



# BOULEVARD

## OVERVIEW

### Édouard Manet (1832-1883)

Parisian artist Édouard Manet was a leading figure in the transition from Realism to Impressionism. Manet's bold new style and emphasis on contemporary life, especially its most provocative aspects, earned the art world's attention during the early 1860s. Rejected from the official Salon in 1863, Manet showed his *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* at the Salon des Refusés and became the unofficial leader of a group of young artists, who would later take the name Impressionists. In 1865, he followed this up by showing an even more controversial painting depicting a prostitute, *Olympia*. This work drew a storm of

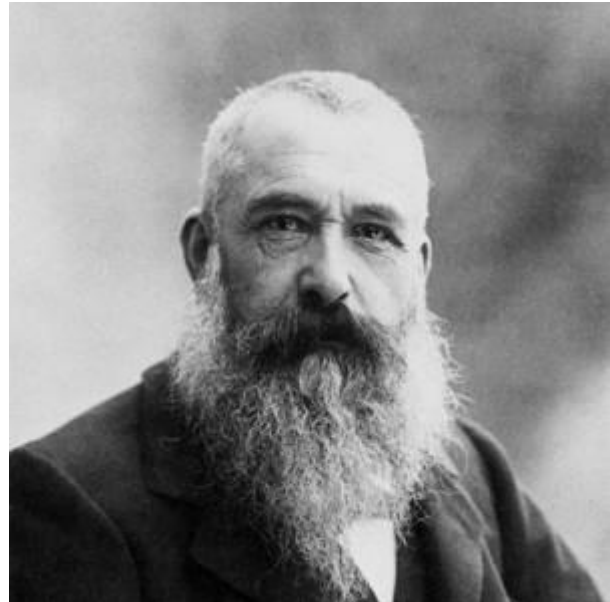


criticism and earned Manet the reputation as the most daring artist of the time. From the 1870s on, Manet's style drew closer to Impressionism in its looser, broken brushwork, and emphasis on the effects of light across surface. Throughout this decade and into the next, the artist continued to focus on modern life themes, especially portraits and other images of fashionable, and at times slightly suspect, women. In addition to hundreds of prints and drawings, Manet created over 400 paintings during his brief lifetime; his last major work, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, was shown at the Salon of 1882.

### Oscar Claude Monet (1840-1926)

The French 19th-century painter, usually referred to simply as Claude Monet, was the leader of the Impressionist movement. Indeed, the very name of the group derives from one of Monet's paintings, a harbor scene entitled *Impression, Sunrise* (1872). Raised in Le Havre, Normandy, Monet grew up on the water and never lost his passion for representing waterways. Moving to Paris in the early 1860s, the artist relished the possibility of capturing

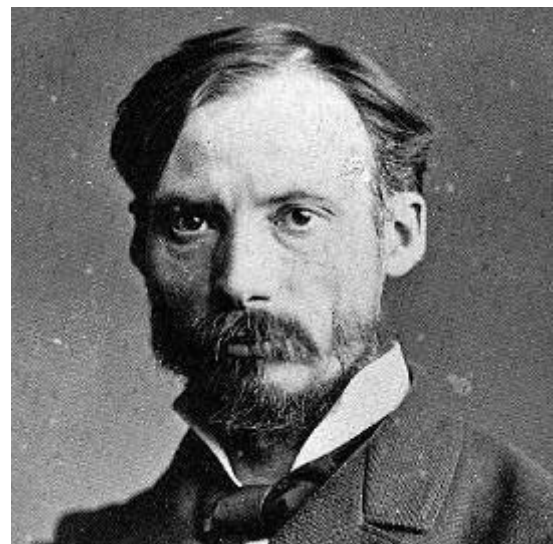
both the spirit and fleeting appearance of the modern world through a more direct engagement with his subjects. This intention led him to paint many of his canvases out of doors. Also strongly influenced by Japanese woodblock prints during his lifetime, Monet's pictures frequently offer unusual views, dynamic, cropped and flattened compositions, and other elements of Japonisme. In 1874, Monet founded the Impressionist movement, banding together with several French artists, who shared a similar desire to break from Academicism with their so-called "new painting."



Monet lived in poverty for much of his life, as Impressionism struggled to find a steady market. It was only in the early 1890s that he achieved some financial success, especially as he began working in a more serial fashion, depicting views of haystacks, cathedrals, etc. Beginning in 1883, Monet rented property at Giverny, outside of Paris; he would eventually be able to buy, expand, and develop a vast landscaping project, including several gardens, a pond, and a Japanese footbridge. It was at Giverny that he began painting his series of water lilies, a subject the artist would continue painting in larger and larger scale until his death in his 80s in 1926. Monet's later work is increasingly abstract, offering a more sustained, internalized, and poetic experience of nature.

### Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1844-1919)

Pierre-Auguste Renoir was a prolific artist who created several thousand pictures over the course of his life and achieved particular success as a portraitist. He was born in Limoges, France, the child of working-class parents. Making his way to Paris as a young man, he befriended Claude Monet, with whom he pioneered Impressionism. During the late 1860s and early '70s, even before the movement had a name, the two artists painted out of doors, frequently side by side. Renoir's early work depicting gardens, river banks, and scenes of modern life is filled with



saturated color and light and rendered in the choppy, varied brushwork associated with Impressionism. However, after a trip to Italy in 1881, which exposed the artist to Renaissance painting, Renoir went through a long classicizing phase during which he attempted to achieve greater structure through a more disciplined drawing technique. After 1890, the painter's outlines became more dissolved again and his compositions suffused with washes of color, which he used to depict domestic scenes and abundantly fleshy, monumental nudes. Indeed, more than any of his Impressionist colleagues, Renoir was a connoisseur of the feminine form—in all its beauty and voluptuousness. An early and sustained artistic inspiration for him was the sensuous works of 18th-century painters Antoine Watteau and François Boucher. In his very last years, when arthritis made painting more difficult for him, Renoir turned to producing sculptures. In 1919, after Renoir's passing, art dealer Ambroise Vollard, published a book on the life and work of his good friend.

### Paul Gauguin (1848–1903)

In 1882, Paul Gauguin gave up his career in Paris as a stockbroker to become a full-time artist. Seeking inspiration in the “otherness” of different regions, as well as a cheaper place to live—since he was constantly struggling financially—the artist moved around Brittany and then eventually settled in Tahiti in 1891. While his early work shows the influence of Camille Pissarro and Paul Cézanne, Gauguin quickly developed a much more stylized and exoticized practice in his painting, prints, and carved sculpture. Synthesizing various artistic traditions, Gauguin drew from medieval stained glass and painted and carved religious art, colorful Japanese woodblock prints, and the encoded poses of dancers ranging from Javanese ritual performance to the hieratic poses of Egyptian wall paintings. He melded and superimposed these eclectic elements upon scenes of French peasant life and later upon his experiences of the South Seas.



Self-mythology played a strong role in Gauguin's promotion and reception from the mid-1880s on; he often portrayed himself as an outsider. As a child, he lived for several years with distant relatives in Peru. On account of this, throughout his life, he claimed to be in touch with his “savage” side and suggested that he could achieve a more primitive authenticity and transcendence not typical of “Western” art. After moving to Tahiti, Gauguin pushed this concept further in both his art and journal writing, overlaying ever-more exotic symbols and tropes.