IMPRESSIONISM

POST-IMPRESSIONISM

Produced by Teacher Programs,
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Thanks to the insight and public-spirited generosity of Chicago collectors of a century ago, The Art Institute of Chicago is home to one of the most extensive and distinguished collections of Impressionist art in the world. In acknowledgment and celebration of this extraordinary treasure, the Teacher Programs division of the Department of Museum Education has produced this teachers’ manual. Designed to facilitate teacher and student access to the Impressionist collections, this guide offers a broad overview of the rich material on view in the museum.

A comprehensive and meticulously researched essay introduces the painters who created a revolution in seeing, placing their lives and works squarely in the context of history and the events of their own time. A glossary, chronology, and bibliography expand upon and clarify the essay information. A poster-sized map, illustrating the principal locations in the life and work of the quintessential Impressionist, Claude Monet, provides immediately accessible visual data. An extensive range of suggested classroom applications furnishes ready tools to help the teacher integrate the material into a variety of disciplines, both within the school and at the museum. And twenty slides of some of the most splendid paintings from the Art Institute accompany this publication, enabling teachers and students to experience and discuss the works together.

It is generally acknowledged today that the visual arts can and should play an important role in the education of our children. We are confident that the material contained in this manual will help advance this goal, while introducing students to the enchanting poetic vision of the painters who changed the face of art over one hundred years ago.

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INTRODUCTION

Note: Glossary words are underlined the first time they appear in the text.

Of all the world’s artists, the French Impressionists of the previous century have been the most celebrated in major exhibitions in recent years. Their names and their works are known from Paris to Tokyo and Moscow. But for all their general familiarity today as names — Cézanne, Degas, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Seurat — to cite a few, their art remains a complicated subject. Was Impressionism a style? An attitude? How long did it last and how did it evolve as an artistic movement? What were the particular achievements of individual Impressionists? And what impact did their work have on the development of modern culture?

These and other questions can be asked and examined with exceptional pleasure at The Art Institute of Chicago, which houses one of the largest and most significant collections of Impressionist art in the world. Thanks to Art Institute founders like Bertha Palmer, Annie Coburn, and Martin Ryerson, the history of French Impressionism can be explored in depth in the museum’s galleries, from its early nineteenth-century antecedents to the last years of Monet’s long life.

A bridge between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Monet’s painting career spanned nearly seventy years. In the late 1860s, his trailblazing works defined the initial doctrine of Impressionism: to record the emerging modern world of France, as if seen in brief instants amid the constant fluctuations of weather and light. By the turn of the century, his lyrical series paintings of a single object, seen and painted moment to moment on multiple canvases, added a profoundly subjective quality to modern art. Meditation on perception itself had become at least as important in the experience of a work of art as meditation on the thing or subject perceived. Monet pushed on. The sweeping brushwork of his late, majestic water-lily murals foreshadowed the colorful abstract painting initiated by American artists a quarter of a century later.
Monet was hardly alone on this voyage into twentieth-century art. In overturning some four hundred years of art history, Romanticism, the Barbizon School, and Realism paved the way for the precursor of the Impressionist movement: Edouard Manet. Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, and Pierre Auguste Renoir were among the diverse group of artists who banded together with Monet in the first of what would be eight unprecedented independent exhibitions, beginning in 1874. Shortly thereafter, they were joined by artist-patron Gustave Caillebotte, whose foresighted bequest to the French nation of his colleagues’ work today comprises the core of the world’s largest collection of Impressionist art in the Musée d’Orsay in Paris. By the time of the final Impressionist show of 1886, a new generation had emerged with Georges Seurat. Dubbed Post-Impressionism, meaning literally “After Impressionism,” which historians claim ended with the last group exhibition in 1886, the movement included such solitary artists as Cézanne, as well as Vincent van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Together, these initiators of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism left the legacy of modern art in all its varied manifestations.

How did Chicago — a sprawling midwestern city of factories, stockyards, and rail tracks over four thousand miles away from these art historical changes — come to have such a rich and representative collection of the work of Monet and his fellow travelers? Devastated by the Chicago Fire of 1871, the city refounded itself in the heyday of French cultural dominance across the Atlantic. Chicago was to become a “Paris on the Prairie,” according to architect Daniel Burnham’s Plan of Chicago, 1909, modeled on none other than Baron Georges Haussmann’s radical transformation of the streets and buildings of Paris. Burnham had first relied on Haussmann’s example when planning the triumphal World’s Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893, when the present Art Institute building itself was constructed.

Chicagoans’ fascination with all things French naturally led them to discover that country’s premier national painter, Claude Monet. As early as 1890, and again in 1893 with the Columbian Exposition, independent art consultant Sara Hallowell organized exhibitions that introduced Chicago collectors to the radical new Impressionist art. These exhibitions apparently led Bertha Honoré (Mrs. Potter) Palmer of
Chicago to buy — in the period between 1891 and 1893 — thirty-two Monets from art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel alone. At one time, this collector is estimated to have owned as many as ninety works of art by the master. Mrs. Palmer's interest also extended to Monet's colleagues, including Manet, Renoir, and Degas. The Potter Palmer bequest to the Art Institute of fifty-two paintings is one of the main reasons that this museum has one of the finest Impressionist collections in the world.

The connection with Monet continued in 1920 when Art Institute trustee Martin Ryerson, escorted by Durand-Ruel's son Charles, paid a visit to the artist's home in Giverny. Ryerson hoped to acquire for the museum the artist's immense, culminating masterworks: the water-lily murals. Although the bid failed (the waterscapes are now housed at the museum of the Orangerie in Paris), Ryerson's extensive personal collection, eventually including no fewer than thirteen Monets, as well as paintings by Renoir, formed the Art Institute's single most important bequest.

Thus launched, the superb Impressionist collection has been augmented over the years. In particular, the twenty-four paintings of the Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection comprise the core of the museum's remarkable Post-Impressionist holdings, which are celebrated worldwide. In addition to major works by van Gogh, Cézanne, Gauguin, and Toulouse-Lautrec, its crown jewel is one of the museum's most famous pictures — and the painting that marked the passage from Impressionism to Post-Impressionism: Scurat's Sunday on La Grande Jatte — 1884. The museum's acquisition of art from these transforming times continues to this day.

The specific pursuit of Monet has of course extended beyond Chicago and beyond collecting. In the words of twentieth-century curator Charles Stuckey, organizer of the Art Institute's 1995 Monet retrospective: "Americans have been Monet-crazed for more than a century." Almost as soon as Monet had established himself in the haven of Giverny, a circle of disciples gathered around him, many of them Americans who painted in an Impressionist manner clearly derived from the maestro himself. The works of these American Impressionists can now be seen in the Musée Americain in Giverny, due to the efforts of Chicago collector Daniel Terra. And finally, it was largely financial
support from the United States that enabled the 1980 restoration in Giverny of Monet's house and famed water-lily gardens, the source of the artist's major work for the last twenty-five years of his life.
THE IMPRESSIONIST REVOLUTION

Remember that a picture, before being a battle horse, a nude woman or a story, is essentially a flat surface covered with colours arranged in a certain pattern.

— Maurice Denis (1870-1943)

I. A NEW WAY OF LOOKING

Claude Monet (1840-1926) once claimed that he wished to see as if he had been born blind and then suddenly gained vision. As he advised an aspiring artist: “When you go out to paint, try to forget what objects you have before you — a tree, a house, a field, or whatever. Merely think, here is a little square of blue, here an oblong of pink, here a streak of yellow, and paint it just as it looks to you, the exact color and shape, until it gives your own naive impression of the scene before you.”

That is just what Monet did in *Impression: Sunrise* (1872; Musée Marmottan, Paris) [see Figure 1]. Painted from a hotel window in his childhood home of Le Havre on the Normandy coast, the work depicts, in the artist’s words, “sun in the mist and a few masts of the boats sticking up in the foreground.” What Monet attempted to capture was the image the eye sees in an instant at dawn, in this case of the boat harbor at Le Havre, with the sun’s rosy light reflecting off rippled water. To do so, he looked directly at the port, in the open air from his
hotel window. He used pure, bright color, unmodified by shading, applied with short, quick brushstrokes.

When Monet joined a diverse group of twenty-nine other artists to show the painting in the first of what would be eight revolutionary independent exhibitions from 1874 to 1886, a critic seized upon the picture’s sketchy, unfinished look and said, with great sarcasm: “Impression — I was certain of it. I was just telling myself that, since I was impressed, there had to be some impression in it... Wallpaper in its embryonic state is more finished than that seascape.” Another critic, Jules Castagnary (1830-1888), was more reasoned in his response: “If one wants to characterize them with a single word which explains their efforts, one would have to create the new term ‘Impressionists.’ They are impressionist in the sense that they render not a landscape, but the sensation produced by a landscape.”

The label eventually stuck and Impressionism — the movement that changed the course of the history of art — was launched. Why was the first critic so hostile? What was wrong with the emphasis by Monet and his avant-garde colleagues on capturing en plein air the quickly changing world around them, on seizing the fleeting moods of nature, its weather and light? Monet and his compatriots advocated truth, light, and modernity in the form of an unpremeditated glance, commonplace looking. Why did this turn the world of western art upside down?
II. RENAISSANCE PROLOGUE

To understand why the movement that Monet pioneered caused such an upheaval, we need to look back to the Italian High Renaissance and an early work by Correggio (c. 1494-1534): *Virgin and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist*, c. 1515 [see Slide 1]. Despite spending most of his brief career in the northern Italian city of Parma, far from the great centers of Renaissance art — Florence, Venice, and Rome — Correggio assimilated lessons from their masters while evolving his own style. In this intimate devotional panel, the idealized figures of the Madonna and infants are all-important. Their soft fullness and pyramidal grouping reflects the High Renaissance manner of such artists as Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and Raphael (1483-1520). Landscape is used as an evocative backdrop, in the Northern European style. What bears the young Correggio’s signature are the gentle sensuousness of the figures and the tenderness they show one another through glance and gesture. Correggio’s mastery of light, shadow, and color seems to bathe the canvas in a soft, gentle glow; skin and fabrics appear to be almost velvet. The panel’s expressive, idyllic quality presages the radiant ceiling frescoes of his maturity.

Correggio’s small painting is an icon. As were the majority of artistic images for centuries to come, the painting’s subject is derived from a literary text, in this case the Bible’s New Testament. Through his luminous colors, skilled use of sfumato, and tender, balanced figure composition, Correggio has presented us with a sublime and seamless image, designed to serve its spiritual message. Every detail in the panel is symbolic. Its central figure is the mother of God, seated on the earth. The Latin word for earth is humus; the Madonna of humility, of the earth. The trellis behind her supports lemon trees. Lemons signify fidelity in love and are associated with the Virgin Mary. Even her robe and dress are allegorical, for red and blue are the Virgin’s royal colors.

For almost four hundred years, western art functioned as did Correggio’s altarpiece. Art was intended to inspire, to instruct, to be a role model. Artists were to act as message-bearers. Everything — technique, choice of subject matter, artists’ identity — was subsumed in this
mission. Acceptable subjects were drawn from texts of the past; from religion, mythology, or history. Works depicted great leaders, extolled certain virtues, or told stories of significant events. Choice of subject was not solely in the artists' domain. Works were painted or sculpted on commission — by the church, the state, or a powerful patron. As agents for this higher cause, artists received rigorous instruction; in Correggio's time, this training took place in studios or workshops of famous artists.
III. ANTECEDENTS

The Academy

To ensure artistic training based on classical standards set forth by Renaissance masters, the French Academy was established in Paris in 1648 as the nation’s official art school under Louis XIV (1638-1715), the famous “Sun King.” He succinctly summed up the exalted mission of its artists in an address he once made to the Academy’s leading members: “I entrust to you the most precious thing on earth — my fame.” After 1789, students studied at the ateliers of the Ecole des Beaux Arts (School of Fine Arts), where faculty and curriculum were controlled by the Academy. Although any artist showing talent could be admitted to the Ecole, acceptance as a full member of the Academy became increasingly difficult, and by the nineteenth century, new members averaged fifty-three years of age.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the Academy fostered a hierarchy of acceptable subject matter, which emphasized the idealized, symbolic human figure. Landscape, for the most part, was used as a dramatic stageset, a backdrop. On top of the hierarchical scale was allegory, the representation of such noble virtues as Charity, Wisdom, or Strength. Significant historical moments was next, followed by portraiture. Then came genre scenes, and on the bottom of the scale was still life, stuff of the earth. Into this lowest of categories fell landscape. It wasn’t until 1819 that the Academy even offered its first classes in landscape painting. To produce academically sanctioned art, students underwent years of rigorous instruction, first in drawing, then in painting and sculpting. They took lessons in perspective and anatomy and courses in religion, history, and classical literature. They copied antique models, like the Correggio altarpiece, or ancient Greek and Roman art. Also acceptable was observation of nature, but a highly selective one. As the director of the French Academy in Rome, Jean-Auguste-Dominque Ingres (1780-1867), cautioned: “Art consists above all in taking nature as a model and copying it with scrupulous care, choosing however its loftiest sides. Ugliness is an accident and not one of the features of nature.”
Up until Monet's era, the Academy reigned supreme. The event of the season was the official Academy Salon. Held in Paris annually or biennially, this celebrated exhibition was the main venue for artists to exhibit their work, receive recognition, and make sales. Thousands of works in all media from many countries were shown, hung often to the ceiling, one piece on top of another. Despite these far from ideal viewing conditions, crowds of people visited the Salons, and critics — some of them major writers of the era — reviewed artists' works. But the Salon's criteria were rigid and narrow: the conservative juries always seemed to favor, apart from portraiture, historical, mythological, or religious subjects done in a highly finished, representational style. The culmination, in a sense, of four centuries of work like Correggio's *Madonna and Child*, the Salon was a factor in why Monet's controversial picture of a harbor was painted in the first place.

**Revolutionary Changes**

Leading up to that unprecedented first Impressionist exhibition were major historical, political, and social changes that began to topple Art with a capital A from its age-old elevated position. The French Revolution of 1789 wiped out centuries of absolute monarchy in France and led to the rise of the powerful empire under Napoleon I (1769–1821). His defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 plunged France into decades of political unrest, with three revolutions and four changes of regime within some forty years. Vying for power were the aristocracy (noble upper class), the republicans (revolutionary, often lower class), and the rising bourgeoisie (middle class).

The Industrial Revolution (c. 1750–1850) also affected the break with tradition. Inventions and technological innovations created machines and factories that changed nations and lives. The new steam engine powered factories, trains, and steamships. The cotton gin, power loom, and sewing machine transformed the textile industry. Mass-production of steel, ceramics, and cast iron began. Industry replaced agriculture as the dominant enterprise. Vast numbers of people flooded cities in search of jobs and higher pay. In 1801, Paris had about one-half-million citizens; its population had quintupled a century later.
These radical changes diluted the power of church and state. Accompanying this loss of power was loss of control over artistic production. Largely gone, then, was the contractual client who brought the artist his subject matter. A by-product of this struggle was the artist's freedom to gradually replace traditional, highminded art subjects fostered by Salons with images that appealed to the ordinary man. Landscape and genre painting, for instance, rose in status. Artists suddenly were able to put down on paper, as never before, the world around them, their personal experiences, their private visions.

Romanticism

This kind of freedom, emotionalism, and emphasis on experience were hallmarks of Romanticism (c. 1750-1850) and enabled one of the movement's leading painters in England, Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), to pursue a lifetime interest: the adventure of the sea. In Fishing Boats with Hucksters Bargaining for Fish, 1837-38 [see Slide 2], Turner has taken the subject itself and the painting's low horizon line directly from seventeenth-century Dutch painting. However, boats in seascapes from that earlier period are almost reconstructible in their exactness, while the minimal details in Turner's depiction are secondary to the drama of the roiling seas, billowing sails, and threatening skies. We can almost feel the rush of wind and crash of waves. (There is a story that once, in order to fully experience the power of a storm at sea, Turner even had himself strapped to a mast while everyone else huddled below deck.)

The dramatic vision depicted in Fishing Boats is worlds away from the devotional panel of Correggio, with its quiet contemplation and meticulously presented spirituality. Turner reduces human figures to a few roughly sketched forms in the foreground. These tiny people are presumably going to negotiate the sale of their catch with the standing figure to the right. Between them is an embodiment of Romanticism: a mythical golden boat that seems to spring directly from the artist's imagination. Far off on the horizon is the suggestion of the modern world, a subject that will move to the forefront of paintings in Monet's time: a steam-driven vessel, emitting a trail of dark smoke.
*Fishing Boats* dates from an important transitional phase of Turner’s style in the mid-1830s when he was becoming increasingly absorbed in rendering the effects of atmosphere and light. Through his expressive brushwork and skillful manipulation of translucent and opaque pigments, he creates a sense of luminous, almost supernatural energy. The exploration of natural light would become central to the later Impressionists, but with a visual objectivity far removed from Turner’s emotionalism. Turner wanted his images to uplift; he wanted to inspire awe at the insignificance of man in the face of nature’s mysterious and sublime power. As if to lay claim to this work, which is considered one of Turner’s masterpieces, the artist signed his name on the windswept flag in the foreground.

The Barbizon School

A chief aim of the Romantic movement was a return to nature, both Turner’s lofty and unbounded nature, but also one more real and ordinary, one uncontaminated by modern life. The Barbizon School (1830s-1870s) was composed of a group of French painters who literally went outside to paint the local scenery around Barbizon and the neighboring villages that nestled next to Fontainebleau Forest, just southeast of Paris. On these excursions, they made oil sketches and drawings of landscape details and rustic scenes from peasant life, which they then reworked into more ambitious canvases in their studios. They painted men and women working in the fields and forests, the fields and forests themselves, and the natural light that bathed all in hushed glow.

One of the finest of these painters was Jean-François Millet (1814-75). From a well-off family in Normandy, he was extremely well-educated, both in art and literature. He moved to Barbizon in 1849 and lived there with his wife and fourteen children until his death, when he left a huge body of work — nearly five hundred oil paintings and three thousand drawings, pastels, and watercolors. Although *In the Auvergne*, 1866-69, was set in Vichy in central France (he made a series of trips there during the late 1860s), Millet has powerfully conveyed in the painting his lifelong theme: the goodness and simplicity of peasant life [see Slide 3].
How much quieter than the Turner is this workaday scene of a shepherdess and her flock. Action, emotion, and tonality are all muted. The solitary figure of a woman stands at the crest of a hill, outlined against the sky. She wears simple peasant garb, roughhewn and shapeless. Her downturned hat echoes her sloping shoulders. So absorbed is she in her spinning that she lets her flock roam. Although the land dominates the composition — the hill slopes up in front of us, crowned by a cluster of trees — nature is unadorned, hardly dramatic. The hillside is scraggly and unremarkable, composed of patches of dirt, rocks, dried-looking grass, and clumps of vegetation. The palette mirrors the terrain: earthy, almost muddy colors relieved by the puffs of white clouds and the blue sky's light. Forms and figures are vaguely depicted, with a roughness that reflects the harshness of peasant life. As in Turner's painting — and the Correggio altarpiece as well — Auvergne intends to uplift, but in a modest way. Exemplifying the Barbizon School, the painting presents small local truths about the simple honesty of the common man in an uncorrupted nature, far removed from the pollution of modern urban society.

Realism

Truth was also the message of Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), but it was a larger realism, one far noisier than that of Millet and the Barbizon School. A staunch republican, Courbet was dedicated to the establishment of a new social order. Aided by the brutal realities of the revolution of 1848, coupled with advances in science and technology, Courbet shot the final blast at the high altar of "Art," as it had been practiced since Correggio's time. "Show me an angel," the artist quipped, "and I will paint it."

These scientific, technical, and cultural advances were abundant. In addition to medical inoculations, public sanitation, food-refrigeration, and reinforced concrete, an earlier invention — lithography (c. 1796) — contributed to the founding and influence of the popular press, as well as to the emergence of a new genre: the novel. Authors such as Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), and Émile Zola (1840-1902) wrote of modern French life as never before. And by the 1860s, the use of photography was widespread. Henceforth, the realities of life could be perfectly and quickly mirrored. "An image

With these breakthroughs as a backdrop, Courbet proceeded to bare his version of reality. As early as 1850, immense, naturalistic, and unsentimental paintings of such commonplace subjects as a country burial or rural stonecutters scandalized Salon-goers and earned him the epithet "apostle of ugliness." Five years later, when his work was refused by the Salon (which that year was part of Paris's inaugural world's fair, the Exposition Universelle), the outspoken artist mounted his own exhibition near the fair's site. He installed forty of his paintings inside a large wooden shed. Over the shed's entrance hung a large sign: "Du Réalisme" ("Concerning Realism") it read. "The art of the painter," Courbet proclaimed, effectively dismissing those lofty subjects drawn from the past, "should consist only in the representation of objects which the artist can see and touch."

Courbet never submitted The Rock at Hautepierre, 1869, to the Salon [see Slide 4]. He considered the late landscape too small and unambitious. It depicts a subject he painted throughout his life: the rugged, mountainous area around his birthplace, the village of Ornans near the Swiss border. Having seen these "various small landscapes" at Courbet's studio, artist and critic Zacharie Astruc (1833-1907) called them "remarkable ... for their enchanting truthfulness and forcefulness." Like the work of Millet, they take us where we've never been before: to unadorned and isolated nature, away from history, away from the city, away from the developments of contemporary life. And once there, Courbet seems to inject the simple, elemental subject — a peasant cottage, a cliff, a lake, the sky — with a clarity that is almost photographic in its intensity.

Courbet's colors are as rudimentary as his landscape — the greens, browns, and oranges of the sunbaked earth, stone, and vegetation. Likewise, his technique resembles the rugged terrain, as well as the harshness of manual labor. With his signature tool, the palette knife, he builds up and blends broad, thick slabs of different colors of paint into simple, blocklike masses. Patches of impasto give texture to the trees, shrubs, and light-tipped mountains. As critic Jules Castagnary noted: "Courbet ... achieves extraordinary effects with [the palette knife]....
This broad execution and beauty of color everyone recognizes in his work are partially due to this process. Through color, technique, and the spare order of his composition, Courbet invests this piece of land with the stark grandeur of unedited, uncompromised, unadorned truth.

Edouard Manet (1832-1883)

The next step was taken by Edouard Manet who combined the small truths of the Barbizon School with Courbet's louder and larger insistence on realism. Manet's upbringing was entirely conventional. Born to a wealthy family, he received traditional training in the atelier of the academic painter Thomas Couture (1815-79), but was fully aware of the work of the generation ahead of him. He synthesized the traditional with the dual threads of his predecessors' realism to evolve a painting style that was utterly shocking and new, one that would pave the way for the movement that would be called Impressionism.

In 1863, Manet inherited Courbet's mantle as the enfant terrible of the Parisian art world when he displayed Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe (Luncheon on the Grass), (Musée d'Orsay, Paris) [see Figure 5] at the Salon des Réfusés. Consisting of works refused from the Salon, this officially sanctioned exhibition was held for one year only because there had been such an outcry at the wholesale rejection by the conservative jury of most new art. Manet's painting depicted a nude woman seated at a picnic between two fully clothed men. It caused an uproar, as did his picture of the full-length nude stretched out on her divan enti-
An additional scandal accompanied the exhibition of *Olympia* at the Salon of 1865. Manet hung the painting directly beneath his *Mocking of Christ*, 1865 [see Slide 5]. It was hard to know which outraged more: the coupling of the secular and religious or Manet’s radical updating of these stock subjects from art history. As critic Théodore Duret (1838-1927) said: “The outcry raised over the *Olympia* and the *Christ Mocked*, added to the noise generated earlier by [Luncheon on the Grass], brought Manet a notoriety such as no painter before him had ever known.”

Like many nineteenth-century French people, Manet was raised a Catholic, but his foray into religious imagery was rare (as indeed it was for his avant-garde peers). In *Christ Mocked*, an almost life-size painting, Manet has chosen to depict the moment when Jesus’s captors have mocked the “king of Jews” by crowning him with thorns and covering him with a purple robe. But instead of an idealized and holy portrayal of the Son of God, Manet has presented us with a very human, vulnerable Jesus. His slack and awkward pose does little to hide his slight frame, veined legs, and large, ungainly feet. (Manet’s model, in fact, was a familiar local artisan and model named Janvier.) Equally earthy and contemporary are Manet’s three soldiers. According to Gospel nar-

tled *Olympia*, 1863 (Musée d’Orsay, Paris) that he exhibited two years later [see Figure 6]. It was not so much the state of undress of the female figures that provoked the response, however. Nudes or, as in the Correggio altarpiece, mixing clothed and unclothed figures, had long been staples of art history. What shocked was Manet’s style: his bold, flat brushwork; a deliberate awkwardness of subject, coupled with a worldly yet ironic detachment. The gaze of both of these female figures is levelled right at us, the viewers.
rative, Jesus’s taunting is followed by beatings, but in Manet’s treatment of the subject, the soldiers surrounding the pale, stark figure of Christ appear to be ambivalent. One gazes at him, one kneels in apparent homage, and one holds the purple cloak in such a way as to suggest that he wishes to cover Christ’s nakedness.

Like the untraditional handling of a traditional subject, Manet has also taken the dark colors typical of Old Master paintings, a palette that bespeaks the solemnity of his theme, and given them a boldly modern treatment. He applied the grays and browns in a flat and fluid manner, without sfumato, without transitional tones. Textures — fur, leather, coarse cloth, calluses on feet — can almost be felt. Christ’s shockingly frontal body is reduced to its essential planes, intensifying his human vulnerability. In Manet’s technique is the literalness of his painting process. We can see how he worked: we can see his brushstrokes, one next to the other — in the arch of the foot, in the lock of Christ’s hair. Manet’s art is a totally modern art, an art of the present, not a seamless vision of the past. This is not Christ, as in the Correggio altarpiece, but a surface of brushstrokes — the painted figure of Christ.
IV. IMPRESSIONISM:  
THE PAINTERS OF MODERN LIFE

It was Manet’s close friend and supporter, poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), who urged artists to find poetry in contemporary everyday scenes, to capture what he called “the heroism of modern life” — the “transitory, fugitive element, which is constantly changing.” In other words, why focus on dead civilizations when the world around them was so alive? Paris was changing before their eyes; railways took them to places they had never been before; wondrous discoveries were made with astounding regularity.

Paris was indeed changing. During France’s resplendent Second Empire (1852-1870), the city underwent massive urban renovation. The emperor Louis Napoleon (Napoleon III, 1808-1873) — nephew of the mighty Napoleon I — fostered the growth of modern France and restored Paris as the center of European life. Through the emperor’s influential prefect, Baron Georges Haussmann (1809-1891), portions of picturesque medieval Paris, with their narrow, crooked, and crowded streets, were razed, regardless of their history. Replacing them were hundreds of miles of bullet-straight boulevards, lined with trees, lighting, sidewalks, and the uniform facades of block after block of deluxe, middle-class apartment buildings. New sewer systems washed everything down. Landscaped parks punctuated these sleek renovated areas, as did new bridges, riverside promenades, and vast glass-and-iron railway stations that exemplified both the excitement and the innovations of a new industrial age. Efficiently and effectively erasing hundreds of years of history, new Paris — the first great modern metropolis — evoked conflicting sentiments succinctly summed up by an old Parisian character in a play of 1866: “My hat’s off and I applaud heartily — but I am so pleased that the good Lord did not know about this marvelous urban system and that he did not put all of nature’s trees in a straight line, with all the stars in two rows.”

Haussmann’s redesigned railway system, with Paris the center of lines radiating in all directions, linked the city as never before to suburban
and rural sites favored by artists for painting *en plein air*. Coupled with these shrinking distances were other benefits of new technology: pre-mixed paints in portable tin tubes, flat brushes, and a wide range of commercially available colors. As the son of Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), one of the artists who was to take advantage of these discoveries, recalled his father saying: “Paints in tubes allowed us to work in nature... Without paint in tubes, there would have been no Cézanne, no Monet, no Sisley or Pissarro, nothing of what the journalists were to call impressionism.”

During the 1860s, Manet and other avant-garde artists gathered around the tables of Parisian cafés to ponder Baudelaire’s advice concerning these innovations. To capture the changing world around them as if in real time amid the rapid fluctuations of weather and light required a modern artistic language, one that had not been taught before. No school curriculum gave instruction on how to render the brand new: the modern city, expanding suburbs, emerging bourgeoisie and their activities of leisure — strolling, sailing, racing, gathering in cafés, dancing in nightclubs. Academic training, with its conventional rules of subject, composition, brushwork, color, shading, and finish no longer sufficed. If an artist wanted to seize a moment, paint a surface that depicted transition — or, as Manet said, “be of our time, and paint what we see,” how could they do it?

So they sat in cafés and discussed new scientific color theories that explored light and placement of color. In addition to the latest developments in photography, they discovered Japanese woodblock prints, introduced upon Japan’s entry into the European market in 1854, and noted their compositional cropping, arrested actions, and bright, flat colors. Then the young artists went out into the city and suburbs and countryside on *plein air* excursions to test these new ideas. No longer were they interested in the mere representation of the world around them. Their goal instead, as critic Jules Castagnary had discerned, was to seize “the sensation produced by a landscape.” A painting for them was as much about looking at a scene as describing it.

A critic who occasionally joined the artists’ café rendezvous was Théodore Duret. He later recalled: “The meetings at the Café Guerbois, with [discussion of] painting in light tones and bright colors by Manet,
and the technique and procedure of open-air painting by Claude Monet, Pissarro and Renoir, were to have fruitful results. From those meetings sprang the powerful development of art that was to go by the name of Impressionism." Pioneering the movement was Claude Monet.

Claude Monet (1840-1926)

Beauty is in front of the eyes, not inside the brain; in the present, not in the past; in truth, not in dreams; in life, not in death. The universe we have here, before us, is the very one that painting ought to translate.

— Jules Castagnary, 1892

Although Monet was born in Paris, the infant soon moved with his merchant family to Le Havre on the northwestern coast of Normandy. There, before the eternal shifts of sky and sea, the boy had constant access to what would later be a lifetime preoccupation: water and the effects of light and air. His early talent for drawings led him to create caricatures for pocket money [see Figure 8]. His first true exposure to the infinite possibilities of painting directly from nature came with his expeditions with the elder artist Eugène Boudin (1824-1888), when they took their casels to the countryside and to the beaches of Normandy. "A veil was ripped from my eyes," Monet said later of these teen-age outings, "and in a flash, I saw what painting was about."

In 1859, he visited Paris, frequented cafés, and studied at the Académie Suisse, an inexpensive art school that provided models but no instruction. In 1861, he received a low draft number and served in the African Cavalry in Algeria for over a year, but was sent back to Normandy on sick leave in late summer of 1862. By autumn, he had returned to Paris where he enrolled in the studio of Charles Gleyre (1808-1874), an instructor at the Academy's Ecole des Beaux Arts. There he met the artists who were to become fellow rebels: in addition to Renoir, Frédéric Bazille (1841-1870), Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), and Ludovic-Napoléon Lepic (1839-1889) were also students there.

Although Gleyre's studio offered these young artists the first occasion to congregate as a group, Monet later liked to dismiss his time there. He
recalled that when Gleyre criticized his drawing of a model, Monet reported that he had replied timidly, “I can only draw what I see.” With that, Gleyre had reputedly said: “Praxiteles (a noted ancient Greek sculptor) borrowed the best elements from a hundred imperfect models to create a masterpiece. One must always think of classical antiquity.” Although Monet often insisted that he left after only two weeks with “lessons in this kind of proficiency,” the young artist probably studied at Gleyre’s through 1864, when the studio closed.

During the next several years, Monet and his friends painted on weekends and holidays in the forests of Fontainebleau and along the coast of Honfleur in Normandy. In 1865, he shared a studio with the independently wealthy Bazille who, two years later, gave refuge to Renoir as well as to Monet, both of whom were without funds. It was an 1867 letter from Bazille to his parents that provides the first known record of the conception of the movement that would be called Impressionism. He wrote about possibly renting a large studio “where we’ll exhibit as many of our works as we wish...Courbet...and others...very much approve of our idea. With these people and Monet, who is stronger than all of them, we are sure to succeed.”

By spring 1868, Monet was settled in the Cloton Inn in the hamlet of Bennecourt, located on the Seine River. There he painted a small landscape that was just the kind of work that would be displayed in Bazille’s hypothetical studio, for it was a painting that exemplified the new visual language that Monet and his friends were developing to seize what Baudelaire had called “the heroism of modern life.”

**On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt, 1868**

Monet had come to Bennecourt, perhaps on the advice of novelist Emile Zola, to escape his chronic lack of money. Only twenty miles away, Paris was too expensive. Against his family’s wishes, Monet had brought along Camille Doncieux (d. 1878), whom he would marry in 1870, and their infant son Jean, and this had caused his family to cut off the artist’s small but essential allowance. The inn where they stayed is the large double story house seen in the painting only through reflection in the smooth waters of the Seine [see Slide 6]. The seated figure gazing across the river
is Camille, whose calm demeanor belies Monet's dire straits. The sketchy white form in her lap initially portrayed their child, but Monet painted it over to represent a small dog. The painting was executed entirely on site in several sittings. He made constant changes as he worked, altering the figure of Camille and adding a second, awkwardly painted tree trunk. The rowboat painted in the foreground provided Monet and Camille their means of transportation to and from the inn.

Among the greatest of Monet's oil sketches, the painting reveals the early hallmarks of the painting style later to be called Impressionism: its commonplace subject of a friend of the artist relaxing on a river bank in the countryside near Paris; the spontaneity of broken, vibrating brushstrokes to depict the fluctuations of light and its reflection; a high-keyed palette, rapidly applied, without shading or modulation; and the summary description of forms to capture a sense of rush and movement, of time moving on. Horizontal bands of wide, flat areas of color depict the banks of the river, the river itself, the hills, and the sky. Punctuating these broad areas are squiggles for the village women washing their clothes, or dots of bright yellow to depict flowers dancing on the grass. Patches of sunlight pierce the shady bank where Camille sits, brightening a cluster of leaves, a tree trunk, her ballooning blouse, her hat.

This was Monet's first innovation — working out-of-doors on a figure painting — and Bennecourt can truly be called his first Impressionist landscape. He would pursue its central motif, the reflections of light on water, throughout his life. (He even once said he wished he could be buried at sea in a buoy.) The artist waited nearly a decade before exhibiting the painting at the second Impressionist exhibition of 1876. The luminous work indeed conveys what Castagnary called "the sensation of the landscape;" the entire image quivers, breathes. Monet has accomplished this not only as if he had been born blind and his eyes had been opened for the first time, but as if the scene had been glimpsed through brilliant light in an instant, unintentionally, en route to something else. As Monet himself said: "Landscape is nothing but an impression, an instantaneous one."

Unhappily, this sun-drenched moment was short-lived. Unable to pay his bill, Monet wrote to Bazille in June 1868: "I was just kicked out of the inn where I lived, as naked as a worm." He was so upset that he made a half-
hearted attempt at suicide by throwing himself into the very water that he had depicted so evocatively. “Fortunately,” he continued, describing what he called the “stupidity” of his impulsive act, “no harm came of it.”

Striving to Emerge: 1868-1874

Money problems persisted during these early years for the expanding group of new painters, which now included Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) and Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), who in turn brought in Edgar Degas (1834-1917). Several of the artists, however, did enjoy some success at the Salon. For instance, Monet’s first submissions, two seascapes, were accepted in 1865. The following year, he displayed a landscape and a rapidly painted picture of Camille — not a portrait per se, Monet was to say later, “but simply a Parisian figure of the era.” The painting was a triumph. But other than a large picture of the port of Le Havre in 1868, the Salon rejected Monet’s work for the rest of the decade, considering it too daring. The artist struggled to find alternative showcases, such as the shop windows of art dealers or venues outside Paris. The same year that he painted Bennecourt, for instance, he won a silver medal at an exhibition in Le Havre. Nevertheless, creditors were always dunning him for bills not paid. In summer 1869, Renoir even brought food to the poverty-stricken Monets. “I’m still in a pretty hopeless state,” he wrote to Bazille, who had also bailed him out during that period. “I’ve sold a still-life.... But as usual here I’m held up for lack of materials.”

Despite monetary difficulties, Monet realized what he called a dream of his that summer of 1869: to work out-of-doors with Renoir, capturing the effects of light on water at La Grenouillère, a popular swimming spot on the Seine that had a boat rental and floating café. The artists lived near one another in neighboring villages. In June 1870, Monet and Camille married, with Courbet as witness. That summer also found Monet painting the bourgeoisie at the fashionable seaside resort of Trouville on the Channel coast in Normandy. But on July 19, 1870, Napoléon III declared war on Prussia (Germany). Avoiding military conscription (and his hotel bill), Monet and his wife left for London in the autumn. There he met other refugees, such as one of his most important future patrons, art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel (1831-1922),
who put him in touch with fellow artist Camille Pissarro, also in London. Before leaving France, Pissarro had stored a number of Monet’s works with his own for safekeeping during the war. Unfortunately, only forty of their fifteen hundred stored works would survive.

Camille Pissarro (1830-1903)

“I found myself in London with Monet,” Pissarro later wrote of this period. They visited London museums together, where they marvelled over Turner and other early nineteenth-century British artists. As Pissarro recalled: “We were struck chiefly by the landscape painters who shared in our aim with regard to ‘plein air’ light and fugitive effects...” Both artists continued the trend begun back home of painting en plein air, now in the streets and parks of London and its suburbs, in order to record firsthand the misty light and subtleties of the seasons of this new locale.

A splendid example of these excursions is The Crystal Palace, one of the finest paintings Pissarro completed during his London exile [see Slide 7]. He chose as his subject the largest and most celebrated modern building of its era. Comparable to Chicago’s McCormick Place today, the Crystal Palace was designed by Joseph Paxton (1803-1865) for London’s Great Exhibition of 1851, an international trade show of unprecedented scale. Paxton, a British architect and landscape designer, drew on the technology he had used to design conservatories, whose glass-and-iron construction signified modernism to a vast public. The Crystal Palace’s enormous vaults of glass and iron stretched over almost seventeen acres of endless displays. Full-grown trees were used as decorative touches. In 1852, the modular structure was dismantled at its original Hyde Park site and reerected, with an even more elaborate design, in Sydenham, formerly a separate town, now part of south London, where Pissarro stayed in 1870. Called the Palace of the People and used as a recreational center as well as a showcase for the wonders of science and industry, Paxton’s building was for years an enormously popular gathering place; fire destroyed it in 1856.

A bright, sunny sky and stiff breeze permeate Pissarro’s comfortable scene of families out for a leisurely stroll. The four-quartered British
flag stands to attention in the wind, and sunshine rims the full, luminous clouds. Figures are sketched-in and simplified, as is the Crystal Palace. In a major departure from traditional art, Pissarro has not made his subject of the Crystal Palace his central motif. Instead the famous building is far away from us and to one side, just part of the scene. Light and reflections bounce off its sheath of glass, making the immense structure seem almost weightless. In contrast is the dark solid mass of the recently constructed middle-class housing across the street. A wide roadway and two sidewalks, filled with activity, run down the center of the painting. This bright, balanced, and harmonious composition evokes a sense of calm leisure far removed from wartorn Paris.

The Franco-Prussian War was one of the shortest wars in history. Less than six weeks after it began, Napoleon III was captured by the Germans and deposed. Following this shocking humiliation, the bloodshed and siege to establish an official government turned internal and in March 1871, the revolutionary Commune government seized control of Paris. Relative stability finally occurred in May 1871 when the Commune was crushed. This resulted in the execution and deportation of thousands of Parisians, including the arrest of a rebellious Communard, the artist Courbet. Political and economic difficulties notwithstanding, the Third Republic lasted until 1940.

The tumult of the Franco-Prussian war postponed, but did not stop, developments in the world of art. Although much property had been damaged during the war and Commune, the overall contours of modern Paris remained, as well as a new spirit of republicanism. After the war, reparations were quickly paid to Prussia, and rebuilding of destroyed areas of the city began. Toward the end of 1871, most of the artists who had scattered during the conflict had resettled in or near Paris. The meetings at Café Guerbois resumed, as did the artists' direct observations and recording of modern, everyday life and the people, like themselves, who enjoyed it. Sadly, Bazille was not among them. He had gone on active duty in the army and was killed almost immediately, even before the Monets fled to London.

After less than eighteen months away, the Monets returned to Paris in autumn 1871, following a brief and fruitful sojourn in Zandaam, Holland, where the artist produced more than twenty works depicting
the little town’s water-filled landscapes. With Manet’s help, he and Camille rented a house in the riverside suburb of Argenteuil, some twenty minutes by train from Paris. He remained there for seven years, beginning for him the first brief spell of success. Durand-Ruel began to purchase from Monet regularly. The dealer also started to buy from Monet’s colleagues, thus helping to shape by financial support the group who would soon be known as Impressionists. In Argenteuil, Monet lavished care on and painted frequently the first of what would become an ongoing passion and subject, his garden. The young Monets also had servants. During these years, the artist was able to recreate, briefly, the sense of bourgeois well-being of his youth.

Monet teamed up once again with Renoir on the banks of the Seine, capturing the river’s reflections, boats, bridges, gardens, and each other. Manet joined them too, and even his touch grew lighter, his palette brighter. And in Monet’s quest to paint outdoors in nature—to express light and its reflections through color, he devised the perfect vehicle, adapted from an earlier model used by Barbizon painter Charles Daubigny (1817-1878): a flat-bottomed boat with a blue-green cabin that had, as Monet said, “just enough room to set up my easel” [see Figure 10]. Almost half of his approximately 170 scenes of Argenteuil were painted from this floating studio. As Monet later wrote: “I lived here with my paints and easels, watching for the effects of light from one twilight to another.”
First Impressionist Exhibition: 1874

In 1874, the years of discussions by the Café Guerbois set finally materialized into action. In these artists’ view, the state-sponsored Salon still all too frequently rejected the new paintings of modern life, with their bright colors, vigorous brushstrokes, and small, informal compositions, in favor of large, highly finished, representational canvases with subjects so often drawn from the past. To combat this official control of artistic training, standards, and sales — to have their work be seen, reviewed, and sold — Monet and his avant-garde colleagues formed a society of independent artists to do what Courbet and Manet had done earlier — exhibit their works outside the Salon.

The painters were extremely diverse, with differing styles, backgrounds and political views. They were adamantly united in one sole area: all wanted to throw off the shackles of the Salon to present art that depicted the here and now. On April 15, thirty of these artists mounted the first of what would be eight independent exhibitions (1874, 1876, 1877, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, and 1886) in defiance of the Salon. In addition to Monet, the artists included Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Berthe Morisot (1841-1895), Pierre Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, and Camille Pissarro, who would be the only member of the original group to exhibit in all eight shows. Although Manet led the way, the great avant-garde painter never participated in the group shows.

Held at the just vacated studio of their friend, photographer Gaspard-Félix Nadar (1820-1910), on one of Haussmann’s elegant new boulevards, the exhibit lasted one month. In contrast to thousands of works crowded together, one on top of another, as in the Salon, there were 165 works on view, most of which hung in a single row at eye-level with space between them. These agreeable viewing conditions hardly quieted critics. As for the “so-called school of the future,” fumed one, “they all have more or less cross-eyed minds.” The critics found little to like about this seemingly unfinished art, with its trivial subject matter, and as another critic wrote, it was “awful, stupid, dirty. The painting had no common sense.” Monet and his group “appear to have declared a war on beauty,” pronounced a third.

As for the leader himself, who this third critic described as “a more
uncompromising Manet.” Monet showed five paintings and seven pastels in the groundbreaking exhibition — including the picture of the harbor seen at sunrise, that impression made during a glimpse of the eye—the painting that led in part to the revolutionary group’s eventual name [see Figure 1].

Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919)

Renoir was in charge of hanging the first show. The second group exhibition was held at art dealer Durand-Ruel’s centrally located gallery in April 1876. Although some critics had mellowed, others remained hostile. “Those self-styled artists give themselves the title of intransigents, impressionists,” read one review. “They take up canvas, paint, and brush, throw on a few tones haphazardly and sign the whole thing.... It is a frightening spectacle of human vanity gone astray to the point of madness.” Of the 252 works by nineteen artists on view, Monet showed eighteen paintings and Renoir fifteen.

One of Renoir’s works was a small, radiant canvas entitled The Rower’s Lunch, 1875-76, that epitomized the Impressionist canon in both subject matter and style [see Slide 8]. Done in a high-keyed palette with brushwork that describes form and evokes light equally well, the painting gives us a bright look at the new leisure activities of the day. It is a lovely, warm summer day. Two men and a woman, members of the newly emerged bourgeoisie, have escaped the hectic pace of modern Paris to boat, dine out, and relax in the burgeoning suburbs. A small still life on the table indicates that they have just finished what looks to have been a delicious meal. Behind them, the boating activity that they came out to enjoy is also relatively new on the scene: canotage, or pleasure boating, arrived in France from Britain during the 1830s. Like the scene they depict, both palette and brushwork are airy, relaxed, almost sensual. Renoir’s colors are flooded with the bright out-of-doors; his strokes are feathery, soft as silk. His brush flits over the surface of the water; it flickers over foreheads and fabrics, wine bottles and glasses, picking up patches of light. Like a tapestry, the orange of the boat reappears, woven into the chairbacks and on the remains of the meal on the table. The blue of the woman’s dress is echoed in the trellis and boating outfit of the female rower who, heading in, almost makes a fourth at the table.
The overall composition has a harmony that seems to bring nature and society into perfect accord. This reflects Renoir's decorative training as a porcelain painter and perhaps his working class origins as well. One of the few members of the Impressionist group who had earned his living in manual trade before turning to painting and who could not rely on his family to help him out, Renoir's emphasis was on figures, particularly those enjoying themselves in society. "For me a picture... should be something likeable, joyous, and pretty — yes pretty," he once said. "There are enough ugly things in life for us not to add to them." What could be a more pleasing expression of modern life than comfortable bourgeois enjoying a good meal after boating in the suburbs on a sunny afternoon?

The small work was one of the most beautiful of a group of paintings featuring rowing along the Seine that Renoir completed shortly after he and Monet painted side-by-side at Argenteuil. Renoir's site was probably nearby Chatou, known for its rowing, which he began visiting in the middle of the 1870s. One of Renoir's favorite spots was the popular riverside Restaurant Fournaise, featured here, whose clientele were boaters and their friends. At least sixteen of Renoir's paintings from this period have been identified with Chatou.

Edgar Degas (1834-1917)

Although it was not exhibited in the Impressionist exhibitions, Edgar Degas's *Uncle and Niece (Henri de Gas and His Niece Lucie de Gas)*, c. 1875-78 [see Slide 9], was painted around the same time as Renoir's suburban luncheon scene. Like Renoir, Degas was the other important figure painter in a movement that concentrated largely on landscape. But unlike Renoir, Degas, the highly educated son of a banker, delved beneath the lush and leisurely surface of modern life. In addition to hundreds of works investigating movement — of racehorses, ballet dancers, milliners, laundresses — the artist produced such masterful and subtle portraits that he was considered the finest portrait painter among the Impressionists.

Degas's approach was rigorous and probing. Unlike Monet and Renoir, he made numerous preparatory drawings in order to carefully devise
each aspect of his spatially complex compositions. As he proclaimed: “I assure you that no art was less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of reflection and the study of great masters.” The end result, however, was calculated to look like an instant rendering that yet penetrated beneath appearance into the psychology of his sitters, seizing private and unguarded moments.

The two figures in this double portrait are shown at that precise yet tentative point when life’s uncertainties have thrown them together. The site is the Degas family apartment in Naples, Italy, where most of the artist’s family lived and worked. His recently orphaned first cousin Lucie de Gas had been placed in the care of her bachelor uncle Henri de Gas. Both Henri and Edgar Degas were in mourning for the artist’s father, who was Henri’s brother. Here Degas captures his black-clad relatives with almost photographic immediacy. His uncle seems to have just put down the newspaper and paused between puffs on his cigar; his niece looks up from reading over his shoulder. Heightening this sense of instantaneity are Degas’s characteristically cropped forms, a quality often seen in photographic compositions, as well as in Japanese prints. Degas was, in fact, an avid and innovative experimenter with photography, as he was with printmaking, sculpting, and other artistic media.

The painting, then, serves as a double portrait of death and family ties, and every aspect of the work seems to further this theme. Details are subordinated to the whole. Using a rapid and assured brushstroke, Degas depicts the newspaper with just a slash of paint. The palette is somber, dominated by the black tones largely eschewed by the artist’s colleagues. Soft, diffuse light bathes the entire image with a sense of poignancy, of loss. The bond of bereavement between man and child is suggested by the similar tilt of their heads and their black mourning clothes. But the contrasting background behind the figures and the central placement of the older man’s chair, on which the child hesitantly rests her hands, imply a distance. Isolated, yet connected, in the aftermath of death, three relatives — two who pose and a third who paints them from across the paper-strewn table — movingly convey the fragility and strength of family. Unresolved details and thinly painted areas around the table suggest that the painting may not have been completed.
Gustave Caillebotte (1848-1894)

By 1877, the Impressionist movement had reached its full maturity, and the third Impressionist exhibition, attended by some eight thousand people, has been considered the finest of all eight shows. It has also been called "Caillebotte’s exhibition." Upon Degas’s recommendation, Gustave Caillebotte had first exhibited in the second group show of 1876. Around that time, the well-to-do artist had also begun buying the work of his young and often penniless friends. These acquisitions, made over many years, today comprise the core of the world’s largest Impressionist art collection, at the Musée d’Orsay in Paris. Wearing both hats, that of artist and patron, Caillebotte donned a third, that of impresario for the 1877 group show. He found and rented the exhibition space, hung the show with Renoir, and paid for the publicity. He also managed to exhibit six of his own works. One of them, Paris Street, Rainy Day, 1877, was singled out by a critic as “the most outstanding work in the exhibition” [see Slide 10].

“I do not mean that the boulevard is Paris,” a late nineteenth-century observer noted about Haussmann’s spacious new streets, “but surely, without the boulevard we should not understand Paris.” To capture in true plein air technique this new urban vision, Caillebotte literally took his easels and paints to one of these streets and worked, it is said, from inside a glassed-in omnibus. His site was the Europe Quarter, one of Haussmann’s new residential areas, so-called because the streets were named after the capitals of European countries. Centered by one of the prefect’s complex, star-formed intersections of six major streets, the Quarter was constructed entirely during the artist’s lifetime. Caillebotte grew up five streets away and actually moved to the neighborhood in 1888. Just off this boulevard was the building which housed the 1877 Impressionist exhibition. Six of the Impressionists’ eight shows, in fact, would be held in this area.

Considered by many to be the masterpiece of his career, Paris Street, Rainy Day gives us Caillebotte’s vision of Haussmann’s new Paris — its rigorous architecture, its wide straight streets, its impersonality, its order. For this contemporary scene, Caillebotte adopted the grand scale generally used for history and religious paintings. The canvas measures almost seven-by-ten feet. Its gray-blue palette captures the mistiness of
the “fleeting” moment that the Impressionists sought to convey. The limestone buildings are damp; the cobblestones and sidewalks are rain-slicked and reflective. Even the sky, with its delicate hint of peach, bears the burn-off of the shower. Likewise, Caillebotte’s near life-size foreground figures portray the Impressionists’ emphasis on a moment in time. These elegant urbanites wear the latest winter fashions; even the curved steel-framed umbrella had just arrived on the scene, having been invented only two years before.

Caillebotte’s rigorously controlled technique mirrors the relentless modernity it describes. Like Degas, he made numerous preparatory drawings and oil sketches, and relied on traditional Renaissance perspective to order his composition. In the final painting, though, he has skewed both to create his unique urban view. The image is far deeper and wider than a normal eye would see. Foregrounds are too large, backgrounds too tiny; streets zoom back with a suddenness that startles. Buildings have been widened and the space between them made too broad. The composition is divided into a giant plus sign formed by the green lamppost and horizon. The deepest point is almost the painting’s exact center — a suctioning reinforced by the receding pattern of the cobblestones, chimneys, and umbrellas. Onto the overpowering buildings and funneling streets, Caillebotte has literally plotted his people. He constantly tinkered with and manipulated his preliminary figure studies until, ultimately, he stuck people on in collage-like fashion, according to his intentions. Instead of the Impressionist flux, the men and women seem glued to their positions, frozen in time, permanent. Like the stark and rigorous impersonality of the restructured city, the figures are anonymous and isolated, as if encapsulated by their umbrellas, separated from their surroundings and each other. Every aspect of Rainy Day adheres to the demanding order of Caillebotte’s meticulously devised technique, the epitome of which is in the right foreground: beneath a delicate veil, a single pearl gleams in the woman’s ear.
Arrival of the Normandy Train, Gare Saint-Lazare, 1877

The third Impressionist show featured two hundred forty-one works by eighteen artists; the largest exhibitor was Monet, with thirty works. But some of these works, including Normandy Train, might not have been done, were it not for another one of Caillebotte’s generous acts. In addition to continuing his practice of advancing Monet sums of money against future purchases, Caillebotte rented the small apartment near Gare Saint-Lazare that Monet used as a temporary studio to create this and at least eleven other versions of the station [see Slide 11]. Originally built in 1836, Gare Saint-Lazare and the surrounding streets were redesigned by engineer Eugène Flachat (1802-1873) in 1868 under the Haussmann plan in order to handle the significant increase in traffic generated by the train station. Bustling with movement, filled with steam, the enormous glass-and-iron vault exemplifies the excitement of the new industrial age. Over eighty percent of the trains’ passengers were commuters, often including the young Impressionists since the station linked Paris to many of the suburban and rural sites where they boated on the Seine, danced in cafés, and set up their easels. Beyond the suburbs, one of the favored destinations was Normandy where, in fact, Monet first practiced his plein air technique during the 1860s.

He continued this technique for Normandy Train, receiving special permission from the railway authorities to paint in and around the station. In winter 1877, he began work on a campaign that produced about a dozen paintings. For several of them, Monet positioned himself within the tangle of tracks and train switches. In other works, as seen here, his vantage point was from within the station proper. There is even a story that he convinced the station master to stop all the trains and cram their engines with coal so that he could capture the enormous billows of smoke and steam.

Using an unorthodox head-on perspective and rapid, often sketchlike brushwork to imply rather than describe people, the train, and the smoke, Monet indeed conveys in this work the intensity and flux of this modern marvel. The travelers — workers, clerks, business people, and shoppers — are dwarfed by the industrial shed, similar in its iron-and-
glass structure to *The Crystal Palace* depicted by Pissarro. Unlike Caillebotte's frozen, clearly defined, and monumental figures, Monet treats his people as *staffage*. Reduced to a mass of simple, dark strokes that heighten the sense of motion, they flicker in and out on the surface of the painting, like butterflies. Time has halted for an instant, but not stopped; if we blink our eyes, the people will have moved on.

Also Impressionist in spirit is the supremacy of light and air. Against a backdrop of luminous sky, clouds and steam and smoke fill the gabled glass roof, rising beyond the train shed toward the sky. The most vaporous substance is given the most materiality with layers of *scumbled* paint. Beyond this radiant haze, our eyes are drawn by the receding lampposts and train tracks to the urban vision that Monet shared with Caillebotte: the new streets, bridges, and buildings of Paris.

Monet exhibited seven of these station paintings in one room of the 1877 Impressionist exhibition, thus inaugurating a variant of what would later evolve into his famous method of working in series. Upon seeing these seminal paintings, novelist Émile Zola remarked: "This year [M. Claude Monet] is exhibiting some superb station interiors. One can hear the rumble of the trains surging forward, see the torrents of smoke winding through vast engine sheds. This is the painting of today: modern settings beautiful in their scope. Our artists must find the poetry of railway stations as our fathers found the poetry of forests and rivers."

The third group show was a grand but brief success. A subsequent economic recession affected the sales — as well as the optimism — of all of the Impressionists. In-fighting and disagreements, such as those about new members and types of artworks to be shown, became even more pronounced in the already disparate group. Not only was Durand-Ruel affected by the recession, but so was a new and major Impressionist collector, and Monet patron and friend, department-store magnate Ernst Hoschedé (1838-1890). Bankrupt, Hoschedé was forced to sell his large collection at very low prices. With debts mounting and creditors clamoring once again, Monet left Argenteuil with financial help from Caillebotte and Manet.
In August 1878, Monet, his ailing wife Camille, and their two young sons moved to the small town of Vétheuil on the Seine River in order to find less expensive lodging. Shortly afterward, the Monets took in the now destitute Hoschedé family, which included six children. Monet’s desperate commutes into Paris did not even find enough buyers to cover the large household’s expenses. The disheartened artist wrote to a friend: “I don’t have the strength to work any more under these conditions. I hear that my friends prepare a new exhibition this year. I renounce taking part in it, not having done anything that’s worth being shown.”

The fourth Impressionist exhibition opened April 1879 with sixteen participants. Protestations to the contrary, Monet was one of them. Caillebotte would not let his friend abstain. He borrowed from owners and occasionally framed many of Monet’s twenty-nine works on view. Receiving general critical acclaim, Monet’s works may have included the early, large *Jardin à Sainte-Adresse*, 1867 (The Metropolitan Museum, New York); two particularly praised birds-eye views of the national June 30th celebration in the Paris streets, done in 1878; and his most recent paintings of Vétheuil.

Another participant of the 1879 group show was newcomer Paul Gauguin (1848-1903). And among the sixteen thousand visitors was the aspiring art student Georges Seurat (1859-1891), then nineteen years old. Although Monet never visited the exhibition, Caillebotte tried to keep his friend informed and his spirits up. In mid-May, he wrote to Monet: “We have achieved much. Manet himself is beginning to see that he has taken the wrong route. Courage then!” Monet needed it. Four months later, Camille Monet died at the age of thirty-two.

Nineteenth-Century Still Life

Since its establishment in the seventeenth century, the Academy had relegated still life, which included landscape, to the lowest rung on the ladder of acceptable art forms. An arrangement of fruit, flowers, or vegetables was hardly instructional or awe-inspiring. Although with the work of famed Romantic artist Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) and Courbet, still life slowly began to gain respect, as late as the 1860s one
critic compared still lifes to mindless, multiplying rodents whose incessant gnawing at the foundation of academic art would soon bring the establishment crashing to the ground. Nevertheless, an indicator of growing acceptance was the steadily increasing still-life submissions to the Salon. Intimate, moderately priced, they were the perfect choice for the smaller domestic settings of the new middle class. For the *plein air* artist, the genre was a fine alternative in inclement weather. In their recording of modern life, still lifes frequently appear as minor elements, for example in Renoir’s *Rower’s Lunch* [see Slide 8]. And for those artists struggling to make ends meet, including Monet, still life was an inexpensive and uninsistent subject. The only drawback in using produce was inevitable decay.

**Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904)**

An example of one of these Salon submission was *Still Life: Corner of a Table* (1873) by Henri Fantin-Latour [see Slide 12]. Born in the city of Grenoble in southeastern France, Fantin-Latour was trained at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Despite his involvement with most of the avant-garde artists and writers of his generation, such as Monet, Manet, and Emile Zola (several of his better known works, in fact, are group portraits of these colleagues), his work was almost entirely unaffected by Impressionist innovations. Although his *oeuvre* ranged from portraits to evocative works based on musical themes by contemporary composers, he is best known for the type of floral still life discussed here.

Painted for the Salon of 1873, *Corner of a Table* is considered one of the masterpieces of nineteenth-century still lifes. It was at first rejected by the Salon, only to be reconsidered. At the time, Fantin-Latour was enjoying growing public recognition (several of his works had just been sold by Durand-Ruel), and he painted this ambitious canvas with scant regard to the considerations of the Salon jury. This relatively large work (especially for the still-life genre) relates to an even larger piece, *Around the Table*, 1872, one of Fantin-Latour’s most famous paintings of the decade [see Figure 14]. The group portrait includes some of the major writers and poets of the day, who are shown carefully positioned around a table which contains many of the still-life elements seen in the Art Institute’s work.
In both works, the objects have been calculatedly arranged on the creased white tablecloth to simulate an elegantly disheveled manner. In the group portrait, the still-life elements are incidental to the main subject, but in the Art Institute’s painting the objects move to center stage. Evidence of use is obvious. It is as if the men have just departed, leaving an almost empty carafe, a piece of fruit on the table, and the sugar-bowl lid askew. Not present in the larger work, almost replacing the Parisian writers, are the delicate blooms of the rhododendron plant. Its placement at the front of the picture plane and its striking silhouette against the white cloth reflect the influence of Japanese prints so popular at the time. This silhouetted pattern against a plain cool background is one of the artist’s visual signatures.

The rush and radiance of modern life seem far away from this timeless scene. Fantin-Latour’s careful brushwork delineates objects with almost photographic accuracy. Offsetting the predominantly dark palette are the bright white cloth and the subtle pale shades of blossoms and fruit. The brilliant light of his Impressionist colleagues remains blocked out, beyond the confines of the room. Light is still a factor here — objects are reflective, translucent, or transparent. But it is a soft indoor illumination that bathes the entire image — both the self-contained world of this corner of a table and a hint of the rest of the table, the room at large, the vaster universe beyond — with a quiet comfort, a poetic repose.

Primarily a landscapist, Monet was also a shrewd businessman with a family to support and knew that still lifes were marketable. There are fourteen known still lifes from his early years during the 1860s, done in styles that ranged from fairly traditional to early Impressionist as the 1870s dawned. He returned to the genre during the early 1880s when he found himself once more in financial straits. By then his Impressionist style was in its full maturity, as can be seen in *Still Life: Apples and Grapes*, 1880 [see Figure 15].

In this painting, we look down onto a table that is pitched forward at a sharp angle. Despite the contrivance of the genre, where objects are carefully arranged, "set up" in the studio, Monet seems to have scattered his still-life elements in a haphazard fashion. In particular, the small cooking apples on the right of the picture seem about to slide right off the table and out of our frame of vision. On the other hand, the small apples line up precisely at the right edge of the canvas and balance, in a sense, the cluster of larger apples on the left. This play between randomness and carefully calculated order imparts spontaneity to the scene.

Enhancing this candid sense of an impromptu glance is Monet's lively brushwork. His paint-loaded brushstrokes fairly burst with energy. Following the contours of his shapes, he uses quick, rounded marks for the various fruits and longer, broad strokes for the tablecloth's flat surfaces. Whereas the objects in Fantin-Latour's painting are self-contained entities, the gesturally painted apples and grapes in Monet's
work overlap and bunch together, forming one dynamic whole. Monet also seems to have snared the outside light beyond Fantin-Latour’s shuttered room. Using luminous colors, quickly applied one next to the other, Monet gives us the sense of light bouncing off the sharp folds of the tablecloth and the clear, crisp skins of the fruit.

The French term for still life is *nature morte*, whose literal translation is “dead nature.” With Monet’s bravura handling of balance and motion, vigorous brushstrokes, and bright and lively colors, the term hardly applies. In fact the image, painted only seven years after Fantin-Latour’s work, seems so alive that it appears about to vibrate off the top of the table.

The 1880s Painting Campaigns

Called the *fin de siècle*, the two decades leading up to the turn of the century witnessed a whirlwind of change. Electric street lights began to replace gas lamps along Haussmann’s endless, unswerving boulevards. Behind the ordered building facades that lined these streets, elevators started to carry residents to homes where central heating, plumbing, and gas were becoming available. The boulevards themselves began to stream with electric streetcars, and soon after the turn of the century, with automobiles. The world grew smaller as merchandise was imported from places never before imagined. Distances shrank further with the inauguration of the first public telephone system in 1878. Women shed the armature of hoop skirts and *bustles* for can-can outfits and cycling gear. Their bodies liberated, they proceeded to demand the freedom to vote.

Monet entered his forties in 1880. Despite change swirling around him, he began to discard his themes of the previous decade: the here and now of modern Paris, its expanding suburbs and their occupants — the newly leisureed middle class. Instead, he began to examine landscape’s timeless motifs. By 1878, he had painted his last pictures of Paris and its near suburbs; by the end of the decade, large-scale figures began to disappear from his works as well. In conjunction with this jettisoning of old themes, he embarked upon nearly annual campaigns, painting trips lasting several weeks, sometimes months, that would continue throughout the decade.
The first of these campaigns took place on the beaches and cliffs along the Channel coast that had also been painted by Courbet. In the middle of the decade, Monet travelled to the Mediterranean coast, with its dazzling light, as well as to storm-thrashed Brittany on the Atlantic. The trips culminated in 1889 with expeditions to the rugged Creuse Valley in central France. With restless, probing brushwork, Monet repeatedly examined “from afar,” as one commentator said, such dramatic and usually unpeopled motifs as the sea, secluded coastal villages and buildings, and unusual rock formations and chalk cliffs. Author Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), a native of the Channel coast who met Monet on one of his campaigns, described the artist as “no longer a painter but a hunter,” stalking fugitive effects of light and air. “He went along followed by children who carried his canvases all depicting the same subject at different hours of the day and with different effects. He would take them up in turn, then put them down again, depending upon the changes in the sky.”

Anchoring the artist during these distant retreats was a momentous and final move. In April 1883, Monet, his future wife Alice Hoschedé, now separated from her husband, and their combined families moved downriver to a leased home in Giverny. About forty miles northwest of Paris, the small village was located on one of the branches of the Seine in Monet’s cherished Normandy. There he found a self-contained environment that met all of his personal and artistic needs: a farmhouse, a big garden, a stream bordered by willows, water meadows, tall poplars, and a short distance away, the Seine itself. His settling in and garden planting was interrupted by the death of the maestro of avant-garde artists, Edouard Manet. Monet returned to the funeral in Paris, where he joined Fantin-Latour as one of the pallbearers.

During the 1880s, Monet finally rose to fame. Whether or not his painting campaigns were calculated to make him the foremost French landscape painter by depicting its most elevated vistas (or its chic tourist spots), they coincided with the decade when Monet made the transition from revolutionary to master. During this period, he learned how to manipulate the art market and significant sales finally occurred. Not only were Monet’s works bought by Durand-Ruel, who had recovered from the recession, but by the end of the decade two other dealers were trading the artist’s paintings at record-breaking prices.
With his eye on the market, he broke ranks with the Impressionists (following the precedent of Renoir) in 1880, opting to show one final time at the Salon. That same year, he received his first one-man show at the galleries of La Vie Moderne, an illustrated arts and society magazine. This foreshadowed his solo exhibit with Durand-Ruel in 1883 and his most successful retrospective to date at Galerie Georges Petit in 1889. He would also be a prime participant, coupled with the other master, sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), in dealer-sponsored, two-man shows held in Paris, throughout Europe, and even across the Atlantic, in New York. His inclusion in the section devoted to one hundred years of French painting at what was billed as the greatest world’s fair to date — the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, symbolized by its great metal tower by Gustave Eiffel (1832-1923) — signified, at long last, that Monet was finally considered a bona fide member of the French national school.

Remaining Impressionist Exhibitions

As for the trailblazing group of various artists who had set the stage for this kind of success — who had fought against official sanctions to allow artists to exhibit, be reviewed, and sell independently — the Impressionists would hold four remaining group shows during the 1880s. Although they had banded together to achieve their objective (the state relinquished control of the Salon in 1881) — although they had bailed each other out of poverty; had bought each others’ works; had lived, worked, and travelled together; would even attend each other’s funerals — the bickering among the artists hardly diminished with the passage of time. Even the monthly dinners at Café Riche that Monet proposed mid-decade to Pissarro and Renoir for their Impressionist colleagues could not hold the artists together. Accusing the group of becoming “a dull schoolroom whose doors are open to any dauber,” Monet refused involvement in the fifth and sixth shows, held in 1880 and 1881 respectively. As the show’s initiator and one of its strongest supporters, this was quite a loss. Even the facilitator Caillebotte was worn down. “I ask you,” he wrote in one of many such letters to Pissarro, “isn’t it our duty to support each other and to forgive each other’s weaknesses rather than tear ourselves down?... All of this depresses me deeply.” He did not exhibit in 1881 either. With such key
figures gone, including Renoir and Cézanne, neither show had great success.

But in the seventh Impressionist exhibition of 1882, Monet, as well as Renoir and Caillebotte, returned to the fold. Monet displayed thirty-five works, ranging from scenes of Vétheuil and still lifes to his more recent seascapes of the Normandy coast. With his use of forceful strokes to capture waves pounding against cliff walls, or of delicate touches to seize the curve of grasses blowing in the breeze, Monet was called by one critic “one of the true contemporary poets of the things of nature.” Reflecting the trend in Monet’s work, landscape replaced contemporary urban subjects as the dominant exhibition theme. Although the group had dwindled to nine participants, including Morisot, Sisley, Gauguin, and of course Pissarro, the show was perhaps the most coherent and unified of them all. As one reviewer wrote: “The holy battalion is reduced to its simplest expression.”

The 1882 exhibition would be Monet’s last participation with the group he pioneered. Renoir, Caillebotte, and Sisley would also exhibit no more. By the time the Impressionists mounted their eighth and final exhibition in 1886, the fractious innovators had all but disbanded. Like the retreat from urban-based subjects, many of the artists themselves had also fled the city of Paris. Monet was based in Giverny. Cézanne had returned to his childhood home of Aix-en-Provence in southern France. Both Caillebotte and Pissarro had homes outside the city. Supplanting the radical works that labelled the group at the first show was an equally revolutionary painting that stunned critics and public alike at the eighth and final Impressionist exhibition, held in 1886.

*) Georges Seurat (1859-1891)

“Bedlam,” “scandal,” and “hilarity” were among the epithets hurled at the unveiling of what is now considered Georges Seurat’s greatest work, and one of the most remarkable paintings of the nineteenth century, A Sunday on La Grande Jatte — 1884, 1884-1886 [see Slide 13]. Although Seurat used Monet’s innovation of working out-of-doors on a figure painting which captured a typically Impressionist scene — Parisians enjoying their day off in a favorite urban park — the painting
signalled, to a degree, the end of the movement that Monet’s
*Impression: Sunrise* had christened. To tackle the issues of color, light,
and form, Seurat based his technique on the most up-to-date scientific
treatises in color optics and visual perception. But in his meticulous
application of these theories in paint, he differentiated his art from the
Impressionists’ more spontaneous and intuitive method, an approach
they themselves likened to painting “as the bird sings.” The result —
notable for the rigorous precision of Seurat’s tiny brushstrokes, all dots
and dashes, as well as for its size (it is over ten feet long) — was what
cau sed the uproar.

In the spring of 1884, Seurat began visiting La Grande Jatte, whose
name translates as “the big platter,” to make the first of his extensive
studies for the painting. The island in the Seine was a popular spot for
boating and leisure. Before beginning a painting, Seurat made numer-
ous preliminary drawings and oil sketches, the latter often painted on
the tops of his father’s discarded cigar boxes. He worked on this canvas
until spring 1885, covering its surface with small horizontal brush-
strokes of *complementary colors.* He turned to other projects until
October 1885, when he resumed work. It was during this second cam-
paign that he added a mass of *petit points,* or tiny dots, of complemen-
tary colors that, through blending in the viewers’ eyes, form a single,
and Seurat believed, more brilliantly luminous hue. To add even more
intensity, Seurat later restretched the canvas and added a border of
painted dots, which he enclosed in the pure white frame favored by so
many of the Impressionists. The painting is exhibited at the museum
today in a replica of this frame.

Subsequently called “pointillism” or “divisionism” by art critics,
Seurat’s technique of creating a tapestry-like surface of small regular-
ized dots and brushstrokes gives the painting its radiant shimmer.
Labeling the artist a “radical reformer,” one reviewer described Seurat’s
technique: “He breaks up the prism with implacable logic, and intro-
duces *petit point* needlework to his painting,” resulting in “a vibration
of light, a richness of color, [and] a sweet and poetic harmony.” Seurat
himself hoped this technique, with its sense of melodic order, would
 evoke permanence.

Some fifty figures fill the surface of *La Grande Jatte.* Like Caillebotte’s
people, they seem glued to positions that have been carefully plotted. Silent and enigmatic, predominantly profiled, they are frozen like statues. Who are they? There are single women, mothers and children, couples out for a stroll. A rower rests on the grass, as does a top-hatted dandy and woman with her embroidery. By the river's edge, two cadets snap to attention, perhaps at the sound of a French horn-player's refrain. In front of them, as solid as a boulder, is the back of a nurse with her elderly, umbrellaed charge. Only the painting's centerpiece, a white-frocked child, faces us directly. With La Grande Jatte, Seurat has fixed in our minds forever a vision of the newly emerged middle-class in Paris in the 1880s.

Seurat's painting career was brief. He was only fourteen when the Impressionists held their first group show and was seventeen when Caillebotte's Rainy Day, whose enigmatic poetry strangely prefigures La Grande Jatte, was exhibited. He was twenty-four when he began initial studies for this monumental painting. He died of diphtheria at the age of thirty-one. By then, the world's tallest structure — the Eiffel Tower — had been built in conjunction with the glorious 1889 Exposition Universelle. Seurat, in fact, dashed out to paint the over 980-foot metal spire even before its completion. Just as this triumph of modern engineering was the product of the most advanced industrial techniques, so too did Seurat's work reflect the latest research in color and optics. From Correggio's sublime and smooth depiction of the past, we now have Seurat's surface of dots which marked, in a sense, the culmination of the Impressionists' use of separate brushstrokes to celebrate the present.
V. POST-IMPRESSIONISM: A MOVEMENT ON TO SOMETHING NEW

The last group show of 1886 was more a debut of a new generation of artists than an endorsement of original Impressionist techniques. Works like Seurat's scientifically derived technique to order the world of Parisian leisure presaged further exploration and depiction of light and space that would later be dubbed by English critic Roger Fry (1866-1934) "Post-Impressionism," meaning simply a movement on to something new. "Oh, let's just call them Post-Impressionists," Fry had reputedly said, at a loss at what to call a large retrospective of French artists in 1910. "At any rate, they came after the Impressionists."

Largely solitary, no longer Paris-based, this generation of artists had little in common, besides their label, except the fact that they derived from Impressionism and wanted to construct upon its foundation new visual orders based upon private visions. They pushed beyond their predecessors' emphasis on the appearance of nature — the detached perception of a moment of objective reality, that glimpse of an eye — to emphasize instead a timeless exploration of feelings, grounded in personal experience. In stressing the expressive over the representational function of art, through color, line, and composition, these artists laid the foundation for modern art.

Their isolation from one another did not mean that they were unaware of each other's varied, often contradictory, approaches. The period between the last group show in 1886 and World War I (1914-1918) saw a burst of artistic gatherings and small exhibitions. Writing about art by artists, as well as by others, flourished. A leading proponent of the new Post-Impressionist aesthetic was, in fact, an original Impressionist, one who had frequented Café Guerbois, had even studied at one of Monet's old haunts, the Académie Suisse: Paul Cézanne.
Paul Cézanne (1839-1906)

Maligned as a minor painter during his two Impressionist exhibitions of 1874 and 1877 but today hailed as one of the fathers of modern art, Cézanne only developed his mature style after he withdrew in the 1880s to his family estate in Aix-en-Provence, near the Mediterranean coast. He spent the rest of his life there, painting in isolation and struggling, in his words, “to make of Impressionism something solid and durable, like the art of museums.” (He was a lifelong devotee of the Old Masters.) His quest was for a basic harmony of color and form, in which he captured the underlying structure and composition of nature. His creative process was a slow, difficult, and uncertain ordeal. It often took him years to complete a work, as exemplified in the dating of The Bay of Marseilles, Seen from L’Estaque, 1886-90 [see Slide 14].

In a letter to his friend and mentor Pissarro, Cézanne compared the view of the sea from L’Estaque to a playing card. He was fascinated by the color and configuration of the buildings, with their red tile roofs and tall chimneys, bordering the bay and set against coastal mountains. L’Estaque was a small village about eighteen miles from Cézanne’s home. The city of Marseilles is visible in the painting’s background, reduced to a few rectangular patches with a jetty jutting out into the bay. The artist divided the canvas into four sections: architecture, water, mountain, and sky. Although these four elements are seen again and again in Impressionist paintings, Cézanne's work is light years away from those of his early colleagues. Their purpose was to record the transient effects of weather and light; Cézanne sought to render the core geometry of nature’s forms. As he instructed a younger painter: “Treat nature” — which he saw as more “depth than surface” — “through the cylinder, the sphere, the cone.”

To do this, Cézanne fills the canvas with shapes defined by bold, contrasting colors and a complex grid of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines. Like Seurat, he wanted to achieve permanence of form through his technique. But instead of Seurat’s tip of the brush to create shimmering dots and dashes, Cézanne uses the side of his brush, as if each stroke were a building block. The brush slides from one facet to another, building up the space with shapes that seem both two- and three-dimensional. Not locked tightly in place yet almost sculptural in their
solidity, his forms seem continually to touch and shift, creating a sense of volume and space that strengthens the composition and brings it to life. So tangible are the artist’s shapes that we almost want to feel our way around the landscape. The resulting image, like a playing card, is a highly compact, dynamic pattern of water, sky, land, and village that at once refers back to traditionally structured landscape paintings and forward to the innovations of Cubism.

_Bay of Marseilles_ is one of more than a dozen such vistas that Cézanne created during the 1880s, before he stopped working at l’Estaque. Like many other Post-Impressionist artists, Cézanne found the advances of technology polluting. “I remember perfectly well … the once so picturesque banks of l’Estaque,” he wrote in a letter to his goddaughter in 1902. “Unfortunately what we call progress is nothing but the invasion of bipeds who do not rest until they have transformed everything into hideous quais with gas lamps — and, what is still worse, with electric illumination. What times we live in!” The grandeur and resolution of the Art Institute’s painting suggests that it may have been his final view of this once-favored motif.

_Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890)_

Vincent van Gogh also fled Paris for the south of France, but his route was more circuitous, his career far briefer than that of Cézanne. The Dutch artist first arrived in Paris to join his beloved art dealer brother, Theo (1857-1891), the same year that Seurat jolted the art world in the last Impressionist show of 1886. The highly responsive van Gogh was transformed by these latest art trends and also by Japanese prints, which he discovered in Paris. He proceeded to lighten his formerly somber palette, traded in rural for urban and suburban subjects, and developed his version of Seurat’s pointillist technique. What to Seurat was a method based on the cool objectivity of science, however, became in van Gogh’s hands an intense emotional language. In 1888, van Gogh moved to Arles, not far from Cézanne’s home in Aix, in part because he linked southern France with his vision of the idealized life depicted in Japanese prints. “I thought that to observe nature under a clearer sky would give me a better idea of the way the Japanese feel and draw,” he said. During his fifteen months in Arles, from February 1888 to May
1889, he created a prodigious body of work — some two hundred landscapes, still lifes, portraits, and interiors, including *Bedroom at Arles*.

Van Gogh was so fond of this image that he painted three versions. He did the first in October 1888, just days before Gauguin’s visit (Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, Amsterdam). In May 1889, he voluntarily checked into an asylum at nearby Saint-Rémy after suffering a series of emotional breakdowns. Although he wrote his sister that he would only be there three months, he remained in the hospital for a year. Recreated completely from memory, the Art Institute version of this painting was done during this painful period in September 1889, when he was trying to recapture happier occasions [see Slide 15]. At the same time, he also painted a smaller copy, now in the Musée d’Orsay, Paris, for his mother and two sisters.

“Looking at the picture ought to rest the brain, or rather the imagination,” he wrote to Theo before starting the painting. The vivid palette, dramatic perspective, and dynamic brushwork that became a hallmark of his style hardly express, however, the “absolute restfulness” of which van Gogh spoke. Pictures tilt off the wall; a blood-red quilt covers the looming bed; like a turbulent sea, the multi-hued floor seems to pitch forward and reel. Each object seems palpable, as solid as sculpture, though modeled in paint. Freed from literal representation, color becomes instead an expressive device. As van Gogh described the picture to his brother: “It’s just simply my bedroom, only here color is to do everything.” Although the room is empty, the sun-drenched space seems ready to burst with an overwhelming sense of presence, a passionate and agitated vitality.

The work was part of a decorating scheme for van Gogh’s new house in Arles, which he dubbed “The Studio of the South,” with the hope that friends and artists would join him there. With the exception of a turbulent, two-month visit by Paul Gauguin, however, the artist colony never materialized. Van Gogh longed for the sense of domesticity and belonging that a home represents and, in a sense, his bedroom scene embodied that quest. The image is so personal, so revealing, that it seems almost a self-portrait. In it, van Gogh paints the items he likes and knows best: portraits of friends; a landscape; painted pine wood furniture; a washbasin, some clothes hung behind the bed.
In May 1890, after a three-day visit to see Theo in Paris, van Gogh went to a site long familiar to many Impressionists and Post-Impressionists: Auvers, north of Paris. His combination of suffering and creativity was so deep that even after despair caused him to shoot himself in July, he managed to paint three more canvases that day before collapsing. He died two days later at the age of thirty-seven.

Monet’s Serial Painting

In 1890, Monet bought the property at Giverny, his leased home since 1883. He would live there for the remainder of his life. He then began extensive improvements that eventually included expansion of the garden; the purchase of more land to make his famous water lily pond; and the construction of increasingly bigger studios to house ever larger canvases. As he retreated further and further behind the boundaries of his estate, the world began to come to him. His colleagues Cézanne, sculptor Auguste Rodin, and American painter John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) paid visits. Collectors arrived to pay homage, as did his future biographer Gustave Geffroy (1855-1926), critic (and gardener) Octave Mirbeau (1848-1917), and the prominent statesman and journalist who would twice become premier of France, Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929). Like his predecessor Courbet, who planned to create an appropriate landscape around Ornans so that he would never have to leave home to paint, Monet would eventually find his major images within his own domain.

Monet was now entering his fifties. Securely anchored at Giverny, surrounded by his children and stepchildren, and finally financially secure, he continued a trend begun during the 1880s in his Creuse Valley campaigns. Like Courbet, who had repeatedly examined a single Normandy beach scene more than a decade before, Monet had painted ten views of the same spot: a gush in the ancient and craggy hills formed by a confluence of two rivers. He had then carried the Creuse Valley works back to the Giverny studio to recapture what he called “their purity of accent,” unifying them into a larger creation, a grander decorating scheme. Five of the Creuse vistas had been hung together in Monet’s triumphant retrospective at Galerie Georges Petit in 1889. Seen together, these paintings enabled the viewer to perceive change: to see the effects
of weather and light on an identical subject, one that was reduced to its bare essentials — to witness shifts and variations and to discover what stayed the same. Now he looked to his own immediate environment and found a subject for repeated scrutiny — wheatstacks.

Wheatstacks, 1890-91

Monet first started using wheatstacks as a subject in 1888. Enormous stacks of harvested grain, which rose fifteen to twenty feet tall — products of a neighbor's fields — stood just outside his farmhouse door at Giverny. In the following year, he completed the first Wheatstacks suite, and he again traveled to the Creuse Valley to paint. He also waged a year-long battle organizing a subscription of artists, writers, and friends to purchase Manet's controversial Olympia for ultimate placement in the Louvre, thus fixing the forerunner of Impressionism firmly inside the national museum [see Figure 6]. Monet resumed work on a wheatstack series, probably at very end of summer 1890, when farmers would have again begun cutting the fields of wheat and oats to build new imposing mounds that would stand for months before being threshed [see Slides 16 and 17].

Monet painted at least twenty-five wheatstack canvases through the fading of fall into the snows of winter 1891. He painted both in the field, where he worked at several easels simultaneously, often carried by a trailing band of children, and in the studio, where he refined pictorial harmonies. It was an arduous undertaking. The pioneer of the instant glance, the quick look, came to realize that he needed to work much more slowly, more deliberately, in order to capture the moment. As he wrote to Gustave Geffroy in October 1890: “I have become so slow in my work that I am exasperated, but the further I go, the more I see that one has to work a lot in order to express what I am looking for: ‘instantaneity,’ especially the atmosphere, the same light diffused everywhere, and more than ever I am disgusted by easy things that come at once.”

In May 1891, Monet hung fifteen of the wheatstack canvases next to each other in one small room in the Galerie Durand-Ruel. Like his Creuse Valley views of the same subject, Monet considered the wheatstack pictures part of a collective ensemble, at once dependent and
independent. The exhibition thus firmly inaugurated to the public
Monet’s now renowned method of working in series, in which he repeat-
edly examined a particular motif at different times and under different
atmospheric conditions. The show was an unprecedented critical and
financial success, with paintings sold both in multiples and singly.
According to Geffroy’s review, Monet had understood “the possibility of
embracing the poetry of the universe in the small space of a field.”
Less than two decades before, Monet, along with his avant-garde com-
patriots, had been an outcast. Now critics proclaimed him “among the
greatest artists who painted the landscape of France.”

The *Wheatstacks* marked a breakthrough in Monet’s career as well as in
the history of French art. They enabled him to combine the basic doc-
trine of Impressionism — capturing instantaneous moments in nature’s
temporal cycle — with the Post-Impressionist’s prolonged and personal
examination of the act of perceiving. The series did not function as an
accurate record of sequence of time nor as a row of stacks of wheat.
Instead, as Monet told Geffroy, he was “more and more driven with the
need to render *ce que j’épreuve*” — what he felt or experienced as he
encountered the world of nature. And he came to experience nature dif-
ferently. “For me, landscape hardly exists at all as landscape, because
its appearance is constantly changing,” he said; “but it lives by virtue
of its surroundings — the air and light — which vary continually.” To
paint the subject only once would deny this constant variation over
time. Thus what Monet so slowly pursued was not the objective fact of
these stacks of grain, as defined by light and air, but how his eye per-
ceived them over the passage of time. The landscape served, then, as a
point of departure, a vehicle for artistic self-expression. In this way,
Monet’s series are testimony to one of the basic tenets of modern art:
the notion that the artist can reconstruct nature according to the formal
and expressive potential of the image itself.

The two Art Institute canvases shown in the slides, which were among
the original fifteen on view in 1891, share a simple basic composition:
one or two solitary stacks surrounded by parallel bands of field, hills,
and sky. Their thatched shape echoes the roofs of the houses and barns
behind them. Monet’s painstaking quest to capture “instantaneity” suc-
cedes: the “envelope of light” surrounding the stacks illuminates them,
throwing into relief the solidity of their shape. Crisp and clear in winter,
soft and thick in summer, this light differentiates each view, as does the relationship between stack and setting. In the late summer views, and in nearly all of the autumn views as well, the pointed tops of the stacks often burst through the horizon up to the sky. But in most of the winter views, which constitute the core of the series, the long-lasting wheat-stack seems wrapped by bands of hill and field, as if bedded down for the season.

In contrast to the monumental simplicity of the series’ composition and the shape of the stacks are Monet’s complex brushwork and hues. A Dutch critic who saw the noteworthy Durand-Ruel exhibition described them. At first disoriented, he wanted to escape “these gaudy colors, these zigzag lines, blues, yellows, greens, reds, browns dancing a crazy sarraband on the canvas.” Then he became “irresistibly compelled by this medley of colors to recreate the artist’s vision.” As in Normandy Train, the least material of substances — air and light — are given the most solidity, the most physicality, with coat upon coat of scumbled paint. These magical and rich tissues of color correspond to season. The prismatic hues of the summer stacks vibrate and shift, enlivening the simple mounds of grain from canvas to canvas. But in winter, the palette is reduced, frozen and dormant. As shown in the slides, colors range (in the words of the Dutch critic) “from the scarlet purple of summer to the chilly grey of a winter evening’s dying glow.”

A distinctly French subject, the wheatstack was for Monet a resonant symbol for sustenance and survival. Complicated structures built according to specific guidelines, the stack often represented a farmer’s major wealth, a village’s most important commodity, and proof of the productivity of the French countryside. After all, what could be a better reminder than the muffin-shaped stacks that France was the breadbasket of Europe? Built by man but created by nature, the stacks were a familiar and reassuring sight — and a typically Post-Impressionist subject, far away from the commotion of the modern city. The Art Institute has the largest group of paintings from Monet’s Wheatstack series in the world; five of the six owned by the museum were among the original canvases on view at Durand-Ruel in 1891.
Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)

Of all of the Post-Impressionists, Paul Gauguin ultimately travelled the furthest away from Paris, the city that originally spawned so much Impressionist art. Restless and nomadic, the stockbroker-turned-painter had long yearned for the exotic, the primitive, for what he believed were more spiritually pure cultures than that of his native France. After exhibiting in the last five Impressionist exhibitions, he abandoned his family and bourgeois life in 1886 for the simpler settings of the French regions of Brittany and Provence, the site of his brief and tumultuous visit with van Gogh. He also traveled to the tropical West Indian island of Martinique, between North and South America.

In 1891, he finally ended up on the opposite side of the world from Paris, replacing its fast, ongoing moment with the infinite, almost indolent, ease of the French colony of Tahiti. His stated goal upon his departure was to make “a simple, very simple art... to immerse myself in virgin nature, see no one but savages, live their life, with no other thought in mind but to render, the way a child would, the concepts formed in my brain, and to do this with nothing but the primitive means of art, the only means that are good and true.” He remained in Tahiti until 1893, when he returned to France, his health and spirits broken, his finances in disarray. Tahiti was not the paradise he had expected. Nonetheless, his output of over sixty paintings, remarkably innovative sculptures, and copious drawings, watercolors, and prints belies his disillusionment — as does his return to Tahiti in 1895. He lived in the South Sea islands for the remainder of his life.

*Ancestors of Tehamana*, 1893, was done during Gauguin’s first stay in Tahiti, shortly before his two-year trip back to France [see Slide 18]. It represents a formal portrait of his young Tahitian mistress Tehamana and was perhaps painted as a farewell. Tehamana was Gauguin’s favorite model, an uninhibited Tahitian Eve who, for the artist, was the ideal antidote to the western depiction of women as seen in, for example, Seurat’s corseted and bustled figures. While Tehamana faces us, Seurat’s profiled figures, for the most part, look away. In the Art Institute painting, she is elaborately dressed in a European-style missionary dress, with flowers adorning her hair. As Gauguin’s main source for information on Polynesian mythology, she is shown seated in front
of a mysterious painted background similar to a frieze on the wall of an ancient palace or temple. The symbols on the upper band of the frieze resemble the only surviving text, as yet undeciphered, from ancient Polynesian culture. Two ripe mangoes — perhaps an offering, or tokens of fertility — rest beside Tehamana's hip. She points a fan, an emblem of beauty, toward the similarly frontal figure of a goddess in the frieze, who also wears a red flower in her hair. The goddess represents the ancient deity Hina from whom all Tahitians believed they were descended. The dress, fan, flowers, fruit, and even the way Tehamana glances to her right suggest not only the strong, enigmatic bond between the woman and the goddess, but also the connections between East and West, present and past, the corporeal and the spiritual, the living and the dead.

To arrive at his “simple, very simple art,” Gauguin streamlines, almost abstracts, line and form and creates innovative and unusual color harmonies. He uses earth tones to model Tehamana, then cloaks her in the bold blue-and-white stripes of Western garb. His line is rhythmic and unadorned. Large, disk-like shapes, one incomplete, depict the fruit. Space is also compressed: the bronzed planes of Tehamana's face are flattened, as is her figure. She seems almost sandwiched against the two-dimensional wall decoration, filled with emblems of her impenetrable past. Alluding to the complexity of this past, the title refers to the Tahitian custom of multiple godparents and, by implication, the complicated origins of the culture as a whole.

Like Monet in his later years, Gauguin painted slowly and deliberately, often working and reworking his composition until he felt he had achieved a pictorial and symbolic harmony. Just as this work incorporates Gauguin's interpretation of the forms, myths, and symbols of Tahitian culture, so does his larger oeuvre contain his adaptations of the art forms of myriad western and non-western artistic civilizations. In this way, he explored in works such as Ancestors of Tehamana — with its elusive meaning, evocative color, and simplification of line and shape — the mysteries, superstitions, and emotions that the artist believed lay beneath all appearances. In introducing the arts of traditional societies into western modes of representation, Gauguin played a seminal role in early twentieth-century art.
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901)

Although Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec did not retreat from Paris like many of the other Post-Impressionists, he celebrated the wrong part of the city, shedding light on a slice of life as yet largely unexposed: the demi-monde. His subjects were as far removed from Correggio's holy images as could be. Night life, cabarets, performers and clients, people on the edge of respectable society provided Toulouse-Lautrec his adventure, his escape. From one of the oldest noble families in France, he suffered from a congenital disease that during adolescence left his growth stunted, his figure misshapen. As a result, he spent much of his childhood drawing and at age seventeen, studied briefly in the ateliers of academic masters in Paris. One of his studio companions, in fact, was van Gogh.

Parisian night life at the turn of the century is memorialized in *At the Moulin Rouge*, 1893-95 [see Slide 19]. A resident since the mid-1880s of Montmartre, one of the era's major entertainment centers, Toulouse-Lautrec depicts in his masterpiece one of the district's most famous cabarets. Advertising a "Ball every evening, Wednesday and Saturday night festivities. Diverse attractions. High-life rendezvous," Moulin Rouge opened in 1889 to attract the huge crowds that gathered to celebrate the Exposition Universelle and the completion of the Eiffel Tower that same year. A grand success, the cabaret's clientele included the future King Edward VII of England (1841-1910).

Toulouse-Lautrec was a regular patron of the Moulin Rouge. For the painting, he turns his acute powers of observation on the club's other habitués — his friends and acquaintances. The flaming red-orange hair of the entertainer Jane Avril is the focal point of the central seated group; gathered around her are another female performer, a photographer, a vineyard proprietor, and a poet. Primping in front of the rear greenish mirror, her back to us, is the dancer La Goulue, whose name translates "The Glutton." Wearing his customary bowler hat, the stunted figure of the aristocratic artist appears, as it often did in life, side-by-side with his devoted cousin, Dr. Tapié de Céleyran. But it is the frozen, acid-green face of the dancer May Milton that dominates the canvas and haunts the action. A strange black chapeau, with insect-like antennae, rests atop her head. In the painting, she seems to have just
left the table; in reality, she was apparently ostracized from the group in 1895.

Toulouse-Lautrec renders this Parisian netherworld with hallmarks of his technique: flowing Art Nouveau lines and flat planes of strident color, both reminiscent of Japanese prints. His dramatic palette is strikingly different from that of the Impressionists. In *At the Moulin Rouge*, there is neither sun nor sky nor evidence of foliage, flowers, or land. Instead it is nighttime; the room is smoke-filled and dusky. The only green is from reflected stagelights — in the rear mirror, on the collar of the bearded gentleman seated on the left, on the rice powder makeup of May Milton’s masklike face. Because of the artist’s linear color style, in which he seems to almost draw with a brush, we can take that green and follow it around the compositionally daring picture. Serving as a vehicle not of the Impressionists’ sunlight, but of the artificial light of the demi-monde, color is used more than ever to express Toulouse-Lautrec’s personal vision and emotions. These rhythmic lines and broad planes of color are even more pronounced in the artist’s celebrated posters, drawings, and prints.

*At the Moulin Rouge* also displays Toulouse-Lautrec’s characteristically unorthodox viewpoints and dramatic cropping, again reflective of Japanese prints. We seem just to have entered this swirling nocturnal den and paused for a moment before the plunging diagonal of the banister. Heading our way is the garish apparition of May Milton, cropped by the painting’s edge. In fact, it appears that the figure of the controversial Milton was once completely severed from the composition. A detail that has caused continued debate, the painting itself is comprised of two joined parts. According to some scholars, the artist added an L-shaped panel to the lower and right edges of a smaller canvas either before he began his composition or during its execution. Others have proposed that the canvas was sectioned after the artist’s death at thirty-seven (rumored by some to be from the effects of alcoholism), presumably by the dealer, to make the composition less radical and more saleable. The painting was restored sometime before 1924 for a special exhibition of Toulouse-Lautrec’s work at the Art Institute,
Monet's Series of the 1890s

After the landmark Durand-Ruel exhibition of wheatstacks in 1891, Monet worked almost exclusively in series. That year, using a variation of the floating boat-studio from his Argenteuil days [see Figure 10], he began twenty-four elegant and decorative canvases of the poplars that lined the banks of the Epte River near Giverny. The revered Gothic facade of Rouen Cathedral in Monet's native Normandy was the subject of thirty canvases done from 1892 through 1894. Using the floating studio again, Monet captured another national treasure and a lifelong subject, the Seine River, with its moist silence at dawn. "I have painted the Seine all my life, at all hours of the day, and at every season," he said. "I have never been bored with it: to me, it is always different."

Monet turned sixty as the twentieth century dawned. His fame had grown so much that he was now declared the "great national painter." As for the style that he helped establish — Impressionism — he acknowledged in 1900 that "today nearly everyone appreciates us to some degree." His early colleagues had achieved a certain amount of critical and financial success as well. But Monet had moved on. His advocacy of seriality again broke artistic frontiers.

From 1899 through 1903, Monet began his views of the fog-shrouded Thames River, with its great stone bridges and Houses of Parliament. "In London," he exclaimed, "what I love, above all, is the fog." He first painted from windows in a London hotel and hospital, then later from memory back in Giverny. Galerie Durand-Ruel exhibited the majority of Monet's series, shortly after their completion, although Galerie Georges Petit featured, among other related works, the artist's views of the Seine in a major one-man show in 1898. Also in 1907, with the help of Monet's friend Clemenceau who had just been elected premier of France, the French state purchased one of the cathedral facades for the collection of modern art at the Luxembourg Museum.

Initially Monet punctuated these endeavors with other painting campaigns: to Sandviken in Norway in 1895 and to his past sites on the Normandy coast in 1896 and 1897. In 1901, he travelled in his newly purchased automobile with Alice Hoschedé, whom he had married (with Caillebotte among the witnesses) in 1892, to their former home in
Vétheuil. There he used his new perceptions about atmosphere and light to expand into series an old subject, the church as seen from across the misty river. And in 1908, when he was facing the first of what would be continual signs of failing eyesight due to cataracts, he took a working trip to the city of light, water, and reflections — Venice — which resulted in the 1912 exhibition of twenty-nine of these canvases at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune.

Monet's Water-Lily Gardens

Monet is but an eye, yet what an eye.

—Paul Cézanne

Ultimately Monet's subjects lay within his own estate. Beginning in the 1890s, the artist largely replaced his various other subjects with a single, timeless motif: his beloved water-lily gardens. Monet had continually expanded and refined his gardens over the years. He even diverted the small river Ru that ran alongside his property so that it nearly tripled the size of his rare aquatic plant pool. The garden featured a water garden and smaller pond, spanned by a Japanese footbridge, built to his design. Paths wound around the ideal, self-created, water-lily world so that one could view the beauty of what was to Monet an infinite source of inspiration. "It took me some time to understand my water lilies," Monet later recalled. "I had planted them for the pleasure of it... And then all of a sudden I had the revelation of how enchanting my pond was. I took up my palette. Since then I've hardly had any other subject."

Indeed, it was as if what Geoffroy called "the luminous abyss of the water-lily pond" provided the artist with a microcosm of his entire creative universe — of such cherished past subjects as water, sky, flowers, and leaves. By focusing solely on the water-lily gardens, as Monet himself stated, he could "capture better the life of atmosphere and light, which is the very essence of painting, in its changing and fugitive play... One instant, one aspect of nature says it all."

These culminating masterpieces are comprised of a number of successive campaigns. In the first series, executed in 1899, Monet concentrat-
ed on the Japanese footbridge. Shown in 1900 at Galerie Durand-Ruel, this rather representational group featured the pond in context with its water lilies, bridge, and trees, all neatly divided by a fixed horizon.

As years passed, the artist became less and less interested in depicting conventional pictorial space, until he dispensed with the horizon line entirely. Instead, his focal point was the surface of the pond. In the series of paintings begun in 1903, Monet gazed directly down, filling entire canvases with images of water and its cluster of plants floating amidst the reflection of sky and trees. It was a taxing endeavor, resulting in postponed exhibition dates, frequent repainting, and even destruction of some works by Monet in utter frustration. News of the latter even spread across the Atlantic: “Monet, the French artist, wrecks works worth $100,000,” one headline blared.

Finally, in 1909, Galerie Durand-Ruel held an historic exhibition of forty-eight canvases entitled collectively “Water Landscapes.” Of these spatially ambiguous canvases — horizontal surfaces depicted on vertical picture planes — one critic remarked: “There is in these waters the reversed reflections of unseen trees, and then at the end one gets a little dizzy and is surprised not to be walking on the ceiling and seeing upside down the people who, with us, have come to admire these somewhat magical portraits of fragile flowers, treacherous waters, changing reflections, rapid hours, and fleeting instants.” It is no wonder that these paintings have occasionally been hung upside down.

Monet’s Grand Decorations

Like the Franco-Prussian War forty years earlier, that interrupted but did not stop Monet and his avant-garde associates from producing work that would later be labelled Impressionist, the real world intruded upon the haven of Giverny, but the artist persevered. Floods in 1910 threatened to swamp his garden, his primary source of motifs. His eyesight continued to deteriorate, and the following year, his wife Alice Hoschedé died. His friend Clemenceau consoled him by letter: “Remember the old Rembrandt [Old Master Dutch painter] in the Louvre... He clutches his palette, determined to stand fast to the end through terrible trials. That is the model.” The year 1914 brought
additional tragedies with another death, that of his beloved son Jean, and the largest war the world had yet seen — World War I — broke out. At times, its front line was less than forty miles from Giverny.

Yet by the next year, heeding Clemenceau’s past reassurance and present encouragement, Monet began construction on a third studio that would be large enough to accommodate an enterprise that he had in mind since the late 1890s. As he explained to a visitor: “Imagine a circular room in which the dado beneath the moulding is covered with paintings of water, dotted with these plants to the very horizon.” So engrossed was he in his new project that he refused to go to Paris upon the momentous occasion of having fourteen of his works installed in the Louvre in 1914. “Impossible for me to leave just now,” read his letter of regret. “I am hard at work... I have undertaken a large work that thrills me.”

Thus Monet embarked upon the series that would occupy him until his death. Transcending the conventional boundaries of easel painting altogether, these final works merged Monet’s examination of ever-changing moments of light and its reflections into a sustained and continuous whole. As if to encompass the infinity of the sky reflected on the water’s surface, his canvases grew accordingly larger until only a last barnlike structure at Giverny could accommodate them. Called “decorations” by Monet, these immense, unified compositions are comparable to the grand mural cycles by such Renaissance and Baroque masters as Raphael (1483-1520), Tintoretto (1518-94), and Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640).

The water-lily pond and his studio were only minutes apart. Large easels were installed by the water so that Monet could work, perched under an umbrella on a high stool, in the open air. However, the distinction between plein air painting and working in the studio was no longer significant. The consummation of development over a lifetime, these monumental works were the product of both ongoing examination of an engrossing motif and long hours in the studio. There, as if to ward off the effects of war, death, and encroaching blindness, these huge canvases, which were mounted on wheeled chassis, encircled the artist as he worked.
Monet continually said that the task was too much. His eyesight was so poor that he often had to trust the labels on the painting tubes and his memories of light in choosing the right hue. By the time he began *Iris*, c. 1922-26 [see Slide 29], he had begun negotiations with Clemenceau and other state officials for the donation of the huge unfinished waterscapes to the French nation, if a suitable building would be designated for them. Measuring some six-and-one-half feet square, *Iris* is the largest of three variations of a composition that Monet apparently developed (but never used) as a right-hand panel for one of the sectional murals destined to go to the state.

*Iris* captures the lily-dappled surface of the pond, with its continually changing reflections of light, mist, clouds, and sky, as well as its banks of perennial spring irises and sun-streaked leaves. In the work we see the culmination of the motif of reflective water that Monet had begun to examine more than a half-century before in *On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt*, 1868 [see Slide 6]. The radiant spring day, however, is no longer an Impressionist representation of nature — the image an eye sees in an instant, rendered in unmodulated, high-keyed color, with short, rapid brushstrokes. Just as Monet’s canvases increased in size, so too did his brushwork grow more expansive, his palette subtler and more complex. Using larger brushes and more sweeping gestures, skeins of color harmonies — of greens, purples, violets, oranges, yellows, and blues — are tossed, scribbled, and stroked on, one layer on top of another.

What seemed unfinished to the early critics of Impressionism has in the iris painting taken on another dimension. Like the pond itself, the painting has depth: its scumbled surface is so thick, so grainy, that it resembles stucco. It is as if this complex and densely painted image merges with the flora-filled surface of the water. Reality and reflection are blurred. There are no ground planes or horizons; no concepts of near, far, up, or down. Gravity seems not to exist; space is defied. Instead of an Impressionist entity to behold, Monet shows us, in the Post-Impressionist manner, how he experienced the light, the water, these irises, their leaves. *Iris* illustrates what Monet’s late great eye perceived: abstractions in color in which to immerse ourselves.
In 1922, Monet signed an agreement with the government to deliver twenty-two panels in two years. They would be housed at the Orangerie in the Tuileries gardens in two specially created elliptical galleries that were designed to mirror the shape of the pool at Giverny. Not only was the Orangerie in the heart of the modern city that had provided Monet and the Impressionists with so many of their early subjects, but Monet delighted in reminding interviewers that the Orangerie was also opposite the site of the old Salon, which had rejected his work so many years ago.

The following year, 1923, Monet had three cataract operations on his right eye. Deadlines came and went. Growing weaker, he nonetheless continued to work, revise, and work some more. On December 5, 1926, Claude Monet died at the age of eighty-six from respiratory illness, with Clemenceau at his side. He struggled to work until the end. Following Monet’s death, the Grandes Décorations were removed from Giverny and glued to the Orangerie walls, making immutable and enduring the artist’s “one instant, one aspect of nature.” Despite his faded sight, Monet’s depiction of his final motif — the water-lily gardens — is awe-inspiring evidence, ironically, of heeding the advice he gave to a young painter decades before: to see with the freshness of vision of one just granted sight.

The space-defying murals were unveiled May 17, 1927, less than one week before American aviator Charles Lindbergh (1902-74) conquered space in the first solo trans-Atlantic airplane flight. Artist Paul Signac (1863-1935) saw the panels just after their opening. He later wrote: “Monet was able to conduct his orchestra until the end. There is not the slightest discord... Generally, when I leave a painting exhibition, I am glad to see the sky, trees and streets again; when I left the Water Lilies, everything looked dry and flat to me.” He then added, “I will go back often.”
VI. THE LEGACY OF MODERN ART

The movement pioneered by Claude Monet and his fellow rebels transformed the history of art. It was a period of twelve years from the unprecedented initial Impressionist exhibition of 1874 to the final show of 1886, which signalled the end of Impressionism and the movement on to something new. Although twelve years can seem like a long time, when we consider the revolutionary changes in subject, technique, color, and composition that occurred during that period, the interval seems like one of the Impressionist’s brushstrokes — rapid and short, a mere flicker.

With paintings such as Monet’s 1868 On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt, the centuries-old canon of subject matter hierarchy, conveyed in a sublimely seamless academic technique, was smashed in what seemed like a single blow. Likewise liberated was color from being purely symbolic or descriptive; instead it began to be manipulated toward expressive ends. Bennecourt served no spiritual message; its subject was not drawn from history, religion, or mythology. Rather the work was an on-site portrayal of a bourgeois woman doing nothing uplifting or exalted, merely sitting in the French countryside on a radiant spring day. In his attempt to capture this utterly contemporary subject with its rapidly changing weather and light, Monet used a bright and pure palette, swiftly applied, resulting in an unfinished, almost messy look.

From early Impressionist works like Bennecourt, it was only a short, logical step to Georges Seurat’s experimentation with color and composition that resulted in the radical La Grande Jatte — 1884, shown in the final Impressionist exhibition of 1886: a stylized, tapestry-like surface composed entirely of tiny dots and dashes of complementary colors. And then it was but another quick leap to the Post-Impressionists’ more lingering quest to express — using line, color, and composition — a new visual order, based on personal vision. As painter and writer Maurice Denis’s classic dictum about modern art stated: “Remember that a picture, before being a battle horse, a nude woman or a story, is essentially a flat surface covered with colours arranged in a certain pattern.”

Thus the brief glimpse that Monet and his avant-garde colleagues initially advocated to capture the quickly changing world around them began
an upheaval over the course of twelve remarkable years that revolution-
ized the world of art. If, after all, Monet could paint something as
unimportant as a contemporary figure in a landscape, or later, a still
life, then stacks of grain, or finally, just water and its reflections of
light, sky, flowers, and leaves — and adjust his palette and composition
accordingly — an artist could create anything, in any manner, using
any color, or none at all.

“Monet is but an eye,” Cézanne once remarked, “yet what an eye.” The
image that Monet’s remarkable eye beheld — initially an instant glance
in front of him, then a series of quick looks over a period of time, until
the object observed gradually merged with his feelings and experience
and was transformed — was but a starting point for an incomparable
heritage: the legacy of modern art.
PRONUNCIATION GUIDE
TO ARTISTS' NAMES

Gustave Caillebotte: goos-TAHV ky-yuh-BOT

Paul Cézanne: pohl say-ZAHN

Correggio: kor-REJ-eeoh

Gustave Courbet: goos-TAHV koor-BAY

Edgar Degas: ed-GAHR duh-GAH

Henri Fantin-Latour: ahh-REE fahn-TAN—lah-TOOR

Paul Gauguin: pohl goh-GAN

Vincent van Gogh: vin-SANT van goh

Edouard Manet: ayy-DWAHR ma-NAY

Jean François Millet: jahn fran-SWAH mee-YAY

Claude Monet: klohd moh-NAY

Camille Pissarro: ka-MEEK pee-SAH-roh

Pierre Auguste Renoir: pec-YAIR oh-GOOST run-WAHR

Georges Seurat: george suh-RAH

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec: ahh-REE duh too-LOOZ—loh-TREK
Absolute monarchy: Form of government with a single hereditary ruler who reigns for life and whose power is total.

Aristocracy: Noble upper class.

Art Nouveau: Decorative style that spread throughout Europe from around 1880-1910; characterized by flowing lines and ornaments based on plants, leaves, branches, etc.

Atelier: Artist’s workshop or studio.

Avant-garde: Artists, works of art, or movements,— whether visual, literary, or musical — considered to be unconventional or experimental and thus ahead of their time.

Bourgeoisie: Middle class.

Brittany: Region in northwest France, bordering the English Channel.

Bustle: A pad or framework placed beneath a skirt to enhance the back of a woman’s dress.

Cabaret: Nightclub, featuring drinks and entertainment; called café-concert in the late nineteenth-century, when it enjoyed great popularity.

Café Guerbois: Favorite meeting place around the mid-1860s whose regulars included Manet, Degas, Renoir, and Monet and where early discussions of the movement that would be called Impressionism occurred. Located on what is now the Avenue de Clichy.

Canon: Body of rules, standards, principles, and norms.
**Channel coast**: French coastline bordering the English Channel.

**Chapeau**: Hat.

**Chassis**: A wheeled frame on which, in this case, canvases could be mounted and moved around.

**Collage**: A picture or design composed of such elements as colored paper, newsprint, engravings, photographs, pieces of fabric, string, etc. pasted onto a background.

**Color wheel**: Circular diagram divided into six triangles, each designated as one of the three primary colors (red, blue, yellow) and three secondary colors (green, purple, orange).

**Commission**: To order works of art to be made.

**Commune**: The revolutionary government of Paris from March 18 to May 28, 1871.

**Complementary colors**: Colors that have the maximum contrast to one another. They are opposite each other on the color wheel. The complementary of one primary color (red, blue, yellow) is formed by mixing the remaining two primary colors (green is the complementary of red).

**Creuse Valley**: A rugged, sparsely populated area in central France.

**Crop**: To cut off or fragment images.

**Cubism**: Art movement (c. 1908-1920) led by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque that took up Cézanne’s search for the basic geometry, or structure, of nature’s forms in order to represent fully on a flat surface what the artist saw in three dimensions. Cubism first attempted to take apart, or deconstruct, these geometric elements, then aimed to reorganize them in new context, and finally hoped to realize new combinations of these fundamental forms.

**Demi-monde**: People on the fringes of respectable society; literally translated “half-world.”
En plein air: Painting "in the open air," removed from the constraints of the studio.

Genre: Indoor and outdoor scenes of everyday life.

High-keyed palette: Bright spectrum hues seen when light is split by the prism — red, orange, yellow, blue, green, indigo, and violet; excluding black and brown.

Icon: Religious image depicting someone sacred and regarded as sacred in itself; also, an important object or work of art that represents a style, a movement, a period, etc. (La Grande Jatte, an icon of Post-Impressionism).

Impasto: Thick, paste-like, heavy application of paint.

Impresario: One who sponsors, produces, or manages entertainment, such as opera, concerts, art exhibitions, or sports events.

Impressionism: Avant-garde art movement originating in France in the latter part of the nineteenth century regarded as the culmination of Realism that sought to capture, as if seen in an instant, the rapidly changing modern world, as well as the fleeting moods of nature. To do this, Impressionist painters analyzed natural effects and relied on optical blending to seize the impression of light at a given moment.

Industrial Revolution: Social and economic changes which took place roughly from 1750 to 1850 as result of inventions and technological innovations. It marked the transition from an agricultural and commercial society to a modern and industrial one that relied on complex machinery rather than simple tools.

Louvre: Foremost French museum, located in Paris. Originally a royal palace and fortress in the thirteenth century, then rebuilt in the sixteenth century, and opened to the public as a museum following the French revolution of 1789-93. Expanded during the 1980s; a glass pyramid by architect I.M. Pei sits atop the entrance to the new space.
Mediterranean: World's largest inland sea at the South of France, surrounded by Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Motif: Major idea or subject in a composition.

Musée d'Orsay: The Paris museum that now houses the entire range of French nineteenth-century art. Formerly a premier railroad station designed by Victor Laloux, completed in 1900; transformed into a museum in 1983-1986 by architect Cae Aulenti.

Normandy: Region in northwestern France on the Channel coast; childhood home of Monet.

Oeuvre: The total body of work of an artist; from the French word meaning work.

Old Master: Paintings of high quality produced before 1800.

Omnibus: Bus.

Optical blending: Involuntary mixing of juxtaposed colors by the eye and brain. Thus, from a certain distance, dabs of red and yellow pigment produce the sensation of orange.

Opaque: Intransparent; impervious to the passage of light.

Orangerie: Former conservatory (that housed orange trees) built in 1853, along with its twin monument, the Jeu de Paume (1861), under Napoleon III's Second Empire; located in the formal Tuileries gardens. In addition to housing Monet's famed water-lily murals, the Orangerie also displays private collections of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art. Currently undergoing renovation for temporary art exhibitions, the Jeu de Paume formerly contained the famed collection of Impressionist art now at Musée d'Orsay.

Patron: Wealthy or influential supporter of the arts or a single artist.
**Perspective:** Scientific method used by artists since the Renaissance to represent three-dimensional objects on two-dimensional surfaces, so that they seem to appear as in nature.

**Plan of Chicago:** First comprehensive metropolitan plan in the United States developed in 1909 by noted Chicago architect Daniel Burnham with the assistance of architect and planner Edward H. Bennett that provided the vocabulary for Chicago architecture through the 1920s. Inspired by Baron Georges Haussmann’s massive renovation of Paris during France’s Second Empire.

**Post-Impressionism:** Umbrella term (whose literal translation is “After Impressionism”) to describe a new generation of artists who pushed beyond their predecessors’ emphasis on the appearance of nature, stressing instead a more prolonged and personal vision.

**Prefect:** High administrative official, similar to a mayor.

**Premier:** Prime minister.

**Quai:** Quay, wharf, or pier.

**Renaissance:** Revival (literally translated “rebirth” from the French) of learning, literature, art, and architecture that initially emphasized the classical models of Greek and Roman antiquity. Began in Italy in the late thirteenth century, then spread to other parts of Europe; lasted throughout the sixteenth century.

**Republicanism:** The preference for a republican form of government.

**Republican:** Revolutionary class in nineteenth-century France that opposed monarchy or other forms of dictatorial government.

**Salon:** Official exhibition of art of all media sponsored by the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Held, for the most part, annually from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Until challenged by the Impressionists beginning in 1874, the Salon was the main venue for artists to exhibit their work, receive recognition, and make sales.
Sarraband [sic]: Saraband or Sarabande: stately court dance of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Scumble: To apply a thin layer of opaque (intransparent) paint over another layer producing, when seen together, a soft, veiled effect.

Secular: Wordly, as opposed to religious, concerns or subjects.

Seine River: Major river flowing through France and the middle of Paris that was a continual source of inspiration to Monet throughout his life.

Sfumato: Soft blending of light tones into dark resulting in blurred outlines and merging of one form into another.

Staffage: Small figures used to help establish scale and/or perspective or to animate a landscape or architectural composition.

Still life: Depiction of a group of inanimate objects (flowers, game, fruit, etc.) carefully arranged by an artist; from the French term, nature morte, meaning “dead nature.”

Thresh: Separating grain from the stalk where it grows and from the chaff which covers it.

Translucent: Clear, transparent; permitting the passage of light.

Tuileries: Formal gardens where the royal palace stood before it was destroyed by the Commune; connected to the Louvre.

Venue: The place or locale where an event occurs.

World’s Columbian Exposition: World’s fair held in Chicago in 1893 whose chief of works was Daniel Burnham. Comprised of 150 buildings done in a classical Beaux Arts architectural style, the exposition was known as the White City because of the white marble-like material used for building construction.
Impressionism and the Art World

C. 1515
Correggio, *Virgin and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist*

1519
Leonardo da Vinci dies in France

1789-99
French Revolution

1837-38
Turner, *Fishing Boats with Hucksters Bargaining for Fish*

1839
Daguerre announces his process for achieving a unique camera image, the daguerreotype
Chevrel publishes *De la loi du contrast simultané des couleurs (The laws of contrast of color)*

1841
Collapsible paint tube invented

1851
The *Crystal Palace* designed by Joseph Paxton for the Great Exhibition, London
Impressionism and the Art World

Contemporary Events

1853
Remodeling of Paris begins under Napoleon III, planned by Baron Haussmann

1853-54
American Commodore Matthew C. Perry leads expedition to Japan that results in opening of trade between Japan and West

1854
Crimean War

1855-60
Several Parisian shops specialize in goods from Far East, including Japanese woodblock prints

1857
Flaubert’s Madame Bovary published

1859
Darwin’s On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection published

1861-65
American Civil War

1862
Hugo’s Les Misérables published

1864
Geneva Convention
Red Cross founded

1863
Manet, Déjeuner sur l’herbe (Luncheon on the Grass)
Manet, Olympia
Salon des Refusés opens as an exhibition of artists’ work that had been rejected by the official Salon
Impressionism and the Art World

1865
Manet, *The Mocking of Christ*

1866-69
Millet, *In the Auvergne*

1868
Monet, *On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt*

1869
Manet and friends gather at Café Guerbois, Batignolles
Courbet, *The Rock at Hautepierre*

1871
Pissarro, *The Crystal Palace*

1872
Durand-Ruel exhibits
Impressionist works in London
Fantin-Latour, *Around the Table*

Contemporary Events

1865
Wagner’s opera *Tristan und Isolde* performed
Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* published

1866
Nobel invents dynamite in Sweden

1867
Mexican Revolution led by Benito Juarez
Opening of Suez Canal, Egypt
Marx’s *Das Kapital* published
Paris World’s Fair pavilions include works by Courbet and Manet

1869
13,254,000 passengers travel this year through Saint-Lazare train station

1870
Franco-Prussian War
Napoleon III overthrown

1871
Franco-Prussian War ends in total French defeat
French Commune seizes Paris
Proclamation of the Third Republic
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<td>1875</td>
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<td>1875</td>
<td>Bizet’s opera <em>Carmen</em> premieres</td>
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<td>1876</td>
<td>Bell invents the telephone</td>
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<td>1876</td>
<td>Schliemann excavates Mycenae in Greece</td>
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<td>1876</td>
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<td>1877</td>
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<td>1877</td>
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<td>1877</td>
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<td>Fourth Impressionist Exhibition</td>
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<td>Edison invents electric light bulb</td>
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<td>1880</td>
<td>Zola’s <em>Nana</em> published</td>
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1880
Fifth Impressionist Exhibition
Monet, Still Life: Apples and Grapes

1881
Sixth Impressionist Exhibition
State abandons control of Salon to a body of artists called the Société des Artistes Français (Society of French Artists)

1882
Seventh Impressionist Exhibition

1883
Manet dies, age 51

1884
Groupe des Artistes Indépendants (Group of Independent Artists) founded in Paris; proposes to organize exhibitions without jury and rewards

1886
Eighth and last Impressionist Exhibition includes Seurat's A Sunday on La Grande Jatte — 1884

1886-90
Cézanne, The Bay of Marseilles, Seen from L'Estaque

1881
Le Chat Noir (The Black Cat), the first cabaret, opens in Paris

1883
Orient Express train makes its first run from Paris to Constantinople

1886
Statue of Liberty, a gift from France, dedicated in New York City

1888
Eastman perfects the “Kodak” box camera
Impressionism and the Art World

1888
Van Gogh, *Bedroom at Arles*

1890
Van Gogh dies, age 37

1890-91
Monet, *Wheatstack* series

1891
Seurat dies, age 32

1893
Cauguin, *Ancestors of Tehamana*
Monet begins to create water garden at Giverny

1894
Caillebotte dies, age 46

1893-95
Toulouse-Lautrec, *At the Moulin Rouge*

1899
Monet begins his first series of water lilies

Contemporary Events

1889
Eiffel designs the Eiffel Tower for the Paris Universal Exposition

1893
Ford builds his first car in Detroit

World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago

1894
Debussy, *Prelude à l’après-midi d’un faune* first performed

Committee to organize modern Olympic Games founded by Baron de Coubertin

1894-1906
Dreyfus Affair in Paris

1895
Louis & Auguste Lumière give the first projected performance of a moving picture, *Workers Leaving the Factory*

1898
Paris Métro subway system opens
Impressionism and the Art World

1903
Gauguin dies, age 54
Toulouse-Lautrec dies, age 36
Pissarro dies, age 73

1904
Fantin-Latour dies, age 78

1905
At the Salon d’Automne (Autumn Salon) exhibition, a critic calls works of Matisse and others “Les Fauves” (the wild beasts)

1906
Cézanne dies, aged 67

1907
Manet’s Olympia hung at Louvre
Picasso, Les Demoiselles d’Avignon

Contemporary Events

1900
Freud’s The Interpretation of Dreams published

1901
Queen Victoria dies, succeeded by Edward VII

1903
Wright brothers make first sustained flight in a powered aircraft

1905
Einstein formulates theory of relativity
Amundsen discovers the North Pole

1908
First newsreels

1912
Ravel’s Daphnis et Chloé first performed
Impressionism and the Art World

1914
Monet begins monumental water lily panels later installed at the Orangerie, Paris

1917
Degas dies, age 83

1919
Renoir dies, age 78

1922-26
Monet, *Iris*

1926
Monet dies, age 86
Monet’s Water Lily panels installed in L’Orangerie, Paris

Contemporary Events

1913
Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* first performed

1914-18
World War I engulfs France

1918
Worldwide flu epidemic

1923
Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* first performed

1925
John Logie Baird makes first TV transmission
CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

Teachers from a range of disciplines will find multiple classroom uses that link this art to a variety of subject areas. By approaching the art object as both a bridge to other disciplines and as an exciting and instructive subject on its own, this manual is designed to be easily adapted to different grade levels and curricula. The ideas presented here should be altered, supplemented, or refined according to students' ages, interests, attention spans, and abilities.

The following definitions have been included for your reference when using the classroom applications beginning on the following page.

Impressionism
Impressionism is a broad label applied to the work of nineteenth-century artists who sought to capture the modern world in transition, in the momentary shifts in light or movement through color. Most Impressionists painted *en plein air* (outdoors), while others worked in their studios; most concentrated on nature, while others focused on people. Whatever the artist's particular technique or subject, they often rejected conventional subject matter and methods of the art academies of their day. As a group — with their loose brushwork, clear and bright colors, unconventional compositions, and modern subject matter — they transformed the art world forever.

Post-Impressionism
While the Impressionists held certain attitudes in common toward subject matter and artistic technique, the Post-Impressionists differed widely from each other over these matters. They adapted various aspects of Impressionism, but stressed their feelings and personal experiences in their explorations of color and form. Though they did not unite in group exhibitions as had the Impressionists, these artists often came in and out of each other's lives in Paris and other locales throughout France.
Comparing Impressionist Paintings

Most of the diverse group of artists who banded together and became known as Impressionists came of age while Paris was being transformed into the first great modern metropolis. Their remarkable body of work mirrors this change. Compare *The Crystal Palace* [Slide 7], *Paris Street; Rainy Day* [Slide 10], *Arrival of the Normandy Train, Gare Saint-Lazare* [Slide 11], and *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte — 1884* [Slide 13]. How do these four works describe a moment in time in a quickly changing urban world? Consider similarities and differences, noting subject matter, setting, weather, color, composition, brushstrokes, and the role of the viewer.

**Activity**

How does art reflect the time and place from which it comes? Investigate and then chart the significant political events, scientific discoveries, and cultural (literary, musical, artistic) milestones of the half century between 1850 and 1900 [see Chronology]. What do these timelines reveal? How are these events or discoveries reflected in the four works cited above? [For more in-depth information see Crun, *The Timetables of History*, 1991].
Slide 5

_The Mocking of Christ_, 1865

**Edouard Manet** (1832-1883)

Oil on canvas, 74 7/8 x 58 3/8 in. (190.3 x 148.3 cm)

Discussion

Manet has created a powerful image by interpreting a traditional religious subject in a new way. Look carefully at this painting and describe what you see. If you did not know the title of the painting, how could you identify the central figure? What makes Manet’s interpretation of Christ appear so vulnerable and human? Study the other figures’ facial expressions and postures. Do they look like soldiers responsible for tormenting Christ? How does Manet’s overlapping arrangement of figures emphasize the subject of the painting and intensify its message? Why would he have used such a limited range of colors? Explain how his use of lights and darks (high contrast) adds drama to the scene. How do Manet’s brushstrokes capture the tension and immediacy of this moment in time?

Activities

1. The strong visual impact of the scene and psychological portrayal of the figures instantly draw the viewer into the painting. Write a short paragraph from the viewpoint of one of the people depicted here. It should consist of the person’s inner thoughts, not spoken words, although the thoughts expressed may be directed toward one of the other characters in the painting.

Alternative: Write a narrative describing the moment depicted, the ones preceding it, and/or those which follow.

2. Compare Manet’s unconventional religious image to Correggio’s idealized _Virgin and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist_, c.1515 [Slide 1]. Examine the paintings in terms of composition, technique, and message. How does each work represent its own time and place? To what extent are such religious subjects universal or timeless?
3. Although Manet’s work was often based on classical themes, his interpretation was modern, making analogies to contemporary life. These images questioned tradition, undermined values, and offended authority, for which he was censored and criticized. How are the values and traditions of today’s society reflected in the arts? Bring to class and discuss news articles regarding the censorship (or criticism) of artists exploring today’s controversial issues. Create a collage or drawing which challenges or satirizes a widely-accepted traditional American value.

4. Manet completed two notorious and controversial paintings in 1863, *Luncheon on the Grass* and *Olympia* [Figures 5 and 6]. Although these are secular in content, find parallels to *The Mocking of Christ* in terms of technique and interpretation. Gain further insight into Manet’s work by studying his other paintings and making a list of qualities they share. How do these characteristics lead the way to the Impressionist movement which followed? [See pages 29-30.]
Slide 6

*On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt.*, 1868

**Claude Monet** (1840-1926)

Oil on canvas, 32 1/16 x 39 5/8 in. (81.5 x 100.7 cm)

**Discussion**

Monet objectively painted informal scenes from modern life. Look carefully at this painting and describe what you see. What catches your attention first and why? Is anything realistically portrayed? Where do you think the artist was when he painted this scene and what makes you think that? Describe your feelings when you look at this image. Although a figure is included, is she the real subject of this painting? If not, what is?

This canvas can be divided into approximately four equal quadrants. Examine the primary focus of each section and how they all seem to work together, the whole becoming greater than its separate parts. Discuss how Monet was not interested in painting realistic details, but rather in capturing a particular place and time as if seen in a glance. Do you think he has succeeded?

**Activities**

1. Monet has created a landscape where everything — figure, sky, trees, water — has been treated equally. Compare this landscape to those by three very different artists included in this manual. Representing Romanticism, the Barbizon School, and Realism respectively, these include: Turner’s *Fishing Boats with Hucksters Bargaining for Fish* [Slide 2], a dramatic seascape; Millet’s *In the Auvergne* [Slide 3], a simple scene of peasant life; and Courbet’s *The Rock at Hautepierre* [Slide 4], a powerful, unsentimental landscape. Become one of these artists and explain why your painting is the “best” interpretation of nature.

2. Monet’s primary subjects in this painting were leisure time near water and capturing the effects of air and light through color. Examine how his brushstrokes and use of color suggest movement. Look into a
natural body of water (lake, river, pond, pool) and see the reflections, shadows, and subtle changes which fascinated Monet. If this is not feasible, place a pan of water near a window and see what it reflects when the water is still. Stir it gently with your finger and discover what happens to these reflections. Create two paintings, one of the objects as seen in still water and one in rippled water.

3. Relaxing on a riverbank or rowing a boat helped relieve some of the anxiety of city life. Examine some of the factors that created stress for modern Parisians in the 1860s (i.e. population growth, traffic congestion, job pressures). In what ways are these stress factors similar to those faced by people today? How do you cope with anxiety and restore balance to your life? Describe your personal “Seine at Bennecourt” activity (such as listening to music, biking in a park, playing basketball with friends, hiking in the woods) in the form of an essay, drawing, or collage.

Alternative: Create a picture postcard which could be sent by the woman in this painting. What image would be on the front? What message would she write and to whom would she send it? Exchange and discuss your postcards.

4. Monet painted this work on site over a period of several days, carefully choosing what to include and altering nature to suit himself. To better understand the decisions made by landscape artists, go outside and find an interesting scene to draw (or use the view from a classroom window). Create several quick compositions based on what you see. One sketch, or a combination of several, may become the basis of a more finished work. Discuss with your classmates the problems and pleasures you encountered in creating your landscape.

5. The Paris scenes Monet painted record a city undergoing a major transformation. Research the city’s development and the changes taking place (Haussmann’s new city plan, population growth, new transportation systems) and the effect these had on the surrounding suburbs. Present your research in one of the following forms: a chart showing the changes in terms of statistics on a graph; a personal diary entry or objective newspaper report describing the changes; or a collage (photocopies of historic photographs, artist’s renditions, and/or your own drawings) showing “before and after” views of the city.
Alternative: Research another major city (anywhere in the world) which has undergone a similar transformation at any point in its history, such as Chicago after the 1871 fire, or San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. Address the reasons for and effects of the transformation.
Slide 7

The Crystal Palace, 1871

Camille Pissarro (1830-1903)

Oil on canvas, 18 9/16 x 28 15/16 in. (47.2 x 73.5 cm)

Discussion

During the nineteenth century, major cities like London, Paris, and Chicago underwent rapid industrialization and staggering growth. This burgeoning urbanization and modernization and the activities/lives of the bourgeoisie became the subject of artwork by Pissarro. Examine and describe what is happening in this painting. What can we learn from looking closely at who or what is painted (subject matter); where it is painted (setting); and how it is painted (technique)? How has the artist created the atmosphere and indicated the time of day and the weather? What do you think the artist is trying to tell us about the people, place, and time?

Discuss the architectural wonder designed by Joseph Paxton and built in 1851. [See page 34.] The image Camille Pissarro chose to paint in The Crystal Palace was the ultimate of the new and modern in 1871. What building in your city is considered an archetype of architectural innovation today (i.e. Sears Tower in Chicago; World Trade Center in New York)? Why?

Activities

1. After a careful observation and inventory of what is going on in The Crystal Palace, write a vivid description of the world Pissarro created with images and color. Use words in the same lively and descriptive manner as Pissarro used paint. Discuss whether these words are grounded in the visual information the painting provides. Do they give an accurate sense of the artwork’s subject, setting, and technique? Can words accurately convey the intentions of Pissarro?

2. Research and discuss the construction of the Crystal Palace. What were the technological developments that made the creation of this huge structure possible? (The manufacture of iron and tempered plate
glass; the concept of prefabrication, which allowed the building components to be fabricated in factories and assembled quickly on the site.) Do we still use these technologies today? How have they changed? What are some contemporary analogies to the Crystal Palace? (McCormick Place and Navy Pier in Chicago are two examples.) Who would spend leisure time in such an entertainment center?

3. Impressionism has been called the movement that changed the course of art history. During a trip to the Art Institute, visit the European galleries to view the painting *Santa Maria della Salute, Venice*, 1735-1740, by Michele Marieschi (1696-1743). After carefully examining this Italian landscape and *The Crystal Palace*, note the subjects, settings, and techniques. How are these two paintings similar? How are they different? Pay particular attention to the depiction of people, and to the presence, location, and importance of architecture within each composition.
Slide 8

_The Rowers’ Lunch, 1875-76_

**Pierre Auguste Renoir** (1841-1919)

Oil on canvas, 21 1/4 x 25 1/4 in. (55.1 x 65.9 cm)

Discussion

Renoir was recognized as a figure painter in a movement principally known for its landscapes. Look carefully at this painting and describe what you see. Who are the three people and what are they doing? What do their gestures and facial expressions reveal about their moods and relationship to one other?

Explain how Renoir has expressed the perfect harmony of nature and people in this composition. What makes the “action” difficult to separate from the atmosphere? How does the size of the painting and the depiction of the space add to the intimate feeling of the work?

Renoir was concerned with the motion of light. Examine and describe how he has captured with paint the flickers of light and shadow as they fall on and define the objects in this scene.

Activities

1. Renoir’s feathery brushstrokes and use of color describe this relaxed, intimate moment among friends and, at the same time, suggest changing light. Find examples (reproductions or photocopies) of other paintings or photographs which are successful in capturing atmosphere or mood. What visual devices have artists used to capture bitter cold or sweltering heat; warm camaraderie or intense anger?

   **Alternative:** Find passages in books where writers vividly describe a particular mood or atmosphere. Explain what makes these compelling.

2. Renoir painted contemporary, middle-class people enjoying pleasurable, informal moments of leisure. Compare this painting to Degas’s _Uncle and Niece_ [Slide 9] and Toulouse-Lautrec’s _At the Moulin Rouge_ [Slide 19], which depict stressful times or alternate life-styles. Discuss
how each painting reflects the artist’s unique view (and interpretation) of nineteenth-century Paris and its inhabitants. Create your own title for each of these paintings based on the people and/or scene portrayed.

3. This painting depicts the Restaurant Fournaise in Chatou, a popular destination for holiday pleasures. What activities could be pursued in riverside resorts like this? In groups of four to five students each, write a dialogue for the people portrayed in this painting, or a similar group of friends. The conversation could be based on a description of a sporting event, meal, or walk they just had. These dialogues should be fact-filled (based on research) and interesting (creatively stated).

4. Parisians could take the train from the Gare Saint-Lazare to Chatou [see Monet’s interpretation in Slide 11]. This easy and available transportation forever altered the appearance of the small villages along the riverbanks and the lives of their original inhabitants. Find parallels in our society today. Focus on the transformation of an area after it has been “discovered” by a group of people for leisure, entertainment, or housing. It can be somewhere in your own neighborhood; anywhere in the United States; or a suburb of Paris during Renoir’s day. Trace the changes, for better or worse, in the form of short newspaper articles or letters.
Slide 9

*Uncle and Niece (Henri de Gas and His Niece Lucie de Gas), 1875-78*

Hilaire Germaine Edgar Degas (1834-1917)

Oil on canvas, 39 1/4 x 47 1/4 in. (99.8 x 119.9 cm)

**Discussion**

Although Degas is best known for his many paintings of ballet dancers, he was deeply interested in human behavior, captured in subtle gestures and fleeting expressions. Look carefully at this painting and describe what you see. What information is conveyed about the identities, emotions, and relationship of the two people portrayed? Describe the emotional climate of this scene. What makes it seem as if you, the viewer, have interrupted these people?

Study the background. Where do you think this might be and what might the rest of the environment look like? How do the artist’s brushstrokes lend spontaneity to this otherwise somber and still picture? Look at the composition (arrangement). Although these two figures are physically placed next to each other, what visual devices has the artist used to separate them? Discuss how issues of loneliness, death, and family are addressed in this painting.

**Activities**

1. Degas’s sensitive portraits catch people in private, unguarded moments – as if they were not aware of his presence. Bring to class photocopies or reproductions of different types of portraits by artists from other times and places. Compare these various approaches to portraiture and how each represents the cultural values of that particular time. (Some interesting portraits to study in the Art Institute’s collection include: the Moche Portrait Vessel of a Ruler; Rembrandt’s *Old Man with a Gold Chain*; Phillip’s *Cornelius Allerton*; Sharaku’s *Actor Bando Mitsugoro as Ishū Genzo*; Van Gogh’s *Self-Portrait*; Gauguin’s *Ancestors of Tehama* [Slide 18]; Beckmann’s *Self-Portrait*; or Hockney’s *American Collectors.*
2. *Uncle and Niece* presents a variety of contradictions and dualities which, when explored, provide a deeper understanding of the work and the artist. Examine this painting and list as many pairs of opposites as you can find. Or explain how the following relate to this painting: male/female, old/young, intimate/distant, casual/formal, fragile/strong, together/apart, tense/relaxed, isolated/connected, natural/artificial, interrupted action/posed scene, spontaneous/controlled, outer appearance/inner psyche.

3. Although this portrait by Degas appears to be a spontaneous “slice of life,” it is a carefully composed picture. Compare this painting to “candid” photographs you may have taken or seen. By the late nineteenth century, small portable cameras were generally available to the middle-class for the first time. Explore the influence photography had on paintings created at that time, and on Degas’s work in particular.

   Alternative: Sketch a traditionally posed figure in an ordinary composition, with standard lighting. Then do another drawing of a figure in an unconventional pose from an unusual viewpoint, with cropped edges and dramatic lighting. Which did you prefer to draw and why?

4. Degas created portraits of the modern city dweller — often revealing the loneliness, anxiety, and tension of modern life. Discuss these emotions and how they are still experienced by people today. Bring to class examples of these themes as expressed in the lyrics of today’s songs, art, or literature.

   Alternative: Express these, or similar feelings through your own words, music, or visual images.
Slide 10

*Paris Street; Rainy Day*, 1876-77

**Gustave Caillebotte** (1848-1894)

Oil on canvas, 83 1/2 x 108 3/4 in. (212.2 x 276.2 cm)

**Discussion**

Considered the masterpiece of his career, *Paris Street; Rainy Day* displays the hallmarks of Gustave Caillebotte’s mature style: a modern urban subject, realistically depicted; a peculiar and insistent spatial order; and a sense of time momentarily frozen. Examine the painting closely to find these stylistic features. Although the buildings may not look modern to us, they were new in the artist’s lifetime. What in this painting would have been considered modern in 1876? [See Chronology.] What else might be modern about the subject matter? How are the people, buildings, and streets depicted? What gives the viewer the sense that time has suddenly stopped?

Caillebotte’s rigorously controlled technique mirrors the pristine modernity of Haussmann’s rebuilt Paris. [See page 28.] He experimented with a plunging perspective to create his unique urban view. The composition is divided into a giant “plus” sign. Locate the horizontal and vertical elements which divide the painting into four parts. (The lamppost and its shadow divide the painting vertically; the horizon line divides the painting horizontally.) Are these four quadrants equally divided? What looms forward on the right side of the painting? What zooms backwards into the distance on the left? Look closely into each quadrant: how are the foreground and background tied together?

**Activities**

1. The point or points on the horizon line where people become smaller and smaller and buildings converge and seem to disappear are called *vanishing points*. Find the visual elements that draw the eye back to these points. How many blocks can you walk back into the painting?

To fully understand Caillebotte’s careful and deliberate organization of space within the painting, groups of students can recreate the scene.
Three people can become the main figures in the “foreground.” Moving back in the “picture plane,” add those people in the “middle ground” and “background.” Pay close attention to the distance between each group of figures. How are the relationships between the “actors” different from the relationship between the figures in the painting? (The scale in the painting is not realistic; the figures in the foreground are too large in relationship to the figures in the middle ground.)

Direct the “actors” to remain frozen in the moment while the remaining students become the viewers of the scene. Where must the viewers stand to have all characters in the correct spatial placement? If the “actors” are allowed to move at will, and then ordered to freeze again, how will the composition and the relationships among the figures change?

2. Write a story, poem, short play, or give an oral presentation about any two people in the painting. Ideas to explore: Who are these anonymous city strollers? Where are they going? Where have they been? Do they talk to one another? How are they dressed? The couple on the right are looking toward the left. What might they be looking at? (Actually, they are looking at the St. Lazare train station.) Summarize the themes which recur frequently.

3. Using the collage technique, compose a contemporary urban scene from a familiar aspect of your life. Consider, among other things, subject, location, people and their activities. After cutting out figures and objects from magazines, experiment with perspective and scale (near and far) before gluing down your final composition, much in the way Caillebotte made preparatory drawings before composing the painting. Discuss your unique urban view and explain how scale and perspective contribute to this interpretation.

4. Caillebotte’s life as a patron was invaluable to the Impressionist endeavor. Discuss the concept of patronage. What institutions and individuals have traditionally provided patronage for artists? (The church, royal courts, wealthy and powerful individuals like popes, cardinals, and business leaders.) What kinds of institutions and individuals occupy that role today? (Governments, corporations, museums, and an expanded art-consuming middle class.)
Examine the history of Caillebotte’s life as a patron. When did he start purchasing the work of his colleagues? In what other ways did he assist them? What did he hope to accomplish with his will? Did he succeed? Letters Caillebotte wrote to Pissarro and Monet are excellent original sources for further investigation into these issues. [For more in-depth research, see *Gustave Caillebotte: Urban Impressionist*, 1994.]
Arrival of the Normandy Train, Gare Saint-Lazare, 1877

Claude Monet (1840-1926)
Oil on canvas, 23 1/2 x 31 1/2 in. (59.6 x 80.2 cm)

Discussion

Claude Monet considered modern, industrial settings like Gare Saint-Lazare to be beautiful. He found poetry in railway stations as previous artists had found poetry in forests and rivers. Study the painting carefully and identify what is happening. What moment from everyday life does this painting capture? Where did the artist stand to paint this? How was the paint applied to the canvas? What is the most important aspect of the scene and why? A year after the train station was redesigned in 1869, Gare Saint-Lazare handled more than thirteen million passengers. Who were they? Where might they have been going? What is a contemporary equivalent of this kind of public transportation center?

Activities

1. The 1869 Gare Saint-Lazare epitomized the excitement of the new industrial age. Research technological inventions of the nineteenth century (i.e., steam engine, internal combustion machine, typewriter, sewing machine). What are some of the developments which helped turn medieval Paris into the first modern metropolis? (Electric lighting, reinforced concrete, tempered plate glass, first public telephone system, elevators, central heating, department stores, creation of the vast railway system.) Which innovations directly affected Monet and the Impressionists? (Collapsible paint tube, aerial photography, commercially available oil paints.) Which of these discoveries can be seen directly in Arrival of the Normandy Train?

2. In this painting, Monet captured the rumble of trains surging forward and the torrents of smoke winding through the vast engine shed. How did he accomplish this? Consider brushwork, colors, details, and point of view. Which part of the painting appears to be lightest? Which is the heaviest? Try to identify the Impressionist techniques used here.
(Direct observation of the world; painting out of doors; use of pure bright colors applied with short, quick brushstrokes; attempt to capture the effects of light.)

3. To observe the world directly was of utmost importance to Monet and the Impressionist artists. Record your own careful observations of modern life in a drawing or painting. Choose a local transportation center that you use (such as a train station, El platform, or bus depot) as the subject of the exercise. What sights, sounds and smells are associated with these places? Is there a sense of commotion and bustle? In your artwork, try to capture the feeling of the surroundings: remember, clear concise details were not important to Monet; he wanted to capture general effects or impressions.
Still Life: Corner of a Table, 1873

Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904)

Oil on canvas, 37 5/16 x 49 3/16 in. (96.4 x 125 cm)

Discussion

Painted at the height of France’s economic and cultural supremacy, this masterpiece of nineteenth-century still-life painting records a moment in bourgeois Parisian life. Fantin-Latour’s visual sensibility was molded by the great classical tradition of French still-life painting and his pursuit of an almost photographic realism. What can we learn by looking closely at the items arranged on this creased white tablecloth? Describe what you see. How does the artist suggest the different materials of each item (crystal, silver, and china)? Try to imagine what may have taken place just before the scene we look at. Who are the people who have just left the gathering around this table? Where does the artist position the viewers? What items on this table might you have in your home? How do all these clues together form a moment in Parisian life?

Activities

1. Both Gustave Caillebotte and Henri Fantin-Latour painted modern subjects realistically and expressed a sense of time momentarily arrested. Compare and contrast the subjects of Caillebotte’s Paris Street; Rainy Day [Slide 10] to Fantin-Latour’s Corner of a Table. Do you think that any of the people in Caillebotte’s painting might have been present at Fantin-Latour’s elegant table? What elements in each painting are similar? Which are different? How are light and shadow handled by each of these artists?

2. After examining the relationships of the individual items found in Corner of a Table, imagine this painting as a stage set. In small groups, develop objects on the table into characters (wine decanter, china cup, wine glass, sugar bowl, pitcher, and fluted bowl) in a one-act play. Consider the function, shape, and reflective quality of each item (i.e. fragile, luminous, or transparent) when assigning each item an identity. Create dialogue among these objects and present your plays to the class.
3. The elegant Parisians who used the objects in Fantin-Latour's still life are not present, but the careful observer can learn many things about them anyway. Assemble your own still lifes by selecting, arranging and drawing articles that are important to you, using these objects to reveal something about yourself. Consider scale (large or small), relationship of objects (near or far), and how you might involve the viewer in your story.

4. Fantin-Latour painted *Still Life: Corner of a Table*, during France's economic recession. Research the period of time after the Franco-Prussian War through the depression of 1870-1879. [See Chronology.] Summarize the sequence of events that led to these economic problems. How would these conditions have affected the life and work of Fantin-Latour and his artist friends? [For further investigation into the French economy during this time, see Denvir, *Chronicle of Impressionism: A Timeline History of Impressionist Art.*]

5. Fantin-Latour, like other artists of this time, loved the music of Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and Robert Schumann (1810-1853). Listen to selections from both composers and think about their musical themes. Why do you suppose this was considered *new* music? Research the lives and works of either of these composers. Are there any similarities between Fantin-Latour's artistic concerns and those of Wagner and Schumann? Create a list of words which describe the music, and another list of words which describe Fantin-Latour's painting. Can the same words be used to characterize two completely different art forms?
A Sunday on La Grande Jatte - 1884, 1884-86
Georges Seurat (1859-1891)
Oil on canvas, 81 3/4 x 121 1/4 in. (207.5 x 308 cm)

Discussion

The bright and airy park on the suburban island of La Grande Jatte was a perfect stage set for Impressionist art. Look closely and describe what is happening in this painting. What can we learn from looking at the activities, clothes, gestures, and expressions of the figures? This painting contains forty characters of different ages, sexes, social classes, and occupations. Can you identify them? What kind of day is it? What do the shadows tell us? Why are most of the people gathered at the edge of the river? Are they enjoying themselves? Find the few accents in the painting that show a sense of motion (a girl running, a small dog in the foreground, and a butterfly).

Like Caillebotte, Seurat made many preliminary drawings and oil sketches for his final work. He experimented with brushstrokes, color placement, and figure positioning until he achieved his desired effect. At the Art Institute, examine the oil study hanging near this painting. Discuss how the brushwork in the study differs from that in the final painting. Analyze the colors in the study. Are they similar to colors in the final painting? Do any of the figures from the study appear in the finished painting?

Activities

1. Seurat explored color, light, and form based on the most up-to-date treatises in color optics and visual perception. Seurat allows his viewers’ eyes to mix colors by placing pure colors side by side. He did not use brushstrokes in the usual sense, but rather applied tiny strokes, dots, and dashes to the surface of the canvas. While at the Art Institute, examine Seurat’s skillful color placement and record which colors are placed next to each other. Then move away from the painting. At what point do the colors seem to blend together? What new colors have been created by this optical mixing? [See Glossary.]
2. Discuss leisure activities which take place outside today and list some possible locations, such as parks, zoos, urban high-rise sundecks, or even shopping malls. Using cut-out pictures from magazines, make a collage of a group of people enjoying their leisure today. Place some of the figures and groups close to the viewer (foreground); place others further away (background). Are there any “props” needed to further identify the setting, such as sailboats, animals, pipes, embroidery, or musical instruments?

Alternative: Create a large-scale collage as a class, depicting a leisure activity that a large group can participate in (such as attending a music festival or participating in a sport). Discuss how the location will be depicted and what collage materials will be used. Pay particular attention to the distinction between the foreground, middle ground, and background. Refer back to A Sunday on La Grande Jatte-1884 for ideas about color and composition.

3. Georges Seurat applied several nineteenth-century scientific developments to his painting. Research the work of the French chemist, Michel Eugène Chevreul (1786-1889), author of On the Harmony and Contrast of Colors; the Scottish physicist, James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879), author of Perception of Color; and the American artist and color scientist Ogden Rood (1831-1902), author of Modern Chromatics. After studying these theories, try to determine which were utilized by Seurat in A Sunday on La Grande Jatte-1884.
Slide 14

*The Bay of Marseilles, Seen from L’Estaque*, 1886-90

**Paul Cézanne** (1839-1906)

Oil on canvas, 31 5/8 x 39 5/8 in. (80.2 x 100.6 cm)

**Discussion**

Cézanne painted directly from nature in the manner of the Impressionists. He was, however, not interested in capturing a moment in time; neither the time of day nor the weather occupied his attentions in *The Bay of Marseilles*. Rather, he sought to discover the basic harmony of color and form which, to him, underlies the structure and composition of nature. How has he accomplished this? Identify which parts of the composition create a complex grid, much like a puzzle, of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines. Quickly sketch this system of lines. How do these lines divide the composition into four large planes? What elements of the landscape do these planes represent? (Sky, water, land, and buildings.) Which area is the largest? What element of this composition anchors the bottom plane of the picture? Identify the shapes painted within the bottom plane. Where are we placed in relation to the elements in the landscape?

**Activities**

1. A grid of lines acts as a skeleton which supports Cézanne’s experimentation with color, form, and mass, creating a sense of volume. In two groups, the students should study the painting carefully. The first group should find the geometric shapes (cylinders, cubes, spheres, and cones); the second group should examine color contrasts and how the paint is applied to create a sense of volume. A spokesperson from each group can debate how Cézanne’s artistic choices convince the viewer of the massiveness and permanence of nature. Remember that the evidence for your arguments is in the painting.

2. Write an article for a travel magazine that records a walking trip through the area around the Bay of Marseilles. Describe the terrain or type of land. Judging from evidence in the painting, can you describe the climate in this part of France? How would you hike to the village? What would you do in or near the water? What body of water is depict-
ed in this painting? What was your most memorable experience while hiking there?

3. Cézanne was one of the pioneers of Post-Impressionism who maintained a lifelong interest in the art of the Old Masters. He wanted his landscapes to have the same sense of structure and permanence as those of the seventeenth-century French painter, Nicolas Poussin. While in the Art Institute's European galleries, compare and contrast Landscape with Saint John on Patmos by Poussin to Cézanne's Bay of Marseilles. What has Cézanne learned from studying the work of Poussin? How has he built upon or expanded these ideas?

4. Cézanne is considered one of the fathers of modern art for his exploration of shape, color, and subject matter. His work profoundly influenced the next generation of artists. Compare The Bay of Marseilles to works of Cubist artists, such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. How do Cézanne's innovations form a link to these Cubist painters?
Slide 15

*Bedroom at Arles*, 1889

**Vincent van Gogh** (1853-1890)

Oil on canvas, 29 x 36 5/8 in. (73.6 x 92.3 cm)

**Discussion:**

This bedroom in the yellow house at Arles was very important to van Gogh, who decorated the room as part of his plan to get ready for other artists and his brother Theo to visit or live there. His frequent letters to Theo about the first version of this painting included descriptions and often sketches of the room’s furnishings. Van Gogh said that “everything from the chairs to the pictures have character... the beds... give an appearance of solidity, durability and quiet...”

Although van Gogh was often in emotional and mental upheaval, he yearned for harmony. Look at the way he outlines the furniture, emphasizing its solidity. Yet the upward slant of the floor and bed, and the way the pictures tilt away from the wall create a sense of instability and reveal his internal struggle. He crowds the background with the bed, window, paintings, night stand, mirror, and hanging clothes and towels. Yet the foreground is open and empty, as if waiting for a visitor. Can you find other inconsistencies?

There is a dramatic sense of energy about the room. Look at the way the top of the painting is cropped. It cuts the windows, walls, and paintings off at different angles. Can the doors be opened easily or will it take some shifting of furniture? What do you think about the way the chairs face the bed as if in conversation with each other or in anticipation of a guest? Are the chairs positioned strategically? One chair is placed almost as guardian at the door, the other next to the head of the bed as if it were a storyteller, nurse, or mother. The person in either chair would be positioned to observe the sleeper. Can you find other pairs of objects in this room? Why are there two pillows, two chairs, two doors, two portraits, and two other small prints or paintings? (These pairs reinforce the idea that van Gogh is expecting to share this house and that this pairing will bring some order to his life.)
Activities

1. Van Gogh’s bedroom is, in effect, a self-portrait. Make a shadowbox portrait of your own bedroom. Construct a box out of cardboard or use a ready-made box for the walls of the bedroom. Furniture can be made out of posterboard or cut out of magazines. Cut interior decorating items from magazines and paste them into the box. Include your interests, hobbies, desires, characteristics, fears, and needs. Display the boxes around the classroom and try to match each with its maker.

2. Read one of van Gogh’s letters to his brother Theo. (See below.) Van Gogh’s depiction of his room was a combination of reality and imagination, something like a daydream. Write a descriptive letter to someone in your school or to a pen pal about a room in your house or school. Detail the layout and furnishings. Describe what goes on in the room. Include doors and windows and indicate what they open on to. Include a sketch of the room. Is this depiction of the room real or imagined or a combination of the two?

[The following is one of van Gogh’s many letters to his brother, probably written in the autumn of 1888. It discusses his plans for the first version of this painting. He painted the Art Institute’s version from memory many months later.]

My dear Theo,
At last I can send you a little sketch to give you at least an idea of the way the work is shaping up. For today I am all right again. My eyes are still tired, but then I had a new idea in my head and here is the sketch of it. Another size 30 canvas. This time it’s just simply my bedroom, only here color is to do everything, and giving by its simplification a grander style to things, is to be suggestive here of rest or of sleep in general. In a word, looking at the picture ought to rest the brain, or rather the imagination.
The walls are pale violet. The floor is of red tiles.
The wood of the bed and chairs is the yellow of fresh butter, the sheets and pillows very light greenish-citron.
The coverlet scarlet. The window green.
The toilet table orange, the basin blue.
The doors lilac.
And that is all—there is nothing in this room with its
closed shutters.
The broad lines of the furniture again must express invio-
labile rest. Portraits on the walls, and a mirror and a
towel and some clothes.
The frame — as there is no white in the picture — will be
white. This by way of revenge for the enforced rest I was
obliged to take.
I shall work on it again all day, but you see how simple
the conception is. The shadows and the cast shadows are
suppressed; it is painted in free flat tints like the Japanese
prints...
I am not writing you a long letter, because tomorrow very
clearly I am going to begin in the cool morning light, so as
to finish my canvas.
How are the pains—don’t forget to tell me about them.
I know that you will write one of these days.
I will make you sketches of the other rooms too someday.
With a good handshake,
Ever yours, Vincent

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3. Bedroom at Arles is an interior scene of a personal nature. Degas was
a very fine portrait painter and was one of the Impressionist painters
who depicted intimate domestic scenes. Compare the two interior
scenes. The class should be divided and half assigned van Gogh’s
Bedroom and half Degas’s Uncle and Niece [See Slide 9]. As each group
analyzes its designated painting, students should formulate observa-
tions through descriptive words or phrases. Include statements about
mood, color, activity, viewer involvement, and other interpretations.
Bring the two groups together to classify their findings in a chart form.
Relate the similarities and discuss the differences of these two private
spaces. What conclusions can be drawn about the paintings from the
chart?
4. Map van Gogh's life. He was a restless soul who moved about and lived in several different cities. After a time in one place, he would then move on, looking for harmony in a new locale. Though the peace he sought was internal, he believed that a change of residency was the solution to his restlessness. Research van Gogh's life and record on a map the dates and the cities he lived in.

Create a master map by expanding this activity to include all the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists contained in this manual. Each student or pair of students could research a different artist. Include all the information gathered and with the map in the manual add removable notes to indicate where and when each artist lived. [See Map.] What other artist was a restless nomad? (Paul Gauguin)
Slide 16

*Wheatstack, 1890-91*

**Claude Monet** (1840-1926)

Oil on canvas, 25 7/8 x 36 1/4 in. (65.6 x 92 cm)

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Slide 17

*Wheatstacks (End of Summer), 1890-91*

**Claude Monet** (1840-1926)

Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 x 39 3/8 in. (60 x 100 cm)

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**Discussion**

It was while painting his series of wheatstacks that Monet realized that he needed to work more slowly and deliberately in order to capture the moment. Take an inventory of everything you see in these two canvases. Describe the basic composition of each painting. Are Monet's color choices real or imagined? Explain. How does Monet persuade us of the time of day and the time of year in each painting? Describe how the paint was applied to each canvas. Suppose you could walk into these paintings and sit down. Where would you choose to be? Why?

While they appear in these two paintings as simple, isolated objects, the wheatstacks represent, in fact, fairly complex structures skillfully created by farmers according to set rules. Why do you think Monet might have chosen wheatstacks as central objects of this series of paintings? Why was it important to the community to have long-lasting, well-preserved wheatstacks? What symbolism is represented by the image of a wheatstack? (Plentiful harvest.) Can you think of other metaphors for agricultural abundance?

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**Activities**

1. Monet worked on these paintings, and many others, at his home in Giverny, a small village in Normandy. Locate this agricultural area in France on the map included. How far is it from Paris? What important river runs by this village? Where does this river come from and where does it go? How might this contribute to the abundance of crops in this area? What regions in the U.S. provide agricultural bounty?
2. Monet's *Wheatstacks* are free-standing objects in an open field. In this way they are similar to a sundial's needle which casts a shadow that shifts as the sun moves from sunrise to sunset. Construct a cone-like wheatstack out of paper and place this on a level paper surface out-of-doors. Outline the shadows and then measure their length and shape at four times over the course of a day (early morning, noon, afternoon, and before sunset). Record the results. What happens to the length of the shadow as the sun moves across the sky?

3. Assuming the hills in the background of the painting in Slide 17 are in the south, what is the time of day? Considering the color of the sunlight in this painting, does your assumption make sense? Although the other *Wheatstack* [Slide 16] depicts overcast weather, can you speculate about the time of day?

4. When natural light falls on an object, the shadow it casts is dark. But is a shadow always black? If you look carefully at Monet's *Wheatstacks* [Slide 17], you find that he painted the shadows in blue, lavender, and green tones, without the use of black paint. There is a simple experiment you can perform that will tell if Monet used his artistic sensibility to imagine color in the shade or if colored shadows do indeed exist.

Illuminate a small object (a cone to resemble a wheatstack) from one side with a bright light source (flashlight, desk lamp, or slide projector). Place a transparent colored filter between the light source and the object. Notice that the object's shadow assumes a color when viewed in some residual room light. This color is the opposite complementary color [see Glossary] of the filter color. In Monet's painting, the sun casts a golden orange glow over the wheatstack. The shadow shows the complementary color: blue-lavender. This phenomenon was first noticed by the French painter Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) whose earlier paintings influenced all the Impressionists.
Slide 18

Ancestors of Tehamana, 1893
Paul Gauguin (1848-1903)
Oil on canvas, 30 1/8 x 21 3/8 in. (76.3 x 54.3 cm)

Discussion

Paul Gauguin made this fascinating painting of a young girl while he lived in Tahiti. Gauguin was interested in creating mystery through his paintings. Are the figures in this painting lifelike or dreamlike? What does the title mean? (Ancestors of Tehamana refers to the sitter’s belief that she was descended from the goddess Hina, depicted in the background on the left.) Where is the tip of Tehamana’s fan pointing and in what direction are her eyes looking? (They are pointing to Hina, and therefore to her ancestry and heritage.) Look at the right arm of the background figure. It looks as if she is patting the arm of Tehamana, suggesting that their lives are concurrent. Compare Tehamana and Hina. How are they the same? (They both face front.) How are they different? (Look at their clothing and expressions.)

Is there much depth to this painting? What do you think Gauguin’s purpose is in flattening the objects and background? (He suggests that the past and the present coexist.) The writing at the top is Gauguin’s version of ancient Polynesian writing. What message do you think Gauguin is trying to convey by lining up Tehamana’s head with the line of script? (She believes in the ideas conveyed in the ancient writing.)

Activities

1. Gauguin was less interested in capturing a likeness of the sitter than in expressing his own emotions. What do you think his feelings are for Tehamana? How does he communicate them?

Express your feelings for someone in your life by creating a collage homage. [See Glossary.] An homage is tribute or acknowledgment that honors a person or idea. Look through magazines and newspapers to find images and writings that can represent the person you chose. Include symbols that tell something about that person. For instance, if
you choose a grandparent who was a musician, you might include images of the instrument, musical scores, and names of other musicians.

2. Gauguin often expressed the desire to clear his head of the influences of European civilization. In addition to his paintings, Gauguin wrote a novel that told of his Tahitian experience. The novel called *Noa Noa* (meaning 'very fragrant') was partly factual and partly fictional. Write an essay about your own imaginary Tahitian adventures and paint a picture to accompany it.

3. Paul Gauguin was a person with mixed cultural ancestry and experiences. Describe what in this painting might be considered part of western culture (clothing is European missionary influence) and what would be considered “Tahitian” in origin (the background of the painting is influenced by indigenous Tahitian religious imagery). How does Gauguin integrate aspects of Tahitian and French culture?

Discuss past and present multicultural influences in your lives. Collect, display, and present objects, arts, and images from the different cultural heritage(s) represented in the class. These can include music, dance, instruments, recipes, spiritual beliefs, photographs of ancestors, recordings in other languages, and visual arts.
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At the Moulin Rouge, 1893-95
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901)
Oil on canvas, 48 1/2 x 55 1/2 in. (123 x 141 cm)

Discussion

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec’s Moulin Rouge provides us with a personal and sympathetic insight into Parisian nightlife. This painting is an intriguing depiction of late nineteenth-century Parisian history, a period when café nightlife was alive with intrigue, vitality, and color. Colors can create a mood. How has Toulouse-Lautrec used color to create mood and emotion in this work? At this time there were new colors available in paints. Chromium increased the range of oranges and yellows. With arsenic, the development of a new emerald green pigment was possible.

The composition (arrangement) of this painting is quite striking also. In the right foreground, the singer and dancer May Milton seems to be plunging out of the painting, yet in the left foreground, the viewer is blocked by a railing from entering the scene. A group of five people are crowded in the center. Toulouse-Lautrec places himself almost on the same plane with the seated group. As your eye travels to the foreground, the space becomes less defined and seems to open up.

How has Toulouse-Lautrec portrayed the people as if characters in a play? (Through extraordinary perspectives as if they were entrances or exits on a stage.) Who is the main character of the scene? (Possibly May Milton, since she seems to be dancing or floating out of the scene and into the viewer’s space.)

Activities

1. Where has Toulouse-Lautrec used the new greens and yellows? How does color create dramatic effects? Observe his use of green in May Milton’s face and trace the green around the painting. How does Toulouse-Lautrec demonstrate the stage lighting that catches her cheeks and eyes? Her exaggerated masklike face emphasizes that she is a performer. Make a sketch of this painting and, using pastels, create a
different atmosphere. What colors were chosen and how did they achieve the mood?

2. This painting has not always been seen in this form. An L-shaped portion, including the lower and right edges, was not always a part of the painting. Experiment with changing the painting's "frame." In a sketch, expand one or more of the sides, top, or bottom, or cut out portions of one or more of the sides, top, or bottom of the painting. How does the cropping of an image affect the painting?

3. Imagine and discuss this painting as if it were a scene from a play. What happens to the viewer or audience? Divide the students into groups. Each group can describe the setting, create the characters, and write a dialogue between the characters. Each group can then act out its scene.
Discussion

How is Iris more Post-Impressionist than Impressionist in character? [See discussions of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in the Glossary and in the Introduction.] How does this painting reveal Monet’s perception of his iris garden? (It conveys a mood more than a realistic depiction.) How many objects can be identified? Is Iris almost abstract (art that does not represent recognizable objects)?

In the early 1900s Monet began to experiment with scale in an unprecedented way. He was no longer interested in painting in series, but rather in creating immense, unified decorations. How does the size of this painting challenge the Impressionist ideas of spontaneity? (It takes longer to complete, and therefore captures more than a “moment.”) The larger canvas compels one to use larger brushstrokes and more paint.

Many of the canvases he produced during this time are principally the result of memory and his determination to create hazy, indistinct visual sensations. “I have rediscovered the powers of intuition and allowed them to dominate,” Monet once said. Sadly, he did not live to complete Iris. In 1926, at the time of his death, the painting remained unfinished in his studio. How can you tell it is unfinished? Or can you?

Activities

1. Compare and contrast On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt from 1868 to Iris, c.1922-26. Compare the dimensions of each painting. Describe the times of day or seasons. Can you find the horizon line in both paintings? The exclusion of the horizon line and its fusion with reflections give a sense of an all-pervasive atmosphere. Locate the reflections of light, mist, sun-streaked leaves, clouds and sky.
What colors did Monet use in each work to show reflective water? How has his palette become limited and darker in *Iris*? Divide students into pairs and assign each pair a section of one of the paintings. Sectioning of the paintings can be accomplished by using paper frames. To make a paper frame, cut a square in the center of a piece of paper. While looking through the frame, students can observe their section and examine color harmonies (purple/yellow; red/green; orange/blue).

2. Monet used a limited number, but extensive range, of colors when he painted *Iris*. Experiment with mixing colors in paint. Try creating ranges of secondary colors by mixing two primary colors. Primary colors are red, blue, and yellow. Secondary colors are created when blending any two primary colors. [See *Color wheel* and *Complementary colors* in the Glossary.] The two colors mixed together can produce many versions of the third color. Mix a range of three or four secondary colors on a small scrap of posterboard. For example, begin with a dot of blue and add one dot of yellow and blend. Take another dot of blue but add two dots of yellow and blend. Add three dots of yellow to the third dot of blue and continue until you have three or four secondary colors in the green range. The results could be blue-green, green, green-yellow, yellow-green. Painters use the lighter tints for highlights and darker for areas in shadow.

3. One of the pleasures of looking at a painting directly is being able to see the brushwork. On a field trip to the museum, carefully examine *Iris*. The subtle strokes of paint that were an important part of earlier Impressionist painting are gone. Monet used a lively and textured handling of dense paint that renders an expression of life rather than a literal depiction of a particular moment. Examine where the paint has been thinly and thickly applied.

In the classroom, experiment with brushwork by using two different painting methods. On a sheet of paper, paint plants, trees, or other aspects of a landscape. The first version can be small in scale and painted with short, quick brushstrokes and scant amounts of paint (Monet's earlier style). A second, larger version can be painted with a larger brush, longer sweeping strokes, and a thicker amount of paint per stroke (Monet's later style). Display and discuss the results.
4. As he grew older, Monet combined earlier concerns with light and reflections with an increasing need to express his feelings and experiences. He once said that when one is looking, one should try to forget the object and recognize the square of blue, or the oblong of pink, or the streak of yellow and paint from these.

Monet's late work had a significant influence on the development of abstract art. The Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky was one of the younger artists inspired by the aging master. After seeing an exhibition of Monet's painting in 1895, Kandinsky said that the "...object was discredited as an indispensable element of the picture." What did he mean by that statement?

Research the work of Kandinsky, or any other early modern painter whose work "discredited the object." Compare the selected painting to any of Monet's late works. [See Janson and Janson, History of Art for Young People, 1992.]
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All images are from The Art Institute of Chicago.

1. CORREGGIO (ANTONIO ALLEGRI, Italian, c. 1494-1534)
   Virgin and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist, c. 1515
   Oil on panel, 25 1/4 x 20 1/8 in. (64.2 x 51 cm)
   Clyde M. Carr Fund, 1965.688

2. JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM TURNER (English, 1775-1851)
   Fishing Boats with Hucksters Bargaining for Fish, 1837-38
   Oil on canvas, 68 3/4 x 88 1/2 in. (174.5 x 224.9 cm)
   Mr. and Mrs. W.W. Kimball Collection, 1922.4472

3. JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET (French, 1814-1875)
   In the Auvergne, 1866-69
   Oil on canvas, 31 1/4 x 38 1/2 in. (81.1 x 100 cm)
   Henry Field Memorial Collection, 1922.414

4. GUSTAVE COURBET (French, 1819-1877)
   The Rock at Hautepierre, 1869
   Oil on canvas, 31 1/2 x 39 1/2 in. (80.2 x 100.3 cm)
   Emily Crane Chadbourne Fund, 1967.140

5. EDOUARD MANET (French, 1832-1883)
   The Mocking of Christ, 1865
   Oil on canvas, 74 7/8 x 58 3/8 in. (190.3 x 148.3 cm)
   Gift of James Deering, 1925.703

6. CLAUDE MONET (French, 1840-1926)
   On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt, 1868
   Oil on canvas, 32 1/16 x 39 5/8 in. (81.5 x 100.7 cm)
   Potter Palmer Collection, 1922.427

7. CAMILLE PISSARRO (French, 1830-1903)
   The Crystal Palace, 1871
   Oil on canvas, 18 9/16 x 28 15/16 in. (47.2 x 73.5 cm)
   Gift of Mr. and Mrs. B.E. Bensinger, 1972.1164
8. PIERRE AUGUSTE RENOIR (French, 1841-1919)
The Rowers’ Lunch, 1875-76
Oil on canvas, 21 1/4 x 25 1/4 in. (55.1 x 65.9 cm)
Potter Palmer Collection, 1922.437

9. EDGAR DEGAS (French, 1834-1917)
Uncle and Niece (Henri de Gas and His Niece Lucie de Gas), 1875-78
Oil on canvas, 39 1/4 x 47 1/4 in. (99.8 x 119.9 cm)
Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial Collection, 1933.429

10. GUSTAVE CAILLEBOTTE (French, 1848-1894)
Paris Street; Rainy Day, 1876-77
Oil on canvas, 83 1/2 x 108 3/4 in. (212.2 x 276.2 cm)
Charles H. and Mary F.S. Worcester Collection, 1964.336

11. CLAUDE MONET (French, 1840-1926)
Arrival of the Normandy Train, Gare Saint-Lazare, 1877
Oil on canvas, 23 1/2 x 31 1/2 in. (59.6 x 80.2 cm)
Mr. and Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson Collection, 1933.1158

12. HENRI FANTIN-LATOUR (French, 1836-1904)
Still Life: Corner of a Table, 1873
Oil on canvas, 37 5/16 x 49 3/16 in. (96.4 x 125 cm)
Ada Turnbull Hertle Fund, 1951.226

13. GEORGES SEURAT (French, 1859-1891)
A Sunday on La Grande Jatte — 1884, 1884-86
Oil on canvas, 81 3/4 x 121 1/4 in. (207.5 x 308 cm)
Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection, 1926.224

14. PAUL CÉZANNE (French, 1839-1906)
The Bay of Marseilles, Seen from L'Estaque, 1886-90
Oil on canvas, 31 5/8 x 39 5/8 in. (80.2 x 100.6 cm)
Mr. and Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson Collection, 1933.1116

15. VINCENT VAN GOGH (Dutch, 1853-1890)
Bedroom at Arles, 1889
Oil on canvas, 29 x 36 5/8 in. (73.6 x 92.3 cm)
Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection, 1926.417
16. CLAUDE MONET (French, 1840-1926)
*Wheatstack*, 1890-91
Oil on canvas, 25 7/8 x 36 1/4 in. (65.6 x 92 cm)
Restricted gift of the Searle Family Trust; Major Acquisitions
Centennial Endowment; through prior acquisitions of Mr. and Mrs.
Martin A. Ryerson and Potter Palmer Collections; through prior bequest
of Jerome Friedman, 1983.29

17. CLAUDE MONET (French, 1840-1926)
*Wheatstack (End of Summer)*, 1890-91
Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 x 39 3/8 in. (60 x 100 cm)
Gift of Arthur M. Wood in memory of Pauline Palmer Wood,
1985.1103

18. PAUL GAUGUIN (French, 1848-1903)
*Ancestors of Tehamana*, 1893
Oil on canvas, 30 1/8 x 21 3/8 in. (76.3 x 54.3 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Deering McCormick, 1980.613

19. HENRI DE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC (French, 1864-1901)
*At the Moulin Rouge*, 1893-95
Oil on canvas, 48 1/2 x 55 1/2 in. (123 x 141 cm)
Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection, 1928.610

20. CLAUDE MONET (French, 1840-1926)
*Iris*, c. 1922-26
Oil on canvas, 78 3/4 x 79 1/8 in. (200 x 201 cm)
Art Institute Purchase Fund, 1956.1202