

Vase and Flowers

Louis Valtat

A critic describes Valtat's style as "broad but without exaggeration: his figures offer singular attraction of concentrated strength combined with a soft and smiling grace." This description relates well to the Vase and Flowers . I think this was painted between 1920-1930. Here is a striking bouquet of flowers placed in a green vase with yellow accents. The colors of the flowers are bold but without distortion. There are yellow flowers slightly off center, that appear to hold the bouquet in place. The hues go from the pale yellow of a daisy to the deep yellowish-orange of a marigold. The yellows are contrasted with the blues and purples. Behind and around the yellow flowers are sumptuous dense flowers of pink, mauve, violet, purple and burgundy contrasting with the green of the vase.

The brush strokes are short and controlled. Some strokes are vertical, some horizontal and diagonal and even some curling ones. The short strokes bring out the slightest contrast of color. There are thick concentrations of paint , as if put on with a palette knife. There are also elongated dabs of paint laid in parallel. The colors appear to have come right out of the tube. The use of color determine the forms of the different flowers. There is a textural effect made by the thick laying on of the contrasting and complimentary colors.

Though Valtat is considered a Fauve, there is no distortion of color like Matisse. There is always a sense of moderation. You can see the influence of Gauguin in the dark outlines enclosing the bright sensual colors. The outlines are in a

dark purple, there is no black in this palette. There are frequent abrupt color shifts.

Balance of color is seen throughout. The generous display of pinks and purple hues on the top right is balanced by a strong cool blue drape on the bottom left. There are touches of oranges peeping out of the white flowers on the top left and the same orange present on the right. The white flowers that accent the colors are on the top left and are repeated on the bottom right. Their shape appears to give them a sense of movement. The background of hot reddish-orange is a stark contrast to the subject but not so stark that it offends.

The vase appears sturdy enough to handle this opulent display. Again the yellow and orange are repeated in the vase and handle. The vase is set on a table. There is a back of a chair pictured with a floral pattern similar to those in the bouquet. The folded napkin in the left hand corner creates a sense of balance. There is evidence of light and shadows on the table. The flowers extend beyond the borders of the painting giving it a feeling of exuberance. While this is a strong display, softness and grace abound.

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