

**Study Questions for Kenneth E. Silver's "Purism: Straightening Up After the Great War"**

1. Silver writes that Purism's "look, its iconography, its theory, its *raison d'être* and its significance can only be understood within the physical and psychological frontiers of a brutalized and defiled France during the First World War" (303). Given this statement, how would you describe Silver's **disciplinary approach** to his subject?
2. Silver understands the Purist movement as a reaction to what historical phenomenon?
3. What does *avant-garde* mean? How might the military connotations of this word be of interest to this article on art history?
4. What are the various meanings of the French word *élan*, and how do they resonate with the title of Amédée Ozenfant's journal?
5. Would Ozenfant's journal *l'Elan* be considered a patriotic publication? Why or why not?
6. What does Silver mean when he argues that "the war begat a new measure of time" (305)?
7. Why did Jeanneret and Ozenfant refer to the First World War as "the Great Test"? What was being tested in this metaphor?
8. In three adjectives, characterize the aesthetic of Purist painting. What kinds of iconography did Purists use in their compositions? Describe the style and general feel of the Purist paintings that you examine in tandem with Silver's article (available on the HCC Website).
9. Traditionally, the First World War is dated between 1914-1918. What does Apollinaire mean by *l'esprit nouveau* (the new spirit)? Why does his characterization of this spirit give us, in Silver's estimation, "the key to more than a decade of French art" (309)?
10. Why does Silver metaphorically compare Jeanneret and Ozenfant's essay "Purism" to the Versailles Treaty? What kind of figurative language operates in "Purism"?
11. Why would the authors of "Purism" denigrate the notion of pleasure? That is, how does the idea of pleasure fit into stereotypes about French culture and why would those stereotypes need to be addressed in the post-bellum period? Accordingly, do Purists value individualistic or universal art?
12. What do you think is meant by the Purist maxim "Nothing is worthwhile which is not general, nothing is worthwhile that is not transmittable"? What values does this maxim speak to in post-war French culture?
13. How do the authors of "Purism" read and interpret Darwin's evolutionary theory in terms

of their own aesthetic theory? How might you relate this section of the essay (315) to the concept of artifactualization introduced by Prof. Izenberg in the Fall quarter?

14. How does the purified, standardized, organized, and clean aesthetic of a painting like Ozenfant's *Fugue* (1925) stand in contradiction to the reality of France after 1918? If this artwork was intended to "pull the curtain" on content that "might be overwhelming" (317), did it succeed?