



# MATISSE IN THE 1930s

## THROUGH THE LENS OF *CAHIERS D'ART*

From 23 June to 24 September 2023

### The first exhibition devoted to the pivotal decade of the 1930s in Matisse's art !

Henri Matisse's work is marked by significant milestones that demonstrate his determination never to remain confined to one particular style. After the period of Nice interiors and odalisques, the 1930s were a turning point, a time of maturity.

Crowned with success, however, Matisse did not want to be seen as an artist who had arrived, preferring to run the risk of the unknown once again. This unknown took pictorial form with the major challenge of creating the mural composition of *La Danse [The Dance]* for the Barnes Foundation, to which he devoted himself between 1930 and 1933. He gave up easel painting to tackle large-scale work, opening himself to other dimensions. His art underwent a profound transformation, both in its architectural ambition and in his ability to produce on a larger scale, freed from the limits of the frame.

### PRESS CONTACTS

#### Opus 64

+33 (0)1 40 26 77 94

#### Valérie Samuel

v.samuel@opus64.com

#### Patricia Gangloff

p.gangloff@opus64.com



### This exhibition is organised with the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

On an unprecedented scale, it brings together outstanding loans from public and private collections, never before shown in Nice. It is supported by three institutions that are emblematic of this phase in the artist's life: the Musée Matisse in Nice, which houses the most extensive collection of works and objects from the artist's collection bearing witness to this decisive period; the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris, dedicated to the collection of Paul Guillaume, one of Matisse's dealers, whose collection of the artist's works was shown in the early 1930s, contributed to the revival of interest in Matisse's radical pre-war period, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which has a long tradition of organising exhibitions devoted to Matisse, is located just a few hundred metres from the present-day Barnes Foundation, which houses *La Danse*.

### Curated by :

At the Musée Matisse Nice : **Claudine Grammont**, Head of the Graphic Art Department at Centre Pompidou

At the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris : **Cécile Debray**, President of musée national Picasso-Paris

At the Philadelphia Museum of Art : **Matthew Affron**, The Muriel and Philip Berman Curator of Modern Art Philadelphia Museum of Art

Exposition  
d'intérêt  
national



*This exhibition is recognized as being of national interest by the French Ministry of Culture. As such, it benefits from exceptional financial support from the French State.*

Musée Matisse Nice  
164, avenue des  
Arènes de Cimiez  
06000 Nice

musee.matisse@  
ville-nice.fr

+33 (0)4 93 81 08 08

musee-matisse-nice.org

## MATISSE IN THE 1930s IN NICE

### Painting Without Limits

The exhibition in Nice covers the period from the 1930s onwards, illustrating the profound transformation that was taking place in Henri Matisse's art. His work acquired a new dimension, both in its architectural ambitions, through the commission for *La Danse* and in his ability to produce on a larger scale, freed from the limits of the frame.

In its Nice phase, the exhibition focuses on the question of how the work is made. This is reflected in the importance given to the artist's studios in Nice as a conceptual and physical framework for creation. The innovative procedures devised by the artist to meet the demands of the large format and then transposed to painting are explained.

At this point, Matisse introduced his stage-by-stage photography method, which placed the principle of metamorphosis at the very heart of his pictorial approach.



In-progress photographs of the work *La Danse*, 5 December 1932  
Archives Henri Matisse, Issy-les-Moulineaux

### Through the Lens of *Cahiers d'Art*

The exhibition also revisits Matisse's presence in the journal *Cahiers d'Art*, placing his work in the context of the international avant-garde and the great debates that enlivened it. Emerging in its early days in the wake of Cubism, the magazine adopted an aesthetic, universalist, and trans-historical approach that nourished the artist's thinking and his taste, far removed from the classical heritage, for extra-Western and ancient art.

### Exceptional Loans

In addition to the museum's own collection, several exceptional public and private loans allow us, for the first time, to appreciate the richness and complexity of this creative period through paintings, sculptures and graphic works. The exhibition at the Musée Matisse Nice, conceived initially as a studio museum, offers an original perspective on this decade of maturity, as close as possible to the physical and conceptual context in which it emerged. Alongside the *Cahiers d'Art*, the exhibition is supported by extensive documentary resources and personal and audio-visual archives.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EXHIBITION

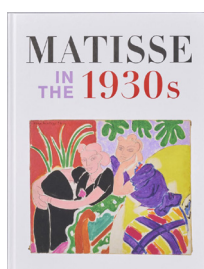
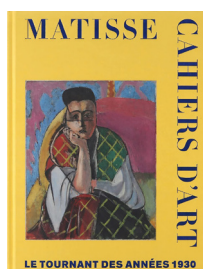
### The exhibition features a number of highlights:

- All the drawings and preparatory studies for *La Danse* from the museum's collection, enabling visitors to follow the development of this titanic work.
- *Grand nu couché (Nu rose)* [Large reclining nude], an iconic work from the period, on special loan from the Baltimore Museum of Art, presented alongside twenty-two photographs of the artist's fascinating transformation, demonstrating the artist's creative process.
- The group of "Nice interiors", whose figures are in keeping with the plant-like, proliferating nature of the studio setting.
- The large-format works inspired by the world of Mallarmé, reflecting the revival of Fauvism in Matisse's work.



Henri Matisse, *Grand nu couché (Nu rose)* [Large Reclining Nude], 1935, oil on canvas, 66,4 x 93,3 cm, The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.258  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo: Mitro Hood

## CATALOGUE



The exhibition catalogue, published in French and English, is co-published by the Musée de l'Orangerie and the Réunion des Musées Nationaux, with the collaboration of the Musée Matisse Nice and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

It reproduces most of the works presented at the three stages of the exhibition, and includes contributions from a number of specialists, thematic focuses, facsimiles of selected pages from the magazine *Cahiers d'Art*, and a new illustrated chronology drawn up on the basis of the Henri Matisse Archives.

*Matisse in the 1930s*

256 p. - \$ 50



## SECTIONS OF THE EXHIBITION

### 1/ Painting in Crisis

Henri Matisse had been living in his apartment-studio on Place Charles-Félix since 1924. He organised the premises as a theatrical space filled with props, oriental furniture, African velvets, and screens to stage his odalisques.

The two 1927 odalisques in the Musée de l'Orangerie and the Musée Matisse in Nice mark the apogee of this subject. From then on, the artist never ceased breaking away from this archetype which had contributed so much to his success. He entered a period of crisis and scarcely painted at all or only with great difficulty.

He found his mode of expression in other practices: sculpture, drawing, and engraving. He worked on sculpture in series (the three busts of Henriette, Musée Matisse Nice) or over time, working on *Grand nu assis* [*Large Seated Nude*] between 1922 and 1929 (Musée Départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis). In his drawings and etchings, notably the important series of etchings from 1929, he allowed himself great freedom in integrating the figure into space.



Henri Matisse, *Grand nu assis*  
[*Large Seated Nude*], 1922-  
1929, bronze,  
78 x 78 x 35 cm, gift of  
the artist, 1952, musée  
départemental Matisse,  
Le Cateau-Cambrésis  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo: musée départemental  
Matisse, Adam Rzepka



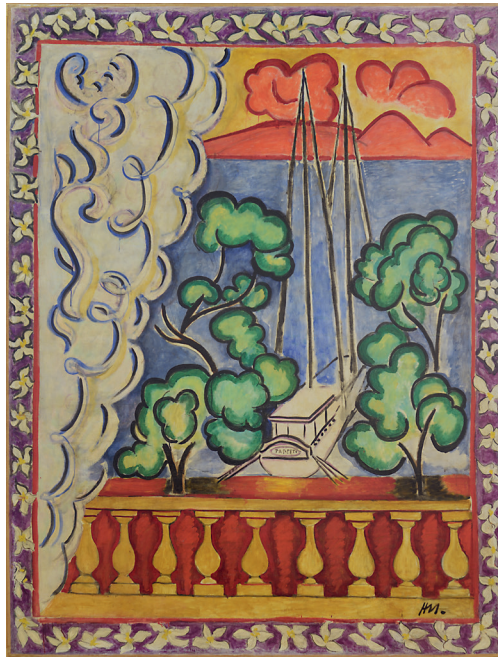
Henri Matisse in New York, 1930  
Archives Henri Matisse, Issy-les-Moulineaux

### 2/ Henri Matisse's World Tour

The revival of the 1930s began with a period away from home, during which Matisse decided to set sail for the South Seas, crossing the United States from East to West. He embarked at Le Havre on the liner *Ile-de-France* for New York on 9 February 1930, then went on from San Francisco to Tahiti on 19 March. He returned to Nice on 19 August. This crossing opened up new horizons that were to fuel his imagination for many years to come.



Malagan sculpture, New Ireland (Papua New Guinea), beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, carved and painted hardwood, plant fibres and shells, 131 x 24 x 22 cm, former Henri Matisse collection, Musée Matisse Nice  
Photo © Ville de Nice



Henri Matisse, *Papeete – Tahiti*, October 1935, oil on canvas, 225 x 172 cm, Musée Matisse Nice  
© Succession H. Matisse | Photo © François Fernandez

We approach this decisive period during which, for the first time in his life as an artist Matisse did not work, through a travel journal. As mnemonic devices, he used drawings, photographs, letters and postcards to record the sensations, colours, shapes and scents that would nourish his work and his imagination for many years to come.

He returned to New York twice more that year, each time by boat. The City was a hotbed of energy that he hoped would help him get out of the rut in which he found himself. Most of his letters and interviews emphasised the revitalising effect of the New World. In New York, with its light and architecture, he experienced a feeling of lightness that he associated “with a sensation of deliverance..., of freedom, through the possession of a larger space.” (letter to Amélie, March 6, 1930, Archives Henri Matisse).

These stays in New York also gave him the opportunity to discover African-American culture through the jazz he listened to in Harlem clubs.

### 3/ Drawing and the Automatism Method



Henri Matisse, *Nu couché de dos [Reclining Nude from the Back]*, 20 May 1935, charcoal on laid paper, 37,9 x 56,4 cm, Musée Matisse Nice  
© Succession H. Matisse | Photo © François Fernandez

The daily practice of drawing became essential for Matisse during the 1930s. Through drawing, he allowed himself every freedom and developed his own method of improvisation. He distinguished between observational drawing with shaded charcoal, a conscious phase during which he immersed himself in the physical presence of the model, and improvised line drawing, carried out in bursts of performative creativity, with no possibility of repentance. His psychic approach to drawing attracted the attention of the Surrealists.

In 1936, the artist designed the cover of a special issue of the magazine *Cahiers d'Art* dedicated to these recent drawings. Reproduced here is a series of line drawings after Lydia Delectorskaya, made in 1935 and 1936 following the *Grand nu couché (Nu rose) [Large Reclining Nude]*, (Baltimore Museum of Art). In the text he published in this issue, Christian Zervos, founder of the journal, made Matisse a precursor of automatism.





Henri Matisse looking at the horizon from the balcony of his apartment-studio, Place Charles-Félix, Nice. Photograph by Pierre Matisse. Photo library, Musée Matisse Nice



Henri Matisse, *Intérieur au vase étrusque* [Interior with Etruscan Vase], 1940, oil on canvas, 73,7 x 108 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art  
© Succession H. Matisse | Photo : Courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art



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  
© Succession H. Matisse

#### 4/ The Winter Garden Studio

Accessories in the apartment-studio on Cours Saleya and then in the vast spaces of the Régina, where the artist moved in 1938, became more contemporary. The oriental bric-a-brac disappeared in favour of fashionable dresses, coats and hats, while the Romanian blouse made its entrance. The painter plunged his gaze into the immensity of the horizon towards which the bay windows faced: a feeling of limitlessness transposed into the space within the painting, which expanded and breathed with new life.

Matisse drew on his constant dialogue with his surroundings – familiar objects and models – to create a kind of meditative journey. Everything that could nourish a sensation was therefore preferred. After he returned from the Pacific, which provided a reservoir of new impressions, the studio took on the appearance of a winter garden. The philodendron, a prolific plant, is the most obvious sign of this, present in many works of the period. The sinuous, full leaves create a meandering path to which the model's curves respond. This profusion, imbued with memories of Oceania, was matched by the spatial quality of the colours, which had regained the expansive character Matisse had achieved in certain works from the pre-1914 period.



Henri Matisse, *Femme assise dans un fauteuil* [Woman Seated in an Armchair], 1940, oil on canvas, 54 x 65,1 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington  
© Succession H. Matisse



## 5/ The Stages of Painting

Two major works from the period, *Grand nu couché (Nu rose)* [*Large Reclining Nude*], (Baltimore Museum of Art) and *La Grande Robe bleue et mimosas* [*Woman in Blue*], (Philadelphia Museum of Art) are presented in the room, as they were in Matisse's studio, against a background of wallpaper imitating a tiled floor. Far from being an anecdotal decoration, this grid testifies to the importance of scale in the treatment of the figure, which acquired an increasingly monumental character regardless of format. To achieve this, Matisse developed an original working method, already used for the mural composition of *La Danse* [*The Dance*]: he had the work photographed at each stage he considered conclusive and kept a record of the parts he erased as the painting progressed. There are eight in-progress photographs of *Grand nu couché (Nu rose)* in existence and twenty-two of *Grande Robe bleue et mimosas*. Several publications were devoted to this new approach at the time, including the journal *Cahiers d'Art*, whose pages revealed the stages of *La Danse* and *Le Chant (The Song)*.



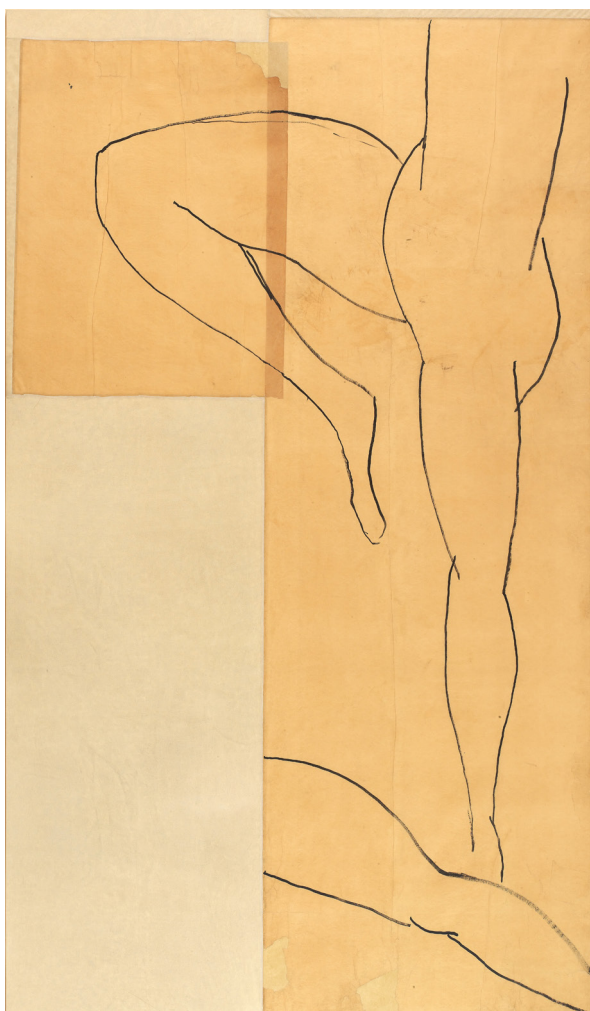
Henri Matisse, *La Grande Robe bleue et mimosas* [*Woman in Blue*], 1937, oil on canvas, 92,7 x 73,7 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Mrs. John Wintersteen © Succession H. Matisse Photo © PMA - Joseph Hu

Henri Matisse, *La Danse*,  
harmonie bleue [*The Dance*,  
*Blue Harmony*] 1930-1931,  
oil on canvas, 33 x 87,8 cm,  
Musée Matisse Nice  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo © François Fernandez



## 6/ Metamorphosis of *The Dance*

Painted sketches, drawings and photographs of the various stages of *La Danse* [*The Dance*] are exhibited together in order to follow the genesis of the work. The full-size sketch of the central figure in the first version of *La Danse*, illustrates the scale of the surface to be covered, which is 13 metres long and 3 metres high. Matisse insisted on working to scale to preserve the rhythm of his own body's performative movement and to validate the visual effectiveness of the flat tints that determine the figures and background.



Henri Matisse, *La Danse*,  
première version. Esquisse à  
l'échelle de la figure centrale  
[*La Danse*, first version. Scale  
sketch of the central figure],  
1930-1931, China ink on  
two sheets of tracing paper,  
335 x 194,5 cm, gift of M.  
Gérard Matisse to the French  
State on deposit at Musée  
Matisse Nice, 1988, musée  
d'Orsay, Paris  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo © CICRP-Odile Guillon

Photographs of the successive states of *La Danse* show the tracings and the multitude of gouache-painted papers, mobile elements that Matisse's assistant Lydia Delectorskaya adjusted and moved according to the proportions of the figures. This extraordinary mosaic of moving papers evolved over the days, then months. The photograph reveals the excessiveness of the work, which lies as much in its size as in its transitory dimension. It is about something continually in progress, whose profound meaning lies in this dynamic incompleteness.



## 7/ The Space of the Book

Matisse worked simultaneously on *La Danse* [*The Dance*] and the illustrations for Mallarmé's *Poésies*, published in October 1932. These two projects were intimately linked in their architectural dimension. Matisse conceived the book as a totality, an architecture made up of elements that balance each other, particularly the double-page spread in which the typographic block and the illustrated page respond to each other.

This commission, like that of the New York bibliophile club, The Limited Editions Club, which asked him to illustrate Joyce's *Ulysses*, was an opportunity for the painter to return to mythological themes, in particular the motif of the faun and the nymph, abandoned since the Fauvist period. Considering that "Joyce's spirit cannot be translated visually" (quoted in Claude Duthuit, *Catalogue raisonné des ouvrages illustrés*), and having not read the work, which was banned in the United States and impossible to find in France, Matisse used the *Odyssey* as a starting point for six etchings. This choice confirms the broader interest he shared with Zervos, the director of *Cahiers d'Art*, in the culture of archaic Greece, which he opposes to the canons of classical antiquity, devoid of emotion in his view. His aesthetic sensibilities were nourished by these "primitive" forms with which he lived, as he collected Cycladic statuettes, examples of which were reproduced by Zervos in publications he had no doubt leafed through.

## 8/ Fauvism Revived

The 1930s were a turning point for Matisse, during which he returned to the founding principles of his art at the time of Fauvism. From *La Danse* [*The Dance*] onwards, he returned to the decorative and architectural ambitions of his major works of the 1904-1917 period. This choice led him to redefine his role as an artist in a troubled historical context.

Carrying out the Barnes commission led Matisse to rethink the role of the image in its relationship with the individual and thus to conceive the picture plane as a possible field of physical and psychological action. The publication of Georges Duthuit's extended essay on Fauvism in *Cahiers d'Art* radically renewed the approach to the movement while at the same time providing a theoretical framework for the transformation wrought by Matisse. "Our canvas," he explains, "introduces a new element in the room it enters. It changes the lighting. The walls recede..." (*Cahiers d'Art*, 1931). There is no better way of expressing the aim the artist set himself: to turn the painting back into a surface for interaction, a vector of energy capable of creating a stimulating environment that goes far beyond the confines of its frame.



Henri Matisse, *Nymphe dans la forêt (La Verduze)* [*Nymph in the forest (Verdure)*], 1935-1942/1943, huile sur toile, 245,5 x 195,5 cm, Musée Matisse Nice

© Succession H. Matisse | Photo © François Fernandez

# MUSÉE MATISSE NICE

## A museum that is part of a major heritage site

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 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The city is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The museum, inaugurated in 1963, consists of a 17th century villa which was revamped and extended with a new wing by the architect Jean-François Bodin between 1987 and 1993. It sits in the middle of a public garden and stands in harmony with the surrounding area, offering the public a simple and engaging introduction to Henri Matisse's work.

### PRACTICAL INFORMATION

[musee-matisse-nice.org](http://musee-matisse-nice.org)

Open every day except  
Tuesdays  
Summer opening hours :  
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

### MUSEUM SHOP ARTEUM

The museum shop offers a wide selection of books and items inspired by Matisse and the French Riviera. To be discovered on site or online:  
[arteum.com](http://arteum.com)

### FOLLOW US !

@museematissenic  
#museematissenic



## A unique collection

The collection which comprises works donated to the city by the artist and his heirs is displayed in a 1200 square meters exhibition space. Its presentation helps the public to experience Matisse's art more fully and measure the importance of one of the greatest artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In close proximity to the studios where Matisse created most of his work, the museum holds a large collection of his personal objects made accessible to everyone through a chronological and multidisciplinary curatorial approach which sparks stimulating dialogues between art movements, techniques, and civilisations. The museum has a policy of regularly rotating this exceptional permanent collection, curating small themed displays and large temporary exhibitions to constantly bring fresh perspective to Matisse's work.

## 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Musée Matisse

In 2023, the Musée Matisse celebrates its sixtieth anniversary with three exceptional exhibitions. This summer, the museum presents the exhibition "Matisse in the 1930s. Through the Lens of *Cahiers d'Art*", as well as a special display looking back at the history of the museum and its collection through archives never before seen or rarely shown to the public.



Photo © François Fernandez



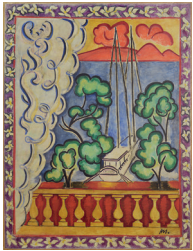
# VISUALS FOR THE PRESS



Henri Matisse, *Grand nu couché (Nu rose) [Large Reclining Nude]*, 1935, oil on canvas, 66,4 x 93,3 cm, The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.258  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo: Mitro Hood



Henri Matisse, *Grand nu assis [Large Seated Nude]*, 1922-1929, bronze, 78 x 78 x 35 cm, gift of the artist, 1952, musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo: musée départemental Matisse, Adam Rzepka



Henri Matisse, *Papeete – Tahiti*, October 1935, oil on canvas, 225 x 172 cm, Musée Matisse Nice  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo © François Fernandez



Malagan sculpture, New Ireland (Papua New Guinea), beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, carved and painted hardwood, plant fibres and shells, 131 x 24 x 22 cm, former Henri Matisse collection, Musée Matisse Nice  
Photo © Ville de Nice



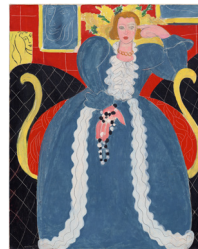
Henri Matisse, *Intérieur au vase étrusque [Interior with Etruscan Vase]*, 1940, oil on canvas, 73,7 x 108 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo : Courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art



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  
© Succession H. Matisse



Henri Matisse, *Femme assise dans un fauteuil [Woman Seated in an Armchair]*, 1940, oil on canvas, 54 x 65,1 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington  
© Succession H. Matisse



Henri Matisse, *La Grande Robe bleue et mimosas [Woman in Blue]*, 1937, oil on canvas, 92,7 x 73,7 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Mrs. John Wintersteen  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo © PMA - Joseph Hu



Henri Matisse, *Nu couché de dos [Reclining Nude from the Back]*, 20 May 1935, charcoal on laid paper, 37,9 x 56,4 cm, Musée Matisse Nice  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo © François Fernandez



Henri Matisse, *La Danse, harmonie bleue [The Dance, Blue Harmony]* 1930-1931, oil on canvas, 33 x 87,8 cm, Musée Matisse Nice  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo © François Fernandez



Henri Matisse, *Nympe dans la forêt (La Verdure) [Nymph in the forest (Verdure)]*, 1935-1942/1943, huile sur toile, 245,5 x 195,5 cm, Musée Matisse Nice  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo © François Fernandez



Henri Matisse, *La Danse, première version. Esquisse à l'échelle de la figure centrale [La Danse, first version. Scale sketch of the central figure]*, 1930-1931, China ink on two sheets of tracing paper, 335 x 194,5 cm, gift of M. Gérard Matisse to the French State on deposit at Musée Matisse Nice, 1988, musée d'Orsay, Paris  
© Succession H. Matisse  
Photo © CICRP-Odile Guillon

# TERMS OF USE

The images of the artworks are provided for the exclusive use of the press in the context of the promotion of the exhibition and for the duration of the exhibition only. It is strictly forbidden to store the files beyond the dates of the exhibition or to send them to a third party.

The image(s) provided must be deleted once used for reproduction. The caption accompanying the reproduction of the artwork must include the complete name of the artist, the title of the work, the date of execution, the location of the work, and the compulsory copyright credits.

## SPECIFIC CONDITIONS REGARDING HENRI MATISSE'S ARTWORKS

### **General conditions for press reproductions of Matisse artworks:**

- The reproductions shall be complete (not cropped).
- Overprinting with texts or logos, or in any other sense, is forbidden.
- The notice « © Succession H. Matisse 2023 » shall be placed immediately adjacent to each reproduction.

**The conditions for the use of reproductions of Henri Matisse's works by the press vary from country to country.** Please contact the organisation representing Henri Matisse's rights in your country. This contact will be forwarded to you by the Musée Matisse Nice ([laurence.schlosser@ville-nice.fr](mailto:laurence.schlosser@ville-nice.fr)).

For any image use not in the context of the exhibition "Matisse in the 1930s. Through the Lens of *Cahiers d'Art*" review, please contact:

Les Héritiers Matisse / Ms. Isabelle Alonso: [isabelle.alonso@lesheritiersmatisse.com](mailto:isabelle.alonso@lesheritiersmatisse.com)