

# Columbia Museum of Art in Columbia, SC, Offers Works by Henri Matisse

The Columbia Museum of Art in Columbia, SC, is presenting *Henri Matisse: Jazz & Poetry on Paper*, a sweeping exhibition that celebrates four of the artist's books, including his iconic *Jazz* portfolio, on view through Jan. 15, 2018. Drawn from the Bank of America art collection, the exhibition features 80 framed illustrations that together offer meditations on life, love, hardship, and utter joy.

"Henri Matisse is one of the essential European artists of the modern era," says Lynn Robertson, CMA interim director. "As South Carolina's only international art museum, we are thrilled to partner with Bank of America to give our community the chance to see the artist in one of his most personal and experimental genres."

To make art accessible in the communities it serves, Bank of America converted its corporate art collection into a unique community resource known as "Art in Our Communities" from which museums and nonprofit galleries may borrow complete or customized exhibitions at no cost. By providing these exhibitions, the bank promotes community engagement and helps generate vital revenue for regional cultural venues. Since the program launched in 2008, worldwide the bank has loaned more than 120 exhibitions.

"Bank of America is a leading supporter of the arts worldwide because we believe that a thriving arts and culture sector benefits economies and societies. Just in the last few years, Bank of America has given more than \$2 million in support of the arts in South Carolina," says Kim Wilkerson, South Carolina and Columbia market president, Bank of America. "We are excited to again be partnering with the Columbia Museum of Art to bring a second exhibition to Columbia through the Art in Our Communities program so that individuals and families can discover a world-renowned artist."

Widely regarded as one of the most important artists of the 20th century, Henri Matisse influenced a diverse number of art movements, artists, and schools of thought. Over the course of his 60-year career, the daringly modern artist experimented with a variety of mediums, producing paintings, drawings, prints, and sculpture, as well as costume and stage set designs.

Matisse became increasingly interested in printmaking and illustrating in the 1930s. Artists' books, conceived as art objects in their own right, provided him personal and creative renewal. He brought to life some of the greatest works of French literature—medieval chivalric poems, 19th-century symbolist works, and 20th-century riffs on ancient myths—with playfully looping gestures, elegant lines, and brightly colored shapes in a way that is always distinctly his own. Over the course of his life, Matisse created 12 illustrated books, 11 of which were widely reproduced and one of which was made exclusively for his family. The Bank of America Collection is fortunate to have four of Matisse's important artist's

books, and these original works are featured in this exhibition:

- Poésies de Stéphane Mallarmé* (The Poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé), 1932
- Pasiphaé—Chant de Minos* (Les Crétains) (Pasiphaé—Song of Minos [The Cretans]), 1944
- Jazz*, 1947
- Poèmes de Charles d'Orléans* (Poems of Charles d'Orléans), 1950

Matisse's first illustrated book, *Poésies de Stéphane Mallarmé* (The Poetry of Stéphane Mallarmé), includes images created to accompany the works of the French poet, a key figure among the symbolist writers. The illustrations in *Poésies* are characterized by the use of simple, delicate lines, making them some of Matisse's most elegant works of art.

*Pasiphaé—Chant de Minos* (Les Crétains) (Pasiphaé—Song of Minos [The Cretans]) retells the story of Pasiphaé, wife of King Minos, and the Minotaur. For these illustrations, Matisse used linoleum engraving to create white lines on a solid black background, suggesting ancient Greek vase paintings.

*Jazz* is considered one of the great illustrated books of the 20th century; Matisse created both the text and illustrations. Based largely on imagery from the circus and music halls, the vividly colored illustrations derived from Matisse's cutouts. Although he had devised the art form years earlier, it wasn't until the 1940s that Matisse focused on cutouts. He perfected the technique in the final years of his long career when, confined to a wheelchair and suffering from illness, he found it difficult to paint. In delightful calligraphy, Matisse expressed his thoughts on the creative process and the inspiration of music.

Published four years before his death, *Poèmes de Charles d'Orléans* (Poems of Charles d'Orléans) features Matisse's fanciful, curvilinear designs and handwritten transcriptions of the ballads and verses of the late-medieval French poet Charles d'Orléans. Matisse copied poems using colored crayons with a spontaneity and freedom reminiscent of the way he used scissors in his late cutouts.

To complement Matisse's works, the exhibition incorporates relevant objects from the CMA collection, including ancient Greek vessels, pages from a medieval book of hours, and a 19th-century bronze. Galleries devoted to *Jazz* and *Poèmes de Charles d'Orléans* each feature softly played thematic music—French swing music of World War II and Debussy's "Trois Chansons de Charles d'Orléans," respectively—creating an immersive experience celebrating the intersection of the arts.

"In this exhibition, I took Matisse's books as a reason to further explore the fact that modernism was a creative hub—art, literature, dance, and music all interwove themselves playfully," says CMA Curator Catherine Walworth. "It's also important to

*continued on Page 23*



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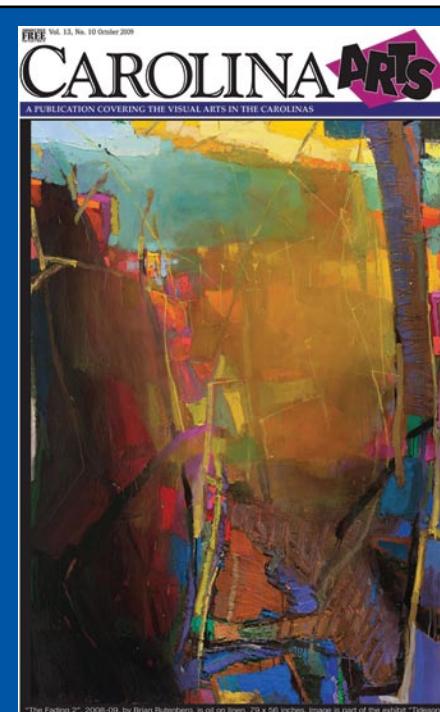
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