

Impressionism: Breaking the Rules

Tour Description

Impressionist art, beloved and popular today, was revolutionary in its own time! Discover how artists like Claude Monet, Pierre Auguste Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Edgar Degas, and others “broke the rules” of traditional art to capture the eye-dazzling effects of light, atmosphere, and movement in fresh new ways.

Tour Objective This tour explores how the Impressionists broke with academic tradition and revolutionized art. Learn about the importance of “modern” subject matter and scientific discoveries that explained how the eye perceives light and color.

Means Show how the Impressionists changed fundamental ideas about how and what to paint by beginning with an academic work as a point of comparison. Explore objects that demonstrate the new range of subjects the Impressionists used.

Many Impressionists such as Degas, Pissarro, and Cassatt were avid printmakers. You might incorporate relevant prints on display to explore the medium as an important facet of this period’s art.

Themes

How to Break the Rules Choose a starting point to explain academic painting:

The Carpet Merchant, Jean-Léon Gérôme, 70.40 or
Temptation, William-Adolphe Bouguereau 74.74 **

You could also start with a Japanese wood block print currently on view to explain characteristics of interest to Impressionist painters:

- Asymmetrical composition
- Use of decorative patterning
- Cropping
- Subject matter related to the urban middle classes

Choose 6-8 examples of Impressionist works:

Vacationers on a Beach in Trouville, Eugène-Louis Boudin, 15.30
The Smoker, Edouard Manet, 68.79
Nude on a Couch, Gustave Caillebotte, 67.67
Seashore at Sainte-Adresse, Claude Monet, 53.13
Grainstack, Sun in the Mist, Monet, 93.20

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Still Life with Pheasants and Plovers, Monet, 84.140
Portrait of Mlle. Hortense Valpinçon, Edgar Degas, 48.1
Place du Théâtre Français, Paris: Rain, Camille Pissarro, 18.19
The Artist's Daughter, Julie, with her Nanny, Berthe Morisot, 96.40
Head of a Young Woman, Pierre Auguste Renoir, 61.15
Tamaris, France, Renoir, 2006.9.2
Piazza San Marco, Venice, Renoir, 51.19

End the tour with one or two examples of new directions artists took after Impressionism:

Olive Trees, Vincent van Gogh, 51.7
Chestnut Trees at Jas de Bouffan, Paul Cezanne, 49.9
Tahitian Landscape, Paul Gauguin, 49.10
Port-en-Bassin, Georges Seurat, 55.38
Snow, Boulevard de Clichy, Paris, Paul Signac, 61.36.16