

HENRI MATISSE, NICE: DREAMING OF ODALISQUES

June 21st to September 29th, 2014

Following the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary in 2013 with the exhibition *Matisse, Music at work*, the Musée Matisse, Nice now sheds new light on the link between Matisse and Nice with a new exhibition *Henri Matisse, Nice: dreaming of odalisques*. Echoing occasionally throughout his work, the theme of the odalisques is particularly related to the set of works known as “The Nice period” (1917 – 1929).

Besides this abundant production, the odalisques raise questions about the surprising return of Matisse to figuration after the advances of Fauvism in 1905.

In 1921, when he moved to Nice, 1 place Charles-Félix on the Cours Saleya, the artist developed his interpretation of this theme from a surprising series of lithographs to join his deep concerns related to shape and line. From both traditional representation of a languid model and the atmospheres encountered by Matisse in Algeria and Morocco, a female character emerges, the plasticity of the body and the pose transforming the composition. The painting takes on a new unit: the structure of the character joins the sculpture.

The exhibition shows this pictorial evolution through paintings, drawings, lithographs and sculptures, at the same time as personal items, furniture and fabrics, most of which belong to the collections of the museum and were used by the artist to create a scenery surrounding models who were to become 'odalisques'.

The presented works come from museums and institutions such as The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, the Kunstmuseum Solothurn (Switzerland), the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges-Pompidou and the Musée de l'Orangerie, both in Paris, the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Musée départemental Matisse of Le Cateau-Cambrésis, the Ballets de Monte Carlo, as well as private collections, including that of the painter's family.

After Ingres, Delacroix and others, Matisse captures the theme of the odalisque which impassioned the European imagination in the late 19th century, and expresses it in a personal way. The Matisse discovery of North Africa stimulates the renewal he wishes for his work after the adventure of Fauvism in 1905.

Thus, during the Nice period, many paintings on the theme of the odalisque will follow, some of which in correspondence with lithographs, such as *Odalisque au coffret rouge* [*Odalisque with red box*], 1927 (coll. Musée Matisse, Nice).

The authenticity of the experience that the artist went through during his stays in North Africa allows him to re-create this imaginary – but not artificial – universe “As for the odalisques, I had seen them in Morocco, thus I was capable to paint them truly on my return to France.”

The exhibition layout displays the works according to the following themes:

- Nice, a favorable atmosphere to a dream of odalisques
- The imaginary time of odalisques
- Algeria, Morocco, sources of revelation and inspiration
- Influence of Orientalism
- The odalisques: The Nice period
- The odalisques: sets and objects
- The Gandoura
- A new space art
- The moucharabieh, a filter of spaces and souls
- Beyond moucharabiehs