



## The Blue House

Artist: Maurice de Vlaminck,  
French

1876-1958

Creation Place: Europe, France

Style: 20th century

Accession Number: 61.36.17

Date: 1906

## FAUVISM

Fauvism is the movement with which Maurice de Vlaminck (pronounced Vlah\***mink**) will always be most closely associated. It is defined as the style of les Fauves (French for “the wild beasts”), a short-lived and loose group of early modern artists whose work emphasized strong color over the representational or realistic color values of the preceding Impressionists. It started about 1900 lasting until 1908 or so. There were several artists joining the movement, but the three leaders were Vlaminck, Henri Matisse, and Andre Derain. These artists were characterized by wild brush work and the use of pure colors. The subject matter was highly simplified and abstract. It can be considered as an extreme development of van Gogh’s Post-Impressionism combined with the pointillism of Seurat and other Neo-Impressionist painters.

## ARTIST

Vlaminck was a colorful character. He was born (1876) in Paris to a family of musicians. Because his father and mother played the piano and the violin, music came naturally to him. He was in fact quite talented but music never lit the fire of passion in Vlaminck that painting did. He did not attend top-notch schools but was intellectually curious. He grew to be a tall, strong and fearless, red-headed man prone to wearing loud colors. He married for the first time in his teens and worked to support his family as a wrestler, billiards shooter, mechanic, laborer and professional cyclist. He married his second wife, had two daughters, and discovered that he could write, and penned several risque (pornographic) novels...anything to pay the bills. *My dad would not go for a guy like this sweeping me off my feet!*

The turning point in his life was a chance meeting on a train to Paris towards the end of his mandatory stint in the army. In 1900, Vlaminck was 23 when he met the aspiring artist, Andre Derain with whom he struck up a life-long friendship. They would later share a studio in Chatou and that is where Vlaminck really began painting. He never had a thought towards selling his works, he was simply overcome with the urge to paint. *Another red flag for my dad!*

In 1901 Vlaminck attended a van Gogh exhibit and he declared that he “loved van Gogh that day more than my own father.” At this same show, Andre Derain introduced Vlaminck to Henri Matisse. Wow! He went back to his studio and spent the next few years pouring dynamic colorful bold landscapes out onto canvas. In 1904, Vlaminck began exhibiting with Derain and Matisse. The 1905 Salon d’Automne exhibition was where these like minded artists received the snarky name fauves, meaning wild beasts, from an art critic. The demand for “wild beast” canvases was crazy. Vlaminck began to sell anything and everything he painted. This was a short-lived movement. Vlaminck’s later work, the bulk of his career, continued to concentrate on color and sell well, but was not nearly as exciting nor controversial as the Fauvism Period.

He died a quiet death, no drama, in 1925 of old age.

## **OUR PIECE**

The Blue House was painted in 1905, the year the “wild beasts” first got labeled. The influence of van Gogh can be seen in the strong colors and vigorous application of paint. The bold colors seem to have no relationship to reality. Vlaminck’s personality is evident in this piece. His violent, turbulent, contempt for intellectual control speak loudly but may also be tempered by his unconscious balance between purpose and expression. I love this piece!

## **TOUR IDEAS**

French Painters

Color

Houses

Abstract Art

Untrained Artists

Paintings with “Punch”

Respectfully submitted:

Susie Housh