

# FAUVISM & FAUVE art

## the French modern art-movement in short text-quotes



'Potato Pickers', De Vlaeminck 1906

Fauvism was a modern French art movement; it is described here by Jacob Bendien who admired Fauvism because of his joy. He defines Fauvism as the modern continuation of French Impressionism, with its airiness in portraying the subject, and its strong connection to color. Bendien greatly valued Fauvism because of the uncomplicated freedom and the strength of awareness of composition. Among the Fauve's artists were Henri Matisse, De Vlaeminck, Derain, and Marquet.

*The selected art quotes on the French art movement Fauvism are produced by the Dutch artist / art critic Jacob Bendien (1890 – 1933); they are taken from his artbook "Trends in the Present Day Art of Painting", published by W.L & J. Brusse N.V. – Rotterdam 1936, after his death.*

editor Fons Heijnsbroek / translation: Anne Porcelijn

## FAUVISM & FAUVES, the French art movement

- Fauvism is the first movement that takes the main focus of the picture to the painting itself, to the play of lines and colors, and is therefore one of the pioneering movements of the modern art of painting.

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- Matisse (who initiated Fauvism, ed) even goes so far as to say: 'When looking at a painting one should forget what it is supposed to be.' The main point is only the quality of the sentiment in the way it is expressed by the play of materials.

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- A Fauve artist feels that a painting should not only express the glory of life, but should also be a jewel in every surrounding. Preferably also by any reasonable light and from far off as well as nearby.

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- Fauvism is the continuation of Impressionism. The light freedom and happiness that we find so often in Impressionistic art, we can also find in Fauvism, but then even more so. These characteristics are strongly undervalued by Expressionism and Cubism. The serious Expressionism only sees – and not entirely without ground – a lack of seriousness, and the strict Cubism sees indiscipline.

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- The Fauves do not search for final truths as for instance The Style, (such as Mondrian and van Doesburg, f.h.) and the expressionists, they (the Fauve artists, fh) only want to create paintings that enrich and uplift.

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- They (The Fauvism artists, ed) like order that helps us to enjoy life easily, but not the sort of order of Cubism amongst others, that forces us to view things in a particular manner. The Fauves paint for the joy of painting.

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- As opposed to Impressionism which only arranges, Fauvism wants to compose. Even so, the Fauves take reality as their starting point. The Fauve and the Cubist both not only handle this by using the art of painting, but see it as such. 'I cannot distinguish between the feeling I have about life and the way I present it'.

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- Even so, the Fauve has a feeling for nature and the Cubist has not. For both reality only exists in the art of painting elements; however, for the Cubist, only out of elements that can be constructed by the mind, such as cubes, cones and geometric planes etc., but for the Fauve, of elements which express his sensual love of nature.

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- The Fauve loves life. He sees life as one huge party. In his expression of this he does not worry about the reality of the separate entities, but gives them the color and form necessary for the composition. Objects only have value as a tone in the musical composition of the whole, as a movement in the development of the melody.

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- If, in a painting a horse has been positioned, instead of painting it grayish as it is in reality, to help the composition the Fauve will, without compunction, paint it blue or green.

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- The Fauve does not find it necessary that the color of an object is painted in the particular place it is situated. If the composition requires he will paint the color way out of its contour. For instance Dufy. This heightens the airy spaciousness of the painting.

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- If we often called Expressionistic art Christian, the Fauve's art is heathen.... Whatever enchants their fine taste, interests them. Blossoming naked women, sunny southern landscapes, peaceful deep blue sea scenes, are all favorite subjects.

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- The Fauves observe their subjects with carefully pleasurable objectivity. Lines in nature are often lines of understanding for them, however, used with the utmost of sensitivity in the painting, and emotionally and spontaneously expressed. In this expression the signature of the artist is seen more fully than in any other art movement.

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- It is as though the Fauve artist views his own emotional expression with pleasure, as though he enjoys his enjoyment once again.

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- The colors are mostly painted to the most eclatant beauty. However, for the Fauve this beauty is totally different to the colors in nature. Matisse declared emphatically that he did not want to compete with nature in producing light. If this was what he wanted he would have placed lights behind his paintings.

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- A Fauve artist's creation is large, peaceful, clear and often entirely, or almost flat, in order not to scatter or make more vague the effect on the viewer, but to allow it to be as penetrating as possible.

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- Space in a Fauve painting is empty; it is a symbolic space, a breadth of feeling. Most often this space is expressed by thin, tenuous, clear neutral colors. Sometimes parts of the painting are left unpainted.... In this tenuous space there are often massive colored planes and strong vital lines, which force themselves into our emotions with intense deep power, without, however, imprisoning us in this feeling.

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- The Fauves have a preference for strong and richly varied contrasts; in color as well as line and manner of filling in planes. When Matisse paints a reclining naked lady against a background of vertically striped wallpaper, the woman is not so much a psychological problem, but rather a rhythmic wave of passive, horizontal lines against the background of vertical stripes.

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- Psychology, perspective and construction come in second place (in Fauvism, fh). The first place is reserved for rhythm, color combinations and play of lines. Floating in this rhythm is much to be preferred by these celebrators of life, than difficult constructions or psychological studies.

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- The Fauve artist is one of the few artists for whom the word decorative is not negative. Quite the opposite, he sees it as the highest praise that can be given to a painting.... For him decorative means also an intrinsic elegance, so that the painting could be placed in any surrounding because of its simplicity and its strength, and its serenity and largesse, it will always retain its beauty.

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- The beauty of Fauvism art is not, as we have already seen, due to the 'performance' or anything we can think of as background, but because of the direct effect of the entire painting, in the same way as with a luxurious object like a Persian carpet or a gemstone.

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- According to the Fauves, the painting should give us joy; it should work as a liberator. Therefore, it should not be necessary for the viewer to study or analyse the painting, 'something which represses his spirit,' according to Matisse. Elsewhere he says that the painting should hold onto the viewer but not hold him in.

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- Fauvism is a purely aesthetic movement that cares not at all for life questions that lie outside esthetics. It is 'l'art pour l'art' in the most pure meaning of the words.

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translation Anne Porcelijn