

MATISSE

PAIRS AND SERIES

7 MARCH – 18 JUNE 2012

Doubles, repetitions, variations, reprises, oppositions: these themes are at the very heart of the work of Henri Matisse (1869-1954), and they span it from beginning to end. The artist constantly repeated the same compositions with different canvases and treatments, in pairs or in series. From one work to the next, he would vary the framing, the design, the touch and the colours. This method was not only an expression of doubt; it was, for the artist, a way of exploring the nature of painting itself. A tireless inventor of new creative processes, capable of questioning each of his own advances, Matisse thought deeply about form. Representation, realism, the relationship between design and colour, surface area and volume, interior and exterior: the questions he posed contributed greatly to the development of modern art.

This exhibition offers visitors the chance to discover the artist's entire body of work through this unique filter. Unfolding in chronological order, the exhibition shows almost half a century of work, from the first attempts at grasping the pointillist method in 1904, to the *papiers découpés* of the 1950s. Sixty paintings are displayed, including four large *papiers gouachés découpés*, as well as about thirty drawings, some of them brought together for the first time since their creation.

From Paris, the exhibition will travel to Copenhagen, to be shown in the Statens Museum for Kunst, from 14 July to 28 October 2012, and then to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, from 4 December 2012 to 17 March 2013.

Centre
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Pont Saint-Michel, circa 1900

Pont Saint-Michel, circa 1901

Pont Saint-Michel, circa 1900

Between 1894 and 1905, from the windows of his apartment, Matisse painted quai Saint-Michel, in Paris. The westward view, to the left, gives on to the Pont Saint-Michel, across from the Ile de la Cité, and, further off, the Louvre.

In 1897, Matisse discovered Impressionism. He changed his palette and his technique, but also his way of working: he began to paint in pairs and series. In *Pont Saint-Michel, effet de neige*, he shows snow anew, restoring every nuance of its luminosity and its whiteness. The moving barges, the smoke, the silhouettes... all play their part here in the prevailing mobility. Through this mobility, and through the effects of vibration that accompany it, the picture distinguishes itself clearly from the other two, which have no movement, no narration. In those pictures, the artist concentrates his work on the surface and the materials. He builds the pictorial space around flat patches of pure colour. The lines of the composition – the bridge, the quays – are based on the vertical line, present in all three versions, of the left-hand edge of the window. The idea of space, highly subjective for Matisse, fragments here through these complementary points of view. **Room 1**

Intérieur, bocal de poissons rouges (1914)

Poissons rouges et palette (1914-1915)

Time is an essential idea in both of these pictures, but the idea is treated differently in each of them. The first, *Intérieur, bocal de poissons rouges*, evokes a precise moment. Everything is frozen, immobile. It is spring. Evening is falling.

Shadows, lights, movements: Matisse examines the relationships between the inside and the outside, and the effects of transparency through the window and the fishbowl.

In the second, *Poissons rouges et palette*, created a few months later, the focus is narrowed. The painter is present, but only through signs: the palette and, on the right-hand side, hints of legs and of the right arm, difficult to make out. An equivocal presence, a fragmented and almost ghostly self-portrait. So it is no longer only the immediate surroundings that Matisse is trying to portray, not only an instant, but a relationship – that between the artist and what is around him, between the external reality and the internal vision. **Room 3**

Tête blanche et rose, autumn 1914

Marguerite au chapeau de cuir, 1914

Marguerite à la veste rayée, 1914

These three pictures are portraits of Marguerite, the eldest of Matisse's children, born in 1894. They are part of a larger series, made up of five paintings. These three portraits, in different sizes, were painted in the same sequence: we see the blouse, the hat, and the black band. *Tête blanche et rose* is noticeably different to the two others because of its black background, its geometrical and simplified shapes. Matisse painted this picture twice. The first version was naturalistic. A few traces of that initial state remain here: the model, the pendant.

When he went back to the picture a few months later, Matisse had just become friends with the cubist painter Juan Gris, taking refuge in Collioure with his wife. According to the historian Jack Flam, the model said: 'The picture began

"I invented myself, if we consider first of all my early works. They are rarely wrong. In them, I found something always believable that, at first glance, I thought was a repetition that made my pictures monotonous. It was the manifestation of my personality, always the same, whatever different states of mind I had been through"

Interview with Guillaume Apollinaire (*La Phalange*, n°2, December 1907)

quite naturalistically. Then he said to his daughter: "This picture is going to take me elsewhere. Do you feel up to it?" She said yes, and he began reworking the picture.' The influence of Juan Gris is palpable here, particularly in the representation of orthogonal strips. By playing with an imperfect geometry, Matisse sought to simplify and condense his formal vocabulary. **Room 2**

Nu au fauteuil et feuillage, 1936
Femme nue drapée, 1936

In the 1930s, Matisse's style changed. He no longer represented things and beings from a precise point of view; he no longer took such care to portray shadow, light and atmosphere. From now on, what he sought was the synthesis, the sketch. He worked with flat patches of bright colours in abstract spaces. Beginning with a painted image, that of a model, he eliminated the details and simplified the shapes.

Nu au fauteuil et feuillage, painted between 3 and 5 November 1936, is light and spontaneous. Matisse uses light colours. The body's contours are schematic, the face indistinct, the hands merely sketched. For the artist, a superfluity of details drained the work of its energy and power. As was often the case with Matisse, the plant symbolised the woman's vital spirit.

The *Femme nue drapée* was painted two days later, from 6 to 7 November. The lines of the face give a greater singularity to the body. It also occupies a greater proportion of the image.

In spite of these differences, the artist's aim was the same: to capture the essence of the real, that which constitutes a being's substance over and above its constant changes. In 1908, he put it this

way: 'Beneath this succession of moments that constitutes the superficial existence of beings and things, and which clothes them in changing appearances, soon to vanish, it is possible to seek a truer, more essential character.

This is what the artist focuses on to give a more lasting interpretation of reality.' ['A Painter's Notes', in *Matisse* [1972] 1992, p45]. **Room 4**

La Robe rayée, 1938
Le Bras, 1938

Matisse painted *La Robe rayée* in only a few days. However, it took him six months to finish *Le Bras*. This is a recurrent feature of his work: this division between spontaneous works and slow, laboriously achieved works. Lydia Delectorskaya, the artist's model and assistant for 20 years, gave an account of the working method that led to these changes of rhythm: 'Most of the pictures were finished in a few sessions, but it was almost the rule that, during 'the working season' (from September to June or July), at least one picture would take longer to finish. Not that Matisse was failing. On the contrary: it was in such pictures that he sensed the possibility of making real progress in his pictorial research, and he would work ceaselessly on it for weeks; what he wished to achieve changed and grew and led him on ever further. In parallel with this, as if to discharge the accumulated impressions and exaltation, two or three paintings would suddenly burst forth, quick and spontaneous like sketches, but finished and often brilliant.'

The dress was made from material chosen by the painter, who kept a collection of fabrics in which to clothe his models. In this way, the clothes become an artistic element – lines, colours – and

"For a first study, I always use a canvas of the same size as that intended for the definitive version of the picture, and I always begin with colour. For large canvases, this is more tiring, but more logical. [...]"

I never retouch a study; I take a new canvas of the same size, as I may change the composition a little bit. But I always strive to render the same feeling, while advancing the whole picture. [...]"

When I am working, I never try to think, only to feel."

Interview with Clara T. MacChesney, In 'A Talk With Matisse, Leader of Post-Impressionists' (June 1912), *The New York Times*, 9 March 1913..

contribute to the picture's composition. Here, the diamond shapes of the Harlequin dress provide the whole work's coloured tonality. In *Le Bras*, the colours are themselves the subject of the painting. Between the two pictures, there is not, strictly speaking, a change of focal distance. The arm is seen at one moment, in another posture. Its strange curved shape transforms it into an animal's neck or part of an Eastern-influenced decor. **Room 7**

Nature morte au coquillage, September-December 1940
Nature morte au coquillage, December 1940

The same tension exists in these two still lifes. Each object is isolated from the others, floating in an abstract space. This space changes between the two pictures: white canvas and threads for the collage, a three-part black and yellow background for the painting. There is no power of cohesion between them, however, no stability. This is what Matisse, soon after creating these two works, called abstraction: 'I believe I have come to the end of what I can do in this abstract sense – through meditations, through developing on different planes of elevation, through bareness.'

From the beginning of the 1930s, Matisse developed a new kind of work, with lines, colours, and what he called the 'expressive marriage of coloured and differently proportioned surfaces'. This was a new alliance between different components of painting, which he wished to invent. To forge this new alliance, he experimented with a new method: collage. In this second picture, there is, strictly speaking, no painting – only monochrome gouaches on paper, pencils, thread. Matisse was inspired by

the surrealist collages of Joan Miró. The status of this second picture is ambiguous, however.

A finished work? An unfinished work? Sketch? Experiment? The work was not exhibited until 1966 – 12 years after the artist's death – when it was considered as a completely separate work.

Room 6

Intérieur rouge de Venise, 1946

Intérieur jaune et bleu, 1946

These two pictures begin the series of Vence *Intérieurs*, in which Matisse established a vocabulary built on thematic and artistic opposites: interior / exterior, still life / landscape, straight lines / curves, and, above all, design / colour. He had been living in Vence since 1943, and began, with difficulty, to paint again, having devoted himself to the drawings of the collection *Thèmes et variations*. He wished to reconcile sublimated colour with simplified design.

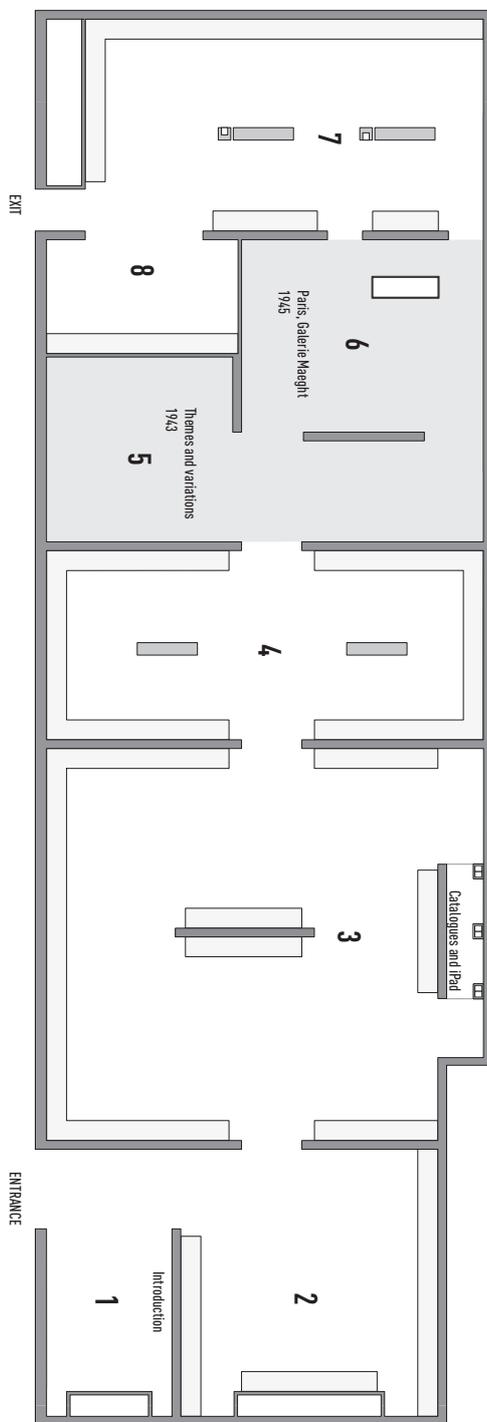
The compositions of the two interiors are based on the same motif – the angle of a room in the villa, with furniture, objects and fruit. The point of view changes from one picture to the next with a turning movement. The clear, fluid design coexists autonomously with the colour. In the *Intérieur jaune et bleu*, it even appears to have been superimposed on the colour that structures the space. These segmented coloured planes began to appear in Matisse's paintings from 1939, probably influenced by the *papers découpés* of the collection *Jazz* which occupied the artist from 1943 and which was finished in 1947.

Room 7

"One enters a state of creativity through conscious work. To prepare a picture is not to work on more or less fixed compartments of that picture. To prepare its execution is, first of all, to nurture its feeling through studies that have a certain analogy with the picture, and that is how the choice of elements can be made. It is these studies that allow the painter to free his unconscious mind. The harmony of all these elements of the picture, participating in a unity of feeling produced by work, causes a spontaneous translation in the mind. This is what can be called a spontaneous translation of feeling, which comes not from a simple thing but from a complex thing, and which is simplified by the purification of the subject and of the mind of its translator."

Words reported by Tériade, in 'Emancipation of painting', *Minotaure*, vol. I, n°3-4, 1933.

EXHIBITION MAP



INFORMATION

01 44 78 12 33
www.centrepompidou.fr

EXHIBITION OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

from 7 March to 18 June 2012
Galerie 2, level 6
Every day except Tuesdays from
11am to 9pm
Ticket desks close at 8pm
Thursday nights until 11pm
Ticket desks close at 10pm

ADMISSION

Entrance with 'Museum & Exhibitions' ticket

Valid all day for one admission to all Exhibition areas, Museum and panoramic viewing point.
€ 13, concessions € 10
Free with the Annual Pass and for under -18s

Buying tickets online

(full price only)
www.centrepompidou.fr/billetterie

YOUR OPINION

of the exhibition interests us
www.centrepompidou.fr/votreavis

TWITTER

Find information and contents on the exhibition via Twitter with the hashtag #Matisse, or by going to <http://www.twitter.com/centrepompidou>

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EXHIBITION

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PUBLICATIONS

CATALOGUE

Matisse.

Pairs and series

Edited by Cécile Debray
288pp., 300 colour illustrations
€42

ALBUM

Matisse.

Pairs and series

Bilingual (English-French)
By Elsa Urtizverea
60pp., 77 colour illustrations
€8,90

APPLICATION

Matisse.

Pairs and series



AROUND THE EXHIBITION

GUIDED TOURS

In French

Every Saturday at 3.30pm
Wednesdays at 7pm: 14, 21 March /
4, 11, 18, 25 April /
2, 9, 16, 23, 30 May / 6, 13 June
€4.50 / concessions €3.50

(+ ticket to museum and exhibitions:
concessions €10) €3.50 with
the Annual Pass.

Meeting point at the exhibition
entrance, with tickets

LECTURES

Un dimanche, une œuvre (One work every Sunday)

The Painter in his studio, 1916-1917
By Rémi Labrusse, professor
of the history of art.
Sunday 18 March at 11.30am,
Petite salle
€4.50, concessions €3.50

VISITS FOR DISABLED VISITORS

Guided tour *écouter voir* ('listen see') for blind and partially sighted visitors.

Saturday 31 March at 10am
€4.50 including entrance,
free for attendants.
Reservation required at least one
week prior to tour: 01 44 78 49 54.
Recommended entrance at
the corner of Rue du Renard /
Rue Saint-Merri

Lip-reading tour for hearing- impaired visitors

Saturday 31 March at 11am
€4.50 including entrance, free for
attendants.
Reservation required at least three
days prior to tour.
Fax: 01 44 78 16 62 / SMS:
06 17 48 45 50 / Email: nicole.
fournier@centrepompidou.fr
Meeting point near Information.

Tour in French sign language for deaf visitors

Saturday 31 March at 2.30pm
Meeting point at Educational Area,
level 0
€4.50, free for attendants
Reservation required at least three
days prior to tour: 01 44 78 49 54

WORKSHOPS FOR YOUNG VISITORS

In Matisse's Studio

(for children aged 3-5, with families)
Wednesdays 7, 14, 21, 28 March /
4 11 April / 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 May /
6, 13 June.

Saturdays 17, 24, 31 March / 7 April /
5, 19, 26 May / 2, 16 June
Sundays 18, 25 March / 8 April /
20, 27 May / 17 June

Spring holidays: from 16 to 29 April,
every day except Tuesdays.
3-4.30pm, children's workshop

Workshop stages

(for children aged 6-12,
unaccompanied)

Wednesdays 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 May /
6, 13 June.

Saturdays 10, 17, 24, 31 March /
7 April / 5, 12, 19, 26 May /
2, 9, 16 June.

Spring holidays: from 14 to 29
April, every day except Tuesdays
and Sundays.

Family Sundays: 11, 18, 25 March /
8, 15, 22, 29 April / 13, 20, 27 May /
10, 17 June.

2.30-4.30pm, children's workshop

Unaccompanied: €10 per child,
concessions €8 /

Accompanied: €10 for one child and
one adult, €8 for each extra person /
concessions €8

LES IMPROMPTUS

from 6 years old, accompanied

Sunday 6 May
3-6pm, free, Forum

MULTIMEDIA GUIDE

35-minute tour with commentary
by the exhibition curator and by
Anne Coron, Claudine Grammont
and Rémi Labrusse, authors of the
exhibition catalogue.

In French, English, Spanish, Italian