

Monday, May 23, 2011

Oh for an Odalisque

Artist I love: Henri Matisse

I've always adored the playful and sexy works Matisse created in studios in his apartment and his villa near Nice.

Matisse dreamed up his own world of costumed odalisques, silken textiles, fulminating flowers and coruscating light and I want to be a part of it.

I've encountered his works at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, in Paris, in New York and London, and in Nice, and I'm always struck by his single-minded focus on observing, recording, and always inciting emotion in the viewer.

Sensual and inventive, his works are often reveries of beautiful models (often nude) in the exotic settings Matisse created in his sun-struck studios.



Matisse also had a reflective side to his work as he worked on compositions and

tested new ways of depicting his joie de vivre and the pure pleasure of painting. He could dash off a drawing or quickly sketch his beautiful model posing in a room of sublime style and grace.

Now, in a new exhibit in the John Berggruen Gallery in San Francisco, we can take a new look at a series of charmingly intimate images by Matisse, and rediscover his genius and brilliance.

Included in the exclusive new exhibit, 'Henri Matisse, Drawings and Prints, 1915-1947, which runs through July 30, are several works from the private collection of the Pierre Matisse family. They demonstrate his lifelong fascination with the figure, pattern, and decoration.

“Matisse considered his drawings to be a very private and personal means of expression,” noted Gretchen Berggruen. “Often his drawings were made to inform or initiate his paintings and sculptures. They are beautifully rendered gestural exercises to capture form and emotion.”



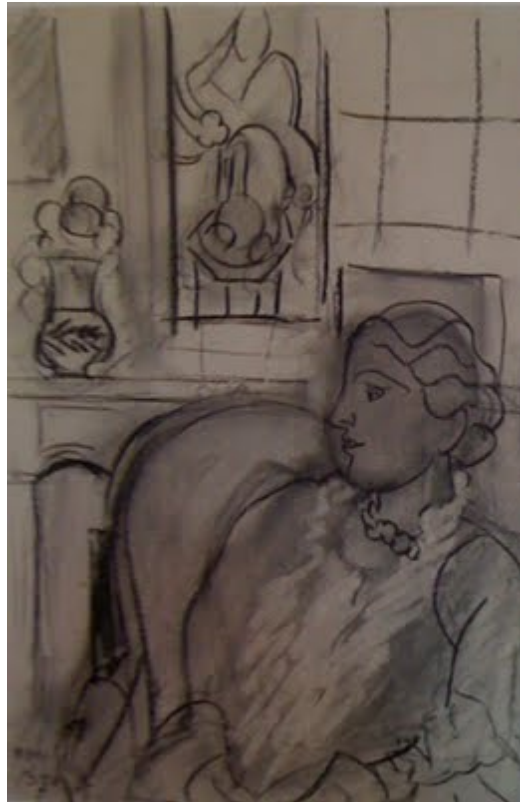


Among the forty examples of Matisse's work in the show are his iconic 'Odalisque debout au plateau de fruits', 1924, a lithograph printed on Japan paper, as well as 'Marie-José en Robe Jaune', 1950, an aquatint printed in colors on Arches woven paper; 'La robe d'organdi', 1922, a lithograph printed on China paper, along with 'Nu assis et portrait de Madame Cézanne', 1929, an etching printed on chine appliqué.



This new exhibition of Henri Matisse's drawings, etchings, lithographs and sketches show the artist's mastery of all the techniques in his repertoire. It's a quieter Matisse. That is, until we encounter his newly invented pochoirs, the vivid and vibrant prints and collages in the 'Jazz' series.

Come for a private visit to this new show of Henry Matisse and see works from private collections and one-of-a-kind pieces rarely seen.





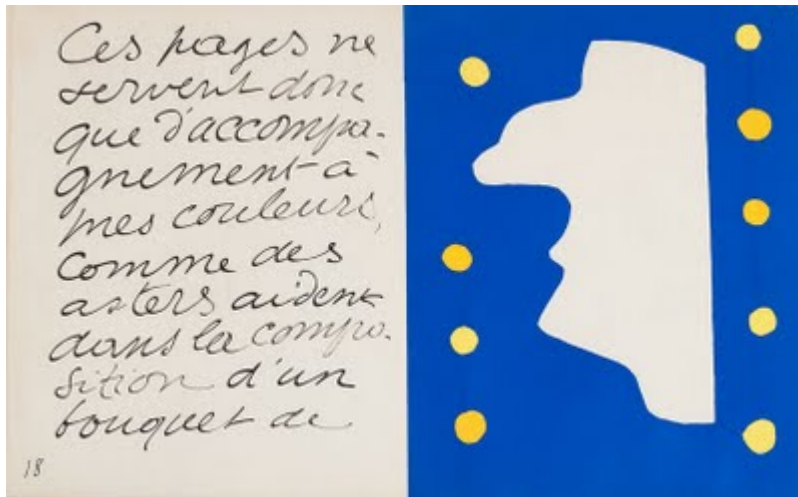
Included are rare charcoal drawings, a bold brush and ink image, as well as expressive pieces in crayon, aquatints, many lithographs in small editions, and several pen and ink quick sketches.

Matisse said, 'It's about learning and re-learning the writing of lines.'

Most of the pieces at the Berggruen gallery are for sale (prices range from \$7,000 for a 'Jazz' pochoir, to \$650,000 for the singular and very rare 'Vase of Ivy' in charcoal). Some of the drawings and prints are from private collections and are on view here for the first time. Most are from very small editions.

Best of all, they feature Matisse's favorite odalisques, inspired by his travels in Morocco. Each model is posed in costume and framed by a beautifully composed 'set' of Matisse's collection of textiles, his woven carpets, bowls of fruit, garden flowers in his antique vases, and an air of timeless bliss.





The Jazz series (I hope you have the dramatic book in which they were collected) resulted from Matisse's love affair with collage when he was confined to bed with his fatal illness (cancer) in the last years of his life.

The colors are pure joy, and each image is almost kinetic with the vibrations of purple, indigo blue, chrome yellow, magenta and bold red, with the occasional scroll of his writing.





I hope you'll visit the show in the next few weeks.

You can wander alone through the silent gallery, if you're lucky, and ponder and gaze and approach each picture in your own way.

I like to spend time, inspecting the frame, the texture of the paper (Matisse used many kinds of specialized papers), and then admiring his imagery and his technique.

While the lithographs are bold and meticulously crafted, the pen and ink drawings and his pencil on paper sketches are free, deft, and seemingly impromptu.

It's the brilliance musings of the master you'll encounter if you stand still for a few moments. How lovely. I want all of them. Such a pleasure.

Thank you, Gretchen Berrgruen for curating and dreaming up this enchanting museum-quality exhibition.



John Berggruen Gallery

Having celebrated its 40th anniversary last year, the John Berggruen Gallery has remained true to its origins. The gallery opened its doors in May 1970 as one of the first contemporary art galleries in Northern California.

The gallery at first specialized in European prints and presented exhibitions of Miro, Giacometti, Picasso, Calder and Matisse. In the mid-1970s the emphasis shifted and expanded to American artists, such as Robert Motherwell, Roy Lichtenstein, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Frank Stella, exhibiting not only prints but paintings and drawings as well.

Over the years, the gallery has developed strong ties to the New York School in addition to focusing on prominent Bay Area artists such as Richard Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff, David Park, Nathan Oliveira, Christopher Brown and Wayne Thiebaud. Also exhibited were sculptors such as Mark di Suvero, Barry Flanagan, George Rickey and Joel Shapiro.

John Berggruen Gallery continues a program of historical exhibitions and shows of well-established artists such as Picasso, Matisse and O'Keeffe. This is documented by the catalogues the John Berggruen Gallery has published.

John Berggruen Gallery has participated in many international art fairs over the years including FIAC, the Tokyo Art Fair, Art Chicago, the Art Show (ADAA), and

Art Basel/Miami Beach. John Berggruen Gallery is a long-standing member of the Art Dealers Association of America and San Francisco Art Dealers Association.

Currently, John Berggruen Gallery continues to specialize in the sale and exhibition of 20th Century American and European paintings, drawings and sculpture.

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CURRENT EXHIBITION:

Henri Matisse: Drawings and Prints

May 17-July 30, 2011

CREDITS:

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