

CHAGALL, PICASSO, MONDRIAN AND OTHERS

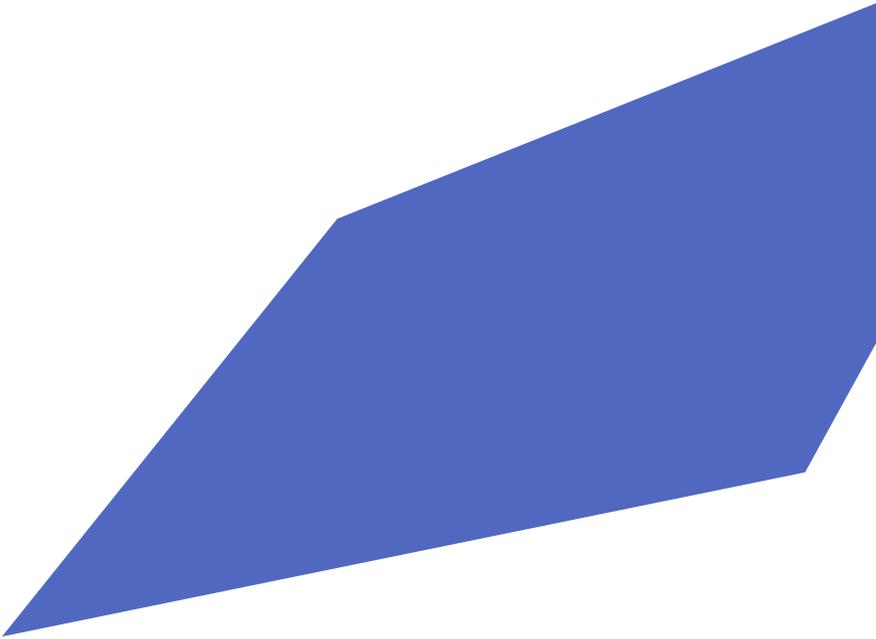
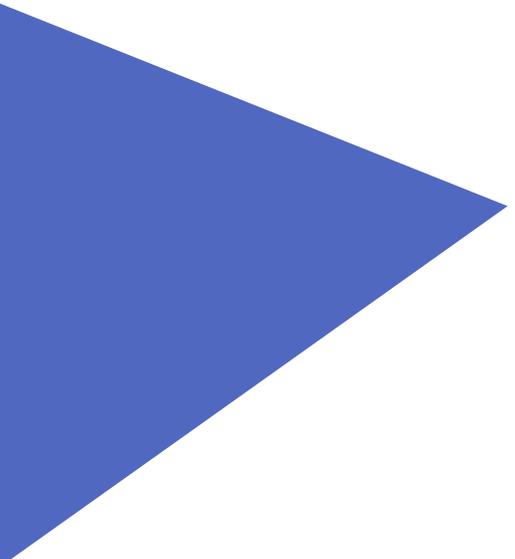


MIGRANTS IN PARIS

STEDELIJK

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“The truly modern artist considers the metropolis as the embodiment of abstract life; it is closer to him than nature.”

Piet Mondrian

“No academy could have given me all I discovered by getting my teeth into the exhibitions, the shop windows, and the museums of Paris.”

Marc Chagall

“I want to show Paris in the carcass of an ox.”

Chaim Soutine

“The camera need not invent, manipulate or fool. It does not paint, nor does it imagine. The photographer is a witness, the witness of his time.”

Germaine Krull

“There is and was French, German, Italian, and Flemish art. But I deny those specific definitions so fashionable with adepts of fascism which make of every country an hermetic cell from which all foreign artists are excluded.”

Ossip Zadkine

“I walk through this huge city. I look into a thousand thousand eyes. But I almost never find a soul there.”

Paula Modersohn-Becker

“Almost every evening, either I went to Braque’s studio or Braque came to mine. Each of us had to see what the other had done during the day. We criticized each other’s paintings.”

Pablo Picasso

“The essential thing is to elongate the women and especially to make them slim. After that it just remains to enlarge their jewels. They are ravished.”

Kees van Dongen

“I have two loves: my country and Paris.”

Josephine Baker

The Italian painter Gino Severini arrived in Paris on a grey, rainy morning in November 1906, aged 27. He would later describe the city in his autobiography as the place of his intellectual and spiritual birth. He was a Futurist — a member of a group of young, revolutionary Italian artists who radically aspired to a new age, and with it the destruction of all tradition. 'We are beginning a new epoch of painting' and 'War is the only hygiene in the world,' wrote the Futurist movement's leading light, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, many artists, foreigners among them, volunteered for the French army. Severini's fellow Futurists in Italy did the same when their country entered the war in 1915. Severini was rejected for military service, however, and went on living in the Parisian suburb of Igny. Nevertheless, there was still a way that he could contribute to this purifying war, Marinetti told him in a letter of November 1914:

'Interest yourself in the war and its repercussions in Paris pictorially. Try to live the war pictorially, studying it in all its marvellous mechanical forms (military trains, fortifications, the wounded, ambulances, hospitals, funeral processions). You have the fortune of being in Paris right now. Take absolute advantage, abandon yourself to the enormous military, anti-Teutonic emotions that agitate France.'

Severini responded to Marinetti's plea in 1915 by painting a series of military trains. In *Train de blessés* he painted one of the many trains that passed his house carrying wounded soldiers. Identifiable elements in the cubist composition include a soldier, a nurse and the interior of the train. The diagonal lines also clearly outline the shape of the Eiffel Tower. The accumulated clouds of steam, flags, houses, signs and newspapers create a striking impression of the agitation and commotion in Paris in the first years of the war.

GINO SEVERINI
Cortona, Italy, 1883 – Meudon, France, 1966
Train de blessés (Hospital Train), 1915
Oil on canvas

TRAIN DE BLESSÉS

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In the first half of the 20th century Paris was a magnet for artists hoping to join the city's artistic circles. Becoming associated with Modernism, the radically innovative style that was having its heyday in Paris, could open a lot of doors. Anyone whose work was exhibited at a gallery gained access to collectors and museums. And a *succès de scandale* was certainly no obstacle to an artistic career.

The Dutch painter Jan Sluijters could testify to that. In 1904 he won the prestigious Prix de Rome, a bursary enabling him to live and work in Rome. But Sluijters much preferred Paris, where he threw himself wholeheartedly into the lively nightlife scene. His painting of Bal Tabarin nightclub in Montmartre is a whirl of light that vibrates with energy. And although his new work was not to the taste of the Prix de Rome jury — he had to return the award — Sluijters was able to turn his reputation as a pioneer of modernism into a steady stream of commissions and positive reviews.

Just before the turn of the century another Dutch painter, Kees van Dongen, started off in Paris as an illustrator. Although he was soon connected with the artists of the avant-garde, he experienced a fair amount of criticism from the press, which he attributed to his status as a foreigner. Van Dongen would later become a much sought-after portraitist who moved in high society circles in Paris. In 1931 he painted this portrait of Countess Anna de Noailles. As befits a society portrait, it depicts the countess as taller, slimmer and younger than she actually was. What steals the show, however, is not the string of pearls, but the order of distinction that Anna de Noailles is wearing with such pride — she had recently been conferred with the Légion d'Honneur, France's most prestigious honor.

KEES VAN DONGEN

Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1877 – Monte Carlo, Monaco, 1968

Anna de Noailles, 1931

oil on canvas

JAN SLUIJTERS

's-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands, 1881 – Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1957

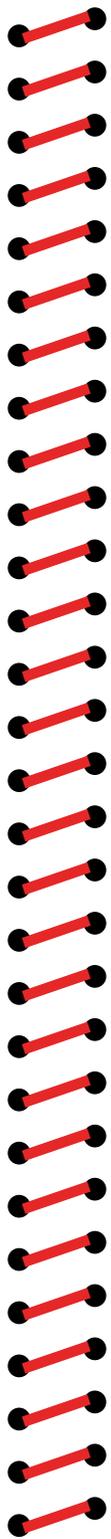
Bal Tabarin, 1907

oil on canvas

Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, long-term loan from a Private Collector, promised gift

COSMOPOLITAN PARIS

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The garlanded head gracing this poster is that of Aimé Césaire, one of the most important and influential poets of the 20th century. Césaire and Picasso met in 1938 at a peace congress in Wrocław, Poland, and their shared interest in Communism, African art and Surrealism formed the basis for an enduring friendship. Picasso's illustrations for Césaire's 1949 poetry collection [included](#) this idealized portrait for the title page.

The image were used again in 1956 on the poster for the groundbreaking 1st International Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris, where, in the years leading up to the Second World War, a new generation of intellectuals who had been educated in the city laid the foundations for Négritude, a new black consciousness movement set on raising awareness of the shared history and culture of Africa and its diaspora. Poets and writers such as Aimé Césaire (from Martinique), Alioune Diop and Leopold Senghor (both from Senegal) played crucial roles in this movement, battling against racism, for the recognition of black cultures, and for the cultural, political and economic liberation of Africa. Diop was also a key figure at the [magazine](#) and its eponymous publishers, the initiator of this congress.

So it was that in September 1956—against a backdrop of colonial independence wars, the cold war, racism and segregation—black intellectuals gathered at Sorbonne University in Paris. As well as offering a platform for the sheer diversity of black culture—from Yoruba poetry to “negro spirituals” to the visual arts of Haiti—the congress gave participants ample opportunity to analyze the causes of the crisis: the slave trade and slavery, racism, colonization, industrialization, and religion.

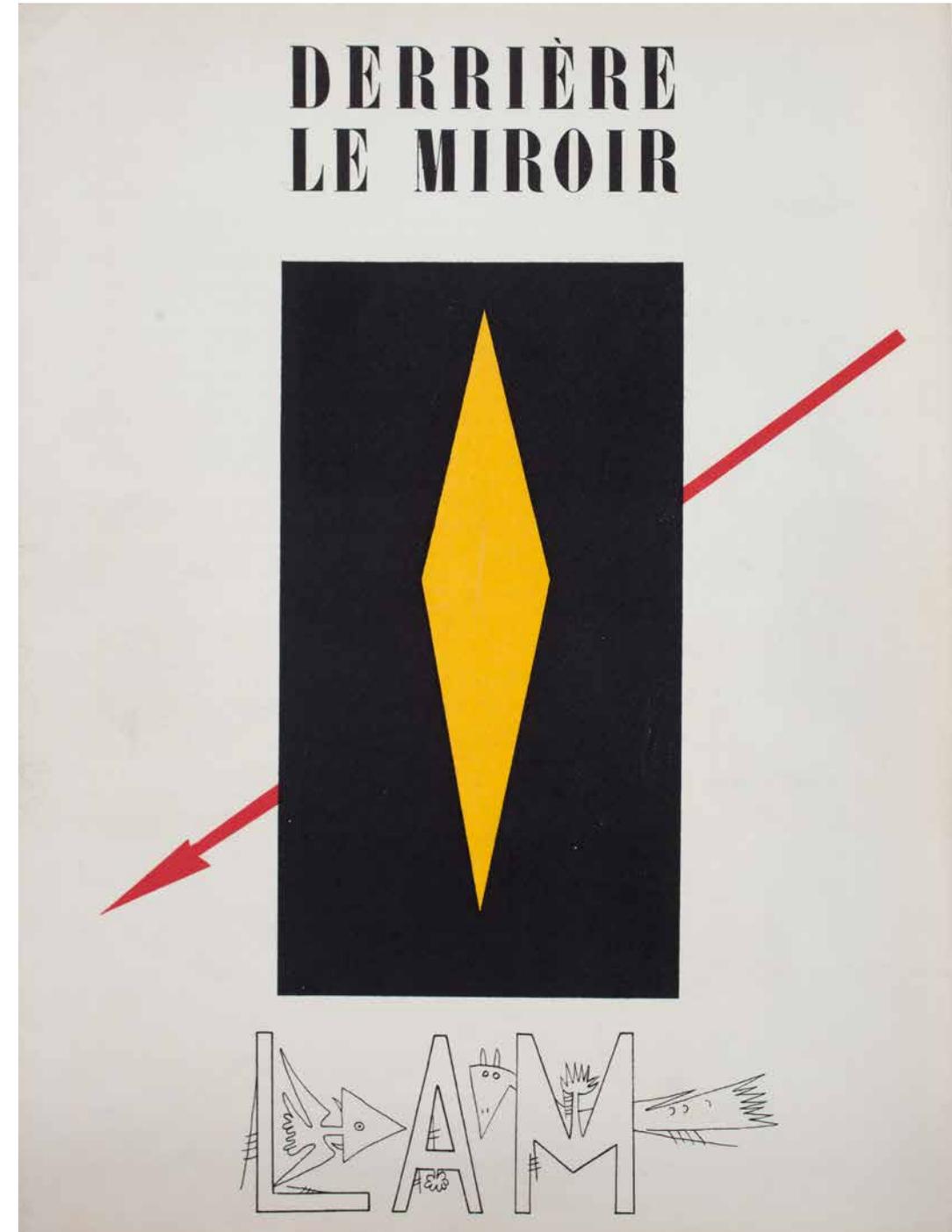
Picasso's portrait symbolized the interconnectedness of the cultures that were being heralded at the congress, while also displaying the support of a section of the white French intelligentsia for the anticolonial movement, and powerfully encapsulating the need for recognition and respect for black culture.

PABLO PICASSO
Malaga, Spanje, 1881 — Mougins, Frankrijk, 1973
affiche *Présence Africaine. Le 1er Congrès international des écrivains et artistes noirs*, Paris, Sorbonne, 19-22 septembre, 1956
lithografie



BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

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“I wanted with all my heart to paint the drama of my country, but by thoroughly expressing the negro spirit, the beauty of the plastic art of the blacks.”

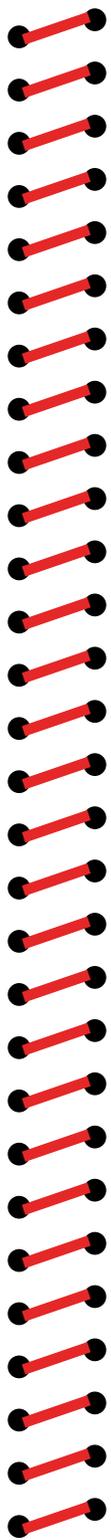
Wifredo Lam was born in Cuba, to a Chinese father and Afro-Cuban mother. His career as an artist began in Spain, where he studied, and in 1938 he moved to Paris where he and Pablo Picasso became friends, and Lam made connections with the Surrealists. Shortly afterwards, however, in 1941, the Second World War prompted him to move back, reluctantly, to Cuba. On this journey he stopped off on Martinique, where he met the poet Aimé Césaire, one of the founders of the Négritude movement. This encounter marked the beginning of a lifelong bond between the poet and the painter.

Returning to Cuba was a defining moment in Lam’s life. The long journey via Martinique and Haiti brought him into renewed contact with his black history, his family, and the harsh realities of Cuban society: black culture in Cuba had been reduced to serving as a folkloric tourist attraction; “What I saw on my return was some sort of hell... trafficking in the dignity of a people.”

Lam was conscious of his exceptional position, given his Afro-Chinese Cuban background, his knowledge on African visual culture, his network in the international avant-garde, and his connections with the spiritual worlds of Santería and voodoo. He developed a surrealist visual idiom to express a conscious and assertive Afro-Cuban identity, often incorporating the symbolism of Santería and voodoo—as in this lithograph featuring a  (Trojan horse), symbolizing a person who is possessed by a spirit.

“I would act as a Trojan horse that would spew forth hallucinating images with the power to surprise, to disturb the dreams of the exploiters,” Lam said later in his life, “My painting is an act of decolonization, not in a physical sense, but in a mental one.”

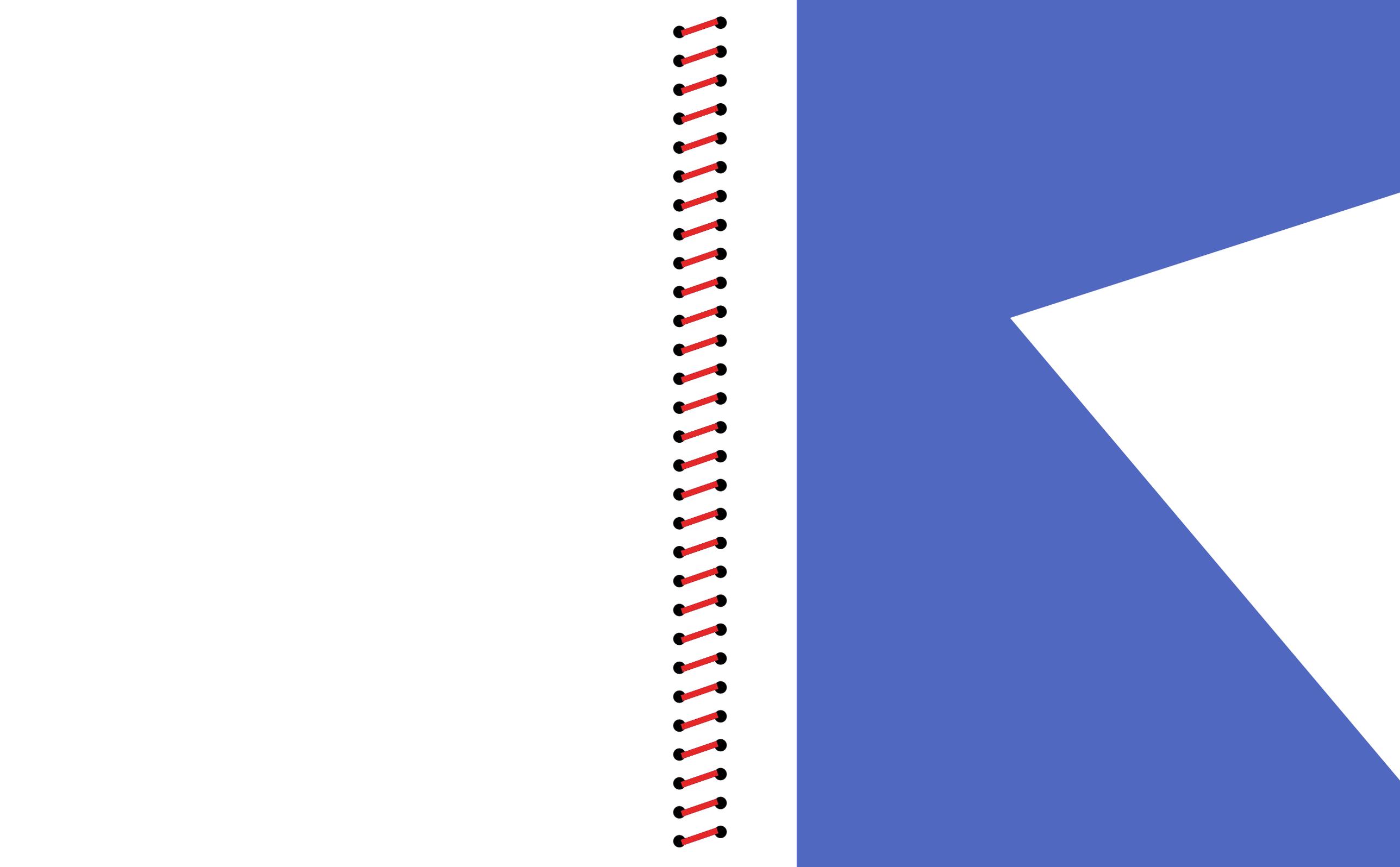
WIFREDO LAM



WIFREDO LAM

Sagua la Grande, Cuba, 1902 – Parijs, Frankrijk, 1982

(Behind the mirror), published to accompany Lam’s exhibition at Galerie Maeght, Paris, 1953





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