IMPRESSIONISM
Impressionism

The impressionist style aimed to capture the fleeting transience of light through the use of pure dabs of unmixed color applied in small brush strokes to simulate actual reflected light.

Occurred primarily in France between 1867-1886
Impressionism

Characteristics include:

- Scenes of daily leisurely activities – to capture changing light
- Loose ‘broken’ brushstrokes
- Pastel colors (with blues and violets replacing blacks and browns)
- Lack of a structured composition (as compared to a triangular Renaissance layout).. Random arrangement of figures to capture fleeting moment (inspired by snapshot effect of photography)
- Natural lighting – painted ‘en plein-air’ -outdoors
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Know Your Artists…

Edouard Manet
Father of Impressionism – joined the group in 1873, but never stopped using black

Claude Monet
‘Impression: Sunrise”, most committed Impressionist painter, repeatedly painted objects over and over, at different times of the day, to observe how light affects color

Pierre-Auguste Renoir
Rosy-cheeked portraits, dappled sunlight, Parisian social settings

Mary Cassatt
America-born, exhibited in Paris with the Impressionists – subjects focused on women & children in natural domestic settings - also influenced by the areas of flat shapes and spaces in Ukiyo-e Japanese prints

Berthe Morisot

Edgar Degas
Diagonal compositions, skilled at drawing, pastel, sculpture & painting, Teacher of Cassatt, Racehorses, Bathers & Ballerinas
In 1863, the Academy rejected *The Luncheon on the Grass* by Édouard Manet primarily because it depicted a nude woman with two clothed men at a picnic. The unusually large number of rejected works that year, set off a firestorm among French artists. The Paris Salon rejected it for exhibition in 1863, but he exhibited it at the Salon des Refusés (Salon of the rejected) later in the year. Emperor Napoleon III had initiated The Salon des Refusés, after the Paris Salon rejected more than 4,000 paintings in 1863. Manet was admired by Monet and his friends, and led the discussions at Café Guerbois where the group of artists frequently met.
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Titian, *Pastoral Concert*, c1510. HIGH ITALIAN RENAISSANCE
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Edouard Manet, Le Chemin de Fer (The Railroad), 1872-73.
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Compare *Olympia* with Titian’s *Venus of Urbino*
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Edouard Manet
*The Fifer*, 1866.

(Note the artist’s use of BLACK… This is the one characteristic that greatly separated him from other Impressionists.)
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Monet exhibited this work in the first Impressionist show in 1874, and, although the critic intended the term to be derogatory, by the third Impressionist show in 1878 the artists themselves were using that label.

Impressionist paintings incorporated the qualities of sketches - abbreviations, speed, and spontaneity.

The work was “finished” in the sense of a complete thought or the characterization of a specific moment.

The brushstrokes are clearly evident; Monet made no attempt to blend the pigment to create smooth tonal gradations and an optically accurate scene.
Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral, 1894.*

The Rouen Cathedral paintings, more than 30 in all, were made in 1892 and 1893, then reworked in Monet’s studio in 1894. Monet rented spaces across the street from the cathedral, where he set up temporary studios for the purpose. Historically, the series was well-timed. In the early 1890s, France was seeing a revival of interest in Catholicism and the subject was well received. When Monet painted the Rouen Cathedral series, he had long since been impressed with the way light imparts to a subject a distinctly different character at different times of the day and the year, and as atmospheric conditions change. For Monet, the effects of light on a subject became as important as the subject itself. His *Series Paintings*, in which he painted many views of the same subject under different lighting conditions, are an attempt to illustrate the importance of light in our perception of a subject at a given time and place.
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Monet's Cathedrals at the Museo d'Orsay
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Monet’s Cathedrals at the National Gallery (DC)
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Claude Monet, *Rocks At Belle-Ile, Port-Dormois*, 1886.

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Claude Monet, *Wheatstacks (End of Summer)*, 1890-91.
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Claude Monet, *Wheatstacks (Snow Effect)*, 1890-91.
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Claude Monet  
*The Japanese Bridge, 1899.*

In 1883, Monet moved to the rural community of Giverny, where he leased a house that he was able to purchase 7 years later. In early 1893, he acquired a swampland area across the railroad tracks, but it was only toward the end of that decade that he turned to the garden he had created there as a rich source of artistic inspiration. In 1899, Monet painted 12 works from a single vantage point, focusing on the arching blue-green bridge and the microcosm of his water garden. Among the 12 works was this *Japanese Footbridge*. Monet designed and built the landscape that appears in the painting—from the bridge to the pond and its shape, to the water lilies and other plantings.
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Claude Monet

_The Saint-Lazare Station._ 1877, Oil on canvas.

In 1877, settling in the Nouvelle Athènes area, Claude Monet asked for permission to work in the Gare Saint-Lazare that marked its boundary on one side. Indeed, this was an ideal setting for someone who sought the changing effects of light, movement, clouds of steam and a radically modern motif. In spite of the apparent geometry of the metallic frame, what prevails here is really the effects of colour and light rather than a concern for describing machines or travellers in detail.

Certain zones, true pieces of pure painting, achieve an almost abstract vision. This painting was praised by another painter of modern life, Gustave Caillebotte, whose painting was often the opposite of Monet's.
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**Henri Fantin-Latour**,  
*L’Atelier des Batignolles*, 1870.

Les Batignolles was the district where Manet and many of the future Impressionists lived. Fantin-Latour, a quiet observer of this period, has gathered around Manet, presented as the leader of the school, along with a number of young artists with innovative ideas: from left to right, we can recognize Otto Schölderer, a German painter who had come to France to get to know Courbet’s followers, a sharp-faced Manet, sitting at his easel; Auguste Renoir, wearing a hat; Zacharie Astruc, a sculptor and journalist; Émile Zola, the spokesman of the new style of painting; Edmond Maître, a civil servant at the Town Hall; Frédéric Bazille, who was killed a few months later during the 1870 war, at the age of twenty-six; and lastly, Claude Monet.

Fantin-Latour,  
*Self Portrait*. 
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Gustave Caillebotte, "Paris: A Rainy Day" Art Institute of Chicago. 1877
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Pierre-Auguste Renoir  "La Moulin de la Galette",  1876.
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Pierre-Auguste Renoir

"La Moulin de la Galette", 1876.
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Pierre-Auguste Renoir

Renoir, "Dance In the City", 1883.

Renoir, "Dance In the Country", 1883.
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Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Oarsmen at Chatou, 1879.
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Pierre Renoir
"On The Terrace", 1881.
Degas’s fascination with patterns of motion brought him to the Paris Opéra school of ballet. His observations of classes there became his main and most favorite subjects.

Degas frequent cutoff figures and objects, such as the windows and the stairs indicate his interest in capturing single moments in time, like in photography, which is also used in the process of his paintings. He would take photographs to make preliminary studies for his works.

The prominent diagonals of the wall bases and the floorboards carry the viewers eyes throughout the painting. The large, off-center empty space in the center creates an illusion that floor is continuous, thus connecting the viewer to the painted figures, as though viewers are on the same ground as the dancers.

Degas, as well as other impressionist artists acquainted with the 1860s “greatly admired their spatial organization, the familiar and intimate themes, and the flat unmodeled color areas and drew much instruction from them.”

- Very diagonal compositions
- Figures tend to run-off sides
- Strong but natural light sources
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Edgar Degas, The Dance Class, 1874.
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Edgar Degas, Horses Before the Stands, 1866-68.
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Edgar Degas, The Dance School, 1874.
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Edgar Degas

The Dancing Class 1873-75.
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Edgar Degas, Racehorses at Longchamp, 1873-75.
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Edgar Degas
L’Absinthe, 1876.
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Edgar Degas, Four Dancers, c. 1899. Chalk Pastel.
Degas' sculpture stands outside the mainstream of nineteenth-century French sculpture. He was never interested in creating public monuments, and, with one exception, neither did he display his sculpture publicly. The exception was *The Little 14-Year-Old Dancer*. It was shown in the 6th Impressionist exhibition held in Paris in 1881, but the work has little to do with Impressionism. Modeled in wax and wearing a real bodice, stockings, shoes, tulle skirt, and horsehair wig with a satin ribbon, the figure astonished *The Little 14-Year-Old Dancer* was not seen again publicly until April 1920.
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Wax and plasticine models from Degas (1860s)
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Mary Cassatt

In the Salon of 1874, Degas admired a painting by a young American artist, Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), the daughter of a Philadelphia banker. “There”, he remarked, “is someone who feels as I do”. Degas befriended and influenced Cassatt, who exhibited regularly with the Impressionists.

Mary Cassatt was born into an affluent family in Pennsylvania on May 22, 1844. She studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, one of the country’s leading art schools. In addition to having regular exhibitions of European and American art, the faculty at the Academy encouraged students to study abroad. In 1865, Cassatt approached her parents with the idea of studying in Paris. Despite their initial objections, Cassatt's parents relented and allowed her to go.

She had trained as a painter before moving to Europe to study masterworks in France and Italy. As a woman, she could not easily frequent the cafes with her male artist friends, and she was responsible for the care of her aging parents, who had moved to Paris to join her, two facts limiting her subject choices.
Because of these restrictions, Cassatt’s subjects were principally women and children, whom she presented with a combination of objectivity and genuine sentiment. Works such as “The Bath” show the tender relationship between a mother and child. Like Degas’s “The Tub”, the visual solidity of the mother and child contrasts with the flattened patterning of the wallpaper and rug.

Cassatt’s style in this work owed much to the compositional devices of Degas and of Japanese prints, but the painting’s design has an originality and strength all its own.
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Contrast how Renoir and Cassatt view a mother and child!
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Mary Cassatt
*Mother and Child*, c1889.

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Mary Cassatt
Girl Arranging Her Hair, 1886.
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Mary Cassatt
Mother and Child,
1889.
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Mary Cassatt
*Summertime*, 1894.
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Mary Cassatt
*Mother and Child*, 1889.
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Berthe Morisot was regularly exhibited with the Impressionists and was well acquainted with many impressionist artists, since Manet was her brother-in-law. She tended to paint mostly domestic scenes, which was considered “the one realm of Parisian life where society allowed an upper-class woman free access.”

Morisot used an open brush and a plein-air (outdoor) lighting effect, both characteristics of Impressionism, to give this waterside effect.
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Berthe Morisot, "Villa at the Seaside", 1874.
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Berthe Morisot
*The Cradle, 1872.*

(The models are her sister Edma and Edma's daughter Blanche.)
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"Japonisme" is a term coined by French art-critic Philippe Burty in 1876 to describe the craze for things Japanese. (such as Ukiyo-E woodblock prints). The influence of Japanese woodblock art can be seen in "Art Nouveau" with its flowing, organic themes.

In April of 1890, the École des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts) in Paris showcased an exhibition of Japanese woodblock prints. These ukiyo-e images, "pictures of the floating world," as they were evocatively called, were compromised mostly of scenes of urban bourgeois pleasure—geishas, beautiful women, sumo wrestlers, kabuki actors—and pictures of the natural beauty around Edo (present day Tokyo)—the mists of Mount Fuji, cherry blossoms, rain showers, and surging waves along the port of Kanagawa.

Toyohara Kunichika Nakamura Fukusuke as Fuku, the Boatman, 1866.
Example of an Ukiyo-e woodcut
Kitagawa Utamaro
*Woman with Baby*, 1860s
Kitagawa Utamaro
Woman and Baby
1860s
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How did Japonisme influence Mary Cassatt?

Mary Cassatt

*Maternal Caress*, 1891.
Mary Cassatt

*The Coiffure*, 1890-91. Drypoint and aquatint on laid paper.

Among the audience at the exhibition at the École des Beaux-Arts that April was the American expatriate painter, Mary Cassatt. Cassatt’s close friend, Edgar Degas, was a great admirer of Japanese art and had recently seen the exhibition with Camille Pissaro. Cassatt was spellbound. In a letter written that week to her friend, the painter Berthe Morisot, she wrote, “You who want to make color prints wouldn’t dream of anything more beautiful. I dream of doing it myself and can’t think of anything else but color on copper…P.S. You must see the Japanese—come as soon as you can.”
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How did Japonisme influence Mary Cassatt?

It was inspired in part by a woodblock print in her personal collection, Kitagawa Utamaro’s boudoir image of the daughter of a prosperous Edo businessman, *Takashima Ohisa Using Two Mirrors to Observe Her Coiffure* (above). Notice the similarities in (1) The cropped compositions, (2) The decorative patterns (3) The intimate, close setting and (4) The flat colors.
In 1872, Muybridge was hired by Leland Stanford (later the founder of Stanford University) to photograph horses. Stanford reputedly had made a bet that for a moment, all four of a racehorse's hooves are off the ground simultaneously, and he hired Muybridge to take the pictures to prove him right. This was difficult to do with the cameras of the time, and the initial experiments produced only indistinct images. He set up a row of cameras with tripwires, each of which would trigger a picture for a split second as the horse ran by. The results settled the debate once and for all: all four hooves do leave the ground at once, as the top middle image in this sequence demonstrates. Muybridge spent the rest of his career improving his technique, making a huge variety of motion studies, lecturing, and publishing. As a result of his motion studies, he is regarded as one of the fathers of the motion picture.
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*The Horse in Motion*

“SALLIE GARDNER,” owned by LELAND STANFORD; running at a 1.40 gait over the Palo Alto track, 19th June, 1878.

The negatives of these photographs were made at intervals of twenty-seven inches of distance; and about the twenty-fifth part of a second of time; they illustrate consecutive positions assumed in each twenty-seven inches of progress during a single stride of the mare. The vertical lines were twenty-seven inches apart; the horizontal lines represent deviations of four inches each. The exposure of each negative was less than the two-thousandth part of a second.
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