

Cubism(s) and Experiences of Modernity I. Telefónica Collection

The premises developed by Gris, Lipchitz, and Blanchard gave rise to a “second cubism” that extended from late 1915 to the winter of 1918. Jean Metzinger’s criteria regarding the portrayal of the relationship between space and time were decisive for this new cubist undertaking in which André Lhote, Albert Gleizes, and Gino Severini also participated from various angles.



New Cubism, New “Pure Art”. 1915–1918

Taking up the work of these artists, in the midst of World War I the reformulation of Cubism as a trend or movement was promoted by Amédée Ozenfant in the magazine *L’Elan*, and supported by the art dealer Léonce Rosenberg, who ended up opening the gallery *L’Effort Moderne* in 1918.

In these difficult years, those involved in this endeavour believed that by keeping Cubism alive they were keeping the foundations of modern art alive. Right from the start, they opted for a new cubism that revolved around the quest for artistic principles in themselves, although this approach was constantly under intellectual “pressure” that encouraged cubists to adopt certain formal and structural principles from the classical tradition.

André Lhote made a distinction between “a priori” and “a posteriori” Cubism to separate cubists who took abstraction as a starting point and then arrived at recognisable objects, and those who, inversely, began with figurative subject matter and worked to purify and synthesise it. Be that as it may, a vivid, active use of colour always played a key role throughout this new stage of Cubism. Colours were valued for their inherent intensity and plastic qualities, without necessarily being linked to “local colour”. They were understood in themselves, independently of the representation of emotional or sentimental aspects.

During the second stage of Cubism the relationship between poetry and painting was radically reformulated, especially through the meeting of some of the artists already mentioned and writers like Pierre Reverdy and Paul Dermée. And around the same time, Vicente Huidobro moved towards creationist poetry, which became a major influence on Juan Gris. New forms such as visual poetry and calligrams developed in parallel to the second stage of Cubism.

The convergence of various artists who were working on a similar artistic approach was particularly important. The culmination of this “second cubism” was grounded on a desideratum: cubist works were to be produced and evaluated through their own pure artistic elements, based on the constructive structuring of paintings, but without abandoning the figurative source of the painting or sculpture. Stéphane Mallarmé’s notion of “pure form” could also be sensed behind these ideas, and Juan Gris and Jacques Lipchitz ended up encapsulating these new cubist aspirations in their work.

