Guided Tour Framework

Rules & Rebels in Nineteenth-Century French Art
Grades 7-12

Tour Objectives
In this tour students will:
- Understand the basic concept and system of the French Salon.
- Learn the criteria upon which paintings were generally accepted into the Salon.
- "Jury" their own Salon exhibition using Joslyn’s collection of 19th century French paintings—selecting which pieces may or may not have been included in the Salon and stating the reasons why.

To the Docent
This program—designed to familiarize students with 19th century French painting in Joslyn’s permanent collection—combines a docent-guided looking with an active student participation in a structured activity.

PREPARATION:
Get the Rules & Rebels portfolio from the Education Department. Check the number of students expected to participate in the tour and be sure that you have enough student activity worksheets and pencils. Be sure that the materials are in order and retrievable so you can access them easily during the tour. Due to the fact that the tour only uses two galleries, you will be working with the entire class, which shouldn’t exceed 25 students.

INTRODUCTION
Meet your group in the Atrium. Greet the students and quickly review the plan for their visit. Remind them of Museum Manners, especially those regarding no touching in the galleries. Gallery stools need to be placed outside Gallery 3 before your tour group arrives. Please check with Director of Adult Programs or Tour Coordinator to make arrangements for gallery stools.

GALLERY 4
Begin the program by sharing a summary of information about the Salon:
The Salon—a large, state sponsored exhibition of contemporary painting in Paris held once or twice a year (annually after 1831)
The Salon lasted as an institution from the mid-eighteenth century into the twentieth century. 1881 was the last time it was a state sponsored institution. Thereafter it continued into the twentieth century as a privately sponsored institution.

The first Salon (1699) was an exhibition of works by artists who were members of the Royal Academy—a group of painters admitted to the “society” according to rules of qualification.

Academic art theory defined painting as art that should instill virtue and inspire patriotism. Artists were trained to produce history paintings, which glorified the church and state. Initially, the Salons were exclusively for members of the Academy. Eventually the exhibitions were opened to all artists, French and foreign.

For decades, the Salon played a dominant role not only in Parisian and French artists' circles, but also in the artistic life of the whole western world. The Salon was at the peak of its importance, popularity, influence, and magnitude from 1848 to 1898. During these fifty years, the French government changed its form five times, but the Salon continued suffering interruptions in its schedule only from wars and revolutions. The Salon was a symbol of the French government’s support of the arts. (Show students the photo reproductions of paintings and sculpture displayed at a Salon—#1).

Two months before the opening of the Salon, the jurors met in the exhibition halls where all the paintings were laid out for the jurors to view at one time. The president held a little bell, which he would ring for the vote. In response, arms and umbrellas would go up or down. The jurors quickly worked their way through the thousands of entries, yet the selection process took weeks. (Show students the photo reproduction—#2 in your art bag) of jurors at work. Point out how artworks were lined up along the wall and on the floor.) Sometimes jurors found that in their haste, they had turned down works by well-known colleagues whose signatures were illegible or hard to find. These mistakes were addressed quietly.

“The painting Exhibit,” a French critic once wrote in 1844, “is the main event of the year. It is talked about for two months in advance, two months of feverish impatience.” The rules for each Salon were published in advance of the date of submission of pictures; artists hurried to finish the works they wished to show while they cursed or approved of the new rules. The election or selection of the jury and the hanging committee were also talked about; as the jury made its decisions, leaks filled the city with rumors. The conduct of the jury was commented upon by everyone in the know: its severity or laxity, who was the real power, who was weak and made concessions, who missed the most sessions, etc. Once the Salon opened and one could see which works had been accepted, new discussions started. The reviews of the critics began to appear in the daily papers and continued from issue to issue—describing and criticizing different works each day maintaining the curiosity of the public.

Most artists wanted desperately to have their works in the Salon. For most, their only exposure to the public (and it was an enormous public—and overall attendance of over half a million at a Salon was not extraordinary) was at the Salon. Their addresses were listed along with their names in the catalogue; so prospective customers could seek them.
out. (Show students the reproduction of pages from 1864 Salon catalogue—#3 in your art bag. Show them how pieces were listed, first by medium, then alphabetically by artist etc.) Being listed in the catalogue was not the only benefit for artists. The Salon jury chose official prize (medal) winners, awarded scholarships to the French Academy in Rome (Prix de Rome), and the state often purchased works of art from the Salon.

The public trusted painters whose work had been accepted by the Salon, and disdained those who had been rejected. (An oft-repeated story demonstrates the attitude of the public… the landscape painter Jongkind had sold a painting just before the jury rejected it, and the buyer asked for a refund.) For a long time, rejected works were stamped on the stretcher with a large refuse or “R,” which made them difficult to sell.

The jury was the most controversial part of the institution. Revolutionary governments usually celebrated their inception by abolishing the jury. Throughout the century, the juries were accused of being opposed to innovation and originality. Since the jury, whether appointed or elected, was usually composed of artists old enough to have made names for themselves, this is not surprising. Artists with strong personalities and reputations, as well as important governmental figures, could manipulate the jury.

One of the most famous results of the Salons was the Salon des Refuses—the Salon of rejected works. It was an intermittent phenomenon; the best known was the exhibition of 1863. The jury that year had been extremely severe. Napoleon, emperor of France, after viewing both the accepted and rejected works and deciding that they were not much different from each other, ordered that the rejected pieces be shown in the Salon des Refuses. This exhibition had its own catalogue and was set up with the same dignity as the official Salon.

The Impressionists—painters devoted to analyzing natural effects tried in their paintings to capture the impression of light and atmosphere at a given moment in time. They painted scenes from contemporary life—often the pleasurable, undemanding side. When the Impressionists’ first submitted works, they were often rejected, so finally they began to set up their own exhibitions, called the Salon de Independants, or the Impressionist Exhibition. Impressionist artists would even open up their own artists studios for exhibitions.

After 1898, the prestige and importance of the Salon continued to decline. Among other things, the pressures of the market had changed the situation. Artists needed steady sales, not yearly awards or commissions. The mass of portraitists, landscape painters and genre painters who did not win state commissions, needed another system of art distribution. From the mid-19th century on, the role of art dealers and independent exhibition increased.

STUDENT ACTIVITY:
Hand out copies of the Jurors Choice: Academic Criteria / You Be the Judge! worksheet to students. Begin by explaining to students the criteria regarding subject matter and aesthetics—those characteristics that were generally accepted into the Salon. The criteria are listed on the student activity worksheet, but begin by orally describing the sought-
after qualities. As you proceed, involve students by asking them to identify examples of each criterion as seen in the works of art that surround them.

When you think students understand the criteria, refer them to the You Be the Judge! activity on the reverse, distribute pencils, and explain the activity. Tell students they are to step back in time and serve as juror of the Salon. Explain that they must choose works based on the criteria of the time. The five works that have been submitted are those listen on the activity sheet.

As a group, go through some examples before they begin. As an example of a painting that would have been accepted, use Brenton’s The Vintage Château Lagrange, 1864 (or The Weeders, 1860.) As an example of a sculpture that would have been accepted, use Marie Antoinette, by Albert Carrier-Belleuse. For an example of a work that would not have gained acceptance in the Salon of the 1860’s and 70’s, use a work by Monet (or Woman Reading, by Mary Cassatt.)

To begin, show them how to identify the work, artist and date by looking at the wall label. Go through the list of criteria, identifying those, which apply to the work. Based on the results of the “criteria check,” decide if the piece is to be accepted into the Salon, or set aside for the Salon des Refuses. Refer to the reproduced pages of the 1864 catalogue to show students that indeed Brenton’s Vintage at Chateau Lagrange had been accepted! (If you are using The Weeders, mention that this painting was the most widely acclaimed of Brenton’s four entries he sent to the Salon of 1861.)

Now ask students to work alone or in pairs as they focus on the other four works submitted. (Point out that because of space, students may want to begin with different works of art.) Check your watch and let students know approximately how much time they have to work on the activity.

CONCLUSION:
Go through the “criteria check” as a group. Use this exercise to wrap up, reviewing the generally accepted criteria. There will probably be discrepancies among their answers. You may use these discrepancies to stress that although there were guidelines for acceptance into the Salon, the final decisions were often the result of individual circumstances. (Remember that it is more important for students to have made thoughtful decisions and to be able to justify their answers than it is for them to have the correct answer.)

Guide the class to the Atrium. (Be sure that all gallery stools are returned to the racks.) That the students for visiting the Museum, and encourage them to return with family or friends on Saturdays, 10 am to noon, when admission is free. When you finish, return the art bag to the Docent Resource Room. Thank you!
JURORS CHOICE: ACADEMIC CRITERIA
During the seventeenth and through the mid-nineteenth centuries, most French artists followed the principles taught at the Royal Academy of Paintings and Sculpture, essentially the only institution in France offering art instruction at the time. Because the Academy’s outlook was conservative, there was little experimentation in the art world.

Subject Matter
Artist painted according to a hierarchy of accepted subject matter:

- **History**: Scenes, which represent important factual events
- **Mythology**: Traditional stories about ancient Greek and Roman gods/goddesses that glorified the state or propagated honor and virtue.
- **Religion**: Religious figures or scenes.
- **Literature**: Classic as well as contemporary writing.
- **Portraiture**: Of significant people
- **Landscape**: Outdoors settings
- **Genre Scenes**: Where common people or activities reflect an attitude of nobility or virtue.

“**Oriental:**” Scenes from exotic (namely “Oriental” or near eastern) cultures that included: history, religion, literature, landscapes, or genre associated with Northern African, near Eastern and Biblical subjects.

- **Still life**: Arrangement of ordinary objects

Aesthetic Qualities
Beyond certain subject matter, the Academy stressed certain aesthetic qualities:

- **Expression**: Noble and uplifting ideas of values presented in a clear, readable manner.
- **Drawing/draftsmanship**: Considered the essential part of artistic activity. Academic artists were initially taught to draw from classical statues or white plaster copies and then progressed to drawing from nude models, acquiring additional skills in a carefully programmed sequence.
- **Surface**: The texture of the painting is smooth and polished, colors are well blended and brushstrokes are unnoticeable.
- **Composition**: Figures and objects are arranged to form a harmonious whole.
- **Perspective**: Figures and objects have a realistic 3D quality and clear sense of space and proportion.
### YOU BE THE JUDGE!

**The King of Rome** (1875)  
Jean Georges Vibert

Subject:

| a. ____ History | a. ____ History |
| b. ____ Mythology | b. ____ Mythology |
| c. ____ Religion | c. ____ Religion |
| d. ____ Literature | d. ____ Literature |
| e. ____ Portrait | e. ____ Portrait |
| f. ____ Genre | f. ____ Genre |
| g. ____ “Oriental” | g. ____ “Oriental” |

**Salome Dancing Before Herod** (1887)  
George Rochegrosse

Subject:

| a. ____ History | a. ____ History |
| b. ____ Mythology | b. ____ Mythology |
| c. ____ Religion | c. ____ Religion |
| d. ____ Literature | d. ____ Literature |
| e. ____ Portrait | e. ____ Portrait |
| f. ____ Genre | f. ____ Genre |
| g. ____ “Oriental” | g. ____ “Oriental” |

**Aesthetic Qualities:**

| a. ____ Expression | a. ____ Expression |
| b. ____ Drawing | b. ____ Drawing |
| c. ____ Surface | c. ____ Surface |
| d. ____ Composition | d. ____ Composition |
| e. ____ Perspective | e. ____ Perspective |

____ ACCEPTED

____ REFUSED

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**Small Country Farm at Bordighera** (1884)  
**The Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen** (1881)

**Claude Monet**  
**Edgar Degas**

Subject:

| h. ____ History | a. ____ History |
| i. ____ Mythology | b. ____ Mythology |
| j. ____ Religion | c. ____ Religion |
| k. ____ Literature | d. ____ Literature |
| l. ____ Portrait | e. ____ Portrait |
| m. ____ Genre | f. ____ Genre |
| n. ____ “Oriental” | g. ____ “Oriental” |

**Aesthetic Qualities:**

| f. ____ Expression | a. ____ Expression |
| g. ____ Drawing | b. ____ Drawing |
| h. ____ Surface | c. ____ Surface |
| i. ____ Composition | d. ____ Composition |
| j. ____ Perspective | e. ____ Perspective |

____ ACCEPTED

____ REFUSED
VOCABULARY

**Academic Art:** Official art of France—glorified the king and the state. It utilized the rules and formulas of art theory and science.

**Catalogue:** Book which methodically lists the artists and artworks represented in an exhibition.

**Criterion/Criteria:** Established rule(s) or principle(s) by which judgment may be made.

**Critic:** Person skilled in judging the merit of anything by certain standards or criteria.

**Exhibition:** Display of works of art—presented for viewing

**Impressionism:** Style of painting begun in France in about 1875. It stresses a candid glimpse of the subject, spontaneity and an emphasis on the effects of light and atmosphere.

**Juror/Jury:** One who serves on a panel judging a contest—the panel selected to judge

**Prix de Rome:** Official scholarship for artist to study at the Royal Academy’s branch in Rome for three years.

**Reviews:** Critical examination of an exhibition or an individual work of art.

**Royal Academy:** French art school, which trained artist in the correct/official style of painting and sculpting.

**Salon:** Large juried exhibition of art—held almost annually from the mid-eighteenth century into the twentieth century—sponsored by the state.

**Salon des Independents:** A non-juried exhibition of art held in Paris which featured new movements of art for the first time.

**Salon des Refuses:** Salon of Rejected Works—a non-juried exhibition of works not accepted into the traditional Salon.