

# MATISSE

CUT-OUTS

Gilles Néret



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Gilles Néret

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### Painting with scissors

#### How Matisse bowed out in a riot of colorful shapes and patterns

**Henri Matisse** (1869–1954) was a fighting spirit. Despite a cancer diagnosis in 1941, increasing frailty, and the confines of a wheelchair, the indomitable Frenchman **never stopped in his quest to make art**. With what he called *une seconde vie*, a second life, he embarked on a remarkable collage period, cutting and pasting pieces of colored paper into *gouaches découpées* of **birds, plants, flowers, and the female form**.

Emphasizing color and contrast, the cut-out technique generated both **striking lines and vivid juxtapositions**. In works such as *The Fall of Icarus* (1943), *The Blue Nude* (1952), *The Snail* (1953), and *La Gerbe* (1953), **clean forms and elemental structures** power a compositional force that belies the work's decorative appeal, at once tightly organized and **infectious with joie de vivre**. As his work progressed, Matisse's excitement with his results fueled ever-larger pieces, advancing from small works to **vast wall-sized murals**.

As his final years approached, Matisse reveled in the simplicity and brilliance of these pieces, avowing, “*Only what I created after the illness constitutes my real self: free, liberated...*” In this essential introductory book, we revisit this joyful final chapter of Matisse's long and prodigious career, examining how the **cut-outs encapsulated the artist's many years exploring the possibilities of composition, form, and color**.

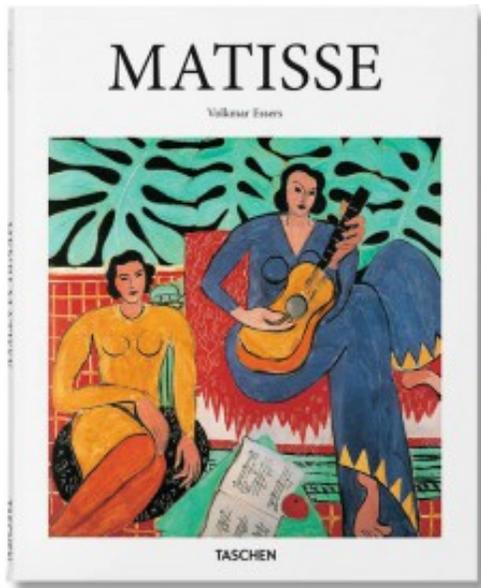
#### The author:

**Gilles Néret** (1933–2005) was an art historian, journalist, writer, and museum correspondent. He organized several art retrospectives in Japan and founded the SEIBU Museum and the Wildenstein Gallery in Tokyo. He directed art reviews such as *L'Œil* and *Connaissance des Arts* and received the Élie Faure Prize in 1981 for his publications. His TASCHEN titles include *Salvador Dalí: I dipinti*, *Matisse* and *Erotica Universalis*.

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