

Catalogue of an Exhibition
of Paintings by
French Impressionists

Detroit Museum of Art
November, 1915

“Impressionism”

No artistic impulse in the history of art has ever weathered such stern opposition and so thoroughly vanquished its detractors as Impressionism. The precursors of the movement were banished from the Salons, were jeered at wherever their work appeared, and they encountered the organized hostility of the Academy which reserved for itself exclusively the precepts of art. Yet their works have been hung in the most important museums of Europe and America, and their influence has extended into most of the schools of today where it has cleaned up the palette of bitumen and black, keyed modern painting in a more joyous pitch, and introduced a vitality of technique never before known.

The story of Impressionism as told by Camille Mauclair in “The French Impressionists,” Theodore Duret in “Manet and the French Impressionists,” and Charles Louis Borgmeyer in “The Master Impressionists” is a most interesting one, and excerpts from their writings on the subject may be of interest.

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In the preface to the catalogue of an exhibition of Manet's work, held in Paris in 1867, is the following paragraph which shows that Manet had no desire to upset established traditions:

“M. Manet has never wished to protest. On the contrary, the protest, quite unexpected on his part, has been directed against himself, because there exists a traditional teaching as to form, methods, modes of painting, and because those who have been brought up in this tradition refuse to admit any other. It renders them childishly intolerant. Any work not done according to their formulas they consider worthless; it provokes, not only their criticism, but their active hostility.”

Says Camille Mauclair:

"Impressionism, first of all is a technical reaction. It embodies the division of tones by juxtaposed touches of color which, at a certain distance, produce upon the eye of the beholder the effect of the actual coloring of the things painted, with a variety, a freshness, and a delicacy of analysis unobtainable by a single tone prepared and mixed upon the palette." * * * * *

* * * "This is the theory of the dissociation of tones which is the main point of impressionistic technique. It has the immense advantage of suppressing all mixtures, of leaving to each color its proper strength and consequently its freshness and brilliancy. At the same time the difficulties are extreme. The painter's eye must be admirably subtle. Light becomes the sole subject of the picture; the interest of the object upon which it plays is secondary. Painting thus conceived becomes a purely optic art, a search for harmonies, a sort of natural poem, quite distinct from expression, style and design, which were the principal aims of former painting. It is almost necessary to invent another name for this special art which, clearly pictorial though it be, comes as near to music, as it gets far away from literature and and psychology. It is only natural that, fascinated by this study, the Impressionists have almost remained strangers to the painting of expression, and altogether hostile to historical and symbolist painting. It is therefore principally in landscape painting that they have achieved the greatness that is theirs."

"Through the application of these principles * * * * a landscape becomes a kind of symphony starting from one theme (the most luminous point), and developing all over the canvas the variations of this theme * * * * The canvases of Monet, Renoir and Pissarro have, in consequence of this research, an absolutely original aspect; their shadows are striped with blue, rose-madder and green; nothing is opaque or sooty; a light vibration strikes the eye. Finally, blue and orange predominate, simply because in these studies—which are more often than not full sunlight effects—blue is the complimentary colour of the orange light of the sun, and is profusely distributed in the shadows. In these canvases can be found a vast amount of exact grades of tone, which seem to have been entirely ignored by the older painters, whose principal concern was style, and who reduced a landscape to three or four broad tones, endeavoring only to explain the sentiment inspired by it."

* * * "It [the realism of Courbet], caused the young painters to turn resolutely towards the aspects of contemporary life, and to draw style and emotion from their own epoch; and this intention was right. An artistic tradition is not continued by imitating the

style of the past, by extracting the immediate impression of each epoch. That is what the really great masters have done, and it is the succession of their sincere and profound observations which constitute the style of the races * * * Impressionism can therefore be defined as a revolution of pictorial technique together with an attempt at expressing modernity. The reaction against Symbolism and Romanticism happened to coincide with the reaction against muddy technique."

Charles Louis Borgmeyer in his book "The Master Impressionists," says:

"Impressionism; painting the effect of things, concentration on atmosphere."

"They said line was an artificial element since nature does not have it, so abas with line. They painted in masses, not edges."

"When they told Manet he could not draw, he would say, 'I do not draw silly lines as they are taught in the schools; but I challenge any of the illustrious professors teaching there to obtain an effect of light; they cannot do it.'"

"Radiant light formed their tocsin call. It seems strange that their advent came with the introduction of bounteous light into every part of our modern homes, a doing away of the old schemes of sombre coloring."

"But as I was saying, the subjects were nothing; execution was nothing; the one all absorbing theme of conversation and experimentation was light."

"In this way one scientific truth after another was discovered and talked over."

"Then one day it came to them that shadows did not mean the absence of light, but rather light of a different value. In other words, colors continue their vibration in shadows, weakened, but still existent. As soon as their eyes were opened to this fact of nature they saw that their own shadows were as false as those painted by the ready-made tones of bitumen and black of the past. Possibly they tried the experiment of holding up a really dark object and seeing that what looked by contrast with brilliant almost black was really a faint purplish tone."

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This comprehensive exhibition of paintings by the French Masters of Impressionism was secured from M. Durand-Ruel, of New York, who was one of the early friends of the Impressionist painters and the largest collector of their works. The fifty splendid examples

loaned by him have been supplemented by an important example of Manet, loaned by M. Knoedler, of New York, and by examples from the collection of Mrs. Edward C. Walker, to all of whom the trustees of the Detroit Museum of Art make grateful acknowledgment.

Many of the paintings in this exhibition are for sale. Miss Dorothy Holt will be present daily in Gallery I to give information regarding the pictures.

LIST OF PICTURES

ALBERT ANDRE, Paris. Born at Lyons, France, 1870.

1. Portrait of a Lady.
2. Interior—Woman Reading.
3. Montsouris Park—Winter.

LOUIS EUGENE BOUDIN (1824-1898). Born at Honfleur, France, 1824; died, 1898. Assisted by the Havre Town Council, Boudin went to Paris where he studied in l'ecole des Beaux Arts. He made his debut at the Salon in 1859. He was awarded a medal of the third class in 1881, one of the second Class in 1883, and a gold medal at the Exposition-Universelle of 1889. That year the French government bought his painting "La Corvette Russe" for the Luxembourg, and in 1896 purchased the "Rade de Villefranche" and conferred upon the artist the Cross of the Legion of Honor. Boudin and Jongkind have been characterized as the links connecting the Barbizon painters of 1830 with the Impressionistic group of 1870.

4. Coast of St. Catherine, Rouen.
5. Environs of Bordeaux.
6. The Fecamp Basin; Sunset.

JOHN LEWIS BROWN (1829-1890). Born at Bordeaux, France, 1829; died at Paris, 1890. His family was of English origin. He received medals at the Salons of 1865, 1866 and 1867, and a gold medal at the Exhibition-Universelle of 1889. He was decorated with the Cross of the Legion of Honor in 1870.

7. The Races.
8. Huntsmen.

RICARDO CANALS, Paris. Born at Barcelona, Spain.
Lives in Paris. Date of birth Dec. 11th, 1876.

9. Cigarette Makers, Seville.
10. Woman and Child.
11. Dancer.

MARY CASSATT, Paris. Born at Pittsburg, Pa. Studied first at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Went to Europe in 1875 and lived for a time in Spain, where she made special study the works of Valasquez. Thence she went to Paris and studied with Degas. She has been represented in all the French Impressionist exhibitions.

12. Young Woman Plucking Fruit.
13. Mother and Child.
14. Woman Dressing.
- 14a. Femmes et Enfant.

Permanent Collection of the Museum. Gift of Edward C. Walker, Esq.

GEORGES D'ESPAGNAT, Paris. Born at Melun (Seine-et-Marne), France, 1870. (Corresponding member of the Berlin Secession.) He came to Paris in 1888 and made several copies and studies in the Louvre Museum. Traveled in Italy. On his return he became a great admirer of Delacroix, Renoir, Degas and Monet.

15. Young Woman Reading.
16. Woman and a Child.
17. Woman Painting.

ARMAND GUILLAUMIN, born 1841.

18. Cape Long and the Castle Sagay.
19. Pont dans les Montagnes, la Cruese.

GUSTAVE LOISEAU, Paris. Born at Paris, 1865.

20. La Porte d'Aval, Etretat, Low Tide.
21. Landscape and River.
22. Banks of the Yonne, Auxerre.

MAXIME MAUFRA, Paris. Born at Nantes, 1861. Received some art instruction from M. le Roux, a local teacher. His father determining that Maufra should follow a commercial career, sent him to England, where, in his spare moments, he studied from nature. Having acquired a competence by a fortunate business transaction, he retired from business and devoted himself entirely to art, in which, of late, he has achieved wide recognition.

23. Entrance to the Port of Goulphar, Belle-Ile by the Sea.
24. The Jetty at Pontivy, Morbihan.
25. Return of the Fishing Boats, Sauzon, Belle-Ile by the Sea.

EDOUARD MANET was born in Paris in 1832. He studied in Couture's studio for nearly six years, during which time he was nearly always at loggerheads with his instructor. In the final break between Couture and himself he was angrily told by his teacher that he would probably be the Daurier of his time. After visiting galleries in Germany he went to Venice and Spain, copying the Venetian masters and Valasquez, and Goya. His first picture exhibited in the Salon in 1861, aroused some irritation. His "Le Dejeuner sur L'Herbe" and "Olympia," submitted in 1863 and '64 respectively, were rejected as were many of his subsequent pictures. These pictures shocked the world and called forth much opposition and abuse. In 1867 an exhibition of fifty pictures was opened in Pont de L'Alma. He may be considered the

founder of the Impressionist school as by his strong personality he dominated the group which met in the Cafe Guerbois, their ostracism by the official painters being their one thing in common. His career was filled with disappointments and few people appreciated his pictures before his death. Outside of the Honorable Mention awarded by the Salon to his first picture he received no official distinction until the year before his death, when he was given the Cross of the Legion of Honor. He died in 1883, and today is regarded as one of the great masters of modern art.

25a. The Music Lesson.

(Loaned by M. Knoedler).

CLAUDE MONET, Giverny, France. Born at Paris, 1840. He early inclined toward an artistic career, but was strenuously opposed by his people—his father being a wealthy merchant at Havre. Like Manet, he was sent away on a foreign tour—which only intensified his devotion to art. In Havre he spent much of his time with the painter, Boudin. Later he entered the atelier of Gleyre. He exhibited in the Salons of 1865 and 1867, but not since the latter date. Monet's early days in art were filled with disappointments, but during recent years he has enjoyed great success and exceptional prosperity. For many years he has been regarded as the head of the Impressionist movement, and the ablest exponent of its principles.

26. Poplars, Giverny.

27. Rocks at Belle-Isle.

28. The Seine at Lavacour.

29. The Ducal Palace seen from San Giorgio, Venice.

30. Water Lilies.

31. Water Lilies.

32. The Willows.

(Loaned by Mrs. Edward C. Walker)

HENRI MORET, Paris. Born at Cherbourg, 1856; died 1913.

33. Brittany Coast.

34. The Groix Island.

CAMILLE PISSARRO (1830-1903). Born 1830, at St. Thomas, in the Antilles; died in Paris, 1903. Showed artistic promise at an early age. In 1873 his parents went to Europe and the talent of the boy was noticed by the Danish painter, Melbye, who took him into his atelier as a pupil. In 1859, Pissarro exhibited for the first time at the Salon. At first he inclined to be a follower of Corot, and later came under the influence of Millet. In 1870 he visited London with Monet, and later became one of the most appreciated painters of the Impressionist group.

35. Pontoise.

36. Sunset—Fog.

37. The Louvre, Morning Sun.

38. Rue St. Honore, Paris.

39. After the Rain (The Seine.)

(Loaned by Mrs. Edward C. Walker)

PIERRE AUGUSTE RENOIR, Paris. Born at Limoges, 1841. He first worked in a porcelain factory in Limoges, painted pictures in the Cafes, etc., until he earned sufficient to enable him to go to Paris to study. In 1860 he entered the studio of Gleyre, where he had as fellow pupils Sisley and Bazille. He remained with Gleyre four years, and then, at Monet's prompting left the atelier to study landscape direct from nature. In 1868 he exhibited at the Salon "The Woman in White," which aroused sufficient hostility to secure his exclusion from the Salon until 1880, when his "Portrait of Madame Carpentier" was accepted.—"Among the pictures of the Impressionists, Renoir's are conspicuous for elegant luxuriousness. Whether

painting a landscape or a figure, he floods it with sunshine and paints its soft, sensuous caress on foliage, water or human flesh."

40. Baigneuse Assize.
41. Woman with a Sunshade.
42. Head of a Young Girl.
43. Baby's Breakfast.
44. Village near Mentone.
45. Woman Reclining.
46. Bordighera.

(Loaned by Mrs. Edward C. Walker)

ALFRED SISLEY (1839-1899). Born at Paris, of English parents, 1839; died at Moret, 1899. He was a student with Renoir in the atelier of Gleyre, until Monet induced them to leave it. At first he painted conventional landscapes rather after the style of Courbet. After passing under the influence of Corot, he evolved a style peculiarly his own, abundantly rich in color and agreeable in line. He painted in England at Hampton Court, on the Thames, and in London; and in France, on the outskirts of Fontainebleau, along the banks of the Seine, the Loing, and in the little towns of Moret and St. Mammes. He exhibited only twice at the Salon. He is regarded as being one of the best exponents of the Impressionist movement.

47. St. Martin, near the Woods of Buches Courteau.
48. Autumn.
49. The Village of Champagne, Sunset.
50. The Plain of Veneux Nadon.
51. The Gue de l'Epine, Sunset.
52. Marly-le-Roi.

(Loaned by Mrs. Edward C. Walker)

FEDERICO ZANDOMENEGHI, Paris. Born at Paris, 1841. Has spent most of his art life in Paris.

53. Bouquet of Flowers.
54. The Promenade.