

# COLNAGHI ELLIOTT

MASTER DRAWINGS

Henri Matisse  
(Le Cateau-Cambrésis 1860 – 1954 Nice)

*Une femme*

Signed and dated lower left: *H Matisse 42*  
Pencil on paper  
26.7 x 20.4 cm. (10 ½ x 8 in.)

Provenance:

Anonymous sale, Galerie Kornfeld, Bern, 10 May 1963, lot 670;  
Anonymous sale, Galerie Kornfeld, 23 June 2000, lot 86;  
Private Collection, Norway;  
By whom sold, Christie's, London, 5 February 2004, lot 409;  
Van de Weghe Fine Art, New York;  
Martin Lawrence Gallery, Boston, until 2008;  
Acquired from the above, Private Collection, USA;  
By whom sold, Christie's, New York, 14 November 2017, lot 225;  
Where acquired, Private Collection, London.



Drawn in 1942, in Matisse's eighty-second year and very shortly after undergoing a major operation, the present sheet, with its confident use of line, is a fine example of the French artist's graphic work from around this time: seemingly effortless and spontaneous, its visual appearance belies the effort behind it. Though a great colourist in oils, drawing had always been central to Matisse's art. A few years earlier in 1939, Matisse explained in *Notes of a Painter on his Drawing* that 'drawing is the purest and most direct translation of my emotion. The simplification of the medium allows that.'

The model depicted is probably almost certainly Lydia Delectorskaya, who had become Matisse's studio assistant and chief model by the mid 1930s. The wavy, shoulder length hair parted in the middle, the long straight nose and the wide forehead of the sitter all accord very closely with photographs of Lydia (fig. 1).



Fig. 1, Rolando Ricci,  
*Lydia Delectorskaya*,  
1935

Matisse's extremely close working relationship with Lydia earned him an ultimatum from his wife Amélie. Matisse chose his wife and, feeling that she had lost her purpose in life, Lydia attempted suicide, shooting herself in the chest. She miraculously survived and, with Amélie having left Matisse anyway in 1939, Lydia returned to the artist and worked with him for the rest of his life, running his household, paying the bills, typing his correspondence, keeping meticulous records, assisting in the studio, and coordinating his business affairs. In every way, she was integral to him.

Wanda de Guébriant confirmed the authenticity of this work at the time of the 2004 and 2017 Christie's sales.