



Alliance Française of Greater Orlando



NOVEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

SEEDS OF HOPE

In our October newsletter we mentioned that, to fight the impact of COVID-19, last March our association had taken some immediate measures: we closed our office and reorganized our French courses on a videoconferencing (Zoom) basis.

However, we also started to look beyond these short term initiatives, in order for AFGO to offer more programs when the "new normal" would come.

In the October letter, we also mentioned that we had just started two new programs and that some more were being studied. We continue our effort and already have seven programs regrouped under the generic project name of "New Horizons". They include a fairly complex study of how and when AFGO might reopen its office, offer in-presence French courses, in parallel with the online ones, and some indoor events in 2021.

Here are two items of good news to end this paragraph:

- since August the number of registered students for the online French courses increased by 30%,
- more than 42 persons now participate in the weekly conferences "Discover France and its Culture".

That's encouraging!



MATISSE'S AMERICAN HERITAGE

"Do tell the American people that I am a normal man", begged avant-garde Henri Matisse in a New York Times interview when his work first reached America. Matisse, one of the fathers of modern painting who inspired artistic revolutions throughout the 20th century, forged close ties with the United States throughout his career. He left behind an enormous cultural and familial heritage after his death.

But the French artist and the bold colors he used to challenge traditional norms and better express emotions, initially received a lukewarm - and even hostile - reception.

When Matisse set his sights on America in 1908, his new style and his disdain for contours and traditional poses sparked a scandal. He was described as a "decadent soul" and a "bizarre artist". In 1913, an effigy of his "Nu bleu" presented at the Armory Show in Chicago was burned.

But Matisse's self-promotion paid off in the post-war years when he began his so-called "Nice period". Just like Picasso during the same time, he refocused on more accessible painting and art in general, and his work was soon seen as more respectable by the American public.

With his new status as an essential addition to any serious private collection with an eye on modern art, Matisse also entered the museum scene. His work was featured in exhibits at the Brooklyn Museum, the Metropolitan Museum and in permanent collections at leading institutions.

Buoyed by long-time supporters like the Stein family in Paris, he then piqued the interest of prestigious collectors in Philadelphia, Baltimore and New York.

When the critics also took his side, Matisse's art finally put down roots in the United States.

Henri Matisse died in 1954. He had raised a family in the US and after his death his son, granddaughter and great-granddaughter continued to promote his art.

