



PRESS RELEASE
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TATE LIVERPOOL

FERNAND LÉGER: NEW TIMES, NEW PLEASURES

23 November 2018 – 17 March 2019

Supported by Liverpool City Council and University of Liverpool

Open daily 10 AM – 5 PM

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Tate Liverpool presents the first major UK exhibition in 30 years of renowned modern artist Fernand Léger (1881–1955). *Fernand Léger: New Times, New Pleasures* brings together more than 50 paintings from across Europe, including many never before seen in the UK. Featuring abstract and figurative paintings, drawings, a large-scale mural, films, graphic design, books and textiles, the exhibition explores how Léger redefined the value of art to 20th century society. Creating works in a diverse range of media, Léger was a politically-engaged artist, with an unwavering belief in the social function of art for everyone.

Influenced by his early training as an architect, Léger developed a unique visual style that powerfully captured the intense experience and energy of the 1910s Parisian metropolis in which he lived. At a time when photography and new forms of visual communication became predominant, Léger's artistic style became heavily influenced by street advertising; like posters and neon signs, his paintings made bold, graphic and colourful statements about the bustle and rhythm of modern life. Highlights of this seminal period of Léger's career include, *The Disc* 1918 and *The Tugboat* 1920 where the pure elements of abstract painting – line, form, colour – are used to embody industrial modernity. His interest and admiration for cinema also influenced his work, specifically his experimental film *Ballet Mécanique* 1924, made in collaboration with director, Dudley Murphy, artist, Man Ray and with music by George Antheil.

Born into a modest farming family, central to the artist's work was a belief that art should be enjoyed by all, not just society's privileged elite. For Léger, modern art was a means of elevating the quality of life for the working man. Seeing beauty in the everyday he created paintings depicting the world of labour including construction workers and people taking part in leisurely pursuits under radiant blue skies. Inspired by classical art and sculpture, he endowed his subjects with a sense of monumentality and dignity, as demonstrated in *Leisure - Homage to Louis David* 1948–9 and *Study for 'The Constructors': The Team at Rest* 1950.

Léger's political beliefs also meant his work engaged with discourses of the day. Alongside architects including Le Corbusier, Léger created grandly-scaled photomurals that employed the same abstract and graphic style found in his painting. Exhibited for the first time in the UK will be *Essential Happiness, New Pleasures* 1937/2011 a work made in collaboration with architect and designer, Charlotte Perriand and a major highlight of the exhibition. This large-scale photomural first appeared at the International Exposition in Paris in 1937. In tandem with his socialist ideals

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and against a backdrop of economic depression and the rise of totalitarianism in Europe, the mural promoted rural life, urging nations to work collectively to forge a better future for all.

Fernand Léger: New Times, New Pleasures provides a comprehensive survey of the artist's career, bringing together major loans from lenders including Centre Pompidou, Fondation Beyeler, and Moderna Museet in Stockholm. The exhibition is curated by Darren Pih, Exhibitions & Displays Curator and Laura Bruni, Assistant Curator, Tate Liverpool. It was initially developed by Lauren Barnes, formerly Assistant Curator, Tate Liverpool. It will tour to IVAM - Institut Valencià d'Art Modern from 2 May to 15 September 2019.

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