

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
AN EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
PATTERN-MAKING AND FINE ART

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CHAPTER ONE
AN INTRODUCTION TO PATTERN

In this thesis I hope to consider the notion of "Pattern Painting",¹ and to examine the relationship between it and both decorative and fine art. Patterning in fine art is not always understood and is consequently often denigrated as a purely formal expression devoid of meaning. Also, people involved in pattern making are often defensive about it because it seems to imply a lack of freedom and emotion. As Amy Goldin says :-

"Pattern carries the aura of craft and contrivance, even though many individual aspects of it; its affinities with number, rationality, mechanical production and depersonalized imagery have been claimed for art"²

In order to rectify this idea of patterning I will point out some of the complexities involved in pattern painting and areas related to it, and I will show that pattern is not entirely, as is generally understood, antithetical to fine art. I will do this by discussing the work of two artists, Henri Matisse and Sonia Delaunay-Terk, who used elements of patterning and decoration in their work throughout their lives. Contrary to what is usually thought painting has always contained patterns but these were usually used as framing devices or as reinforcing elements within patternless compositions. This was true both in the North and in the South during Renaissance and this use of pattern inaugurated an interest in it that was never to leave the easel picture. However, it was not until the twentieth century that pattern

and decoration became a dominant subject matter in fine art. In the early years of the twentieth century pattern and applied art presented a model of abstraction for some painters. It was through the making of decorative or applied art designs that artists as diverse as Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Sonia Delaunay, Theo Van Doesburg and Wassily Kandinsky achieved their abstract painting styles. The attitude of these artists towards art involved a broad conception of the ways in which it could be engaged in society. They were not concerned with the status of art or with pictorial issues. The decorative work they were engaged in seems to have acted as a catalyst to their respective process of achieving a non representational abstract style in painting. These artists used pattern in the applied arts, such as weaving, textile and clothes designs and so on, and they also used pattern as a subject matter for their painting. Pattern can therefore now be looked at, not only as decorative and ornamental, but also can now be considered to be in the area of legitimate fine art concern. Pattern making in general involves the creation of relationships between shapes and colour, either organic or geometric. The result of this interaction is a unified rhythmic scheme. Movement, spontaneity, expression, symbolism and flexibility are inherent elements in pattern. It is in these terms that I hope to discuss pattern itself and pattern in the work of Henri Matisse and Sonia Delaunay-Terk.

NOTES

- ¹ N. Marshall, "Patterning", Arts Magazine 55 (September 1980), pp.120-121
- ² Amy Goldin, "Patterns, Grids and Painting", Artforum 14 (September 1975), pp.50-54

CHAPTER TWO

THE PARTICULAR FEATURES OF PATTERN

Originally a pattern meant an archetype, a pattern was something ideal which was repeated because it was inherently good in some way. After 1700 this meaning began to fade and the modern sense gained currency. This was to mean a motif that was repeated, matched, paralleled, or equalled, according to a particular design. Patterning lay solely in the perception that an archetype could conceivably be duplicated, even beyond the field of vision. A pattern, therefore, does not necessarily need to be repeated in order to be a pattern; as long as the original motif has a real potential toward duplication there is a pattern. This simply means that if the design is patternable, then there is a pattern.

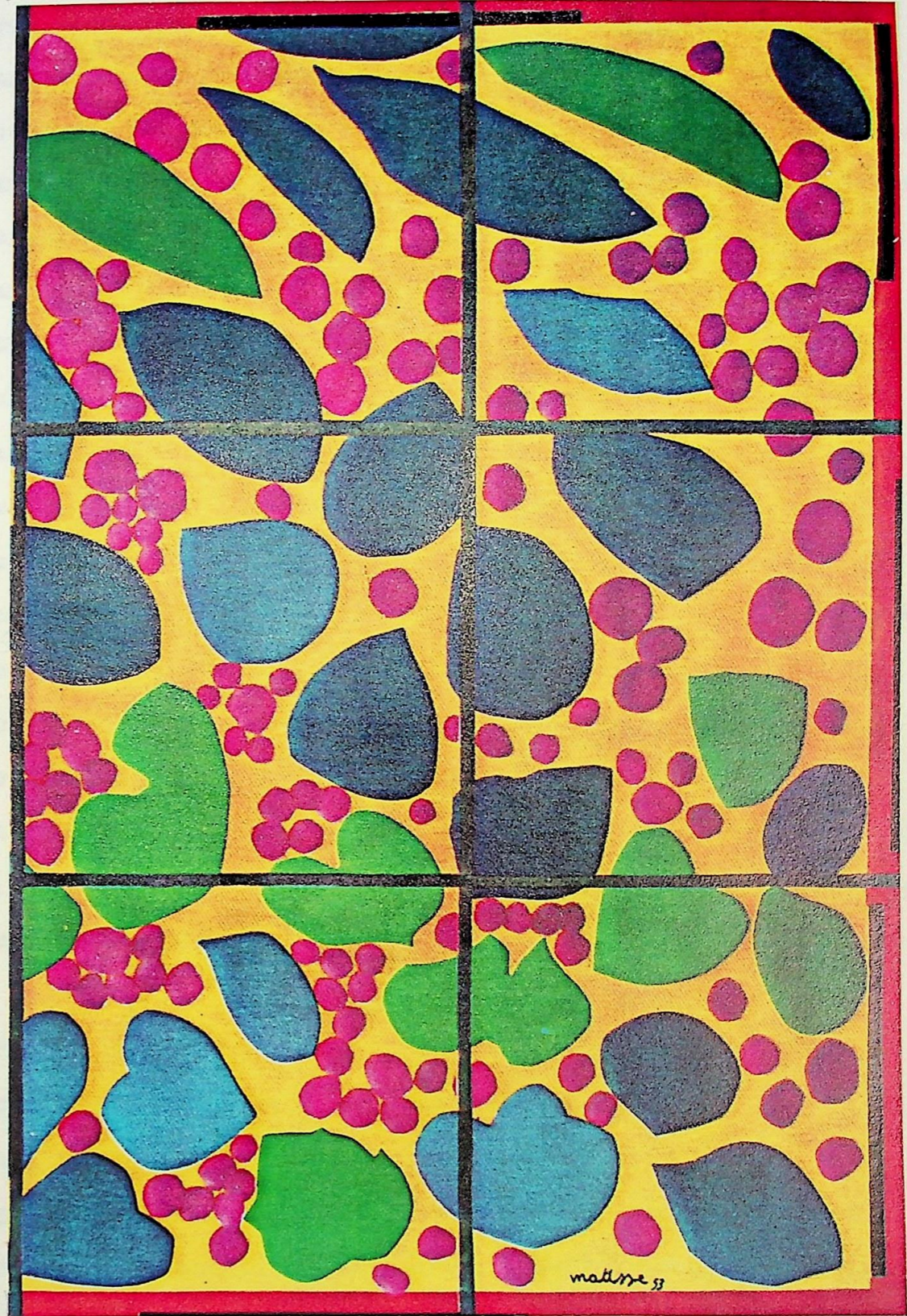
Patterns generally embody a series of abstract images which may be varied in their nature and which constantly accumulate and develop. Basically it is not important what type of motif is used to create the pattern as long as the motif is used as a unit in an over-all rhythmic scheme. Patterns are based on logic and a sense of order and relationships between the different elements involved and, in general, no one aspect of the pattern is more important than any other. Sequence, rhythm, structural relationships and a certain amount of order are integral to pattern-making. It is the investigation and disclosure of these phenomena that are the

basis for the creation of pattern art. It is not important what elements are used, that is up to the person involved. What is important is that the information chosen is pushed to its limits, creating as many variables and possibilities until the outcome is satisfactory. Both Henri Matisse, particularly in his late cut-outs which are made up of rhythmic relationships between shapes and colour and in which no element is more important than another, and Sonia Delaunay-Terk, in all her work, are examples of artists who did this, although their choice of motif and the way in which they used pattern were totally different. Matisse's logic and sense of order stemmed more from his intuition and emotions while Sonia was more aware than he of the theory behind her work.

Patterns, in themselves, project a certain rhythm which is the same as the organic rhythms which guide our heartbeat and movement. It is by this rhythm that a pattern can be recognised. No matter how complicated the rhythm is, once the rhythm has been recognised the repetitive continuation of that rhythm will assure the eye and the mind that the rhythm is complete. Consistent rhythms, however complicated or simple, satisfy our natural sense of order and once the order of a certain pattern is recognised any breaks in the order or changes in the degree of order attract attention, and call for a fresh awareness until a new pattern of order is established. This is the way in which the mind adjusts to changes in patterns. Generally speaking, if the order of

a particular pattern is too familiar it will be considered dull, and if it contains too many breaks from an order that is considered normal, it will be found to be too confusing. A successful pattern, therefore, falls on the line between dullness and confusion or between familiarity and changes, allowing the mind to bring together the new and the old. The patterns and rhythmic relationships of shape and colour, in which Sonia Delaunay and Matisse were interested and succeeded in creating and developing to successful conclusions, were of this kind. Though Matisse does not fall as completely into this system of pattern making as Sonia Delaunay, there are definitely elements of it involved in his work and at times he does fit into this category perfectly. (fig. 1). In fact the reason I have chosen to use these two artists to illustrate the use of pattern is because Matisse at first does not appear to be as 'pattern minded' as Sonia Delaunay - and indeed for a greater part of his life he was not - but towards the end of his life he fused pattern-making and fine art completely.

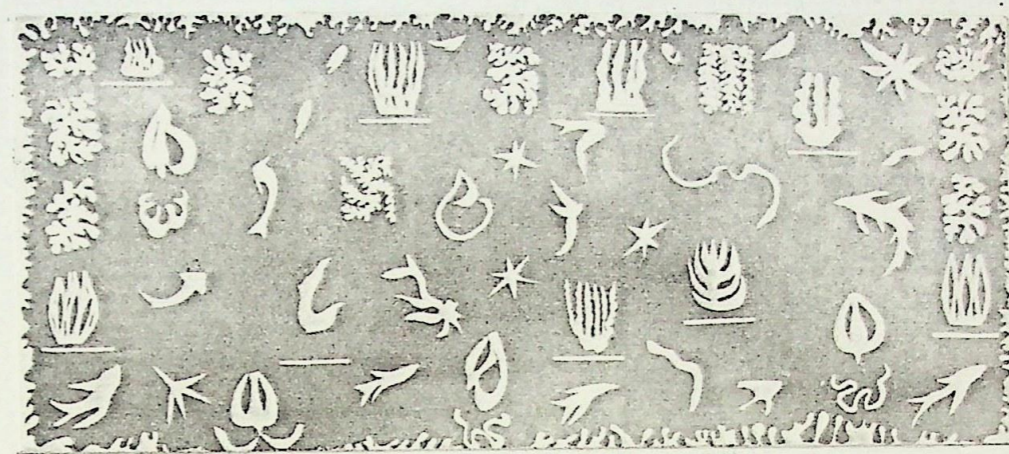
Basically there are two types of motifs that can be used as starting points for the creation of patterns. These are organic or free-style motifs; and geometric motifs. The term 'free-style', as I am using it here, refers to designs other than such purely geometric motifs as stripes, circles, triangles, lozenges and so on, and patterns composed with geometric symmetry. Its meaning is, therefore, quite extensive and covers a wide variety of subjects.



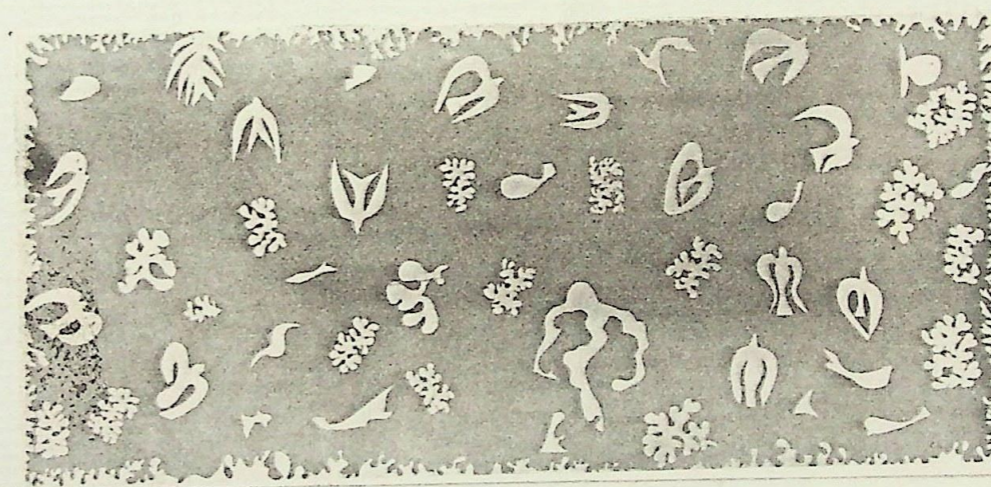
1.-FLOWERING IVY, WINDOW DESIGN

Free-style designs usually deal with more or less recognisable motifs from nature and are often symbolic and express meaning. Plants, animals, water, people, to name a few, can be used as the basic motifs in the exploration and development of organic patterns. Henri Matisse is an example of an artist who used free-style motifs in painting and other works, as opposed to geometric motifs, though this does not necessarily mean that a certain logic and sense of order were not involved in the creation of his work. He always used nature and his surroundings as sources for his work. Some of the aspects of nature he chose as his motifs were, sky, water and growing things. (fig. 2a, 2b). In contrast with free-style or organic, then, the term geometric sounds very precise and might convey the impression that principles of geometry actually dictate the construction of all designs included in this category. However, the term is not intended to have so strict a scientific meaning: it refers rather to more or less geometrically conceived motifs which may be broken up or combined in a geometric manner.

Purely geometric figures, as fundamental elements of geometric-style include a great variety of forms:- such as the square, the triangle, the lozenge or circle. Among geometric designs then, there are innumerable varieties, simple and complicated, strong and delicate. Some may be purely geometric designs consisting of geometric units and repetitions of these, or of combinations of the same or different geometric units, or of compound, transformed, or



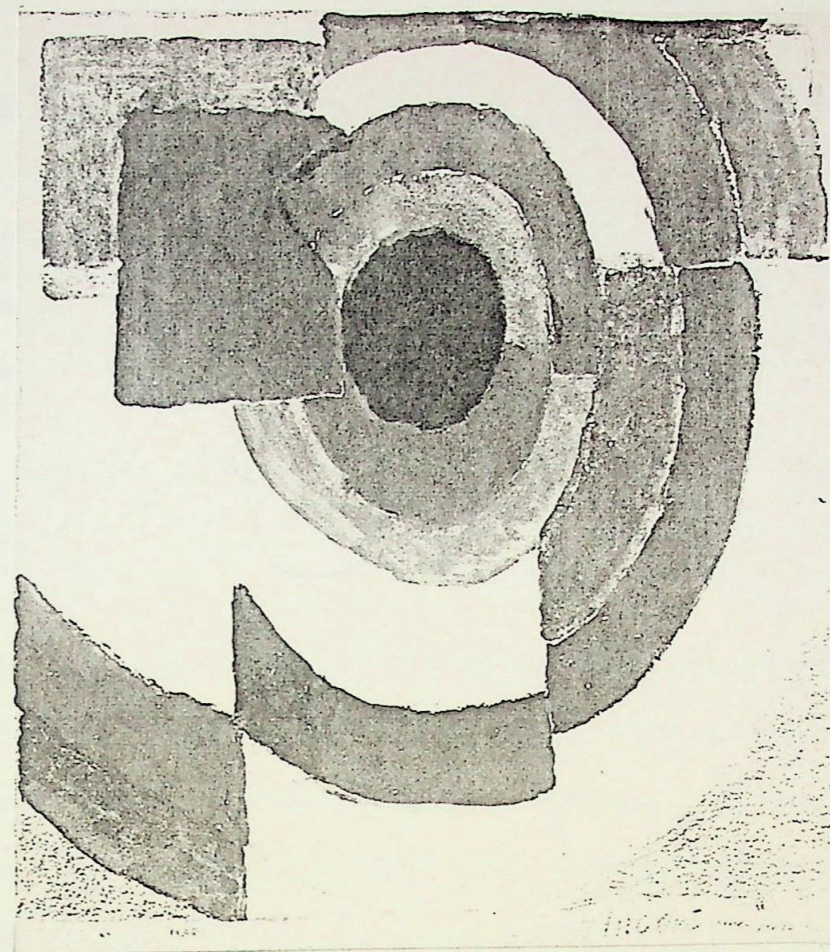
2a.-THE SEA 1946



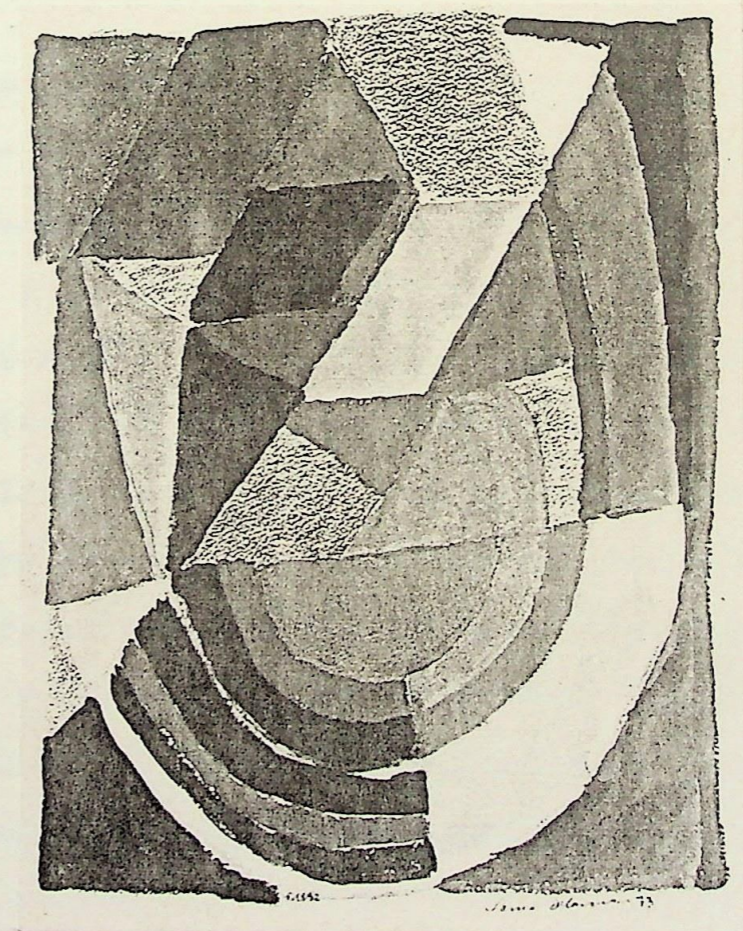
2b.-THE SKY 1946-1948

conventionalised renditions of these; in others geometric motifs may be combined with free-style or organic motifs. Geometric-style patterns begin with those constructed of single geometric forms. As they become more complex, the basic forms are combined with other motifs or their structures are modified. When these are broken up, and re-grouped, they give rise to endless varieties of geometric designs. When single motifs and their simple combinations are developed more elaborately they become expressive. Sonia Delaunay-Terk then, in contrast to Matisse, used motifs of simple geometric shapes, which she unified through colour and rhythm, as a source of her work throughout her life.(fig. 3).

When using either of these two categories to create patterns there are rules and planning involved to some extent. The use of these rules and planning can result in two different types of pattern; free pattern and precise pattern. Basically the difference between the two categories is that free pattern uses these rules and also breaks them, it allows chance and destruction to play a part in the end result, whereas precise pattern does not consider any variations from the method of creation of the pattern. This can mean that once the artist has decided on a motif and worked out according to logic and simple maths the rules governing the pattern, anyone not involved with the creation of the image could actually carry it out. Both systems require a discipline that could either be restrictive or could lead to freedom of thought and expression depending on the mentality and



3.-SYNCOATED COLOUR-RHYTHM 1971



4.-RHYTHM-COLOUR 1973

approach of the artist involved. For example Jack Tworlov said of his work in this area:-

"Now I surround my paintings with a system of limits, limits on the shapes that I use and the way in which I use them. I call this system a diagonal grid. Working within it is for me more creative than working in a completely nihilistic way. The limits impose a kind of order, yet the range of unexpected possibilities is finite.

I still have to make choices and to make these choices there is still no guidance except intuition. I am fascinated with the fact that the work has its origin in system, in a given outside myself, yet within it I am able to invent endlessly".¹

From this statement it can be seen that personality, taste, and intuition play an important part in the creation of patterns. The two artists I have chosen to write about here used the first category, that is, free pattern in which the rules are frequently broken, as a basis for their creative works.

Generally people suppose that a pattern is the repetition of a motif; this is often true but it is not a necessary requirement in pattern making. Often in the creation of pattern the important thing, and the thing which determines the pattern, is, in fact, the constancy of the space between the motifs. It does not matter what marks are used, if the intervals between them remain the same a pattern will appear. A pattern therefore, comes into existence when there are enough repetitions of the space to establish it clearly as a unit, regardless of the marks made. This means, then, that a single motif irregularly applied to a sheet of paper does not result in any sort of pattern at all. To assume that

pattern is simply the repetition of a motif is fatal to any advanced understanding, or use of it, as this assumption allows the pattern-maker to change only the way in which the motif is stated, and this does not necessarily vary the pattern itself. One pattern can have various forms or else a range of changes can present alternative forms of a single pattern. The elements making up a pattern can be grouped together, or spaced, they can be scattered or aligned, in straight or undulating rows; they can be combined into simple shapes or composed into complex networks. There is, in fact, no limit to the development of variations. Basically then, if the interval or space between the motifs is taken as a constant, then a single pattern can be maintained through changes in the motif, the colour and the density. The resulting feel of the pattern will be different as it passes through the changes but the juxtapositions of the variants will usually support some sense of family resemblance. The mutations will, therefore, seem to be internal or genetic. On the other hand if the interval is changed while any or all of the other variables remain constant, the difference in the feel of the pattern will be radical, the new pattern will appear as a system change. The conceptual richness of pattern can really only be fully realised through the juxtaposition of related patterns. While a single pattern may be boring, traditionally offering nothing more than its own easily understood identity, the confrontation of related patterns inevitably interests the mind and an infinity of legitimate unexpressed possibilities. (fig. 4).

In the context of pattern the elements of drawing take on an unexpected weight. For example, if a line is thickened, or a curve flattened, or a tone deepened, it is not simply a form that changes; on the contrary, the rhythm of the whole thing alters. The effects of changes in a pattern, which are sometimes subtle and sometimes violent, is hard to describe in the usual formal terms. The aesthetic vocabulary was made for unique forms and in pattern nothing is unique, the overall identity and unity is everything. The individual elements are fused into a larger unit which is perceived as an object in its own right.

Pattern can be so interesting that it seems strange that it never receives the artistic enthusiasm that it deserves. Though pattern is not an extension or variant of picture-making, bits of it can be pressed into serving pictorial purposes. It is impossible, however, to respond in the same way to a picture and to a pattern because each demands a different kind of perception and a different kind of aesthetic experience. Each of them need a specific kind of attention and particular sets of expectations. The fundamental structure of the pattern is the grid, any pattern can be reduced to some particular grid, though it may not be obviously stated. Unlike pictorial compositions, all-over grids disperse visual attention throughout the whole surface. This can be seen in the work of both Matisse and Sonia Delaunay. Grids can be used on regularly or irregularly shaped areas

and to perceive a grid is to identify the gridded area as a unit. The grid asserts continuity and equalises the importance of all parts of the field. (see fig. 1). Like compositions, grids organise perception but they do so in a way that inhibits the single, stable visual focus that is the normal aim of composition. Compositions in general encourage involvement and intimacy. Grids, on the other hand, generate a greater emotional distance, and a sense of the presence of an objective, pervasive law. It is easier to look at a composition because with its focus areas it is like looking at any scene around. But it is usually necessary to scan a pattern or grid, to search for the nature of the whole; there is often no one element to focus on, it needs to be looked at as a whole first before it can be examined in detail. Grids are non-hierarchical by their nature and the space in a pattern is measured so that there is an experience of visual order. Also in pattern there is usually no informational value to the shapes involved, which are normally the carriers of form and content, this simply means that pattern is more often than not, abstract and non-representational. The grid then, is an isolated, specified, unlocalised field as close as we can come to perceiving pure being free from any added rationale or emotional activity. Mondrian has said that

"For me the plastic relation is more alive precisely when it is not enveloped in the natural, but shows itself in the flat and rectilinear. In my opinion this gives us far more intense expression than natural form and colour. But to use more general terms, the natural appearance veils the expression of relations. When one wants to express definite relations plastically, one must show them with greater precision than they have in nature".²

To say that grids are free from any added rationale or emotional activity, however, is not to say that work which uses a grid as a starting point is not an expressive piece of work. The pattern art which I am discussing involves a system of working within a discipline of planning and rules, which, however, does not exclude emotions, chance or choice. Pattern art, here, means the exploration of shapes, colours, textures, line and most important, what happens when these elements are put together in certain fashions; and since everyone has their own sense of order, their likes and dislikes, and their own instincts, the personality and experience of the artist involved is most important as regards the creation of relationships between, and the exploration of, the above elements. Because grids evoke the experience of law it is generally thought that they are not on the same level of creativity as formal painting. I feel, however, that a great amount of the world's artistic production has been made through the process of discovering possibilities within rigid frameworks like the structure of the grid. Some of this artistic production which results from discovering these possibilities can be seen in the work of Henri Matisse and Sonia Delaunay-Terk, and although they do not always stick rigidly to any set of rules related to pattern-making, there are definitely elements of patterning to be found in the work of both these artists.

NOTES

¹ Jack Tworlov, Art in America (November 1982)

² G. Schmidt, Mondrian (Basel: Galerie Beyeler, 1965),
fig. 35

CHAPTER THREE
HENRI MATISSE IN RELATION
TO PATTERN

"What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity, and serenity devoid of troubling or depressing subject matter, an art which might be for every mental worker ... like an appeasing influence, like a mental soother, something like a good armchair in which to rest from physical fatigue".¹

In this chapter I will discuss the work of Henri Matisse (1869-1954) in relation to pattern and decorative painting. Patterned areas are frequent in his work almost from the beginning, and towards the end of his life Matisse, in fact, abandoned his figurative and compositional skills and put all his energy into the development of a purely abstract decorative art. Throughout his life Matisse's objectives in his work were to give to sensations of colour their most powerful and intense expression, to re-organise the play of forms and colour, to get rid of the established hierarchies which existed among objects, and finally, to change the prejudice concerning beauty and ugliness. Flat colours, set down in pure tones and juxtaposed without transition, are Matisse's contributions to art and to man's joy of life, and are evidence of his use of pattern. Matisse, in fact, produced the most glowing and the most exciting colours of his time. He was a born colourist and in the first half of this century there were also few to match his instinctive feeling for balance and proportion, and his full intellectual control over the composition. Consequently, Matisse commands a more important place in the history of twentieth century

art than anyone else, with the possible exception of Picasso.

Matisse became a professional painter at a moment when the official salons were dominated by naturalistic painting, by hidebound academicians who somehow did not know what all good painters have known throughout the ages: that there is a difference between art and nature and that there was no need for duplicating nature's phenomenon through scientific accuracy. Matisse had little concern for representational or descriptive truth: he did not bother to suggest space, and he was not interested in shadows, in perspective, or in the right local colour. Instead, by a glowing, purified use of colour he got entirely away from the claims of nature and he achieved a unity of composition in his painting, not, as I have just said, through the ordered use of perspective, but through an arrangement of space and colour which resulted in the creation of patterns. So it was not the representation of reality that attracted Matisse to his subjects, but the tensions involved in it. This approach to his painting and other creative work led Matisse to an ever increasing interest in pattern and I hope here to trace this interest in some of his earlier work to its culmination in his last works, the compositions of painted and cut-out paper. I would like to show some of the ways in which Matisse used grids and pattern devices in, for example, such works as the Chapel at Vence 1948-1951, "Swimming Pool" 1954, "Apollo" 1953 and the illustrations for his book "Jazz", (begun in 1943 and

published in 1947), in particular.

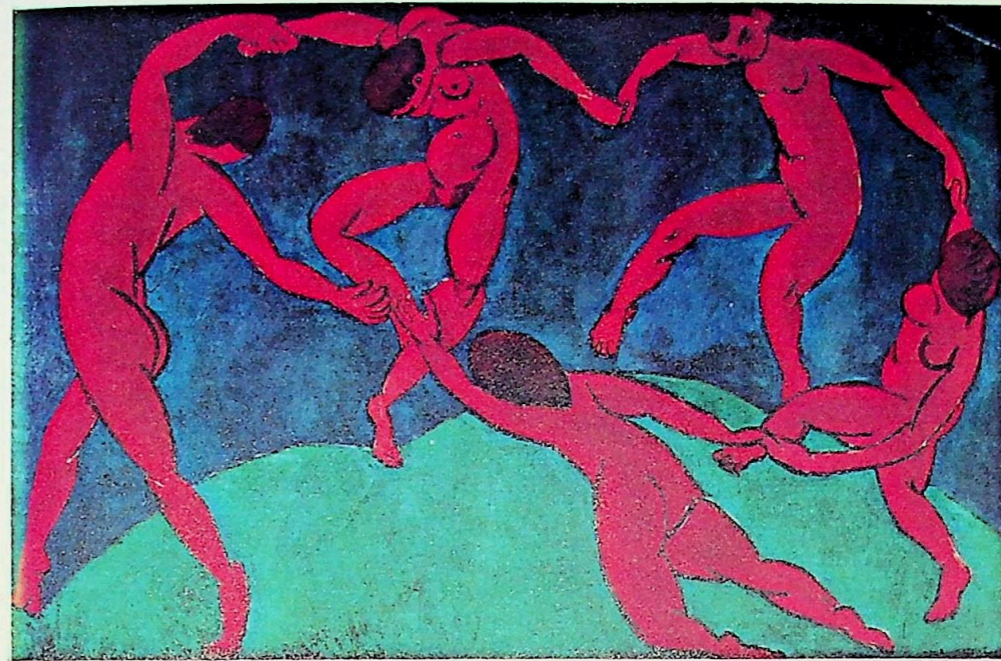
Henri Matisse was born in Northern France at Le Cateau-Cambresis, in 1869, and was sent by his family to study law. At this stage in his life nothing seemed to suggest that he had any vocation for painting, until, quite suddenly, when his mother gave him a paintbox during his convalescence after an operation in about 1890, the idea seemed to come to him. Matisse then gave up his job in a lawyer's office and, not without opposition, went to Paris to study art. But even before he left Le Cateau-Cambresis he had taken a course in drawing and in 1890 had painted the first two works he recognised as the beginning of his serious painting. They were both still-lives, patient reflections of familiar objects, steeped in memories of seventeenth century painting. In Paris Matisse attended the Academie Julian and evening classes at the Ecole des Arts Decoratifs in 1892. Then, once again, chance played an important part in his life. One day as he was painting in the courtyard of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, he was seen by Gustave Moreau who was impressed with his work and got him into the school in his own famous atelier in 1895, allowing him in without the entrance examination. In teaching Matisse, Moreau tactfully allowed him plenty of freedom, letting him make his own discoveries and inviting him to find 'knowledge in the rhythm and curve of the line'. Matisse later married, raised a family and for a few years conducted an art school, but most of all he worked feverishly in his studio with a dedication, a tenacity

and a conviction unmatched by anyone else. Matisse's artistic personality was established during the short flowering of the Fauve group, 1905, of which he was leader. This group's intention was to demonstrate the importance of pure colour by freeing it from a merely descriptive function and by giving it back the emotional value it originally had. All the Fauves, in fact, reached artistic truth by avoiding the limitations of reality, and by justifying their paintings through form and colour, and not through any direct connection with nature. Once its years of activity were over, however, Matisse was the only one of its members to deepen the quality of his own painting in the light of the ideas he had developed during those years. And while there are, inevitably, stylistic changes in Matisse's major work from the 1905 portrait of his wife, "Woman with a Hat" (fig. 5), to the decorations for the Chapel at Vence (fig. 19a,b,c), they are not basic changes. His aesthetics always remained the same and throughout his life Matisse maintained unspoiled the quality inherent in his work. In fact the reason I have chosen to use Matisse to illustrate the use of pattern in art is because at first he does not appear to be as 'pattern minded' as Sonia Delaunay, and indeed for the greater part of his life he was not, during his last years of work he succeeded in fusing pattern-making and fine art completely. Matisse and Sonia Delaunay produced work that was totally different but nonetheless they are both good examples of artists who used elements of pattern in creating art.



5.-WOMAN WITH A HAT 1905

Matisse's profound interest, then, in pattern and decoration was also evident from early on. All during his life he expressed this interest in his constant use of decorative objects as motifs for his paintings and other work and by his interest in large decorative paintings such as the Shchukin, "La Danse" and "La Musique" (fig. 6,7), the Barnes murals, and then in the late cut-outs. Matisse's desire was for an art which would restore to each person their share in the harmony of the world, a harmony that could be promoted by the well ordered arrangement of forms in their related colours, as in "The Blue Window" 1911 (fig. 8) in which the rhythmical arrangement of the objects and the glowing colour connected with that rhythm together produce their visual effect. This desire shows that Matisse believed painting to be a decorative, purely visual, as opposed to narrative, art. Composition, to him, meant the art of combining the elements he had available in a decorative way so that the work converged into a single complete harmony. His work, all the same, was never superficial, on the contrary it was always rendered with complete sincerity and it was also always self-expressive, and though he did not copy nature, his work generally had its source in nature. The particular aspects of nature he chose to work with were the realm of change and movement, of sky, of water, and of growing things. Matisse, himself, never claimed unusual insight and neither did he ever dwell on the story of his life, in fact, his ideals were simply a clear mind and a



6.-LA DANSE 1909



7.-LA MUSIQUE 1909



8.- THE BLUE WINDOW 1911

steady hand, the virtues of the craftsman. Matisse never wanted to stir up anyone with his art, he wanted instead to convey a sense of peacefulness and to induce pleasant dreams through the distortion and simplification of forms, through the balance of colour and also through the repetition of a cheerful motif.

According to Amy Goldin in "Matisse and Decoration : The Late Cut-Outs"² patterns first appeared in the work of Matisse in 1906 and 1907 in some rather expressionistic drawings and lino-cuts of nudes (fig. 9,10). Later on in his work Matisse used patterns to compartmentalise and to structure pictorial space by causing them to imply flat planes such as walls, floors and the tops of tables, as in, for example, "Interior with Eggplants" 1911 (fig. 11). In the "Pink Studio" of 1911 (fig. 12) also Matisse attempted to fuse the colourfield of the painting and patterning. In the centre of the room is the model's patterned backdrop which dominates the picture and flanking it are two patterned panels that further increase its presence. The walls consist of vertical stripes and what little surface remains on the floor is partly covered by a patterned rug.

The "Pink Studio" is among Matisse's most provocative early work, and during the next few years he seems to have attempted to continue to bring together the colourfield and patterning. And in the "Window at Collioure" of 1914, or the "Yellow River"



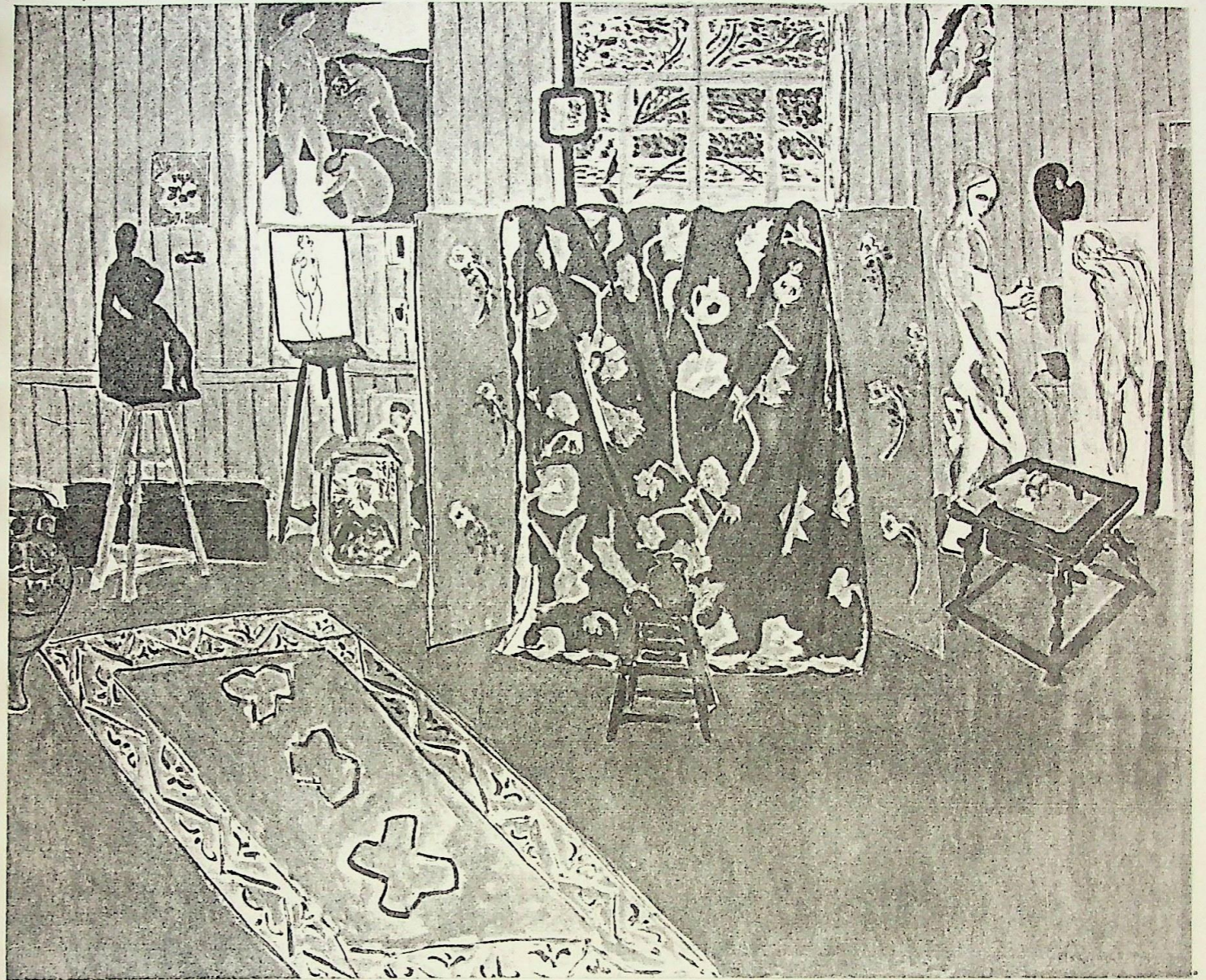
9.-LINO-CUT 1907



10.-LINO-CUT 1907



11.-INTERIOR WITH EGGPLANTS 1911

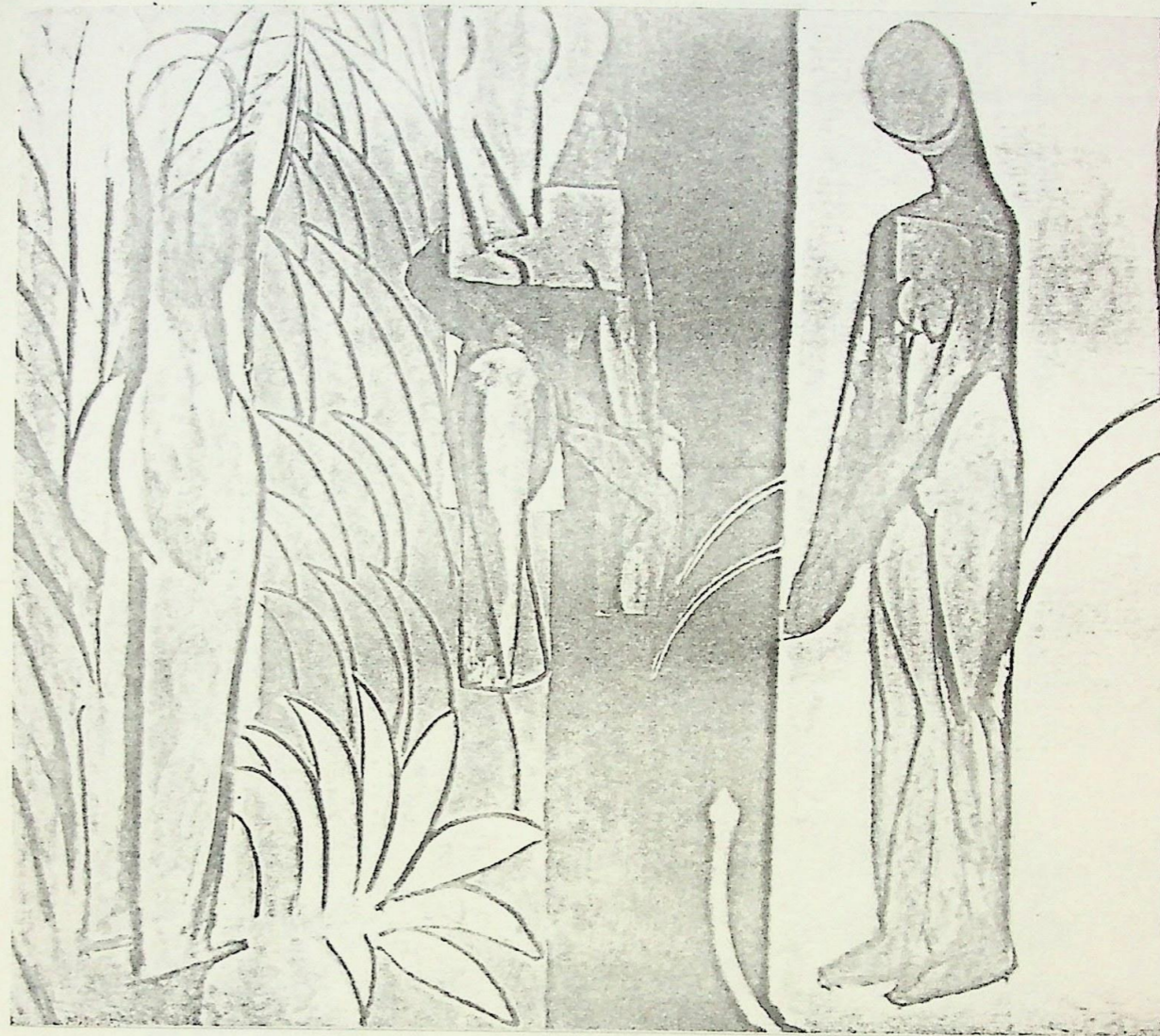


12.-THE PINK STUDIO 1911

of 1914-1915, Matisse did combine these two elements. In the "Bathers" of 1917 (fig. 13) he demonstrated how Cubist drawing could be opened up in a dramatically new way. The strong, edge to edge, vertical stripes of the "Bathers" pointed to a new all-over approach to composition, and as his art evolved to a new acceptance of pattern for its own sake and consequently during the twenties and thirties patterning became central to Matisse's vision.

Throughout this time in his work patterns established plasticity and they gave direction and rhythm to planes and surfaces that would otherwise have been more or less static, as in "Decorative Figure on an Ornamental Background" which was painted in 1925. (fig. 14). In his earlier work Matisse's examples of patterns used elaborate, curvilinear motifs and avoided exact repetitions. However, by 1935, this had changed and simple, freely-drawn stripes, zigzags and checkerboards predominate in his work, and by the early 1940's Matisse was approaching patterning with the master's ease of address, but even still it was not until the cut-outs that Matisse isolated pattern as his sole subject matter and totally accepted it for its own sake. Finally, during this period Matisse's preoccupation and total organisation of the whole, which means his preoccupation with decoration, and his all-over approach to composition, had also become more obvious.

In the process of developing this decorative impulse Matisse



13.-SECTION OF BATHER'S BY A RIVER 1916-17



14.-DECORATIVE FIGURE ON AN ORNAMENTAL BACKGROUND 1927

undertook to provide increasingly intense visual pleasure, and as a result of this he unconsciously accepted the primacy of decoration. This in actuality means that his art gradually became separated from the drama of human existence with its implications of struggle, pain and death. Over the years Matisse by degrees got rid of such things as visible moods, atmospheres and seasons, and eventually in the thirties what he called 'intimacy' drained away. The reason it did so was because Matisse separated his subject matter from recurrent human occasions and he turned it into studio furniture. That is why, for example, Matisse's women are never either sex objects or individualised people, but instead they are models, studio furniture in fact. While Matisse was progressively drawing-off interest in the subject matter, he was simultaneously concentrating on the flat, coloured surface and also on other formal properties of art and he was also reducing the objects of the real world to signs, because, as he said ;

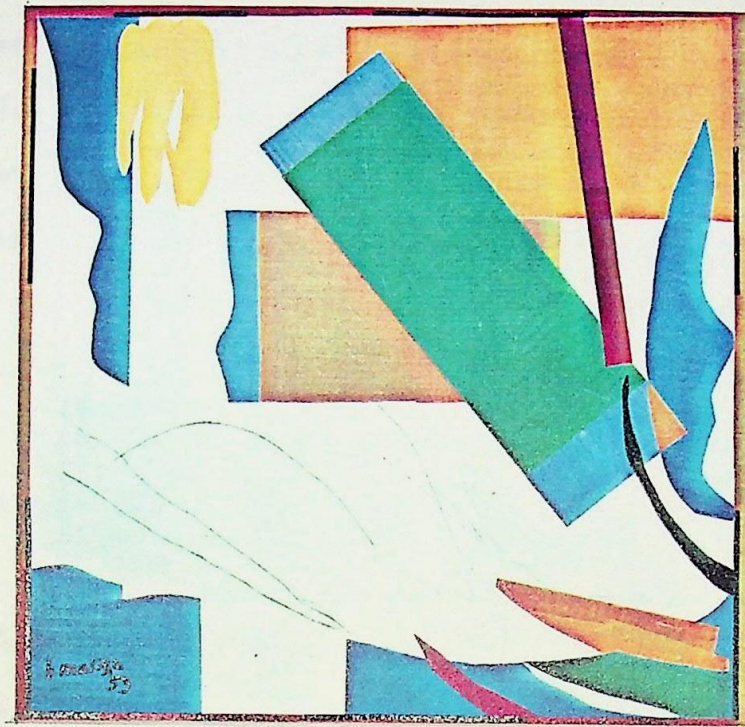
"There is an inherent truth which must be disengaged from the outward appearance of the object to be represented. This is the only truth that matters".³

and these signs became the basis for him for the creation of pattern and decorative painting.

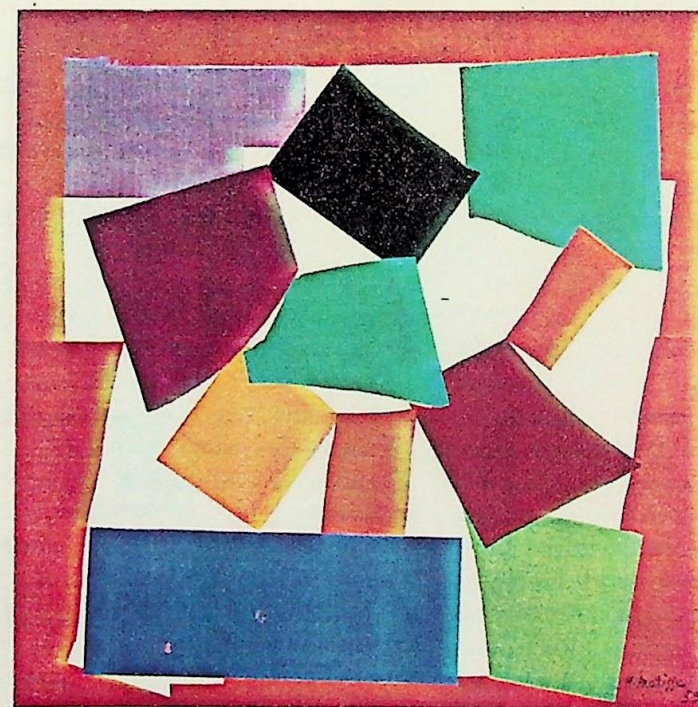
In his late cut-outs Matisse finally found the simplest and most direct way of expressing himself and he also attained a form filtered to its essentials and with greater completeness and abstraction than ever before. Matisse began to use the cut-outs, an original technique, that was all his own,

when he was illustrating "Jazz", and they were not part of research but an autonomous tool in his painting. He used them then from 1944 onwards, and particularly from 1950-1954 when his physical suffering made it impossible for him to work in any other way. Yet, however, they were not substitutes for other forms of work, nor were they either complementary or compensatory to other work. Indeed, the papers which Matisse himself coloured before using them, in order to obtain the exact colour he wanted, and then cut-out with a scissors, were the result of a new wave of youthful creativity. Matisse's painted papers as a process are technically and inventively quite different from painting because, by being used instead of paint, then cut-out and glued to the background, they become a form in themselves and achieve results similar to those of painting. In fact, there was no essential break for Matisse between the oil paintings and the cut-outs. Matisse still had his old mental lucidity and his joy in creation, and these produced motifs with reduced simplified forms and patterns, the colour of which was something necessary, irrevocable and inherent in them. And whereas in his earlier paintings Matisse abstracted from what he saw, in the cut-outs he abstracted instead from what he knew. The forms he used in them recall the dazzling richness of a distant vision of objects, flowers, shells, masks, dancers and acrobats, all these images were from an endless fund of memory, and they were all recomposed as Matisse cut his papers and they took on a new quality, a kind of irrevocable, emblematic quality.

The pure colours he used in the cut-outs counterpoint one another and create abstract forms which become synthesised into purer more concentrated patterns. In these late cut-outs Matisse arrived at imagery which seems to have no existence in space and which exists as pure idea as in, for example, "Memory of Oceania" (fig. 15) which transfigures reality into an abstract concentration of colours and light, and likewise "Snail" (fig. 16) also in which eloquence is found in the circle of gradually altering colours. These two works were both created in 1953 and they are the most completely abstract pictures Matisse ever produced. They are composed of large, simplified areas of space with dazzling colours and patterns and in them the curvilinear, organic forms either disappear or are reduced to a few discontinuous lines and the coloured rectangles become the active component of the picture. Matisse, in fact, began to really investigate grids and patterns in two major undertakings and these were "Jazz" and the Chapel at Vence. Of all the works Matisse illustrated the most interesting, for its inventive use of colour, and the way in which it treated its forms and its patterns, is, undoubtedly, "Jazz", which was published in 1947 as a folio of almost 150 pages, and on which Matisse had begun working enthusiastically in 1944. This book was also an important transitional work for Matisse, because, as I have said, it confirmed him in the cut-paper medium. "Jazz" consists of 20 pages of varying subject matter taken from folklore,



15.-MEMORY OF OCEANIA 1953



16.-SNAIL 1953

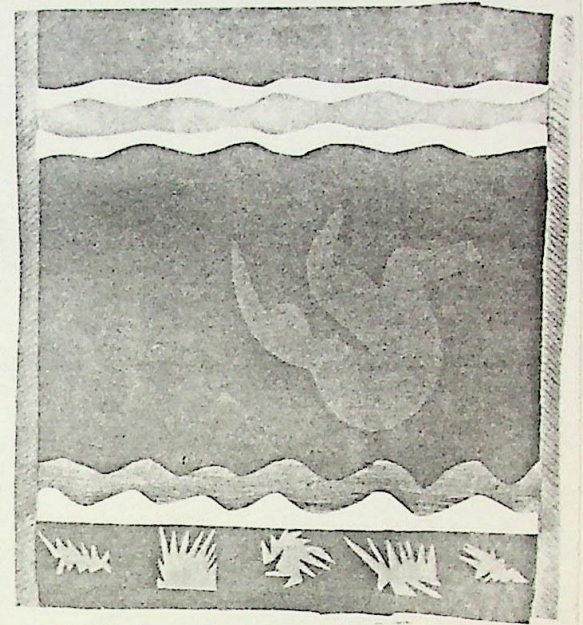
mythology and the circus, and with an accompanying text reproduced in Matisse's own large, sprawling handwriting. (fig. 17). Against backgrounds of a simple colour Matisse boldly cut clear outlines, which are extremely synthetic and at the same time open to light. The images themselves are in vivid and violent colours and they resulted from crystallisations of memories of the circus, and popular tales of travel. This is an example of Matisse abstracting from what he knew rather than from what he saw.

Many of these collages in the book are limited to a very few pictorial elements which are subjected to highly abstracted transpositions and others are embellished with ornamental accessories and they reflect an almost childlike gaiety. (fig. 18a). In an introduction to the text, which was inserted between the illustrations in the album, Matisse stated that the text was meant to "serve only as an accompaniment to my colours, just as asters help in the composition of a bouquet of more important flowers, thus their role is purely visual".⁴ The text does not, therefore, give any understanding of the images, although it does compliment them.

Despite their vivid colours and circus themes, few of the compositions in "Jazz" are cheerful, in fact, several of them are among Matisse's most ominous images. The subject matter in them is unusual and so is the feeling they convey.

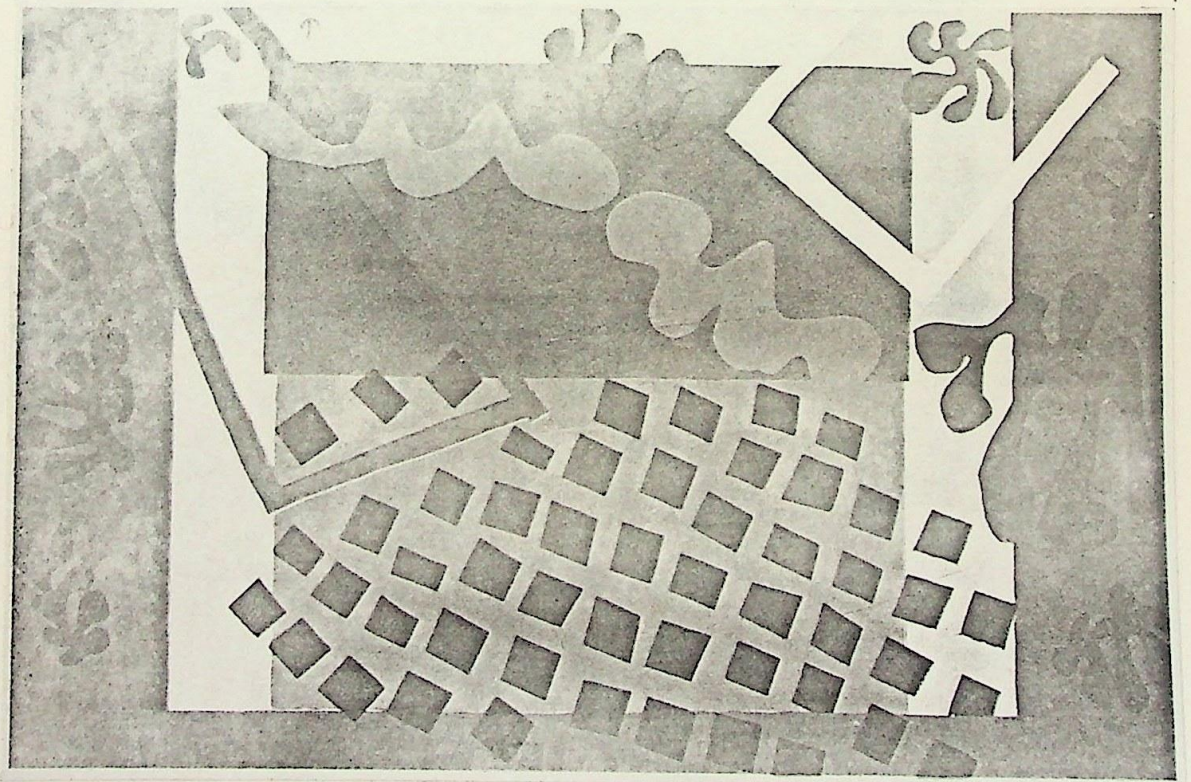
The colour, however, is definitely the most powerful element of the illustrations and "Jazz" is full of overlapped rectangles of solid colour as in "The Codomas" (fig. 18b) or "Swimmer in the Aquarium", for example. This overlapping of the bands of colour in "Jazz" results in the ground of the picture taking on a shifting relationship with the white page, and these interchanges of ground and also of the figure, are central events in many of Matisse's cut-outs. His palette in "Jazz" became radically simplified and his pictures, both then and later, became flatter than ever before, and as a result of the space being flattened a new emphasis was placed on grids and patterns. Because Matisse placed so much importance on the colour element in "Jazz", it is unlike any of his earlier illustrations which were done in line with a very sparing use of colour or else with no colour at all. The coloured papers Matisse used here transformed "Jazz" into a painting situation and out of being simply an illustrated book. "Jazz" does not give the normal orderly appearance of a page of text because with the use of the artist's handwriting the margins become indeterminate and this naturally affects the character of the illustration and also the written text is much more aggressive than printed text and is therefore a better balance for the lawless effect of Matisse's images. Another thing that happened in "Jazz" related to patterning was that the compositional order of the images changed, here Matisse's usual apportionment of interest to figure, environment and ground, in that order, went for good. Consequently, as units of decoration replaced

de conics
populaires
ou de voyage.
J'ai fait ces
pages d'écriture
pour
apaiser les
réactions,
simultanées



1-2

17.-JAZZ : THE TOBOGGAN AND TEXT



18b.-JAZZ : THE CODOMAS



18a.-JAZZ : ICARUS 1943

the usual hierarchic compositional order, Matisse became a beginner, he began using familiar forms in unexpected ways and he also began to rely on the components of pattern more and more. Although the shapes and outlines in "Jazz" are sometimes coarse or fussy and the abstraction seems to be done sometimes too in a careless fashion, this book for Matisse was very important, as it was a candid view of a search for novelties of form. For example, the original bay, or grape, leaf, which the artist used previously in borders for decorative commissions as early as 1907, now became a highly distinctive and mobile Matisse motif; this leaf is of central importance in several of the "Lagoons" from "Jazz" and it dominated a 1957 rug design called "Mimosa". This leaf of Matisse joined with the stars, hearts and flowers which were first seen in "Jazz" and which afterwards began to be seen everywhere. From then on these motifs are to be found on, innumerable separate sheets, as cut-out shapes in black and white pasted over with small pieces of coloured paper and affixed on differently coloured grounds.

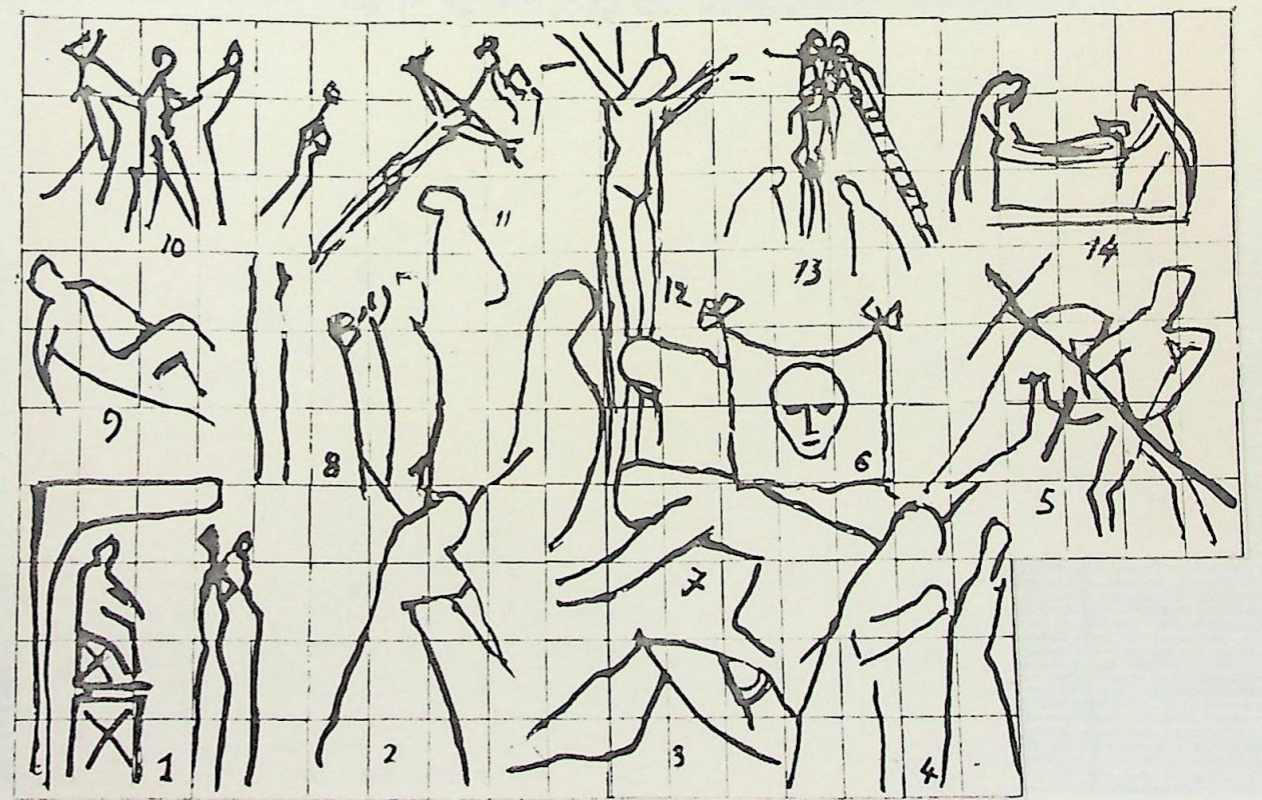
From 1948 to 1951 Matisse worked on the Dominican Chapel of the Rosary at Vence: this undertaking involved a complex labour that included architecture, painting, stained glass, objects and ornaments. Matisse considered the work and the designs he did for this chapel to be his masterpiece. In fact he said: "The chapel gave me the chance to realise what I had been seeking by combining them all together". Matisse was

then eighty years of age and he took on a work that he considered to be the last stage in an entire lifetime of work and the culmination of an enormous, sincere and difficult effort. Indeed he felt that everything he had done until then could only be a preparation for this work.

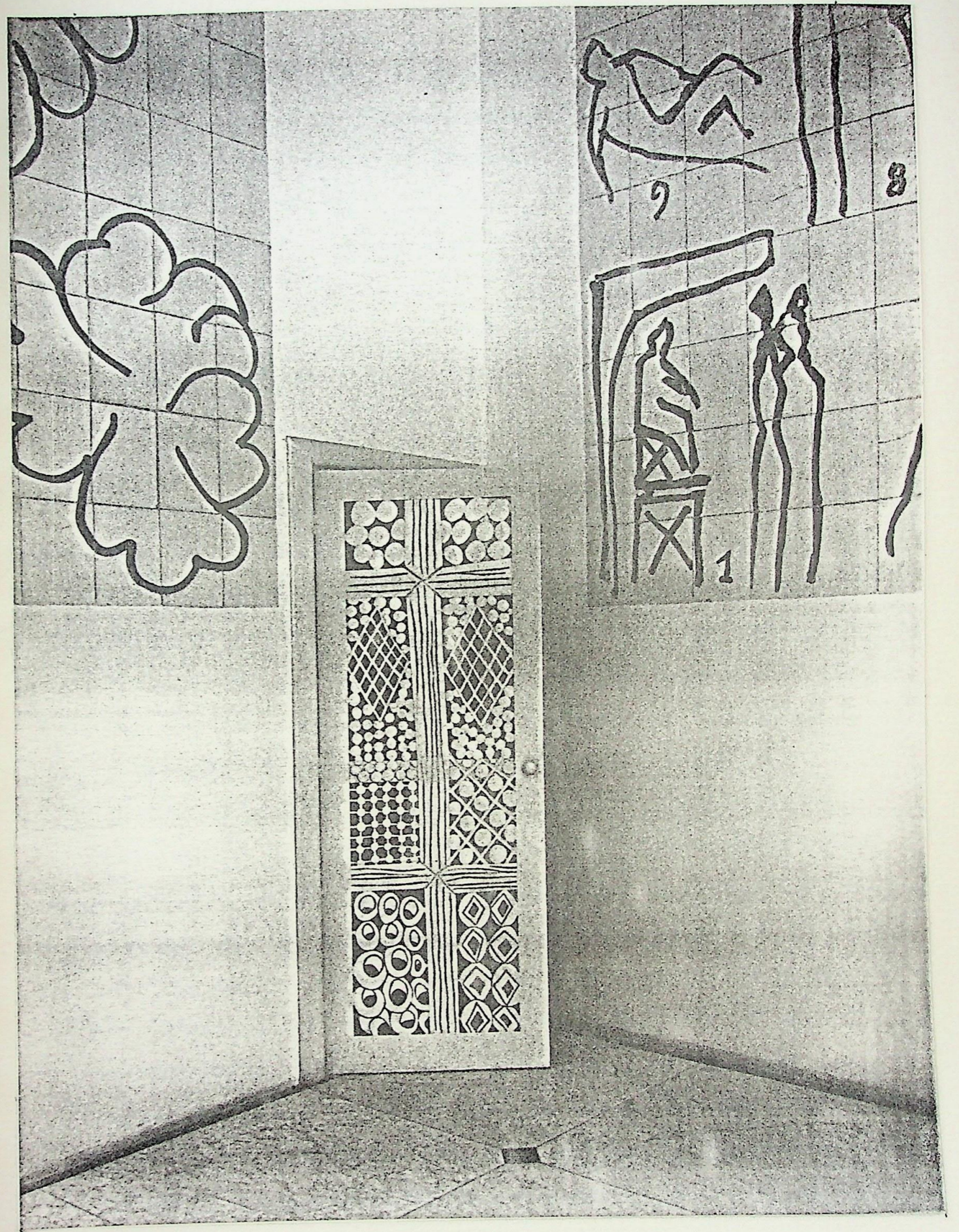
His main preoccupation with this work was to balance the presence of a surface of light and colour with that of a white wall covered with black drawings. Inside this Church almost every visible surface incorporates gridded units. The windows, for example, which Matisse said grew out of "Jazz", are rectilinear grids activated by colour disposed in a series of simply varied shapes. The only colour in the Chapel, in fact, comes from the light filtered through the ultramarine blue, bottle green and lemon yellow leaf and plant motifs of these stained-glass windows. (fig. 19a). On the other three walls, Matisse has set images, signs, and symbols in black on a white ceramic background. The floor here, the confessional door and the beautifully tiled ground are all grids which Matisse more or less fully integrated into the visual whole. (fig. 19b). The three groups of figures behind the altar were the tall, solemn picture of St. Dominic, the Virgin and Child among stylised clouds shaped like large flowers, on the long wall, and lastly, the Via Crucis in the interior of the facade, made up of simplified images and symbols of the passion. (fig. 19c). The design and execution of the work in the Rosary Chapel



19a.-INTERIOR OF THE VENCE CHAPEL WITH WINDOWS



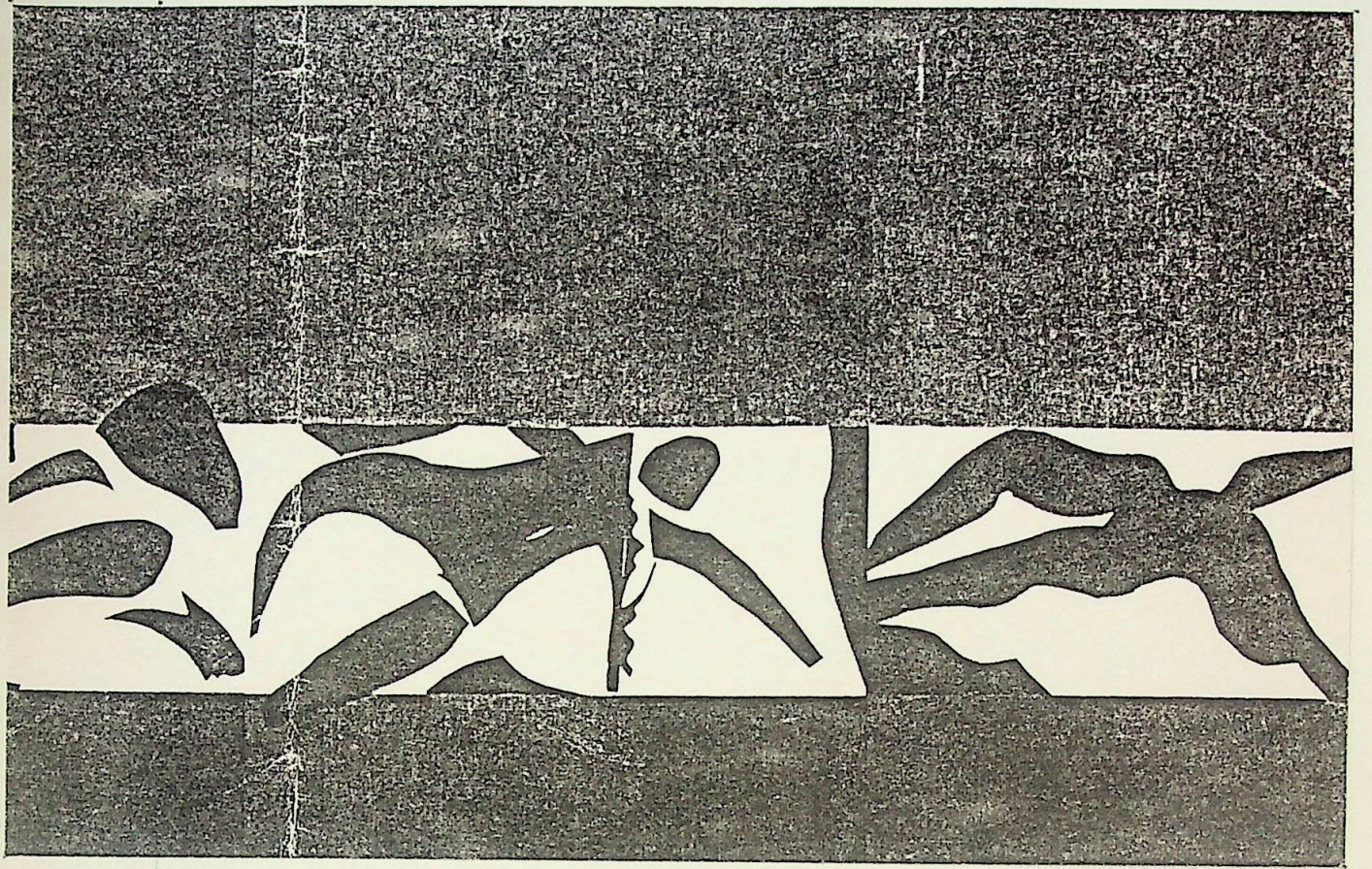
19c.-SYMBOLS OF THE PASSION



19b.-THE CONFESSIONAL DOOR IN THE VENCE CHAPEL 1948-1951

were together a careful concentration of Matisse's style which he achieved patiently with special attention to the drawing (he used the brush stuck into the end of a bamboo cane) and with the will to follow it through to the end. Whether transposing designs onto enamel and stained-glass or seeing to the colours of the glass, or the form of the lead, Matisse, even at this stage in his life, was tirelessly enthusiastic.

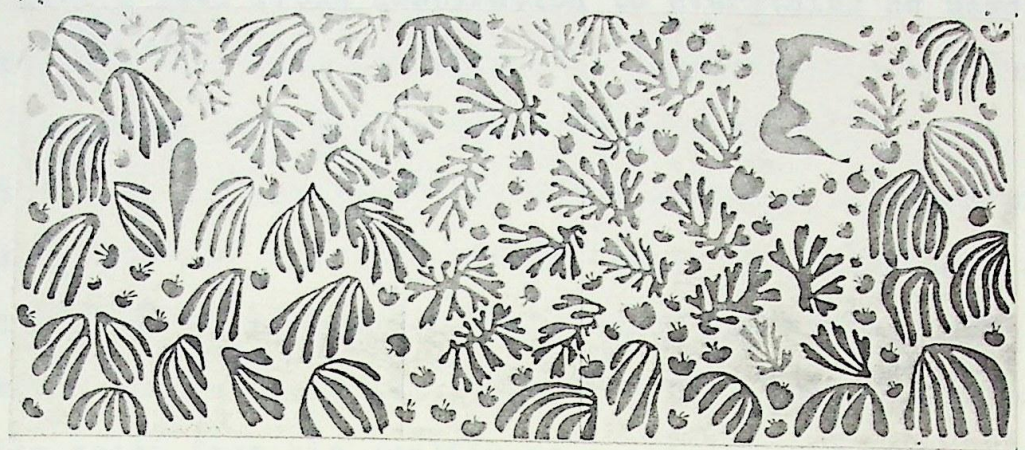
As I said earlier, interchanges of figures and ground, a phenomenon directly related to patterning, are central events in many of Matisse's cut-outs. In equalising the figure-ground relationship, Matisse gave his backgrounds such saturation and visual density that they equalled the weight of the figure or motif. In the "Swimming Pool" 1952, (fig. 20) for example, relations of figure and ground reach a high point of felicity and suggestiveness in Matisse's art. The "Swimming Pool" is a panoramic composition of blue and white shapes on a supporting surface of burlap. As you read from one end of the work to another, what happens is that what is figure at one end gradually becomes ground at the other end and vice versa. White swimmers arching against a blue ground are dissolved and recomposed to form blue figures on a white ground. Along the way from one end to the other figure and ground are juxtaposed in such a way that even areas you read as ground must also be read as figures. Matisse's aim in this composition seems to have been to make



20.-SECTION OF THE SWIMMING POOL 1952

all the forms you can see in it swim. A similar effect can also be seen in many of his other cut-out works, even in many single figures that engage long fingers of figure with long fingers of ground. But the "Swimming Pool" was Matisse's grand statement of the pictorial reality of relations as things seen rather than as ideas.

A gridded organisation of the visual field, which as I have said is an element of pattern-making, appears in all Matisse's window designs, the door of the Confessional at Vence, "The Parakeet and Mermaid" (fig. 21) "Decoration-Fruit" and "Decoration-Masks" and "Apollo" (fig. 22), they are all readable as a single unit and are entirely dependent on the element of pattern. Although he had used pattern all his life, Matisse's attempts at monumental versions of it seem to be somewhat coarse and static at times. The rhythm sometimes falters and perhaps the continuity of the surface is not always held. Nonetheless from 1950 until his death in 1954, Matisse struggled to meet and define a new territory of decoration. In the face of grids and problems of pattern Matisse's mastery of draftsmanship was of little use to him and he courageously threw away this hard earned skill and so in his last work, decorative squiggles and patterns were his only subject matter. In everything he did, in everything he created, Matisse drew upon all kinds of cultures, and all sorts of varied influences from past and present. But he used them always in a very personal way, knowing that he had



21.-PARAKEET AND MERMAID 1952



22.-APOLLO 1953

to give a new, fresh inspiration to everything he used. Throughout his creative life, the fundamental characteristic of Matisse's work lay in being true to himself. This, however, did not mean being immobile on the contrary it meant tirelessly seeking among the riches, which his principles and his methods of work had already tried and tested, with a freedom and autonomy of vision that time had sharpened. Quite apart from his quality as a painter and the autonomy of his vision, Matisse's greatest contribution to art lies in the lesson he gave of pure, fertile creativity, ever renewed through the clear intelligence with which he chose his method of expression.

NOTES

- ¹ Jack D. Flam, Matisse on Art, (Oxford : Phaidon Press, 1979)
- ² Amy Goldin, "Matisse and Decoration : The Late Cut-Outs", Art in America 63, (July, August 1975) pp.45-59
- ³ Jack D. Flam, Matisse on Art
- ⁴ Ibid

CHAPTER FOUR
SONIA DELAUNAY-TERK IN RELATION
TO PATTERN

"Real painting, the only kind that matters, is made up of colours and rhythms and of the poetry which lives in those rhythms".¹ In this chapter I will discuss the work of Sonia Delaunay-Terk (1885-1979) in relation to her use of pattern in painting and decorative works. Throughout her life Sonia was concerned with the dynamics of the surface and her work is full of carefully considered patterns of geometric form and harmonic interplay of colours. Her preoccupation with pattern and decoration existed from a very early stage in her career and a large part of her activities lay outside the sphere of painting. Her ambition was to liberate herself and her art from the traditional concept of easel painting which she felt was too narrow. In her lifework Sonia made an outstanding contribution to the practice of fusing the decorative arts and commercial design with the fine arts.

With her designs Sonia introduced aspects of early modernism to home furnishings, fabrics, book jackets and advertisements. She also chose to make no distinction between traditional women's art-forms and painting and sculpture. She was thus one of the first artists to acknowledge needlework, quilts, tapestries, and other hand crafted items as sources for a fully developed abstract style. In this area she was the forerunner of some contemporary artists and pattern painters,

such as Miriam Schapiro, who also make reference to women's traditional art-forms in their work.

Sonia Delaunay-Terk's contribution to twentieth century art is her lifelong commitment to abstraction and the primacy of colour. She extended her skills as a colorist beyond easel painting to include designs for textiles, wearing apparel, interior decoration and sets for theatre, film, and ballet productions. Her work constitutes a prime example of the successful integration of the aesthetics of modernism with commercial design and the applied arts. She made an easy transition from the decorative to non-representational collages and paintings and probably influenced the De Stijl artists and other early abstractionists. Despite the fact that she did not exhibit her paintings during the thirty-one years of her marriage to Robert Delaunay, the two artists collaborated in the development of the principles of simultaneity which were then applied to all of their works in various media.

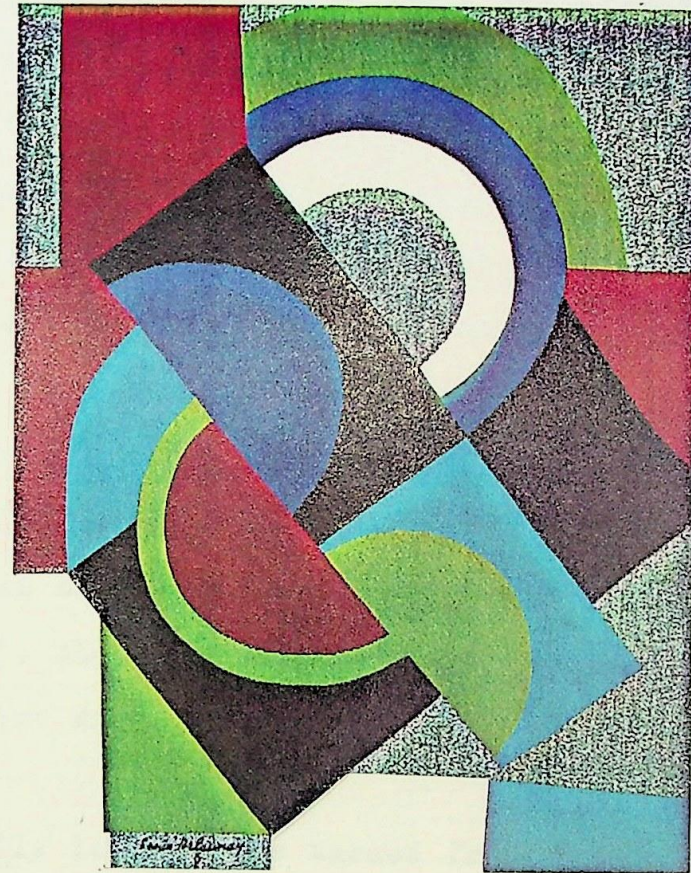
Through all her work in every medium she used, Sonia showed an interest in patterning and in creating rhythmic relationships between shape and colour. To create these relationships she used motifs of simple geometric shapes which she unified through colour and rhythm. In her patterns she used circles, checkerboards, alternating diamonds, triangles and rectangles to set up an order which the eye is allowed to follow just long enough to take in the rhythm. Then she breaks the order

and begins a new one immediately (fig. 23). Sonia's work never allows the mind to lose interest, her patterns never become too familiar because the pattern changes come too quickly. Consequently no order of geometry rules her completed compositions. Instead, Sonia resolves the confusion of pattern by the order of her colour and by the energy of the colour contrasts, by the establishment of form and by the adjustments of changing patterns. A sense of order and disorder are always apparent in Sonia's work in conjunction with spontaneity of expression, rhythm and energy. Her paintings are simultaneously full of harmonies and sharp contrasts. Jacques Damase has observed this strife in Sonia's rhythms and patterns:

"That sometimes oblique rhythm, that almost Dionysiac magic which enlivens the surface, are cut by counter rhythms, counter currents : those syncopated rhythms in short, a living representation of our chaotic and organised epoch".²

Sonia Terk was born in the Ukraine in 1885, and was brought up by a wealthy uncle in St. Petersburg. In 1903 she attended art school and studied drawing with a respected academic draughtsman, Ludwig Schmid-Reulte. In 1905 Sonia and four other young Russian women arrived in Paris for study at the Academie de la Palette.

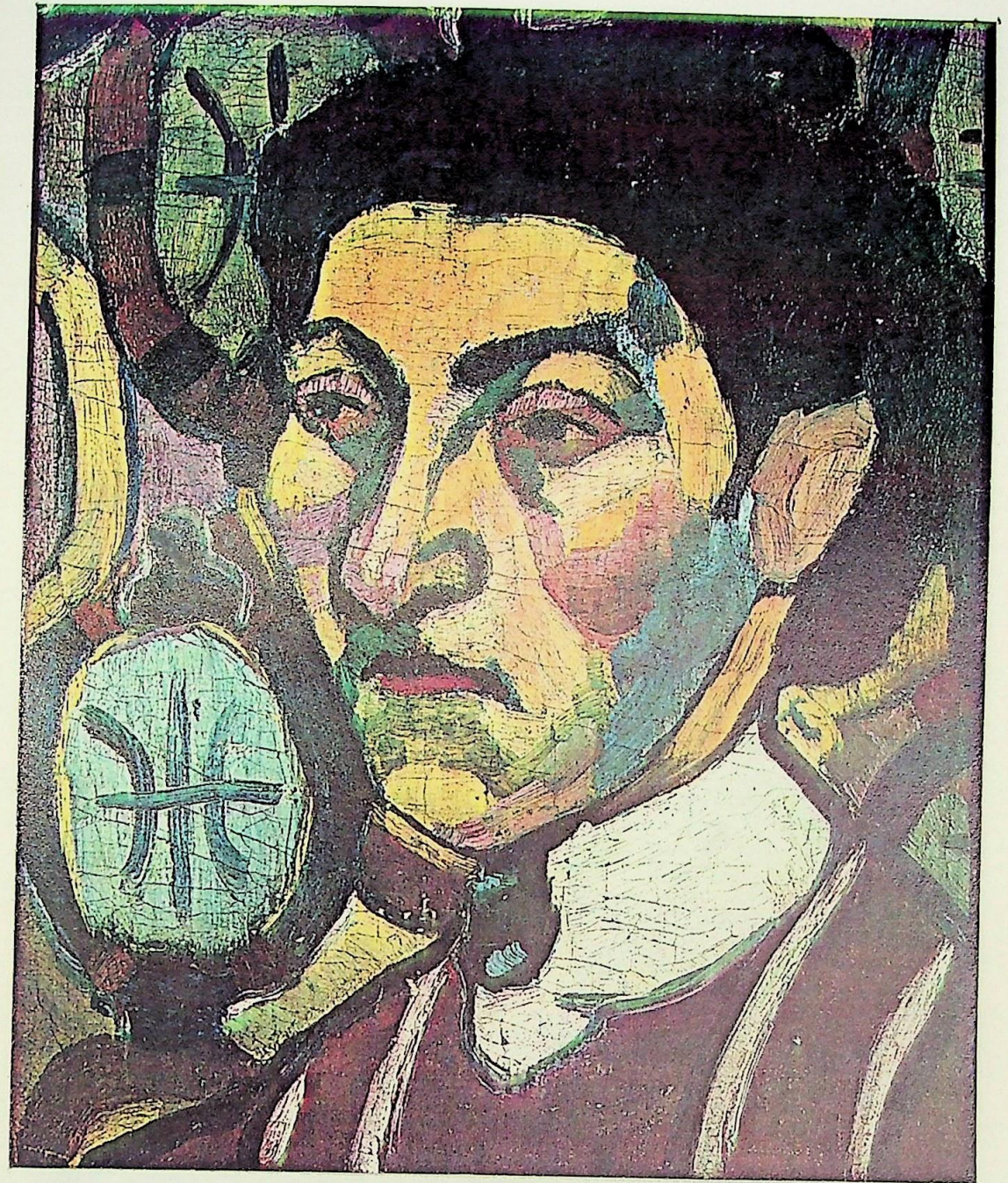
By 1907 Sonia was creating paintings of great originality and strength which acknowledged the Fauves, Van Gogh and



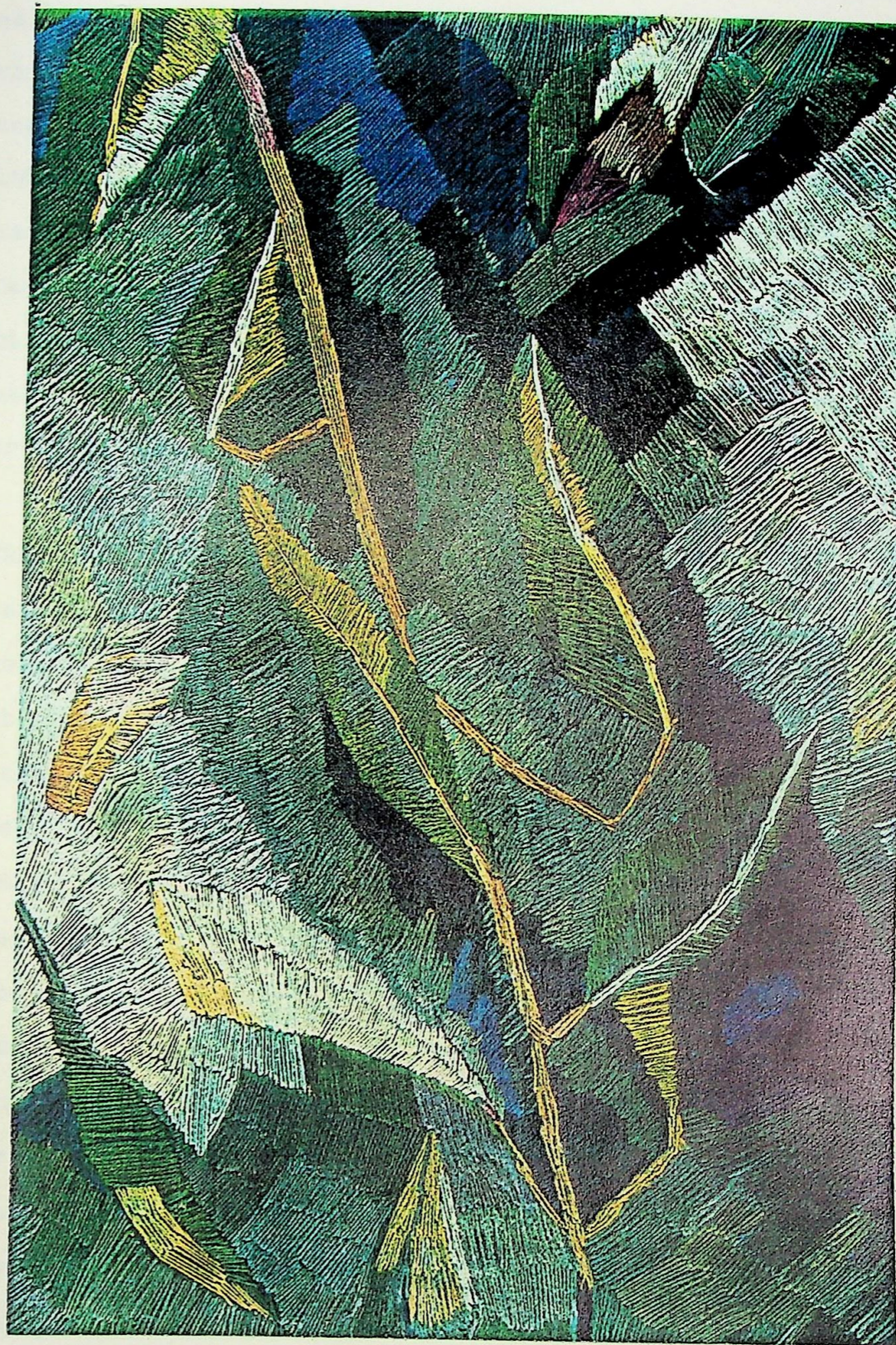
23.-COUNTERPOINT 1967

Gauguin: the monumentality of the figures she painted was reminiscent of the image of Fauvism; she used thick black outlines in the manner of Gauguin, and her background patterning was like that of Van Gogh and Matisse. (fig. 24). At this stage in her career Sonia had already reached relative maturity in her painting. However, like Matisse, her need to create extended to all aspects of her environment and likewise her use of materials extended beyond the realms of oil and canvas. In fact there was no limit to the raw materials that Sonia used as a basis for her creations, and for her the technical process was the same when approaching a canvas or a book cover or a textile design. There was no hierarchy in Sonia's mind concerning painting and decorative art. To her the process of creation was the important thing and not the end result, she thus did away with the traditional distinctions between fine art and applied art.

Consequently in 1909 she turned from painting to embroidery. Her major creation of that year was an embroidery of foliage based on the patterns produced by plant forms. "Foliage" (fig. 25) embroidered with coloured wool on canvas was one of the earliest indications of Sonia's interest in textile designs. She was not, however, using embroidery as a retreat from painting. On the contrary she had a fundamental purpose in changing her medium at this time. Sonia wanted to break away from the constructive approach to her work that she had learned at school, but she found it very difficult to get rid of her carefully defined contours in painting or drawing. In



24.-PHILOMENE 1907



25.-EMBROIDERY OF FOLIAGE 1909

embroidery, however, she was able to experiment with an approach which, while destructive in terms of descriptive contours, was constructive in terms of pictorial form. The only lines in her 1909 embroidery are the central stem lines. The colours she used in this are quiet and subtle. Green is dominant with patches of strong blue, dull yellow and small areas of pale pink and white. "For Sonia Delaunay the embroidery that could have been a mere hobby was in fact part of her passion for creation".³

The abstract evocation of swirling leaves in the embroidery is not without similarities to the work of Robert Delaunay an artist with whom Sonia had become friends around this time. This friendship between the two artists grew and deepened and Sonia and Robert were married in November, 1910. The relationship with Sonia Terk came at a crucial time in Robert's career. Influenced by the work of the cubists, he seemed to be abandoning his previous interest in colour. It was Sonia who helped him discover the properties of pure colour necessary for the abstraction he was seeking. Thus began a mutually supportive artistic relationship which paralleled that of Jean Arp and Sophie Tauber in Switzerland, artists who were to become intimate friends of the Delaunays in later years. Both Sonia and Robert wanted to free art from the limited spheres in which it was practised, but Robert continued to produce only easel paintings. Sonia, on the other hand, realised this ambition through her work in textiles, clothes, bookbindings

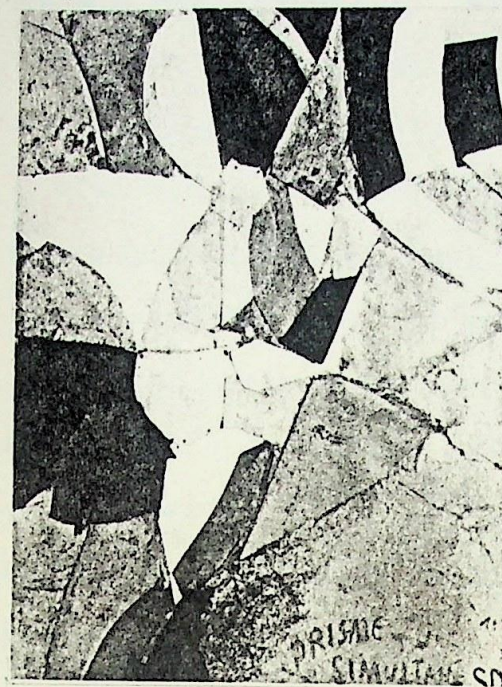
and household items. The freedom she was able to use in her embroideries, textiles and collages helped her to discover her innate instinct for colour and rhythm. By exploring other media Sonia learned how to break through the restrictions of line and form which she had been trained to consider primary in painting. Intuitive rules of colour, geometry, structural relationships and rhythm, phenomenon integral to pattern became the basis of Sonia's paintings and designs. An important milestone in her attempt to break colour free from figuration was a blanket, (fig. 26) she designed for her infant son in 1911. Made-up from bits of coloured fabrics and fur, the blanket was inspired by those Sonia had seen in the homes of Russian peasants. The geometric pattern of colour and textures was completely non-referential and was soon to be followed by abstract collages comprised of elements arranged to effect luminous colour harmonies and lively surface patterns. (fig. 27). The colours she chose for this applique project were intense and varied :- strong reds, yellows, greens, purples, pinks, beiges, whites and blacks. Their force is equal to that of her Fauvist canvases from earlier on. The starting point for this creation was the placement of a certain patch of colour which determined the size, shape and placement of the one next to it. She continued with this process, adjusting it until the arrangement was harmonious and she felt it was complete. It is balanced in its distribution of darks and lights, of complements and related hues, of large and small fragments and of textures as



26.-BLANKET 1911

well. The result is an effect of rhythm and change. Some colours project while others recede, some colours relate, and some jar. There are simple areas and complicated areas in formal and colouristic activity. Rectangles dominate, but the potential monotony of this rhythm is interrupted by occasional swinging diagonals and arcs which carry the movement of the quilt from one corner to the next. This quilt was Sonia's first venture into collage and it was made before the experiments of Braque and Picasso in this area. In her textile work Sonia simplified her task by working with a limited number of related shapes allowing the vibrancy of colour contrasts to dictate their extension. The decorative impulse was already in Cubist patterning of 1910 and 1911 (fig. 28, 29). It provided a structural substitute for the representational form which Cubism was in the process of destroying. Sonia intuitively developed this constructive aspect of analytical Cubism to a final conclusion by combining its rhythms with a focused exploration of colour in a medium that is constructive by its nature. The quilt led Sonia to further experiments in collage and also launched her art into abstraction. She discovered that the technique of applique was equivalent to the Cubist-inspired art of collage which emerged in 1912. She then began to work with coloured paper rather than textiles as a basis for book-covers, posters and paintings. Her paper cut-out designs for posters and book-covers, in fact, pre-figured Matisse's large paper cut-outs.

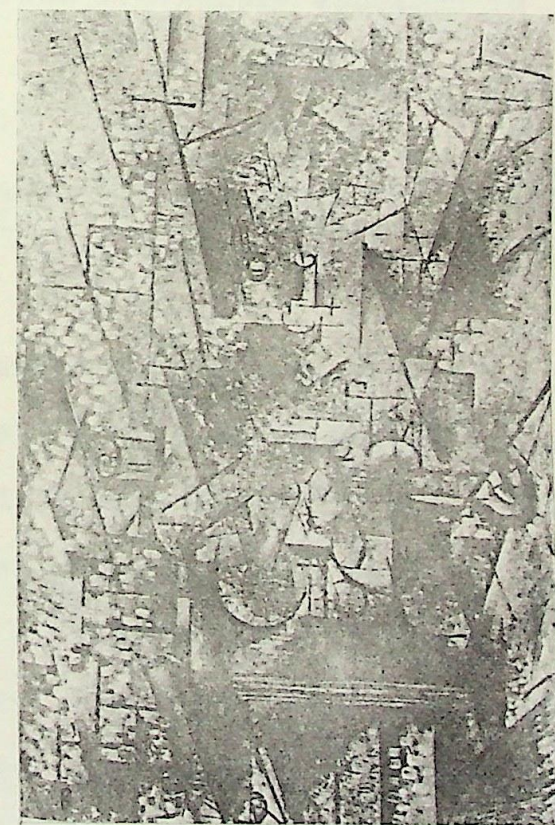
After the birth of her son, Sonia returned to her work



27.-SIMULTANEOUS SOLARPRISM 1914



28.-BRAQUES,
WOMAN READING 1911

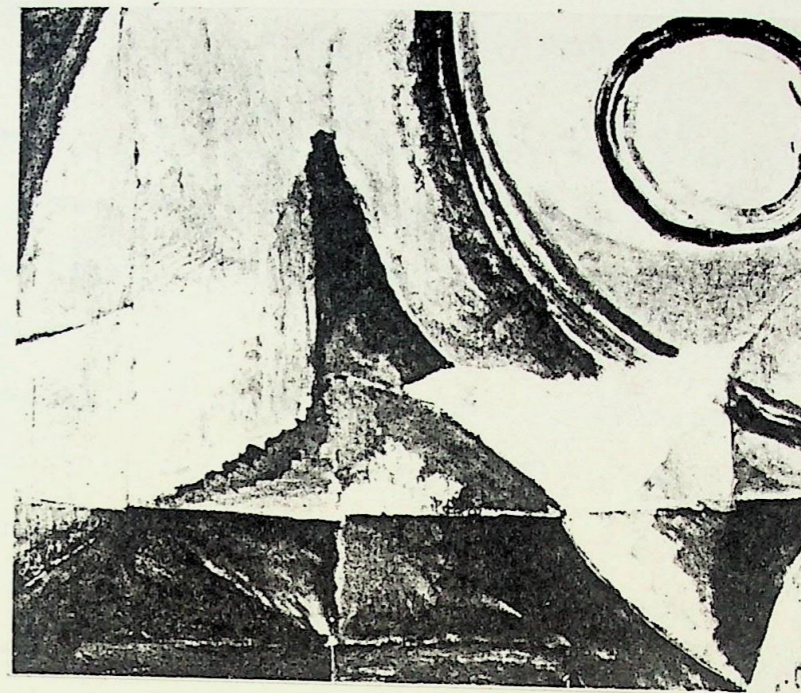


29.-BRAQUES,
STILL-LIFE WITH VIOLIN
1910-11

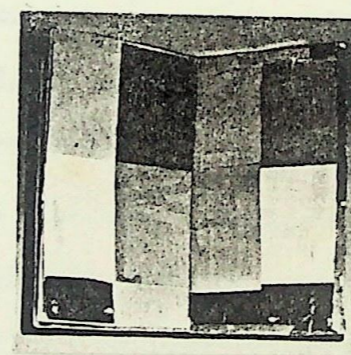
with a new intensity. Robert and Sonia continuously reviewed each other's work and provided one another with critical encouragement. "Simultaneous Contrast" (fig. 30) has close affinities with Robert's canvases of 1912, but is also representational of Sonia's non-figurative work in papiers-collés and her personal artistic evolution. The number of large paintings by Sonia Delaunay-Terk decreased after the birth of her child, but she applied the same principles of colour and rhythm to other art forms. The binding and endpapers which she designed in 1913 for Blaise Cendrars' "Les Paques" (fig. 31) is of special interest as an early example of a purely non-figurative work in papiers-colles and it also represented decisive progress in the direction of geometric abstraction. This book-cover was exhibited in Berlin in 1913 and frequently appeared in contemporary publications.

"Robert attached great importance to this book and was fond of showing it to his visitors. Thus it may have had an impact on Paul Klee, Otto Freundlich, and other painters who turned to pure abstraction in this period. On the endpapers Sonia glued brightly coloured squares which boldly anticipated neo-plasticist paintings".⁴

A small coffer (fig. 32) which was also shown in Berlin in 1913 demonstrated that the principles of simultaneity on which she was working could be applied to everyday objects. In the same year Sonia created her first 'simultaneous' fashions and poster designs. Her studies of coloured light, movement, and pattern were important for Robert Delaunay's paintings as well as her own. A series of drawings, e.g. "Crowd Movement" and "Light Study, Boulevard Saint-Michel", studies of electric



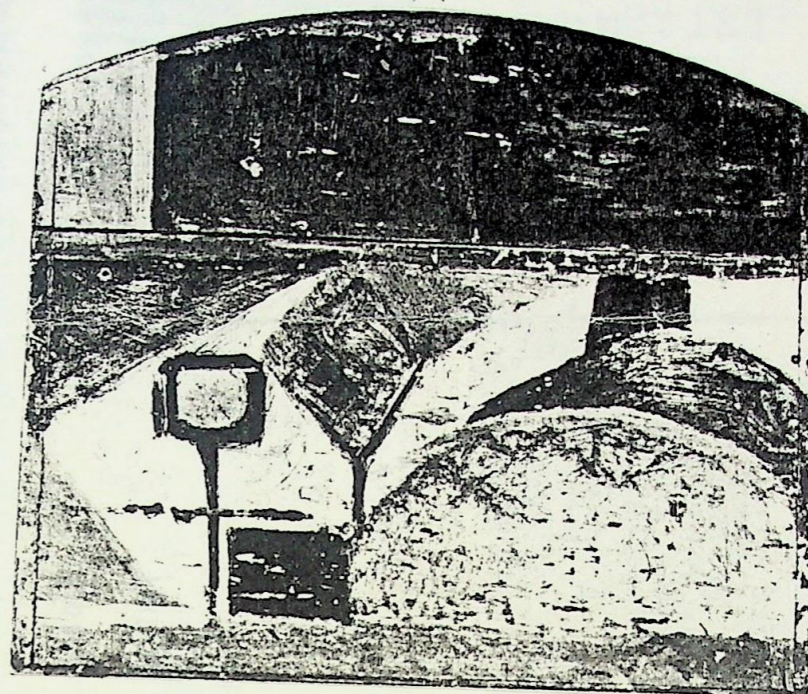
30.-SIMULTANEOUS CONTRASTS 1912



31.-END-PAPERS FOR LES PAQUES 1913

light in the streets, combined colour areas in a manner similar to her collages.

In preparation for one of her major paintings "Electric Prisms" of 1914 (fig. 33), Sonia produced numerous studies of light reflected from electric lamps and the movement of crowds along the streets of Paris. These studies, more like colour notations, were resolved in a carefully structured final version of "Electric Prisms". In the large canvas the adherence to the chromatic ordering of the spectrum established internal rhythms. Silhouettes in movement are brought together in circles of light. The painting was inspired by the observation of vibrating halos of colour which surround electric bulbs. In "Electric Prisms" Sonia also included the title of a collaborative project with the poet Blaise Cendrars who was a good friend and neighbour at the time. This was her illustration for his poem "Prose du Transsiberian et de la Petite Jehane de France" (fig. 34). An experiment in avant-garde typography and the use of colours to evoke the inner movement of the poem, this work was to convey simultaneously the rhythm of words and colours. The poem and illustration were printed on a single vertical sheet over two metres long, and formed from four separate pieces of paper glued together. In this simultaneous book Sonia attempted to rule out time and sequential progression. Divided into two columns side by side Sonia's design provides an intensely colourful counterpoint to the poem, which was printed in different typefaces framed with delicate washes of watercolour. Considerable care was taken to achieve subtle transitions between

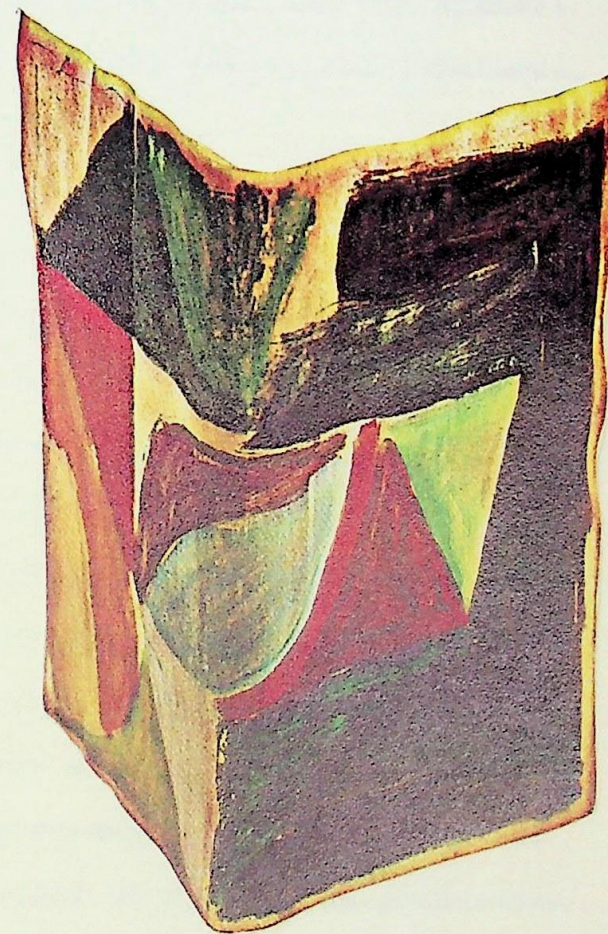
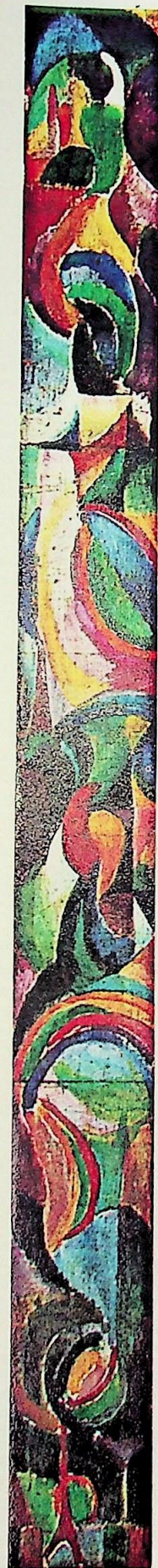


32.-COFFER 1913



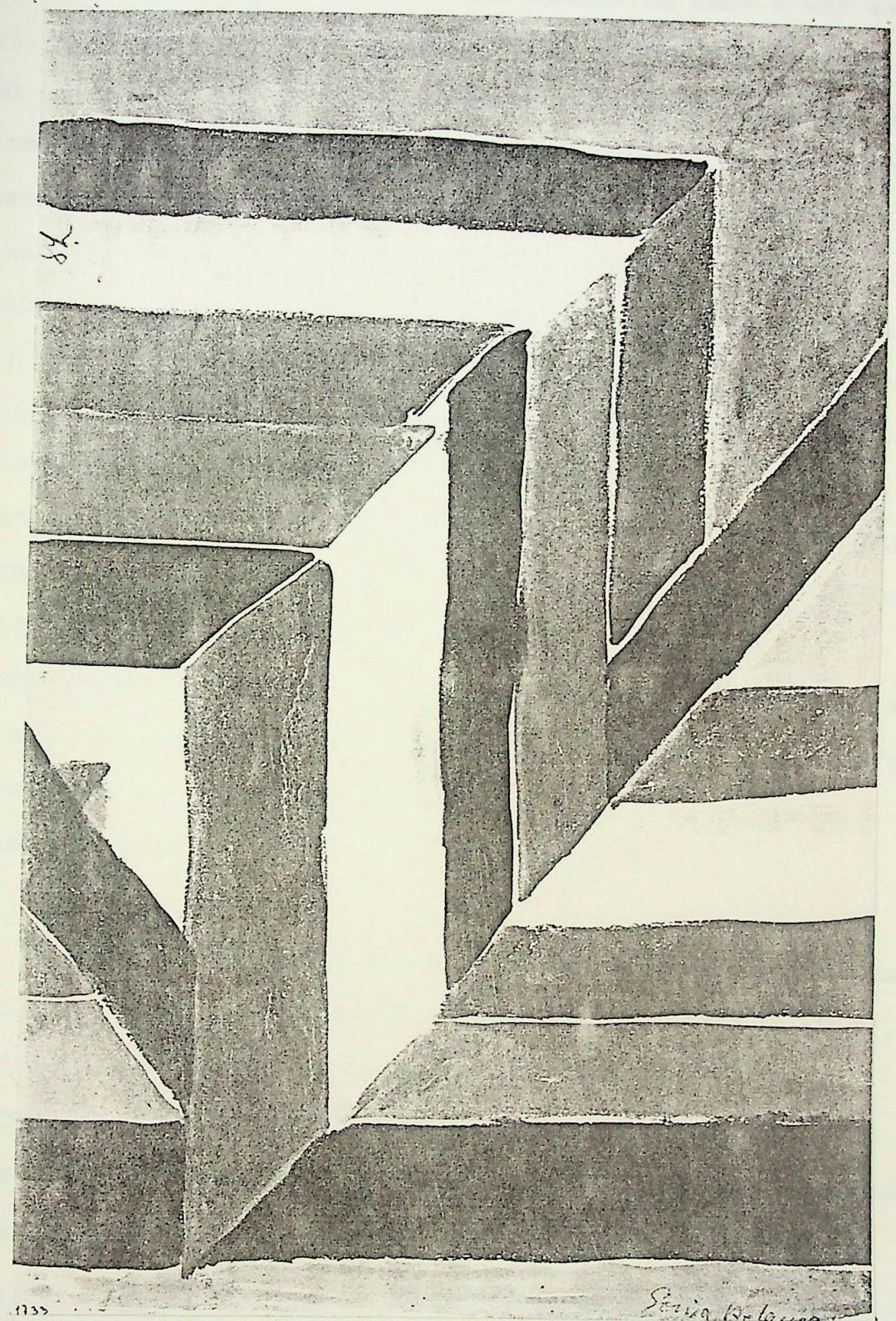
33.-ELECTRIC PRISMS 1914

34.-LA PROSE DU TRANSSIBERIAN
ET DE LA PETITE JEHANE DE
FRANCE 1913



the areas of colour in the design which was printed by the pochoir process (this technique was the predecessor of screen-printing). In places the paint was deliberately bled around the edges of the stencil cut-outs and in other areas Sonia worked over the paint with a brush after removing the stencil in order to disguise some of the obvious mechanical junctures.

During the first World War the Delaunays stayed in Portugal and Spain, where Sonia painted and continued to design simultaneous fashions. After her early success in creating costumes for Diaghilev's Cleopatra in 1918, she produced stage sets and costumes for ballet, dramatic and operatic performances during the 1920's in Paris. Although Sonia had the intention of applying the principles of simultaneity to all forms of art, there were also practical reasons for the diversity of her creative activities during this decade. Her various projects provided a steady source of income for the Delaunay family. Sonia was commissioned to make designs for fabrics, and by 1924 she had decided to manage the production of her textiles and undertook the fabrication of coats and woollen tapestries. In her designs for fabric Sonia used simpler patterns than in her painting, these are perhaps her only creations that have easily grasped and assimilated patterns (fig. 35). By the nature of the product these designs needed to be repeatable and the consistency of their repetition established its own understandable order. However there is still an element of rhythm breaking involved in them



35.-DESIGN FOR FABRIC 1925

too. Sonia simply calculated the motifs in such a way as to let the motif be extended rather than contained. In her fashion and costume designs, these patterns and breaks were considered either to harmonise with or to be in contrast to the rhythmic movements of the body. The patterns were never three-dimensional despite the three-dimensionality of the body. Sonia used simple geometric shapes for her patterns because she felt that decorative motifs of flowers and foliage had no particular purpose on a functional object and served only to confuse it, and to destroy the vitality of the design. Sonia always insisted that her patterns, colours and rhythms were constructive rather than 'decorative'. Her orders of colours and shapes were constructed and dissolved and reconstructed in different forms, even on the cover of a book or a dress fabric, and in each case the process of construction provided a new awareness which led to the next stage of construction.

One of Sonia's favourite quotations is from Plato, "Rhythm is the ordering of movement". Sonia tried to unite order, lyricism and expression in her work. She could only accomplish this by understanding rhythms as completely as possible and through her studies for textiles Sonia gained total control of this problem.

"Rhythm is based on numbers because colour can be measured by its vibrations. This was a completely new concept that opened up infinite horizons for painting and could be used by anyone who felt and understood it".⁵

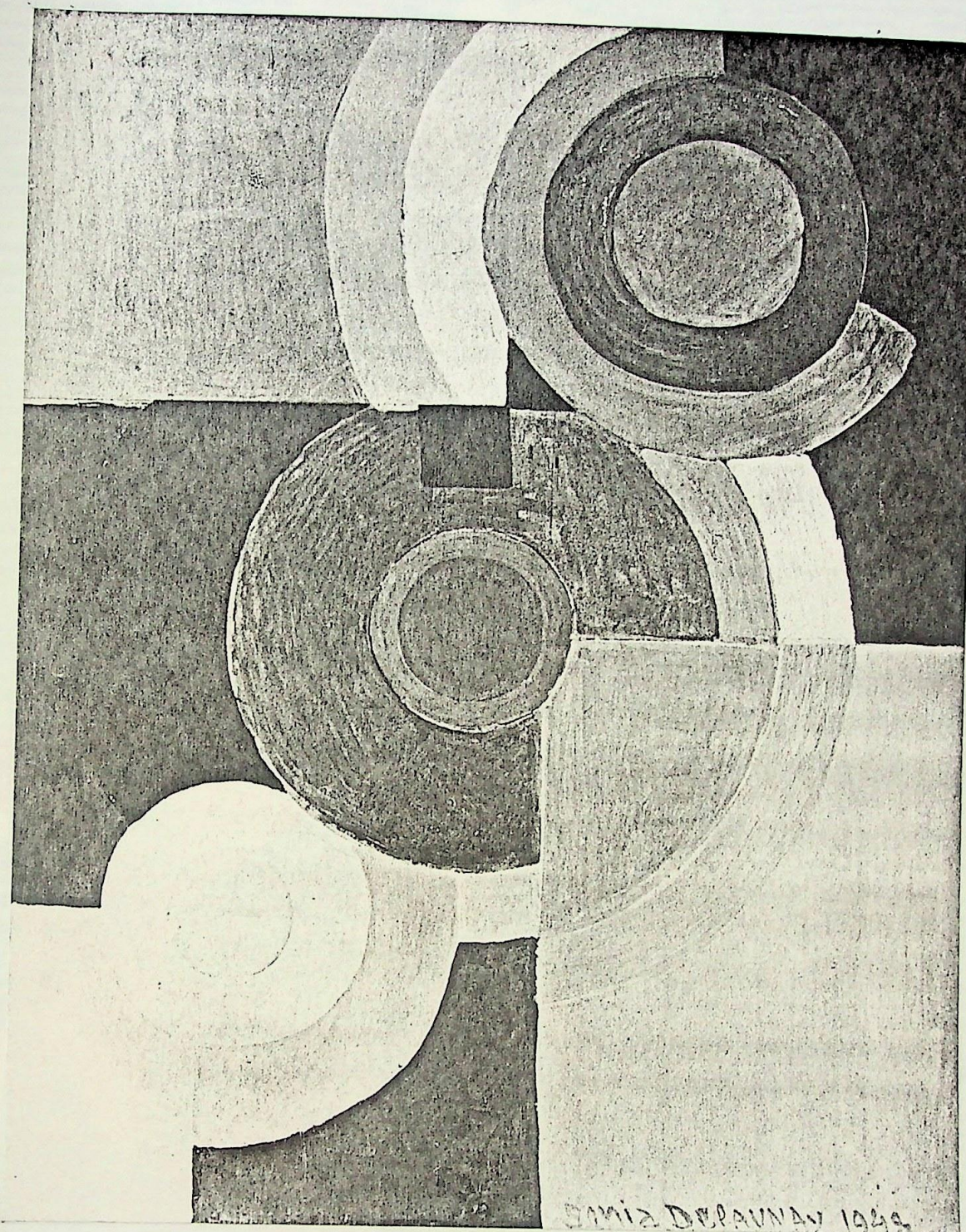
In 1925 Sonia's designs were shown at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs in Paris. Through her experiments in embroidery, textiles and craft, which she kept up throughout her life, Sonia gained more confidence in working with colour relationships and continuous patterns of movement, as a result she was easier and more relaxed in her painting. The freedom of creativity which had always marked Sonia's approach to her home and her dress was maintained in her painting, and painting and the problems it created absorbed her completely.

Sonia's aim in painting was to impose an order on the chaotic energies of colour, but she did not however want calmness with order, she wanted tensions. Without tensions, carefully balanced creating movement throughout their varieties, and contrasts, she felt that the painting would not live, or would not express the creativity of life which emerges from the soul of the artist and therefore it would not be art.

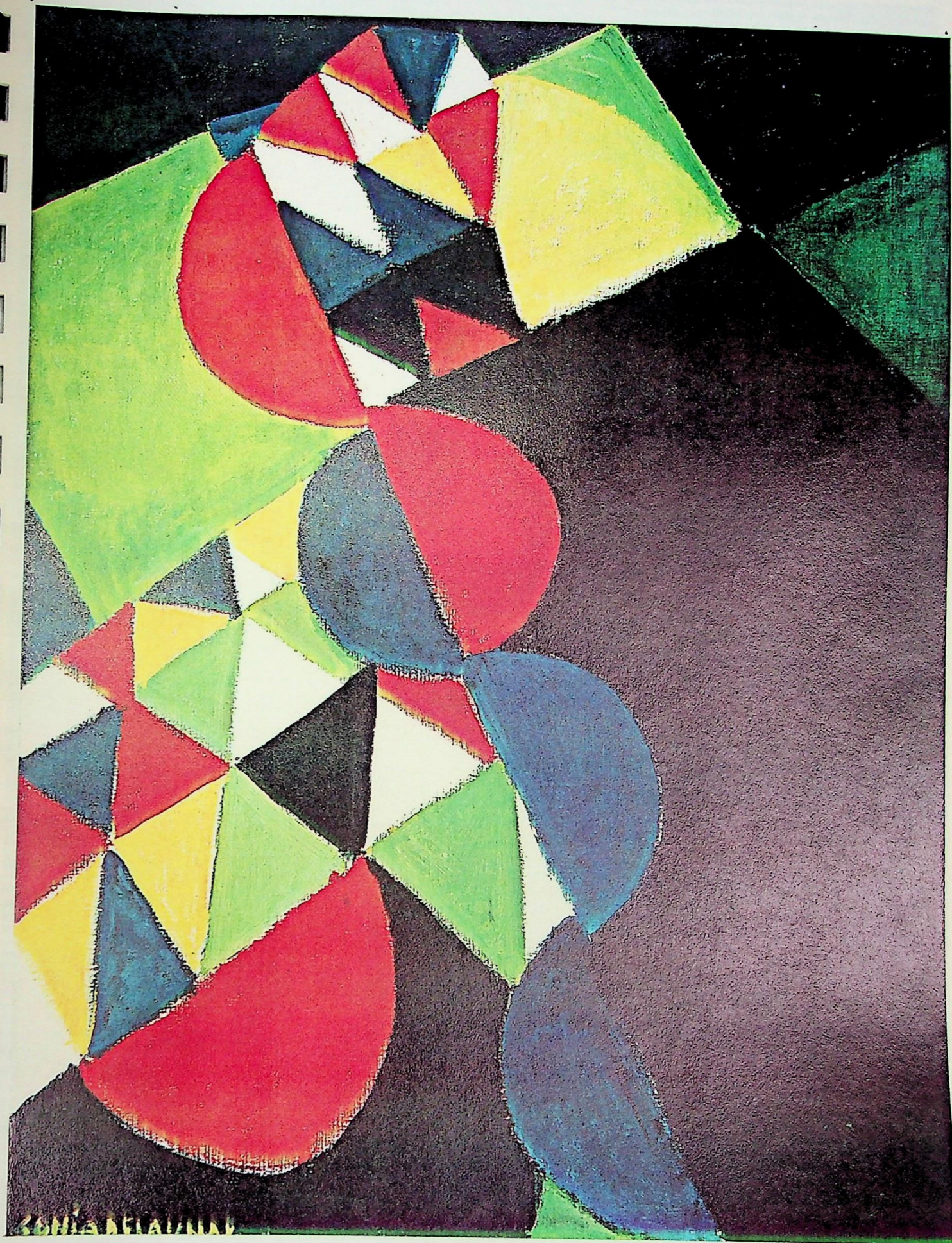
In the thirties the Delaunays were active with the Abstraction-Creation group in Paris. Robert and Sonia were asked to design murals for the Railway and Aeronautics Pavilion for the International Exposition of 1937. After Robert's death in 1941 Sonia continued to devote herself to the study of colour, light and movement which had been their mutual concern for decades.

In 1948 Sonia began dramatic new experiments in the inter-

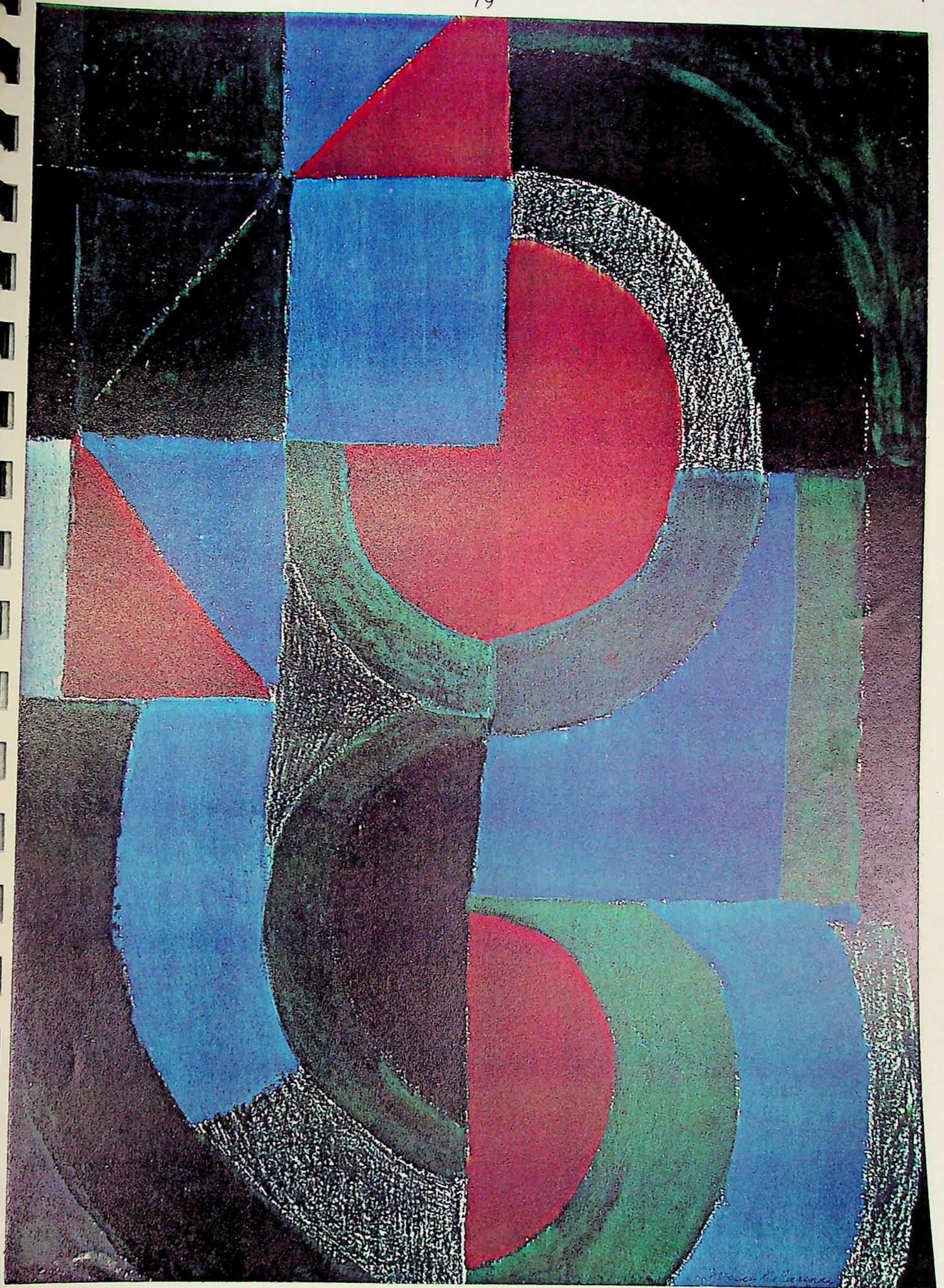
connection of colour and form in her painting. Her formats were large and she used a varied palette that ranged from subtle lines to strong pure colour that adjusted and readjusted the geometric scheme of broken and interlocking discs. (fig. 36). Black dominated her famous "Coloured Rhythm No. 616" of 1948, and this was in strong contrast to her more subtle colours in earlier work or to the clash of primaries she also used in earlier work. Here the forms float in space, or are cut with disturbing angles or they are distributed with compelling irregularity, but all the shapes are connected by invisible tensions and patterns. During the 1950's Sonia increased the irregularities and tensions in her paintings. (fig. 37). Now checkerboards break into circles, angles cut across squares, dark greens are put against brilliant yellows, and blues and reds are put against blacks and whites. Sonia introduced into these paintings new elements which confronted one another in continuing opposition and by this she disturbed the expectations of the observer. Shapes and colours that agree are violently disrupted and those that disagree are calmly brought together. Through all this order mixed with disorder Sonia still retained the unity and pattern of the composition, which is a unity of rhythmic interchange. In her paintings from the 1960's Sonia shows a more daring technical control which she gained by her further years of experience and at this time the scale of her canvases increased to monumental proportions (fig. 38) despite her age.



36.-COLOURED RHYTHMS 1948



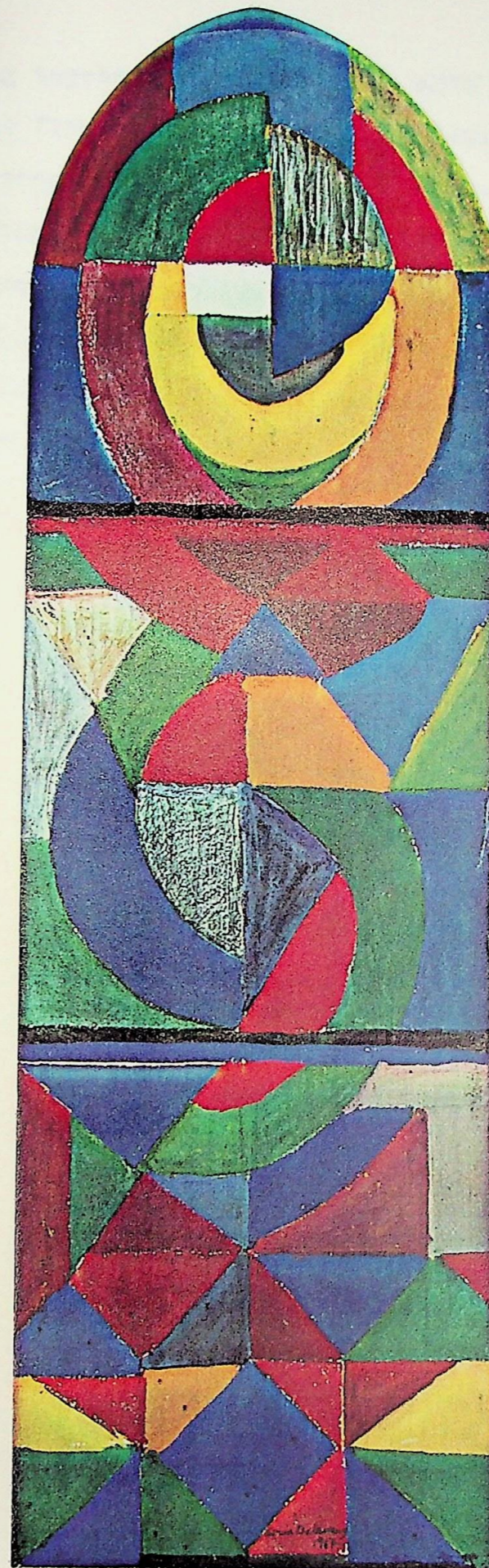
37.-COLOURED RHYTHM 1958



38.-RHYTHM-COLOUR 1964

During the last twenty years of her life, which were from 1959 to 1979, Sonia created some of her most brilliant works in oil, gouache, lithography, ceramics and tapestry. Her palette turned towards mixtures of brilliant orange, yellow, pink, and purple, interspersed with her more frequent blues, reds, greens, whites and blacks. The colours and shapes she used were carefully balanced in combinations that complimented and contrasted with each other in moving patterns and rhythms. Throughout her last years Sonia's work never ceased to expand. She once again returned to designs for soft textiles and she also worked on mosaics and ceramic plates and she developed her prints and books. She received commissions for stained glass windows (fig. 39) and she even received a commission for the exterior design for a sports car, which was appropriate to her continuing enthusiasm for the speed and excitement of modern life.

Sonia Delaunay-Terk died in 1979 at the age of 94. Throughout all her years her work in painting and decorative art was an expression of her life and her energies. Like Matisse, her interest in decoration never led to superficiality. On the contrary Sonia's work was always rendered with complete sincerity and was always also self expressive. Though Sonia did not begin to exhibit her paintings until after her husband's death and only in recent years has she received the recognition her life work deserves and though she is still overshadowed by her late husband in numbers of solo exhibitions Sonia was an outstanding contributor to the practice of



39.-DESIGN FOR WINDOW 1967

bringing together the decorative arts and commercial design with the fine arts and through her exploration of patterning in painting, applique and collage etc., Sonia has been influential to contemporary artists who mix motifs and media from a variety of sources among them quilting and needle-work which have traditionally been placed at the bottom of the artistic hierarchy. In her work Sonia dispensed with the traditional distinctions between fine and applied arts.

NOTES

- ¹ Jacques Damase, Sonia Delaunay, Rhythms and Colours, (London : Thames and Hudson Ltd. 1972) p.406
- ² Jacques Damase, La Rochelle Catalogue 1973
- ³ Sherry Buckberrough, Sonia Delaunay, a Retrospective, (New York : Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1980), p.22
- ⁴ J.M. Marther, "Three Women Artists Married to Early Modernists : Sonia Delaunay-Terk, Sophie Tauber-Arp, and Marguerite Thompson-Zorach", Arts Magazine 54, (September 1979), pp.88-95
- ⁵ Sonia Delaunay-Terk in Cohen, The New Art of Colour, p.197, quoted from Sonia Delaunay on Sonia Delaunay.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

My intention in this thesis was to consider the notion of pattern and to examine the relationship between it and fine art and decoration. Painters use pattern in their work for several reasons and the results evoke different responses. In many paintings pattern is part of the composition, as in the early work of Matisse, where shapes and colours are repeated and a certain visual unity established. Then in more abstract work pattern may suggest movement and rhythm as in the work of Sonia Delaunay-Terk and the late work of Matisse. I hope that my discussion on pattern in the work of these artists results in a better understanding of pattern as a form of artistic expression on a par with any other. Both the artists I chose to illustrate the notion that pattern can be considered to be fine art form, as well as simply decorative, have shown themselves to be dedicated to their work throughout their lives. They both also shared a common commitment to the exploration of their art and that includes the exploration of pattern to its fullest possibilities. Sonia and Matisse were interested in breaking down the barriers between painting and the environment as a whole and it is important to note that they not only explored and developed patterning in painting but also in the applied arts such as textiles, ceramics, book design and so on. As a result of their work then I feel that pattern can now be

considered to be in the area of legitimate fine art concern as well as decorative and ornamental.

Pattern-making then, in its most general form, may be characterised as an ordering of simplified elements, either organic or geometric, in regard to rhythm and movement. It creates classes of motifs which are like in one respect and different in another and it involves the creation of relationships between these forms and colour. Spontaneity, expression, stylisation and flexibility are inherent elements in patterning. These particular aspects of pattern are evident in the work of the two artists I have discussed. Although Matisse's use of pattern is less obvious than Sonia Delaunays', who can easily be seen to be a pattern-maker, pattern was nonetheless central to Matisse's vision particularly in his late work as I have shown. At certain stages in their lives, the work of both Matisse and Sonia involved grids, structural relationships, flattened space and colour rhythms and these elements are directly related to pattern-making.

The choice of motif used and the approach to patterning was totally different for these two artists and I hope that the diversity of their work points out the infinite variety of results the use of pattern can achieve and these are only two of several approaches. The individual approach of Matisse and Sonia confirms that originality and expression are as much a part of patterning as of any other art form.

Pattern in painting and in other art forms has taken on a new dimension over the past few years. In fact a colourful new movement has now emerged in contemporary art which mixes motifs and media from a variety of different sources, among them quilting and needlework. The aim of the artists involved in this type of work is to dispense with the traditional distinctions between the fine and applied arts in their fusion of islamic devices, European and American patterns and arabesques and floral forms in painting, collages and sculptures. Wallpaper and fabric designs are transmuted into painting and even over-all decorative room schemes. With this advent of pattern painting as a style I feel it is necessary to look back with more specific interest to the work of Henri Matisse and Sonia Delaunay-Terk, for whom the formal attributes of pattern, form, colour, line and surface had sufficient intrinsic beauty and expressiveness. To these two artists the fusion of the different arts was important and consequently they can now be seen as forerunners of this new and ongoing interest in pattern for its own sake.

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