

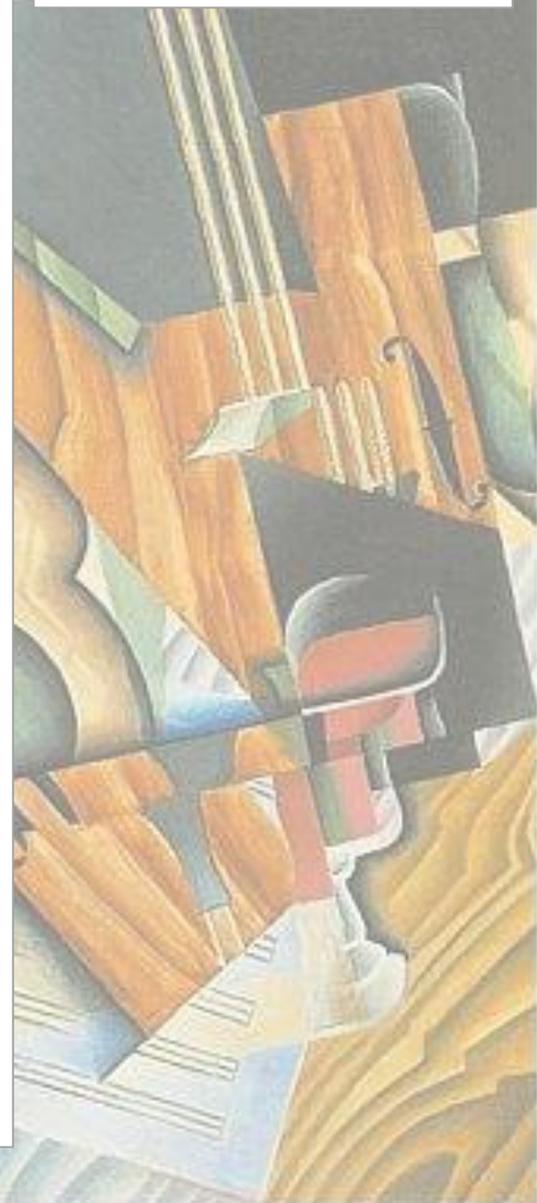
Juan Gris 1887 -1927

Cubism was the first abstract art form and the most revolutionary art movement of the 20th century. It was originally conceived and developed in France by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque around 1907, but other artists soon adopted the style. The Spanish artist Juan Gris (his real name was José Victoriano González-Pérez), a friend and neighbour of Picasso in Paris, was the best of these and he refined the cubist vocabulary into his own instantly recognizable visual language. He is often referred to as 'the third cubist'

- Juan Gris was born in Madrid and his real name was José Victoriano González-Pérez.
- Gris studied engineering drawing before he became an artist.
- He was a friend and neighbour of Picasso in Paris.
- **After Picasso and Braque, Juan Gris is thought of as the third Cubist but he was the artist who was the most consistently dedicated to the style.**
- Gris painted mostly still lifes in a **synthetic cubist style** often using bold colours and collage techniques.
- Although his paintings may appear quite methodical in their design he was quoted as saying, 'I prefer the emotion that corrects the rule', which suggests his instinct and not his intellect was the controlling factor in his art.
- Gris also created sculptures and worked on set designs for Diaghilev's ballets.
- **Juan Gris died at the young age of 39.**



'Still Life with Violin and Glass',
1915 (oil on canvas)



Still life was the most popular of the cubist themes as it allowed artists to use everyday objects whose forms were still recognizable after they had been simplified and stylized. **'Still Life with Open Window, Rue Ravignan'** is a great example of Gris' cubist style. It contains some of the traditional objects commonly associated with still life: a bowl of fruit, a bottle and a glass, a newspaper and a book, all carefully arranged on a table top at a balcony window.

The objects are lit by electric light which contrasts with the moonlit scene outside the window. The subject may have been clichéd and predictable but its arrangement was revolutionary.

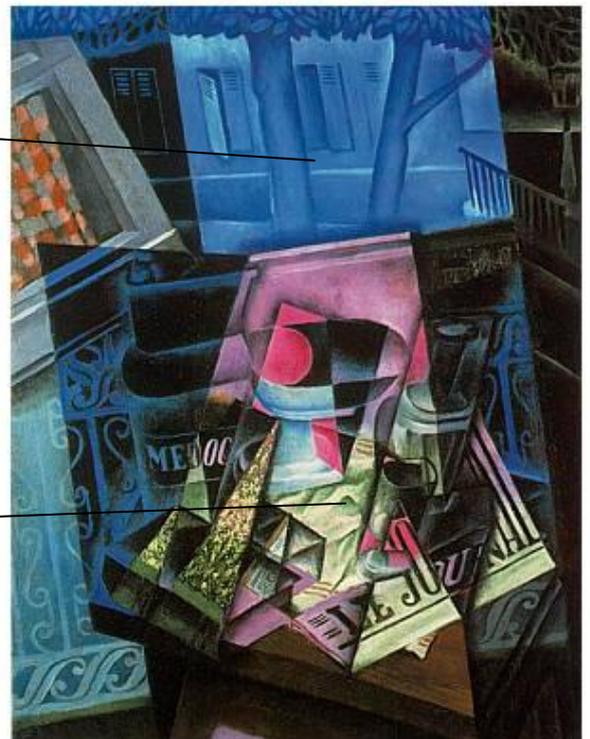
Juan Gris was more calculating than any other Cubist painter in the way he composed his pictures. Every element of a painting was considered with classical precision: line, shape, tone, colour and pattern were carefully refined to create an interlocking arrangement free from any unnecessary decoration or detail.

Gris flattens the composition of 'Still Life with Open Window, Rue Ravignan' into a **grid of overlapping planes**.

Within the structure of this grid, he delicately balances and counterbalances different areas of the work.

Sections shift from **light to dark, positive to negative, monochrome to colour, transparency to opacity, and from lamplight inside the room to moonlight outside**.

The relationships of these juxtaposed elements leave us with a sense of the still life group in its surroundings - the kind of fragmented sense that our memory would retain had we seen them for ourselves.



Cubism a new way of seeing

Before Cubism, all art obeyed the convention of perspective.

This was the technique that artists had used since the Renaissance to arrange objects in space. However, perspective only works from one fixed viewpoint and the Cubists believed that it was a limited visualization technique which did not reflect the way that we see the world.

Their aim was to develop a new way of seeing which reflected the complexity of the modern age.

In Cubist painting artists depict real objects, but not from a fixed viewpoint as in perspective. They combine different viewpoints of a subject in the one image. The whole idea of space is rearranged – the front, back and sides of the subject become interchangeable elements.

Cubist images combine the artist's observation with their memory of the subject to create a poetic evocation of the theme.

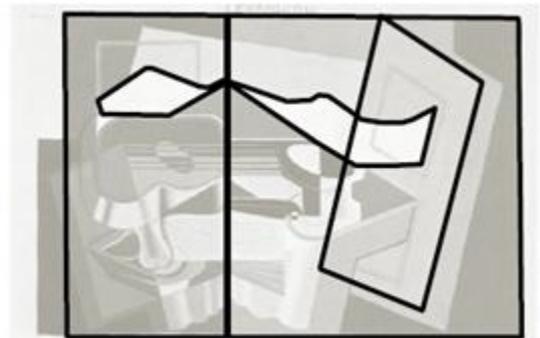


Figure 11: Shutter and mountain shapes.

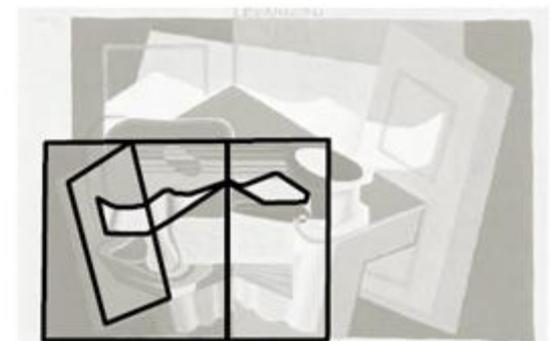


Figure 12: Table and guitar shapes.



Figure 6: Juan Gris, "Fruit Bowl on Checkered Cloth" 1917

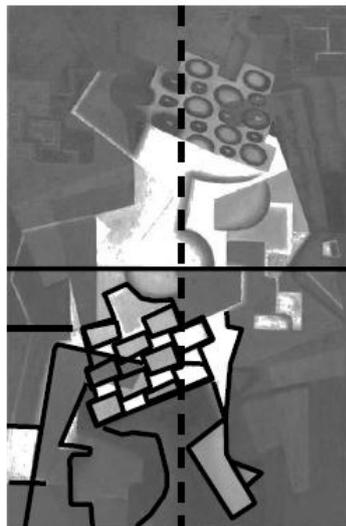


Figure 7: Checkered cloth and other significant compositional shapes.

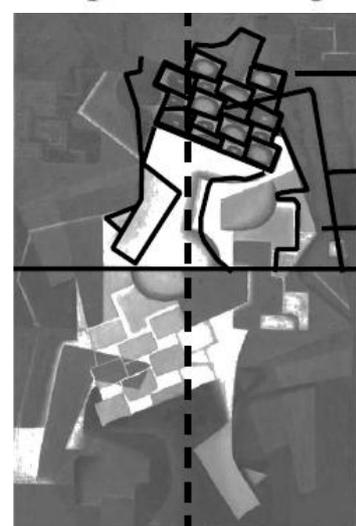


Figure 8: Shapes from lower half reflected and translated to upper half.