



Large
Print

Matisse

In the Studio

Rooms 1 and 2

Do not remove from gallery

Multimedia tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Introduction to the exhibition and
Gourds, 1915-1916

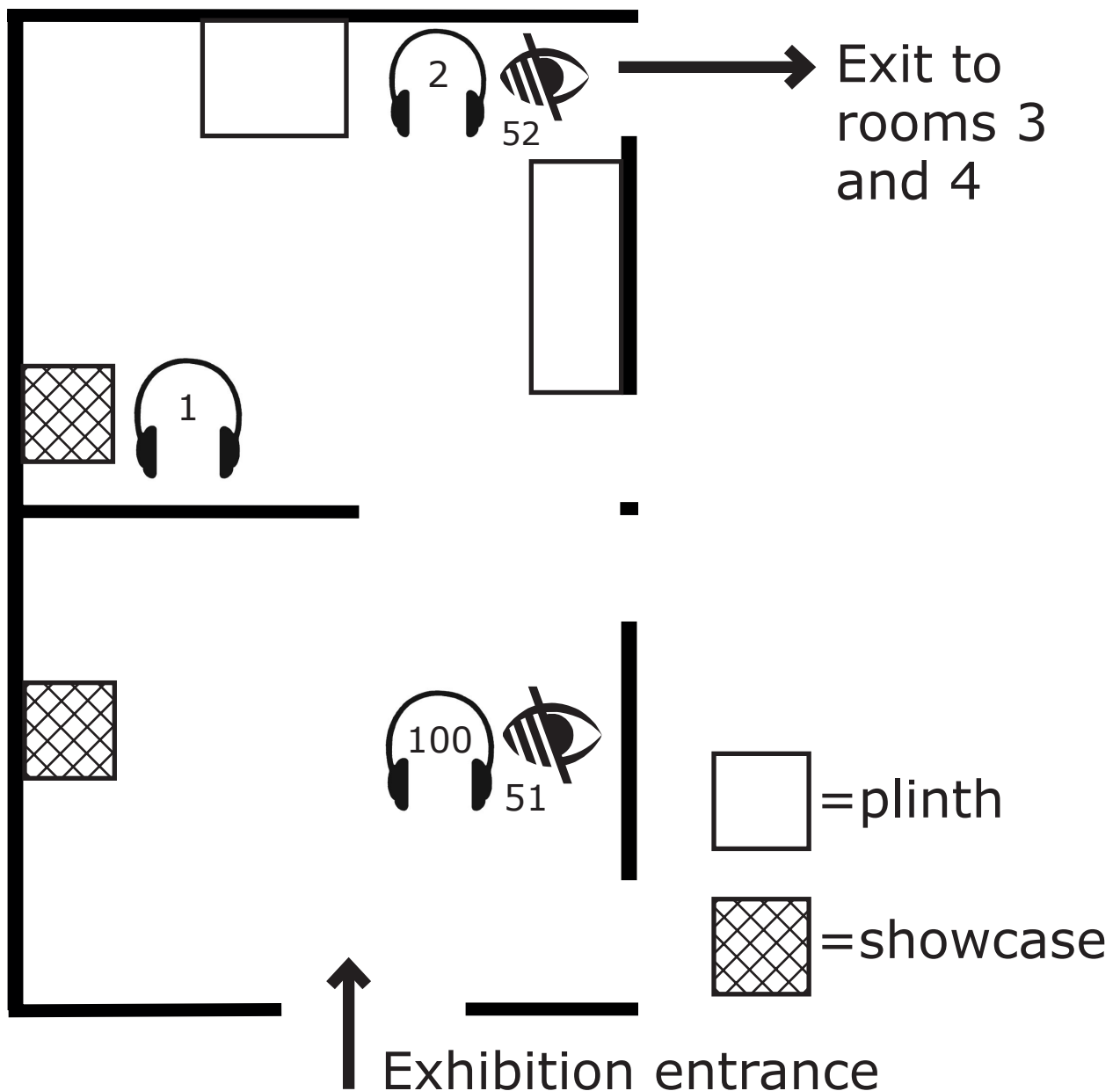
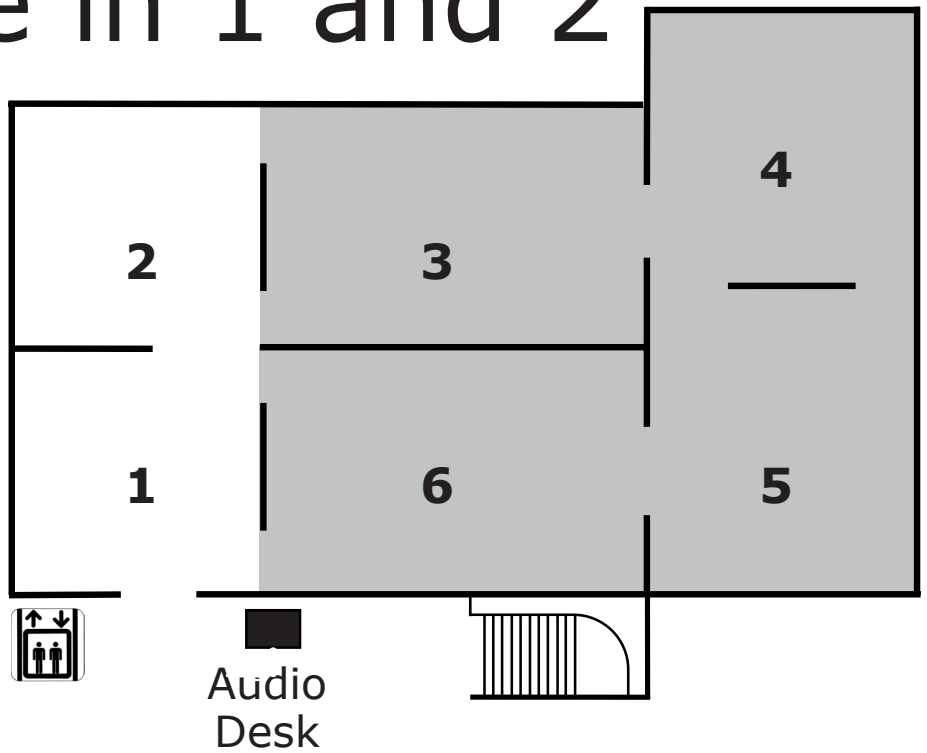


Chocolate pot (chocolatière),
Nineteenth-early twentieth century



Rocaille Chair, 1946

You are in 1 and 2



Matisse in the Studio

In the Sackler Wing of Galleries

5th August - 12th November 2017

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Supported by The Mead Family Foundation

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Room 1

Matisse in the Studio

“My life is between the walls of my studio.”

Visitors to Henri Matisse’s studios were astonished: the experience was like walking into one of his paintings.

Everywhere around them they saw objects – furniture, textiles, sculptures, vases and more.

Matisse’s studio-homes were environments of his own design and the settings for his creativity. This exhibition invites us into these worlds, presenting major works by the artist in the company of objects from his collection.

Matisse (1869–1954) sought out objects that stimulated and provoked him, or that confirmed a direction he was taking in his work.

He found them in France or on his travels, but mostly they originated in or reflected cultures and traditions that were foreign to him. A significant portion of Matisse's collection came from North Africa and the Middle East. He was also drawn to art from Central and West Africa, and from across Asia.

As he radically departed from tradition, he learned new principles of design, abstraction, composition, colour and expressive power from these objects. He valued them more for their aesthetic qualities and personal resonances than for their material worth.

He once described his collection as a "working library", suggesting that it functioned as a resource to which he

regularly returned. He brought his objects with him from studio to studio, rearranging and studying them, making them a focus of his work over six decades.

Many are on view here, reunited with each other and with Matisse's paintings, sculptures, drawings and cut-outs (often for the first time since his death), providing an unprecedented glimpse into his artistic process.

This room opens with a flower still-life in which Matisse included one of his own small sculptures, two other paintings by the artist and the small glass vase portrayed in them, which also appears at the centre of the photograph illustrated above.

The two precisely rendered drawings here echo other objects in the photograph, an image that Matisse sent to his friend Louis Aragon, inscribing on the back: "Objects which have been of use to me nearly all my life."

'Objects which have been of use to me nearly all my life,' Villa Le Rêve, Vence, 1946. Hélène Adant (1903–1985). Archives Henri Matisse.

Photo © Archives H. Matisse. © Succession H. Matisse/DACS 2017

Room 1 list of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Still-life, 1941

Ink on paper

Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/ Centre de création industrielle.

Purchased 1984

Still-life with Fruit and Vase, 1941

Ink on paper

Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/ Centre de création industrielle.

Purchased by the State in 1942

Vase of Flowers, 1924

Oil on canvas

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Bequest of John T. Spaulding

Vase

Early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Andalusia, Spain

Blown glass

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Henri Matisse at home, Villa Le Rêve, Vence, 1944

Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004)

Photo © Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos ©
Succession H. Matisse/DACS 2017

Safrano Roses at the Window, 1925

Oil on canvas

Private collection

We know that Matisse bought the Andalusian glass vase in this painting in 1911, because he wrote to his wife describing and sketching it.

In 'Vase of Flowers' (displayed nearby) the same vase is enveloped in soft light filtered through the window and lace curtain; here, sharper light makes the vase seem heavier and more opaque.

The interior of the bowl was originally white but Matisse modified it to reflect the colour of the vase, in search of what he called "sympathy" between communing objects.

Lilacs, 1914

Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The
Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection, 2002

Small Crouching Nude with Arms, 1908

Bronze

Private collection

Gourds, 1915–16



Oil on canvas

The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Mrs Simon Guggenheim Fund, 1935

Room 2

The Object Is an Actor

“The object is an actor. A good actor can have a part in ten different plays; an object can play a role in ten different pictures.”

The object-actors in this room are two chocolate pots (traditionally used for mixing and serving hot chocolate), a nineteenth-century Venetian ‘rocaille’ (decorative, shell-like) chair, a pewter jug and a North African painted table.

The paintings and drawings presented alongside show how the objects take on different ‘roles’ and are transformed in relation to the space around them and in conversation with other elements of a composition.

Varied materials, colours, techniques and perspectives contribute to the changing appearance of the chocolate pots, for example.

The larger pot is the focus of experimentation in a group of drawings and paintings made around 1900, when Matisse was first coming into his own as an artist.

The smaller pot plays a key role in a groundbreaking collage of 1940, when he was in his seventies.

The sinuous forms of the Venetian chair that so captivated Matisse when he saw it in a shop window are explored in a sequence that ranges from decorative drawings to the powerful late painting 'Rocaille Chair' (1946), a distillation of the object's essence.

In 'Yellow Odalisque' (1937) a modest pewter jug acts as a nucleus from which all the other forms in the painting take their energy.

Its serpentine lines radiate to the pattern of the model's yellow kaftan and to the wall behind her. The jug animates the burst of flowers emerging from its neck, as well as the floral patterns on the North African painted table below.

Room 2 list of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Still-life with a Chocolate Pot, c. 1900

Oil on canvas

Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Albert M. Greenfield and Elizabeth M. Greenfield Collection, 1974

Bouquet of Flowers in a Chocolate Pot, 1902

Oil on canvas

Lent by Musée national Picasso-Paris.

Donation in 1973

This early work is one of a group of paintings and drawings in which Matisse explored different views of one of his chocolate pots.

Around this time, his wife Amélie opened a millinery shop to help make ends meet, creating artificial floral confections for hats, similar to the bouquet depicted here.

Years later, Matisse's friend and rival Picasso purchased this painting, perhaps attracted by Matisse's gifts as a colourist and the playful personality that he gave to the chocolate pot.

Soup Tureen and Handle of a Coffee Pot, 1900

Ink on paper

Private collection

Still-life with Chocolate Pot, 1900

Ink on paper

Musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis

Chocolate pot (chocolatière)



Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

France

Silver and wood

Private collection. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Chocolate pot (chocolatière)

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

France

Silver and wood

Musée Matisse, Nice.

Former collection of Henri Matisse

Albert Marquet, a friend and fellow artist,
gave Matisse a chocolate pot (left) on the

occasion of his marriage to Amélie Parayre in January 1898. Later, Matisse acquired the other pot here, which appears in 'Still-life with Shell' (1940), hung nearby.

Still-life with Shell, 1940

Gouache, coloured pencil and charcoal on cut paper, and string, pinned to canvas

Private collection

Matisse created this collage to help him work out the composition for 'Still-life with Seashell on Black Marble', hung nearby.

He had coloured shapes cut to correspond to each object in the painting, including the smaller chocolate pot in this room.

He used pins to try out different positions for the shapes – notice the holes along their edges. “It’s relationships that interest me,” Matisse wrote, “they all form little worlds that have to be in tune.”

This is a key work in his career, anticipating the paper cut-outs that soon came to dominate his practice, some of which are displayed later in the exhibition.

Still-life and Heron Studies, c. 1900

Watercolour and ink on paper

Private collection

Matisse explores the interactions of a chocolate pot and a soup tureen with swatches of watercolour in varied hues.

According to the artist, he arranged and rearranged objects in his studio “until I found myself brought up short by something about the ensemble that delighted me”.

Rendered here in six slightly varied sketches, the objects take on different characters and densities. At times, the pot looks like a bird, echoing the herons on this sheet.

Still-life with Seashell on Black Marble, 1940

Oil on canvas

The State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

Venetian Chair with Fruit, 1942

Oil on canvas

The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation

Still-life and Venetian Chair, c. 1946

Charcoal on canvas

Private collection

Grand Motif: Venetian Chair, 1943

Coloured pencil on paper

The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation

Grand Motif: Venetian Chair, 1943

Coloured pencil on paper

The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation

Venetian chair

Nineteenth century

Unidentified artist

Germany or Italy

Pinewood, paint, varnished silver plating and gilding

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri Matisse

"I have at last found the object for which I've been longing for a whole year. It's a Venetian baroque chair, silver gilt with tinted varnish, like a piece of enamel.

You've probably seen something like it. When I found it in an antique shop, a few weeks ago, I was bowled over. It's splendid. I'm obsessed with it."

Henri Matisse to Louis Aragon, 1942

Rocaille Chair, 1946



Oil on canvas

Musée Matisse, Nice. Bequest of Madame Henri Matisse, 1960

Matisse was captivated by this chair and the variety of poetic possibilities that it suggested to him. In this painting, the summation of all the studies he made of it, the chair is cropped to fill the entire space of the canvas, dramatically heightening the impact of its distinctive arabesque lines.

The simple bouquet of loosely painted white flowers on the seat softens the bold red, yellow and green colour scheme.

Yellow Odalisque, 1937

Oil on canvas

Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Samuel S. White
3rd and Vera White Collection, 1967

Jug

Late eighteenth century

Unidentified artist

Northern France

Engraved pewter

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri
Matisse

Small painted table (guéridon)

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Algeria

Painted wood

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Pewter Jug: Hinge Studies, c. 1942–43

Ink on paper

Private collection

Pewter Jug Studies, c. 1942–43

Graphite on paper

Private collection



Large
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Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Reclining Nude 1, modelled 1907,
cast c. 1912



Forms, 1943-44



Standing Nude, 1906-07

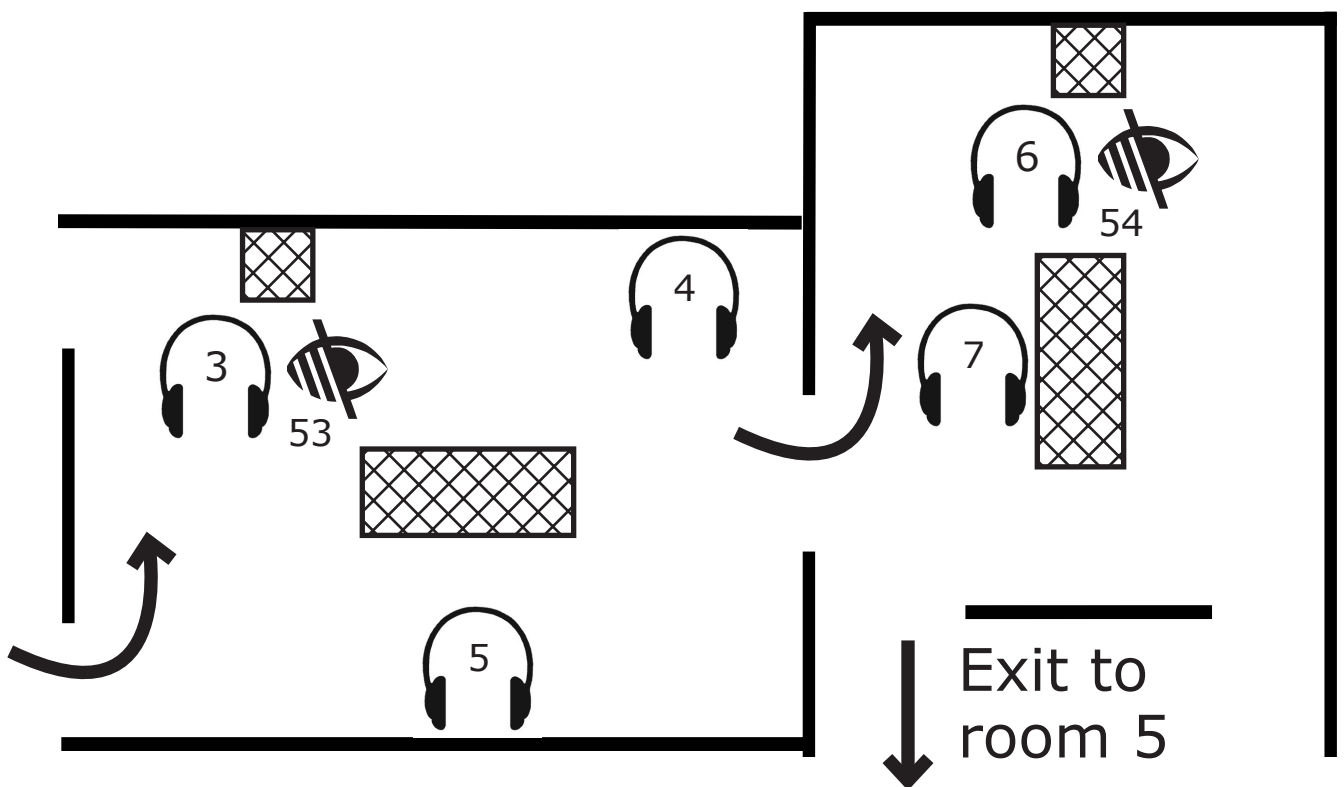
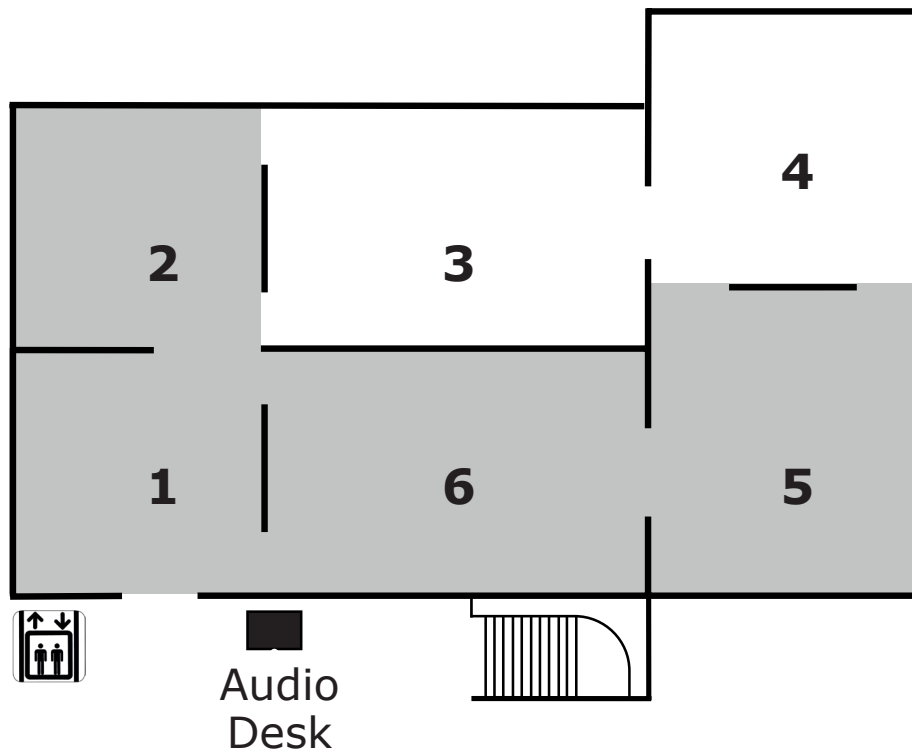


Pende masks, Nineteenth–early
twentieth century



Head of Jeannette I, modelled 1910,
cast 1953

You are in 3 and 4



 = showcase

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Room 3

The Nude

“I will condense the meaning of this body by seeking its essential lines.”

Matisse challenged centuries of artistic tradition with his radical depictions of the female nude. The idealised nude, based on the naturalistic representation of the human body, seemed increasingly hollow to him and other artists of his generation seeking to convey another reality – that of emotional authenticity.

In his search for new approaches to the nude, Matisse drew on a variety of sources: photographs from an erotic-ethnographic journal, Classical sculpture and, above all, the Central and West African works that he collected.

To Matisse, African sculpture embodied an alternative to Western art, an example of the freedom to invent and to be truer to instinct, feelings and creativity. He admired the abstract treatment of form and space in African sculpture and what he saw as its truth to materials. Ultimately, Matisse felt that African artists were able to express something more meaningful and enduring about the body than could ever be possible in the traditional European style. His use of African bodies reflects contemporary thinking about racial difference.

Matisse's engagement with African sculpture marks a turning point in modern art. He purchased his first piece in 1906, a seated figure from the Vili kingdom (Democratic Republic of Congo) that you can see depicted in the painting nearby.

By 1908 he had accumulated some twenty figures and masks, several of which are

included in this exhibition. Rather than representing these objects in a direct way, as he had done with some of his earlier acquisitions, Matisse synthesised the lessons he had learned from the abstract language of African art in his own innovative nudes.

**Room 3 - The Nude, list of works
(clockwise in order of hang)**

**Still-life with African Statuette,
1907**

Oil on canvas

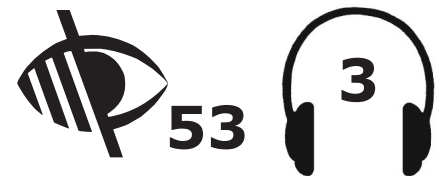
Private collection

Bronze Figure, 1908

Oil on canvas

The National Museum of Art, Architecture and
Design, Oslo

Reclining Nude I, modelled 1907, cast c. 1912



Bronze

Collection of the Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo,
New York. Room of Contemporary Art Fund, 1945,
RCA1945:3

In this bronze Matisse recasts an
archetypal female pose from the European
sculptural tradition, at the same time
borrowing the formal distortions of West

and Central African sculpture to energise the figure and heighten its expressive intensity. Often Matisse featured his small African-inspired sculptures in his own paintings: this one is found in the two still-lives nearby.

Goldfish, 1912

Oil on canvas

Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

Large Nude, 1906

Lithograph on white wove paper

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Samuel Putnam Avery Fund

Female torso

First or second century CE

Unidentified artist

Roman copy, after a Greek original
(fourth or third century BCE)

Marble

Musée Matisse, Nice.

Former collection of Henri Matisse

This Roman torso was originally part of a large group sculpture. In the studio, it reinforced Matisse's belief that a fragment – in this case, part of the human body – could stand in for the whole.

The stencil print 'Forms' and the tiny sculpture 'Small Thin Torso', also displayed here, show Matisse interpreting Classical form in different ways. The latter, for example, is a deeply sensual sign for the body, but on an intimate scale – that of the hand that modelled it.

Forms, Plate IX, 1943–44, for the illustrated book 'Jazz'



Colour stencil print

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum. Francis H. Burr Memorial Fund

Matisse's use of cut paper as a medium started with preparatory work for the illustrated book 'Jazz' (1947). There he wrote that "cutting directly into vivid colour reminds me of the direct carving of sculptors".

The two forms that Matisse created for the torso here present its silhouette at slightly different angles, and as if one is in full light and the other against the light.

Small Thin Torso, modelled 1929, cast 1930

Bronze

Musée d'Orsay, Paris, on loan to the Musée Matisse,
Nice. Gift of Madame Jean Matisse to the State,
1978

Study of a Couple for 'Florilège des amours de Ronsard', 1942

Graphite on tracing paper

The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation

Reclining Nude, 1946

Charcoal on cream laid paper

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Charles H. Bayley
Picture and Painting Fund

Seated Figure with Violet Stockings, 1914

Oil on canvas

The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation

This is a hybrid body, timeless and totemic but also modern and sexual in stockings and heels. With vigorous scratches, Matisse removed pigment from the figure, which appears more like a carved sculpture than a living person.

This experimental nude represents one of his most overt borrowings from West and Central African sculpture: compare the body with the Fang reliquary figure from his collection, displayed nearby.

African Mask Studies, c. 1909–30

Graphite on paper

Private collection

In these sketches, perhaps made at a sale of African art or a dealer's shop, Matisse captures the outlines of an African sculpture and mask. One closely resembles the adjacent Senufo divination figure.

The African art making its way to early twentieth-century Paris was often not well understood by European artists and

collectors; much of it had been removed from its cultural context without documentation. Matisse, however, seems to have had some interest in the origins of the objects he encountered: his notations reference West African geography.

Divination figure (tugu)

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Senufo region, Côte d'Ivoire

Wood

Private collection. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Standing Nude, 1906–07



Oil on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1960

This bold figure's anatomy seems to be carved out of the space of the canvas. Surprisingly, Matisse's source was a photograph of a coy-looking female (illustrated), but here her modesty becomes monumentality.

This painting is one of the first major works in which Matisse grappled with the lessons he was taking from African art.

For the figure's face he probably turned to his 'Muyombo' mask (illustrated, and displayed in the next gallery), finding in it a model for the forceful but enigmatic expression he sought to achieve.

Photographs:

'Subject evoking the idea of surprise or modesty', from 'Mes Modèles',

10 October 1906

Unidentified photographer

'Muyombo' mask

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Pende region, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Wood, fibre and pigment, 49 x 19.3 cm

Photo © Private collection.

Reliquary figure (éyima biéri)

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Fang region, Gabon or Equatorial Guinea

Wood

Private collection. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Reliquary figures are idealised images of the dead, made to guard their remains.

This example of Fang sculpture, which had a significant influence on Parisian avant-garde artists, strikes an elegant balance between calm contemplation and active energy. The anatomy is treated abstractly rather than naturalistically.

Matisse admired the harmonious relationship between forms in African sculpture. He also noted that integrity of materials is key to its expressive impact; in this case, the original wood form is evoked in the long tubular torso and neck.

The Large Woodcut, 1906

Woodcut

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Lee M. Friedman Fund

Small Light Woodcut, 1906

Woodcut

Museum of Modern Art, New York. Abby Aldrich
Rockefeller Fund, 1954

Woodcut printing is a sculptural process: the image to be printed is chiselled in relief from a block of wood. Matisse's woodcuts are engaged with the formal relationships suggested by African art. Rather than describe or imitate, dots and dashes lend these works an intense energy.

This inventive surface patterning suggests an affinity with the pair of Lega ivories that Matisse owned, on view in the case in this room.

Showcase

Exhibits: A, B, C, D

Matisse began his sculpture 'Two Women' (A) using a photograph from an ethnographic- erotic magazine, 'L'Humanité féminine' (B), showing two girls identified as Tuareg, the Berber people of North Africa.

He replaced the photograph's suggestive, sensual tone with a more open-ended exploration of sexuality. From one side, both sculpted figures appear to be female; from the other, they might be a man and a woman. Several sculptures in Matisse's

collection, like the Lega ivories (C) and Bamana figures (D) shown here, are male-female pairs.

A

Two Women,
modelled 1907–08, cast 1908

Bronze

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,
Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.
Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966

B

‘Jeunes filles targui’ (Young
Tuareg girls), in ‘L’Humanité
féminine’, 5 January 1907

Unidentified photographer

Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris

C

Male and female figures

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Lega region, Democratic Republic of Congo

Ivory

Private collection. Former collection of Henri Matisse

D

'Jomooniw' male and female figures

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Bamana region, Mali

Wood and metal

Private collection. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Exhibits: E, F, G

'Standing Nude, Arms on Head' (E), like several of Matisse's nudes, was based on a photograph from 'L'Humanité féminine', an erotic publication that billed itself as an ethnographic journal (F).

The magazine published stories and (often nude) photographs of foreign women, promoting a view of them as sensual objects for European consumption.

The reference for this sculpture was a photograph of a model identified as an Algerian Jewish woman (G). Matisse had only recently returned to France from a 1906 trip to Algeria, which had long been under French rule.

E

Standing Nude, Arms on Head, 1906–07

Bronze

The Rosenbach of the Free Library of Philadelphia,
1954.1951

F

'Femmes d'Afrique: Arabes et Mauresques' (Women of Africa: Arabs and Moors), Cover of 'L'Humanité féminine', 1 December 1906

Unidentified photographer

Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris

G

'Juive algérienne' (Algerian Jew) in 'L'Humanité féminine', 1 December 1906

Unidentified photographer

Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, Paris

Exhibits: H, I , J

The negative spaces captured by the extended limbs in 'The Serpentine' (H), one of Matisse's most important early sculptures, may evoke African sculptures such as the Bamana pair in his collection (D). But Matisse based the figure's lithe, undulating form on a photograph of a nude model (I).

It may also be linked to the Cambodian dancers that he saw in Paris or Marseilles in 1906.

(continued over)

He was later to acquire the Cambodian or Thai sculpture of the earth goddess Nang Thoranee (J).

H

The Serpentine, modelled 1909, cast 1948

Bronze

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,
Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Gift of
Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1972

I

Untitled photographic source for Matisse's sculpture 'The Serpentine'

Archives Henri Matisse. Photo © Archives H. Matisse
© Succession H. Matisse/DACS 2017

J

Standing earth goddess (Nang Thorane)

Eighteenth or nineteenth century

Unidentified artist

Thailand or Cambodia

Bronze, gold leaf and coloured glass

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri
Matisse

Photograph:

Matisse working on 'The Serpentine'
(1909) Edward Steichen (1879–1973)

© The Estate of Edward Steichen/ARS, NY and
DACS, London 2017. Digital image: Archives H.
Matisse, © Succession H. Matisse

Room 4

The Face

“Recording the model’s features reveals feelings often unknown even to the very diviner who has brought them to light.”

Portraiture, for Matisse, was about far more than representing features accurately. He sought to evoke enduring qualities beyond likeness: his subjects’ true identities, their significance to him and the experience of their sessions in the studio. He also acquired sculpted heads and masks throughout his career, such as the medieval saint, African masks and Buddha shown in this room.

From about 1906, Matisse’s portraiture incorporated the lessons that he learned from these kinds of objects, although some items seem to have caught his eye because they echoed directions that he was already taking in his art.

The planar simplification that defines 'Head of Jeanette V' (1913), for example, suggests an affinity with a 'Mboom' mask from the Kuba kingdom (Democratic Republic of Congo) that Matisse acquired much later.

African masks made a particularly strong impact on his portraiture, both stylistically and conceptually.

As he strove to convey the personal impact of subjects as important to him as his daughter, Marguerite, the abstraction and forceful geometric designs of African art helped Matisse to go beyond straightforward resemblance towards portraits that, as he explained, "suggest the deep gravity that persists in every human being".

Room 4 - The Face, list of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Mboom mask

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Kuba kingdom, Democratic Republic of
Congo

Wood, textile, shells, pearls, seeds, copper and
mixed media

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri
Matisse

The 'mboom' mask is one of three main
royal masks worn in ceremonies re-
enacting the foundation of the Kuba
kingdom, a pre-colonial kingdom in Central
Africa, in the south-east of present-day DR
Congo.

The bulging, enlarged brow, broad nose and elaborate embellishments are common features of this highly expressive type of mask. Matisse might have purchased this example in Paris at a 1937 auction of the painter Maurice de Vlaminck's private collection.

Gelede mask

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Yoruba region, Republic of Benin or Nigeria

Wood

Private collection. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Matisse and his contemporaries may not have had a detailed knowledge of the origins of the African art that they collected, but they understood something

of the function of African masks: that they were used for disguise, protection and ceremony, and to share an identity with the past.

In the Yoruba region, great importance was attached to 'Gelede' performances, noted for their elaborate costume. The ears of this mask evoke the sounds to which the performer responds during the dance.

Crowned Buddha

C. sixteenth century

Unidentified artist

Probably Thailand

Bronze fragment with gold leaf

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Head of an apostle, possibly James the Greater

Thirteenth–fourteenth century

Unidentified artist

Probably French

Limestone

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri
Matisse

The Italian Woman, 1916

Oil on canvas

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

By exchange, 1982

We know very little about this woman, but
Matisse painted her almost 50 times in less
than a year. He suggests her detached,

enigmatic presence in mysterious details:
a fold in the background wraps around her
arm, merging with her solid, dark hair.

Inscrutable yet compelling, her face
conveys “the deep gravity that persists in
every human being”, of which Matisse once
wrote, and perhaps also the precariousness
and determination of a young Italian
migrant during the First World War.

Muyombo (left) and Giwoyo (right) masks



Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artists

Pende region, Democratic Republic of
Congo

Wood, fibre, pigment and organic materials

Private collection. Former collection of Henri Matisse

(continued over)

The apparent inscrutability of African masks appealed to Matisse. For him, such objects seemed to demonstrate that a broader and deeper range of psychological expression could be achieved when an artist was not limited to illustrating a particular emotion.

It was a concept that profoundly influenced his approach to portraiture. "Expression for me does not reside in passions bursting from a human face," he wrote.

Portrait of Olga Merson, 1911

Oil on canvas

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Museum purchase funded by the Agnes Cullen Arnold Endowment Fund

Matisse once referred to portraiture as a “quarrel”. In this work he leaves visible his efforts to render, and perhaps restrain, the unruly energy of his model, a former student with whom he had an intense relationship.

Two black, curved lines constrain her body; they highlight her almost regal, powerful posture but also aggressively cut through her neck, hands and thigh.

Nadia, Smiling Mask, 1948

Aquatint on paper

Musée Matisse, Nice. Gift of the artist's heirs, 1963

Door lintel of the treasure house of a chief (kenene)

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Eastern Pende region, Democratic Republic of Congo

Tinted hardwood

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Large Face (Mask), 1952

Ink on paper

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection, 2002

Large Mask, 1948

Aquatint on paper

The Baltimore Museum of Art: Purchased as the gift of Laura and Barrett Freedlander, in honour of Frances S. Loewenstein and Edward T. Cone

Small Head with Striated Hair, modelled 1906, cast 1950

Bronze

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Bequest of Elise S. Haas

Henri Matisse at home, Villa Le Rêve, Vence, 1948

Michel Sima (1912–1987)

Photo © Michael Sima/Bridgeman Images ©

Succession H. Matisse/DACS 2017

Marguerite with Black Velvet Ribbon, 1916

Oil on wood

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection, 2002

Marguerite, 1906–07

Oil on canvas

Lent by Musée national Picasso-Paris. Donation in 1973

Here, in a highly abstracted style, Matisse captures his daughter Marguerite aged thirteen. The portrait's directness and simplicity – qualities that Matisse admired in African masks – also recall children's art, as does the lettering of her name.

When Matisse and Picasso exchanged works in 1907, Picasso chose this painting and placed it in his studio near a Punu mask from Gabon (see photograph reproduced nearby), suggesting that he saw a connection between the two.

Mukudj mask

Nineteenth century

Unidentified artist

Punu region, Gabon

Wood and kaolin

Lent by Musée national Picasso-Paris. Donation in 1979

Both Matisse and Picasso were collecting Gabon masks in around 1907. This one belonged to Picasso, who hung it on the wall of his studio just below Matisse's portrait of his daughter Marguerite, a gift to Picasso (see photograph reproduced nearby).

It seems that both artists, who shared a fascination with Africa, saw a connection between the portrait and African masks.

Frank Burty Haviland in
Picasso's 11 Boulevard Clichy
studio with Picasso's Punu
mask and Matisse's portrait of
his daughter Marguerite, Paris,
c. 1910

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973)

Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (musée Picasso de
Paris)/Droits réservés © Succession H. Matisse/
Succession Picasso/DACS, London 2017

Head of Jeannette I,
modelled 1910,
cast 1953



Bronze

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,
Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.
Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966

Matisse's five sculpted heads of Jeanne Vaderin, three of which are on view here, move from a naturalistic portrait to a stripped-down essence of the model.

Her features take on increasingly abstract and exaggerated form, culminating in 'Jeannette V'. Matisse made 'Jeannette V' from a plaster cast of 'Jeannette III', as the sitter was no longer available.

This process gave him more freedom to invent. Far less recognisable, the model assumes an almost masculine appearance and an intensely concentrated psychological presence. The sculpture is one of his most radically abstract works.

Head of Jeannette III, modelled 1911, cast 1966

Bronze

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,
Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Gift of the
Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation, 1972

Head of Jeannette V, modelled 1913, cast 1954

Bronze

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,
Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Gift of the
Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation, 1972



Large
Print

Matisse

In the Studio

Rooms 5 and 6

Do not remove from gallery

Multimedia tour



Main commentary



Descriptive commentary



Odalisque with Grey Culottes,
1926-27



The Moorish Screen, 1921



Calligraphy panel, Nineteenth century

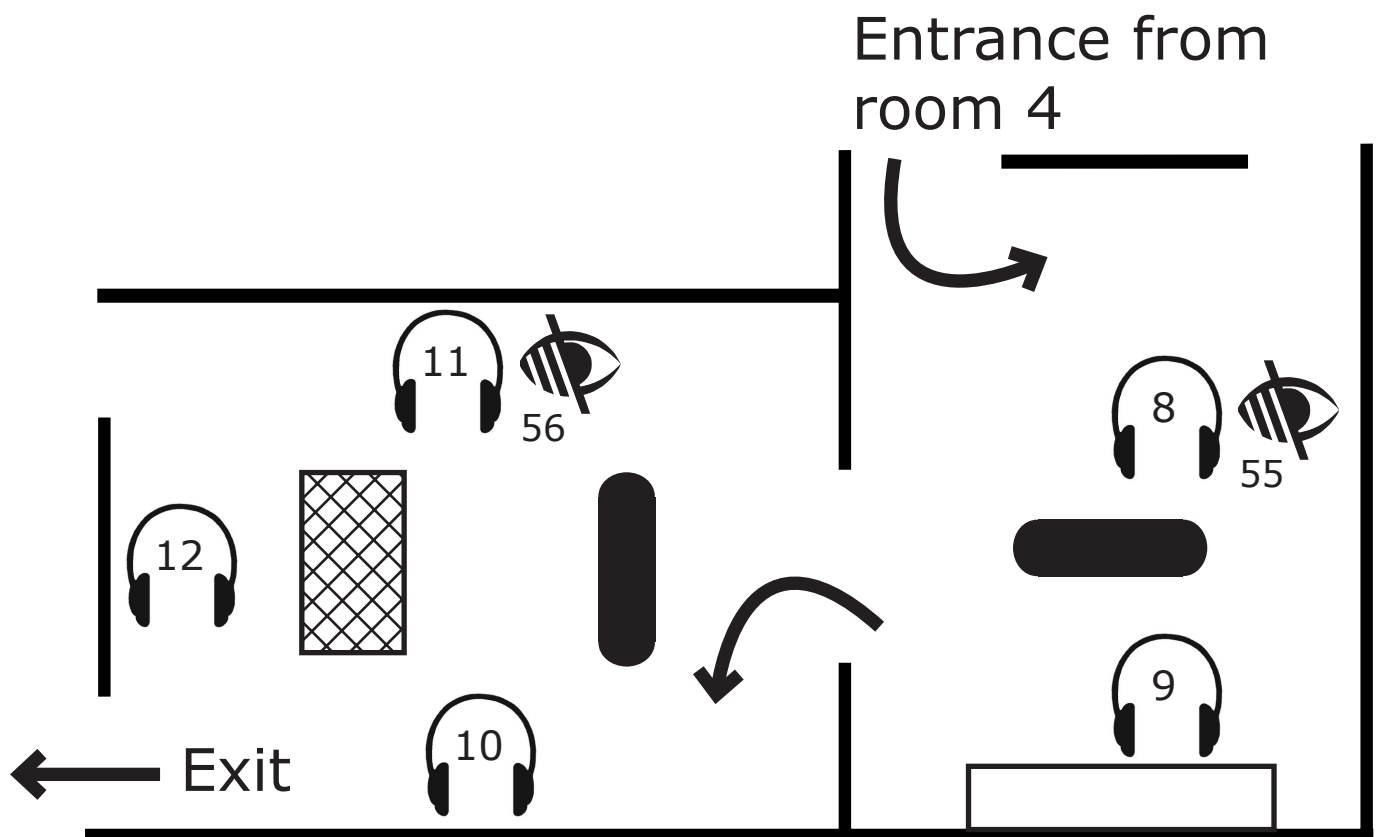
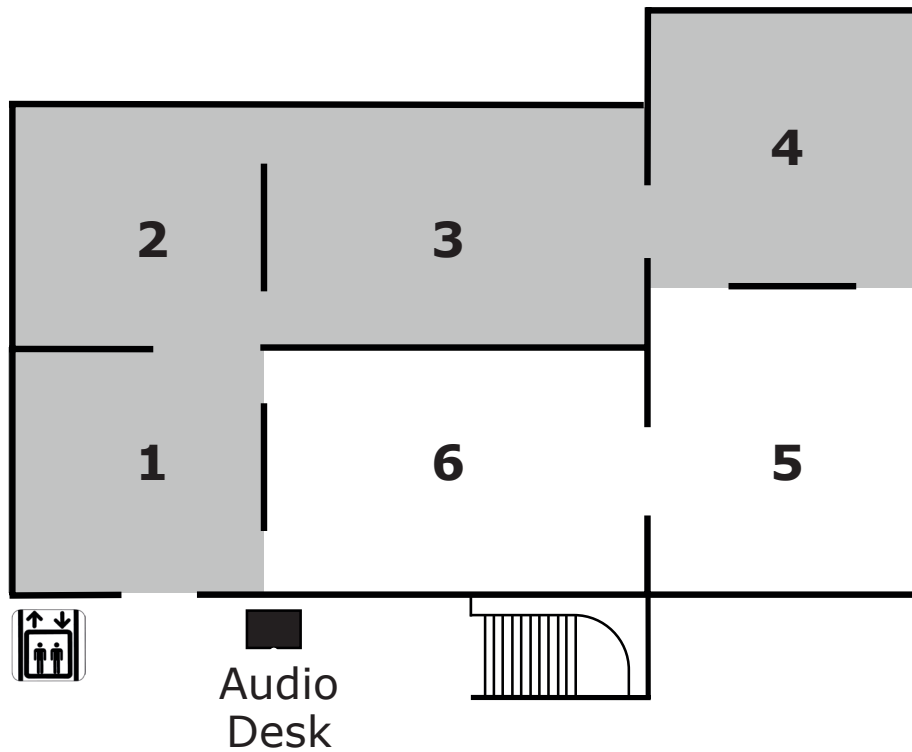


Red Interior: Still-life on a
Blue Table, 1947



Burning Bush, 1951

You are in 5 and 6



 = bench  = plinth  = showcase

Matisse in the Studio

In the Sackler Wing of Galleries

5th August - 12th November 2017

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Room 5

The Studio as Theatre

"...revelation thus came to me from the Orient".

In 1917 Matisse moved from Paris to Nice, where he was to spend the rest of his career. Using furniture, textiles and objects from North Africa and the Middle East, he theatrically 'dressed' his Nice studios, creating elaborate 'sets' of rich visual effects to portray in his works: vivid colour contrasts, layered patterns and the illusion of expanding space.

Although he acquired most of the objects in this room in France, they reminded him of the architectural interiors that he had admired during his travels in Spain, Algeria and Morocco.

Matisse had been borrowing ideas from Islamic abstract design for years – he was profoundly affected by a major exhibition of Islamic art in Munich in 1910 – but after his arrival in Nice he systematically began to depict actual objects from Islamic culture in his works.

They were far more than props: their materials and forms invigorated his search for a more expressive alternative to Western figuration.

This attraction was shaped in part by colonial history. Algeria, which Matisse visited in 1906, was then a French colony; he spent the winters of 1912 and 1913 in Morocco, then a French protectorate.

Art and design reflecting – and mythologising – North Africa and the Middle East had been extremely popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Matisse's theatrical paintings of odalisques – female concubines in a harem – seem to acknowledge the fiction of such exotic stereotypes.

In the end, it was the visual stimulus of Islamic design that appealed to Matisse and helped him to go beyond the European tradition.

“For me,” he explained, “the subject of a picture and its background have the same value ... there is no principal feature, only the pattern is important.”

Room 5 list of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Seated Odalisque and Sketch, 1931

Graphite on paper

The Baltimore Museum of Art. The Cone Collection, formed by Dr Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland

Interior with a Plaster Cast, c. 1928

Graphite on paper

The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundatio

The Lamé Robe, 1932

Graphite on paper

Yale University Art Gallery. Gift of Stephen Carlton Clark BA, 1903

Lisette in a Turkish Chair, 1931

Ink on paper

Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne/ Centre de création industrielle. Gift of the artist, 1932

The model Lisette Clarnète in octagonal chair, 1 Place Charles-Félix, Nice, c. 1931. Unidentified photographer. Archives Henri Matisse

Photo © Archives H. Matisse

Reclining Odalisque, 1926

Oil on canvas

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot (1876–1967), 1967

Two Models Resting, 1928

Oil on canvas

Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of Mrs Frank Abercrombie Elliott, 1964

Odalisque with Grey Culottes, 1926–27

Oil on canvas

Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris. Jean Walter and Paul Guillaume Collection



Odalisque on a Turkish Chair, 1928

Oil on canvas

Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris

Matisse's densely patterned interiors challenge the traditional notion that the human figure should be the visual centre of an artwork.

Here, patterns are pure rhythms, floating in space and competing for attention with the model herself.

The forms of the octagonal chair, which is on view in this room, parallel those of the model's body and limbs, while patterns on its surface seem to have migrated to the wall.

Haiti

Late nineteenth–
early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

North Africa

Cotton plain-weave cut and appliquéed to bast-fibre
cloth

Private collection, on loan to the Musée Matisse,
Nice. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Inspired by fretwork architectural screens
found throughout the Islamic world, this
perforated and appliqué hanging, together
with the red 'haiti' also in this room, was
part of Matisse's wide-ranging textile
collection.

They functioned as decorative wall
hangings or as window screens to filter
strong sunlight.

Matisse used them in his Nice studio to create the layered, rhythmic patterns that can be seen in the nearby painting 'The Moorish Screen,' in which he depicted his daughter Marguerite and a model in front of this 'hacienda.'

The Moorish Screen, 1921



Oil on canvas

Philadelphia Museum of Art. Bequest of Lisa Norris Elkins, 1950

Haiti

Nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

North Africa

Cotton plain-weave cut and appliquéed to bast-fibre cloth

Private collection

Matisse painting the model Zita at 1 Place Charles-Félix, Nice, 1928

Unidentified photographer

Archives Henri Matisse. Photo © Archives H. Matisse
© Succession H. Matisse/DACS 2017

Brazier and tray

Nineteenth century

Unidentified artist

Ottoman region,

Turkey or Syria

Patinated copper, brass and wood

Musée Matisse, Nice.

Former collection of Henri Matisse

This Ottoman charcoal heater appears behind the model's legs in two of the nearby paintings.

Artists often included braziers in traditional paintings of North African harem scenes to trigger the viewer's sense of smell or warmth.

Matisse offers a new take on this familiar prop by having its rounded, almost anthropomorphic form compete for attention with the body of the model.

Octagonal chair

Nineteenth century

Unidentified artist

Probably Algeria or Morocco

Painted wood and cloth

Musée Matisse, Nice.

Former collection of Henri Matisse

Small table (guéridon)

Early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Probably Tunisia

Tinted hardwood with mother-of-pearl inlay

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Matisse's letters refer to a couple by the name of Ibrahim who owned a boutique in Paris.

As early as 1918 he was acquiring objects from them, several of which were to appear in paintings that he made while living in Nice.

This 'guéridon', a common North African piece of furniture, is one of them. Matisse called it "the little Oriental table with the chessboard marquetry".

Room 6

The Language of Signs

“The briefest possible indication of the character of a thing. A sign.”

Late in his career, Matisse synthesised many of the tendencies explored in this exhibition, which he had developed in conversation with objects in his collection.

In 1941 he survived a near-fatal operation for stomach cancer, which left him increasingly immobile but far from unproductive.

The free and innovative works displayed here were mostly completed in the fourteen- year period that he referred to as his “second life”.

The late work represents the culmination of Matisse's persistent endeavour to open his art to ideas from beyond the European tradition.

Chinese art had fascinated him as early as 1919, when he visited the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, and among the Chinese objects that he went on to acquire were the calligraphy panel (a gift from his wife) and blue and white vases on view [here](#).

Equally, the geometric designs of African Kuba cloth pointed a way towards the utter simplicity that he was seeking.

The final fruits of this quest were the cut-outs, the defining achievement of Matisse's last years, in which he achieved a new level of concentrated formal expression.

With scissors he cut shapes from brightly coloured paper, which he then arranged into compositions that fuse colour and line with the movement of the artist's hand.

"I have attained a form filtered to its essential," he explained in a 1951 interview, "and of the object which I used to present in the complexity of its space, I have preserved the sign, which suffices."

In this closing room, such signs abound, representing objects and motifs from Matisse's studio and beyond.

Room 6 list of works (clockwise in order of hang)

Chinese panel surrounded by cut-out elements from 'Blue Nude with Green Stockings', 'Women and Monkeys' and 'The Parakeet and the Mermaid',
Hôtel Régina, Nice, 1952

Lydia Delectorskaya (1910–1998)

Archives Henri Matisse. Photo © Archives H. Matisse
© Succession H. Matisse /DACS 2017

The Eskimo, 1947

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted

Designmuseum Danmark, Danish Design Archive

The Propeller, 1945

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted

The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation

Calligraphy panel



Nineteenth century

Unidentified artist

China, Qing dynasty

Lacquered wood with gilding

Musée Matisse, Nice. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Matisse received this panel from his wife Amélie as a gift for his sixtieth birthday in December 1929. It was a constant presence in his studio- apartments, moved from room to room, surrounded by his own work in progress.

The calligraphy reads either: “pure and virtuous of the district south of the river” or “pure and virtuous like the southern river”. Matisse observed that the panel “is actually carved, but you think it is in relief”. In his cut-outs he explored a similar play between form and ground.

Mimosa, 1949–51, maquette for rug (realised 1951)

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted,
mounted on canvas

Ikeda Museum of 20th Century Art

Alga on Green Background, 1947

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted

The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation

Panel with Mask, 1947

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted on paper

Designmuseum Danmark, Danish Design Archive

To make his cut-outs Matisse used paper vibrantly painted with opaque watercolour, called gouache.

With his assistants he cut the paper with scissors and pinned the shapes to the walls of his studio, where he lived surrounded by his work – “a little garden all around me where I can walk”.

Matisse moved and adjusted elements until he found a balance and rhythm that he liked.

The Burning Bush, 1951



Ink and gouache on paper

Collection Adrien Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence

Matisse spoke repeatedly about Chinese artists in relation to his search for simplified signs.

An artist, he felt, must create empathy for a subject, in himself and his viewers, an idea he often explained through 'an old Chinese proverb' – "I've been told what Chinese professors tell their students: When you draw a tree, have the feeling of growing with it, when you begin at the bottom."

Embroidered textile

Late nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Kuba kingdom,

Democratic Republic of Congo

Raffia plain-weave embroidered with raffia

Private collection. Former collection of Henri Matisse

From the early twentieth century, Kuba cloths, often referred to as 'African velvets' by their European admirers, were brought to Europe from what was then the Belgian Congo.

Far from static and repetitive, the combinations of motifs and tones were improvised and often executed without a pre-established design. Matisse wrote of these textiles: "I never tire of looking at them ... and waiting for something to come to me from the mystery of their instinctive geometry."

Maquette for red chasuble (front), late 1950–52 (realised 1952)

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired
through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1953

Embroidered textile

Early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Kuba kingdom,

Democratic Republic of Congo

Raffia plain-weave embroidered with raffia

Musée Matisse, Nice.

Former collection of Henri Matisse

Red Interior: Still-life on a Blue Table, 1947



Oil on canvas

Art Collection North Rhine-Westphalia, Düsseldorf.
Acquired 1964 as a donation from the
Westdeutscher Rundfun

Matisse's admiration for the 'instinctive geometry' of certain textile traditions – including Kuba cloths – informed his use of pattern in this extraordinary work.

Zigzag vectors cover the red surface, expanding in different directions and attracting the eye here and there, out into the garden or off the edges of the canvas.

This is one of the last great paintings that Matisse made before turning exclusively to drawings and cut-outs.

Embroidered textile

Late nineteenth–early twentieth century

Unidentified artist

Kuba kingdom,

Democratic Republic of Congo

Raffia plain-weave embroidered with raffia

Private collection. Former collection of Henri Matisse

Maquette for red chasuble (back), 1950–52 (realised 1952)

Gouache on paper, cut and pasted

The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1953

Matisse's last major project was his design for the Chapel of the Rosary in Vence, just west of Nice.

Over four years in the making, the chapel was, in Matisse's words, the product of "an entire life of work".

He designed nearly every element, including the robes (chasubles) worn by priests during Mass. His signs for palm leaves and crosses appear on the front and back.

Henri Matisse at home, Villa Le Rêve, Vence, 1944

Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908–2004)

Photo © Henri Cartier-Bresson/Magnum Photos

© Succession H. Matisse/DACS 2017

Delftware vase

1680–1720

Unidentified artist

Netherlands or France

Glazed earthenware

Musée Matisse, Nice.

Former collection of Henri Matisse

Vase

c. 1600

Unidentified artist

China, Ming dynasty

Glazed porcelain

Musée Matisse, Nice.

Former collection of Henri Matisse

Vase

Seventeenth–eighteenth century

Unidentified artist

China, late Ming–early Qing dynasty

Glazed porcelain

Musée Matisse, Nice.

Former collection of Henri Matisse

Two of these vases are Chinese; the third was made in Europe in a Chinese-inspired style.

Matisse spoke repeatedly about Chinese artists in relation to his search for simplified signs. These vases evoke trees in quick, concise strokes.

His own drawings of trees, like the one in this room, reveal his continuing effort to condense the tree into a sign.

Your feedback, please

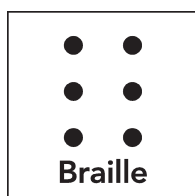
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