

Jazz

Henri Matisse, [translation of the artist's holograph
text by Monroe Wheeler]

Author

Matisse, Henri, 1869-1954

Date

1960

Publisher

R. Piper

Exhibition URL

www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/3408

The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—
from our founding in 1929 to the present—is
available online. It includes exhibition catalogues,
primary documents, installation views, and an
index of participating artists.

Matisse Jazz

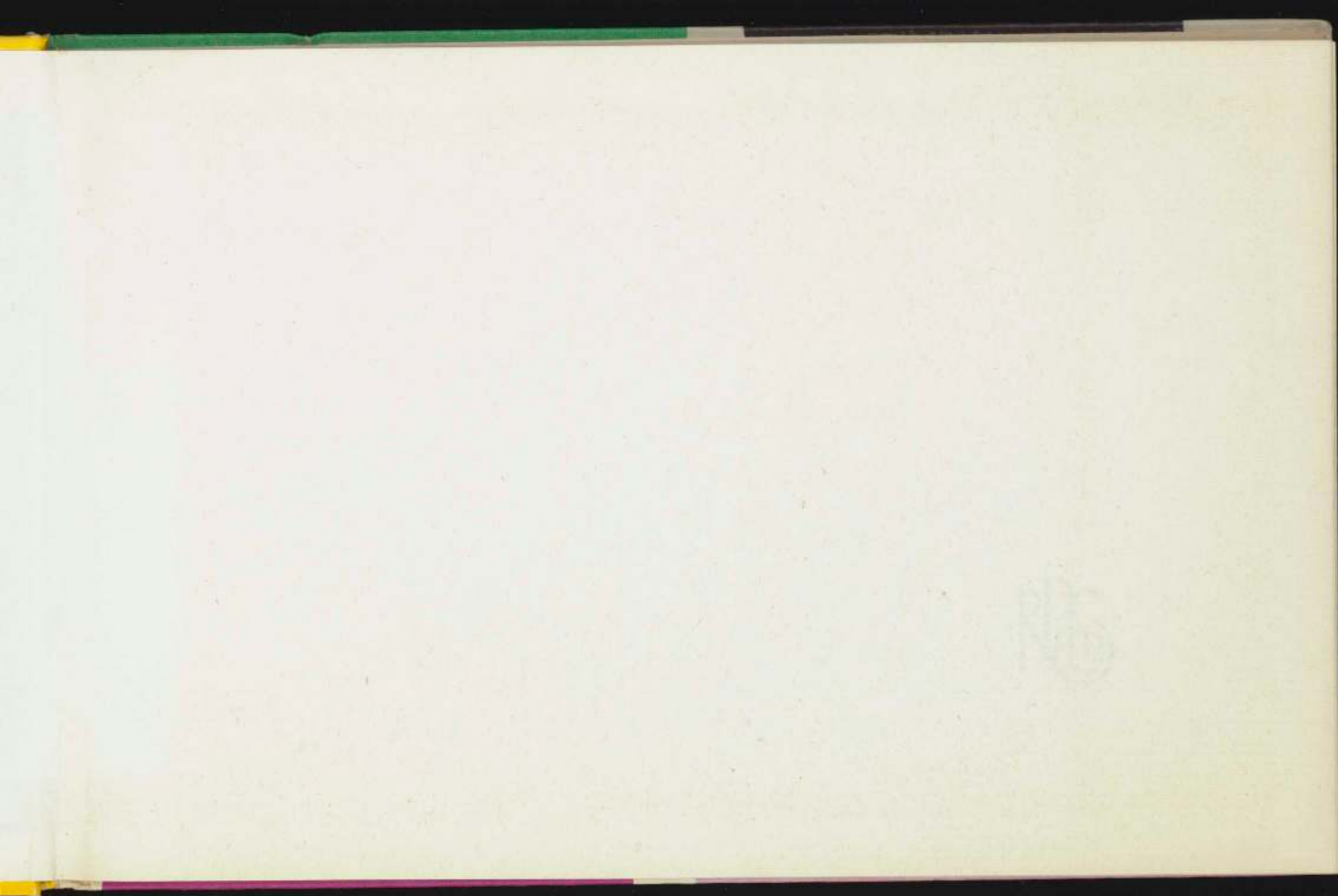
Matisse

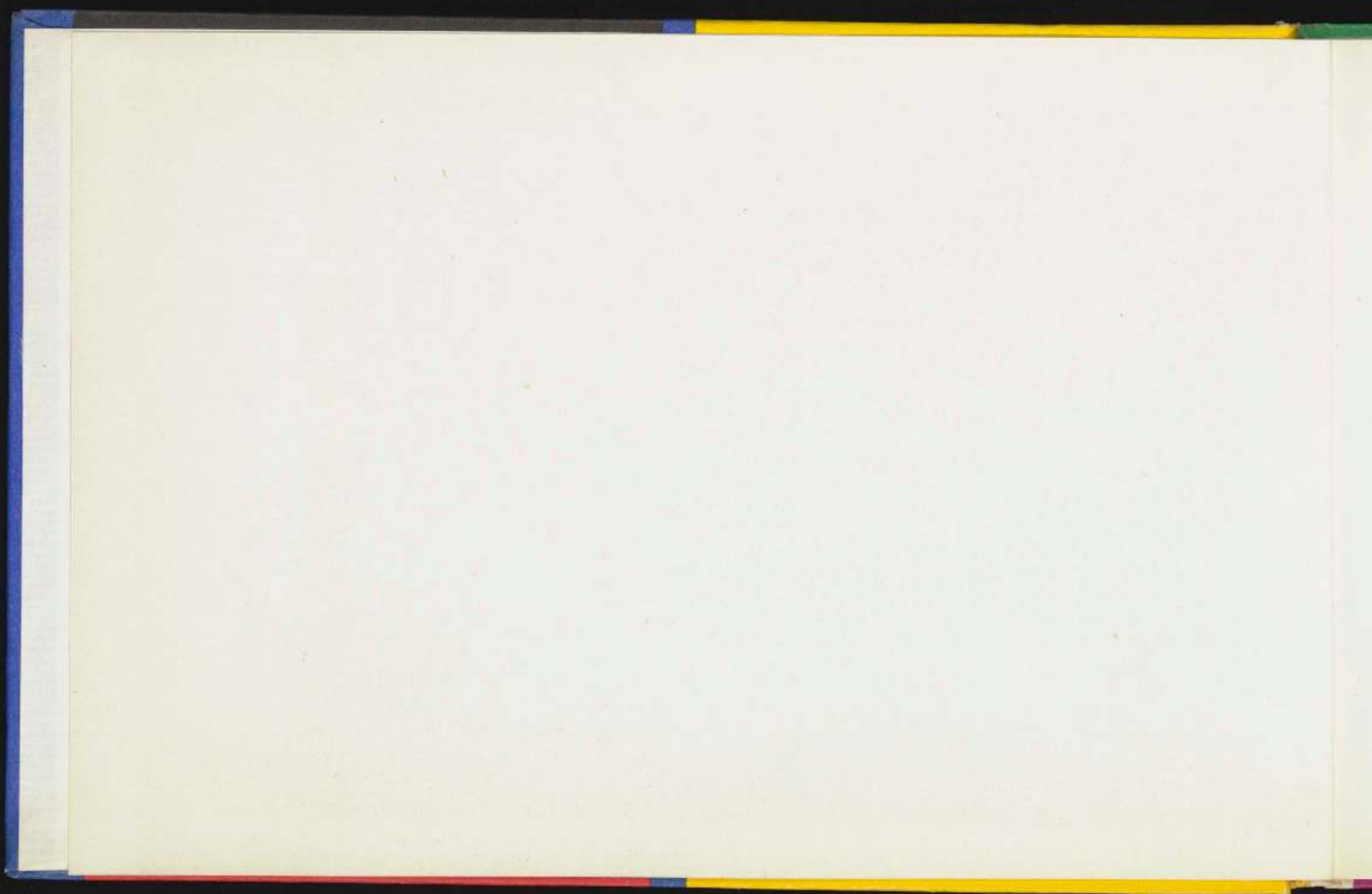
Jazz

Piper-Bücherei









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Henri Matisse

Jazz

Archive

MoMA

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The Museum of Modern Art was honored in 1948 in receiving, as a gift of the artist, one of the 100 copies without text of Matisse's portfolio »Jazz«. The complete set of plates has twice been exhibited at the Museum in 1948 and again in the summer of 1960 when a series of jazz concerts was presented Thursday evenings in the Museum's sculpture garden.

With the gracious permission of E. Tériade the plates in this volume have been reproduced from the 1947 Paris publication of Editions Verve. Of the twenty plates in the original portfolio, sixteen have been selected, with certain pages of Henri Matisse's accompanying text. The publisher thanks Mr. Otto Stangl who placed the original Verve plates at his disposal for these reproductions. Reproduction rights have been obtained from S. P. A. D. E. M., Paris and Cosmopress, Geneva. The book has been produced by Thormann & Goetsch, Berlin.

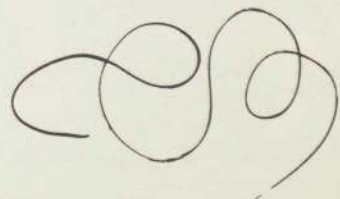
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Dessiner
avec des
ciseaux

—
Découper à
vif dans la
couleur me
appelle la traite
directe des

sculpteurs.

Ce livre
a été conçu
dans cet
esprit.



Bonheur.

Tirer le bonheur
de soi-même,
d'une bonne
journée de
travail, de
l'éclaircie
qu'elle a pu
apporter dans
le brouillard
qui nous en-

tourne. Penser
que tous ceux
qui sont arrivés,
en se souvenant
des difficultés de
leurs débuts,
s'orientent ~~avec~~
avec conviction,
"C'était le bon
temps". Car
pour la plupart:

arrivée = Prison.
et l'artiste ne
doit jamais être
prisonnier.

Prisonnier ?
un artiste ne
doit jamais
être : ~~prisonnier~~
prisonnier de
lui-même, pri-
7 sonnier d'une



manière, pri-
sonnier d'une
réputation,
prisonnier d'un
succès, etc...
Les Goncourt
n'ont-ils pas
écrit que les
artistes japo-
nais de la grande
époque changeaient

de nom plusieurs
fois dans leur vie.
J'aime ça : ils
voulait saur.
garder leurs
libertés -





Le caractère
d'un visage
dessiné ne dépend pas de
ses diverses
proportions
mais d'une
lumière spirituelle qui se
reflète. Si bien
que deux

dessins du
même visage
peuvent représenter le même
caractère bien
que les proportions des visages de ces
deux dessins
soient différentes.

Dans un
figuier au-
cune feuille
n'est pareille
à une autre ;
elles sont toutes
différentes de
forme : Cependant
chacune crie :
Figuier.



Jazz

Ces images
aux timbres
vifs & violents
sont venues
de cristal.
lisations
de souvenirs
du cirque,

de contes
populaires
ou de voyage.
J'ai fait ces
pages d'écri-
tures pour
apaiser les
réactions,
simultanées



de mes im-
provisations
chromatiques
et rythmiques,
pages formant
comme un
"fond sonore"
qui les porte,
les entoure
et protège

ainsi leurs
particularités.





Un musicien
a dit :

En art la vérité
le réel commence
quand on ne com-
prend plus rien
à ce qu'on fait,
à ce qu'on sait,
et qu'il reste
en vous une

énergie d'autant
plus forte qu'elle
est contrariée,
compressée,
comprimée.
Il faut alors
se présenter
avec la plus
grande humi-
lité, tout blanc,
tout pur, candide,



Le cerveau sem.
blant- vide, dans
un état d'esprit
analogue à celui
du communiant
approchant la
Sainte Table.

Il faut évidemment
avoir tout-^{son} acquit
derrière soi et
avoir su garder

la fraîcheur
de l'Instinct.



Mes courbes
ne sont pas
folles

Le fil à plomb
en détermi-
nant la direction
verticale forme
avec son opposée,
l'horiz^{on}tales,



la Boussole
du dessinateur.

Ingres se
servait du
fil à plomb.

Voiez dans
ses dessins
à l'étude de
figures debout

cette ligne
non effacée.
qui passe par
le sternum
et la malléole
interne de
"la jambe qui
porte".

Autour de cette
ligne fictive
évolue "l'arabesque".



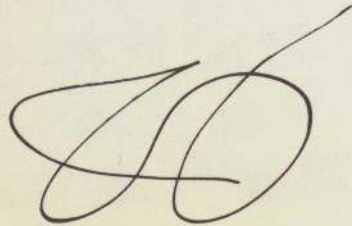
J'ai tiré de
l'usage que
j'ai fait du
fil à plomb
un bénéfice
constant.
La verticale
est dans mon
esprit. Elle
m'aide à pré-
ciser la direction

des lignes,
et dans mes
dessins rap-
pides, je n'in-
dique pas une
courbe, par
exemple celle
d'une branche
dans un pay-
sage, sans avoir



conscience de
son rapport
avec la verti-
cale.

Mes courbes
ne sont pas
belles.



Le Bouquet.

Dans une
promenade
au jardin je
cueille fleur après
fleur pour les
masser dans le
creux de mon
bras l'une après
l'autre au hasard



de la cueillette.
Je rentre à la
maison avec
l'idée de peindre
ces fleurs. Après
en avoir fait
un arrange-
ment à ma
façon quel
déception:
tout leur charme

est perdu dans
cet arrangement.
Qu'est-il donc
arrivé?
L'assemblage
inconscient
fait pendant
la cueillette au
goût qui m'a
fait aller d'une
fleur à l'autre

est remplacé
par un arran-
gement volon-
taire sorti de
réminiscences
de bouquets
morts depuis
longtemps,
qui ont laissé
dans mon



Souvenir leur
charme d'alors
dont-j'ai char-
gé ce nouveau
bouquet.

Renoir m'a
dit : "Quand
j'ai arrangé
un bouquet
pour le peindre,
je m'arrête

Sur le côté que
je n'avais pas
prévu. »





Si j'ai confié
en ma main
qui dessine,
c'est que pensant
que je l'habituais
à me servir,
je me suis ef-
forcé à ne l'a-
voir mais lui
laisser prendre

le pas sur mon
sentiment.
Je sens très
bien, lorsqu'elle
paraphrase.
S'il y a des-
accord entre
nous deux:
entre elle et
le je ne sais

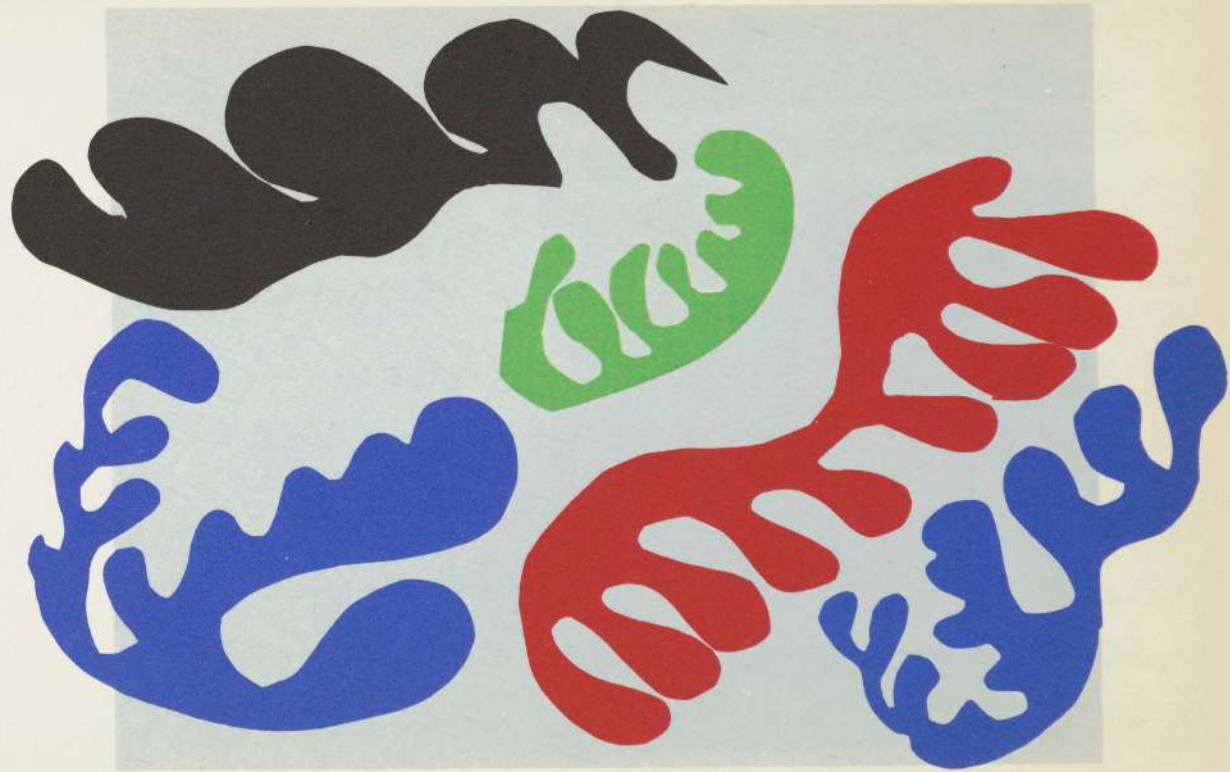


quoi en moi
qui paraît
lui être sou-
mis.

La main n'est
que le prolonge-
ment de la
sensibilité
et de l'intel-
ligence.

Plus elle est
souple, plus
elle est obéis-
sante. Il
ne faut pas
que la servante
devienne maî-
tresse.

El



Notes

Pourquoi après
avoir écrit:
"qui veut se
donner à la
peinture doit
commencer
par se faire

couper la
langue",
ai-je besoin
d'employer
d'autres moy.
ens que ceux
qui me sont
propres?
Cette fois
j'ai à présen-
ter

des planches
de couleur
dans des con-
ditions qui
leur soient
les plus favo-
rables. Pour
cela, je dois
les séparer



par des in-
tervalles d'un
caractère dif-
férent. J'ai
jugé que
l'écriture ma-
nuscrite con-
venait le mieux
à cet usage.
La dimension

exceptionnelle
de l'écriture
me semble
obligatoire
pour être en
rapport dia-
gnostique avec le
caractère des
planches de
couleur.

Ces pages ne
servent donc
que d'accompa-
gnement à
mes couleurs,
Comme des
asters aident
dans la compo-
sition d'un
bouquet de

fleurs d'une
plus grande
importance.

LEUR RÔLE EST DONC
PUREMENT SPECTA-
CULAIRE.

que puis-je
écrire ? Je
ne puis pourtant
pas remplir
ces pages avec

des fables de
La Fontaine,
comme je le
faisais, lorsque
j'étais clerc d'a-
voué, pour les
"conclusions
grossoyées",
que personne
ne lit jamais,

même pas le
juge, et qui
ne se font que
pour user une
quantité de
papier timbré
en rapport avec
l'importance
du procès.
Il ne me reste
donc qu'à rap-
porter

des remarques,
des notes prises
au cours de
mon existence
de peintre.

Je demande
pour elles, à
ceux qui au-
ront la patience
de les lire, l'in-
dulgence que

que l'on ac-
corde en gé-
néral aux
écrits des pein-
tres.



Jazz

BY HENRI MATISSE

DRAWING WITH SCISSORS

To cut right into color makes me think of a sculptor's carving into stone. This book has been conceived in this spirit.

HAPPINESS

To derive happiness from one's self, from a good day's work, from the clearing that it makes in the fog that surrounds us. To think that all those who have succeeded, as they look back on the difficulties of their start in life, exclaim with conviction, »Those were the good days!« For most of them success has meant a prison, and the artist must never be a prisoner. Prisoner? An artist must never be a prisoner even of himself, a prisoner of a style, a prisoner of a reputation, a prisoner of good fortune. Did not the Goncourt brothers tell us that Japanese artists of the great period changed their names several times in their lifetimes? This pleases me: they wanted to safeguard their liberties.

The character of a face in a drawing depends not upon its various proportions but upon a spiritual light which it reflects—so much so that two drawings of the same face may have the same character though drawn in different proportions.

No leaf of a fig tree is identical with any other of its leaves, each has a form of its own but they all proclaim: Fig tree!

JAZZ

The images, in vivid and violent tones, have resulted from crystallizations of memories of the circus, popular tales, or of travel. I have added these pages of text to appease the simultaneous reactions of my chromatic and rhythmic improvisations, which constitute a background of sound which carries them, surrounds them and thus protects them in their particularities.

A MUSICIAN HAS SAID:

In art, truth begins when one no longer understands what one is doing, what one knows, and until there remains in you an energy all the stronger because it is constrained, compressed and repressed. One must present oneself with the greatest humility, all white, all pure, and candid, the mind seemingly empty, with a spirit analogous to that of the communicant approaching

the Holy Table. Obviously, one must have one's accomplishments all behind one, and yet have known how to keep one's instincts fresh.

THERE IS NO MADNESS IN MY CURVES

The plumb line in determining the vertical direction forms, with its opposite, the horizontal, the draughtsman's points of the compass. Ingres used a plumb line. See in his studies of standing figures this unerased line, which passes through the sternum and the inner ankle bone of the leg which bears the weight. Around this fictive line the »arabesque« develops. I have derived constant benefit from my use of the plumb line. There is something vertical in my spirit. It helps me give my lines a precise direction and in my quick drawings I never indicate a curve, for example, that of a branch in a landscape, without a consciousness of its relationship to the vertical. There is no madness in my curves.

THE BOUQUET

Strolling in the garden, I pick flower after flower, gathering them in my arm, one after the other, as I happen upon them. Back I go to the house with the thought of painting them. Having rearranged them to my taste, what a disappointment. All their charm vanished with

my arranging. What has happened? Instead of an unconscious accumulation, as my taste led me from flower to flower, now I have a willful arrangement, the result of reminiscences of bouquets dead and gone leaving in my memory their bygone charm which I have instilled into this new bouquet.

Renoir said to me: »When I have arranged a bouquet in order to paint it I go around to the side that I have not looked at.«

Insofar as I have confidence in my hand when drawing, it is because, as I trained it to serve me, I never let it dominate my sentiment. I sense very quickly, when it is paraphrasing something, if there is any disaccord between us: between it and I-know-not-what in myself which seems submissive to it. One's hand is only a prolongation of one's sensibility and intelligence. The more supple it is, the more obedient. The servant must not become mistress.

NOTES

After having written: »He who dedicates himself, let him begin by cutting out his tongue.«
What need have I to employ another medium than my own? This time I have to present some color plates in conditions as favourable as may be. To do this I must separate them by inter-

ludes of a different character. I concluded that my handwriting was most suitable for this purpose. The unusual size of this writing seemed to me obligatory to keep it in decorative proportion with the color plates.

Thus these pages serve only as an accompaniment to my colors, as asters may be helpful in making up a bouquet of more important flowers. *Thus their function is purely visual.*

What can I write? I cannot fill these pages with fables of La Fontaine as I used to do when I was a law clerk, in my amplified conclusions which no one ever reads in any case. Not even the judge, and which are added only to use up a quantity of stamped paper in proportion to the importance of the case.

I can only offer some remarks, notes made in the course of my lifetime as a painter. I ask of those who have the patience to read them that indulgence which is generally accorded to the writings of painters.

POSTSCRIPT

It was in 1939 that Henri Matisse declared that he was ready to design a cover for the first number of the *Verve* series. Thus began his first work in collage. Nine years later he executed the cover for the eighth issue of *Verve*, again with cut and pasted papers. This time he asked me to obtain color sheets of printer's ink, to eliminate any possibility of color infidelity. These covers prompted me to ask Matisse whether he would not like to illustrate a book done in the same technique; that was in 1942. He set to work, attempting first to recreate one of his recent paintings with pasted papers. This disappointed him and he did not go on with it. In 1943, Matisse offered to design the cover for a new issue of *Verve*. He summoned Angèle Lamotte and myself to Cimiez and there showed us not only the cover for *Verve* Number 13 but also two large bright colored plates—*The Clown* and *The Toboggan*—which were to be the first and last pages of »Jazz«. The »Jazz« cycle was born. The other pages for the book were executed in Vence in the villa »Le Rève« where he had established himself. First he painted large sheets in watercolor and fastened them to the wall of his studio. So brilliant were they that I recall Matisse writing me that his doctor had ordered him not to enter the room without wearing dark glasses.

Using a pair of scissors, he cut forms out of these colored sheets which he kept arranging and combining until he had achieved a harmonious juxtaposition of pure colors. In the entire process he found it unnecessary to draw a single line. As he himself writes in his text for »Jazz«, he drew with the scissors, cutting into the color as a sculptor cuts into stone. It was a historic moment in modern art: Matisse had discovered a brilliant and successful new method of obtaining plastic effects as a painter.

To accompany these pictures, which recall the chromatic opulence of miniature painting, no printing type seemed appropriate. So Matisse, harking back to the magnificent and picturesque calligraphy of the Middle Ages, wrote the text in his own hand.

The themes of the first plates derive from the circus, which is what he first had in mind. As the work progressed, however, he noted an affinity between his chromatic picture-making and musical improvisation and therefore called his book »Jazz«.

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ou le clown

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The above volumes of the Piper-Bücherei are published in German by
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1870

1. The first of the year was a very cold day, with a heavy frost, and the wind was from the north-east.

2. On the 2nd day the weather was much warmer, and the wind was from the south-west.

3. On the 3rd day the weather was again cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

4. On the 4th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

5. On the 5th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

6. On the 6th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

7. On the 7th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

8. On the 8th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

9. On the 9th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

10. On the 10th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

11. On the 11th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

12. On the 12th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

13. On the 13th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

14. On the 14th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

15. On the 15th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

16. On the 16th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

17. On the 17th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

18. On the 18th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

19. On the 19th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

20. On the 20th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

21. On the 21st day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

22. On the 22nd day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

23. On the 23rd day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

24. On the 24th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

25. On the 25th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

26. On the 26th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

27. On the 27th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

28. On the 28th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

29. On the 29th day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.

30. On the 30th day the weather was very warm, and the wind was from the south-west.

31. On the 31st day the weather was cold, and the wind was from the north-east.



