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Inventing Impressionism, October 21, 2016-June 11, 2017

In the spring of 1874, a group of French artists seeking an alternative to official juried shows mounted an exhibition of their work in a rented studio in Paris. A critic, provoked by a painting that Claude Monet entitled *Impression: Sunrise*, called their effort an "Exhibition of Impressionists." Intended to underscore a lack of serious content, "impressionist" also implied the abandonment of established academic practice, but it came to represent the original ways in which these men and women captured modern life.

Embracing the term *impressionist*, the artists organized eight group exhibitions over the next twelve years, showing paintings that depicted leisure activities, domestic and social encounters, urban parks and avenues, and fleeting moments in nature. Often working outside the studio, these artists sketched in theaters and cafés and painted in fields and along riverbanks. Their shared compositional strategies included cropped points of view and flattened perspectives that evoked a sense of immediacy. Many painted directly on white grounds, using unmixed pigments and complementary hues to render bright sunlight or atmospheric effects.

At the same time, artists working in impressionist styles devised highly individualized strategies of painting and drawing. Monet mimicked the physical properties and sensations he observed. Camille Pissarro assembled landscapes with dense patterns of brushstrokes; Cézanne modeled forms with flat patches of color; Berthe Morisot used ribbon-like gestures to register movement. Edgar Degas drew figures from every angle before placing them in a composition. Their innovations overturned long-held preconceptions of realist representation and defined a new way of seeing the world around them.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Claude Monet
French, 1840-1926
A Walk in the Meadows at Argenteuil, 1873
Oil on canvas
Gift of Houghton P. Metcalf, Jr. 1998.107

In this glimpse of his wife and son in a flowering meadow, Monet captured the movement of light across the landscape by highlighting a diagonal course of grasses and juxtaposing their yellow-green hues to the complementary orange-reds of poppies in the foreground. Responding directly to his observations, he rendered the figures with short notational marks and used soft, wide brushstrokes in the sky and middle distance to suggest the optical blur of an overcast day. In this informal view of figures in nature, he emphasized atmospheric sensations over traditional notions of subject matter, anticipating the critical contention that "impressionists" painted random views of modern life with self-invented technique.

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Paul Gauguin
French, 1848-1903
Busagny Farm, Osny, 1883
Oil on canvas
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund in honor of Houghton P. Metcalf, Jr. 1999.3

In early summer of 1883, Paul Gauguin joined Camille Pissarro to paint in the farming village of Osny. Here Gauguin emulates Pissarro's small, dense strokes but rejects his mentor's orderliness, instead experimenting with patches of disorganized marks whose colors sometimes wander from traditional harmonies. The seemingly random heightening of greens, reds, and purples in the foreground hints at his growing rebellion against realist expectations. Gauguin also skews the motif of the farm here, making it uncomfortably featureless and off-balance, anticipating his eventual rejection of the landscape motifs favored by many Impressionists.

Berthe Morisot
French, 1841-1895
Child in a Red Apron, 1886
Oil on canvas
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2010.57

Morisot captured her daughter, Julie, as she peered at a snowy landscape from a bedroom in their Paris home. The glint of a brass knob at top left suggests the window is ajar, while diagonal lavender brushstrokes below mimic a breeze that rustles the curtains and lifts the ties of Julie's apron. Spiraling and slashing marks animate the setting, creating a sense of movement and immediacy.

While the subject appears quickly drawn, Morisot worked deliberately, seeking the same effects of gesture and transparency whether employing pastel, watercolor, or oil. She often proceeded without preliminary sketches, painting with fluid and abbreviated strokes without completely covering the white canvas.

Edgar Degas
French, 1834-1917
Two Jockeys, ca. 1880-1890
black and blue crayon on laid paper watermarked L. Berville
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 21.249

This drawing studies the same jockey from two different angles, a type of composition that Degas frequently made at horse races. The young man's generalized features suggest the artist was more interested in capturing his pose and movement than his likeness.

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Degas deliberately chose a waxy crayon that could slide quickly and easily across the smooth surface of his paper, allowing him to rapidly draw directly from life. His choice of black and blue crayon may have been meant to translate the effects of natural light from different directions.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir
French, 1841-1919
Young Woman Reading an Illustrated Journal, ca. 1880
Oil on canvas
Museum Appropriation Fund 22.125

Nineteenth-century Parisians were avid consumers of illustrated journals. Renoir's intimate painting of Aline Charigot, a young dressmaker who later became his wife, shares its focus with a newspaper spread of fashionable figures. Closely cropping the view, Renoir partially conceals his model's face but captures her profile. He highlights the tone of her skin by opposing its warmth with the cool blue and white of the journal's pages. Matching his brushstrokes to the textures of her costume and brilliant red hair, he then beckons viewers to the curve of her armchair and invites them to read over her shoulder.

Edgar Degas
French, 1834-1917
Ballet Girl, ca. 1886-1888
Pastel on blue laid paper (now faded)
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 23.038

In this drawing of a dancer, Degas focused on the effects of artificial light on form and movement. Using a solid line to contrast the transparency of the girl's gauzy tutu, he reworked the dancer's right arm and leg before settling on the gesture seen here, in which she adjusts her bodice.

The vivid blue chalk used around the dancer's legs and chest would have matched the original color of the sheet, which has faded over time. Degas frequently used brightly hued papers to give his drawings a sense of luminosity.

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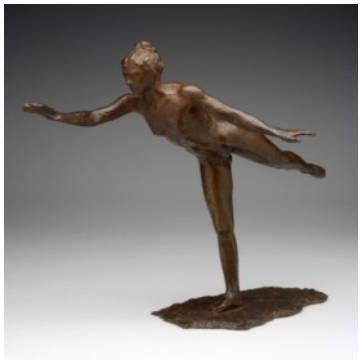
Edgar Degas
French, 1834-1917
La Savoisienne, ca. 1860
Oil on canvas
Museum Appropriation Fund 23.072

This painting depicts a young girl from Savoy, a mountainous region adjacent to Italy and Switzerland that was annexed by France in 1860. Female figures in regional costume were popular subjects in 19th-century art but they are unusual in the works of Edgar Degas.

Earlier in his career, Degas spent three years in Italy, visiting family and studying the Renaissance masters. Recalling the techniques and appearance of 16th-century Florentine portraiture, he carefully drew and modeled the young girl's head. He then opposed these traditional methods of construction with wide, loose brushstrokes that suggest the dense, pleated folds of her coif (linen headdress) and the softer textures of her collar and dress.



Edgar Degas
French, 1834-1917
A.A. Hebrard, foundry or carver
Grand Arabesque, Second Time, ca. 1885-1890 (cast ca. 1919–1922)
Bronze
Gift of Stephen O. Metcalf, George Pierce Metcalf and Houghton P. Metcalf 23.315

Degas created numerous studies of figures in transitional poses as resources for his paintings and as guides to understanding movement. This sculpture was not intended for exhibition, but was cast in bronze after Degas's death.

The dancer leans forward into an arabesque, extending her arms and balancing on one foot as she lifts her left leg backward. The British artist Walter Sickert (the figure standing apart from the group in Degas's pastel *Six Friends at Dieppe*) saw the wax model for this work while visiting Degas's studio, and was struck when Degas "turned the statuette slowly to show me the successive silhouettes thrown on a white sheet by the light of a candle."

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Edgar Degas
French, 1834-1917
Six Friends at Dieppe, 1885
Pastel on paper (now yellowed) mounted to fabric
Museum Appropriation Fund 31.320

Degas created this unusually large group portrait while vacationing with friends on France's Northern coast. The drawing was executed on a single sheet of rough, fibrous paper with a "tooth" (or texture) that held the powdery material of his pastel crayon in place. Using a technique that he developed alongside Mary Cassatt, Degas sketched dense parallel and perpendicular strokes in contrasting warm and cool colors to create a sense of depth. He allowed the brown color of the paper—which has darkened over time—to remain visible, giving the image a striking, warm tone.

Paul Cézanne
French, 1839-1906
Chestnut Trees and Farm at Jas de Bouffan, ca. 1886
Oil on canvas
Museum Appropriation Fund 33.053

Establishing the depth of the foreground in this scene with strong diagonals, Cézanne outlined the columnar trunks of the trees, filling their branches and the lawn below with strokes of close-hued greens that screen the yellow stucco buildings. Distinctive patches of brushstrokes identify his perceptions of hard and soft forms, creating surface rhythms that move the eye in and out of the natural landscape and its geometric structures.

This is the garden of Jas de Bouffan, a house owned by Cézanne's family near Aix-en-Provence. Cézanne built a studio on the property in 1881, preferring his home region in the south of France to life in Paris.

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Edgar Degas
French, 1834-1917
Jockey with Red Cap, ca. 1866-1868
Oil paint with solvent (peinture à l'essence) on paper, mounted to cardboard, mounted to wood panel
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 35.539

Variations on this horse and rider appeared in Degas's work over two decades. In this oil study he cropped the horse's head and legs, emphasizing its muscular belly and flanks. He depicted the jockey from the back, his arms close, chin down, and leg thrust forward as he reins the horse. Working on paper, he employed *peinture à l'essence*, blotting his paints to remove excess oil and then diluting them with a solvent such as turpentine. The thinned medium permitted him to draw more fluently with the brush, and its capacity to dry quickly allowed him to add new layers of pigment to adjust the sketch.

Vincent van Gogh
Dutch, 1853-1890
View of Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Oil on canvas
Given in memory of Miss Dorothy Sturges by a Friend 35.770

Like the bell tower and clustered rooftops, the sweeping grain fields around Auvers-sur-Oise were recurrent motifs in the late landscapes of Vincent van Gogh. Areas of bare, darkened canvas are visible in this small painting, which he may have executed directly on the site. He marks the wheat with irregular patterns of brushstrokes, roughly manipulating the pigment to match his perception of the dry, golden stalks. Looking up at the church quarter, he bathes the stone houses in blue light, outlining them to emphasize their solidity. Above the curved horizon, aggressive curls of dark green foliage animate the townscape, reaching up toward muscular clouds that tumble across a pale green sky.

Paul Cézanne
French, 1839-1906
Still Life with Apples, ca. 1878
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 41.012

Cézanne often chose traditional still-life motifs to explore his interest in representing the sensations conveyed by nature. The solidity, disappearing edges, and internal color shifts he found in apples made them ideal subjects for his methods of construction. Here he used short parallel strokes to sculpt eight apples of various sizes and

shapes. He emphasized their roundness and separateness by outlining each one, faceting their curved surfaces with brilliant lozenges of color that suggest volume and weight. Nestled together on the woven-rush seat of a provincial chair, the apples catch light from the left and cast long, green, fingerlike shadows at right.

Édouard Manet
French, 1832-1883
Children in the Tuileries Gardens, ca. 1861-1862
Oil on canvas
Museum Appropriation Fund 42.190

Manet perceived Paris as an urban theater, and often turned chance encounters into subjects for his paintings. In this oil sketch set in a formal garden, he captures a trio of little girls in momentary stillness. Tilting their heads toward an older girl who gestures in their direction, they share the public space with an old man in a straw hat and a nursemaid of African or Caribbean origin who attends her pampered charge. Manet records the mingling of different economic classes and defines their distinctive costumes with loose brushstrokes, rhythmically punctuating the activity with a screen of chestnut trees whose dark trunks lead the viewer further along the garden's sandy paths.

Paul Cézanne
French, 1839-1906
The Card Player, ca. 1890-1892
Graphite and watercolor on wove paper
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.211

This drawing belongs to a series depicting card players, using men from the artist's hometown as models. During the early 1890s, Cézanne made drawings from his own paintings on this subject, modifying and strengthening their compositions. Here, the man's substantial form is conveyed almost entirely with spare, loosely sketched graphite lines. Light touches of watercolor highlight the blue of his smock and his ruddy cheeks, in contrast to the white expanse of the paper. The artist's choice to focus on this man, excluding his partners in the game, underscores the subject's intense and introspective focus.

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Vincent van Gogh
Dutch, 1853-1890
View of Arles, 1888
Reed pen and ink and wash over graphite on paper
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.212A

Vincent van Gogh drew this meadow using a pen he cut from a reed that grew there. This simple handmade drawing tool allowed him to produce the variety of dots and lines seen on this sheet.

Despite his skillful rendering, the artist admitted in a letter to his brother, Theo, that he found the size of the paper and scope of the composition challenging. He used a perspective frame—a rectangular construction of his own design, crossed by strings—to help plan his study. The framing lines he drew based on this device are still visible along the top margin of the sheet and in a faint rectangle around the composition.

Edgar Degas
French, 1834-1917
Dancer with a Bouquet, ca. 1877-1880
Pastel and gouache over monotype on paper
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.213

This image of a dancer holding a large bouquet on stage originated as a print. Degas first created a monotype—an ink drawing that he transferred onto a sheet of damp paper. (The faint embossed outline of the printing plate is still visible around the margin of the drawing.) After the monotype print was complete, Degas drew over it with bright pastel. He also added a strip of paper along the bottom of the print to expand the composition vertically, allowing for a fuller depiction of the female spectator at lower right. This unusual process, used often by Degas, allowed him to both carefully plan and experiment with his compositions.

Edgar Degas
French, 1834-1917
Before the Race, ca. 1885
Pastel, gouache, and graphite over charcoal on tracing paper mounted to cardboard
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.214

This drawing is one of many that Degas made at racetracks in suburbs outside Paris. These works were often created using pastel sticks, although oil paints were a more commonly used medium at the time. Suiting the rapidity of the horses he depicted, this powdery chalk allowed Degas to sketch spontaneously and directly, combining loose

lines and planes of color. Pastels required no advance preparation of materials, no drying time, and could be adjusted and reworked easily. Degas also combined pastel with other materials such as goauche, the opaque white paint seen here in the horizontal fence.

Claude Monet
French, 1840-1926
The Basin at Argenteuil, 1874
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.219

The boat basin at Argenteuil, with its long promenade and terraced café, was a popular site for watching sailing regattas on the Seine. Monet set up his easel on an island across the river, distinguishing optical effects and textures with strategically varied brushmarks. Using pigments direct from tubes and mixed on his palette, he evoked the bramble of grasses in the foreground with congested jabs of color. A dappled mosaic of horizontal dashes captures the movement of water and the reflections of broadly painted sailboats. Along the riverwalk, dark and light flicks of paint mark a procession of plane trees whose gray-green leaves and their purple shadows are rendered with a flattened touch.

Paul Cézanne
French, 1839-1906
On the Banks of a River, ca. 1904-1905
Oil on canvas
Museum Special Reserve Fund 43.255

In this late, unfinished painting, Cézanne used blocks of color to construct the armature of a landscape. Likely working outdoors, he mapped the riverside village with squares and triangles and used parallel strokes of orange and brown to indicate a cargo-laden barge. A solid, curved structure at right marks a bend in the river, whose overlapping blue patches form a ribbon between the opposing banks. Lighter tones of blues and greens create mutual reflections in the water and the loosely drawn clouds. Cézanne's working process is also evident in the roughly conceived foreground, where broad, multicolored patches indicate forms that he had not yet defined.

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Claude Monet
French, 1840-1926
The Seine at Giverny, 1885
Oil on canvas
Museum Appropriation Fund, by exchange 44.541

Monet may have begun this view from a boat or on a nearby shore. One of a series he painted of this site, where the Seine joins the River Epte, it suggests a reverie in which forms have been abstracted and recalled.

Here Monet frames a confluence of the rivers and the luminous sky with densely massed foliage. Rose-blue light infuses the landscape, emanating from above and repeated in a watery reflection. Subtly distinguishing the trees from their mirror images, Monet loosened and reoriented his brushstrokes to record their presence in the flowing river. Similarly, he transformed the diagonal movement of the clouds into scattered marks in the waves below.

Georges Lemmen
Belgian, 1865-1916
Thames Scene, the Elevator, ca. 1890
Oil on canvas
Anonymous gift 57.166

The technique of painting with tiny dots of color was introduced to the Impressionists by Georges Seurat in the mid-1880s. This quasi-scientific style, in which complementary and contrasting colors were used to create brilliant optical effects, was adopted by Belgian painter Georges Lemmen in this view of the River Thames. He constructed the image with layers of successively smaller points of pigment, altering their density to indicate distance and to distinguish physical properties. Clustering related hues, such as yellows and oranges, and mingling complementaries like reds and blues, he modeled solid forms and created luminous transitions from water to smoke to sky, rendering the industrial scene with subtle, atmospheric effect.

Edgar Degas
French, 1834-1917
Four Jockeys on Horseback, ca. 1885-1887
Pastel over charcoal on tracing paper mounted to cardboard
Bequest of George Pierce Metcalf 57.233

Focusing on the posture and anatomy of horses and their riders, here Degas depicts the electrifying moments before the beginning of a race. His intense interest in this subject occasionally led him to use tracing paper, a material that allowed him to repeat figures from one

work to another. Through the practice of copying and recycling, Degas could experiment with the composition as a whole. *Four Jockeys on Horseback* was later traced, reversed, and edited slightly to produce an entirely new work.

Édouard Manet
French, 1832-1883
Repose (Le Repos), ca. 1871
Oil on canvas
Bequest of Mrs. Edith Stuyvesant Vanderbilt Gerry 59.027

Although he did not exhibit with the Impressionists, Manet was a key participant in the development of a new pictorial language. *Repose* demonstrates elements of his radical style, including dominant contrasts of light and dark tones; broad, tactile paint-handling; and a sense of shallow, compressed space.

This representation of the artist Berthe Morisot shocked some viewers. They criticized her casual pose, her informal dress, and her availability as a model. Her gaze suggests reverie, in contrast to the raucous subject of a pearl diver pursued by a dragon in the Japanese woodblock print above her head. Manet described this painting as a study in physical and psychological repose—"not at all in the character of a portrait."

Edgar Degas
French, 1834-1917
Two Seated Women, ca. 1878
Pastel on blue laid paper (now faded)
Gift of the Museum Committee in Appreciation of John Maxon's Directorship 59.111

As in *Ballet Girl*, Degas used blue chalk to indicate shadows in this sketch. These two women were probably also performers at the Paris Ballet, where Degas often found his models. He made quick sketches from life—both at the ballet and in his studio—which he then incorporated into later painted compositions, focusing on specific areas or aspects of their form.

The contrast between the color and finish of the busts of the two women seen here suggests that their shawls might have been Degas's primary interest, explaining the rough and unfinished rendering of the rest of their bodies.

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Mary Cassatt
American, 1844-1926
Simone in a Blue Bonnet, ca. 1903
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 60.095

Mary Cassatt was the only American to participate in the Impressionist exhibitions. In this unfinished portrait of a young neighbor, she draws directly and economically with her brush, capturing the child's expression and subtly modeling her face. She marks the bonnet's brim with a single firm line then explodes its feathery ornaments with wide, fluid strokes of paint. The prominent vertical and dark, scribbled brushstrokes suggest interior space and project the figure forward, but areas of exposed white ground preserve the natural brightness of the canvas and register Cassatt's desire for an overall light tonality.

Camille Pissarro
French, 1830-1903
Field and Mill at Osny, 1884
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Houghton P. Metcalf in memory of her husband, Houghton P. Metcalf 72.096

Pissarro established the organizational guidelines that launched the first Impressionist exhibition and served as a mentor to younger artists in the 1870s and 1880s. In this painting, he carefully represents a farmyard near his home outside Paris without calling attention to any single element in the scene. The landscape is threaded by a slender stream that curves along a tree-lined path and separates a cluster of buildings from a pasture where cattle graze. Although tilted toward the foreground, the construction of space suggests measurable, perspectival depth. Pissarro's craftsman-like technique is visible in his small, tight brushstrokes and the subtle variation of greens and browns that respond to nature's palette.

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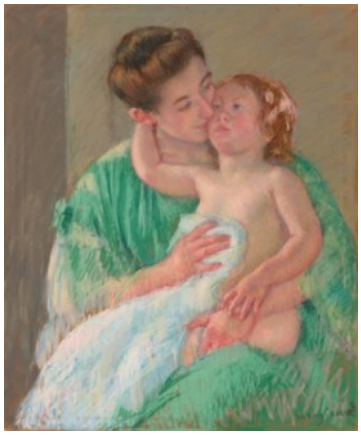

Mary Cassatt
American, 1844-1926
Antoinette's Caress, ca. 1906
Pastel on wove paper mountd to fabric
Gift of Mrs. Houghton P. Metcalf, Sr. 82.115

This drawing depicts a model named Antoinette—whom Cassatt drew frequently around 1900—with her son. The vivid tones used to sketch the pair contrast sharply with the neutral background and contribute a sense of intimacy and warmth.

Cassatt favored pastel for its brightness and texture. Like Edgar Degas (whose work is in the next gallery), she "fixed" layers of pastel to the surface of a sheet of paper, securing the loose material in place so that she could apply more pastel on top of it. This practice is seen throughout this drawing, especially in the layering of unexpected colors such as green and orange in the child's skin.

Berthe Morisot
French, 1841-1895
The Two Sisters (Les deux soeurs), 1894
Charcoal and red chalk on paper
Private collection TL102.2016

This sketch of young girls depicts two of Morisot's favorite models, Marcelle and Marthe, in preparation for a later painting. The pair's comfortable, familiar pose, intended to suggest a familial relationship, is reflected in the later work's title, *The Two Sisters*. Using charcoal and sanguine—a red chalk named after the French word for blood—Morisot mapped out the work's shadows and highlights. Although this combination of drawing materials had been used by artists for centuries as a way to prepare for painted compositions, Morisot's process of manipulation and smearing gives the work a distinctly contemporary appearance.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir
French, 1841-1919
Square at La Trinite (Place de la Trinite), 1875
Oil on canvas
Anonymous loan TL134.96

The neighborhood of La Trinité church is located near the St. Lazare train station in the center of Paris. Its park-like square and new apartment buildings are presented by Renoir as a theater of modern life and middle-class leisure, observed by two figures at the corner of a white balustrade. Above them, a wide marble staircase descends from the church entrance, beckoning families to the flowerbeds and

benches below.

Renoir's blurred brushstrokes lavish attention on the yellow-greens and shady blues of the intimate garden and bathe the scene in a soft pink light that muffles the distractions of city life, reinforcing the sense of a hidden oasis.