

NEWS RELEASE

EXHIBITION EXAMINES THE RETURN TO CLASSICISM IN EUROPEAN ARTS AND CULTURE BETWEEN DESTRUCTION OF WORLD WARS

Full rotunda show includes painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, film, fashion, and decorative arts, featuring many works never shown before in the United States

Exhibition: *Chaos and Classicism: Art in France, Italy, and Germany, 1918–1936*
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Location: Full rotunda and all ramps; Annex Levels 5 and 7
Dates: October 1, 2010–January 9, 2011
Preview: Thursday, September 30, 10 am–1 pm

(NEW YORK, NY – August 5, 2010)—Rising from the ruins and horror of World War I, European art and culture returned to the classical past, seeking tranquility, order, and enduring values. Artists turned away from prewar experimentalism and embraced the heroic human figure and rational organization. *Chaos and Classicism: Art in France, Italy, and Germany, 1918–1936* is the first exhibition in the United States to focus on the vast transformation in European culture between the world wars. With approximately 150 works by more than 80 artists, comprising painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, film, fashion, and the decorative arts, this thematically organized exhibition examines the return to order in its key manifestations: the poetic dream of antiquity in the Parisian avant-garde; the politicized revival of the Roman Empire under Benito Mussolini; the functionalist utopianism of International Style architecture that originated at the Bauhaus; and, ultimately, the chilling aesthetic of nascent Nazi society.

The exhibition presents works by established masters of the period, including Georges Braque, Carlo Carrà, Giorgio de Chirico, Otto Dix, Fernand Léger, Aristide Maillol, Henri Matisse, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Pablo Picasso, Gio (Giovanni) Ponti, Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann, and August Sander, as well as

works by artists lesser known outside of their home countries, such as Julius Bissier, Felice Casorati, Achille Funi, Marcel Gromaire, Auguste Herbin, Anton Hiller, Heinrich Hoerle, Ubaldo Oppi, and Milly Steger. Many works included in *Chaos and Classicism* have never before been shown in the United States.

Chaos and Classicism is on view at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York from October 1, 2010, through January 9, 2011, and will be presented at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain, from February 21 through May 15, 2011.

This exhibition is supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and The David Berg Foundation.

Chaos and Classicism is organized by New York University Professor of Modern Art Kenneth E. Silver, a renowned authority on European art between the wars, assisted by Helen Hsu, Assistant Curator, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, with Vivien Greene, Curator of 19th- and Early-20th-Century Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, as curatorial adviser.

Exhibition Overview

The years after World War I were marked by a striking modernist avowal of traditional aesthetics: a *retour à l'ordre* (return to order) in France, a *ritorno al mestiere* (return to craft) in Italy, and *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) in Germany. Picasso was a leader of this new historicism and proved to be particularly influential in promulgating a classical aesthetic from 1918 to 1936.

Picasso, although Spanish, was based in France from 1904 onward, and his great classical figure paintings of the early 1920s demonstrate how decisively the Parisian avant-garde adopted the new post-World War I aesthetic. *Chaos and Classicism* presents several of his works, as well as other examples of this style, such as Léger's canvases of mechanized figures and commedia dell'arte paintings by André Derain and Paris-based Gino Severini. The notion of a Latinate civilization comes to the fore in the emerging influence of Jean Cocteau, and the exhibition features excerpts from his 1930 film *The Blood of a Poet* (*Le sang d'un poète*). Le Corbusier's architecture and design, as well as the Purist paintings he created alongside Amédée Ozenfant, forge a visual link with abstraction and Synthetic Cubism. Madeleine Vionnet's neo-Greek fashion designs and Art Deco objects by Ruhlmann translate the more abstruse aspects of classicizing art and theory into functional items.

In Italy, de Chirico's paintings, along with those of Carrà, bridge the transition to the New Sobriety of Italian art immediately after the war. De Chirico's essay "Il ritorno al mestiere" ("The Return to Craft"), published in 1919 in the influential journal *Valori Plastici*, was especially vital for this classicizing moment as it renewed interest in the Italian Renaissance painters Fra Angelico and Piero della Francesca. *Chaos and Classicism* also includes paintings by artists such as Massimo Campigli and Giorgio Morandi. Architectural models and design objects, including a version of Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio in Como, Italy, and porcelain by Ponti, demonstrate the power of the neoclassical paradigm for postwar Italian modernists. Sculpture, the quintessential classical medium, was especially strong in interwar Italy and is represented throughout the exhibition.

In Germany, Mies van der Rohe's synthesis of classical form and modern technology was central to the ethos that challenged Expressionism in interwar Germany: iconic elements of his Barcelona Pavilion (1929), including Georg Kolbe's *Morning* (*Der Morgen*, 1925), the life-size nude sculpture so well known from original photos of Mies's seminal structure, are featured in the exhibition. Renowned Bauhaus teacher Oskar Schlemmer's modernist figurative paintings testify to the German translation of the Italian revival (Schlemmer was deeply influenced by the art of Piero della Francesca, among others). Moreover, after the perceived excesses of Expressionist art, the Neue Sachlichkeit movement represented the search for aesthetic *Klarheit* ("clarity") in Weimar Germany. Works by Dix, Georg Scholz, Georg Schrimpf, and Wilhelm Schnarrenberger reveal this rationalist approach along with August Sander's radically pared-down photographic portraits. However, modern German aesthetics also leads viewers toward the exhibition's dramatic conclusion. As the Weimar Republic collapsed and Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, the new classicism—Parisian myths, Italian role-playing, and the German search for objectivity—was monstrously transformed into a quasi-scientific doctrine of human perfection under the Nazis.

Exhibition Installation

The exhibition is organized into eight sections that illuminate the dominant concerns and subliminal drives of European art and thought in this highly charged period. The themes are developed in a loosely chronological installation that winds up the Guggenheim Museum's ramps and on two Annex level galleries.

High Gallery: In the Shadow of War

An introductory section installed in the High Gallery features a selection of 15 prints from Dix's portfolio *The War (Der Krieg)*, 1924, which recollect the destruction and trauma of World War I. These graphic depictions of the horrors of war are juxtaposed with works by Maillol and Picasso, as well as Italian and German sculptors such as Campigli and Hiller whose classical works can be viewed as an aesthetic rehabilitation of the ravaged body according to antique balance and measure.

Ramp 1: A More Durable Self

This section examines artists' enthusiasm for depicting sculpture from antiquity or incorporating sculptural models into their compositions as exemplars of the human form—as more durable versions of the self, epitomized in Bissier's painting *Sculptor with Self-portrait (Bildhauer mit Selbstbildnis)*, 1928). Other artists represented include Hoerle, Suzanne Phocas, and Scholz.

Ramp 2: The Avant-Garde Looks Backward

In the years after World War I, the fragmentation and optical experiments of Cubism strikingly contrast with Picasso's voluptuous, Grecian-robed women, ambling in the Mediterranean sun, or seated in peaceful repose, and Braque's monumental *canéphores* (basket carriers). The postwar subjects of the classicizing artists, including Léger and Matisse, as well as photographer Edward Steichen, indicate a renewed interest in the roots of civilization, in Greece and Rome and their ruins. Several of Picasso's most important works of this period are on view in this section, including *The Source (La source)*, 1921, on loan from Moderna Museet, Stockholm, and *Woman in White (Femme assise, les bras croisés)*, 1924, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Ramp 3: Classical Bodies, New Humanity

The postwar search for a reassuring artistic language from the past led logically to sculpture. The idealized human form was reconceived by an international group of major sculptors including Kolbe, Maillol, and Arturo Martini. This fascination with the whole and intact body lent itself to politicized idealizations in the work of Rudolf Belling, Gromaire, and Léger on the left, and to the Italian Fascist art of Campigli and Oppi on the right.

Ramp 4: Crazy for Classicism

The revived interest in Greek and Roman history and myth, which had long provided the West with a shared narrative and archetypes, proved inspirational in not only painting and sculpture, but also photography, film, fashion, and the decorative arts. This section includes a film excerpt by Cocteau, photographs by Florence Henri and George Hoyningen-Huene, design objects by Ponti, furniture by Ruhlmann, and dresses by Edward Molyneux and Vionnet.

Annex Level 5: The Constructors

This section focuses on the architectural interpretations of classicism and the metaphors of construction and reconstruction that became ubiquitous in the wake of World War I's devastation. The new modernist language sought a resolution of architecture's past with the industrial present. Platonic ideas of geometric harmony and the beauty of new materials, especially glass and metal, were brought together in unprecedented combinations. Examples include Le Corbusier's architecture and design, as well as the Purist paintings he created with Ozenfant. Works on view also consist of newly fabricated models of buildings by Le Corbusier and Terragni, objects and furniture designed for Mies's Barcelona Pavilion, and chairs by Piero Bottoni for the Casa Minerbi in Milan.

Ramp 5: Classicizing the Everyday

Still lifes and portraits crystallizing the German *Neue Sachlichkeit* and Italian Novecento (1900s) movements demonstrate these rigorous approaches to representation and the desire to capture objective reality. The exhibition presents traditional painted portraits and self-portraits by Fridel Dethleffs-Edelmann, Dix, Carl Hofer, Morandi, Picasso, and Luigi Trifoglio, among others, as well as Sander's typological photographic portraits, all of which assert classic fixity amid the flux of modern life.

Ramp 6: Performance/Anxiety

The performing body became a key element of modern culture between the wars. Developed, remade, and "perfected," the body was the new measure of objective value, in contrast to the mind, now considered too abstract and subjective. Artists as stylistically and politically diverse as Willi Baumeister, Franco Gentilini, Gromaire, Albert Janesch, and Lorenzo Lorenzetti invoked the theme of sport in their work of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Circus, carnival, and *commedia dell'arte* imagery was treated by an equally diverse group, including Derain, Antonio Donghi, Juan Gris, Erich Heckel, Hoerle,

and Severini.

Annex Level 7: The Dark Side of Classicism

The exhibition concludes with a sobering look at the nationalistic pursuit of cultural roots and perfection, as gradually appropriated by the political right. Among the most notorious modern portrayals of antique Rome were paintings of gladiators by de Chirico, who was attacked by the Surrealists for his artistic collusion with the Fascist regime. The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin were a classicizing spectacle, recorded and refashioned by the greatest Nazi propagandist, filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl in her *Olympia* (1936–38), excerpts of which are in this final section.

Exhibition Catalogue

Chaos and Classicism is accompanied by a 192-page, illustrated catalogue published by the Guggenheim, with an overview essay by Kenneth E. Silver; additional essays by James Herbert, Professor of Art History and of Visual Studies, University of California at Irvine; Emily Braun, Distinguished Professor, Hunter College; and Jeanne Nugent, independent art historian; and thematic plate entries by Helen Hsu. Priced at \$55 in a hardcover edition and \$35 for the softcover, the exhibition catalogue can be purchased at the Guggenheim Store or online at guggenheimstore.org beginning in mid-September.

Education Programs

A full schedule of educational programs is being presented under the auspices of the Sackler Center for Arts Education during the run of *Chaos and Classicism*. For updated information regarding ticketed programs, contact the Box Office at 212 423 3587 or visit guggenheim.org/education.

On View at the Sackler Center for Arts Education

Vox Populi: Posters of the Interwar Years

September 1, 2010–January 9, 2011

The 1920s and 1930s were among the greatest years in the history of poster design. The popular voice of manufacturers, political movements, and the travel and entertainment industries, the poster was an immensely refined art created for a vast public. *Vox Populi: Posters of the Interwar Years* presents a selection of six posters from France, Italy, and Germany.

Performance

Coup de Foudre: Based on The Blood of a Poet by Jean Cocteau

A Collaboration between Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky; Corey Baker, Co-Artistic Director of Ballet Noir; and Melvin van Peebles

Saturday, October 9, 2010, 8 pm

Sunday, October 10, 2010, 6 pm

Three generations of groundbreaking African American artists with a special affinity for French culture connect through a theatrical reinterpretation of Cocteau's filmic masterpiece. Paul Miller a.k.a. DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid performs an original music score, mixing live instruments and studio recordings with the Telos Ensemble, while Corey Baker, Co-Artistic Director of Ballet Noir and current *Fela!* star, converts the extreme physicality of the film's lead character into choreographic moments. Emmy award winner Melvin Van Peebles, "the godfather of independent film and modern black cinema," simultaneously reads Cocteau's poems. *Coup de Foudre* applies modern compositional strategies, based on sampling and digital media, to unite cinematic history with contemporary times. Following the performance, Christoph Cox, Professor of Philosophy, Hampshire College, moderates a discussion with the artists. Tickets are \$30, \$25 for members, \$10 for students, and are available at guggenheim.org/publicprograms.

The Secret Song II: Digital Workshop with DJ Spooky

Sunday, October 10, 2:30–4:30 pm

In conjunction with *Coup de Foudre*, a contemporary art and performance collaboration featuring Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid, the Sackler Center for Arts Education is pleased to present The Secret Song II, a digital music workshop. Led by DJ Spooky himself, the workshop will provide participants a unique opportunity to use their iPhones, iPod Touches, or iPads to compose mixes using sampling and custom sound effects followed by a museum visit and the performance of *Coup de Foudre*. The Secret Song II will explore the connections between digital mixing and multimedia forms, mining the possibilities of mobile media to create art anytime, anywhere. This limited-enrollment workshop is suitable for adults ages 18 and over; individuals ages 14–17 can attend if accompanied by an adult. For more information and to register, e-mail publicprograms@guggenheim.org. Enrollment includes workshop, performance, and museum admission on Sunday, October 10. Tickets are \$55; \$40 for members; \$20 for students.

Film Screenings

Films are shown in the New Media Theater, lower level.

***Scipio the African (Scipione l'africano)*, 1937**

Directed by Carmine Gallone

Fridays, September 10, 17, 24, October 8, and 15, 12:30, 2, and 3:30 pm
Fascist Italy's most spectacular costume epic celebrates ancient Rome's conquests in Africa during the Second Punic War. Produced and heavily backed by Benito Mussolini's government, at the time this was the most expensive Italian film ever made, with over 430,000 extras, 1,000 horses, and 50 elephants. Drawing on Rome's imperial past to justify Italy's expansionist present, the film is a soaring historical pageant, reverberating with the aesthetics and ideals of fascist Italy. Like much of the art in *Chaos and Classicism*, *Scipio the African* evokes antique history in order to glorify contemporary endeavor. Free with museum admission.

***The Blood of a Poet (Le sang d'un poète)*, 1930**

Directed by Jean Cocteau

Saturday, October 9, 6:30 pm

Sunday, October 10, 4:30 pm

Fridays, October 29, November 5, 12, and 19, 1 and 2:30 pm

The first installment in the *Orphic Trilogy*—a series of three films by acclaimed French avant-garde director Jean Cocteau—the groundbreaking film *The Blood of a Poet* is one of cinema's great experiments. A portrait of the plight of the artist, the film uses surrealist imagery to explore the poet's obsessions with the relationships between art and dreams, metaphor and reality, and life and death. French with English subtitles. Free with museum admission.

***Metropolis*, 1927**

Directed by Fritz Lang

Fridays, December 3 and 10, noon and 3 pm

Perhaps one of the most famous and influential of all silent films, *Metropolis* takes place in 2026, when the populace is divided between workers who must live in the dark underground and the rich who enjoy a futuristic city of splendor. In this new digital restoration, the tense balance between these two societies is realized through elaborate sets and modern science fiction. Free with museum admission.

The Architecture of Doom, 1991

Directed by Peter Cohen

Fridays, December 17 and 24, noon and 3 pm

Featuring newly researched footage of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime, *The Architecture of Doom* captures the inner workings of the Third Reich and illuminates the Nazi aesthetic in art, architecture, and popular culture. Hitler worshipped ancient Rome and Greece and dreamed of a new golden age of classical art and monumental architecture populated by beautiful, patriotic Aryans. There was no place for so-called degenerate artists like Pablo Picasso and other modernists or for “inferior” races like Jews in his lurid fantasy. This riveting documentary shows how Hitler rose from failed artist to creator of a world of ponderous kitsch and horrifying terror. Free with museum admission.

Lectures

Lateness and the Politics of Media

Tuesday, October 12, 6:30 pm

Peter Eisenman

Principal, Eisenman Architects

Charles Gwathmey Professor in Practice, Yale School of Architecture

The celebrated architect, theorist, and author of *Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations, Decompositions, Critiques* (2003) posits that we are in a late moment in history in which design is controlled by the media to promote consumption. Where does that leave architecture, which, he argues, is the antithesis of design? Tickets are \$10, \$7 for members and students, and are available at guggenheim.org/publicprograms.

Scultura Lingua Morta: Sculpture’s Forbidden Languages

Wednesday, November 10, 6:30 pm

Penelope Curtis

Director, Tate Britain

Penelope Curtis, a noted scholar of modern sculpture from Fascist Italy and the Third Reich, shares new thoughts in the context of *Chaos and Classicism*.

Tickets are \$10, \$7 for members and students, and are available at guggenheim.org/publicprograms.

Constructing Classicism in Fashion

Tuesday, December 7, 6:30 pm

Patricia Mears

Deputy Director, The Museum at FIT

Between the world wars, women such as Madeleine Vionnet dominated fashion design in Paris and New York. Charting the embrace of classicism, Patricia Mears, a renowned costume historian and style expert, discusses clothing innovations that defined fashion in the 1930s, changed the course of modern dress, and continue to influence couture today. Tickets are \$10, \$7 for members and students, and are available at guggenheim.org/publicprograms.

Emerging Scholars Symposium: Is Returning to the Past Modern?

Wednesday, January 5, 1 pm

In the spirit of *Chaos and Classicism*, the Sackler Center for Arts Education is sponsoring a program showcasing emerging scholars. Through new research, this series of focused presentations grapples with the long-standing questions of whether artists, architects, and designers can look to the past for inspiration and still be considered modern. To register and review the call for papers, visit guggenheim.org/publicprograms.

Guided Tours

Curator's Eye Tours

The exhibition's curators lead tours of *Chaos and Classicism*. Free with museum admission.

Helen Hsu: Friday, November 12, 2 pm

Kenneth E. Silver: Friday, December 3, 2 pm

Mind's Eye

As part of the museum's free programs for partially sighted, blind, and deaf visitors, Guggenheim museum educators, led by Georgia Krantz, guide an interactive tour and discussion focusing on *Chaos and Classicism*, broken down into two parts and followed by a private reception. Free admission with advance RSVP required at access@guggenheim.org.

Part I: Monday, October 11, 6:30 pm

Part II: Monday, November 8, 6:30 pm

Fall Family Day

Sunday, November 14, 2–5 pm

The public is invited to celebrate the museum's architecture and fall exhibitions, including *Chaos and Classicism*. Activities include a scavenger hunt, art-making projects, performances, and storytelling. Recommended for families with children ages 4–10. \$15 per family; \$10 for members; free for

Family members, Cool Culture families, and Guggenheim partner schools. No registration needed.

Chaos and Classicism: A Workshop for Educators

Saturday, October 16, 10 am–1 pm

In the interwar period, many artists turned to classicism as a means of expression. Through encounters with painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, film, and fashion, this workshop traces the progression of classicism from optimistic to ominous during these years. \$20 includes curriculum materials. Registration required at 212 423 3637.

Online Forum

This fall the Guggenheim Forum presents an installment titled “Satire, Critique, Provocation, Propaganda” to accompany the *Chaos and Classicism* exhibition. A new, diverse group of panelists including novelist and journalist Francisco Goldman and art historian Jennie Hirsh will discuss the various ways artists address politics in their work. Visit guggenheim.org/forum for complete information and to join the conversation.

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Founded in 1937, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of art, primarily of the modern and contemporary periods, through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. Currently the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation owns and operates the Guggenheim Museum on Fifth Avenue in New York and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection on the Grand Canal in Venice, and provides programming and management for the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. The Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin is the result of a collaboration, begun in 1997, between the Guggenheim Foundation and Deutsche Bank. In 2013, the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, a 452,000-square-foot museum of modern and contemporary art designed by Frank Gehry, will open on Saadiyat Island, adjacent to the main island of Abu Dhabi city, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. More information about the Foundation can be found at guggenheim.org.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission: Adults \$18, students/seniors (65+) \$15, members and children under 12 free. Admission includes an audio tour of *Chaos and Classicism*

available in English, and of highlights of the Guggenheim's permanent collection, available in English, Spanish, French, German, and Italian.

Museum Hours: Sun–Wed, 10 am–5:45 pm; Fri, 10 am–5:45 pm; Sat, 10 am–7:45 pm; closed Thurs. On Saturdays, beginning at 5:45 pm, the museum hosts

Pay What You Wish. For general information, call 212 423 3500 or visit guggenheim.org.

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