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THE BMA RECEIVES MAJOR GIFT OF MATISSE PRINTS FROM THE PIERRE AND MARIA-GAETANA MATISSE FOUNDATION

Gift expands BMA's world-renowned collection of works by Matisse

BALTIMORE, MD (October 21, 2007)—The Baltimore Museum of Art today announced that its world-renowned collection of works by French artist Henri Matisse is expanding significantly with a major gift of 77 prints from The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Foundation in New York. This promised gift comes from the collection of Pierre Matisse (1900-89), the artist's son. The Matisse Foundation has also supported the *Matisse: Painter as Sculptor* exhibition that opens at the BMA on October 28.

"We are deeply grateful for the generosity of the Matisse Foundation in donating these remarkable prints to the Museum," said BMA Director Doreen Bolger. "In no other collection in the world can you see Matisse's work across media—painting, sculpture, and works on paper—in such depth and quality. This extraordinary gift helps to further establish the Museum as a leading center for studying and enjoying the work of this great 20th-century artist."

The BMA boasts the most comprehensive collection of Matisse's work in the world with unmatched holdings of more than 600 paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, and illustrated books. Most of these works came from Baltimore sisters Claribel and Etta Cone, who often acquired them directly from the artist. These works were bequeathed to the BMA at the time of Etta's death in 1949, and a selection of them has been on view in the Museum's Cone Wing since its opening in 1957.

Pierre Matisse was an important dealer of modern and contemporary art who exhibited some of the greatest artists of the 20th century at his renowned New York gallery. Following his death, his heirs created the philanthropic Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Foundation, which has made previous contributions to the BMA both supporting the growth of its collection and lending to major exhibitions. Pierre Matisse was well acquainted with Baltimore as he knew the Cone Sisters through their relationship with his father. Later Etta Cone acquired several of Matisse's works from him, and another Baltimore collector, Saidie A. May, purchased a number of major modern paintings and sculpture. Pierre Matisse also visited the BMA and participated in special events such as the opening of the redesigned Cone Wing in 1986.

The Matisse Foundation's gift adds even greater breadth and depth to the representation of Matisse's works on paper at the BMA. Particularly important are a group of 25 late aquatints, which were not well represented in the collection as they were largely made near the end of Etta Cone's life. These strong images, mostly portraits, are characterized by bold strokes of rich black aquatint—just the minimum of lines needed to capture the character of the sitter. The gift also includes a rare monotype, the first in the Museum's collection. Other important prints add images from earlier periods, including several lithographs related to the sculpture *Large Reclining Nude* (1922-29).

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MATISSE AT THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

While the BMA has for decades held the largest collection of Matisse in the world, in the last 10 years, the Museum has set an ambitious goal to become the leading center nationally and internationally for the study, exploration, and enjoyment of the work of Henri Matisse. The first step in this significant initiative was the expansion of the BMA's curatorial staff. Senior Curator of Prints, Drawings & Photographs Jay Fisher, an authority on Matisse's works on paper, was joined by Curator of European Painting & Sculpture Katy Rothkopf in 2000 as the first curator dedicated to the Cone Collection. Associate Curator of European Painting & Sculpture Dr. Oliver Shell began his study of Matisse's sculpture at the BMA in 2003 with a two-year fellowship from The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and joined the staff permanently in 2005. Additional funding from the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery enabled Dr. Shell and BMA Objects Conservator Ann Boulton to conduct the first technical examination of Matisse's sculpture.

In 2001, the BMA completed the redesigned and reinstalled Cone Wing, a two-year, \$4.2 million project that included expanding space for this collection by 45 percent and creating eight galleries, including a dedicated space for intimate thematic exhibitions that highlight a particular aspect of an artist's work, such as Matisse's illustrated book *Jazz* (1947). An Interpretive Gallery features an award-winning virtual display that shows how the Cone Sisters lived with their great collection in their Baltimore apartments.

Recent Acquisitions

Comprehensive collections of works by any of the great 20th-century artists are extremely rare, which makes the Museum an indispensable resource for research on Matisse. The addition of the Matisse Foundation prints expands the BMA's holdings of the artist's work to nearly every medium and every period of his prolific career. Other important recent Matisse's acquisitions include his first sculpture *Jaguar Devouring a Hare* (1899-1901), a drawing related to the BMA's great painting *The Yellow Dress* (1929-31), and, most recently, the sculpture *Small Thin Torso* (1929), a particularly rare sculpture that is one of only three casts known to exist and the only one on public view in the United States. Both of these sculptures will be presented in the exhibition *Matisse: Painter as Sculptor*.

Exhibitions

The BMA is preparing to open *Matisse: Painter as Sculptor*, a nationally traveling exhibition of over 160 sculptures, paintings, and drawings that will be on view October 28, 2007–February 3, 2008. As co-organizer of the exhibition, The Baltimore Museum of Art not only is the largest lender of artworks and a contributor to the catalogue, but also led ground-breaking research on how Matisse created his sculptures. This exhibition comes to Baltimore as the final stop and only East Coast venue for the most important presentation of Matisse's sculpture ever assembled in the U.S. *Matisse: Painter as Sculptor* is a special ticketed exhibition, which includes a complimentary audio tour. For information on how to purchase tickets, visit artbma.org or call 443-573-1700.

Future projects include a traveling exhibition of Matisse's prints organized by The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Foundation, curated by BMA Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs Jay Fisher, and circulated by American Federation of Arts in fall 2009. Exhibitions on Matisse's maquette for *Les Poésies de Stéphane Mallarmé*, and his influence on 20th-century artists, such as Richard Diebenkorn, Roy Lichtenstein, and Max Weber are also being planned.

The Cone Sisters and Matisse

In the early 20th century, Baltimore sisters Claribel and Etta Cone visited Matisse's Paris studios of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso and began forming one of the world's greatest art collections. Over the course of nearly 50 years they assembled an exceptional collection of approximately 3,000 objects, which were displayed in their Baltimore apartments. The highlight is a group of 500 works by Matisse, considered the largest and most significant in the world. Etta Cone met Matisse in 1906, and her initial purchase of several drawings marked the beginning of a life-long passion for his art that continued for four decades. With masterworks such as Matisse's *Blue Nude* (1907) and *Large Reclining Nude* (1935), competition among museums for The Cone Collection began as early as 1940, but Claribel insisted that it go to The Baltimore Museum of Art if "the spirit of appreciation for modern art in Baltimore became improved." Thus achieved, the collection came to the BMA upon Etta Cone's death in 1949, and selections have been on view since 1957. The Cone Collection has been the subject of exhibitions at prestigious museums around the world and celebrated in Baltimore with redesigned and expanded galleries that include a dynamic touch-screen virtual tour of the apartments where the Cone Sisters lived with their remarkable collection. With the Matisse Foundation gift, the BMA's Matisse collection includes more than 600 works by Matisse: 42 oil paintings, 22 sculptures, 282 prints, 42 drawings, 19 books, two textiles, and one ceramic plate, as well as a unique maquette that includes 220 drawings, prints, and copper plates from the artist's first illustrated book, *Poésies de Stéphane Mallarmé* (1932).

VISITOR INFORMATION

General admission to the BMA is free; special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. The Museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. The BMA is located on Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31st Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general Museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit artbma.org.

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