

Modern Beauty?: The Aesthetics of Perceptual Simultaneity

The Wolfsonian Teaching Exhibition at the Frost Art Museum

January 22 – April 6, 2014

Sight, sound, and movement are the focus of a new exhibition, *Modern Beauty?: The Aesthetics of Perceptual Simultaneity*, to be presented by The Wolfsonian–FIU at the Frost Art Museum, opening January 2014. In presenting graphic design, paintings, ceramics, publications, and even musical works drawn from The Wolfsonian’s vast collections on modern art, architecture, and design, the exhibition highlights the development of multisensory experiences in art and literature, promoted by creative figures across Europe in the early twentieth century. The exhibition is intended to complement a course on the development of perceptual simultaneity in architecture and literature, co-taught by the exhibition’s guest curators, Gray Read and Renée Silverman, and offered by FIU’s School of Architecture and Department of Modern Languages in Spring 2014.

In the 1910s, a small group of European poets, artists, and architects, including Blaise Cendrars, Sonia Delaunay-Terk, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Amédée Ozenfant, created works defined by the simultaneous experience of sight, sound, and narrative. They interpreted modernity in terms of this perceptual simultaneity, producing densely layered pieces intended to heighten viewers’ receptivity through the diverse impressions that they formed through sensory perception. The focus on perceptual simultaneity contributed to jarring new beauty that artists discovered in early twentieth century industrialization, civil unrest, and war. *Modern Beauty?* presents some of the seminal work of artists, writers, designers, and musicians who used multiple types of media to develop their conception of a modern experience during the critical years surrounding World War I. The exhibition also shows how the work of other artists extended and built upon their ideas during the 1920s and 1930s.

Modern Beauty? is the ninth exhibition The Wolfsonian presents at the Frost Art Museum. These exhibitions provide an opportunity for FIU faculty members to work with museum staff in developing exhibitions from The Wolfsonian’s collection that serve as resources for teaching and learning, and advance scholarly research. They are supported by a grant to The Wolfsonian from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation whose purpose is to strengthen the ties between the museum’s collections and FIU students and faculty. "In this show, The Wolfsonian offers objects that challenge the senses, created in the moment when modern artists rethought the act of perception itself," Read notes, "Each object offers a quizzical, perceptual puzzle. These objects make us realize that seeing is thinking."