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Maurice de Vlaminck: Modern Art Rebel
September 14, 2024 – January 12, 2025
Museum Barberini, Potsdam

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Museum Barberini, Potsdam

With:
- Ortrud Westheider, Director, Museum Barberini
- Daniel Zamani, Curator of the exhibition, Artistic Director, Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden

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Following the press conference, Daniel Zamani will lead a tour of the exhibition.

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Unmixed colors, vehement brushwork, abstracted forms: in the early twentieth century, a group of artists shocked the public with paintings that radically diverged from accepted artistic norms. Described as "*fauves*" or "wild beasts," these artists – in particular Maurice de Vlaminck (1876–1958) – paved the way for modern art. Initially celebrated as a pioneer of French Expressionism, Vlaminck's last retrospective in Germany took place almost a century ago. Now for the first time since 1929, the exhibition *Maurice de Vlaminck: Modern Art Rebel* offers an overview of Vlaminck's entire oeuvre, focusing especially on his prolific period before World War I along with a selection of later pieces. The point of departure for the exhibition, which brings together seventy-three works and is organized in cooperation with the Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal, are the nine paintings by Vlaminck in the Hasso Plattner Collection. The show also includes loans from museums such as the Tate Modern in London, the Museo nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid, the Centre Pompidou and Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Museum Folkwang in Essen, the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Dallas Museum of Art, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

The First Avant-Garde Movement of the Twentieth Century

From 1903 on, the Salon d'Automne in Paris offered French and international artists a platform to exhibit their work in opposition to the conservative policies of the Salon de Paris. In 1905, a group of young, unknown painters showed there for the first time and were described by the critic Louis Vauxcelles as "*fauves*." Their number included Henri Matisse, André Derain, and Kees van Dongen – as well as Maurice de Vlaminck. With their brilliantly colored paintings, focused entirely on expression and emotion, they founded Fauvism as the first avant-garde movement of the twentieth century. Although they were perceived as a collective, the artists were not bound by a manifesto; what united them was the rejection of all previous conceptions of art and the assertion of the complete freedom of the artist. Maurice de Vlaminck presented himself as an impetuous young painter: an autodidact without academic training, he cultivated the image of a "wild man" whose work was marked above all by its expressiveness. As early as 1905, the art dealer Ambroise Vollard purchased most of the works in Vlaminck's studio, enabling him to embark upon a career as a professional artist.

A Pioneering Autodidact

Maurice de Vlaminck found his way to art through a chance encounter with André Derain, who encouraged the violinist, racing cyclist, boxer, and writer to pursue painting. Influenced by Vincent van Gogh, Vlaminck's Fauvist work was defined by an emphasis on color, which served as a means of passionate expression. Like the Impressionists, Vlaminck was fascinated by the landscape along the Seine River, capturing it in impasto brushwork and brilliant hues. In his use of pure, unmixed colors, sometimes applied to the canvas straight from the tube, Vlaminck followed in the footsteps of his role model Van Gogh. In the period before World War I, Vlaminck developed an Expressionism that recalls the work of the artists' group "Die Brücke" in Dresden. From 1906 on, his explosive color gave way to darker, more muted tones, and Paul Cézanne took the place of Van Gogh as his source of inspiration.

Vlaminck in Museum Collections

In the years before World War I, Maurice de Vlaminck's work enjoyed international notoriety. In 1912, he participated with six works in the Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne; the same year, he also showed at Herwarth Walden's gallery "Der Sturm" in Berlin and the following year was represented at the Armory Show in New York. The Von der Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal, cooperation partner for the exhibition *Maurice de Vlaminck: Modern Art Rebel,* likewise integrated Vlaminck into its collection early on:

"The Von der Heydt-Museum is one of the German institutions that was able to exhibit works by Maurice de Vlaminck at an early point in time. August Freiherr von der Heydt acquired a still life at the Salon d'Automne in Paris already in 1911, and other works followed in 1912 and 1913. Purchases like these established the museum's reputation as a singular venue for European avant-garde art. Against the background of our collection history, it makes perfect sense for us to mount the first posthumous retrospective on the artist together with the Museum Barberini, and we are delighted to be able to present the full stylistic range of his work to a broader public," says Roland Mönig, director of the Von der Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal.

Vlaminck also plays a prominent role in the Hasso Plattner Collection, which has been on view at the Museum Barberini since 2020 and affords visitors a more comprehensive overview of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist landscape painting than any other collection. "The Hasso Plattner Collection holds nine works by Vlaminck, including four key paintings from his Fauvist phase. They constitute the third largest group among all the artists in the collection and represent the largest holding of Vlaminck's work in any museum in German-speaking Europe. In the context of the Potsdam collection,

the exhibition presents Maurice de Vlaminck as an artist who carried Impressionism into the twentieth century in both style and motif, reinterpreting it in brilliant color," states Ortrud Westheider, director of the Museum Barberini.

Daniel Zamani, curator of the exhibition at the Museum Barberini: "Maurice de Vlaminck's work marks a significant link between Impressionism and Expressionism. We are delighted to be able to explore his artistic evolution with such an opulent retrospective. We are particularly pleased about the numerous brilliantly colored works that have arrived from US collections, including incunabula of Fauvist painting from the Art Institute of Chicago and the National Gallery of Art in Washington. Another highlight are the numerous major works from international private collections that are otherwise not accessible to the public."

Late Oeuvre and Propagandistic Collaboration

Although World War I led to personal disillusionment for Vlaminck and marked a caesura in his oeuvre, his painting lost none of its fascination for contemporaries in the interwar years. In 1919, the Galerie Druet in Paris organized a solo show of his work, and in 1929 the Galerie Alfred Flechtheim in Düsseldorf mounted the first and hitherto only major solo exhibition of his art in Germany.

As a result of Nazi cultural policies after 1933, Maurice de Vlaminck's work was denounced as "degenerate" and removed from the collections of German museums. Despite this fact and despite his rejection of militarism and nationalism in his younger years, he participated in a trip to Germany at the invitation of the German propaganda ministry in November 1941. Subsequently, he published two articles openly praising Nazi art and cultural policies; in another text, he polemicized against the French avant-garde as manifested in the painting of Picasso. He had his portrait made by Arno Breker, Adolf Hitler's declared favorite artist, and participated in a committee for an exhibition of Breker's work in Paris in 1942. The former artist-rebel who had styled himself an anarchist and revolutionary became a reactionary polemicist and denouncer of modern art.

Vlaminck's late oeuvre has received little scholarly attention, probably due in part to his political stance. His late work is dominated by bleak, threatening landscapes, beyond any avant-garde movements of the time. In 1955, Vlaminck participated in *documenta I*, and the same year he was accepted into the Académie royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique as an associate member. His late work forms the last chapter of the Potsdam exhibition. Despite the focus on Vlaminck's early Fauvist painting, the show thus also calls attention to the contradictions in the artist's biography.

As Ortrud Westheider states: “Our exhibition presents Vlaminck’s work from its beginnings to his late landscapes, in which he reinterpreted Monet’s grainstacks and Van Gogh’s wheatfields. These paintings show the former rebel’s retreat from the avant-garde, his critique of modernism, and his pessimistic worldview. In 1942, after traveling to Germany, he wrote newspaper articles in praise of Nazi cultural policies. We think it is important to mention this collaboration. His art, however, bears no resemblance to the Nazi aesthetic; while the latter portrays farm laborers as heroes, in Vlaminck’s late landscapes the human person appears isolated and existentially vulnerable.”

The exhibition is accompanied by a 220-page catalogue published by Prestel. The catalogue was preceded by a symposium held in Potsdam in December 2023; as the first major study of Vlaminck published in Germany, it offers new insights that promise to provide impetus for further research on Vlaminck.

Fifty Lenders from Twelve Countries

Curated by Daniel Zamani, Potsdam, and Anna Storm, Wuppertal, the exhibition brings together seventy-three works by Maurice de Vlaminck from fifty international collections including the Albertina, Vienna, the Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation, Tokyo, the Brooklyn Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Centre Pompidou and the Musée d’Orsay, Paris, the Kunsthalle Hamburg, the Kunsthalle Mannheim, the Museum Folkwang, Essen, the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, the Tate, London, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, and the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

An exhibition of the Museum Barberini, Potsdam, and the Von der Heydt-Museum, Wuppertal.

Also Hosted by the Museum Barberini

Alongside the exhibition *Maurice de Vlaminck: Modern Art Rebel* and in cooperation with the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the Museum Barberini presents a small selection of prints by Camille Pissarro. The show is presented in honor of the 150th anniversary of Impressionism and complements the exhibition *A Different Impressionism: International Printmaking from Manet to Whistler*, on view concurrently at the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. This "different Impressionism" focuses on the multifaceted effects of light and shadow in the black-and-white medium of printmaking.

Pissarro was one of the few Impressionists to produce a significant graphic oeuvre. He learned the technical skills of printmaking and experimented with them as vigorously as he did with painting. The artist created etchings, drypoints, aquatints, lithographs, and monotypes, exploring the potential of each medium.

The selection of twenty-six prints offers a foretaste of the major retrospective *The Honest Eye: Camille Pissarro's Impressionism*, to be presented at the Museum Barberini in the summer of 2025.

Anarchy of Color: Vlaminck's Fauvist Painting
Daniel Zamani

While many of the Fauves rejected the attribute of wildness, Maurice de Vlaminck emphatically propagated the self-image of a social and artistic rebel. In his autobiographical work *Tournant dangereux* of 1929, which was later published in English as *Dangerous Corner,* he portrayed himself as a revolutionary individualist, emphasizing not only his youthful fascination with anarchistic ideas, but also his anti-intellectual attitude. Vlaminck's claim to the reputation of a radical innovator is based primarily on his contribution to the development of Fauvist painting between 1904 and 1908—especially the brilliantly colored landscapes of the years 1905 to 1907, which distinguished him as a stylistic precursor of Expressionism. In his writings, Vlaminck never tired of reminding readers of his role as an outsider in the Paris art world. A proud autodidact, he downplayed both the influence of artistic models and the impulses and inspiration he had been able to glean from interactions with fellow artists. An exception was Vincent van Gogh, whose painting Vlaminck had discovered in 1901 at a solo exhibition at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris and whose growing renown as a misunderstood artistic genius clearly impressed him. With regard to the influence of the Impressionists and Neo-Impressionists, however, whose visual language still served as an important reference point for many young artists around 1900, Vlaminck remained silent. The present essay examines Vlaminck's role as a pioneer and innovator in light of the significance of color as an expressive means for the Fauves. It also situates his painting within the broader context of the French avant-garde of his day and the many borrowings and reference points that fueled his Fauvist career.

Fortune's Chance

Before his participation in the Salon d'Automne of 1905, Vlaminck had exhibited paintings only twice before: at the up-and-coming Paris gallery of Berthe Weill in 1904, and at the Salon des Indépendants in 1905. In view of this fact, it is hardly surprising that the five landscapes he showed at the Salon d'Automne alongside paintings by Henri Matisse, André Derain, Kees van Dongen, and other artists who would soon become known as *fauves* attracted relatively little attention. Reviews of the exhibition as a whole, however, which encompassed 1,625 works by 397 artists, focused disproportionately on the young painters in the seventh room—and mostly in a negative light. By no means had the artists been thinking of themselves as a group or association, nor had they strategically planned or influenced the display of their work. It was only the organizing committee that had decided to show their paintings together in the same room, resulting in a concentrated presentation that invited visitors and critics to discover stylistic affinities. The common denominators were a decidedly antiacademic approach to composition and the seemingly unrestrained use of brilliant, pure color—even by Neo-Impressionist standards, still the dominant avant-garde movement at the time.

Influential critic Louis Vauxcelles identified Matisse as the ringleader of a new direction in French painting, one whose pictures seemed to him like orgies of color. In a review published in the journal *Gil Blas,* he described the aforementioned room in the exhibition as a "cage aux fauves" (cage of wild beasts) and joked about the incongruous impression of a classically modeled sculpture by Albert Marque amid the vividly colored paintings: "Donatello among the wild beasts." In his article Vauxcelles, who was quite well-disposed toward Matisse, laid the cornerstone for the ambivalence that would continue to characterize reception of the Fauvist movement. While the attribute of wildness could be used pejoratively to dismiss their art as coarse and even barbaric, lacking in technical skill, it could also be understood in a positive sense as courageous innovation, a striving to replace sterile academic convention with a new emphasis on the emotional and instinctive. This reappraisal of the individual and the expressive was fomented by the pluralism of modern art currents in early-twentieth-century Paris, movements that simultaneously vied with each other for legitimacy—not only Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism, but also the Nabis, Symbolists, and isolated Postimpressionists such as Paul Cézanne and Vincent van Gogh, whose oeuvres slowly but surely gained entrance into an increasingly codified nineteenth-century canon.

For Vlaminck, whose tenuous connection to the Paris avant-garde had resulted from his friendship with Derain and a rather fleeting acquaintance with Matisse, the association of his paintings with a movement perceived from the outside as a collective was a stroke of good luck. While artists such as Matisse had been classically trained as pupils of Gustave Moreau at the École des Beaux-Arts, Vlaminck had come to painting as an autodidact. Until the formation of Fauvism as a loose association of artists, he had earned his living as a bicycle racer, boxer, and violinist. Even after he temporarily moved into a studio with Derain in Chatou in 1900, he initially remained ambivalent toward painting as a profession: "I painted to restore my peace of mind, to calm my desires and, above all, to purify myself a little," he wrote in retrospect in *Dangerous Corner.* "I had no preconceived ideas. Make a career of painting! How I would have laughed if someone had talked to me about that! To be a painter is not a profession, no more than being an anarchist or a lover, a race-track rider, a dreamer or a boxer. It is just fortune's chance, just luck."

The impressive journalistic echo elicited by the Fauvist works at the Salon d'Automne established a place for the young painters in the hotly contested Parisian art world, where they soon enjoyed the support of influential promoters such as art dealer Ambroise Vollard. The perception of the art of Vlaminck and his colleagues as a radical break with the legacy of the nineteenth century—and thus also as avant-garde innovation—was based on more than just their unprecedented predilection for garish colors. Even more important was their often-arbitrary choice of hues, which were no longer intended to illustrate and imitate the motifs, but to transform them into a vehicle of subjective emotion—an anticipation of

key premises of Expressionist painting. The popular association of their vibrant compositions with wildness and excess was anchored in an academic tradition that was beholden to doctrines handed down since the Renaissance and favored compositions with clear contours and harmoniously balanced tones. While form in the sense of *disegno* ("drawing" in Italian, as well as "pictorial invention" or "design") was primarily associated with the sublime world of the mind and the ideal, color *(colore)* was considered an expression of the corporeal and emotional.

Moreover, many of the Fauves articulated the aims of their painting in language that suggested a deliberate attack on art-historical tradition. Derain, for example, described Fauvist color as "cartridges of dynamite," intended to sensually embody the visual experience of pure light. In retrospect, Vlaminck, who had become a fervent anarchist during his years of military service from 1897 to 1900, attributed his own penchant for boisterous color to a purely subjective and thus also antiacademic and anti-intellectual understanding of art. In one of the few passages of *Dangerous Corner* in which he discussed Fauvist painting at length, he wrote with unmistakable pathos, "My enthusiasm allowed me to take all sorts of liberties. I did not want to follow a conventional way of painting: I wanted to revolutionise habits and contemporary life, to liberate nature, to free it from the authority of old theories and classicism, which I hated as much as I had hated the general or the colonel of my regiment. . . . I heightened all my tonal values and transposed into an orchestration of pure colour every single thing I felt. I was a tender barbarian, filled with violence. I translated what I saw instinctively, without any method and conveyed it truly, not so much artistically as humanely." Vlaminck's choice of terms such as *enthusiasm* and *tender* was intended to situate Fauvist color in the realm of the emotional and the instinctive—stylishly dramatized as the heroic rejection of academic rules.

Grotesque Exaggeration

Among the works exhibited at the Salon d'Automne that were most shocking in their brash approach to color was Matisse's *Woman with a Hat* of 1905, a portrait of the artist's wife, Amélie, in flat pastel hues, which soon afterward was acquired by American collector Leo Stein. Presumably it was the media attention generated by Matisse's picture that prompted Vlaminck to create his own version of the motif—though he himself would certainly have denied any direct influence on the part of his Fauve colleagues, particularly Matisse. For his portrait of Amélie, Matisse chose a three-quarter profile view and introduced a dynamic element into the composition through the slight turn of her head. Vlaminck, on the other hand, presented his subject frontally, effectively dramatizing the flatness of the picture plane. Although the contours of the body stand out from the background in strokes of dark blue and black, the figure lacks volume; spatial depth is suggested only by the oval of the slightly forward-tilting hat. Vlaminck rendered the woman's face in broad, coarse strokes

of pink and cream, her cherry-red lips setting a pronounced accent in the center of the picture. The background is enlivened by energetic brushstrokes in white, green, and blue, whose diagonals contrast with the undulating horizontal strokes of the woman's clothing. Even compared to other works by the Fauves, the seemingly unfinished, sketch-like quality of the painting seems jarring—the open structure of the visible, tactile brushstrokes flagrantly resists the academic ideal of the smooth, finished surface, known as *fini.*

While the social position of the subject in Vlaminck's *Woman with a Hat* remains unclear, he produced a number of other figural paintings around the same time that unmistakably show women from the Paris demimonde. Many of them depict actresses from the infamous cabaret Le Rat mort, who often also earned their living as prostitutes. The theme of big-city sex work had already been explored in the late nineteenth century by artists such as Edgar Degas and Édouard Manet and was particularly associated with the work of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, who also painted Le Rat mort in the 1890s. The many images devoted to the motif by Vlaminck and other Fauves such as Derain or Van Dongen thus followed a pictorial tradition already established in the fin de siècle.

Vlaminck's *Reclining Nude* of 1905 exemplifies the element of grotesque exaggeration characteristic of his female nudes. The flesh of the figure is rendered in vivid shades of pink, against which the bright red of her swollen nipples stands out disconcertingly. The white-powdered, heavily made-up face with its rigid expression seems strangely doll-like; the abstracted surroundings, marked by the complementary contrast of blue and orange tones, appear uninviting and garish. Notwithstanding her lascivious pose, the image of the naked woman refuses erotic appropriation by the male gaze. Vlaminck's Fauvist attack on nude painting, a genre dating back to the Venuses of the Renaissance, came to expression in similarly parodic manner in the painting *Reclining Nude,* also from 1905. Not coincidentally, the work echoes Manet's *Olympia* of 1863, the nineteenth-century scandal painting par excellence that was closely associated with the avant-garde pursuit of stylistic and artistic innovation. While Manet's image of nineteen-year-old Victorine Meurent had invoked the pictorial tradition of Old Masters from Titian to Francisco de Goya and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Vlaminck quoted the great father of French modernism, to whom the Salon d'Automne also devoted a retrospective that same year with thirty-one works under the motto "The revolutionary of today is the classic of tomorrow." In the painting by Vlaminck, Olympia's cool complexion and youthfully appealing body yield to a dirty chalk white, whose sickly pallor is intensified still more by the contrast with the surrounding shades of red and black. Even more than in the other *Reclining Nude,* the body seems lifeless and clumsy, while the face turned challengingly toward the viewer appears inaccessible, stony, and rigid.

The ungainly limbs and masklike faces of Vlaminck's figural images were influenced by his interest in African statuettes, which he enthusiastically collected. Like works of "naïve" art or the nonperspectival painting of the Middle Ages—particularly the fifteenth-century works known as the *primitifs français*—the Fauves viewed non-Western artifacts as a source of inspiration for an emotionally charged renewal of modern painting. In Vlaminck's Fauvist work, this process of cultural appropriation shows itself most clearly in the radically abstracted painting *Red Nude,* which once again suggests a stylistic dialogue with Matisse. The schematic head of the seated figure was probably inspired by a mask of the Fang people from Gabon in Central Africa, which Vlaminck acquired the year he made the painting. As with his portrait of André Derain from the following year, here too Vlaminck may have chosen the dark red not only for its visual impact, but also to symbolize his programmatic affirmation of wildness and exoticism.

Explosive Visual Spaces

Although many of the Fauves joined Vlaminck in exploring figural representation, from the time of its christening at the Salon d'Automne in 1905 the movement was associated above all with landscape painting. Many of the artists drew inspiration from visits to the South of France, embracing the glittering light of the French Riviera as a catalyst for their dazzlingly colored images. An important early work by Matisse is the ambitious painting *Luxury, Calm, and Voluptuousness* of 1904, which stylistically is still informed by Neo-Impressionism. It shows a group of nudes gathered on a beach under the setting sun, decoratively assembled around a white picnic blanket. Glowing, jewel-like colors play about the figures, imbuing the southern evening scene with an enraptured atmosphere. Matisse's pictorial invention had been inspired by a visit to the French Riviera in the summer of 1904, where he interacted with fellow artists such as Paul Signac and Henri-Edmond Cross. Thus it is hardly surprising that both stylistically and compositionally, it resembles Cross's *The Evening Air* from around 1893—an homage to the enchantment of the South that Matisse could have seen at Signac's Villa La Hune in Saint-Tropez.

Matisse returned to the theme of human leisure in a paradisical landscape in 1905–06, at the zenith of Fauvist experimentation. His monumental painting *The Joy of Life* shows nude women and men dancing, making music, and lolling about, softly embedded in a sunlit landscape with pure, glowing colors. Themes such as the harmonious unity of humanity and nature and the invocation of a Golden Age reflected the interest in nature utopias that had already characterized many of the pictorial inventions of the Neo-Impressionists. Iconographic references such as the ring of dancing figures in the center background strengthened the affinity to classical genres such as the *fête galante* or *déjeuner champêtre*—and, in a more general sense, alluded to the tradition of the pastorale. The monumental composition, which was exhibited for the first time at the

Fauve-dominated Salon d'Automne of 1906, was preceded by numerous preliminary studies in which Matisse meticulously developed the complex figural program.

In Vlaminck's Fauvist works as well, nature often seems symbolically charged with positive values such as vitality, nourishment, and human security. Yet the elegant spatial balance of Matisse's programmatic painting could not be further removed from the impetuously expressive approach that defines Vlaminck's mid-sized images of nature. Rather than conceiving an ideal landscape rich in art-historical and literary allusions, he turned his attention to his native Seine valley near Paris, painting numerous views of the landscape around Bougival, Rueil, Chatou, and Argenteuil. In these depictions of real places, explored situationally and *sur le motif,* Vlaminck focused on the here and now of an unspectacular nature, from which he could elicit a veritably explosive spatial effect with his garishly exaggerated colors, pronounced tonal contrasts, and energetic, strongly textured surfaces.

The Legacy of Impressionism

In his painterly investigation of the Seine valley, Vlaminck devoted himself to a topography that was closely associated with the legacy of Impressionism and had already been explored by painters before him such as Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Gustave Caillebotte. Like this older generation of artists, Vlaminck depicted different facets of the Seine, showing it both as the site of outdoor recreation and leisure and as a symbolic cipher for technological progress, modernization, and the rapid growth of industrialization in the region around Paris. Images of lonely rowers, sailboats gliding gently down the river, and summer regattas are found in his oeuvre alongside views of modern bridges and imposing industrial complexes. At times, the relationship to the artistic legacy of the late nineteenth century shows itself not only in the motifs, but also in the sketch-like approach to the subject matter, as well as in brushwork that recalls the *tache* of the Impressionists or the *pointillé* of the younger Neo-Impressionists.

A decisive departure from his older colleagues' choice of motifs becomes manifest in Vlaminck's rejection of middle-class subjects, themes that had defined the art of Impressionism. Monet and Renoir, for example, had repeatedly painted the Seine as a hotspot of bourgeois leisure activities, branding it as a motif for a particular class and, more broadly, for a particular clientele. A classic example is Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* from 1880–81 (Phillips Collection, Washington, DC), an important, large-scale work showing high-spirited vacationing urbanites at the Restaurant Fournaise—not far from Vlaminck's later atelier. While the fashionably elegant clothing of Renoir's figures clearly identifies them as middle-class excursionists, the bourgeoisie finds no place whatsoever in the landscape paintings of Vlaminck. A telling exception is the painting *The Rural Luncheon,*

whose satirical elements verge on caricature: while the title of the picture awakens expectations of an idyllic scene of pastoral leisure à la Manet's *The Luncheon on the Grass,* the garish colors and distorted perspective produce a disconcerting, even dissonant atmosphere. The grim, apathetic-looking women in white dresses and straw hats are vaguely reminiscent of Edgar Degas's absinthe drinker, while the refreshments of the resting group are reduced to two wine bottles positioned in the center.

While here the bourgeois figures seem like foreign objects in a tangled web of color, elsewhere Vlaminck shows nature as a vital, protective space in which human beings are peacefully and harmoniously embedded. Remarkably many of his paintings are devoted to fertility and agriculture—themes his great role model Van Gogh had also explored on multiple occasions. Van Gogh repeatedly painted luxuriant fields of wheat with bright golden heads of grain against the fresh blue of the summer sky, as well as reapers, sowers, and farmers toiling on the land in solitary tranquility. Vlaminck embraced these subjects in compositions that echo Van Gogh stylistically as well, while the emphasis on rural labor also recalls the rustic landscapes of Realist painters including Jean-François Millet.

The intensive reception of Van Gogh's painting that began in early-twentieth-century France also focused on his pronounced interest in motifs of simple rural life. Due to his numerous images of rustic subjects, Van Gogh was celebrated as a painter of the common folk and his art lauded as authentic and natural. For Vlaminck, who presented himself as an artistic and social rebel throughout his entire life, this interpretation of Van Gogh's art may have offered an additional layer of identification, while his own interest in rural subjects far removed from Parisian high society may have provided a suitable outlet for his socially critical and decidedly anti-bourgeois mentality.

For Vlaminck, moreover, the work of Van Gogh was characterized by a "revolutionary sense" and "an almost religious feeling for the interpretation of nature." This pantheistic conception of nature as a mysteriously animate force may also have informed Vlaminck's painting: in numerous landscape images, he employed a variety of stylistic means to create pulsating, highly charged visual spaces that evoke an immediate sense of unrestrained vitality—though often in complex compositions that belie the notion of a purely "instinctive," "barbaric," and thus unconsidered art. In his *View of Bougival,* for example, he chose a dramatic perspective looking down into the plain at the village, which appears strangely compact beneath the dynamic brushstrokes of the turbulent, cloud-filled sky. As in so many of his works, Vlaminck varied the direction of strokes and lines in the lush vegetation in the foreground. Together with the extreme complementary contrasts—red against green, blue against orange—the meticulously differentiated brushwork evokes the impression of an explosive spatial configuration in which the viewer's eye scarcely finds opportunity to rest.

The compositional scheme of Vlaminck's *Fishermen at Nanterre* is similarly sophisticated: while the surface of the river, suggested in short strokes of glowing blue and white, recalls the mosaic texture of Neo-Impressionist painting, the turbulent sky in the upper half of the picture is more freely rendered. The smokestack of the factory in the center towers up dramatically like a blood-red spear, while its reflection on the surface of the river penetrates the cooler color scheme of the middle ground. In the foreground, the vegetation on the banks of the Seine serves as an echo and a visual parenthesis, shooting upward like bundles of licking, darting flames. The tonal intensity of the composition recalls Derain's aforementioned description of Fauvist colors as "cartridges of dynamite" intended to explode, as it were, on the canvas, discharging pure light.

"With my cobalts and vermilions, I wished to burn down the École des Beaux-Arts and to render my impressions without any thought for what has been achieved in the past. . . . life and I, I and life." In this retrospective statement from 1928, Vlaminck expressed the goals of his Fauvist painting, emphasizing his revolutionary embrace of pure color. His adroit use of anarchistic metaphor accorded with his lifelong self-stylization as an artistic subversive and revolutionary, steeped in the powerful visual language of Fauvism. Yet beyond his reception of Van Gogh, the examination of his painting within the context of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century artistic currents reveals numerous points of reference that nourished his new and innovative form of expression. The struggle for technical skill, a patient persistence in the painter's craft, were of special importance for his Fauvist still lifes—studies in volume, spatial design, and color patiently executed in the studio, works that already anticipated the greater formal discipline he would embrace starting in 1907–08 under the influence of Paul Cézanne. While Vlaminck himself always posed as a loner and an outsider, and although as a talented author he helped forge his own myth early on, as an artist he was inescapably a product of his time.

Structure of the Exhibition

Maurice de Vlaminck: Modern Art Rebe

Intoxicated with Color: Painting Goes Wild

The earliest works by Vlaminck, a self-taught painter, already foreshadow the wildness of his Fauvist period. Rejecting the academic study of art, he worked as a musician and competed as a racing cyclist. In 1900 he met the painter André Derain, a few years his junior, and began sharing a studio with him in Chatou, a suburb of Paris. A year later, Vlaminck attended the first major retrospective of Vincent van Gogh in Paris, whose expressive painting revolutionized his approach to color. In 1905, Vlaminck showed five paintings at the Salon d'Automne, with works by André Derain and Henri Matisse on view in the same room. Their boisterous colorism earned them the name *fauves* (wild beasts). The Salon represented a breakthrough for the young painters, although the group itself existed for only a few years.

Still Life: Experimenting with Color and Form

During the winter months when the weather made it difficult to paint outside, Vlaminck devoted himself to the genre of still life. Unlike his landscapes, his still lifes were executed not en plein air, but in the studio. Here the artist experimented with color, form, and composition. Vlaminck's still lifes initially showed parallels to the work of his mentor Henri Matisse and later to the painting of Paul Cézanne. The shift began in the winter of 1906/07, when he turned his back on brilliant, garish colors and instead explored a planar, geometric approach to painting. These innovations led to Vlaminck's move away from Fauvism.

Impressionist Motifs: Painting along the Seine

Like the Impressionists of the generation before him, Vlaminck found his motifs in the Seine Valley. He too depicted the river northwest of Paris, both as a recreational site for water sports and an arena of progressive industrialization. He focused his attention on bridges and factories, with scenes that are often enlivened by tugboats, sailboats, and rowboats. In contrast to the Impressionists, however, Vlaminck avoided showing the Seine Valley as a destination for city tourists. None of his landscapes depict bourgeois vacationers; instead, he sought to exhaust the brilliant coloristic potential of the river landscape for purposes of an anti-bourgeois painting. Vlaminck saw himself as part of a youth movement which, like the German Expressionists, used untamed color to convey emotion.

Reliefs of Pure Color: Expressionism in France

Within a very short time, Vlaminck increased the intensity of his hues to evoke “the intoxication of pure color”, as he called his Fauvist phase of 1905/06 in retrospect. In his expressive images of nature, he concentrated on the effect of brilliant, unmixed hues and surfaces enlivened by impasto brushwork. In his quest for expressive power, the significance of the motif became less important than the explosive effect of color. After its scandalous debut at the Salon d’Automne in 1905, this revolutionary painting soon found enthusiastic buyers. That same year, the art dealer Ambroise Vollard, a supporter of Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Picasso, purchased most of the works Vlaminck had created up to that point. In so doing, he helped establish Fauvism as an avant-garde movement.

The Spirit of Cézanne: Fragmentation of Forms

In 1907, the Salon d’Automne in Paris mounted a retrospective of the work of Paul Cézanne, who had died the previous year. For Vlaminck as for many other painters, the rediscovery of Cézanne led to an artistic reorientation. He turned his back on brilliant, pure colors and an expressive style of painting and instead experimented with a Cézannesque approach, embracing contours, muted colors, and a geometric pictorial structure. After 1910, Vlaminck’s works also begin to show the influence of Cubist pictorial solutions. The formal affinity to Cézanne as well as to Picasso and Braque bespeaks the enthusiasm for experimentation among early twentieth-century avant-garde artists in Paris.

Bleak Landscapes: Turning away from Modernism

After World War I, Vlaminck was less productive. He developed an idiosyncratic, expressive version of late Impressionism, often painting snowy landscapes and grainfields under a gloomy sky. These late motivic echoes of Claude Monet and the Impressionists are pervaded by a threatening atmosphere. Although a lot of his paintings were confiscated as “degenerate” in Nazi Germany in 1937 and despite the German occupation of France in 1940, Vlaminck expressed positive sentiments toward German cultural policy on multiple occasions and was critical of Picasso and the French modernists. This affinity to Nazi ideology was a form of intellectual collaboration, although it had no aesthetic effect on his work.

Facts and Figures

Exhibition run:	September 14, 2024 – January 12, 2025
Adress:	Museum Barberini, Alter Markt, Humboldtstraße 5–6, 14467 Potsdam
Opening hours:	M, W – Su 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. Kindergartens and schools by appointment M–F (except Tu), from 9 a.m.
Admission and ticketing:	M, W–F € 16 / € 10, Sa/Su/holidays € 18 / € 10 Free admission for schoolchildren and visitors under 18 Free admission for visitors under 25 every Thu from 2 p.m.
Curatorial Team:	Daniel Zamani, Artistic Director, Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden Anna Storm, Deputy Director, Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal
Exhibited works:	73 paintings
Artists:	Maurice de Vlaminck (1876–1958)
Lenders:	50 lending institutions from 12 countries, including: Albertina, Vienna Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation, Tokyo Brooklyn Museum, New York Centre Pompidou, Paris Fonds de dotation Maison Vlaminck Hamburger Kunsthalle Kunsthalle Mannheim Kunsthaus Zürich Minneapolis Institute of Art Musée d'Orsay, Paris Museo nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid Museum Folkwang, Essen Museum Ludwig, Cologne Museum of Fine Arts, Boston National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie Tate, London

	Tel Aviv Museum of Art The Art Institute of Chicago The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Staatsgalerie Stuttgart Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal Nahmad Collection and further undisclosed private collections
Exhibition area:	ca. 1,200 square meters
Exhibition design:	Philipp Ricklefs, Berlin, and BrücknerAping, Bremen

Digital Resources, Events, Outreach

Social Media:

#VlaminckBarberini at #MuseumBarberini on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube

Digital resources:

The **Barberini App** is a personal guide before, during, and after the museum visit. It offers audio tours in German and English for adults and children as well as parent-child tours, exhibition texts in Easy German, service and event information, and video interviews with experts. The app is free and available in the App Store and at Google Play.
museum-barberini.de/app

The **Barberini Prolog** sets the tone for the current exhibition. As a compact multimedia website, the Prolog offers an overview of themes and works and can be used to prepare for the museum visit or to recommend the show to others.
prolog.museum-barberini.de

The **360° Tour** on the museum website enables viewers to digitally explore the current exhibition and the Impressionism collection. Users can navigate virtually from one exhibition room to the next and view each work in detail using the zoom function.
museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek

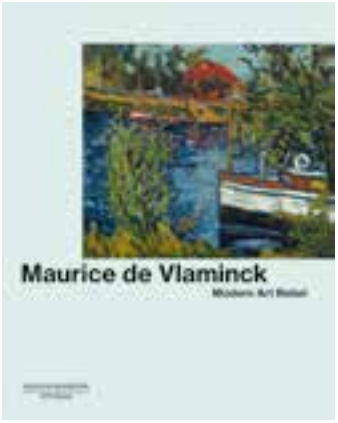
In the video series **Close-ups,** the curatorial and outreach team of the Museum Barberini present works from the collection of Impressionist paintings and offer insight into their creation, visual language, and reception.
museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek

In conversation with art historians, the **expert video** introduces the theme of the exhibition. With Matthias Krüger, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Roland Mönig, Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal, Anna Storm, Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal, Heinz Widauer, Art Historian, Vienna, Daniel Zamani, Museum Frieder Burda, Baden-Baden.
museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek

Program:

Discover the **Impressionism collection** online with explanations of paintings, video tours, expert interviews, and artist biographies.
sammlung.museum-barberini.de/en/
museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek/

The exhibition is accompanied by a wide-ranging **outreach and event program** for all interests and age groups. It includes a **concert reading with Ulrich Matthes** on September 27 in the Nikolaisaal Potsdam, the **KlangFarben concert** on November 22 with Clemens Goldberg and members of the Kammerakademie Potsdam as well as panel talks and readings.
In addition to the popular yoga events, there will be a variety of guided tours, workshops, lectures and barrier-free offers. You can find the entire program as well as the latest additions and news on our website:
museum-barberini.de/en/calendar/formats



Maurice de Vlaminck: Modern Art Rebel
Published by Roland Mönig, Michael Philipp, Anna Storm and Ortrud Westheider

With contributions by Sterre Barentsen, Jacqueline Hartwig, Matthias Krüger, Valentina Plotnikova, Lisa Smit, Anna Storm, Heinz Widauer and Daniel Zamani

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Content

Essays
"Destined by Fate": Vlaminck and Fauvism (Heinz Widauer)
Anarchy of Color: Vlaminck's Fauvist Painting (Daniel Zamani)
"My Inner Being Deeply Shaken": Vlaminck's Reception of Van Gogh's Art (Lisa Smit)
Kinship of Forms: Cézanne, Picasso, Vlaminck (Anna Storm)
The Expressive Power of Pure Color: Vlaminck and Painting from the Tube (Matthias Krüger)

Exhibited works
Intoxicated with Color: Fauvist Painting (Sterre Barentsen)
Impressionist Motifs: Painting along the Seine (Jacqueline Hartwig)
The Spirit of Cézanne: Fragmentation of Forms (Anna Storm)
Bleak Landscapes: The Late Work (Daniel Zamani)

Press Images

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museum-barberini.de/en/presse

Maurice de Vlaminck
The Boats, 1905
Oil on canvas, 46,2 × 54 cm
Private collection
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

Maurice de Vlaminck
Woman With A Hat, 1905
Oil on canvas, 56,5 x 47,6 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

Maurice de Vlaminck
The Bridge at Chatou, 1905
Oil on canvas, 68 × 96 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

Maurice de Vlaminck
Suburban Landscape, 1905
Oil on canvas, 60,3 × 73 cm
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift and Bequest of David and Peggy Rockefeller
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

Maurice de Vlaminck
Bougival, ca. 1905
Oil on canvas, 82,6 x 100,6 cm
Dallas Museum of Art, The Wendy and Emery Reves Collection
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

Maurice de Vlaminck
Canal Boat, 1905/06
Oil on canvas, 60,2 × 73 cm
Artizon Museum, Ishibashi Foundation, Tokyo
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Maurice de Vlaminck
Banks of the Seine at Bougival, 1906
Oil on canvas, 54 x 73 cm
Hasso Plattner Collection
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Maurice de Vlaminck
The Fishermen, 1907
Oil on canvas, 60 x 73 cm
Hasso Plattner Collection
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

Maurice de Vlaminck
The Table (Still Life with Almonds), 1907
Oil on canvas, 54,3 x 65,4 cm
Private collection, Courtesy Beaumont Nathan Art Advisory
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

Maurice de Vlaminck
Sailboats, before 1918
Oil on canvas, 64,5 x 80,5 cm
Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal
© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2024

Maurice de Vlaminck
The Grainstacks, 1950
Oil on canvas, 55 x 65 cm
RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay), on permanent loan to the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Chartres, bequest of Maurice de Vlaminck's daughter, Solange Prével-Vlaminck
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Kandinsky's Universe: Geometric Abstraction in the 20th Century
February 15 – May 18, 2025

At the beginning of the 20th century, painting underwent a profound transformation. Artists no longer wanted to depict the visible; they aspired to a new visual language that reduced artistic expression to an interplay of colors, lines, and shapes. Geometric Abstraction viewed these elements as a visual language that reflected the modern world and transcended national boundaries.

The exhibition spans six decades and shows how Geometric Abstraction in all its varieties has repeatedly found radical expression in Europe and the USA. Taking Wassily Kandinsky as its central inspiration, the show presents over 100 works by numerous artists, including Josef Albers, Sonia Delaunay, Barbara Hepworth, El Lissitzky, Agnes Martin, Piet Mondrian, Bridget Riley and Frank Stella. Among the lenders are the Tate and the Courtauld Gallery, London, the Whitney Museum and the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The Honest Eye: Camille Pissarro's Impressionism
June 14 – September 28, 2025

With Camille Pissarro, an outsider became a central figure within the Impressionist collective. Born in the Caribbean, he came to France in 1855, sensed the anti-academic upsurge in painting, and attracted like-minded people. With their revolutionary style of painting, they founded the Impressionist movement.

Pissarro took up the pointillism of the younger artists as well as their interest in social utopian ideas. He was the only artist to take part in all eight Impressionist exhibitions.

Starting with the seven paintings by Pissarro from the Hasso Plattner Collection, the exhibition shows 80 paintings from lenders such as the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

In cooperation with the Denver Art Museum, where the exhibition will be shown from October 26, 2025, to February 8, 2026.

Unicorn: The Mythical Beast in Art
October 25, 2025 – February 1, 2026

The unicorn has stimulated the imagination like no other animal. It has been documented in many cultures for centuries. Its fascination continues to this day. The mythical animal is a multi-layered symbol that emanates an associative energy. Traces of the unicorn can be found in Christian and non-European art, in natural science and medicine and in a wide range of symbolism. An examination of the iconography of the unicorn invites us to reflect on knowledge of the world, wishful dreams and the limits of reality.

The exhibition presents over 100 works from antiquity to contemporary art from international lenders, including the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna.

The exhibition *Unicorn: The Mythical Beast in Art* will be on display at the Musée de Cluny in Paris from March 16 to June 28, 2026.