

Realism (France/Cornwall) & French Impressionism

The influence on
Australian art in the 1880s

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The Paris Salon

In Paris in the 19th century artists sought recognition through the **Paris Salon**, as this was the key way to exhibit work (small commercial galleries were yet to be a feature), particularly in the early 1800s.

However, the Salon was only interested in accepting work of high academic standard – based on classic subject matter, compositions and techniques.



Art in France in the early 1800s

The styles of painting most featured at that time were **Romantic** – large heroic paintings with emotional overtones and **Neo Classical** paintings.



Eugène Delacroix, *Collision of Moorish Horseman*, 1844

The focus was on art as an object of beauty, expertly constructed – it was meant to transport the viewer, not to focus on the mundane.



Angélique Mongrez, *Mars and Venus*, 1841

Landscapes and seascapes tended to be a vehicle for showing high drama or had a serious, moralizing purpose.



Horace Vernet, *Stormy Coast Scene after a Shipwreck*, c1820

However, there were two important stylistic changes from around 1830 to 1870 -

Realism or Naturalism

in response to both political upheaval within France and the ability to paint *en plein air* (outdoors)

and, as a consequence of this

French Impressionism



Camille Corot, *View near Epervon*, 1858-60



Berthe Morisot, *After Luncheon*, 1881

While both styles were to influence Australian artists to varying degrees, it was the Naturalistic style with which the earlier Australian Plein Air artists were more familiar - particularly as this style had also become popular in England as well.

Plein Air Painting in France

Painting *au plein air* became of interest to a number of artists from around the 1830s, particularly as portable paint and easels became available, and train lines opened up into the countryside and through to coastal areas.

A key outcome of painting directly in front of the landscape was that *the landscape became the subject itself*, ie a picture of what the artist actually saw in front of themselves, without significant embellishment.

Artists also became more interested in capturing the *atmospheric impact of light* as different times of the day.

Whilst not all artists completed their work outdoors, their intention was to be '*true to nature*'.

This was part of the reason why the style of painting became known as Realism, or Naturalism.

Jules Dupré, *Fontainebleau Oaks*, c 1840



Painting plein air also naturally *changed painting techniques* because artists were frequently trying to paint more quickly, rather than wait for oil paints to dry before another layer was applied.

Artists experimented with different techniques such as applying *wet paint onto wet paint* (so they didn't have to wait for the paint to dry before applying another layer) or using looser brushstrokes.

Many artists worked with softer tonal values of colours, rather than sharper contrasts.



Charles-François Daubigny, *Cottages at Barbizon, Evening*

Artists also painted what they saw in the landscapes, and seascapes, which may have been animals, building or people – but these were peasants at work and the art often showed the hardships they faced.

While the artists were keen to capture what they saw in a 'natural' setting, there was often a degree of sentimentality imbued in paintings.

For some artists, the political upheaval that was occurring in France prompted them to portray the local people and peasants as valid subjects, which certainly didn't fit within acceptable academic standards, or public taste for art.



Theodore Rousseau, *Pont de Batignies in the Forest of Compiègne* c.1828

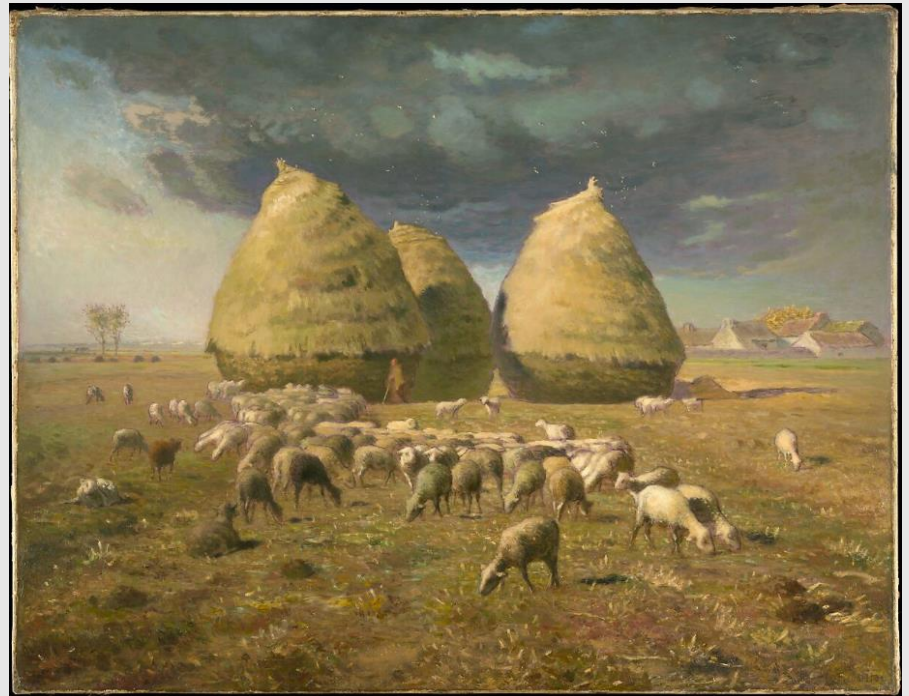
Artists travelled to both rural and seaside areas close to Paris.

One key area in the history of plein air painting and the painting in a Realism style is the town of **Barbizon**.

Barbizon was close to the forest of **Fontainebleau** and had a newly found inn named Auberge Gann. It provided cheap lodgings and rapidly became a hub where artists could exchange ideas. Often students from Paris visited to develop their landscape painting techniques.

Artists painting here from around 1830 – 1870 were said to belong to the **Barbizon School**.

A key feature of many of the landscapes was portraying the atmosphere.



Jean Francois Millet, *Haystacks, Autumn*, c1874

Later, the coastal areas such as **Brittany** and **Douville** also became popular painting locations.



Eugene Boudin, *Washerwoman near Trouville*, c. 1872-1876



Jean-Louis Ernest Meissonier, *Street Scene near Antibes*, 1868

There were several key artists from the *Barbizon School* who were to play a major role in influencing other artists both within France and overseas, including;

Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot
&
Jean François Millet

Gustave Courbet was another significant influence, with his own response to Realism.

In the second half of the century **Jules Bastien-Lepage** developed his painting style based on the earlier Realists, finding a place between academic paintings and Impressionism.

French Impressionists such as **Camille Pissarro**, **Berthe Morisot**, **Claude Monet** and **Edgar Degas** also developed plein air techniques from these artists in the 1860s and 70s and recognized the skills of Corot.

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796-1875)

In 1827 Camille Corot's first painting was accepted at the Paris Salon, and he continued to exhibit there regularly.

He had travelled from Rouen in France to Rome in 1825 to study the masters of the Italian Renaissance, but spent most of his time around Rome and in the Italian countryside. He considered that the three years that he spent in Italy were the most influential of his life, and he returned in 1834 and 1843.

Using his sketches and studies from Italy and the Fontainebleau Forest he composed landscapes of increasingly large size, enlivening their foregrounds with rustic genre motifs.



His first success came at the Paris Salon of 1833, where his *Vue de la forêt de Fontainebleau* won a silver medal.

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot,
Forest of Fontainebleau, 1834



Carl Julius von Leypold, *Wanderer in the Storm*, 1835

Initially his paintings were very much in the approved academic style.

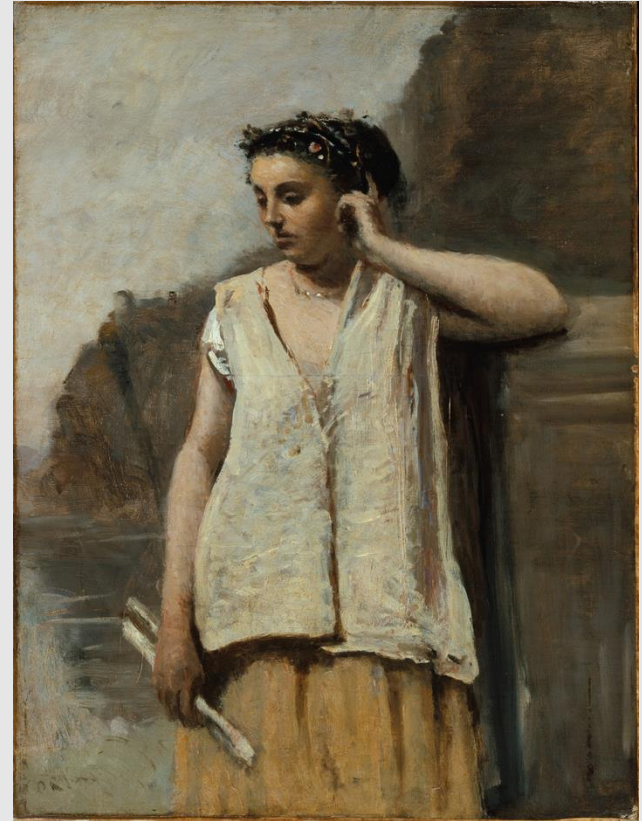


Camille Corot, *View of the Forest of Fontainebleau*, 1830

By the 1850s Corot was painting not only academic compositions for the Salon, but also private studies of the human figure and landscapes in nature, as well as composed landscapes in hazily atmospheric settings destined for sale.



Camille Corot, *Mother and Child*, c 1860s



Camille Corot, *The Muse History*, c1865

His portrait paintings of this time are of local people, not portrayed as heroes. Note the use of soft artwork and tonal values, with the light in the background adding to the atmosphere of the work.

He painted plein air landscape sketches, which he called souvenirs and paysages, dreamy imagined paintings of remembered locations from earlier visits painted with lightly and loosely dabbed strokes.

These later paintings with their softer handling are more in the style of Realism as they are more representative of nature as it actually exists. These were very popular.

The resultant dreamlike quality reflected his desire to stay true to his "first impression" of a landscape.



Camille Corot, *Dardagny, Morning*, 1853

Jean-François Millet (1814-1875) studied in Paris at the studio of Paul Delaroche and at the École des Beaux-Arts, and began his career as a portrait painter.

In 1849, he moved to Barbizon and began a series of rural scenes. His interest was in figures within a landscape – which was an important reflection of the life of the peasants living in the country.



Jean-François Millet, *The Gleaners*, 1857

Jean François Millet, The Gleaners, 1857

Art History
Conversation

Gustave Courbet (1819 – 1877)

Courbet had limited formal training in Paris studios around 1839, but he copied old-masters such as Titian, Caravaggio and **Diego Velazquez** at the Louvre. By 1846, he began touring Belgium and the Netherlands - was specifically inspired by the works of Vermeer, Rembrandt and Velázquez.

He was more interested in painting near his home town of Ornans (near Italy), and subjects which represented the lives of the people living around him.



Gustave Courbet, *View of Ornans*, c 1850



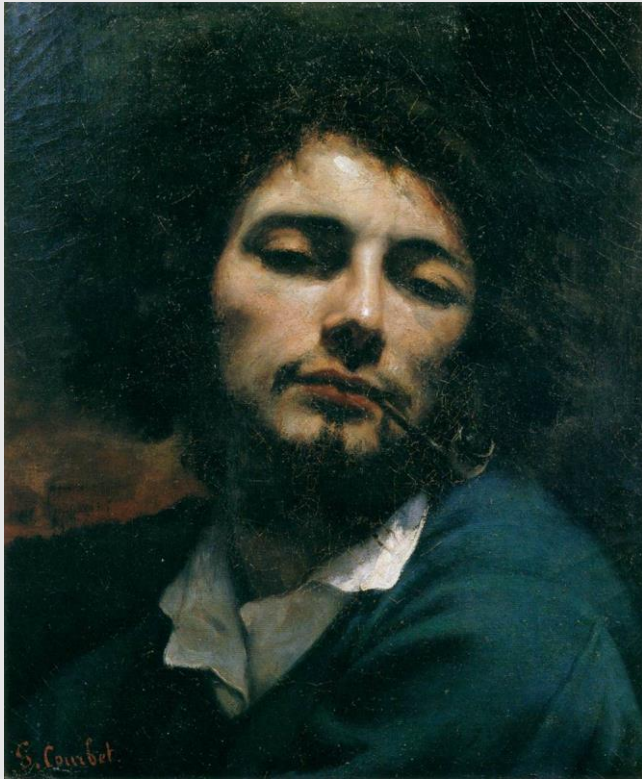
Gustave Courbet, *After Dinner at Ornans*, 1849

He often painted large monumental works as he was keen to be accepted at the Paris Salon.



Gustave Courbet, *A burial at Ornans*, 1849-50

He often painted self portraits, which give a hint to his personality.



One of the key aspects of Courbet's painting style was the use of large brushstrokes.



Gustave Courbet, *Self-portrait with Black Spaniel*, 1844
(first of his paintings to be accepted for the Salon)

Painting techniques of Gustave Courbet



Gustave Courbet, *Good Day Monsieur Courbet*, 1854

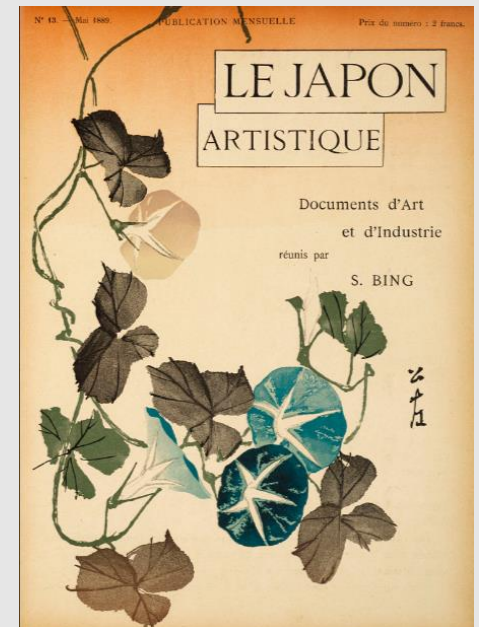
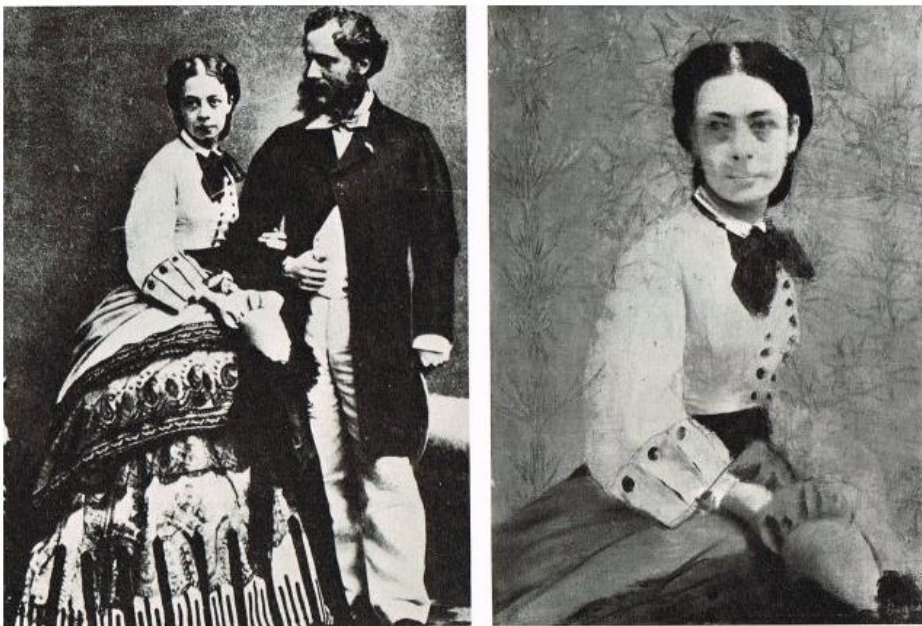


Gustave Courbet, *The Stone Breakers*, 1849

By the 1870s new artists were emerging who were also interested in presenting the lives of ordinary and middle class people in the landscape.

By this time, the new technique of **photography**, together with an interest on **Japonisme** (particularly Japanese prints), was also influencing subject matter and painting techniques.

Photography provided artists with the idea of capturing a snapshot – that is reproducing a moment in time and looking through a camera lens, and Japonisme introduced the notion of broad flat areas of colour.



Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848 – 84),

Bastien-Lepage was initially academically trained, and continued to seek acclaim from the Salon. He painted in a style known as '*juste milieu*' ['middle ground'] between academic paintings and impressionism, and considered himself as heir to the Realist tradition of Millet and Courbet.

The Haymakers (Les Foins) was exhibited at the Salon of 1878

Jules Bastien Lepage, *The Haymakers*, 1877



By the 1870s he was espousing a philosophy that: *'Nothing is good but truth. People ought to paint what they know and love. I come from a village in Lorraine. I mean, first of all, to paint the peasants and landscapes of my home exactly as they are.'*

For him, the quality of the light during the transition hours of early evening and dawn provided new opportunities for presenting his subject matter.



Jules Bastien-Lepage, *All Souls' Day*, c. 1882

His work is distinguished from other artists at the time in capturing local people without the sentimentality of earlier Realists - an almost photographic snapshot, with the key figures in detail in the foreground and a softer less focused background

Bastien-Lepage worked with greater detail with brushstrokes.

He mixed tones of colour *on his palette*, rather than the canvas, so that colour would not appear muddled.

Jules Bastien Lepage, *The Potato Gatherers*, 1879



While peasant and nature scenes brought him success and personal satisfaction, Bastien-Lepage also made his name as a painter of beautiful, and highly realistic, portraits.

His reputation grew not only in France, but also in Scotland and England (with an influence of the Pre-Raphaelites).

Jules Bastien Lepage, *Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt*, 1879



James McNeill Whistler (1834 -1903)

American born and studied in Paris in 1855.

He experimented with a number of different styles of art, used a variety of media, and was also a printmaker.

Whistler was known as an *avante-garde* artist who gained an international reputation and influenced many artists.

He was to have a direct impact on a number of Australian artists, including;

**Tom Roberts,
Emma Minnie Boyd,
May Vale,
John Longstaff,
E. Phillips Fox and
Hugh Ramsay.**

James McNeill Whistler, *The Kitchen*, 1858



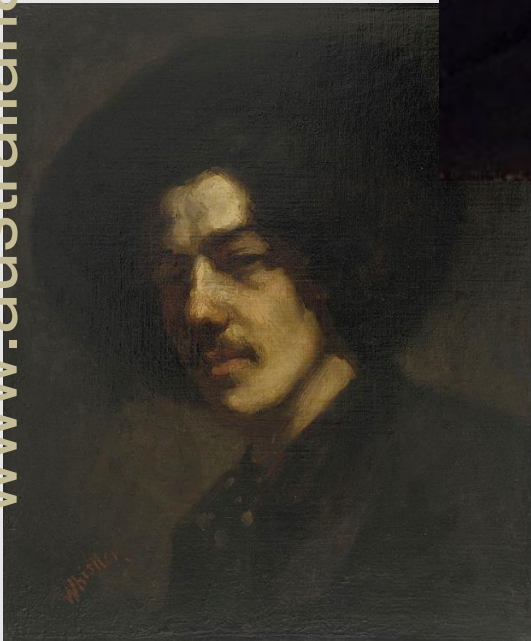
His early influences included Realist artist **Gustave Courbet**, as well as artists from C17th Dutch and Spanish Schools, including **Diego Velázquez**.



Diego Velázquez, *Self Portrait*, 1640



Diego Velázquez, *An Old Woman Cooking Eggs*, 1618



James McNeil Whistler, *Portrait of artist with hat*, 1858

During the 1860s Whistler moved between England and Paris. He also visited Brittany and the coast near Biarritz, where he painted with **Courbet**.



James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in Blue and Silver, Trouville*, 1865



Gustave Courbet, *Seaside*, 1865

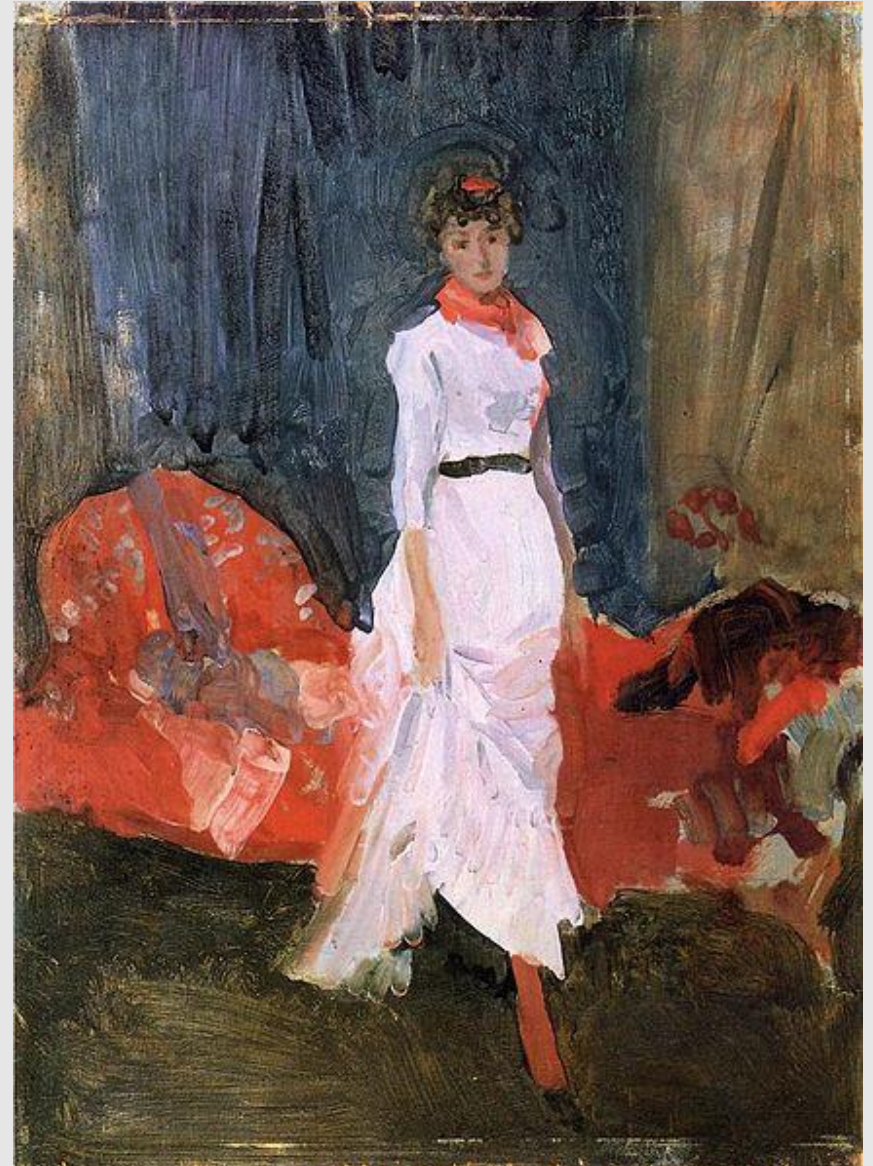
He developed an enthusiasm for **Japonisme** - Japanese prints and blue and white porcelain translated into his compositions



James McNeil Whistler, *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Gold Screen*, 1864

Whistler became interested in **Aestheticism** (art for arts sake) and moved away from his earlier Realist approach.

He used flat, decorative surfaces, subtle tonal harmonies and allusive subjects and began to title his works with the abstract language of music, calling them *symphonies*, *compositions*, *harmonies*, *nocturnes*, *arrangements*.



James McNeill Whistler, *Arrangement in Pink, Red and Purple*, 1883- 84

In 1885 Whistler proclaimed in his “Ten O’Clock” lecture:

“Nature contains the elements, in colour and form, of all pictures, as the keyboard contains the notes of all music.

But the artist is born to pick, and choose, and group with science, these elements, that the result may be beautiful—as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords, until he bring forth from chaos glorious harmony.

To say to the painter, that Nature is to be taken as she is, is to say to the player, that he may sit on the piano.

That Nature is always right, is an assertion, artistically, as untrue, as it is one whose truth is universally taken for granted. Nature is very rarely right, to such an extent even, that it might almost be said that Nature is usually wrong: that is to say, the condition of things that shall bring about the perfection of harmony worthy a picture is rare, and not common at all.”



James McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, 1875

N G V

Whistler's
Mother



Whistler painted in **St Ives, Cornwall** around 1884 and was a friend of expat Australian artist Mortimer Menpes, who promoted his works.

He was also a member of **Royal Anglo Australian Society of Artists** and had works shown in Australia



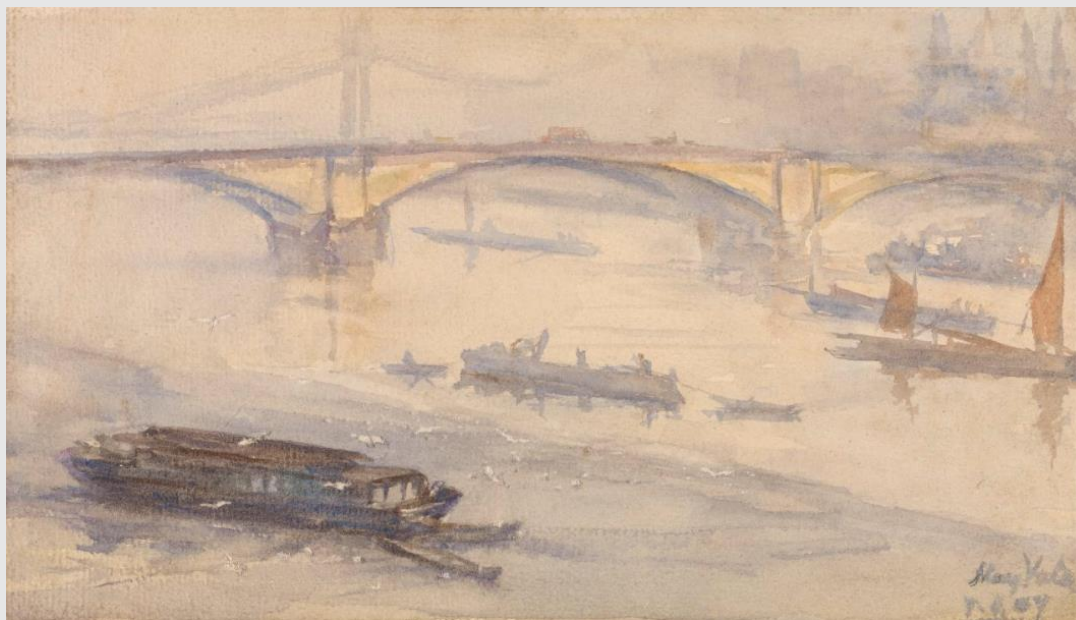
James McNeill Whistler, *St Ives Sunset*, 1883-4



James McNeill
Whistler, *Nocturne
Blue and Silver,
Chelsea*, 1871



Emma Minnie Boyd,
*The Two Esplanades
from St Kilda Pier*, c
1896



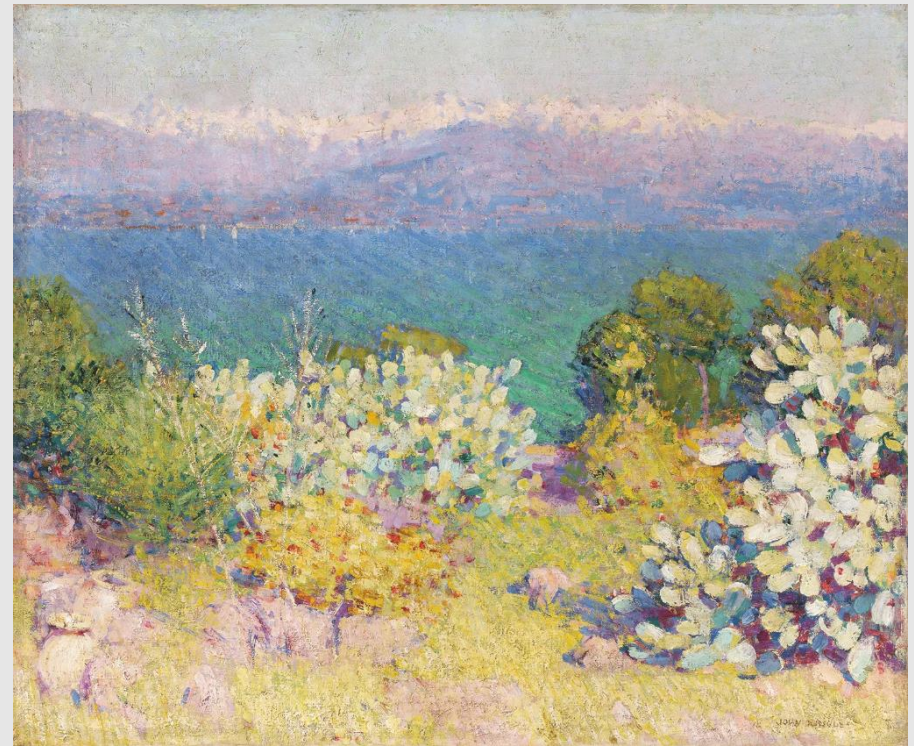
May Vale, *New Battersea Bridge & Chelsea Reach from Cheyne Walk, Chelsea*, 1907

French Impressionism and it's influence on Australian art

The **French Impressionists** were also to have an influence on Australian Impressionism, but not to the same extent.

By the mid 1880s, when more Australian artists where undertaking their grand tours overseas in Europe and the UK, the Impressionists were no longer holding joint exhibitions in the same way that they had earlier and it's difficult to find many direct relationships between French Impressionist artists and Australian artists.

One notable exception was **John Peter Russell**, who painted with such artists as Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh and Henri Matisse



John Peter Russell, *In the morning, Alpes Maritimes from Antibes*, 1890-91

Nonetheless it's known that the Impressionists' work had been seen in galleries in Paris and London, and is sometimes mentioned in correspondence between Australian artists.

Their influences can be seen directly in some Australian paintings, such as works in the **9 x 5 exhibition** held in Melbourne in 1889.

In particular, what Australian artists would have seen is the way in which the Impressionists were painting light filled 'impressions' of the Parisian people at leisure.

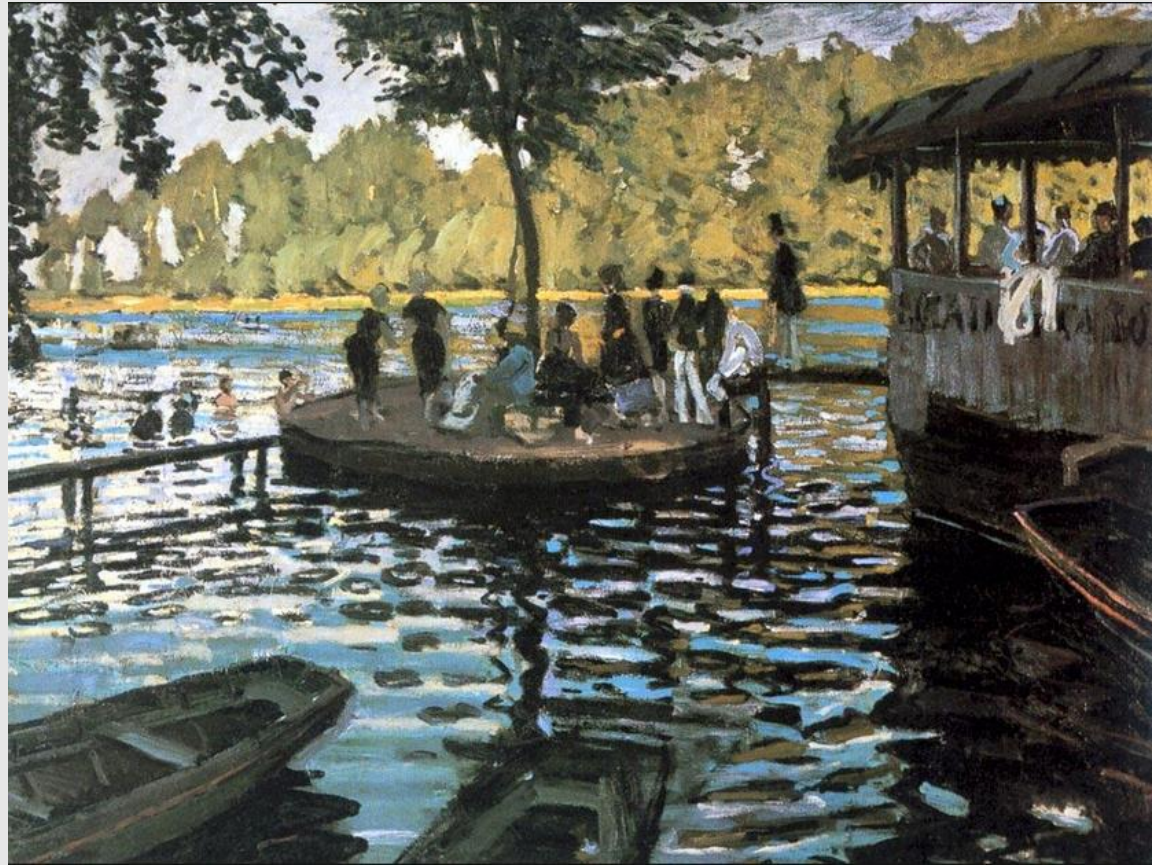


Tom Roberts, *Lady With A Parasol*, c.1889

French Impressionism, 1860s – 1890s

French Impressionism was generally characterised by:

- An interest in the middle class at play
- Bold, visible brushstrokes and a sense of spontaneity
- Bright chromatic colours and broken brushwork - allowing for colour to blend in the eye rather than on a mirror smooth surface of the canvas
- Painted plein air and in the studio to complete works



Claude Monet, *La Grenouillere*, 1869



To create a patch of purple, instead of mixing colours to create purple on the palette, they would lay down a stroke of blue and then a stroke of red right beside it.

The viewer's eyes optically mixed them and created the shade of purple the artists were after.

Claude Monet, *Water Lilies*, 1916



Alfred Sisley, *The Bridge at Villeneuve-la-Garenne*, 1872

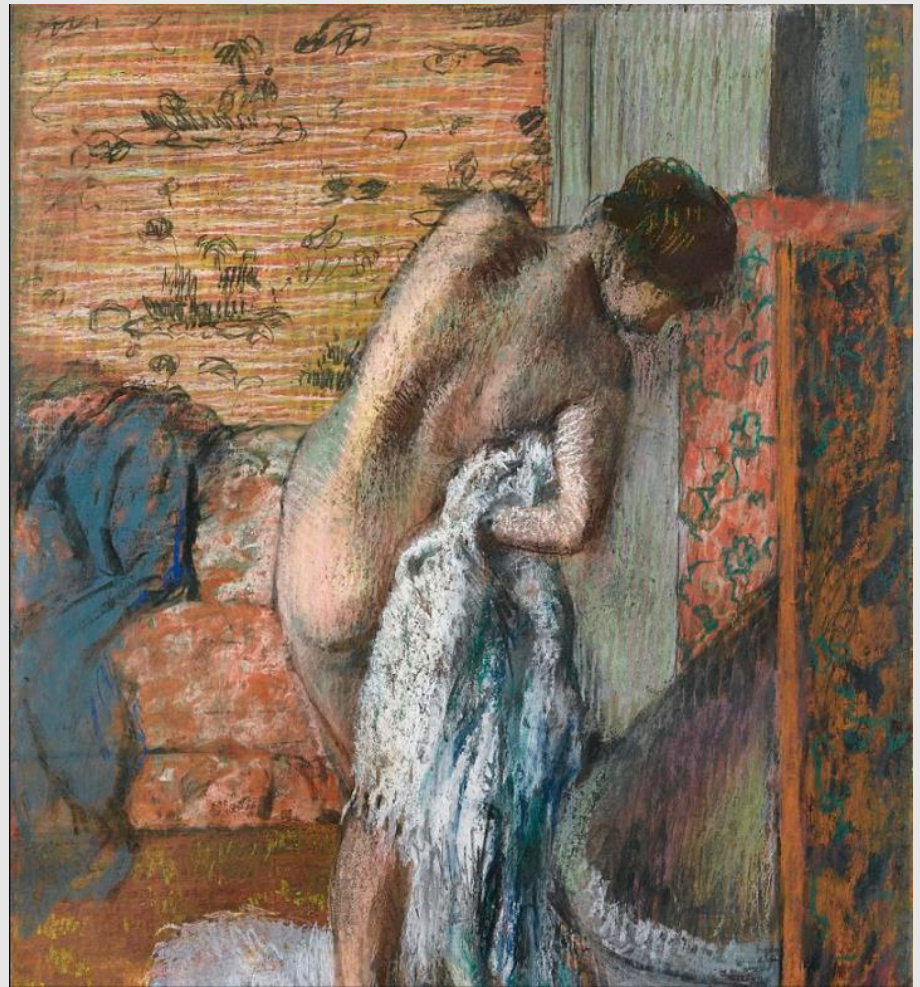


Claude Monet, *Impression Sunrise*, 1872/3

(painted after he had recently returned from London)



Berthe Morisot, *Jeune femme en toilette de bal*, c1879



Edgar Degas, *Woman Drying Herself after the Bath*, c 1882-1885



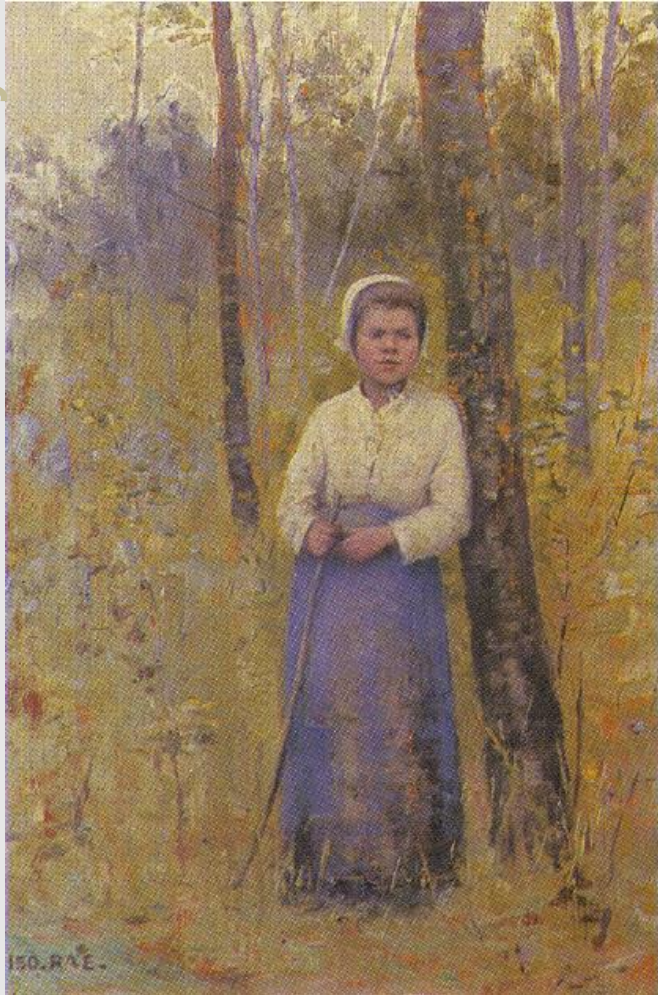
Auguste Renoir, *Dance at Le Moulin de la Galette*, 1876

Eva Gonzalés, *The Woman in Pink*, c1865



Australian artists painting in France in Impressionist style - examples

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Iso Rae, *In the Woods*, 1892



John Peter Russell, *Stormy Sky and Sea, Belle île, off Brittany*

The British Influence

A number of Australian artists chose to visit England and study in London, which provided them with the opportunity to see the latest exhibitions there and meet local artists.

A key factor in the development of plein air painting and Australian Impressionism was the **artists colonies** which were forming in *Cornwall* in the 1880s and 1890s – a number of Australian artist visited these during these years and into the new century.



Emanuel Phillips Fox, *St Ives, Cornwall*, 1904

Newlyn and St Ives artists Colonies, England

- The Anglo-Australian Society of Artists formed and exhibitions held in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide in 1880s and 1890s.
The first was in 1885 at Fletcher's gallery in Melbourne
Artists included James **McNeil Whistler**, **Elizabeth** and **Stanhope Forbes** and **Walter Langley**.



Henry Scott Tuke, *A Sailor's Yarn*, 1887



Elizabeth Stanhope Forbes, *Mignon*, 1890

Newlyn and St Ives artists Colonies, England

Cornish subjects popular with Australian audiences

Art Gallery of New South Wales

purchased several works

After success of exhibitions – Australians drawn to artists colonies to work alongside highly regarded artists



Walter Langley, *A Newlyn Street Scene*, 1885

Newlyn Painting Colony

- In 1880s populated by naturalist painters, interested in painting local fishing & farming communities
- Majority were English who had been trained in Paris or Antwerp and spent time around Brittany

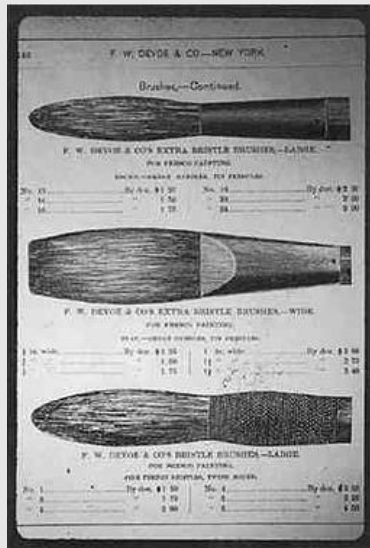
Strong concern for showing the hardships faced by locals, and effects of life

Jules Bastien-Lepage and technique of using large flat brush was a strong influence

Generally focused on the **Royal Academy in London**

Key artists included Elizabeth and Stanhope Forbes and Walter Langley who taught there

Works shown in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide in 1880s and 90s, which encouraged Australian artists to visit



Stanhope Forbes, *Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach*, 1885



St Ives in Cornwall

- Artists began visiting in the 1870s - cheap accommodation and disused industrial building which could be used as studios
- Artist colony formed about 1885-7 by group of friends of varying nationalities – who had been working together in Paris and Brittany
- Committed to submitting works to **Paris Salon**
- Many of the paintings won awards
- Leading to strong reputation
- Initially many artists were figure painters

Anders Zorn, *Fish Market, St Ives*, 1888



The light at St Ives was particularly special because of reflection of the sun against four hard white sand beaches with greater intensity than Newlyn – leading to an interest in marine and landscape paintings in that location.

Dawns, sunsets, afterglows and moonrises particularly popular

Objective was to create mood, emotion or atmosphere – often leading to poetic responses.

James McNeill visited St Ives for a short period of time with **Mortimer Menpes**.

Edward Simmons, *Low Tide, St Ives Harbor*, 1887



William Osborn, *Beach at Dusk, St Ives Harbour*,
c1895



Adrian Stokes Realist approach, based on a careful consideration of tones and colour values. Note the low horizon line, which creates the strong atmospheric effect.



Adrian Stokes, *Uplands and Sky*, 1888



Julius Olsson, *St Ives Bay*, c1884



Richard Hayley Lever, *Fishing Fleet off Shore, St Ives*, 1903

Australian artists who spent time at the artists colonies in Cornwall include:

- Emanuel Phillips Fox
- Ethel Carrick
- Tudor St George Tucker
- Will Ashton
- Charles Bryant
- Charles Conder
- David Davies
- Evelyn Chapman
- Richard Hayley Lever
- Mortimer Menpes
- Edmund Wyly Grier
- John Peter Russell
- Josephine Muntz Adams
- Rupert Bunny
- Portia Geach
- Dora Hake
- Dora Meeson
- Charles D. Richardson
- Violet Teague
- Jessie Traill
- Louis Reginald Monro Grier
- Arthur Burgess

These artists all had some degree of influence on the development of plein air painting, the Heidelberg School or Australian Impressionism in Australia from the 1880s onwards.