

22 September, 2021  
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20th Century Art Before 1945

*The Fate of the Animals: A Visual Analysis*

*The Fate of the Animals* by Franz Marc in 1913 is a vicious rendering of abstracted animal forms with an aggressive diagonal composition. The animals are disjointed and blocky in unnatural positions giving the viewer a sense of their agony.. The colors in this work are used strategically, fading from more brightly colored to more muted and brown as your eyes shift from left to right on the canvas with a seam between the two sections. The composition of this piece is extremely diagonal, moving the eyes to rest on the corners of the work and the few patches of bright white used on the animal form in the center of the piece. In *The Fate of the Animals* painting, the use of color, composition and angular forms give the viewer a sense of violence and death, even without graphic details.

Color plays a key role in this painting because it shows a definite transition from the left side of the canvas to the right side. On the left side of the canvas, the colors are bright and distinct, while on the right side they are muted and barely distinguishable when you look from animal forms to the diagonal shapes. On the left side the colors used are mainly green and red. This use of complementary colors gives a strong sense of energy and activity to that side of the canvas. The use of muted browns and the muddying of other colors on the right side of the canvas almost makes it seem like the action either has yet to occur or is over and now all that is left is the aftermath of whatever is currently happening to the left side. Color is the only thing indicating a difference in energy, as the composition flows directly through the two sides. The seam separating the two uses of color looks almost like torn paper or shattered glass. This could symbolize one thing happening in the past, indicating memory.

The composition of this work is clearly determined by the strong diagonal lines going from the bottom left corner of the canvas, to the top right corner. There are a few lines going the opposite direction, forming an “X” around the center of the canvas. This composition is dramatic, signifying something violent currently happening to the creatures depicted within the painting. The sharp edges of the lines piercing the forms is aggressive and speaks to the cause of death for the animals.

Finally, the subject matter in this painting seems to be forest animals and broken and fallen down trees. The most striking animal is the lone blue and white deer near the center of the canvas. The deer has an unrealistically long neck that is bent unnaturally backward with a light brown diagonal line slashed over it. This abstracted form signifies the death of the deer perhaps by its neck breaking. There are two green horses in the top left that seem to be running but one of them has red lines coming from its stomach, indicating a wound that is bleeding. Those red lines are the only indications of gore in the painting, despite the overall violent nature of the whole canvas. The brown diagonals look to be trees splintering as they are falling down or perhaps being cut down on top of the animals.

Overall, the painting *The Fate of the Animals* by Franz Marc is extremely graphic and violent despite the fact that there is very little actual gore or detailed deaths. The strategic use of bright colors coupled with muted brown colors give a sense of life vs. death and action vs inaction within the painting. The diagonal lines placed throughout the entire composition give it a sharpness that seems to pierce through the forms describing their aggressive and violent deaths. The converging of lines and abstracting of the forms seems to reflect the sense of confusion and fear the animals must have felt as they died. The color, composition, and subject matter of this

painting by Franz Marc all work together to form a violent and deadly quality within the painting without a lot of detail or realism.