
André Derain, *Portrait of Vlaminck Playing the Violin*: The Artists in 1905

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In the autumn of 1905, in a review published in the periodical *Gil Blas*, the critic Louis Vauxcelles (1870–1943) described the works by young artists put on show together in Salle VII of the Salon D'Automne as “*les fauves* (wild beasts).” To be more precise, he called the bust displayed in the middle of that gallery as follows. “It is Donatello among the wild beasts (*fauves*).” What Vauxcelles and other critics criticized were works by artists such as Charles Camoin (1879–1965), André Derain (1880–1954), Henri Manguin (1874–1949), Albert Marquet (1875–1947), Henri Matisse (1869–1954), and Maurice de Vlaminck (1876–1956). Freed from local colors, these artists arranged vivid colors in daring brushstrokes on their canvases in search of new potentials in painting. It was such innovation that aroused opposition from the critics.

These artists proceeded in different directions by around 1907, and the trend of Fauvism disappeared in a very short time. Despite being short-lived, Fauvism is an extremely important movement in the history of art. To name the early Fauvist works in the collection of the Ishibashi Foundation, there are *Portrait of Vlaminck Playing the Violin* (fig. 1) and *Head of a Woman* (fig. 2) by Derain, *Collioure* (fig. 3) by Matisse, *Canal Boat* and *Symphony in Colors (Flowers)* by Vlaminck, and *Posters at Trouville* by Raoul Dufy (1877–1953). (Additionally, there are also works by the above-mentioned artists dating from periods other than the Fauvist period in the Ishibashi Foundation collection.)

This paper focuses on *Portrait of Vlaminck Playing the Violin*, which was recently acquired, and examines the background and significance of Derain painting his friend and artist Vlaminck.

Rapports among the Artists

Let us begin by examining the rapports among the Fauvists chronologically with Derain at the center.

André Derain was born in Chatou, a commune near Paris facing the Seine, in 1880. From 1898 to 1899, he studied art under Eugène Carrière (1849–1906) at the Académie Camillo. There, he met Matisse around 1899.¹ Then, in July 1900, on a train heading from Paris to Chatou, Derain happened to meet Vlaminck, who was on military leave, and they got along very well. Derain was then twenty years old, and Vlaminck twenty-three. Being close in age, it seems that they were fairly like-minded. When Vlaminck completed three years of military service in September 1900, the two rented the hall of a restaurant on the Île de Chatou, which had long been closed, and set up a joint studio. It cost ten francs (approximately 15,000 yen in today's currency) per month. Close by stood La

Maison Fournaise, a restaurant known as a meeting place for the Impressionist artists. Derain and Vlaminck also visited the Van Gogh retrospective held at the gallery Bernheim-Jeune in Paris in May 1901. There, Derain introduced Matisse to Vlaminck, and the circle of friends was extended. Although Derain temporarily suspended art due to conscription in September 1901, once he completed his military service in September 1904, he returned to Chatou and resumed working together with Vlaminck. On the other hand, while Derain also entered Académie Julian, Vlaminck disliked traditional education and chose to study on his own. When Matisse visited their studio in January or February 1905, he advised Derain and Vlaminck to submit their work to the Salon d'Automne.

1905 was an important year for the birth of Fauvism.

Matisse spent the period from May to September 1905 in Collioure, a small fishing village on the Mediterranean, with his family, and changed his artistic style significantly from the pointillism he had employed until then to representation in color planes.² *Collioure* (fig. 3), which was produced that summer, is a bold representation of the landscape. There, colors are employed freely—the green at the center is a church, the pale green extending in the foreground depicts Voramar beach, and the pink on the right shows the sea with yachts afloat. The image is covered in lumps of color no longer retaining their local colors, with the texture of the paint left as is in certain parts.

It appears that Derain was interested in working together with Matisse in Collioure. In a postscript to a letter Derain wrote to Matisse in June 1905, he asks Matisse to send him a postcard inviting him to come to Collioure.³ Responding to Derain's request, Matisse sent him a postcard. In it, he wrote, “a stay here is absolutely necessary for your work.”⁴ Thus, Derain arrived in Collioure in July and worked with Matisse until late August. In a letter to Vlaminck, Derain wrote, “I was hectically busy working with Matisse, but he seems to think that I am not equipped with the chromatics included in the notes I read to you.”⁵

Derain brought thirty canvases, twenty drawings, and fifty or so sketches back from Collioure, and Matisse returned with fifteen finished oil paintings (the rest were finished in Paris), forty watercolors, and nearly one hundred drawings. To Derain, this was a one-time-only stay in Collioure, but Matisse went there almost every year from 1905 onward, and spent his life coming and going between the south of France and Paris. To both Matisse and Derain, their stay in Collioure in 1905 proved an opportunity for them to come up with colorful images. In September 1905, Derain decided to move to Paris, and his work at the studio he shared with Vlaminck came to an end.

In the autumn of 1905, the third Salon d'Automne took place at the Grand Palais in Paris, and works by Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, and other artists were exhibited.⁶ The exhibition was held from October 18 to November 25, 1905. An article in *L'Illustration* features together with illustrations of *Woman with a Hat* (1905, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) and *Open Window* (1905, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) by Matisse, one of *Drying of Sails* (1905, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow) by Derain (fig. 4).⁷ Matisse's *Open Window* and Derain's *Drying of Sails* were painted in Collioure. In November that year, the art dealer Ambroise Vollard (1866–1939) purchased most of the works in Derain's studio (eighty-nine oil paintings and ninety drawings) for 3,300 francs.⁸ The new style of painting Derain cultivated in Collioure together with Matisse brought him success.

The Portraits of 1905

Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, and others did portraits of each other, from which we can learn about their rapports.

The works by Matisse and Derain produced in Collioure in 1905 are as follows. *André Derain* (Tate, London) by Matisse and *Henri Matisse* (Tate, London), *Woman with a Shawl*, *Madame Matisse in a Kimono* (private collection), *Portrait of Henri Matisse* (Philadelphia Museum of Art), *Matisse and Terrus* (private collection), and *Portrait of Henri Matisse* (Musée Matisse, Nice) by Derain.

Let us take a brief look at the provenance of the two works in the Tate collection. Derain's *Henri Matisse* was given to Matisse's wife, Amélie, and it is known that the portrait was kept with great care in the family. Tate purchased this work from Mrs. Matisse in 1958. Likewise, it would seem natural to assume that Matisse's *André Derain* was given to Derain. However, it left Derain's hands in 1908. There is a photograph of this portrait and other works by Matisse hanging on a wall in Michael and Sarah Stein's apartment in Paris in 1908.⁹ Michael Stein was a collector of works by Matisse and obtained this work at an auction in October 1908.¹⁰ After several subsequent auctions,

Tate purchased it in 1954. It is interesting that these two portraits were reunited in Britain after the two artists' death.

There is a small portrait of Derain painted by Vlaminck in 1906 (fig. 5, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). It shows Derain in a white shirt with a pipe in his mouth against a yellow background. Derain is said to have kept this portrait at his side until his death in 1954.

According to the catalogue raisonné of Derain's works, the earliest portrait of Vlaminck was one of the artist holding a pipe in his mouth (private collection), which Derain painted in 1900. 1900 is the year they set up a joint studio. Thereafter, Derain painted two more portraits in 1905, one of Vlaminck wearing a hat (fig. 6, private collection, deposite to Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres) and *Portrait of Vlaminck Playing the Violin*.

In the former example of 1905, *Portrait of Maurice de Vlaminck*, the hat is slightly tilted with the model's hair on the righthand side showing, and Vlaminck is looking straight forward. This portrait is represented in color planes without depicting the details. While placing the paint in daring brushstrokes, the details of Vlaminck's face are captured appropriately. *Portrait of Vlaminck Playing the Violin* differs largely from the other portraits dating from this period in that it is a full-length portrait and, size-wise, it is more than one-meter-long. Partly as it was acquired at an early stage by a collector in Buenos Aires, it was rarely included in exhibitions. However, it is considered an important work in the catalogue raisonné too. On the whole, the paint is applied thinly, and the canvas ground is visible in some parts. Meanwhile, the hands and face, which are important elements in a portrait, are finished in thick layers, demonstrating the artist's adept handling of the paint. Derain's signature appears in the lower right, and Vlaminck's signature and an inscription reading, "*Mon portrait par Derain*," can be seen in the lower left.

Violinists

As connoted in the portrait by Derain, Vlaminck was also active as a violinist.

table 1: Portraits of Derain, Matisse, and Vlaminck

Artist	Title	Date	Technique	dimension	Collection
Henri Matisse	<i>André Derain</i>	1905	Oil on canvas	39.4 × 28.9 cm	Tate, Purchased with assistance from the Knapping Fund, the Art Fund and the Contemporary Art Society and private subscribers 1954
Maurice de Vlaminck	<i>André Derain</i>	1906	Oil on paperboard	22 × 27 cm	The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection, 1998
André Derain	<i>Portrait of Vlaminck</i>	c. 1900	Oil on canvas	34 × 37 cm	Private Collection
André Derain	<i>Woman with a Shawl, Madame Matisse in a Kimono</i>	1905	Oil on canvas	80 × 65 cm	Private Collection, Courtesy of Nevill Keating Pictures
André Derain	<i>Henri Matisse</i>	1905	Oil on canvas	46 × 34.9 cm	Tate, Purchased 1958
André Derain	<i>Portrait of Henri Matisse</i>	1905	Oil on canvas	33 × 41 cm	Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection, 1952
André Derain	<i>Matisse and Terrus</i>	1905	Oil on canvas	40.3 × 54.3 cm	Private Collection
André Derain	<i>Portrait of Vlaminck playing the Violin</i>	1905	Oil on canvas	110 × 68 cm	Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation, Tokyo
André Derain	<i>Portrait of Maurice de Vlaminck</i>	1905	Oil on canvas	41 × 33 cm	Private Collection, deposite to Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres
André Derain	<i>Portrait of Henri Matisse</i>	1905	Oil on canvas	93 × 52 cm	Musée Matisse, Nice

Maurice de Vlaminck was born to a violinist father and pianist mother in Paris in 1876 and was familiar with music from his childhood. His father, Edmond Julien de Vlaminck not only played the violin but seems to have worked on developing new instruments. Articles on a musical instrument combining a small piano and a cello which he invented were published in *La Nature* and *Le Monde artiste*.¹¹ Having learned the violin from his father, in his young days, Vlaminck played in the orchestra at Café Concert and taught the violin too. When he was sixteen, he left home and moved to Chatou. In 1893, he studied painting under an artist named Henri Rigalon on Île de Chatou. In 1894, at age eighteen, Vlaminck married Suzanne Berly, and they had two daughters. Teaching the violin was not enough to support the family. In order to earn money, he took part in bicycle and boat races. However, once he joined the army in 1896, his life as a bicycle racer came to an end. When he was discharged from military service in 1900, in order to make a living, Vlaminck worked as a violinist at the Paris World Exposition and also played at Café Concert and in a gypsy band in Montmartre. He later transferred to the orchestra at Théâtre du Château-d'Eau, which enabled him to keep regular hours and paint during the day. Then, he rented a joint studio with Derain in Chatou.

As regards paintings of violinists, an example by Matisse comes to mind. In *Violinist at the Window* (fig. 7, Centre Pompidou - Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle, Paris), which Matisse painted in 1918, the player facing the window is treated geometrically in simplified portrayal. This figure is considered to be a self-portrait of Matisse. Matisse's father wanted his son to become a lawyer, and besides studying, made him learn the violin. Matisse rebelled against his father, who forced him to practice the violin strictly, and is said to have gone over the fence and escaped to the house next door each time he had to have a lesson. In an interview with Léon Degand in 1945, Matisse said, "I am very fond of music." "I played the violin when I was young. (His secretary explained, that is to say, until he was fifty.)" "I had a little emotion. However, I tried to master too rich techniques, which made me repress my own feelings. Now, I prefer to listen to others."¹² When he was around forty years of age, Matisse became worried about losing his eyesight and resumed practicing the violin.¹³ He is said to have made his elder son, Jean, and his younger son, Pierre, learn the violin, cello, and piano. The boys disliked the hard practice.

As described above, Matisse's and Derain's involvement with the violin as an artist were different. To Matisse, the violin was a cultural accomplishment or hobby, but to Vlaminck, when Derain painted that portrait in 1905, it was an indispensable means to make a living. In May 1906, the art dealer Vollard visited Vlaminck's studio, purchased the works in his studio for 1,200 francs, and reserved future works. Thanks to Vollard, Vlaminck became able to concentrate on painting.¹⁴ In 1907, the first solo exhibition of works by Vlaminck took place at Vollard's gallery.

Vlaminck himself admits that the violin was important to him. In a self-portrait he painted in 1911 (fig. 8, Centre Pompidou - Musée national d'art moderne - Centre de création industrielle, Paris), you can see the scroll of a violin to the left of Vlaminck's head wearing a bowler hat with a pipe in his mouth. It seems as if he is holding the violin to indicate his past career.

The Influence of Vincent van Gogh

From March 15 to 31, 1901, the first major solo exhibition of works by Vincent van Gogh in Paris was held at the gallery Bernheim-Jeune, and altogether seventy-one works, sixty-five oil paintings and six drawings, were displayed. Derain visited this show together with Vlaminck. It was on this occasion that Derain introduced Matisse to Vlaminck. A retrospective of works by Van Gogh also took place at the Salon des Indépendants of 1905, in which Derain, Vlaminck, Matisse, and others took part. Forty-five works were on view at the retrospective held from March 25 to April 30, 1905, and posthumous recognition of Van Gogh increased.

Nathalie Heinich makes the following observation on the reception of Van Gogh from a point of view of sociology of art.

By the time Mirbeau reviewed the first major personal exhibition of van Gogh at Bernheim's in 1901, the themes he rehearsed were well established: "Painful and tragic death," "mystical soul," "predisposition to lunacy," "fatal anxiousness" of a man who "dreamed the impossible," "passionate and exciting life," "vocation to be an artist," "need to proselytize," "subconscious strength," "instinctive need," "apostolate of beauty," "strange, anxious and strong personality," "wonderful and abundant temperament," "healthy art," "love of nature," "loathing of intellectualism," "different, rare" painter, "great and pure artist." Subsequent literature essentially just confirmed and developed them. The only later innovation is a political interpretation of van Gogh's position, in a 1905 article construing him as a kind of anarchist. (The expression *peintre maudit* appears for the first time in the title of this article.)¹⁵

As indicated above, a "Van Gogh myth" had already taken form in 1901, the year after Van Gogh died. As obvious from the fact that Derain visited Van Gogh's solo exhibition in 1901, Derain was interested in Van Gogh. In the letters Derain wrote to Vlaminck, he often mentioned Van Gogh. In a letter written in 1901, Derain mentions his interest in Van Gogh's works as follows. "Tell me, have you seen some new Van Goghs Cézannes, or other works? I saw a real Rodin."¹⁶ In another letter written that year, he says, "As for painting, I am aware that the realist period has ended. We are just about to begin, as far as painting is concerned. Without going as far as the abstraction of the paintings of Van Gogh—abstraction that I do not contend—I believe that lines and colours entertain relationships strong enough, in their parallel to a vital base, to allow for a research in their reciprocal and infinite existence and to find in their synthesis a field, not necessarily new, but more real and more importantly more simple." The following year, in 1902, Derain assesses Van Gogh as follows. "You can probably see Van Gogh's drawings. I like him. But, contrary to your view, I think that Van Gogh is more theoretical than Cézanne."¹⁷ Matisse owned three drawings by Van Gogh and loaned them to the retrospective held in 1905. Perhaps Derain had a chance to see them.

The letters quoted above show that Derain esteemed Van Gogh. As it has already been pointed out, the influence of Van Gogh can be identified in a landscape by Derain dating from the beginning of 1905, particularly in the representation of trees and the composition.¹⁸

It has been pointed out that the composition of Derain's *Portrait of Lucien Gilbert* (fig. 9, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) is similar to that of Van Gogh's *Portrait of Dr. Gachet* (fig. 10, Musée d'Orsay, Paris), which was exhibited at the retrospective in 1905.¹⁹ Both models are crammed into a tight space and are seated with an elbow on the table. Taking the influence of Van Gogh into account, let us look at how Derain depicted figures during this period.

Head of a Woman (fig. 2) dating from circa 1905 captures a woman with her head inclined and looking this way in color planes. Typical of a Fauvist, Derain does not employ local colors. By juxtaposing complementary colors, namely green and red, blue and yellow, the vivid coloring stands out. Bold color planes are also employed in the background, and the subject is expressed not in contours but as lumps of color. Such adventurous use of colors cannot be identified in *Portrait of Vlaminck Playing the Violin* (fig. 1). There, the figure, chair, objects and wall paper in the background are depicted in thick contours. Derain probably realized that both colors and lines were important in portraying figures. In *Portrait of Lucien Gilbert*, too, the sculptor Gilbert (1881–1947), a friend from Derain's childhood, is portrayed in clear-cut contours. The way he is depicted demonstrates the fruit of Derain's studies of Van Gogh. Both Vlaminck and Gilbert portrayed by Derain are crammed into the image, and Vlaminck's right leg and Gilbert's left arm jut out of the canvas. Such expressions convey the vigor and strength of the artist's friends serving as the model.

In his portraits of Matisse and Vlaminck depicting the head only, while employing bold colors, Derain captures his friends in an airy, friendly manner. They must have been snapshot-like works drawn lightheartedly to exchange among friends. Meanwhile, full-length portraits like *Portrait of Vlaminck Playing the Violin* and half-length portraits like *Portrait of Lucien Gilbert* depict the artist's friends dressed up in a rather pompous way. Perhaps they were considered as "portraits" done on commission—although we do not know whether Derain actually received such commissions. As emphasis lay on its role as a portrait, the artist paid more attention to the forms than the colors. The reason Derain portrayed Vlaminck not as a painter but as a violinist was probably because, in those days, performing music was important to Vlaminck. *Portrait of Vlaminck Playing the Violin* also serves as a rare testimony of the period during which Derain and Vlaminck were closely involved with each other.

After working as a Fauvist, Derain left Chatou and moved to Paris, where he rented a studio in Montmartre. By circa 1907, he was associating with Pablo Picasso and other artists at Bateau-Lavoir and painted works influenced by Cubism. From the 1920s onward, Derain's return to classics became marked, and he gained acclaim. However, as he accepted an invitation from Germany to make an official visit during World War II, he was obliged to keep a distance from the art circles after the war. Nevertheless, his friendship with Vlaminck, whom he met in 1900, lasted throughout his lifetime.

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(Translated by Ogawa Kikuko)

Notes

1. There is also a view that Derain met Matisse through Vlaminck. Elizabeth Cowling and Jennifer Mundy, *On Classic Ground: Picasso, Léger, de Chirico and the New Classicism 1910–1930*, exh. cat. (London: Tate Gallery, 1990), p. 92.
2. Details on Matisse and Derain in the summer of 1905 can be found in the following exhibition catalogues. *Matisse-Derain: Collioure 1905, une été fauve*, exh. cat. (Céret: Musée départemental d'art moderne-établissement public de coopération culturelle, Cateau-Cambrésis: Musée départemental Matisse, 2005); *Vertigo of Color: Matisse, Derain, and the Origins of Fauvism*, exh. cat. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2024).
3. Letters dated June 15–20, 1905, in André Derain, *Lettres à Henri Matisse* (Paris, 2017), p. 15.
4. A postcard postmarked June 25, 1905, in *Lettres à Henri Matisse*, p. 18. English translation quoted from *Vertigo of Color*, pp. 155, 160.
5. André Derain, *Lettres à Vlaminck* (Paris, 1955), p. 161. Translated into English from the Japanese text.
6. I referred to the catalogue of the Salon d'Automne 1905 in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution. In it, Henri Matisse is listed under "H," not "M." *Salon d'Automne, 1905*. Miscellaneous art exhibition catalog collection, 1813–1953. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, last accessed August 22, 2024, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/salon-d-automne-8797..>
7. "Le Salon D'Automne," *L'Illustration*, November 4, 1905, p. 295.
8. Following Vollard's advice, Derain traveled to London in 1906. Rémi Labrusse and Jacqueline Munck, "André Derain in London (1906-07): Letters and a Sketchbook," *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 146, no. 1213 (April 2004): pp. 243-260.
9. *Four Americans in Paris: The Collection of Gertrude Stein and Her Family*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970), p. 45. Catalogues of past exhibitions held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York can be viewed online. Last accessed August 22, 2024, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_1960_300062402.pdf.
10. *Matisse-Derain*, p. 36.
11. C. Crépeaux, "Le Violoncelle-Piano," *La Nature*, 24 December 1892, pp. 51-52, last accessed August 22, 2024, <https://cnum.cnam.fr/redir?4KY28.40>; "Le Mélotétraphone," *Le Monde artiste*, 30 December 1894, p. 729, last accessed August 22, 2024, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5453394c>. I also referred to the following website regarding this instrument, last accessed August 22, 2024, <https://histoire-vesinet.org/melotetraphone.htm..>
12. Henri Matisse, *Écrits et propos sur l'art* (Paris, 1972), p. 301. Translated into English from the Japanese text.
13. Françoise Gilot, *Matisse and Picasso: A Friendship in Art* (New York, 1990), pp. 95-97.
14. Wildenstein Institute, Maïthé Vallès-Bled, *Vlaminck: Catalogue critique des peintures et céramiques de la période fauve* (Paris, 2008), p. 543.
15. Nathalie Heinich, *The Glory of Van Gogh: An Anthropology of Admiration*, trans. Paul Leduc Browne (Princeton and New Jersey, 1996), pp. 27-28, last accessed September 19, 2024, <https://books.google.com.ag/books?id=SyFrGApInOEC&lpg=PP1&hl=ja&pg=PA11#v=onepage&q&f=false>
16. Derain, *Lettres à Vlaminck*, p. 29. Translated into English from the Japanese text. English translation of the second letter of 1901 (A. Derain, *Lettres à Vlaminck*, pp. 52-53) quoted from <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5869230>, last accessed September 19, 2024.
17. Derain, *Lettres à Vlaminck*, p. 57. Translated into English from the Japanese text.
18. Niamh O'Laoghaire, "The Influence of Van Gogh on Matisse, Derain and Vlaminck, 1898–1908" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1992), pp. 264–269.
19. O'Laoghaire, pp. 356–357.

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© The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY

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Photo: Bridgeman Images / DNPartcom

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