

Henri Matisse, *Tempête à Nice* [Storm in Nice], 1919-1920, oil on canvas, 60,5 x 73,5 cm, bequest of Mme Henri Matisse, 1960, Musée Matisse Nice
© Succession H. Matisse | Photo © François Fernandez

THE MATISSE MUSEUM IN NICE

Henri Matisse (1869-1954) discovered Nice in December 1917. He produced most of his work in this city where he lived until his death in November 1954. The many places where he lived and worked deeply influenced his creative process and left their imprint on all the decisive stages of his work including the culmination of his artistic career, the cut-outs and the Chapelle de Vence.

Immediately after the war, Henri Matisse was involved in creating the Galerie des Ponchettes, the first museum of modern art in Nice, inaugurated in 1950. In 1953, a year before his death, he gave the City of Nice a set of works around which the Matisse Museum was based. After the artist's death, his family added to this legacy with successive donations. The Villa des Arènes, close to where Matisse had lived in the Régina, is chosen to set up this collection. The artist's children wanted to design a study museum responding to Matisse's desire to develop an educational approach to aesthetic knowledge based in particular on direct contact with the objects that nourished his work. After several years of work, the Musée Matisse opened its doors on 5 January 1963.

Located on the top of the hill of Cimiez, the former Roman city of Cemenelum which became the central feature of Nice's development into a winter resort town in the 19th and 20th centuries, the museum consists of a 17th century Genoese villa and a modern underground wing added in 1993.

The collection brings together 31 paintings, 454 drawings and engravings, 38 cut-outs and 57 sculptures by Matisse, as well as 138 objects from his personal collection. Most of these works and objects were directly brought from the artist's studio, giving the visitor access to the intimacy of his creative process.

The museum has a policy of regularly rotating its exceptional permanent collection, curating themed displays and temporary exhibitions to constantly bring fresh perspective to Matisse's work. Rotations help us turn each of your visits into a new experience !

MUSÉE MATISSE

164, avenue des Arènes de Cimiez - Nice
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Open daily except Tuesdays:
from 10 am to 6 pm from May 2nd to October 31st
from 10 am to 5 pm from November 1st to April 30th

AROUND THE EXHIBITION « SHIRLEY JAFFE. BEFORE AND AFTER MATISSE »

Scan the QR code to discover the programme of visits, workshops and other activities organised in connection with the exhibition.

CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION



Shirley Jaffe
directed by Frédéric Paul with the contributions of Svetlana Alpers, Claudine Grammont, Robert Kushner, Frédéric Paul
Coedition Centre Pompidou and Bernard Chauveau Édition
264 pages – 39 €

MUSEUM SHOP

Level -1 of the museum and online at arteum.com
Discover a wide range of books and objects inspired by the world of Matisse and the French Riviera.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Henri Matisse's grave (next to the monastery cemetery)
Nice-Cimiez Archaeology Museum
"Jardin des Arènes" (a garden planted with centuries-old olive trees next to the Roman arena)
Cimiez Monastery and its garden

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Shirley Jaffe, *Blue Around the Center*, 1990, oil on canvas, 210 x 169 cm, Frac-Aréothèque Nouvelle-Aquitaine, Limoges | © Adagp, Paris, 2023 | Photo © Frédérique Avril

60 ANS MUSÉE MATISSE

MUSEUM AND EXHIBITION GUIDE

OCTOBER 2023
> JANUARY 2024

SHIRLEY JAFFE

BEFORE AND AFTER MATISSE

Exhibition presented
from 20 October 2023 to 8 January 2024

Curated by Frédéric Paul, curator, contemporary collections, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou

The exhibition is organised with the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Kunstmuseum Basel.

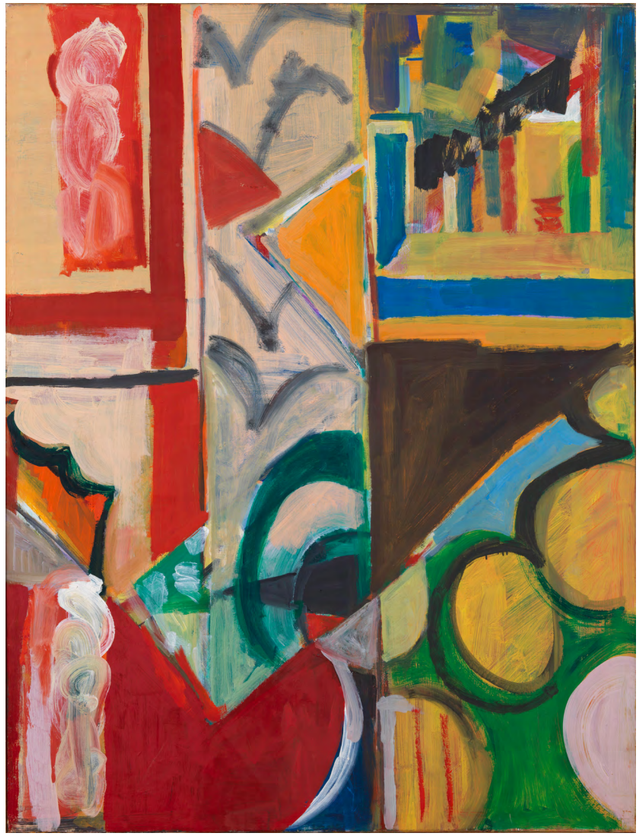
Shirley Jaffe (1923-2016) was a prominent figure in abstract painting from the turn of the 20th and 21st century. She studied in New York, then Washington, which she left for Paris, where she remained from 1949 onwards.
She expressed both an historical fact and her own contrarian nature by declaring that she had discovered Bonnard in New York and Pollock in Paris. Friends with North American artists Jules Olitski, Al Held, Jean-Paul Riopelle and Sam Francis, post-war expatriates like herself, she sublet Louise Bourgeois's studio and maintained a stimulating relationship with Joan Mitchell.
In 1969, she moved to a flat at 8 rue Saint-Victor in Paris, where many artists visited her and where she painted until her last days.

This is the second time that the Matisse museum in Nice pays tribute to Shirley Jaffe's work, having invited her in 1994 to present her recent paintings. This new exhibition spans the whole of her career and traces her stylistic evolution marked by two radical breaks. It shows how, at the end of the 1960s, after Abstract Expressionist beginnings, she abandoned gestural painting in favour of compositions structured by geometric shapes in bright, contrasting colours and then how, from the 1980s onwards, she used the potential of white to bring out the tension between monochromatic motifs.
Comparisons have always been drawn between the American's mature paintings and Matisse's last body of work, his paper cut-outs. Jaffe, for her part, did not like to discuss the matter. Yet it is now known that the 1961 exhibition devoted to Matisse's cut-outs at the musée des Arts décoratifs deeply influenced her.

Running throughout the museum tour route, this exhibition aims to uncover resonances between the two artists' work.



Shirley Jaffe in her studio, Paris, 2008, in front of *Bande dessinée en noir et blanc* (completed in 2009). Bibliothèque Kandinsky, MNAM-CCI, Centre Pompidou
Photograph by Jean-Christophe Mazur © Adagp, Paris, 2023



Shirley Jaffe, *Little Matisse*, 1968, oil on canvas, 118 x 90 cm, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris
© Adagp, Paris, 2023 | Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/Audrey Laurans/Dist. RMN-GP

It was only when I discovered the cut-outs that I saw something that impressed me.
I know, people are going to say again that I am inspired by Matisse. But what I love with him is that the work is so positive, that it has a kind of, what shall I say?, optimism. Life presses in his paintings. It is an art that rejects despair, but he must have known what despair was. These feelings are expressed by the means of painting. I hope that I, too, will be able to express the same qualities of vitality in my own paintings, with my complexity and my dissonances.

Shirley Jaffe in conversation with Yves Michaud, 1989

"I'm painting to give an attitude, a possibility, a sensibility and hope that there's enough for someone to receive it. I want to go as far as I can in what I can give."

On the workbench pushed against one of the two windows in the studio there were not just sheets of glass that served as palettes, tubes of paint and brushes gathered in bundles in tin cans, but also a whole collection of paint knives, scrapers and blades used to mix the colours before spreading them over the canvas (never more than two in a mix) or – and here we go! – to scrape, buff and erase by their insistent mechanical action the bits that weren't working out as she'd hoped: a curve, or straight line that wasn't clear enough. The slowness was not a matter of hesitation, rather stemming from the long chain of decisions that needed to be taken.

"I keep looking for that surprise, that's why I work so damn long on a picture. I can't figure it out at the very beginning. As I work on a picture, something happens that I reinvent. I want to find that reinvention."

Her paintings moved forward in a slow and gradual process. Duration was an essential but invisible part of the work.

"I want it to hold together, where each element speaks, has its voice, and it is a confronting every other element. Nothing stays by itself. I want to make it all fit into one world. I am thinking of one world."

When she was still living with her mother, brother and sister in their modest apartment in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, the amateur practice of art was, she once confided, a way for her – eldest – to get a bit of peace and quiet on her own. But that is not enough to define what abstraction meant to her. It certainly did not signify a position away from reality.

"I may say, compositionally, that this is what I want this picture to have, to be, and I play with it. Playing with that kind of structure. But I want to destroy the structure at some point. I don't want to do it logically. I want to find something that I can't always logically imagine, that comes in the process of looking."

It would be easy to suppose the artist's face-to-face with the canvas was a closed confrontation. Easy and wrong. The urban sorties, when the artist gathered ideas and forms, were also part of this slow process; such as when, back in the late 1960s, she had taken photos of Montparnasse railway station, at the time being demolished before its reconstruction. The frontality Jaffe aimed at when faced with the finished picture could be obtained only at the price of numerous comings and goings from studio to street and back through her visual memory.

These extracts are taken from Frédéric Paul's text, "Shirley Jaffe in person" and the quotations from the conversation between Robert Kushner and Shirley Jaffe conducted in 2003, "Complexity and Dissonance", published in the catalogue of the exhibition: *Shirley Jaffe*, Bernard Chauveau Édition, Paris, 2022.



Shirley Jaffe, *Untitled*, 1972, oil on canvas, 97 x 195 cm, private collection
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