

# bernard jacobson gallery

## Henri Matisse

### Prints

6<sup>th</sup> July – 15<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Bernard Jacobson is delighted to announce a wide-ranging exhibition featuring more than 60 rare and important works from the gallery's comprehensive collection of Matisse Prints, currently the largest and most significant collection of Matisse prints held by any commercial gallery in the world. Matisse is an artist we celebrate for his sumptuous use of colour but he was also a consummate master of line: a virtuosity employed to considerable effect throughout more than half a century of print making. These largely monochromatic works, created using a range of techniques, place him firmly as one of the greatest print makers of the 20th century and appear to us as fresh and vivacious now as the day they were made.

Printmaking was frequently used by Matisse as an extension of drawing and an opportunity for him to experiment with the use of simplified, sometimes almost abstract line. With printmaking, he could return repeatedly to favourite compositions, such as the seated or reclining female and adapt them to suit the demands of his artistic vision. Matisse describes this process of 'visual editing', as an attempt to capture the essence of his subject beyond the immediate beauty of the figure.

The female form was usually his subject and the prints in this exhibition, with the exception of 2 self-portraits, exclusively so. While these subjects are familiar to us from his paintings, they seem to acquire a heightened intimacy in his print making. We are perhaps even more aware of the close working relationship between artist and model, as well as his obsession with pattern acquired as a boy growing up in family descended from weavers in Bohain, a town known for its textiles.

This exhibition focusses on 6 distinct printmaking approaches, employed at different stages during his artistic career - lithography, etching, linocut, woodcut, dry point and aquatint. The earliest works date from the 1900-03 and fittingly begins with a self-portrait in Drypoint, Henri Matisse Gravant, depicting the artist in the intense act of observational drawing. The final works are all aquatints, dating from the late 1940s and displaying the full force of his simplified and dramatic use of line.

Matisse created only 3 woodcuts during his career during a short period from 1906 – 1907, this exhibition is a rare opportunity to see one of them, Petit Bois Clair. Woodcut is of necessity a technique closer to carving than the painterly or linear approach we perhaps more usually associate with Matisse and the artist has responded with a more angular line than the flowing curves of much of his work.

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Linocut, whilst in some ways created with a similar process to woodcut, offers the artist a softer working medium with a greater opportunity for curvilinear lines and the prospect of sweeping areas of dramatic negative space. Four seductive works from 1938 powerfully illustrate the impact of this technique, including *La Sieste*, a masterclass in wonderful economy of line.

Lithography offered scope to render the detail and sumptuous textures of patterns favoured by the artist, realised by him through a special modification of the usual lithographic process. Matisse would 'draw' onto transfer paper, placed over the lithographic stone or metal plate, creating in the process greater modulation, shading and depth. Effects employed to considerable effect in works including *La Persane* (1929).

Etching allowed for a paired down depiction, with his subjects rendered with energy and simple lines which none-the-less capture the essence of his subject, seen here in two works from 1929 - *Nu au miroir Marocain* and *Figure au visage coupé assise dans un intérieur*.

Aquatint was a process deployed by Matisse mostly in his later years and was a method particularly suited to the dramatically simplified, graphic qualities of his later work. His technique was unorthodox; Aquatint is usually deployed to add shade and tone to a primary printing technique, such as etching. Matisse used it in an entirely painterly way, with broad brush strokes and black or single colour inks.

The aquatints included in this exhibition are particularly rare, including *Grande Masque* (1928) - one of only a handful of this small edition held in private hands, rather than a major museum collection.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, featuring an essay by John Yau. It can be purchased from Bernard Jacobson Gallery for £25.

## **PRESS ENQUIRIES**

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