

**MATISSE, HIS ART AND HIS TEXTILES:
THE FABRIC OF DREAMS**

Reviewed by STANLEY BULBACH

[Review originally appeared in
Fiberarts Magazine (Jan-Feb 2006,
page 15) published by
Interweave Press Inc.]

This book is an unexpected portal that opens into a stunning, new way of seeing our world of fiber art. Fiber artists must see this catalog if they did not see the exhibition (at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art June 23-September).

Art history has long taught that the work of Matisse (1869-1954) is significant and beloved due to his particular use of color, outline, shapes, patterns, foreground/background, etc., with passing reference to his attraction to ethnic decorative art. But these considerations are suspiciously similar to those principal in fiber art.

In the past, little attention has been paid to Matisse's first decades in a textile town in French Flanders, where his ancestors had been weavers for generations. And little thought has been given to the impact upon modern art of the development of inexpensive synthetic dyeing that transformed the fashion and furnishings of the expanding middle classes into an explosion of affordable color.

Throughout his entire life, Matisse's personal collection of fabrics and costumes filled his studies, only to be stored away upon his death half a century ago. And it is this private collection that the Royal Academy of Arts in London in association with the Metropolitan Museum of Art have presented along with Matisse's artwork to let the view see the inseparable relationship between the two.

When you are able to turn your eyes away from the catalog's luscious plates, you will find riveting essays by Hilary Spuring, who proposed the project, Jack Flam, Rémi Lebrosse, and Dominique Szymusiak, confirming what should have been obvious over the past decades. This book finally spotlights one of the most inexcusable examples of the lack of accurate research of artwork that involves textiles.

London Royal Academy of Arts. 2004
Hardcover, 216 pages. \$65.

