**Selected Timeline of events 1900–1945**

**Arts and Culture**

1900 The Exposition Universelle opens in Paris. For the occasion, the area surrounding the Eiffel Tower is extensively developed. Among the constructed buildings, the Petit Palais and Grand Palais still survive as exhibition venues today.

As part of the modernizing project heralded by the fair, the Paris Métro system—among the first in continental Europe—is inaugurated. Using glass and cast iron, Hector Guimard (1867–1942) designed the distinctive Art Nouveau entrances, many of which are still visible today.

1901 Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi (1874–1937) succeeds in transmitting a wireless radio signal across the Atlantic: an achievement that paves the way for the invention of the radio and telephone.

1902 Georges Méliès (1861–1938) directs the film *A Trip to the Moon*. An iconic precursor of sci-fi cinema, the film impresses international audiences with its pioneering editing and photomontage techniques that create the illusion of space travel.

1903 Georges Rouault, André Derain, Henri Matisse, and Albert Marquet organize the first Salon d’Automne at the Grand Palais, to counter the academicism of the official Salon de Beaux Arts. Allowing younger artists to exhibit, the Salon d’Automne becomes a showcase for the avant-garde, mounting retrospective shows of works by Paul Gauguin, Paul Cézanne, Édouard Manet, and Georges Seurat, among others.

The Wright brothers succeed in the first heavier-than-air-machine flight in North Carolina, staying in the air for up to 59 seconds. Only three years later they register their flying machine with the U.S. Patent Office.

Writer and poet Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) moves from the United States to Paris and begins a longstanding engagement with the avant-garde. She avidly collects works by Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Georges Braque, and others. Her home soon becomes a showroom and meeting place for international artists, writers, and intellectuals.

1904 Pablo Picasso and Constantin Brancusi (1876–1957) arrive in Paris from Spain and Romania, respectively.

1905 Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) publishes the pioneering psychoanalysis volume *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, which examines how sexual stimuli from a very early age play a part in the development of perversions.

1906 Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920) settles in Montmartre in Paris, where he learns from Cézanne, Gauquin, Théophile Alexandre Steinlen, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

Finland is the first country in Europe to grant full women’s suffrage.
1909 The French pilot Louis Blériot (1872–1936) flies from Calais to Dover across the English Channel. Blériot’s company S.P.A.D. would later manufacture fighter planes used during World War I.

Picasso and Braque (1882–1963), inspired by each other’s work, collaborate between 1907 and 1914, developing what later became known as Cubism.

The American Ford Model T is the first car to be mass-produced using streamlined industrial technology.

1912 Poet and writer Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918) coins the term “Orphism” to describe the work of Sonia (1885–1979) and Robert Delaunay (1885–1941), who were reintroducing and reinterpreting the use of color in Cubist painting.

1913 Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971) composes the musical score for the ballet The Rite of Spring, performed by the Ballets Russes. Under the leadership of Russian impresario Sergei Diaghilev (1872–1929), this company often collaborated on iconic productions with avant-garde artists, who designed costumes and stage sets.

Sonia Delaunay invents her “simultaneous dresses,” which apply some of the color theories of Orphism to textile design.

After his works were outcast by the Cubist painters at the 1912 Salon des Indépendants, Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) exhibits the painting Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2 (1912) at the Armory Show in New York.

Guillaume Apollinaire publishes the essay The Cubist Painters, which outlines the aesthetics and objectives of the style.

1914 The heir to throne of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated in Sarajevo, an event which will ultimately escalate into the outbreak of World War I.

French artists including Braque, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Albert Gleizes, Fernand Léger, and Jean Metzinger serve in the military. Among these, Duchamp-Villon dies of typhoid contracted in the trenches, and Braque sustains a severe head wound. Meanwhile many foreigners remain sheltered in Paris.

During the war years, the Salon des Indépendants does not take place.

1915 Physicist Albert Einstein (1878–1955) publishes his theory of general relativity, challenging for the first time Isaac Newton’s prior theory of gravitation.

1916 The Dada group, led by Tristan Tzara, Jean Arp, and Hugo Ball, gathers at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. Tzara writes the “Dada Manifesto” in 1918.

1917 Tsar Nicholas II of Russia is overthrown during the October Revolution led by the Bolsheviks and Leftist Socialist Revolutionaries. A new Bolshevik government is formed, ultimately leading to the establishment of the Soviet Union in 1922.
Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* is rejected by New York’s Society of Independent Artists, although the organization had previously stated that all works submitted by members would have been admitted.

Guillaume Apollinaire first uses the term “Surrealist” in the prologue of his play *The Breasts of Tiresias*. Inspired by the figure of the Greek clairvoyant Tiresias, who lived part of his life with the body of a woman, the play activates a commentary on gender equality.

1918 First World War ends with an armistice between Germany and the Allied powers. Germany is declared a republic. Its first constitutional assembly is held in Weimar the following year.

Architects Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris (also known as Le Corbusier, 1887–1965) and Amédée Ozenfant (1886–1966) write the manifesto of Purism, titled *After Cubism*, which promoted a return to pure geometric forms in art and architecture.

1919 Delegates from fifteen countries and colonies participate in the first Pan-African Congress in Paris.

The Treaty of Versailles is signed, and the League of Nations is established the following year. The treaty stipulates that Germany must return the contested provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to France.

In France a conservative coalition of nationalists, centrists, and radicals are elected, which causes the battle for women’s suffrage to be placed on hold.

The Staatliches Bauhaus School is established in Weimar by German architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969).


1921 Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel (1883–1971) presents the iconic Chanel No. 5 in her line of perfumes. She had opened her first shops, in Paris and the French resort town of Deauville, only in 1913.

Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) publishes his influential text *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

Man Ray and Duchamp publish a single issue of the magazine *New York Dada*. The following year, once settled in Paris, Ray produces his first “rayographs” (photographs made without a camera by exposing photosensitive paper to light).

1922 Benito Mussolini, leader of the National Fascist Party, becomes prime minister of Italy.

1924 André Breton (1896–1966) issues the first Surrealist manifesto, which will be followed by two updated versions in 1930 and 1942.

Fernand Léger (1881–1955) directs his iconic film *Ballet mécanique*, starring Alice Prin (also known as “Kiki de Montparnasse”). This work reflects his
The formulation of “machine aesthetics,” a synthesis of Cubism, De Stijl, and Constructivism.

Léger is also involved in Marcel L’Herbier’s film *The Inhuman Woman*, which tells the story of a famously cold-hearted Parisian singer who is brought back to life—both physically and metaphorically—by a newly found lover.

Vladimir Lenin dies leaving a power vacuum in the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) assumes power the following year.

1925 The Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes opens in Paris. Léger presents his first murals in the Pavillon de l’Esprit Nouveau designed by Le Corbusier.

Arp, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst, André Masson, Joan Miró, and Picasso participate in the first exhibition of Surrealist painting, which was held at the Galerie Pierre in Paris.

The showgirl Josephine Baker (1906–1975), also known as the “Bronze Venus,” performs *La Revue Nègre*, a performance of Jazz music and dance, at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.

1927 Charles A. Lindbergh completes the first non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean.

1929 The U.S. stock market crashes, unleashing a vast economic depression throughout North America and Western Europe.

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The Museum of Modern Art in New York is founded under the directorship of Alfred J. Barr.

Joaquín Torres-García, Piet Mondrian, and Michel Seuphor found the group Cercle et Carré (Circle and Square), championing abstraction to counterbalance Surrealism in Paris.

Spanish director Luis Buñuel and artist Salvador Dalí collaborate on the Surrealist silent film *Un Chien Andalou*: one of the first experimental films to reject linear narrative by presenting a collage of seemingly disconnected situations.

1931 The Exposition Coloniale Internationale takes place in Paris. The British Empire conspicuously does not participate, but thirty million tickets are sold—an unprecedented attendance. Opposed to the exposition, the Surrealists launch a counter-exhibition: The Truth about the Colonies, which draws less than five thousand visitors.

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René Clair (1898–1981) directs *À Nous la Liberté*, a film that critically portrays aspects of life during the industrial age.

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The group Abstraction-Création is founded. Led by Auguste Herbin and Georges Vantongerloo, the group quickly expands to include about four hundred abstract artists.
1932 Jean Cocteau releases the film *Le Sang d’un Poète*, which uses experimental techniques to portray the journey of an artist and other characters in a surreal, oneiric world.

Austrian-British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein publishes *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, her first major work to build upon and rethink Freudian theories of child development.

1933 German authorities shut down the Bauhaus for allegedly sympathizing with Communist ideology.

U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt enacts the New Deal, an economic policy seeking to resolve the economic crisis. Meanwhile in Germany the economy plummets, and unemployment surges.

Adolf Hitler is elected chancellor of Germany.

1935 Frédéric (1900–1958) and Irène Joliot-Curie (1897–1956) win the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for first synthesizing radioactive elements.

Germany begins to rearm, breaking agreements made with the Treaty of Versailles.

1936 Economic conditions in France deteriorate due to soaring inflation and political instability.

The Spanish Civil War begins.

1937 Spanish artist Pablo Picasso paints *Guernica*.

The Nazis launch the exhibition *Degenerate Art* in Munich. Showcasing paintings that had been confiscated from museums across the country, including works by Chagall, Kandinsky, and Klee, the exhibition condemns modernist practices as being intrinsically connected to left-wing politics, anti-religious sentiment, and disrespect of tradition.

The Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne is mounted in Paris. It encapsulates the escalating antagonism between fascism and communism, most clearly illustrated by the German and Russian Pavilions, which faced each other in the exhibition compound.

1938 Breton, Diego Rivera (1886–1957), and Leon Trotsky (1879–1940) write the manifesto *Towards a Free Revolutionary Art* in Mexico. Trotsky is assassinated there in 1940.

1939 World War II breaks out when German troops invade Poland, forcing France and Britain to declare war on Germany.

The Museum of Non-Objective Painting (predecessor of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum) opens its doors to the public in New York City. Meanwhile Peggy Guggenheim, Solomon’s niece who lives in Europe, has become a great patron of the avant-garde. Many of the works that she acquires are later bequeathed to the museum’s collection in 1976, and a museum to house these works was opened in Venice in 1980.
1940 Germany invades France, and the Vichy regime begins: the French government relocates to this provincial town while German forces occupy Paris.

Comedian, actor, and filmmaker Charlie Chaplin (1889–1977) releases the film *The Great Dictator*, a poignant satire of radical politics and institutional violence.

1941 On the Eastern Front, the Soviets enact a powerful counter-offensive against German troops who had reached the outskirts of Moscow. Japan attacks Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and asserts their support of the Third Reich, causing the United States to enter the war.

1944 The Allies heavily bombard Germany and the remainder of occupied European cities.

French women achieve suffrage.

Picasso premieres his first Surrealist play, *Desire Caught by the Tail*, in Paris after the liberation of the city from German control. The production, held in Michel Leiris’s apartment, is directed by the author Albert Camus, and it stars philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir as well as Picasso himself.

1945 Germany surrenders to the Allies, ending World War II in Europe.

Following Japanese Emperor Hirohito’s refusal to surrender to the Allies, the United States drops two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The end of World War II in Asia took place shortly thereafter with the surrender of Japanese forces to the Allied powers.

The United Nations is founded to promote international cooperation and to safeguard peace.