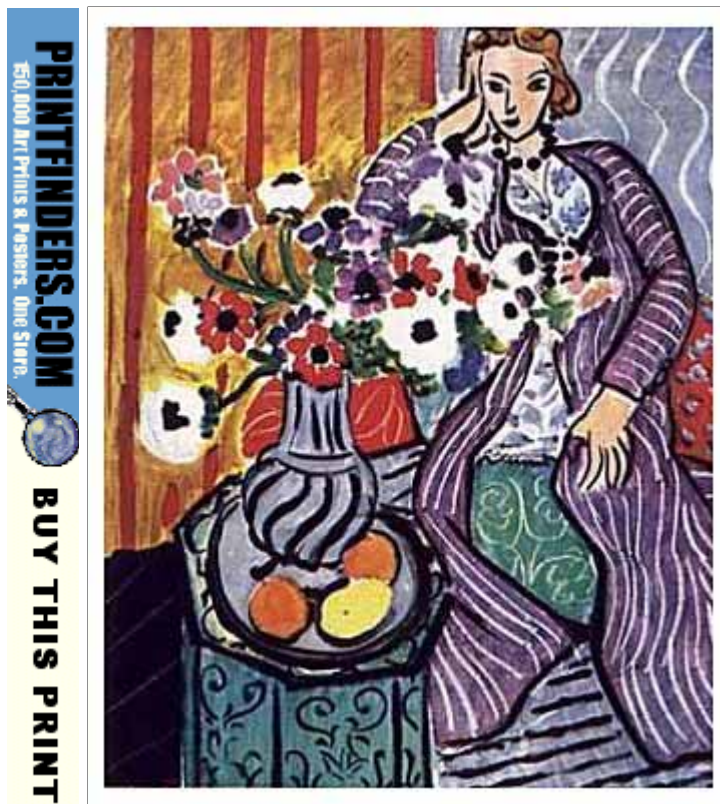


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## Henri Matisse 1869-1954

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Purple Robe and Anemones  
1937  
oil on canvas  
Baltimore Museum of Art



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In 1937 Lydia Delectorskaya posed for Matisse in a purple robe. At the time Matisse had no intention to paint a portrait that looked like a photograph. When accused of painting unrealistic images of women Matisse explained, "**I do not create a woman, I make a picture.**" He readily admitted that his images were not faithful re-creations of reality.



## WebMuseum, Paris



# Matisse, Henri (-Émile-Benoît)

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Timeline: [The 20th century](#)

"Instinct must be thwarted just as one prunes the branches of a tree so that it will grow better."

-- Henri Matisse

**Matisse, Henri (-Émile-Benoît)** (b. Dec. 31, 1869, Le Cateau, Picardy, Fr.--d. Nov. 3, 1954, Nice)

artist often regarded as the most important French painter of the 20th century. The leader of the [Fauvist](#) movement around 1900, Matisse pursued the expressiveness of colour throughout his career. His subjects were largely domestic or figurative, and a distinct Mediterranean verve presides in the treatment.

[\(Biographie en français\)](#)

## Matisse, Master of Color

The art of our century has been dominated by two men: Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. They are artists of classical greatness, and their visionary forays into new art have changed our understanding of the world. Matisse was the elder of the two, but he was a slower and more methodical man by temperament and it was Picasso who initially made the greater splash. Matisse, like [Raphael](#), was a born leader and taught and encouraged other painters, while Picasso, like [Michelangelo](#), inhibited them with his power: he was a natural czar.

Matisse's artistic career was long and varied, covering many different styles of painting from [Impressionism](#) to near Abstraction. Early on in his career Matisse was viewed as a Fauvist, and his celebration of bright colors reached its peak in 1917 when he began to spend time on the French Riviera at Nice and Vence. Here he concentrated on reflecting the sensual color of his surroundings and completed some of his most exciting paintings. In 1941 Matisse was diagnosed as having duodenal cancer and was permanently confined to a wheelchair. It was in this condition that he completed the magnificent Chapel of the Rosary in Vence.

Matisse's art has an astonishing force and lives by innate right in a paradise world into which Matisse draws all his viewers. He gravitated to the beautiful and produced some of the most powerful beauty ever painted. He was a man of anxious temperament, just as Picasso, who saw him as his only rival, was a man of peasant fears, well concealed. Both artists, in their own fashion, dealt with these disturbances through the sublimation of painting: Picasso destroyed his fear of women in his art, while Matisse coaxed his nervous tension into serenity. He spoke of his art as being like "a good armchair"-- a

ludicrously inept comparison for such a brilliant man-- but his art was a respite, a reprieve, a comfort to him.

Matisse initially became famous as the "King of the [Fauves](#)", an inappropriate name for this gentlemanly intellectual: there was no wildness in him, though there was much passion. He is an awesomely controlled artist, and his spirit, his mind, always had the upper hand over the "beast" of Fauvism.



*Notre-Dame, une fin d'après-midi (A Glimpse of Notre Dame in the Late Afternoon)*

1902 (130 Kb); Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 72.5 x 54.5 cm (28 1/2 x 21 1/2 in); Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY



[Green Stripe \(Madame Matisse\)](#)



*Le bonheur de vivre (The Joy of Life)*

1905-06 (150 Kb); Oil on canvas, 175 x 241 cm (69 1/8 x 94 7/8 in); Barnes Foundation, Merion, PA



*Flowers in a Pitcher*

1906 (100 Kb); Canvas, 21 1/2 x 18 in; Barnes Foundation  
Photograph by Charalambos Amvrosiou



*Mme Matisse: Madras Rouge (The Red Madras Headress)*

Summer 1907 (120 Kb); Oil on canvas, 99.4 x 80.5 cm (39 1/8 x 31 3/4 in); Barnes Foundation, Merion, PA



*Le Rifain assis (Seated Riffian)*

Late 1912 or early 1913 (130 Kb); Oil on canvas, 200 x 160 cm (78 3/4 x 63 in), Barnes Foundation, Merion, PA



*La leçon de musique (The Music Lesson)*

1917 (160 Kb); Oil on canvas, 244.7 x 200.7 cm (96 3/8 x 79 in); Barnes Foundation, Merion, PA



*Seated Figure, Tan Room*



1918 (110 Kb); 16 x 13 in; Barnes Foundation  
 Photograph by Charalambos Amvrosiou



*Two Figures Reclining in a Landscape*  
 1921 (150 Kb); 15 x 18 3/8 in; Barnes Foundation  
 Photograph by Charalambos Amvrosiou



*Robe violette et Anemones*  
 1937; *Purple Robe and Anemones*; Cone Collection, Baltimore Museum of Art



*La Musique*  
 1939 (180 Kb); Oil on canvas, 115.2 x 115.2 cm (45 3/8 x 45 3/8 in);  
 Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY



*Deux fillettes, fond jaune et rouge (Two Girls in a Yellow and Red Interior)*  
 1947 (160 Kb); Oil on canvas, 61 x 49.8 cm (24 x 19 3/8 in); Barnes  
 Foundation, Merion, PA

## The experimental years

Matisse's Fauvist years were superseded by an experimental period, as he abandoned three-dimensional effects in favor of dramatically simplified areas of pure color, flat shape, and strong pattern. The intellectual splendor of this dazzlingly beautiful art appealed to the Russian mentality, and many great Matisses are now in Russia. One is *The Conversation* (1909; 177 x 217 cm (5 ft 9 3/4 in x 7 ft 1 1/2 in)) in which husband and wife converse. But the conversation is voiceless. They are implacably opposed: the man-- a self portrait-- is dominating and upright, while the woman leans back sulkily in her chair. She is imprisoned in it, shut in on all sides. The chair's arms hem her in, and yet the chair itself is almost indistinguishable from the background: she is stuck in the prison of her whole context. The open window offers escape; she is held back by an iron railing. He towers above, as dynamic as she is passive, every line of his striped pyjamas undeviatingly upright, a wholly directed man. His neck thickens to keep his outline straight and firm, an arrow of concentrated energy. The picture cannot contain him and his head continues beyond it and into the outside world. He is greater that it all, and the sole "word" of this inimical conversation is written in the scroll of the rail: *Non*. Does he say no to his intensity of life? They deny each other forever.

## Supreme decoration

But denial is essentially antipathetic to Matisse. He was a great celebrator, and to many his most characteristic pictures are the wonderful odalisques he painted in Nice (he loved Nice for the sheer quality of its warm, southern light). Though such a theme was not appreciated at the time, it is impossible for us to look at *Odalisque with Raised Arms* (1923; 65 x 50 cm (25 1/2 x 19 3/4)) and feel that Matisse is exploiting her. The woman herself is unaware of him, lost in private reverie as she surrenders to the sunlight, and she, together with the splendid opulence of her chair, her diaphanous skirt, and the intricately decorated panels on either side, all unite in a majestic whole that celebrates the glory of creation. It is not her abstract beauty that attracts Matisse, but her concrete reality. He reveals a world of supreme decoration: for example, the small black patches of underarm hair on the odalisque are almost a witty inverted comma mark round the globes of her breasts and the rose pink center of each nipple.

## Sculpting in paper

Picasso and Matisse were active to the end of their lives, but while Picasso was preoccupied with his ageing sexuality, Matisse moved into a period of selfless invention. In this last phase, too weak to stand at an easel, he created his papercuts, carving in colored paper, scissoring out shapes, and collaging them into sometimes vast pictures. These works, daringly brilliant, are the nearest he ever came to abstraction. *Beasts of the Sea* (1950; 295.5 x 154 cm (9 ft 8 in x 5 ft 1/2 in)) gives a wonderful underwater feeling of fish, sea cucumbers, sea horses, and water-weeds, the liquid liberty of the submarine world where most of us can never go. Its geometric rightness and chromatic radiance sum up the two great gifts of this artist and it is easy to see why he is the greatest colorist of the 20th century. He understood how elements worked together, how colors and shapes could come to life most startlingly when set in context: everything of Matisse's works together superbly.

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## WebMuseum, Paris



# Fauvism

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Timeline: [Fauvism](#)

"C'est Donatello dans la cage aux fauves!"  
-- Louis Vauxcelles, Salon d'Automne, 1905.

"C'est donc sous la conduite de Matisse, et aussi sous l'influence de Van Gogh que les futurs fauves, Vlaminck, Friesz, Derain, Manguin, expriment dans leurs envois au Salon d'Automne un farouche et virulent enthousiasme pour les joies dynamiques des tons les plus crus."  
-- M. Raynal, *Peinture moderne*.

"Le fauvisme pour Matisse, c'est l'accentuation décisive d'un type de rapport à la couleur qu'il s'emploiera à cultiver : le nerf du système."  
-- Marcelin PLEYNET, *Système de la peinture*.

Fauvism, French Fauvisme, style of painting that flourished in France from 1898 to 1908; it used pure, brilliant colour, applied straight from the paint tubes in an aggressive, direct manner to create a sense of an explosion on the canvas. The Fauves painted directly from nature as the Impressionists had before them, but their works were invested with a strong expressive reaction to the subjects they painted. First formally exhibited in Paris in 1905, Fauvist paintings shocked visitors to the annual Salon d'Automne; one of these visitors was the critic Louis Vauxcelles, who, because of the violence of their works, dubbed the painters "Les Fauves" (Wild Beasts).

The leader of the group was [Henri Matisse](#), who had arrived at the Fauve style after careful, critical study of the masters of Postimpressionism [Paul Gauguin](#), [Vincent van Gogh](#), and [Georges Seurat](#). Matisse's methodical studies led him to reject traditional renderings of three-dimensional space and to seek instead a new picture space defined by movement of colour. Matisse exhibited his famous "Woman with the Hat" (Walter A. Haas Collection, San Francisco) at the 1905 exhibition; brisk strokes of colour--blues, greens, and reds--form an energetic, expressive view of the woman. As always in Matisse's Fauve style, his painting is ruled by his intuitive sense of formal order.

Other members of the group included two painters from Chatou, Fr., André Derain and Maurice de Vlaminck, who, together with Matisse, formed the nucleus of the Fauves. Derain's Fauve paintings translate every tone of a landscape into pure colour, applied with short, forceful brushstrokes. The agitated swirls of intense colour in Vlaminck's works are indebted to the expressive power of van Gogh. Three young painters from Le Havre were also attracted to Fauvism by the strong personality of Matisse. Othon Friesz found the emotional connotations of the bright Fauve colours a relief from the mediocre Impressionism he practiced; his companion Raoul Dufy developed a rather carefree ornamental version of the bold style that suited his own personal aesthetic nature; and

Georges Braque created a definite sense of rhythm and structure out of small spots of colour, foreshadowing his development of Cubism. Albert Marquet, Matisse's fellow student at the École des Beaux-Arts in the 1890s, also participated in Fauvism, as did the Dutchman Kees van Dongen, who applied the style to depictions of the fashionable society of Paris. Other painters associated with the Fauves were Georges Rouault, Henri Manguin, Charles Camoin, and Jean Puy.

Fauvism was for most of these artists a transitional, learning stage. By 1908 a revived interest in [Paul Cézanne](#)'s vision of the order and structure of nature had led them to reject the turbulent emotionalism of Fauvism in favour of the logic of [Cubism](#). Matisse alone pursued the course he had pioneered, achieving a sophisticated balance between his own emotions and the world he painted.

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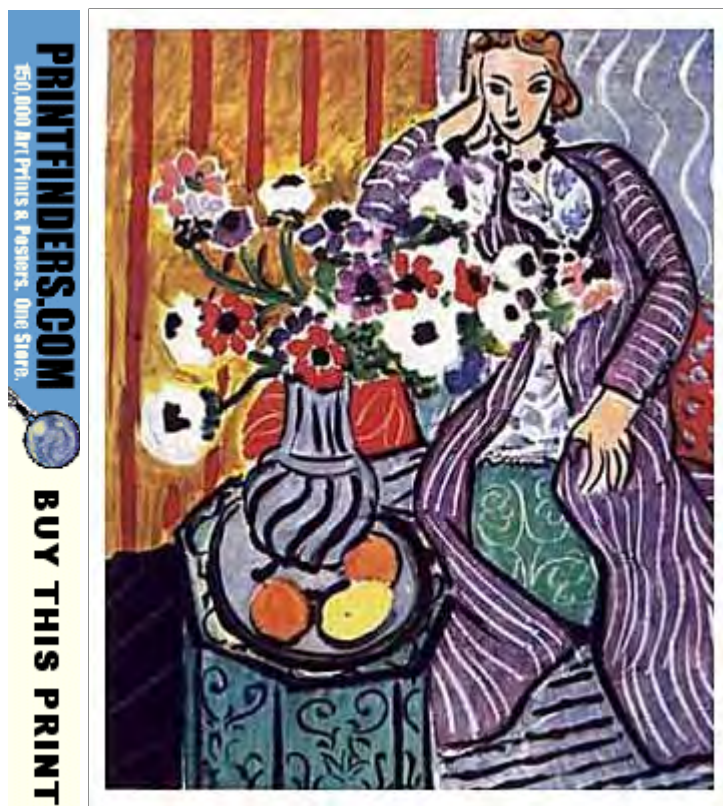
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## Henri Matisse 1869-1954

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In 1937 Lydia Delectorskaya posed for Matisse in a purple robe. At the time Matisse had no intention to paint a portrait that looked like a photograph. When accused of painting unrealistic images of women Matisse explained, "**I do not create a woman, I make a picture.**" He readily admitted that his images were not faithful re-creations of reality.



## Activity

### Objectives:

Students will learn all about Matisse.

### What You Need:

- manilla paper (12" x 18")
- pencils
- construction paper
- tempera paint
- glue

### What You Do:

Hello! This fall I went on a wonderful adventure with my 2nd graders, we went to France and met Matisse! Well not really, but we learned about how he got interested in art and why he drew busy designs and interesting shapes!

In the first lesson examples of Matisse's work were shown, a story was read, then a homework assignment was given! (see Matisse story below).

The next lesson had the students explore the use of shapes, they traced their hands over and over again on a sheet of 12x18 manila paper, overlapping and even running them off the page. They used markers to fill each hand in with an colorful and interesting design.



[click to enlarge](#)

With our final exploration, each student was allowed to choose 3 colors of bright paper, they traced their hands again and cut them out. Next they created a positive shape design:



[click to enlarge](#)

and a negative shape design:



[click to enlarge](#)

we then moved right into painting like the Fauves!



[click to enlarge](#)



[click to enlarge](#)

At the end of this unit the students compiled a small booklet with vocabulary words and coloring pages of Matisse's still life sketches to take home!

## **Matisse Story**

### **A story about Henri Matisse by Eileen Urbanski, Art Teacher at Avon Village School - Avon,OH**

Henri Matisse was born in France in 1869. His father sold seeds and grain and his mother was a dressmaker. At the age of 20 Henri was studying to be a lawyer when he became very ill. He had to have surgery and was bedridden. Henri was very bored just lying around so his mother gave him a box of paints and brushes so he would have something to do. When he recovered he did not want to go back to law school, instead he went straight to art school!

Matisse was so good at painting that the school didn't help him so he decided to open his own school and show other artists how he painted. Art critics thought Henri and his friends painted like "Fauves" (a French word for wild beasts) because they used bold bright and unusual colors.

Critics thought the "Fauvists" would never be successful artists, but they were wrong. Henri Matisse worked on his art for over 60 years and became one of the greatest artists of all time!

Throughout his lifetime, he suffered from poor health, but that never stopped him from creating art! Many pictures were painted from his sick bed so they show the inside of his room and a view of the outdoors through an open window, the rooms had patterned wallpaper, curtains, tablecloths and many everyday objects, there was so much to look at in Matisse's pictures! He used rich colors and shapes and loved to paint people too. Henri was also known for trying a new style by painting paper and then cutting it out and pasting it into the painting.

Matisse was married and had three children. He loved to travel and explore other countries and often was influenced by those cultures and their folk art. He died in 1954 he was 85!

Henri Matisse is one of my very favorite artists, he has given us new and colorful, creative ideas to use in our own art, and his paintings are treasured in museums all over the world!

## **Recommended Books:**

[Matisse for Kids](#)

by: Margaret Hyde

[Henri Matisse \(Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists\)](#)

by: Mike Venezia