



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

THE FRICK ART & HISTORICAL CENTER PRESENTS

THE ROAD TO IMPRESSIONISM: BARBIZON LANDSCAPES FROM THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM

*Stunning exhibition at The Frick Art Museum features
important French landscape paintings*

PITTSBURGH, PA , January 30, 2009—The Frick Art & Historical Center is pleased to present *The Road to Impressionism: Barbizon Landscapes from the Walters Art Museum*. This exhibition of thirty-two paintings includes works by all of the major Barbizon figures, as well as examples by Claude Monet and Alfred Sisley, the Impressionist painters most deeply influenced by them.

The exhibition opens to the public on February 7, providing visitors with the opportunity to celebrate spring at the Frick by enjoying these wonderful representations of nature. *The Road to Impressionism* will remain on view through May 24, 2009.

Nineteenth-century France was a hotbed of new ideas, political movements, scientific discoveries, and creative activity. Important movements in the history of art reflected this ferment and the Barbizon movement—so called for the small village near the Forest of Fontainebleau where the artists worked—was in the middle of it, both chronologically and stylistically. The work of the Barbizon school dovetails with most of the major artistic movements of mid-nineteenth-century France, with the intensely expressive trees of Diaz and

Rousseau conveying the Romantic approach of earlier in the century, and Millet's interest in the life of the rural laborer becoming a powerful force in the rise of Realism. These artistic movements ultimately led to Impressionism in the last third of the nineteenth century, perhaps France's most enduring artistic legacy.

Comments Frick director Bill Bodine, "We are pleased to present this important exhibition, which highlights an artistic school that is particularly relevant and meaningful to this institution. Barbizon paintings that were collected by Henry Clay Frick when he lived in Pittsburgh still grace the walls of Clayton. This means that visitors will have the opportunity to experience these magnificent works of art not only in the gallery setting, but also on the walls in Frick's Gilded Age home, where they remain on view more than a century after they were purchased."

EXAMINING THE BARBIZON INFLUENCE

The Road to Impressionism examines the important influence of this group of artists and includes paintings by Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, and Claude Monet, whose 1871 painting *Windmills Near Zaandam* owes much to the earthy palette and emotional depictions of nature typical of the Barbizon school. Paintings by Barbizon artists were highly sought after by American collectors like Henry Clay Frick and William Walters, who in their Gilded Age mansions, could experience the reverence for the countryside as espoused by Théodore Rousseau, who "heard the voices of the trees and wanted to put his finger on the secret of their majesty."

This exhibition explores the wide range of work of the Barbizon artists from forest scenes to stormy seascapes, from scenes of bright sunlight to atmospheric moonlight, and from moving scenes of peasant hardship to images of seaside leisure. It focuses on the importance of place for the Barbizon artists both in terms of their outdoors paintings and their studio works.

Technological advances, such as the development of railroad lines, made travel to the countryside easier and affordable. In 1840, an American artist John G. Rand, patented the airtight, collapsible metal tube, making it possible for artists to use their paints outdoors. Before the invention of the paint tube, artists needed to grind each pigment and store them in leather receptacles or even pig bladders, which were awkward to transport.

THE ARTISTS

JEAN-BAPTISTE-CAMILLE COROT (1796–1875)

One of the Barbizon school's most well known artists, Corot's career spanned the century from Romanticism to Impressionism. Corot developed a taste for working outdoors while he was in Italy in 1825, but had been working in the Barbizon area as early as 1822, and he not only recorded the visual qualities of a site, but also tried to convey the sensations evoked by it. He described his working method: "After my outings, I invite Nature to spend some days with me in the studio; and it's then that I let my imagination run free . . . I hear birds singing and trees rustling in the wind. I see streams flowing, rivers full of reflections of the earth and sky. The sun sets and rises in my little room." Two of his late works, *Landscape with Bridge*, 1865–1870, and *The Fisherman's Cottage*, 1871, display the atmospheric qualities that convey his romantic view of nature.

NARCISSE -VIRGILE DIAZ DE LA PEÑA (1807–1876)

Diaz, as he was known, learned to paint by decorating porcelain and studying the Old Masters in the Louvre. Around 1835, he began to explore the Forest of Fontainebleau, where he encountered other artists associated with the Barbizon school. His pictures were distinguished by his mastery of color, which led future Impressionists including Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Alfred Sisely to seek his advice.

Diaz specialized in views of the interior of the forest, such as *Forest of Fontainebleau, Autumn*, 1871. In this view of an ancient oak tree, he explores a range of rich russets, ochres, greens, and browns. This late work illustrates the rich, tapestry-like effects he created by dabbing and scumbling his paint to blur the outlines.

CONSTANT TROYON (1810–1865)

Troyon was a gifted marine painter. In the early 1850s, he acquired a house at Villers, northwest of Paris on the coast, which he named "The Academy of Landscape," and there worked closely with several young painters, including Eugène Boudin.

JULES-LOUIS DUPRÉ (1811–1889)

One of the few Barbizon artists to spend a significant amount of time in England, Dupré spent four months there in 1831. He concentrated on marine painting in the last two decades of his life, and his imagery of varied atmospheric effects was admired by the Impressionists.

THÉODORE ROUSSEAU (1812–1867)

Rousseau possessed a love of nature from an early age. He trained with academic landscapists but avoided infusing his works with traditional mythological or classical themes (which Corot often did), instead recording pure landscapes that would pave the way for the Impressionists. “I have heard the trees,” he claimed, and through his work sought “to put [his] finger on the secret of their majesty.”

Rousseau was influenced by seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painters, which is evident in the sculptural massing of clouds and contrast between foreground shadow and illuminated distant field in *Early Summer Afternoon*, from the 1860s. However Rousseau’s dramatic treatment of light in *The Frost Effect*, 1845, is heralded as a harbinger of the Impressionist movement. In this painting, the warm glow of sunrise breaking over a field contrasts with the glistening white frost.

JEAN-FRANCOIS MILLET (1814–1875)

The artist most often associated with the Barbizon school, Millet was formally trained in Paris, and moved his family permanently to Barbizon in 1849, spurred by a cholera outbreak in the city. In contrast to other Barbizon artists, Millet is best known for compositions focusing on the figure in the landscape. His famous paintings *The Sower* and *The Gleaners* transform rural laborers into monumental figures. He often observed laborers in the Barbizon fields and drew from memory in his studio. His own country roots in Normandy afforded him the necessary insight to render the daily toil of peasant life with consummate skill and great warmth of feeling. Millet’s work was greatly admired by post-Impressionists like Seurat and Van Gogh, who referred to him as “Father Millet,” and described him as “teacher and mentor in all things.”

Unlike his dark-toned paintings that portray the brutal reality of peasant life, *The Goose Girl*, 1863, included in the current exhibition, uses a brighter palette to portray a lighter moment in

rural life, as the sunlight gleaming through the foliage illuminates and intensifies the colors in the undergrowth and the girl's rosy flesh.

CHARLES-FRANÇOIS DAUBIGNY (1817–1878)

Daubigny's loose, spontaneous brushwork is a direct link with the work of the younger Impressionists. Daubigny grew up along the Oise River, and although he spent time in the Forest of Fontainebleau, it was the river which drew his artistic attention. His good friend Corot encouraged him to work directly from nature, advice he carried out from his riverboat-studio, *Le Botin*, as he cruised the rivers in search of subject matter.

EUGÈNE BOUDIN (1824–1898)

As cabin boy on his sailor-father's ship, Boudin first observed the sea and sky that would become the primary focus of his paintings. He was instrumental in promoting *plein-air* painting in France and is best known for his pictures of fashionable tourists vacationing on the Normandy coast. He was a mentor to the young Claude Monet, who later commented, "If I have become a painter, I owe it to Eugène Boudin."

Bourdeaux, the Harbor was painted in 1874, the same year as the first Impressionist exhibition, which included works by Boudin. In this scene, the evocation of the grays and pinks of a cloudy day aptly demonstrates why Corot called Boudin the "Monarch of the Skies."

CLAUDE MONET (1840–1926)

Monet grew up at Le Havre and painted regularly outdoors on the Normandy coast during his early career, working closely with Daubigny (1817–1878) and Boudin. The latter introduced Monet to the concept of *plein-air* painting, and in turn Monet invited Boudin to participate in the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874. The gestural brushwork and expansive sky found in works completed during Monet's residence in Amsterdam (October 1870–May 1871) suggest his continued respect for his early Barbizon mentors. *Windmills Near Zaandam*, from this period, reflects Monet's fascination with the terrain of marshes and waterways that had been reclaimed from the sea. He wrote that he found enough there to paint for a lifetime. During his stay, he painted about twenty small views of the town and its environs. In this example, from 1871, a

lone girl walks along the footpath between Oostzaan and Zaandam. By limiting the range of colors, Monet conveys the atmosphere of an overcast day.

The Road to Impressionism: Barbizon Landscapes from the Walters Art Museum is organized by the Walters Art Museum. A contribution toward the Pittsburgh presentation of this exhibition has been provided by PNC Wealth Management.

A suggested donation of \$5 will be requested to view this extraordinary exhibition. Frick members are admitted for free.

The exhibition at The Frick Art Museum will be complemented by programs for visitors of all ages and backgrounds.

A DEVOTION TO WORK: BARBIZON DRAWINGS BY JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET

An accompanying exhibition that features drawings by the nineteenth-century master French painter Jean-François Millet (1814–1875) will be on view at The Frick Art Museum concurrently with *The Road to Impressionism*. Both exhibitions will be on view from February 7 through May 24, 2009.

THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM

The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland is internationally renowned for its collection of art, which was amassed substantially by two men—William Walters and his son, Henry Walters—and eventually bequeathed to the City of Baltimore. The collection presents an overview of world art from pre-dynastic Egypt to 20th-century Europe, and counts among its many treasures Greek sculpture and Roman sarcophagi; medieval ivories and Old Master paintings; Art Deco jewelry and 19th-century European and American masterpieces. While staying in Paris with his family during the Civil War, William Walters developed a keen interest in contemporary European painting. He either commissioned directly from the artists or purchased at auctions major works by many of the Barbizon masters, including Millet and Rousseau, as well as the academic masters Gérôme and Alma-Tadema, and the modernists Monet, Manet, and Sisley.

THE FRICK ART MUSEUM

The Frick Art Museum at the Frick Art & Historical Center contains collections of fine and decorative arts assembled by Helen Clay Frick, daughter of Henry Clay Frick. In addition to exhibiting its permanent collection, which has strengths in Italian Renaissance and French eighteenth-century painting, the museum has an active program of temporary exhibitions.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Frick Art & Historical Center is located at 7227 Reynolds Street in Pittsburgh's Point Breeze neighborhood. Free parking is available in the Frick's off-street lot or along adjacent streets. The Frick is open 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Tuesday–Sunday and closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to the Car and Carriage Museum, Greenhouse, and Playhouse is free.

Docent-led tours of *The Road to Impressionism* are available with museum admission on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 2:00 p.m. Groups of five or more and those interested in scheduling a tour of the permanent collection are requested to schedule a private tour at an alternate time. The cost for group tours of the exhibition and permanent collection is \$7 per person, and reservations must be made one to two weeks in advance. Call 412-371-0600, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00p.m., Monday—Sunday.

For additional information or images, please contact Greg Langel, Media and Marketing Manager, at 412-371-0600 ext. 524 or GLangel@TheFrickPittsburgh.org.

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The Frick Art & Historical Center, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, is an historic site and cultural center with a mission to serve the public through preservation, presentation, and interpretation of the fine and decorative arts and historically significant artifacts for all residents of and visitors to Western Pennsylvania.