Key work: Derain **Charing Cross Bridge**

1. Why did Derain come to London in the winter of 1905/6?
2. Which art dealer sent him?
3. This dealer had made a fortune from selling the paintings of an earlier painter to London. Who was it?
4. Why do you think he wanted to send “a Fauve” artist?
5. Why do you think he sent Derain rather than Matisse or Vlaminck?
6. How many works did Derain complete in London? (Look up the recent show at the Courtauld Gallery to help your research.)
7. Why do you think he didn’t include people in this landscape (or cityscape)?

***Examine and explain how this work is Fauvist (5 marks)***

Derain’s ‘Charing Cross Bridge’ (1906, 80x100cm, oil on canvas) has an unusual subject matter for a Fauvist painting. This scene of industrial London features the Lion Brewery to the left with a line of modern tugs on the river bank. A train crosses the bridge below the iconic silhouette of the Houses of Parliament. This painting was part of a series commissioned by Vollard to show modern London in the newest ‘modern’ style of art and this explains the deviation from the typically informal subject matter of friends/family or local landscapes.

The composition is more typical: cropped on 3 sides and asymmetrical – emphasised by the uneven horizon line and bridge. This shows the influence of both Japonisme and the camera, but more importantly emphasises Fauvism’s determination to break with the ideas of Academic art of the past. Derain’s colours are certainly typical of Fauvism’s focus on unrealistic experimentation – the Houses of Parliament are lurid green while the muddy London river bank has been depicted in shocking complementary reds. This daring use of colour attracted much criticism, prompting Mauclair to complain that “they have flung a pot of paint in the publics’ face”.

The brushhandling is also varied and quick which are hallmarks of this style. Here, Derain has moved away from the early Pointillist dots to longer dashes on the water to the right, interspersed with bare canvas but on the left hand side, Derain points to the later evolution of the style with solid expanse of colour on the red river bank. Thick outlines and shallow depth emphasise the primitive aspect of this work as well as pushing the boundaries of art controversially further than their Post Impressionist predecessors and endorsing Vauxcelles naming of them as “wild beasts”.

*Note how this student has used a list of the formal features to ensure that their analysis is relevant, concise and comprehensive. Every point must be backed up by specific detail from the painting to earn credit.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NAME: | **‘Charing Cross Bridge’** | http://c300221.r21.cf1.rackcdn.com/andre-derain-charing-cross-bridge-1906-1358545997_org.jpg | |
| ARTIST: | **Derain** |
| DATE: | 1906 |
| SIZE: | 80cm x 100cm |
| **FORMAL FEATURES** | **SPECIFIC DETAIL EVIDENCE** | **EVALUATION OF CONTEXT** | **HOW ASSOCIATED WITH STYLE?** |
| Subject matter: | London. View of industrial town with Lion Brewery on left. Train crossing the bridge with lime green Houses of Parliament silhouetted behind. | Following the scandal of the 1905 Salon d’Automne, Derain was sent to London by dealer, Ambroise Vollard, to paint a series of modern London in this new style of the new century. | Cityscape is not typical of the Fauvist choice of subject matters. Despite this, emphasis is still more on the experimentation with style than the importance of the specific subject. |
| Composition: | Simple and asymmetric with angled train bridge providing manmade ‘horizon line’. Tug boats in foreground cropped. | Simplicity and deliberate naivety pushing further than Post Impressionists but clearly influenced by Van Gogh and Gauguin. | Refusal to abide by ‘academic’ expectations of harmonious and symmetrical composition is typical. Wedge of bridge is disruptive. |
| Colour | Bright blocks of red left foreground, Parliament in vivid green, bridge, and water in blue with reflections shown in yellow. | Working with Matisse and Derain in previous summer and group experimentation with releasing colour from bounds of realism. | Vibrant and unrealistic. Colour used to show highlights rather than tone or shadowing. Derain’s colour palette is more primary than Matisse or Vlaminck’s. |
| Brushwork | Blocks on left, broad dabs on water with bare canvas showing through. Outline on tide mark and rough quick patterning on train bridge. | Dabs on water developed from Pointillist style of Signac: Derain wanted to achieve vibrancy but find a quicker method. | Varied mark making here illustrates evolving style. Some references to ‘Luxe’ in pointillism, but also pushing further in willingness to combine a range of techniques on a single canvas. |
| Space and depth | Flattened composition. Viewpoint from adjacent bridge and naïve perspective on buildings. | Influence of Post Impressionist and Japonisme to release modern art from traditional expectations. | Derain endlessly experimenting with earlier ideas in search for new. |
| CRITICAL RECEPTION | Derain searching for “the fixed, the eternal, the complex” | Accused by Louvre guards of “assassinating beauty”. | Belief that the act of painting was at the heart of the matter. |
| QUOTE | “deliberate disharmonies” (Derain) | Derain criticised Monet’s “fugitive short-lived colour” | Picture is the sum of marks made on canvas rather than mirror held up to nature, life or literature. |

**Other practice questions:**

Part a) Explain the ways in which one painter challenges the conventions of space and depth in a landscape painting of this period.

Part b) Explain the ways in which one French painter uses colour to convey meaning and/or effect in one painting of this period.

Part b) Explain the ways in which one painting has been influenced by its social context.

Part a) Explain the ways in which one painting has been influenced by modernity.

Part b) Explain the ways in which one painting by a French artist has been innovative in its technique.

Part c) Explore and evaluate the importance of colour in two paintings made during this period.

Part c) Explore and evaluate the presentation of the modern city in two works produced during this period. Each work should represent a different city.



*Here are two further sample responses to the short question* ***Examine and explain how this work is Fauvist (5 marks)****: Read both, then write your own. Make sure you do not take longer than 7 minutes.*

**EXEMPLAR 1** Derain’s **Charing Cross Bridge** 1906 shows the mid stage of Fauvism. It was commissioned by Vollard after the scandal of the 1905 Autumn Salon which earned the group their name. Vauxcelles identified the radical nature of this first movement of the new century by calling them ‘wild beasts’. In this work, the asymmetric composition is flattened, showing the view across the river to the Hungerford Bridge and the Houses of Parliament on the horizon. Modern factories on the left, lead the eye back to the red sky and steam of the train crossing the bridge, but show little respect for traditional academic perspective.

Derain’s colour is typically Fauve in its vibrant and unrealistic nature: Parliament is lime green, while the muddy Thames sparkles in slashes of yellow and orange. Here the mark-making is varied, showing the roots of the group in Pointillism, but also Derain’s influence of Gauguin in the outlining on the water’s edge and flat expanse of red colour on the bank. Bare canvas comes through and Derain’s replacement of light and tone with flat, unblended colour are typical of the group at this point.

**EXEMPLAR 2** Derain’s **Charing Cross Bridge** 1906 shows the mid stage of Fauvism. It was commissioned by Vollard after the scandal of the 1905 Autumn Salon which earned the group their name. In this work, the asymmetric composition is flattened, showing the view across the river to the Hungerford Bridge and the Houses of Parliament on the horizon. Modern factories lead the eye back but show little respect for traditional academic perspective. Derain’s colour is typically Fauve in its vibrant and unrealistic nature: Parliament is lime green, while the Thames is yellow and orange. The mark-making is varied, showing the influence of Pointillism and Gauguin in the outlining on the water’s edge and flat expanse of red colour on the bank. Bare canvas comes through and Derain’s replacement of light and tone with flat, unblended colour is typical of the group at this point.

*Finally: when you are next in London. Stand on the Hungerford Bridge (from Waterloo heading towards Charing Cross) and take a photograph of this scene looking down towards Westminster Bridge with the Houses of Parliament in the distance. Print this and add this image to your notes. (In 1906, the left hand side housed the Lion Brewery.)*