

# TOUS LÉGER !

AVEC NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE, YVES KLEIN,  
MARTIAL RAYSSE, KEITH HARING...

**MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG**

From March 19 to July 20, 2025

Exhibition co-organized by GrandPalaisRmn, the National Museums of the 20th Century of the Alpes-Maritimes, and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MAMAC), Nice.

#ExpoTousLeger

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Luxembourg's app  
[tinyurl.com/luxappli](http://tinyurl.com/luxappli)



**FROM MARCH 19 TO JULY 20, 2025  
AT THE MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG, 19 RUE DE VAUGIRARD, 75006  
PARIS  
OPEN DAILY FROM 10:30 AM TO 7:00 PM  
NOCTURNES ON MONDAYS UNTIL 10:00 PM  
EXCEPTIONAL CLOSURE ON MAY 1**

**Youth Access !**

Free entry for young people under 26 every day.

Limited number of tickets per date, online reservation required at

**museeduluxembourg.fr**

**CHANEL**

**GRAND MÉCÈNE  
DU MUSÉE DU LUXEMBOURG**

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## **General curator**

Anne Dopffer

Director of the National Museums of the 20th Century in  
Alpes-Maritimes

## **Curators**

Julie Guttierrez

Chief Curator of Heritage

National Museum Fernand Léger, Biot

Rébecca François

Heritage Conservation Officer

Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Nice (MAMAC)

## **Exhibition scenography and design**

Véronique Dollfus, Claire Boitel - Atelier JBL

Taste the intimacy of the *Mademoiselle Angelina* tearoom, located at the gates of the Musée du Luxembourg. On the occasion of the new exhibition *Tous Léger !*, we pay tribute to the exuberant and engaged works of Niki de Saint Phalle. The artist's colorful and light art is reflected in two original creations offered by our chefs, inspired by her universe.

Enjoy the crispy soy-marinated salmon, accompanied by a bulgur tabbouleh, carrot-cucumber-beet pickles, apricot chutney, and topped with Greek yogurt with smoked green oil and coriander, for a colorful and graphic visual.

All this is paired with a delicious pastry made of a white chocolate-lime crispy, almond mousse, orange-lime compote, ladyfinger biscuit, and garnished with colorful chocolate shavings to finish on a delicately sweet note!

**Opening :** The Mademoiselle Angelina tearoom remains open during the same hours as the Museum.

*Mademoiselle*  
ANGELINA

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# THE EXHIBITION

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Imagined primarily from the collections of the Musée National Fernand Léger in Biot and the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Nice (MAMAC), the exhibition creates a dialogue between the works of Fernand Léger (1881-1955), a pioneer of modern art, and more than sixty works by artists from the European and American avant-gardes from the 1960s to the present day.

The exhibition's journey provides an opportunity to highlight the strong historical and artistic connection between Fernand Léger's work and the generation that immediately followed him: the Nouveaux Réalistes. Launched in 1960 by art critic Pierre Restany, the Nouveaux Réalistes movement brought together artists such as Arman (1928-2005), César (1921-1998), Raymond Hains (1926-2005), Yves Klein (1928-1962), Martial Raysse (born 1936), Daniel Spoerri (1930-2024), and Niki de Saint Phalle (1930-2002). These artists embraced everyday objects from consumer society and the aesthetics of the street. Their approach was not about representing reality but rather poetically appropriating it.

While the relationship with objects plays a central role, the exhibition also explores other themes, including the representation of a leisure-driven society, art in public spaces, and the creation of an art form that is accessible to all and connected to its time. It also examines creative processes and the significant role of collective work.

A devoted admirer of Fernand Léger's work, Pierre Restany – who attended the inauguration of the Fernand Léger Museum in Biot in May 1960 alongside Raymond Hains – is said to have named the Nouveaux Réalistes movement as a tribute to the painter, who had frequently used the term himself.

As early as the 1920s, Fernand Léger defined his artistic approach as a « New Realism » describing it as « a tremendous invention for creating truth [...] whose consequences may be incalculable. »

Other periods and movements, including international ones such as American Pop Art – with artists like Robert Indiana, Roy Lichtenstein, and May Wilson – as well as artists emerging in the 1970s and

1980s, such as Gilbert & George in London and Keith Haring in New York, whose works are part of the MAMAC collections, are integrated into the exhibition in dialogue with Fernand Léger's work.

While Léger's role as a forerunner of Pop Art has been explored in several exhibitions – particularly in the *Vis-à-vis. Fernand Léger et ses amis* series at the Musée National Fernand Léger in Biot – the connection with the French art scene of the 1960s, and specifically with the Nouveaux Réalistes, remains unprecedented.

Thus, beyond the fertile dialogue between forms and ideas, this exhibition once again seeks to highlight the modernity, multidisciplinarity, and visionary scope of Fernand Léger's work.

The exhibition was presented at the Musée National Fernand Léger in Biot under the title *Léger et les Nouveaux Réalismes* from June 15, 2024, to February 16, 2025.

# 1. The Five Elements

*« Let's bring in color, a vital necessity like water and fire, and dose it wisely. »*  
Fernand Léger (1924)

The Nouveaux Réalistes paved the way for an art of gestures in interaction with nature and the world. With a spirit of conquest, they seized upon the most emblematic objects of society, revealing urban beauty in all its rawness. At the same time, they embraced the four fundamental elements of the universe and added color as a fifth.

These aesthetic and symbolic explorations question the place of humanity and nature within an era of rapid capitalist expansion, echoing the critical approach of Alain Jacquet, an artist closely linked to Pop Art. As a form of active critique of society, the artist-accumulator Arman addressed the issues of waste, overconsumption, and planned obsolescence early on. A forerunner, Fernand Léger captured the great transformations of the modern world—at times critical, at others fascinated by technological and mechanical revolutions. Over time, nature became increasingly present in his work, calling for a slower, more reflective pace.

Driven by a more metaphysical quest, Yves Klein multiplied his attempts to reconnect with the world through pure color and primordial energies. This vision resonates with Fernand Léger's utopian ideal, in which color is a fundamental, vital, beneficial, and therapeutic element—one capable of influencing social well-being.

## 2. The life of objects

« *The object [...] was to become the main character and dethrone the subject.* »  
Fernand Léger (1945)

The Nouveaux Réalistes, like Fernand Léger thirty years earlier, focused on the symbol of modern society : the object. Léger detached himself from mimetic representation, allowing forms and colors to become autonomous. Artifacts were no longer highlighted for their symbolic meaning but for their formal beauty. They were enlarged, juxtaposed, and fragmented by flat patches of vibrant and random colors. This approach can also be seen in the work of American Pop artists.

In Europe, the Nouveaux Réalistes shifted the object from the realm of representation to that of presentation, through concrete action on the world. They appropriated, accumulated, and assembled objects to reveal their plastic potential.

The aesthetics of ashtrays and workshop tools reflect an intimate relationship with everyday objects. In contrast, the street – with its posters, lettering, shop windows, and lights – exerts a fascination and critical distrust of capitalist society.

Now, faces were treated like objects, even machines.

As archaeologists of the present, these artists captured the essence of an era where art was being challenged, as Léger expressed in 1923, by the « beautiful object », « storefronts », and supermarkets. Ordinary and popular beauty was magnified to express new ways of life and social demands.

### 3. Art is life

« *Transported by imagination, we reach 'Life,' life itself, which is the absolute art.* »

*Yves Klein (1959)*

For Léger, an inherently optimistic artist, painting is a means of honoring life while also documenting the profound social changes of his time. Rooted in the present, the subjects he addresses reflect the transformation of lifestyles, particularly with the introduction of the first paid vacations under the Popular Front in 1936.

The rise of leisure, the festive spirit of entertainment (dance, music, circus), and sports subjects (cyclists, divers) provide him with an opportunity to celebrate the dynamism of the modern world, the vitality of the working classes recharging close to nature, and the flexibility of the bodies in motion–athletes and acrobats. To reach everyone, Léger portrays these new, joyful themes in monumental formats that engage the viewer's eye and body.

In the 1960s, some artists of the Nouveau Réalisme movement also praised the society of leisure and the emancipation of the body, such as with Niki de Saint Phalle's « Nanas » series. By capturing the poetry of everyday life, they erased the boundaries between art and life, thus destroying the symbols of the old world to build a new one under the banner of freedom.

## 4. Beauty is everywhere

*« My drawings do not attempt to imitate life, they attempt to create life, to invent it. »*

*Keith Haring*

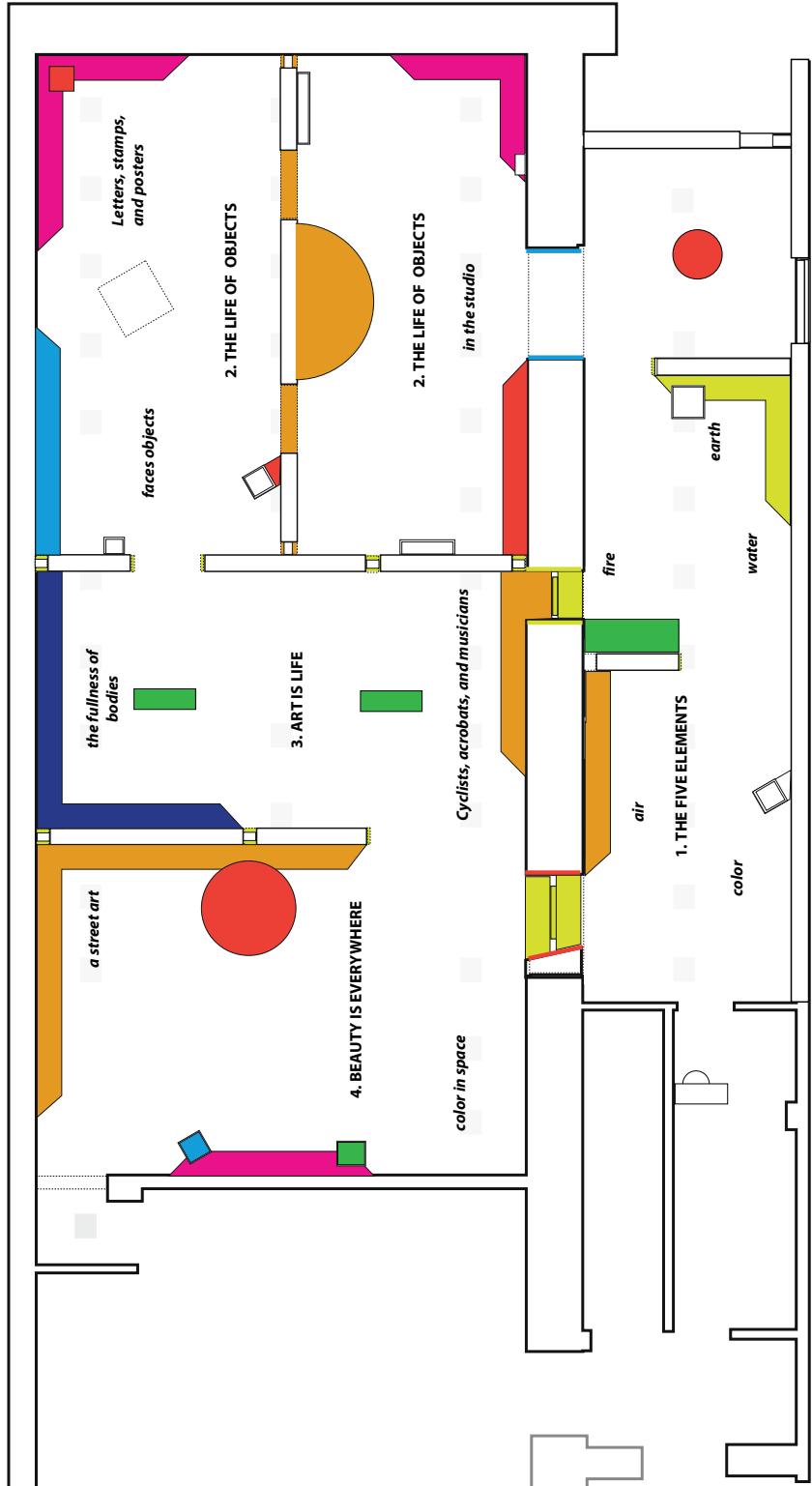
Since the 1930s, Léger has created, alongside his easel paintings, abstract and decorative works specifically designed for architecture. In the post-war reconstruction context, he responded to public commissions to fulfill his dream of integrating his painting into urban and natural landscapes. In 1946, his first achievement, the mosaic facade of the church at the Plateau d'Assy, was followed by other commissions, such as the decor for the Saint-Lô Memorial Hospital, a striking testament to his faith in the therapeutic power of color.

Niki de Saint Phalle joined Léger's concerns by creating numerous monumental sculpture projects starting in 1967, adorning the world with her round figures in vibrant colors.

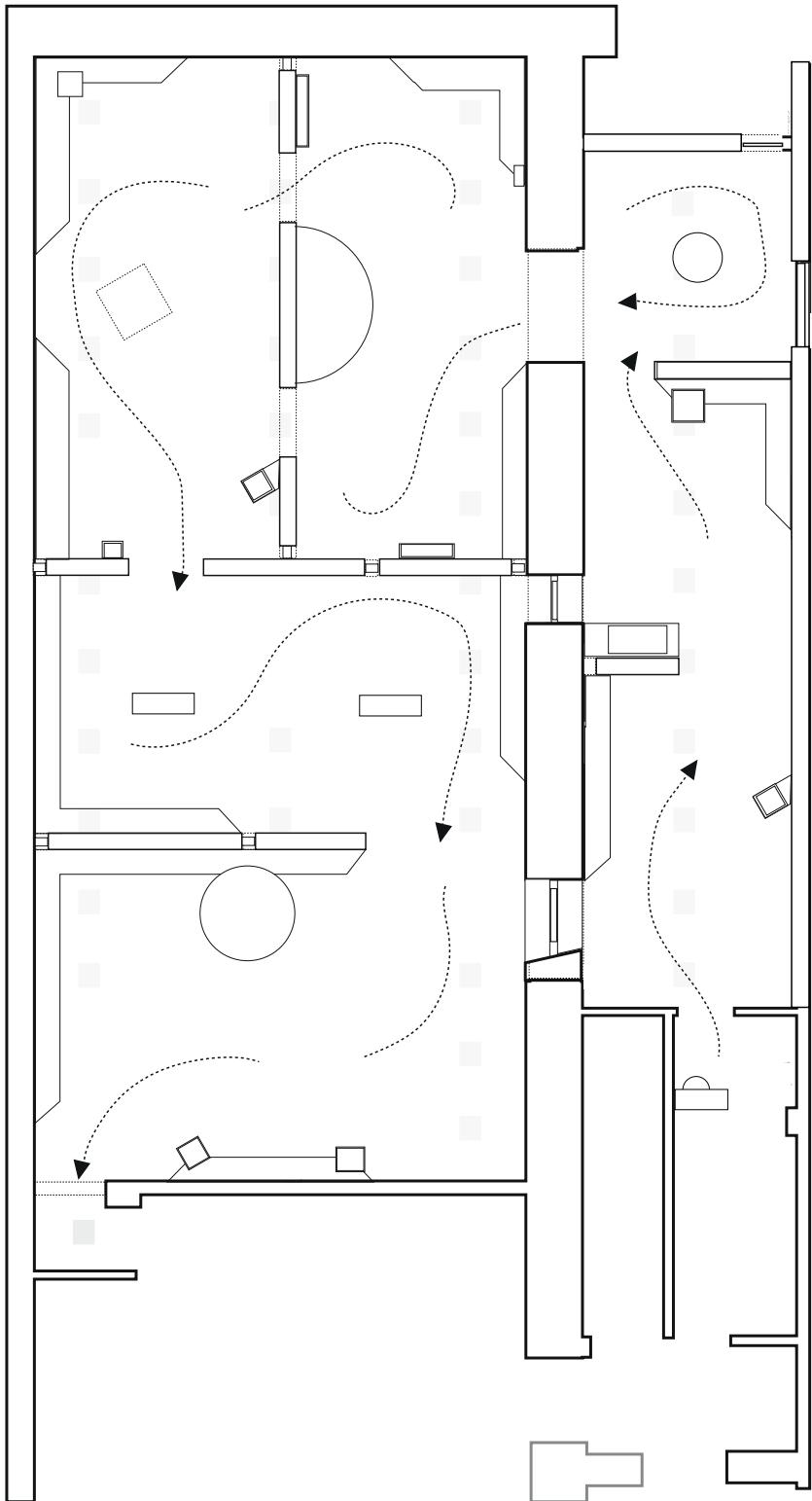
She imagined her « Nana City » with the desire to empower women and fight against the gloom of modern urbanism. An artistic and political utopia, an ideal of art for all, which was later

adopted by the inventors of Street Art in the 1980s, who used the walls of New York as a canvas for their expressiveness. Keith Haring, thus, paid tribute to Léger by asserting that « art is not an elitist activity reserved for the appreciation of a small number of connoisseurs, it is for everyone. »

# Exhibition plan



# Simplified exhibition plan



## AROUND THE EXHIBITION

# Cultural program

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## LECTURE SERIES

Médicis Hall, Palais du Luxembourg, entrance via 15 ter rue de Vaugirard. Reservation required up to 3 business days before the event, and replays of the conferences available on [museeduluxembourg.fr](http://museeduluxembourg.fr). Free entry.

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## PRESENTATION CONFERENCE

Friday, March 21 at 6:30PM

*With Anne Dopffer, Chief Curator of Heritage, Director of the National Museums of the 20th Century in the Alpes-Maritimes, Julie Gutierrez, Chief Curator of Heritage at the Musée National Fernand Léger, Biot, and Rébecca François, Heritage Conservation Officer, Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain de Nice (MAMAC)*

The three curators will reveal the origins of the exhibition. Born from the collaboration between two major collections on the French Riviera—the Musée Fernand Léger in Biot and the MAMAC in Nice—this exhibition highlights the multiple connections between the visionary scope of Fernand Léger's work and the innovative approach of the artists from the generation that succeeded him, led by the Nouveaux Réalistes.

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## FROM FERNAND LÉGER TO PIERRE RESTANY : NOUVEAU RÉALISME IN THE COLD WAR

Friday, April 4 at 6:30 PM

*With Sophie Cras, Lecturer in Art History at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne*

In 1960, art critic Pierre Restany founded Nouveau Réalisme, bringing together artists like Yves Klein, Arman, and Jacques Villeglé. While this founding act is well-known, the Cold War context that shaped it is less recognized. Between communism and anti-communism, aesthetics and politics, Fernand Léger becomes the guiding figure of the movement.

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## NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE : A FEMINIST AHEAD OF HER TIME? WOMEN ARTISTS OF NOUVEAU RÉALISME

Monday, May 12 at 6:30 PM

*With Camille Morineau, Heritage Curator and Director of Aware*

This lecture will use Niki de Saint Phalle's career and her early feminist commitment as a starting point to reconsider the role of women in Nouveau Réalisme. Focusing on her work, the discussion will expand to other female artists of the 1960s, often relegated to the background, and will examine their place, perspectives, and contributions within an artistic constellation dominated by male figures.

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## **NICE, PARIS, NEW YORK, AND BEYOND ? NOUVEAU RÉALISME IN THE GLOBAL GEOPOLITICS OF THE AVANT-GARDES**

**Friday, June 20 at 6:30 PM**

*With Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, Professor at the University of Geneva*

Nouveau Réalisme was an immediately international avant-garde. However, the project of uniting a new generation of European creators was quickly disrupted by the major upheaval in the global geopolitics of art : Paris was now facing competition from new cultural capitals determined to use the avant-garde to demonstrate their superiority. Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel will show how the Nouveaux Réalistes adapted to an increasingly competitive global game, where national pride intertwined with the most cunning commercial interests.

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## EVENTS AND EVENINGS

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### DRAWING SKETCHBOOK EVENING

**Thursday, June 5 from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM**

Take the time to discover the artworks in a different way during this evening specially designed for all those who love to draw : bring your materials and come sketch the Nanas of Niki de Saint Phalle, the black-outlined shapes of Fernand Léger, or the striking compositions of Arman and Daniel Spoerri.

*Reservation required. Free for those under 26, €11 for others.*

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### EUROPEAN NIGHT OF MUSEUMS

**Saturday, May 17 from 7:30 PM to Midnight**

**In partnership with the Printemps des Poètes**

The Museum opens its doors for free for a special evening: the Théâtre du Corps Pietragalla - Derouault presents a dance and performative interpretation dedicated to the poet René Char, a friend of Fernand Léger, while students from Paris-Dauphine University introduce their « favorite » artworks in the exhibition halls. A unique experience that transforms the Museum's space into a true living stage.

*Free entry, subject to availability. Last entry at 11:30 PM.*

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## PERFORMANCE AROUND YVES KLEIN

Sunday, May 18 at 2:30 PM and 4:00 PM

By the Collectif la Machine and actor Félicien Chauveau

*The M.I.I.M - Innovative and Itinerant Mediations of the MAMAC are a production of the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Nice.*

Yves Klein emphasized the dialogue between the artist, the artwork, and the spectator. This theatrical reading of the Manifesto of the Chelsea Hotel adopts his philosophy, breaking down the barriers between the stage and the audience. Through the interactive exchange following the performance, the audience becomes an essential character in this artistic narrative.

Duration : approximately 40 minutes

*Free entry with the day's ticket.*

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## QUIET HOUR

Saturdays, April 26, May 24, and June 21 at 9:30 AM

The Musée du Luxembourg now offers a dedicated time slot for autistic visitors and their families, allowing them to enjoy an independent visit in a calm environment with a very limited capacity.

*Reservation required. More information on [museeduluxembourg.fr](http://museeduluxembourg.fr).*

# Mediation

reservation recommended

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## GENERAL GUIDED TOUR

From 13 years old. Duration : 1h15

Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 12:15 PM,  
Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 5:00 PM, and Mondays at 5:00 PM  
and 8:00 PM

For the first time, the joyful and colorful works of Fernand Léger are presented in dialogue with the creations of the Nouveaux Réalistes, directly inspired by this pioneer of the avant-gardes. A museum guide will take you through the power and creativity of artistic gestures that successfully fused art and life.

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## FAMILY TOUR

From 6 years old. Duration : 1h

Sundays at 2:30 PM, with additional sessions during school holidays

Acrobats on bicycles, joyful Nanas playing with a ball, giant matchsticks: inspired by Fernand Léger, the artists of the Nouveau Réalisme transform our daily environment with play and poetry. Led by a museum guide, this tour invites you to discover the exhibition as a family.

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## **GUIDED TOUR IN ENGLISH**

**From 13 years old. Duration : 1h15**

**Saturdays, April 5th, May 3rd, June 7th, and July 5th at 2:30 PM**

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## **VISITS FOR 3-5 YEAR OLDS : « YOUR GRANDMA IS RIDING A BIKE ! »**

**Duration : 30 minutes**

**Saturdays, March 29th, April 26th, May 24th, and June 21st at 9:45 AM**

With Fernand Léger and the artists inspired by his work, everyday objects and situations surprise us with their poetry, beauty, and even humor! This is a playful and discovery-filled visit led by a museum guide for young children and their families.

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## **SCHOOL VISITS**

**From preschool to higher education, by reservation**

**Duration: 45 minutes to 1h15 depending on the level**

A journey through the 20th century with colorful and playful works that make us reflect on our relationship with objects, nature, or even the city. Inspired for your classes? Students of all levels will find plenty to enrich their learning during this exhibition tour.

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## **CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP TOURS : THE NEW NEW REALISTS**

**From 6 years old. Duration : 2h**

**Monday, April 14th and Thursday, April 17th, Thursday, May 8th,**

**Monday, June 9th, and Sunday, June 29th at 2:30 PM**

After a tour of the exhibition with an artist, children will create and use personalized stamps. Cutting, scraping, assembling: through different activities, playing with color and repetition on various materials, they will experience the playful and creative energy of the New Realists' artistic gestures.

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## **PHILOSOPHY WORKSHOPS**

**From 16 years old. Duration : 2h**

**Mondays, April 14th, May 26th, June 2nd, and June 23rd, 2025 at 6:00**

**PM**

**Workshop led by Les petites Lumières**

Share a moment of reflection, exchange, and creation in the heart of the museum. Come and philosophize with the works of the New Realists by exploring the big questions they raise: What is the real? What is the boundary between the ordinary and the extraordinary? After a philosophical discussion in the exhibition rooms, an artistic practice session in the workshop will allow you to shape the ideas discussed.

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# Digital Resources

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## **A DIGITAL INSTALLATION IN SITU**

A digital installation is featured within the exhibition space. Interactive, this program is accessible through a touchscreen tablet and is connected to a large high-definition video screen.

A digital flipbook will present six focal points, comparing a work by Fernand Léger with a piece by a New Realism artist.

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## **THE MUSICAL WALK**

**A project by Jacopo Greco d'Alceo for the Tsuku Boshi label**

With its sound and light tones, this sonic walk designed for the exhibition responds to the desire to reveal and reclaim hidden beauty, reigniting the discussion around beauty and making it a living space in constant metamorphosis.

*The walk is available for free on the museum's mobile app and website.*

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## PHOTO BOOTH

An innovative and fun experience offered by the Musée du Luxembourg and Bryanthings

Leave with a unique souvenir: thanks to artificial intelligence, create your experimental portrait inspired by the works in the exhibition !

*Free email delivery, printing : €3*

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## CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY BOOK

For children aged 7 and up, available for free at the museum reception and for download on the museum's website

To accompany children over 7 years old in discovering the exhibition, ask for the children's activity book available for free at the museum reception or download it from [museeduluxembourg.fr](http://museeduluxembourg.fr).

# Educational Websites

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## ART PANORAMA

When Fernand Léger created *Le Transport des forces* in 1937, he was already quite popular, even outside of France : he exhibited in New York and traveled frequently abroad.

At the age of 56, he was considered one of the major figures of modern art, close to Blaise Cendrars and Robert Delaunay :

<https://panoramadelart.com/analyse/le-transport-des-forces>

In Léger's painted work, this painting represents a new phase marked by the return of the figure on very large canvases :  
<https://panoramadelart.com/analyse/compositionaux-trois-figures>

Since the late 19th century, the circus, a spectacle that is both popular and modern, has intrigued artists, whether they are painters, writers, poets, or musicians, providing them with a new source of inspiration.

Fernand Léger's painting transports the viewer to the arena of a famous institution in Paris, the Cirque Medrano, located on

Boulevard de Rochechouart in the Montmartre district :

<https://panoramadelart.com/analyse/le-cirque-medrano>

A Focus on Cubism : <https://panoramadelart.com/focus/le-cubisme>

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## **HISTORY THROUGH IMAGES**

Léger, a stretcher-bearer during World War I, was on the front lines from 1914 to 1917. He produced numerous drawings of daily life in the trenches and the sites he saw :

<https://histoire-image.org/etudes/cubisme-front-dessins-guerre-fernand-leger>

The painter Fernand Léger, connected to the Cubist movement, developed close ties with cinema after the 1914-1918 war. This black-and-white drawing from 1923 is a sketch by Fernand Léger for one of the posters of the film *L'Inhumaine* : <https://histoire-image.org/etudes/cinema-artistes>

Fernand Léger was deeply influenced by the realities of his time, and he viewed manufactured objects as the most striking symbol of this. He became an enthusiastic witness to urban and industrial civilization, creating a poetic vision of mechanics : <https://histoire-image.org/etudes/visionmodernite>

An album on the artist : <https://histoire-image.org/albums/fernand-leger>

An album on Cubism : <https://histoire-image.org/albums/courants-artistiques-cubisme>

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## **PEDAGOGICAL FILE**

Available on the Musée du Luxembourg website on the day the exhibition opens.

## **GRAND PALAIS PASS THE ART OF RESERVING SURPRISES FOR YOU**

With the new Grand Palais Pass, you get unlimited access to all exhibitions at the Grand Palais (produced or co-produced by GrandPalaisRmn), the Musée du Luxembourg, as well as the permanent collections of 15 national museums and their temporary exhibitions. The Pass also grants you preferential rates for performances, conferences, and Art History tours, along with special offers for certain events at the Nef. Many more advantages and surprises will be revealed throughout the reopening period...

**With the Grand Palais Pass, fully enjoy all our cultural offerings !**

More information on [grandpalais.fr/pass-grandpalais](http://grandpalais.fr/pass-grandpalais)

## **PREPARE YOUR VISIT ON MUSEEDULUXEMBOURG.FR**

Extend your visit with texts, videos, and various online resources available on the Museum's website.

**Share your visit !  
@museeduluxembourg**

