



The Cubist war Fernand Léger and the Great War

Musée national Fernand Léger, Biot

25 October 2014 - 2 February 2015

Preview, Saturday, October 25 at 11 am

Exhibition organised by the Alpes-Maritimes' National Museums of the 20th century



To mark the centenary of the Great War, the Fernand Léger National Museum in Biot presents an exhibition on Fernand Léger and the Great War.

Called up to the Engineering corps in 1914, Fernand Léger remained a simple soldier until 1917, when he was hospitalised and discharged. Initially a sapper and then a porter, he was posted to Argonne and Verdun. The exhibition shows the war through the eyes Fernand Léger but also the impact it has had on his work in the early twenties.

The exhibition opens with the vibrant colour painting entitled *Le 14 juillet* (July 14) painted before he was called up. Then the artist spent four years producing colourless sketches in his notebooks. Given that it was impossible to paint, the artist produced numerous drawings, including a recent acquisition *Paysage en Argonne* (Argonne Landscape), which is given pride of place in this exhibition. These drawings in a geometric style, embody the Cubist world view which emerged in 1910 and is adapted here to a unique iconography: the ravaged landscapes North-East of France.

The war was also a seminal human experience for Léger. The rich correspondence he kept up with his family, Louis Poughon, a childhood friend and Jeanne Lohy, his future wife, help us understand him. We can hear some of these letters read by the students of the Valbonne International School in an audio room, designed by the students of Pasteur vocational arts and crafts high school of Nice, at the heart of the exhibition. This exceptional first-hand account gives us an insight into the experience of war, living as he was, in the worst possible conditions alongside his fellow soldiers in the trench. Fernand Léger constantly spoke of his admiration for them. At their side, he discovered the social function of art.

From 1917, Léger began using colour again with the depiction of a *Pot à tisane* (Tea pot), a ubiquitous object that he drew at the Villepinte hospital before painting it again in 1918, in the richly brocaded setting of the house in Vernon, where he was convalescing.. This work, on loan from the National Museum of Modern Art-the Pompidou Centre, is a stunning example. This period sees the start of a new visual language that moves away from the his abstract Cubist period. The exhibition also includes the postwar period through works from Léger's mechanical period. Magnified by the war, modern beauty becomes a source of inspiration for the demobbed artist.

In the auditorium, a "cinema for the ear" gives a contemporary take on the war through the acousmatic work, *Potentiel de terre*, specifically created by Diane Simon and Nicolas Blondeau, young graduates at Villa Arson, the national art school in Nice.

The exhibition has been awarded the label: Mission du Centenaire 14-18.

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Exhibition curators

Diana Gay, curator at the National Fernand Léger Museum

Nelly Maillard, collections manager at the National Fernand Léger Museum

National Fernand Léger Museum

Chemin du Val de Pôme
06410 Biot (France)
T+33 (0)4 92 91 50 30
www.musee-fernandleger.fr

Opening hours

Every day except Tuesday, 25 December and 1 January from 10 am to 6 pm, and until 5 pm as from November

Ticket prices

Tickets: €5.50, concessions: €4, Groups: €5 (minimum 10 people) including the permanent collections. Free for visitors under 26 (EU nationals and long residence in EU) and free for everyone on the first Sunday of each month.

How to get there

By Train: Biot SNCF train station, then take bus number 10 from Biot station (Stop located on the left, when you exit the station) to the village of Biot (alight at the stop for Fernand Léger Museum).

By motorway: take the Villeneuve-Loubet exit, the N7, then after 2 Km turn off to Antibes and follow the signs for Biot.

Nice-Côte d'Azur airport, 15 km.

Disabled access, disabled toilets

Adult Audio guides

For visitors in French, English, German, Italian, Russian, Japanese and Chinese.

Multimedia guides in LSF (French sign language) and audio guides for children for visitors in French and English (ID required).

Bookings for guided tours and workshops

visiteguide-mn06@culture.gouv.fr

T+33(0)4 93 53 87 20

F+33(0)4 93 53 87 39

General Bookings

leger.groupe@culture.gouv.fr

Bookshop-Gift shop

T+33 (0)4 92 91 50 20

regie.biot@rmngp.fr

Museum café

T+33 (0)4 92 91 50 22

Online publications

Articles by Annette Becker, a professor of contemporary history at the University Paris X Nanterre West: *Fernand Léger at war: hide yourself, show yourself, camouflage yourself?* and Diana Gay: *The seminal experience of the Great War in the work of Fernand Léger*

Downloadable articles

www.musee-fernandleger.fr

www.musees-national-alpesmaritimes.fr

Press contact

Hélène FINCKER

helene@fincker.com

T+33 (0)6 60 98 49 88

Françoise BORELLO

francoise.borello@culture.gouv.fr

T+33 (0)4 93 53 75 73

T+33 (0)6 70 74 38 71

