

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
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MATISSE IN MOROCCO: THE PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS, 1912-1913

June 24 - September 4, 1990

An exhibition of paintings and newly discovered drawings made by Henri Matisse (1869-1954) in Morocco during 1912-13 opens at The Museum of Modern Art on June 24 and continues through September 4, 1990. MATISSE IN MOROCCO: THE PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS, 1912-1913 is the only comprehensive exhibition ever devoted to this pivotal phase of the artist's career. It includes twenty-three paintings, many of them masterworks, and forty-eight drawings, most of them lively studies of the people and the Casbah of Tangier.

Organized through a unique collaboration among the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, and the State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, MATISSE IN MOROCCO is the first exhibition worked out in all phases jointly by western and Soviet curators.

The exhibition is made possible by a generous grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation. Additional support for the New York showing has been provided by the IBM Corporation. An indemnity for the exhibition was received from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

MATISSE IN MOROCCO includes loans from public and private collections in the United States, Soviet Union, France, Sweden, and Switzerland. It comprises twenty-three paintings, twelve of which have never been exhibited in

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the United States, and forty-eight drawings, the vast majority of which were unknown before research for the project began and forty-five of which have never been exhibited before.

Henri Matisse visited Tangier twice, from late January to mid-April 1912 and from early October 1912 until mid-February 1913. Already an established artist in Europe, he traveled to North Africa in search of new motifs. For Matisse, Morocco represented a kind of earthly paradise. He was struck by its strong southern light and bold architecture, which inspired him to flatten and simplify his compositions while employing bold juxtapositions of color. The motifs and techniques he developed in Morocco influenced and informed his work for the rest of his career.

Matisse chose as his subjects the landscape, architecture, and people of Tangier. The paintings are large and colorful; the drawings are energetic, personal pen-and-ink sketches. One of the most important works in the exhibition, a trio of paintings never before seen in the United States, is the famous Moroccan Triptych from Moscow's Pushkin Museum. It features *On the Terrace*, a painting of Matisse's favorite Moroccan model Zorah, and is flanked by *Landscape Viewed from a Window*, a view of the city and bay of Tangier as seen from the artist's hotel window, and *The Casbah Gate*, a view through an arched gate to the *medina* or old city of Tangier.

Matisse's Moroccan paintings were immediately sought after by private collectors in France, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, and Russia. His two most important patrons were Ivan A. Morosov and Sergei I. Shchukin, both from Moscow. Ultimately, Morosov and Shchukin acquired nearly half of the paintings Matisse completed in Morocco, and these paintings are today in the collections of the Leningrad and Moscow museums.

The exhibition was organized by an international curatorial team, including Jack Cowart, curator of twentieth-century art at the National Gallery of Art; Pierre Schneider, a noted art critic and writer on Matisse, from Paris; John Elderfield, director of the Department of Drawings and curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art; Albert Kostenevich, chief curator of modern European painting at the Hermitage; and Marina Bessonova, curator of modern French painting at the Pushkin.

The exhibition opened at The National Gallery of Art in March 1990. Following its New York showing, it travels to the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow (October 1 - November 20, 1990) and the State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad (December 15, 1990 - February 15, 1991).

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