

## News Release

## The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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### **METROPOLITAN MUSEUM ANNOUNCES GIFT OF MAJOR CUBIST COLLECTION COMPRISING 78 WORKS BY PICASSO, BRAQUE, GRIS, AND LÉGER FROM LEONARD A. LAUDER AND CREATION OF NEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR MODERN ART**

#### **Collection Will Transform the Museum**

#### **One of the Foremost Collections of Cubist Art in the World “A Gift to the People of New York”**

(New York, NY, April 9, 2013)—Thomas P. Campbell, Director and CEO of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, announced today that Leonard A. Lauder has pledged to give the Museum his collection of 78 works by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Juan Gris, and Fernand Léger, which stands as one of the foremost collections of Cubism in the world. Mr. Campbell concurrently announced that, in coordination with the gift, the Metropolitan Museum is establishing a new research center for modern art at the Metropolitan, supported by a \$22-million endowment funded by grants from Museum trustees and supporters, including Mr. Lauder.

The Leonard A. Lauder Collection, distinguished by its quality, focus, and depth, includes 33 works by Picasso, 17 by Braque, 14 by Gris, and 14 by Léger. It is unsurpassed in the number of masterpieces and iconic works critical to the development of Cubism. Among the highlights of the collection are: Picasso's *The Scallop Shell* (“*Notre avenir est dans l'air*”) (1912), *Woman in an Armchair (Eva)* (1913), and *Still Life with Cards, Glasses, and Bottle of Rum: “Vive la France”* (1914; partially reworked 1915); Braque's *Trees at L'Estaque* (1908) and *The Violin (Mozart/Kubelick)* (1912); Léger's *Houses under the Trees* (1913) and *Composition (The Typographer)* (1917-18); and Gris's *Portrait of the Artist's Mother* (1912) and *Figure Seated in a Café (Man at a Table)* (1914).

The Leonard A. Lauder Research Center for Modern Art will be the first such center dedicated exclusively to modern art within an encyclopedic museum. It will serve as a leading center for scholarship on Cubism and modern art, distinguished by its intellectual rigor and range, and its resources available for study. The Center will bring together renowned scholars, fellows, and curators for focused inquiry within the rich global context of the Metropolitan's collection.

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“Leonard's gift is truly transformational for the Metropolitan Museum,” stated Mr. Campbell in making the announcement. “Although the Met is unique in its ability to exhibit over 5,000 years of art history, we have long lacked this critical dimension in the story of modernism. Now, Cubism will be represented with some of its greatest masterpieces, demonstrating both its role as the groundbreaking movement of the 20th century and the foundation for an artistic dialogue that continues today. This is an extraordinary gift to our Museum and our City.”

Mr. Lauder commented: “This is a gift to the people who live and work in New York and those from around the world who come to visit our great arts institutions. The arts are a cornerstone of the cultural, educational, and economic vitality of the City. I selected the Met as the way to share this collection because I feel that it’s essential that Cubism—and the art that follows it, for that matter—be seen and studied within the collections of one of the greatest encyclopedic museums in the world. The Met’s collection of modernism, together with those of MoMA, the Guggenheim, and the Whitney, reinforce the City’s standing as the center for 20th-century art and fuel New York’s ongoing role as the art capital of the world.”

The Lauder Collection will be presented for the first time at the Metropolitan Museum in an exhibition scheduled to open in fall 2014. The exhibition will be co-curated by Emily Braun, Distinguished Professor, Hunter College, and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, who has served as curator of the Lauder Collection for 26 years; and Rebecca Rabinow, Curator in the Metropolitan Museum’s Department of Modern and Contemporary Art.

### **The Leonard A. Lauder Collection: Overview**

The Lauder Collection is one of the most significant groups of Cubist art ever assembled. Over the past 37 years, Mr. Lauder has selectively acquired the best and most important works of the four preeminent Cubist painters—Picasso, Braque, Léger, and Gris. He made his first two Cubist acquisitions in 1976 and his most recent, a Juan Gris collage, in March 2013. Mr. Lauder will continue to look for opportunities to add Cubist works to the Collection he has committed to the Met.

Cubism was the most influential art movement of the 20th century: it radically destroyed traditional illusionism in painting, revolutionized the way we see the world (as Juan Gris said), and paved the way for the pure abstraction that dominated Western art for the next 50 years. Led by Picasso and Braque, the Cubists dismantled traditional perspective and modeling in the round in order to emphasize the two-dimensional picture plane. Cubist collage introduced fragments of mass-produced popular culture into pictures, thereby changing the very definition of art.

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More than half of the Lauder Collection focuses on the six-year period, 1909-14, during which Braque and Picasso—the two founders of the Cubist movement—closely collaborated. Their partnership began in earnest in the fall of 1908, when the visionary dealer Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler exhibited Braque's most recent paintings in his Paris gallery. Henri Matisse is known to have disparaged Braque's pictures as "painting made of small cubes;" the term Cubism first appeared in print in Louis Vauxcelles's review of the Kahnweiler exhibition. The Lauder Collection includes two landscapes from this historic show: *Terrace at the Hotel Mistral, l'Estaque* (1907), which marks Braque's transition from Fauvism to Cubism, and the iconic *Trees at L'Estaque* (1908), which inaugurates Cubism.

By 1909 Braque and Picasso were inseparable. As Picasso later recounted, "Almost every evening, either I went to Braque's studio or he came to mine. Each of us HAD to see what the other had done during the day. We criticized each other's work. A canvas wasn't finished until both of us felt it was." A pair of identically sized paintings from 1911 the Lauder Collection –Braque's *Bottle and Clarinet* and Picasso's *Pedestal Table with Wine Glasses, Cup, and Mandolin*—exemplify a pivotal moment in the history of Cubism when the two artists began to picture objects from different points of view in an increasingly shallow space. Only a few clues were retained to help viewers decode the picture, the profile of an instrument or the tassel of a curtain. As the works hovered on the brink of illegibility, Braque and Picasso began to introduce "certainties," as Braque called them: painted letters and words and, soon after, actual pieces of rope, newspaper, sheet music, and brand labels. They inspired other artists to incorporate all kinds of unorthodox materials into works of art.

The Lauder Collection contains such landmark paintings as Picasso's landscape *The Oil Mill* (1909), which was one of the first Cubist pictures reproduced in Italy. After seeing it in the December 1911 issue of the Florentine journal *La Voce*, the Italian Futurists were inspired to modernize their style and engage in a rivalry with their French peers. Picasso's *Still Life with Fan (L'Indépendant)* (1911), in the Lauder Collection, is one of the first works in which he experimented with painted typography, in this case the gothic type masthead of *L'Indépendant*, the local newspaper of Céret in the foothills of the Pyrenees.

Braque's *Fruit Dish and Glass* (1912), the very first Cubist *papier collé* (paper collage) ever created, is also in the Lauder Collection. Collages were a revolutionary Cubist art form in which ready-made objects were incorporated into fine art. In the summer of 1912, while vacationing with Picasso in the south of France, Braque saw imitation wood-grain wallpaper in a store window. He waited until Picasso left town before buying the *faux bois* paper and pasting it into a still-life composition. Braque's decision to use mechanically printed, illusionistic wallpaper to represent the texture and color of a wooden table marked a turning

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point in Cubism. Braque later recounted, “After having made the *papier collé* [*Fruit Dish and Glass*], I felt a great shock, and it was an even greater shock for Picasso when I showed it to him.”

Braque and Picasso shared an interest in aviation, which extended to Braque’s nickname, “Wilb[o]urg” (after Wilbur Wright). The most famous example of their aviation puns is Picasso’s *The Scallop Shell* (“*Notre avenir est dans l’air*”) (1912). This oval-shaped painting is simultaneously a representation of a tabletop and a blatantly flat canvas. The still-life elements of the work include a trompe l’œil rendering of a pamphlet that had been issued by the French government in February 1912 to raise public support for military aviation. Picasso included it as a witty reference to his and Braque’s daring, groundbreaking Cubist enterprise.

Picasso’s synthetic Cubist masterpiece *Woman in an Armchair (Eva)* (1913) is one of the artist’s most radical and imposing paintings. This provocative and highly eroticized image of Picasso’s mistress Eva Gouel was hailed by André Breton in his seminal text *Surrealism and Painting* (1928). Additionally the Lauder Collection holds examples of two key Cubist sculptures: a rare cast of Picasso’s *Head of a Woman* (1909), which introduced the analytic Cubist style into three dimensions, and *The Absinthe Glass* (1914), which signaled the end of traditionally modeled sculpture. Each of the six casts in the edition was hand-painted by Picasso and includes an actual perforated tin absinthe spoon, thus blurring the boundaries between a multiple and a unique work of art.

Still lifes with flutes, guitars, mandolins, violins, and sheet music are indicative of Braque’s and Picasso’s personal pastimes as well as their enthusiasm for popular vaudeville tunes. Their word play and images combine ribald jokes and erudite references, high and low, as well as allusions to the Cubist movement and commentary on world events. In *The Violin (Mozart/Kubelick)* (1912), for example, Braque indulged in a double entendre by including the name of the famed Czech violinist Jan Kubelik (1880-1940). The first three letters of his name (“KUB”) were those of a common bouillon cube, a foodstuff widely advertised on posters of the period, much to the delight of Braque and Picasso, who appreciated the pun on the word “Cub”ism. *The Violin (Mozart/Kubelick)* was one of three pictures by Braque that Kahnweiler sent to the New York Armory Show of 1913, the exhibition that introduced European modernism to the American public. It became one of the most caricatured Cubist images in the American press, which delighted in pointing out that Braque had put the “cube in Kubelik” and also that he had misspelled the maestro’s name.

Legend has it that, a few years earlier, on his way to visit Picasso at the Bateau-Lavoir, the rundown artist complex in Montmartre, Kahnweiler had glanced into the open window of Juan Gris’s studio and asked to see his work. In late 1912, the dealer began  
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representing Gris. Whereas Braque and Picasso exhibited exclusively with Kahnweiler, Gris sent work to the annual Salon displays, bringing wider visibility to the new Cubist style. The Futurist artist Umberto Boccioni, for example, was directly influenced by Gris's *Portrait of a Woman* (often called *Portrait of the Artist's Mother*) after he saw it at the spring 1912 Salon des Indépendants. Gris took the analytic Cubism of Braque and Picasso and made it his own with precisely delineated compositions, flattened planes, and rhythmic surface patterns that prefigure the synthetic Cubism of the war years.

The Lauder Collection contains an unparalleled selection of six painted collages that Gris created during the first half of 1914. Several of them incorporate wry references to the fictional criminal mastermind Fantômas, the subject of a wildly popular crime series. The shadowy *Figure Seated in a Café (Man at a Table)* (1914) hides his face behind a newspaper, made up of an actual clipping whose headline pointedly reads: "Bertillonage/ One will no longer be able to fake works of art." Gris alludes to the criminal identification systems, or *Bertillonage*, of Alphonse Bertillon, one of the fathers of forensic science, whose methods were featured in the storylines of the Fantômas films. With mock suspense, Gris suggests that, having read about the latest criminal detection methods in the newspaper, the man at the table will escape the authorities once again—as will the Cubist masterminds in their games of visual deception.

In 1913, Kahnweiler added Fernand Léger to his stable of artists. Like Gris, Léger developed Cubism into a distinctive and influential style, in which dynamic intersections of spherical, cylindrical, and cubic forms evoked the new, syncopated rhythms of modern life. The Lauder Collection features several important works from Léger's series *Contrast of Forms*, wherein Léger worked out his primary oppositions of light and dark, angled and curved planes, color and line. The jaunty image of *The Smoker* (1914), with its body reduced to basic geometric parts, anticipates the dehumanization that Léger would experience first-hand during World War I.

Gris and Picasso, both Spanish citizens, remained in France during the war. Picasso's political sentiments are evident in the Lauder Collection's *Still Life with Cards, Glasses, and Bottle of Run: "Vive la France"* (summer 1914; partially reworked 1915). Braque and Léger were among the many French artists who were mobilized to the Front. Léger was hospitalized for more than a year after a gas attack seriously wounded him in the fall of 1916. Upon his release, he began working on *Composition (The Typographer)* (1917-18), one of the largest Cubist works ever painted. Its mural-like size anticipates his collaboration in the 1920s with the architect Le Corbusier. *The Typographer*, the definitive version of a series of three, reflects the affinity Léger felt toward the anonymous working man and his fascination with the trappings of modern Paris, from advertisements to architecture. Léger drew on his background as an

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architectural draftsman in celebrating the beauty of machines and in this way led Cubism into a new modernist machine aesthetic.

**The Department of Modern and Contemporary Art: Moving Into the Future**

Through a previous, unannounced grant, Mr. Lauder has endowed the position of Leonard A. Lauder Chairman of Modern and Contemporary Art, which is held by Sheena Wagstaff, the department's Chairman. He has also provided funds for programming in the area of modern art at the Metropolitan Museum. Rebecca Rabinow, currently a Curator in the Metropolitan's Department of Modern and Contemporary Art, has been named the first Leonard A. Lauder Curator of Modern Art, a new curatorial position established by the Metropolitan Museum in recognition of Mr. Lauder's gift. She will also serve as the Curator in Charge of the Research Center.

"Leonard Lauder's magnificent gift provides a new foundation for the Met's Department of Modern and Contemporary Art," said Sheena Wagstaff. "At this optimal moment, as we are devoting new attention and considerable energy to collecting and presenting modern and contemporary art within the world-renowned collection of the Met, Mr. Lauder's gift is a tremendous vote of confidence. Not only does it kick-start our collection at the birth of the modernist era with exquisite Cubist works, but it will prove to be a catalyst and inspiration for a vast range of possibilities for future collecting, exhibitions, and research in the years ahead."

The Leonard A. Lauder Research Center for Modern Art will serve as a center for scholarship on Cubism and early modern art and is being modeled on research centers housed in other major public collections worldwide. It will be a magnet for the study of modernism. It will foster research, programming, and publications on the Met's collections of modern art and on Cubism's enduring impact on art, design, and architecture in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Under the auspices of the Center, the Metropolitan will award four two-year fellowships annually for pre- and post-doctoral work and invite senior scholars for residencies at the Museum. Through a program of lectures, study workshops, dossier exhibitions, publications, and a vibrant web presence, the Center will focus art-historical study and public attention on modernism generally and on Cubism in particular, and serve as a training ground for the next generation of scholars. The Center will also include a library and an archive on Cubism donated by Mr. Lauder.

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**Leonard Lauder Philanthropy**

In the 1990s, Mr. Lauder decided that his collection should become part of a public institution and be supported with ongoing research and programming that would make the works continually relevant. The donation to the Met extends Mr. Lauder's philanthropic vision of making gifts to museums that strategically build their collections. He has long served as a trustee, President, and Chairman of the Whitney Museum of American Art, to which he has donated hundreds of works of art, including masterpieces by Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Cy Twombly, and Andy Warhol. In 2002 he spearheaded the donation from a group of 11 Whitney trustees of 86 modern and contemporary works selected to build specific areas of its collection. In 2008 he contributed \$131 million to the Whitney's endowment to help ensure its long-term sustainability.

Mr. Lauder has long been involved with the Metropolitan Museum and has served as a member of its Visiting Committees for Drawings & Prints and Modern & Contemporary Art since the 1980s. In 1984 he gave his collection of American Art Posters of the 1890s to the Met, which presented them in an exhibition in 1987 accompanied by a major catalogue that continues to be the standard reference in the field. Since that time, Mr. Lauder has continued to acquire works for the collection.

Mr. Lauder, one of the nation's leading philanthropists, has also been a major supporter of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, University of Pennsylvania, Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF), the Alzheimer Drug Discovery Foundation (ADDF), the Hospital for Special Surgery, and Adventure Playgrounds in Central Park, among hundreds of other cultural, educational, social service, and civic organizations.

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