

Alex Katz, 10 AM, 1999 - Oil on linen, 186 × 171.5 cm - Courtesy : Alex Katz Studio - Photo : Paul Takeuchi - © Alex Katz / Adagp, Paris, 2025

MUSÉEMATISSE

HENRI MATISSE
ALEX KATZ
THE SILENCE OF PAINTING

EXHIBITION GUIDE

28 OCT. 2026 > 18 JAN. 2027

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HOTEL BEAU RIVAGE

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MUSÉES DE NICE

VILLE DE NICE

THE MUSÉE MATISSE NICE: THE STORY OF A COLLECTION

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

After the Second World War, alongside other leading artists and 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. He also plays an active role in promoting modern art on the Côte d'Azur.

The Musée Matisse Nice 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 renovated and extended with a new wing in 1993.

The Musée Matisse Nice's collection—which is characterized both by 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 *Nature morte aux grenades* (*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, prints, drawings, illustrated books, cut-outs such as *Fleurs et fruits* (*Flowers and Fruits*) (1952) and objects from Matisse's personal collection.

Most of the museum's works and objects come directly from the artist's studio, giving the visitor an insight into the intimacy of his creative process. The museum has a policy of regularly rotating its exceptional permanent collection, curating focused thematic displays and major temporary exhibitions to constantly provide fresh perspectives on Matisse's work.



Henri Matisse, *Study of the Red Costume for "L'Étrange Farandole"*, ca. 1937
Pencil and watercolour on paper, 27 × 21 cm
Musée Matisse Nice
Purchased in 2026

NEW ACQUISITION

HENRI MATISSE – ALEX KATZ
THE SILENCE OF PAINTING

Exhibition on view from October 28, 2026, to January 18, 2027

Every autumn, the Musée Matisse Nice explores contemporary responses 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]



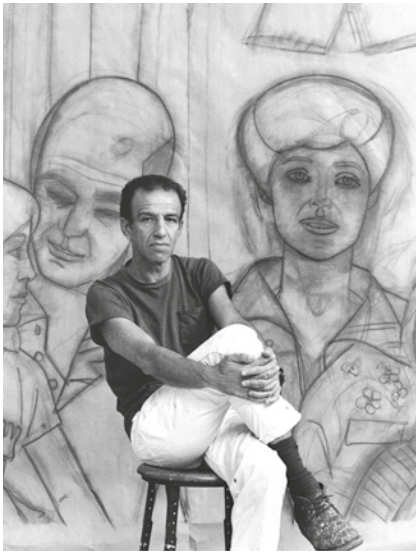
Photograph of Matisse at the top of the Empire State Building, New York, 1930

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]



Henri Matisse, *Still Life with Pomegranates*, Vence, November 1947
Oil on canvas, 80,5 × 60 cm - Musée Matisse Nice
Gift of Henri Matisse, 1953

In February 1949, Alex Katz visited 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.



Portrait of Alex Katz, 1979. Photograph by Hans Namuth

Alex Katz—a painter of everyday 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.

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 Matisse's work.



Alex Katz, *Lilies 13*, 2025
Oil on linen, 182,9 × 122 cm
Alex Katz Studio, New York

[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.

In February 1949, Alex Katz saw Matisse's late interior paintings at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York, including *Le Silence habité des maisons* [*The Inhabited Silence of Houses*] (1947). Through bold contrasts of colour and form, these paintings represent the culmination of Matisse's work as a painter.

The title *Le Silence habité des maisons* was not Matisse's own, but came from a poem by Louis Aragon, *Matisse parle* [*Matisse speaks*] (1947), a poetic tribute to the artist. Aragon evokes with great sensitivity "the sun on the shoulder of thought", "the mute happiness of green plants" and "the inhabited silence of houses".



View of the exhibition *Henri Matisse: Paintings, Papiers découpés, Drawings, 1945-1948* at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York, where Katz admired, in February 1949, *Le Silence habité des maisons* (*The Inhabited Silence of Houses*), 1947 (the third work from the left), and *Still Life with Pomegranates* (1947), immediately to its right. The latter is now in the collection of the Musée Matisse Nice.

THE TITLE OF THE EXHIBITION, *THE SILENCE OF PAINTING*, ECHOES THESE VERSES.

LOUIS ARAGON, *MATISSE PARLE*, 1947

This poem by Aragon is published in its original French version.

Je défais dans mes mains toutes les chevelures
Le jour a les couleurs que lui donnent mes mains
Tout ce qu'enfle un soupir dans
ma chambre est voilure
Et le rêve durable est mon regard demain
Toute fleur d'être nue est semblables aux captives
Qui font trembler les doigts par leur seule beauté
J'attends je vois je songe et le ciel qui dérive
Est simple devant moi comme une robe ôtée

J'explique sans les mots le pas qui fait la ronde
J'explique le pied nu qu'a le vent effacé
J'explique sans mystère un
moment de ce monde
J´explique le soleil sur l'épaule pensée

J'explique un dessin noir à la fenêtre ouverte
J'explique les oiseaux les arbres les saisons
J'explique le bonheur muet des plantes vertes
J'explique le silence étrange des maisons

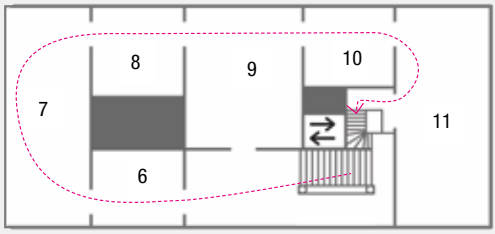
J'explique infiniment l'ombre et la transparence
J'explique le toucher des femmes leur éclat
J'explique un firmament d'objets par différence
J'explique le rapport des choses que voilà

J'explique le parfum des formes passagères
J'explique ce qui fait chanter le papier blanc
J'explique ce qui fait qu'une feuille est légère
Et les branches qui sont des
bras un peu plus lents

Je rends à la lumière un tribut de justice
Immobile au milieu des malheurs de ce temps
Je peins l'espoir des yeux afin qu'Henri Matisse
Témoigne à l'avenir ce que l´homme en attend

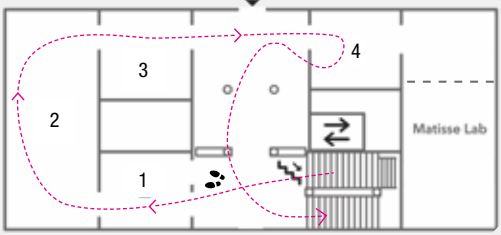
EXHIBITION LAYOUT

LEVEL 1

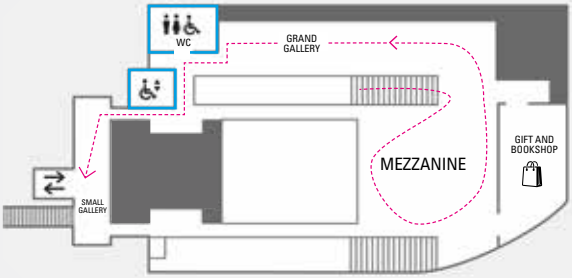




LEVEL 0



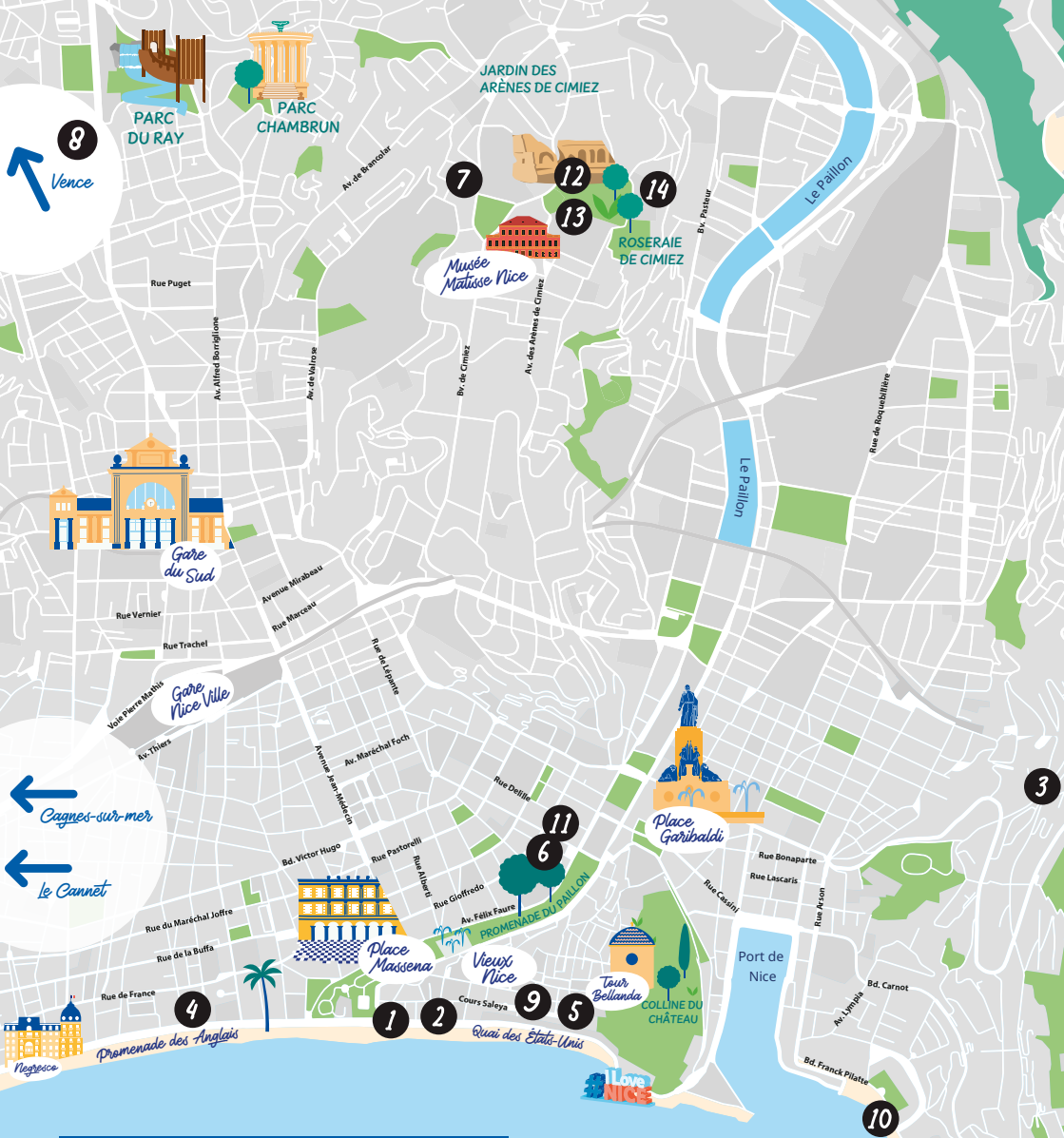
LEVEL -1



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 Tonduti-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 (5 pm from November 1st to March 31st)

GIFT AND BOOKSHOP

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

AVAILABLE AT THE BOOKSHOP

Exhibition catalogue



Coedition In Fine éditions d'art/
Musée Matisse Nice
Bilingual version French-English
With contributions by Éric de Chassey, Aymeric Jeudy and Alex Katz
148 pages, 150 illustrations
Published in November 2026

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

FOLLOW US! @museematissenice #museematissenice #expositionmatissekatz

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