



## Baltimore Museum of Art to Open The Ruth R. Marder Center for Matisse Studies on December 12

Center to feature new exhibition and study spaces, as well as a specially commissioned stained glass installation by artist Stanley Whitney

Esteemed curator Denise Murrell will serve as the inaugural fellow beginning in 2022

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BALTIMORE, MD (UPDATED December 10, 2021)—On December 12, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) will open The Ruth R. Marder Center for Matisse Studies, an approximately 2,500-square-foot space on the first floor of the museum dedicated to the study of French artist Henri Matisse. The establishment of the center fulfills the BMA's long-term strategic goal to increase research and presentation opportunities for the museum's incomparable collection of more than 1,200 works by the artist—the largest public collection of his work in the world. The BMA has also commissioned artist Stanley Whitney to create a set of three, large-scale stained-glass windows to be installed inside the center and is presenting an exhibition titled *Matisse: The Sinuous Line*, both debuting with the center's opening.

Named for a longtime BMA supporter, The Ruth R. Marder Center for Matisse Studies includes a dedicated exhibition gallery; a study room and library for curators, scholars, and students; a workspace; offices; and storage. The center is designed by Quinn Evans Architects and the cost is approximately \$5 million, with additional endowment funds raised to support center staff, research, programming, and ongoing efforts to digitize a vast portion of the museum's Matisse holdings. The exhibition gallery will be named for Jay McKean Fisher, the inaugural director of the center and emeritus senior curator for prints, drawings, and photographs, who retired in 2020 after 45 years at the museum. Fisher curated several acclaimed exhibitions on Matisse and nearly doubled the BMA's holdings of works by the artist during his long tenure.

The center will be guided by Katy Rothkopf, The Anne and Ben Cone Memorial Director and the Senior Curator of European Painting and Sculpture at the BMA. Additionally, the BMA has appointed Denise Murrell as its inaugural visiting fellow, to begin in summer 2022. Murrell is the Associate Curator, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Art in the Office of the Director at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"The goal of the Ruth R. Marder Center for Matisse Studies is to both dedicate BMA curatorial staff time and resources to exhibitions large and small on Matisse and his influence, and also to provide a space for college level and graduate students as well as visiting curators and scholars to learn more about the artist by close looking at our large and representative collection of his work," said Rothkopf. "We want to inspire scholarship on Matisse's extraordinary impact from both inside and outside of the institution."

The new Jay McKean Fisher Gallery provides a space to show wonderful examples of the French artist's works on paper and sculpture in small, focused exhibitions. The exhibitions will range from those that explore a particular theme or technique in Matisse's work solely, to installations that show Matisse and his contemporaries exploring similar ideas, as well as projects that show Matisse's influence on artists working today." The fellowship supports one of the major priorities of the center, which is to spur new scholarship about French artist Henri Matisse and his enduring influence on the trajectory of art. As the inaugural fellow, Murrell will make periodic visits and have ongoing access to the BMA's incomparable holdings of work by the artist and be able to conduct research toward future projects that expand our understanding of Matisse's practice and engages the public in new ways with his work.

**Stanley Whitney** has long been recognized for his vibrant explorations of color and light within the painterly structures of the grid. He has often cited historic European painting as one source of inspiration for his formal investigations, including the work of Matisse and in particular Matisse's glass windows for the Chapelle du Rosaire de Vence in Southern France. Whitney's installation for the BMA marks the artist's first museum commission and his first time working in stained glass, translating his interest in expressions of color in a medium naturally suited to it. To create the panels, Whitney is working with Mayer of Munich, one of the world's oldest and most celebrated artist glass studios. Whitney's installation is being developed with curatorial support from Katy Siegel, BMA Senior Curator for Research and Programming and Thaw Chair of Modern Art at Stony Brook University.

"With the inauguration of the Marder Matisse Center, we are establishing a new resource that invites research, discovery, and dialogue about Matisse's significance to art history and his ongoing relevance to contemporary practice. Our vision for the center is to engage scholars and the public alike by dedicating new space where individuals can learn and engage with the work and each other. This effort is supported in part by the appointment of Denise Murrell as the center's inaugural fellow. Denise is a visionary curator and scholar, and we are very much looking forward to collaborating with her and to the projects that will result from her research," said Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. "We are also thrilled for the opportunity to permanently display Stanley Whitney's first stained-glass work within the center. The stunning installation exemplifies Stanley's incredible engagement with color and light and reflects a dynamic connection across time and artistic vision. Capturing this creative relationship is very much in alignment with the work we plan to do at the center and across the museum."

***Matisse: The Sinuous Line*** is the first installation in a two-part exhibition series that examines the artist's graceful use of line and innate ability to suggest personality and mood with just several strokes or with many more in his fully fleshed-out compositions. The exhibition takes Matisse's bronze sculpture *The Serpentine* (1909)—held in the BMA's collection—as its point of departure to explore the artist's transition from a more classical style to a streamlined treatment of the body through 15 objects from the BMA's collection. *Matisse: The Sinuous Line* will feature several bronze works and a selection of drawings, etchings, and lithographs—many of which have not been on view at the museum for several years. The exhibition is curated by Rothkopf and reflects the underlying vision for the center to explore lesser-studied aspects of Matisse's work. It will remain on view through April 24, 2022.

The Matisse collection at the BMA was first established in the early 20th century through the vision and philanthropy of sisters Claribel and Etta Cone, whose internationally renowned collection was bequeathed to the museum in 1949 and is the centerpiece of the BMA's expansive holdings. Among the highlights of the Cone Collection are more than 600 works by Matisse, including paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, and illustrated books. To this incredible group of objects, the BMA has added hundreds of works by the artist, amassing the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of Matisse works in a public museum. This includes gifts from members of the Matisse family, such as a selection of works from the collection of the artist's daughter Marguerite Duthuit, and a major donation of prints by The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation in New York.

The foundation of the collection is explored in part in the BMA's exhibition [\*A Modern Influence: Henri Matisse, Etta Cone, and Baltimore\*](#), on view at the museum from October 3, 2021 - January 2, 2022. Curated by Rothkopf and Leslie Cozzi, BMA Associate Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, the exhibition explores the singular 43-year friendship between Baltimore collector Etta Cone and Matisse and the ways their connection informed the development of the extraordinary Cone Collection. The show features more than 160 paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, and illustrated books and is accompanied by a catalogue that includes explorations of the correspondence and engagement between the collector and artist.

The BMA will also open on December 12 the adjacent Nancy Dorman and Stanley Mazaroff Center for the Study of Prints, Drawings and Photographs.

### **Stanley Whitney**

Stanley Whitney's (b. 1946, Philadelphia) work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX, USA (2017) and Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY (2015). He has been featured in many prominent group shows, including *Inherent Structure*, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH (2018); Documenta 14 in Athens, Greece and Kassel, Germany (2017); *Nero su Bianco* at the American Academy in Rome, Italy (2015); and *Utopia Station* at the 50th Venice Biennale (2003), among others. Whitney has been awarded the Robert De Niro Sr. Prize in Painting (2011), the American Academy of Arts and Letters Art Award (2010), and a Guggenheim Fellowship (1996). His work is in a range of public collections, including the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, KS; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT. He holds a BFA from Kansas City Art Institute as well as an MFA from Yale University and is currently Professor emeritus of painting and drawing at Tyler School of Art, Temple University. Whitney was born in Philadelphia in 1946 and lives and works in New York City and Parma, Italy.

### **Denise Murrell**

Denise Murrell, PhD, is an Associate Curator, Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Art in the Office of the Director at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (January 2020-present). She was the curator of the exhibition *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (October 2018-February 2019) at Columbia University's Wallach Art Gallery, and also served as the Wallach's Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Research Scholar (2014-2019). She was a co-curator of the exhibition's

expansion at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, as *Le Modèle Noir de Géricault à Matisse* (March-July 2019) and a guest lecturer for a final tour as *Le Modèle Noir de Géricault à Picasso* at the Memorial ACTe, Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe. Murrell is the author of the *Posing Modernity* exhibition catalogue (Yale University Press and The Wallach Art Gallery, 2018), which was based on her 2014 art history PhD dissertation at Columbia University in New York. The catalogue received College Art Association and Dedalus Foundation book awards. She was an essayist for the related Musée d'Orsay exhibition catalogue. Murrell has taught art history at Columbia University in New York and in Paris and has given public lectures at numerous museums and universities. She held a Mellon pre-doctoral fellowship at Princeton University Art Museum (2012-2013), where she developed permanent collection installations in relation to the exhibition *The African Presence in Renaissance Europe* and initiated the online resource *The Art of Africa and Its Diasporas*. Prior to her art history PhD from Columbia University, Murrell received an MBA from Harvard Business School and a BS degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She previously had an extended career in finance and consulting.

### **Baltimore Museum of Art**

Founded in 1914, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) inspires people of all ages and backgrounds through exhibitions, programs, and collections that tell an expansive story of art—challenging long-held narratives and embracing new voices. Our outstanding collection of more than 95,000 objects spans many eras and cultures and includes the world's largest public holding of works by Henri Matisse; one of the nation's finest collections of prints, drawings, and photographs; and a rapidly growing number of works by contemporary artists of diverse backgrounds. The museum is also distinguished by a neoclassical building designed by American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of modern and contemporary sculpture. The BMA is located three miles north of the Inner Harbor, adjacent to the main campus of Johns Hopkins University, and has a community branch at Lexington Market. General admission is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art. [artbma.org](http://artbma.org)

### **Visitor Information**

General admission to the BMA is free. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Timed reservations, face masks, and answering two questions about COVID-19 exposure are required for all visitors. The Sculpture Gardens are open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to dusk. The museum and gardens are closed New Year's Day, Juneteenth, July 4, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. The BMA is located at 10 Art Museum Drive, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit [artbma.org](http://artbma.org).

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