Art History 101--Class 4: Nineteenth-Century Art

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The French Revolution seemed to turn the Enlightenment's dream of human equality and perfectability into a nightmare as the principled, patriotic idealism of the Revolution's early days gave way to the bloody Reign of Terror in 1793 to '94. Francisco Goya's 1796 etching titled *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* suggests that that dark creatures of the night are let loose when reason sleeps. Goya meant this image as a critique of what he perceived as irrational post-Revolutionary political and religious leadership in his native Spain, but other artists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries celebrated the irrational, inexplicable side of human nature that the Enlightenment sought to deny. Romanticism celebrates the emotions and the imagination, in contrast the Enlightenment's faith in reason and empirical knowledge.

Compare Goya's etching to Henry Fuseli's painting *The Nightmare.* Rejecting the Enlightenment emphasis on reason and science, Fuseli often depicted supernatural and irrational subjects. Here, a horse with phosphorescent eyes—the Night mare of the title—looks on as a monstrous creature of the imagination assaults a sleeping woman. The painting draws on folklore, popular culture, and classical art to create a new kind of visual horror, closely related to the Gothic literature that flourished in Britain from around 1770 to 1830. Sigmund Freud displayed a reproduction of this painting in his office, to illustrate his belief that dreams were manifestations of repressed desire.

Also opposed to the Enlightenment emphasis on reason was Fuseli's friend William Blake. A brief membership in the Royal Academy convinced Blake that the rigid rules for painting laid down by Reynolds and his followers hindered creativity. A deeply if unconventionally religious man, Blake felt that reason could only explain the natural world, while only imagination offered access to the spiritual world. His paintings, prints, and poems were highly original, but he lived much of his life in considerable poverty, and was considered eccentric, if not mad, because he firmly believed that he was in direct communication with a spirit world. On the left is *God as an Architect;* although this may seem to be a very scientific God out of sync with Blake's rejection of Enlightenment philosophy, Blake is actually saying that God, not Newton or any other scientist, is the only one capable of understanding his creation. The image on the right is *Satan, Sin, and Death,* one of Blake's illustrations for Milton's *Paradise Lost,* from the Huntington collection.

But Neoclassicism remained vital in the early nineteenth century, largely thanks to Napoleon, who crowned himself Emperor of France in 1804 and made classical iconography a key part of a propaganda campaign designed to legitimize his claim to the imperial throne; in this portrait by Ingres, note the static, senatorial pose; the toga-like mantle; the laurel wreath on his head; and the Roman-style booties on his feet. Patrons and creators of neoclassical art held to the belief that recalling ancient Greece and Rome ensured a connection to the purest form of democracy, despite the disappointing outcome of the French Revolution. Neoclassicism survived through the mid-nineteenth century, though by then it was mostly confined to academic art, the increasingly conservative

output of academies, where members and students were encouraged to study and emulate antique models.

After the disappointing failure of his *Oath of the Tennis Court* project, which we discussed last week, and a narrow escape from the guillotine, Jacques-Louis David reemerged as the dominant painter in France under Napoleon. He finally got to complete a monumental group portrait depicting the coronation of Josephine, Napoleon's wife, a canvas measuring more than 500 square feet.

As he led his armies across Europe and the Middle East, Napoleon commissioned a series of paintings commemorating his heroic deeds, often with little relation to reality. This is *Napoleon in the Plague House at Jaffa* by Antoine-Jean Gros, a student of David's. While fighting the Turks in Palestine, plague broke out among Napoleon's soldiers. To boost morale, he visited the sick in a mosque that had been converted into a hospital. Here, he calmly touches the sores of one victim in a Christlike gesture. The dramatic lighting, the emphasis on individual rather than communal virtue, the emotionally stimulating elements, both exotic and horrific, and distortion of historical facts to heighten those emotion, are all characteristic of Romantic painting. And although Gros never went to Jaffa, we will see later on that the setting is particularly appropriate. But the format of the painting, a shallow stage with a row of arches behind the main actors, is directly inspired by a key work of neoclassicism, David's pre-Revolutionary history painting, *The Oath of the Horatii.*

First exhibited in 1785, *The Oath of the Horatii*—not to be confused with the *Oath of the Tennis Court*--was inspired by an event in ancient Roman history; during a war between Rome and its rival city-state Alba, the three sons of Horace, the Horatii, on the left, swear an oath to their father, who holds their swords in the center, that they will fight to the death for Rome, as their wives and children weep at the right. The spatial division, accentuated by the three arches, and the contrasting stances and body types separate the three groups and the three emotions portrayed. Although the painting, with its evocation of ancient democracy and its celebration of sacrifice for the good of the state, became an emblem of the French Revolution, it was actually commissioned by King Louis the Sixteenth, reminding us that neoclassical art was the mainstream art of the Enlightenment and not necessarily politically motivated.

By looking at these two side by side, we can appreciate some of the differences between neoclassical and romantic history painting. The *Horatii* is intended to incite Republican virtue rather than veneration of one heroic individual. While a Romantic painter would be attracted to the opportunity to depict the extreme emotion of the bereft women and children, David has made them so passive that they almost seem to be asleep; they are totally resigned to their fate, in contrast to the upright, muscular male figures boldly going forth to meet their destiny. The *Horatii* figures are balanced in two stable pyramids, one for the men and one for the women, and perfectly framed by the three arches. The *Plague House,* by contrast, is a sprawling, layered composition, with multiple diagonals. It has the same sense of staginess, but the emotions rather than the intellect are the artist's audience. The nude and dying figures as well as the exotically turbaned

natives attract our eyes and sympathies, while we can hardly see the faces of the Horatii figures. The subjects, too, suggest different definitions of history. David's is taken directly from a historical source, and not just any historical source but specifically a classical one, while the Romantics made history out of current events, instantly elevating Napoleon to the same historical prominence as the heroic Horatii. Romantic artists preferred subject drawn from literature, landscape, current events, or the artists' own imagination. Instead of turning to classical Greece and Rome for models, they looked to the present, or else considered other historical time periods overlooked by neoclassicists, like the medieval age.

Gericault's *Raft of the Medusa,* which Stokstad discusses at length, is another example of a modern-day "historical" event that received the Romantic treatment. In this case, though, there is no Napoleon, no obvious hero, just victims eliciting our sympathy. In contrast to neoclassical history painting, there is no obvious moral, simply a tense standoff between life and death.

Orientalism was a major theme of romantic art. Travel was thought to stimulate the imagination as well as the intellect, and the more exotic the destination, the better. Napoleon's campaigns in Egypt and the Middle East aroused interest in those regions, and as European nations colonized the Middle East, Orientalist subjects, as they were called, enjoyed prolonged popularity through the end of the nineteenth century. Some artists even traveled there to satisfy the demand for paintings; Delacroix went to Morocco, for example.

The Death of Sardanapalus by Eugène Delecroix combines women, slaves, animals, jewels, and rich fabrics in a violent and sensuous but somewhat incoherent scene. This painting depicts neither a current event nor an Orientalist fantasy but an event from ancient history, contemporaneous with the source material for oath of the Horatii; Delacroix may have felt that he could not get away with such a disturbing image without the buffer of history. The Assyrian ruler Sardanapalus held out against his besieging enemies for two years before his palace fell. In the last moments before the invading army arrived, he ordered all his treasures, horses, and concubines to be brought together and burned with him in a defiant act of self-immolation. The expressive figures and strong diagonals are obviously indebted to the Gericault painting we just saw, while the rich colors and meticulously orchestrated action, filling every corner of the canvas, are inspired by Rubens.

Although Ingres, like David, sought fame as a history painter, he is best remembered for his elegant portraits and his sensual paintings of odalisques, or harem slaves. Although Ingres' precise style was grounded in neoclassical training, this anatomically incorrect body with its impossibly long spine and seemingly boneless feet is about as far away from the classical ideal as you can get.

The Romantic vision of nature differed radically from the Enlightenment view, which saw nature as something orderly, predictable, and controllable, like Jean-Baptiste Hilair's views of the Parc Monceau in the Huntington collection. The Parc Monceau itself was an

exercise in controlling nature. It was a private garden built in the 1770s and dotted with follies in the shape of classical ruins, pyramids, and windmills. After the Revolution, it became a public park, and these views from circa 1795 depict middle-class Parisians enjoying this newly accessible space. Stokstad points out that the Enlightenment produced very few landscape artists.

By contrast, the Romantic period produced the greatest landscape artists of all time. Romantics saw nature as unpredictable, powerful, and awe-inspiring. Nature itself had many moods, and it could inspire many different emotions in viewers. In literature and art, "the sublime" described a category of Romanticism depicting an emotionally compelling blend of beauty and terror. Caspar David Friedrich combined landscape motifs with religious symbolism to produce sublime effects. Just as Blake felt that imagination offered access to the spiritual world, Friedrich thought that a personal experience of nature would reveal the divine. He famously said that "God is everywhere, in the smallest grain of sand." All of his landscapes are religious paintings on some level. One of his contemporaries credited him with inventing a new genre, the tragedy of landscape. In *The Polar Sea*, the iceberg represents nature, and the ship, barely visible, is man, destroyed by the immense, indifferent force that has pushed the blocks of ice upwards into a striking pyramidal composition. Friedrich could never have seen this landscape, although he would have known at second hand accounts of polar exploration, and he sketched blocks of ice in frozen rivers in his native Germany in preparation for this canvas. But the details of Friedrich's landscapes matter less than the overall mood.

Turner was a contemporary of Friedrich's. His early work was heavily influence by Romanticism, as he rejected topographic accuracy in favor of atmospheric effects; Stokstad calls his work "more faithful to feeling than to fact," and that's an excellent description of Romantic art in general. His loose brushwork prefigures Impressionism, but while the Impressionists were reacting against the precision and formalism of academic art, Turner was simply trying to capture the turbulent emotions implicit in his landscapes. This Venetian scene from the Huntington collection is one of many Turner painted of the city, where almost every view offered a meeting of sea and sky, reflecting the famous Italian light.

The other great English landscape painter of the nineteenth century, John Constable, produced a very different vision of nature. He was more influenced by the English watercolor tradition of the late eighteenth century and by the example of seventeenth-century Dutch landscape artists, with their precise and orderly topography. His favorite subject was the countryside near his childhood home in Sussex. The artist once said that "painting is but another word for feeling," and his emotional connection to his subject gives his landscapes a powerful psychological dimension.

Those of you who saw the Constable exhibition here at the Huntington earlier this year will remember *The White Horse,* one of six six-foot-wide landscapes for which he also produced full-size oil sketches. This is another six-footer, the *View on the Stour at Dedham*, from the Huntington collection. One reason Constable painted these landscapes on such a grand scale was to attract the attention of potential patrons at the crowded

annual Royal Academy exhibitions, but he also used them to broadcast his ideas about landscape.

He believed that artists should paint nature with fresh eyes, in the fresh air–so much so that he actually opposed the establishment of the National Gallery in London because he felt it would have a bad influence on painters, distracting them from concentrating on their subjects. Constable sketched in the open air, called *plein air* painting, working up his drawings and oil studies out-of-doors to capture the dynamic, changing effects of light, clouds, and weather conditions. In order to capture faithfully his initial sensation, he used dabs of pure color on his canvases, a technique later adopted by the Impressionists.

The Salon de Paris exhibited Constable's works in 1824, and they inspired a group of French landscape painters that emerged in the 1830s, including Camille Corot, Charles-François Daubigny, and Jean-François Millet. They became known as the Barbizon School, because many of them lived and painted in the rural village of Barbizon in the forest of Fontainebleau outside Paris, where it was easy to sketch directly from nature. The Huntington has a small but important collection of Barbizon paintings that used to hang in this very room; they will be displayed in the new nineteenth century galleries in the HUG.

The Barbizon painters made nature their subject, rather than a picturesque backdrop or a religious metaphor. Millet extended the idea of nature from landscape to figures like peasants and agricultural workers, as here in *The Sower*. The Barbizon school overlaps

with an art movement known as Realism; realist painters stepped back from Romanticism and tried to portrayed nature objectively, without emotional meaning or imaginative flourishes. The development of photography in the second half of the nineteenth century forms the backdrop for the new interest in recording nature with absolute accuracy.

The Gleaners portrays three women working at the harvest. There is no narrative or hidden subtext, just as there is no pretense that nature exists only to inspire emotion; it is a realistic, inhabited landscape. As Van Gogh, who revered Millet above all other artists, wrote: "I must draw diggers, sowers, men & women at the plough, without cease. . . I no longer stand as helpless before nature as I used to do."

Table discussion: Landscape at The Huntington

The Enlightenment's legacy of intellectual curiosity and scientific inquiry spurred great advances in manufacturing, transportation, and communication in the nineteenth century, the so-called Industrial Revolution. The iconic Turner painting I'm showing you is usually referred to as *The Fighting Temeraire,* but its full title is more revealing: *The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her Last Berth to be broken up*. The 98-gun ship Temeraire played a distinguished role in Nelson's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, earning herself the nickname The Fighting Temeraire. But by 1838, when this painting was begun, the ship was dilapidated and redundant; she was decommissioned and towed from Sheerness to the Rotherhithe shipyards to be broken up. The painting captures not just the last journey of one famous ship, but the decline of Britain's naval power. In typical Romantic fashion, the painting distorts historical facts even as it records them. The

Temeraire is shown traveling east, away from the sunset, even though Rotherhithe is west of Sheerness. The setting sun heightens the sense of loss and the passing away of time that are the true subjects of the painting. Turner was in his sixties when he painted it and his own mortality was surely on his mind as well as the Temeraire's. But the painting also marks the dawning of a new era; the old warship is being towed by a smaller but more efficient steam-powered tugboat, representative of the progress of the Industrial Revolution. The steady march of industry provided both a source of inspiration and a foil for artists.

Turner's *Rain, Steam, and Speed: The Great Western Railway* gives an indistinct and mysterious view of a very real and identifiable railway bridge across the Thames, finished in 1839, with a view towards London in the background. Steam locomotives were fairly new technology at the time; they were invented in 1808 but commercial rail service didn't begin until the late 1820s. The railways quickly transformed the European landscape as well as the European way of life. Along with the steamship, the steam locomotive facilitated the shipment of raw materials and merchandise, and encouraged travel and the growth of new cities. Europe was transformed from an agricultural economy—the virgin countryside celebrated by the Romantics and Realists—into an industrial one. It's not clear whether Turner is fascinated or terrified by the new technology, or both. The threatening sky takes up most of the scene. Both in technique and subject, this image, like the previous one, leaves the eighteenth century behind, looking forward to industrialism and Impressionism.

The second half of the nineteenth century was the age of sprawling international exhibitions and world' fairs celebrating advances in industry and technology. The first of these was London's Great Exhibition of 1851, held in a revolutionary glass structure erected for the occasion in Hyde Park called the Crystal Palace. Imagine the Botanical Center enlarged to 18 acres—the largest enclosed space ever constructed at that time. Inside, more than 14,000 exhibitors from as far away as China displayed the latest advances in manufactured goods: carpets, sculpture, furniture, china, weaponry, musical instruments, anatomical models, electric lamps, perfume, agricultural machinery, fishing rods, and much, much more. Six million people visited in the 141 days the exhibition was open, and the profits funded the construction of the Victoria and Albert Museum and Museum of Natural History in nearby South Kensington. To some, it was the greatest show on earth; to Karl Marx and other social reformers, it was a disturbing fetishization of consumer culture.

In a world that seemed to be changing too fast, some artists deliberately looked backwards. The Realist school celebrated the countryside even as it disappeared before their eyes, giving their work an increasingly nostalgic mood. In 1848, seven young London artists formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in response to what they considered the misguided practices of contemporary British art. Instead of the formal conventions taught at he Royal Academy, based on the work of Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and their contemporaries, they advocated the naturalistic approach of early Renaissance and medieval masters like Boticelli, Giotto, and Fra Angelico. They

also tried to infuse art with a didactic moralism, in the tradition of Hogarth and other socially conscious British artists of past generations.

Ford Madox Brown was not a member of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, but he was close friends with many of them and his work is influenced by pre-Raphaelite ideals, with a moral agenda and level of detail reminiscent of Hogarth's modern moral subjects. Notice the cabbages hanging from the side of the ship in his painting *The Last of England*, depicting a family leaving the white cliffs of Dover behind for a better life in Australia. The subject --departure in desperate circumstances for a foreign land--has parallels with the biblical story of the Flight into Egypt, but it was inspired by an event in Brown's life, the departure for Australia of his friend, the Pre-Raphaelite sculptor Thomas Woolner. Brown himself posed for the painting, along with his partner Emma, and their children Cathy, the fair-haired girl in the background, and Oliver, the baby.

Pre-Raphelites took their subjects from modern life but also from literature: Shakespeare, Dante, the Bible, and classical mythology. They were selective, however, preferring tragic scenes involving innocent young women. They painted directly from nature itself, as truthfully as possible and with incredible attention to detail, using antique costumes and props when necessary. But that approach sometimes backfired. This is John Everett Millais' *Ophelia*, from *Hamlet*. Most of the flowers in *Ophelia* are included either because they are mentioned in the play, or for their symbolic value. Millais observed these flowers growing wild, but because he painted the river scene over a period of five months, flowers appear next to those that bloom at different times of the year. His model

posed in a bathtub full of water with oil lamps placed beneath it to keep it warm. Nonetheless, the water grew cold and she became ill, and her father sent Millais a bill for her medical expenses. The model's name was Elizabeth Siddall, and she later became the wife of Millias friend and fellow pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rosetti.

She died when they had been married just two years, and Rosetti painted her from memory as Beatrice, the poet Dante's love in *The Divine Comedy*, on the left. She sits in a trance state as a dove drops a red poppy, a symbol of sleep, into her hands. The Victorian stereotype of female beauty was blond, petite, and corseted; by contrast, the pre-Raphaelites preferred models with strong facial features, long, flowing dark hair, and strong, voluptuous figures. Many of their wives served as models, and they popularized a style of clothing called "Artistic" dress, incorporating medieval and classical touches like hand embroidery and flowing fabrics, and rejecting modern corsets, bustles, chemical dyes, and machine sewing. On the right is Jane Morris, wife of William Morris, painted by her husband as Queen Guinevere, wearing a medieval-style costume that she probably wore off canvas as well. William Morris began his career as a pre-Raphaelite painter, but this is his only completed canvas; he later turned his attention to interior design and decoration.

His interest in handcrafts developed partly in reaction to the gaudy industrially produced goods showcased in the Great Exhibition, and partly out of admiration for all things medieval. He became frustrated when, after marrying Jane in 1859, he could not find satisfactory furnishings for their new home. With the help of his friends, he designed and

made his own medieval-style furnishings, then founded a decorating firm, Morris and Company, to produce them commercially, providing handcrafted alternatives to industrial furniture. He also produced wallpaper, tiles, carpets, stained glass, and textiles to go along with them, creating an organic artistic environment. Although some of these were expensive, one-of-a-kind products, others were cheap and simple; a socialist, Morris felt that art should benefit not just a wealthy few but society as a whole. The Huntington acquired the Morris company archive in 1999, along with the stained glass window you see here; the collection is showcased in the 2003 exhibition catalogue *The Beauty of Life*.

Morris's attention to handcrafts inspired what became known as the Arts and Crafts movement. Charles Robert Ashbee was the most influential figure in the later history of the Arts and Crafts movement in England. His works have the 19th-century emphasis on exacting craftsmanship and truth to materials, combined with the new formal impulses associated with the Modern movement. The Huntington recently acquired two Ashbee pieces, the piano on the left and the music cabinet on the right. The nineteenth century British collection has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years, and will likely continue to do so. When the HUG reopens, it will be displayed upstairs in the west wing, in an enormous space formerly occupied by the art reference library.

Like Morris and his followers, Gothic revival architecture and interior decoration looked back to medieval times; remember our first session when we discussed the emergence of the spiky, skeletal Gothic style beginning in the twelfth century. London's ancient Parliament building burned to the ground in 1834, an event captured on canvas by Turner, in a painting pictured on page 1002 of Stokstad. A. W. N. Pugin designed the

Gothic revival interior and exterior decoration of the new Parliament building, on the left. If you haven't been inside Parliament, take a tour next time you're in London—it's one of the most beautiful buildings in the world, and the ultimate expression of the Gothic revival style. Unlike the late eighteenth-century version of the Gothic, it was historically accurate, based on surviving medieval churches and illuminated manuscripts. It began in churches and public buildings but could be found in private homes by the 1860s. The Gothic revival style was a particularly appropriate for this commission because the new Parliament was to stand opposite the 13th-century Westminster Abbey.

Pugin, in common with the pre-Raphaelites, believed that the modern era, with its mechanization and materialism, was inferior to the Middle Ages, which he envisoned as an era of deep spirituality and superb craftsmanship. For Pugin, Gothic revival architecture was not just a style but a philosophical statement against modernity. He wrote: "the smallest detail should have a meaning or serve a purpose; and even the construction itself should vary with the material employed, and the designs should be adapted to the material in which they are executed"—revealing how much the Gothic revival had in common with the Arts and Crafts movement. The Gothic revival chair on the right designed by Pugin is in the Huntington collection.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the idea that nothing good happened after the middle ages had fallen from fashion, and British artists began to reconsider the value of academic art and neoclassicism. The New Sculpture movement combined neoclassical subjects with the highly finished bronze sclupture tradition of the Renaissance, infusing them with very personal, emotional meditations on love, death, and spirituality.

Sir Hamo Thornycroft's bronze sculpture of the Greek archer Teucer from Homer's *Iliad* reflects the sculptor's deep appreciation for the early masterpieces of Greek art, while at the same time revealing his desire to move the art of sculpture toward something more naturalistic and expressive. Like the *Apollo Belvedere,* the piece depicts the hero just at the moment when he has released the arrow from his bow. But Teucer is depicted as being less remote and godly, more physical and athletic; his muscles are still tensed, his back arched, and his gaze following the shaft as it flies toward its target. The Huntington acquired a version of Teucer last year.

Sir Alfred Gilbert was the leading figure in the New Sculpture movement. Gilbert was known for putting a very personal spin on classical subjects. His sculpture, *Perseus Arming,* on the right, also recently acquired by the Huntington, is actually a kind of self-portrait; Gilbert imagined himself as a young man arming himself for a career as an artist. One of the ways he did this was by visiting Florence, where he was impressed by Cellini's masterpiece *Perseus and Medusa*, in which a young man, a mere mortal, slays a mythological monster, Medusa. Gilbert imagined art critics as his Medusa, and produced this upon his return in 1882. The critics praised *Perseus Arming,* and Gilbert went on to produce other autobiographical works drawn from appropriate classical sources; for example, a winged *Icarus* to represent his high-flying professional ambition.

In France, a different kind of revolution in art was taking place in the second half of the nineteenth century. The term "Impressionist" was coined in 1873 as a pejorative term to describe the seemingly haphazard technique and unfinished look of a group of thirty frustrated artists who broke away from the conservative academy, which had rejected

their work in the past, and held their own independent exhibition. Seven more independet exhibitions followed between 1876 and 1886, with a slightly different group of artists each time. While influenced by Realism and the Barbizon school, these artists painted modern, urban subjects as well as landscapes—for example, the vast new light-filled train stations that began to dominate urban skylines. This is one of Claude Monet's twelve views of the *Gare Saint-Lazare.* He and several Impressionist painters lived in the neighborhood surrounding the Saint-Lazare station and it was a favorite subject, offering not just high-tech machines and interesting atmospheric effects but the human drama of the new kinds of social interactions possible in this kind of setting.

The Impressionists continued to practice plein air painting in the Barbizon tradition, working quickly in order to capture the fleeting effects of light and atmosphere, something Constable had done for the same reason, and one of the reasons why Impressionist were accused of not finishing their paintings. The invention of tin tubes for oil paint in 1841 made painting outdoors much easier than it had been for Constable. Unlike the Romantics, though, the Impressionists were not concerned with evoking an emotional response through landscape

Stokstad calls Monet "the purest exponent of Impressionism." He painted outdoors, sometimes on a boat that he had turned into a floating studio, using paints right out of the tube, unmixed, with no underpainting. His many paintings of water lilies and other features of his garden at his country house in Giverny are examples of his relentless focus, portraying the same subjects over and over in various lighting conditions.

Though he never exhibited with the Impressionists, Edouard Manet was one of the spiritual leaders of the group. Stokstad discusses three of his best-known works in detail, *Dejeuner sur l'Herbe* and *Olympia*, both entirely modern in their frank depiction of female nudity in a contemporary setting, while also referencing famous Renaissance paintings. Remember Titian's *Venus of Urbino.* The third is the *Bar at the Folies-Bergere*, which was on loan to the Getty over the summer; some of you may have seen it there. Manet exhibited it in 1882, just one year before his death, and it sums up many of the themes and techniques present in his work.

Like many Impressionists, Manet was fascinated by scenes of urban leisure and spectacle. The Folies-Bergère was one of the most elaborate variety-show theaters in Paris, showcasing entertainment ranging from ballets to circus acts; you can see the feet of a trapeze artist in the upper left corner. Another attraction was the barmaids, who were assumed to be moonlighting prostitutes. By depicting one of these women and a shadowy male patron on a grand scale, Manet brazenly introduced a morally suspect, contemporary subject into the realm of high art—just as he had done with his *Dejeuner* and *Olympia*. The inconsistent visual effects and their narrative implications have confounded art historians. We—and presumably the artist—are standing directly in front of the barmaid, in the position of her customer. Yet the huge mirror behind the bar reflects the top-hatted patron off to the right. The bottles and fruits are arranged like a still life or a shop window display, cutting us off from the barmaid. Regardless of how we interpret the painting, we are complicit in the transaction taking place. Stokstad points out that while most Impressionist paintings take an optimistic outlook, this is pessimistic and somewhat depressing. Her expression is one of boredom at best, despondency at worst.

The Impressionists considered it essential to come to the easel without any preconceived notions; as a result, they often sought out new, non-traditional subject matter that had not been painted before. For Degas, this meant the racetrack, the ballet, the opera, and the hat shop. Unlike the other Impressionists, he painted mostly indoors and under artificial light. His jarring angular viewpoints show the influence of Japanese prints, which he collected, and his seemingly arbitrary cropping of figures shoes the influence of photography, which he also practiced. Both of these were important new influences on artists in the late nineteenth century, but they are not as evident in the works of other Impressionists. On the left, we are looking up at an angle from the front row; the ballerinas' heads and feet are cut off, and we get only a cross-section of the orchestra. On the right, we seem to be looking down from directly above the stage as a dancer basks in the footlights; we can see the other dancers waiting offstage in the wings.

The theater proved to be a fertile source of inspiration for the Impressionists; there was no better place in Paris to see and be seen, and artists played with the narrative and visual possibilities of consumption and display. For Mary Cassat, an American artist living in Paris, the theater was a world she knew well and had access to as a high society woman. On the left, her *Woman in a Loge* is sitting in a private box or loge, with a mirror behind her reflecting the crows and the ornate interior of the newly built Opera Garnier. Cassatt probably chose the setting as a way of demonstrating her solidarity with the Impressionists; she used her connections with American collectors to create a market for Impressionist in the US. On the right, Pierre-Auguste Renoir's version of the same subject makes it clear that the action on the stage was secondary to the action in the loges; the gazes of the man and the woman are pointed in completely different directions.

Renoir was drawn to attractive women in privileged circumstances, and belived that paintings should be “pretty” above all else.

Auguste Rodin tried and failed three times to gain entrance to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. After an 1875 trip to Italy, where he saw the sculpture of Donatello and Michelangelo—remember the two Davids we looked at two weeks ago—he developed his mature style of vigorously modeled, rough-hewn figures in unconventional poses. He translated the Impressionist principles of spontaneous and direct observation from nature into sculpture. Critics hated his unacademic style but the public loved him, and his works were frequently reproduced in plaster, marble and bronze. His willingness to stylize the human form for expressive purposes was revolutionary. He literally brought sculpture down off of its pedestal, putting noble or heroic deeds within reach of mere mortals.

Both of these compositions were intended as part of his monumental *Gates of Hell*—the portal to a proposed state museum of decorative arts, inspired by Dante’s *Inferno*—which was never completed but provided the sculptor with inspiration for many of his most important works. *The Kiss*, on the left, has become an iconic image of passion, but it actually a depiction of Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini, adulterous lovers who appear in the *Inferno.* They fell in love as they read the story of Lancelot and Guinevere together; the book can just be seen in Paolo’s hand. Francesca’s outraged husband discovered them and killed them both. Its blend of eroticism and idealism makes it one of the great images of sexual love, but it is also a study of hopeless love. *The Thinker* was originally titled *The Poet,* and it was intended to represent Dante himself, perched atop the gates of Hell, pondering or perhaps imagining the chaos below. The sculpture is nude,

a heroic nude in the classical tradition, as interpreted by. It is Rodin's best-known sculpture and has come to be an immediately recognizable icon of intellectual activity, no longer representing Dante but all thinking and imagination.

Quiz