

One Artist's Colorful Tribute To Henri Matisse



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Arts

I write about the crossover between high art and pop culture.



Grand Odalisque with Batik Kantha by Robert Kushner DC MOORE GALLERY

American artist [Robert Kushner](#) recently opened a solo exhibition at the [DC Moore Gallery](#) in New York. “[I ♥ Matisse](#)” pays tribute to the artist’s love and admiration for the French modern artist, Henri Matisse. The exhibition runs until June 19.

Kushner is showing a series of new paintings that tap into Matisse’s bold palette and patterns. Each painting has either fruits, plants or fabrics that call to mind the French artist’s simple, abstract approach to modern art. From fabrics to patterns, ceramics and textiles, they offer insight into domestic bliss and finding the magic in our everyday. As Matisse once said: “I don’t paint things. I only paint the difference between things.”



Birthday Party Steuben Vase and Oranges by Robert Kushner DC MOORE GALLERY

In one piece called “*Birthday Party Steuben Vase and Oranges*,” Kushner paints a bowl of oranges on a wildly patterned table with matching walls. In another, called “*Daffodils and Dupatta*,” a patterned vase with daffodils sits on a table with a blue-hued tablecloth.

Kushner doesn't play it safe when it comes to color. Each painting brings together a wide range of hues, from pastel pinks to mint greens and bright yellows, which in theory might clash, but here, work together harmoniously thanks to his expert compositions. They are all tinged with a sense of exoticism, as many of these paintings send our imaginations off on journeys to places like North Africa, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe.

The artist created these works while in his studio over the past year, or so. Kushner imagined himself back in time.

“I work thinking more about being an artist in the 1930s,” he said in a statement. “I am a Danish (or maybe Finnish, or maybe Swedish) artist who studied at Matisse’s academy in Paris, which ran from 1907 to 1911, during the heyday of the Parisian avant-garde and of Fauvism itself.”

He says that he “summons” in his mind “the blinding light” of the French Riviera.

“I remember being a student of the master, watching him daily in awe, as I am now squeezing the entire world of color onto my palette and then letting it sing on the canvas,” said Kushner. “In my studio, I am carefree, wild, experimental, intoxicated by color harmonies and the sun-drenched tranquility and protection of being in the south of France. Or is it the south of California? The Mediterranean plants, the fruit, the vases, the fabrics; that is what keeps going on in my head.”