

Pierre-Auguste Renoir



Pierre-Auguste Renoir (February 25, 1841-December 3, 1919) was a French artist who was a leading figure in the development of the impressionist style.

His early works were typically impressionist snapshots of real life, full of sparkling color and light. Characteristics of impressionist painting include visible brushstrokes, light colors, open composition, emphasis on light in its changing qualities (often accentuating the effects of the passage of time), ordinary subject matter, and unusual visual angles. The influence of impressionist thought spread beyond the art world. In all cases, the leading feature of impressionism is a break with a representational aesthetic, relying more on sense perception and conveying a more subjective art, reflecting the view of the artist, rather than an objective reality.

Biography

Pierre-Auguste Renoir was born on February 25, 1841 in Limoges, Haute-Vienne, France, the child of a working class family. He was the sixth of seven children. In 1844, his family moved to Paris where Renoir's father took a job as a tailor. As a young boy, Pierre sang in the church choir but he was more interested in drawing on the music books.

When he was older, he worked in a porcelain factory where his drawing talent led him to paint flower designs on china. He painted hangings for

overseas missionaries, and painted on fans before he enrolled in art school. When the porcelain factory closed, he got a job as a copyist at the Louvre art museum. He could paint quickly and copied the works of the masters. That is how he earned the money to go to art school.

In 1862 he began studying art under Charles Gleyre in Paris. There he met Alfred Sisley, Frederic Bazille, and Claude Monet. At times during the 1860s, he did not have enough money to buy paint. Renoir and his friends shared their money to buy themselves paint. Although Renoir first exhibited paintings in 1864, recognition did not come for another 10 years due, in part, to the turmoil of the Franco-Prussian War.

During the Paris Commune in 1871, while he painted by the Seine River, a Commune group thought he was spying and they were about to throw him in the river when a Commune leader, Raoul Rigault, recognized Renoir as the man who protected him on an earlier occasion and thus spared his life.

After many struggles in the beginning of his life, Renoir finally, in the mid-1870s, experienced his first acclaim when his work hung in the first impressionist exhibition of 1874.

While living and working in Montmartre at the age of 40, Renoir married Aline Victorine Charigot, and they had three sons, one of whom, Jean Renoir, became a filmmaker. After his marriage, he was to paint many scenes of his children and their nurse.

In 1881 he traveled to Algeria, a country he associated with romantic painter, Eugène Delacroix, then to Madrid, Spain to see the well-known work of Diego Velázquez, also to Italy to see Titian's masterpieces in Florence, and the paintings of Raphael in Rome. Amidst all his travelling, Renoir painted *Luncheon of the Boating Party* the same year. Renoir's wife, Aline Charigot, is in the foreground playing with a small dog

On January 15, 1882, Renoir met composer Richard Wagner at his home in Palermo, Sicily. Renoir painted Wagner's portrait in just 35 minutes.

In 1883, he spent the summer in Guernsey, painting 15 paintings in little over a month. Most of these feature Moulin Huet, a bay in St. Martin's, Guernsey. These were the subject of a set of commemorative postage stamps, issued by the Bailiwick of Guernsey in 1983.

In 1887, a year when Queen Victoria celebrated her Golden Jubilee, upon the request of the queen's associate, Phillip Richbourg, Renoir donated

several paintings to the "French Impressionist Paintings" catalog as a gift of his loyalty.

Around 1892, Renoir developed rheumatoid arthritis. In 1907, he moved to the warmer climate of "Les Collettes," a farm at Cagnes-sur-Mer, close to the Mediterranean coast. Renoir painted even during the last 20 years of his life when arthritis severely hampered his movement, and he was wheelchair-bound. He developed progressive deformities in his hands and problems with his right shoulder, requiring him to adapt his painting technique. It is often said that in the advanced stages of his arthritis, he painted by strapping a brush to his arm, but other sources say that this is untrue. During this period, he created sculptures by directing an assistant who worked the clay. Renoir also utilized a moving canvas or picture roll to facilitate painting large works with his limited joint mobility.

Renoir visited the Louvre to see his paintings hanging with the old masters right before he died in the village of Cagnes-sur-Mer, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, on December 3, 1919.

His Artistic style

Renoir's paintings are notable for their vibrant light and color. Unlike many impressionists who focused on landscapes, he painted not only landscapes, but people in intimate and candid compositions, and made the female nude one of his primary subjects. In characteristic impressionist style, Renoir suggested the details of a scene through freely brushed touches of color, so that his figures softly fuse with one another and their surroundings.

His initial paintings show the influence of color in the works of Eugène Delacroix, the luminosity of Camille Corot, and the realism of Gustave Courbet and Édouard Manet. Another painter Renoir greatly admired was the eighteenth-century master François Boucher.

In the 1860s, through the practice of painting light and water *en plein air* (in the open air), he and his friend Claude Monet discovered that the color of shadows is not brown or black, but the reflected color of the objects surrounding them. Several pairs of paintings exist in which Renoir and Monet, working side-by-side, depicted the same scenes.

One of the best known impressionist works is Renoir's 1876 *Dance at Le Moulin de la Galette (Le Bal au Moulin de la Galette)*, which depicts an open-air scene, jammed with people, in a popular dance garden on the Butte Montmartre close to where he lived.

A trip to Italy in 1881, where he saw works by Raphael and other Renaissance masters, convinced him that he was on the wrong path, and for the next several years he painted in a more severe style. This is sometimes called his "Ingres period," as he concentrated on his drawing and emphasized the outlines of figures. But after 1890 he again changed direction, returning to the use of thinly brushed color which dissolved outlines as in his earlier work. Starting from this period he concentrated especially on monumental nudes and domestic scenes.

The Apple Seller

ca. 1886-1889

oil on canvas

Cleveland Art Museum, Cleveland, OH

This painting depicts a young country girl offering apples to Renoir's wife, Aline. The boy in the straw hat may be the artist's nephew, Edmond, but the young girl with the ribbon in her hair has not been identified. Bathed in soft, dappled sunlight from a violet sky, the figures are united through the fluid thick brushstrokes that cover the canvas. The shadows are deep in color but the patches of light are larger. The apple seller's clothes are darker and simpler showing the difference in social classes. The leaping dog provides an accent of humor and motion in an otherwise tranquil scene. The picture was probably completed at Essoyes, in eastern France.

Questions:

When was this painting made? Now or long ago? How can you tell?

The clothes they are wearing, styles of dress, basket to hold food, hairstyle, hats,

What colors do you see? violet, pinks, yellow, blue, green, brown.....

What are the people doing? mother and children out for a walk and meet unexpectedly an apple seller.

What do you think the people are saying to each other? anything

What is the person's basket? apples

Can you find the dog?

Do you like this painting?

Would you want it in your house?

How does it make you feel? Why?

What if the colors were blacks and browns? How would you feel then?