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***Impressionism: The Hasso Plattner Collection***

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## **Impressionism: The Hasso Plattner Collection**

On view at the Museum Barberini since September 2020

**The permanent exhibition at the Museum Barberini in Potsdam, on view since September 2020, presents museum founder Hasso Plattner's extensive collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings. With 113 masterpieces by 23 artists including Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Alfred Sisley, Camille Pissarro, Henri-Edmond Cross, and Paul Signac, the collection shows French landscape painting in a uniquely coherent and comprehensive way. With 39 paintings by Claude Monet, the museum houses the largest body of Monet's work in Europe outside of France, as well as exceptional paintings by Caillebotte, Pissarro, Signac, Sisley, and Maurice de Vlaminck, making Potsdam one of the most important centers of Impressionist landscape painting worldwide.**

In the 1860s, the young painters Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Alfred Sisley came together in Paris. They liberated themselves from the traditional pictorial subjects of their time and revolutionized art with their sun-drenched landscapes. In 1874 they became known as "Impressionists," who preferred to work in the open air and capture fleeting impressions directly on the canvas. Berthe Morisot, Paul Cézanne, and Gustave Caillebotte later joined the new movement, and in the 1890s Paul Signac and Henri-Edmond Cross continued to develop the Impressionist style with Pointillism. The early twentieth-century Fauves, including Maurice de Vlaminck and André Derain, turned their backs on Impressionism and Pointillism in favor of a painting marked by flat, brilliant colors. The Impressionists, Neo-Impressionists, and Fauves all pursued the same ideal: to evoke the sensory experience of nature through light and color.

Since 2020, museum founder Hasso Plattner's collecting activities have focused on Impressionism: "As viewers, we are immediately drawn into the paintings. We feel the wind on our skin and the temperature of the water when we look at Monet's sailboats on the Seine. No other art can do that. The Impressionists are geniuses of communication," Plattner explains. In the fall of 2020, about three years after the opening of the Museum Barberini in 2017, Plattner transferred 103 works from his private collection and the holdings of the Hasso Plattner Foundation to the museum on permanent loan. In 2022 and 2023, ten new acquisitions joined the collection, including a painting from Claude Monet's famous series of the Houses of Parliament in London. The collection now comprises 113 masterpieces of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism by 23 artists. With 39 paintings by Claude Monet, the museum houses the largest body of Monet's work in Europe outside of France, as well as exceptional paintings by Caillebotte, Pissarro, Signac, Sisley, and Vlaminck. Among the best-known works in the collection are Caillebotte's *The Argenteuil Bridge and the Seine* (ca. 1883), Signac's *The Port at Sunset*,

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*Opus 236 (Saint-Tropez)* (1892), and Monet's *Grainstacks* (1890), *The Palazzo Contarini* (1908), and *Water Lilies* (1914–17).

The collection on view at the Museum Barberini spans the period from the 1850s to the early twentieth century and brings together paintings by three generations of artists who often worked together, traveled to the same places to paint, and mutually inspired one another. With nine thematically arranged rooms, the show offers the opportunity to trace the development of French landscape painting through Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, and Fauvism. As Ortrud Westheider, director of the Museum Barberini, says: "No other collection can show French Impressionist landscape painting so comprehensively and coherently, in terms of both development and iconography. Through our works, visitors can learn not only about the history of this fascinating art movement, but also about the subsequent development of landscape painting by the Neo-Impressionists and Fauvists."

Since the inaugural exhibition *Impressionism: The Art of Landscape* at the Museum Barberini in 2017, up to three special exhibitions a year offer the opportunity to discover Impressionism as well as other artistic movements from a variety of perspectives.

The catalogue *Impressionism: The Hasso Plattner Collection* by Ortrud Westheider (Prestel 2023) accompanies the permanent exhibition. The collection is also presented in depth on the museum website with texts by Daniel Zamani, collection curator at the Museum Barberini, and the results of provenance studies by research assistant Linda Hacka.

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## Reflections in the River

The Impressionists developed their repertoire of motifs through the landscapes along the Seine. Working outdoors and focusing on the here and now, they renounced the anecdotal elements that characterized earlier landscape painting. They sharpened their skills of observation on the reflecting surfaces of the Seine. In addition to the constant change of light and of the clouds in the sky, other dynamic moments were observed in the reflections and flowing of the water.

As early as 1865 Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Alfred Sisley embarked on a painting excursion along the Seine that ended in the estuary at Le Havre. Many artists in this collection continue to be associated with towns along the Seine such as Argenteuil, Giverny, and Moret, among them Eugène Boudin, Gustave Caillebotte, Claude Monet, Paul Signac, and Alfred Sisley.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, industrialization and increased efficiency further transformed the Seine. Steamships operated on supply routes to the capital and brought steel for the construction of railways and arcades from the foundries on the river. Building materials for the boulevards and new neighborhoods in the quickly growing metropolis were also shipped from the stone quarries in Normandy. Besides grain and vegetables from the surrounding countryside, barges transported mussels, textiles, and other goods to be sold to urban consumers. The Seine was also the scene of modern sailing sports and a destination for day-trippers from the city, who reached the suburbs by train. These were aspects of modern life that the Impressionists integrated into their landscape paintings as a matter of course.

## Paris and the Periphery

The Impressionists observed life on the boulevards, in cafés and parks. Massive construction work had transformed the capital since the 1850s. In the service of Napoleon III, Baron Haussmann had turned the city into a modern metropolis with monumental avenues and thoroughfares for the growing traffic, boasting new parks, enormous market halls, train stations, and theaters. Uniform façades and rows of trees, gas lanterns, advertising columns, cafés, and shops lined the streets.

After London, Paris was the largest city in the world. Between 1850 and 1870 the population doubled to two million inhabitants. New streets connected the city with the periphery. The suburbs grew when blue- and white-collar workers moved there in search of alternatives to the high rents in the city center. Unlike in London, where the workers lived downtown, in Paris the banlieues were created through industrialization.

Since the 1860s Parisians who were looking for recreation were able to travel by railroad to the coast of Normandy in less than five hours. In Étretat and Trouville there

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were resorts in the style of English baths. Unlike during the eighteenth century, when only the nobility went to spas to take the waters, bathe in hot springs, and relax in parks, countless tourists were drawn to the resorts on the seaside, including the artists and their collectors.

### **A New Kind of Realism**

The motifs of the Impressionists are adamantly unspectacular: fields of wheat, rows of poplars, forest paths, and meadows. In the fields near their homes, they recorded aspects of the French landscape that did not correspond to nostalgic or national clichés. Their new modern views of nature come alive through animated brushstrokes. Despite the openness of their painting style, their depiction of topography is precise. Paths, for example, instead of symbolizing the course of life as in classic landscape painting, now invite viewers to experience the light, air, times of day, and seasons with all of their senses.

As people from the city, the Impressionists perceived France's agrarian tradition in a different way than the farmers saw their land. While Camille Pissarro and Alfred Sisley engaged with rural people in their pictures, Claude Monet staged himself and his family as outsiders. His paintings show the rural environment of Giverny without directly depicting the work of the local farmers.

In changing light and weather conditions the painters captured atmospheric phenomena of the sort that nineteenth-century scientists researched. The artists, too, strove for an exact observation of phenomena. Rather than painting random atmospheric effects, they created protocols of direct experience: each brushstroke a piece of information.

### **Modernity by the Sea**

Although France was not a seafaring nation, the coasts of Brittany and Normandy gained importance over the course of the nineteenth century. Le Havre, where Eugène Boudin and Claude Monet started their first painting campaigns, was the second largest port in France after Marseille. Ships carrying cotton from the New World had been landing there since the early nineteenth century.

The often archaic appearance of the ports with their sailboats is misleading, because they had already transformed their economy from preindustrial production to modern services. To keep up with the expanding trade, French harbors were rebuilt after the model of the London Docks. Le Havre also underwent modification to accommodate steamers of increasing size: in 1872 work was begun on the expansion of the outer harbor, which Boudin and Monet painted, with a new quay wall.

Impressionist depictions of harbors did not serve the purpose of marine painting in England or the Netherlands, which was to express pride in the national fleet. The artists

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were inspired by works by the Old Masters and focused on the modernity of the ports. The new rhythm of cargo handling was illuminated by artificial lighting. Monet also intensified and consolidated what he saw. He had visited the Docks in London, where he had also come into contact with the dynamic paintings of William Turner, as Berthe Morisot (the only woman who exhibited with the Impressionists from the very beginning) would do soon after him.

### **Garden Paintings**

In the nineteenth century, garden culture developed into a hobby of the educated classes after the English model. There was also an increase in the importation of exotic plants. In their own gardens the artists around Claude Monet cultivated their love for variability and sought to visualize the changing times of day and seasons through this new subject.

Claude Monet's oeuvre is inextricably linked with the water garden he created in the 1890s and whose water-lily pond became the defining motif of his late work. But the enthusiastic amateur gardener had already been working intensively on the subject of horticulture since the 1870s.

Monet shared his passion for designing gardens with friends including Gustave Caillebotte, the writer Octave Mirbeau, and the politician Georges Clemenceau. With flower bulbs and seeds purchased from Japanese merchants in Paris, they developed the rich coloring of their gardens. The chrysanthemums they cultivated, for example, symbolized the sun in Japan. Exchanges with Monet encouraged Caillebotte to paint still lifes with flowers from his own garden. Artist gardens were also an important topic at the turn of the century because they offered the possibility of combining images of nature with interiors.

### **The Coasts of Europe**

Claude Monet's views of Venice are the only works that are reminiscent of the Grand Tours on which artists of previous centuries embarked. The city had already inspired Romantic painters to create atmospheric depictions of light. In Monet's generation the model of antiquity and classic landscape painting that was schooled on the Italian Campagna had been replaced by northern painting and the study of nature at home.

When Eugène Boudin, Berthe Morisot, and later Henri-Edmond Cross and Paul Signac traveled to Italy, they did not take the traditional approach. Instead they traveled with the railroad along the coasts like other tourists. The coasts of northern and southern Europe were marketed as tourist destinations in the late nineteenth century by means of post-cards. The painters reacted to this competition by adapting the cut-out techniques of photography. The impasto of their paintings was quite the opposite of the slick surfaces of the new medium.

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The Côte d'Azur was being discovered by tourism at the same time as Cross and Signac settled there in the 1890s. The sunlight that attracted the painters to the south was a sort of energy that fed artistic innovations and social utopias. Three generations of Impressionists, Pointillists, and Fauves, contemporaries of a rapidly developing modern France, were linked by the same ideal: making nature experienceable with the senses by means of light and paint.

### **Monet's Series Paintings**

After Monet turned his back on Paris at the end of the 1870s, he devoted himself first in Vétheuil and later in Giverny to representations of nature in the change of day and season. Here, he pursued the idea of coming closer to capturing the fleeting moment through repetitions of one given motif.

From 1891 on, Monet used solo exhibitions in the Parisian gallery of Durand-Ruel to present large-scale series of works in which he showed one single motif in numerous variations. His Grainstacks were followed by the Cathedrals of Rouen, later by the series of the British Parliament in London, and finally by that of the Waterlilies in his garden in Giverny. Three of these groups are represented in the Hasso Plattner Collection.

With the Grainstacks, Monet introduced his concept of the *enveloppe* – that envelope of light and air surrounding the motif, which he elevated to the actual subject of his painting. The silhouette of Westminster Palace appearing in the smog against the sunset occupied him during three stays in London between 1899 and 1901. The water-lily pond in Giverny gave Monet material to see and paint for over two decades: reflecting water surfaces had influenced his work from the beginning. The studio located next to his water-lily pond now allowed him to work on previously unimaginably large canvases. By foregoing representations of the horizon and mirroring the sky, the landscapes seem to expand beyond the frame of the canvas, offering viewers an immersive experience.

### **Landscapes of the Fauves**

In 1905 a radically new art movement emerged that emphasized contours and used paint to expressive ends. On the occasion of their first exhibition in the Paris Salon d'Automne, an art critic called these painters "Les Fauves" (the Wild Beasts).

While André Derain had worked alongside his friend Henri Matisse in the South of France on the trail of Cross and Signac, Maurice de Vlaminck remained in northern France on the Seine. The Fauves distanced themselves from the Impressionist and Pointillist styles and developed a technique characterized by flatness and bright colors. Unlike the Impressionists they were not interested in the depiction of natural phenomena but in the expressive value of color. In this respect, they were related to the painters of the German

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movement Die Brücke. They also began, in emulation of Cézanne, to experiment with the dissection of form, as was continued by the Cubists.

Their expressive painting style did not prevent them from following Impressionism and Pointillism in their choice of locations and motifs. In 1907, for example, Derain traveled to Cassis, where Signac had worked previously. Vlaminck used one of Renoir's motifs when he painted the boatyard of Rueil. Although their landscapes are agitated and often dark, the Fauves were still referring to the iconography of the Impressionists.



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<b>Presentation:</b>	On permanent display at the Museum Barberini since September 2020
<b>The Collection:</b>	113 works by 23 artists: Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947), Eugène Boudin (1824–1898), Gustave Caillebotte (1848–1894), Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), Henri-Edmond Cross (1856–1910), André Derain (1880–1954), Albert Dubois-Pillet (1846–1890), Raoul Dufy (1877–1953), Émile-Othon Friesz (1879–1949), Armand Guillaumin (1841–1927), Auguste Herbin (1882–1960), Henri Le Sidaner (1862–1939), Gustave Loiseau (1865–1935), Maximilien Luce (1858–1941), Claude Monet (1840–1926), Henry Moret (1856–1913), Berthe Morisot (1841–1895), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Camille Pissarro (1830–1903), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919), Paul Signac (1863–1935), Alfred Sisley (1839–1899), Maurice de Vlaminck (1876–1958)
<b>Curators:</b>	Dr. Ortrud Westheider, Dr. Daniel Zamani, Museum Barberini
<b>Gallery Space:</b>	ca. 1.000 m²
<b>Exhibition Design:</b>	Gunther Maria Kolck, Hamburg, and BrücknerAping, Büro für Gestaltung, Bremen
<b>Address:</b>	Museum Barberini, Alter Markt, Humboldtstraße 5–6, 14467 Potsdam
<b>Opening Hours:</b>	M 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. / W – Su 9 a.m. – 7 p.m. Kindergartens and schools by appointment M – F (except Tu), from 9 a.m.
<b>Admission and Tickets:</b>	M, W–F € 16 / € 10, Sa/Su/holidays € 18 / € 10 Free admission for schoolchildren and visitors under 18
<b>Social Media:</b>	#ImpressionismusBarberini at #MuseumBarberini on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube
<b>Digital Resources:</b>	Discover the <b>Impressionism collection online</b> with explanations of paintings, video tours, expert interviews, and artist biographies. <a href="https://sammlung.museum-barberini.de/en/">sammlung.museum-barberini.de/en/</a> <a href="https://museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek/">museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek/</a>

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The **Barberini App** is a personal guide before, during, and after the museum visit. It offers **audio tours** in German and English for adults and children as well as parent-child tours, exhibition texts in simplified language, service and event information, e-tickets, and video interviews with experts. The app is free and available in the App Store and at Google Play.

**[museum-barberini.de/app/en](https://museum-barberini.de/app/en)**

The **Barberini Prolog** sets the tone for the current exhibition. As a compact multimedia website, the Prolog offers an overview of themes and works and can be used to prepare for the museum visit or to recommend the show to others.

**[museum-barberini.de/prolog/en](https://museum-barberini.de/prolog/en)**

The **360° Tour** on the museum website enables viewers to digitally explore the current exhibition and the Impressionism collection. Users can navigate virtually from one exhibition room to the next and view each work in detail using the zoom function.

**[museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek](https://museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek)**

In the video series Close-ups, the curatorial and outreach team of the Museum Barberini present works from the collection of Impressionist paintings and offer insight into their creation, visual language, and reception.

**[museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek](https://museum-barberini.de/en/mediathek)**

**Program:**

Readings, yoga in the museum, concerts, lectures, tours, workshops, and barrier-free opportunities: the exhibition is accompanied by a wide-ranging outreach and event program for all interests and age groups. The complete program, along with updates and news, is available on our website. **[museum-barberini.de/en/kalender/formate](https://museum-barberini.de/en/kalender/formate)**



Ortrud Westheider:

## **Impressionism: The Hasso Plattner Collection**

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Gustave Caillebotte:  
*Rue Halévy, Blick aus der sechsten Etage, 1878*  
Öl auf Leinwand, 59.5 x 73 cm  
Sammlung Hasso Plattner



Gustave Caillebotte:  
*The Argenteuil Bridge and the Seine, ca. 1883*  
Oil on canvas, 65 x 82 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Henri-Edmond Cross:  
*The Beach at Saint-Clair, 1896*  
Oil on canvas, 54 x 65 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Raoul Dufy:  
*The Beach of Sainte-Adresse*, 1906  
Oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection  
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Claude Monet:  
*Grainstacks*, 1890  
Oil on canvas, 73 x 92.5 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Claude Monet:  
*Villas at Bordighera*, 1884  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 74 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Claude Monet:  
*Houses of Parliament, Sunset*, 1900-1903  
Oil on canvas, 81.2 x 92 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Claude Monet:  
*Water Lilies*, 1914–1917  
Oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Maximilien Luce:  
*The Seine at the Pont Saint-Michel*, 1900  
Oil on canvas, 89.2 x 116.2 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Camille Pissarro:  
*Hoarfrost, Young Peasant Woman Making Fire*, 1888  
Oil on canvas, 92.8 x 92.5 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Pierre-Auguste Renoir:  
*The Pear Tree*, 1877  
Oil on canvas, 46.1 x 37.7 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Paul Signac:  
*The Port at Sunset, Opus 236 (Saint-Tropez), 1892*  
Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Alfred Sisley:  
*Snow Effect in Louveciennes, 1874*  
Oil on canvas, 54 x 65 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection



Maurice de Vlaminck:  
*The Bridge at Chatou, 1906/07*  
Oil on canvas, 52.5 x 71.5 cm  
Hasso Plattner Collection  
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