

MATISSE

IN THE COLLECTION OF
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAJOR EXHIBITION PROVIDES SHOWCASE
FOR WORLD'S FINEST MATISSE COLLECTION

Henri Matisse is perhaps the most universally acclaimed painter of the twentieth century--and one of the undisputed giants of modern art. From October 27 through January 30, 1979, on the eve of its Fiftieth Anniversary Year, The Museum of Modern Art is presenting MATISSE IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, an exhibition displaying the breadth of Matisse's work in all media. Included are all of the paintings, sculptures, drawings, and cut-outs in the Museum Collection, as well as many remainder-interest and promised gifts. A generous selection of design objects will also be shown, along with nearly 100 of Matisse's prints from the Museum's very extensive holdings.

MATISSE IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART affords an overview of virtually every period in the artist's long and varied career. In the words of John Elderfield, Curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture and Director of this exhibition, The Museum of Modern Art Collection "contains a number of Matisse's greatest masterpieces, and constitutes the single most important collection of his art in private or public hands." Indeed, the Matisse holdings of The Museum of Modern Art constitute the world's best single collection of the artist's work.

Since 1931, the third year of the Museum's existence, when Alfred H. Barr, Jr., its first Director, organized a major Matisse retrospective--the Museum's first large European one-man show and the first important Matisse exhibition at an American museum--The Museum of Modern Art has been in the forefront of those who have helped win for Matisse the broad international appreciation he enjoys today.

MATISSE IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, together with the fully illustrated publication that will accompany the exhibition,* has been made possible by a generous grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Jr. Charitable Trust. In conjunction with the exhibition, a series of four lectures by internationally distinguished scholars will be presented in November and December. A program of films on Matisse will be shown on Thursdays and Fridays at noon for the length of the exhibition (also on Mondays and Tuesdays at noon during November). There will be gallery talks daily at 1:00 p.m. throughout the exhibition as well.

MATISSE IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART includes 179 works, ranging from an 1896 still life painted while Matisse was an art student to the great cut-out of 1952-53, Memory of Oceania, completed a year before his death. The Museum Collection especially highlights the years 1907-1917 when Matisse is considered to have been at the height of his powers. Works of this period featured in the exhibition include the three figure paintings Music (1907), Dance (1909) and Bather (1909); the paintings of 1911, Goldfish and Sculpture and The Red Studio; The Blue Window (1913) and the near-abstract View of Notre Dame (1914); the almost Expressionist The Italian Woman (1916); and the 1916 paintings The Moroccans and The Piano Lesson.

Matisse's sculpture in the exhibition represents several different aspects of his work in this medium. Included are Matisse's The Serf (1900-03); Reclining Nude I (1906-07), a favorite work depicted in a number of Matisse's later paintings; the four Back reliefs made at intervals between 1909 and 1931; the five Jeannette heads (1910-1913); and Tiari (1930), unique in Matisse's work for the way it combines plant forms and a head in one image.

Drawings in the exhibition span fifty years of Matisse's art and include a number of studies that complement works in other media. Especially noteworthy are two late drawings, Dahlias and Pomegranates of 1947, and The Necklace of 1950. An extensive representation of prints and illustrated books from the largest Matisse print collection anywhere has been selected and installed by Riva Castleman, Director of the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books, demonstrating the full range of Matisse's work in this field.

In addition to the 1907-1917 period, Matisse's last years (1950-1954) are particularly well represented in the Museum Collection. Large paper cut-out works from the early 1950s include the major thematic work Memory of Oceania, arguably Matisse's last masterpiece, as well as the maquette for the Nuit de Noël stained glass window, and the 54-foot-long environmental mural, The Swimming Pool. Also on view are the famous liturgical vestments designed by Matisse for the Chapel of the Rosary of the Dominican Nuns at Vence in southern France.

In planning this exhibition, Matisse's works in the Museum Collection have been thoroughly researched and new knowledge brought to light. The Museum's last major Matisse exhibition in different media was held in 1951-52; it was preceded by Alfred Barr's important exhibition of 1931.

These shows, however, were not limited to the Museum's collection. More recently, an exhibition of 64 paintings was mounted in 1966, and in 1972 a show of Matisse's sculpture included 93 works. There have also been a number of smaller Matisse exhibitions over the years.

"Of course," John Elderfield notes, "not all periods of Matisse's work are equally well represented in the Museum Collection, despite its considerable size. This is testament less to the want of trying to fill the lacunae that do exist than to the astonishing variety of Matisse's art. However, the collection as it stands--containing 26 paintings, 16 sculptures, 6 cutouts, 19 drawings, nearly 200 prints, plus design objects of various kinds--shows the quality, range and depth of Matisse's achievement more fully than any other single collection and offers a remarkable overview of the development of his artistic career."

*Matisse in the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art. By John Elderfield, with additional text by William S. Lieberman and Riva Castleman. 232 pages. 130 illustrations (34 in color). 144 reference illustrations. \$25.00 cloth-bound; \$12.50 paperbound. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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