



Samantha Friedman  
Illustrations by Cristina Amodeo

# MATISSE'S GARDEN

with reproductions of artworks  
by Henri Matisse

**MoMA**



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with reproductions of works by Henri Matisse

The Museum of Modern Art, New York



One day the artist Henri Matisse cut a small bird from a piece of white paper.



It was a simple shape, but he liked the way it looked and didn't want to throw it out. So he pinned it on the wall of his apartment to cover up a stain.





**T**he bird seemed lonely by itself. So Matisse cut out more shapes, which joined the bird on the wall.

**A**s he cut shape after shape from the white paper, he thought about a trip he had taken many years before, to the island of Tahiti. The shapes looked like the birds, fish, and seaweed he had seen there.





**A**s his scissors glided through the paper, he thought about how a bird must feel when it flies. As he cut, Matisse felt like he, too, was flying.



**S**oon his walls were covered with plant and animal shapes. They captured the feeling of soaring and the sensation of swimming, but they didn't convey the bright blue of the sky or the deep blue of the sea.

**S**o he made a new work, this time pinning his white forms to sheets painted azure and marine blue.



Matisse  
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**W**hen he saw how the color brought his shapes to life, he asked his assistants to paint sheets of paper in a range of shades, from vermillion to lemon to violet. Instead of using only white paper, he decided he would make his shapes by cutting directly into color.

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## HENRI MATISSE (1869–1954)

Henri Matisse was born in 1869, in Le Cateau-Cambrésis, in northern France. He trained to be a lawyer but took up painting while recovering from appendicitis. In 1891 he went to Paris to study art at the Académie Julian, and he became an apprentice to the painter Gustave Moreau. In the summers of 1904 and 1905, in the sunlit South of France, Matisse began to paint with bright, clashing colors. This style was eventually called Fauvism, after a critic called Matisse and other artists painting in this manner *fauves*, or wild beasts.

From there Matisse continued along a path he described as “construction by means of color.” On a visit to Morocco in 1912 and 1913 he took in light, architecture, and textiles that influenced his painting; during his Nice period, from 1917 to 1930, he focused on female figures, interiors, and still lifes. In the 1930s and ’40s Matisse turned increasingly to printmaking, and in the last decade of his life he pioneered a new form that came to be known as cut-outs, creating perhaps his most radical works at the end of his career. He died in 1954, at the age of eighty-four.

### WORKS BY MATISSE

#### Polynesia, the Sky. 1946

Maquette for tapestry  
Gouache on paper, cut and pasted, mounted on canvas  
6' 6 3/4" x 10' 3 5/8" (200 x 314 cm)  
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle



#### Polynesia, the Sea. 1946

Maquette for tapestry  
Gouache on paper, cut and pasted, mounted on canvas  
6' 5 3/16" x 10' 3 5/8" (196 x 314 cm)  
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle



#### Composition (The Velvets). 1947

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted  
20 1/4" x 7' 1 5/8" (51.5 x 217.5 cm)  
Kunstmuseum Basel. Acquired with support from  
Dr. Richard Doetsch-Benziger, Basel, and Marguerite Hagenbach, Basel



#### Composition, Black and Red. 1947

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted  
16 x 20 3/4" (40.6 x 52.7 cm)  
Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley,  
Massachusetts. Gift of Professor and Mrs. John McAndrew



#### The Bees. Summer 1948

Preliminary maquette for the side windows  
of the Chapel of the Rosary, Vence  
Gouache on paper, cut and pasted, mounted on canvas  
39 3/4" x 7' 10 7/8" (101 x 241 cm)  
Musée Matisse, Nice. Gift of the artist's family



#### Zulma. Early 1950

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted  
7' 9 11/16" x 52 3/8" (238 x 133 cm)  
Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen



#### Chinese Fish. 1951

Maquette for stained-glass window  
Gouache on paper, cut and pasted,  
and charcoal on white paper, mounted on canvas  
6' 2 3/4" x 35 1/2" (189.9 x 90.2 cm)  
Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros

#### The Parakeet and the Mermaid. 1952

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted, and charcoal on white paper  
11' 5/8" x 25' 2" (337 x 768.5 cm)  
Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, acquired with  
the generous support of the Vereniging Rembrandt and the  
Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds



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