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NY CULTURE

Matisse's Cut-Outs, Now Screening at a Theater Near You

Museum Looks to Metropolitan Opera's Live in HD Series for Inspiration



Director Phil Grabsky and curators Jodi Hauptman and Karl Buchberg at 'Henri Matisse: The Cut Outs,' at the Museum of Modern Art. *ANDREW HINDERAKER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

By **ANDY BATTAGLIA**

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The vibrant colors of Henri Matisse move from white walls to the silver screen on Tuesday, when three New York City cinemas, along with hundreds more across the U.S.,

screen a new film about the artist's blockbuster show at the Museum of Modern Art.

The film is part of the new series "Exhibition on Screen," which aims to do for museums what the Metropolitan Opera has done with its Live in HD series, which broadcasts productions to movie theaters.

"We want to show the exhibition as well as we possibly can to the audience who can't get there," said Phil Grabsky, director of the Matisse film, which focuses on the MoMA show as well as an earlier incarnation at Tate Modern in London. "But the audience is mixed: people who know a lot about art and people who know absolutely nothing. I want them both to feel equally satisfied."

Inspired by the kind of "event cinema" pioneered by the Met, which began broadcasting live streams of some of its operas to movie screens in 2006, Mr. Grabsky started his series to simulate the experience of strolling through an art exhibit.

Though none of it is live, his film, "Matisse From MoMA and Tate Modern," mixes high-definition footage from cameras moving through rooms with commentary from curators, museum administrators and, by way of a narrator reading words from the past, Matisse himself.

"We talk a lot about accessibility and the way we can make the work we do here accessible beyond the walls," said Jodi Hauptman, co-curator of the MoMA show. "For audiences that can't necessarily come to New York to see the work in person, it offers access. And people who have seen the exhibition have a chance to have another look or see behind-the-scenes stories that go into making these kind of ambitious projects."

Karl Buchberg, Ms. Hauptman's curatorial colleague and co-star in the film, described it as a rare chance to share in some of the process.

"As a curator or especially as a conservator, many people have no idea what you do even after you describe it," he said.

Had he ever imagined watching himself work on a movie screen?

"It is a career that one expects never to have a star turn," he said. "It may be like when a special-effects person sits and watches 'King Kong.'"

After the film's one-night showing on Tuesday—in New York City it plays at Regal Union Square Stadium 14, AMC Loews Kips Bay 15 and AMC Empire 25 in Times Square—the



Henri Matisse in a still from 'Matisse From MoMA and Tate Modern.' *FATHOM EVENTS/ARTS ALLIANCE/SEVENTH ART PRODUCTIONS*



'Matisse Live' with Royal Ballet principal Zenaida Yanowsky. *JAMES MORTON-HAWORTH*

“Exhibition on Screen” series continues throughout the year with similar films about shows devoted to Rembrandt, Vincent van Gogh, Johannes Vermeer and 19th-century Impressionists.

Mr. Grabsky began “Exhibition on Screen” in 2013 through his company Seventh Art Productions in

Brighton, England. “For various reasons, much of them technological, there’s demand

for documentaries and cultural films in cinemas,” he said. “The cinema is the best place to see these types of programs.”

The screens are bigger and sharper, he said, but they also bring people together in ways similar to the museum experience itself.

“We live in a society where the opportunity to intermingle and interrelate is diminishing,” Mr. Grabsky said. “You can go days without actually talking and meeting with people. Cinemas stake a claim for being real hubs of community.”

From the museum side, it presents a chance to fan the fever for a popular exhibition that passed the 500,000-visitor mark last week. To meet demand, the show was recently extended two days, through Feb. 10, with additional hours on weekends this month and continuous 24-hour accessibility on its final weekend Feb. 6-8.

“People really love this exhibition,” Mr. Buchberg said. “They’re responding to color and form but also to Matisse, working in a crescendo toward the end of his life, and working on such wonderful scale on such wonderful pieces. The guards all say people are always smiling when they leave.”

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