



art

Matisse, to Celebrate the Renovation of the Lyons Museum

by Claudine Canetti

LYONS thus benefits from the generous policy of "outside the walls" exhibitions led by the Centre which loans its masterpieces to museums in France but also in Spain, Finland, Japan, the United States and Mexico. Another event to accompany the complete reopening of the renovated museum, housed in what was, in the 17th and 18th centuries, one of the oldest and most prestigious Benedictine abbeys in France, is the presentation of the exceptional collection of Impressionist and modern paintings bequeathed to the museum by the actress Jacqueline Delubac, who passed away in 1997.

The Matisse exhibition groups together some 120 works (20 paintings, 11 sculptures, 53 drawings, 25 cut-out gouaches and the engravings and lithographs of a dozen illustrated books) by this painter of genius who was

one of the major figures of 20th century art (1869-1953). The presentation, by themes and in chronology, groups together, for each of the sequences chosen, paintings, drawings and sculptures showing how, in parallel with traditional methods such as modelling or charcoal or pen and ink drawing, Matisse used new techniques such as coloured paper cut-outs. The sequences alternate themes and periods of composition: **Matisse before Matisse** (1900-1903), **The decisive years** (1905-1913), **Windows and Portraits** (1914-1917), **Nice** (1918-1930), **Seeking the Arabesque** (1930-1937), **Themes and Variations** (1939-1945), **Vence** (1946-1948), **Cutting straight into colour** (1938-1953) and **Matisse and Books**.

This itinerary includes some of Matisse's most famous paintings: the *Self-Portrait* of 1900, *Interior with goldfish-bowl* (1914), *Portrait of Greta Pozor*

(1916), *The Violinist at the window* (1917-1918), *Decorative figure on an ornamental background* (1925), *The Dream* (1935, one of the first appearances of Matisse's favourite model, Lydia Delectorskaya), *The Romanian Blouse* (1940), *Still life with a magnolia* (1941) and *Large Red Interior* (1948). Among the gouache cut-outs, there are two of the famous *Blue Nudes* (1952) and the twenty original plates of the magnificent *Jazz series* (1943-1946). The four sculpted *Nudes from the back* are also exhibited in Lyons as well as, among the drawings, the "variations" on the theme of the *Woman sitting in an armchair*.

To justify being called the "little Louvre", the Lyons museum has many other treasures to show. Its collections, which are divided up among five departments over an area of nearly 7,000 m² and extend from Pharaonic Egypt to Picasso, make it a veritable "museum of civilisation" in which Greek pottery, pieces of ivory from the Middle Ages, enamels from the Renaissance, Italian painting, the Impressionists and Art Deco furniture alternate.

The star of the Department of Antiquities is Egypt where archeologists from Lyons made numerous fruitful excavations. Greece, Italy and the Near and Middle East also feature largely in this important section of the museum with, in particular, an ancient statue of Kore (young woman) coming from the Acropolis in Athens. Sumerian tablets and bronzes from Luristan.

The Department of art objects contains some very fine Roman, Gothic and Renaissance sculptures, Byzantine and Carolingian pieces of ivory, the biggest collection of Islamic art in France outside Paris, and also the exceptional Art Nouveau bedroom by Hector Guimard.

In passing, we should note the Lyons medal collection which, with its 40,000 coins, medals and seals is the largest collection of coins and medals in France after that in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

The Department of Paintings, which is the most extensive in the museum, offers a general panorama of European art from 14th century Primitives up to the 1960s with, in particular, rich collections of Italian paintings and from the schools of the North. The large collection of works from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century recall that, from 1901 when it bought *The Guitarist* by Renoir, the Lyons museum was the first non-Paris museum to dare to assemble a collection of Impressionist paintings. The first work by Gauguin to become part of a French public collection, *Nave Nave Mahana*, was bought in 1913, three years after the famous *Cafe-Con-*

cert des Ambassadeurs by Degas.

Jacqueline Delubac's bequest comes at the right time to enrich this modern art section of the museum, which was renovated and extended at the beginning of 1997. The exceptional collection of the actress who had very eclectic tastes (and who was one of the five wives of the playwright Sacha Guitry) includes three bronzes by Rodin and 34 Impressionist or modern paintings by Manet, Monet, Renoir, Degas, Bonnard, Picasso, Modigliani, Braque, Rouault, Vuillard, Dufy, Wilfredo Lam, Hartung, Poliakoff, Dubuffet and Francis Bacon.

It is a fine culmination to the renovation of this *Palais Saint-Pierre* (St Peter's palace), heir to the former abbey of the same name which became a museum in 1803 and was listed on the supplementary inventory of Historical Monuments in 1938.

Actualité en France

book

Everything You Want to Know

by Sylvie Bullo

Asprightly sixty, pocket-sized and containing exactly 128 pages, this modern encyclopedia, which adopted a compass as its symbol, benefits from the attention of the best specialists. It is the *"Que sais-je?"* (what do I know) series.

The history of this little book began in the Second World War with Paul Angouvent, a banker who had become a publisher by chance and out of humanism, a few years earlier. He had decided to merge the four declining publishing houses of which he was in charge, to produce a single one, the *Presses Universitaires de France* (PUF). With the

war and its host of everyday difficulties, Paul Angouvent sought a formula which would be compatible with the shortages of the period, to help the French to escape, at least intellectually. He found the solution with *"Que sais-je?"* and thus invented the very first pocket-sized encyclopedic collection.

To launch the collection, he chose a theme which was not of topical interest, *"Stages of Biology"* (re-edited twenty-five times with the title *"History of Biology"*). However, right after the Liberation, PUF published the *History of Germany* which was an immediate success and really launched the collection. Paul

Angouvent wanted, at the same time, to prove that his *Que sais-je?* Books were anchored in matters of current interest and to make them the worthy successors of Diderot and D'Alembert's Encyclopaedia.

The formula was tried and tested. A *Que sais-je?* Contains one hundred and twenty-eight pages, not a page more or less. The text, which has never been published before, is the work of a specialist on the subject, whether he is an academic or a professional. The cover can be recognised by a compass. *"A Que sais-je? Can be recognised by all these signs. This collection has a real visual*

identity which we are keen to respect and to maintain in spite of the few recent modifications made to the colours, which are brighter, the graphics, which are more modern, and the layout which is more spaced out and illustrated," explains Isabelle Nogera, the assistant of Anne-Laure Angouvent who is the manager of the collection and the founder's grand-daughter. *"As for the subject, we will go on choosing our authors from among the greatest names. Our almost sixty years in existence and our identity as pioneers in the matter, have provided this book with a legendary aspect, an aid which is not to be*

neglected in the fight against the tough competition prevalent in the publishing world. But that is not a reason for us to rest on our laurels!" She goes on. Every year, one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty new titles see the light of day, but, out of the three thousand four hundred volumes existing to date, only two thousand are available. Certain titles, which sold less well, have simply been withdrawn from circulation, while others, such as those devoted to the Internet, have boosted sales (sixty million copies in a single year). Thanks to its imperatives of management, PUF do not intend to give in an inch to com-

petition. Today, the compass on the cover continues its journey around the world and benefits from international renown, a rare occurrence in the world of publishing.

"Que sais-je? books are translated into all languages (forty in all), even the rarest, from Finnish to Hindi and including Chinese and Bulgarian. Without having any particular publishing strategy with regard to the development of new communication techniques, we also have a site on the Internet and, like a few other French publishers, we sell our books by mail using this means", Isabelle Nogera points out.

fiction

Utsav (The Party)

by Akhtaruzzaman Elias

Continued from last week

LYING down he gave brief and quite satisfactory answers to the questions of his wife. Then came the time of regular love-making before sleep. He had to love that woman for at least twenty minutes. He was afraid lest she might undo his precious party. But he had already seen so many beautiful women that evening that his happiness would be with them. Saleha would only be an instrument.

When he was opening the buttons of her blouse and the hooks of her bra with his accustomed hands, she made habitual rattling sounds, 'Oh, leave it tonight' and came closer to him whereas his blood circulation stopped; his body was covered with a coldness. A voice came from his cold body, 'What happened to you? Why don't you feel like doing it tonight?' Sometimes he read pornography in his office at noon and those nights he got a fresh taste from the body of that woman. Anger gripped him for the women of that type could hardly master the method however sexy they looked. And the wife of Parvez! She passed at best I.A. After her marriage she had just got admitted in a college, and did she ever pass I.A? Yet she had an elegant way of talking, an exquisite way of looking. He talked with the woman at the very end when they were leaving. Parvez put suddenly his arm around his shoulders.

'I was marking you for a long time. You've grown fat enough, Anwar. I could hardly recognise you.' Then he introduced Anwar to his wife, 'He's my school-friend. We passed the matriculation exams from the same school, we went to the same college and then I studied engineering and Anwar in university.'

Anwar Ali never studied in university. He passed B. Com. from another college after flunking once in that college. He could see that woman without tension, as his childhood-friend did not know the fact. The type of her face showed that she was going to talk like a chatterbox, but she followed strictly the cultured group. So there was a typical courtesy in her voice and a hazy desire in her pronunciation. 'You're his childhood-friend? How long you know each

other, yet you never came to our place. Isn't it surprising?'

He tried with his entire mind to draw the woman permanently in his memory. He saw shamelessly all her body. With a hungry desire he saw her blouse, the embroidery on her Jamdani sari, the red spot on her forehead, the thin bangles of her hands, her fair fingers, her nail polish.

'You got married long ago, didn't you? How many children have you got? Come to our place one day.' Anwar Ali took down the address of Parvez, answered properly to his questions and prepared a few well-structured sentences for his wife. 'What a long friendship, yet we don't see ourselves for quite a long time. Of course I shall go one day to disturb you.' As he tried to say these words, the wife of Parvez said, 'Come one day with your wife. Any Sunday. Please come. We'll be very happy if you come.'

Parvez took the keys of his car out of the pocket and dangling them in his hand he went away with his wife. Anwar Ali could not say the sentences so well-woven. Would he get once more such an occasion?

There came a mild fragrance from the body of the woman. A very mild and sweet scent. He talked to her standing so close and only a few hours later it seemed so distant an incident. And much nearer than that, in his very hands he had the breasts of Saleha, yet why could he not touch them? Were there invisible thick gloves of rubber on those hands holding the balloon-like swollen breasts of Saleha?

'Please come. If you come we'll be happy.' He could recall the dialogue, he could smell the fragrance and yet the party, the women of the party remained far away from him. A salty smoke of blood came out from the mouth, breasts and hands of Saleha and turned the room cloudy. Her breasts were burning with excitement. But who would remove his shockproof gloves?

In the microphone of the restaurant was playing the song 'Awara hun'. Happy people were going back home from the cinema; each of them was a hero of the film. Some of them were singing the hit songs of that film.

Among the crowd there were not so many girls as only a single whistle was heard. After a small silence, the commotion grew louder. Was anything wrong in the gathering of gamblers? But the voices indicated that happy people were celebrating something happy.

In the party also there were voices and lots of people were there, lots of women too. With mild and sweet cadences, the tape-recorder went on slowly. Most of the songs were western with a few Tagore's songs. Listening to the song 'Come, come to my home' one woman said, 'This one is appropriate for the function, isn't it? Who was that woman?'

The sound of the song 'Awara Hun' grew fainter with the combined shouts of the crowd. The record was changed once more. No words of the song were then audible. What made the crowd so exultant?

He tried to understand where the shouts were coming from without the slightest change in the position of his body. Boiling sounds were coming out of the glowing mouth of Saleha Begum. 'What's going on so late at night? Oh! What are these bastards shouting for?'

'Da ma dam mast kalandar'. Someone sang loudly in his full voice and the crowd burst into laughter. At the strong sounds outside, the numb hands of Anwar Ali fell down like a piece of wood beside his cold chest. He got up and said, 'I'm going to see what makes these bastards so happy.'

On the doorstep was a narrow veranda; three more steps on the stairs and there was the lane. At the end of the lane there was a small crowd. People of different ages were there, even some young boys. They were not of any house, nor were they of the slum of the area. They were coolies of the market, ticket-blackers of the cinema and those who pushed rickshaws across the bridge. They passed their nights on footpaths or on someone's veranda sleeping or without sleeping. Anwar Ali called one of them. 'Hi boy, what's going on there?' The boy looked once at him and shouted loudly, 'Da ma dam mast kalandar.'

Then the entire scene became clear. At the entrance to their lane, beside the bakarkhani-shop of Khizir Ali, a dog

and a bitch were engaged in sexual intercourse. The crowd was cheerful to see dog sex and encouraging them in several ways. From the gathering of gamblers, who were on the raised terrace of the street, came a line of a song; a parody of a popular song, 'In the month of Kartik, came two dogs and...'. But from the same gathering another shout came more loudly, 'Hey guys, can you bring a handful of salt? If you sprinkle salt on them they'll get separated. Go and bring some salt.' And the rest of the song was not heard. But who would go for salt? No one wanted to change his position. The gamblers were in a position high enough to see clearly the entire scene with the game going on.

An immense cauldron of shahi halim was on a stove of dim-light on a four-wheel pushcart. A man of the area used to sell halim from early evening to twelve or twelve-thirty at Rathkhola. He used to return home pushing his cart through that lane at around one o'clock. There were a lot of people in the lane, so he had to stop and join the crowd. People were eating almost cold but cheap meatless halim that he poured in small earthen bowls from the bottom of the cauldron. The boy who used to sell cigarettes in front of Ahmedia Restaurant whistling with the songs of the records was eating that thing standing near the terrace of the gamblers. One of the gamblers: a scooter driver, throwing his cards, looked at the dogs for one minute and shouted at the cigarette-vendor, 'You old bugger, give my cigarettes!' But his small cigarette-tray was hung to his neck, the halim-bowl in one hand and the aluminium-spoon in another hand and he had two hands only. How could he give him cigarettes?

'Here is Anwar Shahib,' Anwar Ali turned and found Nasrullah Sardar looking through the window of his bedroom. Nasrullah Sardar was once the chief of the area. Nawab Salimullah himself crowned Nasrullah's father in 1907. But these days he had no more power. When Anwar Ali stood by the side of Nasrullah's window he said angrily, 'You see the activities of these pigs, all these shameless people. I don't know how I should call them. In this area there are so many pious people

with their wives and children and these plebeians are amusing this way at one o'clock at night. You see!'

Nasrullah himself came out of his room. That place was propitious for him and for Anwar too. From there the whole scene was very clear.

'Are there any cuts in your office?' it was clear that Nasrullah wanted to converse with him.

'Is anyone under 303?'

'Yes, our chairman is in the front of the list.'

'He has already earned a lot. Now it's no use catching him.' But Anwar Ali had no intention of wasting time in conversation. That man would start to narrate his autobiography if he found a chance. In the background of the autobiography there would be a comparative study of honest British officers of the time of Nawab Salimullah and Nawab Habibullah with Pakistani civil servants.

A tea-boy was walking around with a bucket of water in one hand, a small glass in the bucket and in another hand a tea-kettle on a portable stove that worked with coal. Nasrullah entered his room talking to himself something incomprehensible. He looked at the dogs for the last time through his window and shut it loudly.

When Nasrullah shut his window a small piece of brick was thrown on one of the dogs. The canine couple, in shame or in fear or in both shame and fear, started to move aside. But in that situation it was impossible for them to get separated. Or they might not just feel like that.

Clouds were roaring like a herd of cows in the sky of autumn. The reddish yellow full moon was shining above the thin transparent mists. With the moonlight blew a bright breeze that tickled Anwar in the skull and he started to laugh. He was lucky enough as there heard another sharp shout from among the gamblers, 'Oh my childhood-friend! The entire crowd burst into mad laughter and he also laughed to his heart's content. This phrase was used in a recent film. He had seen the film and laughed a lot with Saleha Begum.'

Other dogs of the lane gathered on the other side of the street. Some of them

lay idly, some laughed barking. A lonely dog sighed at the incomprehensible sufferings of human beings and perhaps of dogs too. Another sentimental dog was standing on a pushcart a little away from the scene. It was sobbing continually with its gloomy eyes, looking at the full moon that looked so sweet.

'Jummon Ali, hi Jummon Ali!' Every man and every dog looked back at the new voice. Tuta Mia, owner of ruti-shop called the boy who worked in his shop, 'You son of a bitch, what damn are you doing here? It's one o'clock now and you bastard, you are having fun! Which father of yours will open the shop tomorrow?'

'Why are you shouting?' answered Jummon Ali rather affectionately, 'I've arranged everything.'

'Fuck you! If you watch play all the night, can you open the shop in the morning?' Jummon Ali did not seem, however, to care much. He saw dog-sex for the last time and went away with Tuta Mia.

'Jummon Ali has seen the play of dogs and now you'll play with Jummon. Who'll see that?' said someone among the gamblers.

Another piece of brick was thrown beside the pair of dogs. Its target was the bulb of the lamp-post. Striking the lamp-post it fell back while the bulb of dim light continued to shine with all its power.

Anwar Ali entered his room, shut the door and called in a deep voice, 'Saleha!'

With a drowsy voice she said lovingly, 'Where have you been so long? What happened outside?'

'Seeing the gathering I went to the lane. He lay down and pulled his wife closer.'

'My Saleha!'

'Tell me why there is so much noise.' 'Oh Shelley, seeing two dogs... these people are... The thick rubber-gloves from his hands were removed.'

'At one o'clock at night they have nothing to do, these vulgar people.'

Sticky sounds started to ooze out from the glowing mouth of happy and excited Anwar Ali.

Translated by Swapan Barman