

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

DRAWINGS: RECENT ACQUISITIONS
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
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Wall Label

These drawings by Henri Matisse are particularly relevant to other works by the artist in the Museum's collection which are exhibited with them.

Earliest in date is a pencil study, contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Matisse in honor and memory of M. Victor Leventritt, for Madeleine, Matisse's first sculpture of the female figure of 1901. In 1900 Matisse began his first original sculpture, a male figure called The Slave; he then went on to Madeleine. In the drawing the figure is shown in the same posture as in the sculpture, standing with arms folded across her breast to give emphasis to the curve of outthrust hip and thigh. In the finished sculpture, the contour of the hip becomes more exaggerated, and the naturalistic details of flesh have been simplified to accentuate this curve

Another sketch from the model, Nude Study, a view of the model from the back, of around 1907, makes a fascinating companion to a nude study already in the collection, which shows the model in a similar pose from the front. The restlessness of stroke that is characteristic of Matisse's drawings of the Fauve period dominates in these studies. Although they were probably studio sketches, perhaps they ultimately suggested to Matisse the idea for his series of four large relief sculptures, The Back (numbered I-IV, 1909-30) which can be seen in the Museum's garden from this gallery's window.

A major acquisition, a gift of Mrs. Bernard F. Gimbel, is a pen and ink portrait of Yvonne Landsberg, the sitter for Matisse's famous painting in oil of 1914, now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Albert Clinton Landsberg, the brother of the model, had met Matisse, and in the spring of 1914 prevailed on his family to commission from Matisse a portrait drawing of his sister Yvonne, who was not yet twenty at the time.

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Matisse completed a full-face pencil study of her and then asked whether she might pose for a painting. Numerous sittings followed, and Matisse made several drawings and five etchings of her, of which one is shown here. The drawing exhibited is one of the studies that preceded the painting. Its delicacy of line and subtlety of portrayal make the finished painting seem even more remarkable. Although Mlle Landsberg's portrait in oil had begun as a close likeness to the sitter, it grew daily more abstract. At the last sitting, while the paint was still wet, Matisse incised with the wooden ends of his brushes the lines that curve out from the figure.

Eila Kokkinen
Assistant Curator for Drawings
Department of Drawings and Prints