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| **Henri Matisse****(1869 - 1954)** |
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| Matisse, surely one of the most influential modern artists and leader of the Fauvism movement, only began painting during a period of convalescence at the age of thirty-one. Born in 1869, Matisse studied law in Paris and in his hometown, Le Cateau-Cambrésis in Northern France. After developing his interest in art, he asked his father's permission to study in Paris. From 1892-97, he was a student at the École des Beaux-Arts.Matisse began with an impressionist style, but by the 1890s, he was becoming inspired by post-impressionist work, particularly that of Cézanne. As he gained interest in the structure of forms, his work became bolder, tougher and darker in tone.Matisse's first one man show in 1904 was not successful. At the Salon d'Automne the next year, however, the public became aware of the work of a new group labelled the 'Fauves', and Matisse was recognized as the leader. The Fauves, or 'wild beasts', followed their instincts rather than reason or science. They were intent on using new techniques to represent nature. The key to their work was vividness; they used bright colors to highlight their seemingly childlike work. Their exhibit in 1905 shocked and intrigued the public and Matisse was established as the leader of the avant-garde. Although Picasso was soon to take Matisse's place in this role, Matisse had clearly established a solid international reputation and continued to hold regular exhibitions.In 1908, Matisse opened the Académie Matisse for a diverse group of art students. In the same year, he also published 'Notes of a Painter' in order to put forth a clear statement of his artistic beliefs. In this text, Matisse expressed his desire to create, above all, balanced, pure and serene art. Color was of central importance to the artist, and he continually played with the relationship between line and color and spatial structure and surface pattern.Although Matisse was never a Cubist, between 1913-1917, he felt the influence of this movement. His paintings used straight lines and geometric and stylized forms. Eventually, this evolved into a more liberated style. Matisse's fascination with two dimensional patterns and forms became clear in the later stages of his career, when he began working with paper cut-outs. As his eyesight failed, he focused exclusively on this abstract and representational style. His Jazz series is an important example of his work at this stage. Matisse's sculpture was an extension of his painting; a love of form and an interest in 'primitive' art can be seen in his sculpted work.Matisse died in Nice in 1954. The artistic movement he spearheaded has had an unparalleled effect on the use of color in twentieth century  |

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