

Blaise Cendrars  
(1887–1961)  
*Poetry Is Everything*

MAY 26 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

LARGE PRINT LABELS

The  
Morgan  
Library &  
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**Robert Delaunay (1885–1941)**

***The Tower*, 1911, dated 1910**

**Ink and graphite**

**The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abby Aldrich  
Rockefeller Fund, 1935; 235.1935**

After settling in Paris in 1912, Cendrars befriended the painter Robert Delaunay, inspired by the artist's dynamic use of color and by a shared obsession with the Eiffel Tower. Many Parisians viewed the structure, completed in 1889, as an industrial blot on the landscape, unsuitable for artistic subject matter. In dozens of works, however, Delaunay rendered it vertiginously from multiple perspectives, introducing time, motion, and depth into his Cubist practice.

For Cendrars, the tower symbolized the profound transformations of the modern world. It figures in his poems as a gallows, a palm tree, a paint brush dipped in light, and an embodiment of technology and language, with its antenna radioing Morse code across the sea.

## THE FIRST SIMULTANEOUS BOOK

The visual presentation of Cendrars's *Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jeanne of France* was initially conceived by the Ukrainian-born artist Sonia Delaunay-Terk. When Cendrars met her and her husband, the painter Robert Delaunay, in Paris, the couple was exploring Simultanism in chiefly abstract paintings. Their idea, based on color theory, held that a viewer's simultaneous perception of contrasting hues generates rhythm, movement, and depth.

Inspired by Cendrars's poetry, Delaunay-Terk proposed that they collaborate on a "simultaneous book," with his text set in contrasting colors parallel to her designs. Cendrars formatted the poem using thirty typefaces, which were letterpress printed on the right side of four large sheets. Delaunay-Terk's painted maquette was then converted into dozens of stencils, through which printshop workers hand applied gouache with a brush, one color at a time. The four sheets were then pasted together and accordion-folded like a travel map or a string of picture postcards. Cendrars and Delaunay-Terk planned to produce 150 copies, so that, if placed vertically end to end, the edition would reach the top of the Eiffel Tower. Little more than half that number were realized.

## POETRY IN MOTION

*The Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jeanne of France* fuses reality, memory, and imagination in a breathless flow of spontaneous impressions. (A complete translation by the American poet Ron Padgett can be read on the nearby screen.) Narrated by a man named Blaise, the poem takes place on a train trip from Russia to China, though it concludes in Paris. In free verse, with virtually no punctuation, Cendrars's lines are rife with imagery of war and revolution, inter-woven with the minutiae of daily life and casual references to the New York Public Library and to his friends Marc Chagall and Guillaume Apollinaire. Occasionally, the narrator's litany is interrupted by the voice of his travel companion, Jeanne: "Say, Blaise, are we really a long way from Montmartre?"

Cendrars's time spent in Russia and the narrator's name led readers to assume that the work was autobiographical. But the poem's journey undoubtedly occurred in Cendrars's imagination: among his belongings was a poster for a panorama restaurant at the 1900 World Exposition in Paris, where guests dined in stationary railroad cars, as painted scenes of the 6,000-mile journey scrolled by.



FRONT OF CASE:

**Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961) and Sonia Delaunay-Terk  
(1885–1979)**

*La prose du Transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France (The  
Prose of the Trans-Siberian and of Little Jeanne of France)*

**Paris: Éditions des hommes nouveaux, 1913**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Dr. Gail Levin, 2021;**

**PML 198726**

**Morgan Russell (1886–1953)**

***Color Form Synchrony (Eidos)*, 1922–23**

**Oil**

**The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mrs. Wendell T. Bush Fund; 21.1951**

Cendrars inscribed the Morgan's copy of *Prose of the Trans-Siberian* to the American painter Morgan Russell, who cofounded Synchronism—a term Russell coined to distinguish himself from Sonia Delaunay-Terk and other painters associated with Orphism and Simultanism. Russell's Synchronism emphasized the locomotion of the viewer's eye, which generated “color rhythms” by moving across the canvas from color to color, like a musician reading music. Cendrars and Russell planned to collaborate on a Synchronist ballet. Russell was preoccupied, however, with inventing a light machine to transform the chromatic vision of his paintings into a public spectacle. Neither the ballet nor the light machine was ever realized.

## VISUAL POETRY

Cendrars never aligned himself with a single school of art, though his career was intertwined with figures tied to Cubism, Orphism, Futurism, Dada, and Surrealism. In Paris he fell in with a motley group of artists at the La Ruche studios in Montparnasse. Many of the resident painters and sculptors were Russian Jews fleeing pogroms; others, from Hungary, Bulgaria, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, had left their homelands in search of social and economic freedoms.

At La Ruche, Cendrars became closest to the painters Marc Chagall and Amedeo Modigliani, though he wrote poems about many artists, including the Russian sculptor Alexander Archipenko. Cendrars's "The Head," for example, was inspired by Archipenko's synthesis of color, tension, and movement in *Woman in Front of Mirror* (1914), a large mixed-media work, now lost, which is both figural and machinelike. In the poem's first line, Cendrars maps his artistic parameters to encompass mechanized violence and beauty: "The guillotine is the masterpiece of plastic art."





Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920), *Portrait of Blaise Cendrars*, ca. 1918. Photo: Mondadori Portfolio / Bridgeman Images.



**Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)**

**“Marc Chagall”**

**In *Expressionismus, die Kunstwende* (Berlin: Verlag Der Sturm, 1918)**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2022; PML 198778**

Chagall’s freeform style and dreamlike paintings, grounded in the everyday life of Jewish people in Russian villages, rebelled against both conservative aesthetics and those of the establishment avant-garde. Chagall and Cendrars became intimate friends at La Ruche. The poet promoted Chagall’s early career and assigned titles to many of his iconic works, including *I and the Village* (1911), reproduced here in black and white. In Cendrars’s facing text, translated into German, the poet praises Chagall for his unmediated rendering of reality—as if he painted a cow with a cow, not with a brush—something Cendrars aspired to in his poetic diction.

**Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920)**

**Frontispiece portrait of Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)**

**In Blaise Cendrars, *Dix-neuf poèmes élastiques* (*Nineteen Elastic Poems*) (Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1919)**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2022; PML 198768**

The word “elastic” in Cendrars’s title *Nineteen Elastic Poems* points to the ways he stretches and adapts language. In poems dedicated to his artist friends, Cendrars bends their practices to serve his own ideas. Sometimes he disparages art and art criticism, claiming to take more pleasure in postage stamps than “Number this and Number that in the Louvre.”

The 1914 poem “News Flash” barely alters the words in an article about a prison break in Oklahoma; other poems quote copyright statements or the slogan on a bottle of tomato sauce. Exceptional for their use of everyday language, Cendrars’s elastic verse lives up to his ecstatic claim: “the windows of my poetry are wide open.”

**František Kupka (1871–1957)**

***Around a Point*, ca. 1918**

**Watercolor and gouache over graphite**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Nancy Schwartz, 2022;  
2022.63**

**Alexander Archipenko (1887–1964)**

***Woman in Front of Mirror***

**Photographed in *Les soirées de Paris*, no. 25 (15 June 1914)**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Robert and Linda  
Stillman, 2017; PML 197215.1**



## **“The Head”**

The guillotine is the masterpiece of plastic art

Its click

Creates perpetual motion

Everyone knows about Christopher Columbus's egg

Which was a flat egg, a stationary egg, the egg of an inventor

Archipenko's sculpture is the first ovoidal egg

Held in intense equilibrium

Like an immobile top

On its animated point

Speed

It throws off

Multicolored waves

Colored zones

And turns in depth

Nude.

New.

Total.

**Blaise Cendrars (1914), translated by Ron Padgett**

**Program for a Lyre et Palette poetry reading, Paris, 26  
November 1916**

**Houghton Library, Harvard University, purchase, Amy Lowell  
Fund, 1971; FC9.Ap437.A917s**

This keepsake was created for a poetry reading marking the first exhibition sponsored by Lyre et Palette—a venture Cendrars helped establish to promote the intersection of visual art, poetry, and music. At the show's opening, visitors were invited to leaf through Cendrars's *Prose of the Trans-Siberian* to the sounds of Erik Satie's music. Framed works on the walls by Matisse, Modigliani, Picasso, Moïse Kisling, and Ortiz de Zárate were paired with wooden and stone sculptures, which had been removed by Europeans from Gabon, Sudan, and other countries under colonial rule. The exhibition's organizers claimed that the non-European works were being displayed for the first time solely for their artistic qualities.

## THE POETICS OF WAR

In Paris in the summer of 1914, Cendrars and the Italian poet Ricciotto Canudo galvanized fellow non-French citizens to volunteer to fight in World War I. Cendrars was soon stationed in northern France. In the fall of 1915, during the Second Battle of Champagne, a burst of machine gun fire virtually severed his right forearm, necessitating its amputation at the elbow. He learned to write with his left hand and soon addressed the subject of war in poetry and prose, including *I Have Killed* and *The War in the Luxembourg*, a poem about children playing wargames.

While recovering from his injuries, Cendrars bonded with the Cubist painter Fernand Léger, another veteran who had fought at the front. Léger's subsequent works intermixed the blood-red mechanics of war and urban life with fragmented human figures, inflected with locomotion and aspects of cinema and dance. In Léger's works Cendrars recognized his own "portrait," as he wrote in the poem "Constructions."



Blaise Cendrars in uniform, ca. 1916. Photo:  
© Succession Cendrars.

**Fernand Léger (1881–1955)**

***Composition*, 1918**

**Watercolor, opaque watercolor, and black ink and wash over  
graphite on paper mounted on board**

**Thaw Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum; 2017.146**

**Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)**

***J'ai tué (I Have Killed)***

**Illustrations by Fernand Léger (1881–1955)**

**Paris: À la Belle édition, [1918]**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N.  
Ray Fund, 2015; PML 196205**

**Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)**

***La guerre au Luxembourg (The War in the Luxembourg)***

**Illustrations by Moïse Kisling (1891–1953)**

**Paris: Dan. Niestlé, 1916**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N.  
Ray Fund, 2022; PML 198776**

**Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)**

***Profond aujourd'hui (Profound Today)***

**Illustrations by Ángel Zárraga (1886–1946)**

**Paris: À la Belle édition, 1917**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2022; PML 198932**

*“I no longer know if I’m looking with my naked eye at a starry sky or at a drop of water through a microscope.”*

The first sentence of Cendrars’s *Profound Today*, quoted above, captures the poet’s discombobulation as he recovered from World War I. Cendrars’s text combines conversational prose with one- or two-word sentences in its inventory of the synesthesia and disconnections of modernity. In the narrator’s descriptions, man is an hour sounding on a clock, factories exude erotic furor, steamships whinny, and pieces of fabric can be set to music. The Mexican artist Ángel Zárraga interpreted Cendrars’s nightmarish interchanges of the animate and inanimate with this illustration of a machinelike man, mutilated by the war.



## **“Construction”**

Color, color, and more colors . . .

Here's Léger who grows like the sun in the tertiary epoch

And who hardens

And who fixes

The still life

The earth's crust

The liquid

The steamy

Everything that grows dim

The cloudy geometry

The plumb line that retracts itself

Ossification

Locomotion

Everything is teeming

The mind suddenly comes alive and gets dressed in its turn like  
the plants and animals

Prodigiously

And now

Painting becomes this great thing that moves

The wheel

Life

The machine

The human soul

A 75 mm breech

My portrait

**Blaise Cendrars (1919), translated by Ron Padgett**

**Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)**

***Head of a Man*, 1909**

**Black fabricated chalk**

**Thaw Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum; 2017.189**

Cubism's muted palette was the antithesis of the polychrome typography of *Prose of the Trans-Siberian* and the brilliant colors used by artists Cendrars admired: the Delaunays, Léger, Morgan Russell, and Chagall. Outspoken in his critiques of Cubism, Cendrars faulted the movement for its rigid theories, which he said investigated the reality of objects rather than reality itself. After the war, however, Cendrars praised Picasso's post-Cubist style and compared him to a visionary poet—one who unleashes the modern world's latent spirituality in mystical, savage, voluptuous, and tender works. Cendrars used his postwar role as a publisher to solicit Picasso for illustrations.

## MUSIC AND DANCE

Cendrars had studied and written about music as a young man and, at age twenty-five, while living in New York for six months, had briefly earned money playing piano in a nickelodeon theater on the Bowery. Beginning in 1916, Cendrars and Jean Cocteau co-organized concerts in Paris to promote Erik Satie's protégés, the avant-garde composers nicknamed "Les Six"—Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Germaine Tailleferre. Three of Les Six set Cendrars's verse to music, and Satie inspired Cendrars's poem "The Musickissime." Cendrars, as a literary director of the new avant-garde imprint Éditions de la Sirène, helped to make music publishing a priority there. Some of the music he promoted, including the score of his own ballet *The Creation of the World*, appropriated art forms originated by Black Americans—namely, ragtime and jazz.



Left to right: Francis Poulenc, Germaine Tailleferre, Louis Durey, Jean Cocteau, Darius Milhaud, and Arthur Honegger, with Cocteau's drawing of Georges Auric, 1929.

## **“The Musickissme”**

***To Erik Satie***

What do we care about Venizélos

Only Raymond • let's put Duncan still tucks up old Greek  
clothes

Music with vegetable ears

Like an elephant's

Fish cry out in the Gulf Stream

Can juicier than a fig

And the Basque voice of the sea microphone

Music hall duet

With car accompaniment

Gong

The musical seal

50 measures of do-re do-re do-re do-re do-re do-re do-re  
do-re do-re do-re do-re do-re do-re

That's it!

And a diminished chord in A-flat minor

ETC.!

When it's pretty a pretty toy noisemaker dances the  
doorbell

Intermission

Over

**Theme:** Orchestra conductor CHARLIE CHAPLIN keeps time

Before

The top-hatted European and his corseted wife

**Counterpoint:** Dances

Before the bewildered European and his wife

**Coda:** Sings

Quod erat demonstrandum

**Blaise Cendrars (1916), translated by Ron Padgett**

**Poster for a performance of works by Francis Poulenc,  
Georges Auric, Erik Satie, and Darius Milhaud, Paris,  
February 1920**

**[Paris: printed by François Bernouard, 1920]**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, James Fuld Collection**



**Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)**

***Rag-Time***

**Cover illustration by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)**

**Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, [1919]**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, Mary Flagler Cary Music  
Collection; PMC 2593**

**Jean Cocteau (1889–1963)**

***Le coq et l'arlequin (Cock and Harlequin)***

**Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1918**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, James Fuld Collection**

Cocteau's *Cock and Harlequin*, a poetic manifesto for the musicians he and Cendrars promoted, was the first title in Cendrars's literary series Collection des tracts. (Guillaume Apollinaire, the author of the second booklet in the series, would die while his book was in proofs.) Cendrars's typographic imagination informed his innovative approach to the series' uniform cover and title-page design. Making use of oversize letterforms intended only for posters, he designed the cover on extra-large paper, then had it photographically reduced to fit the small format.

**Program for the American tour of the Swedish Ballet,  
featuring *The Creation of the World as Creation: An African  
Negro Ballet***

**[Paris: Les Ballets suédois, 1923]**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Mary  
Flagler Cary Fund, 2022; PMC 2825**

*The Creation of the World*, a ballet by Cendrars, Léger, and Milhaud, lays bare how many White modernists appropriated and conflated the creative expressions of Black people. The trio distorted ideas emerging concurrently at the Pan-African congresses in Europe, which were drawing connections between the colonial exploitation of people of color and racism in the diaspora. For the ballet's scenario, Cendrars adapted a White missionary's account of a Bantu Fang myth from Gabon. Milhaud, who had seen jazz performed in Europe and America, studied Black Swan recordings (the first Black-owned music label) in an attempt to inflect his music with percussive and harmonic elements of jazz.

**Fernand Léger (1881–1955)**

**Mise-en-scène for *La création du monde* (*The Creation of the World*), 1922**

**Graphite**

**The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of John Pratt;  
342.1949**

As the costume designer for *The Creation of the World*, Léger dressed the White dancers in black leotards and covered most of their bodies in cardboard masks and cubistic shapes. The artist cited “classical African sculpture” as his sources. This sketch is a preliminary design for his gigantic set pieces that dominated the stage. They represent the three gods overseeing “the springtime of human life”: Nzame, Mbere, and Nkwa. Although the deities figure in some versions of Fang creation myths, the White missionary Henri Trilles, whose account Cendrars adapted for the ballet, likely emphasized their tripartite relationship because it parallels the Trinity of Christian doctrine.

## POETIC DISTANCE

In the 1920s Cendrars traveled to South America three times, initially at the request of an art collector he had met through the Brazilian painter Tarsila do Amaral. Amaral was in the midst of formulating a nationalist modernism, independent of European influence. After Cendrars gave lectures in São Paulo, the pair traveled to the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, where the remnants of colonialism and slavery remained entrenched. Amaral's sketches of Minas Gerais informed her paintings of the 1920s and her illustrations for Cendrars's *Travel Notes*.

Cendrars indiscriminately applied his theories of art to Indigenous languages and non-White peoples. In writings, he seemed to view Brazil's industrial ambitions and the varied economic conditions of its multiracial citizens as the ultimate embodiment of contrast—a manifestation of modern life Cendrars had been seeking in art and language, first realized in *Prose of the Trans-Siberian's* colorful design.

Blaise Cendrars

# Feuilles de route

I.  
le Formose

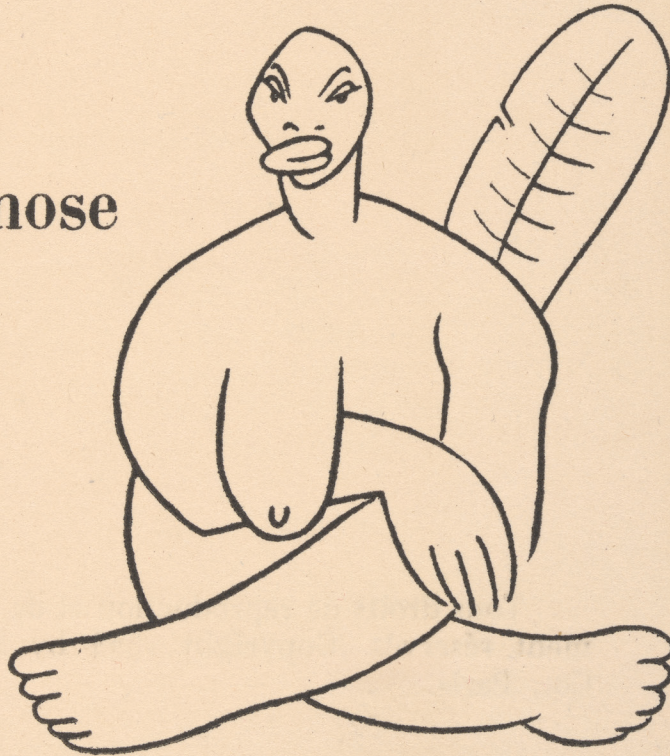
Dessins de Tarsila

Au Sans Pareil

37, avenue Kléber

PARIS

1 9 2 4



Tarsila do Amaral, Cover illustration for Blaise Cendrars, *Feuilles de route* (Travel Notes). The Morgan Library & Museum; PML 198746. © Tarsila do Amaral. Photo: Janny Chiu.

**Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973)**

***Study for “Composition (Lonely Figure) III,” 1930***

**Ink and graphite**

**The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Max**

**Perlingeiro through the Latin American and Caribbean Fund;**

**524.2017**



**Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)**

***Feuilles de route: I. Le Formose (Travel Notes: 1. The Formosa)***

**Illustrations by Tarsila do Amaral (1886–1973)**

**Paris: Au Sans Pareil, 1924**

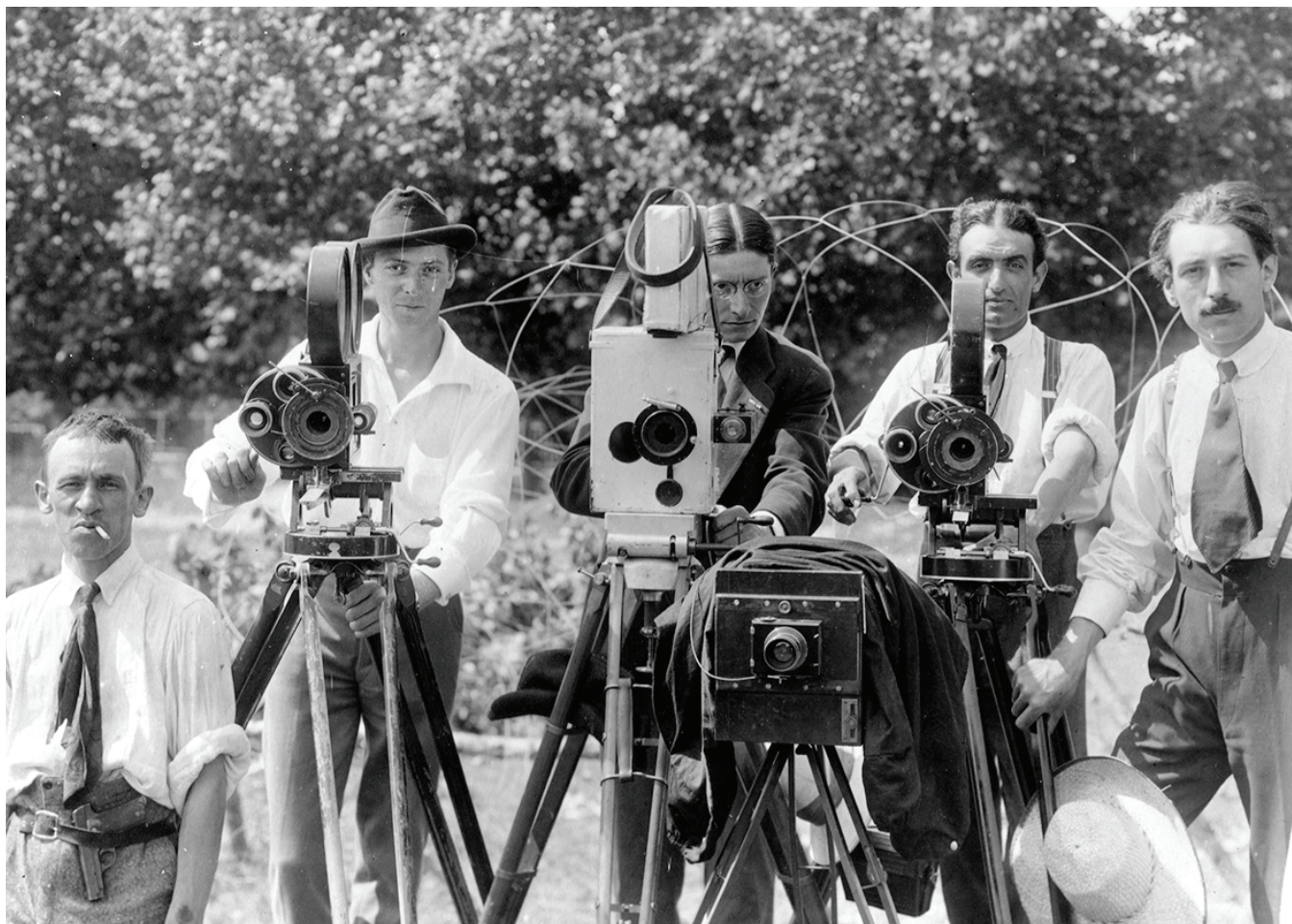
**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N.  
Ray Fund, 2021; PML 198746**



## THE BOOK OF CINEMA

Cendrars believed in the poetic potential of motion pictures. For him, the medium's editing techniques, such as the jump cut and the close-up, epitomized the speed, fragmented time, and intense reality of modern life. Most importantly for Cendrars, cinema was an international language, capable of communicating the human experience through the simultaneous, shared reactions of audiences all over the world.

His most substantial forays into film involved the French director Abel Gance. Cendrars worked as a production assistant and extra and eventually became assistant director of Gance's films *J'accuse* (1919) and *La roue* (1923). The latter includes lines of Cendrars's poetry as intertitles. Cendrars's other projects, including screenplays intended to be directed by Jean Vigo or Cendrars himself, were either abandoned or destroyed. His engagement with the medium is evident in print, however, as an author, editor, and publisher, and, most significantly, in his use of film and photography techniques in writing.



Blaise Cendrars (left) and Abel Gance (far right), with cameramen on the set of *J'accuse*, ca. 1918.

**Jean Epstein (1897–1953)**

***Cinéma***

**Illustrations and design by Claude Dalbanne (1877–1964)**

**Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1921**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2022; PML 198920**

Cendrars was not alone in seeking poetry in other art forms. His protégé Epstein, a budding director and film theorist, argued that to read Cendrars's poems was to be subject to one image per second—that, like cinema, his poetry captured the speed of thought. Epstein used this comparison to reinforce his call for the “superimposition” of literature and film.

Cendrars supervised Epstein's first publications. In *Cinéma*, shown here, Epstein combined poems and prose with experimental typography, drawings, and imaginary film posters and fan magazines. This page superimposes images of the actor Alla Nazimova (1879–1945) from the silent movie *Camille* (1921).

**Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)**

***La fin du monde, filmée par l'ange N.-D. (The End of the World, Filmed by the Angel of Notre Dame)***

**Illustrations by Fernand Léger (1881–1955)**

**Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1919**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2021; PML 198752**

In Cendrars's bizarre film scenario *The End of the World* (which includes interplanetary train travel and Martians parading inside bubbles), God, portrayed as a cigar-chewing American banker, unleashes the Apocalypse. The angel atop Notre-Dame Cathedral, who sets everything in motion, doubles as a camera operator, using time-lapse photography and montage to capture earth's devolution on film. But a fire in the projectionist's booth ultimately causes the movie to run in reverse, undoing the annihilation and bankrupting God.

Cendrars intended the scenario to be part of *Book of Cinema*, an anthology of film-based works by poets he never realized.

**Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)**

***Kodak (Documentaires) (Kodak [Documentary])***

**Cover illustration by Frans Masereel (1889–1972)**

**Paris: Librairie Stock, 1924**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2022; PML 198919**

Cendrars referenced both still and motion pictures in the title *Kodak (Documentary)*, which he described as a collection of “verbal photographs.” Similar to creating photocollages from found images, Cendrars composed *Kodak*’s poems by cutting up and rearranging sentences taken from two other authors’ texts—one about the disparities of American wealth and poverty, and the second presenting an elephant hunter’s critique of colonialism in the Belgian Congo. Cendrars, however, did not reveal his methods or sources. The resulting hybrid work subverts the notion that so-called documentary film and photography capture objective reality.

## From Blaise Cendrars, *The ABCs of Cinema* (1917–21)

### A

*On location.*

The camera that moves, which no longer stands still, which records all the shots simultaneously, which reverberates, which sets itself in motion.

### B

*In the theaters.*

The spectator who no longer sits still in their seat, who is uprooted, brutalized, who participates in the action, who recognizes themselves on-screen among the convulsions of the crowd, who yelps and cries out, protests and struggles.

### C

*On earth.*

At the same time, in every city on earth, the crowd which exits the theaters, which spills out into the streets like black blood, which like a mighty beast stretches out its thousand tentacles and with the least effort crushes the palaces, the prisons.

## Z

*Deep in the heart.*

Watch the new generations growing up suddenly like flowers.

Revolution. Youth of the world. Today.



## ADVERTISING = POETRY

*“I hereby make an appeal to all poets: Friends, advertising is your domain. It speaks your language. It carries out your poetics.”*

Cendrars revered advertising as a supreme expression of the contemporary sensibility. He called it the seventh wonder of the modern world and the “flower of contemporary life.” For him, ads, like poems, embodied the era’s “conscience,” illuminating the minds that created and consumed them. Cendrars’s remarks about film’s internationalism echo in his praise for advertising’s ability to bypass cultural differences and reach a collective audience instantaneously.

In the 1930s Cendrars modified these ideas to single out the graphic designer A. M. Cassandre as the great animator of modern life, the first “film director” of the streets. Cassandre’s posters had become ubiquitous in Paris, most famously those he created for the aperitif Dubonnet and the SS *Normandie* ocean liner. Cendrars furnished Cassandre with language for ad campaigns; he also contributed text used to promote Bifur, Cassandre’s masterpiece of type design (and the inspiration for the headlines used in this gallery’s graphics).





André Kertész (1894–1985), *On the Boulevards, Paris*, 1934.  
Gelatin silver print. © André Kertész - RMN. Image: © The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY.

**A. M. Cassandre (1901–1968)**

**11 plates from *Le spectacle est dans la rue* (The spectacle is in the streets)**

**Text by Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)**

**Montrouge: Draeger frères, [1935]**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2022; PML 198788**

**Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)**

***Le Panama, ou Les aventures de mes sept oncles (Panama, or the Adventures of My Seven Uncles)***

**Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1918**

**With: *Union Pacific Timetable* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1911)**

**The Morgan Library & Museum, purchased on the Gordon N. Ray Fund, 2021; PML 198727**

Cendrars's *Panama* is a tour de force of book design. Fragments of maps reproduced from railroad timetables, as well as an advertisement by the Denver Chamber of Commerce, are interwoven into the poem. The back cover replicates the design of an American Union Pacific Railroad schedule. Cendrars intended readers to fold the book vertically, so that the back cover wraps around, resulting in a red booklet with identical covers, narrow enough to fit in a traveler's pocket.

*Panama* suggests that purely imagined adventures, and those experienced secondhand through literature, letters, and imagery, are as real and as formative to one's identity as lived experience.

## **“At the 5 Corners”**

To dare and make some noise  
Everything is color movement explosion light  
Life flowers at the windows of the sun  
Which melts in my mouth  
I'm ripe  
And I fall translucent in the street

You said it, buddy

I don't know how to open my eyes?  
Golden tongue  
Poetry is in play

**Blaise Cendrars (1914), translated by Ron Padgett**