

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide

a journal of nineteenth-century visual culture

Isabel L. Taube

exhibition review of

The Armory Show at 100: Modern Art and Revolution

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide 13, no. 1 (Spring 2014)

Citation: Isabel L. Taube, exhibition review of *The Armory Show at 100: Modern Art and Revolution*, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2014), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring14/taube-reviews-the-armory-show-at-100>.

Published by: [Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art](#)

Notes:

This PDF is provided for reference purposes only and may not contain all the functionality or features of the original, online publication.

License:

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#) [Creative Commons License](#).

The Armory Show at 100: Modern Art and Revolution
New-York Historical Society Museum & Library
New York, New York
October 11, 2013–February 23, 2014

Catalogue:

The Armory Show at 100: Modernism and Revolution.

Marilyn Satin Kushner and Kimberly Orcutt, eds., and Casey Nelson Blake, Senior Historian.
New York: New-York Historical Society Museum & Library in association with D. Giles
Limited, London, 2013.

512 pp.; 160 color illus.; 160 b&w illus.; selected bibliography; index.
\$79.95

ISBN: 978-1-907804-04-5 (hardcover)

The Armory Show at 100: Modern Art and Revolution, organized by Marilyn Satin Kushner and Kimberly Orcutt for the New-York Historical Society Museum & Library (N-YHS), celebrated the centennial of the 1913 Armory Show by presenting one hundred American and European artworks from the original exhibition held at the 69th Regiment Armory on Lexington between East Twenty-fifth and Twenty-Sixth Streets from February 17–March 15, 1913. The show was accompanied by an impressive 512-page, illustrated catalog and by extensive, well-developed programming, including an online exhibition and two symposia in New York and Paris, sponsored by the Terra Foundation for American Art. Given both the art historical and historical significance of the Armory Show, the N-YHS with its art and history resources, served as an ideal venue. The show offered the rare opportunity to see and learn from a multi-media, transatlantic display of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art by canonical, less well-known, and nearly forgotten painters, sculptors, and printmakers. Unfortunately, it did not travel, remaining tethered to its New York origins. However, it made a major contribution to the yearlong celebration of the Armory Show at a wide range of venues.^[1]

Re-staging the original Armory Show, or more accurately, the *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, offered a particular set of challenges. It had three different incarnations with an increasingly reduced number of artworks as it traveled from New York (about 1,400), to Chicago (about 600), and finally to Boston (about 300).^[2] Few photographs exist of its New York venue and none of its Boston installation though the Art Institute in Chicago took a comprehensive set of images.^[3] The Armory Show also has been much-mythologized and frequently reduced to the scandal caused by the European avant-garde paintings, specifically Henri Matisse's *Blue Nude: Memory of Biskra* (fig. 1) and Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending the Staircase (No. 2)* (fig. 2).^[4]



Fig. 1, Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude*, 1907.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

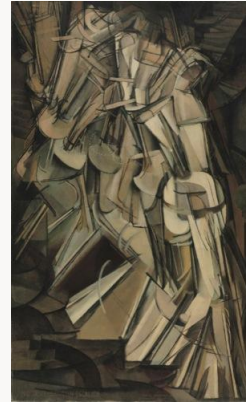


Fig. 2, Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

This N-YHS exhibition served as a corrective to long-held assumptions about the Armory Show. Rather than focusing on the controversial, now canonical, modernist paintings by the Cubists and the Fauvists, it presented a cross-section of work from the original installation along with examples of visual and material culture from the same period. It also combined art historical and historical frameworks and explored multiple, sometimes conflicting, narratives about the show's organization and reception. Although the N-YHS exhibition concentrated on the New York installation, it did include information about the Chicago and Boston venues in its introductory section and catalog. This overall pluralistic approach locates the exhibition and its catalog firmly within current revisionist scholarship on modernism, regarding it as multi-faceted, even fractured, rather than unified.^[5]

Introductory Galleries

Pursuant to the N-YHS's mission, the curators emphasized the Armory Show's historical context, especially at the beginning and end of the exhibition, and created a chronological framework, moving from conception to execution to aftermath (WWI). Viewers learned about its trajectory from conception to execution in an introductory gallery titled "Behind the Scenes in 1913: Organizing the Armory Show," and its wider New York context in a corridor area adjacent to the main gallery before encountering a single painting, sculpture, or print from the 1913 show. The dimly lit "Behind the Scenes" introductory room contained glass cases filled with materials, borrowed mostly from the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.^[6] This space unfolded the story of the Armory Show "in microcosm through documents."^[7] On the left side of the room, the narrative began with the formation of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors (A.A.P.S.), the small New York-based artist's group that organized the show. Along with a list of its members around 1912 were documents related to the show's development and timetable, most notably a letter from the President of the A.A.P.S., Arthur B. Davies' to A.A.P.S. member Walt Kuhn, dated September 2, 1913, recommending that he see the Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne. This correspondence initiated the decision to send Kuhn to Europe, a trip that dramatically altered the show's contents, transforming it from a strictly American to an international exhibition, which featured the most experimental art movements in Europe. The September date on the letter suggests how quickly they put together such a large transatlantic exhibition, which

opened just over five months later. Other documents, such as shipping receipts and an explanation of three ways one's work could be accepted for the show (if one were a member of the A.A.P.S.; invited by a member; or one submitted work for approval three weeks in advance of the opening), revealed the behind-the-scenes paperwork and administrative details often downplayed in art historical accounts, which tend to concentrate on the show itself and its impact.

In more glass cases across the gallery, the story of the Armory Show continued with materials related to the public presentation and reception of the show. Floor plans showed the shift in conception when European, predominantly French, art took center stage and American work was pushed to the periphery. Installation photographs from New York and Chicago, catalogs from all three venues (fig. 3), including the print curator and art historian Carl Zigrosser's copy with his thumbnail sketches as well as his sketch of the layout with artists's names penciled in, helped to visualize the arrangement of the artworks. Promotional materials distributed or sold at the show also were on view: buttons with the Armory Show's uprooted pine tree emblem, derived from a Revolutionary War flag, demonstrated how the organizers sought to express visually the "new, independent, even radical, spirit" exemplified by the art on display while a variety of texts, such as the six didactic pamphlets featuring information on specific artists (Cézanne; Gauguin; Odilon Redon; and Raymond Duchamp-Villon); an edited collection of "for and against" responses to the new styles; and the March 1913 issue of *Arts & Decoration*, which featured Davies' chart tracing the development of modern art, revealed the importance the organizers placed on instructing visitors about the radical and unfamiliar European styles and their emergence out of a recognizable nineteenth-century tradition. The story of the Armory Show in this gallery concluded with a survey of criticism and press coverage drawn from Walt Kuhn's press scrapbook and clippings saved by members of the A.A.P.S. One notable photograph of artists and members of the press gathered for a beefsteak dinner during the run of the show captured "the comfortable relationship" that the artist-organizers felt they had with New York critics. This event apparently was a lively celebration, during which they read satirical, mock telegrams credited to Roger Fry and Gertrude Stein (several were on view nearby) commenting on the Armory Show.^[8]

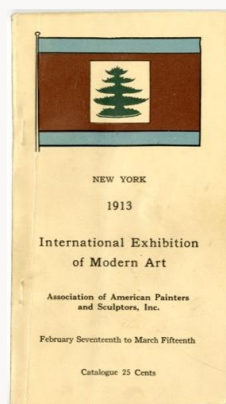


Fig. 3, Cover for the catalog of the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* in New York, 1913.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

The N-YHS exhibition continued in a corridor space to the left of the introductory room. This section established the broader New York ca. 1913 context for the show and drew most of its ephemera from the N-YHS's own collection. This installation was divided into four thematic

sections, “The Capital of the New”; “Progressivism and Change in New York”; “Greenwich Village and Radicalism”; and “Bodies in Motion,” emphasizing the “new” social and political forces in the city as well as its flourishing and constantly changing visual culture (fig. 4). Highlights included clips from actuality films with scenes of New York skyscrapers, crowds at the fish market, and emigrants landing at Ellis Island as well as excerpts from comedic and dramatic films with then current editing effects; Theodore Roosevelt’s “fairly open-minded” article about visiting the Armory Show on presidential inauguration day after his loss to Woodrow Wilson in the presidential race; covers for the socialist magazine *The Masses* designed by John Sloan, who also exhibited paintings in the Armory Show; a photograph of Mabel Dodge’s Washington Square apartment where she held weekly salons with activists, artists, and writers, exemplifying Greenwich Village radicalism; photographs of strikes and political marches; and sheet music covers for popular ragtime songs, such as *Hilarity Rag* and *Buena Vista: Tango*. Drawing on the visual and material culture of the early teens, this section helped visitors to understand the character of the city and the kinds of images that the 1913 audience would have seen and the sort of events which they might have participated in or observed.



Fig. 4, View of corridor gallery installation, setting the New York ca. 1913 context.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

Across the corridor from the aforementioned display was a photomontage of enlarged reproductions of early twentieth-century images of New York and its inhabitants (fig. 5). This presentation silhouetted against a sky blue background showed the diverse fabric of the city, from skyscrapers like the Woolworth Building in Manhattan to an illuminated Luna Park in Coney Island, with a wide-range of urban activities from dancing to striking. Adopting the seemingly modernist technique of photomontage, this display effectively portrayed New York ca. 1913 as a vital, spirited place with diverse activities happening simultaneously. This conception of the city was reiterated by Francis Picabia’s statement quoted on the wall next to the entrance to the main gallery: “New York is the Cubist, the Futurist city. It expresses in its architecture, its life, its spirit, the modern thought” (fig. 6). While this contextual material positioned the show in its period, the design of the installation arguably overemphasized a European modernist agenda that privileged dynamism, not only in the use of the photomontage in the corridor but also in the diagonal orientation of the exhibition’s title (fig. 7).



Fig. 5, Photomontage of ca. 1913 photographs of New York.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 6, Francis Picabia quotation on the wall outside of the main gallery.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 7, View from corridor gallery looking into the main gallery, featuring works from the Armory Show.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

Main Gallery with Works from the Armory Show

The transition from the corridor with its busy design and narrow street-like character into the main gallery with its more restrained, cream-colored installation suggested the original visitors' experience of leaving behind the hectic life of the city and entering an art show (fig. 7). This section with the artworks from the 1913 Armory Show began in earnest at the far side of the gallery so visitors had to traverse the relatively narrow space before arriving at the introductory wall label and scene-setting visuals—an exterior photograph of automobiles lined up outside the Armory building during the show, an interior photograph of the installation, and a floorplan (fig. 8). The installation photograph revealed that the original show started with a space that contained George Grey Barnard's large sculpture, *The Prodigal Son*, in the center; small-scale sculptures; decorative screens along the walls; and a glass case with painted china. The N-YHS curators alluded to this entry space with Robert Chanler's *Leopard and Deer* screen and a cluster of small bronze and marble sculptures, including George Grey Barnard's *The Mystery of Life*; Abastenia St. Leger Eberle's *White Slave*; and Arthur Lee's *Ethiopian* (figs. 9, 10).



Fig. 8, Introductory wall text and enlarged photographs in the main gallery.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 9, View of the American side: (center) sculptural grouping; (far right) Robert Chanler, *Leopard and Deer*, 1912.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 10, View of the sculptural grouping in the center of the gallery.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

As curator Kimberly Orcutt explained, “we did not want to reproduce but to evoke” the spirit of the original show.^[9] To this end, they did not hide the museum’s ceiling as typically done in this second-floor gallery so that the space recalled the great height of the 69th Regiment Armory, and they used angled wall separations to hint at the shape of the original “rooms.” This layout enabled visitors to see from one section to another and encouraged them to make comparisons between stylistically and geographically diverse works, not possible in the enclosed spaces in the original installation. As in the 1913 show, the N-YHS curators segregated American and European paintings and sculpture, but not prints and watercolors; however, they included only a 100 of the approximately 1,400 artworks.^[10] They also did not arrange the artworks in discrete, alphabetically labeled rooms nor did they include the decorative garlands and greenery seen in the original installation photographs.

The N-YHS curators made other, more significant changes to the original installation. Perhaps due to the constraints of the rectangular gallery space, they opted to group the American works on one side of the room and the European ones on the other, giving equal weight to both unlike in the original show, where the Americans appeared at the periphery. On the American side, the curators also decided to group the works by style and artist, an approach not taken in the 1913 show. The decision to reorganize the works stemmed from their belief

that it was important to present the now canonical narrative about the development of American Modernism. Therefore, visitors progressed along a zig-zag path from the side wall into the center and back to the side wall again, advancing from Impressionist-style paintings, such as those by Childe Hassam, Theodore Robinson, and J. Alden Weir (fig. 11), to works by the show's organizers, including Davies, Kuhn, Elmer McRae, and influencers, most notably Walter Pach (fig. 12), to the Ashcan School represented by George Bellows, Robert Henri, and John Sloan (fig. 13). The final grouping consisted of paintings by artists like Marsden Hartley, Morton Schamberg, and Charles Sheeler, whose work already embodied the influence of French avant-garde styles thereby undermining the claim that the Armory Show radically altered the direction of American art (figs. 14, 15). Although the N-YHS presentation reinforced the accepted trajectory of American art, it did retain the organizers' original intent of celebrating individual expression, including works by outliers or lesser-known artists, albeit only a few, who do not neatly fit into schools or groups, such as Charles Hopkinson and Agnes Pelton.

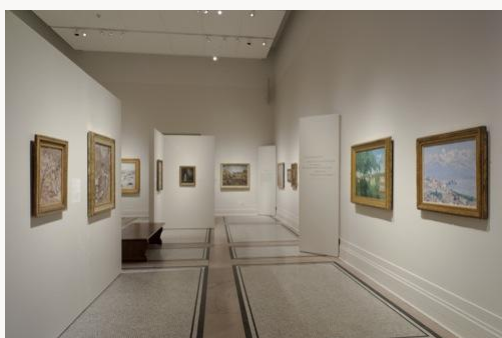


Fig. 11, Installation view of the American side with works in the foreground by (left to right): Theodore Robinson, *In the Orchard*, 1872–96.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

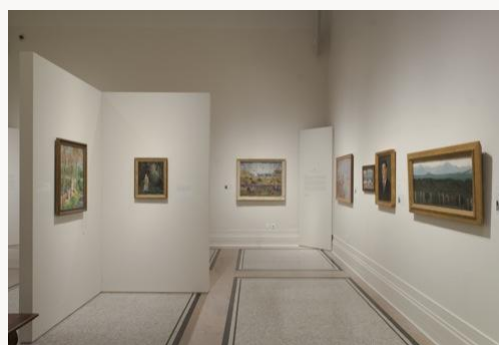


Fig. 12, Installation view of the American side with works by the organizers and influencers: (right wall) Arthur B. Davies, *A Line of Mountains*, ca. 1913.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 13, Installation of the Ashcan School artists: George Bellows, *Circus*, 1912.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 14, View of American side: (left to right) Charles R. Sheeler, *The Mandarin*, 1912.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 15, View of American side: (first on left) Morton Livingston Schamberg, *Study of a Girl* (Fanette Reider), ca. 1912.
[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

The final three paintings in the American section and the first group of paintings on the European side of the gallery space evoked four central galleries (O, P, Q, and R) in the 1913 show dedicated to the nineteenth-century sources for then current art. The N-YHS's reworking of this arrangement included a James McNeill Whistler portrait and two landscapes by Albert Pinkham Ryder on the American side, and French nineteenth-century works by Honoré Daumier, Eugène Delacroix, and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes on the European side (fig. 16). This arrangement unfortunately, and maybe unintentionally, divided American and French art, creating a separation not in the original presentation.



Fig. 16, View of nineteenth-century French paintings: (right to left) Honoré Daumier, *Third-Class Carriage* (*Un Wagon de troisième classe*), 1856–58.
[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

As with the American section, the European one was laid out roughly chronologically and moved along a zig-zag path back and forth across the room. After the Puvis appeared the French Impressionists: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, and Paul Cézanne (including his *View of the Domaine Saint-Joseph*, late 1880s, purchased by Bryson Burroughs for the Metropolitan Museum of Art from the Armory Show for \$6,700, and the first of his paintings to enter an American public collection) (fig. 17). Next came the French Post-Impressionists led by Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin. Then, two early twentieth-century works appeared on a temporary wall, jutting out into the center of the room: the Portuguese-born Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso's *The Stronghold* with its avant-garde Cubist motifs and the British painter Augustus John's *The Way Down to the Sea* with its classicizing

aesthetic, recalling the work of Puvis nearby (fig. 18).^[11] They shared a similar palette of ceruleans but captured the shockingly diverse styles on view.



Fig. 17, View of nineteenth-century French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings with Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Standing Woman*, 1910 (cast 1916-17).
[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 18, View of European side, including on temporary wall: (left to right) Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso, *The Stronghold*, 1912.
[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

Following this pair of paintings in a low-lighted area appeared a group of works on paper and an oil on canvas by Odilon Redon (fig. 19). He was represented originally by over 70 works in a variety of media (paintings, drawings, pastels, etchings, and lithographs), which were unknown in the United States prior to the Armory Show and were well-received by American critics and collectors. Redon's Symbolist sensibilities appealed to Davies, suggesting how his aesthetic taste played a central role in shaping the show. Sharing the reduced light-levels on the adjacent wall was a Salon-style hanging of prints and watercolors by both American and European artists, reminiscent of how they were displayed in 1913. The watercolors by American artists Stuart Davis, Edith Dimock, and John Marin expressed a range of modern, mostly urban, subjects. Most of the American prints were etchings, exemplified by the works of John Sloan and Charles Henry White, whereas the European works on paper included color lithographs by Maurice Denis, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Edvard Munch. As with painting and sculpture, the European printmakers introduced new styles and techniques, such as color lithography, which Americans adopted after the show.^[12]

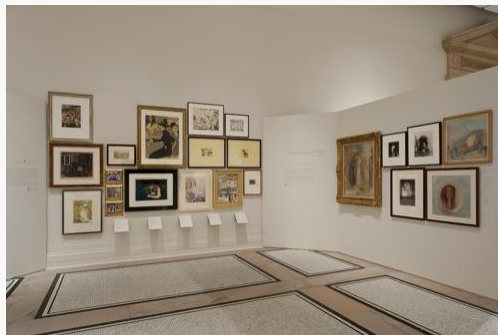


Fig. 19, View of installation of Odilon Redon's works along with the salon-style hanging of works on paper.
[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

The final section of the main gallery evoked the two most notorious and controversial displays in Gallery H and I. Dubbed the “Chamber of Horrors,” Gallery I, as presented in the N-YHS exhibition, featured Marcel Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase*, Francis Picabia’s *Dances at the Spring* as well as Salon-style Cubist paintings by Albert Gleizes and Jacques Villon (fig. 20). The arrangement across the room facing the Cubists suggested the last room in the 1913 Armory Show, Gallery H, to which all paths led. It was evoked by a display of Fauvist paintings, including Henri Matisse’s *The Blue Nude*, a selection of Constantin Brancusi’s sculpture, and a painting by a Polish émigré to Paris Eugene Zak (fig. 21). As the wall label explained, Davies requested Zak’s paintings for the show, and the organizers placed them in the final gallery with Brancusi and Matisse, indicating that they regarded his work as contributing to “the summit of modernism” despite their hard-edged, neoclassical character and stylized modernist forms. Significantly, as the original Armory Show’s floor plan reveals, the organizers considered the Fauves, not the Cubists, as the apex of modernism.



Fig. 20, View of “Chamber of Horrors” section.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

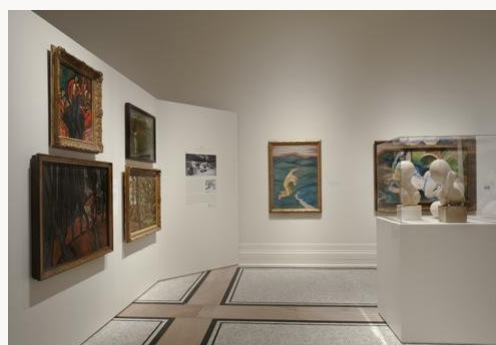


Fig. 21, View of installation of Gallery H, including (far wall) Eugene Zak, *The Shepherd*, 1910-11.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

Like the original Armory Show, the N-YHS exhibition conveyed to visitors a selective, predominantly French story of modern art and its sources. Despite being inspired by the Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne, only one Kandinsky and one Kirchner represented German Expressionism. The Italian Futurists claimed their works were committed elsewhere yet their influence on Cubo-Futurism practiced by Duchamp among others was evident. The Russian Neo-Primitivists, Rayonists, and Cubo-Futurists as well as the Secessionist Movements in Austria and Germany appear to have been overlooked. The N-YHS show also exposed the significant impact of Davies’s taste for symbolism on the selection of works.

Labels in the Armory Show Gallery

Throughout the main gallery, wall labels related the artist and his/her work to the overarching narrative of the Armory Show. Some of them relayed information about how a certain artist helped to organize, influence, or advance the mission of the show. For example, a wall text on the American side elaborated Walter Pach’s role in introducing the organizers Davies and Kuhn to artists, dealers, and collectors in Paris, while a wall text on the European side noted Picabia’s position as “the unofficial ambassador of the avant-garde,” because he gave interviews and explained modern art when he visited the Armory Show.

In some cases, the text explained why an artist's work appeared in the show as well as any relevant debates or controversies about its inclusion: John Mowbray-Clarke's sculpture was in the show, because he was an A.A.P.S. member, who served on the committee that selected the sculpture; Charles Hopkinson failed to be elected a member of the A.A.P.S. but probably was invited to participate by his friend, the A.A.P.S. treasurer and member Elmer McRae (fig. 22); Agnes Pelton's work, not well known today, most likely was included because of its moody, symbolist quality, which, as already noted in reference to Redon's work, suited Davies's aesthetic taste (fig. 12). On the European side, the labels focused more on where the paintings previously had been on view: Renoir's *Algerian Girl* was shown at the National Academy of Design and at the Durand-Ruel Galleries, perhaps making it recognizable to Armory Show audiences (fig. 23); Gleize's *Man on the Balcony* appeared in the Salon d'Automne in 1912, a year before its introduction to American viewers.



Fig. 22, View of installation with Charles Hopkinson, *Three Girls (Group of Children)*, 1911.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

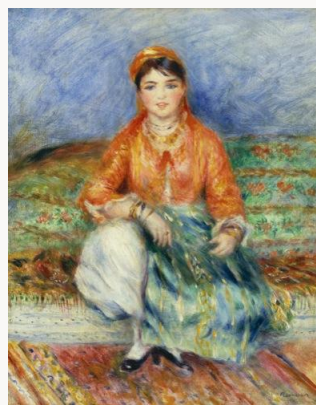


Fig. 23, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Algerian Girl*, 1881.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

Labels also described the critical response to the works: the one accompanying Eberle's *White Slave*, which portrays a young white woman next to a male auctioneer who is selling her into prostitution, explained that its subject matter rather than its formal qualities made it provocative. It quoted a visitor who "could not go on . . ." after seeing it. The label for Brancusi's *Mlle Pogany* reviewed the mixed opinions about this sculpture and how critics joked that "she looked like a hardboiled egg perched on a sugar cube."

Not wanting to distract from the primary narrative of the Armory Show, the curators sensibly opted to place smart phone-accessible urls on the labels, which led viewers to specific information about the artist and the individual work on the exhibition website. Taking advantage of technology's potential for intertextuality seems appropriate in this situation, especially since the label copy would have been much too long, but one wonders how many visitors made the effort.

The Concluding Galleries

The penultimate gallery attempted to explain why the works of Matisse and Duchamp were so shocking and to present the more conventional approaches to art with which most visitors would have been familiar. While the dual purpose of this gallery may theoretically make sense,

the section on the preference for traditional art risked being overly reductive in its summary of the taste of wealthy collectors like J. P. Morgan and Collis Huntington. Their aesthetic interests were represented along a tightly hung wall by a medieval manuscript from Morgan's collection, seventeenth-century Dutch portraits, and Rembrandt prints. In addition, an Egyptian bronze, signifying the phenomenon of Egyptomania, was squeezed into this arrangement (fig. 24). On the adjoining wall were selections from the National Academy of Design (NAD) spring 1913 annual exhibition, including a portrait by George Bellows, who also had works in the Armory Show, such as *Circus* (1912) on view in the main gallery of this exhibition (figs. 25, 26). He played on both sides since the A.A.P.S. was "at war" with the more conservative NAD.



Fig. 24, View of installation of New York taste before the Armory Show, including (left to right) *One of the souls of Buto*, ca. 664-525 BCE or later.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 25, View of works from the National Academy of Design Annual and paintings done by American artists after the Armory Show.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 26, View of works from the National Academy of Design Annual, including (center) George Bellows, *Little Girl in White (Queenie Burnett)*, 1907.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

The third wall in this gallery, painted in an eye-catching cadmium red, displayed the effect of the Armory Show on American painters: Davies's adopted a Cubist-style in *Day of Good Fortune*, and Oscar Bluemner re-painted in a Cézanne-inspired, Cubist-style landscape of Long Island he had exhibited in the Armory Show and retitled it *Aspiration, Winfield* (fig. 27).^[13] The realization that Bluemner reworked this image was one of several discoveries that occurred during the research phase of the show. Another was locating Puvis de Chavannes's *Le Verger*,

Les Enfants au verger, L'Automne (Orchard, Children in an Orchard, Autumn) (ca. 1885–89) at the City College of New York.



Fig. 27, View of installation displaying the affect of the Armory Show on American artists, including (second and third from left on cadmium red wall) Oscar Bluemner, *Aspiration, Winfield*, 1911–17.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

On the same wall as the post-Armory Show paintings by Bluemner and Davies, was Robert Chanler's *Parody of the Fauve Painters*: Matisse appears as a monkey surrounded by miniature versions of his paintings and a group of "gawky" human-painter sycophants (fig. 27). This humorous yet biting critique of the Fauves visualizes the anxiety about the "primitive" character of their style. A wall text drew to a close this part of the exhibition, highlighting the aftereffects of the Armory Show and the collapse of the A.A.P.S. in 1916.

The Armory Show at 100 concluded back in the corridor gallery, where the New York context was established, with an installation that offered an overview of the turbulent cultural and historical conditions that arose near the end and after the close of the 1913 show. It featured another shocking cultural event from the same period, Igor Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, which premiered in Paris in May 1913; and it addressed the advent of World War I with familiar draft posters (figs. 28, 29). Viewers departed with the curatorial idea that the artwork was literally framed by its historical context, an approach rarely taken in an art museum.



Fig. 28, View of "New York After the Armory Show" installation.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)



Fig. 29, View of "New York After the Armory Show" installation, featuring World War I posters.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

The Catalog

The well-designed and extensively illustrated catalog does not merely replicate the exhibition, but serves as a rich complement (fig. 30). It consists of an impressive 512 pages with 31 essays by art historians and historians who specialize in the Armory Show, its artists, and/or New York and American history of this period. Size and broad coverage mean that it will serve as the definitive book on this topic for years to come.

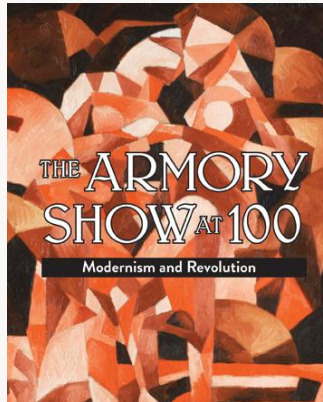


Fig. 30, Catalog cover, *The Armory Show at 100: Modernism and Revolution*.

[\[view image & full caption\]](#)

The catalog's essays begin with Marilyn Satin Kushner's detailed account of the Armory Show's historiography, in which she explains that its recognition as a harbinger of modernism developed slowly over decades. After Kushner's assessment of the Armory Show scholarship, the book consists of suites of essays divided into six sections: "Organizers of the Armory Show"; "New York and the United States ca. 1913"; "The Exhibition" with European and American subcategories; "Responses"; "Traveling Venues" and "Legacy." Following the texts are a selected bibliography and two appendices: the first consists of the complete checklist for the 1913 Armory Show, and the second lists the works in the show by gallery, enabling the reader to search an artist by both name and location.

Like the exhibition itself, the catalog engenders multiple viewpoints though not a diverse range of methodological approaches, and inevitably some repetition, especially about the shocking character of the show, occurs. Given the number of essays, I will merely adumbrate: the first group of essays offers studies of the organizers and influencers of the show, such as Kimberly Orcutt's reassessment of Arthur B. Davies's role, concluding that he was neither a hero nor a villain but a man on an evangelistic mission to introduce Americans to modern art, and Laurette McCarthy's argument for Walter Pach "as a prime mover" behind the European component of the show. Following these focused investigations are broader historical examinations: Casey Nelson Blake, who served as the exhibition's Senior Historian, documents the culture of open communication, exemplified by the debates on the meaning of modernity in Greenwich Village around the time of the Armory Show, which he concludes "impeded the creation of a shared modern culture" (94); historian Daniel Borus explores multiplicity, which had replaced unity, as the driving force behind American culture and thought by the early twentieth century. To reinforce his argument, he cursorily cites examples from standards of beauty to philosophical ideas like Bergson's vitalism to the visual forms of comic strips to notions of the self to a new morality based on contingency. Conductor and music historian

Leon Botstein contrasts the art and music scenes in New York and America in 1913, explaining that the then small art world was engulfed by the French avant-garde whereas the more popular music world was still enthralled by romanticism and would not be affected by such ultra modernism until the 1920s when Central European sources of inspiration diminished. Two texts (Anne McCauley's on Alfred Stieglitz's retrospective at 291, and Charles Musser's on 1913 as a feminist moment when women organized art shows) remind us that the Armory Show ran concurrently with other significant exhibitions in New York, attesting to the diverse character of the city's art world.

The next group of essays examines the Armory Show itself and includes descriptions of the European and American art on view and how it was installed by Didier Ottinger and Virginia Mecklenburg, respectively, followed by case studies of specific artists and their works, including Duchamp (Francis Naumann), Picabia (Michael Taylor), Henri (Kimberly Orcutt), and Schamberg (William Agee), and analyses of the drawings (Roberta Olson) and the prints (Marilyn Kushner).

The focus on the New York Armory Show then expands to its reception, the traveling venues, and its affect. Kimberly Orcutt addresses the public debate about the show, which was supposed to introduce and instruct the public about modern styles but paradoxically caused the condemnation of those very styles; Sarah Burns reconsiders the "cartoons, parodies, and other satirical sallies" as more than just "clumsy attacks" but as publicity for the show and as a way for visitors to keep their judgment intact and figure out the new styles for themselves. The essayists for the traveling venues were well-selected for their regional expertise: Judith Barter, Curator of American Art at the Art Institute of Chicago, writes about the Chicago venue and the significant part played by philanthropist and arts patron Arthur T. Aldis in bringing the Armory Show there while Carol Troyen, Curator Emerita of American Paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, explores the Boston context, specifically the Copley Society's role in presenting it to an "indifferent" public paralyzed by its cultural history and fear of the city's decline. The catalog appropriately concludes with two essays about the Armory Show's long term impact: Barbara Haskell gives a nuanced account of the show's artistic legacy, noting its "particularly ruinous blow to American realism" (400) and its promotion of an "unlimited license to experiment" (410); Avis Berman directs attention to the effect of the show on collectors and dealers, including Stieglitz, John Quinn, Lillie Plummer Bliss, and the Arensbergs, who embraced modernism and set out to transform public taste by legitimizing modern art in the marketplace, the museum, and the academy.

Concluding Comments

The Armory Show at 100 successfully detailed the 1913 art event by focusing not only on the show itself, but also on the organizers and their decision-making process and didactic goals. Given its multiple perspectives, it would have benefited from a more fluid layout. The limitations in space and size of the N-YHS's second-floor galleries meant that the introductory gallery was separated from the main room and the contextual corridor, causing some visitors with whom I spoke to overlook it. Quips aside, the N-YHS and its staff should be commended for bringing structure and clarity to such a complicated topic and for correcting assumptions and contributing new insights. *The Armory Show at 100* along with its catalog serves as a model for future exhibitions about exhibitions by not attempting to reproduce but to adopt a case study approach that reframes our understanding of a specific art event.

The Armory Show at 100 exhibition website: <http://armory.nyhistory.org/opening/>

The Archives of American Art website dedicated to the Armory Show: <http://armoryshow.si.edu/>

Isabel L. Taube
Rutgers University
taubeisa[at]gmail.com

Notes

Acknowledgments: I am very grateful to Kimberly Orcutt for touring me through the exhibition and offering her insights into the curatorial decision-making. I also want to thank Marilyn Kushner, Dayna Bealy, and Timothy Wroten for their assistance with obtaining installation photographs and label copy.

[1] For a list of other exhibitions related to the Armory Show on view prior to and concurrently, visit <http://armory.nyhistory.org/resources/armory-and-1913-celebrations/>.

[2] The show was on view at the Art Institute of Chicago, the only museum venue, from March 24–April 16, 2013, and at the Copley Society in Boston from April 23–May 14, 2013.

[3] See the Art Institute of Chicago's online exhibition: <http://extras.artic.edu/armoryshow>.

[4] See Marilyn Satin Kushner's catalog essay, "A Century of the Armory Show: Modernism and Myth," 13–23.

[5] At the New York symposium, Chris Stephens in his presentation on Augustus John addressed the idea of multiple modernisms, and Kimberly Orcutt discussed Robert Henri's *Figure in Motion* (1913) as his contribution to the 'modern' nude despite its traditional handling. Henri made his female figure modern by instilling her with individual character and setting her in motion rather than fragmenting and/or distorting her form like other mainstream modernists, such as Duchamp and Matisse.

[6] Many of the archival materials from this section of the exhibition can be viewed in the Archives of American Art's online exhibition, *1913 Armory Show: The Story in Primary Sources*: <http://armoryshow.si.edu/>.

[7] Conversation with Kimberly Orcutt, December 11, 2013.

[8] For additional information about the reception of the show, see Kimberly Orcutt's essay in the catalog, "Public Verdict: Debating Modernism at the Armory Show," 327–39.

[9] Conversation with Kimberly Orcutt, December 11, 2013.

[10] It is impossible to reconstruct the original New York Armory Show, because many works were done by non-professional and now unknown artists whom the A.A.P.S. organizers encouraged to submit.

[11] The American collector John Quinn championed the work of Augustus John, who had 38 paintings and drawings in the Armory Show, many of which belonged to Quinn.

[12] For a discussion of printmaking in the Armory Show, see Marilyn Satin Kushner's catalog essay, "Revisiting Editions: Prints in the Armory Show," 313–23.

[13] Megan Fort, Research Assistant, Museum Department, N-YHS made this discovery and blogged about it. Visit <http://armory.nyhistory.org/a-truly-exciting-discovery/>.

Illustrations

All photographs courtesy of the New-York Historical Society.



Fig. 1, Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude*, 1907. Oil on canvas. The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.228. © 2013 Succession H. Matisse; Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photography by Mitro Hood.

[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950, 1950-134-59. © 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; ADAGP, Paris; Succession Marcel Duchamp. [\[return to text\]](#)

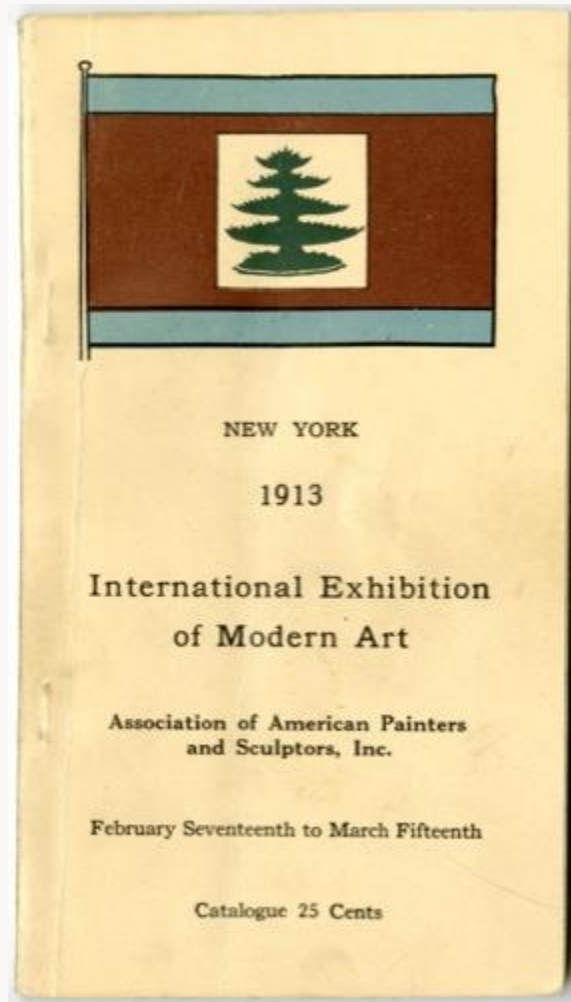


Fig. 3, Cover for the catalog of the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* in New York, 1913. Walt Kuhn, Kuhn family papers, and Armory Show records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, View of corridor gallery installation, setting the New York ca. 1913 context. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, Photomontage of ca. 1913 photographs of New York. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, Francis Picabia quotation on the wall outside of the main gallery. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano.
[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, View from corridor gallery looking into the main gallery, featuring works from the Armory Show.
Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 8, Introductory wall text and enlarged photographs in the main gallery. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 9, View of the American side: (center) sculptural grouping; (far right) Robert Chanler, *Leopard and Deer*, 1912. Gouache or tempera on canvas, mounted on wood. Rokeby Collection, New York. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 10, View of the sculptural grouping in the center of the gallery. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano.

[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 11, Installation view of the American side with works in the foreground by (left to right): Theodore Robinson, *In the Orchard*, 1872–96. Oil on canvas. Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ; John H. Twachtman, *Hemlock Pool*, ca. 1900. Oil on canvas. Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Massachusetts; J. Alden Weir, *The Factory Village*, 1897. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Childe Hassam, *Vesuvius*, 1897. Oil on canvas mounted on wood. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano.

[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 12, Installation view of the American side with works by the organizers and influencers: (right wall) Arthur B. Davies, *A Line of Mountains*, ca. 1913. Oil on canvas. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; Walter Pach, *Portrait of Gigi Cavigli of Arezzo*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Francis M. Naumann Fine Art, New York; Walter Pach, *Casentino Mountains*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Francis M. Naumann Fine Art, New York; Elmer L. MacRae, *Battleships at Newport*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Biggs Museum of American Art, Dover, Delaware; (back wall) Walt Kuhn, *Morning*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; and by women artists (left wall): Katherine Sophie Dreier, *Landscape with Figures in Woods*, ca. 1911–12. Oil on canvas. Michele and Donald D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield; Agnes Pelton, *Vine Wood*, ca. 1910. Oil on canvas. Collection of Alec H. Esker, Yuma, Arizona. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano.

[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 13, Installation of the Ashcan School artists: George Bellows, *Circus*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover; Robert Henri, *Figure in Motion*, 1913. Oil on canvas. Terra Foundation for American Art, Chicago; John Sloan, *Sunday, Women Drying Their Hair*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover; John Sloan, *McSorley's Bar*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 14, View of American side: (left to right) Charles R. Sheeler, *The Mandarin*, 1912. Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Utica; Marsden Hartley, *Still Life No. 1*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 15, View of American side: (first on left) Morton Livingston Schamberg, *Study of a Girl (Fanette Reider)*, ca. 1912. Oil on canvas. Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano.

[\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 16, View of nineteenth-century French paintings: (right to left) Honoré Daumier, *Third-Class Carriage* (*Un Wagon de troisième classe*), 1856–58. Oil on panel. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco; Eugène Delacroix, *Christ on the Lake of Genesareth*, ca. 1853. Oil on canvas. Portland Art Museum, Portland; Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Le Verger, Les Enfants au verger, L'Automne* (Orchard, Children in an Orchard, Autumn), ca. 1885–89. Oil and pencil on canvas. The City College of New York, New York; Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist*, 1869. Oil on canvas. The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, Birmingham. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 17, View of nineteenth-century French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings with Wilhelm Lehmbruck, *Standing Woman*, 1910 (cast 1916-17). Bronze. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 18, View of European side, including on temporary wall: (left to right) Amadeo de Souza-Cardoso, *The Stronghold*, 1912. Oil on canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; Augustus E. John, *The Way Down to the Sea*, 1909–11. Oil on canvas. Private collection. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 19, View of installation of Odilon Redon's works along with the salon-style hanging of works on paper. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 20, View of "Chamber of Horrors" section. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 21, View of installation of Gallery H, including (far wall) Eugene Zak, *The Shepherd*, 1910-11. Oil on canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; and (behind sculpture case) Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude*, 1907. Oil on canvas. The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, Baltimore (see fig. 1). Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 22, View of installation with Charles Hopkinson, *Three Girls (Group of Children)*, 1911. Oil on canvas. Descendants of the artist. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 23, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Algerian Girl*, 1881. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Juliana Cheney Edwards Collection, 39.677. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 24, View of installation of New York taste before the Armory Show, including (left to right) *One of the souls of Buto*, ca. 664-525 BCE or later. Bronze. Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn; Michiel van Miereveld, *Jacob van Dalen*, 1640. Oil on wood. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Collis P. Huntington; Michiel van Miereveld, *Margaretha van Clootwijk*, 1639. Oil on wood. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; *Book of hours*, ca. 1430. Vellum. The Morgan Library & Museum; Rembrandt van Rijn, *Jan Six*, 1647. Etching, drypoint and burin. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Rembrandt van Rijn, *Jan Uytenbogaert (The Gold Weigher)*, 1639. Etching and drypoint. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 25, View of works from the National Academy of Design Annual and paintings done by American artists after the Armory Show. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 26, View of works from the National Academy of Design Annual, including (center) George Bellows, *Little Girl in White (Queenie Burnett)*, 1907. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 27, View of installation displaying the affect of the Armory Show on American artists, including (second and third from left on cadmium red wall) Oscar Bluemner, *Aspiration, Winfield*, 1911–17. Oil on canvas. Private Collection, courtesy of Barbara Mathes Gallery, New York; Arthur B. Davies, *Day of Good Fortune*, ca. 1914. Oil on canvas. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and (far right) Robert W. Chanler, *Parody of the Fauve Painters*, 1913. Oil on hardboard. Woodstock Artists Association and Museum Permanent Collection, Woodstock. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 28, View of “New York After the Armory Show” installation. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 29, View of “New York After the Armory Show” installation, featuring World War I posters. Photo credit: Glenn Castellano. [\[return to text\]](#)

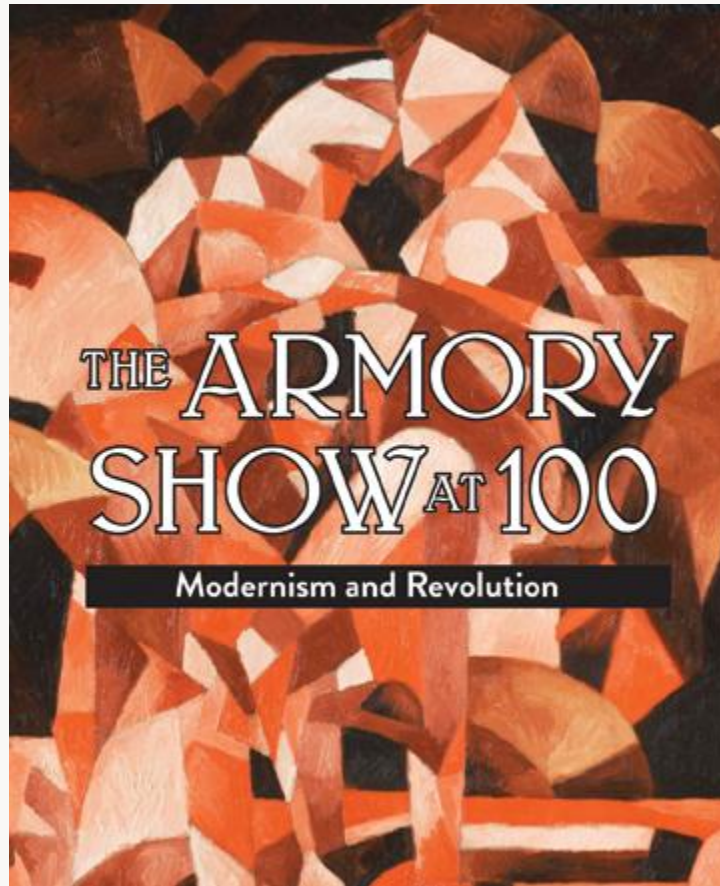


Fig. 30, Catalog cover, *The Armory Show at 100: Modernism and Revolution*. [\[return to text\]](#)