

***HENRI MATISSE: THE CUT-OUTS, THE MOST EXTENSIVE EXHIBITION OF THE ARTIST'S LATE WORK EVER MOUNTED, DEBUTS THE NEWLY CONSERVED MONUMENTAL CUT-OUT *THE SWIMMING POOL****

***Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs***

October 12, 2014–February 10, 2015

The Joan and Preston Robert Tisch Exhibition Gallery, sixth floor

**Press Preview:** Tuesday, October 7, 2014, 9:30–11:30 a.m.

**NEW YORK, September 25, 2014**—With the major exhibition ***Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs***, The Museum of Modern Art offers the most extensive presentation of Matisse's cut-outs ever mounted, on view from October 12, 2014, through February 10, 2015. This groundbreaking reassessment of the brilliant final chapter of the artist's career includes approximately 100 cut-outs—drawn from public and private collections around the globe—along with a selection of related drawings, illustrated books, stained glass, and textiles, as well as the post-conservation debut of MoMA's *The Swimming Pool* (1952). The last time New York audiences were treated to an in-depth look at the cut-outs was in 1961. *Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs* is organized by The Museum of Modern Art in collaboration with Tate Modern, London. It is organized at MoMA by Karl Buchberg, Senior Conservator, Department of Conservation, and Jodi Hauptman, Senior Curator, Department of Drawings and Prints, with Samantha Friedman, Assistant Curator, Department of Drawings and Prints. Prior to its presentation at MoMA the exhibition was on view at Tate Modern from April 17 through September 7, 2014.

In the late 1940s, Henri Matisse (1869–1954) worked extensively with cut paper as his primary medium and scissors as his chief implement, introducing a radically new form of art that came to be called a cut-out. Matisse cut painted sheets into various shapes—from the organic to the geometric—which he then arranged into lively compositions, striking for their play with color and contrast, their exploitation of decorative strategies, and their economy of means. Initially, these compositions were of modest size but, over time, their scale grew along with Matisse's ambitions for them, expanding into mural- or room-size works. The culmination of Matisse's long career, the cut-outs reflect both a deep engagement with form and color and an inventiveness freshly directed at the status of the work of art, whether as a unique object, environment, ornament, or a hybrid of all of these.

The exhibition was sparked by a multiyear initiative to conserve the Museum's monumental cut-out *The Swimming Pool*, acquired in 1975. This room-size work has not been shown at MoMA for more than 20 years, and will return to view in this exhibition following extensive conservation. Although *The Swimming Pool* is at the conceptual heart of MoMA's presentation of *Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs*, the exhibition goes well beyond it, encompassing works of luminous color that engage both abstraction and decoration and range from the intimate

to the expansive. The presentation is part of the Museum's long and deep commitment to Matisse's oeuvre, encompassing an outstanding collection that reflects his activities across mediums, exhibitions that have considered both his entire career and more focused aspects, and a tradition of new scholarship.

The result of in-depth research on two fronts—conservation and curatorial—*Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs* offers a reconsideration of this body of work by exploring a host of technical and conceptual issues: the artist's methods and materials and the role and function of the works in his practice; their environmental aspects; their sculptural and temporal presence as their painted surfaces exhibited texture and materiality, curled off the walls, and shifted in position over time; and their double lives, first as contingent and mutable in the studio and, ultimately, made permanent, a transformation accomplished via mounting and framing. The exhibition also mines the tensions that fuel the cut-outs, between economy and complexity, fine art and decoration, drawing and color.

### **Early Cut-Out Experiments**

Though Matisse would not come to regard his cut-outs as an independent medium until the mid-1940s, he used cut paper as an expedient well before. In 1930, Matisse accepted a commission to design a mural for the Merion, Pennsylvania, home of Dr. Albert C. Barnes. As he began work on the commission, Matisse adopted a system of pinning cut pieces of painted paper directly onto the canvas to compose and revise his subject. Archival photographs of the in-progress mural are on view in the exhibition along with a related gouache and pencil study that document this early experimentation with cut paper.

Matisse also used his cut-paper technique to design book covers, and sets and costumes for the ballet. The exhibition includes several of his cut-and-pasted paper maquettes for covers of *Verve*, an artistic and literary review edited by the Greek publisher Tériade. Matisse subsequently created *Jazz*—one of the 20th century's greatest illustrated books and Matisse's first sustained cut-out project. In 1943 Matisse began this project by taking two unfinished cut-paper designs for the 1939 ballet *Rouge et Noir* and repurposing them as maquettes for *Jazz*. The exhibition features all 20 of these original cut-paper maquettes, as well as related drawings, alongside a copy of the 1947 illustrated book.

Matisse's further explorations with cut paper may be seen in *Oceania, the Sky* and *Oceania, the Sea*, made in Paris during the summer of 1946. He arranged white cut-paper forms directly on the walls of his Boulevard Montparnasse studio, creating a composition of birds, jellyfish, sharks, and seaweed that crystallized the artist's memories from a 1930 trip to Tahiti. *Oceania, the Sky* and *Oceania, the Sea* were ultimately screenprinted on beige linen by textile manufacturer Zika Ascher. The original paper forms are on view in the United States for the first time.

## **Vence, 1947–1948**

“The walls of my room are full of *découpages*,” Matisse wrote in February 1948, referring to a arrangement of colored paper forms pinned to the wall of his studio-residence, the Villa le Rêve in Vence in the south of France. Matisse continually shifted the shapes, pinning, unpinning, and repinning them so they interacted in different ways. This key moment in the development of the cut-outs—when the technique is established and the possibilities of expansion offered by the wall are in evidence—is represented in the exhibition with a dense cluster of reunited works.

One of these “motifs,” as Matisse called them, *Composition, Black and Red* (1947), demonstrates how the cut-out technique enabled Matisse to exploit positive and negative forms. Rather than discarding the paper that fell from his scissors when he carved out a shape, Matisse kept the remainders, often incorporating both into a composition. Both a green leaf and the rest of the sheet from which it was cut appear on the left side of this work.

## **The Vence Chapel and New Subjects**

Over the course of almost four years, Matisse devoted considerable efforts to designing the Chapel of the Rosary in Vence, approaching the design scheme as a total, environmental artwork. He created three different versions of the apse windows: the cut-paper maquettes *Celestial Jerusalem* and *Pale Blue Window* are on view in the exhibition, and *The Tree of Life*, the final version, is represented by a stained-glass trial. Matisse also used cut-outs to design the priests’ vestments and the tabernacle, which may be seen along with ink drawings depicting the Stations of the Cross, the Madonna and Child, and Saint Dominic, which were fired onto ceramic tiles that lined the Chapel’s walls.

During the same period, Matisse continued to work with cut paper to plan several decorative commissions. A few such maquettes in the exhibition include *Chinese Fish* (1951), for a stained-glass window for Tériade’s home on the French Riviera, and *Mimosa* (1949–51), for a rug issued by the American carpet manufacturer Alexander Smith and Sons in 1951.

Simultaneously, Matisse was investigating the cut-outs’ capacity for representation, exemplified by *Zulma* (early 1950). With *The Thousand and One Nights* (June 1950), in which motifs referencing the classic tale of Scheherazade unfold from left to right as if on a scroll, he also explored the cut-outs’ narrative possibilities.

## **Blue Nudes, The Swimming Pool, and The Parakeet**

In 1952, Matisse began a series of cut-outs whose reduced palette of blue and white enabled him to focus intensely on the human form. Among these are his four Blue Nudes. Viewers will have the rare opportunity to see all four Blue Nudes together. With these works, Matisse opened up the female figure, separating anatomical segments with passages of negative space, and allowing the white mount to help define the figures’ contours. The exhibition will include rarely seen drawings for these works, as well as for the related *Acrobats*, which demonstrate how Matisse often studied

a form in pencil or ink before he turned to scissors. It was this repeated rendering that in some cases facilitated his ability to cut, as observers noted, "with mastery."

One of these Blue Nudes, *Blue Nude II*, as well as the related cut-outs *Standing Blue Nude* and *Venus*, were each tried out by Matisse in the composition that became known as *The Parakeet and the Mermaid* (1952). This substitution was characteristic of Matisse's process, in which elements were constantly shifted and rearranged as he lived with the works. In the summer of 1952, he installed myriad leaves and pomegranates across a corner of his studio at the Hôtel Régina, Nice, creating, as Matisse himself would describe it, "a little garden all around me where I can walk."

That same summer, Matisse was inspired to create an immersive environment after a visit to see divers at a pool in Cannes. Declaring "I will make myself my own pool," Matisse began work on *The Swimming Pool*, the first and only instance of a truly self-contained, site-specific cut-out. A band of white paper was positioned on the walls of his dining room at the Hôtel Régina just above the level of the artist's head, breaking only at the windows and door at opposite ends of the room. Matisse filled his "pool" with blue swimmers, divers, and sea creatures, who plunge above and beneath the water line.

*The Swimming Pool*, restored to its original color balance, height, and architecture after an extensive five-year conservation effort, can now be experienced more closely to the way Matisse himself lived with it.

### **Late Decorations**

In his final cut-outs, including several decorative commissions, Matisse worked at an increasingly expansive scale. He began to push his abstractions further, as seen in *Memory of Oceania* (summer 1952–early 1953) and *The Snail* (1953). In *Memory of Oceania*, Matisse uses large, unbroken areas of color to evoke the light and landscape of the South Pacific, which he visited in 1930. Though the arrangement of cut-paper rectangles and strips approaches abstraction, various shapes suggest a scene depicting a green boat with a fuchsia mast, a banana tree, and the golden Tahitian sky. With *The Snail*, one of the most abstract cut-outs Matisse ever made, Matisse used large sheets of painted paper, arranging them in a concentric composition echoing the spiral pattern of a snail's shell.

Other late works display Matisse's interest in repetition and the decorative. With its tessellating floral forms, *Large Decoration with Masks* (1953) manages to be both organic and geometric. Bound by blue columns, its ornately repeating forms recall Islamic tiles, demonstrating the ongoing impact of Near Eastern art on Matisse's work. Matisse began *Large Decoration with Masks* for a commission from the Los Angeles collectors Sidney and Frances Brody for a ceramic design for their patio. When this composition proved too wide, Matisse went on to make two more designs; the colorful spray of leaves in *The Sheaf* (1953), also on view, represents the fourth and

final design. The resulting composition's exuberant rhythm is determined as much by the presence of white space as by the red, orange, green, blue, and black leaves.

**SPONSORSHIP:**

Bank of America is the Global Sponsor of *Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs*.

Major support for the MoMA presentation is provided by The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III, and Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis.

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**TICKETS:**

Timed tickets are required for *Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs* and advance purchase is highly recommended. Tickets are now available through Showclix.com at [MoMA.org/matissetix](http://MoMA.org/matissetix).

The general admission ticket includes all-Museum access plus timed ticket. Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D.; free for members and children 16 and under. Please note there is a \$1.50 per ticket ShowClix service charge for reserving timed tickets in advance. Confirmation of ticket reservations will be sent via e-mail; timed ticket holders must present confirmation in the Museum lobby on the day of visit. Online ticket buyers are strongly encouraged to choose the print-at-home option for expedited entry.

MoMA Members and their accompanied guests can enter the exhibition anytime by showing a valid membership card or guest ticket. No timed tickets are required.

MoMA will reserve a portion of general admission tickets for same-day sales onsite, available on a first-come, first-served basis and subject to availability.

**PUBLICATIONS:**

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue edited by Karl Buchberg, Nicholas Cullinan, Jodi Hauptman, and Nicholas Serota, with additional contributions by Samantha Friedman, Flavia Frigeri, Markus Gross, and Stephan Lohrengel. The publication presents approximately 150 works in a groundbreaking reassessment of the artist's colorful and innovative final years. Richly illustrated to show the cut-outs in all of their vibrancy and luminosity, the book features new research by curators and conservators exploring issues such as the artist's materials and methods and the relation of these works to his larger practice, as well as photographs of the works in progress in Matisse's studios and essays focusing on different moments in the development of this radical medium. 9"w x 10.5"h; 256 pages; 250 illustrations. Hardcover, \$60. ISBN: 978-0-87070-915-9. Paperback, \$45. ISBN 978-0-87070-948-7. Published by The Museum of Modern Art and available at MoMA stores and online at [MoMAstore.org](http://MoMAstore.org). Distributed to the trade through ARTBOOK|D.A.P. in the United States and Canada. Published and distributed outside the United States and Canada by Tate Publishing.

The exhibition is also accompanied by a new children's book. Featuring colorful cut-paper illustrations by Cristina Amodeo and reproductions of eight of Matisse's own cut-outs, three of them on large foldout spreads, *Matisse's Garden* is the story of an endlessly curious artist who used scissors and painted paper to make something completely new. Written by MoMA assistant curator Samantha Friedman, this book is an immersive introduction to Matisse's cut-outs for children and parents. Hardcover. 9"w x 11.75"h; 44 pages; illustrated throughout. ISBN: 978-0-87070-910-4. \$19.95. Published by The Museum of Modern Art and available at MoMA stores and online at [MoMAstore.org](http://MoMAstore.org). Distributed to the trade through Abrams Books for Young Readers, an imprint of ABRAMS, New York, in the United States and Canada. Distributed outside the United States and Canada by Thames & Hudson.

#### **AUDIO TOUR:**

The audio tour accompanying the exhibition features commentaries by exhibition curators Karl Buchberg, Jodi Hauptman, and Samantha Friedman, who address the radical nature of Matisse's cut-outs, provide perspective on the making of individual works, and speak to their material properties. Quotations from the artist and excerpts from an interview with his former studio assistant, Jacqueline Duhême, are interwoven. An audio tour designed for children ages six to 10 is also available.

MoMA Audio+ is available free of charge at the Museum and is also available for streaming and download on MoMA's free app on iTunes, [MoMA.org/m](http://MoMA.org/m), and [MoMA.org](http://MoMA.org). MoMA Audio+ is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

#### **WEBSITE:**

Launching concurrently with the opening of *Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs* at MoMA, the exhibition website ([MoMA.org/matisse](http://MoMA.org/matisse)) will allow users to go beyond these vibrant works of art to explore the materials, methods, and circumstances of their making. The questions "What is a cut-out?" and "Why cut-outs?" will be addressed through a combination of archival images, animations, and texts. Central to the site are the three studio spaces in Paris, Vence, and Nice where Matisse composed the cut-outs directly on his walls. Users can activate studio photographs to compare in-progress works to their present states, and see compositions grow and change over time. Finally, the process of conserving MoMA's monumental cut-out *The Swimming Pool* will be presented through video as well as photographs and prose.

#### **EVENING TOURS**

Saturdays, November 29 and December 20 and 27, 5:30 p.m.

Explore *Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs* and experience the tranquility of the Museum after hours. MoMA's knowledgeable art historians lead intimate tours of Matisse's groundbreaking cut-outs, including *The Swimming Pool* (1952), a visitor favorite fresh from MoMA's conservation lab. *Tickets required; Non-Member \$75; MoMA and Corporate Members \$65. Space is limited; to purchase tickets and view an up-to-date list of available tours, visit [MoMA.org/matisse](http://MoMA.org/matisse).*

#### **MoMA STUDIO: BEYOND THE CUT-OUT**

October 23, 2014–January 11, 2015

The Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Education and Research Building, Mezzanine

Open Wednesday through Monday, 1:00–5:00 p.m.; Friday, 1:00–8:00 p.m.

Information is available at [MoMA.org/matisse](http://MoMA.org/matisse) or in the Matisse press kit.

*MoMA Studio is made possible by a partnership with Volkswagen of America.*

#### **TALKS, WORKSHOPS, CLASSES, AND PUBLIC PROGRAMMING:**

Information is available at [MoMA.org/matisse](http://MoMA.org/matisse) or in the Matisse press kit.

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**For downloadable high-resolution images, register at [MoMA.org/press](https://www.moma.org/press).**

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**Public Information:**

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, [MoMA.org](https://www.moma.org). Hours: Saturday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. [MoMA.org](https://www.moma.org): No service charge for tickets ordered on [MoMA.org](https://www.moma.org). Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Film and After Hours Program Admission: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current I.D. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or [MoMA](https://www.moma.org) Membership within 30 days.