

The Decorative Character of the Natural Landscape of Felix Vallotton: the Problem of Colour and Form

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Abstract

Nowadays, Felix Vallotton (1865-1925) attracts the attention of researchers with his talent, hard work, and most importantly a large number of problems and discussions in his work that have not yet been resolved. In particular, the theme of landscape in the work of Vallotton contains many questions that have yet to be explored. This research is aimed at finding decorativeness in the artist's paintings of landscape. In a work of fine art, decorative character is acquired according to the rule due to colour and form. Our goal is to understand how F. Vallotton works with colour and form and how he uses them to create a decorative landscape.

Keywords

Decorativeness, landscape, Felix Vallotton, colour, form



Self-portrait, 1897, oil on canvas, 59,2x48 cm. Musée d'Orsay

Introduction

Today Felix Vallotton's legacy has gained recognition and interest from researchers. The Foreign Nabi (Vallotton's nickname) is an amazing phenomenon and at the same time a typical artist of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries: he worked in portrait, still life, nude, landscape, symbolic scenes; he was engaged in graphics and painting. F. Vallotton adhered to classical art, but was no stranger to art innovation. The decorative character of natural landscape of Felix Vallotton: the problem of colour and form is a small contribution to the overall larger theme of Vallotton's landscape. We are faced with the task of understanding how a painter created a decorative landscape through the colour and the form. It is thanks to these two elements in the composition that works of art can acquire a decorative character.

Materials & Methods

In order to answer these goals, it was necessary to analyze a group of landscapes painted by Vallotton at different periods of his life. For convenience, we have divided 19 landscapes into three groups: early landscape (1893-1900), mature landscape (1901-1913), late landscape (1914-1925). Our study is limited in scope, so we focused on just a small number of the artist's work. The painting was selected

according to 3 principles: 1) it is a piece of painting (not graphics); 2) Swiss or French views are captured on canvas; 3) the landscape is attractive in terms of the colour or the form. Analysis of the work of art began with its structure - composition. Then attention turned to the colour and the form.



Surroundings of Lausanne, 1900, oil on cardboard, 40x55 cm, Private collection

Results

After analyzing all 19 landscapes, several conclusions were drawn. The decorative nature of the landscape is created by 1) the use of predominantly local colour and a simplified form 2) composition. In some cases, the structure of the canvas is similar to the structure of a stained-glass window 3) due to the detailing, which turns into a pattern or ornament. Highlighted with outline or strokes, tree leaves or pebble shore turn into a pattern that is characteristic for applied arts.

The painter used the landscape as a field to experiment with the composition, the colour and the form. He tried to depict different states of nature: night, morning, fog, wind, near or far spaces.

Vallotton's landscapes retain reality, albeit conventional, and at the same time are close in composition, colour and form with avant-garde and expressionist paintings.

Discussion

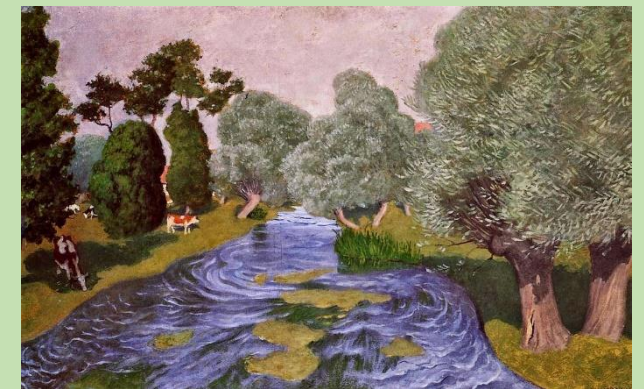
Our research covered only a small part of the Vallottonian landscape. However, even it was able to show that the study of the colour, the form, the structure of the paintings must be studied in depth. It is obvious that the landscape for the artist was a space for experimentation. An important, but little developed in our work, is the theme of the influence of other artists on the work of Vallotton.

Research on oeuvre, as well as on the landscape of the Swiss-French artist, is not enough at the moment to understand who could have influenced a particular work of Vallotton. An interesting point in the work was the problem of green and grey colours. They are quite common in the landscapes of Vallotton. Their study, perhaps, will be a topic for another research.

Our dissertation has shown that the Vallottonian landscape still remains a huge space for discussion and new research.

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Arques-la-Bataille, 1903, oil on canvas, 67x103,5 cm, Hermitage Museum, St. Petesbourg

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