HENRI LAURENS AND THE PARISIAN AVANT-GARDE

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the development of Henri Laurens' artistic work from 1915 to his death in 1954. It is divided into four sections: from 1915 to 1922, 1924 to 1929, 1930 to 1939 and 1939 to 1954. There are several threads that run through the dissertation. Where relevant, the influence of poetry on his work is discussed. His work is also analyzed in relation to that of the Parisian avant-garde. The first section discusses his early Cubist work. Initially it reflected the cosmopolitan influences in Paris. With the continuation of the war, his work showed the influence both of Léonce Rosenberg's 'school' of Cubism and the literary subject of contemporary Paris.

The second section considers Laurens' work in relation to the expanding art market. Laurens gained a number of public commissions as well as many ones for private clients. Being site specific, all the works were different. The different needs of architectural sculpture as opposed to studio sculpture are discussed, as is his use of materials. Although the situation was not easy for avant-garde sculptors, Laurens became well respected through exposure in magazines and exhibitions.

The third section considers Laurens in relation to the depression and the changing political scene. Like many of the avant-garde, he had left wing tendencies, which found form in various projects, including producing a sculpture for the École Karl Marx at Villejuif. Patronage virtually ceased. However, Laurens was frequently included in articles in avant-garde journals and exhibited widely.

The fourth section begins with the war. Laurens continued to live and work in Paris but was not included in official exhibitions. After the war, the press and State, which had largely disregarded members of the École de Paris, reversed this trend. As well as revisiting old sculptural themes, Laurens illustrated a number of books.

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me his lovely collection of works by Laurens and his *cahier d'or* at a time when I was wondering why I was researching someone as elusive as Laurens. That morning set me back on track.

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SECTION 1

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Early Work and Cosmopolitan Cubism

Introduction

The first surviving works by Henri Laurens that can be dated with any certainty are from 1915.[1] Although Laurens was introduced to the Cubists in 1911, his style did not immediately change from one allied to his artisan's training. It appears that for a few years he was simultaneously working on decorative and studio sculpture. By 1915 however, Laurens was drawing and sculpting exclusively in a manner that showed the influence of the Futurist and Russian artists who were in Paris at the time, as well as the Cubists. Laurens was close to Picasso, Braque and Gris. He was also close to many writers and musicians, including Reverdy and Satie. His early work has affinities with the broad spectrum of international ideas in Paris. From around 1917, his work changed to embrace a more French flavour, although still drawing on ideas from all three arts.

Laurens came from an artisanal family. He was born in 1885 and as a boy lived in Le Faubourg Saint-Denis. His father was a cooper.[2] He decided to become a sculptor when ten, and at fourteen entered *L'école d'art industriel Bernard Palissy* to become an architectural decorator.[3] There he worked directly on stone and plaster decorations for buildings. It was not unusual for a sculptor to learn his trade as a decorative artisan. Rodin and Dalou, among others had a similar training.[4] A photograph dated 1903, shows Laurens sitting in a studio with elaborate sculptural decorations of scrolls and

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[1] Mady Ménier, 'Henri Laurens et le cubisme,' (Sainte-Etienne: Université de Sainte Etienne, travaux IV, 1973), 131. Laurens destroyed nearly everything prior to this date.
[2] Catalogue, *Henri Laurens rétrospective*, (Lille: Musée d'art moderne, Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1992), 274.
[3] Ibid., and Bruno Voutiers, 'Sculpture. Laurens le modeste et le magnifique,' *Le voix du nord,* (6 et 7 décembre 1992), unpaged.
[4] Both had attended the trade school, the Petit École, which had been established in 1767 for the express purposes of training artisans, including decorative sculptors. Frederic Grunfeld, *Rodin. A Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 17.

filigree work hanging on the wall.[5] Both Marthe and Claude Laurens wrote how he retained a close feeling for his tools and for the craft of sculpture.[6] Even much later, he continued to love his craft like an artisan. While learning his trade, he also attended an academy of drawing run by the sculptor Jaques Perrin.[7] From 1899 to 1905 Laurens worked in the builders' yards of Paris and it was there that he became interested in the decorative sculptures of the churches in the Île de France.[8] This interest in the sculpture of Gothic and Romanesque churches was to continue through his life, and he made frequent visits to Chartres, Rampillon and St-Loup-de-Naud.

Early in 1911 Laurens moved to 6 rue Cortot in Montmartre where he was a neighbour of Braque.[9] Both artists were married by this time and a firm friendship was to develop between the couples. They were both from artisans backgrounds, had the same tastes and thought in a similar way about art. Artists at the time, like Juan Gris, thought of Laurens as being both a friend and pupil of Braque's.[10] Certainly there was an influence but Laurens was also to give ideas to Braque. From this time Laurens also knew the work of Léger, Archipenko and Lipchitz who were also to be influential.[11] Léger was to be an admirer of Laurens and later owned some of his work.[12]

It was also in 1911 that Laurens had his first atelier in the Impasse Girardon.[13] His studio was so close to that of Braque that they could talk to each other through the windows.[14] The sculpture of *Marthe Girieud* of 1912, the only surviving sculpture

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[5] Lille, 1992, op. cit., 275.
[6] Claude Laurens, 'Cent ans,' in catalogue, *Henri Laurens 1885-1954*, (Bern: Kunstmuseum, 1985), 13 and 15.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Isabelle Monod Fontaine, 'Le cubisme de Laurens,' in catalogue, *Henri Laurens. Constructions et papiers collés 1915-1919,* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985), 10.
[9] Ibid., 16.
[10] Douglas Cooper, ed., *The Letters of Juan Gris 1913-1927*, collected by D-H. Kahnweiler, (London: Privately published, 1956). Letter no LXXXI to D-H Kahnweiler, Paris, September 3 1919.
[11] Isabelle Monod Fontaine, 1985, op. cit., 10.
[12] Christian Derouet, ed., *Correspondances. Fernand Léger- Léonce Rosenberg, 1917-1937,* (Paris: Les cahiers du musée national d'art moderne, 1996), 188. Letter, Rosenberg to Léger dated septembre 19 1925.
[13] Lille, 1992, op. cit., 275.
[14] Conversation with Mme. Laurens, 19 February 1998.

from this date, is rationalised and stripped of any detail.[15] The hair is like a cap. It is closer to the post-Cézanne style of Derain than to the Cubism which was surrounding him. A photograph of Laurens and his wife Marthe in the studio in 1912, (Plate 1.1) shows Laurens working on a small, clay seated nude. In spite of no evident model, this work shows affinities with realist sculptors like Dalou. It is an un-idealised representation, with sagging breasts and tired stance. In the studio are also a number of reliefs done in a similar style which appear to have been executed in clay and plaster. It also shows the plaster of *Marthe Girieud* on a sculptor's table. [16] He was clearly considering idealism and realism in his work.

In 1913 he exhibited three works in the Salon des Indépendants; *Tombeau, Tête d'homme* and *Cadre de croquis.*[17] The tomb, which he made for his mother, was in cement. The style attested to his interest in medieval sculpture, while also showing an awareness of symbolism. The head was simplified in the same manner as *Marthe Girieud* and had overtones of Symbolism in the closed eyes and outstretched hands. The drapery of the figure had the linearity of the stylised clothing of the Old Testament figures on the west façade at the Cathedral of Notre Dame at Chartres. Laurens also exhibited decorative sculpture in the Salon des Indépendants of 1914.[18]

There is at least one letter to the dealer Léonce Rosenberg which appears to date from mid 1914.[19] In one he wrote about his work and of going to see Monsieur Inagatri to arrange for some sculpture to be translated from plaster to wood. From this and subsequent letters, it becomes apparent that Rosenberg was paying for this work. Laurens' early works, which have been dated from 1915, required machine precision.

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[15] Centre Georges Pompidou. Henri Laurens, *Marthe Girieud,* 1912. Bronze. 0.315 x 0.165 67 En 2276/5.
[16] Lille, 1992, op. cit., 275.
[17] Isabelle Monod Fontaine, 1985, op. cit., 17.
[18] Lille, 1992, op. cit., 275.
[19] Documentation du Musée national d'art moderne- Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Fonds Léonce Rosenberg. Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c2 9600.494. Many of the letters are undated, so that it is not possible to date them all as being post 1915. The letter in question is dated *Mardi 28 juillet* which would mean that this is from 1914. It is a fascinating archive, although sometimes the letters are

These letters indicate that he was working in this style from 1914. Rosenberg was interested in promoting Cubism, but was also a businessman. He would have needed evidence of a sophisticated assimilation of avant-garde concepts before entering into any business agreement. As he also exhibited decorative work at the Salon des Indépendants in 1914, it appears that Laurens was working in the two styles simultaneously.[20]

Paris before about 1915 was a focus for the avant-garde poets, painters, musicians and dancers who flocked to the city. Laurens loved poetry and music. He was to provide illustrations for much poetry, including a volume of verse by Reverdy in 1917. Laurens also became friends with the writers Paul Dermée and Raymond Radiguet, both of whose work he was to illustrate. The ideas generated by these illustrations fed into his sculptures. Marthe Laurens wrote that it was important to realise the overlap between poetry and the work of Laurens.[21] He loved the rhythm of poetry, and enjoyed reciting phrases of Germain Nouveau, Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Guillaume Apollinaire to himself in a bass voice.[22] These rhythmic sounds, especially in some of the poems by Max Jacob, whose work he particularly admired, could link with his sculpture. 'Musique acidulée' by Max Jacob, plays with the sounds of consonants and vowels.[23] The sounds and meanings are fused in a manner not dissimilar to the surface and content of a Cubist painting. In this poem, the repeated vowels gradually move around the spectrum of open and closed sounds, the changing consonants altering the meanings. Laurens' faceted sculpture changes emphasis as the viewer moves around. In his *Danseuse espagnole* of 1915 for instance, different elements of movement and fragments of body are revealed in repeated, rhythmic motifs. There were also letters

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difficult to read. All letters between Laurens and Rosenberg are from this archive unless otherwise stated.

[20] Lille, 1992, op. cit., 275.

[21] Isabelle Monod Fontaine, 1985, op. cit., 9.

[22] Marthe Laurens 'L'Homme,' in *Henri Laurens. Exposition de la donation aux musées nationaux.* (Paris: Ministères des affaires culturelles, 1967), unpaged.

[23] Max Jacob, 'Musique acidulée,' in Michel Décaudin, *Anthologie de la poésie française du XX siècle,* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 142.

between Apollinaire and Laurens which no longer exist.[24] Laurens knew and admired Apollinaire's poetry and ideas. Laurens' main interest was in the major French poets from the nineteenth century to his contemporaries, especially Baudelaire and Mallarmé. This is also relevant for his work which frequently shows affinities with ideas from the nineteenth century.

Laurens also loved music. Music was always in the house. His wife Marthe played the piano and he was friends with many composers including Auric, Poulenc and Satie.[25] The Laurens' had Satie's piano, and the composer came frequently to the house. Auric would also visit and play his new works.[26] These composers, who were all members of Les Six, sought an anti-romantic, French style, affiliated to contemporary life. Laurens enjoyed listening to Mozart's operas and classical music. When the craze for jazz arrived in Paris, he also grew to love that.[27] Laurens and Braque listened to music together.[28] Kahnweiler wrote that after 1920 he would frequently encounter Laurens and his wife at the *Opéra comique*.[29] Laurens' home was a meeting place for poets, painters and musicians. All three arts were of the utmost importance for him.[30]

Papiers collés

In 1915 Laurens created a number of papiers collés and at least two sculptures on the theme of a woman dancing. In these he did not use the imagery of ballet but of something more foreign and timeless. Just as Rodin attempted to capture a broad range of movement, from graceful to ecstatic stamping of dance steps in his gouache and pencil drawings of Cambodian dancers, so Laurens depicted a variety of dances and

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[24] Conversation with M. and Mme. Laurens, 11 September 1998.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Claude Laurens, Untitled essay about his father in catalogue, *Henri Laurens, 1885-1954*, Château de Biron, Dordogne, (Paris: Jacques London, 1990), 27.
[29] D. H. Kahnweiler, 'Recollections of Henri Laurens,' in Werner Hofmann, *The Sculpture of Henri Laurens,* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1970), 49.
[30] Michael Harrison, 'Introduction,' in catalogue, *Henri Laurens*, (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980), 24.

poses.[31] The papier collé *Jeune fille* of 1915, (Plate 1.2) captures a single moment of a graceful dance. *La dame à l'éventail* (Plate 1.3) and the *Danseuse* of 1915 capture the frenetic, fractured rhythm which traces the movement of rapid dance.[32] The papier collé, *Josephine Baker, danseuse* (Plate 1.4) and its related sculpture show a captured moment in a reclining form which has one leg in the air. The *Jeune fille* shows a non-European figure, *La dame à l'éventail* and the *Danseuse* were possibly Spanish dancers, and *Josephine Baker, danseuse* was a music hall entertainer. In all these works he used a visual vocabulary which reflected the cosmopolitan population of the avant-garde in Paris at the time. As well as deriving certain aspects from the writings of the Futurists, his work can also be associated with the sculpture and ideas of the Russians. However, Laurens also used a contemporary vocabulary which was entirely his own.

During the war, Laurens became close friends with Picasso and Gris, frequently visiting their studios.[33] However, his use of papier collé at this time was different to that of the other Cubists. He used precisely cut pieces of coloured paper which had no previous meaning. There are few words and visual puns. Unlike Picasso, Laurens did not search through copies of the sensationalist newspaper *Le Journal* to find absurd headlines, articles on the Balkan wars or even the cut word 'Jou' to denote games and layers of meaning.[34] Unlike Gris, he did not cover the surface with paper and fracture it with changes of perspective. The papier collé which is closest to the contemporary work of Gris was the *Nature morte* of 1915. (Plate 1.5) In this work, the word SPORTIN changes direction and scale, and is shown in light and dark, in a manner similar to Gris' *Pot of Geraniums* of 1915. (Plate 1.6) Like this work, Laurens also uses flat areas of dots. However, the majority of Laurens' works are of single figures

[31] Rodin drew a series of drawings in 1906 of a travelling troupe of Cambodian dancers in Marseilles. Here though, he worked from the moving model. There is no evidence to suggest that Laurens ever used a model for these works. See, Frederic Grunfeld, *Rodin, a Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 518-520.

[32] Henri Laurens *Danseuse* 1915. Papiers collés, crayon, rehauts de gouache sur papier. 31.5 x 24.5 Galerie Louise Leiris.

[33] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c50 9600.541 and c52 9600.543.

constructed from repeated geometrical shapes of paper which he annotated. The object, (usually single at this time,) floats decontextualized on the surface. Ruled lines of force or construction cut across the geometric shapes. Laurens was more precise and severe in his execution and representation than the other Cubists. The compass marks for the creation of the perfect circle remain, and the edges were obviously ruled. Unlike the work of Gris, this geometry was not fused onto a surface grid. No changes of mind are evident, so the whole was obviously worked out in advance. Pierre Reverdy thought that the introduction of papiers collés was like '*une cure de désintoxication...Ils ont libéré leur main, leurs yeux et leur ésprit des charmes trop envoûtants de la couleur en tube.*'[35] The use of cut, coloured paper stopped the temptation towards sensuous handling. The papiers collés of the other Cubists, especially those of Picasso and Braque can be seen as separate from their painting. Their exploration of ideas was broadened by the different medium. The affinity between the papiers collés and sculpture of Laurens is evident, so that one can see these works as an extension of his sculptural thinking.

There are at least two papiers collés on the theme of a dancer with a fan from 1915, one showing the whole figure, the other just the torso. Just as Severini's *Blue Dancer* of 1912 (Plate 1.7) depicts the successive movements of an energetic figure, so the limbs and fan trace their movement in the multiplication of moments accented with lines of force. Unlike in the Severini, the figure itself does not exist. The individual parts of the mass are enclosed and joined by the most tenuous of points, but they float in space. Only aspects essential for the depiction of movement are revealed. The geometric shapes show a complete flexibility of signs. These images of the dancer also relate to those in *Le clown* of 1915 (Plate 1.8) which describe the movement of juggling a hoop. The image is again purely conceptual. The use of the limited means of triangles, circles and rectangles and the brown and black colouring of the dancers is

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[34] For a good discussion of this, see Patricia Leighton, *Re-ordering the Universe. Picasso and Anarchism, 1897-1914*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), esp. 130-142.

[35] Pierre Reverdy, 'La plus longue présence,' 1955 quoted in Pierre Reverdy, *Oeuvres complètes-Note éternelle du présent*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 142.

not an attempt to charm the viewer. Just as in the paintings of Gris, Laurens was creating work of finish and precision. Laurens' letters to Rosenberg from during the war state a number of times how he was always searching for a purity of expression and a maximum of intensity in both his sculptures and drawings.[36] He thought that it was essential to sacrifice all that habitually charmed the eye.[37] The use of an industrially produced medium, cut to a perfect geometry can be seen as a distancing mechanism. However, paradoxically Laurens used it to enable the creator to realise an inner truth and purity. He wrote '*Je pense que l'essence d'une oeuvre est extériorisation de l'homme qui le crée. Sa qualité depend de la qualité d'humanité de l'artiste.*'[38] This was to be an idea that he was to reiterate throughout his career. It hints at an instinctive rather than intellectual approach akin to symbolism and Bergson, who wrote of intuition leading one to the very inwardness of life.[39]

The flow of movement shown as discontinuous shapes implies the depiction of time. This again links with the writings of Bergson. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson put forward the idea that something of the past is always conveyed into the present, and so there is no concept which is not undergoing constant change.[40] While acknowledging the apparent discontinuity of psychical life, Bergson does however state that evolution is a continuous stream and not made up of separate steps.[41] The papiers collés do show separate steps, but the wooden *Danseuse espagnole* of 1915 describes a stream of rhythmic movement. The body has been abstracted into a flow of gesture, the geometric elements swirling and cutting into the air.

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[36]Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c48 9600.539 and c47 9600.538. It seems likely from the context that these undated letters are from 1916 or 1917.
[37] Letter, c48 9600.539. Léger also indicated that this was necessary in his essay of 1913, 'Les origines de la peinture contemporaine et sa valeur représentative,' in Fernand Léger, *Fonctions de la peinture*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 26.
[38] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c47 9600.538.
[39] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, (London: McMillan and Co, 1911), 186. I will be discussing Laurens' links with Bergson in chapter 3.
[40] Ibid., 2.
[41] Ibid., 3 and 5.

Jeanneret wrote in 1920 how '*c'est par l'étude du movement corporel qu'il faut commencer,...c'est à l'étude du jeu des valeurs, des rapports, des combinaissons, en un mot, de l'abstraction, émotion fondamentale de l'artiste, qu'il faut s'attacher.*'[42] He also wrote in the previous article on the same subject how an education '*fondée sur l'étude du rythme est à la base de tout enseignement moderne, le rythme étant à la base des arts comme de la vie.*'[43] The timeless yet contemporary aspect of dance, with its abstract reliance on the rhythm of time was seen as a means of conveying a spiritual essence.

Diaghilev had brought the *Ballet Russe* to Paris and astounded audiences with the *Rite of Spring* in 1913. Not only was the music unexpected, with the unusual timbres of the instruments and the strong rhythmic passages, but the style of dance was also primitive yet contemporary. The Ballet Russe were a major influence in Paris throughout the teens and 1920s. Their exotic costumes and sets provided both work and inspiration for avant-garde artists and designers. The Russian Futurists also exhibited in Paris. Goncharova brought a decorative freedom of Oriental and Russian folk art in her paintings and costumes. As well as designing the scenery for Rimsky-Korsakov's *Coq d'or* as performed by the *Ballet Russe* in 1914, she also exhibited 150 works at the Paul Guillaume gallery in Paris.[44]

Sculptures

The small sculpture *Danseuse espagnole* of 1915 (Plate 1.9) was made to be viewed from all sides. She was not a classical dancer, but the rhythm of the form and the petticoats of the dress make her foreign and exotic. The facetted forms are loosely founded on the figure, with elements of the skirt and hands and breasts apparent. What is important in this work is the swirling movement made up of the tilted abstracted forms. The sculpture was made from different thicknesses of wood. The skirt and the

[42] Albert Jeanneret, 'La rythmique,' *L'esprit nouveau*, (No. 3, décembre 1920), 335-336.
[43] Albert Jeanneret, 'La rythmique,' *L'esprit nouveau*, (No. 2, novembre 1920), 183.
[44] Leroy C. Breunig, *Apollinaire in Art: Essays and Reviews 1902-1918*, tr. Susan Suleiman, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 394 and 412-414.

semi-circular breasts appear to be machine produced. The concave, red/brown sections were made by hand. The Futurists had been publishing their manifestos since 1909 and had been exhibiting in Paris since 1912. They had shown a large number of works in the 1914 Salon des Indépendants, and their influence on other artists was noted by Apollinaire.[45] Whereas the Cubists were concerned with showing a kind of realism, the Futurists were keen to express a symbol, or an impression.[46] One of the sculptures where this found form was in Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* of 1913. The striding, half mechanical figure becomes in itself a symbol of progress. Revealed are various stages of this movement. Laurens' dancing figure was not such an absolutist vision of contemporaneity, but like the Boccioni, it was concerned with showing movement within a single image. This was an integral part of Futurist manifestos. *The Technical Manifesto* of 1910 explained that no longer should a fixed moment in time be represented, but the dynamic sensation itself.[47] The eye's perception of movement was that the object appeared to multiply, so that the legs of a horse appeared as twenty stages of the movement.[48]

Although there was a gap between Futurist theories and execution, the idea of mixing the media of sculpture was a potent one.[49] Between 1912 and 1915, Boccioni, Balla, Depero, Tatlin, Baranoff-Rossiné, Archipenko, and Lipchitz all began to experiment with different materials within a single work of art. Laurens was to experiment with this also. For the Italian Futurists the new materials were a symbol of modernity. In the 'Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe' published by Balla and Depero in 1915, the use of mirrors, talcum powder, cardboard, and wire were considered means by which

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[45] Guillaume Apollinaire, 'The Thirtieth Salon des Indépendants,' Leroy C. Breunig, ed., ibid. 365.
[46] Francoise Cachin, 'Futurism in Paris, 1909-1913,' *Art in America*, (March/April 1974), 40.
[47] Marinetti, 'Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto,' (Milan, 11 April 1910), quoted in Herschel Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1968), 289. Translation by Marinetti.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Francoise Cachin, 'Futurism in Paris 1909-1913,' *Art in America*, (March/April 1974), 40. The exhibition was held at the Bernheim Jeune Gallery in June 1912. In the exhibition in the Galerie la Böetie in June 1913 only two of the twelve sculptures shown were mixed media works, Boccioni had reverted almost exclusively to working in plaster. Object sculptures using unusual materials were shown in Futurist exhibitions in Rome and London in 1914. See Katherine Janszky Michaelsen, 'Early Mixed Media Constructions,' *Arts Magazine*, (January 1976), 73.

one could reconstruct the universe.[50] Depero's *Complesso plastico colorato motorumorista di equivalenti in moto* of 1914-15, used glass, cardboard, tin, wires, wood, tubes and pulleys. It was capable of movement and noise.[51] Laurens' *Danseuse espagnole* did not use the contrasts of different materials. Like *Le clown* (Plate 1.10) and *Femme à la mantille* which were also made in 1915, it was made of wood with a unifying skin of paint. What Laurens was showing was the dynamism of movement.

Russian artists focused on the formal properties of materials. Archipenko and Baranoff-Rossiné who were in Paris at their most adventurous time, used contrasting materials, which expanded the formal possibilities and when seen in conjunction with the figurative elements created paradoxes and similes. Archipenko opened up sculpture presenting an alternative to the traditional notion of the monolith. He also re-introduced colour into sculpture, which could serve to unify, clarify or create optical effects.[52] Archipenko's sculpture which he exhibited in 1914, *Médrano II Dancer*, was a polychrome sculpture in tin, wood, glass and oilcloth. Vladimir Baranoff-Rossiné also exhibited a mixed-media construction in the same exhibition called *Symphonie II.* Both were singled out by Apollinaire for praise.[53]

Laurens made two wooden sculptures of clowns in 1915. It was a popular subject, both in poetry and art. The *Cirque Médrano* was in Paris, and was a favourite haunt of Parisian artists. Laurens also loved the circus. He went frequently to the shows with Gris, and also knew many of the performers.[54] As well as being contemporary, the circus also had a long artistic tradition. It was a subject used by many French poets since the nineteenth century, with specific meanings of which Laurens would have been aware. Baudelaire's prose poem, 'Un Mort Héroique' used the performance of

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[50] See ibid. Balla and Depero, 'Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe', in Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Futur Balla*, (Rome, 1970), 70-79.

[51] Katherine Janszky Michaelsen, 'Alexander Archipenko, 1887-1964,' in K. J. Michaelsen and N. Guralnik, *Alexander Archipenko. A Centenial Tribute,* (Washington: National Gallery of Washington, 1986), 73.

[52] Ibid., 45-46.

[53] Ibid., 72.

the clown to expose the tragic and vulnerable nature of the relationship of the artist to society.[55] Verlaine's 'Le clown' was concerned with the acrobat clown. No longer the butt of society, his ability to perform extraordinary athletic feats which were beyond those of ordinary man, had gained him respect.[56] This link between striving for ever more complicated athletic triumphs and creative activity was a common theme from the Goncourts to Theodore de Banville.[57] The clown as a metaphor for the creative artist was also explored in Mallarmé's poem, 'Le pitre châtié', where the clown attempted to reject the form of his performance by washing away his make up, only to realise that this led to creative sterility.[58]

Laurens' clowns of 1915 were very similar in execution, showing different stages of juggling a hoop by the use of fractured elements. In this they are closely related to the papiers collés. The tilting axis and poised instability, together with the use of non-illusionist geometric forms links the vocabulary of these works with that used by Archipenko in his *Carrousel-Pierrot* of 1913. (Plate 1.11) This language of complementary forms, differentiation of planes, and an opening of syntax was an aspect of Archipenko's work which Apollinaire complemented in his review of 1914.[59] However, while the figure expresses movement, it does not have the sense of the duration of time evident in the Laurens sculpture.[60] Archipenko's *Médrano 1* of 1912-1914 was, like Laurens' sculpture of this time, influenced by the Futurist manifestos, literally incorporating movement into sculpture in the form of a moveable arm. According to Archipenko, the spheres of the knees and breast were a metaphor

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[54] Conversation with Mme. Laurens 19 February 1998.
[55] I am grateful to Joan Gibbons for suggesting these links. Joan Gibbons, *Themes of Circus and Popular Entertainment*, Unpublished M A Dissertation, City of Birmingham Polytechnic, (1984), 68.
[56] Ibid., 70. See P. Verlaine, *Oeuvres Complètes*, (Paris 1911, Vol. 1), 309.
[57] Ibid., 64, 67. See E and J de Goncourt, *Journal, Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, (Monaco: R Riccatti, Vol. 3), 171. Theodore de Banville, *Les Pauvres Saltimbanques*, (Paris, 1857), 12-14.
[58] Rosemary Lloyd, *Mallarmé Poesies*, (London: Grant and Cutler Ltd., 1984), 72-75.
[59] *Apollinaire on Art,* op. cit., 363.
[60] For a discussion of possible influences on Laurens' *Clown*, see Joelle Pijaudier, 'Henri Laurens et le cubisme,' in catalogue, Lille, op. cit., 22-23.

for the juggling balls tossed by a circus performer.[61] In spite of the depiction of real and perceived movement in this sculpture, the appearance is static.

The *Clown* and the *Femme à la mantille* of 1915, which were made before money had become as scarce as it would later in the war, show machine precision as an integral part of the design. The lathing and assembling of the wooden sculpture was work given to a Monsieur Inagatri, for which the quoted price was 200 francs for each sculpture.[62] Laurens was clearly excited at the prospect of being able to see his work in wood, having produced the maquettes in plaster, a material which he considered '*froide et ingrate.*'[63] He was also excited about the possibilities of colour.[64] The reason for sending out the work to a maker was presumably because of the requirement of specialist tooling. Just as the papiers collés of 1915 used ruled lines and compass drawn circles, the sculptures required cones and spheres which were made with lathe precision. In a letter from September of 1915, Laurens praised the irreproachable execution of the sculptures.[65] The unnamed sculpture was to be reproduced three times and was to be finished in three ways, one white with black drawing, one black and red for contrasts, and one kept as natural wood.[66] It is clear that Laurens was considering artificial sculptural means. The clean, precise aspect of the sculptures expresses a contemporary modernist vision that complemented the growing importance of the machine in society. It is also clear that Rosenberg wished to defray the costs of having the sculpture made by producing three versions, which he felt that he could exhibit and sell.

The geometry of the forms and the sense of movement in the work of Laurens relate to the contemporary work of Léger as in *L'escalier (2me état)* 1914. Here, the figures abstracted into cones, jostle together giving a sense of the vitality of the modern world

[61] Katherine Michaelsen, 'Alexander Archipenko, 1887-1964,' in K.J. Michaelsen and N. Guralnik, *Alexander Archipenko. A Centennial Tribute*, (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1986), 33.
[62] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c2 9600.494.
[63] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c2 9600.494.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c21 9600.513. The postage stamp reads 12 11-9 15.

linking them to the poetry of Guillaume Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars and Henri-Martin Barzun.[67] The rhetoric of Barzun's poetry is close to the dynamism of the propaganda of the Futurists. He wrote of 'stressing the pulse of the great rhythm: Hymn of forces, of the World and of the Sun.'[68] Léger wrote how '*le réalisme pictural est l'ordonnance simultanée des trois grandes quantités plastiques: les Lignes, les Formes et les Couleurs.* '[69] The images of Laurens is clearly connected with these ideas. The clown, both historical and contemporary, shows both past and present in the subject and means. The rhythm, like those of the dancers', is part of a quest to show 'universal dynamism.'[70]

With the continuation of the war, the cosmopolitan aspect of Paris diminished. Life became hard, especially for avant-garde artists who were regarded by the general public with suspicion. Artists felt the necessity of changing their style. Laurens, as with Gris and Braque, felt a need to return to an art which could be considered more French.

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[66] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c21 9600.513.
[67] Christopher Green, *Léger and Purist Paris*, (London: Tate Gallery, 1971), 27.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Fernand Léger, *Fonctions de la peinture*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 26.
[70] Marinetti, 'Futurist painting: Technical Manifesto,' (11 April 1910), in Herschel Chipp, op. cit., 293.

Laurens and Rosenberg

With the outbreak of war many of the avant-garde enlisted in the army. Laurens was not able to do so owing to ill health. For those who remained in Paris, life was difficult. Anti-German propaganda was rife and to be part of the Cubist avant-garde was considered 'Boche'.[1] In part this was owing to the many German-Jewish dealers in avant-garde art since the nineteenth century, who were thought to have imposed foreign taste and culture on the French.[2] Paris lost its cosmopolitan aspect with many artists returning to their homes or becoming part of the war machine. The main Cubist dealer, Kahnweiler, was a German. He was in Italy when war was declared and was to remain in exile.[3] He was no longer able to support the artists as he had before the war. Léonce Rosenberg was Jewish, and so would again have been suspect according to popular opinion. Although enlisted as an interpreter with the Royal Flying Corps, he befriended Cubist artists and also supported new talent. Laurens had been selling his work to Rosenberg and corresponding with him for possibly a year when he entered into a six year contract in December 1915.[4] Being out of Paris, Rosenberg liked to correspond with 'his' artists and be kept informed of their progress. Some found this difficult, but the correspondence between Laurens and Rosenberg continued for over ten years.

Relations between Laurens and Rosenberg

Rosenberg saw himself as a promoter of Cubism, which he regarded as a group movement and French. This ran opposite to contemporary public opinion which considered it to be foreign. Rosenberg's concept of Cubism as being part of French cultural heritage was to find voice after the war when he opened his gallery. Christian

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[1] Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de Corps. The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925,* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 8.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 4.
[4] Documentation du Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Fonds Léonce Rosenberg, letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, envelope dated 2 décembre 15. The letter is almost illegible, but Laurens left the details of the contract for Rosenberg's judgement. All letters between Laurens and Rosenberg are from this archive unless otherwise stated.

Derouet makes the point that even the name, *L'Effort Moderne,* proclaimed to the public that Cubism was part of the movement towards national reconstruction.[5] Rosenberg was crucial for those who were continuing to paint and sculpt in a Cubist manner during and just after the war. By 1917 he had made contracts with at least twelve artists to whom he gave a monthly stipend.[6] However, this could be a double-edged sword. Rosenberg had no scruples about offering advice. Both Kahnweiler and Rosenberg liked to have personal relationships with their protégés.[7] Those with Kahnweiler were in general less stormy, as he supported a variety of artists with a broader range of aims and did not interfere. Rosenberg could not refrain from attempting to inject his own theories of art into his artists.[8] Throughout, Rosenberg maintained a position on Cubism that emphasised the spiritual element and an adherence to tradition.

Rosenberg could be forceful in his opinions. They sometimes sounded like a battle cry. In 1916, he wrote to Gris '*Ordre du jour à tous les croyants du 'Cubisme'. Mot d'ordre: travail patience silence...La victoire par la foi, par l'union, par la purité.*'[9] He also sent circulars. In one he wrote that he did not wish any of his artists to work for the ballet as it was a medium which fostered the joy and sadness of the moment. True art by contrast represented eternal values. He felt that the search for these led to God.[10] This authoritative tone was typical of Rosenberg. In a particularly forthright letter of 1918 to Gris, he stated that '*les fonds dont je dispose sont ma propriété et*

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[5] Christian Derouet 'Exposition Henri Laurens, décembre 1918,' in exhibition catalogue *Henri Laurens, rétrospective,* (Lille: Musée d'art moderne Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1992), 39. Christopher Green makes the point that Ozenfant wrote in an affirmative way in 1915 and 1916 about Cubism, equating the orderliness of it with the contemporary stress on national order and the classical notions of the French tradition. Christopher Green, *Cubism and its Enemies,* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 10.

[6] The artists were Gris, Metzinger, Rivera, Laurens, Lipchitz, Lhote, Zarraga, Heyden, Severini, Braque and Léger. Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics and Collectors of Modern Painting: aspects of the Parisian Art Market between 1910 and 1930,* unpublished PhD dissertation, University of London, (1977), 228.

[7] Ibid., 48 and 52-53.

[8] Ibid.

[9] 1916 in Georges González Gris, ed. *Juan Gris. Correspondance. Dessins. 1915-1921,* (Paris: Institut Valencia d'art moderne et Musée national d'art moderne, 1990), letter no. 1. Léonce Rosenberg à Juan Gris.

non la vôtre.'[11] He had a strong business sense and always looked for the best price for a work or the most advantageous terms for a contract.[12] He demanded a strict loyalty from his employees, not wanting his physical distance to be a reason for any infringement of the contracts. In 1916 he wanted Gris to send a particular catalogue of a Paris exhibition by return courier, with the names of those who had participated *'pour tirer parti de mes efforts, de mon autorité et de mes sacrifices.'*[13] The tone of this letter was not unusual at this time. The artists were left in no doubt as to the discipline demanded and the result if they strayed. Although there are no surviving letters to Laurens in this manner, it is likely that Rosenberg made his authority clear.

However, Rosenberg wanted to be more than just a banker and dealer. Gris wrote what a charming man he was.[14] Léger wrote many friendly letters to him, discussing subjects as diverse as literature[15] and gardening.[16] Laurens always wrote in a very amicable fashion, and clearly Rosenberg went frequently to the house and was welcome. In a letter, which is probably from 1916, Laurens invited Rosenberg to their house at l'Etang-la-Ville in the warmest of tones.[17] He wrote what a pleasure it would be for him and his wife to receive Rosenberg there, how beautiful and close the forest was, and all this only one hour from Paris.[18] In acknowledging the receipt of the bank orders each month, Laurens always found time to expand on his ideas, to give an update on his work, or to respond to something which Rosenberg had mentioned in a previous letter. Rosenberg wrote to him about the war and of his life

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[10] Ibid., 'Circulaire confidentielle,' Paris, 3 septembre 1917.
[11] Ibid., letter Rosenberg to Gris 28 novembre 1918.
[12] Christian Derouet, ed. *Correspondances, Fernand Léger-Léonce Rosenberg, 1917-1937*, (Paris: Les cahiers du musée national d'art moderne, 1996), Léger to Louis Poughon dated 7th December 1917, 22. and letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c167 9600.592.
[13] Georges González Gris, op. cit. Letter no 8, Léonce Rosenberg to Juan Gris, 29.5.16.
[14] Douglas Cooper, ed. and trans., *The Letters of Juan Gris,* collected by D-H Kahnweiler, (London: privately printed, 1956), letter LI, 41, October 1916, from Gris to Maurice Raynal.
[15] Christian Derouet, op. cit., 52, Léger letter, no 54.
[16] Ibid., 39, Léger letter, no 36.
[17] Letter from Laurens to Rosenberg c41 9600.533. This is probably from the summer of 1916 as from the contents of the letter it was the first stay at L'Etang-la-Ville. He stayed at 11 Rue de Marly (la Montagne)
[18] Ibid.

as a soldier,[19] and sent Laurens and Gris a picture of himself on horseback in soldiers' uniform.[20] He seems to have given quite a vivid account in spite being stationed at Meudon, Le Havre and at Nanterre-la-Folie as an interpreter with the Royal Flying Corps, rather than fighting at the front.[21] Laurens appears to have felt a certain pressure owing to his lack of participation in the war.[22] He wrote how he *'aurait été d'être de la grande lutte mais les misères de la vie en ont décidés autrement.'*[23] Later in the letter, he wrote how '*en attendant je travaille le mieux que je peux*,' and in another which appears to be from the same summer, *'Tout çela doit être bien loin de vous dans la bataille, mais pour moi je travaille de toutes mes forces pour préparer l'autre bataille que vous aurez en soutenir.'*[24]

These cordial relations seem to have continued after Laurens left Rosenberg. There are many notes mentioning visits, and postcards from holidays throughout the 1920s. Léger also kept up a friendly correspondence, but this does seem to contrast with some of the other artists. In 1924 Rosenberg wished to send Braque a copy of the *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne* which had reproduced a painting of his, but Rosenberg did not have Braque's address.[25] In another letter to Laurens, Rosenberg asks Laurens to be an intermediary in buying a painting by Braque.[26] It is obvious that Rosenberg was not in the habit of visiting Braque's studio as he was with Laurens. Gris also seems to have broken off relations with Rosenberg in 1921.[27] They had a stormy relationship before that. In a letter dated the 28th November 1918, Gris was offered his freedom from the binding contract. This he did not take, but the tone of the letter

[19] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c 49 9600.540. This letter from is probably from the summer of 1916 or 1917, and acknowledges one from Rosenberg.
[20] Georges González Gris, op. cit., 40. The photo which Rosenberg sent to Gris was dated 31-8-16. One was also sent to Laurens as it was mentioned in the undated letter number c42 9600.534 in Fonds Léonce Rosenberg, op. cit.
[21] Cooper, op. cit., letter LI, 41, dated October 4th, 1916, Juan Gris to Maurice Raynal.
[22] This was due to ill health, but in the contemporary climate there must have been much public pressure. On this subject see Kenneth Silver, op. cit., 4-6
[23] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c 49 9600.540.
[24] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c51 9600.542.
[25] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c169 9600.594 dated 29.11.24.
[26] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c.167 9600.592.
[27] There appear to be no letters to him from this date, and no mention of Rosenberg in any letters to others.

from Rosenberg was acerbic. '*Il est venu à ma connaissance que vous déclariez à tout venant que c'était vous qui aviez fait la G.E.M. J'ai déjà entendu cette prétention puerile de la bouche de Rivera, d'Ortiz etc.*'[28] When Rosenberg renewed Gris' contract in 1920, he only did so for certain sizes of paintings. Gris painted nothing within those sizes and sent all his work to his old friend and dealer, Kahnweiler at the Galerie Simon.[29] This may well have pleased both of them as Rosenberg was clearly having financial difficulties. In a letter dated 20th January 1920, he told Léger that the contract with him was too onerous and that he wished to annul the agreement.[30] He wrote to Lipchitz in a similar vein on the 2nd of January of that year.[31]

In part, Laurens' continuing good relations with Rosenberg was a shrewd move. In linking himself with Rosenberg he was an integral part of a movement that was being actively promoted. Rosenberg held regular exhibitions at his gallery and wrote much in defence of Cubism from 1918 onwards. This began with a letter to the *Carnet de la semaine* in September of that year, where he defended Cubism against the attacks of Vauxcelles.[32] Vauxcelles was a particularly vociferous critic who penned regular diatribes against Cubism and Cubist artists in his column in the *Carnet de la semaine*. In his campaign after the war, he was determined to convince his readers that Cubism was dead.[33] Rosenberg countered this with a series of solo exhibitions of Cubist artists from late 1918 through the spring of 1919 at the Galerie de l'Effort Moderne, showing their work from 1914 to the actual months of the exhibitions. This showed, in an unequivocal manner, the strength and vitality of the movement.[34]

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[28] Georges González Gris, op. cit., 68. Letter, Rosenberg to Gris, dated 28 novembre 1918.
[29] D-H Kahnweiler, *Juan Gris. His life and work*, trans. Douglas Cooper, (London: Lund Humphries, 1947), 17.
[30] Derouet, op. cit., 64. Letter, Rosenberg to Léger, 20 January 1920, no 61.
[31] Ibid., 64. Letter, Rosenberg to Lipchitz quoted in note one.
[32] Green, op. cit., 11.
[33] Ibid., 8-9.
[34] Ibid., 11. The exhibitions were December 1918 Henri Laurens, January 1919 Metzinger, February 1919 Léger, March 1919 Braque, April 1919 Gris, May 1919 Severini, June 1919 Picasso.

Rosenberg was an attentive dealer, writing articles, sending works abroad and keeping a continuous stock at the Effort Moderne, which he kept in a good state of repair. This was not always as easy with sculpture as with paintings. Transportation alone could be a problem. Once, when carrying one of his sculptured heads to the gallery, Laurens had an accident in the wind and rain in which it became damaged.[35] In contrast with this, Gris wrote of rolling the works up to send by train, and if the paint was still wet, of putting grease proof paper in between the works.[36] As well as being heavier and more difficult to transport, sculpture was also more delicate. It was not unusual for Laurens to carry out some repairs for Rosenberg. On one occasion a sculpture was damaged while hanging, but this also could happen as a result of general wear and tear in the gallery.[37] It seems that the *sculpto peintures* were particularly at risk, as in 1927 Laurens was asked to repair most of the ones in the collection.[38] This again contrasts with paintings, which are protected by frames, so that small knocks as well as changes in temperature do not make any difference. In the same way, mistakes in paint can, in the main, be rectified. However, in stone this is not always the case. The head of the *Femme à l'oiseau* of 1921 became broken when Laurens was making the base.[39] He wanted Rosenberg to go and see the damage. However, a month later, Laurens had finished it and Rosenberg was pleased, commending Laurens' courage.[40]

Sales

Sculpture in general was harder to sell than paintings. It had less status in the eyes of the public than painting, was difficult to house and was expensive to buy. In particular, the sales of Laurens' work were not great. Constructions were not popular. Cubist sculpture did not at this stage have a large following and Laurens was

[35] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c12 9600.504 probably 1915.
[36] Cooper, op. cit. There are many letters from Gris which talk of him sending rolled canvases to Kahnweiler from the station at Bandol. For instance, CXXVIII to Kahnweiler, Bandol, April 15 1921 and CXXII to Kahnweiler, Bandol, March 22 1921.
[37] Letters. For instance Rosenberg to Laurens, c159 9600.580 dated 20.4.21 and c170 9600.595 dated 4. 12. 24.
[38] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c189 9600.615 January 12 1927.
[39] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c78 9600.581 dated 2. 5. 21.

relatively unknown at this time. Rosenberg dealt with this with a degree of tact. When writing about Laurens' one man exhibition at the Galerie de L'Effort Moderne in the spring of 1920, he said that it had been well enough attended but that there had been no sales, which did not surprise him given the '*mentalité du public ici.*'[41] He compared it with the exhibition in Stockholm, which had been attended by about one thousand people.[42] This general lack of interest in the work of Laurens seems to have continued. In 1925 he wrote to Laurens arranging a *rendez-vous* to see some sculpture. However, he also wrote that he hoped that Laurens would not charge a large price as '*la sculpture en générale est fort difficile à vendre mais aussi la vôtre est, en particulier, pas encore appréciée, à la juste valeur, par le public.*'[43] He continued saying that he was sure that his hour would come.[44] Even in the letter which gave Laurens his liberty in 1921, Rosenberg finished it with '*Je n'en reste pas moins comme par le passé, un vif et très sincère admirateur de vôtre art, dont je serai toujours heureux d'acquérir des réalisations.*'[45] In many ways, Rosenberg was a good dealer for Laurens. Rosenberg continued to acquire works from Laurens during the 1920s. Laurens had a contract with Kahnweiler for two years from 1920, but did not have a single exhibition at the Galerie Simon. However, the Galerie Simon also bought work from Laurens throughout his career, and Laurens and Kahnweiler were to remain good friends.

From December 1916 to August 1917, Laurens received 400 francs each month.[46] The price at which Laurens sold his sculptures to Rosenberg was about 350 francs

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[40] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c160 9600.582 dated 11. 6. 21.
[41] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens. c150 9600.569 dated 27th January 1920. Laurens' exhibition was from 17 February to the 19th March. It appears that Laurens was unhappy about the date and had requested it to be made later as his exhibition was directly after that of another sculptor. This was impossible for Rosenberg, as before the end of the season; the 15th July, he had to hold the exhibitions of Gris, Herbin, Severini, Braque and Léger. Picasso, Blanchard and Irene Laqut were scheduled for the following autumn.
[42] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c151 9600.570.
[43] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c178 9600.603.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c162 9600.585.
[46] Letter, c 30 9600 522. Laurens received 400 francs for each of those months. He sold Rosenberg two sculptures at 350 francs each on the 25 March 1917. On 12 August 1917 he sold Rosenberg 21

and between 50 and 100 francs for drawings.[47] Contemporary with this, Léger received 3,000 francs from Rosenberg for *La partie de cartes* and four drawings.[48] Léger considered the contract, which was drawn up between him and Rosenberg at this time, to be very advantageous. He commented on how he had had to fight to get these terms.[49] It was to come into effect after the end of the war, but the prices of the paintings were already fixed at between 200 and 1000 francs, and the drawings between 50 and 100 francs.[50] Towards the end of the war money was scarce and Rosenberg was forced to ask his artists to accept a reduction. Laurens took a cut of 100 francs each month.[51] It appears that Gris had started with a higher monthly rate than Laurens, and was asked to make do with 400 francs.[52] Three hundred francs was not a great deal of money, and whether Rosenberg asked Laurens to take a further cut or not is not clear, but a number of undated letters say that it would be impossible for him to survive on less. It is not unusual to find letters where Laurens was asking for an advance on the monthly pay, including the reason that he had bought some stone and it needed to be transported.[53]

After the war ended, Rosenberg was able to be much more generous. Between November 20 1918 and October 4 1919, Laurens received 8750 francs, often in one thousand franc instalments, as opposed to what would have been 3300 francs over

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drawings at 50 francs, 9 drawings at 75 francs, 1 drawing at 100 francs. 1 drawing at 75 francs, 1 sculpture at 200 francs and 2 sculptures at 350 francs. This left Laurens a debt of 100 francs.

[47] Ibid. However, c25 9600.517 dated 2nd February 1916. Laurens sold 2 sculptures: *Nature morte, Verre et tabac* and *Nature morte verre et journal*, and a drawing: *Tête* for 600 francs. Christian Derouet states that Laurens received 300 francs a month. There are many undated letters which do acknowledge the receipt of this amount. What is not clear is whether Laurens started at 300 francs, had a raise and then a reduction, or whether, which is more likely that he took a cut in 1918 at the same time as Gris. See Derouet, op. cit. 40. The letter from during the war, number c43 9600.535 thanks Rosenberg for 200 francs and it from the tone of the letter, Rosenberg had voiced concern about the ability to continue with Laurens' contract in the original form. Laurens wrote that it was impossible to make any further concessions.

[48] Derouet, op. cit., 22. Fernand Léger, note 4, dated 5 décembre 1917.

[49] Ibid. Letter from Léger to Louis Poughon, dated 7 décembre 1917.

[50] Ibid., 22. Léger had arranged a contract to start at the end of the war in which he estimated that he would receive 20-25,000 francs a year.

[51] Georges González Gris, op. cit. Gris to Rosenberg, letter no 67, 26 November 1918. He alludes to Rosenberg's letter of 15 June 1918. See also letter Laurens to Rosenberg, c43 9600. 535.

[52] Georges González Gris, Ibid. Gris states that it was he that suggested the lower rate of 300 francs.

[53] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c9 9600.501, c46 9600.537 and c64 9600.554.

the same period during the preceding years. He frequently advanced Laurens money on the value of his production. It was this which was to be the downfall of Laurens, as in 1920 he became behind in his work to such an extent that it was becoming impossible for him to pay off the debt.[54] Laurens had been ill and in September of 1921, Rosenberg gave him his liberty.[55]

The value of individual sculptures also rose. In 1918 Rosenberg bought a polychrome stone sculpture for 350 francs.[56] He bought the bas relief *Boxeur* in 1920 for 900 francs and *La femme à l'oiseau* for 1500 francs in 1921.[57] In 1925 Rosenberg bought the *Femme au bras lévé* for 4000 francs[58] and three gouaches for 1000 francs, although he had written to Laurens to say that he could not give what he felt was a good price for his work as his work was not well appreciated.[59] Gris in 1919 wrote that he sold two of his paintings, a size 12 for 500 francs and a size 10 for 400 francs for Rosenberg while he was out of the gallery. Rosenberg thought that this price was too low.[60] This places price of the individual works of both Gris and Laurens on a similar footing with those of Léger, who received 300 francs for a size 10 and 1000 for a size 80-70 for the three years after the war.[61] However, Léger undertook to paint at least three paintings a month. Gris was also able to paint a number of paintings in each month. The arduousness of the medium meant that Laurens was unable to produce that amount of sculpture. In the five months between March and August 1917, Laurens made only 5 sculptures but 32 drawings. The drawings were valued at

[54] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens c153 9600. 572 dated 29th March 1920. Rosenberg had the inspectors of the inland revenue coming to examine his books and so wanted Laurens to liquidated his debt. He was afraid that the inspector would regard the debt as impossible, which could have repercussions that Laurens would not like.
[55] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens c162 9600.585 dated 3.9.21. Laurens had engaged, in a letter dated 2nd April 1921, (number c156 9600.576) to show Rosenberg a selection of drawings prior to making three sculptures. Laurens had failed to produce either drawings or sculptures.
[56] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg c85 9600.627 dated 30 avril 1918. *Bouteille et verre* no 5721. He also bought two drawings at 100 francs and 3 drawings at 225 francs
[57] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c98 9600 640 dated 24 March 1920 *Le boxeur*, bas relief. No size given. c101 9600.643 dated 22 juin 1921 *La femme à l'oiseau*, height 0.56 m.
[58] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c110 9600 652.
[59] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c178 9600.603 dated mai 11 1925.
[60] Cooper, op. cit. Letter LXXXIII from Gris to Kahnweiler, October 11 1919.
[61] Derouet, op. cit. 22. Letter 6 Léger to Rosenberg dated 6th December 1917.

a similar amount to those by Léger, at between 50 and 100 francs. Laurens made many more of them than Léger, who only expected to do around 30 in a year, but Laurens would have earned considerably less overall.

Laurens and his family went to L'Etang-la-Ville for the first time in 1916 for the summer. There he worked, sometimes in the garden that ran around the house, enjoying the calm, and the beauty of the surrounding forest of Marly.[62] They lived there in a modest manner. As he wrote in a letter to Rosenberg, who had clearly been questioning the possible extra expense, that it was not more costly and that '*il me serait tout à fait impossible de faire les folies.*'[63] During the winter of 1917-1918 Laurens changed his Parisian atelier from Impasse Girardon to Rue Lamark as it had become too cold to work. He wrote to Rosenberg that all the sculptures, which he had prepared in terre glaise for study, had frozen and fallen apart.[64] This meant that he had been unable to start the final versions.

This constant concern about money must inevitably have had an effect on his sculptures. The materials and style he used reflected the strictures. *Le clown* and the *Femme à la mantille* of 1915 were made using a precision that resulted from sending out the work to a maker to fabricate using lathes and other machine tools. There was no later mention of sending out sculptures for fabrication. Laurens' style was developing rapidly. The dependence on machine precision was no longer important, and by 1916 a more direct, improvised method of working, which often involved the juxtaposition of different, inexpensive materials became normal. This again relates to the style of the papiers collés, which were now not so reliant on the ruler and compass. This change does not totally relate to contemporary artistic aesthetic. Juan Gris was producing paintings where the edges were very precise and corresponded to a predetermined and presumably ruled grid. Léger continued to paint using cones as

[62] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c41 9600.533. He continued to go there for part of the year until 1935, travelling into Paris, just an hour away, occasionally to see friends.
[63] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c47 9600.538.
[64] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c17 9600.509.

machine precision elements of the people playing cards in *La partie de cartes*, of 1917. It must be questioned as to how far economic circumstances dictated the change to a more evolutionary and experimental approach to sculpture and how much was a continuation and expansion of formal possibilities proposed in the Futurist manifesto of 1910.[65]

Working Methods

The letters between dealer and artist also give a vivid account of Laurens' work in progress. He drew constantly. These are works in their own right, were sold individually and their precision and finish means that they cannot be viewed as just sketches. They contain elements of ideas that he used and developed in his sculptures. Frequently they were a means of clarifying ideas for sculpture. Several times maquettes are mentioned as precursors to realisations in the final material.[66] This does not always seem to be the case, as around 1916-1917, when Laurens was working in differing materials, he talked of executing a still life directly.[67] This would allow him to manipulate the materials and to a certain extent respond to them and make them part of the creative process. The papiers collés of this time play one material against another.

These constructions were a major part of his output during the war, with some reliefs in polychrome wood, cement, and terracotta. Only occasionally was a sculpture completed in stone, as with the large *Tête* of 1917. The use of different materials, producing interplay of textures and densities with a lighter, more transparent aspect was clearly important. This type of construction raises questions about the perimeters of the sculpture itself and the metaphor and reading of the materials used, questions which would not arise if he had chosen to complete his works in inexpensive terracotta or plaster. In a letter describing a *Nature morte d'instruments de musique* which was being executed in different materials, Laurens wrote how '*chaque matière*

[65] See discussion in first chapter.
[66] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c65 9600.556 undated but possibly April 1920.
[67] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c51 9600.542.

devant [sic] exprimée une densité différente dans un espace de qualité plastique.'[68] This openness of sculpture was important for him and it was his conception of modernity which he was relaying to Rosenberg. However, it is also a fact that soon after the end of the war, the constructions ceased to be made, and there was an increased use of unpainted stone and bronze. This change is a complicated area involving the whole artistic climate.

Rosenberg saw Cubism as a collective, French art movement and himself as its defender.[69] The exhibition of Laurens' work at the Effort Moderne in December of 1918 was the inauguration of the dealer and Laurens into the Paris art market. It seems that the idea of the exhibition was proposed during the summer when Laurens was at L'Etang-la-Ville. Laurens wrote of being very excited and of working furiously.[70] It was to be a large exhibition with thirty two sculptures and one hundred and sixty one drawings.[71] This was the first of a series of solo exhibitions at Rosenberg's new gallery, which effectively promoted Cubism as a continuing, vital movement. However, the public response was not all that had been hoped. The Rue de la Baume was very quiet, and the entrance to the gallery discrete.[72] There appears to have been little publicity, although a short film was made for this purpose.[73] This was screened at the cinema and showed Laurens in a hat and coat rotating *La femme à la mantille.*[74] The audience was amused.[75] The lack of any other means of publicity was in line with the way in which the galleries were run prior to the war. Kahnweiler

[68] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c42 9600.534. This is undated, but is probably from 1916 as it appears to be at the beginning of his use of diverse means.
[69] See Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market between 1910 and 1930*, unpublished PhD. dissertation, University of London, (1977), especially 48-53.
[70] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c23 9600.515.
[71] Christian Derouet, 'Exposition Henri Laurens, décembre 1918,' in catalogue Lille, 1992, op. cit., 47.
[72] Ibid., 41.
[73] Ibid., 46.
[74] Ibid., 46.
[75] Conversation with Mme. Laurens, 19 February 1998.

apparently had spent no money on publicity for his exhibitions.[76] There had never been announcements in the press or any attempt to appeal to the crowd.[77] Even the exhibitions themselves were less appealing than more fashionable galleries, which sold Impressionist paintings and attempted to capture the imagination of the buying public by grouping objects together into ensembles. The Galerie de l'Effort Moderne had plain sackcloth on the walls and showed the works as if in a museum.[78] For later exhibitions in the series, Rosenberg organised literary and musical evenings at the gallery.[79] These were intended to attract the public. However, these were not available for Laurens' exhibition and there were no reviews in the press.[80] Only two works sold, convincing Rosenberg that there was no market for Laurens' work as it stood.[81] This has been suggested as the reason why Laurens changed to working in unpainted stone.[82]

Another reason could also be that Laurens spent some time at Chartres during the Spring of 1918. It was a place that he had previously only known from reproductions. He was clearly overwhelmed by the actuality which '*dépassait ce que j'avais pu imaginer. Surtout dans les parties romanes.*'[83] He loved the great sculptural presence of the tympanum,[84] and the simplicity and force of the interior. He thought of it as the summit of French art and that it represented '*les qualités extrêmes de la race.*'[85]

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[76] Nancy Troy, 'Domesticity, Decoration and Consumer Culture: Selling Art and Design in Pre-World War 1 France,' in Christopher Reed, ed. *Not at Home. The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern art and Architecture*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 121.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Cooper, op cit., letter LXXVI dated February 2nd 1919 From Juan Gris to Maurice Raynal. It says that the first literary and musical evening was to be arranged during the Léger exhibition in February 1919, with Cendrars and Satie. Letter LXXVIII to Raynal February 26 1919, Cocteau was to give a reading of some poetry, Raynal would give a talk about art, and then some music by Auric would be played at Gris's exhibition in April of that year.
[80] Derouet in catalogue, Lille, 1992, op. cit., 49. A list of works in the exhibition is given in ibid., 51-53.
[81] Ibid, 49. A Norwegian collector bought *Verre et bouteille*, painted wood and *Nature morte*, a construction.
[82] Ibid. Derouet claims that Rosenberg asked Laurens to change material, but does not back this up with any documentary evidence.
[83] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c63 9600.554.
[84] It was a postcard of this which he chose to send to Rosenberg c 62 9600.553.
[85] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c63 9600.554.

Stone as a material was a way in which that tradition could be acknowledged in a meaningful way. Laurens was to continue to enjoy Romanesque and Gothic architecture and made 'pilgrimages' to his favourite churches of Rampillon and St-Loup-de-Naud in the Île de France throughout his career.[86] In contrast to stone, constructions can be seen as more international in outlook, with varying materials being advocated by Italian and Russian artists. The use of colour also appeared less pure. In materials and style constructions were not wedded to tradition. With the ending of the war, Rosenberg had more money to invest in sculpture. Stone was one of the materials which had been an integral part of Laurens' work as an apprentice of Parisian architectural decoration. Stone, unlike bronze, epitomised the unique object. It signified a long tradition of sculpture, and with the contemporary climate of looking for national pride, stability and order, it seems logical that Laurens would have adopted stone as his principal medium.

During the years 1915 to 1922, the style and materials used by Laurens developed rapidly. He had moved from a style that encompassed the international flavour of Paris prior to the war to one that embraced tradition as well as being contemporary. In these, Laurens maintained a personal voice in spite of being integral with the group movement of Cubism as it was being promoted by Rosenberg. Throughout this time, the financial and personal backing for his work by Rosenberg was a crucial element. The move from construction to stone, as well as other possible formal developments, had been made with at least part of an eye on appealing to the public. After the hardships of the war, the value of his work rose in line with that of the other contemporary artists. This was to continue through the boom years of the 1920s. Rosenberg's promotion of Laurens' work, along side that of other Cubists, was crucial.

[86] Jean Leymarie, 'Introduction' in catalogue, *Henri Laurens*, (Rome: Académie de France à Rome), 14.

Laurens: The Spiritual, Grace and Tradition.

The first major article about Laurens was that written by Maurice Raynal in 1921.[1] This had three main areas of discussion: French grace, the idea that he revealed the contemporary spirit while acknowledging the history of sculpture and the humanity evident in his work. These were to be the major themes that were discussed in relation to Laurens in most of the articles published during his lifetime. The only other major concept that was to be explored was the idea that his sculpture was in some way a reflection of himself, an aspect with which Laurens concurred and which reveals an interest in the Symbolists and Bergson. This chapter will consider these aspects, placing them within the contemporary artistic and philosophical framework.

Tradition

Like much contemporary writing, the article by Raynal was general in its criticism, preferring to make comments about the tendencies of Laurens' work rather than discussing individual sculptures or the development of his style. Raynal started the article with the concept of the grace apparent in the work of Laurens as being of a superior order. He meant that it was produced by '*assurance, d'authorité, de candeur discrètes mais inébranalables...et surtout impose certaines imperfections.*'[2] Grace was clearly depicted through both technical and spiritual means. Laurens had the complete mastery of his trade, having served as a decorative artisan for many years. Imperfections were formal means used by the artist for effect. Each work, Raynal wrote, was meticulously assembled from gracious fragments.[3] Raynal considered that his ability to instill grace into every aspect was a particularly French trait.[4] He was not alone in this. Even writers analyzing furniture wrote about the feminine grace of French style and linked that with the luxurious and delicate work of the

[1] Maurice Raynal, 'Laurens,' *L'esprit nouveau,* (No 10, 1921), 1152-1164. *L'esprit nouveau*, which was a magazine edited by the Purist artists Ozenfant and Jeanneret, had regular articles on artists of the day: Picasso in no. 1, de La Fresnaye in no. 2, Léger in no. 4, Gris in no. 5, Braque in no. 6, Laurens in no. 10, Lhote in no. 11 and Metzinger in no. 15.
[2] Ibid., 1152.
[3] Ibid. Another person to comment on this trait was Pierre Gueguen, 'La conjonction de la realité sensuelle et de l'abstraction dans l'oeuvre de Henri Laurens,' *Cahiers d'art,* (1932), 52.
[4] Raynal, ibid., 1153.

eighteenth century.[5] Grace was an attribute that was also commented upon by Kahnweiler in relation to the work of Laurens. 'His art is very French; its graceful, flowing forms remind me of the sixteenth-century sculptor Jean Goujon.'[6]

Tradition was a crucial aspect for anchoring avant-garde art at a time when the general public were viewing Cubism with suspicion. These traditions could be diverse, but tended towards rational, constructed art and were given nationalist overtones. Just as Gleizes and Metzinger had quoted previous masters as a justification of Cubism and Gris frequently acknowledged previous French masters, so Kahnweiler anchored the work of Laurens into a French lineage.[7] Raynal also linked Laurens with Poussin and Rodin.[8] It was an unstable era when the necessity of validating Cubism through a French artistic parentage seemed imperative. In the early 1920s, Waldemar George began to expound his often repeated idea of the river of French tradition with tributaries in archaic Greece. This river meandered though Rude, Barye and Rodin to Bourdelle, Laurens Lipchitz and Zadkine.[9] The concept of an almost Darwinian evolution of French civilization was also promoted by Focillon in his book, *Pierres de France* which was published in 1919.[10] The tone of the book was patriotic in the extreme. French history was filtered through the rational and poetic aspects of architecture. Wars had bled the earth, peace rebuilt homes. Over time, through this reconstruction, the people became elevated, reasonable, pleasant, heroic and noble.[11]

Nos titres de noblesse, vous les épellerez sur les murailles de nos

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[5] For instance Paul Mantz, 'Les Meubles du XVIIIe siecle,' *Revue des arts décoratifs*, (1883-1884, part 3), 380. Quoted in Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin de Siècle France. Politics, Psychology and Style*, (Berkley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1989), 125. She discusses this trait between 121-125.

[6] D-H Kahnweiler, 'Recollections of Henri Laurens,' in Werner Hofmann, *The Sculpture of Henri Laurens,* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.,1970), 50.

[7] Gleizes and Metzinger, *Du cubisme*, (Saint-Vincent-sur-Jabron: Presence, 1980, originally 1912), 41. For instance, Douglas Cooper, ed. and trans., *The Letters of Juan Gris*, (London: privately published, 1956), letter no. CXXIV, dated March 25, 1921.

[8] Raynal, 1921, op. cit., Rodin, 1153, Poussin, 1163.

[9] Catherine Pütz, *Cubist Sculpture and the Circularity of Time*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, (1999), 34. It is curious that he included Lipchitz and Zadkine as part of French tradition. Waldemar George's tone would change in his writings of the 1930s where he denounced the École de Paris.

[10] Focillon, *Les pierres de France*, Paris: Henri Laurens ed., 1919.

[11] Ibid., introduction, no page.

> *cités, aux parois de nos maisons communes, aux porches formidables de nos cathédrales, ces falaises bâties par des hommes et qui, par leur peuple de pierre, proférent d'étonnantes vérités.*[12]

The visible aspects of French culture were seen as confirmation of the nobility of the French soul. It was a way of understanding the present. Particularly important for this were Romanesque churches which were built, according to Focillon, at one of the most noble times. One could not understand present culture without visiting these provincial sites.[13] It has been speculated that Laurens had read this book.[14] Certainly he loved the provincial churches of the Île de France although he tended to prefer Gothic architecture.

Rosenberg also sprinkled tradition in art with nationalistic overtones. In a letter to Léger in 1919, he wrote that the mixture of the East and the West from the XI century to the Renaissance created a new Greece and that the descendants of these became '*ce chef-d'oeuvre incomparable et immortel: La France.*'[15] In this he can be associated with the ideas of Focillon. Like Focillon, Rosenberg felt that the combination of international forces and traditional elements were the basis of a contemporary French national identity, which counteracted the decadence of the Greco-Latin inheritance. In this he is at odds with Apollinaire who, when also writing in nationalistic terms, felt that France were the inheritors of Greece and Rome.[16] He felt that it was a civilizing mission to follow those ideas which France, being at once the most temperate, accomplished and sensible nation, was uniquely fitted to accomplish.[17] In part, this difference was a reflection of their own interests. Rosenberg had become interested in Theosophy which probably accounts for his

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[12] Ibid., introduction, no page.
[13] Ibid., 46.
[14] Isabelle Monod Fontaine, 'Le cubisme de Laurens,' in catalogue *Henri Laurens constructions et papiers collés, 1915-1919*, (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985), 14.
[15] Christian Derouet, ed., *Correspondances, Fernand Léger-Léonce Rosenberg, 1917-1937*, (Paris: Les cahiers du musées national d'art moderne, 1996), 55. Léonce Rosenberg letter to Léger no. 55, dated 24-8-1919.
[16] Apollinaire, 'The Wonderful Flowering of French Art,' in Leroy C. Breunig, ed., *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews, 1902-1918*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 447.
[17] Ibid.

emphasis on civilizations of the middle and far East.[18] In a letter to Laurens, Rosenberg urged Laurens to go to the 'bibliothèque Doucet' to look at the books on monumental art of Byzantium, Persia, Arabia and China.[19] He felt sure that by studying these, Laurens' liking for Western Christian art would be diminished. While Romanesque art reflected the influence of the Orient and respected plastic laws, Gothic art, he felt, was pure acrobatics.[20] He wrote that the lack of discipline evident in the works meant a loss in the universal aspects of art. However it appears that Rosenberg did not succeed in persuading Laurens against the local French tradition, as he frequently visited the churches in the Île de France, in particular, those of Rampillon and St-Loup-de-Naud throughout his life. [21]

In April of 1918, Laurens and his family went to Chartres for the first time. The first postcard that he sent to Rosenberg was of the central tympanum.[22] He had gone for a month for the quiet, to draw and to visit the cathedral. This was clearly a revelation for him. It was beyond anything that he had imagined, especially in the Romanesque areas. He found it all wonderful, the architecture, sculpture and windows. Here was the summit of French art, which represented '*les qualités extrèmes de la race.*'[23] Although Laurens rarely expressed himself in these nationalistic terms, it was part of the general climate that sought to uphold the idea of a French national identity. Emile Mâle published *L'art allemand et l'art français du moyen age* in 1917. Like Focillon's *Les pierres de France* it was nationalistic in tone. The whole thrust of the book was to demonstrate that it was France and not Germany who initiated Gothic architecture. Both Rosenberg and Laurens were interested in contemporary art being associated with French tradition. Rosenberg promoted Cubism as being French and a flowering of previous endeavours, both distant and recent. After the group show of 1920 entitled *Les maîtres du cubisme*, which included works by the artists he

[18] Catherine Pütz, op cit., 18. She states that Lipchitz and Gris were also interested in the subject.
[19] Documentation du Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Fonds Léonce Rosenberg. Letter, Rosenberg, to Laurens c158 9600.579 dated 19.4.21. All letters between Laurens and Rosenberg are from this archive unless otherwise stated.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Jean Leymarie, *Henri Laurens*, catalogue, (Rome: Academie de France à Rome, 1980), 10.
[22] Postcard Laurens to Rosenberg dated 20-4-18 c62 9600.553 He was staying at 8 rue du Chêne Doré
[23] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg c63 9600.554, undated, but after the postcard.

supported, he organized two further exhibitions, *De Corot à Cézanne* and *De Cézanne au Cubisme*.[24]

Raynal also raised an idea which was to become common in articles on Laurens and other Cubists, that his work was connected with that of the ancients. Raynal did not wish it to be seen as a literal link, as he thought that many had lost some of the secrets of humanity, which he felt was an important aspect Laurens' work.[25] However, Praxiteles' sculptures did include this, which was important for later artists. Raynal felt that '*nul secret des Grecs, des Egyptiens ou des Nègres ne lui échappe*.'[26] The emphasis on formal and spiritual means gained from the ancients is close to what Laurens was later to write. '*On voit naître, au cours d'époques relativement arrièrées dans leur économie les formes spirituelles les plus avancées.*'[27] Georges Limbour also thought this was also true when he wrote that ancient artists worked in a complete state of innocence, and that Laurens was an innocent.[28] In spite of the work of Laurens revealing an awareness of the ancients, Raynal was careful to state that his inspiration and sensibility was of his age.[29] He associated the simplicity of the individual elements within his work with those being advocated by Ozenfant and Jeanneret.[30] Laurens was also linked with Lipchitz. [31] The idea that the contemporary movement of Cubism was part of a long, universal tradition was important for many writers and artists. *Cahiers d'art* was to explore this theme and in virtually every volume after it started in 1926, there were articles about archaeology and non-European art alongside those about contemporary artists. The magazine created the impression of a common language running through all visual culture, making it relevant for understanding contemporary art and ideas.

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[24] Fonds Léonce Rosenberg, op. cit., letter from Rosenberg to Herbin, c143 9600.483 dated 8 mars 20. The group exhibition was to be held for the duration of May, after which the two other exhibitions were to take place.
[25] Raynal, 1921, op. cit., 1154. See also Paul Westheim, 'Enquête sur la sculpture moderne en Allemagne et en France,' (*Cahiers d'art*, 1929), 143 and Francoise Leibowitz, 'L'oeuvre exemplaire d'Henri Laurens,' *Le Point*, XXXIII, (July 1946), 32-47.
[26] Raynal, 1921, op. cit., 1163.
[27] 'Enquête Laurens,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1939), 68.
[28] George Limbour, 'Laurens et les sphinx,' *Le Point*, XXXIII, (1946), 19.
[29] Raynal, 1921, op. cit., 1163.
[30] Ibid., 1154.
[31] Ibid.

The concept of Cubism as being part of a tradition as well as rigorously contemporary was a central theme in Léonce Rosenberg's ideas on art. The group movement, which he promoted at his gallery and through many articles, adhered to this concept. At the very beginning of the first issue of the *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne*, Rosenberg wrote that '*Le Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne, respecteux de la Tradition qui, seule, permet de continuer et de durer.*'[32] Rosenberg wrote how contemporary society needed the eternal principles of harmony and order. He felt that it was an error to consider that life had changed simply because it was now so mechanized and had airplanes. On the contrary, the great artistic principles remained as they had always been, those of the universe.[33] Rosenberg also wrote in his article 'Cubisme et la tradition' about the continuation of an artistic tradition. He linked contemporary art with the primitives who, he stated, understood all. By concentrating on the spirit they gave their forms the underlying Idea. In visual deformation they found a new equilibrium.[34] In the same way, he felt that Cubist artists sought an ideal reality, but theirs was guided by the spirit of analysis where elements emerged from the object.[35]

In a letter introducing Laurens to Jacques-Emile Blanche, Rosenberg wrote that his influences were those of the grand sculptural traditions: the Assyrians, the Greeks of the Parthenon and Chartres. Like Lipchitz, Laurens had discovered the sculptural means which had been completely lost over preceding centuries, in particular that of simplicity.[36] There is no evidence of Laurens' thoughts about the ancients at this time. However, in a letter written during the war, he was concerned with simplicity, saying that he wanted to gain the maximum of intensity from the minimum of means.[37] The sculptures and papiers collés also back this up. Throughout his oeuvre

[32] Léonce Rosenberg, initial statement of *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne*, no 1, (janvier 1924), unpaged.
[33] Derouet, op. cit., 54. Léonce Rosenberg letter to Léger, no. 55, dated 24-8-19.
[34] Léonce Rosenberg, 'Cubisme et la tradition,' in catalogue, *La jeune peinture français. Les cubistes*, (Genève: Galerie Moos, février 1920), 10.
[35] Ibid.,10.
[36] Christian Derouet, 'Exposition Henri Laurens, décembre 1918,' in catalogue, *Henri Laurens rétrospective*, (Lille: Musée d'art moderne Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1992), 48-49.
[37] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c49 9600.540. Undated but from during the war.

there was never to be an excess of detail. The discretion of line and plane in his work resemble a High Gothic cathedral, where the unadorned plain walls are accented and articulated by the structural elements of the pillars and vaults.

This simplicity was all part of the same quest to make a work of profundity. Raynal thought that the charm evident in the work of Laurens was not brought about by imitating the surface detail of a smile, or indeed by imitating anything from nature. This was superficial and made with the intention of pleasing. Laurens' charm was not imposed on the sculpture as an end in itself, so it remained fresh.[38] Laurens wrote how the superficial charm of Monet was a negation of anything profound.[39] One always had to guard against what would superficially please and search for the purest forms of expression.[40] Gris was in agreement with this. He felt that the Impressionists only painted a fugitive reality based on sight rather than knowledge.[41] Raynal in his article on Cubism of 1924 wrote how one must always remove the changeable details and aspects of an object. It was to be represented in its essence, as purely as possible.[42] This search for underlying essence and purity of form was also a theme with the Purists. Ozenfant and Jeanneret wrote an article in their magazine *L'esprit nouveau* in 1920 entitled 'Sur la plastique.' This was one of the major articles that set out the ideas of Purism.[43] Shown were examples of good and bad art. Bad art was epitomized by the work of Monet and Rodin, above which a statement said that '*Si Claude Monet est déjà périmé, c'est qu'il a méconnu la physique de la plastique. Rodin idem.*'[44] Good art was represented by Juan Gris, African and Greek sculpture and Seurat. Poussin, Chardin and Raphael were also referred to as praiseworthy exemplars.[45] Like Raynal, Rosenberg and the Cubists, the Purists were creating a tradition for their art. The common factor which appealed to both the

[38]Raynal, 1921, op. cit., 1152-3.
[39] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c48 9600.539. Undated.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Juan Gris, 'Reponse à une enquête,' *Documents*, (1930, no. 5), 267-273. In Kahnweiler, *Juan Gris. Sa vie, son oeuvres, ses ecrits*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), 359-361.
[42] Maurice Raynal, 'Quelques intentions de cubisme,' *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne*, (février, 1924), 3.
[43] Ozenfant and Jeanneret, 'Sur la plastique', *L'Esprit Nouveau*, (1920, no. 1), unpaged.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

Purists and Cubists was the calm order, created by their compositional architecture which appealed to eternal truths.

Artistic spirituality

Before 1922, Laurens created many images which were linked to the contemporary urban life. In particular, he drew and sculpted figures that were fashionable types. *Femme aux boucles d'oreilles* of 1921, for instance, was not an individual, but a generalized fashionable type found in magazines, wearing ear rings, with crimped hair and emphasized mouth. However, within the image there is also a note of Gothic sculpture in the elongation of form, schematized hair and balance between detail and surface. The concept of showing the modern while still revealing universal elements was influenced by the writings of Baudelaire, who influenced many later writers and artists. In his treatise on *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire outlined his concept of beauty. For him it was made up of the eternal and invariable and also that which was circumstantial, which he defined as contemporaneity, fashion, morality and passion.[46] For him these subjects were more important than those which were ordained by the state. All over Paris there were wonderful possibilities for depiction. One did not need to tackle those of the high life, for there were many equally suitable scenes in the underworld of the city.[47]

The world, according to Baudelaire, was to be considered as a storehouse of images upon which the imagination could graze, digest and transform.[48] This imagination which was synthesis and sensitiveness he considered to be the Queen of Faculties.[49] Imagination had created analogy and metaphor and for Baudelaire was positively related to the infinite.[50] It was through the imagination that a person in any field of endeavor could go beyond literal learning. From observing the visible world, the artist could create a new one by amassing and ordering material according to rules

[46] Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life,' in Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Artists*, trans. and intro., P.E. Charvet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 392.
[47] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Heroism of Modern Life,' in ibid., 106-107.
[48] Baudelaire, 'The Governance of the Imagination,' in ibid, 306.
[49] Baudelaire, 'The Queen of Faculties,' in ibid., 299.
[50] Ibid., 299-300.

found only in the deepest recesses of the soul. Baudelaire also highlighted a spiritual aspect when he wrote that imagination created the world and so that it was right that it should govern it.[51]

Baudelaire stressed that it was though internal vision that the artist could transform the exterior world. Raynal, in his article of 1921, repeatedly spoke of the importance of the humanity evident in the work of Laurens. This indicates a vision based on the inner workings of the artist as opposed to him being tied to external reality. Raynal compared Laurens favourably with Lipchitz, who he felt was principally interested in the play of light on form. The intimacy which Laurens maintained '*touche d'un peu plus près de la terre.*'[52] In allowing both artists to represent aspects of Cubism, in spite of differences of approach, he was allowing for their different temperaments. Baudelaire's idea of creating something new from ordering ones impressions according to the rules of the deep recesses of the artist's soul, was also close to Laurens's stress on the importance of '*extériorisation.*' Laurens believed that true art came from within the artist and revealed his humanity.[53] It can also be considered as promoting the absolute importance of the artistic soul. If the artist was to be governed solely by his own imagination at the expense of a mathematical ordering principle, which had been promoted through perspective and composition since the Renaissance, then the artists' humanity becomes fused with the form and so becomes elevated. Baudelaire and Rosenberg were in agreement about this as Rosenberg felt that art was a spiritual exercise that led ultimately to God.[54]

Art, which was for Rosenberg the revelation of beauty, was ultimately a spiritual path that an artist took.[55] As the artist developed, he went through three phases: imitation or the appearance of nature, interpretation which is the exteriorization of an

[51] Ibid., 299.
[52] Raynal, 1921, op. cit., 1163.
[53] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c47 9600. 538.
[54] Georges González Gris, ed., *Juan Gris. Correspondance, dessins, 1915-21,* (Paris: Institut Valencia d'art moderne et musée national d'art moderne, 1996), Léonce Rosenberg, 'Circulaire confidentielle,' Paris, 3 septembre, 1917.
[55] Léonce Rosenberg, 'Reponse à la question: Pourquoi changez-vous?,' *Nord-Sud,* no. 16, (1917-1918), unpaged.

impression, and finally creation, where only the constant and absolute elements which are necessary to the construction of a work remain. Only through choosing elements in the latter stage does the artist realize the spirit.[56] In this Rosenberg appears to be at variance with many of the artists. What he seemed to be saying is that from work the artist gains his spiritual knowledge, whereas Laurens felt that the work was as a result of the artists' humanity. He wrote to Rosenberg during the war that *'Je pense que l'essence d'une oeuvre est extériorisation de l'homme qui le crée. Sa qualité depend de la qualité d'humanité de l'artiste.'*[57] Laurens was close to Braque and saw him whenever possible during the war. After one such visit, he wrote to Rosenberg saying that he had seen a drawing in papiers collés. *'La dessin à mon avis est une haute et pure extériorisation plastique.'*[58] In neither Laurens' nor Braque's work is there excess and nothing remains which does not add to the work. However, exteriorization of form was, for Laurens, the goal. He felt that *'c'est l'esprit qui doit être roi.'*[59] Braque, whose ideas were very similar to those of Laurens, also thought that emotion was the germ from which art flowered.[60]

These ideas show knowledge of the writings of Henri Bergson who was an influential philosopher of the time, in particular through the writings of neo-Symbolist writers and in Symbolist oriented journals.[61] Gleizes and Metzinger published in these journals between 1910 and 1914.[62] During this time Gleizes interest moved towards a theory of the artist that was profoundly personal to the point of being an artistic *sur-homme*.[63] Gleizes and Metzinger expanded on their ideas in *Du cubisme*. In order to establish pictorial space, *'il faut recourir à des sensations tactiles et motrices et à toutes nos facultés. C'est notre personnalité*

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[56] Ibid.
[57] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c47 9600.538. Undated but from the contents most likely 1916-1917.
[58] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c49 9600.540. Undated but from during the war.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Braque, op. cit., 148, no 19.
[61] Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson. Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-garde*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 17-18. Neither M. nor Mme. Laurens knew for certain whether Laurens had actually read Bergson, but both said how well read he was and that he would have been well aware of the ideas which were current.
[62] Ibid. The journals included *Vers et prose, Les bandeaux d'or* and *Pan*. Roger Allard, André Salmon and Guillaume Apollinaire were also major figures in the neo-Symbolist milieu.
[63] Ibid., 61-3.

entière qui...transforme le plan du tableau.'[64] They also wrote of the inner growth of the artist who abstained from all concessions.[65] The artist was to study all manifestations of life so as to be able to apply them metaphysically.[66]

Bergson was an anti-rationalist who provided a counter-current to the ideas of Descartes and the Enlightenment, where it was thought that all things could be explained by natural laws. Throughout his writings Bergson considered intuition against analysis and concluded that intuition gave greater insights. Laurens also relied on intuition and instinct. Bergson wrote that there were two ways of knowing a thing, by moving around an object and by entering into it.[67] By moving around the object one limited oneself to the exterior, what one saw depended on ones point of view.[68] In analyzing or describing that object one only used symbols, which by their very nature meant that one did not understand what was quintessential and unique to it.[69] By contrast, entering into the object through the imagination could lead to the absolute, as one became in sympathy with it.[70] This was to be achieved by understanding the notion of the interior and exterior.[71] This again could refer to Laurens' idea of the work of art being the exteriorization of the artist. Bergson felt that one's body was the center by which all external images and matter were refereed. The interior, which can be termed affection, is acted upon by our perception of external bodies through our senses. Our understanding and representing of matter results from discarding that which had no interest for us. From this one gains the image in its purest sense.[72] All this signifies choice. The diverse perceptions by the different senses that apprehend the same object will never give a complete image. They will always remain distinct.[73] In order to fill the gaps, Bergson

[64] Gleizes and Metzinger, *Du cubisme*, op. cit., 50.
[65] Ibid., 74.
[66] Ibid., 75.
[67] Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T.E. Hulme, (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1913), 1.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 3-4
[70] Ibid., 2.
[71] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer, (London: Swan Sonnerschein and Co, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1911), 43.
[72] Ibid., 60.
[73] Ibid., 46.

wrote that the senses needed to be educated.[74] All external realities are measured against the consciousness that we have of our own self.[75] The idea of the self being the one thing towards which we can all have sympathy and of being the agent to which all things refer, necessitates an outside object to act upon us. It also required the artist to look towards the internal to express this object. This would account for the importance of a subject in Cubist art. Unlike the de Stijl group who exhibited at the Galerie de L'Effort Moderne, the Cubists used subject in diverse ways.

Bergson felt that every psychical state reflected the whole personality as every feeling contained within it the whole history of the person.[76] The past is juxtaposed against the present in the mind of the person so that two moments are never perceived to be identical.[77] One can perceive this either as a frozen aspect, where all the portions of memory can be understood as separate elements, or as the idea that there is a constant flow of input where each successive moment of experience causes all to subtly change as one grows and develops.[78] The present contains the continuous life of our memories which constantly change as our life progresses.[79] This concept of duration could, according to Bergson, only be understood by intuition and not by analysis.[80]

This would explain Laurens' concentration on the interior aspect of the artist. When he wrote that the work of art represented the humanity of the artist, there is a strong implication of the necessity of developing the inner life. Even in the letter of the 15th December 1916, where he was unusually formalistic about his aims, writing about geometrically determined means and his use of differing materials, he ended that section with '*la force d'humanité dont on est suceptible est extériorisée par les moyens.*'[81] He was to adhere to this throughout his life. In 1935 he was to write that

[74] Ibid., 46.
[75] Bergson, 1913, op. cit., 55.
[76] Ibid., 21.
[77] Ibid., 10-11.
[78] Ibid., 19.
[79] Ibid., 38.
[80] Ibid., 20.
[81] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, loose in box, dated 15 décembre 1916.

'*la valeur intrinsèque de l'oeuvre d'art lui vient surtout du potentiel de spiritualité de chaque artiste.*'[82] Unlike Gris or the Purists who wrote about the objects depicted in a detailed way and of the importance of underlying form, Laurens was less interested in this. His works of this time reveal an interest in order, but clearly it was by no means an end in itself. Few of his works actually conform to a geometric base. There was always a stasis and harmony in his work, but this was not gained by external rules but from a search within himself. The physical form of his work was the result of interior cogitation. As has been discussed earlier in relation to Raynal's comparison between Laurens and Lipchitz, Laurens was considered more interested in the human aspect. Bergson wrote how it was indispensable that one would need to translate our inner experience into eventual data, and that once this had happened the original paled.[83]

In a letter from the winter of 1917-1918 Laurens wrote how he was entirely in accord with the ideas that Rosenberg expressed in response to Reverdy's 'Sur le cubisme.'[84] Rosenberg had written to Laurens expressing what he had written on the subject of Reverdy's article. Although this letter no longer exists, it was clearly a critical response and Laurens admired his lofty ideas and nobility of spirit.[85] Rosenberg had written a number of times about the spiritual aspect of art and how in following that path one gradually broadened one's spiritual abilities. In this Laurens and he concurred. Bergson felt that intuition of one's own duration brought one into contact with a whole broader continuity of durations.[86] Through this realization, and by attempting to extend ourselves into these, one can transcend oneself. By using intuition to follow duration upwards, one moves upwards towards an eternity of life.[87] What it is likely that Rosenberg and Laurens found less satisfactory about Reverdy's pamphlet was the lack of spiritual element and universal context.

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[82] 'Enquête. Henri Laurens,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1935), 47.
[83] Bergson, 1911, op. cit., 62.
[84] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg. c55 9600.546. Undated, but address from Rue Lamark, so the winter of 1917-1918.
[85] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c55 9600.546. Undated, although there is the date mars 1917 written in pencil. This is unlikely as it was addressed from 37 Rue Lamark which Laurens only rented for the winter of 1917-1918.
[86] Bergson, 1913, op. cit., 50.

Reverdy's argument was fundamentally about formal principles, and although later he spoke in spiritual terms, this article was mainly about aesthetics.[88]

Raynal thought of the spiritual in a slightly different way, in that he differentiated between the mind and the intuitive sense.[89] For him the initial work was an analysis of objects, through drawings and rough sketches. From these the artist would extract the most beautiful, fundamental elements. Finally, in a synthetic method, using all the pictorial means, the artist would make a new ensemble from those elements.[90] This can be associated with an anecdote by Bergson about an artist who went to Paris where he sketched different parts of the city.[91] As he had really been there and experienced it, from those sketches he was able to join the images and understand the whole. Someone who had not been to Paris would only ever see them as notes and sketches.[92] However, this implies that the artist was to sit in front of an object. This was clearly not the case for Laurens or the Cubists. Laurens' subject matter during the teens and early 1920s was contemporary Parisian life. There is no evidence that Laurens ever used a model, but he loved Paris and walked the streets every day that he was there. He enjoyed ordinary life, knew circus people and boxers, and loved to have a beer while watching people pass. However, his work was created in the studio. There are links between his drawings, sometimes one only being changed by a few variations of line. There are a number of graphite and paint drawings of *Tête de jeune fille* from 1920. These use very similar elements, with just the proportions changing as he experimented with form. He was clearly not thinking of each image in isolation. The details of the figures are also related to contemporary imagery in magazines of fashion and physiognomy. This implies that he was very much aware of these aspects even if he did not analyze or sketch them from nature prior to starting work. The final images become refined and are constructed from fundamental elements. In this he was in tune with the ideas of Raynal. Although

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[87] Ibid., 54.
[88] In Pierre Reverdy, 'L'image,' *Nord-Sud*, (mars 1918), unpaged. Reverdy states that *l'image est une création pure de l'esprit.*
[89] Maurice Raynal, 'Quelques intentions du cubisme,' *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne*, (mars 1924), 2-3.
[90] Ibid., 2.
[91] Bergson, 1913, op. cit., 23-24.

expressed differently, Laurens did appear to work in the way he outlined. He drew constantly. Some of these drawings were clearly essays for his sculptures. He wrote about the maquettes which he made prior to his final sculptures.[93] He also wrote about simplifying the works in the search for purity.[94] Although sometimes he would move freely between two and three dimensions, mostly the image came after much thought and inner search.

Although not expressed, what is evident in Laurens' works and his methods is a great degree of intellectual rigour as well as artistic and spiritual input. The reticence of Laurens to take a theoretical stance, which against the background of artists like Gris, Severini and Gleizes who were keen to proselytize, has had the effect of making him appear innocent in his artistic endeavors. While Gris gave public talks, and Severini and Gleizes wrote publications, Laurens wrote little in the magazines before his article of 1951. Even in this, he was not laying down rules as such, but discussing his aims and the role of sculpture. It appears that he only discussed art with those with whom he felt some affinity. His son wrote how Laurens would discuss art with Braque with whom he was very close.[95] He discussed his ideas with his dealer.[96] However, others of his acquaintances have written how they never heard him utter a theory.[97] Laurens worked in silence and alone and appears to have been happy for others to promote both the avant-garde and his work. Reverdy was one who commented on Laurens' silence.

> *Son oeuvre, pleine de discrétion et de cette apparente bénignité des gestes d'un géant qui retient sa force et mesure la portée de ses coups, se tait.*[98]

The discretion and apparent mildness of Laurens' work, together with his lack of theorising has given Laurens the reputation of being a non-intellectual. In an article

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[92] Ibid.
[93] For instance, letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c42 9600.534. Undated, but from the content, probably 1916-1917.
[94] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c47 9600.538.
[95] Claude Laurens, 'Cent ans,' in Sandor Kuthy, *Henri Laurens 1885-1954*, (Berne: Kunstmuseum, 1985), 17.
[96] This is revealed in the many letters.
[97] Lobo, 'Quisiero Decir Algo...,' *Le Point*, XXXIII, (juillet 1946), 47.
[98] Pierre Reverdy, 'Henri Laurens. Le sculpteur silencieux,' in ibid., 18.

which Raynal wrote in 1946 he stated how the essence of Laurens was that he '*découle et reste la traducteur fidèle d'effusions naturelles et non des déductions intellectuelles.*'[99] The natural and non-intellectual was also a point raised by Paul Fierens when he wrote that

> *pour Laurens comme pour les 'artistes' du groupe, - opposons-les aux théoreticiens, aux techniciens, aux décorateurs, - le Cubisme ne fut pas seulement un nouveau langage plastique, une vocabulaire...il fut encore et surtout une poétique.*[100]

Although this was written in 1928, and can be seen in part as a justification for saying that Cubism was still alive in spirit even if not in grammar, it represents part of the theme of Laurens as a non-intellectual innocent that runs through critical writing on his work.[101] However, as has been shown, he was well read in poetry and literature and understood music. He considered contemporary theories. He did not dogmatically follow the path of other artists, but filtered out what was right for his art. This was not just naïve work, but spoke of something larger, requiring a sophisticated understanding of eternal artistic concepts.

This chapter has discussed the themes which were elaborated in the article which Raynal wrote in 1921. These themes were to be repeated frequently by other critics in relation to the work of Laurens. The aspects of grace and tradition had nationalistic overtones which were part of the era. Simplicity was part of the search for profundity. The spiritual necessity of art which both Laurens and Rosenberg considered important was at odds with many Cubist artists and revealed an interest in Bergson and Baudelaire.

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[99] Maurice Raynal, 'Henri Laurens,' in ibid., 7.
[100] Paul Fierens, 'Henri Laurens,' *Cahiers d'art*, Vol. 1, (1928), 42.
[101] This should perhaps also be seen against the background of the conscious return to the land of the artists, the vogue of naive painting in the 1920s and an anti-intellectual bias of many of the critics. See Romy Golan, *A Moralised Landscape. The Organic Image of France between the Wars*, unpublished PhD. dissertation, University of London, (1989), 175-179.

Modern Woman

Introduction

This chapter will address the concepts of the contemporary and the timeless in relation to Laurens' depictions of the female figure. With the continuing war Laurens, like other avant-garde artists in Paris, looked for a vocabulary and imagery that could be considered French. Between 1915 and 1922, Laurens' style changed enormously in terms of imagery, materials and concept. Throughout this time he was close to many of the avant-garde in the spheres of poetry, music and art. He absorbed ideas from all of the arts but always kept a personal voice. Laurens was unusual in using the imagery of the contemporary female to such a large degree; most of the other avant-garde expressed the human form as harlequins and pierrots. This chapter will reveal how from around 1917 he used contemporary imagery from magazines, linked with ideas from poetry and music, while at the same time retaining some elements which relate to artistic tradition.

With the hardships of the war and the removal of much of the cosmopolitan element from Paris, the contemporary vision altered. Machine production, the use of geometric elements and the depiction of movement as signs of modernity became unimportant. Instead of the international vocabulary and timeless imagery there was inevitably a turn towards a national, and in particular a Parisian identity. Laurens' sculptures and drawings became less fractured in the search for a calm stability. Although some ruled lines are in evidence, freehand lines were frequently drawn over the top to give a more human aspect.

Much of Laurens' output between 1915 and 1922 was directly related to contemporary urban life. In this he was associating himself both with contemporary and nineteenth century writers. Baudelaire had urged artists to look to the urban

streets of Paris for inspiration.[1] In his many poems within *Tableaux parisiens*, Baudelaire wrote about scenes of Parisian life. The glance of a woman, watching a fashionable woman dance, walking around the streets of Paris sometimes as if in a dream were all subjects suitable for these poems.[2] Mallarmé wrote his short *Chansons bas,* which in a few lines conjured up the sight or sound of a newspaper vendor or a road mender.[3] Apollinaire wrote the scenes of *Le flâneur des deux rives* between 1909 and 1918 when they were published. These again gave a flavour of particular Parisian scenes. A shop or café and particular characters were evoked as part of the flâneur's travel around the city.[4] Laurens knew and admired the work of these poets. He was also friends with Dermée and Radiguet whose work also concentrated on contemporary life. Throughout Laurens' life he was to be close to many avant-garde poets. He attended the evening discussions with Pierre Reverdy's circle and always felt a great affinity with his poetry.[5] Laurens corresponded with Apollinaire, and although theirs was not necessarily a close friendship, he knew his ideas and admired his poetry. Laurens provided illustrations for many books of poetry and contemporary literature, including Dermée's book of poems entitled *Spirales,* which was published in 1917 and Radiguet's *Les Pélican* of 1921.[6]

Laurens loved Paris, although each year beginning in 1916, he spent some time away from the city. However, when on these working vacations at L'Etang-la-Ville, he was only an hour from Paris, and we know that he travelled into the city to visit friends and his dealer.[7] Laurens loved to discuss things like sport, nature, music and *les*

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[1] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Heroism of Modern Life,' in *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. P.E.Charvet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 104-107.
[2] Charles Baudelaire, *Complete Poems*, trans. Walter Martin, (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1997), 219-267. See À une passante, 242, L'amour du mensonge, 254 and Rêve parisien, 262.
[3] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, trans. Henry Weinfield, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1994), 58-63.
[4] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Le flâneur des deux rives,* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).
[5] Catalogue, *Henri Laurens*, Musée national d'art moderne, (Paris: Ed. Musée nationaux, 1951), unpaged.
[6] Paul Dermée, *Spirales*, (Paris: Paul Birault, 1917).
[7] For instance, Documentation du Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Fonds. Léonce Rosenberg. Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c52 0600.543 and c50 9600.541. All letters between Laurens and Rosenberg are from this archive unless otherwise stated.

spectacles de la rue.[8] His friend Dermée was particularly interested in both posters and the city. He wrote *Les affaires et l'affiche* in 1922 with Eugène Courmont and also articles in *La publicité* around 1919 under the pseudonym *L'Afficheur* or *L'Affichiste.*[9] In one of these articles he questioned where contemporary life was enacted. Dermée considered it was to be found on the streets, and in the boulevards. Through the poster one could participate in that collective life.[10] In being friends with Dermée, it is probable that the city and poster imagery would have arisen in conversation, and Laurens was clearly aware of some of the magazines, as in one of his illustrations for Radiguets *Les Pélican* Mlle. Charmant carries a copy of *La vie parisienne.*[11]

Illustrations for *Spirales*

In an undated letter to Léonce Rosenberg written during the war Laurens wrote of working with his friend Dermée on his forthcoming book of poetry called *Spirales.* They wanted the edition to have a *'caractère très moderne.'*[12] The majority of the poems are about modern Paris where life was observed and experienced. A train journey is taken in *Nord-Sud,* the language and page layout of broken lines and capitalisation reinforcing the drama of the experience as the train furiously gallops through the darkness and into the electric light of the stations as it traverses Paris from Montmartre to Montparnasse. In an untitled poem dedicated to Henri Laurens, the observer, while thinking in the evening light, overhears a neighbour spitting and a soldier singing. This preoccupation with Paris is not unusual in poetry or the popular and avant-garde press from the war and following years.[13] For Dermée *'dans toute oeuvre d'art, il y a une représentation du monde.'*[14] The specific concept of the poems, as it were, conjuring up the flavour of an observed and experienced Paris was

[8] Jean Leymarie, *Henri Laurens*, (Rome: Académie de France à Rome, 1980), 8-10.
[9] Albert Halter, 'Paul Dermée and the Poster in France in the 1920s: Jean d'Ylen as Mâitre de l'Affiche Moderne,' *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (1992), 39.
[10] Ibid., 41.
[11] Laurens did seven illustrations for this play in 1921. Reproductions of these appear in Brusberg, Documente 9, *Henri Laurens. Das druckgraphische oeuvre*, (Berlin: Brusberg, 1985), 50-65.
[12] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c23 9600.515.
[13] For instance *La vie parisienne, Nord-Sud* and *Montparnasse.*

very much in line with the writings of Baudelaire. His influence had been realised in the paintings of Manet and the Impressionists, and continued through the early part of the century in the work of Delaunay and the papiers collés of Picasso and Braque. In the same way, much of the popular press tended to be almost exclusively concerned with the life and culture of contemporary Paris.[15]

The two illustrations that Laurens did for *Spirales* were of a still life and the head of a young woman. (Plate 1.12) Both are strongly related to his other contemporary work, and can in turn be seen to initiate new ideas for the future. The still life depicts only the manufactured objects of a bottle, pipe and glass and the head is of an abstracted, but still recognisably fashionable young woman. The hair is short and waved and she wears a hat. *Vogue* in one of its many articles on the subject wrote that since the war, the coiffure had become almost extinct in Paris, and that while evening frocks were forbidden at the opera and dining out was considered an indulgence, people were turning to hats. These were of all different materials, trimmings and shapes.[16] Hair was beginning to be cut short, and sometimes curls would be shown at the front. In these details, the illustration by Laurens was following the fashion of the day. The images he produced of women between 1917 and 1922 reveal a sharp awareness of the fashion trends, especially in accessories such as head dresses and ear rings, as well as a frequent capturing of the physiognomy and contemporary look of the images shown in the mass media.

The 1917 *Tête* for *Spirales* also shows an awareness of the papier collé heads which Picasso made around 1913. The *Student with a Pipe* is a mixed-media work showing a young man represented by overlapping, flat outlined and textured planes, wearing a

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[14] Paul Dermée, 'Intelligence et création,' *Nord-Sud*, (1917-1918), 4-5.

[15] Many did not print during the war, like *Montparnasse*, which was started on the 20 June 1914 and only ran for a few issues before the outbreak of hostilities. It was meant to be an artistic review of all the happenings in the area. It restarted in July 1921. There were many small reviews during the war, like *Nord-Sud, Le carnet de la semaine*, and larger one like *La vie parisienne* and *Vogue*, which although it was printed in London, was available in Paris, and included many articles on Paris life and fashions.

large floppy hat. (Plate 1.13) As with the Laurens, the signs are more representational than illustrative, and have been abbreviated to a minimum. Christopher Green has pointed out that the key to both the work of Laurens and Picasso at this time is the flexibility of simple signs.[17] What has been depicted is not an individual, but a contemporary type who links with the visual vocabulary of the day.

Contemporary magazines

Fashion was a major preoccupation both during and after the war in the popular press. *Le carnet de la semaine* included articles about fashion, sport and theatre in most of the issues as well as being an essentially political periodical. In an article of 1916 it wrote how *'Les occasions de s'habiller sont nombreuses en ce moment. Que de galas, de concerts de charité, de répétitions de très chic!'*[18] The idea that the hardships of the war stopped all the usual entertainment of the city was clearly not the case. Theatres and music halls were open, there were exhibitions, and the Louvre was partially open some of the time.[19] All these provided opportunities to look and be seen. Laurens would have been part of this.

La vie parisienne was a sparkling and tongue in cheek publication. During the early part of the war it always included several pages of photographs of the front showing the life of the soldiers. It also had cartoons about the war, which within limits joked about the inevitable problems. Articles about fashion were frequent, and these were invariably treated with an amusing gloss. For instance, parodying a prevalent idea of the era which promoted a link between fashion and patriotism,[20] an illustrated article demonstrated how one could save material for the soldiers. The woman started by

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[16] Anon., 'The Ever Interesting Coiffure,' *Vogue,* (Early March 1917), 26, and anon., 'The Hat-Trees bloom in Paris,' *Vogue,* (Early March 1917), 29.

[17] Christopher Green, *Cubism and its Enemies. Modern Movements and Reaction in French Art, 1916-1928*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 23.

[18] Maud, 'Le carnet de la mode,' *Le carnet de la semaine,* (25 June 1916), unpaged.

[19] *Vogue,* (late June 1917) showed several pictures of Mistinguett who was 'so well known to Paris play goers.,' 47. She and Chevalier were at the Casino de Paris in 1917. Mistinguett, *Mistinguett, Queen of the Paris Night* , trans. Lucienne Hill, (London: Elek, 1954), 106. Certain rooms of sculpture were open at the Louvre between 1st March 1916 and 7 February 1917, and from the 1st May 1917 to the 31st January 1918. *Bulletin de la vie artistique,* (1 décembre 1919), 13.

being fashionably dressed, and over subsequent pictures as she realised how these could be useful, she gave up articles of clothing, finally finishing by being naked. This linking of fashion and patriotism gives one a glimmer of the importance set on fashion. *Vogue* declared that 'Every time the French designers make a narrow skirt and short coat they know that wool is being saved for the coat of some *poilu'*.[21] The following month it said that 'Fashions are based on the Exigencies of War; Women wear silks and Delicate Things, leaving the Sterner Stuffs to Men; and the Material Determines the Silhouette.'[22] Clearly the idea of doing without fashionable clothing was not considered possible, so fashion had to cater to the contemporary difficulties. By appearing in a narrow skirt or a short jacket one could feel that one was doing one's duty. There had been an attempt by the state to introduce a bureaucratisation of fashion during the war, but this failed. A young woman in contemporary finery of a drab short dress, hat and gloves was illustrated on the front of *La baionnette* in December of 1917, wearing the proposed 'national shoe.' She stands in shock, with tears in her eyes, surrounded by her fashionable forebears with their layers of trimmed skirts, delicate shoes and extravagant head pieces. (Plate 1.14)

Michelet, a contemporary of Baudelaire wrote in his History of France that 'France was a woman herself...Even when she took pleasure in vain elegance and outward show, she was at heart still close to nature.'[23] Marianne, as opposed to La France who represented royal France, was the personification of the Republic. She was always young and beautiful and answered a variety of conflicting desires from the transcendental to the transgressive.[24] Kenneth Silver has commented on an illustrated cultural story as it appeared in *La baionnette* on the 18 April 1918, entitled

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[20] This was a favourite theme in *Vogue.*
[21] Anon., untitled, *Vogue*, (Late February, 1918), 47.
[22] Anon., 'Patriotic Fabrics to Charm the New Mode,' *Vogue,* (Late March 1918), 27. There was also an article in the April edition on 'Dressing on a War Income,' in ibid., 44-46.
[23] Michelet, *L'histoire de France*, vol 5. From Ian Jeffrey, *La France. Images of Women and Ideas of Nation, 1789-1989*, catalogue, (London: Hayward Gallery, 1989), 29.
[24] Ibid., 26.

'*Marianne et Germania, histoire d'un Bonnet et d'un Casque.*'[25] Marianne is pretty, graceful and fond of pleasure.[26] This was a picture of France as she thought others perceived of her. Barrés in *Les traits éternelles de la France* of 1916 wrote how the French were thought of as being entirely ruled by the pursuit of pleasure, and how people from abroad came to Paris to experience this.[27] In the illustrations of the story in *La baionnette*, Marianne is seen to dress in strange costumes, and to dance in a free manner, ignoring the degenerating political and cultural situation.[28] This fun-loving female seems to have much in common with the popular imagery of the magazines and, by inference, those of Laurens. In a sense, the images can be seen as being not just urban and fashionable, but also patriotic.

It is not only important that Laurens was depicting the specifics of fashion at this time, but also the significance of using fashion as a means of conveying modernity. Coco Chanel defined the art of the fashion designer as '*l'art de capter l'air du temps*'.[29] Baudelaire thought of fashion as 'a symptom of the taste for the ideal that floats on the surface of the human brain.'[30] In Baudelaire's view, nature was in itself horrible and only artifice created things that were beautiful as it was the result of reason and calculation. Adornment he considered to be a sign of nobility in the human being.[31] In an open question posed by the *Bulletin de la vie artistique* in 1920, as to whether fashion was an art, the overwhelming response was '*oui*'.[32] Louise Hervieu's answer was fairly typical.

> '*Tout au souci d'être belles et de se renouveler, les femmes sont intrépides artistes... Une femme peut être indépendant de son amour; elle n'échappe pointe de la mode. Chaque saison, ce sont des révolutions*'.[33]

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[25] Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps. The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914-1925,* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 13-22.
[26] Ibid., 18.
[27] Maurice Barrés, *The Undying Spirit of France,* (New Haven, 1917), 2-3. Quoted in ibid., 19.
[28] Silver, op. cit. 21.
[29] This was a definition of Coco Chanel. Quoted in Barbara Vinken 'Eternity- a Frill on the Dress,' *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 1 Issue 1, (March 1997), 59.
[30] Baudelaire, 1988, op. cit., 426.
[31] Ibid., 425-6.
[32] 'La mode est-elle un art? Une enquête,' *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, (15 mars 1920), 214-5.
[33] Ibid.

Just as in the nineteenth century, Baudelaire had encouraged artists to consider the streets of Paris as material for their art, so this was considered relevant for the war, and immediate post-war period. The aim for Baudelaire as well as Chanel was to 'capture from fashion the poetry that resides in its historical envelope.'[34]

In depicting everyday women in fashionable clothing, Laurens was also showing a democratisation of fashion which had been transforming the world since the beginning of the century. Fashion was open to a wider populous owing to technology, simpler styles and materials. No longer were the aristocracy the role models in this sphere, but it had become part of the general culture, and it was this that contemporary artists wished to capture.[35] This democratisation was a symptom of the modern era. Around 1912 photographers such as Lartigue, were taking un-posed images of elegant women in the public sphere. They represented a shift towards spontaneity of image and encompassed the new total look, which could be instantly perceived by the viewer.[36] This spontaneity was something that Laurens captured in many of his sculptures and drawings of the war and immediate post war period. The representation of fashion had also become enmeshed in the fabric of the popular press, and as such was part of the means of visual communication of contemporary society. Paul Poiret, who took much of the credit for the fashion revolution in the teens hired eminent fashion artists like Lepape and Iribe to realise his ideas.[37] Many of these found their way into magazines with a strong fashion content. Their images tended to be of young, elegant women. The images shown in more popular magazines, and frequently in the work of Laurens, were invariably of a slim, young, urban, flirtatious female with cropped hair, wearing - or not wearing- fashionable clothes. It was an optimistic image aimed at showing the new liberated woman which made light of the real war time and post-war difficulties. In light-

[34] Baudelaire, 1988, op. cit., 402.
[35] Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 182-3.
[36] Anne Hollander, *Seeing through Clothes*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), 320-321.
[37] Ibid., 334.

hearted grace, frivolous and coquettish charm she had become almost a symbol for the general public of a youthful France.

Tête series

The *Tête,* which Laurens did for *Spirales,* grew from a number of images from the previous year. The papier collé *Tête* of 1916 in San Fransisco has the same central oval panel, wavy hair and triangular shape enclosing the left eye. (Plate 1.15) This in turn is a development from the *Tête* series of 1915. (Plate 1.16) These, however, are so abstracted with the image spread across the page, that it is not the image that is contemporary, but the means. The overlapping planes of colour and texture show an awareness of the contemporary work of Picasso and Gris, but regarding the image simultaneously from all viewpoints is entirely Laurens' own.[38] These works should not only be considered as sketches although he wrote of his drawings as being '*provisions d'idées mises au point*'[39] as the finish is so good and he clearly intended them to be sold as works in themselves.[40] Some of the papiers collés in this series are also distinctly non-spatial. They appear as explorations in colour and texture. However, certain elements continue through the series and become realised in the wooden *Tête de femme* of 1915, in the overlapping plains of the face, the circular eyes and shape of the head. Just as in the *Mandolin and Clarinet* of 1914 by Picasso, solid and void have been reversed. The head is described by the inner edge of two projecting planes. The features are made of an assortment of jutting facets and spheres. The wooden *Tête* of 1916 owes something to this vocabulary, in the tapering strip of the nose and the tilting facets of the face planes. However, this sculpture is

[38] Laurens knew Picasso and Gris at this time and mentions going to see their work in their studios. Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, undated, but appears to be the summer of 1916-17, c52 9600.543.
[39] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c23 9600.515.
[40] During an eight month period of 1917 Rosenberg bought 32 drawings. Documentation du Musée national, ibid., c9600 521/522. Derouet says that from extracts of these letters it is clear that the drawings and papiers collés should be regarded as preparations for his sculptures. Christian Derouet, 'Exposition Henri Laurens, décembre 1918,' in catalogue, *Henri Laurens Rétrospective,* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Musée d'art moderne 1992), 47. However, not all drawings are related to sculpture and the fact that he sold 32 drawings to Rosenberg during the time mentioned above and only 5 sculptures implies a commercial importance.

solid, and as well as showing curls at the front also has the hair swept back into a bun in the way which was frequently seen in the press.

The *Tête* series of 1917, which grew from the illustration for *Spirales,* are not related directly to any sculpture. It consists of at least five papiers collés and drawings in gouache and pencil. They represent real progress towards an interaction with the imagery found in the contemporary press. All the women have hats, short hair and curls showing around the face. (Plate 1.17) There is the hint of make up in the accent of the eyes and mouth. These are also the areas on the face that were emphasised in the fashion drawings of the day. (Plate 1.18) In an article in *Art et décoration* in 1920 the point was made that fashion painting conveys the physiognomy of the day and represents part of the history of society.[41] In the same way, these abstracted pictures of Laurens showed the young, urban woman as she would be seen on the street. However, in spite of showing an awareness of both the artificial nature of the representation of fashion and of the fashion itself, these images are set apart from this world by being uncompromisingly Cubist.

The *Tête* dated 6.17, in water-colour and pencil, from the Galerie Jeanne Bucher reveals that it was started by using geometrically determined points. There is a point at which many lines would have converged on the head. Ruled lines were used initially and the freehand ones then drawn on top. However, there is less of a sense of a rigid grid to which the image must conform, as there is evidence of changes of mind in this work, as in other works of the time. On both sides of the hat there are traces of lines which were removed, and to the left of the shoulder area there is an erased shaded area. Changes of mind are less easy to determine in the *Portrait of Madame Josette Gris* of 1916 by Juan Gris. (Plate 1.19) The immaculate finish of the oil painting only reveals the end product, not the facture. There is, however, much in common between the two works. In both, the image is submerged in the means of

[41] Émile Henriot, 'Les petits maîtres de la mode contemporaine,' *Art et décoration*, (June 1920), 8. This can also be seen to be part of the argument put forward by Baudelaire. See Baudelaire, 1988, op. cit., 402-403.

representation. Both use flat planes of colour which do not correspond with the descriptive image. There is, in the softened line of the Gris and in the pencil shading of the Laurens, the suggestion of depth that is never fulfilled. Both use visual shorthand for some of the details, such as the eyes. Both appear to emerge from a linear starting point. This can only be part of the case in the Gris. It has been shown how this work grew from the *Girl with a Mandolin* by Corot of 1860-1865 so that while the image is of a contemporary person, traces of tradition remain.[42] Gris and Laurens were close at the time. It is unlikely that Laurens would not have been aware of Gris' interest in the work of previous masters, like Cézanne, from which he had made some drawings.[43] No such visual evidence remains in the case of the Laurens. However, in an undated letter to Rosenberg, Laurens praises the work of Cézanne as being the most pure of the Impressionists whose work revealed a rich humanity.[44] Cézanne was *le plus pur et le plus grande de ces peintres,* and *la riche humanité de Cézanne s'est imposée de tout son poid sur l'époque.*[45] The *Tête* series from 1917 were modern in appearance. He showed an awareness of contemporary urban fashion as it was revealed both on the streets and in magazines. They were also constructions emanating from fixed points which link these works to contemporary artistic methods. While choosing an image which captures the moment, Laurens used the regulating ruled line, a certainty in Braque's terms, reason and calculation to create beauty in Baudelaire's.[46]

The *Tête* series of 1919, which consists of at least four gouache and ink works and a sculpture also appears to be connected with the imagery of the popular press and to show an awareness of popular entertainment. These works show a freedom of handling and expression that was not evident in the previous series. All the drawn figures appear to be masked, and as usual in Laurens' images of women, they are

[42] Mark Rosenthal, *Juan Gris*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 94.
[43] For instance, *Bathers after Cézanne*, 1916 and *Head of a Harlequin after Cézanne*, 1916.
[44] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c48 9600.539, probably 1916-1917.
[45] Ibid.

emblematic of a type, in this case, fashionably dressed for attraction in the party season.[47] All the images are treated as individuals, rather than being closely linked as was usual in the work of Laurens. The gouache *Tête* of 1919 could almost be a drawing of a construction of a woman. The composition is layered into a series of planes and the shoulder seems to be indicated by a sheet of metal curving around to the front. In the *Femme au collier* of 1919 the image is much more immediate and witty. (Plate 1.20) The painting shows the head and torso of a decorative woman constructed from a combination of lyrical curves and overlapping geometric planes. The emphasis is on the obviously painted mouth, the masked eyes, and the breasts which appear to have the dress starting below them.

Masks were popular for the fête season and there were many images in the magazines from this time which included them.[48] With the war now being over the popular press, especially *La vie parisienne,* were keen to forget any thoughts of hardship. Entertainment, in the form of dances, fêtes, fashion shows and so on, were widely reviewed. In a 1919 edition of *Fantasio* the central illustration shows a cartoon of a fashion show of Monsieur Poiret. (Plate 1.21) In it the mannequins parade down the steps in exotic head dresses and few clothes. The astonished audience of mainly women with a few older men, reveal the women in the audience to be followers of fashion, and were therefore equally scantily dressed.[49] It is a light hearted view of the era. Laurens' two dimensional work also capture this post war euphoria. The appearance of the unclad breasts, makeup, mask and implied movement in the Laurens drawing, clearly relate to images in the press.

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[46] George Braque, 'Thoughts on Painting,' Edward Fry, *Cubism*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 147. Laurens kept in touch with Braque and saw him during the war period. Undated letter from before the end of the war, Laurens to Rosenberg, c 49 9600.540. Baudelaire, op. cit., 425.

[47] It is less clear in the case of the sculpture, *Portrait of Céline Arnauld* of 1919, although this is based on a lithography touched up with watercolour, entitled *Jeune fille* of 1919, which does have a purple band across the eyes.

[48] Anon, Untitled, *Vogue* (January 1920), 16.

[49] Dessin de A. Vallée, *Fantasio*, (15 août 1919), no page.

The coquettish look in many of Laurens' images from this time also relates to the magazines. This marked a change from those created during the war, where although they were fashionable and urban figures, they were also withdrawn. Stories of flirts and ladies of leisure abounded in the popular magazines. There was the appearance of the socially emancipated woman. She was free to drink, smoke and make love. In real life, this appearance of freedom and emancipation was only an option for the few women who were socially and economically independent, and was, in reality, only a substitute for more tangible freedoms which were not available to women in France at this time.[50] The *Code Napoleon* of 1804 was still almost unchanged. In it, women, especially married women had the same status as children and the mentally incapable. The two main thrusts of the act was *puissance maritale*, where all the authority of the couple was with the husband, and the *puissance paternelle*, where the control in the raising of the children was given to the father, even after death, as he could appointment a *conseil de famille*.[51]

Feminism as a movement emerged from the First World War with an enhanced reputation and feminists were no longer considered as part of the fringe, but as an integral part of the political scenery.[52] There was an unfulfilled but widely held belief that women's franchise was imminent. (Plate 1.22) Thus, the imagery which appeared in the press, as with the imagery which Laurens produced, represents only a small part of the idea of Woman. The notion of Woman is in itself inherently unstable. A *Tête de femme* should only be considered as part of a language system prevalent at the time, which was concerned with showing a narrow range of types. It was part of the era in which women were demanding freedom and so appeared threatening to the old order. It was also a time when life was hard for many, so gaiety

[50] Christopher Breward, op. cit., 187.

[51] Paul Smith, *Feminism in the Third Republic. Women's Political and Civil Rights in France. 1918-1945,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 163-4. The only changes that there had been, was the right to open a savings account without the express permission of the husband, 1895, ibid., 167, the ability to witness legal documents, 1897, ibid., 167, and the ability of wives to dispose of their salaries as they wished. Even here, they had to contribute a portion to the maintenance of the family, 1907, ibid.

was promoted as a means of amnesia. Although Laurens cannot be seen to be giving a particular comment on society, he was engaging directly with the imagery and concerns of the day, which was unusual with the Cubist artists at this time.[53] There were not many Cubist images of contemporary women at this time. The majority of works depicting the human form were harlequins and pierrots. These can be seen as a withdrawal from society towards an image of Cubism itself. Laurens however, used fashion and physiognomy to reveal modernity. Both concepts refer to late nineteenth century ideas. Seurat painted many images of clowns and harlequins. Manet, Seurat and Toulouse-Lautrec had also used the imagery of the popular press, fashion and contemporary events as inspiration for their work. Laurens did the same.

The freedoms of the war, which included widespread employment of women and the ability to go out without a chaperone, were echoed in the freedom of fashion. However, the simulation of freedom, which involved exotic finery, fans and revealing dresses, conjures up the words of Baudelaire.

> 'Woman...carries out a kind of duty, in devoting herself to the task of fostering a magic and supernatural aura about her appearance; she must create a sense of surprise, she must fascinate; idol that she is, she must adorn herself to be adorned.'[54]

This dazzling, if empty-headed figment for the male attention is certainly an image which the popular press was keen to promote. For Laurens the image is inevitably more complicated. His images do show an image of fashionable woman, which in Baudelaire's terms is artificial. However, they are also artificial constructions which conform to the rules of art and acknowledge tradition. The bas-relief *Tête de femme*

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[52] Ibid., 13 and 15. The most important group of secular feminism was the C.N.F.F., the *Conseil National des Femmes Françaises* which was led by Julie Siegfried and Ghenia Avril de Sainte-Croix.
[53] Braque was painting predominantly still lifes. Gris was painting many still lifes and *commedia dell'arte* figures. Harlequins became a metaphor for 'pure Cubism' during the post war period. He did paint a few country types in 1918, like the *Peasant in a Blue Smock*, which can be seen as being part of another post war trend. For a discussion of both types, see Christopher Green, *Juan Gris*, (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery), 1992. 127-135. Picasso was painting an eclectic mixture of works based around the ballet, others based on previous masters, still lifes, peasants, and *commedia dell'arte* figures.
[54] Baudelaire, 1988, op. cit., 427.

of 1921 is of a young woman wearing fashionable ear rings, with crimped hair and a flowing low cut dress. (Plate 1.23) However, the overlapping, flattened planes are Cubist, while the decorative, rationalised linearity of the hair and the suggestion of architecture hint at Gothic figures.

The illustration of Hortense, which Laurens did for Radiguet's *Les Pélican* of 1921 epitomises the idea of the shallow, fun loving life.[55] (Plate 1.24) The play itself could almost be a parody of an episode from *La vie parisienne*. It opens with Mademoiselle Charmant reading a copy of that magazine. She runs off with Parfait the valet, in spite of having been flirting with Monsieur Pélican. Madame Pélican flirts with the swimming instructor, a Monsieur Pastel, who it later emerges is unable to swim although he says that he knows the theory. The play proceeds in a complicated, opera buffa way, finally ending with everyone being happy. Hortense is shown in a fashionable dress, a bag marked *mode* over one arm, and a marguerite in the other hand. She is going to the Seine to drown herself, (luckily the Seine is frozen,) having taken the petals from the marguerite one by one, whereby she realises that Monsieur Chantecler no longer loves her. The flat, overlapping planes are rhythms of angles, details and texture. A suggestion of depth is given by the converging lines of the wall, which, in turn, relate to the angles of shoulder and hem in the figure. The very stylisation is reminiscent of the work of Martin who did some illustrations for Satie as well as textile and wallpaper designs. (Plate 1.25) Here again the flattened images showing carnivals and flirting are regulated into overlapping planes.

The stone *Tête de jeune fille* of 1920 is again one of a series of drawings and sculptures, and is one of the first of the sculptures which aim to charm and associate with the viewer. (Plate 1.26) The protruding mouth pouts and the demure eye appears to flicker. It is as though Laurens is illustrating the Baudelairian idea of a woman as holding 'men's destinies and wills in thrall to her glances.'[56] The accented mouth and

[55] Radiguet, *Les Pélican* in Radiguet, *Oeuvres complètes*, (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1978), 419-435. First published in 1921 by Galerie Simon, Paris.
[56] Baudelaire, 1988, op. cit., 423.

eyes hint at makeup. By covering her face in rice powder Baudelaire thought she smoothed out any irregularities which nature had given her and gave the impression of a statue, which in itself denoted a divine or superior being. The addition of colour added a sense of mystery, the passion of a priestess.[57]

The Cubist volumes of the shoulders and arms of the sculpture ambiguously describe the gesture of the hand up against the cheek, which could be seen as being both ancient and modern. The Louvre has a Roman copy of a Greek statue of *Polyhymnia*, where the figure stares reflectively into the distance, her cheek resting upon her hand. Ingres frequently used the gesture, as in the portrait of the *Comtesse d'Haussonville*.[58] It was also a gesture which was often used in the contemporary fashion magazines, as in *Les Modes* of 1919. (Plate 1.27) The magazine advertisement showed an image so close to the Ingres that it is hard to consider that the former was not done with that in mind. In the Laurens, Ingres and the advertisement there is a sense of a captured moment and a sense of intimacy with the viewer. This duality of past within the present were also important for Baudelaire. To him, women and their clothes presented on unity of vision.[59] That beauty though, was made up of two elements, that of the eternal and invariable, and that of the fleeting and contemporary.[60] Modernity is transient, but he felt this should not be despised, as it is part of a historically defined era.[61] By looking at the fashion of different times, the viewer should become aware of the progression of fashion, and so understand the present as a continuation of the past.[62]

The sculpture by Laurens however, changes as one moves around. This is a common trait with all of Laurens' sculptures, and one which Cubism in particular encourages. The shifting moods create a greater whole than one could create from a two

[57] Ibid.
[58] André Salmon and others felt that Ingres had played a vital role in the development of Cubism. See Green, 1987, op. cit., 59.
[59] Baudelaire, 1988, op. cit., 391.
[60] Ibid., 403.
[61] Ibid., 403.

dimensional painting. From the three quarter view, the tilt of the head is pronounced and the eye appears lowered in a manner reminiscent of traditional depictions of the Madonna. From the front, it is an upright stance, with the accented lips and slanted eye creating a more pert and challenging aspect. The hair is waved in the contemporary manner. In spite of the simple generalised shapes, this is a depiction of a contemporary woman. There are at least five drawing connected with this sculpture, (Plate 1.28) all accenting the eyes and mouth in the manner of fashion drawings and photographs. (Plate 1.29) Just as the fashion models attempted to give a fleeting glance intended to capture the audience, so the drawings and the sculpture attempt to defy the solidity of the materials and flicker an eye.[63]

The *Tête de jeune fille* of 1920 is related to at least three other sculptures that were executed the following year. As was frequently the case, Laurens experimented with a similar composition using different materials and formats. As his son Claude said he was a *'merveilleux artisan et connaissait à fond son métier, le travail de la terre, du plâtre, de la pierre, et il aimait tant ses outils de sculpture.'*[64] Laurens was happy to use different materials, although he found plaster *'froide et ingrate.'*[65] He did not allow the differing qualities of materials to change the forms. In some aspects, such as the protruding eye, it would clearly have been easier to make in an additional material like *terre cuite* rather than stone. The compactness of the composition is suitable for the 'truth' of carving, with the adherence to the form of the block. Even when using bronze at this time, no allowance was given to the tensile strength of that material, nor indeed was there any surface decoration imposed after the casting in the manner of the Renaissance sculptors. The relief *Tête de femme* is a bronze. It relates closely to the drawings of 1920, the overlapping planes being shown at the three

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[62] Ibid., 392.
[63] The point has been made that as a result of the movies, the general public were increasingly aware of fashionable style being within physical movement. The fashion photograph followed this and while showing a single moment, it sought to represent a sequence of instants. Hollander, op. cit., 154.
[64] Claude Laurens, 'Cent ans,' in catalogue, *Henri Laurens 1885-1954,* (Bern: Kunst museum, 1985), 13-17.
[65] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg. Letter no c2 9600.494, dated mardi 28 juillet, which would make it 1914.

quarters view. Unlike the drawings though, there are no areas of texture and contrast. All is described using raised areas and incised line. She wears no jewellery to make her contemporary, and so becomes an enigmatic, almost Madonna-like figure, with delicately inclined head, flowing hair and the suggestion of a halo in the layers behind. There is a similar version in wood which, although the facture is more evident, shows a similar disregard for contrast of texture.

The *terre cuite, Tête de femme* of 1921 is also a relief. In contrast to bronze, the material, by its very nature produces only the subtlest sheen. Like the bronze it consists of overlapping planes and broad unadorned planes and discrete areas of pattern. These serve to highlight the waved drawn back hair, the details of the low-necked dress and the earrings thus once again relating the image to the contemporary vocabulary of fashion illustration. It is as though the clothes and woman are one. Indeed as Baudelaire wrote, 'When he describes the pleasure caused by the sight of a beautiful woman, what poet would dare to distinguish between her and her apparel?'[66] The little drop earrings with waved hair pulled back were popular at the time. The dress, with the wide, low cut collar was similar to the type shown in both the illustration of Hortense and in Martin's illustration for Satie. In both respects Laurens is in tune with the fashion of the day. The small circular eye looks out with candour. The *Femme aux boucles d'oreilles* of 1921 (Plate 1.30) also wears little drop earrings and has a contemporary physiognomy, keeping the protruding demure eyes of the previous year. In this work, the highly polished coarse grained stone is crisply cut to a precise finish.

The terracotta *Femme à l'éventail* of 1921 is very similar in pose to the others in the series and is in the form of a deep relief. (Plate 1.31) In this work he has made the surface detail crisper than is usual in this soft material by using a sharp instrument to incise the hair, to accent the planar lines and to inscribe the pupil of the eye. This contrasts with the treatment of the *terre cuite Tête de femme* of 1920, where the

[66] Baudelaire, 1988, op. cit., 424.

definition is kept soft. This lack of sharpness helps to create the meditative calm of the work.

All of these works, in spite of their different materials, are similar in composition and are related to contemporary drawings. These were made both for sale and for the clarification of ideas. This does raise a question about the validity of the idea that both he and his son expressed that he only started with a vague idea.[67] This was an idea that Gris also held, although again, it can be seen that sometimes he also did paintings in a group, as with the two clowns of 1919 where the pose and underlying form are very similar.[68] However, Gris was willing in 1924 to counter Braque's assertion that one did not make *'un clou avec un clou,'* by saying that in fact one did just that as *'si l'idée de la possibilité du clou n'était pas préalable, on risquerait fort...de fabriquer un marteau ou un fer à friser.'*[69]

The *Femme à l'éventail* of 1921 also has the addition of an open fan. Laurens had used fans on a number of occasions in his sculpture since the reclining *Femme à l'éventail* of 1919. Fans were very fashionable and many articles were devoted to them in the popular press. Invariably they were both written about as having historical and contemporary significance, as well as being a tool for flirting. 'A Breeze from the Ancients' in a 1917 edition of *Vogue* dates the fan back to Ancient Egypt, the Court of the Hindu princes and to China.[70] It also related the importance of it in the theatre. How could one imagine Molière's *Perceives ridicules* without the use of a fan? The article also gives instructions on how to use fans to give social nuance, saying that it was possible to have lessons in the art.[71] In the spring editions of *Vogue* in 1920 there were numerous references to fans, especially one made of

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[67]Yvon Taillandier, 'Une déclaration d' Henri Laurens', *Amis de l'art,* no. 1 (26 juin 1951) and Claude Laurens, op. cit., 15.
[68] Juan Gris, *Clown,* 1919, huile sur toile, 100 x 65, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris. Juan Gris, *Clown,* 1919, huile sur toile, 90 x 70, Musée d'art moderne, Paris.
[69] Juan Gris, 'Des possibilités de la peinture,' 1924 in D-H-Kahnweiler, *Juan Gris. Sa vie, son oeuvre, ses écrits,* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), 343.
[70] Roger Boutet de Monvel, 'A Breeze from the Ancients,' *Vogue,* (Early January 1917), 21-22.
[71] Ibid., 22.

feathers.[72] Even in these pictures there is a coquettish air. 'A fan is so much more than a fan; it is a sigh, a challenge, even a blush, when one is past blushing.'[73] There are numerous engravings from the nineteenth century which show the fan being used as a flirting tool.[74] It also appears frequently in the *fête galante* paintings of Watteau. The fan which appears in the sculpture and drawings of Laurens however, are not of fashionable feathers, 'airy and fragrant',[75] but more of a sign indicating 'fan'. The corrugated planes are perfect rhythmic devices within the Cubist vocabulary. The contrast between the shallow waves of the hair which could be from a Gothic sculpture, the gentle curve of the torso, and the deep indents of the fan are formally satisfying. However, the inclusion of the fan preserves the ambiguity between the ancient and modern.

The Pilgramage to the Island of Cythera of 1717 by Watteau in the Louvre shows a figure on the right demurely looking down, a fan in hand while her lover coaxes her. As with Laurens at this time, Watteau frequently wished to show a passing moment. This represented an aspect of the Rubenesque tradition which Watteau and Boucher were emulating. Both painters were interested in showing a light-hearted coquettish and the fleeting moment in their paintings. This famous painting inspired texts by the Goncourt brothers and Baudelaire. Renoir was also aware of his link with this tradition. His stature at the time of his death in 1919 was very high. The *Bulletin de la vie artistique* published an obituary for him in which he was praised for simultaneously creating works which represented the spirit of the day, as well as continuing the pure tradition in which he is linked with Watteau.[76] His images where *'on reconnaîtra demain l'interprète véridique de l'idéal feminin moderne'* were also of

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[72] *Vogue,* in the issues between January and April had constant references to fans. They were frequently connected with evening wear. In the late April edition, 58, there was a whole page of fans, mostly of feathers. When showing the gowns, 50-53, most have fans.

[73] Anon, 'A fan is so much more than a fan; it is a sigh, a challenge, even a blush when one is past blushing,' *Vogue*, (Early January 1919), 45.

[74] Musée Carnavalet. *Cabinet de l'art graphique.* Moeurs 128/1. e.g. from 1882, *Boulmarche,* engraving.

[75] No author, No title, *Vogue*, (late April 1920), 58.

la sauvagesse originelle et ingénue, instinctive, passive, indolente... Sa chair est une fleur grasse et rayonnante, dont les fards n'ont pas terni la fraîcheur.'[77]

Renoir was praised for showing tradition within the contemporary. For many his art offered both order and a sense of refined sensuality.[78] Laurens also mixed aspects of timeless and contemporary imagery.

Renoir's *Baigneuses au griffon* of 1970 was based on Praxiteles's *Venus of Cnidos*. However, she also retained the contemporary pose in the hunched shoulders, raised and diminished waistline and large breasts. In this she appeared to be a perfect copy of the modish clothed posture of 1870.[79] The late bathers also retained contemporary attributes. In these the distorted large women with small heads, huge abdomens and buttocks echoed the traditional nude with overtones of fertility and sensuousness, while still retaining and essence of modernity in the coiffure and look.

Standing and reclining nudes

In the works of Laurens that have already been discussed, the females were in the contemporary slim look. However, there were a number of drawings and sculptures from end of the war which celebrated plumpness. The ink drawing, *Femme debout* of 1918 reveals a seemingly arm-less woman with huge hips, abdomen, and legs. This clearly connected with fertility goddesses, such as those which were illustrated in Ozenfant's *Foundations of Modern Art*.[80] On the same page as the Willendorf woman, there is a photograph of a contemporary woman in a bathing costume revealing very similar proportions. This juxtaposition of old and new appears frequently throughout the book, clearly giving the message of eternal themes. The drawing by Laurens articulates the fertility ideal, but also reveals a certain ambiguity

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[76] No author, 'Renoir', *Bulletin de la vie artistique,* (15 décembre 1919), 27-28.
[77] Ibid., 28.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Hollander, op. cit.,161.
[80] Amidée Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1952. First printed in French in 1928), 45: The Venus of Lespugne, c. 25000 B.C. and 203: the Prehistoric Woman of Willendorf, c. 25000 B.C.

as to period. The dress with fluted columns starts below the breasts as in other works by Laurens. The overall shape is that of an oval, which was also part of the fashion of the day. While the indoor garments of 1918-1919 hung loosely, the outer coats and wraps frequently had a tight hemline and a broader middle which concealed the arms.[81]

The terracotta *Femme en chemise* of 1921 shows many of the same characteristics.[82] (Plate 1.32) The standing figure wears a dress, which again reveals a breast. As has been discussed earlier, this could relate to contemporary fashions. However, there is as long history in sculpture and painting of the slipped chiton.[83] It was used in antiquity, and reappeared in the fifteenth century where it was associated with lactation.[84] In the nineteenth century it frequently appeared within representations of Victory.[85] These associations could well be relevant, as at this time there was a concerted effort by the government to increase the population. The *Fédération Nationale des Associations des Familles Nombreuses* started in 1920, but grew from nineteenth century groups concerned to increase population. The *famille nombreuses* was seen as the true moral guardians of the future of France.[86] Posters on the maternity theme abounded, as did corresponding images in the Parisian avant-garde.[87] Picasso's neo-classical works of the period have been linked with both these maternal themes and to the representations of *La France*, *Marianne* and the *Nation*.[88] Just as the *Mother and Child* by Picasso of 1921 can be seen to be both timeless and addressing the contemporary concern for fruitful women, so the Laurens sculpture can be seen as being part of the same language.

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[81] Jane Mulvagh, *Vogue History of Twentieth Century Fashion*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 46 and 56.
[82] Henri Laurens, *Femme en chemise*, 1921, *terre cuite*, 29.5 x 10 x 7.5. Musée national d'art moderne.
[83] For a detailed discussion see Anne Hollander, op. cit. 187-202.
[84] Ibid. 188.
[85] For instance Delacroix, *Liberty at the Barricades*, 1830, Louvre.
[86] Paul Smith, op. cit., 218.
[87] Kenneth Silver, op. cit., 282.
[88] Ibid., 283.

Related to the *Femme en chemise* in pose is the *Femme à la guitare* of 1921.[89] The small bronze statue shows a nude with flowing hair playing the guitare. The Cubist vocabulary and theme link it with the stone *Femme à la guitare* (Plate 1.33) and the wooden *Femme à la mandoline* of 1919.[90] They represent a timeless theme while still giving a contemporary image. Both wear a head dress which is similar to some found in magazines. Both wear a shift, are made up of non-illusionistic blocks and have a pert expression. The facetted shapes almost slot into one another, in the manner of a constuction. This is in contrast to the timeless quality of the *Femme à la guitare* of 1921 who, while retaining the pose of the head from the many *Têtes de femmes* of that year, appears to have moved away from the contemporary, having a more self-sufficient aspect. The substantial figure of *Femme nu à la mandolin* of 1922 is yet another step towards the primitive, where the seated nude has long flowing hair and a relatively unified, non-faceted body. Although this figure is not as generalised as the large bathers of the late 1920s, it has withdrawn beyond the contemporary aspect. The *Femme à la guitare* of 1919 shows the guitar and the torso merging into one form. In this he prefigures Lipchitz who in 1925 sculpted the *Man with Guitar* where he had the same philosophical concept of the instrument and musician being incorporated as one interdependent body. The *Pierrot with clarinet* by Lipchitz of 1919 shows a similar austerity to the sculpture of Laurens. Both use broad, flattened planes which reveal an underlying geometry. Both use a flexibility of signs. The Laurens though does look towards contemporary imagery, and particularly that of the female, whereas the Lipchitz, in common with so many of the avant-garde were using the abstraction of the *commedia dell'arte* figure as the theme.

The *Femme à l'éventail* of 1919 was one of the first reclining nudes which Laurens created. It was a theme which recurred throughout his career, and although the actual pose changed very little, the treatment of it did. Christopher Green likens this image to a prehistoric goddess.[91] While this is this echo, there do appear to be other layers

[89] Henri Laurens, *Femme à la guitare*, 1921, bronze, 28.5 x 9 x 7.
[90] Henri Laurens, *Femme à la mandoline*, 1919, wood. Size unknown.
[91] Green, op. cit., 80.

of possible interpretation. Reclining nudes go back to classical sculpture, were depicted by many artists including Titian and Goujon, and appear on many of the buildings of Paris.[92] The figure is invariably rounded and sensuous. The reclining nudes of Laurens over the next few years are always plump, but they vary in their attributes. Some carry fans, read, are obviously contemporary in dress or are almost nude and timeless. The fact that he did change the details means that these were of importance and so should form part of the reading.

The *Femme à l'éventail* of 1919 is one a number of sculptures showing a reclining nude with a fan. (Plate 1.34) Fans, with their link to both timelessness and coquetry have already been discussed. Both the sculpture of 1919 and that of 1924 show an ambiguity between contemporaneity and timelessness, in spite of being treated in a very different fashion. That of 1919 is built around the regulating zigzag to which the body conforms and which is echoed in the hair, fan and material. Like the Titian *Venus with a Lute Player,* she wears a string of pearls, which again can be seen as being both timeless and contemporary, as they were in fashion at the time. The look, which is at once both distant and contemporary also add to the ambiguity. The stone *Femme couchée à l'éventail* of 1924 is also ambiguous. (Plate 1.35. See also 1.36) The material with the obvious coarse texture, so reminiscent of Modigliani at once suggests a 'primitive' aspect, which is backed up by the generalised non-European features.[93] Like the *Femme à l'éventail* of 1919, the woman is of ample proportions, but she wears a slip which flows from below the breasts which gives a contemporary feel. The fan echoes the folds of the dress, but again adds to the idea that this represents an urban woman.

French bourgeois society was enamoured with antique culture at the end of the nineteenth century. Salons and brothels reconstructed scenes of Greek shepherds and

[92] For instance, Titian, *Venus with the Lute player*, c. 1560. Gougon, *Fontaine des Innocents*, Paris, *Fontaine des quatre saisons*, Rue de Grenelle and no 7. Rue de Tilsitt.
[93] Laurens knew Modigliani from around 1915. Modigliani made a number of portraits of Laurens. Catalogue, *Henri Laurens, 1885-1954*, (Reading: Arts Council, 1971), 23.

Sabine women.[94] Posters of the music halls abounded, many of which showed seemingly naked women reclining.[95] Many of the images of women in publications showing 'aesthetic' nudes showed them to be reclining, sometimes in oriental head dresses to make them less Parisian.[96] Until 1919 when *Paris qui danse* shocked the Paris audiences, total nudity did not take place on the stage. The actors were actually wearing flesh coloured outfits.[97] The Parisian music halls were still continuing to show *tableau vivants* in between other items. For instance in 1921 the *Folies Bergère* entertained the audience with an evening which started with Spanish scenes with 'beauties', then a jazz band 'the Red Devils', then '*encore de beauté'* with *'statues vivants,'* then a vaudeville sketch. The evening continued in a similar vein.[98] This included Babylon sketches, and a photograph in the magazine shows the *Fin de Babylone*, a reconstruction of a '*célèbre tableau de Rochegrosse.*'[99] This included many reclining females in scant attire. It was clearly the quality of the tableaux which were appreciated and were reviewed with enthusiasm. '*C'est la parisienne voluptueuse et frivole qui l'emporte.* '[100] The music halls were popular and well represented in the press, including in established and serious magazines such as *Vogue*.[101] While Laurens was not promoting his reclining nudes as music hall actresses, the strong feeling he had for contemporary imagery, does suggest this within the layers of meaning.

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[94] Alain Weill, *One hundred Years of Posters of the Folies Bergère and Music Halls of Paris*, (London: Hart, Davis, Mac Gibbon Ltd. 1977), 9.
[95] For instance a poster for *Le tableau vivant* at the Folies Bergère from 1883 by Emile Levy in ibid., 46.
[96] E.g., *Le nue aesthetique*, Paris, 1903.
[97] Alain Weill, op. cit., 9.
[98] M. Louis, 'C'est à le Folie. Le marchand, la revue, les scènes , les décors,' *Paris Music Hall*, (1 avril 1921), 3.
[99] Ibid., 6.
[100] M. Jaques Charles, 'Avec le Sourire!...Revue en 2 Actes et 52 Tableaux,' *Paris Music Hall.* (15 avril 1921), 3.
[101] For instance in Anon, Untitled, *Vogue,* (late June 1917), 47. There are several pictures of Mistinguett, who was 'so well known to Paris play goers.' Mistinguett sang, danced performed acrobatics and comedy, and went to the *Casino de Paris* with Chevalier in 1917. Both of them appeared in *Paris qui danse* in 1919.

The bronze sculpture *Femme couchée lisante* of 1921 was clearly based on the illustration which he did for Radiguet's play *Les Pélican* as well as being part of the series of reclining women.[102] Mlle. Charmant reclines in the illustration reading *La vie parisienne*. This is not spelt out in the sculpture as she reads an anonymous book. It is the only sculpture by Laurens where the woman does something cultured other than playing an instrument.

This chapter has discussed Laurens' imagery of the female form. Although there are obvious relationships between contemporary depictions in magazines and Laurens' work, there were also overtones of other aspects and influences. Laurens continued to sculpt the female form throughout his career. After 1922, this became virtually his only subject, but he moved away from obviously contemporary depictions towards something more timeless and remote.

[102] Henri Laurens, *Femme couchée lisante*, 1921, bronze, size unknown.

Modern Man

The majority of Laurens' images of modern man were made between the years 1917 and 1921. Like the images of modern woman, they encompass a narrow range of types, in this case the slim flâneur and the sportsman. However, the range of male figures depicted in the popular press after the war was wider than this. Men were frequently shown as plump and middle aged or as young and suave, and encompassed a variety of characters. Generally they were depicted in terms of their relation to a slim, bright, young woman. Laurens chose to ignore the older, plump figure. All the images are of single fashionable figures of the elite. The sporting men form a group which encompass a narrow range of sports which could be considered to be English in origin: boxing, rugby and horse racing.

Sporting images

Prior to the war there had been much concern about the enfeeblement of the French race. This grew from the mid nineteenth century when it became clear that the population of France was not increasing at the rate of other European countries.[1] There was also a concern about the health of the population. The French were seen as obese people who drank too much and were riddled with syphilis.[2] *La vie sportif* and *La santé par les sports* were two magazines which advocated sport and body building as a nationalistic exercise to regenerate the French population. Professor Desbonner had a school of sport that promised to build a body beautiful in twenty four lessons.[3] His idea was that when all the muscles were used the body grew in a harmony of proportions, creating a modern athlete in the mould of those from Ancient Greece. Only through increasing the health and vitality of the body would

[1] Theodore Zeldin, *A History of French Passions, Volume two, Intellect, Taste and Anxiety*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 949. Between the Years 1800 and 1940, Germany's population grew four fold, Britain's tripled but the population of France rose by only fifty per cent. This was not achieved through increased birth rate, but by increased longevity and immigration.

[2] I would like to thank Fay Brauer for her paper, 'The Built Body, Sporting Nationalism and French National Identity in the Poincariste State', which she gave at the Art Historians Conference, 4 April 1998, which drew my attention to these ideas.

[3] Professeur Desbonner, *Comment on devient athlète,* (Paris, Berger-Lerault, 1914), 92.

one be able to create a future race that was strong.[4] Pierre Ainaud was a historian who thought that the English school system, which encouraged team sports, should be emulated in order again to produce a nation of physically and morally strong people. In particular he promoted rugby and boxing as sports which would develop the required discipline and health.[5] It was also seen as a way of producing soldiers who would be capable of defending the French nation.

Laurens created a number of images on the subject of boxing, rugby and horse racing. In the post war period boxing and other sports in France regained momentum. Boxing was very popular and Laurens was one of many people who took a keen interest in the sport and apparently went frequently to fights.[6] He also enjoyed talking about boxing with Braque.[7] It was however a time for change as French boxing, which had dominated prior to the war, gave way in popularity to English boxing.[8] However, the stance, *la garde*, which was used frequently in photographs, was very similar in both styles. This stance is also the same one Laurens used in many of his images, including the stone, relief *Le boxeur* of 1919, with one gloved hand in front of the torso, the other lower and the two legs slightly apart. This was also a pose which was frequently used in photographs and etchings of boxers from the nineteenth century. Then it was made out to be an eccentric English pastime. One undated coloured engraving was entitled 'Folie Anglaise' and showed two aristocratic English sportsmen saying, *'Mille guinea pour la mâchoire cassé'* to which the other replies, *'Mille guinea pour l'oeil crevé.'*[9] It was seen as a gentleman's sport, which was also taken up by early twentieth century French men. There are images of the fashionable Maurice Chevalier practising his boxing and looking very elegant.[10]

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[4] Ibid
[5] Fay Brauer, op. cit. *La vie sportif* frequently made allusions to this also.
[6] Conversation with Mme. Denise Laurens, 19th February 1998.
[7] Claude Laurens, 'L'homme,' in exhibition catalogue, *Henri Laurens, 1885-1854*, (Biron: Chateau de Biron, 1990), 27. Also conversation with Mme. Denise Laurens, 19 February 1998.
[8] J. Alliot, G. Prevot, *La boxe française*, (Paris: la boxe française Parisienne, 1958) French boxing is similar to judo using both arms and feet where as English boxing uses just the hands for contact.
[9] Musée Carnavalet, Cabinet de l'art graphique, Cabinet de moeurs 116/6.

The sports press of the day was popular, with magazines specifically for boxing and horse racing. This was probably owing to the fact that France had many of the world's best boxers. However, this was not a popular motif with the other avant-garde. Braque produced no images on the subject from this time. Picasso depicted one in his analytical Cubist painting *Le boxeur* of 1909-10. Even Léger, who was keen to depict images of contemporary society through people and the urban environment, seems to have ignored this motif in preference to circus images and wrestlers. In the sports magazines of the post first world war period, such as *La boxe et les boxeurs*, boxers were frequently shown as heroes. George Charpentier was champion of all Europe in all categories in 1918 and was frequently shown as a great man of the world.[11] He was eulogised as being a marvellous ambassador of sport.[12] Boxing was written about as improving the moral character, courage, providing resistance to sadness and gaining rapid judgement.[13] Clearly the perception at the time when Laurens was creating his images was of boxing as being an elevated sport.

There was also the idea that sport was representative of the era which was promoted in many articles. In an exhibition catalogue which reviewed the celebrated sports critic of the time, Geo-Charles, sport was placed along side *La bohème, Josephine Baker, le jazz et les courses automobiles* as reflecting the spirit of the age.[14] Geo-Charles, who was a prolific sports writer in contemporary magazines, also made the link between sport, art and the cinema. He felt that sport and the cinema were the two forms of contemporary life which received the most attention of the young artists.[15] He cited the work of Bourdelle, Domergue-Lagarde, Piron, Touzin and many others as being prolific in this field.[16] However, Geo-Charles also looked to Nietzsche (who was, he claimed, so influential in France), in his praise of the movement and moral

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[10] Ibid.
[11] J. Alliot and G. Prevot, op. cit., 2. and *La boxe et les boxeurs*, 1923, undated and unpaged.
[12] Ibid.
[13] J. Alliot and G. Prevot, op. cit., 1.
[14] Catalogue, *Montparnasse. La revue de Geo-Charles. La collection complète de 1914 à 1930.* (Pontoise: Musée de Pontoise. 9 février- 9 mars, 1980), unpaged.
[15] Geo-Charles, 'Les possibilites d'un art français du sport et du cinema,' *Montparnasse*, (1 novembre 1921), 2.

provider in contemporary sport.[17] '*Élevez vos coeurs, mes frères, haut, plus haut, et n'oubliez pas non plus vos jambes... j'ai canonisé moi-même mon rire... Zarathoustra à devient léger.*'[18] Here he was clearly linking with the patriotic idea from prior to the war, with sport creating a nation of super men. Professor Desbonner linked fitness to ancient Greek proportions. Geo-Charles also advocated this. In writing about the spirit of the sports person he wrote that he would like to reproduce some pages of Pindar and Homer or certain comparisons of Plato.[19] Just as the themes which Laurens pursued in his images of modern women had historical references, his portrayal of boxing can also be read in this light. André Stil wrote how sport was a spectacle enjoyed by millions.[20] The beauty of it he linked with classical antiquity, and wrote that it is part of culture which is never forgotten.[21] It does appear that this ideal has become ingrained in the twentieth century psyche.

The images which Laurens produced did not show boxers as being particularly athletic. They do not portray an action man of the type advocated by Professor Desbonner or a Nietzschian super man. They frequently look static, posed and awkward. If one compares Duchamp Villon's *L'athlète* of 1916 (Plate 1.37) with Laurens' *Le boxeur* of 1919 (Plate 1.38) two different concepts of the sports person emerge. The bronze by Duchamp Villon shows a man with enlarged chest and muscular legs striding forward in a manner reminiscent of Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*. The image by Laurens reduces the figure to flattened planes which show no muscularity or development of the body. There is no aspect of the hero; in fact the image is treated as he would have constructed a still life.

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[16] Ibid., 2-3.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Geo-Charles, op. cit.
[20] The main arenas where fights took place in Paris at this time were the Cirque de Paris, the Ring de Paris and the Gymnase Christmann. *La boxe et les boxeurs*, 1921. These were the places where the fight were held which were reviewed.
[21] André Stil, 'Le sport comme spectacle,' in *Le sport ou la beauté de geste*, (Paris: Échirolles, mai 1978), unpaged. And, Manfred Lämmer, 'Sport und Kunst in der griechischen Antike,' in catalogue, *Kunst und Sport. Malerei, Graphik und Plastiquk des 20 Jahrhunderts in Baden Wüttenberg*, (Stuttgart: Galerie der Stadt, 9 August to 14 September, 1986) Clearly there has been this idea throughout the twentieth century.

As well as producing sculptures, Laurens produced many drawings of this subject. *Le boxeur* of 1918-19 is a gouache that shows the figure as a series of overlapping planes, each with different colours and textures. Just as Picasso, in his *Harlequin* of 1918, (Plate 1.39) was using flat, contrasting areas which do not represent any particular aspect, so the elements of this image in isolation are non-descriptive. The head in both images can be construed as showing different angles, although that by Laurens is more opaque. He also carries this idea through to the body, which depicts two aspects. The *Harlequin* is a static figure, which is conveyed by the upright lines. *Le boxeur,* in his garde position, is meant to be showing a man at least ready for action. Most of the lines are vertical, except for the one dividing the three quarter view from the frontal, which shows the figure leaning forward. Although not as dynamic as some of the posters which advertised fights, such as that of 1905 for the *Folies-Marigny,* which showed one figure actively punching his opponent, this does give a forward thrust. (Plate 1.40)

The poses of Laurens' boxers link with those depicted in magazines. Typically boxers were shown in publicity photographs either in the *garde* position or torso, looking noble against a blank background.[22] This is also the pose which was chosen for many of the ceramics, commercial statues and other memorabilia which were available to the public to celebrate French sporting achievement at this time and through to the 1930s. These had proliferated since around 1900 and the codification of Olympic sports by Pierre Coubertin.[23] These were thought of as being a veritable *Corpus des temps modernes*, in the same way as the ancient Greeks celebrated their sport on their vases.[24] It could be argued that he chose a motif with particular nationalistic overtones, but in the means of portraying that image he would appear to be negating this.

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[22] *La boxe et les boxeurs*, (14 décembre 1921), photo of Papin just torso, and ibid., (7 décembre 1921), photo of Frank Briscot, whole figure. Both unpaged.
[23] Felix Marcilhac, 'Retro-Sport: un siècle de passion,' in *Retro Sport 1850-1940. Peintures, sculptures, dessins, jeux, objets et figurines*, catalogue, (Paris: Galerie 190-200, 1984), 2.
[24] Ibid.

The images of boxers were also sometimes interchangeable with those that he produced of other sports such as rugby. What appears to be the most important thing is the fact that it is a boxer or a rugby man rather than any particular idea of conquest. The planes and overall composition of the boxer are almost identical with that of *Le joueur de rugby* of 1917; the only difference being the inclusion of a rugby ball and other hand hanging by the side. Laurens painted a gouache *Rugbyman* in 1919, (Plate 1.41) which again shows the same stance. This is painted in bright yellow, white, flesh pink and brown. As with papiers collés, colour is shown as an independent entity to form. The yellow is part of the striped area of the top, part of the shorts and the back panels of the head. The brown colours the left arm, half the trunks and a leg. He also contrasts texture. Behind the head there is a stippling of dots. The flesh colour appears to have been laid onto a waxy surface. The white of the ball and shoulder is flat. Like the images of boxers, this is not an athlete full of energy, but an emblem constructed of patterned planes. Like boxing, rugby was not a particularly popular subject with the Cubist avant-garde, although André Lhote painted a number of images portraying the game in 1917, 1918 and 1920. In his images, the players are actually on the field taking part in the game as in Delaunay's *L'équipe de Cardiff* of 1912-13. In this painting the contemporary image of sport was aligned with the new mechanical energy of flight and the big wheel, modern posters and that eternal symbol of progress, the Eiffel tower. The game of rugby was an important part in the symbolism of modernity in this painting as it was in the works by Laurens and Lhote. It could however be argued that as the images shown by Laurens and Lhote (Plate 1.42) were created during the war, when there were few men who were not fighting and few opportunities for playing rugby, this imagery was not characteristic of the era. Certainly the popular press in 1917 did not mention the sport or show images. It would appear that Laurens wished to show an image, which would in normal times, unequivocally signify modernity in the same way as fashion.[25]

[25] It was not just in art that there was a wish to portray rugby. Honnegger in 1928 wrote a movement of a symphony about rugby. He said that he wanted to '*exprimer dans ma lange de musicien les attaques*

Boxing on the other hand could be interpreted as ancient and modern. There is a bronze statue of a seated *Boxer from Rome* of ca. 100-50. The figure with its broken nose and bloodied ears appears tired and angry, aspects which lead Andrew Stewart to contest that it is linked with mythology, perhaps the story of Amykos who was beaten in a boxing match by Polydeukes.[26] *Tête de boxeur* by Laurens of 1920 (Plate 1.43) certainly shows a boxer with the facial attributes of one who has been in many fights. The ear is deformed, the nose flattened and the left side of the face corrugated. The latter is not so much a literal deformation, as an effective, formulaic way of expressing repeated bruising. The side view of the head accentuates this, as there is a strong emphasis on the original rectangle of the block. The back of the head is vertical and in line with the neck. The front is again vertical, but is subdivided into simple segments. It brings to mind some of the late portraits of ancient Rome, such as that of Gallienus ca. 267, where the strength and individuality of earlier portraits remains, but with an increased use of formal abstraction.[27] The face is an oval and set on a thick neck, relating this sculpture unusually to the original block. The cheeks are smooth and without definition. The surface rhythm is created by the repeated incising of the beard, eyebrows and moustache. The formulaically furrowed brow and the emphasis on the eyes create the strength and character.

The relief stone sculpture of 1920, *Le boxeur* (Plate 1.44) can be seen to relate in form to *Tête de boxeur* in form. It shows a three quarter view of the head made up of abstracted planes. It has the same broken nose, round eye and hair line of the right view of the three dimensional sculpture. The corrugated facets are missing, the rhythmic stripes now being linked with the arm and the edge of the head, which is similar to the gouaches of the *Rugby man* of 1919. Like his gouache drawings, he has used a stippled effect on part of the head as a contrast to the smoothness of other

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et les ripostes du jeu, le rythme et le couleur d'un match au stade de colombes.' Bernard Jeu, 'La musique et le sport' In *Le sport ou la beauté du geste*, catalogue, (Paris: Échirolles, 1978), unpaged.

[26] Andrew Stewart, *Greek Sculpture. An Exploration*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 225.

[27] Diana Kleiner, *Roman Sculpture*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 375.

areas. Unlike the works on paper, the matting carries over onto different planes. As in his three dimensional sculpture, there is a real contrast between the sharply defined edges as can be seen at the top of the head, and the rounded modulations such as the right edge of the neck. In the same way the depth of the cutting of the head contrasts with the sketchy shallow aspect of the background rope. This is the same idea used by many artists working in relief, such as Donatello. In his marble *Assumption of the Virgin* of 1427, areas of texture contrast with plainer, more modulated areas and distant or less essential figures are cut with less depth than the central Mary.

Many of these ideas also relate to the stone relief *Boxeur* of 1919. In form and detail this sculpture relates closely with the gouaches of the *Rugby man* and the *Boxeur.* Like the relief *Tête de boxeur* some of the surfaces are matted. Some are also corrugated, creating rhythmic shadows which contrast with the deep cutting of the edges of the planes. In the background there is also the representation of the ring. This is shown as overlapping rectangles, which become part of the overall scheme of composition, describing the ropes but giving no hint of real space. This schematisation was something which he was also to explore in the illustration he did of *Hortense* in *Les Pélican*, where the fence behind complements the shapes and structure of the figure, so making the reality of the space ambiguous.

The three-quarter length *Boxeur* of 1920 (Plate 1.45) can be seen to relate to other three dimensional sculptures of the time. Like the *Femme au compotier* of the same year, it is made up of interlocking, non-representational blocks. These blocks are fundamentally smooth apart from added abstract decoration and the few features. Because there appears to have been no instigating idea reflected in the form of a boxer or a woman with a bowl of fruit, the gender and occupation of both appears curiously superficial. Lipchitz's *Pierrot with Clarinet* of 1919 (Plate 1.47) is similarly constructed from blocks which in themselves represent form rather than subject. In the same way as in the sculptures by Laurens, the subject finally emerges from the details. As in the paintings of Gris these are interchangeable, so that the

circle of the eye becomes the holes in the clarinet. Like the work of Laurens, the balance of detail and form is paramount, resulting in a calm sculptural fact. In Laurens' sculpture there are none of the facial features of a boxer, no squashed nose or mutilated ear, except perhaps the idea of this in the shifting plane of the face. The main attributes are the large, rounded gloves.

Laurens created a number of images on the theme of the jockey around 1921. These all relate to the one which he created as part of the illustration for the short play by Radiguet, *Les Pélican* which was published by the Galerie Simon in that year. The last etching is of a jockey who represents the son of the family, Anselm, who at the end of the play is finally allowed to pursue this career. (This is in preference to becoming a poet which was the career his parents preferred, and after loosing some weight.)[28] This illustration complements that of his sister Hortense. Both show the figures in front of an abstracted background, individualised by their clothes rather than any other intrinsic features. This complements the story, which is of a family entirely living on the surface, impressed more by the appearance of things rather than their real worth. Anselm wears the costume and carries the whip that his parents had given him. The image is made up of flat, overlapping planes. The one furthest from the viewer has texturing of dots and the one representing the coat hints at the stripes of the jacket. The appearance of cloth in the cap is represented by cross hatching. Connected with this is at least one preparatory ink drawing, which is similar, but not as refined.

The illustration of Anselm is like many images which appeared in elite magazines of the day, such as *Monsieur*. (Plate 1.49) In an illustration of 1920, riders from a hunt were shown in their costumes.[29] The images of jockeys in up market men's magazines inevitably made the wearer appear slim and aristocratically English,

[28] Raymond Radiguet, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed Chloe Radiguet et Julien Cendres, (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 261.
[29] Shown in Vittoria de Buzzaccarini, *Elegance and Style. 200 Years of Men's Fashions*, (Verona: Lupetti and Co., 1992), 117.

which matched the historical fact that the Racing Club, which was founded in France in 1882, was based on that at the Lords.[30] Jodhpur breeches were worn by men of quality when visiting stables and exercising dogs, but they also could be worn at fashionable beaches during the day, to emphasise the wearer's credentials. *La vie parisienne* was less certain about the contemporary status of the riders. In a cartoon from 1919, riders from yesterday, today and tomorrow were depicted. Those from yesterday were the elite, today's were soldiers and tomorrow were all. The latter appeared to be all shapes, unlike the dandy elite, and wore a variety of clothes. Only men in that cartoon were shown riding.[31]

Laurens made the choice to portray only the aristocratic type of jockey. The sculpture, *Le jockey*, which relates to the illustrations is a small terre cuite of 1921. (Plate 1.48) It shows a figure wearing breaches, a sporting top and carrying a whip. The front view shows the overlapping planes fanning out, which contrasts strongly with the view from the side, which is very slim. Formally this sculpture can be related to the equally small *Femme à la guitare* of 1921. Here again the planes overlap in a geometric rhythm, the cloth billowing out behind the legs. The similarity of the forms which also relate to other images of women at this time, does again raise a question about the relevance of gender in the sculptures. The faceted planes and similar overall shape of a man in jodhpurs, or a woman with billowing cloth becomes a woman with large hips and thighs in the *Femme en chemise* of 1921.

Modern Man

As well as sporting images, Laurens created sculptures and drawings of fashionable, urban men. These encompass a small range of types. Some smoke, some have moustaches and some have neither of these, but all conform to the image of the well-bred gentleman. All these images were made after 1919 when there were more men on the streets of Paris and in the magazines. They can be seen to conform to the idea

[30] Ibid., 112.
[31] Cartoon, *La vie parisienne*, (11 janvier, 1919), 36. The courses re-opened later that month. *La vie parisienne*, (25 janvier, 1919).

of the flâneur and the dandy. Within all these images, the men appear fashion conscious, conforming to the rigorous codes of the day, which included a cold demeanour. All are urban, and more particularly, Parisian. As such they represent a specific attitude and narrative device, a spectator of modern life who holds a privileged position.[32] It could be argued that in depicting this sort of male, Laurens was creating the equivalent of his coquettes and fashionable women. In both types, they are there to observe and be observed. They were the people who were on the streets, conforming to certain ideas of modernity and contemporaneity. They are at once the consumers of, and the representation of, the era. (Plate 1.50)

The fashionable men which Laurens depicted were invariably slim dandies. Again this was a type which was characterised in the writing of Baudelaire. While being relevant for the nineteenth century, it was also a type which appeared in the fashion magazines during and after the First World War. Invariably they were fashionable, slim, urban and distant. For Baudelaire the dandy was a man used to luxury who had no other aim than that of happiness which he pursued according to the rigorous codes of the clan.[33] While the dandy did not seek money or elegance as an end in itself, that was for mere mortals, these attributes were important in symbolising the aristocratic superiority of his mind.[34] The distant, blasé attitude was also important for appearances. Even in pain, the dandy should appear unaffected.[35] Immaculate dress combined with absolute calm in the face of any dangers would appear to be a form of idealisation. However, combined with this was a strong desire to be individual and original.[36] For Baudelaire it was an aspect of his era and was therefore modern. Dandyism always appeared at a time of transition, when democracy was not totally powerful and the aristocracy is only partly weakened. Into this void there would

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[32] For a discussion of the role of the flâneur in art and literature, see Chris Jenks, 'Watching your step. The history and practice of the flâneur,' in Chris Jenks, ed. *Visual Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 142-160.
[33] Baudelaire, 'The Dandy,' in Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, trans. P.E. Charvet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 419.
[34] Ibid., 420.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

always be a number of men who would step and attempt to create an alternative aristocracy.[37] Laurens only depicted this type of fashionable man for a few years after the end of the war. This was also a time of flux, when some had much money and leisure time. It was also then an aspect of modernity.

Le fumeur of 1919 (Plate 1.51) can be related to the *Man from the Touraine* by Gris of the previous year. (Plate 1.52) Both depict a man with a pipe using interchangeable signs and appear to have developed from a grid. In both images, the circles of the eye also describe the buttons of the jacket and the hole of the pipe. In the Gris, the figure, background and underlying grid are united so that neither appears dominant. In the relief by Laurens the figure is painted and there is no background, other than the roughened stone, which makes the figure dominant. This image does appear to conform to an underlying grid of regular boxes with an emphasis on the central upright line. The painting by Gris also has a regular box grid to which the motif corresponds, but the image is spread across the picture plane, so that there is no central energy as there is in the Laurens.

The motifs also differ. The Gris is an almost Cézannian figure, timeless yet contemporary. He sits in his country clothes, relaxing with pipe, glass and newspaper. The figure by Laurens is more ambiguous. He has no props to place him in a particular setting or to give him an occupation. He does wear a bowler hat, which had been popular since 1900 as an emblem of the elegant and busy gentleman about town.[38] He also appears slimmer than the figure by Gris, which was another important feature for elegance. Cigars would have been the preferred choice for a man of this type in public. *Le fumeur* smokes a pipe which does not appear to have been so popular in the street.[39] Cigarettes do feature in advertisements for expensive clothes, as in the *Minister's Report of Fashion for Gentlemen* of 1916-1917.[40] Cigars

[37] Ibid., 421.
[38] Vittoria de Buzzaccarini, op. cit., 93.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 108-9.

seem to have reflected an American influence, which was drawn upon by Laurens in an ink drawing of 1920-1921. Here the figure's apparel seems larger than life, with fringed detail on the jacket, large hat and huge, fat cigar. The pipe itself was frequently portrayed in many Cubist still lifes, including *Pipe and Fruit dish with Grapes* of 1918 by Gris, and *Bouteille et pipe* of 1917 by Laurens, so that it could be seen as just part of the Cubist vocabulary. However, Laurens did not make a feature of this motif in the same way as Gris, and given the interest he had in portraying the contemporary man and woman at this time, it would seem that he was using signifiers of a particular type.

The three dimensional *L'homme à la pipe* of 1919 by Laurens is very similar in form to the two *Têtes* of 1920 and *L'homme à la moustache* of 1919. (Plate 1.53) It also relates closely to a number of gouache drawings. In all, the face is elongated in a manner that was used to portray the elegant gentleman in the magazines. The head of *L'homme à la pipe* tapers into the neck which has a raised collar. The pipe itself is crumpled into a series of blocks, while still retaining its identity. This would have been less easy to achieve as a sculptural fact if he had been portrayed with a cigarette. *L'homme à la moustache* of 1919 shows an older man with bushy eyebrows, recessed eyes, moustache and bow tie. In spite of being older, he still retained the image of elegant urbanity. There are also a number of gouache drawings of men with moustaches, as in *Tête de l'homme* of 1919. (Plate 1.54) This shows an elegant man with a combed moustache and a monocle. Frequently small moustaches were worn as a sign of elegance, as can be seen in numerous fashion images, although there were a certain number of tongue in cheek articles during and after the war. *Le carnet de la semaine* had an amusing article in 1915 about the Kaiser who had lost his talisman, in other words, his moustache.[41] Soon, they said that he would also lose the point to his Prussian helmet.[42] *Fantasio* had a competition to guess the owner of the moustaches in 1919.[43] The owner of this was clearly an older, less fashionable man.

[41] V. Cyril, 'Ses moustaches,' *Le carnet de la semaine*, (30 juin 1915), unpaged.
[42] Ibid.
[43] 'Qui est-ce?' *Fantasio*, (15 août 1919), 71.

In the images of Laurens, even with the sculpture which indicates an older person, they always conform to elegant society.

There are two, three dimensional, stone *Têtes* of 1920, one painted and the other which retains only traces of paint, which are otherwise identical. (Plate 1.55) Both depict a man with a raised circular eye, which presumably represents a monocle, wavy hair, and the same elongated chinless face as before. The sculpture was designed to be viewed from all directions, in spite of a natural frontal preference. From the left the planes of the right hand side of the face are visible, as well as the nose and the left portion. The other side shows only the right, but it is made more complex, with the eye being a cylinder. The skull itself is split and shows several different angles so that from behind there is still formal interest. The remains of the paint seem to show that the tones were similar to those of the still painted example.[44] They appear to have been strongly contrasted, with white on the left facial plane, black on both the raised nose and the hollow of the right and various shades of ochre in other areas. Clearly the colour was designed not to accentuate form, but to be a separate entity. The painted version accentuates the waves of the hair, the inner circle of the eye, the central dot of the mouth and the chin line with colour. Here, the details and patterns are clearly the important aspect. It is not obvious whether the other version would have done this, but it is certainly possible.

Although none of the three dimensional modern women from the 1920s were painted, there is a similarity of approach. The face is elongated, showing the connection with the images in the media. Much is made of the details, the hair and in the case of the females: jewellery and details of clothes, and in the case of the men: moustaches, monocles and pipes. In all these aspects the images confirm their contemporary status. The men, in keeping with the physiognomy of the day appear effete. However, with the images of women, Laurens emphasises their femininity by

[44] I have only seen a black and white reproduction.

using the corner of the block, so that there are fewer facets. With the contemporary man, the face is frontal and faceted.

Laurens chose to depict specific types of modern man. The sporting man was limited to boxers, rugby men and jockeys. In all three they had specifically English overtones, and in the case of the boxers and rugby men also suggestions of nationality and patriotism. In these the manner of depicting the motif was counter to expectations. In the images of modern fashionable man, Laurens again conformed to a type that was derived from the aristocratic English as represented in the high fashion magazines. He was specifically an elite, fashionable Parisian.

Still Lifes

Between 1915 and 1928 Laurens created a large number of still life compositions. However, most were made before 1921, with a group in 1922 and a few in 1926 and 1928. After 1922, nearly all of Laurens' work used the female form as its subject. The objects shown in his still lifes were also confined chronologically, with guitars and fruit bowls only being represented after the war. Before this, the majority depicted machine made bottles and glasses, sometimes with the addition of a pipe and newspaper.

Subject

La bouteille de Beaune of 1915-16 (Plate 156) is typical of this early work. It is a wood and plaster polychrome construction depicting a bottle of Beaune and a glass on a table. Still lifes, by their very nature, exclude the human form and yet through the choice of objects, culture of a type is shown. However, in the sculptures by Laurens these are decontextualized in that there is no background showing a café setting or a domestic interior. The objects depicted are non-hierarchical in that they are mass produced and in common usage. The wine, Beaune, which Laurens often chose to include, encompasses a broad range of moderate to expensive wines. Norman Bryson has described the *xenia* of ancient Rome as a presentation of culture versus nature, of luxury against necessity.[1] Food was shown as part of a system. In the first, uncooked food representing bountiful nature is shown as part of a non-hierarchical system where all enjoy the delights of plenty.[2] The second *xenia* shows the opposite, where man exploits nature, orders and cooks the produce as part of a system where hierarchy and luxury is available for a few.[3] In both forms, the objects are represented with detail and abundance. The early, domesticated still lifes of Laurens at this time avoid the depiction of food. Nature itself has been excluded.

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[1] Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked. Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1990), 17-29.
[2] Ibid., 23-25.
[3] Ibid., 25-27.

Culture is only there in the form of a standardised drink and through the depiction of mass produced objects, which by their very nature do not denote status. Even culture itself is not allowed to be bountiful. Laurens frequently chose to depict only two objects within his still lifes of this time.

His friend Juan Gris painted many still lifes at this time, which also included mainly mass produced objects. His *Breakfast* of 1915 (Plate 1.57) shows his favourite motif of a coffee grinder, together with a newspaper, coffee maker, bowl and glass set on a table. The range of objects is broader than those in the work by Laurens and they set a domestic scene of the morning repast, although actually there is no food or drink in evidence. Christopher Green has made the point that the disappearance of fruit and cultural abundance from the canvases of Gris as the war progressed was part of a resignation to hardships.[4] Certainly, although there are no figures in the picture, it does recall the *Frugal Repast* of 1904 by Picasso. There, the empty bowl, small hunk of bread and half empty glasses are displayed in-between the viewer and the emaciated couple. They have become physically and mentally distanced from the scarcely touched food. Seventeenth century still lifes also frequently portrayed a frugal meal, which the viewer was invited to savour.[5] In contrast to the banquets that depicted the pleasures of the table in lavish detail, these were painted almost in monochrome, which served to emphasise the simplicity of the meal. There was a moral message about plenty or prudence, in an era where there was a religious anxiety about the new wealth of the nation. Gris and Laurens seem not to be making judgements. They do not include food, only the objects necessary for serving it. The work of Laurens, especially in the domestic still lifes from 1916 to 1917, reveal an emptiness of subject and an austerity in the method.

It was common during the war for Gris to show objects set out in his studio in the Place Ravignon depicting the setting of a human ritual like eating, drinking, or

[4] Christopher Green, *Juan Gris*, (London: Whitechapel art Gallery, 1992), 152-154.
[5] An example of this is Pieter Claesz, (1598-1661), *Still Life with Stoneware Jug, Wine Glass, Herring and Bread.*

relaxing with a newspaper by a window. This was not true for Laurens who, while he does show a bottle and glass which could suggest having a drink, does not depict a pipe or newspaper to turn this into an event, or any particular backdrop to place this into a context. Although it could be argued that the lack of obvious café culture depicted by both artists was a sign of the war time difficulties, Laurens nearly always depicted his objects in isolation. However, these wartime still lifes could not be more spartan in subject, which is exemplified in his two papiers collés, *Bouteille et pipe* (Plate 1.58) and *Nature morte à la bouteille* of 1917. The sombreness of the subject is paralleled in the manner of depiction where unadorned brown shapes are set against a pale cream and green background. It appears as if the real shortage of money, which he wrote about to his dealer, is translated into pictorial form. As he wrote, he lived in a very modest way, which altogether made it impossible to *faire des folies.*[6] He also wrote presumably in October of 1916 that he was in desperate need of money.[7] The years 1915-17 were also particularly hard for those in the city, with much of the café and night life gone, many restrictions and fuel and food shortages. As early as March 1915, *Fantasio* was bemoaning the lack of any life in Montmartre after the early evening. The cafés closed at eight, and by nine the Place Pigalle was empty.[8] The real hardships which affected both his living and working conditions during these two years does seem to have been reflected in his work.

However, in 1918 he expanded the range of objects and formal play in his work. This can be seen in his group of papiers collés which include *Verre et dominos,* (Plate 1.59) *Pipe et dés* and *Verre et byrrh,* where the dice, dominoes and pipes indicate the possibility of a communal event. The works also expand in their visual play of echoes and surface embellishment. Bounty, in the form of grapes, also appear in 1918 in the construction *Compotier de raisins.* (Plate 1.60) However, even this does

[6] Documentation du Musée national d'art moderne- Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Fonds Léonce Rosenberg, undated letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c47 9600.538. From context, 1916-1917. All letters between Laurens and Rosenberg are from this archive unless otherwise stated.
[7] Undated letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c42 9600.534.
[8] Gaston Derys, 'Nuits de guerre. Le bataillon de Cythere...immobilisé,' *Fantasio*, No. 195, (1 mars 1915), 31-2.

not show overflowing grapes, just a small bunch all but overpowered by the rest of the sculpture. There are a number of related papiers collés. *Le compotier* of 1918 shows the side of an empty fruit bowl on a table. Another shows an empty fruit bowl, seen from above, which serves to emphasise the emptiness. *Le compotier de raisins* 1918 again shows the fruit bowl from the side, but this time with the silhouette of, and a shaded version of a bunch of grapes. The whole is made up of plain areas, with the only decorative element being outside the subject. It is not until 1920 that grapes overflow and form a major compositional role. This relaxation in subject and formal means corresponded with the apparent easing of the financial position. 1918 was a little easier as Laurens visited Chartres in the spring[9] and the accounts show that Laurens received fairly substantial payments from his dealer, Rosenberg, in the spring and early summer of that year.[10] There was also a feeling that the war was drawing to a close. This meant that Rosenberg would be able to open his gallery and his artists would be able to show their work. The tone of Laurens' letters was pure excitement, with a real goal in sight.[11]

It could also be argued that Gris' *Breakfast* and Laurens' *Bouteille de Beaune*, in laying the table in front of the viewer invites the audience to participate in a manner similar to many seventeenth and eighteenth century still lifes. Unlike Cézanne who elevated the still life into a theatre of artifice, backed up by the frequent inclusion of a swag of a curtain, everyday objects are presented as in a Chardin, in a casual arrangement. In Chardin's *The Smokers Case* of 1737, the humble objects are displayed in front of the viewer's eye. The light flickers across them, the materiality of each motif remaining important. The very relaxed nature of the arrangement invokes a hidden presence. The Gris painting and the Laurens sculpture show the

[9] Postcard, Laurens to Rosenberg, c62. 9600.553, received 20/4/18.
[10] Fonds Léonce Rosenberg, c86 9600.628, dated 16/4/18, Laurens received 186 francs. c85 9600.627 dated 30 avril 1918, Laurens promised 675 francs, received 1/8/18. c87 9600.629 dated 21/5/18, Laurens received 175 francs. c88 9600 630, dated 28 Mai 1918, Laurens received 600 francs. c 89 9600 631 dated 8/6/18, Laurens received 300 francs. There are no receipts surviving between this one and that of the 15th November, but presumably the monthly payments were continuing as before.

objects casually arranged on the table for the viewer to behold. However, the artifice of the handling in both works distances and elevates the subject into the realm of art, to be viewed and not touched. In *La bouteille de Beaune*, the fabrication echoes the mass-produced subject. The wooden planes appear to come from planks of a standardised thickness. The cylinders appear to have been made on a lathe. The colour and uniform aspect of the surface act as a skin and add nothing to the materiality of the individual objects.

Materials and structure

La bouteille de Beaune, like the almost contemporary *Clown* shows the objects broken down to reveal different views simultaneously. *Le clown* shows the arms broken into geometric elements that convey the successive movements of a juggler. Like *Le clown*, the elements of the still life tilt and reveal different facets of their broken geometric form. It is a dynamic composition, which has aspects reminiscent of Boccioni's *Development of a Bottle in Space* of 1912-13. Just as the figure compositions of the Futurists revealed movement, so normally static still lifes should be dynamic and reveal the particular rhythm of each object. In a catalogue of 1912 the Futurists stated that inanimate objects can also create emotion in the spectator through line and composition and through the formal relationship of each object with its neighbour.[12] The objects in the work of art were to be a synthesis of the known and the visible. Through these means the onlooker should feel drawn into the centre of the composition.[13] Like the *Development of a Bottle in Space*, the elements in the sculpture by Laurens were cut back to reveal the interior. *La bouteille de Beaune* describes the thickness of the glass wall and the speckled liquid within, and in another view the height of the liquid in the bottle. In both compositions the table is

[11] For instance, letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c23 9600.515. He writes of having many sculptural projects in mind, of drawing to clarify his ideas and of working furiously for the forthcoming exhibition.

[12] Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carra, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini, 'The Exhibitors to the Public,' 1912, catalogue entry to exhibition at the Bernheim-Jeune gallery Paris, (February 1912). Translation for the Sackville gallery catalogue. Quoted in Herschel Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1968), 294-298.

[13] Ibid., 296.

faceted and tilts forward in a non-realistic fashion. Like the Boccioni, the elements are generalised so that all that is shown is sculptural form. Set within the parameters of Futurist ideas, this alone should create emotion in the viewer.

The colours of *Bouteille de Beaune* are stark and non descriptive, which, like the sculpture *Le clown* is black, white with also dark blue. The blue is used solely for the glass, including where the rim is reflected in the plane behind. The reflective and absorbent qualities of white and black in themselves distort light and shade, but the use of the two colours is purely as colour and not light. As Laurens was later to write,

> *quand une statue est rouge, bleue, jaune, elle reste toujours rouge, bleue, jaune. Mais une statue qui n'est pas polychromée subit les déplacements de la lumière et des ombres sur elle et se modifier sans cesse.*[14]

Just as Gris used black as both a signifier of cast shadows and to throw other forms into relief, so Laurens shows this tendency in this work.[15] The black behind the bottle could be a cast shadow and the negative of the writing could well be a reflection. The pointilliste dots also relate with the work of Gris and Picasso who were enlivening the surfaces of their work at this time with texture and paint effects.

The *Bouteille de rhum* of 1916-17 (Plate 1.61) also reveals a link with the work of Picasso, in particular the *Bottle of Bass, Glass and Newspaper* of 1914. (Plate 1.62) The construction by Picasso was made from folded sheet metal, whose thin walls encompass the possibility of a bottle and glass without actually giving a feeling of the material weight of glass. The surfaces were enlivened with paint, sometimes thickened with sand, which again runs counter to the actual material qualities of the objects represented. Laurens' *Bouteille de rhum* uses thin sheet metal in a similar way for the bottle and glass. The table by way of contrast is shown as thick wood, which has been partially stained so that the grain shows through, and the rest left natural. In this he is close to Juan Gris' *Fruit dish, Glass and Newspaper* of 1916

[14] Yvon Taillandier, 'Henri Laurens,' *Amis de l'art*, no 1, (26 juin 1951.)

which was painted on plywood. Unlike many of his contemporary still lifes that represent wood through painterly means, this allows the wood to speak as an element in its own right. However, it is not representational in that at some points it is part of the table and others part of the *compotier* or background. The materiality of the wood in the Laurens sculpture represents the wood of the table in a way which the metal does not represent glass of the bottle. Metal has the property of being reflective like glass, but in this sculpture it is in the main covered with paint. Only the circle representing the top is allowed to partially shine. Margit Rowell indicated that there was a formal reason for the choice of materials. She felt that it depended on the kinds of forms that he wished to depict. Circular inner spaces were contoured by sheet metal, where as angular spaces were created by abutted or intersected planes of wood.[16] This is not always the case. *Le compotier de raisins* of 1918 uses both wood and sheet metal for the flat plains and the *Bouteille et verre* of 1918 appears to use curved sheets of wood. Laurens was not systematic in his choice.

Picasso created many constructions in 1913-1914. Even when utilising different materials, they almost never incorporated areas of varying density. The *Violin* of 1913 was made of cardboard, paper and string. The thickness of each material corresponded with each other. *Glass and Die* of 1914 was made of wood and paper and here he did exploit the paper which was used to represent the fringe of the shelf, and in the curling frailty offers a contrast the robustness of the wood. Most of his constructions were of wood that was painted, frequently in a non-illusionist manner that also hid the material.[17] In the exploration of materials, Laurens was probably closer to Tatlin who did use mixed media. Tatlin's *Painterly relief. Collation of Materials* of 1914 was made of iron, plaster, glass and asphalt. The handling of the

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[15] For comments on Juan Gris's use of black, see Christopher Green, *Juan Gris,* catalogue, (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1992), 79.

[16] Margit Rowell, *The Planar Dimension. Europe 1912-1932,* catalogue, (New York: Solomon Guggenheim Museum, 1979), 14.

[17] Ibid., 12. Margit Rowell compares the constructions of Picasso and Laurens by saying that the subject matter is comparable. Both use thin sheets of metal and wood. Both are frontal, layered, open and painted. Both pare down constituent parts into components to the value of signs, conveying

materials, where the inherent qualities of the materials were emphasised and contrasted, was however more important than the imagery.[18] Like Laurens, the densities and volumes of the materials are emphasised, as is the facture, however, with Laurens he altered the surface values in a more painterly way.

Unlike *La bouteille de Beaune, La bouteille de rhum* has a more relaxed feel to the facture. Nails which attach the wooden elements to the rest of the sculpture are not hidden. The metal cuts are not perfect. The paint surface is not pristine. This represents a real change in working method and in conception about a work of art. Already in early 1916 Laurens had been writing to his dealer about the new spirit in art and of the difficulties of realising sculpture in a definitive material as opposed to plaster. *'Je pense que cette façon moderne de penser qu'à cette esprit neuf il faut des moyens normaux et neufs. C'est un pays inconnu à explorer.'*[19] He was working in a new way in the summer of 1916 when he wrote to Rosenberg that he was working *'avec des moyens directs- c'est à dire éxecute d'une façon définitive.'*[20] Later that year he wrote of working on a head and a still life.[21] The head was in wood but the still life he felt was a development. He had clearly not started the final version, which he intended to make in a variety of materials. This would not only give a variety of dimensions, but also in the density of volume.[22] His vocabulary was also traced in this letter when he continued *'de ne faire rendre dans la construction que des formes géométriquement déterminés.'*[23] This is curious, as at this stage he was moving away from the rigidity of pristine circles and cylinders. In another letter he wrote of making

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elusive and shifting points of view. However, she says that Laurens is more sculptural. His slanting planes suggest depth and his inner volumes are more significant than the outer shell.

[18] John Milner, *Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian Avant-garde*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 91-93.

[19] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c24 9600.516, dated jeudi, 20 janvier 16.

[20] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c41 9600.533. Undated, but from the context, the summer of 1916.

[21] Letter loose in box. Laurens to Rosenberg, dated 15 décembre 1916.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid. Isabelle Monod Fontaine has written about this as being his program from which he moved towards the ripening of his forms. See Isabelle Monod Fontaine, 'La plaque sensible. Du dessin a la sculpture,' In *Henri Laurens, rétrospective*, (Lille: Musée d'art moderne Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1992), 12. Christopher Green writes that this allows for his forms to, at least initially, be given different meanings. See Christopher Green , *Cubism and its Enemies*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 24.

a still life directly in wood and iron. He felt that he had arrived at '*une construction assez fluide.*'[24] Through formal means of planes and volumes he wanted the spirit to dominate in the sculpture.[25] He wanted the sculpture to represent the exteriorisation of the artist.[26] It appears that the rigorous geometry of his earlier work could not achieve these ends. These extracts from his letters mark the stages of development from late 1915 to late 1916, which is evident in the work. *La bouteille de Beaune* was made from blocks of wood which were machined, carved and assembled to create a dynamic composition which had strong geometric elements. *La bouteille de rhum* was assembled from a variety of materials which were manipulated and cut and nailed. Even the parts representing the tops of the bottle and glass are not spherical. In both the surfaces have been coloured, but in *La bouteille de Beaune* it is a unifying skin which hides the properties of the material. In *La bouteille de rhum* it is in part materiality and part surface adornment.

The papier collé *Bouteille et verre* of 1917 (Plate 1.63) and the sculptural partner *Bouteille et verre* of 1918 (Plate 1.64) increase the layers of subtlety and sculptural nuance. The papier collé was assembled in a searching and direct way. Instead of the neat geometry and pristine finish of the earlier papiers collés, this one reveals changes of mind and evidence of the facture. The area to the left of the black neck obviously had had a piece of paper stuck down which has been removed and an extra strip was added to broaden the central white piece. There are cuts in the card where he had cut through the paper and there are pin pricks where it seems that Laurens was moving pieces around. There are also small guide lines to align the pieces.[27] Although some lines are ruled this is not always the case and frequently the lines are emphasised in freehand. The *Bouteille et verre* of 1918 is a translation of the papier collé into three dimensions. The materials are used in varying ways. The metal, while

[24] Letter, Laurens to Rosenberg, c47 9600.538. Undated but either 1916 or 1917 from the context.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] This method of developing a composition by moving strips of paper around prior to starting painting was used by Braque. It can be seen in his *Pedestal Table* of 1913 where marks can be seen where the

representing the decoration of the glass retains its own personality. The base of the glass appears to be a found element. The top of the glass however is made up of layers of plane and void with non-illusionist colour painted on the wood and metal. The bottle exploits similar paradoxes with the shape being framed in stained wood.[28] The actual and previous lives of the elements jostle in ones attention simultaneously with the exploration of space and solid, and two and three dimensionality. This was one of the fundamental ideas of the papiers collés of Braque and Picasso from 1912. In these, traces from everyday life were introduced and used for another purpose. While supposedly undercutting the hermetic quality of Cubist art, the actual reference is also undercut in its new dimension.

Signs

One of the major aspects of papier collé is the juxtaposition of disparate elements that have no obvious connection, which fracture the surface and are then manipulated into a new meaning by the artist. In *La bouteille et verre*, another papier collé of 1917 Laurens makes the rare addition of a piece of a newspaper. Unlike in the papiers collés by Picasso, one is not meant to read the article.[29] There is no aspect of consumerism or social nuance.[30] It appears there as an element in layers of representation. The brown paper which covers much of the background, also had a visible previous life, as there are traces of handwriting which insinuate that this once wrapped a parcel. The obviously drawn Beaune label is traced across the darker and lighter panels representing the bottle, although paradoxically the dark swatch appears to be in front of the lighter. Three dimensions are promoted by shadows and then refuted by overlaying of paper and continuation of motif across the boundaries. He was playing similar games of artifice and language that Picasso explored in his

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dominant shapes were fixed. John Golding, 'Braque and the Space of Still Life,' in catalogue, *Braque. Still Lifes and Interiors.* (London: South Bank Touring Exhibition, 1990), 14.

[28] Green, 1987, op. cit., 23. Christopher Green writes that the vocabulary, paradox and expressive pursuit in this work and the fruit bowl of 1918 look back to the work of Picasso of 1914-1915.

[29] See Patricia Leighten, *Re-Ordering the Universe. Picasso and Anarchism, 1897-1914*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), chapter 5.

Guitar, Sheet Music and Wine Glass of 1912, but with a sculptors emphasis on space and form.

The papier collé *Bouteille de rhum* of 1918 also includes words. As well as the obviously written *rhum*, is a play with the word *journal*. The third letter is made by the pipe, and instead of being a u, it echoes the o in a visual pun. These circles in turn echo the tops of the glass and the bottle. This visual play was part of the whole Cubist vocabulary but the clarity and formal emphasis was Laurens own. Gris had been increasing his pictorial vocabulary during 1917, but by 1918 there was an increased clarity and order in his compositions.[31] The use of a circle to represent several different motifs within the papier collé by Laurens is similar to Gris in his *Man from the Touraine* of 1918. Just as the circle symbolises the eyes of the peasant, so it also represents the buttons, and the top of the candlestick, pipe, and the stem of the glass. This was a development in the compositional language of Gris which he explored while he was away in the Touraine. Laurens had used circles to represent eyes and ears in his papier collé *Tête* series of 1915. Similarly he had been using the same motif for depicting the tops of bottles and other circular elements in his still lifes. What is new is the real playfulness and inter-changeability of the signs in *La Bouteille de rhum.*

The papier collé *Figure,* which is dated by Laurens as 1917, (Plate 1.65) apparently depicts a person.[32] The circle of the eye, which Laurens had used before as the top of a bottle, is echoed in the top of the glass, and buttons. Almost identical is the papier collé *La sellette du sculpture* of 1917. (Plate 1.66) Both share the same overall shapes and many of the details. The motifs depicting a figure have become

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[30] See Jeffrey Weiss, 'Picasso, Collage, and the Music Hall,' in Kirk Varnedoe and Adam Gopnik, eds., *Modern Art and Popular Culture. Readings in High and Low*, (New York: Harry N Abrams, 1991), 82-115.

[31] Green, 1987, op. cit., 28-29.

[32] This work was exhibited in an exhibition in Zurich in 1961-*Composition avec personnages*. See catalogue *Henri Laurens. Constructions et papiers collés 1915-1919*, (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985), 125 no. 62.

interchangeable with those depicting a still life.[33] What was an eye becomes the top of a bottle, the circles presumably representing the breast and navel become part of a label, and again presumably, part of the mechanism of the sculptor's table. Picasso's *Harlequin* of late 1915 has been linked with the contemporary *Bottle of Anis del Mono, Wine Glass and Playing card.*[34] The link has been seen as important as it served to clarify the connection between the diamond faceted bottle of liqueur and the *commedia dell'arte* figure with whom Picasso identified.[35] The flat, overlapping and non-illusionistic planes of the harlequin can be seen to link with those of Laurens' papiers collés.

If the titles are original and the intention was really that both images should be read as suggested, the flexibility allowed within this formal vocabulary was great. Both images are difficult to 'read' in any definitive manner. Within boundaries, it would appear that Laurens was experimenting with the concept of allowing the subject to emerge from the shapes. This was also what Gris had also been doing from late 1917, but developed while in the country in 1918.[36] However, he did not leave for the county until the end of March. Both were experimenting with similar ideas. It can be seen that Gris' and Laurens' vocabularies were expanding and certain details were being resolved using similar means. It seems likely that group of papiers collés by Laurens which reveal his expanded vocabulary date from the beginning of 1918 as they would appear to link with the wooden relief, *Bouteille et verre* (Plate 1.67) which has been dated as 1917-1918.[37] This work shows a similar way of treating the glass as in the papiers collés. The base of the bottle echoes the top and the base of the glass. He also used a repeated dot pattern as in the *Verre et dominos*. Given the way

[33] Isabelle Monod Fontaine, in ibid. 12. Isabelle Monod Fontaine states that there is always some confusion between the female form and the bottle in the most beautiful constructions of Laurens. She questions whether this is conscious on the part of the artist.
[34] Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Picasso and Things. The Still lifes of Picasso*, (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1992), 172. She says that this link was first made by Rubin in 1972.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Christopher Green, 'Synthesis and the Synthetic Process in the painting of Juan Gris 1915-1919,' *Art History*, Vol. 1, (March, 1982), 96. Christopher Green argues that in some paintings, like the *Nature morte à la plaque* of December 1917, there is a geometric armature which suggested a plaque. The compositional structure is so ambiguous as to be capable of more than one ultimate ending.

in which Laurens tended to work in groups of ideas, one image feeding another, it would appear that all these works date from early in 1918, before Gris set off for the country. The dots which appear on the table cloth of the wooden relief *Bouteille et verre* appear in the Gris painting, *The Houses in Beaulieu* of 1918. (Plate 1.68) It also would appear to be more of a sculptural motif, with the uniform dents being made by the drill. However, rather than being restricted to one area, the dots within the painting serve as grass, dappled light and roof decoration.

As with the *Figure* of 1917, there is a slight ambiguity in the representation of the *Bouteille et verre*. In this first work of the sculptural group, the bottle is not labelled as Beaune, but left generalised. The circle at the top of the bottle could be an eye. The glass could be a hand holding what could be a book. In a similar way, Gris' *Man from the Touraine* is composed from elements which could equally have been ordered into a still life. Christopher Green has illustrated how a charcoal study by Lipchitz from 1918 is constructed of elements that are so non-specific that it could have proceeded in a number of directions.[38] The imagery has become merged with the surface. Lipchitz also recalled later how he made detailed preparations for his sculpture in 1917 using proportions based on the golden section.[39] The major difference is that while Gris' and Lipchitz' work from this time emerge from a rigid, geometric grid, Laurens almost wilfully rejects an underlying geometry. While there is evidence of a previously generated grid of upright panels in the *Bouteille et verre* of which the four outer strips are equal, the overall grid does not have a geometrical basis. The lower portion is not quite a square. The major lines do not cut at golden section points. The ordered stability of the image, while corresponding to the panels, was generated by the eye. In Gris' painting the *Houses at Beaulieu* of 1918, the size of the brick is the generating principle for the work. The generation of a work from a grid which owing to the vocabulary used can become almost any subject can, in a sense be seen as a distancing principle. It allows the painting to grow in an almost

[37] Lille catalogue, 1992, op. cit., 255.
[38] Green, 1987, op. cit., 32-33.
[39] Jacques Lipchitz, *My Life in Sculpture*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), 41-42.

self-perpetuating way and ensures a separation from the real world. Gris was not alone in using this method at this time. Metzinger and Lipchitz also developed this method which was considered essential for purity.[40] Laurens frequently asserted how the work of art came from the exteriorisation of the image from the artist and it was this that led to purity. Unlike Gris and Lipchitz, his was an instinctive, non-intellectual concept of Cubism.

The small stone *Verre et bouteille* of 1919 is a sculpture designed completely in the round. (Plate 1.69) All the viewing angles are of equal importance. Each flat surface is treated like a relief, with the glass inserted into the body of the bottle. Areas are cut away in both a descriptive and purely plastic way. Edging the fields of colour is a thin, black, ruled line, which both describes the edges of areas cut away and the outline of the bottle, as in a drawing. Laurens in this work did use guiding lines. However, even in this work, which emanated from a simple rectangular block, there is a rejection of rigid geometry. While there are relationships of angles, and some form of horizontal grid could have initiated the form, the result is more flexible. The measurements are not exact and the angles do not quite add up.

The similarities and differences of style between all three are telling at this point. All three artists felt that they were going beyond the fugitive to attain the eternal. All three were attempting to bring the different planes into a visual balance. All three were using a very similar and simple vocabulary to create visual equivalents. There is a tension between the ordered surface and subject. In the *Bas Relief 1* of Lipchitz (Plate 1.70) the composition is realised in a series of layers. The transparency of the glass is depicted as a negative shape. The planes that are nearest to the viewer are painted darkest while those furthest away are the lightest, negating the idea of distance and space. Neither Gris nor Laurens were as systematic as that. Both used colour to answer compositional needs irrespective of light and shade. In the polychrome *Bouteille de Beaune et verre* of 1918, Laurens coloured the body of the

[40] Green, 1992, op. cit., 52-53.

bottle with his favourite dark blue. It also colours the indented line around the neck of the bottle, which is kept natural. He used the same colour for both raised and undercut areas. The other blue which is used in the composition fills in the holes which denote the pattern of the tablecloth, while the tablecloth itself is not differentiated from the glass or the background other than by texture and line. (Lipchitz used the same idea of spaced dots as a motif in another bas relief of 1918.) The white area covers the top of the glass and the related area, which is both raised and indented. In other words, colour has been kept as a separate element, away from meaning, depth or light and shade.

Collectors

In all the works that Laurens created during the war, there is a certain discretion. His exhibition in December of 1918 was the launch of the group movement of Cubism backed by Rosenberg. It consisted of papiers collés, constructions and reliefs and was not a success. In the still lifes we have seen how the range of objects was narrow, and the means non-hierarchical. There was an avoidance of the virtuoso in his handling of materials. The Renoir *Portrait of Vollard* of 1908 shows the collector and dealer holding a small Maillol sculpture of a female nude in his hands. The stone material, the subject of the nude, and the classical and 'fine' rendering of the subject make this into a collectors piece, to be held and admired. On the table are other pieces from Vollard's collection, a small figurine and a fine china bowl. It is the image of a man who surrounded himself with tasteful works for his senses of sight and touch to be stimulated. Together they would be part of an aesthetic interior in much the same way as the Goncourt brothers created a sanctuary from the outside realities in their home at Auteuil.[41]

Laurens was the first sculptor to investigate the subject of still life seriously in three dimensions. Picasso had made many small works, but in the main they were explorations of space to be translated into his two dimensional work, or were light

hearted and connected to his papiers collés. Still life motifs had, of course, been widely used as reliefs in architecture as a decorative element, perhaps depicting the Arts. Laurens was using the subject in a manner which deprived it of its usual allusions. They could not be promoted as part of an ideal aesthetic life, separate from and superior to the mundane realities of existence. Although the scale of these still life constructions was domestic, few of the established collectors would have felt that they complemented their interior schemes. The machine aesthetic was to play a significant role in the 1920s. However, the main collectors who wanted a modern interior commissioned artists like Eileen Gray who used exotic and sensual materials like lacquer.

Jacques Doucet was one such collector. He had had a wonderful collection of French eighteenth century arts and artefacts which he sold in 1912. The house, which he had furnished in the Rue Spontini, revealed a similar concept to the interiors of the Goncourt brothers of the nineteenth century. The interior was seen as feminine and private, separate from the outside world, where the senses could be soothed by the aesthetic beauties of the arts.[42] Having sold all his art, Doucet asked Paul Iribe to design a new apartment in the Avenue du Bois.[43] This apartment was to be a show-case for modern art and design. He was to buy works by Laurens in the 1920s to go into this apartment, but these appear to have been images of women either in stone or bronze. Among the designers from whom he commissioned works was Eileen Gray who made the *Lotus Table* in dark green and white lacquer with amber balls hanging from tassels and *Le destin*, a four panelled lacquer screen with symbolist inspired figures.[44] Like Doucet, Eileen Gray loved exotic materials, and the furnishings of his apartment included lamps of crystal, an enormous, crystal fish and mosaic floors over

[41] Debora Silvermann, *Art Nouveau in Fin de Siècle France*, (London, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 20.
[42] Ibid., 17-27.
[43] Peter Adam, *Eileen Gray. Architect/ Designer*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 82.
[44] Ibid., 126.

which masses of cushions were scattered.[45] Even the frames to his pictures were made by the best designers in tropical woods and lacquer.[46]

Gray did not like Doucet's apartment saying that it was still cluttered, and really only a slightly modern version of his eighteenth century interiors.[47] A photograph of a later flat belonging to Doucet, into which he had transferred many of the works of art and pieces of furniture, shows a small sculpture by Modigliani on a chest.[48] It is one of his 'primitive' female heads in stone. Although parts of the sculpture are left unfinished, it would appeal to the collector as being almost tribal in style. In using the high art material of stone, a sculptural tradition was hinted at. Surface and finish were clearly still essential for the collector who wished to create an interior which reflected refined taste. It was also necessary that the subject corresponded with established notions of fine art.

The still lifes by Laurens were in many ways a stark contrast with this. Not only were they a traditionally low genre of subject, but they were also made in a way which many would not see as art. Seventeenth century artists frequently painted beautiful, finely crafted objects as can be seen in the *Still Life with Nautilus Cup* by Willem Kalf. The objects shown in the painting would flatter the taste of the discerning owner as well as reflecting wealth in the subject matter and in the manner of production. Paintings of abundance revealed in the minute detail and sumptuousness of finish the hours of work and the technical proficiency required of the artist.[49] The lushness of the paint of Gris or Braque to a certain extent compensated the collector for what could be considered humble subject matter. The fact that they could be framed in an obviously expensive manner could also be seen to add to the visual value. Laurens' mixed-media works were constructed better than those which Braque

[45] Ibid., 84.
[46] Ibid., 85.
[47] Ibid., 86.
[48] There is also a photograph of Doucet's flat at Neuilly which shows Laurens' sculpture in stone, *Femme couchée* of 1921 on a cupboard. See Lille, 1992, op. cit., 59.
[49] For a discussion of this subject, see Bryson, op. cit., 128-135.

and Picasso made from 1912. However, the facture in Laurens' constructions was evident. The low status of wood and sheet metal is not in any way hidden or made exotic. The very fact of their materials, which ensured that each work was unique, would not have been enough compensation. Laurens was not aiming at a mass market, nor was he aiming to please the superficial eye with effects, however, to the collector at the time, they must have appeared similar in treatment to a sketch. Paradoxically, the use of every day materials and humble subjects had a distancing effect on the viewer. The rich collector structured his world within a limited range of recurrent images. In spite of the historical interest in the fragment, which the viewer or reader was to complete, the image of a *still life of mass produced objects made in* a seemingly casual way did not have the accepted resonance.[50] Above all the work was fragile. There are a number of letters from Rosenberg to Laurens asking him to repair or repaint his constructions that had become damaged in the gallery.[51] For a collector this would have made them difficult to display. They would have needed a protective glass case, which would deter from the immediacy of the relationship between collector and sculpture. Without this, the traditional everyday maintenance to counteract the effects of temperature variation and dirt would have been a problem. Unlike Vollard holding his Maillol, the evident fragility and lack of sensuality of the works would have deterred touch.

One of the means that Laurens developed after the war which would have made the still life more acceptable, was the polychrome relief which was frequently framed like a painting. These were less austere than his previous works, with a broader range of objects and a richer vocabulary of rhythms. The *Panier de fruits* of 1922 has a rhythm of small circles that depict abundant grapes set within panels of non objective fresco colour. Like many of his works it is domestic in scale being 27 x 38 cms.

[50] For instance, Diderot felt that the fragmentary aspect of a picture was a positive attribute, allowing the viewer to interpret the image. If too much of the narrative is exposed, the viewer is left cold. See Monika Greenleaf, *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion. Fragment, Elergy, Orient, Irony,* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 28. The fragment is also an integral part of modern poetry, as in the work of Reverdy, Apollinaire etc.
[51] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c189 9600.615.

Around the attractive painted relief is a raised, painted framing boarder with two toned diamond shapes. It would thus have adorned the wall in the same way as a painting. The stone *Instruments de musique* of 1920 used a similar idea in that the painted relief is mounted on a base stand. The stone is slightly raised around the composition in a proto-frame. The work could be stood against the wall. Some works were translated into bronze like the relief *Guitare* of 1926. The gleaming and textured metal would have complemented many interiors.

Le compotier de raisins of 1922 (Plate 1.71) is an example of the more decorative vocabulary which Laurens employed during the 1920s. Like the *Panier de fruits*, the fruit is abundant and the rhythms subtle. The greys, ocres and creams of this work would have complemented many interiors by *ensembliers* like Ruhlmann at this time. Like the Purists, Laurens used secondary hues almost exclusively, which, in the case of Ozenfant and Jeanneret, was meant to keep colour as the secondary sensation and not distort form. In the case of Laurens colour sometimes corresponds with and sometimes cuts across the form of the object and the relief forms as an independent entity. The balance of the tones in this work does mean that none of the colours protrude, although the darker grey does not indicate depth as it is used both for the raised area around the grapes on the table and in the concave area behind the compotier of grapes. While being still Cubist in vocabulary, the effect is more relaxed and open to pictorial effects.

These ideas which Laurens developed can be associated with those of Braque. The two artists were in constant contact and they clearly influenced each other. After his recovery from being wounded in the war, Braque returned to painting slowly and seems to have consulted the work of Gris and Laurens. Their presence can be felt in such works as *Glass, Pipe and Newspaper* of 1917 in the subject, tightness of the facture and overlapping planes.[52] Like Laurens at this time, the still lifes of Braque in 1917 tend to have few objects, perhaps three, within the composition. His subject

range was narrow, only including a pipe, cards and glass from 1916, and a guitar and compotier with fruit, clarinet and newspaper from 1917. From 1918 he began his major *gueridon* series where the table overflowed with objects and the compositional fabric becomes altogether more complicated.

Musical instruments

Both artists frequently experimented with frames at this time. Laurens' papier collé *Guitare* of 1917 (Plate 1.72) was one of a number of still lifes depicting guitars and musical instruments which used either an oval format or frame within the picture. Braque also used this in his oil painting, *Guitare et compotier* of 1917. The difference is that Braque fills the canvas with the objects and painterly effects, where as Laurens was using a frugal vocabulary and the objects have space all around them. They are not grounded, but float against the white back-drop. This can also be seen in Laurens' G*uitare* of 1918. Again he employs a frame within the picture, this time a diamond shape. In this papier collé, the frame acts as an organising device, the background planes being directly related to the removed points. The guitar and music seem to rock around the central axis. In the oil painting, *Guitare et verre* of 1917 by Braque, the diamond frame also provides a starting point for the composition. As with the Laurens the generating lines are sometimes visible under the objects. The guitar in the Braque painting owes much of its shape to the diamond shape, the top of the belly being parallel to the top line. Again, the painterly effects abound. The neck of the guitar bursts from the confines of the frame. In both these examples, the frame can be seen as reinforcing the distance of the object from the outer world by providing a structure from which the objects were generated.[53] The frame, which Gris had frequently used in his still lifes before 1916, appears to have had another purpose. The *Book, Pipe and Glasses* of 1915 show an abundance of objects on a table. The edge of the table, which is a natural visual demarcation, serves as a

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[52] See John Golding, 'Braque and the Space of Still Life,' in catalogue, *Braque. Still Lifes and Interiors*, (London: South Bank Centre, 1990), 14.

[53] For a discussion of the centrifugal or centripetal aspect of the grid See Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths*, (Cambridge Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1986), 18-19.

frame.[54] The objects overflow beyond this barrier, much as they would in life. The frame, unlike later works of Braque and Laurens, does not appear to have any generating purpose for the composition. Gris' *Playing cards and Siphon* of the following year has an artificial oval frame within the natural frame. The layout of the composition also appears to have been organised to conform within the framework of the basic geometry.

In painterly effects, Braque appears to have been much more experimental than Laurens. In Braque's *Guitare and Glass* of 1917 the composition is unusually crisp for this time and could be seen to relate to the work of Gris and Laurens. However, he used bright yellow over browns and greys. He also overlaid one colour on another allowing both to be visible, feathered edges and used dots of colour. These techniques had a softening and sensual effect. Laurens' papier collé, *Bouteille et clarinette* (Plate 1.73) of the same year also, unusually, used bright yellow against brown. The use of shaded crayon allows the underlying colour to permeate and the edges of those areas contrast with the crispness of the cut paper. Some of Laurens' papiers colles become almost proto-reliefs. The *Mandore et clarinet* of 1918 has such a thick white gouache which is feathered in parts and crisp in others that it appears raised, especially in contrast to the flatness of the cut paper and the sketchy quality of the table decoration. *Guitare sur la table* of 1918 incorporates corrugated cardboard around the sound hole to suggest strings. Again this sets up real shadows in a work which denies space and light.

Laurens produced a trio of papiers collés on the subject of music in 1916. These show a guitar and music on a table, possibly in front of the sea. The guitar was a favourite motif of all the Cubists prior to the war. Lipchitz wrote how musical instruments were part of the basic Cubist vocabulary which was used in reaction to the elevated subjects of the academics. He felt that they had neutral overtones.[55]

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[54] For a discussion of frames in the work of Gris between 1912 and 1915 see Green, 1992, op. cit., 61-62.
[55] Lipchitz, op. cit., 54-7.

André Lhote wrote in 1918 when he said that each movement had its subject, *'Les impressionistes choisirent les 'bords de la Seine.' Les cubistes élurent la guitare...'*[56] Braque had frequently depicted guitars and musical instruments prior to 1914, including many with programs, or as part of a wider scheme involving drink and the possibility of conviviality. Sophie Bowness has stated that it can be a mistake to look at Braque's instruments too literally as there can be both an incompatibility and ambiguity in the subject.[57] However, his still lifes do make an ensemble of meaning. The inclusion of pasted parts of newspapers and programs linked Braques pictures with the contemporary and everyday. Like Laurens, Braque had a real love of music and was close to many composers of the time.[58] Maurice Sachs, in his book of 1932 on the period, wrote about the importance of the cross fertilisation between musicians, artists and poets.[59] At the centre he placed Satie, who was a great friend of Laurens. Laurens and Zadkine frequently attended concerts of Les Six.[60] However, there is also a tradition of musical instruments being depicted as part of creativity and the culture of the arts, which nullifies the concept of the guitar and music as being purely neutral.

Braque was to write later how he painted many musical instruments at this time, partly because he was surrounded by them, partly because of their plasticity, but also because as objects they come to life when you touch them.[61] The fact of their latent possibilities for creativity, that they require a musician to reveal the music was clearly an important factor for an artist, as it were, revealing art. This was clearly a factor for Laurens in the three papiers collés of a guitare and music on a table. The *Guitare et papier à musique* of 1916 (Plate 1.74) shows the guitar on an upturned

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[56] André Lhote, in 'Le carnet des ateliers: Au pays du cube,' *Le Carnet de la semaine*, (6 octobre 1918), 7.
[57] Sophie Bowness, 'Braque and Music,' in catalogue, *Braque. Still Life and Interiors*, (London: South Bank Centre, 1990), 58-60.
[58] Sophie Bowness, op. cit., 58. He was close friends with Satie and Auric.
[59] Maurice Sachs, *La décade de l'illusion*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1950, orig. 1932), 97 ff. Quoted in Catherine Pütz, *Cubist Sculpture and the Circularity of Time*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1999, 117-118.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Dora Vallier, 'Braque, la peinture et nous,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1954), 16.

table, the neck jutting into the space behind. The word *musique* flows across the side of the guitar, the table and again into the space behind. What is ambiguous is the status of the background. One reading is of hills and staves being the waves of the sea.[62] This would then make this an open window picture, which was a motif used by Gris in 1915 and was to be explored further in his Bandol series of 1921. It was also a motif explored by Delaunay in his *Ville* series between 1909 and 1911 for which Apollinaire wrote the poem 'Fenêtres.' The last two lines of this are: *La fenêtre s'ouvre comme une orange/Le beau fruit de la lumière.* For Apollinaire, light was a metaphor for the artist's power of creating meaning from the chaos of experience.[63] One could interpret these two lines as alluding to the window of the soul.[64] Laurens, being widely read and part of the avant-garde was well aware of these overtones. However, it was the only time he was to allude to this metaphor in his work.

This chapter has analysed the still lifes of Laurens. During the war they can be seen to have paralleled the hardships in subject and means. The subject and means employed were echoed in the work of Braque, Gris and Lipchitz. Still lifes, while having a rich history in iconographical terms have never had the status of being a high genre, a fact that had an impact on collectors. Cubist artists, while being aware of this history, used it widely as a means of exploring form. After the initial exposure of his work in 1918, where the unsuitability of the vocabulary and motif was exposed, Laurens began to create works which were more suitable for the modern domestic interiors of the day.

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[62] The reading is not helped by the fact that this papier collé is lost and the only record is a black and white photograph.

[63] Virginia Spate, *Orphism. The Evolution of Non-Figurative Painting in Paris, 1910-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 89.

[64] Ibid., 188. The writings of Leonardo were well known in Cubist circles. One of his ideas was that the eye was the window to the soul which communicated the beauties of the world, above all light, to the mind. Mallarmé's poem, 'Les fenêtres' was also well known, where the eyes were associated with the waters of rebirth, baptism and with a pane of glass.

SECTION 2

Laurens and the expansion of the Art Market in the 1920s

Introduction

This section will concentrate on the work by Laurens between 1924 and 1929. After 1922, he ceased to have exclusive contracts with any dealer. Rosenberg and Kahnweiler continued to support Laurens through exhibitions and commissions. There appear to be no works from 1923. The art market expanded greatly during the decade, with many collectors commissioning and buying new work. Laurens became a well respected artist who was considered an integral part of the avant-garde. With the general increase in wealth he received both public and private commissions. Prices gained for art were soaring in general, but it was much easier to sell sculpture in the Indépendant style or paintings. Avant-garde sculpture was not generally popular. Exhibitions abounded, but the sculpture shown was mainly middle of the road. Many more magazines were writing about art, although again, avant-garde sculpture was generally not popular. However, Laurens was featured in many articles and did participate in exhibitions. In spite of general public indifference, Laurens became relatively well known and successful. Laurens' style changed after 1922 from one which had urban overtones to a universal primitivism. He was not alone in this. To a certain extent, the old Cubists were tailoring their artistic production to suit new wealthy clients.

These chapters will consider his new style and growth of recognition.

Working Method, Materials and Style. 1924-1930

Working methods

The work which Laurens produced from 1924, represented a change of artistic direction. The images of figures prior to that date were depictions of modernity, with fashionable clothes and physiognomy. Some of the sculptures had included layers of possible interpretation, which involved tradition overlaid with modernity. While a few of the works in 1924 continue to have elements of modernity, these images are more ambiguous than those from the previous years, with the balance now towards tradition. The majority of his sculptures at this time display a non-geographically specific, universal primitivism, with a few being in a generalised classicism. It was important for Laurens to synthesise artistic heritage into a contemporary image. Laurens' depictions were now, apart from a few still lifes, exclusively of women. For materials, Laurens was using mainly uncoloured *terre cuite*, bronze and stone for sculpture and gouache and pencil in his drawings. His work from this era is unified in image, retaining the concept of the block regardless of the material.

Laurens liked to work in *terre cuite*. It was an inexpensive medium which was easy and quick to use. As with so many sculptors, many of the works were not translated into other mediums during his life. It was only with the bequest to the Musées Nationaux in 1967 that many were cast for the first time. The expense of casting bronze meant that it was often necessary to have a commission before it was possible to translate the work into that material. Furthermore, *terre cuite* has many different textures and colours. These he exploits in his sculptures. It is also a flexible medium which Laurens used both for quickly sketching his ideas into three dimensional form and for creating finished works which were sometimes coloured. In the areas where the paint has worn away on the bas-relief *Instruments de musique* of 1919, the

material can be seen to have a rough, open texture.[1] *Femme à l'oiseau* of 1921-1922 was made in a smooth, fawn medium, ideal for picking out the details of the dress and defining the sharp edges. *Femme couchée à l'éventail* of 1922 is pinker with a slightly gritty body. All three works had a high degree of finish and, in keeping with Laurens' style prior to 1924, had well-defined volumes with planes which appear cut rather than modelled. Sculptures after that date rely less on the crispness of detail possible with the medium. *Torse* of 1925 (Plate 2.1), for instance, has very sparse detail. The carefully modulated volumes show a minimum of crisp definition between the different parts. *Tête de femme* of 1925, however, used a material that was fawn in colour with a texture not unlike limestone. The facial features and hair were crisply defined and contain no hint of manual facture. *Femme couchée à la draperie* of 1926 (Plate 2.2) contrasts with this in that the soft surface appears smoothed rather than cut and defined, with the lines of the raised arm flowing into the rippling cloth. The detail has again been kept to the minimum and it is more sketch-like and immediate, which corresponds with the lightness of mood shown in the pose of the figure.

Laurens was aware of the tradition of the medium and also found it flexible for exploring ideas. These were not defined by subject but by a sculptural idea. Turning the sculpture in front of him he would regard the volumes and spaces and change the nuances of the angles. For him the sculpture was formed by '*mille lignes parallèles qui devaient chacune passer devant son oeil et être mise en forme par sa main.*'[2] He made many *terres cuites* using similar shapes and poses. Sometimes a drawing would precede the model. Sometimes he would start directly with a sketch in three dimensions and then consider the ideas in a gouache or drawing. His drawings were

[1] I am grateful to the Galerie Louise Leiris who allowed me to see the wonderful exhibition, 'Henri Laurens, *60 terres cuites*' in May 1998 before it opened to the public.
[2] Claude Laurens, 'L'homme,' in catalogue, *Henri Laurens 1885-1954*, (Dordogne: Chateau de Biron, 1990), 26.

made in the same studio as his sculptural work so that the images would surround him and one medium would feed the other.[3]

Femme agenouillée of 1926 (Plate 2.3) was one of a group of images in two and three dimensions, which explored the image of a crouching or kneeling woman. They all have simplicity of form, lack of contemporary details and timeless, balanced poses. Laurens was no longer creating images of the urban environment. These show affinities with a universal primitivism which look back to a simplicity of vision of late nineteenth century artists such as Gauguin and the willed innocence of Baudelaire. The gouaches are flat red-brown shapes with simple white lines outlining the volumes in a manner reminiscent of images found on antique Greek vases (Plate 2.4). The *terres cuites* also show simple rounded volumes with little detail apart from some crisp defining lines. They do not have obvious modelling marks, but have been finished to resemble the smooth surface of stone. Both show the double view-point of Egyptian art, the upper torso facing the front, the hips to the side. Plate 2.3 also shows the legs of the figure squatting in a position similar to that of the *Aphrodite accroupie* from the third century BC in the Louvre.[4] The body shape of both the *terre cuite* and the gouache, however, is less naturalistic and more Polynesian in aspect, reminiscent of the simplicity of figures in a Gauguin painting. Like these figures the modelling is minimal and the poses are not specific to any particular tradition. Unlike Gauguin's sculptures however, where he was exploring the idea of primitivism through material and facture as well as subject and pose, Laurens did not make the handling evident or the surface of the sculptures crude. One can see in both of the sculptures how Laurens explored different aspects of stasis and movement. Plate 2.3 is composed, upright and in balance. Plate 2.5, by shifting the angles slightly and changing the leg position has produced a sense of forward movement. The gouaches that Laurens produced at the same time relate to each other and to the sculptures. The

[3] I am enormously indebted to M. Claude and Mme. Denise Laurens who patiently and courteously answered my many questions about Laurens' working methods and his use of materials. Interview, 25 May 1998.

[4] *Aphrodite accroupie*, Roman, third century B.C. Acquired by the Louvre in 1848.

dialogue between the works in two and three dimensions is clear. As Isabelle Monod-Fontaine has explained, Laurens' drawings are inseparable from his sculptural output.[5] In this he was similar to Matisse. Between 1923 and 1925, he worked on the *Large Seated Nude*. Related to this sculpture are paintings, sketch sculptures and drawings in a variety of media.

Just as looking at the images Laurens created in gouache and *terre cuite* can highlight particular interests at one time, so one can also trace the development of ideas over a number of years. Photographs of Laurens' studio taken at different times do not show images of other people's work in either photographic or actual form. Unlike Picasso or Matisse, he did not surround himself with plants or other props to give inspiration. Unlike Matisse, he did not use models who, to an extent, determined poses by their natural movements and unselfconscious attitudes in repose.[6] What one does see in the studio, however, are his sculptures, mostly in *terre cuite* and plaster, of all different sizes with the small ones arranged on shelves. Being surrounded by his work prompted him to reconsider ideas to explore them anew. He developed the form of the *Femme accoudée à la draperie* of 1927 (Plate 2.6) further in the *Femme couchée* of 1930 (Plate 2.7). Both show the rounded fertile form of a reclining woman leaning on her elbow with one leg bent into the base and the other raised on drapery. In the sculpture of 1930, the belly is elongated and rounded with the turn into the torso coming impossibly high, under the small emblematic breasts. The head has been reduced to a small abstraction, without defining features. The image, although similar to the *Femme accoudée à la draperie,* is less a study in the rhythm of curves and more an open composition of long lines.

Laurens felt that it was important to translate his work into bronze. Mme. Laurens explained how he 'thought in bronze' and would have pieces cast whenever it was

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[5] Isabelle Monod-Fontaine, 'La plaque sensible. Du dessin à la sculpture,' in catalogue, *Henri Laurens, rétrospective*, (Lille: Musée d'art moderne Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1992), 12.
[6] Isabelle Monod-Fontaine, *The Sculpture of Henri Matisse,* (London: Thames and Hudson and The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1984), 37.

possible.[7] This was in part because of the status of the material. He used a variety of founders, depending on the size of work and the method he wanted. Sand casting produced a slightly dryer feel to the surface than the lost wax method, which he sometimes preferred for a sculpture. Valsuani had their foundry just along the road from Laurens' home in the Villa Brune to which he moved in 1927. They did smaller pieces using the lost wax method. Unlike Rodin, Laurens liked to keep in close contact with his work at this stage of the sculptural process, so their proximity was an asset. He also used Susse who could do large-scale work, Godard, Robecchi and Rudier. The latter two used sand casting at least some of the time.

Laurens liked a well-cooked look to his patinas, which he associated with the ancient Greeks, and he was concerned to have this done to his specifications. He would carry around with him a large coin and say that he wanted the patina to be just like that. What he hoped for was a dark mixture which would still give a feeling of transparency. He did not like the finish to be too thick or heavy. Frequently Laurens was out of Paris. He spent much time working at L'Etang-la-Ville, but even when he was in Paris, once the plasters had left the studio it was not always possible to keep the closeness of contact required to ensure a good result.

Sometimes Laurens was required to act as business intermediary. In a series of letters between Rosenberg and Laurens, several sculptures which were to be cast by Rudier were discussed. In the first letter, dated 11 February 1925, Rosenberg wrote that Rudier had visited the gallery, but the quoted price for casting some sculptures was too high. Rosenberg wondered whether Laurens could visit the founder and gain a concession.[8] This was obviously obtained, as in an un-dated letter from Rosenberg, he asked Laurens to go again to Rudier to ask about how the bronzes were progressing. Apparently, every time that Rosenberg had phoned, Rudier was out and

[7] Interview with M. and Mme. Laurens, 25th May 1998. All the particulars of his working method for bronze are again gleaned from this interview unless otherwise stated.
[8] Documentation du Musée national d'art moderne-Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Rosenberg Archive. c172 9600.597. All letters between Laurens and Rosenberg are from this archive unless otherwise stated.

his responses were evasive.[9] There was still no news in March or the beginning of April.[10] The next letter is un-dated, but Laurens was requested to go to see the sculptures which had finally been delivered to Rosenberg's gallery, as he was unhappy with the patina.[11] Patination was clearly a problem, especially when Laurens was out of Paris and was unable to direct operations. A letter from September of 1925 which was sent from Rosenberg to Laurens while he was staying at L'Etang-la-Ville requested that Laurens return to Paris as the patina on the most recent of the sculptures delivered by Rudier was 'ignoble'.[12]

Laurens was always interested in the surface of his sculptures. The surfaces of Rodin's sculptures showed interior elements pushed outwards, so that muscles, veins and bones helped to create the expression of a mood. Laurens' surfaces, by contrast, were the exterior shapes of volumes and voids. The corollary to this is that surface texture could answer the demands of a sculpture and the way in which Laurens wanted light to strike the form. This can be illustrated in the three bronzes related to the marble sculpture which Laurens made for his patrons, the de Noailles, in 1928. The *Large Draped Woman* of 1928 (Plate 2.8) has a shiny, relatively smooth and uniform surface. This corresponds with the form, which has the most explicit anatomical description of the three sculptures, especially within the hands and feet. The *Draped woman* of 1928 (Plate 2.9) is very similar apart from having less detail, but the surface is more matt and has a variety of textures. The cloth has a hint of weave in the criss cross markings. The skin throws off a dappled light with the variations in modelled texture. The other *Draped Woman* of 1928, (Plate 2.10) is altogether more abstract in form which is reflected in the much rougher and varied texture. The figure has withdrawn from the Renoir-like monumentality that balanced the contemporary with the timeless, towards something more remote. The bold, block forms are matched by the battered surface, which hints at extreme weathering. This

[9] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c173 9600.598.
[10] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c175 9600.600, dated mars 28 1925 and c176 9600.601 dated avril 2 1925.
[11] Letter, Rosenberg to Laurens, c177 9600.602.
[12] Letter, Rosemberg to Laurens, c179 9600.604, dated septembre 22 1925.

aspect of surface as expressive device for the form, was one that he was to continue to develop through the 1930s.

As well as working in a modelling technique, Laurens also enjoyed carving. Stone was one of the materials of his apprenticeship. It was however expensive, heavy, time consuming and arduous to work. He worked in a number of different stones, frequently choosing the local stone as it was best suited to the climate.[13] He would only use marble for outside sculptures in the south of France, as it would not withstand the heavy frosts of the north. One can speculate as to whether there was also an aspect of the idea of the sculpture growing from the land and being inextricably part of it. The two graves which he made in 1924 and 1927 for instance, were carved in the local stone. Although many of the surrounding graves were in polished granite, the local stones were softer in appearance, complemented other tombs and have withstood the climate. Sculptures which Laurens made for interior display, were sometimes in marble, but many were also limestone. The slightly open grain of the texture was hard enough for definition, while remaining matt even when smooth. Pouillney was one of the stones which he favoured. There were many stone merchants at that time in Paris where one could choose a block. Frequently he used Fèvre.

Style

The style of his works at this time was no different whether he was using stone or bronze. Unlike during the 1930s when the tensile strength of bronze was explored in a more lyrical form, at this time sculptures in both mediums were linked to the block. Sometimes a bronze would be translated directly into stone as with the *Femme assise* of 1928-9. The matt smoothness of the stone is matched by the shallow surface dimpling of the bronze which breaks up the light, but otherwise the two works are the same. It demonstrates that, unlike many artists, Laurens did not consider stone essential to the expression of the primitive. Where as Modigliani used a coarse stone

and frequently left areas un-finished to emphasise the process of making and the primitive aspects of his heads of women, Laurens used the materials interchangeably and always created works of finish and precision.

African tribal sculpture uses the complete variety of materials available and frequently has a high finish to the surface. Sculptures which were collected by Parisian artists were mainly in wood and of inferior quality. The wholesale and uncritical acceptance of non-European and tribal art which was reflected in the fine and decorative arts at this time, said more about European taste rather than anything intrinsic in the African or Polynesian art which was being collected.[14] This search for a contemporary means of expression in the art of others has been a theme since the Enlightenment. Colonialism made the culture of other nations available to European audiences and the idea of the 'savage' even if he was made 'noble'[15] was a concept always seen from the perspective of westerners.

It is relevant to the understanding of this, to consider how these cultures were shown to the public. Initially ethnographic finds brought back to Berlin, London and Paris were shown with the pre-historic finds.[16] The Trocadéro, set up in 1878, was reported to have no regional classification or order in the display until after the First World War. What was shown were not objects of beauty, but spears and curiosities.[17] It was not until 1928 when the museum was reorganised, that the objects were spaced out and put into some sort of critical order.[18] Although it was considered that all ethnographic objects should be treated equally, the exhibitions shown at the Trocadéro in the 1930s were essentially about art from particular countries.[19] The

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[13] Interview with M. and Mme. Laurens, 25 May 1998. The details about his work in stone come from this interview unless otherwise stated.
[14] Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1966, originally 1938), 38.
[15] As Jean-Jacque Rousseau termed him.
[16] Goldwater, op. cit., 5.
[17] Ibid., 7 and pictures facing 7 and 11.
[18] Ibid., 9-11.
[19] Ibid., 11. The exhibitions were on art from Benin, 1932; Dakar- Djibouti, Marquesas, 1934; Eskimo, 1935.

displaying of objects with little classification or discernment, promoted the idea that there was a European culture and then an indiscriminate, timeless Other. However, many artists of the day, including Ozenfant, appear to have thought of all art as essentially being eternal and almost interchangeable. He gave lectures on modern art where he projected different masterpieces on the screen without any attempt at order, date, school or artist's name. In one lecture, he cited Seurat, the Egyptians, the Cubists, the Greeks, Cézanne, Negro art, Michaelangelo and the incised carvings of prehistoric caves. Apparently the majority of the audience thought it was all modern art. 'Masterpieces are always modern.'[20]

Picasso's collection of African sculptures was diverse in authenticity and quality. He felt that it was not necessary to have only fine works to gain the idea.[21] One of the aspects that he particularly admired about tribal art was simplicity. It was also something that he looked for in contemporary art, not in the sense of the absence of effects, but as a distillation of complexities.[22] This was also one of the aspects which was evident in the work of Laurens at this time and was part of his primitive aesthetic. In none of the photographs of Laurens' studio or house are there any tribal sculptures. His son told me that although he was not influenced directly by African sculpture, it was always 'in the air'.[23] Not only did his friends have collections, but museums and galleries were showing these sculptures. Tribal art was evident in markets around Paris and was being discussed at his friends' houses and studios.[24] Matisse already had twenty pieces of African sculpture by 1909.[25] He continued to collect after this date. It is also clear that Matisse used photographs of models from

[20] Amidée Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art,* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), 212. The first edition was in 1928.
[21] William Rubin, 'Modernist Primitivism. An Introduction,' in catalogue, *'Primitivism' in Modern Art*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984, vol 1), 14.
[22] Ibid., note 28, 75.
[23] Interview with M. and Mme. Laurens, September 11, 1998.
[24] 1919 saw the first commercial exhibition of primitive art in Paris although dealers had been active long before this. In 1923 there was an exhibition of *L'art indigène des colonies françaises* at the Pavillon de Marsan. In 1928 the Trocadero reorganised its displays into a more rational system. See Goldwater, op. cit., 9.
[25] Alan G. Wilkinson, *Gauguin to Moore. Primitivism in Modern Sculpture*, catalogue, (Ontario: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1981), 126.

different parts of the world for inspiration. One from a magazine he used as a basis for the *Two Negresses* of 1908.[26] Lipchitz began collecting primitive and archaic art around 1909.[27] Although by the 1920s Laurens and Lipchitz were not close, Laurens would have seen these in the teens and would have been aware of Lipchitz' work at this time. None of the avant-garde artists thought of themselves as connoisseurs of tribal art. They were not attempting to form important ethnic collections.[28] Often the objects were bought just because the artists saw the pieces and liked certain shapes. Even in the furnishings of the modern houses, the exotic was sought in the form of animal skins on the floor and furniture which revealed African influences. Jazz was popular in Paris. Laurens also liked it.[29] Josephine Baker was all the rage in Paris from the middle of the 1920s, as were many black musicians. *La Revue Nègre*, which had started as a black American gospel and blues revue was reworked for Parisian tastes to show the exuberance of African inspired dancing, exotic backdrops and dazzling jazz music.[30] The original idea of having the show has been credited to Laurens' friend, Léger, who created an African inspired ballet, *La création du monde* in 1923, which in turn was an adaptation from Cendrars *Anthologie Nègre*.[31] It could be argued that Laurens' change of style to one that was less European, rather than being a withdrawal from contemporary ideas was actually showing an awareness of the preoccupations of his era. However, none of the influences revealed in his sculpture are simple and direct. The general idea of primitivism and a universal tradition rather than a representation based on one particular style was important for Laurens.

It is apparent that although non-European art and the primitive were part of the era, artists reflected this in diverse ways in the 1920s. Laurens' work was frequently

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[26] See Isabelle Monod-Fontaine, 1984, op. cit., 14-15. The source was entitled *Deux jeunes filles Targui.*
[27] Rubin, op. cit., 209.
[28] Ibid., 14.
[29] Discussion with M. Claude Laurens, September 11, 1998.
[30] Jon Kear, 'Vénus noire: Josephine Baker and the Parisian Music-hall,' in Michael Sheringham, ed. *Parisian Fields*, (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd., 1996), 48-49.
[31] Ibid., 48.

distanced and hermetic and was essentially about the play of volumes. It was now important for him to escape from obvious references to the Parisian scene. This was also evident in the work of other avant-garde artists. Matisse painted many works in the 1920s which represent an essentially contemporary, western women, which he distanced by the languid pose in transparent oriental costume.[32] Braque was also producing paintings of women, which were visually seductive, but were neither naturalistic nor Parisian. He continued to paint monumental, classical nudes alongside his Cubist still lifes. Whilst Picasso was using a variety of styles and influences, he frequently seemed to be referring to a golden age of simplicity and sun.[33] Simultaneously, he was also developing works closer to the contemporary automatism of Surrealism.[34] Léger painted a number of highly finished Neo-Classical figure paintings between 1925 and 1928. These were a development of the machine precision nudes of the early 1920s. He also developed still life painting based on the Purist notion of the 'type-object'.[35] Although it would appear that Léger's and Laurens' styles were very different, Léger clearly admired his work and saw an affinity. In a letter from Rosenberg to Léger in 1925, the dealer agreed to exchange a number of Laurens' painted sculptures, each one for eight of Léger's drawings.[36] Laurens was not attempting to be sensuous like Matisse or Braque. Neither did he use the distancing method of a mechanised and standardised image. Although some of his works of the twenties are decorative, they are not attempting to be an alluring Other or nostalgically promising a golden age. Laurens' primitivism was a more instinctive search for essences, which was revealed through simplicity of form and a distillation of ideas.

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[32] For instance, Matisse, *Odalisque with raised arms*, 1923, oil on canvas, 25 1/2 x 19 3/4 inches. Chicago Art Institute.
[33] For instance Picasso, *The Pipes of Pan*, 1923, oil on canvas, 80 3/4 x 68 3/4 inches, Musée Picasso, Paris.
[34] Christopher Green, *Cubism and its Enemies. Modern Movements and Reaction in French Art, 1916-1928*, (New Haven and London, 1987), 109.
[35] Ibid., 111
[36] Christian Derouet, éd. *Fernand Léger. Une correspondance d'affaires*, 1917-1937, (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1996), 189, letter 284, Rosenberg to Léger, dated 3 octobre, 1925.

A search for universal truths in art was considered in a number of books of the era. This is also an aspect of primitivism. A doctrinaire idea of art based on the science of numbers was espoused by Paul Sérusier in his *ABC de la peinture* and in Gino Severini's book *Du cubisme au classicisme,* both of which were originally published in 1921.[37] Correspondences between music and art are also mentioned, but less for spiritual connotations but because of the proportions of overtones and the string divisions when used to play a scale. They were not alone in their approach to painting, although many artists did not agree with their fundamentally intellectual approach. The complexity of the artistic scene became evident with Guillaume Janneau's book *L'art cubiste* of 1929, which rationalised Cubism into different chapters entitled 'La doctrine', 'École de la peinture pure', (which included Severini among other artists) and 'Le cubisme expressioniste' which included Laurens.[38] By dividing Cubism into different chapters he helped to show diversity, but perhaps overlooked similarities. Indeed, Goldwater linked the simplicity, fundamentally and universality espoused by Purists, Neo-Plasticists and Suprematists, and here he could have included Severini or Serusier, as having primitive connotations.[39] Like artists seeking a universality of art through a naive and primitive style, they also wanted to attain a fundamental language. Theirs, however, was expressed through the rules of proportion, which would be understood by the intellectual faculties of the viewer as being in harmony with the rhythm of the universe.[40] Laurens also sought a harmony of balance and form. His was an instinctive search where he looked into himself for that harmony. Like the more expressive artists of the day, doctrinaire artists also looked back to an artistic heritage. Sérusier wrote,

> *l'artiste subit en même temps le style de son temps et de sa nationalité ...de sa race. Ce style et fait d'un assemblage de formes transmises par l'hérédité, l'ambiance, l'éducation...elle est de tel siècle de tel pays.*[41]

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[37] Paul Serusier, *ABC de la peinture*, France: Librairie Floury, 1942. and Gino Severini, *Du cubisme au classicisme, (esthétique du compas et du nombre),* Paris: J. Povolozky and Cie Éd., 1921.
[38] Guillaume Janneau, *L'art cubiste. Théories et réalisations*, Paris: Éditions d'art Charles Moreau, 1929.
[39] Goldwater, op. cit., 164-5.
[40] Severini, op. cit., 101.
[41] Serusier, op. cit., 11.

Severini was less nationalistic than this, saying that the early Italians of Sienna and Florence, who he calls 'primitives,' also constructed their paintings on the basis of numbers.[42] His work had a more Latin emphasis in this respect, but he also looked back to the end of the late nineteenth century and used the discoveries of Henri and Chevreul to back up his arguments about angles and colour.[43]

Laurens was part of this overall artistic complexity. His home was a meeting place of artists, writers and musicians. These were people who held a wide range of ideas. He did not choose his friends only on the basis of their artistic affinity. He was almost never critical of people following a different set of ideals, he just thought of them as doing something different.[44] Laurens also attended Kahnweiler's legendary Sunday meetings at his house at Boulogne-Billancourt. It was open house, so that the gatherings could include Surrealists, Cubists, writers, or indeed a wide range from the Parisian intellectual circles.[45] Kahnweiler had a particular liking for Laurens, admiring the modest simplicity of his character and the respect he had for his craft.[46] Laurens would also have been aware of contemporary ideas through magazines. *L'esprit nouveau* featured the arts, science and popular culture in the early 1920s. *Cahiers d'art* which frequently featured Laurens, promoted world art from different eras side by side with contemporary art from their beginning in 1926. Rosenberg published his magazine, the *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne* which showed a broad range of Cubism from the instinctive, as with Laurens, to the doctrinaire, like van Doesberg.

The idea of the 'primitive' goes back to the Enlightenment, but became popular from the mid nineteenth century. Laurens loved poetry and music and was aware of their development and ideas. Baudelaire wrote about a willed innocence to be found in far

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[42] Severini, op. cit., 43.
[43] Severini, op. cit., chapter X. The whole of this chapter deals with this issue.
[44] Interview with M. Claude Laurens, September 11, 1998.
[45] Pierre Assouline, *An Artful Life. A Biography of D.H. Kahnweiler, 1884-1979*. Translated by Charles Ruos, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 190.
[46] Ibid., 197.

off places. Mallarmé searched for the sources of language. Both of these aspects can be thought of as searching for the 'primitive.' By returning to the roots of society and the fundamentals of language, one could gain a focus on the essence of humanity. Gauguin had left France in order to immerse himself in nature and a simple way of life. While Laurens did not feel the need to escape from the area around Paris, the life which he and his family lived was simple. When he wanted quiet, he returned to L'Etang-la-Ville, an old, traditional village which was surrounded by trees. Gauguin's paintings and sculpture which he made in Tahiti, were not particularly related to the indigenous art. Just as Gauguin drew on a variety of art types which included Egyptian and Javanese art, so Laurens also drew from various traditions. Like Gauguin, he also looked for a simplicity and innocence in his works, which was brought out in the vocabulary which could be thought of as not having the complex veneer of 'civilisation'. Like Gauguin he also used a limited number of poses repeatedly in his work. Sometimes these were from Eastern sources so that to the Western eye they have fewer connotations. Some of Gauguin's poses are European however, and have overtones of sensuality as in *Manao Tupapau* of 1894. The search for the exotic land of simple pleasures was one extolled in Baudelaire's *L'invitation au voyage* where all was 'grace and measure, richness, quietness and pleasure.' The overtones of earthly pleasures as well as the willed innocence obtainable only through escape to distant lands are present in the poem, as with some of Gauguin's paintings.[47] Laurens' 'innocent' vision tended to use poses and forms devoid of sensual overtones. In spite of using the naked female exclusively as a vehicle of expression, with all its connotations throughout the history of European art, Laurens appeared to be attempting to bypass the expectations of the middle class Parisian eye.

Mallarmé thought of myth and language as being entwined. Like Laurens, he was interested in vocabulary. He studied words for the origins of language using phonetic

[47] Charles Baudelaire, 'L'invitation au voyage,' in Charles Baudelaire, *Complete Poems*, trans.Walter Martin, (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd, 1997), 140-143. Baudelaire linked naivity with the dominance of temperament in the manner of creating art. Baudelaire, 'The Salon of 1846', in *Selected Writings on Art and the Artists*, trans. Charvet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 102.

and semantic means in order to rid language of cliché and return to its source.[48] Laurens was using a vocabulary in the later 1920s which both spoke of the contemporary and aligned itself to a long tradition. In using styles and proportions from different artistic traditions his sculpture, in effect, cleanses itself from cliché and returns to its roots. His use of simplified and purified form can be related to this concept of vocabulary. Mallarmé also felt that instinct was the source of the faculties. It is from this pre-intellectual layer that the lyrical and synthesising impulse springs.[49] Laurens wrote of his art coming from instinct as opposed to intellect. Mallarmé also wrote that one should '*peindre non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle produit*'.[50] Laurens' work was non-narrative. The combinations of elements within the sculptures do suggest an emotion, but one that is indefinable.

Laurens' sculptures rarely imitated actual styles, but they did sometimes relate to the proportions of specific sculpture. *Nu accroupi au mirroir* of 1929 (Plate 2.11) relates closely to the proportions of Dogon art with the elongated, upright, cylindrical body with high breasts and arms positioned parallel to the body. The de Noailles had a Dogon sculpture of this kind in their house at Hyères, which Laurens would have known from his visits.[51] However, the Laurens sculpture only takes a recognisable essence from the style. Intermingled with this is also a European semi-kneeling positioning of the legs and a face which is related to some of his earlier Cubist works. The *Nu debout à la draperie* of 1925 while hinting at the eternal through the theme of the bather, was composed using cones in a manner reminiscent of Léger's depictions of women from the early 1920s. The *Cariatides* of 1929 and 1930 (Plate 2.12) perhaps relate most closely with Egyptian sculpture in the sparseness of detail, shallowness of contour and adherence to the block. These sculptures, which are a development of his kneeling figures of the previous few years, were made in both stone and bronze and show the high degree of finish and precision which is evident

[48] Lawrence J. Watson, *Mallarmés Mythic Language*, (Oxford: Tallents Press Ltd., 1990), 142.
[49] Ibid., 157.
[50] Ibid., 176/7. From Mallarmé, *Correspondance*, 1, 137.
[51] See the film made by Man Ray in 1929, *Les mystères du château du dè.* Now available on video: *Les films de Man Ray,* Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 1998.

in Egyptian stone sculpture. The line itself, while being reduced to essentials, was allowed a lyrical turn where thigh and torso meet. This discrete use of detailing also brings to mind early gothic churches where the large expanses of wall are accented with the rhythm of regular columns, which in turn have the shallow detail of stiff leaf carving. It also brings to mind the layout of Mallarmé's poem, *Un coup de dés* where the spaces on the page are like silences, broken by the words, whose layout and typographical accent correspond with the meaning. Like Mallarmé's poems, Laurens' sculptures are not descriptive nor do they hint at a narrative, but through complex images, they show an essence, a hint at something more than itself. The non-emotional figures in being elusive for the viewer, again, like the poems of Mallarmé, capture humanity not just of the contemporary era but of eternity.

Growth of Recognition

Sales and Gallery Exhibitions

Laurens was not alone in changing his thoughts about Cubism and art around 1924. Most of the original Cubists radically changed their styles. Cubism was no longer the main avant-garde movement in Paris. The increase of magazines promoting Surrealism and non-objective art in 1925 was part of an ongoing process which gave these movements more prominence, and hastened the perception that Cubism was now of secondary importance.[1] The general move towards a universal art, which was more acceptable to the buying public, was an inevitable process.

The Uhde Sales of 1921 had had a significant impact on the market of avant-garde art. These sales of Kahnweiler's sequestered stock showed how little public backing there was for Cubist works. The prices were published in *L'esprit nouveau* and after that Vauxcelles, who had never been sympathetic to Cubism, had written an article in the *Carnet de la semaine* about the failure of Kahnweiler's artists.[2] Derain, who had given up any pretensions of being a Cubist, commanded prices more than twice that of Picasso. The works of Léger and Gris fetched particularly derisory prices.[3] The low value that the public placed on Cubist work had a great effect on collectors, dealers and artists.[4] Kahnweiler and Léonce Rosenberg were penniless.[5] The styles of many of the Cubists changed. In part, this was natural evolution, but the change in the style of Cubist work during the couple of years following the sales is noticeable. Gris moved towards a more appealing style of painting in 1922. His *Jeune fille* of that year was painted with soft curvaceous lines and pretty colours. Léger started

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[1] Christopher Green, *Cubism and its Enemies. Modern Movements and Reaction in French Art,* 1916-1928, (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1987), 106. The whole of chapter six deals with this issue.
[2] Douglas Cooper, ed. and trans. *Juan Gris. Letters.* (London: privately published, 1956), letter CLXVI, Gris to Kahnweiler, Céret, March 1922.
[3] Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics and Collectors of Modern Painting. Aspects of the Parisian Art Market between 1910 and 1930,* unpublished PhD dissertation, University of London, 1977, 24.
[4] Malcolm Gee, 'The Avant-garde, Order and the Art Market, 1916-1923,' *Art History,* (vol 2, no 1, March 1979), 102.
[5] Pierre Assouline, *An Artful Life. A Biography of D-H Kahnweiler,* trans. Charles Ruas, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld 1990), 175.

having a crisis in his work in 1921 which continued for a number of years.[6] His work became more simplified and unified. Metzinger and Severini moved towards an idealisation of traditional styles. Braque showed his two *Canéphores* at the 1922 Salon d'Automne.[7] Their sensual idealisation has been linked with Renoir, whose reputation at the time was great.[8] Their pose, linearity and ample proportions can be compared with the standing figures by Goujon on the *Fontaine des innocents.* All had moved away from the strict ideas of Cubism towards different concepts of classicism.

The Uhde sales were not the only reason for this shift in style: there had already been a return to more traditional style and a reassessment of the importance of Cézanne, by the original pioneers of Cubism. This can be seen in a number of drawings by Gris, including *Bathers (after Cézanne)* of 1916 and his *Portrait of Madame Huidobro* of 1917. His works which were more naturalistic in appearance were only executed in pencil. Picasso was producing some drawings and paintings in an Ingrist style from the middle of the war. Laurens, although expressing an admiration of Cézanne at this time, did not translate this into his work. Even in the post war period there were differences between the Cubists. Gris had written in 1920 of his disappointment in Braque's recent work.[9] Braque had refused to have his work hung in the same room as Gris in the Salon des Indépendants earlier in that year. [10]

The low prices gained at the sales however, were indicative of the lack of popular support for Cubism. The return to a French artistic tradition at the time of the war and Rosenberg's reaffirmation of the Frenchness of Cubism, had not been enough to sway public opinion. *L'art vivant* had had a poll in 1925 for artists to be included in a Musée français d'art moderne. Picasso and Braque were the only representatives of Cubism to be included in the top ten names. Others within this band were Matisse,

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[6] John Elderfield, 'Epic Cubism and the Manufactured Object. Notes on a Léger Retrospective,' *Art Forum*, (April 1972), 60.
[7] Green, 1987, op. cit., 56.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Cooper, op. cit., letter From Gris to Kahnweiler dated February 17, 1920.
[10] Assouline, op. cit., 158.

Maillol and Derain, who were more classical and traditional. Only Léger was included in the next ten, and he could also be seen to be more classical in style. Gris, Lipchitz, Laurens, Gleizes and Metzinger were not even in the top thirty.[11] This was in spite of the fact that by this stage all had softened their styles. There were also shifts of allegiances between the main dealers. Braque, Gris and Laurens left the *Effort Moderne* between 1920 and 1921 to return to Kahnweiler who had always maintained a more relaxed position about a 'school' of Cubism. These shifts in loyalty and the complexity of artistic production, together with the unpopularity of Cubism within the art market meant that change was inevitable.

The situation was worse for sculptors attempting to sell their work than for painters. It has been argued that, in contrast to painting, the economic and physical conditions of the conception, production and display of sculpture together with the patronage system played a crucial part in the style and subject of what the sculptor produced.[12] Many sculptors died with a multitude of plasters and unsold sculptures in their studios. This is possibly one of the reasons for the many sculptors' studios which have become museums in Paris.[13] Even a sculptor like Bourdelle, who was well respected by the public and had many official commissions, still had many works unsold at his death. This was not a new problem. One only needs to look at the cartoon by Daumier, *The Sad Face of Sculpture placed amongst the Paintings*, 1857 to realize that pubic indifference to sculpture was not new. This was compounded for avant-garde sculptors like Laurens, by being generally invisible in mainstream magazines and major exhibiting spaces. Few magazines promoted avant-garde art, preferring the safer, Indépendant style. The extreme blandness of sculpture photographed in the magazines of the 1920s is depressing. This reflected the work in exhibitions. It would appear that the general public also found the works dull as, according to a critic of 1927, they only looked at sculpture in exhibitions when they

[11] Green, 1987, op. cit., 138.
[12] Patrick Elliott, *Sculpture in France, 1918-1939*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of London, (1991), 35.
[13] Ibid., 32. For instance the museums of Landowski, Bernard, Bouchard, Bourdelle, Zadkine and Brancusi.

were tired and sitting down.[14] Frequently the sculpture within an exhibition was ignored in the press, or was perhaps relegated to a token paragraph at the end of an article.[15] It was perceived by critics to be secondary in importance and interest to painting. However, sometimes the installations of sculpture were not complete by the opening of exhibitions when the press were there, as they were positioned after painting. This again would account for the lack of publicity.[16]

It was prohibitively expensive for small galleries to hold exhibitions of sculpture. Sculpture required space for storage. It was heavy to transport. The display of paintings was cheaper and easier and the collectors preferred to buy them.[17] Apart from the expense of material, slowness of production, difficulties of transport and the fragility of the product, all of which had a direct effect on the price, exhibiting sculpture well is difficult. Whereas paintings, if they are large and colourful enough, will gain some attention even in a crammed exhibition with poor light, sculpture requires good lighting and enough space to view from different angles. Here, size, which in a painting can be an advantage, becomes perilous. A prospective buyer might buy a large painting which hung against the wall, but a large sculpture would take up too much room in an apartment. An article of 1930 queried what happened to sculptures which were not portraits. How could a sculptor make his living? The number of people who placed sculptural ornaments in their gardens was not great. It was an enigma.[18] However, Léonce Rosenberg continued to support Laurens in various ways. He kept a stock of Laurens' work at his gallery. He frequently published illustrations of Laurens' work in the *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne*. The Galerie Simon also had some of his works from the time when Laurens had his contract there. Kahnweiler continued to buy works. Rosenberg proposed an exhibition at the Effort Moderne in May 1925 which was to show the work of

[14] Ibid., 26-27. He quotes an anonymous critic of the Salon des Tuileries of 1927 in *Le crapouillot*, June 1927, 45.
[15] For instance, Jacques Guenne, 'Le Salon des Tuileries,' *L'art vivant*, (juin 1934), 248-250. In spite of being generally complimentary about the sculpture, the coverage of it is limited to the last two inches of the page. The same happens in the December issue of that year when he wrote an article on the Salon d'Automne in the same magazine, 502. It was a trait throughout the 1920s and 1930s.
[16] Ibid., 25.
[17] Elliott, 1991, op. cit., 29-30.

Laurens, Léger and Valmier.[19] In part this exhibition reflected the competitive spirit between Léonce Rosenberg and his brother. Picasso had deposited the large painting, *Les trois musiciens* from 1921 with Paul Rosenberg and Léonce hoped that Léger would develop his drawing of *Les musiciens* into a large painting to equal that of Picasso.[20] There is no other mention of Laurens' involvement in this exhibition.

The Salon remained the main place for exhibiting sculpture and here one needed works of a certain size to speak. The lighting was bad at the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne, which meant that sculpture competed on unequal terms with painting.[21] Laurens was one of a number of the avant-garde to show his work at the Société des artistes Indépendants in 1924, where he exhibited a vitrine of *terres cuites*.[22] All the works were for sale. The catalogue showed no illustrations and the magazine coverage of this exhibition was not large. *Le crapouillot,* which reviewed the show, failed to mention the avant-garde. All the photographs of sculptures in the article were of figures, mainly female and frequently portraits, in a safe Indépendant style.[23] Laurens did not exhibit with them again. In fact, he did not exhibit in any more of the salons of the 1920s. The Salon d'Automne, which until 1923 had been attracting some avant-garde artists, was increasingly linked with the establishment. It had a jury system from this date and tended to attract attracted only a safe style of sculpture and paintings.[24]

Laurens showed a *Boxeur* and a *Tête* at the exhibition L'art d'aujourd'hui in 1925, among a broad range of the avant-garde including Arp, Brancusi, Csaki, Delaunay, Gris, Léger and Picasso. The aim was not to show examples of all contemporary tendencies, but to represent works of '*art plastique non imitative*,' which Cubism

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[18] René Jean in *Commoedia,* (2 May 1930), quoted in Elliott, ibid., 32.
[19] Christian Derouet, ed. *Fernand Léger. Une correspondance d'affaires*, (New York: Le cahiers du musée national d'art moderne, 1996), letter from Rosenberg to Léger, 25 février 1925, 164.
[20] Ibid., Rosenberg to Léger, 6 mars 1925, 165.
[21] Elliott, 1991, op. cit., 29-30.
[22] Catalogue, *Societé des artistes Indépendants*, (Paris: Grand Palais, 1924), 139.
[23] Robert Rey, 'Le salon des Indépendants,' *Le crapouillot*, (16 février 1924), 13-25.
[24] Gee, 1977, op. cit., 16.

was the first movement to really consider.[25] In setting out the agenda for the exhibition, the contemporary vision was linked to music. The musician cannot imitate the sounds of nature, but can only lay out those which are central to music. In the same way, the artists were not intermediaries between nature and the spectator, but could only lay out the forms.[26] These could not be imitative. The catalogue linked contemporary art with that of Poussin who thought delectation was the ultimate goal of painting. The artists shown were producing work which, in the opinion of the author of the catalogue, had the aim of lyricism and a dream like quality.[27] There appears to have been very little press coverage of the exhibition.

The Salon des Tuileries was another venue where Laurens could have exhibited. It was meant to be a place celebrating contemporary art. In 1926, Delaunay, Lipchitz, Latinow, Ozenfant, Matisse and Zadkine exhibited there. In 1927, Zadkine, Lhote, Brancusi and Bourdelle among others were shown, so the avant-garde was represented.[28] However, Laurens did not exhibit with them. It had a committee which invited artists with 'real talent' to go before a jury. The jury which judged the sculpture in 1923 were Bourdelle, Despiau, Mlle. Poupelet, Jean Boucher and Dejean.[29] These figures could be considered as having the sensibilities of the Indépendants and of the establishment. *L'art vivant* of 1927 which had an article on the Tuileries of that year, wrote how '*la sculpture est un art qui ne fleurit bien que dans les terreaux officiels*'.[30] He cited certain artists who were exhibited including Bourdelle, Pompon, Poupelet and Despiau, All were Indépendants. All were people with power in their circles. The photographs which accompanied the article show a strong classicising trend.[31] An article of the same year wondered why the sculptors of the era were so insensible to the '*mouvement qui entraîne quelques-uns des meilleurs peintres...et combien ils se soucient peu de répondre à l'appel de*

[25] Catalogue, *L'art d'aujourd'hui*, (Paris: Les presses modernes, 1925), unpaged.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Catalogues, *Salon des Tuileries*, (Paris: no publisher, 1926), unpaged and ibid., (1927), unpaged.
[29] Catalogue, *Salon des Tuileries*, ibid., (1923), unpaged.
[30] Robert Rey, 'La sculpture au Salon des Tuileries,' *L'art vivant,* (1 mai 1927), 343.
[31] Ibid., 345-346.

l'époque. "[32] It appears that the expectations of the committees and public, while not necessarily expecting academic art from sculptors, were not prepared to go to the other extreme and accept the avant-garde. The Indépendants with their technical proficiency and their classicizing style were as much risk as they wanted.

During the 1920s it was the Indépendants who were the most visible artists. As has been shown, they had control of the major exhibition spaces. The leading art reviews, including *Art et décoration, L'amour de l'art, L'art vivant, Beaux arts* and *Formes* promoted the Indépendants.[33] Academic art and the avant-garde were restricted to a narrow range of magazines. The Academics were members of the *Institut* or were professors at the École des Beaux Arts, like Denys Puech and François Sicard.[34] Critics who were hostile to official, academic art perceived the Indépendants as having sincerity. They were seen as providing a coherent, almost subversive barrier against an avant-garde which the critics did not understand and wished to ignore.[35] While the Indépendants were not given official, public recognition and did not obtain the quantity of commissions which the academics gained, they did have the advantage of exhibition space, review backing and some public commissions which avant-garde sculptors were refused.

Auction catalogues from the 1920s reveal that the avant-garde in general were under represented, and avant-garde sculpture was almost invisible.[36] Alphonse Bellier bought a dead practice at the Hotel Drouot and started to hold sales in October of 1920.[37] He wanted to create a market for contemporary art and frequently went directly to the artists offering to sell their work.[38] There is no evidence that he approached Laurens in this capacity. Drouot held sales of *Tableaux modernes* in June of each year, but these frequently contained mainly nineteenth century work with

[32] J-G, 'Au Salon d'Automne-la sculpture,' *L'art vivant*, (15 novembre 1927), 921.
[33] Elliott, 1991, op. cit., 87.
[34] Ibid. 62.
[35] L. Gischia et N. Védrès, *La Sculpture en France depuis Rodin*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1945), 83.
[36] I am grateful to the personnel of the Hotel Drouot who allowed me to look through all the back issues of their auctions from the 1920s and 1930s in their busy office.
[37] Gee, 1977, op. cit., 25-26.
[38] Ibid.

only a little from the previous couple of decades. An example of this was at the auction of June 1927, where the sculptures were by Carpeaux, Barye and Mène.[39] Frequently, however, there was no sculpture at these sales. The auction of *Tableaux modernes* in December 1925 had only watercolours, pastels, gouaches and drawings.[40] Prices, however, were good. A Braque *Nature morte* on card fetched 7,000 francs. Picasso's *Le violon* which was a papier collé was bought for 1,500 francs. These were fairly typical of the prices in these media at the time. It was a boom time in the art market for certain types of work. The collection of Paul Poiret was sold in 1925. The collection contained no sculpture, but included works by Dufy, Matisse, Modigliani, Picasso and Vlaminck. Nearly all the prices were higher than the estimates from the auction house.[41] An oil painting by Picasso of a still life fetched 11,200 francs and a *Harlequin* gained 11,500.[42] A Modigliani *Portrait of Max Jacob* was sold for 10,500 francs.[43] However, sculpture was less popular. An undated *terre cuite* by Laurens, *Femme couchée à l'éventail* was sold in 1927 for only 2,000 francs which was the same as the estimate proposed by the auction house. This contrasts with the 1930s, where his work, and that of many others, failed to reach the estimate. At the same auction, a Léger *Nature morte* sold for 6,000 francs.[44] The *Femme couchée à l'éventail* was one of the few sculptures by Laurens to be sold at these auctions during the 1920s. What was vital for Laurens was the loyalty of a few key collectors. Charles and Marie Laure de Noailles were to buy a number of contemporary sculptures from the auction houses, although they also bought directly from Laurens and also from the Galerie de l'Effort Moderne.[45] They

[39] Drouot Documentation, catalogue for auction 17-18 June 1927, by Baudoin, Schoeller and Marboutin.
[40] Drouot Documentation, catalogue for auction 11-12 December 1925, by Bellier and Hessel.
[41] Drouot Documentation, catalogue for auction, 18 November 1925, by Bellier, Bernheim and Hessel.
[42] Ibid. Picasso *Nature morte*, undated, 21 x 26, oil on canvas. *Harlequin,* undated, 61 x 47, oil on canvas.
[43] Ibid., Modigliani, Portrait of Max Jacob, undated, 73 x 60, oil on canvas.
[44] Drouot Documentation, catalogue for sale of Jaques Zoubaloff, 16-17 June 1927, by Dubreuil, Hessel and Schoeller. The price of the Laurens was the same as was expected. The painting by Léger was 54 x 65 cm.
[45] Shane Dunworth, *The de Noailles as Collectors and Patrons*, unpublished M.Phil., University of London, (1984), 54 and 74. The prices of works from Léonce Rosenberg appear to be higher. They bought a bust of a woman with arms above her head from before 1926, of unknown dimensions and

bought *Le guitare* of 1917, a polychrome stone sculpture in 1927 for 2,600 francs and an untitled bas relief from 1919 for 1,520 francs in the same sale.[46] Modern sculpture was frequently cheaper than painting, and *terres cuites* were often priced the same as drawings. It was not the best market for Laurens. In spite of the promotion of modern art at sale rooms and the increasing prices for most art, sculpture was not a popular acquisition.

The auctions at the Hotel Drouot sold a variety of art and design objects. Sometimes they would represent a personal collection, sometimes there were themed auctions. Eighteenth century furniture and art were often featured in the sales catalogues. Within these sales there were frequently *objets de vitrine* which were clearly popular and gained good prices.[47] Léonce Rosenberg was, between 1924 and 1925, the editor of small bronzes and stone sculptures by Laurens which he called '*objets de bon gout*'.[48] One of these was the *Femme nue couchée* of 1924 and another *Femme couchée*. All of the group were small female nudes, suitable for this niche in the market, and most, it appears, were reclining. The bronzes shown in the Rosenberg archive which one presumes are these sculptures, appear less radical in style than Laurens was typically creating at the time.[49] They were less primitive in style and the fact of them reclining sets them against that European tradition in painting and sculpture. They also tended to be more lyrical. Rosenberg seems to have been hoping to promote these small works as a twentieth century *objets de vitrine* and to this end encouraged Laurens to make works which were appealing to collectors. Rosenberg went to Laurens' studio in January 1924 to view a plaster of *Femme couchée*. He had clearly asked Laurens to make improvements to the legs and feet of this work and

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materials for 10,000 francs in 1926. Catalogue from the *Cahier* of the de Noailles of works purchased between 1923 and 1938.

[46] Ibid. Catalogue from *Cahier* of the de Noailles of works purchased between 1923 and 1938. Henri Laurens, *Le guitare*, 1917 polychrome stone, h. 33 cm., acquired in Hotel Drouot sale, 24/10/27 for 2,600 francs. Untitled *bas relief*, 45 x 56 cm., acquired 1927 Hotel Drouot sale 24/10/27.

[47] Drouot Documentation. An example of this was a sale held on 19th December 1927, a Monsieur X and Monsieur F in salle no 16.

[48] Derouet, ed., 1996, op. cit., 189.

[49] The sculptures in the Rosenberg archive are undated and one can only make an informed guess as to which were the ones that he produced at this time.

wanted to see the changes.[50] This sculpture was to be done in stone and again, he wished to view the piece which Laurens had chosen.[51] *Femme couchée* was cast in bronze by Rudier for Rosenberg and was of a single reclining nude. (Plate 2.13) The torso lacks any detail in its cylindrical form, but the legs and arms are relatively naturalistic. The face was detailed in a primitive style and the hair curls and flows around the features. If one compares this work with the *Femme à la corbeille* of 1924 one can see a great difference. (Plate 2.14) The *Femme à la corbeille* is in stone, but it has been noted that the materials made no difference to style. The single woman is upright, which is typical of much of Laurens' work of this time. The *Femme à la corbeille* as with the *Femme couchée*, shows an awareness of different styles, but here they are more remote and timeless. The limbs and breasts are not in proportion to the whole, the arms increasing in size at the base, and the breasts are on the diagonal which corresponds with the composition. They are related to the sculpture as form, obeying the rhythmic demands of the complete sculpture as opposed to being immediately recognizable components.

Laurens was not alone in aiming some of his work towards the new moneyed audience. It has been noted above how the more innovative avant-garde were not popular with the public. Matisse's paintings of the 1920s were, even at the time, considered to be conservative. His many decorative females in oriental attire from this time make a marked contrast to the radical works of the teens. It has been argued that the sizes of his canvases, which became smaller for this decade, were also changed to make them suitable for the bourgeois apartment.[52] It was good tactical salesmanship on the part of Bernheim-Jeune, who was Matisse's dealer between 1909 and 1926, and made Matisse's work attractive for the new buyers of art.[53] Matisse was gaining high prices for his work. At an auction in 1926 at the Hotel

[50] Letter, c165 9600.588, Rosenberg to Laurens, 24 janvier 1924.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Kenneth Silver, 'Matisse's retour à l'ordre,' *Art in America*, (June 1987), 110-12, 117-8.
[53] Ibid.

Drouot his *Group de trois jeunes filles* was sold for 59,000 francs whereas a similar sized Derain sold for only 19,000 and a larger Gris sold for just over 8,000.[54]

Between 1922 and 1925, Gris painted with less underlying geometry and more appealing colours. In contrast to the works prior to 1922, when colours were well contrasted, bold and balanced throughout, many of the works of this era used pinks and mauves, colours which were close in the spectrum. His harlequins and pierrots were unchallenging subjects. Later, in 1926, he also painted a few contemporary figures, like *La chanteuse* who, in spite of wearing modern dress and having a modern coiffure, has a remoteness and simplicity of form which he was to use in the more classical *Femme au panier* of the following year. As with Matisse, he became successful in the market. Having craved monetary success all his life, some of the major collectors started to buy his work in 1924, including Alphonse Kahn and Dr. Reber from Lausanne.[55] These works which were less Cubist were found to be attractive to the buying public.

Laurens was also gaining a number of collectors who wished to buy his work. People frequently came to the studio in Paris to look at his work and to buy.[56] His sculpture was being bought in the 1920s by some of the major collectors of the day. Doucet and the de Noailles were loyal and both commissioned works from Laurens and bought individual pieces of sculpture. Probably the most active collector of his work was Jacques Zoubaloff. He amassed a great collection of contemporary art, including works by Braque, Gleizes, Gris, Léger and Picasso.[57] His collection, which he had assembled before 1929 went on sale in 1935. He sold thirty four drawings and gouaches and papiers collés and twenty two sculptures by Laurens. The works that he had bought did not represent just work from the more lyrical 1920s, but he had a

[54] *Gazette de l'hotel Drouot*, 28 October 1926, sale of the collection of John Quin. Matisse *Group de trois filles,* undated, 92 x 72 cm. Derain, *Devant la fenêtre ouverte, nature morte*, undated, 92 x 65 cm. Gris, *Au café,* undated, 1m. 28 x 97 cm.
[55] Christopher Green, *Juan Gris*, (London: Whitechapel, 1992), 105.
[56] Interview with M. Claude Laurens, September 11, 1998.
[57] Drouot Documentation, *Collection Jacques Zoubaloff.* Sale 27-28 November 1935, by Bellier and Hessel. In the box dated 1935.

large collection from Laurens' earliest period.[58] The sculptures were not dated in the catalogue, but represent all the media, including two marbles, *Tête de femme* and *Femme au mirroir,* many *terres cuites* and a bronze, the *Femme drapée,* as well as some wooden constructions. What is clear is that he preferred to buy small works which would have been easy to display. The largest sculpture was the painted wooden *Clown* which was 55x22x20 cm. Many were smaller than that. A typically sized work was the *Femme au mirroir* which measured 22x11x9 cm.[59] This would have integrated well onto the top of a table or cupboard, as can be seen in the photograph of the interior of Doucet's studio at Neuilly. This shows a *Femme couchée* by Laurens of 1921 which would have been of a similar scale. Within the photograph one can see a Matisse painting and a de Chirico. Other views of Doucet's house show a Modigliani sculpture and works by other contemporary artists. The de Noailles bought many pieces from Laurens. Within all three collections, Laurens' work would have been viewed along side other major artists of the day.

Magazines and Books

In the early 1920s Laurens was still a relatively unknown artist. This was to change during the decade. Rosenberg had promoted him since 1918 through exhibitions and contacts. He was also to frequently include Laurens in his magazine, the *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne* during the 1920s. There had also been two articles in which Laurens featured, in *L'esprit nouveau* in 1920 and 1921, by Waldemar George and Maurice Raynal. He was not featured again in that review, but from 1924 Laurens was increasingly written about and photographs of his work were appearing in other magazines. These were not mainstream art reviews but were ones which placed his work firmly within the avant-garde. These included an article on him by Christian Zervos in *Art d'aujourd'hui* in 1924, one by Paul Fierens in 1926 and another by Christian Zervos in 1930, both in *Cahiers d'art.* This magazine was especially important in promoting Laurens from its inception in 1926. It frequently showed glossy photographs of his work and included him in many articles on broad issues,

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

such as in 'Notes sur la sculpture contemporaine' in 1929 by Christian Zervos, as well as in dedicated articles. This support was to continue through the next few decades. He was also being included in general articles in other magazines like *Architecture vivant* in 1924 when Jean Badovici wrote about the architecture of the day. A number of magazines held *enquêtes* to which artists were invited to contribute. Laurens contributed to those held by the *Bulletin de la vie artistique* and *Art vivant*, both in 1924. In 1929, Janneau wrote an important book on Cubism entitled *L'art cubiste*. This book, which rationalised the movement into a series of threads of ideas included much on Laurens. It placed him as an important figure within the artistic avant-garde.

Christian Zervos wrote an important article on Laurens in 1924.[60] Much of the article was written in a general manner, which was current at the time. However, one of the first points that he made was concerning the personal input of the artist. An artist needed to communicate his own vision and escape from a plastic grammar. Although the rules of the old masters should be a governing principle, the intimate inclination of the artist in a work of art was essential.[61] He continued by placing Laurens' work within this context of tradition and instinct.[62] The emphasis on the personal as opposed to the doctrinaire could be seen as positioning Laurens in contradiction to artists like Severini, who in 1921 wrote how art was only a humanized science.[63] Severini wrote about the rules of constructing a composition and creating beauty through the contrasts of lines and angles.[64] These aspects of balance and weight he linked to machinery or to an edifice.[65] He was not alone in this concept of art. Paul Serusier also looked for universal rules to govern composition, although he did link the effects of certain elements with a spiritual dimension.[66]

[60] Christian Zervos, 'Henri Laurens,' *L'art d'aujourd'hui*, (Automne 1924), 11-16.
[61] Ibid., 11.
[62] Ibid., 12.
[63] Gino Severini, *Du cubisme au classicisme*, (Paris: 1921), 16.
[64] Ibid., 47.
[65] Ibid., 60.
[66] Paul Serusier, *ABC de la peinture*, (France: Librairie Floury, 1942 [1921]), 16, 20 and 24.

Another point made by Zervos was how the figures of Laurens had a plastic rhythm. There was no sentiment, but just a sense of balance and serenity.[67] Nothing was extraneous to the needs of the sculpture, it was built of simple elements through which life was evoked.[68] In his succinct article in the *Bulletin de la vie artistique* of 1924, Laurens wrote that a composition was the '*représentation du fait plastique; retenir et exprimer l'essentiel avec des moyens simples et personnels; rejoindre la tradition.*'[69] This three fold idea of the representation of a sculptural fact, a personal expression of the essential and an awareness and depiction of the artistic tradition was exactly what Zervos was developing in his much lengthier article. Towards the end he anchored Laurens' work into the French tradition by linking his polychrome sculptures to those of the eleventh century and by the idealism imprinted with reason, the measured gentleness and the emotional profundity to French works of the thirteenth and the eighteenth centuries.

In the article, Zervos also brought out Laurens' love of architecture. He cited the tomb of the aviator Tachard as a good example writing of the perfect proportions and simple masses.[70] He also wrote about how his reliefs could be adapted to an architectural program by being incorporated into a wall or a chimney.[71] These were also aspects which Jean Badovici wrote about in 1924. He wrote of Laurens' love of architecture and how his work was incorporated into the whole.[72] It was architecture which carried sculpture, but sculpture could, in turn, give much through its balance and rhythm.[73]

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[67] Zervos, op. cit., 12.
[68] Ibid.
[69] 'M. Henri Laurens,' 'Chez les cubistes,' *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, (15 novembre 1924), 509.
[70] Christian Zervos, op. cit., 12.
[71] Ibid., 15.
[72] Jean Badovici, 'Sculptures d'Henri Laurens et de Chana Orloff,' *L'architecture vivante*, (Automne et Hiver 1924), 28.
[73] Jean Badovici, 'Les possibilités architectonique de demain,' *Architecture vivante*, (Automne et Hiver 1924), 30. While not at this point actually writing about Laurens, the article has many illustrations of the capitals which Laurens did for the house for Doucet, and frequently alludes to him in the text.

The series of articles entitled 'Chez les cubistes' in 1924 to 1925, which was included in six issues of the *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, showed the diversity of opinion within Cubism. Lacking the charismatic, unifying leadership of an artist like Picasso, Cubist sculptors had always been individualists. However, many of the artists interviewed now challenged the concept of Cubism as a school of art. Picasso basically dismissed Cubism as being no different to the customs of other schools of art.[74] In this Laurens was in agreement as he said that *la tradition est continue sous les différentes apparences des époques.*[75] Léger looked to the past for inspiration. He wrote how admirable early Italian painters and mosaic makers were, and how he hoped that modern painters would make something equivalent.[76] Both Csaky and Zadkine thought in formal terms and wrote of purity of style and volume.[77] Csaky, like Léger, looked to the pre-Renaissance time for his abstraction. Léonce Rosenberg wrote how ancestral memory, from both an individual and collective aspect was within all of us and was like an underlying support.[78] Clearly these contributors were looking to the past for a contemporary vision, and were considering purity of form as essential. The notion of tradition was also central to Laurens' thoughts. However, none mentioned the spiritual aspect necessary for the creation of art in the same way as Laurens. He wrote that a work of art was the expression of the humanity of the artist.[79] This showed a continuation of his thoughts from the teens, and a continued link with the Symbolists and Bergson.

Paul Fierens wrote an article on Laurens in *Cahiers d'art* in 1926. This was the first of many articles which this magazine included on Laurens. From the very beginning the general thrust of *Cahiers d'art* was towards the correspondences between ancient, non-European and contemporary French art. Rather than a nationalistic agenda, it promoted a universal concept of art. In the first year of publication articles were included on Matisse, Picasso, Laurens, Léger, architecture, pre-historic art,

[74] 'M. Pablo Picasso,' 'Chez les cubistes,' *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, (15 décembre 1924), 556.
[75] 'M. Henri Laurens,' 'Chez les cubistes,' op. cit.
[76] 'M. Fernand Léger,' 'Chez les cubistes,' *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, (1 novembre 1924), 486.
[77] 'M. Joseph Csaky,' 'Chez les cubistes,' *Bulletin de la vie artistique,* (15 novembre 1924), 508 and 'M. Ossip Zadkine,' 'Chez les cubistes,' *Bulletin de la vie artistique,* (15 décembre 1924), 558.
[78] 'M. Léonce Rosenberg,' 'Chez les cubistes,' *Bulletin de la vie artistique,* (15 novembre 1924), 505.

African sculpture, factories, Cyclidic and Chinese sculpture. The balance between ancient art, non-European art and the contemporary varied, so that in 1930, the number of articles about old non-European art were about the same as those devoted to contemporary French art and ideas. All the issues were lavishly illustrated. The juxtapositions were designed to make artists consider the origins and the universal aspects of art. This concept of the tradition of art and the universality of the humanity of artists was one which was evident in the work of Laurens.

In the article of 1926, Fierens wrote how, like Picasso and Braque, Laurens was still a Cubist. '*Il conclut après avoir analysé, compose après avoir décomposé.*'[80] In this he was thinking in terms of Cubism as being a process rather than a style. It would appear to be different to Gris' ideas when he wrote that Cubism was not a process, but a state of spirit. If one judged Cubism as a style, it had disappeared.[81] Braque however had written how it was a means, which he had invented to carry out his ideas. [82] In the same volume of *Cahiers d'art,* Zervos wrote of going to an exhibition of Picasso's work.[83] Generally, he thought, one considered Picasso to be becoming distanced from Cubism. However, he found that Picasso's work was still an interpretation of Cubism. Here he appeared to be thinking in terms of an aesthetic. The critics as well as the artists held divergent views on how to define Cubism. What is interesting is that in spite of the visible differences between the contemporary artists and the distance which the aesthetic had traveled from the original concepts, Cubism was still seen as an important and cohesive force.

The artists which Rosenberg supported showed the breadth of styles which could be considered under the banner of Cubism. De Stijl were included in many exhibitions at the Galerie de l'Effort Moderne including the 'Maitres du cubisme'. The edition which was produced for the exhibition had certain essays including 'Neo-

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[79] 'M. Henri Laurens,' op. cit.
[80] Paul Fierens, 'Henri Laurens,' *Cahiers d'art,* (Vol. 1, 1926), 41.
[81] 'M. Juan Gris,' 'Chez les cubistes,' *Bulletin de la vie artistique,* (1 janvier 1925), 16.
[82] 'M. Georges Braque,' 'Chez les cubistes,' *Bulletin de la vie artistique,* (1 novembre 1924), 485.
[83] Christian Zervos, 'Lendemain d'une exposition,' *Cahiers d'art,* (vol. 1, 1926), 119.

plasticisme' by Mondrian and 'Classique-Baroque-Moderne' by van Doesberg.[84] The *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne* was the mouthpiece for artistic ideas which corresponded with Rosenberg's own. As well as showing photographs of work by the de Stijl group and Cubists like Braque and Laurens, it also showed fashion designs by Sonia Delaunay and stage sets, for instance for the *Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* designed by Irene Lagut. Clearly Rosenberg's ideas about Cubism had broadened. His magazine also included a serialization of Gleizes' 'La peinture et ses lois' and many articles by Léger and Severini.[85] The articles gave credence and weight to contemporary artistic ideas. The photographs at the center of the magazine, which were independent of the writing, acted almost like a collage of different mediums and ideas of the day.

Fierens wrote of Laurens as part of a group opposed to theoreticians. Above all he was a poet.[86] Poetry, in the contemporary critical sense, was not considered to be exclusive to the arts.[87] Zervos wrote in an article, which was illustrated with photographs of factories and electricity cables, how that concept had grown to encapsulate the poetry of mathematics. However, the beauty of a machine consisted of the sum of its functions. Art by contrast was made up of the relationship of every detail to the whole, which was why that type of beauty would last for all times.[88] For Fierens, poetry was above grammar and the accidents of style. It was more profound than that. Although Cubist grammar was dead, he felt that its spirit survived within some artists, including Laurens.[89]

Christian Zervos wrote an article commenting on the *Exposition international de sculpture* held in 1929 at the Galerie Bernheim, in which Laurens participated.[90] From the photographs it is evident that a wide range of sculpture was admitted and

[84] *Maitres du cubisme*, deluxe ed., (Paris: Galerie de l'Effort Moderne, mai 1924).
[85] Albert Gleizes, 'La peinture et ses lois, ce qui devait sortir du cubisme,' *Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne*, (mai 1924). Other extracts were in the editions of June and July of that year.
[86] Paul Fierens, op. cit., 42.
[87] Christian Zervos, 'Lyricism contemporaine,' *Cahiers d'art*, (Vol. 1, 1926), 36.
[88] Ibid., 37.
[89] Paul Fierens, op. cit., 45.
[90] Christian Zervos, 'Notes sur la sculpture contemporaine,' *Cahiers d'art*, (Vol. IV, 1929), 465-473.

exhibited without much differentiation between conflicting styles and sizes. The fountain, which Laurens made for the de Noailles, was in the same room as works by Belling, Lembruch and Lipchitz. Also included in the exhibition was a small version of *Femme à la draperie* which Laurens had made for Charles de Noailles in 1927, a painted still life relief and a reclining, semi-draped figure. Laurens was favoured both in illustrations and the article itself. His works were visible in group photographs as well as being singled out and featured. (Plate 2.15) The fountain was shown on the same page as pictures of an archaic Greek stature from the acropolis and an idol from Mali. The statue from the acropolis had certain facial features and a formality of design which related to Laurens' sculpture. The statue from Mali showed a simplicity and economy of form, which again links with the figure on the fountain. Many of Zervos' comments were general, linking the sculpture of the era to a Mediterranean classicism.[91] The consequence of this was the creation of calm, ordered sculpture. He felt that much contemporary work had become dead because of too much emphasis on technique, which had sapped its vitality.[92] However, Laurens' work was considered to have tact and a concentrated eloquence in the purity of its forms.[93] In this he was linking Laurens' work with classicism. However, in an article of the same year, which also featured Laurens, he was linked to the monumentality of Egyptian sculpture.[94] This was also a well illustrated article, with several pages of photographs of work by Barlach and Laurens. The author wrote of the importance of construction, of the balance of space and volume and the articulation of the masses.[95] In France, he wrote, one could find these traits in the work of Maillol, Brancusi, Laurens, Lipchitz and Despiau. The artists he highlighted had different aesthetics: Maillol and Despiau being Indépendants, and Brancusi's work owing more to a tribal primitivism than either Laurens or Lipchitz. This also shows the disparity of style even within avant-garde sculptors. However, he

[91] Ibid., 465-466.
[92] Ibid., 470.
[93] Ibid., 470.
[94] Paul Westheim, 'Enquête sur la sculpture moderne en Allemagne et en France,' *Cahiers d'art*, (vol. IV, 1929), 143.
[95] Ibid.

attempted to unite them, by concentrating on construction, balance and articulation, which can be considered as classical features.

The book by Guillaume Janneau entitled *L'art cubiste* of 1929, broke Cubism down into chapters which encapsulated different aspects of the movement. He wrote about 'La doctrine', 'École de la peinture pure', and 'Le cubisme expressionniste'. Within the latter chapter he included Metzinger, Léger, Laurens, Lhote, Csaky and Zadkine. It is interesting that Braque, Picasso and Gris, with whom Laurens was frequently allied, were in the chapter 'École de la peinture pure.'

In the first part, Janneau wrote about the importance of Cézanne for contemporary artists, and linking him with Mallarmé, wrote that both were important for evicting the inessential to express the idea.[96] Throughout, he mentioned writers as being essential and integral with the ideas of the artists. When writing about the laws of Gleizes and Metzinger in *Du cubisme* of 1912 and also their writings of the 1920s, Janneau used Apollinaire's *Méditations esthétiques* as a counterpoint. For him it provided the opposition between didacticism and intuition.[97]

Laurens was given a dominant position in the chapter entitled 'Le cubisme expressioniste.' His work was well illustrated, showing many of his sculptures which were in the collection of Zoubaloff. Much of the text was a chronology of his work, but he had also interviewed Laurens for this chapter and included many of his ideas. Laurens had told him how he worked '*à bout de neufs...obéissant à des sensations presque insaisissables.*'[98] Janneau defined Laurens' expressive Cubism not as having lost a sense of reason, but that he was the most original of the inner circle of artists. He wrote much about this. The inventiveness of Laurens' work was, he felt, contrary to the normal ideas about the inventive possibilities of sculpture. Citing Apollinaire, he wrote how sculpture was seen as being distanced from nature and allied to

[96] Guillaume Janneau, *L'art cubiste. Théories et réalisations*, (Paris: éd. d'art Charles Moreau, 1929), 7-10.
[97] Ibid., 31 and 46.
[98] Ibid., 84.

architecture. Janneau said that in Laurens' case this was not so. Sculpture could be as inventive as painting.[99] Laurens was opposed to concrete plans and a definite method, which Janneau compared in a favourable light to Gleizes.[100] The inventiveness of Laurens' sculpture made Laurens a master. He was equal to Picasso, Braque and Gris.[101]

The visibility of Laurens' work in the 1920s grew enormously. He was debated as being an important figure within broader issues of the avant-garde as well as an artist in his own right. His works were frequently illustrated in the magazines. In spite of his thoughts and style being a little different to others within the Cubist movement, the definition of Cubism by the mid 1920s was very broad and he was perceived as being an integral and major figure within the movement.

[99] Ibid., 88.
[100] Ibid., 87.
[101] Ibid., 85.

Commissions

Public Commissions

Although Laurens did not enjoy working on large scale, public commissions, he was involved in two projects in the 1920s. He created the scenery for *Le train bleu* and two sculptures for the Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes. Both of these helped to increase Laurens' profile, and both placed him alongside the most progressive artists and designers of the day.

Le train bleu

In 1924, Laurens was commissioned by Diaghilev to design the sets for the new ballet, *Le train bleu.* (Plate 2.16) The 'train bleu' in real life was a famous train which took the affluent society to the Côte d'azur, although Cocteau's plot of the 'operette dansée' was set at Deauville which was in vogue at the time.[1] Coco Chanel designed the bathing costumes. Milhaud wrote the score and was asked to base it on the songs heard in the contemporary French music halls. Nijinska, who did the choreography was taken by Cocteau to see ballroom dancing, and he also talked to her about music hall and café concert performances.[2] It was to be a danced opera, very modern in style and with the trappings of 1920s society.[3] The characters satirized the contemporary preoccupation with the healthy, sporting life. There were four main characters, one of whom was a tennis star played by Nijinska. She was modelled after Suzanne Lenglen who was the French champion and unbeatable at Wimbledon between 1919 and 1924.[4] The three other main characters were Beau Gosse an athlete who was played by Anton Dolin, a golfer, and Perluse the coquette. There were also more than twenty bathers on stage who were defined as 'poules' and 'gigolos'.

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[1] Bibliothèque de l'Opéra, *Dossier d'oeuvre, Train bleu.* Review, *Telex danse*, (mai 1992). For a full discussion of Le train bleu, see Anne Nardin, 'A propos du 'Train bleu': la sculpture en scène,' in catalogue, *Henri Laurens rétrospective*, (Lille: Musée d'art moderne Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1992), 70-83.

[2] Franc Ries, *Jean Cocteau and the Ballet*, (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1980), 161.

[3] Arthur King Peters, *Jean Cocteau and his World*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 87.

Diaghilev was an important patron. Many contemporary artists designed costumes and scenery for his staged works. It was his contention that the success of the Paris season depended on having the newest ballets, the best music and the best sets.[5] Picasso was the first of the Parisian avant-garde to be asked to contribute in 1917, when he did the sets and costumes for *Parade*. Derain, Matisse, Gris, Laurencin, Braque and many others were also commissioned.[6] Laurens was the first sculptor and was not a totally popular choice. Picasso, when he heard thought, *'Il va te fiche tout par terre'.*[7] Cocteau thought it not bad.[8]

From the very beginning there were difficulties. Cocteau did not see eye to eye with Nijinska and they frequently quarreled. Things were repeatedly altered which was confusing for the cast. Chanel frequently changed the costume designs, so that at the dress rehearsal they were being worn for the first time and apparently looked awful.[9] Laurens designed several stage sets before satisfying himself and Diaghilev.[10] He would have had to work fast as in a letter dated 28th February Laurens was told that the maquettes were to be ready by the 1st of April.[11] Laurens clearly enjoyed making the model for the scenery and was pleased with the result.[12] Prince Scherrachidzé then translated this into full size.[13]

The drawings show that one of Laurens' ideas was to have one cabin and no stage flats on the right. He worked through several versions which had the appearance of an abstracted rocky cave, with the layered scenery cut to angles, creating a tunnel effect.[14] It meant that the stage became a closed space, which was usual with the

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Anton Dolin, *Divertissement*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Co. Ltd, undated), 84.
[6] John Percival, *The World of Diaghilev*, (London: Herbert Press, 1979), 10.
[7] Bibliothèque de l'Opéra. Cocteau, *Fonds Kochno*, Pièce 23(6), 2 CL. BN. 90 c 145747. Letter to Serge (Diaghilev) from Jean (Cocteau), 29 février 1924.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Boris Kochno, *Diaghilev et les Ballets Russes*, (Nancy: Berger-Levrault, 1973), 219.
[10] Dolin, op. cit., 82-3.
[11] Laurens archive, letter from Diaghilev to Laurens, 28 February 1924.
[12] Dolin, op. cit., 83.
[13] Kochno, 1973, op.cit., 219.
[14] Bibliotèque de l'opera, *Dossier d'oeuvre, Train bleu.* Working drawings inscribed: 'Henri Laurens. Le train bleu, 1924.'

majority of stage sets of the time. The final version was a representation of an open beach, a vacant setting for the vacuous plot. It could be seen as more modern in feel than many of Diaghilev's stage sets, being simpler with clean lines and abstract vision. It was spacious and uncluttered. In this way it could be linked in idea to the contemporary modernist architectural interiors of Le Corbusier and Mallet-Stevens. There were two bathing huts on the stage and a ramp at the back which created the necessary height variation. The flats on the right were vertical and two-tone, which contrast with the abstracted rocks on the other side. A diagonal of cloud at the top was balanced by the angle of the sky. There were two large dolphins on either side, at the front, which conveyed a humorous touch.

The first point was that there actually was no blue train. Being the age of speed, it had already arrived. The passengers who were already in their bathing attire were shown on a beach which did not exist, in front of a casino which did not exist. The plot represented nothing.[15] The first scene opened with *les poules* and *les gigolos* sun bathing, after which the *gigolos* ran on the spot and performed physical exercises, while the *poules* held poses reminiscent of those seen on post cards.[16] They were meant to ridicule, by resemblance, the choir of an operetta. '*La bêtise de l'operette, du marbre, du chic, du sport peuvent très bien se fondre et former un tout.*'[17] They were to sing badly. The scene continued in this fashion. In the second scene, the cabin door opens showing a bather. Both cabins had these doors set in the central panel. The bathing huts were a focal point for the plot. There was much coming and going between them with, at one point, a male and female bather being locked in one together. Dancers posed in the cabins, while others are grouped around holding gracious stances.[18] The cabins were shaken. They became scenes for flirtation. Dancers sat on their bases. An airplane was heard overhead but was not seen. They all looked up and followed its progress across the sky with their heads. (Plate 2.17)

[15] Beaumont, *Complete Book of Ballets*, (London: Putman, 1937), 809-810.
[16] All the plot has been taken from the outline by Cocteau in the piano score, (Paris: Heugel, 1924), unpaged.
[17] Ibid.

The plot can be seen as part of a series of theatrical entertainments about the inconsequentiality of modern life. *Les Pélican* of 1921 by Radiguet for which Laurens did the illustrations was about flirtation and nothingness. *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* of the same year by Cocteau also had an inconsequential plot. This was a 'spectacle' danced and spoken by the Ballet Suedois, which combined the music hall with a theatre of the absurd. It again set out to ridicule petit bourgeois aspirations through the clichés of a wedding party posing against the Eiffel Tower for their photographs. The music was a joint effort of *Les Six*, five of them individually providing the music for each movement.[19] It was discussed in the previous section how Laurens' sculpture up to 1922 was concerned with the contemporary and the modern. Many of his female figures could be aligned to popular imagery. His sculpture changed in 1924, but he was still friends with Satie and Auric, so would have been in touch with this concept of production. The strain of satire which ran through the works of Cocteau at this time and which was backed up by *Les Six* was part of a programme to promote a very French, anti-Romantic theatre allied to popular culture. Cocteau felt that the

> music hall, the circus and American Negro bands, all these things fertilize an artist...This life force which is expressed on the music-hall stage makes...all our audacities appear old fashioned.[20]

Satirizing society's pretensions could also be seen as part of a post war reaction to Dada. The wit and charm of the productions was quintessentially French. However, Cocteau had been friends with Picabia, and until 1920 had associated himself with the Dada movement.[21] The magazine which he edited in that year called *Le coq,* imitated *391* in format, fragmented text and varied typography. It was enormously witty and anti-Dada, but sometimes became Dadaist itself in the extremity of its parody.[22]

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[18] Ibid., scene two.
[19] The music was by Auric, Honnegger, Milhaud, Poulenc and Tailleferre.
[20] Jean Cocteau, 'Cock and Harlequin,' (1918), in Margaret Crossland, ed. and intro., *Cocteau's world. An Anthology of Writings by Jean Cocteau*, (London: Peter Owen Ltd., 1972), 312.
[21] Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau. A Biography*, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1970), 228.

The movements of the dancers in *Le train bleu* were closer to the contemporary fashion for gymnastics than to real ballet. The poses were not elegant in the traditional sense. It was not in fact the first ballet to have used sport on the stage. *Jeux* in 1913 had a couple in tennis costume on the stage who used stylized movements based on the sport.[23] Cocteau had been inspired to create *Le train bleu* having seen Dolin practicing acrobatic exercises the previous year.[24] Dolin, as the Beau Gosse, was required to perform very complicated acrobatics, for which he also would have required space on stage. Nijinska's choreography for the bathers was based on movements associated with swimming, golf, tennis and beach games.[25] The opening of the music was grand, with pompous chords. This then gave way to the *Choeur des poules et des gigolos* which had short episodes including those in five-four, syncopation and simple, recurring rhythmic motifs. The music also incorporated simple dance music in four bar constructions. These ideas were used and developed in the rest of the score. The finale was rumbustious.[26] The shapes the dancers were producing and the popular inspiration for the rhythms of Milhaud's score, were backed up by the angular planes of the construction-like cabins. The contrasting colours of blue and white are again appropriate for the clean, simple harmonies. The large numbers of dancers on stage doing gymnastics and running about, meant that the stage needed to be relatively free of obstructions. Laurens' scenery was uncluttered, an aspect which was commented on in the press. Many critics ignored the scenery, but some clearly expected more. One thought of him being an 'ignare' in theatrical terms, providing neither optical nor light effects.[27] Another thought one needed to supplement the scenery with one's own imagination.[28] However, with the requirements of the dancers and the location of the

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[22] Ibid., 247.
[23] *Jeux*, 1913, choreographed by Nijinsky, music by Debussy, costumes and décor by Bakst.
[24] Beaumont, op. cit., 810.
[25] Ibid.
[26] *Diaghilev at Monte Carlo*, Igor Markevitch conductor, Monte Carlo National Orchestra, (Pembury: Pavilion Records Ltd.), no date.
[27] André Levinson, 'Le spectacle', newspaper cuttings transphered to microfilm without sources. Bibliotèque de l'Arsenal. RO12548-entier R80589, May, June 1924. It is also possible that the critics did not see the full effect as on the first night the lorries which were transporting the scenery to the theatre got lost and so the complete décor was not shown. Interview with M. Claude Laurens, September 11 1998.
[28] Raymond Charpentier, 'Au Theatre des Champs Elysées, Le train bleu,' 24.6.24. Microfilm, ibid.

beach, it would have been hard to create something as reassuring and dramatic as Braque's sets for *Les facheux* or as contained as Laurencin's for *Les biches.*

Le train bleu was shown to the Paris audience in June of 1924, at the *Champs Elysées*, after which it went to London.[29] Being so short, just twenty six minutes long, it was always shown as part of an evening of different works. The evening of the 22nd consisted of *Parade*, *Les facheux*, *Le train bleu* and *Les biches.*[30] The setting for *Parade* was a street, which made it possible for Picasso to create a dramatic false perspective and have decorative effects of windows, railings and plants. Like *Le train bleu,* the influences were popular and the dancers used movements other than those associated with classical ballet. *Les facheux* was a comedy ballet after Molière for which Braque designed the sets and costumes. Both of these were in a mock eighteenth century style, and like *Parade* the setting was in a town. The whole appearance of the set was cluttered with false perspectives and the flats spreading well into the stage. The eighteenth century was popular with the established classes. This type of period drama which celebrated Frenchness, was one which Diaghilev frequently explored. It was also a style with which the paying public were comfortable. Diaghilev had organised the *Fête merveilleuse* during the previous year which was held in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. It was an evening of mixed entertainment with all the music, food and costumes being redolent of the era of Louis XIV.[31] Gris, who created the set, had a mirrored staircase, spun glass fountains, which caught the flickering light from chandeliers, glittering adornments, baskets, garlands and flower beds.[32] Diaghilev loved splendour and brilliance, so that this type of spectacle would have suited his temperament.[33]

Les biches, which was also shown in the same evening as *Le train bleu* was set in a room. Like *Le train bleu,* it had no real plot, but was about the young, leisured

[29] It was performed on the 20th, 22nd, 27th, 30th. *Calendrier des Ballets Russes, Théâtre de Champs Élysées,* Microfilm, ibid., May, June, 1924.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Richard Buckle, *Diaghilev*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), 413.
[32] Nesta Macdonald, *Diaghilev Observed*, (London: Dance Books Ltd., 1975), 290-292.
[33] Ibid.

classes. Marie Laurencin's designs of white cloth, large blue sofa and pale rose and beige costumes were widely admired.[34] *Les biches* was said to resemble a *fête gallante*. It was charming and elegant.[35] The prettiness of Laurencin's set contrasted with the modernity of Laurens'. The plot of *Les biches* was '*une féerie espiègle et amoureuse, un instant de fantasie et de sourire*.'[36] The delicacy of the set clearly backed up this idea of fantasy and escapism. By contrast, *Le train bleu*, with its heavy satire, links with popular entertainment and music hall, clearly required something more hard edged. Despite the reservations of the press, *Le train bleu* was a huge success. It received ovations every night and it was hard to obtain tickets.[37] In spite of the plot which undermined the pretensions of the new wealthy, everyone wanted to take the real blue train to Deauville and perform acrobatic exercises on the beach.[38]

The design of the scenery complemented the plot and the costumes of the drama. Although different, the sculpture that Laurens made for the Hall of the Ambassador at the Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes of 1925 was also required to be part of the over all design. Few Cubist artists participated in the exhibition. However, the hall, which was designed by Mallet-Stevens, was one of the most progressive designs in the exhibition. In providing a large relief for this, Laurens was again aligning himself with avant-garde concepts.

Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes of 1925

The Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes of 1925 was the first exhibition for over a century which was dedicated to the applied arts. There were no scientific, mechanical or agricultural elements. It was a large site which spread from the Place des Invalides to the Grand Palais, and also along the banks of the River Seine. It included individual pavilions for major department stores. There

[34] For instance, Maurice Brillant, 'Les Ballets Russes, du correspondant,' (29 juin 1924), unpaged. Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, microfilm, RO12549.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Frank Ries, *Jean Cocteau and the Ballet*, (Michigan: Ann Arbor, 1980), 173.
[38] Beaumont, op. cit., 810.

were also some on specific themes like the Pavillon d'un collectioneur by Ruhlmann and the Hôtel d'un ambassadeur, which was a series of rooms created by the *Société des artistes décorateurs*. There were also gardens of different types all over the exhibition with fountains and features. While not specified in the catalogue, the exhibition was aimed at an elite market. There was also a general lack of involvement of the avant-garde. Laurens contributed a statue for a garden pavilion and a relief for the hall of the ambassador's residence.

Laurens created a sculpture for the interior of the Pavillon de jardin in the Grand Palais, Section français. In the same pavilion was ratin furniture by E. Drucker, works by the architect and decorator, Jean Charles Moreux and drapery by Sonia Delaunay.[39] This was the only mention of this particular work by Laurens, either in the official catalogues or in the press. Laurens created many outdoor sculptures and fountains for private clients, so it is interesting that his involvement in this section was not larger.

From the photographs of the exhibition one can see that fountains were an important element in the contemporary garden. Many also had statues of nymphs to create focal points and screens, backdrops and changes of level which added an artificial, architectural component. The *Jardin de la cour des métiers* is a case in point (Plate 2.18) The garden is typically geometric in design with a fountain in the center by Pierre-Marie Poisson which had a relief of a semi-draped female holding a palette set into the stone. Much of the garden was paved with small segments of formal beds. Sculptural figures were set into the niches of the outer screen. The use of hard materials and garden furnishings created an outside room which could be considered an extension of architecture. This type of garden is linked to the great French tradition of châteaux overlooking formal areas of planting, with fountains and statues forming focal points along paths. It was, by being smaller, more suitable for the contemporary market. The new rich no longer wished to keep up large, labour

[39] Catalogue générale officielle, *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes,* (Paris: no pub, avril-octobre 1925), 296.

intensive gardens. They were seen to have other desires, including travel and cars.[40] Gardens needed to reflect this change in life style. They were smaller than before, more unified in design and aligned to the artificiality of the city.[41] The garden in the exhibition did have traditional overtones in the use of geometry. This was a fact which was noted.[42] It was seen as a natural extension of the French love of order that one would also wish to impress this on nature.[43]

The fountain which Laurens did for Doucet's villa at Marly in 1924, (Plate 2.19) like the fountain in the *Jardin de la cour des métiers* contained a relief of a semi draped female with an arm over the head and a bent leg. Both show a decorative female, the one from the exhibition being linked to the arts, whereas that by Laurens was aligned to water, with the ripples of hair echoing the rhythmic lines around the legs. The basin around the Laurens, like that in the exhibition is geometric. Compositionally they have much in common. However, the female on the exhibition fountain was more closely aligned to the Indépendant style, where as the Laurens was Cubist, rationalised and flattened. Given the general lack of the involvement of the avant-garde, this was clearly an important difference from the point of view of the exhibitors. However, the art deco style hinted at Cubism through the geometrization of motifs, stepping effects in furniture and a flattening of figures. As Waldemar George wrote, '

> *Architectes, meubiliers, ornemenistes appliquent uniformément les principes des compositions introduits par Pablo Picasso, Georges Braques, Juan Gris... Il est donc d'autant plus regrettable que les peintres...ne soient pas représentés à l'exposition.*[44]

This comment could equally well apply to sculpture. Waldemar George was condemnatory about the attitude of the press. He felt that it was hostile towards the

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[40] *Rapport général. Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*, (Paris, 1925), Volume XI, *Rue et jardin*, 69-70.
[41] Ibid. and Fernand Bac, 'L'art des jardins a l'exposition des arts décoratifs,' *L'illustration*, (août, 1925), 135.
[42] Rapport general, *Rue et jardin*, op. cit., 70.
[43] Ibid., 18.
[44] Waldemar George, 'Exposition des arts décoratifs et industriels de 1925. Les tendances générales,' *L'amour de l'art*, (août, 1925), 288.

ideas of Cubism.[45] This is born out in the magazines. It was not just Cubist work which was either excluded or ridiculed, but the modern architecture and design in the exhibition. *Art et décoration* wrote a substantial amount about the exhibition, but there was no mention of Le Corbusier or Laurens and only a small amount on the works by Mallet-Stevens.[46] In considering the modern spirit, one contributor was clear in the difference between the contemporary and the modern. Contemporary was a state of being where as modernity meant cars and electricity.[47] For him, the general effect of an ensemble should be somber, romantic and pleasant.[48] To be contemporary one did not have to espouse the avant-garde. Just as the gardens were to be seen to celebrate a link with the eighteenth century, so too the interiors of buildings were to continue with that tradition.[49]

The one official comment on Cubist sculpture in the exhibition was not flattering. In the realm of Cubist sculpture in the exhibition, '*où les blocs évoquent mieux l'idée de cubes,*' Lipchitz: '*auteur d'un surprenant menhir placé dans l'herbe, devant la construction de l'esprit nouveau*' Laurens, and Jan et Joel Martel were the representatives.[50] This type of avant-garde art was not considered to correspond with the aesthetic of the exhibition as a whole. The writer also omitted the two sculptures by Zadkine which were in the exhibition, a dragon and a cerf.[51] The dragon was for the pergola for *La douce france* which revolved around the Arthurian legend. It was a decorative piece which was not in Zadkine's usual Cubist style. *La douce france* was a magazine which championed direct carving and positioned itself politically as northern, Celtic and associated with the past.[52] To an extent, Laurens at this time could be linked with them. He favoured the churches of the Île de France, his whole

[45] Ibid., 285.
[46] *Art et décoration* dedicated most of three of that years volumes to the exhibition.
[47] Guillaume Janneau, 'Introduction à l'exposition des arts décoratifs: considérations sur l'esprit moderne,' *Art et décoration,* (XLVII, 1925), 151.
[48] Ibid., 142.
[49] Anon., 'Fleurs et parterres,' *Art et industrie,* (mai 1929), 4.
[50] Paul Leon, *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes,* (Paris: 1925), Vol II, Architecture, 25.
[51] Catalogue générale officielle, op. cit., 149 and 162.
[52] Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia,* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 34-35.

style was more northern than southern and a proportion of his work was in carved stone. The Galerie Barbaznge held two group shows for the *Douce france* in 1922 and 1923 which included in the latter six works by Zadkine and one by Laurens.[53]

However, Laurens aligned himself with the modern. His relief for the ambassador's residence at the exhibition was in a room with only two other works, by Delaunay and Léger. They were all designed to complement the architectural scheme by Mallet-Stevens.

Hall of the Ambassador

The design of the reception rooms and private apartments of an embassy was a group project by the *Société des artistes décorateurs*.[54] In order to provide exhibition space for the many members, who covered a broad area of art and design, the project was in four parts. These were reception rooms, private apartments, an art gallery and a collection hall for small art objects and decorative sculpture. The residence as a whole showed the breadth of style which could be considered modern, including a Cubist inspired black lacquered smoking room by Jean Dunard and a pastel coloured woman's bedroom with sinuously shaped furniture by Andé Groult. The rooms, which were created by *ensembliers*, were varied and provided a showcase for many artists and artisans, but were not meant to provide an architectural whole. The hall, which included the relief by Laurens was part of four grouped interiors by Pierre Chareau, Francis Jourdain and Mallet-Stevens who created rooms which were more contemporary in aesthetic than the other ensembles. Like the Hotel d'un collectioneur which was designed by Ruhlmann, the ambassador's residence was aimed at the elite market. The hall which was designed by Mallet-Stevens was widely regarded as being austere. Mallet-Stevens asked Delaunay and Léger to provide paintings, Laurens a sculptural relief and Barillet some coloured ceiling lights. There was no clutter, excess furniture or exotic materials. In keeping with

[53] Ibid., note 49, page 174.
[54] For a full account of this, see Yvonne Brunhammer and Suzanne Tise, *French Decorative Art, The Société des artistes décorateurs, 1900-1942*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), 94-110.

Mallet-Steven's early influence of the Wiener Werkstätte, all the details were kept in relation to the architectural whole.

This style contrasted with the rest of the embassy. The Grand salon de réception included a variety of decorative art works, including sculpted bas-relief friezes by Henri Bouchard and Gaston Le Bourgeois, a large painting entitled *La danse* by Gustave Jaulmes, wall hangings, wrought iron work, a grand piano and many fine cabinets. In addition there were many small *objets d'art* including coffers in ivory and mother of pearl and copper vases encrusted with silver.[55] The room was large so that it was not overwhelmed with the objects. However, it promoted the idea of status through these decorative elements and through the architecture. Classicism was hinted at in the columns and decorative frieze that ran around the walls. A link with the pre-Revolutionary eighteenth century is suggested through the restrained forms of the furniture. The colours of brown and mauve which were picked out in the thick carpet, the covers of the upholstered chairs and exotic wood were in the contemporary 'funerary style'. The whole room spoke of refined elegance and taste.

The contemporary interest in surface was demonstrated in Jean Dunand's smoking room which was also in the embassy. It was in black lacquer, with a silver ceiling and touches of red. The chairs were also lacquered, with two tone leather upholstery. Decorative accents were provided by cushions, a panel of jazz inspired elements and a linear pattern of exotic animals on a cupboard. It was an integrated ensemble of furnishings and architecture which was widely admired.[56]

The interiors by Chareau, Mallet-Stevens and Jourdain offered a new aesthetic. That by Chareau, an office/library, was uncluttered and had moving walls which could make the central space private from the surrounding room.[57] Even here though, the style of the furniture had links with the eighteenth century and the heavy brown and mauve colours cast a somber note. The physical culture room by Jourdain was

[55] Ibid., 97-98.
[56] Ibid., 98.
[57] Ibid., 104.

simple, with built in furniture flush to the walls. It contained the requisite mirror for the athletes, weights and equipment for boxing. This was in keeping with the contemporary culture of the *vie sportif.* However, the room was lined with wood.[58] The floor had a fitted carpet. The appearance was comfortable rather than hygienic.

The interior by Mallet-Stevens was different. It was light, bright, uncluttered and modern. (Plate 2.20) The geometric order of the architecture was reflected in the forms of space and closure, articulated walls, patterned tiled floor, square, layered light fixtures and the decorative panels by Laurens, Léger, Delaunay and Barillet. The only extra decoration was the clipped shrubs at either end of the room: tamed nature in a geometric space. Rather than espousing power, elitism and nostalgia, as was evident in so many of the interiors, Mallet-Stevens showed a modern interior which linked with the internationalism of Hoffmann. While the international style of Le Corbusier's Pavillon de l'esprit nouveau also used a simple geometric ordering of volume and space, the art, although espousing economy and the machine aesthetic, was not integrated into the architecture. This was an important element for Hoffmann with his collaborations with Klimt and other artists from the Vienna Secession. Mallet-Stevens knew the Palais Stoclet of 1905-1911 in Brussels and many of his projects from 1913 to 1924 owed a strong allegiance to this concept of architecture.[59] The white interior walls of the hall were articulated into panels by vertical black strips, simultaneously framing the decorative panels and accenting the volumes. This was a technique which Hoffmann had used in the main hall of the Palais Stoclet, where the white panels of the balcony were edged with a dark line to differentiate them from the grey marble pillars. In both of the buildings there was a play of solid and void. In the main hall of the Stoclet house, the broad white balcony overhung a proportion of the floor area, and required the support of pillars, which created a division of areas and framed views. In the hall of the ambassador, the large openings were left un-accented and provided views to other spaces. The bushes set into cube

[58] Ibid., 106.
[59] Gérard Monnier, *L'architecture en France. Une histoire critique, 1918-1950. Architecture, culture, modernité,* (Paris: Philippe Sers Éditeur, 1990), 52-53.

shaped boxes was also one which was frequently used on the exteriors of Hoffmann's buildings.

The panels by Léger, Laurens and Delaunay were large. Delaunay's panel was more than double the height of the door openings on either side and Léger's fitted above the central door to the ceiling. They provided coloured accents of blues, browns, black and white at either end of the room. Laurens' relief, broad and tall, provided visual strength between two large openings. Although uncoloured, the crisp forms of the Cubist relief kept the eye within the room. In style, all three were different. The Léger panel was non-representational, being made up of flat geometric shapes. The painting by Delaunay showed the beauty of Paris made flesh. (Plate 2.21) As with the *Ville de Paris* of 1912, it celebrated the new, through the image of the Eiffel Tower in conjunction with the old, in the form of buildings. Straddling these elements which were literally floating in space and time was an image of a female nude. The Laurens relief was one of a number of substantial nudes with an arm over the head which he executed between 1924 and 1926.[60] The first was for the fountain for Doucet's villa at Marly in 1924. It is also very similar to that done for the vestibule of the de Noailles house at Hyères. It appears that the relief was high and crisp, the decorative zig zags echoing the concertina aspect of the Barillet coloured glass in the ceiling.

The flatness of the panels of the Léger composition contrasts with his contemporary paintings which, while frequently abstract at this time, also contained aspects of polished shaded surfaces, diagonals and areas broken down into pattern.[61] In this, the panel corresponded with Léger's ideas about the distinction between easel and wall painting. The former, being mobile and separate from architecture was an art object, and as such was a self-contained world.[62] Wall painting, on the other hand, should

[60] Gladys Fabre, 'La sculpture architecturale de Laurens face au cubisme et aux arts décoratifs ou comment affirmer son autonomie?' in catalogue, Lille, 1992, op.cit., 64.
[61] For example, Fernand Léger, *Mechanical Elements*, 1924, oil on canvas, 57 1/2 x 38 1/2 inch. Musée national d'art moderne, Centre George Pompidou, Paris.
[62] Robert Herbert, ''Architecture' in Léger's Essays, 1913-1933,' In Nancy Troy and Eve Blau, eds. *Architecture and Cubism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 1997), 81.

be clear, flat and static. The architecture of a room provided the volumes, the people the moving image so that the work should be considered as just a decorative element.[63] This could well have been brought into focus by Léger's work in the cinema. Mallet-Stevens, who also worked in films, wrote that the actor provided the dynamic element while the decor was static. However, it represented and promoted the social position, the tastes and habits of the character.[64] This could equally well apply to Laurens. When he was commissioned to provide a sculpture or a panel for a particular place, he considered this as integral with the surroundings and approached each as an individual problem.[65] The tastes and habits of the patron were taken into account.

Some of the officials clearly thought that the taste and position of the fictive ambassador were not reflected in the interior. Monsieur Fernand David and Monsieur Paul Léon, who were *commissaires généraux* inspected the ambassador's residence and ordered the panels by Delaunay and Léger to be removed. They thought that they were too avant-garde.[66] Léonce Rosenberg and others in the press reacted strongly to this and the order was reversed.[67] It is interesting that the panel by Laurens was not included in this stricture.

All three of the works added different aspects to the spatial complexity of the room. The Léger, while providing an accent on the wall offered no hint of space beyond the flat surface. The Delaunay created a fantasy of objects floating in the sky, being decomposed by light. The Laurens offered no illusion of fictive space, but through the making of the relief, created a reality of space and volume which was contradicted through the composition. As in the reliefs by Goujon on the side of the *Fontaine des innocents*, the twists of the body are absorbed into the frontality of the representation. As in the more sensuous *Canéphores* by Braque of 1922, perspective

[63] Ibid.
[64] Robert Mallet-Stevens, 'Le décor', *L'art cinématographique*, VI, (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1929), 2 and 5.
[65] Discussion with Mme. Laurens, September 11 1998. This will be discussed further in the following section.
[66] Derouet, 1996, op. cit., 178. There is a full account of this incident 178-180.

and depth are not explored. The sculpture, while depicting an antique theme of the source of life, fertility and bounty, remains, in spite of a traditional pose, hermetic, stylised and constrained within the strictures of the architecture.

These were the two main public commissions which Laurens received in the 1920s. He much preferred to work for patrons on private work. The two most loyal patrons who commissioned work for their houses were Jacques Doucet and Charles and Marie Laure de Noailles. He also had commissions for two graves. In all these works, he designed the sculptures so that they complemented the surroundings. All were different according to the needs of the architecture and clients. This set the work apart from his studio sculpture, where the sculpture grew from internal necessity.

Private Commissions

Tomb Sculpture

Laurens was commissioned to make three family graves. The first was for his mother in 1912. It is unknown outside of photographs. He also did a tomb for the Tachard family in 1924 and for the Fillacier family in 1927. In both of the tombs from the 1920s, Laurens created personal monuments for the families concerned, using a style which was contemporary, while also considering the surrounding graves. A tomb is a private memorial in a public place where families go to remember the dead. They need to reflect the person for whom it is made for while also being suitable for following generations.

The tomb for his mother owed much to Medieval sculpture, but was in the modern material of cement.[68] Many fourteenth century tombs like that of Léon de Luisigan from 1393, at the Basilique Saint-Denis have the figure on its back, lying on top of the tomb in the same way as that for Laurens' mother. Laurens knew the Basilica,

[67] Ibid.
[68] Gladys Fabre, op. cit., 56.

and so would have known the many inside tombs, which in effect provide a history of the form and style of the tomb through the ages. Like that of Léon de Luisigan, the drapery hangs as if the figure is standing. The stylized linearity of the folds combined with the shallowness of the cuts is reminiscent of the figures on the West portal of Chartres Cathedral. The other worldliness, closed eyes and stiff gesture is pure Symbolist in inspiration. This was an early work in his development, done after his meeting with Braque, but while Laurens was still searching for a path for himself. It does, however show his interest in Gothic sculpture, which was to continue through his life, as well as in contemporary materials with which he was to experiment during the teens.

The tomb of the aviator Tachard was for a soldier who was killed in October 1917. (Plate 2.22) His mother, who asked Laurens to make the tomb, was a friend of Doucet and a collector of modern and African art.[69] Laurens made the tomb at L'Etang-la-Ville and then had it transported.[70] It is now situated in the cemetery at Montparnasse, looking directly down one of the main walkways, towards the sculpture of the winged figure at the center. The situation gives more meaning to the shape which rises to the front, ambiguously referring to a bird or airplane, both making a suitable reference to the young pilot and perhaps a more poetic one of flying towards the next life. The tomb occupies a double plot, suitable for the whole family, so the ground size conforms to a standard measurement. It is higher than many of the flat tombs around, although not as tall as those which are upright. In order to lighten the bulk, Laurens stepped back the central part, a method used by many of the graves around it. In spite of the abstraction and the unusual treatment of motif, the tomb reflects those which are close. The majority of the tombs are raised towards the back. Laurens incorporated this tilt along the side edges and then raised the central slab up to the front. The inverse V at the back, echoes that shape incorporated into the tomb behind to General Paul Huellin 1841 and the one to the

[69] Ibid. 62.

[70] Documentation du Musée national d'art moderne-Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. Fonds Léonce Rosenberg. Letter, c 60 9600 551, undated letter from Laurens to Rosenberg. All letters between Laurens and Rosenberg are from this archive unless stated.

right done for someone killed in 1915. The material at the base of the Tachard tomb is granite, which is the predominant, surrounding material. The upper, sculpted portion is in a pale sedimentary stone which again echoes the material of many of the surrounding tombs.

The tomb for Vonvon Fillacier which Laurens made in 1927 (Plate 2.23) was for the daughter of a musician friend, who had died at the age of eighteen. 'Vonvon' was her childhood nickname.[71] Like the Tachard tomb, it occupies a large plot for the whole family. Its form again echoes those which surround it, while still being distinctive. Many of the graves are stepped up to the central portion and have a high back for the inscriptions. Laurens does this while also making a decorative zig-zag along either side, echoing geometric elements used in art deco. A bird with outstretched wings stands guard on the grave. Those who have not chosen granite in this graveyard have used the same hard limestone. It is a personal grave which is at once individual and respectful of the surroundings.

These were not the only outside sculptures which Laurens made. He also worked on architectural sculpture and a fountain for an unbuilt house at Marly for Jacques Doucet.

Sculpture for Jacques Doucet's House at Marly

Between 1921 and 1923 Doucet commissioned Mallet-Stevens and Ruaud to build him a house at Marly. (Plate 2.24) This was never built, but the works by Laurens exist in a finished state. He was asked to provide an entrance and portico, as well as a fountain. Before 1912, Jacques Doucet had been a renowned collector of eighteenth century art and artifacts, with a collection which rivaled that of Wallace.[72] He surrounded himself with his objects in a manner similar to the Goncourt Brothers. After he sold this collection, Doucet began to collect avant-garde artists as well as

[71] Mady Mernier-Fourniau, *L'oeuvre sculpté d'Henri Laurens*. Thèse de doctorat d'État, (Paris: Sorbonne, 1966), 1202.
[72] Elizabeth Ann Colman, *The Opulent Era. Fashions of Worth, Doucet and Pigat*, (London: Thames and Hudson and the Brookline Museum, 1989), 150-151.

contemporary furniture by Ruhlmann, Iribe, Legrain and Eileen Gray. He particularly liked his furniture to be of expensive and rare woods. Photographs of his house show it to be filled with diverse, exotic objects. His art collection became quite eclectic, with paintings and sculptures by the Cubists and Surrealists, and also Chinese and African works.[73]

The house, which would have housed this collection, was to have been a substantial building, reminiscent of the Hoffmann style. Models show it with large windows of differing sizes, some with coloured glass, decorative paintings at the corners and the masses reflecting the internal shapes. It was to have been sculpturally strong, with the play of light and shadow from the stepped cuboid forms and different architectural elements. Mallet-Stevens wrote that decoration was not a separate element added to architecture. The house itself was one huge sculptural block.[74] The model shows a bow shaped building with the main doors from the outside being in the central part. This is the area for which Laurens designed his portico and steps. Madame Marthe Laurens said how important Laurens' role had been.[75] He had imagined the architectural setting and fixed the proportions.[76] The house sheltered the work of Laurens on two sides, the steps sweeping up to the square door, a sculpture almost identical to that of the Tachard tomb dividing the steps in two and facing down the garden. The portico, in a Romanesque Cubist style, would have surrounded the door which had a large circular glazed center. It corresponded with the general eclecticism of the house, the facetting of the Cubist sculpture reflecting that of the strange angled roof. However, it is not a totally happy resolution. The square door and windows on either side seem rational in contrast to the decorative architecture. The Cubist reliefs relate to Laurens' contemporary work, which contrasts with the house, which owes more to turn of the century architecture.

[73] Gladys Fabre, op. cit. 59.
[74] Untitled article where Mallet-Stevens outlined his ideas, *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, (décembre, 1924), 533.
[75] Mady Mernier, op. cit., 1204.
[76] Ibid.

It has been speculated that the sculpture pre-dated the house, which has been thought of as being planned in 1924.[77] Certainly, the sculpture exists in a finished state, (Plate 2.25) whereas the house was never built. However, there are photographs of the model which include Laurens' sculptures. There is also a letter from 1921, written directly to Doucet saying that the sculpture was nearly finished and Laurens hoped that he would come to his studio to view the works.[78] Clearly Doucet was an important part of the decision making even if Mallet-Stevens was the architect. There is also a letter from Rosenberg to Laurens boasting that it had been him who had recommended Laurens to Doucet.[79] This leads one to speculate whether it was Doucet who provided the commission rather than Mallet-Stevens. It is possible that the idea for the sculptures had come from Doucet, however, it is unlikely that the sculpture would have been made without even a plan of the house. It could only have been in outline form at this stage, which would also explain Marthe Laurens' remark above. The speculation as to date of the project has been based on when it was first published in *L'architecture vivante* in 1924.[80] However, it was the ability of Laurens to unify sculpture into the architectural whole which was commented on by Badovici in this article.[81] He wrote how this reflected Laurens' love of architecture.[82] The presumption here was that the sculpture was integrated into the architecture rather than the other way around.

Sculpture for Villa Noailles at Hyères

The de Noailles were loyal patrons of art. They were to become good friends with Laurens, as well as buying sculpture and commissioning important works for their various houses. For their new house at Hyères, which was designed by Mallet-Stevens, they commissioned a large bather which was situated on the roof overlooking the bay, a chimney piece for the living room and a relief on the pillar

[77] Gladys Fabre, op. cit., 60-61.
[78] Letter dated 23. 9. 21, from Laurens to Doucet. Quoted in full in Gladys Fabre, ibid., 60.
[79] Letter dated 19. 2. 23, Léonce Rosenberg to Laurens, c163 9600 586.
[80] See note 16 in Gladys Fabre, op. cit., 69.
[81] Jean Badovici, 'Sculptures d'Henri Laurens et de Chana Orloff', *L'architecture vivante*, (Automne et Hiver, 1924), 28.
[82] Ibid.

facing the door in the entrance hall. All were different in style to suit the surroundings.

The house at Hyères was built on the site of a ruined Cistercian convent with about one and a half hectares of terraced land surrounding the building. It is built above the town, set apart, and at that time silhouetted against the rocky hills and the old castle. They asked Mallet-Stevens to be the designer of a modern house where the two of them could entertain their friends. Léon David was to construct the building. The choice of Mallet-Stevens was only made after Mies van der Rohe had refused the commission and they had decided against Le Corbusier.[83] In spite of the fact that the house was to be built on the site of an old building which still had some ruins in existence, what they were seeking was a modern house in the international style. Mallet-Stevens was not well known at the time, except through pasteboard models, film sets and articles.[84] In many ways this was typical of the pattern of the patronage of the de Noailles. They frequently used little known artists and were not afraid to give a first commission.[85]

The house included many commissions from a broad range of contemporary artists and designers both from France and abroad. These included windows by Barillet and by Joel and Jan Martel, furniture by Djo Bourgeois as well as interiors by Dutch artists like *la chambre des fleurs* which was decorated by van der Doesberg.[86] The de Noailles were not afraid of mixing styles. Images from the film, *Les mystères du château du dé* show old and new furniture and artifacts within the house and rooms reflecting different moods and uses.[87] The de Noailles were friends with many of the avant-garde, including Les Six, Cocteau, Laurens, Giacometti and Max Jacob as well

[83] Monnier, 1990. op. cit., 74.
[84] Jean François Pinchon, *Robert Mallet-Stevens. Architecture, Furniture, Interior Design*, (Cambridge, Massachussetts: MIT Press, 1990), 19.
[85] Dunsworth, 1984, op. cit., 17.
[86] Statement by Charles de Noailles in 'La villa Noailles' in R. Lassarat, *Hyères les Palmiers*, Cahiers d'histoire no 19, undated photostat in Archives de la Marie d'Hyères, 6. Also, Maurice Périsset, 'La villa Noailles,' *Hyères les Palmiers,* (Malesherbes: ed Images et memoires de Hyèrois, 1993), 167.
[87] Man Ray, *Les mystères du château du dé*, film made in 1929, op. cit.

as with members of the aristocracy.[88] It was important for them to have a personal relationship with those that they aided.[89] Laurens stayed at one of the houses in their garden several times to install his work. This contrasted with Lipchitz, who, although he was commissioned to make the garden sculpture, the *Joie de vivre*, remained distant. Charles de Noailles was to remember Laurens warmly in a letter which he wrote years later, describing how he had immediately liked Laurens and how he still cherished a *Tête de femme* which Laurens had given him as a present.[90]

Although the house was above the town and had architecture which suggested a hermetic aspect, it was not as removed from contemporary culture as the beginning of the film *Les mystères du Chateau du dé* suggested. Hyères was a hub of intellectual life in the 1920s. Many writers and artists lived there. Paul Bourget wrote most of his *Idylle tragique* there and frequently entertained a large circle of friends. Edith Wharton also lived nearby and surrounded herself with literary friends.[91] The film itself showed a couple travelling through an increasingly wild France as they venture further from Paris towards a deserted contemporary house which they then explore. Based on Mallarmé's poem, *Un coup de dés*, it explores reality, non-reality and aspects of chance as one journeys through life. What it also shows is the relationship of the de Noailles to their possessions and how these were to appear to the friends who came down for the house parties.

As the car in the film becomes closer to the house, one views the white, geometric building against the mountains and sky, with the marble *Femme à la draperie* by Laurens prominent, and yet integrated with the rocky backdrop. (Plate 2.26) The camera goes through the house and garden looking for any inhabitants. It rests on various items of furniture and decorative pieces. The screens holding the store of the painting collection move in balletic motion as each slide back into the wall. It also featured various items of sculpture including the fireplace and *Femme à la draperie*

[88] Dunsworth, 1984, op. cit., 65.
[89] Ibid., 17.
[90] Ibid., 317-318. Letter from Charles de Noailles to Malcolm Gee, dated 13. 2. 74.
[91] Lassarat, op. cit., 2.

by Laurens and the *Joie de vivre* by Lipchitz. The house is the backdrop to the mystery. It also becomes a foil for the house-guest actors. Figures are shown in the pool in the guise of water nymphs and their watery shadows play immaterially across the screen. The actors imitate statues against a wall and the Carpeau fountain *The Four Quarters of the Globe*, 1872-74. (Plate 2.27) Towards the end, the equation between material and immaterial and living and non living gains an extra twist with two of the actors coming onto the roof to pose next to Laurens' sculpture in a statuesque manner. The film then reverts to negative, fusing the actors and the sculpture in a twilight zone of non-materiality. Like the Jacques Manuel film, *Bicepts and Bijoux*, the film by Man Ray creates a hermetic world where the guests play out their roles within an artistic framework.

Charles de Noailles commissioned *Bicepts and Bijoux* in 1927/8, from the Société cinématographique which was directed by Marcel Herbier. Jacques Manuel was his assistant.[92] The first part is a panorama of the surroundings, the house and the gym. The second is set in the swimming pool.[93] The *vie sportif* was clearly one which the de Noailles promoted. The third part involved the house guests in a mystery about a theft, where the house and art works were again a stage set. An evening party was held in the salon. Laurens' fireplace is prominent as dancers entertain the guests. A telephone call was made by the stained-glass door in the hallway. The sequence that explained the missing pearls was shown in the garden by Gulvrenkian with the Lipchitz sculpture in a prominent place.[94] Both films were made for friends in the setting of the house. They were souvenirs both of specific house parties and their amusements, as well as the house and artistic furnishings. They celebrate a rich contemporary life, but also one which was designed to reflect taste and a cultural awareness.

[92] Dunsworth, 1984, op. cit.
[93] See film, *Biceps et Bijoux*, 1927/8, Centre national de la cinématographie, Bois d'Arcy, no. 57713-57716.
[94] Ibid.

The house itself resembled certain sets that Mallet-Stevens produced for Marcel Lherbier's film *L'inhumaine* in 1923. The laboratory of the engineer is based on strong play of geometric forms creating a dramatic play of light and shadow. The door of geometric panels is similar. It was a dazzling film, intended as propaganda for contemporary French design.[95] This meant that the text was less important than the harmony of forms.[96] Inhumaine's villa was a symbol of her existence.[97] Mallet-Stevens wrote that one went to theatre to see, and it was this which counted the most.[98] The set presented the character of the person.[99] When writing about architecture, he tended to be formalistic in his comments saying how the house of tomorrow needed to respect the logic and simplicity of the machine. However, dramatic light and shade effects were also part of the plan.[100] The films which were commissioned by Charles de Noailles, were for private use. None the less, the de Noailles picked Mallet-Stevens as the architect of his house in preference to Le Corbusier, finding that he would be more open to suggestion.[101] They also commissioned and participated in the films, both of which were intended as reflections of their life and taste.

The house was also celebrated in artistic magazines of the day. *Art et industrie* had a full article on the house in 1928.[102] It contained many photos and spoke of the large collection of modern art which the de Noailles had accumulated. Laurens was mentioned but not pictured. *Art et décoration* also had an article in that year which was well illustrated.[103] Again the modern art collection, which included works by Picasso, Braque, Gris and Chagall were discussed. The hall relief by Laurens was

[95] D. Deshoulières and H. Jeanneau, 'The Demands of Architecture,' Dominique Deshoulières, Hubert Jeanneau, Maurice Culot, Brigitte Buyssens, *Robert Mallet Stevens, Architect*, (Brussels: Archives d'architecture moderne, 1980), 43. *L'inhumaine* by Lherbier, score by Milhaud, sets by Mallet-Stevens, costumes by Poiret and furniture by Chareau.
[96] Michel Leiris, 'Mallet-Stevens and the Cinema, 1919-1929,' in ibid., 152.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Mallet-Stevens, 'Le décor,' 1929, op. cit.
[99] Ibid., 5.
[100] Untitled article. Mallet-Stevens outlining his ideas. *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, (décembre, 1924), 533-534.
[101] Monnier, op. cit., 75.
[102] Anon., 'Une villa à Hyères. Appt. du Vte. et la Vtesse. de Noailles,' *Art et industrie*, (septembre 1928), 3-10.

also mentioned. The house was seen to reflect the de Noailles taste for the outdoors and the modern.[104] Unlike the films, these articles were public, and part of a contemporary interest for showing modern homes of the rich and fashionable. The works by Laurens were viewed and discussed within that context.

Laurens made three sculptures for the house at Hyères. All three were very different in style, reflecting their positioning both in terms of the physical environment and the lighting. This also reflects the difference between a commission and a studio work. The de Noailles had firm artistic opinions. Unlike the large collection of paintings which were stored on racks and hung in the house on a temporary basis, the sculptures were a large and permanent part of the house. Laurens needed to think of them as individuals, although they do incorporate ideas from his contemporary works.[105] The fireplace was made in 1926 for the coved living room that opened onto the Cubist garden. (Plate 2.28) It was part of the old building and was one of a number of vaulted rooms on the lower floor. It had thick walls and shuttered windows. The barrel vaulted ceiling, which sprang from below the top of the windows created a rhythm of broad, curved shadows. All the furnishings were comfortable, with upholstered chairs and old wooden tables. Just as the house embraced the old and the new, the de Noailles reflected this in their furnishings. It was a room for the evening, which would have been lit by the many small lamps. Laurens' fireplace reflected the roundness of the architectural shapes and the broadness of the walls in the deep relief of the carving, the curvaceous shapes of the semi-nude female, and the rounded top. The figure is part of the whole of his oeuvre of reclining nudes with drapery. (Plate 2.29) The kicking leg and pose are similar to that in the *terre cuite* nude *Femme couchée à la draperie* of 1926. The fireplace figure was wearing a crisply pleated skirt which echoes the art deco inspired, architectural zig-zags below. The detailing was kept crisp to stand out in the

[103] Leon Deshairs, 'Une villa moderne à Hyères,' *Art et décoration*, (July 1928), 1-24.
[104] Ibid., 2.
[105] Madame Laurens explained how Laurens thought of his commissions as different from his studio works. If he was to do a chimney for instance, this might be the first one, and so he needed to consider the problems intrinsic to that.

diversely shadowed room. The chimney also had broad surrounds, with a large expanse of plain stone which balanced the thickness of the walls of the room.

The relief for the pillar in the entrance hall was for a very different situation. It was placed in good reflected light, but with none that was direct. The hall itself was an area of bold, sculptural elements with deep shadows and strong shapes. Coming in from the garden the pillar was directly in front of one, with the staircase and stained glass door by Louis Barillet behind and to the left of the pillar. A room ahead and to the right providing another lit area to draw the eye into the house. The hall itself was darker. The relief appears to have been shallower than on the fireplace, with a crisply detailed rhythm. (Plate 2.30) It provided a punctuation point in the room, a point of accent in a transient area. The linear aspect was echoed in the stained glass at the turn of the staircase, the solidity of the white stone contrasting with the coloured transparency of the glass. The idea of linking elements was crucial in the house. Vistas both inside and out were an intrinsic part of the design. In the outside room leading into the hall with the relief, the hills and bay are framed like pictures by the rectangular holes in the walls. Many of the vistas were within the closed architectural spaces. The three sculptures by Laurens formed part of this.

The marble *Femme à la draperie* of 1928 (See plate 2.8)[106] was situated on the roof of one of the wings, looking away from the house and towards the sea. It was a large marble with broad, simple volumes reminiscent of a Cézanne bather. It was at once timeless and modern. It would have been visible from many of the garden areas. In the late twenties and thirties it would also have been visible for miles around, a craggy shape against the uprights of the old castle and the exposed rocks of the mountains, a white form emanating from the pristine geometric shapes of the house. As explained earlier, it was part of a group of figures in which Laurens experimented with surface and volume. The marble was closest to the most finished of the three figures. It was smooth in texture and had a degree of anatomical detailing in the hands and feet. In a letter to Rosenberg written in September of 1928 Laurens said

[106] The illustration is of the bronze version. That for the house was in marble.

that he was working on the marble.[107] He was at his studio in Paris. The sculpture was to be transported to Hyères on the first of November after which Laurens went to see it installed.[108] This was one of a number of visits.[109] He used these as an opportunity for travel. When he went to Hyères in the spring of 1926, he stopped at Avignon to see the frescos at the Chateau des Papes and at Villeneuve. A month later he was enjoying a trip to Algeria.[110]

Laurens made other works for the de Noailles. André and Paul Vera and Jean-Charles Moreaux designed the garden for their house at St Cloud in 1926.[111] It was a sparsely planted landscape of parquetry, ground cover, gravel and flagstones, which was designed to be seen from the house.[112] In spring the stones were to be replace by flowers.[113] The garden was fundamentally of hard materials in a geometric shape. Laurens was commissioned to decorate a bench, which was made after drawings by Paul Vera, for this area with two sculptures.[114] Just as the interior decorative sculpture at Hyères had been made for particular areas and to specific dimensions, so it was with the bench for the garden.

Laurens enjoyed working on private commissions. Each one provided individual problems. These he solved taking into account the wishes of his clients and the necessity of the architectural spaces. Unlike his studio work, external requirements determined the form, but none the less, they were related to his contemporary output. The 1920s were a comparatively successful decade for Laurens. He had good patronage from both public and private patrons. He was written about, and discussed

[107] Fonds Léonce Rosenberg. Letter postmarked 19 septembre 1928. No catalogue number on folder. Laurens to Rosenberg.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Postcard from Hyères postmarked 28 novembre 1928. He was planning on staying about a month. Laurens to Rosenberg. c73 9600.564. One dated from 13 April 1926 was from Avignon from Laurens to Rosenberg stated that he was en route for the de Noailles. c71 9600.562.
[110] Ibid., and postcard from Laurens to Rosenberg postmarked 27-5-26, from Algiers, showing the mosaic Timgad-Toillette de L'Hermaphrodite.
[111] Dorothée Imbert, 'Unnatural acts: Propositions for a new French Garden, 1920-1930,' in Nancy Troy and Eve Blau, eds. op. cit. 170-171.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Anon. 'Chez le Cte. Charles de Noailles,' *Art et industrie*, (septembre1927), 16-17.
[114] Ibid.

in journals as an integral part of the avant-garde. By the end of the decade, he was well known and respected in artistic circles.

SECTION 3

Laurens: Art and Politics in the 1930s

Introduction

Laurens was *un rouge*, anti-fascist and an avant-garde artist.[1] The political and economic difficulties of the 1930s caused a polarisation and an entrenchment of people's opinions. Politics and art became united in the press. Writers and artists, especially in the avant-garde, became active in their condemnation of the increasing oppression of intellectuals in Europe. Laurens had always been quiet about his political and artistic opinions. However, during this era he wrote articles which elaborated some of his ideas, signed political manifestos and took part in projects in which art and politics were entwined. Like all of the avant-garde, he recognised the importance of creative freedom that could only be realised through respect for the individual. This was evident in the style of avant-garde art from the early 1930s, when the links between the Surrealists and the old Cubists were at their closest. The lyricism of form, gained from interpreting exterior reality through the interior spirit, was evident in the work of Laurens, Braque and Picasso at this time, which brought them close to the work of Miro and Arp. The closeness in artistic form and idea was correspondingly linked to political ideology. Magazines like *Cahiers d'art* and *Minotaure* promoted this link between the avant-garde and left wing political beliefs. They provided a contrast to right wing magazines like *Formes*, which promoted a style of art with its roots in classicism, French tradition and establishment values.

The economic depression and the politics of the 1930s had a marked effect on the art market. The boom of the 1920s came to an end with the Wall Street crash in October of 1929. France was the last to be affected by the slump but was also the last to

[1] Mady Mernier-Fourniau, *L'oeuvre sculpté d'Henri Laurens*, Thèse de Doctorat d'État, (Paris: Sorbonne, 1966), 29. She links his left wing tendencies with growing up in rue Louis Blanc.

emerge from its effects.[2] Although the particular problems of the art market were sometimes shown as being a consequence of a system where art had become too profitable, it was really only part of the broader problem facing Europe and America at the time.[3] Between 1918 and 1939 the franc lost nine tenths of its original gold equivalent. Savers were badly hit, especially those who were of modest means. Six per cent government bonds, which had been bought in the 1920s, were forcibly reconverted in 1932 at 4.5%. There were widespread bankruptcies, which again sapped public confidence.[4] People who had been patrons of the arts no longer had the money to spend. Others, who in boom years might have risked buying art, did not have the confidence in the stability of the investment. Laurens received few commissions during this time.

Coinciding with the economic depression was a series of weak governments. The previous political generation was on the way out. The centre and the right entirely changed their leaders at the beginning of the decade to people with relatively little experience.[5] The parliamentary right was strong in France, and the different strands were unified by clericalism, nationalism, liberal orthodoxy and anti-communism.[6] The left considered them to be fascist, because Mussolini's dictatorial anti-parliamentary style was widely admired.[7] A rejection of these establishment values brought together diverse factions including radical intellectuals.[8] It was less a draw towards communism than a disgust at the state of society and the success of fascism.[9]

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[2] Douglas and Melanie Johnson, *The Age of Illusion. Art and Politics in France, 1918-1940,* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 97.
[3] Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics, Collectors of Modern Painting, Aspects of the Parisian Art Market between 1910 and 1930*, un published PhD., University of London, (1978), 284. He cites Elie Faure, 'L'agonie de la peinture,' *L'amour de l'art*, (June 1931), 231-8.
[4] For a good analysis of the economic situation of the time, see Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years. France in the 1930s,* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995), 26-42.
[5] Philippe Bernard and Henri Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic, 1914-1938*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 175.
[6] Ibid., 209.
[7] Ibid., 210.
[8] Ibid., 216.

After the First World War, there had been an increasing obsession to reassert a French artistic tradition. The term, École de Paris, became increasingly applied to foreign artists working in Paris, and these artists were increasingly separated from French artists in the press and exhibitions.[10] In 1922, the Musée de Luxembourg established the Jeu de Paume as an annex devoted to foreign art. In 1923, the Salon des Indépendants exhibited according to nationality.[11] Articles in art magazines increasingly wrote about the 'problem' of foreign artists in Paris, who were undermining the French tradition.[12] With the economic crash, these articles became more frequent and virulent. Even the titles appeared more paranoid: 'L'agonie de la peinture,' 'Avons-nous encore un art français?' and 'La fin de la peinture française,' were just three from the early 1930s.[13] Art magazines integrated the political and economic situation into their articles. These frequently mentioned the difficult times, the perceived spiritual crisis or economic situation, both in dedicated articles and in ones that were mainly about art. This was apparent in a broad range of magazines. Right wing magazines, like *Formes*, became increasingly nationalistic. It included many articles on aspects of the French artistic tradition, including Gothic art, medieval manuscripts and classicising artists like Renoir. The continuity of this tradition was perceived to be of vital importance in contemporary art. In an article of 1931, Waldemar George dismissed the whole concept behind the term the 'École de Paris.' The very name, he felt, ratified 'elements' from abroad who claimed to be offspring of the French tradition. As such, it had no legitimacy. France, he wrote, was

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Romy Golan, 'The 'École Français' vs. the 'École de Paris'. The debate about the status of Jewish artists in Paris between the Wars,' in Kenneth Silver and Romy Golan, *The Circle of Montparnasse. Jewish arts in Paris 1905-1945,* (New York: Universe Books, 1985), 82.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid. These included Vauxcelles, who in *Le carnet de la semaine* in 1925, (no further source given) wrote of barbarian hoards rushing upon Montparnasse and descending on art galleries. Fritz Vanderpyl wrote a series of articles on the Jewish 'problem' in the *Mercure de France* in 1925, including 'Existe-il une peinture juive?', (15 juillet 1925), 386-396. This outlined the swarming of Jewish painters, who had no style of their own. Their invasion of French art and its market resulted in a decline of French artistic tradition.

[13] Ibid, 86. Elie Faure, 'L'agonie de la peinture,' *L'amour de l'art,* (juin 1930), 231-238. George Rivière, 'Avons-nous encore un art français?,' *L'art vivant,* (septembre 15 1930), 721-22. Jacques-Emile Blanche, 'La fin de la peinture française,' *L'art vivant,* (1931), 297-98.

more than a nation. It represented a certain spiritual and intellectual order of things. 'France will retain her noble status of exemplar to the world only by defending to the last ditch the iron law of her continuity.'[14] Cubism was relegated in the magazine to an artistic side-track of no historical importance.[15] The sculptor Despiau, on the other hand, was promoted as being an artist who showed the loftiest tendencies of the race, entirely purified of foreign elements. He assured, 'with the greatest force and serenity the continuation of the French tradition.'[16] Laurens was only briefly mentioned in the magazine. However, he believed in the continuity of tradition in art, admired Gothic art and some of his work showed a classical tendency. He was also avant-garde and left wing politically, both of which would be seen as undermining the elements that ensured the stability of society: institutions, doctrines, social distinctions and hierarchy.[17]

In contrast, *Minotaure* was a magazine linked with the Surrealists. It aimed to show the broad range of contemporary artistic and literary tendencies which, it claimed, could not be separated. It also showed a range of work from non-European countries. Most of the articles on contemporary art, were devoted to the avant-garde. Laurens did not feature frequently in this magazine. However, what was apparent was the grouping of artists from different tendencies. The Symbolists were frequently cited as being important for the contemporary vision.[18] They could be seen as being important for both the Cubists and Surrealists. Although politics were hardly mentioned, the Symbolists and Surrealists had strong links with left wing ideas. Laurens continued to be interested in the Symbolists and took an active role in left

[14] Waldemar George, 'French School or École de Paris?' *Formes*, (June 1931), 92-93.
[15] Waldemar George, 'The Artist's Dilema,' *Formes*, (September 1931), 9. See also Anon., 'An Exhibition of Contemporary French Art at London,' *Formes*, (February 1932), 223-224. The 'so-styled' Cubist pictures of Picasso, Braque, Gris and La Fresnay were said to provide a dynamic note, but now that La Fresnay had left Cubism, he had returned to the human principle. Braque, the Frenchman, was so much better when he humbly attempted to copy tangible objects.
[16] Ivanhoe Rambosson, 'The busts of Charles Despiau, French Sculptor,' *Formes*, (1933, no 32), 362.
[17] See Daniel Rops, 'The World Crisis and the Crisis of Man,' *Formes*, (October 1931), 131. He felt that the search into oneself led to confusion. Bergson and other similar thinkers were dissmissed as undermining to the foundations of society. God was the answer.
[18] For instance, Paul Eluard, 'Premieres vues anciennes,' *Minotaure*, (Winter 1937), 49.

wing, anti fascist politics in the 1930s. 'Dieu-table-cuvette', an article of 1933, drew together sculptors as diverse as Laurens, Brancusi, Maillol, Despiau and Giacometti.[19] 'Emancipation de la peinture' included the thoughts of Matisse, Miro and Braque. In both articles, artists of different affiliations were brought together. Illustrations of their work and discussions of their ideas, showed them to be close.[20] The lyricism evident in the sculpture of Laurens at this time and his ideas on art, reveal him to have had similar values to the broad range of the avant-garde at the time.

Cahiers d'art continued to be an important magazine for promoting those who were aligned to the Cubists, especially Laurens, Braque, Léger and Picasso. They were placed alongside images and articles about ancient and non-European art. Laurens was frequently featured in the 1930s. Laurens had always considered art as being a product of the humanity of the artist, an exteriorisation of an inner search.[21] During the 1920s, few of the other Cubists had expressed themselves in this way. The *Enquête* of 1924 in the *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, which was discussed in the previous chapter, had revealed that many Cubist artists had looked at their art in formal terms while also linking it to that of the past. This changed. The necessity of spirituality in art and life began to be discussed in earnest in the early 1930s as an antidote to the world crisis. The promotion of the natural and spiritual was evident in the style of the art of the time. *Cahiers d'art* included many articles on the arts of ancient peoples, like the Greeks, which were again linked to the contention that their better political system produced art which integrated the individual with the rest of society.[22] The magazine wrote frequent articles against fascist oppression. Left wing politics were seen as providing an answer.

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[19] Maurice Raynal, 'Dieu-table-cuvette,' *Minotaure*, (3-4, 1933), 39-53.
[20] E. Tériade, 'Émancipation de la peinture,' *Minotaure*, (3-4, 1933), 9-18.
[21] This was originally outlined in Documentation du musée national, Centre George Pompidou, Fonds Léonce Rosenberg. Letter from Laurens to Rosenberg, c 47 9600 538.
[22] Sophie Bowness, *The Presence of the Past. Art in France in the 1930s*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, (1995), 318. She discusses the introduction to Zervos, *L'art en Grèce des temps prehistoriques au debut du XVIIIe siecle*, which was published in 1934.

The polarisation in political opinion was manifested in the magazines which all had their set views. Although it would be wrong to assert that all artists who created work in a certain style had the corresponding political outlook, these magazines promoted those artists and styles that were felt to uphold certain values. The extremity of the situation in the 1930s tended to mean that even those who were normally quiet in their beliefs were forced to become active participants in society.

The State of Art 1929-1936

The stock market crash of 1929 affected all of society. The art market was a luxury trade which relied on consumer confidence and surplus cash. The most important dealers were able to wait but, as Kahnweiler explained, they sold nothing. He could sit in the gallery all day and not see a soul.[1] He was unable to renew his artists' contracts and would only take paintings on commission as there was no guarantee that they would be sold.[2] Kahnweiler used many means to keep the interest in buying art works alive. He took prospective clients directly to the studios of artists to view their work. For instance, in 1935 he showed the curator of the Royal Museum of Copenhagen to the studios of Laurens, Braque and Matisse.[3] In order to counter the immediate cash problem he ran a mutual aid syndicate, in which Laurens was involved, where a group of art lovers would pay a sum to the artists via the gallery. At the end of the year, depending on how much they had paid in, they were entitled to various works which the artists had made.[4] The idea was to help artists continue with their work and also keep an interest in collecting alive.[5] Other galleries had similar problems. Galerie Jeanne Bucher struggled during the late 1920s and early 1930s to show the wide range of artists which they supported.[6] Léonce Rosenberg had lost much professional credibility after his stance in the liquidation sales of Kahnweiler's sequestered stock. He still represented Herbin, Metzinger, Valmier, de Chirico and Picabia, but the economic crisis finished the Galerie de l'Effort Moderne.[7] These problems meant that the work of the avant-garde was inevitably less visible than before. Without gallery exhibitions and an active buying public, it was easy for avant-garde artists to be ignored. It was not just in the private galleries that the depression was obvious. Contemporary art was less visible even at the

[1] D-H Kahnweiler and Cremieux, *My Galleries and Painters*, trans. Helen Weaver, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 103-4.
[2] Pierre Assouline, *An Artful Life. A Biography of D-H Kahnweiler, 1884-1979*, trans. Charles Ruas, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 223.
[3] Ibid., 236.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 238.
[6] Ibid., 229.
[7] Ibid.

auction houses. The number of auctions that were held for the sale of modern art at the Hotel Drouot, dropped from thirteen in 1929 to six the following year.[8] Many fortunes were lost which forced old patrons of art to sell their treasures. However, at the same time there were others who were amassing great collections.[9]

Selling art in general was more of a challenge than before, but sculpture was especially badly hit. As has already been noted in the previous chapters, there were fewer collectors of sculpture than of paintings. It was expensive and difficult to house. This reluctance to buy sculpture was exacerbated by the fact that at this point neither Laurens nor Kahnweiler could afford to translate his work from *terre cuite* into bronze. It was difficult to explain to collectors that a sculpture in this material did not make it less important as a work of art and that fragility was the only drawback.[10] Laurens made fewer sculptures in stone during this period for the same reason. The material was expensive to buy and the sculpture took a long time to make. Many of his works, even in exhibition, remained in plaster or *terre cuite*.[11]

There were fewer works of sculpture being shown at the large exhibitions. In 1931 it was commented on that, in the middle of contemporary pictorial anarchy, sculpture remained an oasis of calm. However, the number of sculptures shown at the Salon d'Automne was greatly reduced from the previous year.[12] In 1934 it was again commented on that sculptors were hit worse by the crisis than painters.[13] However, the article also noted that weaker artists had been forced out of art, so that the general standard of work was higher.[14] Laurens, in common with most of the avant-garde, did not take part in these Salon exhibitions. The combination of the lack of vitality in

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[8] Malcolm Gee, *Dealers, Critics and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market between 1910 and 1930,* unpublished PhD dissertation University of London, (1978), 283.
[9] Assouline, op. cit., 220.
[10] Ibid., 227.
[11] Laurens took part in the exhibition, Les arts dits primitifs at the Maison d'Aujourd'hui in 1935. *La négresse*, 1934 was shown in plaster.
[12] Luc Benoist, 'Poil et plume, sculpteurs (au Salon d'Automne, chez Brandt et chez Ruhlmann.)' *Le crapouillot*, (février 1931), 30.
[13] Jacques Guenne, 'Le Salon d'Automne,' *L'art vivant*, (décembre 1934), 502.
[14] Ibid.

the private galleries, auction houses and large exhibitions meant that avant-garde art generally and its sculpture specifically became increasingly marginalized.

A number of his most loyal collectors ceased to buy his sculpture. Jacques Doucet died in 1929. Charles and Marie-Laure de Noailles had provided Laurens with some important commissions and had bought many smaller works from Laurens during the 1920s. By 1929 the emphasis of their art purchases had shifted towards Surrealist work which was closer to Marie-Laure's taste.[15] As the couple's lives began to move in separate directions, they became less active patrons and after the economic crisis really had an impact in 1932, the de Noailles bought substantially less art.[16] Jacques Zoubaloff was ruined by the economic crisis and Russian revolution.[17] He virtually ceased to buy art after 1929 and, in November of 1935, was forced to sell his enormous collection of two hundred and six works by the contemporary avant-garde. The size of the collection flooding onto the market worried both artists and dealers. This was especially relevant for Laurens as his work represented over a quarter of the sale. A huge publicity campaign was launched. *Cahiers d'art* advertised the event in issues five to six of 1935. Christian Zervos wrote how the collection, which included works by Picasso, Braque, Laurens, Léger and Gris represented the finest artists of the day. It showed the competence of his choice which demonstrated his discernment as a collector.[18] Léonce Rosenberg also used his energies to contain the potential disaster. He wrote how he had written, telephoned and visited people who he hoped would be interested in buying some of the work.[19] He felt, after it was over, that the sale had been a success.[20]

The sale came at a difficult time. 1935 was the low point of the depression in France, although America was already recovering. The only purchasers of art were foreign

[15] Shane Dunworth, *The de Noailles as Collectors and Patrons*, unpublished M.Phil., University of London, (1984), 114.
[16] Ibid., 113 and 144.
[17] Christian Derouet ed., *Fernand Léger. Une correspondance d'affaires*, (Paris: Éditions du centre Pompidou, 1996), 252, note 1.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., letter from Rosenberg to Gleizes, 29 novembre 1935.
[20] Ibid.

collectors.[21] It took place in November 1935 at the Hotel Drouot.[22] In keeping with the prices at the time, sculpture fared particularly badly. Eight paintings by Braque were sold, seven which reached or exceeded the estimates of the auction house.[23] Eleven paintings by Gris were sold, seven of which reached or exceeded the expectation of the sale catalogue.[24] The paintings by Braque were sold for between 2,000 and 16,000 francs. The paintings by Gris gained between 850 and 8,100 francs. There were twenty two sculptures by Laurens which were sold, of which only five exceeded the estimate. Most were considerably lower. Thirteen sculptures sold for under 300 francs, one sold for 1,000 and another for 2,000 francs.[25] This was the *Buste de femme* which had been illustrated in *L'esprit nouveau* in 1921 and in *L'art cubiste* by Guillaume Janneau. This exposure may have added to the status of the works. The majority of the others were below 500 francs. It seemed to make little difference to the price whether the materials were marble, *terre cuite* or wood. Ten were in *terre cuite,* and while the prices were mainly below 300 francs, one sold for 910 francs, which was more than a bronze of a similar size.[26] The *Clown* from 1915 in painted wood sold for 1,000 francs, whereas the contemporary *Danseuse espagnole* which was also in wood only gained 300.[27] The difference in size of the two works may have had an effect on the price. However the marble *Tête de femme* fetched 420 francs which was less than the smaller *Femme au mirroir* which was in the same material.[28] One would also have considered that the higher status of the marble than the wood would have been reflected in the price. This was clearly not the case. Fragility may have been a concern with both the constructions and the *terres cuites*. To have works like this in a home would have required a special display area. The prices that the sculptures commanded were closer to the cost of

[21] Assouline, op. cit., 236.
[22] Drouot Documentation, sale catalogue of the collection of *Jaques Zoubaloff*, 27- 28 November 1935, at the Hotel Drouot, Bellier and Hessel.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., Laurens, *Compotier*, terre cuite rehaussée de couleur, 1919, 36 x 17 x 13, estimate 600, sold for 910 francs. Laurens, *Femme drapée,* bronze, cire perdue, n.d., 38 x 11 x 10 estimate, 600, sold for 900 francs.
[27] Ibid., *Le clown*, bois peint, 55 x 22 x 20 cm., n.d. *Danseuse espagnole*, bois, 32 x 10 x 8 cm., n.d.
[28] Ibid., *Tête de femme*, marbre, 34 x 19 x 13 cm., n. d. *Femme au mirroir*, marbre, 22 x 11 x 9 cm. n.d.

drawings by Braque and Gris in the sale. In part these low values of the work of Laurens must have been owing to the numbers being sold on one day. However, it appears to have been a sculptural problem. There were only six sculptures by Csaky in the auction. All but one of his were below the expected price, with them being sold for between 120 and 500 francs. Three of those were in the high status material of bronze and another was in marble. The sizes were similar to those in the sale by Laurens. The fact of sculptures having less value than paintings can be illustrated by a *terre cuite* by Braque which was sold at a sale earlier that year for less than any of his water colours.[29] At the same auction, a Modigliani *Masque de femme* in stone sold for 600 francs, where as an oil painting by him fetched 20,000 francs.[30]

There were thirty six works on paper by Laurens which were sold at the Zoubaloff sale. They were in a variety of media including lithographs, drawings, papier collé, water colour and gouache.[31] Most were from the period between 1916 and 1919, so it appears that Zoubaloff was collecting mainly water colour drawings and papiers collés in the early Cubist style. Hotel Drouot had priced them in a comparable bracket to the Gris drawings, with most being between 100 and 300 francs. However, there were only ten works on paper which were being sold by Gris and all apart from one exceeded the estimate with the prices ranging from 150 to 1,300 francs. The work on paper by Laurens were mainly sold for less than the estimated price, the majority going for between 75 and 150 francs. This was low, although the drawings by Herbin fared worse. The reasons for the comparatively good prices obtained by Gris as opposed to Laurens were possibly owing to scarcity. Gris was dead, appears to have made fewer drawings and only ten were for sale at this sale. The Zoubaloff sale showed how low the prices were for Cubist work in general and Laurens' work in particular in the 1930s. He hardly featured in other sales of the decade. He also received few private commissions during the 1930s. He made a fire back for Helena

[29] Drouot Documentation, catalogue for sale, *Collection de l'art moderne*, Lucerne Suisse, 20 juin 1935. Braque, *Jeune fille*, terre cuite, 19 x 7 estimate 200, sold for 210, less than for any water colour in the sale which were sold for between 270 and 700 francs.
[30] Ibid. Modigliani, *Masque de femme*, sculpture sur pierre, 47 x 26 cm., n. d. Modigliani, *Femme nue au collier de corail,* peintre, 1918, 92 x 60 cm.
[31] Drouot Documentation, catalogue for the sale of the collection of *Jacques Zoubaloff*, op. cit.

Rubenstein and had a few other small commissions but the major private patronage of the previous decade was over.

State commissions

The state bought two sculptures by Laurens in the 1930s. It was not until 1936 that the *Femme accroupie* of 1929-30 by Laurens (or the *Cariatide* as it is now known) (See Plate 2.12) was acquired. A further small sculpture by Laurens was bought by the state in 1940.[32] Both of these sculptures were fairly conservative examples of his work. The Musée d'art moderne only bought their first Brancusi in 1946, their first Lipchitz in 1947 and it was not until the 1950s that works by Arp and Giacometti were added to their collection.[33] In contrast, by 1931 the museum already had seven works by Bourdelle and six by Despiau.[34]

The system for buying works of art by the state was biased towards official art. This was both because of who was choosing the works and where they were looking for their acquisitions. Many more paintings were bought than sculptures, and those which were bought, because they were chosen from the Salon des Indépendants, tended to be works conforming to that style. Preferential treatment in the acquisitions of painting over sculpture can be seen throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Between 1920 and 1924 three sculptures and over forty two-dimensional works were bought from the Salon des Indépendants.[35] This trend of disparity between the two media was to continue through the following decade. For instance in 1934 only two-dimensional work was bought from the Salon des Indépendants. In 1935 two paintings and one sculpture were bought and the following year nine paintings and two sculptures were acquired for the state from that salon.[36] In 1934, a commission was formed to broaden the range of art acquired by the state. There was to be a consultative committee to buy works from exhibitions organized by *La société des*

[32] Archives Nationales, Laurens Dossier, F/21/6795. There is some confusion as to whether this was the *Ondines* of 1933 or the *Femme acroupie à la draperie* of 1932. This will be discussed later.
[33] Patrick Elliott, *Sculpture in France, 1918-1939*, unpublished PhD., University of London, (1991), 8.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Archives Nationales, F/21/4105, Carton: Salon des Indépendants.

artistes français, La société nationale des beaux-arts, La société des artists décorateurs, La société du Salon des Tuileries, La société du Salon d'Automne et La société des artistes Indépendants.[37] However, even with this increased breadth, the exhibitions cited, were either showing official art or were fundamentally Indépendant in style. The lists of those who were on the commissions also show this tendency. For instance, in 1933 the proposed list for membership of the board of *La commission consultative des achats aux salons* had forty names.[38] Not all accepted, but although they included Bonnard as a painter, most had important positions in artistic establishments. These included Brière who was conservator at the Musée national de Versailles and Signac as President de La société des artistes Indépendants. There were no sculptors or members of the avant-garde. The critics Vauxcelles, Waldemar George and Camille Mauclair were also on the list. These writers had a right wing, nationalistic agenda and were fundamentally not in tune with the progressive ideas of the avant-garde.

A system of recommendation appears to have started in 1926 when the folders in the archives included letters from artists drawing their work to the attention of the board and also letters from establishment figures promoting certain artists.[39] It is clear that although those who were recommending artists may have been genuine in their pursuit, they were not from artistic backgrounds but were bureaucratic, establishment figures. Social connections played a crucial role. George Turpin in his book of 1929 entitled *La stratégie artistique* made a close connection between sculpture commissions and political intrigue.[40] It was not unknown for critics to be bribed into giving favourable reviews.[41] Some writers were both critics and on the selection

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[36] Archives Nationales, F/21 4105, ibid.
[37] Archives Nationales, F/21/4758, folder for 1934, Travaux d'art musées expositions- Arrêté. Le ministre de l'éducation nationale, undated.
[38] Archives Nationales, F/21/4758, folder for 1933, brown form dated 27/4/33
[39] Archives Nationales, F/21/4105. This was the first folder since the war to include these letters. There were some in the 1914 folder, so either the system changed or the letters were thrown out. This would be surprising given the amount of documentation which survives. An example of recommendation was by M. Sarrout, a senator in Paris who was recommending a M. Bastide.
[40] George Turpin, *La stratégie artistique*, (Paris: 1929), 95-96. Quoted in Patrick Elliott, *Sculpture in France, 1918-1939*, unpublished PhD., University of London, (1991), 48.
[41] Ibid., 50.

committee. It cannot always have been easy to remain impartial. Academic education, the Prix de Rome and the Légion d'Honneur were the most effective way of achieving major commissions. Landowski and Bouchard, who were professors at the École des Beaux Arts, had the majority of state commissions in the 1920s.[42] The critics did not generally favour their style but preferred that of the Indépendants. Although this broad term embraced artists as diverse as Maillol, Bourdelle and Despiau, their style was united by being linked to the classical tradition, abandonment of anecdote and extraneous features, gravity of expression and stasis.[43] This 'pure' sculpture implied taste and discernment in the beholder, and above all was seen to belong to the French tradition. The system for buying works of art to be shown at museums favoured this style. Thus style and a political agenda become merged.

What this system excluded were those, like Laurens, who did not exhibit at salons and were avant-garde in style. This was partly recognized, as another commission was created in 1938. This stated that they were only going to buy works by living artists and that there should be two teams of people. The first would go to the salons and the other which was to be made up of twelve people were to look at works which were not exhibited in those institutions.[44]

The state purchased the *Femme accroupie* by Laurens in 1936. This was when George Huisman was directing the Ministry of Beaux Arts. It was with his appointment that the policy for purchasing relaxed to include avant-garde art. Works by Csaky, Zadkine and Lipchitz were bought while he was in charge, as well as works from the exhibition of 1937, *Les maîtres de l'art Indépendant* at the Petit Palais.[45] The pattern of the sale was typical. It appears that Laurens was initially

[42] Ibid., 85. He cites that Landowski had the most prestigious and expensive commissions of the day. He gained 400,000 francs for the Monument to Clément Ader in 1928 and 1,600,000 francs for the tomb for Maréchal Foch in 1931. The normal state commission averaged 10-15,000 francs. Bouchard also gained eleven expensive commissions between 1920 and 1939.
[43] Elliott, 1991, op. cit., 95.
[44] Archives Nationales, F/21/4759, folder: *Projet de création d'une commission d'achat. Note sur la Commission des achats et commands d'oeuvres d'art*, décembre 1938.
[45] Elliott, 1991, op. cit., 10.

recommended by Mme. Cuttoli and M. Dezrois.[46] Pierre Ladoué went to Laurens' studio where he saw a model for the *Femme accroupie* which Laurens could make in marble or stone for 15,000 francs. Ladoué wrote a note wondering whether the Musée Luxembourg would be willing to have it in their collection if the state pursued this commission.[47] Laurens was called to the *Direction générale des beaux-arts* and the deal was struck.[48] He was to be paid in installments in May, October and the following February.[49] Laurens completed the first stage of the sculpture in early May and asked for his payment.[50] He was visited and the payment was made. All proceeded according to plan and he finished the sculpture at the beginning of October.[51] He was asked to bring it to the *dépôt des ouvrages.*[52]

The sale of the *bronze petite statuaire* in 1939 to 1940 was more complicated.[53] (Plate 3.1) This purchase was priced to fall within the *petits achats* limit of 6,000 francs which had been initiated in February 1939.[54] The sale was proposed in November. The contract in January of 1940 had two blurred photographs of an *Ondines* and *Femme accroupie à la draperie,* both which appear to be already in bronze. They bought one which they then lost. Laurens wrote that it was the *Femme accroupie à la draperie* which they had bought, but on the back of the photograph of the *Ondines* someone had written that it was this one which had been lost. It is

[46] Archives Nationales, F/21/6795, Laurens dossier, 'Femme accroupie,' typed note dated 18 décembre 1935, from Georges Huisman to M. Poli. This note was followed by another dated 6/1/36, again from Georges Huisman to M. Poli saying that Laurens had been recommended by some other amateurs.
[47] Ibid. Typed letter, Musée nationaux-Musée du Luxembourg, dated 23 janvier 1936. On the same letter there was a penned 'oui, 13,000 francs'.
[48] Ibid. Printed form dated 29 Jan 1936.
[49] Ibid. Arreté du 17 février 1936. The contract was not drawn up until 29th February. On this was stapled a photo of the sculpture which had Laurens' name, address and the name of the statue and the original price in his own hand writing. Given the time involved in developing the film and the fact that Ladoué would have had to return to the studio for the details to be put on the back, one must speculate that Laurens took this himself. The two sculptures which were offered for purchase in 1940 were treated in the same way. It is possible that Laurens had photographs of his work with the details available for prospective clients.
[50] Ibid., letter from Laurens dated 5 mai 1936. The first instalment was for 5,000 francs.
[51] Ibid., letter from Laurens stamped 28 septembre 1936 saying that he had nearly finished. He was visited and this was confirmed 19 octobre 1936.
[52] Ibid. Letter 28 octobre 1936.
[53] Archives Nationales, F/21/6795, Laurens dossier, folder for 'achat d'un bronze petite statuaire'.
[54] Archives Nationales, F/21/4759, Folder 2, séance du 3 février 1939.

possible that they were looking for the wrong one. There were letters from various personnel on this subject. It was apparently in the study of M. Laugier, the *Directeur du cabinet du ministré*.[55]

Significantly, these two sculptures were conservative examples of Laurens' work. Pierre Ladoué, who had been to the studio to make the selection wrote that it was a work which was representative of the 'art synthétique' of Laurens.[56] While the *Femme accroupie* represents one aspect of Laurens' primitive style from the late 1920s, it could not be seen as being his most radical work. The early 1930s were marked by experimentation in form. By the mid 1930s when Ladoué would have been looking at the work in Laurens' studio, the ambiguous *Le torse* or the amorphous *La mère* of 1935 would have been available. The *Femme accroupie* represented a figure which, although different from the usual Indépendant style of work acquired by the state, was not so radical as to be shocking for the museum.

[55] Archives Nationales, F/21/6795. The letters were written during January and the first half of February. Payment was also slow in arriving. Although the postal order for 6,000 francs was sent on 2 February 1940, there is a letter dated 11/3/40 from Laurens asking for payment.
[56] Archives Nationales, F/21/6795, Laurens dossier, 'Femme accroupie,' letter dated 23 janvier 1936, op. cit.

Art and Politics

The 1930s in France was a decade of weak government and increasing social unrest. The economic depression sapped peoples' confidence. This was only part of a much broader problem. As political uncertainty and oppression of the intellectuals became widespread in Europe and Russia, the possibility of war became increasingly discussed. Pacifism was widespread. Indeed, many French people thought it would be preferable to be governed by Germany rather than have another war.[1] Coinciding with this was a strong nationalistic streak, which was revealed through an interest in eugenics,[2] French cultural heritage, especially in France's medieval architecture and sculpture,[3] and in restoring the broken link with nature as located in Corot, Poussin, and Courbet.[4] One aspect of this was revealed in the copying and imitating the styles of past French masters by the avant-garde from around 1916, as in Gris' drawing, *The Bathers (after Cézanne)* of 1916. Another way in which this nationalism was shown in art during the twenties and thirties was in the many landscape paintings produced by previously avant-garde artists like Derain, Herbin and de La Fresnaye. These paintings linked to the concept of French landscape being a symbol for France itself, which had in a sense been 'wounded' in the war.[5] The need for national characteristics in the style of art was felt to be important. French painting was thought to be in a crisis, which art magazines linked to that in society. Art magazines found different solutions to the problem. *Formes* and other right wing reviews felt that the answer was an adherence to tradition in both art and society.

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[1] Eugen Weber, *The Hollow Years. France in the 1930s,* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995), 20–25.
[2] Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia. Art and Politics between the Wars,* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 98. Dr Alexis Carrel, *L'homme, cet inconnu,* (Paris: 1935), became an instant best seller. It argued for the perpetration of the strong and that a great race must perpetuate its best elements.
[3] Ibid., 28-29. Golan argues that the 'martyrdom' of 3,500 churches during the first world war resulted in the French pitting their Medieval architecture against the German's.
[4] Ibid., 28. However it could also be argued that the Section d'or group had thought in these nostalgic terms before the First World War in paintings such as Albert Gleizes, *Le Dépiquage des moissons,* 1912. Some of their ideas came from the Abbaye de Créteil commune which established itself on the banks of the Marne. This group of painters and poets wanted to integrate art with life away from the stifling control of the bourgeoisie. See Daniel Robbins, 'From Symbolism to Cubism. The Abbaye of Créteil,' *Art Journal,* (Winter 1963-4), 112-3.
[5] Golan, op. cit. His first chapter makes a convincing argument to this effect. See esp. 7-16.

Cahiers d'art was more left wing in its tendencies. It was the magazine which espoused theories that were most in tune with those of Laurens. From the beginning of the 1930s there were articles devoted to the necessity of regaining the spiritual core in society and art. Christian Zervos wrote 'Vie spirituelle ou activité utile?' in 1932.[6] In this, he questioned whether the spiritual life was obsolete, or whether it was something which modified the center of one's existence. He wondered whether one could lift life out of the contemporary condition by returning to the necessary disciplines of the interior. He called upon the present generation

> *de s'orienter vers les profondeurs inconnues...qui portent le réseau complexe de l'esprit, de mieux pénétrer les mystères latents en nous, ...de multiplier les échanges entre le physique et le moral entre le moi et la réalité.*[7]

This concentration on the spirit was individualistic, and as such was part of left wing thinking. Laurens had always considered the spiritual essence of the artist to be crucial in creating art, but this was new for most of the original Cubists.[8] Zervos continued by writing how important it was to revive the sentiment of the real and of the spirit of metaphysical intuition, '*enfin, adapter les expériences antérieures au système d'expérience actuelle.*'[9] He was not alone in promoting the importance of the spiritual over the intellectual. Henri Focillon wrote in 1934 how the life within the artist's mind developed on many levels which were connected with bridges.[10] The artist needed to live his emotional life through form. His whole life was steeped in the relationship between the inner and outer realities.[11] The life of form in the mind of the artist was merely preparation for its life in space.[12] This again can be associated with Laurens' concept of the art object being an 'exteriorization' of the

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[6] Christian Zervos, 'Vie spirituelle ou activité utile?,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1932), 5-8.
[7] Ibid., 5
[8] See Enquête, 'Chez les cubistes,' *Bulletin de la vie artistique* which ran for six issues, 1 November 1924 to 15 January 1925. It included short articles by a broad range of artists.
[9] Zervos, 1932, op. cit., 7.
[10] Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. Charles Beecher, Hogan and George Kubler, (New York: George Wittenborn Inc 1948, orig. 1934), 49.
[11] Ibid., 47
[12] Ibid., 46

artist's inner reality.[13] This importance of tapping the spiritual in the artist was part of a wider quest for a spiritual growth in society. Bergson, who was still an influential thinker, had a pessimistic view of contemporary life. In 1932 he wrote that in order for man to regain his soul he must lead a healthier, simpler life. He advocated spiritual regeneration through a return to agriculture. Unless there was a return to the soil with a corresponding awakening of the spirit, France would find itself once again involved in war.[14]

Many of the avant-garde who had espoused the machine aesthetic and Taylorism in the 1920s felt the need to return to nature and to nurture the spirit. Léger, whose work underwent a dramatic rethink in the 1930s spent entire months away from Paris from the beginning of the decade and stayed at his family farm in Normandy.[15] His cry that one should 'take time in this fast and ever changing world... to work outside the elements of disintegration'[16] was very similar to the concept that Laurens held to be true that the artist '*se développe avec lenteur, dans le silence.*'[17] However, it was far from his espousal of the machine aesthetic of the previous decade. Le Corbusier who had also been a strong advocate of the machine, rationality and order during the 1920s, started to spend long periods of time south of Bordeaux, producing paintings which were concerned with man and nature.[18] In 1931 Braque moved into his new home at Varengeville, near Dieppe.[19] He still had his studio in Paris, but spent less time there.

Laurens had spent much time during the late teens and the 1920s at L'Etang-la-Ville which, although it was only an hour from Paris, was situated in a forest and retained

[13] Documentation du Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, Rosenberg archive, letter from Laurens to Rosenberg, c47 9600 538. All letters between Laurens and Rosenberg are from this archive unless otherwise stated.
[14] Golan, 1995, op.cit., 87. Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la réligion*, 1932. Valery also had similar views which he discussed in *Regards sur le monde actuel,* 1931.
[15] Golan, ibid., 69.
[16] Ina Conze-Meairs, 'Revolution and Tradition. The metamorphosis of the conception of realism in the late works of Fernand Léger,' in catalogue, *Fernand Léger, The Late Years*, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1987), 13.
[17] 'Enquête. Laurens,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1939), 68.
[18] Golan, 1995, op.cit., 75.
[19] Karen Wilkin, *Georges Braque,* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 97.

the quiet and the look of a traditional village in the Île-de-France. He continued to visit, and from 1932 he spent half of the year there, where he walked every morning.[20] These walks were important for his work. The rhythms which he saw in nature would be translated into his sculptural forms. This method of working links with the ideas of Focillon where the artist renewed and enriched his life which in turn fed into his work.[21] The emphasis which Laurens placed on tradition and the physical act of making, can also be linked with Focillon's ideas of *métier*.

> The artist, carving wood, hammering metal, kneading clay, chiseling a block of stone, keeps alive for us man's own dim past...a survivor of the 'hand age.'[22]

Laurens loved his craft, which he felt was superior to any other occupation.[23]

Laurens was not alone in seeing himself as a craftsman. The Surrealist magazine, *Minotaure* had an article on contemporary sculpture in 1934.[24] (Plate 3.6) The studios of Laurens and others were photographed with their work. He was featured on the first page and given a double page spread. The illustrations showed his work from the late 1920s and early 1930s, both inside his studio and in the garden. One interior photograph had the image of the large *Ondines* shown with a small maquette in front, together with a mallet, which gave the appearance that Laurens was in the middle of working. Giacometti's studio had drawings on the wall, a token hammer and finished pieces arranged around the room. Brancusi's studio was full of rough stone and the odd piece of finished work. Maillol was also shown as a craftsman working in his studio. The avant-garde were clearly keen to show themselves as artisans whatever their artistic allegiances. Despiau, by contrast, was shown seated in front of a cabinet containing his sculptural busts. The room had none of the articles associated with making, but had a long case clock ticking in the corner. The accompanying article by Maurice Raynal was meant to explain, and presumably unite, the disparate elements. He wrote how the realization of an idea became a

[20] Marthe Laurens, ' L'oeuvre et l'homme,' in catalogue, Leymarie, *Henri Laurens*, (Académie de France à Rome, 1980), unpaged.
[21] Focillon, 1934, op. cit., 46-49.
[22] Ibid., 71.
[23] Assouline, op. cit., 197.

primitive chase, which was made to obey an instinct. The only goal was '*arracher son secret à l'idée qui l'a illuminé.*'[25]

The move to the country by so many of the avant-garde could be argued as a collective return to roots, to the soil and spirituality, in a manner which was being promoted by Zervos, Focillon and Bergson. It stopped the daily cross fertilisation of ideas and transferred the emphasis from a collective art back to the individuality of the personality. However, there were links between the work of all of the artists. They were still drawing from the Cubist vocabulary of the previous decade but were showing an increased interest in a human and natural aspect. This can be seen in the subject matter chosen by the artists, more earthy tones of paint and, as was particularly relevant for Laurens, in an increased lyricism and organic quality to form. This quality was designed to give the appearance of a less intellectual content, to seem closer to nature and to convey feeling. As Focillon wrote in 1934,

> Form exists in matter and space. [This] realization...distinguishes the artist from...the intellectual...Memory provides a rich storehouse [which]...allows the artist to free himself from the tyranny of the model... Form's very externality is its innermost principle, its life in the mind is simply a preparation for its life in space.[26]

The links which the artists were re-establishing between their spirit and nature did not mean that they were copying the forms which surrounded them, but were using it as a storehouse for ideas and a metaphor for life.

Laurens experimented with new and diverse means of expression throughout the 1930s. Contemporary works could have an entirely different appearance. This was another aspect of not working to a formula but obeying the interior impulse. Works as dissimilar as the abstracted *Femme couchée* (Plate 3.2), the elongated *Femme à la draperie*, (Plate 3.3) the Cubist inspired *Standing woman* (Plate 3.4) and the plump *Banderolle,* all date from 1931. (Plate 3.5) Although some of these are linked in subject, the styles are different. *Femme couchée* is one of a number of reclining

[24] Maurice Raynal, 'Dieu-table-cuvette,' *Minotaure*, (1934, no. 3-4), 39-53.
[25] Ibid., 39.
[26] Focillon, 1934, op. cit., 45-46.

nudes whose generalised, swollen forms have little definition. *Femme à la draperie*, like *Banderolle* holds a snake of drapery that balances and adds interest to the form. They have a similar pose. However, the forms are different. The former is rounded and soft in outline whereas the *Banderolle* has a cylindrical and squat body. The face of the *Femme à la draperie* is defined whereas that of the *Banderolle* is generalized and faceted. The relief of the standing woman was a return to the faceting and decomposition of anatomy of the early 1920s. However, this is not an image of a contemporary, city woman. Her generalized form appears to be standing on a rock. The previous year Laurens had made a series of reclining women whose abstracted forms undulated in an impossible manner (Plate 3.7). They were some of the most abstract work which Laurens was to make. Few other artists could command quite such a range of styles. In 1931 Picasso created a twisted metal *Figurine*, a bronze *Head of a Woman*, his decomposed *Figures by the Sea* and a flattened, glass-like *Pitcher and Bowl of Fruit*. However, in general, there was less unity than before within individual oeuvres, as each artist struggled to find a personal voice.

Laurens' work from the late 1920s was almost exclusively of the female form, and was frequently associated with water.[27] Laurens did not see the sea often, although he had taken a trip to Algiers in 1926 and it is possible that he again saw it on his trip to Italy in 1928.[28] However, it has been said that the idea of the sea's rhythm and the the metamorphosing qualities of water were important for him.[29] The *Océanide* of 1933 is related to the more classical work of his oeuvre. In keeping with the idea of the form being the personification of the sea, the figure rears up from the waves, expressing exuberance. The body is distorted to communicate the expression of the inner sensation. In the same way *Les ondines* of 1933 (Plate 3.8) reflects the rolling rhythms of the sea. Unusually for him, two figures are incorporated. Their bodies

[27] For instance: *Ondines,* 1933, *The Wave*, 1933, *Océanide,* 1933, and the many drawings and sculptures on the theme of the *Sirens* from c. 1937 onwards.
[28] It has always been said that he did not see the sea until 1937 when he went to Brittany, for instance, catalogue, *Henri Laurens, rétrospective.* (Lille: Musée d'art moderne, Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1992), 279. However, postcard no. c72 9600.563 dated 27-5-26 from Laurens or Rosenberg refutes this. He also spent time with the de Noailles at their house at Hyères which overlooked the sea during the 1920s. Laurens sent a postcard to his sister from Florence which was dated 1928. Laurens archive.
[29] George Limbour, 'Laurens et le sphinx,' *Le point*, (July 1946), 23.

recline on the undulating base, the rubberized forms, reminiscent of Ingres, are positioned one behind the other, in similar poses but at different states. A sculptural rhythm is created. Unlike the related *Deux femme couchée* of 1930, where the bodies are heavy on the ground, these figures ride the waves. While essentially frontal, they retain visual interest all round. A sculpture that retains a similar carefree manner is *Vague* of 1932, where the figure kicks into the air in a manner reminiscent of the figures in a Clodion relief.

The contemporary use of elongated and liquid form is not unique to either the subject of water, or to Laurens. His *Femme couchée* of 1930, (Plate 3.9) which predates the amorphous line used by Picasso in his nudes of the early 1930s, shows a female nude of impossibly long torso and boneless limbs. Laurens created a number of works within this style and they relate strongly to the forms that Braque was painting in his scenes from 1930 to 1931. Braque's *Baigneuses au parasol* of 1931 (Plate 3.10) represent two bathers on a contemporary beach with beach huts. This, in turn, relates to a number of works at this time which show a reclining figure with an amorphous line similar to that within Laurens' sculptures. While the form which both were using looked back to Ingres and Matisse's *La Serpentine* of 1909, it was also contemporary. The Surrealists, with their search for an interior vision frequently made use of undulating lines, as in *Chaste Joseph* of 1928 by Max Ernst. Picasso allowed flowing forms rather than anatomical correctness to be the reason for the work at this time. His *Reclining Woman* of 1932 was particularly close to the group of sculptures which Laurens created from 1930, both in subject and form. As well as painting many sleeping and reclining nudes at this time, Picasso was continuing the theme of figures on the beach from the teens and 1920s. These were, in spite of their distorted forms, like those of Braque, often modern figures playing with beach balls at a resort.

This link of female form with water was the continuation of a theme which had been popular since the late nineteenth century with artists like Renoir and Cézanne. It was also important in poetry. For Mallarmé, a voyage across the sea was frequently

linked with the creative act. Water for him was also linked with the amniotic fluid of life.[30] Ozenfant used it as a metaphor for the contemporary era: 'it is the era of living springs.'[31] It is a symbol of the source of life itself within the collective unconscious. This was perhaps particularly relevant in an era which was searching for the roots of civilization. For Jung, water was the most common symbol for the unconscious. Where as the spirit soars above, all that is instinctual and base comes from the flowing rivers of blood and the lake of passion.[32] This again links with the contemporary search for the inner spirit. What Jung described as the 'anima,' the magical feminine being which can be revealed in many forms with both positive and negative aspects, he thought of as being the archetype of life itself.[33] The mother type can be full of wisdom and have cherishing qualities. The anima can also belong to the world of the dead, hidden and secret.[34] The *Ondines* and *Oceanides,* which Laurens made at the beginning of the 1930s, were positive beings. The series of *Sirens,* which he made in the later 1930s, depicted beings, which according to myth and contemporary poetry, habitually infatuate young men and suck the life from them.[35]

In spite of the abstraction evident in the work of Laurens and Braque at the beginning of the 1930s, both were still thought to be Cubists. Pierre Gueguen wrote how Laurens' *Femmes couchées* of 1931 revealed '*la leçon du cubisme*'.[36] However, he also commented on the link between his art, his personal spirit and that of nature. '*Le naturel de ses femmes autant que du naturel féminin en lui-même, relève du naturel plus vaste de la nature, de la grande Maïa*'.[37] This link with nature was

[30] Robert Cohn, 'Mallarmé's Windows,' *Yale French Studies* (No. 54, 1977), 26. In discussing the lines in the poem, *Yeux, lacs avec ma simple ivresse de renâitre...J'ai troué dans le mûr de toile une fenêtre,* he explains how the baptism through the eyes is associated with water, then with a pane, so that the water becomes linked with the waters of birth.
[31] Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, (New York: Dover Publications Ltd.1952), 6.
[32] C.G. Jung, *The collected works, vol. 9. The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,* trans. R.F.C. Hull, (London: Routlege,1959), 18-19.
[33] Ibid. 32.
[34] Ibid., 81-82.
[35] Ibid., 24-25.
[36] Pierre Guéguen, 'La conjonction de la realité sensuelle et de l'abstraction dans l'oeuvre de Henri Laurens,' *Cahiers d'art*, (Vol 1-2, 1932), 52.
[37] Ibid.

clearly considered part of Cubism. It has been stated that the ideas of Laurens and Braque were close.[38] In an article on Braque in 1932, Christian Zervos wrote how his work was also Cubist.[39] He outlined Braque's ideas on Cubism in formal terms. The subject of a work was only the poetry of the picture, the inter-relationship of forms. The exterior world was re-formed, rather than deformed onto a two dimensional surface. Colour was a constructive force in itself, independent of form.[40] He was clearly thinking of Cubism in formal terms. On the same page, the illustrations show some paintings of flattened, abstracted female heads with multiple views and lyrical line. The flowing line and expressive faceted form is reminiscent of some by Picasso, like *The Sculptor* of 1931. The deformation of the body parts, the balance and rhythm of the curves and the linearity link with Surrealists as well as the Cubist images of Laurens and others from the early 1930s. Zervos wrote how Braque had been restrained until recently by his fear of the irrational. '*Mais, aujourd'hui...il peut laisser toute liberté à ses émotions*'.[41]

Minotaure included an article by Tériade on 'Émancipation de la peinture' in 1933.[42] The illustrations were of work by Matisse, Braque, Miro and Picasso. All showed a fluidity of form. Tériade wrote how chance, spontaneity and the absence of a model were the fundamental concepts of contemporary art.[43] He also included the ideas which had been expressed to him by various artists during conversations with him. All wrote in different ways about the importance of the interior vision and the cultivation of the spirit. Braque wrote how one should not loose contact with nature. However, he also stated the importance of creative hallucination. This was '*la réalisation définitive d'une longe imprégnation dont les débuts auraient remonté à notre jeunesse.*'[44] Laurens was not included in this article which was devoted exclusively to painters. However, the ideas expressed were close to his own. He

[38] Interview with Mme. Denise Laurens, 11 September 1998.
[39] Christian Zervos, 'Georges Braque et le développement du cubisme', *Cahiers d'art*, (Vol 1-2, 1932), 18.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 13.
[42] E. Tériade, 'Emancipation de la peinture,' *Minotaure*, (no. 3-4, 1933), 9-20.
[43] Ibid., 10.
[44] Ibid., 10.

never used a model. Forms developed over a long time of working in silence.[45] They were formed as a result of an inward, non-intellectual search. Clearly, the interior vision and the expression of the emotions was now considered an integral part of Cubism, although this also brought them closer to the ideas of the Surrealists.

Minotaure was keen to establish the links between the avant-garde. An advertisement for the *Exposition Minataure* in 1934 listed the artists who would be participating. There were many, including Arp, Brancusi, Braque, de Chirico, Ernst, Matisse, Man Ray and Laurens.[46] It represented a broad range of contemporary artists. In an accompanying article two aspects of contemporary art were discussed. The first was the *recherche poétique d'une réalité inexprimée* and the other was *la recherche passionnée du mouvement dans l'expression plastique*.[47] Both these aspects were general enough to unite the different factions. Artists who had been affiliated with the Cubists were, in the 1930s, becoming more lyrical and free in their approach to art. The contemporary pictorial language, according to the article, was to be evocative and capable of explaining the subtle visions of Rimbaud and Lautréamont.[48] The article condemned the idea of the imitation of outward appearances. Like Breton, Tériade made the link with symbolist poets as the founding example of the search for an interior model.[49]

Cahiers d'art carried many articles on ancient and non-European art. It showed the past with the present in order, Zervos hoped, to reveal the unity of the human spirit. In 1934, Zervos made this interest in the past political, when he wrote about the contemporary spiritual crisis. He believed that through the study of ancient Greek art, the antagonism between the individual and the collective could be corrected.[50] Laurens was to write something similar in 1939 when he said that epochs which

[45] Henri Laurens, 'Enquête,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1939), 68.
[46] Advertisement, *Minotaure*, 1934, no 5, unpaged. *Exposition Minotaure* in the Palais des Beaux Arts Bruxelles, 12 mai au 3 juin 1934.
[47] E. Tériade, 'Aspects actuels de l'expression plastique,' *Minotaure*, (no 5 1934), 33.
[48] Ibid.
[49] André Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, (Paris and London: Macdonald and Co. Pub. Ltd.), 4.

were relatively behind in their economy, produced forms which were spiritually more advanced.[51] Like Zervos and many artists of the time, he considered the links between ancient and contemporary art to be important. He participated in the exhibition, *Les Arts dits Primitifs* in the *Maison d'Aujourd'hui* in 1935 with Le Corbusier, Léger, Lipchitz and works from other eras, including the Moscophone cast of 560 BC, from the Acropolis museum. The personal vision was seen to link with that of the greater, universal vision. This expression was in keeping with the ideas of the day and can be linked with a larger, political agenda.

The École Karl Marx at Villejuif.

On 9 July 1933, the École Karl Marx was opened in the communist municipality of Villejuif.[52] (Plate 3.11) This was an infant and junior school which was designed by André Lurçat, with art works by Laurens, Jean Lurçat and Laughlin.[53] It was seen to be an important school for both social and artistic reasons.[54] At a time when all public budgets were sacrificed for rearmament, where the physical and mental education of the young was directed towards war, this school wished to create something more constructive.[55] The introduction to the book dedicated to this school was at once idealistic, proclaiming the importance of spiritual development and practical in the sense of what the school could offer in a physical sense. '*Tout homme mis en présence d'une création de l'esprit humain manifestera sans doute à son égard un certain intérêt*'.[56] The artistic creator held before himself certain material and spiritual aspects which were part of the history of humanity.[57] It was considered that the artists' work in the school would create an environment where the individual spirit would be nurtured. The school housed the *école maternelle* and the girls and

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[50] Sophie Bowness, *The Presence of the Past: Art in France in the 1930s*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, (1995), 318. Introduction to Zervos, *L'art en Grèce des temps préhistoriques au debut du XVIIIe siècle,* (Paris: Cahiers d'art, 1934), unpaged.
[51] Henri Laurens, 'Enquête,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1939), 68.
[52] Sarah Wilson, *Art and the Politics of the Left in France c. 1935-1955*, unpublished PhD., University of London, (1992), 41.
[53] *Groupe scolaire de l'avenue Karl Marx à Villejuif*, preface by Max Raphael, no date or place, acquired by the National Art Library, 1937, 1.
[54] Ibid., 12.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 5.
[57] Ibid.

boys school. It was also to have certain common services: the gym and the showers. This was linked with the concept of private and public education. The education and the school was meant to be for the benefit of the children privately, but the effects were to reach into the community at large.[58] The art works were also designed to make this connection. By including sculptures and murals as an integral element within architecture, the totality of the arts was employed. The loss of integration between sculpture, painting and architecture during the previous century was linked, by those involved, to a loss of social collectively. The reintegration of the arts, which was evident in the school, was important if the present anarchy in society was to evolve into social cohesion.[59]

The facilities and the environment of the school were enlightened. The *école maternelle* had a room for rest periods and large windows in the class rooms, which looked onto a court with trees and shrubs. Outside there were sun beds, terraces and gardens. The refectories had large murals by Jean Lurçat which were linked to natural phenomena including starry nights, flowers and rocks. Nature was present inside and out. Laurens' sculpture, *Stella,* was at the entrance to the *école maternelle* under the pergola, (Plate 3.12) directly opposite the gate so that it would be the first thing that would attract the attention of the children as they came into the school. It depicted a crouching woman with an arm over the head holding a flowing ribbon which had an inscribed star. This could be read as having links with both pagan and Christian beliefs. To the Greeks and Romans, the stars were divinities. The star is also connected with the Virgin Mary and was the guiding principle which showed the wise men the correct path.[60] The sculpture could also be suggesting a link between the female body and the universe. Thus, the art, which was integrated with the architecture of the school, was designed to help the spiritual growth of the children and lead them towards forming a better society.

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 10.
[60] James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, (London: John Murray Ltd. 1974), 289.

The *Grande Fête et Inauguration* of the school on July the ninth 1933 was aided by the artistic strength of the *Association des Écrivains et des Artistes Révolutionnaires,* the A.E.A.R.[61] Members of this society had been involved in the design of the school. The organization had started in December of 1932. By late 1933 it had over 550 members within the arts and literature sections.[62] These included Jean Lurçat, Laurens, Breton, Buñuel, Man Ray and Eluard. It had communist leanings and was against fascism in Germany and the imperialistic outlook of France.[63] Fascism within the cultural domain they saw as the '*dernier sursaut de la civilisation bourgeoise qui tente par la violence et le verbalisme révolutionaire de revivifier les idéologies les plus caduques*'.[64] It was seen as a manifestation of the bourgeois and the artists and writers wanted to support and aid the German '*prolétariat*'.[65]

A circular from the A.E.A.R. of August 1933 which was signed by Laurens and other artists, including Herbin, Ozenfant, Signac and Zadkine, proclaimed the importance of a socially responsible stand by artists and writers.[66] It claimed that the contemporary problems which were facing artists were so grave that they needed to revise their values and notions. Artists needed to stop their preoccupation with their interior vision, which excluded anything not concerned with their art. They needed to create work that was for society.

> *La co-existence des tendances adverses, qui proliférent en raison inverse de la 'demande sociale', les problèmes que ces faits sucitent sur la raison d'etre des arts, le* desarroi *qui en résulte et le sentiment pour chacun de vivre dans l'ATTENTE, ne sont que les symptômes cliniques d'un nouvel art en gestation sociale.*[67]

The only way to stop the degeneration of art was to separate it from the defunct economic system and re-institute the real social function of art.[68] The sculpture that

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[61] Wilson, 1992, op. cit., 41.
[62] Ibid., 42.
[63] Ibid., 39.
[64] Manifesto, 'Protestez,' in *Feuilles Rouge,* 2 March 1933, quoted in Wilson, ibid, 40.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Circular, dated August 1933, of the A.E.A.R. quoted in full in Wilson, ibid., 410.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

Laurens made for the school at Villejuif, was part of a project which was to educate and nurture the spirit of the future generation.

The exhibition which was advertised for December by the A.E.A.R. was postponed until the following February. This *Exposition des artistes révolutionnaires* held a massive anti fascist demonstration at the Porte de Versailles which included over 200 artists.[69] Four days later there were riots as the anti fascists were countered by fascists.[70] The A.E.A.R. provided a unifying mission for artists who had different affiliations. The Surrealists had been involved with politics since the 1920s. In 1927, Breton, Péret, Aragon and Eluard had officially joined the communist party. The party had not been happy to have them as they were thought to be too individualistic, counter revolutionary and scornful of science and technology.[71] Laurens was always 'un rouge' with libertarian sympathies.[72] However, in spite of this and his connection with the collaborative project at the school, he felt that it was impossible for the masses at this time to understand a work of art. The state of society at that time meant that in general they would not understand the mysterious element crystallized within it.[73] He was fundamentally an individualist, believing that the work of art came from within while also retaining something of the world.[74] Many of the avant-garde looked towards Russia and felt that it offered a place where the individual could develop. For Laurens, as for many of the avant-garde, the increased oppression of the intellectuals, the rise in fascism and dogmatism, the increasing threat of war and the economic situation, meant that politics became part of artistic daily life.

It has been argued that the insistence which the Surrealists put on modernity and sexuality had far reaching political implications. In focusing on woman as closer to the unconscious, they felt that they could get closer to the state of repression brought

[69] Circular, August 1933, in Wilson, op. cit.
[70] Ibid., 48.
[71] Helena Lewis, *The Politics of Surrealism,* (New York: Paragon House, 1988), 56-63.
[72] Mady Mernier- Fourniau, *L'oeuvre sculpté d'Henri Laurens*, Thèse de Doctorat d'État, Paris, Sorbonne, (1966), 29.
[73] Henri Laurens, 'Enquête,' *Cahiers d'art*, 1935, 47.
[74] Ibid.

about by the forces in society.[75] Laurens also used the female form exclusively in his work. They were not, however, contemporary figures. The form itself was created from an internal necessity, and so communicated a certain abstract feeling. The names of his works were again not designed to have any specific meaning. This changed in 1935. Where as the earlier work had names that were directly related to the formal pose, those after 1935 were given names which could lead to a variety of interpretations. *Rosa* and *La fôret* are not names which have direct meaning, especially when placed next to the sculpture. This could again link with the Symbolist notion of not describing the thing itself, but creating poetic images for the brain to consider. In 1935 Laurens wrote a short article in *Cahiers d'art* in which he elaborated on his view concerning importance of the spirit of the artist in the creation a work of art.[76] '*La valeur intrinsèque de l'oeuvre d'art lui vient surtout du potentiel de spiritualité de chaque artiste.*'[77] All that happened in ones life was transformed into form. Clarity was necessary and came from a combination of experience and emotion. He felt that, in a way reminiscent of the Symbolists, one should be able to explain fundamental ideas, to capture '*l'incommensurable, l'impondérable, l'invisible.*'[78] He also wrote that real beauty was that which '*dérange nos calculs*' and '*secoue notre torpeur spirituelle.*'[79] The formal properties of Laurens' sculpture at this time changed. They became more lyrical in style, moved away from the block and experimented more with the possibilities inherent in the tensile strength of bronze.

Myth

Two works of 1935 reveal him to be using the female form in an almost Surrealist manner. *Rosa* and *La fôret* can be read in this light. An image which cannot be reached by normal logic and allows the mind free play, can come under the Surrealist

[75] Fer, Batchelor, Wood, *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism. Art between the wars*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 180.
[76] Henri Laurens, 'Enquête Laurens,' *Cahiers d'art,* (1935), 47-48.
[77] Ibid., 47.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 48.

definition of 'convulsive beauty'.[80] Hofmann interpreted *Rosa* as having the Surrealist ambivalence towards the fertility idol by creating a sculpture where the figure is its own sexual partner.[81] Certainly there are overtones of creativity, sexuality and fertility. *Rosa*, (Plate 3.13) like other sculptures by Laurens from 1935, took distortion and ambiguity of the figure to new levels of abstraction. The female figure leans back, barely poised, with crab-like arms and the suggestion of a bird's head. The image of a bird's head on a human body was frequently used by Ernst, for instance Oedipus in the *Semaine de bonté*. *Loplop*, Ernst's creative alter ego also sometimes appears in this form. The image of the bird frequently appeared in the work of both Dali and Ernst during the 1920s and 1930s, representing the creative spirit. The combination of the disparate parts within *Rosa* can be linked with the ideas of Breton who felt that by reconciling two images, the viewer transcends the object's manifest appearance. The work then becomes a series of possibilities for interpretation.[82]

The name *Rosa,* has no inevitable link with the form of the sculpture. The rose has symbolic associations with both the Virgin Mary and Venus, with implications of spiritual and physical love. The degree of sensuousness evident in this work is unique in Laurens' sculpture from the 1930s. However it was typical, if not particular, to Surrealism.[83] Picasso, who flirted with Surrealism at this time, created in his painting *Sleeping nude* of 1932, an image of a woman which can be linked with that of Laurens. The sensuous form reclines on a bed with head arched back, two apple like breasts and a handful of amorphous protuberances which represent limbs. While Laurens' sculpture is a narcissistic image, concentrating on the sexual and irrational, it is not an image which could be interpreted as a contemporary figure. Neither does it use the contemporary means of photography, mass or 'found'

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[80] André Breton, 'Mad Love,' in Franklin Rosemont, ed., *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, (London: Pluto Press, 1978), 161-3.
[81] Werner Hofmann, *The Sculpture of Henri Laurens*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1970), 22.
[82] André Breton, 'The crisis of the Object,' 1936, in *Surrealism and Painting,* (Paris and London: trans. Macdonald and Co. Pub. Ltd., 1965), 279.
[83] Breton, 1978. op. cit., 160. Breton wrote how one should search for beauty envisaged exclusively for passionate ends. A work of art should give a sense of disturbance. He related this sensation to erotic pleasure.

imagery like *grattage* or *frottage*. Laurens used traditional sculptors' materials, in which he allowed evidence of the manipulation by the artist, to remain in the surface.

La forêt (Plate 3.14) of the same year is also a symbolic image which was derived from the interior vision of the artist rather than outward reality. The generalized, reclining figure reflects a landscape in the undulations of the solids and voids. The emblematic head suggests a tree. The perceived closeness between woman and nature was important for both Surrealists and Symbolists. In the poem *L'union libre*, Breton explored the symbolist concept of correspondences. The various parts of '*ma femme*' are likened to many natural phenomena, for instance, water, molehills, and beechnuts.[84] Although he linked the female nude with nature, it was less as a mythical figure, but more as a means of creativity and manipulation. The forest has been traditionally thought of as female and also as a representation of the spiritual world, which man must penetrate in order to find the meaning of life.[85] Baudelaire in his poem *Correspondances* wrote of man passing through forests of symbols that watch him with familiar glances.[86] The Symbolists frequently placed their paintings on the subject of the passing of time in a forest setting, as in Gauguin's *D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Ou allons-nous?* of 1897. The forest adds to the sense of mystery in this and in other paintings of the period. It was also an image that appeared frequently in many paintings by Ernst from the late 1920s. Many are apocalyptic visions of petrified woods.[87] The forest had become the metaphor for landscapes of the soul, which in being formed by the civilization in which one lives, becomes a renunciation of European civilization.[88] *La forêt* by Laurens is not an apocalyptic work. However, the sense of mystery and the combination of different emblems within it, opens it to interpretation. The large hipped, rounded figure is literally and metaphorically close to the earth. She is a symbol of fertility, both in the

[84] André Breton, 'L'union libre,' in Michel Décaudin, *Anthologie de la poésie française du XXe siecle,* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 301-303.
[85] J.C. Cooper, *Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 71.
[86] Charles Baudelaire, *Complete poems,* trans. Walter Martin, (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1997), 18-19.
[87] For instance, Max Ernst, *L'oiseau dans la forêt,* 1927, oil on canvas, 81 x 100 cm.
[88] Jung, op. cit., 18-19.

physical and mental realms who, in being close to nature, is also close to the irrational, and so can symbolize a path to the unconscious.

The Surrealists used references in their work which reflected the contemporary climate. In literature and artistic work they increasingly defined themselves as a politically aware protest group.[89] Ernst's *Oedipus and the Sphinx* of 1935 used both classical and contemporary imagery. The lion's head appears in many other of his collages connected to a body in Napoleonic uniform. It also refers to the bronze statues of a lion standing in the Place Denfert Rochereau, which commemorates the siege of Belfort, a territory claimed by both France and Germany. The sphinx relates in Greek mythology to the idea of the source of and destroyer of man.[90] Laurens was not at this stage using his sculpture in this way. Both *Rosa* and *La fôret* had overtones that suggested the necessity of creative freedom. They linked with Laurens' concept of the work of art being the fruit of the inner spirit.

From the late 1930s Laurens began to use myth in a way which was obviously linked to the contemporary political climate. He was to continue using images in this way throughout the war. He made a series of sirens in both gouache and sculpture from 1937 to 1946. As such, they represent a subject which appeared only during crisis years. While he had frequently used the motif of water nymphs in the past, both the form and the fact of these being called *Sirène* have particular overtones. His sirens have various forms. The *Sirène au bras levé* of 1938 reclines while beckoning. The *Groupe de sirènes* of the same year bend around each other, their amorphous forms looking plump and alluring. Most of the sirens, however, conform to the form of *La sirène* 1938 (Plate 3.15) with her metamorphosing, half stretching, alluring body. She is the antithesis of *La mer* of 1937, which he created for the outside of the

[89] Lewis, 1988, op. cit., 37. Their relationship with Clarté marked the beginning of a period of intense political involvement. It was founded after the First World War by pacifist liberal intellectuals with the idea of socialist intellectual thought spanning the borders. Ibid., 55. From 1926 the Surrealists had an uneasy relationship with the Communist party. Although Breton joined in 1927 and expected all the others to follow, it was far from unanimous. The Communists were not always happy about their membership.

[90] Witney Chadwick, 'Eros or Thanatos. The Surrealist cult of Love Re-examined,' *Art Forum*, (November 1975), 50.

Sèvres pavilion at the *Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne.* That sculpture evoked a contented roundness and fertility while swimming with fish. Both sculptures can be seen as archetypes in that they follow the traditional pattern of the female form being part of nature, instinct and fertility, which has been held since the remotest times. The rounded recumbent form of *La mer* is not provocative, but links one back through the vocabulary of reclining Venuses to the earliest of the fertility figures. The *Sirène* is, however, unlike Laurens' previous sculptural vocabulary of stances. The incomplete, rearing form is grasping instinct personified.

The idea of sirens as being always negative and leading to death is not consistent through history. Plato placed a siren on each of the heavenly whorls. Each sung a single note which created harmony.[91] However, the traditional, Homeric notion of the siren as temptress was one which both artists and poets had been portraying since the late nineteenth century. Mallarmé and Apollinaire frequently used the image of a siren as a being who undermined the creative act, by luring the poet towards sensual delights. Both Moreau and Rodin explored the theme in the *Poet* and *Siren.*[92] The tapestry by Moreau, shows a young dreaming adolescent who is about to be drowned by the evil, standing siren. The Rodin sculpture shows a young male clasping hold of the elusive, flying figure.

Debussy had a more holistic approach. He considered the ocean as a primordial mother figure to which all mankind returns at death. In his *Sirènes* the sirens, in the form of a female chorus, sing in the moonlight to summon their prodigal children.[93] Like Baudelaire, Debussy considered the arabesque as the most beautiful line as it corresponds with the laws of beauty inherent in the whole cycle of nature.[94] He was not interested in reproducing nature, but in the mysterious correspondences which

[91] Plato, *Republic X.* 616c-617c
[92] 1893 and 1900.
[93] Stefan Jarovinski, *Debussy. Impressionism and Symbolism,* (London: Eulenberg Books, 1976), 156.
[94] Ibid., 104.

link nature with the imagination.[95] Laurens' *Sirène* of 1938 was a projection of inner ideas. The sinuous, stretching lines conform to the idea of an arabesque. The traditional link which the motif has with death of the creative spirit, inevitably suggests a link with the political situation at the time. Lipchitz also used myth which he intended to be read as anti-fascist statements. His images were more obvious in their political stance than those of Laurens. In his sculpture, *Promethée libéré* of 1937, he expressed the way he felt about the oppression of the intellectuals through the imagery of a vulture tearing at Prometheus' liver.[96] The subject of conflict was to become increasingly important to him during the 1930s and was shown in works such as *David and Goliath* of 1933 and *Scene of Civil War* 1936.

Another example of Laurens using his sculpture as a political warning is in *Amphion* of 1937. (Plate 3.16) In this work the lyre and body have become one, a late Cubist device used by Lipchitz in his *Reclining Nude with Guitar* of 1928. The story of the power of Amphion's music building the wall of Thebes better than the force of physical prowess gained resonance over the centuries.[97] Ronsard, one of the *Pléiade*, wrote a poem *La Lyre* in 1569. The decorations described on the lyre made it something beyond itself. Being an instrument of the gods it became a sign of the creative power available to the poet, and in this poem it fused the powers given to the three arts.[98] Baudelaire, in searching for a word to represent the poet Theodore de Banville thought of the lyre as suitable. Although he was in agreement with Ronsard about it evoking an '*état présque surnaturel*' he continued by stating that '*la lyre étant expressément chargée de traduire les belles heures, l'ardent vitalité spirituelle*'.[99] This is a different emphasis than was traditionally placed on the theme of cerebral order and harmony. In 1931 Valery revived the myth in a melodrama which keeps close to the original story, and was set to music by Honegger. It is likely that Laurens would have seen it, being fond of both poetry and music. Again, the

[95] Ibid. 96.
[96] Jacques Lipchitz, *My Life in Sculpture*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), 127.
[97] T.S. Dorsch, trans. and intro., *Aristotle, Horace, Longinus. Classical literary criticism*, (London: Penguin, 1965), 92.
[98] Margaret McGowan, *Ideal Forms in the Age of Ronsard*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1985), 114-116.

richness of meanings and the call for harmony and reason in a turbulent political climate can explain the use of myth.

La musicienne à la harpe of 1937 (Plate 3.17) can also be interpreted in the same way. The harp, the instrument of harmony is linked with the body of a centaur who are traditionally more earthly in their passions. Often centaurs are to be seen as part of a Bacchanalian feast, entertaining with flutes and lyres. Ovid describes how the centaurs who, fired with wine at the wedding feast of Pirithous and Hippodame, became lustful towards the women there. The chaos and retaliation this provoked, in the form of spilt brains and smashed bones so graphically described, can be seen as a metaphor for the chaos of impending war.[100] The might of the centaurs was crushed by the youth Caeneus, whom they had bated and insulted about his unsuitability for battle owing to him having been born woman.[101] If one were to translate this into the contemporary situation, France was hopelessly weak and ill equipped for war. Hitler and fascism appeared indomitable. However, the sculpture is more complex than that. It is a female centaur. Normally they are seen with a family, nurturing young.[102] In Ovid too, they appear more nurturing.[103] *La musicienne à la harpe* shows the harp as an integral part of the body, which appears almost dance like in stance. *La grande musicienne* of 1938 (Plate 3.18) also has the harp integral with the body. This vibrant sculpture, whose external form becomes the rhythm of the music, dances in a way which evokes the abandon of the figures in *The Dance* by Matisse of 1931-2. As in the frieze by Matisse, the power and frenzy of the form does not emulate ballet or folk dance but something more primordial, akin to the rhythmic impetus in the music of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* of 1913, where the young female dancer was sacrificed to the gods in a celebration of the spring rites.[104]

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[99] Charles Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques. L'art romantique*, (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962), 765.
[100] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* trans. Melville, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 280-290.
[101] Ibid., 288-9.
[102] As in Jan Collaert after Stradauus *Centauress Nurturing Young*. A reconstruction of Zeuxis's painting described by Lucian.
[103] Ovid, op.cit., 286. Hylonome loved Cyllarus, and won him with sweet words and winning ways.
[104] In this ballet written for Diaghilev, with music by Stavinsky, a young girl dances herself to death as part of the spring rites.

Cahiers d'art

From 1937, *Cahiers d'art* was including articles about the political situation in an unveiled way. Zervos wrote a well argued and heated condemnation of Hitler's system in 'Reflexions sur la tentative d'esthétique dirigée du IIIe Reich.'[105] He wrote how the national socialists systematically destroyed the value of the individual. Work which was produced and was valued only for their promotion of the system amounted, he felt, to sterile narcissism.[106] He condemned the fascist idea that any style which was not classical or academic, was produced by inferior races.[107] In the same year, an issue was devoted to Picasso's *Guernica*, the struggle in Spain and the Spanish Pavilion.[108] It included a range of articles by leading writers of the day including Duthuit, Eluard and Leiris. In 1938 three large articles were devoted to contemporary art in Germany, England and America, all of which included the major figures of the avant-garde.[109] It was a clear attempt to link and prove the force of the international avant-garde which could be viewed as being anti-establishment.

In 1937, Laurens won the Helena Rubinstein prize for the sculptor in the École de Paris who was most representative of Cubism. The jury was made up of a broad range of artists and writers. The event was written up in *Cahiers d'art*. Included in the article were illustrations of his work, all of which dated from 1937. What is interesting is why it was still considered to be important for an artist to be Cubist at that time. *Formes* thought of Cubism as not being a French phenomenon. This was a continuation of the propaganda from the First World War, when Cubism was seen as 'Boche'. The École de Paris was considered, by the right wing, to be an invasion by foreign elements who diluted French art.[110] It had always been, and had gained strength from being, cosmopolitan. The works which were illustrated, *Amphion, Maquette for the Temps Nouveau*, the *Musicienne* and *Musicienne à la harpe* were

[105] Christian Zervos, 'Reflexions sur la tentative d'esthétique dirigée du IIIe Reich,' *Cahiers d'art*, (vol 1-3, 1937), 51-61.
[106] Ibid., 52.
[107] Ibid., 55.
[108] Christian Zervos, 'Histoire d'un tableau de Picasso,' *Cahiers d'art*, (vol. 1-3, 1937), 105-156.
[109] Will Grohmann, 'L'art contemporaine en Allemagne,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1938), 7-28. Herbert Read, 'L'art contemporaine en Angleterre,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1938), 31-42. J Sweeney, 'L'art contemporaine aux États Unis,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1938), 45-68.

not Laurens' most obviously Cubist works. They were, however, all works that can be considered to have political overtones. While not stated, it was another means of ratifying and adding weight to the avant-garde.

In 1939, the avant-garde artists were invited to respond to an 'enquête'. Laurens wrote how difficult it was to define the relationship between the general state of a civilisation and its art. Like everyone, artists were determined, up to a point, by what was around them. However, one developed slowly, so that immediate political events could not be directly related. Art could not be fascist or communist or anything which was imposed from above.[111] Tradition continued, developed and showed the face of humanity which was under the turmoil of the political maelstrom.[112] While acknowledging the difficult and turbulent era, Laurens also thought one should be true to art and to oneself. Braque thought in a very similar way. He also thought about the changes but, like Laurens, felt that a work of art, which was the result of the growth in the spirit, was inevitably linked with personal growth which had taken place over many years.[113] Neither were saying that one should be oblivious to the troubles. Indeed, both reflected in their own way, the instability of the era in their work. What they were contending was that a style or subject could not be given by someone else, if the outcome was still to be a creative work of art.

In placing Laurens in the context of the artistic and political life one can determine the complexity and degree to which both were intertwined. The immense political problems which were engulfing Europe, meant that it was necessary for avant-garde artists to unite and create a force of resistance through projects, exhibitions, demonstrations and publicity. The fact that many artists spent much time away from Paris, meant that daily contact and exchange of ideas was restricted. However, the styles and ideas of the avant-garde became, if anything, closer than before. The perceived need to return to nature was part of the philosophy of the day. The search

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[110] Waldemar George, 1931, op. cit., 92-93.
[111] Henri Laurens, 'Enquête,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1939), 68.
[112] Ibid., 39.
[113] Georges Braque, Enquête, *Cahiers d'art*, (1939), 65-66.

for inner spirituality was understandable in the political climate and after the dominance of the machine in the 1920s. Also important for Laurens, as for many of the avant-garde including the Surrealists, was the use of myth and symbol as a warning and a reflection of the contemporary situation. Laurens was at the center of all these debates, using traditional means to create work which was both contemporary and timeless.

Exhibitions 1936-1937

Laurens participated in a number of major exhibitions in the 1930s, both in France and abroad. In Cubism and Abstract Art he was, in effect, being included as part of the making of the canon. Although this was held in New York, Barr perceived the exhibition as European. It showed the strength and breadth of the avant-garde. Maitres de l'art indépendant, which was held in Paris was devoted to the École de Paris figures. Laurens had many works in this show. Again he can be seen as part of an evolving canon. Both of these exhibitions can be interpreted in part as political in stance.

1936: Cubism and Abstract Art, New York

Laurens had three sculptures in the exhibition organized by Alfred Barr, entitled Cubism and Abstract Art, which opened in New York in 1936. From there, it traveled to San Francisco, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Baltimore, Providence and Grand Rapids.[1] Barr also published a catalogue to accompany the exhibition, which sought both to illustrate and explain the contemporary trends in European art. This book was sent to all participating artists, to dealers, collectors and libraries.[2] It became highly influential in the English speaking world. Barr did not see the exhibition as pioneering. However, the scale of the exhibition and the all-encompassing nature of the media which, as well as including painting, sculpture and constructions, also had photography, architecture, industrial art, theatre, films, posters and typography, was a definite statement of the strength, breadth and ideas of avant-garde creativity. This had a scarcely concealed political agenda. Barr wrote in the accompanying catalogue that the exhibition 'might well be dedicated to those painters of squares and circles... who have suffered at the hands of philistines with political power.'[3]

[1] Susan Noyes Platt, 'Modernism, Formalism and Politics: *The Cubism and Abstract Art Exhibition* of 1936,' *Art Journal*, (Winter 1988), 291.
[2] Ibid.

The loans for the exhibition were arranged during a trip that Barr took to Europe in the summer of 1935. There were also many works from collections in New York. He visited many of the studios of artists in Paris, including Braque and Lipchitz, as well as gathering work from critics, private collections and galleries. He does not appear to have visited Laurens' studio but chose the *Bottle of Rum* of 1917, *Head* of 1918 (or 1915) and *Guitar* of 1920 from the Galerie Simon.[4] There was no attempt to give an overview of Laurens' or any other artist's work. What Barr intended was a historical survey of important aspects of twentieth century avant-garde art and design, which were linked to Cubism and abstraction. He emphasized eras of individual artists or movements which were more creative or important historically in their influence.[5] Works from all the visual arts, whether their status was traditionally high or low, were given a prominent place. Inevitably this was a personal and subjective exhibition. However, through his writing and the map outlining the trends and their influences at the beginning of the catalogue, he created and promoted the fact of an all-encompassing, international spirit in art, architecture and applied arts.

The works by Laurens which were shown were all made prior to 1920. Cubism, specifically in relation to Picasso, was only briefly regarded after this date as Barr felt that as a school it was fundamentally dead. Picasso and Braque were seen as the dominant figures in the formation of Cubism with most artists being compared to them. Laurens' constructions were said to come from Picasso's collage reliefs and his sculpture in general to be influenced by Picasso and Braque.[6] Constructions were listed separately from sculpture.[7] While Barr did include many works of sculpture including those by Archipenko and Brancusi, he also considered Cubist sculpture to

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[3] Alfred Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art 1936, reprinted Arno Press, 1966), 18.
[4] Ibid., 213. *Bottle of Rum* 1917, painted wood and metal, 11 7/8 ins high. *Head* 1918, catalogue, Lille, 1992, 253, dates this as 1915, painted wood, 19 5/8 ins high. *Guitar*, 1920 cast stone, 15 3/4 ins high.
[5] Ibid., 9.
[6] Ibid., 110.
[7] Ibid. See fly leaf.

be secondary to and dependant on Cubist painting.[8] This was contrary to the ideas espoused in contemporary art magazines like *Cahiers d'art* and *Minotaure*, or Janneau's book *L'art cubiste* of 1929, who all considered painting and sculpture as equally important in the development of the movement. The ideas that he espoused on Cubist sculpture were to have a profound influence on future English and American writers, like Douglas Cooper, and were instrumental in the concept of Cubism being a painters' movement.

Barr did not hide the fact of artistic repression in Europe. It had a prominent place in the catalogue. Opposite the introduction two posters, which had been made to advertise the same exhibition in 1928, were placed side by side. A conservative one had been published for the Anglo-American public, an abstract one for the German market. It had been felt that the German population were sophisticated enough to be able to read their poster at the time of publication. This style was now discouraged in Germany in favour of a more figurative style.[9] There was also a section on abstract art and politics.[10] In this, Barr wrote about the links made by politicians on style in art and political agendas. He wrote of the repression of abstraction in Germany and Russia. Without actually writing this, the inclusion of politically suspect works, such as Pevsner's *Abstract portrait of Marcel Duchamp* of 1926, Archipenko's *Bather* of 1915 and Laurens' *Head* of 1915, created a visible and strong anti establishment message. Barr also noted that American customs officials had refused entry to nineteen sculptural works for the exhibition as they were not of standard materials and did not represent animal or human form.[11] These included Laurens' *Head* and *Guitar* as well as work by Boccioni, Duchamp-Villon and Giacometti, but not Picasso's *Glass of Absinth* of 1914 or Pevsner's *Construction* of 1934.[12] In spite of the obvious interest in contemporary art shown by many Americans at the time, officially, abstract sculpture was not recognized.

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[8] Ibid., 103.
[9] Ibid., 10.
[10] Ibid., 16-18.
[11] Ibid., 18.
[12] Ibid., 18. A photograph of the rejected work at the customs in New York appears to also show Laurens' *Bottle of Rum*. Susan Noyes Platt, op. cit., 291.

The exhibition toured America. It was large and helped to place Cubism and abstract art permanently in the American mind as an important international force. The catalogue, which was made available to an even wider public, explained the different ideas and gave a bibliography for further reading. Laurens' sculptures were shown as an integral part of the debate.

Maitres de l'art indépendant, Paris, 1937

Laurens had a whole room devoted to his work in the large exhibition, Maitres de l'art indépendant which was held at the Petit Palais in the summer of 1937. This exhibition showed work by the École de Paris artists, and like Cubism and Abstract Art was a great show of strength for the international quality of art in Paris. Unlike it, each artist had an exhibition space devoted to their work so that it created the idea of individual artistic retrospectives, rather than being an attempt to create stylistic associations and unity. The catalogue was also less explanatory than that for the exhibition in New York and had fewer illustrations.

Laurens exhibited thirty nine of his works. These showed the full range of his output, including three etchings, seven gouaches and twenty nine sculptures and constructions from all periods of his life. Indeed, the catalogue entry described him as '*sculpteur cubiste et illustrateur.*'[13] His sculptures that were included were diverse in scale, material and style. Among them were the painted wooden *Clown* of 1915, a bas relief, stone *Boxeur* from the early 1920s, the large architectural sculpture which he did for the school at Villejuif in 1933 named *Stella* and the small bronze *Rosa* of 1935. Some of the work from the 1930s, like *La mère*, were shown in plaster as presumably Laurens did not have the funds to cast them.[14] In comparison to other major artists in the exhibition, Laurens was shown to be an important figure. If one counts the two dimensional work as separate items, he had more works shown than Picasso, Lipchitz, Léger, Gleizes, Metzinger or Gris. He also showed a broader range

[13] Anon., *Maitres de l'art indépendant-Paris 1895-1937*, catalogue for exhibition held at the Petit Palais, June-October 1937, (Paris: Ed. Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1937), 116.
[14] Ibid. None of the works were dated and no names were given to the etchings and gouaches.

of work. Lipchitz and Zadkine only exhibited their sculpture and Picasso showed only included two sculptures in his display.[15]

The catalogue also demonstrated how well Laurens' sculptures had sold in relation to others, but it also showed how badly sculpture faired in relation to painting. Gris and Picasso had sold all their paintings to mainly private collections. Léger had sold all but four of his twenty seven exhibited works. Laurens' list showed that fifteen sculptures and three etchings had come from other collections.[16] Some of the other works were in bronze. It is possible that some of them were part of a series in which others had been sold. All but two of the exhibited works by Zadkine were from his own collection. Some of those could not have been part of a series as they were made in wood. Lipchitz exhibited thirty six sculptures. He owned all but three. Eleven were in bronze, so that it is possible that he had sold others in the series. Even Maillol had many works in stone that were unsold.[17]

Laurens also had three sculptures which were shown in the exhibition Origines et développement de l'art internationale indépendant at the Musée de Jeu de Paume in the summer of 1937. Like Cubism and Abstract Art it showed Cubist work together, with virtually nothing past 1921.[18] Laurens' *Boxeur*, *Buste de femme* and *Le compotier* were shown in room twelve with works by Chagall, Braque, Gris,

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[15] Ibid., 118-119. Lipchitz showed thirty six sculptures, eleven in bronze, thirteen in stone, one in wood, one no material specified and ten in plaster. Ibid., 114. Zadkine showed forty seven works, fifteen in bronze, ten in stone, fourteen in wood, often exotic woods like ebony etc, also terre cuite, mixed media, plaster etc. Although watercolours are mentioned, the catalogue entries list none.

[16] Ibid., 116. Soby 1, Galerie Simon 4 sculptures and 3 etchings, M. Simon 2, Vicompte de Noailles 1, M. Raynal 2, L. Rosenberg 3, Richet Parie 1, Petit Palais 1. I have seen no other reference to the latter work which was described in the catalogue as a *bois peint (figure)*.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Anon., *Origines et développement de l'art internationale indépendant*, catalogue for an exhibition held at the Musée du Jeu de Paume, 30 July to 31 October 1937, (Paris: Moderne Imprimerie, 1937), unpaged. Wilson, 1992, op. cit., 107, states that the Origines et développement de l'art internationale exhibition was much more of an exhibition of the École de Paris than the Maitres de l'art indépendant at the Petit Palais, which she said showed the work of the École Francais. They were very different exhibitions. The former showed a full range of the international avant-garde in the twentieth century, with different movements being highlighted at the peak of their influence. The latter picked out important international artists who were, or had worked in Paris.

Marcoussi, Picasso and others.[19] Cubism was shown in this exhibition as being a truly international movement which had been embraced by Paris. It also had rooms for Fauvism, Purism, Dadaism Surrealism, Constructivism and non-figurative art. So, like the other exhibitions it was showing the strength of the international avant-garde.

By taking part in these exhibitions in such a significant manner, Laurens was aligning himself firmly within the international avant-garde. Just as *Cahiers d'art* and *Minotaure* had been promoting a non-nationalistic stance, these exhibitions showed the strength both of the École de Paris and the importance of Paris as the center of avant-garde art. Normally this could have been easily overlooked by the general public owing to the stance taken by many of the magazines of the era, the weakness of the private galleries and the lack of avant-garde work in public collections. However, these exhibitions, which were simultaneously shown in Paris, directly addressed this issue and pushed the ideas to the front of the public consciousness.

Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne, 1937

Laurens was one of many sculptors who contributed to the Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne.[20] Although many of the avant-garde, like Braque and Matisse, did not show their work, Lipchitz, Zadkine and many other artists and decorators participated. Laurens made two sculptures for the Palais de la découverte: *La vie* and *La morte*, two sculptures for the Sèvres pavilion: *La terre* and *La mer* and an un-named hanging figure in the Pavillon de temps nouveau. There were many art works throughout the exhibition, which was designed as a huge fête for entertainment, to show the world *'la fraîcheur toujours nouvelle de notre génie'*

[19] *Origines et développement*, ibid. Laurens *Le boxeur*, 1920 stone relief. Laurens *Buste de femme*, 1920 marble, coll. Mme. Cuttoli. Laurens *Le compotier*, construction, 1918, coll. Maurice Raynal.
[20] There has been much work on the exhibition. See for instance, Wilson, 1992, op. cit., or Hayward Gallery, *Art and Power, Europe under the Dictators, 1930-1945*, London: The South Bank Centre, 1996. It is not my intention to go into great detail about the exhibition itself.

and to stimulate the flagging economy.[21] The art was meant to complement the themes of the exhibition halls, with the contracts stipulating subjects, size and positioning of the works. As well as providing entertainment, showing national pride and helping the economy, the exhibition also hoped to create the concept of a solidarity of the European civilization. Two of the pavilions which Laurens was directly involved with were designed to promote peace. The Palais de la découverte was devoted to science which, it was said, should be directed towards the most noble of human ends and above all, peace.[22] Edmond Labbé, who was the Commissaire général de l'exposition internationale de 1937, in his article on the Palais de la découverte wrote how science alone was capable of establishing a solidarity between all people on earth, regardless of political and national boundaries.[23] The exhibition in the Pavillon de temps nouveau was also designed to rebuild society into a co-operative and happy world which explicitly denounced war.[24]

In the era in which the exhibition was held it was impossible for countries to avoid a political agenda. Paris was still the artistic center of Europe and was a major center for debate about contemporary political and cultural ideas. It has been suggested that the exhibition was designed as an expression of international solidarity.[25] Certainly Labbé and Le Corbusier would have agreed with that. Pacifism and appeasement were widespread sentiments in France at the time. This was also built into the plans of the layout of the exhibition. In a controlling position, in the Place du Trocadéro was a tower, the Monument to Peace, which had been designed by Bazin and Laprade.[26] Behind the monument was a semi circular edifice upon which hung the flags of the forty two participating nations. [27] However, many of the pavilions and

[21] E Labbé, *Rapport Général. Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne. 1937.* Tome V (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1939), XII-XIII.
[22] Edmond Labbé, 'Le Palais de la découverte sera un des 'clous' de l'exposition de 1937,' Archives Nationales, F/12/12315 no 2, 7.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Le Corbusier, *Des canons, des munitions? Merci des logis...S.V.P.* (Boulogne: Ed. de L'architecture d'aujourd'hui, 1937), 142-3.
[25] Dawn Ades, 'Art and the Power of Nations,' catalogue, Hayward Gallery, *Art and Power, Europe under the Dictators, 1930-1945*, (London: The South Bank Centre, 1996), 58.
[26] Ibid., 60.
[27] Ibid.

exhibitions were designed to enhance national pride or be propaganda for the regimes in power. France and Greater France took up the majority of the site. These were devoted to the themes of the exhibition which was to reunite the work of artists, artisans and industry. There were also many pavilions dedicated to rural France which were built in their local styles and were given an important place. A whole volume of the official catalogue was dedicated to rural France. As well as these aspects which inspired national pride, an exhibition of art, Chefs-d'oeuvre d'art français charted French art with masterpieces from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Other countries also showed national pride through architecture and exhibitions.

Palais de la découverte

The Palais de la découverte was in the west of the Grand Palais des Champs Elysées. It had sections on mathematics, astronomy, physics and chemistry, biology, medicine, surgery and microbiology.[28] The exhibits showed the cutting edge of science through exhibits which included machines, experiments and films. The works of art were designed to complement the exhibits. Laurens' sculptures, *La vie* and *La mort* were for the biology section. Other sculptures for this pavilion were *L'optique* by Gilbert, *Chimpanzé* by Guyot and Lipchitz', *Promethée libéré*. There were also paintings which included *Le transport des forces* by Léger and Lhote's *La Houille et ses dérivés*. The pavilion contained a range of work in a variety of contemporary styles.

Laurens was asked to do a series of sculptures on the theme of *Les ages de l'homme*.[29] He was one of the artists on the provisional list drawn up in February 1936.[30] Others included Lipchitz, Dufy, Léger and Lhote. The contract, which was signed on the 16 October 1936 asked for two plaster bas reliefs of five meters by

[28] Labbé, 1939, op. cit., tombe IV, 218.
[29] Archives Nationales, F12 12181, folder 3: Correspondance. Letter 27 février 1936, Jean Perrin to M. Huisman.
[30] Archives Nationales, F12 12181, folder 3: Correspondance. Letter dated 27 février 1936 from Jean Perrin, Membre de l'Institut, Presendent de la classe 1 to M. Huisman, Directeur Général des Beaux Arts.

three meters which should conform to the architectural projects set by M. Debré and be completed by the 1 April 1937. For this he was to gain 38,000 francs, which was to be paid to him in three stages: 12000 on completion of the drawings and maquettes to the satisfaction of the commission, 7,000 after the completion of the mould, and 12,000 after completion and acceptance by the Commissariat général de l'exposition.[31] These payments were generous in comparison with that given to other sculptors in the Palais de la découverte. Lipchitz' contract stipulated that he was to be paid 30,000 francs for his four meter high sculpture on *L'esprit de la découverte*.[32] Gilbert-Lucien was to gain 12,000 francs for his patinated plaster bas reliefs and Léger 22,000 francs for his painted panel on the *Transports des forces*.[33]

The first payment was made on the 19 October 1936, which promotes the possibility that Laurens had been officially asked to make these sculptures before the written contract.[34] A letter, written by Laurens in January 1937, invited an inspector to view the sculptures and authorize payment of the second installment.[35] All the contracts stipulated that payment was on condition of the report of an inspector. An official visited Laurens, gave a favourable account and payment was made.[36] Laurens finished the sculpture at the end of March and again it was inspected and payment made.[37] Presumably owing to the size of the sculptures, the inspector was not directed to Laurens' own studio, but to 13 passage Déchambre (Bd. de Vaugirard). A further payment of 5,700 francs was made to Laurens on October. This does not

[31] Archives Nationales, F12 12181, Laurens folder. Contract dated 2 October 1936 and signed by Laurens 16 octobre 1936, by le conseiller technique chargé de la direction des travaux d'art de l'exposition de 1937.
[32] Archives Nationales, F12 12181, Lipchitz folder within folder 1. Formal letter dated 2 octobre 1936.
[33] Archives Nationales, F12 12181, folder 2: Palais de la découverte, Commandes peinture: Léger folder. Contract, 2 October 1936.
[34] It appears that this was so. See Archives Nationales, F12 12181, folder 3: Correspondance, letter, 27 février 1936. There is a note that Laurens asked to de *Les ages de l'homme* verbally on the 5 juin 1936.
[35] Archives Nationales, F12 12181, Laurens folder. Letter from Laurens stamped by the service 28 janvier 1937
[36] Archives Nationales, F12 12181, Laurens folder. Letter dated 3 février 1937, signature illegible. Same folder, certificate of payment, 4 février 1937, 2nd accompte de 7,000 francs.
[37] Archives Nationales, F12 12181, Laurens folder. Letter from Laurens stamped 22 mars 1937. Letter approving payment after inspection, 27 mars 1937, signed by Cheronnet. Third payment of 7,000

appear to have been unusual. It appears that costs had been rising so quickly since the original contracts that the authorities felt compelled to increase the amounts paid. Bouchard, who made a decorative figure in *bronze doré* for the Trocadero on the theme of *Apollo* for which he gained 224,000 francs, was one of those who complained. He outlined the spiralling costs of casting, of his assistants, suppliers and materials. He wrote that these had all gone up forty per cent.[38] Laurens did not use assistants, but the scale of making sculptures for three of the exhibition halls inevitably involved extra costs.

The contract, while giving the title and specifying the placement of the reliefs was vague as to possible interpretation. However, the fact of having inspectors to vet the sculptures meant that Laurens was to a certain extent controlled in the style of work he could produce. As the contract stated, the work he made had to conform to the architectural requirements. The two sculptures were surprisingly daring for the exhibition. The two figures faced each other as complementary but contrasting pieces. The flowing amorphous line of the female figure of *La vie,* which merge with the surrounding organic growth, has energy within the forms which correspond with many of Laurens' sculptures from the 1930s. There is also a lyrical quality which links with that found in some of the paintings of Matisse of the time, like the *Over-mantle Decoration* of 1938. *La Morte* provides a counterbalance. The figure, still amorphous and lyrical, sags within the organic structure.

From 1937 Laurens had been making works which could be read as relating to the contemporary political situation. In spite of *La vie* and *La morte* being near to his contemporary style, Laurens did not choose to make these works into a political statement. They are fundamentally decorative. Lipchitz had been contracted to make a central figure in plaster for the Palais de la découverte on the theme of *L'esprit de*

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francs was made 1 April 1937. This was less than was agreed, but another letter 9 juin gave him 12,000 francs.

[38] Archives Nationales, F12 12181: Bouchard folder. Letter from Bouchard dated 22 décembre 1936 to M. Hautecoeur, Directeur des travaux d'art à l'exposition de 1937.

la découverte.[39] This became *Prométhée étranglant le vautour* in which Prometheus, wearing a phrygian bonnet strangles the Nazi eagle.[40] This work gave rise to right wing attacks, but must have been respected by the authorities as it remained in the garden after the end of the exhibition.[41]

Sèvres Pavilion

Laurens did a pair of reliefs for the outside of the Sèvres pavilion, at *l'angles des Avenues*. The subject was not specified in the contract. He was just asked to make an ornamental motif which would complement the architecture of M. Camelot.[42] The building itself was in brick, which set it apart from other buildings in the class which were made of plaster or wood. In shape, the central portion was similar to a huge kiln. On the outside were a variety of decorative panels in brick and ceramic, which were designed by different factories.[43] The whole assemblage was rather curious, with the mixture of different artists' works and panels of decorative tiles all shown next to each other. Ceramics and glass in France had been badly hit in the recession. Seven hundred and twenty dossiers had been sent to potential exhibitors from which there had only been fifty requests for participation.[44] Originally the architect, M. Camelot had envisaged six fountains to be outside the pavilions but this was no longer economically possible. Two vases were to be placed on either side of the main entrance to the general ceramics hall.[45] Many of the panels on the exterior of the various halls were given free by the exhibitors.[46]

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[39] Archives Nationales, F12 12181. Lipchitz folder in Folder 1, Palais de la découverte: Commands. Formal letter dated 2 octobere 1936. *L'esprit de la découverte* was to be 4 metres high for which he would gain 30,000 francs.
[40] Wilson, 1992, op. cit., 131.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Archives Nationales, F12 12165, no 3, Céramique et verrerie: Commandes, sculpture. Carton 11 de 558. Contract signed 12 septembre 1936.
[43] Archives Nationales, F12 12444, folder 1: Tableau d'avancement des travaux de façade.
[44] Archives Nationales, F12 12339, folder 3: Minutes de la 10 réunion de classe 45 Group IX. 25. septembre 1936.
[45] Archives Nationales, F12 12339, folder 3: Minutes de la 11 réunion des deux classes 28 mai 1937.
[46] Archives Nationales, F12 12444, folder 1: Pavillon de la céramique et verrerie. Rapport 15 avril 1937 by Les architects de l'opération.

Laurens' reliefs on the subject of *La terre* and *La mer* were positioned on either side of the doors of the pavilion which was dedicated to Sèvres porcelain and which also had a restaurant within. Having sculptures there instead of vases and the building being of brick as opposed to plaster, meant that the Sèvres factory stood out against its competitors. Laurens had been asked to make decorative panels. Certainly these figures were less avant-garde than the work which he made for the other pavilions. The rounded, semi-reclining female forms had attributes of fish in the case of *La mer* and large birds and foliage in the case of *La terre.* In a sense, their decorative quality complemented the work of the manufacturer, which as well as showing table ware, also had statuettes, vases and sweet dishes '*dont le charme lui valut ses premiers succès.*'[47] The artistic works were thought to show that hand and machine could work side by side, each meriting their place by constantly evolving techniques and styles.[48] Above the sculptures and doors was a large ceramic panel on the theme of *Water* by Gromaire. The flattened, hard edged female bathers in contemporary attire contrast with the generalized, timeless figures in the sculptures by Laurens.

The contract stated that Laurens was to make the models for the sculptures in *terre cuite* for which he would receive 10,000 francs. He was to finish the work by 1 November.[49] Like the sculpture which was done for the Palais de la découverte, the work would be inspected at various junctures: after finishing the drawings and maquettes and during the process of modeling.[50] Laurens only signed the contract on the 17 October which was after the drawings and maquettes had been accepted. Although he finished the work by November 1, he was not finally paid until the end of January 1937.[51]

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[47] Edmond Labbé, *Exposition internationale des arts et techniques. Rapport général. La section Français. Les groupes et les classes groupes VI a X*, Vol 6, (Paris: 1937), 193.
[48] Ibid., 197.
[49] Archives Nationales, F12 12165, no 3: Céramique et verrerie. Commandes, sculpture. Carton 11 de 558. Contract signed 12 September 1936.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Archives Nationales, F12 12165, No 3: Carton 11 de 558: Laurens. 14 October 1936, Laurens to get 1st payment. 10 December 1936, Laurens to get 2nd and 3rd payments. 18 December, Laurens asked them whether those payments had been activated, so he had presumably still not been paid. 26 January 1936, activation of the last payment.

Pavillon des temps nouveaux

Laurens made a large hanging sculpture for the Pavillon des temps nouveaux. This exhibition space was a tent that housed Le Corbusier's ideas for a new society in France. In 1931, Le Corbusier had had the idea of an independent museum of contemporary art.[52] He originally intended, in the Pavillon des temps nouveaux, to have the collaboration of a large group of avant-garde artists. This would have represented a broad range of the École de Paris, with a good sculptural representation. Laurens had advised him on this list which included Picasso, Braque, Delaunay, Miro, Helion, Lipchitz, Brancusi, Arp, Giacometti, Laurens and Léger.[53] As late as November 1936 Le Corbusier was envisaging the collaborative efforts of the painters Helion, Léger, Le Corbusier, the artist decorators, Bossu, Chareau, Effel, T. Laurens, and Perriand and a large sculpture by Laurens.[54] It was also proposed that Arp, Chauvin and Lipchitz should create sculptures for a '*théâtre du verdure*'.[55] This exhibition was designed as a demountable *Musée d'éducation populaire* which would travel around France by means of the two wagons which were part of the exhibit, in a manner reminiscent of the Bolshevik agit-prop trains of 1919.[56]

By June 1936 Le Corbusier was describing the pavilion's contents as *'concrétisation du programme du Front Populaire'*. The name, 'Temps Nouveau', was also linked to this, being a phrase which was frequently used by the Popular Front movement.[57] The exhibits included plans for Paris, agricultural reform and four functions of urbanism. It analyzed existing cities and put forward solutions to the major social problems.[58] Most were done as photo montages using the techniques pioneered in Russia. These included vertiginous, dynamic viewpoints, objects depicted in grand differences of scale juxtaposed against each other and photos of happy, healthy

[52] Wilson, 1992, op. cit., 293.
[53] Ibid., 296.
[54] Archives Nationales, F 12 12173, folder 1: Temps Nouveaux. Subfolder: Correspondance. Letter dated 7 November 1936, from Ch. Perriand for Le Corbusier to M. Hautecoeur. Many of the letters in this folder were from Perriand in place of Le Corbusier.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid. See also Wilson. 1992, op. cit., 114.
[57] Ibid., 296
[58] Archives Nationales, F 12 12173, folder 1: Temps Nouveaux. Subfolder: Correspondance. Letter dated 7 novembre 1936 from Ch. Perriand for Le Corbusier to M. Hautecoeur.

people along side industrial aspects including pylons and pulleys. Le Corbusier had been to Russia a number of times in the late 1920s and maintained contacts with the Russian avant-garde architects like Chernikov and Ginsburg. Léger was also closely involved with the organization of the pavilion and contributed a photo montage on the subject of work. *Travailler* was based on techniques which had been used by El Lissitsky and Senkin at the U.S.S.R. pavilion at the Pressa exhibition at Cologne in 1928 and the Film und Photo exhibition in Stuttgart in 1929.[59] In the main hall in which Laurens' sculpture hung, there was a chart outlining the ideas of the Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne. Included was the concept that the city should ensure through its spiritual and material plans individual liberty and the benefit of collective action.[60] These concepts of the growth of the individual spirit within society were reminiscent of the ideas behind the École Karl Marx in which Laurens was also involved. Le Corbusier wrote a book outlining the ideas within the exhibition. It was concerned with rebuilding society in which the individual was secure within the collective whole. At the end, was a strong pacifist message where Le Corbusier wrote that the forces which were leading to war were strong and needed to be resisted.[61]

Laurens' sculpture was a light weight structure which was suspended from the roof in the Hall d'honneur. Being a reclining nude it had no overt political connotations. Laurens had, however, been involved in the exhibition for a number of years, it was the only sculpture in the tent, and the style formed an integral part of the overall architectural design. Originally it was to have been in wood and plaster, so presumably it was envisaged as a solid work.[62] The final work was a construction in

[59] Wilson, 1992, op. cit., 113.
[60] Le Corbusier, 1937, op. cit., 30.
[61] Ibid., 142-3
[62] Archives Nationales, F 12 12173, folder 1: Temps Nouveaux. Subfolder: Correspondance. Letter dated 7 November 1936 from Ch. Perriand for Le Corbusier to M. Hautecoeur. The files in the archives are very unclear as to how much Laurens received for this work. His name does not appear on the contract list of 24 mars 1937 in A. N., F 12 12173: folder Temps Nouveaux, sub folder: Décoration Command Perriand. I was unable to find a contract specifically for him, although a typed letter of the 26 May in the folder above from an (illegible) official to Charlotte Perriand wrote that the construction for which Laurens made the maquette was nearly finished and Laurens required payment. Claude Laurens also worked on the exhibition, which makes it difficult to determine definitively who gained which payments. It appears that Henri Laurens gained 3,500 francs, see note

wood, metal and card. It appears that the sections would have been easily slotted together and then taken apart which would have made transportation easy.[63] Le Corbusier wrote that the pavilion was not decorated, but was made of the substance of architecture, *'volumes, surfaces, éléments verticaux et horizontaux, matières, couleurs en larges surfaces'*.[64] Drawings where Le Corbusier was considering the exhibition space show the sculpture roughed out and in place.[65] The sculpture was just an integral part of a solid, coherent entity.[66] The sculpture by Laurens was in a style which he had not engaged with since the late teens. It was a Cubist construction, with elements of Tatlin in the fact that it was hanging. The interior of the tent was divided by free-standing metal constructions upon which the exhibits were attached. They were light and visually spacious. Laurens' work also allowed the space to penetrate the elements. This collaboration between the arts was part of the program which Le Corbusier had advocated in 1935 as part of the remodeling of society. It was again promoted in his book, *Des canons, des munitions? Merci des Logis... S.V.P.* which complemented and explained the program outlined in the pavilion. Le Corbusier looked back to the Middle Ages which he felt were a golden age of co-operation between art and architecture and hoped that that one could again achieve stability through unity.[67]

The choice of a tent as an exhibition space was both contemporary and archaic in its references. As well as evoking a nomadic tent, this tent used the most innovative of technology. The polychrome canvas was actually of the most modern material. The use of steel for the cables, poles and pylons employed techniques drawn from aeronautical engineering.[68] This reference to ancient and modern within a universal framework could be allied to the collage effect in *Cahiers d'art* where art from different times and cultures were shown side by side. It also links with the exhibition

attached to a letter to Charlotte Perriand dated 15 juin 1937 and then later 1,100 francs on 27 octobre 1937, both in the folder above.

[63] M. Claude Laurens agreed that this was so. Discussion September 11 1998.

[64] Le Corbusier, 1937, op. cit., 37.

[65] Le Corbusier, *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux and other Buildings and Projects, 1936-1937*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Paris: Fondation Le Corbusier, 1983), 500, plan 906.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 5.

which Le Corbusier organised in 1935, *Les arts dits primitifs* in which Laurens participated. Ancient sculpture was shown along side contemporary work. Sketches reveal that Le Corbusier had imagined his travelling museum to include a number of works from that exhibition, including Laurens' *La négresse* of 1934.[69]

Laurens played an important part in the 1937 exhibition. Many of the avant-garde like Braque and Matisse did not participate. It could have been that Laurens' financial situation required that he produced work. It could also have been that in keeping with the ideas espoused by the A.E.A.R. and in which he also believed, he felt that it was a good opportunity to make art which was available to the populous. The sculptures that he produced were all different and fitted, both in subject matter and in style, the needs of the exhibits they were complementing and the spaces for which they were made.

[68] Sophie Bowness, 1995, op. cit., 299.
[69] Ibid., 296.

SECTION 4

Laurens, The War and After.

The War

The coming of war inevitably had a large impact on art. The obsession with asserting a French style in art that emphasised the French tradition, which had been increasingly and virulently promoted in the press since the 1920s, became part of the accepted program of the Vichy government. With the coming of the German troops in 1940, many artists, including Laurens, left Paris, so that when they entered the city it was a ghost town.[1] Although some, like Picasso and Laurens returned, many stayed in the country hoping that they would be safe in the free zone.[2] This move was not always unwelcome. Hans Arp, Sophie Tauber-Arp and Sonia Delaunay reacted with delight to their new surroundings near Grâsse.[3] André Breton, his family and many Surrealist visitors stayed in a suburb of Marseilles. On Sundays they would make collective drawings while drinking barrels of wine.[4] Many seemed not to realise the seriousness of the problem and adapted well to the new circumstances. Jewish artists attempted to hide or escape the country. Laurens returned to Paris and for the duration of the war sheltered his Spanish friend and artist Lobo, who had fought on the Loyalist side of the Spanish civil war, in his small home on the Villa Brune.[5] Paris was occupied. There were shortages, inevitable curtailments and many of the artists, writers and gallery owners with whom he had been friends were not in the city.

The new government saw art as a tool. Exhibitions abounded and new galleries opened. To the general public it would have appeared that French culture was being promoted and that the scene was lively and flourishing. The Musée des arts décoratifs had four exhibitions in 1941, including Les arts décoratifs contemporains

[1] Catalogue, *Henri Laurens, rétrospective*, (Lille: Musée d'art moderne, Villenueve d'Ascq, 1992), 279.
[2] Michèle Cone, *Artists under Vichy. A Case of Prejudice and Persecution*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 6.
[3] Ibid., 90-91.
[4] Ibid., 105.

and La Seine à Paris. The Musée de l'Orangerie had a celebration of the Monet-Rodin centenary in 1940, an exhibition of the Paul Jamot donation and a show of Berthe Morisot in 1941.[6] The Salon des artistes français, Salon des Tuileries, Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Indépendants held their annual shows.[7] Although there was an appearance of normality, exhibitions were controlled. In order to exhibit at the Salon d'Automne, artists signed a declaration to say that they were French and not Jewish.[8] This was standard practice for all French administration and although many found it distasteful, the majority did sign. The Salon d'Automne of 1943 included many eminent avant-garde artists from before the war such as Matisse, Bonnard, Dufy and Lhote. George Braque was the featured artist in that exhibition and was considered by the president of the salon to be *le peintre officiel*.[9] Picasso was not officially allowed to exhibit during the occupation, owing to the pressure which had been brought to bear on the Vichy government by General Franco.[10] He stayed and worked in Paris. For many he became the symbol of intellectual and artistic resistance.[11] Laurens also stayed in Paris, worked quietly on works that were not in the officially accepted style and did not take part in official exhibitions.

Museums had become depleted as many art treasures had been moved to safety away from Paris from the late 1930s when war had seemed inevitable.[12] Modern, avant-garde art had not been collected in any great quantity by the state during the previous decade. The controls instigated by the Third Reich meant that it was difficult to exhibit modern art. During the previous few years Peggy Guggenheim had been collecting contemporary art voraciously, directly from artist's studios. As well as owning work by Laurens, her collection included paintings by Kandinsky, Klee,

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[5] Ibid., 174.
[6] Ibid., note 1, 199.
[7] Ibid., 12.
[8] Ibid., 13 and see register,14.
[9] Sarah Wilson, *Art and Politics of the Left in France c 1935-1955*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, (1992), 263.
[10] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 146.
[11] Sarah Wilson, 'La vie artistique à Paris sous l'occupation' in *Paris 1937 Paris 1957*, (Paris: Éd. Centre Georges Pompidou, 1981), 96-102, 100.

Picabia, Braque, Gris and Léger, and sculpture by Brancusi, Lipchitz, Giacometti, Moore and Arp.[13] As the troops neared Paris she needed to find a place to store them. Léger told her that he thought that the Louvre would give her a cubic metre in a safe place in the country. The Louvre, however, thought that her collection was not worth saving.[14] Eventually she found a place in a friend's barn near Vichy. She still hoped to exhibit her pictures and so contacted M. Farcy, the director of the Musée de Grenoble. Although he liked modern art he was too frightened to exhibit the collection. He had been forced to hide all his museum's modern collection in the cellar. Peggy Guggenheim was allowed to hang her works in a back room and show them to her friends. It was considered too dangerous to exhibit them publicly. M. Farcy was imprisoned and nearly lost his museum directorship.[15]

The possibility of being labelled by the Vichy government as a Judeo-Marxist-decadent was possible regardless of artistic style. Jews, whatever their affiliations or artistic affinities, were automatically categorised.[16] Artists who were regarded as morally decadent were labelled as such and thought in need of re-education. Avant-garde artists, especially those with communist leanings, were regarded as decadent. French modernists had shown solidarity with the avant-garde of Germany and the rest of Europe during the 1930s through exhibitions, statements and in many articles in *Cahiers d'art*, especially towards the outbreak of war. This magazine had published photographs and essays on contemporary avant-garde art in Germany, England and America in 1938.[17] Christian Zervos had written a scathing article about the system of art and the repression of artists under the Third Reich in 1937.[18] Artists and writers who had participated in this solidarity were considered candidates for 're-

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[12] Jean Cassou, 'Introduction,' *Musée national d'art moderne, Catalogue-guide,* (Paris: Éd. des musées nationaux, 1947), II.
[13] Peggy Guggenheim, *Confessions of an Art Addict*, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1960), 75-76.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 77.
[16] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 5-6.
[17] Will Grohmann, 'L'art contemporain en Allemagne,' *Cahiers d'art,* (1938), 7-28. Herbert Read, 'L'art contemporain en Angleterre,' *Cahiers d'art,* (1938), 31-42. J. Sweeney, 'L'art contemporain aux États Unis,' *Cahiers d'art,* (1938), 45-68.

education.' Laurens would have been suspect. He had written in *Cahiers d'art* in 1939 that art could not be dictated from above.[19] He believed in the individuality of the artist's spirit and his work did not show tradition in the officially accepted sense. He also had politically left wing ideals. For all these reasons, the occupying government did not favour him.

In Paris the situation was difficult. There were attempts to foil German influence. News that the Germans had wished to appropriate the Palais de Tokyo for storage was circulated. The Musée national d'art moderne, which was run by Vichy's Ministry of Education and Youth, was quickly inaugurated in August 1942 in order to make use of the space.[20] Only about one third of the collection was shown as most was dispersed in storage out of the city. The introduction to the catalogue stated that a broad range of artists was shown, with works being grouped in schools or affinities.[21] It stated that Traditionalists, Realists, Neo-impressionists, Nabis, Fauves, Cubists, Expressionists, Neo-naturalists and Surrealists were exhibited. However, the actual catalogue of works presents a slightly different picture. The art shown was limited by availability, but presumably also because of official restrictions. There were no works by Picasso or sculpture by Lipchitz, Zadkine, Brancusi, Arp, Giacometti or other Jewish École de Paris artists.[22] It had been the international element which had given so much weight to the school. However, that was also the part which had appeared so threatening to right wing art magazines during the thirties, and which continued to undermine the purity of French art in the eyes of the Vichy government. Much of the work shown in the exhibition looked back in style to the nineteenth century. It was this aspect of a living tradition that combined aspects of convention and nationalism, which had been promoted in right wing magazines during the 1930s, and continued to be during the war. In sculpture, the old

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[18] Christian Zervos, 'Reflexions sur la tentative d'esthétique dirigée du IIIe Reich,' *Cahiers d'art*, 1937, 52-57.
[19] Henri Laurens, 'Enquête,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1939), 68.
[20] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 35
[21] Pierre Ladoué, 'Introduction,' *Musée national d'art moderne. Exposition permanente*, (Paris: Julien Frazier, 1942), unpaged.
[22] Ibid. See list of artists at the back of the catalogue.

Indépendant artists were prevalent. Six works by Maillol were in the entrance hall. Bouchard and Despiau were well represented. Academic salon art was not favoured, being thought of as bourgeois-decadent.[23] However, there were many paintings by the Fauves, including Dufy, Matisse, Laurencin and Valadon.[24] In general the Fauves were treated with leniency by the Germans, their use of colour and vigour being thought of as a reaction to bourgeois-decadence.[25]

The Cubist room, no 213 at the Palais de Tokyo, included two Braques and work by La Fresnaye, Le Fauconnier, Laurencin, Gromaire, Lhote, Jacques Villon, Robert Delaunay, Léger, Gleizes and Picabia. Inevitably it was a strange, eclectic mixture of work, with the contrasts between the soft images of Laurencin, the brightly coloured palettes of Delaunay and Léger, and the patriotic and historicist themes of La Fresnaye. Although the dates of the works were not given in the catalogue, the room appears to have had none of the critical, radical Cubist work. The main protagonists in paint, like Picasso and Gris, were automatically excluded. Sculpture was shown separately. Laurens' *Femme accroupie* from 1930, which the state had bought in 1937, was exhibited with other sculpture. This work, as discussed in the previous chapter, was not one of Laurens' most contentious sculptures. It was shown in a room of mainly figurative works, mainly of busts of females. Aside from Csaky, all the other artists in the room, including Salendre, Pryas, Debarre and Iché are now less well known and appear to have been retrogressive in style. There was virtually no radical Cubist sculpture, and in being displayed separately from painting meant that the impact of the school was lessened. Without the main École de Paris figures, who had provided much of the innovative work, the exhibition could only represent a dilute image of Cubism.

The sculpture shown in the exhibition was middle of the road and included many works by Bourdelle, Maillol, Despiau and Pommier. Maillol's *L'Île de France* was

[23] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 22.
[24] Pierre Ladoué, op. cit. For a comment on the revival of interest in the Fauves, see Michèle Cone, op. cit., 48-49.
[25] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 48.

illustrated on the cover of the catalogue and six of his works were shown in the entrance hall. Many purchases of sculpture were made during the war, but these were exclusively not radical works. This was a continuation of the purchasing bias of the 1930s. Among many Indépendant artists there appears to have been at least passive collaboration. Between 1942 and 1944 ten million francs were spent by the state on commissions which included 244 paintings and 260 sculptures.[26] For the first time, artistic commissions were favouring sculpture. Many works by Maillol were bought including *L'action enchaînée*, 1906, *Jeune fille à la draperie*, 1910 and *La montagne* 1937 which were all acquired in 1942.[27] Maillol's art appealed to the German critics because of its Greekness and its appeal to the public.[28] Arno Breker, Hitler's official sculptor, was crucial in fostering collaboration. He still had many contacts and friendships from his time in Paris in the 1920s when he had studied with Despiau.[29] His exhibition at the Orangerie in 1942 was seen almost as a symbol of artistic occupation of Paris.[30] Breker received huge commissions from Hitler and during the war had over a hundred people working for him in his studio near Berlin.[31] The clarity, taste and harmony of his style of sculpture was perceived as being particularly French. Jacques Baschet, who wrote *Sculpteurs de ce temps* in 1946, also excluded avant-garde sculpture.[32] Among those shown were Maillol, Dejeun, Niclaus, Despiau, and Landowski. All the works shown were nudes and portrait busts, in a figurative style and mainly carved in stone. Most of the artists had received major commissions which were illustrated. Niclausse had the *Monument aux morts de Metz* included in the section on his work. Dejeun had a *Nymphe* in the Palais de Tokyo. The bias in official commissions of the thirties continued through the war.

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[26] Sarah Wilson, 1992, op. cit., 224.
[27] Jean Cassou, Bernard Dorival, Mme. Genevieve Homolle, *Musée national d'art moderne. Catalogue-guide,* (Paris: Musées Nationaux, 1947), unpaged.
[28] Michèle Cone, op. cit. See pages 158-169 for general pro German feeling among artists at the time and 165-166 about Maillol in particular.
[29] Sarah Wilson, 1992,op. cit., 221.
[30] Sarah Wilson, 1981, op. cit., 96. His exhibition was held in May of 1942.
[31] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 160.
[32] Jacques Baschet, *Sculpteurs de ce temps*, (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Français, 1946)

There were many new galleries in Paris. Between May 1941 and the autumn of 1943 the numbers practically doubled.[33] However, these were only establishments and exhibitions which conformed to the concept of Aryan art. Most galleries were kept open at the beginning of the war and there were shows of avant-garde art. The Galerie de Mai had exhibitions of Léger and Chagall in the spring of 1940.[34] However, after the armistice of 1940, most galleries which had specialised in avant-garde art closed or were expropriated for Aryanization. Some dealers like Léonce Rosenberg stayed in Paris but kept a low profile. Other Jewish dealers arranged their businesses to avoid being taken over by more acceptable dealers. Kahnweiler 'sold' the Galerie Simon to his non-Jewish sister in law, Louise Leiris and left the city.[35] Authorisation for exhibitions required permission from the German Propaganda-Abteilung and spies were sent to make sure that all was in order. There were many instances of disobedience. The Galerie Charpentier was ordered to remove a painting by Picasso which had been in the window. However, it remained exhibited but in the office of the director.[36] A few galleries managed to continue exhibiting avant-garde works throughout the war, including Galerie René Drouin, Galerie Esquisse and Galerie Jeanne Bucher.[37] Galerie Louis Carré, as well as holding some exhibitions of modernist work including Villon, Denis, Dufy and Cocteau, also commissioned pieces.[38] The gallery bought four marbles by Laurens, *Flora* of 1940, *Marchande de poisson*, 1940, *Dormeuse,* 1944 and *L'adieu* 1944. These were illustrated in the first edition of *Cahiers d'art* to appear after the war together with other work which Laurens had made during the war.[39] Laurens had a solo exhibition there in the autumn of 1945.

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[33] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 12.
[34] Exposition Fernand Léger, until 30 mars 1940. Exposition Marc Chagall, 26 January-26 February 1940 at the Galerie Mai du 1er. *Cahiers d'art*, (1940), 33-36.
[35] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 13.
[36] Ibid., 147.
[37] Sarah Wilson, 1992, op. cit., 244.
[38] Sarah Wilson, 1981, op. cit., 100. Louis Carré held exhibitions of Villon in April 1943 and December 1944. He also showed Walch, Cocteau, Denis, Dufy, Marchand and Oskar Dominguez during the occupation.
[39] Laurens, *Flora,* 1940, h. 40 cm. Laurens, *Marchande de poisson*, 1940, h. 40 cm. Laurens, *La dormeuse*, 1944, h. 30 cm. Laurens, *L'adieu,* 1944, h. 30 cm. *Cahiers d'art* (1940-1944. One volume), unpaged. The dates of these works are those cited in the magazine. They are different from those

Galerie Jeanne Bucher held regular exhibitions of the avant-garde during the war, including one devoted to Laurens and another that included his drawings.[40] During the 1920s and 1930s they had shown diverse exhibitions, but with the emphasis on Surrealist art. Laurens had exhibited there in early 1936 in relation to a show of the collection of Henri Laugier.[41] However, apart from that he had not been featured. During the war the gallery held about four exhibitions a year including ones for Kandinsky, Miro, Marcoussis and Lurçat.[42] The exhibition on Kandinsky was closed by the Nazis in July 1942.[43] Laurens' one man exhibition in 1942 was well attended by the avant-garde, including Picasso, Eluard, Braque, Le Corbusier, Kandinsky, Jacques Villon, Lobo and Léonce Rosenberg.[44] This does give one a sense of the number of the avant-garde in Paris at the time. Laurens attended a number of exhibitions at the gallery including one for Charles Lapique and a joint exhibition for Dora Maar and Vera Pagav.[45] The exhibition of drawings in 1944 included works by more than sixteen artists including Laurens, Picasso, Léger, Braque, Dufy, Dali, Klee, Ernst and Gris. The inclusion of the Picasso in this exhibition was provocative. The broad spectrum of the artists represented was reminiscent of the range shown in *Minotaure* and in related exhibitions of the 1930s. Many of the artists shown were officially denounced in 1943 when canvases by Masson, Miro, Picabia, Klee, Ernst, Léger, Picasso and others were slashed and burned in the gardens of the Jeu de Paume.[46] The exhibition of drawings by Laurens and others was also well attended.

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mentioned in other books. The *terres cuites* of *La dormeuse* and *L'adieu* are dated 1943 and 1940 respectively, by the Galerie Louise Leiris in their recent exhibition catalogue, *Henri Laurens, 60 terres cuites*. (Paris: 1998) The other works have always been cited as being made before the war. Presumably the dates in *Cahiers d'art* refer to the actual marble sculptures which Laurens made for the gallery.

[40] I am grateful to M. Jaeger for showing me the gallery's *Cahier d'or*. The gallery at this time was at 9 ter Boulevard du Montparnasse. *Henri Laurens exhibition. Sculptures et dessins*, 25 Juin -17 Juillet 1942. Exhibition of *Dessins et gravures*, 4 Mars 1944.

[41] Ibid. December 1935-January 1936, *Collection of Henri Laugier.*

[42] Ibid. July 1942: Kandinsky. October 1943: Miro. November/ December 1943: Marcoussis. January/ February 1944: Kandinsky peint gouaches. March 1944: Gouaches of Lurçat.

[43] Sarah Wilson, 1992, op. cit., 245.

[44] Galerie Jeanne Bucher, *Cahier d'or.*

[45] Ibid. November/December, 1941: Charles Lapique. June 1944: Dora Maar and Vera Pagav.

[46] Sarah Wilson, 1992, op. cit., 242.

Most of the exhibitions shown in the gallery's *Cahier d'or* have pages of signatures of people who had attended. The fact of artists and writers signing attendance for subversive exhibitions was in itself an act of defiance. Although no notice was taken of the exhibitions in the press, they were counter to the official definition of acceptable art. The neighbour of this gallery during the war was George Hugnet who ran a bookstore-gallery and was active in the resistance.[47] Many of the artists were also active in this way.

The major art reviews also saw a large change after the war began. *Cahiers d'art* published until April 1940. After that, Christian and Yvonne Zervos went to Vézelay and worked for the resistance.[48] *Minotaure* stopped publishing in May 1939. *Le journal des arts* amalgamated with *Beaux arts* in 1941 and became the official magazine for Vichy ideas under the name of *Le journal des arts.*[49] There were no Jewish art critics. For the public, the general lack of avant-garde art in major exhibitions, galleries and magazines would probably have been almost unnoticed among all the other art activity. However, it was a calculated attempt to rewrite cultural history. Clandestine reviews were printed. *L'art français* appeared in 1942 and had five issues which wrote of the necessity of artists resisting the political situation. Each issue had a circulation of fifteen hundred to two thousand copies.[50]

One of the new aspects visible in Laurens' work was the inclusion of violence and apocalyptic themes. Right up to the war, although themes could be related to political events and the general situation, Laurens' style remained one of balance. In 1939, he wrote that an artists work was '*déterminé jusqu'à un certain point par les moeurs et les habitudes du lieu et du temps où il vit.*'[51] However, he continued by saying that political events should not directly effect work.[52] To an extent, Picasso, Braque and

[47] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 200, note 4 and 147.
[48] Ibid., 13.
[49] Sarah Wilson, op. cit., 223.
[50] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 170.
[51] Henri Laurens, 'Enquête,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1939), 68.
[52] Ibid.

Laurens produced work in the war which was apolitical. However, the themes of all three became stark and morbid. Both Picasso and Braque painted many still lifes which included skulls and used sombre colours. Picasso's *Still Life with a Steer's Skull* of 1942 showed a large skull in harsh reds, yellows and purple on a table set in front of closed windows through which one could see nothing. The day before he had painted a large bull's skull on a table in front of a blanked out window.[53] Picasso at this time was obsessed with death. The series of works which included bulls' skulls has been linked with the death of his friend, Julio Gonzáles, the previous month. Picasso was also concerned that his own life would end.[54]

We know less about Laurens' state of mind in the war. However, like his friends his work did respond to the changing circumstances. He inevitably made many drawings during the war. There were few traditional materials available with which to make sculpture. Unlike Picasso, he no longer wished to make works from recycled and found materials. Frequently his work shows violence in gesture and rendering. Two drawings from 1942, *L'exterminée* (Plate 4.1) and *Femme-fleur* (Plate 4.2) show this characteristic. In these, he continued to develop the continuous line technique of before the war, where amorphous body parts were randomly described in a rhythm of balancing curves. In *L'exterminée*, the kneeling figure raises spiky hands and gapes, open mouthed and hollow eyed, in a gesture of horror. The lines have become more varied in weight and speed. The shapes have become angular. Dots create emphasis. Laurens drew many images on the theme of *Femme-fleur.* In the one illustrated, the pointed fingers cover the eyes and again the mouth is open. In *Femme* of the same year, both hands cover the eyes while still showing the open mouth. A deep amorphous shadow partly covers the body of *Femme-fleur*, suggesting the presence of another. This use of shadow, disassociated from the form of the subject, which was frequently used to suggest threat, was an aspect which Laurens developed both during and after the war. He also used the frame of his images to greater effect. The

[53] Picasso, *Still Life with a Steer's skull*, 1942, dated 6.4.42, oil on canvas, 117 x 89. Picasso, *Head of a Bull on a Table*, 1942, dated 5 April 1942, oil on canvas.
[54] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 139.

figures in both, like many drawings at the time, fill the pictorial space. The figures in the *Femme-fleur* series appear claustrophobically moulded into the perimeters of the sheet. These drawings contrast with the *Femme assise* of 1935 (Plate 4.3) where, like many of the drawings from this time, the figure was set well in from the margins. The outline of the earlier form was made from six gestures of rhythmic, answering curves. Compared to the later drawings, it appears lyrical, balanced and less complicated. The bronze sculpture, *Femme-fleur* of 1942 (Plate 4.4) relates to the drawings of that name. The outstretched pointed fingers cover face and breast in a defensive gesture. The amorphous limbs fold upon themselves, constricting the figure into a confined block.

Laurens designed a frontispiece for his friend, Paul Eluard's book *La dernière nuit* in 1942. It was not the first time Laurens had illustrated Eluard's work. The book *Un poème dans chaque livre* had an illustration against each poem by Eluard's friends, including Giacometti, Ernst, Léger and Laurens. The work by Laurens, dating from 1937 showed a lyrically linear image of a semi-reclining figure against the poem 'Les mains libre'.[55] The illustration for *La dernière nuit* could not be a stronger contrast. A figure brandishes a serrated knife over the throat of another figure with gaping mouth and outstretched hand. Jagged lines add to the air of violence. The theme of violence was to continue after the war with *L'ange exterminateur*, an etching from 1947. Here the angular lines of the figure fill the page, the hand outstretched, mouth open and dagger poised downwards. Although many images after the war did regain an aspect of the former poise and lyricism, Laurens' artistic vocabulary had been enriched. He continued to use shadow suggestive of outside forms and his line frequently regained a nervous quality, suggestive of emotion.

Many of the sculptured figures from the war-time fold inwards. This was a new quality and was not one which was to continue after the war. The distended limbs and head in *L'adieu* of 1941 are so compressed that no space is allowed through the

[55] Paul Eluard, *Un poème dans chaque livre,* (Paris: Louis Broder, 1956)

form. (Plate 4.5) The head is bowed and the arms protect the body. The gesture is that of hibernation. Lobo was to write of this work that it was a symbol of *l'humanité terrassée.*[56] *La nuit* and *La dormeuse* (Plate 4.6), both of 1943 continue this theme. The plump limbs of *La dormeuse* create a continuous whole within the overall rounded shape. There is little definition within the slumbering form. One of the characteristics in all of Laurens' oeuvre up until this time was the play between solid and void and the contrast of crisp line and surface. The poses of his figures, even if reclining, conveyed mood. These works show minimum definition and less activation of space. This becomes more obvious when compared to *Le matin* of 1944. Here the figure raises itself on to its knees, the head still bowed and eyes closed. *L'aurore* (Plate 4.7) of the same year again shows the figure on one knee, the head on this sculpture looking upwards. The liberation of Paris occurred in August of 1944, and while the situation continued to be difficult, the end of the war was in sight. It is tempting to link the change in sculptural form with this event.

Laurens continued with the idea of using evocative themes. *Ange assis à la trompette* of 1940 (Plate 4.8) was one of a number of drawings of angels from the war. The imagery of an angel blowing a trumpet has medieval connotations. This, on the surface would have been acceptable to the Vichy regime. The link with French medieval art, which had been promoted during the 1930s in right wing magazines, continued to be emphasised during the war. A return to medieval values of simplicity, humility and subjectivity were found in the work of *Jeunes peintres de tradition française* who exhibited in Paris during the occupation.[57] The work of the group met with the approval of the Vichy government.[58] The Romanesque sculpture rooms at the Musée des monuments français were kept open during the war, presumably as they provided a reminder of French tradition.[59] The Saint-Sever manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale from the eleventh century which had been a

[56] Lobo, 'Quisiero Decir Algo...' in *Le point*, (juillet 1946), 47-8.
[57] Sarah Wilson, 1992, op. cit., 235.
[58] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 38.
[59] Sarah Wilson 1992, op. cit., 235.

key exhibit at the Exposition du Moyen Age in 1926, was in Les plus beaux manuscripts français du VIII au XVIe siècle in 1937 and was reproduced in *Verve* in the Spring of 1938.[60] The imagery was influential on the avant-garde and has been linked to Picasso's *Guernica.*[61] Trumpet blowing angels were a tangible part of this tradition. As well as appearing in manuscripts, they were also subjects in gothic church carvings, as on the west façade of Notre Dame in Paris. Laurens' apocalypse drawings link with this. Laurens had always been interested in Île de France churches and was fond of gothic art. *Ange assis à la trompette*, like so many drawings of this subject from the war, do not show a poised angel. The manner of depiction was not traditional. His image shows violence through the jagged edges of the wings and the rapid squiggles of the legs. In the book of Revelation, the first six angels with trumpets that God sent brought death and chaos to earth. They presaged hail, fire, poison and locusts.[62] Although medieval imagery was popular in France at this time, the translation of it into contemporary art was meant to be positive and affirming. One of the aspects which was necessary for the approval of the Vichy government was that art should not be depressing, represent decay or be otherwise decadent.[63] The images by Laurens were not positive. *L'ange au glaive* v. 1940 (Plate 4.9) shows a crouching winged figure, with hand shielding face, all but obliterated by the shape of a winged shadow. The double-edged sword, which is tentatively held up, is one of the accompaniments to the scales of justice. This work, like the previous one can be read as subversive. It would not have appealed to the occupying regime.

The war years were not easy for artists who were not collaborators. The École de Paris had, in effect, been liquidated. Many of the artists were not in Paris. Those who were kept a low profile. There were few places which dared to exhibit avant-garde work and the magazines which had promoted it prior to the war did not publish during the occupation. Laurens made fewer sculptures, but many drawings. These

[60] Sophie Bowness, *The Presence of the Past. Art in France in the 1930s*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, (1995), appendix 2, 349.
[61] Ibid.
[62] *Bible*. See chapters 8 and 9 in Revelation.
[63] Michèle Cone, op. cit., 23-25

showed a broadening of the means of expression. Whereas before the war he created works of harmony and poise, there was now an element of violence in many drawings, created by the use of shadow, angularity and framing. The subject matter also added to this with apocalyptic themes. These elements were to enrich his post war drawings and illustrations. In sculpture, many of the works between 1941 and 1943 folded in on themselves and were of themes like *La dormeuse*. These again could be linked with the situation at the time. With the ending of the war, Laurens' sculpture quickly returned to work which drew on his explorations from the 1930s, in creating work which was serene and harmonious.

After the war

With the ending of hostilities, even though the economic situation continued to be difficult, almost immediately there was a liberalization of attitude and a broadening of work promoted in magazines. Laurens was part of this. The École de Paris, which had been forcibly ignored during the war, was now championed in the press and in museums. One of the problems, especially for post war critics was that, in the immediate aftermath of the war, the name given to the French school would have inevitably contain nationalistic overtones. Eventually, the term 'École de Paris' became the one which could represent Paris.[1] Critics paid much attention to the exhibition of 1946, Cent chefs-d'oeuvres des peintres de l'École de Paris at the Galerie Charpentier. It showed many of the great international avant-garde painters from before the war including Chagall, Soutine, Utrillo, Matisse, Braque and Picasso.[2] Increasingly there were exhibitions which were of abstract art, but critics were proud of the changing École de Paris. They found that, in spite of the forced expatriation of many artists, Paris still had the power to draw others. The future intellectual and artistic primacy of France was not in doubt.[3]

The new head of the Musée nationale d'art moderne, Jean Cassou, was keen to expand the collection to include work by the pre war École de Paris artists. He wrote in the new catalogue of 1947 how aware he was of the bias in the collection, especially in work since Cézanne.[4] He clearly wanted to remove the nationalist bias. He wrote tellingly that the École Français was now the same as the École de Paris and how, in future, he intended to have no distinction made between artists which were French by birth and those who were originally from abroad.[5] The State were clearly in agreement as enough money was made available for him to be able to

[1] Laure de Buzon-Vallet, 'L'École de Paris: éléments d'une enquête', *Paris 1937 Paris 1957,* (Paris : Éd. Centre George Pompidou, 1981), 252-255, 252.
[2] Ibid., 252
[3] Pierre Francastel, *Nouveau dessin, nouvelle peinture, l'École de Paris*, (Paris 1947), 177-179 quoted in ibid., 252
[4] Jean Cassou, 'Introduction,' Jean Cassou, Bernard Dorival, Mme. Geneviève Homolle, *Musée national d'art moderne, catalogue-guide*, (Paris: Musées nationaux, 1947), II.
[5] Ibid., V.

pursue his aims. Donations were also forthcoming, so that in the few years after the end of the war, a substantial collection of Cubist work became part of the official collection. Two Laurens sculptures were bought in 1946 to add to the *Femme accroupie* which had been acquired in 1937: *La Sirène* of 1944 and *Adieu* of 1940.[6] Apparently, the collection was aiming to have at least three works of each of the major sculptors of the École de Paris. Neither Lipchitz nor Brancusi had had any work in the state collection prior to this date, so three of their works were bought.[7] Three works by Csaky were acquired, making six in the collection.[8] Picasso donated twelve works, ten from his collection and two from that of Paul Rosenberg.[9] Eight new Braques were purchased, bringing the collection to eleven.[10] Four Légers were donated.[11] For the first time, the museum was able to exhibit a good range of Cubist work by the most important figures.

There were still large gaps. As the catalogue stated, many important works had been bought by foreigners at a time when the French State was not interested.[12] This meant that the work was irretrievably gone from France. Also, owing to the lack of investment in contemporary work, it was not possible to immediately have a coherent and balanced collection. There were no sculptures by Laurens prior to 1930 and none of his graphic work. His works were shown with Brancusi, Chauvin, Csaky, Duchamp Villon, Lipchitz, Chana Orloff and Zadkine in a large room at the head of the staircase. Although Cubist sculpture was still being isolated from painting, Laurens' work was now being shown in conjunction with others whose styles were complementary with his own. The collection was to gain in strength over the next few years. Laurens' large sculpture, *La grande musicienne,* originally from 1937 although dated 1950 in the catalogue, was bought in 1952.[13] Temporary exhibitions also broadened the scope of the collection. There were a number of these

[6] Ibid., 122 *Adieu*, 1940, bronze doré, h. 0.85. *La sirène*, 1944, bronze doré, h. 1.18.
[7] Ibid., 122, 120.
[8] Ibid., 121.
[9] Ibid., 62-3.
[10] Ibid., 50-51.
[11] Ibid., 48.
[12] Ibid., II.

every year in a very large room dedicated to this series. From the first exhibition in 1947 on Marc Chagall, there was an international perspective. The majority were artists and groups who would not have been thought suitable by the Vichy regime. These included Paul Klee and a colony of Flemish artists in 1948, Zadkine, Léger and Moore in 1949 and contemporary Wallon artists and Haitian art in 1950. Laurens had a large retrospective in 1951.[14]

After the end of the war, art magazines started to take stock. *L'amour de l'art* which began to publish in May 1945 wrote in the first issue how much art was not on view, but was still in storage. Twenty French artists and twelve who were part of the École de Paris were now in New York.[15] The article wrote that the enforced exodus had actually been good for French art, in that it had given it a much wider audience.[16] Pages were devoted to each artist, with illustrations and lists of their many exhibitions in America. This would probably have been the first news which the general public would have heard of many of the artists in a number of years, as France had been isolated from the rest of the world.

Cahiers d'art had ceased publication in 1940. The first edition published after the occupation had the years 1940-1944 in one volume. Included in that were illustrations of the marbles by Laurens which the Galerie Louis Carré had bought, many drawings and a plaster of a larger *Adieu* of 1942 and *Matin* of 1943.[17] The volume for 1945-1946 included many of the major pre war figures of the avant-garde who had been forcibly ignored during the previous few years. They included articles on Klee, Kandinsky, Chagall, Giacometti, Breton and Lipchitz. The volume of 1948 was dedicated to Picasso, half of which were photographs of his ceramics. The issues after the war continued the trend from before the war of being lavishly illustrated,

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[13] Jean Cassou, Bernard Dorival, Mme. Geneviève Homolle, *Musée national d'art moderne, catalogue-guide*, (Paris: Musées nationaux, 1954), 195-6.
[14] Ibid., IX-X.
[15] Charles Sterling, 'Art Français en Amerique,' *L'amour de l'art*, (Mai 1945), 28.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Laurens, *Flora*, 1940, h. 40 cm. Laurens, *Marchande de poison*, 1940, h. 40 cm. Laurens, *Dormeuse*, 1944, h. 30 cm. Laurens, *Adieu*, 1944, h. 30 cm. These dates do not correspond with those

but there was a general move away from the philosophy of the 1930s, which had placed an emphasis on the importance of non European and ancient art for contemporary artists. The magazine continued to be loyal to the old avant-garde whose art was based on figurative work, in spite of the fact that new artists were coming to Paris and the styles in the exhibitions were becomingly increasingly abstract. This was also true of exhibitions which they promoted. Yvonne Zervos, Jacques Charpier and René Girard organised a large exhibition in Avignon in 1947.[18] It was well illustrated in the magazine, showing Laurens' *Cariatide* and possibly some other of his works in the exhibition. Also included were works by Matisse, Braque, Picasso, Kandinky, Klee, Leger, Chagall, Mondrian, Giacometti, Cálder and Lipchitz.[19] It had no cohesion of style, but was a celebration of the range and force of international avant-garde.

This broadening of scope in the magazines meant that many of the École de Paris artists who had been ignored during the war and neglected during the 1930s were now being targeted. Laurens benefited from this. *Le Point* devoted an issue to him in 1946.[20] It included affectionate articles and a poem about him and his work written by friends. It also had many illustrations of a broad range of his work and photographs of him in his studio. It was the first such tribute and was the beginning of a much wider public recognition. The first article was by Maurice Raynal. He began by writing of the lyrical expression and poetry in his work.[21] Laurens, he wrote, sought to recreate eternal truths of life of objects.[22] His work was not the result of intellectual deductions but were translations from natural, spiritual emanations.[23] He felt that these aspects linked Laurens' art with that of prehistoric and universal art.[24] Pierre Reverdy commented on the discretion of both Laurens the

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cited in other books. For instance, the catalogue Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1992, op. cit., dates *La dormeuse* as 1943 and *L'adieu* as 1941.

[18] Exposition d'art contemporain au Palais des papes à Avignon, 27 June to 30 September 1947.

[19] Yvonne Zervos, Jacques Charpier et René Girard, 'Exposition d'art contemporain au Palais des papes à Avignon,' *Cahiers d'art* (1947), 294-319.

[20] Special issue, 'Henri Laurens,' *Le point, revue artistique et littéraire*, (juillet 1946)

[21] Maurice Raynal, 'Henri Laurens,' in ibid., 3.

[22] Ibid., 5.

[23] Ibid., 7.

[24] Ibid., 10.

person and the artist who worked in silence and yet made stone speak.[25] Georges Limbour wrote affectionately of Laurens' innocence as a person and gave an insight into his simplicity of thought.[26] Françoise Leibowitz wrote how Laurens' recent work had recovered the essential qualities which had been lost since antiquity.[27] Her approach was more historical, saying that although his initial influences were Cubist painters, it was Cubism's clarity and state of mind which he used.[28] Although the colour and constructions of his early work revealed their painterly influence, it is the quality of the object isolated in space, which determined their sculptural resonance.[29] Gradually he distanced himself from these origins and used a simplification which was linked with primitivism. His more recent work was affiliated with the grand sculptural tradition.[30] Lobo also wrote of Laurens' simplicity and clarity in character and work and of his dislike of theorizing.[31] In all the articles, his links with an eternal and not specific sculptural tradition was emphasized. The perceived simplicity and non intellectual stance of the man made it possible for him to create timeless work which had the innocence of primitive art. He was also written about as being the major sculptor of the day who spoke to the contemporary condition.

Laurens was also interviewed for a few magazines after the war. In one for *Arts de France* in 1946, he laid out his working methods which again suggested a non intellectual approach.[32] The studio had innumerable small figures which Laurens said suggested and fixed forms. He did not think about light in his work as he felt that if a sculpture was balanced and worked, then it took hold of light.[33] Good work imposed itself on the viewer and appeared to be the sole solution.[34] These ideas were

[25] Pierre Reverdy, 'Henri Laurens le sculpteur silencieux,' in ibid, 18.
[26] George Limbour, 'Laurens et les sphinx,' in ibid, 19-27.
[27] Françoise Leibowitz, 'L'oeuvre exemplaire d'Henri Laurens,' in ibid., 32.
[28] Ibid., 34.
[29] Ibid., 36-39.
[30] Ibid., 46.
[31] Lobo, 'Quisiero Decir Algo...,' in ibid., 47-48.
[32] Philippe Jacques, 'Henri Laurens,' *Arts de France*, (no 10 1946), 31-36.
[33] Ibid., 32.
[34] Ibid.

reiterated and elaborated in his lengthy article of 1951 in *Amis de l'art*.[35] He began by writing in practical and formal terms on his work. He sought stability and calm in his sculpture, even if the figure was moving. This was achieved through plastic laws of volumes and spaces. Sculpture above all took possession of space so that he felt that it was necessary to integrate it within architecture.[36] He wanted to ripen form. His work was a product of his imagination which grew from the sculpture itself. When starting a sculpture, he said that he did not know how it would finish as he responded to the requirements of each work.[37] Both of these articles stressed a practical approach to art. He wrote how by balancing forms then certain effects would be achieved. However, there was more than this. The act of creation, as in a poem by Mallarmé, becomes the work of art. He was not imposing himself on the work, but was responding at a deeper level to the needs of the developing form.

The way in which Laurens was writing about making art from his own imagination and his instinctive response to the growing sculpture was probably why Giacometti, in an affectionate tribute to Laurens, wrote that his sculpture was like a projection of himself in space, similar to a three dimensional shadow.[38] He wrote how every aspect of Laurens' sculpture had been sifted through the artist, so that became like his breathing, touching, feeling and thinking. There was clearly much respect between the two sculptors. The Viscount de Noailles wrote how they were friends and that Giacometti had consulted Laurens as to the type of stone which should be used for a particular sculpture.[39]

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[35] Y. Taillandier, 'Une déclaration d'Henri Laurens,' *Amis de l'art*, (26 juin 1951) reproduced in full in catalogue, *Henri Laurens, sculptures en pierre 1919-1943*, Galerie Louis Leiris, (Paris: Draeger Frères, 1958), unpaged.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Alberto Giacometti, 'Henri Laurens: A sculptor seen by a sculptor,' Quoted in English in full in Arts Council, *Henri Laurens*, exhibition catalogue, Hayward Gallery, (Reading: Berkshire Printing Co. 1971), 13-15. Translation Pamela Sylvester, 1971. From Alberto Giacometti, 'Henri Laurens: un sculpteur vu par un sculpteur,' *Labyrinth*, no. 4, Geneva, 1945, 3.

[39] Charles de Noailles, 'Statement,' dated October 1977, in R. Lassarat, *Hyères les Palmiers*, Cahiers d'histoire, no. 19, 'La villa Noailles' undated photostat in the archives of the Mairie at Hyères.

Matisse and Laurens were also close. Matisse had been born in the same village in Picardy as Marthe Laurens.[40] They had known each other since 1918.[41] Laurens would visit Matisse every year and wrote frequently. A group of letters survive from Matisse to Laurens from the late 1940s. In each there was a discussion about materials and making. In one letter dated 5 October 1949, Matisse was wondering whether lost wax or sand casting would be suitable for a bas relief. There appears to have been a reply from Laurens as the next letter from Matisse, dated 12 October 1949 continued the discussion.[42] As well as writing about founders and methods of casting, there were also discussions of modeling. Valsuani, the founder, had suggested that Matisse should use plasticene instead of wax, which he did not like.[43] In another letter Matisse wrote that 'we share the same views about modeling with clay that is not too rich, but somewhat sandy as Gauguin and Maillol liked it.'[44] Matisse commented that he had seen Laurens' *Deux filles* which he admired. It was still *en blanc* so presumably it refers to the bronze *Les deux soeurs* of 1950. A year earlier, a letter from Matisse said how pleased he was that Laurens had liked a sculpture of his.[45] In all the letters there was a warm respect.

This was also shown in 1950. Laurens had been invited by Italy to take part in the Venice Biennale. Matisse won the prize for painting. Laurens failed to do so in the sculpture category. In protest, Matisse shared the money of his prize with Laurens and Giacometti removed his works.[46] A banquet was given in Paris in honour of Laurens as further protest. One hundred and sixty guests, including most of the celebrities in the art world, friends and admirers participated.[47] It was an event

[40] Conversation with Madame Denise Laurens, 6 January 1999.
[41] There is a post card in the Laurens archive between Matisse and Laurens dated 1918.
[42] I would like to thank Madame Laurens for showing me these letters. A few extracts are included in Pierre Schneider, *Matisse*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 544. However, it appears that the dates of the letters are incorrect in the book. The one which is dated October 5 1949 should, I believe, be October 12 1949.
[43] Letter dated 12 October 1949. Laurens archive.
[44] Letter dated 12 October 1949 in Pierre Schneider, op. cit.
[45] Letter dated 20 December 1948. Laurens archive.
[46] Catalogue, *Henri Laurens, rétrospective*, (Lille: Musée d'art moderne Villeneuve d'Ascq, 1992), 282.
[47] Pierre Assouline, *An Artful Life. A biography of D. H. Kahnweiler, 1884-1979*, trans. Charles Ruas, (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 322.

conducted in the most friendly of spirits.[48] Kahnweiler toasted Laurens, praising the modesty of both artist and his art. He said that his work was 'great sculpture' and that it formed a body of work which was 'coherent, complete and sensual.'[49]

In 1951, Laurens had a major retrospective at the Musée national d'art moderne in Paris. (Plate 4.10) It showed eighty of his sculptures of all different sizes, from 1914 to 1951. Also included were drawings, papiers collés and illustrated books.[50] It showed the complete range of his work. The exhibition was a revelation, even for his closest admirers like Christian Zervos.[51] Few had realized the extent and breadth of his work. As Zervos wrote, Laurens had always been an artist with an aversion to publicity.[52] The exhibition was reported in *Cahiers d'art* and in relation to the film which was made of Laurens in 1951 by Pillet in *Art d'aujourd'hui*.[53] Laurens was gaining in public recognition. As well as illustrating the exhibition, Christian Zervos wrote an article which corresponded with what Giacometti had written in 1945. It confirmed the spiritual, instinctive aspect of the working method, with the work coming from within Laurens.[54] He also wrote how the works themselves had life. *Les valeurs secrètes de ses sculptures...ne viennent pas seulement de la surface, mais encore du foyer même de son être.*[55] Zervos wrote about the independence of Laurens. He had trodden a path between the neo classicism of Maillol and the reduction of reality as expressed by Brancusi. His art showed freedom and hardiness and opened new perspectives.[56]

Laurens' work after the war showed a return to favourite motifs in his sculpture and an increased interest in the illustration of books. After the closed and violent images

[48] Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler, 'Recollections of Henri Laurens,' in Werner Hofmann, *The Sculpture of Henri Laurens*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams), 51.
[49] Pierre Assouline, op. cit., 322.
[50] Catalogue, *Henri Laurens*, (Paris: Musée nationaux, 1951), unpaged. 9 May -17 June, Musée national d'art moderne
[51] Christian Zervos, 'Exposition Henri Laurens au Musée national d'art moderne, (oeuvres de 1914 à 1951),' *Cahiers d'art,* (1951), 156-161, 157.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Léon Degand, '50 années de sculpture,' *Art d'aujourd'hui*, (October 1951), 29.
[54]Zervos, op.cit., 157, 161.
[55] Ibid., 158.
[56] Ibid., 157.

of the war years, his sculpture now returned to a ripeness and luxuriance of form. His sculptural work was exclusively modeled, probably in *terre cuite*, and later cast in bronze. Many of the forms exploit the possibilities of the material with the distorted limbs posed away from the body and only joined at narrow points. *L'automne* of 1948 is an example of this. (Plate 4.11) The point at which the swollen arms join the body is narrow and could only be supported by the inherent tensile strength of the material. It was a continuation of the theme of the many reclining nudes which Laurens had made in his oeuvre. The body leans back, the swollen legs casually crossed and arms under head. Although the twist and placement of the limbs were impossible, there was a renewed new sense of calm apparent in his work. Many of Laurens' works from the 1930s, like *La mère* of 1935, were distorted. (Plate 4.12) The join of the arms to the body was also narrow, and the figure twisted. The figure, however, was more craggy, with a rougher surface and amorphous limbs. In *L'automne* however, the smooth surface and rounded contours, swollen as if there was pressure from within, have developed into a new sensuality. This is also true in *Baigneuse* of 1947. Bathers had been a favourite theme in the 1930s and had taken on many forms. In common with his work at this time, he was achieving a '*mûrissement des formes*.' [57] There was calm and stability within the turning figure. Although most of his work at this time was essentially lyrical, *Les deux soeurs* of 1950 returned to the proportions of Dogon art which he had used in the late 1920s. The elongated torso and short plump limbs are similar to *Nu accroupie au mirroir* of 1929. However, the cylindrical body and geometrical pose of the sculpture from the 1920s has now given away to a more fluid line and a feeling of movement within the balanced forms.

Laurens illustrated a number of books after the war. Although he had done this before, these late books represent a substantial part of his work at this time. Laurens had a life long interest in literature. These illustrations united his two main interests: contemporary French poetry and classical literature. The illustrations for

[57] Henri Laurens, *Amis de l'art,* (26 juin 1951), quoted in full in catalogue, *Henri Laurens, sculptures en pierre, 1919-1943*, (Paris: Draeger Frères, 1958), unpaged. Galerie Louise Leiris, 29 October-29 November, 1958.

contemporary poems, such as Tristan Tzara's *Entre temps* of 1944, frequently included just one illustration. The classical works were much more substantial. These included *Les idylles* by Théocrites in 1945, *Loukios ou l'âne* by Lucien de Samosate of 1947, and *Les Dialogues* by Lucien de Samosate in 1951. Tériade, who was the editor of all three of these books, produced them on a lavish scale. *Les idylles* had 39 illustrations by Laurens, both as full page drawings and images set within the text.[58] (Plate 4.13) The drawings were red-brown, silhouette blocks of the main forms with lines which defined the anatomy and details, like an illustration on an ancient Greek vase. Those illustrations within the script tended to refer directly to an element in the text like a depiction of a cow. The full page drawings set the scene for the stories. The style throughout was constant. *Loukios ou l'âne* had 68 black and white illustrations, again both full page and set within the text.[59] (Plate 4.14) These illustrations tended to be less literally tied to the stories. They were also more diverse in artistic expression. Keeping the themes of line, shadow and block running through the book, Laurens varied the combinations. He explored the use of shadow which he had used during the war, both as shape in itself and suggesting another presence. Block was used both as an element within form, but also distinct from and cutting across it. Some of the illustrations were just abstract shadows, others had strong links with the text. While illustrating the text, there was also a large element of artistic counterpoint where themes emerged and were reiterated. The illustrations had a meaning and status separate from yet linked to the story.

This was explored further in the illustrations for Lucien's *Dialogues.*[60] (Plate 4.15) Laurens made thirty three coloured wood block illustrations for this book. Throughout, the graphics have a real but only tenuous link with the text. Lucien wrote witty conversations between gods which, while they were based on myth or

[58] Théocrite, *Les idylles*, Illustrations Henri Laurens, Paris: Tériade Éd., 1945. See Dieter Brusberg, *Henri Laurens, Das druckgraphische Oeuvre*, (Hannover: Éd. Brusberg, 1985), 92-101.
[59] Lucien de Samosate, *Loukios ou l'ane*, Illustrations Henri Laurens, (Paris: Tériade Éd., 1947) in Brusberg, ibid. 110-125.
[60] Lucien de Samosate, *Dialogues*, Illustrations, Henri Laurens, (Paris: Tériade Éd, 1951) in Brusberg, ibid. 148-159.

the characters of the gods, frequently had no actual link to traditional stories.[61] They provided an alternative vision. Laurens' wood-block drawings were a counterpoint to the conversations. There were no actual stories or even real scenes for him to illustrate. Each image provided a relationship between two conversing parties. The book itself was divided into four chapters. Laurens gave each a character of its own.

All the chapters had an illustration built around the initial letter, as was usual in medieval manuscripts. In the case of the *Dialogues des dieux* this was a P. In this chapter, there were also seven full page illustrations and a drawing at the end of the text. The colour scheme for the *Dialogues des dieux* was a brown and a black block shape, with black and white lines describing the heads. The coloured blocks were elements independent from the descriptive qualities of the lines, in a manner reminiscent of papiers collés. Laurens kept the attributes of the gods vague, although in the illustration for the dialogue between Hermes and Apollo, he gave Apollo laurel leaves and placed a lyre between the figures.[62] Just as the illustrations can literally be taken out of the book, being unbound, they also stand apart from the text. The two outer drawings visually face inwards like brackets. A progression is implied as elements from previous images were used. The positioning of heads, as with the fourth and fifth illustrations might be similar, or opposed as with the fifth and the sixth. The block shapes were echoed as with the third, fifth sixth and eighth. The second chapter, the *Dialogues marines* had four full page illustrations, and a small one at the beginning and the end. (Plate 4.16) Here again the relationship with the text was elusive. Sometimes he appeared to join elements of two dialogues together when they were on the page opposite. This was so in the first full page illustration, where the Cyclops of the second conversation appears with the nymph of the first.[63] In these illustrations, he used black, green and fawn shapes with blue figures and black and white lines. As with all the images, they show a conversational counterpoint. In this chapter, the characters are treated in a different manner. The

[61] Lucian, *Dialogues*, trans. M. D. Macleod, (Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1961), vol. VII.
[62] Lucien, 1951, op. cit., between 26 and 27 in original.
[63] Ibid., 54-55.

dominant character in the story was kept to the base and was illustrated as a line head. The secondary character was full figure and was illustrated by the blue block and line. In keeping with the marine theme, the shapes of those characters were rhythmic undulations and the colours watery. The illustrations for *Dialogues des morts* were more severe.[64] They were composed of dusky blue and black blocks, with black and white lines. The two characters were shown as heads and again harkened back to Cubist vocabulary with simultaneous front and side views. The fourth chapter, the *Dialogues des courtisanes* was brighter and more sensual, with the two independent blocks in yellow and pink and the black describing part or whole of the mask like face.[65] All the drawings were a juxtaposition of the head against the sinuous lines of a female form. The sensuousness of these female forms drew on the expanded vocabulary of the war years, and also linked with his contemporary sculptural output. The bronze *L'ëveil* of 1951 has an accentuation of hips and holds a similar stretching pose as the fourth drawing.

All of Laurens' illustrated books were approached in a different manner. He chose the style which was most suitable for the project. This, however, did not mean that they were subservient to the text. Especially in the illustrations for Lucien's *Dialogues,* there was a freedom and independence. The drawings had a program of their own which was separate from the book itself.

Laurens died in Paris in May 1954. Pierre Guéguen wrote a warm affirmation of the work of Laurens as a tribute to him, while regretting the general lack of interest in official quarters.[66] Earlier that year he had had his large sculpture, *Amphion* which was destined for Caracas, exhibited with the works by other artists which were also destined for the university. The architect of the complex, M. Villanueva, had chosen works by Laurens, Léger, Arp, Bloc, Pevsner and Vasarely for the site.[67] In March he had received the *Lauréat du grand prix de sculpture* at the Biennale of Sao Paulo. He

[64] See Brusberg, op. cit., 154-155.
[65] Ibid., 156-157.
[66] Pierre Guéguen, 'Hommage à Henri Laurens,' *Art d'aujourd'hui,* (May/ June 1954), 52-53.
[67] Michel Seuphor, 'Caracas,' *Art d'aujourd'hui,* (February 1954), 28-29.

did not go to Sao Paulo, but received the prize in his studio.[68] That year Laurens had visited his friends Picasso, Braque and Matisse in Vence. He had never received public recognition equal to theirs, but was regarded by them and many other artists with considerable respect. His last few years saw the beginnings of wider recognition which was to continue after his death.

[68] Photo of prize giving, *Art d'aujourd'hui*, (March/April 1954), 64.

Recognition

In 1955 Marthe Laurens wrote the first monograph on Laurens.[1] This was an insightful book as to his character, had a chronology and many illustrations. The monograph by Cecile Goldscheider, *Laurens*, of 1959 was more substantial.[2] Although not long, the essay placed his work alongside that of his contemporaries. Fundamentally, the essay was formalist in approach but did provide some insights. It also listed his book illustrations and exhibitions in which he participated. Again there were many illustrations of his work. It was not until 1970 that a really substantial monograph was published. *The Sculpture of Henri Laurens* by Werner Hofmann, with a short essay by Kahnweiler, outlined trends for each era of Laurens' work, as well as analyzing specific sculptures.[3] Although subjective in parts it was a critical study. He mainly wrote in a formalist manner, although some iconographical details were included. There were also many illustrations of Laurens' sculpture from all periods of his work. Inevitably, in a project of this type, it only included his sculpture. This meant that the real interplay between the two mediums in his work was not discussed. The previous books were also almost exclusively on his sculpture.

With Laurens' sculpture for the university at Caracas and his death, there was an increase of interest shown in the press. There had been substantially more articles dedicated to him in the early 1950s than in previous decades, but the number increased dramatically both in French and foreign magazines. He was included in three articles in 1952, seven in 1953, fourteen in 1954, eight in 1955, eleven in 1956, six in 1957 and eight in 1958.[4] Many of these were general, such as Pierre Guéguen, 'Idées générales sur la sculpture,' of 1954, which included a number of artists besides Laurens and was fundamentally contextual and formalist in approach. However, there were a number of articles which were dedicated to aspects of his work and were well illustrated. Jacques Dupin wrote of Laurens' *papiers peints* in

[1] Marthe Laurens, *Henri Laurens, sculpteur*, Paris: Pierre Bérès, éd., 1955.
[2] Cecile Goldscheider, *Laurens,* New York: Universe Books, 1959.
[3] Werner Hofmann, *The Sculpture of Henri Laurens*, New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1970.

Cahiers d'art in 1954. Although it was quite a general article, writing of the significance of papiers collés for Cubism, it also placed Laurens' early two dimensional work in the context of his sculpture and discussed his work in relation to the other Cubists. He continued by writing that the rigorous medium had been crucial for creating modern sculpture.[5] The article by Bruguière on 'Pierres sculptées d'Henri Laurens,' also in *Cahiers d'art* in 1960, was substantial.[6] In keeping with the format after the war, it contained over thirty illustrations of Laurens' work from 1919 to 1943. The article itself was fundamentally a history of Laurens' development, taking into consideration subject and form. He wrote how theme for Laurens was just a pretext for form. He also wrote about Laurens' gradual renunciation of stone, saying that as a medium it was too onerous without commissions and resources. There were many other articles which tended to be general and, in keeping with the critical style of the time, were formalist in approach. Many were illustrated. This interest kept Laurens' name and work alive in art magazines.

In the 1950s, before Laurens died, he had been gaining increasing international recognition through exhibitions. Before the war he had had five solo exhibitions, four of them in Paris. In 1952 alone, he had four one man exhibitions, in Paris, Amsterdam, Stockholm and New York. In 1953 he had three exhibitions in Germany.[7] This international interest continued after his death, with two solo exhibitions in Paris in 1955, one in Cologne in 1956, one in London in 1957, one in Paris in 1958 and two in New York in 1958 and 1959. The exhibition at the Galerie Louise Leiris, Paris, in 1958 was for his stone sculptures between 1919 and 1943. The dates represented the extent of Laurens' use of stone in sculpture. The catalogue had both colour and black and white illustrations of each of the thirty four works in the exhibition.[8] It also included the article which Laurens wrote in 1951 in *Amis de*

[4] Catalogue, *Henri Laurens. Rétrospective*, (Lille: Musée d'art moderne, Villneuve d'Ascq, 1992), 289-290.
[5] Jacques Dupin, 'Les papiers peints d'Henri Laurens,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1954), 179-190.
[6] P.-G Bruguière, 'Pierres sculptées d'Henri Laurens,' *Cahiers d'art*, (1960), 120-159.
[7] Lille, 1992, op. cit., 294-295.
[8] Galerie Louise Leiris, *Henri Laurens. Sculptures en pierre, 1919-1943*, Paris: Draeger Frères, 1958.

l'art about his ideas on sculpture. It was a comprehensive selection of work, with painted sculpture, reliefs and three dimensional sculpture in different scales and styles. It would have complemented the two other solo exhibitions in Paris of Laurens' work since his death. That at the Galerie Creuzevault in 1955 had been for his *terres cuites* and that at the Galerie Berggruen et Cie, also in 1955 showed his papiers collés.[9]

Laurens' sculpture was also being included more in group exhibitions. This again was a trend which had begun before his death, with his work being exhibited in three exhibitions in 1953, seven in 1954, seven in 1955, six in 1956, two in 1957, four in 1958 and eight in 1959.[10] This was to continue. In some exhibitions from the 1950s he was shown as part of a private collection, as with the exhibitions of the collection of Mr and Mrs Harry Lewis Winston in 1955 and 1957 in Michigan and Detroit. In some he was part of a selection of artists whose work complemented each other, as with the exhibition at Nice in 1957 which showed the sculpture of Laurens, Lipchitz, Richier and Zadkine. In some he was part of surveys as in the exhibition at the Fine Arts Associates Gallery in New York, 'From Rodin to Lipchitz' or at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam in 1958, 'De Renaissance der 20, Eeuw'.[11] What is important is that he was part of collections of connoisseurs, was seen as an integral part of the École de Paris and was considered important enough as an artist to be included in substantial surveys of art. This trend has continued to the present day.

These exhibitions helped to keep Laurens' work in front of the public as most was still in private collections. The Musée d'art moderne in Paris still had only four works. In 1967 Laurens' son, Claude Laurens, donated about two hundred works to the Musée Nationaux. Many were cast into bronze for the occasion.[12] There were articles dedicated to this event and the exhibition of works was first shown at the Grande Palais in Paris and then at the Haus am Walsee de Berlin. Kahnweiler also

[9] Lille, 1992, op. cit., 296.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 285.

donated about forty *terres cuites*.[13] For the first time, a selection of Laurens' work would always be on view in the national museums of France.

> *La sculpture de Laurens est ...une véritable projection de lui-même dans l'espace...Cette sculpture est complexe; elle est réelle comme un verre...chacune de ces sculptures est en plus la cristallisation d'un moment particulier de ce temps.*[14]

[13] Ibid.

[14] Alberto Giacometti, *Labyrinthe* 4, (janvier 1945). Quoted in full in catalogue *Henri Laurens. 60 oeuvres 1915-1954,* (Paris: Galerie Louise Leiris, 1985), 10.

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