

PRESS RELEASE

MONET AND THE BIRTH OF IMPRESSIONISM

11 MARCH TO 28 JUNE 2015

Städel Museum, Exhibition Annex

Frankfurt am Main, 12 February 2015. From 11 March to 28 June 2015, Frankfurt's Städel Museum is presenting a major exhibition on "Monet and the Birth of Impressionism". One hundred masterworks from the world's most prominent painting collections will shed light on the beginnings of the Impressionist movement in the years from the early 1860s to 1880. World-famous loans will be on view, for example Monet's *La Grenouillère* (1869) from the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, his *Boulevard des Capucines* (1873) from the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, and *The Luncheon: decorative panel* (ca. 1873) and *Camille on Her Deathbed* (1879), both from the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. The exhibition, which will be one of the highlights of the "200 Years Städel" anniversary programme, inquires into how Impressionism came about and the extent to which this approach to painting manifests contemporary visual experience. In addition to some fifty paintings by Claude Monet, works by numerous other Impressionists will also be on display, including important examples by Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro and Alfred Sisley. The anniversary exhibition bears a direct connection to the history of the Städel Museum's own holdings: as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, then director Georg Swarzenski (1876–1957) came out passionately in favour of acquiring French painting – which now represents one of the chief focuses of the museum's collection.

The exhibition is been made possible by the Commerzbank Foundation.

In conjunction with the show, a catalogue is being published by Prestel Verlag in German and English. In addition to numerous essays, it will present the results of in-depth technological examinations of all the Impressionist works in the Städel holdings, carried out in preparation for the exhibition. An audio guide of the show recorded by actress Diane Kruger will also be available. The free *Digital* moreover offers interested visitors a means of acquainting themselves with the exhibition contents before coming to the museum (monet.staedelmuseum.de). In order to avoid waiting in queues, the Städel advises visitors to purchase their tickets in advance online at tickets.staedelmuseum.de.

Städelsches Kunstinstitut
und Städtische Galerie

Dürerstraße 2
60596 Frankfurt am Main
Telefon +49(0)69-605098-170
Fax +49(0)69-605098-111
presse@staedelmuseum.de
www.staedelmuseum.de

PRESS DOWNLOADS UNDER
newsroom.staedelmuseum.de

PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
Axel Braun, head
presse@staedelmuseum.de

Silke Janßen, deputy head
Phone +49(0)69-605098-234
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
janssen@staedelmuseum.de

Karoline Leibfried
Phone +49(0)69-605098-212
Fax +49(0)69-605098-188
leibfried@staedelmuseum.de

“Works from the early days of Impressionism are rare and precious. All the more delighted are we that we have been able to realize such a complex and spectacular special exhibition as a prelude to our anniversary year, and have the opportunity to present loans from all over the world side by side with central works from the Städel collection. The exhibition and research project will undoubtedly be yet another highlight in the Städel’s two-hundred-year history”, comments Max Hollein, the director of the Städel Museum.

Taking as its point of departure Claude Monet’s painting *The Luncheon* (1868/69) – a key work of early Impressionism that the Städel is fortunate enough to have in its holdings – and the museum’s superb collection of early Impressionist works by Auguste Renoir, Édouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Alfred Sisley and Paul Cézanne, the exhibition will show how the Impressionists found their way to the dissolution and dematerialization of their pictorial motifs. From a multifaceted perspective, the visitors will learn about the various conditions that led to the birth of Impressionism and the radical change that came about in the relationship between pictorial content and form in the paintings produced by this important movement. Impressionism challenged the visual habits of the time in a completely new way – and met with a wide variety of responses, as is evidenced by contemporary caricatures to be presented alongside works of Impressionist painting and photography.

“Our show revolves around the beginnings of the Impressionist movement. The Städel collection provides a foundation upon which we can ask how it was possible for Impressionism to emerge within just a few years. This exhibition focuses on the development of Impressionism from its inception to 1880”, remarks curator Felix Krämer, the head of the collection of modern art at the Städel Museum.

The nineteenth century was a time of upheavals and a wide variety of developments all taking place at the same time – developments that also left their mark on the paintings of the Impressionists. Increasing industrialization brought about a change in the relationship between man and nature, but also that between work and leisure time. Technical progress led to a general acceleration of life. The visual experience of the big city and the spread of new media such as photography also had a decisive impact on the works of the period’s artists. The main protagonist and continual point of reference in the exhibition is Claude Monet. Among the artists of his time, Monet played a pioneering role in the growing popularity of open-air painting. In his oeuvre, the formal innovations of Impressionism – the clearly recognizable brushstroke and the rapid, sketchy painting style – are particularly prominent. And his work also exemplifies another phenomenon that applies to the art of the Impressionists in

general: they increasingly abandoned large-scale figural compositions in favour of smaller landscape scenes.

A circular tour of the exhibition

Part I of the exhibition

Arranged in chronological order, the presentation spreads out on both floors of the exhibition annex. A prologue in the first room on the ground floor is dedicated to the artists whom the Impressionists looked to as examples, such as the representatives of the “School of Barbizon” in whose work the predilection for landscape scenes, the tendency towards a sketchy manner of painting and the departure from academic tradition are all manifest. Here key compositions by Camille Corot, Jean-François Millet, Gustave Courbet, Charles-François Daubigny, Eugène Boudin and Johan Barthold Jongkind are on view.

After the prologue, the first main section of the show retraces the development of early Impressionist art in the period from 1864 to approximately 1870/71. It begins with a selection of paintings executed in the Forest of Fontainebleau. This is where the members of the “Barbizon School” worked on their open-air studies. Following in the footsteps of the painters they admired, Monet and his artist friends Frédéric Bazille, Pissarro, Renoir and Sisley also visited the Fontainebleau woods to paint. This section of the show is flanked by a photo gallery devoted to the theme of nature in the photography of the period, and shedding light on the concurrence of painting and photography activities in the Forest of Fontainebleau.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Paris transformed from a city still shaped by medieval structures to a modern metropolis characterized by large squares and wide boulevards and considered very progressive. Monet also devoted himself to the motif of the public urban space in these years. His first endeavours to come to terms with the theme of the city are already perceivable in the following room of the show. Here the significance of Édouard Manet for Monet also becomes evident. At the time, Manet was regarded as the major talent of the avant-garde, and younger artists looked to him for orientation. The exhibition features Manet’s large-scale painting *The Universal Exhibition of Paris 1867* (Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo). Yet Monet was also concerned with depicting the urban realm: *The Quai du Louvre* of 1867 (Gemeentemuseum, The Hague) shows the view from the balcony of the famous museum: it was not the Old Masters in the Louvre galleries that interested him, but the view of the everyday present outside. At the same time, he and his colleagues continued to paint landscapes and seascapes, several of which are likewise on view in this room.

The rear section of the ground floor concentrates on the years from 1868 to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71. The key work here is the painting *The Luncheon* (1868/69) belonging to the Städel. The depiction of the home of a couple without a marriage licence and with an illegitimate child was a deliberate provocation and a critique on prevailing conventions. It was moreover the first time an artist had represented a private interior on such a large scale. Measuring 2.31 x 1.51 metres, the work was refused by the Salon jury, as was the depiction of *La Grenouillère* (1869) Monet had likewise submitted. This rejection led to the artist's break with the Paris Salon and a radical reorientation in his art: *The Luncheon* is the last of his large-scale figural paintings and marks his departure from Manet as an artistic reference. The fact that Monet presented this painting at the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874, when it was already five years old, testifies to the significance it nevertheless held for him. It was the largest work in the 1874 show. Scenes of the Franco-Prussian War are not to be found in the Impressionist paintings of this period. Most of the works were executed in exile, among them Monet's Dutch landscape views. This section is enhanced by a photo gallery shedding light on the discrepancy between the political situation and the cheerful Impressionist pictorial motifs of these years.

Part II of the exhibition

The second part of the exhibition follows the further development of Monet's œuvre and those of other Impressionists from 1872 to 1880 – i.e. to the phase in which the subordination of the pictorial subject to atmospheric phenomena reached a climax. Upon entering the suite of galleries on the upper level, the beholder encounters another Monet painting: *The Luncheon: Decorative Panel* dating from 1873 (Musée d'Orsay, Paris), with which the artist reacted to his Frankfurt *Luncheon*. The work aptly demonstrates the shift of interest that had come about in his art: the focus was no longer on the human being and the interior but on nature and atmosphere. The dark shades of the predecessor painting make way for flickering dabs of paint applied to the canvas unmixed. Monet now concentrated primarily on reproducing light and colour and conveying a certain mood. In these paintings the visitor witnesses the increasing dissolution of form that took place in this phase of Impressionism. Monet presented this work along with the depiction of *La Grenouillère* at the second Impressionist exhibition in 1876.

The painting *The Boulevard des Capucines* of 1873 (Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City) on display in this room is representative of Monet's depictions of Paris. The pedestrians on the street have been recorded sketchily, with rapid brushstrokes, as an anonymous mass. Here the artist has masterfully captured the constant state of unrest and motion in the city with painterly means, and it is a work that already met with great admiration in his lifetime. The subsequent section of the show features

landscape depictions and leisure-time scenes of the years 1873 to 1878, works that address man's changing relationship to nature. As illustrated, for example, by Monet's painting *Summer of 1874* (Alte Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), the great outdoors gained importance in this period as a place of recreation and recuperation for the modern city dweller. In the main room on this floor, the focus is on the Parisian metropolis and motifs of urban life as depicted in paintings by Degas, Morisot, Renoir and others. In Monet's railway station scenes the increasing dissolution of the scenery brought about by the sketchy, diffuse application of the paint is clearly evident. At the centre of his 1877 work *Exterior of Saint-Lazare Station (The Signal)* of 1877 (Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum Hannover), a large traffic signal blocks the view. The grounds of the railway behind it are blurred, and reminiscent of a landscape seen from a train window during fast travel on what was then a brand new means of transport. The steam of the engine also prevents us from taking in the entire scene. Obstructions to sight have thus been elevated to the status of pictorial motifs as the actual subject recedes ever further into the background. At the same time, the artist has assigned special importance to atmospheric qualities. This section is accompanied by a gallery showcasing contemporary caricatures on Impressionism. In the last room on the upper level, we see how the phenomenon of the pictorial subject's disintegration has been taken to the farthest extreme and the intrinsic value of colour has come to the fore, for example in Monet's painting *Vétheuil in the Fog* of 1879 (Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris).

Finally, an "epilogue" assembles a number of characteristic works of Monet's late phase that serve as particularly good illustrations of the development to the nearly complete loss of the pictorial subject. In the four paintings from the *Rouen Cathedral* series (Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Klassik Stiftung Weimar; private collection) executed in 1892–94 and depictions of London bridges likewise dating from this period (Philadelphia Museum of Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art, private collection), no more than an inkling of the built structures has remained; they appear almost entirely immaterial. Instead, the representation of light and atmosphere dominates the compositions.

The research project in preparation for the exhibition

In preparation for the exhibition, the Städel's department of painting conservation subjected all of the Impressionist works in the museum's holdings to comprehensive technological investigations. Achieved with the aid of the microscope, ultraviolet and infrared light and X-ray, the results of these procedures enhance the project with a well-founded technological perspective and are being published in the accompanying exhibition catalogue. With the aid of QR codes, visitors can moreover access detailed online information on the results of technological examinations of seven selected

paintings in the exhibition. Among other things, the examinations have provided invaluable insights into the complex evolution of Monet's *Luncheon*. Edited by Felix Krämer, the catalogue is being published in German and English by the Prestel Verlag. In addition to the co-editor and project director Dr Nerina Santorius, the authors include Prof André Dombrowski, University of Pennsylvania, and Prof S. Hollis Clayson, Northwestern University.

The exhibition *Digitorial*

With the *Digitorial* developed especially for the show, the Städel is moreover offering a new digital educational medium. A responsive website presents worthwhile background information, art-historical and culture-historical contexts and fundamental exhibition contents. The free digital format in German and English enables the public to tune in to the exhibition themes before visiting the exhibition. The multimedia combination of image, sound, film and text interlinks the contents in a multiplicity of ways and provides entirely new means of depicting, narrating and mediating art. The *Digitorial* is accessible at monet.staedelmuseum.de.

List of artists

Frédéric Bazille (1841–1870), Édouard Béliard (Edmond Joseph Béliard) (1832–1912), Eugène Boudin (1824–1898), Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), Antoine Chintreuil (1814–1873), Camille Corot (1796–1875), Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), Charles-François Daubigny (1817–1878), Edgar Degas (1834–1917), Armand Guillaumin (1841–1927), Charles Jacque (1813–1894), Johan Barthold Jongkind (1819–1891), Stanislas Lépine (1835–1892), Édouard Manet (1832–1883), Jean-François Millet (1814–1875), Claude Monet (1840–1926), Berthe Morisot (1841–1895), Camille Pissarro (1831–1903), Auguste Renoir (1841–1919), Henri Rouart (1833–1912), Théodore Rousseau (1812–1867), Alfred Sisley (1839–1899), Félix Ziem (1821–1911).

MONET AND THE BIRTH OF IMPRESSIONISM

Curator: Dr Felix Krämer, Head of the Department of Modern Art

Project management: Dr Nerina Santorius, Assistant Curator of the Department of Modern Art

Exhibition dates: 11 March to 28 June 2015

Information: www.staedelmuseum.de, info@staedelmuseum.de,
telephone +49(0)69-605098-0, fax +49(0)69-605098-111

Visitor services: +49(0)69-605098-232, besucherdienst@staedelmuseum.de

Location: Städel Museum, Schaumainkai 63, 60596 Frankfurt am Main

Opening hours until 8 June: Tue, Wed, Sat, Sun 10 am – 7 pm, Thu + Fri 10 am – 9 pm
closed Mondays

From 9 to 28 June: Daily 10am – 9pm

also Mondays

Special opening hours: 14th, 24th and 25th May / 4th and 26th June 2015 10 am – 7 pm

Admission: 14 euros, reduced 12 euros, family ticket 24 euros; admission free for children to the age of 12; groups (min. 10 persons) reduced admission fee per person. Groups are required to make advance reservations by calling +49(0)69-605098-200 or writing to info@staedelmuseum.de.

Advance ticket sales at: tickets.staedelmuseum.de

Catalogue: The exhibition is being accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue edited by Felix Krämer and published by Prestel Verlag. With a foreword by Max Hollein and texts by Christoph Asendorf, Eva Bader, Marlene Bielefeld, Hollis Clayson, André Dombrowski, Chantal Eschenfelder, Dorothee Hansen, Felicity Korn, Felix Krämer, Svenja Mordhorst, Ingrid Pfeiffer, Isolde Pludermacher, Nele Putz, Nerina Santorius, Beate Söntgen and Maria Zinser. German and English edition, approx. 300 pages, 39.90 EUR (museum edition).

Visitors' guide: A guide booklet will be available in German and English, 7.50 EUR

Digitorial: The Digitorial has been made possible by the Aventis Foundation. It can be accessed at monet.staedelmuseum.de.

Audio guide: The audio guide has been made possible with support from the Georg und Franziska Speyer'sche Hochschulstiftung. It provides a guided tour of the exhibition in German and English. The audio guide was recorded by the actress Diane Kruger. The fee for one audio guide is 4 EUR, for two audio guides 7 EUR.

Social Media: The Städel Museum will communicate the show in the social media with the hash tags #monet and #staedel.

General guided tours of the exhibition: Tue + Sat 3 pm, Wed + Sun 11 am, Thu 7 pm, Fri 5 pm. Tickets: 5 EUR plus admission fee, available starting two hours before the tour begins and on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 am, at the Städel cashier's desk.

Lunchtime Special: Admission and guided tour of the special exhibition (offer available online only), Tue to Sun 1 pm, 18 EUR, tickets.staedelmuseum.de.

Sponsored by: Commerzbank Foundation

Media partners: Alnatura, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Verkehrsgesellschaft Frankfurt am Main.

Mobility partner: Deutsche Bahn AG

Cultural partner: hr2-kultur

The exhibition advertising campaign at Frankfurt Airport is supported by Fraport AG and Media Frankfurt.