

Into the Night: Cabarets and Clubs in Modern Art,  
Barbican Art Gallery, Getty Images, photo by Tristan Fewings

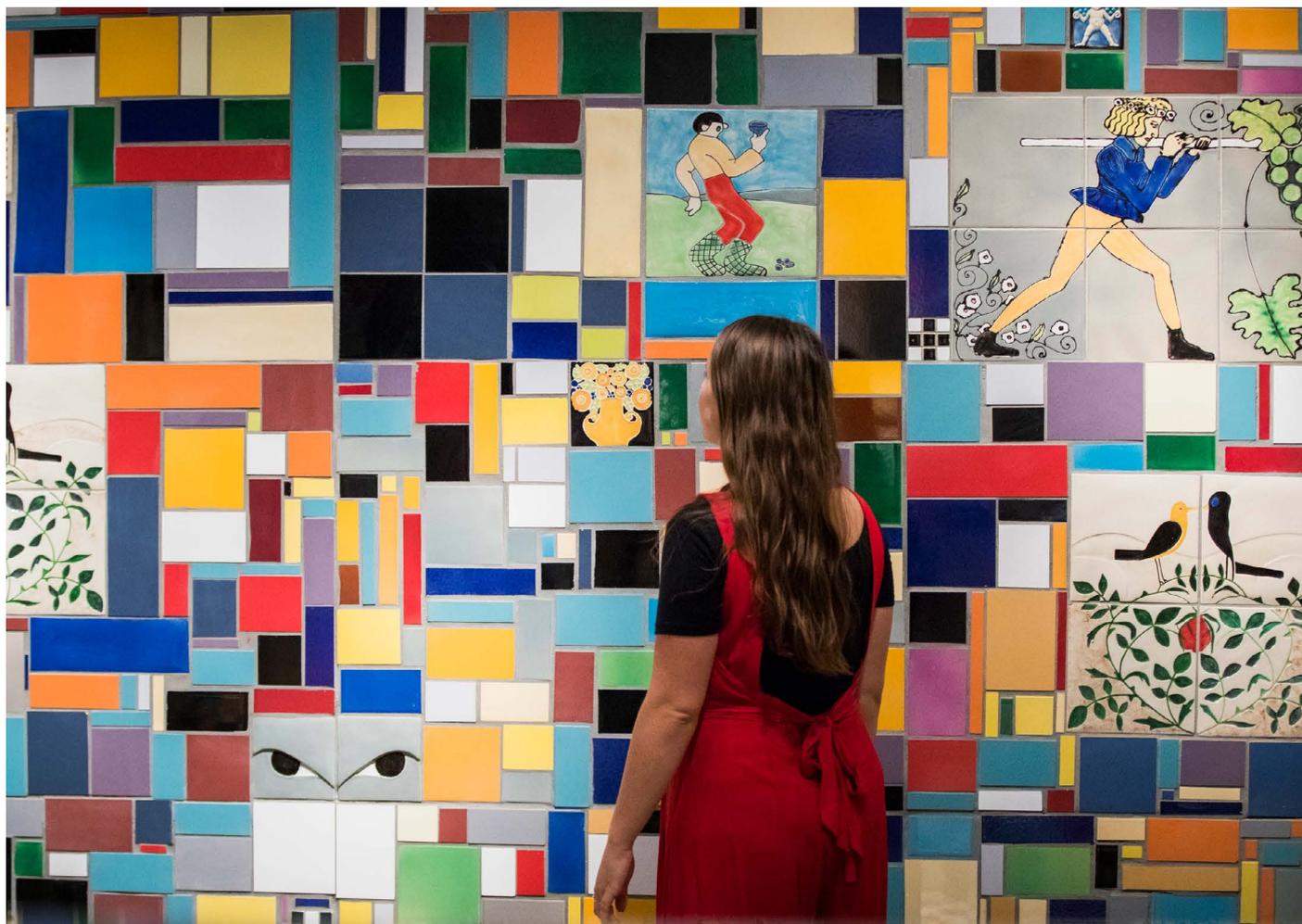


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# Into the Night

**Cabarets and Clubs in Modern Art**  
Creative Learning: Teachers' Resource



## Using this Resource

This resource examines key areas of the exhibition and a range of potential focus areas and cross curricular links. It includes questions and points for consideration to encourage engagement and activity ideas both in the gallery and beyond. It may be useful to secondary school teachers, or leaders of arts or youth groups visiting the exhibition. You can draw from the resource to open discussion and responses from your groups – encouraging them to explore their own thoughts, ideas, observations and interpretations about the works.

**Resource created by Alison Dunne for Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning.**

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- Introduction
- Constellations of Clubs – Key information about the clubs and cabarets featured in the exhibition
- Welcome to the Club - Cross curricular themes within the exhibition (Art and Design, English, Music, Dance, Drama and History)

## Plan your Visit

Children under 12 should be accompanied by adults. It is most appropriate for pupils studying at Key Stage 4 or higher. A pre-visit is recommended for teachers intending to bring students to the exhibition.

## Your Visit

*Into the Night: Cabarets and Clubs in Modern Art*  
Barbican Art Gallery (Level 3), Barbican Centre

4 October 2019 – 19 January 2020

Mon–Tue 12noon–6pm

Wed–Fri 12noon–9pm

Sat 10am–9pm

Sun 10am–6pm

A discounted group booking rate of £3 per student applies to all secondary and sixth form school groups of ten or more (up to age 19).

For bookings and enquiries please contact the school groups booking line.

Tel: 020 7382 7211 (Mon–Fri 10am–5pm)

Email: [groups@barbican.org.uk](mailto:groups@barbican.org.uk)

**Free tours: please book at least two weeks in advance if you would like a free exhibition tour as part of your visit.**

## Introduction

*Into the Night: Cabarets and Clubs in Modern Art*, explores the artistic life and social context of such venues across the modern period (1880s-1960s), in a number of global locations.

The 'artistic cabaret' came into being during the late nineteenth century in Paris and soon became a phenomenon across other cities in Europe by the early 20th century. Within the exhibition, we see how cabarets and clubs of the late 19th and early 20th century were very much associated with Modernism and the Avant-Garde. At this time, huge shifts were occurring in technology, industrialisation, urban life, society and arts/culture allowing innovation, exploration and experimentation to proliferate. Later clubs followed suit in the same vein, kicking out against convention and norms of their day.

These spaces were all melting pots of interdisciplinary creativity, exchange, experimentation and personal expression: often providing oases of liberation from different forms of oppression and class, gender and origin divides for artists, performers, architects, designers, writers, dancers, musicians, political revolutionaries and more.

These night time venues challenged the status quo and pushed the boundaries artistically, culturally, socially and politically. Performance, dance, music, exhibitions, debates and the production of publications were just some of the activities that took place in a cross disciplinary synthesis of art forms. Ultimately, many of these clubs and cabarets influenced and connected with each other far across international borders and time periods, encouraging further cross-pollination of ideas, cross cultural dialogues and new dynamics to emerge.

## Constellations of Clubs

Existing across different points in space, time and place these clubs and cabarets can be seen as glittering constellations of exchange and dialogue, transmitting ideas and influence through global and historical connections.

Students may wish to explore and research aspects of individual clubs including visual outputs and art movements involved, interior decoration, design concepts, theatrical spectacle and genre, dance and choreography, music and composition and more.

There is potential to delve deeper by investigating and tracing parallels between these spaces and the immersive experiences they offered – what similarities and ways of thinking overlap and chime together in some way? For example:

The Estridentista group in Mexico were influenced by Marinetti and Futurism taking place Italy at that time with both movements challenging conventions and developing new artistic languages that reflected the experience of modern urban life. There were close affinities too between Estridentista sculptor Germán Cueto and the Dada artist Marcel Janco.

From the late 19th century and into the 1920s, an international communal spirit prevailed. Look closer at how artists in Europe would visit and perform across boundaries in Paris, Vienna and Zurich allowing for further dissemination and sharing of creative ideas. See too how the influence of American music and dance started to permeate the European scene.

## Le Chat Noir - Paris, 1881

Le Chat Noir cabaret club was founded by eccentric storytelling show man and entrepreneur, Rodolphe Salis. Its eclectic interior had a medieval feel, crammed with objects and images from different eras and it soon became the exciting epicentre of the artistic avant-garde in France. Its outpouring of spontaneous poetry performances, visual arts, improvised performances, satirical songs and debates on contemporary politics became legendary. Its 'open stage' meant no two evenings were ever the same, with performers rising to their feet as inspiration struck or the mood took them!

Le Chat Noir is particularly known for its famous and influential shadow theatre which was initiated in 1886 by Henri Rivière. Be inspired by these shadow plays and work by other figures associated with Le Chat Noir including: artist Toulouse Lautrec, dancer Jane Avril, cabaret singer Aristide Bruand, composer Claude Debussy, poet Paul Verlaine and the group of artists known as the Incoherents whose satirical work, prefigured both Dada and Surrealism.



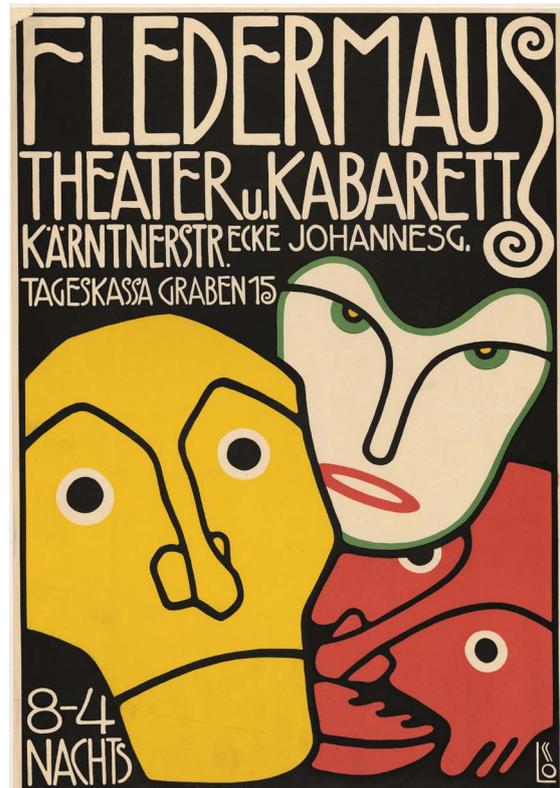
**Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen**, *Réouverture du cabaret du Chat Noir* (Reopening of the Chat Noir Cabaret), 1896. Victoria and Albert Museum, London © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

## Cabaret Fledermaus - Vienna, 1907

The Cabaret Fledermaus was conceived by the Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshop) - a group of artists and designers founded by architect Josef Hoffmann, artist Koloman Moser and businessman Fritz Waerndorfer. It was a cross arts collective looking

to champion real hand-made crafts and individual makers over mass production and industrial processes. Josef Hoffmann was behind the overall design scheme which fused different styles and art forms. He incorporated grids of squares and rectangles in primary colours and a mosaic of over 7000 uniquely designed tiles by Wiener Werkstätte artists Berthold Löffler and Michael Powolny.

Consider how the Cabaret reflected the Wiener Werkstätte's ideals with its unique synthesis of art and design, architecture, poetry, music, performance and theatre, expressive dance and shadow plays by artist Oskar Kokoschka.



**Bertold Löffler**, *Poster for the Cabaret Fledermaus*, 1907. The Albertina Museum, Vienna © The Albertina Museum, Vienna

## The Cave of the Golden Calf - London, 1912

The Cave of the Golden Calf was the first artistic cabaret in London and took as its inspiration the cosmopolitan feel and experiences offered by both Le Chat Noir and Cabaret Fledermaus in Europe.

It was set up by Austrian writer Frida Strindberg with interiors designed in the British Proto-Vorticist style, by young British avant-garde artists including Spencer Gore, Wyndham Lewis, Jacob Epstein, Charles Ginner and Eric Gill.

At a time when night life in London could be dreary and unadventurous it provided an experimental and challenging alternative. The Cave had an eclectic performance programme including immersive artistic and theatrical spectacles and shadow plays. Can you find any equivalent examples of immersive performance spaces or experiences in London or the UK today?

## **Cabaret Voltaire - Zurich, 1916**

Cabaret Voltaire was key to the development of the Dada movement and was founded by Dada pioneers Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings as a performance and meeting space for artists in which to share, exchange and experiment with ideas. Dada incorporated a reaction to the dehumanising, chaotic effects of war (the First World War was raging at the time outside neutral Switzerland) and it sought to dissolve meaning and order into subversive, nonsensical and satirical new forms.

Investigate further the ground breaking repertoire of the cabaret which included experimental sound poetry, absurdist lectures, abstract dance, masked performance, African-inspired modern music, improvisation and spontaneous theatre.

Other participating artists included Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Jean Arp (who were key to the design of L'Aubette club in Strasbourg), Richard Huelsenbeck, Marcel Janco, Tristan Tzara and Kurt Schwitters.

## **Bal Tik Tak and the Cabaret del Diavolo - Rome, 1921**

Futurist artist Giacomo Balla designed the Bal Tic Tac in Rome which was opened by Futurism founder Marinetti in 1921. Fellow artist, Fortunato Depero developed the Cabaret del Diavolo which opened in 1922. In 1915 both artists contributed to the influential text, *Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe* in which they put forward the concept of the 'total work of art' - art was capable of being everywhere and in everything as a free flowing force in everyday life; art could be inhabited!

Consider how both clubs embodied the Futurists' obsession with the total work of art and the speed and dynamism of modern life. In the Bal Tik Tak, the brightly coloured, abstracted mural designs for the interior reflected the swirling movements of new dances such as the foxtrot and one-step whilst the modern sounds of jazz played. The Cabaret del Diavolo was based on Dante's Divine Comedy, with the three realms of the dead - Heaven with bright lit stars in the ceiling and floating angels; Purgatory with the waiting green souls of limbo; Hell with violent flames, devils and red lights.

## **Café de Nadie and the Carpa Amaro - Mexico, 1921**

The Café de Nadie was adopted as a meeting places for artists, writers and musicians of the avant-garde Estridentismo group to explore new literary and visual languages which reflected the experience of contemporary urban life freed from the constraints of the past.

Consider the historical context of these spaces, emerging as they did after the 10 years of suffering which was the civil war and Mexican Revolution. It was a time to look forwards and outwards and to renew and re-make identity and culture. The Café de Nadie was filled with Cubist and Italian Futurist influences and art featuring modern technologies such as planes and cars. Poet and founder, Manuel Maples Arce and artists Germán Cueto and Ramón Alva de la Canal were key figures involved.

The Carpa Amaro was a huge tent which held shows that were designed as interdisciplinary, all-encompassing, inclusive experiences which brought free art to the people – very much part of the Socialist agenda post revolution.

## **L'Aubette – Strasbourg, 1922**

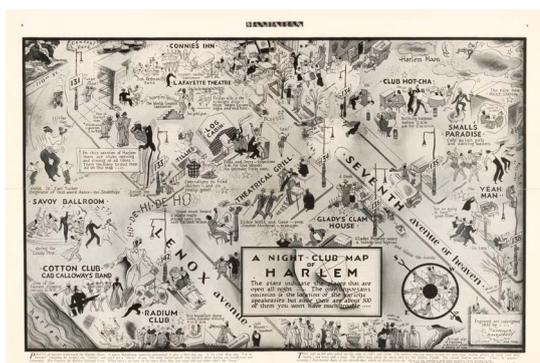
Brothers and entrepreneurs Paul and André Horn invited Sophie Taeuber-Arp to create the artistic vision of their new entertainment complex, L'Aubette. It was conceived as an immersive, total work of art or unified experience through which one could be led in a choreographed 'dance'. Tauber-Arp had studied under dance choreographer Rudolf Laban and her designs had a musical, notational, rhythmic feel.

Theo van Doesburg, (leader of the Dutch avant-garde movement De Stijl) designed the Ciné Ballroom (Ciné-Bal) as a true multimedia experience of painting, architecture, cinema, dance and lighting combined with everyday activities such as eating, drinking and socialising. The diagonal rhythms of his abstract compositions created a dynamic and disorientating effect, further enhanced by wall mirrors which also caught the fast moving reflections of the dancers on the dance floor.

Consider Van Doesburg's radical new vision of placing people inside the painting instead of in front of it – how does it feel to be part of a dynamic work of art?

## Weimar Clubs and cabarets - German cities, 1920s

After the collapse of its Empire and the defeat of the First World War, Germany became a democracy, the Weimar republic. In the early 1920s, people yearned for excitement, there was a sense of liberation and the economy started to recover. Night clubs appeared which fused cabaret, literature, art, music, theatre and satire in multi-sensory experiences. American jazz and dance crazes including the foxtrot, tango, one-step and Charleston became popular and exotic dances by Anita Berber, Valeska Gert and famously Josephine Baker were performed.



**E. Simms Campbell**, *A Night-Club Map of Harlem*, 1934. Photomechanical print on paper 35 × 56 cm Publisher: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., New York Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Washington, DC

Fantasy spaces were created such as the dance-casino called Scala where the ceiling was sculpted into jagged structures that hung down like crystalline stalactites. The pulsating energy of such clubs and bars was captured by artists including Otto Dix, Jeanne Mammen and Elfriede Lohse-Wächtler.

## Nightclubs, jazz clubs and cabarets of the 'Harlem Renaissance' - Harlem, New York, 1920s

After the First World War, in Harlem as in Germany, people craved places of escapism. Thousands of African Americans had travelled north to escape the persecution of the Jim Crow laws (which enforced racial segregation) and poor economic conditions in the South. Many moved to New York's Harlem neighbourhood bringing with them the rhythms of the blues and jazz.

Look at how in the 1920s, Harlem and its clubs, dance halls and speakeasies provided a fertile climate for new artistic and social freedoms and the defining of racial, sexual and gender identities through literature, music, theatre and the visual arts. New dance styles, such as the lindy hop, Charleston and jitterbug emerged and iconic figures such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald performed (ironically often in clubs

which were white owned and for white audiences only). Aaron Douglas' paintings and writing by Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson reflect and explore the vibrancy and excitement of 20s Harlem.

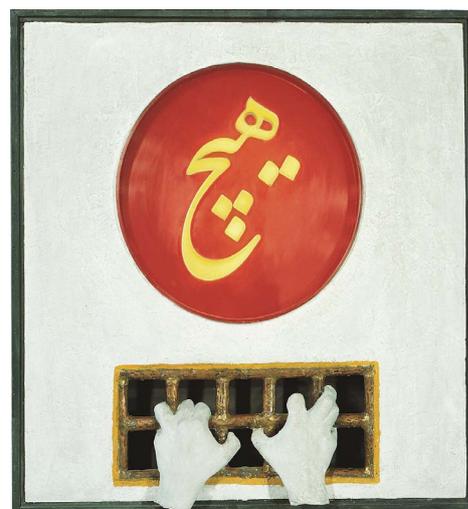
## The Mbari Clubs - Nigeria, 1960s

In 1960, Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule and in this postcolonial period clubs were established to reinvent artistic practice in new and exciting ways. In 1961, a group of artists, writers (including Chinua Achebe), musicians and actors formed the Mbari Artists and Writers Club in Ibadan. An exciting programme of events included open-air dance and theatre performances; Yoruba operas by Duro Ladipo; Fela Kuti's Afro-jazz; poetry and literature readings; experimental art workshops; and exhibitions by artists such as Colette Omogbai, Ibrahim El-Salahi, Jacob Lawrence, and Valente Malangataga.

The gallery at Mbari showed work that merged an appreciation of indigenous artistic traditions fused with modern practices and new art languages and forms.

## Rasht 29 - Tehran, 1966

Rasht 29 was established in 1966 by architect Kamran Diba, artist Parviz Tanavoli and musician Roxana Saba as a gathering space or club for artists. Spontaneous performances were held, artists collaborated and the first contemporary art auction in Iran took place. The Iranian art movement known as Saqqakhaneh which reconciled Modernism with ancient Persian traditions such as calligraphy was bound up with the life of this club. Explore some of the art forms created – including ready-mades and mechanised automata complete with motors and lightbulbs.



**Parviz Tanavoli**, *Heech Hands*, 1964. Collection Parviz Tanavoli © Parviz Tanavoli

# Welcome to the Club

## Cross Curricular Themes within the Exhibition

(Art and Design, English, Music, Dance, Drama and History)

Into the Night explores inter disciplinary thinking, making and collaborating in some of the most inspired settings and ways imaginable. As such, it provides a great springboard for both individual subject areas and cross curricula creativity, particularly through rich intersections between Art and Design, English, Music, Dance, Drama and History – with numerous possibilities for fusions and dialogues between them.

Look at the Constellations section for key information about individual clubs and eras. The following sections can be used as further starting points for student discussion and consideration and/or students' own research and creative work in single or multiple disciplines.

Consider your own preferences and reactions to the works you see and what effect they have on you, how they make you think and feel - and why. What inspiration and ideas can you take from them for your own work?

## Laboratories of Modern Life

The cabarets and clubs in this exhibition could be said to be 'laboratories' of modern life. Consider what happens in a laboratory – research, experimentation, testing out new approaches, discovery and invention and see how this applies to the spaces explored in this exhibition. For example, in the Cabaret Voltaire 'laboratory,'

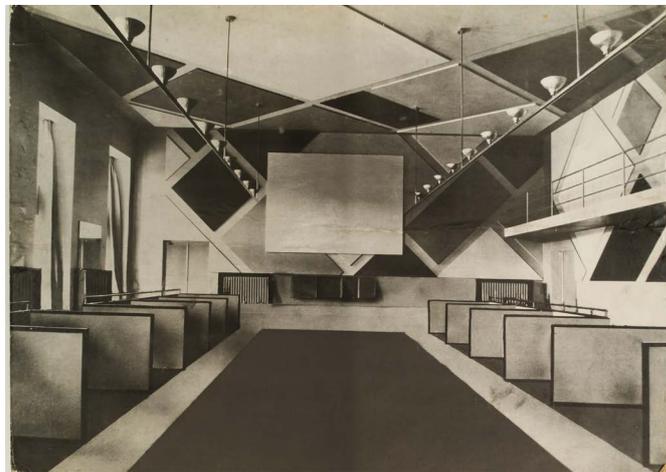
Hugo Ball created and performed what was to be known as the first performance of a new genre called 'sound poetry' whilst wearing his wildly imaginative magical Bishop Dada costume! Think too about Theo Van Doesburg's radical concept of the spectator entering into the painting rather than just standing in front of it merely looking. Can you create an equivalent experience perhaps in the form of an installation with interactive performances?

Create your own laboratory of ideas, experiments and research and see how you can make overlaps between your subject areas – can you team up with someone from another subject area to further push your shared creative thinking into new possibilities?

Think about setting up a café group or salon to explore and discuss ideas or causes you and others are interested in – think a myriad formation of books, politics, music, art and culture, ideas, beliefs and philosophies.

Examine how cabaret culture was often informed by popular and traditional forms of expression

including carnivals, circuses, funfairs, puppet shows and indigenous arts and crafts. Look further into these arts and entertainment forms and draw on any personal experiences of your own associated with them, to devise your own costumes, performances and artistic responses.



The Ciné-bal (cinema-ballroom) at Café L'Aubette, Strasbourg, designed by Theo van Doesburg, 1926-28. Image: Collection Het Nieuwe Instituut, donation Van Moorsel

## Gesamtkunstwerk

These night time venues were examples of Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art) as they organically synthesised and unified multiple art forms under one roof. Music, literature, performance and visual arts would all complement and feed into one another. Consider how the overall design concept of a club was created, including the range of artistic and cultural experiences down to the smallest of details; everything was developed with care and thought e.g. all the way from a handcrafted peppermill to the ambitious mosaic scheme in the Cabaret Fledermaus.

These were places that involved all the senses. Think of ways you can create artistic experiences that marry all the senses. You might develop spontaneous poetry performances or improvised theatre in an 'open stage'/'open mic' fashion; be inspired by Futurist or Dada approaches to poetry and free words from their usual grammatical or syntactical functions; create shadow plays; develop experimental dance; play jazz music; turn a room into an inhabitable painting or installation.

Explore the synthesis of art forms in key artistic movements associated with certain venues – for example, the Wiener Werkstatte, British Vorticism, Constructivism, De Stijl and Futurism.

## Kaleidoscopes and Shadows

Although the clubs, cafes and cabarets mainly came to life at night they were full of both shadows and kaleidoscopic light alike.

Look further into the shadow plays which were performed across venues e.g. in Le Chat Noir or Cabaret Fledermaus – how were they made and operated? Look at the technical and highly complex dramatic lighting created from just a light box projecting with different coloured transparencies slotted in to create sunsets, mist, mountains, horizons, seas etc. Can you create your own versions using traditional and/or modern technologies?

Consider the multimedia links between the shadow theatres of these clubs, their origins in the theatre, pantomimes and dioramas and the magic of early cinema which was about to arrive.

Explore the potential of using light in your own creative art work. You may wish to create a sculpture which produces light, or use light to create a sculpture or experience, through the manipulation of light, shadow, projections and colour in a space. Look at how work with light by Constructivist artists paved the way for future artists such as Dan Flavin, Yayoi Kusama and Olafur Eliasson.



## Immersive Experience

These cabarets and clubs created truly immersive, multi-sensory experiences for the visitor. The sense of arrival was always important, followed by a range of carefully thought through and often choreographed experiences. One entered a startling new world in dramatic contrast to the city and everyday life outside the doors. Depero described the spectator as 'the real actor of the evolving spectacle' – can you imagine the feeling of descending down into the flickering inferno underground in the Cabaret del Diavolo, participating in the ever-evolving drama?

In these venues, divisions were often dissolved between performers and audience. Immersive theatre took place on stage and off. Consider ways of performing that encourage this experience such as the breaking of the 'fourth wall' in drama. Think how these spaces laid foundations for modern theatre and take inspiration from contemporary interactive theatre such as Punchdrunk and You Me Bum Bum Train.

Look at overlaps between theatre design, installation art and site specific arts happenings. You may look to staging your own event in which you experience first-hand all aspects of producing a performance, such as lighting, costume, interpretation and design concepts.

Create your own multi-sensory and participatory spectacle blurring lines between performers and participants. Think about holding a performance in an unusual location such as outside in a park or natural area or in a tent as in the Carpa Amaro in Mexico - it could be a promenade performance, engaging directly with the audience.

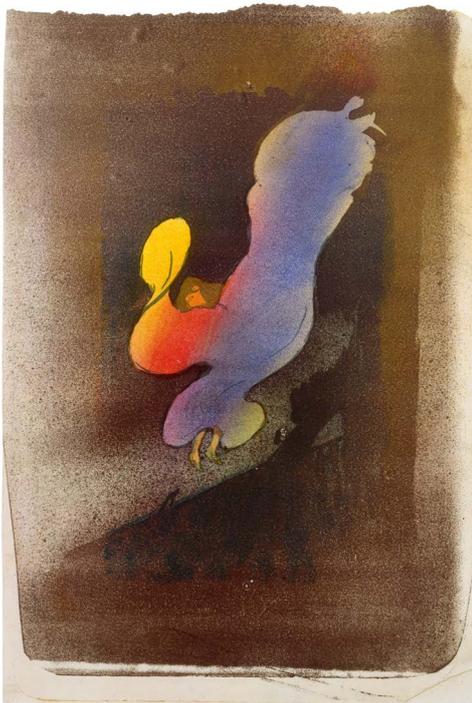


**Fortunato Depero**, *Diavoletti neri e bianchi. Danza di diavoli* (Black and White Little Devils: Dance of the Devils), 1922 Mart, Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto / Fondo Depero © DACS 2019 Archivio Depero, Rovereto. Courtesy Mart - Archivio Fotografico e Mediateca.

## Dancing the Night Away

Experimental dance and music were staples of the cabaret and club scene. Consider the diaphanous dances of Loie Fuller (who often performed at the Folies Bergere) and the luminous effects created by her billowing costumes and projected lights. Look at how Henri Toulouse-Lautrec creates two dimensional equivalents of her dances through animated sequences of lithographs which describe ever changing light, movement and abstracted form. Both Fuller's dances and Toulouse-Lautrec's works have a cinematic quality, reminding us that early film was just around the corner with filmmakers such as the Lumière brothers.

Listen to the jazz of the Harlem Renaissance and artists such as Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington and explore the simultaneous dance crazes



**Henri De Toulouse Lautrec**, *Miss Loie Fuller*, 1893  
© Bibliotheque nationale de France Paris

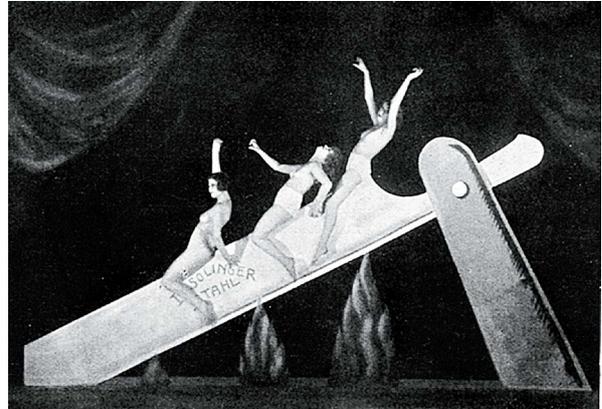
such as the lindy hop, foxtrot, Charleston and jitterbug. Consider too how jazz and American dance forms were also enjoyed across the Atlantic at the same time in European clubs such as those in Germany and Rome.

Explore the similarities between visual art and music and how both can have rhythm, structure, beat, energy and dynamic movement. For example, look at the visual art of Sophie Tauber-Arp in L'Aubette cabaret and beyond. Do her designs mirror her dance and musical training?

Listen to a range of music and as you do so, use colour, mark making or line to equate to musical notes, beats and rhythms. Allow your own musical tastes to inform your creative work whether that be through drama, dance, visual art or a cross-arts fusion. Create a series of abstract drawings inspired by what you hear.

Students may wish to try collaborative arts fusions e.g. choreograph, perform and film performance art and

dance based on appreciation of and engagement with, the forms experienced in the exhibition. Look for further inspiration in more recent examples; such as the experimental choreographer and artist Trisha Brown, who created drawings with her whole body in performances and collaborated with a host of other artists including Robert Rauschenberg.



'Slide on the Razor', performance as part of the Haller Revue 'Under and Over', Berlin, 1923. Courtesy Feral House

## Words and Pictures

It was common for such cabarets and clubs to produce a journal or in-house publication as a vehicle to chronicle the venue's activities, interests and aspirations in various forms such as poems, stories, reviews, political comment, drawings and illustrations. For example, journals were produced by Le Chat Noir, Cabaret Voltaire, the Mbari Clubs and Café de Nadie. Look at and make comparisons between the graphic identities of these clubs – at typefaces and stylistic devices employed e.g. grid-like text structures with art nouveau flourishes appear in different forms across many publications of a certain era.

Such publications formed an influential role in the rise of caricature and illustrated media. Look at contemporary caricaturists and cartoonists and consider how they comment on society and politics through witty observation and interpretation.

Consider creating your own journal, zine or annotated sketchbook either individually or collectively. Incorporate images, writings, collages, commentaries, inspirations, found material and more.

## Identity Collages

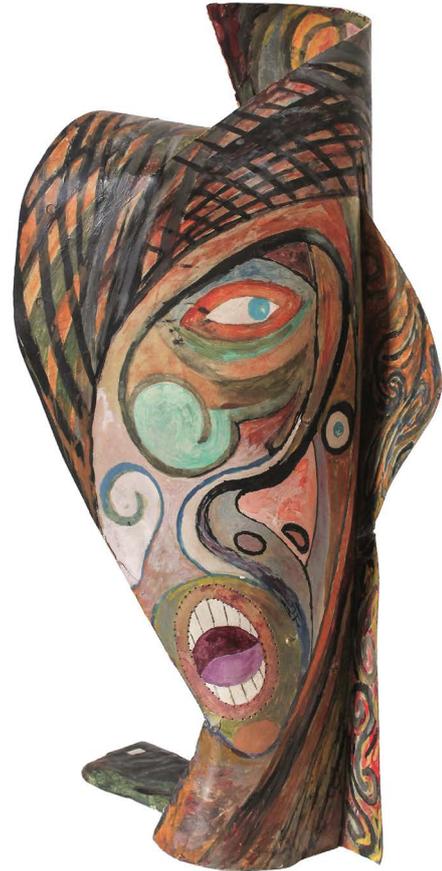
The exploration of identity was a common theme running through all these clubs and cabarets. Performers' could develop dramatic on and off stage identities which often pushed against the boundaries of the day. Even the venues themselves were collages of inspiration – with art forms and genres from across time and geography coexisting seamlessly. Consider the eclectic nature of these spaces and how this openness to both the modern and the traditional created infinite possibilities and multi-faceted identities.

Look at the mask as an art form of identity. See parallels between masks made by artists Marcel Janco of the Cabaret Voltaire and Germán Cueto of the Café de Nadie in Mexico a few years later.

Janco's mixed media masks are collaged from card, wood, string, cloth, found materials and paints, inks and pastels. Consider the inspiration behind them – as diverse as Cubist assemblages and juxtapositions, and African, Japanese and Greek theatre masks. The facial features are exaggerated, angular and often distorted. Do you think they might mirror the terrible horrors raging on the First World War battlefields of Europe at the time? The masks were worn in experimental Dada performances with the Cubist/Dada technique of collaging disparate elements being echoed in the performances of deconstructed language and sound, often accompanied by African drumming.

Look at the masks by Germán Cueto with their dynamic swirling and geometric shapes, bold colours and deconstructed, sliced and fragmented portrait surfaces. These were made in papier-mâché or terracotta and took inspiration from traditional Mexican crafts and beyond; they were worn in Estridentista performances often informed by ancient Mexican carnival.

Look closer at the mask as an art form and use various influences to create your own mixed media expressive masks using similar materials and techniques. Consider staging a performance dictated by the masks – what movements ensue? What emotions are evoked? How inventive and experimental can you be?



**Máscara estridentista** (Stridentist Mask), c. 1924. Colección Ysabel Galán, México. Courtesy Colección Ysabel Galán, México. Photo: Cortesía del Museo Frederico Silva Escultura Contemporánea, San Luis Potosí, Mexico.

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