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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – EXHIBITION

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AN EXHIBITION OF MATISSE DRAWINGS CURATED BY ELLSWORTH KELLY
June 25 – September 18, 2016

Matisse Drawings: Curated by Ellsworth Kelly from The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation Collection will begin its national tour on June 25, 2016, at the Weatherspoon Art Museum in Greensboro, North Carolina.

The Weatherspoon Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is pleased to announce three exhibitions opening in June 2016. The main exhibition, Matisse Drawings: Curated by Ellsworth Kelly from The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation Collection provides the unique opportunity to view the work of a modern master through the eyes of one of the greatest abstract artists of the twentieth century. Through a selection of 45 works, Ellsworth Kelly surveys Henri Matisse’s drawings from 1900 through 1950—from sketches to finished pieces—and reveals Matisse’s process and creativity as a draftsman. Matisse Drawings: Curated by Ellsworth Kelly from The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation Collection is organized by the American Federation of Arts and the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in collaboration with The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation.

To accompany Matisse’s drawings, nine works from Kelly’s own Suite of Plant Lithographs (1964–66) will be shown in an adjacent gallery in an exhibition entitled Plant Lithographs by Ellsworth Kelly 1964-1966. The coupling suggests both the sympathies and distinct differences between the two artists.
The two exhibitions were presented at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum (August–December 2014). After the only Southeast appearance at the Weatherspoon Art Museum in Greensboro, North Carolina (June 25–September 18, 2016), the tour continues to the Katonah Museum of Art, in Katonah, New York (October 23, 2016–January 29, 2017), the Audain Art Museum, Whistler, British Columbia, Canada (February 24–May 21, 2017), and the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, Michigan (November 18, 2017–February 18, 2018).

Matisse drew constantly throughout his life. With a deceptively simple line, he conveyed shape, volume and composition, and expressed emotion. His direct and elegant renderings inspired Kelly and continue to inspire countless others. In an interview with John Stomberg (reproduced in the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition), Kelly stated, “Picasso made me want to paint, but Matisse drawings made me want to draw.”

Ellsworth Kelly discerningly chose for exhibition both exemplary drawings and works that reflect Matisse’s drawing process. Included are studies of body movements, repeated views of a single detail, and fully realized renderings, as well as sketches related to major works, such as The Dance (1931). Selected from the collection of The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation, many of these drawings have rarely, if ever, been displayed in public.

Kelly arranged Matisse’s drawings in a single row, evenly spaced, with identical off-white mats and pale wooden frames, and chose not to use wall labels. Reflecting on Kelly’s installation in the accompanying catalogue, John Stomberg states, “While every Matisse drawing was shown to its best advantage, Kelly’s aesthetic added dramatically to the experience of the exhibition. Viewers walked through an Ellsworth Kelly composition to see Henri Matisse drawings.” This minimalist presentation allows the works to be viewed without distraction.

This is echoed in the separate display of nine works by Kelly in an adjacent gallery. In 1969, Kelly stated: “The plant drawings... are exact observations of the form of the leaf or flower or fruit seen. Nothing is changed or added: no shading, no surface making. They are not an approximation of the thing seen nor are they a personal expression of an abstraction.... My lesson was to see objectively to erase all “meaning” of the thing seen. Then only, could the real meaning of it be understood and felt.”

Realized in 2014, when Kelly was 91 years old, Matisse Drawings was one of his last projects. Although the artists never met, comparisons have been drawn between the two. After Kelly’s death in December 2015, the art critic Jerry Saltz described him as “the artist I now think of as the American Matisse.”

In conjunction with Matisse Drawings and Plant Lithographs by Ellsworth Kelly 1964-1966, the Weatherspoon will present works from its permanent collection in an exhibition, Henri Matisse: Selections from the Claribel and Etta Cone Collection. Working in different media often helped Matisse sort out compositional and stylistic problems as well as formulate new ideas. This focused exhibition of bronzes and lithographs will explore one of Matisse’s enduring themes, the female body.
Ellsworth Kelly
One of the most important practitioners of abstract art in the United States, American artist Ellsworth Kelly (1923–2015) gained an international reputation by the early 1950s. Over the course of six decades, he created an extraordinary body of work comprising abstract painting and sculpture, as well as figurative drawings and prints. Kelly’s work has been featured in numerous solo exhibitions at institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2007), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2002), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1998), the Guggenheim Museum (1996), and the Whitney Museum of American Art (1982).

Publication
The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in association with the American Federation of Arts. It features a new interview with Kelly and reproductions of all of the works in the exhibition.

Credits
_Matisse Drawings: Curated by Ellsworth Kelly from The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation Collection_ is organized by the American Federation of Arts and the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in collaboration with The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation.

The exhibition was made possible by the generous support of the Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Charitable Trust and The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation. Additional support provided by the JFM Foundation, and Mrs. Donald M. Cox.

_Matisse Drawings and Plant Lithographs by Ellsworth Kelly, 1964-1966_ are sponsored at the Weatherspoon by a generous gift from Jane R. Kearns.


Related Programs:

**Director's Preview and Remarks**
**Thursday, June 23, 5:30pm**
Join Director Nancy Doll for a special reception and preview of _Matisse Drawings: Curated by Ellsworth Kelly from The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation Collection_.
By invitation.

**Modern Art on Display: The Legacies of Six Collectors**
**Thursday, June 23, 6:30pm**
Art historian and professor emerita Dr. K. Porter Aichele, UNCG, brings a new perspective to the history of collecting and interpreting modern art in America over half a century (1915-1960) by pairing collectors of modern art with artists they favored. By examining the books the collectors themselves read and analyzing archival photographs of their displays, Aichele makes a case for the historical significance of how the collectors presented the art they acquired before their collections were institutionalized. Among the six collector artist pairs she examines is one well-known to the
Weatherspoon: Etta Cone and Henri Matisse. **Open to the public.** Visitors are invited to preview *Matisse Drawings: Curated by Ellsworth Kelly from The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation Collection* following the talk.

**Educators Workshop**
**Tuesday + Wednesday, June 28 +29, 10am-4pm**
**$55 WAM Members; $70 Non-Members**
The focus of this workshop will be on drawing from botanicals and the live model in conjunction with WAM’s exhibitions of Matisse’s drawings and Ellsworth Kelly’s lithographs. Visiting instructor **Alix Hitchcock** will lead this workshop in the Gatewood Studio Arts Building's well-equipped drawing studio on UNCG's campus. Pre-registration is required. Contact Terri Dowell-Dennis at t_dowell@uncg.edu for details.

**Noon @ the ‘Spoon Exhibition Tour**
**Tuesday, August 9, 12pm**
Our 20-minute Noon @ the 'Spoon tour is a fun way to explore a new exhibition during your lunch break. Offered the second Tuesday of the month. Free. This month’s tour will be led by WAM’s Curator of Collections, **Elaine D. Gustafson.**

For a complete, updated list of related programs and public tours, visit: [http://weatherspoon.uncg.edu](http://weatherspoon.uncg.edu).

**About the American Federation of Arts**
The American Federation of Arts is the leader in traveling exhibitions internationally. A nonprofit organization founded in 1909, the AFA is dedicated to enriching the public’s experience and understanding of the visual arts through organizing and touring art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishing exhibition catalogues featuring important scholarly research, and developing educational programs. For more information about the AFA, visit [www.afaweb.org](http://www.afaweb.org).

**About the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum**
The [Mount Holyoke College Art Museum](http://www.mhc.edu/Arts-and-Culture/Museum) aims to spark intellectual curiosity and ignite a lasting passion for learning and creativity through direct engagement with art and material culture. Founded in 1876, MHCAM stewards, displays, and interprets a permanent collection of over 24,000 objects and generates thought-provoking exhibitions, publications, and programs.

**About the Weatherspoon Art Museum**

**Mission**
The Weatherspoon Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro acquires, preserves, exhibits, and interprets modern and contemporary art for the benefit of its multiple audiences, including university, community, regional, and beyond. Through these activities, the museum recognizes its paramount role of public service, and enriches the lives of diverse individuals by fostering an informed appreciation and understanding of the visual arts and their relationship to the world in which we live.

**History**
The Weatherspoon Art Museum at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro was founded by Gregory Ivy in 1941 and is the earliest of any art facilities within the UNC system. The museum was founded as a resource for the campus, community, and region and its early leadership developed an emphasis—maintained to this day—on presenting and acquiring modern and contemporary works of art. A 1950 bequest from the renowned collection of Claribel and Etta
Cone, which included prints and bronzes by Henri Matisse and other works on paper by American and European modernists, helped to establish the Weatherspoon’s permanent collection. Other prescient acquisitions during Ivy’s tenure included a 1951 suspended mobile by Alexander Calder, Woman by Willem de Kooning, a pivotal work in the artist’s career that was purchased in 1954, and the first drawings by Eva Hesse and Robert Smithson to enter a museum collection.

In 1989, the museum moved into its present location in The Anne and Benjamin Cone Building designed by the architectural firm Mitchell Giurgula. The museum has six galleries and a sculpture courtyard with over 17,000 square feet of exhibition space. The American Alliance of Museums accredited the Weatherspoon in 1995 and renewed its accreditation in 2005 and 2015.

**Collections + Exhibitions**
The permanent collection of the Weatherspoon Art Museum is considered to be one of the foremost of its kind in the Southeast. It represents all major art movements from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. Of the nearly 6,000 works in the collection are pieces by such prominent figures as Sol LeWitt, Robert Mangold, Cindy Sherman, Al Held, Alex Katz, Henry Tanner, Louise Nevelson, Mark di Suvero, Deborah Butterfield, and Robert Rauschenberg. The museum regularly lends to major exhibitions nationally and internationally.

The Weatherspoon also is known for its adventurous and innovative exhibition program. Through a dynamic annual calendar of fifteen to eighteen exhibitions and a multi-disciplinary educational program for audiences of all ages, the museum provides an opportunity for audiences to consider artistic, cultural, and social issues of our time and enriches the life of our university, community, and region.

**Weatherspoon Art Museum**
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