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Matisse and Shchukin: A Collector's Choice

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Students and scholars of the work of Henri Matisse would agree that his *Joy of Life* (fig. 2), exhibited for the first time in 1906, at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris, became the source for a major series of works on the theme of paradise: these include *Game of Bowls* (fig. 3), *Bathers with a Turtle* (fig. 4), and *Nymph and Satyr* (fig. 5), among others. This cycle culminated in four huge panels of the same size: *Dance I*, in The Museum of Modern Art, New York (fig. 6); *Dance II* (fig. 7) and *Music* (fig. 8) (both in The Hermitage Museum, Leningrad); and *Bathers by a River* (cover and fig. 1, p. 44), in The Art Institute of Chicago. There is no question that *Dance* and *Music*, commissioned by the Russian collector Sergei I. Shchukin (figs. 1 and 9), rank among Matisse's greatest achievements. Deceptively simple in composition and subject, they have nevertheless been scrutinized by numerous scholars from Alfred Barr to John Neff and Jack Flam, among others.¹ The paintings, along with *Dance I* and *Bathers by a River*, continue to provoke lively scholarly debate covering a number of issues — pictorial qualities, compositional structure, iconological interpretation, and the relationship between them.

While this ongoing concern with the internal qualities of these four compositions has yielded valuable insights, it is equally worthwhile, and certainly as interesting, to consider the nature and history of the commission. We know that *Dance II* and *Music* were considered shocking in the morally restrictive atmosphere of Russian society at the beginning of this century. Any examination of Shchukin's motives in commissioning the cycle must take into account the significance that these images had for the collector. The part Shchukin played in Matisse's affairs before World War I is discussed or, at least, mentioned in every serious monograph on the artist. In dealing with an artist, a scholar poses questions concerning his direction and influences. We should ask the same questions about a patron.

A member of one of the leading merchant families of Moscow, Sergei Shchukin (1854–1936) began collecting the work of Russian artists in the early 1890s. In a few years, he tired of them, making his first purchase of French painting (Claude Monet's *Lilacs of Argenteuil* [1873; Moscow, Push-

FIGURE 1. Sergei Ivanovich Shchukin (1854–1936). Private collection. Shchukin was a leading Russian collector of French art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because of his interest in the more progressive painters of the period, Shchukin became a major patron of Henri Matisse.

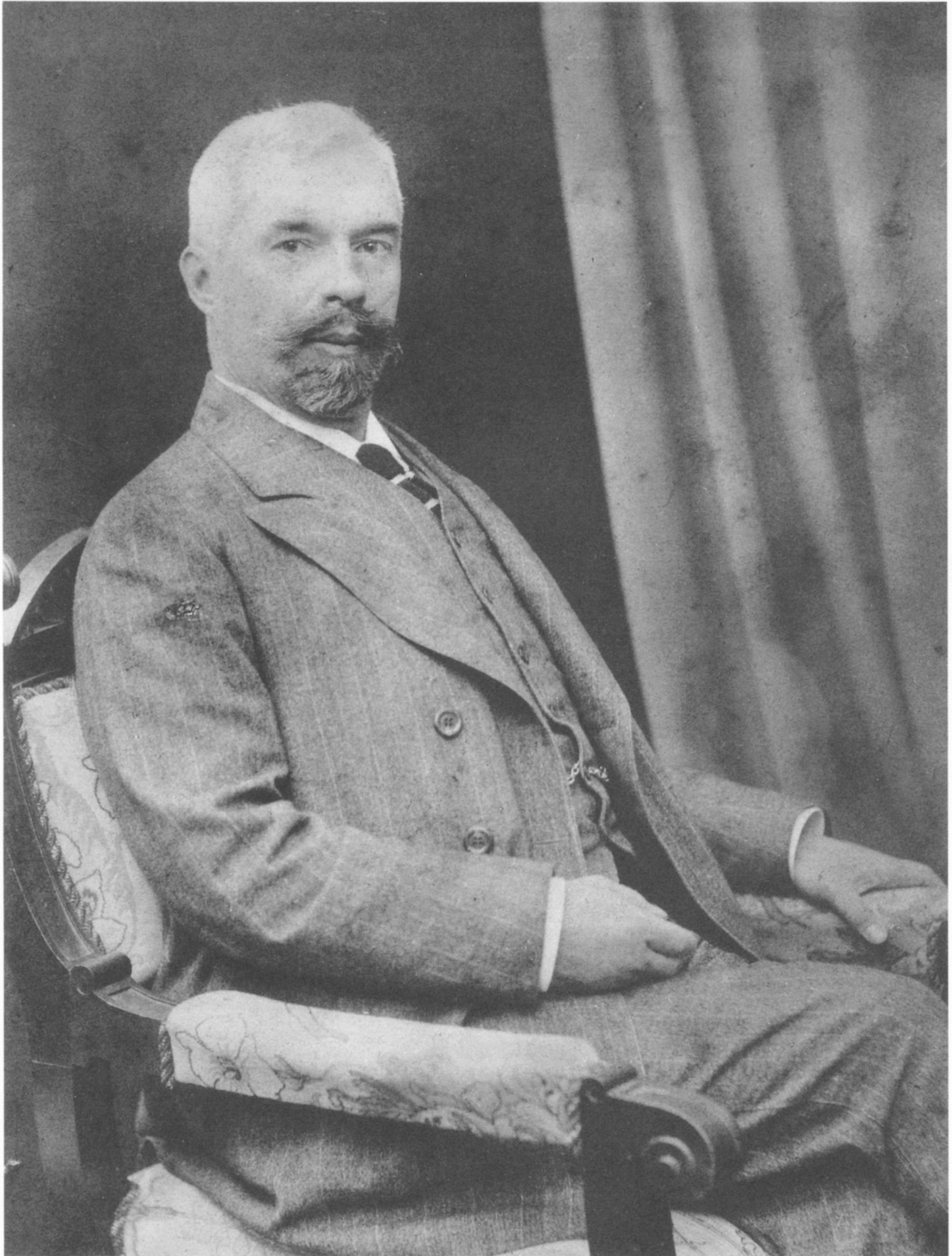




FIGURE 2. Henri Matisse (French, 1869-1954). *Joy of Life*, 1905-1906. Oil on canvas; 124 x 238 cm. Photo: © 1990 by The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Penn. This large, idyllic landscape, with its voluptuous figures of lovers, music-makers, and dancers, was the source for a series of works by Matisse with similar paradisaical themes culminating in four monumental panels: *Dance I* (fig. 6), *Dance II* (fig. 7), *Music* (fig. 8), and *Bathers by a River* (p. 44, fig. 1).

kin Museum]) in 1897. The daring and acumen Shchukin displayed in conducting his business affairs extended to his collecting. Within a few years, he had amassed an important collection of French art that included master works by Gauguin, van Gogh, Cézanne, and many others,² which covered the walls of his mansion on Znamensky Lane, now Gritsevets Street, called Trubetskoy Palace.³

The written documentation of Shchukin's commission is not extensive. A number of letters exist from the collector to Matisse concerning the panels; these were first published by Barr and later by Flam and by Beverly Whitney Kean.⁴ Some unpublished letters are conserved in the Archives Henri Matisse in Paris. The artist's responses have disappeared, and every attempt to locate a Shchukin archive has failed. All we have are the works of art themselves, a 1908 article on the Shchukin Gallery by the critic P. P. Muratov, and a catalogue of the collection produced in 1913.⁵ Unfortunately, none of these sources contains much information on Matisse's paintings. While Muratov provided the earliest survey of the collection, he was too conservative to devote much attention to the innovative painter. Furthermore, most of the examples by Matisse entered Shchukin's collection after Muratov's article was written. On the other hand, the Shchukin catalogue lists these works but fails to record such important information as the date of receipt and other details surrounding the purchase of the paintings. Yet we must use these inadequate tools in any attempt to reconstruct the history of this important commission.

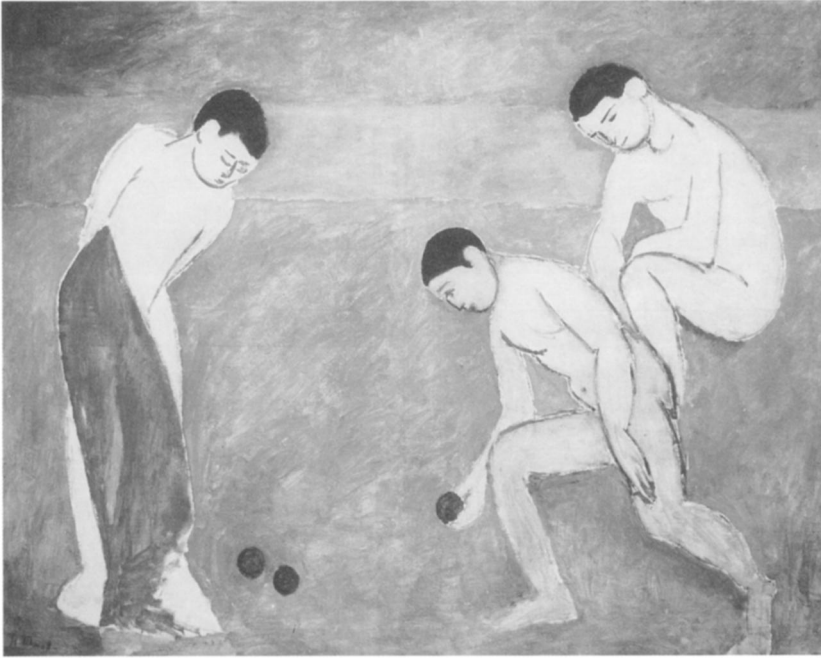
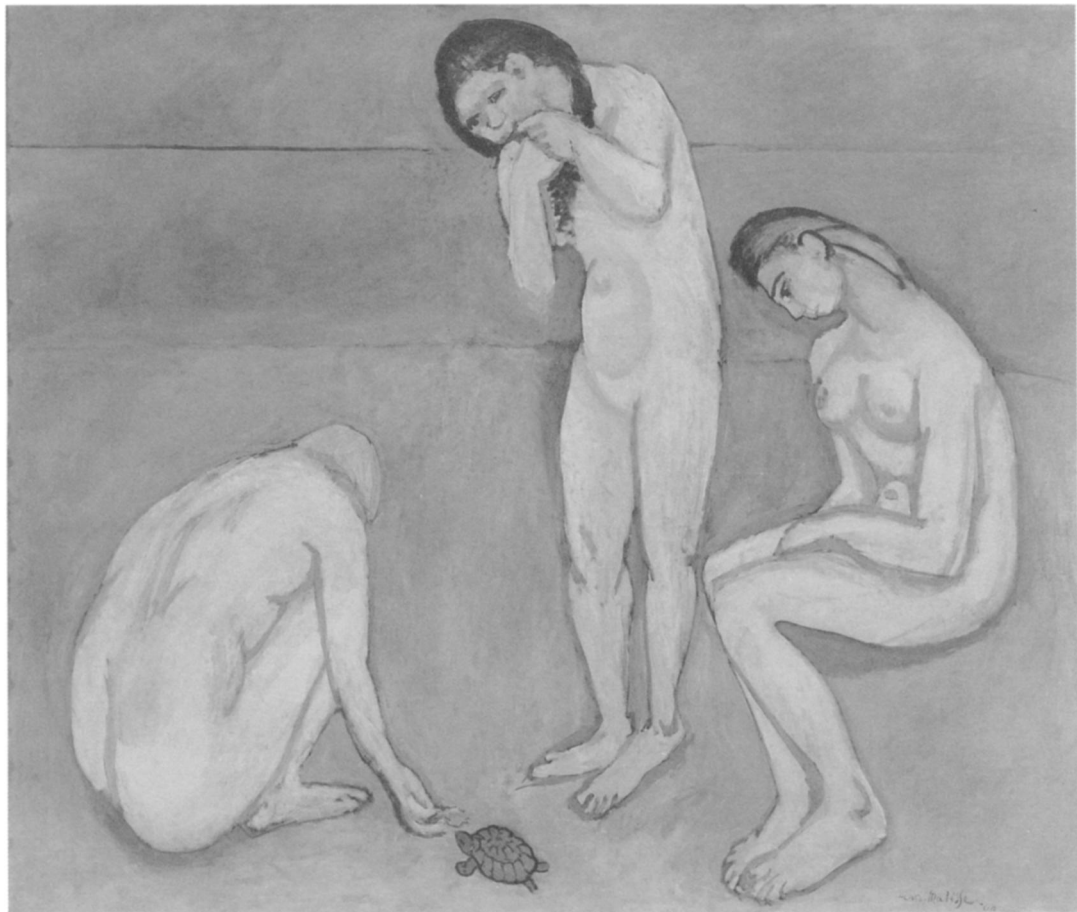


FIGURE 3. Henri Matisse. *Game of Bowls*, 1908. Oil on canvas; 113.5 x 145 cm. Leningrad, The Hermitage Museum. Matisse's simple, almost austere, style elevates this image of a child's game to a solemn and universal level. For the artist's Russian patron Sergei I. Shchukin, the painting may have had a personal, tragic relevance, as he had recently suffered the loss by suicide of two of his three sons. It is possible that in choosing to portray one of the figures clothed, while the other two are nude, Matisse created a symbolic composition, which responded to his patron's personal tragedy.

FIGURE 4. Henri Matisse. *Bathers with a Turtle*, 1908. Oil on canvas; 178.8 x 216.9 cm. The Saint Louis Art Museum.



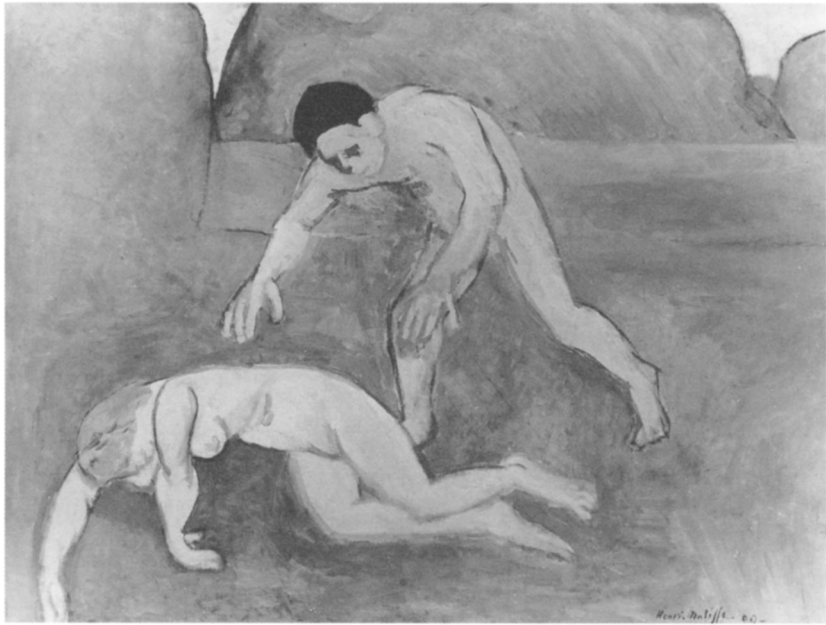


FIGURE 5. Henri Matisse. *Nymph and Satyr*, 1909. Oil on board; 189 x 116.5 cm. Leningrad, The Hermitage Museum.

According to Kean, the Moscow collector visited the Salon d'Automne with his oldest son, Ivan; she quoted Ivan as having remembered "that his father was drawn to the distant farandole . . . [a] tiny bacchanalian ring of dancers in the background."⁶ Obviously the memory of an event that occurred almost seventy years earlier is not always accurate. While *Joy of Life* was certainly unusual enough to attract Shchukin's attention, it is difficult to believe he would have ignored the large-scale lovers in the foreground in favor of a distant detail. It is more likely that the remark was an attempt to divert his son's attention away from these sensuous images. In the strict moral climate of early twentieth-century Russia, such an erotic tableau would have engendered much disapproval.

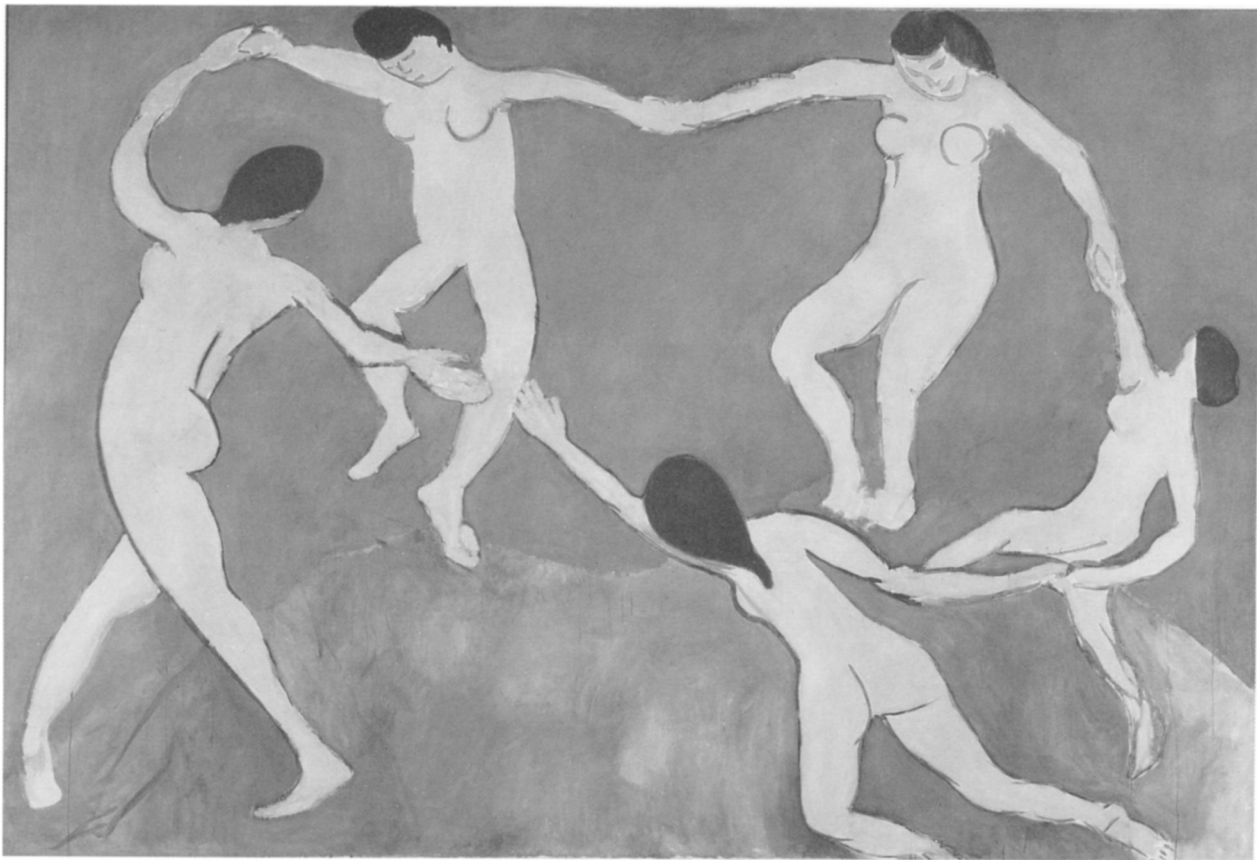
At the time that he saw *Joy of Life*, Shchukin had scarcely conceived of the idea of *Dance*; however, in March 1909, Matisse showed the collector a huge canvas, *Dance I*. The most authoritative scholars, from Barr through Flam, agree that Shchukin commissioned *Dance II* after he saw *Dance I*. We still do not know whether Shchukin and Matisse discussed the commission before the artist executed the painting, but it seems unlikely that the artist would have proposed or agreed to undertake such an ambitious work without doing a study first. In all probability, Matisse painted *Dance I* in the hope of impressing Shchukin and precipitating the desired commission.⁷ Interestingly, this was the only work Shchukin ever commissioned: his normal practice was to find already finished paintings and buy those he considered the best.

Unlike the other outstanding Moscow collector of contemporary French art, Ivan Morozov, Shchukin did not operate under any long-range plan in building his collection. Instead he was bolder than his cautious contemporary and acquired works in waves of increasing strength and audacity. In the beginning of the century, Shchukin built the best collection of Gauguin paintings in the world, a feat requiring a certain amount of courage on the part of the patron. The artist L. O. Pasternak (father of the poet Boris Pasternak) remembered: "Serov and I visited Shchukin once. 'Now I shall

show you,' he said, moving aside a heavy window curtain and pulling out his first Gauguin (*Maori Venus with a Fan*, Moscow, Pushkin Museum). He added, laughing and stuttering, 'Here it is, a m . . . m . . . m . . . madman painted and a m . . . madman bought it.'"⁸ Shchukin installed the Gauguins in the most spacious and beautiful room in his mansion. Yet, by the time he realized that Matisse and Pablo Picasso were becoming the leading figures in contemporary art, Shchukin stopped acquiring pictures by Gauguin or by other painters of the previous generation. One could say that he was more of a participant in a movement than a collector preoccupied with the completeness of his collection. When, in 1913, Matisse recommended a Gauguin painting to him, Shchukin replied that Gauguin was no longer interesting to him. This was something Morozov could never have done, for he planned his acquisitions more methodically and aspired to fill this or that lacuna. In the last period of his collecting activity (before World War I), when Shchukin was completely absorbed by the art of Matisse, Picasso, and André Derain, Impressionism and even Post-Impressionism had become dead issues for him.

As a collector, Shchukin believed in his own instincts, although he knew that they were not always right. Before buying a work, he needed time to determine his real feelings. Matisse recalled his first meeting with Shchukin at the artist's studio on the quai Saint-Michel: "He noticed a still life hanging on the wall and said, 'I am going to buy it, but first I must live with it for several days and, if it sustains my interest, I will keep it.' I was lucky in that

FIGURE 6. Henri Matisse, *Dance I*, 1909. Oil on canvas; 259.7 x 389.9 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art, Lillie P. Bliss Bequest. The predecessors of this lively group of dancers inhabit the background of *Joy of Life* (fig. 1). In all likelihood, it was upon seeing *Dance I* in March 1909 that Shchukin decided to commission *Dance II* from Matisse.



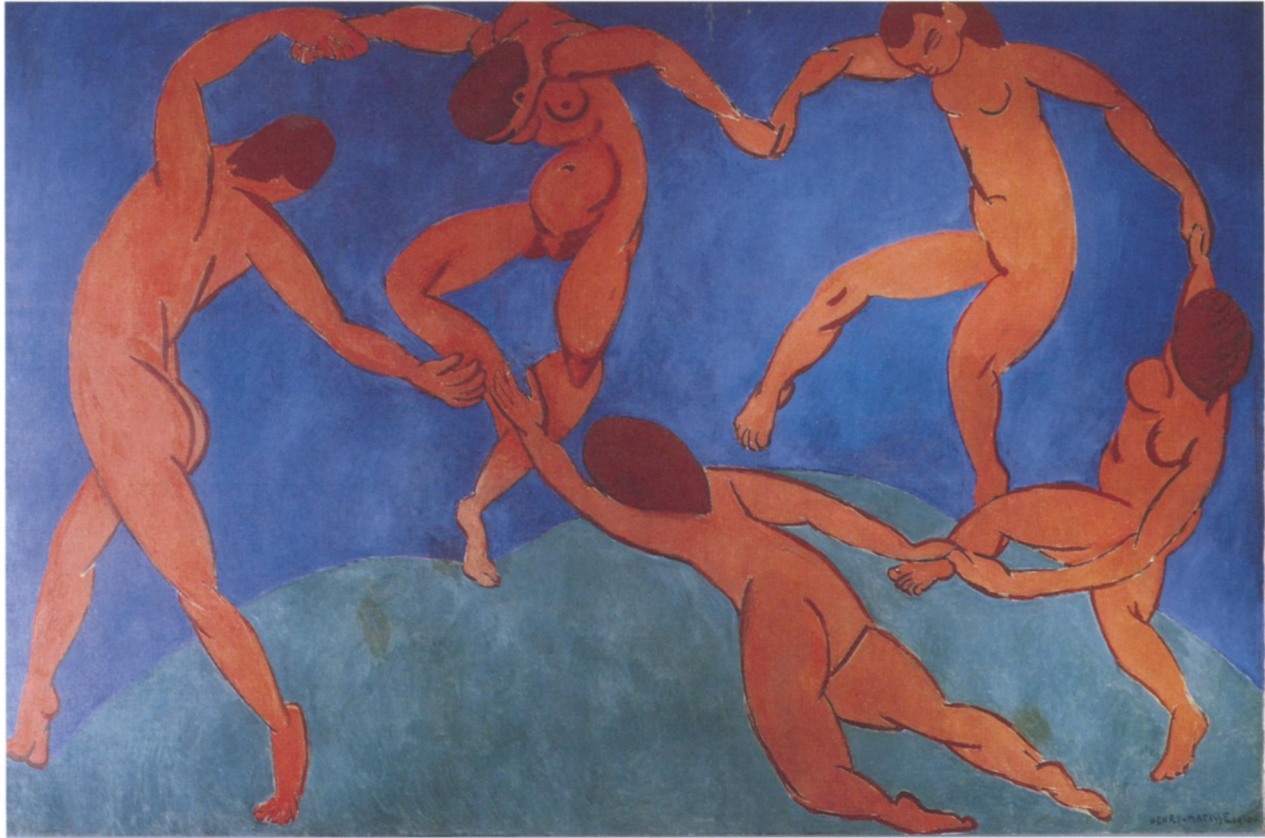


FIGURE 7. Henri Matisse. *Dance II*, 1909–10? Oil on canvas; 258 x 389.9 cm. Leningrad, The Hermitage Museum. These large-scale, vividly colored nudes, totally absorbed in frenzied movement, would have been very shocking in the repressive Russian society in which Shchukin lived. That he commissioned the work testifies to the deep personal meaning the image held for him.

he continued to like it, and thus this first test went quite well.”⁹ Records in the archives of the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, Paris, disclose a revealing episode: Shchukin bought a painting by Pierre Bonnard, *Le Fiacre* (Washington, D.C., The National Gallery of Art), and sold it back to the gallery after a short amount of time.¹⁰ Clearly he had no interest in Bonnard, whose painting must have seemed rather traditional and inappropriate for a collection that was fast becoming a monument to a unique and rapidly evolving taste. Shchukin’s collection was distinguished by a remarkable cohesiveness, because it reflected his personality so closely.¹¹

Of all the paintings in Shchukin’s house, *Dance* and *Music* were the largest. Their enormous size can be explained by the circumstances of their installation. While other works may have been intended for certain rooms, they were not commissioned specifically for the patron or limited to one and only one location (in fact, we know the collection was periodically shifted around). Matisse’s panels, however, were destined for a definite space, the staircase of Shchukin’s mansion. To plan a specific, and permanent, site for a work of art was unusual for Shchukin, for he did not adhere to the notion of the marriage of decorative painting with architecture so dear to his compatriot Morozov. The latter had commissioned a *Psyche* series from Maurice Denis for his music room (fig. 10), and Bonnard’s *Mediterranean* triptych (1911; Leningrad, Hermitage) for his staircase, along with two supplementary panels. Because Shchukin and Morozov were both friends and rivals, the Denis commission became a challenge to Shchukin. He esteemed Denis’s painting greatly, hanging his works side by side with those of Paul Cézanne,



Puvis de Chavannes, and Auguste Renoir. Yet Denis also represented a dying epoch, while Matisse seemed the apostle of the future. The differences between the work of these two artists was underscored at the Salon d'Automne of 1910, where both artists displayed huge decorative panels on similar topics; this prompted public and critical controversy. This controversy later took on special significance for Shchukin.

Another reason for the commission was a change in Shchukin's living conditions. The terms of his purchase of the Trubetskoy Palace (figs. 11, 12) permitted the former owner Princess N. B. Trubetskaya to live there until her death. She died in 1909 at the age of 97. The wing she had occupied became available to Shchukin, allowing him to enlarge his collection significantly.

After Matisse completed *Harmony in Red* in 1908 (Leningrad, Hermitage), he became, in Shchukin's eyes, the foremost contemporary painter. For that reason, many of the French master's most important works went immediately to Moscow in the years between 1908 and 1913. It was during this extremely productive period that Matisse painted *Dance* and *Music*. For Shchukin, these years were also fruitful. Who else compared with him? When asked if his father would ever have painted panels on such a scale without Shchukin, Pierre Matisse answered, "Why? For whom?"¹²

Before considering further the circumstances around the creation of *Music* and *Dance*, we must look at two other paintings that preceded them, *Game of Bowls* (fig. 3) and *Nymph and Satyr* (fig. 5). Because it also deals with movement, *Game of Bowls* anticipates the 1909 *Dance* in the same way

FIGURE 8. Henri Matisse. *Music*, 1910. Oil on canvas; 258 x 389.9 cm. Leningrad, The Hermitage Museum. Shchukin suggested to the artist the subject of this monumental painting, because of the large role music played in his own life. He sponsored numerous musical evenings in his Moscow residence and, at the time of this commission, was in love with one of the most talented pianists in Russia, Vera Scriabina.

FIGURE 9. Sergei Shchukin and his family. In the third row, between his brothers Pyotr and Dmitri is Sergei Shchukin. In the foreground are his first wife, Lydia, and their sons Gregori and Sergei, both suicides. Above, sitting on the rail, is the eldest son, Ivan.



that the earlier *Bathers with a Turtle*, for example, anticipates *Music of 1910*.¹³ *Bathers with a Turtle* (fig. 4) resembles the later work in being a symbolic composition with nudes. Shchukin probably knew that it belonged to the German collector Karl Ernst Osthaus, and that it had been purchased from Matisse for his museum in Hagen. Faced with the reality of the Russian attitude toward the nude, he was not likely to have bought the painting in 1908 when it was done. Those nudes he did own, Renoir's *Anna* (c. 1876) and Edgar Degas's *Woman Combing her Hair* (c. 1885/86) (both Leningrad, Hermitage), he acquired only in 1912 from his older brother Pyotr, who kept them in private quarters. His Gauguin nudes, on the other hand, were more acceptable, since these women were exotic island natives.

Clearly Shchukin's attitude toward the nude had altered by 1909, when he acquired *Nymph and Satyr*, *Black and Gold* (1908; Leningrad, Hermitage), and *Game of Bowls*. This change can perhaps be explained by altered circumstances in his personal life. His first wife, Lydia, died on January 4, 1907. An imperious woman and a paragon of the society matron of that period, she disliked modern art, although she tolerated her husband's collecting. She probably believed that the depiction of the nude was more a matter of morality than of art.

The representation of three figures and inclusion of landscape in *Game of Bowls* recall that of *Bathers with a Turtle*. But the synthesis of abstraction and naturalism in *Game of Bowls* would find full expression in *Dance* and *Music*. While Matisse's youths are playing a game common to boys of any epoch, their movements are those of a solemn ritual. This is not a simple, childish pastime: it is human existence we see symbolized in the boys' play; behind them flows not just a country stream, but the river of life.

Matisse's ability to clothe such a profound theme in the simplest of styles must have appealed to Shchukin for a number of reasons. In the first place, this painting could have reminded him of the art of ancient Egypt, such as the "Butcher shop" fresco from the Ptahiruck tomb at Sakkarah (c. 2450 B.C.). Shchukin visited Egypt at least twice, and liked it very much. As Matisse recalled of his patron, "In Paris, his favorite pastime was visiting the Egyptian antiquities in the Louvre. He found parallels there with the peasants of Cézanne."¹⁴

Game of Bowls must also have had a more immediate relevance to Shchukin, one grounded in personal tragedy. Matisse painted his three

youths as a kind of counterpart to the three maidens or graces of *Bathers with a Turtle*. Yet he may have had another reason for choosing the gender and number of his figures. His patron Shchukin had three sons, but by the time he purchased Matisse's masterpiece, two of them had committed suicide, one in 1906 and the other in 1908. In *Game of Bowls*, two of the boys are completely nude, like Elysian beings, but one is clothed in drapery as if still a part of this world. Here Matisse seems to have evoked the recent past of Shchukin's own family, as part of a meditation on life and death. While some may consider this interpretation too fanciful, it is important to keep in mind that we are dealing here with a symbolic art, which intersects with and transcends the level of everyday reality.

Osthaus, the owner of *Bathers with a Turtle*, possessed another work that greatly tempted Shchukin, *Nymph and Satyr*, a ceramic triptych now in



FIGURE 10. Maurice Denis (French, 1870–1943). *Psyche*, 1908. Leningrad, The Hermitage Museum. The Russian art patron Ivan Morozov commissioned this work from Denis and installed it in the music room of his Moscow home. Since Morozov and Shchukin were both friends and rivals, it is possible that this commission challenged Shchukin and prompted his commission of *Dance II* and *Music*.

FIGURE 11. Shchukin's mansion in Moscow, called Trubetskoy Palace. The terms of Shchukin's purchase agreement specified that the former owner, Princess N. B. Trubetskaya, was allowed to live there until her death. When she died in 1909, her living quarters became available to Shchukin, allowing him to expand his collection.



FIGURE 12. Trubetskoy Palace. Wing occupied by Princess Trubetskaya.



FIGURE 13. Henri Matisse. *Nymph and Satyr* (central panel of a triptych), 1907. Paint on ceramic tile; 56.5 x 67 cm. Hagen, Karl Ernst Osthaus Museum.



the Osthaus Museum (fig. 13). Its lateral panels contain dancing bacchantes related to the figures in *Dance*. But the time for this masterpiece had not yet come. Rather, in January 1909, Matisse was in Cassis, France, working on an extraordinary variant of *Nymph and Satyr*, commissioned by Shchukin. In the painted version, the two tones of the background—the blue of the river and the warm green of the grass—evoke passion and fertility in nature. The canvas's ceramic counterpart lacks a landscape background and is purely decorative in intent, a fact underscored by its border of grapes. When Matisse returned to the subject in doing Shchukin's painting, he emptied it of its specific mythological details and changed the poses of the figures. As realized, the scene embodies more distinct metaphorical qualities in which are coalesced the most profound themes—fate, life, the relationship between the sexes. In this way, the painting becomes a link between *Game of Bowls* and the *Dance-Music* ensemble.

On February 7, 1909, Matisse indicated to the French art critic Félix Fénéon, who was then managing the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune, that he had finished a painting for Shchukin. He was probably referring to *Nymph and Satyr*. It is difficult to say whether Shchukin commissioned the work, or saw it partly finished and expressed a desire to own it. The painting's extremely bright colors emanate such intense emotion that it is difficult to hang it near another picture. These lovers require a separate wall.

It is more than likely that *Nymph and Satyr* retains an echo of the affair that Matisse had with his Russian student Olga Meerson.¹⁵ Matisse's 1911 portrait of her, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, bears a great resemblance to the nymph in the Shchukin painting, but not to that in the image belonging to Osthaus. *Nymph and Satyr*, however, is painted in an exaggerated style. Probably the resemblance between the woman depicted in the two works was very obvious, causing Matisse to send *Nymph and Satyr* away, even though the paint was not quite dry. It is impossible to tell if Shchukin knew about Matisse's affair, but it seems unlikely. In any case, Shchukin would only have been interested in the work as art, not as anecdote.

It is not impossible, however, that Shchukin's reaction to *Nymph and Satyr* was more than purely aesthetic. The painting's intense coloration and erotic subject matter argue against a strictly intellectual and emotionally neutral response. Shchukin was fifty-four years old when he bought the picture. Although not young, he was still very energetic. He was also between marriages.

At the time that Shchukin acquired *Nymph and Satyr*, his personal life was in turmoil. He had recently endured the deaths of four family members—his wife, two sons, and a younger brother—three of them by suicide. These tragedies tormented him greatly: he both did and did not want to escape from reality. Shchukin's sanctuary became his collecting, which reflects his emotional instability and ambivalence during this period. Along with contemporary *memento mori*, such as two still lifes with skulls, Picasso's (1908) and Derain's (1912) (both Leningrad, Hermitage), Shchukin also bought Matisse's visions of paradise. When one compares the works by Matisse Shchukin purchased at this time with his previous acquisitions, one must conclude that complex and profound meaning had become more important to him than formal originality.

Shchukin's desire for more meaningful content in painting becomes obvious in considering his purchases of works by Matisse alongside those of his rival, Morozov. It was actually Morozov who brought the first representation of *Dance* into Russia. Entitled *Still Life with "Dance"* (fig. 14), the painting, a studio view of *Dance I*, appeared in Moscow in 1910, before Shchukin's version. In its own way, Morozov's painting, which was superbly analyzed by Barr,¹⁶ is a tour de force of equilibrium. One must admit, however, that the masterful play of the various, perfectly balanced patterns lacks the emotional and philosophical depth of *Game of Bowls*, *Dance*, and *Music*. The strong, formal construction of *Still Life with "Dance"* corresponds to Morozov's taste, which was formed by his love of the art of Cézanne. At the beginning of the century, his collection of Cézannes was the

FIGURE 14. Henri Matisse. *Still Life with "Dance,"* 1909. Oil on canvas; 89 x 116 cm. Leningrad, The Hermitage Museum.



best in the world. *Game of Bowls* and *Nymph and Satyr*, on the other hand, are highly dramatic. These works, along with *Dance* and *Music*, reflected Shchukin's emotional state.

While the story of Shchukin's commission of *Dance* and *Music* has been told, some points still need clarification. For example, even though *Joy of Life* was the source for the panels, there are great differences between the earlier work and its progeny. *Dance I* is less vigorous than *Dance II*, but both panels, in their intensity, express something other than the voluptuous, languid sensuality of *Joy of Life*.

Initially Matisse's idea for the Shchukin ensemble took the form of two watercolors, *Composition I* and *Composition II* (figs. 15, 16), which the

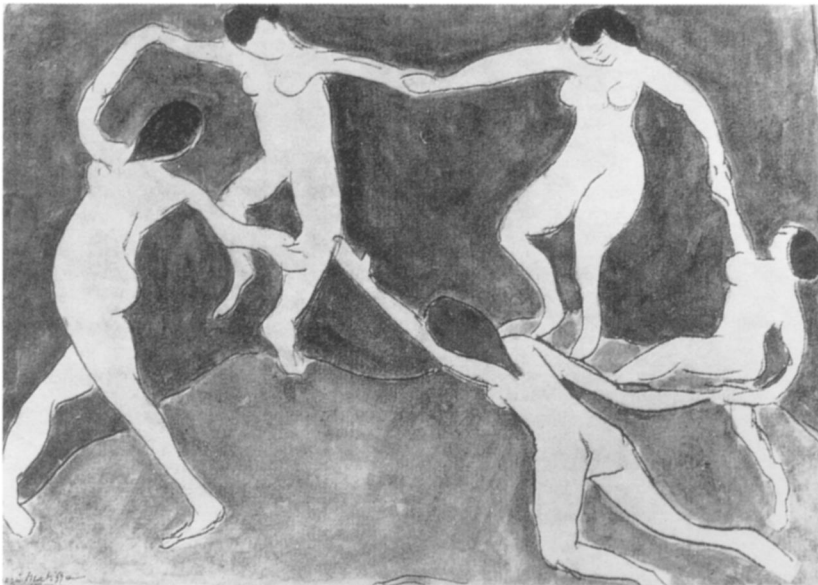
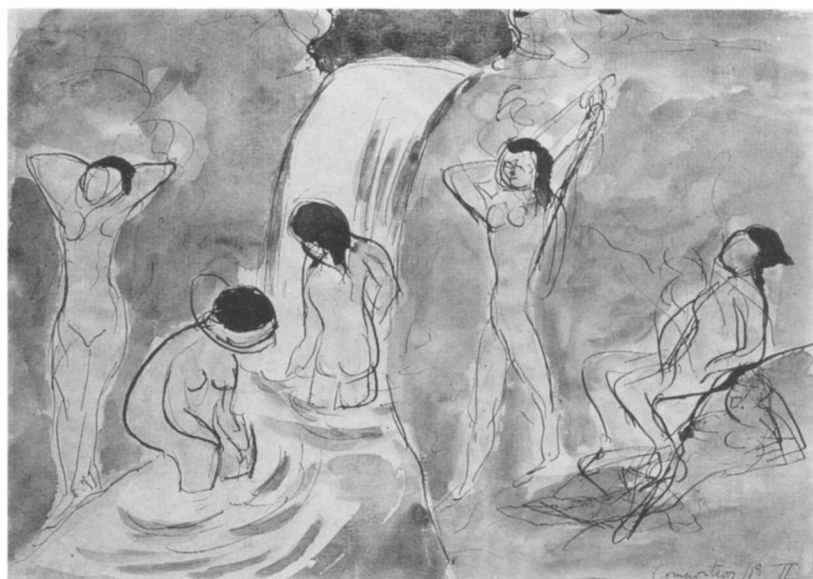


FIGURE 15. Henri Matisse. *Composition I*, 1909. Watercolor and pencil on paper; 22 x 65.1 cm. Moscow, The Pushkin Museum. Photo: Jack Flam, *Matisse: The Man and His Art, 1869–1918* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London, 1986), p. 256, fig. 250.

FIGURE 16. Henri Matisse. *Composition II*, 1909. Watercolor on paper; 22 x 29.5 cm. Moscow, The Pushkin Museum. This watercolor represents Matisse's first idea for the painting that would later become *Bathers by a River*.



artist sent to the collector. While *Composition I* clearly reflects *Dance I*, the second watercolor shows an absolutely new intention. To our knowledge, it was this composition that Matisse later brought to fruition in the great Art Institute canvas *Bathers by a River*. The two Moscow watercolors are very different in style. *Composition I* is much more confident than *Composition II*, for it represents an image that the artist had already satisfactorily resolved. But in *Composition II*, Matisse was clearly searching for solutions, a process that would continue in his working out of *Music* for Shchukin and later in *Bathers by a River*. In spirit, *Composition II* is a step back to *Joy of Life*.

By the time Shchukin received the two watercolors, he had already decided that *Dance* would be the first panel of the ensemble. The decision concerning the second panel was more complicated, however. We know that Shchukin had seen *Dance I* in early March 1909, but what program, if any, he discussed with Matisse remains obscure. It is quite possible that the artist had conceived a scheme for a decorative ensemble before he discussed anything with the collector.

On April 12, 1909, Matisse explained his concept to Charles Estienne, correspondent for *Les Nouvelles*:

I have to decorate a staircase. It has three floors. I imagine a visitor coming in from the outside. There is the first floor. One must summon up energy, give a feeling of lightness. My first panel represents the dance, that whirling round on top of the hill. On the second floor one is now within the house; in its spirit and in its silence I see a scene of music with engrossed participants; finally, the third floor is completely calm and I paint a scene of repose: some people reclining on the grass, chatting or daydreaming. I shall obtain this by the simplest and most reduced means, those which permit the painter pertinently to express all of his interior vision.¹⁷

Another important document in understanding the history of the Shchukin commission is a letter written by the collector to Matisse, dated March 31, 1909:

I find your panel *Dance* of such nobility that I am resolved to brave our bourgeois opinion and to hang on my staircase a subject with *nudes*. At the same time, I must have a second panel, whose subject might very well be music.

I was very happy to receive your response: accept a firm order of 15,000 for the dance panel and 12,000 for the music panel, [these being the] confidential price. I thank you very much and hope I will soon have the second panel.

In my house, there is a great deal of music. Each winter we have ten classical concerts (Bach, Beethoven, Mozart). The music panel should indicate a bit the character of the house. I have complete confidence in you and I am certain that *Music* will be as successful as *Dance*.

Please let me know how your work is progressing.

All of my reservations in the preceding two letters are annulled by my telegram of last Sunday. Now you have my definite order for the two panels. Please extend my compliments to Mme Matisse.¹⁸

The two letters mentioned by Shchukin, which could shed some light on the initial stages of the commission, have never been found. Matisse's comments to Estienne, however, raise some interesting issues. The artist had evidently not yet received Shchukin's letter, with its definite order and terms. Was the project he described then destined for Shchukin? It is more likely that, at this moment, Matisse cherished an imaginary scheme for a "stairway," a proper setting. Did Matisse know that Shchukin's mansion had only two stories? If he did, why then did he prepare three very large, similar canvases instead of two? Did he suppose that, failing to find an appropriate way to hang all

three, as he envisioned, they could somehow be installed differently? If so, Shchukin soon disabused him of this hope. The collector was able to install only two great panels in his stairwell. Finding a satisfactory space for them was not easy. The staircase was too narrow to allow the viewer enough distance to see each painting properly. (The room in the Hermitage where they are presently hung is wider, although still not wide enough.) The narrowness of the stairwell can be judged by the width of the central portion of the façade (see fig. 11). In any case, there was no place to install Matisse's "first panel" in such a way that it would "summon up energy, [and] give a feeling of lightness." The initial short flight of stairs leads to a small landing about a meter wide. If Shchukin had placed the painting on the wall above, only part of it would have been visible from the first flight. For Shchukin to keep the panels in his stairwell required that he hang them on the upper floor, where there was only room for two paintings.

These installation problems forced Matisse to rethink his ideas. Since one composition had to be sacrificed, it made sense to the painter to retain the first and last compositions, namely, *Dance* and the image of repose. In any case, Matisse's decision to send Shchukin *Composition II* indicates that, for the second panel, he favored a scene of leisure.

When Shchukin wrote his letter confirming his commission of the panels, he already possessed the two watercolors. It is possible that he had discussed the idea of two panels and of the theme of music during his visit to Matisse in early March. In any case, in his March 31 letter, Shchukin commissioned two panels, not three and, pushed for a theme related to music, rejecting the artist's suggestion of a scene of repose by ignoring it. To play such a determining role in shaping a commission was most unusual for Shchukin. In answer to the question of what made Shchukin the ideal client, Pierre Matisse answered, "He never tried to influence the structure of the work."¹⁹ Yet we have here the only instance in which Shchukin tried to do just that; therefore his reasons must have been very strong.

One approach to determining Shchukin's motives is to examine closely details in his letter to Matisse that have thus far not been analyzed by Western scholars. The first of these is Shchukin's emphasis on the nude ("I am resolved to brave our bourgeois opinion and to hang on my staircase a subject with *nudes*"). To call attention to this theme might seem strange in a man who strove to be completely European in every respect, even to the clothes he wore. After all, the nude had been portrayed in Western art for centuries. Clearly Shchukin felt it necessary to acknowledge a non-European, asiatic resistance to this subject. He also used the term bourgeois to characterize those hostile to portrayal of the nude. In fact, in Russia, all those receptive to the subject were bourgeois. It was the Orthodox church and most sectors of society that condemned its use. In the West, on the other hand, it was the bourgeoisie who opposed avant-garde artists such as Matisse. Clearly Shchukin was trying to make an unfamiliar attitude comprehensible to an artist who had never been in the East. Shchukin's reluctance about nudes most probably stemmed from the moral climate in Russia and the fact that many young people attended his Sunday open houses, which began in 1909. Furthermore, he had adopted three young girls between eight and ten years old, who were living in his house. It was rumored that Shchukin had initially proposed to Matisse that the figures in *Dance II* be clothed rather than nude. And yet, while the collector was invoking Russian habits and psychology, these pre-existed Shchukin's commission. Rather his sudden concern with these issues may have been sparked by Matisse's

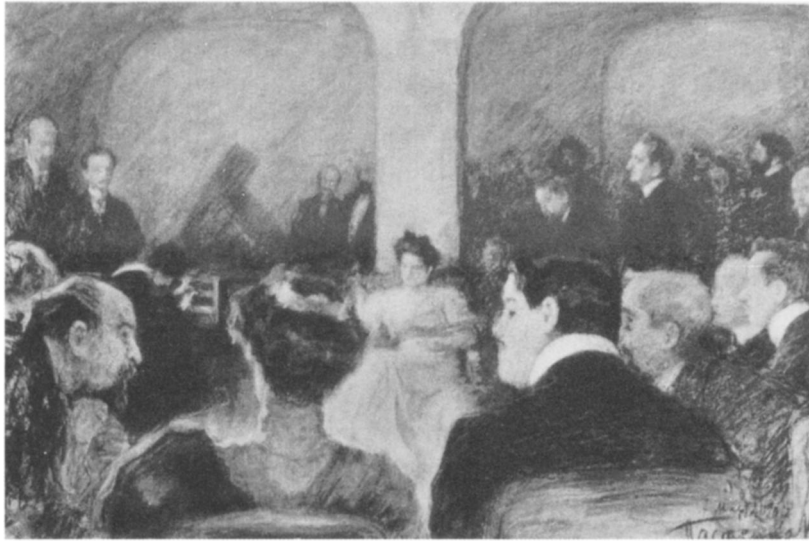


FIGURE 17. L. O. Pasternak (Russian, 1862–1945). *Wanda Landowska's Recital*, 1907. Pastel. Moscow, The Tretyakov Gallery. The father of the writer Boris Pasternak, Leonid Pasternak was a leading Russian artist at the turn of the century. In this pastel, he recorded a recital given at a private Moscow home, with the performer surrounded by Sergei Diaghilev (right foreground), the painter V. A. Serov, Shchukin (left foreground), and others.

approach: It was probably not only the nudes as such that made him hesitate, but the artist's simple and almost aggressive presentation of them. Moreover, Shchukin did not want Matisse to understand that his reasons for doubt were more about the painter's style than nudity itself.

Clearly Shchukin considered the stairwell to be his "visiting card," the most public area of his residence. A scene of bathers would have included too many nudes to be acceptable in such a context. One could justify the nudes in *Dance*, however, by interpreting the scene as a Dionysian ritual, as Shchukin seems to have done.²⁰ The absolute calm of *Music* would create an excellent counterpoint to the ecstatic movement of *Dance*. *Music* would also be more dignified than a scene of bathers.

Since such direct intervention was so unusual for him, Shchukin felt he had to justify to Matisse his dictate by demonstrating the appropriateness of music as a theme for his house. Some further details about Shchukin's personal life help us to understand why he insisted the second panel be devoted to the theme of music.

The subject of music had great significance for Shchukin. His first wife liked giving parties at which music was played. But even more important, Shchukin was a true music lover and hosted many famous Russian composers and pianists in his home.²¹ Furthermore, the collector was a member of the *Svobodnaya Estetika* (Free Aesthetics) society and regularly attended its Moscow concerts. Members also held meetings with writers and attended art exhibitions and gatherings where various radical Russian art movements — "Jack of Diamonds" (Bubnovy Valet), Futurism, and Rayonnism — were discussed. In addition, the society sponsored musical parties and receptions in honor of figures such as Claude Debussy, Sergei Diaghilev, and others. In her memoirs, Henriette Ghirshman recalled a clavichord concert given in her house by Wanda Landowska. Pasternak recorded this event in a pastel (fig. 17), which shows the performer surrounded by Diaghilev, Shchukin, the painters V. A. Serov and Milioti, and I. S. Ostroukhov.²²

The concerts mentioned by Shchukin in his letter to Matisse took place in the Claude Monet room of his mansion. Pasternak wrote of these evenings, "For a period of time, Shchukin organized magnificent concerts of chamber music in his house. The room was decorated with wonderful



FIGURE 18. Photograph of Vera Ivanovna Scriabina. After the death of his first wife, Shchukin fell in love with this well-known Russian concert pianist. She refused his proposal, however, and he eventually married Scriabina's friend, and fellow performer, Nadezhda Konius.

bouquets of red roses, and the guests were offered plenty of delicious food and drink. During intermissions, the hospitable owner showed his splendid collection of French art."²³

After the death of his first wife, sons, and brother, Shchukin found solace in music, as well as in his art collection. Eventually he turned to a new group for company, all of whom were involved with music. At the time that he commissioned Matisse's great panels, Shchukin was in love with a beautiful and talented woman, who was one of the best pianists in Russia. Yet even though the collector was intelligent, well educated, and incredibly wealthy, his love remained unrequited.

The woman was Vera Ivanovna Scriabina (fig. 18), the first wife of A. N. Scriabin. The couple had four children, but the marriage broke up after seven years.²⁴ After her divorce, Scriabina returned to active concert work in which she mainly performed the music of her former husband. The well-known composer and music critic G. E. Konius wrote of her: "V. I. Scriabina is one of the best pianists of our time. Along with subtle musicality, her playing reveals many precious virtues—rhythmical certainty and power—that brings her style closer to a masculine manner."²⁵ The same writer would say of her in a later article, "It is impossible not to be grateful to V. I. Scriabina for her interesting idea to present in one evening all five sonatas [of Scriabin] which are rarely played. The public that packed the hall very much appreciated the original program of Scriabin's music."²⁶

There is a letter from Scriabina of August 20, 1908 (Moscow, Scriabin Museum), which indicates that she and Shchukin had met. In a pun she played on Shchukin's name ("The pike is in the sea expressly to keep one alert" [*Schaka* means pike in Russian]), making an oblique joking reference to their courtship. It was during the period of Vera's active concert career in Russia that Shchukin fell in love with and proposed to her. One of her daughters remembered the large bags of candy he brought for the children, and the enormous bouquets of flowers for their mother. This daughter also knew that Shchukin had asked Mme Scriabina to marry him and she had declined.²⁷ Her reasons, which may have been the twenty-year age difference between them, her children, or her unending love for Scriabin, remain unknown.

In about 1911, Shchukin met Scriabina's friend Nadezhda Afanassiievna Konius, who was also a pianist. In 1915, they were married. And at the end of the year, their daughter, Irina, was born. Nadezhda Shchukina has been described as "neither a great pianist nor intellectual [who] had no desire to shine in society. Yet she was quick and practical, a very good housewife, and a cordial hostess. She knew to support those people who understood her husband."²⁸

As has been told many times, the sensation that was sparked by the exhibition of *Dance* and *Music* at the Salon d'Automne in October 1910 finally pushed the ambivalent collector to refuse the paintings. He offered to purchase two smaller canvases, asked if Matisse would at least retouch the "flute player" in *Music* (which the artist refused to do), and even considered purchasing a large panel by Puvis instead. In the end, he changed his mind and had *Dance* and *Music* shipped to Moscow. Nonetheless, at some point, Shchukin actually had the genitals of this figure covered with red paint (whether he did this himself or had it done by someone else is not known). Matisse was obviously very irritated by the collector's action. Much later, in October 1934, he wrote to A. Romm, who was writing a book on Matisse, asking to have the overpainting removed.²⁹ But not until November 1988 did the Hermitage conservators uncover the concealed portions. The red paint,

covered by a layer of varnish, probably applied by Shchukin himself, was a gouache that was easily removed with water.

While Shchukin installed *Dance* and *Music* in their intended place on the staircase of his mansion, their actual disposition is uncertain. Did their placement correspond to Matisse's vision? Kean believed that the panels were hung quite high up, but this was probably not the case.³⁰ It is easy to reconstruct the original installation (see fig. 19). A visitor to the former Trubetskoy Palace enters a very small entrance hall. As previously noted, a short staircase (about ten steps) leads from the foyer to a small landing. From there, two flights of stairs take off in opposite directions. The design of the staircase precludes the possibility that *Dance* was hung between floors. It had to have been located on the upper floor. *Music* would then have been placed on the opposite wall.

While the two panels entered the collection of the Hermitage in 1948, they were not exhibited until 1958, when it was decided to reflect the original arrangement. Consequently the panels were installed opposite one another on one of the staircases in the Winter Palace. But the traffic of visitors using the stairs and kicking up clouds of dust, proved to be too much for the paintings, and they have since been moved and are now on facing walls.

Several decades separate Shchukin's acquisition of Matisse's panels for his house in Moscow and their arrival at the Hermitage in Leningrad. During that time, the collector's opinion of their stature has been more than confirmed. They are now considered among the greatest examples of modern painting. Had Shchukin agreed to Matisse's initial conception for his stairwell, The Art Institute of Chicago would not have one of its masterpieces today.



FIGURE 19. Behind the entrance to Shchukin's house is a small hall with a divided staircase leading to the upper level. The design of the staircase suggests that the Matisse panels were hung on the upper level rather than between floors.

KOSTENEVICH, "Matisse and Shchukin: A Collector's Choice," pp. 26–43.

1. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Matisse: His Art and His Public* (New York, 1951); Jack Flam, *Matisse: The Man and His Art, 1869–1918* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London, 1986); and John Hallmark Neff, "Matisse and Decoration: The Shchukin Panels," *Art in America* 63, 4 (July–Aug. 1975), pp. 8–48.

2. For more on Shchukin, see Beverly Whitney Kean, *All the Empty Palaces: The Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (New York, 1983) (but see note 3 below); Albert Kostenevich, "Shchukin and Morozov," in The Art Institute of Chicago and New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *From Poussin to Matisse: The Russian Taste for French Painting, A Loan Exhibition from the U.S.S.R.*, exh. cat. (Chicago, 1990), pp. 22–33; and idem, "The Russian Collectors and Henri Matisse," in Washington, D. C., The National Gallery of Art, *Matisse in Morocco*, exh. cat. (Washington, D. C., 1990).

3. There has been some misunderstanding about the history of Shchukin's Moscow residence. The mansion was not built in the Rococo style, and not all of it is eighteenth century in origin, as has been stated. Its interior design dates from the Second Empire period of the nineteenth century. Nor was it built for the Trubetskoy family. Rather its original owner was Hovansky, chief procurator of Moscow. It was purchased by Prince Trubetskoy, leader of the Moscow aristocracy, in the nineteenth century. According to Kean:

Shortly before his death in 1893, his father, the Shchukin patriarch, bought the Trubetskoy Palace from the Princess Trubetskaya and presented it, the future site of the Shchukin collection, to Sergey. It was a belated wedding gift. . . . The great mansion stood in the middle of Moscow. . . . Sergey's eldest son remembered that when his family moved into Trubetskoy Palace, the walls were heavy with the works of Wanderers and their successors. . . . It is not clear whether Ivan purchased these pictures to enhance his gift, or if they were a holdover from the previous owner. What soon became apparent, according to Ivan Sergeevich's testimony, is that his father could not bear to live with them. (Kean [note 2], pp. 135–37.)

It is a pity that even a two-page passage contains so many inaccuracies, especially since this book, the most extensive on Shchukin, presents important information and interesting observations. In the first place, the mansion could not have been even a belated wedding gift, since Shchukin had already been married for ten years when he assumed ownership of it. Secondly, it is not really great. Thirdly, the group of paintings by the Wanderers (an anti-Academic movement of the third quarter of the nineteenth century that promulgated realism and a return to native Russian themes and styles) could not have been holdovers from the Trubetskoy family, because the Russian high nobility of the 1870s disliked the art of Wanderer V. I. Surikov and similar artists. It is more likely that these paintings were acquired by Shchukin's father or by Shchukin himself. Indeed Shchukin began his collecting with works by the Wanderers' successors. It was only in the mid-nineties that he tired of them. One must also question the accuracy of an account (that of Shchukin's son Ivan Sergeevich) that was given some seventy years later.

4. See Barr (note 1), pp. 132–35; Flam (note 1), pp. 254–57; and Kean (note 2), pp. 194–99.

5. P. P. Muratov, "Shchukin's Gallery, Essay on the History of the Most Modern Painting," *Russian Idea* 8 (1908), p. 116 (in Russian); and *Catalogue des tableaux de la collection S. I. Tchiboukine* (Moscow, 1913). The catalogue was published in Russian, as well. A version also appeared in Valentine Marcadé, *Le Renouveau de l'art pictorial russe* (Lausanne, 1971), pp. 274–77; and in Kean (note 2), pp. 300–309.

6. Kean (note 2), p. 193.

7. Flam (note 1), p. 254.

8. L. O. Pasternak, *Notes of Different Years* (Moscow, 1975), p. 63 (in Russian).

9. Dominique Fourcade, *Henri Matisse, Ecrits et propos sur l'art* (Paris, 1972), p. 118.

10. Jean and Henry Dauberville, *Bonnard. L'Oeuvre peint*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1965), no. 92 bis.

11. For example, while in Morocco in 1913, Matisse painted two pictures of a Riffian; both are on a heroic scale but one is more than twice as large as the other. Barr (note 1), p. 159, followed by other scholars, considered the bigger painting, *Seated Riffian* (Merion, Penn., The Barnes Foundation), to be the more important work. He found it "the most imposing of all Matisse's Moroccan paintings." Nevertheless, the half-length *Standing Riffian* (Leningrad, Hermitage) is of equal stature, though it has a simpler composition. Shchukin chose this painting because its colors are fresher and thus it seemed better suited to the rest of his collection.

12. Kean (note 2), p. 193.

13. Flam (note 1), p. 226.

14. *Matisse* (note 9).

15. Barbara and Erhard Göpel, *Leben und Meinungen des Malers Hans Purrmann* (Wiesbaden, 1961). The sitter's name has been given in its French form, Merson, in the literature.

16. Barr (note 1), p. 127.

17. *Matisse* (note 9), pp. 62–63.

18. This letter was first published by Barr (note 1), p. 555, where it was erroneously combined with a letter of August 22, 1912. Barr's mistake was corrected by Kean (note 2), pp. 296–99.

19. Kean (note 2), p. 160.

20. For a lengthier discussion of the symbolic significance of the Shchukin panels, see Albert Kostenevich, "La Danse and La Musique by Henri Matisse: A New Interpretation," *Apollo* 154 (Dec. 1974), pp. 504–13.

21. According to *Recollections of Rachmaninov*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1974), p. 463 (in Russian), in December 1910, a letter was sent from Shchukin's house to the composer Metner which listed the names of the best Russian musicians: Scriabin, Glier, Taneiev, Ippolitov-Ivanov, Konius, Kussevitsky, and others. The letter was also signed by Shchukin.

22. Henriette Ghirshman, "My Recollections of V. A. Serov," in *Valentin Serov in Recollections, Diaries, and Letters of his Contemporaries*, vol. 2 (Leningrad, 1971), p. 331 (in Russian). Ghirshman and her husband were wealthy and important patrons of Russian art.

23. Pasternak (note 8).

24. No one knows the entire story of Shchukin's involvement with Vera Scriabina. A young, brilliant musician, Vera Ivanovna Issakovich graduated from the Moscow Conservatory with a gold medal in the spring of 1897. She met her future husband in 1893, at a student concert. At the time, Scriabin said to her, "When you were playing, I thought, here at last is a pianist I can listen to with pleasure" (Y. Engel, "A. N. Scriabin. A Biographical Essay," *Contemporary Music* 4–5 [Petrograd, 1916], p. 40) (in Russian). Scriabin and Vera Ivanovna Issakovich married in August 1897. From time to time, they performed together, for example, in Paris, on January 31, 1898 (*Alexander Nicolayevich Scriabin* [Moscow, 1980], p. 60). In the spring of 1904, the couple left for Switzerland. By this time, they were having problems. Scriabin was involved with another woman, Tatyana Shletzer. In June 1905, Scriabin and Shletzer, who would become his wife, settled in Italy. Vera agreed to a divorce almost at once. In September, she returned to Moscow and began teaching at the conservatory:

25. *Georgy Eduardovich Konius, 1862–1933, Documents, Memoirs, Letters* (Moscow, 1988), p. 138 (in Russian).

26. G. E. Konius, "The Recital of V. I. Scriabina," *Russian Morning* (Mar. 2, 1911), in *ibid.*, p. 170 (in Russian).

27. This information was provided by A. A. Demskaya, head of the Pushkin Museum archives, Moscow. She received it from one of the Scriabin daughters.

28. Natalie Dumova, "I Collected for my Country. . . Kuranti (Chime of Bells)," *Historical Miscellany*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1989), p. 222 (in Russian).
29. "It [*Music*] has been overpainted with a little red in order to conceal the genitals, even though these were originally indicated very discreetly. They were included to complete the torso. A restorer could easily remove the paint by rubbing it with a bit of liquid solvent such as mineral spirits, benzine, until the hidden portion is revealed," in *Matisse, Painting, Sculpture, Drawings, Letters* (Leningrad, 1969), p. 222 (cited in French, book in Russian).
30. Kean (note 2), p. 136.

BOCK, "Henri Matisse's *Bathers by a River*," pp. 44–55.

1. Henri Matisse, "Notes of a Painter," cited in *Matisse on Art*, ed. Jack Flam (New York, 1978), p. 38.
2. This work has been variously titled in English and in French. Among the latter are *Au Bord de la rivière* and *Les Jeunes Filles au bain*. Jack Flam, in his authoritative recent monograph, *Matisse: The Man and His Art, 1869–1918* (Ithaca, N.Y., and London, 1986), referred to the Art Institute's canvas as *Bathers by a Stream*.
3. *Luxe, calme et volupté* (Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne) is the title of a painting of 1904 by Matisse, in which he first used the subject of women, mostly nude, relaxing on a beach. The title is taken from the refrain of Baudelaire's poem *L'Invitation au voyage*.
4. On the Shchukin panels, see John Hallmark Neff, "Matisse and Decoration: The Shchukin Panels," *Art in America* 63, 4 (July–Aug. 1975), pp. 38–48. Albert Kostenevich, "*La Danse* and *La Musique* by Henri Matisse: A New Interpretation," *Apollo* 154 (Dec. 1974), pp. 504–13; Beverly Whitney Kean, *All the Empty Palaces: The Merchant Patrons of Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Russia* (New York, 1983), pp. 193–201; and, in this issue of *Museum Studies*, Kostenevich, "Matisse and Shchukin: A Collector's Choice," pp. 26–43.
5. See John Golding, *Matisse and Cubism* (Glasgow, 1978), pp. 14–19, and Lisa Lyons, "Matisse: Work, 1914–1917," *Arts Magazine* 49, 9 (May 1975), pp. 74–77. These authors placed the work in the formal discourse of Cubism and the historical context of the war.
6. For the most basic texts on the painting, see Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Matisse: His Art and His Public* (New York, 1951), pp. 189–203; ill. p. 408; Pierre Schneider, *Matisse*, trans. Michael Taylor and Bridget Strevens Romer (New York, 1984), pp. 284, 472, 488–90; and Flam (note 2), pp. 277–309. Schneider and Flam stressed the Golden Age theme and the Moroccan echoes in the work.
7. Golding (note 5), p. 18.
8. Jean Guichard-Meili, *Matisse* (New York, 1967), pp. 93–94.
9. Dominique Fourcade, *Henri Matisse, Ecrits et propos sur l'art* (Paris, 1972), and, in English, *Matisse on Art* (note 1).
10. See Appendix on p. 55 for these references.
11. Amy Goldin, "Matisse and Decoration: The Late Cut-Outs," *Art in America* 63,4 (July–Aug. 1975), p. 54.
12. "Notes of a Painter," in *Matisse on Art* (note 1), p. 38.
13. The eyes of the "ideal viewer" have always been male, which may account for the continued tendency to see the painting as portraying desirable, sexually available females, the conventions of nude female representations leading to habituated responses. The equation of the nude female in an outdoor setting as a sign of "the natural," of fulfilled pleasure, of the release from onerous labor, and of the ultimate gratification of desire is certainly made by and for men.

14. The meaning of the figure has certainly eluded scholars. Flam (note 2) saw the woman in a Moroccan context: "And these women, like the veiled women who would not pose for Matisse in Morocco, are presented to us anonymously, without faces. In fact one of them—the second bather from the left—seems actually to be veiled" (p. 419). Clement Greenberg cited in his monograph *Henri Matisse* (New York, 1953) the "echoes of Cubism. . . in the handling of anatomy, especially in the seated, wading bather upper left corner, whose body is cut into cones and rectangles not all of which belong to it," commentary on pl. 18. Lyons (note 5), p. 75, related the seeming intersection of two possible figures to the conflation of two nudes in Cézanne's *Five Bathers* in the Pellerin collection, which Matisse may have examined.

15. Cf. Catherine C. Bock, *Henri Matisse and Neo-Impressionism, 1898–1908* (Ann Arbor, 1981), pp. 63–96, for an account of the early development of this theme and Schneider (note 6), pp. 241–75 and passim, for an argument on the theme of the joy of life as the central one in all of Matisse's oeuvre.

16. Henri Matisse, cited in Charles Estienne, "Des Tendances de la peinture moderne, Entretien avec M. Henri-Matisse," *Les Nouvelles*, April 12, 1909, p. 4; "Estienne: Interview with Matisse, 1909" in *Matisse on Art* (note 1), p. 49.

17. Paris, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, *Henri Matisse, Exposition du centenaire*, exh. cat. by Pierre Schneider (1970), p. 76.

18. To raise money for his brother and others conscripted for labor in Germany, Matisse designated eleven etchings to be sold as a suite, dedicated to "the civilian prisoners of the town of Bohain"; the proceeds were to be used for food packages for them. Clement Janin, "Les Estampes et la guerre," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 15 (1917), p. 382; first noted in Kenneth E. Silver, "*L'Esprit de corps*: The Great War and French Art, 1914–1915" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1981).

19. Cited in Raymond Escholier, *Matisse ce vivant* (Paris, 1956), pp. 112–13.

20. Agnes Humbert, "Notes analytiques," in Gaston Diehl, *Henri Matisse* (Paris, 1954; English ed., New York, 1958), p. 141. Humbert compared *Bathers* with the portrait of Yvonne Landsberg (1913), noting that the spirit ruling both "arises from essentially intellectual speculations." She added, however, that *Bathers by a River* "features the bizarre impression of malaise and restlessness doubtless cruelly felt by the artist at this epoch of his life."

21. Cited in Danièle Giraudy, "Correspondance Henri Matisse–Charles Camoin," *Revue de l'art* 12 (1971), p. 19. After recounting the illnesses in his family, Matisse concluded: "You see that the home front is no fun. Add to that our beautiful painter's profession, which is beautiful only in pipe-dreams."

22. Cited in Barr (note 6), pp. 181–82.

23. See Schneider (note 6), p. 735, for a description of the Matisse household as "full of women" during the first years of the war. Schneider's biographical account of these years is the most detailed.

24. Letter from Matthew Stewart Prichard to Mabel Warren (Nov. 7, 1913), cited in Flam (note 2), p. 374. A typescript of Prichard's letter is in the Matisse Archives in The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

26. "Portraits," in *Matisse on Art* (note 1), p. 152.

27. John Golding's (note 5) is still the classic exploration of Matisse's debt to Cubism in these years. The artist's examination of "methods of modern construction" began in 1913 and continued into 1917. Golding observed:

Matisse's greatest debt to Cubism lay in the fact that its manifestations of 1913 and 1914 suggested to him ways in which he could manipulate space in a freer and more abstract fashion that would parallel or complement the coloristic abstraction during the years in which he had been assimilating and consolidating the Fauve experience. . . . [It clarified] his ability to use pure, unmodulated color, often at maximum intensity or hue, in such a way that it defines the architectural breakdown of the picture surface, adhering to its two-dimensionality, and yet simultaneously playing its part convincingly in a naturalist rendition of space.