



The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute brings masterpieces by Manet, Monet, Renoir and Degas... and all the splendour of Paris at the turn of the 20th century to CaixaForum Barcelona

Impressionists. French Masters from the Clark Collection

French painting in the second half of the nineteenth century represents a crossroads in the history of art. This was a period of change and experimentation, even revolution. For many painters, the tradition of the "Grand Manner", inherited from the Old Masters and sanctioned by the Académie des Beaux-Arts, or Academy of Fine Art, and its official Salon exhibitions, remained the highest calling for art. Others rejected the techniques and subjects of past art and sought to define a new painting based on nature and dedicated to representing the rich variations of the modern world. The most outstanding artists in this revolutionary movement were, without doubt, the Impressionists, and Paris was the centre of this extraordinary period, which ushered in the history of modern art. The exhibition *Impressionists. French Masters from the Clark Collection* features a selection of masterpieces from the late 19th and early 20th century that represent the entire range of styles and tendencies found in that dynamic period: from naturalist landscapes by artists in the Barbizon School to a range of exceptional paintings by the most outstanding artists of the time: Manet, Monet, Pissarro, Sisley, Degas, Morisot and, above all, Renoir. The show reflects the personal tastes of Sterling and Francine Clark who, over five decades, built up one of the most important collections of Impressionist painting in the world. CaixaForum Barcelona is the only stop in Spain on an international tour organised by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute to bring these great masterpieces to audiences around the world, an initiative that coincides with the extension of the US gallery.

The exhibition *Impressionists. French Masters from the Clark Collection* is organised by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, produced by "la Caixa" Foundation and curated by Richard Rand, senior curator at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. The show will be open to the public at CaixaForum Barcelona (Av. de Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia, 6-8) from 17 November 2011 to 12 February 2012.

Barcelona, 16 November 2011.- Jaume Lanaspà, General Manager of "la Caixa" Foundation; Michael Conforti, Director of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute; and Xavier Solà, Secretary General of Cuilture, Government of Catalonia, will this afternoon officially open the exhibition *Impressionists. French Masters from the Clark Collection*, an exceptional selection of French painting from the turn of the 20th century from this outstanding American art collection.

The cooperation between "la Caixa" Foundation and the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute forms part of a series of agreements made with museums and private collections around the world. By way of example, the great retrospective devoted to Eugène Delacroix that CaixaForum Madrid is currently hosting is fruit of an agreement with the Louvre Museum. Similarly, in March 2012, a major exhibition featuring works from the Prado will open at CaixaForum Barcelona.

Along similar lines, several exhibitions recently organised by "la Caixa" Foundation have focused on the role played by collectors in modern and contemporary art. These include shows devoted to the Fondation Jean et Suzanne Planque avant-garde art collection and to the Henri and Eske Nannen collection of German Expressionist painting.



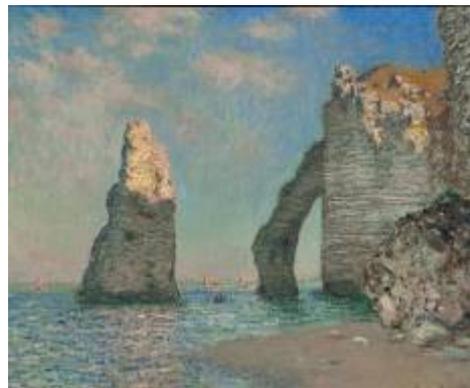
EDGAR DEGAS. *Dancers in the Classroom*, c. 1880.
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. Williamstown,
Massachusetts, USA.

Impressionists. French Masters from the Clark Collection gives audiences the chance to see works from one of the great American collections and to relive the splendour of the early 20th century, when Paris was the capital of painting, enjoying pieces by some of the most outstanding artists from those days.

The exhibition features a considerable number of works from this important American art museum's extraordinary collections of 19th-century French Impressionism and European painting. The selection of 72 works includes pictures by such great masters as, amongst others, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, Pierre Bonnard, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Paul Gauguin, Jean-François Millet, Alfred Sisley, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, William-Adolphe Bouguereau and Jean-Léon Gérôme.

Sterling Clark built up most of his collection in Paris in the early 20th century, a personal collection that reflects the sophistication of both Sterling and Francine Clark, who spent much of their time focused on acquiring art that pleased them. This patron of the arts conceived his collection on the domestic scale: his works formed part of the everyday environment and he distributed the works around the house according to own personal taste, combining pieces from different periods and styles. From a standpoint that contemporary sensibilities find easy to identify with, Clark sought to establish continuity between art from the past and the present.

The works that Clark acquired, many from the first Impressionist period, stand side-by-side with old masters and with the immediately preceding style, without rupture. In this way, the exhibition covers the whole range of styles and tendencies from that dynamic period: naturalist landscapes by artists from the Barbizon School; magnificent paintings by academic and society artists; and evocative fin-de-siècle works. Nonetheless, the core of the Clark Collection is made up of works by the most famous artists of those times – the Impressionists.



CLAUDE MONET. *The Cliffs at Étretat*, 1885.
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.
Williamstown, Massachusetts. USA.

CaixaForum Barcelona is the only stop-in Spain on this first international tour of Europe, America and Asia bringing outstanding masterpieces from the painting collections of The Clark to audiences around the world, an initiative that coincides with work to extend its own premises.

The international tour began last year at the Palazzo Reale in Milan and continued to the Musée des Impressionnismes en Giverny (France). After CaixaForum Barcelona, this exhibition of French masterpieces will travel to the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth (Texas); the Royal Academy of Arts, London; and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in Canada. Finally, in 2013, the show will travel to Japan and China.

The organisation of *Impressionists. French Masters from the Clark Collection* follows the American institution's cooperation with two other exhibitions in Spain over the last year: *Picasso Looks at Degas*, at the Picasso Museum of Barcelona; and *A Passion for Renoir*, at the Prado in Madrid.

The Clark Collection

Sterling and Francine Clark personally acquired most of the paintings that form the core of the Clark Collection. Between 1910 and 1950, the Clarks built up an impressive collection of European and American painting, sculpture and drawing, as well as English silverwork and European porcelain.

Although The Clark is best known for its outstanding collection of French Impressionist painting – which includes more than 30 works by Pierre-Auguste Renoir – its holdings embrace a much wider period, from the Renaissance to the late 19th century. The Collection has expanded greatly since the museum was opened in 1955, with acquisitions including works from the early days of photography, amongst other things.

An explorer, horse breeder and art expert, Sterling Clark formed his taste by frequenting art galleries and auctions and developing relations with art dealers, most notably the Durand-Ruel family. Clark himself once said that: “I like all kinds of art, if it is good of its kind”. He also relied heavily on Francine’s opinion, describing his wife as “an excellent judge, much better than I at times,” and referring to her as his “touchstone in judging pictures.”

The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute



The Sterling And Francine Clark Art Institute. Williamstown, Massachusetts. USA.

The Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute combines a public art museum with a major centre for post-graduate studies and research into the visual arts. The magnificent collection bequeathed by Sterling and Francine Clark, the exhibitions, the academic community and the stunning natural setting all help to shape what is a true hothouse for ideas.

The Clark’s teaching and research programme is characterised by its academic excellence and intellectual engagement. Over the last ten years, its residential Fellows program has welcomed more than 200 scholars and museum professionals from more than 25 countries. Situated in Williamstown, in the Berkshires of Western Massachusetts, The Clark maintains close ties with nearby Williams College, the leading liberal arts college in America. The cooperation between these two institutions has generated a graduate degree programme in art history that attracts students

from all over the world to this academic community, strategically positioned between the cities of Boston and New York.

The international tour has been organised to coincide with a programme to extend The Clark's campus in Williamstown (Massachusetts), which includes the buildings that Sterling y Francine Clark originally opened in 1955, as well as a later addition designed by Pietro Belluschi. The Clark has turned to the renowned Japanese architect Tadao Ando to design a new Visitor, Exhibition, and Conference Center that is currently under construction. In 2008, the Clark opened another Ando-designed building, Stone Hill Center, on its campus. New York-based architect Annabelle Selldorf has been selected to design the renovations and expansion of the Clark's existing facilities. This circumstance presents the perfect opportunity to organise an international tour to share some of the works in the collection with audiences around the world.

EXHIBITION SECTIONS

Fleeing the modern world. Corot and the Barbizon School

Until the 19th century, rural landscapes occupied a secondary place in the history of painting, as the backdrop to religious or mythological scenes. At around the time of the 1848 revolution, a group of artists – Camille Corot, Jean-François Millet, Constante Troyon and Théodore Rousseau – withdrew to the Forest of Barbizon, near Fontainebleau, to seek the peace they need in order to paint, far from the modern world.

Although the Barbizon School artists produced realist painting, their pictures reflected an interest in light, colour and the possibility of transmitting mood. In this sense, they blazed a path for Impressionism, which finds painting's *raison d'être* in contact with nature, the open air.

Painting the moment. The beginnings of the Impressionist movement

Like the Barbizon School painters, the Impressionists sought to capture moments from life: a street in a Normandy village; sun-drenched cliffs; a field of tulips; a river flowing peaceably through woods and fields...



CLAUDE MONET. *Geese in the Brook*, 1874.
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA.

The first compositions of painters like Claude Monet, Gustave Caillebotte and Alfred Sisley do not have that revolutionary quality that we normally associate with the Impressionist movement: magnificent and sumptuous, they seek to capture the impression of a moment in the day through the effects of light and colour observed in nature. In these works, the human figure has disappeared and landscape is the absolute protagonist.

The sublime landscape. Impressionism comes of age

Rejected by the official *Salon*, the Impressionists gave their first show at the studio of the photographer Nadar in Boulevard des Capucines in April 1874. That exhibition represented a turning point in art history. In just a few years, painters eschewed appearance, natural colours, theme and perspective, the elements that had characterised painterly representation since Renaissance times. Their style changed with time, from the quick, short brushstrokes of the early days to the adoption of ever more laborious and sophisticated techniques.

Claude Monet's picture *Geese in the Brook* dates to the early period. The image is built up by layers of individual brushstrokes that create the effect of an explosion of light. In around 1880, Monet began to experiment with the representation of space, eliminating the vanishing point and turning the picture into – for example, *Primavera en Giverny* – into a decorative meditation on line and colour.

The soul of things. Renewal of the still life

The Impressionists applied the results of their investigations into landscape to one of the classical painterly genres: the still life. They adapted this format to the domestic space, choosing simple themes related to everyday life in the country or the city and depicting them as they had never been portrayed before: often using natural lighting and vibrant brushstrokes that recreate the effect of light on the surface of things. This room contains still life paintings by Sisley, Manet, Fantin-Latour and Morisot.

Renoir was the great renovator of the still life, producing captivating and sensual works. A jar of flowers, a bowl containing apples or a bunch of onions and garlic on a white tablecloth transmit *joie de vivre*. *Onions* was Sterling Clark's favourite Renoir, and he often used this painting as a reference when judging other works.

The perfection of the human body. Academic art

In Sterling Clark's view, all art could be good if it was good in its kind. For this reason, Impressionist masterpieces stand side-by-side in his collection with pictures by the best painters formed at the Academy of Fine Art in Paris, academic artists who reproduced authorised subjects on their canvases: historic, religious and mythological themes and portraits of important personages.

The academic painters were methodical: before painting the pictures that they would present every year at the *Salon* in Paris, they produced preliminary sketches, drawings and paintings. Their favourite themes included the human body, which they modelled with anatomical precision. Fine examples of this style include the paintings of William Adolphe-Bouguereau, *Seated Nude*, and Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Slave Market* and *The Snake Charmer*.

Interior landscapes. Painting the everyday

Innovations in 19th-century painting also affected interiors. Such Impressionist painters as Manet, Degas and Renoir coincide in their tendency to present the people they portrayed in their own environments, in a meditative attitude that brings out their personality. Away from their social activities, reading, sewing or chatting, men and women reveal their true nature.

An outstanding feature is the presence of women, whose luxurious clothing enabled artists to demonstrate their painterly abilities, as is case in the folds in the dress worn by Giovanni Boldini's *Young Woman Crocheting*. 19th-century painting captures women's and spirituality, as well as their desire for freedom, an urge which clashed with the conventions of bourgeois society.

Renoir's colour and sensuality. Sterling Clark's great passion

In 1916, attracted by the artist's use of colour and sensual treatment of the female image, Sterling Clark acquired Pierre-Auguste Renoir's painting *A Girl Crocheting*, de Pierre-Auguste Renoir. This was the first of the thirty-nine paintings by Renoir that Clark would gradually add to his collection.

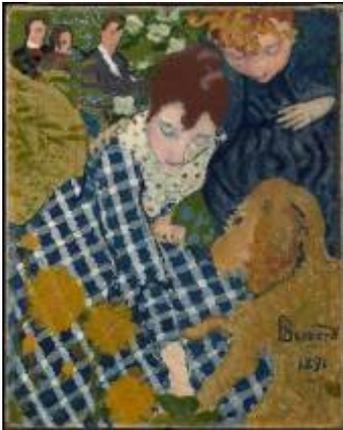
The Clark collection focuses particularly on the Renoir's years as an artist, between 1874 and 1880, when he was linked to the Impressionist movement. It includes pieces from all genres: nudes, scenes from modern life, the portraits that gave him economic freedom, self-portraits, landscapes and still lifes.

Moreover, Renoir's travels in Algeria, Spain and Italy in 1881 opened up new horizons for his painting.

Hence, the energetic brushstroke in *Self-Portrait*, painted in around 1875, and the thick impastos of *Sleeping Girl* (1880) give way to *Blonde Bather* (1881), with its classical inspiration and softer tones, and *The Letter* (c. 1895-1900), with its painstakingly drawn figures, representing the artist's later period.

Luminous portraits. Impressionists and Post-Impressionists

From Honoré Daumier to Henry Toulouse-Lautrec, from Edouard Degas to Pierre Bonnard and Paul Gauguin, in little under thirty years the portrait was renewed. At first, visual discoveries made by Impressionism were brought in: natural light, filtered by a window or the leaves of a tree; the use of different colour gradations to create volume...



PIERRE BONNARD. *Women with a Dog*, 1891.
Sterling and Francine Clark Art
Institute. Williamstown, Massachusetts,
USA.

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Later, a revolutionary form of artistic expression was introduced. The laws of perspective are ignored and plain, light-drenched colours are used, sometimes alone, as in Gauguin's *Young Christian Girl*, at others with bright prints, such as that seen in Bonnard's *Women with a Dog*. The path that began in Barbizon in 1848 had taken painting to the gateway to the abstract art of the 20th century.

Impressionists. French Masters from the Clark Collection

17 November 2011 - 12 February 2012

INAUGURAL LECTURE

Impressionists. French Masters from the Clark Collection

By **Richard Rand**, exhibition curator

CaixaForum Barcelona

Av. de Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia, 6-8
08038 Barcelona

Times

Monday to Friday, from 10 am to 8 pm
Saturdays and Sundays, from 10 am to 9 pm
December 25 and January 1 and 6, closed

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