

# Yellow Seacoast (or Boats on the Beach, L'Estaque), 1906

Georges Braque, 1882–1963

Oil paint on canvas, 495.3 x 698.5 mm

Gift of Anatole Litvak (53.55.1), Los Angeles County Museum of Art

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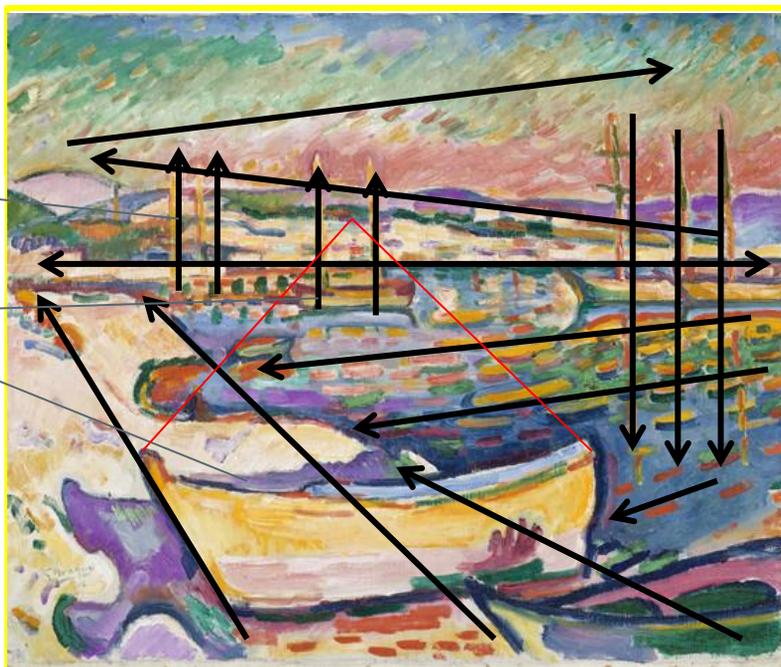
## Assignment 5. Annotation 1

Suzu Walker-Toye (510646)

The name of The Fauves is from the French *Les Fauves*, wild beasts, this was a derogatory term coined from the first Exhibition, 1905 Salon d'Automne, where these bright colourful canvases were hung all together in one room with a Henri Rousseau and more traditional sculpture for maximum contrast. Colour was freed from descriptive representation and used to represent emotions. Everyone in the room was hated by the public and ridiculed by the critics. Only Andre Gide recognised it was 'a by-product of theories'. (Ferrier, 1995). The same public was only just coming to accept the 'palette scrapings' of Impressionism (Ferrier, 1995). This new art was an evolution too far for them. Braque came to Fauvism late this is painted at his most fauve period. Dufy, Braque & Friesz all came from Le Havre, in Normandy. Dubbed The Fauves Havrais, they have a slightly different take on it than the more Southern Fauves. Friesz & Dufy had been taught by the same local art teacher, Charles Lhuillier of Ecole des Beaux-Arts and Braque his successor. At different times they all received a grant to go to Paris. Also at different times they all entered the studio of Leon Bonnat at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Braque initially studied art at night school and had an apprenticeship with House painter Lamberthe, which influenced him technically later on with more a focus on craft than the others. He did military service 1901-2, then off to Academie Humbert, Paris. All three artist spent some time together in the studio of Bonnat in 1903, having an impressionistic style in muted colours before moving on to Fauvism after seeing the room VII in the 1905 Salon d'Automne. Braque left early to move towards a more geometric look, in 1908, before fully developing Cubism with Picasso (see annotation 2). By 1908 the public was starting to accept Fauvism, Matisse was even on the Hanging committee for the Salon d'Automne. Here you can see the deep influence of Cezanne who died in the year this was painted. Cezanne also painted L'Estaque landscapes.

Braque had plenty of opportunities to paint boats and their masts up on the sky when he lived in Antwerp in 1906 with Friesz eg *Le Mat - Le Port d'Anvers, 1906*. As with those paintings, here he paints across the water, with no figures and a sense of separateness from the local town although the bright Mediterranean light would have been a much intense than the grey atmosphere of Antwerp. The composition follows the Impressionists basis for framing the landscape in a 1:2 sky/land ratio, and weighted in the lower left corner. Due to social and economic changes in French tourist towns between the visits from the Impressionists and the Fauves, the Fauves were more likely to make their landscapes nonspecific and idealistic.

Depth is represented much more traditionally in this work than in Annotation 2. The boat in the foreground overlaps the water, the masts of the background boats are overlapping the town on the horizon and the pontoon. The painting has tradition one point perspective with large close boats in the foreground and smaller boats in the background vertically above them. You can almost see the linear perspective guide lines (marked in red) between the small boat in the background one the one in front.



*What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity devoid of troubling or depressing subject-matter. Matisse, (Harrison and Wood, 2003)*

Braque painted the same scene over and over again until he'd worked out the nuances of the water, wood and rock. Eg *Paysage a L'Estaque, 1906 & Le Port de L'Estaque, 1906*, Fridart Foundation. They evoke a more daytime feeling that this one which seems like it might be painted at sunrise or sunset when you see the 3 together you see more of the colours are representational after all. Painting L'Estaque was a rite of passage for the Normans, allowing them into the fauve circles.

*'The principles of Fauvism may be listed briefly as follows: construction of space with colour, purity and simplification of technique, economy of means'. (Ferrier, 1995)*

Like the Cubist work in annotation 2, the oil paint has been applied smoothly in some places and in little dabbing strokes in others. Unlike the Cubist work, here the brush strokes are much looser (and from what I could tell wider). It's difficult to tell from the small online reproduction anything about the texture or thickness of the application. It's not really the medium that is used unconventionally but the colours, this painting has the mood of a joyous reflection of nature, unlike the Cubist work which was a complex and analytical look at the man-made objects depicted.

**Lines:** There are implied diagonal lines as you look up the beach from the stern of the boat in the foreground. From there your eye zigzags across the painting along the towns horizontal line, up the slope of the hills to be carried across by the texture in the sky. Several points in this visual zigzag are broken by ship masts pointing into the sky or from the edge of the sky, down the masts into their reflections on the water and across the other colourful water reflection lines. True to Fauvist style many of the main objects (such as the boats and waters edge) are outlined in thick contour lines. This has the effect of breaking the colours reactions to each other by circling in dark blue. Other elements are not outlined, allowing the colours to react against each other, for example in the purple of the hills and the red of the sky.

**Colours:** A very wide colour palate which is not all realistic but conveys an atmosphere of joy, this is in complete opposition to the Cubist picture in Annotation 2 which uses dim colours to help concentrate your mind on the form, here the forms are modelled by the colours. Contrasting colours are placed next to each other seemingly everywhere. Chevreul's colour theories can be seen clearly at work, for example the orange and purple of the main boat and its shadow. The balance of warm vs cool colours is mostly balanced but perhaps a bit on the warm side or that could be an optical illusion of the strident colours. The only dark colours really are blues, greens and purples. The purples form the shadows and the colour of the distant hills, the blue is in the water is quite dark, and in the dark blue contours and there are some darker greens as shadowy bits in the boats and in the background. The range of colour values featured is not as wide as it first looks, there's no blacks or whites. Use of contrasting colour values pick out areas of interest, the boats on the water, the lands edge and the boats masts against the dramatic sky. The distribution of the colour values helps pull your eye around the composition and model shadows without using dark and light tints. In some places the colour is naturalistic (if a little representational) for example the blue for water, but the water was probably not that blue, in other places its ambiguous, for example it's hard to tell if the colour purplish in the background hills is to represent atmospheric perspective of just because he wanted them purple, there are some 'nearer' hills which are green.

# Clarinet and Bottle of Rum on a Mantelpiece (Clarinette et bouteille de rhum sur une cheminée), 1911

Georges Braque, 1882–1963

Oil paint on canvas, 810 x 600 mm

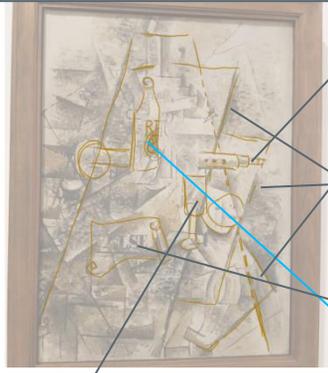
Tate Modern, London: Purchased with assistance from a special government grant and with assistance from the Art Fund 1978, Photo by Suzy Walker-Toye

## Assignment 5. Annotation 2

Suzy Walker-Toye (510646)

The same artist – a completely different style from annotation 1, painted only 5 years later, here Braque is in his Analytical phase of Cubism. So what happened? He was taken by Guillaume Apollinaire in 1908 to Picasso's studio to see *Les Femmes d'Alger*, which opened his eyes to a new way of seeing. When he went back to L'Estaque his art took on a more geometric style (eg *Houses at L'Estaque*, 1908), this caused a scandal when Matisse rejected it from the Salon d'Automne, he told Vauxcelles "Braque sent canvases covered with little cubes." (Ferrier, 1995), Braque exhibited them in Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler's little gallery instead. When he met up with Picasso again in 1909 they had both advanced in a similar direction so decided to team up to create a completely new pictorial language. Cubism went through several stages, with Analytical being the first. Braque spent the summer at Ceret with Picasso in 1911 when this was painted, during these years their paintings are very similar. This was the year that Braque introduced lettering into his paintings, and started using musical instruments in his still lifes. This was the start of a series of them on the mantelpiece. Here you can still see the deep influence of Cezanne.

Perspective view of the mantelpiece from the left end



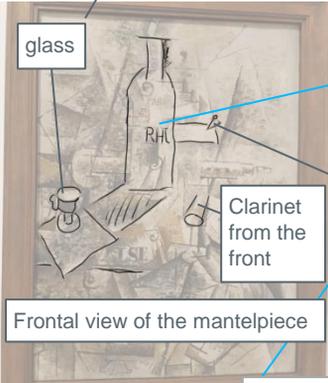
Clarinet lays horizontal across

Sheets of paper hanging over the edge of the front of the mantel piece

Scroll with French word for Waltz

Scheme pivots on the bottle in three main views

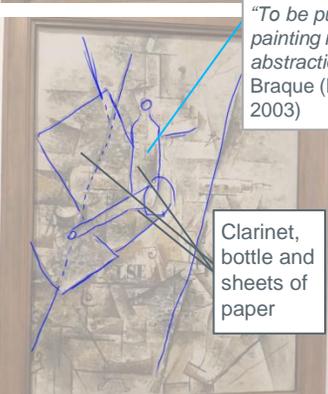
Trompe-l'oeil nail. "Trompe-l'oeil is due to an anecdotal accident that makes its effect through the simplicity of the facts." Braque 'Thoughts on Painting' (Harrison & Wood, 2003)



glass

Clarinet from the front

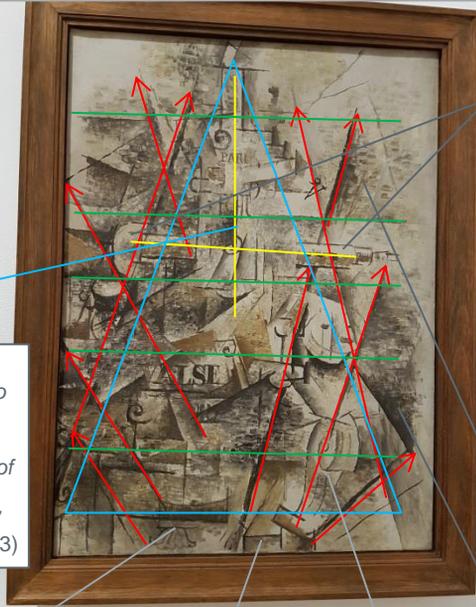
Frontal view of the mantelpiece



Perspective view of the mantelpiece from the right end

Cubism was expression through line and form, and Fauvism was expression through colour.

"There exist in the painting the scheme of forms and small real details as stimuli integrated into the unity of the work of art; there exists, as well, but only in the mind of the spectator, the finished product of assimilation, the human head for instance. There is no possibility of a conflict here, and yet the object once 'recognised' in the painting is now 'seen' with a perspicacity of which no illusionistic art is capable" Daniel Henry Kahnweiler (Harrison and Wood, 2003).



Mantelpiece edge section, seeing the corbel from above

Mantelpiece edge from the side

Mantelpiece underside to see the ornate corbel

Contemporary critics such as Apollinaire routinely compared Cubism & Fauvism, seeing a direct connection between them in that they are both moves towards abstraction, they both encourage artists to 'to take greater liberties with visual appearances' (Golding, J, 1988),

**Lines:** There are plenty of diagonal lines radiating out and upwards from the bottom like a fan and a slight overall pyramidal feeling to the composition. The main elements are in an internal triangle section. Internally to that there are bisecting vertical planes and pieces (eg the Clarinet is horizontal and the bottle is vertical) and various little triangles made of overlapping planes of various textures and detail. There are thick contour lines all around the painting but many are for the contours of the planes not actual for an object as such, areas of nothingness are treated like objects in their own right and have contours. There is a tertiary impression of 5 lines (in green on my diagram above) which reminded me of sheet music.

To tackle incorporating the 'real' elements such as the trompe-l'oeil nail and the writing into the unity, Braque & Picasso began to limit the background space in their paintings, in this example setting up the still life on a mantelpiece. Cezanne had frequently used this trick of limiting the space. Picasso had discovered open form, meaning they could do away with the illusionistic skin of objects as described by chiaroscuro where they needed to. The clarinet here still has its 'skin' (ie in closed form) on the flute end but is more open form at the round end, more like a geometric representation of that end. "The aim is not to reconstitute an anecdotal fact but to constitute a pictorial fact." Braque 'Thoughts on Painting' (Harrison & Wood, 2003)

The oil paint has been applied in various ways across the surface of the painting. Thinly in places, for example at the edges where you can see the texture of the canvas. The black lines and white space opaque smooth and some parts are rather more thickly applied it little dabbing brushstrokes for texture, it seems as though there is a specific texture that fills the 'spaces'. Texture reminiscent of Cezanne. "The subject is not the object; it is the new unity, the lyricism which stems entirely from the means employed." Braque 'Thoughts on Painting' (Harrison & Wood, 2003)

The scene feels 3 dimensional because of the many overlapping layers, but they don't overlap in a traditional sense. Its a bit confusing what object is what. The planes sort of shimmer above the canvas. its an odd effect. In such a limited space, there is now diminishing scale or atmospheric perspective. And one of the tenants of Cubism is the abolishment of single point perspective to explore forms 'plastically' but looking at this a bit longer I think that there is linear perspective on one or two of the view points which are not immediately obvious.

**Colours & Lighting:** A very narrow colour palate of slightly warm colours, typical of Analytical Cubism, has been used to concentrate the viewer on the forms. In contrast to tradition paintings where the distribution of the colour values helps pull your eye around the composition, light here is used almost randomly to separate the various planes and sections from very dark to white. The light is not coming from any clear direction because there are so many view points in the picture. Contrasting colour values are in places used to model three-dimensional forms, for example the clarinet mouthpiece and holes, (which in this part of the painting is lit from above and to the back).