



Just what is Impressionism Anyway?

Presented

by Meg Black, PhD

About the presenter:

Meg Black, Ph.D. was the chair of Art Education at Salem State University. Her research focuses on aesthetics and aesthetic development. Her published writings include “You’re taking us Where? Reaction and Response to a Guided Art Museum Field trip.” in *Visual Arts Education in Museums and Galleries*, and “Landscapes in Paper” *Handpapermaking Magazine*. Her artwork is included in many public collections including the United States Department of State, *Art in Embassies: Belgrade, Serbia*, the State of New Hampshire, Concord, NH, and the town of Topsfield.



Today, Impressionist merchandise is everywhere . . .



It wasn't always like this

- I asked a few people what they thought Impressionism was . . .

Didn't they like to paint outside?

They were rebelling against something . . .

They liked to use color . . .



Late Gothic/Early Italian Renaissance 1425-1485

- To understand Impressionism, we need to go back to the Gothic era



... c. 1137 when Louis XII was the king of France. Abbot Suger, a classmate and friend to the king, was the chief architect of the new Gothic style, as seen in the church of St. Denis, the burial church of the French monarchs. As the architect, he encouraged groups of skilled workers to form guilds with the consent of Louis VII.



Louis VII, 1120-1180



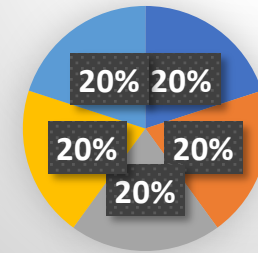
Abbot Suger, 1081-1151



Guilds were like labor unions.

- ❖ Self-governed
- ❖ apprentice, journeyman, master
- ❖ Pretty much equally distributed labor
- ❖ Each guild had a window dedicated to it in the new church

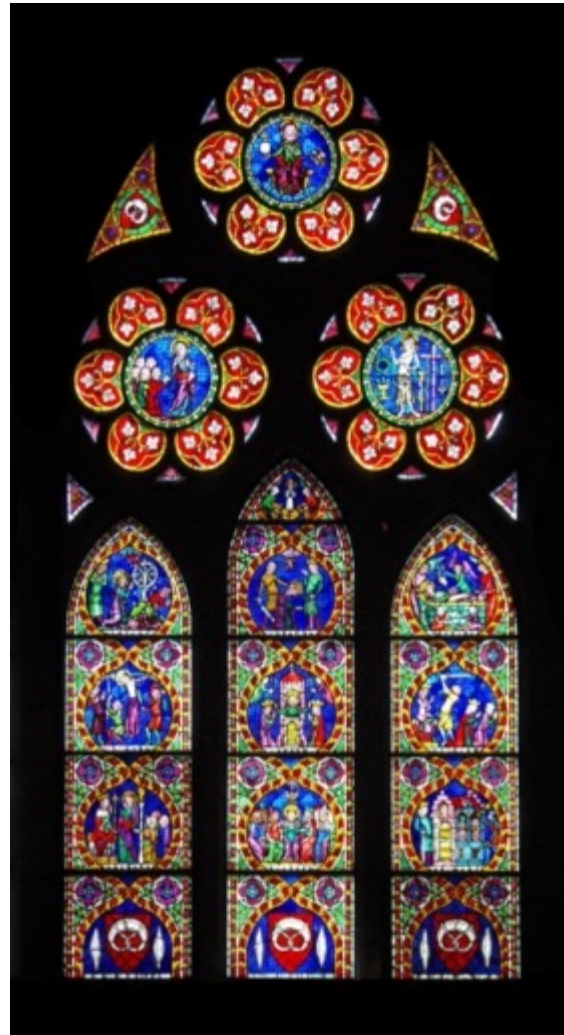
Guilds



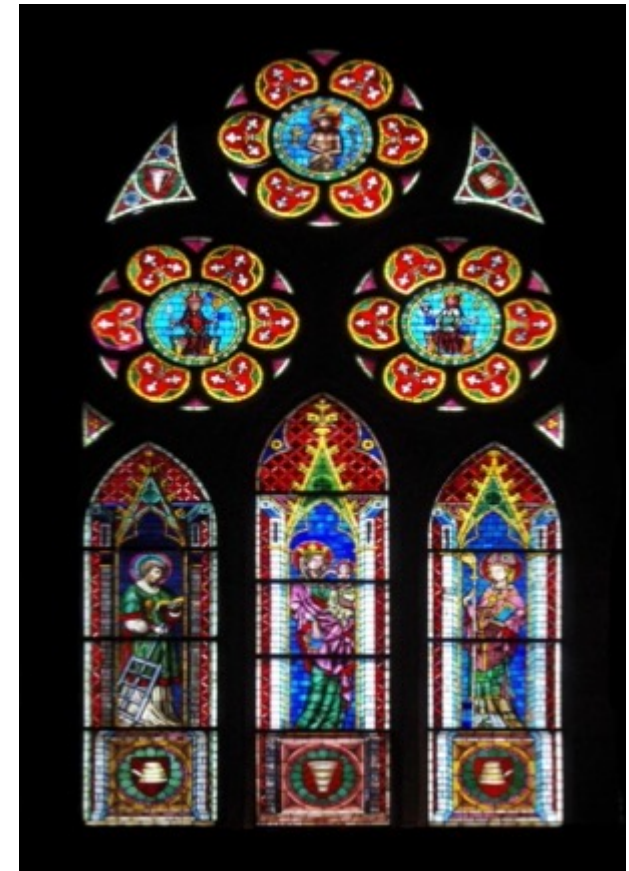
- History
- Nude/portraits
- Landscape



Cobbler's Guild



Baker's Guild



Brewer's Guild

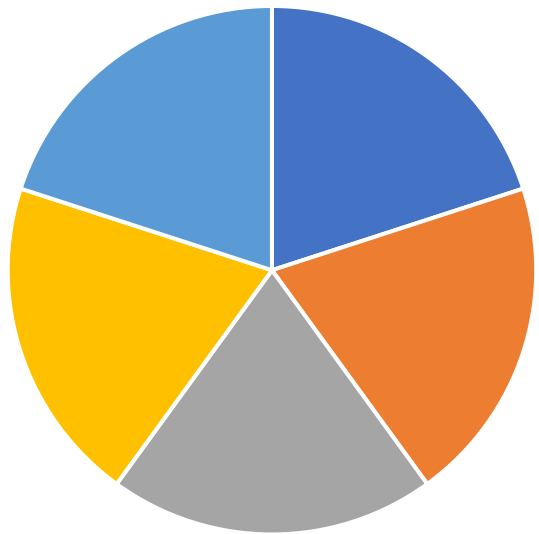


Hyacinthe Rigaud LOUIS XIV
1701. Oil on canvas, 9'2" ×
7'10-3/4" (2.19 × 2.4 m).
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

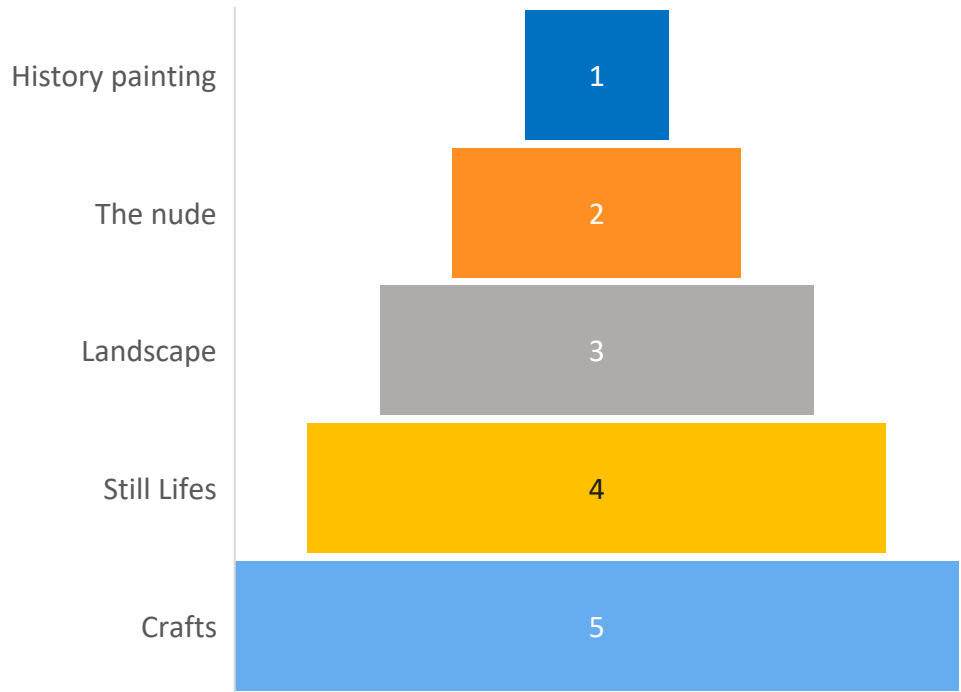
- Louis's very great grandson, Louis XIV grew suspicious of the guilds.
- Actually, he was suspicious of everybody.
- So, he set out to dissolve the guilds.
- He replaced them with the academy.
- The world's first union buster.

The French Academy became the standard for artistic excellence. What had once been a circle with equally sized wedges, now was a pyramid of hierarchy. This guaranteed competition between academy members who all vied for limited prizes and awards. Divide and conquer!

Guilds



- History
- Nude/portraits
- Landscape
- Still Lifes
- Crafts



The first American Academy was the Copley Society in Boston in 1780. Located on Newbury St., it is still active today.

The art made by academy artists featured mythological figures from history, mostly nude goddesses, Exotic and erotic. The painted surface of the canvas was as slick as a freshly painted sports car. This type of art was seen as increasingly disjointed by the mid 19th century.



Alexandre Cabanel, *The Birth of Venus*, 1863.
Musee d'Orsay, Paris. Private collection of Napoleon III.



Before the Impressionists: The Impressionists did not suddenly appear as an isolated phenomenon. Precursors included Realist artists who challenged the art of the academy and sought a more “realistic” form of expression.




Ilya Repin. *Barge haulers on the Volga*. 1870–1873. 4' 3 3/4" × 9' 3".

This was the height of the Industrial Revolution, after all. While the merchant class made a fortune, rampant poverty, urban blight, poor working conditions, and a social underclass was just as evident. Not as much room for mythological nudes in this story.



Jean-François Millet. *The Gleaners*. 1857. 33 × 44".



Ok, so where did the
Impressionists
come from?

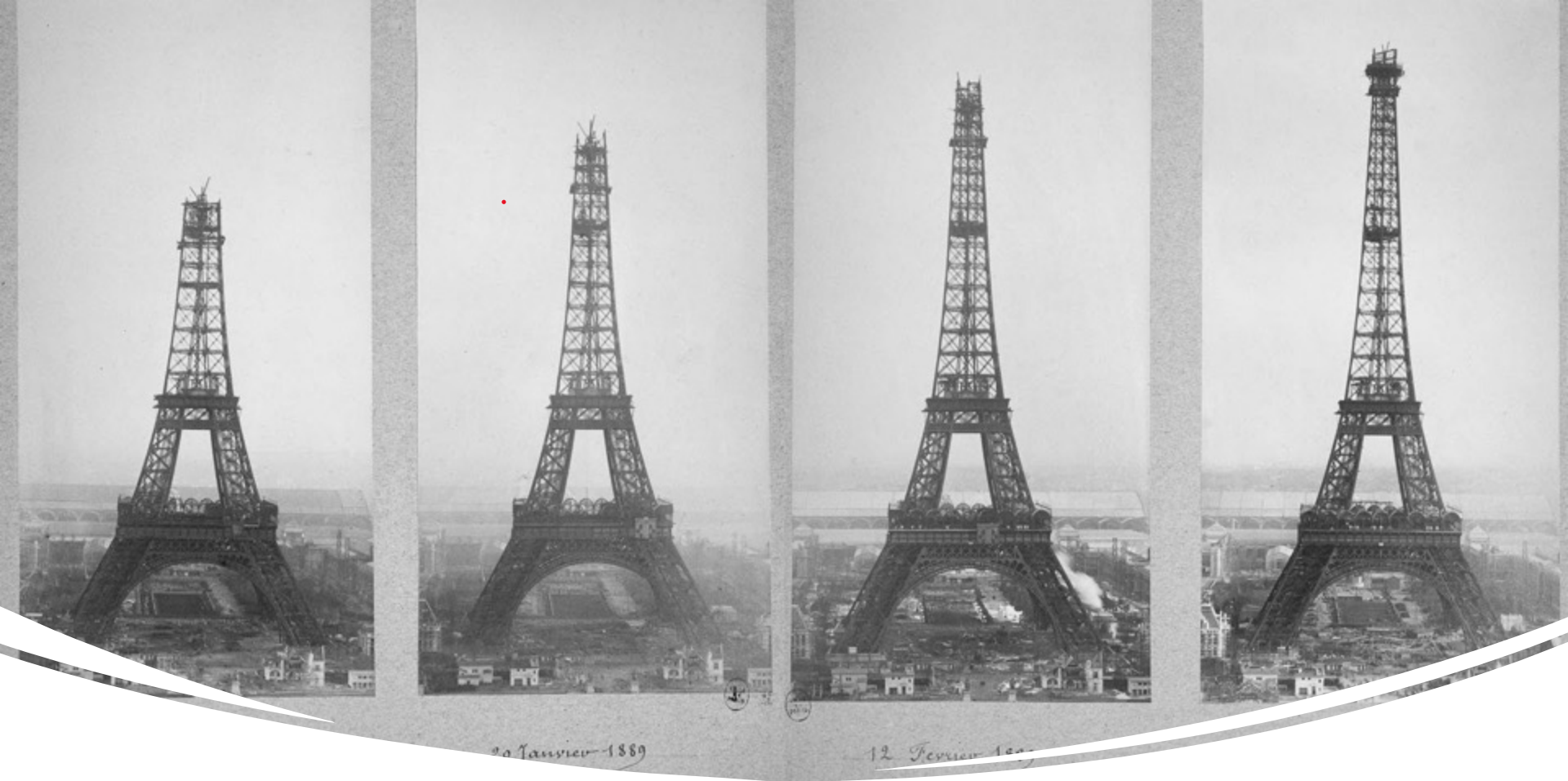
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The
Impressionists
weren't like
the Beatles,
who came
from the same
town ...



They came from many different places. And moved to different places.





- They came to Paris because it was hopping at the time. The Prussian war had ended, and the city was being rebuilt.
- Rome and Florence had been the big art centers in the past. Now it was Paris' turn.



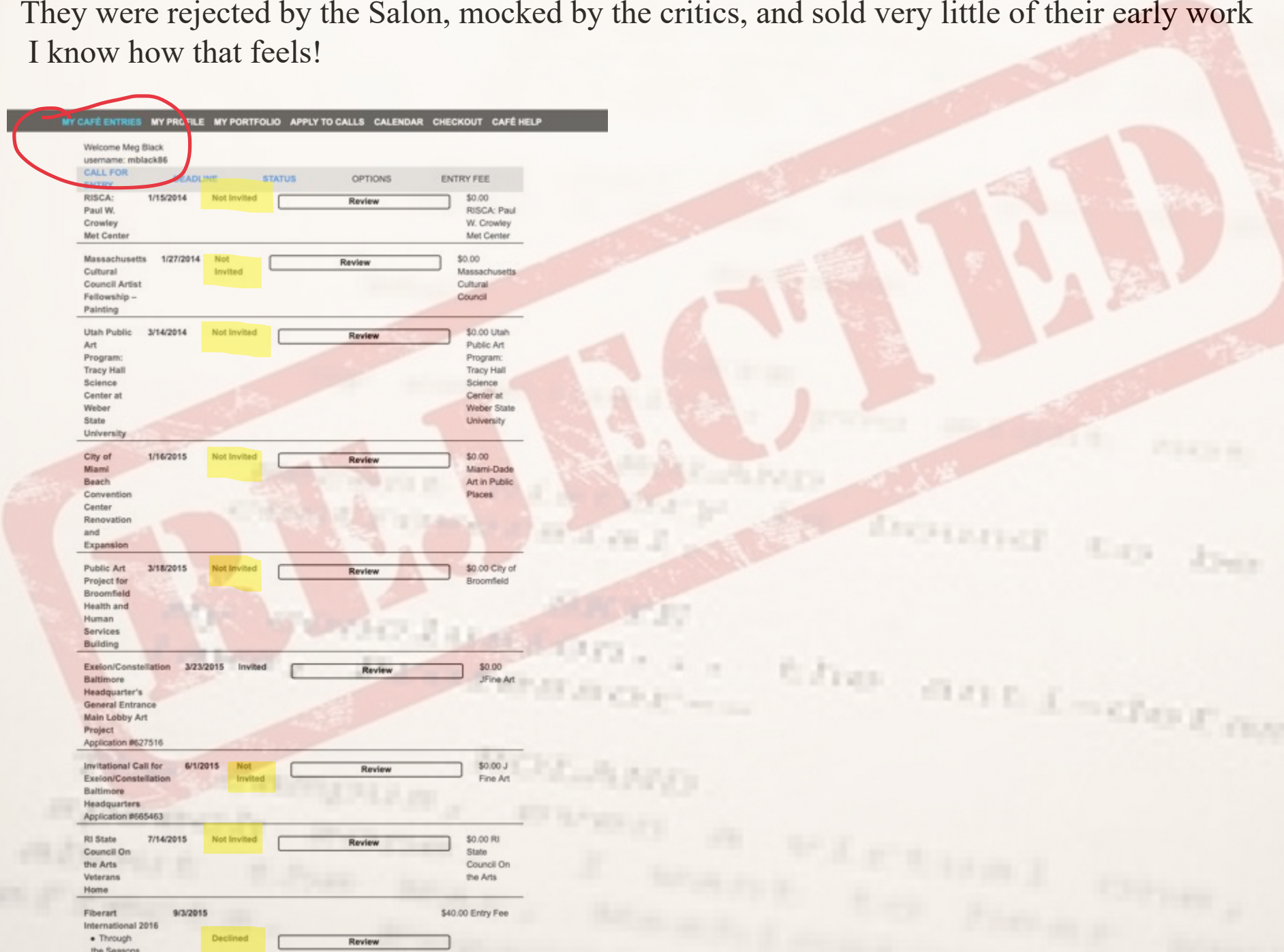
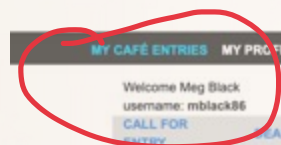
Impressionism:

- Artists began to paint outdoors, *en plein air* to record fleeting effects of light and atmosphere.
- A group under the organization of Camille Pissarro urged artists to band into grass-roots organizations rather than rely on state-sanctioned institutions. Their charter was based on the Bakers' Guild of 1137. Take that Louis XIV! Bread is vey important in France after all.
- They did not refer to themselves as Impressionists. They called themselves the Société Anonyme des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs, Engravers, etc.
- Rolls right off the tongue!

They were rejected by the Salon, mocked by the critics, and sold very little of their early work
I know how that feels!

Welcome Meg Black
username: mblack86

CALL FOR ARTS	DEADLINE	STATUS	OPTIONS	ENTRY FEE
RISCA: Paul W. Crowley Met Center	1/15/2014	Not Invited	<input type="button" value="Review"/>	\$0.00 RISCA: Paul W. Crowley Met Center
Massachusetts Cultural Council Artist Fellowship – Painting	1/27/2014	Not Invited	<input type="button" value="Review"/>	\$0.00 Massachusetts Cultural Council
Utah Public Art Program: Tracy Hall Science Center at Weber State University	3/14/2014	Not Invited	<input type="button" value="Review"/>	\$0.00 Utah Public Art Program: Tracy Hall Science Center at Weber State University
City of Miami Beach Convention Center Renovation and Expansion	1/16/2015	Not Invited	<input type="button" value="Review"/>	\$0.00 Miami-Dade Art in Public Places
Public Art Project for Broomfield Health and Human Services Building	3/18/2015	Not Invited	<input type="button" value="Review"/>	\$0.00 City of Broomfield
Exelon/Constellation Baltimore Headquarter's General Entrance Main Lobby Art Project Application #627516	3/23/2015	Invited	<input type="button" value="Review"/>	\$0.00 JFine Art
Invitational Call for Exelon/Constellation Baltimore Headquarters Application #665463	6/1/2015	Not Invited	<input type="button" value="Review"/>	\$0.00 J Fine Art
RI State Council On the Arts Veterans Home	7/14/2015	Not Invited	<input type="button" value="Review"/>	\$0.00 RI State Council On the Arts
Fiberart International 2016 • Through the Seasons	9/3/2015	Declined	<input type="button" value="Review"/>	\$40.00 Entry Fee



SOCIETE' ANONYME
DES ARTISTES, PEINTRES, SCULPTERS, GRAVEURS, ETC

PREMIERE

EXPOSITION

1874

35, Boulevard des Capucines, 35

CATALOGUE

Prix : 50 centimes

L'Exposition est ouverte du 15 avril au 15 mai 1874,
le 10 heures du matin a 6 h. du soir et de 8 h. a 10 heures du
PRIX D'ENTREE : 1 FRANC



PARIS
IMPRIMERIE ALCAN-LEVY
61, RUE DE LAFAYETTE

1874

The first Impressionist exhibit was in April 1874. The final exhibit was in 1886.

- 'Look at the Catalogue.' 'Impression Sunrise.' 'Impression--I was certain of it. I was just telling myself that, since I was impressed, there had to be some impression in it...and what freedom, what ease of workmanship! Wallpaper in its embryonic state is more finished than that seascape!'" Louis Leroy, art critic for *Le Charivari*

Edward Manet never exhibited with the Impressionists. He had his own bones to pick with the academy. Manet sought to connect history with modernity, often to the howl of the critics.



Titian, *The Pastoral Concert or Allegory on the invention of Pastoral Poetry*, (c. 1510). Oil on canvas, 41 x 54, Musée de Louvre, Paris.



Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, (1538). Oil on canvas, 3'11" x 5'5", Uffizi, Florence.



Manet, *Le Dejeuner sur L'herbe*, (1863). Oil on canvas, 7' x 8'8". Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



Manet, *Olympia*, (1863). Oil on canvas, 4'3" x 6'2", Musée de Louvre, Paris.

While Impressionist artists tended to focus on modern life, many, such as Manet, were influenced by the history of art.

The first Impressionist:

Camille Pissarro was born in the Caribbean to a staunch Jewish family who discouraged him from including the human form in his art, based on biblical tenets. He left St. Thomas for Paris to study art at the academy. He was rejected immediately.

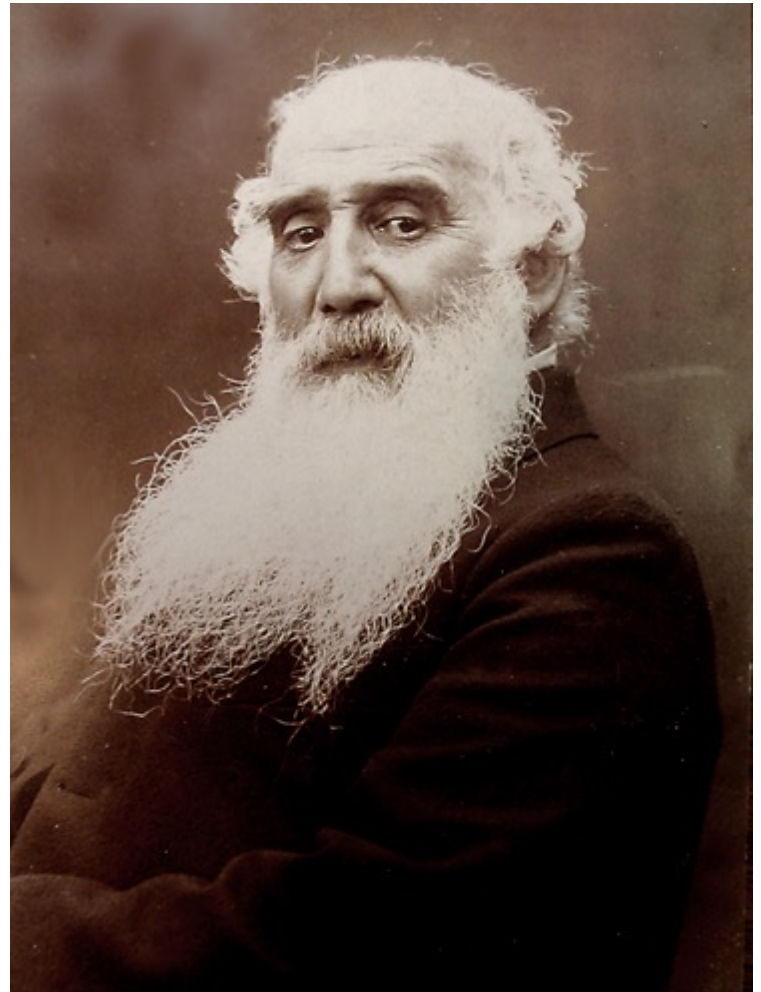
The only Impressionist to exhibit in all 8 exhibits.

Married his mother's maid, Julie, and was cut out of her will as a result.

He is known for his landscapes and for portraying the elusive play of light and shadow.

Pissarro insisted on painting individuals in natural settings without "artifice or grandeur" (Renoir).

He focused on the poor worker much like the realist painters.



(1830-1903)

“Blessed are they who see beautiful things in humble places where other people see nothing” — **Camille Pissarro**

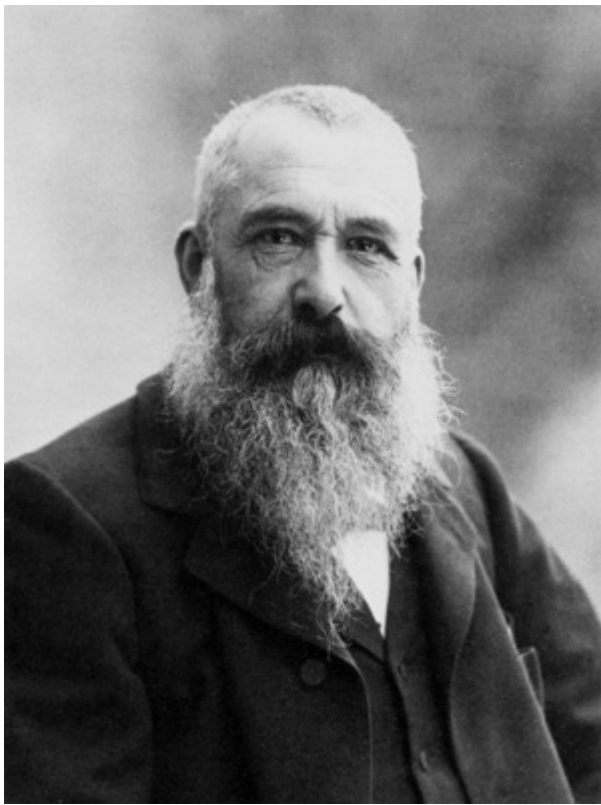


Pissarro, The orchard

After being rejected from the academy, Pissarro started his own studio, one without a teacher, which pretty much guaranteed he wouldn't suffer further rejection.

One day, in walked a dandy of a young man
.....





(1840-1926)



Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*, 1872, oil on canvas, 19" × 24-3/8".
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris.

- ❖ Oscar Claude Monet grew up in the port city of Le Harve near the Normandy coast.
- ❖ His life-long fascination with painting water came from his early years.
- ❖ He was the first to embrace the term “Impressionist.”
- ❖ Main subjects were nature and landscapes- en plein air
- ❖ Painted same scenes day after day to capture changing of light
- ❖ He dug ditches to place his large canvases in so he could paint outdoors.
- ❖ Both Manet and Pissarro accused him of copying their work

The richness I achieve comes from nature, the source of my inspiration. – **Claude Monet**



Women in a Garden, 1866–1867



Jean Monet on his hobby horse, 1872

Both Pissarro and Monet focused on landscapes with people, but from very different points of view. Pissarro's figures are part of the landscape, whereas Monet's are detached from it.

The third member to join the group was a young porcelain painter, considered a “slacker” by his employer . . .



- Pierre-Auguste Renoir painted the middle class at leisure.
- Like Monet, he was interested in light and how it defined the passing moment - but he rarely painted without images of people enjoying themselves.
- Renoir suggested the details of a scene through freely brushed touches of color, so that his figures softly fuse with one another and their surroundings.
- Sunday had always been a day for church and feeling guilty. But the new middle class had access to trains, which allowed Parisians to spend Sundays at leisure, in dance halls, and Paris parks. Renoir captures this in his paintings.



1841-1919



Renoir, The Luncheon of the Boating Party

To my mind, a picture should be something pleasant, cheerful, and pretty, yes pretty!-**Pierre Auguste Renoir**



Pierre-Auguste Renoir MOULIN DE LA GALETTE
1876. Oil on canvas, 4'3-1/2" × 5'9" (1.31 × 1.75 m).
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Pissarro focused on the working class, Monet on the Bourgeois, and Renoir on the middle class. Evidence of class distinctions is evident in most Impressionist paintings.

And what's a group
of Bohemian artists
without a Bourgeois
wannabe who can
introduce them to the
right people who
would might actually
buy this stuff?
Enter . . .



- Edgar Degas often depicted observances of rehearsals and performance of ballet.
- *The Rehearsal on Stage* is not a factual record, but a contrivance viewed from the angled perspective of an opera box.
- Dancers stretch, look bored or exhausted, and are watched over by several "protectors." Protectors often sought sexual favors from young dancers who were deemed unrespectable due to their profession.
- Instead of looking posed, he gives the scenes an element of spontaneity, a primary concern of all impressionists. Like the other impressionists, he is interested in light and changing atmosphere - but his is almost always the light of the stage or indoor lighting.



(1834-1917)



I assure you no art was ever less spontaneous than mine-**Edgar Degas**



Edgar Degas THE REHEARSAL ON STAGE

c. 1874. Pastel over brush-and-ink drawing on thin, cream-colored wove paper, laid on bristol board, mounted on canvas, 21-3/8" × 28-3/4" (54.3 × 73 cm).
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Degas's later images include intimate scenes of bathing women.

The Tub is rendered from an elevated, domineering vantage point, evidenced by the tipped-up table with a still life of objects associated with bathing.



Edgar Degas THE TUB
1886. Pastel on cardboard, 23-5/8" × 32-5/8" (60 × 83 cm).
Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

One of Degas' bourgeois friends was a painter whom he introduced to the group and invited to exhibit with them in the 1874 exhibition.

A legendary beauty of her time. Meet . .



- Berthe Morisot married Edouard Manet's brother and continued painting even after the birth of her daughter.
- Her art was dedicated to the lives of bourgeois women, such as in *Summer's Day*.
- As a member of the Bourgeois class, Morisot was discouraged from being seen in public without a male escort, something the “Lorraine’s” in Renoir’s paintings needn't worry about.
- Most of Morisot’s paintings are of domestic scenes as a result.
- She never had a studio, she painted in her living room.



(1841-1895)



The Psyche mirror (1876). Oil on canvas. 65 x 54 cm
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

Real painters understand with a brush in their hand-**Berthe Morisot**.



Berthe Morisot SUMMER'S DAY

1879. Oil on canvas, 17-13/16" × 29-5/16" (45.7 × 75.2 cm).

National Gallery, London. Lane Bequest, 1917. © 2016. Copyright The National Gallery, London/Scala, Florence. [Fig. 31-32]

The only
American to
ever exhibit
with the
Impressionists
was our final
panelist

...



- Mary Cassatt was an American expatriate living in Paris who befriended Degas.

Whether they were more than that is open to speculation.

- Her work sought to counteract the clichéd conceptions of the domestic and social life of bourgeois women.

- *Mother and Child* features contrast between loosely painted clothing and solidly modeled forms of faces and hands.

- It was Cassatt, from a wealthy Pittsburgh family, who introduced Impressionism to America. Americans loved it as it and bought most of the great Impressionist art-



(1844-1926)



Mary Cassatt MOTHER AND CHILD
c. 1890. Oil on canvas, 35-1/2" × 25-3/8"
Wichita Art Museum, Kansas.

If painting as I have described, it seems a pity that some of us are born into the world with such a passion for line and color-

Mary Cassatt

As mentioned, evidence of class distinctions is evident in most Impressionist paintings. Here are a few examples.

Renoir and Mary Cassatt painted scenes of the Loge . . .



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, (1874) *La Loge (theatre Box)*
The Courtauld, London.



Mary Cassatt, (1882). *The Loge*, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

. . . while Degas focused not on the audience, but on the dancers.



Edgar Degas THE REHEARSAL ON STAGE

c. 1874. Pastel over brush-and-ink drawing on thin, cream-colored wove paper, laid on bristol board, mounted on canvas, 21-3/8" × 28-3/4" (54.3 × 73 cm).

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt painted domestic scenes, spaces they controlled. Fashion, manners, and polite conversation are all on display.

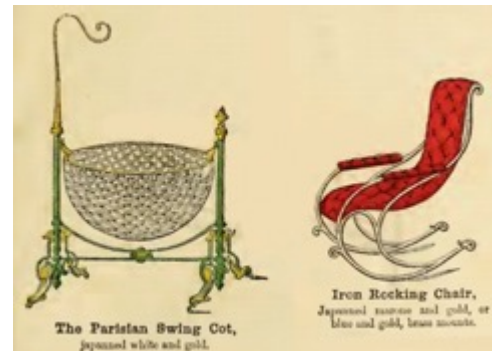


Mary Cassatt, (1880). *A Cup of Tea*. MFA, Boston.

Cassatt exhibited this painting in the 1880 exhibit where it was immediately panned. Critic Paul Mantz called it “poorly drawn” and commented upon the “wretched sugar bowl [which] remains floating in the air like a dream,” while Philippe Burty, a respected critic regretted her “partially completed image[s].”



Berthe Morisot (1872). *The Cradle*, Musee d'Orsay, Paris.



The cradle and rocker were both featured in Paris furniture catalogs.

So, just what is Impressionism, anyway?

- Impressionism is a style of art that elevates experiences of everyday life to the grandeur of greatness.
- Impressionists focused on the play of light, the emotions colors could extract, and the way the textured surface resonated with the viewer.
- Impressionists painted outdoors, in their living rooms, gardens, and in railway stations. No subject was deemed too small or too common.
- The Impressionists were a group a very young artists who dared challenge the status quo, supported each other much like the guild members of the middle ages, and eventually broke the grip the academy held on artistic standards as first determined by Louis XIV, a world class philistine, albeit one with a nice pair of legs.
- They in turn influenced generations of artists to seek new ideas, work directly from nature, express emotions in their work, and bring their work to the public, many of whom are not regular museum visitors.

- Such as . . .

Landscape painters

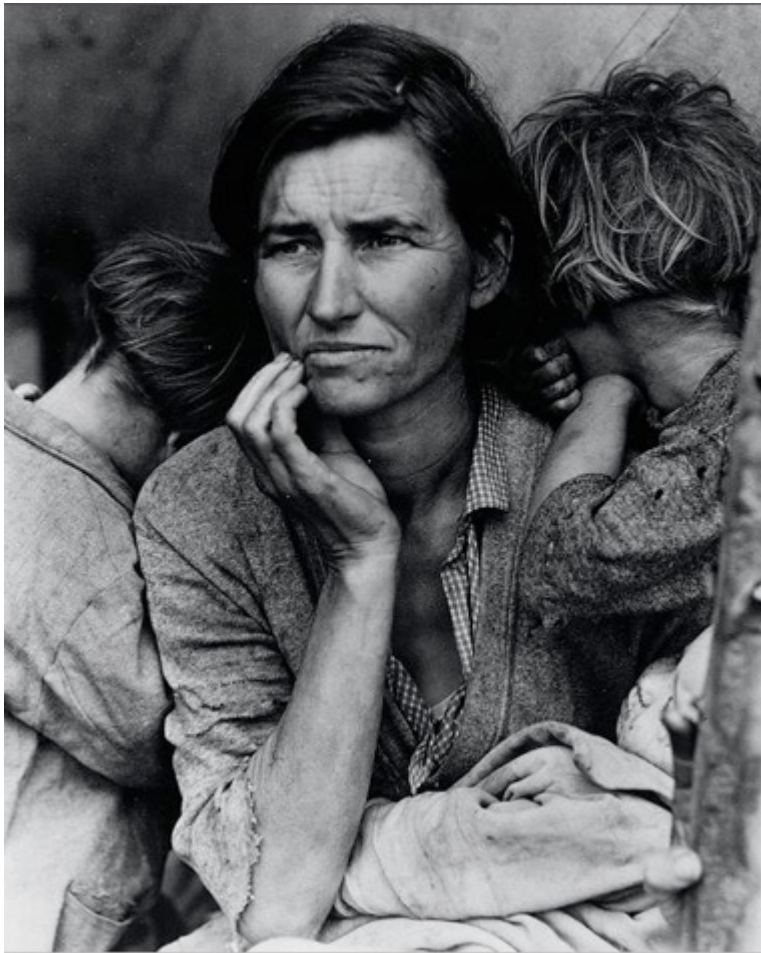


Vincent van Gogh THE STARRY NIGHT
1889. Oil on canvas, 28-3/4 × 36-1/4" (73 × 93 cm).
Museum of Modern Art, New York.



David Hockney, 1998. Garrowby Hill. MFA, Boston.

Photographers



Dorothea Lange,
Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California
gelatin silver print. 22.1 x 17.7 cm
February 1936
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.



Ansel Adams, 1937. *Clearing Winter Storm, Yosemite National Park.*

Sculptors



Andy Goldsworthy – *Touching North*, 1989, North Pole



Non-Violence, by Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd (2007).
United Nations, New York. Bronze, 6'7" x 13'2".

Portrait painters



Alice Neel in her studio, c. 1967



Andy Warhol's *Shot Sage Blue Marilyn*, 1964.

Thank you for coming



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Join my newsletter for upcoming events, and announcements about my latest artwork.

www.megblack.com

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