



SALON

LIKE IT'S 1905

THE AGE OF MODERNITY FROM
DEGAS *to* PICASSO

Featuring
Anthony White & the Art History Team
(University of Melbourne) in collaboration
with Shepparton Art Museum

sam
Shepparton Art Museum





Bienvenue **SALONNIÈRES!**

We're delighted you're here. This pack invites you to step into the spirit of a Parisian salon - the lively gatherings of artists, writers, musicians and thinkers that helped shape modern European culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Part social occasion, part intellectual exchange, European salons and cafés became places where ideas were tested, debated and celebrated. Guests gathered around tables to discuss art, politics, poetry, philosophy and the changing world around them. New ways of seeing emerged through conversation, curiosity and creative risk-taking.

This downloadable guide to modern art, academia and conversation reimagines the salon for today. Whether you're hosting friends around the breakfast table, meeting online, or enjoying a quiet solo morning with coffee and a croissant, you're invited to explore the turn of the century through artists' eyes with readings and conversation prompts selected by the University of Melbourne, Parisian-inspired recipes, and hosting tips.



THERE IS NO SINGLE

WAY *to* SALON

- 1. Host a gathering:** Invite friends, family or fellow art lovers to share brunch or an evening soirée. Print the pack, read together, share snacks, and let the prompts guide your conversations!
- 2. Go solo:** Take yourself to your local café and grab a café latte and pastry. Move through the pack at your own pace with a notebook in hand.
- 3. Join us online:** Use this pack to prepare for our online conversation with Professor Anthony White on Thursday 11 June.

WHAT YOU NEED

To set the stage and spark your creativity at your salon, we suggest having to hand:

- Paper and pen to jot down your thoughts
- A printed version of the pack
- Snacks and drinks (check out our recipes on Page 6)
- A comfy spot to gather, think, and chat
- A speaker for a pack-inspired playlist (link included later!)
- And perhaps a curious mind for an open exchange of revolutionary ideas!

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Salonnières et salonniers and their guests followed a code of etiquette to ensure gatherings were conducted with maximum politesse and *savoir-vivre* (in other words, avoiding chaos!):

1. THE POWER OF THE SALONNIÈRE ET SALONNIER

The host was the absolute judge and arbiter. They chose the guest list, set the agenda, and could redirect or halt a conversation instantly if it became too heated—or too dull!

2. THE ART OF POLITESSE (POLITENESS)

While debate was encouraged, it was expected to be conducted with courtesy and charm. Guests were expected to be witty; flatly contradicting someone was often considered a social misstep (oops!).

3. THE RULE OF 'STAIRCASE WIT'

A guest's reputation was built on their *bons mots* (witty remarks) and repartee. If you only thought of the perfect comeback as you were leaving (i.e. on the staircase), you had already lost.

4. INTELLECTUAL EQUALITY

Within the salon, social rank was set aside. A philosopher from the middle class might debate a duke as an equal—provided they had the wit to keep up, of course!

5. ACTIVE LISTENING

A good guest never monopolised the conversation. Speech was expected to be brief, fluid, and balanced; speaking too loudly, or being too cautious, were both grounds for not being invited back. Phew!

THE ART OF BEING WELL-READ

A READING LIST

Curated by the University of Melbourne's Art History Department, these readings invite you to explore the many pathways of modernism through three distinct artists and ideas. Rather than a single movement or style, modernism was shaped by different responses to a changing world—through reimagining tradition, embracing rupture, and refining ways of seeing.

Across these readings, you'll encounter Paul Cezanne, whose experiments with colour and perception helped transform painting; Jacob Epstein, whose fractured sculpture *Rock Drill* reflects the upheaval of war and industrial modernity; and Eileen Mayo, whose careful attention to nature offers an alternative vision of modernism grounded in observation and design.

Together, these texts reveal that modernism was never one story, but many. They offer a starting point for discussion, reflection, and fresh perspective at your salon.

You'll find links to all three readings throughout this pack - dip in, out, and around them as if you're moving between tables in your own modernist salon.

CONTRIBUTORS

Professor Anthony White

Anthony is Associate Professor and Head of Art History and Art Curatorship at the University of Melbourne, specialising in modern and contemporary art, mass culture and marginalised artistic practices.

Dr Nancy Locke

Nancy is an art historian at Penn State University, specialising in nineteenth and early twentieth-century European art.

Elin Morgan

Elin is an art historian and curator at The New Art Gallery Walsall, with expertise in modern British sculpture and the impact of war on artistic practice.

Peter Vangioni

Peter is an art historian and curator at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, specialising in New Zealand art and printmaking.



Élisabeth, Countess Greffulhe (1860-1952) A French socialite, known as the queen of the salons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain in Paris.

READING ONE: RE-SEEING THE WORLD

Nancy Locke, 'Paul Cezanne Revered the Old Masters, yet Influenced Waves of Modernists', *Humanities*, vol. 36, no.1, 2015.

<https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2015/januaryfebruary/feature/the-museumgoer>

Locke's text places Cezanne¹ in the Louvre, studying the Old Masters even as he transforms their lessons. Rather than rejecting tradition, he returns to it repeatedly, reworking its structures through colour and perception.

Key Idea

Modernism begins as a problem of vision: how to see the world not as fixed, but as constructed through looking.

Discussion Prompts

Prompt 1 Rewrite the museum scene from Cezanne's perspective. How does the experience of looking change?

Prompt 2 Cezanne is described as both "student" and innovator. What tensions arise from this dual role?

Prompt 3 Sketch a landscape from memory, then redraw it focusing only on colour relationships. What shifts in your perception?

READING TWO: BREAKING THE HUMAN FORM

Elin Morgan, 'Epstein's Rock Drill Transformed by War', *Exhibition Guide, The New Art Gallery Walsall*, 2015.

thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/file/exhibguide_rockdrill_aug15_v2_print.pdf

Morgan traces the transformation of Rock Drill from a machine-human hybrid into a fragmented torso following its destruction by the artist. The work becomes a record not only of artistic experimentation but of historical trauma.

Key Idea

Modernism fractures the body and the object. Meaning emerges through fragments, absences, and reinterpretation.

Discussion prompts

Prompt 1 How does the destruction of an artwork affect its meaning? Does it diminish it or intensify it?

Prompt 2 Consider the idea of the fragment. What kinds of meaning can incomplete objects produce that complete ones cannot?

Prompt 3 Create a drawing or collage using only fragments (cut, erased, or obscured forms). How does fragmentation shape interpretation?

READING THREE: ANOTHER MODERNISM – ATTENTION TO NATURE

Peter Vangioni, 'Devoted to Nature' in *Eileen Mayo: Nature, Art and Poetry*, *Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū*, 2019, pp. 7 - 23.

https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/media/uploads/2023_02/Eileen_Mayo-Nature_Art_and_Poetry.pdf

Vangioni's text presents Mayo as an artist whose work remained grounded in the observation of the natural world across a wide range of media, from printmaking to design. Her practice resists dominant narratives of rupture and instead develops through continuity and precision.

Key Idea

Modernism can also be a practice of sustained attention; refining observation, composition, and form rather than breaking them apart.

Prompt 1 Mayo worked across multiple media. How does this challenge traditional distinctions between "fine art" and "design"?

Prompt 2 Compare careful observation of nature with more expressive or abstract approaches. What different kinds of knowledge do they produce?

Prompt 3 Draw a natural form (plant, shell, insect) with close attention to detail. What kind of looking does this require?

1. Readers will note the lack of the acute é in our spelling of Paul Cezanne's name in this resource—this has been done to revert the artist's name back to its original Provençal spelling, which Cezanne himself maintained in signatures throughout his life.

SET UP YOUR

SALON *at* HOME

A suggested order of proceedings for your soirée:

TIME	ACTIVITY	DETAILS
Arrival	<i>Bienvenue & First Pour</i>	Guests arrive, settle in with coffee, brunch or pastries. Music begins softly in the background.
Conversation I	<i>Reading One: Re-seeing the World</i>	Read the excerpt aloud and dive into the first creative prompt. Journal your ideas before sharing with the rest of the group.
Conversation II	<i>Reading Two: Breaking the Human Form</i>	Read Elin Morgan piece, then invite participants to respond through collaging or conversation.
Pause	<i>Refill & Refresh</i>	Break for snacks and drink top-ups. Encourage informal conversation.
Conversation III	<i>Reading Three: Another Modernism – 'Devoted to Nature'</i>	Read Peter Vangioni's text and navigate the first conversation prompt. Invite debate before collecting natural pieces to sketch.
Final Reflection	<i>Closing the Salon</i>	Group reflections: what stood out, what surprised you, what you'll take away.
After Hours	<i>Lingering at the Café</i>	Stay, chat, sketch, or continue the conversation informally – salons rarely end on time!



FOOD & DRINK TO SERVE

SIGNATURE *cocktail*

THE MODERNIST SPRITZ

**A light, sparkling toast to modern life,
conversation, and new ways of seeing.**

INGREDIENTS

- 60ml Prosecco (or other sparkling wine)
 - 30ml elderflower liqueur
 - 30ml soda water
 - Ice
- Lemon peel or edible flower, to garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Fill a wine glass with ice
2. Pour in the elderflower liqueur
3. Top with chilled Prosecco and a splash of soda water
4. Gently stir to combine
5. Garnish with a twist of lemon peel or an edible flower

Mocktail Version:

Mix elderflower cordial and cloudy apple juice, top with sparkling water over ice and garnish with lemon peel or mint



FOOD & DRINK TO SERVE

SNACK IDEAS

HERB & CHEESE SAVOURY TART

A simple, elegant centrepiece that will transform your gathering space into a Parisian café!

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 sheet of ready-rolled puff pastry (Carême brand, if you can get it!), thawed
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- ¾ cup grated Gruyère cheese
- 1 cup of ricotta cheese
- A handful of spinach
- A handful of chives
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons of dried herbs (a mix of thyme, rosemary, and parsley works great!)
- Salt & pepper
- Olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 180°C
2. Lay puff pastry in a baking dish or tray
3. Whisk ricotta, eggs, cheese, garlic, salt and pepper together
4. Pour mixture onto pastry
5. Scatter herbs, chives and spinach over the top
6. Bake for 25–35 minutes until golden and just set
7. Slice and serve warm or at room temperature

THE SALON TABLE

A rich and textured grazing board inspired by Paris café mornings.

Gather the following:

- Brie or other soft cheeses
- Aged cheddar or Comté
- Fresh baguette slices
- Butter and sea salt
- Grapes and figs
- Cornichons or pickled onions
- Honey or fig jam
- A small bowl of edible flowers or petals for garnish

Think of your table as a still life; composition, colour, and conversation matter just as much as taste!



SET THE SCENE: ATMOSPHERE & STYLING IDEAS

DRESS *code* THEMES

Encourage guests to dress in a way that reflects the spirit of Parisian café and salon culture – expressive, elegant and a little experimental

Parisian Café Chic

Think stripes, linen and simple neutrals; effortless 'I've just stepped out of a Montmartre café' energy

Artist's Studio Fit

Paint-stained shirts, smocks, oversized garments, scarves and rolled sleeves. Imagine Degas, Picasso and Matisse in the studio!

Belle Époque Elegance

Envision late 19th/early 20th century inspired silhouettes; soft dresses, hats, gloves and muted pastels, lace and refined detail.

Modernist Experiment

Re-create a Picasso painting with bold shapes, monochrome looks, graphic patterns and abstract styling!

BONUS

You could even offer a prize for the best dressed!

SOUNDTRACK *the* SALON

Set the mood with some French jazz classics or some instrumental piano inspired by Parisian cafés, in the background of artist studios, Belle Époque salons, and the creative energy of modernity.



Scan the QR Code to access a salon-inspired playlist on Spotify, or search 'Salon Like It's 1905 Playlist' on Spotify.

Suggested Artists:

- Erik Satie
- Debussy
- Django Reinhardt
- Édith Piaf
- Charles Trenet
- Josephine Baker
- Nina Simone
- Blossom Dearie
- Juliette Gréco
- Pink Martini

SHARE *your* SALON!

We'd love to see how your *Facing Modernity: Degas to Picasso*-inspired gathering went – tag us on Instagram @sam_shepparton

Or share your photos, comments and feedback to publicprograms@sheppartonartmuseum.com.au



WHAT'S NEXT: KEEP THE SOIRÉE GOING!

Your modernist art ventures don't have to end here
– there's plenty more to get involved in!

SAVE *the* DATES!

SAM Deep Dives: An Introduction to Modernism with Professor Anthony White (online)
Thursday 11 June, 6 – 7.15pm
Zoom

[REGISTER HERE](#)

SAM Deep Dives: The Modern Woman – Visibility in Art with Dr Mimi Kelly
Thursday 9 July, 6 – 7.15pm
SAM – Register your spot:

[REGISTER HERE](#)

We have even more *Facing Modernity: Degas to Picasso* programs and events coming up at SAM – check our website for more details

[LEARN MORE](#)

Facing Modernity: Degas to Picasso is on show at SAM every day from 23 May to 20 September – grab your ticket here

[BOOK TICKETS](#)



THANK YOU

This Salon Like It's 1905: *The Age of Modernity from Degas to Picasso* – Free Downloadable Toolkit was created by Shepparton Art Museum (SAM) in collaboration with the University of Melbourne.



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