

## **Matisse's women: Four female muses who shaped the master**

***Only two weeks left to see works by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century art revolutionary***

As South Africa marks 60 years since the historic Women's March to the Union Buildings, we also toast an artist whose life brimmed with interesting and influential women – Henri Matisse, whose landmark ***Rhythm and Meaning*** exhibition is in its final weeks at Johannesburg's Standard Bank Gallery.

Thousands of visitors have already marvelled at the ***Henri Matisse/Rhythm and Meaning*** exhibition, the first full-scale showcase of the French modernist's work on the African continent. Art lovers and anyone with a general interest in exploring the art world, only have until 17 September 2016 to experience this rare and illuminating display of paintings, sculptures, prints and paper cutouts spanning 50 years.

*The female figure dominated Matisse's work, and here are four key women whose likenesses are featured in the ***Rhythm and Meaning*** exhibition:*

**1. Amélie (*Portrait of Madame Matisse, 1905, oil on canvas, 46cm x 38cm*)**

Matisse met Amélie Parayre at a friend's wedding in October 1897, and they were married three months later. He said at the time: "Mademoiselle, I love you dearly, but I shall always love painting more."

Amélie is the subject of more than 100 of Matisse's portraits, which were non-naturalistic and went beyond likeness, establishing his status as a leader of the avant-garde. She ran his studio and his household while raising their three children: sons Jean and Pierre, as well as Marguerite, Matisse's daughter from a previous relationship (whom she adopted). Amélie and Matisse separated in 1939.

**2. Marguerite (*Marguerite in a Leather Hat, 1914, oil on canvas, 82cm x 65cm*)**

Matisse's daughter, Marguerite, was born in 1894 to Caroline "Camille" Joblaud, one of Matisse's early models who was also his mistress. At the age of six, Marguerite fell ill with diphtheria and had an emergency tracheotomy. After that, she always wore a ribbon around her neck to hide the scar.

Matisse and Marguerite were very close, and he valued her forthright and intelligent critiques of his work. She modelled for him frequently, and this striking portrait is typical of the light palette and distorted perspectives of his Fauvist ("wild beast") works. Marguerite was active in the French resistance during World War II, and was captured, interrogated and tortured by Gestapo agents. She managed to escape, and survived the War. Also on display is a portrait of Matisse that Matisse made in 1945 as part of a series of prints sold to raise funds for people who had been active in the resistance.

**3. Lydia (*Lydia, 1947, lithograph, 32.3cm x 33cm*)**

Born in Siberia, Lydia Delectorskaya was orphaned at the age of 12 and fled revolution-era Russia. In 1932, the beautiful but penniless young refugee found

work as a studio assistant and domestic worker in the Matisse household in Nice. Lydia began modelling for Matisse and also helped him manage the paper cutout system that became such an important technique in his later years.

Even though they were not lovers, she became indispensable to Matisse, and their close relationship placed strain on Matisse's marriage. In 1938, a jealous Amélie gave Matisse an ultimatum: her or Lydia. He chose his wife and dismissed Lydia, who attempted suicide by shooting herself in the chest, but the bullet lodged against her breastbone. Amélie and Matisse separated, and Lydia (whom he called his "snow princess") returned to his side – where she stayed, devotedly, for the rest of his life. The very last portrait Matisse drew on the day before he died was a ballpoint sketch of Lydia.

#### **4. *Ida (Portrait of Ida Chagall, 1948, pencil on paper, 55cm x 43cm)***

In 1948 Matisse did a series of drawings of Ida Chagall, daughter of fellow artist Marc Chagall. He found her face captivating, writing to his son Pierre that he found that she had "a mobility of expression that runs over her face like the sun runs light and shadow across a field of oats under a slightly cloudy sky".

This pencil drawing of Ida was reproduced opposite the title page of a book titled *La femme sacrée (Sacred Woman)* produced for a charity event in 1948. Marc Chagall designed the cover of the book that featured work by artists such as Jean Cocteau. Several other line drawings of Ida Chagall are on display in this exhibition, showing Matisse's mastery of the simple, spare but eloquent line.

***Henri Matisse | Rhythm and Meaning*** is co-curated by Patrice Deparpe, Director of the Musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis, and Federico Freschi, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at the University of Johannesburg.

The Standard Bank Gallery is located on the corner of Simmonds and Frederick streets in central Johannesburg. Entry to the exhibition is free. Gallery hours are Mondays to Fridays from 8am to 4.30pm, and Saturdays from 9am to 4pm. It will also be open until 9pm on Thursday, 1 September, when art-loving night owls can take advantage of a free shuttle service running between Braamfontein, the Maboneng Precinct and the gallery.

There are also daily shuttle services from Park Station to the gallery, between 11.30am and 2.15pm, from Mondays to Saturdays. Book at [www.standardbank.com/matisseshuttle](http://www.standardbank.com/matisseshuttle). Free public walkabouts by art educator Wilhelm van Rensburg will take place on 1, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16 and 17 September.

A two hundred page, full colour Henri Matisse | Rhythm and Meaning catalogue is available at the exhibition for only R300 which includes the full range of works on the exhibition and intensive commentary various art historians and co-curator Prof Federico Freschi.

***Henri Matisse | Rhythm and Meaning*** is presented by Standard Bank in partnership with the Embassy of France in South Africa and the French Institute of South Africa, and with the support of the Musée départemental Matisse du Cateau-Cambrésis, Air France, Total and Air Liquide.

**Standard Bank Art Online Links:**

Website: [www.standardbank.com/matisse](http://www.standardbank.com/matisse)

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**Image Captions:**

*Portrait de Madame Matisse* (Portrait of Madame Matisse), 1905. Oil on canvas. 46 x 38cm. Musée Matisse, Nice ©Succession H. Matisse

*Marguerite au chapeau de cuir* (Marguerite in a leather Hat) 1914. Oil on canvas, 82 x 65cm. Musée départemental Matisse, Le Cateau-Cambrésis ©Succession H. Matisse

*Lydia*, 19476. Lithograph, 32,3 x 33cm. Collection S Mazo ©Succession H. Matisse

*Portrait d'Ida Chagall* (Portrait of Ida Chagall), 1948. Pencil on paper, 55 x 43cm. Private Collection ©Succession H. Matisse