

Henri Matisse, *Purple Robe and Anemones*, 1937 - Baltimore Museum of Art, The Cone Collection, established by Dr. Charles Cone and Mrs. Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland - Photo © Miro Hood



Yves Saint Laurent exploratory sketch, Fall/Winter 1988 haute couture collection
Yves Saint Laurent Paris © Yves Saint Laurent © Fondation Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent

HENRI MATISSE

YVES SAINT LAURENT

BEAUTY, FASHION AND HAPPINESS

MUSÉE MATISSE

With the *Musée YVES SAINT LAURENT Paris*

 **EXHIBITION GUIDE**
JUNE–SEPTEMBER 2026

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 **MUSEUM OF ART**



VILLE DE NICE

HENRI MATISSE – YVES SAINT LAURENT

BEAUTY, FASHION AND HAPPINESS

FROM 17 JUNE TO 28 SEPTEMBER 2026

"For me, he is "the" painter [...], I love Matisse, with his utterly calm life and his constant search for colour."

Yves Saint Laurent

"Drawing with scissors. Cutting straight into colour reminds me of direct carving by sculptors."

Henri Matisse

Today, the relevance of a connection between fashion and the visual arts is a given. An interest in painting is intrinsic to the work of Yves Saint Laurent (1936–2008), while an attraction to the applied arts is at the heart of the decorative aesthetic of Henri Matisse (1869–1954). The artistic resonance between the two creators is clear. It is based on a shared system of references, the connections between their practices and the similarities in their perspectives, but also on their analogous questioning of the body, material, colour, light and pattern, as well as on the practice of drawing as an inexhaustible source of exploration.

Bringing together 160 works—haute couture garments, traditional costumes, paintings, drawings, textiles, accessories and archival documents—the Musée Matisse Nice offers a unique journey highlighting the profound unity of the ties that Yves Saint Laurent—one of the greatest innovators in French fashion—wove with Henri Matisse, one of the greatest artists of his time. The museum will present a special display of its collections dedicated to Matisse's models to coincide with the exhibition.

LEVEL -2

Introduction

Textiles were significant in ushering new and radical paths into Henri Matisse's artistic practice. Brought together in what the artist himself called a "working

library", they nourished his reflection on visual art and constantly fed his decorative imagination. Textile design thus held a central place in the development of his aesthetics, based on the conviction that colour alone had the ability to order the pictorial space and structure its composition.

Many years later, Yves Saint Laurent would share this same approach to colour, which was central to his textile creations. The couturier kept a keen eye on Matisse's work throughout his life, finding a fertile ground for inspiration, rich in patterns and colours, in the artist's canvases and cut-outs.

LEVEL -1

MEZZANINE

Chapter 1: Interior laboratories

Textiles occupied an essential place in Matisse's environment from a very young age. Born in a region marked by a strong textile tradition, the artist developed a particular sensitivity to fabrics, patterns and colours very early on, and collected pieces of cloth and tapestries. A genuine visual and tactile laboratory, this collection was at the heart of his work.

Similarly, the collection of artworks, as well as the library that Yves Saint Laurent built with his partner Pierre Bergé, contributed just as essentially to forming and nurturing a creative reservoir at the heart of the couturier's aesthetic.

LEVEL -1

GRAND GALLERY

Chapter 2:

Painting and haute couture

Clothing and accessories played a major role in Matisse's environment. Costumes, precious fabrics and haute couture garments designed by Germaine Bongard, among others, or pieces brought back from his travels, made up a vast repertoire of forms, colours and materials on which the artist drew to construct his paintings. In *La Robe bleue reflétée dans la glace* [*The Blue Dress Reflected in a Mirror*], the theatricality of the costume almost steals the show from the model, Lydia Delectorskaya, who seems distant in the taffeta and organza dress although in reality it sublimates the model's state of mind. It does not decorate the space, but brings it to life with its presence.

This dress had a deep influence on Yves Saint Laurent, who adopted its cut and colours. The couturier observed Matisse's paintings depicting textile models closely, not only for their lines but also their patterns. As a result, certain patterns, whether tartan, stripes or zigzags, were reproduced and reinterpreted in several models in his SAINT LAURENT *rive gauche* line.



Henri Matisse, *The Blue Dress Reflected in a Mirror*, sketch, February 1937
The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto

Yves Saint Laurent, evening dress worn by Trish Goff
Autumn/Winter 1981 haute couture collection
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris

LEVEL 1

ROOM 6

Chapter 3:

Metamorphoses of the Romanian blouse

The Romanian peasant blouses that Matisse acquired thanks to his friend and artist Theodor Pallady were the starting point for a whole series of drawings and paintings. Garment in fashion on the Côte d'Azur, these flower-embroidered tunics became a much-used theme, whose graphic beauty sparked Matisse's interest.

In 1981, and again in 1999, Yves Saint Laurent transformed the Romanian blouse into haute couture, favouring exceptional materials and reworking the graphic designs in embroidery.

ROOMS 7 AND 8

Chapter 4:

A Shared Fascination with the Orient

Matisse built an imaginary world of extraordinary visual richness in Nice in the 1920s. He then enhanced his collection of costumes and fabrics, brought back from his travels or acquired from merchants such as "Madame Ibrahim". The textiles in this Aladdin's cave vied with the exuberant patterns of the studio's wallpaper. With his odalisques, Matisse went beyond the traditional ordering of horizontal and vertical lines by modulating them with the interplay of fabrics. Arabesques, floral patterns on fabrics and oriental motifs provided the artist with a fertile repertoire of forms, allowing him to impart a sense of expansion and dynamism to the painting that extended the pictorial space beyond its material limits.

Yves Saint Laurent shared this fascination for a dreamt-of Orient, inhabited by odalisques. These would become emancipated and modern figures on the couturier's catwalk. The most refined fabrics and patterns were chosen for the famous "Opéra-Ballets russes" collection of 1976, with its abundance of colours. These bright shades were revealed to him on each of the couturier's trips to Morocco, his second home and a major source of inspiration.

ROOM 9

Chapter 5: Around the stage

When Diaghilev commissioned Matisse for the sets and costumes of the *Chant du Rossignol* [*The Song of the Nightingale*], he began to improvise costumes and went to Paul Poiret's workshop to make them. He then asked Diaghilev to lend him one of the costumes that Bakst created for *Schéhérazade*. He would describe his scissors as "a tool as sensitive as the pen".

Yves Saint Laurent was also interested in the performing arts and collaborated with the choreographer Roland Petit throughout his career. For several of his music-hall shows, the couturier chose an Orientalist ambiance, dressing the dancers in costumes heavily inspired by the Ballet Russes and the work of Léon Bakst.

ROOM 10

Chapter 6: The accessory, a meeting space

Accessories occupied an essential place in Matisse's work. Among them, the hat was one of his favourites and became, as in *Les Plumes blanches* [*The White Feathers*] an opportunity for pictorial risks and challenges. Matisse appropriated this attribute of bourgeois elegance at a time when the relationship with clothing and the body was changing profoundly, and made it a core element of the composition. By alternately making the figure—and conversely the décor—more prominent or more abstract, he modulated the role of accessories, jewellery, fabric, and so on, while creating a rhythmic balance of planes and surfaces.

For Yves Saint Laurent, garments were always combined with accessories, which were an essential element of the outfit. In the 1980s, the couturier

combined several of his silhouettes with accessories designed from motifs inspired by Matisse. He liked to dress his models in turbans, transforming them into modern odalisques, to which he added an asymmetrical star taken directly from Matisse's cut-outs as a decorative brooch.



Henri Matisse, *The White Feathers*, 1919
Minneapolis Institute of Art
The William Hood Dunwoody Fund

ROOM 11

Chapter 7: Cutting out a world

Matisse used weaving techniques in the new language he invented with cut-outs, working directly on the blank wall of his studio on the sometimes monumental compositions he designed at the end of his life. A new synthesis of colour, line and movement occurred as a result of this technique.

This way of making art like a couturier fascinated Yves Saint Laurent, who adopted Matisse's cut-out gouaches by transposing them onto textiles, notably as motifs applied to stunning evening dresses in 1981. It was, in fact, these same gouaches, as well as the work done by Matisse for *Jazz* or for the covers of *Verve*, that Saint Laurent looked at when designing several of his *LOVE* greetings cards. The asymmetrical

geometric motifs, bursting with colour, accompanied these messages of love sent to his friends and collaborators.



Henri Matisse, cover of *Verve* magazine, vol. II, no. 18, 1940
Paris, Tériade Éditeur, 1940
Musée Matisse Nice



Yves Saint Laurent, *Love* greetings card, 1983
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris

LEVEL 0

ROOMS 1, 2, 3 AND 4

Epilogue:

The model in Matisse's work

The feminine figure occupied a central place in Matisse's work. In the early days, the painter often used members of his family circle—notably his wife Amélie and his daughter Marguerite—as models but gradually moved away from this and hired professional models.

A new stage of his journey began with Laurette: his serial work developed and the model became a partner in his research. The numerous figures adorned with exotic costumes and fabrics already heralded the universe of the odalisques that would blossom in Nice in the 1920s, while Lydia Delectorskaya established herself from the 1930s as an essential presence at the heart of his work. Much more than mere models, all become privileged witnesses to the transformations in his art.

PROGRAMME AT THE AUDITORIUM

Nice Classic Festival

OPENING CONCERT

- **Sunday 21 June** at 4 pm
Free entrance, booking necessary.

LUNCHTIME CONCERTS

- **Thursday 23 July** at 12 noon
- **Wednesday 29 July** at 12 noon
- **Thursday 6 August** at 12 noon
*Admission fee, booking is required.
Tickets are not sold at the museum.*

More information on the programme and tickets on the festival's website: niceclassiclive.com.

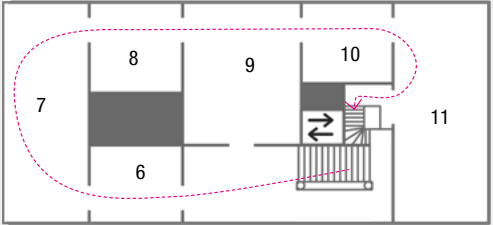
Carte blanche to the students of the Nice Conservatoire

Wednesday 24 June at 3 pm
Free entrance, subject to availability.

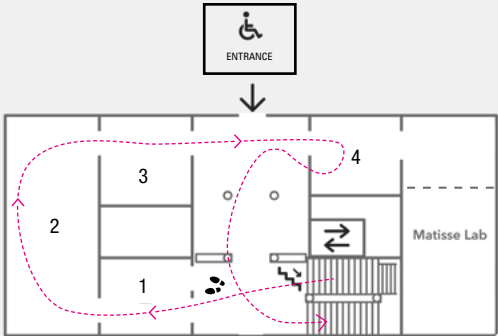

**CONSERVATOIRE
DE NICE**
MUSIQUE - DANSE - THÉÂTRE

EXHIBITION LAYOUT

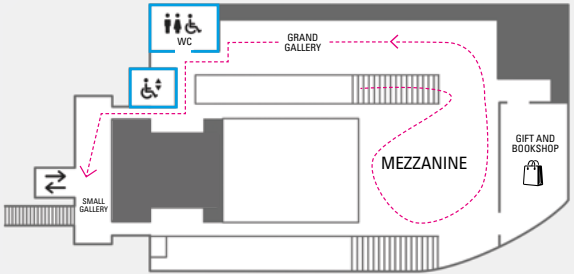
LEVEL 1



LEVEL 0

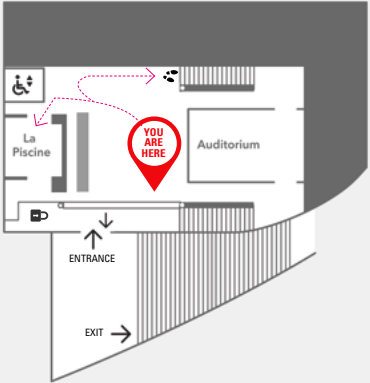


LEVEL -1



YOUR VISIT
STARTS HERE

LEVEL -2





IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MATISSE

Places where he lived and worked

1 - Hôtel Beau Rivage

From December 1917 to April 1918
107, quai des États-Unis

2 - Promenade des Anglais

April 1918
105, quai des États-Unis

3 - Villa des Alliés

From May to June 1918
138, boulevard du Mont-Boron

4 - Hôtel de la Méditerranée

Autumn 1918–1921
25, promenade des Anglais (destroyed)

5 - Palais Caïs de Pierlas

1921–1938
1, place Charles-Félix

6 - The studio of

La Danse de Barnes

1931–1932
8, rue Désiré-Niel (destroyed)

7 - Le Régina

From 1921–1938 and 1949–1954
73, boulevard de Cimiez

8 - Villa Le Rêve, Vence

July 1943 to end-1948
261, avenue Henri-Matisse

Leisure places

9 - Marché aux fleurs

Cours Saleya

10 - Club nautique de Nice

50, boulevard Franck-Pilatte

11 - École nationale d'art

décoratif de Nice
6, rue Jonduti-de-l'Escarène

12 - Jardin des Arènes de Cimiez

184, avenue des Arènes-de-Cimiez

Worth seeing

13 - Musée Matisse Nice

164, avenue des
Arènes-de-Cimiez

14 - Cemetery of the

Monastère de Cimiez
Place Jean-Paul II :
grave of Henri Matisse

MUSÉE MATISSE NICE

164, avenue des Arènes de Cimiez – Nice – +33 (0)4 93 81 08 08 – musee.matisse@ville-nice.fr

Open daily from 10 am to 6 pm, closed on Tuesdays.



GIFT AND BOOKSHOP

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

AVAILABLE AT THE BOOKSHOP



Exhibition catalogue

Bilingual version French-English
Copublished by Musée
Matisse Nice, In Fine & Musée
Yves Saint Laurent Paris
248 pages, 250 ill.



EATING AND DRINKING

Kiosque des Arènes in the museum's garden
(a garden planted with centuries-old
olive trees next to the Roman arena)



AROUND THE MUSEUM (5 MIN.)

- Cimiez's monastery, cemetery and garden
- Matisse's grave (in the monastery's cemetery)
- Archeology Museum

FREE DIGITAL GUIDE

Available on Bloomberg Connects via the app or directly
by scanning the QR code.

Access detailed digital content about the works, translated into
over 50 languages. This can also be viewed outside the museum to
prepare for your visit or return to it afterwards.



**Bloomberg
Connects**



VISIT THE CHAPEL OF THE ROSARY IN VENCE

466, avenue Henri Matisse – Vence

chapellematisse.com

Open from Tuesday to Saturday from 10 am
to 11.30 am and from 2 pm to 5.30 pm.



ACTIVITIES, WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS

Visit the museum's website to
find out about our programme for
adults, children and families.

musee-matisse-nice.org

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