



MOBILE TOUR SCRIPT

Greeting

Hello, this is Jack Becker, Executive Director and CEO of Joslyn Art Museum. Welcome to the exhibition *Renoir to Chagall: Paris and the Allure of Color*, which features forty-nine remarkable Impressionist and modern paintings from the collection of the Dixon Gallery and Gardens in Memphis, Tennessee.

Thank you for visiting *Renoir to Chagall* which is made possible with generous support of major sponsors Douglas County, First National Bank, and Valmont, as well as our contributing and supporting sponsors. We welcome any thoughts you would like to share with us about this exhibition and Joslyn. You can do so by entering star zero on your phone at the end of any stop. I encourage you to tell your friends about the show, and to join the museum as a member to support special exhibitions like this one. We hope to see you again soon, and now, please enjoy the tour!

Stop 1 *Renoir to Chagall*: Introduction

The city of Paris was transformed in the mid-nineteenth century by Emperor Napoleon III. The city's crowded neighborhoods and narrow streets were demolished and replaced by wide boulevards and public squares. Rising economic prosperity created a growing middle class, and the *flâneur* – the “gentleman stroller of the streets” – represented a new generation of Parisian citizen who valued entertainment and leisure time. Parks, cafes, the ballet, and the theater became popular gathering places, and the development of the railroad system allowed easy access to the coast and the picturesque towns surrounding the city.

Artists looked to Paris' fast-paced, modern culture as inspiration for their work. Despite the admiration they hold today, however, the Impressionists were widely rejected in their time by traditional critics for the unfinished, sketch-like appearance of their work. Painting “en plein-air” – or outside the studio – to capture the varying effects of natural light at different times of day and in different seasons, and mixing their paint directly on the canvas in quick, bold strokes, they turned away from historical subjects to concentrate on the appearance of sunlight, color, and atmosphere. Bringing to life the cafes and boulevards of Paris and its environs in a new style, these artists laid the foundations for modern art in the twentieth century, inspiring painters including Henri Matisse, Georges Braque, and Marc Chagall.

This audio tour by Toby Jurovics, Chief Curator, and myself, highlights ten paintings in the exhibition, and points you toward related paintings and sculpture in Joslyn's permanent collection galleries. Please join us and enjoy the tour.

Stop 2 Alfred Sisley, *The Quay of the Seine during Snow Season*

Born and raised in Paris of English parents, Alfred Sisley first set out on a career in the cotton and coffee business, but after seeing the work of the English painters Turner and Constable while studying in London, he elected to pursue his interest in painting instead. By 1862, Sisley was studying in Paris in the studio of Charles Gleyre, where he met Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Frédéric Bazille— all of whom would prove to be pivotal figures in the Impressionist movement.

In the autumn of 1877, Sisley moved to the town of Sèvres, just a few miles southwest of Paris, where he would remain for the next two years. Sèvres was far enough from the city to allow Sisley to paint rural landscapes, but close enough for him to stay in touch with friends and colleagues in Paris. His time there proved a crucial transitional period as he shifted from the softer painting style of his earlier canvases to the more energized and agitated brushwork that would come to define his career.

Sisley painted *The Quay of the Seine during Snow Season* toward the end of his time in Sèvres. Like Monet, he struggled to find collectors in the late 1870s and his income was sporadic. In the face of such circumstances, Sisley closely identified with the poor and was increasingly drawn to working scenes along the river, where barges line the water's edge rather than pleasure boats. In this snowy winter scene, an idle laborer with his hands shoved in his pockets walks along a tall fence. In *The Seine at Billancourt*, seen to the right, Sisley portrays a staging area for barges and boats, showing the Seine as a working river and not simply as a backdrop for leisurely weekend strolls.

Stop 3 Claude Monet, *Port of Dieppe, Evening*

The Impressionist movement earned its name from a painting by Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*, that was shown in 1874 with the group of artists called the Anonymous Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Printmakers. A critic accused Monet's work of being a mere sketch or impression because of the unfinished appearance of its short, staccato brushstrokes, bright unblended colors, and emphasis on the surface effects of light rather than three-dimensional modeled form.

As a landscape painter, Monet took his materials outdoors to work en plein-air, and finished his canvases later in the studio. He completed numerous series of paintings of the same subject at different times of the day and in different seasons, illustrating the effect of varying qualities of light. The French writer and critic Émile Zola singled out Monet's particular ability to paint waterscapes, describing a painting similar to this one as follows: "His water is alive, and deep, and very convincing. It laps against the small boats in little greenish wavelets, interspersed with glimmers of white; it stretches away in gray-green marshes ruffled by the sudden passage of air; it elongates the masts by shattering their reflections upon its surface; and here and there pallid and lifeless hues [become] suddenly alight with intense translucence."

Joslyn's permanent collection features two incredible paintings by Monet which can be seen in the Drew Gallery in the Memorial Building.

Stop 4 Camille Pissarro, *View from the Artist's Studio at Éragny*

Camille Pissarro was born in St. Thomas in the West Indies. He came to Paris at the age of twelve to attend boarding school, and later studied painting under Camille Corot and Gustave Courbet. A founding member of the Impressionist movement, he helped to organize their first independent exhibition in 1874 and participated in all seven of the annual shows that followed. Pissarro also invited many younger artists to join the Impressionist platform, including Paul Gauguin and Paul Cézanne, whose works are also seen in this exhibition.

In addition to views of city streets and plazas, Pissarro's most frequent subject was peasant life and the country landscape, as in the *View from the Artist's Studio at Éragny*. He was the only one of his fellow Impressionists to include agrarian life as a central subject, and had strong political affinities. A devout reader of anarchist philosophies, Pissarro envisioned a collective society based on agriculture, and many of his works reflect these ideologies. You can see in his painting *Haymakers*, a work that portrays the harmonious rural life he hoped would follow a social revolution, in the Drew Gallery in the Memorial Building.

Pissarro was open to new painting techniques as they developed in Paris. He continued to explore other styles, such as Pointillism, formulated by Georges Seurat, whose *The Picnic*, is seen in the exhibition as well. By the time Pissarro painted the *View from the Artist's Studio at Éragny*, he was suffering from an eye infection, which kept him indoors, painting scenes from out his window, for the remainder of his career.

Stop 5 Paul Cézanne, *Trees and Rocks near the Château Noir*

Paul Cézanne is recognized as one of the most influential painters in the history of modern art, inspiring Fauve painters like Henri Matisse; Cubists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque; and generations of abstract artists well into the twentieth century. Born in Aix-en-Provence, a small town in the south of France, in 1839, Cézanne began to paint in 1860. Initially drawn to romantic and classical themes in the tradition of Eugene Delacroix, he abandoned his dark palette and formal subjects at the encouragement of the Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro. Beginning to paint en plein-air, Cézanne adopted a brilliant new color scale and subtly modulated tonal variations to create three-dimensional form.

Beginning in 1882, Cézanne created numerous of landscape paintings in his native Aix and L'Estaque, a small fishing village on the Mediterranean. Constructing a series of horizontal planes that create a rhythm across the painting's surface, he organized the canvas into a system of layers that build dimension and volume, drawing the viewer into the image. Cézanne's brushwork reflects the structure of the rocky landscape, drawing attention to his rigorous technique.

Stop 6 Henri Matisse, *The Palace, Belle Île*

One of the most widely recognized artists of the twentieth century, Henri Matisse's vast body of work includes painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, and collage. Beginning his education as a lawyer, Matisse soon developed an interest in art, moving to Paris in 1891 to study with the academic painter William-Adolphe Bouguereau, who is represented by two paintings in the Kiewit Gallery in the Memorial Building. As a young artist, Matisse worked in a variety of styles. Influenced by Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism, he experimented with numerous techniques, employing new kinds of brushwork, light, and composition to create his own vibrant pictorial language, as seen here in *The Palace, Belle Île*.

A trip to Saint-Tropez in the summer of 1904 to visit the painter Paul Signac, led to a fundamental change in direction. Influenced by the radiant light of southern France, Matisse shifted to a much brighter palette. And through Signac, Matisse was introduced to the pointillist painters Georges Seurat and Henri-Edmond Cross – work by all three artists are seen nearby in this exhibition. Matisse is perhaps best known, however, as a leader of the Fauves, or “wild beasts.” An early 20th century movement that emphasized unnaturalistic color and vivid brushstrokes, the turbulent emotionalism of Fauvism was a stunning contrast to the rigid structure of colleagues like Paul Cézanne or the emerging cubist painters Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. A 1917 portrait by Matisse, *Head of a Woman*, can be found in Joslyn's permanent collection, on display in the Drew Gallery in the Memorial Building.

Stop 7 Berthe Morisot, *Peasant Girl among Tulips*

Berthe Morisot exhibited in all but one of the Impressionist salons. She generally painted domestic, interior scenes, doing so with thick, free brushstrokes of pastel colors, striving to capture a fleeting moment on canvas, as seen in *Peasant Girl among Tulips*. In addition to painting, Morisot also modeled for her friend and brother-in-law, Édouard Manet, who introduced her to the Impressionist circle, and the two artists influenced each other throughout their careers.

Upper class women in Parisian society, including Morisot and her contemporary, Mary Cassatt, were not expected to become professional artists. Pursuing a career was believed to take away from a woman's role as a wife and mother, and they faced adversities in challenging accepted social roles. Women were not allowed to attend the painting school at the École des Beaux Arts until 1897; they weren't allowed to paint live models; and they could not attend the cafes and dance halls that their male contemporaries frequented. Women were often limited to domestic scenes, a genre which coincided well with the Impressionist's focus on contemporary daily life. Morisot approached her feminine subjects with a particular intimacy and care, offering insight into womanhood while continuing to challenge a traditionally male domain.

Stop 8 Edgar Degas, *Dancer Adjusting Her Shoe*

Edgar Degas' interest in the ballet began in the late-1860s, and he returned to the subject again and again throughout his career. The ballet has a rich history in Europe, serving as both high art and popular entertainment. After a fire burned down the Paris Opera – the home of the ballet – in 1821, an interim theater was established for performances until the construction of a new theater. Opening decades later in 1875, the Paris Opera serves as the site of a number of paintings in this exhibition.

Degas would watch both rehearsals and performances of the ballet, and was intrigued by the world of the dancers backstage. Confirming his dedication to the subject, and his utilization of a variety of media, Degas said, “one must repeat the same subject ten times, a hundred times....nothing in art, not even movement, must seem an accident.”

Dancer Adjusting Her Shoe, which served as a sketch for a later painting, was done in pastel and charcoal; the contrast between the hatched lines that fill much of the background, and the more fully resolved figure of the dancer, creates an ambiguous sense of space, and exemplifies the rich variety of texture that Degas was able to achieve with pastels. A finished canvas, *Ballet Scene*, is seen on the left, and the original plaster of Degas' renowned sculpture, *Little Dancer, Fourteen Years Old*, is on view in the Drew Gallery in the Memorial Building.

Stop 9 Mary Cassatt, *The Visitor*

Born to a wealthy family in Pennsylvania, Cassatt attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and was granted her parent's permission to move to Paris in 1865. During her early years in Paris, she studied under the teachings of the academic painter Gérôme whose works in Joslyn's collection you can find in Kiewit Gallery. After returning home during the Franco-Prussian War, Cassatt returned to Paris permanently in 1874. Edgar Degas, who became a close friend and mentor, invited Cassatt to join the Impressionists a few years later in 1877.

Cassatt's works illustrate daily life of modern women, portraying them in domestic interiors, reading, or at the theater; as well as exploring relationships of mothers, daughters, and the family. The subject of this particular painting is Cassatt's sister, Lydia, who often modeled for the artist. Lydia is also the subject in Joslyn's *Lydia Reading the Morning Paper*, displayed in the Drew Gallery in the Memorial Building.

Similar to Degas, Cassatt believed that line and form were essential to painting. Precise drawing was an important component to her compositions and her subjects – whether reading, sharing a cup of tea among friends, bathing a young child, or looking through binoculars at the opera—have a solid, grounded presence. Cassatt was the only American officially associated with the Impressionist group in Paris and played an important role in bringing the style to the United States.

Stop 10 Jean-Louis Forain, *Woman in a Café*

The 1993 acquisition of fifty-seven works by Jean-Louis Forain established the Dixon Gallery and Gardens as a major international repository of the artist's career. Forain's work offers visual references to his contemporaries, especially Edgar Degas and Edouard Manet, and clearly illustrates the realist subject matter that typified Impressionism. Forain captured the inhabitants of "la vie moderne"—the world of the café, brothel, racetrack, ballet, and other aspects of modern Parisian life in the late nineteenth century. Through the invitation of his mentor Degas, Forain began to exhibit with the Impressionists in 1879. Degas greatly influenced Forain's early career, and when the elder artist was asked the opinion of his "pupil," Degas was quoted as saying, "Little Forain? He is still holding me by the coat tails, but he'll go far if he lets go."

When asked to write his autobiography by a newspaper in 1888, Jean-Louis Forain responded simply, "I was born in Reims on the 23rd of October 1853, and I adore the ballet." This reveals the artist's private nature and his most overriding passion. In addition to his scenes of Parisian popular entertainments, Forain is also well known for his satirical drawings and prints, such as *After the Ball*, *the Reveler*, which can be seen to your right.

Stop 11 Marc Chagall *Dreamer*

An émigré from Russia, Marc Chagall was raised in an Orthodox Jewish home in a small rural town. When he first moved to Paris in 1910, he lived in what is known today as Montparnasse, and was immersed in the diversity of movements that were emerging in the city. With the onset of World War I, Chagall returned to Russia, where he participated in the revolution and overthrow of the czar. He then returned to Paris in 1923, where he settled with his wife, Bella, until the German persecution of Jews during World War II forced them to seek safety first in the south of France and then the United States.

Chagall's experiences growing up in a small Russian town, along with his cultural traditions and beliefs, are essential to his paintings. Celebrating the freedom he had to paint what he wanted while living in the city, he was greatly influenced by his contemporaries, such as Vincent Van Gogh, Pablo Picasso, as well as Henri Matisse. He used bright colors, often dividing his canvas geometrically, incorporated dreams and surreal subjects into his art. His works intricately blend contemporary techniques with traditional and spiritual subject matter, reflecting both his Jewish upbringing and his absorption of the Parisian avant-garde.