French Moderns

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THE FRICK PITTSBURGH

FRENCH MODERNS

Over the span of a century, Paris played a pivotal role in the rise of modern art. The French capital served as the center for new styles and movements that turned away from the centuries-old models and hierarchies of the French Academy of Painting and Sculpture, to embrace contemporary life and ideas. Spurred by the industrial growth of the 1850s and 1860s, Paris was the artistic hub for modernity with its galleries, annual Salons, and spectacular world's fairs. Varying in scale, style, and media, the 56 paintings and sculptures on view here explore major new forms of representation and abstraction forged in France during a period of profound social, cultural, and technological change.

By the early 1900s, Brooklyn Museum's visionary curators and trustees were acquiring contemporary masterpieces by artists such as Henri Fantin-Latour and Paul Cézanne, forming the cornerstone of a collection that now includes iconic paintings by Edgar Degas and sculpture by Auguste Rodin. In addition to presenting works by these French-born masters, the exhibition includes foreign artists drawn to France, such as Marc Chagall and Giovanni Boldini.

French Moderns is organized around four themes: Landscape, Portraits and Figures, The Body, and Still Life. The exhibition surveys the innovative styles and techniques developed by artists working in France, spanning a century of artistic movements from the Realism of Gustave Courbet to the Surrealism of Yves Tanguy.

Landscape

Since its founding in 1648, the French Academy had considered landscape painting to be among the lowest and thus least important forms of artistic expression. However, as painters in the 1800s began to challenge the traditional academic conventions and categories, landscapes rose in critical and commercial popularity. Taking advantage of newly portable paint tubes, artists began setting up their easels outdoors to capture nature *en plein air*, or in the open air. From the atmospheric colors and loose brushwork of the Impressionists to the bold visions of the Expressionists and Surrealists, landscape became one of the prime subjects through which painters expressed their modernity.

Still Life

The French term for still life—*nature morte* (dead nature)—conveys the lowly status that the French Academy accorded to paintings of inanimate objects, as opposed to human subjects. Far from being inert, however, still life reflected the rapidly changing world experienced by artists in the 1800s and 1900s. Beginning in the 1850s, the genre garnered a newfound popularity that continued through the end of the century. While many artists evoked the familiar comforts of home, others called attention to an increasingly globalized society by depicting precious goods from Egypt, Japan, and elsewhere. Some artworks aim to stimulate the viewer's senses through displays of fine cloths, ripe fruits, and warm, sunlit tabletops. Artists in the 1930s and 1940s used everyday objects to evoke moods and meaning, transforming familiar things into powerful expressions of inner thought and feeling.

Portraits and Figures

With the spread of affordable ready-to-wear clothing in the mid-1800s, portraits of fashionable urbanites became a staple of avant-garde painting. Artists used bold colors and lively brushwork to highlight shimmering fabrics, rich textures, and jeweled accessories. Many of these works capture the elegance and energy of the *Belle Époque*—a period of cultural vibrancy in late 1800s France.

Not all artists focused on high society. Some were drawn to distinctive personalities or intellectual thinkers, while others focused on people outside urban centers. By depicting the clothing, customs, and daily lives of rural or religious communities, these artists sought to celebrate—and sometimes preserve—traditions they felt were disappearing in a changing modern world.

The Body

In the 1800s, the nude body was inextricably linked to the ideals of classical Greek sculpture, with its flawless human forms and grandiose historical and mythological subjects. In the eyes of conservative critics, contemporary figures hardly seemed worthy of immortalization in bronze, marble, or oil paint. Champions of modernity, however, such as the critic and poet Charles Baudelaire, argued for a new, modern kind of beauty through the representation of daily life. Artists increasingly responded by approaching their models' nakedness with an unflinching realism. By the 1900s, the modern nude sometimes also reflected the shifting perspectives of abstraction as artists abandoned anatomical accuracy for new forms that expressed inner emotions and psychology.

Gustave Courbet

French, 1819–1877

The Wave, circa 1869

Oil on canvas

This is one of several paintings focusing on cresting waves that Courbet made in Normandy. The paintings were radical for their anti-picturesque subject and their technique. The motif of a single wave was inspired by Japanese prints that were readily available in Paris in the 1860s. Referencing his use of a palette knife to slather paint on the canvas in thick strokes, some critics thought the artist's waves were too solid—too much like undisguised paint—to represent water. Paul Cézanne, who admired Courbet, noted that he "slapped paint on the way a plasterer slaps on stucco." Popular caricaturists lampooned Courbet's method.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Horace O. Havemeyer, 41.1256

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

French, 1796–1875

Ville-d'Avray, 1865

Oil on canvas

Described as "the very poet of landscape," Corot captured serene landscapes bathed in soft, silvery light. He painted this work, and many others, on his family's property in Ville d'Avray, in the countryside west of Paris, although he would have completed the paintings in his studio. The realistic play of light on water guides the viewer's eye through the composition.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Charlotte R. Stillman, 51.10

Eugène Louis Boudin

French, 1824–1898

The Beach at Trouville, circa 1887-96

Oil on canvas

In this late seascape, Boudin depicts local workers in a wooden horse-drawn cart crossing a beach that, at other times, was filled with fashionable urban tourists. Though the composition evokes Dutch marine paintings from the 1600s, the freshness and immediacy of Boudin's paint handling is very modern. Boudin was committed to working *en plein air* (outdoors) to capture the play of light on water and clouds in patches of color. Boudin is recognized as an important forerunner of the Impressionists; his approach had a profound influence on his younger friend Claude Monet.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Robert B. Woodward, 15.314

Alfred Sisley

French and British, 1839–1899

Flood at Moret, 1879

Oil on canvas

The Seine and its tributaries flooded several times in the 1870s due to increased human impact on the environment, particularly agricultural deforestation. Drawn to the changing conditions of nature, Sisley painted the boatyard buildings and partly submerged trees on the banks of the Loing River, a moment of calm in the flood's aftermath. To capture the ephemeral conditions, he used sketchy, energetic brushstrokes, even leaving patches of canvas bare to indicate white wisps of clouds around the windswept trees.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of A. Augustus Healy, 21.54

Gustave Caillebotte

French, 1848–1894

Apple Tree in Bloom, 1885

Oil on canvas

With his signature use of zooming perspective, Caillebotte lures the viewer into the canvas. His careful depiction of the garden's strict plan complements his more informal treatment of the apple blossoms, rendered with thick touches of pink, white, and green paint. Strokes of bright orange hint at the roofs of the estate's various buildings, fragmented by the screen of flowering tree branches.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of William K. Jacobs, Jr., 1992.107.2

Camille Pissarro

French, 1830–1903

The Climb, Rue de la Côte-du-Jalet, Pontoise, 1875

Oil on canvas

Pissarro's scene departs from traditional landscape formats. Using an array of techniques, from touches of paint to broad palette-knife applications, he incorporates multiple viewpoints: up the path, down through the trees, and across at the buildings. This radical treatment of space and form inspired his friend and student, Paul Cézanne, with whom Pissarro often painted in Pontoise, just northwest of Paris. Working *en plein air*, Pissarro advocated using a palette knife: "Don't be afraid of putting on color…Paint the essential character of things… generously and unhesitatingly…"

Brooklyn Museum, Purchased with funds given by Dikran G. Kelekian, 22.60

Pierre-Auguste Renoir

French, 1841–1919

The Vineyards at Cagnes, 1908

Oil on canvas

In this canvas, Renoir depicts a woman reading beneath an olive tree on his estate near Cagnes, in the South of France. The work fuses modern and classical elements of French landscape painting. Although his freely handled technique is quintessentially modern, his composition—foreground trees framing the receding landscape and distant mountain—recalls the orderly compositional structure of landscapes from the 1600s, with trees framing a distant vista.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Colonel and Mrs. Edgar W. Garbisch, 51.219

Paul Cézanne

French, 1839–1906

The Village of Gardanne, 1885-86

Oil and conté crayon on canvas

This unfinished canvas is representative of the experimental style and radical pictorial vision that would inspire Cézanne's contemporaries and future generations of artists. Here, he rendered the village of Gardanne in his native Aix-en-Provence through a series of architectonic and organic forms, animated by the shift between cool and warm tones and expanses of unpainted base coat that convey a sense of light. In his highly constructed view, Cézanne omitted the factories and coal pits that surrounded Gardanne, instead selecting an angle that intensified the timeless presence of the church and its bell tower.

Brooklyn Museum, Ella C. Woodward Memorial Fund and the A. T. White Memorial Fund, 23.105

André Derain

French, 1880–1954

Landscape in Provence, circa 1908

Oil on canvas

The schematic design and compressed composition collapsing foreground and background show the increasing influence of Paul Cézanne, who died in 1906. At this time, Derain began to move away from the shocking, unnaturalistic colors of the paintings he had made just a few years prior while working with Henri Matisse in Collioure. Instead, he began to emphasize the underlying geometry and structure of the landscape in flat, intersecting patches of color that are true to the bright greens, blues, and ochres of the sunlit South of France.

Brooklyn Museum, Anonymous gift, 39.273

Gabriele Münter

German, 1877–1962

Nightfall in Saint-Cloud and *Countryside near Paris*, 1906

Oil on board

Münter's studies of the Parisian countryside were executed *en plein air* (outdoors) with overlapping strokes of wet paint, thickly applied with a palette knife, resulting in nearly abstracted images of land and sky. Of her landscape painting, Münter said, "My main difficulty was I could not paint fast enough. My pictures are all moments of life—I mean instantaneous visual experiences, generally noted very rapidly and spontaneously."

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of William K. Jacobs, Jr., 1992.107.29-30

Odilon Redon

French, 1840–1916

Jacob Wrestling the Angel, circa 1905-10

Oil on canvas

As a Symbolist, Redon sought to express spiritual ideas and feelings in his art, as opposed to slavishly copying nature. In his depiction of the biblical story of Jacob wrestling an angel (Genesis, 32:24–29), he emphasizes the narrative's visionary qualities. He places the two diminutive figures at the bottom of the canvas, between towering trees and bathed in an atmosphere of opalescent color. Redon described himself as freed from "the encumbrances of naturalistic particularities" in favor of "the representation of imagined things."

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Alexander M. Bing, 60.31

Raoul Dufy

French, 1877–1953

The Regatta, circa 1908-10

Oil on canvas

The Regatta depicts a crowd of spectators watching a boat race at Sainte-Adresse, a popular seaside resort near Le Havre, in Dufy's native Normandy. The artist reduces the figures, sailboats, and flags to geometric forms, building his composition through blocks of bright, flattened color. He was inspired by the *Fauves*, or Wild Beasts, who caused a scandal at the 1905 Salon d'Automne in Paris with their brash colors and non-naturalistic painting style.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William K. Jacobs, Jr., 64.91

Yves Tanguy

French, 1900–1955

Morning Dress (Robe du Matin), 1946

Oil on canvas

Tanguy frames the desolate voids on this canvas with interlocking forms that resemble body parts and spindly rods. He painted this otherworldly landscape in the United States shortly after World War II. His dreamlike deviations from the natural world reflect Surrealism's interest in Freudian psychology and the subconscious. He stated that painting "surprises me as it unfolds, giving me total freedom…and for this reason I am unable to make a prior plan or a sketch."

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of The Beatrice and Samuel A. Seaver Foundation, 2004.30.25

Henri Fantin-Latour

French, 1836–1904

Madame Léon Maître, 1882

Oil on canvas

Fantin-Latour imbued his subject—the sister-in-law of his friend, composer Edmond Maître—with an air of melancholy. Madame Maître's downward glance avoids direct engagement. Her elegant evening dress emphasizes her corseted waist and low neckline. Painted in the studio, the raking light from above makes the sitter's ivory skin glow. Critics praised his sedate portraits as exemplars of femininity and breeding: "No one expresses like Monsieur Fantin-Latour the freshness of flowers and the natural gentleness of women of good solid bourgeois stock."

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of A. Augustus Healy and George A. Hearn, 06.69

Jules Breton

French, 1827–1906

Breton Peasant Woman Holding a Taper, circa 1869

Oil on canvas

In this image of a woman holding a rosary and candle, Breton conveyed the religious devotion associated with the people of Brittany, a conservative, religious region of northeastern France. The work is a study for a figure in one of his many paintings of *pardons*, Brittany's annual penitential rites in which peasants in traditional dress take part in a procession. Many urban male artists in the late 1800s perceived Brittany—especially its women, whom they nearly always depicted wearing their distinctive white headdresses—as "primitive," pious avatars of a culture unspoiled by modern life.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of William H. Herriman, 21.102

Édouard Vuillard

French, 1868–1940

Thadée Natanson, 1897

Oil on cardboard mounted on panel

This painting portrays Thadée Natanson, Vuillard's first and most important patron and publisher of *La Revue Blanche*, a noted avant-garde French periodical in the 1890s. The work typifies the artist's oeuvre of this period in its concentration on a single meditative figure in the familiar setting of the home interior. Though Vuillard produces a clearly recognizable portrait, he focuses primarily on the mood and personality of the sitter. With eyes downcast, Natanson projects the inner contemplation at the heart of French Symbolism.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of William Kelly Simpson in honor of Nathan Todd Porter, Jr., 2005.23

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

French, 1796–1875

The Young Woman of Albano, 1872

Oil on canvas

Corot's painting of a contemplative young woman dressed in garments that conjure past times or distant places exemplifies his practice as a figure painter. His model, a fifteen-year-old girl named Mademoiselle Darmelas, wears the traditional attire of the Italian town of Albano, just south of Rome. For Corot, such costumes were interchangeable references for imagined worlds, as well as opportunities to explore color, pattern, and texture in delicate touches of paint. Darmelas' pensive gaze and the smoky tones of the background together lend the picture a melancholy air.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mrs. Horace O. Havemeyer, 42.196

Jean-François Millet

French, 1814–1875

Shepherd Tending His Flock, early 1860s

Oil on canvas

The son of Norman farmers, Millet dedicated his career to depicting the peasants of Barbizon, the farming community outside Paris where he lived. Millet endows the shepherd here with an imposing monumentality, head haloed against the sky as he stands among his flock like a Christ figure. While Millet did not support overtly religious interpretations of his work, his images were widely perceived in France and the United States as a reflection of the inherent spirituality of peasants. For some, Millet's work did not represent an idealized rural past, but an unadorned vision of contemporary rural poverty. Conservative critics scorned his work, viewing his subjects as ugly, animal-like figures prone to revolution.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of William H. Herriman, 21.31

Jules Breton

French, 1827–1906

The End of the Working Day, 1886-87

Oil on canvas

Breton portrayed rural laborers, frequently young women, as dignified, majestic, and poetic. Bathed in the glow of the setting sun, three women cross flowering fields, their postures evoking those of ancient classical sculpture. In his autobiography, Breton recalled that after the democratic Revolution of 1848, artists showed “a deeper interest in the life of the street and the field. The tastes and the feelings of the poor were taken into account, and art conferred honors upon them, formerly reserved for the gods and for the great.” Breton’s rosy sentimentalism and his visions of earthly and female fecundity—produced for urban consumers—earned him both critical praise and commercial success.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mrs. Edward S. Harkness, 35.867

Auguste Rodin

French, 1840–1917

The Age of Bronze, first reduction, 1876, cast 1967

Bronze

This male nude is one of Rodin's most celebrated and enigmatic subjects. First called *The Vanquished*, it was interpreted as a symbol of France's heroism and suffering in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. When Rodin decided to remove the lance the model posed with, he also eliminated any explicit narrative symbols in favor of highlighting the sensuality and emotional potential of the human body. He retitled it *The Age of Bronze*, suggesting a moment of awakening into a new consciousness. The half-life-size version here was first produced in 1903-1904 in response to popular demand for a smaller-format edition.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of B. Gerald Cantor, 68.49

Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux

French, 1827–1875

Why Born Enslaved! (Pourquoi Nâitre Esclave!), 1868

Plaster with patina, red stone base

A virtuosic display of sculptural skill, this bust depicts a woman straining against ropes that twist around her body. The identify of the Black woman who posed for this sculpture is unknown, but recent scholarship suggests that she might have been born into slavery in the French Antilles and, following her emancipation, migrated to France. Created twenty years after the abolition of slavery in the French colonies (1848), the bust was meant to appeal to the antislavery views of a progressive white audience. Despite its seemingly sensitive portrayal of an individual, the bust nonetheless reinforces the objectification of the Black female body as an exoticized other, her single bare breast a symbol of both liberty and colonial fantasy.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Benno Bordiga, by exchange and Mary Smith Dorward Fund, 1993.83

Kees van Dongen

Dutch, active France, 1877–1968

W. S. Davenport, circa 1925

Oil on canvas

Van Dongen was a popular society portraitist in 1920s Paris. Dark tones dominate this picture contrasted by white highlights in the tuxedo and patent leather shoes. The striking blue-green highlights to the flesh tones on the sitter's face are a legacy of van Dongen's association earlier in the century with the movement called Fauvism, characterized by bold, non-realistic colors. The sitter for this portrait was an American dentist living in Paris. The bright red brushstroke at his lapel signals the badge of the Legion of Honor, awarded to him for his work in facial reconstructive surgery during World War I.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William Slocum Davenport, 32.117

Edgar Degas

French, 1834–1917

Dancer at Rest, Hands Behind Her Back, Right Leg Forward, modeled 1882-95, cast 1919-32

Bronze

This sculpture depicts a young dancer of the Paris Opéra Ballet in fourth position. Degas made such small-scale studies with wax and other modeling compounds as a means to experiment in three dimensions with movements and poses he would portray in his paintings. These were private works, not intended for display, but when his heirs found them in his studio after his death, they selected 74 to cast in bronze in limited editions.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Rodgers, 70.176.5

Auguste Rodin

French, 1840–1917

She Who Was the Helmet Maker's Once-Beautiful Wife, 1885-87, cast 1969

Bronze

Throughout much of his career, Rodin faithfully represented the effect of age upon the body. In this sculpture of an old, naked woman sitting on a rock with her head lowered, the artist's keen sense of observation is evident. The figure's sagging, wrinkled flesh challenged the era's conventional standards of beauty in art. Indeed, even the contemporary sculptor Aristide Maillol was mystified by the master's choice of subject matter: "An old woman's belly does not appeal to me: I like health and beauty."

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation, 86.87.2

Aleksandr Yakovlev

Russian, 1887–1938

Model Washing Her Hair, 1929

Tempera on linen

Yakovlev played a key role in ushering a new classicism in post-Revolutionary Russian art. He trained at the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts but traveled at a young age to Italy and Spain, where he applied the light and modeling of the "Old Masters" to modern subjects. Unable to return to Russia after the outbreak of the 1917 Russian Revolution, Yakovlev settled in Paris, but continued to travel around the globe, immersing himself in world cultures. Inspired by Edgar Degas's paintings of bathers, Yakovlev rendered this private scene in earthy tones with broad brushstrokes.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Martin Birnbaum, 44.220

Edgar Degas

French, 1834–1917

Nude Woman Drying Herself, circa 1884-86

Oil on canvas

Rather than posing his models for bathing compositions, Degas simply asked them to wash themselves in a studio basin so that he could observe their natural movements. This image is thought to be the underdrawing for an ambitious but unfinished painting, and therefore provides insight into Degas' working process. First using brushes and cloths to establish broad outlines and tonal relationships in monochrome, he would then add color.

Brooklyn Museum, Carll H. de Silver Fund, 31.813

Jacques Villon

French, 1875–1963

The Philosopher, 1930

Oil on canvas

Based on a life study of a seated male bather swathed in a towel and reading a newspaper, Villon’s simultaneously geometric and organic painting blends hard- and soft-edged intersecting planes with organic contours to create a monumentalized figure. Although this work developed out of an initial interest in the human form, the artist gave it a title that evokes the metaphysical realm of the intellect or the intangible.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Gerda Stein, 34.1000

Narcisse-Virgile Diaz de la Peña

French, 1807–1876

Bathers by a Woodland Stream, 1859

Oil on canvas

Narcisse-Virgile Diaz de la Peña, born to Spanish parents in Bordeaux, was part of a group of French landscape painters who began to paint in the Forest of Fontainebleau near the village of Barbizon, about thirty miles south of Paris, in the 1830s. In this painting, Diaz's characteristically rapid and loose handling of paint, evident in the daubed highlights on the sun-dappled leaves and tree trunks, enlivens the tranquil, centered composition. The three female bathers, who might represent nymphs, lend the painting a mythological air. Leafy, tree-filled scenes like this one—sometimes with figures, sometimes without—were the artist's stock-in-trade.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Gladstone in memory of Sylvia Israel, 85.228

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot

French, 1796–1875

Young Women of Sparta, 1868-70

Oil on canvas

In this idyllic landscape, a woman reclines in a theatrical “gypsy” costume, while a trio of maidens in the background dance or perhaps engage in a physical contest reflecting the athleticism for which ancient Sparta was renowned. Corot depicts his favorite model, Emma Dobigny, chosen for her voluptuous figure and natural ability to capture a wistful tranquility. Her pale skin reflects the tonalities of the landscape. Corot wrote of his struggle to capture “these tissues of flesh that let one sense the blood beneath while they reflect the light of the sky.”

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mrs. Horace O. Havemeyer, 42.195

Fernand Léger

French, 1881–1955

The Divers (Les Plongeurs Polychromes), 1941-42

Oil on canvas

This painting is part of Léger's "Divers" series, which was inspired by watching swimmers at a pool in Marseilles while awaiting passage to New York in 1940. As the artist recalled, "It was impossible to tell whose head, leg, and arm belonged to whom." Indeed, *Les Plongeurs Polychromes* gives an impression of a tangled mass of figures in space—a topsy-turvy tumble of bodies and birds with neither top nor bottom. Léger's juxtaposition of bright colors enhances the sense of exuberant, athletic chaos.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of The Beatrice and Samuel A. Seaver Foundation, 2004.30.11

Edgar Degas

French, 1834–1917

Portrait of a Man, circa 1866

Oil on canvas

In this enigmatic painting, an unidentified man in modern bourgeois attire sits in a chair among cuts of meat. A platter bearing sausage and a bloody, freshly carved pig's trotter rests on the cloth-covered table, and what appears to be a rib roast sits on another platter on the floor. Behind him hangs another cloth partially covering some indecipherable images on the wall. It has been suggested that the scene depicts a butcher's shop, a restaurant, or, more likely, an artist in his studio—a theme that Degas explored in numerous works. A disquieting combination of portraiture and still life, the image thwarts easy explanation.

Brooklyn Museum, Museum Collection Fund, 21.112

William Bouguereau

French, 1825–1905

The Elder Sister, reduction, circa 1864

Oil on panel

Bouguereau’s painting portrays a young woman, dressed in garments that seem at once rustic and classical, cradling a small child. The title identifies the figures as siblings, but their tender, entwined pose intentionally recall images of the Madonna and Child. Such sentimentalized paintings appealed to a bourgeois clientele—both French and American—that appreciated delicately rendered Christian and domestic themes. Many people who bought art for their homes in the late 1800s preferred paintings like Bouguereau’s to those that displayed more radical approaches to brushwork and form.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of William H. Herriman, 21.99

Berthe Morisot

French, 1841–1895

Madame Boursier and Her Daughter, circa 1873

Oil on canvas

Morisot came from a well-to-do family, and her paintings reflect an essentially urban, bourgeois vision of the world. Unable to respectably patronize the entertainment venues her male counterparts frequently depicted, she focused on upper-class domestic spaces and the activities typically associated with modern Parisian women. The sitters in this portrait are the artist's cousins, posed during a social visit. Both are fashionably dressed and sit in an elegantly furnished room with floral upholstery, a piano and sheet music, and a vase of flowers. Quick, unblended strokes summarily define the scene while simultaneously highlighting the materiality of paint itself.

Brooklyn Museum, Museum Collection Fund, 29.30

Giovanni Boldini

Italian, 1842–1931

Portrait of a Lady, 1912

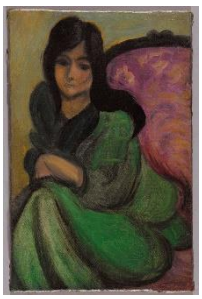
Oil on canvas

Among Boldini's glittering muses was the New York philanthropist Florence Blumenthal (née Meyer). This portrait, painted in Paris, emphasizes a casual, sensual elegance. The artist's careful drawing of her face contrasts with the dabs of black, gray, and white that delineate her fashionable dress and the jacket she has just removed. The liveliness of the brushwork and the sinuous curves of the chaise longue and Florence's pose make for a striking composition.

Brooklyn Museum, Anonymous gift, 41.876

Henri Matisse

French, 1869–1954



Woman in an Armchair, circa 1916-17

Oil on canvas

Between 1916 and 1917, Matisse made some fifty paintings of a professional Italian model named Laurette. She enjoyed dressing up in different studio costumes, and he was inspired by her expressiveness and changeability. Here, she sits in a pink upholstered armchair wrapped in a green gandoura, a Moroccan robe typically worn by men, projecting a pensive air. It is a study in sinuous curves—from her long, dark hair, the draped robe, and the bent frame of the chair.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Laura L. Barnes, 67.24.15

Marc Chagall

Belarusian, active France, 1887–1985

The Musician, circa 1912–14

Oil on canvas

The Musician evokes the spiritual significance for Chagall and his memories of growing up in a Russian Jewish household in Vitebsk, in present-day Belarus, listening to his uncle play the fiddle. Chagall painted the work during his first stint in Paris between 1910 and 1914), when he was quickly catalyzed by the avant-garde visual vocabulary of vibrant color and flattened space. The influence of Fauvism and Cubism is evident in the painting's bright, nonrepresentational colors and spatial ambiguities.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of William K. Jacobs, Jr., 1992.107.3

Lajos Tihanyi

Hungarian, 1885–1938

The Critic, 1916

Oil on canvas

A self-taught artist who settled in Paris in the 1920s, Tihanyi combined the fragmentation of Analytical Cubism and the psychological intensity of Expressionism in his portraits. His sitter is his friend Andor Halasi, a Hungarian literary critic. Tihanyi emphasizes the sitter’s pronounced bone structure with a subtle play of light and shadow. The angular wings of the starched collar and the tie’s knot further accentuate the sitter’s pointed features.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Right Reverend John Török, D.D., 29.1302

Augustus John

Welsh, 1878–1961

Woman by a Riverbank, circa 1910-12

Oil on panel

Using bold touches of unmixed pigments, John painted his mistress Dorothy (“Dorelia”) McNeill wearing brightly colored garments that reflect their shared interest in unconventional dress and in Romany culture, a lifelong fascination for the artist. Dorelia appears as a bohemian Venus on the shores of a wild, imagined arcadia that was, in reality, probably a fishing village in Provence.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Helen Babbott Sanders. 78.151.7

Chaïm Soutine

Russian, active France, 1893–1943

Still Life, Gladiolas, circa 1919

Oil on canvas

Soutine’s passion for painting led him from a Lithuanian Jewish ghetto in modern Belarus to the art academies of Minsk and, ultimately, Paris. In the French capital, he turned his back on the prevailing avant-garde style of Cubism and embraced the expressive manner of Rembrandt van Rijn and Francisco de Goya, whose works were then on view in the Louvre. Soutine combines the expressive brushstrokes of the European “Old Masters” with the brilliant color and flattened compositions of his contemporaries in France, including Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Laura L. Barnes, 67.24.24

Pierre Bonnard

French, 1867–1947

The Breakfast Room, circa 1925

Oil on canvas

Painting the quiet spaces and familiar routines of his household, Bonnard was interested in translating the experience of “what one sees when one enters a room all of a sudden.” He achieved this not by working directly in front of his motif, but from memory, reimagining—often through a lens of longing or nostalgia—his initial perception of the scene’s colors, shapes, and textures. His intimate, domestic subjects and bright palette belie the fact that many of his paintings, including this one, are more ambiguous portrayals of detachment and solitude.

Brooklyn Museum, Frank L. Babbott Fund, Carll H. de Silver Fund, and A. Augustus Healy Fund, 43.202

Jehan Georges Vibert

French, 1840–1902

An Embarrassment of Riches (Un Embarras du Choix), before 1873

Oil on panel

Early in his career, Vibert discovered that “comparatively small pictures of a storytelling character, bright with color, and exquisitely finished, found a ready market.” He won acclaim as a genre painter, specializing in satirical images of ecclesiastical life. His men of the cloth often appear lazy, vain, or decadent, in keeping with widespread anti-Catholicism sentiment in post-Prussian war France. The scarlet-robed cardinal in this image sniffs at a bouquet of flowers in an opulently decorated room.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mrs. Carll H. de Silver in memory of her husband, 13.39

Jean-Léon Gérôme

French, 1824–1904

The Carpet Merchant of Cairo, 1869

Oil on canvas

Gérôme traveled frequently through Egypt and the Ottoman Empire from 1853 onward, collecting photographs, textiles, and other props to use in his Paris studio. Although his detailed rendering of two carpets lends this painting a documentary appearance, Gérôme's stereotypical portrayal of an Egyptian vendor and brightly costumed passerby reveals his desire to appeal to European fantasies of the Arab-Islamic world. In France, such imagined scenes were interpreted as faithful records of an unchanging "Orient," helping to justify and obscure the harrowing transformations enacted by European imperialism within North Africa and the Middle East.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Joseph Gluck, 74.208

Pierre-Auguste Renoir

French, 1841–1919

Still Life with Blue Cup, circa 1900

Oil on canvas

Auguste Renoir’s modest still life depicts a blue cup and saucer, two peaches, and several green figs arranged horizontally on a tablecloth. A slender strip of floral wallpaper can be seen behind the table, and the creases and folds of the tablecloth are modeled with gray and violet tones. Works like this may have served as a way for Renoir to explore color combinations—such as the contrast between the cool blues of the cup and the warm oranges and yellows of the peaches.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Laura L. Barnes, 67.24.19

Édouard Frère

French, 1819–1886

The Little Cook, 1858

Oil on panel

Frère's small-scale paintings of village children engaged in everyday activities were enormously popular with Parisian middle class patrons. The artist adopts a low vantage point in this painting, encouraging viewers to share the young girl's space as she sits beside the stove, waiting to stir the pot with a ladle more than half her size. Root vegetables and a large head of leafy green cabbage are scattered on the floor, and popular, inexpensive prints are pinned to the wall. Common in nineteenth-century working-class households, the prints also allude to a more complicated world beyond the confines of the child's humble kitchen.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Robert B. Woodward, 15.328

Antoine Vollon

French, 1833–1900

Fish, 1871-75

Oil on canvas

Vollon depicts this mound of freshly caught fish in a dynamic manner that merges his subject with the substance and movement of paint itself. Slippery scales emerge from long brushstrokes and touches of color, while a wicker basket and a bed of reeds are partially conjured through marks that appear to have been scratched into the still-wet paint with a brush handle, along with his signature at the bottom right.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of William A. Putnam and Walter H. Crittenden, 19.86

Robert Delaunay

French, 1885–1941

In the Garden, 1904

Oil on canvas

Delaunay was just nineteen years old when he painted this intimate still life bathed in morning light, while on holiday at his family home. His free brushwork and delicate impasto create the effects of dappled sunlight. Using a low vantage point, the young painter exploits the play of color with blue shadows along the garden path to direct the viewer's eye through the composition. Essentially self taught, Delaunay was likely influenced by landscapes by Claude Monet, whose paintings had been exhibited in Paris the year before. He would go on to experiment with Divisionism and Orphism, creating a new visual language that privileged color through abstract forms.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Iris and Gerald B. Cantor, 86.28

Henri Matisse

French, 1869–1954

Flowers, 1906

Oil on canvas

This canvas was painted one year after a critic reviewing the Salon d'Automne exhibition in Paris used the term *Fauves* (meaning "wild beasts") to describe similar paintings by Henri Matisse. His bold brushwork and vivid color denied conventional perceptions of depth. Variable patches, strokes, and smudges of unblended paint, along with areas of unpainted canvas, render empty space and solid objects alike. For Matisse, such still lifes were a vehicle for exploring color.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Marion Gans Pomeroy, 61.243

Georges Lemmen

Belgian, 1865–1916

Still Life with Fan, circa 1907-8

Oil on canvas

Like many of the artists in his Belgian symbolist circle, Lemmen often imbued inanimate objects with a significance beyond the visible or external. After 1900, he concentrated on subjects drawn from his domestic milieu, his studio, family, and home life. This still life was painted during this period and depicts a bouquet of wildflowers in a blue-and-white vase, an open fan behind, and more flowers scattered on the table. The profusion of real and decorative blossoms is almost claustrophobic, while the shallow depth and allover pattern create a flattened, decorative effect that evokes a tapestry or mosaic.

Brooklyn Museum, Purchased with funds given by William K. Jacobs, Jr., 83.701

József Rippl-Rónai

Hungarian, 1861–1927

Woman with Three Girls, circa 1909

Oil on board

Inspired by avant-garde techniques he observed while living in Paris in the 1890s, Rippl-Rónai developed a style that juxtaposed daubs of bright colors and compressed the figures, furnishings, and decorative patterns of his tapestry-like paintings into a single plane. When Rippl-Rónai returned to Hungary in 1901, he combined these formal innovations with elements that would reflect a distinctive, modern Hungarian style. This composition includes embroidered textiles and a vase of tulips, traditional symbols of Hungarian culture and identity.

Brooklyn Museum, Designated Purchase Fund, 1994.68

Georges Rouault

French, 1871–1958

Still Life with Clown, 1932

Oil on paper laid down on canvas

Clowns dominated Rouault's body of work after 1904. He found extensions of himself in the private lives they led offstage and behind their masks: "I saw quite clearly that the clown was me, was us, nearly all of us." Rouault started his career as a glazier, later restoring medieval stained-glass windows and creating contemporary ones, before becoming a painter and printmaker. Vestiges of his training as a stained-glass artist are visible in the dark contours that frame the bold, flat patches of color that form the principal elements in his composition.

Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of William K. Jacobs, Jr., 1992.107.34

Jean Hélion

French, 1904–1987

Composition, 1939

Oil on Masonite

This canvas dates from around the time that Hélion, a leading proponent of abstraction in the 1930s, began to coalesce his arrangements of colored shapes and gradated volumes into more explicitly figurative representations. *Composition* evokes some of the subjects that would soon occupy him: bust-length, suited men wearing brimmed hats, viewed from the front, back, or in profile. Hélion said of his figural and abstract pictures: “They are the same thing, or nearly. Planes, volumes, spaces. Strong colors, fine tones, the rhythms of all nature. You can even, if you like, mix my figures and my abstractions.”

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Lucile E. Selz, 1991.283.2

Fernand Léger

French, 1881–1955

Composition in Red and Blue, 1930

Oil on canvas

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, Léger's primary artistic concern was the object, its representation in space, and its popular appeal. Seeking a "new realism," the artist combined abstract and representational forms in his paintings, juxtaposing flatted shapes with more volumetric ones. Léger was inspired by the burgeoning medium of cinema, and began using techniques such as fragmentation, magnification, and montage in his paintings.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of The Beatrice and Samuel A. Seaver Foundation, 2004.37.2

André Masson

French, 1896–1987

Glasses and Architectures, 1924

Oil on canvas

A window still at the left of this canvas gives way to a receding wood tabletop that anchors the composition, supporting two glass goblets, one tipped on its side and another standing upright. A limbless, androgynous torso is cropped on the right in profile, extending the still life beyond the frame. The geometric structuring of the composition draws from Analytic Cubism, whose practitioners, including Pablo Picasso, fragmented their images into abstract forms. The year he painted this work, Masson joined the Surrealists, whose art sought to blue the boundary between dream and reality.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of The Beatrice and Samuel A. Seaver Foundation, 2004.37.3

Alexander Archipenko

Ukrainian, active France and United States, 1887–1964

The Ray, 1956

Bronze with green patina

Archipenko first conceived this work's form—an elongated, abstracted figure of a woman—about 1918. He explored the figure numerous times in several variations and media, sometimes calling it "Vase" or "Vase Woman" and other times "Ray," recognizing the flexibility of perception, as well as the relationship between animate and inanimate forms.

Brooklyn Museum, Gift of The Beatrice and Samuel A. Seaver Foundation, 2004.37.1a–b

Auguste Rodin

French, 1840–1917

Danaid, circa 1903

Marble

This sculpture depicts one of the Danaids of Greek mythology. After murdering their husbands on their wedding night, the Danaids were punished with the endless task of filling leaking vessels with water. Rodin’s Danaid has collapsed in exhaustion and despair, having realized the futility of her actions. Although the overturned jug links the composition to its mythological source, Rodin was primarily interested in the expressive potential of the nude female form, here presented in a pose that is both sensual and frank.

Brooklyn Museum, Ella C. Woodward Memorial Fund, 12.873