constituted one of the elements in the birth of evocative landscape painting: nature itself could become the subject of the painting, its role had shifted from that of decor to that of subject. In One Morning, The Dance of the Nymphs, the line of trees separating the characters from the background has the same function as a theatre curtain and evokes an opera ballet, an ambiguity confirmed by the title, 'Le mimisme' signifying both morning and an early performance. Yet the velvety and fluidly treatment of the foliage, so characteristic of Corot's work, testifies to the shift in the artist's interests from the narrated scene to the natural elements themselves. This tendency can be seen in other works such as 4. A Clearing in Ville d'Orsay, where the young woman sitting in the shaft of light of the clearing, is only discreetly identifiable as the huntress Diana, her bow string at her foot while the deer runs away in the distance. The title no longer includes the mythological allusion, and there is only a small step to take before all references to antiquity disappear, giving way to pastoral landscape painting, and anticipating the experiments of the future impressionists.

Part Three: the “return to the Antique” (end of the 19th century and first years of the 20th)

1. Émilie-Antoine Bourdelle (1861-1929): Héros killing the Bird of Lake Stymphale, 1900 Location: middle level, gallery 70

Bourdelle, who had been Bourdelle’s teacher, was no stranger to using references to Antiquity for their enabling qualities. In his sculpted group Faun and nymph, (Musée d’Orsay), he used figures echoing with the dark forces of nature, to permute the climate of danger and resistance in a scene that is almost a representation of a rape. Bourdelle proceeded in a similar manner with his ‘héroïques’ in which he avoided narrative or anecdotal elements connected with the legend of the twelve labours, and instead sought to symbolize strength and balance, a perfection of gestures, all the quintessential features of a male hero. The character is thus endowed with allegorical strength, without in any way prefiguring its forward modernity.

2. Jean-Victor Roussel (1847-1894): The abduction of Leucippe’s Daughters, 1911 Location: middle level, gallery 70

The subject of this painting was taken from book XXXII of the Iliad by the Greek pastoral poet Theocritus. Castor and Pollux, the twin sons of Zeus, the inseparable, duel nature twins (Castor was mortal and Pollux, divine), eloped with the daughters of their uncle Leucippe (the Leucippean), who were engaged to other cousins. The abduction is to have dir consequences: in the following battle, Castor was killed, but Zeus granted Pollux’s request that his brother also be immortalised: they became the constellation of Gemini.

Roussel has chosen an episode early on in the tale, when life was still calm: the Discourt, in the distance, catch a glimpse of the young girls bathing. The treatment of the two female nudes in the foreground places the work in the tradition of pastoral painting. The matt colours of the flesh tones echo the subdued range of colours used by the artist in the landscape. But the small touch of pure red that reveals the presence of the two brothers enlivens the whole, limiting at the action to come. In a work which seems at first to be essentially decorative, Roussel succeeds in discovering but efficiently introducing the Classical tale’s sequence of events: this heightened red that contrasts with the rest of the painting, accentuated by the white bush from which it emerges,ает the gaze of the viewer along with those of the Leucippeans, towards a point that gives a sense of depth in this mostly frontal composition.

3. Odilon Redon (1840-1916): Apollo’s Chariot, 1905-1904: paint and patinated on canvas Location: upper level, gallery 40

For a powerful visionary such as Odilon Redon the reference to Antiquity was not only a tool for the expression of his personal artistic vocabulary and for structuring the pictorial space of the canvas, but it also occupied his imagination.

The subject of Apollo’s Chariot thus held a privileged place in Redon’s work and while studying Delacroix’s composition in the Apollo Gallery of the Louvre he wrote: “This is the triumph of light against darkness, the full day against the sadness of night and shadows, like the relief of feeling better after anguish” (ibidème, Paris, 1922).

Before and after the visit

Suggestions to help teachers prepare for and get the most out of their visit to the Musée d’Orsay:

• familiarise the pupils with the modes of representation of mythological or historical figures in Classical art, for instance by organising a visit to the department of Greek and Roman antiquities at the Louvre;
• study the various “returns to Antiquity” which have occurred in the history of Western art: the Renaissance, 17th century Classicalism, Davidian Classicism;... • study the history of archaeology as a science (its methods and consequences), from its beginnings to the present day;
• focus on a particular theme in Antiquity; its history, literature or mythology, and have pupils carry out a project in order to report on the representations of that theme which have ensued, from Antiquity to the 20th century.

References to Antiquity in Visual Arts (1848-1914)

Presentation

To make the most of this visit it is worth revisiting a few aspects of the cultural and artistic background.

1. In the 19th century, receiving an education was the preserve of the small minority who were able to attend the lycées (senior secondary schools). The curriculum was largely based on the “humanities” which meant learning classical languages through a method of immersion. The historian Ernest Lavisse, who devised the most popular text books of the time, summarised this method with the words: "I have the feeling to have come from a noble, foreign and remote background. I have lived in Athens in the times of Pericles, in Rome in the times of Augustus... although he went on to denounce the failures of an education system in which chitons occupied the first place. The most important exercise was speaking Latin, especially in Latin. Writing a speech meant attributing noble words to great characters. Pericles or Diocletian could not possibly be expected to speak in Hellenic, every day language. Only memorable phrases illustrating Antique virtues, taken from texts studied in class, were worthy enough to be studied by the future graduates of the baroque/academic.

Young artists studying at the École des Beaux-Arts (School for Fine Arts) received a similar education although instead of the baccaulareate they were aiming for the institution’s highest accolade, the prix de Rome.

2. One style and one personality dominated the École des Beaux-Arts: Neoclassicism and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867). Ingres’ unique teaching method was the ideal of “classicism”, a purity which could only be attained by the painstaking study and copying of Antique statues. This meant asserting the importance of drawing over colour, and the symmetry and clarity of composition as much as Classical Antiquity (and to feature Roman literature most of which was available in translation and chosen excerpts. 19th century artists had access to mythological dictionaries called ‘dictionnaires de la Fable’. They did not hesitate to juxtapose several traditions, without giving the slightest prevalence to Antiquity.

But aside from Academicism and Eclecticism, Antiquity made its mark on many other stylistic movements in 19th century art. Styles that were formally innovative, in both painting and sculpture, turned once again to Antiquity, especially towards the end of the century. This “return to the Antique” is the object of the third part of the visit.

3. References to Antiquity may be factual or visual.

• Visual references: besides the whole of Greek-Roman literature most of which was available in translation and chosen excerpts, 19th century artists had access to mythological dictionaries called ‘dictionnaires de la Fable’. They did not discriminate in any significant way between mythological, historical and literary sources.

• Visual references: the 19th century was an era of intense archaeological research. The exhume sculptures, and newly discovered decor were universally admired and supplied models for artists.

Targeted public

1. Lower and upper secondary school pupils (9-11 years) who want to discover the visual arts.

2. Pupils taking visual arts at history options.

3. 5th and 6th year pupils studying 19th century history.

Objectives

1. To show pupils studying Latin and Greek language and civilisation, that the 19th century, a period of return to Antiquity, considered classical Antiquity as a vivid source of inspiration and gave it a prominent place in its artistic vocabulary.

2. To address the problem of transcending elements from the civilisation of one era onto the visual arts of another. This means discussing the notion of interpretation, through visual means, of a common set by tradition.

3. To discover and compare the various mediums (painting, sculpture, objects/art) and styles (neo-clasicism, eclecticism, symbolism, post-impressionism) available in the Musée d’Orsay from a common angle: the use they made of the reference to Antiquity (this is generally a new discovery for pupils who often tend to think of the Musée d’Orsay solely in terms of its impressionist collection).

4. Finally, to simultaneously encourage: interest (by searching out and identifying scenes related to Greek and Roman literature, both in painting and sculpture); a critical facility (comparing modes of reference to Antiquity by studying very different artworks from a formal point of view); a proactive and personal approach to the museum visit.

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The visit: the artworks

Part One: ... from fideity... to pastiche; or the Antique's progressive loss of meaning to a "mock Antiquity"

1. Eugène Guillaumet (1822-1895):
The Graces (1847-48), double bust, bronze
Location: ground floor, central aisle
Here the sculptor represented the constellation of Caïn and Théodore Gracchus. The inscriptions on the walls where the two brothers' hands meet is: “LES LÉGIEN DE AGR. P.O.B. SESSENIUS” and on the front plinth: “T. ET C.S. SEMPRONIS F. GRACCIUS THO. FLEBRE SOPHIE DE ROMANO MERITIS” provide opportunities to remind pupils of the historic role played by the two tribunes.

This work is typical of the Neoclassical movement which promoted fidelity to the Antique model. It offers a threshold reference:

- literary: the Gracchi are known thanks to Plutarch’s Lives of Illustrious Men (AD 120 AD) in which the historian drew a double parallel between the two Spartan revolutionaries kings Agis and Cleomenes, and the two Roman brothers; all noblemen by birth who supported the struggle against the nobility.

- historical: the words inscribed by the sculptor on the plinth are, as we have seen, a direct allusion to C. Licinius Stilo’s agerian law which the Gracchus upheld.

- formal: the crouching (empty funeral monument), is a kind of Antique monument erected to honour the memory of a deceased person that does not contain the corpse.

The critics of the time were aware of these references and praised the sculpture as a contemporary artwork capable of vying with those of a far cry from the chaste and idealised eroticism of the goddess is lying on the foaming crest of a wave in which artists in the second half of the 19th century would exteriorise Sapho, the character: its sound chamber, sculpted into the top of the rock in Leucade out of love for the beautiful Phaon by whom she had been rejected.

According to the legend, Sapho threw herself from the top of the rock in Leucade out of love for the beautiful Phaon by whom she had been rejected. This abandoning of mythological pretexts was the sculpture’s eureka moment, coupled with an opportunity to express a modern allegory. We shall select one example: the Greek poetess, Sapho was chosen by many romantic and symbolist artists to be the emblematic figure of “poetry” and more generally of “artistic creativeness”.

2. Adolphe David (1828-1895):
Les Gracques (1861)
Location: ground floor, gallery 4
Two years after Ingres’ Venus, here is another, and one which presents a very different kind of relationship to Antiquity. Although there is a fidelity to the narrative elements of the myth, the goddess is lying on the foaming crest of a wave, where she is supposed to have been born - it is a far cry from the chaste and idealised eroticism of Ingres’ Venus. The pose of Cabanès’ Venus evokes neither birth nor awakening, nor sex: it is a sort of stretching, which highlights her charms according to the conventions of the erotic code. The gardian of couples gazes past her. She is only the embodiment of the human, of that which has the formal function of accentuating the curves of the goddess’s body. But the nudity is still present, a fact which prompted Zola to comment: “the goddess, dressed in a river of milk, looks like a delicious harlot, made not of flesh and blood, but that would be indecent - but of a sort of pink and white almonds paste”.

Actually such idealisation was little more than a visual euphemism to titillate the bourgeoisie of the Second Empire. In this Cabanès was wholly successful as the painting was bought by Napoleon III the same year that Manet painted Olympia which, becoming an object of public sarcasm, was dubbed “The Venus of the suburbs”.

Manet: Olympia, 1859 (ground floor, gallery 14)

Jupiter et Antiope (1863)
Location: ground floor, central aisle
Napoleon I is thus represented in the nude, which Antiquity usually reserved for gods, standing on a Roman altar, with a crown, on the central axis of the Olympic heavens. It is widely acknowledged that the second Empire took great care over placing itself in the wake of the first and the artwork such as this is testimony to that.

b) The use of an emblematic figure as a pretext (vehicle)
The reference to Antiquity can be used as a vehicle to express a modern allegory. We shall select one example: the Greek poetress, Sapho was chosen by many romantic and symbolist artists to be the emblematic figure of “poetry” and more generally of “artistic creativeness”.

1. Paul-Charles Gallebrun (1825-1895):
Napoleon III, 1861, oil on canvas
Location: ground floor, gallery 5

Part Two: The reference to Antiquity used as a pretext

a) Its use as a pretext for a political message

1. Camille Corot (1796-1875):
One Morning. The Dance of the nymphs, 1851, oil on canvas
Location: ground floor, gallery 6

Although a number of Corot’s landscapes are still peopled with the small figures of Classical tradition, this one is extraordinary in its representation of a small group of young women still in the midst of an experimental Barbizon School. This was a group of artists who, by spending their summers in the Fontainebleau forest, preferred to paint outdoors, “en plein air”, no longer considering it necessary to refer to antique subjects in order to justify their interest in nature. This abandoning of mythological pretexts...
The visit: the artworks

Part One: ... from fidelesity, to pastiche; or the Antique's progressive loss of meaning to a "mock Antiquity"

1. Eugène Guillaume (1822-1895): The Gracchi (1847-48), double bust, bronze Location: ground floor, central aisle

Here the sculptor represented the cenotaph of Caio and Titus Gracchus. The inscriptions on the roll where the two brothers' hands meet is: ‘LES LIGNA DE AGR. P.O. S (DIVIENSIS)’ and on the front plinth: ‘T. ET C. SEMPRONI F. GRACCUS THIR P. LEBR OrtizN DE ROMAN MERITIS’ provide opportunities to remind pupils of the historical role played by the two tribunes. This work is typical of the Neoclassical movement which pronounced fidelesity to the Antique model. It offers a threefold reference:

bibliographical: the Gracchi are known thanks to Plutarco's Lives of Illustrious Men (AD 46-112 AD) in which the historian drew a double parallel between the two Spartan revolutionary kings Agis and Cleomenes, and the two Roman brothers: all noblemen by birth who supported the struggle against the nobility;

historical: the words inscribed by the sculptor on the plinth are, as we have seen, a direct allusion to C. Lucius Sisodia's argument on which the Gracchi upheld;

formal: the cenotaph (empty funeral monument), is a kind of Antique monument erected to honour the memory of a deceased person that does not contain the corpse.

The critics of the time were aware of these references and praised the sculpture as a genuinely Roman as the most characteristic works of Antiquity:

"It offers a threefold reference: the goddess is lying on the foaming crest of a wave according to the conventions of the erotic code. A sort of stretching, which highlights her charms evokes neither birth nor awakening: it is rather a far cry from the chaste and idealised eroticism of Classical artists.

The reference to Antiquity can be used as a pretext for a political message. In this respect Pradier's contemporaries found his statue enigmatic as the only reference to the concept of apotheosis. It was in the aftermath of the First and a artwork such as Pradier's, made use of the reference to Antiquity in heroic landscape

The Venus of the suburbs – but of a sort of pink and watery demise are the sculpted garments of the Roman emperor (vehicle) itself in the wake of the First and an artwork such as Pradier's, made use of the reference to Antiquity in heroic landscape to Neoclassical values, neither does it aspire to Neoclassical nudity.

This sculpture is typical of an Eclectic style, and on the front plinth: ‘Secret from above, marble group, 1847’ Location: ground floor, central aisle

What secret can this mock Mercury be whispering in the ear of the statue of Aphrodite? This sculpture is typical of an Eclectic style, genre piece: ‘A Antiquity’ it no longer refers to Neoclassical values, neither does it aspire to Neoclassical nudity, all sense of the erasmalf has been shed. Without referring to pretext mythological or literary sources the artist has appropriated the motif of the toga, mainly to highlight and balance the supple and graceful male nude. The scene is thus stripped of all mythical or ritual material. The atmosphere of complexity that reigned between the two characters, accentuated by the nonchalance of Mercury's pose, corresponds to the spirit of mock Antiquity - light and facetious - as it may be found in Ovid's opera where Homere heroes are reduced to the level of Parisian salon wit, typical of the late 19th century.

‘tomb’, a column topped by a host representing an artistic: the Gracchi are known thanks to Plutarco's Lives of Illustrious Men (AD 46-112 AD) in which the historian drew a double parallel between the two Spartan revolutionary kings Agis and Cleomenes, and the two Roman brothers: all noblemen by birth who supported the struggle against the nobility.

Jupiter and Antiope (1852-1853), marble statue, 1852 Location: ground floor, central aisle

The reference to Antiquity can be used as a vehicle to express a modern allegory. We shall select one example: the Greek poetess, Sapho was chosen by many romantic and symbolist artists to be the emblematic figure of ‘poetry’ and more generally of ‘artistic creativity’.

1. Paul-Charles Galbrunner (1823-1905): Napoleon III, 1866, diverse precious materials Location: ground floor, gallery 3


3. Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889): The Birth of Venus, 1885 Location: ground floor, gallery 5

Ten years after Ingres Venus, here is another, and one which presents a very different kind of relationship to Antiquity. Although there is a fidelity to the narrative elements of the myth, the goddess is lying on the foaming crest of a wave where she is supposed to have been born - it is a far cry from the classic and idealised representations of Venus in Paphos. The pose of Cabanel's Venus evokes within the museum visitors a sort of stretching, which highlights her charms according to the conventions of the erotic code.

The garland of fruits crossing over her shoulders has the formal function of accentuating the curves of the goddess's body. But the motif is still a far cry from a chaste and idealised representation of Venus in Paphos. The pose of Cabanel's Venus evokes within the museum visitors a sort of stretching, which highlights her charms according to the conventions of the erotic code.

The reference to Antiquity can be used as a pretext for a political message.

Part Two: The reference to Antiquity used as a pretext

a) Its use as a pretext for a political message

1. Paul-Charles Galbrunner (1823-1895): Napoleon III, 1866, diverse precious materials Location: ground floor, gallery 3


These two objects are fine examples of the way in which artists in the second half of the 19th century made use of the reference to Antiquity as a pretext or vehicle. The partner of monarchs as Roman emperors was not new: it had been so often under the Ancien Régime that these phrases have been seen in terms of those circumstances Galbrunner's bust presents Napoleon III wearing a tunic and laurel crown, the sign which encapsulate all the powers to be found in the person of the Roman emperor (emperor Caesar Augustus). Certainly Napoleon, known as ‘the small’ was in fact the author of the development of an of the 6th century BC Greek poetess. However, the aspect of the 6th century BC Greek poetess’ life which would be exalted by that poet. According to the legend, Sapho threw herself from the top of the rock in Leucate out of love for the beautiful Phaon by whom she had been rejected.

In this respect Pradier's contemporaries found his statue enigmatic as the only reference to the young woman's watery demise are the sculpted wavelets on the base. Instead, the viewer's attention is drawn to the lyre lying to the right of the character: its sound vibrations, modelled in the shape of a tortoise shell, and its bronze strings are held to be of major importance.

Dancing himself from anecdotal banality that would enthrall Sapho's departs, the sculpture created an atmosphere of enchantment by animating his work with a sort of circular movement. Above all, the by his statue is a metaphor for self as a wearable, multi-layered figure, a symbol of artistic creation and melancholy, which, according to the romantics, are inseparably linked.

1. Paul-Charles Galbrunner (1823-1895): Napoleon III, 1866, diverse precious materials Location: ground floor, gallery 3


3. Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889): The Birth of Venus, 1885 Location: ground floor, gallery 5

4. Julien-Hippolyte Moulin (1832-1884): Secret from above, marble group, 1847 Location: ground floor, central aisle

The reference to Antiquity can be used as a vehicle to express a modern allegory. We shall select one example: the Greek poetess, Sapho was chosen by many romantic and symbolist artists to be the emblematic figure of ‘poetry’ and more generally of ‘artistic creativity’.

1. Paul-Charles Galbrunner (1823-1895): Napoleon III, 1866, diverse precious materials Location: ground floor, gallery 3


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Napoleon I is thus represented in the nude, which Antiquity usually reserved for gods, standing on a Roman pedestal, barcode, central aisle

What secret can this mock Mercury be whispering in the ear of the statue of Aphrodite? This sculpture is typical of an Eclectic style, genre piece: ‘A Antiquity’ it no longer refers to Neoclassical values, neither does it aspire to Neoclassical nudity, all sense of the erasmalf has been shed. Without referring to pretext mythological or literary sources the artist has appropriated the motif of the toga, mainly to highlight and balance the supple and graceful male nude. The scene is thus stripped of all mythical or ritual material. The atmosphere of complexity that reigned between the two characters, accentuated by the nonchalance of Mercury's pose, corresponds to the spirit of mock Antiquity - light and facetious - as it may be found in Ovid's opera where Homere heroes are reduced to the level of Parisian salon wit, typical of the late 19th century.

‘tomb’, a column topped by a host representing an artistic: the Gracchi are known thanks to Plutarco's Lives of Illustrious Men (AD 46-112 AD) in which the historian drew a double parallel between the two Spartan revolutionary kings Agis and Cleomenes, and the two Roman brothers: all noblemen by birth who supported the struggle against the nobility.
constituted one of the elements in the birth of violet landscape painting: nature itself could become the subject of the painting, its role had shifted from that of de ver to that of die. In one Morning, the Dance of the Nymphs, the line of trees separating the characters from the background has the same function as a theatre curtain and evokes an opera, an ambience confirmed by the title, “Le matin” signifying both morning and an early performance. Yet the velvety and fluid treatment of the foliage, so characteristic of Corot’s work, testifies to the shift in the artist’s interests from the narrated scene to the natural elements themselves. This tendency can be seen in other works such as A Clearing in the Garden or A Clearing in the Forest, where the young woman sitting in the shaft of light of the clearing, is only discreetly identifiable as the riverine Diana, her long braided hair at her feet while the deer runs away in the distance. The title no longer includes the mythological allusion, and there is only a small step to take before all references to antiquity disappear, giving way to pastoral landscape painting and anticipating the experiments of the future impressionists.

Part Three: the “return to the Antiquity” (end of the 19th century and first years of the 20th)

1. Émilie-Antoine Bouffioulle (1861-1920): Héroïdes killing the Bird of Lake nymph, 1900 Location middle level, Lilac Terrace

Bouffioulle, who had been Bouffioulle’s teacher, was no stranger to using references to Antiquity for their enabling qualities. In his sculpted group Fauns and Nymphs, (Muses of Orsay), he used figures expressing the dark forces of nature, to perennial the climate of desire and resistance in a scene that is almost a representation of a Raphaelscend in a similar manner with his florals in which he avoided narrative or anecdotal elements connected with the legend of the twelve labours, and instead sought to symbolize strength and balance, a perfection of gestes, all the quintessential features of a male hero. The character is thus endowed with allegorical strength, without in any way prejudicing its formal modernity.

2. Jean-Xavier Delacroix (1887-1984): The abduction of Leucippe’s Daughter, 1911 Location middle level, gallery 78

The subject of this painting was taken from book XXXII of the Iliad by the Greek pastoral poet Theocritus. Castor and Pollux, the sons of Zeus, the inseparable, dual nature twins (Castor was mortal and Pollux, divine), eloped with the daughters of their uncle Leucippe (the Leucippe), who were engaged to other cousins. The abduction was to have dire consequences: in the following battle, Castor was killed, but Zeus granted Pollux’s request that his brother also be immortalized: they became the constellation of Gemini.

Rousseau has chosen an episode early on in the tale, when life was still calm, the Discursive, in the distance, catch a glimpse of the young girl bathing. The treatment of the two female nudes in the foreground places the work in the tradition of pastoral painting. The matt colours of the flesh tones echo the subdued range of colours used by the artist in the landscape. But the small touch of pure red that reveals the presence of the two brothers enlivens the whole, limiting at the action to come. In a work which seeks at first to be essentially decorative, Rousseau succeeds in discovering but efficiently introducing the Classical tale’s sequence of events: this heightened red that contrasts with the rest of the painting, accredited by the white busts from which it emerges, leads the gaze of the viewer along with those of the Leucippe, towards a point that gives a sense of depth in this mostly frontal composition.

3. Odilon Redon (1840-1916): Apollo’s Chariot, 1895-1914, paint and pastel on canvas Location: upper level, gallery 40

For a powerful visionary such as Odilon Redon, the reference to Antiquity was not only a tool for the expression of his personal artistic vocabulary and for structuring the pictorial space of the canvas, but it also occupied his imagination. The subject of Apollo’s Chariot thus held a privileged place in Redon’s work and while studying Delacroix’s composition in the Apollo Gallery of the Louvre he wrote: “This is the triumph of light against darkness, the joy of full distance. The title no longer includes the sequence of events: this heightened red that contrasts with the rest of the painting, accredited by the white busts from which it emerges, leads the gaze of the viewer along with those of the Leucippe, towards a point that gives a sense of depth in this mostly frontal composition.

Before and after the visit

Suggestions to help teachers prepare for and get the most out of their visit to the Musée d’Orsay:

• familiarise the pupils with the modes of representation of mythological or historical figures in Classical art, for instance by organising a visit to the department of Greek and Roman antiquities at the Louvre.
• study the various “returns to Antiquity” which have occurred in the history of Western art: the Renaissance, 17th century Classicism, Duchamp Neoclassicism…
• study the history of archaeology as a science (its methods and consequences), from its beginnings to the present day.
• focus on a particular theme in Antiquity; its history, literature or mythology, and have pupils look at different uses and examples of how the representation of that theme has evolved, from Antiquity to the 20th century.

References to Antiquity in Visual Arts (1848-1914)

Presentation

To make the most of this visit it is worth revisiting a few aspects of the cultural and artistic background.

1. In the 15th century, receiving an education was the preserve of the small minority who were able to attend the lycées (senior secondary schools).

The curriculum was largely based on the “humanities” which meant learning classical languages through a method of unsupression. The historian Ernest Lavisse, who devised the most popular text books of the time, summarised this method with the words: “I have the feeling to have come from a noble, foreign and remote background. I have lived in Athens in the times of Pericles, in Rome in the times of Augustus…” although he went on to denounce the failures of an education system in which students occupied the first place. The most important exercise was speaking Latin, especially in Latin. Writing a speech meant attributing noble words to great characters: Pericles or Diocletian could not possibly be expected to speak in banal, everyday language. Only memorable phrases illustrating Antiquity virtues, taken from texts studied in class, were worthy enough to be studied by the future graduates of the baraculardine.

Young artists studying at the École des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts) received a similar education although instead of the harsculean they were aiming for the institution’s highest accolade, the Prix de Rome.

2. One style and one personality dominated the École des Beaux-Arts: Neoclassicism and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867). Ingres’ style teaching model was the ideal of classical beauty which could only be attained by the painstaking study and copying of Antiquity sources. This meant ascertaining the importance of drawing over colour, and the summery and classical beauty of mythological and historical scenes which became enshrined in the hands of artists of lesser genius. The teachers of the École des Beaux-Arts strove to maintain the classical Neoclassical tradition: the students’ spending most of their time copying casts of Greek statues and art models, frozen in poses inspired by the Classics. Above all, Antiquity was considered to be the quintessential embodiment of the concept of Beauty. Naturally, the competition subjects for the Prix de Rome were almost always chosen from Greek-Roman literature. Despite this, armed with a greater or lesser degree of radicalism, including D’Annunzio Articists (Realists, Impressionists) and even so-called “official” artists (i.e. those who were chosen by the jury) were eventually successful at the annual Salon (i.e. other publics.

3. Among these other publics, one was widely acknowledged for its influence and canons of official art towards the end of Lucas-Philippe’s reign, under Napoleon III and the Third Republic. These artists, whose patronage were members of the nobility and the upper bourgeoisie, and who sold many works to the State upheld a stylistic movement known as Eclecticism. Disregarding hierarchical criteria, they were happy to glean inspiration from any artistic period (the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, etc. as much as Classical Antiquity) and to feature in their works, with increasing archaeological accuracy, a variety of iconographic elements such as costumes, settings, etc. They founded their movement on a doctrine called Historicism. Their approach differed from the Neoclassicists following the Beaux-Arts’ tradition, inasmuch as they did not hesitate to juxtapose several traditions, without giving the slightest prevalence to Antiquity.

But aside from Academicism and Eclecticism, Antiquity made its mark on many other stylistic movements in 19th century art. Styles that were more formally innovative, in both painting and sculpture, turned once again to Antiquity, especially towards the end of the century. This “return to the Antiquity” is the object of the third part of this visit.

References to Antiquity may be textual or visual:

• Textual references: besides the whole of Greek-Roman literature which was available in translation and chosen excerpts, 19th century artists had access to mythological dictionaries called “dictionnaires de la Fable”. They did not hesitate to borrow freely from mythology.

• Visual references: the 19th century was an era of intense archaeological research. The exhumble sculptures, and newly discovered décor were universally admired and supplied models for artists.

Objectives

1. To show pupils studying Latin and Greek language and civilization, that the 15th century, from its humanistic origins, considered classical Antiquity as a vivid source of inspiration and gave it a prominent place in its artistic vocabulary.

2. To address the problem of transposing elements from the civilisation of one era onto the visual arts of another. This means discussing the notion of interpretation, through visual means, of a canon set by tradition.

3. To discover and compare the various mediums (painting, sculpture, objects of art) and styles (neo-classicism, eclecticism, symbolism, post-impressionism) available in the Musée d’Orsay from a common angle: the use they made of the reference to Antiquity (this is generally a new discovery for pupils who often tend to think of the Musée d’Orsay solely in terms of its impressionist collection).

4. Finally, to simultaneously encourage: curiosity (by searching out and identifying scenes related to Greek and Roman literature, art and mythology).

• a critical facility (comparing modes of reference to Antiquity by studying very different artworks from a formal point of view).

• a proactive and personal approach to the museum visit.

Targeted public

1. Lower and upper secondary school pupils (9th to final year) studying Latin or Greek.

2. Pupils taking visual arts or art history options.

3. 7th and 8th year pupils studying 19th century history.

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