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| Artist | Henri Matisse |
| Title | Blue Nude (Souvenir at Biskra) |
| Date | 1907 |
| Medium | Oil on canvas |
| Scale | 92cm x 140cm |
| Scope/s | Female Nude |
| Style | Fauvist |
| Location | Baltimore Museum of Art |
| Function | To depict the female body through a non-traditional, primitive approach |

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| Formal features/How ‘Modernist’? | |
| Composition | Female nude appears as the focus point of the painting, in the centre. The background is composed of greenery, which gives a primitive feel as well as adding a sense of earth’s natural elements to the overall message. It is also cropped, framing the figure. |
| Colour or texture | Crude application of paint to give a rustic feel to the painting. This rejects traditional depictions of female nudes. The same can be said for the unprimed areas of canvas, perhaps offering a judgement that the painting is underdeveloped, which mirrors the primitive aspect of Matisse’s work. The garish colours reflect the Fauvist style. The bright blues and greens are far from the soft pinks and whites that are usually used to depict women, further emphasising how Matisse has been influenced by primitivism and fauvism. |
| Light & tone | The woman’s facial features appear darker in tone than her body, which adds more definition and shows that the face should be more interesting to focus on. Her shoulders and hips bear darker tones too, giving them a masculine finish, which would have been seen as unattractive and controversial. They give a harsh and bony depiction of the female nude, perhaps suggesting she is muscular and toned from physical labour, which again goes against societal norms of what women should do and look like. The light focuses on her breasts and stomach, drawing attention to the fact they are not “feminine” (instead they are blocky and toned) |
| Space & depth or relief | The ground she is lying on separates her from the background, making her the centre piece. The dark lines that surround her stomach and hips create a sort of shadow that contrasts the colour of her skin, again captivating the viewer’s attention. The leaves in the back offer little space of depth, giving a flat impression which then leaves you looking at just the woman. There is little traditional depth or 3D iin her thighs and hips, showing the more masculine aspect of her body. |
| Line or brushwork | Cross-hatching shows influence from primitive artefacts. Thick visible brushstrokes show influence from own Fauvist experiments. |

Influence from political factors:

Colonisation of Morocco confronted the contemporary audience with a lack of racial identity. The fact she has no identity leaves the painting open to interpretation as well as criticising the racial and sexual ignorance at the time for only focusing on people’s bodies, not their gender or race.

Stylistic comment and artistic influence:

The nude is hard and angular, both a tribute to Cezanne and to the sculpture Matisse saw when visiting Biskra in Algeria. It is also a deliberate rejection to the Paris Salon ideals, which stated women should be soft and beautiful, not ugly. Perate said it was “Impetuous and violent”.

Use or development of materials, techniques & processes:

The fact the face doesn’t have a true identity comes from the primitive technique of making masks in order to disguise yourself. Visible brushstrokes and pentimento around the breasts give an unflattering finish to the 20th century viewer.

Critical text quote:

“A structured illusion on which nature is seen to a material surface on which coloured masks and drawn lines are disposed...it is the action of these on the spectator that any effect of light and space in nature is to be experienced” Chris Green.

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