

PRESS RELEASE

EXHIBITION Autumn 2026

HENRI MATISSE – ALEX KATZ

The Silence of Painting

From 28 October 2026 to 18 January 2027

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Every autumn, the Musée Matisse Nice explores contemporary perceptions of the work of Henri Matisse (1869–1954). This year, it is hosting a temporary exhibition dedicated to Alex Katz (born in 1927), a leading figure in American painting.

The encounter between Henri Matisse and Alex Katz forms part of a vast cultural history linking France and the United States. Henri Matisse's work was exhibited across the Atlantic from 1908 onwards and played a part in introducing the American public to the most avant-garde developments in European art. In 1930, with his reputation already firmly established on both sides of the Atlantic, Henri Matisse set out on his first trip to the United States. On his arrival in New York, he was struck by the city's visual impact: "The light in New York is exceptionally beautiful, and then there are the towers, these massive structures soaring into the sky, bathed in a crystalline light. Yes, the light on the Riviera is lovely too—but it's different. The atmosphere in New York is so dry, so crystal-clear—unlike anywhere else."¹ The experience prompted an intuition about the future in Henri Matisse: "You will understand, when you see America, that one day they will have painters, because it is simply not possible, in a country like that, which offers such dazzling visual spectacles, that there should not one day be painters."²



Alex Katz, *Black Roses 12*, 2025
Oil on linen, 122.6 × 92.1 cm
Courtesy: Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac

In February 1949, Alex Katz came across an exhibition at Pierre Matisse's gallery in New York, which was dedicated to his father's recent works. The paintings known as the "Intérieurs de Vence" (*Interiors of Vence*)—including *Nature morte aux grenades* (*Still Life with Pomegranates*) and *Le silence habité des maisons* (*The Inhabited Silence of Houses*)—along with the brush drawings and cut-outs, had a profound aesthetic impact on the young artist, who was then a student at the Cooper Union in Manhattan. Alex Katz – a painter of everyday

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¹ Henri Matisse. Dudley Dorothy, "Notes on Painting: The Matisse Fresco in Merion, Pennsylvania", *Hound and Horn*, vol. 7, no. 2, January–March 1934.

² Henri Matisse, remarks made in 1933, as reported by André Masson in "Entretiens avec Georges Charbonnier", Paris, Julliard, 1958.

Henri Matisse, *Tête de Lorette sur fond vert* (Head of Lorette Against a Green Background), Paris, 1916
Oil on panel, 36 × 27 cm
Musée Matisse Nice



Alex Katz, *Ada with White Dress*, 1958
Oil on linen, 152.4 × 121.9 cm
Private collection
Courtesy: Dallas Museum of Art

American life—has been studying the work of the French master ever since. Seventy-five years later, the idea for the exhibition arose following Katz's encounter with the museum's collections in 2024 and the fruitful dialogue that ensued. Designed in collaboration with the artist himself, "Henri Matisse – Alex Katz. The Silence of Painting" offers a new display of the museum's collections, in which Alex Katz's works resonate with those of Henri Matisse.

As John Russell³ points out, Katz's work features "a system of echoes and affinities that links his paintings to the art of the past"⁴ and, in particular, to the work of Matisse, who influenced him most in his use of light and colour.

Born in Brooklyn in 1927, Alex Katz lives and works in New York and Maine. From the very start of his career, he developed a distinctive style of painting that is difficult to categorise within the art movements of his time in the United States. The traditional genres of figurative painting—floral still lifes, landscapes and the human figure—became the main subjects of his work at a time when Abstract Expressionism was dominating the American art scene. His blocks of colour, his framing and his large formats sometimes bring his work close to Pop Art, without ever being confused with it.

In his numerous works on the artist, Éric de Chassey discusses this distinctive style, which is "consistently figurative, arising from a paradoxical reaction to the abstract painting of Franz Kline and Jackson Pollock".⁵ A painter of the present day, capturing the moment and transposing it onto canvas, Alex Katz, like his predecessor, is interested in dance, fashion and cinema. His painting is not naturalistic: nature is stylised, reworked and transformed in the studio. He shares with Matisse a pictorial vocabulary based on the simplification of forms and a marked economy of means. Blocks of colour cover the surface of the canvas and create a space characterised by flatness, in which perspective is absent. This apparent simplicity actually conceals, in both of them, a taste for risk and for performance: reduce, select and eliminate to reveal what is essential. The subject remains, and the work keeps its distance from the narrative in order to give full rein to sensations and an immediate vision of the world and of reality.

³ Art critic for *The New York Times* from 1982 to 1990.

⁴ John Russell in *Alex Katz: Recent Paintings*, London, Marlborough Fine Art (exhibition catalogue), 1982.

⁵ Éric de Chassey, "Une peinture au présent" in *Peinture. Alex Katz & Félix Vallotton* (ed. Bernard Fibicher), Lausanne, Cantonal Museum of Fine Arts, Milan, 5 Continents Éditions, 2013.

Thanks to its broad chronological scope, the exhibition offers visitors the chance to explore Alex Katz's body of work, from his earliest pieces (*Nude*, 1951) to his most recent works (*Lilies 13*, 2025). Paintings, drawings, collages and prints from the artist's studio invite the public to revisit the museum's collections—which themselves originate from Matisse's studio—through a contemporary lens, and highlight the enduring relevance of his work.



Alex Katz, *Lilies 13*, 2025
Oil on linen, 182.9 × 122 cm
Courtesy: Alex Katz Studio

Curated by:

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 exhibition has been organised in collaboration with Alex Katz.
It has received generous support from the Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery.

Thaddaeus Ropac
London Paris Salzburg Milan Seoul

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THE MUSÉE MATISSE NICE

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musee-matisse-nice.org

Open every day
except Tuesdays
from 10 am to 6 pm
(5 pm from 1 November
to 31 March)

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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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.



View of the museum's hall
Photo © Edgar Zippel / ERCO

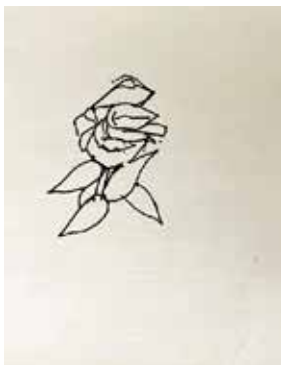
VISUALS FOR THE PRESS



Alex Katz, *Black Roses 12*, 2025
Oil on linen, 122.6 × 92.1 cm
Courtesy: Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London · Paris · Salzburg · Milan · Seoul
Photo: Daniel Greer
© Alex Katz / Adagp, Paris, 2026



Alex Katz, *Ada with White Dress*, 1958
Oil on linen, 152.4 × 121.9 cm
Private collection
Courtesy: Dallas Museum of Art
Photo: Chadwick Redman
© Alex Katz / Adagp, Paris, 2026



Alex Katz, *Drawing for Black Roses 16*, 2025
Ink on paper, 28 × 21.6 cm
Courtesy: Alex Katz Studio
Photo: Daniel Greer
© Alex Katz / Adagp, Paris, 2026



Alex Katz, *Lilies 13*, 2025
Oil on linen, 182.9 × 122 cm
Courtesy: Alex Katz Studio
Photo: Daniel Greer
© Alex Katz / Adagp, Paris, 2026



Alex Katz, *Reclining Bather*, 1960
Oil on cardboard, 76 × 122 cm
Courtesy: Alex Katz Studio
Photo: Thomas Müller
© Alex Katz / Adagp, Paris, 2026

Henri Matisse, *Tête de Lorette sur fond vert* (*Head of Lorette Against a Green Background*), Paris, 1916
Oil on panel, 36 × 27 cm
Musée Matisse Nice
Bequest of Madame Henri Matisse, 1960
Photo: © Musée Matisse Nice/François Fernandez



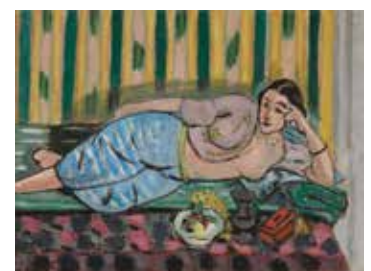
Henri Matisse, *Nature morte à l'harmonium* (*Still Life with Harmonium*), Paris, 1899-1900
Oil on cradled panel, 73 × 55.5 cm
Musée Matisse Nice
Bequest of Madame Henri Matisse, 1960
Photo: © Musée Matisse Nice/François Fernandez



Henri Matisse, *Étude de fleurs de grenade et d'aubépines* (*Study for Pomegranate and Hawthorn Flowers*), 1945
Pencil on paper, 30 × 23 cm
Private collection, France



Henri Matisse, *Odalisque au coffret rouge* (*Odalisque with a Red Box*), Nice, 1927
Oil on canvas, 50 × 65 cm
Musée Matisse Nice
Bequest of Madame Henri Matisse, 1960
Photo: © Musée Matisse Nice/François Fernandez



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