

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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The Museum of Modern Art announced today the gift of Dance by Matisse, "a very valuable addition to the collection, esthetically and historically." The large canvas, 8 1/2 feet high and more than 12 feet wide, was given to the Museum by Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller, a trustee for many years, in honor of Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of Museum Collections. It will be on view in the Museum's main lobby through December 1.

Painted in the winter of 1909, the Museum's picture is the first version at full scale of Matisse's most famous composition, Dance, commissioned by the Russian businessman Sergei I. Shchukin for the stair landing of his palatial house in Moscow.

After seeing this first version, early in 1909, Shchukin took Matisse to lunch at Larue's in Paris. They discussed the possibility of Matisse's painting two murals for Shchukin and argued about the price. A bit later, Shchukin wrote Matisse from Moscow: "I find your panel 'The Dance' of such nobility that I am resolved to brave our bourgeoisie opinion and hang on my staircase a subject with nudes. At the same time, it will be necessary to have a second panel of which the subject might very well be music. I was very glad to have your reply: accept a definite order of the panel 'Dance' at fifteen thousand francs and the panel 'Music' at twelve thousand, price confidential. I thank you very much and hope soon to have a sketch for the second panel."

The first version of the Dance, in which Shchukin found such nobility, may even have been sent to Moscow to see how it looked in place and then returned to Matisse.

Matisse finished the final Dance and Music in time for the Paris Autumn Salon, October 1910, where their size and Dionysian violence made a sensation. Shchukin saw them there and lost his nerve. He explained he had just adopted two young girls, so that pictures of nudes in his staircase would be unseemly. But after another two years, the Russian's vacillations came to an end and both the Dance and Music were at last installed in his house in Moscow. Both now hang in the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.

The first version of the Dance, lay for years rolled up in Matisse's studio. In 1936 it was sold by the artist's son, Pierre Matisse, to Walter P. Chrysler, Jr. Recently it was bought by Governor Rockefeller as a gift to The Museum of Modern Art.

The Museum's newly acquired painting is exhibited with photographs of Matisse's earlier oil, Joy of Life (1905-06), in which the composition of the Dance has its source. Matisse spent the summer of 1905 on the French Riviera near the Spanish border. There he watched the wild dances of Catalan fishermen, swinging in a circle

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on the beach. One night he joined them, an experience that inspired the round of dancers in the background of the Joy of Life painting.

An early charcoal study for the Museum's Dance showing the chief changes Matisse made in adapting the dancing ring of the Joy of Life, and the final version of the Dance are also shown in photographs.

Commenting on the Museum's picture, Mr. Barr says: "The whole composition is more spontaneous in style and spirit than the dance in the Joy of Life or in the final version of the Dance."

Other exhibitions on view at the Museum through December 1, are Hans Hofmann, Stairs, Fallingwater: A Frank Lloyd Wright House Re-visited, and The Photographer and the American Landscape. Medardo Rosso remains on view through November 23 and the Museum Sculpture galleries, through November 19. Selections from the Museum Collections (paintings, architecture and design, drawings and prints, photographs), usually on view throughout the year in the second floor galleries, have been dismantled. All the Museum galleries, the auditorium and the restaurants, will close Sunday evening, December 1, in order to complete the current building and remodeling program.

The "new" Museum of Modern Art will open in May, 1964 at the time of the New York World's Fair.

During the transition period, a temporary bookshop and information center will be maintained on the ground floor, and the Art Lending Service, People's Art Center, Photo Services and all offices will remain open. The circulating exhibition program and the circulating film program will also continue.

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. CI 5-8900.