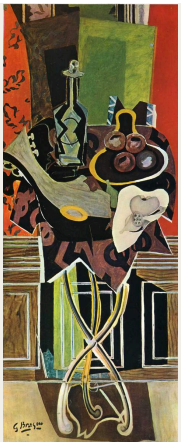
PARIS, FRANCE

Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou: Masterpieces

Twenty works from the Musée national d'art moderne, Paris



The Centre Pompidou's collection belongs to the Musée national d'art moderne, which holds France's national collection of modern art. Its holdings go well beyond painting and sculpture into design and photography, and they trace many of the major developments in twentieth-century art. Twenty works can only be a small, partial sample, and this one leans heavily towards painting. Most are recorded as oils, with Braque's Fruit Dish combining oil with charcoal and gouache. Exceptions include a pastel by Joan Miró, and no medium is recorded for Sophie Taeuber-Arp's painted head on its stand, Matisse's cut forms, Valadon's The Blue Room or Kandinsky's Yellow-Red-Blue and Sky Blue.

Several artists appear more than once, so some works can be compared with others from the same career. Picasso is here with a fractured bust, a still life built round a classical bust and a serenade. Braque has a Cubist fruit dish and a later red pedestal. Kandinsky has a picture split between yellow angles and dark circles, and a field of separate shapes on blue. Suzanne Valadon has a close portrait of the composer Erik Satie and a reclining woman on a patterned bed. Around these pairs are pictures of very different things: Otto Dix's mirrored halls in Brussels, a poultry yard by Henri Rousseau, a courtyard seen through a window by Balthus and a largely black surface by Pierre Soulages.

Artline chose these works from the museum's documented holdings, independently of the museum. Dates and attributions keep the qualifications given in the linked records.

Explore this selection in Artline

See the selected works alongside books and events from their period, or compare when the artists lived. The books and events provide context, not evidence of direct influence. Works without confirmed dates remain in this guide.

Artworks in context Who lived when?

artlines.org/guides/centre-pompidou-collection

The selection · 20

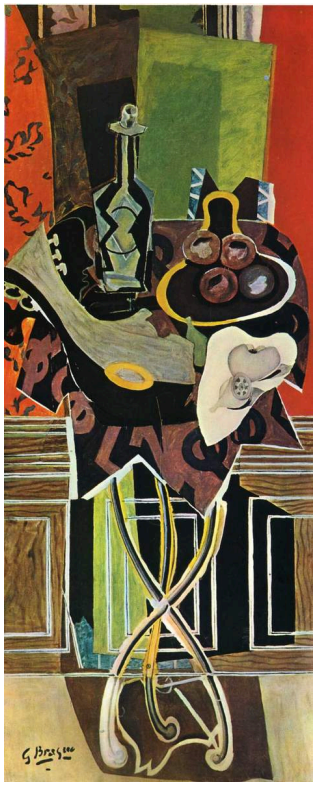
1. A Red Pedestal
   Georges Braque · 1939
2. Bust of a Young Woman from Avignon
   Pablo Picasso · 1907
3. Fruit Dish
   Georges Braque · 1913
4. Lolotte
   Amedeo Modigliani · 1916
5. Memory of the Halls of Mirrors in Brussels
   Otto Dix · 1920
6. Yellow-Red-Blue
   Wassily Kandinsky · 1925
7. Paranoiac Woman-Horse
   Salvador Dalí · 1930
8. Painting, 146 × 114 cm, 1950
   Pierre Soulages · 1950
9. Portrait of Erik Satie
   Suzanne Valadon · c. 1892
10. Still Life with an Antique Bust
    Pablo Picasso · 1925
11. The Moon-Woman Cuts the Circle
    Jackson Pollock · 1943
12. The Palace of Window Rocks
    Yves Tanguy · 1942
13. The Poultry Yard
    Henri Rousseau · 1896 - 1898
14. The Serenade
    Pablo Picasso · 1942
15. Window, Cour de Rohan
    Balthus · 1951
16. Figure
    Joan Miró · 1934
17. The Blue Room
    Suzanne Valadon · 1923
18. Dada Head
    Sophie Taeuber-Arp · 1920
19. Sky Blue
    Wassily Kandinsky · 1940
20. The King's Sadness
    Henri Matisse · 1952

01 / 20

A Red Pedestal

Georges Braque

1939 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d'art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Georges Braque. A Red Pedestal. WikiArt source label: Georges Braque Fair Use. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/georges-braque/a-red-pedestal-1939 · Georges Braque Fair Use (WikiArt source label)

Braque gathers objects round a red stand and lets their outlines overlap and slip into one another, so they can be recognised only in part. The pedestal is spared. It keeps its solid colour and its shape, the one stable structure in the picture. Much Cubist painting builds familiar things out of fragments, which is why a single intact object stands out so firmly here. In Braque's earlier Fruit Dish, also in this selection, nothing gets that kind of wholeness.

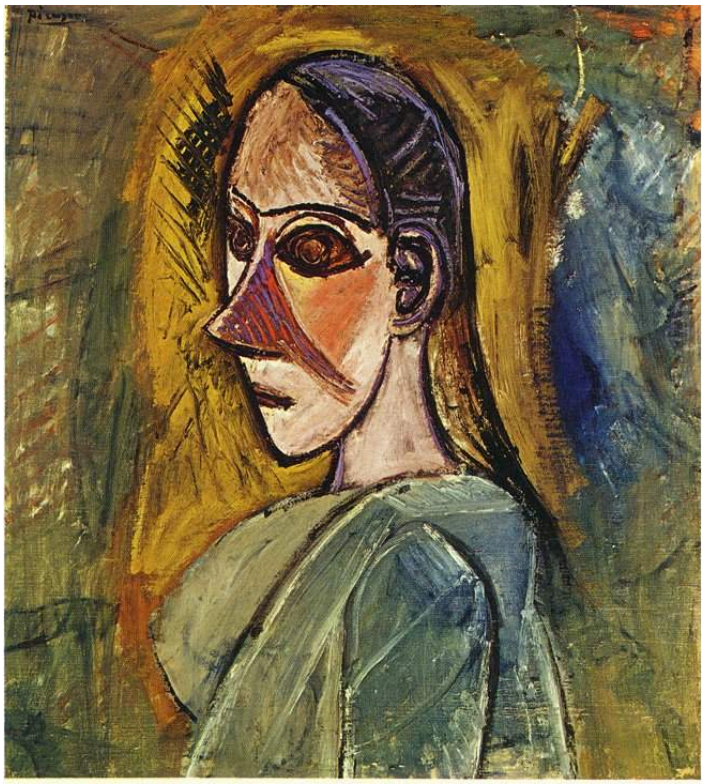
Object source · Open artwork

02 / 20

Bust of a Young Woman from Avignon

Pablo Picasso

1907 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Pablo Picasso. Bust of young woman from Avignon. WikiArt source label: Public domain US. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/pablo-picasso/bust-of-young-woman-from-avignon-1907 · Public domain US (WikiArt source label)

Dark contours cut the face into separate areas. Each plane keeps to its own angle, so the flesh never smooths into a continuous surface. A broad shoulder and a turned head are enough to make this a bust, a familiar format, yet the parts will not settle into a single viewpoint. As for the sitter, the title says only that she is a young woman from Avignon, and the painting tells us little more.

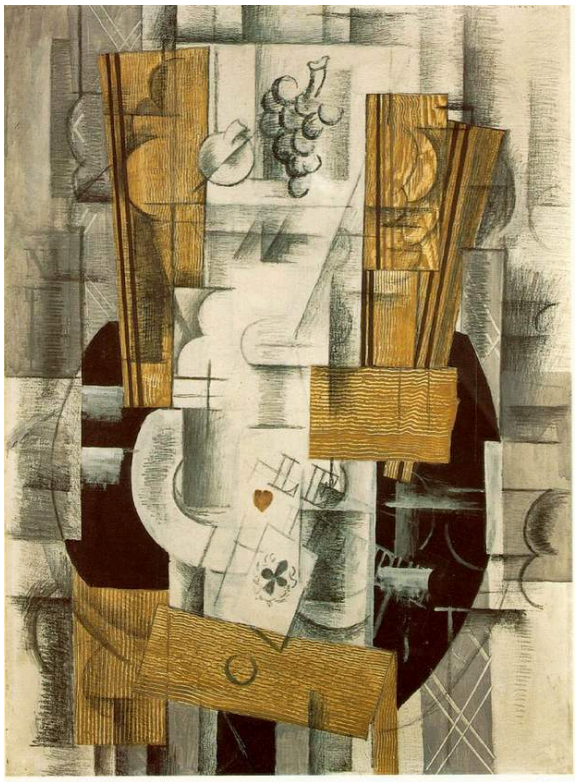
Object source · Open artwork

03 / 20

Fruit Dish

Georges Braque

1913 · Charcoal, gouache and oil on canvas · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Georges Braque. Fruit Dish. WikiArt source label: Public domain US. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/georges-braque/fruit-dish-1913 · Public domain US (WikiArt source label)

Charcoal and gouache share the canvas with oil, and dish, fruit and table have to be pieced together from incomplete clues. A line will run on across an area whose tone or texture pulls it firmly back to the flat surface, so depth is suggested and then withdrawn. The different kinds of mark stand for objects without ever adding up to a view you could check against a real table.

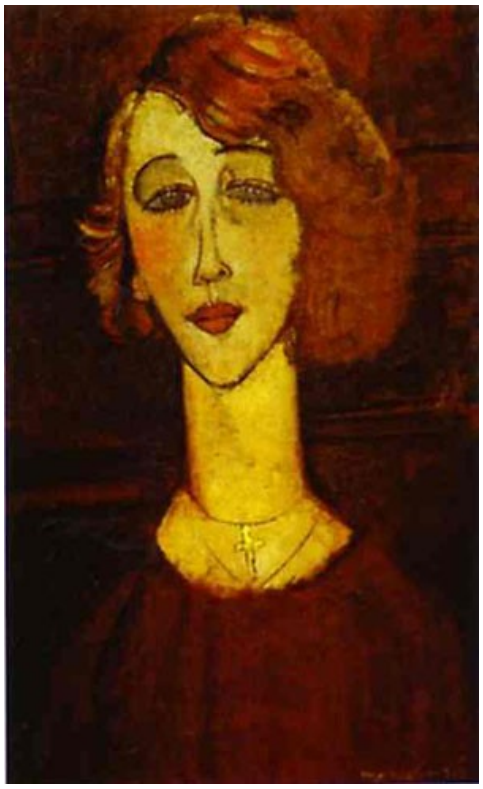
Object source · Open artwork

04 / 20

Lolotte

Amedeo Modigliani

1916 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Amedeo Modigliani. Lolotte. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/amedeo-modigliani/lolotte-1916 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

Modigliani makes no pretence of natural proportion. The neck is drawn out between dark clothing and red hair, continuing the picture's vertical movement, and curves repeat throughout. With so much stylisation, it is the face that keeps Lolotte from dissolving into pattern. It is neither perfectly symmetrical nor generic: small differences in the eyes and mouth break the overall regularity.

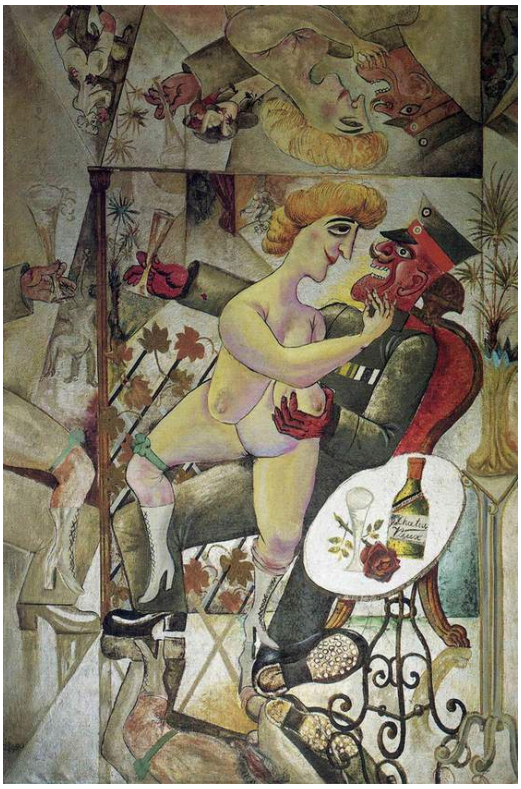
Object source · Open artwork

05 / 20

Memory of the Halls of Mirrors in Brussels

Otto Dix

1920 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d'art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Otto Dix. Memory of the Halls of Mirrors in Brussels. WikiArt source label: Public domain US. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/otto-dix/memory-of-the-halls-of-mirrors-in-brussels · Public domain US (WikiArt source label)

Figures, furnishings and reflected fragments meet at abrupt angles. The mirrors multiply the room until its actual layout is hard to work out, and Dix leaves few reliable routes through the crowded interior. The title calls the picture a memory, not a survey of the place, which may explain why the confusion counts for more than the plan.

Object source · Open artwork

06 / 20

Yellow-Red-Blue

Wassily Kandinsky

1925 · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Wassily Kandinsky. Yellow-Red-Blue. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The title names colours and nothing else, and the picture tells no story. Instead it is divided against itself. Angular yellow forms spread across one side, darker circular masses and curling lines gather on the other, and red areas mediate where the two meet. What movement there is comes from unequal weights and from contrasting kinds of edge, the angular against the curved, and the balance never quite settles.

Object source · Open artwork

07 / 20

Paranoiac Woman-Horse

Salvador Dalí

1930 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Salvador Dalí. Paranoiac Woman-Horse (Invisible Sleeping Woman, Lion, Horse). WikiArt source label: Salvador Dali Fair Use. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/salvador-dali/paranoiac-woman-horse-invisible-sleeping-woman-lion-horse · Salvador Dali Fair Use (WikiArt source label)

Dalí lights this low landscape with precision, and the shadows seem more certain than the things casting them. All that exactness does not make the forms any easier to name. Their contours suggest more than one possible body, and because everything is drawn so clearly, every identification looks justified and tends to push out another. The hyphen in the title, fastening woman to horse, describes the result fairly well.

Object source · Open artwork

08 / 20

Painting, 146 × 114 cm, 1950

Pierre Soulages

1950 · Oil · Musée national d'art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Pierre Soulages. Peinture 146 x 114 cm, 1950. WikiArt source label: Pierre Soulages Fair Use. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/pierre-soulages/peinture-146-x-114-cm-1950-1950 · Pierre Soulages Fair Use (WikiArt source label)

Soulages titles the work like a catalogue entry, giving its dimensions and a year and nothing that points the eye towards a subject. What remains is the black. It covers much of the surface but is far from uniform. Broad strokes cross and overlap, and their edges show differences of direction and pressure. Between them are small pale openings, and the shape of each changes the weight of the black around it.

Object source · Open artwork

09 / 20

Portrait of Erik Satie

Suzanne Valadon

c. 1892 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Suzanne Valadon. Portrait of Erik Satie. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/suzanne-valadon/portrait-of-erik-satie · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

Valadon frames Satie so closely that there is room for little beyond his hat and coat. Warmer colours pick out the face and beard against the dark surround, and her attention goes to the angle of his head and the direction of his gaze. Nothing in the picture refers to his work as a composer.

Object source · Open artwork

10 / 20

Still Life with an Antique Bust

Pablo Picasso

1925 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Pablo Picasso. Still life with antique bust. WikiArt source label: Pablo Picasso Fair Use. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/pablo-picasso/still-life-with-antique-bust-1925 · Pablo Picasso Fair Use (WikiArt source label)

Picasso's second bust in this selection is a different kind of object: an antique sculpture set among vessels in a still life, not a sitter in a portrait format. A bust of this kind brings an expectation of solid, modelled volume, but the room it enters is divided by sharp planes, and areas of orange, white and black make the depth hard to follow. Picasso gives the classical object no special treatment. It gets the same unstable planes as the vessels beside it.

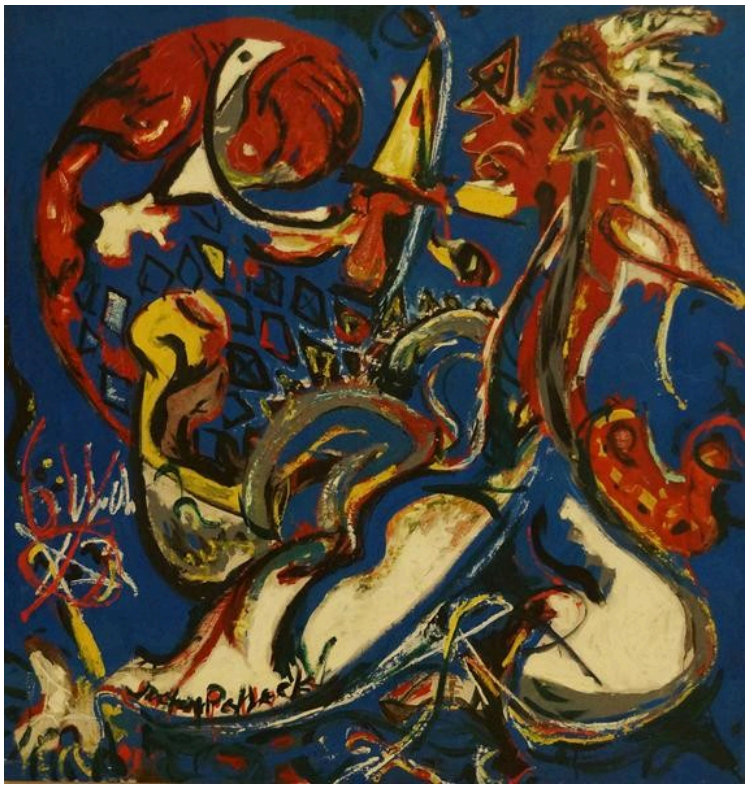
Object source · Open artwork

11 / 20

The Moon-Woman Cuts the Circle

Jackson Pollock

1943 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



The Moon-Woman Cuts the Circle. WikiArt; Jackson Pollock. Proportional resizing and JPEG compression; source frame preserved. · Jackson Pollock

Suggestions of figures surface among the dense lines and coloured marks, but none is cleanly separated from the activity around it. A curve or a pointed form may belong to a body, may interrupt the larger pattern, or may do both. The title promises a character and an action, and the painting is slow to supply either. It offers a "moon-woman", but where exactly is she, and which circle is she cutting?

Object source · Open artwork

12 / 20

The Palace of Window Rocks

Yves Tanguy

1942 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d'art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Yves Tanguy. The Palace of Window Rocks. WikiArt source label: Yves Tanguy Fair Use. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/yves-tanguy/palace-on-windows-rocks · Yves Tanguy Fair Use (WikiArt source label)

Tanguy's low plain follows the rules of a plausible landscape. The scattered forms on it cast clear shadows and seem to stand firmly in space, and that firmness only makes them stranger, since they have no evident use. Dalí's forms in Paranoiac Woman-Horse invite too many identifications. Tanguy's look as if they belong somewhere, but the picture never explains what they are for, and the title, with its palace and its window rocks, does not settle the matter.

Object source · Open artwork

13 / 20

The Poultry Yard

Henri Rousseau

1896 - 1898 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d'art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Henri Rousseau. The Poultry Yard. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/henri-rousseau/the-poultry-yard-1898 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

Rousseau gives an ordinary yard a pronounced order, with paths, fences and buildings dividing it into clear compartments. The small birds inside seem not to have noticed. They move irregularly and ignore the straight lines laid out for them.

Object source · Open artwork

14 / 20

The Serenade

Pablo Picasso

1942 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



The serenade. WikiArt; Pablo Picasso. Proportional resizing and JPEG compression; source frame preserved. · Pablo Picasso

The room is all angles and neither body in it is drawn naturalistically, yet the situation is clear at once: one figure performs and the other listens. Picasso separates them by colour and posture. The listener reclines in yellow while the musician is upright, and each is set at a different angle.

Object source · Open artwork

15 / 20

Window, Cour de Rohan

Balthus

1951 · Oil on canvas · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Balthus. Window, Cour de Rohan. WikiArt source label: Balthus Fair Use. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/balthus/window-cour-de-rohan-1951 · Balthus Fair Use (WikiArt source label)

The building opposite is seen through the open window, past the sill and the objects near it, inside a series of enclosing edges. Balthus gives these intervals more weight than any activity in the courtyard, so the picture seems to be as much about the measured distance between room and view as about the view itself.

Object source · Open artwork

16 / 20

Figure

Joan Miró

1934 · Pastel on paper · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Character. WikiArt; Joan Miró. Proportional resizing and JPEG compression; source frame preserved. · Joan Miro

Miró needs only a head, curved arms and feet to suggest a body, though its proportions could not hold up a person in ordinary space. The pastel outline is sharp and the colour around it softer. With so few parts, the gesture reads from the way they relate to one another. The title is as plain as the drawing.

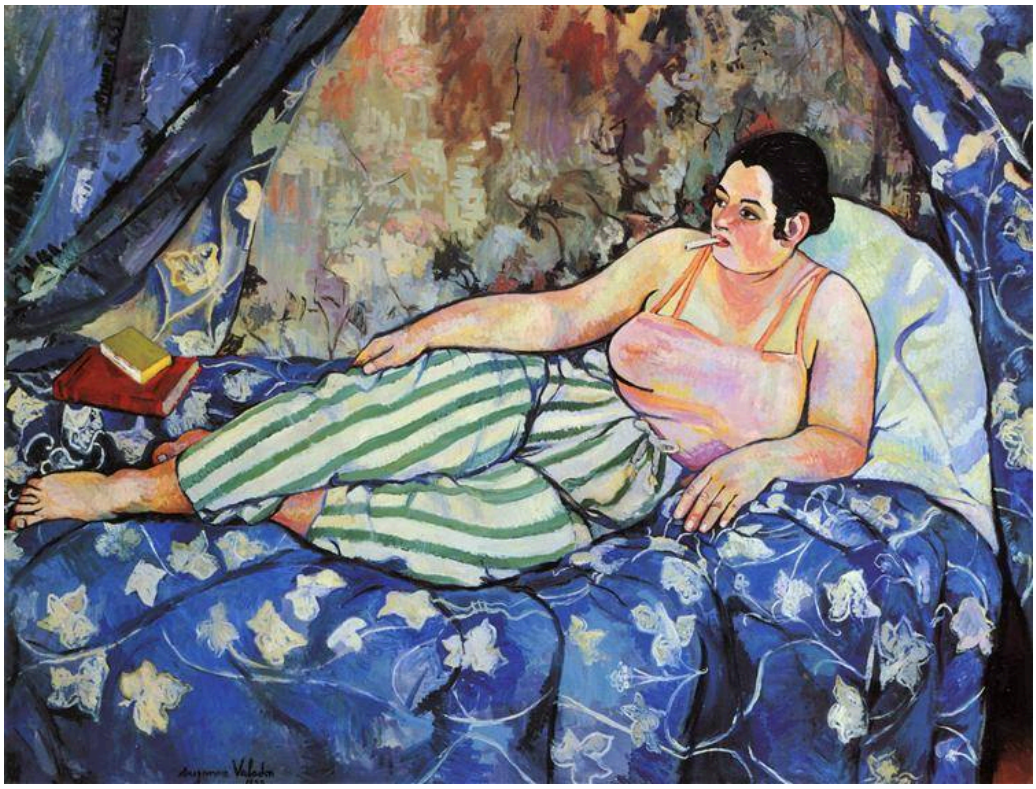
Object source · Open artwork

17 / 20

The Blue Room

Suzanne Valadon

1923 · Musée national d'art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Suzanne Valadon. The Blue Room. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The Satie portrait leaves almost nothing around its sitter. Here, competing patterns surround a reclining woman, from striped trousers to a blue patterned bed. Books give the room an everyday use, so it is more than a backdrop for a pose. Valadon gives the figure bodily weight without idealising her anatomy, and for all its busyness the pattern never crowds her out.

Object source · Open artwork

18 / 20

Dada Head

Sophie Taeuber-Arp

1920 · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Sophie Taeuber-Arp. Dada Head. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Unlike most of the works here, this one has volume: a rounded form mounted on a narrow stand. It suggests a head, but the painted geometry on it never resolves into a naturalistic face. Taeuber-Arp's colour does not describe the form underneath. It divides that form according to an order of its own, so the construction stays as visible as the likeness.

Object source · Open artwork

19 / 20

Sky Blue

Wassily Kandinsky

1940 · Musée national d’art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Wassily Kandinsky. Sky Blue. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Where Yellow-Red-Blue sets two halves against each other, Sky Blue keeps everything apart. Each small floating shape has its own curves, stripes or appendages, none merges into a larger mass, and the gaps between them are as noticeable as the shapes themselves. The unbroken blue holds them all in one field.

Object source · Open artwork

20 / 20

The King's Sadness

Henri Matisse

1952 · Musée national d'art moderne — Centre Pompidou



Henri Matisse. The King's Sadness. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Matisse's cut forms suggest figures and a performance without modelling them in depth. A yellow instrument and scattered leaf-like shapes add small movements to the broad areas of colour, and the clean edges keep the overlapping activity readable in a crowded scene. The sadness in the title is harder to find. None of the shapes imitates a sorrowful expression, and the picture leaves open how far cut colour can carry such a feeling, and how much is left to the title.

Object source · Open artwork

Finding the works

Being in the collection does not mean a work is on display, and some of these may be on loan or off display. Before setting out to see a particular one, check the Centre Pompidou's current programme and the object records.

Further reading

Concerning the Spiritual in Art

Wassily Kandinsky; translated by Michael Sadleir · Read free · English

Kandinsky's own account of what he hoped colour and abstract form could achieve, in Michael Sadleir's English translation. It sets out one painter's historical argument in his own words and makes a useful companion to Yellow-Red-Blue and Sky Blue.

Museum website · Official collection guide

Sources and visitor information checked: 2026-10-12
