

Impressionism by Dana Ailer

When photography was invented in the late 1830's, painters were no longer intrigued by capturing subjects in a realistic style. When a realistic image was desired, a photograph could simply be taken. Consequently, painters wishing to break the confines of realism began to explore the notion of mimicking the eye's interpretation of a scene rather than accurately recreating the scene. The method of Impressionistic painting uses pure, unmixed color and small brushstrokes to simulate the effects of light and color. Impressionism took hold and was practiced primarily in France.

Perhaps the best known Impressionist is Claude Monet. His painting *Impression: Soleil Levant* (1872) literally gave a name to this style. Monet preferred to paint outdoors. Although he traveled extensively and found inspiration all over Western Europe, the gardens at his home in Giverny provided inspiration for some of his best known work such as *Bridge Over a Pool of Water Lilies* (1899) and *The Artist's Garden at Giverny* (1900.)

Pierre-Auguste Renoir is another well known French Impressionist. Describing his joyful style of painting, Renoir once famously said, "Why shouldn't art be pretty? There are enough unpleasant things in the world." His paintings of cherubic children, beautiful women, and flowers illustrated this belief. Renoir's *A Girl With a Watering Can* (1876) is one of Impressionism's most recognizable paintings. His pleasing paintings inspired instant appeal and made Renoir one of the most popular painters of his time.

French artist Edgar Degas participated in the Impressionist movement for a time. Degas was intrigued by the human (or animal) form in motion and is best known for his paintings, drawings, and sculptures of ballet dancers and race horses. *Green Dancer* (1880) and *Racehorses in a Landscape* are 2 of his works.

Other influential Impressionists include Paul Cezanne, Camille Pissarro, and Armand Guillaumin.