

British and American Painters at the Musée d'Orsay

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Presentation

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period during which exchanges between artists of different countries of Europe and North America intensified. A visit centred on artworks by British and American painters on show at the Musée d'Orsay can focus on two aspects:

- The sojourn in France of many American painters, particularly in Paris. Some trained in the workshops of French painters, others simply established contacts with fellow artists. The two artistic movements that influenced these painters most deeply were realism and impressionism.

- The development, in Great Britain, of an original movement, that of the Pre-Raphaelites, which opened the path for symbolism and Art nouveau.

• American painting

The first American painters were mostly portrait painters whose work reflect the British or Dutch origins of their authors, the majority of whom remained obscure. Progressively, the new moneyed class of traders in the northern states and planters of the South commissioned paintings and the portrait genre became more academic. From the colonial period we retain principally the names of Benjamin West (1758-1820), who emigrated early to Europe never to return, and above all of his pupil, John Singleton Copley (1738-1815).

After the Independence war (that ended in 1783), American artists developed an interest in landscape. Thomas Cole (1801-1848), who started his career as a travelling portrait painter, may be regarded as the spiritual father of the landscape painting movement known as the Hudson River School. During the second quarter of the 19th century, these painters – who would more accurately be labelled a movement than a school – chose to represent landscapes on the banks of the Hudson river, in the East of the United States, in a style evoking that of the Barbizon painters in France. A later trend of this movement, influenced by the fashion of panoramic views, extended its field of investigation towards large wild and rocky landscapes of the West.

In the 1850's, European influence prevailed. Many American visitors discovered the work of Jean-François Millet and Gustave Courbet at the Paris World Fair of 1855. Although European artist seldom travelled to the New World, their work widely circulated there as engravings and etchings.

The second half of the 19th century saw the emergence of specifically American painting. The Musée d'Orsay owns a few pieces by artists of this period. They fall into two groups. Some, represented by Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins, made short sojourns in Europe, but most of their careers was spent in the United States. Particularly influenced by realism, they mostly

painted genre scenes. Others, including James Whistler, Mary Cassatt and John Singer Sargent, spent most of their lives in Europe. It is rather on the side of Manet and the impressionists that parallels and confrontations occurred in their paintings.

• British Pre-Raphaelites

In the 1840's and 1850's, the great school of English painting that had inspired the French romantics died out. Constable, Blake, Bonington, Turner were no more and, as the art historian Kenneth Clark put it "everything happened as if the sense of poetry that had inspired British painting for almost seventy years had passed away". Young artists, dissatisfied with academic teaching, turned to Italian and Flemish primitives whose freedom and simplicity they admired. They wanted to rediscover the purity and nobleness of expression of painting before Raphael (1483-1520) that for them represented the image of achievement of the Renaissance and humanism. In September 1848 the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was created by the painters Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, among others. Ford Madox Brown, Rossetti's teacher and friend, had been connected to the Nazareans, a group of young Germans established in Rome in 1810 who had created the Brotherhood of Saint Luke, in an attempt to re-establish the links between art and faith. This group inspired the Pre-Raphaelite movement without ever formally taking part in it. The group took over the organisation of Brotherhood that corresponded to the religious revival of the society of the time, but their set of rules concerned mostly functional arrangements and the organisation of exhibitions.

This movement inspired the poetry of Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) and John Keats (1795-1821) and borrowed subjects from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but it promoted, as far as the technique was concerned, a return to realism understood as the exact representation of nature. The painters met in the countryside to prepare the natural background of their paintings in direct contact with reality before adding their characters, in whom one can often recognise the members of the group and their friends. For their first public show in 1849, a common theme, *Isabelle and the Pot of Basil*, a poem by Keats inspired from Boccaccio (1313-1375), was imposed, as well as the addition of the initials P.R.B. to their signatures. Critics judged them with severity, identifying a sort of dissociation between the naturalism of the technique and the idealistic concerns of the artists. If John Ruskin (1819-1900) took their side, it was rather out of interest for their quasi-scientific realism than for their choice of themes. When several of their works were acclaimed at the exhibition of 1852, each painter has already set on his separate course: Rossetti had given up exhibiting his work since 1851, Millais had become associate member of the Royal Academy and Hunt

was to leave for the Holy Land.

But Pre-Raphaelite painting continued with a second group, under the leadership of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. These artists took part in the painting of frescos, re-created the atmosphere of Arthurian legends, found inspiration in Keats's poem *La Belle Dame sans Mercy* for their conception of women, haughty and fatale. It is mostly this image of women, replete with a cold sensuality, languor, a pale complexion, red lips, abundant red hair, that one remembers in Pre-Raphaelite paintings. The resemblance with their models, in particular Elisabeth Siddal and Jane Burden Morris, was such that it prompted a kind of confusion, of constant iteration between reality and fiction. Henry James, as he met Jane Morris, stated: "It's hard to say whether she's a grand synthesis of all Pre-Raphaelite pictures ever made - or they a 'keen analysis' of her - whether she's an original or a copy. In any case, she is a wonder".

William Morris, a mediaevalist, soon turned to the aspect of craftsmanship in art. In 1861 he created the firm Morris & Co that made furniture, tapestries, ceramics, stained glass, linen and objects, after he had drawn himself the furniture and decoration for his own house in Kent, the "Red House". In 1888, he was at the origin of the Arts and Crafts movement, in collaboration with Walter Crane who shared his socialist ideas.

The French symbolist movement found inspiration in the Pre-Raphaelites and Art Nouveau took over their exaltation of feminine and vegetal shapes.

Biographies

• American painters

John Abbott McNeill Whistler
(Lowell, Massachusetts, 1834 – London, 1905)

Whistler dropped out of West Point military school in 1854 to devote himself to painting. He settled in France in 1855 and attended the painter Charles Gleyre's workshop. He adopted a bohemian life style and became a friend of Courbet and Fantin-Latour. Faithful to Théophile Gautier's aesthetic theory ("L'art pour l'art", art for art's sake), he thought that the artwork must be freed of any external association and asserted the prevalence of esthetical intentions over subject matter.

He took part in the Salon des Refusés in 1865 with *The White Girl* (1862) that was to take the title of *Symphony in White Number 1*. Indeed, ten years later, he adopted a musical terminology for his work that fitted his conception of abstract aesthetics. In parallel, deeply influenced by Japanese art, he started to perceive the artwork as a decorative entity. From the 1860's onwards, Whistler settled in London, without ceasing to make frequent trips to France. He represented the river Thames many times, together with the bridges and the London fog, in ranges of colour. His major concern became strictly formal research. He then opposed the search for the right shape and colour in landscapes with that of realism for people and details.

From 1870 onwards, he devoted most of his time to portrait painting (*Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, 1871) that allowed him to concentrate on the formal opportunities his subject matter offered.

Winslow Homer
(Boston, 1836 – Prout's Neck, Maine, 1910)

At first a lithographer and an illustrator, Homer executed reports drawn during the Civil War. Around the age of thirty, he turned to painting, and his first works were genre scenes inspired by military life and the countryside, rendered in an original way through eliminating all anecdotal element. Homer was interested in painting for its own sake, without concern for any message or secondary meaning.

He sojourned in Paris in 1866-1867 and was influenced by the impressionist painters who were then making their début, and then by Japanese etchings. The 1870's were devoted to watercolour. One of his recurrent themes was that of children playing, unworried, whom he opposed to anonymous and solitary adults. From 1881 onwards, he stayed for a long period in England. His principal subject became the sea, his choice of colours became darker and his touch heavier.

He spent the end of his life in the United States, in Maine, painting fishermen and seamen, their hard condition and their heroism, furthering his investigation of the relationships between man and nature.

Thomas Eakins
(Philadelphia, 1844 – id., 1916)

After beginning his training at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and through following anatomy classes, Eakins came to Paris in 1866 and attended the painter Gérôme's workshop.

He was influenced by the works of Rembrandt, Velázquez, Ribera and Courbet. He developed his own conception of realism, marked by his interest in sciences and photography, and in particular in Muybridge's work on the decomposition of movement.

Back in Philadelphia in 1870, he was never to leave the city again. He was much interested in nude painting and anatomic accuracy. The hostile reactions of the public to the presentation of *The Gross Clinic*, that showed an operation on a real patient, added to the misgivings some of his female pupils had about his teaching founded on living models and provoked his eviction from the teaching position he occupied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He nevertheless still found opportunities to represent human bodies, in particular through a *Crucifixion* (1880). He was also interested in representing urban middle classes with portraits and interior and open-air scenes.

Little-acclaimed during his lifetime, Eakins is now considered, together with Winslow Homer, as one of the main representatives of American realism, who inspired in particular those who, following their collective exhibition in 1908, were called the "Trashcan painters" (around Robert Henri).

Mary Cassatt
(Allagheny City (now Pittsburgh), Pennsylvania, 1844 – Mesnil Théribus, Oise, 1926)

Born in the United States, Mary Cassatt spent her childhood first in Germany then France. She studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia from 1861 to 1865, then in Paris, where she attended Charles Chaplin's workshop, and finally in Parma.

She started presenting pieces at the Salon in 1872. Degas, who had noticed her work, invited her to join the impressionist group following the rejection of her work from the 1876 Salon. She took part in impressionist exhibitions from 1877 onwards.

Mary Cassatt was interested in the representation of human figures, in particular in the theme of mother with child. Beside painting, she also practised engraving, pastel and drawing. She spent part of her last years spreading the knowledge of impressionism in the United States and was able to have many pieces of this movement enter the collections of American museums.

John Singer Sargent
(Florence, 1856 – London, 1925)

Although an American citizen, Sargent only first went to the United States aged 26. After an itinerant childhood in Europe, he settled in Paris in 1874 and studied painting in Carolus-Duran's

workshop. He was influenced by Whistler and Degas and became a friend of Monet, adopting for a while the impressionists' touch. He exhibited regularly at the official Salon. Through frequent trips to Spain, Holland and North Africa, he was influenced by the free and franc strokes of Hals and Velázquez.

Sargent settled in London in 1885, where he responded to diverse commissions for mural paintings. He exhibited at the Royal Academy of which he became a member in 1897, and towards the end of his life he made many trips to the United States where he met considerable success. Although Sargent is best known for his portraits, he also painted landscapes and scenes of military life.

Lionel Walden
(Norwich, Connecticut, 1861 – Paris, 1935)

Walden was an American-born painter whose biography is obscure. We know that he was a pupil of Carolus-Duran in Paris, that some of his work was accepted to the Salon from 1903 onwards and that he took part in many exhibitions. He was influenced by the impressionists, of which his marines and moonlit landscapes of the Breton and English coasts testify. He then turned to themes related to contemporary life, following the path set by the naturalists.

• English painters

Ford Madox Brown
(Calais, 1821 – London, 1895)

After studying painting in Belgium, Ford Madox Brown sojourned in Paris from 1840 to 1845 and discovered the works of Delacroix and those of the Spanish painters gathered in the Louvre by Louis-Philippe. The "Byronian" romanticism of his débuts then acquired a realistic blend.

In 1845, he was in Rome where he was interested, among other things, in the work of the painters of the Nazarean Group – a group of German artists working in Rome whose approach is similar to that the Pre-Raphaelites were to adopt. F.M. Brown returned to England and became the teacher and friend of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He never formally joined the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, but his work reveals many affinities with the group's objectives. He was also interested in social subjects, rendered with a sometimes moralising bias. In 1861, he was one of the founders of the Morris and C^o group and a few years later of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Sir John Everett Millais
(Southampton, 1829 – London, 1896)

A precocious pupil at the Royal Academy, Millais was awarded medals very early on for his first works that belonged to the academic tradition. Following his meeting with William Hunt and Rossetti, Millais was among the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. After receiving only

half-hearted acclaim, he at last met with a degree of success with *Ophelia* (1851-52). Millais painted his landscape after nature and integrated his characters later on, in his workshop. From 1855 onwards, he drew apart from the movement, tackled contemporary subjects and exploited the melodramatic vein (*The Blind Young Girl*, 1856). He started an official career after being elected in 1868 to the Royal Academy of which he became president shortly before his death.

Edward Burne-Jones
(Birmingham, 1833 – London, 1898)

While considering at first to take holy orders, Burne-Jones met William Morris, with whom he shared a common admiration for Dante Gabriel Rossetti, one of the founders of Pre-Raphaelism. During a trip to France in 1855, the two friends discovered mediaeval art and then, in Italy, the Primitives. They set about an artistic career and founded the second Pre-Raphaelite trend, that was nearer to symbolism. Burne-Jones became for a time one of the directors of the firm Morris & Co founded in 1862 that, inspired by Ruskin, had the ambition to build connections between the world of art and that of work and to integrate aesthetic concerns in social ones. In his painting, Burne-Jones rejected the representation of contemporary reality and illustrated subjects from the Middle Ages (*The Beguiling of Merlin*, 1874) or Antiquity (*The Mirror of Venus*, 1872), painted cycles evoking myth or legend in several episodes (*The Story of Pygmalion*, 1869-79, *The Story of Perseus*, from 1875 onwards). A renewed interest in symbolism and Art nouveau, of which he is considered as a precursor, has prompted the re-discovery in France of his work, momentarily forgotten.

Walter Crane
(Liverpool, 1845 – London, 1915)

Walter Crane was the son of a painter who taught at the Academy. He was an apprentice with a socialist wood engraver. After receiving limited acclaim at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1862, he devoted his time to illustrating books and to decorative arts. He drew wallpaper for the Jeffrey and Co firm, took part in the creation of the Art Workers' Guild of which he became Great Master in 1888. Meanwhile he had joined William Morris's Socialist League. He was president of the Association for the Arts and Crafts exhibition until 1912, responsible for artistic training at the Manchester Art School and afterwards Director of the South Kensington Royal College of Art in London. In 1911, he published a compilation of lectures, *William Morris to Whistler*.

Objectives

- Acquire basic notions about the history of British and American painting in the later half of the 19th century.
- Learn how to observe and analyse pieces of different styles.
- Give pupils basic elements from which to draw on to present an iconographic document at the English oral examination of the French baccalaureate : pictorial vocabulary, elements for analysing pictures.

Before the visit

- Present the Musée d'Orsay, its architecture and the period concerned by its collections (1848-1914) to the pupils.
- Give them the elements concerning the artistic movements evoked during the visit.
- Study the excerpts of literary works to which reference will be made (cf. bibliography).
- Give them notions of vocabulary needed to word the acquired knowledge in art history and to describe and analyse a painting (teachers may also choose to guide the visit in English).

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British and American Painters at the Musée d'Orsay

• The visit : the artworks

N.B.: the artworks are listed in the order of the general circuit in the museum

First explain to the pupils the outline of the visit that is based on the following elements:

- Artworks representative of realism and impressionism, from which they can measure the influence of these trends on the work of British and American painters studied later on.
- Works by American painters who sojourned in France for long or shorter periods and who were marked by these influences.
- Artworks by British painters that may be related to the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

This preliminary presentation is necessary as the location of the artworks within the museum does not allow studying them in this logical order, without adopting a chaotic circuit through the galleries.

At the beginning of the circuit, show quickly *Un enterrement à Ornans (A Burial in Ornans, 1849-50)* by Gustave Courbet and *Femmes au jardin (Women in a Garden, 1867)* by Claude Monet, and situate them in their respective backgrounds: realism – scene of ordinary life, refusal to idealise characters... – and impressionism – open-air painting, choice of light colours, vibration of light...

- location: ground floor, galleries 7 and 18

1. Mary Cassatt:

Femme cousant dans un jardin (Woman Sewing in a Garden), 1880-82

Painting presented at the last exhibition of the impressionist group (1886)

- location: ground floor, gallery 19 (Personnaz collection)
- subject matter: Mary Cassatt chose a theme explored many times by the impressionists, the integration of a portrait in a landscape. Her choosing to represent a woman is one of the permanent features of her work. One may see in it a deliberate choice, but one may also wonder whether this was not rather a constraint for a woman artist to whom male models were hardly accessible. This difficulty is illustrated by the segregation between sexes that went on after the *École des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts)* was open to girls in 1900. When a male model was shown, women had to represent him covered with a loincloth, not nude, and this was a way for teachers, who were often hostile to coeducation, to recognise their work while avoiding giving them awards...

- observe:
 - the framing is close, the young woman occupies two thirds of the painting. The viewpoint is from above. Today it would be said to be a "high-angle shot".
 - the character is shown from the front, the parting of her hair and the back of the armchair accentuate this frontality that is nevertheless upset by the oblique lines of the sloping path and the greenery in the background.
 - the artist plays on different kinds of strokes: wide brush strokes for the background, where the greens are accentuated by the red spots of the flowers; finer touches for the clothes and the transparent folds of the clothing.

2. Sir John Everett Millais:

Mrs Heugh Aged 93 (1872)

- location: ground floor, gallery 22
- subject matter: the Musée d'Orsay does not house artworks corresponding to Millais' Pre-Raphaelite period. He parted from this movement in the mid-1850's to devote more and more of his time to historical paintings and portraits that brought him fame and the means to support his family. The portrait of Mrs Heugh was commissioned by the model's son, who himself owned artworks by the artist. The elements of the decor, a large armchair upholstered with green velvet with the back covered with a piece of cloth from the Far East, the presence of a pet, a dark curtain occupying two thirds of the wall at the back, a framed picture hung in the left angle..., evoke a bourgeois and cosy atmosphere. Have the pupils memorise these elements so that they may compare them with the portrait of Whistler's mother they will see later on during the visit.

- observe:
 - the character, seen from three quarters, fits in a square format of which she occupies the greater part;
 - the circuit of the spectator's eyes is guided by the clearer values – the face, the hands, the budgie – whereas the darker values are to be found in the dress and the curtain;
 - the painter renders with much accuracy the effects of matter, clothes, metals, as well as the marks of old age on Mrs Heugh's flesh.

3. Edward Burne-Jones:

Princess Sabra or The King's Daughter (1865-66)

- location: Pavillon Amont, first floor
- subject matter: this is an episode of Jacques de Voragine's *The Golden Legend* about Saint George. A dragon terrifies the city of Silcha in Libya, and after sacrificing all the ewes to him, the inhabitants drew lots to pick among their children those who will have to appease its anger. One day chance designs the king's daughter; she was to be saved by Saint George who killed the monster. This theme was tackled many times by painters since the Renaissance, in particular by Carpaccio, Paolo Uccello... Burne-Jones illustrated it in a series of seven paintings meant to decorate the dining room of the draughtsman Birket Foster in Witley, Surrey.

We can see here the first of these panels, showing the young girl, represented in the manner of gothic virgins, walking in a garden, holding a pious book in her hand.

- observe:
 - although it is an oil on canvas, the painting and the choice of colours are connected to those of a mural. The artist's will to work in the style of 15th century fresco painters contributes to the impression of atemporality.
 - Burne-Jones did not seek to give an illusion of a three-dimensional perspective. He chose to treat the background, representing trees and flowers, in four stripes of different values. The values of the stripes situated at the bottom and at the top of the



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1. Mary Cassatt: *Woman Sewing in a Garden*, 1880-82
2. Sir John Everett Millais: *Mrs Heugh Aged 93* (1872)
3. Edward Burne-Jones: *Princess Sabra or The King's Daughter* (1865-66)

painting being perceptibly the same contribute to the lack of any impression of depth. The young woman is dealt with in flat tints, her silhouette standing out against the background and the painter did not seek to integrate her in the landscape, thus reinforcing the decorative effect of the background.

(It is also possible to see *The Wheel of Fortune* by the same artist, median level, gallery 59)

4. Ford Madox Brown:

The Finding of Don Juan by Haidee (1878)

- location: Pavillon Amont, first floor
- subject matter: this painting was inspired by *Don Juan, An Epic Satire*, published by Byron between 1819 and 1824 (Song II, stanzas CXXII to CXXIX). Following a gallant intrigue with Dona Julia, Don Juan, a noble from Seville aged 16 is sent abroad by his mother. His ship is wrecked. He embarks on a life-boat with part of the crew and after great suffering – in particular witnessing his preceptor and his dog being sacrificed to feed the passengers – he is jettisoned on a Greek island where he is discovered by Haidee, the daughter of the corsair Lambro. Fond of literary subjects, as were all Pre-Raphaelites, Ford Madox Brown illustrated a popular edition of Byron's poems and chose to paint this episode. He took as models the Greek consul's daughter and a young Neapolitan, disregarding the dislike of Victorian puritans for the representation of male nudity.

• observe:

- the painting is divided by a diagonal starting at Haidee's woman follower's glance and finishing at Don Juan's feet. The landscape is on the right of this, the characters on the left. The spectator's glance circulates from one character to the next following this same diagonal.

- the colours used are vivid, even gaudy, and the golden light bathing the scene seems completely artificial; there is no definite source of light and the directions of the shadows are contradictory.
- the unrealistic landscape evokes rather a theatre set in which actors perform with grandiloquent or languid attitudes.

5. Walter Crane: *Mrs Walter Crane* (1852)

- location: Pavillon Amont, first floor
- subject matter: this is the portrait of the artist's wife. It is not a psychological portrait, but rather a sort of manifesto of the artist's life and work. The social and intellectual background is evoked through the accessories: hat, lace, jewels, open book. Other elements in the decor are invitations not to forget Crane's varied activities: the wallpaper in the background is a reminder of the fact that he was also a decorator, and the book that he practised illustration. Finally, the mention of the model's name on the phylactery, together with the date and signature (Mary Frances Crane June 1882 Pinx + monogram in the shape of a crane) may have several meanings: it identifies the model, but it may also reflect the artist's acknowledging his painting and what it

represents: his wife, his social background, his taste for decoration, his mediaevalist sources of inspiration (the motifs of the wallpaper evoke the "thousand flowers" tapestries of the Middle Ages)...

• observe:

- both character and background are bathed in the same frontal light.

- the painter uses dark values for the clothing and the hat, clear ones for the face, the hands, the lace, the phylactery and some of the flowers of the background, in between with clear patches for the background. The spectator's glance circulates through the painting from one clear patch to the next.

6. James Abbott McNeill Whistler:

Layout in Grey and Black Number 1 or *Portrait of the Artist's Mother* (1871)

• location: upper level, gallery 30

- subject matter: portrait of his mother by the artist. The old lady, dressed in black, is sitting on a black wooden chair with a grey wall behind her. The left corner is occupied by a black curtain on which a few white flowers are printed, while the monotony of the monochrome wall is broken by a framed engraving (it is a reproduction of *Black Lion Wharf* by Whistler) and the only partly visible border of another frame. The barren background, the lack of accessories evoking intimacy endow this portrait with an austerity contrasting with the impression of comfort the portrait of Mrs Heugh gives. Reflecting on the double title chosen by Whistler for his painting, one may conjecture that composition was as important to him than the subject represented. This way of attracting the public's attention to the technique used in the painting took a growing importance with the artist who progressively left aside in his titles all reference to the subject matter, and called his works with allusions to a chromatic range or a musical composition. The Musée d'Orsay thus houses another painting by Whistler entitled simply *Variations in Violet and Green* (1871, same gallery).

• observe:

- the painting is constructed along a geometric structure made up of vertical and horizontal elements; the character occupies a triangular mass against a background made of rectangles of diverse lengths.

- the only elements that suggest depth or volume are the network of fine vertical lines of the carpet and the foot stand, on the one hand, the hands and face of the woman, on the other. What is outside the picture is suggested by the frame being cut at the top on the left, like the dress at the bottom in the centre, and the curtain on both sides.



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4. Ford Madox Brown: *The Finding of Don Juan by Haidee* (1878)

5. Walter Crane: *Mrs Walter Crane* (1852)

6. James Abbott McNeill Whistler: *Layout in Grey and Black Number 1* or *Portrait of the Artist's Mother* (1871)

7. John Singer Sargent: *La Carmencita* (1890)

- location: median level, Salle des Fêtes
- subject matter: it is the portrait of a Spanish dancer who performed in Paris in 1889 as part of the “allée des étrangers” (foreigners’ alley), on the occasion of the World Fair. During the same event, Édouard Manet’s painting *Lola de Valence* (1862, Musée d’Orsay, ground floor, gallery 14) was exhibited, and Sargent could not be unaware of this work, all the less so as he had been a pupil of Carolus-Duran, a close friend of Manet. A few months later, Sargent met the Andalusian dancer again in New York and she agreed to pose for him. Soon she was no longer satisfied with the bracelets she had asked for as a reward, and her financial demands became exorbitant. She finally dropped Sargent before he had time to finish her portrait, posing for a while for another painter, Chase, who went through the same troubles as Sargent, and who introduced a bracelet at the feet of the model in his portrait of her as a reminder of his misadventure. Sargent gave Carmencita an arrogant expression and a provoking attitude, a slightly low angle accentuates the effects produced by the high arches, the tantalising leg, the gleaming skirt, her hands on her hips. Should the uncompleted state of the left arm and hand be attributed solely to the model’s defection ?

- observe:

- the light seems to be directed by a projector on the model and not on anything else, leaving the background in the dark. It is totally artificial and the shadow of the dress on the ground contradicts the direction of the supposed source of light.
- the vivid colours used for the character, ranging from white to an almost golden yellow for the dress, the flower in her hair, the string of the right shoe, are opposed to those of the background, dark and neutral.

8. Winslow Homer: *Summer Night* (1890)

- location: median level, gallery 59
- subject matter: two women are dancing by the sea, lit by a light that seems to come from a house that would be located near the spectator. A group of ghostly silhouettes, without depth, turn their backs to the scene, looking towards the sea. The night atmosphere seems electrified, and the dancing women look enthralled by a strange charm. The one who is seen from the front has a beaming face, and a great sensuality emanates from the body seen from the back, whose long dress underlines her seductive plumpness.

- observe:

- the ground, the sea and the sky are figured by three stripes of different values; that evoking the sea is itself made up by three levels, rocks and shadows separating two planes of clearer water. Each stripe is linked to that juxtaposing it: the characters on the right link the ground and the rocks, the dancing women connect the ground (on which can be distinguished lattice as floor planes or a dance ring) and the dark zone, while this zone fades away in the strip figuring the sky. The

impression of depth is strengthened by the red dot (a lighthouse?) situated on the horizon.

- the beach, the sky and the characters in the shadow are represented by flat tints, the sea and the rocks by apparent strokes, wide by the beach, smaller and smaller near the horizon line. For the dancing women, Homer chose the modelling, distributing light and shadows in such a way that it suggests three-dimensional shapes.

9. Thomas Eakins: *Clara* (circa 1900)

- location: median level, gallery 59
- subject matter: portrait of a woman named Clara J. Mather. The painter situates his model outside of all background, of any element of decoration, without any accessories. It is the woman’s psychology that seems to have interested the artist. Her eyes, expressionless, evoke no possibility of contact either between her and the painter or between her and the spectator. The character, seen in a slightly low angle shot, occupying the top two thirds of the painting, whereas the lower third is in the shadow, contributes to the fact that this portrait gives an impression of a certain immanence, with a character whose expression is absent, with an air of melancholy.

- observe:

- the light seems to come from a definite source towards which Clara’s look is turned. The painter used an effect of *chiaroscuro* for the face, in particular the part of it which is located on the left of the painting, which stands out in light value against a dark background. The clothes are indistinct from the background, except when they are in direct contact with the character’s neck that is itself partly in the dark. The spectator’s gaze does not circulate in this painting, or hardly so, outside the zone of clear value of the face and neck.

10. Lionel Walden: *The Docks of Cardiff* (1894)

- location: median level, gallery 58
- subject matter: Cardiff, the largest coal port in Britain, exports the coal produced in the neighbouring coal mines since the 18th century, which explains the presence of trains and sailboats. The painter’s choice of an industrial landscape and his transposing it into an aesthetic language may justify a comparison with *La Gare Saint-Lazare* by Monet (gallery 32).

An atmosphere of mystery and dream emanates from this scene, accentuated by the near total absence of human beings in this landscape transformed by man and existing only by and for him. One can barely make out the conductor’s head in the locomotive, who becomes in a way the machine’s eye. The equipment necessary to maritime trade gives way to a play of almost abstract surfaces.

- observe:

- the map of the ground is constructed by the network of rails, sleepers... The space is organised from the right to the left: close shot on the rails on the right – gauge, precision of details : sleepers,



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levers, signals - , reduction of the gauge on the left, where signal lanterns are blurred, the buildings and machines smaller, direction of the steam...

- in the half-light of the dawn of a rainy day, the light seems to come from the different luminous spots constituted by the signal lanterns, the headlights, the projectors and their reflections on the wet ground, as well as the diffraction of this light in the steam. Walden represents the buildings, the locomotive and the coaches by dark zones tainted in a reddish brown, as well as the part included between the rails on the foreground to the right, and by clearer zones tainted with yellow, green and blue, the space between the rails in the centre and the steam. The clearer zones attract the eye between the buildings and the cranes on the left of the painting, giving the illusion that the rails go on outside the spectator's range of vision and beyond the frame.



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