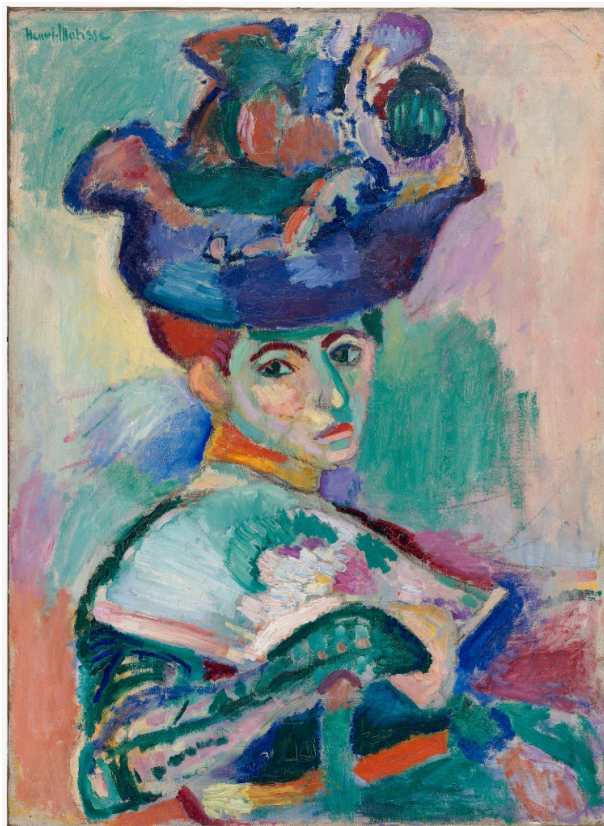


**EXCLUSIVE SFMOMA PRESENTATION OF
MATISSE'S FEMME AU CHAPEAU: A MODERN SCANDAL EXPLORES THE
SPECTACULAR DEBUT AND ENDURING IMPACT OF MATISSE'S ICONIC
PAINTING**

Major Exhibition Opens with a Hat Party and a Free Community Day



**Matisse's *Femme au chapeau*: A Modern Scandal
May 16–September 27, 2026**

**Press Preview Thursday, May 14
Hat Party Sunday, May 17
Free Community Day Sunday, May 24**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 6, 2025; updated September 8, 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.

From May 16 to September 27, 2026, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present *Matisse’s Femme au chapeau: A Modern Scandal*, a major exhibition illuminating how the painting—now an icon of the museum’s collection—made its mark on art history. Positioning Matisse in dialogue with his peers, subsequent generations, as well as artists working today, the exhibition will examine in greater depth than ever before the painting’s historical context, subject, provenance, circulation through exhibitions and publications, and impact over more than a century.

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 1905 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 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. Under the terms of its bequest, *Femme au chapeau* does not travel, making SFMOMA the exclusive venue for this landmark exhibition.

“We are thrilled to have this opportunity to share the full story of Matisse’s *Femme au chapeau*—a painting that is emblematic of 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 work of art, *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 shed light on the painting in more detail than ever before, from its public debut in Paris in 1905, to its years as a must-see painting in Leo and Gertrude Stein’s Left Bank apartment, and, eventually to the walls of SFMOMA.”

“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; through this exhibition we are able 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 included in the original presentation 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. An opening section will introduce the painting’s model, Amélie Matisse, as both a professional hat-maker and partner and close collaborator to Matisse. It 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 its circulation through exhibitions, and reproductions. Animated large-scale projections of both the Grand Palais and Leo and Gertrude Stein’s Left Bank apartment will provide immersive experiences, fostering further connections between visitors and the early twentieth-century Parisian avant-garde.

The final chapters of the exhibition will trace how artists have responded to Matisse’s painting over time—from works made by his peers such as Jacqueline Marval, Jean Metzinger, Kees Van Dongen, and Maurice de Vlaminck during or in the immediate aftermath of the Salon to those by artists working today such as Hilary Harkness, Rachel Harrison, David Hockney and others. The exhibition also uncovers its impact closer to home on Bay Area Figurative artists like Joan Brown, Richard Diebenkorn and David Park.

FREE COMMUNITY DAY AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS

In celebration of the opening of *Matisse's Femme au chapeau: A Modern Scandal*, visitors are invited to wear their favorite hat when visiting the museum on Sunday, May 17, 2026. Visitors can also head to the Koret Education Center on Floor 2 and the Gina and Stuart Peterson White Box on Floor 4 for **Hat Party**, where they can make their own hat from recycled materials with SCRAP and craft *flores de papel*.

On Sunday, May 24, 2026, SFMOMA will host a **Free Community Day**, offering free public programming and free admission to the entire museum, including *Matisse's Femme au chapeau: A Modern Scandal*.

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 examine in unprecedented depth how Henri Matisse's portrait of his wife Amélie impacted more than a century of art history. 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, former Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture with Alison Guh, Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture.

SUPPORT

Lead support for *Matisse's Femme au chapeau: A Modern Scandal* is provided by Mimi and Peter Haas Fund and Diana Nelson and John Atwater.

Presenting support is provided by Bank of America and Dana and Bob Emery. Major support is provided by Neal Benezra Exhibition Fund, Carolyn and Preston Butcher SFMOMA Exhibition Fund, and Davidow Family Fund for Exhibitions of Modern Art.

Significant support is provided by Deloitte and Yes SF, Mary Jane Elmore, Christine and Pierre Lamond, The Elaine McKeon Endowed Exhibition Fund, Jessica Moment and Sebastian Bredberg, Deborah and Kenneth Novack, The Bernard and Barbro Osher Exhibition Fund, Stephanie and Mark Robinson, and Anonymous.

Meaningful support is provided by Alka and Ravin Agrawal, Dolly and George Chammas, Jessica and Matt Farron, Laurie and Jim Ghielmetti, Robert Lehman Foundation, Stuart G. Moldaw Public Program and Exhibition Fund, Keiko Sakamoto and Bill Witte, Nancy and Alan Schatzberg, Thomas W. Weisel and Janet Barnes, Bobbie and Mike Wilsey, Pat and Bill Wilson Exhibitions Fund, and Anonymous.

Additional support is provided by The Glen and Sakie Fukushima Fund and John and Carry Thacher.

Support for the catalogue is provided by Furthermore: a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund.

Matisse: The Wild Palette digital interactive and film utilizing Google AI to bring to life archival images of the Grand Palais are provided with support from Google Arts & Culture.

Significant support for Free Community Day is provided by the Walter & Elise Haas Fund in honor of Elise S. Haas.

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

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The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is one of the largest museums of modern and contemporary art in the United States and a thriving cultural center for the Bay Area. Our remarkable collection of painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, design and media arts is housed in a LEED Gold-certified building designed by the global architects Snøhetta and Mario Botta. In addition to our seven gallery floors, SFMOMA now offers over 45,000 square feet of free, art-filled public space open to all.

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Henri Matisse, *Femme au chapeau* (Woman with a Hat), 1905; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, bequest of Elise S. Haas; photo: Glen Cheriton for SFMOMA