

## MATISSE/GAUDI: ECCLESIASTICAL DESIGNS

"Christmas Night" a ten foot tall, brilliantly colored stained glass window designed by Matisse in 1952, and the silk chasubles he designed for the Vence Chapel in France are on view in a holiday exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art through January 9, 1977. MATISSE/GAUDI: ECCLESIASTICAL DESIGNS, drawn from the Museum's own Design Collection, also includes a recently acquired wooden bench for a chapel by the Spanish architect Antonio Gaudí, exhibited for the first time, and plaster models for elements of his great unfinished church, Sagrada Familia, in Barcelona. The exhibition has been installed in the second floor Goodwin Galleries by J. Stewart Johnson, Curator of Design.

The window, "Nuit de Noel" (Christmas Night), was commissioned from Matisse by Time, Inc. in 1952. On its completion, it was exhibited in their lobby, but this is the first time it has been on display in the Museum since it was acquired in 1953.

The five chasubles--red, green, purple, black, and white--were designed for the celebration of different masses in the Chapel of the Holy Rosary for the Dominican Nuns of Vence, and can only be exhibited briefly and infrequently, because the colored silks would fade under the Museum's lights. When the Chapel was consecrated on June 25, 1951, the officiating priest wore the white chasuble shown in this exhibition. Because its silk was too heavy for continued use, the Convent relinquished it to the Museum in exchange for a replica in lighter silk. The other four chasubles were commissioned by the Museum through a special agreement between the Convent and Matisse.

Matisse was eighty years old when he designed these vestments. Bedridden at the time, he developed a highly original technique in making the maquettes. He had sheets of paper painted with gouache color which he had mixed himself. With scissors he then cut out the designs and had an assistant pin them up on

(more)

the white walls of his bedroom. Extremely self-critical, he had the elements in the design shifted and repinned again and again; and even then he made two to four maquettes for each of the five different-colored sets of vestments. The chasubles were executed by the nuns of Les Ateliers de Arts Appliques at Cannes, and the window was executed by Paul and Adeline Bony, who also made the stained glass windows for the Vence Chapel.

The bench by Gaudí, acquired through the Estee and Joseph Lauder Design Fund, is one of the few furniture pieces he designed. It was created for the Chapel of the Guell Colony, a residential community for workers at Santa Colona de Cervella. The community was a commission from one of Gaudí's best friends and most generous patrons, Count Eusebi Guell. The Chapel remained unfinished at the Count's death in 1914. Also included are plaster models for designs for a column and a nave window for Gaudí's Church of the Sagrada Familia. Gaudí often found it more congenial to work with scale models or full-size mock-ups rather than architectural drawings because his work is so sculptural.

---

Photographs and additional information available from Michael Boodro, Assistant, or Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019. Tel. 956-7504; 7501.

---