

MODERN ART AND IDEAS 1
1882–1900

A Guide for Educators

Department of Education at The Museum of Modern Art

POST-IMPRESSIONISM AND SYMBOLISM

Artists included in this guide:

Eugène Atget, H. Blancard, Paul Cézanne, Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas, Vincent van Gogh, Hector Guimard, François-Raoul Larche, Edvard Munch, Georges-Pierre Seurat, Paul Signac, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Édouard Vuillard

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A NOTE TO EDUCATORS

This is the first volume in the Modern Art and Ideas series for educators, which explore the history of modern art through The Museum of Modern Art's rich collection. While traditional art historical categories are the organizing principle of this series, these parameters are used primarily as a means of exploring artistic developments and movements in conjunction with their social and historical context, with attention to the contribution of specific artists. The guide is informed by issues posed by the selected works in a variety of mediums (painting, sculpture, prints, photography, film, and architecture and design), but its organization and lesson topics are tailored to the public school curriculum, with particular application to social studies, visual art, history, and language arts. Lessons are accompanied by writing, research, and hands-on, art-based activities that encourage students to make connections between the visual arts and other disciplines.

The goal of this guide is to introduce students to Post-Impressionism and Symbolism, two movements in modern Western art history, and to demonstrate to teachers the variety of ways that art can be used in the classroom. The guide's purpose is not just to explicate works of art, but to model how images and historical information can be integrated into numerous subject areas and skill bases taught in the classroom.

The works featured in this guide span the years 1882 to 1900. Post-Impressionism is a term coined after the fact in 1910 to describe a group of artists working in a variety of styles after the Impressionists. Symbolism was, initially, a literary term adopted by artists to describe their interest in objectifying their subjective experiences. Students will be introduced to significant ideas in art and culture from this period. By comparing a variety of mediums and artistic styles, students will be able to practice observation, articulation, and discussion skills, and to further develop their visual literacy.

This guide has been written with the understanding that the history of modern art is not simply a progression of hermetic styles; rather, a complex matrix of intellectual, social, and historical factors have contributed to the creation of art. Modern art is not solely the product of artists who seek to overthrow convention at all cost. As Kirk Varnedoe suggested, it "has been the product of individual decisions to reconsider the complex possibilities within the traditions available to them, and to act on basic options that were, and remain, broadly available and unconcealed."¹ Indeed, a work of art may be viewed as a locus that invites numerous approaches and offers multiple ways of understanding the historical moment in which it was made and the individual who created it.

1. Kirk Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1990), 22.

USING THE EDUCATORS GUIDE

The five lessons—**Painting Modern Life**, **Rise of the Modern City**, **Portraiture**, **Popular Culture**, and **Landscape**—that comprise this guide may be used sequentially or as independent units. An introduction to the key principles of each lesson is followed by a close examination of each work, including formal analysis of the work, the work’s historical context, and biographical information on the artist. Discussion questions based on the information lead students through formal analysis of the artwork and seek to create connections between information and visual evidence. The activity or project that concludes each lesson encourages students to synthesize what they have learned about the works, and carries the lesson into the broader curriculum or relates it to skills students are practicing in the classroom.

Encourage dialogue and debate by asking your students to respond to each others’ observations and interpretations. Restating students’ responses, periodically reviewing students’ comments, and summarizing the discussion all help to validate students’ thoughts, focus the discussion, and generate additional ideas about the artwork

IMAGES

All of the questions, discussions, and activities in this guide are based on the images on the accompanying slides and CD-ROM. Please examine the images carefully before showing them to your students. Your classroom should be equipped with a slide projector or computer and LCD projector.

ACTIVITIES

The Activities sections are intended for students to make connections between their own experiences and the concepts presented in the lesson. Through these activities, students will begin to develop a language for discussing and looking at art. Please feel free to tailor the activities to the age level of your students.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

In many cases, the materials in this guide will provide opportunities for in-depth research on specific artists or artistic movements. We have suggested some topics, to which we encourage you to add your own.

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION AND SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES

The section “For Further Consideration” proposes additional discussion questions and research projects. A bibliography and resources section has also been provided for teachers and students to use in conducting research. The resources provide further information on the artists and artworks in this guide, general historical topics, and more classroom activities.

GLOSSARIES

A glossary of art historical terms (bolded upon first mention in each lesson) is included at the end of the guide.

SETTING THE SCENE

1. WORLD'S FAIR

The 1889 Exposition Universelle, or World's Fair, took place in Paris and showcased new innovations, recent geographical and scientific discoveries, and works of art. World's Fairs, or Expos, as they are often called today, still take place and are hosted by various countries. Research the Paris World's Fair of 1889 to learn about the themes, events, and inventions that were seen there. Has there ever been a World's Fair in your country? Where and when did it take place? What were the important ideas that were represented there? Research modern World's Fairs that have taken place in countries across the globe.

Create your own mini world's fair in the classroom. As a class, come up with a list of themes or ideas your fair should represent (i.e., technology, innovation, environment, politics, etc.). Form small groups. Each group should create a presentation based on one of the themes or ideas. (Individuals may work independently if preferred.) Include photographs, drawings, or replicas of important inventions already in existence (or drawings or models of your own inventions) that you would like to include in your fair.

2. ENVIRONMENT

Many artists whose works are described as Post-Impressionist took their inspiration from the unique surroundings in which they lived and worked. They worked for extended periods in a place and therefore became closely associated with a specific geographical location. For example, Paul Cézanne is closely associated with Aix-en-Provence, France; Paul Gauguin, with Tahiti; Vincent van Gogh, with Arles and Saint Remy, France; and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, with Paris. Research these artists, focusing on their relationship to where they lived and worked. Compare and contrast art by artists associated with a city and by those who worked in the countryside. Consider how your environment influences how you think, work, live, and play. Compare your own experiences with what you would imagine life to be like for someone inhabiting a very different kind of environment.

LESSONS

LESSON ONE: Painting Modern Life



IMAGE ONE: Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas. French, 1834–1917. *At the Milliner's*. c. 1882. Pastel on paper, 27 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 27 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (70.2 x 70.5 cm). Gift of Mrs. David M. Levy

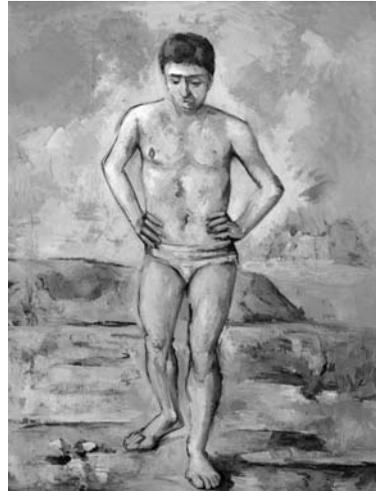


IMAGE TWO: Paul Cézanne. French, 1839–1906. *The Bather*. c. 1885. Oil on canvas, 50 x 38 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (127 x 96.8 cm). Lillie P. Bliss Collection

INTRODUCTION

The artists associated with the Impressionist movement chose to depict modern (meaning contemporary), everyday life over mythological, religious, or heroic subject matter. Post-Impressionist was a term assigned to a group of artists working after the Impressionists who wished not only to depict modern life, but also to reveal its emotional and psychological effects. They achieved this in a variety of styles. The two art works in this lesson are distinctively modern but in very different ways. Hilaire-Germain-Edgar Degas's *At the Milliner's* focuses on a moment between two women in a hat shop, and with numerous details carefully highlights the mundane activity of trying on the latest fashion in hats. *The Bather*, by Paul Cézanne, also captures a moment in time, depicting an adolescent boy about to take a step forward, but the painting includes no reference to late-nineteenth-century contemporary life and is quite traditional in its subject matter—a male figure in a landscape. Unlike traditional painters, Cézanne did not use this unheroic body in its barren, ambiguous setting to tell a story; rather, this composition permitted him to explore new ways of painting.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will compare and contrast two paintings.
- Students will understand the term *modern* as used in an historical and art historical context.
- Students will become familiar with the terms **foreground**, **middle ground**, and **background**.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Ask your class to brainstorm definitions of the word “modern.” “Modern” can mean related to current times, but it can also indicate a relationship to a particular set of ideas that, at the time of their development, were new or even experimental.
- Prior to the nineteenth century, artists were most often commissioned to make artwork for a church or a wealthy person. These artworks usually represented a biblical or mythological scene; they told stories and were intended to instruct the viewer. During the nineteenth century, many artists started to make art about people, places, or ideas that interested them and of which they had direct experience. Sometimes these new subjects led them to explore new ways of creating images. They experimented with color, technique, and different **mediums**. This art looked different from the established norm, and had quite different subject matter. At The Museum of Modern Art, this kind of art made after 1880 is considered “modern,” meaning that it is related to a new way of thinking about making art.
- Think about the places where you see art—in museums, in libraries, on buildings, in buildings used for religious worship. Does the art tell a story or teach people about an idea? What do you think inspired the artists?
- In *A Fine Disregard* (1990), the art historian Kirk Varnedoe recounts a story about a group of soccer players in England in 1823. In the story one of the players, William Webb Ellis, decides to pick up the ball with his hands, which is not allowed in soccer. This, legend has it, is how the sport of rugby was born. Can you remember a time when you were inspired to break a rule? What inspired you? What were the consequences? Would you do it again?

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

- Give your class a couple of minutes to look at *At the Milliner's*. Ask the students to tell you what they see. Ask them to describe the people in the drawing. Where might they be? What might they be doing? To help students explain what they are seeing, it may be useful to introduce them to the terms *foreground*, *middle ground*, and *background*. In this image a chair is in the foreground, the figures are in the middle ground, and there appears to be a wall in the background.
- Ask your students to focus on the figure to the right. Ask them to come up with five words each to describe the person. Ask them what they see that made them choose those words. Ask the class to focus on the figure to the left. Ask them what they can tell about this person just by looking. Have them compare the figure to the one on the right. How are they the same? How are they different? Degas has intentionally made it more difficult to describe the figure on the left. Ask why and how he might have done that.
- Inform the class that a milliner is someone who makes hats, that this scene takes place in a hat shop, and that the woman on the right is trying on hats. The woman on the left works at the hat shop and is bringing hats for the first woman to try on. Ask your students if knowing this changes their initial ideas about the drawing. Ask them why or why not.

To Degas, painting modern life meant painting what happened every day in Paris, where he lived. He often went for walks through the city with his friends, such as the American artist Mary Cassatt, who is the model for the woman trying on the hat. Degas thought that depicting many specific, detailed small scenes, such as this moment in the milliner's shop, would create a deeper understanding of modern life.

- Ask your class to imagine that they can see beyond the frame of this picture. What else might they see?
- Ask your students to make a drawing of a small scene encapsulating one aspect of their life. What would they draw?
- Now show your students the image of *The Bather*. Ask them to take a couple of minutes to look at the painting.
- Ask them how the image is similar to *At the Milliner's*. Ask how it is different. *At the Milliner's* is a drawing and *The Bather* is a painting, a difference that is hard to recognize in a reproduction.
- Ask how the central figures (the woman trying on the hat and the bather) are similar and how they are different.
- Ask what is going on in *The Bather*. Have your students look at the foreground, middle ground, and background. Ask them what they see that tells them what is happening in the painting.

Cézanne did not include much information in this painting. He painted from a photograph of a man standing in a studio in a bathing suit rather than from something that he had seen in real life. It is hard to tell where the painting takes place and who the person is. This uncertainty is one of the reasons why *The Bather* is considered to be a modern painting. Instead of telling a story or representing a specific place, the painting seems to capture a sense of ambiguity or uncertainty that is typical of the modern experience.

- Ask your students how they might convey an idea about life where they live (i.e., is it crowded and noisy or desolate and quiet?) without showing a specific place or activity.

ACTIVITY/PROJECT

Write about a small scene that takes place where you live. Could that scene tell us something more about life in that place? How?

LESSON TWO: Rise of the Modern City



IMAGE THREE: Hector Guimard. French, 1867–1942. *Entrance Gate to Paris Subway (Métropolitain) Station*. c. 1900. Painted cast iron, glazed lava, and glass, 13' 11" x 17' 10" x 32" (424 x 544 x 81 cm). Gift of Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens



IMAGE FOUR: Eugène Atget. French, 1857–1927. *Coiffeur, boulevard de Strasbourg*. 1912. Albumen silver print, 8¹³/₁₆ x 6⁷/₈" (22.4 x 17.5 cm). Abbott-Levy Collection. Partial gift of Shirley C. Burden



IMAGE FIVE: H. Blancard. Untitled (construction of the Eiffel Tower). February 10, 1888. Platinum print, 6¹/₈ x 8¹¹/₁₆" (15.6 x 22.1 cm). Purchase



IMAGE SIX: H. Blancard. Untitled (construction of the Eiffel Tower). April 1888. Platinum print, 6¹/₈ x 8¹¹/₁₆" (15.6 x 22.1 cm). Purchase



IMAGE SEVEN: H. Blancard. Untitled (construction of the Eiffel Tower). June 1888. Platinum print, 8¹⁵/₁₆ x 6¹/₈" (22.4 x 16 cm). Purchase



IMAGE EIGHT: H. Blancard. Untitled (construction of the Eiffel Tower). August 1888. Platinum print, 8¹⁵/₁₆ x 6¹/₈" (22.4 x 15.6 cm). Purchase

INTRODUCTION

The turn of the century in Paris, known as the Belle Époque, was a time of modern invention, intense art production, and relative peace for France and its neighbors. The new subway system and the Eiffel Tower are among many exciting projects undertaken in Paris at this time.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will be introduced to two new mediums: industrial design and photography.
- Students will consider the ways in which art, architecture, and design affect their everyday life.
- Students will consider the impact that the creation of public monuments has on a city and its citizens.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Begin the conversation by asking your students to think about any recent changes that have been made in the landscape of their city or town. These could range from additions like a light rail system or a new museum to a new or enlarged shopping mall. What sort of impact do these projects have on the look of the city? How do these projects affect the way people think about the place in which they live?
- Show students the four photographs of the Eiffel Tower being constructed (Images 5–8). Ask your students to react to the construction based on the photographs, and to imagine what it might have been like to be a citizen of Paris while the Tower was being constructed. Do they like the Tower? Do they think everyone in Paris liked it when it was first built?
- Give your students some background information on the Eiffel Tower while continuing to discuss various reactions the public might have had to the changing nature of their city. The Eiffel Tower was named for Gustave Eiffel, who founded and developed a company specializing in metal structural work. The primary focuses of the company were railway bridges and stations, but Gustave Eiffel is also known for designing the Statue of Liberty's structural support.

The Eiffel Tower was conceived of during preparation for the 1889 World's Fair in Paris. The Tower was begun in July 1887, and it took five months to build the foundation and twenty-one months to assemble the metal pieces (of which there are 18,000).

There was a strong reaction to the Tower from the general public, as well as from artists who thought it was unsightly and a “stain” on the Paris cityscape. One critic called it “a truly tragic street lamp.” Gustave Eiffel responded to the criticism in a newspaper interview, saying, “For my part I believe that the Tower will possess its own beauty. Are we to believe that because one is an engineer, one is not preoccupied by beauty in one's constructions or that one does not seek to create elegance as well as solidity and durability? [. . .] Moreover, there is an attraction in the colossal, and a singular delight to which ordinary theories of art are scarcely applicable” (www.tour-eiffel.fr).

Initially, the plan was to demolish the tower after the 1889 World's Fair, but it gradually became a defining icon of the Paris cityscape. Many artists embraced the Eiffel Tower as a symbol of modernity and the *avant-garde*.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

- Show your students *Entrance Gate to Paris Subway (Métropolitain) Station* and ask them to spend a moment looking closely at the image. Ask them to come up with one word that describes the object. Have each student share his or her word.
- Inform your students that the object is an entryway to the Paris Métro—or subway system—made in 1900, the year that the subway was completed. The Parisian architect and designer Hector Guimard was commissioned to make *Entrance Gate to Paris Subway* not only in order to mark entry to the new subway but to help make this new mode of transportation appealing to Parisians.
- Ask your students to consider how Guimard designed the entryway so that it would stand out. How is Entrance Gate to Paris Subway different from subway entrances, bus stops, or street signs that you see today? What devices did the designers use to capture your attention? How does Guimard’s design capture your attention?

Entrance Gate to Paris Subway is designed in the style of Art Nouveau, created as an international style of decoration and architecture in the 1880s and 1890s. Nature was an important source for Art Nouveau artists and designers, and the entryway’s curvilinear lines and patterns were inspired by vines.

- Now that students have discussed and are familiar with *Entrance Gate to Paris Subway*, ask them to come up with another word to describe the entryway and write the word on a piece of paper. Then divide the students into groups of four or five, and direct them to create a sentence describing what it would be like to see the entryway on the street, using all the words that they have written down. Students may add as many other words as they like to form their sentence. Ask the students to read the sentences out loud.
- Continue the exploration of the streets of Paris by showing your students *Coiffeur, boulevard de Strasbourg*, by Eugène Atget. Give your students a moment to look closely at the image, and then ask them what they think is going on in the work.
- Ask them what they think attracted Atget to photographing this storefront window.
- Ask them where they think he was standing when he took the picture. Ask them what they think it would have been like to encounter this shop window when walking down the street.
- Ask them to compare the framing—how the image fits into the picture—with the framing of *At the Milliner’s*, by Degas. In what ways are they similar? How are they different?

Eugène Atget spent thirty years documenting Paris at the turn of the nineteenth century, creating thousands of images. After his death a number of artists and journalists commented on the artistic and decidedly modern way that Atget had captured the city of Paris. An article that ran in New York newspapers referred to Atget as “the first photographer to formulate the theory that the camera was an artistic instrument rather than a mere machine.”²

- Not much is known about Atget. Some people think that he was a documentary photographer who took pictures that were only later considered modern and interesting. Others think that he was an artist who had discovered how to use a camera in an inventive and imaginative way.

2. John Szarkowski, *The World of Atget* (vol. IV: Modern Times) (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1985), 10.

- **Divide the class into two teams. Ask one team to defend the position that Atget was a documentary photographer who was not interested in creating a photograph that would be considered a “work of art.” Ask the other team to defend the position that Atget was an artist who was using photography to capture many of the same ideas about modernism that the class explored in the previous lesson. Have each team present their argument.**

ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS

Research the development of other transit systems, such as the London underground and New York subway. How did these cities entice riders to use their systems?

Document an existing building or renovation site, or research the creation of a civic symbol or landmark. What is the history of the building/site/landmark? Why was it created? What is its function? What does it commemorate? What was the public’s reaction to it when it was first completed?

Think about how a piece of sculpture or architecture can change the look of a neighborhood or even a city. If you wanted to design something to change the way your city looks, what would it be? Think about what you would make and why. Where would it be located in the city? Write a statement like Gustave Eiffel’s (p. 9), about your vision for your creation.

The Paris Métro improved life in the city by making transportation cleaner and faster. Think about ways in which you might improve your city or neighborhood. If you did create something new, how would you entice people to use it? Design an advertising campaign for your new idea for improving life in your city or neighborhood.

Research other projects that Gustave Eiffel was involved in, such as his design for the interior structure of the Statue of Liberty.

LESSON THREE: Portraiture



IMAGE NINE: Vincent van Gogh. *Portrait of Joseph Roulin*. 1889. Oil on canvas, 25 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (64.6 x 55.2 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Rosenberg, Nelson A. Rockefeller, Mr. and Mrs. Armand P. Bartos, The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection, Mr. and Mrs. Werner E. Josten, and Loula D. Lasker Bequest (all by exchange)



IMAGE TEN: Paul Signac. *Opus 217. Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones, and Tints, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890*. 1890. Oil on canvas, 29 x 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (73.5 x 92.5 cm). Fractional gift of Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller. © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

IMAGE ELEVEN: Édouard Vuillard. *Mother and Sister of the Artist*. c. 1893. Oil on canvas, 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 22 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (46.3 x 56.5 cm). Gift of Mrs. Saidie A. May. © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

INTRODUCTION

Portraits can represent individuals in many different ways. They can be literal representations of a person or they can represent a person symbolically. Around the time that these three paintings were created, a shift in the way artists represented people was starting to take hold. Rather than just seeking to capture the sitter's physical appearance, artists sought to represent his or her character, disposition, and even inner psyche. In order to represent such

subjective and symbolic aspects of their subjects, artists often paid less attention to capturing precise facial features than to developing new compositional devices, employing nonnaturalistic color and making very specific choices about the background and what it might reveal about the subject.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will be introduced to some of the conventions of portraiture such as **costume, gesture, expression, pose, and background.**
- Students will consider how the above elements can communicate information about a person.
- Students will consider how symbols can be used in a portrait to add meaning.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Begin the conversation by asking your students to define portraiture. Ask them if they have ever sat for their portrait. Perhaps they have had their picture taken at school. Ask them if they do anything special in preparation for having their picture taken. Ask them why or why not.
- Ask your students to describe what someone looking at their portrait could learn about them from what they are wearing (their costume or outfit) or the expression on their face.
- Consider Édouard Vuillard's painting (Image 11), which represents his mother and sister at home, where they both lived and worked as seamstresses. Unlike traditional portraiture, Vuillard was not so interested in recording his subjects' precise likenesses as in capturing the nature of their relationship and environment. Ask your students to look carefully at this work and tell you what the painting seems to be suggesting about Vuillard's mother and sister. Make sure that they support their comments with visual evidence from the painting. Ask them to note specifically how Vuillard communicates these ideas to the viewer. Introduce the terms "pose" (the way a figure is positioned), "gesture" (the placement of the figure's hands), and "expression" (the appearance of the figure's face). Ask them to consider the background against which the figures are posed.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

- Ask your students to take a moment to look at *Portrait of Joseph Roulin*. Make sure that they understand the terms "costume," "expression," "pose," and "background," and ask them to keep these ideas in mind while describing the portrait to you.
- Ask your students what they think can be learned about Joseph Roulin by looking at this picture.

Joseph Roulin worked for a post office in the French town of Arles. He was not a letter carrier but rather held a higher position as an official sorting mail at the train station. Van Gogh and Roulin lived on the same street and became close friends. Van Gogh painted many portraits of Roulin. This picture, which van Gogh boasted of having completed quickly, in a single session, was painted after Roulin got a better-paying job and left Arles. Some scholars think that this portrait was not painted from life but rather from memory or from previous portraits.

- Show your students *Opus 217. Against the Enamel of a Background Rhythmic with Beats and Angles, Tones, and Tints, Portrait of M. Félix Fénéon in 1890*. Ask them to take a moment to look at this portrait.
- Ask them what they think can be learned about Félix Fénéon by looking at this portrait, keeping in mind costume, expression, pose, and background.
- Ask your students to think about the title. Make sure they understand that the term “opus” refers to a musical movement, and that the rest of the title refers to the background of the painting as “rhythmic with beats and angles, tones, and tints.” Write this part of the title on the chalkboard, and ask your students to consider the words while describing the painting’s background.

Félix Fénéon was an art and literary critic who acted as a spokesperson and advocate for Paul Signac and contemporaries such as Georges Seurat and Camille Pissarro. He coined the term “Neo-Impressionist” to distinguish their work from the Impressionists, and explicated the artists’ interest in optics and color theory, which informed their use of many small brushstrokes or dots (a style known as “pointillism”) to compose their pictures. Like many of his friends, Fénéon enjoyed dressing eccentrically in silk top hats and capes. His pointed beard contributed to his resemblance to Uncle Sam.

- Ask your students to look at these two paintings again. Ask them to describe how they are similar and how they are different.
- Ask what aspects of their subjects the artists have chosen to highlight.

ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS

Ask your students to plan a portrait of someone they know. Ask why they selected this person. Have them write a few words to describe his or her personality and consider what they would like to communicate about the person to the viewer. Then ask them to think about the costume, expression, pose, and background they intend to include in their portrait to best communicate this information. Have them make a drawing, painting, or collage of the person.

Ask your students to create a **self-portrait** in the same manner.

As mentioned above, Félix Fénéon was an art critic who influenced the way in which people understood and thought about the work of artists he chose to write about. There were other people who wrote about art at this time who also had an impact on the way in which the public viewed art. Research some of these critics and their ideas.

There are art critics today who write reviews of museum exhibitions and artists’ shows in newspapers and magazines. Find a local exhibition and ask your students to visit it either on their own or as a class. Before the visit, students should brainstorm about questions to consider while they are at the exhibition. They should take notes about what they see, thinking carefully about the themes and ideas in the exhibition and the ways in which the works are installed. Ask them to use these notes to each write a review of the show. Then have the students read a published review on the exhibition. How does the review add to their ideas or help further their understanding of the exhibition? Do they agree or disagree with the reviewer?

LESSON FOUR: Popular Culture



IMAGE TWELVE: François-Raoul Larche. *Loie Fuller, the Dancer*. c. 1900. Bronze, 18 1/8 x 10 1/8 x 9 1/8" (45.7 x 25.5 x 23.1 cm). Gift of Anthony Russo



IMAGE THIRTEEN: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. French, 1864–1901. *Divan Japonais*. 1893. Lithographed poster, composition: 31 7/8 x 23 7/8" (80.3 x 60.7 cm); sheet: 31 7/8 x 24 1/16" (80 x 62.4 cm). Publisher: Édouard Fournier, Paris. Printer: Edward Ancourt, Paris. Edition: unknown. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, 1949

INTRODUCTION

The end of the nineteenth century in France is known as the Belle Époque (literally, “beautiful age”) because of the high cultural development that occurred at that time. Entertainment for the general public was a fairly new phenomenon, and artists created images in a variety of mediums and techniques of celebrities and of audiences enjoying popular culture.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will be introduced to one new medium and one new technique: bronze sculpture and lithography.
- Students will consider the ways in which popular culture is recorded or disseminated in society.
- Students will consider the ways in which art and popular culture may be integrated in advertising.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Discuss the idea of popular culture with your students. Ask them to create a list of definitions or examples of popular culture that they have seen. How do we learn about popular culture? Ask your students to consider the idea of celebrity. What is the role of the media (TV, newspapers, the Internet) in creating the idea of celebrity?

- The poster created by Toulouse-Lautrec (preceding page) was commissioned as an advertisement. Show your students a videotape of a commercial (or focus the conversation on a commercial that they have all seen), or have some advertisements from magazines or newspapers available for review. Ask the students to identify the product that is being advertised and the strategy that is being used to sell the product. Ask them to consider the link between advertising and popular culture.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

- Give your students a moment to look closely at *Loïe Fuller, the Dancer*. Begin the conversation by asking your students to describe what they see. Have them create a list of words to describe the sculpture.
- Inform your students that this is a sculpture of a well-known American dancer named Loïe Fuller, who moved to Paris and became a regular performer at a famous music hall called the Folies Bergères. She was celebrated for her twirling dances and flowing, silky costumes. A number of artists created images of her in a variety of mediums.
- Ask your students to look closely at *Divan Japonais*. Inform them that the owner of the cabaret depicted in the work, the Divan Japonais, commissioned Toulouse-Lautrec to make this poster to celebrate the cabaret's reopening after it had been refurbished. Ask your students to examine the three figures in the poster. These people would have been recognized by the public at the time. The man was an art critic and founder of a literary magazine. The central female figure was a famous cancan dancer. The figure onstage, whose head is cropped, was a well-known singer. Although her face is not visible, she would have been recognized by the long black gloves that were her signature accessory.
- Break your students up into pairs. Ask them to list all of the similarities they can find between *Loïe Fuller* and *Divan Japonais*. Once they have come up with a number of similarities, go around the room and have each pair name one. Tell students that they cannot repeat an idea that has already been stated, so they must listen closely to each other. How many similarities are related to background information and how many are purely visual ones.

Both *Loïe Fuller* and *Divan Japonais* are in the style of Art Nouveau. As described on p. 10 of this guide, nature was an important source for Art Nouveau artists and designers. Vines and vegetation inspired the curvilinear lines and rhythmic patterns typical of the style. The unique swirling movements that were characteristic of Loïe Fuller's dancing extended through her filmy costumes, creating organic, fluid forms that embody the Art Nouveau sensibility.

Divan Japonais is a lithograph. Lithography, invented in 1798, is a form of printmaking in which an artist can draw directly onto the surface of limestone (now usually aluminum plates) with an oily medium. The artist's drawing is "fixed" to the surface of the plate with an acid. Water is then used to cover the areas of the plate that the artist has not drawn on so as to repel the medium (water and oil do not mix). Thus, when the medium is applied to the plate, it adheres only to the actual image the artist has drawn. Damp paper is then placed onto the plate, which is sent through a press to create the image. (For more information and to see a demonstration of this process, see <http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/whatisaprint>.)

ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS

Ask your students to create a poster advertising a popular student hangout at school. Will they include people that they can all recognize? Ask how they think they could make people recognizable without showing their faces. They can make their poster using many different mediums, such as drawing, painting, and/or collage.

In addition to being a pioneer of modern dance, Loïe Fuller held several patents in stage lighting and costume design. Research Loïe Fuller and her impact on these various aspects of modern dance.

LESSON FIVE: Landscape

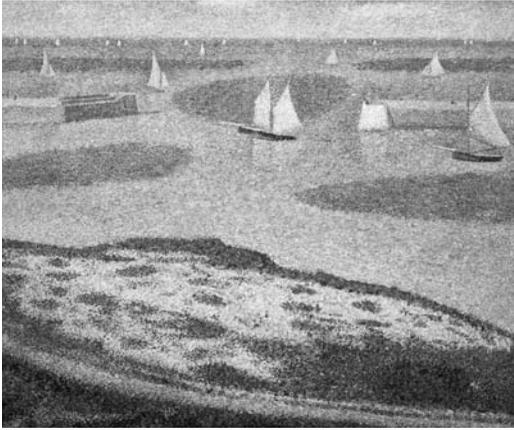


IMAGE FOURTEEN: Georges-Pierre Seurat. French, 1859–1891. *Port-en-Bessin, Entrance to the Harbor*. 1888. Oil on canvas, 21 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 25 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (54.9 x 65.1 cm). Lillie P. Bliss Collection



IMAGE FIFTEEN: Vincent van Gogh. Dutch, 1853–1890. *The Starry Night*. 1889. Oil on canvas, 29 x 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (73.7 x 92.1 cm). Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest



IMAGE SIXTEEN: Edvard Munch. Norwegian, 1863–1944. *Melancholy III*. 1902. Woodcut with gouache additions, composition: 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (37.5 x 47 cm); sheet: 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 25 $\frac{15}{16}$ " (52 x 65.8 cm). Publisher: the artist. Printer: M. W. Lassally, Berlin. Edition: approximately 100 in several color and compositional variations. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The William B. Jaffe and Evelyn A. J. Hall Collection. © 2005 The Munch Museum/The Munch-Ellingen Group/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

INTRODUCTION

Landscape was a popular subject for many artists throughout the nineteenth century. While interested in painting modern city life, a number of artists in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century were averse to the intense pace of modern society. For artists who wished to paint landscapes, the country—made more easily accessible by the new railroads—offered a retreat from growing industrialization.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will become familiar with the term “landscape,” and will revisit the terms “foreground,” “middle ground” and “background.”
- Students will consider how an artist’s painting technique impacts a viewer’s interpretation of a painting.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

- Begin by showing your students *Port-en-Bessin, Entrance to the Harbor*. Ask them to take a moment to look at the image carefully. Ask the students to describe what is in the foreground, middle ground, and background.
- Inform your students that this is a landscape. Ask them to define “landscape,” or help them to define it based on what they see in this image. A landscape is an image that has natural scenery as its primary focus.
- Ask your students to write down five to ten words that describe this painting. (Emphasize to older students the use of adjectives as opposed to nouns.)
- Ask your students to choose their favorite words and share them with the class. Direct them to use visual evidence from the work to explain their word choices. Make a list of the words on the chalkboard or on chart paper.

Georges-Pierre Seurat, like Impressionist painters before him, was very interested in painting light, and studied optical theory to develop his painting technique, known as “pointillism,” or Neo-Impressionism (see Lesson Three, p. 14). Seurat created this image by carefully placing small dots of color side by side. When viewed up close, one is aware of the many small dots of varied color. When viewed from a distance, the dots fuse together to create the image. Neo-Impressionist artists believed that this painstaking method of painting was the most scientific and precise way to record color and light.

- Ask your students to look carefully at *The Starry Night*. How is it similar to *Port-en-Bessin, Entrance to the Harbor*? How is it different?
- Ask your students why—based on the definition they came up with earlier—this painting is considered a landscape.
- Ask them to write down five to ten words that describe this painting. (Emphasize to older students the use of adjectives as opposed to nouns.)
- Ask the students to choose their favorite words and share them with the class. Ask them to use visual evidence from the work to explain their selection.

- **Make a list of the favorite words on the chalkboard or on chart paper and compare this list with the list of words that the class came up with for *Port-en-Bessin, Entrance to the Harbor*. How many words do the two lists have in common? How many are different?**

“This morning I saw the country from my window a long time before sunrise, with nothing but the morning star, which looked very big,” wrote van Gogh to his brother, Theo, describing the inspiration for *The Starry Night*.³ But the painting is more about imagination than realism. While it is true that this landscape is of a real night sky van Gogh observed while living in the South of France, it also contains fictional elements, such the church spire, which did not exist in the small village that he saw from his window but which is reminiscent of a church in his native Holland. Van Gogh spoke passionately about painting a scene as he saw it, not as it was expected to be rendered: “[...] those mountains, were they blue? [...] They were blue, weren’t they? Good—make them blue and that’s all!”⁴

- **Ask your students to take a moment to look at *Melancholy III*. Ask them to compare and contrast this image to *The Starry Night*. How are they similar? How are they different?**

Edvard Munch believed that working in an expressive mode and capturing emotion was more important than making realistic images of the world. He wrote, “Nature is not something that can be seen by the eye alone—it lies also within the soul, in pictures seen by the inner eye.”⁵ This approach to creating images is called Symbolism. The Symbolists included artists and writers who sought to communicate their subjective reaction to the world around them rather than to create realistic depictions of it.

Melancholy III is a woodcut. A woodcut is a print that is made by carving an image onto a woodblock. The artist chisels away at the block leaving a raised image. When ink is rolled onto the woodblock, it lands on the raised image. Paper is placed on the block, which is then sent through a printing press to create the image. (For more information and to see a demonstration of this process, see: <http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/whatisaprint>.)

ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS

Show your students the three images again. Give them a moment to review them closely. Ask them to write “postcards” from each of the three landscape scenes. They should include both a description of the places shown in the images and a description of the mood that comes across in each image. Ask them to imagine what it would be like to spend a day there as they write.

Have your students create a landscape or a cityscape. First ask them to choose a location and take several photographs of it. Then they can begin by creating sketches before moving on to painting the scene.

3. *MoMA Highlights: 350 Works from The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 35.

4. John Rewald, in *Visions of Modern Art*, John Elderfield, ed. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2003), 29.

5. Wendy Weitman, in “Landscape as Retreat,” *ModernStarts: People, Places, Things*, John Elderfield et al, eds. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 212.

FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

After completing the lessons, ask your students to make a list of any questions that they still have about an artist or artists in this guide. Organize their questions into different categories so that they can conduct their own research. Categories can include: biographical questions; questions about a specific work of art, such as why the artist made it and what types of materials the artist used; and questions regarding historical events at a certain time during the artist's life.

Research artists associated with Post-Impressionism and Symbolism who are not included in this guide. Select a work by one of these artists and compare it to a work in this guide. Do you notice any similarities or differences? Why do you think these two artists were identified as part of the same group?

Visit The Museum of Modern Art and locate an artwork that was included in this guide. Now that you are looking at the actual work, think about its size and scale. How would you compare the work in the Museum with the reproduction that you saw in the classroom? Are there any details you see now that you didn't notice earlier? Have your ideas about this work changed? Why or why not?

Consider the works of art installed around the one you are viewing. How would you compare the works? Why do you think they were chosen to be exhibited together?

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Looking Back

This guide discusses Post-Impressionist artists and their relationship to the Impressionists. Research Impressionist artists such as Claude Monet and Édouard Manet, and think about the connections between these artists and the ones referenced in this guide.

Contemporaries

This guide is focused primarily on artists working in France during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Investigate artists working in other countries at that time, and other movements. For instance, the Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí and the Austrian painter Gustav Klimt worked in the style of Art Nouveau.

Looking Ahead

Select one of the artists in this guide. Follow the artist's career after 1900. What kind of art did he or she make? Describe the different mediums used by the artist. Compare and contrast one of these works with a later work by another artist not included in the guide. Do you notice any similarities or differences? Were there any factors that played an important role in the later artist's work, such as historical events (for example, the impact of World War I) or personal experiences? How did people react to his or her work at the time? (You may also want to refer to other guides in the Modern Art and Ideas series.)

Literary Connections

Explore connections with writers who were contemporary to the artists presented in this guide, such as Kate Chopin, Henry James, Stéphane Mallarmé, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, and William Butler Yeats.

Looking at American History

Compare the artistic climate in the United States during this period with that of France and/or Germany. Who were some prominent American artists at the time? Why were they prominent?

As part of your research, choose one or two works of art by an American artist. Describe the work in as much detail as possible, and include reactions from art critics or historians from around the time the work was made. Do you agree or disagree with published opinions of this work?

GLOSSARY

Art Nouveau: an international style of decoration and architecture begun in the 1880s and 1890s.

Avant garde: a group that is innovative and inventive in its technique, particularly in the arts.

Background: the part of the picture that appears furthest from the viewer; also, the area against which a figure or scene is placed.

Cityscape: an image that has urban scenery as its primary focus.

Costume: what a figure is wearing.

Expression: a facial aspect indicating an emotion.

Foreground: the part of the picture that appears closest to the viewer.

Gesture: the placement of a figure's hands.

Landscape: an image that has natural scenery as its primary focus.

Lithography: a printmaking technique based on the repulsion of oil and water. (For more information and for a demonstration of this process see <http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/whatisaprint>.)

Medium: a term used to refer to the material or materials used in a work of art.

Middle ground: the part of the picture that is between the foreground and background.

Portrait: a representation of a particular individual.

Pose: the way a figure is positioned.

Self-portrait: an individual's representation of him- or herself.

Woodcut: a printmaking technique involving an image in relief on wood. (For more information and for a demonstration of this process see <http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/whatisaprint>.)

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ONLINE RESOURCES

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
www.moma.org

The official site of the Eiffel Tower
www.tour-eiffel.fr

What Is a Print?
www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/whatisaprint

The Grove Dictionary of Art Online (requires subscription)
www.groveart.com

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