

French Connections



10. A Studio in Paris

April 23, 2025

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THIS CLASS WILL BE DEVOTED TO FOREIGN ARTISTS who contributed to the Parisian art and music scenes in three periods: the Impressionist era at the end of the 19th century, the explosion of Modernism at the start of the 20th, and the extraordinary cross-fertilization that happened in the Twenties.

For most of the class, all the figures to be considered will be American, but the first decade of the century saw so many artists flocking to Paris from countries all over Europe that it would be impossible to ignore their contribution to the cultural whirlpool that historians call The School of Paris. *rb.*

A. In Search of Color

After a brief prelude on a Cajun-American composer rejected by the Paris Conservatoire in the mid-19th century, we turn to a group of American artists who fell under the spell of the Impressionists.

♪ **Gottschalk:** Symphony #1, ending

Sargent: Claude Monet Painting (1885, NY Met)

Sargent: Cançale (1878, Washington NG)

Sargent: Portrait of Mme. X (1884, NY Met)

Chase: Beach scenes

Hassam: Paris scenes

Robinson: two scenes from 1892

Prendergast: Parisian figures

Prendergast: from the Paris sketchbook (1891–94, NY Met)

♪ **MacDowell:** To a Wild Rose (Chris Childers)

B. The Modernist Whirlpool

In the early years of the 20th century, Paris became an exhilarating spin of artists coming from all over Europe, bringing as many ideas about how to celebrate the modern age. Americans were in the minority among them, but they caught the fever too.

Weber: New York scenes (1913 and 1915)

Weber: *The Cellist* (1917)

Dove: *Nature Symbolized #2* (1991, Chicago)

Dove: *The Cow* (1912, NY Met)

Dove: *The Goat* (1935, NY Met)

C. Three American Dancers

Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Josephine Baker: three women, one from each of the periods under discussion today. Each came to Paris in search of a freedom they could not obtain at home, and each made an indelible contribution to the history of modern dance.

♪ **Lumière Brothers:** Loie Fuller's *Danse serpentine* (1897)

♪ **Duncan:** *Narcissus*, danced by one of her pupils

Posters: Josephine Baker and *Le Bal Nègre*

♪ **Film:** Josephine Baker in *Siren of the Tropics* (1927)

D. Americans in Paris

During the interwar years, Paris was the world center of modern music, and celebrated pedagogue Nadia Boulanger was the center of that center. We look at two of the numerous Americans who came over to study with her (Copland and Thomson) and another (Gershwin) who, for the best of reasons, she refused to accept

♪ **Gershwin:** *An American in Paris*, blues (Frankfurt)

♪ **Copland:** *As It Fell Upon a Day*, introduction and opening

♪ **Thomson:** *Four Saints in 3 Acts*, prologue (Ensemble Parallèle)

♪ **Thomson:** *Four Saints...*, "Pigeons on the grass" (Victorian Opera)

We also look at two visual artists who were attracted to Paris in the Twenties by the freedom it gave to experiment—to play. A similar ferment also attracted the expatriate writers described by Hemingway as the “lost generation”—but for that, we must turn to Woody Allen’s evocation of the period in his 2012 film *Midnight in Paris*.

♪ **Man Ray:** *Le retour à la raison* (film)

Calder: *Eagle* (1971, Seattle)

Calder: *Crinkly, with Red Disk* (1973, Stuttgart)

♪ **Video:** Calder demonstrates *Le Cirque Calder*

♪ **Allen:** *Midnight in Paris*, Gil goes back in time, and/or:

♪ **Allen:** *Midnight in Paris*, blog summary (compiler unknown)

Woody **Allen** (1935–, American filmmaker), Josephine **Baker** (Freda Josephine McDonald, 1906–75, American dancer), Nadia **Boulanger** (1887–1979, French musician), Alexander **Calder** (1898–1976, American sculptor), Mary **Cassatt** (1844–1926, American painter), William Merritt **Chase** (1849–1916, American painter), Aaron **Copland** (1900–90, American composer), Arthur **Dove** (1880–1946, American painter), Isadora **Duncan** (1877–1927, American dancer), F. Scott **Fitzgerald** (1896–1940, American writer), Loie **Fuller** (1862–1928, American dancer), George **Gershwin** (1898–1937, American composer), Louis Moreau **Gottschalk** (1828–69, American composer), Childe **Hassam** (1859–1935, American painter), Ernest **Hemingway** (1899–1961, American writer), Edward **MacDowell** (1861–1901, American composer), **Man Ray** (Emmanuel Radinsky, 1890–1976, American artist), Pablo **Picasso** (1881–1973, Spanish artist), Maurice **Prendergast** (1858–1924, American painter), Theodore **Robinson** (1852–96, American painter), John Singer **Sargent** (1856–1925, American painter), Augusta **Savage** (1892–1962, American sculptor), Gertrude **Stein** (1874–1946, American poet), Igor **Stravinsky** (1882–1971, Russian-American composer), Virgil **Thomson** (1896–89, American composer), Max **Weber** (1881–1961, American painter)

The course website is www.brunyate.com/FrenchConnections
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