

Fernand Léger: Paris - New York

LÉGER



Author:	Fernand Léger
Genre:	Uncategorized
ISBN13:	9783775721615
Goodreads Rating:	3.75
Published:	September 1st 2008 by Hatje Cantz
Language	English
Pages:	206
ISBN10:	3775721614

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Fernand Léger (1881-1955) is one of the few Modernist artists that can be said to have anticipated both American Abstraction and American Pop, and to have made a deliberate relationship with American culture: He visited the U.S. several times, and during the Second World War, from 1940 to 1945, he lived in exile in New York. In America, Léger found much to admire--above all, a dynamic embrace of industry sympathetic to his own quasi-Futurist love of technological energies. An early critic of Léger described him as more of a "Tubist" than a Cubist, noting the cool metal cylinders that fill his early work. It was through such motifs that the artist approached modern life, viewing industry as a force for the good and its translation into art as a Modern vernacular. "Our pictures are our slang," he optimistically declared towards the end of his stay in New York. During that time, Léger had produced some of his most important works, which found a ready audience in the younger American artists surrounding him. "Paris-New York" covers the artist's entire oeuvre, from the Cubist-influenced early work to the later, cheerful large-format paintings.

Special attention is paid to the American dimension of Léger's oeuvre, and the volume traces his impact on American artists--primarily on Roy Lichtenstein and Ellsworth Kelly, but also on other late twentieth-century artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Al Held, Jasper Johns, James Rosenquist, Frank Stella and Andy Warhol.