

The Museum of Modern Art

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A major new acquisition - Henri Matisse's Memory of Oceania - has been installed in the Main Entrance Hall of The Museum of Modern Art where it will remain through January 27, 1970.

Memory of Oceania, acquired through the Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund, was painted in 1953, twenty-three years after Matisse's visit to Tahiti. One of the finest of the glorious group of cut and painted paper pictures he created in his eighties, bed-ridden and failing, it is a kind of reverie in which fragmentary suggestions of foliage and a reclining nude are absorbed into a more abstract context of shapes and colors, the picture does not illustrate the tropical world but rather evokes a universal image of pleasure.

"The simplicity of Matisse's late style represents a distillation of the premises that underlay his painting from 1904 onward -- a purification of his immense gifts as draftsman and colorist. Great artists are rare enough. Among them are only a few -- one thinks of Titian and Rembrandt, or Beethoven and Verdi -- whose works seem so gloriously to proclaim their very essences," William S. Rubin, Chief Curator of the Painting and Sculpture Collection, notes in the wall label.

Unlike many of Matisse's paper pictures, which primarily develop one or two shapes, Memory of Oceania is notable for the range and variety of its forms and for a structural grandeur reminiscent of the monumental works he created at the time of World War I, such as The Piano Lesson and The Moroccans, both on view on the 2nd Floor.

Additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, New York. 10019. (212) 956 - 7501.