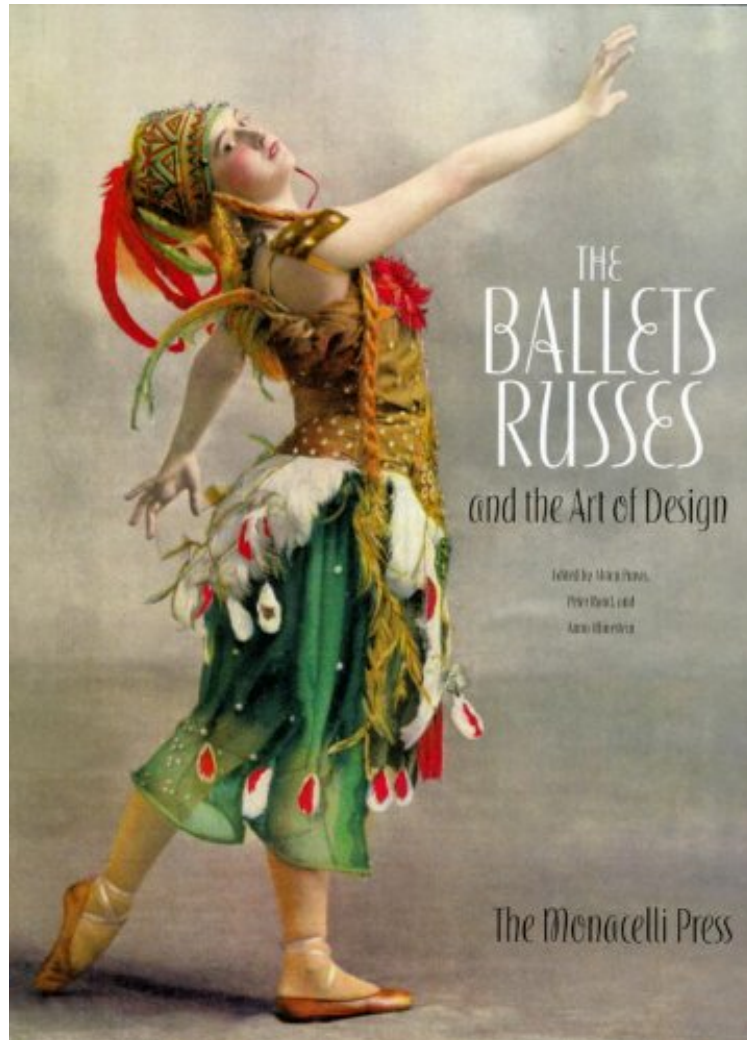


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## The Ballets Russes and the Art of Design

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**From Brand: The Monacelli Press : The Ballets Russes and the Art of Design** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ballets Russes and the Art of Design:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. ExcellentBy T. DreilingBeautiful book. A great book for those interested.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Ballets Russes gemBy Sandra E. HollimonThe quality of the illustrations in this book are outstanding! The colors are vivid and the illustrations are very sharp. The paper quality is excellent and the scholarly quality of the essays is first rate!8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. wonderfulBy JanineThe book has many photographs of art in black and white, also in color. The descriptions and stories are wellwritten. The eroticism in the early 1900's is displayed in many of the costumes.

The Ballets Russes was a phenomenon of the early twentieth century, permeating daily life wherever the company traveled and leaving a lasting impact on dance, theater, and the visual arts. Sergei Diaghilev, impresario from 1909 until his death in 1929, fused the most avant-garde, groundbreaking movements in dance, choreography, art, design, and costume into unique and stunning productions. The work was exciting, and always new, and it stretched the limits of the possible in art. The color, form, and material in costume and set design astonished audiences, transforming every corner of Western culture in the twentieth century. Fashion and decor designers and visual artists in particular including Coco Chanel, Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Lon Bakst, and Pablo Picasso found inspiration in the Ballets Russes. Designers and artists moved past old boundaries and created costumes and set designs for these extravagant productions, bridging the gaps between tangible and abstract artistic genres. The Ballets Russes and the Art of Design explores these revolutionary icons and ideas, illuminating Sergei Diaghilev's profound revitalization of the arts, which continues to influence us today. Ten essays by internationally recognized experts and 200 color and black-and-white illustrations many from private collections and never-before-published discuss a broad range of topics, including set and costume designs, graphic design and poster art, photographs and postcards, Diaghilev's presence in the media, and private and museum collections of Ballets Russes treasures.

"This deluxe book from The Monacelli Press is beautifully illustrated and includes a number of varied essays which offer a thorough and lively exploration of the many accomplishments of this extraordinary dance company." Bart Boehlert's Beautiful Things About the Author Alston Purvis, chair of the department of graphic design, College of Fine Arts, Boston University, has written numerous books, including Type: A Visual History of Typefaces and Graphic Styles, Vol. 1, Dutch Graphic Design: A Century of Innovation, and Meggs' History of Graphic Design. Peter Rand teaches writing at the College of Communication, Boston University, and is the author of numerous works of fiction and nonfiction, including Firestorm and China Hands. Anna Winstein is a historian and scholar of Russian culture working on her doctoral dissertation at Oxford University. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. From: Introduction by Peter Rand The show's the thing, to paraphrase Shakespeare. Sergei Diaghilev, the Ballets Russes impresario, was a showman, vulgar though it may seem to say so. Only a master of show business of a very high order could have harnessed the genius of great artists and fused elements of the fine arts to stage works for the musical theater with such professional success for two decades. Diaghilev in some respects created the model for twentieth-century impresarios like Florenz Ziegfeld, Billy Rose, and Mike Todd. He possessed a genius for publicity. He was able to hold his own among bankers and theater people. He knew his particular audience, and he knew how to keep them entertained. Diaghilev stands alone, however, among those showmen who came before and those who followed because he was a provocateur, a passionate aesthete with a radical mission to show an audience, as with a mirror, works that would disturb its self-image and incite it to think in new ways about art. Painting and the art of the new formed the foundations of the Ballets Russes mission, which grew to include musical composition and dance. For Diaghilev, show business was the means to an end. He never sacrificed his mission to the demands of the box office. The Ballets Russes product was conceived and refined, aesthetically and ideologically, over two decades before Diaghilev launched his first season in 1909, in the World of Art workshop. This was the informal club of young men who, under the inspired guidance of Alexandre Benois, used to meet regularly in Saint Petersburg. Diaghilev was a vital force in this group, which claimed Lon Bakst as an early confederate. Diaghilev was an ambitious proponent of its ideas, but it must be said that the Ballets Russes was the product of a collective mission to assert new values in Russian painting and, in the new century, to introduce to the Paris salons a peculiarly Russian contribution to painting of the new century in Europe. . . . He set forth with the confidence of someone who knows exactly what he needs to do. Victory was a foregone conclusion. He understood the members of his audience better than they knew him, and this was his power. He did not want to turn them to stone. He'd done that in Saint Petersburg. He wanted to excite them and show them a spectacle that would arouse them and break some taboos. He used the rhythms of Russian music, classical ballet performance with new choreography, and vibrant design to awaken archetypal drives, long repressed, that ranged from eros to thanatos. He did so with spectacles that demanded absolute perfection and integrity in every aspect of the various disciplines employed. From this beginning, under the command of Diaghilev, the Ballets Russes matured over twenty years into a theater of experiment in the relationship between form, image, and content in dance. These showpieces continued to shock, and they continued to reflect a world of bewildering change. Great works came into being under the command of Diaghilev. To make this happen, he played to a capitalist gallery that was always prepared to be bored. He solved the problem by creating the new. He led his troupe through a world war, across the ocean, and from one country to another. Diaghilev showed his audience how to imagine the future. That future is with us, now. As you behold the images on these pages, and read the thoughtful commentaries that elucidate aspects of the Ballets Russes, you may find a kind of inspiration of your own reflected here for the time in which we now live. Such is the gift, however fragmentary, that the Ballets Russes continues to supply.