



Picturing France

1830–1900

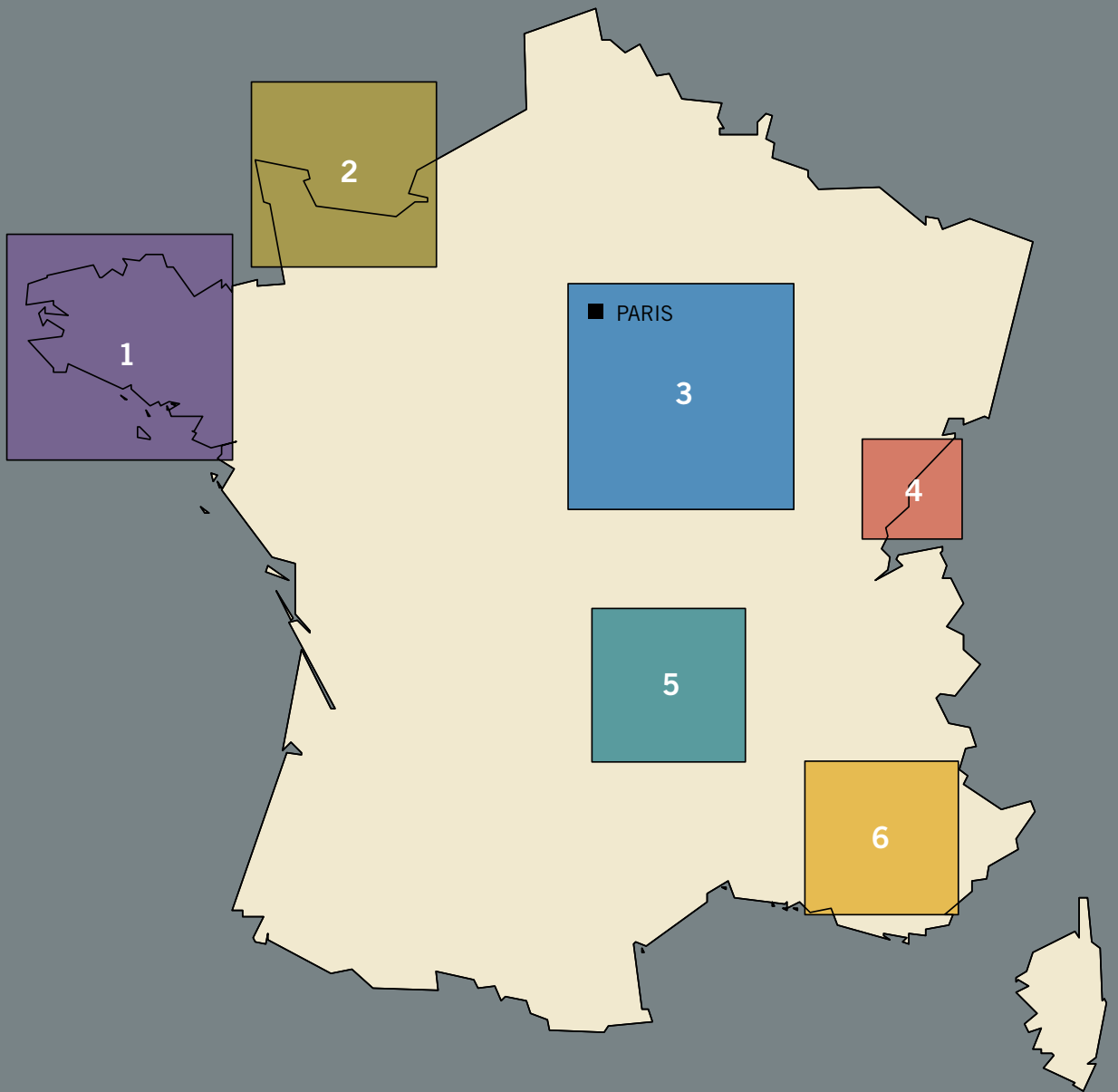


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NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON

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Picturing France

From about 1830 to the end of the nineteenth century, a period of enormous political and social change, French landscape painting was transformed. Previously, French artists had rarely painted the French countryside. The academic tradition of historical landscape was firmly rooted in Italy. But the painters included in this teaching packet were newly inspired by their own place and time. A number of things contributed to this change. Romanticism helped focus interest on nature, not simply as a backdrop for historical narrative, but as a subject worthy in and of itself. A naturalist trend helped foster less idealized depictions that were honest portrayals of the real world. At the same time, travel around France became much easier with the arrival of railroads and more common with the growth of a tourist culture.

It might seem obvious that landscape painting would entail painting outdoors, but as our period opens, artists produced only studies *en plein air* (in the open air), not fully formed paintings. They used these studies, often with notes, to produce more polished pictures in their studios. But this situation, too, was rapidly changing, and we can follow the evolution of *plein-air* painting as the century progressed.

A sense of place is not achieved by “scapes”—whether land, city, or sea—alone. Place is defined by society as well. So, we look at people, too, and examine how their lives were altered with the dramatic changes of the nineteenth century. We have already mentioned the railroad; it is only one aspect of increasing industrialization in France. Huge numbers of people moved from rural areas into cities, and particularly to Paris. Agriculture was a deeply felt part of the French national identity. Loss of peasant farmers from the countryside was troubling and at times created economic crises in rural areas. The nineteenth century was a period of centralization in France—a natural impulse, perhaps, of the autocratic regimes that governed for most of it. Old provincial prerogatives were marginalized as officials in Paris strove to standardize culture and education; regional languages, like those in Brittany and the Midi, for example, were discouraged. At the end of the nineteenth century, regionalist movements emerged in several parts of the country to protect and promote local traditions.

Drawing on the strengths of the National Gallery of Art collection, we focus largely on Normandy, Brittany, Provence, and the Île-de-France; in fact, we divide the Île-de-France into three separate sections: Paris, Fontainebleau, and the river towns. Our packet does not represent all regions of France comprehensively—we have no works from the southwest, Corsica, or Alsace-Lorraine, or from the great wine-producing areas. We look at a single painting from Auvergne and only two from Franche-Comté. Nevertheless, in the course of this journey around France, we encounter most of the styles—from realism to post-impressionism—and many of the greatest artists who flourished in the nineteenth century. This is not meant to be a survey of French painting or even a collection of “greatest hits.” Instead, we present a discussion of artists by region in an effort to explore how they represented a new sense of place and time.

Different artists, of course, were drawn to paint in various locales for very different reasons. Some were lured by scenery and aesthetics, others by solitude or personal connection to a place, some by market forces. Several of the artists we look at worked in many different places—Monet, for example, was exceptionally well traveled. Others, like Cézanne, limited their sights (and sites) more narrowly.

This booklet is organized by region, but there are many ways to approach your tour of France. Here are a few alternative “itineraries” you might consider:

- the rise of landscape painting
- the development of *plein-air* painting
- connections between earlier artists, impressionists, and post-impressionists
- the impact of industrialization and technology, including photography and new art materials, on painting and painting practices
- regional traditions and artists’ responses to them
- the effects of transportation and tourism on artists and the art market
- artists’ public and personal connections to place
- the encroaching presence of the city on the countryside



A view of Paris, looking west to the Eiffel Tower, after 1889
National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, Image Collections, Gramstorff Archive

CD 1

Adrien Tournachon
French, 1825–1903

Vache Garonnaise, âgée de 5 à 6 ans, 1856
Gelatin coated salted paper print from collodion negative
mounted on paperboard, sheet: 8 1/6 x 11 1/4 in.

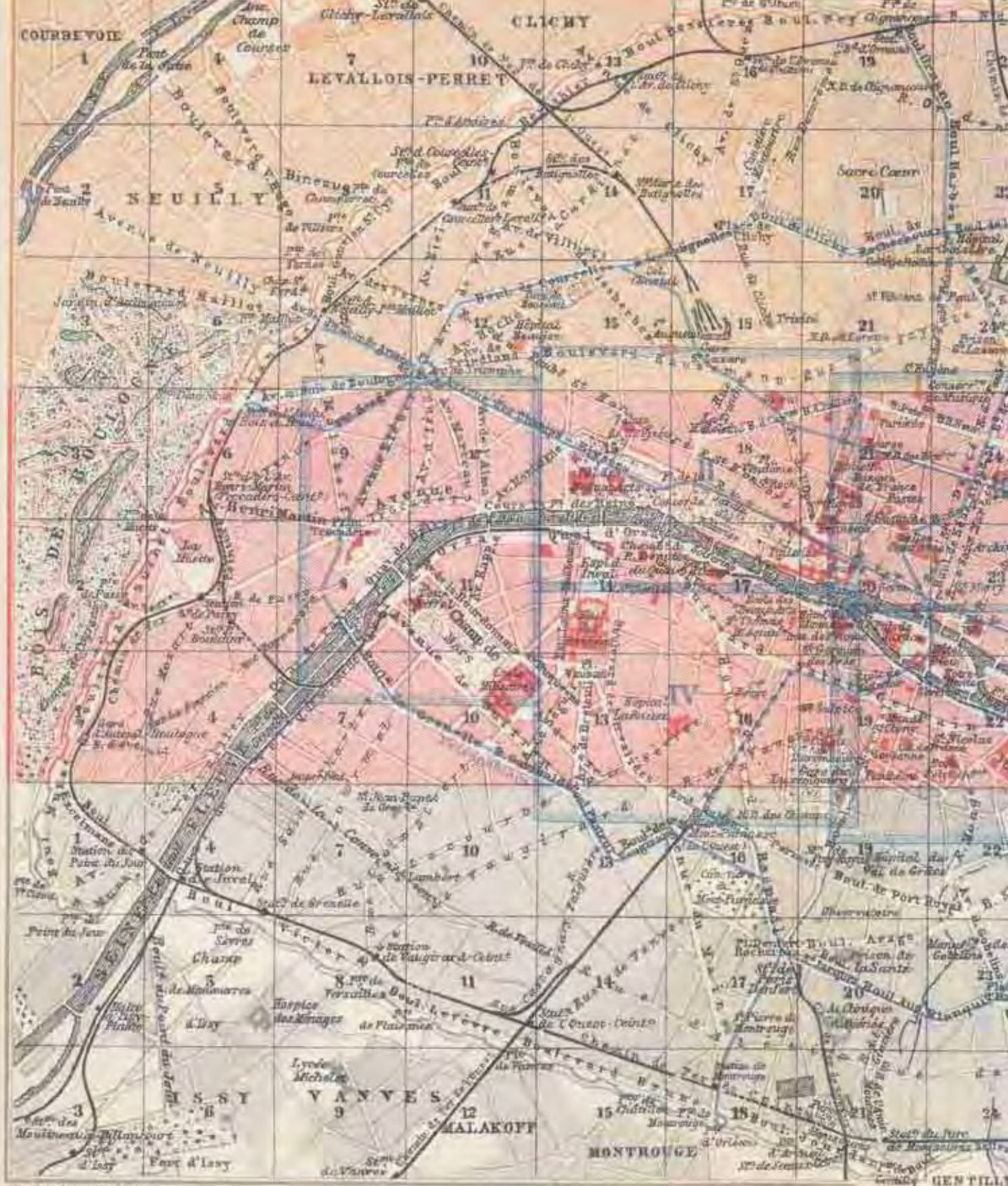
National Gallery of Art, Washington
Anonymous Gift 2000.122.3



Adrien Tournachon was the younger brother of Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, a well-known artist and caricaturist whose work appeared in numerous satirical newspapers under the pseudonym, Nadar. The two collaborated briefly after Adrien opened a photographic studio, but competitive tensions arose in 1855. Adrien hoped to continue the practice alone as “Nadar jeune,” but a court ruled that Félix, who was the better known and more accomplished photographer, was “the only, the true Nadar.” Years later Nadar’s studio would be the site of the first impressionist exhibition.

In 1856 and again in 1860, Adrien made a series of photographs of prize-winning livestock at the agricultural fairs in Paris. To photograph animals that rarely stood still longer than a few seconds, he used the more rapid collodion wet plate process rather than the slower paper negative process he had used previously. At the 1856 livestock show, Tournachon succeeded in making more than 120 negatives, and printed around 50 of them to be included in an album presented to the minister of agriculture and commerce in July 1856.

This photograph of a prize-winning cow from the Garonne region was printed in the technique known as *vernis-cuit*, in which the paper is coated with layers of gelatin and tannin to give the surface the appearance of varnished leather. This image of an impressive farm animal celebrated an agrarian way of life, even as the urban structure of the French capital was being redesigned and “modernized.”



Drawn and engraved by

Georges Huet, Paris

1:66,600

Scale bar showing 0, 1, 2, 3 Kilometers

Kilomètres



Paris and the Painters of Modern Life

An influential essay published by poet and critic Charles Baudelaire in 1863, titled “The Painter of Modern Life,” exhorted artists to abandon the biblical figures and Roman heroes, the innumerable Venuses, who had long populated the walls of the Salon and instead to take their subjects from the life around them. Only in the contemporary world were authentic loci for real art to be found — and the epicenter of that world was Paris. Critic and historian Walter Benjamin called it “the capital of the nineteenth century.”

The city was much changed from what it had been in the early 1800s. Between about 1830 and 1890, the population of Paris increased fourfold, as people from rural areas moved to France's political, cultural, and economic center. In the early 1850s, Napoleon III appointed Baron Georges Haussmann to devise a master plan for the city, giving him a broad mandate and funds for its modernization and revitalization. Haussmann's plan called for the destruction of 30,000 dwellings and the displacement of 300,000 people to make way for new railway stations, bridges,

and public monuments. The cramped and irregular streets of the older city were replaced with the wide, tree-lined boulevards that we associate with Paris today.

The archetypal denizen of the new, modern boulevard was a *flâneur* (from *flâner*, to stroll), a man (always, a man) of sophistication and elegance who scanned the activity around him with detachment, even irony. Baudelaire cast the artist in the role of *flâneur*, a detective who could decipher the codes of a new urban experience.



CD 2

Maxime Lalanne
French, 1827–1886

Demolition for the Opening of the rue des Écoles
(*Démolitions pour le percement de la rue des Écoles*), unknown date
Etching, plate: 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund 1974.69.78



CD 3

Charles Marville
French, 1816–c. 1879

Rue Saint-Jacques (detail), 1865/1869
Albumen print from collodion negative,
12 1/8 x 10 3/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Anonymous Gift and Gift of Joyce and
Robert Menschel 2003.17.1

This photograph, an albumen print made from a collodion glass negative, depicts an intersection near the Sorbonne university in the heart of the medieval Latin Quarter. Made for documentary purposes—Marville was hired by the government to record the old city—it not only captures the street's

architectural character and condition, but also sensitively describes the light flooding through the narrow passageway and lingers on the contrast between the bold lettering of advertisements and the damp, peeling walls that threaten to absorb them. While the photograph at first appears to be devoid

of human presence, a closer look reveals several figures—one standing under the street light and another leaning out a nearby balcony—who stood still long enough during the exposure to register on the negative.

Background: Paris

Setting

- Paris occupies a slight bowl along an arc of the Seine and includes two islands in the river: Île de la Cité and Île Saint-Louis.
- The river divides the city into the Left Bank and Right Bank.
- The commune of Paris is about 105 km² (about 40 sq. mi.) but the greater metropolitan area extends far beyond to roughly 14,500 km² (5,600 sq. mi.).
- The highest point, in Montmartre, is 130 m (425 ft.) above sea level.
- The city is divided into 20 numbered *arrondissements* (boroughs), which spiral clockwise from Île de la Cité.

History

- When Julius Caesar conquered Paris in 52 BC, it was a small fishing village on the Île de la Cité; the name Paris comes from the Parisii, the local Gallic tribe.
- Under Charlemagne Paris became a major center of learning, but it was not until Hugh Capet, Count of Paris, became the first Capetian king that the city was firmly established as France's capital.
- As the power and reach of the French kings grew, so did the influence of Paris in French life.
- The heart of medieval Paris occupies the two islands and the Left Bank's Latin Quarter, where the university drew such scholars as Thomas Aquinas.
- In the 16th century, François I brought the Renaissance to the Louvre and the chateau at Fontainebleau.
- Louis XIV, distrustful of Paris, moved his court to Versailles, but the city played a central role in the Revolution.
- During the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), France was defeated and Paris besieged; the Paris Commune, a bloody insurrection in the spring of 1871, left more than 20,000 dead.
- During the Third Republic, constituted in 1875, Paris was cemented as the administrative, cultural, and transportation center that it remains today.

Today

- The metropolitan population of Paris in 2004 was approximately 11.5 million; this includes about 30 percent of all white-collar workers in France and more than 18 percent of the entire French population.
- The city is still symbolized by the Eiffel Tower, designed by Gustave Eiffel and built for the 1889 World's Fair, but new monuments have also become familiar worldwide, including the Centre Pompidou for contemporary art and the glass pyramids of the Grand Louvre.
- Paris' first skyscraper, the Tour Montparnasse, was begun in the late 1960s but since then most tall buildings have been restricted to La Défense, an area northwest of the city center.

Explore Paris when it was a Roman city:
www.paris.culture.fr (in English and French)

The Works

slide 1
CD 4

Édouard Manet
French, 1832–1883

The Old Musician, 1862
Oil on canvas, 73 ¾ x 98 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.162



“It was the homeland, at ten pence a night, of all the street organ players, of all the monkey tamers, of all the acrobats and of all the chimney sweeps that swarm the streets of the town.” Writing in 1860 novelist and commentator Albéric Second was describing the neighborhood of Petite Pologne, close to Édouard Manet’s studio. Balzac called it “sinister,” and Manet himself “a picturesque slum.” It was one of the many poor sections of Paris completely razed in Baron Haussmann’s renovations. By 1862, the date of Manet’s painting, the Petite Pologne had been cleared for construction of the boulevard Maiesherbes. More than one hundred thousand people were officially listed as indigent in the city, and many more were uncouncted.

Here Manet presents a visual catalogue of the Petite Pologne’s displaced. Most are real individuals. The seated musician is Jean Lagrène, leader of a local gypsy band who earned his living as an organ-grinder and artist’s model. The man in the top hat is Colardet, a rag-picker and ironmonger, whom Manet had earlier depicted drinking absinthe. At the right is a man named Guérout cast as the “wandering Jew,” the prototypical outsider. One of the boys is a street urchin named Alexandre, but the other is a member of Manet’s own household.

Manet presents them all with neutral detachment. Their emotional blankness felt “modern” to contemporary viewers. Impassive and silent, these people from the margins of Parisian life are restricted,

friezelike, to the narrow plane of the foreground. Behind them space opens with disquieting ambiguity. Almost rural, the setting also seems to have lost its identity, belonging to no particular city or time. The displaced people and transformed place are equally unrooted. But in Manet’s canvas the overlarge figures also assert an identity and dignity probably denied them in real life.

reproduction
slide 2 | CD 5

Camille Pissarro
French, 1830–1903

*Boulevard des Italiens, Morning,
Sunlight*, 1897
Oil on canvas, 28 7/8 x 36 1/4 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.198



Camille Pissarro, primarily a painter of rural life, produced very few city scenes before the 1890s, when he painted several series of streetscapes in Paris and elsewhere. He wrote his son Lucien in 1897: “I have engaged a large room at the Grand Hôtel de Russie, 1 rue Drouot, from which I can see the whole sweep of the boulevards.”¹ He could look left onto the boulevard Montmartre or turn right toward the boulevard des Italiens. The two streets were at the western end of Paris’ *grands boulevards*, a linked chain of avenues that arcs from La Madeleine along the line of the city’s medieval fortifications. In the late 1800s, the *grands boulevards* formed

the prosperous heart of Paris. According to a count taken in 1881, twenty thousand vehicles traveled the boulevard des Italiens each day, rolling past the Opéra, expensive shops, fine restaurants, and cafés like the celebrated Café Tortoni, which drew *le tout Paris* (the city’s elite) and was a favorite of Manet.

Between mid-February and mid-April, Pissarro painted two views of the boulevard des Italiens (he made far more of the boulevard Montmartre). He worked in the morning, as the sun just broke over buildings to fall on the pavement at the lower right. Working two hours at a

stretch, he seems to have been most intent on capturing the busy movement of urban life. His overhead view, angled perspective, and abrupt cropping on all four sides suggest an energy and ceaseless activity that extends beyond the frame. Rapid, abbreviated brushstrokes give the blurred effect of objects caught in motion.

Consider this

Identify some characteristics of *Boulevard des Italiens* that were dictated by the artist's elevated position. Would you say that this unusual position was an advantage or disadvantage?

What modes of getting around Paris do you see represented?

- walking
- horse-drawn cab
- two-story omnibus

How would the street be different if viewed today?

How would the effect of the painting change if sky were visible above the buildings? Or if the buildings ended before the edge of the canvas, allowing you to see beyond them?

What is the main focus of the painting?

Where does your eye rest—or does it?

What is the effect of the scattered dots of red paint? Of the dark vertical trees placed at regular intervals and receding into space? Of the blurred brushstrokes?

- all contribute to the eye's busy movement around the canvas and to creating a sense of motion

This painting is one of two representing the same scene at different times of day. How would you expect *Boulevard des Italiens, Afternoon* to differ?

- lighting; color scheme
- longer shadows falling at different angles

A modern city

Pissarro's crowded streetscape illustrates several familiar features of late nineteenth-century Paris. The large two-story omnibuses, pulled by two- or three-horse teams, seated up to forty passengers and were fixtures of the avenues after their introduction in 1855. Supplemented by trams and cabs for hire, they made it relatively easy for Parisians to travel across the city, even before the opening of the Métro in 1900. Omnibuses were one of the places where different levels of society mingled—though all riders were warned to guard against pickpockets.

Named after the advertising agency that had the exclusive contract for them, green-domed Morris columns were also ubiquitous. For viewers today these kiosks are instantly evocative of Paris. Plastered with posters for theatrical and other events, they were an important means of communication.

Also visible in Pissarro's painting are large plate-glass shop windows at street level. The technology to manufacture such large panes had not existed before 1850 or so. Now, with expanded gas and electric lighting, they produced glittering displays that were yet another attraction of the *grands boulevards*.



slide 3
CD 6

Auguste Renoir
French, 1841–1919

Pont Neuf, Paris, 1872
Oil on canvas, 29 5/8 x 36 7/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.58



Auguste Renoir's originality as a landscape painter helped define impressionism. In paintings like this one, he transcribed immediate and ephemeral sensory effects. The pavement is yellow with light, brighter even than the sky. Its glare washes out incidental detail so that we almost squint at dark, backlit forms. Shadows fall in cool violet tones, complements of the yellow light.

Among the brisk crowd, one man, wearing a straw boater and carrying the cane of a fashionable *boulevardier*, appears twice: he is Renoir's younger brother Edmond, at the time an aspiring journalist. In the lower center, he angles toward us while consulting a book, and walks away at the far left. Many years later Edmond described how he and Renoir shared ten-centime coffees above a café on the

Right Bank, overlooking the bridge. As the artist painted the busy activity below, he would dispatch his brother to delay some figures with idle questions and chatter while he brushed in their forms.

When Renoir painted pont Neuf, life was just returning to normal in Paris. The city had been besieged and the country defeated in the Franco-Prussian War; war wounds and the ensuing violence of the Commune were still raw. Although many parts of the city remained devastated, Renoir emphasized a rebounding vitality. Crossing the bridge are soldiers and dandies, laborers and pampered young ladies: the renewed life of the city.

A most modern old bridge

Which is the oldest of the thirty-plus bridges that cross the Seine in Paris? The “new bridge,” pont Neuf. Begun in 1578, it is also among the longest, spanning both flows of the river as it parts around the Île de la Cité. In 1607 it was officially christened by Henri IV with the name it still bears. (Henri’s equestrian statue can be seen in Renoir’s painting.)

What was new about pont Neuf was its style: instead of being lined with houses in typical medieval fashion, its open span allowed a view of the water. Pont Neuf attracted a lively commerce. On the feast of Corpus Christi, members of the painters’ guild sold their wares there. In 1985 pont Neuf entered the catalogue of contemporary art when it was wrapped in sandstone-

colored fabric by the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

Learn more about the wrapping of pont Neuf:

www.christojeanneclaude.net/pn.html

Gastronomie: haute cuisine

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the highly polished and refined look of Salon painting was matched by the food presented on the finest tables in Paris. *La grande cuisine* originated with the cooking style of Antonin Carême (1784–1833), who cooked for Talleyrand, Baron James de Rothschild, and Czar Alexander I. Carême made the cake for Napoleon Bonaparte’s wedding, and is often called the chef of kings and king of chefs. Known for elaborate constructions and complicated dishes, he was also among the first to begin the practice of serving courses individually and devised many of the tools that are a common part of cooking today. His five-volume *L’Art de la cuisine française* was published in 1833–1834.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, both food and its presentation became simpler. In large measure this change was due to Georges Auguste Escoffier (1846–1935). Escoffier had shown some promise as an artist but was already working in his father’s restaurant in Nice at age thirteen. He moved to Paris in 1865 and served as an army cook during the Franco-Prussian War. After meeting the hotelier César Ritz, Escoffier worked in Ritz restaurants in a number of cities before opening the most famous of them all, in Paris in 1889. His *Guide Culinaire*, published in 1902 with more than 5,000 recipes, remains a standard work on classic French cuisine. Escoffier is also credited with having elevated the status of chef to a profession.

Read a biography of Antonin Carême:

Ian Kelly, *Cooking for Kings: The Life of Antonin Carême, the First Celebrity Chef*. New York: Walker and Co., 2004.

Visit the Escoffier Foundation online:

www.fondation-escoffier.org (in French)



Au Buffet des Tuileries—Souvenir d'une Soirée de l'Année 1869

After a watercolor by Édouard Detaille, in M. Armand Dayot, ed. *Le Second Empire (2 Décembre 1851–4 Septembre 1870)* (Paris, n.d.), 259

National Gallery of Art Library, Washington

slide 4
CD 7Jean Béraud
French, 1849 – 1936*Paris, rue du Havre*, c. 1882
Oil on canvas, 13 7/8 x 10 3/4 in.National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.2

Not all painters of modern life adopted the loose brushwork of impressionism. Jean Béraud, younger than either Monet or Renoir, painted the fast pace and isolation of contemporary Paris, but he typically employed the more refined style and finish of Salon painting.

Here, Béraud presents a view of the corner of rue du Havre and boulevard Haussmann. In the background is the facade of the Gare Saint-Lazare (see p. 24). On the right, tarpaulins and colorful posters enliven scaffolding that protects the damaged edifice of the department store, Le Printemps. Described by Émile Zola as a “*cathédrale du commerce*,” Le Printemps suffered a catastrophic fire in the early morning hours of March 9, 1881. Fortunately, the shopgirls living on upper floors escaped, and only one fatality was recorded. The store was rebuilt and remains, much expanded, at the same location today.

Department stores

Le Printemps, which opened in 1865, is one of the world’s oldest department stores (Le Bon Marché, also in Paris, is usually credited with being the first). These new institutions offered women a new public space. They provided lower-class women with respectable

work and upper-class women with a socially acceptable destination outside the home. The bustling young woman with hatboxes who crosses Béraud’s picture from the 1880s would have found such an errand commonplace, but her mother probably experienced it as a newfound freedom.

Read a nineteenth-century novel detailing the phantasmagoria of the modern department store:
Émile Zola, *Au bonheur des dames*
(*The Ladies’ Paradise*), 1883.

reproduction
slide 5 | CD 8

Edgar Degas
French, 1834–1917

The Dance Lesson, c. 1879
Oil on canvas, 14 15/16 x 34 5/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1995.47.6



Many of Edgar Degas' best-known paintings depict ballet dancers. Degas was drawn to athletes and performers of all kinds. With a practiced line he arrested their precise, controlled movements in a snapshot-like moment of time.

This work is probably the first of a group of forty distinctive ballet scenes with an unusual horizontal format. The wide view accommodated Degas' fascination with the unexpected views of photography and Japanese prints (see p. 132): figures are sharply cropped and placed off-center, while the floor, dominating the scene, seems tipped upward, an illusion accentuated by the format.

Ballet made hard demands, as Degas' picture suggests. Most dancers were from poor families. They began classes at age seven or eight and worked long hours. By the time she was a teenager, a girl who had advanced to become a member of the company was probably the top breadwinner in her family. Already in the later 1870s, when Degas' painting was made, ballet had begun to attract more middle-class girls, perhaps encouraged by the fame and aristocratic marriages achieved by some leading stars of the dance stage.

Consider this

How does it feel to be in this room? What mood or emotions do the figures and setting convey? Can you suggest an alternative title?

Ballet dancers are known for the seemingly effortless perfection of their elegant stage performances. Does this behind-the-scenes view reinforce or contradict that view? Why do you think Degas chose to treat the subject in this way?

- *realist depiction of modern life*
- *variety of relaxed and tensed poses*
- *popularity of ballet*

Where are the brightest colors in the painting? Why do you think the painter accented those areas?

- *red wrap at lower left directs our eye to exhausted sitter, setting emotional tone of painting and also drawing eye to that starting point*
- *red bow causes eye to pan across canvas to upper right*

Is the composition balanced or asymmetrical? Try to locate the foreground, middle ground, and background—how do they change in different parts of the picture?

Cover up the brown wainscoting and see how the picture changes.

- *Dark shapes provide a central anchor for the dynamic composition*

If horizontal lines suggest restfulness and diagonal lines suggest dynamism, how would you characterize the composition?

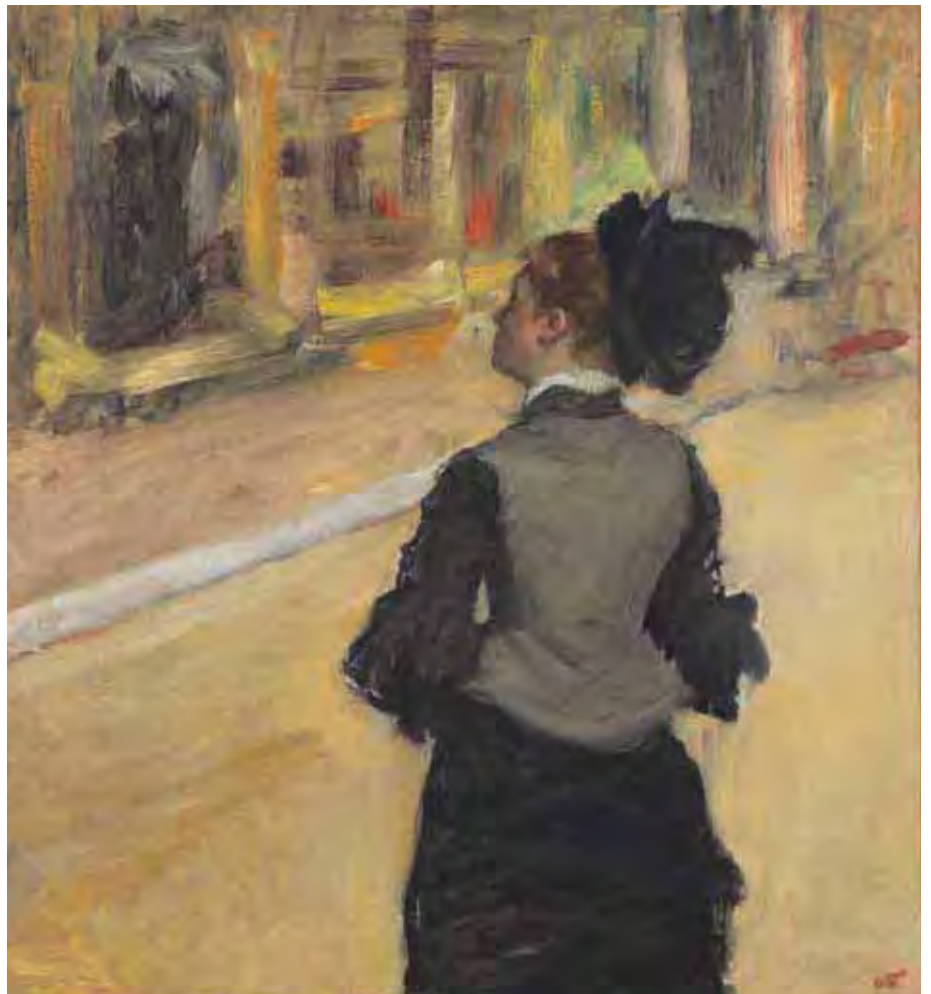
Where do you see the influence of photography or Japanese prints?

- *high, angled vantage point*
- *cropped figures*
- *awkward, seemingly unstaged poses*

CD 9	Edgar Degas French, 1834–1917	<i>Woman Viewed from Behind</i> , unknown date Oil on canvas, 32 x 29 ¾ in.	National Gallery of Art, Washington Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1985.64.11
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Long, sketchy brushstrokes suggest paintings in heavy gold frames, an expanse of parquet floor, and, at the right, a pair of rose-colored columns. The information from these brushy details is sufficient to place this woman in the Grande galerie of the Louvre (see p. 18). Although her form is more clearly defined than her setting, Edgar Degas withholds her full identity by showing us only her back and profile. Almost certainly, however, she is Mary Cassatt, whom Degas had met in the Louvre, where they studied old master paintings. Both artists emphasized careful composition and strong drawing, not the spontaneous transcriptions of classic impressionist style.

Degas made a number of prints and pastels of Cassatt and her sister on visits to the museum; in some she appears to wear the same dress and hat seen here. Perhaps even more telling is the woman's lively interest as she examines the art on the wall before her. Despite Degas' free brushwork elsewhere, an energetic line defines her posture and conveys her quick alertness. Her engaged silhouette—the very tilt of her chin—seems to belie a comment Degas is reported to have made about this painting: that he hoped it would “express the boredom, the overwhelmed respect and admiration, the total lack of sensation that women experience before paintings.”² Although Degas often aimed his sharply critical wit at colleagues (and at women generally), he was, in fact, impressed with the young American, saying of her, “there is someone who senses painting as I do.”³



CD 10 | Edgar Degas

Mary Cassatt at the Louvre: The Paintings Gallery (Au Louvre: La Peinture),

c. 1879/1880

Etching, aquatint, drypoint, and electric crayon on wove paper, plate: 11 7/8 x 4 15/16 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Rosenwald Collection 1946.21.106



slide 6
CD 11

Mary Cassatt
American, 1844–1926

The Loge, 1882
Oil on canvas, 31 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 25 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.96

While Degas took many of his subjects from the stage and orchestra pit, Cassatt focuses attention here on the audience. Behind these two young women are rings of theater seats and a massive crystal chandelier—reflections from the mirrored rear wall of their luxurious box. Ladies were not permitted to sit in orchestra seats. The women, like Cassatt herself, clearly belong to wealthy, proper families. Their careful posture is reserved, almost stiff with decorum.

Not all eyes were trained toward the stage, however, as the young women are equally on view. They sit forward in the loge to be seen (although social norms prevented proper unmarried young women from overtly looking at anyone themselves). The woman holding the fan is Mary Ellison, a friend of the artist visiting from Philadelphia. Even from behind this screen her shy gaze is cast modestly down. The other woman, projecting a more forth-right confidence, is the daughter of poet Stéphane Mallarmé, Geneviève.



The Louvre and Tuileries

It can be argued that the Louvre in Paris was the first true public museum. Although other institutions (including the British Museum [1759], the Ashmolean at Oxford University [1683], and collections in Dresden [1744], the Vatican [1784], and elsewhere) are older, they were not fully public in access or ownership. The idea of opening the French royal collections to the public had been considered in the waning years of the *ancien régime*—changes to the Grande galerie to accommodate public displays were even discussed—but nothing happened before the Revolution of 1789. When the Louvre opened on August 10, 1793 (first anniversary of the founding of the Republic), it was a true public institution, intended not only as a venue for the display of art but to play a role in the

formation and development of a new society. As artist (and revolutionary) Jacques-Louis David declared, “The museum is not supposed to be a vain assemblage of frivolous luxury objects that serve only to satisfy idle curiosity. What it must be is an imposing school.”⁴ For many years the area under the Grande galerie served as artists’ studios and workshops.

The complex of buildings that makes up the Louvre today was built around the core of a twelfth-century fortress erected by Philippe Augustus (1165–1223); its moat walls can be toured in the Louvre basements. The palace was rebuilt and expanded over the centuries. The Grande galerie was completed in 1606 under Henri IV. The collection itself grew from a nucleus formed by François I (1494–1547), which

already included the Louvre’s most famous painting, Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*. By the time of Louis XIV (1639–1715), the royal collection included nearly 1,500 paintings. The military campaigns of Napoleon Bonaparte brought in new treasures from Europe and ancient Egypt. Today the Louvre houses more than 6,000 European paintings, dating from the Middle Ages to the mid-nineteenth century, as well as celebrated works from ancient and nonwestern civilizations.

Visit the Louvre online:

www.louvre.fr (in French and English)



Painted shortly after the Louvre opened, Robert’s view of the Grande galerie shows it filled with visitors, sketching amateurs, and serious artists.

Hubert Robert | French, 1733–1808

Project of the Disposition of the Grande Galerie of the Louvre, 1796

Oil on canvas, 45 ¼ x 57 in.

Paris, Musée du Louvre/Scala/Art Resource, NY



CD 12

Camille Pissarro
French, 1830–1903

Place du Carrousel, Paris, 1900
Oil on canvas, 21 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.55

Pissarro painted roughly twenty-eight scenes of the Tuileries gardens with the Louvre beyond, from a hotel room in the rue de Rivoli. In the sixteenth century, Catherine de Médicis (1519–1589) had

built the Tuileries palace here, on the site of a former tile (*tuile*) works. Burned and reconstructed after the revolutions in 1789 and 1848, the palace was not rebuilt when it was torched a third time during the

Commune. It became instead a royal park, and after Napoleon III opened it to the public, one of the city's most popular promenades.

CD 13

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec
French, 1864–1901*Maxime Dethomas*, 1896
Oil on cardboard, 26 7/16 x 20 7/8 in.National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.219

Maxime Dethomas was an artist and a friend of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, who described him as “a charming lad and partner, who does not talk about his own painting, which is greatly to be admired.”⁵ The two were frequent visitors to various Montmartre nightspots: brothels, dance halls, and café-concerts. They traveled to Spain and Holland together, too.

Yet, for all their closeness, Lautrec’s image of his friend seems almost anonymous. He is pressed close to us, his bulk dominating the front of the picture plane but locked into a narrow space. His figure is cut off at the bottom, increasing the sense that we are witnessing this scene in person. Lautrec painted Dethomas during a masked ball, possibly the one that was held each year during Lent at the Opéra (see opposite). Behind him are gaudily and scantily clad members of the demimonde. The contrast of their pink tights and ruffles with Dethomas’ dark form flattens space—compresses time. It was a boisterous crowd at the Opéra ball, but Lautrec’s picture suggests isolation within the throng and a hallucinatory silence.

Lautrec often painted *à l’essence*, in which oil paints are thinned with turpentine. Used on a cardboard support, like the one here, the technique leaves the pigments with a dry, sketchy quality after the solvent evaporates.

Montmartre

The butte Montmartre was only incorporated into the city of Paris in 1860, and it kept some of its rural character long after other parts of the capital had been transformed by Haussmann’s renovations. Its streets

still followed their twisting medieval paths. Artists found it an inexpensive place to live and work, and it also became the heart of a racy entertainment district.

All levels of society mixed there: the most daring of Paris’ elites, working-class couples, men and women seeking drink or companionship, even the curious foreign tourist.

CD 14

Édouard Manet
French, 1832–1883

Masked Ball at the Opéra, 1873
Oil on canvas, 23 ¼ x 28 ⅞ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Mrs. Horace Havemeyer in memory of
her mother-in-law, Louisine W. Havemeyer 1982.75.1



Manet's canvas presents a wide view of the rowdy festivities at the annual Opéra ball. A leg dangles over a railing. A figure costumed as Polichinelle enters on the left. The ball was a place where upper classes and the demimonde met. "Imagine," suggested the newspaper *Figaro*, "the opera house packed to the rafters, the boxes furnished out with all the pretty showgirls of Paris..."⁶ There is little doubt about the sexual nature of these encounters between wealthy men and young actresses and showgirls in daring dress. In the center a woman stands on the arm of an elegant man. Probably she is an upper-class woman who, by wearing a mask, is rendered anonymous.

Manet posed several of his friends for this painting—writers, artists, and musicians—and even included himself. He is the bearded blond man at right who looks out toward the viewer. A dance card at his feet bears his signature.



Polichinelle was a stock character in raucous and satiric productions performed by such popular theaters as the guignol and commedia dell'arte—and a popular costume choice at masked balls, as well. Manet's Polichinelle bears a striking resemblance to Marshall MacMahon, president of France between 1873 and 1879.

CD 15 | Édouard Manet

Polichinelle, 1874

Lithograph in black hand-colored with gouache and watercolor on wove paper, 18 ⅞ x 12 ¾ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift (Partial and Promised) of Malcolm Wiener, in
Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery
of Art 1990.65.1

reproduction
slide 7 | CD 16

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec
French, 1864–1901

Quadrille at the Moulin Rouge, 1892
Oil on cardboard, 31 ¾ x 23 ¾ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.221

This painting puts us inside one of Paris' most celebrated dance halls, the Moulin Rouge. It was opened in 1889 on the boulevard de Clichy, a frontier of sorts between low-rent Montmartre and more stylish areas. It was a perfect place to witness the spark produced by the collision of popular culture and upper-class society. The Moulin Rouge offered a range of attractions: there were singers and novelty music acts (including a famous “flatulist”), as well as donkey rides in the garden. Beginning around 9:30 in the evening, Paris' smart set arrived for the dancing, which was performed in the midst of the audience.

The woman, hands on hips, who stands squarely in front of a well-dressed couple is the popular danseuse Gabrielle. A high flounce of petticoats behind her shows the character of the dance that drew in the late-night clientele. It was an extreme, highly sexualized form of the cancan, known as the *chahut* or *quadrille naturaliste*. Mark Twain, in *Innocents Abroad* (1869), described the scene firsthand:

Twenty sets formed, the music struck up, and then—I placed my hands before my face for very shame. But I looked through my fingers. They were dancing the renowned Can-can... The idea is to dance as wildly, as noisily, as furiously as you can; expose yourself as much as possible if you are a woman; and kick as high as you can no matter which sex you belong to. There is no word of exaggeration in this.

The *chahut* (from *chahuter*, to create a disturbance) probably originated among the lower class but, like the street culture of hip-hop, was co-opted and marketed for commercial entertainment. Its performers attained celebrity status and helped



increase interest in the dance halls, which had existed since the mid-1800s but underwent a surge of popularity in the 1880s and 1890s.

Consider this

In Lautrec's painting, why might the woman in the green dress be standing as she is, with her hands on her hips and her feet splayed out? How does she contrast with the woman opposite her?

- facing out/facing in
- alone/with companion
- warm colors/cool colors
- active pose/passive pose

Which other aspects of the painting convey an impression of lively movement? What adjectives would you use to describe the presence or absence of motion in the scene?

Lautrec also produced advertising posters, designed to attract the quick glance of an eye. What aspects of this painting would be effective in a poster?

- flat, shallow space allows image to be taken in at once
- simplified forms and lack of distracting details
- clear outlining of shapes
- large areas of color and simplified color scheme
- space at lower right for text

Compare the appearance of this picture, made using the technique of "*peinture à l'essence*" on cardboard, to conventional oils like Manet's *The Railway* (p. 24).



Jane Avril was a friend of Lautrec and a star of the cancan, celebrated for a dance style that was both sensual and ethereal. She had what one contemporary called an "air of depraved virginity."⁷ This was the last poster she commissioned from Lautrec, in late 1899. Its bold design exemplifies his graphic work.

CD 17 | Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

Jane Avril, 1899

5-color lithograph (poster), image:
22 1/16 x 14 15/16 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Rosenwald Collection 1953.6.137



Although there were still a few functioning windmills in Montmartre, the "mill" of the Moulin Rouge was never more than part of its elaborate promotion. Important advertising also came by way of posters commissioned from some of the city's most daring artists. Lautrec's first poster was designed for the Moulin Rouge in December 1891, and it made him famous overnight when more than 3,000 copies were pasted on the walls of Paris.

The Moulin Rouge, before c. 1900

John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art,
Washington, Gallery Archives

reproduction
slide 8 | CD 18

Édouard Manet
French, 1832–1883

The Railway, 1873
Oil on canvas, 36 1/8 x 45 1/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Horace Havemeyer in memory of his
mother, Louise W. Havemeyer 1956.10.1



When Manet painted *The Railway*, the Gare Saint-Lazare was the busiest train station in Paris, gateway to points north and west, including the coast of Normandy and popular riverside resorts along the Seine (see sections 3 and 5). It handled some 40 percent of the city's rail traffic. The pont de l'Europe, a new trellised iron bridge, carried six roadways across its wide trainyard.

Manet titled this painting, which he showed at the Salon in 1874, *Chemin de fer* (railroad). The Gare Saint-Lazare is unseen, but the place was recognizable enough, identified by a small slice of pillar and distinctive grillwork of the new bridge, and by the masses of rising steam. Manet's intentions, however, were not clear to his audience, and they found the picture

difficult to understand. According to a contemporary, "the subject was pronounced to be unintelligible. Properly speaking, there was no subject at all."⁸

The figures are deliberately enigmatic. It seems a casual moment, but one without obvious narrative. The pair are opposites in blue and white, the woman facing out with a direct but undecipherable stare while the girl turns to face the tracks. The contrasts in color and tone neutralize any perception of space and flatten the composition.

Consider this

Describe the setting of *The Railway*. Identify the foreground, middle ground, and background. Try to estimate the depth of each of these areas. How close are we to the figures? What is the visual effect of the railing?

Describe what you see behind the railing. Why might the artist have made it so difficult to identify exactly what is there?

- not to distract attention from the foreground figures*
- to convey the impression of a quick glance*
- to create the bold visual contrast between white steam and black bars; etc.*

List some of the contrasts the artist makes between the two figures.

- young/old*
- seated/standing*
- turned away/facing viewer*
- body covered/skin exposed*
- reversed distribution of blue and white*

How old is each figure? What is their relationship?

Why are they here? How long have they been here?

- long enough for the puppy to fall asleep*

What were they doing before they arrived? What will they do next? What might the seated woman be reading? What is she thinking? Does she recognize us? What is the younger girl thinking?

Where are we now in relation to the scene?

The Artists

Mary Cassatt

American, 1844–1926



Edgar Degas

Portrait of Mary Cassatt, c. 1880–1884 | Oil on canvas, 28 1/8 x 23 1/8 in.

Washington, D.C., National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution | Gift of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation and the Regents Major Acquisitions Fund, Smithsonian Institution NPG.84.34/Art Resource, NY

Mary Cassatt was born in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania, now Pittsburgh. The daughter of a wealthy banker, she grew up in a cultivated environment and lived abroad for a number of years as a young girl. At age sixteen she enrolled in classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia; six years later she set sail for Europe to continue her study of painting. Over the next four years, she worked under several well-known painters in Paris and

Rome. During the Franco-Prussian War, she returned to the United States, but after sixteen months was back in Europe, painting and copying in museums in Italy, Spain, and Belgium. In 1874, the year of the first impressionist exhibition, she settled in Paris. Although she would return home with some regularity, Cassatt spent most of her remaining life in France. Her parents and sister joined her in 1877.

During her long career, an openness to experimentation and new ideas led Cassatt to work in various styles. Until about 1878, her paintings—many of them genre scenes and portraits—reflected the dark, rich colors of the old masters she admired. Several of her works were accepted at the Salon between 1868 and 1876. Through Degas, whom she met in the Louvre, she became part of the circle of impressionists, adopting a more pastel palette and quicker, freer brushwork. When her new work was rejected by the Salon, Degas persuaded Cassatt to join the 1879 impressionist exhibition. She participated in 1880, 1881, and 1886 as well. Degas and Cassatt remained close associates and collaborators. Working with Degas, she took up pastels and printmaking in the mid-1870s—and became one of the most innovative printmakers of the day. Both techniques reinforced her strong and original drawing. In the 1880s she developed a painting style that was more linear and abstract, often influenced by the strong design of Japanese art.

Also in the late 1880s, Cassatt began to devote increased attention to the subjects for which she is most known: intimate scenes of mothers and children. Like all women of her class, she was more limited in her access to subjects than male colleagues. Nevertheless, she enjoyed wide success in Europe and the United States—and advised wealthy American friends on their purchases, particularly of modern paintings, many of which have found their way onto the walls of the National Gallery and other museums in the United States.

Jean Béraud

French, 1849–1936

Jean Béraud and his twin sister Mélanie were born in St. Petersburg, where their father, a French sculptor, was working. The family returned to France after the elder Béraud died, when Jean was four. He grew up in Paris, and read for the law until age twenty-four when he began to study painting. Initially Béraud concentrated on portraiture, but by the end of the 1870s he had turned his eye to subjects from modern life. Béraud admired Manet (and lived in a similar social milieu, once seconding for Marcel Proust in a duel). To accurately reflect a street scene and its rapidly shifting cast of Parisians, Béraud would spend hours sketching from a horse-drawn cab. It was joked that he was known to all of the taxi drivers in Paris—they appreciated a fare who made so little demand on their horses. Béraud worked most often in a detailed, realistic manner but also produced more impressionistic works, with quicker, more spontaneous brushwork and concern for light effects. Around 1890 he began to paint biblical scenes in realistic contemporary settings that his viewers found quite shocking; only in his last years did he return to the city-life scenes that had brought him popular success.

Edgar Degas

French, 1834–1917



CD 77 | Edgar Degas

Self-Portrait with White Collar, c. 1857 | Oil on canvas, 8 1/16 x 5 7/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington | Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1995.47.7

Edgar Degas was born in Paris, the oldest son of a well-to-do banker and part of an extended aristocratic family with cousins in Italy and the United States. His mother had been the daughter of a cotton broker in New Orleans, and Degas spent some time there in the early 1870s.

Although Degas originally intended to study law, he enjoyed unusual parental support for his ultimate decision to become an artist. He began copying Renaissance works in the Louvre, and in 1854 entered the studio of an academic painter who had been a pupil of the neoclassical artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Degas was especially impressed by Ingres' disciplined style, and the older artist reportedly advised him, "Draw lines, young man, and still more lines, from life or from memory."⁹ Throughout his career, Degas stressed careful composition and strong drawing.

In the Louvre Degas met Manet, and through him, future impressionists. Although Degas was an initial organizer of the first impressionist exhibition in 1874 and remained influential among the group, he never accepted the impressionist label to describe his own work. While artists like Monet or Renoir were attempting to transcribe, both directly and immediately, a brief sensory impression, Degas' approach was deliberate and controlled. Believing art to be a series of decisions, he painted in the studio using memory, notes, and preparatory drawings. Degas did, however, share the impressionists' interest in modern life. In the 1860s he started painting scenes at the racetracks around Paris and later in the city's ballet studios and stages, cabarets and dance halls. In all these places he was intrigued by the precise, disciplined movements of the performers—whether racehorses, dancers, singers, or acrobats. "You need natural life," he told landscape colleagues. "I need artificial life."¹⁰

Degas was one of many artists who admired the high viewpoints and looming perspectives of Japanese woodblock prints, which were hugely popular in late nineteenth-century Paris. His unexpected angles and cropped scenes also reflect the impact of photography. Often his work is described using the vocabulary of film: pans, tight close-ups, and freeze frames. These elements impart a momentary feel and enhance a sense that we are seeing a piece of modern life—factual but incomplete like a snapshot that holds only a fragment of reality. Though these compositions appear casual, they are the result of Degas' careful design. "No art is less spontaneous than mine," he said.

Édouard Manet

French, 1832–1883



Henri Fantin-Latour | French, 1836–1904

Édouard Manet, c. 1867 | Oil on canvas,
46 ¼ x 35 ⅞ in.

Art Institute of Chicago/Bridgeman Art Library

“I saw coming toward me a man of youthful appearance, almost distinguished, turned out with elegant simplicity. Light hair, a fine, silky beard... gray eyes, nose straight with flaring nostrils; hands gloved, step quick and springy. It was Manet.”¹¹ These words describe a well-to-do *boulevardier*—an urbane and sophisticated member of Parisian society, a man of the boulevards. This was Édouard Manet’s milieu, the life he lived and painted.

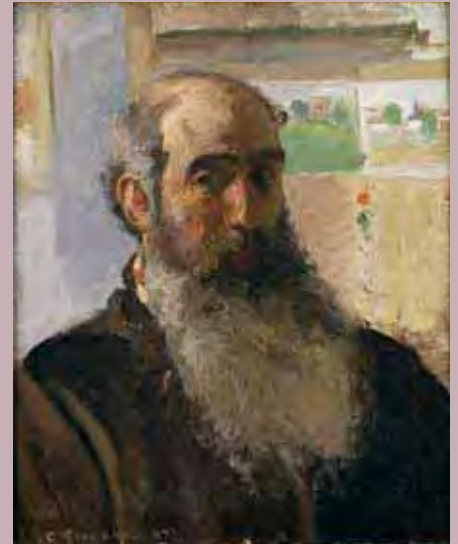
Manet was born in Paris and died there (he said he never truly felt comfortable anywhere else). He showed an early talent for drawing and caricature but tried, unsuccessfully, to enter the French naval college. Overcoming the initial opposition of his father, a high-ranking official at the Ministry of Justice, Manet entered the studio of a successful Salon painter; his most important lessons, however, were learned from old masters in

the Louvre. He was especially impressed with the vivid brushwork of Spanish painter Diego Velázquez and began to develop a free manner of painting that was quite different from the polished surfaces of the academic tradition. Manet created form, not through a gradual blending but with discrete “patches” (*taches*) of color placed side by side. He tended to omit transitional tones, which had the effect of flattening space. Rather than building up thin layers of glaze to slowly achieve his final color, he applied it directly, from the start. Though he often relied on old master paintings for compositional structure and even subject matter, Manet imparted a distinctly modern cast to his work—the cast of modern Paris detected by a *flâneur*.

Although Courbet and others had already challenged academic tradition, when Manet’s painting *Olympia* appeared at the Salon in 1865, no work had ever created such outrage. Its broad patches of color appeared unfinished, an affront to audiences. Even more shocking was its subject—a nude courtesan, one slipper dangling, who assessed viewers with unapologetic frankness. There was no way to escape her reality, to pretend she was cloaked in myth. The *succès du scandale* made Manet an instant leader of the avant-garde. His bold style and modern subjects were enormously influential on the younger artists who would be called impressionists. Although Manet painted some impressionist pictures in the 1870s, he never exhibited with the group and did not share their concern with spontaneity. He worked with models and from drawings, painting mostly in the studio.

Camille Pissarro

French, 1830–1903



Camille Pissarro

Self-Portrait, 1873 | Oil on canvas, 21 ¾ x 18 ⅜ in.
Paris, Musée d’Orsay/Erich Lessing/
Art Resource, NY

Camille Pissarro was born in Charlotte Amalie on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas, where his family (which was French, of Portuguese descent) owned a general store. Today St. Thomas is part of the U.S. Virgin Islands but was then a Danish dependency, and Pissarro remained a Danish citizen although he spent almost his entire adult life in France. After attending school outside Paris, where he developed an interest in drawing, Pissarro found little appeal in the family business back on St. Thomas—and the island offered limited opportunity to study art. After meeting a marine and landscape painter in 1852, Pissarro escaped family pressures and spent the next two years with the artist in the Caribbean, learning to paint.

Pissarro returned to France in time to see the 1855 universal exposition and was especially impressed by Corot’s paintings exhibited there. Years later he would still identify himself as Corot’s student. Pissarro

Auguste Renoir

French, 1841–1919

took classes at the Académie Suisse, where he met Cézanne, Monet, and other younger painters. By about 1869 he had begun to paint in an impressionist style, with quick, unblended brushstrokes and a light palette. He was devoted to capturing sensations—not only an appearance of nature but his individual experience of it. Pissarro later advised a young artist, “Don’t work bit by bit... Keep everything going on an equal basis; use small brush strokes and try to put down your perceptions immediately. Do not proceed according to rules and principles, but paint what you observe and feel.”¹²

Pissarro moved his family to Pontoise and then Louveciennes, small towns outside Paris that were better suited to his temperament and struggling finances. There, he grew closer to Monet (living in Argenteuil) and Renoir (a frequent visitor). Pissarro was drawn to the rural life of the countryside. His politics—humane, secular, and socialist—grounded his art. He played a vital role in organizing the loosely defined group that participated in the first impressionist exhibition in 1874 and was, in fact, the only artist to participate in every one of the eight exhibitions mounted between 1874 and 1886.

Pissarro is best known for the impressionist landscapes he painted in the early 1870s, but already toward the end of the decade, he was working the canvas more heavily. He made a long study of optical effects and color theory, and in the mid-1880s briefly adopted a pointillist style. With a tolerant, generous nature, Pissarro was a natural mentor and teacher. He worked closely (and to mutual benefit) with Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Seurat. Cassatt was reported to have said that “he could have taught stones to draw correctly.”



Frédéric Bazille | French, 1841–1870

Pierre Auguste Renoir, Painter, c. 1867 | Oil on canvas, 24 ¾ x 20 in.

Paris, Musée d’Orsay/Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

Auguste Renoir was born in the porcelain center of Limoges. His father was a tailor of modest means, and the young painter would struggle financially. The family moved to Paris in 1844, and at age fifteen Renoir was apprenticed as a porcelain painter. In the evenings he studied drawing. By about 1860 he had determined to become a serious artist and began to study in the Louvre. He was drawn particularly to works by Peter Paul Rubens, François Boucher, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and Eugène Delacroix—artists who delighted in exuberant color, the human figure, and social interaction. In 1862 Renoir was accepted at the École des Beaux-Arts, but his most fruitful exchanges were with the other young artists: Monet, Sisley, and Frédéric Bazille, whom he accompanied on painting expeditions to the nearby forest

of Fontainebleau. It was Renoir and Monet, working together, who created impressionism, developing its broken, sketchy brushwork and light-filled palette. From the late 1860s through the early years of the 1870s, the two often painted alongside each other, capturing the same outdoor scene. Even in his landscapes, however, Renoir’s real interest appears focused on people.

By the 1880s Renoir, like many of the impressionists, had become dissatisfied with the style’s reliance on visual effects, and sought—in his words—an art of more permanent qualities. Following a trip to Italy, where he found new inspiration in Raphael and other Renaissance painters, Renoir developed a harder, more linear manner. In 1890 he reverted to a softer style with scenes of women and children and female nudes.

A *joie de vivre* characterizes all Renoir’s work, whatever its style. We link his name almost automatically with images of young men and women enjoying each other and their leisure. Although his contribution to the development of impressionism was substantial, as Renoir himself recognized, “it is difficult for painting to be accepted as really great painting while remaining joyous... They don’t take seriously people who smile.”¹³

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

French, 1864–1901



Toulouse-Lautrec painting his portrait with himself as model, c. 1890

John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gallery Archives

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec was born in Albi, in southwestern France. His family had ties to the counts of Toulouse, who had once ruled over large parts of the Languedoc. As was fairly common in aristocratic families anxious to preserve their lineage and reluctant to dilute landholdings, Lautrec's parents were cousins. In his case inbreeding resulted in abnormally weak bones. As a child he suffered multiple breaks that stunted his growth and caused lifelong problems with his legs. Shut out of most of the activities that occupied young men of his class, he became an observer instead of a participant, finely tuned to detect hypocrisy and sentimentality—which he often encountered personally. By the time he was seven or eight, Lautrec was sketching family members. After 1872 he spent much of each year in Paris, living with his mother. As his interest in drawing and painting continued, he undertook formal studies. In the early 1880s, Lautrec began to frequent Montmartre. In 1884 he rented a studio there and made the quarter his home. In the seedy, marginal district of Montmartre, he found the subjects

that would occupy the whole of his short career: singers, circus performers, dancers, and audiences from every level of Parisian society, whose complex psychologies he captured with insight and economy.

Lautrec's scandalously bohemian lifestyle (his father urged him to use a pseudonym) and constant drinking did not hinder his success. By the time he was twenty-one, he was selling drawings and prints to magazines and newspapers and was illustrating books, song lyrics, and theater programs. He was well regarded by the international avant-garde, exhibiting in Paris and Brussels, and he enjoyed popular success as well. In 1891 he produced the first of thirty posters that both made him famous and revolutionized the graphic arts. In 1899 alcoholism forced his institutionalization. He was released, in part because of a series of drawings he had made from memory to prove his soundness of mind, and returned to Montmartre, late nights, and heavy drinking. He died in 1901 at age thirty-six.

CARTE DE LA FORET DE FONTAINEBLEAU



Encounters with Nature in the Forest of Fontainebleau

Many French painters' engagement with France's countryside began about 60 km (40 mi.) south of Paris, in the forest surrounding the town of Fontainebleau. Originally a hunting preserve of French kings, in the nineteenth century this ancient forest met new needs for a growing middle class. As industrialization displaced and reordered rural economies, the conception of nature changed. An older, romantic ideal of raw, awe-inspiring power would be increasingly moderated by bourgeois views of nature as a restorative balm for the world-weary.

Large numbers of city dwellers—accommodated by a growing rail network—traveled to find comfort, contemplation, and recreation in the woods. Guidebooks describing nature itineraries expanded outward from Paris as new track lines were laid. Appearing in 1837, Etienne Jamin's *Quatre promenades dans la forêt* was among the earliest guides to the Fontainebleau forest. Already, however, photographers and painters had been making regular artistic expeditions there. For those living in Paris, the forest was an easy day's jaunt a full decade before an 1876 guidebook noted:

Fontainebleau offers all the beauties of nature joined together close to Paris: imposing views and a grandiose bleakness, majestic forests and century-old beeches, clearings where heather grows among the sand and sandstone; pools and mossy ponds. The forest of Fontainebleau is a veritable school of contemporary landscape painting. There is not a single artist among the most famous who has not passed through it.¹

Most of the artists we encounter in this section were associated with the so-called Barbizon school (see p. 37). Gathered at the rustic Ganne Inn, they helped make a new kind of landscape art.



View of the Fontainebleau forest
Kimberly Jones

slide 9
CD 19

Constant Famin
French, c. 1830–1900

Forest Scene, c. 1865
Albumen print from collodion negative
mounted on blue paper, 9 ¾ x 7 ¼ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Joyce and Robert Menschel 2004.42.1



Painters were not alone in traveling to Fontainebleau. Photographers explored the forest and its environs with their cameras. Constant Famin, whose prints first appeared in 1863, was among this group. A specialist in landscape and scenes of rural life, Famin seems to have operated a studio in Paris.

Background: Fontainebleau and the forest

- Today the forest of Fontainebleau encompasses about 28,000 hectares (69,000+ acres) and has been a part of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere preserve since 1986.
- By the beginning of the 11th century, it was a royal hunting preserve, called the Bière forest.
- A succession of ever-grander hunting lodges evolved into the magnificent chateau in Fontainebleau, where François I (1494–1547) introduced Italian Renaissance art and architecture to northern Europe.
- Planting began around 1720, and from the late 18th century some areas of the forest were devoted to the harvesting of pine.
- By 1820 three villages had begun to attract painters: Marlotte, Chailly, and Barbizon; in the 1840s a rail line near these locations made access easier.
- The forest terrain is quite diverse, with deep woods, sandy desertlike stretches, bogs, ravines, and boulders worn into fantastic shapes.
- The rock is largely sandstone and supplied many of the cobbles used to pave the streets of Paris.
- The forest remains home to stag, roe deer, fox, wild boar, and an especially rich diversity of insects, including 1,700 species of butterfly.
- Its current tree population is approximately 45 percent oak, 40 percent pine, and 10 percent beech.
- Visited by about 13 million people each year, 'Bleau, as young enthusiasts call it, is a world-class site for boulder climbing.

Vocabulaire

- auberge (f):** inn
- blaireau (m):** badger (also, shaving brush)
- bloc (m):** boulder
- calcaire (m):** limestone
- cerf (m):** stag
- chasse (f):** hunt
- chêne (m):** oak
- forêt (f):** forest
- grès (m):** sandstone
- hêtre (m):** beech tree, beech wood
- papillon (m):** butterfly
- pin (m):** pine tree
- randonner:** to make an excursion or tour (especially on foot)
- renard (m):** fox
- rocher (m):** rock
- sable (m):** sand
- sanglier (m):** wild boar

Read about expeditions to Fontainebleau in 19th-century literature:

Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Manette Salomon*, 1866

Gustave Flaubert, *L'Éducation sentimentale*, 1869

Visit Barbizon, the Ganne Inn, and artists' studios:

www.barbizon-france.com (in French and English)

Learn more about the ecology and future of the forest:

www.onf.fr/fontainebleau (official site of the French National Office of Forests, in French)

Get a feel for bouldering. Find maps, trail information, difficulty ratings, and message boards; register to see video of boulder climbs, or post your own:

<http://bleau.info/> (in French, English, and Dutch)

The Works

reproduction
slide 10 | CD 20

Alphonse Jeanrenaud
French, 1818–1895

Fontainebleau, c. 1860s
Albumen print, sheet: 12 5/8 x 10 1/4 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
The Amy Rose Silverman Fund and Funds
from an Anonymous Donor 1999.70.1



Like many early photographers, Alphonse Jeanrenaud experimented with various photographic techniques and materials and published some of his findings. This is an albumen print, made by coating the paper surface with egg white, sensitizing it with silver nitrates, and exposing it to the negative. Prized for rich, brilliant tones and clarity of detail, the albumen printing

process allowed Jeanrenaud to render in exquisite detail the specific character of trees, vegetation, and rocks, and especially subtle transitions of light and shade. Like his colleague Eugène Cuvelier, who also made photographs of the Fontainebleau forest, Jeanrenaud sought to capture not specific points of interest but rather the subjective experience of the forest as a

Consider this

What landscape features in Jeanrenaud's photograph lead your eye deeper into space?

- path*
- rocks*
- light of sky*
- dark trees on either side*

Where is the area of sharpest focus? Where do the objects appear blurred? What impact does this distinction have on the illusion of spatial depth?

Where was the photographer standing when he made this picture? How does his vantage point affect our experience of the picture?

- enhances effect of recession*

Photographers and painters often worked together in the forest. Imagine their discussions about this scene and how their different media would affect their images.

place of quiet meditation and aesthetic contemplation. In this photograph the personal and experiential quality of the forest is conveyed not only through the delicate rendering of light but also through the composition itself. Trees gently frame a curving path that invites viewers to enter imaginatively the forest's refuge.

slide 11
CD 21

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
French, 1796–1875

Forest of Fontainebleau, 1834
Oil on canvas, 69 1/8 x 95 1/2 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.109



The small figure in the foreground of this large-scale picture seems a bit of an afterthought—awkward, almost too small—and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, in fact, added the woman over an area already painted with plants. She is a bit surprising, with her dangerously low-falling chemise, untied locks, and intent concentration on what looks to be an illuminated manuscript. Audiences, who saw her at the Salon of 1834, would have recognized her right away as Mary Magdalene, the fallen woman who became the great penitent. The long tresses, book, and revealing décolletage point to her identity. In 1834 audiences, and the artist himself, still expected a finished landscape—especially one destined for the Salon and of such imposing dimension (almost 8 feet long)—to be more than a mere recording of nature. Corot added the Magdalene to

give his picture the kind of serious purpose expected of it by Salon juries.

Even without the figure of Mary Magdalene, however, this painting is far from a mere recording of nature. Although it relies on oil studies that Corot painted outdoors in the Fontainebleau forest, this is a painting made—physically and mentally—in the studio. It does not portray a single spot but is an arrangement of landscape elements composed from various studies and from memory. A clear recession of forms, the stream that draws the eye to a light-filled distance, the *repoussoir* effect of dark masses on either side, the bright focus on the figure—all these echo the classical conception of a landscape made two hundred years earlier (see opposite). What has sometimes been called Corot's “instinctive classicism” sets him apart from the Barbizon painters.



CD 22 | Claude Lorrain | French, 1600–1682

Landscape with Merchants, c. 1630

Oil on canvas, 38 ¼ x 56 ½ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Samuel H. Kress Collection 1952.5.44

The Barbizon school

Between about 1830 and 1870, a number of artists were associated with the forest of Fontainebleau, and especially the village of Barbizon, where they gathered at a small inn run by the Ganne family. They were never a formal group, and not all of them painted the forest per se, but these young artists shared a new approach to landscape. They emerged from the so-called Generation of 1830. As the July Revolution was deposing a conservative monarch, they were themselves overturning long-held artistic traditions. They looked to Dutch landscapes of the seventeenth century and to John Constable's views of the English countryside (shown in Paris at the Salon in 1824). Constable's fresh naturalism encouraged these young French painters to express their vision of nature without academic convention or idealization—abandoning the classical tradition that had long dominated French painting. On the one hand, their choice of humble subjects over heroic themes fit well with the aims of realism, but their celebration of peasant life—and especially their deeply

personal connection to nature—evidenced a romantic sensibility too. Barbizon regulars included Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, and Narcisse Diaz (and others not discussed here). Charles-François Daubigny was also a frequent presence, although his favorite subjects were along the Oise River. Somewhat older, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot had sketched in the forest from the early 1820s and inspired younger painters working there. As all these artists moved toward a more natural approach, they placed greater emphasis on painting outdoors and applied a freer technique than the smooth finish of academic art. Their legacy would become the *plein-air* painting of impressionism. They, however, did not seek an immediate “impression” of nature. Instead, the Barbizon artists hoped to reveal nature's deeper character, the rugged and enduring unity underlying all of its changing aspects.

reproduction
slide 12 | CD 23

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
French, 1796–1875

Rocks in the Forest of Fontainebleau, 1860/1865
Oil on canvas, 18 x 23 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.110



Corot painted this canvas some thirty years after *Forest of Fontainebleau*, and he did so right in front of the scene. Grains of sand stuck in the paint are proof, though its vivid sense of place is testament enough. This is a humble corner of the woods, perhaps near the Gorges d'Apremont. But, these are not the famous rock formations or ancient oaks that drew most painters (or tourists). Corot was attracted instead to secluded areas and to images of struggling life—these trees manage to grow from meager spaces between the boulders. Light and air circulate through the entire space, creating an enveloping atmosphere, unlike the heavy wooded shade that attracted Barbizon artists. A bit of bright sky breaks through the leaves, and the sun filters down; it seems not to punctuate the darkness but to shimmer and dance in the cool

shade. It was the freshness and immediacy of works like this that attracted younger artists. Corot's unselfconscious observation of a direct experience in nature positioned him, at age seventy, among the avant-garde. He bridged an old and new way of looking at landscape, between the classical tradition and the sensory approach of the impressionists. He was instrumental in a new acceptance of unembellished nature and the freer style of *plein-air* painting.

When Corot was a younger man, such *plein-air* works would have been created as studies only. Although he never meant it for exhibition or sale, Corot did, however, consider *Rocks in the Forest of Fontainebleau* an independent work of art—insofar as it was self-sufficient and freestanding, not simply a tool for the production of a “real” painting.

Consider this

Describe Corot's *Rocks in the Forest of Fontainebleau* using the photographic terms of focus and out-of-focus. Why do you think Corot adopted this treatment?

- *perhaps influence of photography, but also to create a sense of atmosphere*

Is there any evidence of sunlight? If you touched the rocks would they be warm or cool? Would the grass be dry or wet? What sounds might you hear in this place?

What words or kinds of words express the mood of the painting?

If Corot had wanted to use this painting as a sketch, the basis for a more traditional work to be carried out in his studio, what changes would produce the sort of classical composition exhibited at the Salon?

- *organizing space into clear zones for foreground, middle ground, background*
- *adding repoussoir and other devices that lead the eye into space*
- *including figures and literary or historical references*

A feel for light



CD 24 | Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
Bridge on the Saône River at Mâcon, 1834
Oil on paper on canvas, 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.
National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.22

The affinities between these two light-filled spaces are clear—both are painted using a technique of *peinture claire*, in which pigments are built up on a light-colored ground. It was Corot's feel for light that attracted such younger artists as Morisot. Berthe Morisot painted her sister Edma during a trip to the Brittany coast in 1869. Remove Edma from the scene and Morisot's painting becomes even more like Corot's study, painted three decades before in southern Burgundy while Corot was en route to Italy. Each composition is divided into a triad of land, water, and sky.



CD 25 | Berthe Morisot
The Harbor at Lorient, 1869
Oil on canvas, 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.48

CD 26

Théodore Rousseau
French, 1812–1867

Sunset from the Forest of Fontainebleau, 1848
Oil over graphite on paper laid down on canvas,
12 ¹/₁₆ x 18 ¹/₁₆ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Helen Porter and James T. Dyke 2003.70.1

No artist is more closely associated with the forest of Fontainebleau than Théodore Rousseau, who made the village of Barbizon his permanent home. This is an oil study for an official government commission given in 1848, an important work for the artist, who had seen most of his earlier works rejected by more conservative Salons. The final, much larger painting was exhibited in 1850–1851 and is now in the Louvre (below).

This look from inside the forest to a clearing is a composition Rousseau repeated often. Rousseau does not idealize; yet, this is not some chance corner of the forest. Even if based on studies made outdoors it is an artfully arranged scene. Rousseau sought to express the abiding structure and permanence of nature, not its incidental appearance. His oil study, which on first glance can look almost monochromatic, is painted in a muted range of tones with strong, short strokes. It has a freshness that is rarely translated to Rousseau's final canvases, which he worked and reworked to express his deeply personal connection with nature.



Théodore Rousseau

Exit from the Forest of Fontainebleau at Sunset, c. 1848
Oil on canvas, 55 ⁷/₁₆ x 77 ³/₄ in.

Paris, Musée du Louvre/Scala/Art Resource, NY

The academic tradition and Salon painting

For most of the nineteenth century, painting and sculpture in France were dominated by the official arts establishment, embodied by the Academy (Académie des Beaux-Arts). It ran the official art school, awarded prizes to young artists (and largely controlled their fates), and sponsored the official juried exhibitions known as Salons. Its influence was enormous—the Academy prescribed what painting should depict and how it should look. The original Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture had been founded in 1648 under Louis XIV. It set out a hierarchy of genres that promoted history painting (figure paintings with elevated themes taken from ancient history, mythology, and the Bible) as the highest achievement of art, since it required learning and imagination. Further down the ranks was portraiture, which relied on the physical appearance

of the sitter but which also communicated intangible qualities of personality and character. Landscape and still-life painting were regarded as essentially imitations of what the artist saw, which in the Academy's eyes turned the artist into a mere copyist of nature.

The style of painting promoted by the Academy followed the classical tradition of Renaissance Italy. Successful students were awarded the Prix de Rome, which granted the winner a year's stipend to study in Italy and learn from such masters as Raphael. Two of the most prominent French painters of the seventeenth century, Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin (who was the founding director of the royal Academy), spent most of their careers in Italy, using the scenery of the Roman countryside as settings for

history paintings. At different times, debate raged within the Academy about the relative primacy of line or color, with the former usually ascendant. Line was thought to be disciplined and cerebral while color was considered a blandishment for the senses. Academic compositions were harmonious and carefully controlled, their receding planes easily “read.” Depictions were naturalistic and detailed but highly idealized and artfully contrived—nature was actively transformed into art. Academic expectation also dictated a refined and polished finish; individual brushstrokes were so blended as to be invisible. Avant-garde artists in the nineteenth century would challenge all these conventions.

Poussin's art was a foundation of the French classical style favored by the Academy. This scene is taken from Greek and Roman mythology. It is painted in a naturalistic but idealized manner, with a high degree of finish, an emphasis on line to convey legible forms, and an ordered, almost geometrically conceived composition.

CD 27 | Nicolas Poussin | French, 1594–1665

The Feeding of the Child Jupiter, c. 1640
Oil on canvas, 46 1/8 x 61 1/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Samuel H. Kress Collection 1952.2.21



CD 28

Narcisse Díaz de la Peña
French, 1808–1876

*The Edge of the Forest at Les Monts-Girard,
Fontainebleau, 1868*
Oil on canvas, 38 ½ x 49 7/16 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Fund 2000.37.1

This painting depicts a well-known area at the edge of the forest, where the oaks were ancient and beautiful. The scene has a grandeur unembellished by any hint of human anecdote, even though the clearing was often used for resting flocks. Although Narcisse Díaz de la Peña would have made outdoor studies on the spot, his finished work was painted in the studio and probably incorporates landscape elements sketched elsewhere around Fontainebleau. The warm tones of green and brown, and shimmering light are all typical of his late paintings. His richly painted surface—thickly applied pigment encrusts the old trees almost like lichens—impressed younger painters with its boldness. So did his feeling for light, here breaking through gathering storm clouds to fall on tree trunks and a boggy pool.



Photography and painting

Since the announcement of photography's invention in 1839, painting and photography have been engaged in a productive, mutually informing dialogue. The value of photography for documentary purposes was recognized from the outset; for example, the French government commissioned Charles Marville to record old sections of Paris slated for demolition. But even in the earliest days of the new medium, many photographers set about to make photography an art. A number of French photographers had been trained as painters: Louis Daguerre was a designer of stage sets and panoramas, Eugène Cuvelier studied with a landscape artist, and both Charles Nègre and Gustave Le Gray trained under the noted academic painter Paul Delaroche. Early photographers modeled their compositions and often their subject matter

on painting. They were seeking to give their images the same power of expression that painting possessed, whether rendering insight into the character of a portrait subject, detailing the familiar narratives of genre scenes, or forging a romantic connection to nature.

Painters, for their part, responded to the new medium in various ways. Several, including Degas, became proficient with a camera themselves, while others, like Courbet, used photographs as preparatory studies for paintings. Corot, who collected photographs, also experimented with a printmaking technique called *cliché-verre* that uses a hand-drawn photographic negative. Other artists adopted the visual effects of photography; for example, the soft, feathery texture characteristic of prints made from

paper negatives finds parallel in paintings and pastels by Corot and Millet. Degas' photographs likely reinforced his use of casual poses and unusual perspectives. Eadweard Muybridge's sequential photographs of animals and people in motion also seems to have informed Degas' painterly exploration of time, sequence, and motion. Other painters responded to photography's unexpected blurring of moving objects, adopting sketchy brushstrokes to convey speed, movement, and the pace of modern life.

Read more about early photography and photographers at:

<http://www.mediahistory.umn.edu/photo.htm>

Oaks, artists, and nature preserves

Ancient oaks—and the artists who admired them—helped preserve the forest of Fontainebleau for France and all who visit today. In 1861 Rousseau and other Barbizon artists, concerned that the oaks were being logged to allow commercial

planting of pine, petitioned the emperor to intervene. Napoleon III's proclamation designated 1,000 hectares (about 2,500 acres) of the forest as "*séries artistiques*," the first official action in history to protect a natural site. (Yellowstone in the United States, the

first national park, was established in 1872. Its creation was also spurred by artists, especially Thomas "Yellowstone" Moran whose paintings communicated the site's grandeur in a way no written account could.)



CD 29

Eugène Cuvelier
French, 1837–1900

Forest Scene, early 1860s
Salted paper print from paper negative, 7 5/8 x 10 1/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Patrons' Permanent Fund 1995.36.71

Eugène Cuvelier's technical prowess and ability to sensitively render light and atmosphere are evident here. Although nominally a description of trees, his

photograph's main subject is the feathery, luminous appearance of dappled, silvery light as it filters through the twisted skein of delicate branches.

slide 13
CD 30

Charles-François Daubigny
French, 1817–1878

Studio on the Boat (Le Bateau-atelier), 1862
Etching, plate: 5 1/16 x 7 1/16 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Joan Lees in memory of
Edward Lees, M.D. 1981.58.14

In 1857 Charles-François Daubigny bought a river ferry, the “Botin,” and outfitted it as a floating studio. Corot was named honorary admiral; Daubigny’s son was cabin boy—and, it appears from some of the artist’s etchings of life aboard, chief fish-catcher. The studio boat gave the artist a platform for views he could not paint directly on land. He sailed “Botin” up and down the rivers of France until his death. Other artists, including Monet, would also equip studio boats.



Daubigny associated with the Barbizon painters, but this is not a forest scene. Like many of his works, it shows a spot along the Oise River, near the village of Valmondois, where Daubigny grew up. Probably it was painted mid-river from Daubigny’s studio boat, which afforded him a good vantage for painting the luminous sky and watery reflections. These plays of light and air are his main preoccupation, not the tiny washerwomen, barely visible on the bank on the left. They may have been added as a concession to public taste.

CD 31 | Charles-François Daubigny

Washerwomen at the Oise River near Valmondois,
1865

Oil on wood, 9 1/2 x 18 1/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of R. Horace Gallatin 1949.1.3

Monet in Fontainebleau

Drawn to the works of Corot and the Barbizon painters, Claude Monet and other impressionists-in-the-making also painted in the forest of Fontainebleau during the early 1860s. It was the setting of Monet's most ambitious work to date: a twenty-foot canvas that was never publicly

exhibited. The painting was so large he had to lower it into a trench in order to work on it outdoors. Left to settle a debt with his landlord, it was ruined by moisture and neglect. Today, only fragments survive, along with painted studies and drawings, including the two illustrated here.

The oil study captures the brilliant light that dapples the ground and dances off an elegant young couple. They are Monet's future wife Camille and Frédéric Bazille, a friend and fellow painter. The pencil sketch lets us place them within the broader composition: approaching other fashionable young Parisians gathered for a picnic. This road, often painted, led through the forest to the village of Chailly. In the shadows is a server, hired from one of the many local catering firms that could provide all the accoutrements of a forest outing. After extension of the train from Paris to Melun in 1849, Fontainebleau and villages like Chailly became easy suburban jaunts. While Corot and the Barbizon artists continued to paint its ancient oaks and time-formed rocks, the forest had long since become a place where the bourgeoisie encountered nature on its own terms—a place for tourists, guided by books and signposts, and populated with numerous amateur painters. Monet's Fontainebleau subject, despite its forest setting, was really modern life.



CD 32 | Claude Monet

Bazille and Camille (Study for "Déjeuner sur l'Herbe"), 1865 | Oil on canvas, 36 ⁵/₈ x 27 ¹/₈ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.41



CD 33 | Claude Monet

The Luncheon on the Grass, c. 1865
Black chalk on blue laid paper, 12 x 18 ⁷/₁₆ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1995.47.60

The Artists

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

French, 1796–1875



Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

Self-Portrait at the Easel, 1825 | Oil on canvas,
12 ½ x 9 ⅜ in.

Paris, Musée du Louvre/Scala/Art Resource, NY

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot links the classicism of France's past with the naturalist impulses that drove nineteenth-century art. He was born in Paris, where his father was a prosperous cloth merchant and his mother a dressmaker. His father hoped he would enter the clothing trade, but Corot was uninterested in business. A small income allowed him to study art instead. His first teachers were painters in the academic tradition, which sought to elevate the natural world

into a more ideal state through narrative and lucid composition. They hoped to enhance the status of landscape painting itself—held in lower esteem than grander pursuits of history painting or even portraiture—by incorporating historical or biblical themes. After Corot these aims would fall away. He was, as Baudelaire wrote about him in 1845, “at the head of the modern school of landscape.”² Corot lived nearly eighty years, and was productive almost until his death—he saw French landscape transformed, in large measure by his influence.

Today, Corot's most admired paintings are outdoor studies, most made during many trips to Italy (the first in 1825) and around various parts of France. He traveled a part of almost every year, often in the company of Rousseau or other painters. The fresh vision of his works painted directly from nature had a profound impact on fellow artists, but they were shared with few others. For the Salon and his many eager buyers, Corot instead offered “historicized” landscapes in the academic tradition, peopled with figures from myth, the Bible, or ancient history, and “composed” landscapes. These composed scenes, most set near his home at Ville d'Avray, were part fact, part memory. Their soft atmospheres and diaphanous trees are as much evocations of mood as of place; yet, they were informed by his constant work outdoors.

Eugène Cuvelier

French, 1837–1900

Born in the northern city of Arras, Eugène Cuvelier was first introduced to photography by his father, Adalbert. Although he made his fortune in manufacturing, the elder Cuvelier was also an amateur painter and an accomplished photographer. While the young Eugène most certainly learned the practice of photography from his father, his training in the studio of landscapist Constant Dutilleux encouraged a broader interest in art and especially the aesthetic of *plein-air* painting.

In 1856 Cuvelier visited Barbizon for the first time, and three years later he married Louise Ganne, the daughter of the Barbizon innkeeper whose auberge served as the gathering place for Corot, Millet, Rousseau, and other painters. Alongside his fellow artists, Cuvelier explored the forest of Fontainebleau with his camera, creating some of the most astonishingly sensitive and lyrical of all nineteenth-century landscape photographs.

Although he was a member of the Société Française de Photographie, and occasionally exhibited his photographs, Cuvelier does not appear to have sought commissions, operated a studio, or sold his work to the public. Instead, creating photographs for himself and his friends, he made few prints from his negatives and lavished great care on them, achieving a tonal and surface richness rarely found in the work of commercial nineteenth-century photographers.

Charles-François Daubigny

French, 1817–1878



In M. Armand Dayot, ed. *Le Second Empire (2 Décembre 1851–4 Septembre 1879)* (Paris, n.d.), 254

National Gallery of Art Library, Washington

Charles-François Daubigny was born in Paris but raised along the Oise River. Son of a landscape painter, he was too poor to enter a teaching studio. As a teenager he supported himself by doing illustrations for a publisher and working for a painting restorer. At the same time he was making landscape sketches in the countryside outside Paris. After 1848 he began to spend time in Fontainebleau with Rousseau and other Barbizon painters, but it was the Oise—not the forest—that would become his enduring subject. Daubigny and Corot became lifelong friends, traveling and painting together often. Corot's influence helped Daubigny to focus on landscapes and to paint directly from nature.

By the late 1850s, Daubigny was accepted as a major landscape artist, but some critics were displeased by what they termed an increasingly “lazy” style, which resulted from his *plein-air* practice. They believed his works were insufficiently finished and too casually composed. Daubigny's approach reflects a shift in the way landscape—and the landscape painter—was viewed. Nature was being examined in a more materialistic, less romantic light, while the artist himself de-emphasized his subjective role to become a more “scientific” observer. In this respect Daubigny's response differed from the intensely personal one of Rousseau—and this objectivity marked his modernity.

Younger artists were increasingly trying to transcribe nature's changing surfaces rather than interpret its deeper mysteries. Over the next decade, Daubigny would be accused of rendering only “impressions” of nature, and in 1864 exhibited, for the first time, a *plein-air* painting at the Salon without a title that specifically labeled it as a “study.” Daubigny's honest observation of nature and his free handling were very influential on the generation of artists who would soon embrace the name “impressionist.”

Narcisse Diaz de la Peña

French, 1808–1876



In M. Armand Dayot, ed. *Le Second Empire (2 Décembre 1851–4 Septembre 1870)* (Paris, n.d.), 254

National Gallery of Art Library, Washington

Narcisse Diaz de la Peña's Spanish parents fled to France in the wake of Napoleon's wars on the Iberian peninsula. The family settled in Bordeaux, where Narcisse was born, but his parents died young and he grew up in a foster home near Paris. At age thirteen an infected insect or snake bite led to the amputation of Diaz' left leg. It apparently did not affect his general good humor and generosity, and he was held by friends as something of a *bon vivant*. After apprenticing as a porcelain painter, he began in the late 1820s to study with a history painter in Paris and to copy works in the Louvre. Most of Diaz' early pictures were sentimental and romanticized idylls that he was able to dash off with speed. About 1835 he started to explore the forest of Fontainebleau, becoming a close associate of Rousseau and a regular summer visitor at Barbizon. Quickly, the forest, its heaths, deep

woods, and strong effects of light and shade became Diaz' preferred subjects, and remained so for the duration of his career. His paintings enjoyed popular success—greater than the less conventional and more melancholic canvases of Rousseau, for example—and he retired to the French Riviera a wealthy man, sharing his reward with colleagues who were less financially secure.

Alphonse Jeanrenaud

French, 1818–1895

Little is known about Alphonse Jeanrenaud. A former naval officer, he resided in Paris and became a member of the Société Française de Photographie in 1855. Throughout the 1860s he exhibited photographs of diverse subjects, including architectural views and landscapes. Jeanrenaud's most admired works are sensitive landscapes. Ernest Lacan, editor in chief of *La Lumière*, the journal for the Société Française de Photographie, praised him as “possessing to a very high degree a feeling for Nature that characterizes true landscape artists.”³

Jean-François Millet

French, 1814–1875



Jean-François Millet

Self-Portrait, c. 1845–1846 | Charcoal and pencil on paper, 12 ½ x 17 in.

Paris, Musée du Louvre/Bridgeman Art Library

Jean-François Millet was born to a prosperous farm family in Normandy. He received a strong classical education and kept up a lively interest in literature his entire life. He first studied art with a local portrait painter before going to Cherbourg for more professional training. In 1837 the city awarded him a stipend to continue study under a well-known history painter in Paris. He returned to Cherbourg after two years to work as a portrait painter—portraitists were about the only artists who could support themselves in smaller communities. Struggling financially, he moved back and forth several times over the next few years between Paris and Normandy. To attract more buyers he started painting bucolic idylls with a hint of eroticism.

In 1848 Millet painted the first scenes of farm labor that would later become his best-known subjects (see p. 65). Spurred by an outbreak of cholera in 1849, he moved from Paris to Barbizon, becoming a close friend and associate of Rousseau and other artists working in the forest. Millet was unusual in the group for his focus on the human figure. The large scale of his peasants gives them a kind of monumental gravity. Their faces are generalized rather than individual, idealized but not pretty. Abstracted into motionless compositions, their actions take on the color of archaic ritual. Millet's art is often linked with the social themes of realism, but his outlook was quite different. His paintings are not records of actual life but interweave memories from his childhood on the land in Normandy. Although his sympathy for the peasants he painted was deeply felt—and his work would inspire social realists in the twentieth century—Millet's motivation had little to do with politics (and he was rather pessimistic about the possibility of progress). His concerns were more aesthetic, centered on the powerful drawing and compositional intensity that made his art modern.

Claude Monet

biography, p. 68

Berthe Morisot

biography, p. 69

Théodore Rousseau

French, 1812–1867



Nadar I French, 1820–1910

Carte-de-visite photograph

Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum/Bridgeman Art Library

Théodore Rousseau grew up in Paris, where his father worked in the clothing trade. Already as a boy, he was sketching trees in the Bois de Boulogne, the large park on the west side of the city. At age thirteen he was sent to live and work in a family-owned sawmill in the Jura (see section 4). He thrived in this rugged region of eastern France and on his return to Paris determined to become a landscape artist. He studied with several painters of historical landscapes, but the idea that landscape needed somehow to be “elevated” with myth or biblical stories was at odds with his passion for nature as a living thing. By age sixteen Rousseau had already made excursions to sketch in the forest of Fontainebleau. In the mid-1840s, he made Barbizon his permanent residence.

Rousseau’s naturalism was not a sensory response—not the kind of rapid transcription that was beginning to infect Daubigny’s works and would become a touchstone of impressionism. Instead, Rousseau’s approach was one of long, meditative study. He understood nature as a process of constant growth, death, and rebirth. In trees he saw fellow creatures and nobility:

I also heard the voices of trees... this whole world of flora lives as deaf-mutes whose signs I divined and whose passions I uncovered; I wanted to talk with them and to be able to tell myself, by this other language—painting—that I had put my finger on the secret of their majesty.⁴

After some early success at the Salon, Rousseau’s pictures were systematically excluded after the mid-1830s, perhaps in part because of his strongly republican politics and perceived role as “leader” of the Barbizon painters whose aims were counter to those of the academicians serving on Salon juries. The Revolution of 1848 at least briefly created a more receptive climate for his work, but Rousseau still had to wait long—almost to his death—for official recognition.





Life and Leisure along the Rivers of the Île-de-France

To a large extent, our picture of impressionism is located in the Île-de-France, in small towns and riverside resorts along the Seine and its tributaries. The very word impressionism conjures the image of a painter, white hat shading the face, at work in a grassy field near flower-strewn banks.

Rail service made these once rural places easily accessible and brought them into the larger orbit of the capital. Many became bedroom communities for middle-class families. An 1886 census indicated that fewer than half of all residents in the environs of Paris had been born in the place where they lived; for the rest of France the figure was almost 85 percent. The area was transformed

by these new, more urbane residents and by constant economic interchange with Paris. The Île-de-France supported the capital with intensive farming—in some areas using city sewage to fertilize crops—and supplied it with building materials. Commercial services and heavy industry moved to the suburbs, and smokestacks punctuate the skies of many impressionist pictures.



A view along the Oise
Leo J. Kasun



John Singer Sargent | American, 1856–1925

Claude Monet Painting at the Edge of a Wood,
c. 1887

Oil on canvas, 13 ³/₈ x 25 ⁵/₁₆ in.

London, Tate Modern, presented by Miss Emily
Sargent and Mrs. Ormond through the National Art
Collections Fund 1925/Art Resource, NY

While some artists edited out these signs of progress, others frankly included the modernity of steel railroad bridges and billowing smoke.

Several river towns were centers for recreation—another byproduct of a growing middle class. The very concept of mass leisure was new. While city workers normally toiled six days a week, even the poor could take a train for a Sunday outing. Only a ten-minute ride from the Gare Saint-Lazare was Asnières, where a popular bathing establishment stood opposite factory buildings. Sailing was the primary attraction downstream at Argenteuil, and rowing at Chatou. People with means built houses for extended summer stays.

For the impressionists these places in and along the rivers held appeal as sites of modern life and as landscapes where they could capture the fresh look of light and air—but they were also home. Monet, Renoir, Sisley, and Pissarro all lived and worked in small river towns like Argenteuil, Louveciennes, and Vétheuil—names familiar to us from their paintings.

Background: Rivers and the Île-de-France

- In the Middle Ages the word *île* designated not only islands but areas bounded by rivers; the Île-de-France, the “island” of France, is defined by the Seine and two of its tributaries, the Aisne and the Oise.
- The Île-de-France formed the nucleus from which the modern French state was created.
- The population of the Île-de-France quadrupled between the mid-19th and 20th centuries.
- Today, industry in the region includes electronics, information technology, and aeronautics manufacturing, among others.
- The Île-de-France is home to many residential suburbs for people who work in Paris and is the most densely populated part of France outside the city itself.
- Outer *départements* still have rolling fields of grain, rapeseed, soybeans, and sugar beets; fruit trees, grapes, and market produce are also grown.

The Seine

- The Seine flows about 770 km (roughly 480 mi.) through northwestern France from its origin in the Langres Plateau, north of Dijon.
- It empties in the English Channel between Honfleur and Le Havre.
- The river is navigable for oceangoing ships as far as Rouen and since Roman times has been an important commercial artery linking Paris and the north.
- The Seine and its main tributaries—Aube, Loing, Marne, Oise, Yonne, and Eure—drain the entire Seine basin.

Accompany 19th-century characters on Seine outings:
Émile Zola, *L'Oeuvre*, 1886

Visit the town of Chatou today:
www.chatou.fr

Visit a riverside establishment immortalized by Renoir, which is now a museum and restaurant:
www.musee-fournaise.com

Vocabulaire

- barque* (f): barge
- cantonier* (m): rower
- fleuve* (m): a large river (in France: Seine, Loire, Rhône, and Garonne)
- inondation* (f): flooding
- jardin* (m): garden
- loisir* (m): leisure
- nymphéa* (m): white water lily
- pré* (m): meadow
- rive* (f): river bank, shore
- rivière* (f): river
- verger* (m): orchard
- voile* (f): sail

The Works

slide 14
CD 34

Auguste Renoir
French, 1841–1919

Madame Monet and Her Son, 1874
Oil on canvas, 19 7/8 x 26 3/4 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.60



Many years after Auguste Renoir painted this canvas, his friend Monet described the circumstances of its creation:

This delightful painting by Renoir, of which I am the happy owner today, portrays my first wife. It was done in our garden at Argenteuil. One day, Manet, enthralled by the color and light, undertook an outdoor painting of figures under the trees. During the sitting, Renoir arrived. He, too, was caught up in the spirit of the moment. He asked me for palette, brush, and canvas, and there he was, painting away alongside Manet.¹

After the Franco-Prussian War, Monet moved his family to Argenteuil. Manet had found them a rental house, and both he and Renoir were frequent visitors. Renoir's image captures a leisurely afternoon of middle-class domesticity. Monet's wife Camille appears in contented contemplation, older son Jean, born in 1867, in a dreamy sprawl. We glimpse them from

above. Of Monet's fabled garden—still newly established—we see only a young tree and bit of geranium bed (and the ubiquitous yard fowl). The lack of horizon and the incidental way Camille's skirt is cropped at the bottom of the canvas impart a momentary quality.

This ephemeral feeling is well matched by the lively spontaneity of Renoir's brush. Touches of blue and yellow are enough to shape the shaded gathers of Camille's hat. Long, fluid strokes suggest the soft fullness of her skirt and the pull of fabric in the leg of Jean's jumper. We can almost sense a faint stir of air lifting the rooster's loosely brushed feathers. Up close, chicks dissolve into mere dabs of paint.



This is Édouard Manet's version of the same scene. Although the poses of Camille and Jean are very close in both paintings, Manet takes a wider view, revealing a much deeper background. This added depth places his figures in a more specific, more "real-time" place. On the left we even see Monet, watering can at his feet. While Renoir shows Camille's gaze drifting idly upward, Manet depicts her looking directly at the viewer (or the painter). The moment feels more concrete. Even Manet's paint appears more substantial than Renoir's feather-light surfaces.

Édouard Manet

The Monet Family in Their Garden at Argenteuil, 1874
Oil on canvas, 24 x 39 1/4 in.

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, bequest of Joan Whitney Payson, 1975 (1976.201.14)

reproduction
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Claude Monet
French, 1840–1926

Argenteuil, c. 1872
Oil on canvas, 19 7/8 x 25 5/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.42



In the six years or so that Monet lived in Argenteuil, he produced about 260 paintings, many of the river or its banks. From the early 1860s until 1889, there was not a single year that he did not paint the Seine. Like Daubigny, Monet even outfitted a studio boat.

Here, Monet presents a view along the promenade in Argenteuil, created when a brackish back channel of the Seine had been filled. In the distance are two signs of the once rural town's new life: sailboats on the left, smokestacks on the right. Though these “facts” are recorded by the painter, Monet's real interest seems to be the river's silver surface—liquid and light—and the effect of sun. Cool shadows bathe the bank

and promenade with mauve and green, except where streaks of low-angled light break through in single strokes of salmon- and lemon-colored paint.

Monet later advised American artist Lilla Cabot Perry:

*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 . . .*²

slide 16
CD 36Claude Monet
French, 1840–1926*Bridge at Argenteuil on a Gray Day*, c. 1876
Oil on canvas, 24 x 31 5/8 in.National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.44

The landscapes captured in impressionist paintings were not natural but built environments. Artifacts of industrialization were increasingly a part of the view. Two bridges crossed the Seine at Argenteuil (one for road, one for rail traffic), and they figure often in Monet's paintings. More conventional landscape artists might have eliminated such intrusions as insufficiently "picturesque" or chosen another vantage point. Monet, however, took them as simply and undeniably part of what he saw, a part of the "truth" he painted.



"Impressionism"

In April 1874 a group of artists opened an independent exhibition in the studios of the photographer Nadar on the boulevard des Capucines. The program identified them as the "Société Anonyme des Artistes, Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs" —roughly "Artists, Painters, Sculptors, Engravers, Inc." They came to be known as impressionists.

The name is usually attributed to a disparaging critic who seized on the title of Claude Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*. Accustomed to the more polished works of the Salon, he compared Monet's sketchy harbor view to wallpaper—unfavorably. He expected more of a painting than a mere "impression." But what had Monet meant when he put the word in his title? The word

was already in common use both for rapidly executed sketches and to describe the initial visual impact a scene made on an artist. Another commentator on the 1874 exhibition noted, "They are impressionists in the sense that they render, not the landscape, but the sensation produced by the landscape..."³ Artists like Monet, he realized, wanted to paint not simply what they saw but the way they saw it at a particular time and place.

"Impressionism" entered the painting lexicon at a time when French positivist philosophers and scientists were studying perception and color theory. Young avant-garde artists like Monet, Renoir, Sisley, and the other founders of impressionism were *observers* and accepted on principle that

juxtaposing discrete brushstrokes of pure color transcribed their raw sensation directly, allowing them to capture the fleeting and evanescent. Instead of modeling from dark to light, with quick brushwork they could record changing effects of weather and times of day, creating form through color.



Program of the first
impressionist exhibition

Monet's dahlias

As France industrialized the beauties of nature held ever greater appeal for middle-class citizens, who were convinced of its beneficial effects on physical and mental well-being. The nature they sought, however, was not wilderness—it was a setting of beauty tamed by civilization. The number of gardens and gardeners, the sheer variety of plants cultivated, grew dramatically in the late nineteenth century. As part of modern life, gardens and promenades were natural subjects for impressionist painters, many of whom were devoted gardeners themselves. Monet created gardens wherever he lived; for forty years they engaged his passion for plants and painter's eye.



Auguste Renoir

Monet Painting in His Garden at Argenteuil, 1873
Oil on canvas, 31 ½ x 18 in.

Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art,
Bequest of Anne Parrish Titzell



Monet lived in Argenteuil, on and off, between 1872 and 1878. Monet, Manet, and Renoir all painted this garden where Monet made an exuberant hedge of dahlias, a flower he expressed particular fondness for. The style of French gardens had become much less formal in the late nineteenth century. In place of tidy parterres, Parisians adopted the profusion of English gardens.

CD 37 | Claude Monet

The Artist's Garden in Argenteuil (A Corner of the Garden with Dahlias), 1873
Oil on canvas, 24 ½ x 32 ½ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Janice H. Levin, in Honor of the 50th
Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art 1991.27.1

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CD 38

Claude Monet
French, 1840–1926

The Artist's Garden at Vétheuil, 1880
Oil on canvas, 59 7/8 x 47 5/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.45



Monet called Vétheuil, a little downstream from Argenteuil (and about 60 km, or 40 mi., from Paris), “a ravishing spot.” When he rented a house there in 1878, he arranged immediately with the landlord to landscape terraces leading down to the river. In this large painting, the garden is shown in full-summer bloom of gladioli and sunflowers. Dappled sunlight tessellates the path in prisms of color. Even the “blue-and-white” planters (which Monet took with him as he moved from Argenteuil, to Vétheuil, and beyond to Giverny) are hued green and pink by reflections on their surfaces.

CD 39

Claude Monet
French, 1840–1926

The Japanese Footbridge, 1899
Oil on canvas, 32 x 40 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Victoria Nebeker Coberly, in memory of her son
John W. Mudd, and Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg 1992.9.1



In 1883 Monet moved to a property in Giverny, which he eventually bought. It was in Normandy, just over the Epte River from the Île-de-France, still a favored spot for Parisians' summer retreats. Improvements to the gardens occupied Monet until his death in 1926. In his last decade, he painted little else but his prized lily pond, which had required long negotiations with local authorities to allow diversion of river water. Monet's stepson described the lily pond in 1960:

This was entirely his own creation; he converted a patch of landscape, and filled it

*with water to mirror the sky and with plants: some red, yellow, pink and white water lilies to float on this water as though it were on the surface of the sky; the others, irises, calatheas and arrowheads to mark the line of the banks, and above all else to give pleasure to the eyes...and then there is a little Japanese-style arched bridge...*⁴

Monet called his water lily pictures *paysages d'eau* (waterscapes). Progressively, they lost their landscape elements—the footbridge, the definition of banks and horizon—to become floating shapes and reflections over the entire surface of the canvas. Here, the sky has already

been eliminated; the lush foliage rises all the way to the frame, and the illusion of three-dimensional space is flattened by the decorative arch of the bridge. Attention is forced onto the paint surface itself, and held there, not drawn into the scene. In later lily pond paintings, flowers and their mirrored reflections assume equal stature, blurring distinctions between solid objects and transitory effects of light. Monet had always been interested in reflections, feeling that their discontinuous and fragmented shapes paralleled his own broken brushwork.

River sports

The French passion for sailing and rowing, which arose in the 1830s, was an import from England. Initially, these sports were enjoyed only by the wealthy, but by the later 1800s, railroad expansion to outlying towns and creation of less exclusive boating clubs made river sports widely accessible. Even lower-class Parisians could enjoy close-in Seine resorts like Asnières that offered dining and musical entertainment along with swimming and boating.



At Argenteuil the Seine widened, giving more water and the steadier breezes needed for sailing. By the 1870s about two hundred sailboats were moored in the Argenteuil basin. Many were owned by Parisians—the capital was only a half-hour train ride away—but others were available for rent. With a breezy lightness of its own, Renoir's painting depicts the boats and bankside spectators at one of Argenteuil's many regattas. At least two were run every month between early spring and fall.

CD 40 | Auguste Renoir

Regatta at Argenteuil, 1874

Oil on canvas, 12 ¾ x 18 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.59

reproduction
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Auguste Renoir
French, 1841–1919

Oarsmen at Chatou, 1879
Oil on canvas, 32 x 39 7/16 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Sam A. Lewisohn 1951.52



At Chatou rowing was the main attraction. In Renoir's painting a man brings a gig to shore. These two-person boats were designed for relaxed recreation. The rower sat facing his companion, often a lady, who controlled the rudder by ropes. The man in the boat, wearing a typical boating costume, may be the artist's brother Edmond. Standing on the bank are painter Gustave Caillebotte and Aline Charigot, who would become Renoir's wife. On the opposite bank are riverside restaurants, where pleasure boaters could end an afternoon with food, drink, and dancing.

The painting captures the brilliance of sun and water, summer and youth. The silky texture of Renoir's brushstrokes mirrors his languid, leisurely scene. In the water, skips of strong blues and white alternate, their shimmering intensity enhanced through the equally strong presence of orange in the boat's reflection and the scarlet accent of Aline's bow. Renoir has put into practice aspects of contemporary color theory, which suggested that colors were perceived more strongly when placed next to their opposites, by juxtaposing orange with blue, for example, or red with green.

Consider this

How many figures do you see in this painting? What are they doing? Where have they come from? Where will they go?

Where do you see warm colors laid beside their complementary cool colors?

What effect does this juxtaposition have?

- *the paired colors have more visual punch, seeming to pop out from the canvas*

What areas of the painting are meant to read as white? What colors have actually been used to create that effect?

Use words and gestures to contrast the brushstrokes in these areas: the foreground grasses; the ripples of water; the distant sky.

Judging by the fall of light, what landscape feature do you think might be found to the left of the figures?

- *trees creating dappled light*

If horizontal lines suggest restfulness and diagonal lines suggest dynamism, how would you characterize the composition?

How might photography have influenced this painting?

- *high, angled vantage point*
- *asymmetrical composition*
- *casual, unstaged poses*

slide 19
CD 42Gustave Caillebotte
French, 1848–1894*Skiffs*, 1877
Oil on canvas, 35 x 45 ¾ in.National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1985.64.6

While Renoir focused on leisure, Caillebotte was interested in sport. He competed in both sailing and rowing, sometimes in craft he designed himself. The lightweight, flat-bottomed skiffs he painted here were fast but precarious—their name, *périssoires*, comes from a verb meaning “to sink.” Like most of Caillebotte’s paintings, this river scene (at Yerres, his family home) uses strong diagonals and a plunging perspective. The viewpoint is so low that the boaters are dramatically foreshortened, and we feel ourselves nearly at the water’s surface.

Gastronomie

The Île-de-France still supplies garden vegetables, fruit (including cherries, apples, pears, plums), and dairy products to the capital. Wheat and other grains are also grown locally. Among the most famous of all French cheeses is a product of the Île-de-France: Brie, whose name comes from the old province that corresponds roughly to the modern department of Seine-et-Marne. With 45–50 percent fat, Brie was known as “the king’s cheese” before the Revolution.

Crème Argenteuil (Cream of Asparagus Soup)

Argenteuil drew Parisians on excursion and foreign visitors alike. British guidebooks noted that, although its wines were modest, the town’s asparagus was justly celebrated. In this recipe be sure to use white asparagus.

2–4 cloves of garlic, whole
1 lb. white asparagus
1 onion
2–3 leeks
small bunch of fresh chervil
pinch of dried thyme
pinch of dried laurel
1 tbs. flour
⅔ stick butter
2 cups crème fraîche
2–3 cups chicken stock
salt, pepper, cayenne

Peel and clean the asparagus. Chop the stalks, reserving the points. Clean and slice the leek and onion. Sauté them in butter for 5 minutes with the garlic, then add the asparagus. Add the flour and continue to sauté, but do not let the mixture brown. Add the stock and herbs. Salt and pepper to taste. Continue to cook over low heat for 45 minutes. Remove the garlic and herbs and strain the mixture through a *chinois* or sieve. Add the cream and adjust the seasoning. Keep warm in a *bain marie* (water bath), or serve cold. Before serving add the reserved asparagus tips as garnish.

reproduction
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Camille Pissarro
French, 1830–1903

Orchard in Bloom, Louveciennes, 1872
Oil on canvas, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 21 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.51



Consider this

Is this a painting of labor or of leisure?

What are the figures doing? Is their activity suggestive of a modern or of a traditional way of life?

Although some critics accused Pissarro of choosing commonplace subjects, they respected his ability to find beauty in them. Why might contemporary critics have considered this scene unsuitable for art? How has its treatment made it artistic?

What evidence do you see to indicate that this painting was completed very quickly, perhaps in just one outdoor session?

What adjectives describe the mood or emotions conveyed by this painting?

When the idea for the first impressionist exhibition arose, Camille Pissarro was one of its earliest and most energetic supporters. He drafted the written statement of purpose and would be the only artist to participate in all eight impressionist exhibitions. This painting is one of the five he showed in the first exhibition in 1874. It was made shortly after Pissarro had returned to the small town of Louveciennes after the Franco-Prussian War and the violence of the Commune that followed. A Danish national, Pissarro had spent the war in England, and his house had been used

by Prussian troops. Many of the canvases he had left there were destroyed. Returning home, Pissarro must have viewed the freshly plowed earth and budding trees as signs of renewed hope.

In the early 1870s, Pissarro created his most purely impressionist works, painted—as this one probably was—in a single session outdoors. The paint is quickly applied. We can see, in parts of the foliage, for example, where brushstrokes have been pulled through one another while still wet on the canvas. Most of his fellow impressionists chose sophisticated and urbane subjects from modern life and leisure, but Pissarro preferred to paint a

more traditional, rural way of life. These small figures are peasants and laborers, not fashionable Parisians. Committed to socialist and anarchist principles, Pissarro identified strongly with the land and those who worked it. Some critics complained about this rusticity, one writing, “He has a deplorable predilection for market-gardens and does not hesitate to paint cabbages.” But the critic went on to say that such “vulgaries of taste do not alter his beautiful qualities of execution.”⁵

Peasants

After centuries of a relatively unchanging existence on the land, the French peasantry experienced dramatic upheavals during the nineteenth century. Large numbers of them moved to Paris, where they became urban poor. For many it was a lonely existence. Cafés and bars often substituted for family. In some neighborhoods of the capital, most weddings were witnessed by bartenders. While suffrage was granted in 1848, their opportunities and status remained low; still, peasants' political stake did grow, disquieting many in the bourgeoisie.

The artist most closely associated with scenes of peasant life was the Barbizon painter Jean-François Millet. He portrayed them with epic dignity but also unpretified realism. Born himself into a prosperous farm family in Normandy, Millet turned to scenes of peasant life after he moved to Barbizon in 1849. As rural areas were depopulated, his images smacked of controversy, particularly following the Revolution of 1848.

The figure of the sower appeared in one of Millet's earliest peasant paintings, exhibited at the Salon in 1850. He linked the figure with the age-old and endless cycles of agriculture, but the man's large, almost hulking, posture and coarse features were also disturbing to audiences worried about the impact of change in the countryside. Millet's work, with its bold composition and sympathetic treatment, influenced both Pissarro and Van Gogh, who copied Millet's sower and incorporated the figure into his own paintings.



CD 44 | Jean-François Millet

The Sower, unknown date

Chalk on blue laid paper, 14 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{16}$ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Rosenwald Collection 1943.3.6257



While the peasants in Pissarro's early paintings, such as *Orchard in Bloom*, were usually small, anonymous figures, in the 1880s his rustic subjects became large and individualized. In some pictures they are busy with their work, in others paused in pensive, meditative moments—but always they are shown with a direct honesty and lack of sentiment.

In places the heavily worked surface of this canvas seems almost stuccoed with paint. After the spontaneous *plein-air* landscapes of the 1870s, Pissarro's work in the next decade was produced more slowly, with painstaking deliberation in the studio. His brushstrokes assume a kind of independence, a logic of their own. The variously colored shadows—green on the girl's chin, purple on her hat—reveal Pissarro's study of how local color is affected by reflected light.

CD 45 | Camille Pissarro

Peasant Girl with a Straw Hat, 1881

Oil on canvas, 28 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.52

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CD 46

Alfred Sisley
French, 1839–1899

Flood at Port-Marly, 1872
Oil on canvas, 18 ¼ x 24 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1985.64.38



When the Seine overflowed its banks at the small village of Port-Marly in December 1872, the chance to paint watery streets and a rain-heavy sky lured both Alfred Sisley and Monet. Sisley, who lived nearby in Louveciennes, painted a half-dozen views, and made still others during another inundation a few years later.

In previous generations artists had been drawn to floods for their dramatic display of nature's power. Sisley, however, was interested in the water's visual effects. He worked quickly, on the scene, probably completing this canvas in a single session. His brushstrokes are thin and fluid, varying in response to the textures he represents: rippling zigzags in the watery reflections, broad rectangles in

window panes. The heavy skies are well matched to the muted, nuanced tones preferred by Sisley, who seems to have had a liking for the palette of winter.

The expanses of air and water form an open stage for weather and light. Yet Sisley chose his vantage points carefully, framing and composing his scenes with a more classical sensibility than most of his impressionist colleagues, whose cropped views imparted a more momentary, more "modern" feel. Here, Sisley used the trees and pole at right, with their long reflections, to balance the tall mass of the restaurant at the left. The dark figures poling a small boat help our eye mark the distance to the background.

reproduction
slide 22 | CD 47

Berthe Morisot
French, 1841–1895

Hanging the Laundry Out to Dry, 1875
Oil on canvas, 13 x 16 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1985.64.28

A long loop in the Seine defines the bulging plain of Gennevilliers. The towns of Gennevilliers and Petit-Gennevilliers were well located for boating in Argenteuil or Chatou, and attracted many well-to-do Parisians. Caillebotte built a summer villa there, and Manet's family also owned property. It was while Morisot was staying at the Manet house (she was married to Manet's brother) that she painted this small canvas.

The broad, flat fields that stretch out to the river had been part of an agricultural experiment to fertilize using human waste pumped in from Paris. It is not clear that contemporary viewers, however, would have found any irony in Morisot's picture of clean clothes hanging out to dry. The wash lines are those of a commercial laundry, an enterprise that had not existed in previous decades. Washing had been done at home for the most part or by young women in the city. Laundresses, whose lives were chronicled in realist fiction, worked long, hot hours for low wages, and their morals were often questioned because of their loose attire and the deliveries that took them to men's apartments. Now, though, with expansion of urban life into suburbs, laundry from the city was bundled and hauled by the wagon-load to towns like Gennevilliers, where factory-type operations employed local women. Contemporary audiences who saw Morisot's picture—it was shown in the second impressionist exhibition in 1876—were attuned to its depiction of modernization and of new employment for rural women.

More striking, however, was Morisot's brushwork. Critics often noted its distinctiveness, many complaining that her work seemed only half-finished. She



defined this landscape with bare flicks of paint. Restless and luminous, her brushstrokes appear almost to flutter. Their looseness contrasts with the strong, cropped geometry of the composition, formed by the oblique parallel wash lines, the vertical poles, and the upright slats of the horizontal fence that form the garden border. Morisot's clear color and light touch—often described as “feminine” during her lifetime (and long afterward)—took impressionist technique as far as any of her male colleagues ever dared.

Consider this

What is the subject of Morisot's painting?

What visual elements do you think attracted the painter to the scene?

How have human activities redefined this landscape?

What aspects of the painting suggest that it was done very quickly, right as Morisot was looking at the scene? If, instead, it had been painted slowly in the artist's studio rather than on the spot how might it look different?

A critic described Morisot's brushstrokes as being like flower petals. What comparisons would you use?

The Artists

Gustave Caillebotte

French, 1848–1894



Gustave Caillebotte

Self-Portrait, c. 1889 | Oil on canvas,
16 ¾ x 12 ¾ in.

Paris, Musée d'Orsay/Erich Lessing/
Art Resource, NY

Gustave Caillebotte came from a wealthy Parisian family. Before beginning to study painting with an academic artist, he received a law degree. In 1873 he was accepted at the *École des Beaux-Arts* but apparently attended only briefly, if at all. Instead he was attracted by the impressionists and their new paintings of modern life. Degas invited him to join the first impressionist exhibition in 1874, and Caillebotte continued to participate regularly. He organized the 1877 show and worked hard to maintain cohesion in the group. Because of his fortune, he never needed to sell his own work but frequently supported his colleagues by buying theirs.

Caillebotte was more attracted to the geometry of Paris' architecture than the bustle of its citizens. His unusual, plunging perspectives produced bold spatial effects, some of which seem to foreshadow early twentieth-century photography. Disappointed at the disputes that fractured the original group of impressionists, Caillebotte distanced himself from the art community in Paris and eventually settled in the river town of Petit-Gennevilliers. He was an avid boater and had long painted river scenes. These river paintings and his garden (he equaled Monet in his passion for gardening) became his main focus.

Caillebotte willed his personal collection—including many of what are today considered among the most important works by Manet, Monet, Degas, and others—to France. Renoir was one of his executors. Eventually the state accepted thirty-eight of the sixty-seven impressionist paintings in his bequest. Today they form the core of the impressionist collection of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

Claude Monet

French, 1840–1926



CD 78 | Auguste Renoir

Claude Monet, 1872 | Oil on canvas,
25 ½ x 19 ½ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington | Collection of
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1985.64.35

Claude Monet was born in Paris but grew up outside Le Havre on the Channel coast, where his father had a wholesale grocery and ships' provisioning business. He displayed an early talent for drawing, producing incisive caricatures of local notables. Some of these, on view in a shop window, drew the attention of Eugène Boudin. While still a teenager, Monet began to accompany Boudin as the older artist painted the beaches and their flocks of tourists. Boudin worked outdoors, directly in the sand and wind. This "truthful" painting, Monet later claimed, had determined his path as an artist.

Berthe Morisot

French, 1841–1895

In 1862 Monet entered the studio of a history painter in Paris, a condition of his family's grudging assent to his career choice. It proved to be a signal event—but for an unexpected reason. There he met fellow students Sisley, Renoir, and Frédéric Bazille. They would form the core of the original impressionists. During the 1860s Monet was still looking for success at the Salon with ambitious figure paintings (see p. 45). But toward the end of the decade, he had largely abandoned these projects in favor of smaller, more spontaneous outdoor paintings.

Most of Monet's canvases from the 1870s are landscapes made in and around the small towns along the Seine. They epitomize classic impressionist style: quick, seemingly spontaneous transcriptions of visual phenomena. By about 1880, however, Monet was already beginning to show greater interest in the painted surface itself. He reworked canvases in the studio, elaborating brushstrokes that began to take on greater importance in their own right—decorative as well as descriptive. As he looked at color and light as more purely artistic concerns, he began to paint the same subject repeatedly in series. Harmonizing colors and textures allowed him to elaborate his original response to a place and explore effects on mood.

Monet traveled widely, painting in Paris, along the Seine, in Normandy and Brittany, and the Mediterranean coast of France. He also worked in England, Holland, Venice, and Norway.

Jean-François Millet

biography, p. 48



Édouard Manet

Berthe Morisot with a Bouquet of Violets, 1872 | Oil on canvas, 21 ½ x 14 ⅞ in.

Paris, Musée d'Orsay/Art Resource, NY

Daughters of a high-ranking civil servant, Berthe and her sisters were encouraged to draw as a social accomplishment. They took informal lessons from two well-regarded artists. The Morisots were supportive of the girls' artistic endeavors, even building a studio in the garden of their home. Both Berthe and Edma had works shown at the Salon in the mid-1860s. Edma did not continue to paint seriously, but Berthe did. She studied informally with Corot, who was a strong influence on her growing interest in outdoor painting.

Morisot also studied old masters in the Louvre and, while she was copying there in 1867, was introduced to Manet. From the same well-to-do society, Morisot also became part of his artistic circle, meeting Renoir, Monet, Degas, and others (and in 1874 marrying Manet's brother Eugène). Despite Manet's attempt to dissuade her, Morisot exhibited in the first impressionist show in 1874. Of the eight impressionist exhibitions, only the one in 1879 did not include her work.

Temporarily without studio space after the Franco-Prussian War, Morisot had started to work with watercolors. The transparency of these paints had a lasting impact on her technique and style. Her colors became brighter and her brushwork loosened radically—reduced to delicate, quick flicks. Critics often described her works in feminine terms. Théodore Duret said her white and silvery gray tones were “scattered like flower petals.” She avoided what would be seen as the taint of professionalism for a woman of her class by working in her home, and her subjects were often family members and friends. Nevertheless, Morisot was respected by her male colleagues and her daring technique evinced astonishing freedom.

Camille Pissarro

biography, p. 27

Auguste Renier

biography, p. 28

Alfred Sisley

French, 1839–1899



Auguste Renoir

Portrait of the Painter Alfred Sisley, 1864 |
Oil on canvas, 32 ¼ x 26 in.

Zurich, Foundation E. G. Bührle Collection/
Bridgeman Art Library

Alfred Sisley's parents were English, but he was born in Paris and spent almost his entire life in France. Not long before his death, he tried unsuccessfully to become a French citizen. His father directed a company that manufactured artificial flowers. In 1857 Sisley was sent to London to study business but came away with a greater admiration for painting, especially the landscapes of J. M. W. Turner and John Constable. When he returned to Paris five years later, his parents supported his decision to become an artist. He met Monet and Bazille and became a close friend of Renoir, with whom he painted in the forest of Fontainebleau.

The Franco-Prussian War altered Sisley's circumstances dramatically. His father went bankrupt and died shortly after. Sisley, who had never had to worry about money, was now forced to support his new family with his painting. (He never achieved the same level of financial success eventually enjoyed by his colleagues and died in relative poverty.) He left Paris to economize but also to pursue his favorite subjects, which were located in the countryside and river towns. During the 1870s, he painted his best works, landscapes realized with simple but apt brushwork.

In the 1880s Sisley settled in the small medieval town of Moret-sur-Loing at the edge of the Fontainebleau forest. The move separated Sisley from his colleagues and, to some degree, their experiments. He remained committed to landscape and to the visual qualities of impressionism; he has been called the most "pure" of the impressionist painters.



CD 48

Édouard Vuillard
French, 1868–1940

Landscape of the Île-de-France, c. 1894
Oil on cardboard on wood, 7 ³/₄ x 9 ¹⁵/₁₆ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1995.47.14



Les Guides Bleus, *Bourgogne, Franche-Comté, Jura, Lyonnais* (Paris, 1931)
National Gallery of Art Library, Washington



Rugged Landscapes in Auvergne and Franche-Comté

This section includes the work of only two artists: Théodore Rousseau, who is most closely associated with Fontainebleau (see section 2) but who painted early landscape studies in Auvergne; and Gustave Courbet, whose deep physical connection to his home territory in Franche-Comté finds expression in his direct and tactile painting style.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the best French artists aspired to work in Italy—if possible by winning the Prix de Rome (see p. 41). Awarded by the Academy in several categories, it provided a state-sponsored tour of study. Schooled in the Roman Campagna, the “native” landscape of these young artists was less French than it was Italian.

The very lucidity of Mediterranean light suited the classically realized compositions of academic tradition. Before the 1820s the panoramic countryside of France was largely ignored, and when artists did begin to paint in France, they looked initially to settings that offered “bones” similar to the Italian models. Among the first of these places was Auvergne. Its landscape of gorges and cascading river rocks offered a visual structure similar to that seen in Italy. Moreover, its Roman, and Romanesque, history tapped deep into France’s past, and its volcanic geology resonated with romantic sensibilities.

Auvergne was described in the first volume of an early guide to France, Baron Isidore Taylor’s lavishly illustrated, seventeen-volume *Voyages pittoresques dans l’ancienne France*. These voyages were meant to be enjoyed in the comfort of an armchair, but by the 1830s real guidebooks, with practical information and portability, were also beginning to appear. Some of the earliest described Fontainebleau (see section 2), but another region that attracted the more adventuresome traveler was Franche-Comté. Its rugged terrain was of keen interest to naturalists and geologists—and artists. In addition to native-born Courbet, Rousseau and Corot also painted there.



Baron Isidore Taylor, *Voyages pittoresques dans l’ancienne France* (Paris, 1820), frontispiece

National Gallery of Art Library, Washington
Victoria and Roger Sant Fund

Background: Auvergne

- The Auvergne lies in the southern Massif Central, the relatively arid plateau that comprises about one-sixth of the total area of France.
- Within Auvergne are approximately 80 ancient volcanic peaks, called *puy*s; the highest is Puy de Sancy at 1885 m (6,188 ft.)
- Today, mineral water from volcanic springs (at Volvic and Vichy, for example) are among Auvergne's most recognizable products.
- In Auvergne in 52 BC, Julius Caesar defeated Vercingétorix, king of the Averni tribes—and the last bastion of Gallic resistance to Roman rule.
- It was also here, in 507, that Clovis (first of the Merovingian kings) expelled Alaric and the Visigoths in his quest to unite French territory.
- The Auvergne finally became a permanent part of France when it was confiscated from the dukes of Bourbon by François I in 1527.
- Today, the capital city Clermont-Ferrand is an important industrial center, home of Michelin tires; but the region is still strongly agricultural.
- The region's history and volcanic parks contribute substantial tourist revenues.
- In 2004 the population of Auvergne numbered about 1.3 million.

Explore volcanoes in France:
www.vulcania.com

Learn how fine knives are made:
www.laguirole-elite.com
www.sabatier.com

Background: Franche-Comté

- Franche-Comté is dominated by the Jura Mountains, which straddle France's eastern border with Switzerland.
- The fossil-bearing limestone formations date from—and give their name to—the Jurassic Period, about 208 to 144 million years ago.
- Franche-Comté (“free county”) acquired its name in the 12th century, when the local count wrested freedom from certain imperial levies of the Holy Roman emperor; a reputation for independence endures.
- Territorial rule passed among Burgundy, France, and the Holy Roman Empire before Franche-Comté was ultimately conquered for France in 1674.
- Today, the upland economy remains largely centered on animal husbandry and production of milk and cheese; in lower elevations, wine grapes and fruit trees are cultivated.
- Most of the population (about 1.1 million in 2004) lives in the region's industrial center between the cities of Besançon and Belfort.
- Watch- and clock-making, automotive, textile, chemical, and forest products are important industries.
- The Jura's rugged terrain and natural beauty contribute important revenue from outdoor tourism.
- The Loue, which runs through Courbet's hometown, is one of France's most picturesque rivers; a favorite with canoers and kayakers, it is also well known for fly-fishing.
- In recent years Franche-Comté has become a center for cross-country skiing and *vélo tout terrain*, or mountain biking.

Discover les Grandes Traversées: ski, mountain bike, and hiking trails in Jura:
www.gtj.asso.fr

Gastronomie: Franche-Comté

Franche-Comté produces a number of cheeses, including Emmental, and smoked meats. Local cuisine also makes use of abundant trout and other fish, eel, game, and forest products like mushrooms and morels. Vin jaune (yellow wine), called for in the recipe below, is a local specialty, aged six years, three months in small oak casks that are only partially filled.

Poulet aux Morilles (Chicken with Morels)

- 1 young chicken
- 1 onion
- 1 or 2 carrots
- 1 stalk celery
- bouquet garni of herbs for seasoning
- 5–6 tbs. butter
- 1 bottle (620 ml) vin jaune*
- 1 ½ cups cream
- 6 oz. dried morels
- salt, pepper

Soak the morels in water overnight. Reserve the water and filter it. Remove the breasts and legs from the chicken and set aside. Make a stock with the rest of the carcass, the chopped onion, carrot, celery, and the bouquet garni. Simmer about an hour.

In the meantime, sauté the breasts and legs in 2 tbs. of the butter over high heat until golden. Cover and cook gently for 10 minutes more. Salt and pepper to taste.

Deglaze the pan with the wine and cook 5 minutes. Add 1 ½ cups of the stock, 1 cup of the water used to soak the morels, and 1 cup of the cream. Cook 5 minutes over lively heat to reduce. Add the morels. Salt and pepper to taste.

Strain the sauce, then finish it by whisking in the remaining cream and butter. Pour it over the morels and chicken.

*Vin jaune is produced in fairly small quantities and its availability in the United States is limited. Try substituting a light sherry, which is produced in a similar fashion and has a similar nutty flavor. Note that a bottle of vin jaune is only 620 ml (not the standard 750 ml).

Gastronomie: Auvergne

Auvergne is noted for cheeses and tender green lentils—but perhaps its most prominent place in French kitchens is the utensil drawer. Centered around the town of Thiers, where our Rousseau painting was made, are the best knife manufacturers in France, including Sabatier and Laguiole.

Lentilles à l’Auvergnate (Lentils Auvergne)

- ¼ lb. bacon, cut into small pieces
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, finely chopped
- 1 leek, white and pale green parts only, finely chopped
- 1 ½ cups small green lentils
- 2 ¼ cups veal stock or water
- bouquet garni of thyme, bay leaf, and parsley
- salt, pepper

Soak the lentils overnight. Rinse and drain. Fry bacon, but do not brown. Add the vegetables and cook about 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Do not let brown. Stir in the lentils. Add stock and bouquet garni. Bring to boil, then let simmer 30 minutes or until lentils are tender. Remove bouquet garni. Salt and pepper to taste. Serve with grilled sausages.

Vocabulaire

anguille (f): eel

cascade (f): waterfall

casque (m): helmet

chute (f): rapids

couteau (m): knife

morille (m): morel

pêche à la mouche (f): fly fishing

pneu (m): tire

puy (m): volcanic peak

ruisseau (m): stream

vélo tout terrain (m): mountain bike

The Works

reproduction
slide 23 | CD 49

Théodore Rousseau
French, 1812–1867

Mountain Stream in the Auvergne, 1830
Oil on paper on canvas, 12 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 14 $\frac{1}{16}$ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Fund 1997.24.1



Théodore Rousseau was eighteen years old when he set out in June 1830 to paint in Auvergne, leaving Paris only a month before the outbreak of the July Revolution that replaced the Bourbon monarch with Louis-Philippe, the Citizen King. His destination was the rugged mountains of Cantal in southern Auvergne. Views of Auvergne appeared regularly at the Salon—the two academic landscape painters who had been Rousseau’s teachers had painted studies there. It was described by a friend of Rousseau’s as a place with “a half-savage population,” and “a turbulent nature that was much as it had been at the beginning of the world.”¹

Rousseau traveled by stagecoach; the first French railroad did not open until

1832, and it was ten more years before government initiatives began to make rail transport an important means of travel, well behind England and some other European countries. The coach line went via the small town of Thiers in the modern department of Puy-de-Dôme. Built on the steep slopes of a river gorge, the town’s bridges, mills, and rushing water offered attractive opportunities for painters. Rousseau made several studies there, including this one.

The direct roughness of his studies shocked Rousseau’s teachers (one of whom was reported to have called them works of *délire*, madness). Other artists had returned with Auvergne sketches, but they were not so individual—either in their romantic

cast or energetic execution. We can see the motion of Rousseau’s brush in bold strokes that carve out boulders and ruffle the surface of water with cursive movements.

The next year, Rousseau would enter an Auvergne landscape as his first submission to the Salon, a work painted in his Paris studio from sketches like this one that he had made in the open air.

Consider this

What techniques did Rousseau use to create the illusion of depth?

- overlapping forms
- contrast of large foreground and smaller middle-ground objects
- warm colors in front and increasingly cool colors toward the back

Where was the artist when he painted this view? How does the vantage point affect our experience of the scene?

- diminished sense of immediacy when not standing in the midst of the stream

Rousseau loved the primitive wilderness of Auvergne, and yet his painting contains many signs of human civilization. What does the painting tell you about the relationship of human beings to the natural world?

How would the visual and emotional effect of the painting change if all human elements were removed?



Rousseau's scene is similar to this one from an 1834 guidebook published in England. The author notes about this engraving:

The view of Thiers from the point where the artist made his selection, can scarcely, we think, fail to remind the reader of the pleasing and romantic appearance, presented under deeper shadowings, of the wild and rural Tivoli [outside Rome]... Like the Italian, it is situated on high and broken acclivities; and as that looks far out over the Campagna, towards the 'Eternal City,' so the abrupt eminences of Thiers command a fine view over the rich plains, and level country towards Clermont.

Similarity to the Italian countryside attracted artists and travelers to Auvergne.

At Thiers

Engraving after J. D. Harding in Thomas Roscoe, *The Tourist in France* (London, 1834), pl. 7

National Gallery of Art Library, Washington

Consider this

In what ways does Courbet's *Stream* (opposite) break the rules of classical landscape composition? In what ways (whether by chance or design) does it adhere to those rules?

- *as in classical landscape painting, a stream leads the eye into the distance*
- *unlike classical landscapes, Courbet's composition lacks clarity in the organization of spatial planes*

Consider the distribution of warm and cool colors. What effect does their placement have?

- *large patches of warm brown in the foreground and cool blue in the background help create the illusion of spatial projection and recession, but dotting these colors throughout the canvas envelops the scene in a unifying atmosphere*

Locate passages in which Courbet might have relied on a palette knife, rather than a brush, to produce texture, thereby enhancing the tactile realism of his painting.

If you were to add a figure to this painting, who would it be and what would he or she be doing? How would the addition alter the effect of the painting?

reproduction
slide 24 | CD 50

Gustave Courbet
French, 1819–1877

*The Stream (Le Ruisseau du
Puits-Noir; vallée de la Loue)*, 1855
Oil on canvas, 41 x 54 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. P. H. B. Frelinghuysen
in memory of her father and mother,
Mr. and Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer 1943.15.2



An early catalogue claimed that Courbet thought this picture, “entirely painted from nature,” to be his best landscape. It is unlikely, however, that the 54-inch canvas was actually made outdoors; a smaller study was probably the basis for it. It is the first of many finished paintings that depict a well-known spot near his hometown of Ornans, where a small stream (the Brême) flows through a steep gorge called the Puits Noir (Black Wells). Secret, even mysterious, this dark corner seems untouched by human presence. In a letter to a friend, Courbet described the place as “a superb landscape of profound solitude, in the depths of the valley of my country.”²

He does not focus on a single topographical feature but seems instead to paint the deep quiet of the place. As viewers, we feel ourselves not so much looking at but immersed in it. Courbet once boasted that he made no effort to select his motifs but planted his easel randomly and painted whatever was before him. His unconcern with producing dramatic compositions distinguishes him from near contemporaries among the Barbizon painters.

To reproduce the sunlit faces of rock, Courbet applied thick buff-toned paint with a palette knife. He felt his technique was parallel to the processes of nature, that he was drawing out the highlighted areas in the same way light itself acted on the rock.

His understanding of these rocks was informed by new geological study of the Jurassic formations. “Try a brush to do rocks like that,” he said, “rocks that have been eroded by the weather and the rain, which have formed long seams from top to bottom.”³ Courbet captures not only the solid, tangible qualities of the place, his palette knife and brush also conjure light on the moving surface of the water and the moist green atmosphere of the forest.

CD 51

Gustave Courbet
French, 1819–1877

La Grotte de la Loue, 1864
Oil on canvas, 38 ¾ x 51 ¾ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Charles L. Lindemann 1957.6.1

The river Loue emerges from the underground course of this cave about 14 km (less than 9 mi.) southeast of Courbet's home at Ornans. Within the grotto the water's mirrorlike stillness reflects light onto the rock above. Outside, a frothy cascade breaks past a low wooden sluice. In both areas Courbet used a palette knife, running smooth horizontal streaks in the quiet water and piling up thick paint on the mossy rock. Except for the small figure who stands spearfishing (and providing a sense of scale), the scene is reduced to the essential matter of water and rock.



As this modern photograph illustrates, Courbet concentrated his landscape, showing us only the part his eye witnessed in one direct look—a close-up view of the grotto opening rather than the whole towering expanse of the rock face.

Source of the Loue, Doubs, France
Photograph © Yves Lafon

The Artists

Courbet on realism

Courbet was upset when what he regarded as his most important works were rejected for the official art exhibition at the *Exposition universelle* in 1855. In response, he arranged an independent showing opposite the fair's entrance. The title over the door proclaimed it as the pavilion of *Le Réalisme*. Five years later, having always rejected academic training, Courbet reluctantly acceded to students' requests to open an unorthodox and democratic studio. Unfettered by formal instruction, pupils could sketch a nude model, or an ox, horse, or deer. Courbet's clearest statement of his own ideas about *Le Réalisme* appeared in an open letter to students:

The human spirit must always begin work afresh in the present... The real artists are those who pick up their age exactly at the point to which it has been carried by preceding times. To go backward is to do nothing...

I maintain, in addition, that painting is an essentially concrete art and can only consist of the representation of real and existing things. It is a completely physical language, the words of which consist of all visible objects; an object which is abstract, not visible, non-existent, is not within the realm of painting...

Imagination in art consists in knowing how to find the most complete expression of an existing thing, but never in inventing or creating that thing itself...

The beautiful exists in nature and may be encountered in the midst of reality under the most diverse aspects. As soon as it is found there, it belongs to art, or rather, to the artist who knows how to see it there.⁴

Gustave Courbet

French, 1819–1877



Gustave Courbet

Self-Portrait, 1850–1853 | Oil on canvas, 9 x 11 in.

Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek/Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

Gustave Courbet was born close to the Swiss border in the Jura Mountains, noted for their rugged landscape and independent population. Although the artist would later assume the persona of peasant—and Parisian bohemian—his farmer/winegrower father was part of the relatively prosperous middle class in their provincial hometown of Ornans. By all accounts young Courbet spent hours in the woods and mountains. He hunted, fished, and, it was said, had a special knack for catching butterflies. As an adult he remained proud of his physical strength and retained a deep emotional attachment to the land of his childhood, returning often throughout his life.

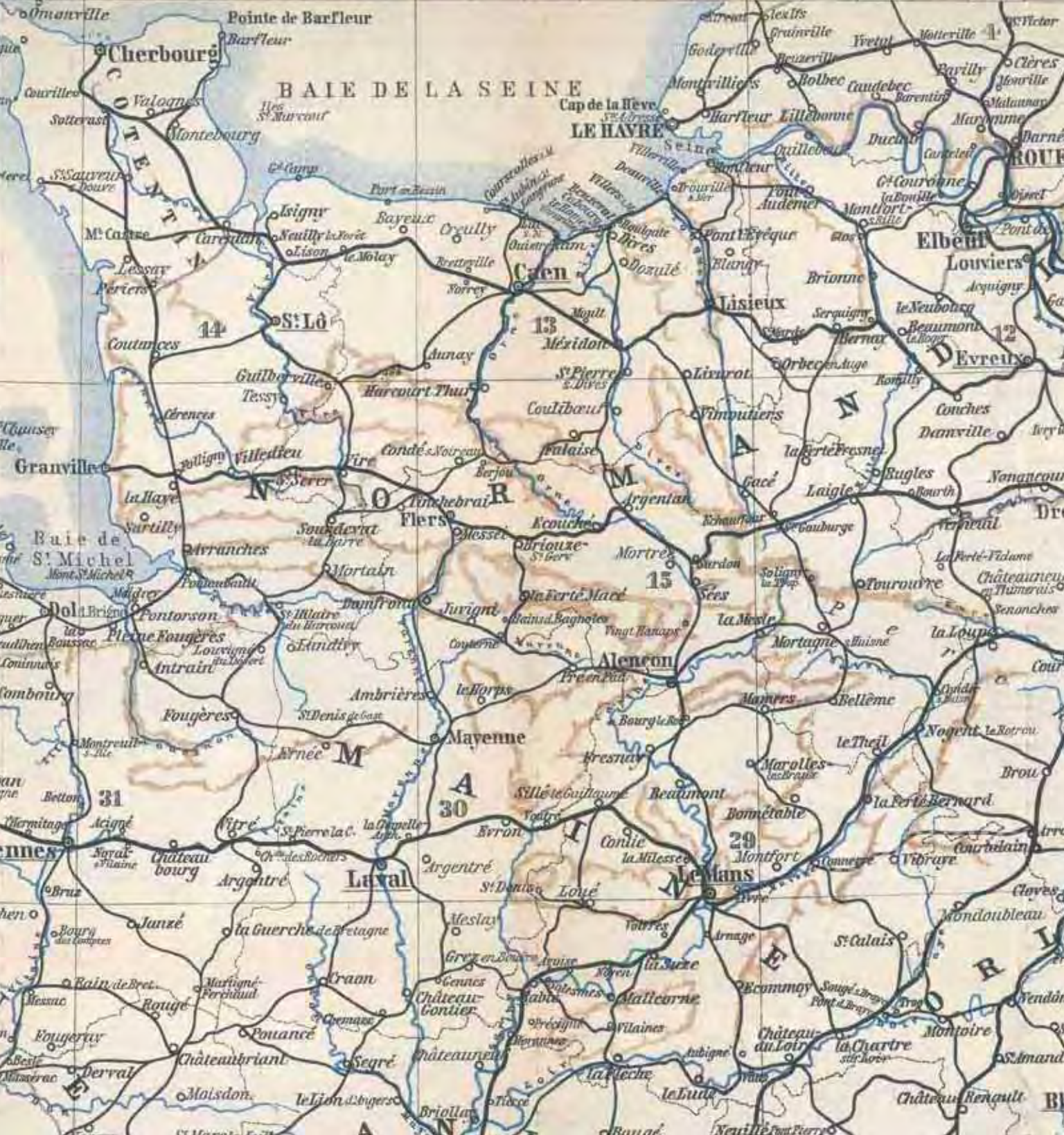
In 1839 Courbet was sent by his parents to Paris. They hoped he would study law, but he had already determined to become a painter. He entered the studio of a successful academic artist but did not stay long (or, as he later claimed, learn much). Instead he enrolled at the Académie Suisse, where he

could paint on his own from a live model. He also studied old master paintings in the Louvre. From them he adopted a technique of painting from dark to light. Even as contemporaries would shift to lighter grounds, Courbet continued to build up light pigments over a darkly primed surface.

His method emphasized the solid, material presence of things—and his own physical connection to them. He painted the concrete, he said, giving matter physical dimension, its own tactile reality on the canvas. Often he used a palette knife to trowel on heavy layers of pigment that become, in a sense, congruent with the thing being painted. Such a materialist understanding of the world lay at the heart of nineteenth-century French realism in both the literary and visual arts. Among painters, Courbet was its greatest exponent.

There were other aspects to his realism: in addition to this rough technique he also reveled in raw subjects, rejecting the mythological, biblical, and historical narratives of the academic tradition. For Courbet the only authentic source of art was experienced in the immediate present, by an individual artist. His early submissions to the Salon offended conventional taste: like contemporary realist novels, they treated ordinary people and everyday subjects—a funeral in his hometown of Ornans, for example, or stonebreakers at work. And he presented these scenes of common people on a heroic scale, creating paintings that seemed to dignify the ordinary and the ugly. Courbet came to embody the challenge of the avant-garde, to assert bold styles and modern subjects. His influence for the younger generation of painters was enormous.

Théodore Rousseau
biography, p. 49



K. Baedeker, *Northern France*, (Leipzig, 1899)
National Gallery of Art Library, Washington

Painters and Tourists in Normandy

Before about 1750 Europeans were not much interested in the seaside as a place to be — oceans were considered dangerous necessities of commerce and transportation, fishing and war. It was in England that large numbers of people first began to enjoy the beach. So perhaps it is not surprising, given England and Normandy's shared history and proximity, that Normandy welcomed early beach goers in France, and that they were mostly a mix of French and English tourists. As railroads made access easier, a developed tourist infrastructure arose, often backed by English money. Many of the pictures in this section were painted along the English Channel, which forms Normandy's northern limit. Views painted by artists "advertised" Normandy's attractions, and tourists' enjoyment of local sites, in turn, increased demand for landscape painting.



Two of the painters we look at in this section were born in Normandy (Boudin and Monet), but almost every artist represented in this packet worked there: Corot, Rousseau, Millet, Courbet, Daubigny, Manet, Morisot, Renoir, Cézanne, Seurat. Their diversity

provides a chance to investigate several currents: the influence of tourism, the rise of *plein-air* painting, the artistic motivations of Monet's series painting, and the neo-impressionism of Seurat.



Field and pasture in Normandy
Leo J. Kasun

Background: Normandy

Setting

- The Seine, which reaches the English Channel at the port of Le Havre, divides Normandy; the south and west share Brittany's ancient, eroded granites; in the east are limestones and chalks of the Seine Basin.
- Chalky cliffs give eastern Normandy one of the most dramatic coastlines in France; to the west are wide stretches of sand and pebble beaches.
- Inland terrain is largely an open plateau with gentle hills, well suited for small fields, orchards, and pastures.

History

- Normandy was conquered by Julius Caesar in 56 BC and made part of Roman Gaul; its administrative center, Rotomagus, is now called Rouen.
- Beginning in the 8th century, the region suffered devastating raids from Norse marauders; finally in 911 the French king ceded northeastern Normandy to the Norse chief Rollo.
- Norse settlers arrived in large numbers; adopting a new language and culture, they established and gave their name to what became an independent duchy.
- William, duke of Normandy (distant relation of Rollo), invaded England and was victorious at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.
- Norman and English territories were a single political entity, ruled variously by English kings and Norman dukes, until the English crown formally surrendered its claim to Normandy in 1259.
- After the vicissitudes of the Hundred Years War, Normandy was finally secured for France in 1450.
- On June 6, 1944, Allied troops landed in Normandy in one of the major battles of World War II; by August all of northern France had been liberated from Nazi occupation.

Today

- Le Havre, Rouen, and other cities along the Seine are highly industrialized; major industries include petroleum refining, petrochemicals, and automobile manufacture.
- The river is navigable to ocean ships as far as Rouen, an important grain port.
- The southern department of Eure is sometimes called *Paris' 21st arrondissement*; Monet's home in Giverny, like many contemporary Parisians' summer homes, is located there.
- Agriculture remains important in the south and west, where moist air is especially well suited for dairy production and apple and pear orchards.
- Tourism draws millions of visitors annually.
- The population, most centered in urban areas, numbered about 3.2 million in 2004.



Emmanuel-Adolphe Midy | French, 1797–1874
Artists Sketching near a Chateau, 1825
Brush and brown wash over graphite with scraping
on wove paper
The Peabody Art Collection, Courtesy of the
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Advertisement for E. Mary et Fils, Paris, in *Salon de 1888*,
Catalogue illustré (Paris, 1881), 351
National Gallery of Art Library, Washington

Plein-air painting

Open-air painting was already an established tradition by the early nineteenth century. An influential treatise published in 1800 by Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes (and still read by Pissarro sixty years later) stressed the value of outdoor studies, done quickly and with a broad sweep: “all *études* from Nature should be done within two hours at the outside, and if your effect is sunrise or a sunset, you should take no more than half an hour.”¹ Studies were a vital part of a young painter’s training and a continuing part of his or her preparation. Many artists made regular expeditions to paint in scenic locations, sharpening their eyes and recording effects that could be employed in later compositions. Even at mid-century, however, neither artists nor audiences, and certainly not the official arts establishment, afforded these *plein-air* sketches equal standing with a finished work painted in the studio. Although sketches were exhibited at the Salon, they were always identified as studies.

Several factors helped erode this distinction. In 1841 an American artist had invented collapsible metal tubes for oil paints, which made working outdoors much easier (previously pig bladders were used to store pigments). Later, artist suppliers offered portable paint boxes (*boîtes de campagne*), some with built-in easels and parasols. These innovations coincided with the expansion of railways, which made it much easier to reach the countryside in the first place. The sheer number of people painting outdoors increased. Artists’ colonies grew up in picturesque

locales, many of which would become tourist destinations. By the mid-1800s a new mindset was also at work. Realism, in art and literature, emphasized “truth” and “sincerity” rather than contrived constructions, prompting progressive artists to paint nature with unembellished directness. Bolder painting styles also started to blur the difference between sketches and fully realized studio work.

Many of the artists in this packet were early promoters of *plein-air* painting. Corot’s outdoor sketches were very influential on younger artists (and appealed to avant-garde critics), even though he did not exhibit them publicly. Rousseau made a special easel for working outdoors and many times began his canvases in front of his motif, although he would complete them in the studio. Boudin’s understanding of light and weather effects depended on *plein-air* studies, and he began to paint finished works almost entirely outdoors. In 1864 Daubigny exhibited as a Salon picture a landscape created entirely on the spot. By the 1870s *plein-air* painting had become a touchstone for impressionists, who placed a premium on direct observation, speed, and spontaneity as they tried to capture the look of changing weather, seasons, and times of day.

A “study” vocabulary

French academic practice defined a number of different terms for what we more generally refer to as sketches or studies.

pochade: a very free, rapid sketch

esquisse: a small trial sketch for a planned composition (more defined than a *pochade*)

étude: a preparatory study for a painting (more complete than an *esquisse*), but which could be valued, and was increasingly, as a painting in its own right

ébauche: the initial lay-in of paint on what will be the final canvas

Gastronomie

The cuisine of Normandy is based on cream and butter, and makes great use of apples—more than one hundred varieties are grown. Camembert is the best known of its several cheeses, and one of Normandy's most famous products. Legend holds that the secret for making Camembert was traded in 1790 for shelter by a priest from Brie in the Île-de-France who was hiding from anticlerical measures of the Revolution.

Cider, not wine, is the drink of Normandy, and it comes in a variety of styles and strengths. It is also used to produce Calvados, an apple brandy. Drunk between courses during a long meal, Calvados is called the *trou* (hole) *normand*—leaving a clear palate for the next food. Situated so close to the sea, Normandy naturally also has a strong tradition of seafood.

Tarte Normande à la crème (Normandy Apple and Cream Tart)

- 10 ½-inch unbaked pastry shell
- 4 large Granny Smith or other tart apples, peeled, cored, and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 tbs. unsalted butter, melted
- ⅔ cup sugar
- 4 large eggs
- ⅔ cup crème fraîche or heavy cream
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

Toss apples with the melted butter.

Beat together ½ cup of the sugar and the eggs until they are creamy and pale yellow. Add the cream and the vanilla extract and beat until the ingredients are well blended.

Spread the apples evenly over the bottom of the tart shell. Cover with the cream mixture to just below the rim. Sprinkle with remaining sugar.

Bake the tart (use a removable ring pan) on a baking sheet in a preheated 375 degree oven for 35–45 minutes. Apples should be browned and batter set. Cool on a wire rack. Serve warm.

Vocabulaire

bateau à vapeur (m): steam boat

ciel (m): sky

escarpé (m): cliff

falaise (f): bluff

La Manche: the English Channel

marine (f): navy, also seascape

nager: to swim

nuage (m): cloud

plage (f): beach

pomme (f): apple

port (m): harbor

villégiature (f): extended holiday

The Works

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Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
French, 1796–1875

Beach near Etretat, c. 1872
Oil on canvas, 4 7/8 x 10 1/4 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.117



Cliff near Etretat
Leo J. Kasun

This *pochade*, painted outdoors within a few hours, was meant to record Corot's direct impression of the landscape. Its long, sweeping brushstrokes capture in shorthand the look and feel of light and weather, preserving the freshness and immediacy of his initial observation. Corot often made summer expeditions to paint in Normandy. His gentle view of the cliffs near Etretat gives little hint of the dramatic scenery that drew most artists and tourists to the town: two rocky headlands pierced with portals and a dramatic jutting rock called the "Needle."

reproduction
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Eugène Boudin
French, 1824–1898

Jetty and Wharf at Trouville, 1863
Oil on wood, 13 5/8 x 22 3/4 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1983.1.9



Eugène Boudin began to paint tourist scenes in 1862; the next year, when this painting was made, a new rail line opened from Paris to Deauville-Trouville, making travel to these resorts much easier. Beach vacationers were unconventional subjects for an artist at that time. Seascapes, if they had figures, were more typically staffed by fishermen or peasant washerwomen. Boudin's tourists, by contrast, were as modern as the black smoke rising from the arriving steamer. They had leisure time and money to spend, and were the patrons as well as the subjects of his art. Though

crowded, Boudin's beach scenes usually lack narrative or anecdote. He was characterizing a class of people, not individuals and, therefore, painted their postures and fashions, not their faces. Their very anonymity added to his pictures' modern feel.

Boudin's modern subjects and, even more, the immediacy of his handling of changing light and sky were a strong influence on younger painters.

Consider this

If you had to sketch *Jetty and Wharf at Trouville* using only two lines, how would you do it?

- *maybe create three horizontal bands*

If you had to reduce the painting to three colors, what would they be? Which color is most difficult to determine?

- *probably the bluish-pinkish-yellowish sky*

Express the painting as a series of ratios: what is the ratio of sky to water to land? Of natural to human elements? Of fixed to ephemeral elements? What do these ratios tell you about the subject—and about what the artist was most interested in?

How does Boudin prevent the human figures from distracting attention from his principal focus, the sky?

- *large proportion of canvas devoted to sky*
- *small scale and lack of detail in figures*
- *vertical elements leading eye upward*
- *bright patches of cloud attracting the eye*

Describe the various activities the figures are engaged in. Are they arriving at or leaving Trouville? What time of day is it? What is the weather like?

What signs of modern life do you see?

- *steamer and smoke*
- *streetlight*
- *tourists*

If this location had been painted fifty years earlier, in what ways would it look different?

- *in place of modern elements, there might be peasant figures, fishermen, nets, boats*

Try to imagine the scene with these changes made—does it convey a different mood and message?

Imagine you are standing on the wharf with the tourists. What might you hear? Feel? Smell? Taste?



This on-the-spot study, although not specifically made for *Jetty and Wharf* (in fact, painted years later), nonetheless illustrates the relation between an oil sketch and a studio-finished picture meant for exhibition at the Salon.

CD 54 | Eugène Boudin

On the Jetty, c. 1869/1870

Oil on wood, 7 ¼ x 10 ¾ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.13

Channel resorts



Claude Monet

Beach at Trouville, 1870

Oil on canvas, 22 x 22 5/8 in.

Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum

Museum of Art 1948.116

During Boudin's lifetime the Channel coast was transformed by tourism. Already in the 1830s some small fishing villages accommodated visitors from France and England. Artists sought the opportunity to paint scenic locales and peasant life, and were soon followed by others in search of the healthful benefits of sea water and air. Bathers, in voluminous clothes to protect against the sun as much as immodesty, did not so much swim as immerse themselves in the water. Ladies were carried out in divans. Actual swimming did not catch on until mid-century or later, when other more competitive activities like rowing and boating also became popular.

Trouville became known as *la reine des plages* (the queen of beaches). By 1850 the former fishing village had become a true resort. The local population was outnumbered during summer season by a factor of five or six to one, and businesses worked to supply tourists with all the amenities they required: large hotels, casinos, theaters, concerts, even perfumed soap for their small dogs. Aristocratic subscribers of private gaming clubs were a powerful draw to prestige-conscious members of the bourgeoisie. The sea itself was now a lesser attraction than this society of leisure and self-display—no wonder Boudin's paintings were so popular. The artist expressed some ambivalence about his customers, once saying they

deserved to see their lives enshrined by art, another time labeling them “gilded parasites.” He went on to clarify his true subject:

Should I confess it? This beach at Trouville, which used to be my delight... seems like a frightful masquerade. One would have to be something of a genius to make something of this bunch of do-nothing poseurs... You feel a certain shame in painting such idle laziness. Fortunately, dear friend, the Creator has spread out everywhere his splendid and warming light, and it is less this society that we reproduce than the element that envelops it.²

Monet and the paintings of Rouen cathedral

Painting in series

In the 1880s many of the artists who had forged impressionism became dissatisfied with its focus on spontaneity and visual perception. Renoir looked to models from the Italian Renaissance, and Pissarro experimented with neo-impressionism. Around 1890 Monet began to explore a single subject systematically, in series: grainstacks, poplar trees, views in Venice and London, a mountain in Norway, and the Rouen cathedral. These paintings were quite different from his impressionist landscapes of the 1870s. Though Monet began them in front of his subject—often working on several canvases simultaneously—he spent long hours reworking them, usually over a couple of years. “The further I go,” he wrote, “the better I see that it takes a great deal of work to succeed in rendering what I want to render: ‘instantaneity,’ above all the *enveloppe*, the same light spread over everything, and I’m more than ever disgusted at things that come easily, at the first attempt.”³

The “*enveloppe*” that attracted Monet was the air itself, the unifying atmosphere between him and his subject. As a younger man Monet had sought to capture the visual effects of light and weather by painting quickly and directly. When asked about his studio, he went so far as to exclaim, “Studio, but I never had one!” and flung his arms wide to embrace the whole out-of-doors. “That,” he said, “is my studio.”⁴ It was not true, of course; even his early impressionist pictures often show signs of having been worked on later in the studio. But now he pursued the most ephemeral effects with deliberate slowness. The relationship between subject and painting evolved as he explored color and light as artistic concerns. Increasingly, he sought internal, pictorial unity, not only in each painting but through each series as a whole. Harmonizing colors and textures allowed him to elaborate his original response to a scene and to explore the effects on mood produced by differing light and color.



Rouen cathedral, 1938

John Rewald Papers, Gallery Archives
National Gallery of Art, Washington

reproduction
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Claude Monet
French, 1840–1926

Rouen Cathedral, West Facade, 1894
Oil on canvas, 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 25 $\frac{15}{16}$ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.49

In late January or early February 1892, Monet rented rooms across from the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Rouen. He remained until spring and returned to work again the next winter. He painted more than thirty views of the cathedral in all, moving from one canvas to the next as the light and weather changed. Monet took the cathedral paintings back to his home at Giverny (about halfway between Paris and Rouen) and worked on them laboriously in the studio—many made the trip more than once. He wanted to harmonize them as a group, abandoning spontaneity for more careful elaboration that emphasized the subjectivity of his vision. Their heavy layers of paint show him struggling at times. In correspondence he complained about the difficulty, once even calling his pictures “obstinate encrustations of color.”⁵ He finally exhibited twenty of the Rouen views in Paris in 1895.

Rouen had experienced renovations like those made by Baron Haussmann in Paris but kept more of its medieval character. Today, around seven hundred timbered houses still line narrow streets, drawing tourists and scholars of medieval domestic architecture. Even in the nineteenth century, the city invoked images of France and its medieval past. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake here, rallying forces for the Dauphin of France against the English. Monet’s audience would have recognized the cathedral right away. Built over a four-hundred-year period, beginning in the twelfth century, it reflects all the different stages of the French Gothic style. Gothic architecture was invented in France at the abbey church of Saint-Denis just outside Paris, and the style was deeply associated with the nation itself. All these



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CD 56

Claude Monet
French, 1840–1926

Rouen Cathedral, West Facade, Sunlight, 1894
Oil on canvas, 39 3/8 x 25 7/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.179



overtones, combined with a Catholic revival during the 1880s, would have made Monet's choice of motif particularly resonant for contemporary French viewers, even if his primary motivation remained an exploration of color and mood.

Consider this

Monet painted more than thirty scenes of Rouen cathedral. Suggest some environmental conditions that might have been seen in other paintings in the series. Why were serial paintings well suited for Monet's exploration of the changing effects of light, weather, and atmosphere?

Monet struggled to render the unifying atmosphere that bathed a scene, which he called its *enveloppe*. Can you describe this painting's *enveloppe* in words?

Do you see any clear outlines? Is it possible to determine exactly where one surface ends and another begins? If line does not define the forms in this painting, what does?

□ *color*

Monet spent long hours in his studio reworking these canvases he had begun under direct observation. How did this procedure differ from the original outdoor technique of the impressionists?

reproduction
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Georges Seurat
French, 1859–1891

The Lighthouse at Honfleur, 1886
Oil on canvas, 26 ¼ x 32 ¼ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1983.1.33



Between 1885 and 1890 Georges Seurat traveled to Normandy every summer but one, staying many weeks in different locations to paint along the coast. He was continuing a tradition of Seurat family vacations but also consciously positioning himself in the long line of artists who had painted there before him.

In 1886 he was in Honfleur. Once an important port, it had been overtaken by Le Havre on the other side of the Seine estuary. Seurat returned from his stay there with six canvases, including this one. Seeing this and other views of the Normandy coast in the final impressionist exhibition in 1888, a contemporary reviewer was moved to describe the “calm immensity”⁶ of Seurat’s seascapes. In the right foreground, a boat cradle and abandoned wheel invoke the lives of Honfleur’s retired sailors living in the hospice behind. The dark building’s walls are dabbed with horizontal bits of red and orange, purple and blue, even green. In the roof a different balance of these colors gives the appearance of slate, slicked with salt air. In practice the small touches of paint are too large to achieve the true optical mixing that neo-impressionists like Seurat sought, but the complementary colors produce a shimmering effect.



Hospital and lighthouse at Honfleur, 1950s

John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art,
Washington, Gallery Archives.

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CD 58

Georges Seurat
French, 1859–1891

Seascape at Port-en-Bessin, Normandy, 1888
Oil on canvas, 25 5/8 x 31 7/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of the W. Averell Harriman Foundation in
memory of Marie N. Harriman 1972.9.21

Consider this

What mood or emotion does *Lighthouse at Honfleur* convey to you? Suggest five adjectives to describe it.

The dark criss-crossing lines of the boat cradle in the foreground make a strong impression against their pale surroundings. Why do you think Seurat gave so much emphasis to this object?

- try covering it with an appropriately colored piece of paper to appreciate its anchoring effect
- observe how the composition is underpinned by a similar convergence of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines

The painting contains many signs of human activity, such as the lighthouse, rowboat, hospice building, and wheel—but no people. Why do you think they were excluded? How does the lack of figures affect our experience of the painting? Do you see anything that suggests movement, sound, or passing time?

What color is the roof of the hospice?
What colors were used to create that appearance?



Six paintings resulted from Seurat's six-week stay in Port-en-Bessin in 1888. It was a small fishing port, nestled between opposing cliffs cut by the river Dromme. Seurat chose to paint the normal life of the little harbor and straightforward views of the coastline—a choice that differed from most painters. He preferred a quiet landscape, like this one, to dramatic views of cliffs or crashing waves. And, with few exceptions, he avoided either picturesque or overtly modern scenes, ignoring both Port-en-Bessin's medieval stone tower and the many tourists he must have encountered hiking the same cliff trails.

Seurat's brushstrokes are more uniform in this painting than in *The Lighthouse at Honfleur*, which he made only two years earlier. More often following the contours of the forms they define, the brushstrokes make us more aware of Seurat's presence

as artist. He believed art to be a transformation (not imitation) of nature accomplished through the artist's imagination and intellect. The small touches of complementary colors continue around the painted border of the canvas, making the image “pop.”

Seurat's ideas about composition were influenced by Charles Henry's *L'Esthétique scientifique*, published in 1855, which went so far as to include what Henry called an “aesthetic protractor.” Seurat came to believe that mood was determined by three factors: tone, tint, and line. Sadness, for instance, was created by descending contours and cool colors, like those in this painting. The land, shaded by blues and greens, steps down in a large triangle that dominates the canvas. Gray clouds dampen the blonder tones of the sky below.

Neo-impressionism

Seurat's style was dubbed "neo-impressionist" by a sympathetic critic, but the artist himself preferred the terms "divisionism" or "chromo-luminisme." "Pointillism" describes the technique of applying paint in small dots (*points*), which had existed before Seurat adopted the practice. Neo-impressionism was no simple technique but an attempt to systematize all aspects of painting. Seurat laid out his ideas in a letter written in 1890, which he illustrated with small sketches:

Aesthetic

*Art is Harmony. Harmony is the analogy of contrary and similar qualities in **tone**, **color**, and **line**, considered with reference to a dominant and under the influence of a scheme of lighting in gay, calm, or sad combinations.*

The contraries are:

*In **tone**, a more luminous against a darker.*

*In **color**, the complementaries; that is, a particular red set against its complementary, etc. — red-green/orange-blue/yellow-violet.*

*In **line**, those that form a right angle.*

***Gaiety of tone** results from a luminous dominant; of **color**, from a warm dominant; of **line**, from angles above the horizontal.*



***Calmness of tone** results from a balance of dark and light; of **color**, from a balance of warm and cold; of **line**, from a horizontal.*

***Sadness of tone** results from a dark dominant; of **color**, from a cold dominant; of **line**, from angles below the horizontal.*



Technical

Assuming the phenomena of the duration of a light-impression on the retina.

Synthesis necessarily follows. The means of expression is the optical mixture of tones and colors (local color and the color of the source of illumination: sunlight, lamplight, gaslight, etc.), in accordance with the law of contrast, gradation, and irradiation.

The frame is in a harmony that opposes those of the tones, colors, and lines of the picture.⁷



Color and light

Seurat's technique was informed by new understanding of the relation between color and light. Artists had long known that pigments of red, yellow, and blue mixed to form all the other colors. Yellow mixed with blue produces green, for example. This is a subtractive process, each pigment absorbing and reflecting different wavelengths of light. The neo-impressionists' small touches of color, however, were meant to work by an additive process, acting directly as color-

light wavelengths on the eye and brain. These paints—a whole range of them, applied straight out of the tube—were blended in the viewer's perception, not on the palette. Physicists Hermann von Helmholtz and James Clerk Maxwell had demonstrated, using rapidly spinning disks with varicolored segments, that colored light did, in fact, mix optically: spinning red and green disks produced the sensation of yellow; red and blue, purple; blue and

yellow, white. An American, Ogden Rood, professor of physics at Columbia University and amateur watercolor painter, made these discoveries accessible in his *Modern Chromatics*, published in French in 1879. Rood urged artists to "paint with light." No artist made a more serious attempt than Seurat.

The Artists

Eugène Boudin

French, 1824–1898



Eugène Boudin at Deauville-Trouville,
June 1896

Honfleur, Musée Eugène Boudin

Eugène Boudin was born and died in Normandy. His father was a sailor on one of the first steamships that ran between Le Havre and Honfleur. Boudin worked as cabin boy on his father's ship, observing from an early age the ever-changing sea and sky that would become his primary focus as a painter. In 1836, at age twelve, he began to work in a stationery and frame shop. The owner gave him a box of paints, but little else is known about his early interest in art. At twenty he opened his own business, framing and selling the works of visiting artists. In 1847 Boudin sold the shop to pay his way out of military service. Sponsored by his former artist-clients, he went to Paris to study and copy in the Louvre. In 1851 the town of Le Havre awarded him a three-year scholarship.

Boudin quickly established the pattern he would follow throughout his career: in summer he traveled to paint outdoor sketches that he would complete in his Paris studio over the winter. He went mostly to Normandy and Brittany, and other parts of the Channel coast. (Near the end of his life, illness took him to the French Riviera; he liked the sunny warmth, his letters suggest, but still preferred the cool, windy north.) Though he painted inland landscapes, peasant scenes, and still lifes, it was the coast, especially its river estuaries and harbors, that most attracted Boudin's eye. In 1862 he started painting the droves of fashionable tourists who vacationed at Normandy beach resorts. These pictures—his best known—were highly marketable and number in the thousands.

In the 1860s Boudin did not yet consider his outdoor studies fully finished; he felt they should be “pushed,” as he said, to completion using notes, sketches, and memory. He meticulously recorded details about atmosphere, weather, and times of day (and inscribed this information on his canvases). He wrote to a student: “An impression is gained in an instant, but it then has to be condensed following the rules of art or rather your own feeling and that is the most difficult thing—to finish a painting without spoiling anything.”⁸ At the same time, Boudin also claimed “everything that is painted directly and on the spot has always a strength, a power, a vivacity of touch which one cannot recover in the studio.” Eventually Boudin would paint almost entirely *en plein air*, saying that one brushstroke placed outdoors was of more value than two days spent in the studio. His work foreshadowed impressionist concerns with atmosphere and the changing effects of weather and light. Daubigny called him “the king of the skies.” The direct freshness of his works was a particular influence for Monet, who as a teenager worked alongside Boudin. As the modest Boudin himself wrote: “I may well have had some small measure of influence on the movement that led painters to study actual daylight and express the changing aspects of the sky with the utmost sincerity.”

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
biography, p. 46

Claude Monet
biography, p. 68

Georges Seurat

(French, 1859–1891)



Ernest J. Laurent | French, 1859–1929

Portrait of Georges Seurat, 1883 | Black chalk,
15 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ in.

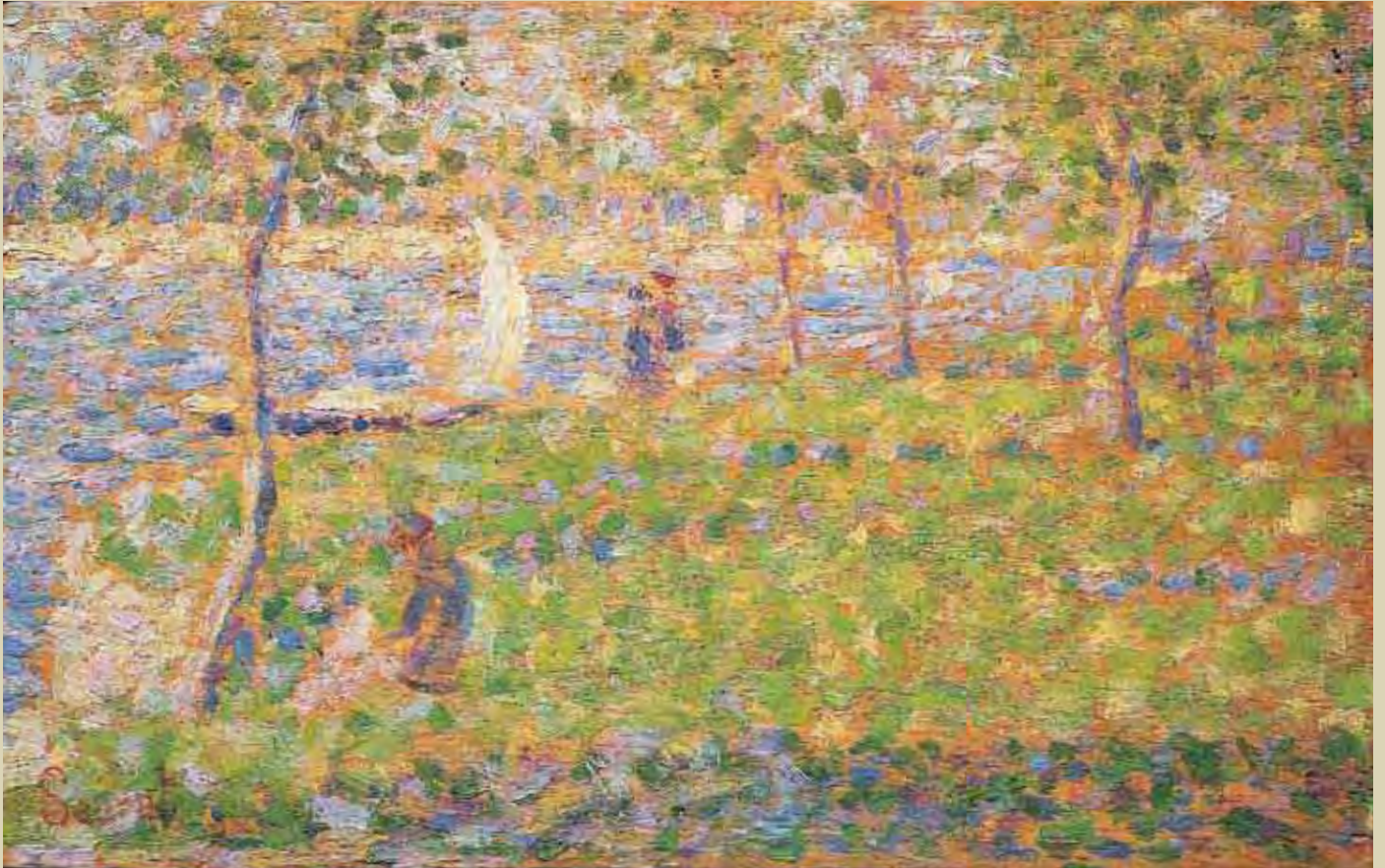
Paris, Musée du Louvre/Art Resource, NY

Georges Seurat was born in Paris to a middle-class family. His father had worked as a coachman but retired with a substantial income from real estate. Seurat began drawing as a boy and was enrolled in formal lessons by age sixteen. Three years later he was accepted at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Seurat's artistic training followed a traditional academic course. He was attracted by neo-classical painters like J. A. D. Ingres and the airless monumentality of early Renaissance frescoes. He read theoretical studies about the expressive value of color and line, distinctions between local and reflected color, the operation of color complements, and the idea that colors could be mixed optically in the eye. (See the Glossary for information about color terms.) Seurat studied at the *École* for about eighteen months but did not return following a short period of military service in 1879. Instead he started working independently.

Still in 1879 Seurat visited the fourth impressionist exhibition, which a friend described as producing “an unexpected and profound shock.” He turned from the heroic nudes and mythological figures of his student work to modern subjects in the city, suburbs, and countryside. He was interested in the impressionists' bright palette and broken brushwork but began to systematize their intuitive and empirical approach. Despite depicting modern life, Seurat shunned quick snapshotlike views for carefully planned compositions that were monumental and timeless. He eliminated all that was accidental, thereby underscoring their classical feel. A contemporary likened his figures to those of ancient Greek art, saying Seurat's ambition was to “make the moderns pass by... in their essential aspect like figures on a Panathenaic frieze.”⁹

Between 1881 and 1883, Seurat continued to read about optics and color, and aesthetic theories linking formal elements of color and composition with emotion and mood. He applied these lessons in small painted panels (previously he had mostly drawn), initially using a hatchwork of small brushstrokes (*balayé*), and then a more rigorous system of small dots (*points*). In pairing small dabs of color in complementary pairs, his goal was not simply to produce a blended hue in the eye but—because this technique mixes colored light, not pigment—to enhance the luminosity of his paintings. Seurat applied a similar systematic approach to composition, aligning certain types of line and color with particular moods. His neo-impressionist “rules,” however, did not produce cold or mechanistic results; instead Seurat's paintings are highly personal and resonant, and were greatly admired by symbolist writers and poets.

Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte—1884* became the most famous painting of the decade (and among the works most often reproduced in commercial art today). It created a sensation when it was shown at the final impressionist exhibition in the spring of 1886 and, overnight, made Seurat leader of a new avant-garde. His leadership was short-lived, however. He quarreled with other neo-impressionists, and in 1889 was challenged by the synthetism of Gauguin. He died of diphtheria only a few years later at age thirty-one.



Between May and December 1884 Seurat made numerous preparatory drawings and painted studies for *La Grande Jatte*, including this one.

CD 59 | Georges Seurat

Study for "La Grande Jatte," 1884/1885

Oil on wood, 6 ¼ x 9 7/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.81



BRITTANY

Scale: 1:500,000

Legend:

- Through railways
- Other railways
- Distance to roads
- Distance to railways
- Distance to coast
- Distance to sea level

HEIGHT OF LAND

300
200
100
Sea Level

Seeking the “Primitive” in Brittany

The strength and persistence of Brittany’s Celtic heritage set it apart from the rest of France. To many who traveled to the region in the nineteenth century it must have seemed almost a foreign country. Peasants spoke a language unrelated to French. Ancient monoliths and the mists of Arthurian legend kept its pagan past feeling quite current. It produced no wine—and almost unique in France, still doesn’t.



F. Muirhead, *Brittany* (London, 1925)
National Gallery of Art Library, Washington

First to “discover” Brittany were romantic writers, drawn by its primitive mystery and the thrall of waves crashing at Finistère (literally “land’s end”). Descriptions by Chateaubriand, Balzac, Stendhal, Hugo, and other writers attracted visual artists in turn. The English painter J. M. W. Turner visited in 1826; Corot made seven trips between 1829 and 1865. By the mid-1860s, inns in the small town of Pont-Aven were filled with artists, many foreign-born. An American, Robert Wylie, transformed a local chateau into a free arts academy, establishing the first colony of American painters in France.

Most of these artists were seeking picturesque landscapes and scenes of peasant life. But Paul Gauguin, the artist we look at most closely in this section, was not interested in ethnography. Gauguin was drawn to Brittany for the expressive power of its “primitive” culture, a power he hoped to tap into and convey in his work. For Gauguin and his followers, the Breton land and people became starting points for an exploration of color and form as modes of expression.



Cows graze in Brittany
Philippe Giraud/Corbis

Background: Brittany

Setting

- Brittany is a flattened upland known as the Armorican Massif, with Precambrian rocks more than 540 million years old; the ancient mountains have mostly worn down, leaving the highest elevation at 417 m (1,368 ft.).
- The coastline along both the English Channel and Atlantic is rugged and dramatic, deeply indented with bays; on the Atlantic side, especially, ocean currents moderate the climate.
- Large, undulating heaths occupy much of the inland area, with only a few remaining bits of the once-dense Armorican forest that figured in Arthurian legend.

History

- Brittany has more neolithic stone monuments than any other place on earth, including thousands of menhirs (from Breton “long stone”); dating from about 4500 BC, they were erected by the peoples who preceded the arrival of Celtic Gauls.
- In 56 BC Julius Caesar made Brittany part of the Roman empire; penetration of Roman culture, however, remained superficial.
- In the 5th and 6th centuries AD, invading Anglo-Saxons drove British Celts to Brittany—thus the name Bretagne, or “little Britain.”
- Missionaries from the British Isles converted the population to Christianity, but old pagan myths, legends, and customs remained strong for centuries.
- Brittany was formally incorporated as a part of France in 1532 but retained many local privileges; throughout the 19th century it remained a conservative region, preserving old social structures and religious customs.

Today

- Brittany is linked with other Celtic cultures by tradition, language, and music; the Breton name for Brittany is *Breizh*.
- Major cities include the capital Rennes, Brest, Lorient, and Quimper; industry remains fairly limited but the telecommunications sector is growing.
- The rural population is mostly engaged in animal husbandry; Brittany is a large milk producer but is also known for cauliflower and artichokes.
- Fishing, though reduced from past levels, remains an important economic activity.
- Tourism, especially in the coastal towns, has grown.
- In 2004 the population numbered just over 3 million.

Celtic culture: language, music, and religion

Today many aspects of Brittany's Celtic culture remain strong. At least 300,000 people understand Breton, a language related to Cornish and Welsh. In the 1930s that number was closer to one million; when the painters we discuss traveled to the western parts of Brittany in the late nineteenth century, about half the population spoke only Breton. Schools are now teaching Breton again, and a Breton literature has re-emerged.

Compare a few words in...

Breton	Welsh	French	English
ker	tre	ville	town
mor	mo[+r]	mer	sea
krampouez	crempoq	crêpe	pancake
bihan	bychan	petit	small
mat	da	bon	good

Since the 1970s Breton music has shared in the wide revival of Celtic music. Hundreds of *fest-noz* (night dances) take place each year. Typical of Breton music are historical ballads and a kind of response singing in which a second singer repeats and then responds to a lyric sung by the first, driving the music forward. Traditional instruments include the *biniou* and other types of bagpipe, the *bombarde* (related to and played like an oboe, but louder), harps, whistles, accordions, flutes, and fiddles. Dances like the *gavotte* were part of village festivals and family celebrations, and have many local variations. Somewhat unusually among folk traditions, Breton dances are accompanied by singing as well as instrumental music.

Another strong feature of Breton culture was the fervent religious belief of Brittany's peasants. The seven founder saints (many unrecognized by Rome) are still venerated in an ancient rite called the *tro-Breizh* (tour of Brittany), in which pilgrims walk about 600 km (almost 373 mi.) around the province to visit each of the saints' pilgrimage churches in turn. Villages celebrate their saints' feast days with a *pardon*, a long procession and mass, which often retains echoes of ancient pagan practices.



Pascal-Adolphe-Jean Dagnan-Bouveret | French, 1852–1929

The Pardon in Brittany, 1886

Oil on canvas, 45 x 35 ³/₈ in.

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Gift of George F. Baker, 1931 (31.132.34)

Gastronomie

No part of Brittany is very far from the sea, so fish and shellfish are plentiful. Breton oysters have designations of origin like fine wines and are described in similar terms. Paimpolaise are plump and taste of iodine. Cancale are not very meaty but have a distinct salty taste. Probably the most celebrated are Belon oysters, with a nutty aftertaste. Before the sixteenth century, most of the salt in Europe came from Brittany, and today chefs prize the coarse and slightly gray Sel de Guérande, evaporated from seawater.

Pancakes are a Breton specialty, part of its tradition of simple rural fare. In eastern Brittany thin crepes made with wheat flour are served for dessert with sweet fillings like fruit, honey, or chocolate. In the west buckwheat crepes, called *galettes*, are filled with ham, egg, cheese, and other savory foods—or simply eaten with butter and a bit of salt.

Galettes de Sarrasin (Buckwheat Crepes)

1 cup buckwheat flour
 ¼ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
 1 ½ tsp. Guérande sea salt, or to taste
 ¾ cup milk
 1 ½ cups water
 3 eggs
 1 tbs. melted butter

Sift the flours and salt together in a bowl. Whisk in the milk and water until smooth. Beat the eggs and whisk in batter. Let stand 1 to 2 hours. Heat a frying pan and brush lightly with some of the butter. Ladle the batter onto the hot pan and tilt to spread. Cook about 1 minute, flip and cook about 30 seconds more. Serve with a filling of your choice, accompanied by cider.

Vocabulaire

aber (m): deep river inlet, gorge

cidre (m): cider

crêpe (f): thin pancake

galette (f): cake; also buckwheat griddlecake

huître (f): oyster

meule (f): grain stack or rick; also millstone

sable (m): sand

sabot (m): wooden shoe

sel (m): salt

Learn about Breton and other Celtic music:
www.ceolas.org/ceolas.html (in English)

Check fest-noz dates, places, and scheduled musicians:
www.fest-noz.net (in English, French, and Breton)

Read more about the Breton language, even take an online course:
www.kervarker.org (in English, French, Breton, Spanish, and German)

The Works

reproduction
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Paul Gauguin
French, 1848–1903

Breton Girls Dancing, Pont-Aven, 1888
Oil on canvas, 28 ¾ x 36 ½ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1983.1.19



Gauguin wrote to art dealer Théo van Gogh (brother of Vincent), “I am doing a gavotte bretonne: three little girls dancing in a hayfield... The painting seems original to me, and I am quite pleased with the composition.”¹ The subject itself was a familiar one; Breton dances, religious processions, and other peasant scenes were shown with some frequency at the Salon. Parisian

audiences would have recognized the girls’ triangular bonnets, broad collars, and wooden shoes immediately. The town of Pont-Aven and its church spire can be seen in the background.

But Gauguin’s aim was not to present an anecdotal view of Breton life; his eye was trained on artistic concerns of color and form per se. His dancers loom overlarge in front of a stone wall, their size

emphasized by small heaps of grain. Their linked arms suggest a sinuous chain and create a patterning of zigzags that seems to fence them into a narrow space, an effect enhanced by strong contrasts of color: the dark dresses and white collars, the brilliant poppies attached to their aprons and the green of new hay.

Consider this

Gauguin was very pleased with his design for *Breton Girls Dancing*. Consider why by covering up certain elements with appropriately colored pieces of paper.

Note how the picture changes when you remove parts of the composition:

- *the diagonal line of stones—diminishes the asymmetrical dynamism of the picture and the outward thrust of the girl’s arm*
- *the two red flowers—dulls the color scheme and eliminates back-and-forth movement of the eye*
- *the vertical steeple, chimneys, and trees in the background—deadens energy by eliminating upward extension of figure group*

The three dancing girls are almost identical in size, dress, hair color, and facial features. Why do you think Gauguin represented them this way?

- *to treat them as abstract visual elements rather than real people*
- *to suggest movement over time, as if one person is shown at three different points of the dance*

The linked bodies of the girls suggest a semicircle. Can you find other groupings of three that form or suggest semicircles?

Imagine you are dressed as the girls are. Would your head, body, and feet feel different than they do now? What activities that you enjoy would be difficult in those clothes? What does this indicate about the girls’ daily activities?

What role does the dog play in the painting? Is it there to add a note of humor, to elaborate the narrative, or as a spot of brown where it’s needed?



In 1889 the owner of a café across from the World Fair’s official art exhibition was persuaded to host a showing of works by the “Groupe impressioniste et synthétiste” — Gauguin and his Pont-Aven followers. Other artists, including Cézanne and Pissarro, also participated. Known as the Volponi exhibition, it included Gauguin’s first attempts at print-making, including this lithograph.

CD 61 | Paul Gauguin

Pleasures of Brittany (Joies de Bretagne), 1889
Lithograph (zinc) in black on yellow wove paper,
8 ½ x 9 ½ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Andrew W. Mellon Fund 1978.54.1

Synthétisme

Gauguin and the artists who gathered around him in Brittany believed that art should be a synthesis of three things: outward appearance, the artist's feelings in front of what he or she sees, and purely aesthetic considerations of color and form. The term *synthétisme* was coined for the 1889 Volponi exhibition Gauguin and colleagues organized opposite the official art show of the *Exposition universelle*. The participants were interested in moving beyond impressionism's visual transcription of nature. For them the landscape—or any subject—was merely a starting point. Their goals were both more personal and focused on the work of art per se. As artist Maurice Denis would say in 1890, "It is well to remember that a picture before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order."² By flattening space and applying color in broad, flat areas without modulation, and by repeating rhythms for overall effect, synthetist artists ordered and simplified sensory data. Not limited by realistic details, they could concentrate on intangibles of feeling and expression. Although the synthetists still grounded their art in the real world, their flat space and nondescriptive color would be important influences on artists in the early twentieth century who went on to pursue an art of pure abstraction.



Paul Sérusier

The Talisman, 1888

Oil on wood, 10 ½ x 8 ½ in.

Paris, Musée d'Orsay/Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY

Another of the artists working in Brittany was Paul Sérusier. As Gauguin instructed him to apply his colors "straight from the tube," Sérusier painted a landscape with barely recognizable connection to the natural world:

"You see these trees as what color?" questioned Gauguin.

"They are yellow."

"Well, then, put down yellow. And that shadow?"

"Rather blue."

"Don't be afraid to paint it as blue as possible. Use pure ultramarine. And those red leaves? Use vermilion."³

The result was one of the first paintings to approach pure abstraction, its forms and colors so reduced as to be nearly free from description. For several of the young artists, the painting seemed to have an almost living power and they called it *The Talisman*.

CD 62

Paul Gauguin
French, 1848–1903

Landscape at Le Pouldu, 1890
Oil on canvas, 28 7/8 x 36 3/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1983.1.20



By 1889 Gauguin found Pont-Aven overcrowded. Seeking a more isolated and less expensive environment he and several colleagues took up residence in Le Pouldu, a small village on the Atlantic coast. Only 20 km (about 12 mi.) distant, it had nonetheless a totally different feel: more rural, with open fields and trees deformed by wind.

Gauguin and his confreres made many expeditions to the outlying countryside. Here we see the undulating hills of the Kerzellec valley. Despite its proximity to the ocean, much of the economy in this region was agricultural, based in the *armor*, the ancient Celtic term for the fertile land bordering the coast. (In Roman times Brittany was called Armorica.)

Gauguin wrote to Van Gogh about the

orange-pink sand that farmers hauled in from the coast to lighten the dense soil: “pink and not yellow sand,” he emphasized. A Scottish artist wrote of Le Pouldu:

Imagine a country of gigantic sand dunes, like the mountainous waves of solid sea, between which appeared glimpses of the Bay of Biscay and the Atlantic rollers. All this, peopled by a savage-looking race, who seemed to do nothing but search for drift-wood, or to collect seaweed, with strange sledges drawn by shaggy ponies; and with women in black dresses, who wore the great black ‘coif’ (like a huge black sun-bonnet). Gauguin has given us the exact spirit of the place...⁴

Landscapes like this one were not painted entirely outdoors. Gauguin stressed to his colleagues the need to work from sketches and especially memory. “Don’t copy nature too literally,” he advised. “Art is abstraction; draw art as you dream in nature’s presence, and think more about the act of creation than about the final result.”⁵

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CD 63

Paul Gauguin
French, 1848–1903

Haystacks in Brittany, 1890
Oil on canvas, 29 ¼ x 36 7/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of the W. Averell Harriman Foundation
in memory of Marie N. Harriman 1972.9.11



This stylized view of fields and farm buildings near Le Pouldu is typical of the *synthétiste* works that Gauguin made in Brittany in 1890. Its forms are simplified, abstracted to their essence. In 1888 Gauguin had defined his goal as a synthesis of form and color obtained by observing “only the dominant element.”

The friezelike procession of cows and cowherd in the foreground coaxes our gaze to move horizontally, and we find that the entire composition is arranged into patchwork bands, layered one on the

other. Even the sky is stratified. Exploited especially in the black-and-white cows and the flowering crops, strong contrasts of dark and light flatten forms, rendering them more decorative than descriptive. The vivid and unexpected oranges in the foreground exaggerate nature and cast it according to the artist’s imagination. Notice how the silhouette of the cow at right is outlined against the orange with dark blue. In many places similar outlines compartmentalize colors, in the manner of cloisonné enamels or stained glass.

In this painting, made before he had embraced the flat color spaces of later pictures, Gauguin’s admiration for Cézanne is evident, especially in the tightly parallel brushstrokes. While the observation of the landscape reveals Gauguin’s impressionist roots, the overall, tapestrylike pattern tends to flatten the scene and create a decorative surface.

CD 64 | Paul Gauguin

Brittany Landscape, 1888

Oil on canvas, 28 x 35 ¼ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.148



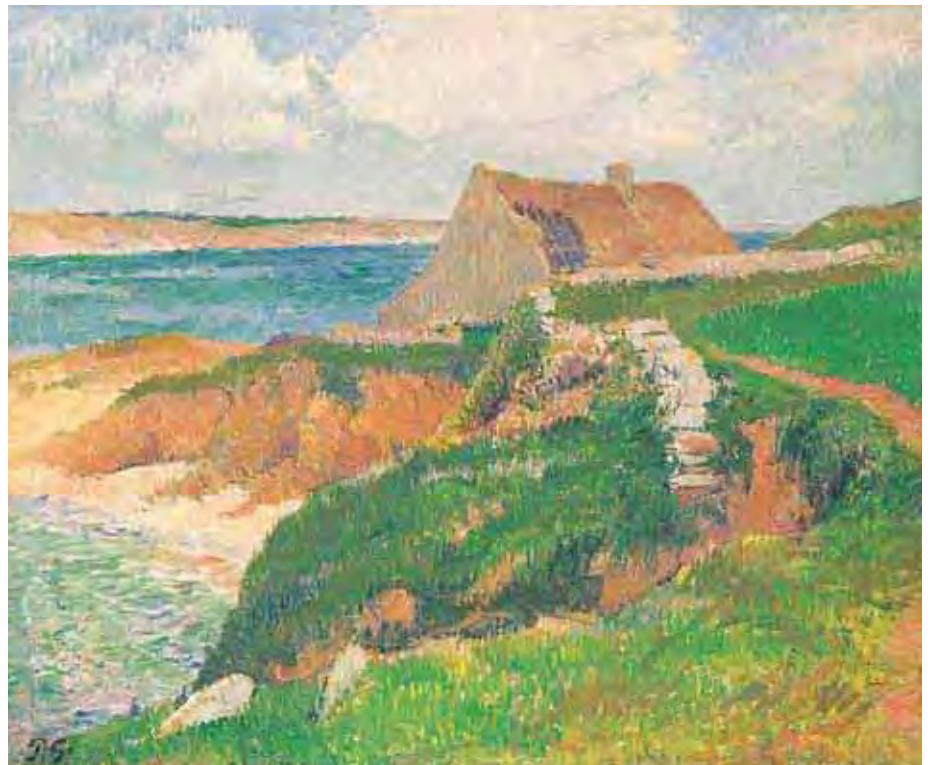
Henri Moret was another of Gauguin’s followers in Le Pouldu. He used the sort of parallel brushstrokes Gauguin himself had adopted from Cézanne.

CD 65 | Henri Moret | French, 1856–1913

The Island of Raguenez, Brittany, 1890/1895

Oil on canvas, 21 ¼ x 25 ½ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.46



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CD 66

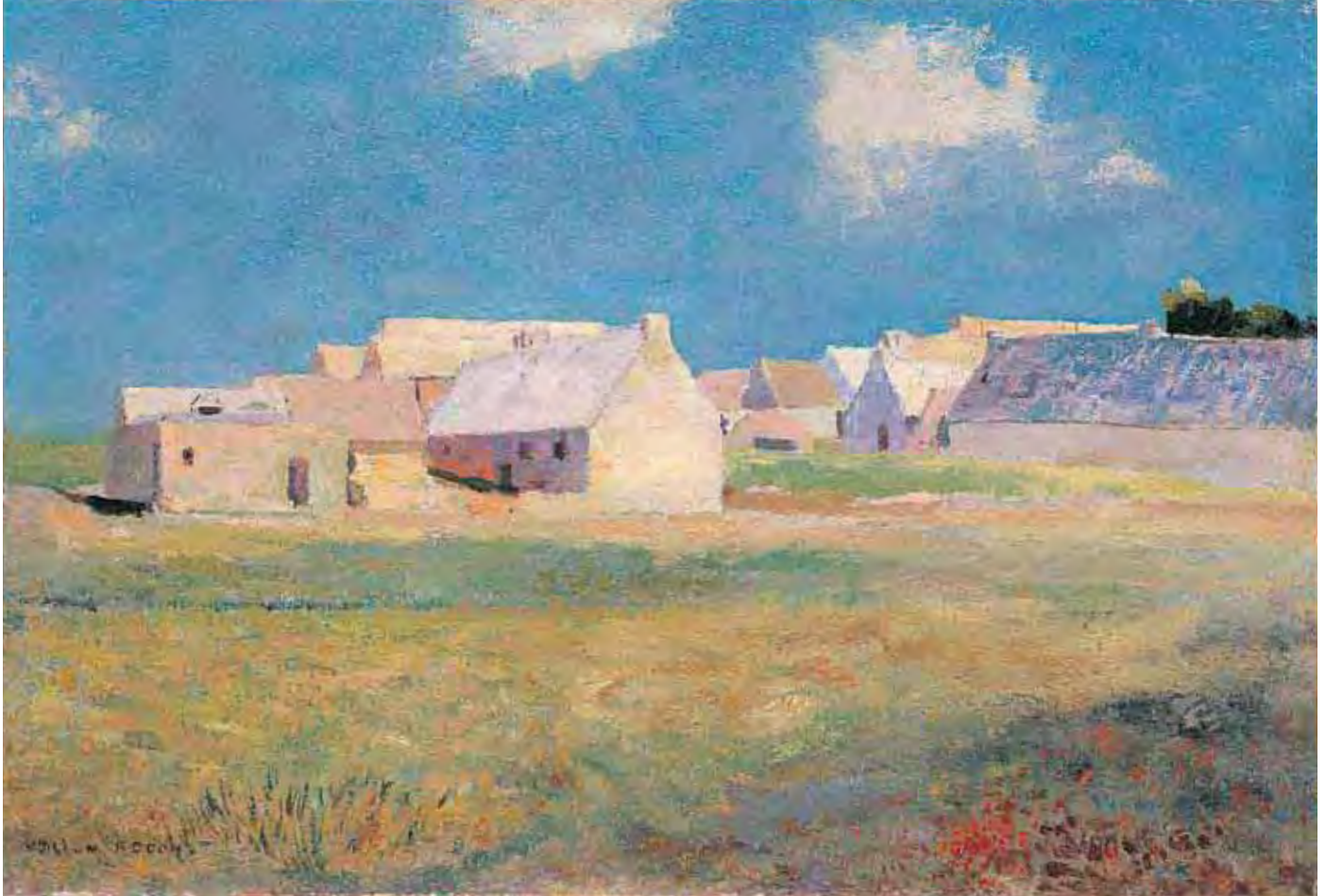
Paul Gauguin
French, 1848–1903

Pair of Wooden Shoes (Sabots), 1889/1890
Polychromed oak, leather, and iron nails,
5 1/16 x 12 7/8 x 4 1/16 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.239



While in Brittany Gauguin often wore native costumes of embroidered shirts, heavy woolen sweaters, and *sabots* (wooden shoes), such as this pair, which he carved and decorated. We know he sometimes wore the rough *sabots* in Paris, but he may have made this pair only for decorative purposes. Gauguin did not limit his artistic activity to painting. In his rejection of Western, industrialized society and quest for authenticity, Gauguin regarded all crafts—he produced ceramics and woodcarvings—to be of equal artistic merit and value as painting and sculpture. He was among the first to eliminate the distinction between high art and decoration.



CD 67

Odilon Redon
French, 1840–1916

Breton Village, c. 1890
Oil on canvas, 9 x 13 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1994.59.11

Odilon Redon had painted *plein-air* landscapes from 1865 or so, when he left the studio of the academic painter with whom he briefly studied. He continued to produce them even while he was creating his *noirs*, the often macabre charcoal drawings he reproduced as lithographs. He intended the *noirs* for public consumption, the landscapes for private

purposes, calling them “studies for becoming an artist.” Straightforward and painted with strong, saturated colors, most of Redon’s outdoor studies were created before 1890, when he turned from the *noirs* to use color in his studio works.

Redon had discovered Brittany by 1870 and returned often. But he found the countryside in his home county of the

Médoc more to his liking. In July 1875 he wrote from Quimper:

*It’s there the North begins, it’s the sky that presses obstinately, heavy and hard, on men... It rains, it falls slowly, heavy mist. Everything is sad... All nature, man and landscape, seems to feel the weight of the end of time... Sad country, crushed under somber colors.*⁶

reproduction
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Paul Sérusier
French, 1863–1927

Farmhouse at Le Pouldu, 1890
Oil on canvas, 28 3/8 x 23 5/8 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift (Partial and Promised) of Alexander M
and Judith W. Laughlin 2000.95.1



Sérusier painted a typical Breton farmhouse, with its stone walls and low-hanging thatched roof, but his true subject is color and form. The undulating line of the roof becomes a foil for the sunlight that spreads on the ground in a yellow pool. Three-dimensional space is flattened and the complexities of color reduced, contained within clear outlines. His painting is informed by *synthétisme*, which Sérusier first embraced with Gauguin in Brittany and later expounded with the Nabis. Synthetists held that art is separate from mere experience, and should be organized by principles of art and pictorial unity. Gauguin urged Sérusier not to paint simply what was before his eyes but to translate what he felt in front of a landscape, giving license to simplify form, exaggerate color, and transpose reality.

Consider this

Do you think Sérusier’s farmhouse is the family dwelling? A barn? Look at the 1938 photograph of this farm compound (below) for more clues.

What is represented by the gold-colored material surrounding the haystack? Is it the same as the four golden circles behind the woman?

What color are the shadows in this picture? How does the arrangement of warm and cool colors affect your impression of the space depicted?

Synthétiste paintings were inspired as much by what the artist felt at a certain place as by what he saw there. What emotions or thoughts does this painting produce in you?

What is the approximate ratio of man-made to natural forms in this painting?

What techniques harmonize them into a unified form?

- *shape*
- *color*
- *fall of shadow*
- *relatively uniform, thin brushstrokes*



Photograph of the farm that Sérusier painted, 1938
Musée de Pont-Aven

The Artists

Paul Gauguin

French, 1848–1903



Paul Gauguin with his palette, 1888

John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gallery Archives

Paul Gauguin was born in Paris but spent most of the first six years of his life in Peru. His great-grandfather had been a Peruvian diplomat, and Gauguin would always play up his exotic roots, claiming—with little evidence beyond his craggy profile—to have Inca blood. His maternal grandmother was the noted feminist and socialist writer Flora Tristan. After completing his education in Orléans, Gauguin joined the merchant marine and later entered the French navy. He served until 1871, when he started work at the Paris stock exchange.

In the early 1870s, Gauguin began to paint as a hobby and to collect works by the impressionists. He worked with Cézanne and Pissarro, who was a mentor. In 1883, following a market crash, Gauguin abandoned his life as a stockbroker to paint full-time. He participated in the impressionists' last four group exhibitions, but impressionism's preoccupation with visual effects did not satisfy

him for long. Like contemporary symbolist writers, he sought to portray what could not be seen, to express interior states rather than surface appearances.

Seeking both a cheaper place to live and relief from bourgeois convention, in 1886 Gauguin went to the town of Pont-Aven in Brittany, where an art colony already flourished. In Brittany, with its rugged landscape and fervently religious peasants, Gauguin hoped to tap the expressive potential he believed he would find in a more rural, even “primitive” culture. He wrote in an 1888 letter: “I love Brittany; I find there the savage, the primitive. When my clogs ring out on this granite soil, I hear the dull, muted, powerful tone which I seek in my painting.”⁷ In Pont-Aven Gauguin became the center of a group of avant-garde artists, including Émile Bernard and Sérusier, who dedicated themselves to an artistic philosophy they called *synthétisme*. Influenced in part by Bernard's interest in stained glass, Gauguin transformed his use of color, applying it in broad, flat areas outlined with dark paint. His new style enhanced color's inherent emotive qualities, its ability to communicate intangibles.

Over the next several years, Gauguin shuttled between Paris and Brittany, traveled also to Panama and Martinique, and spent a few months with Vincent van Gogh in Arles. His rejection of European urban values finally led Gauguin to Tahiti in 1891. He expected to find an unspoiled, exotic, and sensual culture, but was confronted instead with a world already transformed by Western civilization. The primitive Tahiti he painted was largely his own invention. Apart from one return visit to France, Gauguin spent his remaining years, many of them marred by ill health and depression, in the South Seas.

Odilon Redon

French, 1840–1916



Odilon Redon in his studio

Paris, Archives Larousse/Bridgeman Art Library

Odilon Redon was born in Bordeaux, the same year as Monet, yet his art was untouched by impressionism. He rejected both the sterile forms of academic painting in which he trained and impressionism's reliance on appearance, believing instead that art should convey an inner experience, more than surface reality. He found like-minded artists and poets among the symbolists, including Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé. Early in his career, Redon was known for works executed in charcoal and reproduced as lithographs. These images—*noirs* (blacks) he called them—revealed bizarre and dreamlike states, often macabre and disturbing. The critic and novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans called Redon the “prince of mysterious dreams.” Perhaps more than any previous artist, Redon linked his images with the written word through captions and titles, and in producing drawings for Baudelaire's collection of poems, *Les Fleurs du mal* (first published 1857, *The Flowers of Evil*).

About 1890, when he was fifty years old, Redon turned away from the *noirs* to celebrate color in pastels and oil paintings. Although their lyricism contrasts with the melancholy *noirs*, these works were still driven by Redon's

highly personal, dreamlike vision. Redon was enthusiastically embraced by the next generation of painters, including Gauguin, who saw him as a kind of spiritual precursor.

Paul Sérusier

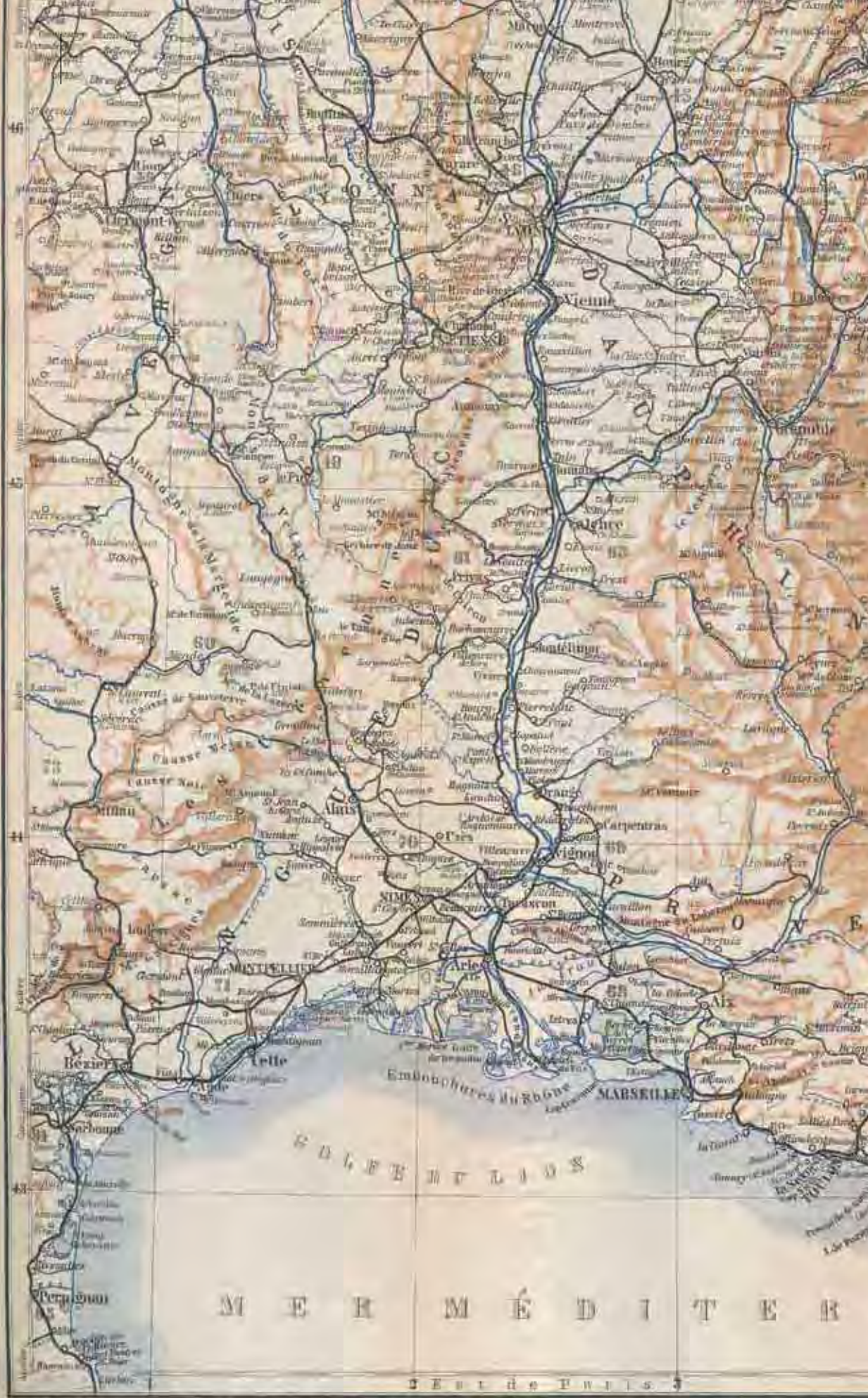
French, 1863–1927



Paul Sérusier in Brittany, 1890s
Musée de Pont-Aven

Paul Sérusier, born in Paris to a wealthy family that owned a *parfumerie*, was one of the young artists who joined Gauguin’s following in Brittany. He first arrived in Pont-Aven in 1888 after years of study at the Académie Julien, Paris’ largest private art academy. There he was noted for wide-ranging intellectual pursuits as well as artistic promise. He received an honorable mention at the Salon of 1888, the same year he went to Brittany. When he arrived in Pont-Aven, he shared meals with other “serious” artists, French and foreign-born, who were drawn in large numbers by Brittany’s picturesque land and peasant life. His interest, however, was aroused by the passionate discussions of a small group of diners who sat apart, including Gauguin, Bernard, and several others. They were identified as “impressionists” but were, in fact, taking painting in a new direction.

A small painting Sérusier made on a wooden panel under Gauguin’s direction (see p. 110) was one of the most abstract works ever to have been painted to that time. When Sérusier returned to Paris, he took *The Talisman*, as it was called, with him, using it to explain synthetism to friends and fellow students, including Maurice Denis and Pierre Bonnard. Together with them and other artists, Sérusier would go on to form the Nabis (from the Hebrew word for prophet), an artistic/quasi-mystical group devoted to the pursuit of synthetist principles. Brittany, Sérusier said, was “my real homeland because it was there I was born in spirit.”⁸



M E R M É D I T E R

DE LA POISSONNERIE

Kilomètres 1:1,500,000

Effects of the Sun in Provence

The imaginary *ligne Bordeaux-Genève*—much like the Mason-Dixon line in the United States—divides the Midi, the South, from the rest of France. Like Brittany, Provence probably seemed a world apart to many French people in the nineteenth century. The climate was hot and dry, and the cuisine based on oil, not butter. People had dark hair and eyes, and they spoke a language that sounded more Spanish than French. Policies of the central government in Paris tried to blunt regional distinctions, suppressing local traditions like Carnival and bullfighting and strictly enforcing the use of standard French.



Marseilles, connected with a rail link to Paris early in the century, became a major center, eventually France's second city, propelled in part by new trade via the Suez Canal. Industry, including mining, textiles, and ceramic manufacture, introduced new marks in a landscape of grain fields, lavender, and olive groves. By 1850 sun-seeking tourists descended on the stunning coastline at Cannes and, a bit later, Nice, though it was not yet part of France. Regionalist societies emerged to protect traditional crafts and dialects.

Provence retained its distinct cultural and visual character. Artists flocked there, but in this section we look at only two, both of whom produced their most important works in this fragrant, sun-drenched region. For Paul Cézanne, a native of Aix, this land was the deeply rooted source of his art and experience. For Vincent van Gogh, Provence was "the Japan of the South," a place naturally endowed with the vivid color and strong compositional outlines he felt in tune with his aesthetic goals.



Rustic stone farm building (*cabanon*)
in a field of lavender
Bryan F. Peterson/Corbis

Background : Provence

Setting

- Provence occupies a broad triangle defined by the Alps, the Rhône River, and the Mediterranean Sea.
- A mild Mediterranean climate gives some towns an average 300 days of sun a year.
- The terrain varies from mountains—the highest is Mont Ventoux at 1,909 m (6,263 ft.)—to broad plains.
- The Camargue, the Rhône's delta of salt marshes, wetlands, and grazing areas, is one of the most unusual landscapes in France, with pink flamingoes, wild horses, and cowboys.
- Provence has one of the world's richest dinosaur egg deposits, in the area of Roques-Hautes on the flanks of Montagne Sainte-Victoire near Aix.

History

- Traces of human habitation date back about 30,000 years; neolithic remains include cave paintings and stone dolmens.
- After about 600 BC, when a Greek colony was established in Massilia (modern Marseilles), Provence was oriented toward the Mediterranean world.
- Greek colonists introduced grapevines and olives.
- By the end of the 2nd century BC, the region was a part of the Roman province of Gallia Transalpina (later Gallia Narbonensis).
- In the mid-6th century AD, Provence came under Frankish rule but was not truly integrated with France; the 8th century saw frequent raids by Saracens.
- In the 12th century, Provençal cities flourished through trade with the Levant and set up independent governments.
- During these years Provençal culture produced troubadour poetry and the idea of courtly love.
- In 1246 Provence passed to the house of Anjou; in 1481, not long after the death of its most celebrated king, René, the region was willed to the French crown but still retained much autonomy until the Revolution.

Today

- Major cities include Marseilles, the largest Mediterranean port, Toulon, Cannes, Aix-en-Provence, and Nice, which only became a permanent part of France in 1860.
- Provence is a major tourist center; the Côte d'Azur has been a year-round resort of the rich and famous since about 1850, but millions are also drawn to hill towns like Gordes and to cities like Arles, Nîmes, and Orange, where monuments from Provence's Roman period are well preserved.
- Industries range from petrochemicals to perfume.
- The population in 2004 numbered about 4.5 million.

Vocabulaire

cabanon (m): small rural outbuilding

calanque (f): rocky inlet of the sea

garrigue (f): scrubby vegetation

lavande (f): lavender

mas (m): traditional farmhouse

méridional (adj): describing things from the Midi

midi (m): afternoon

Midi (m): the south of France

olivier (m): olive tree

tournesol (m): sunflower

Occitan and Languedoc

Provençal, the language of the troubadours, was the first true literary language in France. It was an old dialect of Occitan, a Romance language still spoken today by about 1.5 million people in southern France. Standard French only penetrated the Midi after the Revolution, and although affected by long

exposure to French, Occitan dialects today are relatively little changed since the Middle Ages. In grammar and pronunciation, they are more closely related to Latin and Spanish, and especially to Catalan, than to French.

Today, the name Languedoc is applied to a large part of the Midi, west of Provence. It comes from *langue d'oc*, that is, a language using *oc* (from Latin *hoc*) for yes. This distinguished it from French, the *langue d'oïl*, which used *oïl* (modern *oui*, from Latin *hoc ille*).

Pétanque

One of the most characteristic sights in Provençal towns is the gathering of pétanque players in town squares. Individuals or teams throw their *boules* (balls), trying to get closer than their opponents to the smaller *cochonnet* (piglet). The game is a version of the much older *jeu de Provence*. It is said that pétanque, in which players stand with their feet on the ground within a small circle, was devised in 1910 by an older *boule* player in the town of La Ciotat (near Spain) who felt disadvantaged by younger players' ability to take running and jumping starts. The name comes from *pièds tanqués* (feet rooted). The game today is played informally and in organized leagues.

The mistral

When Provençal regionalists established societies and journals, they gave them names uniquely associated with the province: *La Cigale* (the “cicada,” whose whiny drone propels the summer soundscape), *L'Aïoli* (the tangy garlic mayonnaise that accents bouillabaisse and other Provençal dishes), and *Le Mistral*. The mistral, a cold, dry wind from the northwest, is almost synonymous with Provence. It is formed when high-pressure air from the mountains in the north is funneled down the Rhône Valley toward lower pressure zones around the Mediterranean. Wind velocities can reach more than 160 km/hr (100 mph) and temperatures drop precipitously. Folk sayings claim the mistral is “enough to pull the tail off a donkey.” It blows for several days, most often and most strongly during the winter and spring, leaving crystalline air behind. The mistral has made its force evident in the landscape. Trees are sculpted by it, and rows of cypress or bamboo are planted as windbreaks for young crops. Traditional farmhouses sink into the terrain, low and massive. Windows are protected with heavy shutters—northern exposures are often blank—and heavy tile roofs are further weighted with rocks.

Gastronomie

Tapenade is a classic olive spread, from *tapeno*, the Provençal word for capers. It combines all the favorite flavors of the Midi: briny black olives, salty anchovies, the piquancy of capers and garlic, and the arid scent of Mediterranean herbs—all bound with the ubiquitous ingredient of southern cuisine: olive oil.

Tapenade

1 $\frac{2}{3}$ cups black olives in brine, drained and pitted
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup capers, rinsed and drained
 3 salted anchovy fillets, rinsed
 pinch of *herbes de Provence*
 pinch of coarse salt
 freshly ground pepper
 2 cloves garlic
 4–5 tbs. olive oil

Combine the olives, capers, and anchovies in a food processor fitted with the metal blade and process until smooth. In a mortar pound together the herbs, salt, a generous grind of pepper, and the garlic to form a paste. Add the olive mixture and work together, adding olive oil, a little at a time, until the mixture is the consistency of a thin paste.

Serve at room temperature on bread or as a stuffing for zucchini or seeded tomatoes.

Herbes de Provence

Each cook in Provence has his or her own herb blend, but the ingredients and proportions below are fairly typical. Use dried herbs. Store the mixture in a tightly sealed container for up to three months. Use it to season soups and sauces, omelets, fish, meat, vegetable and tomato dishes—the possibilities are endless.

3 tbs. marjoram
 3 tbs. thyme
 3 tbs. summer savory
 1 bay leaf, crumbled
 1 tsp. basil
 1 tsp. rosemary
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. sage
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. fennel seeds
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. lavender

Learn more about Provençal traditional culture with an elementary school class in Provence:
<http://perso.wanadoo.fr/ecolebeaurecueil/index.htm#anciens%20eleves> (in French)

Tour the natural history museum in Aix:
<http://www.museum-aix-en-provence.org>

Learn more about olives in Provence:
<http://www.provenceweb.fr/e/mag/terroir/olives/olive.htm>

Explore neolithic paintings in a cave near Marseilles:
<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/archeosm/en/fr-cosqu1.htm> (in French and English)

Learn rules and techniques of pétanque, even start your own club:
www.usapetanque.org

Learn more about Occitan:
<http://occitanet.free.fr/en/index.html> (in French and English)

Take a cinematic tour of Provence: Jean de Florette (1986) and Manon des Sources (1986), both directed by Claude Berri, based on the novels by Marcel Pagnol.

The Works

reproduction
slide 35 | CD 69

Paul Cézanne
French, 1839–1906

Houses in Provence: The Riaux Valley near L'Estaque, c. 1883
Oil on canvas, 25 5/8 x 32 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1973.68.1



Many of the places Cézanne painted have been identified, including this spot close to the town of L'Estaque, on the coast near Marseilles. This one is unusual in having a specific historical and a specifically Provençal association. It was regarded in Cézanne's day as the home of the baroque sculptor Pierre Puget (1620–1694), who, prior to Cézanne, was the most celebrated artist to have been born in Provence. Cézanne owned, and sometimes included in his still lifes, a plaster cast of a cupid believed at that time to have been made by Puget.

It was in L'Estaque, where he avoided service during the Franco-Prussian War, that Cézanne began to find his true artistic direction. In 1876 he wrote

of the sun-blanked landscape: “It’s like a playing card. Red roofs over the blue sea... The sun here is so vivid it seems to me that objects are always outlines, not only white or black, but blue, red, brown, violet. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that it is the opposite [*antipode*] of modeling.”¹ From now on Cézanne would create three-dimensional form, not by shading with light and dark, but with color contrasts. Here, blue shadows and pale ochres—the cool color receding, the warm advancing—carve the faces of rock and the volumes of buildings. The cubic blocks of the traditional Provençal *mas* (farmhouse) seem an organic part, another expression of the architectonic form of the hillside itself.

Consider this

How has the strong mistral wind shaped this environment?

- *windowless walls*
- *scrubby vegetation*

How does Cézanne capture a sense of the intense sunlight of Provence?

- *strong contrasts of light and shade, particularly on the farmhouse*

Describe the brushstrokes. How do they differ from those you have seen in impressionist paintings like Pissarro's *Orchard in Bloom, Louveciennes* (see p. 64)?

- *more uniform and precise, system of parallel hatching—"constructive" brushstroke*

Do they appear to have been applied rapidly or methodically? How do they correspond with the shapes or forms they represent? Compare them to the brushstrokes in Sisley's *Flood at Port-Marly* (see p. 66).

Name the three predominant colors and locate each of them in the composition. How does the color arrangement produce a harmonizing effect?

How does the painting suggest depth?

- *intersecting patches of contrasting color create contour*
- *smaller scale of forms in the background and slight predominance of cool colors there*
- *light-filled space; light seems to create and fill the space*

Cézanne and modern art

Cézanne is often seen as a fountainhead of modern art. Pablo Picasso regarded him as a "mother hovering over," Henri Matisse as "father to us all." Inevitably, our understanding of his painting is colored by the cubism and abstraction that came later. His reduction of the visible world into basic, underlying shapes, the faceted brushstrokes that seem to reconstruct nature through purely painterly forms, the fracture and flattening of space—all these can be pointed to as the beginnings of modern art. Though he transformed raw sensation with discipline and rigor—he said he wanted "to make of impressionism something solid and durable, like the art of the museums"—Cézanne's paintings should not be reduced to their formal elements alone or his "modernity" overread. He identified himself as an impressionist to the end and stressed that he painted from nature and according to his sensations, seeking to realize a "harmony parallel to nature." "I paint as I see," he told a journalist in the 1870s, "and I have very strong sensations."² His painting remained rooted in nature and his personal response to it.



Houses in Provence in the valley of Riaux near L'Estaque, Puget's birthplace, 1990

John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art, Washington Gallery Archives

CD 70

Paul Cézanne
French, 1839–1906

*Montagne Sainte-Victoire Seen beyond the Wall
of the Jas de Bouffan*, c. 1885/1888
Watercolor and black chalk, 18 x 12 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1985.64.82

Montagne Sainte-Victoire, reaching an altitude of 1,021 m (about 3,350 ft.) at Pic des Mouches (Peak of the Flies), is one of the most recognizable spots in Provence and the principal landmark of the Aixois region. This watercolor captures Cézanne's view of it from the Jas de Bouffan, the family home.

Montagne Sainte-Victoire became something like a personal symbol in Cézanne's art. It appears in at least twenty-five canvases (and many more drawings and watercolors), made from the early 1880s until his death. Oriented east-west, the mountain drops steeply to the Arc River basin on the south, while the north slopes gently in a series of plateaus. Bright red clay at the base—legend held it had been colored by the blood of local tribes slaughtered by Roman troops in the first century BC—contrasts brightly with the light limestone ridge.

Cézanne and his boyhood friend Anton Marion (who would become director of the natural history museum in Marseilles) explored the mountain as youths and adults, discussing geology and painting. Late in his life, Cézanne stressed his need to understand the mountain: "I need to know some geology—how Sainte-Victoire's roots work, the colors of the geological soils..." And:

In order to paint a landscape well, I first need to discover its geological structure... I come face to face with my motif; I lose myself in it... gradually the geological structures become clear to me, the strata, the main planes of my picture, establish themselves and I mentally draw their rocky skeleton.³



slide 36
CD 71

Paul Cézanne
French, 1839–1906

Château Noir, 1900/1904
Oil on canvas, 29 x 38 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer 1958.10.1



Cézanne's paintings after about 1895 are more somber and more mysterious than those of earlier years. His colors deepen, and his brushwork assumes greater expression. Spaces become more enclosed. Compare this landscape with *Houses in Provence*, made twenty years earlier. That painting is open, while this one is screened by a web of branches. This place is crabbed and remote, much more difficult and forbidding. The sky is no longer airy, but darkened with touches of purple and green. Even the pale buildings are now a deeper ochre.

Cézanne was attracted not only to the fundamental order of nature, but also to its chaos and restlessness. The moody loneliness of this place seems matched

to his own. He painted the Château Noir several times. The place was the subject of local legends and had earlier been called Château Diable (devil). With its Gothic windows and incomplete walls, it has the look of a ruin. Between 1887 and 1902, Cézanne rented a room in the rundown building. He tried to buy it after the 1899 sale of the Jas de Bouffan, but the owner rejected his offer.

The chateau was located at Le Tholonet, at the foot of Montagne Sainte-Victoire, a rugged, rocky site with prehistoric caves and the ruined arches of a Roman aqueduct. But it is also a place that is cool and shaded by fragrant pines, and even in Cézanne's day it was frequented by crowds of day-trippers. Cézanne

must have encountered many during his expeditions, but in his paintings they are nowhere in evidence.

Cézanne painted in the open air, directly in front of the motif, until the end of his life, but not to make a quick recording of visual effects. This is a long and intense meditation, an attempt to realize—to use Cézanne's words—his “*sensation*” of and in this place. The French word signifies more than its English cognate. Cézanne's notion of sensation involved his temperament, his vision, and his mind equally.

slide 37
CD 72Paul Cézanne
French, 1839–1906*The Bathers (Large Plate)*, 1897–1898
Colored lithograph, sheet: 19 x 24 ¾ in.National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Karl Leubsdorf 1979.58.1

*Adieu, mon cher Émile:
Non, sur le flot mobile
Aussi gaiement je file
Que jadis autrefois,
Quand nos bras agiles
Commes des reptiles
Sur les flots dociles
Nageaient à la fois.*⁴

*Farewell, my dear Émile:
No, over the running flow
I do not speed as happily
as in times gone by,
when, arms agile
like snakes
through the gentle stream,
we swam side by side.*

The poem young Cézanne sent to his friend Émile Zola in 1858 hearkens back to the long, sun-filled days of their youth spent hunting and swimming in the country around Aix. They cast their experience in the mode of Virgil's idylls, whose Latin (to paraphrase Cézanne) had "tortured" them during nine long years in school. This lithograph—one of only two the artist ever made—copies a painting from some two decades earlier. The static atmosphere, the quiet, and the poses based on ancient sculpture (the figure on the right is derived from a Hellenistic Hermes in the Louvre), all contribute to a nostalgic feeling for a classical past. Cézanne presents these swimmers—a specter of himself among them—in a Provençal Arcadia, with Montagne Sainte-Victoire prominent in the background.

reproduction
slide 38 | CD 73

Vincent van Gogh
Dutch, 1853–1890

Farmhouse in Provence, 1888
Oil on canvas, 18 ½ x 24 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.34



Vincent van Gogh arrived in Arles in February 1888 to a landscape covered with snow, the coldest winter in almost thirty years. But it was sun that Van Gogh sought in Provence, a brilliance and light that would wash out detail and simplify forms, reducing the world around him to the sort of pattern he admired in Japanese wood-blocks (see p. 132). Arles, he said, was “the Japan of the South.” Here, he felt, the flattening effect of the sun would strengthen the outlines of compositions and reduce nuances of color to a few vivid contrasts. Pairs of complements—the red and green of the plants, the woven highlights of oranges and blue in the fence, even the pink clouds that enliven the turquoise sky—almost vibrate against each other.

Van Gogh’s time in Arles was amazingly productive. In under fifteen months—just 444 days—he produced more than 200 paintings, about 100 drawings, and wrote more than 200 letters. He described a series of seven studies of wheat fields as, “...landscapes, yellow—old gold—done quickly, quickly, quickly, and in a hurry just like the harvester who is silent under the blazing sun, intent only on the reaping.” Yet he was also at pains to point out that these works should not be criticized as hasty since this “...quick succession of canvases [was] quickly executed but calculated long beforehand.”⁵

Consider this

Suggest one adjective to describe the mood of Van Gogh’s farm scene and three to describe its color scheme. Do you think this was a hot or cool place? Why?

Where do you see pairs of complementary colors?

Describe the various brushstrokes. How does their texture affect your impression of the painting?

Compare this to Van Gogh’s drawing of La Crau (see p. 134). Does that help you distinguish different brushstrokes in the painting? Why do you think Van Gogh drew a view of La Crau, a scene he had already painted?

The influence of Japanese art



Van Gogh was far from the first artist working in nineteenth-century France to be influenced by the strong graphic qualities of Japanese art. Woodblock prints—*ukiyo-e*, literally “mirror of the passing world”—had first arrived in France wrapped around imported ceramics and enjoyed a huge vogue from the middle of the century on. Among the earliest collectors were Rousseau and Millet; later Degas, Cassatt, Monet, and Lautrec were also strongly influenced by their bold design. The prints showed familiar scenes of daily life: interiors or street views, geishas and actors in traditional dramas, familiar landscapes blanketed by snow—but to Europeans these were exotic. In France what struck collectors, and particularly painters of the avant-garde, were the prints’ formal characteristics: bold areas of unmodulated, contrasting color; dramatic cropping; unusual perspectives, often taken from a high diagonal; and juxtaposed areas of pattern that flattened any sense of depth. The influence of Japanese prints was—along with photography—central to the evolution of impressionism.

Ando Hiroshige | Japanese, 1797–1858

Squall at the Large Bridge Ohashi, 1857
Woodblock print

Galerie Janette Ostier, Paris/Bridgeman-Giraudon/
Art Resource, NY

reproduction
slide 39 | CD 74

Vincent van Gogh
Dutch, 1853–1890

La Mousmé, 1888
Oil on canvas, 28 7/8 x 23 3/4 in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.151



In a letter to his brother, Van Gogh described how this painting consumed his attention. “It took me a whole week...but I had to reserve my mental energy to do the mousmé well.” This name, he explained, came from a character in a novel set in Japan, *Madame Chrysanthème* by Pierre Loti: “A mousmé is a Japanese girl—Provençal in this case—twelve to fourteen years old.”⁶

Her portrait is a contrast of patterns and complementary shades: bold orange dots on her blue skirt; red stripes against the pale green lattice of vertical and horizontal brushstrokes in the background. The vigorous patterns express Van Gogh’s sympathetic response to his young sitter. Her flowering oleander branch probably suggests his pantheistic faith in the power of nature’s cycles of life and renewal.

The women of Arles, *les Arlésiennes*—with dark hair and eyes, a traditional small bonnet and neck scarf—had long been a common subject for painters. Their presence was enough to localize a scene for audiences. But this girl does not wear traditional costume; she is not a “type.” *La Mousmé* is one of a series of portraits Van Gogh painted in Arles of women, young and old, of farmers and gypsy performers, postmen, babies, and innkeepers. They were, he wrote, “the only thing in painting that excites me to the depths of my soul, and which made me feel that infinite more than anything else.”⁷

Consider this

Identify various patterns that Van Gogh contrasts in this portrait.

- spotted skirt
- striped bodice
- crisscrossing brushstrokes in background

Where do you find shadows? Where do you find outlines? What color are they?

What is the effect of the orange dots on the blue skirt? Why did the artist pair these colors?

- they are complementary and therefore reinforce each other and give a scintillating impression

Van Gogh’s letters frequently mention the oleander buds in the girl’s hand—what meaning or association might they be intended to convey?

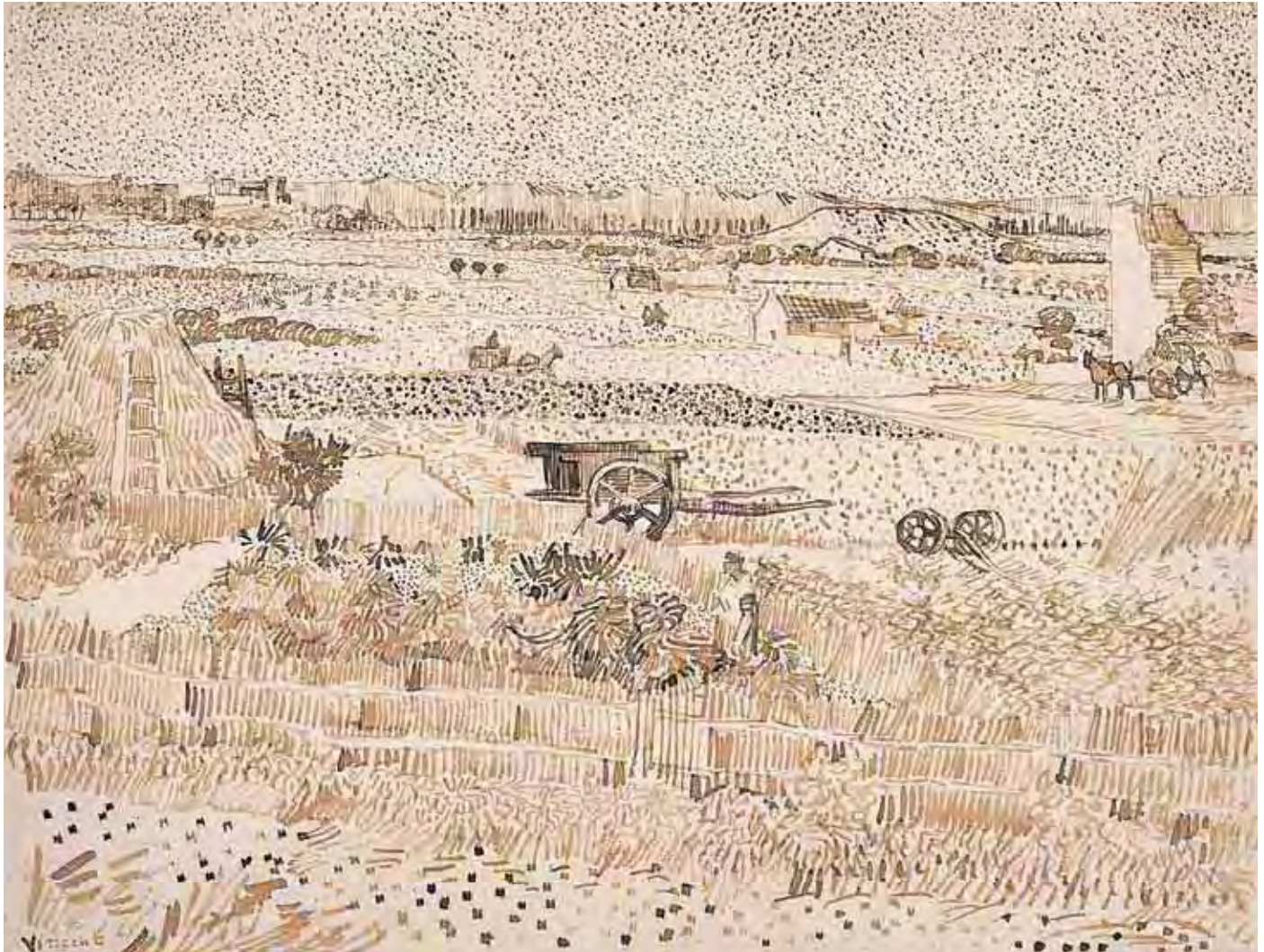
- open to speculation—perhaps natural cycles of birth and renewal, or freshness of youth

slide 40
CD 75

Vincent van Gogh
Dutch, 1853–1890

Harvest—The Plain of La Crau, 1888
Reed pen and brown ink over graphite
on wove paper, 9 ½ x 12 ¾ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, in Honor of the
50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art 1992.51.10



The sensational aspects of Van Gogh's life and suicide often cloud our understanding of the intention and deliberation in his approach to the craft of art. Behind his highly charged and expressive style are countless drawings with bold, sure lines. He made studies, sometimes with notes about color, in preparation for painting, but he also drew scenes (like this one) that he had already painted, to further his skill and understanding.

CD 76

Vincent van Gogh
Dutch, 1853–1890

The Olive Orchard, 1889
Oil on canvas, 28 ¾ x 36 ¼ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.152



During the last six or seven months of 1889, Van Gogh produced at least fifteen paintings of olive trees, a subject he found both demanding and compelling. He wrote to his brother Théo that he was “struggling to catch [the olive trees]. They are old silver, sometimes with more blue in them, sometimes greenish, bronzed, fading white above a soil which is yellow, pink, violet tinted or orange to dull red ochre. Very difficult.”⁸ He found that the “rustle of the olive grove has something very secret in it, and immensely old. It is too beautiful for us to dare to paint it or to be able to imagine it.”⁹

In the expressive power of the olive trees’ ancient and gnarled forms, Van Gogh found a manifestation of the spiritual force he believed resided in all of nature. His brushstrokes make the soil and even the sky seem alive with the same rustling motion as the leaves, stirred to a shimmer by the Mediterranean wind. These strong individual dashes seem more drawn than painted onto the canvas. The energy in their continuous rhythm communicates to us, in an almost physical way, the living force Van Gogh found within the trees.

The Artists

Paul Cézanne

French, 1839–1906



Paul Cézanne with walking stick and backpack, c. 1874 or c. 1877

John Rewald Papers, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gallery Archives

Paul Cézanne was born in Aix-en-Provence. A small city with a storied past, Aix was the capital of René d'Anjou's kingdom (b. 1409), and seat of a famous court of justice during the Renaissance. But in the second half of the nineteenth century, and despite increasing industrialization, Aix was a provincial town, far removed from avant-garde trends in the capital. Cézanne's father, originally a hatmaker, had become part owner of a bank, and the family was well-off, though never quite accepted by the town's conservative, bourgeois elite. Cézanne received a strong education in classical languages and literatures. His adolescent years were shared with Émile Zola, future novelist and critic. With other friends, who would later distinguish themselves as naturalists and poets, they roamed the countryside to hunt and fish, and swim in the Arc River. They discussed literature and exchanged poetry.

After finishing secondary school, and at his father's insistence, Cézanne studied law but was increasingly drawn to art. In the spring of 1861, he negotiated parental permission to study in Paris. He drew from live models at the Académie Suisse and analyzed old master paintings in the Louvre. But the city held little appeal for him, and he returned to Aix to work in his father's bank. The next year, however, Cézanne was back in the capital with firm intention of becoming a painter. Zola, who had moved to Paris ahead of him and was already beginning to see some success, provided encouragement and support. Cézanne associated with advanced artists like Manet and the future impressionists. His own early works, however, were very different. Cézanne's pigments were dark and heavy, applied with emphatic brushstrokes or palette knife. His subjects were often considered difficult, sometimes violent and erotic, deeply personal. He assumed the persona of a rude provincial, deliberately awkward, coarse, and bearded, and exaggerated his Provençal accent.

In the early 1870s, under the influence of the impressionists, Cézanne's style changed. Working alongside his mentor Pissarro, in the open air around the Île-de-France, he turned to landscapes and adopted the impressionists' broken brushwork and brighter colors. He exhibited with them in 1874 and 1877 (his submissions provoking some of the most stinging ridicule).

During the Franco-Prussian War, Cézanne avoided the draft in the village of L'Estaque, near Marseilles. He was growing increasingly disillusioned in Paris and started to divide his time between Provence and the capital. His paintings did not sell (and, in fact, were seen by few, other than his fellow painters). In 1886 he broke with Zola after the novelist used Cézanne as the model for the character

of a failed painter. When his father's death the same year left him the family *bastide* (country estate), the Jas de Bouffan, Cézanne moved permanently to Provence (though he kept a Paris studio and made extended stays there).

In the south Cézanne found the subjects he wanted to paint. The familiar landscape—his center of gravity—was his most frequent motif. But even his still lifes evoke a sense of place, with their olive jars and lemons and colorful printed cotton cloths. His depictions of bathers, a subject he pursued to the end of his life, recall the idyllic days of a youth spent in the southern sun.

In Provence, rejected by critics and working in isolation, Cézanne's style developed independently. Beginning in the late 1870s and increasingly through the next decade, his brushwork became more ordered and systematic. This "constructive stroke," as it is often described, results from penetrating analysis. It represents rather than imitates visual effects. Color relationships render the fundamental nature and connectedness of what Cézanne saw and felt. In his late paintings, those made after about 1895, these color harmonies become more sonorous, autumnal, and the paintings more meditative and melancholy. In failing health for several years—but still going out to paint in the countryside almost every day—Cézanne died after being caught in a cold rain.

Visit the hillside studio Cézanne built in 1901–1902, now a museum, to learn more about the painter and his sites:
www.atelier-cezanne.com (in French, English, and other languages)

Vincent van Gogh

Dutch, 1853–1890



CD 79 | Vincent van Gogh

Self-Portrait, 1889 | Oil on canvas, 22 ½ x 17 ¼ in.

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John Hay
Whitney 1998.74.5

Vincent van Gogh was born and spent his childhood in the village of Groot Zundert, in the southern Netherlands, where his father was a minister. The oldest of six, he grew up within a close-knit family of deeply rooted religious faith. At sixteen he took a job, arranged by an uncle, in a well-known commercial art firm. During the next seven years, he worked for the company's branches in The Hague, London, and Paris, but was not a success at the business of art. Driven by a desire to help humanity, he resigned to work as a teacher, preacher, and missionary—but succeeded at none of them. Working in the Belgian coal-mining district of Borinage, he began to draw in earnest. After being dismissed by church authorities in 1880, Van Gogh finally found his lasting vocation in art.

In 1881 he began to study in The Hague with painter Anton Mauve, a relative of his mother. He left The Hague in 1883 for a remote part of the country to “be alone with nature,” and afterward moved to his father’s parsonage. There, he painted nature, which always held great power for him, and scenes of peasant life. His palette consisted of earth tones that express, almost literally, the dirt-poor existence of rural workers. He was drawn to Millet’s images of peasants for their sympathetic portrayal of laborers (see p. 65).

In 1885 Van Gogh traveled to Antwerp, enrolling briefly in the arts academy. He was influenced by his growing exposure to Japanese prints and the work of impressionist painters in France. In March 1886 he arrived, three months earlier than planned, on his brother Théo’s doorstep in Paris. Théo, an art dealer, provided constant emotional and financial support throughout the rest of Van Gogh’s life. Much of what we know about Van Gogh’s experiences and ideas about art is owed to their vast correspondence.

Van Gogh had only been painting for a few years when he moved to Paris, and only after he met Pissarro and other avant-garde artists did his real education as an artist take flight. Pissarro encouraged Van Gogh to brighten his somber palette and to juxtapose complementary colors for a luminous effect. Van Gogh wrote his sister that he had spent the first summer in France painting nothing but flowers to get used to colors other than gray. At the same time, influenced by younger artists like Lautrec and Gauguin, he began to use color symbolically and for emotional effect.

He was exhausted, however, by the hard life he lived in Paris and said he wanted to “look at nature under a brighter sky.” Early in 1888 he moved south to Arles, in Provence.

He hoped the warm climate would relax him and that bright colors illuminated by a strong sun would provide inspiration for his art. He hoped to find a natural environment that projected the kind of coloring and composition he admired in Japanese prints. He worked feverishly, pushing his style to greater expression with intense, active brushwork and saturated, complementary colors. “I have tried,” he wrote, “to express the terrible passions of humanity by means of red and green.”¹⁰ Yet, neither his colors nor the rhythmic surfaces of his heavily painted canvases were divorced from nature—they were tools to communicate the spiritual power that he believed molded nature’s forms.

Van Gogh hoped to attract like-minded painters to Arles to form a “studio of the South,” but only Gauguin joined him, staying about two months. It was soon clear that their personalities and artistic temperaments were not compatible. For Gauguin, the artist alone propelled artistic creation, but Van Gogh believed strongly that each subject should have an intrinsic power the artist could explore and reveal.

Opinions about the nature of his illness are still debated, but just before Christmas, Van Gogh suffered a breakdown. In April, following periods of intense work interrupted by recurring mental disturbances, Van Gogh committed himself to a sanitarium in nearby St.-Rémy. He painted whenever he could, believing that work was his only chance for sanity. After a year, in the spring of 1890, he returned north to be closer to Théo; in July he died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Take a virtual tour of the exhibition

Van Gogh’s Van Goghs:

<http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/vgwel.shtml>

Glossary

academic

The adjective describes the art prescribed by the Academy. Its rules created a distinct hierarchy of genres: most prestigious was history painting, which called on the artists' learning and imagination to create scenes from the Bible, ancient history, or mythology, as well as their proficiency in rendering the human figure. After history, came portraiture, landscape painting, and finally still life. Academic tradition promoted naturalistic representations and a highly finished painting style. For more see p. 41.

Academy (*Académie*)

The Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture (Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture) was established in 1648 in Paris to centralize control over the arts in France, and elevate artists above their former status as craftsmen. The Academy sought to bring the visual arts onto an intellectual par with literature by codifying the rules of art (see **academic**) and overseeing the education of artists. Only members of the Academy could be granted royal commissions or participate in **Salon** exhibitions. After the Revolution the teaching role of the Académie Royale was assumed by the new **École des Beaux-Arts**. For more see p. 41.

anarchism

Anarchism is a loose set of beliefs contending that government is unnecessary, even damaging. Anarchists consider crime to be a by-product of political authority, deny the legitimacy of laws made by governments, and regard property as a form of tyranny. The foundation of anarchism was laid by Frenchman Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who in 1840 published *What is Property?* His answer was "theft."

Barbizon school

Named for a town outside of Paris, located in the Fontainebleau forest, this group, primarily of landscape painters, included Rousseau, Daubigny, Millet, and other artists who presented the world with new, unidealized naturalism. Their images of a quickly fading, preindustrial world stood in contrast to the idealized landscapes of academic art. For more see p. 37.

color

(see **primary and complementary colors** and **warm and cool colors**)

Commune

When lowercased commune means municipality. Capitalized, the word refers to the Paris Commune, a popular insurrection (March–May 1871) that rocked the capital after France's defeat in the **Franco-Prussian War** and ensuing fall of the **Second Empire**. Republicans, fearing the monarchy would be reinstated, took to the streets. Barricades were erected and public buildings burned (including the Tuileries palace). Some 750 government soldiers were killed and more than 20,000 communards. Reprisal by the government was harsh; 38,000 people were arrested and thousands deported. Realist painter Courbet was exiled for his participation.

department (*département*)

Following the Revolution France's provinces were divided into 78 departments, organized into 22 new administrative regions that largely correspond with the former provinces.

École des Beaux-Arts

The École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, founded in 1795, remains the principal official art school in France. During the nineteenth century, admission was difficult, the training traditional, and the student body mostly male. Increasingly, many artists preferred the more relaxed approach of private studios like the Académie Suisse.

Exposition universelle

(see **universal expositions**)

Franco-Prussian War

On July 19, 1870, **Napoleon III** declared war on Prussia—the proximate cause was diplomatic manipulation (masterminded by Prussian chancellor Bismarck) of negotiations surrounding candidates for the Spanish throne. The underlying, and vastly more important, cause was the threat Prussia's growing power and influence held for France's previously preeminent position on the Continent. French generals were convinced that they could easily win, in part, assisted by a new weapon, an early type of machine gun. But the Germans had numerical and organizational superiority. French troops were driven back and Paris was besieged. The city surrendered on January 28, 1871, and the punitive Treaty of Frankfurt was signed in May. Alsace-Lorraine was transferred to Germany, whose faith in militarism was confirmed. Dissatisfaction about France's defeat led to the **Commune**. Animosity between France and Germany continued, a contributing factor leading in 1914 to World War I.

Georges-Eugène Haussmann (1809–1891)

Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann was commissioned by **Napoleon III** to mastermind a grand project to modernize Paris between 1852 and 1870. According to his plan, the city was redesigned to accommodate 1.5 million inhabitants, virtually obliterating medieval Paris to make way for new water and sewage systems, street lighting, and new residential and commercial buildings. Haussmann's plan called for the creation of wide boulevards that would increase traffic flow but also deter future uprisings (which was a concern following the revolutions of 1830 and 1848). It is estimated that 300,000 people were displaced to make way for the boulevards; that one in

five Parisian workers was employed in the rebuilding; 100,000 trees were planted, and four bridges were constructed. Each district of Paris had new police stations, schools, and markets.

impressionism

The term impressionism was coined in a derogatory comment by a critic in 1874 after the title of Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*. Recognizing that the color of an object is not stable, but modified by light, weather, and time of day, impressionist artists presented a visible world of flux and change appropriate to the new pace of modern life. Rejecting the **academic** practice of rendering an illusionistic depiction of nature, they strove instead, with a great emphasis on *plein-air* painting, to capture plays of light and color through direct observation. For more see p. 57.

July Monarchy/July Revolution

Oppressive measures taken by the Bourbon king Charles X prompted three days of insurrection (July 27–30, 1830), which in turn forced Charles' abdication and brought **Louis-Philippe**, duc d'Orléans, to the throne as the so-called Citizen King. Initially Louis-Philippe steered a middle course between extreme right-wing monarchists and republican and socialist elements. Faced with continuing violence and repeated attempts on his life, however, his rule became increasingly repressive; already by the end of the 1830s opposition had been driven underground. He abdicated following the **Revolution of 1848**.

Languedoc

A dialect of the language Occitan spoken in southern France; also a southern region.

Louis-Philippe (1773–1850)

The so-called Citizen King, Louis-Philippe ruled France from 1830 to 1848, between the **July Monarchy** and the **Revolution of 1848**. He died in exile in England.

Louis-Napoleon/Napoleon III (1808–1873)

Nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, Louis-Napoleon was elected president of France following the **Revolution of 1848**; after agreeing to a coup d'état, he was proclaimed emperor of France, as Napoleon III, in 1852. His reign under the **Second Empire** was stable but authoritarian. After France's defeat in the **Franco-Prussian War**, Napoleon III stepped down and lived in exile in England until his death.

Midi

When capitalized, Midi designates the south of France.

naturalism/naturalist

As a distinct literary movement naturalism is linked with writers Émile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, and Joris-Karl Huysmans in the 1880s. Like **realism**, which preceded it, naturalism presented real life in unembellished terms, but it took a more systematic approach to its subjects. In a broader sense, naturalist trends dating much earlier in the nineteenth century helped foster a direct representation of nature and modern life in both literature and the visual arts.

neoclassicism

Neoclassical style, epitomized in French art during much of the nineteenth century by J. A. D. Ingres, is carefully balanced and harmonious in composition, typically linear in conception, and executed with a high degree of finish. Its inception, with works by Jacques-Louis David and others in the late eighteenth century, was characterized by a return to ancient Greece and Rome in both subject matter (historical and moralizing stories) and form (antique sculpture

served as source of formal inspiration). Its subjects, treated with clarity and precision, emphasized heroism, duty, and education. Neoclassicism is often contrasted with **romanticism**, but paintings like Ingres' harem scenes, for example, can be neoclassical in style while prompting romantic evocations of the exotic or awe-inspiring.

neo-impressionism

Also known as divisionism, or pointillism, the style was originated by and is chiefly associated with Seurat. Neo-impressionism reflected an interest in the science of optics and perception. Instead of mixing pigments on the palette, artists applied pure colors in small dots or dashes, which seem to blend when seen from a distance. Color is mixed not on the canvas, but in the viewer's eye. For more, see **primary and complementary colors**.

Old masters

The term describes both illustrious European artists from the Renaissance to the seventeenth century—especially Italian, Dutch, and Flemish artists—and their works. In the Louvre, nineteenth-century artists would have been able to study the art of such past masters as Titian, Rubens, and Rembrandt.

plein air

French for outdoors, literally open air. For more see p. 87.

post-impressionism

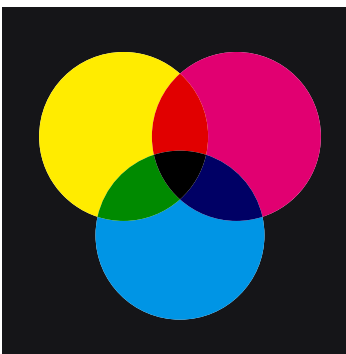
Post-impressionism (the term was coined in 1910) did not indicate any one style, but many, all of which were created in response or reaction to what was perceived as the "formlessness" of impressionism. Cézanne, Seurat, Van Gogh, and Gauguin have all been categorized as post-impressionists; they were less concerned with the spontaneous depiction of light and fleeting changes in weather or times of day, and more concerned with formal order and structure, and with expressive content.

primary and complementary colors

The color wheel below illustrates the relation of colors in subtractive color mixing. Painters recognize three primary paint colors—red, yellow, and blue—from which all others can be mixed. Pairing the primaries yields the secondary colors orange, violet, and green.

Color complements are those color pairs that appear opposite each other on the color wheel: red-green, yellow-violet, blue-orange. In the nineteenth century, Michel Eugène Chevreul and others demonstrated that when complementary colors are placed next to each other, their perceived intensity is increased: a red next to a green looks more red than one against a neutral background. Many artists adopted this strategy to enhance the vibrancy of their paintings.

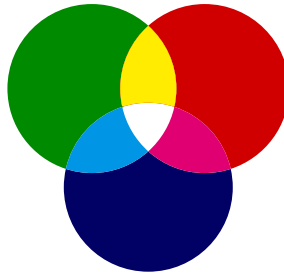
The traditional color wheel describes subtractive color mixing, which is what happens when pigments are mixed. In this process, wavelengths of light are absorbed (subtracted). Combining complements yields black.



Subtractive color mixing

Additive color mixing occurs when colored light (not paint) is mixed. For example, on a computer screen; complements mix to white. A different set of primaries applies in additive mixing—essentially they are the subtractive

secondaries. One goal of **neo-impressionism** was to make use of additive color mixing to enhance a painting's luminosity.



Additive color mixing

primitivism

A term used to describe views held in the West (especially during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) about the arts of Africa, the Pacific Islands, and even local, rural cultures. Artists like Gauguin turned to “primitive” cultures to reinvigorate their work, believing in the sincerity and purity of unspoiled people.

realism

The term realism was first applied to literature. Realism encompassed a diverse group of writers, including Flaubert and the Goncourt brothers, as well as visual artists Courbet and Millet. Realists insisted on simple style and real-life subjects directly observed and presented with unvarnished truth. Many also thought their work should have a social purpose; their leftist politics showed a strong sympathy for the working class and peasantry. For more see p. 81.

repoussoir

A technique to direct the viewer's gaze into the distance of a scene by painting large, dark objects in the left and/or right foreground.

Revolution

The French Revolution of 1789 that overthrew King Louis XVI.

Revolution of 1848

Under **Louis-Philippe** France enjoyed peace and relative prosperity, but revolution rocked many countries in 1848, including Italy, Germany, and the Austrian empire. Most of these rebellions were quickly suppressed and led to greater repression and disillusionment. Only in France did the Revolution of 1848 succeed. It has been called a revolution with a result but without a cause, but several undercurrents led to the popular uprising that erupted in late February 1848, when nervous government authorities moved to suppress a mass liberal gathering: discontent among urban poor, middle-class dissatisfaction with the lack of suffrage and political opportunity, the growing influence of utopian socialism, and a crop failure in 1846. Faced with the prospect of a bloodbath in Paris, Louis-Philippe abdicated. A provisional government was installed and universal male suffrage declared. In one stroke, the electorate of France went from 200,000 to about 9 million people. **Louis-Napoleon** was elected president in a landslide.

romanticism

More than defining a style, romanticism suggests an inspiration of the creative imagination and the intense, personal responses it triggers. In 1846 poet and critic Charles Baudelaire called it “a manner of feeling.” In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment emphasis on rationality gave way to new sensibilities. Emotion and the senses overtook reason and the intellect. Romantic artists and writers sought the imaginative, emotional, and transcendental. They felt deep appreciation for nature and its ability to inspire awe and were drawn by the exotic. Early romantics included writers Wordsworth and Coleridge in England,

and Chateaubriand in France. Artists most closely associated with romanticism include the French Eugène Delacroix and British J. M. W. Turner.

Salon

In 1737 works by members of the **Academy** were exhibited in the Salon Carré of the Louvre, and the room gave its name to the official French art exhibition. It was held only sporadically until 1774 and the venue varied (sometimes it was in the Grande galerie). Between 1774 and 1792 it was held every two years. After the **École des Beaux-Arts** was established, the Salon was opened to all artists and eventually became an annual event. It was a popular attraction that drew visitors from many levels of society. Dissatisfaction about conservative jury selections and the awarding of prizes created controversy for much of the second half of the nineteenth century. In the wake of the **Revolution of 1848**, the Salon temporarily became less restrictive, but normal practice quickly returned. The challenge of young progressive artists culminated in the **Salon des Refusés** in 1863. In 1881 the École gave up control of the Salon, whose prestige was already gone. By then, independent exhibitions had already taken its place.

Salon des Refusés

To allow public viewers to judge for themselves the quality of art rejected by **Salon** juries, the government of **Napoleon III** arranged for the rejected submissions of 1863 to be shown in a separate location. An entry by Manet, *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (*Luncheon on the Grass*)—one of three thousand that were exhibited—created such a scandal that the exposition was closed.

Second Empire

The reign of **Louis-Napoleon**, from 1852 to 1870.

Second Republic

The years 1848 to 1852, while **Louis-Napoleon** ruled as president.

synthetism (*synthétisme*)

A style based on simplified, flattened forms, using bold, unmodulated colors in an effort to convey emotions and ideas. Synthetists, like Gauguin, believed art should be a synthesis of three things: outward appearance, the artist's feelings in front of what he sees, and purely aesthetic considerations of color and form. For more see p. 110.

Third Republic

Following the disastrous **Franco-Prussian War**, an interim government ruled until proclamation in 1875 of the Third Republic, which lasted until 1940 when France fell to the Nazis in World War II. Under the Third Republic, France had universal male suffrage, and an elected parliament and president, but most power was wielded by the president's cabinet of ministers.

universal expositions

The first of the grand World Fairs, which celebrated arts and industry from across the globe, took place in London in 1851; after expositions in Dublin and New York in 1853, France followed suit with the first *Exposition universelle* in 1855, which included an extensive arts exhibition. Expositions (during the period of our packet) were also held in Paris in 1867, 1878, 1889 (centenary of the Revolution and for which the Eiffel Tower was built), and 1900.

warm and cool colors

Generally speaking warm colors, which range from reds to yellows (see diagram below), tend to project while cool colors recede. Painters like Cézanne used this perceptual effect to “sculpt” space, creating three-dimensional form through color rather than shading from dark to light.



Notes

Section 1

- 1 Quoted in Rewald, *Pissarro*, 118.
- 2 Quoted in Boggs, *Degas* (1996), 440.
- 3 Quoted in Pierre Cabanne, *Degas* (Paris: Chêne), 95.
- 4 Quoted in K. Schubert, *Curator's Egg* (London: One-Off Press, 2000), 19.
- 5 Quoted in Thomson et al., *Toulouse-Lautrec*, 267.
- 6 *Le Figaro*, Paris, April 1, 1875.
- 7 Quoted in Thomson et al., *Toulouse-Lautrec*, 139.
- 8 Théodore Duret, *Histoire de Édouard Manet et de son oeuvre*, 4th ed. (Paris: Burnheim-Jeune, 1926), 113.
- 9 Quoted in Reff, *Degas*, 43.
- 10 Quoted in Rewald, *History*, 380.
- 11 Quoted in *Manet 1832–1883*, 13.
- 12 Quoted in Rewald, *Pissarro*, 118.
- 13 Quoted in Bomford et al., *Impressionism*, 206.

Section 2

- 1 Quoted in Adams, *Barbizon School*, 7.
- 2 Quoted in Philip Conisbee et al., *In the Light of Italy: Corot and Early Open-air Painting* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1996), 219.
- 3 Quoted in Michèle Auer, *Encyclopédie Internationale des photographes de 1839 à nos jours* (Hermance, Switzerland: Editions Camera Obscura, c. 1985).
- 4 Quoted in Robert Herbert, *Barbizon Revisited* (New York: Clarke and Way, 1962), 14.

Section 3

- 1 Quoted in Hayward Gallery, *Renoir*, 205.
- 2 L. C. Perry, “Reminiscences of Claude Monet, 1889–1900,” *American Magazine of Art* (March 1927), 120; quoted in House, *Monet*, 75.
- 3 Quoted in Moffett et al., *New Painting*, 51–52.
- 4 Quoted in Denvir, ed., *Impressionists at First Hand*, 151.
- 5 Quoted in Rewald, *Pissarro*, 28.

Section 4

- 1 Alfred Sensier, *Souvenirs sur Th. Rousseau* (Paris: Leon Techener, 1872), 20.
- 2 Quoted in Faunce and Nochlin, *Courbet*, 124.
- 3 Quoted in Faunce and Nochlin, *Courbet*, 61.
- 4 Quoted in Linda Nochlin, *Realism and Tradition in Art 1848–1900* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 34–35.

Section 5

- 1 Quoted in Bomford et al., *Impressionism*, 20.
- 2 Quoted in Herbert, *Impressionism*, 268.
- 3 Quoted in House, *Monet*, 220.
- 4 E. Taboureux, *La Vie moderne*, June 12, 1880; quoted in Charles F. Stuckey, ed., *Monet: A Retrospective* (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Assoc., 1985), 90.
- 5 Quoted in Tucker, *Monet*, 155.
- 6 Quoted in Moffett et al., *New Painting*, 468.
- 7 Quoted in Thomson, *Seurat*, Appendix II.

- 8 Quoted in Hamilton, *Boudin*, 13
- 9 Quoted in P. Smith, “Seurat, Georges,” Grove Art Online, Oxford University Press (accessed Nov. 20, 2005), <http://www.groveart.com/>.

Section 6

- 1 Quoted in Brettell et al., *Art of Paul Gauguin*, 94.
- 2 M. Denis, *Définition du néo-traditionnisme*, 1890; quoted in *Art for the Nation: Collecting for a New Century* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2000), 81.
- 3 Quoted in M. Denis, “Paul Sérusier,” *ABC de la Peinture*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1942), 42.
- 4 Quoted in Pickvance, *Gauguin*, 11.
- 5 Quoted in Brettell et al., *Art of Paul Gauguin*, 56.
- 6 Quoted in Rosaline Bacou, *La Donation Ari et Suzanne Redon* (Paris: Louvre/ Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1984), 21.
- 7 From a letter to Émile Schuffenecker, quoted in Bernard Denvir, ed., *Paul Gauguin: Letters from Brittany and the South Seas, the Search for Paradise* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1992), 38.
- 8 Quoted in Monique de Beaucorps, *Le voyage des peintres en Bretagne* (Paris, 1995), 12.

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- 1 Quoted in Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne*, 112, n. 57.
- 2 Quoted Bomford et al., *Impressionism*, 196.
- 3 Quoted in Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne*, 176.
- 4 Quoted in Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne*, 200.
- 5 Quoted in Pickvance, *Van Gogh in Arles*, 94 (letter to Théo, no. 507).
- 6 Vincent to Théo, July 29, 1888, in *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, vol. II (London: Thames and Hudson, 1958), no. 514, p. 621.
- 7 Quoted in *National Gallery of Art, Washington* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 198.
- 8 Vincent to Théo, [1889], in *The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh*, vol. III (London: Thames and Hudson, 1958), no. 608, p. 220.
- 9 Vincent to Théo, c. April 25–28, 1889 (accessed Feb. 8, 2006). <http://webexhibits.org/vangogh/letter19/587.htm>.
- 10 Vincent to Théo, September 8, 1888 (accessed Feb. 8, 2006). <http://webexhibits.org/vangogh/letter18/533.htm>.

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Helen Porter and James T. Dyke
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.60

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.42

slide 16 | CD 36 | Claude Monet
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.44

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Janice H. Levin, in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art 1991.27.1

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.59

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Sam A. Lewisohn 1951.5.2

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 1985.64.6

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.51

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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French, 1841–1895

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1985.64.28

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
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French, 1812–1867

Mountain Stream in the Auvergne, 1830
Oil on paper on canvas, 31 x 37 cm
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Fund 1997.24.1

reproduction | slide 24 | CD 50**Gustave Courbet**

French, 1819–1877

The Stream (Le Ruisseau du Puits-Noir; vallée de la Loue), 1855
Oil on canvas, 104 x 137 cm (41 x 54 in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. P. H. B. Frelinghuysen
in memory of her father and mother, Mr. and
Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer 1943.15.2

CD 51 | Gustave Courbet
French, 1819–1877

La Grotte de la Loue, 1864
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(38 ³/₄ x 51 ³/₈ in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Charles L. Lindemann 1957.6.1

Section 5: Painters and Tourists in Normandy**slide 25 | CD 52****Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot**

French, 1796–1875

Beach near Etretat, c. 1872
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.117

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French, 1824–1898

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(13 ⁵/₈ x 22 ³/₄ in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1983.1.9

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French, 1824–1898

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(7 ¹/₄ x 10 ³/₄ in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.13

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French, 1840–1926

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.49

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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French, 1859–1891

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1983.1.33

slide 30 | CD 58 | Georges Seurat

French, 1859–1891

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(25 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 31 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of the W. Averell Harriman Foundation in memory of Marie N. Harriman 1972.9.21

CD 59 | Georges Seurat
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Study for “La Grande Jatte,” 1884/1885
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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Section 6: Seeking the “Primitive” in Brittany**reproduction | slide 31 | CD 60****Paul Gauguin**

French, 1848–1903

Breton Girls Dancing, Pont-Aven, 1888
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1983.1.19

CD 61 | Paul Gauguin
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Andrew W. Mellon Fund 1978.54.1

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French, 1848–1903

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
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French, 1848–1903

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of the W. Averell Harriman Foundation in memory of Marie N. Harriman 1972.9.11

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.46

slide 33 | CD 66 | Paul Gauguin

French, 1848–1903

Pair of Wooden Shoes (Sabots), 1889/1890
Polychromed oak, leather, and iron nails,
12.8 x 32.7 x 11.2 cm (5 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 12 $\frac{7}{8}$ x
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.239

CD 67 | Odilon Redon
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1994.59.11

reproduction | slide 34 | CD 68**Paul Sérusier**

French, 1863–1927

Farmhouse at Le Pouldu, 1890
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(28 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 23 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift (Partial and Promised) of Alexander M.
and Judith W. Laughlin 2000.95.1

Section 7: Effects of the Sun in Provence**reproduction | slide 35 | CD 69****Paul Cézanne**

French, 1839–1906

Houses in Provence: The Riaux Valley near L'Estaque, c. 1883
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1973.68.1

CD 70 | Paul Cézanne
French, 1839–1906

Montagne Sainte-Victoire Seen beyond the Wall of the Jas de Bouffan, c. 1885/1888
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1985.64.82

slide 36 | CD 71 | Paul Cézanne
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Château Noir, 1900/1904
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer
1958.10.1

slide 37 | CD 72 | Paul Cézanne
French, 1839–1906

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Gift of Karl Leubsdorf 1979.58.1

reproduction | slide 38 | CD 73
Vincent van Gogh
Dutch, 1853–1890

Farmhouse in Provence, 1888
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection 1970.17.34

reproduction | slide 39 | CD 74
Vincent van Gogh

Dutch, 1853–1890

La Mousmé, 1888
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(28 ⅞ x 23 ¾ in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Chester Dale Collection 1963.10.151

slide 40 | CD 75 | Vincent van Gogh
Dutch, 1853–1890

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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon,
in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the
National Gallery of Art 1992.51.10

CD 76 | Vincent van Gogh
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The Olive Orchard, 1889
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(28 ¾ x 36 ¼ in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington
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Artist portraits

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French, 1834–1917

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(8 ⅛ x 5 ⅞ in.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
1995.47.7

CD 78 | Auguste Renoir
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
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National Gallery of Art, Washington
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