

Biennale
des Arts
de Nice

Henri Matisse, *Tulipes et huîtres sur fond noir*, 1943, oil on canvas, Musée national Picasso, Paris | © Succession H. Matisse | Photo © RMN-Grand Palais
[Musée national Picasso-Paris] / Mathieu Rabreau • David Hockney, *30th January 2021*, iPad painting, collection of the artist | © David Hockney



Un
Paradis
retrouvé

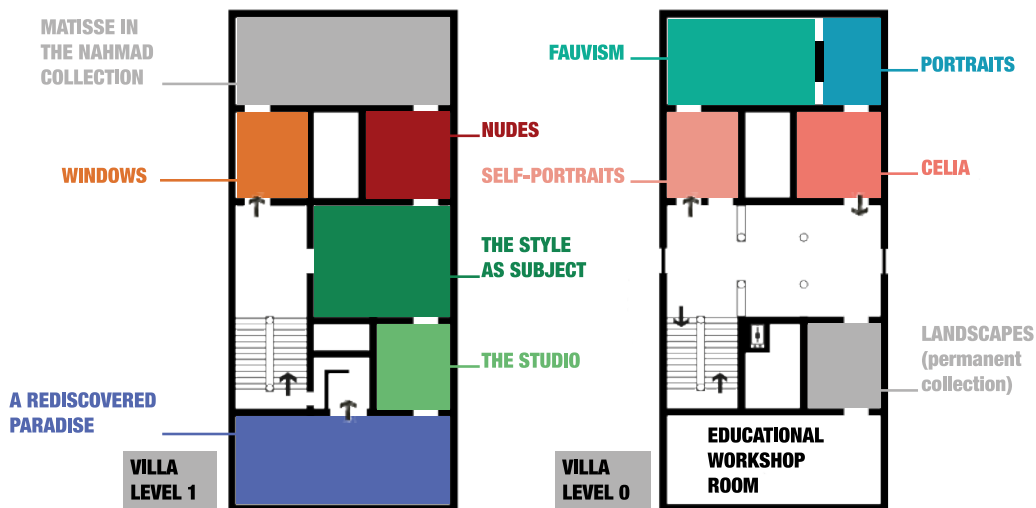
Hockney
Matisse



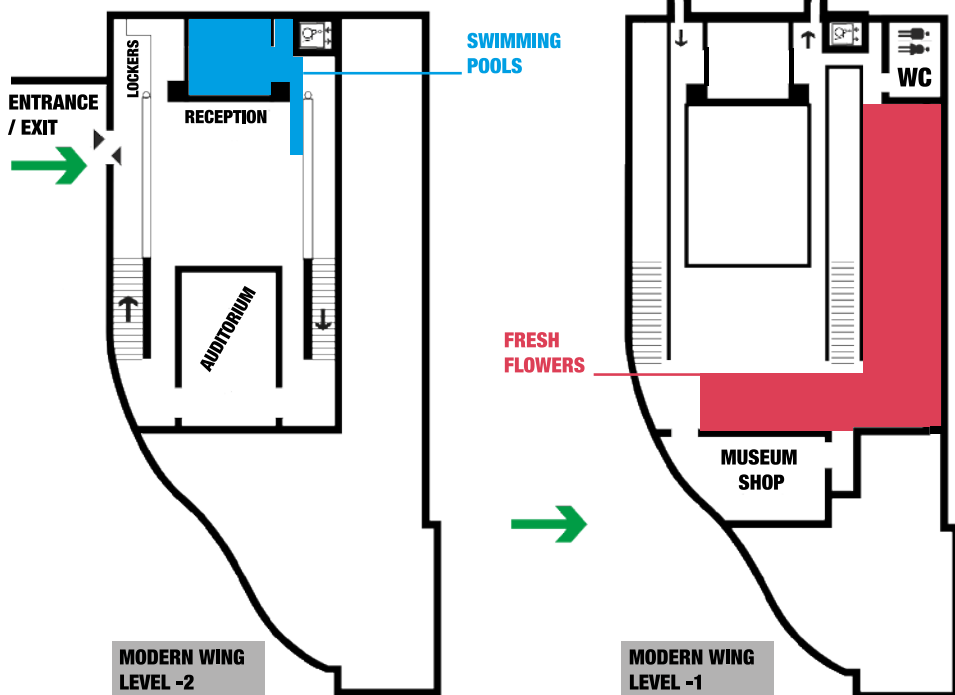
MUSÉE MATISSE

9 JUNE > 18 SEPT. 2022

EXHIBITION
GUIDE



SECTIONS OF THE EXHIBITION



Hockney – Matisse. Un Paradis retrouvé

The exhibition starts with a recent series of flower iPad paintings made in Normandy. The show then takes the public on a journey through the museum's permanent collection seen through the prism of David Hockney's art. Never reduced to simple juxtapositions, the display creates surprising echoes which show what their two worlds have in common, particularly this sensual continuity between the studio space and its objects – the mental space of creation – and the outside-landscape, in Nice, Tahiti or Los Angeles. The French Riviera coincides with California through several themes: the swimming pool, the window and lush gardens.

From room to room, we understand that David Hockney's work is never far from Henri Matisse's, whether in the pure lines of his drawings, in his landscapes full of his body and movements, or in his relationship with the model and, more generally speaking, in his desire to embrace reality. Traces of the same uncompromising gaze can be found everywhere in the works of two painters who never stop reflecting on perception and exploring its multiple potentialities. The same desire for colour can also be found everywhere in their art: it gives us pure delight as it opens onto their 'paradis retrouvé'.

FRESH FLOWERS

These bouquets were made by David Hockney between 30 January and 21 April 2021 in his house in Normandy where he has been living since 2020. With this series, he shows complete mastery of a medium with which he has been experimenting since 2011. As the years went by, he transformed his iPad painting technique while getting used to this new tool offered to the painter-engraver. Rather than giving a photographic rendering to his work, he prefers to reveal the variety of the marks he uses on the iPad: "When you look at the flowers closely, you can see how they are drawn, you can see the marks I made, very clearly. I don't try to cover them up. And that's essential I think."

SELF-PORTRAITS

The conversation starts with self-portraits which bring together artists who never stop questioning their reflection while following the

rules of the genre. In Hockney's self-portraits as in Matisse's, the artist is not only faced with his image but also questions the nature of perception. The perceiving artist is not only an eye but the vehicle for a multisensory perception which involves the body as a whole.

FAUVISM

Hockney has repeated, including when he was studying at the Royal College of Art in London, his interest in Fauvism. The impact of the Fauve aesthetics on his work is more visible at the beginning of the 1980s, in his landscapes of the Hollywood Hills – their burst of colours is a sign of his spontaneity –, and his opera set designs, particularly those he created for Maurice Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*.

PORTRAITS

David Hockney has been dedicating himself to portraits for more than 60 years through

different mediums, including the iPad, working from life or from photographs.

His father was the subject of his first oil painting in 1955 but it's only in 1966 that he started trying to capture the likeness of his model with the *Portrait of Nick Wilder*. He said once: "Painting portraits took quite a while to come to. I think I always wanted to do portraits, but you were so tied to those boring old Royal Academy ideas. The portraits, after all, of Picasso and Matisse were not the ones that were being thrust at you, they're not even now. Now I have come to the conclusion that painted portraits are infinitely more interesting than photographic portraits. [...] The painting of another person is [...] deep in us, everybody is interested in faces."

CELIA

In the series of lithographs *Celia* and *Ann*, made in the Gemini studio between 1979 and 1980, David Hockney's graphic vocabulary evolved as it drew inspiration from Van Gogh and Matisse. The dry drawing-contour of the previous years made way for a great diversity of marks whose linear rhythms varied in their effects and directions, bringing the surface to life and giving it its luminous quality. Like Matisse, he got 'closer' to his model: there is similarity in the way they both draw the figure within the space of the page.

WINDOWS

The 1972 aquatint, *Rue de Seine*, Hockney made during his stay in Paris explores the Matissian theme of the window combined with that of the goldfish bowl. He couldn't be more explicit in his references. The window reappears in

two 1974 paintings of the Louvre, *Contre-jour in the French Style – Against the Day dans le Style Français* and *Two Vases in the Louvre*, the second of which is presented in the exhibition.

Other windows would follow in his work such as the huge bay window looking out over the sand dunes and the ocean in *Fire Island Interior* (1976) which can be seen as an American version of Matisse's Nice interiors.

NUDES

From academic drawings to odalisques and sculptures, Matisse's work revolving around the body and its relationship to space proved essential until the end of his career. As a counterpoint to his almost exclusive focus on female nudes, we decided to show an ensemble of Hockney's male nudes which testify to the autobiographical nature of his art.

The drawings and etchings of Peter, Mo or Wayne are both erotic and sensuous and they all reflect Hockney's intimacy with the model. These naked men who adopt languid poses usually associated with femininity speak of Hockney's sense of belonging to the gay community he discovered in New York and then in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s.

Hockney's attachment to the representation of the human figure shows how, at the time, he ran against the prevailing trend of abstraction and conceptual art.

THE STYLE AS SUBJECT

From the start, Hockney used stylistic versatility as his signature. It freed him from pigeonholing

and equipped him with an extraordinary ability to reinvent himself: “I realised you could play with style in a painting to make a ‘collage’ without using different materials... I thought this is an interesting thing you can play with, style as a subject.”

In *Two Heads and a Palm Tree*, figuration, abstraction and text merge into a single image. Some of Matisse’s works, especially his most experimental paintings, reflect a very similar tendency towards stylistic hybridity.

THE STUDIO

A fervent Proust reader, like Henri Matisse, David Hockney tends to be more and more attached to his studio and the world of various sensations it forms. As the years go by, from his studios in London (Pembroke) and Los Angeles to his current studio in Normandy, the ties between the artist and his space of creation grew tighter.

Paying close attention to their environment, both artists are particularly attached to certain objects: the chair or the armchair, for instance. Matisse’s *Fauteuil rocaille* is the most famous example of his fascination with a Venetian baroque chair which he bought from an antiquarian in Nice and portrayed as if it was a man or a woman sitting in majesty. Hockney’s armchair is less precious but it is as subjective as Matisse’s in the way it suggests human presence without it being shown.

The use of reverse perspective in *Pembroke Studio Interior* (1984) or in *Green Easy Chair* (1986) only makes the objects closer – they seem to protrude from the painting and call

attention to themselves. Despite the banality of his 1988 *Office Chair*, Hockney manages to give it a familiar quality which makes it alive.

A REDISCOVERED PARADISE

In Normandy, David Hockney’s studio isn’t only a room anymore, it stretches for miles and includes the surrounding countryside. Hockney knows every plant, every tree which grows in the gardens around the house and says: “here I am right in the middle of my subject.” Close to nature, he observes it through the seasons and records its changes in many drawings and paintings.

In 1941, a surgery left Matisse chair and bed bound. He worked continuously but was prevented from moving and travelling normally. At Villa Le Rêve in Vence and then in his large studio at the Régina, he lived in a world of plants and flowers, a lush garden in which he mentally took regular walks. The exhibition’s last section is dedicated to an important theme the two artists have in common, that of the luxuriant garden.

At the end of this journey, the viewer realises that the older the two artists get, the more energy, freshness and youth they convey through their work – Hockney with his iPad paintings, Matisse with his cut-outs.

MUSÉE MATISSE

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Museum open every day except on Tuesdays

Open from 10 am to 5 pm from November 1st to April 30th

Open from 10 am to 6 pm from May 2nd to October 31st

Closed on January 1st, Easter Sunday, May 1st and December 25th

ACTIVITIES

Guided tours of the museum and the exhibitions

Interactive tours for families and workshops for children and adults (only in French)

Information : musee-matisse-nice.org

MUSEUM SHOP ARTEUM

A selection of books and items related to the collection and the exhibition

Discover the catalogue of the exhibition « Hockney - Matisse. Un Paradis retrouvé. »

(bilingual edition, In Fine éditions d'art, 136 p., 35 €)

Level -1 of the museum and online at arteum.com

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Henri Matisse's grave (in the monastery cemetery)

Nice-Cimiez Archaeology Museum

« Jardin des Arènes » (garden planted with centuries-old olive trees next to the Roman arena)

Cimiez Monastery and its garden

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