

The Museum of Modern Art

NO. 3

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

It had taken "well over a hundred years to resolve the antithesis between the English connoisseur, Sir George Beaumont, who said 'A good picture, like a good fiddle, should be brown' and a painter like Derain who in 1905 took a plain red, a plain blue and a plain yellow from the tube and put them straight on the canvases in rectangular dabs that subverted the whole notion of 'good painting,'" the critic John Russell observes.

ADVANCE ANNOUNCEMENT OF MAJOR SPRING SHOW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

- Title:** The "Wild Beasts": Fauvism and Its Affinities
- Sponsors:** SCM Corporation and the National Endowment for the Arts
- Tour:** The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, March 26 - June 1
San Francisco Museum of Art, June 28 - August 15 (tentative)
Kimball Art Museum, Fort Worth, September 13 - October 31 (tentative)
- Director:** John Elderfield, Curator, Painting and Sculpture, The Museum of Modern Art
- Contents:** 100 paintings and a few related drawings and sculptures created for the most part in 1905 and 1906 by the Fauves -- the group of artists, led by Matisse, which earned the name "wild beasts" because of their bold and "unnatural" colors. Includes more than 20 Matisses, several originally owned by the Gertrude Stein family, Derain's large-scale figure compositions and landscapes, paintings by Braque, van Dongen, Dufy and others.

An orientation gallery relates Fauvism, the first 20th-century movement, to 19th-century Impressionism and post-Impressionism and to later developments in modern art.

Matisse was the greatest and dominant personality of the "fauve"

(more)

14

or wild beast generation which scandalized the Paris public. One critic, reviewing the Salon d'Automne of 1905, referred to "uncouth and naive games of a child playing with a box of colors."

But, as John Elderfield points out, "Genuinely new art is always challenging, sometimes even shocking to those not prepared for it. In 1905, the paintings of Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck and their friends seemed shocking to conservative museum-goers.... But shock and surprise quickly disappear. To look again at these exquisitely decorative paintings is to realize that the term Fauvism tells us hardly anything at all about the ambitions or concepts that inform Fauvist art....

"The history of Fauvism is largely the history of this essentially private artist's [Matisse] single sustained period of cooperation with the Parisian avant-garde, albeit for a very short period. Within this period we see an emphasis upon the autonomy of color almost entirely new in Western art, a concern with directness of expression that countenanced mixed techniques and formal dislocations for the sake of personal feeling, and a truly youthful bravado that in its search for the vital and the new discovered the power of the primitive. We also see a rendering of external reality that found pleasurable stimulus in the 'vacation culture' subject matter of the Impressionists, but that pushed it at times either to the verge of a vernacular urban realism or toward a more ideal celebration of the Bonheur de vivre. Finally, and perhaps most basic of all, a belief in both individual and pictorial autonomy, which found a remarkable balance between the concern for purely visual sensation and for personal and internal emotion, and in so doing rediscovered a tradition of high decorative

(more)

art that has provoked some of the most sublime as well as expressive paintings of this century."

Book: The "Wild Beasts": Fauvism and Its Affinities by John Elderfield, approximately 160 pp, approximately 200 black-and-white illustrations, 24 color plates

Openings: Press Preview: March 24, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Contributing Members: March 24, 9 a.m. - midnight
Regular Members: March 25, 11 a.m. - 10 p.m.
Public: March 26 - June 1

Poster: Four-color

Lectures for Students and Scholars:
The Museum of Modern Art
Tuesdays at 6 p.m.

Pierre Schneider, March 30
"Matisse and the Bonheur de Vivre."

William Rubin, April 6
"Fauvism, Cézannism, Cubism: A Proposal in Art Historical Revisionism."

Theodore Reff, April 13
"Matisse and the Meaning of Still Life."

Donald E. Gordon, April 20
"The 'Expressionist Moment' in Fauvism."

January, 1976

Color transparencies, black-and-white photographs, checklist, book text and other press information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7501; 7504.
