



Henri Matisse, *Mataie morte aux grenades*, Vence, novembre 1932, Musée Matisse, Nice © Succession H. Matisse | Photo © François Fernandez

MUSÉE MATISSE

EXHIBITION
GUIDE

THE COLLECTION

musee-matisse-nice.org

OCTOBER 2024 > APRIL 2025

THE COLLECTION

An exhibition presented from 23 October 2024 to 14 April 2025

STORY OF THE COLLECTION

After the Second World War, alongside other prominent artists and influential figures from the museum world, Henri Matisse puts his fame at the service of the Union Méditerranéenne pour l'Art Moderne (the Mediterranean Union for Modern Art), founded in 1946. He personally gets involved in the creation of the Galerie des Ponchettes, the first museum of modern art in Nice, inaugurated in 1950 with a major retrospective of his work, and plays an active role in promoting modern art on the Côte d'Azur. The Matisse museum's collection, one of the most significant collection for its breadth and diversity, owes its existence to the generosity of Henri Matisse and his family. In 1953, a year before his death, the artist donates a group of works to the City of Nice, forming the core of the collection of today's monographic museum, including the iconic *Still Life with Pomegranates* (1947). His wife, Amélie, adds to this collection in 1960, bequeathing works including paintings and nearly one hundred drawings. His children and heirs further enhance the collection with the donation of sculptures, engravings, illustrated books, cut-out papers such as *Blue Nude IV* (1952) and objects from Matisse's personal collection.



Henri Matisse, *Blue Nude IV*, Nice, 1952, cut-outs, pasted on paper, mounted on canvas, 103 × 74 cm. Gift of Madame Jean Matisse to the French State on deposit at the Musée Matisse, Nice, 1978, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

THE EXHIBITION'S NARRATIVE

This chrono-thematic narrative, spread over four floors, showcases the vast collection of the Matisse Museum, inviting visitors to discover or rediscover Matisse, one the most important artists of the 20th century.

The Beginnings

Born in the North of France, Henri Matisse settles in Paris in 1891, where he begins his academic training, essentially focused on learning to draw from and copy the masters. His early works are notably dark in colour and emulates a certain classicism, something his mentor, Gustave Moreau, quickly encourages him to move away from.

Matisse and Objects

Still lifes hold a central place in Matisse's work, from his earliest creations to the "Interiors at Venice". After initially imitating classical works and his predecessors, Matisse dares to experiment, using objects as a valuable source of inspiration. He is fascinated by their textures, forms and the relations between them, describing them as "all interwoven like a rope or a snake". With still lifes, featuring "thousands of background actors", Matisse intensely explores colour and spatial compositions.

Towards a Liberation of Colour

After spending three seasons in Brittany, Matisse gradually lightens his palette. He also frees his touch under the influence of the Impressionists. His stays in the South of France and Corsica prove transformative; he abandons darker tones in favour of bright colours, which will define Fauvism.

Fauvism

After the Salon d'Automne of 1905, the term "fauves" (*wild beasts*) is coined, and Matisse is considered the leader of this movement which includes Derain, Braque, Manguin and Camoin, among others. The Fauves intensify bright colours, prioritising expressiveness over

likeness. Matisse applies this principle to sculpture as well, exaggerating, for instance, the features of a face.

First Nice Period

During his first decade in Nice, Matisse focuses on intimate paintings, and particularly on interiors and odalisques. His studio becomes a stage where he varies the arrangements and gives free rein to bold experiments.

Graphic Art Cabinet

Matisse views drawing not only as a step in the process of creating paintings or sculptures but also as an independent artistic practice. This approach reaches its highest expression with his cut-out papers. The collection of drawings donated by the artist to the City of Nice includes nearly two hundred sheets, making it one of the most significant in the world.

Nice, Work and Joy

In 1949, Matisse chooses *Still Life with Pomegranates*, created two years earlier, as the visual for a poster aiming to promote tourism for the city of Nice abroad. The lithographic reproduction of the poster is met with general enthusiasm on both sides of the Atlantic, in particular thanks to Matisse's fame.

THE OVERWHELMING POWER OF COLOUR

A dialogue with Yves Klein in the collection of the Nice Matisse Museum

Curated by Hélène Guenin, Director of the Nice Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MAMAC) and Aymeric Jeudy, Director of the Matisse Museum

The Nice Matisse Museum is displaying eight works by Yves Klein from the MAMAC, currently closed for redevelopment. Part of the MAMAC's off-site exhibitions programme, this loan highlights the dynamic collaborative research between the two museums. Known for his "monochrome propositions" and "zones of pictorial sensi-

city", Yves Klein (1928-1962) shares affinities with Henri Matisse (1869-1954), whose work extends far beyond the traditional concept of easel painting. For Matisse, colour invades space creating works without limits, where pure pigment overtakes the surface, blurring the edges.

Primitive Skies, Modern Architecture

Certain works by Henri Matisse and Yves Klein show a clear connection to the aesthetics of Italian primitives, particularly Giotto. Both artists share a will to provide the viewer with a spiritual experience.

Matisse's Models

The female figure is a central theme in Matisse's œuvre, with the sitting session playing a fundamental role in his artistic process. His models are less "muses" than catalysts of his creative energy, women-forms who fascinate him and whose presence he finds indispensable.

Beyond the Motif

Although Yves Klein was born and lived in Nice, there are no direct quotes from Matisse in his writings. Nevertheless, many of his works resonate with Matisse's later period, particularly his cut-out paper compositions.

Both artists indeed share a common desire to expand the surface. Like Matisse in his studio, Klein



Henri Matisse working on *The Dance* in his studio of rue Désiré-Niel, 16 April 1932
Photogramme by Agnes Mitchell Sattler

allows his works to float freely on the wall, liberating them from frames. In doing so, he generates an immaterial space around them.

Modernism and Tradition

Klein and Matisse draw inspiration from ancient works and distant artistic traditions to feed their reflections about the limitations imposed by line in three-dimensionality. Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* thus inspired to Klein his statue *Michelangelo's*



Yves Klein, *Untitled Anthropometry (ANT 84)*, 1960

Pure pigment and synthetic resin applied on paper that is mounted on canvas.
MAMAC Collection, Nice

Slave (S20) and to Matisse his painting *Interior with Slave*. Classical culture also guides Klein toward the earliest artistic forms of humanity, such as in the *Anthropometries*, which evoke the prehistoric and callipygian figures of Venus.

The Enchantments of the Sea and the Sky

Klein is captivated by the ability of sponges to absorb everything, particularly his signature blue pigment, to the point where he decides to turn them into artworks in their own right, with *Untitled Sponge Sculpture (SE 90)*. Sponges also



Yves Klein working at the Opera-theatre in Gelsenkirchen, in 1958-1959
Photography by Charles Paul Wilp

feature among the marine elements in Matisse's tapestries *Oceania, the Sky, Oceania, the Sea* and *Polynesia, the Sea*, a direct echo to his journey to Polynesia

Vence, a Modern Conquest

Matisse considers the Chapel of Vence a defining achievement of his artistic career and spiritual journey. This total artwork — synthesis of various creative techniques, including cut-outs papers — is entirely designed by Matisse. His stained-glass windows, that stand as vibrant witnesses to a new visual culture, would later be seen by Klein, in December 1950.

THE MATISSE MUSEUM IN NICE

In December 1917, Henri Matisse discovers Nice for the first time. This is where he will produce most of his work and live until his death in 1954. The places where he has lived and worked have greatly influenced his creative process and are intrinsically connected to the different periods that have marked his career.

The Matisse Museum opens its doors on 5 January 1963. It is located in the heart of Cimiez's hill, the former Roman city of Cemenelum which was a central feature of Nice's development into a winter resort in the 19th and 20th centuries, and housed in the Villa des Arènes, a 17th century Genoese dwelling, that was revamped and extended with a new wing in 1993.

The collection brings together 31 paintings, 454 drawings and engravings, 38 cut-out papers, 57 sculptures and more than 130 objects from Matisse's personal collection. Most of these works and objects were directly brought from the artist's studio, giving the visitor a glimpse into 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 provide fresh perspectives on Matisse's work.

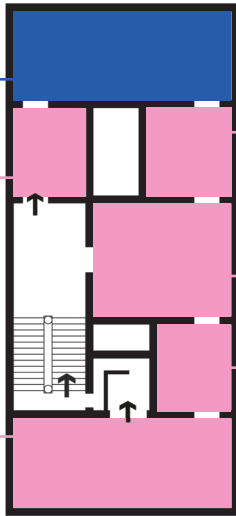
DIALOGUE WITH YVES KLEIN

MATISSE'S
MODELS

PRIMITIVE SKIES,
MODERN
ARCHITECTURE

VENCE, A MODERN
CONQUEST

VILLA
LEVEL 1



BEYOND
THE MOTIF

TOWARDS
A LIBERATION
OF COLOUR

MODERNISM
AND TRADITION

THE ENCHANTMENTS
OF THE SEA
AND THE SKY

VILLA
LEVEL 0

THE COLLECTION

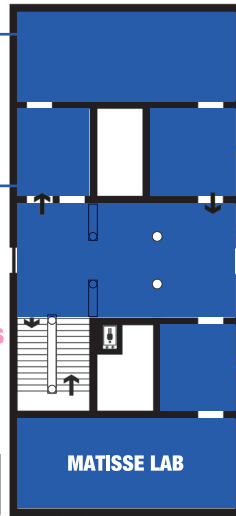
FAUVISM

FIRST
NICE PERIOD

NICE,
WORK AND JOY

GRAPHIC
ART CABINET

MATISSE LAB



SECTIONS OF THE EXHIBITION

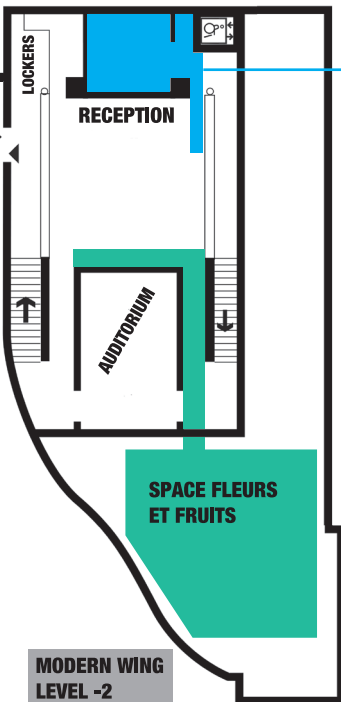
ENTRANCE /
EXIT

RECEPTION

AUDITORIUM

SPACE FLEURS
ET FRUITS

MODERN WING
LEVEL -2



SWIMMING
POOL

THE
BEGINNINGS

MUSEUM
SHOP

MODERN WING
LEVEL -1



MATISSE
AND
OBJECTS

WC

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Opening times:

Open every day except Tuesdays

- from 10am to 5pm from 1st November to 31st March
- from 10am to 6 pm from 1st April to 31st October

AROUND THE EXHIBITION “THE COLLECTION”

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



MUSEUM SHOP

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

AROUND THE MUSEUM

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



View of exhibition “The collection”
at the Nice Matisse Museum, 2024

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WEBSITE

www.musee-matisse-nice.org

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

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