

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ACQUIRES IMPORTANT MASTERPIECE BY HENRI MATISSE

### Last Great Work from the Artist's Daring Early Experimental Period Still in Private Hands Enters the Museum's Collection

The Museum of Modern Art has acquired an important masterpiece by Henri Matisse, thanks to a major contribution by Museum Chairman Ronald S. Lauder. The painting, *The Window/The Yellow Curtain* (c.1915), represents the view from a window of Matisse's home in Issy-les Moulineaux, near Paris. It shows a vista dominated by the yellow of flowering acacia trees and punctuated by the blue of the sky above and a canopy below, framed by a window with a billowing crimson curtain at left, with glimpses of a yellow lining that echoes the trees in the distance. In 1992-93 the work was included in MoMA's *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective*, one of the most popular exhibitions in the history of the Museum.

Glenn D. Lowry, Director of the Museum, said, "I would like to thank Ronald Lauder for his enormous generosity. For years he had hoped to acquire this painting for his personal collection, but he became increasingly convinced of its importance to the Museum. When it became available, he not only very graciously agreed to let MoMA buy it, but also volunteered to make a major donation toward the purchase. With critical acquisitions such as this, The Museum of Modern Art continues to enhance its unparalleled historical holdings. The painting is as bold as it is daring and is a truly outstanding addition to our Matisse collection."

Mr. Lauder remarked, "I have long admired this remarkable work and am extremely pleased to see it enter the Museum's collection. I remember seeing it in the mid 1970s in the collection of Marcel Marbille in Belgium and I realized how special it was. I wanted this work since that time but I am delighted that it has finally come to the place where it belongs."

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Kirk Varnedoe, Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, added, "This is a truly uncanny picture, radically austere in its abstraction, but also sensual and seductive. The boldness of its simplified shapes is balanced by a linear delicacy in its drawing in a way that makes it very singular within Matisse's oeuvre and premonitory of aspects of abstract painting half a century later. Our holdings in the artist's early work were already superb, yet *The Window/The Yellow Curtain* obviously matches that level of quality and adds something unique and invaluable. Ever since I first saw this painting I have dreamed of bringing it into this Museum's collection."

Noted Matisse scholar John Elderfield, the Museum's Chief Curator at Large and Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs, who organized *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective*, said of the acquisition, "This is the last great privately held work from Matisse's important experimental period of 1913 to 1917 that is possibly available. In concept and execution, it is as radical as the Museum's *View of Notre-Dame* (spring 1914), and it almost predicts the paper cutouts of the artist's final years. Yet coloristically, this painting is an extraordinary thing, as joyous as the artist's most uplifting works, in contrast to the more frequently solemn, even severe, pieces of this period. Because every work of this extraordinary era is so independently conceived, it is fitting that *The Window/The Yellow Curtain* takes its place in the Museum's collection, which is especially strong in this period."

The painting was sold to the Museum by Stephen Hanh, a collector and former dealer in modern art, through William Acquavella, Inc. The painting is now on view in the Museum's Matisse Gallery.

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