Fauvism: Characteristics And Major Artists

Fauvism is defined as a style of painting with vivid expressionistic and non-naturalistic use of color that flourished in Paris from 1905 and, although short-lived, had an important influence on subsequent artists, especially the German expressionists. Key artists that contributed heavily to this movement were Henri Matisse, André Derain, and Georges Braque. Some major characteristics of this style of art include a profound use of unnatural color which separated objects from their realistic role in society, strong and united works of three-dimensional settings that appear flat on the canvas, authentic representation of the emotions of the artist creating the pieces rather then representations of what each object “should” look like based on nature, and thick surface texture of the paint on canvas.

Henri Matisse is widely known as one of the most influential Fauvist painters that there ever was. From a young age, I myself learned about his influence in the art world and viewed his works in museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC). Matisse applied vibrant colors to the everyday objects in his paintings. These colors were often variations of the three primary colors that sometimes even clashed with each other; creating the unrealistic dynamic of realistic objects that Fauvism is known for. In works like The Red Studio and The Blue Window, Matisse displays rooms consisting of vibrant blues and reds and yellows with scattered objects all around the perimeter. In Woman in a Purple Coat Matisse strays a little from the dominant primary colors (although still including some yellows and reds in the background pattern, and a blue in her shoes) and focuses on this deep, striped, purple coat. Henri Matisse was an expert at using color to create forceful contrast.

If Matisse experimented with the production of avant-garde works in his style of creation they would resemble his paintings quite similarly, but also vary in some ways. For instance, I could picture Matisse being interested in creating a yellow sofa, due to his intense and consistent usage of the primary colors, but patternless in order to really pop in a room filled with other neighboring furniture. If he were to take up the entire field of interior design, his style would definitely shine through his color combinations; between the wall paint color, the furniture hues, and the additional decor, heavy contrast would definitely be found. Matisse just had a way with color. I envision Matisse’s avant-garde interior design career including many house plants and artworks (sculptures, etc) embellishing his projects.

Henri Matisse could also surely excel in an avant-garde fashion scene. Similarly to what I previously stated about his furniture techniques, he would apply his knowledge of color to comfortable, yet stylish, women’s clothing. While writing this, I remembered back to Matisse’s painting entitled Woman in a Purple Coat, and believe that clothing by Matisse would resemble this purple coat closely. Matisse has an eye for color, and which matches which correctly in order to get the absolute perfect contrast to appeal to the human eye.

André Derain is another well known painter from the Fauvist movement. We talked about him a lot throughout this semester in Modern Art History and learned extensively about how he contributed to Fauvism through, of course, his use of colors as well as utilization of pointillism. Derain once said, “We were always intoxicated with colour, with words that speak of colour and with the sun that makes colours live” (freemanart.ca). His love for color, similar to Matisse,

shines through a lot of his famous Fauvist paintings. In Boats at Collioure, the water is blue and the sand is a yellow-orange color. Although these are realistic places for these colors to be found, they are much more vibrant hues than average water or sand would be and the water is tinted with reds and greens. In this work, Derain also displays his interest in pointillism, creation am energetic feel to the painting. In Landscape Near Chatou Derain continues with his vibrant use of colors, and puts some unexpected colors in some unexpected places. The sky is different shades of pink, as well as some of the grass. The grass also exhibits some blues and oranges. He included a lot of color variety within his pieces, unlike what I found in most of Matisse's art, where he typically used primary colors.

In the case that André Derain were to be able to shape a particular object domain in everyday life, he would take it very slowly and seriously. I've found that his paintings are not only beautiful because of the vibrant colors and interesting liveliness, but also the very specific pointillism dots that make every detail perfect. If he were to make objects like clothing or furniture every single detail, inch by inch, would be accounted for and worked at closely. And in this case, it would be very difficult to mass produce these items. This also might mean that patterns he would choose to use in potential fabrics could be polka dotted, or include variations of spots. I envision the coloration in these avant-garde pieces to be very similar to Matisse's, with a little less focus on primary colors, and more just on vibrant tones of every color there is available.

Hats would be a signature element in Derain's clothing line if he were to create one. After viewing his paintings entitled Portrait of Lucien Gilbert, Portrait of Madame Paul Guillaume with a Large Hat, and The Artist in His Studio, and many more, I began to notice a trend. He could put a lot of his focus toward creating hat lines for both men and women, maybe incorporating some of that polka dot fabric that I previously mentioned within these fun accessories.

Georges Braque is the third Fauvist painter I have chosen to research for these thought experiments. Braque not only contributed art to the Fauvism movement, but also helped co-develop the Cubism movement along with Pablo Picasso which I will discuss further following Fauvism. Unlike Matisse and Derain, Braque seemed to stick to more monochromatic color schemes within his paintings, often being even just different shades of brown. In Braque's piece entitled Fruit Dish and Glass, it appears to be sketched with pencil on white paper with pieces of brown peaking in. Glass on a Table has a very similar brown/neutral color scheme to it, and you almost can't even tell what's being depicted without actually reading the title. Man with Guitar exhibits those same monochromatic tones but in a deeper hue which turns almost blue-ish/grey while looking at it.

If Georges Braque was given the opportunity to create avant-garde objects through his art I believe he would definitely incorporate fruit in whatever he found himself working on. Many, many, many of his paintings included various fruits in bowls and vases as the centerpiece of a table. Typically, the table in his pieces is a glass table. This leads me to believe if he were to begin working with furniture, he might experiment with some glassware and how to construct glass as a medium for art. Within the rooms where he would place these glass tables with bowls of fruits on them, I also visualize many plants scattered, big and small.

The clothing items Braque may have produced in this situation would also stem off of monochromatic color palettes, like his paintings. Natural browns, tans, yellows, maybe some deep greens would all find a place in his clothing items. Avant-garde apparel trends by Braque

would include high fashion everyday items that could be worn in daily life or to a day at the office; mostly including winter clothing such as gloves, earmuffs, hats, trench coats, raincoats, etc.

Fauvism is the movement that shaped the history of art and changed it forever. The artists that worked within this movement each contributed their own personal qualities to it and left a lasting impression. Matisse, Derain, and Braque all exhibit Fauvism effectively and would exhibit that in avant-garde items through color and details. Characteristics found in each of their specific works of arts say so much about their creative style and how it would carry over to shape a particular object or domain of everyday life, I found these thought experiments to be very straightforward and precise.