Henri Matisse (1869 - 1954): Fauves Artist

Henri Matisse was born in December of 1869 in Le Cateau, France. He began painting during a convalescence from an operation, and in 1891 moved to Paris to study art. Matisse became an accomplished painter, sculptor and graphic designer, and one of the most influential artists of the 1900s.

He was the leader of the Fauves, a group of artists whose style emphasized intense color and vigorous brushstrokes. He believed the arrangement of colors was as important as a painting's subject matter to communicate meaning. He avoided detail, instead using bright color and strong lines to create a sense of movement. In 1905, works by Matisse and other Fauve painters were exhibited together. The bold forms and bright colors of these paintings shocked the Paris art world.

Matisse's work reflects a number of influences: the decorative quality of Near Eastern art, the stylized forms of the masks and sculpture of African, the bright colors of the French impressionists, and the simplified forms of French artist Paul Cezanne and the cubists.