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Henri Matisse

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Louis Aragon is one of France's foremost poets, Matisse is one of France's most glorious painters. To Aragon, in the darkest moment of France's history, Matisse became France itself. Their first meeting took place in 1941, during the occupation of France by the Germans. Aragon and his Russian wife, Elsa Triolet, had sought refuge in Nice. Matisse, in love with the Mediterranean light, lived in Cimiez, above Nice. Aragon, who had admired him all his life, now came to know him personally. He watched Matisse while he worked, began to write about him, recorded his words and his comments on Aragon's writings about him. Aragon has been writing about Matisse ever since. His insights into the workings of Matisse's mind and brush are not those of an art critic but of a fellow artist, fascinated by the infinite expressive complexity of Matisse's method, by his constant capacity for renewal.

It took Aragon close to twenty-seven years to put this book together. He assembled here all that he had ever written on Matisse, adding to it, elaborating on it, providing his glosses, letting memory do its creative work, shaping his material into what it pleases him to call 'a novel', and allowing himself numerous digressions. In spite of his elliptical ways, however, the subject 'Matisse' is overwhelmingly present, most obviously through the illustrations, carefully keyed into the text following Aragon's layout instructions and admirably illuminating it, but no less through Matisse's own words which Aragon records with scrupulous fidelity. What he has arrived at is a dialogue between writer and painter unique in writings on artists and art and uniquely revealing of the creative process.

The French Window (1914)
Paris, Private Collection
Photo Studio Adrion, Paris
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2 vols
£28 net

Aragon
Matisse: a novel
1972





But man is our subject . . .
I. - Henri Matisse, *Self-portrait* (1906).

Aragon

Henri Matisse a novel

Translated by Jean Stewart

I

Collins, St James's Place, London

The lines from Dante's *Divine Comedy* quoted on p. 55 are from the translation by Dorothy L. Sayers of *Book II: Purgatorio*, published by Penguin Books, Ltd.

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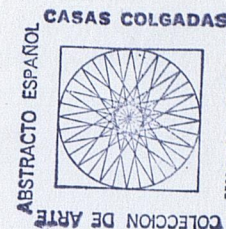
Louis Aragon is one of France's foremost poets, Matisse is one of France's most glorious painters. To Aragon, in the darkest moment of France's history, Matisse became France itself. Their first meeting took place in 1941, during the occupation of France by the Germans. Aragon and his Russian wife, Elsa Triolet, had sought refuge in Nice. Matisse, in love with the Mediterranean light, lived in Cimiez, above Nice. Aragon, who had admired him all his life, now came to know him personally. He watched Matisse while he worked, began to write about him, recorded his words and his comments on Aragon's writings about him. Aragon has been writing about Matisse ever since. His insights into the workings of Matisse's mind and brush are not those of an art critic but of a fellow artist, fascinated by the infinite expressive complexity of Matisse's method, by his constant capacity for renewal.

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Large Interior in Red (1948)
Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne
Photo U.D.F. - La Photothèque, Paris
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del Museo
Arago 

Henri Matisse: a novel



045504-80



I. — *Seated Blue Nude*, cut-out gouache, 1952. Reproduced for the first time from the original and not from the lithograph.

Aragon

Henri Matisse

a novel

Translated by Jean Stewart

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Collins, St James's Place, London

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