

The Museum of Modern Art

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JAZZ, HENRI MATISSE'S CELEBRATED BOOK,
TO GO ON VIEW AT
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ON NOVEMBER 17, 1983

Jazz, by Henri Matisse is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful illustrated books of this century. To celebrate the publishing of a special new edition of Jazz, The Museum of Modern Art will present all 20 of the book's brilliantly colored prints together with several of the handwritten text pages in MATISSE: JAZZ, opening in the Museum's lower level lobby on November 17, 1983. Organized by Riva Castleman, Director of the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, and featuring plates from the copy given to the Museum by the artist in 1948, the exhibition will remain on view through January 3, 1984.

During a prolonged, bedridden convalescence after a serious operation in 1941, Matisse turned to creating collages, a medium he had first explored a decade earlier. Calling his creations "drawings with scissors," Matisse cut brightly painted paper into figures and forms and then meticulously arranged the clippings into bold compositions. The plates in Jazz reproduce Matisse's original cut-out designs through a process using hand-cut stencils (in French, pochoir) printed with the same colors used for the collages.

Jazz was issued in Paris in 1947 by Tériade, a publisher of illustrated

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books, in two editions: as a book with text handwritten by the artist and as an album of the plates alone. Most of Jazz's illustrations relate to the circus and the theater and present such scenes as a knife thrower, a sword swallower, and a swimmer in a tank, although some images offer abstract evocations of the artistic spirit. The book's manuscript text was intended to create, according to Matisse, "intervals of a different character" between the plates. "More than a means to convey verbal information, the text of Jazz is drawing in ink in tandem with Matisse's invention of 'drawing with scissors'," notes Miss Castleman. "This syncopated composition is clearly what Matisse felt was the visual counterpart of jazz music."

A special, unbound and boxed edition of Jazz has just been published by George Braziller exclusively for The Museum of Modern Art. Using papers and inks made especially to approximate the original textures and colors, this publication faithfully reproduces the 20 plates of collages and, in 156 pages, the artist's hand-drawn French text. In addition to an introduction by Riva Castleman and a translation of Matisse's text by Sophie Hawkes, The Museum of Modern Art's edition of Jazz features a facsimile of Matisse's illustrated letter to Tériade regarding Jazz which has never before been published in its entirety.

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