SERGE LIFAR collection

Serge Lifar was a principal dancer and eventual Director of the Ballets Russes. Initially guided by Diaghilev, he collected works of art and on the death of his mentor, he acquired pictures, designs and books that were in Diaghilev’s possession. The Serge Lifar Collection at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum in Hartford, Connecticut, is now recognised as invaluable evidence of the emergence of modernism in theatre and in Western art.

Lifar is depicted here in a masterful drawing by artist Jean Cocteau, who developed a close relationship with the young Lifar when he joined the Ballets Russes in 1923. The intimate nature of the pose is disrupted by the sense that the dancer is ready to leap up at any moment, Lifar’s eyes are only half closed and there is tension evident in his grip of the sheets.

BALLET RUSSES

From 1909 to 1929, Sergei Diaghilev commissioned artists such as Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Henri Matisse, Nathalie Gontcharova, Max Ernst and Giorgio de Chirico to design sets and costumes for his Ballets Russes, a ballet company based in Paris that is now recognised as one of great artistic movements of the early 20th century.

The drawings in this exhibition were made for ballet productions that often featured the daring choreography of Vaslav Nijinsky and George Balanchine, as well as musical innovations by composers such as Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev and Erik Satie. Diaghilev’s approach to commissioning reinvigorated the art of performing dance and created new possibilities of artistic collaboration that remain influential today.
Georges Braque
Giorgio de Chirico
André Derain
Max Ernst
Naum Gabo
Nathalie Gontcharova
Juan Gris
Fernand Léger
Henri Matisse
Pablo Picasso
Georges Rouault
Pavel Tchelitchew

Jean Cocteau

*Serge Lifar*
Graphite on gray board, 1931
**SET in TIME**

**Drawings from the Serge Lifar Collection**

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**Henri Matisse**

1. Sketch Design for the Drop Curtain (front cloth), for *Le Chant du Rossignol*

**André Derain**

1. Costume Design for Alexandra Danilova as the Black Ballerina for *Jack-in-the-Box Carrier*
2. Costume Design for a White Cloud Carrier for *Jack-in-the-Box*
3. Costume Design for one of the Ballerinas from *Jack-in-the-Box*
4. Design for the Set with Two Blue Ballerinas and the Two White Cloud Carriers for *Jack-in-the-Box*

**Georges Braque**

2. Costume Design for Alice Nikitina as Flore for *Zephire et Flore*

**Juan Gris**

1. Design for the front cloth: *Offrandes à la Bergère* for *Les Tentations de la Bergère*
2. Design for cut cloths
   Production uncertain

**Pablo Picasso**

1. Two Dancers resting
2. Preliminary Sketch for the Set of *Le Tricorne*

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**SET in TIME** guide available for sale at **GLUCKSMAN** shop

Please return this exhibition map to the stand when finished with it.
Giorgio de Chirico
1. Design for the Cover of the Souvenir Program of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes for the 1929 season in Monte Carlo and Paris
2. Trophy, previously thought to be project for Le Bal
3. Design for detail of the Backdrop for Scene 2, for Le Bal
4. Set Design for Scene 2: The Ball from Le Bal
5. Costume Design for Anton Dolin as the Young Man in Le Bal
6. Costume Design for Male Guest from Le Bal
7. Costume Design for Alexandra Danilova as the Woman from Le Bal

Jean Cocteau
1. Serge Lifar, dedicated by the artist to Serge Lifar

Naum Gabo
1. Costume Sketch Design for Serge Lifar as the Young Man from La Chatte
2. Costume Design for the Young Man's (Lifar's) Six Comrades from La Chatte

Nathalie Gontcharova
1. Design for the Set of Les Noces

Fernand Léger
1. The Trench Diggers
2. Design for the Set for La Création du Monde
3. Two Figures

Max Ernst
1. The Sea, Act-drop for Act 1 of Romeo and Juliet
2. The Sun, dedicated by the artist to Serge Lifar

Georges Rouault
1. Design for the Banqueting Tent for Scene 2: In a Far Country from Le Fils Prodigue
2. Design for the Backcloth for Scenes 1 and 3: Home from Le Fils Prodigue

Pavel Tchelitchew
1. Costume Design for a Female Dancer in a Crinoline Skirt from Ode
2. Costume Design for Serge Lifar as the Pupil from Ode
3. Project Design
4. Costume Design for the Men with Phosphorescent Markings from Ode

Georges Braque
1. Design for the Set from Les Sylphides