

Toulouse-Lautrec and His 19th Century Mentors



Chicago is the home of this beautiful collection of 19th century art, collected by Mr. Greg Bloch. Mr. Bloch has been an art dealer for almost 40 years and his experience includes directing and owning art galleries as well as 30 years of publishing art. He is also actively involved in artist management.

Mr. Bloch began acquiring art for his personal collection early in his career, indulging his personal tastes and whims. He says that he lives by the dictum: "If I love it and I can afford it, I buy it."

As time went by his interests began to take a definitive direction. His interests in the 19th Century art movements, especially French, became the primary focus of his acquisitions. In his home he exhibited his collection of prints, drawings and paintings of this era. Over the past 25 years he began to collect actively and aggressively using the previously stated dictum of his likes. He has accumulated a vast library of the artists and the artworks, to support the collection, and has made himself an acknowledged expert in this field.

Recently a colleague completed an inventory of the collection and found it was not only exhaustive, and world-class, but was worthy of being seen by more than he and his friends, and should be exhibited publicly. The Coral Springs Museum of Art exhibition is proud to display this impressive and stunning collection, which is a part of a much larger body of work.

Impressionism

They became known as Impressionists because a newspaper critic thought they were painting mere sketches or impressions. The Impressionists, however, considered their works finished. Many Impressionists painted pleasant scenes of middle class urban life, extolling the leisure time that the industrial revolution had won for middle class society. Since they were realists, followers of Courbet and Manet, the Impressionists set out to be "true to nature," a phrase that became their rallying cry. When Renoir and Monet went out into the countryside in search of subjects to paint, they carried their oil colors, canvas, and brushes with them so that they could stand right on the spot and record what they saw at that time. In contrast, most earlier landscape painters worked in their studio from sketches they had made outdoors.

The more an Impressionist artist looked, the more she or he saw. Sometimes they came back to the same spot at different times of day or at a different time of year to paint the same scene. They never copied themselves because the light and color always changed with the passage of time, and the variations made each painting a new creation.

Realism meant to an Impressionist that the painter ought to record the most subtle sensations of reflected light. In capturing a specific kind of light, this style conveys the notion of a specific and fleeting moment of time. Impressionist painters like Monet and Renoir recorded each sensation of light with a touch of paint in a little stroke like a comma. The public was upset that Impressionist paintings looked like a sketch and did not have the polish and finish that more fashionable paintings had. But applying the paint in tiny strokes allowed Monet, Renoir, Cassatt and the others to display color sensations openly, to keep the colors unmixed and intense, and to let the viewer's eye mix the colors. The bright colors and the active

participation of the viewer approximated the experience of the scintillation of natural sunlight.

The Impressionists remained realists in the sense that they remained true to their sensations of the object, although they ignored many of the old conventions for representing the object “out there.” But truthfulness for the Impressionists lay in their personal and subjective sensations not in the “exact” reproduction of an object for its own sake. The objectivity of things existing outside and beyond the artist no longer mattered as much as it once did. The significance of “outside” objects became irrelevant. Concern for representing an object faded, while concern for representing the subjective grew. The focus on subjectivity intensified because artists became more concerned with the independent expression of the individual. Reality became what the individual saw. With Impressionism, the meaning of realism was transformed into subjective realism, and the subjectivity of modern art was born.

Impressionists and their Followers Cezanne, Sisley, Morisot, Guillaumin

Joining together officially as The Society of Anonymous Painters, Sculptors and Engravers, the artists referred to themselves as the Impressionists or, in proud defiance of the State-sponsored Salon Exhibition jury’s “refusal” to accept their works, Refuses. They mounted eight independent exhibitions from 1874-1886 that celebrated color, light and everyday life in contemporary Paris. Art that would never bring them official recognition according to the Louvre’s Grand Salon standards. And although most came from fairly well-to-do families, they quickly became the original starving artists.

Radicals in their time, early Impressionists broke the rules of academic painting. They began by giving colors, freely brushed, primacy over line, drawing inspiration from the work of painters such as Eugene Delacroix. They also took the act of painting out of the studio and into the world. The Impressionists found that they could capture the momentary and transient effects of sunlight by painting en plein air. By re-creating the sensation in the eye that views the subject, rather than recreating the subject, and by creating a welter of techniques and forms, Impressionism became seminal to various movements in painting which would follow, including Neo-Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism.

Each year, a group of young artists submitted their art to the Salon, only to see the juries reject their best efforts in favor of trivial works by artists working in the approved style. A core group of young realists, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, and Frédéric Bazille became friends and often painted together. They soon were joined by Camille Pissarro, Paul Cézanne, Armand Guillaumin, Edgar Degas, Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot.

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