

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR WEDNESDAY RELEASE

IMPORTANT EXHIBITION OF WORK BY HENRI MATISSE TO OPEN AT MUSEUM

Note: Because the arrival from France of many important works by Matisse has been delayed by the dock strike, the Museum cannot hold the customary press preview on Tuesday afternoon. The press will be welcome to the Members' private preview on Tuesday evening, November 13, from 7 to 11 p.m. which will be held whether or not the works from France have yet been unloaded from the Ile de France, due to dock in New York on November 12. The press will also be welcome to visit the exhibition the following morning, prior to its opening to the public at noon.

A large, highly selective exhibition of work by the dean of French painters, Henri Matisse, will open to the public on November 14, to remain on view at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, through January 13. The work includes 75 paintings and 31 sculptures as well as numerous drawings, prints and illustrated books, all carefully selected for their high quality by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum's Collections, whose comprehensive book Matisse, His Art and His Public will be published by the Museum early in December. For this important showing, the French Government has assumed responsibility for sending to the U.S. as a generous international gesture, 25 paintings, 12 bronzes and 7 drawings borrowed from French museums and private collections and from Matisse's own collection. Many of these works have never before been shown in this country. The exhibition, which will occupy the third floor galleries, will be installed by Miss Margaret Miller of the Museum staff. After its close in New York it will be shown at the Cleveland Museum of Art, February 5 through March 16; at the Art Institute of Chicago, April 1 through May 1; at the San Francisco Museum of Art, May 21 through July 6. Matisse himself has designed a special 6-color cover for the catalog accompanying the exhibition and a jacket for Mr. Barr's book.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr., says of the exhibition:

France has given Matisse to the world or, it might almost be said, the world has taken Matisse from France. During the most challenging and controversial period of his career his most faithful patrons and ardent followers were Germans, Russians, Scandinavians and, first of all, Americans. Without those redoubtable San Franciscan-Parisians, the four Steins -- Sarah, Leo, Gertrude, Michael-- Matisse's recognition abroad

as a great painter would probably have been deferred as long as it was in France. Their enthusiasm spread in waves over Europe and to America through Edward Steichen Director of the Museum's Department of Photography who organized the three exhibitions which Alfred Stieglitz courageously put on in New York between 1908 and 1912. Today, forty years later, no less than twenty-six public museums throughout the United States own paintings by Matisse.

The present exhibition is not so large as the recent comprehensive retrospectives held in Philadelphia, Lucerne and Tokyo. It is designed first of all to present a highly selective review of Matisse's painting by means of some 75 of his most important or characteristic works ranging from 1890 to his recent magnificent still lifes.

Interspersed among the paintings are concentrated groups of other works many of which are comparatively unfamiliar to the American public. The sculpture, for instance, includes two extraordinary series of variations on a theme -- three great reliefs of a woman's back and five bronze heads of a girl -- of which only the preliminary versions have ever been seen in this country. Matisse's vast graphic oeuvre is represented by two constellations of drawings, one group shown and bought in New York over forty years ago, the other, five studies of the same subject done in 1919. A half dozen handsome lithographs of the 1920s and three sumptuous illustrated books represent his graphic art of recent decades. His brilliant cut-and-pasted papers are shown in compositions of 1950 and 1951.

Of the Dominican chapel at Vence dedicated only a few months ago, Matisse has written: "For me this chapel represents the result of an entire lifetime of work and the flowering of an enormous effort, sincere and difficult." To see the chapel one must go to Vence, but here, in the exhibition, are the bronze crucifix and full-scale designs for the windows, the great butterfly-like chasubles, the carved door of the confessional, and studies for the mural compositions in black line on white tile.

Matisse will be eighty-two on the last day of 1951. He has been co-operative in assembling this exhibition but, to tell the truth, he is not interested in "retrospectives." His mind is full of plans for the future -- more paintings, more stained glass, more sculpture. Some of it is already under way. This exhibition is merely a report of progress, of magnificent achievement not yet completed.

Special Matisse Symposium to be held:

"The Art of Matisse," a discussion of the work of the dean of French painters and reminiscences by his friends will take place in the Museum Auditorium on November 19 at 8:30 p.m. Participating friends of Matisse are:

Panel members: Walter Pach, painter and critic

Max Weber, American artist and one-time pupil  
of Matisse.

Edward Steichen, photographer who introduced the  
work of Matisse to this country

Meyer Schapiro, author and professor

Moderator: Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum

Collections and author of the forthcoming book,

Matisse: His Art and His Public

Tickets: Members \$1.50; non-members \$2.00

Notes on the biography of Henri Matisse and the development of his art: (based on Mr. Barr's forthcoming book)

Henri Emile Benoit Matisse, son of a successful grain merchant, was born on December 31, 1869 at Le Cateau-Cambrésis. He studied law in Paris and, in 1889, took a position as a lawyer's clerk at St. Quentin. The following summer he attended an elementary drawing class and painted as an amateur "Books and Candles," the earliest work shown in this exhibition. He studied painting in Paris during the winter of 1891-92, first with Bouguereau and later with the more liberal Gustave Moreau, where he met other students who were to join him a decade later to become the "fauves." At this time, Matisse copied 17th- and 18th-century paintings at the Louvre; and his own works, mostly in the manner of Chardin, he successfully exhibited in 1896 at the conservative Salon Nationale to which he was elected as a member.

He completed his first major composition, "Dinner Table" (exhibited), in 1897 which aroused academic disfavor. At this time he met Pissarro, dean of the impressionists, and for the next year he painted vigorous impressionist landscapes. He married Amélie Payrayre in 1898 and, after a year in Corsica and Toulouse, settled in a Paris studio apartment where he remained until 1908. He worked from the model along with André Derain, purchased small works by Cézanne, Gauguin and Rodin. His painting soon began to reflect his study of Cézanne. Between 1899-1900 he executed his first sculptures, influenced by Rodin.

For the next few years Matisse suffered acute financial problems and went to live in his parents' home, painting less radical, more somber interiors and landscapes, exhibiting each year at the modern Salons, working evenings on sculpture, starting to make etchings and drypoints. The critic Roger Marx and the dealer Berthe Weill advocated his paintings, and he had his first one-man show at Vollard's in June 1904. He spent this summer on the Riviera near the painters Paul Signac and Henri-Edmond Cross whose pointillist technique and pure high-keyed color showed their influence in Matisse's large Neo-Impressionist figure composition "Luxe, Calme et Volupté" (exhibited), a canvas that stirred great interest at the Salon des Indépendants in

1905. At the Salon d'Automne he exhibited along with Derain, Manguin, Vlaminck, Friesz and Rouault. The violent color and unconventional drawing of this group, led by Matisse, soon caused them to be nicknamed "les fauves" (the wild beasts). At this time Matisse met the four Steins, originally from San Francisco, who started purchasing his work. Leo Stein and his sister Gertrude welcomed him to their influential Saturday evenings. Michael Stein and his wife Sarah, returning home to look after their affairs following the San Francisco earthquake, took with them a Matisse drawing and oil, and thus brought the first Matisses to America. They showed them to Alice B. Toklas and then to George F. Of, the master picture-framer, who asked them to buy him one, sight unseen. On their return to Paris, they sent him "Nude in a Wood," the first Matisse acquired by a collector in the U.S. Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, the Steins' house guest in Paris, bought the first of 43 Matisse paintings in the Cone Collection, now in the Baltimore Museum. Thirteen oils and sculptures and 4 drawings and lithographs have been borrowed from this collection for the exhibition. Other friends and supporters of Matisse at this time included Harriet Levy of San Francisco, Hans Purrmann of Mainz and Marcel Sembat of Grenoble.

Matisse's work now represented a radical break with realist tradition, and he was regarded as "King of the Fauves." After his second one-man show in 1906, which included his first lithographs and woodcuts, he traveled briefly in North Africa and in Italy. By 1908 the Russian collector Sergei Shchukin became his principal patron, purchasing in the subsequent 6 years 37 paintings, now owned by the Museum of Modern Western Art in Moscow. He had abandoned the fauve style in 1907 and now painted powerfully constructed paintings in flat colors. He produced a series of portraits in 1909-10 (exhibited) and some large landscape compositions with a few figures, beginning with "Bathers with a Turtle" (exhibited) and culminating in the "Dance and "Music," mural canvases commissioned by Shchukin, the key studies for which are exhibited. During the winter Matisse took a trip to Spain, and in the fall of 1911 he traveled to Moscow in connection with the Shchukin decorations. He painted a series of large interiors, one of the most important of which is "Red Studio" owned by the Museum of Modern Art (exhibited).



For three years, from 1908-11, Matisse ran a school, organized by Sarah Stein, Hans Purrmann and others, which attracted about 120 students, including the American painter Max Weber, the caricaturist Al Frueh and the future dealer Joseph Brummer. The following two winters were spent in Tangier where he painted Moroccan views (two exhibited including "Park in Tangier" from the Stockholm Museum, never before seen here) and models in native dress (one exhibited). During this period his flat, brightly colored style gave way to more sober discipline and structure in depth. The Moroccan works were exhibited in 1913 at Bernheim-Jeune Gallery where he had signed a contract in 1909.

International recognition for Matisse really began in 1908 when Edward Steichen organized the first one-man show outside of France for Alfred Stieglitz' "291" Gallery in New York, and a second one in 1910. During these two years Matisse also exhibited in Moscow, Berlin and in England. In 1912, "291" showed his sculpture, and he was impressively represented in three important international exhibitions, including the famous "Armory Show" of 1913 in New York, Chicago and Boston.

Matisse's painting now became more restrained in color, as shown in his monumental figure studies "Woman on a High Stool" and "Yvonne Landsberg" (both exhibited). He moved from the comparatively realistic "Interior with Goldfish" to the flat semi-cubist "Goldfish" (both exhibited), and painted several very large semi-abstract compositions, such as "The Moroccans," and the "Piano Lesson" and "Bathers by a River" (all exhibited).

Matisse was 44 when World War I began, too old to take a part. About that time he made some 50 portrait etchings and another series of lithographs. In 1915 a large exhibition of his work was held at the Montross Gallery in New York, organized by the painter and art critic Walter Pach. During the latter part of the war he set the pattern for following years of spending winters on the Riviera, returning north in summer. At Nice his style became softer and more realistic in his views from hotel windows, interiors, landscapes and numerous studies of a model wearing a plumed hat (five exhibited). He designed sets and costumes for a Diaghilev-Stravinsky-Massine

ballet presented in 1920 in Paris and London. This pleasant, serene and decorative style continued into the 1920s with paintings of girls at a window, odalisques and nudes against decorative backgrounds, still lifes with flowers and richly furnished interiors (several exhibited). During this period he made a great many drawings and lithographs (several exhibited).

In 1925, Matisse was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. He resumed his work in sculpture at this time with "Seated Nude" (exhibited), and he renewed his experimental work in painting that was more vigorous, yet retained its decorative effect, and in drawing that was more arbitrary, with figures schematically composed. He won first prize at the Carnegie International Exhibition in Pittsburgh in 1927, and in this year his son Pierre Matisse organized an exhibition at the Valentine Gallery in New York.

Matisse's first visit to this country was early in 1930 when he went to Tahiti by way of New York and San Francisco. Later in the year he returned to serve as juror at the Carnegie International Exhibition and visited Philadelphia and Baltimore. Large retrospective exhibitions of his work were held in Berlin, Paris, Basle and in New York at the Museum of Modern Art in 1931. Dr. Albert C. Barnes of Merion, Pennsylvania, commissioned a large mural, "The Dance," which Matisse finished in 1933, and then came to America to supervise its installation.

From 1933 to 1939 Matisse worked more with easel painting, executing many nudes, large decorative paintings such as "The Magnolia Branch" (exhibited), a long series of pen drawings, some portraits and figure compositions. In 1937 he made his first découpages (colored papers cut with scissors and assembled with paste), a method which he has since used extensively, particularly in the designs for the recent work for the Vence chapel, as well as for the two covers he has just designed for the Museum's catalog and book.

When the cold war of 1939 turned hot in May 1940, Matisse contemplated leaving France for Brazil, but changed his mind and stayed. In 1941 he underwent serious operations which left him a partial invalid. When air raids and Allied invasion threatened Nice in 1943, Matisse moved to the hill town of Vence where he stayed through 1948. At first in Vence he painted less, but worked more on illustrations

for several books, and wrote the text and composed the découpages for "Jazz," published in 1947. In the late 1930s he had designed for various media, such as tapestries and glassware, and he now designed more tapestries, an altarpiece for a modern church at Assy, a rug and some linen stencils.

From 1948-50, Matisse's major effort was devoted to the Vence chapel. With the assistance of Brother Rayssiguier and the architect Auguste Perret, Matisse designed a Chapel of the Rosary for the Dominican nuns of Vence. His work included all the furnishings and decoration: black line tile murals of St. Dominic, the Virgin and Child and Stations of the Cross; stained glass windows, altar, crucifix, chasubles, carved door and wrought-iron spire. (Full-scale designs, studies, replicas etc. exhibited). The chapel was consecrated last June. Although Matisse has said he considered this chapel to be his masterpiece, recent visitors report that he is so bursting with new ideas and energy that they will not be at all surprised to see future masterpieces by him.

The Museum of Modern Art, in organizing this exhibition, has borrowed paintings and sculptures from 15 American and foreign museums and from 33 private collections. Thirty-two works have come from Matisse's own collection.

New Book on Matisse Published by Museum

Matisse, His Art and His Public, by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Director of the Museum Collections, will be the most complete account ever written not only of the artist's life and achievement but of how the world has received his art. Now at the age of 82, Matisse is accepted as a master, but for years he was the most controversial living painter. The book's many quotations record how he was attacked, slyly or with blundering fury, and of how he was supported with hammer-and-tongs enthusiasm by English critics, German painters, Scandinavian pupils, a Russian businessman who was the world's greatest collector of 20th-century painting, and above all by Americans -- Leo and Sarah Stein, Bernard Berenson, Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Walter Pach -- who, four decades ago, fought for his art in Paris and New York.

Far greater than the warfare around Matisse's art was the struggle within the artist; no painter has suffered more creative anxiety than Matisse or been more articulate about his artistic problems. Here are his honest and lucid statements along with the eminent author's own analyses and evaluations of hundreds of individual works.

The 500 illustrations as well as the text cover for the first time in one volume the extraordinary range of Matisse's art, his paintings, drawings, sculpture (so long neglected); his prints, decorative arts, theatre designs and superb illustrated books. Many documentary photographs show his pictures in the Steins' living rooms in 1907, in a Moscow palace in 1912, or record how the artist looked teaching a sculpture class in 1909, rowing a two-oared scull in 1920, signing a ballet curtain in 1939 or modeling a crucifix in 1950.

Notes taken in Matisse's school forty years ago, contracts with his dealer, lists of his paintings in public galleries and an extended bibliography supplement the text and illustrations, which include 23 full page color plates.

Alfred H. Barr, Jr. is Director of the Collections at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and through the fame of his previous books, Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art and What is Modern Painting? - to



mention only two - is widely known as a lucid and authoritative writer on modern art. He has written of Matisse:

"Joy of Life and The Dance are two of Matisse's most famous works; the third is his just completed Chapel at Vence in which light and color sing with a radiance unsurpassed since gothic stained glass. In a world grown dark with fear and muddy with lies Matisse has sought truth and serenity by transforming his delight in the visible world into works vigorous in form, joyous in color."