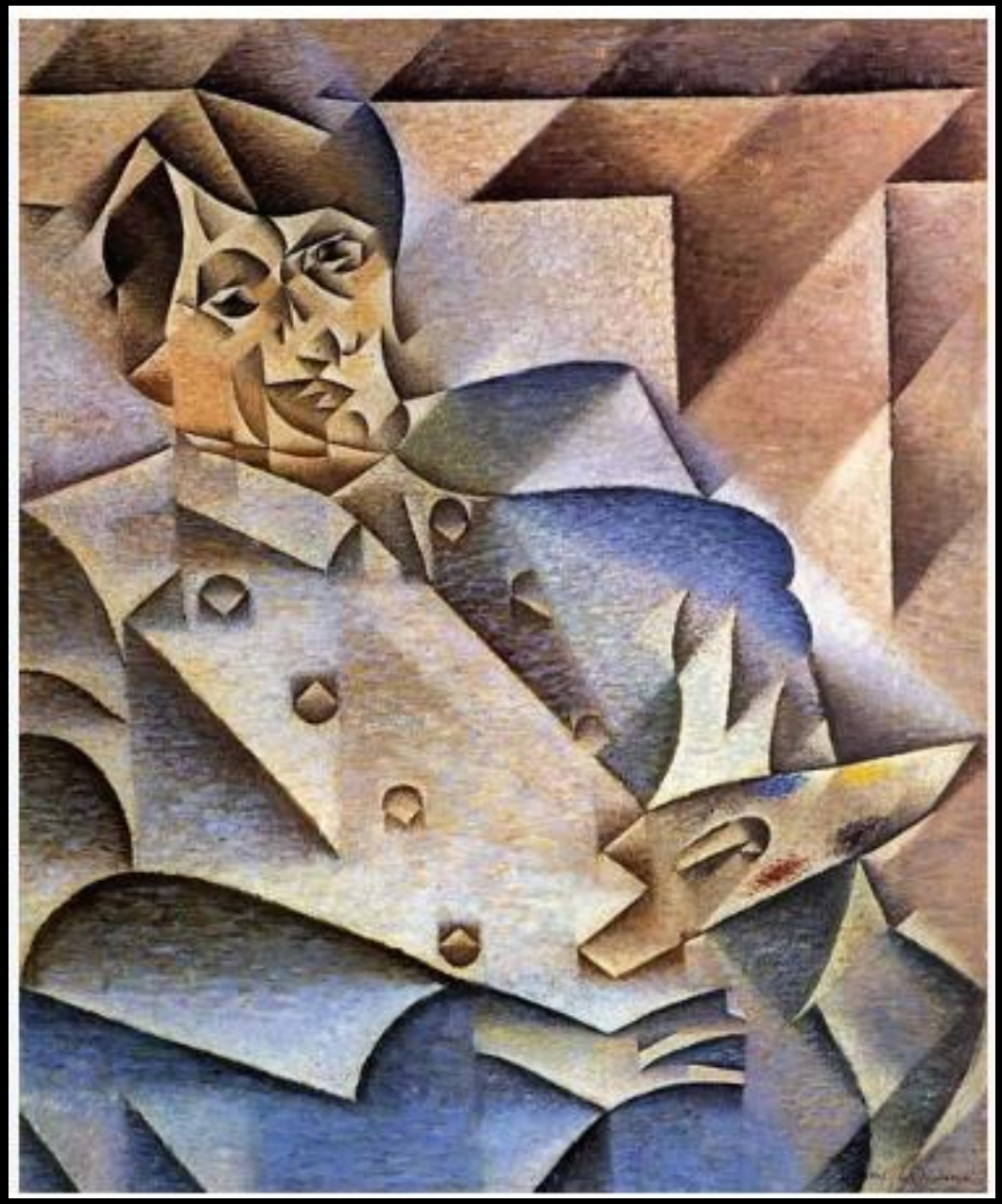
Cubism evolution



- Cubist subjects are analyzed, broken up, and reassembled in an abstract form. Instead of depicting objects from a single perspective, the artist depicts the subject from multiple perspectives to represent the subject in a greater context
- Orphism, “pure lyrical abstraction,” uniting sensation and color, changing to focus only on form and color.
- Post Industrial – work shifts from labor to knowledge and so does art, Modernism.

Du “Cubisme” 1912 Treatise

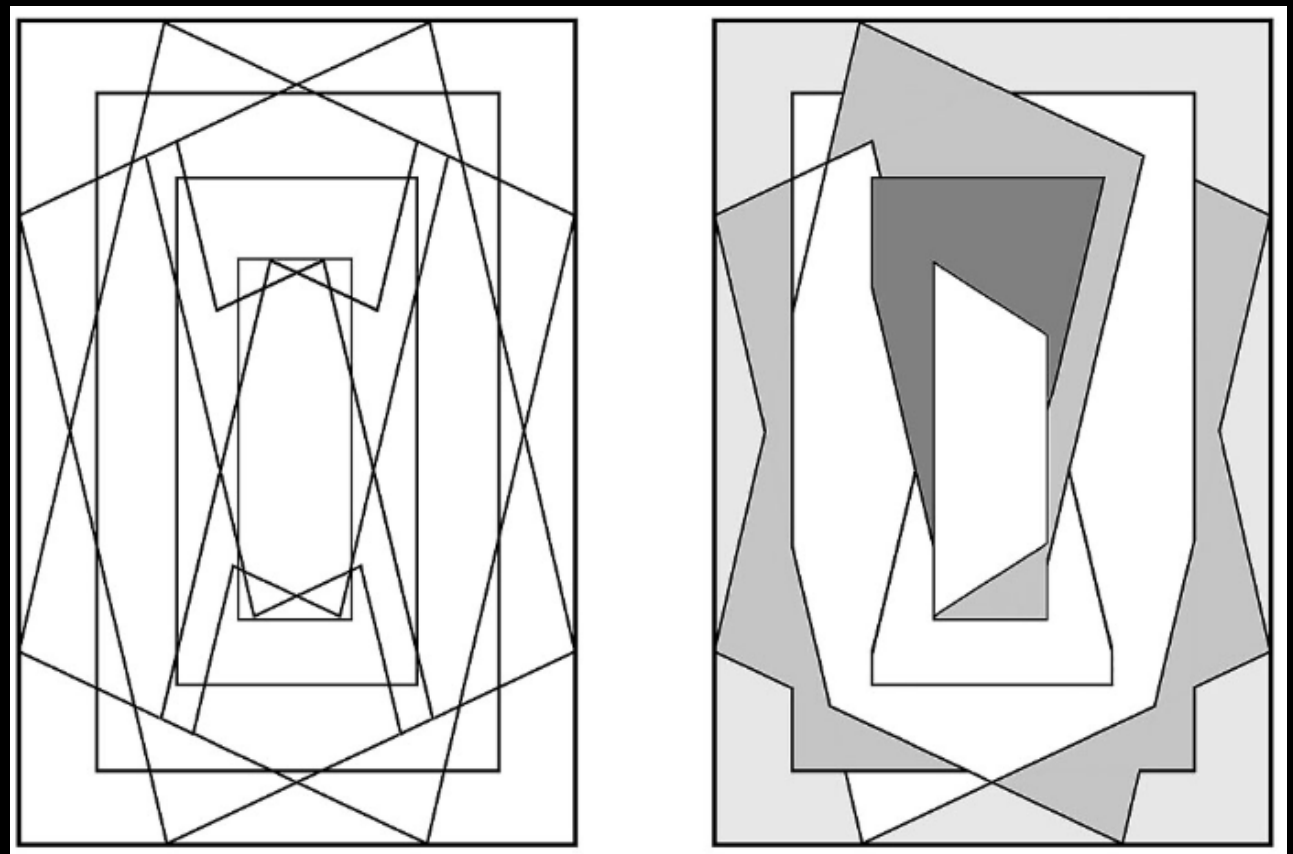
- By Gleizes and Metzinger.
- Cubism itself was not based on any geometrical theory
- The essence was in the understanding of space other than by the classical method of perspective; an understanding that would include and integrate the fourth dimension (movement).
- Cubism, with its new geometry, its dynamism and multiple view-point perspective, not only represented a departure from Euclid's model, but it achieved, according to Gleizes and Metzinger, a better representation of the real world: one that was mobile and changing in time.
- Included photos of work from: Paul Cézanne (1), Gleizes (5), Metzinger (5), Fernand Léger (5), Juan Gris (1), Francis Picabia (2), Marcel Duchamp (2), Pablo Picasso (1), Georges Braque (1), André Derain (1), and Marie Laurencin (2).



Juan Gris, Portrait of Pablo Picasso. Spain, 1912, Oil on canvas, Signed and inscribed, l.r.: "Hommage á Pablo Picasso/Juan Gris, 93.3 × 74.4 cm (36 3/4 × 29 5/16 in.)

What to look for in Cubism

1. Geometric shapes to convey essence instead of realism
2. Fragmented forms to allow multiple viewpoints represented simultaneously
3. Various angles in a single composition, nontraditional perspective.
4. Limited color in Analytical Cubism
5. Brighter colors considered to be Orphism/Crystal Cubism, decorative, synthetic.



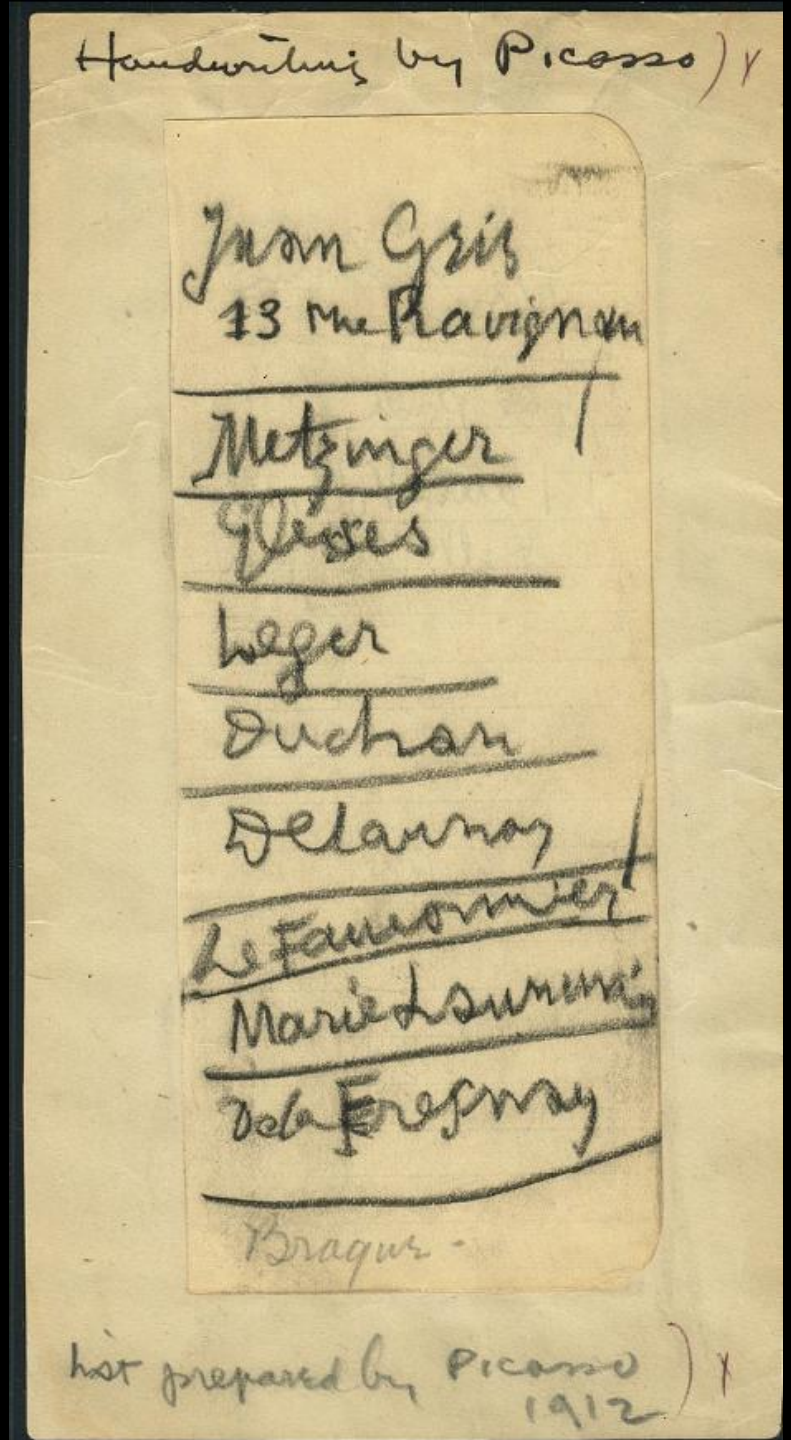
Albert Gleizes, Plastic Spatial and Rhythmic System, from La Peinture et ses lois, 1923. A conceptual study on spatial dynamics and movement in painting.

Visual basics to look for in Art

Elements		Principles
Line		Balance
Shape		Contrast
Form		Emphasis
Space		Movement
Color		Pattern (Repetition)
Value		Rhythm
Texture		Unity (Harmony)

Armory show: Picasso's list

- Jean Gris – 1887-1927, Spanish, Cubism (not in Armory Show)
- Jean Metzinger – 1883-1956, cofounder of cubism (not in Armory Show)
- Albert Gleizes 1881-1953, cofounder of cubism
- Fernand Leger 1881-1955
- Marcel Duchamp 1887-1968 post industrial perspective
- Robert Delauney 1885-1941 Orphism
- Henri le Fauconnier 1881-1946 (not in Armory show)
- Marie Laurencin 1883-1956
- Roger de La Fresnaye 1885-1925 Cubism
- Georges Braques 1882-1963 Cubism
- Pablo Picasso, Spanish, 1881-1973 Cubism



	Influenced by/Influenced	Worked in
Jean Metzinger	Section d'Or Seurat, Cross, Cezanne German expressionism	1912 Du “Cubisme” with Gleizes Fauvism Proto cubism
Albert Gleizes	Section d'Or Impressionism School of Paris (expressionist)	1912 Du “Cubisme” with Gleizes Abstract art Bauhaus
Fernand Leger	Section d'Or Filmmaking	Cubism Mechanical period
Roger de La Fresnaye	Section d’Or Symbolism, Nabi Fauvism	Cubism Orphism
Marie Laurencin	Section d’Or and Bateau Lavoir poet	Avant garde Cubism Abstraction featuring women and animals
Robert Delauney	Section d’Or and Bateau Lavoir Neoimpressionism	Cubism Orphism
Georges Braques	Bateau Lavoir Inspired by Fauves Decorator and house painter	Collage co inventor post industrial perspective
Pablo Picasso	Bateau Lavoir Classic training	Collage co inventor post industrial perspective
Marcel Duchamp	Bateau Lavoir Chess player, inventor Typography in army	Avant garde, Orphism, Futurism, Dada, post industrial perspective Readymades

Jean Metzinger (1883-1956)

- Not in Armory show, instead was in NYC Exhibition of Cubist and Futurist Pictures
- Professional painter from age of 20
- Connector and intermediary of different types of cubism.
- Influenced by DaVinci, the golden ratio, Seurat
- Started faceting form in 1908



Jean Metzinger, 1911-12, Man with a Pipe (Portrait of an American Smoker), oil on canvas, 92.7 x 65.4 cm (36.5 x 25.75 in), Lawrence University, Appleton, Wisconsin.

Albert Gleizes (1881-1953)

GLEIZES, ALBERT
195 La Femme aux Phlox
196 L'Homme au Balcon



- Poor student, Infantry soldier, then began painting in 1901 as impressionist.
- Created artist communities that came and went.
- Cubism represented a "*normal evolution of an art that was mobile like life itself*."[5]
- Wanted to convey sensations, not objects
- Emphasis on abstraction.

Woman with Phlox, 1910, Oil on canvas, 32 1/8 × 39 7/16 in. (81.6 × 100.2 cm) Museum of Fine Arts Houston

Fernand Léger



Nude Model in the Studio (Le modèle nu dans l'atelier), 1912–13, oil on burlap, 20x38 in (128.6 × 95.9 cm), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



LEGER, FERNAND
361 Etude, No. 2
362 Etude, No. 1

La Femme en Bleu (Woman in Blue), 1912, oil on canvas, 38x76in) (193 × 129.9 cm,) Kunstmuseum Basel. Exhibited at the 1912 Salon d'Automne, Paris

DELAUNAY, ROBERT
255 Route de Laon
256 Les fenêtres sur la Ville
Lent by M. K. á Paris
257 Ville de Paris

Robert Delaunay



La Ville de Paris, Oil on Canvas, 1910 – 1912, 159x105 in,
City of Paris Museum

- Color looked prismatic, was told by colleagues it was “decorative” but became Orphism.
- La Ville de Paris rejected for being too big
- Pulled all his work out of Armory Show

Marie Laurencin (1883-1956)

LAURENCIAN, MARIE

383 Portrait (Water Colour)
384 Desdemona (Drawing)
385 Jeune Fille avec eventail (Drawing)
386 Jeune Fille (Drawing)
387 La toilette des jeunes filles
388 La Poetesse
389 Nature Morte

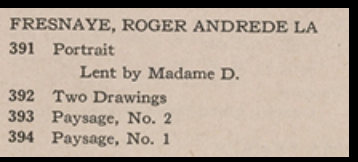


- 1923: "Cubism has poisoned three years of my life, preventing me from doing any work. [...] As long as I was influenced by the great men surrounding me, I could do nothing."
- She changed her work to focus on women and animals in pastels, with simple lines.
- Museum in Nagano Japan, currently closed.

1911 La Toilette des jeunes filles (Die Jungen Damen) black and white photograph of oil painting in Du Cubisme

Roger de La Fresnaye (1885-1925)

- Aristocrat, son of French officer
- Attended both Julian Academy and Ecole des Beaux Arts
- Influenced by Braques and Picasso, but more by Delauney because of structure and prismatic colors.
- Died of TB after WWI


FRESNAYE, ROGER ANDREDE LA
391 Portrait
Lent by Madame D.
392 Two Drawings
393 Paysage, No. 2
394 Paysage, No. 1



Roger de La Fresnaye, *The Conquest of the Air (La Conquête de l'Air)*, 1913. Oil on canvas, (93x76in) 235.9 x 195.6 cm. Sold for 2,370,500 Euros in 2017

Georges Braque (1882-1963)

BRAQUE, GEORGES
205 Le Violon
206 Anvers
207 La Forêt
Lent by M. Henry Kahnweiller

- Fauvist, house painter and decorator like family business.
- 1908-1912 interested in geometry, light, simultaneous perspective. Started working with Picasso in 1909.
- Summer of 1911 to 1914 collaboration with Picasso in Céret in the French Pyrenees, experimenting. Developed collage together.
- Injured during WW1.
- “A daring man who despises form, reducing everything to geometric schema, to cubes.”

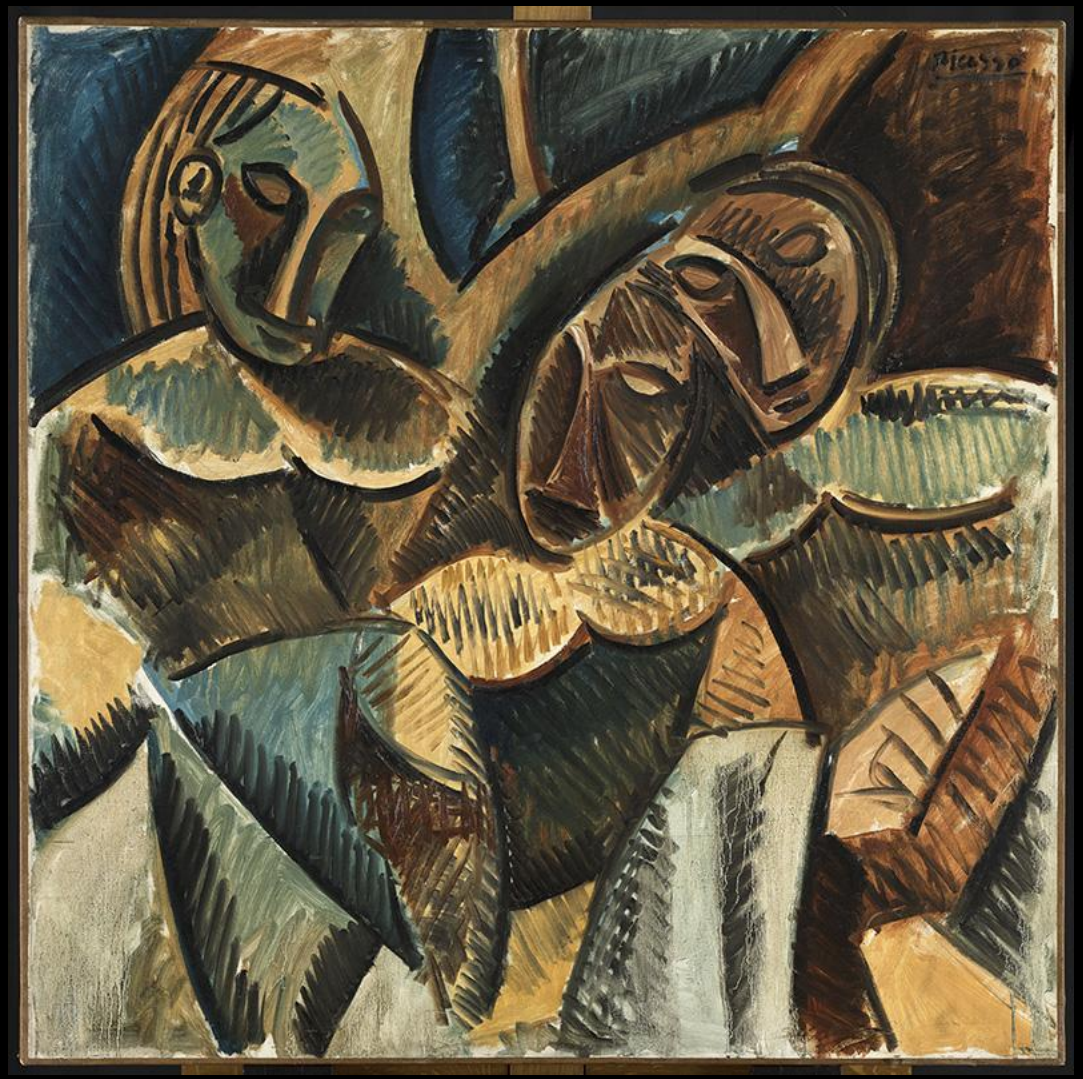


Georges Braque, 1909 (September), Violin and Palette (Violon et palette, Dans l'atelier), oil on canvas, 91.7 × 42.8 cm, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Picasso (1881-1973) Spanish

PICASSO, PAUL

345 Nature Morte No. 1
346 Nature Morte, No. 2
Lent by M. Leo Stein
347 Les Arbres
348 Mme. Soler
349 Tête d'homme
350 La Femme au Pot de Moutarde
Lent by M. Henry Kahnweiller
351 Drawing
Lent by Alfred Stieglitz, Esq.



Pablo Picasso, "Three Figures Under a Tree", 1908, Oil on canvas, 99 x 99 cm, Musée national Picasso-Paris

- Classically trained since age 7.
- Produced more than 61,000 works.
- Blue Period (1901-4)
- Rose Period (1904-6)
- African influenced (1907-9) – only saw masks in Paris museums.
- Analytic Cubism (1909-12)
- Synthetic (Crystal) Cubism (1912-1919)
- Remaining life combined many styles.

Marcel Duchamp 1887-1968

- 4 out of 7 siblings because successful artists.
- Classically trained.
- Cubism is "an arithmetic relationship between the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed”
- After Salon Independants controversy, he withdrew from painting groups to work as librarian and study math and physics.
- Last major work on canvas in 1912, The Large Glass. Influenced by The Ego and Its Own (Stirner) and Impressions d’Afrique (Roussel).

DUCHAMP, MARCEL

239 Le roi et la Reine entourés de Nus Vites
240 Portrait de joueurs d'echeque
241 Nu descendant un escalier
242 Nu (sketch)



Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2) 1912
Oil on canvas, 57 7/8 × 35 1/8 inches (147 × 89.2 cm
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Still Life with Glass and Lemon



Paul Cézanne 1877, oil on canvas, 7 1/4 x 11 3/4 in. (18.4 x 29.8 cm)



Pablo Picasso, 1910. oil on canvas, 29 1/8 x 39 13/16 in. (74 x 101.1 cm)



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, 1892, Oil, canvas 30x43 in (77 x 111.25 cm)



Roy Lichtenstein, 1974 Lithograph and screenprint with debossed plate, Image: 32 9/16 × 23 7/8 in. (82.7 × 60.7 cm)

Slow Looking Exercise

- Look at the work for at least 30 seconds.
- Describe what you see (Elements and Principles).
- What do you think is happening?
- What evidence are you using?

- Still-Life (Cincinnati Art Museum
- Jean Metzinger 1919, oil on canvas
- 45 3/4 x 31 3/4 in. (116.2 x 80.6 cm)



