

Lecture 4: Matisse in Russia: Modern Masters in the Hermitage

At the turn of the twentieth century the Russian textile merchant Sergei Shchukin became Henri Matisse's greatest patron and amassed the largest collection of the artist's works in the world. An advocate of early French modern art, Shchukin was quick to identify Matisse as an up and coming artist and promoted his Fauvist work in Russia. This lecture will follow Shchukin's role as Matisse's patron from their first meeting in 1906 until the artist's famous visit in the autumn of 1911 to his patron's house in Moscow.

Matisse developed a unique style of painting that is distinguished by its use of flat, brilliant colour and fluid line. His visit to Moscow, at Shchukin's invitation, had a major influence on his subsequent artistic production. For the first time the French artist was introduced to non-European art. Icon painting was a revelation and Matisse credited his trip to Russia with showing him how to imbue brilliant colour with a spiritual force.

Over a decade, Shchukin acquired nearly 40 of the artist's best paintings. He also commissioned the famous double panels *The Dance* and *Music* of 1910. These are two of the most iconic works of the artist's career and will form a major case study for pictorial investigation. We will investigate these key works and look at the artist's innovative use of colour and form. These renowned pictures were all acquired by the Soviet Union and now reside in the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg and the Pushkin Museum in Moscow. Other significant works for examination include *The Dinner Table (Harmony in Red)* (1908) and *Girls with Tulips* (1910). Additionally, we will look at primary documentation including letters concerning Matisse's trip and contemporary reviews of the artist.

