

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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MATISSE PRINTS ON VIEW AT MUSEUM

The most extensive survey of prints by Matisse ever held in New York will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from June 27 through October 7. The Prints of Henri Matisse, under the direction of William S. Lieberman, Curator of Prints, contains 80 works of art including nine monotypes, a large group of lithographs, etchings, and drypoints, linoleum cuts, aquatints and 15 illustrations from three books.

Portraits of Matisse's friends and family; studies of the nude; interiors and still lifes; illustrations for the poems of Mallarmé, for Henry de Montherlant's Pasiphaé: Chant de Minos, and circus scenes from Jazz are included in the exhibition which ranges from etchings made in 1903 to three aquatints executed during the winter of 1952-53, a year before he died. Most of the prints, three-quarters of which are from the Museum Collection, are being shown for the first time.

Seven sculptures of figures, including The Slave, complimentary or related to the prints, are also shown in the exhibition.

"Unlike Picasso or Rouault," Mr. Lieberman says, "Matisse never sustained a continuous interest in printmaking as such. While his accomplishment as an etcher, lithographer and book illustrator was prodigious, it was limited to comparatively short periods throughout his career. Twice, for instance, in 1914 and 1929, he took up etchings with enthusiasm, as if he deliberately sought refreshment from easel painting in the chemistry of a print medium.

"Matisse first worked in copper about 1903. His early prints are tentative essays, the most assured of which, the Self-Portrait as an Etcher, offers a factual reflection of the artist's image. The bold abbreviation of another self-portrait in the exhibition, a lithograph drawn fifty years later, offers a startling contrast in observation.

"The exhibition shows all Matisse's linoleum cuts and most of his lithographs of 1906. His first etchings, cumulatively significant as a series, were begun in 1914, a year in which he returned to printmaking in several media. Within a period of a few months he produced nine or ten lithographs, a dozen monotypes and about fifty etchings. The etchings, mostly portraits of friends and family, build a brilliant sequence of quick and informal characterizations: the wives of the

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painters Galanis and Gris, Mme Vignier and her young daughter, Mlle Landsberg, the artist's son, daughter and wife, and surprising to a student of Matisse, several men, among them Iturrino, Bourgeat and the American painter Walter Pach. The contours of the faces often fill the rectangular format of the copper plate itself; figures are treated at greater length only occasionally.

"The exhibition gathers together the largest selection of Matisse monotypes ever assembled. These monotypes--each unique--represent still lifes, portrait heads, studies of the nude and an interior. After the etchings, monotypes and lithographs of 1914, Matisse's most important prints were lithographs composed between 1926 and 1930. For the most part studies of professional models, these include free studies of nudes in contorted positions as well as the more famous, meticulously-detailed drawings of odalisques.

"Suddenly, at the end of the decade in 1929, Matisse resumed etching. Again within a period of months, he etched a constellation of plates. Many of these etchings repeat the seraglio atmosphere of the lithographs, and Matisse plays variations on certain themes such as a nude gazing at a bowl of goldfish. The etchings offer daring reductions of a pose or movement into an essential of lines. In 1930 Matisse began a third and last important series of etchings, illustrations to the poems of Mallarmé. Three of these are included in the exhibition. After 1930 and until his death Matisse's imagination continued to be stimulated by projects for illustrated books. Plates for two other volumes are shown: linoleum cuts to Henry de Montherlant's Pasiphaé: Chant de Minos (1944) and Jazz (1947).

"The copy of Jazz was chosen by and presented to the Museum by Matisse himself. Begun at the age of seventy-seven, it is one of the most splendid creations of his last years. The ten scenes exhibited are taken from circus life: sword swallowers and throwers, cowboys, swimmers, elephants. Two plates represent actual performers: Monsieur Loyal, a famous clown, and the Codomas, a family of trapeze artists. The designs for Jazz were worked out with scissors, paste and pins into collages of painted pieces of paper. These were reproduced by pochoir (stencil) using the very same colored inks mixed by Matisse himself. Matisse was also the author of the text for Jazz, and facsimiles of his manuscript are included.

"The exhibition concludes with three aquatints, executed during the Winter of 1952-53. A pair of these are women's heads freely brushed into the plate to create, when printed, the effect of drawings in ink."

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Lenders of prints include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, W. Roloff Beny, Peter H. Deitsch, Mr. and Mrs. E. Powis Jones, Louis Macmillan, Mrs. Gertrud A. Mellon, Walter Pach, Mrs. Bertha M. Slattery, and Robert Thomsen. Most of the prints, however, are from the Museum of Modern Art collection. Of the seven pieces of sculpture four are from the Museum collection and the others are on loan from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mrs. Ruth Dubonnet, and Miss Helen Frankenthaler.

Photographs and further information as well as a complete checklist are available from Elizabeth Shaw, Publicity Director, the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York 19, N. Y. Circle 5-8900.