

Impressionism

Definition

Impressionism is the name given to an art movement that developed chiefly in France during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Artists who work in this movement are known as Impressionists.

Impressionist painting comprises the work produced between about 1867 and 1886 by a group of artists who shared a set of related approaches and techniques. The most obvious characteristic of Impressionism was an attempt to accurately and objectively record visual reality in terms of the changing effects of light and colour. The Impressionists regularly worked out doors and were referred to as 'plein air painters'.

Three Impressionist Artists

Claude Monet (b. Nov. 14, 1840, Paris - d. Dec. 5, 1926, Giverny)

Monet was a French painter, initiator and leader of the Impressionist style. His devotion to the ideals of the movement was unwavering throughout his long career. One of his pictures - **Impression: Sunrise**, gave the Impressionists their name. Monet's devotion to painting out of doors is illustrated by the famous story concerning one of his most ambitious early works, **Women in the Garden**. The picture is about 2.5 metres high and to enable him to paint all of it



Women in the Garden 1866
Oil on Canvas
256 x 208 cm



Luncheon of the Boating Party 1881
Oil on Canvas
129.5 x 172.7 cm

outside he had a trench dug in the garden so that the canvas could be raised or lowered by pulleys to the height he required. Courbet visited him when he was working on it and said Monet would not paint even the leaves in the background unless the lighting conditions were exactly right.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir (b. Feb. 25, 1841, Limoges, France - d. Dec. 3, 1919, Cagnes)

Renoir is perhaps the best loved of all the Impressionists, for his subjects - pretty children, flowers, beautiful scenes and above all lovely women - have instant appeal, and he communicated the joy he took in them with great directness. 'Why shouldn't art be pretty?' he said, 'There are enough unpleasant things in the world.'

Renoir loved painting the female form, and he said 'I never think I have finished a nude until I think I could pinch it.' In old age he once remarked, 'I do not know if I would have become painter if God had not created the female bosom'.

Grace Cossington-Smith

(b. April. 22, 1892 Sydney, Australia – d. Dec. 10, 1984)

Grace Cossington-Smith studied at the Royal Art Society of New South Wales in 1910 and attended drawing classes at the Winchester School of Art, England and at Stettin, Germany from 1912-14. She returned to Sydney in 1914. Her work reflects her middle-class suburban life devoted to painting and depicting the environment about her. She was primarily concerned with form and colour, and with giving her images a spiritual quality. She portrayed flower pieces and sun-drenched domestic settings, as well as landscapes, streetscapes, views of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and religious subjects.

Impressionists to Research: Camille Pissarro, Alfred Sisley and Berthe Morrisot. Edgar Degas and Paul Cézanne also painted in an Impressionist style for a time in the early 1870's. Édouard Manet, whose work in the 1860s greatly influenced Monet and others of the Impressionist group, adopted the Impressionist approach about 1873.

Artwords and Artists to Remember: Impressionism, Impressionist, plein air, art movement, Claude Monet, Pierre Auguste Renoir, Grace Cossington-Smith, objectively, landscape, streetscape



Floral Still Life 1892-84
Oil on Board
45 x 35 cm
This painting depicts Cossington-Smith's use of small dabs of colour and her choice of simple objects as inspiration for her work.

Questions to Answer

1. Complete this sentence. Impressionism was an attempt to.... _____

2. What does the term 'plein air painter' mean? _____
3. How did the Impressionists get their name? _____
4. Why is Monet's Women in the Garden famous? _____

5. There is three quotes by Renoir on this handout. Write down the one you like the most. _____

6. Of what did Grace Cossington-Smith paint pictures? _____
