

INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION GALLERIES

THE "WILD BEASTS": FAUVISM AND ITS AFFINITIES

If Fauvism did seem shocking in 1905, it was only to those not yet adjusted to earlier avant-garde art. Fauvism, in fact, had been prepared for in various ways by artists of the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist generations. The Impressionists' presentation of a colorful vacationers' world set the pattern for many Fauve paintings. Likewise, both the subjective and the methodical extensions of Impressionism found an echo in Fauvist art. In 1904-05, both van Gogh's exaggerated, emotive development of the Impressionist technique and the Neo-Impressionists' objectification of the same source were important to the Fauves. The period 1906-07 was dominated by Gauguin's influence, and 1907-08 by Cézanne's. The Fauves, however, transformed these influences in utterly original ways. If Post-Impressionism had already pointed towards an art made solely out of color, it was only with Fauvism that such as art was finally born.

The first three galleries of the exhibition present Fauvism with its affinities. From the juxtaposition of proto-Fauve, Fauve and post-Fauve works, we see the relationship of Fauvism to contemporaneous art.

The first gallery shows the relationship of Fauvism to Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism. Included here are examples of the Fauves' early Neo-Impressionist-derived works, the earliest from 1899. Also, paintings by Monet and Signac; and by Mondrian and Kandinsky who later worked in Neo-Impressionist styles. Shown here together for the first time are Matisse's study and definitive version of Luxe, calme et volupté (1904-05) and Derain's L'Age d'or (1905) their important multiple-figure compositions representing a poetic Golden Age and painted in the Neo-Impressionist style.

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The second gallery shows the more 'Expressionist' side of Fauvism, with paintings by Matisse, Braque and Vlaminck, and beside them works by Valtat (a precursor of Fauvism) and later work by the Brücke artists, Pechstein and and Kirchner. This gallery also contains Derain's The Dance, his large-scale exotic and primitivist figure composition of 1906.

In the final orientation gallery, juxtaposed paintings show the relationship of Vlaminck's work to that of van Gogh, and Rouault's relationship to Fauvism and German Expressionism. Also seen here are contrasting examples of the early and developed Fauve styles: the former, still dependent upon Neo-Impressionism; the latter, influenced by the open forms and high color of Gauguin. Still-lives by Jawlensky, Vlaminck and Braque conclude this section, and show how Fauvism contained within itself not only the seeds of Expressionist colorism but also the structures of the Cubist art which replaced it.

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