

Modern art 1900-40 essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



By the end of World War I in 1918, artists had a remarkable change in their styles of art. Two very pronounced artists, Fernand Leger and Max Beckman, served in the war and impacted their art profusely.

World War I was an era of industrialization in culture and in the economy, and as the world changed, so did European Art. Leger's fascination with the past and his vital experience in the war had a profound impact on his work. While the war was undergoing trench warfare, Leger was one who almost lost his life, due to a mustard gas attack, which changed his imagery in art from cubist, to what critics called "tubist". His emphasis on cylindrical, ambivalent forms, machine-like imagery, and highly saturated colors created a futuristic world with distorted space. In Leger, *Reclining Woman* 1922, Leger's main focus was the obvious woman in the center foreground of the painting. She appears to be looking at you, the audience, as if she were trying to bring you into her space.

Although she appears to be nude, Leger tries to make the main focus in the curves of the woman by exerting his color and balancing out the composition. The highly saturated yellow in the woman's pants draws your attention to the middle of the painting where it displays the woman lying down holding a book. The distinctive lines and high to dark contrasted colors allow Leger to show the woman's body. From bright yellow, to shades of brown, and a dark emphasis in his lines, you can distinguish the separation of the pants and her upper body. The geometrical shapes in the woman's body are outlined by dark hues of a rusty orange and brown.

These tubular, body like shapes keeps our focus more on the woman herself, rather than the other geometrical forms in the background. With color, shapes, and lines, the image was compositionally balanced. There is an equal balance of yellow in the middle composition, as well as on both sides of the woman, also the light shades of peachy, brown are also divides between the woman body and pants. The image of the woman is concretely centered in the middle of the foreground and equally balances with the shapes, lines, and color in the back ground.

The painting seems to be on an all white surface, where Leger began to center the women with a dark hue of green in the background and a line of brown in the front of the composition. Along with two black dots on each side of the dark green line, the background can be equally split in half. What Leger did to one side of the composition, he did to the other.

By adding lines of gray to the bottom right and left corners of the foreground he really put his emphasis on balance, along with the spherical circles, with saturated blue diamonds on each side of the women. Leger also uses the book in her hand as a divided line from her body and the middle of the painting. Leger's balance was mostly accentuated with the highly saturated primary colors, without the use of red, and his distinctive dark lines that let you know the separation of each image on the painting.

Leger depiction of space was limited due to the un-naturalistic colors and shapes in the background. The image really tries to keep you centered and focused on the woman. It doesn't allow your eye to leave the canvas because everything is equally divided and balanced which keeps you

suffocating in the lack of space Leger displays. Leger's, *Compositions in Blue* 1921-27, is an example of where he was taking his art. He continued the "tubist" idea in certain paintings and really emphasized color, and shapes. Like *Reclining Woman* 1992, Legers light to dark colors, shades, and tints, allowed the image to balance out, and give you an idea of what he is trying to showcase. Along with Leger, Beckmann also had a change in his art due to his traumatic experience as a medic in World War I that coincided with his dramatic transformation of his academically correct depiction, to distorted pictures and lack of space. He wanted the audience to see the war, rather than the world around us.

His influence on Persian art made his subject matter that of a traditional female nude, ideally displaying the beauties of a woman's body. He took a different route than Leger when it came to expressing his artistic skill. He was an expressionist who distorted the body and space. In Max Beckmann's, *Reclining Nude* 1929, Beckman decided to take it a different direction.

He shows the woman in a different aspect. It seems to me as if she is laying down on a reclining chair or mattress showing off her feminine body to her audience. She seems to letting herself open to the public and he highlights this by his lighting gestures in the painting. Beckman's main focus is the woman laying down, relaxing; perhaps she is waiting on company to come around and lay beside her as if she is saying " here I am out in the open". The iconography at the time related to what other artist were doing and as a well marketed artist Beckman did the same.

Although Beckmann does many things different than Leger, their interpretations of color, and distorted space had the same idea, but different views. In the painting, there seems to be a sign of light coming from the left side of the image that really put emphasis on her body. It highlights her legs, up to her breast, and sides of her arms. Beckman's art seemed to be pasty, or chalky, and put a lot of emphasis on his brush strokes. It is clear that he wants you to know where and why he puts the paint where it is. This is obvious in the center of the composition on the woman's shaded legs, stomach and breast. The woman's face is also brought to our attention with the highly saturated orangey, red. His use of complementary colors unifies the woman with the composition.

On the upper left side of the composition it is clear that his brush strokes are seen, and done with two dark black lines in the middle that split the image in half from light to dark. Beckmann's emphases on lines were also seen, from the outlines of the white cloth, to the lines of the woman, and the mattress she appears to be laying on. He distinctly separates the things in his art with the use of lines and does elude us from the painting. Beckmann's balance in the image is seen through the grayish green tints on one side of the image and separated with the start of the two black brush strokes and the strong solid black on the right side of the image. You can also draw a straight line from the grey, and black all the way down to the corners of, what seems to be a table in the front of the composition.

The saturated blue of the mattress also balances out the woman and keeps her stable in the middle of the painting. Beckmann also distorted the body

of the woman and the color of the scenery. From the woman's un-naturalistic breast, and angular elbows, and knee's, to the image of the table and mattress; it seems as if the woman were to be falling off the mattress and floating in air. What Beckman does is distort the space; the woman is being pushed forward at us and the table is being brought upwards as a lack of space. This also follows through with his uncomfortable tints of color.

The face of the woman not compatible with the rest of her body; she appears to have blotchy hues of grey, brown, and yellow, and white on the side of her face. Most of the woman's body is painted with tints of white, yellow, brown, and a bit of saturated orange. All of these aspects in Beckmann's art unify together with his over all message of drawing attention to the beauty of a woman. Her feminine curves and sexuality really connects with the world around him. " Enormous enlargements of an object or a fragment give it a personality it never had before, and in this way, it can become a vehicle of entirely new lyric and plastic power. " Fernand Leger. As well profound artist in the twenty's Leger and Beckmann's artistic style caught the eyes of the audience and were able to be marketed in a transforming economy.

The people didn't make their art what it was, the overall creativity, and personality they gave their art is what made it what it is. They had to endeavor many obstacles to reach their success, and had to undergo different method, and technique to match those artist in their era. Although the both display the beauty of a female nude, they take their own distinctive direction and showcase it in different ways, color, shapes, and space.

Enormous enlargements of an object or a fragment give it a personality it never had before, and in this way, it can become a vehicle of entirely new lyric and plastic power. Fernand Leger