

Medium of choice

A show brings together works on paper by some of the finest Western artists

BY FATMA SALEM
Features Writer

The exhibition, *From Matisse to Warhol: Works on Paper by Modern Masters*, offers an opportunity to discover works of iconic artists such as Matisse, Picasso, Chagall and Warhol.

On the one hand, the exhibition shows how modern drawing developed into a form of self-expression and exploration. On the other, it represents the use of 17 tools, techniques and materials in drawing — gouache, pencil, pen, ink, watercolour, chalk, brush, pastel, collage, wax crayon, India ink, oil paint, wash, felt-tip pen, coloured crayon, ball-point pen and acrylic paint.

The show brings together 41 artworks from a time frame of 70 years. Out of the 37 works on paper, the largest is by Willem de Kooning (*Woman*, c 1965) and the smallest by Salvador Dali (*Flesh Wheelbarrow*, c 1947).

Most of the works have never been on display in any exhibition before, either because of the artist's choice or probably because of the medium's sensitivity to light.

Gallery of greats

Henri Matisse (1869-1954), one of the most prominent artists of the 20th century, considered drawing the most spontaneous form of art.

Matisse used many materials for his drawings, such as charcoal and pen. Though his style appears to be cautious, he explored uncharted artistic territories.

His works on display in this exhibition — one untitled and the other titled *Tete de femme* — were created during what Matisse called his "second life", after a bout of serious illness in 1941. His art became marked by more energy and freedom. "I have needed all that time to reach the stage where I can say what I want to say," he said.

The drawings he produced were simple and were used on the pages of Jules Romains's *Pierres Levees: Poemes*.

Mark Chagall (1887-1995) migrated to France in 1910 and immediately fell in love with Paris. He was fascinated by the bohemian atmosphere of the city. *Homage to Paris* (1952) is the fruit of his fascination.

Chagall's dreamy style and pictorial interests steeped in faith marked him as the painter-poet of the 20th century.

His works on paper, such as *Dans les nuages* and *Le pretendant*, are on display in this exhibition.

Working extensively during the last two decades of his life, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) produced thousands of works on paper, such as *L'homme au beret* (1960). Picasso and Dali have the lion's share of the exhibition.

Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) was one of the key artists of the last century and a leading practitioner of the Art Nouveau style.

The thin line of his pencil highlights the subject's frailty and adds an effusive quality to his works. This can be seen in *Tanzerin*, one of the works on display, which depicts a woman in a subdued yet coy pose.

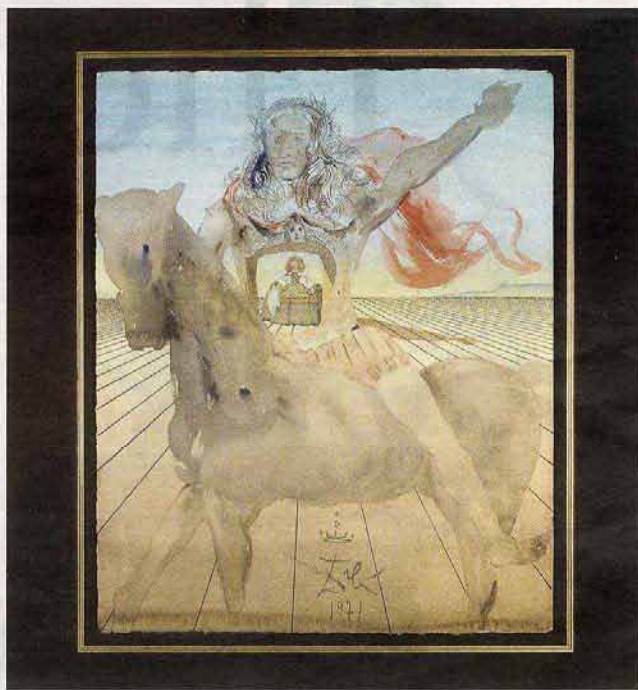
The work of Maurice de Vlaminck (1876-1958) centres around a street in the north-western Parisian suburb where the artist spent most of his adulthood. Both Impressionism and Fauvism had a strong influence on his art. His works on paper include illustrations for over 20 books.

Paul Klee (1879-1940) produced more than 9,000 works, of which 5,000 were on paper. His characteristically whimsical style can be seen in *Gaby* (1934), displayed in this exhibition.

Espagne, Sierra Morena (1909) by Francis Picabia (1879-1953) mirrors the artist's departure from the Impressionist style of his earlier works. Picabia produced this work after meeting his wife Gabrielle, who played an important role in his artistic development by introducing him to avant-garde themes across a range of art forms, from painting to music and poetry. The exhibition also features works by Man Ray, Paul Delvaux, Joan Miro, Alexander Calder, Yves Tanguy, Marino Marini, Bernard Buffet and Andy Warhol, all of them immortalised by their works on paper.

There are four sculptures included in the show. The largest is an untitled piece by Alexander Calder from 1974, the oldest is by Klimt (*Die Erwartung*, 1907-1908) and the most recent is a cast made in 1984 by Dali.

From Matisse to Warhol: Works on Paper by Modern Masters is on at The Farjam Collection, Dubai International Financial Centre, until February 28.



The Farjam Collection

Top: Salvador Dali's 'Le Roi Soleil' shares its title with a fragrance whose bottle the artist designed

Above: A work by Alexander Chagall that depicts his love of nature