|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Artist | Henri Matisse |
| Title | The Goldfish |
| Date | 1912 |
| Medium | Painting, oil on canvas |
| Scale | 146x97cm |
| Scope | Still life - French |
| Style | Late Fauvist |
| Patron | NA |
| Location | French |
| Function |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Formal features | |
| Composition | The interesting compositional idea of this painting is the view of the fish both from above; where little detail is shown and the fish are merely smears of colour, and from the front, where the fish are portrayed in more detail. Surround the fish bowl are bold colours, and print like patterns. |
| Colour or texture | Bold colours are the main attraction of this painting. Bright orange contrasts with the subtle pinks and greens that surround the fish bowl. Blue + orange, green + red are complementary colours. Colour influenced by Matisse’s Fauvist years. |
| Light & tone | Light is reflected throughout the painting, in the water, from the table surface, and the railing on the left-hand side. However, it is more a means to an end than a focus of the painting, which is clearly the colour |
| Space & depth or relief | The fish are seen simultaneously from two different angles, which creates a tension in his depiction of space. |
| Line or brushwork | Unrefined brushwork, typical of fauvist paintings and Matisse’s style at the time |

Critical text quote:

It is obvious that Matisse and some of his disciples, like Friesz, are endowed with a remarkable sensibility…they restore to us the sunlight…Their aesthetic permits them to attempt to blind us; they do not recoil from using the extremes of colour…also the extreme simplicity of their compositions, indicates that nothing remains of the theories of neo-impressionism

* Maurice Denis

This young painter (Matisse) assumes, whether or not he wishes to, the position of head of the (Fauvist) school.

* Louis Vauxcelles

Influence from technological factors:

The development of means of travels meant that he had a first-hand experience of these different cultures that had such a profound effect on his work, including his travels to North Africa, Morocco.

Use or development of materials, techniques & processes:

Stylistic comment and artistic influence:

This painting is an illustration of some of the major themes in Matisse’s painting: his use of complementary colors, his quest for an idyllic paradise, his appeal for contemplative relaxation for the viewer and his complex construction of pictorial space.

Influence from cultural/social factors: Goldfish became a reoccurring subject matter for Matisse, appearing in 9 paintings, however here they are the centre of the composition. But why was Henri Matisse so interested in goldfish?  One clue may be found in his visit to Tangier, Morocco, where he stayed from the end of January until April 1912. He noted how the local population would day-dream for hours, gazing into goldfish bowls. Matisse would subsequently depict this in The Arab Café, a painting he completed during his second trip to Morocco, a few months later. For Matisse, the goldfish came to symbolize this tranquil state of mind and, at the same time, became evocative of a paradise lost.

