



THE MATISSE NAME LIVES ON

PARIS Almost 150 years after his birth, Henri Matisse is getting a second life of sorts.

Maison Matisse, a business that the artist's descendants quietly introduced in mid-October in Paris, invites contemporary designers to turn Matisse's aesthetic into home décor objects. It is billed as the first time the Matisse name has appeared on anything other than the artist's original works.

"We thought it would be a good idea for the family to create something, to try to transmit what we see and imagine from his legacy," Jean-Mathieu Matisse said, "but we wanted to do something that hadn't been done before."

"There was already one Matisse; I don't intend to do another," he said.

Mr. Matisse, 46, one of the artist's 14 great-grandchildren, runs the project with his sister, Anne-Maxence, 47, and the general manager, Eliana Di Modica, who previously worked with the French fashion labels Zadig & Voltaire and Lacoste and the retail chain Monoprix.

The business has been a decade in the making, partly because the Matisses wanted approval from relatives in France and the United States, and partly because, Mr. Matisse said, "we

wanted to make sure whatever we did was respectful, well thought out and authentic."

The debut featured limited-edition, signed ceramic vases (a recurring object in Matisse's work) imagined by some well-known names in design: the French brothers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, the Spanish artist and designer Jaime Hayon and the Italian designer and architect Alessandro Mendini (who completed the work before his death in February at 87). They chose the artisans who created 12 copies of each design.

Prices range from 7,000 to 12,000 euros (\$7,810 to \$13,390) for each piece.

"Everything inspires me about Matisse," said Mr. Hayon, who presented three different vessels of Mediterranean inspiration that were decorated, collagelike, with "stickers" (his word) of various shapes and colors. Each vase required as many as 20 firings.

Vases by Mr. Mendini looked like conceptual groupings of leaves with a hint of Radical design, painted in as many as eight colors from Matisse's palette. And the Bouroullecs took an abstract, minimalistic approach, with vases in various sizes and shades of blue-green, an extrapolation of the open windows that the artist often depicted.

In addition to such limited editions, the house plans a line of lower-priced objects, with new collections introduced three times a year. The first group of about 15 products, inspired by the 1939 painting "La Musique" and designed by Marta Bakowski, is to be unveiled in January. And it is working on establishing a store.

Art and design may be more intertwined than ever, but Mr. Matisse considers the relationship differently.

"I see our project as creating objects, but not 'art objects,'" he said. "These objects will go out and live their own life. People will be able to live with an object that has a certain presence, that speaks to them like Matisse."

TINA ISAAC-GOIZE

A new legacy

Top, vases created by Jaime Hayon, a Spanish artist and designer, for a limited-edition collection from Maison Matisse. Right, a vase by the Italian designer and architect Alessandro Mendini, also for the collection.

