

# HENRI ÉMILE BENOÎT MATISSE

1869-1954 • French modernist painter who turned illness into a final language of color and scissors



French modernist painter, sculptor, and designer, 1869-1954. After grave illness nearly took his body, he made a late language from color, paper, and scissors.



He had already changed painting with Fauvist color and restless simplification. By old age, his hand knew rooms, figures, textiles, and Mediterranean light.



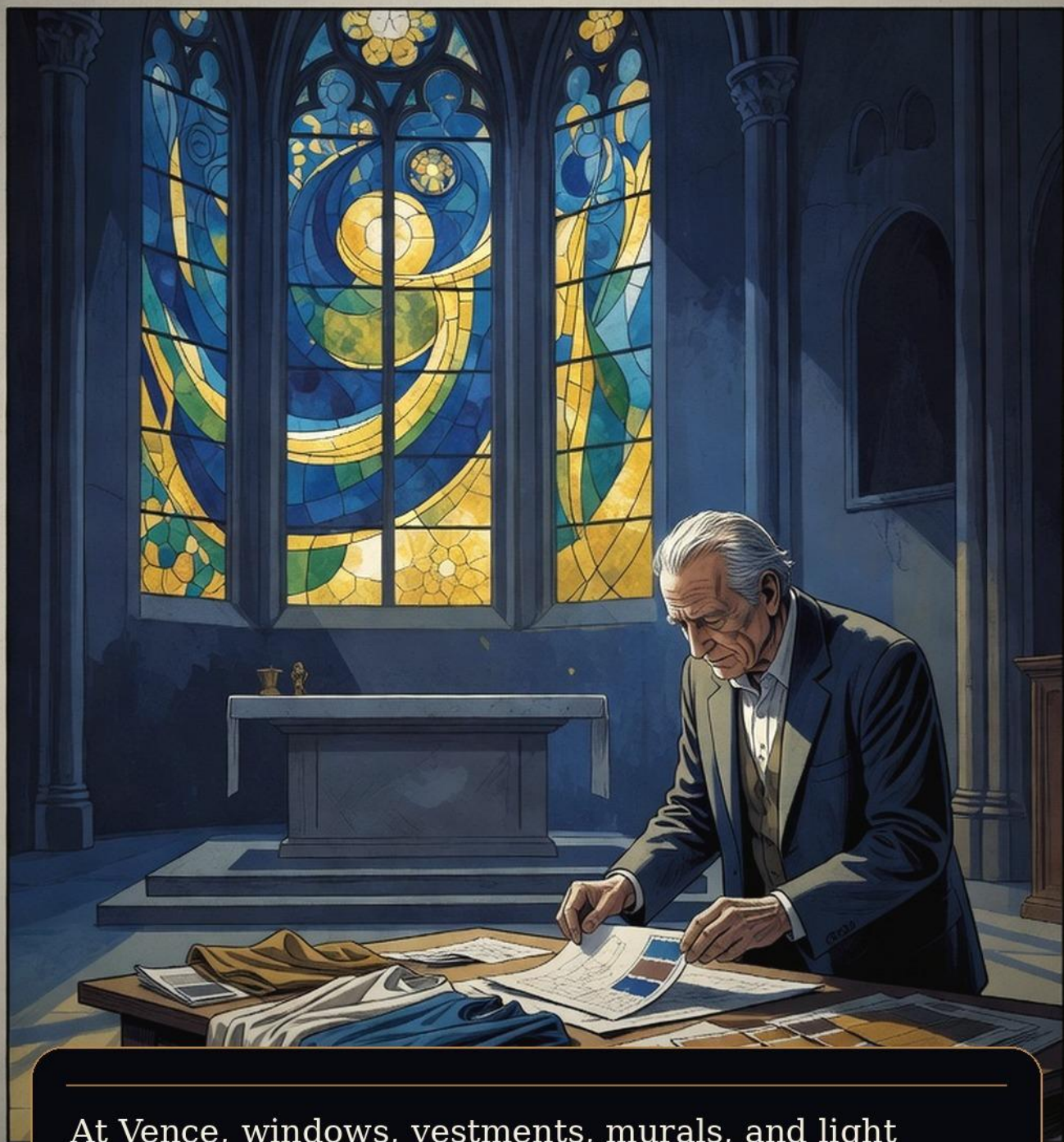
In 1941, in Lyon, surgery for duodenal cancer nearly killed him through complications. The old painter survived, but bed and chair narrowed the world.



Confinement did not end the work. Drawings, assistants, painted paper, and long-handled tools brought the studio to the body that could no longer move freely.



The cut-outs were not a retreat. For Jazz and the late paper works, he used scissors like a blade of color, cutting shape straight from painted sheets.



At Vence, windows, vestments, murals, and light became one work. The old limits became scale: color entered walls, worship, and air.



Matisse's late work renewed modern art's vocabulary. Museums now treat the cut-outs as a final reinvention, not a frail man's afterthought.



Henri Matisse died in Nice on November 3, 1954, and was buried at Cimiez. The operation gave him no comfort. It gave him time — and he spent it in color.

Sources: Musée Matisse Nice; Encyclopaedia Britannica; Centre Pompidou; Saint Louis Art Museum.

A second life is not extra time. It is the bill coming due.