

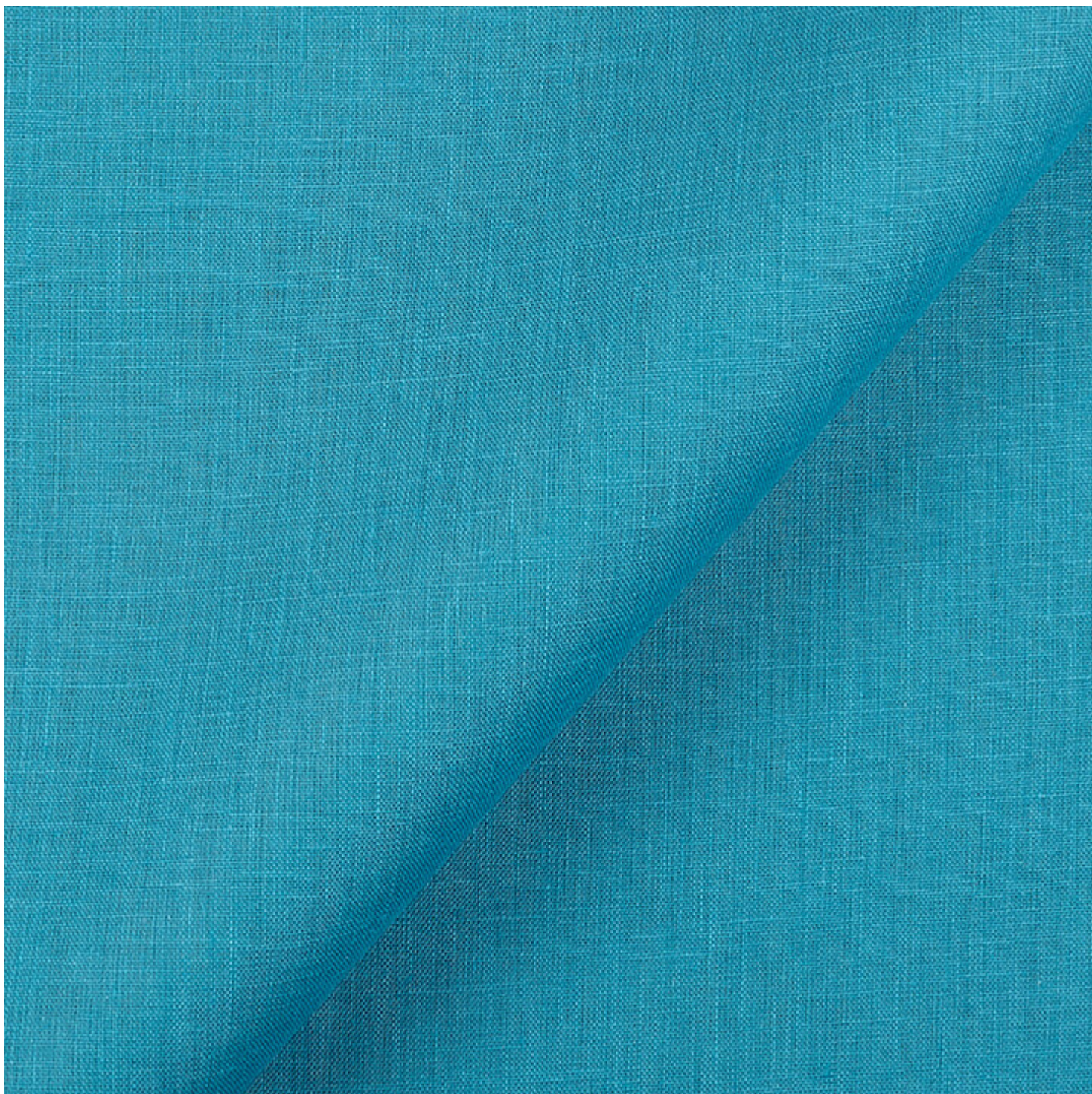
Creative Pathways into MEDITERRANEAN BLUE: Paul Cezanne, Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse

Description



Pablo Picasso, Pigeons, 1957

[MEDITERRANEAN BLUE](#) is a dazzling, electrifyingly bright colour that conveys the soaring brilliance of summer. Artists through the generations have explored how this entrancing shade of turquoise blue can capture the light of the European coastline, encapsulating the azure blue of the ocean and the wide-open, cloudless skies overhead. We look at three pioneering French artists of the 20th century who adored this shade of blue, and the ways it could sing with brilliance alongside a series of complementing and contrasting colour pathways.



FS MEDITERRANEAN BLUE Lightweight Linen

The leading French Post-Impressionist painter Paul Cezanne adopted a similar colour palette throughout the mature phase of his career, painting with a trademark palette of sandy beige, burnt orange, turquoise blue and soft green. In Cezanne's striking, late career painting *Black Castle*, 1904, the

artist veers into a darker palette than usual. He combines the azure turquoise blue of the background sky with deep shades of rusty oranges, along with warm, enveloping forest greens. These dark tones create cool areas of shadow, away from the blazing heat of the French summer sun in Provence, where the artist lived for the last years of his life, and carved out his name as the great father of modern art.

Many artists in the next generation of French painters took great influence from Cezanne. These include Pablo Picasso, whose early art often mimed the same colour palette of Cezanne's late art. In Picasso's late Cubist collage *Guitar*, 1913, the design might be entirely flat and devoid of any light, perspective or space. But through the use of electric bright turquoise blue, Picasso conveys the warm, glowing light of France, spreading across the background like an expanse of summer sky. Picasso combines the blue here with a series of warmer tones, including the orange tinge of old newspaper, the burnt yellow and deep brown of patterned wallpaper, and the creamy, off-white tinge of paper scraps found scattered across his studio space.



Henri Matisse, Interior at Nice, 1919/1920

Later, Picasso, adopted the same soaring turquoise blue in his atmospheric, Cubist-style painting *Mediterranean Landscape*, 1952. While the blue here is only a small part of the painting's overall design, it still dominates the scene, suggesting the sky and sea of a balmy hot summer's day on the French Mediterranean coastline. Matisse combines this shade of blue here with a whole patchwork of other shades, including tomato red, bright yellow, white, and scattered patches of olive green, illustrating the scattered buildings that spill out across the horizon.



Paul Cezanne, L'Estaque with Red Roofs, 1885

Another French painter whose art was influenced by Cezanne was the pioneering Fauvist Henri Matisse. Like Picasso, Matisse saw Cezanne's rich colour palette and ramped it up for dramatic effect. Turquoise blues were a recurring theme in his paintings, which conveyed the brilliance of the French coastline, even when it was barely in view. In Matisse's much celebrated, early-career painting *Interior at Nice*, 1919/1920, the artist explores his trademark inside/outside theme, playing with the threshold between interior views and the wide-open space beyond. In this painting Matisse situates his model on the balcony between the domestic room inside and the stunning scenery beyond. Around his model, long strips of aqua blue run from sky to ceiling, forming a bold framework of atmospheric light. Matisse combines these hues with a series of softer shades including pale grey, yellow ochre, soft beige, rust red, and a patch of sandy pink carpet. This allows the aqua blues to take centre stage, dominating the entire scene, and illustrating the artist's longstanding love affair with the oceanic French coastline.

CATEGORY

1. COLOUR SERIES
2. TEXTILES

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