

MATISSE IN MOROCCO

The Paintings and Drawings, 1912-1913

a USA/USSR Joint Project

National Gallery of Art, Washington
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow
The State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Updated information

MATISSE'S ART INSPIRED BY MOROCCO

TO BEGIN USA/USSR TOUR AT NATIONAL GALLERY

SHOW INCLUDES NEWLY DISCOVERED WORKS

Washington, D.C., January 30, 1990 -- An exhibition of paintings and newly discovered drawings executed by Henri Matisse in Morocco in 1912 and 1913 will be held in the East Building of the National Gallery of Art March 18 through June 3, 1990. Matisse in Morocco, The Paintings and Drawings, 1912-1913, A USA/USSR Joint Project, organized by the National Gallery of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, and The State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, will be the first exhibition worked out in all phases jointly by western and Soviet curators.

The most comprehensive show ever devoted to this pivotal phase of the artist's career, Matisse in Morocco is made possible by a generous grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

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"This extraordinary exhibition owes its existence to the vision and diligence of a unique team of Soviet and western scholars," said J. Carter Brown, National Gallery director. "It represents for me not only one of the most dazzling moments in twentieth-century art, but also new chapters in the study of Matisse's art and in the cooperation of museums and scholars east and west."

Richard E. Oldenburg, director of The Museum of Modern Art, commented: "This exhibition will contribute importantly to modern art scholarship and give great pleasure to a large public in this country and in the U.S.S.R. We are delighted to be collaborating on this project with our museum colleagues in Washington, Moscow, and Leningrad."

Jack Cowart, curator of twentieth-century art at the National Gallery, and Pierre Schneider, a noted art critic and writer on Matisse, conceived and organized the exhibition with the help of participating curators, John Elderfield, director of the drawings department at The Museum of Modern Art, and Albert Kostenevich, chief curator of modern European painting at The Hermitage.

Henri Matisse visited Tangier twice, from late January to mid-April 1912, and from early October 1912 until mid-February 1913. Already an established artist in Europe, he came to North Africa in search of new motifs. The exotic environment of Morocco proved extraordinarily fruitful. Matisse completed 23 paintings, many of them masterworks, and more than 60 drawings, most of them lively studies of the people and the Casbah of Tangier.

For Matisse, Morocco represented a kind of earthly paradise. He was struck by its strong southern light and bold architecture, which inspired him to flatten and simplify his compositions while employing bold juxtapositions of color. He chose as subjects the landscape,

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architecture, and gardens of Tangier, still lifes, and the Moroccan people. The motifs and techniques he developed in Morocco influenced and informed his work for the rest of his career.

Matisse in Morocco will include loans from public and private collections in the United States, Soviet Union, France, Sweden, and Switzerland. There will be 23 paintings, 12 of which have never been exhibited in the United States, and 45 drawings, the vast majority of which were unknown before research for the project began and 42 of which have never been exhibited before. The Moroccan paintings are large and colorful. The drawings are energetic, personal pen-and-ink sketches made by Matisse as he searched for motifs in the Casbah and medina (old city) of Tangier.

One of the most important works in the exhibition, a trio of paintings never before seen in the United States, is the famous Moroccan Triptych from Moscow's Pushkin Museum. The ensemble features Sur la terrasse (On the Terrace), a painting of Matisse's Moroccan model Zorah, flanked by Paysage vu d'une fenetre (Landscape Viewed from a Window), a rendering of the view of the city and bay of Tangier as seen from the artist's hotel window, and by Porte de la Casbah (Casbah Gate), a view through an arched gate to the medina.

Matisse's Moroccan paintings were immediately sought after by private collectors in France, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, and Russia. His two most important patrons were Ivan A. Morosov and Sergei I. Shchukin, both from Moscow. Ultimately, Morosov and Shchukin acquired nearly half of the paintings Matisse completed in Morocco, and these paintings are today in the collections of The State Hermitage Museum in Leningrad and the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow.

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The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue containing essays by Messrs. Cowart, Schneider, Elderfield, and Kostenevich. The catalogue also contains contributions by Laura Coyle, research associate for the exhibition at the National Gallery and Beatrice Kernan, assistant curator in the department of drawings at The Museum of Modern Art. The publication features many rare archival photographs, full entries on the paintings in the show, new chronologies, many never-before-published drawings dated 1912/1913, and significant new documentation excerpted from letters and postcards Matisse wrote in Morocco.

The softcover edition of the catalogue is published by the National Gallery of Art. The clothbound edition is published and distributed in the United States and Canada by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York. The clothbound edition is distributed in Great Britain by Thames and Hudson Ltd.

On crowded weekdays and weekends, free passes will be distributed if necessary on a first-come, first-served basis. Passes are for specified half-hour entry times and may be obtained at the special desk located on the main floor of the East Building. Current pass information for the exhibition is available by calling (202) 842-3472.

After its premiere at the National Gallery, the show will travel to The Museum of Modern Art, New York, June 24 through September 4, 1990. It will also appear at the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, September 28 through November 20, 1990 and The State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, December 15, 1990 through February 15, 1991. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

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Participating Curators' Biographical Summaries

MARINA BESSONOVA has been curator of modern French painting at the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow since 1970. She has organized numerous exhibitions on the works of impressionist and post-impressionist painters and contributed to many exhibition catalogues. Her recent projects include the exhibitions "Impressionist to Early Modern Paintings from the U.S.S.R." (1986), "Moscow-Leningrad, Epoch of Discoveries (French Avant-garde art from 1900 to the Present) (1989), and "Paul Gauguin: View from Russia" (1989).

JACK COWART is head of department and curator of twentieth-century art at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. The major exhibitions and related research catalogues he has contributed to since coming to the National Gallery in 1983 include "Georgia O'Keeffe 1887-1987," and "Henri Matisse: The Early Years in Nice 1916-1930." Cowart also directed the 1977-1978 exhibition "Henri Matisse Paper Cut-Outs" that premiered at the National Gallery. He received a Ph.D. from The Johns Hopkins University (1972) with a dissertation entitled "Ecoliers to Fauves - Henri Matisse, Albert Marquet and Henri Manguin Drawings: 1890-1906."

JOHN ELDERFIELD is director of the Department of Drawings and curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. His work on Matisse includes "Fauvism" (1976), "Matisse in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art" (1978), "The Cut-Outs of Henri Matisse" (1978), and "The Drawings of Henri Matisse" (1984), the first two of which accompanied exhibitions he organized. His other recent exhibitions and accompanying publications include "The Modern Drawing" (1984), "Kurt Schwitters" (1985), "Morris Louis," (1986), and "The Drawings of Richard Diebenkorn" (1988). He received a Ph.D. in 1975 from the Courtauld Institute of Art at the University of London.

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ALBERT KOSTENEVICH is chief curator of modern European painting at The State Hermitage Museum in Leningrad, a post he has held for 21 years. Beginning with an early retrospective of the paintings of van Gogh in 1967, he has been responsible for numerous exhibitions at the Hermitage, including many shows of American and western art on loan from museums in the United States. Kostenevich specializes in French art of the late 19th and early 20th century. In addition, he is the author of numerous publications, including "Orozco" (1969), "Raoul Dufy" (1975), "Picasso" (exhibition catalogue, Moscow and Leningrad, 1982), "European Painting of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in the Hermitage" (1987, in English), and "From Monet to Picasso" (1989). His work in preparation for the upcoming "Matisse in Morocco" exhibition has provided expanded opportunities for him to travel and conduct research in the United States and Europe.

PIERRE SCHNEIDER, art critic and scholar is a Junior Fellow of the Society of Fellows at Harvard University, from which he received a Ph.D. in 1952. He also holds the Doctorat d'Etat from the University of Paris (1984). The author of a monograph on Matisse published in 1984, he has initiated and directed or otherwise been involved with numerous exhibitions and accompanying catalogues on the art of Henri Matisse, including "Henri Matisse: Exposition du Centenaire" at the Grand-Palais, Paris (1970), "Henri Matisse: Das goldene Zeitalter," Kunsthalle, Bielefeld (1981), and "Matisse et l'Italie," Museo Correr, Venice (1987). A frequent lecturer and contributor to European and American journals, Schneider resides in Paris.

National Gallery of Art

Washington, D.C.

MATISSE IN MOROCCO
The Paintings and Drawings, 1912 - 1913
(USA/USSR Joint Project)
March 18 - June 3, 1990

EXHIBITION

This exhibition of paintings and newly discovered drawings is the first comprehensive exhibit since 1913 to focus on works by Henri Matisse during his visits to Morocco between 1912 and 1913. This exhibition is made possible by a generous grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

HOURS

Monday through Saturday, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sunday, 11:00 am to 6:00 pm.

PASSES

Admission to the National Gallery and its special exhibitions is always free. On crowded weekdays and weekends free passes will be distributed as necessary on a first-come, first-served basis. Passes are for specified half-hour entry times and are valid only on the day they are issued. You may pick up same day passes at the special exhibition desk on the Ground Level of the East Building.

TOURS

Matisse In Morocco is the subject of the Tour of the Week Tuesday, April 3 through Saturday, April 7 at 1:00 pm and Sunday, April 8 at 2:30 pm. Please meet at the East Building Art Information Desk at the designated time.

RECORDED TOUR

A forty-five minute recorded tour by Jack Cowart, curator of twentieth century art, is available: individuals, \$3.00 each; students and senior citizens, \$2.50 each.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The monthly Calendar of Events will provide information on all other programs offered in connection with this special exhibition.

GROUPS

Timed passes may be reserved for groups of 15 people or more on Monday through Friday at 11:00, 1:00 and 2:00 pm; Saturday, 1:00 and 2:00 pm; and Sunday, noon and 3:00 pm. To reserve passes, please call 842-6754.

REGULATIONS AND SERVICES

No photography, lecturing, shopping bags, packages, or umbrellas are permitted in the exhibition. A limited number of baby strollers and wheelchairs can be borrowed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Access for the handicapped is available to all levels of the East Building. There is limited parking for the handicapped near the East Building entrance.

PUBLICATIONS

Posters, postcards, related publications and an exhibition catalogue, illustrated in color, are available. For mail orders, the price for the soft cover catalogue is \$22.50 plus \$2.50 mailing charge, and the hard cover catalogue is \$39.95 plus \$3.50 mailing charge. If interested in making a purchase, please call 301-322-5900 or send your request to:

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