

## LECTURE notes

### Syllabus 1/24: FAUVISM AND MATISSE

#### Beginning with Introduction and Overview

#### EXPRESSIONISM

- has many subtle variations. Expressionism is a word with lots of different meanings. It's not acceptable as a complete explanation for how to characterize a period or style. It means too many different things and there are too many forms of Expressionism that are so different from each other. For example, Expressionism is Matisse, and Van Gogh, and Munch, and symbolism.
- Symbolism concurrent w/ Post Impressionism
- **Expressionists, Fauvists and others were about what's on the interior.** Different from Impressionists who were about surface things, capturing fleeting moments, light on water etc.
- Gauguin (Post-Impressionist) said to his followers (Nabi) in the Bois D'Amour: "Do not copy too much after nature. Art is an abstraction. You must dream before nature"
- Munch (Expressionist) said: "Art comes from the interior of man"

#### RODIN (1840-1917)



- **02\_Monument to Balzac – Balzac – 1897**
  - Sculpture commissioned by writers at urging of Emile Zola to honor novelist Honore de Balzac who died in 1850
  - Symbolic – captures inner idea of person rather than exact likeness

#### STEICHEN



- **01\_Balzac—The Open Sky – Steichen 1908**
  - Photographer asked by Rodin to photograph his sculpture
  - One of the 1<sup>st</sup> to use photography as means of expression rather than just documentary device
  - Steichen part of movement of photographers in 20<sup>th</sup> century associated with Steiglitz who started Photosecession and lined Amer Mod Art scene w/ Avante Garde ideas
  - Movements in Europe corresponded with Steichen and others

#### STEIGLITZ



- **03\_The Street, Fifth Avenue Steiglitz - 1896**
  - Photo conveys a feeling/idea rather than just a record of the moment



- **04\_ The Steerage – Steiglitz - 1896**
  - Purpose was visual composition, not to document class disparities by showing how they are split – abstract, geometric, diag lines, circular hat echoed in circular drum.
  - Taking Nature and making it into aesthetic composition. Using Photog as Art

## CEZANNE

- **Gave birth to 2 broad directions in 20<sup>th</sup> century European Art:**
  - Expressionism (Matisse) and Formalistic (Cubism)
- didn't like fleeting nature of Impressionism.
- Wanted to make Impressionism more durable, lasting, essential
- Took separate brush strokes of Impressionists and made them into FLAT PLANES OF COLOR
- Gave us what painting could reveal that eye doesn't see rather than realism and what the eye sees
- **“Treat nature in terms of cylinderes, cones and spheres”**
  - Using metaphor to reduce art to the essentials (like these figures are essential)
  - Look at the world and pull out the ESSENCE/essential forms by seeing past surface



- **05\_ Mt. St-Victoire – Cezanne - 1904-6 – (not fauvism!)**
  - Perspective altered – multiple perspectives give us something else to appreciate other than just copying actual view.
  - Atmospheric perspective different from Renaissance artists using 1 & 2 pt. Measured perspective. **His is skewed thru his interpretation**

## MATISSE

- Very influenced by Cezanne. Started out Impressionist, Post Impressionist then moved toward Cezanne's ideas
- “Notes of a Painter” reflects similar ideas as Cezanne's (above).
  - Discover the essential chracter of things and produce an art of “balance,purity,serenity”



- **06\_ La Dessert – Matisse - 1896-7**
  - Matisse still using Imp/Post Imp style and throwing in Cezanne's quirks:
    - Loose brushwork
    - odd tilted perspective (comes from Japanese prints and Cezanne)



- **07\_Male Model - Matisse – 1900**
  - Matisse still a student. Influence of Cezanne evident:
    - Loose impressionist brush marks are spreading out into flat planes of color
    - Body composed of flat planes of color
    - Color is modelling/creating the form not the other way around
    - Mixing new ideas w/ shading, chiaroscuro & traditional stuff

### **1904-MATISSE AND OTHERS (SIGNAC) GO TO ST. TROPEZ TO STUDY LIGHT ON WATER:**

#### **SIGNAC**



- **09\_Flushing Pier – Signac- 1896**
  - Took Seurat's pointilist dots and systemitized them, like decorative mosaic
  - Experimental. Exploring decorative possibilities of pointilism/divisionism/NeoImpressionism
  - Decorative perjorative now but good then. Meant not being bound by rules of illusionism and could express and explore artistic possibilities

#### **MATISSE**



- **08\_Lux, Calme et Volupte - Matisse 1904-5**
  - Matisse's version of idyllic, arcadian paradise as state of mind
  - Matisse's St. Tropez painting under Signac's influence & others.
  - Title: couplet in Baudelaire poem: "There all is perfection and beauty, luxury, calm and delight"
  - Baudelaire an art critic and champion of avante garde experimentation going against grain in 19<sup>th</sup> cent French painting. Friends with Manet, Emile Zola, Courbet; also writer, poet)

#### **CEZANNE**



- **10\_Large Bathers Cezanne- 1905**
  - Compare to Matisse Lux, Calme et Volupte
  - Both are Standard idyllic, arcadian paintings but Matisse is UPDATING by expressing more than women on a beach
  - Matisse uses color and sinuous forms, brush strokes, lines, composition to convey "feeling"
  - NOT FAUVISM YET, BUT THIS IS WHERE THE GERM OF FAUVISM STARTED

**THIS is FAUVISM:** (wild beast)

Arbitrary use of bold expressive colors

Colors used purely for their expressive power

Exploring the full expressiveness color in the medium of paint



- **11\_Open Window, Collioure - Matisse. – 1905**
  - **Pre-Notes of a Painter. Formally Matisse begins using:**
  - Arbitrary color. Thick gobs. Exposed canvas. Bold colors to express purely what color can do



- **12\_Mdme Matisse - Matisse – 1905**
  - **Pre-Notes of a Painter**
  - Green stripe c/o playing with colors to equalize colors – green recesses, yellow forward

**Above all he's after expression and the means to achieve it are color, line, harmony etc.**

**RETURN FROM ST. TROPEZ – SUBMIT ALL THIS NEW WORK TO THE AUTUMN SALON OF 1905 – IT'S ACCEPTED!**

Paintings shown in single room surrounding classical renaissance style sculptures. Yikes!  
Reviewer said “Mon Dieu, Donatello emit les fauves” and **FAUVISM WAS COINED.**

**DERAIN**



- **13\_London Bridge - Derain 1906–** inspired by Gauguin
  - Taking Impress. Brush strokes and making them bigger, distorting perspective to make vibrant coloristic composition



- **14\_Turning Road, L'Estaque – Derain 1906 –**
  - Bold expressive power of blues and oranges transform and enliven scene, making it more expressive

**VLAMINCK – inspired by VanGogh**



- **15\_Portrait of Derain – Vlaminck - 1906\_**
  - Vlaminck painted friend, Derain, in arbitrary, expressive brush strokes conveying how powerful Derain's art was



- **16\_Picnic in the Country 1905– Vlaminck w girlfriend**

**LUMIERE** – Photog brothers – worked in same region where Fauves and Cezanne were



- **17\_Young Lady with Umbrella - Lumiere 1907**  
Lumieres try to develop color photography.  
Exposed plate (BW) thru camera then manipulated color during development process

**MATISSE:**



- **18\_The Joy of Life - Matisse 1905-6 – FULLY FAUVE. CAUSED UPEHAVAL WITH CRITICS**
  - Caused Picasso to paint Desmoiselles d' Avignon
  - Critics confused by M.'s departure from classical norms
  - Outrageous c/o part classical, part not classical = critics confused
  - Dreamlike scale, out of proportion
  - When compared to **20\_Madonna on the Steps by Poussin** it's actually the same compositional scheme w balance of colors, parametal composition, triangular composition but WITH MATISSE'S UPDATED SLANT ON THINGS. HE'S NOT REJECTING, HE'S UPDATING.
  - Matisse draws on Classicism but then moves on in his own way
  - "Don't copy all the details – eliminate certain things" (woman's head is missing bottom R)

**MAILLOL** – Contemporary of Rodin and Matisse.



- **19\_The Mediterranean - Maillol 1901**
  - This is Updated French Classicism. What makes it classical: reclining nude, idealized, but simplified and reduced

## MATISSE:

- After the notoriety of the Autumn Salon of 1905 **Matisse** went to **N. Africa** (just like he wanted to see St. Tropez), because European artists were collecting specimens of African art and getting very excited about the expressive qualities that they interpreted in the abstraction of the forms of this art. In N. Africa he observed everything but didn't create art there. On return, inspired, he created the bronze sculpture **Reclining Nude**.
- Although we associate Matisse with flat, modernist painting, he frequently worked out his ideas in 3 dimensions before translating them to canvas (flat pictorial space).

### Cezanne's advice:

- "Treat nature in terms of the cylinder, the cone and the sphere". Matisse is simplifying and reducing the figure to the essential lines, curves, forms, volumes in space.

### Matisse wrote in *Notes of a Painter* (Chipp):

- "What I am after above all is: expression".

### How does he achieve expression?

- Color, line, harmony, compositional and formal elements, shape and balance, reducing the non-essential and focusing only on the essential elements. You don't need eyelashes unless they're essential to the expression you are trying to convey.

### Beginning of important theme thru early modernism in western art – ALLUDING TO THE TRADITION OF REPRESENTATION AND UNDERMINING IT AT THE SAME TIME.



- **22\_Reclining Nude - Matisse 1907** (bronze sculpture) -

#### Alluding to traditional representation:

- Looks traditional in subject matter – reclining female nude

#### Undermining it:

- not idealized, takes liberty with what he's emphasizing and/or simplifying and abstracted.
- The controposto is exaggerated
- hip juts forward
- face is minimally defined just to give you an idea.
- It's the overall muscular turning in space that he's trying to depict.



- **21\_Blue Nude - Matisse 1907** (painting)

#### Alluding to traditional representation:

- subject (reclining nude) yes, and formally it has dimension and depth, color, shadow, value, light, chiaroscuro, and controposto.

#### Undermining it:

- heavy black contours; shadow lines are hatchmarks (drawing techniques).



- **23\_Harmony in Red, LaDessert - Matisse- 1908**

- A remake of the earlier painting: The Dessert Table #6.
- Simplified subject matter (less food);
- emphasizing color c/o lots of amazing intense red;

- made tablecloth same color as background;
- curvilinear/arabesque pattern inspired by Moroccan and Islamic designs & textiles that he saw on trip to N.Africa.
- Also influenced by Art Nouveau -- one of 1<sup>st</sup> modern all pervasive styles in everything emphasizing curvilinear, sinuous, organic forms – a reaction to industrial, geometric tendencies of the beginnings of modernism in architecture, mass production, etc.
- Effect of red: bold; optically it flattens the work. Again, he's creating space with color. And it's totally flat.
- example of optical space
  - a new kind of pictorial space – not one you could walk thru illusionistically as in classical Renaissance works with windows having perspective that look like you could step through them, but a space that can ONLY be traveled through with the eye.
  - CLEMENT GREENBERG wrote that modernism created “optical space”– (if 1 person were responsible for Post Modernism it could be him because his criticism was so influential that Post Modernism was partly a reaction to his criticism)
    - He uses Matisse as an example of optical space. You have a flat space but intuitively you know it represents depth & he leads us thru it optically.



- **24\_The Dance II – Matisse – 1910** – Interesting for a number of reasons:
  - Subject matter is joyful dance, lively, tribal, not violent but fun;
  - Matisse uses only 3 colors to depict it;
  - Simple composition: circle with a divided space and yet he gets so much content.
  - EPITOME OF Notes of a Painter. Everything applies in this work:
    - he's after expression;
    - achieves it through reduction of means – we know what we need to know through simplified shapes, colors, & movement;
    - another example of “optical space” : flat planes of color make the work flat, even though we know it has depth because a circle of people are dancing.
  - EXAMPLE OF Primitivism :
    - a key strategy of early 20<sup>th</sup> cent modernism in ALL branches of art, not just painting:
    - Idea that indigenous people of non Western societies were primitive and more pure and uncorrupted by modern urban civilization (Rousseau 's 18<sup>th</sup> century “noble savage”).
    - Not only an attitude but a strategy of “appropriation” based on Colonial attitude encouraging artists like Matisse, Die Brucke, Picasso and Braque etc. to imitate the primitive forms by appropriating them and using them in their art.
  - EXAMPLE OF Appropriation: source is actually Greek red figure vase painting.



- **25\_The Back I - Matisse**



- **26\_Backs 1 through 4 - Matisse – 1909-29**
  - Created over 10 years. You can see his process. By #4 you can see the influence of geometric abstraction (which actually reflects the influence of cubism) now beginning to enter into Matisse's once organic, simplified, flattened artistic vocabulary.



- **27\_Piano Lesson - Matisse 1916 -**
  - geometric abstraction and the influence of cubism.
  - Form leads eye around the image and thru the space which is essentially flat=Matisse's method.
  - Mixing simplified planes of color and geometric simplified approach with contrasting curvilinear lines.
  - Colors more muted than the joyful, vivid color of earlier works: reflection of the times as experienced by Matisse – WWI in Paris was a devastating time. His paintings during this time are more subdued.



- **28\_Decorative Figure on Ornamental Background - Matisse - 1927**
  - reminder of Orientalism: harem girl/exotic odalisque (Delacroix). Takes Odalisque tradition and idealizes/abstracts her form.
  - Places her in amazing decorative background like another update of La Dessert. Background Pattern is DECORATIVE and flattens it even though we get a suggestion of space from the room itself.



29\_ No Pink Nude on test



- **30\_Jazz Cowboy - Matisse — 1947.**
  - Matisse suffered from cataracts and in 1940's began working with cut paper.
  - Created whole "Jazz" series.
  - REMEMBER THIS ONE when later we look at Robert Motherwell's famous abstract expressionist piece, the "Elegy of the Spanish Civil War."

**Matisse says art should be like a "good armchair" –**

- soothing, a place for comfort and relaxation and joy. This is what expressionism is after.