

MATISSE IN THE 1930s

THROUGH THE LENS OF *CAHIERS D'ART*

ACTIVITY
BOOKLET

MUSÉE
MATISSE
NICE

EXHIBITION PRESENTED FROM JUNE 23rd TO SEPTEMBER 24th 2023

Hi, I'm **Raudi**,
Henri Matisse's dog!

What's your name?

Can I join you while you visit the
exhibition "**Matisse in the 1930s.**
Through the Lens of Cahiers d'Art"?

I'm going to tell you about some of my master's
artistic tricks.

Let's go and see how he turned his art upside down between the
1920s and the 1930s.



Tips to avoid getting lost: the titles of the sections of
this booklet and their colour are the same as those of each
section of the exhibition.



CAHIERS D'ART

Take a close look at the issues of *Cahiers d'Art*
displayed in the exhibition.

This art journal, founded by the **art critic Christian Zervos** in 1926, aimed to give its readers news from the art world, and took a strong interest in the **avant-garde artists** who invented new ways of working. The magazine regularly published beautifully illustrated articles **on Matisse**. Lucky him! There was no better way to shine a spotlight on his latest works! The magazine also featured analysis on **ancient arts** (ancient Greek art for instance), and **non-Western arts** (African, Chinese, or Oceanian arts...) which were important sources of inspiration for artists like Matisse!



Cover of *Cahiers d'Art*, n°5-6, 1931

PAINTING IN CRISIS

When he turned sixty (true, he wasn't quite a young man!), my dear master **Henri Matisse** had made quite a reputation for himself: he was **famous worldwide** and deemed one of the greatest artists of his generation! Trouble is he had serious doubts about his career and his style of painting.

He had settled in Nice in 1917 and had invented a successful formula: he painted **odalisques** in **interior scenes** full of **colourful patterns**. But he grew tired of it. He needed a change and didn't know how to reinvent himself.

At the end of the 1920s, he was depressed and **scarcely painted at all**. He focused on other techniques such as etching, drawing and sculpture.

WHAT IS AN ODALISQUE?

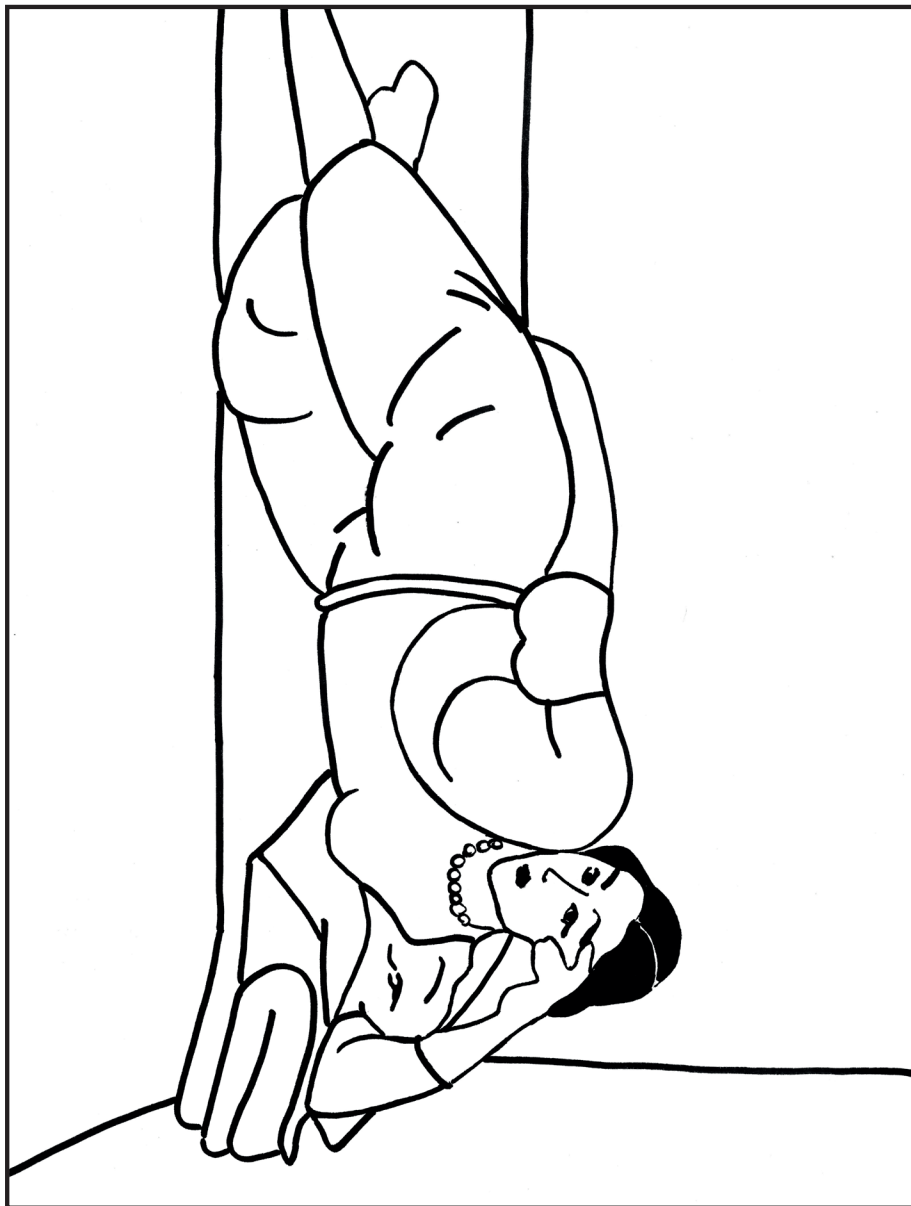
An odalisque is a female **servant** in a **harem** (the part of a house or palace set apart for women in the Ottoman empire). The word is also used in art to refer to scantily and exotically dressed women depicted in European paintings. They are often shown **reclining and daydreaming** in a **fantasy world** evoking the **Orient**. These representations have nothing to do with the reality!

Can you spot the many odalisques drawn and painted by Matisse in the first part of the exhibition?



Henri Matisse, *Odalisque au coffret rouge* [Odalisque with the Red Casket], 1927, oil on canvas, 50 x 65 cm, Musée Matisse Nice

Use this colouring page created from the *Odalisque with the Red Casket*, to decorate the room in which the woman lies, and design your own objects and types of motifs. You can look at the paintings and the objects from Matisse's personal collection exhibited in the first part of the exhibition to get inspired.



HENRI MATISSE'S WORLD TRIP



There is nothing better than travelling to take one's mind off worries. My master made up his mind to go to **Tahiti**, on the other side of the world! In the 1930s, means of transport were much slower than today and his trip lasted more than a month! He made the most of it and travelled across the **United States** by train, from coast to coast. When he reached his final destination, he explored the **Polynesian island** and its surrounding area for a month and a half.

In the exhibition, **illustrated maps** retrace this extraordinary trip. Look closely at the photographs Matisse took while he was over there, as well as the letters he wrote to his wife Amélie to tell her about his discoveries and experiences.

Can you spot the letter in which he drew himself swimming with his goggles?

Follow Matisse in his long journey and circle the right answers:

- How did Matisse travel to the United States?
by plane / by train / by transatlantic liner
- What's the name of the train which Matisse took to travel across the United States from Chicago to Los Angeles?
California Zephyr / The Chief / Coast Starlight
- How long did the crossing from San Francisco to Papeete last?
1 month / 10 days / 2 days
- In Tahiti, which German filmmaker invited Matisse to join him as he was shooting a film in Tautira Bay?
Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau / Ernst Lubitsch / Fritz Lang

THE WINTER GARDEN STUDIO

To get to the next section of the exhibition, head to the first floor of the villa by taking the stairs. Before you leave, you can also check out the ground floor where you'll see some works by Matisse from other periods.

It's safe to say that the trip produced the desired effects! When he came back from his round the world trip, my master got back to work enthusiastically.

He didn't give up his favourite subjects (women in interiors) but the experience of America's **wide-open spaces** and **immensity**, and the discovery of the **Polynesian landscapes** led him to paint in a **new way**.

He made a clean sweep and replaced orientalisising costumes and objects with **new dresses and accessories**. As reminders of the lush Tahitian vegetation, he installed **tropical plants** which gradually invaded the studio space. He hired new models like **Lydia Delectorskaya**.

In doing so, he created an **enchanted working environment** for himself and translated it into paintings that invite us to **dream** and **meditate**.



Henri Matisse, *Nature morte à la dormeuse* [Still Life with Sleeping Woman], 1939-1940, oil on canvas, 82,5 x 100,7 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington

Can you spot the 7 differences in these two versions of *Still Life with Sleeping Woman*? Circle them in the picture below:



THE STAGES OF PAINTING

The woman depicted in **Grand nu couché (Nu rose)** [*Large Reclining Nude*] looks a bit strange, don't you think? Her limbs are **weirdly elongated**, and her head seems **disproportionately small**. It's as if she was contorting her body and trying to **exit the frame**.

To keep track of the evolution of this painting, Matisse had it **photographed** every time he thought he had arrived at a **significant stage**.

Look at the **photographs of the painting in progress**: notice how he gradually transformed the body, reducing it to its essential lines. See how he simplified the composition by applying **flat tints** of **vivid colours**?

Using the silhouette below, create your own version of the painting and add a new stage to the 22 which it already went through!



THE DANCE

In the **United States**, Matisse met **Albert Barnes**, a rich American collector who commissioned a wall decoration for his **foundation** from him. Matisse chose to work on the theme of **dance**. It was the first time that he had to make such a monumental mural. It was a **gigantic project** which took **three years** to complete.

Before finalising the composition, he made numerous small-format **preparatory studies**. In a garage converted in a studio, he worked **to scale** to design the decoration which was 13 metres long and 3 metres high. To draw on such a large wall, he used a **long bamboo stick** at the end of which he fixed a charcoal. He also invented a new technique: he cut **scrapes of paper** painted in different colours which he used to arrange and re-arrange the composition as often as he wanted, adjusting the proportions and the positions of each dancing figure. To record the progress of the work, he had each stage photographed. From one stage to another, you can see the dancers change and move **as if they were really dancing**.



Time to dance with Matisse!
Strike a pose just like me. Pick a figure in one of the studies for *The Dance* exhibited in this room and adopt the same pose.

Have yourself photographed and send us the picture by email to the following address:

publics.musee.matisse@ville-nice.fr

We'll add it to our photo album if you want.



FAUVISM REVIVED



Fauvism is the derogatory nickname an art critic chose to refer to a group of painters, including Matisse, whose use of **bright and unnatural colours deeply shocked** him. It derives from the word "**fauves**" which means "**big cats**" in French. But don't expect to find any in this room (Matisse didn't paint many animals... he preferred them as friends rather than as models for his paintings)!

This **art movement** flourished from 1905, after Matisse and his friend André Derain spent a summer in Collioure (in the South of France) where they painted and experimented with **unmixed colours to express their emotions**. In the 1930s, Matisse returned to founding principles of Fauvism, especially in the way he used colour.

MATISSE AND ANTIQUITY

In several works exhibited in the last room, Matisse explored themes linked to **Greek Antiquity** such as the motif of the **nymph and faun** (a mythological creature who is half man, half goat). In the previous room (The Space of the Book), you might have noticed that Matisse illustrated some of the adventures of **Ulysses** famously told by Homer in *The Odyssey*.

Ancient Greek art and **myths** were a great source of inspiration for Matisse. In his studio, he kept the cast (a copy) of a **Kouros** called Kleobis, a Greek statue from 6th century BC. **Did you say hi to him when you came in?**

Turn into an art critic! Look closely at the painting *Nymphe dans la forêt (La Verdure)* [*Nymph in the Forest (Verdure)*] exhibited at the end of the room. Fill the gaps in the text with your own words or by choosing the most appropriate words from the options given below.

What a painting made by Matisse!
strange / magnificent / intriguing / complex

He kept it in his studio for about eight years, regularly working on it to change or complete the composition.

However, it looks like it's
finished / unfinished

Is it a drawing or a painting? or something in between?

It's a attempt at finding balance between line and colour.
confusing / failed / beautiful

As he painted it, Matisse wasn't so much interested in the result than in the process to get to that result. To him, the doing was more important than the outcome and the canvas served as a
a testing ground / a distraction / a lesson

The painting represents a in a forest.
path / river / road

We can make out two figures who can be identified as a
easily / barely **nymph / woman / goddess**
and a who plays the flute and interrupts her sleep.
faun / man / god / satyr

The artist returns to a theme relating to Antiquity which had marked his work between 1904 and 1910 and which inspired him again in the 1930s.

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Henri Matisse and his dog Raudi in the 1930s, Place Charles-Félix, Nice