

*Crossing the Channel: The Challenges of French Impressionism in
Great Britain*

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Introduction: French Impressionism in England

As Impressionism spread throughout Europe in the late nineteenth century, the movement took hold in the British art community and helped to change the fundamental ways in which people viewed and collected art. Impressionism made its debut in London in 1870 when Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Paul Durand-Ruel sought safe haven in London during the Franco-Prussian war. The two artists created works of London landscapes done in the new Impressionist style. Paul Durand-Ruel, a commercial dealer, marketed the Impressionist works of these two artists and of the other Impressionist artists that he brought over from Paris. The movement was officially organized for the First Impressionist Exhibition in 1874 in Paris, but the initial introduction in London laid the groundwork for promoting this new style throughout the international art world. This thesis will explore, first, the cultural transformations of London that allowed for the introduction of Impressionism as a new style in England; second, the now-famous Thames series that Monet created in the 1890s and notable exhibitions held in London during the time; and finally, the impact Impressionism had on private collectors and adding Impressionist works to the national collections.

With the exception of Edouard Manet, who met with success at the Salon in Paris over the years and did not exhibit with the Impressionists, the modern artists were not received well. Beginning in 1864, Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, Paul Cézanne, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir were submitting their works to the Salon annually. Out of the group, only a few had works chosen each year, and no more than two works from an artist were shown.¹ The Salon in Paris was conservative and was hesitant to accept Impressionist pieces, but the artists were persistent in developing their unique style. They were breaking with

¹ John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 594-95.

tradition and consequently faced opposition and ridicule, similar to the reactions that they first received in England.

What the movement needed was an advocate who had connections to the established art market in London but was willing to invest in Impressionism despite the lack of guaranteed financial success. This figure was Paul Durand-Ruel, and the fateful meeting between Durand-Ruel and Monet and Pissarro occurred in London in 1870, where all three had fled during the Franco-Prussian War. Durand-Ruel immediately bought the paintings that the artists had brought to him, and he included them in his exhibition of the Society of French Artists, which he had founded in London.² These initial sales in 1870-71 gave Monet and Pissarro the financial assistance that they needed to support their painting profession. Durand-Ruel took considerable risks by investing in the Impressionists, and while he struggled financially at moments throughout his career, the support that he provided to these artists was invaluable in allowing them to create a greater number of works in their distinctive styles.

Through Durand-Ruel's sponsorship, the artists' works entered the art market in London. Similar to the reactions of the art community in Paris, Londoners did not know what to make of this strange new style. Critics ridiculed it and the public largely ignored it, but emerging British supporters saw the value in and importance of engaging with modern, foreign art. As Impressionism gained international attention during the late nineteenth century and works were increasing in economic value, campaigns were started in London to raise funds to buy these works. Donors made monetary contributions that allowed new works to be purchased while some collectors donated works to enhance the national collections. Early in the twentieth century, several articles ran in art periodicals emphasizing the benefit that British artists would receive

² John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 254-55.

from knowing the contemporary styles and being able to view them in person in their own city. Hesitantly at first, the British began to accept Impressionism as a legitimate art movement.

Studying the reactions and results of introducing French Impressionism into British culture reveals the influence that the city of London had on the development of the movement as it spread internationally. Before Impressionist artists had officially debuted at the Impressionist exhibitions in 1874, their works were on view in London; the artists honed their techniques, using the city as their inspiration. The iconic characteristic of emphasizing the effects of light and air in a composition are seen early on in depictions of the London fog and River Thames. The key meeting between Durand-Ruel and the Impressionist artists while in London affected the movement for its duration. The development of Impressionism as a significant movement is directly related to its initial introduction into the British art market and the attention that it gained from notable art dealers and collectors.

Chapter One: The Beginnings of Impressionism in London

The introduction of French Impressionism to Britain would not have been possible without the establishment of commercial galleries that made the art available to the public. By the 1850s, London had become an important, if not vital, center for the development of the modern retail market for art. As the capital city of a global empire and a city of commerce and finance, it made a natural home for a growing art market. As art became a commodity more available to the growing middle class and the means of buying and selling art became more structured, dealers with commercial galleries became commonplace. This backdrop of a growing demand for new art and new ways to exhibit it provided the outlet for French Impressionism to be viewed in England. Commercial galleries supported the initial introduction of the movement as French Impressionists and dealers began working in London.

Before the first commercial art gallery opened in London in 1850s, the city had undergone a transformation of its cultural spaces. Motivated by military victories throughout the Regency Period, the British Parliament wanted London to reflect its status as the capital city of a major global empire by cultivating its arts and culture. State-sponsored improvements to the arts in London abounded beginning in 1810, and the most notable accomplishment was the founding of the National Gallery in 1824. Rather than encompassing the royal collection into a public exhibition, Parliament purchased the collection of John Julius Angerstein, mostly of foreign old master paintings, and his home in Pall Mall to house the Gallery. The establishment of the National Gallery gave England a “cultural symbol and resource which most European capitals had possessed for decades.”³ The purpose of the National Gallery was to portray London as a sophisticated global city but also to encourage its citizens to take pride in their arts and culture.

³ Holger Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination* (London: Profile Books, 2010), 370.

During the renovations of London beginning in 1810, Trafalgar Square, and later Nelson's Column, were established to honor England's military achievements.⁴ In 1838, the National Gallery moved to Trafalgar Square where it remains today. As the British public was encouraged to take pride in both the national art collection and the country's military accomplishments, the location of the National Gallery close to monuments honoring recent victories emphasized the connection. The more accessible Trafalgar Square location gave Londoners more opportunities to view the national collection, as well as further associating the Gallery with national pride. The National Gallery was fully entrenched in British culture, which would contribute to the museum's reluctance to accept modern French artists when Impressionism made its debut in England during the 1870s.

Before the establishment of the National Gallery, Londoners viewed art at major exhibitions held by the Royal Academy of Arts. Since its founding in 1768, the Royal Academy of Arts in London has been organizing art exhibits for the British public. Artists would submit their works to the Academy, and several exhibitions would be staged throughout the year, most notably the summer exhibition of contemporary art. Artists not chosen to exhibit at the Academy's shows could transform their studio into a gallery and invite guests to view, and hopefully, buy their latest works. Artists could also form exhibition groups and organize a show at a rented exhibition space, or, very rarely, a dealer would stage a one-artist show.⁵ These methods were frustrating for the artist, dealer, and viewer because of a lack of consistency in organizing regular shows along with a limited number of consumers the shows would reach. Reaching a larger audience became more feasible once department and home furnishing stores

⁴Ibid., 373.

⁵ Pamela Fletcher and Anne Heilmrich, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 5-10.

began to carry works of fine art, but there was still a lack of permanent space dedicated to exhibiting works with regularity.⁶ It was this void in the art world that the opening of commercial galleries filled.

Private, permanent exhibition spaces dedicated to the sale of fine art transformed the art market in London because they grew trade and increased demand. The commercial gallery was an independent institution run by a dealer who exclusively sold fine art. These emerged in the 1850s and 1860s and became a major component of the art market by the 1880s and 1890s. Throughout London's West End, commercial galleries were plentiful. As they changed the way that art was viewed and sold, they also changed the way people classified art. Viewing art became a more commercial activity: the galleries could be considered exhibition spaces or shops, and the dealer could be a patron or a speculator.⁷ As the art world grappled with these new developments, commercial galleries became an accepted, and essential, aspect of the market. A writer for the *Art Journal* conceded, "The time has been when almost every work by artists of any eminence regularly appeared in some public institution; but as that is now no longer to be expected, the opportunity of seeing in galleries of this kind so of dealers, cannot be neglected."⁸ Dealers effectively became middlemen between artists and consumers as they established trust between both parties.

These galleries were so effective at marketing art that "by the early 1880s, it was a common complaint in Academy reviews that artists were sending their best pictures to private galleries. But the Academy exhibition itself was also a site of struggle; many works shown in annual exhibitions were already the property of dealers, who might show the work in their

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ Ibid., 47.

⁸ "Mr. Morby's Gallery," *Art Journal* (November 1860), 349.

galleries...before the Academy opened.”⁹ The weakening influence of the Royal Academy and the rise of galleries created a favorable condition for French Impressionism to infiltrate the British art world. For while the Royal Academy was strictly conservative in its choices, dealers were looking at contemporary, foreign art. This transition in the art world allowed French Impressionist artists to find a market among dealers, and subsequently the British public, who were interested in their work.

One of the first dealers who opened a commercial gallery in London was Ernest Gambart, who came to the city from Belgium in 1840. Gambart’s French Gallery was established during the 1850s, and in the following years, commercial galleries began to open across London.¹⁰ Fletcher cites a letter from the dealer Ernest Gambart offering to show a client “some of the best Pictures going to the Royal Academy.”¹¹ Other important dealers who quickly followed Gambart’s business model were Louis Flatou and Agnew’s. They were meeting with economic success as well. During the 1860s, Gambart amassed £100,000 in capital with Flatou following at £60,000 and Agnew’s at £61,000.¹² While the dealer-gallery structure was favorable for the introduction and proliferation of French Impressionism, the notable British dealers were not the first to support or exhibit their works. As seen through sales records, Gambart was heavily involved in the sale and exhibit of works by the French artist Rosa Bonheur but would not become involved with the French Impressionists.¹³ Agnew’s gallery, another prominent gallery in London, was known for the high caliber of its British works, not modern foreign art.

⁹ Fletcher and Heilmreich, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market*, 53.

¹⁰ Pamela Fletcher, “Creating the French Gallery,” *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2007).

¹¹ Maas, *Gambart*, 168; cited in Fletcher and Heilmreich, *The Rise of the Modern Art Market i*.

¹² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³ Algernon Graves, *Art Sales from Early in the Eighteenth Century to Early in the Twentieth Century (mostly Old Master and Early English Pictures)* (London: A. Graves, 1918).

The greatest advocate for Impressionism in both France and England was Paul Durand-Ruel, a French dealer who is credited with inventing Impressionism. Durand-Ruel's relationship with the Impressionists began during the Franco-Prussian War, when many French citizens had fled to London. Not only would London provide a safe haven during the war, Durand-Ruel already had business contacts in the art market and was eager to participate in the highly active gallery trade. Before his journey to London, Durand-Ruel arranged for the transfer of his pictures from his Paris gallery to London, indicating that he was eager to establish himself as a dealer there. The shipment was sent to Henry Wallis, who managed Gambart's French Gallery. Wallis found temporary space for Durand-Ruel's collection at 7 Haymarket, in the gallery of Thomas McLean. Durand-Ruel left France in September 1870, and upon arriving in London began to pursue artists with whom he had contacts and bought new works from them to expand his picture trade. The dealer sought out the French landscape painter Charles-François Daubigny, whom he knew from his previous work with the Barbizon School artists in France, and commissioned three new works from him.

Daubigny was also responsible for introducing Durand-Ruel to Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro, a partnership that would change the course of Impressionism in the following decades.¹⁴ When Durand-Ruel saw Monet's portfolio, he admired "Monet's bold, direct approach, but he was also equally excited when he discovered the work of other artists associated with what was then called 'the new painting.'"¹⁵ These other artists included Camille Pissarro and Alfred Sisley, whom the dealer met in London at the same time. As he admired these artists, he "bought works in staggering quantity and showed them with conviction and persistence in

¹⁴ Sylvie Patry, *Discovering the Impressionists* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2015), 173-175.

¹⁵ Karen Wilkin, "Durand-Ruel & the Impressionists." *The New Criterion* 34, no. 1, (September 2015): 1.

London.”¹⁶ The financial assistance and continued promotion of their works allowed the artists to continue to work in London. The exhibitions that Durand-Ruel held at his galleries introduced the British public to Impressionism, to mixed reviews.

Three months after his arrival in London, Durand-Ruel rented the German Gallery (so named because of a previous exhibit of German artists) on New Bond Street for his gallery. In every year from 1870 through 1875, Durand-Ruel hosted exhibits with works by modern, foreign artists. He called these exhibitions, *The [First] Annual Exhibition in London of Pictures: The Contribution of the Society of French Artists*, until he began to hold exhibitions more frequently. In 1872 he also held a *Winter Exhibition* and a *Summer Exhibition*. From 1873 to 1875, he held two exhibitions each year. Although the number varied, each exhibition usually presented around 150 works. The first exhibition in 1870, which did not contain any Impressionists, featured eight hundred works done by Daubigny and Millet among many others. In 1871, Durand-Ruel included his first Impressionist pieces, one work by Monet and two by Pissarro. By the end of the *Eleventh Exhibition* in 1875, Durand-Ruel had displayed around 2,318 works by modern French artists.¹⁷ The sheer size of his exhibits, along with the particular promotion of Impressionist artists at the shows, successfully exposed the British public to this new style, which would lead to greater acceptance and demand in later years.

The most notable exhibition that Durand-Ruel organized in London in this period was the 1883 show of Impressionists. The show, held on New Bond Street at Dowdeswell’s Galleries, attracted considerable press attention. The exhibition included two works by Mary Cassatt, three works each by Manet and by Morisot, six by Monet, seven works by Degas, eight each by Sisley and Renoir, and eleven works by Pissarro. In total, approximately 50 works were displayed at the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Paul-Louis Durand-Ruel and Flavie Durand-Ruel, *Paul Durand-Ruel* (Paris : Flammarion, 2014), 210-211.

show, making this the largest group of Impressionist works to be seen in England up to this time. It would not be until 1905 when Durand-Ruel organized an exhibition at the Grafton Galleries that another large-scale show would be held of Impressionist works in England. Kate Flint, in the introduction to her work on the critical reception of the Impressionists in England, writes of the 1883 exhibition, “This show proved a turning point not just in the reception of the Impressionists in England, but in the development of art criticism...The very size of the show, which demonstrated that the Impressionists were a united force, ensured a wider reception than was accorded to Durand-Ruel’s promotional efforts of the 1870s.”¹⁸

Previous to this 1883 exhibition, the Impressionists were given little media attention. A review in *The Artist* states that the Impressionists must have been avoiding publicity because “practically nothing” has been written about them. For many Londoners, this exhibition represented the entrance of Impressionism into the British art world and was seen as “especially strong in the work of the masters of the school; of Degas, of Renoir, and of Monet.” The reviewer draws specific attention to Monet’s work *Petit Bras à Argentueil* for its strength and delicacy.¹⁹ Other reviews of this exhibition, overcoming previous prejudices against Impressionism, praised these artists for their skill. A reviewer for *The Standard* newspaper writes, “The Impressionists are not all that narrow and ill-informed partisan advocacy has represented them to be. They are not going to make us forget...the Rembrandt and Titian of old time.”²⁰ Once art critics could appreciate Impressionism and move beyond their previous prejudices, they were more inclined to review the Impressionists’ works and began to see artistic value.

¹⁸ Kate Flint, *Impressionists in England* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 6, 361.

¹⁹ “Notice of the Impressionist Exhibition at Messrs Dowdeswell’s Gallery,” *The Artist* (1 May 1883), cited in Kate Flint, *Impressionists in England*, 60.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

The three artists with whom Durand-Ruel first worked in London were Camille Pissarro, Alfred Sisley, and Claude Monet. After introductions to the artists, Durand-Ruel requested to view more works from them. The artists at the time were working on scenes of London and the surrounding countryside. Pissarro stayed in England from 1870 to 1872, and during his visit was able to create cityscapes as well as views of the British countryside. In the winter of 1870, Pissarro was in Norwood, which he called “a charming suburb.” This town served as inspiration for two of his works from this period: *Fox Hill, Upper Norwood*, 1870, and *Lordship Lane Station, Upper Norwood*, 1871 (Figure 1).²¹ Both of these works depict life in small-town England, but there remains a suggestion of industry and progress. The emphasis on the railway serves as a reminder of the close proximity of London via rail and shows the spread of industrialization even to the countryside.

Alfred Sisley stayed in England from 1871 through 1874. The only London scene that Sisley created during this visit was *View of the Thames: Charing Cross Bridge* (Figure 2); he focused more on scenes of Hampton Court Palace and East Molesey.²² These works, notably *Hampton Court* and *Molesey Weir, Near Hampton Court*, both done in 1874, reveal Sisley’s interest in capturing the effects of light and reflection on water.²³ The early works show that Sisley was experimenting with the Impressionist style, but he focused more on depicting the details of the scene rather than his impression of them. The architecture of Hampton Court is clearly delineated while the water is depicted in its blurry, changing form. When comparing Sisley’s work to Monet’s, it is clear that Sisley does not go so far as Monet does in blurring the overall composition; he focuses more on carefully rendering his subject. One recent reviewer

²¹ Kenneth McConkey, *Impressionism in Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 177.

²² “Sisley in England and Wales,” *National Gallery*, 2008, <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/about-us/press-and-media/press-releases/sisley-in-england-and-wales>.

²³ Kenneth McConkey, *Impressionism in Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 191.

states that “the vivid early scenes are faithful to their settings,” meaning that Sisley is concerned about depicting the overall composition rather than focusing solely on the atmospheric elements.²⁴ Sisley’s works did not garner the same admiration and attention as Monet and Pissarro, but his British portfolio reveals the different ways in which the artists depicted similar scenes.

While in London from 1870 to 1871, Monet produced five canvases: three depictions of the Thames and the Pool of London and two of London’s parks, *Hyde Park, London* and *Green Park, London*.²⁵ One of his paintings of the river, *The Thames River Below Westminster*, 1871, would later develop into a series to which he would dedicate years depicting the hazy atmosphere over the Thames with the Houses of Parliament in the background (Figure 3). Compared to later depictions of similar scenes, the 1871 piece is more vivid, with distinct outlines of people and buildings. The careful delineation is absent in his later works, which focus more on the atmospheric elements rather than the literal objects filling the space. The early work also shows scenes of labor and industry, almost totally absent from his work after the 1870s.

Monet’s visit to London in 1870 marked the start of a lifelong admiration for the city that would feature prominently in his later work. Wynford Dewhurst, in an article on Monet for *Pall Mall Magazine* in 1900, says that the artist is “enthusiastically in love with London from the artistic point of view.” From this first visit, not only did he meet Durand-Ruel—“a firm, and, as it has proved, a lifelong friendship,...and those business relations which have meant so much to both them and the Impressionist movement generally”—but Monet studied almost daily at the National Gallery and was exposed to works by Turner, Constable, and Crome that influenced his

²⁴ Laura Cumming, “The Vague Impressionist,” *The Observer*, (November 23, 2008), 18.

²⁵ McConkey, *Impressionism in Britain*, 161.

subsequent works.²⁶ The effects of the city on Monet's work are seen more readily in his progress of depicting atmospheric elements, as London provided a bounty of foggy landscapes to practice his skills.

As Monet worked in London, he also exhibited at various galleries across the city. Notably, he attempted to exhibit with the Royal Academy in 1871, but his submissions were not selected.²⁷ Monet met with success elsewhere, however, as Durand-Ruel exhibited his works at his New Bond Street Gallery in the early 1870s. He also showed with the Royal Society of British Artists at their winter exhibition, although the decision to include Monet made by J.A.M. Whistler, the current president, cost the latter his position the following year.²⁸ This hesitant reception to Monet indicates lingering uncertainties about the new style and new artists, but the growing support and recognition of Monet and the Impressionists that occurred during the 1870s and 1880s would carry into the twentieth century as efforts to collect and exhibit their works expanded.

²⁶ Wynford Dewhurst. "Claude Monet-Impressionist". *The Pall Mall Magazine* 21 no. 86, (1900): 214-215.

²⁷ Nathalia Brodskaya, *Great Masters : Claude Monet*, (New York: Parkstone International, 2010), 15, 128.

²⁸ McConkey, *Impressionism in Britain*, 160.

Chapter Two: Notable Series and Exhibitions

After the initial introduction of Impressionism in London in the 1870s, the movement grew more visible throughout the British art community as more Impressionist artists began to work in London and galleries were exhibiting their works. Most famously, Monet created a series featuring the Thames and several notable British landmarks, including the Houses of Parliament, Charing Cross Bridge, and Waterloo Bridge. The skill he had developed in depicting one scene in different atmospheres while in France was manifested in his Thames series. As the painter was growing more familiar with the London landscape, the city was becoming more familiar with the Impressionists. Paul Durand-Ruel had the desire to stage a monumental retrospective exhibition of Impressionist works for the British public. While the exhibition, held in 1905, did not result in selling many paintings, it was effective in exposing Londoners to the modern art movement and created a desire among the art community to view more of these works, which would lead to more art exhibits and collectors in the ensuing years.

As has been explored above, Monet first visited London in 1870 to flee the Franco-Prussian War. He created several works before returning to France in 1871, and did not again work on scenes of London until the very end of the nineteenth century. As Paul Hayes Tucker discusses in his *Monet in the 90s*, Monet had stated several times in the 1890s that he wanted to work in London again and had returned to the city twice before 1899. In 1891, Monet was invited to exhibit with the New English Arts Club, and he returned to London to view the show, and in 1898, he visited his son Michel who had moved to London to learn English. Neither of these trips resulted in any paintings.²⁹ It was not until 1899 that Monet visited London to work

²⁹ Paul Hayes Tucker, *Monet in the 90s* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1989), 242.

and produced three series of the River Thames which would become some of his most famous paintings.

Before his Thames paintings, Monet had produced series of haystacks beginning in 1884, poplars beginning in 1890, and Rouen Cathedral beginning in 1892 (Figures 4, 5, 6). Focusing on a single motif for a group of several paintings allowed Monet to study and depict his subject in different atmospheres and times of day. The works in each series were exhibited together as a group by Durand-Ruel shortly after their completion. After completing his Thames series, Monet created perhaps his most famous body of work, the water lilies series.³⁰ In Theodore Duret's book *Manet and the French Impressionists*, he asserts that Monet's talent for impressionism was fully realized in his series: "since every time he painted from nature his real motive was impression, the fugitive aspect, he gradually came to repeat the same subject several times, without changing his point of view, and yet every time producing an entirely different picture."³¹ Previously, Monet had followed in the artistic tradition of landscape painting and depicted a variety of different scenes, but in his series work, he was able to fully focus on capturing the pure impression of a scene through several compositions of one subject.

Although this method of work showcased Monet's talents, it still presented a challenge for him, potentially more so than traditional landscape painting. He worked harder than he had before on his painting but was producing fewer works. Duret writes, "I have heard Monet say that the labour of painting Rouen Cathedral under the varied effects of light demanded such intense application of mind that he became utterly exhausted."³² Capturing the scene as it appears strictly in terms of its atmospheric elements presents a difficult task, but as Charles

³⁰ Grace Seiberling, *Monet's Series* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1981), 4-6, 86, 112, 135.

³¹ Théodore Duret and John Ernest Crawford Flitch, *Manet and the French impressionists: Pissarro--Claude Monet--Sisley--Renoir--Berthe Morisot--Cézanne--Guillaumin*, (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 143.

³² Ibid., 144.

Caffin reviewed Monet's Rouen Cathedral paintings in 1918, he characterized the series as describing a "higher impressionism" that captures the meaning behind the style. He writes that the series "reveals a vivid rendering...of their influence upon the spirit when they are wrapped in the infinite diversities of that impalpable, immaterial, universal medium which we call light."³³ Caffin elevates Monet's series beyond the physical act of painting, and while he is reviewing in New York and not London, his sentiments reveal the ideas that were circulating at the time that Monet was working on his Thames series.

After experimenting with series work in France, Monet returned to London in 1899 and began work on his Thames series. He stayed at the fashionable Savoy Hotel with his wife Alice and her daughter Suzanne on the sixth floor in a room facing the Thames. His visits from 1899-1901 each lasted three months, and he always resided at the Savoy.³⁴ Monet often worked in his room, but he traversed the city as a tourist and took part in its cultural activities. He visited the Tower of London at least once and attended the funeral procession of Queen Victoria in 1901, calling it "a unique spectacle."³⁵ He was viewed as something of a celebrity in London as a result of the growing fame of his art. He was invited to many aristocratic dinner parties where the other guests all spoke French on his behalf, and the concierge from the Savoy always met him at the railroad station upon his arrival.³⁶ From his visits spanning three years, Monet was familiar with both the cityscape and culture of London.

The three series that Monet created of the Thames are titled *Waterloo Bridge*, *Bridge at Charing Cross*, and *Houses of Parliament*. These are three landmarks that are iconic to London,

³³ Charles H. Caffin. *How to Study Pictures by means of a series of comparisons of paintings and painters from Cimabue to Monet*, (New York, The Century Co., 1918), 462.

³⁴ Tucker, *Monet in the 90's*, 242.

³⁵ Ibid., 246.

³⁶ Ibid., 247.

and along with depicting the River Thames in the works, Monet created a group of works that honors British culture by instilling its places of pride with such artistry.³⁷ The British reception of French Impressionism was at first hostile, but in Monet's later Thames series, the two cultures appear together harmoniously. Monet works in the modern style of Impressionism to depict landmarks that serve as symbols for the stability and prosperity of British society, but he gives these places a sense of beauty that elevate them above the hustle and bustle of business and industry traditional in British culture. J.A.M. Whistler, another great painter of the Thames, expresses in words the same emotion surrounding the river Monet shows in his paintings. Whistler describes the artist's connection to the Thames in his famous 1885 Ten O'Clock lecture:

and when the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanile, and the warehouses are palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairy-land is before us – then the wayfarer hastens home; the working man and the cultured one, the wise man and the one of pleasure, cease to understand, as they have ceased to see, and Nature, who for once, has sung in tune, sings her exquisite song to the Artist alone, her son and her master – her son in that he loves her, her master in that he knows her.³⁸

This imagery describes the sentiment that Monet is expressing in his Thames series – that there is artistry in the river that is more often viewed as an avenue of industry. He became captivated by the vision of a scene and sought to capture its beauty rather than emphasizing its economic value.

³⁷ Charles Louis Borgmeyer, "The Master Impressionists," *Fine Arts Journal* 27, no. 6 (December 1912): 401-402.

³⁸ James McNeill Whistler, etc. *"Ten O'clock": A Lecture*. (Maine: Mosher Press, 1920), 13-14.

Throughout the three series of the Thames, the artists leaves clear detailing behind as he moves toward abstraction. Monet also uses shades of green, purple, blue, orange, and red in his series works rather than more traditional color choices for river scenes. The changes in composition and color that characterize the three Thames series and separate Monet's early work of the Thames from his later paintings is clearly seen in a comparison between his 1871 *The Thames River and the Houses of Parliament* and *The Houses of Parliament, Seagulls* from 1903 (Figures 3, 7). In 1871, as discussed in the previous chapter, Monet focused on architectural and structural details of the bridge and buildings. In the 1903 composition, Monet removed the bridge from the scene to focus more tightly on Parliament and primarily strove to capture the effects of fog on the water. A flock of seagulls is placed in the foreground, and a small rowboat handled by two figures is depicted closer to Parliament. The lack of activity in this painting contrasts with the industrial scene that Monet creates in his 1871 work. The 1903 composition is blurry without a clear distinction of the horizon line, and the outline of Parliament is sketched rather than clearly delineated. The colors are less traditional than the browns and greys used in his 1871 painting of the Thames; Monet uses green, light blue, and purple in this work. These details show Monet's dedication to capturing the pure atmospheric elements and impression of a scene that he was revisiting.

The changes of composition and color are seen specifically in *The Houses of Parliament, Seagulls*, but the Charing Cross Bridge series illustrates the significance of fog in Monet's work. Charing Cross Bridge was a railway bridge constructed in 1863 with three tracks and a footbridge. The heavy rail traffic and increased industry in London led to more pollution than the city had ever experienced. The fog that was so dense and peculiarly colored from the pollution was unique to nineteenth-century London and features prominently in Monet's paintings,

especially the series of Charing Cross Bridge, whose railways contributed to this heavy smog.³⁹

In the 1903 painting *Charing Cross Bridge, Fog on the Thames*, the fog is so dense that the bridge can barely be discerned, and the setting sun has an eerie green glow surrounding it, presumably a result of the pollution over the bridge (Figure 8). This painting illustrates the prominence of fog in Monet's London works, a way of indicating an industrial city without depicting any actual industrial activity.

In 2005, the Brooklyn Museum held an exhibition entitled "Monet's London: Artists' Reflections on the Thames, 1859-1914." The museum gathered works that depicted the Thames during the period in different ways. Many of the British artists depicted the Thames as an industrial, commercial avenue for London filled with barges and passenger ships, while other works shown emphasized the construction of new bridges and the changing landscape of the city. In Monet's series, however, this commercial activity is glossed over. Even when compared with Pissarro's depictions of the river, Monet emphasizes the fog and light over the water. One reviewer writes, "Pissarro's boats are peopled with hordes of passengers, while Monet's boats are mere vehicles for the delivery of smoke. Pissarro's London air is powdery and light...Monet's air is thick and soupy with dense fog, and his bridge something that casts reflections into the water, a surface for the play of light and shadow."⁴⁰ This observation paired with the Whistler quote above shows that Monet was looking beyond the physical structures before him and was striving to paint the atmospheric combination of light, water, and weather. The Thames series is neither leisure nor work; it is focused on depicting the impression of the scene. In a review for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's publication, *Brush and Pencil*,

³⁹ Grace Seiberling, *Monet in London* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1988), 49-52.

⁴⁰ Meredith Davis, "Review of 'Monet's London: Artists' Reflections on the Thames, 1859-1914,'" *CAA Reviews*: (January 23, 2006).

Desmond FitzGerald writes that Monet was “ever striving after those illusive, misty phantoms which pursue each other with relentless haste out of the half lights and vapors of the river.”⁴¹ Once again, a critic is praising Monet for reaching a mystical, almost spiritual level in his series works.

Monet’s focus on series painting was supported and advertised by his longtime dealer Paul Durand-Ruel. The paintings were met with critical approval and popularity in Paris where a show featuring Monet’s Thames series at the Galerie Durand-Ruel in Paris was held from May 9 to June 4, 1905. The popularity of the Paris show prompted Monet to plan for a similar exhibit of the works to be held in London the following year. When he learned of Durand-Ruel’s upcoming exhibit at the Grafton Galleries of Impressionist works, Monet requested that these London works be withheld in anticipation of his later solo exhibit later that year.⁴² He wanted his solo show to be limited to his Thames series works, and Monet began to look into potential gallery space to rent. Monet’s London show never materialized, however, as he came to feel that his later Thames works were not yet ready for exhibition.⁴³

Still in anticipation of his solo exhibition, none of Monet’s works set in London were shown at the 1905 Grafton Galleries exhibition. Not only did he withhold his Thames series from the show, but he cautioned Durand-Ruel against a retrospective of Impressionist artists. In a letter to the dealer, Monet writes, “Staging an exhibition by several painters would, in my opinion, be unwise to start with...those that I have seen in London have done more harm than good, and, because of the number and quantity of exhibiting artists, have baffled the public that

⁴¹ Desmond FitzGerald, “Claude Monet: Master of Impressionism,” *Brush and Pencil* 15, no. 3 (1905): 186-187.

⁴² Sylvie Patry, ed. *Discovering the Impressionists*, 186-189

⁴³ Tucker, *Monet in the '90s*, 253.

knows very little about us.”⁴⁴ Monet’s predictions were proved wrong, however, as the exposure that the 1905 Grafton Galleries exhibit garnered changed the way that modern French art was received by the British public.

After holding several smaller exhibitions of Impressionist works in London, the massive show featuring only members of the Impressionist group, along with Manet and Boudin, caught the public’s attention and attracted extensive media coverage. A total of 315 paintings were displayed at the Grafton Galleries in the center of London, making this the largest Impressionist exhibition up to that time.⁴⁵ The notice in *The Athenaeum* announcing the show called it “an exhibition of unusual magnitude and completeness.” Not only was this show significant for Impressionism, it would also help shape the future reception of the movement in England. As *The Athenaeum* put it, “the all-important question for English visitors to the show is, ‘What will be the verdict of the future upon Impressionist painting? ... Is it an art comparable in every way to the art of the great old masters? Or is it a momentary freak of fashion?’”⁴⁶ These questions received mixed responses. Attendance numbers were impressive, but sales did not meet expectations, and overall critical reception remained largely negative.

The purpose of the exhibit was to stage a retrospective of the movement; it was used to educate the public about Impressionism, more so than for commercial purposes. The show began in the Octagon Room with works by Boudin that served as a prologue to Impressionism. Some of his works were *Fisherwomen on the Seashore*, *Fisherwomen Gathering Sea-Eels*, *A Family at the Seaside*, *The Beach*, *The Port of Dordrecht*, *Environs of Bordeaux*, and *The Port at*

⁴⁴ Letter from Monet to Durand-Ruel, August 12th, 1904; cited in Lionello Venturi, *Les archives de l'impressionisme*, (New York: Durand-Ruel editors, 1939), 396.

⁴⁵ Patry, ed. *Discovering the Impressionists*, 186-189.

⁴⁶ “French Impressionists at the Grafton Gallery,” *The Athenaeum*, no. 4032 (February 4, 1905), 153.

Trouville.⁴⁷ Other works by Impressionists were on display in the Octagon Room as well, including Renoir's *Two Sisters*, Pissarro's *Pont Boieldieu, Rouen, Rainy Weather*, and a few Monets. The Music Room displayed a large number of Manet's works including *Eva Gonzales* and *Bar at the Folies-Bergere* (Figure 9). The Long Gallery featured Renoir, with as its centerpiece the *Luncheon of the Boating Party*. Renoir's *Dancer* and *Girl with Cat* were also on display. The End Gallery displayed works by Pissarro on one side and works by Sisley opposite. The last room of the Gallery, and the end of the exhibit, showed works by Degas, including *Miss La La* and his works featuring women ironing, ballet dancers, and horse-racing scenes (Figure 10).⁴⁸ Works by Morisot in the show included *Before the Looking-Glass*, *In the Morning*, *Before the Mirror*, *Butterfly Catching*, *The Pier*, and *The Quay*, and works by Cezanne on display included *Dessert* and *In the Woods*. While Monet refused to contribute his London series work to the exhibit, part of his series of the haystacks was on view at the Gallery.⁴⁹

Some continued to ridicule Impressionism, yet the staggering attendance at the show reveals a greater acceptance of the movement among the British public. Over 11,000 people attended the show, including Queen Victoria's daughter Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, and the politician Joseph Chamberlain. Despite the monumental size of the rooms at the Gallery, capacity was capped at 500 visitors, but on March 5th, 2,927 people attended. The sales, however, did not reflect the number of visitors: only thirteen works were sold. As many came from Durand-Ruel's private collection and were not for sale, this number does not fully convey the importance of the exposure that the artists and the overall movement received.⁵⁰ A desire for

⁴⁷ Grafton Galleries (London, England), *A Selection from the Pictures by Boudin, Cézanne, Degas, Manet, Monet, Morisot, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley*, (New York: Durand-Ruel and Sons, 1905), 1-5.

⁴⁸ Patry, ed. *Discovering the Impressionists*, 186.

⁴⁹ Grafton Galleries (London, England). *A Selection from the Pictures*, index.

⁵⁰ Patry, ed. *Discovering the Impressionists*, 189, 193.

similar shows and museum exhibitions would be felt among the progressive art community and would manifest itself in committees and funds set up to add Impressionist works to the British national collection.

Chapter Three: British Museums and Collectors

After the Grafton Galleries show in 1905 and the commercial success of Monet's London series from 1900-1903, Impressionism grew more visible in British culture. While the movement was more accepted by the public, several factors prevented it from becoming a permanent fixture in the British art world. Reluctance by museum directors and art critics to accept Impressionist works into British national collections was clearly felt during the early 1900s. The board of the National Gallery, responsible for acquiring new works for the museum, tended to adhere to tradition and viewed the movement as too new and too French to be exhibited in British museums. Several members of the board actively blocked efforts by a few key members in the art community to convince the museum to collect Impressionist works, but these campaigns ultimately bore fruit.

Advocates for Impressionism were faced with the challenge of finding a place suitable to exhibit these works. The controversy centered on exhibiting modern French paintings in British museums, which had not been done before this period. The National Gallery Board members argued for a sense of nationalism and tradition for the museums and were reluctant to accept a movement that was untested by time and had originated in France. Impressionism had made a definite break with tradition and was still regarded with hesitancy by the art community in England. J. Page Croft wrote for *The Photographic Times* in 1905, "[T]his country [England] takes far less kindly to impressionism than France, Germany, and the United States, who have realized this highest form of individual art, and are fast outstripping this country in the appreciation and cultivation of this form of pictorial expression."⁵¹ Even until the early

⁵¹ J. Page Croft, "A Word for Impressionism," *The Photographic Times* 37, no. 6 (June 1905): 271.

1920s, long after Impressionism had given way to Post-Impressionism, this was the view of the National Gallery Board members, encapsulating their continued disdain for Impressionism.

Not only did the Board members not favor collecting modern French art, but it was against policy to do so. Until 1917 the National Gallery could not collect works by living artists and the National Gallery, Millbank (later renamed the Tate Gallery) could only collect works by British artists.⁵² Adding Impressionist works to national collections was gaining attention in the rest of Europe as Gustave Caillebotte bequeathed his large collection of Impressionist works to the Musée du Luxembourg. Following his death in 1894, the Luxembourg organized the Caillebotte bequest in 1898 and staged a prominent exhibition at the museum. A review in *The Artist*, a monthly periodical published by the Frick Collection in New York, praised the Luxembourg for its acceptance of Impressionism. The writer states that this momentous exhibit signaled that Impressionism, which had so long struggled against critics, had been officially recognized. Manet, Renoir, Monet, Morisot, Pissarro, Cézanne, and Caillebotte himself all had works exhibited, and the attention given to them by a renowned museum gave a certain legitimacy to the Impressionists and showed that their work could be taken seriously.⁵³ Sir Hugh Lane bequeathed his extensive art collection, including Impressionist works, to the National Gallery in London, but following his death in 1915, the Trustees of the Gallery were less willing to exhibit their newly acquired collection of modern art than the Luxembourg had been with Caillebotte's collection. With prominent Impressionist exhibitions held in museums gaining attention in Europe, British museums were under pressure to loosen their strict policies over collecting modern foreign art.

⁵² John House, *Impressionism for England* (London: Courtauld Institute Galleries, 1994), 9.

⁵³ "The Impressionists at the Luxembourg Museum," *The Artist* no. 21 (April 1898): 202-206.

The first bequest of works including Impressionist artists to a British museum was given by Constantine Ionides in 1900 to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The collection mainly comprised Barbizon School artists, but it did include a work by a contemporary French artist, Edgar Degas' *The Ballet Scene from Meyerbeer's Opera 'Robert Le Diable'* (Figure 11).⁵⁴ This Impressionist work attracted the attention of the critics. One writer for *The Burlington Magazine* noted the value of having such a work in the British museum:

In England, where the later developments of French art still appeal to only a limited audience, it is fortunate that Degas should be represented thus, because here it is still the custom to talk as if the so-called Impressionists were at least imperfectly trained if not also imperfectly gifted. This single picture is enough to show that, in the case of one important master at least, such an idea is an utter mistake. It also has the advantage of being a starting point from which further additions to our national collections can easily be made, so that they may some day be brought up to date without any serious lack of sequence.⁵⁵

This review, written in 1904, acknowledged the changing attitude toward the Impressionists. The writer recognized the hesitations of the public to accept Impressionism, still regarded as a relatively new style, and acknowledged the criticism that portrayed the artists as untrained and their works as unfinished. In refutation of these criticisms, the writer upheld Edgar Degas' *The Ballet Scene from Meyerbeer's Opera 'Robert Le Diable'* as a work that proved the skill and value of Impressionism. The article also emphasized the importance of this work by Degas as a “starting point” for acquiring more Impressionist works by national collections. The collection

⁵⁴ “The Constantine Ionides Collection,” *Victoria and Albert Museum*, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-constantine-ionides-collection/>.

⁵⁵ “The Constantine Ionides Bequest. Article II-Ingres, Delacroix, Daumier, and Degas”. *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 5, no. 8 (September 1904): 529–35.

also contained works by Old Masters and British painters, so the relatively conservative works and the large scale of the bequest made the modern French painting a more permissible acquisition for the museum.

The twentieth century began with a renewed focus on strengthening the national collections, which set the stage for new organizations to be established that were dedicated to acquiring foreign modern art. The Ionides bequest brought attention to the need to add contemporary works to British museums. As great masterpieces coming on the market were being snatched up by foreign collectors at prices much higher than the British museums could afford, rather than let the national collection suffer, a group of art patrons founded the National Art Collections Fund in 1903. While the group did not collect French Impressionist works, they did show a dedication to modern works with the 1905 acquisition of Whistler's *Nocturne in Blue and Gold: Old Battersea Bridge* that was gifted to the Tate Gallery (Figure 12).⁵⁶ This group grew steadily in membership and was able to purchase many works for the British museums.

One such art enthusiast who was concerned with acquiring French Impressionist works for the British national collection was Frank Rutter, a writer for the *Sunday Times*. In his article "Round the Galleries" he offered praise for the 1905 Grafton Galleries' Impressionist exhibition. He urged his readers to ignore the past criticism that stated that Impressionist works were undeveloped and unsophisticated and advocated for the acquisition of such works by British museums. He wrote, "Even those who are still hostile to the theory and practice of impressionist painting must admit that the absence of any work by Manet or Monet leaves a serious gap in our records of the history of painting...I venture to appeal to the generosity of art-patrons of all shades of opinion to give such assistance as they can towards securing for the nation at least one

⁵⁶ Eleanor Tollfree, "Saved! 100 Years of the National Art Collection Fund," *The Art Fund* 11, no. 3 (June 2004): 22-23.

work by Manet and Monet, and I hope, by Sisley and Camille Pissarro.”⁵⁷ In his column the following week, he proposed a means of raising funds to purchase these works. He advertised a lecture he was giving at the Grafton Galleries with a five shilling admission price and announced the promised support of Claude Phillips, Keeper of the Wallace Collection, and D.S. MacColl, Professor of Art at University College for his proposed fund.⁵⁸ From Rutter’s efforts, the French Impressionist Fund was established. The first work proposed by Rutter to be purchased with the fund was Monet’s *Snow Effect at Vétheuil*, but this piece was rejected by National Gallery Trustees because it was too modern. A more traditional work by Boudin, *The Entrance to Trouville Harbor*, was bought instead.⁵⁹ Rutter was eager to add Impressionist works to the national collection, but the Gallery’s continued coldness toward the new movement prevented the Fund from reaching its goal of broadening the national collection to include Impressionist works.

Another enlightened patron, Sir Hugh Lane wanted to enhance the national collection by loaning his personal collection to the National Gallery, which he offered to do in 1913. The Trustees of the Gallery discussed Lane’s offer at their board meeting on August 5, 1913, and after viewing the pictures, the Trustees decided to accept fifteen out of thirty-nine. To make a more educated decision on these works of modern art, the Trustees brought in John Singer Sargent and D.S. MacColl to view the works and guide them on their value. Before the paintings could be exhibited, Lord Redesdale, a prominent member of the Board who had been abroad at the time of the agreement, learned of the planned gift and wrote a memorandum to the Board expressing his disapproval. In his view, none of the pictures chosen met the standards set by the

⁵⁷ Frank Rutter, “Round the Galleries,” *Sunday Times* (January 22, 1905): 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ John House, *Impressionism for England*, (London: Courtauld Institute Galleries, 1994), 10.

old masterpieces and should never be considered as possible works to be exhibited in the National Gallery. His memo expresses harsh disapproval of the Impressionist style and considers the works unworthy of the National Gallery.

The National Gallery is – and should remain – a great Temple of Art. It should open its doors to what is highest and best: never to the productions of a degraded craze, which, it may be hoped, will be shortlived. I should as soon expect to hear of a Mormon service being conducted in St. Paul’s Cathedral as to see an exhibition of the works of the modern French Art-rebels in the sacred precincts of Trafalgar Square.

Redesdale believed that the best motive Lane could have in offering this collection was to force this new art on the British people and create a taste for it.⁶⁰ Although Redesdale was harsh in his condemnation of Impressionism, his comments illustrate the seriousness with which the art community considered their national collections. To compare the National Gallery to St. Paul’s Cathedral speaks to the respect that the British had for their history and explains the reluctance to accept a movement untested by time. Lane’s attempts to exhibit his collection in the National Gallery in 1913 thus ultimately did not succeed, but after his untimely death during the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the National Gallery took possession of his collection, and the works were finally exhibited in the Lane Room at the Gallery in 1917.⁶¹

The Lane exhibit caught the attention of the public and the media, and many reviews were written in praise of the collection. Roger Fry wrote a lengthy piece in the *Burlington Magazine*, especially praising Renoir’s works including *Les Parapluies* (Figure 13).⁶² In C.J. Holmes’s review for the same publication, he wrote in admiration of Daumier’s *Don Quixote* and

⁶⁰ Lord Redesdale, “Memorandum from Lord Redesdale to the National Gallery Board of Trustees”, February 1914.

⁶¹ Sir Claude Phillips, “National Gallery: ii. – Sir Hugh Lane’s Pictures,” *Daily Telegraph*, 1917.

⁶² Roger Fry, “The Sir Hugh Lane Pictures at the National Gallery,” *Burlington Magazine* 30 no. 166, (January 1917): 147-53.

Degas' *La Plage*. Holmes also commented on the effect that World War One had on the British perception of French art. The war, he wrote, had forced those in England to have a broader outlook on the "peoples and politics of the continent, will have something of the same effect upon our attitude towards continental art."⁶³ These reviews reflected a sense of exasperation that it took so long for these works to be exhibited. The Lane exhibit showed a changing perception of French art and a growing acceptance of, and even demand for, the style.

The most successful attempt to introduce Impressionist works to the British people came through the establishment of the Contemporary Art Society in 1910 by a group of progressive art critics. Notable members included Roger Fry and Samuel Courtauld. To publicly announce the founding of the society and to begin to raise funds, the group held a loan exhibition of living foreign artists at Colnaghi's Gallery in London in June 1924. The exhibition was advertised in *The Times* in a letter to the editor: "The Contemporary Arts Society...has long felt that it would be very desirable to create a fund for the purchase of contemporary foreign work...We venture, therefore, to appeal to the art-loving public through your columns in the hope that so favourable an opportunity will not be missed." Not only was the society concerned with the national collection exhibited in various London museums, but they also made mention of provincial artistic centers and their public galleries.⁶⁴ By supplementing these collections, the society hoped to promote artistic development and education of contemporary art styles throughout England.

With the state's approval for the society inferred from the presence of the Prime Minister at the opening of the show, Roger Fry furthers this idea of educating British artists by asserting that the study of modern foreign art will strengthen the works of British painters and keep the

⁶³ C.J. Holmes, "New Exhibition at the National Gallery," *Burlington Magazine*, (1917): 80-81.

⁶⁴ Members of the Contemporary Art Society, "Modern Art Abroad: Proposed Purchases for the Nation," letter to the editor, *The Times*, May 30, 1924.

British art world current with the dominant European tradition. In the preface to the catalogue for the loan exhibition, he asserts that to be a good British citizen, it is important to be knowledgeable of the world and its traditions. In regards to the exhibit, “To those who believe that each nation should cultivate its own garden and never look over the fence to see how their neighbors do this will be a matter for regret. To those who believe that the interchange of ideas between different nations enriches all it will be a source of satisfaction.” Fry was successful in making this point as reviews of the exhibit were generally positive and encouraging and reflect the popularity of the exhibit.⁶⁵ Art critic Raymond Mortimer wrote in the *New Statesman* that the exhibit included four Picassos (none of them very impressive in his opinion), a dozen Matisse, two Derains, Braque’s *Still Life*, and other works by Rouault, Marie Laurencin, Degonzac, Friesz, Marchand, and Utrillo. He ended his overview of the exhibit by urging his readers to donate to the Contemporary Art Society, “For, indeed, to see such pictures as these quite reconciles one to the present age, and at least while one is in their presence, it is bliss to be alive, and to be young is very heaven.”⁶⁶

With the attention gained through the various organizations dedicated to promoting Impressionism in England, the National Gallery Trustees felt the need to establish a committee of members led by Lord Curzon to investigate the need for a national gallery to exhibit modern foreign art. After the committee’s research, it was proposed to establish a Gallery of Modern Foreign Pictures and Sculpture, for “the formation of such a collection is not merely a duty imposed on us by the wise example of foreign countries, but is also essential to the artistic development of the nation.”⁶⁷ The report continued to reassure the Board that it would not

⁶⁵ Roger Fry, *Loan Exhibition of Modern Foreign Painting*, (1904), catalogue preface.

⁶⁶ Raymond Mortimer, “The French Pictures,” *New Statesman* 23, no. 584 (June 1924): 349.

⁶⁷ National Gallery Board of Trustees, *Report of the National Gallery Committee*, 1914: 24-26.

undertake the purchase of any highly experimental art, but that it cannot be denied that some modern foreign art is reputable and worthy of purchase. Lord Curzon's report included a list of significant artists that met this criteria but were unrepresented in the National Gallery, recommending Degas, Manet, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley; however, Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, and Seurat were still excluded.⁶⁸ Sir Joseph Duveen offered to pay for the Galleries for Modern Foreign Art. *The Times* announced the news of Duveen's gift of the galleries in 1918, stating bluntly, "The news that Mr. Joseph Duveen has generously offered the money to build a national gallery of modern foreign art, and that his offer has been accepted, is good; but it should make us ashamed of ourselves. Such a gallery ought to have been built and stocked long ago, and out of public funds. It is more needed in this country, perhaps, even than a National Gallery of ancient art, certainly more than one of modern English art." The announcement further endorses the new galleries by saying that they will teach British artists about French art, which "is the home of all the most important movements in modern painting" and will, in turn, enhance their own work in England. The article ends with the call for a "brave and judicious" buyer, a role that would soon be filled by Samuel Courtauld.⁶⁹

With the recommendation of the Curzon Report to construct a separate gallery for modern foreign art and the success of the Lane collection, Samuel Courtauld was inspired to donate £50,000 to the Tate Board to acquire works to enlarge the collection of modern foreign art. The Courtauld Gift would be used to purchase works by French artists from the late nineteenth century, paintings that would not be easily acquired by funds coming from the national treasury.⁷⁰ The recommended artists included Manet, Renoir, Degas, Cezanne, Monet,

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ "English and Foreign Art: A National Modern Gallery." *The Times*, July 23, 1918.

⁷⁰ "The Courtauld Gift." *The Times*, February 8, 1924.

Van Gogh and Gauguin. Courtauld, Lord Henry Bentinck, Sir Charles Holmes, Sir Michael Sadler, and Mr. Charles Aitken, director of the Tate, made up the committee to administer the Fund and quickly began to amass Impressionist works.⁷¹

Six major paintings had been bought by the time the Trust was announced: Manet's *La serveuse de bocks* (£10,000), Renoir's *La Première sortie* (£7,500), van Gogh's *A Cornfield, with Cypresses* (£3,300), Degas' *Jeunes spariates s'exerçant à la lutte* (£1,200), and two van Goghs from his brother's widow, Madame van Gogh-Bonger, *Sunflowers* and *The Yellow Chair* (£2000 for the pair). After the initial announcement, the Courtauld Gift purchased Seurat's *Une Baignade, Asnières* from Felix Fénéon (£3560).⁷² Other later notable works include Cézanne's *Self-Portrait* and *Paysage Rocheux*. The committee acquired twenty-three works in total by Manet, Renoir, Van Gogh, Monet, Cezanne, Degas, Pissarro, Seurat, Sisley, Utrillo, Bonnard, and Toulouse-Lautrec.⁷³

An exhibition of all the Courtauld Gift works opened at the Tate in January 1926 before the modern foreign galleries were open. It was the first chance for the media and public to assess the collection's value, and the press was favorable, although Roger Fry, in his article in *Nation and the Athenaeum*, regretted that the Tate had chosen to exhibit these masterpieces in small, dark rooms more suited to developing photographs. Fry uses a sarcastic tone to explain that the Gallery must have done this to discourage other gifts of this kind. He writes, "The fear that every week or two a cheque for £50,000 might arrive by post from some wealthy and patriotic citizen, stirred by emulation, naturally filled them with dread lest the smooth functioning of the Gallery administration might be seriously interfered with. It was no doubt well to discourage from the

⁷¹ Frank Hermann, *The English as Collectors*, (New Castle: John Murray, 1999): 383.

⁷² John House, *Impressionism for England*, (London: Courtauld Institute Galleries, 1994), 14.

⁷³ Frank Hermann, *The English as Collectors*, (New Castle: John Murray, 1999): 383.

outset a habit that might so easily grow to unforeseen proportions.”⁷⁴ He believed it still reflected on the Gallery’s reluctance to accept these new modern works.⁷⁵ Thus, the opening of the Gallery of Modern Foreign Art, where these works could be better exhibited, was eagerly anticipated.

The modern foreign galleries opened a few months after the Courtauld Gift exhibit in June 1926. The exhibit included the existing permanent collection, most of which had been made possible by the Courtauld Gift, along with a loan exhibition of French painting spanning from 1850 to 1925. The gallery included the modern works, as well as the national collection of non-British art beginning in 1800 with works by Ingres, Delacroix and Goya.⁷⁶ Notable works in the permanent collection acquired through the Courtauld Gift include van Gogh’s *Sunflowers*, Cezanne’s *Self Portrait* and *Hillside in Provence*, Manet’s *Corner of a Café-Concert*. These works were moved from the Tate to the National Gallery during the 1950s and 1960s once the works were no longer considered contemporary.⁷⁷ This national collection symbolized the acceptance of Impressionism by the British public and allowed for later collectors and museums to continue to amass and exhibit Impressionist works to expand the British art world.

⁷⁴ Roger Fry, “The Courtauld Gift,” *Nation and Athenaeum* 38 no. 18, (January 1926): 613.

⁷⁵ John House, *Impressionism for England*, (London: Courtauld Institute Galleries, 1994), 16-17.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁷⁷ A full list of works acquired through the Courtauld Gift: van Gogh’s *Sunflowers*, *A Wheatfield with Cypresses*, *Long Grass with Butterflies*, and *Van Gogh’s Chair*; Seurat’s *Bathers at Asnières*; Degas’ *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando*, *Young Spartans Exercising*, *Portrait of Elena Carafa* and *Ballet Dancers*; Monet’s *The Beach at Trouville*; Manet’s *Corner of a Café-Concert*; Cézanne’s *Self Portrait* and *Hillside in Provence*; Toulouse-Lautrec’s *Woman seated in a Garden*; Renoir’s *At the Theater (La Première Sortie)*; Sisley’s *The Watering Place at Marly-le-Roi*; and Pissarro’s *The Boulevard Montmartre at Night*. Accessed through “Samuel Courtauld,” *National Gallery*, <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/history/collectors-and-benefactors/samuel-courtauld>.

Conclusion: Impressionism in England Today

In the mid-nineteenth century, the growing art market and the influence of notable art dealers, such as Paul Durand-Ruel, brought Impressionism to England. Commercial galleries gave these dealers the avenue and opportunity through which the innovative style could be viewed and works could be bought. With the structure in place to sell these works, British supporters of the movement demanded that the national collections reflect the changing art world. They wanted to keep London relevant as an international city and to educate British artists on the art styles that had gained global influence.

As Impressionism was changing British culture and collections, the city of London served as inspiration for many French Impressionists. Notable Impressionists, such as Monet, Pissarro, and Sisley, made works depicting London scenes and British landscapes. Oftentimes, the break from Paris while in London allowed the artists to develop their skills and experiment with new techniques. The Thames series by Monet is a testament to this. A characteristic style of Monet is his depiction of atmospheric elements. His technique for depicting water, light, fog, and reflections became part of his signature style, and he experimented with these techniques while painting the Thames. Detailed attention to the elements rather than the architecture or landscape is seen in his series of the Thames. This compositional technique is seen in his first works of the Thames in 1870, but his later depictions of the Thames from his 1900-03 series clearly emphasize the atmospheric elements over the cityscape. From his many visits to London over the years, Monet was able to experiment with this skill and perfect his depiction of water and reflections in his series of water-lilies.

In 1999, the Royal Academy of the Arts in London held an exhibition of Monet's works, "Monet in the Twentieth Century," that was a record-breaking success. The exhibition attracted

813,000 visitors over its twelve-week run. With tickets at \$15 each, the impressive popularity of this show erased the Royal Academy's \$5 million deficit accumulated over several unsuccessful years. The experimental exhibitions that had been held in previous years featured contemporary artists who had not yet been accepted into mainstream culture.⁷⁸ Once Monet would have been considered a new, daring artist, but his success has made possible the support and promotion of the "new" modern, foreign artists.

When Monet visited London in 1870-71 on his first visit to the city, he submitted two works to the Academy that were rejected. Because of the increasing popularity of Monet and his water-lilies, an institution that had originally rejected Monet was now indebted to the artist for rescuing its finances. This exhibition and its need to boost revenue is a clear indication that Impressionism has been accepted, and now even loved, among the British public and around the world. The movement has become entrenched in popular culture, no longer creating the scandal and ridicule that it originally faced from earlier Londoners. Monet and the other Impressionists have moved from experimental artists to beloved, accepted emblems of the modern art world.

⁷⁸ Alan Riding, "The Royal Academy Puts on a New, Fresher Face," *New York Times*, April 21, 1999.

FIGURES



Figure 1: Camille Pissarro, *Foxhill, Upper Norwood*, 1870, National Gallery, London, oil on canvas



Figure 2: Alfred Sisley, *View of the Thames, Charing Cross Bridge*, 1874, National Gallery, London, oil on canvas



Figure 3: Claude Monet, *The Thames Below Westminster*, 1870, National Gallery, London, oil on canvas

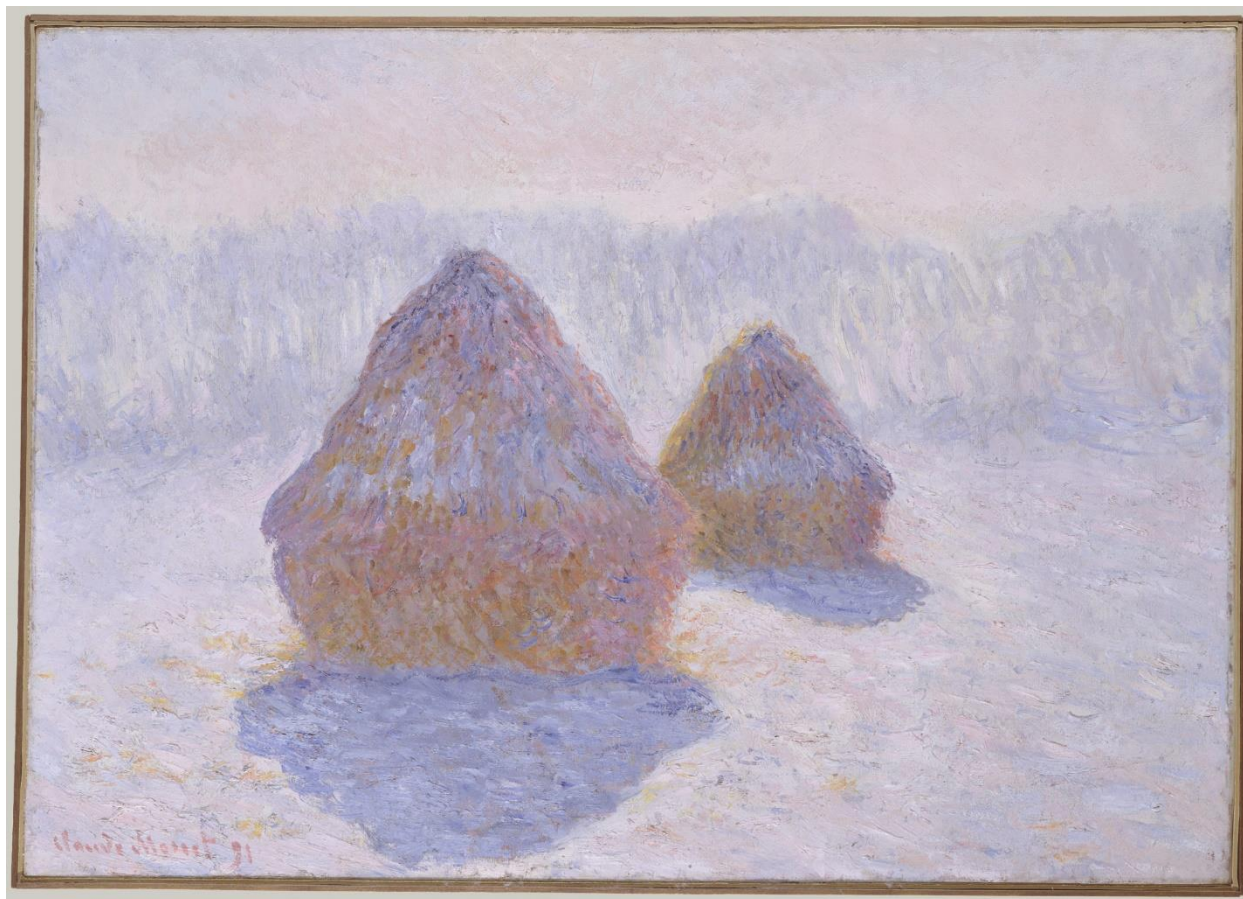


Image 4: Claude Monet, *Haystacks (Effect of Snow and Sun)*, 1891, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, oil on canvas

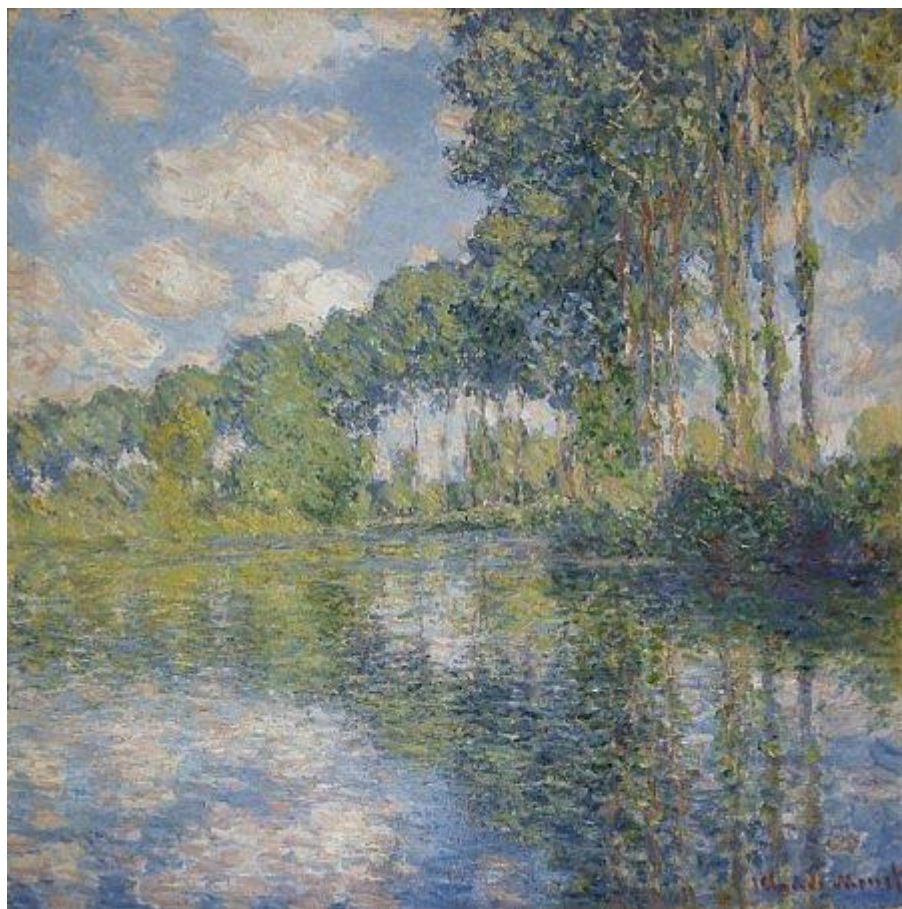


Figure 5: Claude Monet, *Poplars on the Epte*, 1891, National Gallery, Scotland, oil on canvas



Figure 6: Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral: The Portal (Sunlight)*, 1891, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, oil on canvas



Figure 7: Claude Monet, *The Houses of Parliament, Seagulls*, 1903, Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, oil on canvas

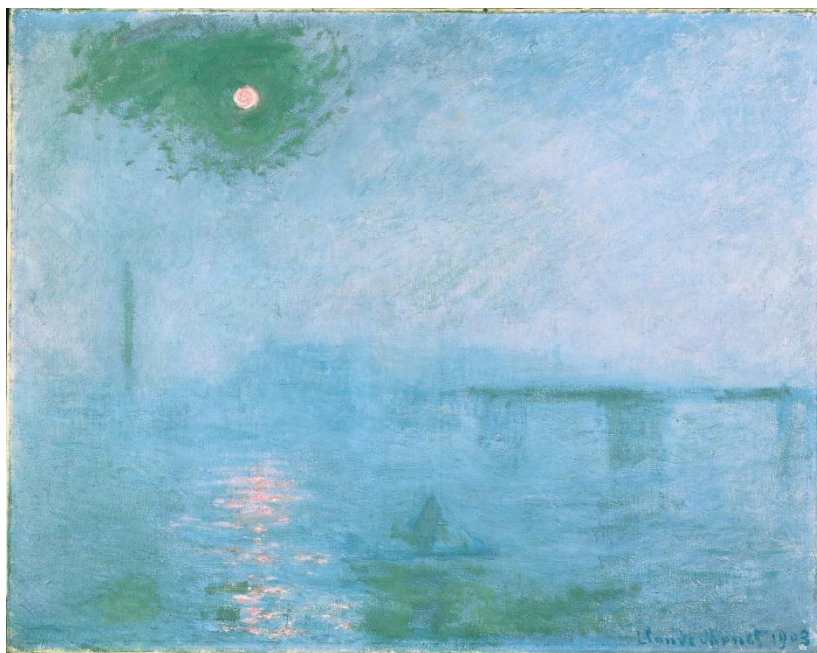


Figure 8: Claude Monet, *Charing Cross Bridge: Fog on the Thames*, 1903, Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge, oil on canvas



Figure 9: Edouard Manet, *Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882, The Courtauld Gallery, London, oil on canvas

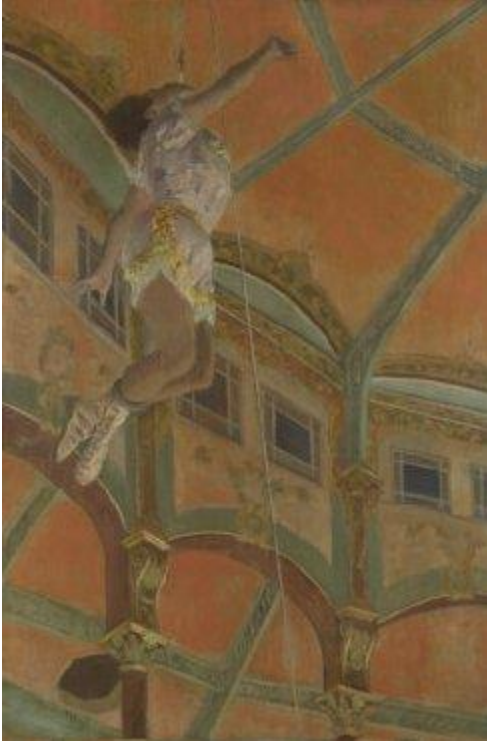


Figure 10: Edgar Degas, *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando*, 1879, National Gallery, London, oil on canvas



Figure 11: Edgar Degas, *The Ballet Scene from Meyerbeer's Opera 'Robert Le Diable'*, 1876, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, oil on canvas



Figure 12: James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Blue and Gold: Old Battersea Bridge*, 1872-5, Tate Museum, London, oil on canvas



Figure 13: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Les Parapluis*, 1881-6, National Gallery, London, oil on canvas

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