

춤 the Dance 마티스 댄스 The Dance by Matisse



The Monumental Architecture of *The Dance*

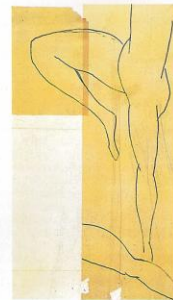


Famous, showered with honours and now financially secure, Matisse began travelling. In 1927, he won the most prestigious of international prizes, the Carnegie Prize, which was awarded the following year to Picasso, when Matisse was on the jury. Matisse was invited to Pittsburgh to receive the prize, but before going he decided to take a trip to the Pacific, in the wake of Gauguin, via New York and San Francisco. He spent a three happy months in Tahiti, although he was very slightly disappointed at the negative aspect which Westerners so often retain of their encounter with this dreamlike world. Matisse brought a great deal with him, especially memories of the work he had done. He would tell Tériade that his travels had made it possible for him to consider the work he had done and to find solutions to current problems, through this disorientation. "This proves that my work is the split personality of the life of my brain. It may also be the *idée fixe* of an old fool who travels around the world only to come home to look for the tobacco pouch which he had mislaid before he left."

Having worked for forty years in "European light and space", Matisse dreamed of other proportions which might perhaps be found in "the other hemisphere". "I have always been conscious of another space in which the objects of my reverie were forming. I was looking for something other than real space. Hence my curiosity for the other hemisphere, where things might happen differently." Unfortunately, according to Matisse, this "something else" was not to be found in the South Pacific, or rather, as was his custom, not until it had passed through his "filtering". "That is why," he said, yet again paradoxically, "when I was in Tahiti, I drew back to seek views of Provence and contrast them bluntly with those of the landscape of the South Pacific."

It may well be partly for the same reasons that Gauguin painted a snowy Breton landscape shortly before his death under the sun of the Marquesas Islands. "Most painters," commented Matisse, "need direct contact with objects in order to feel that they exist and they can only reproduce them under their strictly physical conditions. They seek an external light to see clearly within themselves. Yet the artist or the poet has an internal life which transforms projects to create a new, tangible, organised model, a living world which is itself the infallible sign of divinity, a reflection of divinity."

The occasion was to offer him the opportunity of finding, or rather constructing, what he was looking for but what the South Pacific had been unable to provide. After his arrival in Pittsburgh, he went to visit the principal American collections some of which already contained works of his, especially those of Cone and Dr. Barnes. The latter commissioned him to create a huge mural in the mansion he had built to house his art collection. The site was fifty-two square metres in size. It was high above the French windows and thus in poor light, and was split into two semi-circles separated by the projecting drop of an overhang supported by a row of pillars. Yet the location was a prestigious one since it made it possible to

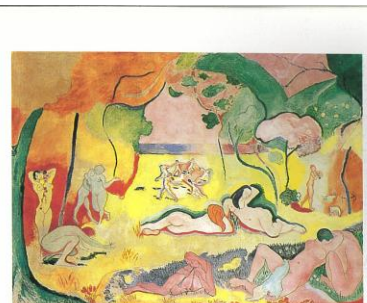
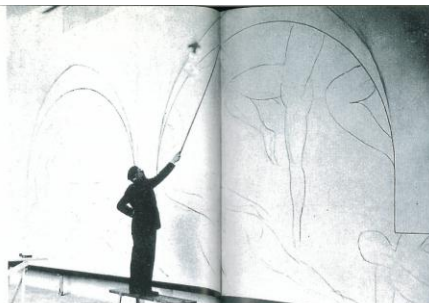
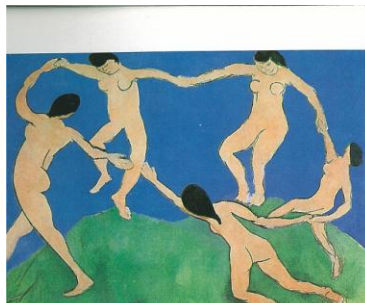


Dancers, 1910-1911
Dancers
Lithograph over red pencil, 43 x 32 cm
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Barnes Collection Version of "The Dance", sketch in the
Scale of the Grand Figure, 1910
La danse Barnes, esquisse à l'échelle de la figure
centrale
Pencil and ink on chalk-covered paper,
101 x 101 cm
Musée Matisse, Nice

PAGE 142
Unfinished Version of "The Dance" (right-hand panel),
1910
La danse (version inachevée de la danse)
Oil on canvas, charcoal, 144 x 198 cm
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

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create a peculiar pediment worthy of the works of art which Barnes had accumulated below, without "overwhelming" them. The works in question included Seurat's *The Models*, the large *Card Players* and *Madame Cézanne in a Green Hat* by Cézanne, *The Family* by Renoir and *Saint Ruffin* by Matisse himself. Matisse explained to Dorothy Dudley: "My aim was to translate painting into architecture to make a fresco the equivalent of cement or stone. I do not think this is very often attempted nowadays. People who paint on walls now create paintings and not true murals." "But what about Puvion de Chavannes?" she asked. "Yes, he comes close to it but he never reaches perfection in this sense. The walls of the Pantheon, for example, are made of stone. The paintings of Puvion de Chavannes are made of metal, not in rubber." "So has your painting really corrected architecture?" Matisse admitted that he considered this to have been an imperative; if the proportions had been different he would not have developed the particular theme and would have done something else on the surfaces. "Now, one would be happy to call this place a cathedral," proudly proclaimed Barnes as he viewed the result.

"This dance," confided Matisse to Gaston Diehl, "is something I have long had inside me and I had already put it in *La Joie de Vivre* (p. 145), and subsequently in my first large composition (the version created for Shchukin, pp. 58-59). However, this time, when I wanted to do sketches on three one-metre canvases I was unable to do so. Finally, I took three five-metre canvases, which were the actual size of the wall, and one day, armed with a piece of charcoal attached to a length of bamboo, I began to draw the whole thing in one go. It was inside me, like a rhythm that carried me along. I had the surface in my head. But once the drawing was finished, when I started to apply colour, I had to change all the shapes I had planned. I had to fill in all this area in such a way that the whole would remain architectural. Furthermore, I had to work closely with the masonry so that the lines would withstand the massive projecting blocks of the springing of the arches; they even had to project beyond them and have enough impetus to link up with each other. Having all this to contend with when composing it, the attempt to create a living, singing composition could only be the result of trial and error, a constant variation on the colour sections and the blacks."

Shchukin's "Dance" (first version), 1910
La danse de Shchukine (première version)
Oil on canvas, 192.7 x 390.3 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Matisse drawing the Unfinished "Dance", 1910

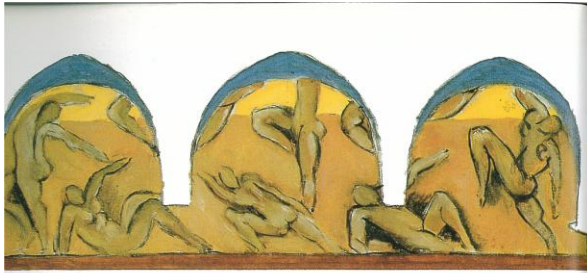
The Matisse Version of "The Dance" at the Barnes Foundation

TOP RIGHT:
La Joie de Vivre, 1910-1911
Oil on canvas, 171 x 128 cm
The Barnes Foundation, Merion (PA)



The first attempt was a failure. Started in April 1911, this *Unfinished Dance* (pp. 142 and 146) was abandoned at the beginning of the following autumn. By trying too hard to make "the fresco the equal of the cement and stone" Matisse may have pushed the combination too far, hesitated too much between the medium and the design, mastering the contours and the carnal nature of the figures conferring upon them through their colour the mineral quality of stone. In short, he was trying to turn these dancers into hybrids, somewhere midway between the organic and the inorganic or, to quote Baudelaire (whose work Matisse would later illustrate) to make "living pillars". Matisse had once told Aragon that "Renaissance art is decadence - because anatomy so dear to Michelangelo when hollowing out and hammering the human body, spoils the plane of the painted surface." Nevertheless, Matisse fell into the very trap he wanted to avoid. First of all, as the eulogist of colour he found the grey "pillar" he had created unattractive and to make it worse, it was not even uniform. Using a play of various pale shades, Matisse added some anatomical features to abstract silhouettes - the play of bones and muscles, the tendons with the shadows he gave them - which was contrary to what he was trying to achieve. Begun without enthusiasm, the *Unfinished Dance* perished in the realisation of failure. "The reality of the space took precedence over the Apollonian dream."

Matisse went back to work, deeply fatigued, though not discouraged. This time he tried to "freeze life and bring the pillars to life". "The eternal question of the objective and the subjective", which Matisse never failed to ask himself, confronted him here in the form that tradition in architecture renders as a cruel conflict. However, Giotto's example encouraged him. "When I see Giotto's frescoes in Padua," he noted as early as 1908, "I am worried about which scene in the life of Christ I am witnessing, but then I understand the feeling which emanates from it because it is in the lines, in the composition, in the colour..." A new version of *The Dance* was started and this time it was completed and proved to be a success just as the previous one had proved to be a failure. The human element was attenuated in favour of its translation into architectural terms; the nymphs dance less but the composition dances more. When installed, the canvas could be detached from the painter to become "part of the building".

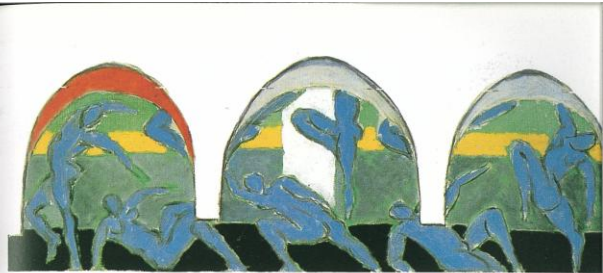


To solve the problem, Matisse conceived the really novel idea of using coloured paper cut-outs which could be moved around and substituted at will until the best position could be found for them. The *Acrobats in Jazz* (p. 156) are the direct descendants not only of the forms thus created but also of the technique itself which was to raise his unusual individual style to new heights. Unfortunately, a disappointment regarding the size awaited Matisse on his arrival at Merion in 1932: a mistake had crept into the measurements which had been supplied to him. Thanks to this mistake, the true original version of *The Dance* can be viewed in the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (pp. 150–151). One year later, a second version was ready (p. 147): "Thus, for three years," commented the painter, "I had to constantly redesign my work like a film director. When I work it is really a sort of perpetual cinema. But there I was also bound by the architecture which was in control."

Matisse insisted that there was a difference between the two completed versions of the mural commissioned by Dr. Barnes. In 1934, he explained in a letter to the critic of Russian art, Alexandre Roman: "The second (version) is not a simple replica of the first, because due to the different pendentives, and the need for a composition which took account of architectural masses which were twice as bulky (as he had originally been led to believe), I had to change my design. I even worked with different feelings. The first (*The Dance* which is now in Paris) is wistful, the second (*The Dance* which is now in Merion) is Dionysian. The colours which are the same have, nevertheless, changed. The quantities being

Study for the Paris Version of "The Dance"
(*The Dance II, Odeur Harmony*, 1930–1931)
Étude pour "La danse de Paris" (*La danse II*), harmonie Odeur
Oil on canvas, 33 x 87 cm
Musée Matisse, Nice

The Unfinished "Dance", 1931
La danse inachevée
Oil on canvas, charcoal, 3 panels left, 324 x 400 cm;
central, 328.2 x 499 cm; right, 324 x 398 cm
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris



Study for the Paris Version of "The Dance"
(*The Dance II, Blue Harmony*, 1930–1931)
Étude pour "La danse de Paris" (*La danse II*), harmonie bleue
Oil on canvas, 33 x 87 cm
Musée Matisse, Nice

The Merion Version of "The Dance", 1932–1933
La danse de Merion
Oil on canvas, 3 panels left, 329.7 x 441.5 cm;
central, 325.9 x 393.2 cm; right, 328.2 x 439.4 cm
The Barnes Foundation, Merion (PA)



different, their quality changes as well; the colours used quite plainly obtain their quality from their relationship to quantity." He ended with a credo which he applied to Manet which he would often repeat in later years: "A great painter is one who finds personal and lasting signs to explain the spirit of his vision in plastic terms."

The Dance is one of those crucial achievements in Matisse's work from which a whole series of oil paintings and gouaches would later result of which the most notable are *The Dream* (p. 167) and *Seated Pink Nude* (p. 173) in which the arrangement is as bold as it is majestic and seems to burst out of the frame. All of them reveal a distortion in the modelling within a very careful compositional context reminiscent of the original model. The human element is alleviated, tempered or even removed. "If one excludes all the richness of spirit which Raphael and Michelangelo expended in their murals, did they not render their walls heavy by the expression of this human element which always separates us from the whole, especially in *The Last Judgement*?" asked Matisse. He said to Georges Charbonnier in 1932: "I need above all to give a feeling of immensity within a limited space. That is why I put in figures which are not always complete. About half of them are outside it... That is what I did at the chapel in Vence..."

Matisse had the Paris version of *The Dance* in his studio when he executed his first gouaches using paper cut-outs. It was the ideal way in which to re-create "a sort of paradise in which I could make frescoes." It was also his original method of reworking his composition at will without having to constantly repaint it. This



Dancers, 1930–1933
Danceuse
Pastel, 32.2 x 15.7 cm
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Auguste Rodin: Dance Movement, 1931
Pastel, 32.2 x 20 cm
Musée Rodin, Paris

Auguste Rodin: Nude Woman Dying a Headless, c. 1900
Gouache and gouache, 32.6 x 22.7 cm
Musée Rodin, Paris



Pablo Picasso: The Acrobat, 1930
Oil on canvas, 165 x 139 cm
Musée Picasso, Paris

1930–1931
Acrobate Danseur, 1930–1931
Dessins et gouaches
Lithograph, 30 x 29.7 cm
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

is how he created the scenery and costumes for the ballets of Léonide Massine (pp. 152 and 154) or the covers of magazines such as issue No. 1 of *Verre*. What started out as an assemblage of little pieces of paper cut-out and glued, used like the touches of colour applied to a painting with a paintbrush, which would soon become a means of expression in its own right, serving to create a figurative iconography on a large scale. It would be the cut-out gouaches in *Jazz* and the large compositions for which he would carve boldly simplified forms directly out of large sheets of brightly-coloured paper. In the meantime, the experience acquired in executing the decorative panel for Dr. Barnes was the inspiration for the radical transformation to which Matisse's painting was subject in the 1930s, at a time when he was moving towards a new stage in his quest, towards a new balance between drawing and colour. In the summer of 1935, he wrote to his son Pierre that he was "doing some experiments". He felt, he said, that his recent paintings using vivid colours were the inauguration of a new method of working which would make it possible for him to achieve a better combination between line and colour.

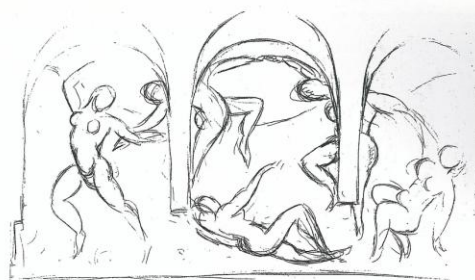
As usual, drawings and sculptures alternated with compositions. All of them reflect this tendency towards the architectural, the monumental which at the time constituted Matisse's principal preoccupation. In Matisse's work, even book illustration is primarily a question of architecture. Like Mondrian's squares or the unity of Le Corbusier, a drawing is created first for an "occupant." He identifies the walls of the reader's bedroom or a room in a museum and its narrow confines directly with an open book. "Are not the fourteen Stations of the Cross in the Chapel of the Rosary in Venice the pages of the largest architectural book which Matisse ever produced?" "This book has caused numerous architectural difficulties," said Matisse of *Pygmalion* as if a book had some direct relationship to a building in spatial terms." (Xavier Girard)

Subsequent illustrations for the poet Stéphane Mallarmé (pp. 158–161), Pierre de Ronsard, Charles d'Orléans, James Joyce, Guillaume Apollinaire, Baudelaire,



Study for the Left-hand Panel of the Mosaic Version of
"The Dance", 1923.
Pencil, 26.8 x 33.4 cm
Musée Matisse, Nice

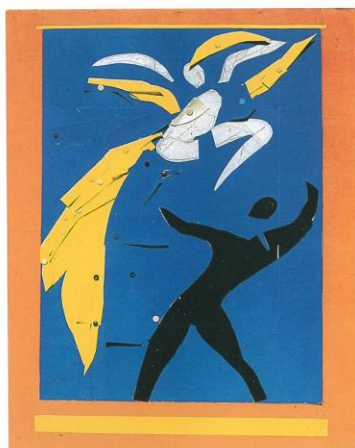
Barnes Collection Version of "The Dance", Study of
White Set of Panels, 1929-1931
La danse Barnes, étude d'ensemble.
Pencil, 27.7 x 37.7 cm
Musée Matisse, Nice



NOTES:
The Paris Version of "The Dance" (five versions),
1910-1913
La danse de Paris (première version)
Enching in colours, 20.7 x 30.7 cm
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris



Deuxième: Study for the Backing of the Ballet "Strange
Surrealism", 1927
Deuxième
Sculpt and gouache cut-out, 31.2 x 59.8 cm
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris

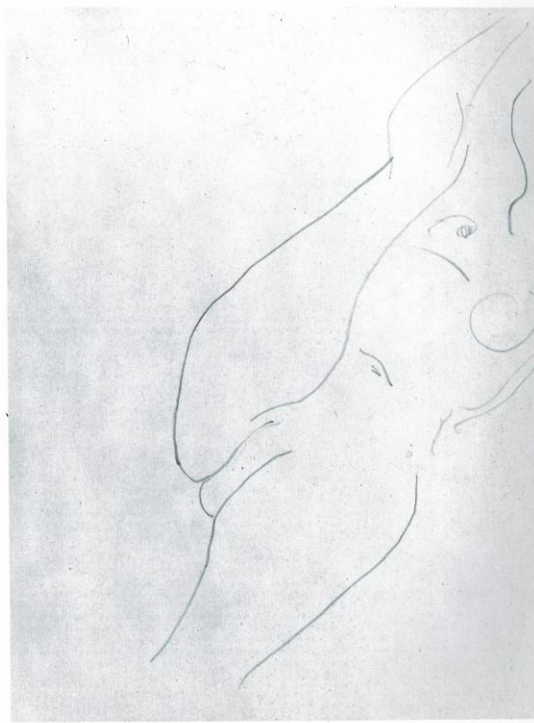


The Dance, 1928
La danse
Gouache on paper cut-out, 80 x 65 cm
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris

Page 152
Ensemble, 1929-1931
Graphite pencil, 28 x 33.6 cm
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris

Henry de Montherlant, "architectures on paper", were first and foremost celebra-
tion of the splendour of "whites". If it is the blacks which are admired in other
artists who produced drawings and engravings, from Redon or Seurat to Rouault
or Picasso, in Matisse – perhaps the ultimate simplification! – it is the magical
property of white which predominates.

Matisse the engraver is Matisse made whole. The Matisse who said of his work:
"Anything that is not useful in a painting is, by virtue of that fact, an irritant." He
also said to André Verdet: "The work of art is the emanation, the projection of
oneself. My drawings and my canvases are parts of myself. Their whole constitutes
Henri Matisse." That is what Aragon would call the Flaubert side. For Matisse,
engraving was another sort of drawing, and drawing was always painting. The
difference for him between a sculpture and a painting was the way in which he
had to "organise" and "order" his feelings, to find a method which would suit him
completely. Nor was it by chance that Matisse chose to illustrate those poets who
sing, celebrate and revere women and love. This is the "face" which makes it
possible for him to best express his feeling "to say everything religious which I
possess in life". A swan, a hairstyle, "an acacia at Vesuvius, its movement, its
slender grace may have led me to conceive of the body of the dancing woman"



Design for Backdrop of "Strange Farandole", 1938
 Projet de rideau pour "Strange Farandole"
 Costume en papier cue-out, 86 x 61 cm
 Private collection



a Lermite Machine
 Henri Matisse 38

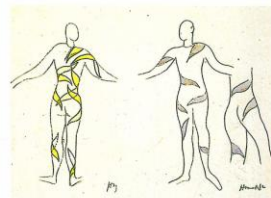
PAGE 115 BOTTOM:

A scene from the ballet "Strange Farandole" was created in Monte Carlo by the Ballets Russes, using the music from Shostakovich's second symphony. The choreography was by Lermite Machine and sets and costumes by Matisse. The subject of the ballet was the eternal internal struggle between the spiritual

and the material. Matisse dressed the principal pair of dancers in white, to symbolize the poetic spirit facing the attacks of the black or evil characters who symbolized the forces of violence or evil. Man would succeed in dominating them provisionally, but eventually he would suffer for "him".

Programme cover for the ballet "Strange Farandole", 1939

Costume designs for "Strange Farandole", 1939



Matisse bestowed upon it. It is also because the paths of Matisse and of Brancusi could not be further apart, the simplification and distortion which both used creating completely different results in each case. Matisse's preoccupations were closely linked to a certain "realistic" continuity, especially through his studies of human figures.

What is surprising is that at the same time, both Matisse and Picasso, as well as others such as Jacques Lipchitz, seem to have made a break with their previous ventures into sculpture which were more tormented, more unreal and more Cubist in order to return to massive, monumental sculpture in the tradition of sculptors of which Rodin would say: "A painter who knows how to draw knows how to sculpt," thus making a decisive contribution to the liberation of forms and materials. Freedom of expression being acquired, it was much more the degree of culture, of intellectual maturity and also of clairvoyance that counted. In the midst of the various currents with which he was confronted, Cubism through Arp, "The Iron Age" through Gonzales or Calder, Figurative Classicism of which Marino Marini was the archetype, Constructivism of the Pevsner type, there existed at the time a Neo-Expressionist current which once again brought

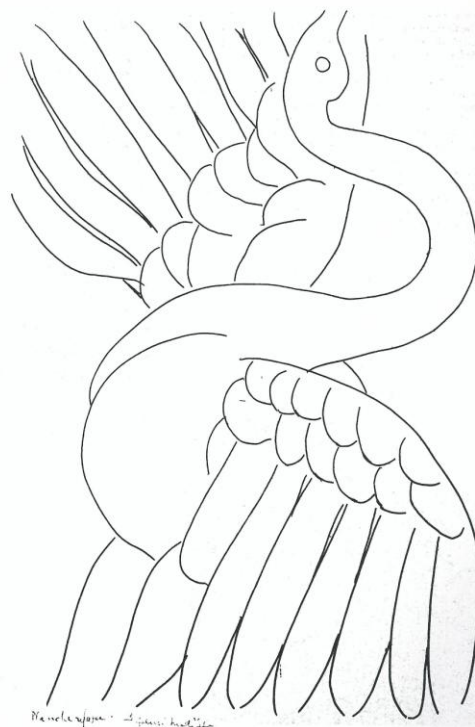


Henri, 1932
La chevelure
Sensil

Matisse drawing a swan in the Bois de Boulogne,
6. 1930
Photo: Pierre Matise

Henri, Study for the Book of Thèmes by Stéphane Mallarmé, 1914
La chevelure. Étude pour le "Mallarmé"
Paris, 19.4 x 13.7 cm
The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore (MD)

PAGE 130:
The Swan. Referred plate for the Mallarmé book,
1910-1911
Le cygne. Plaque du "Mallarmé" relative
Enlign. 13 x 23 cm
The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore (MD)



Henri Matisse - Le cygne - 1910

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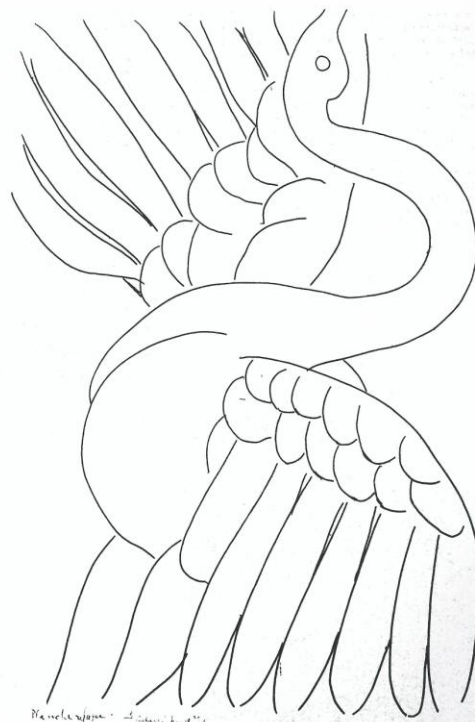


Henri, 1932
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Matisse drawing a swan in the Bois de Boulogne,
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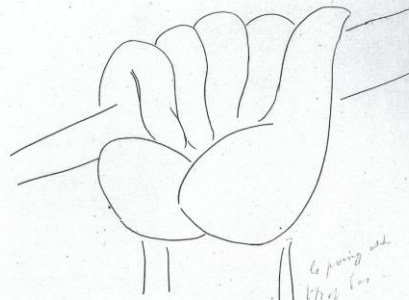
PAGE 130:
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Henri Matisse - Le cygne - 1910



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LE GUIGNON

Ce dessus du bétail aburi des humains
Bondissaient en clartés les sauvages criminières
Des mendiants d'azur le pied dans nos chemins.

Un noir vent sur leur marche éployé pour bannières
La flagellait de froid tel jusque dans la chair,
Qu'il y creusait aussi d'irritables ornières.

47

Plan des refuges d'Guignon
Henri Matisse

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1904-1905
Le Guignon, Lignes for the Matisse book, revised
plans, 1905-1906
Le guignon, Matisse pour le "Matisse" planches
révisées
Enlignes 11 a 15 cm each
The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore (MD)

The Turi, 1930
Le taur
Bronze, height: 10 cm



Matisse and Picasso together. As we know, it only takes one person to yawn in a crowded room for many others to suddenly feel the need to yawn. That is one explanation for the fact that so many artists produce similar works and seem to copy each other whereas in fact, it is merely that there is converging trends which combine to produce the "spirit of the age". It is this "spirit of the age" to which both Matisse and Picasso were sensitive, which took the form of a sort of renewed but perpetual dispute between "ancients" and "moderns". In this instance it was the defence of Woman in the face of her "massacre" by the destructive representations produced by the descendants of Fauvism or Cubism, whose original exponents happened to be - Matisse and Picasso. Both of them have encouraged us not to become too attached to a particular, strictly defined stylistic tendency and, in painting as in sculpture, they always reserved the freedom to create by suddenly changing course to undertake new ventures. It is significant that they seemed to move at the same time towards a reactionary tendency which could be described as "new realism" which took a monumental form in which Woman occupies a special position, the bust and the nude being the inheritance of the past.

Between 1925 and 1930, Matisse created his last great set of sculptures which began with *Large Seated Nude* (p. 120) and continued with *Venus in the Shell* (p. 163) and the unclassifiable *Turi* produced in 1930 (p. 162), executed upon his return from a trip to Tahiti, the title taking its name from a tropical flower. Under

Pablo Picasso, *Head of a Woman*, 1931
Tête de femme
Bronze, height: 86 cm

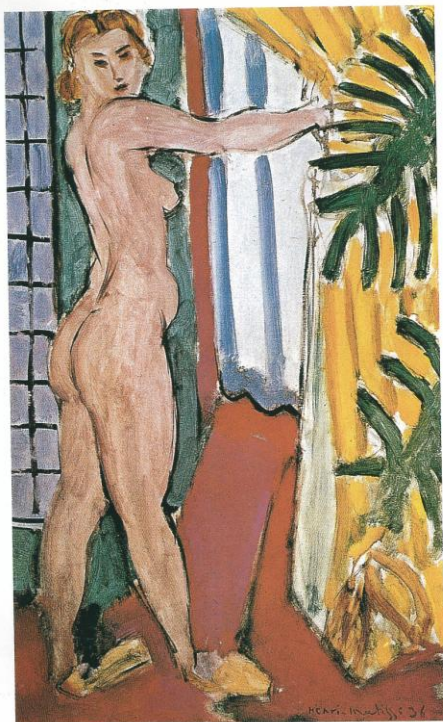
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the fingers of Matisse, the flower is transformed into the monumental head of a woman relatively similar to the one which Picasso would create a few years later (p. 162), or the last versions of *Heurtevent* (p. 140). To his students, Matisse then explained: "In this African you can see a cathedral, that is to say a solid, majestic, superb construction resulting from the assembly of numerous elements. But from time to time it is essential for you to remember that he is a negro and not to forget this, or yourself, when creating your construction."



Venus in the Shell, 1930
Venus à la coquille
Bronze, height: 31 cm

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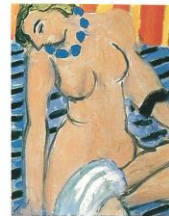
The Wise Old Man and the Young Giantesses



Eroticism, or rather sensuality, which reappeared in 1930 with *The Dance* became the basic motif in Matisse's work. The affectionate identification of the painter with his model was a prime condition for his work. He explained it thus: "A relationship is a kinship between things, it is a common language: rapport is love, yes, love." Unlike Picasso, in Matisse's case love was not linked directly to sexual potency. It meant an internalised emotion which caused him to perceive the world in a positive way. An illustration of this is the *Pink Nude* (p. 170) and the paintings and drawings on a similar theme. They cannot help but affect us as the voyeurs. Matisse expects the viewer's imagination not only to reach beyond the limitations of the canvas itself but even beyond its content. Using his magical zoom lens, Matisse seems to be able to get closer and closer to the model. Thus although the *Pink Nude* has rather small proportions, it gives the impression of being monumental in size. The background is merely a backdrop used to offset the subject, all perspective has disappeared, overwhelmed by the "close-up". The exaggeration of the proportions of the arms and legs, the alternating warm and cold tones, are reminiscent of a fresco. In relation to the colours, Matisse himself speaks of a beautiful "mattness" which is one of the great qualities of a mural. The whole episode of *The Dance* was a turning-point.

Although Matisse has been described as "a charmer who loves to charm monsters", Matisse never considered his creations to be charmed or charming monsters. Nor did his models have the role of mere "extras". "I often keep these young girls for several years, until there is a loss of interest. My plastic signs probably express their state of mind (an expression I do not like) in which I am unconsciously interested, so what should interest me? They are not always perfectly formed but they are always expressive. The emotional interest they inspire in me is not seen especially in the representation of their bodies but often by the special lines or values which are distributed throughout the canvas or the paper and create its orchestration, its architecture. But not everyone can see this. Perhaps it is sublimated desire, which is not perceptible to everyone."

The relationship between the painter and his model generally remain a mystery. Lydia Delecorskaya was first hired as an assistant in 1935, and was then required to pose daily. She has partially raised the veil. Matisse was 65 years old when he met her. Most of the nudes of that period, from *Nude Standing in front of an Open Door* (p. 164) to *Blue Eyes* (p. 166) to the later *The Dream* (p. 167) are her. The *Reclining Nude* (p. 169), the first "realist" and more austere version of *Pink Nude* (p. 170) are her. She wrote a book about the special "artist-model" relationship she had with the painter through his masterpieces between 1935 and 1939. In particular, she published the photographs which either of them took or for which they hired a photographer, of the various stages of the work in progress. Thus she shows us that for *Pink Nude* alone there were 24 stages (p. 171), at the



Study for "The Dream", 1935
Ensemble pour "Le rêve"
Graphite, 28 x 38 cm
Private collection

Seated Nude with White Towel, Black Braids, 1936
Nu assis sur tapis blanc, tresses noires
Oil on canvas, 54 x 39 cm
Private collection, Cambridge

1936-1937
Nude Standing in front of an Open Door, 1936
Nu debout devant la porte ouverte
Oil on canvas, 54 x 39 cm
Private collection, New York