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THE PEDAGOGY OF GUSTAVE MOREAU.

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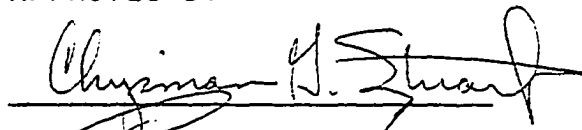
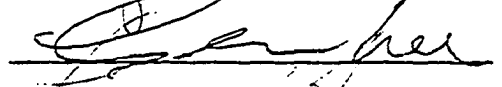
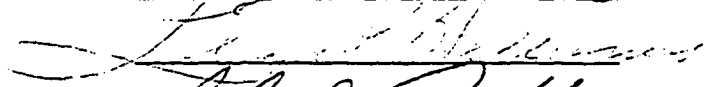
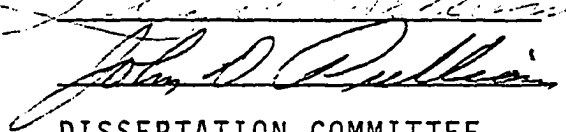
THE PEDAGOGY OF GUSTAVE MOREAU

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY  
R. PARK LANG  
Norman, Oklahoma  
1979

THE PEDAGOGY OF GUSTAVE MOREAU

APPROVED BY

  
  
  
  
DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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# THE PEDAGOGY OF GUSTAVE MOREAU

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ATMOSPHERE OF PARIS IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) was both an artist and a teacher. His life and career spanned one of the most turbulent eras in the history of art. Moreau reached his artistic maturity when modernism was asserting itself and challenging established art philosophies, as well as the practices of art institutions. While the appearance of his works gained him entrée into official French art circles, Moreau's philosophy of art had a pronounced influence upon the development of the avant-garde. Moreau encouraged individualism, the hallmark of the modernist movement, through his connection with the Symbolist style and his teaching at the École des Beaux-Arts.

Moreau's art and ideals were an eclectic combination of the traditional and the avant-garde. For that reason he can neither be considered a product of his time nor a total

innovator in the field of modern art. He was simply one of the multiple forces which aided the development of the modern movement in art. Moreau worked within the confining atmosphere of the official art world of mid-nineteenth century France. Therefore, his unique qualities are best seen when displayed against that background.

In mid-nineteenth century France, an artist's professional aspirations were subject to the whims and demands of official art circles and the example set by the Paris Salon. The Salon exhibit was despotically controlled by the Academy of Fine Arts whose members were chosen to comprise the jury for the Salon, the faculty at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and the board of directors for the French Academy in Rome. The Academy of Fine Arts, which was a professional organization of artists rather than a school of art, was the fine arts section of the Institut de France and had been established in 1795 to replace the Royal Academy.<sup>1</sup> By the 1870s the Paris Salon, the established arbiter of taste, had become the showplace where French artists displayed their works in hopes of recognition and sales. The artists' public consisted primarily of the bourgeoisie who crowded the exhibit halls to see what new works had been selected by the Academy jury for display as examples of excellence in art.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Rewald, The History of Impressionism (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Barbara Ehrlich White, Impressionism in Perspective (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), pp. 132-133.

However, during the next half-century, the Academy would relinquish its position as the authority in the art world, and many changes would affect the organization of the Paris Salon.

The most positive manner in which a young artist could achieve public recognition before the late-nineteenth century lay in his successful progression through the École des Beaux-Arts. There he might receive prestigious prizes and awards which would later assure his acceptance in the Paris Salon. The course of study at the École des Beaux-Arts consisted of dry lectures and sterile exercises presided over by a renowned faculty of academicians. Drawing from plaster casts of classical sculpture, the pupils at the École des Beaux-Arts were encouraged to emulate the cold forms of Ingres by creating conventional shading and highlights trapped within strong contours.<sup>1</sup> It was not until 1863 that courses in painting and sculpture were added to the École curriculum, so the pupils were primarily confronted with the task of working two-dimensionally from three-dimensional models. The aim of these academic exercises was faculty recognition in the form of awards, such as the Prix de Rome, which meant advanced study at the French Academy in Rome and acceptance in the Salon exhibition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For further information concerning the influence of Ingres' artistic philosophy and technique upon the École des Beaux-Arts curriculum, see John Rewald's History of Impressionism, pp. 19-22.

<sup>2</sup>White, pp. 134-135.



The only alternatives to this rigid course of study were to be found in private classes conducted by recognized artists of the day. For the most part, these artists were non-academicians whose approach to success deviated from the official path of the École des Beaux-Arts curriculum. In addition to copying the paintings of the old masters in the Louvre, art students could work in Couture's studio where they were taught painting technique, or in Locoq de Boisbaudran's studio where they were encouraged to paint from memory, or they could attend classes at the Académie Suisse or the Académie Julian where they could paint from live models. By the late-nineteenth century these alternatives had become more attractive to many of the young men pouring into Paris to study art. Not only did the course of study in some private ateliers offer more freedom, but the École des Beaux-Arts was no longer able to accomodate the vast number of aspiring young artists, and, it began to lose its authoritative influence over artistic production.<sup>1</sup> Gradually, such weaknesses in the structure of academic control began to affect the entire French art system.

The École's loss of control through the dispersion of talent also meant lessened authority for the Academy of Fine Arts, its governing board. Both the educational institution and the professional organization were becoming the victims of obvious changes in French politics and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

economics, as well as more subtle changes in French social structure. With the evolution of a capitalistic industrial system, the attitudes of French society had undergone alteration. As Girvetz and Ross point out, the economic forces in a society definitely reflect upon that society's philosophies.<sup>1</sup> And French society in the late-nineteenth century was recognizably affected and modified by new developments in technology. Not only had an influential bourgeoisie established itself as the backbone of the French economy, but it had also become instrumental in setting fashion trends. Bourgeois industrialists realized that articles produced for the consumer market must be considered obsolete before they could be replaced by newly-manufactured products. The French economic system was based upon the philosophy that increased technological production created a demand for accelerated innovation in consumer products which in turn influenced changes in fashion and aesthetic taste.<sup>2</sup> With the emergence of capitalism, cultural centers like Paris developed into large cities where activity and its accompanying change became the norm. The atmosphere in late-nineteenth century Paris was dynamic and new feelings for innovation permeated every aspect of creativity.

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<sup>1</sup>Harry Girvetz and Ralph Ross, Literature and the Arts: The Moral Issues (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1971), pp. 102-103.

<sup>2</sup>White, pp. 64-65.

The substantial industrial fortunes of the burgeoning bourgeoisie allowed them a new type of economic control in the arts. These nouveaux riches were interested in investing their money in works of art, but only if these works of art reflected their middle-class values and life styles. Instead of the historical and classical subjects espoused by the Academy and the École des Beaux-Arts, the bourgeoisie wanted to see subject matter which told them sentimental stories or exemplified them as personages of position. The painting technique which most appealed to them embodied trompe-l'oeil effects which created the illusion of reality, executed with smoothly-finished surfaces showing no visible brush strokes.<sup>1</sup>

Middle-class influence on the arts had developed slowly over the years. The opinions of the bourgeoisie on cultural matters had first begun to gain political support when King Louis Philippe established the first annual Salon in 1831. Although the king's purpose was predominantly a political one, his generous response to public interest in the arts set a precedent for future public intervention in the creation of cultural policy. The public now had an opportunity to view works of art and develop its aesthetic knowledge, a privilege previously enjoyed only by the upper classes. From that point on, official art was referred to as juste milieu art and its purpose was to satisfy a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 136-137.

heterogeneous public whose tastes were to become more cultivated and more contemporary in terms of subject matter and theme.<sup>1</sup> Originality, as opposed to the time-honored intellectual messages found in academic art, became the cry of both the public and the *juste milieu* artists. This cry was answered by the Emperor Napoleon III when he accepted and enacted the Decree of 1863. Two important innovations were realized through governmental support of this decree: it forced pedagogical reform in the curriculum of the *École des Beaux-Arts*, and it established the *Salon des Refusés* in galleries next to those of the official *Salon*. The purpose of this new *Salon* was the exhibition of works which had been rejected for exhibit by the jury of academicians from the *Paris Salon*. This development not only quieted the indignation the public voiced over jury choices, but it also prompted the Academy jury to be less severe in its rejection of works for future exhibition in the *Paris Salon*.<sup>2</sup>

Governmental support of official art caused much tension between the *juste milieu* artists, whose desire was to cater to bourgeois taste, and the academic artists whose preference was the preservation of historical subject matter and intellectualism. The academicians considered the Decree of 1863 an affront to their artistic sensibilities and the

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century (London: Phaidon Publishers, Inc., 1971), pp. 14-15.

<sup>2</sup>White, pp. 136-137.

tension between the two factions continued to mount. The power of the bourgeoisie and the juste milieu artists was finally evidenced in 1881 when the French government handed the control of the Paris Salon over to the juste milieu group. Academic bias was then neutralized through the election of more liberal Salon juries who encouraged innovation in the arts. Subsequent Salons further reinforced the dominance of the juste milieu artists in official art circles, and academic doctrine found itself outmoded to a degree.<sup>1</sup>

The juste milieu artists with their bourgeois patrons were not the only opponents of the academic system in late-nineteenth century Paris. While these two factions received the bulk of the notoriety during the 1870s and 1880s, a more powerful trend was developing in the arts. Outside of the academic-official controversy, a movement was being born which would eventually supplant such trivial considerations as subject matter and intellectualism versus a genre approach to art with a revolutionary new concept. A handful of avant-garde artists, unknown to the majority of the public, were working through the developmental stages of a style which would alter both the traditional visual and philosophical perceptions of art. That infant style was Impressionism, and its parent was the dynamic atmosphere of Paris. When one considers the varied aspects of the era and its locale from the vantage point of time, it seems very natural that

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<sup>1</sup>Boime, pp. 15-17.

Impressionism was born in that environment. As Barbara White says:

Impressionism is an urban art . . . because it sees the world through the eyes of the townsman . . . [and] it describes the changeability, the nervous rhythm, the sudden, sharp but always ephemeral impressions of city life.<sup>1</sup>

Impressionism reflected the fragmentary and momentary essence of a changing society by showing that society its cyclical nature through the birth-death process.

Although Impressionism mirrored Parisian society of that era, total acceptance was not immediately forthcoming. Reality is not always recognized as such since it . . . "is not a being but a becoming, not a condition but a process."<sup>2</sup> Impressionism was a style which replaced the tactile characteristics of typical Salon painting with visual characteristics only perceived through a new awareness. Instead of volume and forms rendered through explicit values and Renaissance perspective, Impressionism challenged the eye with color harmonies and lighting effects which dissolved the traditional image of naturalism. Art enthusiasts, including large segments of the connoisseurs and critics in Parisian art circles, ridiculed Impressionist paintings unmercifully when a few began to appear in the Salon exhibitions. The journalists who reported on the Salon of 1879

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<sup>1</sup>White, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

were especially unkind to the Impressionists in support of "the insipidities of the genre painters . . . [who] were the favorites of the general public."<sup>1</sup> In spite of the Impressionists' desire to make their art known through official channels,<sup>2</sup> they soon realized that the Salon and its patrons were as yet unready and unwilling to recognize a new aspect of reality.

Although the bourgeoisie was proud of its newly acquired position in fashionable society, there was still a tendency in the 1870s to defer to the dictates of the Academy in matters of taste in the fine arts. The works selected by the Academy jury were many times of uneven quality, so it was possible for large numbers of people with divergent tastes to find art to their liking among the variety offered in the Salon shows. The strongest prejudices were voiced against avant-garde art, represented by the Impressionists. So derisive were the comments that the Impressionists broke away from the Salon in 1874 to exhibit their works as an independent group.<sup>3</sup> Through this move the Impressionists accomplished one of their main objectives, which was to establish an identity separate from academic art. The group

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<sup>1</sup>Rewald, p. 242.

<sup>2</sup>Eveline Schlumberger, "Revoilà les Academiques," Connaissance Arts No. 268, 79 (June 1974) 68-69.

<sup>3</sup>Even though the Salon des Refusés had been established to show those works not accepted by the official Salon, the stigma which was attached to exhibiting in such a show led many avant-garde artists to reject the opportunity.

shows continued to attract avant-garde artists for the next seven years when another objective was finally achieved: the French government relinquished its supervision of the official Salon to the extent that a more liberal jury was elected by participating artists for the Salon of 1881.<sup>1</sup> With the stranglehold of the Academy lessening, the avant-garde circle gained more opportunity to be recognized by the public.

It had taken almost twenty years, from the opening of the Salon des Refusés in 1863 to the re-election of the Academy jury in 1881, for the management of the Salon to pass from the hands of the establishment into those of the artists. The artists might have been able to accomplish this task by themselves, but they were aided in their efforts to gain recognition by the organization of group shows and by the support of a few discriminating art dealers.

The most enlightened of those dealers was Paul Durand-Ruel who had begun buying Impressionist works after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. In addition to being a connoisseur of art, Durand-Ruel was an astute businessman who had learned the dealer's trade from his father and had expanded the family business to include an established clientele and branch galleries in England, Germany, and the Netherlands. In 1870 he launched a campaign to promote the Impressionists. While featuring their accomplishments in a

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<sup>1</sup>Rewald, p. 452.



journal publication dedicated to modern art, Durand-Ruel showed Impressionist paintings in his galleries. Some of these works he purchased outright for speculative purposes and others he showed to his more discerning clients. Durand-Ruel also advanced funds to the impoverished members of the group with the understanding that they would repay their debts with future paintings and an exclusive right to their works.<sup>1</sup> After launching his promotional campaigns aimed at the European market, Durand-Ruel approached prospective American buyers who were roaming Europe in search of culture near the end of the nineteenth century. These collectors became his most important market and both Durand-Ruel and his artists prospered from 1890 on. The pattern Durand-Ruel established in building patronage for the Impressionists "was soon adopted by other contemporary dealers and, later, by men such as Vollard and Kahnweiler."<sup>2</sup>

Without Durand-Ruel's support many artists would have been unable to live during their formative years. Most of the Impressionists were from middle- or upper-class backgrounds and their accustomed life styles demanded steady incomes which were many times provided by their principal dealer. Their financial dependence upon Durand-Ruel was

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<sup>1</sup>Many times Durand-Ruel was financially unable to lend advance funds which sent some artists scurrying to other dealers (like Petit) with the possibility of turning paintings into cash.

<sup>2</sup>White, p. 78.

further strengthened by the fact that the government-directed Academy had never made provision for individual living allowances for its artists. Naturally, their allegiances were to the dealer, rather than to the Academy, during the early years of group shows and few sales.

The group shows, which started with the first Impressionist exhibit in 1874, continued in their original form (as a rebellion against the Salon) until 1886 when dealer shows began to take their place.<sup>1</sup> The system of dealer shows and sponsorship became the vehicle for the acceptance of the Impressionists, because established dealers could offer them social support, publicity, visibility, and a steady income. By the 1890s the dealers, who were "once marginal figures to the Academic system, became, with the Impressionists, the core of the new system."<sup>2</sup> The flexibility and support which this system offered the artist succeeded to the extent that the Academic system became defunct. As younger generations of artists brought new forms and aesthetic concepts to the art world, the dealer system sustained them also to become one of the leading institutions of the modern art market.

Many forces played a role in supplanting academic control of art with artist control. The growing economic influence and flowering tastes of the bourgeoisie were the

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<sup>1</sup>Durand-Ruel had started this trend in 1882 when he agreed to organize the Impressionists' show for that year.

<sup>2</sup>White, p. 93

first elements which gave rise to the acceptance of new forms of expression. Educational alternatives provided art students with the freedom to develop their personal aesthetic. Lessening government control and an atmosphere of free enterprise finally allowed the dealer system to become an invaluable tool in the establishment of an art market which was receptive to new visual phenomena. But rather than seeing this period as a riotous struggle between the academicians, the juste milieu group, the avant-garde artists, and the dealer system, a more accurate picture of the period can be conceived if one realizes that few revolutionary changes take place immediately. It is true that the face of art and its place in the world changed during the late-nineteenth century, but it is also true that the process of change was more evolutionary than revolutionary. The Academic system did become outmoded, but the process was a gradual one and the forces which contributed to its downfall were not all external.

Changing tastes did affect some reform in curriculum and theory before public demand and official intervention forced the academicians out of the art market. As Albert Boime illustrated in his study of the evolution of nineteenth-century French academic pedagogy, most of the artists to become recognized in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries as innovators in the modern movement had at least received the fundamentals of their art training from academicians.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Boime, p. 185.

At least a portion of the theory and practice which academic pedagogy generated can be traced from the ateliers of the École des Beaux-Arts to the studios of more independent artists. Therefore, it would be both unfair and unwise to accuse academicism of having a completely negative effect upon innovative development in the arts. Through the enlightened tutelage of some academicians, French pedagogy made a ". . . positive, if unintended contribution . . . to the evolution of independent tendencies."<sup>1</sup> A more thorough knowledge of the practices in the École des Beaux-Arts of the nineteenth century shows both the negative and positive forces which contributed in varying degrees to the stream of modern art as it trickled from the late-nineteenth century and surged into the twentieth century.

From its official sanctioning in 1795 until reform was instituted through the Decree of 1863, the École des Beaux-Arts curriculum remained predominantly unchanged. Emphasis was placed upon daily exercises in drawing from plaster casts for beginning students, and, for advanced students, there were courses in drawing from a live model as well as courses in perspective, anatomy, and painting. As an attempt at innovative reform, two important competitions had been introduced into the curriculum in 1816: one competition for compositional sketches and the addition of a landscape division in the traditional Prix de Rome competition,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

both of which were to have a considerable effect upon future creativity. While the academicians favored spontaneity in the execution of sketches, the carefully-finished painting grounded in classical subject matter and philosophy seemed to them to be the only valid type of two-dimensional work. That technique was aimed at satisfying the requirements of the Prix de Rome competition. That view was later challenged by independent artists who believed that the freshness of a sketch should be the primary criterion for an expressive work of art, and there was a high coincidence between this sketch method of painting and the growing appreciation of landscape subject matter in art.<sup>1</sup> However, the core of the instruction at the École, then as now, was centered around a thorough grounding in drawing.

The emphasis on drawing was intended to enable the student to master the representation of everything in his visual environment, but that was not truly the case. By representation, the academician referred to rendering objects in an ideal vein rather than in actual appearance, and the subjects to be rendered were of a highly selective group rather than random examples of objects from daily existence. Academic art not only represented the products of the École environment, but it also represented a highly subjective approach to art philosophy. The drawings from plaster casts and live models were to be executed with an eye for noble

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-10.

poses drawn from examples of classical art and the neoclassic technique of Dominique Ingres. All considerations were relegated to rigid formulas based upon the principle of proceeding ". . . from the part to the whole, by grouping elements into an ensemble of the stereotyped pose [which] formed the basis of the pedagogy in all art studios until the late nineteenth century."<sup>1</sup> Even for the advanced students, who were allowed to progress into painting, the formulas persisted. Academicians shunned the idea of painting directly from a subject because they felt only the light of the studio could show the painter the subtle modulations of tone from light to dark which they felt must be rendered with cold precision to create form. Color should only be a dead complement to precise drawing and classical composition. Nothing in the form of expressive properties from nature or the artist's imagination should ever invade the realm of perfection exemplified in academic art.<sup>2</sup> It is a small wonder that these academicians could not see the inconsistencies in their methods: while commanding students to learn through observation, they demanded that naturalism be ignored and form rendered through an exacting formula.

Most students in the École des Beaux-Arts program accepted the criticisms and dictates of the academicians

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Tommy Carroll Williams, The Teaching Philosophy of Thomas Eakins (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), Ph.D. dissertation, pp. 11-16.

without question for many reasons; their most obvious reason was a chance at the Prix de Rome. Considered to be the highest honor bestowed upon young art students, the Prix de Rome was a scholarship for study at the French Academy in that city where the winner was set free from the restraints of demanding professors to sketch and paint at will. However, the Prix de Rome winners were obligated to send the products of their labors back to the École where an appointed board of faculty members judged the work for its technical and philosophical content. Geographic distance still did not free the École students from the authority of the academicians, and this was another reason for the generally mute acceptance of Academy policy. The French Academy and its members constituted the final authority in art matters and the formidable academicians occupied positions of undisputed prestige through their appointments as art educators. The only respite available to the art student was enrollment in some private atelier where he might find a more liberal master whose teachings would enrich those of the École des Beaux-Arts faculty.

According to Nikolaus Pevsner, many École students sought additional instruction in the private studios of famous artists because . . . "there was quite a matter-of-fact atmosphere of plain teaching and learning about the best of these studios."<sup>1</sup> In addition to a less rigid learning

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<sup>1</sup>Nikolaus Pevsner, Academies of Art, Past and Present (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1940) p. 226.

environment, the private atelier curriculum was designed to offer the student a more thorough preparation for the Prix de Rome competition than that of the École des Beaux-Arts. Although drawing was taught at the École, the private atelier offered a more elementary and basic approach to the discipline for the beginning student. It also prepared the student for all of the minor drawing competitions which were designed by the Academy as preliminaries for the Prix de Rome competition. In order for a student to be officially enrolled at the École, he had to participate successfully in the concours des places competition, and only the private studio instruction prepared him for this contest for places. Even though the École expected its applicants for the concours des places to possess drawing ability, working alternately between plaster casts and a live model, the principles of drawing were not part of its curriculum; it simply provided a place for advanced students to work under the scrutiny of an academician. Since the majority of the École faculty operated private ateliers and also served as judges in the placement competitions, the private training was encouraged and students flocked to enroll under masters working outside the École. This practice not only gained them experience for the École competition, but it also gained them entrée to the competition in the form of a letter of recommendation from the master, another regulation for admission to the École des Beaux-Arts.<sup>1</sup> The private

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<sup>1</sup>Boime, p. 23.



atelier was a desirable preparation for a career in academic art circles, whether the student sought to be an artist, an academicien, or both.

Albert Boime provides the most authoritative and extensive account of the private atelier curriculum. The typical curriculum in the private studio consisted of lessons in elementary drawing, drawing and painting from a live model, compositional study, and copying the paintings of the old masters. The exercises in elementary drawing and drawing from a live model were designed as preparation for participation in the concours des places. The master, upon seeing examples of an applicant's drawing ability, placed him in either the elementary or the figure drawing group when he first entered the studio. The elementary drawing students were required to draw from plaster casts of various parts of the human body as well as from engravings or lithographs of the human figure in which contours and shading had been highly accentuated. First, the pupil worked only with sharp contours until his mastery of these allowed him to progress to rendering shaded areas along with his contours. The shading was achieved either by cross-hatching parallel lines or by using the estompe (a tightly-rolled piece of paper with a pointed end) to smooth his pencil or charcoal lines into delicate value gradations. By applying himself to this tedious routine, a student succeeded in copying the styles of others and achieving a lifeless rendition of the

human form without developing self-expression.<sup>1</sup> Even at that early stage in his training, the student was already taught to follow the main doctrine of the Academy--copy tradition with no regard for individual expression. The next stage in the elementary drawing exercises consisted of drawing from plaster casts made from various parts of classical statuary, the purposes of which were to acquaint the pupil with antiquity and with the intermediate value relationships perceived through light falling upon the pieces. The desired effect in these drawings was an emphasis on strong contrast between shading and highlights and, simultaneously, a subtle rendering of intermediate tones showing a flawlessly smooth transition from one value to the next in a graduated manner.<sup>2</sup> Again, the student was encouraged to achieve the artificial regularity so prized by the academicians of the École.

The next step in a student's progress through private instruction, before he was allowed to paint, consisted of drawing from a live model. Not only did this step signal artistic advancement for the student, but it was also a form of social advancement within the private atelier. Instead of being considered a junior member of the student body and being subject to the heckling of his superiors, he had now achieved senior status among the ranks of students. The pupil was first required to practice capturing the entire

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-26.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-29.

pose quickly by squinting his eyes and avoiding details, a practice diametrically opposed to the elementary drawing exercises. The student then progressed to applying detail while keeping the entire figure in mind and, at the same time, avoiding the natural irregularities of the model's figure in favor of the idealized proportions found in classical sculpture.<sup>1</sup> Again, the contradictions in practice ran rampant: the student must consider the whole and the details simultaneously; he must work from nature but make it conform to an intellectual concept rather than allowing it to suggest its own form.

After the student had grasped the tenets of the academic drawing style to the satisfaction of his master, he was considered to be prepared to paint from the live model. This feature of the atelier curriculum was an innovation of the nineteenth century. For the previous two hundred years, the private atelier masters had followed Ingres' pedagogical principles in drawing. Ingres had never introduced a student to painting, on even a rudimentary basis, until long after the student had become extremely proficient in rendering a classical interpretation of a model. However, by the nineteenth century, the private atelier master had begun introducing the student to painting before the length of drawing time proscribed by Ingres had terminated. At such a time, the master assigned his student to paint a head, either from

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 30-34.

a copy of an old master painting, or from a head study done by the teacher himself. After this exercise, the student was allowed to do head studies from the live model. The proscribed painting technique was laborious: as with drawing, the emphasis was placed on value gradation from the local highlights down through the intermediate values to the darkest tones; these tones were all juxtaposed, rather than mixed, on the canvas in a mosaic fashion. The next step involved blending the graduated tones with the aid of a clean brush dipped sparingly in light pigment and applied to the edge of each tone until it fused softly with its adjacent tone; the final step encompassed the application of both light and dark values in a seemingly-random manner to emulate a feeling of immediacy. In order to heighten the coloring and preserve the pigments, a final layer of paint was added in the previous manner after the original layer had dried; the only difference between the first and second applications lay in increasing the highlighting effects and achieving a smoother finish on the surface of the painting.<sup>1</sup> The purposes of applying a first layer of paint and then later applying a second layer were contradictory. The first layer was calculated to affect spontaneity, while the final layer covered it in a fashion which was anything but spontaneous. It is no wonder that those students of an independent nature were to later question the sequence of these processes.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 36-40.

Exercises in compositional study were conducted during both the advanced drawing and painting phases of a student's instruction. To develop an understanding of various solutions to compositional problems, a student was advised to make facsimile copies of old master paintings in the Louvre. Another unrequired, but suggested, exercise involved making thumbnail observations from life in a sketch-book which the student could carry with him through his daily activities. That exercise not only gave the student practice in composition but it also required him to capture immediate impressions of unposed subjects.<sup>1</sup> Even though the masters advising this practice did not consider these sketches to be finished works of art, they did emphasize their importance from the standpoint of compositional study and immediacy of execution. This seems to be a very advanced attitude when one considers the continual importance placed upon the finished product by nineteenth century academicians. Unknowingly they were laying the groundwork for the informal techniques later espoused by independent artists.

Copying, whether it was done in a drawing or a painting medium, was one of the primary pedagogical techniques of the private atelier masters. Copying was espoused both for its value in compositional study and for understanding technical procedure. The teachers expected their students to learn these skills by replicating their works as well as

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 34-35.

those of the old masters. After the morning session in the private atelier and the afternoon session in the studios of the École des Beaux-Arts was each completed, the student was expected to do his homework for his private lessons by copying in the Louvre. When these copies were of a portable size the master accepted them for criticism in his home, and when they were too large to be transported, he might pay a visit to the Louvre for criticism. While the more independent academicians advised their students to make loose painted sketches of old masters for the purpose of studying composition, they also recommended exact copies be made of some works for the purpose of learning the artists' technical use of materials. These exact copies of old masters also served two additional purposes: they were required by the Academy as "the necessary complement of a classical education . . . [and the copies also]--provided a steady source of income for the neophyte, as well as an opportunity for the beginner to break in professionally."<sup>1</sup> The copy served the student in both an academic and a practical sense, so the practice sustained itself throughout the nineteenth century both inside and outside official art circles.

While an understanding of the general tendencies of a situation provides an overall view of practices in an area, there are many times notable deviations within a system. This was just as true of the pedagogical attitudes and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

practices of the academicians in the private ateliers and the studios of the École des Beaux-Arts as it was of any other professional operation of the period. The French Academy established and supported its rigid doctrine to the best of its ability. However, there were those individuals within academic circles who gave only lip service to the system, and a few of them introduced innovations which were to have a decided effect on both pedagogical reform and the future of art.

The academicians who received the most acclaim during the late-nineteenth century (such as Gérôme, Couture, and Bouguereau) were staunch supporters of the stifling mode of teaching espoused by the French Academy of Art. However, there were some lesser-known independent academicians whose ideas were very radical: Viollet-le-Duc who crusaded for originality as opposed to imitation in art; Lecoq de Boisbaudran who believed a student should work from memory to heighten his expressive capacity; and Gustave Moreau who was later proclaimed the best teacher at the École by several successful avant-garde artists. Why were these men innovators? They were each capable of functioning within the official world of the French Academy of Art, but something in their backgrounds or their personalities prompted them to challenge officialdom. Of the three artists mentioned, Gustave Moreau was noted most for his innovative teaching method. He planned his early training as preparation for a career in

history painting, but he ended his career as the beloved professor of such famous moderns as Henri Matisse and Georges Rouault. What prompted Moreau to devote himself to teaching so late in his career? There are many answers to that question. And they can only be found by looking at Moreau's life and the influences which shaped his mature philosophy of art.



## CHAPTER II

### MOREAU: THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE FIGURE

Of the many artists who reached their creative maturity during the mid-nineteenth century, Gustave Moreau is among the most elusive. He attained a pronounced degree of fame during his lifetime, but he became a very shadowy figure for the art connoisseurs of later generations. Moreau's anonymity is typical of the careers of many nineteenth century academicians. Until the early 1960s few academicians were known for their accomplishments, and it was only Moreau's fame as the teacher of Henri Matisse and Georges Rouault which earned him a rather unstable position in the history of art.<sup>1</sup> However, a resurgence of interest in the works of academicians has brought Moreau out of isolation. He has recently been referred to as a Romantic, a Symbolist, and a forerunner of modernism in painting. Actually, when one considers Moreau's entire range of expression, he was a little of each. It is probably his eclecticism which has contributed most to the elusive character of Moreau's art.

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<sup>1</sup>Julius Kaplan, Gustave Moreau (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1974), p. 7.

Moreau's importance can be realized when it is viewed historically. His art was a synthesis of the academic and the avant-garde in painting: while Moreau was originally attracted to the Romanticism of Delacroix, he ultimately incorporated features of Symbolism into his painting style. Philosophically and technically, Moreau's works support the basic tenets of modernism in painting with its emphasis upon the primary importance of line and color.<sup>1</sup> It was this aspect of Moreau's art which served as a major influence on the careers of his avant-garde students as well as later generations of modernists. The majority of Moreau's pupils absorbed his philosophy of art without having seen any of his paintings, because he refused to exhibit his works and he sold them reluctantly.<sup>2</sup> It was only after Moreau's death that his former students had the opportunity to view the master's work. Although his disciples knew Moreau the philosopher much better than Moreau the man or Moreau the painter, these three aspects of the total man must each be considered for a sound picture of the influence Moreau exercised over successive generations of painters.

In spite of Moreau's solitary nature, recent investigation has begun to uncover a many-faceted personality.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1976), pp. 17-18.

Moreau lived his entire life in a cultivated atmosphere of solitude and security which enabled him to pursue his profession without the usual encumbrances of family and financial obligations. He was born in Paris on April 6, 1826, to Pauline Desmoutier Moreau, an accomplished musician, and Louis Moreau, an architect for the city of Paris.<sup>1</sup> The most accurate account of Gustave Moreau's birth and youth was written by his mother:

Gustave Moreau was born . . . on 6 April 1826 at 9 o'clock in the morning, in the house of Mr. Hennequin, a lawyer, in the Rue des Saints-Pères, at that time No. 3, opposite the Rue de Lille. . . .

His father L. Moreau was appointed departmental architect in the Haute-Saône in 1827 and moved to Vesoul with his wife and children. . . .

Although he had been removed from his post in 1830 because of his liberal views, Monsieur Moreau was asked to remain at Vesoul on account of the good work he had done. But when the revolution . . . broke out he returned to Paris with his family. It was not long before he was appointed architect to the Ministry of Public Works and of the Interior. He had a sense of humour, was well educated and interested in the arts; his wife was musical and very responsive. Gustave loved them both devotedly. His mother especially he was reluctant to leave. But the time came when he had to be sent to the Collège Rollin; there he spent two years. This was the most unhappy period of his life. Being very shy and very small for his age, he suffered from being thrown together with youngsters who were sturdier than he and had been brought up in a more manly way.

After the death of his sister in 1840, his parents decided to bring him home again. Soon afterwards he made a journey to Italy with his mother, uncle and aunt. From the age of eight he was continually drawing everything he saw. So during his journey he made sketches of the views, the people and lots of horses, and he brought home quite an interesting album for his father.

His love of drawing now became a passion with him. But his father would never allow him to interrupt his

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Paladilhe and José Pierre, Gustave Moreau (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 9.

schooling. It was only in the late afternoon, when school was over, that he went to a studio to draw from the model.

Finally, after he had obtained his school-leaving certificate [baccalauréat], his father gave him his entire freedom especially after having submitted to Mr. Dedreux d'Orcy a painted sketch. . . .

It was about that time that he entered the studio of Mr. Picot.<sup>1</sup>

Upon close inspection, this account reveals much about Moreau's home life and his relationship with his parents, especially his mother. Gustave was over-protected and indulged by his mother who obviously took great pride in his accomplishments. Mme Moreau lived with her son from the time of her husband's death in 1862 until her own death in 1884 at the age of 82. Moreau never married and was left bereaved and desolate when his mother passed away. Also, this account was written in the third person as if Moreau's mother were playing the role of a biographer recording the drama of her son's life.

While Mme Moreau's possessive love had a decided effect upon her son's life, Gustave's father must have influenced his son's mature philosophies of art and teaching. Many years later when speaking to his students at the École des Beaux-Arts, Gustave Moreau spoke admirably of his father's character:

Anyone would be the better for having a father like mine, well-off in the first place, then very strict, inflexibly so in all that concerns one's work, an architect who had lived much with artists, who was well aware how difficult it is to judge a work of art and who never sought to impose any of his ideas upon me.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Louis Moreau must have had a deep understanding of artists as well as the obligations of their teachers. When he proposed an educational program for a National School of Fine Arts, he made the following observations concerning the teachers' duties to their pupils: "A principal requisite of their teaching is that it should never be frigid or dry, but on the contrary always lofty, even poetic, lest the highly sensitive imagination of the artists should be promptly rebuffed by it."<sup>1</sup> Whether or not Gustave Moreau was aware of this declaration made by his father, the influence of this philosophy was quite evident in Moreau's approach to his art, as well as his teaching. The aesthetic sensitivity and humanitarian beliefs of both parents combined to provide a solid foundation upon which Gustave Moreau constructed his mature system of values.

Although Louis Moreau believed that his son should complete his baccalauréat before pursuing professional studies, he became aware of the boy's passion for drawing and painting when Gustave was in his early teens. While enrolled at the Collège Rollin, Gustave won an award for draftsmanship based upon a drawing which was probably done from a plaster cast or copies of an engraving.<sup>2</sup> After two years at the Collège Rollin (1838-1840), Gustave's parents called him home: they were desolate over the loss of their

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Kaplan, p. 11.

daughter Camille who had just died at the age of thirteen, and they needed to have their son with them.<sup>1</sup> After a period of mourning, Gustave traveled to Italy in 1841 with his mother, aunt and uncle. Their stays in Bologna, Florence, Turin and Geneva excited Gustave's imagination and he returned to Paris determined to be an artist. Although his father was quite impressed with the notebook of sketches from Italy, he insisted that Gustave return to school to compete his baccalauréat.<sup>2</sup> Gustave obeyed his father but at the same time retained his passion for drawing.

After completing school in 1844, Gustave convinced his father that he must study art. Louis Moreau conceded to his son's wishes after receiving a favorable response to Gustave's work from the painter Dedreux d'Orcy. Moreau's parents enrolled him in the private studio of François-Edouard Picot, a famed neo-classical painter and instructor at the École des Beaux-Arts. In Picot's studio, which was designed to prepare students for the entrance examinations at the École, Gustave followed the academic regimen of the day: the mornings were spent making anatomical drawings of the nude model (either male or female) who was posed according to the classical ideal; the afternoons were spent in the Louvre where the younger students drew from classical

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup>Paladihe and Pierre, p. 9.

statuary, while the older students made pencil copies or oil sketches of the old master works with the hopes of selling them to visitors.<sup>1</sup> During the latter sessions, Moreau came to appreciate and emulate the works of Veronese, Titian, Mantegna, Rembrandt and Ingres.<sup>2</sup> Moreau obviously valued the Louvre studies for this was a practice which he later required of his own students.

In 1846 Moreau sat for the entrance examination (the concours des places) at the École des Beaux-Arts. All applicants were required to execute a study (either modelled or drawn) of a figure from live nude models who posed for the six two-hour sessions of the examination period.<sup>3</sup> The best work of one-hundred draughtsmen and forty sculptors was then chosen from all submitted works, and Gustave Moreau placed fifty-sixth in the drawing competition on October 7, 1846.<sup>4</sup> He eagerly entered the studio of François Picot (his former atelier master) at the École des Beaux-Arts to prepare himself for further competitions within the Academic system.

At that time Moreau was enthusiastic about following the academic road to success, but his opinion of the validity of that route was soon to be modified. While Moreau worked

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

conscientiously, he soon found Picot's conventional approach to art to be too confining. The cold precise method of drawing exemplified by Ingres' technique, which Picot supported, restricted Moreau's impetuous nature. The emotional young artist . . . "was attracted to the Academy's antithesis: the romantic art of Delacroix",<sup>1</sup> with its expressive color and curvilinear movement. Moreau came to worship Delacroix's art while attempting to synthesize the academic approach with the tenets of Romanticism.

In 1848, when he was twenty-two, Moreau entered the competition for the Prix de Rome, hoping to win the four-year scholarship to study at the French Academy at the Villa Médicis in Rome. His failure at that first attempt, as well as his second failure in 1849, caused Moreau to question the judgment of the academicians by turning to Delacroix for advice. After confiding his grievances to the great painter, Delacroix replied, "What do you expect them to teach you? They don't know anything."<sup>2</sup> That evaluation caused Moreau to lose further confidence in the academic method, but his father would not allow him to leave the École des Beaux-Arts and he remained under Picot until 1850.<sup>3</sup> In addition to his father's insistence that he continue his studies at the École,

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<sup>1</sup>Julius Kaplan, "Reevaluating Gustave Moreau," Art News 73 (September 1974) 89.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



Moreau was not one to actively defy his master for whom he still had admiration. It was not until later, with further encouragement as well as his father's consent, that Moreau left the academic scene.

In his search for inspiration, Moreau returned to the Romantics. Aside from the paintings of Delacroix, Moreau was much attracted to the works of Théodore Chassériau, a young French artist who had recently completed a series of allegorical frescoes decorating the staircase of the Audit Office (Cour des Comptes) in Paris; after taking his father to see the paintings, Louis Moreau granted Gustave permission to leave the École des Beaux-Arts.<sup>1</sup> Gustave was ecstatic over his newly-granted freedom, but Louis Moreau was more concerned with practical matters when he asked his son: "But do you know what you really want to do? . . . Have you any clear idea, or a particular aim?" [and Gustave answered] "I want to create an epic art that will not be an academic art."<sup>2</sup> The inspiration provided by Chassériau's art seemed reason enough to the young artist for seeking public instead of academic recognition, and Moreau set out in search of a studio where he could work toward his aim.

Moreau eventually took a studio in the Avenue Frochot near that of Chassériau, and a close friendship developed

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 10.

between the two artists.<sup>1</sup> Chassériau, a former student of Ingres and an admirer of Delacroix, personified Moreau's ideal of the Romantic artist. It was through Chassériau's art that Moreau found the synthesis of Ingres' linear qualities and Delacroix's expressive color; Chassériau's style showed classical subject matter from a nostalgic viewpoint that appealed to Moreau's dream-like nature and his penchant for the richly decorative in painting.<sup>2</sup> Moreau had at last found his point of departure for creating a mature art style which answered his demands for personal expression.

Although the twenty-four year old Moreau was full of youthful enthusiasm, he was perceptive enough to realize that, without the sanction of the *École des Beaux-Arts*, the only roads left open to public recognition at that time were acceptance in the annual Salon exhibit and commissions for decorative copies to grace public buildings. Through the influence of his father and Ferdinand Barrot, the Minister of the Interior, Gustave began to win government commissions. His first commission, a Pietà, was shown in the Salon of 1852; his next commissions, Song of Songs and Darius Fleeing After the Battle of Arbèles, Stops Exhausted, to Drink in a Pond, reflect his mature Romantic style and were accepted for exhibition in the Salon of 1853; the commission which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>R. Ironside, "Gustave Moreau and Burne-Jones," Apollo 101 (March 1975) 174-175.

marked Moreau's move away from Delacroix's influence to a more personal style was The Athenians Delivered to the Minotaur in the Labyrinth on Crete, which not only earned him the respectable sum of four thousand francs (the standard payment for government commissions was six hundred francs) but was also shown in the combined Salon and Universal Exhibition of 1855.<sup>1</sup> Later in his career Moreau was able to work independently. However, his early reputation was dependent upon acceptance into the official art circles of the Salon, as well as the influence and encouragement of family and friends.

In addition to the official contacts made for Moreau by his father and the inspiration provided by Chassériau, further encouragement came from Eugène Fromentin. Moreau met Fromentin through Chassériau and provided the struggling painter with working space in the studio which Louis Moreau had built for his son in the family residence at rue de la Rochefoucauld 14. The new studio, which Moreau and Fromentin occupied around 1853, allowed both artists ample space in which to work as well as the benefit of close contact.<sup>2</sup> For the next three years Moreau's closest associates and personal friends were Fromentin and Chassériau. The latter had

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<sup>1</sup>Kaplan, Gustave Moreau, pp. 11-12.

<sup>2</sup>Barbara Wright, "Gustave Moreau and Eugene Fromentin: A Reassessment of Their Relationship in the Light of New Documentation," Connoisseur 180 (July 1972) 191-192.

remained in his studio on the Avenue Frochot but continued to visit with Moreau on a daily basis. The triangle was not broken until 1856 when Chassériau's unexpected death at the age of thirty-seven left Moreau shocked and filled with grief.

On the occasion of Chassériau's funeral Moreau met again with Delacroix. The elderly Romanticist later wrote in his journal: "Poor Chassériau's funeral. There I met Dauzats, Diaz, and young Moreau the painter. I quite like him."<sup>1</sup> At that stage in Moreau's development it seems as though fate kept throwing him back to his original sources of inspiration. These associations would all later appear in the fabric of his mature Romantic style. However, he was still too close to Delacroix and Chassériau to develop his own approach to Romanticism.

One of the crucial points in the development of Moreau's unique Romantic style was his trip to Italy from 1857 to 1859. Moreau must have decided on the Italian trip for a number of reasons: personally, he probably felt that a change of scene would be advantageous in dealing with the death of Chassériau; professionally, the trip might reinforce the technical lessons of his early training and give him new insight into his stylistic development; it is also known that his friend Fromentin felt a tremendous lack in his own artistic education, since he was financially unable to make

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Pach, trans., The Journal of Eugène Delacroix (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), p. 518.

the same journey, and it is very likely that he encouraged Moreau to take advantage of the opportunity.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the reasons, Moreau left for Italy in November, 1857 with his friend, the painter Frédéric de Courcy. They stayed at 81 Via Frattina through June, 1858 during which time both men became acquainted with the many young French artists who were studying at the French Academy and the Villa Médicis.<sup>2</sup> These sculptors, painters, and musicians formed stimulating discussion groups to probe and analyze the problems of their art forms. In addition to receiving the benefits of these casual associations, Moreau came to occupy the advantageous position of mentor to some of the younger artists, especially Edgar Degas.

Moreau's relationship to these artists was that of a benevolent teacher among admiring pupils. Degas and his friends considered their mature colleague to be an excellent "spiritual guide and . . . artistic example".<sup>3</sup> This situation must have flattered Moreau who obviously mentioned Degas to his father. In a letter to his son in April, 1858, Louis Moreau referred to the Degas-Moreau relationship:

About your young companion, guided by you, of course, does he have an intelligent grasp of what he sees? Will he be a painter? Though knowing very little about him, we are interested enough in him to learn with pleasure

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<sup>1</sup>Wright, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Theodore Reff, "More Unpublished Letters of Degas," Art Bulletin 51 (September 1969) 281.

that you may make a friend and a pupil of him, one who will always understand your ideas and who, if need be, could give you some good work.<sup>1</sup>

Degas was a pessimist who was subject to fits of melancholy and his professional immaturity contributed to his unhappy situation. Moreau attempted to alleviate Degas' insecurities by helping him to formulate an individual mode of expression. In addition to instilling a respect for the old masters in the young painter, Moreau helped Degas replace the limitations of "the Ingresque style he had learned in the studios of Barrias and Lamothe . . . [with] the importance . . . [of] color."<sup>2</sup> Moreau was already beginning to develop the pedagogical method that he was to later employ with his students at the École des Beaux-Arts.

When he was not assisting younger artists in Rome, Moreau followed a rigid work schedule comprised of copying the old masters in Italian museums. His purpose was the assimilation of their technical secrets. During his entire stay in Italy, Moreau never tired of copying the old masters. After he arrived in Florence in June, 1858, Moreau spent the majority of his time at the Uffizi. There he copied the works of Titian, Uccello, and Giovanni Bellini, among others; he was later joined in these pursuits by Degas whom he then regarded as an intimate friend.<sup>3</sup> In late August Moreau left

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, pp. 65-66.

<sup>2</sup>Reff, p. 281.

<sup>3</sup>Mathieu, pp. 66-68.

for Milan and Venice, where it was prearranged that he meet his parents. In addition to sight-seeing with his parents in Venice, Moreau became entranced with the works of Carpaccio and he managed to extend their stay. Early in December he returned with his parents to Florence where young Degas awaited his arrival.<sup>1</sup> After short stays in Siena, Pisa, Rome, and Naples beginning in March, 1859, Moreau finally returned to Paris in September.

Since the entire Italian trip had been devoted to absorbing the old masters and classical antiquity, Moreau had little original work to show his friends upon his arrival in Paris. However, Moreau's Italian sojourn was far from fruitless. He was later to realize that his brief exposure to medieval and Renaissance Italian art helped shape his career in terms of subject matter and decorative motifs. The stylistic result would be an amalgamation of Italian and Flemish art in which color and noble subjects resided comfortably within a decorative framework of rich details.<sup>2</sup> By 1859, Moreau was well on his way to developing an original expressive style, but he still had many battles to win before he was to achieve recognition.

The atmosphere of Paris in 1859 was marked by strife. The authoritarian régime of the Second Empire had promoted materialism and scientific progress which was viewed by some

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<sup>1</sup>Wright, pp. 192-193.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 29.

as beneficial; others saw it as a threat to human values. Progressivism in art was represented first by the militant Realism of Courbet, and later by the Impressionism of Manet, while conventionality was supported by the French academicians.<sup>1</sup> The idealistic tendencies of the academicians, along with the influence of their bourgeois patrons, commanded the scene at that time. Consequently, Moreau had to compete with the fame and official recognition of such painters as Cabanel, Gérôme, Couture, and Bouguereau. Although the avant-garde artists had not as yet refuted the validity of the mythological and exotic subjects of the academicians, Moreau could not be classed with either of the two groups. It is true that his interest in literary subject matter was shared by contemporary academicians, but Moreau's style with its expressive color and decorative motifs was far removed "from the photographic descriptiveness . . . in the ideal subjects illustrated by the mid-century academicians."<sup>2</sup> Moreau was actually developing an eclectic style within the Romantic tradition, a unique approach taken by no one group at the time.

Moreau was neither a traditionalist nor a member of the avant-garde because he was using mythology as a point of

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph C. Sloane, French Painting Between the Past and Present: Artists, Critics, and Traditions, From 1848 to 1870 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 18-21.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Rosenblum, "The 19th Century Franc Revalued," Art News 68 (Summer 1969) 58.



departure for the expression of personal mental images and ideals.<sup>1</sup> Also, when one attempts to align Moreau's art with the Romantic tradition, further discrepancies can be found. The visual symbols which Moreau had begun to develop in his painting at that time could not be found in traditional Romantic art. His was a new brand of interior Romanticism which separated his art from that of earlier Romantics, as well as that of the academicians and the avant-garde.<sup>2</sup> Moreau's art was becoming an entirely personal type of expression which defied the categorization that was so prevalent in Parisian art circles of the mid-nineteenth century.

Moreau struggled with his personal visions in the privacy of his studio beginning in 1859. Finally he emerged triumphant with Oedipus and the Sphinx, a totally different painting which was accepted in the Salon of 1864. While the traditional mythological subject was evident in the work, Moreau's handling of the figures suggested "a sense of detachment from worldly concerns"<sup>3</sup> that could not be found in other allegorical art of the period. Oedipus and the Sphinx represented Moreau's first step toward his later

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<sup>1</sup>For more information, see: Nello Ponente, The Structures of the Modern World 1850-1900, pp. 145-146; R.H. Wilenski, Modern French Painters, p. 11; François Fosca, French Painting: Nineteenth Century Painters, 1800-1870, pp. 101-104.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, pp. 90-92.

<sup>3</sup>Henri Dorra, "Guesser Guessed: Gustave Moreau's Oedipus," Gazette des Beaux Arts 81 (March 1973) 131.

Symbolist style in which the duality of good and evil became apparent: the painting represented "a contest between woman, as an incarnation of evil, and man as an incarnation of good."<sup>1</sup> In writing about his interpretation of the painting, Moreau later entered some thoughts in his notebook:

The painter conceives man as having reached the serious and serene state of life. It, the sphinx or woman, presses, hugs, and clutches him with its terrible claws--but this traveler, proud and calm in his moral strength, looks at it without trembling.<sup>2</sup>

Although Oedipus and the Sphinx was difficult for critics to label stylistically, Moreau's work received much praise and brought him official recognition as a medal-winner.<sup>3</sup> It must have seemed a moment of extreme triumph as Moreau had not exhibited since the Salon of 1855.

Moreau's art created a similar stir in art circles a year later when he submitted Young Man and Death and Jason and Medea to the Salon of 1865.<sup>4</sup> The Young Man and Death, which Moreau dedicated to his deceased friend Chassériau, was a perfect balance of his admiration for the old masters and his desire to reach a new aesthetic awareness through expressive color.<sup>5</sup> Although this work was not exhibited

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, pp. 25-26.

<sup>4</sup>Unfortunately, Louis Moreau was not alive to enjoy his son's success, for he had died two years earlier in 1862.

<sup>5</sup>Wright, p. 195.

until after Oedipus and the Sphinx, it is now believed that the execution of Young Man and Death predated the painting of the former work.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the case, both paintings exhibited Moreau's unique ability to create mental images<sup>2</sup> through Symbolism and they mark the beginnings of the artist's mature development. In spite of the two literary quotations which Moreau inscribed within the composition of Jason and Medea, his use of supernatural symbols created the same mystical aura to be found in Oedipus and Young Man.<sup>3</sup> Some critics attacked Moreau's conceptions in Young Man and Jason but all of them agreed that his talent could not be denied; Moreau received another medal for his efforts, as well as a much-coveted invitation to court at Compiègne.<sup>4</sup> Moreau's name was now before the public as one of the most intriguing young artists of the day.

Moreau's Orpheus, which he submitted to the Salon of 1866, represented a further step toward his development of a Symbolist style. The subject, which was later to become a predominant image in many Symbolist works, was formulated to possess . . . "all the psychological qualities of Symbolist

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<sup>1</sup>Dorra, pp. 129-138.

<sup>2</sup>Hubert Pierquin, "La Peinture Legendaire de Gustave Moreau," Academie des Beaux Arts Bulletin No. 12 (July 1930) 186-192.

<sup>3</sup>Kaplan, Gustave Moreau, pp. 24-25.

<sup>4</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 31.

painting--suggestiveness, unspecific evocativeness, above all, ambiguity."<sup>1</sup> Moreau showed the head of Orpheus, the most renowned of all musicians and poets, carried upon his lyre by a young girl; Orpheus represented the plight of the artist when faced with the uncontrolled frenzy of his public, while the figure of the girl represented a contrasting positive statement about human sympathy.<sup>2</sup> While the subject of Orpheus was as tragic as the subjects of previous works, Moreau's approach and message were more gentle and thought-provoking than before. The subtlety of Orpheus may have been one reason why Moreau's work did not cause its accustomed stir in academic circles, for he won no medal that year.

Undaunted by the lack of official recognition for Orpheus, Moreau exhibited Prometheus and Jupiter and Europa in the Salon of 1869. While the jury favored his entries with a third medal, the public showed obvious preference for the paintings of Moreau's friend Fromentin and the academic works of Cabanel and Bouguereau.<sup>3</sup> Even the critics attacked these works stylistically by referring to Moreau's anemic sense of color and his inability to draw.<sup>4</sup> Moreau still had a following in official art circles, but the negative criticisms of his work caused him to withdraw from public exhibitions for the next seven years.

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<sup>1</sup>Mario Amaya, "The Enigmatic, Eclectic Gustave Moreau," Art in America 62 (September 1974) 96.

<sup>2</sup>Kaplan, Gustave Moreau, p. 25.      <sup>3</sup>Mathieu, p. 104.

<sup>4</sup>Kaplan, Gustave Moreau, p. 32.

During the period from 1869 until 1886 Moreau closeted himself in his studio to develop stylistic innovations and to refine his expression. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 contributed further to Moreau's isolation since he and his mother remained in Paris during the seige.<sup>1</sup> After the end of the war, Moreau continued to work while he strengthened his ties with his intimate friends Fromentin, Degas, Delaunay, and Puvis de Chavannes; their frequent meetings became discourses in which Moreau assumed the role of teacher among his peers. Moreau's advice and assistance consisted of everything from critiques of works before they were exhibited to re-touching paintings.<sup>2</sup> Moreau must have considered his life during that period to be very pleasant. Except for the anguish caused by the Franco-Prussian War, it was a period in which he enjoyed the luxury of choice. He could be surrounded by admiring companions who sought his advice, or, he could spend uninterrupted days in his studio formulating works which would not be attacked in public exhibitions.

The period from 1872 to 1876 was a very fruitful one for Moreau. The alternate periods of work, discussion, and thoughtful solitude, allowed Moreau to develop his mature Symbolist philosophy. In searching for its definition, Moreau placed much emphasis upon intuitive feelings which cannot be

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, pp. 115-116.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 37.

explained rationally and he stated: "I believe only in what I cannot see and only in what I feel. My brain and reason seem ephemeral and doubtful to me; my interior feeling seems the only thing that is eternal and incontestably certain."<sup>1</sup> Moreau's intuitive feelings were to lead him to define the ideal as a state of mind which transcends and triumphs over the conflicts of dualism. His philosophy defied the physical and glorified the spiritual in man.

Finally, Moreau was coaxed out of isolation. In 1875 he was awarded the cross of a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and his friends convinced him to exhibit in the Salon of 1876.<sup>2</sup> Salomé Dancing Before Herod, Moreau's contribution to the Salon that year, exemplified the artist's fully-developed Symbolist style. Moreau's pronounced stylistic change was evidenced by dramatic chiaroscuro and rich color which was traced over by delicately-drawn details of architecture and figures.<sup>3</sup> The dual themes of the decapitated head<sup>4</sup> (of John the Baptist) and the dancer Salomé<sup>5</sup> were

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<sup>1</sup>Kaplan, Gustave Moreau, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>Amaya, p. 96.

<sup>4</sup>Jean-Pierre Reverseau, "Pour une Étude du Thème de la Tête Coupée dans la Littérature et la Peinture dans la Seconde Partie du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle," Gazette des Beaux Arts 80 (September 1972) 173-184.

<sup>5</sup>Ragnar von Holten, "Le Développement du Personnage de Salomé à Travers les Dessins de Gustave Moreau," L'Oeil no. 79/80 (June-August 1961) 44-51, 72.

to recur in Moreau's later works as well as in those of later Symbolist painters and writers. The symbolic content of the work was concentrated in the figure of Salomé. To Moreau, Salomé represented:

This woman who is bored, whimsical, with a bestial nature, gives herself the pleasure to strike down her enemy. This woman who leisurely walks in a vegetal and bestial way in the gardens which have just been stained by this horrible murder which frightens the very hangman . . . When I want to render such nuances I find them not in my subject, but in the very nature of woman who looks for unwholesome emotions and who, silly, doesn't even understand the horror of the most frightful situations.<sup>1</sup>

Not only did Moreau give Symbolists an image of Salomé, but he also established a fatal view of woman, which was to become a recurrent theme in late-nineteenth century art.

With Salomé Dancing Before Herod Moreau established his reputation as a master painter. Further acclaim came to him two years later in the Exposition Universelle of 1878 when he exhibited the same work along with ten other oils and watercolors following similar technical and Symbolist formats. Many of Moreau's admirers were unable to grasp the personal concepts of his subjects, but all of them agreed upon the success of his expressive painting technique.<sup>2</sup> Moreau followed that success with a triumphant return to the Salon in 1880 where he showed Galatea and Helen on the Ramparts of Troy. All of the Salon critics praised Moreau's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 40.

originality and his abilities as a colorist.<sup>1</sup> Moreau had finally accomplished his aim of achieving artistic originality with acclaim from official art circles.

After the Salon of 1880, Moreau only showed his work twice in public. Those shows were exhibits of watercolors he executed as illustrations for Antoni Roux's edition of La Fontaine's Fables. The first exhibit of twenty-five watercolors took place in 1882 at the Galerie Durand-Ruel, and the second exhibit was four years later at the Galerie Goupil.<sup>2</sup> From 1886 until long after his death in 1898, Moreau's works remained in the seclusion of his home.

After 1880 Moreau led a very secluded life at rue de la Rochefoucauld 14. However, he was not forgotten by his admirers: in 1882 he was elected an Officer of the Legion of Honour; in 1888 he was elected to membership in the Académie des Beaux-Arts and later served as president of that august body.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the official honors bestowed upon the reclusive artist, Moreau's philosophy and paintings became models for the Symbolist movement which was in full flower by the mid-1880s.

Joris-Karl Huysmans, a Symbolist writer, praised Moreau's art in his novel A Rebours (Against the Grain) which was published in 1884. For Huysmans, both his novel and

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 55.



Moreau's art represented "an escape from the intolerable vulgarity and materialism of the contemporary world . . . into 'the tumultuous spaces of nightmares and dreams'."<sup>1</sup> Throughout A Rebours Huysmans made continual references to the delightful qualities of Moreau's art through his main character, the Duc des Esseintes.<sup>2</sup> The Duc was a French aristocrat who had withdrawn from the coarseness of society in order to pursue his artistic interests without the limitations of convention.<sup>3</sup> Huysmans' character epitomized the privileged aesthete who was able to transcend the common elements in life through contemplation.

Huysmans obviously admired Moreau's philosophy of life as well as his art. Although it is not known what prompted Moreau to withdraw himself from the official art world after 1880, there were many similarities between his seclusion and that of the Duc des Esseintes in A Rebours. The Duc des Essientes rejected reality and the present, and this Symbolist characteristic was expressed in Moreau's thoughts.<sup>4</sup> The only obvious difference between the two was

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<sup>1</sup>Jeffrey Meyers, "Huysmans and Gustave Moreau," Apollo 99 (January 1974) 39.

<sup>2</sup>Linda Nochlin, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism 1874-1904 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), pp. 201-203.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Dore Ashton, "Symbolist Legacy - I," Arts and Architecture 81 (September 1964) 37.

Moreau's spiritual rejection of physical desire.<sup>1</sup> Moreau may possibly have been one model for Huysmans' main character, since his secluded life style exemplified Huysman's Symbolistic ideal.

The Symbolists of the fin de siècle in France were intellectual pessimists. Their dreams and their accompanying despair occurred repeatedly in Moreau's writings and his art.<sup>2</sup> However, when one delves deeper into Moreau's art, certain characteristics appear which are inconsistent with the total Symbolist ideal. Moreau, who was "a pillar of the Establishment of his day",<sup>3</sup> hinted at carnality in his works but it was never consummated in sensual fulfillment. The violent movement which traditionally accompanied Symbolist sensuality became only poetic gesture in Moreau's art.<sup>4</sup> Moreau's art and his life style deviated enough from the symbolist ideal for them to be considered anything more than a model for the movement.

Moreau was too eclectic in both his personal and art preferences to be labeled a leader of any movement or school

<sup>1</sup>Georges Duthuit, "Vuillard and the Poets of Decadence," Art News 53 (March 1954) 30.

<sup>2</sup>Phillippe Jullian, Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of the 1890's (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>"Romantic St. George," Country Life (December 23, 1976) 1899.

<sup>4</sup>Ironside, p. 176.

of thought. However, he was continually linked with the Symbolists. In 1886 when the Galerie Goupil exhibited over sixty watercolors which Moreau had executed as illustrations for Antoni Roux's edition of La Fontaine's Fables, the art critic Fourcauld said, "I accept his paintings because they are great and because I recognize in them the anxious uneasiness of the present time."<sup>1</sup> Although Moreau disclaimed any link with literary Symbolism, the younger generation of artists found inspiration in his art.<sup>2</sup> Again, Huysmans praised Moreau's art in his book Certains published in 1889.<sup>3</sup> Moreau's art was never able to escape identification with the Symbolist movement.

Moreau was never a true Symbolist. When his approach is compared with those of Symbolist artists like Odilon Redon and Puvis de Chavannes, Moreau is seen as unique. All Symbolists synthesized mythological and religious subject matter into personal statements, but Moreau's originality lay in his . . . "additive method, [which meant] accumulating the various details into one large statement rather than creating essential symbolic statements through simplification."<sup>4</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup>Ragnar von Holten, "Gustave Moreau: Illustrateur de La Fontaine," L'Oeil 115-116 (July-August 1964) 27.

<sup>2</sup>John Rewald, Post-Impressionism: From Van Gogh to Gauguin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962), p. 163.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>4</sup>Julius Kaplan, "Gustave Moreau's Jupiter and Semele," Art Quarterly 4 (Winter 1970) 403.

a comparison of Moreau's method with that of Hans von Marées, one of his Symbolist contemporaries, Gert Schiff says, "Instead of reducing . . . a mythological incident to a level of general human validity, Moreau . . . multiplies the possible references at the expense of the intelligibility of his meaning."<sup>1</sup> Moreau's meaning, whether obvious or vague to the viewer, came from Symbolist sources which he combined with a love for color and rich detail.

The culmination of Moreau's effort was Jupiter and Semele. It was the last large finished painting in which Moreau synthesized his early linear detailing with a new painterly technique.<sup>2</sup> Jupiter and Semele also represented a new approach to content: the meaning of the painting dealt with the destructiveness of female sensuality, as in earlier works, but each particular element contributed to the content of the whole; the content of the work depended upon the combined meaning of specific details, which in earlier works could have been subjects for separate paintings.<sup>3</sup> Moreau's secluded experiments had resulted in the full flowering of his expressive maturity.

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<sup>1</sup>Gert Schiff, "Hans von Marées and his Place in Modern Painting," Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin 33 (October 1972) 96.

<sup>2</sup>Julius Kaplan, "Gustave Moreau's Jupiter and Semele," p. 393.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 394.

It was during the 1880s that Moreau refined his themes. His interests in the duality of feminine nature continued, and he also became intrigued with the investigation of Biblical and Oriental subject matter. His maturity resulted in an amalgamation of all of these subjects into a very personal expressive unit. His earlier images had merely presented man's transcendental approach toward dilemmas, but his unified themes presented conclusive solutions to life's problems.<sup>1</sup> Moreau had found solace and balance in a life devoted to the perfection of his art. Consequently, the will of reason triumphed over the dilemmas which were inherent in his dualistic themes.

Woman, the dominant theme of Moreau's works of the 1880s, was always presented as beautiful but destructive. That duality of Moreau's vision of the female nature raises interesting questions concerning his attitudes toward sexuality. Moreau's uncharitable attitude toward females in his art has led some of his biographers to surmise that he was a latent homosexual.<sup>2</sup> That charge was refuted by those closest to Moreau and recent evidence supports their testimonies of Moreau's heterosexuality.<sup>3</sup> According to Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Moreau had intimate relationships with three

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<sup>1</sup>Julius Kaplan, Gustave Moreau, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>For further information, see: Paladihle and Pierre, Gustave Moreau, p. 118; Mathieu, Gustave Moreau, pp. 165-167; Kaplan, Gustave Moreau, p. 7; Meyers, "Huysmans and Gustave Moreau", pp. 39-43.

<sup>3</sup>Julius Kaplan, "Reevaluating Gustave Moreau," p. 90.

women during his life. In his youth Moreau experienced two failures with love: he fell deeply in love with a married woman but, to forget her, he left for Italy in 1857; another affair in 1860 with a woman named Laure ended when she married another man.<sup>1</sup> The longest relationship Moreau had with any woman lasted for twenty-five years with a lady named Adélaïde-Alexandrine Dureux. She lived in an apartment, provided by Moreau, which was near his home and their relationship was known only to his closest friends.<sup>2</sup> Why they never married is not known, but the answer may lie in Moreau's belief that "marriage destroys the artist."<sup>3</sup> However, the truth about Moreau's sexual preference is irrelevant, for he was first an artist.

Moreau's art, as well as his personal life continued to be well-kept secrets. Moreau disliked his imitators<sup>4</sup> and made every effort to keep his works from the general public after 1880. Even when Moreau taught at the École des Beaux-Arts, he took precautions to keep his students from imitating his style. It became his custom to receive students in his home on Sunday afternoons, but none of them actually saw his works until after his death in 1898. In 1895 Moreau had

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<sup>1</sup>Pierre-Louis Mathieu, "Gustave Moreau Amoureux," L'Oeil 224 (March 1974) 31.

<sup>2</sup>Mathieu, Gustave Moreau, p. 163.

<sup>3</sup>Mathieu, "Gustave Moreau Amoureux," p. 31.

<sup>4</sup>Jullian, p. 189.

remodeled his home from two to four stories in order to create a museum which was later (1902) accepted by the state as the Musée Gustave Moreau.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that Moreau was concerned with preserving his art for posterity, but his penchant for secrecy in all important matters contributed to the elusive quality in both his life and his work. The most revealing recollections of Moreau the artist and Moreau the man come from his intimate friends and his students at the École des Beaux-Arts.

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<sup>1</sup>Kaplan, Gustave Moreau, p. 10.

## CHAPTER III

### MOREAU THE TEACHER

Although Moreau did not begin his teaching career until the age of sixty-six, it was his most successful occupation. His entire life had been excellent preparation for that task. Moreau's personal dedication to art constituted a lifelong pursuit which was actualized in each learning environment he inhabited. From a very early age he was consumed by the desire to be an artist. With the sanction of his wealthy parents, Moreau began his art education in the Collège Rollin at the age of nine. His formal training was continued at the École des Beaux-Arts where he was first admitted to the studio of Picot (master of Cabanel and Bouguereau) in 1846 and then to the studio of Chassériau in 1848. Two unsuccessful attempts at the Prix de Rome and the death of Chassériau caused Moreau to leave for Italy in 1857 where he immediately became enchanted with the works of the early Renaissance masters. While studying at the Villa Médicis in Rome, Moreau unwittingly displayed his interest



in teaching others through his friendship with Edgar Degas.<sup>1</sup> The Italian trip was highly influential in the development of Moreau's mature style which was officially recognized in the Salon of 1864 when he won a medal and received great acclaim for his Oedipus and the Sphinx. From that point on, Moreau achieved many official rewards: in 1875 he was appointed a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and then became an Officer in 1883; he was elected a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in 1888 and, in 1892, he became a professor at the École des Beaux-Arts where he attracted many students. Even though his teaching career lasted a short five years (1892-1897), Moreau was recognized at the time of his death in 1898 as a much more important artistic influence than artist.<sup>2</sup> L.E. Rowe states that through Moreau's teaching, ". . . discerning artists like Degas and others realized the gifts he had contributed to French art."<sup>3</sup> The core of Moreau's teaching lies in his philosophy and method which he passed on to many students at the École des Beaux-Arts.

When Moreau's art is compared with that of contemporary academicians, a first inspection yields little evidence

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<sup>1</sup>Phoebe Pool, "Degas and Moreau," Burlington Magazine 105 (June, 1963) 251-256.

<sup>2</sup>Mahonri Sharp Young, "Moreau on the West Coast," Apollo 100 (December, 1974) 525.

<sup>3</sup>L.E. Rowe, "A Water-Color by Gustave Moreau," Rhode Island School of Design Bulletin 23 (April, 1935) 36.

of originality and liberal thought. Moreau's subject matter is historical and his painting style displays a penchant for the decorative as seen in many works by nineteenth century academicians. It is not until one becomes aware of Moreau's personal visions that his originality begins to surface. His aims were seeded in a fertile imagination which he expressed in personal thoughts:

O noble poetry of living and passionate silence! Beautiful is that art which under a material envelope, mirror of physical beauties, equally reflect the great transports of the soul, the spirit, the heart, and the imagination, and replies to those divine needs of the human being of every age. It is the language of God! A day will come when the eloquence of this mute art will be understood; it is this very eloquence, whose character, nature, and power over the spirit have not been able to be defined, to which I have given all my care and efforts; the evocation of thought by line, arabesque, and plastic means, that is my aim.<sup>1</sup>

Below the surface of Moreau's art, is to be seen a very personal world bursting with expressive desire. It was this deep need for personal expression that so strongly influenced Moreau's most individualistic students.

Moreau was very much against an art of the commonplace, which he considered much contemporary academic art to be, and he felt that a deplorable situation would arise ". . . if this marvelous art that is capable of expressing so many things, so many noble, ingenious, profound and sublime thoughts,

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph C. Sloane, French Painting Between the Past and the Present: Artists, Critics, and Traditions, From 1848 to 1870 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 174.

should be reduced to photographic translations or paraphrases of common events."<sup>1</sup> Moreau further substantiated this point by saying, "Photographic truth is merely a source of information."<sup>2</sup> Fleeing from the vulgarity of the ordinary, Moreau created an eclectic collection of exotic and even bizarre symbols which he felt to be the most perfect vehicles for his self-expression. While none of his students imitated the exterior appearance of his art, Moreau's insistence upon personal imagination was to become the backbone of modern aesthetics for his avant-garde students.

When Moreau was elected by the professors of the École des Beaux-Arts to succeed Elie Delaunay, a personal friend of his who had just died, little was known of Moreau's philosophy. Since Moreau had never before been employed as a teacher, his colleagues knew even less of his teaching method. Instead of the aloof academician who controlled his studio in a dictatorial manner, Moreau presented himself to both colleagues and students as a "benevolent rival."<sup>3</sup> Moreau's fellow academicians must have been sorely disappointed in his refusal to establish an impenetrable facade to his students, and further disbelief would have been expressed by

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Paladilhe and José Pierre, Gustave Moreau (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup>Linda Nochlin, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism 1874-1904 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 199.

<sup>3</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 146.

Moreau's colleagues if they had been in his studio and observed his liberal teaching methods. Alfred Barr feels that Moreau's unstructured method can be seen in Matisse's impression of his master: Matisse received much encouragement and little criticism from Moreau, who refused to impose his own style upon his students; unlike the other academicians, Moreau did not insist upon academic drawing technique, and he never criticized a figure painting on the grounds of imperfect drawing; Moreau never discouraged personal opinion in his students since his own aim was originality; he enthusiastically encouraged his students to copy the old masters in the Louvre and simultaneously suggested that they sketch in the streets.<sup>1</sup> While they felt less admiration for his art, independent students like Matisse and Rouault greatly admired Moreau as a teacher.

Even though Moreau was never caught up in the Realist-Impressionist controversy that raged in some art circles from the 1860s through the 1880s, he did unwittingly pass on to his students one of the most important doctrines of the Impressionists--that of pure painting. The pure painting theory, which was later to become the basic doctrine supporting the structure of most avant-garde movements, subordinated the importance of subject matter to the importance of painting technique. The expressive elements of a painting (such as color, line, shape, value, and texture) were becoming the

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Matisse: His Art and His Public (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1951), p. 15.

most important components of a work with the subject matter serving only as a vehicle for expression. For the time, Moreau was expressing extremist views to his students when he raised such questions as "What does nature matter? It is only a pretext for the artist to express himself. Art is an endless pursuit of the right form to express our inner feeling."<sup>1</sup> When encouraging his students to avoid imitation in favor of expressive properties, Moreau heavily emphasized the creative use of color. Moreau's realization of the fundamental function of color is very apparent in such statements as:

Just as a dream has its own special atmosphere, so a conception, realized in a painting, should exist in a world of colour that is peculiar to it. Obviously, a particular tone used for one part of the painting will be predominant and modify the others. . . . All the figures, their relation to each other, the landscape or interior acting as their background or horizon, their clothes, everything in short should add to the general idea and wear its original colour, its livery so to speak.<sup>2</sup>

For Matisse, the future leader of the Fauves, Moreau's color philosophy had such a profound effect that it was to become the primary force behind that modern painter's entire development.

When one is aware of Moreau's emphasis on expressive originality, a study of his painting method seems a direct

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<sup>1</sup>Jean-Paul Crespelle, The Fauves (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1962), p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 158.

contradiction to his painting theory. His carefully composed literary subjects emerged slowly from canvases that sometimes sat on their easels for years in order to be meticulously reworked. Moreau only allowed spontaneity in his preliminary monochromatic sketch and his later painted oil sketch.<sup>1</sup>

Moreau's art method was thoroughly examined by Pierre-Louis Mathieu in a step-by-step process. The initial phase began with a series of archetypal images which Moreau recorded in impromptu ink or Conté crayon sketches with eclectic borrowings from the old masters. Following the working method of Ingres, Moreau then used the preliminary studies to compose the initial design in which the main lines were arranged within a traditional compositional framework, such as an isosceles triangle. The third step, which involved a technique that he had learned as a student at the École des Beaux-Arts, was a documentary study composed of carefully-rendered anatomical drawings made from a live model whose poses and gestures were arranged to coincide with those of the classical figures to be painted; that phase, known as squaring the design, led to a monochromatic cartoon of the work to which he added his eclectic details and atmospheric effects in exaggerated chiaroscuro. Moreau then progressed to the watercolor and oil sketches which established his color harmonies; he used these unregulated sketches as the

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<sup>1</sup>Julius Kaplan, "Gustave Moreau's Jupiter and Semele," Art Quarterly 4 (Winter, 1970) 394.

models for the final painting. He began the final work on canvas by creating a glazed underpainting and then adding decorative detail which was executed in impasto by using a brush, or a palette knife, or by simply squeezing the pigment directly from the tubes onto the surface.<sup>1</sup> By the time Moreau reached the final painting stage, his design had been so carefully studied, and his paint so meticulously worked, that the freshness of the early color sketches was conspicuously absent.

Although the dutifully-finished work was the hallmark of academic painting, that was an aspect of Moreau's art which he never imposed upon his self-reliant students. While other academicians cited their own works as examples of excellence for students to follow, Moreau kept his working methods relatively secret in order to encourage honesty in his student's technical practices. According to accounts by Georges Rouault and Henri Evenepoel, two of Moreau's unconventional students, the master encouraged automatism in their preliminary work with special emphasis on the painting elements rather than the details.<sup>2</sup> Much of the instruction they received from Moreau at the École des Beaux-Arts was later applied to their mature works. That was particularly

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<sup>1</sup>Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau (Boston: Massachusetts: New York Graphic Society, 1976) pp. 192-203.

<sup>2</sup>Albert Boime, "Georges Rouault and the Academic Curriculum," Art Journal 29 (Fall, 1969) pp. 36-37.

true in the case of Rouault (Evenepoel died shortly after completing his formal training), whose sketch competitions and exercises at the École provided a solid base for building his fully-developed style; Rouault later displayed his indebtedness to his academic education by applying for admission to the Academy.<sup>1</sup>

Moreau's wide-ranging influence on his students can be understood better when one views him from the standpoint of his methodology as a teacher rather than as an artist. In the latest monograph on Moreau, Mathieu described Moreau's pedagogy in contrast to that of some of his famous academic colleagues such as Gérôme, Bonnat, Bouguereau: Moreau took ". . . every chance to instruct his students . . . [and] always gave a kindly welcome to any student who came to him with his work and asked advice."<sup>2</sup> Unlike his foreboding colleagues who maintained a guarded aloofness with students, Moreau always encouraged an intimacy with his students in both the École and in his home. On Sundays Moreau's students customarily brought their works to Moreau's home where the master made himself available for personal consultations. By shunning the typical academic formula for making art, Moreau encouraged his pupils to develop their own aesthetic codes. He hoped to facilitate that development through

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-39.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 58.



intelligent criticism and a positive attitude. While resisting the temptation to correct a student's work with his own hand, Moreau exposed the weak points and exclaimed over the strong points. His entire philosophy of teaching had grown from an unwavering respect for individual freedom which included the right to personal choice with a cautious avoidance of current fashion in the arts. In order to allow his students that freedom, Moreau remained stylistically anonymous and avoided showing preference for one student over another. While other academicians demanded that their students copy in the Louvre on their own time, Moreau was the only professor among them who personally took his students to the museum for an extensive study of the techniques and practices of the old masters. For material sources for their art, Moreau suggested that his students study nature and then interpret it objectively.<sup>1</sup>

The lessons they learned in the Louvre became the basis for the future practice of Moreau's avant-garde students who ". . . all agreed to the importance of color as a vehicle of personal expression."<sup>2</sup> Contrary to what was taught by Gérôme, Bonnat, and Bouguereau, Moreau encouraged students to be guided by their sensibilities and to paint with their hearts. Moreau favored the use of

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, pp. 212-224.

<sup>2</sup>Frank Anderson Trapp, "Atelier Gustave Moreau," Art Journal 22 (Winter, 1962-1963) p. 94.

imagination in his students' stylistic development when he advised them:

Work simply and keep away from a smooth, slick execution. The modern tendency is all for simplicity of means and complication of expression. . . . Copy the austerity of the early masters and see only that! In art from now on, as the still vague education of the masses is carried further little by little, there is no longer any need for finish or a carefully smoothed style, no more than in literature shall we care for rhetoric and well-rounded periods. . . . So that the art to come, which has already condemned the methods of Bouguereau and others, will ask of us no more than indications and sketches, but also the infinite variety of many different impressions. One will still be able to finish the picture, but without seeming to do so.<sup>1</sup>

What an amazingly modern stylistic awareness and approach to art for a painter whose own works were steeped in the techniques of the old masters and the long tradition of history painting. In spite of Moreau's personal artistic preferences, he was deeply concerned for the future of art and the part his students would contribute to its evolution.

Moreau's success as a teacher was derived from inspiration, as opposed to dictation; he impressed upon his students a need for personal expression which he believed to be the sole aim of a true artist.<sup>2</sup> But Moreau was also aware of the heterogeneity of the pupils in his studio at the École des Beaux-Arts, and he wanted to provide inspiration for each student. The more traditional students who planned to make an academic career of art were interspersed with

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>Paladilhe and Pierre, p. 57.

those of a more self-reliant nature, and Moreau achieved some success in fulfilling the needs of all his students. The academic students saw Moreau as a guide after whom they could pattern their own careers, and the avant-garde pupils saw a free spirit whose liberal ideas reflected many of their own.<sup>1</sup> When Moreau died of stomach cancer on April 18, 1898, an attempt was made by the directors of the École to find a satisfactory replacement. After several teachers had tried to reinstate typical academic practices into Moreau's former studio, the uninhibited students left in protest; Moreau had created several rebels, such as Matisse and Rouault, whose future works would exemplify the unique and authentic in the world of art.

Aside from Jacques Louis David, Gustave Moreau is credited with training more painters than any other nineteenth century teacher. Moreau trained painters in both an official and an unofficial capacity. Mathieu mentions some of the better known artists who studied under Moreau in various capacities. From 1892 to 1898 there were 125 students listed on Moreau's official enrollment sheets at the École des Beaux-Arts. Among the best known were Georges Rouault, Léon Bonhomme, Edouard Maxence, Raoul du Gardier, Réne Piot, Antoine Bourbon, Arthur Guéniot, and Eugène Martel, all of whom Moreau met when he took over the studio of Elie

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<sup>1</sup>Crespelle, pp. 49-50.

Delaunay on January 1, 1892. Moreau's reputation as a liberal teacher soon brought him such students as Jules Flandrin, Charles Guérin, Albert Marquet, Paul Baignères, Henri Evenepoel, and Léon Lehmann. Of the unofficial students whom Moreau admitted to his studio, the most noteworthy were Henri Manguin and Henri Matisse.<sup>1</sup> While the works of these last two artists have withstood the test of time more gracefully than those of others, the list of Moreau's pupils nevertheless constitutes very impressive evidence of his abilities to inspire diverse and natural talents.

The durability of Moreau's influence on his students, whether famous or obscure, was attested to years later (as Mathieu points out) when ". . . all of them acknowledged . . . that in Moreau they had had an outstanding teacher."<sup>2</sup> The majority of Moreau's students retained his emphasis upon the pure painting philosophy, as seen in the refined works of artists such as Rouault, Evenepoel, and Matisse.<sup>3</sup> And on a more individual basis, other influences were remembered: aside from the jewel-like color and a fascination for the art of the old masters inspired by Moreau, Rouault remembered Moreau advising him not to compete for the Prix de Rome at the École if the rules of the competition ruined his chance for personal expression; Matisse, too, remembered Moreau's

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, pp. 211-212.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 234.

emphasis on imaginative technique as well as his master's prediction that he (Matisse) would ultimately "simplify painting."<sup>1</sup> Collectively, Moreau's students traced their early development back to their benevolent teacher with only disregard for the practices of the other academicians who figured in their artistic training.

Though Moreau served as a major influence on his many pupils, there were some aspects of his art philosophy and style which they rejected. The sublime mood of Moreau's works which has been described as "beautiful inertia . . . [and which has been explained as a type of] psychological suspension,"<sup>2</sup> was often rejected by his self-motivated students. Moreau's painting technique with its fine surface texture was also scorned by his unconventional students who believed ". . . that a painter should employ painterly methods and not those of . . . [an] enamelist to obtain his surface texture."<sup>3</sup> Moreau's orientalism and its accompanying richness of detail was ignored by all of his students except for Matisse whose attraction to the exotic is evidenced in his works of the 1920s and the 1930s showing Turkish themes. Although Moreau's orientalism was utilized for a purpose

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Leymarie, Fauvism (Paris: Skira Publisher, 1959) p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Trapp, p. 94.

<sup>3</sup>François Fosca, French Painting: Nineteenth Century Painters, 1800-1870 (New York: Universe Books, Inc., 1960), p. 102.

different from that of Matisse, the master nonetheless influenced the themes of his pupil. Moreau also followed the academic tendency to fit form into a preconceived ideal which was obvious when he said to his figure drawing students: "Do your drawing and make the model fit into it."<sup>1</sup> Moreau advised his students to follow the ideal classical forms found in museums, rather than forms as they exist in nature. However, in spite of those features which his students rejected, Moreau's imaginative qualities achieved through flowing arabesques of linear pattern and a glowing palette found their way in one form or another into the works of his most avid pupils.

Moreau's encouragement of suggestive qualities was not always condoned by his colleagues at the École des Beaux-Arts. Since he preferred to take his students into museums for technical and compositional study, rather than merely follow the academic methods of drawing from plaster casts in the studio, many of Moreau's fellow academicians at the École ". . . regarded him as a heretic, and recriminations were frequent and prolonged."<sup>2</sup> Moreau's art and ideals sometimes caused public derision also, since his primary aim was to stimulate thought rather than to narrate a story. Viewed in academic terms of a preference for history painting and saccharine renditions of genre subjects, Moreau's art

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup>Crespelle, p. 51.

appeared revolutionary. What is even less understandable is the derision that Moreau's art and philosophy sparked in professional art circles. While the Symbolist painter Odilon Redon was inspired by Moreau's early works and the literary Symbolist Joris-Karl Huysmans celebrated Moreau's work in his novel A Rebours, other associates of progressive art circles made scathing comments about Moreau's approach to personal expression: "Degas said of Moreau, 'He wants to make us believe that the gods wore watch chains!'" and Gauguin: 'Of every human being he makes a piece of jewelry covered with jewelry.'"<sup>1</sup> In spite of misunderstandings and acid recriminations concerning Moreau's teaching methodology, his art, and his philosophy, he held fast to his beliefs throughout his life in the hope that he might inspire a few young artists to likewise discover their own form of personal expression.

Moreau did create originality within the academic tradition. While his classical and religious subject matter fit within the prescribed framework of the traditional nineteenth-century history painter, he infused it with ". . . an elusive inwardness which imparts a mysterious and provocative effect to certain of his pictures, an effect obtained partly by expression and use of detail, and partly by color and light effects."<sup>2</sup> Moreau's conceptions, unlike

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<sup>1</sup>John Simon, "Torments of Imagination," Arts 36 (February, 1962) p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Sloane, p. 130.

those of enthusiastically received artists such as Bouguereau, were ". . . too personal and introspective to give rise to movement."<sup>1</sup> However, the basic precepts of Moreau's philosophy did influence some young artists to seek their own internal vision. Fortunately, Moreau ". . . understood perfectly that his teaching should consist less in transmitting a style and academic skill than in allowing his pupils to be guided by their own temperament."<sup>2</sup> And this was the secret of Moreau's true success as a teacher. His teaching method was designed around the quest for originality. His practice of acting as mentor rather than autocrat, his advice to experience art wherever it may be found, and the open-mindedness with which he received his pupils' innovations, were calculated to fertilize the mind rather than stunt its growth. Moreau's more industrious pupils, such as Matisse and Rouault, might have become the famous artists they were without the benefit of Moreau's tutelage, but it is undeniable that Moreau was entirely responsible for providing fertile ground for the individual ideas these artists conceived as young men within the academic tradition.

Moreau, like Viollet-le-Duc and Lecoq de Boisbaudran, was typical of the independent academician. These independent masters dedicated themselves to their tasks with an eye

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, p. 260.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 240.



toward improvement and they now offer an interesting contrast to their more staid colleagues. A comparison of the philosophies and methodologies of the traditional academician with those of the independent academician, gives a deep insight into the complexities of the French pedagogical system of the last few decades of the nineteenth century.

William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825-1905) was the epitome of the traditional academician of the École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julian. Bouguereau was one of the most decorated and honored artist-academicians of the late-nineteenth century: after four years of study at the École des Beaux-Arts, he won the Prix de Rome in 1850; in 1855 he was awarded the Second Class Medal at the Exposition Universelle and received the First Class Medal in 1857; his appointment as Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in 1859 was followed by his election as an Officer in 1876 and a Commander in 1885; he was also elected as a member of the Institut de France in 1876 and later became president of the Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers. In 1878 when Bouguereau was only fifty-three years old he won the Grand Medal of Honor, the highest official award offered at that time. He was a Salon exhibitor for fifty years of his life and functioned as a professor at the École des Beaux-Arts for over twenty-five years.<sup>1</sup> One of the most popular

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<sup>1</sup>Jules Langsner, "Bouguereau Revived," Art News 55 (March, 1956) 15.

painters of his day, Bouguereau became a household word for the bourgeoisie who flocked to purchase the works of the most noted artists of the Academy and Salon. Not only was the purchase of a work by Bouguereau considered a mark of connoisseurship, it also fulfilled the desire of the bourgeoisie for art which illustrated the moral standards of the day within a narrative framework. Bouguereau's themes, his style, and his official honors became his ticket to complete success.

In a confusing age when Darwin and Marx were challenging existing religious and political views, Bouguereau offered the public reassurance through a traditional type of subject matter executed with a highly-polished painting technique heralding back to the Renaissance masters. His presentations of peasants and animals were "so idealized by allusions to old-master paintings of classical and Christian subjects"<sup>1</sup> that they offered artistic solace to those whose religious ideals were being challenged. These same paintings also reaffirmed the bourgeois notion that each level in a class-structured society offered its citizens a stable existence that would never be successfully challenged in the political arena. For those who were less concerned with political and religious questions Bouguereau offered beauty

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Rosenblum, "The 19th Century Franc Revalued," Art News 68 (Summer, 1969) 58.

and sensuality in lush paintings of "titillating nudes with classical titles"<sup>1</sup> reminiscent of works by Boucher and Fragonard in the eighteenth century. These subjects and their traditional approach exemplified the typical Salon paintings of the era and Bouguereau knew his market well.

All during his career, Bouguereau was sensitive to public sentiment. As early as 1855 when he was still an aspiring young artist, Bouguereau observed that all honors of officialdom were going to artistic followers of Ingres who emphasized linearism and lyricism in favor of expressive color and harsh realism. Consequently, his color was anemic and thinly applied to acceptable subjects with accentuated contours. At that same time, Bouguereau realized that the intellectual history paintings of his early youth were considered unfashionable by the newly-risen bourgeois art patron who preferred saccharine genre subjects with shallow narrative.<sup>2</sup> It was for this group of patrons that he produced his peasants, nudes, and religious subjects.

In view of his private life, some ironies can be found when one examines Bouguereau's own ideals in contrast with those narrated in his art. Before he won first prize for figure painting at the École des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux, Bouguereau dutifully worked in his father's olive-oil

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<sup>1</sup>Linda Nochlin, Realism and Tradition in Art 1848-1900 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Alfred Werner, "The Return of Monsieur Bouguereau," Art and Artists 9 (March, 1975) 28.

business. With that official encouragement for following an art career, Bouguereau disdainfully renounced the life of a bourgeois merchant to become ". . . a manufacturer of pictures."<sup>1</sup> Both he and his religious parents avoided any hint of lewdness in their private lives and yet Bouguereau painted erotic nudes. Only one breath of sensuality entered his personal life, and it was long-stifled by conventional attitudes. After the death of his first wife, Bouguereau settled into respectable bachelorhood, with his widowed mother serving as housekeeper to him and nursemaid to his two young children. Even after the children grew up and left home, Bouguereau's mother remained to see that his life was occupied only by work. Fortunately for him, he later fell in love with Elizabeth Gardner who had entered the Académie Julian disguised as a male student. Females were not as yet permitted on the premises, but Elizabeth was determined to learn painting. In light of his mother's protests against his marrying an American, Bouguereau and Elizabeth submerged their feelings and continued their relationship in secret for the next twenty years. It was only after his mother's death in 1896 that Bouguereau (aged seventy-one) and Elizabeth (aged fifty-six) were able to legalize their union.<sup>2</sup> Except for this one relationship, Bouguereau's life was marked by hard work and propriety.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

For his bourgeois market, the staid Bouguereau created socially-acceptable erotica, but erotica nevertheless. The subtly-sensual female figures in his paintings are often

. . . slyly indecent in their movements . . . and even a fully clothed woman might become disarranged, part of the dress slipping from one shoulder, cleverly exposing a breast . . . [while the nude figures] are always turning their unfashionably full-fleshed, wide-gauge bottoms to the observer for admiration.<sup>1</sup>

The wealthy French businessman was guaranteed prestige, admiration, and excitation in his careful purchase of the elaborately-framed Bouguereaus found in the Salon. The effect was calculated and even Bouguereau himself was aware of his deception when he said: "I soon found that the horrible, the frenzied, the heroic does not pay; and as the public of today prefers Venuses and Cupids and as I paint to please the public, to Venus and Cupid I chiefly devote myself."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this somewhat explains the irony to be found in his work. Bouguereau may have been born with the soul of an artist, but he developed the mind of a businessman very early in his career.

While Bouguereau's righteousness may have been absent from many of his themes, it was present in his painting technique. He was a superb craftsman who labored to create slick surfaces ". . . devoid of texture and meticulously executed."<sup>3</sup> The formal qualities in his works

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"William-Adolphe Bouguereau in Paris," Burlington Magazine 108 (February, 1966) 109.

are also apparent when one notices the rhythmic contours of his figures and the skill with which he rendered subtle value contrasts to create modeling on his forms.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the carefully-posed artificiality in Bouguereau's work, ". . . the verdict is more positive than negative: [as John Canaday said], if Bouguereau was not a great artist, he was at least a great academician."<sup>2</sup> And the French Academy of Art and the École des Beaux-Arts recognized this quality by showering Bouguereau with prestigious awards as an artist and a teacher.

Bouguereau was also considered to be a great teacher and a model artist by many of his students at the École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julian. For the most part, the admirable reports of his abilities came from students who were content to work within the academic framework under the scrutiny of dictatorial professors. Bouguereau's teaching methodology was typical of that of most of his academic colleagues, especially when it came to his attitude toward the positive value of reproducing the old masters. Bouguereau transferred that value to many students who later became teachers. In that regard, a former pupil of Bouguereau later taught his own pupils:

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<sup>1</sup>Phyllis Derfner, "New York Cultural Center: Exhibition," Art International 19 (March, 1975) 36.

<sup>2</sup>Werner, p. 25.

Not only to see to it that the same subtleties of perception and representation found in an old master painting are preserved in your copy, but that they are attained in the same way. Use the same brushwork or execution. Use the same pigments in the same places, with the same vehicles . . . try to see not only how the painter did a certain thing but why. So that as you work, you follow him in the working out of his problem, and make it your problem also.<sup>1</sup>

Most of Bouguereau's students docilely followed his advice as if he were the ultimate authority in art matters, but there were a few who resented him as an artist as well as a teacher. Nowhere are there more vivid accounts of the animosity Bouguereau sometimes created than in the recollections of Henri Matisse and his experience in Bouguereau's studio. Early in October, 1891, on the advice of the painter Paul-Louis Couturier, Matisse enrolled in the private atelier of Bouguereau and Gabriel Ferrier at the Académie Julian. But Matisse was disappointed in his choice from the first day when he found Bouguereau methodically copying one of his own academic works. In spite of his first impression, Matisse thought he might still learn something, so he settled in to his lessons. However, his work was soon severely criticized when Bouguereau said to him:

You rub your charcoal with your finger. That shows carelessness. . . . Draw the casts on the wall of the atelier. Show your work to an old pupil, he will advise you. . . . You badly need to learn perspective.

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century (London: Phaidon Publishers, Inc., 1971), p. 125.

But you must find out first of all how to hold your pencil. You will never know how to draw.<sup>1</sup>

After this tirade against his work, Matisse hoped for some constructive criticism from Ferrier who alternated with Bouguereau every other month as a teacher at the atelier. At first, Ferrier admired Matisse's charcoal sketches of plaster casts and he prompted Matisse to draw from the live model. Matisse had finished the head and part of the hand when Ferrier came around to inspect, but, out of embarrassment for the poor quality of the head, he rubbed out part of the drawing. When Ferrier saw it, he told Matisse his work was hideous and he could never finish it in time.<sup>2</sup> Matisse was so discouraged that he left the Académie Julian before the middle of the month. He was unaware of it at the time, but he was following the examples of Maurice Denis, Pierre Bonnard, and Edouard Vuillard, all avant-garde artists who would also make names for themselves in the future.

On October 24, 1885, Bouguereau delivered a speech before the Institut de France in which he defended the conservative pedagogy which was then being challenged at the École des Beaux-Arts. Along with upholding the Renaissance tradition and Ingres' teaching method and neoclassic technique, he had the following to say about French art education:

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond Escholier, Matisse: A Portrait of the Artist and the Man (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1960), p. 27.

<sup>2</sup>Barr, pp. 14-15.



The first organization of the Institute was distinguished by a prudent separation of its instruction into different academies, and by subdivisions within each academy--a method wise in its conception. . . . It was, therefore, not without regret that I saw the Ecole des Beaux-Arts react against this necessity of our era; it wants to emancipate itself from what some consider the narrow prejudices of our forerunner, and, believing that the initial differences in the study of painting, sculpture, or architecture are not enough when taken singly, it requires of its candidates examinations in all three arts at once, complicating the competition still further with examinations in history. . . . I believe that theory should not intervene in such a tyrannical manner in the elementary education of artists. . . . As soon as our pupils know how to draw and to make use of the concrete procedures of their art. . . . they will feel the need to undertake the special studies their work demands, and they will pursue them with greater profit. One can always acquire the accessory knowledge that goes along with the production of a work of art, but never--and I insist on this point--can will, perseverance, or obstinacy in one's mature years make up for lack of practice. . . . Whoever wants to learn everything from the beginning will remain a pupil all his life; he will undoubtedly become very learned, but he will never attain the goal of his art, which is to produce. . . .<sup>1</sup>

With never an eye toward innovation, formidable academicians such as Bouguereau discouraged many a young promising artist.

Fortunately, for the future of art, some of the avant-garde students of the period found educational alternatives. Moreau's studio was one of these alternatives. A great contrast between ideologies can be found in a comparison of the pedagogy of Moreau with that of Bouguereau. The difference in approach is nowhere more apparent than in recollections made by pupils who studied under both masters. The following comments were the results of an interview Henri Matisse

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves, ed., Artists on Art (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), pp. 278-288.

allowed Jacques Guenne in 1925; in speaking of his student days, first with Bouguereau and then with Moreau, Matisse said:

One of my acquaintances, a friend of Bouguereau, advised me to come to Paris and take lessons from a painter who had acquired such great notoriety at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. I used to go to the atelier of Bouguereau. The master taught relief in twenty lessons, the art of giving the human body noble academic bearing and the best way to scumble the depths. He contemplated my easel, 'You need to learn perspective,' he said. 'Erasure should be done with a good clean rag, or better yet, with a piece of amadou. You should seek advice from an older student.' Another time he reproached me more crossly for 'not knowing how to draw.' Tired of faithfully reproducing the contours of plaster casts, I went to Gabriel Ferrier [Bouguereau's colleague at the Academie Julian], who taught from live models. I did my utmost to depict the emotion that the sight of the female body gave me. How stupefied and indignant the professor was! Painting the hand before the model's face! 'But my poor friend,' he cried, 'you will never finish your canvas by the end of the week.' Having barely sketched in the torso, he considered indeed that I would never have time to 'do the feet' by Saturday, the day when the professor came around to correct us. I abandoned that studio. . . Nevertheless I went back to the Ecole des Beaux Arts . . . where Gustave Moreau was teaching. 'All you have to do,' I was told, 'is rise when the professor walks by in order to be accepted as one of his students.' This time I had been better advised. What a charming master he was! He, at least, was capable of enthusiasm and even of being carried away. One day he would affirm his admiration for Raphael, another, for Veronese. One morning he arrived proclaiming that there was no greater master than Chardin. Moreau knew how to distinguish and how to show us who were the great painters, whereas Bouguereau invited us to admire Giulio Romano [A pupil of Raphael]. I used to visit the Louvre. But Moreau told us, 'Don't be content with going to the museum, go out into the streets.' In effect, it's there I learned to draw.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jack D. Flam, Matisse on Art (New York: Phaidon Publishers, Inc., 1973), p. 54.

In referring to Moreau's response to the first canvas in which Matisse had eloquently achieved self-realization, Matisse said:

Moreau showed the same indulgence toward me as toward Marquet and Rouault. To the professors who discovered what was already revolutionary in this attempt, he responded: 'Let it be, his decanters are solidly on the table and I could hang my hat on their stoppers. That's what is essential.' . . . I felt a passion for colour developing within me. . . . Slowly I discovered the secret of my art. It consists of a meditation on nature, on the expression of a dream which is always inspired by reality. . . . Little by little the notion that painting is a means of expression asserted itself, and that one can express the same thing in several ways.<sup>1</sup>

The philosophy of Bouguereau was totally defeated for Matisse when he began to discover his aesthetic nature through Moreau's philosophy. Inner expression, prompted by nature, began to reveal itself through the use of pure color. Matisse was discovering a method of interpretation as unique and personal as that of his master, and Moreau was responsible for that revelation in his former student's intellectual process.

Moreau's and Bouguereau's philosophies also contrasted sharply in the area of painting technique. Unlike Bouguereau, who was obsessed by smoothly painted surfaces, Moreau was preoccupied with a painterly application of pigment which resulted in expressive surface textures. Moreau's enthusiasm for a manipulative brushwork technique, which he had inherited

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

from his master Picot, was handed down to his students at the École des Beaux-Arts.<sup>1</sup> Rouault and Matisse especially benefited from Moreau's emphasis on the expressive effects which could be achieved by juxtaposing glazed areas with impasto dashes of the brush. Moreau's delight in the fluid characteristics of paint, combined with a love of color, created an energetic contrast to the lifeless articulations of the brush found in the works of his colleagues.

The interpretation of subject matter was another area in which Moreau and Bouguereau disagreed. Unlike the typical history painter, Moreau started with a mythological or Biblical source and then, according to Julius Kaplan, Moreau made his own addition of figures and details:

His uniqueness lies in his reliance upon an additive method, accumulating the various details into one large statement rather than creating essential symbolic statements through simplification--the stylistic touchstone of the younger painters around him.<sup>2</sup>

Both Bouguereau and Moreau depended upon literary sources for their artistic expression, but each interpreted them in an entirely different manner. Bouguereau made literal interpretations of his subjects, adhering to a centuries-old tradition in narrative art, while Moreau used subjects from literature as inspirational sources. Moreau elaborated upon literary subjects by transforming them into eclectic conceptual images capable of expressing his inner visions.

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<sup>1</sup>Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Kaplan, p. 403.

A further and final contrast between the ideologies of Bouguereau and Moreau has emerged with the passage of time. While the works of both artists encountered disfavor in the early twentieth century, various attempts to revive their art have been made since that time. The same modernist movement which had discredited the works of nineteenth century academicians was indirectly responsible for anemic attempts to revive the works of those same academicians in the early 1930s. Young artists of that era, having become bored with the often obscure symbols of modern masters, found a renewed admiration for the naturalistic presentation and academic craftsmanship of Bouguereau's work. A contemporary critic, attempting to explain the awe felt by young artists for Bouguereau's approach to subject matter, had this to say:

Bouguereau's splendid impersonality, his faith in description and even in story telling, appeal to them as much as does his perfect elocution. Wise and cool, Bouguereau's work may have a soothing effect and remind one that men of great talent need not behave like madmen. . . The Bouguereau vogue, if it develops into that, may yet end by sweeping us willy-nilly off our feet.<sup>1</sup>

Less than one month later the interest in Bouguereau had seemed to cool considerably. It was still conceded that Bouguereau was an excellent craftsman who had successfully created the rhythmic contours so desired by the public in the nineteenth century, but it was also noted that his forms

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<sup>1</sup>"The 'Back to Bouguereau' Movement is here," Art Digest 7 (December 15, 1932) 10.

lacked vitality and life.<sup>1</sup> Critics had generally become too sophisticated to appreciate an art which had been built upon artifice with no consideration for genius.

A decade after the attempt to revive Bouguereau's art it was ". . . still fashionable to belittle Bouguereau . . . [whose nude paintings exhibited] the most banal, saccharine, meaningless display of pink buttocks you ever saw."<sup>2</sup> That description was made in reference to a work of Bouguereau's entitled Nymphs and Satyr, which had been rediscovered in a New York warehouse by Herbert H. Elfers, an employee of the Durand-Ruel firm. Elfers' discovery of the painting in 1943 was more of a boon to journalists than it was to art connoisseurs, due to its indirect connection with a sensational turn-of-the-century murder story. According to an account in the Art Digest, Nymphs and Satyr had been purchased in the 1880s by Edward S. Stokes, proprietor of the Hoffman House in New York. Mr. Stokes, who wanted the erotic painting to decorate the bar in his establishment, had just been released from a four-year prison sentence which he had served in Sing Sing for the murder of Jim Fiske, partner of Jay Gould. Stokes had reportedly killed Fiske during a rivalry for the affections of Miss Josie Mansfield, a provocative entertainer at the London Terrace. Stokes'

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<sup>1</sup>"Back to Bouguereau Exhibition at the John Levy Galleries," Art Digest 7 (January 1, 1933) p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>"Once Over Lightly," Art Digest (February 15, 1943) 14.

purchase of the painting then set a precedent for buying nude paintings for barroom decorations, and the owners of such establishments as the Palmer House in Chicago and the Palace Hotel in San Francisco soon followed Stokes' example. When Stokes died in 1901, his entire collection of nude art works from the Hoffman House was purchased by an unknown man whose purpose was to prevent their eroticism from contaminating public morality. Nymphs and Satyr, along with its companions, was buried in a warehouse until its discovery over forty years later.<sup>1</sup> Although many of Bouguereau's paintings had resided in American collections since their purchase in the nineteenth century, they had never received the notoriety attached to Nymphs and Satyr. The reason for this could not have been that painting's artistic superiority over Bouguereau's other works, because the quality of his production was evenly balanced through the use of academic formulae. Undoubtedly, the only explanation for the notice received by the painting was its connection with the much-publicized murder. The fame of Bouguereau's art was finally dependent upon mere external stimuli, rather than innate values, for its popularity.

From the 1950s through the 1970s, attempts to revive Bouguereau's art proved pathetic. The general consensus of

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<sup>1</sup>"Lost Bouguereau Aids Free French," Art Digest 17 (February 15, 1943) 26.

critical opinion allowed Bouguereau a distinguished place among an undistinguished group of dead academicians. One contemporary writer called Bouguereau's works ". . . endlessly dissimulated dislikes of the imperfect, the specific, the lived . . .".<sup>1</sup> At his best, Bouguereau was an accomplished technician, but any attempt at finding intellectual genius beneath the slick surfaces of his works has been futile. Bouguereau's art remains, but only as a relic of a past style which was never truly alive.

Later generations have not judged Moreau's art quite so harshly as that of Bouguereau. Because of Moreau's affiliation with the French Academy of Fine Arts and the École des Beaux-Arts, it has been convenient to classify his works with those of his fellow academicians. However, Moreau was not a typical academician in either his thinking or his art production. During his painting career Moreau, who was not content to emulate the academic tradition in history painting, attempted to synthesize adverse trends in the art of painting. Through his style and philosophy, Moreau successfully combined the academic classicism inherited from Ingres with Delacroix's Romanticism to produce a unification of allegory and Symbolism.<sup>2</sup> Although Moreau constantly supported his eclecticism in favor of identification with a

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<sup>1</sup>"Neglected 19th Century: A Selection of Works by French Painters," Art International 16 (January 1972) 70.

<sup>2</sup>Mario Amaya, "The Enigmatic, Eclectic Gustave Moreau," Art in America 62 (September, 1974) 95.



specific group or movement, his philosophy served as a prominent influence for the Symbolists of the late-nineteenth century, and some of those artists regarded Moreau as their leader.

Joris-Karl Huysmans, the late-nineteenth century Symbolist critic and writer, remarked in the 1880s that Gustave Moreau had no artistic descendants,<sup>1</sup> but time has proven that observation to be false. Moreau's descendants might not have been able to trace direct relationships between his style and theirs, but the marriage of ideals between Moreau's eclectic Symbolism and the art of the anti-Realist reactionaries of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries proved to be a bond with strong ties. In a series of three articles dealing with Symbolism's legacy, Dore Ashton made the following observations concerning Moreau's inspirational influence upon the movement: the Symbolists' main themes, which centered around an aversion to reality and the vulgarities of the modern world, recurred predominantly in Moreau's art.<sup>2</sup> Moreau's philosophy of a work's concept being its truth was later nurtured and expressed repeatedly by Pierre Bonnard and Henri Matisse.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jeffrey Meyers, "Huysmans and Gustave Moreau," Apollo 99 (January, 1974) 43.

<sup>2</sup>Dore Ashton, "Symbolist Legacy-I," Arts and Architecture 81 (September, 1964) 37.

<sup>3</sup>Dore Ashton, "Symbolist Legacy-II," Arts and Architecture 81 (November, 1964) 6.

Other twentieth century moderns, such as Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrain, Giorgio de Chirico, and René Magritte, acknowledged their debt to the literary direction of Symbolism found in Moreau's art.<sup>1</sup> The Symbolist philosophy continued to influence the thoughts of other moderns, such as Joan Miro and Victor Vasarely, who have extended the tradition of Symbolists like Moreau well into the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> For an artist whose contemporary and friend claimed that he had no artistic descendants, Moreau proved to be an extremely fertile progenitor. Moreau's philosophy of inner vision has been regenerated in the aesthetic codes of some of the twentieth century's most eloquent artists.

Aside from acknowledging Moreau's obvious philosophical influence on later generations, art critics and connoisseurs have recently attempted to revive Moreau's art. Some have seen Moreau's paintings as stylistic forerunners of twentieth century abstraction while others have attempted to discredit that interpretation. In reference to some watercolors on display at the Moreau retrospective exhibition held in the Louvre in 1961, Pierre Schneider saw these abstractions with their dark colors as ". . . not only historically important in that they are the first modern

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>2</sup>Dore Ashton, "Symbolist Legacy-III," Arts and Architecture 81 (December 1964) 6-7.

works to explore the nocturnal range, but among the best ever created."<sup>1</sup> Other critics attacked both Moreau and the directors of the exhibition, Jean Paladilhe and Ragnar von Holten, with acid comments as to the worth of Moreau's work in the modern stream.<sup>2</sup> The controversy created by the retrospective exhibition in the Louvre caused other critics to define their attitudes concerning Moreau's art. In a visit to the Musée Moreau in Paris, Paul Jenkins decided that certain landscapes by Moreau were finished products of the painter's imagination and stylistically reminiscent of the works of Clyfford Still, rather than the unfinished studies that some scholars believed them to be.<sup>3</sup> The opinions concerning the intent behind Moreau's abstractions were as varied as the paintings themselves, and the controversy raged on.

The Moreau retrospective at the Louvre<sup>4</sup> in 1961 was followed by another show featuring the works of Redon, Moreau, and Bresdin at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1962. Of the three artists' works, those of Moreau were the undisputed favorites since they "ranged from illusory

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<sup>1</sup>Pierre Schneider, "Moreau at the Louvre," Art News 60 (September 1961) 49.

<sup>2</sup>See Annette Michelson's article entitled "Paris Report: Moreau and Maillol" in the September, 1961, issue of Arts, pages 47-48.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Jenkins, "Gustave Moreau: Moot Grandfather of Abstraction," Art News 60 (December 1961) 46-48, 67-69.

<sup>4</sup>R.V. Gindertael, "Exposition au Musée du Louvre," Quadrum 11 (1961) 172.

mysticism . . . to abstractions superior to those one sees on tenth street today. . . ."1 The abstract oil sketches, ". . . in which subject is hardly discernible and where the painting is established with blobs and scrapings of color . . . held together with thin washes producing a frighteningly mid twentieth-century effect,"2 intrigued many viewers. Again, some writers praised Moreau as a forerunner of abstraction while others questioned the validity of that evaluation.

No critic or connoisseur has developed a theory to satisfy all of the questions raised by the factions which split over the issue of the relevance of Moreau's art to late modern abstraction, and these questions remain unanswered today. Because of its eclectic quality, Moreau's art is capable of supporting dissimilar opinions simultaneously.<sup>3</sup> His production is so diverse that it would be impossible to encase its ephemeral characteristics within a specific stylistic framework. Such is not the case with the art of the unfortunate Bouguereau. After fashion had turned its admiring glance away from his paintings, only newsworthy events could again call indirect attention to the works of

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<sup>1</sup>"Art: Show at the Museum of Modern Art," Progressive Architecture News Report 43 (February 1962) 58.

<sup>2</sup>"Redon, Moreau, and Bresdin at the Museum of Modern Art," Art News 60 (February 1962) 13.

<sup>3</sup>Gerhard Weber, "Some Watercolors by Gustave Moreau," Connoisseur 167 (January 1968) 28.

an unfashionable artist. And here lies the final contrast between Moreau's and Bouguereau's art. Even though the styles of both artists are now passé, Bouguereau's empty philosophy starves the modern imagination while the fecundity of Moreau's philosophy retains the ability to impregnate the mind with a myriad of images.

## CHAPTER IV

### MOREAU'S INFLUENCE ON HIS PUPILS

Moreau's influence lived on after his death. The controversy over the amount of influence his art has exercised on later modernists remains an issue in the art world. Some critics see his oil sketches as forerunners of Abstract Expressionist works, while others deny any stylistic connection between Moreau and later generations of painters. However, no matter which camp one occupies in this issue, there is one fact concerning the longevity of Moreau's influence which is undeniable. And that is the total and lasting effect of Moreau's philosophy.

All of Moreau's pupils who later wrote about their master recognized the degree to which Moreau contributed to their intellectual development in art. This situation applies to the development of the students who ultimately attained fame in avant-garde circles, as well as to the development of those who later occupied modest positions in the art world. Some of the lesser-known pupils (such as Marcel Béronneau, Raoul du Gardier, Edgard Maxence, René

Piot, and Léon Bonhomme) went from Moreau's studio to build reputations as provincial artists. Moreau's stylistic and philosophical influence can be seen in the works of each of them.<sup>1</sup>

Student recollections of Moreau many times begin with accounts of Moreau as a teacher. According to Arthur Guéniot, Moreau was the most tolerant of the three painting teachers at the École des Beaux-Arts.<sup>2</sup> His students formed a united group around their beloved master, and their devotion to him was of both a professional and a personal nature.<sup>3</sup> In recalling Moreau's student-teacher relationships, Guéniot said:

We loved listening to the master's judgment. Students of nearby workshops ran up to him too, because their teachers did not really correct their sketches. . . . The students of Gérôme's and Bonnat's classes called us the "Botticellis" because of Moreau's passion for the Italian Primitives.<sup>4</sup>

Arthur Guéniot studied under Moreau from 1892 until July 1897. With Moreau's encouragement, Guéniot planned a study trip to Italy. On the eve of Guéniot's journey, Moreau gave his pupil advice concerning which cities to visit and which artists to study. Moreau also made predictions

<sup>1</sup>Pierre-Louis Mathieu, Gustave Moreau (Boston, Massachusetts: New York Graphic Society, 1976) pp. 230-231.

<sup>2</sup>Anne Prache, "Souvenirs d'Arthur Guéniot sur Gustave Moreau et sur son Enseignement à l'École des Beaux-Arts," Gazette des Beaux Arts 67 (April, 1966) 231.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 231-233.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

about the future course of art:

Modern trend leads us to simple means and complicated expressions. Use simple tones. Copy the austerity of the primitive masters and focus on it. . . . Art in the future--which has already condemned the methods of Bouguereau and others--will require only indications, rough sketches, with the infinite variety of multiple impressions.<sup>1</sup>

Guéniot was still in Italy when Moreau died, but he was to remember his master's words for years to come.

Paul Baignères, another former student of Moreau, also recognized his master's teaching ability. Late in his life, Baignères related pleasant memories of the time he spent in Moreau's workshop. During an interview in 1938, Baignères said:

More than at the workshop, it's at the Louvre that Moreau best . . . affected me with his instruction. . . . Each one was free to copy the work he had chosen for its traits of color or for its difficulties of technique. Moreau would go from one to the other, freely giving advice, approval or criticism, he never failed to come to shake the hand of one of his comrades from the Picot workshop, which was dedicated for ten years and perhaps more to the copy of Antiope of Correggio in indefectible series.<sup>2</sup>

Baignères could see the anemic results of pedantic instruction during those afternoons in the Louvre. His appreciation for Moreau resulted from the friendly and open attitude with which the master approached his students.

Ary Renan and George Desvallières were the only students of Moreau to emulate their master's painting style.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 235-236.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Fegdal, "Paul Baignères et l'Atelier Gustave Moreau," Beaux Arts (August 19, 1938) 2.



Despite Moreau's protestations, Renan and Desvallières imitated his subject matter and technique until after their student days were ended. Ary Renan was influenced by both Moreau and Burne-Jones; the Romantic qualities in the works of those two artists appeared in Renan's paintings until his premature death in 1900.<sup>1</sup> Desvallières, who had a studio near that of Moreau, imitated the older master's works so closely that collectors confused his paintings with Moreau's.<sup>2</sup> It was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that Desvallières took Moreau's earlier advice to develop an original style.

While Moreau was teaching at the École des Beaux-Arts, he wrote in his journal: "If I leave two or three good painters, or even a single one, I shall consider myself lucky".<sup>3</sup> He would have been deeply gratified if he had lived to see the successes of two of his pupils, Henri Matisse and Georges Rouault. Matisse went on from Moreau's studio to formulate the Fauve style and rival Pablo Picasso as the greatest avant-garde artist of the twentieth century. Georges Rouault, the most dedicated pupil of Moreau, became one of the leaders of the Expressionist movement. Moreau's wish was fulfilled.

Rouault was both a student and a friend of Moreau. Consequently, his evaluations of his master were both of a

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<sup>1</sup>Mathieu, p. 232.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

professional and personal nature. Rouault had a deep respect for Moreau's character. Although he believed that Moreau's frankness was typical of the tactless bourgeoisie, Rouault realized that Moreau never intended offense with his candid remarks.<sup>1</sup> Both men tended to be intense and withdrawn, but these seem to be the only points of similarity between their personalities.<sup>2</sup> Mutual admiration, rather than kindred spirits, sustained and enriched their friendship until Moreau's death. At that time Rouault was appointed curator of his master's works housed in the Musée Moreau.

Even before the deep friendship developed between the two men, Rouault came to respect Moreau as an artist and teacher. The public knew Moreau as a Romantic painter of literary subjects, but Rouault knew Moreau the Symbolist whose private works "were wild, chaotic, richly-hued, and often contained almost unrecognizable forms and great sheets of color".<sup>3</sup> In fact, the Symbolist qualities in Moreau's works had a profound effect upon the development of Rouault's mature painting style.

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Alden Jewell, Georges Rouault (Paris: Hyperion, 1947) p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>William A. Dyrness, Rouault: A Vision of Suffering and Salvation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971) p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Joshua Kind, Rouault (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1969) p. 8.

Moreau's attitudes helped shape Rouault's mature philosophy of art. As a student, Rouault appreciated the fact that Moreau was not an overbearing teacher. Instead of making demands, Moreau preferred that his students solve aesthetic problems themselves.<sup>1</sup> His purpose was to stimulate his students to seek interior vision by turning their attention inward before realizing an outer reality.<sup>2</sup> Rouault had a creative imagination which flowered within Moreau's approach to personal expression, and the results were rewarding for both student and teacher. Rouault's introspective vision formed the basis for his artistic approach to man's suffering and faith, the themes of his mature works.

Rouault's deep attachment to Moreau was that of a son to his father, but he also formed other lasting friendships with his contemporaries. His association with Henri Matisse began when they were both students in Moreau's workshop. Although their mature works are quite different in meaning, Rouault and Matisse each respected the creativity of the other and they remained lifelong friends.<sup>3</sup> In fact, both artists formed their most lasting attachments in Moreau's studio. There they met the men who were to be their strongest allies through Fauvism. These influences, along

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<sup>1</sup>Lionello Venturi, Georges Rouault (Paris: Skira Publishers, 1948) pp. 16-18.

<sup>2</sup>Dyrness, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-52.

with those from Moreau, prompted Rouault and Matisse to seek artistic originality.

Matisse, who was Moreau's most individualistic pupil, is the best example of the influence the master exerted upon his students. Matisse had already spent some time seeking his vocational direction when he entered Moreau's studio. By 1890, Matisse had passed the law examinations in Paris and returned to Saint-Quentin to work as a clerk in a lawyer's office. He suffered an attack of appendicitis that year and, at the suggestion of a neighbor, he tried painting to occupy himself during his convalescence.<sup>1</sup> Matisse became fascinated with the idea of being a painter. He enrolled in a drawing class at the École la Tour where Saint-Quentin's youth could learn to become embroidery and textile designers.<sup>2</sup> Matisse worked hard and was encouraged by one of his teachers, Paul Louis Couturier, to study under Bouguereau in Paris.<sup>3</sup> Despite his family's objections, Matisse left for Paris in October, 1891 where he planned to study art.

Although he was full of expectations, Matisse suffered disappointments as a beginning art student. He enrolled in classes at the Académie Julian where he drew from the model, under Gabriel Ferrier, and from plaster

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas B. Hess, "Matisse: A Life of Color," Art News 47 (April, 1948) 17-18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

casts, under William-Adolphe Bouguereau.<sup>1</sup> However, he found Couturier's advice lacking. Couturier was a provincial artist who had studied under Picot, one of Bouguereau's disciples, and Picot had exaggerated Bouguereau's artistic merits and teaching abilities.<sup>2</sup> Matisse found Bouguereau to be a pedantic instructor who had nothing to offer creative students.<sup>3</sup> However, the disappointed Matisse endeavored to derive something valuable from his instruction.

During the few months he studied at the Académie Julian, Matisse came to realize the futility of his efforts under Bouguereau. It was well known that the venerable master cited his own works as examples of excellence for his students to copy. Bouguereau's art, according to Carter Ratcliffe, "was part of an attempt to hold the line of tradition against the aggressive innovators of late Romanticism and the early avant-garde".<sup>4</sup> In disgust, Matisse enrolled in evening classes at the École des Arts Décoratif where he met Albert Marquet.<sup>5</sup> The two students had similar opinions regarding art and pedagogy, and when Matisse was expelled from class for refusing to remove his hat, Marquet

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Jack D. Flam, Matisse on Art (New York: Phaidon Publishers, Inc., 1973) p. 131.

<sup>3</sup>Victor I. Carlson, Matisse As A Draughtsman (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1971) p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Carter Ratcliffe, "Remarks on the Nude," Art International 21 (March, 1977) 65.

<sup>5</sup>Jean-Paul Crespelle, The Fauves (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1962) p. 53.

soon quit the class out of sympathy for Matisse.<sup>1</sup> The two students were later reunited under more favorable circumstances in Moreau's workshop. Marquet and Matisse were beginning a lifelong friendship which later flowered through their collaboration in the development of Fauvism.

After his expulsion from the École des Arts Décoratif, Matisse faced another major disappointment. He had decided to sit for the entrance examinations at the École des Beaux-Arts, but he failed and was rejected. Matisse was confused and became more hostile toward academic policy. In recounting the event in 1948, he said:

I didn't understand a word of those drawing lessons at the Cours Yvon where my early works were corrected by teachers who were categorical but far from clear. . . . A teacher doesn't always know what he is teaching; most studios remind me of Brueghel's The Blind Leading the Blind. . .<sup>2</sup>

Matisse was always against any type of teaching in which imitation of nature was regarded as more valuable than the expressive use of imagination.<sup>3</sup> For Matisse, the traditional pedagogy of the École des Beaux-Arts represented the narrowest aesthetic. And late in life he said:

Throughout my career I have reacted against this opinion, to which I could not submit myself, and this struggle has been the source of the different avatars along my way, during which I have sought for possibilities of expression beyond the literal copy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>John Jacobus, Henri Matisse (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1973) p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

That was in 1953, one year before Matisse's death. The negative aspects of academic pedagogy remained with Matisse to the end of his life.

Matisse's recollections of his early academic training were not all negative, however. His fondest memories of the period began with his chance meeting with Gustave Moreau. Matisse had continued working at his drawing, even after failing the entrance examinations to the École des Beaux-Arts. Most of his studies were made in the Cours Yvon, a glass-enclosed courtyard at the École, where some of his earlier drawing lessons under Bouguereau had taken place. Although he was not officially enrolled at the École, any aspiring young artist was allowed to sketch from plaster casts housed in that area. Matisse took advantage of the opportunity and it was in the Cours Yvon that he met Moreau. Many teachers maintained their aloofness with students as they passed through the courtyard on the way to their classrooms, but not so with Moreau. His attention was arrested one day by Matisse's work. After close scrutiny of the young artist's drawings, Moreau said: "Join my class if you want to, . . . and I'll fix it up later with the administration."<sup>1</sup> That was the beginning of Matisse's most fruitful association with academic instruction.

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<sup>1</sup>John Russell, The World of Henri Matisse 1869-1954 (New York: Time-Life Books, 1969) p. 12.

Matisse studied under Moreau for five years. Moreau's teaching philosophy affected Matisse in two important ways. First, that experience gave Matisse a thorough grounding in the fundamentals of art. The patient master had a respect for tradition and a fund of knowledge about technique which gave his students the confidence to pursue unique directions.<sup>1</sup> Second, Moreau's teaching philosophy inspired Matisse to express himself. Moreau's warm student-teacher relationship, his belief in interior vision, and his unique approach to copying, all combined to put his students at ease with themselves.<sup>2</sup> The thing which most impressed Matisse in Moreau's philosophy was the master's emphasis upon "spiritual freedom".<sup>3</sup> Moreau applied this freedom to such traditional pedagogical devices as copying the old masters. While other teachers were demanding literal copies from their students, Moreau was encouraging his students to copy in order to "cultivate the mind".<sup>4</sup> After Matisse left the École des Beaux-Arts, he proceeded to exercise aesthetic freedom with full confidence.

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<sup>1</sup>Frank Anderson Trapp, "Atelier Gustave Moreau," Art Journal 22 no. 2 (Winter, 1962-1963) 93.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 93-94.

<sup>3</sup>Raymond Nacenta, School of Paris (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1960) p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Raymond Escholier, Matisse: A Portrait of the Artist and the Man (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1960) p. 30.



Without Moreau's influence, Matisse would have been unable to seek originality within the academic framework. Through the free copies of the works of a variety of old masters, Matisse realized very early the artistic elements which were important to him. In 1931 Matisse referred to these copy sessions when he said, "I owe my knowledge of the Louvre to Gustave Moreau: one didn't go there any more. He took us there, and taught us to see and to question the old masters".<sup>1</sup> Moreau was emphasizing painterly effects, instead of imitation of subject matter, in his lessons at the Louvre. Although he was not involved in most of the avant-garde movements of the day, Moreau was supporting the pure painting theory upon which these movements were based.<sup>2</sup> According to Georges Duthuit, Moreau also encouraged his more creative pupils to go into the streets and observe life, rather than waste their time in the studio.<sup>3</sup> These bits of advice were remarkable, when one considers that they came from a nineteenth century academician.

Moreau always kept an open mind regarding innovations in painting technique. On Moreau's advice, Matisse sought

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<sup>1</sup>Flam, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph C. Sloan, French Painting Between the Past and the Present: Artists, Critics, Traditions, From 1848 to 1870 (Princeton: New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951) p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>Georges Duthuit, The Fauvist Painters (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., 1950) p. 32.

out the works of the Impressionists.<sup>1</sup> That contact influenced Matisse to experiment with Impressionism<sup>2</sup> and, later, with the pointillistic technique of Neo-Impressionism.<sup>3</sup> While Moreau was never personally fond of Impressionism, he felt that Matisse might benefit from the contact. The Impressionists' preoccupation with light and color presented some solutions to Matisse's experimental problems in the same areas. Again, Moreau had anticipated a student's individual needs.

Moreau also taught Matisse much about modern design. Since the Crystal Palace Exhibit of 1851 had introduced non-European design to London, many artists had become fascinated with its two-dimensional character.<sup>4</sup> The resultant design theories became the basis for the flat forms found in modern art.<sup>5</sup> When the influence on flatness affected Impressionism and Symbolism,<sup>6</sup> Gustave Moreau adopted the arabesque as a feature of modern design.<sup>7</sup> The sensuality of curvilinear arabesques can be found in the works of both Moreau and Matisse. In fact, Matisse was later to espouse

<sup>1</sup>Crespelle, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen C. Oppler, Fauvism Reexamined (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976) pp. 41-42.

<sup>3</sup>Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Matisse: His Art and His Public (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1951) pp. 47-48.

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Masheck, "The Carpet Paradigm: Critical Prolegomena to a Theory of Flatness," Arts 51 (September, 1976) 83-84.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 82. <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 87. <sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 88-89.

the use of flat design in his Notes d'un Peintre.<sup>1</sup> He had seen the picture surface interpreted as a flat plane in Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist works, and flat design continued to intrigue him. It was to become the main characteristic of the form in his mature works.

Moreau also had an indirect influence on Matisse's art. During his student days, Matisse was searching for subject matter which seemed valid to his art. However, he was dissatisfied with the traditional subjects he encountered during his copying sessions at the Louvre. After posing his dilemma to Moreau, the master asked, "Well, what are you looking for?"<sup>2</sup> "Something that is not in the Louvre, but is there,"<sup>3</sup> Matisse answered pointing outside the studio. Moreau replied, "And do you think that the masters of the Louvre didn't see that?"<sup>4</sup> Moreau was trying to show Matisse that each artist must find his own subject matter through experimentation. Matisse began painting the world around him, which was comprised of Moreau's studio and the live models. He started working with studio themes and the human figure, subjects which carried him from his student days through his maturity.<sup>5</sup> In 1908, Matisse addressed himself to the question of subject matter:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>2</sup>Flam, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Jacobus, pp. 16-17.

What interests me most is neither still life nor landscape but the human figure. It is through it that I best succeed in expressing the nearly religious feeling that I have towards life.<sup>1</sup>

Moreau's student had found his own world of subject matter and his own reality.

Moreau was partially responsible for influencing Matisse's symbolic content and his passion for the exotic. Moreau was totally involved in Symbolism by the time he began teaching at the École des Beaux-Arts, and he transferred that tendency to his students. While Matisse did not paint Symbolist pictures, he was nevertheless influenced by the Symbolist philosophy of Moreau and the Symbolist poetry of Mallarmé.<sup>2</sup> Matisse's mature works show a penchant for the exotic subject matter of the East which is directly traceable to Moreau's Symbolist pictures.<sup>3</sup> Matisse's world is an exotic place which represents an alternative to the world one normally inhabits.<sup>4</sup> Moreau locked himself away from reality to immerse himself in a world of visions, but Matisse took the exotic from reality and enlivened it to create pleasure.

Both artists were pursuing expression, but in different ways. Matisse said the following about expression:

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves, editors, Artists on Art (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964) p. 412.

<sup>2</sup>"Matisse," Arts 49 (May, 1975) 70-71, 76-77.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>4</sup>Ratcliff, pp. 62-63.

What I am after is expression. . . . I am unable to distinguish between the feeling I have for life and my way of expressing it. Expression to my way of thinking does not consist of the passion mirrored upon a human face or betrayed by a violent gesture. The whole arrangement of my pictures is expressive.<sup>1</sup>

Moreau relied upon theatrical imagery and decorative detail for his expression. The subtle gestures of his figures, combined with literary Symbolism, created a temporal world which could only be inhabited by one who possessed the same secretive philosophy of life. Matisse's expression is based on a universal appreciation of joy and pleasure. However, his self-portraits from the earliest decades of the twentieth century deal with the deeper concerns of human isolation and alienation.<sup>2</sup> Like Moreau before him, Matisse saw the dual nature of man and he realized that man's human qualities sometimes conflict and coexist. The forms and methods utilized by each artist were different, but the source of the expression remained the same.

Matisse's greatest debt to Moreau lies in the area of color usage. Both Moreau and Matisse saw color as a vehicle for personal expression which must be developed imaginatively, rather than descriptively. In his Notes d'un Peintre Matisse said, "The chief aim of color should be to serve expression as well as possible."<sup>3</sup> And Matisse's art taught a whole generation of abstract artists "to brace one

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<sup>1</sup>Jacobus, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>"Matisse," pp. 50-52.

<sup>3</sup>Goldwater and Treves, p. 412.

color against another on an admittedly flat surface, with little or no linear support."<sup>1</sup> That is the one aspect of Moreau's technique and philosophy which stimulated generations of creative artists.

Matisse's originality dated back to 1892 when he entered Moreau's studio at the École des Beaux-Arts. It was there that Fauvism was born. Georges Desvallières, Georges Rouault, and Albert Marquet were already studying under Moreau when Matisse entered the workshop. After Henri Manguin and Charles Camoin joined the circle in 1895 and 1896, the original Fauve group was complete.<sup>2</sup> Moreau's liberalism allowed those creative young men to experiment with technique and style. The master's insistence upon self-expression propelled them toward experimentation with color theory. Through their need for purity and their desire for self-expression, the budding Fauves developed a passion for pure color.<sup>3</sup> It was also during the period from 1892 to 1898, that the Fauves began to experience the avant-garde. Through exhibits at Vollard's and Durand-Ruel's they saw works by the Impressionists, Neo-Impressionists, Nabis, and Symbolists.<sup>4</sup> Moreau was not part of the avant-garde, but he felt that his students would benefit from contact with a

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<sup>1</sup>James Thrall Soby, Modern Art and the New Past (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957) p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>John Elderfield, The "Wild Beasts": Fauvism and Its Affinities (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976) p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard Dorival, "Fauves: The Wild Beasts Tamed," Art News Annual 22 (1951) 119.

<sup>4</sup>Barr, pp. 35-37.

variety of works. It was his encouragement which freed the young artists to seek self-expression through experience.

After Moreau's death in 1898, his creative pupils experienced less sympathy in the academic environment. Moreau was replaced by Fernand Cormon, the typical pedantic academician. Matisse's works, with their strong slashes of bright color, were unacceptable to Cormon, so, Matisse was asked to leave the studio.<sup>1</sup> For a while, Matisse and Marquet worked on their own painting outdoors. However, Matisse still wanted to study the human figure in a controlled atmosphere. At the suggestion of Andre Derain, Matisse enrolled at a small studio in Paris where the students' drawings were corrected by the painter Eugène Carrière.<sup>2</sup> It is not known how well Matisse fared at the Académie Carrière, for he made little mention of that experience later in life. However, he was too far advanced in the development of Fauvism to benefit from any further academic training. Even if Moreau had lived, Matisse probably had little more to learn from him.

Matisse always remembered Moreau and the master's contribution to his development. In 1943, when asked about his teachers, Matisse replied:

Only one among them counts for me: Gustave Moreau who turned out, among numerous students, some real artists. The great quality of Gustave Moreau was that he

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<sup>1</sup>Tony Richardson and Nikos Stangos, editors, Concepts of Modern Art (New York: Harper and Row, 1974) p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

considered that the minds of young students were about to undergo continued development throughout their lives, and that he did not push them to satisfy the different scholastic tests which, even when artists have succeeded in the greatest competitions, leave them, around thirty, with warped minds, and an extremely limited sensibility and means; so that if they are not wealthy, they can only look for marriage to a well-to-do woman to help them follow their path in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Matisse was speaking from hindsight and from experience. Moreau had opened his mind and taught him to rely on self-expression. His sensibilities had been awakened.

After Matisse was exposed to Impressionism, he painted his first important work entitled La Desserte. Although it was badly received at the Salon, Moreau defended Matisse's conception and execution.<sup>2</sup> With Moreau's encouragement, Matisse continued to experiment. From 1896 to 1904 Matisse went through an Impressionist period, the pointillism of the Neo-Impressionists, a period influenced by Cézanne, and then a period during which he used pure color.<sup>3</sup> His idea to use pure color came from several sources. In addition to Moreau's insistence upon the expressive use of color, Matisse was influenced by the colors he saw in a memorial exhibit of van Gogh's work in 1901 and another show of Gauguin's paintings in 1903.<sup>4</sup> Matisse and the other creative students were

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<sup>1</sup>Flam, p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>Mathieu, p. 238.

<sup>3</sup>Marcel Giry, "Matisse et la Naissance du Fauvisme," Gazette des Beaux Arts 75 (May, 1970) 331.

<sup>4</sup>J.T. Honeyman, "Les Fauves--Some Personal Reminiscences," Scottish Art Review 12 (Summer, 1969) 17.



strongly affected by the explosive quality of pure color in those works, and they decided to incorporate that quality into their own paintings. That was the beginning of Fauvism.

Matisse became the leader of the Fauves in Moreau's studio. And the development of Fauvism was a systematic progression from earlier student experiments, rather than an abrupt break in continuity. Many times Fauvism is characterized as a reaction against Impressionism, but that is an exaggeration. Matisse brought the spontaneity of Impressionist brush strokes into Fauvism, with strong color added for solidity.<sup>1</sup> The early Fauve style was merely a more colorful form of Impressionism. In fact, it was not until 1906 that Matisse became less dependent upon visual appearances and turned toward a more abstract style based upon concepts from Neo-Impressionism.<sup>2</sup> Through the associations in Moreau's studio, one of the most revolutionary of modern movements was born.

By the time Moreau died, Matisse no longer needed his support. Matisse's originality was beginning to flower and Fauvism was receiving some private and public support. The earliest avid collectors of Matisse's work were Michael and Sara Stein, husband and wife, and Michael's older brother and sister, Leo and Gertrude Stein, an American family of

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<sup>1</sup>Elderfield, pp. 56-61.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Meyers, "Matisse and the Fauves," American Artist 15 (December, 1951) 70-72.

expatriates living in Paris. The Michael Steins were the first American collectors of Matisse,<sup>1</sup> soon to be followed in their enthusiasm by Leo and Gertrude Stein.<sup>2</sup> Matisse became a frequent visitor at both the apartment on the rue Madame, where the Michael Stein's lived, and the studio-apartment on the rue de Fleurus which Leo and Gertrude shared.<sup>3</sup> The Steins, especially Leo and Gertrude, were avid collectors of modern art. They owned works by Renoir, Cézanne, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Picasso, as well as Matisse. The studio-apartment on the rue de Fleurus was frequented by many visitors interested in the avant-garde, and this helped promote the careers of the young artists sponsored by the Steins.

In addition to private support, Fauvism received recognition through the Paris Salons. The Salon des Indépendants (1884) and the Salon d'Automne (1903) were both established as reactions against the confining rules and traditional juries of the original Paris Salon.<sup>4</sup> These two Salons were dedicated to establishing the validity of modern

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<sup>1</sup>Fiske Kimball, "Discovery from America," Art News 47 (April, 1948) 29.

<sup>2</sup>James R. Mellow, "Exhibition Preview: Four Americans in Paris," Art in America 58 (November, 1970) 85.

<sup>3</sup>Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Matisse, Picasso, and the Crisis of 1907," Magazine of Art 44 (May, 1951) 164.

<sup>4</sup>Nacenta, pp. 48-49.

art, and Fauve painting appeared along with other modern works in early exhibitions. These exhibits helped to satiate the artists' desire for recognition, as well as the curiosity of the public, during the early years of the modern movement.

The first of these two Salons to benefit Matisse and the Fauves was the Salon d'Automne of 1903. In contrast to the Salon des Indépendants, which had no jury and imposed no professional standards, the Salon d'Automne selected its jury by drawing lots from among its members.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, awards were given and judgments were made by one's colleagues. Two of Matisse's paintings were shown, along with works by other avant-garde artists, and the public became aware of new currents in modern art.

In June 1904, Matisse had his first one-man show at Ambroise Vollard's gallery. Vollard rarely showed the works of obscure artists, but he had been very impressed by Matisse's paintings which he had seen in a Fauve show at Berthe Weill's gallery in April of that year.<sup>2</sup> With the encouragement of Roger Marx, a discerning art critic, Vollard decided to launch Matisse. In the preface to the exhibition catalog, Marx wrote:

The art of Henri Matisse harmoniously reveals the synthesis of the combined teachings of Gustave Moreau and Cezanne. . . . Furthermore the artist's discipline is such as to justify anyone's confidence and esteem.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Barr, Matisse: His Art and His Public, pp. 43-44.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

As a result of the one-man show, Matisse sold his famous Dinner Table.<sup>1</sup> He was still far from being economically secure, but he had made his first step in that direction.

Matisse's work was accepted in 1905 at both the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne. He received much praise at the Salon des Independants for his painting entitled Luxe, Calme et Volupté (Luxury, Quiet and Voluptuousness). The piece was purchased by the painter Paul Signac and was not exhibited again until 1950.<sup>2</sup> Although Matisse must have been pleased with the results of the Salon des Indépendants, they cannot compare to the notoriety he received through the Salon d'Automne in 1905. Many of the critics at the Salon wrote scathing comments about the works they saw,<sup>3</sup> and their reactions of horror brought crowds of curiosity seekers to the exhibit. Although Fauvism was not completely new in 1905, that was the year it was recognized by the general public. The movement was also baptized that year by the critic Louis Vauxcelles, who wrote for the Gil Blas. When he saw Fauve paintings hanging in a room also occupied by a few pieces of Renaissance sculpture, Vauxcelles exclaimed: "Look! Donatello in a cage of wild beasts!"<sup>4</sup> The term Fauves, or wild beasts, caught on when Vauxcelles' remark was printed in the Gil Blas, and from that time on the painters and their movement had a name.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 54    <sup>3</sup>Dorival, p. 115.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Leymarie, Fauvism (Paris: Skira Publishers, 1959) p. 13.

Many authors have emphasized the negative reactions of journalists reviewing the Fauve work in the 1905 Salon d'Automne, but few have emphasized the positive reactions. There were those critics who were not completely hostile to the exhibit.<sup>1</sup> It is true that there were negative comments, but they were not in the majority of the critiques written by all of the journalists who covered the exhibit. In reference to Matisse's paintings, critic André Gide wrote in the Gazette des Beaux Arts:

For the sake of convenience, I am willing to admit that M. Henri Matisse is endowed with the finest natural gifts. . . . The canvases which he paints today seem to be demonstrations of theorems. I stayed quite a while in this gallery. I listened to the visitors and when I heard them exclaim in front of a Matisse: "This is madness!" I felt like retorting: "No, sir, quite the contrary. It is the result of theories."<sup>2</sup>

Two less sympathetic, but more positive, reviews were written by Gustave Geffroy and Louis Vauxcelles. Geffroy's article in Le Journal d'Illustration quoted his remark that "Matisse, so greatly gifted, has been misled like the others [Fauves] into eccentricities of color from which doubtless he will recover himself."<sup>3</sup> Louis Vauxcelles, the critic who named the movement, reported in the Gil Blas:

M. Matisse . . . is one of the most richly endowed of today's painters. He might have won a facile success; instead he prefers to drive himself, to undertake passionate researches, to force pointillism to greater vibration. . . . But his concern for form suffers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Oppler, pp. 14-17.

<sup>2</sup>Barr, Matisse: His Art and His Public, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

All of the critics credited Henri Matisse with the leadership of the Fauves. In fact, a few of them like Geffroy, Vauxcelles, and Marx, traced the development of Fauvism back to Moreau's studio.<sup>1</sup> Since none of the Fauves denied the charge that Matisse was their leader, and had been from the time they met in Moreau's studio, these conclusions became fact. Fauvism had truly started in Moreau's studio under the guidance of Matisse.

Matisse continued to lead the Fauves, and he dominated the Salon des Independants of 1906. That exhibition represented the culmination of Fauvism.<sup>2</sup> It also represented the culmination of Matisse's experiments through the success of his one entry, Joie de Vivre (Joy of Life).<sup>3</sup> Matisse's student days were truly over at that point, and he was ready to strike out on his own path.

Although Fauvism reached the pinnacle of its success in 1906, it was to be a short-lived movement for many reasons. First, Fauvism had no clearly defined style.<sup>4</sup> Each of the Fauves approached his style from different directions at different periods. Second, there was a lack of ideology in Fauvism.<sup>5</sup> The Fauves never wrote a consolidated statement of their beliefs, because that would have been impossible. Each Fauve had an eclectic ideology which was separate and distinct from those of the other Fauves.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Richardson and Stangos, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Jacobus, pp. 21-22. <sup>4</sup>Oppler, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup>Elderfield, pp. 40-42.

The only common element was a desire for the freedom to seek self-expression. That was probably one reason so few of the original group remained with Fauvism.<sup>1</sup> Finally, Cubism replaced Fauvism in the limelight of the avant-garde.<sup>2</sup> By 1907 Cubism was creating the same notoriety which Fauvism had evoked earlier, and the Fauve group had broken away from Matisse to cause the final dissolution of the movement.

Fauvism ended but its influence affected later generations of modern artists. Modern painters in the next decade were to follow the example of the Fauves by leaving their Impressionist beginnings and by coming to terms with Neo-Impressionism more rapidly than their predecessors.<sup>3</sup> The Fauves also indirectly influenced later generations of artists to seek their own forms of originality.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Matisse continued to create in his original vein which inspired the support of some avant-garde critics like Guillaume Apollinaire.<sup>5</sup> Fauvism was the first dynamic step in an evolutionary trend which paved the way for twentieth century innovation.

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<sup>1</sup>Janet Hobhouse, "The Fauve Years: A Case of Derailments," Art News 75 (Summer, 1976) 48-49.

<sup>2</sup>Leymarie, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>Elderfield, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Guillaume Apollinaire, Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews 1902-1918 (New York: Viking Press, 1972) pp. 36-39.

Fauvism caused a shock when it was introduced to the general public in 1905. Consequently, it has often been referred to as a revolutionary, rather than an evolutionary, movement. But this is a mistake, for Fauvism evolved through three distinct stages in surface treatment:

A Post-Impressionist Pointillism that retained Impressionist regularity of fracture but added heightened, purified color and curvy, interlocking shapes; a middle period . . . where the consistent surface was deliberately violated with mixed techniques of scumbled and block-like strokes of color; and a last phase in which color areas become denser, flatter and, once again, consistent.<sup>1</sup>

When one views Fauvism from the standpoint of its technical development, the progression seems very systematic and natural.

Although Fauvism died officially in 1907, Matisse remained active as an artist and a teacher during the early years of the new decade. Sarah Stein and Hans Purrmann approached Matisse in the fall of 1907 with the idea of his conducting an art class.<sup>2</sup> Matisse at first suggested that they merely work together, but the two eventually convinced him to give them formal instruction. With Michael Stein's financial backing, the Académie Matisse opened officially in 1908 in the Couvent des Oiseaux at 56 rue de Sèvres.<sup>3</sup> The first class was small in number but very diverse. In addition to Sarah and Michael Stein and Hans Purrmann, the original

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<sup>1</sup>Amy Goldin, "Forever Wild: A Pride of Fauves," Art in America 64 (May, 1976) 28.

<sup>2</sup>Barr, Matisse: His Art and His Public, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



class consisted of the young American artists Max Weber, Patrick Henry Bruce, Walter Pach, and Maurice Sterne.<sup>1</sup> However, Matisse was still skeptical about his abilities as an instructor when he said: "I refused my fee for my corrections, not wishing to be tied by such considerations when I might have reason to give it up."<sup>2</sup> Matisse was worrying needlessly since his students considered him to be a complete success.

The size of Matisse's original class ballooned in only a few months. Purrmann brought three new German students, and Carl Palme from Sweden was only the first of approximately fifteen Scandanavian students to enroll; later additions were Joseph Brummer, a Hungarian sculptor, and Jean Biette, a friend Matisse had met at the Académie Carrière.<sup>3</sup> Matisse later recalled his success when he said, . . . "as the atelier grew, Purrman and Bruce had to move it to the one-time convent of the Sacred Heart, boulevard des Invalides."<sup>4</sup> Up to the spring of 1911, Matisse devoted himself to his teaching duties but soon began to find them to be too time consuming. By summer Matisse had resigned. He later explained his reasons:

I quickly realized that I had my own work to do, and was wasting too much of my energy. After each criticism I found myself faced with lambs, and I had to build them up constantly, every week, to make them into lions. So

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<sup>1</sup>Dorival, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>Escholier, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup>Barr, Matisse: His Art and His Public, pp. 116-117.

<sup>4</sup>Escholier, pp. 72-73.

I wondered whether I was a painter or a teacher; I decided I was a painter and quickly abandoned the school.<sup>1</sup>

Matisse's success as a teacher was not enough compensation for the detrimental effects it had upon his own production.

Matisse was a very traditional pedagogue. During the first year his académie was in operation, Matisse paid weekly visits to criticize his students' work. After that, he limited himself to visits every two weeks. His curriculum was similar to any other in Paris. The class drew and painted the figure from plaster casts and the live model.<sup>2</sup> They also worked with still life and modeled in clay as a discipline.<sup>3</sup> The curriculum of the Académie Matisse was strongly influenced by Matisse's own academic education.

Also, Matisse was a conservative disciplinarian with teaching methods similar to those of any academician. According to Alfred Barr, Maurice Sterne gave a vivid account of Matisse's first visit to his new class:

The students had been painting busily all week in preparation for the master's Saturday criticisms. When Matisse entered the room he was aghast to find large canvases splashed with garish colors and distorted shapes. Without a word he left the atelier, went to his own quarters in the same building, and returned with a cast of a Greek head. This he put on a stand in the center of the class and told his students to turn their half-baked efforts to the wall and start drawing. . . . "Don't think you are committing suicide

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<sup>1</sup>E. Tériade, "Matisse Speaks," Art News Annual 21 (1951) 47.

<sup>2</sup>Barr, Matisse: His Art and His Public, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

[Matisse exclaimed] by adhering to nature and trying to portray it with exactness. In the beginning you must subject yourself totally to her influence. . . . You must be able to walk firmly on the ground before you start walking a tightrope!"<sup>1</sup>

Matisse's reaction must have been quite a shock to those students who were expecting something other than the traditional approach toward drawing and painting.

Several of Matisse's students recorded his words in the atelier and later gave interesting accounts of Matisse as a teacher. John Lyman, a student at the académie, later recounted Matisse's pedagogical attitude when he said:

He was quick to censure the superficial device, the merely decorative abbreviation, the lack of "density" as he always called it. That was the burden of his teaching. Students who came to him to learn modern tricks got no encouragement.<sup>2</sup>

This account, together with Sarah Stein's class notes from 1908,<sup>3</sup> tend to corroborate Maurice Sterne's account of the Académie Matisse as related by Alfred Barr. Matisse, the revolutionary artist, was anything but innovative in his teaching philosophy.

Matisse was most concerned with instilling a sense of order in his students' work. He stressed the necessity for order in working with the human figure when he advised his students:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>John Lyman, "Matisse as a Teacher," Studio International 176 (July, 1968) 2.

<sup>3</sup>Flam, pp. 42-44.

. . . fit your parts into one another and build your figure as a carpenter does a house. Everything must be constructed--built up of parts that make a unit: a tree like a human body, a human body like a cathedral.<sup>1</sup>

He also insisted upon an orderly color composition when he told them:

Order above all, in color. . . . Put three or four touches of color that you have understood upon the canvas; add another; if you can--if you can't set this canvas aside and begin again.<sup>2</sup>

Matisse was not attempting to play the pedantic instructor in front of his students. Instead, he wanted them to realize that any type of art must be based upon sound technique and fundamental processes. These were facts which he had learned from Moreau's workshop, and he had an abiding faith in his dead master's pedagogy.

When one compares Matisse's teaching philosophy with that of Moreau, the similarities are numerous. Like Moreau, Matisse emphasized the importance of working from nature and developing an understanding of the works of past masters. Nature was a starting point for Matisse's forms, and, even late in his life, he felt the necessity to return to nature for inspiration.<sup>3</sup> Matisse also took his students to the Louvre to study Chardin and Poussin using Moreau's analytical

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<sup>1</sup>Jack D. Flam, "Matisse's Backs and the Development of His Painting," Art Journal 30 no. 4 (Summer, 1971) 354.

<sup>2</sup>Elderfield, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup>"The Relevance of Matisse: a Discussion Between Andrew Forge, Howard Hodgkins, and Phillip King," Studio International 176 (July, 1968) 12.

approach.<sup>1</sup> Matisse realized that independence and originality are essential to a student's growth, but he did not know how to inspire those qualities in the works of others. That is the most important and crucial difference between the teaching methods of the two men. Moreau knew how to inspire creativity in his students, but Matisse lacked that gift.

By 1911, Matisse had made the decision to give up an academic career in favor of being an innovative painter. He was too devoted to his art to willingly divide his time between teaching and painting. However, some people always see teaching as an alternative to art production. In his book on Matisse, Jean Cassou made references to an essay written by Guillaume Apollinaire shortly after the public appearance of Fauvism. Cassou related Apollinaire's thoughts about Matisse's art and teaching when he wrote:

He [Matisse] has adopted excess as a formula and as a postulate. Nevertheless, like many characteristic artists of French genius, he can, if he wishes, be a teacher. . . . And it has been remarked on many occasions how this revolutionary, with his cold and meditative expression, resembles a professor.<sup>2</sup>

Apollinaire admired Matisse's innovative art, but he could not see its possibilities for growth and durability. How fortunate for modern art that Matisse rejected any alternative to art production.

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<sup>1</sup>Barr, Matisse: His Art and His Public, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>Jean Cassou, Henri Matisse (Paris: Brown Publishing Company, 1948) p. 5.

The death of Fauvism was a beginning, rather than an end, for modern art. The Fauves, and later the Cubists, ". . . created the triumphal arch through which all the brilliant parade of modern painting has passed."<sup>1</sup> In reference to the Fauve retrospective exhibit held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1976, Amy Goldin said, "The Fauvist movement . . . remains one of the most exciting in the history of modern art, a burst of high spirits and profound innovation."<sup>2</sup> Even today, the spirit of the movement influences contemporary ideology.

The art of Henri Matisse retained the innovative spirit of Fauvism long after the movement died. Unlike so many celebrated artists who rework old ideas in their later years, Matisse worked to solve new problems right up to the end of his life.<sup>3</sup> His originality was based upon his unique concepts of drawing, motif, and color. As Matisse encountered new problems in art, he created solutions by making fresh interpretations of those elements.

Matisse drew during his entire career. He constantly thought about the importance of drawing.<sup>4</sup> When discussing the correct process for becoming a painter, Matisse said:

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<sup>1</sup>Dorival, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>Goldin, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup>Agnes Humbert, "Henri Matisse 1869-1954," Studio International 151 (June, 1956) 170.

<sup>4</sup>René Micha, "La 'Creative Method' de Matisse," Art International 19 (October, 1975) 58.

I believe study by means of drawing is most essential. If drawing is of the Spirit, and color is of the Senses, one must draw first, to cultivate the spirit and to be able to lead color into spiritual paths.<sup>1</sup>

However, he did not mean that only the aspiring young artist should draw as a prelude to painting. He felt that every artist, in each stage of his development, should refresh himself and his ideas through drawing.

When considering motif, Matisse always turned to nature. He believed that ". . . genuine creative effort comes from within. We have also to nourish our feeling, and we can do so only with materials derived from the world around us."<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that Matisse wanted to imitate nature. On the contrary, he once remarked: "It is always when I am in direct accord with my sensations of nature that I feel I have the right to depart from them, the better to render what I feel. . ."<sup>3</sup> Matisse utilized natural forms such as fruit, flowers, plants, and the human figure for "images of delight and fertility"<sup>4</sup> which he associated with the life cycle. To reinforce those images,

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<sup>1</sup>Dorothy Grafly, "Matisse Speaks," American Artist 12 (June, 1948) 51,62.

<sup>2</sup>"Notes in Passing," Arts and Architecture 71 (March, 1954) 11.

<sup>3</sup>Alan Gouk, "An Essay on Painting," Studio International 180 (October, 1970) 145.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Peppiatt, "Images of Delight and Fertility," Art News 73 (November, 1974) 67.

he distilled them into their most essential elements and flattened their forms into rhythmic patterns.<sup>1</sup> For him, the sensual rhythms of natural forms expressed the essence of life.

Matisse's art, from the Fauve period to the end of his career, emphasized color. It was during his student days that he began to realize the expressive capabilities of color. After dealing with the color theories of the Neo-Impressionists, Matisse stated:

The choice of my color isn't based on any scientific theory; it is based on the observation, on the sentiment, on the experience of my sensibility. . . . I don't want to distinguish between that feeling that I have of life and the way in which I translated it.<sup>2</sup>

Although Matisse used a limited palette,<sup>3</sup> he is always referred to as a great colorist. He achieved his expressive color harmonies through simultaneous contrast of complementary colors, rather than the use of an elaborate palette. He approached color, as well as drawing and motif, through a simplified approach toward nature.

The most enduring quality in Matisse's art is his design concept. This was the characteristic which was so difficult for critics and the public to accept in his Fauvist works. Until well after the Salon d'Automne of 1903, critics distinguished between three-dimensional easel pictures and

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<sup>1</sup>J. Burr, "Hymn of Hedonism: Arts Council's Retrospective," Apollo 88 (August, 1968) 138.

<sup>2</sup>G. Marchiori, "Le Retour de Matisse," XXe Siècle 35 (December, 1970) 5.

<sup>3</sup>C.R. Morse, "Matisse's Palette," Art Digest 7 (February 15, 1933) 26.



two-dimensional decorative pictures, the latter being considered less artistic.<sup>1</sup> Matisse's early Fauve paintings represented an amalgamation of the two approaches, and many critics made disparaging remarks about the decorative aspects of his art. In spite of the criticism, Matisse remained true to his unique form of decorative design.

Many artists, both European and American, have benefited from Matisse's modern concept of decoration. For the last thirty years, as Clement Greenberg said, ". . . Matisse has been a more relevant and fertile source for ambitious new painting than any other single master before or after him."<sup>2</sup> In fact, Matisse was the first and most lasting influence on the development of modern American art.<sup>3</sup> As was discussed earlier, the Stein family patronized Matisse after the Salon d'Automne of 1905. They not only purchased numerous works from Matisse, but they introduced other American collectors to Matisse's art. In fact, they were indirectly responsible for Matisse's first American exhibit which was sponsored by Alfred Stieglitz in 1908 at his Gallery of the Photo-Secession at 291 Fifth Avenue in New York.<sup>4</sup> Although his works in that exhibit were poorly

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<sup>1</sup>"Matisse," p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Clement Greenberg, "Influence of Matisse," Art International 17 (November, 1973) 28.

<sup>3</sup>Jean Clair, "L'Influence de Matisse aux États-Unis," XXe Siècle 35 (December, 1970) 157.

<sup>4</sup>Kimball, pp. 31-32.

received by the critics and the public, Matisse had made his first step toward influencing modern American art.

Matisse's most direct influence on American art took place in the Académie Matisse in Paris. During the four years that the school was in operation, numerous American artists were exposed to Matisse's artistic ideology.<sup>1</sup> The cultural climate in America at that time was unreceptive to the avant-garde. Consequently, these young American moderns attached themselves to the European avant-garde through their associations in the Académie Matisse.

Except for a few individuals like the Steins and Alfred Stieglitz, Americans maintained their indifference toward modernism in the early years of the twentieth century. It was not until 1913, when the Armory Show opened in New York, that the avant-garde created a widespread reaction in America.<sup>2</sup> Matisse was well represented in the Armory Show, but his influence on American art declined after 1913 due to the influence of Cubism.<sup>3</sup> From World War I through the 1920s Cubism reigned supreme as the most influential of modern movements. Young American artists imitated the European masters of Cubism, and the United States began to lose its indifference toward the avant-garde in the arts.

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<sup>1</sup>Clair, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

By the 1930s Matisse's influence was revived in America. The reasons for that resurgence of interest in Matisse and his Fauvist principles were two fold. First of all, American modernists were growing weary of European dominance in avant-garde circles. Cubism was still associated with Europe, and American artists had achieved the self-assurance necessary for striking out in a more original direction. Second, American modernists found that the structural and harmonious characteristics of Matisse's art could be transposed to develop a native style without total dependence upon European modes.<sup>1</sup> Stuart Davis and Milton Avery, the two most dominant figures of American modernism in the thirties, pursued Matisse's ideas in their own works. Stuart Davis was attracted by the bold cut-out forms and crisp colors which he saw in Matisse's works from the early thirties,<sup>2</sup> and Milton Avery had long been attracted to the sense of balance and tranquility in Matisse's art.<sup>3</sup> At last, American art could compete on an equal footing with the European avant-garde.

Matisse's principles continued to exercise a strong influence on the development of modernism into the mid-century. It was his unique consolidation of easel painting with decorative painting which influenced American Abstract Expressionists of the forties and fifties. The color field

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 159-160.

<sup>3</sup>Greenberg, p. 28.

painters and the action painters, the two wings of Abstract Expressionism, both found relevance in Matisse's approach toward spacious design. Jackson Pollock, Arshile Gorky, Barnett Newman, and Clyfford Still started to obliterate the margins of their pictures in the manner of Matisse.<sup>1</sup> Hans Hofmann,<sup>2</sup> Robert Motherwell,<sup>3</sup> and Ellsworth Kelly<sup>4</sup> were all strongly influenced by Matisse's emphasis on motif and autonomous color. In fact, Matisse was the primary force behind the total development of Abstract Expressionism. Matisse's art served as an inspiration for young innovators long after his death. Op Art of the sixties, with its emphasis on color opposition, was based upon Matisse's development of simultaneous contrast through juxtaposing complementaries.<sup>5</sup> Matisse's forms and ideals have touched many of the major figures and movements in twentieth-century modern art.

This last statement raises two questions. Why did Matisse's art affect so many artists and so many different movements? And where did Matisse find the inspiration for his innovations. The answers to both questions are complex and inter-related. As far as the first question is concerned,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Gouk, p. 146.

<sup>3</sup>H.H. Arnason, "Motherwell: The Window and the Wall," Art News 68 (Summer, 1969) 50-52.

<sup>4</sup>"Matisse," p. 66.

<sup>5</sup>Gouk, p. 147.

the answer has to pertain to the diverse qualities found in Matisse's art. He dealt primarily with color, motif, and form, and he approached these elements in a very individual manner based upon his own perceptions. Matisse's followers were influenced to deal with their unique perceptions of these elements, rather than to imitate the solutions found in the works of other artists. Matisse's art has a message for every artist who is dealing with self-expression. The second question can be answered in a more explicit manner. Matisse's inspiration for the innovative concepts he developed came from within himself and from the manner in which he perceived the world. Initially, however, he was taught by Gustave Moreau to seek self-expression. Without Moreau's influence, Matisse would have encountered more obstructions on the road to originality.

Intellectually, Moreau lives through Matisse and those artists who were inspired by his students. Matisse never denied the value of his copying sessions in the Louvre,<sup>1</sup> because he understood their purpose. Years later, when speaking of Moreau, Matisse said:

He was a cultivated man who stimulated his pupils to see all kinds of painting, while the other teachers were preoccupied with one period only, one style--of contemporary academicism--that is to say their own, the leftovers of all conventions.<sup>2</sup>

Moreau taught Matisse to find stimulation in any work of art which was original.

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<sup>1</sup>Humbert, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup>Tériade, p. 41.

Moreau showed Matisse that the elements of a work of art, rather than its subject matter, create expressive quality. This is especially true when one considers each artist's approach toward color in painting. Matisse, like Moreau, came to see color as an element which ". . . must be thought-out, dreamed, imagined".<sup>1</sup> And Matisse utilized color for its emotional impact rather than its descriptive capabilities.

Moreau also taught Matisse that work in one artistic discipline can benefit another. Although both artists were devoted to two-dimensional media, they each experimented with three-dimensional forms in sculpture. Moreau executed wax and clay sculptures as studies for the figures in his paintings.<sup>2</sup> Moreau's practice of solving two-dimensional problems by working in the third dimension was later adopted by his student. In reference to his three-dimensional studies, Matisse later said, "I did sculpture because what interested me, in painting, was to put order in my brain."<sup>3</sup> Modeling helped Matisse solve his pictorial problems.

The most subtle, and yet most profound, influence of Moreau upon Matisse was in the area of self-expression. Moreau cited nature as an inspirational point of departure for the attainment of self-expression. He taught Matisse to

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<sup>1</sup>Marchiori, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ragnar von Holten, "Gustave Moreau, Sculpteur," La Revue des Arts 9 no. 4-5 (1959) 209-215.

<sup>3</sup>Marchiori, p. 16.

portray his inner feelings about nature, rather than the visual realities of nature.<sup>1</sup> Moreau influenced Matisse to deal with expression symbolically. Both artists were symbolists, but each in his own manner. Moreau's allegorical symbolism was based upon a fixed set of iconographical details, but Matisse's symbolism was composed of a system of implied comparisons based upon the transformation of recurrent themes.<sup>2</sup> Matisse's art and Moreau's art both exhibit subtle human qualities through the use of visual elements like color and form. In this respect, the art and philosophies of Moreau and Matisse live on.

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<sup>1</sup>Jacques Schnier, "Matisse From a Psychoanalytic Point of View," College Art Journal 12 no. 2 (1953) 111.

<sup>2</sup>"Matisse," p. 52.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR APPLYING MOREAU'S PEDAGOGY TO CONTEMPORARY ART INSTRUCTION

Few nineteenth century academicians influenced Modernism. However, Gustave Moreau was an exception to that rule. Moreau had some degree of influence upon the philosophical and technical development of every major modern trend through the mid-twentieth century. When one first considers the diverse characteristics of such styles as Fauvism, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Pop and Op Art, it seems impossible that one mysterious figure could generate such profound and long lasting influence. The only explanation for Moreau's extensive influence seems to be the flexible character of his teaching methods.

While his influence is well documented, no one has as yet considered the importance of the vehicle for this influence. Since Moreau's success in teaching was responsible for the longevity of his philosophical influence, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the possibilities for adapting his pedagogy to contemporary art instruction.



Moreau's methodology can only be beneficial to the contemporary art instructor if it can be applied to present needs in art education. With this end in mind, it is first necessary to study some of the problems encountered in teaching art today. Unfortunately, teaching in most art schools remains conventional.<sup>1</sup> creating the same academic problems which existed at the École des Beaux-Arts in Moreau's day. The aesthetic inbreeding of the nineteenth century academy has been inherited by its twentieth century counterpart. Originality and innovation have little chance of growing in such an environment.

The sterility of the academic mind is usually fostered by the organizational structure of most academies. Those in power still dispense their approval through prizes and medals which are awarded to those students whose works exemplify the traditional use of academic formulae. These formulae all have one aim, and that is the imitation of form. The academic artist is controlled by this bias from his student days through his entire career.

Academicians seldom train their students to perceive anything but the most conventional forms in art. They look at art subjectively as if its primary purpose is

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<sup>1</sup>Nikolaus Pevsner, Academies of Art Past and Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940) pp. 287-293.

illustrative, and that approach makes no consideration for the quality which separates a work of art from any other human product. It denies the legitimacy of the expressive artist's personal view of the world. Furthermore, academic students are taught to imitate an artist's technique without regard for the manner in which he envisioned his subject. Consequently, the essence of the work is lost for both the student and the teacher.

This is not to say that emphasis upon technical discipline should be abandoned in favor of unbridled emotional expression. Most art educators will agree that students must acquire skill in handling their media before creativity can develop,<sup>1</sup> but an over-emphasis upon strict technical interpretation can result in sterility. What is needed in art instruction is a working balance between control and expression. As James Ackerman states:

Education in art should be thought of as a discipline that helps the student to consciously articulate the form-making impulse without losing the power of its irrational and emotional origins.<sup>2</sup>

The acquisition of technical skill should be viewed as a means to an end, rather than the final aim of art education.

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<sup>1</sup>Joachim Thoma, A Contemporary Approach to Art Teaching (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1977) p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Margaret Mahoney and Isabel Moore, editors, The Arts on Campus: The Necessity for Change (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society Ltd., 1970) p. 68.

In addition to stifling innovation and originality, academicism has created a chasm between many artists and their public. The students who have failed to achieve success in avant-garde art circles far outnumber those who have succeeded, and this situation has led many artists to view the public with attitudes marked by bitterness and contempt.<sup>1</sup> But even those artists whose gifts were to become recognized by the public seldom attributed their success to their academic training.<sup>2</sup> Instead, they saw academicism as a dead weight which had to be thrown off before they could make progress in their development. Academic policy continues to represent a void between the avant-garde and the art-buying public.

Since the late 1960s colleges of art, schools of art, and art academies have come face to face with the results of outmoded systems of art education. Art students have rebelled against requirements that seem irrelevant to the contemporary art scene, as well as the academic practice of electing administrative heads for art institutions on the basis of their administrative skills as opposed to their experience with the arts.<sup>3</sup> These student rebellions have

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<sup>1</sup>Sjoerd Hannema, Fads, Fakes and Fantasies: The Crisis in the Art Schools and the Crisis in Art (London: Macdonald and Company Ltd., 1970) p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Pevsner, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup>Stuart Macdonald, The History and Philosophy of Art Education (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1970) pp. 360-362.

raised some academic eyebrows and caused some educators to question the value of the existing structure in art institutions. In his study of the art education system, Sjoerd Hannema found an absence of consistent teaching philosophies and explicit standards of performance to be the primary causes of student unrest.<sup>1</sup> The solution to these problems lies in a reassessment of pedagogical aims and methods as they apply to needs in art education.

The cultural explosion has reemphasized the need for art in higher education. This is probably one reason why so many contemporary educators are concerned with the problems of improving the validity of art education. Edward Mattil points out the main difference between methodology and needs in the fine arts, as opposed to the liberal arts, when they coexist in institutions of higher education: the liberal arts can be transmitted and understood through oral and written communication while an understanding of the fine arts requires the development of additional visual sensitivities.<sup>2</sup> Visual literacy is a tool which cannot be acquired through academic exercises; it can only be developed through experience.

Educational authorities tend to agree on many points when considering the causes of problems in art education and

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<sup>1</sup>Hannema, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence E. Dennis and Renate M. Jacob, The Arts in Higher Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1968) pp. 60-63.

the possible solutions to these problems. All concur that academicism destroys the innovative tendencies of most students and is indirectly responsible for the poor relationship between many artists and their public. They believe that academic emphasis on technique should be combined with encouragement toward self-expression during the learning process. Many educators agree that meaning in art can only be perceived if the viewer develops his visual literacy and comprehends the relationship between experience and methodology. Some propose curricular changes as the answer to problems, while others see the need for consistent teaching philosophies and explicit standards of performance. However, very few educators propose teaching methods which might be utilized as problem-solving solutions.

Educational research generally leaves the selection of teaching methods to the discretion of the teacher. After researching the pedagogy of Gustave Moreau, certain characteristics of his method seem applicable to the needs of contemporary art instructors. It is possible that his methodology might be utilized by the art teacher in higher education. For this purpose, his pedagogy will be studied in relation to current issues in art education.

Moreau was adamantly opposed to the simple imitation theory in art. That was the primary characteristic of his philosophy which distinguished his teaching method from those of his colleagues at the École des Beaux-Arts.

Bouguereau encouraged students to produce facsimile copies of his works, and other École professors demanded of their students exact technical copies of a limited range of old masters' works. Moreau believed in technical discipline, but not as an end in itself. For him, the aim of technical exercise was familiarity with the media which would then allow the student to progress freely towards self-expression.

Edward Mattil sees a need for the development of visual literacy during the processes of creation and appreciation. Moreau would have agreed with Mattil's concept. Moreau was aware that stylistic differences in art result from each artist's personal vision of the world, and he succeeded in creating his own unique manner of painting by relying on visionary images suggested by nature. He encouraged his students to work from life, but only as a point of departure. Moreau's more independent pupils learned how to manipulate their elements of form to achieve expressive content which was unique to each of their experiences. While a student is discovering the intimate relationship between form and personal vision, he can make a comparative study of past artists' sources of form as possible solutions to his own dilemma. Moreau made that requirement of his students. The Louvre copying sessions he initiated were intended to familiarize them with the varied techniques and sources of form utilized by their predecessors. Moreau believed that each generation of artists faces the obligation

of understanding past art so that it might add innovations to the history of art.

Moreau was concerned for the future of art and the future of his students. In fact, most serious art educators contemplate the future because they are aware that their present approach toward art and art education is shaping future direction. Sjoerd Hannema projects the future of art and artists based upon anticipated social changes. With the continuing growth of urbanization and an increase in affluence and leisure time, Hannema sees that art in the future must be directed toward satisfying human needs: architectural design and town-planning must become oriented toward providing living structures in which solitude and beauty offer an escape from the noise, pollution, and debris which characterize the urban environment; art production must become a communal activity in which artists teach their skills in community centers, help transform unproductive land into recreational areas, and assist architects in creating pleasing building interiors.<sup>1</sup> While Moreau realized that he was indirectly shaping the future of art through the work of his independent pupils, he did not have the strong social conscience which Hannema believes the future artist and educator must possess. Moreau was a humanitarian, but his world was very small. Its limits were defined by his home, the homes of some of his students, and his studio at the

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<sup>1</sup>Hannema, pp. 113-118.

École des Beaux-Arts. He was a very private man who cloistered himself from the concerns of society in general. Since he considered Parisian society of his era to be noisily vulgar and congested, he would be even more appalled at the conditions of contemporary society.

Moreau would have felt more comfortable with the futuristic ideas and proposals presented by James Ackerman in The Arts on Campus: The Necessity for Change. Ackerman proposes a teaching philosophy whose goal would be provision for a general art education, rather than a professional art education, in which students are prepared to analyze objectively by being shown alternate ways of perceiving and communicating.<sup>1</sup> Moreau supported the idea of presenting visual alternatives to his students. His primary concern in that respect was to teach all of his students something they could later use in their careers. Since he taught both traditionally-oriented painters and avant-garde painters, he used a different approach with each group. He directed his more academic pupils to synthesize painting styles based upon the best of the old masters, and he encouraged his more independent pupils to take a more objective stylistic approach to all types of art in their quests for originality.

Ackerman's proposed philosophy is directed toward stimulating both the internal and the external development of the individual. For the internal development, he

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<sup>1</sup>Mahoney and Moore, p. 72.



encourages self-realization by utilizing the arts to give articulation to the creative impulses; for the external aspect of the individual, he believes that education should develop ethical conduct in the maintenance of a "humane social and physical environment."<sup>1</sup> Moreau fervently supported the encouragement of self-realization and creativity, and that was the main reason he did not impose his own style on any of his students. It has been previously mentioned that Moreau did not attempt to heighten his students' social consciousness. However, he was a kindly man who maintained a warm student-teacher relationship and insisted upon gentlemanly conduct from his students.

Like Ackerman, many educational futurists see the need for man's external development. Dennis and Jacob see a definite social need for the arts in future higher education. They point out that art is the only area in the curriculum which can train students in emotional maturity by encouraging the expression of personal feeling and its integration with thought.<sup>2</sup> Hannema believes the future artist must be trained both as a skilled craftsman and a humanitarian.<sup>3</sup> It seems as though the majority of art educationalists see a need to train the total man to occupy his future place in a complex and possibly less-humane society.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Dennis and Jacob, pp. 50-53.

<sup>3</sup>Hannema, p. 117.

Ackerman proposes a curriculum which is geared to his teaching philosophy. And again, Moreau's methodology is applicable to this approach. Ackerman's program is organized in three stages: stage one introduces students to the means of visual expression and communication by dealing with the intrinsic character of a visual image; stage two involves a study of content and of the bases for making quality and value judgments by examining the relationship of works of art to their context of cultural values; stage three is an application of previous training to either individual invention or to social situations within the environment.<sup>1</sup> Moreau's teaching methodology can be applied directly to all aspects of Ackerman's curriculum, except for a portion of stage three.

The first stage of the proposed curriculum involves five processes: it first introduces students to techniques and materials; then an analytical study of form and symbolism is introduced by examining the interaction between form and meaning; these analytical studies are then carried further by judging the effects of the elements of form on the viewer and considering the potentialities of each element for conveying feelings and ideas; next, the instructor creates exercises in which his students develop compositions based upon abstract themes; finally, the pupils analyze works by

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<sup>1</sup>Mahoney and Moore, pp. 73-79.

past artists in an art historical context, as well as sketch the works of the artists for stylistic implications which could be used to solve their own studio problems.<sup>1</sup> Moreau emphasized the importance of students dealing with the basics in art, which involved a thorough knowledge of media and technique. Only after a student exhibited a proficiency with his materials, did Moreau allow him to proceed toward self-expression. Moreau believed that originality could be achieved by following two paths: first, by studying the stylistic differences among the works of the old masters and, next, by applying the knowledge of the manner in which others have utilized form to the purpose of expressing one's own feelings and ideas. Moreau, like Ackerman, believed that the true artist's sole aim was personal expression, and both educators have offered similar practical suggestions for achieving that result.

Ackerman's second stage encompasses two operations: first, pupils study the function of art in society and the relationship of art expression to other modes of expression, such as science, mathematics, and politics; second, the pupils are exposed to judgments of quality for the purpose of understanding the nature of the grounds on which the judgments were made and, ultimately, for developing their own aesthetic theories.<sup>2</sup> Moreau also believed strongly in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 73-75.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 75-77.

his students developing their own aesthetic judgments. And he felt they could best achieve that end by studying and analyzing the aesthetic judgments made by other artists and critics. However, when it comes to Ackerman's proposal that the relationship of art to society and other modes of expression should be analyzed by students, he and Moreau differ in their opinions. Moreau was never concerned with answering the needs of society through his art. He did, however, want to communicate his Symbolist ideas to a discerning few and he accomplished that by frequenting gatherings of Symbolist painters and writers. He was unable to perceive an expressive relationship between the liberal arts and the fine arts, but he did see a valid connection between the visual and the literary arts.

The third stage of Ackerman's proposed curriculum represents the culmination of the two previous stages. It also provides the student with an opportunity to exercise his internal and external self. The internal side of the student's nature would involve achieving self-realization through independent study projects, while the needs of the external self could be answered through active practice of communication through art between the student and the community.<sup>1</sup> Moreau encouraged his independent students to follow the pure painting theory by using the elements of form for self-expression, but he was less enthusiastic when it came

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-79.

to his students' communication with the general public. He believed that the genuine artist should make a practice of avoiding fashion in the arts, and thereby limit his communication to an exclusive group of avant-garde thinkers. He could see no value resulting from attempting to satisfy the masses.

Although a few aspects of Moreau's pedagogy might be difficult to apply to the practical considerations of the contemporary art educator, the major portion of his teaching philosophy should be considered for its beneficial effects. Most contemporary educators will agree that students learn more productively in a humane environment where self-motivation, rather than fear of punishment, is respected by the teacher. Moreau's warm attitude toward his students was accentuated by much encouragement and little criticism, as well as a genuine concern for their future welfare. Moreau encouraged self-motivation by avoiding academic formulae and the imposition of his own style upon his students. He was aware that his students would never achieve self-realization if their personal motives were destroyed during the learning process. That was why he based his flexible teaching structure upon the study of the relationship between form and meaning. By citing the expressive qualities of past art and the inspirational qualities of nature as exemplary sources of form and meaning, Moreau

showed his students a wide range of possible directions for the ultimate achievement of self-expression. He tuned his students in to their own imaginations. Can teaching and learning have a better result?

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