

Independents and Impressionists

Key Ideas

- Paris was the hub of the art world in the late 19th century, with a knowledgeable public attending Salon exhibitions.
- Artists began to rebel against the structure and strictures of the French Academy and its Salon in Paris. This rebellion takes different forms:
 - Focus on subject matter of MODERN life in the city (Paris).
 - Interpreting Classical art forms in new ways, through emotion, uncompromising realism, or unpolished/unfinished look.
 - Japonisme. Many artists collect or view Japanese prints and incorporate the Japanese aesthetic in compositions (color, perspective, etc.) and subject matter (private moments, women).
- Impressionists exhibited their work together as a group, outside of the Academy's annual Salon. Impressionists differed in style, but had similar goals of embracing modern subject matter and seeking to capture the impression of a fleeting moment in terms of light, color, and/or composition.

Terms and Names:

Avant-garde: A term first coined during the Napoleonic era, to designate a forward military unit that would scout new territory before the advancing army. In the late 1820s, the term came to be associated with the arts, meaning “those artists or concepts of a strikingly new, experimental, or radical nature for their time.” (Stokstad, p. 1138)

Auguste Rodin

Japonisme

Édouard Manet

Impressionism (founding members: Monet, Renoir, Degas, Pissarro, Morisot, Sisley, and Cézanne, and others)

Mia Objects (Independents and Impressionists)

- Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, *Les Trois Grâces (The Three Graces)*, c. 1872, 75.52a,b
- Jean-Baptiste Auguste Clésinger, *Bacchante and Satyr*, 1869, 73.13
- Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, *Torchère*, one of a pair, c. 1862, 74.27.1a-e
- Auguste (François-Auguste-René) Rodin, *The Age of Bronze*, 1876–1877 (plaster model); casting date unknown, 54.1
- Auguste (François-Auguste-René) Rodin, *Study for a Burgher of Calais (Pierre de Wiessant)*, modeled c. 1885 in plaster, 59.20
- Henri Fantin-Latour, *Portrait of the Artist Alphonse Legros*, 1856, 2000.48
- Henri Fantin-Latour, *Roses*, 1884, 69.70

- James McNeill Whistler, *The Seashore*, 1883-1885, 2009.16.3
- Eugène-Louis Boudin, *Vacationers on the Beach at Trouville*, 1864, 15.30
- Johan Barthold Jongkind, *View of Lake Léman at Nyon*, 1875, 64.22
- Édouard Manet, *The Smoker*, 1866, 68.79
- Édouard Manet, *The Cats*, 1869, P.3,001
- Alfred Stevens, *Portrait of Mademoiselle Dubois*, 1884, 2007.45
- Claude Monet, *The Seashore at Sainte-Adresse*, 1864, 53.13 (Not on view)
- Claude Monet, *Still Life with Pheasants and Plovers*, 1879, 84.140
- Claude Monet, *Grainstack, Sun in the Mist*, 1891, 93.20
- Claude Monet, *The Japanese Bridge*, c. 1923-1925, 61.36.15
- Camille Pissarro, *Orchards at Louveciennes*, 1872, 2016.33.41
- Camille Pissarro, *Place du Théâtre Français, Paris: Rain*, 1898, 18.19
- Pierre Auguste Renoir, *Head of a Young Woman*, late 19th century, 61.15
- Pierre Auguste Renoir, *The Piazza San Marco, Venice*, 1881, 51.19
- Pierre Auguste Renoir, *Tamaris, France*, c. 1885, 2006.9.2
- Berthe Morisot, *The Artist's Daughter, Julie, with her Nanny*, c. 1884, 96.40
- Alfred Sisley, *Le Pont de Moret*, 1888, 2002.67
- Edgar Degas, *Portrait of Paul Valpinçon*, c. 1855, 74.28
- Edgar Degas, *Portrait of Mlle. Hortense Valpinçon*, c. 1871, 48.1 (not on view)
- Edgar Degas, *Dancer Putting on Her Stocking*, 19th century, 56.8
- Edgar Degas, *Woman in a Bathtub*, 1889 modeled (cast 1920-21) no. 26/C, 89.99
- Gustave Caillebotte, *Nude on a Couch*, c. 1880, 67.67

Quotes:

In 1877, critic John Ruskin published a letter describing an exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery which included Whistler's work. He complained in particular about *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (shown in room 3): 'I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.' Whistler, deeply offended, decided to sue Ruskin for libel.

<http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/turner-whistler-monet/who-what-when/ruskin-v-whistler>

From James Abbott McNeill Whistler:

‘Art should be independent of all claptrap—should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism and the like. All these have no kind of concern with it, and that is why I insist on calling my works “arrangements” and “harmonies”.’

<http://oxfordindex.oup.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803122045500>

Charles Baudelaire, from “The Painter of Modern Life,” 1863: “...in order to speak for their time and place, artists’ works had to be infused with the idea of modernity.”

From Édouard Manet to Charles Baudelaire, on the reception Olympia had after the exhibition opened: “abuses rain upon me like hail. I have never before been in such a fix...I should have wished to have your sound opinion of my work for all this outcry is disturbing and clearly somebody is wrong.” <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring04/70-spring04/spring04article/285-the-puzzle-of-olympia>

Critic Albert Wolff, announcing an Impressionist auction, 1875:

“The impression which the impressionists achieve is that of a cat walking on the keyboard of a piano or of a monkey who might have got hold of a box of paints.”

Claude Monet, quoted by 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, until it gives your own naïve impression of the scene before you.”

Camille Pissarro, giving advice to a young artist, 1897:

“...Precise drawing is dry and hampers the impression of the whole; it destroys all sensations. Do not define too closely the outlines of things; it is the brushstroke of the right color and value which should produce the drawing.”

(Spielvogel, *Western Civilization: Since 1789, Volume C*, page 730)

Many avant-garde artists struggled financially. Renoir recalled being turned down by one collector who said: “You are too late. Pissarro has just left, and I have taken a painting of his. A human consideration: he has such a large family. Poor chap!”

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Camille-Pissarro>

Critic Albert Wolff, *Le Figaro*, responding to the second exhibition in 1876:

“...Or try to explain to M. Renoir that a woman’s torso is not a mass of flesh in the process of decomposition with green and violet spots which denote the complete putrefaction of a corpse!”

To be a woman artist: In a letter to the mother of Edma and Berthe Morisot, their private art instructor expressed the implications of the two girls’ burgeoning talents: “Considering the characters of your daughters, my teaching will not endow them with minor drawing room accomplishments, they will become painters. Do you realize what this means? In the upper-class milieu to which you belong, this will be revolutionary, I might say almost catastrophic.”

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/19wa/hd_19wa.htm

Berthe Morisot: “I don’t think there has ever been a man who has treated a woman as an equal, and that is all I would have asked, for I know I’m worth as much as they.”

(Spielvogel, *Western Civilization: Since 1789, Volume C*, page 732)

Additional Resources:

To learn more of Carpeaux’s *The Dance*, check out this video at Khan Academy:

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/avant-garde-sculpture/v/jean-baptiste-carpeaux-dance-1865-69>

To read some excerpts from Charles Baudelaire’s 1863 essay, “The Painter of Modern Life,” click here:

http://www.columbia.edu/itc/architecture/ockman/pdfs/dossier_4/Baudelaire.pdf

Exhibition on *Comic Art: The Paris Salon in Caricature*:

http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/comic_art/

Spotlight lecture from Crystal Bridges on James Abbott MacNeill Whistler, “Whistler: A Life for Art’s Sake” by University of Arkansas Professor Daniel Sutherland:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmEy0CyPwHw>

Catalogue from the Metropolitan Museum on *Auguste Rodin: The Burghers of Calais, A Resource for Educators* by Benedek, Nelly Silagy (2000), available free online:

http://www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications/Auguste_Rodin_The_Burghers_of_Calais_A_Resource_for_Educators#

NPR story on Eugene Boudin, *Eugene Boudin: The Man Who Inspired Monet* by Susan Stamberg, July 1, 2010:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128174560>

Essay on Impressionism: Art and Modernity:

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/imml/hd_imml.htm

Mia Stories, on acquisition of Manet’s *The Smoker*: <http://new.artsmia.org/stories/once-at-mia-mr-dayton-manet-and-the-inside-story-of-a-beloved-painting/>

Catalogue from the Metropolitan Museum, *Edgar Degas: Photographer* by Daniel, Malcolm, with essays by Eugenia Parry and Theodore Reff (1998), available free online:

http://www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications/edgar_degas_photographer#about_the_title

Video of *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*, uploaded by the Clark Art Institute:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-hhIVqOtMY>