

Chapter 17

Out of the Studio and into the
Light: Impressionism and Post-
Impressionism

Impressionism

- In the 19th century with the growth of the middle-class in town and cities, a new audience for art began to emerge
- Most artists lived in urban centers where they could interact with other artists and be part of an art world that included gallery owners and critics, as well as artists and collectors
- The life of the city (especially in Paris) had a vital impact on these late 19th century artists
- The capital of France, once deserted by Louis XIV for the artificial city of *Versailles*, was now again the hub of French government and culture

The Salons and Academic Art



- *Realists* like Courbet were challenging the academic painters of the official *Salon* in Paris
- Courbet glorifies two working-class women lounging in a state of semi-undress outdoors
- Popular taste called for women to be shown as goddesses and nymphs like in this work by Bouguereau

Impressionism

The Salon des Refusé and Manet

- Edouard Manet became the focus of the public's attention in the "*Salon of the Refused*" – a show sponsored by the Emperor to show the many rejected artists of the official Salon of 1863
- The painting causing so much debate was of a naked woman in a public park with 2 clothed men
- Manet wanted the work to be seen as a painting in the academic tradition, of a reclining nude in a landscape, but reinterpreted in a modern, realist fashion
- The men were in contemporary dress, and the woman was not a *classical goddess* - so it was seen as scandalous



Out of the Studio and into the Light



- Although Manet never exhibited with the Impressionists he came to be seen as the “father” of the new movement – his emphatic brushstrokes and insistence on painting modern life will inspire them
- The younger painters were interested in working outdoors, directly from nature - the new packaging of oil paint in metal tubes made oil paint more portable (and new colors were available)
- Manet’s work starts to show the influence of the brighter colors of the Impressionists

Monet, the pure Impressionist

- Claude Monet paints *Le Grenouillere* – a floating restaurant and dancing pavillion in Paris, in the new *Impressionist* style
- He achieves heightened color effects by placing colors side by side rather than mixing them
- The water in the foreground is made up of rough, overlapping, unblended strokes of sky blue, white, and black, with dabs of gold ochre added to suggest the reflection of the pavilion



Monet in Giverny

- In 1888 Monet began to paint *Grainstacks* from a field next to his home in Giverny
- His brushstrokes become heavier, his color richer – he emphasizes *pictorial texture*, making us aware that we are looking a paint on a canvas, not a photograph of reality
- Monet is also attempting to convey the light and atmosphere of the natural world – he will create a series – changing canvases when the light changes



Impressionism

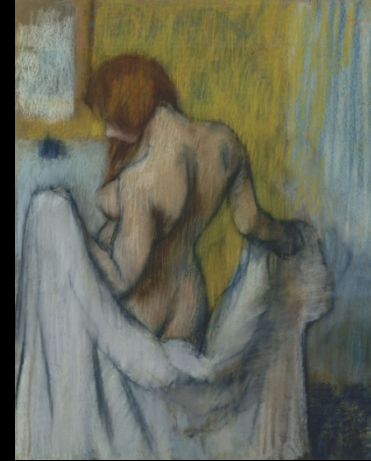
Renoir



- Like all of the Impressionists, Renoir wanted to show the life he saw around him in Paris – but he was more concerned with human interactions and moods
- In his outdoor café the dappled light, broken brushstrokes, and bright colors are typical of Renoir's Impressionist style
- He evokes the light of a late spring afternoon, filtering through the trees – he emphasizes vibrant movement and a sense of pleasure in this beautiful passing moment

Degas and Cassatt

- Edgar Degas and Mary Cassatt were both more interested in line than the other Impressionists
- In Degas' pastel he constructs an interesting composition with the curving lines of the woman's back contrasting the curve of the towel - the visible strokes of the chalk reveal the creation of the image out of lines of color
- *Japanese prints* influenced Cassatt's dramatic composition in *The Boating Party* - and also her use of flat, bold color shapes



Seurat and Pointillism



- Seurat uses Impressionism to create a new kind of timeless, classical art - the subject, colors, and light of *La Grande Jatte*, come from Impressionism, but the technique is new - he begins by simplifying forms and arranging them into a pleasing composition
- He reduces the Impressionist broken brushstroke to a “dot” and creates an *optical mix* – bright colors are placed next to each other and the viewer’s eye “optically” mixes them – he invents *Pointillism*

Gauguin and the search for Paradise

- Gauguin felt that Europeans had become too civilized; modern life was corrupted by cynicism - He left Paris for Tahiti in an attempt to rejuvenate his art and life
- In *Spirit of the Dead Watching* he paints his Tahitian wife terrified of a dead spirit
- He uses the traditional format of the reclining nude, but adds bright, powerful colors, and a decorative, flattened space
- Gauguin freed color from the bonds of reproducing visual reality



Van Gogh: Father of Expressionism



- Van Gogh was inspired by the brilliant color and light of Impressionism, but will use them in new, more *expressionistic* way
- He said that he wanted to portray the *Night Café* as a place where you could ruin yourself, go mad, or commit a crime
- He uses distortion and intense color to emphasize feeling

Van Gogh: Father of Expressionism

- In Van Gogh's *Starry Night* he creates a work that is not just an imitation of the world, but an intense recreation of feeling
- The stars are like balls of fire, the earth rolls as if in an earthquake, the cypress tree rises from the foreground like a brown tongue of flame – all painted with thick lines of paint



Cézanne's Revolution



- In Cézanne's *Still Life with Apples* he is no longer obeying the mathematical rules of perspective – the fruit bowl is seen from 2 angles at once – expressing the way we perceive the world – with movement
- Cézanne is reinventing the way pictures are made
- He shared with the Impressionists a distaste for conventional drawing – his forms are created by planes of solid color lying next to each other
- His work marks the end of the naturalistic approach that began with Giotto – Artists would now have the freedom to pursue their own vision and to ignore the rules