



Graphic Passion: Matisse and the Book Arts (Penn State Series in the History of the Book)

John Bidwell

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The great painter Henri Matisse was also a great book illustrator. A pioneering member of the Fauves, a supreme colorist, a remarkable draftsman, and a creative genius: this is the Matisse known and admired by everyone with even a passing interest in modern art. But few know Matisse as an artist who designed and illustrated his own books. From 1912 until his death in 1954, he engaged in nearly fifty illustration projects, many of which rank among the greatest artists' books of the twentieth century. A master printmaker, equally adept in various media, he ensured that his prints would appear to best advantage in conjunction with the printed page. He directly participated in page layout, typography, lettering, ornament, cover design, and even the choice of text. More than any others of his rank and stature, he knew the principles of visual communication and perceived the potential of letterpress printing.

Graphic Passion recounts the publication history of nearly fifty books illustrated by Matisse, including masterworks such as *Lettres portugaises*, Mallarmé's *Poésies*, and his own *Jazz*. It is the first comprehensive, in-depth analysis of his book-production ventures and the first systematic survey of this topic in English. Drawing on unpublished correspondence and business documents, it contains new information about his illustration methods, typographic precepts, literary sensibilities, and staunch opinions about the role of the artist in the publication process.

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