

Matisse

1941 – 1954

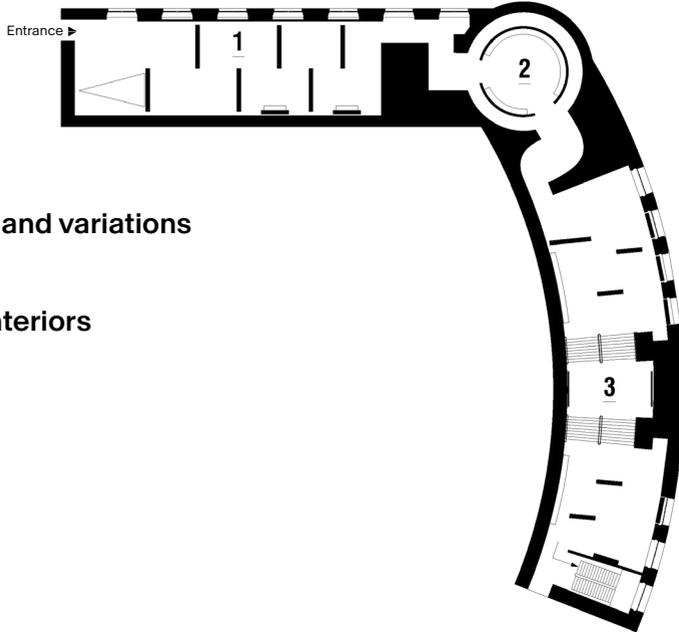
In 1941, Henri Matisse survived a serious operation that almost killed him, after which he felt he was “entering a second life”.

This period lasted until his death in 1954 and was marked by an extraordinary surge in creativity. Never had he been so prolific or so bold in the diversity of techniques and media he used: paintings, drawings, gouache cut-outs, illustrated books, textiles and stained glass.

At the age of nearly 80, Matisse reinvented himself through gouache cut-outs. They became an independent visual language in their ability to attain the universal through simplicity. Well suited both for reproductions and monumental commissions, they allowed him to express the decorative and architectural dimension of his art to the full. The exhibition highlights this change in his practice, which led him, as he cut into colour, to give a sense of breadth and respiration to everything he created, from his smallest works to his largest and most elaborate compositions. This final period also marked the culmination of his painted work, epitomised by the masterful *Intérieurs de Vence* (Vence Interiors) series.

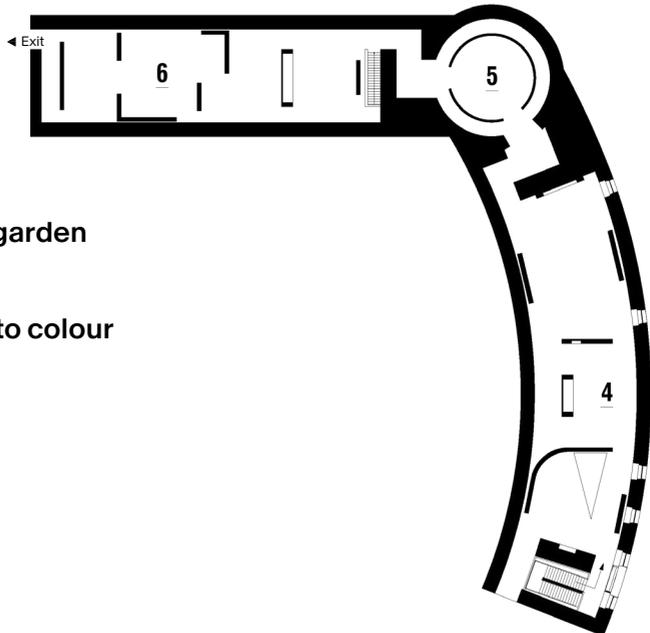
Plans

LEVEL 1



1. Themes and variations
2. Jazz
3. Vence Interiors

LEVEL 2



4. Matisse's garden
5. Faces
6. Carving into colour

Key dates

1941

Matisse nearly died following a serious **operation** that left him physically very weak. He **drew** with great intensity.

1943

After bombings in Nice, he moved to the Villa **Le Rêve** in **Vence**.

Publication of the **album** titled ***Dessins. Thèmes et variations*** (Drawings. Themes and Variations).

Creation of the first plates from the **Jazz album** using **gouache cut-outs**.

1944

His wife Amélie and his daughter Marguerite were arrested by the Gestapo for acts of resistance.

1946

Participation in the **“Art et Résistance”** exhibition at the Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris.

Start of the ***Intérieurs de Vence*** (Vence Interiors) series, completed in 1948.

1947

Start of the **Chapelle du Rosaire** project in Vence, which took him three years.

1949

Exhibition at the **Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris** for his **80th birthday**.

1951

His retrospective at **MoMA** established his image as an avant-garde artist and a forerunner of abstraction.

1952

Creation of ***La Tristesse du roi*** (The Sorrow of the King), the ***Nus bleus*** (Blue Nudes) series.

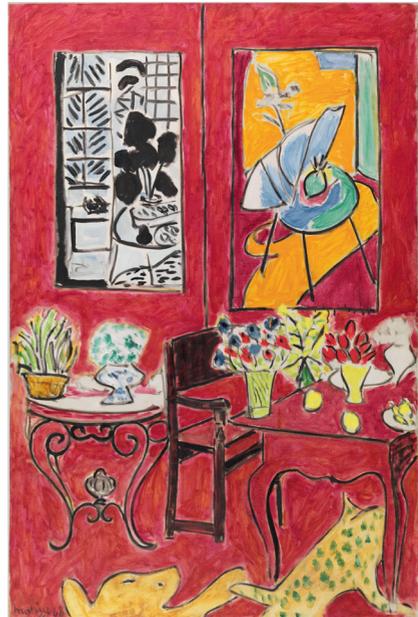
Creation of ***Nuit de Noël*** (Christmas Eve), a large **stained-glass window** that was installed in the **Rockefeller Center** in December.

1954

Commission of a stained-glass window for Nelson A. Rockefeller, destined for the **Union Church** in **Pocantico Hills** in the **State of New York**. Completion of the maquette, ***Rosace*** (Rose Window), on 1st November. It was his last work.

On 3 November, Matisse died in Nice. His **funeral** was an international event with wide press coverage.

“The role of painting, I think, the role of all decorative painting, is to enlarge surfaces, to work so that one no longer feels the dimensions of the wall.”



Henri Matisse, *Grand intérieur rouge* (Large Red Interior), 1948. Oil on canvas, 146 × 97 cm
Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d’art moderne – Centre de création industrielle
Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI/
Audrey Laurans/Dist. GrandPalaisRmn

Key words

Studio

Matisse painted his studio as he perceived it mentally rather than visually. A trigger for his musings, this construction became a world in constant transformation.

Stages of creation

During an exhibition of his works at Galerie Maeght in 1945, Matisse displayed his painting titled *La Blouse roumaine* (The Romanian Blouse), 1940, alongside ten photographs documenting the different stages in its creation. This display revealed the long process of simplification behind the making of his painting.

Gouache cut-outs

In 1943, Matisse created 20 illustration plates for his *Jazz* album, cutting out shapes from paper painted with gouache. In 1948, he freely covered his walls with large, autonomous cut-outs. The gouache-painted shapes were simply pinned in place and could be moved at will before being fixed permanently. By 1951 the cut-outs had become paintings and Matisse revisited seriality with the *Nus Bleus* (Blue Nudes) the following year.

“Cutting directly into colour reminds me of a sculptor’s carving into stone.”



Henri Matisse, *La Chute d'Icare* (The Fall of Icarus), 1943
Gouache paper cut-outs, pinned in place, 36 × 26,5 cm
Private collection, courtesy Galerie de l'Institut

Series

Matisse adopted a method of serial drawing (album titled *Dessins. Thèmes et variations* (Drawings. Themes and Variations)). He focused on a single motif or subject, which he drew over and over again, producing a new variation each time. Matisse applied the same principle to painting in his Vence interiors.

Signs

Whether with a pencil, a paintbrush or scissors, Matisse managed to synthesize his artistic approaches: “I have attained a form filtered to its essentials and of the object [...] I have preserved the sign which suffices and which is necessary to make the object exist in its own form”.

“A sign is enough to evoke a face, there is no need to force eyes or a mouth on people... The field should be left free for the viewer to dream.”



Henri Matisse, *Visage* (Face), 1952
Brush and ink on paper, 65 × 50 cm
Private collection

Practical information

24 March – 26 July 2026
Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 7.30pm
Late opening Friday until 10pm

Grand Palais, entrance on Square Jean Perrin,
Galleries 3 and 4

Rates

Full rate: €19

Reduced rate: €16 (subscription holders,
18-25 year-olds, students up to and including
age 30, large families)

Free (under 18 year-olds, jobseekers, visitors
with a disability, GrandPalais Pass holders,
Carte Pop holders)

Publications



Catalogue *Matisse, 1941-1954*

Co-published by Centre Pompidou
– GrandPalaisRmnÉditions
Produced under the direction
of Claudine Grammont
19.6 × 28 cm, 480 pages, 300 images
Price: €45

Educational pack

Learning resources in connection
with the exhibition are available at
<https://www.grandpalais.fr> (in French)

Dossiers ressources

Find the learning resources on
<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/fr/offre-aux-professionnels/enseignants/dossiers-ressources-sur-lart/henri-matisse> (in French)

Visits and workshops

For guided tours by the Grand Palais, visit:
<https://www.grandpalais.fr>

For guided tours by the Centre Pompidou, visit:
<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/>

Podcast

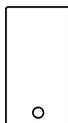
Based on contributions by artists
Jean-Charles de Castelbajac, **Isabelle Ferreira**,
Agnès Thurnauer and composer **Claudia
Jane Scroccaro**, the exhibition podcast
invites you to explore the **legacy of Matisse
in contemporary creation**. The podcast
is available on the Centre Pompidou
website and via streaming platforms
and the Grand Palais app. The transcript
of the podcast can be downloaded for free
via the Centre Pompidou website.



<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/fr/pompidou-plus/podcasts/podcasts-visites-dexpos>

The Grand Palais app

Available on the App Store and Google Play (in French and English), the Grand Palais app is an essential tool for keeping abreast of the news, preparing your visit and getting the most out of exhibitions and events at the Grand Palais. It includes tours of the building and Grand Palais exhibitions.



Download the Grand Palais app
to access to all the audioguide tours
of the exhibition Logos stores



Share #ExpoMatisse



GrandPalais Centre Pompidou

Rmn

After four years of work, the Grand Palais, an emblematic Parisian monument, gradually reopened for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2024. It hosts exhibitions and events as part of a generous, festive program organised by the GrandPalaisRmn.

In 2025, Centre Pompidou began its metamorphosis. Its iconic building, located in the Beaubourg district of Paris, will undergo a thorough renovation, which by 2030, will allow it to reconnect with its original utopia. During this unprecedented period, the spirit of Centre Pompidou will continue to thrive through its Constellation programme, which offers a vast array of exhibitions, live shows, films, meetings and workshops in France and abroad.

The GrandPalaisRmn and Centre Pompidou are thrilled that the Grand Palais takes on such a central role in this Constellation.

Exhibition

Curator: Claudine Grammont

Research assistant: Alix Agret

Project Manager, Grand Palais: Aude du Ché

Production Manager, Centre Pompidou: Claire Gerlach

Architect scenographer: Julie Boidin

Graphic designer: Studio Matters

Sponsors and media partners

With the support of:

CHANEL
GRAND MÉCÈNE
DU GRAND PALAIS

ALL
ACCOR

 **AG2R**
LA MONDIALE

MIRABAUD


CAPAROL

Media partners:

TF1

arte

Le Parisien

PARIS MATCH

Télérama

TC
TROISCOULEURS

inter

In partnership with:


PARIS AÉROPORT

SNCF
GARES
& CONNEXIONS