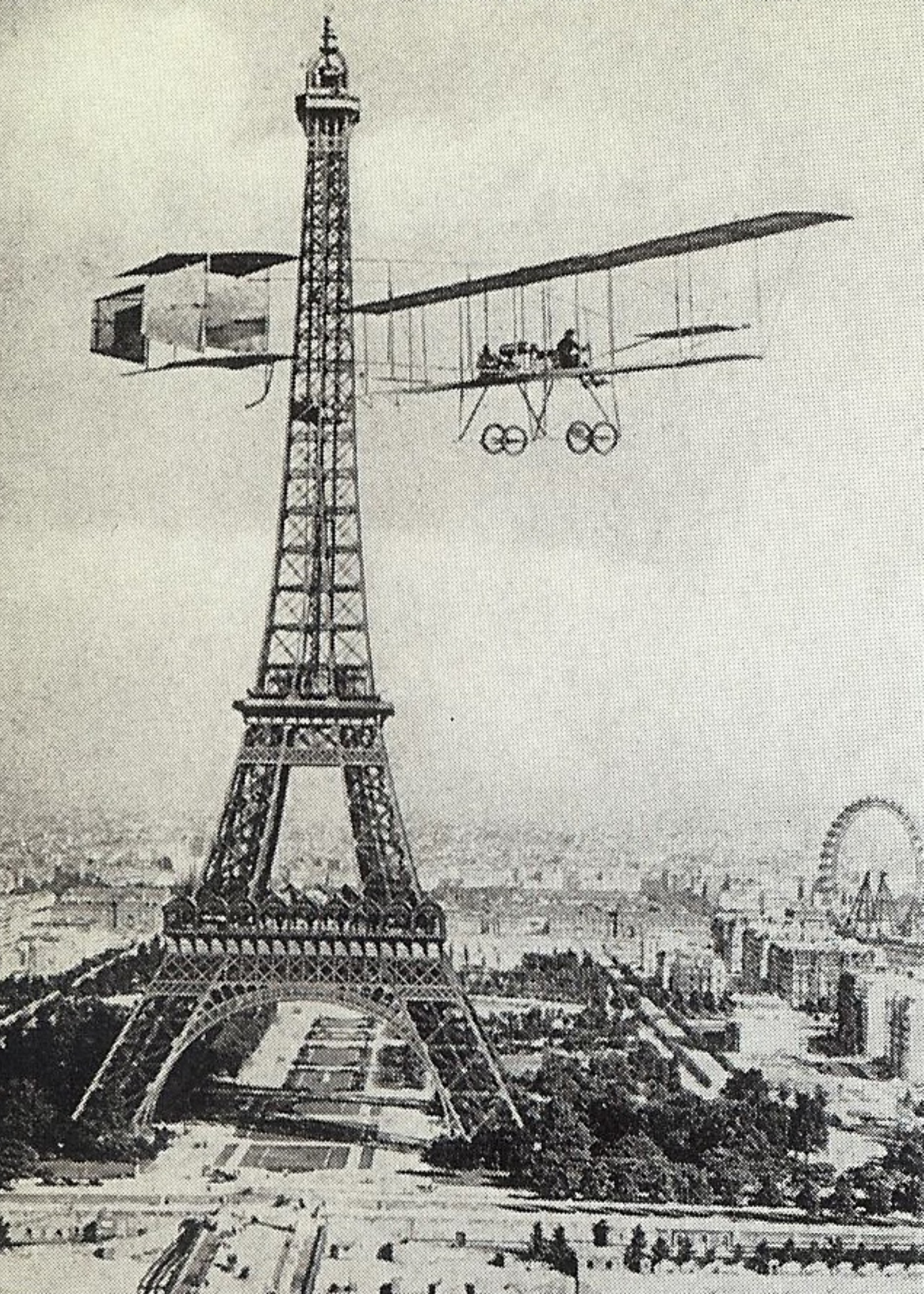


An abstract painting on a textured, light-colored fabric or paper. The composition features large, overlapping, organic shapes in various colors. A prominent shape in the upper right is a large, light blue circle with a thick, dark blue border. Inside this circle, there are smaller, colorful shapes: a purple circle, a green circle, an orange circle, and a blue circle. Below these, there is a large, light blue shape with a thick, dark blue border. In the lower right, there is a large, light blue circle with a thick, dark blue border. The overall effect is a complex, layered composition of colors and shapes.

DELAUNAY

LA VILLE DE PARIS, LA FEMME ET LA
TOUR EIFFEL, 1925



DELAUNAY

LA VILLE DE PARIS, LA FEMME ET LA
TOUR EIFFEL, 1925



ROBERT DELAUNAY (1885 – 1941)

LA VILLE DE PARIS, LA FEMME ET LA TOUR EIFFEL, 1925

signed lower centre *r delaunay*; signed in red on the lower part of the stretcher *ROBERT DELAUNAY*; inscribed in red, verso, *F.628 BAS*, and again in blue crayon; and inscribed on the upper part of the stretcher in red *H 233*

oil on two canvases in one frame

300 x 94 cm. and 150 x 94 cm. (118 x 37 in. and 59 x 37 in.)

PROVENANCE

Sonia Delaunay, Paris.

Galerie Gmurzynska, Cologne.

Private Collection, Germany, acquired from the above.

LITERATURE

Bulletin de l'Effort Moderne, July 1925, no. 17, pp. 12-13 (illus.)

L. Bovey and E. Manganel, *Le Mouvement dans l'Art Contemporain*, exh. cat., Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, 1955, no. 26.

L. Degand, *Robert Delaunay*, exh. cat., Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège, 1955, no. 11.

C. Schweicher, *Robert Delaunay*, exh. cat., Städtisches Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, 1956, n.p., no. 53 (as 'Die Stadt Paris').

G. Habasque and P. Francastel, *Robert Delaunay: Du Cubisme à l'Art Abstrait*, Paris, 1957, p. 288, no. 233.

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R. Riss, "Catalogue Raisonné: Tours Eiffel", in *Robert Delaunay: Tours Eiffel*, exh. cat., Galerie Manuel Barbié, Barcelona, 2008, p. 195, no. 34 (illus.)

J. Bingham and J. Rizzi, eds., *Sonia Delaunay*, exh. cat., Tate Gallery, London, 2014 (illus. p. 122, in a photo of the set of *Le P'tit Parigot*, 1926; p. 214, in a photo of Sonia Delaunay in her studio, Paris, c. 1952; and p. 224, in a photo of Sonia Delaunay painting *L'Affreux Jojo (Scallywag)*, 1947).

EXHIBITED

Paris, *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, April – Oct. 1925.

Liège, Musée des Beaux-Arts, *Robert Delaunay*, 23 April – 22 May 1955, no. 11.

Lausanne, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, *Le Mouvement dans l'Art Contemporain*, 24 June – 26 Sept. 1955, no. 26.

Leverkusen, Städtisches Museum Morsbroich, *Robert Delaunay*, 7 June – 15 July 1956, no. 53 (lent by Sonia Delaunay); this exhibition later travelled to Freiburg, Kunstverein, 22 July – 19 Aug. 1956.

Turin, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, *Robert e Sonia Delaunay*, March 1960, no. 31.

Paris, Musée Carnavalet, *Paris vu par les Maîtres de Corot à Utrillo*, March – May 1961, no. 23.

Hamburg, Kunstverein, *Robert Delaunay*, 26 Jan. – 11 March 1962; this exhibition later travelled to Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, 24 March – 6 May; and Frankfurt, Kunstverein, 18 May – 24 June 1962.

Paris, Musée des Arts Decoratifs, *1925*, 15 Oct. 1976 – 2 Feb. 1977, no. 57.

Paris, *Salon des Indépendants*, 1978 (lent by Sonia Delaunay).

Tokyo, National Museum of Modern Art, *Robert and Sonia Delaunay*, 9 Nov. – 23 Dec. 1979, no. 27 (lent by Jacques Damase, Paris).

Berlin, Deutsche Guggenheim, *Visions of Paris: Robert Delaunay's Series*, 7 Nov. 1997 – 4 Jan. 1998, no. 42; this exhibition later travelled to New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 16 Jan. – 25 April 1998.





INTRODUCTION

The “Roaring 20s” – known as the *années folles* (“crazy years”) in Paris – was a decade like no other. During this postwar period of sustained economic prosperity, a new dynamism emerged in the social, artistic and cultural milieu, bolstered by widespread public optimism. It was also a period of unprecedented industrial growth: manufacturers responded to consumer demands for automobiles, telephones, airplanes, motion pictures, radios and electricity. In both the United States and in Europe, an aspirational society was breaking free from tradition and embracing modernity, leaving the countryside *en masse* and joining the crowds in the great metropolitan centres of New York, Chicago, London and Paris. For modern painters like Robert Delaunay, who shared this feverish energy and fascination with modern technology, Paris represented the cultural capital of the world, and Delaunay took full advantage of the inspiration it offered. Delaunay is celebrated as one of the founders of Orphism, an offshoot of Cubism, and for his magnificent series paintings, among which his *Tour Eiffel* pictures must surely rank among his supreme achievements.

THE EIFFEL TOWER

It is impossible today to conceive of the Parisian skyline without the iconic silhouette of the Eiffel Tower, the city’s most beloved monument. Constructed in 1889 as the entrance arch to the 1889 World’s Fair, the Tower became the symbolic manifestation of French modernity and urban renovation in Paris in the first decade of the 20th Century. However, at the time it was designed and built, the Tower was at the centre of a great controversy. When Gustave Eiffel presented the project to the *Société des Ingénieurs Civils*, almost four years to the day before its completion, he declared that the tower would symbolise “not only the art of the modern engineer, but also the century of Industry and Science in which we are living, and for which the way was prepared by the great scientific movement of the eighteenth century and by the Revolution of 1789, to which this monument

will be built as an expression of France’s gratitude.” The planned structure was immediately attacked by members of the Parisian establishment; they doubted the feasibility of the project and were strongly critical of the design. A “Committee of Three Hundred”, led by the architect Charles Garnier and counting among its members artists including Adolphe Bouguereau and writers such as Guy de Maupassant, sent a letter of objection to Charles Alphand, the Minister of Works and Commissioner for the Exhibition. They began “We, writers, painters, sculptors, architects and passionate devotees of the hitherto untouched beauty of Paris, protest with all our strength, with all our indignation in the name of slighted French taste, against the erection...of this useless and monstrous Eiffel Tower...” They went on to call the design “giddy [and] ridiculous”, and a “hateful column of bolted sheet metal”. Their protests were overridden and construction commenced on 28 January 1887 (fig. 1). Once erected, the Eiffel Tower was (and indeed still is) the tallest structure in Paris, and until the completion of the Chrysler Building in New York in 1930, it was the tallest building in the world. It is the quintessential icon of urban existence, a monumental tribute to human aspiration and architectural achievement.

THE SCIENCE OF COLOUR

“Painting is by nature a luminous language” (R. Delaunay, *La Peinture est Proprement un Language Lumineux*, manuscript, c. 1924).

Robert Delaunay, a native Parisian, was fascinated throughout his life and career in the science behind colour and its organisation on the canvas. He was aware of the pioneering work of the French chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul, whose research was published in 1839 as *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs*. (The text was translated into English and published in 1854 under the title *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colors*.) Specifically, Chevreul was investigating the optical properties of contrasting colours, and he identified the phenomenon by which the perceived colour of a particular hue is influenced by the colours that surround it. Unsurprisingly, his discovery had a tremendous influence on the work of artists such as

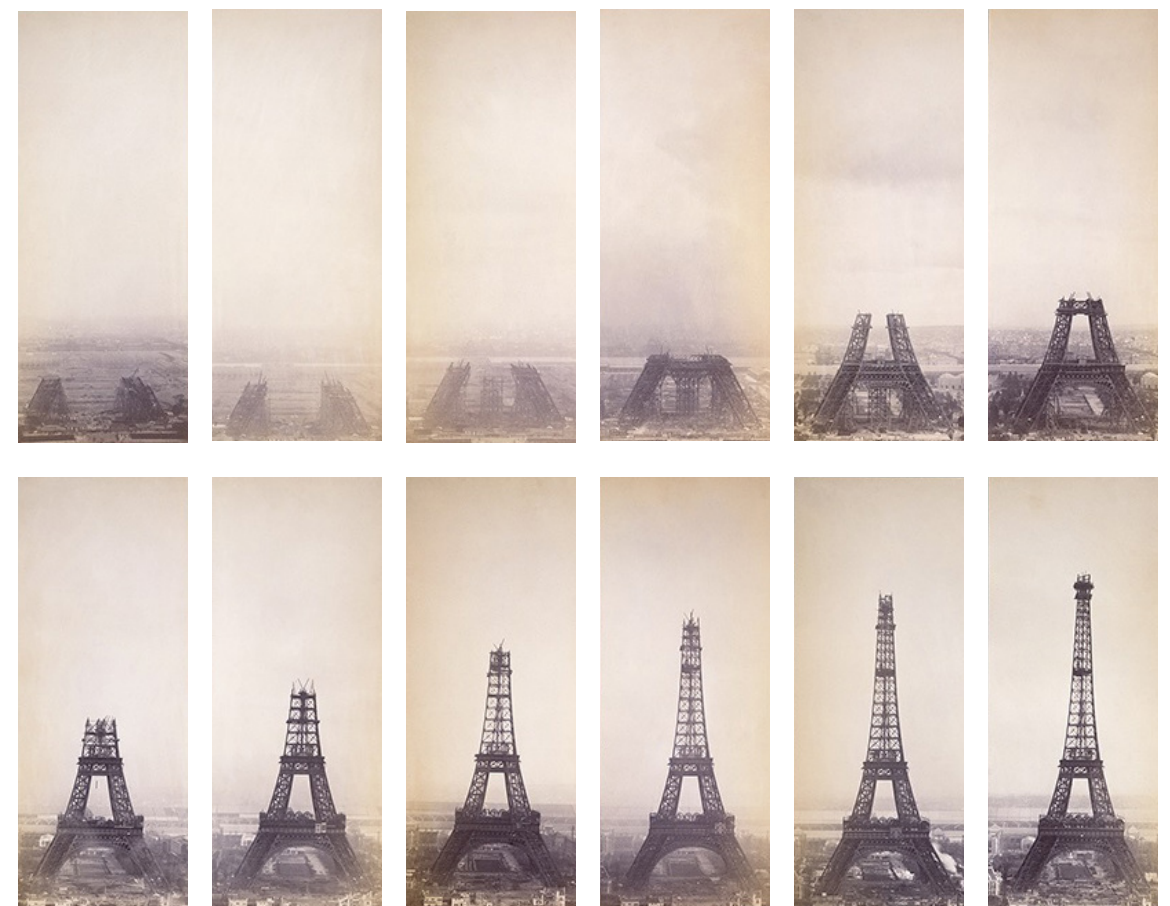


FIG 1
Stages of Construction of the
Eiffel Tower, 1887 – 1889

Delaunay, who harnessed this new knowledge to achieve deliberate visual effects. Chevreul is one of 72 scientists and engineers whose names are inscribed on the Eiffel Tower, and one of only two who were still alive when Gustave Eiffel planted the *tricolore*, the national flag, at the apex of the Eiffel Tower on 31 March 1889.

Delaunay, along with his wife Sonia, was a pioneer of Orphism, a term coined by the poet Guillaume Apollinaire in 1912 when he spoke of Delaunay's art as "secretive" ("orphique" in French). The movement, considered an offshoot of Cubism, relied on the sensation of pure colour as a means of both expression and structure. Delaunay believed colour was a thing in itself, with its own form. Apollinaire said Delaunay was "an artist who has a monumental vision of the world". Unlike Picasso and Braque, who broke down figures or still lifes into fragments and facets, Delaunay constructed grand architectural edifices defined by brilliant colours. Already in his early landscapes, we can see two defining characteristics emerging: "The contrast of colours utilized as a poetic language and the circle serving both as a formal element and as a cosmic symbol" (M. Hoog, op. cit., p. 25). Between 1909 and 1914, Delaunay painted a number of series in which he explored themes related to modern Paris; these include *La Ville* (1909-11), *La Ville de Paris* (1911-12), *La Fenêtre* (1912-14), and *Formes Circulaires* (1913). He did not stop one series in order to work on another, and his paintings can at times be difficult to date because within a short time span he was able to produce works exhibiting tremendous stylistic variations. The work of the Impressionists served as a great source of inspiration, and Delaunay declared: "Impressionism; it is the birth of light in painting" (Robert Delaunay, *La Lumière*, 1912). He credited the seminal series paintings of Monet and Cézanne, but his chosen subjects were urban rather than rural, and modern rather than historic: where Monet gives us the sunlight-dappled façade of Rouen cathedral, Delaunay conveys the majestic, explosively-energetic form of the Eiffel Tower. Furthermore his forms were equally far removed from the humble, domestic still life subjects favoured by the Cubists, and his vibrant palette contrasted with their often monochrome compositions.



FIG 2
Robert Delaunay
Tour Eiffel aux Arbres, 1910
Oil on canvas
126.4 x 92.8 cm.
Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum, New York



FIG 3
Robert Delaunay
Champs de Mars: La Tour Rouge, 1911
Oil on canvas
160.7 x 128.6 cm.
Art Institute of Chicago

TOUR EIFFEL SERIES

“The need for a new subject has inspired the poets, launching them onto a fresh path and bringing to their attention the poetry of la Tour [the Eiffel Tower], which communicates mysteriously with the whole world. Rays of light, waves of symphonic sounds. Factories, bridges, iron structures, airships, the numberless gyrations of aeroplanes, windows seen by crowd simultaneously” (R. Delaunay, originally published in *Les Soirées de Paris*, October 1913, p. 111).

Effectively replacing the pastoral landscape idylls of the Impressionists with a prophetic vision of contemporary architectural development, Robert Delaunay aimed to emphasise French achievement, innovation, progress and patriotism by composing a series of images that stressed the monument’s structural glory, magnificence and strength. Delaunay first turned his attention to his *Tour Eiffel* series between 1909 and 1914 during a fantastically fertile period immediately preceding World War I (figs. 2-3). Delaunay’s friend, the writer Blaise Cendrars, recalled: “Delaunay wanted to show Paris simultaneously, to incorporate the Tower into its surroundings. We tried every vantage point, we studied it from different angles, from all sides...And those thousand tons of iron, those almost seven hundred feet of girders and beams, those four arches spanning three hundred feet, that whole dizzying mass flirted with us” (B. Cendrars, writing in 1931, quoted in G. Vriesen and M. Imdahl, *Robert Delaunay: Light and Color*, trans. M. Pelikan, NYC, 1967, p. 29). One of the earliest studies of the Eiffel Tower was painted in 1909 as an engagement present for Delaunay’s wife, born Sonia Terk (1885 – 1979), whom he had met the previous year (figs. 4-5). He inscribed it “Mouvement profondeur 1909 France Russie”. She later recalled: “It was ‘our’ picture. The Eiffel Tower and the Universe were one and the same to him.” (fn 69, quoted in Vriesen *op. cit.*, p. 25). In his preface to catalogue for Delaunay’s 1912 exhibition at Galerie Barbazanges, Maurice Princet wrote: “In spite of its appearance, the Eiffel Tower is not an infantile and ridiculous plaything. We concede that it is planted there without anything to justify it; at the first glance this absence of harmony deceives us. But it is necessary to look closer. The grace of its curves and the peculiar slenderness of its lines gives it true beauty.”



FIG 4
Sonia and Robert Delaunay in front of his painting, *Propeller*, 1923

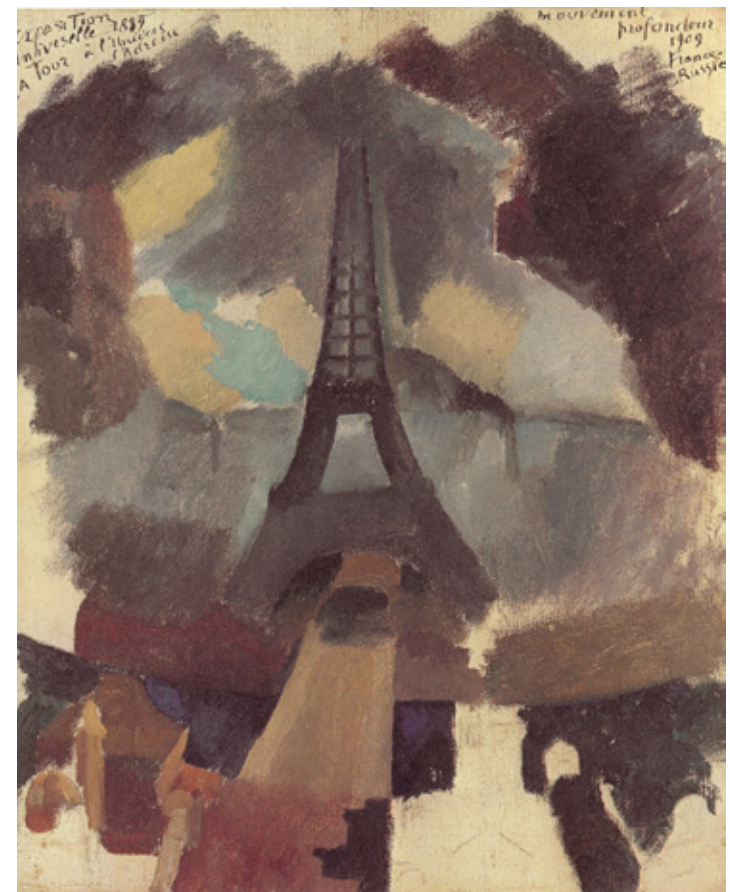


FIG 5
Robert Delaunay
Tour Eiffel, Première Étude, 1909
Oil on canvas
46.2 x 38.2 cm.
Private Collection



FIG 6

Robert Delaunay
La Tour Rouge, 1911-12
 Oil on canvas
 125 x 90.3 cm. (49¼ x 35½ in.)
 Solomon R. Guggenheim
 Museum, New York

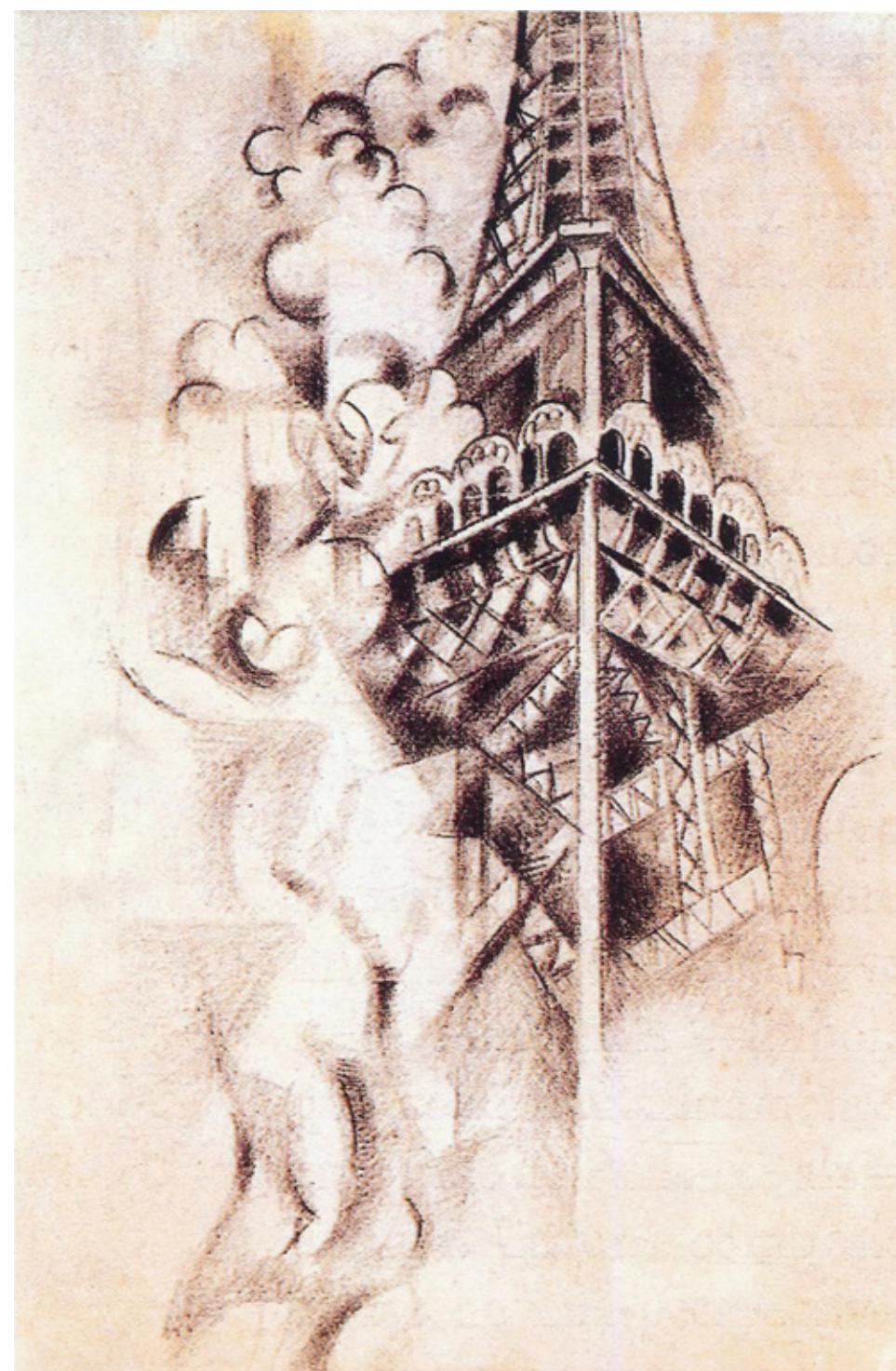
FIG 7

Robert Delaunay
Sketch for 'La Femme et la Tour',
 1925
 Pencil on tracing paper
 53 x 23 cm.
 Private Collection

FIG 8

Robert Delaunay
Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour,
 1925-26
 Pencil on paper
 27.8 x 21.2 cm.
 Musée Nationale d'Art
 Moderne, Paris

Delaunay's work was interrupted by the outbreak of war in Europe while he and Sonia were travelling in Spain, and the couple escaped to Portugal. After returning to Paris in 1921, he returned to the theme in the 1920s and 1930s, albeit with a slightly different pictorial vocabulary. In these later works, the explosive stylistic drama that Delaunay had previously invested in the subject gives way to more lyrical compositions, although much of the earlier dynamism is retained in the strong colours he consistently employs. Executed in 1925, *La Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour Eiffel* is one of the most important works in this later series, painted for the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs* in 1925. Unlike the cubist language of fragmentation associated with the earlier phase of the *Tour Eiffel* series – seen, for instance, in such works as *La Tour Rouge* (fig. 6, 1911-12; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York) – *La Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour Eiffel* takes on a more contemplative reverence for the structure. It is viewed from a relatively low vantage point and the dramatic foreshortening underscores the immense scale of the work itself – at four and a half metres high, it is the tallest work in the *Tour Eiffel* series. In his essay in the 1997 exhibition catalogue, Matthew Drutt notes: “The fact that Delaunay chose to portray the Eiffel Tower in red is intriguing. While his early impressions of it convey the dark colour of its iron skin, the red hue becomes a distinguishing feature of the series and his reprisal of the subject in the 1920s” (M. Drutt, “Simultaneous Expressions: Robert Delaunay’s Early Series”, *op. cit.*, p. 45, fn. 74). Delaunay’s own explanation of the series was suitably dramatic. He called it “CATASTROPHIC ART: Dramatics, cataclysm. This is the synthesis of the entire period of destruction: a prophetic vision” (R. Delaunay, “Passages from Old Methods to New”, c. 1938, quoted in A.A. Cohen ed., *The New Art of Colour: The Writings of Robert and Sonia Delaunay*, trans. D. Shapiro and Cohen, New York, 1978, p. 13)



In addition to several pencil sketches in which he worked out his earliest ideas (figs. 7-8), Delaunay evidently painted two studies in preparation for his submission to the 1925 Exposition (figs. 9-10). Both are considerably smaller in scale. The more loosely painted of the two, now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, measures 130.8 x 31.7 cm. A second study, more detailed yet still smaller in scale than our painting, at 208 x 52 cm., was last recorded in a sale in Paris at the Palais Galliera (8 Dec. 1966; see *Apollo*, April 1967, p. 312). There is also a painting entitled *La Tour Eiffel et l'Avion*, which shares the same measurements as the upper canvas of *La Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour Eiffel*, and may have been intended as an alternate top (fig. 11; Private Collection).

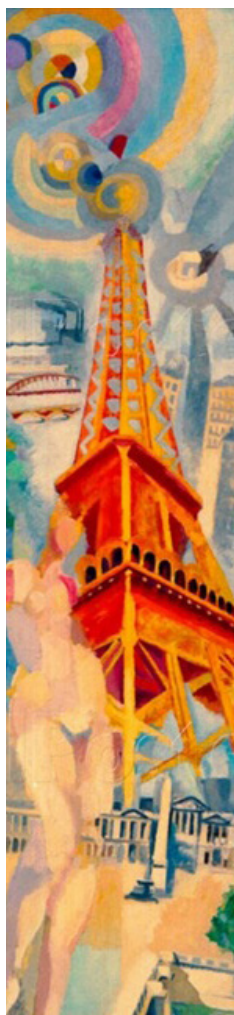
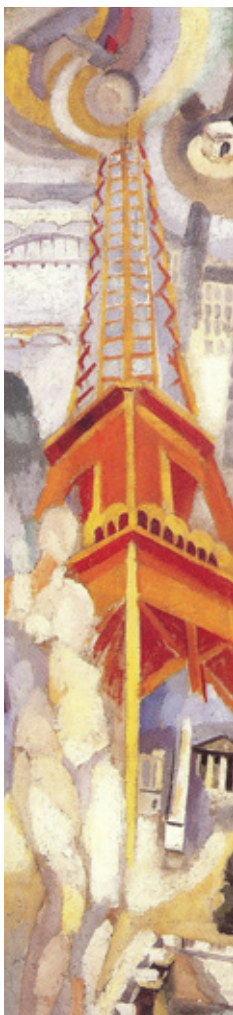


FIG 9
Robert Delaunay
La Tour Eiffel, c. 1925
Oil on burlap
130.8 x 31.7 cm.
Philadelphia Museum of Art

FIG 10
Robert Delaunay
La Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour, 1925
Oil on canvas
208 x 52 cm.
Private Collection

FIG 11
Robert Delaunay
La Tour Eiffel et l'Avion, 1925
Oil on canvas
155 x 95 cm.
Private Collectoin



In 2008, in conjunction with the exhibition *Robert Delaunay: Tours Eiffel* held at Galería Manuel Barbié in Barcelona, Richard Riss compiled a catalogue raisonné of the Tours Eiffel of Robert Delaunay. Riss notes that, although Guy Habasque originally undertook the cataloguing of Delaunay's *oeuvre* in the mid-20th century (with his valuable efforts published in Pierre Francastel's 1958 text *Du Cubisme à l'Art Abstrait*), the lack of images and similarities between many of the titles have hindered more recent scholarship. Habasque's catalogue included a total of 680 pieces, comprising 338 oils, 117 watercolours and 225 drawings. His efforts were advanced by Sonia herself who, until her death in 1979, sought to track down and document those of her husband's works that had been omitted from the 1958 catalogue. The project was subsequently continued by her grandson, Jean Louis Delaunay, and later still by Riss himself. The H number inscribed on the back of the canvas refers to Habasque, while the F number refers to the Fonds Delaunay in the Bibliothèque National, Paris (given by Sonia in 1977). There are, Riss notes, over 61 works catalogued by Habasque as Tours Eiffel, although this does not account for those works in which the Eiffel Tower appears albeit not as the primary subject.



FIG 12
Charles Godefroy taking his
Nieuport 11 "Bébe" through the
Arc de Triomphe in Paris on 7th
August 1919

FIG 13
Fernand Léger
Les Disques, 1818-19
Oil on canvas
129.9 x 97.2 cm.
Los Angeles County
Museum of Art

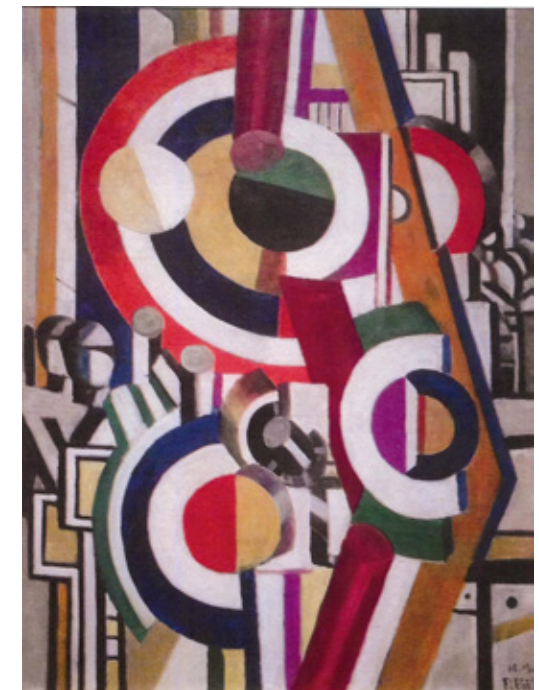




FIG 14
Robert Delaunay in his
Studio, 1925

LANDMARKS IN PARIS

In addition to the iconic form of the Eiffel Tower, we can identify a number of other Parisian landmarks in this composition. The classical female nude stands on the Pont de la Concorde, which spans the Seine between the Quai d'Orsay (on the Left Bank) and the Quai des Tuileries at the Place de la Concorde (on the Right Bank). At its centre is the obelisk given by the Egyptian government to the French in the 19th century. Receding in the distance, along the left margin of the painting, are several bridges. The lowest one may be the Pont Alexandre III but, based on its shape, is more probably the Pont des Invalides or the Pont de l'Alma. Some way above that is the immediately recognisable shape of the Passerelle Debilly, a footbridge connecting the Quai de New York to the Quai Branly across the Seine. It was constructed in 1900 to accommodate visitor traffic to the 1900 World's Fair. Further back still is the Pont de Bir-Hakeim, constructed between 1903 and 1905, which connects the 15th and 16th *arrondissements* and passes through the île aux Cygnes. It has two levels, a lower one for vehicles and pedestrians, and an upper one for the Métro. At the time Delaunay painted this composition, it was known as the Viaduc de Passy. The most distant bridge, just above the horizon, may be either the Pont de Grenelle or the Pont Mirabeau.

To the right of the Eiffel Tower, near the top of the canvas, is a round shape with thick, dark radiating lines. This represents the Place Charles de Gaulle, also called the Place de l'Étoile, the meeting point of twelve large avenues including the Champs-Élysées. At its centre we see the block-like arched shape of the Arc de Triomphe, one of the most famous monuments in Paris. It was commissioned in 1806 to honour Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz. In 1919, three weeks after the victory parade celebrating the end of hostilities in World War I, Charles Godefroy flew his Nieuport biplane through the arch, with the event captured on film (fig. 12). It is this moment that Delaunay is evidently celebrating in his composition, and we can see



FIG 15
View toward the Eiffel Tower
from l'Arc de Triomphe, Paris
postcard
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

FIG. 16
Robert Delaunay
La Tour Eiffel, 1910 (detail)
Oil on canvas
130.2 x 97 cm.
Museum Folkwang, Essen

the plane itself soaring skyward in the upper left corner of the painting. Godefroy's achievement, much like the Eiffel Tower itself, symbolises the triumph of technology and modernity.

Directly above the Tower, a series of circular and semicircular painted segments prove more challenging to identify with certainty. Visually, they show Delaunay's continued experimentation into the colour partnerships of non-objective optical forms. The interest in disk forms was something Delaunay shared with another pioneer of modernism, Fernand Léger, whom he had met in 1909 (fig. 13). In *La Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour Eiffel*, a rhythm derived from the relationship of colours develops into a repetitive, quasi-sinusoidal motion. But what are these circular, abstract forms? There are several possibilities. The works in Delaunay's series *La Ville* (1909-11) are based on a postcard known to have been in Delaunay's possession, which features the *Grand Roue de Paris*, a 100-metre-tall Ferris wheel constructed for the 1900 *Exposition Universelle* (fig. 15). Although it was disassembled in 1920, its circular form appears alongside the Tower in several paintings from *La Ville* series, and Delaunay could conceivably be recalling its shape here (fig. 16).





FIG 17
Robert Delaunay
La Ville de Paris, 1910-12
Oil on canvas
267 x 406 cm.
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville
de Paris

FIG 18
"Exposition des Arts Décoratifs"
postcard, 1925

Another, perhaps more likely explanation is that the radiating circles represent the energy of radio waves. In 1910, Father Theodor Wulf measured radiant energy at the top and bottom of the Tower. He found more at the top than expected, incidentally discovering the existence of cosmic rays. Then in 1914, during the first weeks of World War I, a radio transmitter located in the Tower jammed German radio communications. This proved a serious hindrance to the German advance on Paris, and contributed to the Allied victory at the First Battle of the Marne. Delaunay may well be celebrating these recent historical events in his depiction of the Eiffel Tower.

The subject matter is derived from one of Delaunay's most celebrated and large-scale works on Paris, his mural *La Ville de Paris*, about which Apollinaire proclaimed: "Delaunay's picture is the most important one in the Salon. *La Ville de Paris* is more than an artistic manifesto. This picture marks the advent of a concept of art which has not been seen since the great Italian painters" (quoted in *L'Intransigeant*, 19 March 1912; fig. 17, 1910-12; Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris). In this earlier canvas, Delaunay depicted the figures of the Three Graces before a Paris skyline dominated by the Eiffel Tower. *La Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour Eiffel* includes a single nude Grace, standing on the Pont de la Concorde. Referring to these unclothed figures, Delaunay explained: "The female nudes are edifices of the nudes, the grace of Antiquity is reborn: Pompeii! But drowning in the wish to create something new" ("Robert Delaunay through the eyes of Robert Delaunay", in P. Francastel, *Du Cubisme à l'Art Abstrait*, Paris, 1958). Like the Tower itself, this female form in *La Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour Eiffel* symbolised the hope and regeneration of modern France. She can also be contrasted against the very masculine silhouette of the Tower itself.

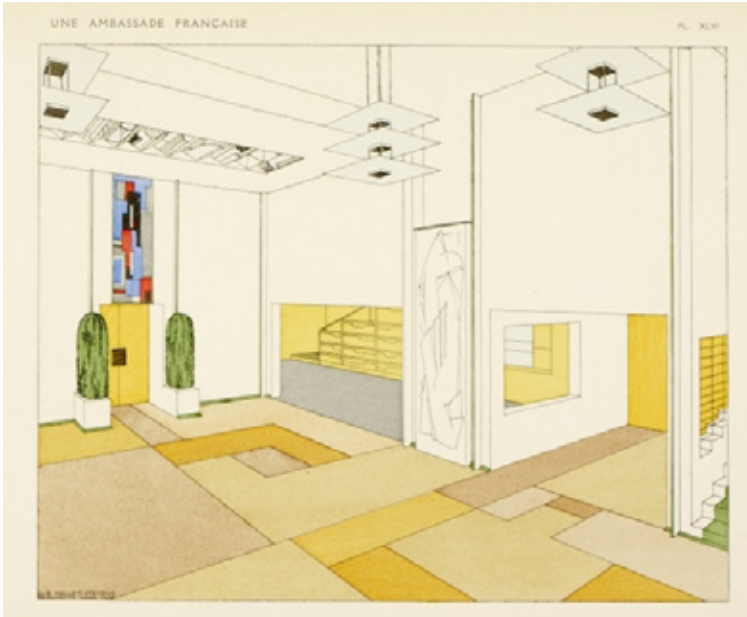


FIG 18
R. Mallet-Stevens, Design for
the Pavillon de Tourisme, 1925

FIG 19
Interior of the Pavillon de
Tourisme, 1925

FIG 20
“Exposition des Arts Décoratifs,
Pavillon du Tourisme”
postcard, 1925

FIG 21
“La mode qui vient, manteaux
modèles par Sonia Delaunay”
postcard, 1925
Published for the Exposition
des Arts Décoratifs

ART DECO

Delaunay created *La Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour Eiffel* for the seminal 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs* in Paris, the title of which led to the widespread adoption of the term “Art Deco” (fig. 18). This influential visual arts style combined traditional arts and crafts motifs with the imagery and materials of the Machine Age. It also drew influences from Cubism, Constructivism, Functionalism, Modernism and Futurism. The fair was located between the Esplanade of Les Invalides and the entrances of the Grand Palais and Petit Palais (fig. 19). Its aim was to establish France as the epicentre of the modern world and the arbiter of taste and fashion. It was a celebration of French style, French luxury goods, and French innovation. Delaunay’s entry was famously rejected by a conservative jury that failed to embrace the artist’s depiction of nudity and his abstract pictorial language. However, the *Exposition’s* decision was later overturned by the widespread support for Delaunay among other Modern artists. Originally, Delaunay intended this picture to form part of a collaboration with fellow artist Fernand Léger and the architect Robert Mallet-Stevens for a scheme to decorate the *Pavillon de Tourisme* in the *Exposition*, a project sponsored by the French Embassy (figs. 18-20). Mallet-Stevens’ architectural drawing records the appearance and intended location for the Leger, and in a contemporary photograph we can see the hall with the Delaunay installed. A postcard published to advertise the exhibition features models in Sonia Delaunay’s own designs standing in front of Robert’s masterpiece (fig. 21).



PROVENANCE

After Robert Delaunay's death in 1941, this work remained in Sonia Delaunay's own collection until her death in 1979. It can be seen in various photographs of Sonia in her studio (fig. 22). A talented artist and designer in her own right, Sonia produced striking and original fabrics based on the aesthetics of Orphism, and she dressed Surrealists, socialites and film stars. She also designed interiors, and together with Robert was responsible for the set and costume designs for *Le P'tit Parigot* ("The Small Parisian One"; fig. 23). This 1926 French movie, shot as a serial in six parts, was directed by René Le Somptier and starring Georges Biscot. *La Ville de Paris, la Femme et la Tour Eiffel* can be seen in the background in contemporary photographs of the film set. Jacques Damase (1930 – 2014), who negotiated the loan of this painting to the 1979 exhibition held shortly after Sonia's death, was the author of the first catalogue raisonné of the work of Robert Delaunay. He was also an expert in the work of his great friend Sonia.

CONCLUSION

When Delaunay declared "Art in Nature is rhythmic and has a horror of constraint", he may have been thinking of the soaring height and repeated geometric patterns of his Eiffel Tower. The dizzying perspective, which seems to look simultaneously down at the Pont de la Concorde between our feet and up at the biplane soaring above the horizon, echoes the giddy pace of *les années folles*. Like the Eiffel Tower itself, Delaunay's radical construction received its share of scepticism from conservative critics; yet it has endured to captivate contemporary audiences with its timeless celebration of technological advancement and human ambition in the modern metropolis.



FIG 22
The modern apartment designed by Robert Mallet-Stevens and decorated by Sonia Delaunay, on the set of René Le Somptier's film *Le P'tit Parigot*, 1926

FIG 23
Sonia Delaunay painting *L'Affreux Jojo (Scallywag)*, 1947
Photograph
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris



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Robert Delaunay

La Lumière (text), 1912

2 La Tour Eiffel
de la largeur
des Villes
Congrues
Rails
L'Art ~~comme~~ ^{dans} la Nature est rythmique et a honneur de la composition
Si l'Art s'apparente à l'Objet il devient descriptif littéraire
divisionniste littéraire
Il faut donc des moyens ^{d'expression} imparfaits il se condamne de
lui-même il est sa propre négation il ne se déguise pas de
l'Art d'imitation
Si de même il représente les relations Visuelles d'un objet ou
des objets entre eux sans que la lumière joue le rôle
d'ordonnance de la représentation
Il est conventionnel il n'aide pas à la pureté plastique
il est une infirmité il est la négation de lui-même le sublimé
de l'Art de la peinture
Pour que l'Art atteigne la limite de sublimité il faut
qu'il se rapproche de cette Vision harmonique de la clarté
de la clarté de la clarté de la clarté de la clarté
Celle-ci sera coordonnée proportion et proportion de la clarté
empres de diverses mesures simultanées dans une action
Celle-ci doit être l'harmonie représentative l'ordonnance
Synchronisme ^{simultané} plastique qui est la seule réalité
Celle action synchronisme sera due à l'objet qui est
adéquat à l'harmonie représentative
R. Delaunay

