

# The Portrait

Painting and sculpture in France between 1850 and 1900

- Presentation
- Objectives
- Preparation and follow-up to the visit
- The visit: the artworks
- Bibliography

## Presentation

Nowadays, when we think of portraits we think of photographs, perhaps most often of those small format passport-booth photographs. Also, as children, we all draw pictures of ourselves, our friends or family. These two aspects of portraiture illustrate two, apparently contradictory, characteristics of the genre: the purely morphological likeness which allows the portrait's sitter to be identified – (the importance of this criterion being such, that legal identity is largely based on photographic portraits) – and the symbolic aspect of this type of representation: even children's portraits of themselves and of their family bring to light, if subconsciously, elements which they deem essential, allowing psychologists to consider such drawings as fruitful material for study.

A variety of museums, with collections from diverse historical periods, structure visits around the theme of the portrait. But the Musée d'Orsay collections present a twofold advantage: they belong to a precise period (the second half of the nineteenth century) and cover a great diversity of techniques so that we may find portraits realised in painting, sculpture, photography and in various graphic techniques exhibited according to their requirements and their fragility.

## What is a portrait?

Not all representations of the human figure may be considered to be portraits. When the title of the work indicates "portrait of..." or makes direct references to aspects of the identity of the featured person or persons, then there is no ambiguity. Conversely, certain types of representation of characters in an allegorical or symbolic form (Death, Justice, Abundance...) are not and must not be confused with the portrait genre. But there are more complex cases: sometimes a person appearing on a painting, whose identity is not mentioned in the title, is nevertheless identifiable: in this case there may indeed be a portrait included in the wider subject, for instance in an historical composition, but the painting still does not belong to the portrait genre.

Must a portrait necessarily bear a likeness? One spontaneously assumes that it should, but the history of portraiture as a whole indicates two opposing conceptions which may be called, for the sake of simplification, the realistic tendency (according to which a portrait should be morphologically as faithful as possible to its sitter) and the idealist tendency (which ennobles, or even transcends the sitter); either tendency may be exerted to varying degrees.

### 1. A short history of portraiture until the nineteenth century

Ancient Egyptian funerary art featured large groups of individualised figures, depicting both the deceased and the entourage which accompanies them in the variety of scenes represented. In the Egyptian's religion-based art, the portrait served to record the image of the deceased to allow them to continue in the after life. Roman civilisation, although it continued to exhibit this link between death and the portrait (found on sarcophagi and cenotaphs), it also introduced portraiture's more banal function which still exists today: there were sculpted busts in private houses and they played a role in political life, ensuring the posterity of the main public personalities.

During the Christian Middle Ages, portraiture's sacred status was once more an issue. Either influenced by oriental religious iconoclasm, or perhaps by superstitious beliefs whereby the image was central to potentially harmful magic practices, princes and Churchmen were mistrustful of portraiture, going so far as to make it "taboo". As if to deflect potential dangers, effigies of living people reappeared in art through the context of religious representations. The popes had their own images put beside those of the Saints and accompanying Christ or the Virgin Mary in the mosaic decors of the high Middle Ages (like Felix IV, who lived in the sixth century, in the Church of St. Cosme and St. Damien in Rome). Later on, even laymen appeared on frescos and altarpieces as donators, financing an artwork made for the glory of God; their good deeds protecting them from evil spells.

In France it was not until the fourteenth century, that the portrait was freed from its sacred context. The first real portrait, properly speaking, is considered to be that of Jean le Bon, King of France from 1350 to 1364. The painting, a small wood panel housed in the Louvre, shows the King's head in profile, on a neutral background, without either attributes or accessories. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the portrait bloomed. Flemish, Venetian, and Florentine painters of the Quattrocento, all adapted the genre to suit their sensibilities: intimate portraits of characters captured in their daily routine such as the Arnolfini Wedding Portrait by Van Eyck (1454) or full length paintings of noble knights represented in all their glory with Tuscany landscapes in the background. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the growth of Courtly portraiture; painters specialised in the genre had an ever growing clientele, consisting often of courtesans but also of members of the robed nobility and the upper bourgeoisie longing for social recognition. Against the banalisation that threatened it, a new category of portraiture appeared: that of the allegorical or mythological portrait, whose sitters were elevated to the dizzy heights of history painting. It was at this time and in this context that the art historian Félibien defined the hierarchy of genres (1667), which put the portrait beneath representations of Biblical or Classical subjects (history painting), as well as below genre scenes (subjects from daily life). Different categories of the portrait genre were thus progressively codified, the rigid official portrait having little in common with the much freer formulae which blossomed with the apparition of psychological portraits in the eighteenth century. These disposed of all accessories and portrayed the head alone in a rapid or minute rendering, casual or patient, using techniques which were often far from conforming with the aesthetics of the "well finished". This was a prelude to the Romantic portrait, which searched its sitter for their intimate feelings, their true personality, their hidden ego.

### 2. The triumph and the crisis of the portrait in the nineteenth century

During the period covered by the Musée d'Orsay collections, i.e. the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when photography was still a nascent art, the portrait genre in painting and sculpture was flourishing. The bourgeoisie, both an actor in and beneficiary of the industrial revolution, acquired the purchasing power which allowed it to become a patron. For want of a castle's ancestral portrait gallery, the inhabitants of Haussmannian apartments or provincial mansions decorated their reception rooms with the portraits of their spouses and families and had their busts made in marble or stone for their winter gardens or vestibules. If they were unable to boast a prestigious lineage, they could at least be comforted that they were leaving an image of their success for posterity. Later on, the photo album commemorating the essential moments of family life, marriage,

baptisms, etc., would fulfil a similar role, though much cheaper and less bulky. It was at this time that portraiture becoming a genuine industry, and one that was not exclusively city based. Portrait studios sprang up everywhere, supplying the demand for the serial production of effigies of an entire social class which, being much broader than the bourgeoisie, even included some working class circles.

The Republican regime, in augmenting the number of actors in political life, also multiplied its figure-heads: the cult of the “great man”, constructed on and illustrated by the painted and especially the sculpted portrait, invaded the public space and in particular the urban environment. The Third Republic’s commissions were given to artists who favoured the Eclectic style, and later to the Naturalists who represented the major movements in official art. In comparison, one might assume that the Impressionists’ abandonment of drawing and rejection of the primacy of the form would so obscure the notion of an identifiable and recognisable individual that they would be little concerned with the portrait genre. Certainly, the Impressionists were more often landscape painters than portrait painters; nevertheless, for whatever reason, they all contributed to the evolution of the genre – profoundly so in the case of Degas, Cézanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin, artists for whom Impressionism was no more than a stage in their aesthetic experimentation which led them onto individual paths of innovation.

## Objectives

1. First and foremost, this visit enables pupils of all levels to train their eye by identifying the differences in the kinds of portraits presented by nineteenth-century artists. Pupils will be helped in this through paying attention to the titles of the works and by simply using their powers of observation. The following questions are a good guide to the sort of things they should be looking out for:

- Can we see
  - a full-length portrait,
  - a portrait limited to the bust or the face?
- Is the sitter represented:
  - face-on,
  - in profile,
  - three-quarters facing,
  - three-quarters back view?
- Has the artist chosen to represent the character(s):
  - with clothes
  - with identifiable signs,
  - in a particular setting?
- Which ones?
  - is it:
    - an individual portrait?
      - Does the artist indicate that it is:
        - the portrait of a relative, acquaintance or friend?
        - the portrait of a character named according to their function, title or trade?
        - a self-portrait?
    - a group portrait ?
      - Does the group appear to be composed:
        - of people related by family, intimacy or friendship?
        - of people connected by professional, political or social circumstances?

These questions, although naïve in appearance, provide a number of clues which are indispensable in order to move on in the reflection to the second objective.

2. The portraits presented in the Musée d’Orsay collections are sufficiently numerous and diverse for visitors to become aware of the different functions this genre has fulfilled in France during the second half of the nineteenth century. Building on observations made in a first stage (viz. objective #1), the pupils can be led to classify the portraits they have seen according to the following categories, each of which corresponds to a distinct function:

- a) Allegoric or symbolic portraits (in which the sitter, for instance a monarch represented as “Caesar”, makes the portrait an instrument to serve his glorification)
- b) ceremonial portrait, Society portrait (to publicise the sitter’s social standing)
- c) “Manifesto” portrait (referring to a common position, an ideological statement...)
- d) Psychological portrait (attempting to render the personality of the sitter, to expose their character)

- “poetic” portrait (Zola, Mallarmé: the essence of the artist)

e) the Caricature (witty or polemical portrait highlighting dominant traits in the sitter’s character).

3. It is particularly necessary, as one approaches Impressionist portraits and the different post-Impressionist trends, to help the pupils understand how much the portrait is a genre that lends itself to innovating artistic experiments. In some cases (Monet, Cézanne, Gauguin) the portraits seem to partially or totally escape the functions listed above. This is because they mostly provide the artist with a pretext for their research; thus they are less about the sitter than about the painter themselves.

4. The portrait genre implies a particular and important relationship between the patron – who is not always the sitter – and the artist. By questioning the reasons that motivated the commission, the wishes and reactions of the patron or patrons (the well-known case of Rodin’s commission by the Société des Gens de Lettres to sculpt the portrait of Balzac is particularly interesting), one will be able to make the pupils aware of the issue of the artist’s relationships with the society of their time, the critics and the art market.

5. One may choose to devote an entire visit to the theme of self-portraits.

## Before and after the visit

### Primary school level

#### • Before the visit

1. Approach the notion of portrait from the angle of vocabulary: what does “that child is the image of his father” mean? Note the close terms “image”, “feature”, “effigy”, “description”; the phrase to “sketch a portrait”.

Show that making a portrait is not only a question of visual art, but can also be spoken description or in writing – not to mention the industrial techniques of copying that may bring the portrait outside the range of art (for instance the identity photographs made in small automatic booths).

2. Work on the notion of resemblance between a person and their portrait.

One may, for instance, look at different portraits of a same person: photographs, drawings, caricatures... and consider the photographer’s or the draughtsman’s objectives according to the defined context. For this work, newspapers may provide adequate materials.

3. Set up a class project on the theme of expression. With the help of pictures made by the pupils, explain the basic morpho-psychological traits of expressions: happiness, sadness, anger, disgust... For this, the teacher may like to consult the *Grammaire des arts du dessin* by Charles Blanc, who reports and comments on Humbert de Supervielle’s theory on the expressive power of lines, largely used by Seurat.

#### • After the visit

1. Work on caricature, giving the pupils personal projects, which may lead them to consult newspapers or watch closely television programmes based on the use of caricature puppets. Question the use of caricatures, their functions. This work may lead to pupils’ productions.

2. Encourage the pupils to notice the importance of costumes in certain kinds of portraits, in particular in full size portraits and official portraits (one may start with the phrase “the clothes make the man”). After studying nineteenth-century costumes, one may work in an interactive way, teaching the pupils about the functions and social roles of characters whose portraits they are shown. Naturally this exercise is transposable to other periods.

3. Introduce the pupils to the notion of décor. Show them, for instance, how the same character (cut out from a photograph) may be perceived in different ways according to the décor surrounding him.

4. With young pupils or for a moment of relaxation, one may introduce the concept of the oral portrait with guessing games: give out a certain number of clues and ask “Who is it?” or proceed through analogies with “If I were...”.

### Lower and upper secondary school

With a theme such as the portrait, rather than distinguishing between the two student levels, it seems better to classify the suggested “before and after” activities according to the study subjects to which the visit is related. It was considered that the theme of the portrait could be relevant to the educational curricula of three subjects: literature, history and visual arts.

Suggestions may include:

#### A) French literature

##### • Before the visit

With lower secondary school pupils in particular, it may be useful to study the semantic field surrounding the portrait, defining the diverse meanings of the term (see “primary school level”).

##### • After the visit

1. A project on the multi-disciplinary nature of the genre may lead to fruitful comparisons between portraiture in the visual arts and the literary portrait, both in prose and in verse. The best known examples are to be found in 17<sup>th</sup> century literature (letters of the Marquise de Sévigné, works by diarists like Saint-Simon, comedies by Molière (in *Le Misanthrope* for example), or if only one is to be singled out, the collections of *Caractères* by La Bruyère. But for those who would like to remain more rigorously in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one may find in the *Grand Larousse du XIXe siècle* (vol.16), at the entry “Portrait” a long list of literary portraits contemporary to the artworks presented at the Musée d’Orsay. The two best specific books in this respect are the *Portraits littéraires* by Sainte-Beuve (6 vol. published between 1844 and 1852) and the *Portraits contemporains* by Théophile Gautier (1874). But all the 19<sup>th</sup> century realist and naturalist novels (Balzac, Flaubert, Zola) are rich in portraits of characters presented at different moments throughout the narratives. The literature teacher should warn pupils of the limits of comparative study which should always be conducted with caution, keeping in mind that the differences between the pictorial and literary languages prevent them from being interchangeable.

2. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, literature, like visual arts and music, put a particular emphasis on the “ego” which had been exalted by the Romantics. It is therefore possible to devote a visit exclusively to self portraits. One may couple the study of this particular genre with that of autobiography (*Les mémoires d’outre tombe* by Chateaubriand...) keeping in mind the reservations about the use of a comparative method mentioned above.

#### B) History

##### • Before the visit

Clarify the social categories in 19<sup>th</sup> century French society; defining and discriminating between them will allow a better understanding of the resources of the Musée d’Orsay. One may go deeper into the subject by evoking the manner in which social

categories represented themselves and their perception of other categories.

##### • After the visit

1. The social function of the portrait may occasion commentaries comparing 19<sup>th</sup> century artworks seen at the Musée d’Orsay with representations from previous centuries (with paintings in the Louvre, for example).

2. Otherwise, one may focus on two types of portraits:

##### a) Caricature

A genre that underwent spectacular development in 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers, caricature was a means of expression by which, under authoritarian regimes, political personalities could be criticised at the highest level without risking the kind of draconian censorship which was applied to the written word. Teachers may choose a number of caricatures of actors in the French political scene to explain the role played by images in the expression of political ideas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

b) The phrase “statue-mania” has been coined concerning the period covered by the Musée d’Orsay collections. The term refers to the phenomenon which was particularly active under the Third Republic whereby the nascent and strengthening Republic fostered the cult of the personality (political figure-heads etc.) through the commission of sculpted portraits. Sculptures of “great men” sprang up all over cities and public buildings, sculptures which were intended to play an important ideological role in the new regime’s programme of education for its citizens.

#### C) Visual arts

##### • Before the visit

1. Explain the concept of genre in painting, presenting in particular the hierarchy of genres as it was still largely respected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the teaching at the Ecole des Beaux Arts (School of Fine Arts) and in academic and official circles. Indicate the status of portraiture, less “noble” than history painting or the genre scene, but higher than animal representation and landscape painting.

2. Highlight, if necessary through practical exercises, the diversity of modes in the representation of sitters (see objective number 1).

##### • After the visit

1. Study the relationship between the portrait and the caricature: how, through what pictorial means, does one switch from one to the other ?

2. Through a thorough pictorial analysis of a few Musée d’Orsay portraits, find out how the conventions of Society portraiture were surreptitiously perverted by the painters of “modernity”.

3. Continue chronologically the study of the evolution of the portrait genre, in particular in its function as a rich ground for innovation: a visit at the Musée d’Art Moderne in the Georges Pompidou Centre will complete the circuit up to

the abandonment of figuration (Fauvists, cubism, surrealism)...

4. Study the connections which may exist, from the pictorial point of view, between the sitter and the artist's choice of background. This study may focus on composition, perspective, and tackle the issues of light and relative values. It may also analyse the ways in which the portrait is constructed on the two-dimensional support of the canvas, and the degree of the effects in an illusion of depth.

NB Teachers may be interested in a visit specialising in self-portraits, for which a list of artworks may be found below.

- Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) : *Portrait d'artiste (Artist's Portrait)* or *L'homme à la ceinture de cuir (Man With Leather Belt)*, 1845-46
- Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) : *L'homme blessé (The Injured Man)*, exhibited in 1855
- Edgar Degas (1854-1917) : *Portrait de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist)*, known as *Degas au porte-fusain (Degas With Charcoal Holder)*, 1855
- Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) : *L'atelier du peintre. Allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique et morale (The Artist's Studio. A Real Allegory of A Seven Year Long Phase of My Artistic Life)*, 1854-55
- Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875) : *Portrait de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist)*, 1859
- Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904) : *Hommage à Delacroix (Homage to Delacroix)*, 1864
- Frédéric Bazille (1841-1870) : *L'atelier de la rue de la Condamine (The Studio, Rue de la Condamine)*, 1869-70
- Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891) : *Portrait de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist)*, 1871
- Camille Pissarro (1850-1905) : *Portrait de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist)*, 1875
- Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) : *Portrait de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist)*, vers 1875-76
- Ernest Meissonier (1815-1891) : *Portrait de l'artiste dans son atelier (Portrait of the Artist in His Studio)*, vers 1875
- Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848-1884) : *Portrait de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist)*, vers 1880
- Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890) : *Portrait de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist)*, 1887
- Paul Gauguin (1848-1905) : *Pot anthropomorphe (Anthropomorphic Pot)*, 1889
- Paul Gauguin (1848-1905) : *Autoportrait au Christ jaune (Self-Portrait With Yellow Christ)*, 1889-90
- Camille Claudel (1864-1945) : *L'âge mûr (Maturity)*, 1895
- Maurice Denis (1870-1945) : *Hommage à Cézanne (Homage to Cézanne)*, 1900
- Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) : *L'homme et la femme (Man and Woman)*, 1900
- Lucien Schnegg (1864-1909) : *Autoportrait (Self-Portrait)*, 1912
- Claude Monet (1840-1926) : *Portrait de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist)*, 1917

## The visit: the artworks

The portrait genre is particularly well represented in the Musée d'Orsay collections, allowing a great variety of possible circuits. Teachers choosing to lead their visit themselves without a museum guide may use the suggested circuit below.

## Bibliography

- Marie-Ange Monchablon, *Autoportraits, Carnets Parcours du Musée d'Orsay n°6*, RMN, 1986
- Melissa Mc Quillan, *Les Portraits Impressionnistes*, Hermé, 1986
- Pascal Bonafoux, *Les peintres et l'autoportrait*, Skira, 1984
- Thadée Natanson, *Peints à leur tour*, Albin Michel, 1948
- *Visages et portraits de Manet à Matisse*, exhibition catalogue *Musée Art et Essai*, Palais de Tokyo, RMN, 1981
- Catherine Chevillot, *La République et ses grands hommes*, collection Guides Paris-Musée d'Orsay, RMN-Hachette, 1987
- Pascal Bonafoux, *Les impressionnistes - Portraits et confidences*, Skira, 1986
- Service culturel du Musée d'Orsay, *CD Photo 100 portraits au Musée d'Orsay*, RMN, 1996

# The Portrait

## Painting and sculpture in France between 1850 and 1900

### • The visit: the artworks

N.B.: the artworks are listed in the order of the Museum's general circuit

## Ground floor

Hippolyte Flandrin (Lyon, 1809 – Rome, 1864):  
*Le prince Napoléon (Prince Napoleon)*, 1860  
Location: gallery 1, Ingres et l'Ingrisme

#### • The portrait

The prince Napoléon-Joseph-Charles-Paul Bonaparte (1822-1891) was Jérôme Bonaparte's son and Princess Mathilde's brother. A statesman, he was a member of Parliament, Senator and a minister under the second Empire. In contrast with the rest of the family, he had progressive, democratic and anticlerical inclinations, so that he embodied a possible "left-wing bonapartism".

#### • The painting

The sobriety, bareness and the absence of pomp and ceremony in this portrait highlight the character of the face and hands. The sitter is thus endowed with a strong presence that seems to emanate from his own character, rather than from his connection with the imperial family.

#### • The painter's outlook

Flandrin's portrait was unanimously acclaimed by the public and critics. It was praised for the quality of the painting as well as the connection between this work with one of the greatest portraits by Ingres (Flandrin's teacher): that of Monsieur Bertin (Paris, Musée du Louvre). Amongst other praises, the critic Valéry Vernier wrote "The perfection of the line, the unity, the simplicity, all those qualities transmitted by M. Ingres to M. H. Flandrin can be found in the portrait of Prince Napoleon. Despite its veiled colour, tarnished, a little sad, one cannot turn away from this painting in which all is related, in which an admirable ease prevails. By his noble posture, an attitude both free and dignified, the character takes full possession of the frame".

2. Honoré Daumier (Marseilles, 1808 – Valmondois, Seine-et-Oise, 1879):  
*Les célébrités du Juste Milieu (The Celebrities of the juste Milieu)*, 1851

Location: gallery 4, Daumier

#### • The portrait

Thirty six busts made of coloured clay, commissioned by Charles Philipon to serve as models for lithographs published in *Le Charivari* and *La Caricature*, newspapers of which he was the director. They depict members of parliament who sat at the Chambre des députés at the beginning of the July Monarchy.

#### • The sculptures

Observing this series of small busts allows us to understand the skill of caricature-making. Each of the faces has been transformed in order to highlight a dominant characteristic. One may read the epithets attributed to each of the cartels by Maurice Gobin who established the catalogue of Daumier's work in 1952.

#### • The sculptor's outlook

The great caricaturist, Daumier was a painter, a sculptor and a draughtsman. Some of the caricatures of parliamentarians may be recognised

in the lithograph series: *Masques de 1831 (La Caricature, 8 March, 1852)* and *Le Ventre Législatif (L'Association mensuelle, January, 1854)*. It has often been said that these busts were modelled in the Chamber itself; but it is more likely that Daumier only spent periods of observation there. It was his prodigious memory which allowed him to accurately summarise the character trait he wished to illuminate.

3. Eugène Guillaume (Montbard, Côte d'Or, 1822 – Rome, 1905):

*Napoléon Ier à cheval en tenue militaire (Napoleon I on Horseback in Military Costume)*, wax sketch for the plaster model commissioned in 1862 for the Cour Napoléon in the Louvre and never made;  
*Napoléon Ier à cheval en costume romain (Napoleon I on Horseback in Roman Costume)*, wax sketch, undated  
Location: central aisle (showcase)

#### • The portraits

Both equestrian statues represent the same character, Napoleon I.

#### • The sculptures

The crucial difference between these two equestrian portraits resides in the costume: in the first case Napoleon is dressed in a contemporary military uniform, topped by the first emperor's famous cocked hat, and in the second he wears a Roman costume, with a crown of laurels.

#### • The sculptor's outlook

Portraits of this kind met very specific codes. The effigy of a great man was sculpted to satisfy the fervour of French citizens. Emperor Napoleon III used Napoleon I as a figure-head, relying on him to support his legitimacy. Representing the great man in the costume of a Roman emperor was a way of enhancing his authority even further by placing him in line with the heroes of the all powerful Antique Rome, an aura which would be indirectly reflected on Napoleon III.

4. Henri Fantin-Latour (Grenoble, 1836 – Buré, Orne, 1904):

*Un atelier aux Batignolles (A Studio in the Batignolles)*, 1870

Location: gallery 15, Fantin-Latour

#### • The portrait

From left to right, Otto Scholderer, Manet seating in front of the easel, Renoir, Zacharie Astruc, Emile Zola, the third character standing, starting from the left, Edmond Maître, Bazille, Monet.

#### • The painting

Is this how one imagines the atmosphere of an artist's studio? What is to be thought of the costumes and décor? Why did Fantin choose such sobriety? Very few details make up the décor: try to name them and to find out their meaning.

#### • The painter's outlook

The Batignolles was the district in Paris where Manet and a large number of the future impressionists lived. Fantin-Latour, a discreet witness of these times, represented Manet, as the leader of the new school of painting around whom



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1. Hippolyte Flandrin : *Le prince Napoléon*, 1860

2. Honoré Daumier : *Les célébrités du Juste Milieu*, 1851

3. Eugène Guillaume : *Napoléon I<sup>er</sup> à cheval en costume romain*, study in wax

4. Henri Fantin-Latour : *Un atelier aux Batignolles*, 1870

he painted young artists whose painting styles were radically innovative: Renoir, Bazille, Monet, Zola... Fantin insisted on the severity of their costumes and gravity of their expressions to make them look serious and respectable. The two accessories in the scene are clues as to the group's aesthetic standpoint: the statuette of Minerva embodies Truth and testifies to their respect for the Antique tradition and the Japanese-style sandstone pot evokes the admiration which all this generation of artists had for Japanese art. The general atmosphere in this painting is reminiscent of the great Flemish group portraits of the 18<sup>th</sup> century through which Fantin intended to prove the seriousness of these still much criticised artists.

5. Carolus-Duran (Charles Durant, Lille, 1837 – Paris, 1917):

*La dame au gant (Lady With Glove)*, 1869

Location: gallery 15, Fantin-Latour

- The portrait

It represents the artist's wife. But neither the title or the way the young woman is represented reveal the intimacy between the artist and his sitter.

- The painting

It is a full length portrait. But this is not the full story. What does the glove, fallen to the floor, indicate? In playing with an anecdote which may be partially reconstructed the painter has introduced an element of mystery which contrasts with the apparent austerity of the portrait. Compare this work with *Madame Gaudibert* by Claude Monet (see below).

- The painter's outlook

Carolus-Duran has been close to Manet before setting out on a more official course. the full-length portrait is a mode of representation which exalts individuality but above all the social status of its sitter, bourgeois, and so highlighting the young woman's elegance... "With M. Carolus-Duran, colour glitters, sparkles, bursts. The portrait of Mme D... is a display of fireworks. The full-length figure is of noble aspect... The dress, the glove, all the details that pertain to the still-life are irreproachable" (E. About, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1869).

6. Claude Monet (Paris, 1840 – Giverny, Eure, 1926):

*Madame Louis-Joachim Gaudibert*, 1868

- The portrait

After *Femmes au jardin (Women in a Garden)*, Paris, Musée d'Orsay) was refused at the 1866 Salon, Claude Monet's financial situation was very precarious. In September 1868, a rich tradesman from Le Havre, Monsieur Gaudibert, commissioned two portraits from him: his own, now lost, and that of his wife.

- The painting

Is this painting really a portrait? The artist, unconcerned with resemblance, did not try to render the traits of Madame Gaudibert's face. He had the young woman sit in such a way that three quarters of her face can not be seen by the viewer.

He was more interested in other pictorial problems: the light, which allowed him to "sculpt" the different folds of the dress or to suggest the tactile qualities of the shawl or of the carpet; The space, where his model sits imposingly, framed by the curtain from which her bust stands out.

- The painter's outlook

In 1868, Monet was a young artist in search of his style. He was not yet the uncontested master of impressionism. Critics were often hard on his work. This is what Martin, an art dealer, wrote about the young Monet to the painter Eugène Boudin: "At the moment he is painting the full-length portrait of Madame Gaudibert... One cannot deny this bold young man is bound to paint an original painting and that the search for truth still dominates, but in its execution it is terribly vulgar and neither the delicacy of the flesh nor the fineness of the type are respected. This is a painting, not a portrait". The last statement could be read as a reproach or, on the contrary, as a compliment.

7. Edgar Degas (Paris, 1834 – id., 1917)

*La famille Bellelli (The Bellelli Family)*, 1858-67

Location: gallery 15, Degas before 1870

- The portrait

The painting presents the whole family: The baron Gennaro Bellelli (1812-1875), senator of the kingdom of Italy; His wife and the artist's aunt, née Clotilde Laure De Gas (1814-1897); Their daughters, Giovanna (born in 1848) and Giulia (1851-1922).

- The painting

Observe the costumes, the disposition of the characters and the point of view. What can we infer from these about the relationships between the characters and their personalities?

- The painter's outlook

Masterpiece of Degas's early work, this portrait evokes the family tensions isolating each of the characters from the others. The imposing format, sober colours, the structured plays on open perspectives (doors and mirrors), all go to create an atmosphere of unease, further accentuated by the hints of escape such as the curious little dog, half out of frame. Only the almost playful position of the younger daughter, crossing one leg under her skirts, contrasts with the constrained atmosphere while her older sister seems already prisoner of the adult conventions.

8. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (Valenciennes, 1827 – Corbevoie, 1875):

*Le prince impérial et son chien Néro (The Imperial Prince With His Dog, Néro)*, 1865

Location: left end of the central aisle (near *La Danse*)

- The portrait

Napoléon (Eugène Louis Jean Joseph) Bonaparte (Paris 1856 – Zululand, 1879) as a child, represented with his dog.

- The sculpture

One may walk around it: it's a sculpture in the round. The format of the sculpture is nearly life



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5. Carolus-Duran : *La dame au gant*, 1869

6. Claude Monet : *Madame Louis Joachim Gaudibert*, 1868

7. Edgar Degas : *La famille Bellelli*, 1858-67

8. Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux : *Le prince impérial et son chien Néro*, 1865

size which allows an impression of proximity with the subject, further conveyed by the simplicity of the costume and of the pose.

- The sculptor's outlook

Carpeaux was appointed as the Imperial Prince's drawing teacher of the year before he sculpted this portrait. He therefore knew the child well. Is this perhaps the reason why he was not inclined to make an official portrait with its protocol for a member of the reigning family? On the contrary, in this portrait he strove to be as near the truth as possible. The Empress and the critics approved of his choice. "A portrait of true resemblance, unconcerned with the person's rank or with the prestige attached to his name" (Auvray). "M. Carpeaux has concealed his science under an extreme simplicity" (Jahyer). "The noble and unpretentious attitude as well as the suppleness of the clothes." (Beignières). "The resolutely modern will to have chosen a contemporary costume" (Théophile Gautier). As a result of its success, the sculpture was reproduced in different materials, in small format. Its popularity continued even after the fall of the Empire, but as a simple portrait of a child without name or title.

## Upper level

1. James Abbott McNeill Whistler (Lowell, Massachusetts, 1854 – London, 1905): *Arrangement en gris et noir n°1 (Arrangement in Grey and Black Number 1)* or *La mère de l'artiste (The Artist's Mother)*, 1871  
Location: gallery 30, Caillebotte, Whistler

- The portrait

The artist's mother, Anna Matilda McNeill (1804-1881) was sixty-seven when her portrait was made. At the time she was living in London with her son.

- The painting

As in several other portraits he painted in the 1870's, the artist combined the requirements of this genre with his experiments as a colourist. Each arrangement of forms and colours has an informative function on the image of the sitter.

- The painters' outlook

His taste for Japanese art lead him to play with the simplification of lines and the subtle agreement of neutral tones. The sober lines, simple forms and limited colour ranges were Whistler's pictorial means. He wrote about this painting: "For me, it is interesting because it is the portrait of my mother; But could or should the public be concerned by the identity of the sitter? The painting must be worthy on the sole merit of its composition."

2. Paul Cézanne (Aix-en-Provence, 1859 – id., 1906): *La femme à la cafetière (Woman With Coffee Pot)*, 1890-95  
Location: gallery 36, Cézanne

- The portrait

Cézanne's sitter is unknown. Recent research lead

to several hypotheses the more likely of which is that it was an employee – cook or laundress of the jas in Bouffan.

- The painting

The woman, presented from the front, is geometrically structured. Her dress is organised around two perpendicular straight lines: the horizontal of the belt and the vertical of the central fold starting at the chin and ending at the bottom of the painting. This play of perpendicular lines is echoed by that of the coffee pot, structured in a similar way by the vertical of the spout prolonged by a shadow and by the horizontal of the junction between its upper and lower parts. Likewise in the cup, the edge of which is underlined by a stroke of blue, a spoon stands upright, one of those tin teaspoons the lobe of whose handles are frequently bisected by a small vertical peak.

- The painter's outlook

This painting is a particularly outstanding illustration of the artist's famous precept according to which one should "render nature through the cylinder, the sphere, the cone". Cézanne sought simplification, a synthesis of the forms and the role of colours in creating space, in the perception of an object or of a character. There is no psychological study of the sitter in the work, no narration of any sort. But it would be excessive to conclude that the painter treated his sitter as an object. The hands, reminiscent of work, the face, rough but dignified, testify to the painter's sympathy for "this monumental icon of simple life" (F. Cachin).

3. Vincent van Gogh (Groot Zundert, Brabant, The Netherlands, 1853 – Auvers-sur-Oise, Val d'Oise, 1890):

*Deux fillettes (Two Young Girls)*, 1890  
Location: gallery 39, Van Gogh

- The portrait

The portrait of the two sisters was painted in Auvers-sur-Oise during the last months of the artist's life, at the same time as those of other close friends of Van Gogh's: Doctor Gachet, his daughter, etc.

- The painting

Vincent van Gogh repeated it again and again in his letters: when he painted a portrait, he did not look for likeness. It is for other reasons that the faces immediately catch the viewer's attention. First the eyes, impertinent of one of the girls, bored of the other. Then the expressions. The left-hand girl retains, thanks to a certain softness of the lines, a childish expression. But asymmetrical elements appear in her mouth and brows, perturbing her physiognomy. The right-hand girl was treated more roughly. The painter emphasised the modelling by using a brown line that underlines quasi grotesque irregularities. Looking at the brows, mouth and nose they suggest the features of a nasty and disturbing old woman.

- The painter's outlook

"What I'm trying to learn, he said, is not how to draw a hand, but a gesture, not a mathematically exact head, but the deep expression".



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1. James Abbott McNeill Whistler : *Arrangement en gris et noir n°1* ou *La mère de l'artiste*, 1871
2. Paul Cézanne : *La femme à la cafetière*, 1890-95
3. Vincent Van Gogh : *Deux fillettes*, 1890
4. Paul Gauguin : *La belle Angèle*, 1889

4. Paul Gauguin (Paris, 1848 – Atuona, Hiva-Oa, Marquise islands, 1905):  
*La belle Angèle (The Beautiful Angèle)*, 1889  
Location: gallery 45, Pont-Aven school

- The portrait

In Pont-Aven, a small town in Brittany where he had settled with a group of artists sharing his research, Gauguin set about painting the portrait of Angèle Satre, whose husband was to become mayor of the village. Madame Satre, nicknamed “the beautiful Angèle” had indeed a reputation in the region for being very beautiful.

- The painting

Does it clearly justify its title? The portrait of the young woman occupies only part of the canvas.

- The painter's outlook

A painting within a painting, *La belle Angèle* owes much to Gauguin's familiarity with Japanese seersuckers. The young woman is represented within a halo and, like a saint's icon, her name is inscribed in full under her portrait. Against this sacred image is echoed a small primitive idol painted in the corner of the work by Gauguin after one of his own ceramics. The painting, whose only traditional aspect is Angèle's Breton costume, was refused by the sitter but later acquired by Degas.

## Median level

1. Jacques-Emile Blanche (Paris, 1861 – Dieppe, 1942):

*Marcel Proust*, 1892

Location: gallery 57, Blanche, Boldini, Helleu

- The portrait

In 1892, Marcel Proust, aged 21, posed for Jacques-Emile Blanche. “There was in him more of the high-school he had just outgrown than of the dandy he wanted to become. The dandyism of his clothes was already outdated, it was the Batignolles genre of Manet's sitter in the *Père Lathuille*, the studied untidiness of a George Moore, with the affectation of a schoolboy who keeps his gloves on to hide ink-stained fingers he has bitten”, the portraitist remembered.

- The painting

The portrait presents a face on a dark background. The clear accents of the orchid and Proust's shirt highlight the paleness of this static face. It is supposed this portrait was originally a full-length portrait cut at some later stage. This would explain the absence of the hands.

- The painter's outlook

During the 1880's, Influenced by Manet and Whistler, the Society portrait, began to follow the trend of using sharp tonal contrasts in particular to isolate the sitter's face and hands on a dark background. The effect produced here is that of mystery; The deep and enigmatic gaze of the young Marcel Proust distances him from the frivolity of Society.

2. Auguste Rodin (Paris, 1840 – Meudon, 1917):  
*La Pensée (Thought)*, 1886-1889  
Location: Seine terrace, at the level of galleries 64 and 65

- The portrait

Rodin's work includes several portraits of Camille Claudel, as well as a few allegories inspired by her face. Here, she is wearing the traditional Breton headwear (or perhaps from the Berry region) habitually reserved for young brides.

- The sculpture

The artwork is voluntarily left unfinished. It was said that Rodin's assistant the sculptor Peter, was ordered to interrupt his work by Rodin.

- The sculptor's outlook

Rodin deeply marked the contrasts by leaving the almost unworked matter visible in the unessential parts of the work. Sometimes, in what is incorrectly called a bust, the head alone is treated with infinite delicacy as it emerges from the rough rock-like stone. Certain pieces, such as *La Pensée*, owe much of their power to this contrast.

3. Camille Claudel (Fère-en-Tardenois, Aisne, 1864 – Villeuneuve-lès-Avignon, 1945):  
*L'âge mûr (Maturity)*, 1895-1905  
Location: Seine terrace, at the level of galleries 64 and 65

- The portrait

Executed at a time of rupture in the relationship between the artist and Rodin, this group evokes Rodin's wavering between his former lover, Rose Beuret, whom he was eventually to choose, and Camille who, to retain him, is bending forward to the point of losing her balance. Camille Claudel included a self portrait in this group, the young woman kneeling who, in another sculpted version, is named *L'Implorante (The Suppliant)*, thus marking the tragic nature of her destiny.

- The sculpture

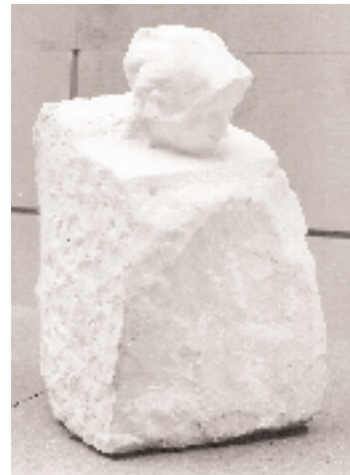
The three characters are rendered differently. The body of the young woman although thin, is modelled with tenderness, the forms being rounded and smooth. In contrast the old woman's limbs are knotted and bony. Her face, with cavernous eye-sockets, is particularly terrifying, reminiscent of the grimacing face of allegorical Death in Medieval art.

- The sculptor's outlook

Looking beyond her personal story, Camille Claudel was sculpting a symbolic work which invited the viewer to meditate on human relationships. The group may thus be interpreted as an allegory of time leading humans inexorably from an ever lost youth to an old age announcing death. This more distant interpretation of the work is made possible in part by the effect produced by a surprising base on which it stands: a sort of terrace curved in the shape of a wave. This motif is reminiscent of the sinuous lines of Art Nouveau which occupies the end galleries of the dome in the Musée d'Orsay.



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