

Orientalism

- Presentation
- Objectives
- Before the visit
- After to the visit
- The visit: list of artworks
- Bibliography

Presentation

Orientalism, a term used from 1850 onwards, describes an aesthetic climate rather than a style. It emerged during the 17th century and went on to develop in 18th and 19th century French painting. Orientalism began with the taste for things Turkish, well illustrated by the famous “mamamouchi” in Molière’s *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and continued with the convention of sultans and muftis, common in the theatre and in heroic paintings at the time of Louis XV. However during the 19th century, Orientalism went through a significant development: in 1829, Victor Hugo wrote in his foreword to the *Orientalists*, that “the Orient has become a general preoccupation”.

Political events and economic transformations bring about a new approach to the Orient

The Egyptian Campaign

Bonaparte, inspired by the example of the great conquerors of Antiquity and determined to impose a French presence in a region of the world which was also coveted by the English, landed in Aboukir on July 1st, 1798. He was accompanied by a group of scientists who were to provide the country with modern technologies and by a few artists who made sketches of archaeological sites and monuments (the baron Vivant Denon, who later became general director of museums, published the *Trip in Upper and Lower Egypt* in 1802). The French occupation of Egypt lasted only three years but it inspired such renowned works as *Bonaparte Visiting the Pesthouse in Jaffa* by Gros (1804, Musée du Louvre) and it nourished the vogue for “Egyptomania”.

The War of Greek Liberation

Dominated by Ottoman authority, Greek patriots were enthused by the echoes of the French Revolution which were awakening the people’s desire for independence. The Greeks had been organising themselves into patriotic societies as far back as the closing years of the 18th century but when in 1821, the war for national liberation began, it was marked by bloody massacres. Many foreigners, like the British poet Byron, rallied to the Greek cause, and their voluntary brigades (the Philhellenes) achieved some victories over the troops of the Sultan. Nevertheless, it took the Anglo-Franco-Russian intervention of 1827, for Greece to finally gain independence (1829-1830). This struggle inspired and touched liberal artists, a famous and vivid example being Delacroix’s *Massacre at Chios* (1824, Musée du Louvre).

The Conquest of Algeria

After the capture of Algiers by Charles X’s army in 1830, the French began to carry out the simultaneous conquest and colonisation of Algeria.

The various battles taking place throughout the 19th century gave battle painters opportunities to represent exotic settings such as the *Capture of the Smala of Abd-el-Kader* by Bellangé (Chantilly, Musée Condé). The progressive colonisation by the French stimulated interest and curiosity amongst the “Metropolitan” French for the Algerian landscape and the customs of its people. The interest was such that some artists, like Guillaumet, went to stay in Algeria several times.

Cultural and Economic Development

The Ottoman empire declined and receded throughout the century. Its defeat led part of its elite to call for their country’s modernisation which meant the increase of economic investments, secular and religious educational missions, cultural and diplomatic exchanges. As a consequence, Mehemet Ali (1805-1849), who gave France the obelisk on the Place de la Concorde, opened his country to the outside world. The inauguration of the Suez canal, engineered by Ferdinand de Lesseps, in 1869, the development of roads, railways and maritime routes for steam boats, all encouraged exchanges and visits.

Romantic Orientalism: An Imaginary Orient

Romantic artists and writers, in a quest for new models and sources of inspiration, were seduced by the exoticism of an Orient from which they constructed new themes, amongst them: cruelty in the form of the desert, the tyrant or the hunt, the sensuality and opulence of harem women, the picturesque street scenes with colourful and teeming crowds... They also savoured the opportunity of painting more intense light effects, using more vivid and gaudy colours. Decamps stayed only once and for little more than a year in the Middle-East (1828-1829), but even before his trip he was painting imaginary cities and buildings, and Turkish characters. From 1852 onwards, Delacroix, crossed the Maghreb, staying specifically in Meknes, Oran, Algiers... where he made numerous sketches and watercolours – a source of documentation which served him for thirty years to come – and developed some of his most renowned paintings, including the *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* (1834, Musée du Louvre). He saw in the nobility of Arabs all the Classical qualities which he had felt French Neo-classicism lacked: “Rome is no longer in Rome”, he wrote, “Antiquity has nothing more beautiful”.

This is similar to the approach of Horace Vernet, the battle painter, who during his trips to Algeria, painted biblical scenes using contemporary models. In 1848, he published an article in *L’illustration* entitled: “The similarities between ancient and modern Hebrew dress”. Chasseriau on the other hand spent only a short while in Algeria, in 1846, and although he continued to be

inspired by the Orient years later, he subjected it to a rather free interpretation; his female nudes are of Parisian models who evoke an imaginary and sensual Orient.

Orientalist painters often collected genuine weapons, carpets and other rare and unusual artefacts, using these accessories according to their imaginative fantasies.

Naturalist Orientalism: Ethnographic Curiosity

The confrontation with the Orient having been made more possible in real terms by the amelioration of travel conditions, inspired some artists to look beyond Romantic fantasy and be more readily interested in its reality: Guillaumet’s realist tendencies earned him the nickname “Millet of the desert”. Some artists even accompanied scientific missions, attempting to record the memory of the Orient as it underwent transformations caused by its contact with Europeans. The sculptor Cordier, for example, made a series of busts intended to be part of a presentation on the history of the races in the anthropological gallery of the Paris Museum of Natural History. This is reminiscent of the Naturalist approach.

Landscapes were just as interesting to painters as human types. Struck by the immensity of the desert, artists like Fromentin, Guillaumet and Tournemine endeavoured to capture its feeling of infinity. The spirit of observation, the desire to relate and testify to things as they saw them, as well as to qualities of atmosphere and light led these artists to emphasise reportage rather than emotion.

Objectives

Various educational objectives may be linked to a visit based on Orientalism. They are listed here in order of ascending complexity.

Primary school level

The infant school curricula includes an initiation into the discovery of the world, the environment and culture. It is possible to use the artworks outlined in this visit to give a simple idea of orientation (near, far, far distant spaces...) and of landscapes, houses, costumes, exotic animals...

Primary school introduces the study of the diversity of landscapes, the discovery of maps and the terrestrial globe, as well as an initiation into artistic approaches. One may encourage the children to compare the world around them with other environments and to reflect about differences in space and time. The Orientalist paintings depict different climates, natural environments, landscapes and human activities, which are interesting for the children to compare with those they are familiar with. It is also possible to tackle notions of distance and time based on the study of means of communication and transport.

Secondary school level

1. The visit may be used as part of a reflection on travel, displacement and otherness. By listing and analysing the iconographic and pictorial elements which tell of the artists' search for fresh subjects and new atmospheres, pupils will be able grasp the 19th century aspiration towards aesthetic renewal.

2. The visit may serve as an element in a larger project about "dream vs. reality". It may constitute the seeds of reflection on the relationship, in the field of visual arts, between reporting "fact" and expressing a subjective interpretation.

3. The visit is a perfect complement to the study of Romanticism, highlighting one of the major themes of this movement. It also shows how Orientalism was extended and modified beyond the codes of Romantic aesthetics.

4. Orientalism is a subject that lends itself to making a comparative study of the differences and parallels in the approaches and treatments taken by literature and visual arts. This is marvellously illustrated by Eugène Fromentin's dual literary and artistic work, *A Year in the Sahel*, 1859 from which pupils may study excerpts. One may also apply the comparative approach to other Orientalist texts by better known authors, but it is important to mark the limits of parallelism drawing a clear distinction between the processes specific to visual arts and to literature.

5. Another significant feature of this particular visit is that, owing to the nebulous nature of Orientalism, it may be used to cut across the entire

range of the great visual arts movements of the second half of 19th century held in the Musée d'Orsay collections. This is a refreshing way of approaching the art of period rather than in the usual "instalments", i.e. through the juxtaposition of movements (romanticism, realism, academicism, impressionism etc.).

Furthermore, Orientalist works are found in all the different disciplines represented in the Museum collections: painting, sculpture, photography, and occasionally, objets d'art. Finally, representatives of Orientalism can be found in all the genres codified by the traditional "hierarchy": history painting, portrait, animal painting, and landscape.

6. More specifically, the ethnographical approach of some of the Orientalist artists may be included in the study of social sciences during the second half of the 19th century. It is also possible to include it in a more general study of the relationship between arts and sciences.

Before The Visit

Several suggestions are made to help teachers prepare for the visit at the Musée d'Orsay, which can be tailored according to the level and the subject taught.

- Study the historical background of Orientalism. Specify the different zones of influence in the Middle-East and in Northern Africa of the European countries and of France. Distinguish between the processes of conquest and colonisation. One may examine the role of political authorities and the bias of the commissions they assigned to artists and also the material and topographical conditions of the "trip to the Orient" which artists made increasingly under their own steam.

It is also important to use maps to define the zones pertaining to Orientalism: for instance, it may be surprising for pupils to learn that the 19th century Orient began in southern Spain.

- Study a certain number of texts pertaining to 19th century Orientalist literature, preferably chosen to illustrate the two sides of the visit: the first on "the Orient as a Romantic dream", and the second "the real Orient of the naturalists". (see bibliographical suggestions below and the fourth "objective" above)

- Provide the pupils with materials such as excerpts from texts, pictures, historical events which enable them to understand in what forms the Orient inspired literature and the arts in the 17th and 18th centuries. This would be nicely illustrated by a visit to the Musée du Louvre centred around the 18th century. It will then be possible to guide the pupils through the theme's evolution during the 19th century.

After The Visit

A further and more detailed study of Eugène Delacroix is recommended as the chronological limits assigned to the Musée d'Orsay restrict the amount of his work which can be represented in its collections. Major pieces by Delacroix are housed in the Musée du Louvre, and a rich and diverse collection of his work can be seen at the Musée Delacroix, Place Furstemberg (Paris VI).

Another interesting follow-up would be to pursue the confrontation between Orientalism and Primitivism, the latter's best known representative being Gauguin. One may show pupils that the Orient mostly provided "Orientalist" artists with two kinds of resources: new subject matter and a renewal of pictorial expression in terms of light and colour. Primitivist artists were to go further: they would actually include elements derived from ethnic art in their artistic vocabulary. This approach was to influence a profound change in the order of values: would the "scientific" art of the Western world lose its supremacy?

The visit: list of artworks

N.B. For guided visits, this list of artworks is indicative only. The guide leading the group is free to choose the works which support their demonstration.

This list includes paintings, sculptures and objects d'art exhibited in the galleries of the Musée d'Orsay.

Paintings

- Gustave Guillaumet: *Le Sahara (The Sahara)*, also known as *Le Désert (The Desert)*, 1867
- Henri Regnault: *Exécution sans jugement sous les rois maures de Grenade (Execution Without Trial Under the Rule of the Moorish Kings in Granada)*, 1870
- Charles de Tournemine: *Éléphants d'Afrique (African Elephants)*, 1867 Salon
- Charles de Tournemine: *Café à Adalia (Café in Adalia)*, 1861
- Eugène Delacroix: *Chasse aux Lions (Lion Hunt)*, 1854
- Eugène Delacroix: *Chasse au Tigre (Tiger Hunt)*, 1854
- Eugène Delacroix: *Passage d'un gué au Maroc (Fording a River in Morocco)*, 1858
- Eugène Delacroix: *Chevaux arabes se battant dans une écurie (Arab Horses Fighting in a Stable)*, 1860
- Auguste Renoir: *La mosquée (The Mosque)* or *Fête arabe (Arab Celebration)*, 1881
- Auguste Renoir: *Paysage d'Algérie (Algerian Landscape)* or *Le ravin de la femme sauvage (The Wild Woman's Gully)*, 1881
- Auguste Renoir: *Champs de bananiers (Banana Fields)*, 1881
- Théodore Chassériau: *Tépidarium (Tepidarium)*, 1855 Salon
- Théodore Chassériau: *Chefs de tribus arabes se défiant au combat singulier sous les remparts d'une ville (Arab Tribal Chiefs Challenging Each Other to Single Combat Under the Walls of a City)*, 1852 Salon
- Léon Belly: *Pèlerins allant à la Mecque (Pilgrims on Their Way to Mecca)*, 1861
- Alexandre Decamps: *Marchand turc fumant dans sa boutique (Turkish Merchant Smoking in His Shop)*, 1844
- Alexandre Decamps: *Paysage. Saül poursuivant David (Landscape. Saul Pursuing David)*
- Eugène Fromentin: *Le pays de la soif (The Land of Thirst)*, circa 1869
- Eugène Fromentin: *Chasse au faucon en Algérie, la curée (Falcon Hunting in Algeria, the Quarry)*, 1865
- Gustave Guillaumet: *Tisseuses à Bou-Saâda (Weavers in Bou-Saâda)*, formerly known as *Fileuses à Bou-Saâda (Spinners in Bou-Saâda)*
- Gustave Guillaumet: *Le Désert (The Desert)*, 1867
- Gustave Guillaumet: *Laghout, Sahara algérien (Laghout, Algerian Sahara)*, 1875

- Gustave Guillaumet: *Prière de soir dans le Sahara (Evening Prayer in the Sahara)*, 1865
- Octave Penguilly-L'Haridon: *Les bergers, conduits par l'étoile, se rendant à Bethléem (The Shepherds, Led by the Star, on Their Way to Bethlehem)*, 1865
- Jean-Léon Gérôme: *Jérusalem [Golgotha, Consumatum est, La Crucifixion] (Jerusalem [Golgotha, Consumatum est, The Crucifixion])*, 1867
- Alfred Dehodencq: *L'adieu du roi Boabdil à Grenade (King Boabdil's Farewell to Granada)*, 1869

Sculptures

- Louis-Ernest Barrias: *Jeune fille du Mégare assise et filant (Girl from the Megare Sitting and Spinning)*, 1868
- Adèle d'Affry Marcello, duchesse de Castiglione-Colona: *Chef abyssin (Abyssinian Chief)*, 1875
- Jean Damp: *Avant la fantasia, souvenir de Tanger (Before the Fantasia, souvenir of Tangier)*, 1885
- Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier: *Nègre du Soudan (Sudanese Man)*, 1857
- Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier: *Capresse des colonies (Woman of the Colonies)*, 1861
- Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier: *Arabe d'El-Aghouat en burnous (Arab from El-Aghouat Wearing a Burnoose)*, 1857 Salon

Objets d'Art

- Théodore Deck: *Coupe monumentale (Monumental Cup)*, circa 1870
- Philippe-Joseph Brocard: *Vase*, 1867

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- Théophile Gautier, *Voyage en Espagne*, Flammarion "GF", 1981
- Pierre Loti, *Le Désert*, C. Pirot "Monts et merveilles", 1987
- Victor Segalen, *Les Immémoriaux*, Pocket "Terre humaine", 1985 (pour further study into exoticism, Gauguin and Tahiti)
- Edward Saïd, *L'Orientalisme : l'Orient créé par l'Occident*, Seuil "La couleur des idées", 1996
- Mounira Khemir (introduction), *L'Orientalisme. L'Orient des photographes au XIX^e siècle*, CNC "Photo Poche", 1994
- *La sculpture ethnographique, de la Vénus hottentote à la Tehura de Gauguin*, RMN "Les Dossiers du Musée d'Orsay" n°53, 1994

Audiovisual

- *Le rêve oriental au XIX^e siècle, écrivains, peintres, géographes, photographes*, CNDP "Diathèque, expression et langage", 24 slides + booklet
- *Eugène Delacroix, le voyage au Maroc*, CD-ROM, joint production Arborescence/Les Films d'Ici/Institut du Monde arabe/RMN, 1994

• The visit: the artworks

N.B. The artworks are presented in the same order as the Museum's usual circuit.

I. Orientalism inspired by Romanticism

1. Eugène Delacroix (1798-1865):
Chasse aux lions (Lion Hunt), 1854
Location: ground floor, gallery 2

This artwork is a sketch for a painting that has been destroyed by fire. Although it is difficult to pick out individual elements, one can identify the figure of the horse rearing up in the centre of the composition. The theme was inspired by Rubens, whose influence can also be found in the composition which is structured by colour rather than drawing. The quick, nervous touch, in which the artist's hand can be felt, expresses the fervour of the scene and the vitality of the painter. In a tangled and violent mêlée, the bodies of the animals are presented in a spiral constructed from the three primary colours: blue, red and yellow. The colour harmony in the finished painting prompted Baudelaire to write: "Never before have more beautiful, more intense colours, penetrated one's very soul by way of one's eyes." The painting often received hostile criticism which reproached Delacroix for his extravagant colour and incomprehensible composition. Although he was a major representative of Romanticism, Delacroix here shows himself to be a pioneer; in the importance he assigned to colour masses and the expressive quality of the tumult, the sketch seems to announce Fauvism, a movement that was to mark the first years of the 20th century.

2. Eugène Delacroix (1798-1865):
Chasse au tigre (Tiger Hunt), 1854
Location: ground floor, gallery 5

This hunt bares many similarities to the *Lion Hunt*, and can be seen as a finished equivalent. Here the representation of movement and violence is reinforced by the vivid and intense light directed at a few significantly selected parts of the painting: tiger, clothes..., and animated by the quick gestures of the men who are about to attack the beast. The determination of the horseman, the terror of the horse, the violence of the tiger show the cruel sport of hunting at its climax. This painting was shown as part of the retrospective of the painter's work at the 1889 World Fair; it contains all that made up Delacroix's genius, his science of colours, the freedom of his drawing, and the psychological accuracy with which he analysed behaviour.

3. Théodore Chassériau (1819-1856):
Tepidarium, 1855 Salon
Location: ground floor, gallery 2

A *tepidarium*, was part of the Roman bathing system; a place where bathers, according to the custom common throughout the Orient, came to rest and dry after bathing. The painter very consciously set his scene in Roman Antiquity, the ceiling vault being decorated with a bas-relief inspired by the baths of Venus Genetrix, a recent archaeological discovery at Pompeii. But Chassériau's nudes convey all the poetry of the Orient. The nonchalance of the poses and looks, the sensuality born from the proximity of bodies and of their languid curves all conform to the standard harem atmosphere as assumed by Western art. A painting like this contributes to the occidental fantasy of the odalisque, the myth of the idle, dreaming, sensual oriental woman. The combination of warm colours – note in particular the yellow and blue pieces of cloth – and the smooth and pearly perfection of the female nudes remind us that Chassériau, having been a pupil of Ingres, was an admirer of Delacroix.

4. Théodore Chassériau (1819-1856):
Chefs de tribus arabes se défiant au combat singulier sous les remparts d'une ville (Arab Tribal Chiefs Challenging Each Other to Single Combat Under the Walls of a City), 1870
Location: ground floor, gallery 2

Whereas the stock-image of the oriental woman was that of the nonchalant harem odalisque, the oriental man was seen as the haughty warrior, courageous but cruel. In this respect, this painting may be seen as the companion to *Tepidarium*. The fight plunges us into a cruel, merciless world in which the violence and hatred of the challenge can be read in the glances exchanged by the warriors. The two horses and the bloody corpse in the foreground are composed in a V-shape. In the background, between the horses' heads, one can see the fights taking place; bodies accumulate; a soldier, with a sabre in his hand, is attacking a horseman, who is himself stabbing an enemy. Warm and cold colours confront one another in the chiefs' tunics. The contrast is reinforced by the fact that one of them is on dry ground whilst the other is in water. Cruelty is also expressed by the fight's disproportionate odds in terms of weaponry: one chief is only armed with a small arrow whilst the other brandishes a heavy javelin.



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1. Eugène Delacroix : *Chasse aux lions*, 1854
2. Eugène Delacroix : *Chasse au tigre*, 1854
3. Théodore Chassériau : *Tepidarium*, salon de 1855
4. Théodore Chassériau : *Chefs de tribus arabes se défiant au combat singulier sous les remparts d'une ville*, 1870

5. Henri Regault (1845-1871): *Exécution sans jugement sous les rois maures de Grenade* (*Execution Without Trial Under the Rule of the Moorish Kings in Granada*), 1870
Location: ground floor, gallery 5

Regnault sent this painting to the Académie des Beaux-Arts during the fourth year of his prix de Rome residency at the Villa Médicis in accordance with the rules governing the residency. Rather than choosing a Classical subject, he took his inspiration from the Orient, where he had been given permission to travel. The Hispano-Moorish architectural setting indicates how much the young painter had been impressed by the Alhambra in Granada.

Here, once again, the Orient is characterised by a violent scene. The final framing - originally Regnault had conceived of a larger painting - is eminently theatrical: the two diagonals formed by the sabre and the victim's corpse, the viewing angle from below and the staring eyes of the severed head, all work to stirring dramatic effect. The evocative power of painting is further enhanced by the astonishing device of the "dribblings" of red paint which lend the flowing blood a disturbing realism.

6. Gustave Guillaumet (1840-1887): *Le Sahara* (*Sahara*), also known as *Le Désert* (*The Desert*), 1867
Location: ground floor, gallery 25

The painting's originality lies in its emptiness. The landscape is completely reduced to horizontal layers of colour interspersed with grey. The only identifiable being, the skeleton of the camel in the foreground, carries a forceful symbolic power: death and loneliness rule in this immensity where desert and sky answer each other with equal silence. In the background, bathed in light, a mysterious group appears: is it a caravan or a mirage? Illusion is merged with reality. Most of Guillaumet's paintings evoke the austere and primitive life of the Algerian desert. The artist shared the poor, rough, and monotonous life of the desert peoples. He also suffered from malaria. This painting is exceptional in his oeuvre and it is almost as a visionary that he evokes the desert's desolate and deadly world.

7. Charles-Emile Tournemine (1812-1872): *Éléphants d'Afrique* (*African Elephants*), 1867 Salon
Location: ground floor, gallery 25

Here, Tournemine presents the secret world of wild animals in the Eden-like but slightly conventional atmosphere of a sunset. The strength of the elephants is in harmony with the calm and gentle landscape, all the more so as they cohabit peacefully with a group of birds. Tournemine, who travelled widely, produced many paintings in this oriental "picturesque" mode; genre scenes and landscapes, admirable for their rich colours and popular with the visitors of the official Salons in the 1850s and 60s. The painting plunged the 19th century viewer into another world which was, then, even more striking than it is today: the elephant only rarely represented in zoos, still held the power to impress.

8. Louis-Ernest Barrias (1841-1905): *Jeune fille de Mégare assise et filant* (*Mégare Girl Sitting and Spinning*), 1868
Location: ground floor, gallery 25

All the grace of this figure is expressed in the delicacy of the proportions chosen by the artist and in the care he took in details. The Orientalist clues remain discreet: the girl is wearing a bracelet on her left arm and the base on which she is sitting cross-legged is decorated with intertwined motifs forming stars characteristic of Islamic art.

The refinement of her gestures as she is spinning the thread evokes the poise of a dancer. The girl's physicality is entirely in keeping with the accepted canon for the representation of the adolescent in Western art.

This piece served as model for the *Girl From Bou Saâda* (1890), a funeral sculpture made as a final homage to the Orientalist painter Guillaumet for his tomb in the Montmartre cemetery.



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5. Henri Regnault : *Exécution sans jugement sous les rois maures de Grenade*, 1870
6. Gustave Guillaumet : *Le Sahara*, dit aussi *Le Désert*, 1867
7. Charles-Emile Tournemine : *Éléphants d'Afrique*, salon de 1867
8. Louis-Ernest Barrias : *Jeune fille de Mégare assise et filant*, 1868

II. Realist and Naturalist Orientalism

9. Alexandre Decamps (1805-1860):
Marchand turc fumant dans sa boutique (Turkish Merchant Smoking in his Shop), 1844
Location: ground floor, gallery 5

This picturesque subject from Algerian daily life is presented like a familiar traveller's anecdote but is also used as a pretext for studying colour and light. The scene represents a lone man, curled up, exhausted by the heat and tinged with the calm of oriental meditation. The shop interior, full of objects, makes up part of a larger exploration of the customs of this country which, through street scenes, were easily accessible to travelling painters. Baudelaire described Decamps's style: "No one studied the effects of atmosphere with such care. He valued above all the most bizarre and incredible interactions of shadow and light. (...) The only thing (...) one could reproach him with is in giving too much consideration to the material execution of the objects." Rembrandt's influence was often mentioned when describing the artist's technique which was characterised by heavy impasto and the rendering of light on small format canvases. Decamps exercised a profound influence on Diaz de la Peña, Monticelli, Cézanne and even Van Gogh.

10. Léon Belly (1827-1877):
Pèlerins allant à la Mecque (Pilgrims on their Way to Mecca), 1861
Location: ground floor, gallery 25

For this work, considered in its time to be a masterpiece of Orientalist painting, Belly chose an imposing subject and format: it represents the movement of a caravan through the desert on Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. A critic tried to judge the work using the criteria of history painting and reproached it for grouping the human subjects too tightly and "exaggerating the space apportioned to the camels compared to that of the human figure", but the public was captivated by the image. "On the way back from the Salon, it seemed as if every visitor was part of the caravan" (Timbal). The scrupulous accuracy of the painting gives it a quasi-photographic aspect. In accordance with the rules of atmospheric perspective, in the background the crowd of pilgrims fades into the horizon line. Observe the group of three characters on the left of the caravan: a man on foot accompanying a woman with her child on a donkey: it is a striking reference to the subject, so frequent in painting, of the "flight to Egypt" of Mary, Joseph and the Christ child. The painter is knowingly playing with syncretism, merging two religious traditions.

11. Gustave Guillaumet (1840-1887):
Tisseuses à Bou-Saâda (Weavers in Bou-Saâda), previously known as *Fileuses à Bou-Saâda (Spinners in Bou-Saâda)*
Location: ground floor, gallery 25

Girls are weaving in the gloom of an underground room. Beams of light coming from the open trap door break the half-light in which the painting is bathed. The artist employs a technique where small isolated touches of barely pigmented white and red catch the eye, illuminating the whole canvas. Although no expression can be distinguished on the faces of the protagonists, the atmosphere conjures up the harsh working conditions of the weavers. Guillaumet lived amongst the Algerian people and so was familiar with their daily life. The painting shows that there was something of a Social Realist movement amongst the Orientalist painters.

12. Eugène Fromentin (1820-1876):
Le Pays de la soif (The Land of Thirst), circa 1869
Location: ground floor, gallery 25

This landscape holds nothing but hostile rocks where drought has destroyed everything: men and vegetation. It contrasts dramatically with the idyllic image of the Orient presented by Tournemine in his *African Elephants*. Here, the land is dominated by suffering and death. The composition is Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* - a work renowned throughout the 19th century, now exhibited at the Louvre - transposed into "drought-ridden earth". In both paintings, the only remaining touch of hope is embodied by an arm stretched towards the sky, calling for help. The other men do not even have the strength to call out. Is it a caravan one can see in the distance, or a mirage? Is there hope of deliverance or only illusion? For Fromentin, the Romantic period "informed entirely by imagination" is succeeded by a period "informed entirely by observation": the "oriental quest" became the "inquest on the Orient".

13. Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier (1827-1905):
Nègre du Soudan (Sudanese Man), 1857 Salon
Location: ground floor, far end of the central aisle

Cordier made a series of busts upon a commission from the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, to illustrate the "History of Races" exhibit in the gallery of anthropology. The sculptor went on assignment in Algeria and Greece to study those human types which, it was feared, were "about to melt into a single people". This sculpture is therefore very much in the ethnographical mould. The use of bronze and onyx takes up the Roman tradition of using Algerian onyx (the quarries having been reopened following colonisation). Like the sculpture, the base is multicoloured.



9



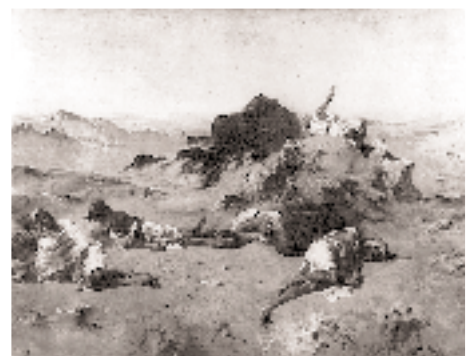
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11



12

9. Alexandre Decamps : *Marchand turc fumant dans sa boutique*, 1844
10. Léon Belly : *Pèlerins allant à la Mecque*, 1861
11. Gustave Guillaumet : *Tisseuses à Bou-Saâda*, dit autrefois à tort *Fileuses à Bou-Saâda*
12. Eugène Fromentin : *Le Pays de la soif*, vers 1869
13. Charles-Henri-Joseph Cordier : *Nègre du Soudan*, Salon de 1857

III. An Impressionist Orientalism?

14. Auguste Renoir (1841-1919):
La Mosquée (The Mosque) or Fête arabe (Arab Celebration), 1881

Location: upper level, gallery 32

Either a landscape teeming with figures or a genre scene viewed from a distance, this painting shows a joyous crowd gathering around an oriental dance. The background is divided into predominantly white architecture on one side, a rocky landscape on the other, the far background being occupied by the sea and palm trees. In the foreground, one can pick out figures sitting on the top of a rock to get a better view. The impasto brush stroke is characteristic of Impressionism. In places, the figures, their faces indistinguishable, are made up of no more than a quick suggestion of coloured spots.

The perceptible details of the costumes (turbans), the white architecture and vegetation evoke the exotic atmosphere of the Orient. Renoir presents a pleasant and joyful Orient contrasting with the austere visions of hostile deserts and bloody fights. This is an innovative kind of Orientalism, employing the pictorial characteristics of impressionism.

One should also look at Renoir's Orientalist landscape, hanging next to *La Mosquée*. Its exotic vegetation, whose luxuriance is suggested by the intertwining of coloured brush strokes, plunges us once again in into a dream-like Orient.



14