



The Matador appears to result from geometrizing a real figure: the clothing, stance, and shape of the statue are clearly those of a matador “broken down into multiple components and reassembled into a composition.” [Cubism and its Derivatives Handout] The limbs and head are geometrized by substituting realistic modeling of muscle and skeleton with parts of arcs, spheres, and flat-sliced planes, creating unusual perspectives.

Triangular/pyramidal shapes create the face, arms, legs and feet. Notice the use of triangles and arcs for the eye and the plane it occupies. The jaw and ear are suggested by arcs that make a half circle of the cheek plane. The nose is another triangle, with an indented triangle defining its shape, but the lips below seem fully-shaped, though small and skewed vertically. The hair and hat are fairly representational, though the circle, oval and sphere define their shapes.

Wrists curve into hands which end in extra-long, square-shaped fingers. Lipchitz also exaggerated the upper arms, buttocks, thighs and dorsal calves by expanding the curve of muscle into a ballooning sphere or arc. The knees and shins are even more “cubist” than the head: his left kneecap is created by a “convex” triangle protruding over the flat plane of the shin. But the right joint is indicated by a “concave” triangle set into the leg, the imprint of the left knee’s shape.

Light gleams as it reflects off the embossed organic designs, shoulder bosses, and fringe of the matador’s brocaded jacket. The luxurious jacket and the drape of the cape over his arm contrast with the crisp triangles of his collar, the narrow channels of his tie, and the stiffly corrugated ruffle of his shirt.

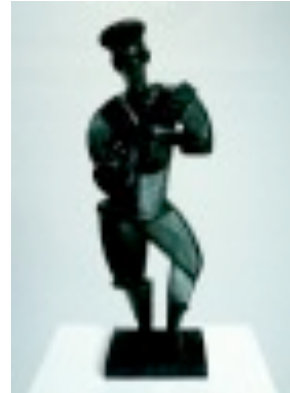
The Matador shows Lipchitz transitioning from his elegant art nouveau style to sculptural Cubism.

LIPCHITZ'S INFLUENCE AND INSPIRATION

Lipchitz, considered the first Cubist sculptor, "consistently worked with the sculptor's animated, three-dimensional space to achieve...the equivalent of Picasso's and Braque's cascading perspectives and stripped-down form during the 1910-1914 period. [Putz]

Lipchitz's Montparnasse studio was near that of Constantin Brancusi, who introduced him to other avant-garde artists, such as Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani, Diego Rivera, and Max Jacob. As a result Lipchitz abandoned his graceful, polished neoclassical style (Woman with Gazelles) and pursued sculptural cubism, "creating abstracted and simple forms with surfaces reduced to simple planes.... The Matador (1914) and Sailor with a Guitar (1914) are representative of his transitional phase to Cubism." ["Jacques Lipchitz."]

The Sailor and the Guitar (1914), right, is Lipchitz's first sculpture "based on a dissecting of the figure and the counterbalancing of opposed parts" which Lipchitz later said was "building up [a] figure from abstract forms rather than geometrizing a realistic figure." [Putz] He exploited "angular facets which produce sharp contrasts in shadow and light. This jaunty piece recalls the Cubism of Juan Gris, a close friend, rather than that of Picasso or Georges Braque." ["Jacques Lipchitz."]



"Soon Lipchitz created Head (1915), left, which calls to mind aspects of a head but doesn't depend on them. This piece secured Lipchitz's place as the first cubist sculptor. Head "recalls human features and the proportions of the face, but in its expressiveness it is independent from the known, human world." [Putz]

Although Cubists heavily influenced Lipchitz, his powerful works also influenced them, including Picasso. For example, Picasso's 1921 Three Musicians

owes much to Lipchitz's Man with a Guitar (1916).

Lipchitz sculpted clay sketches before creating full-size clay or plaster sculptures, which he had others carve from stone.



Man with a Guitar



Picasso's Three Musicians

In 1916, with the support of the dealer Leonce Rosenberg, Lipchitz had the resources to begin "bigger and better" projects. "Lipchitz opened up forms and pierced the material to reveal spaces which function as totalities in vital contrast with the surrounding mass. In 1920 Lipchitz had his first important

one-man show at the Leonce Rosenberg Gallery in Paris." ["Jacques Lipchitz."]

By 1924 Lipchitz was leaving Cubism behind. In 1925 Lipchitz began experimenting with a radical approach to three-dimensional form. In his small 'transparent', as he called them, he found himself 'playing with space, with a kind of open, lyrical construction that was a revelation to me' (Lipchitz and Arnason, 1972, p. 86). These skeletal figures, bronzes cast from constructions in wax and cardboard, represented a hitherto unexplored juxtaposition of solids and voids; their fragile forms presented new technical problems in terms of casting....Lipchitz's 'transparent' were among the most innovative works of his career, and they influenced Picasso and Julio González's metal constructions of 1928. ["Wilkinson]



"Two important pieces are Joie de Vivre (1927), left, and the powerful totemic Figure (1926-30), right, a seven foot bronze of compactly intertwining forms which terminate in an abstract, ovoid head with a pair of small cylindrical forms so placed as to suggest piercing eyes." ["Jacques Lipchitz."]



Soon Lipchitz was in demand and Galerie de la Renaissance held a retrospective of his work. Cubism was forgotten as he pursued a new style that featured fluid human forms. His Prometheus won a gold medal at the Paris World's Fair in 1936-7. The 1930's ushered in an era of violence and warfare, themes that Lipchitz expressed in dark, brooding shapes or scenes of violence. Sculptures such as David and Goliath, right, came across as criticism of the Nazi will to power.



Once World War II began, it was dangerous for Lipchitz to remain in France. With the help of dealer Curt Valentin he was able to relocate to the United



States in 1941. "His work took on a strongly autobiographical feel, reflecting the horror of war. The pain of Mother and Child (1941-5), left, strongly conveys Lipchitz's anguish over wartime atrocities. ["Jacques Lipchitz."]

D. Rockefeller III. In 1954 MoMA hosted an important retrospective exhibition.

Lipchitz continued to innovate and experiment through the 60's and early 70's until his death in 1973.

In the early '50's Lipchitz created Birth of the Muses, right, for Mrs. John



Tour Questions

1. Take a moment to look at The Matador from all sides. Describe what you see. What stands out for you? What, if anything, is unexpected?
2. Try posing yourself like The Matador. When you strike his pose, how do you feel? What is your new personality? Why do you say that? (Works with kids.)
3. If you were modeling this sculpture out of clay, what details or shapes would you enjoy making? What tools would you use? What makes you say that?
4. Compare to Italian Town by the Sea by Alexandra Exter or Table and Fruit by Fernand Leger in the same gallery. How do Cubist painters solve the problem of multiple perspectives?

TOUR TIPS

- Use on the following tours:
 - Modern Art
 - Visual Elements (pattern)
 - Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Art
 - How Was It Made
 - Off the Wall: Sculpture at the Institute

Bibliography

"Jacques Lipchitz." Encyclopedia of World Biography. Detroit: Gale, 1998. Gale Biography In Context. Web. 29 Apr. 2011.

Putz, Catharine. Jacques Lipchitz, The First Cubist Sculptor. London: Paul Holberton, 2002.

Wilkinson, Alan G. "Jacques Lipchitz." Grove Art Online. 2009, Oxford University Press. MoMA. Online. http://www.moma.org/collection/artist.php?artist_id=3563.