

BEYOND CUBISM

Serge Férat · Léopold Survage · François Angiboult

With *Beyond Cubism*, we wanted to bring together Serge Férat, Léopold Survage and François Angiboult - the pseudonym used as a painter by Baroness Hélène d'Ëttingen - three singular figures who occupy a fascinating place in the history of the early twentieth-century avant-garde.

All three encountered Cubism, absorbing its construction and vocabulary, yet none of them allowed themselves to be confined by it. On the contrary, their work stands at the crossroads of several different paths, during that extraordinary moment in the 1910s when the boundaries between Cubism, Futurism, abstraction, literature, poetry and theatre were still fluid, and artists were inventing, almost day by day, new ways of seeing.

Of Russian origin and based in Paris, Férat, Survage and d'Ëttingen belonged to a cosmopolitan milieu in which ideas circulated with extraordinary freedom. Around them were Apollinaire, Picasso, Soffici, Severini, the Delaunays, Alexandra Exter, Irène Lagut and many others. Férat and d'Ëttingen had particularly close ties with the Italian painter and writer Ardengo Soffici: their story bears witness to this constant exchange between Paris and Italy, between Cubism and Futurism.

But what perhaps unites them even more profoundly is the way in which they **liberated colour from Cubism**. Nourished in particular by their Russian heritage, colour in their work becomes vibrant, rhythmic, almost autonomous.

With Survage, this exploration achieved astonishing modernity as early as 1913 with his *Rythmes colorés (Coloured Rhythms)*: he imagined a succession of abstract, coloured forms intended to come alive over time, like the images of a film. Painting was no longer simply to occupy space; it could now possess **rhythm, duration, almost a musical quality**.

Férat and Hélène d'Ëttingen were themselves far more than witnesses to this extraordinary artistic ferment: **they were active participants and conduits for it**. Within Apollinaire's circle, they took part in the adventure of *Les Soirées de Paris*, an essential review where painting, poetry, literature and criticism came together, and which played an important role in introducing and championing the most innovative artistic developments of the time.

In 1917, this fluidity between the arts found a particularly striking expression when Serge Férat designed the sets and costumes for Guillaume Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias (The Breasts of Tiresias)*. It was for this work, described as a “**surrealist drama**”, that a word appeared which would go on to have an extraordinary legacy. Férat's sets and costumes fully participated in this ambition to invent a new form of theatre.

Hélène d'Ëttingen perhaps embodies this freedom better than anyone. A painter under the name François Angiboult, a writer under the name Roch Grey, a poet under the name Léonard Pieux, as well as a collector, patron and leading figure within this avant-garde circle, she too refused to accept boundaries between disciplines. Her life, like her work, tells the story of an era in which **painting, literature and poetry were being reinvented together**.

This is precisely what we wanted to show with *Beyond Cubism*: not to confine these artists within yet another category, but, on the contrary, to recreate the freedom of a moment when **the categories themselves were beginning to break apart.**

They began with Cubism, but were already looking elsewhere.

They stood at a crossroads: between Paris and Europe, between Russia and Italy, between figuration and abstraction, between painting, poetry and theatre.

And perhaps this is where their true modernity lies: in their refusal to follow a single path, and in the remarkable curiosity that allowed them to open several paths at once.

Galerie Berès

Beyond Cubism - from 10 September 2026