

PRESS KIT

EXHIBITION Summer 2026

HENRI MATISSE–YVES SAINT LAURENT

Beauty, Fashion and Happiness

From 17 June to 28 September 2026

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The Musée Matisse Nice and the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris present a major exhibition dedicated to two leading creators who never ceased to rethink the 20th century, exploring and transgressing its sources to abolish the established boundaries between the fine and applied arts.

For Henri Matisse (1869-1954), the dynamism of decorative prints becomes the means of creating a pictorial space that “extends beyond the limits of the tangible”¹; for Yves Saint Laurent (1936-2008), painting offers the possibility of moving from plane to volume, of conceiving the garment as a mobile element that unfolds in space, an art in movement.² Sewing and painting are gestures that contribute to the “same experimentation with line, the same precision in handling contrasts, between materials and volume”³. In this respect, Henri Matisse and Yves Saint Laurent share a common lexical field: “cutting into colour”, “shaping material”.

Born in the north of France, in an environment where the textile industry occupied a prominent place, Henri Matisse developed a deep interest in fabrics, costumes and accessories very early on.

As a result, fashion runs through his work and is one of its significant features, whether it is haute couture or more popular ready-to-wear designs. Many of the paintings shown in this exhibition are named after clothes (*Miss Matisse in a Tartan Coat* [*Mademoiselle Matisse en manteau écossais*], *The Blue Dress Reflected in a Mirror* [*La Robe bleue*



Yves Saint Laurent with Matisse's painting
The Cowslips, Blue and Pink Carpet [*Les
Coucoucs, tapis bleu et rose*] in his apartment,
55 rue de Babylone, Paris, 1983
Photograph by Duane Michals

¹ *Matisse and the colour of fabrics*, Kathleen Brunner, Ann Dumas, Jack Flam, et al., Le Cateau-Cambrésis, Musée départemental Henri Matisse, London, Royal Academy of Arts; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Arts, 2004-2005 / Paris, Gallimard, 2004.

² He speaks of it thus, from the release of his first dress explicitly inspired by a pictorial work, the dress known as “tribute to Mondrian”, created in 1965 and considered today as a major milestone in his relationship with the arts.

³ Dominique Païni, “Le peintre de la femme moderne”, in Yves Saint Laurent, *Dialogue avec l'art*, 2002. With other couturiers who are art enthusiasts — Jacques Doucet, for example — certain gestures, such as painting and sewing, find the same experimentation with lines and the same attention to contrasts between materials and volumes.

Yves Saint Laurent, jar with fruits, 1981
Collage on paper, 73,5 × 50,5 cm
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris



Henri Matisse, *Flowers and Fruits* [*Fleurs et fruits*], Nice, 1952-1953
Paper painted in gouache and cut, glued to paper and mounted, 410 × 870 cm
Musée Matisse Nice

reflétée dans la glace], *The Striped Dress* [*La Robe rayée*], *Lorette in a Red Jacket* [*Lorette en veste rouge*], *The Blue Gandoura* [*Portrait à la gandoura bleue*], *Purple Robe and Anemones* [*Robe violette et anémones*]) and so many others. His “working library” illustrates this passion. It forms a visual and tactile repertoire that is essential to his art, allowing him to explore the harmony of colours and the movement of the body as well as a decorative aesthetic. Far from being a mere ornament, textiles represent a field of formal experimentation for Matisse. As Pierre Schneider pointed out, “with his interest in the art of costume, Matisse could hardly fail to be interested in fashion”.

Modern art found a particular echo in Yves Saint Laurent, who absorbs those whom, following Nietzsche, he calls his “aesthetic phantoms”. Among them, Matisse is a source of inspiration and creativity. The designer does not copy, but is inspired first by the works from his personal library – “his reserves”, in which the painter featured prominently – and then by collecting the master’s works with his partner, Pierre Bergé. Far beyond the references he made to the artist through several collections in the 1980s and 1990s, he subtly observed him throughout his career, admiring the boldness of his colours, the intensity of his contrasts and his taste for ornament. He grasped the essence of Matisse’s creative processes, such as the cut-outs that enable him to “draw with scissors”.

For both masters, the “reserves”⁴ that come from their travels, but especially their studios and the books that surround them, are a vast source of inspiration, at the heart of their creativity. These continuous explorations and horizons open to the discovery of new worlds testify to an immense curiosity, amply documented by the abundant archives left by each of them. Certain references in this constellation where painting, music, dance, cinema and literature intersect, are common, including Apollinaire, Aragon and Proust. It is to Baudelaire, who was read by both Matisse and Yves Saint Laurent, that this exhibition owes its title.⁵

In Matisse’s studios in Nice, fabrics, costumes and objects blend with wallpapers to create atmospheres rich in materials and patterns in which the painter multiplies interior scenes, painting, drawing and sculpting young women either nude or dressed in clothes from his collection. Later, the cut-outs pinned to the wall, moved, adjusted until the right balance is

⁴ *Yves Saint Laurent aux musées*, Madison Cox, Stephan Janson and Mouna Mekouar (eds.), Paris, Centre Pompidou, Musée d’Art Moderne de Paris, Musée du Louvre, Musée d’Orsay, Musée National Picasso-Paris, 2022 / Paris, Fondation Pierre Bergé–Yves Saint Laurent, Gallimard, 2022.

⁵ Charles Baudelaire, “Le beau, la mode et le bonheur”, in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, published in 1863, included in *L’Art romantique*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1885, *Complete Works*, volume III, pp. 51-56.

achieved, contribute fully to the flourishing of one of the pictorial revolutions of the 20th century. In Yves Saint Laurent's studio, the silhouette is constructed through successive adjustments using drawings pinned to cork boards and worktables cluttered with objects and mirrors, in a constant dialogue between eye and material. In their respective creative processes, Yves Saint Laurent's polaroids tell the story of clothing in the making, while Matisse's states of painting document the progress of the work.



Henri Matisse, *La Robe rayée* [The Striped Dress], 1938
Oil on canvas, 46 × 38 cm
Albertina, Vienna

The artist and the couturier share a common ground: that of a formal language based on the primacy of drawing. In both, the repetitive act of drawing becomes an almost instinctive, immediate gesture. For Matisse, drawing eliminates the superfluous to achieve expressive accuracy. For Yves Saint Laurent, it is the founding act of all creation. Before the studio, before the fabric, there is paper, on which he draws the essential line with an almost spontaneous gesture. The line captures the poise, how the body is carried, its balance, a silhouette already in motion anticipating the presence of the model.



Yves Saint Laurent, original sketch of an evening outfit, SAINT LAURENT *rive gauche* spring-summer collection 1988
Pastel and graphite pencil on paper, 29.6 × 21 cm
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris

It is also important to note how acutely Yves Saint Laurent assimilates the principle of the cut-outs emblematic of Matisse's work and translates it into a field of his own. Clothing, like pictorial composition, then becomes the place where the harmony of forms is experienced, where the body and its language meet the eye. Moreover, well before conceptualising the cut-outs as an autonomous visual language, Henri Matisse used this technique as early as 1919 to design the sets for the ballet *The Song of the Nightingale* [*Le Chant du rossignol*] (for which he designed the costumes himself in Paul Poiret's workshop) or again, in the early 1930s, when he composed the mural *The Dance* [*La Danse*]. Working from large painted sheets of paper, he creates the various elements of his composition, which he can pin on the wall, move, adjust and rearrange in order to test their balance. He would become a couturier himself when the London industrialist Zika Ascher asked him to create sets of scarves and linen hangings (*Oceania, the Sea* [*Océanie, la mer*]; *Oceania, the Sky* [*Océanie, le ciel*]), which he would offer to the City of Nice in 1953.

Today, the relevance of bringing together fashion and the visual arts no longer needs to be demonstrated; Yves Saint Laurent's interest in painting is intrinsic to his work, while Matisse's attraction to the applied arts lies at the heart of his decorative aesthetic. The artistic resonance between the two creators is evident. It is rooted in a shared system of references, in the dialogue between their practices and the affinities of their perspectives, as well as in their parallel explorations of the body, material, colour, light, and pattern, with drawing as an inexhaustible source of invention.

The exhibition aims to highlight these connections and to create a dialogue between the works of the two artists. It relies on the rich collections of the Musée Matisse Nice and of the Fondation Pierre Bergé–Yves Saint Laurent, complemented by prestigious loans, from both French and international institutions.

Bringing together 160 works – haute couture garments, traditional costumes, paintings, drawings, textiles, accessories and archival documents – the Musée Matisse Nice presents a unique exhibition highlighting the ties the couturier – one of the greatest innovators in French fashion – wove with the art of Henri Matisse, one of the greatest artists of his time.

From left to right:

Henri Matisse, *The Dance [La Danse]*,
June 1938
Watercolour on paper, 28.5 × 49 cm
Musée Matisse Nice

Henri Matisse, *Study of a Red Costume
for 'L'Étrange Farandole'*, circa 1937
Pencil and watercolour on paper,
27 × 21 cm
Private collection

Yves Saint Laurent, costume
sketch for the dancers of the ballet *La
Rose malade*, choreographed by Roland
Petit and performed at the Palais des
Sports de Paris, 1973
Felt-tip pen on paper 26.9 × 20.6 cm
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris



An exhibition by the Musée Matisse Nice and the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris

Curated by:

Serena Bucalo-Mussely, Curator, and **Aymeric Jeudy**, Director of the Musée Matisse Nice and associate researcher at the Centre for the Modern and Contemporary Mediterranean (University of Nice Côte d'Azur)

This project has benefited from the valuable contribution of the scientific teams of both museums. Among them, Domitille Éblé, Head of Collections at the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris, and Claire Gooden, Research Officer at the Musée Matisse Nice, played a significant role in creating this exhibition.

Exhibition Design:

Designed by Studio Matters (Charenton-le-Pont), the exhibition features seven chapters over two floors. To coincide with the exhibition, the Musée Matisse Nice will present a special display of its collections dedicated to Matisse's models.

Exhibition catalogue:

Under the direction of Serena Bucalo-Mussely and Aymeric Jeudy

With contributions from Khémaïs Ben Lakhdar Rezgui, Laurence Benaïm, Serena Bucalo-Mussely, Domitille Éblé, Claire Gooden, Aymeric Jeudy, Mouna Mekouar, Victor Sainsot and Popy Venzal

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THE MUSÉE MATISSE NICE

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

musee-matisse-nice.org

Open every day
except Tuesdays
from 10 am to 6 pm

ONLINE TICKETING



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



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HÔTEL BEAU RIVAGE
★★★★

A museum set within a major heritage site

Located on top of a hill, the Musée Matisse Nice 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 in the 19th and 20th centuries. The city is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The museum, inaugurated in 1963, consists of a 17th-century villa that was revamped and extended with a new wing by architect Jean-François Bodin between 1987 and 1993.

Nestled within a public garden, it stands in harmony with the surrounding area, offering visitors an engaging experience of Henri Matisse's work.

A unique collection

The collection which comprises works donated to the city by the artist and his heirs is displayed in a 1 200-square-meter exhibition space. Its presentation provides an insightful exploration into the œuvre of one of the greatest artists of the 20th 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.



Exterior view of the Musée Matisse Nice
Photo © François Fernandez

THE MUSÉE YVES SAINT LAURENT PARIS

Presided over by Madison Cox, the Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris is the first museum dedicated to one of the greatest couturiers of the 20th century in the fashion capital of the world. It opened on 3 October 2017, 15 years after the closure of the haute couture house, and was awarded the title “Museum of France”. It occupies the historic private mansion at 5 avenue Marceau where, over a period of 30 years, from 1974 to 2002, Yves Saint Laurent’s creations were born.

The museum’s collection boasts approximately 100,000 graphic art pieces, including 55,000 fashion sketches by the designer and 194,000 photographs comprising slides, negatives, vintage and modern prints, as well as 12,000 textile pieces including 8,300 haute couture pieces. An archive comprising more than 4,000 magazines and 60,000 documents, including correspondence, audiovisual documents and personal items, has been added to the collection, the result of the pioneering archival work undertaken by Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Bergé.

The Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris is temporarily closed for renovation works. It is scheduled to reopen in autumn 2027.

<https://museeyslparis.com/>



Photo © Sophie Carre

EIFFAGE, CORPORATE PATRON OF THE EXHIBITION AT THE MUSÉE MATISSE NICE

A longstanding supporter of flagship cultural events in Nice, including several major exhibitions, EIFFAGE is supporting in 2026 the landmark exhibition “Henri Matisse – Yves Saint Laurent. Beauty, Fashion and Happiness”, dedicated to a dialogue between two leading creators who never ceased to rethink the 20th century, exploring and transgressing its sources to abolish the established boundaries between the fine and applied arts, between painting and couture.

Being firmly committed to the local community lies at the heart of EIFFAGE's mission across its many areas of expertise: urban development, public spaces and roads, property development and construction, civil engineering, earthworks, and energy.

Deeply rooted in the city of Nice and across the wider metropolitan area, EIFFAGE delivers comprehensive solutions tailored to the needs of the region, its public authorities, and its residents.

Being bold and inventive, as well as being socially and environmentally responsible on a daily basis are among EIFFAGE's commitments and core values, placing the ecological transition at the heart of its strategy and drawing upon collective intelligence as an inexhaustible and constantly renewed resource.



VISUALS FOR THE PRESS



Carmen Leschennes posing for Henri Matisse,
Le Régina, Nice, summer 1951
Photograph by Dmitri Kessel
© Dmitri Kessel/The LIFE Picture Collection

Yves Saint Laurent with Matisse's painting
The Cowslips, Blue and Pink Carpet [*Les Coucoucs, tapis bleu et rose*] in his apartment 55 rue de Babylone, Paris, 1983
© Photo : Duane Michals
Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York



Henri Matisse, *Flowers and Fruits* [*Fleurs et fruits*], Nice, 1952–1953
Paper painted in gouache and cut, glued to paper and mounted
on canvas, 410 × 870 cm
Musée Matisse Nice
Photo © Musée Matisse Nice/François Fernandez

Yves Saint Laurent, jar with fruits, 1981
Collage on paper, 73.5 × 50.5 cm
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris
© Yves Saint Laurent
© Fondation Pierre Bergé–Yves Saint Laurent



Henri Matisse, *The Striped Dress* [*La Robe rayée*], 1938
Oil on canvas, 46 × 38 cm
Albertina, Vienna – Batliner Collection
© Photo : The Albertina, Vienna

Yves Saint Laurent, original sketch of an evening outfit, SAINT
LAURENT *rive gauche* spring-summer 1988 collection
Pastel and graphite pencil on paper, 29.6 × 21 cm
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris
© Yves Saint Laurent
© Fondation Pierre Bergé–Yves Saint Laurent



Henri Matisse, cover of the review *Verve*, vol. II, n° 18, 1940
Paris, Tériade Éditeur, 1940
Print on paper based on a composition of cut-outs, 36.5 × 27 cm
Musée Matisse Nice
Photo © Musée Matisse Nice/François Fernandez

Yves Saint Laurent, greeting card *Love*, 1983
Print on paper, 55 × 44 cm
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris
© Yves Saint Laurent
© Fondation Pierre Bergé–Yves Saint Laurent



VISUALS FOR THE PRESS



Henri Matisse, *The Conversation* [*La Conversation*], 1938
Oil on canvas, 46.7 × 55.4 cm
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Bequest of Mr. James D. Zellerbach
© Photo : San Francisco Museum of Modern Art/Bridgeman Images

Yves Saint Laurent, evening outfit worn by Amalia Vairelli.
SAINT LAURENT *rive gauche* spring-summer 1994 collection.
Cour du Louvre, Paris, October 1993
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris
Photo © Guy Marineau



Henri Matisse, *The Romanian Blouse* [*La Blouse roumaine*], 1936
Pencil and black ink on paper, 51.2 × 38.1 cm
Baltimore Museum of Art, The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel
Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland
© Photo : Mitro Hood

Yves Saint Laurent, original sketch of a blouse, haute couture
autumn-winter 1999 collection
Graphite pencil on tracing paper, 17.5 × 20 cm
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris
© Yves Saint Laurent
© Fondation Pierre Bergé–Yves Saint Laurent



Henri Matisse, *The Blue Dress Reflected in a Mirror, sketch* [*La Robe bleue reflétée dans la glace, esquisse*], February 1937
Oil and pencil on canvas, 64 × 49 cm
The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto
© Photo : The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto

Yves Saint Laurent, evening dress from the Fall/Winter 1981
haute couture collection, worn by Trish Goff at the last runway show,
Centre Pompidou, Paris, 22 January 2002
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris
Photo © Guy Marineau



Henri Matisse, *Purple Robe and Anemones* [*Robe violette et anémones*], 1937
Oil on canvas, 73 × 60 cm
Baltimore Museum of Art, The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel
Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland
Photo © Mitro Hood

Yves Saint Laurent, research sketches, haute couture
autumn-winter collection 1988
Graphite pencil and pastel on paper, 29.7 × 21 cm
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris
© Yves Saint Laurent
© Fondation Pierre Bergé–Yves Saint Laurent



VISUALS FOR THE PRESS



Henri Matisse, *The Dance [La Danse]*, June 1938
Watercolour on paper 28.5 × 49 cm
Musée Matisse Nice
Gift of the artist's heirs, 1960
Photo © Musée Matisse Nice/François Fernandez

Yves Saint Laurent, costume sketches for the dancers of the ballet *La Rose malade*, choreography by Roland Petit at the Palais des Sports in Paris, 1973
Felt pen on paper, 26.9 × 20.6 cm
Musée Yves Saint Laurent Paris
© Yves Saint Laurent
© Fondation Pierre Bergé–Yves Saint Laurent



Henri Matisse, *Study of a Red Costume for 'L'Étrange Farandole'*, circa 1937
Pencil and watercolour on paper, 27 × 21 cm
Private collection, France
Photo : © Jean-Louis Losi



Henri Matisse, *The White Feathers [Les Plumes blanches]*, 1919
Oil on canvas, 72.3 × 58.7 cm
Minneapolis Institute of Art
The William Hood Dunwoody Fund
Photo : © Minneapolis Institute of Art



Views of the exhibition “Henri Matisse–Yves Saint Laurent. Beauty, Fashion and Happiness” at the Musée Matisse Nice, 2026
Photo: © Ville de Nice / David Nouy © Yves Saint Laurent
© Fondation Pierre Bergé – Yves Saint Laurent

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