

Abigail Larson

Student number: 2200140

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Tutor: Gwenllian Beynon

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Introduction

Fauvism immediately catches one's eye as a movement that is useful to learn more about. The use of bold color immediately sticks out. The art movement itself stood out as brave and unapologetic. These are characteristics which we could all stand to incorporate more of in our work.

It is important to look at artists that one is inspired by. This can lead to changes for the better in one's practice. One can take elements of that which inspires them and incorporate them. The continuing collection of information is crucial to a developing creative practice. Without such collection we cannot hope to progress in our work, and one would not be an artist without the quest for constant improvement. Perfection will never be reached and thus we must continue to collect inspiration for our work.

Fauvism

In this section we will explore what this art movement was about, and who was a part of it.

Les Fauves, The Wild Beasts, was the name an art critic spontaneously gave to a group of young painters after seeing their works hanging together at the Paris Salon d'Automne of 1905. The image that leapt to mind of untamed animals shows how aggressive these paintings appeared at first sight to an audience which was only just coming to terms with Impressionism. (Whitfield 1991, p. 7)

Fauvism is eye-catching and extreme. The colors are bold and don't seem to adhere to the same rules as art movements that came before. This seems to be an important part

of the movement. There is heavy use of primary colors. There seemed to be a freedom to it that other art had lacked. The energy that this style of painting exudes is incredible, and it shows how powerful color can be. “While color still played an important role in establishing the structure and mood of a piece, particularly as the Fauvists emphasized individual expression, the use of color no longer needed to be tied to the natural world.” (artincontext, 2021)

The art movement itself was still inspired by other movements. One of the strongest influences on the fauvism movement was Van Gogh who painted in the styles of pointillism and impressionism (Sotheby's, 2018)

Below is an example of what the art of the fauvism movement looked like. You can see the how bold and bright the colors are. This particular image was painted by Andre Derain (1906) and is titled *The Turning Road, L'Estaque*. “Of all the Fauve artists, Matisse is by far the most famous today. However, in terms of contribution to the movement, Derain, was equally as important.” (Sotheby's, 2018)



Derain, A. (1906). *The Turning Road, L'Estaque*. [Oil on Canvas]

The movement centered on a group of French artists and only lasted from approximately 1905 to 1907 (Chilvers and Graves-Smith, 2015). It seems unsurprising that the movement was short. The same forces that drew these artists to create Fauvism could also be what drove them past it quite quickly. Someone seeking to free themselves from rules will surely always be in pursuit of something more. There are always new sets of rules to break. Once you have broken one set, another takes its place. But short does not mean unimportant. “Even after the dissolution of the group, Fauvism’s ideas surrounding color and subjectivity would continue to influence art movements for decades to come.” (Garrison, 2019)

Henri Matisse is most famously one of the creators of fauvism. There were other artists involved as well. However, it is agreed by most that he was one of the most important and leading figures in the movement. (artincontext, 2021)

About Henri Matisse

What is fascinating about Matisse is that he was not always an artist. This is an inspiring fact for anyone wishing to start their journey in the arts. It's an example of the fact that you don't need to come from a particular background in order to become an artist. You may choose to alter your course later in life. The arts are open to anyone at any stage of life.

His interest in art didn't start until a later age. At around the age of twenty his interest in art really started. He began to sit in on a drawing class. When he had recently been experiencing severe medical issues, he began to paint using oils his mother had gifted to him. A year later he was off to Paris to become a professional artist (McMullen, 2022)

I wonder if not growing up knowing that he would pursue art helped him to think about it in a different way. Perhaps having not been drilled on its rules all his life, it was easier for him to break from them. It's always inspirational to find people who did not realize a passion until later in life.

Now that we know how Henri Matisse became an artist, let's explore what drew Henri Matisse to help create fauvism.

Matisse had gone to the Mediterranean coast with André Derain. He was inspired by Van Gogh and Cézanne at the time. Van Gogh inspired him to use a certain emotional intensity while Cézanne inspired him to use an abstract sense of space. This is where he began to formulate the style that would be associated with the Fauvism movement. Here he began to paint with even brighter colors than he had before. (Flam, J.D., 2003)

These seem to be the first steps towards the movement. Matisse like most artists took inspiration from a few other artists. He seemed to combine the aspects of the styles he admired to create something new. This is something which all artists do.

Semiotic analysis

In this section we will explore and analyze a piece of work from the Fauvism movement.

The picture below was painted by Henri Matisse (1905) and is titled *The Open Window*.

The heavy use of green gives a sense of calm. The colors work together to convey a sense of warmth. You get the feeling straight away when you look at this painting that it must have been a beautiful day. I think the bright and bold colors help to achieve this effect. It would not have the same feel if the colors were less vibrant.

The view (as the title also states) is through an open window. We get the sense of looking out into this scene. It almost feels like we are on vacation, staying in the room, and we have awoken to this wonderful view. The colors and the subject matter all work together to convey a sense of calm. The pink tones in the sky could suggest that it is either sunrise or sunset.

The use of color could also be a signifier that the painter was happy at the time. Pink could signify love. Maybe the painter was in company of people he cared for.

We know that we are by the ocean because of the boats we can see through the window. Views of the water are almost always automatically calming to me. Most of my vacations have been near the water. "The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe" (Berger, n.d., p.8) When I look at this painting, I am calm and relaxed. My personal experiences and knowledge of being around the water influences how I view this painting. I believe this to be a relaxing environment because I personally have never experienced otherwise. One might view this painting in a different light if one had a traumatic experience with water.



Matisse, H. (1905). *The Open Window*. [Oil on Canvas]

Conclusion

Fauvism was an inspiring movement. Through researching the topic, one can learn many facts that will help with one's own practice. You can take inspiration from the use

of color. You can also learn from other artists mindsets. Learning what drives other artists is always beneficial. You can take what inspires and incorporate it your own practice. By digging deeper into a movement, you have more information to help inspire. It can also encourage you to look at your own motivation and to think through questions. This is an important part of the creative process. It is needed for improvement. Examples of these questions might be “What is my personal relationship with art?” and “How does my past influence how I am creating now?”.

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