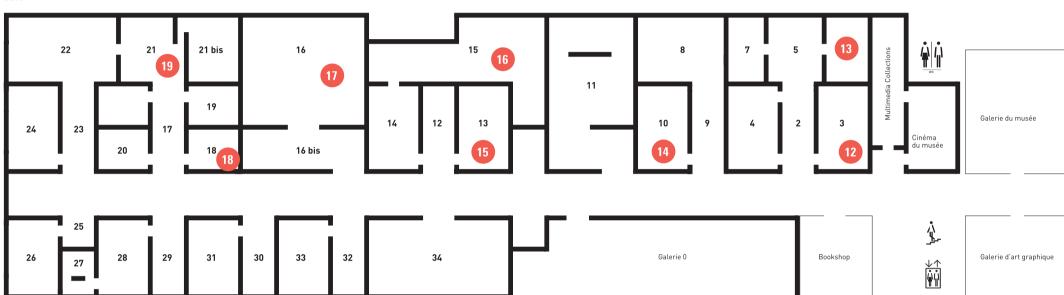
#### **Contemporary Collections**

#### 1965-2021

Level 4



# Otto Dix (1891-1969) Bildnis der Journalistin Sylvia von Harden, 1926

Between 1925 and 1927, Otto Dix painted a series of portraits that characterised the New Objectivity movement: a cold realistic style that satirised German society, inspired by early 16th century German masters like Grünewald, Cranach or Holbein, not only in the use of their technique – tempera on wood – but also in the choice of uncompromising representation. In contrast with the friendly environment of the Romanisches Café, a centre for the literary and artistic world of Berlin, the journalist is depicted in isolation, in the role of the emancipated intellectual she sought to play in 1920s Berlin.

## Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) The Frame, 1938

at the age of 18. Frida Kahlo started painting while lying on a hospital bed. This was the beginning of a long series of self-portraits. In 1928 she met Diego Rivera, the muralist, and married him the following year. Her tumultuous life with him, her physical and mental suffering then became the main themes of her work. The self-portrait is inserted at the center of a reverse glass painting, a Mexican artisan product, which was destined to frame a mirror, a photographic portrait or a holy image. The artist's face appears in the midst of a luxuriant decor whose chromatic and ornamental exuberance are reminiscent of the accessories, the pre-Colombian objects and the garden of her house in Mexico City.

## Joan Miró (1893-1983) Bleu I, Bleu II, Bleu III, 1961

The Catalan artist was part of the Surrealist movement in 1924. His painting was inspired by the free and dreamlike images in the poetry of Apollinaire, Éluard and many others. Painted between December 1960 and March 1961, Joan Miró's three Bleus were designed in the artist's new studio, built in Palma de Mallorca by his friend José Lluis Sert in 1956. They are the outcome of a long process of gestation. Miró returns to his meditation on space and on the act of painting. These three masterpieces are the result, according to Miró, of a "very great internal tension in order to arrive at a desired sobriety".

## **Yves Klein (1928-1962)** SE 71, L'Arbre, grande éponge *bleue*, 1962

Born in Mexico in 1907 and victim of a terrible accident For Yves Klein, beauty existed before the work of art was created, but in an invisible state. His task was therefore not to create it, but to grasp it wherever i was, in the air, in the material, on the surface of bodies, and to render it visible. All these materials were seized by the artist who used them to impregnate his tools, his works, his models and the spectator. As of 1957, he reduced his painting to a single blue only, a colour "beyond dimensions". With the use of sea sponges, Klein found the absorbent material par excellence. Sea sponges soaked up the blue and formed a powerful image of Klein's utopian universe.

## Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957) **Phoque II**, 1943

The animal form, usually raised vertically in Constantin Brancusi's work, appears here deployed between the vertical and the horizontal. The sculptor allows himself to be guided by the material, in this case blue marble, and in a subtle play of balance brings out the simple form of the seal. This dynamic and spiritual dimension of Brancusi's sculptures can be seen in the group of works displayed in his studio, located outside the Centre and accessible via the Piazza.

# Brancusi studio

The reconstitution is faithful to the studio as the artist left it, with spaces for living, working and exhibiting his works. Brancusi's layout of his sculptures in a spatial and harmonious relationship had become inherent to his process of creation and makes the studio a work of art in its own right. The minimal forms he arrived at, the relationship between the sculpture and the studio space, the elimination of the stand and serial principles would have a fundamental influence on minimalist American artists in the 1960s. (Practical information on the last page)

# BEN (1935) *Le Magasin de Ben*, 1958-1973

In 1958, Ben opened a second-hand shop in Nice, where he bought and sold records, cameras and other items. He gradually turned it into a "total art centre", a place for publications, meeting and talking, attracting artists from all horizons. He assembled all sorts of elements, turning the shop into an quoi" ("Whatever"). His DIY aesthetic and refusal to take things seriously already heralded the spirit of Fluxus, an art movement that emerged in the early 1960s, in which art was central to everyday life.

# Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985) *Le Jardin d'hiver.* 1968-1970

Le Jardin d'hiver was part of the artist's Hourloupe period, illustrated by graphic works that engendered an illusionary world laced with fantasy and nightmare. The stark décor of this cavern features nothing but black lines on a white background. Yet it is a complex project: the ground and walls are uneven and dented, with the black marks apparently enhancing or contradicting the bumps. The entire environment calls our visual and spatial perception

# Agam (1928) *Le Salon Agam*, 1972-1974

Yaacov Agam produced this layout for the Elysée palace in 1971. It was commissioned by the French Head of State, Georges Pompidou. It is a "kinetic" pictorial space on the scale of a living room, complete with walls, ceilings, floor and doors. It was designed according to "polymorphic picture" principles using colourful, bevelled elements. Designed using very specific materials and colours, this work offers the vision of an ever-changing geometric space which moves with the onlooker.

## ଲ Giuseppe Penone (1947) Albero di 7 metri, 1999

Giuseppe Penone stripped half of a block of squared timber, leaving behind the exact shape of the tree trunk and branches it was from, representing a specific moment in its growth. The work comprises two sections from the same beam, placed head to toe. The non-sculpted ends form a base and stabilise the tree pointing up and down. The artist continues to produce these "trees" today, in a quest to reveal imperceptible processes and energy in the living world.

## **16** Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) *Plight*, 1985

*Plight* is an environment comprising two rooms lined with thick rolls of felt, Joseph Beuys' favourite material. Inside, visitors may feel warmth and protection, all the while feeling anxiety at being cut off from the world. The felt absorbs sound, making the grand piano's presence quite incongruous. A blackboard and a thermometer have been placed upon it. The work demonstrates further ambivalence and complexity in its title, which evokes constraints, duty yet also a promise.

#### Henri Matisse (1869-1954) La Blouse roumaine

[The Romanian Blouse], 1940

Henri Matisse worked for six months on this canvas. He achieved this progressive work of simplification in order to achieve the synthetic treatment of line and colour to which he aspired. In its definitive form, the details of the model were eliminated, erased or covered over in order to reach a harmony between the three colours, a decorative simplicity and an opulence in the curves full of vitality. "My line drawing is the purest and most direct translation of my emotion. The simplification of means enables this" he explained. La Blouse roumaine marks the conclusion of this research and prefigures the pure colours of the artist's last period, that of paper cut-outs.

# Fernand Léger (1881-1955) Les Loisirs - Hommage à Louis David [Leisure, Homage to Louis David], 1948-1949

In his dynamic compositions with vivid colours and elementary forms of the twenties, Fernand Léger echoed the new, modern and urban world, which generated progress for humanity, as well as tensions. On returning from the USA during the WWII, the painter also returned to simple subjects "through a direct art, comprehensible for all". In homage to Jacques-Louis David, the painter of the French Revolution, Léger painted popular leisure and holiday activities as a great history painting.

# Marc Chagall (1887-1985) Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel. [The Couple of the Eiffel Tower] 1938-1939

A hotchpotch of memories of Russia, contemporary life in Paris, fantastic animals and music is jumbled around the newly-weds and the cock. Following a first trip to Paris between 1911 and 1914, and after participating in the Bolshevik revolution, Marc and Bella Chagall settled in Paris. The painter captures the sacred dimension of the union, for whom the love of Bella constituted the central pillar of his turbulent life as a Russian immigrant. In 1938-1939, confronted with the signs of an imminent war, Chagall painted a protective painting.

## Anselm Kiefer (1945) Für Velimir Chlebnikow: Schicksale der Völker, 2013-2018

Time, History, war and the human condition underpin the thinking of Anselm Kiefer, tapping into poetry, philosophy, mythology and alchemy. He has based this work on the parascientific theory of Russian poet Velimir Khlebnikov who claimed that naval battles were cyclic events occurring every 317 years. Rusty sculptures of submarines have been assembled in two monumental displays. Onlookers can contemplate their own reflection, becoming characters in the drama staged by the artist.

## Annette Messager (1943) Les Piques, 1992-1993

Featuring dismembered bodies and impaled heads, this work replays the drama and grotesque of the Reign of Terror during the French revolution, giving it a modern twist with a focus on current affairs. The artist bears witness to her time, mingling a multitude of individual destinies with History Gestures and materials are reminiscent of black magic and the daily lives of women, as well as the world of childhood

## **19** Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) Precious Liquids, 1992

Louise Bourgeois's *Precious Liquids* explores the mechanics of bodily fluids (sweat, tears and urine) in emotional shock. Their scope is symbolic: the greatcoat hanging phallically, symbolises the father, a repressive figure of authority. The sterility and moist fertility of maternity are suggested. Liquid leaked from the barrel evokes that of childbirth. The thinking that guided the artist has been engraved on the metal band over the entrance to the installation: "Art is a guaranty (sic) of

# **Robert Delaunay (1885-1941)** Manège de cochons

# [The Carousel of Pigs], 1922

The painting forms part of a series of works devoted to scenes of modern urban life, sporting and popular performances that favour the representation of movement and speed. The composition reuses the artist's iconic motif of the disc. Their breakdown into rings of every colour in the prism and their tumultuous rotation carries the spectator away in the relentless whirl of a carousel. In the middle, a pair of black legs, carried away by the whirlpool of colours reconstitutes the rowdy atmosphere of fun fairs.

# Vasily Kandinsky (1866-1944) Mit dem schwarzen Bogen [With the Black Arch] ,1912

Since his installation in Munich in 1908, Kandinsky wished to distance himself from appearances, too transient to allow him to reach a more internal spiritual world. The painting unveils the order of the world in its own language. Seized in opposing movements, blocks of colour are maintained in a state of tension by black lines. Language and musical conventions help him to remove painting from its descriptive function, thus entering into a pure interplay of disharmonious colourful relations or a dissociation of line and colour. "To create a work is to create a world."

# **Piet Mondrian (1872-1944)** New York City, 1942

New York City was painted in New York where Piet Mondrian went into exile in 1940. The electric lighting of New York and the relentless traffic that reigns there had a strong impact on exiled European artists. The intensity of colour and movement of this American work magnificently translates "the new energy" Mondrian discovered in the American city, also echoing the syncopated rhythm of the boogiewoogie that inspired his last works. The work is characteristic of his latest research, after his long neo-plastic period in Europe. The primary colours and the density of the junctions on the whole surface create a luminous optical dynamism.

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