



The Ballets Russes and the Art of Design

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The Ballets Russes was a phenomenon of the early twentieth century, permeating daily life wherever the company traveled and leaving a lasting impact on dance, theater, and the visual arts. Sergei Diaghilev, impresario from 1909 until his death in 1929, fused the most avant-garde, groundbreaking movements in dance, choreography, art, design, and costume into unique and stunning productions. The work was exciting, and always new, and it stretched the limits of the possible in art. The color, form, and material in costume and set design astonished audiences, transforming every corner of Western culture in the twentieth century.

Fashion and decor designers and visual artists in particular—including Coco Chanel, Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Léon Bakst, and Pablo Picasso—found inspiration in the Ballets Russes. Designers and artists moved past old boundaries and created costumes and set designs for these extravagant productions, bridging the gaps between tangible and abstract artistic genres.

The Ballets Russes and the Art of Design explores these revolutionary icons and ideas, illuminating Sergei Diaghilev's profound revitalization of the arts, which continues to influence us today. Ten essays by internationally recognized experts and 200 color and black-and-white illustrations—many from private collections and never-before-published—discuss a broad range of topics, including set and costume designs, graphic design and poster art, photographs and postcards, Diaghilev's presence in the media, and private and museum collections of Ballets Russes treasures.

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