

LESSON THREE: Art and Movement

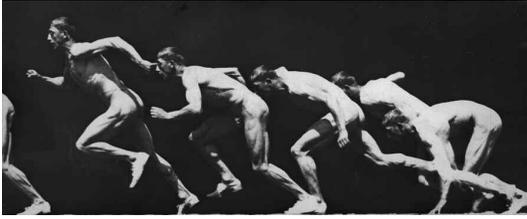


IMAGE SEVEN: Étienne-Jules Marey, French, 1830–1904, and Georges Demeny, French, 1850–1917. *Untitled (Sprinter)*. c. 1890–1900. Gelatin silver print, $6\frac{1}{16} \times 14\frac{5}{8}$ " (15.4 x 37.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Paul F. Walter



IMAGE EIGHT: Gino Severini. Italian, 1883–1966. *Dynamic Hieroglyphic of the Bal Tabarin*. 1912. Oil on canvas with sequins, $63\frac{3}{8} \times 61\frac{1}{2}$ " (161.6 x 156.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest. © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP



IMAGE NINE: Umberto Boccioni. Italian, 1882–1916. *States of Mind I: The Farewells*. 1911. Oil on canvas, $27\frac{7}{8} \times 37\frac{3}{4}$ " (70.5 x 96.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller

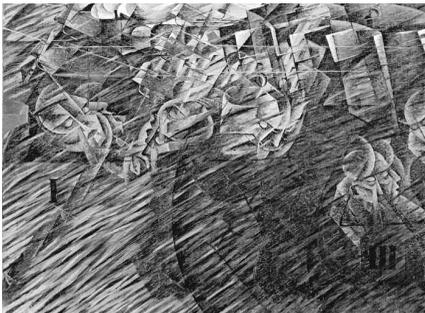


IMAGE TEN: Umberto Boccioni. Italian, 1882–1916. *States of Mind II: Those Who Go*. 1911. Oil on canvas, $27\frac{7}{8} \times 37\frac{3}{4}$ " (70.5 x 96.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller



IMAGE ELEVEN: Umberto Boccioni. Italian, 1882–1916. *States of Mind III: Those Who Stay*. 1911. Oil on canvas, $27\frac{7}{8} \times 37\frac{3}{4}$ " (70.5 x 96.2 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller

INTRODUCTION

The artists in this lesson were interested in depicting the sensation of motion. Inspired by advanced photographic techniques and other new forms of technology and transportation, these artists chose dynamic, active subjects like the hubbub of a train station and the energy of a nightclub.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore different artistic techniques for communicating motion.
- Students will analyze how a work in series can depict narrative and motion.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Explain to students that before the advent of photography, human and animal movement could only be studied by observing an action as it happened in front of you. Show students the photograph of the sprinter and ask them to describe what's happening in it. Tell them that Étienne-Jules Marey invented a technique he called "chronophotography," meaning the photography of time. This photographic process allowed him to record a rapid succession of exposures on a single photographic plate, making it possible, essentially, to stop time. With this technique, the movement of a running horse or flying pigeon was revealed. Marey's work greatly influenced the history of cinematography. Ask students to imagine what discoveries would have been made by people viewing these photographs. Ask them to consider what impact photographs like these had on artists.
- Have students create flipbooks using small blank books made of paper cut into small squares and bound together. Challenge them to depict a figure in the greatest possible range of motion, bearing in mind how the figure will change from page to page. Have students compare and contrast their finished works with Marey's photograph, and discuss how the movement created by a flipbook is similar to the process of animation.
- Have each student choose and bring in a comic strip. Explain to students that in comics, artists create a visual narrative that unfolds over sequential panels. Engage students in a discussion of the choices made by the artists in these comic strips. Discuss characters, settings, and why specific narrative moments in the story might have been chosen.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

- Give students some time to look at *Dynamic Hieroglyphic of the Bal Tabarin*, but don't tell them the work's title. Ask them to describe what they see, either as a class or with a partner.
- Tell your students the title of the work and ask them to define "dynamic" and "hieroglyphic." Explain to them that this painting by Gino Severini depicts Bal Tabarin, a famous nightclub in Paris, as it was remembered by the artist. Ask students to compile a list of the words that come to mind when they think about the sensory and visual experience of nightclubs and nightlife, and to discuss how *Bal Tabarin* relates to those associations. Discuss how the artist depicts the rhythm, energy, and movement of the environment.

Severini was an Italian artist who moved to Paris in his early twenties. He was a member of the Futurist movement, which was devoted to celebrating speed and the modern machine. He was also influenced by the Cubist works of Braque and Picasso, which he had seen in Paris. In *Bal Tabarin*, Severini includes dancers, top hats, instruments, drinks, and club décor, as well as allusions to the era's political climate; the colorful flags and the Arab riding a camel refer to the Turco-Italian War of 1911–12, in which Italy gained control over Libya.

- Have students, working in groups of three or four, write a sentence or poem featuring the words they came up with to describe the sensations of nightclubs and nightlife. They may add other words as needed to complete their poems.
- Tell your students that the next works they'll look at, the States of Mind series by Umberto Boccioni, depict a departure from a train station. Before you show them the works, have them sketch their own drawings for each of the three titles: *The Farewells*, *Those Who Depart*, and *Those Who Stay*. Ask students to share their series with the class and discuss the choices they made.
- Show your students each of the works in the States of Mind series. For each one, have students describe what's going on and compare their own drawings with Boccioni's. Discuss the choices the artist made in depicting action and atmosphere, and what students find that is similar or different in the three works.

Describing this series to the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire, Boccioni wrote, "one expressing departure, the other arrival . . . To mark the difference in feeling I have not used in my painting of arrival a single line from the painting of departure."⁵

Boccioni was one of many artists profoundly affected by the technological changes in the world around him. Although many of his Futurist colleagues embraced and glorified the new mechanical era, in the States of Mind series Boccioni reveals his own anxiety about the drastic changes made to daily existence.

- Turn your students' attention back to *Bal Tabarin*. Have them compare and contrast Boccioni's treatment of movement and mood with Severini's.

ACTIVITIES

Have your students make two kinds of drawings that focus on capturing movement or the sensation of movement. Possible subjects include children playing at a playground, or a sporting event or dance performance on television. See how many different kinds of movements—running, jumping, standing, sliding, and so forth—they can depict on a page. For the first drawing, they should make quick, small sketches of figures in motion. For the second drawing, they should use different shapes, lines, and symbols to indicate the same kinds of movements sketched in the first drawing.

Have your students write a narrative of a trip from beginning to end, including as much visual information and description (such as sounds, smells, and feelings) as possible. Afterward, have them translate their experiences into three sequential drawings and give the series a title. Have them share their work with the rest of the class.

5. John Elderfield, ed., *Modern Painting and Sculpture: 1880 to the Present at The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 123.