

MUSÉE
D'ART
MODERNE
DE LA VILLE DE PARIS

« Albert Marquet, *Painter of Time Pending* »

25 March – 21 August 2016



Albert Marquet (1875-1947), *Le Pyla* 1935, huile sur toile, 50 x 61 cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Bordeaux
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Albert Marquet Painter of Time Pending

25 March – 21 August 2016

Press preview : Thursday 24 March, 11 am – 2 pm

Opening : Thursday 24 March, 6 – 9 pm

The Musée d'Art Moderne is commemorating Albert Marquet (1875–1947) with a major monographic exhibition of over one hundred paintings and drawings, some of them being shown in France for the first time.

The chronological and thematic layout of the exhibition allows viewers to rediscover an artist who defies pigeonholing, and who evolved with the movements of his time – from Post-Impressionism to Fauvism – without ever losing his stylistic independence.

Marquet spent his life travelling between the shores of the Mediterranean and the banks of the Seine, with landscape and water his favourite subjects. He shaped his oeuvre far from the artistic squabbles of his time, maintaining an unswerving friendship with Henri Matisse, whom he met in Gustave Moreau's studio in 1892.

Of the Fauvism that marked his beginnings, he clung to only a few characteristics: formal simplification, a relative empowerment of colour and an appearance of rapid improvisation. His real goal was a tonal harmony that would lay bare the essentials as he sought to encapsulate his subjects with fidelity and balance and, as he put it, "to paint like a child without forgetting Poussin."

The exhibition scenography uses the different aspects of the Marquet oeuvre to highlight a constant quest for modernity, from the early works painted alongside Matisse in Paris and Arcueil, his Fauvist period, and the characteristic nudes, part academic study and part sensual confrontation, through to his obsession with landscape in variations and series: what critic Jean Cassou would term "this very particular optical domination of the world", at once modern and timeless.

The catalogue offers the opportunity to catch up with all the latest research into Marquet, with contributions from art historians like Isabelle Monod-Fontaine, Claudine Grammont, Pierre Wat and Donatien Grau, and input from the Wildenstein Institute.

Organised by the Musée d'Art Moderne, the exhibition will subsequently be on show at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow from October 2016 to January 2017.



Albert Marquet (1875-1947), *Vue du Port de Havre (Le Quai de notre Dame)*, vers 1911, huile sur toile, 65 x 81 cm, Fondation Collection E.G. Bührle, Zurich
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Visitor information
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Open Tuesday – Sunday
10 am – 6 pm
Late night Thursday 10 pm

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Exhibition layout

Learning his craft (1899 – 1913)

Marquet enrolled in Gustave Moreau's atelier at the Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1895. At the time nude drawing from life and the study of the Old Masters were the underpinning of an academic system Marquet would tweak in his *Nu dit "fauve"* (Fauve Nude): the model is shown upright on the modelling stand in three-quarter back view, surrounded by student painters in Manguin's studio; the subject is "academic", but the vivid colouring, avoiding local tone with Divisionist brushstrokes in the Signac manner, presages the advent of Fauvism. In the 1910s Marquet systematically resorted to models in his studio on the Quai Saint-Michel. The colours are not as vivid as in his earlier years; instead, he uses light to reveal the body as graceful and harmonious. He avoids detail, too, preferring an overall perception of the body. The model's face is often hidden or in shadow, as in *Nu à contre-jour* (Nude in Backlight) of 1909–1910. Gradually the erotic component became more overt: this was no longer just a model, but the subject of his desire – Yvonne, his favourite model and his companion at the time. He was also painting portraits, often of friends or family members, but in later years he returned to the genre only occasionally. The appeal of his *Sergent de la Coloniale* (Sergeant of the Colonial Regiment) lies in the use of black to highlight the gold of the stripes and epaulettes and in its subject's haughty expression.

Working from life

Marquet drew in various media – pencil, pastel, ink, watercolour – all his life. Although he initially adhered to the demands of the academic approach, between 1899 and 1910 he adopted a more elliptical blend of silhouette and caricature. He honed his technique in the street, with Paris as his "hunting ground". In 1904 he was commissioned to illustrate Charles-Louis Philippe's novel *Bubu de Montparnasse*, but the publisher rejected his drawings. Marquet, nonetheless, had the gift of catching ordinary people in typical poses, neatly pointing up their foibles without recourse to sarcasm. Here he created a little world all of its own, one he would use as a "basic store of human character types to be introduced into his landscapes." These are little paintings in their own right, simple, serene and sensitive, with the added benefit of colour. He seems, too, to have used drawing as an exercise – like a musician practising his scales.

Making landscapes (1899 – 1904)

Between 1899 and 1904 Marquet and Matisse went painting from life together in the Paris suburb of Arcueil, but also in Paris itself, in the Luxembourg Gardens. Learning from his companion, Marquet developed "his" landscape, whose spatial organisation was shaped by a personal use of structure and line: the cube (house, cathedral), the vertical (chimney, streetlamp, tree), the diagonal for creating depth (towpath, pile of sand, embankment, the wash on a river), and the horizontal (bridge). He would continue to organise space this way all his life. This period also saw the appearance in his work of pure colour, laid on in directional brushstrokes learned from Cézanne: yellow, green and red were juxtaposed, saturating the space and banishing traditional perspective. These small landscapes come close to being the most "Fauve" works he ever painted. He resorted, too, to pastel, creating interrelated areas of solid colour – yellow, green, blue, pink, etc. – that were made vibrant by the texture of the paper, and slipping in occasional details: a lamppost, a tree, a spire. He was already showing his interest in features of urban and industrial settings: factory chimneys, streetlamps, arched bridges, river barges and locks.

A fauve in Normandy (1906 – 1911)

Marquet returned to Normandy regularly throughout his life. On one of his first stays, in 1906, he was accompanied by Raoul Dufy, a native of Le Havre, and the two had many subjects in common: boats decked with pennants, Bastille Day celebrations, tents on the beach at Sainte-Adresse, and posters.

But while Dufy was a master of the lively brushstroke and chromatic boldness, Marquet was uncomfortable with vivid colours, preferring those that were more restrained but still, in their own way, just as daring – pink for example. *La Plage de Fécamp* (The Beach at Fécamp) is one of his most accomplished pictures from this period: in the foreground – this was exceptional for him – he settled for the "amorphous humanity" of two uniformed sailors contemplating a beach that emanates serenity. What interested him most, though, was the port at Le Havre: the silhouette of the city, the harbour basins, the jetties – crowded or empty – and the world of boats big and small, with their oars and sails. Not to mention the permanent presence of water, either calm or plashing with wiggly brushstrokes.

Ports (1905 – 1938)

The painter Claude Lorrain is famed for his views of idealised harbours, with their comings and goings of sumptuous galleons. Marquet, by contrast, turned the port into a modern, feverishly living landscape, the swell stirred up by its traffic mingling with the smoke from tugs and the steam from all sorts of vessels. To this he added the industrial poetry of busy wharfs, the silhouettes of dockers and the spikes of cranes and streetlights; the docks were the new emblems of modernity, just as stations had been for the Impressionists. From Marseille to Stockholm, from Le Havre to Hamburg, Marquet shows the same monochrome spectacle: leaden sky, black water, white smoke, the grey haze that blots out detail.

Paris, The Seine (1905 – 1947), Notre-Dame

When starting out Marquet had, of course, painted cityscapes of Paris, but with his moves to the Quai des Grands-Augustins in 1905 and then the Quai Saint-Michel in 1908, two views came to dominate: downstream the Seine embankments, the bridges and the Louvre, and upstream Notre Dame. Looking out and down from the calm of his studio – like his neighbour, Matisse – he painted countless, differently framed views of the cathedral. One result was a series: he had doubtless seen Claude Monet's Rouen Cathedral series at the Durand-Ruel gallery in 1904. Preferring the misty or snowy weather that shrouded Notre Dame in grey, he blurred the details to the point of leaving only a massive, ghostly outline. Snow also allowed him to do away with depth and paint in black and white: his areas of solid white contrast powerfully with the small black silhouettes of the passers-by and the composition's lines of force.

Paris, The Seine (1905 – 1947), Les Quais

The views of the Seine embankments as painted by Marquet from 1899 until his death in 1947 offer incredible variety, but three features stand out: the right and left banks, the bridges and the Seine itself. He compositional method was changeless: a diagonal to mark the flow of the river and a horizontal – the bridge – to strike across the image and create a horizon. To this he added the hectic life of the city: on the banks were horse-drawn vehicles, automobiles, strollers, workmen and dockers; and on the river, barges, laundries and boats belching swirls of white. In winter bold use of weather effects – mist, rain, snow – were used to subvert the city's architectural structure, while summer triggered compositions in which the sharp, elongated shadows of trees and vehicles contrast powerfully with the landscape elements. These different aspects are subsumed in firmness of composition and a unifying gaze that eliminates detail.

Mirrored landscapes (1908 – 1936)

Marquet had a permanent, obsessive predilection for water: seashores, lakefronts, riverbanks. He developed a type of landscape whose lines of force and perspective hardly ever varied, and his choice of places to paint in the course of his travels did little to diversify his compositional approach. Rivers provided the inspiration for remarkable landscapes. Like Monet he was attracted to banks shaded by trees and greenery whose reflection in calm water gave rise to a dual but reversed image. However, he was not at all interested in the diffraction caused by ripples: he preferred to double his images by playing down the changes in reflected colour and retaining the shape of his trees. Green thus pervades the canvas, inducing an enigmatic quality verging on the abstract.

Sea shores (1926 – 1936)

Marquet was also interested in the interconnections between the three elements: water, air and earth. Gently lapping water or waves in a storm are matched by translucent or cloudy skies intercut with mountains, curtains of greenery or beaches pure and simple. The beach was one of Marquet's favourites, present in his work since the Fauve days with Raoul Dufy; he returned to it in the 1930s when he stayed at Les Sables-d'Olonne, Le Pyla and La Goulette. Gone are the wind-whipped Normandy beach tents, replaced now by bathers and small rowing or sailing boats, signs that leisure activities had become more widely accessible. Always in search of an elevated vantage point, Marquet used the beach as a dynamic diagonal in structuring his compositions. The effects of light and the ebb and flow of the tides were an opportunity to introduce decorative shapes and unexpected colours, while working in watercolour enabled a prolific output of beach and shoreline scenes.

Algiers, city of white (1924 – 1943)

Marquet spent part of his life in the East, but never succumbed to the lure of Orientalism. He took only a minimal interest in Arabic-Moorish architecture (the mosque) and Mediterranean vegetation (a few palm trees). Nothing in his work distinguishes Algiers from a city like Marseille, its rival across the water. While he created an image of Paris as grey, snowbound and wrapped in mist, we cannot help noticing that he gradually reduced Algiers to the life of its port and the colour white (the mosque, army headquarters). At the same time, the city's port and bay provided an endlessly renewed spectacle. Marquet captured the merchant port of the 1920s, then the military port of the Second World War years, with liners at anchor being replaced by cuirassiers on manoeuvres. In these pictures we sense the patriotic leanings also attested to by the discreet presence of the French tricolour.

The view from the window (1932 – 1946)

Since the publication of Alberti's *De pictura (On Painting)* in 1436, the window had become an inseparable element of perspective. It was, in addition, the source of the codes of landscape painting. Even when absent from Marquet's pictures, the window remains implicit. He frames the landscape, rendering it more blurred and distant while slipping in aspects of his everyday life – a flowerpot, an easel – for extra colour. He is also one of the few artists to have taken the window as a subject in its own right, sometimes delighting in the dazzling light that suddenly comes pouring into his studio. He had always painted landscapes seen through windows, but towards the end of his life these little pictures became more frequent. One of his last works, *Persienne verte (Green Shutters)*, offers a restrained rendering of light filtering through closed shutters.

Practical information

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Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 6pm (ticket desk closes at 5:15pm)
Late opening on Thursdays until 10pm only for special exhibitions (ticket desk closes at 9:15pm)
Closed on Mondays and during bank holidays
Open March 27th, May 5th, May 8th, May 15th 2016



The exhibition is accessible to people with motor and reduced mobility disabilities.

Admission

Full rate €12
Concessions €9

Ticket desk

No-queue tickets available on www.mam.paris.fr

The museum also presents

Pandora's Box, Another photography by Jan Dibbets at the ARC from March 25th to July 17th 2016
Paula Modersohn-Becker, An Intensely Artistic Eye, from April 8th to August 21th 2016
Sturtevant, The House of Horrors installation in the collection until April 30th 2016

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