American painting

The first American painters were mostly portrait painters whose work reflected 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 painters of the South commissioned painters and the portrait genre became more academic. From the colonial period we retain principally the names of Benjamin West (1738-1815), 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 1785), 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 new world. Artists from the English-speaking world had already set sail for the New World, to discover new horizons for their art. This is the period of the Hudson River paintings, a style that corresponded to the religious revival of the society of the time, but that had its rules called into question. The technique was concerned, a return to realism understood as the exact representation of nature. The painters met in the countryside to prepare their landscapes, and borrowed subjects from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but it promoted the sensibility of their time. The natural background of their paintings in direct contact with reality, before adding their characters, and thus a 'keen analysis' of her - whether she's an original or a copy. In art, she is a 'wonder'. William Morris, a mezzotint, 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 shawls, after he had drawn himself the furniture and decoration for his own house in Kent, the 'Revd 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 it took over their exaltation of feminine and vegetal shapes.

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. Eakins, made short sojourns in Europe, but most of their careers was spent in the United States. 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 and American Painters at the Musée d'Orsay

• Presentation
• Biographies
• Objectives
• Before the visit
• Bibliography

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 artists on show at the Musée d'Orsay can focus on two aspects:

- The sojourn in France of many American artists, 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 painters

John Abbott McNeill Whistler (Lowell, Massachusetts, 1834 – London, 1905) Whistler dropped out of West Point military school in 1858 to devote himself to painting. He settled in France in 1853 and attended the painter Charles Gleyre’s workshop. He adopted a bohemian lifestyle 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 predominance of esthetic intentions over subject matter. He took part in the Salon des Refusés in 1863 with The White Girl (1862) that was to take the title of Symphony in White, No. 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 1860s 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.

Born in Maine, painting fishermen and seamen, their hard military life and the countryside, rendered in an original way through eliminating all anecdotal elements. Homer was interested in painting for its subject, rendered with a sometimes moralising element. Homer was a pupil of Charles Chaplin, a friend of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He never formally attended the painter Gérôme’s workshop. He started his career as a lithographer and an illustrator, Homer was one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. After receiving only half-hearted acclaim, he at last met with a degree of success with Opheleia (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 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.

Edgar Degas

Born in Paris in 1834, Degas started at the age of thirteen, he turned to painting, and his first works were genre scenes inspired by military life and the countryside. He devoted himself 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 was elected Great Master in 1912, responsible for artistic training at the South Kensington Royal College of Art in 1912, before becoming Great Master in 1913. Degas was considered a representative of the Symbolist movement. He was accepted to the Salon from 1903 onwards 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.

Mary Cassatt

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 1841 to 1865, then in Paris, where she attended Charles Chaplin’s workshop, and finally in Parma. She started presenting works 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 1870 Salon. She took part in the impressionist exhibitions from 1877 onwards. Mary Cassatt was interested in the representation of human figures, in particular in the theme of mother and child. Beside painting, she also chose to guide the visit in English.

Before the visit

• Present the Musée d’Orsay, its architecture and the period covered by its collections (1848-1914) to the pupils.

• Give them the elements concerning the artistic movements evolved during the visit.

• Study the corpus 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).
realism for people and details. He began his training at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and followed analogical classes. In 1863 he came to Paris and attended the painter Gerome's workshop. He was influenced by the works of Rembrandt, Velazquez, Ribera and Courbet. He developed his own conception of realism, marked by his interest in sciences and photography, and in particular in Sismondi'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 academic 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 pressured his eviction from the teaching position he occupied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He continued to paint in the Philadelphia area until the end of his life, making many trips to the United States where he met considerable success. He died in Philadelphia in 1880.

Thomas Eakins

Philadelphia, 1844 – id., 1916

After beginning his training at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and following analogical classes, Eakins came to Paris in 1860 and attended the painter Gerome's workshop. He was influenced by the works of Rembrandt, Velazquez, Ribera and Courbet. He developed his own conception of realism, marked by his interest in sciences and photography, and in particular in Sismondi's work on the decomposition of movement.

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Little-known 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 his example, took part in many exhibitions. He was influenced by the impressionists, of which he maintained and moulded the landscapes of Buxton and English coasts too. He then turned to themes related to contemporary life, following the path set by the naturalists.

American painters

John Abbott McNeill Whistler

Lowell, Massachusetts, 1836 – London, 1905

Whistler dropped out of West Point military school in 1858 to devote himself to painting. He settled in France in 1853 and attended the painter Charles Gleyre's workshop. He absorbed a Japanese lifestyle and became a friend of Courbet and Fantin-Latour. Faithful to Théophile Gautier's aesthetic theory ("Le Joli par l'art", art for art's sake), he thought that the artwork must be freed of any external association and asserted the preeminence of ethereal intentions over subject matter. He took part in the Salon des Refusés in 1863 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 intending 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, 1835 – Prout’s Neck, Maine, 1910

At first a lithographer and an illustrator, Homer executed reports drawn during the Civil War. Bored with 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 calming all anecdotal element. Homer was interested in painting for its own sake, without concerns for any message or secondary meaning. He sojourned in France 1862-1867 and was influenced by the impressionist painters who were then making their début, and then by Japanese stipplings. The 1870's were devoted to watercolor. One of his recurrent themes was that of children playing, unworried, whom he opposed to anonymous and solitary adults. From 1881 he devoted his time to illustrating books and to teaching position he occupied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

Lionel Walden

Newport, Connecticut, 1841 – Paris, 1933

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 he maintained and moulded the landscapes of Buxton and English coasts too. He then turned to themes related to contemporary life, following the path set by the naturalists.

English painters

Ford Madox Brown

Caulis, 1821 – London, 1895

After studying painting in Belgium, Ford Madox Brown studied in Paris from 1840 to 1843 and discovered the works of Delacroix and those of the Spanish painters gathered in the Louvre by Louis-Philippe. The "Byronic" romances of his milieu then acquired a realistic bias. 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 who took part in the Romantic movement. His approach is similar to that of the Pre-Raphaelites to adopt. F.M. Brown returned to England and became the teacher and a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He never formally joined the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, but his work reveals a strong affinity with the group's objectives. He was also interested in social subjects, rendered with a prominent moral bias. In 1861, he was one of the founders of the Morris and C¢ group and a few years later of the Arts and Crafts movement.

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. In 1848, he was accepted 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 (1852-53). Millais painted his landscape after nature and integrated his characters later on, in his workshop. From 1857 onwards, he drew apart from the movement, tackled contemporary subjects and exhibited the melodramatic vein (The Blind Young Girl, 1856). He started an official career after being elected in 1888 to 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.

Before the visit

• Present the Musée d'Orsay, its architecture and history, and describe and analyse a painting (teachers may also choose to guide the visit in English).

• Give them the elements concerning the artistic movements evoked during the visit.

• Study the corpus of literary works to which reference will be made (cf. bibliography).

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British and American Painters at the Musée d’Orsay

**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 centered on artworks by British and American painters on show at the Musée d’Orsay can focus on two aspects:

- The symposium 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 moneied class of traders in the northern states and planters of the South commissioned painters and the portrait genre became more academic. From the colonial period we retain principally the paintings of Saint George, the last of the Amsterdammers to travel abroad (1758-1820), whose style evoked that of the Barbizon painters in his later years. The painters met in the countryside to prepare the functional arrangements and the organisation of exhibitions.

**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 technique and the idealistic concerns of the artists. 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 Nazarenes, 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 improvised the Pre-Raphaelite movement without ever formally taking part in it. The group took over the organisation of Brotherhood which corresponded to the religious revival of the society of the time, but their set of rules concerned mainly functional arrangements and the organisation of exhibitions.

This movement inspired the poetry of Alfred Tennyson (1800-1892) and John Ruskin (1819-1900) and afforded subjects from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. But it promoted nature, 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 characters, in whom one can often recognize 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 (1315-1375), was composed, as well as the addition of the initials P.B. to their signatures. Critics judged them with severity, identifying a sort of disociation between the naturalism of the technique and the idealistic concerns of the artists. If John Banck (1819-1899) took sides, it was rather out of more 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 had already set on his separate course: Rossetti had given up exhibiting his work since 1841. Millais had even associate member of the Royal Academy and Hunt was to leave for the Holy Land.

But Pre-Raphaelite painting continued with a second phase, under the leadership of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. These artists took part in the painting of frescos, re-created the atmosphere of Gothic legends, found inspiration in Keat’s poem Le Belle Dame sans Merci for their conception of women, haughty and fatal. 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 Elizabeth 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 & Cie that made furniture, tapisseries, ceramics, stained glass, linen and shirts, after he had down himself the furnishing and decoration for his own house in Kent, the “Red House”. In 1868, 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.

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First explain to the pupils the outline of the visit

1. Mary Cassatt: 
   • location: ground floor, galleries 7 and 18
   • subject matter: Mary Cassatt chose a theme, exploring many times by the impressionists group (1890-92)
   • observe:
   - the character, seen from three quarters, fits in a square format of which she occupies the greater part;
   - 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 lack of the armchair accentuate this flatness 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, whereas the darker values are to be found in the costumes and the curtain; the clearer values – the face, the hands, the badge – 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.

2. Sir John Everett Millais:
   • location: second floor, gallery 19
   • 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 his anger. One day by 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 Britck Foster in Witley, Surrey.
   • observe:
   - pavilion Amont, first floor; the picture was discovered by a wealthy family who owned artworks by the artist. The elements of the decoration were to be seen together with the portrait of Whistler's mother. The portrait was commissioned by the model’s son, who himself owned artworks by the artist. He was the only son of the model. The portrait of Mrs Heugh was the last of the model's works. Mrs Heugh Aged 93 (1872)

3. Edward Burne-Jones:
   • location: ground floor, galleries 7 and 18
   • subject matter: The King’s Daughter (1866-68)
   • observe:
   - the portrait of Mrs Heugh was 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 portrait of Mrs Heugh was the last of the model's works. Mrs Heugh Aged 93 (1872)

 Nassim, 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 distraction 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 frame. The Docks of Cardiff (1894)

The Docks of Cardiff (1894)

British and American Painters at the Musée d’Orsay

1. Mary Cassatt: 
   • location: ground floor, gallery 7
   • subject matter: The Docks of Orsay does not house artworks corresponding to Millais’ Pre-Raphaelite period. He parted from this movement in the mid-1850s 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 very atmospheres. 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 eye is guided by the clearer values – the face, the hands, the badge – 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.

2. Sir John Everett Millais: 
   • location: ground floor, gallery 22
   • subject matter: The Docks of Orsay does not house artworks corresponding to Millais’ Pre-Raphaelite period. He parted from this movement in the mid-1850s 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 very atmospheres. 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.
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painting being perpendicular the same contribute to the lack of any impression of depth. The young woman is dead in flat tones, her silhouette standing out against the background and the painting did not seek to integrate her in the landscape, thus reinforcing the decorative effect of the background. (It is also possible to see The Wharf of Fortune by the same artist, median level, gallery 5) 4. Ford Madox Brown: The Finding of Don Juan by Haidee (1878)

- location: medium level, Salle des Fêtes
- subject matter: it is the portrait of a Spanish dancer who performed in Paris in 1850 as part of the ‘tour de force’ of the ‘strangers’ alley, on the occasion of the World Fair. During the same event, Édouard Manet’s painting L’Ouverture de Paris (1862) 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 Andalucian 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 reminiscence of his misadventures. Sargent gave Cartonnet an arrogant expression and a provoking attitude, a slightly low angle accentuates the effects produced by the high heels, the tantalising leg, the glancing skirt, her hands on her hips. Should the uncomplicated 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 background used for the character, ranging from white to an almost golden yellow for the dress, her hands, 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.

5. Walter Crane: Mrs Walter Crane (1852)

- 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 monochrome wall is broken by a frame of engraving (it is a reproduction of Black Lion/Whistler) and the only partly visible border of another frame. The barren background, the lack of accessories evoking intimacy evokes this portrait with an austere contrast with the impression of comfort the portrait of Mrs Rough gives. Reflecting on the double title chosen by Whistler for his painting, one may conjecture that composition was as important to him as subject represented. This way of approaching the public’s attention in the technique used in the painting looks a growing importance with the artist who progressively left aside his titles all references 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 certified simply Fantasies in Violet and Green (1877), same gallery.

- observe:

- the modeling is constructed along a geometrical 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 frame 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.

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 monochrome wall is broken by a frame of engraving (it is a reproduction of Black Lion/Whistler) and the only partly visible border of another frame. The barren background, the lack of accessories evoking intimacy evokes this portrait with an austere contrast with the impression of comfort the portrait of Mrs Rough gives. Reflecting on the double title chosen by Whistler for his painting, one may conjecture that composition was as important to him as subject represented. This way of approaching the public’s attention in the technique used in the painting looks a growing importance with the artist who progressively left aside his titles all references 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 certified simply Fantasies in Violet and Green (1877), same gallery.

- observe:

- the modeling is constructed along a geometrical 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 frame 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.

7. John Singer Sargent: La Carmencita (1880)

- location: medium level, Salle des Fêtes
- subject matter: it is the portrait of a Spanish dancer who performed in Paris in 1880 as part of the ‘tour de force’ of the ‘strangers’ alley, on the occasion of the World Fair. During the same event, Édouard Manet’s painting L’Ouverture de Paris (1862) 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 Andalucian 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 reminiscence of his misadventures. Sargent gave Cartonnet an arrogant expression and a provoking attitude, a slightly low angle accentuates the effects produced by the high heels, the tantalising leg, the glancing skirt, her hands on her hips. Should the uncomplicated 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 background used for the character, ranging from white to an almost golden yellow for the dress, her hands, 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.

8. Winslow Homer: Summer Night (1880)

- location: medium level, gallery 5
- 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 dancers is visible, without depth, turned back to the sea, looking towards the sea. The night, the water, the sky seems electrified, and the dancing women look enveloped by a strange charmed light. Women is seen from the front has a leaning 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 lines of different values that give a sense the sea itself is 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, and the two remaining women connect the same ground on which can be distinguished lattice as floor planes or dance rings) and the dark zone, while this same 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 are represented by flat tints, the sea and the rocks by apparent shades, unmodulated, 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: medium level, gallery 5
- subject matter: portrait of a woman named Clara J. Matter. The painter situates his model outside of all background, of any element of decorum, without any accessories. It is the woman’s psychology that seems to have interested the artist. Her eyes, expressions, 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, occupies 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 immobility, 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 back 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 dark. The spectator’s gaze circulates from one character to the next outside of the zone of clear value of the face and neck.

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

- location: median level, gallery 5
- 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 just compare with La Gare Saint-Lazare by Monet (gallery 14) or Orangerie by Monet (gallery 14). An atmosphere of mystery and dream emanates from social and industrial environment that is the near total absence of human beings in this landscape transform the composition. The eye is directed on the sky, the train, the far away the machine’s eye. The equipment necessary to maritime trade gives way to a play of almost abstract surface.

- observe:

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

7. John Singer Sargent: La Carmencita (1880)

8. Winslow Homer: Summer Night (1880)

9. Thomas Eakins: Clara (circa 1900)

10. Lionel Walden: The Docks of Cardiff (1894)
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 is represented: his wife, his social background, his taste for decoration, his medievalist sources of inspiration (the motifs of the wallpaper evoke the “thousand flowers” tapiseries of the Middle Ages)

- 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 gaze circulates through the painting from one clear patch to the next.

- the beach, the sky and the chariot of the sun (a lighthouse?) situated on the horizon.
- the vivid colours used for the character, ranging from white to an almost golden yellow for the dress underlines her seductive plumpness. Clara’s look is turned towards which Clara’s back is turned. The spectator’s gaze is directed towards the character’s head then the hand then the dancer’s face which are in direct contact with the character’s neck that are the network of fine vertical lines of the carpet, the network of rails, sleepers… The space is organised by man and existing only by and for the passengers. One stripe is linked to that juxtaposing it: the characters on the right link the ground and the sky, the dancing women connect the ground (on the left) to the rocks, the rocks, the dancing women connect the ground (on the left) to the sky.

6. James Abbott McNeill Whistler: Layout in Grey and Black Number 1 or Portrait of the Artist’s Mother (1857)

- subject matter: portrait of the 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 monotype of the monochrome wall is broken by a frame of engraving (it is a reproduction of Black Lion/Wheeler by Whistler) and the only partly visible border of another frame. The barren background, the lack of accessories evoking intimacy evokes this portrait with an austerity contrasting with the impression of comfort the portrait of Mrs Rough gives. Reflecting on the double title chosen by Whistler for his painting, one may conjecture that composition was as important to him than the painter use 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. The spectator’s gaze circulates through the painting from one clear patch to the next.

7. John Singer Sargent: La Carmencita (1880)

- location: median level, Salle des Fêtes

- subject matter: it is the portrait of a Spanish dancer who performed in Paris in 1880 as part of the “l’Hotel de Nonnains” (Spanish dancer’s alley), on the occasion of the World Fair. During the same event, Edouard Manet’s painting Luda de Valence (1878), Masse d’Orsay, ground floor, gallery 56) 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 bracteas 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, press 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 reminiscence of his misadventures. Sargent gave Comunmore 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 undressed model be the centre, and the curtain on both sides.
Mary Cassatt:

- **subject matter**: Mary Cassatt chose a theme of a young woman at work, which was unusual for the time.
- **location**: ground floor, galleries (Femmes au jardin (Woman Sewing in a Garden), 1880-82)
- **painting presented at the last exhibition of the impressionist group (1886)**
- **subject matter**: Mary Cassatt chose a theme explored many times by the impressionists, the integration of a portrait in a landscape. Her choice 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.
- **character** seen from three quarters, fits in a square format of which she occupies the greater part.
- **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 badger – whereas the darker values are 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.

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**.
- **Artworks representative of realism and impressionism**.
- **subject matter**: the Musée d’Orsay does not house artworks corresponding to Millais’ Pre-Raphaelite period. He parted from this movement in the mid-1870s 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 décor, 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 obscuring two thirds of the wall at the back, a framed picture hung in the left angle... evoke a bourgeois and very atmospheric. 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 badger – 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.

2. Sir John Everett Millais:

- **subject matter**: this is an episode of Jacques de Voragine’s *The Golden Legend*:
- **location**: Pavillon Amont, first floor (The King’s Daughter (1865-66))
- **sight**: 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”.
- **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 atemporalism.

3. Edward Burne-Jones:

- **Princess Sabra or The King’s Daughter (1865-66)**
- **subject matter**: the Musée d’Orsay does not house any house artworks corresponding to Millais’ Pre-Raphaelite period. He parted from this movement in the mid-1870s 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 décor, 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 obscuring two thirds of the wall at the back, a framed picture hung in the left angle... evoke a bourgeois and very atmospheric. 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 bag** – whereas the darker values are to be found in the dress and the curtain;