

GEORGES BRAQUE

and the
Cubist Still Life

1928 / 1945





FIG. 7
Pierre Jehan
(French, 1909-2003)
Georges Braque (right) in his studio with Jean Paulhan, viewing
Braque's painting *The Chest of Drawers* (1914), Paris, July 1943.

48. Paulhan, "Braque ou le sens du caché," 47-48. A revised form of this essay eventually became section 2, titled "The Disclosed Pattern," in the final version of *Les Cahiers*.

49. Section 4 of *Les Cahiers* never appeared in early 1943 and led the general press to Braque's monogram in the public art world (the Salon d'Automne of 1943). The first English translation of the complete sets appears in the present volume, accompanied by an introduction by the translator, Eric Traub, which includes a discussion of its multiple versions.

50. For a discussion of the politics behind this issue of the journal, which had not been published during the war, see Christian Zervas's introduction to this issue.

51. For a discussion of the history and cultural context of the time, see the introduction to *Cahiers* under the occupation, although the inclusion of essays and poems by writers was unusual for a journal that was devoted mainly to art.

52. Zervas, the editor and publisher of *Cahiers*, explained his rationale for this issue of *Cahiers* in a letter to Malraux: "Because instead of studies on the poetries, on plastic literary texts, poems, philosophical studies, [we] written under the oppression oppose their reproductions, so as to give a view of the complexity of the literary and artistic movement in France under the occupation." Zervas to Malraux, dated by 23, 1944, cited in Christian Zervas, "The 'Art of Ideology' (1943-1945)," in Zervas and Cahiers d'art (Paris: Editions de la Cité, 2004), 201.

53. Many of these texts condemn the war overtly, but others, particularly those written during the war, do not. Although

a broad discussion of artistic production during the war is beyond the scope of this essay, the combination of art and literature in this issue is striking. See in related articles like Braque and Malraux, who upheld the autonomy of artistic production, with texts such as René Leveau's essay on Schoenberg's twelve-tone system, "Introduction à la musique de douze sons," by authors who did the same.

54. For a complete discussion of Braque's trial and the issue of cultural collaboration, see Alice Kaplan, *The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 106.

55. For an account of Paulhan's criticism of the postwar purge of suspected collaborationist writers, see Michael Sverdlov, *Defying Georges: Jean Paulhan's Intervention in Twentieth-Century French Intellectual History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

56. Paulhan's main issue as a writer are examples of the complications driving literary production during and after World War II. He had been the editor of the *Revue de France* (SRF), France's premier literary journal, from 1925 to 1940 but had stopped down under increasing pressure to adhere to German policies, or which joined the German collaborator and Nazi sympathizer Pierre Drieu la Rochelle to link up the relationship. In 1941 Paulhan founded, among other publications, the Resistance journal *Lettres françaises* with Daniel Deleury and the *Revue* as Jacques Doucet. In 1945 he joined the editorial board of *Les Temps modernes*, a politically engaged literary journal begun by Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty after the war as an alternative to the conservatism of the NRF.

subsequent literature but in art criticism as well. The existential language of Babelon's essay conveys the loss of the sense of self in the face of the horror of war and heroizes Braque, demonstrating the artist's ethical commitment to his art.

It was not until another political sea change, after the liberation of Paris, that questions about the relationship between aesthetic autonomy and political praxis in Braque's work were raised in significantly more complex ways by the French writer Jean Paulhan (fig. 7) in his brief essay "Braque ou le sens du caché."⁴⁸ This essay, published in the issue of *Cahiers d'art* that appeared just after the liberation of Paris, was one of many early versions and fragments of Paulhan's larger essay *Braque le patron*, which first appeared in book form in 1945.⁴⁹ "Braque ou le sens du caché" was written during the height of the épuration, the French purging of suspected Nazi collaborators that began after the liberation, and it makes a stronger connection between Braque's work and contemporary politics than the reviews written during the occupation. In this, it was a complement to the postwar liberation issue of the journal *Cahiers d'art*, in which it appeared.⁵⁰ The journal had ceased publication during the war, and like most publications at this time, it raised the issue of artistic collaboration but sought to separate French artistic production from the shadow of Nazi German ideology.⁵¹ Within this celebration of French art and literature, Paulhan's essay slyly took on the righteousness of much postwar posturing while at the same time defending Braque's right to aesthetic autonomy.

In the immediate postwar period, culture, and in particular literature and art, could be held responsible for acts of life and death. At the time, the Comité national des écrivains (CNE)—a group that had been formed during the occupation and that included writers affiliated with the Resistance, such as Louis Aragon, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Elsa Triolet, and Jean Paulhan himself—was involved in an intellectual purge of French literature similar to the general purge of collaborators in France after the war. The CNE created a blacklist of about 150 French writers with whom they refused to be published and publicly called for General Charles de Gaulle to take judicial action against collaborationist writers. In 1945 four writers—Robert Brasillach, Charles Maurras, Marcel Jouhandeau, and Lucien Rebatet—were tried for articles and essays published during the war, and Brasillach was ultimately sentenced to death and executed in February 1946.⁵² Although the trial had not yet come to pass, Paulhan refused to sign the petition and quickly resigned from the CNE to protest the blacklisting of suspected collaborationist artists and writers.⁵³ It is these events that form the background to his essay on Braque.

As the title of the essay indicates, Paulhan was ostensibly analyzing an aspect of Braque's work that is hidden. He defends the artist's right to maintain this hidden world—variously called "the mystery" or "the secret"—in the face of a thoroughly cleansed civic world that does not allow secrets. On the surface the essay is a



FIG. 22
Georges Braque
Bottle and Newspaper (The Gueridon: "Stal"), 1911-12
Oil on canvas, 20 3/4 x 22 1/4" (72.5 x 58.5 cm)
Museum Fohovang, Essen. Acquired in 1962 with the support of the Eugen- und Agnes-von-Waldhausen-Platzhoff-Museum-Stiftung, Inc. G 223



FIG. 23
Georges Braque
Glass on a Table, 1909-10
Oil on canvas, 22 1/4 x 18 1/4" (57.1 x 47.2 cm)
Tate, London. Bequeathed by Sir Antony Huxley through
the Friends of the Tate Gallery, 1988

much like the more commonly cited example of Picasso's *Still Life with Chair Caning* of the same year, the oval format fluctuates unstably between the shape of the actual canvas and the shape of the represented table (helped along by the curving line on the lower left side of the painting, which gives us the barest hint—all we can ever expect from Braque's Cubism at this time—of a table's rounded edge).

But if the depicted forms of the grid and the table each play off the literal oval of the tableau, the table-tableau relation has things to tell us about Braque's painting and its relation to the viewer that would not necessarily be apparent in the grid alone yet that end up being fundamental to it. Most evidently perhaps, the table-tableau shunts back and forth, not just between the painting's literal and depicted shape but also between its literal and depicted surface. And in this play of surfaces, as we flip between the vertical, front-facing plane of the tableau and the horizontal, overhead view of the tabletop, we become that much more attuned to—that much more grounded in and upon—our own grid of entangled surfaces outside the painting. Looking into the lines and surfaces of the Cubist grid, in other words, we find ourselves repeatedly thrust back out—back out onto the literal shape and flatness of the canvas, and back out, along with it, onto the literal verticality of our viewing posture and the horizontal ground beneath our feet. Here we stand, planted upright on the flat expanse beneath us, as our vision projects laterally onto the vertically flipped horizontal table, mapped onto the vertical support of the tableau that sits, in its turn, upon the vertical support of the wall. Christine Poggi articulates this in her description of how the vertical



1929-30) Braque paints a new series of large still lifes, including *The Round Table* (CR2; plate 7) and *Still Life with Fruit Dish, Bottle, and Mandarin* (CR3; plate 10). These works are characterized by more complex compositions and increasingly thin and fluid brushwork; they represent a focused examination of the relationship between light and dark planes.

JANUARY 18-MARCH 2, 1930: The Museum of Modern Art in New York presents *Painting in Paris*, an exhibition of works from American collections. Four paintings by Braque are on view, along with works by Picasso and Henri Matisse.

MAY 1930/31: Braque exhibits at Galerie Paul Rosenberg, Paris.

1931: Braque's country home in Varengeville, Normandy, designed by the American-French architect Paul Nelson, is completed, with a studio incorporated into an outbuilding fifty meters from the house.

DECEMBER 1929: Ambroise Vollard commissions Braque to illustrate Missak's *Theogony*, and he makes sixteen etchings for the project between 1932 and 1933. The book has not been published by the time of Vollard's death in 1935, but the French art dealer and publisher Aimé Maeght publishes it in 1955. Braque also makes a series of related engraved plaster reliefs around this time.

1933: In conjunction with the Kunsthalfe Basel retrospective, *Cahiers d'art* publishes an eighty-four-page issue devoted to Braque and extensively illustrated with works from 1906 to the present. It includes essays in French by Christian Zervos, in German by Carl Einstein, and in English by H. S. Eck, assistant curator at the Tate Gallery, as well as reprints of seminal early criticism.

APRIL 18, 1933: Braque's most important retrospective exhibition to date—consisting of 183 paintings, collages, drawings, and engraved plaster panels as well as an unspecified number of prints—opens at the Kunsthalfe Basel. It is organized by the Kunstsverein Basel and curated by Carl Einstein.

1934: Einstein publishes *Georges Braque, the most substantial monograph yet written on the artist*.

MARCH 19-21, 1934: Paul Rosenberg organizes a group exhibition at the Durand-Ruel Galleries in New York. The show consists of twenty-three paintings by Picasso, thirteen by Braque, and ten by Matisse. Rosenberg presides over a selection of Braque's works from 1927 to 1933, including *The Round Table* (CR2; plate 7), which appears on the cover of *Art News* in March.

1935: Christian Zervos publishes an "Essai" in *Cahiers d'art* about the state of the plastic arts. This survey is based on Zervos's conversations with young artists, dealers, and critics, including Marc Chagall, Georges Rouault, Piet Mondrian, Marc Chagall, and the dealer Galerie Rosenberg.

1935: Braque and Jean Paulhan meet for the first time.

1936: Braque begins a series of interiors with figures (1936-39). At the same time the theme of the pedestal table returns. He makes a quick tour of Germany but does not return there after Hitler reoccupies the Rhineland later that year.

JANUARY 8-21, 1936: Braque exhibits at Galerie Paul Rosenberg, Paris.

MARCH 2-APRIL 19, 1936: Works by Braque are shown in the exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

1930

JANUARY 30, 1933: Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany.

MARCH 4, 1933: Inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt as president of the United States.

AUGUST 2, 1934: The German president Paul von Hindenburg dies, and Hitler becomes president of Germany. The German army swears an oath of allegiance to him. Two weeks later he appoints himself Führer and chancellor of the Third Reich.

JANUARY 6, 1936: Mussolini leaves the Stresa Front in order to support Germany.

MAY 3, 1936: In France, the Popular Front—a coalition of left-wing political movements, including the Socialist and Radical Parties, with support from the Communists and the SFIO—wins the general election. SFIO leader Léon Blum subsequently becomes France's first Jewish and Socialist prime minister.

MAY 9, 1936: In a public speech, Mussolini declares the creation of the Italian Empire.

JULY 19-18, 1936: Rebels in the Spanish army proclaim a revolution against the leftist Madrid government, headed by the Spanish Popular Front. General Francisco Franco joins them. A civil war subsequently breaks out.

AUGUST 1936: France, Britain, the United States, Italy, and Germany, among many other nations, sign the Non-Intervention Agreement, in which they agree to remain neutral during the Spanish Civil War. Germany

1935

APRIL 18-16, 1935: Britain, France, and Italy form the Stresa Front at a conference in Stresa, Italy, reaffirming their opposition to German expansion.

JANUARY 6, 1936: Mussolini leaves the Stresa Front in order to support Germany.

MAY 3, 1936: In France, the Popular Front—a coalition of left-wing political movements, including the Socialist and Radical Parties, with support from the Communists and the SFIO—wins the general election. SFIO leader Léon Blum subsequently becomes France's first Jewish and Socialist prime minister.

MARCH 2, 1936: In response to Germany's defiance of the Munich Agreement and the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Britain guarantees Polish independence. In a separate agreement, signed on May 19, France also guarantees Polish independence.

MARCH 11, 1936: Léon Blum very briefly becomes prime minister of France again. Édouard Daladier of the Radical Socialist Party replaces him on April 10, 1936.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1936: Germany, France, Britain, and Italy sign the Munich Agreement, a settlement permitting Germany's annexation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland. They believe that this act of appeasement will guarantee peace, yet it is widely regarded as a betrayal.

and Italy consistently flout the terms of the agreement, providing extensive aid to Fascist Italy.

JANUARY 20, 1937: Roosevelt begins his second term as president.

APRIL 26, 1937: The Spanish Nationalists, with help from the German Condor Legion, destroy the Basque town of Guernica.

MARCH 22, 1937: Camille Chautemps of the Radical Socialist Party replaces Léon Blum as prime minister and begins to exclude other liberal coalition members from office. Ultimately the French Popular Front collapses.

MARCH 21, 1939: Léon Blum very briefly becomes prime minister of France again. Édouard Daladier of the Radical Socialist Party replaces him on April 10, 1938.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1936: Germany, France, Britain, and Italy sign the Munich Agreement, a settlement permitting Germany's annexation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland. They believe that this act of appeasement will guarantee peace, yet it is widely regarded as a betrayal.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1936: Germany, France, Britain, and Italy sign the Munich Agreement, a settlement permitting Germany's annexation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland. They believe that this act of appeasement will guarantee peace, yet it is widely regarded as a betrayal.

1937: Braque is awarded first prize at the Carnegie International Exhibition in Pittsburgh for *The Yellow Tablecloth* (CR30).

"The decision sparks controversy, which is fueled by the local Pittsburgh press. Critics perceive the awarding of the prize to Braque's painting as a publicity stunt on the part of the Carnegie. Two years later the painting receives the first prize at the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco.

APRIL 9-30, 1937: Braque exhibits at Galerie Paul Rosenberg, Paris.

1938: Skulls appear in Braque's still lifes, in works such as *Studio with Black Vase* (plate 27) and *Bedroom and Sky* (plate 24, recto). The motif will appear again in 1939 and 1943.

NOVEMBER 19-DECEMBER 10, 1938: Braque exhibits at Galerie Paul Rosenberg, Paris.

FEBRUARY 1939: After the Spanish Republic is overthrown, Einstein, who is Jewish, is forced to flee to France, where he is temporarily interned in a camp. He reaches Paris in February but subsequently, in 1940, is interned near Bordeaux.

APRIL 4-26, 1939: Braque exhibits at Galerie Paul Rosenberg, Paris.

APRIL 1939/3: George Duthuit publishes an "Éloge" in *Cahiers d'art* in which he asks five artists—Braque, Henri Laurens, Fernand Léger, Joan Miró, and André Masson—about current political events and their effect on contemporary art.

JULY 21, 1939: Vollard dies.

SEPTEMBER 1939: Braque is in Varengeville, Normandy, when Britain and France declare war on Germany.

OCTOBER 1939: Braque stops painting for the first time since 1917 and devotes himself to sculpture.

NOVEMBER 1939-MARCH 1940: First US retrospective dedicated to Braque's art is on view at The Arts Club of Chicago; The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC; and the San Francisco Museum of Art.

1940

NOVEMBER 9-10, 1938: Kristallnacht takes place as a result of the murder of a German diplomat by a Polish Jew in Paris. During this officially sanctioned "night of broken glass" anti-Semites loot Jewish property, burn synagogues, and murder Jews throughout Germany and parts of Austria.

MARCH 1939: The German army invades Czechoslovakia.

MARCH 21, 1939: In response to Germany's defiance of the Munich Agreement and the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Britain guarantees Polish independence. In a separate agreement, signed on May 19, France also guarantees Polish independence.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1939: The German army invades Poland and annexes Danzig.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1939: Britain and France declare war on Germany. The United States remains neutral.

NOVEMBER 4, 1939: Roosevelt signs the Neutrality Act of 1939, allowing the sale of arms to warring parties, thereby asserting American support for Britain, France, and their allies.

MARCH 21, 1940: Paul Reynaud of the Democratic Alliance Party becomes prime minister of France.

APRIL 9, 1940: Germany invades Denmark and Norway.

MAY 10, 1940: Germany attacks the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Winston Churchill succeeds Neville Chamberlain as British prime minister.

JUNE 4, 1940: The Battle of Dunkirk concludes with the evacuation of Allied forces. Churchill makes his famous speech of defiance: "We shall fight on the beaches... we shall fight in the fields... we shall never surrender."

JUNE 5, 1940: The Germans begin an offensive against the French armies in the south. The French prime minister, Paul Reynaud, appoints Charles de Gaulle as undersecretary of state for national defense and war and charges him with coordinating with the United Kingdom.

JUNE 10, 1940: Italy declares war on Britain and France. The French government relocates to Tours from Paris. President Roosevelt condemns Germany and Italy and promises material help to the Allies.

JUNE 5, 1940: Braque is in Varengeville when the German army breaks through the Maginot Line. He takes refuge in the Limoges region and then in the Pyrenees for the rest of the summer. After returning in July to Paris, where he remains until the end of the war, he begins painting again.

JULY 6, 1940: Einstein commits suicide after finding himself caught between the German army, which has occupied southern France, and the Spanish border. It was his second attempt, having tried unsuccessfully the previous month.

SUMMER 1940: Paul Rosenberg, who is Jewish, is forced to flee to New York. He arrives in September and moves into the Hotel Madison. In 1941 he opens Rosenberg & Co. at 30 East 57 Street, where he will hold a series of solo and group exhibitions including Braque's work.

JANUARY 1941: Braque's first solo show organized by Paul Rosenberg in New York is held at the Valentine Gallery.

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1941: French artists are invited to go on a guided tour of Germany in an effort to repair Franco-German cultural relations, generate propaganda, and compromise, if not subvert, the participants. Thirteen French artists—including André Derain, Othon Friesz, and Maurice Vlaminck—go to Germany, along with a journalist and an interpreter. Braque is not invited.

1942: Braque paints a number of interiors with a dark palette, dominated by black.

APRIL 1-25, 1942: Braque has his first solo show at Rosenberg & Co., New York.

MAY-JULY 1942: Braque is represented in a group show called *Les Fauves*, highlighting work from 1903 to 1908, at the Galerie de France from June 13 to July 11, and in the opening exhibition of the Musée national d'art moderne at the Salon des Tuileries from July through July of the same year.

JUNE 16, 1940: The Germans, who have overrun or outflanked the Maginot Line, invade Paris.

JUNE 16, 1940: The French decide to seek an armistice. Reynaud resigns, and Marshal Philippe Pétain forms a new government.

Orders are given for the remaining British troops to leave France, and their evacuation is complete on June 18.

JUNE 18, 1940: Charles de Gaulle delivers a radio address from London (*"Appel du 18 juin"*) that is credited with sparking the resistance.

JUNE 19, 1940: French ships seek refuge in British and North African ports. The Germans invite the French to send representatives to discuss armistice terms.

JUNE 22, 1940: Pétain signs an armistice with Germany that limits the French army to 100,000 men and commits France to pay all occupation costs. The armistice also divides France into occupied and unoccupied zones.

Three fifths of northern and western France are now under German occupation, leaving only the southern part of the country under the control of a French puppet government led by Pétain, headquartered in Vichy.

DECEMBER 7-5, 1940: The Japanese attack major targets in the Pacific, including Pearl Harbor, the American naval base in Hawaii, sinking part of the American Pacific fleet. Japan declares war on the United States. The United States declares war on Japan.

DECEMBER 11, 1940: Germany and Italy declare war on the United States, and the United States declares war on Germany and Italy.

JANUARY 1, 1942: Representatives of twenty-six nations, including the United States, sign the Declaration by the United Nations, affirming their cooperation against the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan.

JANUARY 20, 1942: At the Wannsee Conference in Berlin, fifteen senior Nazi officials meet to implement the "Final solution" to the Jewish problem by means of forced labor and mass murder in concentration camps. The mass killings of Jews in the gas chambers begins soon thereafter, in the spring and summer of 1942.

JULY 1942: In Paris, the French police arrest and detain 13,000 stateless Jews. Nine thousand of them, including 4,000 children, are transported immediately to death camps such as Auschwitz.