

A room in the museum when it opened in 1963
Musée Matisse Nice archives
© Succession H. Matisse for the artist's works

THE MATISSE MUSEUM IN NICE

In December 1917, Matisse discovered Nice for the first time. He produced most of his work in this city where he lived until his death in November 1954.

After the Second World War, the City of Nice created strong links with Henri Matisse and the local public discovered his work thanks to two exhibitions, first in 1946 at the Palais de la Méditerranée and then in 1950 at the Galerie des Ponchettes, which was inaugurated for the occasion. After the artist's death, his family, in agreement with the city, chose to set up the museum in the Villa des Arènes, close to where he had lived in the Régina. After several years of work, the Musée Matisse opened its doors on 5 January 1963.

Located on top of a hill, the Musée Matisse is part of the vast heritage complex 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 city is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.The museum consists of the Villa des Arènes, a 17th century Genoese dwelling, which was revamped and extended with a new wing by the architect Jean-François Bodin between 1987 and 1993.

The collection brings together 31 paintings, 454 drawings and engravings, 38 cut-outs, 57 sculptures and more than 130 objects from Matisse's personal collection which he and his heirs donated to the City of Nice. 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 small themed displays and large 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
+33 (0)4 93 81 08 08

Musée ouvert tous les jours sauf le mardi
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

CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

Forthcoming catalogue with essays by Gail Stavitsky and Claudine Grammont and a conversation with Susan Davidson.

MUSEUM SHOP

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

AROUND THE MUSEUM

- Henri Matisse's grave (in the monastery's 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

FOLLOW US AND SHARE YOUR VISIT !

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WEBSITE

www.musee-matisse-nice.org

Engage with our collection online and get access to exclusive content.



Musée Matisse Nice
exterior view
© François Fernandez



Tom Wesselmann, *Great American Nude #1*, 1961, mixed media and collage on board, 121,3 x 121,3 cm
© Estate of Tom Wesselmann / Adagp, Paris, 2023 | Photo © Jeffrey Sturges

60 ANS MUSÉE MATISSE

GUIDE TO THE MUSEUM AND EXHIBITION

FEBRUARY > MAY 2023

TOM WESSELMANN

AFTER MATISSE

Exhibition presented
from 24 February to 29 May 2023

The exhibition was curated in collaboration with the Estate of Tom Wesselmann and with the support of the Almine Rech Gallery.

With his *Great American Nudes* series of the Sixties, Tom Wesselmann turned the Matissian odalisque into a pop icon. Subsequently, Henri Matisse's work remained a central reference in his search for visual effectiveness and overload.

Through a selection of forty-one artworks, the exhibition *Tom Wesselmann. After Matisse* explores the multiple ways in which the artist expressed his admiration for Matisse, from his first collages in 1959 to his last works, the *Sunset Nudes* series in the 2000s. They reflect different modes of appropriation: works based on Matisse, direct quotations, or, more profoundly, a Matissian conception of colour and surface.

The exhibition investigates Wesselmann's creative processes in the studio and helps to understand the elaborate technique of collage or 3D drawing he used, showing how attentive he was to the question of scale, in small formats as in large size works. It brings together four significant series of works which testify to the dialogue between this major American Pop artist and Henri Matisse : collages, *Great American Nudes*, *Steel Drawings* and *Sunset Nudes*.

STEEL DRAWINGS

In the 1980s, Matisse can be found everywhere in Tom Wesselmann's work, through direct quotation, or through processes that recall his own. At the time, Wesselmann used the process of steel drawings, drawings on cut-out aluminium or steel. The artist used all the freedom and fluidity of drawing with marker or ink on chrome coat paper, which was then enlarged by projection before being produced in steel cut with a laser. He then drew on the steel with charcoal or paint when the work was in colour. This spontaneity produced by various mechanical or even computerised processes was an elaborate way of pursuing his exploration of reproducibility in its formal potential, even conceiving of it in three dimensions. This gave rise to *Blue Dance,* a huge assemblage of cut-out and painted aluminium, which reproduces very freely and almost abstractly Matisse's *Dance* (1910, Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg).

In a series of drawings made using the same technique, with the model Monica, works by Matisse appear in the background. They were not very recognizable, for they were most often very schematically or even only partially reproduced. Now a familiar figure in the studio, Matisse slipped more surreptitiously into Wesselmann's work through his sculpture *Reclining Nude II* which appeared in various compositions.



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Tom Wesselmann, *Blue Dance,* 1996/2002, oil on cut-out aluminum, 210,8 x 294,6 x 12,7 cm
© Estate of Tom Wesselmann / Adagp, Paris, 2023 | Photo © Jeffrey Sturges

AMERICANISATION OF THE MATISSIAN NUDE

After he started his famous *Great American Nudes* series in 1961, Tom Wesselmann never lost interest in exploring Henri Matisse through the theme of the nude, or more precisely the nude figure in a domestic interior, endowed with a highly erotic quality.
The works he did with the model Monica at the end of the 1980s or his *Sunset Nudes* series in the 2000s, are a continuation of the Americanisation of the Western nude tradition at work in the *Great American Nudes* through which the Matissian nude was transposed into the cultural context of the 1960s.



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Tom Wesselmann, *Monica with Tulips,* 1989, enamel on cut-out aluminum, 144,8 x 182,9 cm
© Estate of Tom Wesselmann / Adagp, Paris, 2023 | Photo © Jeffrey Sturges

GREAT AMERICAN NUDES

When Tom Wesselmann moved to New York in 1956, Henri Matisse, although he had died in 1954, was still quite present on the American art scene and his work still felt very timely.
While it is difficult to identify the first contacts that Wesselmann had with the French artist's work, there were numerous such opportunities, both at MoMA and in galleries. In addition, the boom in the production of colour postcards and posters helped circulating the artist's work. This popularisation of Matisse interested Wesselmann more than the original works to which he could have access. At this key moment in his career, the example of Matisse appeared as a kind of distraction from abstract expressionism, from which he was seeking to distance himself as shown by his collages (*After Matisse* and *Judy Trimming Toenails, Yellow Wall*).



In his famous *Great American Nudes* series started in 1961, Wesselmann went even further in this process of assimilating Matisse, and it turned out to be increasingly sophisticated. What took precedence for him was the search for a form of visual excitation, of retinal titillation, whether it came from a confrontation of colours that were increasingly smooth and garish or from a whole range of popular, trivial imagery, such as pin-ups, which came directly from the mass media, posters, magazines, etc.

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Tom Wesselmann, *Judy Trimming Toenails, Yellow Wall,* 1960, mixed media and collage on board, 18,3 x 14,4 cm
© Estate of Tom Wesselmann / Adagp, Paris, 2023 | Photo © Jeffrey Sturges



SUNSET NUDES

Toward the end of his life, Tom Wesselmann produced a series of paintings that are his last homage to Henri Matisse, *Sunset Nudes*. These large-scale compositions produced from 2002 to 2004 are also a kind of retrospective movement regarding his own work, because he seems here to return to the eclectic collages of the 60s with Matisse as a background, an image that subsequently became so familiar in his work.

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Tom Wesselmann, *Sunset Nude with Matisse Odalisque*, 2003, oil on canvas, 304,8 x 254 cm
© Estate of Tom Wesselmann / Adagp, Paris, 2023 | Photo © Jeffrey Sturges

LOOKING AT THE ODALISQUES AGAIN

Tom Wesselmann's work allows us to look at Henri Matisse's work differently, especially the odalisques he painted in the 1920s, re-placing them in the context of the popular visual culture of the time.

The nude models in oriental costumes in the setting of a harem that populated Matisse's paintings at the time were less inspired by Delacroix and Renoir than by a modern Orient, which stemmed in particular from the movies filmed in Nice at the Victorine Studios. Following World War I, commercial exoticism had a resurgence of popularity, including the decor of department stores, music halls, or movie theatres and the fashion of the Ballets Russes, and even reaching the advertising world, which capitalised on this seductive stratagem.



With his odalisques, Matisse did not hesitate to tap into this form of trivial exoticism, which used the pretext of the Orient to convey an imaginary erotic world. These figures were a great commercial success, including in the United States, where the works of the Nice Period entered most major collections. While they were still received with a certain prudishness by moralising American critics in the 1930s, Wesselmann seized this imaginary world and transformed it by re-placing it in the context of the America of the 1960s. Through his eyes, Matisse's odalisque became a pop icon.

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Henri Matisse, *Hindoue à la jupe de tulle*, 1929, lithograph on paper, 36,2 x 49,6 cm, Musée Matisse Nice
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