

THE BMA AND SFMOMA CO-ORGANIZE FIRST EXHIBITION TO SHOW THE INFLUENCE OF HENRI MATISSE ON RICHARD DIEBENKORN

Landmark exhibition will offer an unprecedented view of both artists

BALTIMORE, MD (January 12, 2016)—The first major exhibition to show the profound influence of French modern artist Henri Matisse (1869-1954) on the work of American artist Richard Diebenkorn (1922-1993) will premiere at The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) on October 23, 2016, before traveling to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) in the spring of 2017, after it opens its expansion on May 14, 2016. Co-organized by the BMA and SFMOMA, *Matisse/Diebenkorn* will feature over 90 objects—including more than 30 paintings and drawings by Matisse with 60 paintings and drawings by Diebenkorn from museums and private collections throughout the U.S. and Europe, as well as a selection from Diebenkorn’s personal library of books on Matisse. While Matisse’s impact on Diebenkorn has been noted in numerous art publications, there has never been a major exhibition pairing the two artists’ work. Matisse’s influence on Diebenkorn is most visible in the younger artist’s figurative works from the 1950s and 1960s, but also evident in the structure, composition, and light of his earlier and later abstractions. Seeing the artists’ powerful works side-by-side reveals Diebenkorn’s deep connection to Matisse, though they never met, and presents a new view of both artists.

“San Francisco and Baltimore have brought together works of stunning brilliance to create an unprecedented visual narrative reaching across the 20th century,” said BMA Interim Co-Director Jay Fisher. “*Matisse/Diebenkorn* reveals connections that contribute to a fresh comprehension of the inventiveness of both artists and furthers the BMA’s goal of using the museum’s extraordinary collection of works by Matisse to bring forth new scholarship on the artist and his influence on others.”

“*Matisse/Diebenkorn*, which brings together two artists represented in great depth in SFMOMA’s collection, is really about artistic inspiration,” said SFMOMA Director Neal Benezra. “The opportunity to experience these extraordinary painters’ works juxtaposed for the first time promises to be nothing short of revelatory. Visitors to the BMA and SFMOMA will be given the opportunity to see how Diebenkorn’s lifelong passion for the French modernist’s paintings beautifully inspired so many aspects of his own work.”



Left: Henri Matisse. *View of Notre Dame*. 1914. The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Right: Richard Diebenkorn. *Ocean Park #79*. 1975. Philadelphia Museum of Art
 (Full image credits on page 3)

The exhibition is organized chronologically through Diebenkorn’s career beginning with some of the first Matisse works that Diebenkorn viewed in the Palo Alto home of Sarah Stein, one of Matisse’s first patrons, and at the BMA, The Phillips Collection in Washington D.C. and The Museum of Modern Art in New York in the 1940s. These works introduced the motifs, palette and techniques that later influenced the American painter. A group of outstanding works from Diebenkorn’s Urbana and Berkeley periods (1953-1955) demonstrate the significant impact of his visit to a seminal Matisse retrospective in Los Angeles in 1952. Diebenkorn was taken by the color and structure of the oil paintings, and inspired by Matisse’s willingness to show evidence of his creative process.

A rich selection of exceptional paintings and drawings from Diebenkorn's representational period (1955-1967) illustrate the artist's shift from abstraction towards identifiable subject matter and will be paired with some of the French master's own compositions that were of particular relevance. Diebenkorn continued to seek out Matisse's example, most notably during a trip to the Soviet Union in 1964, where he saw the extensive collections of works by Matisse in the State Hermitage Museum and the Pushkin Museum. This was followed by a visit two years later to a large Matisse retrospective in Los Angeles, where he saw over 300 works by the French master. Two highly significant abstract Matisse paintings that Diebenkorn saw in the 1966 retrospective will be featured in the exhibition. Diebenkorn returned to abstraction soon after moving to Ocean Park in Santa Monica, California in 1967. He is best known for his color and light-filled abstract compositions produced there. The exhibition will conclude with a selection of his *Ocean Park* paintings (1968-1980) juxtaposed with a selection of Matisse's most influential works.

Exhibition Organization and Sponsorship

Matisse/Diebenkorn is co-organized by The Baltimore Museum of Art and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The exhibition is curated by Katy Rothkopf, BMA Senior Curator of European Paintings & Sculpture, and Janet Bishop, SFMOMA Weisel Family Curator of Painting and Sculpture. *Matisse/Diebenkorn* has received generous support for the exhibition and catalogue from the Henry Luce Foundation, Terra Foundation for American Art, and National Endowment for the Arts.

Tour Dates

The Baltimore Museum of Art: October 23, 2016-January 29, 2017

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: March 11-May 29, 2017

Exhibition Catalogue

A fully illustrated catalogue will be produced with essays by *Matisse/Diebenkorn* co-curators Katy Rothkopf, BMA Senior Curator of European Painting & Sculpture, and Janet Bishop, SFMOMA Weisel Family Curator of Painting and Sculpture. Both examine Diebenkorn's interactions with Matisse's work throughout his long career. It will also include an introduction by John Elderfield, Allen R. Adler Distinguished Curator and Lecturer at the Princeton University Art Museum and Chief Curator Emeritus of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, who has curated groundbreaking exhibitions on both artists. Jodi Roberts, Associate Curator of Special Projects at the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University will contribute an essay regarding the relationship between Matisse's drawings and Diebenkorn's own graphic work. The exhibition catalogue will be co-published with DelMonico Books/Prestel.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

The Baltimore Museum of Art is home to an internationally renowned collection of 19th-century, modern, and contemporary art. Founded in 1914 with a single painting, the BMA today has 95,000 works of art—including one of the most comprehensive holdings of works by Henri Matisse in the world. Throughout the museum, visitors will find an outstanding selection of American and European painting, sculpture, and decorative arts; prints and drawings from the 15th century to the present; works by established and emerging contemporary artists; and exceptional objects from Africa and Asia. Two beautifully landscaped gardens display an array of 20th-century sculpture that is an oasis in the city. The 210,000-square-foot museum is distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope. The BMA's \$28 million multi-year renovation has transformed galleries for contemporary, American, African, and Asian art, created a new education center, and improved infrastructure and visitor amenities. Since 2006, the BMA has provided free general admission so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Founded in 1935 as the first West Coast museum devoted to modern and contemporary art, SFMOMA is reaching the final stages of a major expansion project that will significantly enhance gallery, education and public spaces, enabling the museum to better showcase more of its expanded permanent collection. SFMOMA will open to the public on May 14, 2016.

Images: Henri Matisse. *View of Notre Dame*. 1914. The Museum of Modern Art, New York: Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, and the Henry Ittleson, A. Conger Goodyear, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sinclair Funds, and the Anna Erickson Levene Bequest given in memory of her husband, Dr. Phoebus Aaron Theodor Levene, 116.1975. ©2015 Succession H. Matisse, Paris/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York

Richard Diebenkorn. *Ocean Park #79*. 1975. Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and with funds contributed by private donors, 1977, 1977-28-1. ©Richard Diebenkorn Foundation