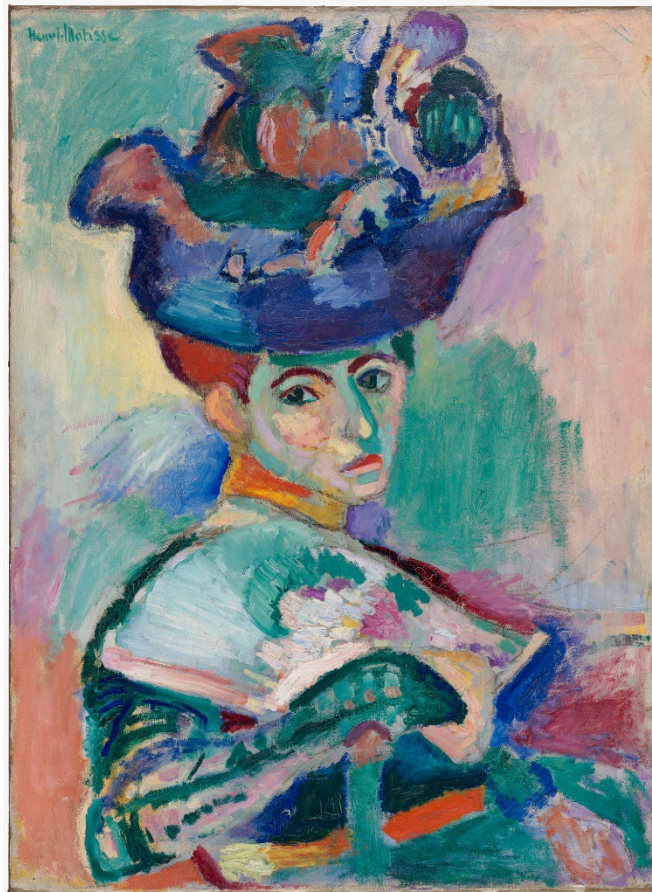


**SFMOMA IS EXCLUSIVE VENUE OF
*MATISSE'S FEMME AU CHAPEAU: A MODERN SCANDAL***

**Major Exhibition Explores the Spectacular Debut and Enduring Impact of
One of Henri Matisse's Most Iconic Paintings**



May 16–September 13, 2026

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 6, 2025; updated March 5, 2026)—Henri Matisse ignited passionate controversy in 1905 with the public debut of *Femme au chapeau* (Woman with a Hat) at the Salon d'Automne in Paris. The portrait of the artist's wife, Amélie, was at the center of a defining moment of rupture in the history of modern art, shocking audiences with its seemingly carefree brushstrokes and bright hues that purposefully departed from observed reality. It was established as the leading image of Fauvism, the first French avant-

garde art movement of the 20th century, and its impact has continued for more than 120 years.

From May 16 to September 13, 2026, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present a major exhibition titled *Matisse’s Femme au chapeau: A Modern Scandal*. This project will shed new light on how the painting—now an icon of the museum’s collection—made its mark on art history. Positioning Matisse in dialogue with his peers and followers, as well as artists working today, the exhibition will examine in greater depth than ever before the painting’s historical context, subject, circulation and impact.

“We are thrilled to have this opportunity to share the full story of Matisse’s *Femme au chapeau*— a painting that marks the artist’s radical break from convention in the early years of his career,” said Janet Bishop, SFMOMA’s Thomas Weisel Family Chief Curator. “Arguably SFMOMA’s most art historically significant painting—*Femme au chapeau* began sending shockwaves through the art world as soon as it left Matisse’s studio and has captivated viewers ever since. The exhibition will tell its full story, from its public debut in 1905, to its years as a must-see painting in Leo and Gertrude Stein’s Left Bank apartment, to the walls of SFMOMA.”

The exhibition will also explore how the painting marked a pivotal moment in Matisse’s career, as it captured the attention of American expatriate collectors Leo and Gertrude Stein who, while living in Paris, acquired the work on the last day of the Salon d’Automne exhibition. In 1915, *Femme au chapeau* made its way to the Paris collection of their brother and sister-in-law Michael and Sarah Stein, who brought it across the Atlantic, from France to the Bay Area in 1935. Matisse’s painting was shown in the US for the first time the following year, in an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now SFMOMA) organized by its founding director, Grace McCann Morley. Since entering the museum’s collection in 1991 as a bequest of Levi’s heiress Elise S. Haas, who had purchased the work from Sarah Stein in 1948 it has continued to resonate with contemporary artists, who find inspiration in its bold approach to color and form. *Femme au chapeau* does not travel by the terms of its bequest, making SFMOMA the exclusive venue for this landmark exhibition.

“Part of our vision at SFMOMA is to encourage our visitors to see the world—and art—in new ways. Matisse’s *Femme au chapeau* has long been a cornerstone of SFMOMA’s collection, and I am thrilled by this opportunity to consider the initial shock and enduring impact of this remarkable artwork through a range of different perspectives,” said Christopher Bedford, Helen and Charles Schwab Director of SFMOMA. “With stunning paintings by Matisse and his peers, as well as work by some of the most exceptional artists working today, this exhibition promises to captivate SFMOMA visitors this spring.”

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

The heart of the exhibition will restage the public debut of Matisse's *Femme au chapeau* in Gallery VII of the 1905 Salon d'Automne in Paris. This gallery inspired the moniker "fauve" (wild beasts), coined in a review by critic Louis Vauxcelles in the October 17, 1905 issue of the periodical *Gil Blas*. Designed to echo the architectural context of the Salon, this space will feature work by all 10 of the artists and will reunite the greatest number of objects from that gallery since 1905. The recreation of this seminal display will illuminate how and why works by Matisse, Charles Camoin, André Derain, Henri Manguin, Albert Marquet, and Maurice de Vlaminck, among others sparked such heated debate and admiration during their time.

Other galleries will include focused analyses of different aspects of *Femme au chapeau's* subject and history. One section will bring light to its model, Amélie Matisse, as both a professional hat-maker as well as Matisse's partner and close collaborator and will investigate the broader fashions of the time that informed her choice of headwear in the painting. Another explores the painting's journey from the Paris salon to San Francisco as well as the circulation of its image through exhibitions and publications. The final chapter of the exhibition will trace how artists have responded to Matisse's painting over time—from works made by his peers during or in the immediate aftermath of the Salon to those by artists working today such as Hilary Harkness and Rachel Harrison, among others—who continue to be impacted by its mesmerizing subject and vibrant palette.

CATALOGUE

A richly illustrated 128-page book will accompany the exhibition, published by SFMOMA in association with DelMonico Books · DAP (Distributed Art Publishers). The volume will shed new light on *Femme au chapeau*, examining in unprecedented depth how Henri Matisse's portrait of his wife Amélie made its mark on art history. Positioning Matisse in dialogue with his contemporaries, and collaborators, as well as artists working today, the book will examine the painting's historical context, subject, circulation, and impact over more than 120 years. Contributors include Janet Bishop, Maria Castro, Claudine Grammont, Alison Guh, and Popy Venzal.

ORGANIZATION

Matisse's Femme au chapeau: A Modern Scandal is organized by Janet Bishop, Thomas Weisel Family Chief Curator and Maria Castro, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture with Alison Guh, Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture.

SUPPORT

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San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

151 Third Street
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Media Contacts

Clara Hatcher Baruth, chatcher@sfmoma.org, 415.357.4177
Rebecca Herman, rherman@sfmoma.org, 415.357.4174
Alex Gill, agill@sfmoma.org, 415.357.4170

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