

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

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NEWLY DISCOVERED MATISSE PAINTING TO GO ON VIEW AT NATIONAL GALLERY
Matisse Exhibition on view through March 29, 1987

WASHINGTON - A rare painting by Henri Matisse, not seen in public for more than 50 years, has been added to the National Gallery of Art exhibition, Henri Matisse: The Early Years in Nice 1916 - 1930. Presumed lost by most art historians, the existence of the painting became known only recently when it was given to the Norton Gallery and School of Art, in West Palm Beach, Florida.

The painting, La toque de velours bleu (The Blue Velour Hat), which depicts Matisse's daughter, Marguerite, was painted in the summer of 1919 during the artist's return from Nice to his home outside Paris in Issy-les-Moulineaux. The work was shown in Basel, Switzerland, in 1931, but disappeared from public view shortly thereafter. Its location remained a mystery until December 1986 when the owners, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Goodman of Palm Beach and New York, gave the work to the Norton Gallery of Art. Mrs. Goodman purchased the painting in Paris in the late 1940s. Until recently it hung in the Goodman's Manhattan apartment.

"More than 400,000 people have seen the Matisse show since it opened in November," said J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art. "For those who have yet to see the exhibition, this wonderful painting is further incentive to visit the National Gallery while this remarkable collection is still on view."

"This is a work of great quality, a compelling, astringent portrait that captures the direct gaze and psychology of the subject," according to Jack Cowart, curator of 20th-century art at the National Gallery and co-curator of the Matisse exhibition. "We had tried for a number of years to locate La toque de velours bleu and were ready to conclude that it was lost. Naturally, we are now delighted to show the work and greatly appreciate the Norton Gallery's help in making it available."

This painting joins two other important Matisse paintings from the Norton Gallery already in the exhibition, Grande falaise, les deux raies (1920) and Tête de Lorette aux longues boucles (1916-1917).

Henri Matisse: The Early Years in Nice 1916-1930 is the first exhibition ever devoted exclusively to the paintings of Matisse during his first years in the south of France. Almost one-third of the 170 works in the exhibition have seldom or never before been seen in public. With subject matter that ranges from flowers, nudes and exotic interiors to landscapes of the Côte d'Azur, this collection of paintings captures the mood and spirit of the French Riviera during the 1920s.

The exhibition was organized by Jack Cowart, along with Dominique Fourcade, a noted authority on Matisse. It is made possible by a grant from GTE Corporation and will appear only at the National Gallery of Art. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Admission to the exhibition is free of charge, with passes distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. National Gallery hours are 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and 12 noon until 9 p.m., Sunday. For further information on the Matisse exhibition please call (202) 842-3472.