

Example of essay on henri matisse's the red room and the fauvist ideas

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Fauvism was not just the first artistic movement of the 20th century. It inaugurated a new era in the history of art that would change art forever. Although the Fauves were not a consistent group and for most of the artists it was just a transitional stage in their work, the Fauves broke with the earlier artistic tradition that had started in the Renaissance more than any other artist or group of artists before, paving the way for the great changes that would occur in art in the next 100 years (Rewald). As the leader of the Fauvist movement Henri Matisse is considered the most important French painter of the 20th century and along with Picasso one of the two most important artists in the world during that period (Piocch). His painting The Red Room (Harmony in Red) displays all the ideas and characteristics of the Fauvist style and is a great example of the movement.

The Red Room was created in 1908-1909. It depicts an interior domestic scene. In a red room, a woman places a bowl of fruits on a table. On the table the viewer can see more fruits, two bottles and a vase with flowers. Next to the table can be seen a chair and an open window from which a beautiful green and blossomed landscape denotes that this is probably an image from spring or early summer. Even from the first glance some of the best known characteristics of the Fauvist style are obvious to the viewer: bright colors, simple design and bold patterns created through large brushstrokes (Tansey and Kleiner, 1033-1034). Color was of primary importance for the Fauves. Cezanne had suggested in the end of the 19th century that the painter could only convey light in a painting through color (Tansey and Kleiner, 1034). Matisse and the Fauves took this suggestion to another level by using a series of impressive, vivid and at the same time

unnatural colors that dominated their paintings (Rewald). In the Red Room, the dominant color - as the title implies- is red although blue, yellow and green, are also present. The room, table and tablecloth are a vivid red. The upper part of the two chairs and some fruits -probably apples- are a deeper red. The colors of the interior are supplemented by yellow and blue, while the landscape from the open window is dominated by emerald green.

The representation of the human figure and the objects in the scene is simplistic and the artist chose simple lines and motifs something that most probably reflects Matisse's influence from non Western art like African and Indian art. The Fauves were after all the first group of artists to look outside the Western world for inspiration (Tansey and Kleiner, 1034). Realism and naturalism both in design and color cease to be the focus of art for the first time since the Renaissance. In this respect Matisse's The Red Room distances itself even more from the Renaissance tradition than Impressionistic and Post Impressionistic paintings ever did (Tansey and Kleiner 1033-1034). The choice of the artist to use multiple perspectives to depict the different objects of the room is another break with tradition. Matisse chose to depict the items from the angle that would best represent them. This does not seem strange when looking at the painting, as a special unity has been achieved creating a harmonious whole.

Interestingly, the Fauves received initially very bad critiques. Even the name Fauves by which we know them today was originally used as an insult to their art as it means wild beasts (Rewald). Nevertheless, their work survived time and as the 20th century progressed was greatly and widely

appreciated. Matisse, more than any of his fellow Fauves is still considered a pioneer and The Red Room proves why.

WORKS CITED

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