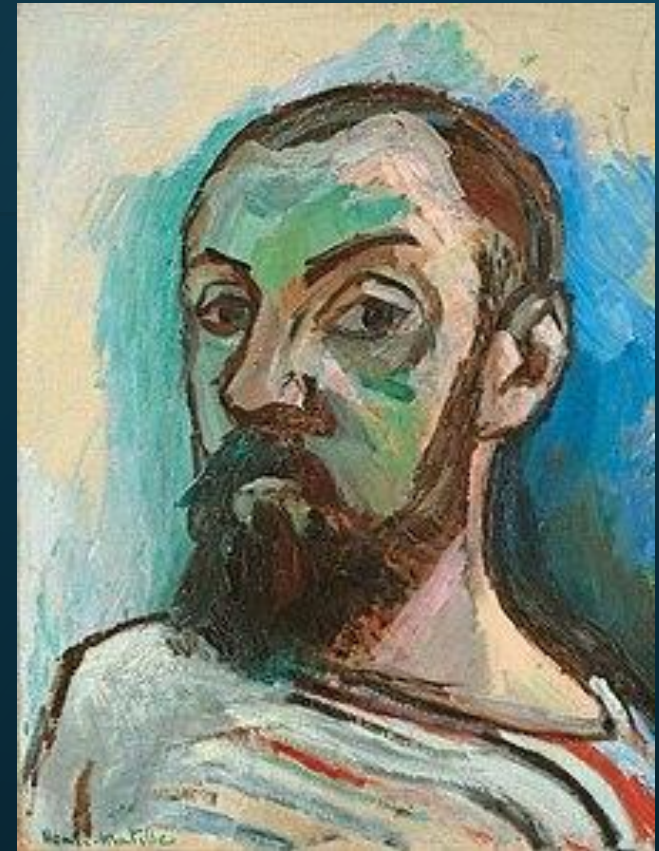
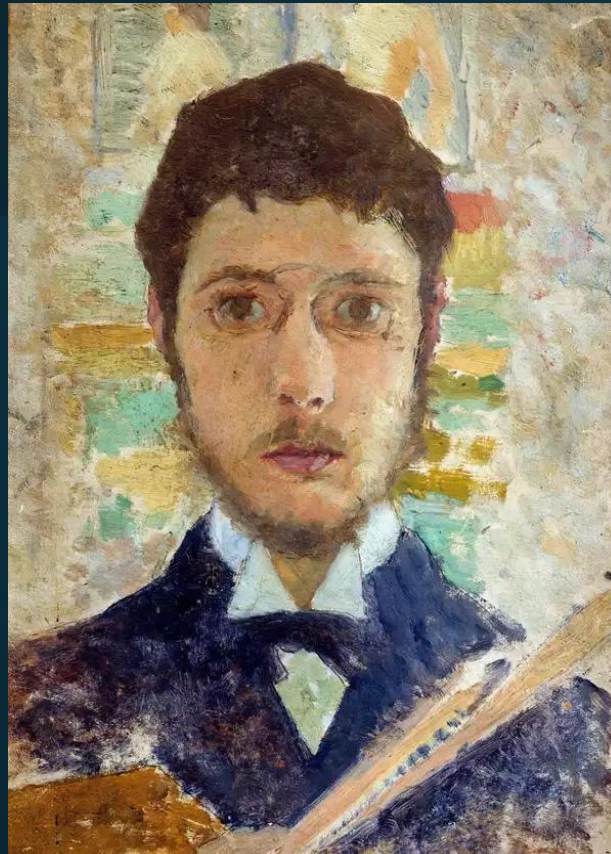


# Van Gogh, Bonnard, Matisse



**Giants in the Riviera**

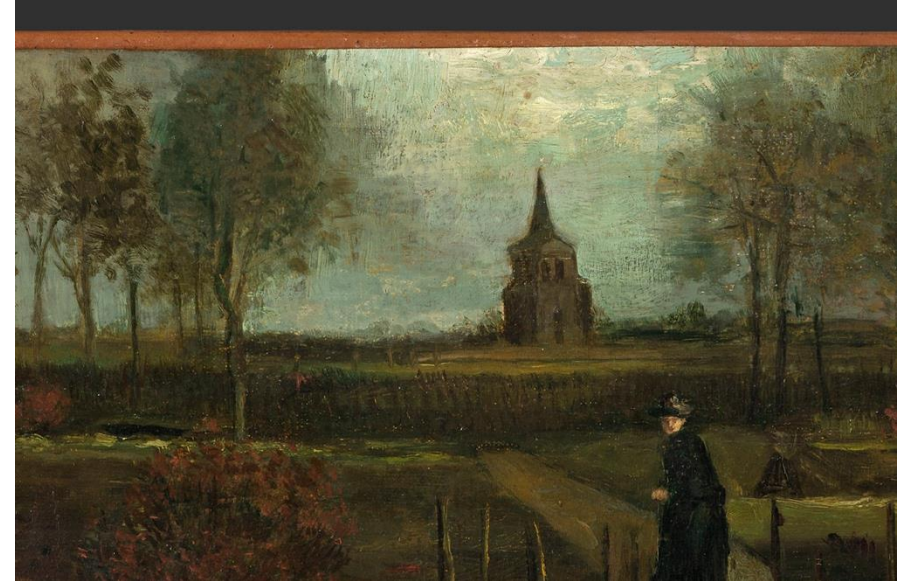


# Vincent Van Gogh (Dutch, 1853-1890)

## Arrival in Paris

Vincent van Gogh, born in 1853, grew up in the southern Netherlands, where his father was a minister. After seven years at a commercial art firm, Van Gogh's desire to help humanity led him to become a teacher, preacher, and missionary—yet without success. Working as a missionary among coal miners in Belgium, he had begun to draw in earnest; finally, dismissed by church authorities in 1880, he found his vocation in art.

Van Gogh's earliest paintings were earth-toned scenes of nature and peasants, but he became increasingly influenced by Japanese prints and the work of the impressionists in France. In 1886 he arrived in Paris, where his real formation as a painter began. Under the influence of Camille Pissarro, Van Gogh brightened his somber palette and juxtaposed complementary colors for luminous effect. Younger artists like Henri de Toulouse Lautrec and Paul Gauguin prompted him to use color symbolically and for its emotional resonance.





# From Paris to Arles



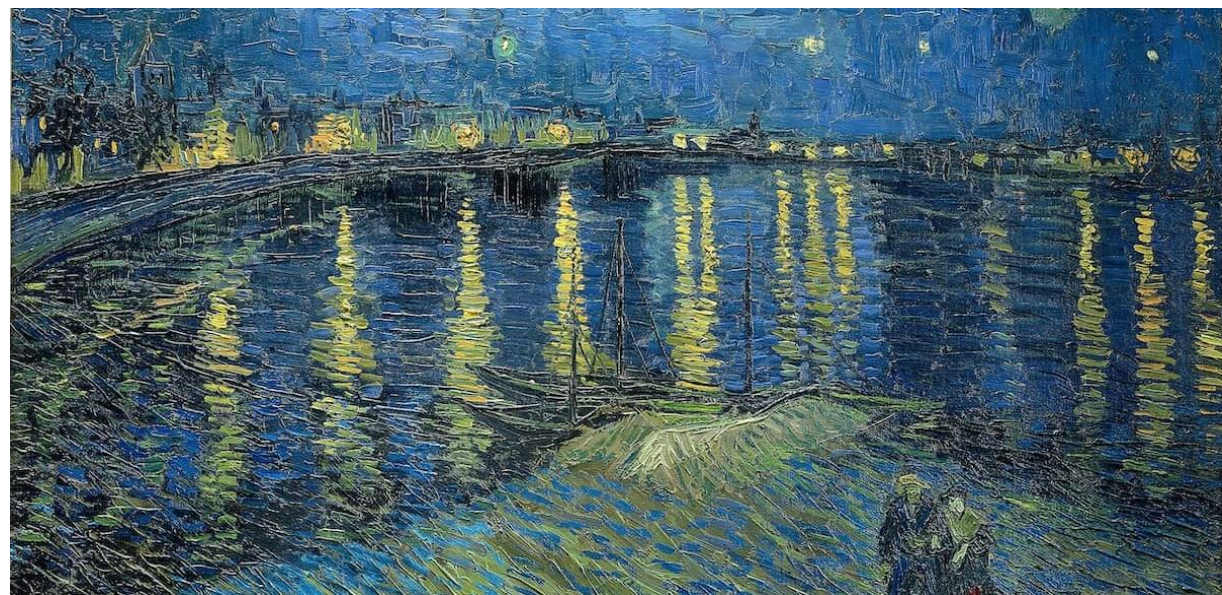
Van Gogh found the vibrant artistic environment in Paris overwhelming, and in 1888, just two years after his arrival, he decided to move to Arles.

This relocation to the Midi region inspired him to experiment boldly with color and explore new styles and subjects. Through intense work, Van Gogh further developed his style, employing dynamic brushstrokes and bright, contrasting colors.

The pieces he created during this time mark the height of his artistic development and an important milestone in the progression of nineteenth-century Western art.

He focused on perfecting his technique, producing famous works such as *Sunflowers*, *The Night Café*, *Starry Night* over the Rhone, and *Bedroom in Arles*.







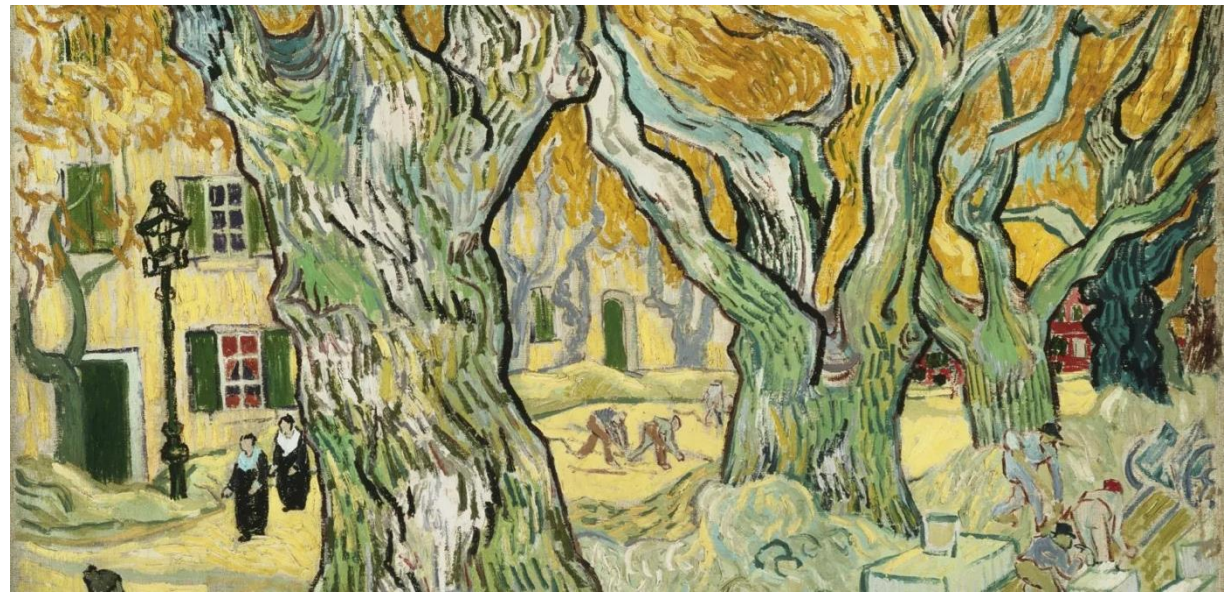
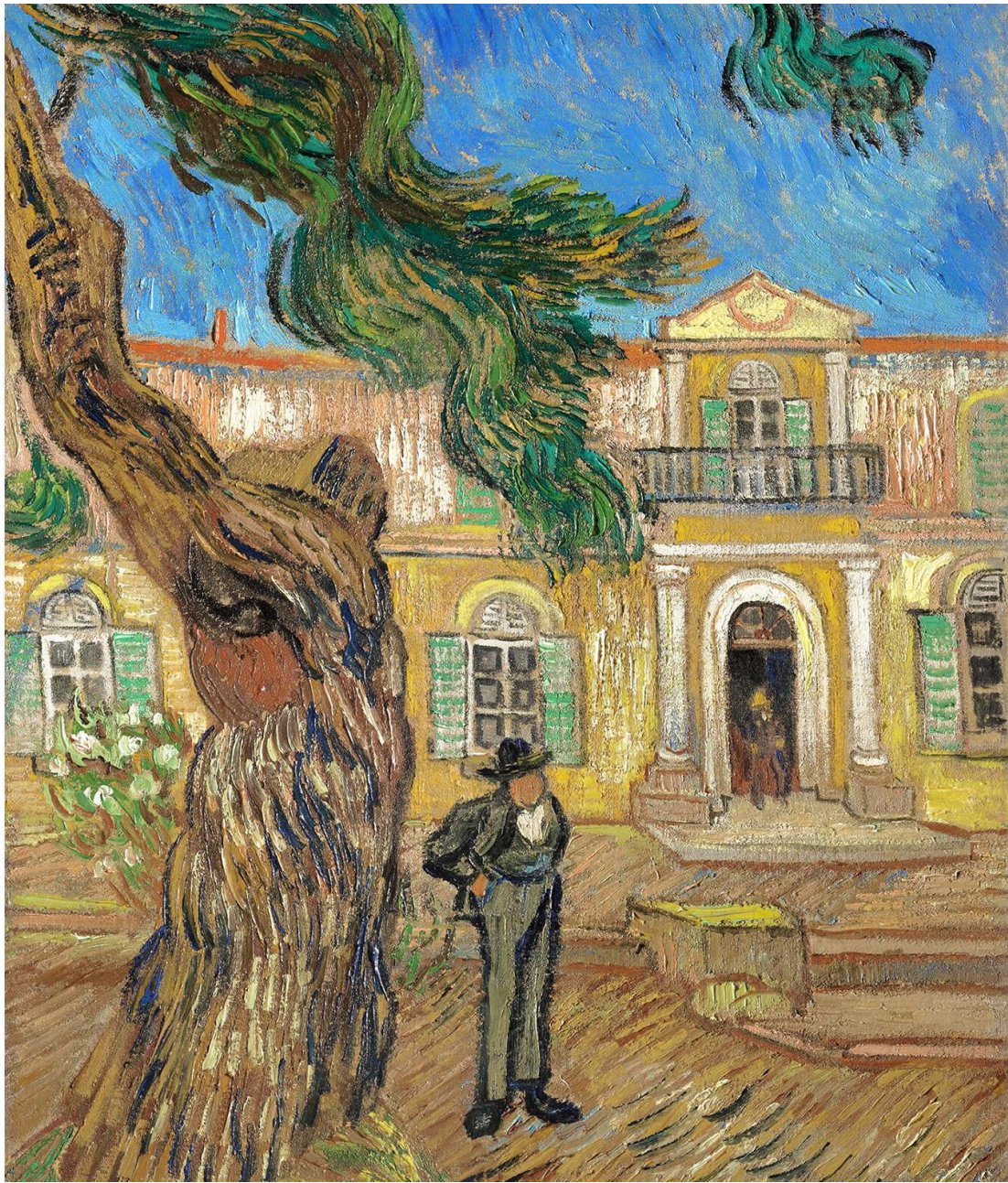


## Van Gogh in Saint-Remy

Van Gogh hoped to attract like-minded painters to Arles, but only Gauguin joined him, staying about two months. It was soon clear that their personalities and artistic temperaments were incompatible, and Van Gogh suffered a breakdown just before Christmas, culminating in his infamous ear-cutting incident after Paul Gauguin's departure. This led to his voluntary admission to an asylum in nearby Saint-Rémy.

He painted whenever he could, believing that in work lay his only chance for sanity. After a year, he returned north to be closer to his brother Théo, who had been his constant support; in July 1890 he died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.







## Pierre Bonnard (French, 1867-1947)



Bonnard was painter, illustrator, and printmaker celebrated for his decorative style and vivid color palette. His early works were notably influenced by Paul Gauguin, as well as the prints of Hokusai and other Japanese artists.

Bonnard had a relatively uneventful childhood and initially enrolled in law studies at the University of Paris in 1896. However, he redirected his path a year later by joining the Académie Julian, a progressive art school in Paris. There, alongside five peers, he co-founded Les Nabis, an avant-garde collective of post-impressionist painters.

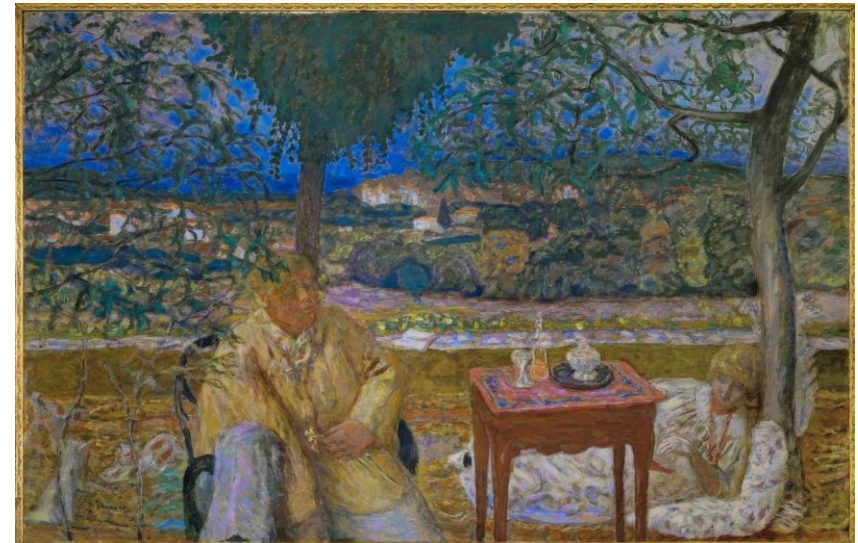
As a key figure linking Impressionism and Modernism, Bonnard's body of work encompasses landscapes, cityscapes, portraits, and intimate domestic scenes, with a particular focus on backgrounds, color harmonies, and painting techniques rather than the central subjects.

## Bonnard in Provence – Le Cannet

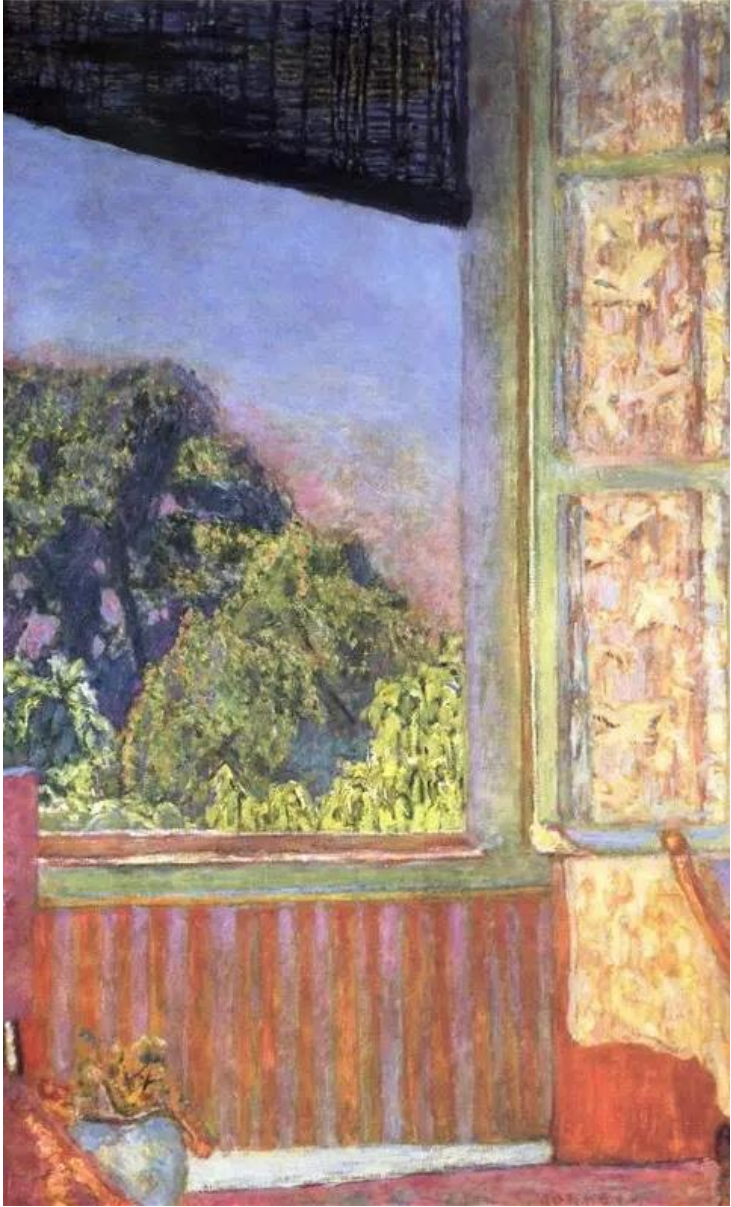
Around 1920, Bonnard moved to the Riviera. He had visited it before and wanted the chance to paint under the southern midi light. His years at Le Cannet, a small town near Cannes, profoundly influenced his art, inspiring luminous landscapes, intimate domestic scenes, and vibrant color palettes, with the Mediterranean light becoming a key subject. The house in Le Cannet became one of his primary subjects as was his wife.

Bonnard liked intense colors. He combined them in his paintings in a completely individual way that gives them great intensity. He could give the sense of bright sunlight outside, as well as artificial light indoors. Color floods his late works, almost overwhelming the subjects of his paintings.

Bonnard painted many nudes, mainly of his companion and wife Marthe de Mélny. She is often depicted washing or drying herself or, in a few paintings, lying in the bath so that her floating body is magnified by the water. These intimate views were part of their daily life together. These works show Marthe from Bonnard's male gaze.











## Henri Matisse (French, 1869-1954)

One of the undisputed masters of 20th century art, was a French artist, known for his use of colour and his fluid and original draughtsmanship. He was a draughtsman, printmaker, and sculptor, but is known primarily as a painter. Matisse is commonly regarded, along with Picasso and Marcel Duchamp, as one of the three artists who helped to define the revolutionary developments in the plastic arts in the opening decades of the 20th century, responsible for significant developments in painting and sculpture. Although he was initially labeled a Fauve (wild beast), by the 1920s he was increasingly hailed as an upholder of the classical tradition in French painting. His mastery of the expressive language of colour and drawing, displayed in a body of work spanning over a half-century, won him recognition as a leading figure in modern art.



## Early life and Fauvism

Matisse grew up in Bohain-en-Vermandois, Picardy, France, where his parents owned a flower business; he was their first son. In 1887 he went to Paris to study law, working as a court administrator. . He first started to paint in 1889, after his mother brought him art supplies during a period of convalescence following an attack of appendicitis. He discovered "a kind of paradise" as he later described it, and decided to become an artist, deeply disappointing his father. In 1891, he returned to Paris to study art at the Académie Julian.

In 1898, on the advice of Camille Pissarro he went to London to study the work of J.M.W. Turner. Upon his return to Paris in February, 1899 he worked beside Albert Marquet and met André Derain among others. Matisse immersed himself in the work of others and went into debt from buying work from painters he admired. In Cézanne's sense of pictorial structure and color Matisse found his main inspiration.

In 1905, Matisse and a group of artists now known as "Fauves" exhibited together in a room at the Salon d'Automne. The paintings expressed emotion with wild, often dissonant colors, without regard for the subject's natural colors. Matisse showed *Open Window* and *Woman with the Hat* at the Salon. Critic Louis Vauxcelles described the work with the phrase "Donatello au milieu des fauves!" (Donatello among the wild beasts), referring to a Renaissance-type sculpture that shared the room with them





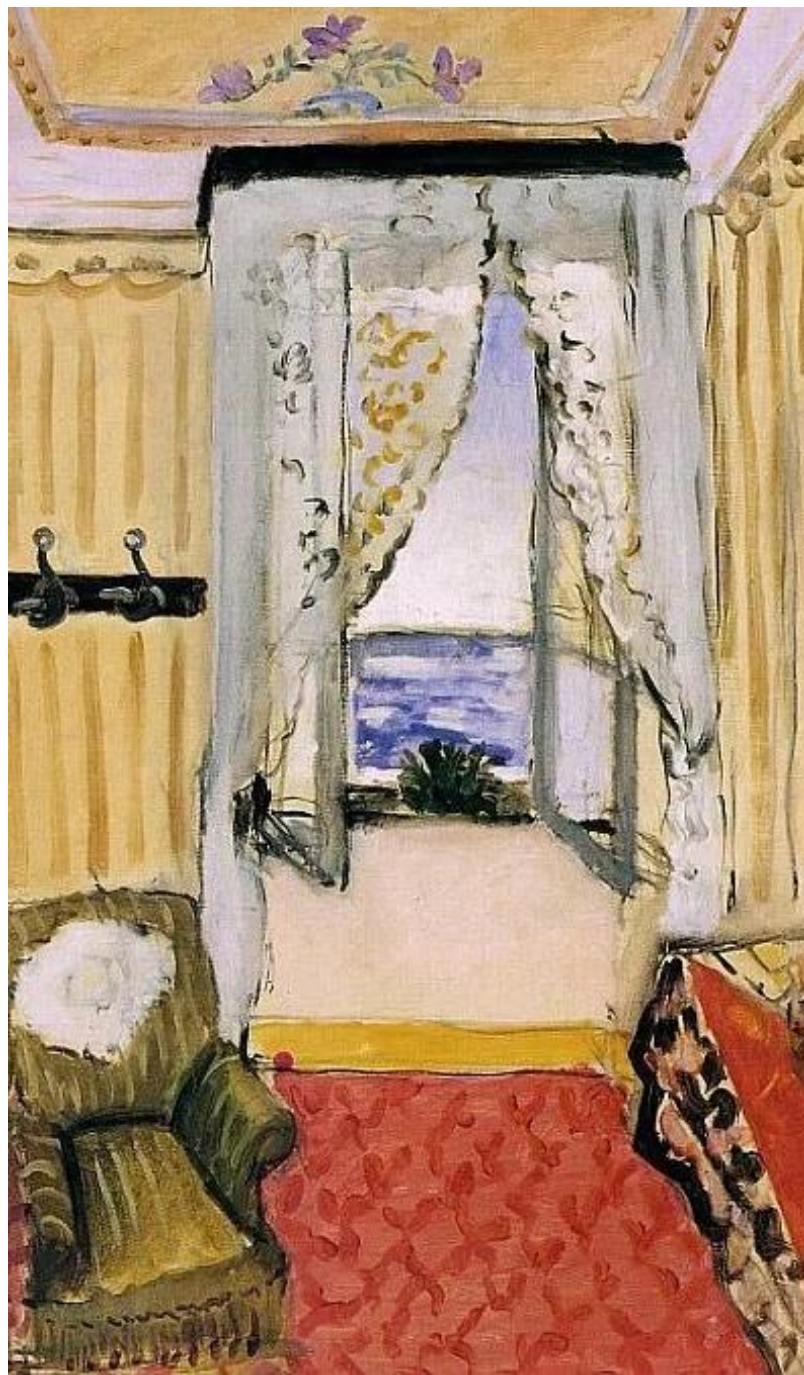
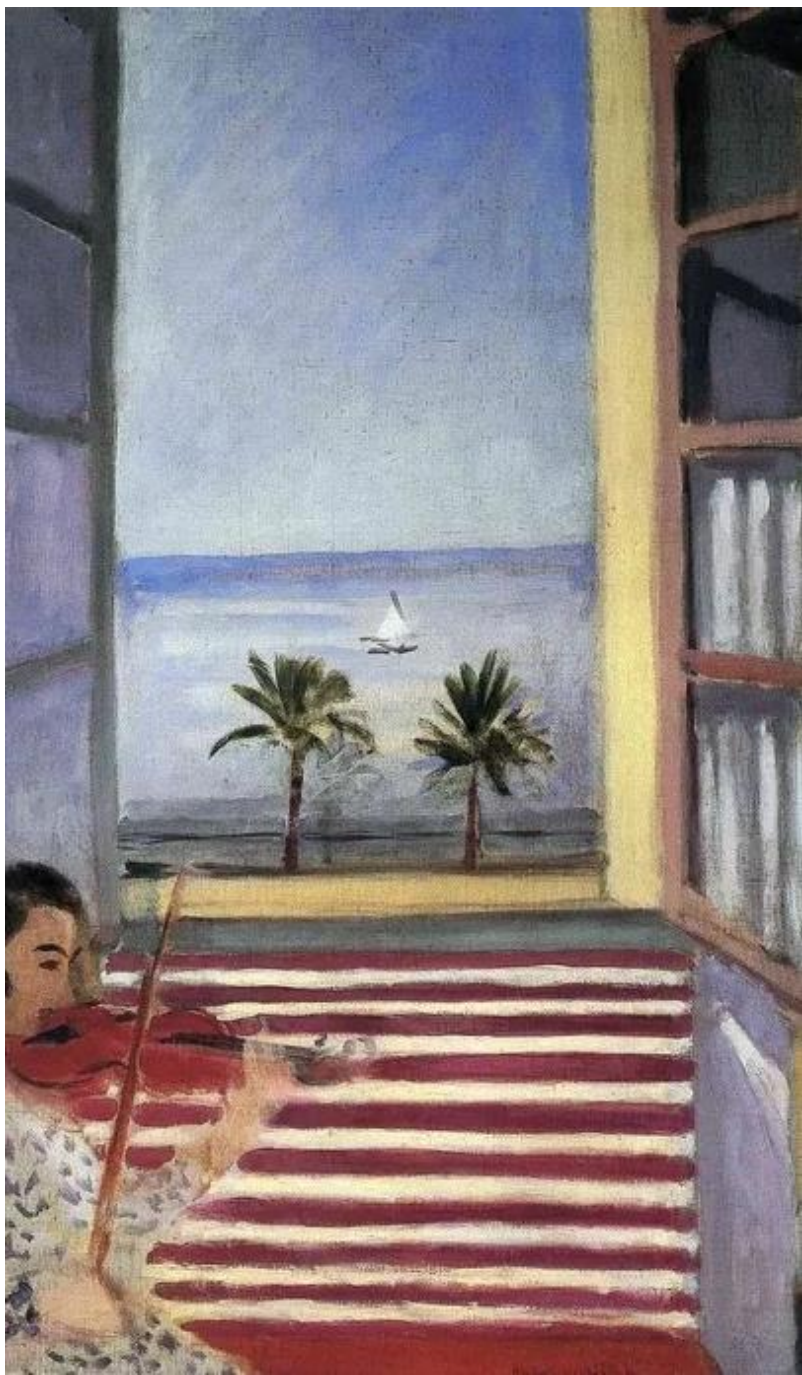


## Matisse in the Riviera

In 1917 Matisse relocated to Cimiez on the French Riviera, a suburb of the city of Nice. His work of the decade or so following this relocation shows a relaxation and a softening of his approach. His orientalist odalisque paintings are characteristic of the period; while popular, some contemporary critics found this work shallow and decorative. He lived in Nice for 40 years and produced countless paintings.

*“When I realised that I would see this light every morning, I couldn’t believe my luck. ... The sea is blue, but bluer than any one has ever painted it, a colour entirely fantastic and incredible. It is the blue of sapphires, of the peacock’s wing, of an Alpine glacier, and the kingfisher melted together; and yet it is like none of these, for it shines with the unearthly radiance of Neptune’s kingdom; it is like nothing but itself, its color is so rich and deep you would think it opaque, and yet it gleams, it is translucent, it shines as if it were lit up from below.”*







# La Chapelle du Rosaire de Vence – The Matisse Chapel

In 1951, Matisse completed a four-year endeavor designing the interior, stained glass windows, and decorations of the Chapelle du Rosaire de Vence, commonly known as the Matisse Chapel. This project stemmed from his close friendship with Sister Jacques-Marie, whom he had employed as a nurse and model in 1941 before she became a Dominican nun. They reconnected in Vence and began their collaboration.

Although he had never undertaken such a project before, Matisse, then seventy-seven, approached it with great enthusiasm. He crafted every aspect: the stained-glass windows, flooring, wall designs, lighting, and even the priest's vestments. Modest on the exterior and harmonizing with the typically sunny surroundings of Vence, the Matisse Chapel is primarily identified by its white and blue tiled roof and its thirteen-meter-high wrought iron cross adorned with crescent moons and golden flames.









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