



Matisse – Doubles and Variations The National Gallery of Denmark 14 July – 28 October 2012



© Succession H. Matisse/BilledKunst Copydan 2012. Henri Matisse, *Le Luxe I*, 1907. Centre Pompidou, Paris
© Succession H. Matisse/BilledKunst Copydan 2012. Henri Matisse, *Le Luxe II*, 1907-08. National Gallery of Denmark

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This year's main exhibition at the National Gallery of Denmark brings together a range of absolute masterpieces by Matisse from museums and private collections from all across the world. The exhibition, which is realised as a result of co-operation between the National Gallery of Denmark, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, adds a new chapter to our shared understanding of the French master painter.

A Quiet Dissident

Henri Matisse (1869-1954) is one of the main figures of art history in general and one of the most far-reaching innovators of the art of painting in the 20th century. His bold deformation of the human figure, his coarse lines, his liberation of colour, and his highly insistent accentuation of the painterly marked a clear break with the expectations of art prevalent at the time. Yet while his shocked contemporaries viewed these features as horrendously barbaric, Matisse himself had no desire for conflict and provocation. Rather, the paintings – with their sense of harmony and optimistic colour schemes – were intended to offer a moment of pleasure, independent from the toils and tragedies of everyday life.

Matisse meets Matisse

However, Matisse's own approach to visual language was not quite as effortless and unproblematic as the final images may suggest. The exhibition "Matisse – Doubles and Variations" presents a picture of an artist who retained an exploring – and frequently doubting – approach to his art throughout his life, constantly testing and challenging his own mode of expression. Or, as he himself put it: "My concern is to push further and deeper into true painting."

Presenting 53 paintings, 15 drawings, and 22 photographs – many of them major masterpieces – the exhibition provides an overview of Matisse's life's work from the very beginnings of his career to the end. However, this exhibition differs

from standard retrospectives about this French artist by virtue of its insistent focus on the artistic process itself; here, Matisse's method of exploration comes under close scrutiny. Special attention is directed towards how the artist would repeat the same motif in series and pairs while systematically varying the colours and modes of expression. The exhibition juxtaposes a wide range of these inter-related works, several of which have rarely been shown together since they left the artist's studio.

Photo documentation and technical studies

During some periods of his career Matisse had his works photographed at crucial stages of the creative process. The photographs offered a way at capturing a range of possible solutions for each painting, documenting the often dramatic changes that would take place from one day to the next. The exhibition presents a range of these photographs, which testify to how the process itself was often as important to the artist as the final outcome. The exhibition also presents the results of technical studies conducted on a number of central works over the course of the years of research that preceded the exhibition. Together, these studies and photographs offer visitors a chance to gain deep insights into Matisse's working process.

At the exhibition: themes, guide, and app

The exhibition has a chronological structure that allows visitors to trace how Matisse would often repeat and return to his subjects at different stages of his career. Before, during, and after their visit, visitors can immerse themselves in Matisse's universe through sound, text, and images presented by an app for their smartphone or iPod. Visitors can borrow an iPod from the Gallery's Information desk during their visit.

Book to accompany the exhibition

In conjunction with the exhibition, the National Gallery of Denmark and The Metropolitan Museum of Art publishes the comprehensive catalogue *Matisse – In Search of True Painting*.

The catalogue is edited by the two curators Rebecca Rabinow (Metropolitan) and Dorthe Aagesen (National Gallery of Denmark) and features 28 articles by the world's leading Matisse scholars.

256 pages, lavishly illustrated.

Price: DKK 298. Available from the Gallery bookshop.

ISBN: 978-1-58839-467-5

Paris – Copenhagen – New York

The exhibition was shown at the Centre Pompidou from 7 March to 18 June 2012. After the completion of the exhibition run at the National Gallery of Denmark the exhibition will travel to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where it will be on display from 3 December 2012 to 17 March 2013.

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PRESS PHOTOS are available for download at <http://pressefotos.smk.dk>

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