

LOOKING AND COMPARING ARTISTS PAINTINGS & MOVEMENTS IN ART HISTORY

The two artists whose work interests me are Salvador Dali and Henri Matisse. I have chosen these two paintings.

SALVADOR DALI

1 'Paranoic Critical Solitude'

This painting was dated 1935.

The artist Salvador Dali has used the media of oil paint on canvas. His palette is mostly sandy ochre's and browns. There is some blue, green and blacks.

The detail is such that it must have taken a long time to paint, perhaps a few months?

The painting although 'surreal' is very naturalistic or realistic in style. The paint is very carefully and smoothly applied, and the artists uses perspective with great care taken to show the form and depth of the landscape.

The painting is of a deserted craggy and barren wilderness. One can just make out the small village in the far distance. There is a vintage car which seems to have flowering plants growing out of the back seat. In the craggy rock there is the impression of the shape of that car. The car looks like it has been extracted from the rock. The scene seems to be sunny as there is a short shadow under the car, however, the sky which we see has patchy clouds - with one of the clouds being dark and ominous.

The mood experienced through the subject is of uncomfortable confusion. I am puzzled as to what the painting is about. The title gives me a clue, it is certainly a very lonely landscape. It has the quality of an unsettling dream. Perhaps the political situation is relevant? Perhaps questioning the reason for why we exist and our ideas of time and space? I like this painting because it is intriguing, and perhaps what it is about can never be answered.

HENRI MATISSE

2 'The Dance'

This painting using oil on canvas was created in 1910.

Henri Matisse was an important member of the art movement called the Fauves. 'Fauve' means 'wild beast' and was used as a insulting term by a critic who was outraged by an exhibition of Matisse's work which he thought was as if a wild beast had thrown pots of paint at a canvas.

This painting shows a group of 5 naked women with joined hands dancing joyously in a circle. The space of the painting is quite shallow. Perspective is not used and all the figures are around the same size. The colours are intensely vivid - the green floor, the bright blue background and the vibrant pink skin tones of the dancers. They are clearly at the height of their dance and are totally enjoying themselves unselfconsciously. It is not a naturalistic piece. It has simple economic lines which define the movement of the dancers. The lines are very important and there is not much form or depth in the painting. Matisse was fascinated with shape, colour and pattern - and was very interested in the exotic designs of near eastern art, particularly textiles and patterned surfaces as in tiles.

I am not sure how long this painting took to paint, but it is quite big at about 4 metres wide and 3 metres high.

I think Matisse must have really enjoyed painting this. It makes me feel that it is warm and full of life and vitality. The dancing bodies make a great composition and my eye is drawn into the energy of the painting.

- 1 The two paintings I have chosen are really quite different. '*The Dance*' is full of energy was probably painted unselfconsciously and quite spontaneously by the artist, whilst '*Paranoic Critical Solitude*' is, I think, quite self-conscious. The painting has no movement in it and apart from the flowers in the back of the car, no life. It seems that the air is heavy and almost suffocating. The artist was very organised and detailed in his approach. It has more of a deep question for the viewer. I like to look at both these paintings.