

# The Museum of Modern Art

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62

## 54-FOOT ENVIRONMENTAL MURAL BY MATISSE AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The Swimming Pool, a 54-foot long environmental mural by Matisse, will go on view March 11 at The Museum of Modern Art in a gallery specially constructed to replicate the room for which he designed the work in Nice 25 years ago. The recently acquired mural, considered the masterpiece of Matisse's "Blue Nude" paper cutouts, will be on view at the Museum for six months before it is lent to a large exhibition to be in Washington, D.C., St. Louis and Detroit.

Purchase of the mural was made possible through the Mrs. Bernard F. Gimbel Fund. The special installation was aided by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. It consists of nine panels, each 7½ feet high.

"Cutting colored papers permits me to draw in color," Matisse stated in the early 1950s, during the final stage of his career. "For me it is a matter of simplification. Instead of establishing a contour, and then filling it with color--the one modifying the other--I draw directly in color....This guarantees a precise union of the two processes; they become one." Owing to ill health toward the end of his life, he was unable to paint at his easel, and so he shaped his materials by cutting his own hand-painted paper. With the aid of assistants, who pinned each colored section to the wall according to his instructions, the artist composed an extraordinary group of decorations that included thematic compositions, designs for stained glass windows, wall ceramics, church vestments, and the celebrated Blue Nude series of which the environmental mural The Swimming Pool is the most important.

Matisse had the walls of his dining room covered with a background of brownish burlap. On this he placed a band of white paper resembling a horizon encircling the room. Blue forms of female swimmers leap, dive and float across the white paper, and even rise above and plunge below it, giving one the impression of being caught up in the joyous vitality of a Mediterranean

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bathing scene. Matisse's bold reversal of white-on-blue occurs in one panel in which the outline of a floating form is cut out of blue paper, revealing the woman's silhouetted torso in white. Although certain paper cut-outs were made as preparatory designs for commissioned ceramics, The Swimming Pool was not. After Matisse's death, however, a ceramic version was authorized by his family but has not yet been executed.

The Museum installation will be on view for six months in a special gallery on the first floor. It will then be included in the exhibition The Paper Cut-Outs of Henri Matisse, organized by the St. Louis Art Museum and the Detroit Institute of Arts in collaboration with The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. This exhibition will open in Washington in September 1977 and will subsequently be shown in Detroit and St. Louis.

Plans for the new addition to the Museum include a special gallery for Matisse's The Swimming Pool, where it will be placed in the proper historical sequence of the Museum collection.

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Black-and-white photographs, color transparencies and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019. Tel: (212) 956-7501.

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