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Newly Renovated and Freshly Installed 19th-Century French Galleries to Reopen At National Gallery of Art on January 28, 2012



Edouard Manet, *The Railway*, 1873, oil on canvas

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

Washington, DC (Updated January 13, 2012)—Following a two-year renovation, the galleries devoted to impressionism and post-impressionism in the West Building of the National Gallery of Art reopen to the public on January 28, 2012. Among the greatest collections in the world of paintings by Manet, Monet, Renoir, Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Gauguin, the Gallery's later 19th-century French paintings will return to public view in a freshly conceived installation design.

"The Gallery's French impressionist and post-impressionist holdings, comprising nearly 400 paintings, are among the most prized in the collection, and rightly so," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "While the appearance of these revered rooms has changed very little—preserving the conditions of light, the room proportions,

and wall colors that make the Gallery one of the great places to view art in the world—the paintings themselves will be shown in a newly innovative arrangement."

The new installation is organized into thematic, monographic, and art historical groupings. The "new" Paris of the Second Empire and the Third Republic are highlighted through cityscapes by Manet, Renoir, and Pissarro. Showcasing sun-dappled landscapes and scenes of suburban leisure, a gallery of "high impressionism" masterpieces of the 1870s is prominently located off the East Sculpture Hall, including such beloved works as Monet's *The Artist's Garden at Vétheuil* (1880) and Renoir's *Girl with a Hoop* (1885). A gallery is devoted to the sophisticated color experiments of late Monet, while Cézanne's genius in landscape, still-life, and figure painting is explored in another. Paintings exemplifying the bold innovations of Van Gogh and Gauguin are displayed along with Degas' later, experimental works in one gallery, followed by a room of canvases by artists such as Delacroix, Renoir, and Matisse celebrating exoticism and the sensual use of color and paint handling. The final gallery is dedicated to the Parisian avant-garde circa 1900: Toulouse-Lautrec, Modigliani, Rousseau, and early Picasso.

The recently acquired *Black Rocks at Trouville* (1865/1866) by Gustave Courbet will be on view for the first time in the French galleries. Additionally, 13 works have been newly restored. Most of these will be on view in the West Building galleries, including Renoir's sparkling Parisian view of the Pont Neuf (1872), his ever-popular *Girl with a Watering Can* (1876), Monet's classic *Bridge at Argenteuil* (1874), and an 1867 portrait of Monet's newborn son Jean in his cradle.

During the two-year period of repair, restoration, and renovation, works normally on view in these galleries were either in storage, on loan, or featured in a special installation—*From Impressionism to Modernism: The Chester Dale Collection*—in the West Building Ground Floor galleries. Some 50 of the greatest works from this collection were included in major exhibitions shown in Houston, Tokyo, and Kyoto.

"A Collection of Collections"

Opened in 1941, the National Gallery of Art is significantly younger than its nationwide

competitors—The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art—in this area of collecting. As the nation's art museum, the National Gallery's collection was formed through generous donations from private citizens and has continued to grow to the present day thanks to contributions by numerous collectors and patrons.

The impressionist and post-impressionist collection begins with the 1942 Widener bequest, and reaches a high point with an extraordinary gift from Chester Dale in 1962, which tripled the size of the Gallery's modern French paintings. These works include major masterpieces, such as Cézanne's *The Peppermint Bottle* (1893/1895), Gauguin's *Self-Portrait* (1889), Van Gogh's *La Mousmé* (1888), Degas's *Four Dancers* (c. 1899), and two of Monet's celebrated views of Rouen Cathedral (1894). Two of their most spectacular acquisitions, made within nine months of each other, were Manet's early masterpiece, *The Old Musician* (1862), and Picasso's early masterpiece, *Family of Saltimbanques* (1905). In particular, the Dales gravitated toward figural works, accruing examples by many of the modern masters of portraiture, as well as marvelous female nudes, such as Renoir's *Bather Arranging Her Hair* (1893) and *Odalisque* (1870) and Modigliani's *Nude on a Blue Cushion* (1917). In accordance with the deed of gift, these great works may never be loaned.

Paul Mellon—son of the Gallery's founding benefactor Andrew Mellon—also avidly collected 19th-century French paintings, influenced by his second wife, Rachel "Bunny" Mellon. Inspired by Dale's example, Mellon expanded upon the foundation of French modernism that Dale built for the Gallery. While the Dale collection includes Monet's later landscapes, Mellon collected Monet in all genres and across his career, as well as work by important impressionist painters the Dales did not collect, such as Bazille and Caillebotte. Mellon was a great admirer of Cézanne and gave the Gallery seven paintings spanning the artist's career, including the 1991 gift of *Boy in a Red Waistcoat* (1888–1890), one of the Gallery's great masterpieces. Mellon was also a devotee of Degas, and his gift of major paintings and sculptures by the master makes the Gallery's Degas collection one of the best in the world.

Paul Mellon's sister Ailsa Mellon Bruce augmented the Mellon family's dedication to the Gallery through her extensive 1969 bequest of great old master and impressionist

paintings, by Renoir in particular. Other important donors to this part of the Gallery's collection include the Havemeyer family, W. Averell Harriman, his second wife Marie Norton Whitney Harriman and his third wife Pamela Digby Churchill Hayward Harriman, John Hay and Betsy Cushing Whitney, and Eugene and Agnes Ernst Meyer.

Small French Paintings

The Small French Paintings galleries in the East Building, designed to accommodate the extraordinary gift of French paintings from Ailsa Mellon Bruce, are among the most beloved at the Gallery. The works in these rooms have also been part of reconsidering the 19th-century French collection in the West Building. One gallery will feature an installation of prints together with several paintings by Pierre Bonnard, illuminating the way this artist works across the two media. Other groupings include a selection of circa 1800 landscape sketches, impressionist interiors, realist landscapes, a suite of works by Eugène Boudin, and intimate paintings by the artistic brotherhood known as the Nabis.

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on [Twitter](http://twitter.com/ngadc) at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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