

Three Apples, 1910 Morgan Russell (American, 1886-1953)

Dark outlines and vivid colors define these apples.



Oil on cardboard; 9¼ x 12¾ inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Given anonymously, 1949 (349.1949.2). Digital Image ©The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY. ©Simone DeVirgile

As a young American artist in Paris, Morgan Russell spent considerable time at the apartment shared by Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo, who enjoyed every opportunity to speak authoritatively about the daringly modern paintings that hung on their walls. One of the paintings that Russell greatly admired was Cézanne's *Five Apples* (included in this resource). To his great pleasure, he was invited to borrow the painting so that he could study how the master juxtaposed patches of color to build up his forms. He responded by painting *Three Apples*.

The intense colors of *Three Apples* forecast the kind of painting that Morgan Russell would be doing a few years later when he helped to develop a new modernist movement called *Synchromism* (meaning "with color"), which related abstract color patterns to music.

How are Russell's apples presented?

- The apples are presented in bright, vivid colors.
- The stem area on each apple forms a dark black accent.
- The skin is perfect with no blemishes.
- The apples are set against the corner of a bright "white" tablecloth made up of pale pastel colors.
- A dark wall provides a backdrop.

How did Russell use his brush?

- Brushstrokes are clearly visible on each apple.
- The tablecloth is made up of many loose broad brushstrokes. Those near the bottom of the tablecloth are consistently diagonal to indicate where the cloth falls over the table's edge.

How did Russell make the apples appear round and solid?

- The apples are "modeled" with areas of color rather than with gradual light to dark shading.
- Brushstrokes move across the apples diagonally, helping to create the illusion of roundness.

How did Russell arrange the apples?

- The three apples are separated by dark broad outlines. In some places, the outlines become thin or break open to provide linkage between the apples and the surrounding space.
- The yellow and green apples are placed symmetrically on either side of the red apple.
- Two apples are upright; one lies on its side.