



Matisse by Matisse

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UCCA Great Hall

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UCCA Center for Contemporary Art and Musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis collaborate to present the Chinese mainland's first Henri Matisse exhibition. Featuring more than 280 artworks as well as textiles and more from the artist's own collection, "Matisse by Matisse" offers an unparalleled portrait of the creative practice, artistic achievements, and incredible life of the inventor of Fauvism.

Beijing, CHINA — From July 15 to October 15, 2023, UCCA Center for Contemporary Art presents "Matisse by Matisse" in collaboration with Musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis, marking the first solo exhibition by modern master Henri Matisse (1869-1954) held in the Chinese mainland. The exhibition is the most comprehensive presentation in China to date of the life and work of Matisse—founder and key representative of Fauvism, one of the most influential art movements of the twentieth century. The exhibition features more than 280 works by the artist, along with handicrafts and other objects he himself collected, all drawn from the collection of Musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis. It covers Matisse's entire career and the full range of his practice, encompassing mediums including oil painting, sculpture, ink drawings, prints, cut-outs, illustrations, and textiles. "Matisse by Matisse" includes the artist's academic beginnings; pieces representative of his turn towards Fauvism; experiments leading to his invention of the paper cut-outs later in life; and works from the culmination of a lifetime of artistic exploration, his design of the Vence Chapel. Additionally, the exhibition also features a special section exploring the influence of Matisse and Fauvism on the modern art movement that emerged in China between the 1920s and 1940s. The exhibition will subsequently travel to UCCA Edge, Shanghai, where it runs from November 4, 2023, through February 18, 2024.

Born on December 31, 1869, in Le Cateau-Cambrésis, northern France, Matisse came from a textile family that had been in the business for over 300 years. Two years before his death, Matisse bequeathed the most prized works from his own collection to his hometown, establishing the core of the collection of Musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis. He took care in choosing the pieces and was involved in the design of the original gallery spaces, down to the details of the display of each artwork. This was the only museum that Matisse would personally participate in the planning and founding of. The title "Matisse by Matisse" is inspired by this high level of involvement, emphasizing



Matisse's role as "curator." The exhibition may thus be regarded as a unique artistic legacy left behind by the artist, exemplifying most directly and intimately his artistic practice, creative processes, and ideas about art. After the recent sesquicentennial of Matisse's birth, this valuable collection now has the unique opportunity to make its way to China. "Matisse by Matisse" is more than just another presentation of the artist's masterpieces: it is a dive into his life, his research, his discoveries, his failures, his joys, his sorrows. Viewers are invited on a unique journey of discovery, one shaped by the artist himself and his initial donation to Musée départemental Matisse seven decades ago.

"Matisse by Matisse" is organized into eleven sections, following the chronology of the artist's life and career. Pascal Rodriguez's exhibition design bears the imprint of Matisse's practice itself: rooms have been constructed within UCCA's 1,000 square meter Great Hall to delineate sections, yet their roofs have been left open in shapes inspired by the artist's paper cut-outs. Their colors, meanwhile, pay tribute Matisse's role in the birth of Fauvism, and how his bold innovations in color and style broke with traditional aesthetic frameworks. This design approach invites viewers to experience the evolution of Matisse's practice, while at the same time underscoring how he remained dedicated to avant-garde experimentation throughout his long career.

The exhibition's first section "The Origins of the Musée Matisse," introduces how the museum in the artist's hometown came about, narrated in part by a letter Matisse wrote on the occasion of his initial donation, which today forms the core of this exhibition. The subsequent sections, therefore, not only represent a systematic retrospective of Matisse's art, but also the artist's summing up of and concluding statement on his own lifelong practice. The second section, "The Making of Matisse," looks at how the artist studied technique and built up his skills in the early days of his artistic career. During this period, Matisse copied the works of masters, completing *The Ray (After Chardin)* (1897-1903) over six years; undertook self-portrait studies such as *Self-Portrait* (1900); and was inspired by new light and colors encountered on his travels, as seen in *First Orange Still Life* (1899). These early works would lay a crucial foundation for his later artistic breakthroughs. The third section "The Fauvist Revolution," focuses on the artistic rebellion that Matisse sparked. Pieces include *Collioure, Sun Street* (1905) and *Seashore in Collioure* (1905), both inspired by the colorful, sun kissed fishing village of the title, and *Iris and Poppies I and II* (Tangier, c. spring 1912), which the artist retained in his personal collection throughout his life. These groundbreaking pieces reveal how Matisse used pure color to upend the restraints of conventional painting, opening up a new chapter in the history of the medium.



Next, “The 1920s: The Majesty of the Model” turns to the new path that Matisse embarked upon as Europe went through a period of cultural and artistic flourishing following the end of World War I. *Small Thin Torso* (1929), *Large Odalisque with Bayadere Trousers* (1925), *Drawing for Henriette II* (c. 1928), *Nude in a Room with a Venetian Lamp and Goldfish* (1929), and other works demonstrate how Matisse explored different ways of depicting the body in sculptures, sketches, and prints, and other media. Many of his paintings of the time feature atmospheric, prop-filled settings, and African and Asian-inspired clothing draped over models’ graceful bodies, imbuing works with an intriguing sense of narrative. The following section, “Voyage to Tahiti,” examines the impact that Matisse’s 1930 trip to French Polynesia had on his practice. At a crossroads and facing illness as he reached the age of 60, Matisse decided to throw himself into a new challenge, traveling to Tahiti to search for new forms of light. He would slowly digest the insights gleaned in the Pacific over the next few years, eventually producing groundbreaking works such as *Window in Tahiti or Tahiti II* (18 December 1935 – 15 March 1936), *Oceania, The Sky* (1946), and *Oceania, The Sea* (1946). As a transcendent, almost spiritual experience, the trip not only transformed Matisse’s perceptions, but also would eventually inspire his great innovation, the paper cut-outs.

“The 1940s: The Peak of Accomplishment” shows how, despite World War II (which directly affected his family), Matisse took his oil painting and sketches to a new level in the 1940s and early 1950s. The rich colors of *Two Young Girls, The Yellow Dress and the Scottish Dress* (Nice, November 2-16, 1941) and the ink lines of *Portrait of Katia* (June 14, 1951) move closer to reconciling the tension between form and color, a question that he had grappled with since the beginning of his career. Additionally, the radical style of *Interior with Bars of Sunlight* (October 22-23, 1942), verging on abstraction, marks a significant departure in Matisse’s practice that would inspire many later generations of artists.

Many of the remaining sections concern Matisse’s turn to a diverse array of new mediums in his later years. The seventh section “The Cut-Outs,” introduces the new medium that he invented and would almost exclusively dedicate that the rest of his career to. From the cover mock-up for *The Decisive Moment: Photographs of Henri Cartier-Bresson* (1952), to *Icarus* (1947), *Arabesque* (1947), and the book *Jazz* (1947), one may observe how Matisse refined the expressiveness and potential applications of paper cutting. What at first had been a means for him to test ideas for larger format works gradually developed into a full-fledged artistic medium, one that could also be used in the design of murals, textiles, stained glass windows, books, and more. Matisse’s technical invention of gouache paper sparked one of



the most significant artistic revolutions of the twentieth century, and saw him finally resolve the relationship between drawing and color. “Vence, the Final Masterpiece” presents how at age 80 Matisse began to design the Vence Chapel, a project that is regarded as the apex of his long career. A mock up for a white and golden chasuble from late 1950, a study for a liturgical tablecloth from 1949, *Virgin and Child* (1950-1951), and other works evidence how, over a four year period, Matisse designed every element of the chapel, including the architecture, frescoes, stained-glass windows, chasubles, and liturgical materials. As always, he sought to achieve the optimal balance between line and color.

In “Matisse and Textiles,” visitors will find clothing from the artist’s own collection, as well related artworks. These include the tapestry *Woman with a Lute* (May 14, 1949-October 23, 1950) along with some of the last oil paintings Matisse made prior to his death, such as *Woman in the Blue Gandoura* (December 1951). As the scion of a textile family, the aesthetics of exquisite fabrics left a deep impression on him even before he had encountered oil painting, and they would become a fruitful source of inspiration in his work. He collected fabrics, calling them his “working library,” and deployed his understanding of textile production to design clothing, tapestries, carpets, silk scarves, and more, even applying this knowledge to design costumes and sets for stage productions.

The tenth section, “Matisse and Illustrated Books,” introduces viewers to another important area of the artist’s practice: book illustrations and cover designs. Featured artworks included illustrations he created for his first book, an edition of *Poems* by Stéphane Mallarmé, and cover designs for the French art magazine *Verve*, one of the most influential arts publications in Europe during the 1940s. Illustration was a creative playground for Matisse, allowing him to freely apply all the different techniques he drew upon in his varied practice. In addition to books designed by Matisse, this section also presents art books by Giacometti, Picasso, Léger, and Chagall, revealing to viewers how close collaboration between the worlds of literature, art, and publishing led to a flourishing of creativity in mid-twentieth century Europe.

The final section, “Matisse, Fauvism, and Modern Chinese Painting,” organized by UCCA Deputy Director of Research Huang Jiehua, discusses how the work of Matisse and other artists associated with Fauvism spread to China and influenced the modern painting movement that emerged from the 1920s to 1940s. Through archival materials and works by major artists including Liu Haisu, Ting Yin Yung, and Guan Liang, among others, the section traces the transmission of Matisse’s art from France to China (often via Chinese



artists studying in Japan), and the impact that his style had on a vibrant, yet precarious, art scene framed by the complex interplay between Modernism, nationalism, traditional techniques, and political activism. Dusting off a forgotten corner of the “prehistory” of Chinese contemporary art, the section reveals how Matisse inspired Chinese artists to create revolutionary new work.

UCCA Director Philip Tinari notes, “With this rare exhibition, UCCA is honored to further expand its efforts to present key figures in twentieth-century art to audiences in Beijing and Shanghai. We are particularly excited by the range of work on offer, and by the chance to present works so dear to the artist himself.”

“Matisse by Matisse” is curated by Patrice Deparpe, Director and Chief Curator, Musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis. The exhibition is designed by Pascal Rodriguez and coordinated by the art and culture agency Doors 门艺. “Matisse by Matisse” is presented with special support from the French Embassy in China as part of the 17th edition of the Croisements Festival.

Support and Sponsorship

The exhibition is proudly presented by NIO. UCCA thanks supporting coffee sponsor Bernachon, supporting sponsor Turkish Airlines, and charity education sponsor TELUNSU for their generous support. Exclusive wall solutions support is provided by Dulux. Genelec contributed exclusive audio equipment and technical support. Colors Illumini Technology provided lighting support. Gratitude to Blue Note China for performance support, as well as chief exhibition video platform collaborator Douyin Art and chief exhibition social media platform collaborator Xiaohongshu for their promotional support. UCCA also thanks the members of its Foundation Council, International Circle, and Young Associates, as well as Lead Partner Aranya, Lead Art Book Partner DIOR, Presenting Partners Bloomberg, Voyage Group, and Yinyi Biotech, and Supporting Partners Barco, Dulux, Genelec, and Stey.

Elegance is Power: NIO and “Matisse by Matisse”

NIO is a global smart electric vehicle company dedicated to creating design-driven products that are pure, user-friendly, and aspirational. In his art, Henri Matisse combined pure, expressive color and composition to express a rich and deep understanding of nature, creating a harmonious, peaceful, and delightful world. Matisse’s artistic vision resonates with NIO’s mission to bring joy into lives.



To celebrate its collaboration with UCCA to present “Matisse by Matisse,” NIO presents a reimagined version of its flagship coupe SUV, the EC7. On display exclusively at UCCA, it wears a unique livery inspired by the artist’s best-known works, striking a balance between purity, elegance, and power, and uniting art with technology to create a bold aesthetic statement.

As the EC7 meets art, experience how elegance is power.

Publications

On the occasion of this special exhibition, UCCA is publishing an exhibition catalogue in collaboration with Zhejiang Photographic Press, featuring essays by exhibition curator Patrice Deparpe and Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts Professor Cai Tao. Design is provided by renowned designer Luk Chi-Cheong. Furthermore, UCCA Kids will present an illustrated children’s book, *Matisse’s Journey*, in collaboration with Everafter Books, introducing the artist and his travels around the world to younger readers in a fun and accessible manner. The book invites children to follow the Fauvist artist’s footsteps, learning about the climate and vegetation in the many places he visited, encountering new cultures and meeting new friends on a literary journey that shows readers the vastness and richness of the world.

Public Programs

During the exhibition period, UCCA Beijing will present six weekends of public programs exploring Matisse’s artistic career, art and history at the turn of the twentieth century, and the artist’s influence on the Chinese modern art movement. Programs include conversations, workshops, film screenings, and a performance. The performance “The Unfinished Battle of the Two Xus,” will explore how modern Western art sparked debate when it was first introduced to China. The presentation also touches upon questions of professionalization and cultural modernity in contemporary art education, drawing from historical texts to rewrite and reenact history. In addition, the theme “The Eve of Modernity” will explore the social background and development of modern art in China in the first half of the twentieth century from the three perspectives of urbanization, popular and consumer culture, and art history.

UCCA Kids Workshops

UCCA Kids has designed a series of workshops and summer camps based on the exhibition, encouraging children to explore Henri Matisse’s entire artistic career through different



theme-based classes. Students will learn how Matisse, recognized as a master of color, depicted life and conveyed emotion in a direct, powerful way. Through hands-on learning, children will discover how Matisse used a wide variety of different media, and create their own paper cut-outs, textile works, book illustrations, and more.

Exhibition Merchandise

Exclusive exhibition merchandise for “Matisse by Matisse” is available now at UCCA Store! Inspired by select artworks from throughout different periods of Henri Matisse’s expansive artistic career, products include t-shirts, canvas tote bags, phone grips, and more, vividly recreating the artist’s masterpieces so that visitors can continue experience his brilliance outside of the exhibition. Best of all, for every tote bag purchased from this collection, UCCA Store will donate RMB 1 to UCCA Foundation’s initiative “Opening the Door to Art,” raising awareness for philanthropic programs that are helping make the next generation’s artistic dreams come true. Find UCCA Store on Tmall or visit UCCA Store during the exhibition to purchase.

UCCA Summer Gala 2023

On the occasion of the opening of UCCA Center for Contemporary Art’s marquee summer exhibition “Matisse by Matisse,” the museum is proud to host its 2023 Summer Gala on July 14. Inspired by Matisse’s unbridled, colorful creativity, the event invites guests from all walks of life, including key UCCA supporters and collaborators, to celebrate of the future of art-based philanthropy in China and dive into Matisse’s extraordinary life and art, kicking off a colorful summer with more than 280 of his artworks.

The Summer Gala continues UCCA’s efforts building charity art initiatives in China. Through on-site charity auctions for works by outstanding contemporary artists and exclusive dolls, as well as an online silent auction open to the wider public, the event offers art lovers the opportunity to contribute to UCCA Foundation’s charity initiative “Opening the Door to Art.” The program aims to improve art education in China by giving children in less developed, remote areas and those with the special needs the chance to directly engage with art. By bringing comprehensive art education to children who might otherwise lack access, UCCA seeks to foster creative expression and different ways of thinking, with benefits for each child’s educational development as a whole. Since the launch of “Opening the Door to Art” in 2018, UCCA Foundation has presented almost a dozen exhibition-based art classes, guidebooks, and art kits, and held more than 100 events, benefiting nearly 60 underserved schools and organizations, reaching around 10,000 students directly or indirectly. All



proceeds from the Summer Gala go towards “Opening the Door to Art.”

About Musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis

Located in Henri Matisse’s hometown of Le Cateau-Cambrésis in northern France, Musée départemental Matisse was founded by the artist and houses one of the most important collections of his works in the world. In 1952, Matisse bequeathed 89 of his works to the city of Le Cateau-Cambrésis and personally participated in the design of the exhibition galleries. The museum’s collection continued to enlarge after Matisse’s death, with a gift from French abstract painter Auguste Herbin in 1956, and another, of books and works by Modernist masters, from art publisher Alice Tériade in 2000. Musée départemental Matisse originally opened in the Town Hall of Le Cateau-Cambrésis, moving in 1982 to the Fénelon Palace, built during the eighteenth century. In 1992, it became the property of the Département du Nord and ten years later, it was significantly enlarged. The museum is currently undergoing renovation in preparation for a new expansion, and will open in June 2024.

About UCCA

UCCA Center for Contemporary Art is China’s leading contemporary art institution. Committed to bringing the best in art to a wider audience, UCCA shares a wide range of exhibitions, public programs, and research initiatives to a public of more than one million visitors each year across three locations. UCCA Beijing sits at the heart of the 798 Art District, occupying 10,000 square meters of factory chambers built in 1957 and regenerated in 2019 by OMA. UCCA Dune, designed by Open Architecture, lies beneath the sand in the seaside enclave of Aranya in Beidaihe. UCCA Edge, designed by New York-based architecture firm SO – IL, opened in Shanghai in May 2021. Formally accredited as a museum by the Beijing Cultural Bureau in 2018, UCCA also operates non-profit foundations, licensed by the Beijing Bureau of Civil Affairs and the Hong Kong government. UCCA’s commercial ventures include the retail platform UCCA Store, the children’s education initiative UCCA Kids, and collaborations and projects under the rubric UCCA Lab. Opened in 2007 and revived by a committed group of Chinese and international patrons in 2017, UCCA works to bring China into global dialogue through contemporary art.

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