2015 Sept Muse Addendum

This Muse Addendum contains two articles, both by Kay Miller. The first was published in the Muse in December 2012. It is EXCELLENT and so it has been re-published to tell you how the Delacroix Exhibitions, and exhibitions in general, are created. The second article is the complete Delacroix Exhibition article and begins on page 5. "Patrick Noon's Recommended Books on Delacroix" is on page 11.

Bridging Delacroix: The Delicate Business of Creating an Exhibition

by Kay Miller

Putting together a major exhibition requires curators to be a little like a Hindu god, with multiple arms juggling dozens of tasks. If curators expect to borrow premiere paintings – Manet, van Gogh, Whistler and Matisse – from other museums, they'd better have something new to say, a long lead time and an internationally prominent partner with which to say it.

Relationships are key. Diplomacy, charm and a bit of verve help. Occasional political intrigues crop up as curators discover competing exhibits and tease out which museums will lend to them, but not to rivals who have been stingier lending their own works. Quid pro quo is the name of the game. And, always, your reputation precedes you.

"People don't have a clue what goes into making an exhibition," mused Patrick Noon, Patrick and Aimee Butler Chair of Paintings and head of the MIA Paintings Department. "They think you can just make a few calls and produce a great show. But it takes a phenomenal amount of work."

For four years, Noon has been working on a seminal exhibit tentatively entitled Delacroix and Modernity that he hopes will push the boundaries of how we think about modern art and the role that French artist Eugène Delacroix played in its evolution. Although the show is not scheduled to open until Oct. 18, 2015 through Jan. 10, 2016, in time for the MIA's centennial, Noon is in the thick of research and planning. His project is a great illustration of what MIA curators regularly go through arranging a show with national and international reach, one that packs a wallop but appears seamless.

Since joining the museum in 1997, Noon has curated exhibitions on Homan Hunt, Edgar Degas, Marc Chagall, Alexander Calder, Georgia O'Keeffe and Francis Bacon. For those and thematic shows on American landscape paintings, Nordic landscape paintings and Crossing the Channel: British and 8 French Painting in the Age of Romanticism, Noon teamed with national and international museums.

"We have some status in this business," Noon said. "But you really do need a partner that has some clout internationally to make it work. It's not to say that we wouldn't get the loans on our own but it's much easier if you have the National Gallery in London, which is not someone you say no to readily."

Landing the National Gallery was Noon's first major hurdle. Like the MIA, it is known for an excellent collection and its willingness to lend to other museums. It also has three major Delacroix, as well as works by major artists he influenced.

Noon broached the joint exhibition idea when Nicholas Penny, director of the National Gallery and long-time friend, was at the MIA to give a lecture during the Titian show. Penny found Noon's idea intriguing: an original, thoughtful take on Delacroix's impact. The next time Noon was in London, he met with Penny and two curators in the director's office.

"Did you bring any visuals with you?" Penny asked. "Do we need to go somewhere and set up a PowerPoint?" "I said, No it's right here," and flipped open my iPad. He was intrigued with the presentation. They had seen iPads but they just weren't as prevalent over there as they are here."

Around the table, the curators flipped through Noon's wish list of paintings that would tell the story: "Impressionism doesn't spring from nowhere. I think there's a tangible connection between what we consider modern art, starting with Impressionism, and British art and aesthetics at the beginning of the century," said Noon, who is an expert on 18th, 19th and 20th century British and French art. "Delacroix is the bridge, the purveyor of that message, both in his paintings and his writings.

"I'm interested in what happens around the time of Delacroix's death and the last couple decades of his life and what the artists who are coming into prominence at that time are seeing. The first big wave came immediately after Delacroix died when his entire studio was on display. Manet, Fantin-Latour and Whistler were all in Paris at that time, looking at his oeuvre and reacting to it.

"Then you have the next generation – Bazille, Redon and people like that coming up from the provinces." They were influenced by several exhibitions of Delacroix's work, including a huge retrospective in the 1860s and another in 1885, both at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

"So 1885 – that's the year that Van Gogh, Gauguin and Cezanne start seeing again the bulk of Delacroix's work. Seurat goes to this show and he makes extensive color notes from our Fanatics of Tangier which was in the exhibition! Then, in the 1890s Signac writes that treatise crediting Delacroix and Impressionism with completely changing the way that people view nature."

The National Gallery folks were sold. They set a date. After Minneapolis, the show would travel to London for a February 10 through May 15, 2016 exhibition.

Next, Noon sent out "letters of intent" to twenty museums, naming specific works he hoped to borrow. Those letters are a sort of "save the date" with a two-page description of the project and how their object fits into it, asking them to "pencil this in" and if someone else asks to borrow it, please tell them no.

At the time, Noon had been sitting on requests from some of the museums asking to borrow MIA paintings. "I started those letters out by saying, 'I'm pleased to inform you that our trustees agreed to lend you our Manet for your show. So, this might be a good time to mention a project that we're doing,' " Noon chuckles, knowingly. "It's all about relationships. If they can lend, they will lend."

A few museums responded, regretting that the works were unavailable. Some were too fragile to travel. Others had just returned from a major Delacroix exhibit in Spain, where its largest bank, Caixa, sponsors exhibitions that are free to the public. Caixa had hired Louvre curators to organize a huge Delacroix show for Barcelona and Madrid.

“That’s an incredibly expensive proposition and they paid the Louvre a fortune to organize a Delacroix show for them,” Noon said. The Louvre itself was prohibited from loaning some of their Delacroix paintings because the terms under which the works were originally bequeathed to the museum specify they remain in France.

“So the Louvre was going around asking other people to lend their pictures.” At this, Noon raised his eyebrows. They asked to borrow the MIA’s Fanatics of Tangier and Delacroix’s View of Tangier landscape.

“If I wasn’t involved with this project I would have said no because what am I going to get out of 9 this? The Louvre is making a fortune.” They also asked to borrow three Delacroix from the National Gallery. “Their reaction was the same as mine. Between the two museums, we were lending more than we’re asking the Louvre to lend to us. But we had no choice. Their objects are key!”

Timing is all important, Noon knew. He needed to make sure there was enough time between the closing of the Delacroix shows in Spain and the opening of his MIA exhibition, so that lenders to their show wouldn’t balk at the request. Paintings need time to rest. And home audiences get disillusioned if every time they go to the museum to see favorite pieces they are out on loan.

To get the federal indemnification that insures such priceless works of art, Noon will have to apply at least a year-and-a-half before the show. Each requires an independent dealer or expert from the auction houses to confirm their valuations. If he applied too late, the pool of money would be drained by other shows and the MIA would face a huge insurance bill.

While at the Barcelona exhibit, Noon ran into an old colleague, an independent curator. She asked what he was working on. Behind the scenes, she was quietly trying to organize a Delacroix show for the Royal Academy in London. Privately, she was sounding out the French to see what paintings she might borrow. Curators are in the position of choosing between suitors: Who gets the prize picture? Implicit for them is the question: “What is the Royal Academy going to do for me? They don’t have a collection. We have a relationship with National Gallery.” Later, Noon learned through a Paris colleague that the Musée Eugène Delacroix had turned the freelancer down, “whereas they will lend to London and Minneapolis because they want to borrow from us.”

By June, Noon was drafting formal loan requests. Each stressed the importance of that object to the show. MIA Director Kaywin Feldman signed the letters, sometimes jotting a charming note to director colleagues, saying she hoped they could help make the show a success. Then the letter was express mailed to London for Penny’s signature.

“If we get a positive response, we follow up. We satisfy whatever terms the lenders want.” Sometimes they request a facilities report, detailing the MIA’s exhibition space and climate control. Noon already had gotten a number of verbal assurances that loans would be forthcoming. “They respect the institution. They know what’s at stake. If they can part with the object, they will.”

One of the very few turn-downs was for a particularly beautiful version of Delacroix’s Christ Asleep During the Tempest. It had been in the Barcelona show and its museum felt that the picture had been traveling too much. Noon’s backup was another version at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the very painting that inspired van Gogh’s Olive Trees, with Delacroix-like silvery greens and half-tones.

In the heart of the summer, work with London colleagues was temporarily suspended as curators left town to avoid the crush of people attending the Olympics. During that time, the MIA applied for a National Endowment for the Arts grant to support research and fund to travel to see the art first-hand and plead the case to borrow it. In October, the project was awarded a $40,000 grant over two years, a boon to Noon, who must also keep tabs on project costs.

All the while, he was planning the catalog. What new ground would it plow? Who would write which essays? “Most lenders want to know that there’s going to be a publication. We insist on it, actually. If you’re going to borrow an important object, you have to have a very good reason to justify it. You want your collection to be show-cased. That can’t be done if you’re not doing a proper publication. The reason you lend to these things, you really want to advance the scholarship. You also want the world to know you have these great objects and maybe they’ll come to see them in person.”

Typically museums don’t charge each other loan fees. “You don’t barter your collection as a fund-raising tool.” They know how quickly that practice would escalate to the point that museums couldn’t afford major loans. But museums do pay to crate, insure, conserve and transport borrowed works, as well as the travel fees of couriers who accompany the works here – “a huge outpouring of money.”

“You may have a sponsor, but they’re not paying the whole cost of the show. The question is – can you really afford to borrow 75 pictures from 75 institutions, each of which is going to require courier fees?” So, Noon tries to limit the number of lenders, drawing several works if he can from extensive collections 10 at the Met and the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Noon well knows how seminal many MIA pictures are. The Tuscan Poets has twice been to the Uffizi, most recently in 2011. Mlle Lange was so important to a Parisian show on Girodet that the museum director said if they couldn’t borrow it, there would be no show, Noon said. “They ended up building a special room for it.”

When the Pompidou in Paris mounted a Bonnard show, Noon was loath to lend Dining Room in the Country. It’s too big and too important. “We have nothing to replace it.” Bonnard’s great grandson was sent to Minneapolis to plead their case. “If you lend this picture, I will give you four related sketches that I own,” he said. They were pencil drawings of the cats in the painting, a very hard offer to refuse.

“Our picture was the centerpiece of the show. That’s why they wanted it so badly. Everybody who went to that show commented on how that great Bonnard is from Minneapolis.”

The power of such loans was evident when Henri Loyrette, director of the Louvre, was here for the opening of the Louvre show. As he walked through the galleries with Noon, he was visibly surprised to see such famous works as Poussin's Death of Germanicus, van Gogh's Olive Trees, Cezanne's Chestnut Trees at Jas de Bouffan, Caillebotte's Nude on a Couch and Beckmann's Blind Man's Buff. "I've never been here, but I know all these pictures," Loyrette told Noon. "I think I know your collection just from the loans you have made over the years."

Delacroix's Influence on Modern Art

By Kay Miller

After Eugène Delacroix died in 1863, there was no state-sponsored cortege, no imposing monument erected in Luxembourg Gardens, none of the official pomp typically afforded France's art heroes. Just a handful of artists, critics and childhood friends gathered to mourn and acknowledge that one of the greatest and certainly the most influential artist of the 19th century had passed.

Outraged, poet Charles Baudelaire wrote a three-part newspaper eulogy for Delacroix and artist Henri Fantin-Latour painted *Homage to Delacroix*, a portrait of the great man surrounded by devotees – young avant-garde artists and critics who were passionately moved and profoundly influenced by his art. *Homage* was a manifesto of sorts, intended to put the establishment on notice: Modernism had dawned in the art world. And Delacroix was its inspiration, its guiding light, its source.

"Every major advance, every step in the evolution of painting in France in the last half of the 19th century – what we describe now as the beginnings of Modernism – owes something to Delacroix," says curator Patrick Noon, Mia's Elizabeth MacMillan Chair of Paintings. He spent much of the past five years organizing the landmark exhibition, "Delacroix's Influence: The Rise of Modern Art from Cézanne to van Gogh," running Oct. 18 to Jan. 10, 2016. After opening in Minneapolis, the show will move to the National Gallery in London, Noon's partner in putting the exhibition together.

It took over five decades from Delacroix's death, through successive generations of cutting edge artists for his massive influence to unfold. How those waves came about is an intriguing roll-out of rediscovery, posthumous retrospectives 20 years apart and the 1993 publication of his journals and letters. To tell that story, Noon brings together 35 seminal Delacroix paintings and 40 works by his followers and champions - from Manet to van Gogh, Gauguin to Cezanne. Delacroix's reach extended even to Matisse and Kandinsky in the 20th century, as Noon demonstrates in the final gallery.

"When Cezanne says, 'We all paint in his manner,' he means it. He's saying, 'What Delacroix did is what we are all trying to do.' "

Delacroix was prolific. It took four volumes to complete his catalogue raisonné. He had early success with Salon paintings purchased by the French government and publicly displayed at the Luxembourg, then France's museum of modern art, making it available for generations of artists to see. But his passionate, revolutionary approach soon ran afoul of Salon standards. "He was constantly criticized for being a bad draftsman, which was silly because, as his supporters pointed out, he's not drawing with charcoal or pencil," Noon said. "He draws by modeling form with color, not with line. Not with tonal graduations, but with tonal contrast. That gets him to the whole point of color theory. "

Within the 30 years of Delacroix's death there were three major clusters of events – rediscoveries of sorts - that vastly increased awareness of his prescient ideas. Each impressed a new generation of highly individualistic artists, all of whom were frustrated with the safe, stultified Académie des Beaux-Arts-approved way of painting. They hungered for a new vision and found it Delacroix's revolutionary use of color, imagination, and memory, Noon said.

"They take from it whatever they want and run with it," launching the major art movements of the 19th century: Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, Symbolism and Fauvism.

The first serendipitous cluster came shortly after Delacroix's death in 1863 with Baudelaire's widely read three-article eulogy to Delacroix and Fantin's large *Homage* salon painting. The following year, they organized a massive memorial retrospective of Delacroix's work and studio sale, which put 800 of his paintings, drawings and water colors on the market and grossed 200,000 francs in two days. All over Paris, Delacroix's work filled dealers' windows at the very moment that Redon, Cezanne, Renoir and Bazille were arriving in Paris to learn how to paint.

The next major cluster of events came in 1885. For 20 years, Fantin-Latour, Manet and Baudelaire, the most astute critic of the era, had chaffed at the official snub Delacroix received at his death and the puny sarcophagus marking his grave. They decided that a major monument was needed at Luxembourg Gardens, where Victor Hugo and other French luminaries were honored. To raise money for the commission, they assembled a comprehensive exhibition at the École des Beaux-Arts. Thousands flocked to see it, including Seurat, Signac, and Gauguin, who were too young to see the earlier show. The era was ripe for change. Moreover, the exhibit came on the heels of the scandal that Manet and Whistler created with the Salon des Refusés. Their message couldn't have been clearer, Noon said: "Guess what, guys? The baton of modernism has passed from this man to us."

As Delacroix's works were exhibited, purchased and dispersed, they were on view in new venues. Mia's *Fanatics of Tangier* was up for sale in 1886 from a private collection. "Seurat is sitting in front of that picture taking extensive color notes on our picture, and notes on Delacroix's touch – the way he puts his paint down," Noon said. "This is right, at the point that Seurat is about to paint his first major picture – the *Bathers at Asnières*.

By 1886, Van Gogh had arrived in Paris, where he saw Delacroix's *Christ on the Sea of Galilee* in a commercial gallery. "*That's* the picture that sets him off in terms of his whole approach to color," Noon said. "He writes extensively about it. After he goes to Arles, he goes on and on about that picture - the chrome yellow and Prussian blue. The juxtapositions for him are just mind-blowing. Then he starts painting that way."

When Paul Gauguin finally arrived in Arles to join van Gogh's Studio of the South, the pair traveled to Montpellier expressly to see Delacroix's second version of *The Women of Algiers.* Noon said. "It's much more atmospheric [than the first version] and there's much more use of half-tones. Van Gogh writes to Theo, 'This picture is gorgeous – what's happening here? It's just fantastic!' "All the while, Gauguin holds in memory Delacroix pictures owned by his guardian. He will filter those boyhood memories into *Christ in the Garden of Olives,* borrowed from the Norton Museum for the show.

Finally, the third period of rediscovery comes in 1893, with publication of Delacroix's journals. "You have Signac and Matisse *reading* them to each other," Noon said. Six years later, Signac publishes *From Delacroix to Neo-Impressionism* – his influential color treatise in which he quotes extensively, endlessly actually, from the journals.

One of Noon's great coups was securing works that these and many other artists actively studied. He was ingenious in overcoming two stumbling blocks: First, much of Delacroix's seminal work in the Louvre is not allowed to leave Paris. Second, a number of Delacroix's late, great works are immoveable murals in Paris churches, homes and the coffered ceilings of France's National Assembly. Noon solved the first by securing other versions Delacroix painted of the same subjects. He overcame the later problem, by flying with a film crew in September to videotape the National Assembly ceiling, a detail to be featured in galleries near the artists' works that they spawned.

"What Delacroix is trying to communicate is something very spiritual, his spiritual identity, not a story. Baudelaire would say that Delacroix was the personification of the spirit of modernity – of modernism - that the painter of modern life is the person who paints the existential existence of the modern person. Delacroix was *it* because he felt so deeply the things that he experienced and that people experienced generally at that moment in time.

"He was able to communicate the zeitgeist of his time," Noon said. And in doing so, he gave followers for the next half-century an exemplary vision, example and inspiration to show their spirit of their lives and times. "Delacroix is the most influential artist of the 19th century – bar none."

The Delacroix exhibition is arranged in five main thematic sections that open with an introduction:

INTRODUCTORY GALLERY: As visitors pick up audio guides, they will get an instantaneous glimpse of the breath of Delacroix's influence, starting with a large facsimile of Fantin's *Homage to Delacroix* and a cluster of self-portraits by artists influenced by him. A large wall graphic or audio-visuals, complete with quotations, allude to how Delacroix shaped their art.

EMULATION: Gallery 1 immediately invites viewers into Delacroix's persona – public, private and professional – and shows works by artists so taken by his paintings that they adopted his subject matter and approach, or copied them outright.

Delacroix's earliest Salon picture, his famous 1822 *Barque of Dante* now in the Louvre, was an instant success and made his reputation, Noon said. It won a gold medal, was purchased by the French state and was hung in the Luxembourg museum

"It was the one picture that they all seem to have copied – Renoir, Cezanne, Manet and Degas," Noon said. Manet's lush version of the *Barque*, perhaps the finest of these emulations, is in the show.

Much the same was true of another key Delacroix picture, *The Women of Algiers*, 1834, was similarly available for the first generation of Delacroix followers to see. Delacroix painted it a second time. The show features the very version that van Gogh and Gauguin visited in Montpellier.

ORIENTALISM: IMAGINED, EXPERIENCED, RE-IMAGINED. Gallery 2. This section is a real treat and is perhaps the easiest to explain. Delacroix was one of the earliest orientalist painters and this is the work for which he is best known. There were three distinct phases of his orientalism:

Orientalism Imagined: Before Delacroix actually traveled to North Africa, he painted a number of pictures inspired by the literature of Byron and Victor Hugo. These pictures are purely imaginary. But his interest in all things literary carries through his life.
Orientalism Experienced: In 1831, Delacroix traveled with French diplomat Charles de Mornay to visit the Sultan of Morocco. It was common then to take artists along to visually document a journey. So, Delacroix kept voluminous journals and color sketches in notebooks. His paintings from this era, including Mia's *Fanatics of Tangiers* (newly renamed *Convulsionists of Tangiers* - Delacroix's name for it) include scenes he actually witnessed and painted upon his return to Paris:
Noon calls *Convulsionists* one of the most important Delacroix pictures in North America. As he put the show together, he was mindful of key Delacroix works that had been in the extensive collection of St. Paul railroad magnet James J. Hill, *Convulsionists* among them.

"Hill was the most important collector of Delacroix in North America at the end of the 19th century and the richness of [Mia's] collection is the result of his descendants returning or giving us a lot of these objects," Noon said, adding that in Mia's 100th year, "It's worth recalling that legacy."

Two stunningly beautiful and influential works flank *Convulsionists*: On one side is Renoir's *"Arab Festival,"* with writhing, white-clad whirling dervish Sufis in the middle ground. These echo Delacroix's "furious torrent of Aissaouas" that he and Mournay witnessed from an attic hideaway.

"Delacroix's orientalist pictures launch this whole artistic subtext: 'We have to go South to understand Delacroix's color and his light and how he paints.' " Noon said. Renoir was among Delacroix's most devoted followers; he goes deep into North Africa, Noon said. "A bunch of other artists feel the same way. But most were content to go to the south of France, like Cezanne, van Gogh and Gauguin, or to travel the Mediterranean like Monet and Renoir. Others were confident that they could get the same kind of experience there, although they couldn't really when you think about it."

That point is made by *A Street in El-Aghouat,* 1859, by artist and famed travel writer Eugene Fromentin. "He was fixated on the intense heat and light and how you'd paint this because it was staggeringly difficult," Noon said. "He said, 'You go to this town. In the morning, people are on one side of the street because it's so bloody hot. In the afternoon, they're all on the other side of the street in the shade. They go from one bit of shade to the next because the heat is so oppressive."

Fromentin doesn't mention that he visits this town six months after the French military went in massacred the entire town. But people who read the newspaper would understand the subtext, that this city had been under siege and was brutalized by the French. "These are people sitting in the shade. But they look like dying people. He's projecting that into this image." As a fascinating aside, Noon adds that the French government bought the picture and immediately sent it to the Musée de la Chartreuse in distant Douai – "out of sight, out of mind"

– rather than the Luxembourg when everyone in Paris could see it.

Author George sands *made* her friend Delacroix read Fromentin's books, saying, "If you read these books, you'll think you're looking at your pictures." In his most famous travelogue, *A Year in the Sahal* , Fromentin "reconstructs" a scene of himself entering a harem – typical of the visual fantasies of so many orientalist painters. But his description is almost a verbatim description of Delacroix's *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, (*Femmes d'Alger)* complete with the curtains pulled back. You can almost hear Fromentin's description as you dive into one version of Delacroix's *femmes* in the show. That very picture inspired Baudelaire to write a huge fantasy about opium-induced visions of the Orient.

Orientalism Re-Imagined: The third phase of Delacroix's orientalism features the exotic and erotic – the orient reconstructed – in which he filters long-past North Africa experiences through his imagination to produce perhaps his most sensuous pictures.

"He feels his greatest accomplishment of oriental subjects happened when he was far enough removed from the experience that he wasn't bothered by the details," Noon said. "He could reimagine the experience, rather than be bothered by trying to record it."

Delacroix treats themes of wild animals, odalisques, Arab horsemen, and odalisques, merging them with other ideas that interest him.
"You get Oriental subjects, but they become vehicles for something else, either his own imaginative reconstructions or totally non-narrative things: experiments with color and aesthetic issues," Noon said. So you get all these orientalist paintings later in life that tend to be about his aesthetics – color theory and composition and his approach to execution - brushwork."

Of all the Delacroix works that Noon sought, he got the one he most wanted, *Arabs Skirmishing in the Mountain*s, 1863, which was also in Hill's collection.

"This is literally the *last* picture that Delacroix painted," Noon said. "It's one of those recollections of an experience, one he may or may not have had. He may have experienced it or heard about it. It's more about his color theory than anything else."

NARRATIVE PAINTING AT A CROSSROADS - TRUTH IN ART: Gallery 3 includes Delacroix's religious paintings and works inspired by Shakespeare and Bryon's poetry. This section includes Delacroix-inspired work by van Gogh, Gauguin, Odilon Redon, Degas, Cezanne and Richard Parkes Bonington, the brilliant young British artist who once shared a studio with Delacroix.

Something totally modern is taking place in these pictures: "There's a moment when narrative painting is no longer important, which is art for art's sake – aestheticism," Noon said.

"There's a resurgence of religious painting in the 1850s and 1860s, especially among the academic painters. Delacroix is very much part of that because the commissions are good," Noon said. Partly to fulfill demand, Delacroix repeatedly returns to familiar subjects – the Lamentation, Christ on the Sea of Galilee, Christ on the Cross. Devotional easel paintings are Delacroix's bread-and-butter while he works on monumental murals at the Church of Saint-Sulpice.

“For Delacroix, these subjects that he repeats constantly aren’t necessarily because he needs to reinterpret a text from Scripture or from Byron. It’s because these are the things he finds most useful for expressing himself. It’s like Monet will do Haystacks. Cezanne will do bathers – 400 bathing scenes. Degas finally settles on dancers. Van Gogh does 15 olive trees and irises. The content is not important. They all go back and find some subject matter they’re comfortable with. The subject is just a hanger for their experimentation and self-expression.”

Rather than a visually verbose version of Abduction of Rebecca, Delacroix shows it simply – with the nasty knight carrying off Rebecca – like a flash of memory. “What more do you need to tell the story?” Noon asks. Cezanne answers with an inspired dark version that is in the show.

“It’s the sentiment of these pictures that entrance artists like van Gogh,” Noon said. So van Gogh goes down to Saint-Rémy. Puts himself in the asylum. While he’e there, he gets a letter with a tracing or free-hand drawing from Gauguin of *Christ in the Garden*. This gorgeous Gauguin is in the show.

“Delacroix puts it rather succinctly: “A painting is just a bridge between the mind of the artist and the mind of the viewer. And meticulous definition, meticulous painting is just the art of being boring.’ ”

DELACROIX’S LEGACY IN PROSE AND PAINT: Galleries 4 and 5 take visitors to the crossroads of modernism, beginning with landscapes and infused with flowers. Here, ideas of aesthetics and how major artists respond to Delacroix over five decades hold sway.
“The great advances that we find in modernism take place in landscape painting because there’s no subject. There’s no distraction. The artist doesn’t have to deal with constructing a composition that clearly conveys a message – a message that it was painted for. You paint trees in a meadow, all you are painting is your optical experience of those trees in that meadow - the sunlight, the color. That is the new definition of beauty,” Noon said.
“Working with color was part of his experimentation. With Delacroix, it’s the whole theory of simultaneous contrast of color. So you take primaries and secondaries or primaries and complementaries and juxtapose them. One color pushes the other one back. So you’re creating space and volume by using different colors – not by creating gradations.” Signac and Seurat picked up on what they saw in Delacroix’s paintings and read in his journals and employ it in pointillist paintings.

The final gallery is awash with flower paintings. This is not a botanical section, but rather one dealing with a very modern notion: Art for art’s sake. Non-narrative painting became a great issue in the 1860s with Whistler, Fantin-Latour and others claiming art has no subject; it’s simply about the artist feels like painting.

“In the late 1840s Delacroix paints a number of flower pictures for his own amusement and shows them, but no one was buying. He kept them in his studio. Then in the late 1850s, right before his death, he sends all these big flower pieces to a dealer in Paris who puts them on view, creating a firestorm of interest,” Noon said. “Every one of these guys - Courbet, Manet, Renoir, Monet, Redon - in 1862-63 starts doing these flower pieces.” When Delacroix dies, people pay huge amounts for his floral picture. The one in the show commanded six times what Delacroix asked in his lifetime.

“These flower pictures become the symbol of art for art’s sake thing. Critics describe Delacroix’s palette as a bouquet of flowers, which become manifestations of his color theory. His flower paintings exist only to delight the eyes. They are not encumbered by religious subject matter or illustrations to be interpreted. They’re simply optical arrangements of colors. “Delacroix’s still lifes – and he painted just a handful – become very important in this dialogue. People point to these non-narrative subjects and say, ‘Even Delacroix paints these large wonderful still lifes that are totally non-narrative and we should all do this.’ ”

Patrick Noon's Recommended Books on Delacroix

Fonsmarck, Anne-Birgitte, et al. *Delacroix, the Music of Painting* (Copenhagen: Ordrupgaard, 2000)

Trapp, Frank. *The Attainment of Delacroix* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971)

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