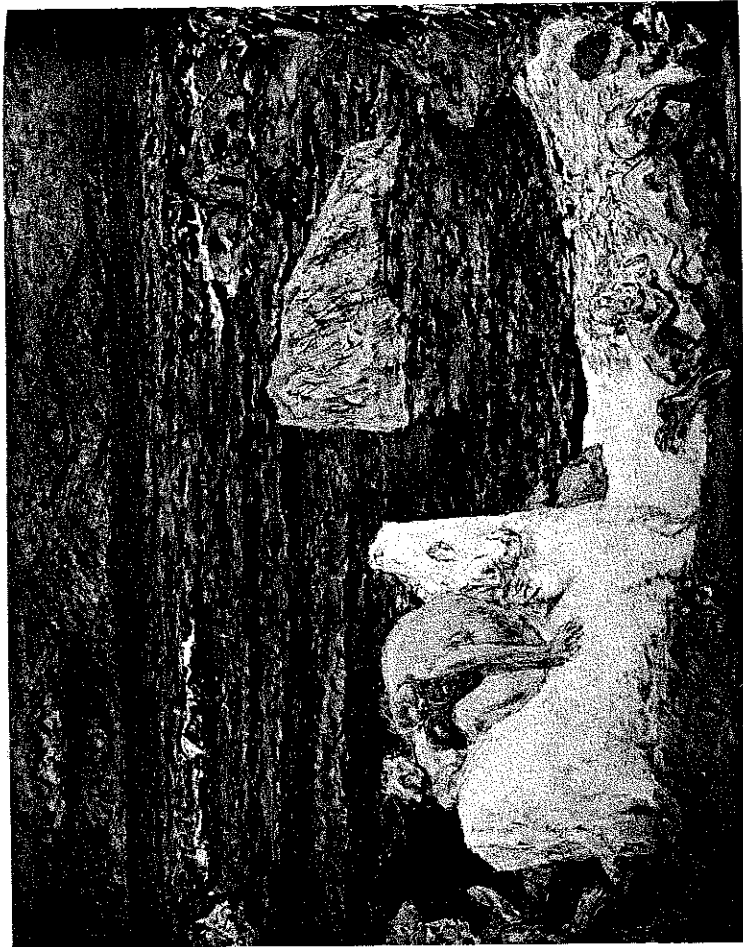


The mundane setting should not disguise the fact that she is surrounded by her natural element; she is a Venus rising from the waters.

The psychological implications of Bonnard's greatest paintings are accompanied by formal qualities of comparable depth and subtlety. The very touch of his brush on the canvas is an affectionate one, and his choice of colour is inexhaustibly inventive, as though no end could ever be found to the riches of life. Similarly his compositions are coherent, self-contained worlds which we are invited to enter and explore, relishing their strange ambiguities and familiar passages.

More than any other single painter, Bonnard bridges the 19th and 20th centuries. On the one hand he is clearly the heir of Monet and Renoir, yet he was to inspire the abstract painters of the 1940s, and in his attitude to art and to life he is close to Matisse, who was to set in train the re-making of painting in the early years of this century.

85 PIERRE BONNARD (1867-1947) *The Abduction of Europa*, c. 1925. Oil on canvas, 3'10" x 5' (117.5 x 153). The Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio (Gift of Edward Drummond Libby, 1930)



That Matisse should be the principal figure of a chapter entitled 'expressionism' may at first appear to be stretching a definition too far. But all labels attached to art movements are to a certain extent arbitrary and unsatisfactory. With rare exceptions, works of art are not made to fulfil aesthetic programmes; and artistic 'movements' are the generalizations of journalists when confronted by the existence of new work that cannot be fitted into any convenient pigeon hole. Such terms survive only because they have a certain historical validity, and also because they help to confer some sort of order on the apparent anarchy that the contemporary art scene has, ever since Romanticism, seemed to present.

Expressionism, as an art label, originated in Germany around 1910, and is now often restricted to central European art. It is not easy to define, except negatively in relation to impressionism, but in its original German usage it included what Roger Fry was at about the same time to call post-impressionism. The essential idea was that art should not be limited to the recording of visual impressions, but should express emotional experiences and spiritual values. As Franz Marc wrote, 'Today we seek behind the veil of appearances the hidden things in Nature that seem to us more important than the discoveries of the impressionists.' So defined, expressionism would of course embrace almost all the artists whose work has been discussed in the two preceding chapters, but this would extend a definition to the point of complete vagueness. The justification for applying it to the artists now to be considered is that they belong more or less to the same generation, and share some common ground. The particular association of expressionism with Matisse is justified by the passage in the text of his *Notes of a Painter*, published in Paris in 1908 and immediately translated into German and Russian. Matisse declared:

'What I am after, above all, is expression. . . . I am unable to distinguish between the feeling I have for life and my way of expressing it.'

'Expression to my way of thinking does not consist of the passion mirrored upon a human face or betrayed by a violent gesture. The whole arrangement of my picture is expressive. The place occupied by figures or objects, the empty spaces around them, the proportions, everything plays a part. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the various elements at the painter's disposal for the expression of his feelings. In a picture every part will be visible and will play the rôle conferred upon it, be it principal or secondary. All that is not useful in the picture is detrimental. A work of art must be harmonious in its entirety; for superfluous details would, in the mind of the beholder, encroach upon the essential elements.'

To understand what Matisse meant by this statement we must consider it in relation to the development of his work.

Henri Matisse (1869-1954) began painting in the 1890s, which was, as we have seen, a decade of assimilation and retrenchment. As a young man in Gustave Moreau's studio at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, Matisse was almost totally unaware of the revolutionary implications of impressionist and post-impressionist painting. This should be a reminder that any sequential view of artistic development (such as that presented in this book) is inevitably a historian's generalization imposed long after the events. In the 1890s the real significance of recent advanced painting was far from clear; it was for Matisse's generation to make it so.

Not until 1905, when he was 35, did Matisse come before the public as the leader of the new painters. He needed first to make his own synthesis from the innovations of his predecessors. He had begun by copying the Old Masters; then in succession the major influences on his work were those of Corot, Manet, Monet, Pissarro, Cézanne, Gauguin, Seurat. As Matisse told Apollinaire in 1907: 'I never avoided the influence of other artists. I should have thought it a form of cowardice and a lack of sincerity towards myself.'

Carmelina of 1903 (Ill. 86) demonstrates Matisse's ability to draw together diverse influences. The subject

makes us think at first perhaps of Vuillard or of Lautrec — then we realize that the girl is presented without any strongly personal associations, except for the blue bow in her hair. She is simply a model, posing in the artist's studio, and in the mirror we glimpse not only her back but also the artist himself at work on the picture. Thus Matisse reminds us of the artifice of picture-making, as did Manet and Courbet before him, or Velasquez in *Las Meninas*, the ultimate source of this particular reference.

The artifice extends to the composition: everything fits into place. The background architecture of rectangular shapes sets off the fully-modelled forms of the nude girl. The structure of the picture is further emphasized by Matisse's control of tone — a subtle gradation from dark to light, manipulated in order to throw the figure into relief. There is a sharp contrast of complementaries provided by the painter's red shirt and the blue jug standing before it — a lesson learnt from Corot — but otherwise the colour is generally monochromatic: an ochre base that moves between a warm reddish-brown and a cool grey-green.

Matisse had not in fact come to terms with the bright colours of the post-impressionists — this was indeed one of the problems that beset him as a young painter. It was the systematic approach of the Seurat followers, and in particular of Signac, whom he got to know well in 1904, that gave Matisse the key he sought.

After Seurat's early death, Paul Signac (1863-1935) had assumed leadership of the little group of neo-impressionists. They formed a militant minority who, like the abstract artists of the 1920s, believed that they alone had achieved true vision. Delighted with his new convert, Signac encouraged Matisse to paint an ambitious figure composition which he immediately bought, and which remained until recently in the possession of his family.

This was *Luxe, Calme et Volupté* (Ill. 87), a work so programmatic in its adherence to neo-impressionist precepts that Maurice Denis called it 'the diagram of a theory'. But another painter, the youthful Raoul Dufy (1877-1953), was deeply impressed: 'I understood all the new principles of painting, and impressionist realism lost its charm for me as I contemplated this miracle of the imagination introduced into design and colour. I immediately understood the new pictorial mechanics.'



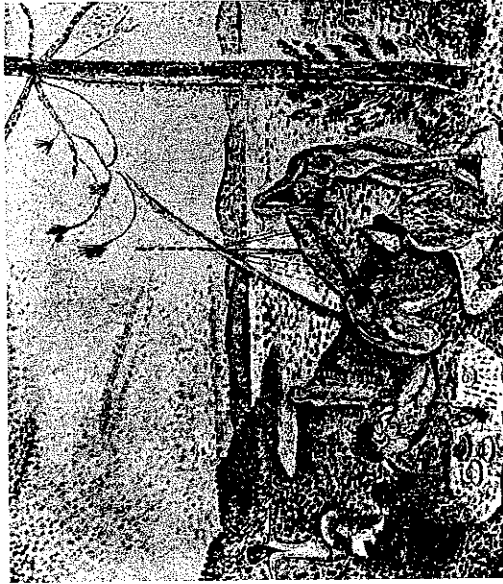
86 HENRI MATISSE (1869-1954). *Carmelina*, 1903. Oil on canvas, 32" x 23 1/2" (81.5 x 59.5). Courtauld Institute of Art, London. (A. Gordon Tompkins Residency Fund)

In comparison with *Carmelina*, *Luxe*, *Calme et Volupté* is little concerned with tone; Matisse concentrates instead on colour and composition. The local colours, the colours of light and shadow, the complementary contrasts are all observed, and related in the brick-like dabs of paint on canvas. The lines of the composition and the placing of each key figure are calculated according to geometrical formulae; the emotional resonance of directional lines is observed. Thus, Matisse uses formal means to express a mood of joyous harmony.

In its subject matter, *Luxe*, *Calme et Volupté* extends beyond neo-impressionism, without contradicting it. For the neo-impressionists were in general political optimists, believers in a golden future, and this assurance is what Matisse paints. The title is a quotation from Baudelaire, the repeated couplet of the poem *L'invitation au voyage*:

*Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté
Luxe, calme et volupté.*

So that although the subject is the bay at Saint Tropez, with a group of nude figures reposing after a swim, it is clear that more than a simple summer afternoon scene is being depicted: this is a vision of an ideal existence, the *Deux Pays* of Puvis (Ill. 45) or the *Golden Age* of Ingres – or for that matter the idyllic world of Cézanne's *Bathers* or Gauguin's imagined Tahiti.



87 HENRI MATISSE (1869-1954)
Luxe, Calme et Volupté, 1904-05.
Oil on canvas, 5' 9" x 7' 10" (174 x 238). Musée d'Orsay, Paris



88 HENRI MATISSE (1869-1954)
Joie de Vivre, 1905-06. Oil on
canvas, 5' 9" x 7' 10" (175 x 240).
Copyright 1972, The Barnes Founda-
tion, Merion, Pa.

Matisse was a highly intelligent painter who did nothing without forethought and calculation, and these references were unquestionably intended. He needed to place himself firmly in a certain pictorial tradition, yet he also needed somehow to break with that tradition. This is precisely what he did in the ten years from 1905 to 1915, the high plateau of his art.

First he needed to abandon his rigid adherence to neo-impressionism, and in this he was helped by a younger painter, André Derain (1880-1954). The two men worked side by side at Collioure in the summer of 1905, and together created what was at once recognizable as a new way of painting. When their work appeared at the autumn Salon of this same year it was to be labelled 'fauve' – wild – and fauvism became the label attached to the style. It was not inappropriate.

What fauvism essentially represents is both a restatement and a combination of those qualities of post-impressionism which seemed particularly relevant to the younger generation. If Matisse brought an understanding of Seurat to Collioure, Derain, like his friend Maurice Vlaminck (1876-1958), was entirely under the spell of Van Gogh. To Matisse's intellectual discipline, Derain brought an emotional charge, and the result was the explosion of colour represented by pictures like *Portrait with a Green Stripe* (Ill. 89). Matisse extended his bricks of paint into flat areas of colour, thinly painted, and in doing so created a new kind of space and light in painting.

The culmination of this tendency may be seen in Matisse's largest painting to date, *Jolie de Vivre* of 1905-06 (Ill. 88). In a sense it repeats the message of *Luxe, Calme et Volupté*, but on a much grander scale. Elation is matched with calm, Bacchanal with Pastoral. The forms are translated into free-flowing linear rhythms; the colours are liberated from any descriptive function - 'they sing together, like a chord in music,' said Matisse.

The musical analogy is a significant one: Matisse was pushing his painting in that direction as hard as he could go. He was ready to sacrifice everything else, everything but harmony, melody, rhythm. It led him, four years later, to paint the two great mural decorations for the Moscow collector, Shchukin, *Dance* and *Music*. In them, simplification of pictorial means is taken to an extreme in the attempt to create a more expressive pictorial language.

At the same time that he simplified, Matisse made his art more complex. There was a richness about life as he experienced it, which he wanted to capture in his painting. He was fascinated by Oriental art - by Arab rugs and textiles, as well as by Persian miniatures and Japanese prints. In the portrait of *The Painter's Family* of 1911 (Ill. 90), the figures are painted in simple flat colours and set off against a richly patterned background. One's spatial expectations are reversed: the background seems to force the figures forward into the spectator's world.

For Matisse, the flatness of the picture was always the first consideration. Every form is related in some way to the picture surface, and reversal plays a key part in this. Rectangular forms may describe voids, not solid objects; a colour may extend over the whole picture, uniting top and bottom, back and foreground in an effortless way. With flat, unmodulated planes of luminous colour, Matisse achieved that reconciliation of surface and space which his contemporaries were seeking.

Matisse pursued a path of experiment until the end of 1916, and then, quite suddenly, stopped. He moved from Paris to Nice, and in the relaxing atmosphere of the South of France began to paint frankly hedonistic pictures, the most characteristic being of scantily-clad odalisques in sumptuous interiors. He had many years earlier declared that his only ambition was to create an art 'devoid of any troubling subject-matter... as relaxing as a comfortable arm chair', and now he did exactly that.



89 HENRI MATISSE (1869-1954) *Portrait with a Green Stripe*, 1905. Oil on canvas, 15¾" × 12½" (40 × 31.5). Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (J. Rump Collection)

Though he painted great canvases in the later part of his long career, and the pasted paper works that he made shortly before his death in 1954 have a serene, magisterial quality, Matisse never recaptured the excitement and creative intensity of the ten years from 1905 to 1915.

By his resolute elimination of the dark side of existence as something unsuitable for transmutation into art, Matisse had posed a challenge to his contemporaries. How was it possible to live through the holocaust of the 1914-18 war, so unexpected in its destruction and human cruelty, and yet show no reflections of it in one's art? As we shall see later, Picasso, for one, constantly considered himself in relation to Matisse, and reacted against a certain unfeeling coldness in the Frenchman. For there is a paradox here: the man who could say, 'While working I never try to think, only feel', does at times strike us as a calculating intellectual, devoid of feeling. One has only to compare a Matisse nude with a Bonnard to realize this. This is not to denigrate Matisse's achievement — only to attempt to define it more exactly. He saw his art as having a universally cathartic value, and too personal a content was for him a hindrance. Although his *Souvenir d'Océanie* (Ill. 91) is a recollection of his visit to Tahiti in 1930, the message is expressed impersonally in the abstract language of colour, form and composition. This evokes a sense of purification and freedom from care, as Matisse wished it to do. This is still the vision of the Golden Age of his earlier pictures, but now all the essentials have been eliminated and the language of painting alone carries the message.

It has already been asserted that Matisse's work between 1905 and 1915 has an exceptional quality: this is perhaps because those years coincided with that stage in his career when he needed — as any artist does — to make an extra effort to rise above his contemporaries. And it is also true that this particular decade, like the comparable decade in the 16th century, was one of those short, intensive seminal periods in the history of art. Little that is really new has, in fact, happened since then.

Matisse established himself as the leader of the avant-garde when he exhibited his fauve pictures at the Autumn Salon of 1905 and *Joie de Vivre* in the spring of 1906. For a year or so his position was undisputed: then Picasso painted *Les Femmes d'Alger* (Ill. 109) as, I believe, an explicit challenge to Matisse, though, as



90 HENRI MATISSE (1869-19).
The Painter's Family, 1911. Oil
canvas, 4'8" x 6'4" (143 x 194).
Hermitage, St Petersburg

the picture was not publicly shown at the time, the challenge was of a private nature.

More significant, and soon to affect Matisse's position, was the rising star of Cézanne. The years from 1900 to 1913 were years of great exhibitions — new Salons, a succession of retrospectives of all the major figures of 19th century art, and then, outside France, the mammoth expositions which revealed the whole development of modern painting — the best known being the Sonderbund in Cologne in 1909, the post-impressionist exhibitions in London in 1910 and 1912, and the Armory Show in New York in 1913.

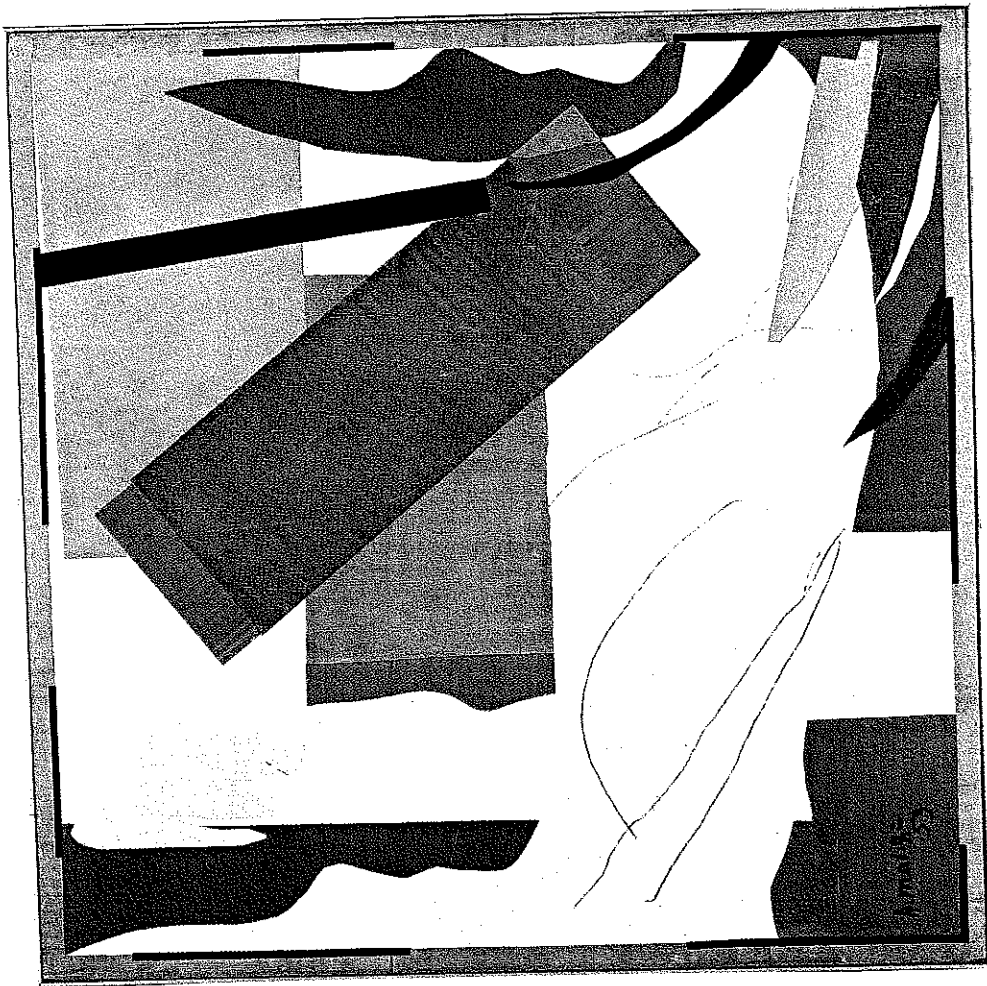
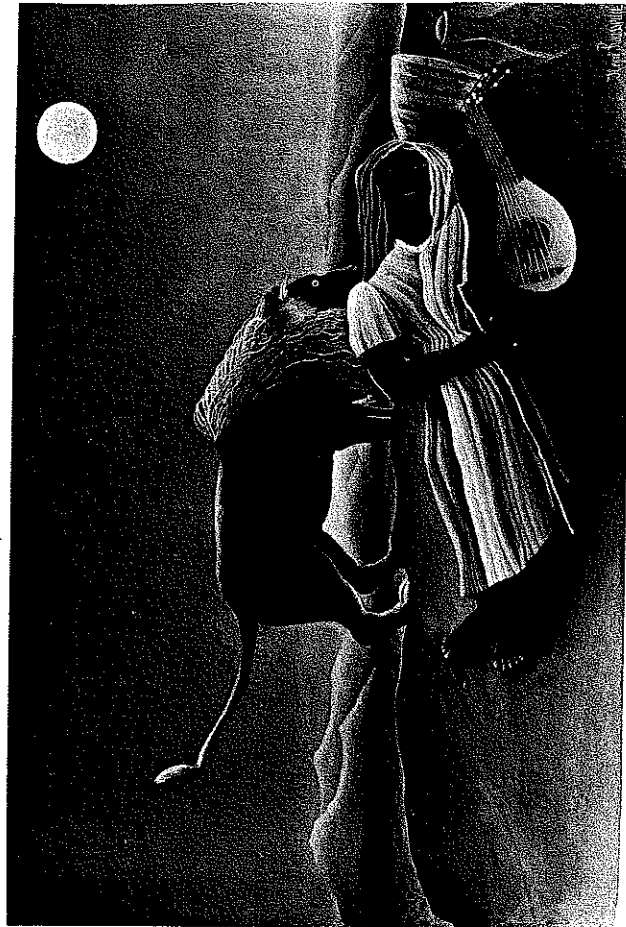
Well-timed and well-planned exhibitions have an educative value, on artist as well as general public, and they frequently affect the course of art. The Cézanne retrospective at the autumn Salon of 1907 is a case in point. It was not that Cézanne was unknown or disregarded, but his death and the memorial exhibitions served to draw the attention of young painters to those unresolved qualities in his art which seemed to demand a solution. No young painter in Paris could escape his influence — in Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, Picasso, Braque, Delaunay, Modigliani, it is clearly to be seen.

The conversion of Derain and Vlaminck, Matisse's co-workers in the evolution of fauvism, was the most dramatic. One moment they were painting brightly-coloured, loosely-handled pictures; the next everything was tightened up, the colours sombre and near-monochrome, the brush stroke disciplined and directed.

Derain's reaction to Cézanne was significantly different. More detached and objective than Vlaminck, he was able to take from Cézanne those qualities of construction which had appealed equally to Braque and Picasso. Like them, he too was fascinated by the work of the self-taught painter, Henri Rousseau (1844-1910), called the 'Douanier' because he had once worked at one of the since disappeared toll gates of Paris. *The Sleeping Gypsy* of 1897 (Ill. 92), for example, was a totally inexplicable masterpiece to the young painters of the day: how could such a simple man have conceived such a picture? Not only did the subject have a resonance that was to haunt the surrealists, but the formal qualities - in the painting of the pitcher, for instance - seemed to arise from a naïve conceptual vision which suggested an answer to one of the problems of pictorial representation posed by Cézanne.

Out of these two very disparate sources Derain, like Picasso, forged a personal style. With paintings like *The Beggiper* of 1911 (Ill. 94) he achieved a lyrical poetry unusual in French paintings, and the simple kitchen objects in the still lifes of 1911 and 1912 have a remarkable stillness and luminosity. For a year or two Derain was able

92 HENRI ROUSSEAU
DOUANIER' (1844-1910) 7
Sleeping Gypsy, 1897. Oil on canvas
4'3" x 6'7" (129.5 x 200.5). C
ollection Museum of Modern Art, N
York (Gift of Mrs Simon Gugg
heim)



Vlaminck preserved that passionate intensity of vision which marks his finest landscapes, thus illuminating what one is tempted to call the expressionist side of Cézanne: those pictures of nature so charged with personal meaning that they can be read as self-portraits. Vlaminck at his best offers us the same quality, and the storm-tossed trees and clouds in the *Paysage d'Orage* (Ill. 93) represent a personality similarly buffered. Vlaminck's problem was the expressionist's perennial dilemma, already observed in the work of Van Gogh - an inability to represent any but the emotions actually felt, that too-personal basis for painting which Matisse has so successfully eliminated.

91 HENRI MATISSE (1869-1954)
Souvenir d'Océanie, 1953. Gouache
and crayon on cut and pasted paper, on
canvas, 9'4" x 9'10" (284.5 x
286.5). Collection Museum of Mod-
ern Art, New York (Mrs Simon
Guggenheim Fund)



93 MAURICE VLAMINCK (1876-1958) *Paysage d'Orage*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 31½" x 39½" (80 x 100). Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris

to sustain this intensity of work, but somehow, with the quickening of pace among even younger artists, and then with the outbreak of war in 1914, his concentration faltered. One can only regard the close of his career as a coda which has probably undermined the force of his earlier contribution.

This became, unfortunately, all too familiar a pattern for other artists of this generation. A premature death, preferably in romantic circumstances, sometimes seems to have served their reputations better, as in the case of Modigliani. He was typical of many ambitious young men, drawn to Paris in the early years of this century, as the only place where their talents could develop and their dreams be realized. This was something that happened quite suddenly around 1900, and was to last only until 1940.

Amadeo Modigliani (1884-1920) was born in Italy but, like most of the artistic immigrants to Paris, he was Jewish. For a time he was undecided whether to concentrate on painting or on sculpture, and the issue was decided for him only when the outbreak of war put an end to his supplies of material for sculpture. But Modigliani's paintings, like the *Portrait of Lipchitz and his wife* (Ill. 95), have a sculptural quality that prevents the best of them from lapsing into a mannered prettiness.

There is at times an anguish about Modigliani's work, a direct appeal to compassion for the subject, and by implication for the artist. This is perhaps the most obvious aspect of expressionist painting; inherited from

such artists as Van Gogh and Munch, this emotionalism reaches a pitch of neurotic intensity in the work of another Parisian immigrant of a slightly younger generation, the Lithuanian Jew, Chaim Soutine (1894-1943). A Soutine landscape (Ill. 96) burns with a fevered emotion: the paint seems to have been poured out on to the canvas, and never loses its very tangible reality. This is the same South of France that was painted by Corot, by Cézanne, by Bonnard, but whereas the French painters can feel at home and at ease in the landscape, Soutine finds it strange and alien, though still a salve to his bruised and battered self. Trees, bushes, houses, - all come close to being out of control in the *Landscape at Céret*. They are tenuously held within the pictorial composition, as Soutine could only tenuously hold his grip on life and sanity.

The external pressures on artists of this generation seemed somehow to be even more extreme than those which had faced their predecessors. Mallarmé had seen poetry as a defiant gesture made in a void: man's only possible answer to the relentless passage of time in a meaningless, godless world. Such a view of artistic creation was now widely accepted: it made the artist an heroic figure, a visionary with a greater understanding of things than his purblind contemporaries, going about their daily existences unquestioningly. Not many could sustain this role as self-appointed seer, and some sought the support of a Christian faith.

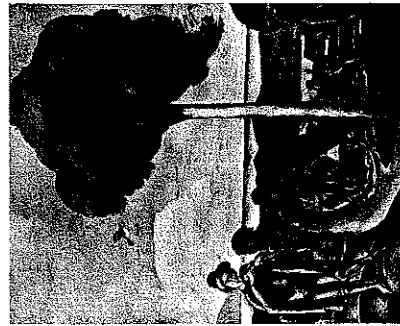
Religious revivals, of one kind or another, were a common feature of the time. In France the mystic



96 CHAIM SOUTINE (1894-1943) *Landscape at Céret*, c. 1920-21. Oil on canvas, 24" x 33" (61 x 84). Tate Modern, London



95 AMADEO MODIGLIANI (1884-1920) *Portrait of Lipchitz and his wife*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 31½" x 21" (80 x 53.5). Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago (The Hele Birch Barrett Memorial Foundation)



94 ANDRÉ DÉRAIN (1880-1954) *The Bagpipers*, 1911. Oil on linen, 6'1" x 4'11" (185.5 x 150.5). The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (Bequest of Putnam Dana McMillan)



97 GEORGES ROUAULT (1871-1958) *The Old Clown*, 1917. Oil on canvas, 40" x 20 3/4" (101.5 x 75.5). Private Collection

Catholicism of the writers Paul Claudel, Léon Bloy and Charles Péguy found its counterpart in the painting of Georges Rouault (1871-1958). Like Matisse, Rouault had been trained in the studio of Gustave Moreau, whose favourite pupil he became. During a spiritual crisis, Rouault became obsessed with evil, which he saw everywhere, corroding and corrupting the fabric of life. In his paintings, conventional values are overturned - judges are seen as ape-like monsters, whores as saintly women. By degrees, the clown becomes the holy fool and then Christ himself (Ill. 97). Rouault progressively constricts his vision until his work becomes a meditation on the life of Christ, the expression of an extremely narrow-minded view of the world, where landscape, for example, exists only as the setting for biblical events. And the jewelled, stained-glass colours, the sombre, palpitating light and the heavy, brooding forms of his pictures inevitably suggest the interior of the Church, which alone for Rouault contains and preserves the message of Christianity.

Rouault has his Protestant equivalent in the north German painter, Emil Nolde (1867-1956), and now we move away from France to the heartland of expressionism, central Europe. Nolde's finest paintings are those in which he paints the life of Christ, and especially the sequence executed between 1909 and 1912. In *The Last Supper* (Ill. 98), Nolde portrays Christ and his disciples as German peasants, and the primitive vision is matched by a primitive manner of painting. Unmixed colours are laid directly on to the canvas: the composition is crude, the touch rugged and unrefined. In Nolde's later work, landscape contains the religious emotion - the flat, dune landscape of Nolde's home, Seebüll, with its stormy seas and banks of lowering clouds. Such pictures grip the viewer in the pathetic fallacy, but like other romantic and expressionist landscape painting, they perform that same purgative and purifying function that Matisse wanted his very different art to perform.

Nolde was a solitary by temperament, but he came successively into contact with two of the centres of modern art activity in Germany - Dresden and Berlin. In Dresden in 1907 he met a group of young painters who had banded together into an artistic community which they called *Die Brücke* (The Bridge). The leader was Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938); other mem-



99 ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER (1880-1938) *The Artist and His Model*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 41 1/2" x 33" (150.4 x 100). Kunsthalle, Hamburg

bers were Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (b. 1884), Erich Heckel (1883-1970) and Max Pechstein (1881-1955). Pechstein had worked in France and had seen the fauve Salon of 1905: the Bridge that the German painters were making was one from provincial Dresden to cosmopolitan Paris, and in particular to the new vision of art revealed by Gauguin and Van Gogh, and now entrusted to the hands of Matisse and Derain.

In their flat unbroken bright colours, their heavy contours, their lack of perspective, *Brücke* paintings show an evident debt to the French fauves. Yet a more clumsy, more subjective quality always sets them apart. Kirchner's painting of himself and his model (Ill. 99) in 1909, carries an emotional charge that is absent from Matisse's treatment of similar subjects. Kirchner seems to need to impose some psychological interpretation, to present the scene as something more than an everyday studio occurrence. 'We no longer paint for the sake of art, but for the sake of people', maintained one of the German theorists of expressionism, and it is precisely this shift of emphasis that is observable in these works.

Kirchner and the other *Brücke* painters moved in 1911 from Dresden to Berlin, which was now asserting itself as the intellectual capital of northern Europe. Both Strindberg and Munch had lived in Berlin, and Munch's influence throughout Germany was considerable, and helps explain the *Brücke*'s particular interest in woodcuts

and lithographs. Kirchner was fascinated by big-city existence, especially its seamy side – the streetwalkers and pimps, the dancers and circus performers. *Brücke* subject-matter was for a time polarized between this night-side, and its antidote, the countryside seen in the fresh light of day. The painters project an open-air cult: if winters are spent in Berlin, then summers must be devoted to the beach and the mountains, where the healing force of nature brings refreshment and balm. Nudity becomes a positive, self-conscious demonstration of health; sunshine something to be worshipped for its own sake. Some common and characteristic 20th century attitudes have origins in the Germany of this period.

Between 1910 and the outbreak of war in 1914, Berlin's intellectual life revolved round the figure of Herwarth Walden. His art gallery and his literary magazine, both called *Der Sturm* (The Storm), acted like magnets. Delaunay brought his most abstract pictures to show in Berlin in 1913; with him came the poet Apollinaire to talk about new painting in Paris. Marc Chagall hesitated in Berlin and almost decided to settle there permanently; and for a time a young Viennese painter, Oskar Kokoschka (born 1886) actually worked in Walden's office. Here more than anywhere did the public image of expressionism evolve.

Kokoschka's *Self-Portrait with Alma Mahler* of 1912 (Ill. 100) makes a striking contrast to Kirchner's *Self-Portrait*; the figures in the Kokoschka have the same vitality, but it is conveyed by graphic rather than painterly means. Kokoschka at this stage in his career was essentially a draughtsman – indeed this is why he had found employment at *Der Sturm* – and it is that nervous, all-expressive line which scratches at the picture surface and snakes over it, quivering with life. Kokoschka's portraits at this time also have a probing analytical quality which no sitter can withstand. It was scarcely surprising that his activities as a painter were compared to Freud's as a physician, particularly as psychoanalysis was developed in much the same ground that nurtured Kokoschka.

Apart from Berlin, Munich was the main artistic centre in Germany. It was here that the third organized manifestation of expressionism emerged – the *Blauer Reiter* (Blue Rider). The group came together in 1911; its leading members were the Russian, Vasily Kandinsky (1866–1944), long domiciled in Munich, and two



100 OSKAR KOKOSCHKA (1886–1980) *Self-Portrait with Alma Mahler*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 39 1/2 × 35 1/2" (100 × 90.5). Folkwang Museum, Essen

young German painters, Franz Marc (1880–1916) and August Macke (1887–1914). Unlike the *Brücke* artists, the *Blauer Reiter* painters shared no common style – but they did share a common conviction about the need for spirituality in art. Kandinsky's experiments, drawing on multiple sources that included Matisse's fauve manner, led him to abstract art; his work will be discussed in a later chapter. Marc was also on the road to abstraction when he died, but his surviving work falls into the expressionist category and supplies an appropriate conclusion to this chapter.

For Marc, art had a special part to play in a world that had experienced and rejected both Christianity and 19th century materialism. He wanted to create symbols, which could take their place on the altars of the future intellectual religion. How could this be done? Marc tried at first to contrast the natural beauty of animal life with the sordid reality of man's existence: the essential pantheism in his approach descends at times into the sentimental. But in his masterpiece, *The Fate of Animals* of 1913 (Ill. 101), Marc uses the new discoveries of

futurism and cubism to give his vision that extra edge. The picture's original title is written on the back: 'All being is flaming suffering.' In an apocalyptic holocaust, a blue deer lifts its head to a falling tree: there are red foxes on the right, green horses at the top left. Colours are used for symbolic reasons: and blue for Marc is the colour of hope. Yet hope is soon to be extinguished in this cataclysmic destruction of animal life.

Shortly before his death in action on the Western Front, Marc sent a postcard of *The Fate of Animals* to his wife. 'It is like a premonition of this war, horrible and shattering,' he wrote. 'I can hardly conceive that I painted it. It is artistically logical to paint such pictures before a war - but not as stupid reminiscences afterwards, for we must paint constructive pictures denoting the future.'

The war took a heavy toll of the expressionist generation. It killed Marc and his young friend Macke. Both Kirchner and Kokoschka were brought to the edge of insanity: Kirchner's health was indeed permanently broken, and he was an invalid in Switzerland until his suicide at the advent of the Second World War. Kokoschka's survival must be attributed to his toughness, and to a final refusal to accept the 20th century at all. For Kokoschka remains the last great 19th century painter, who has been able to carry on during a long and successful career as if the artistic events described in this book had never occurred at all.



101 FRANZ MARC (1880-1916)
The Fate of Animals, 1913. Oil on
canvas, 6' 5" x 8' 8" (195 x 263.5).
Kunstmuseum, Basel

Of all the revisions of pictorial language proposed in the 20th century, cubism has been the most radical. It led immediately to the conception of the painting as primarily an object, which in turn made possible both a totally abstract art and an extension of painting, first into collage and relief and then into sculpture. The distinction between the arts of painting and sculpture breaks down in the mid-20th century as a result of the cubist revolution.

Cubism was essentially an intellectualization by two young painters, Picasso and Braque, of certain practices that they had noticed in the painting of Cézanne. Cézanne's approach to landscape and still-life was always empirical, in a sense un-self-conscious; and he died without ever feeling that he had found a solution to the problems of pictorial representation that faced him. With all the aggressive assurance of youth, Picasso and Braque simplified the problem and propounded a solution that at least satisfied them. But the solution only raised new questions, which led to fresh innovations.

The moment of crisis came in 1906, the year of Cézanne's death. A small group of his paintings were shown in the Autumn Salon, in preparation for the memorial exhibition to be organized a year later; they had a profound effect on Picasso. Other important influences were coming to bear on Picasso's painting at this time, particularly that of archaic and primitive sculpture, and the consequence was that angry masterpiece that he painted in the winter of 1906-07, *Les Femmes d'Alger* (III, 109).

Picasso's work before 1906 does not prepare us for the explosion of *Les Femmes*. Born in Malaga in 1881, the son of an art teacher, Picasso was gifted with extraordinary natural talents. He quickly learnt from the Old Masters in the Prado, from the art magazines that circulated in Barcelona where he spent his youth, and