

MUSÉE MARMOTTAN MONET

BERTHE MORISOT AND THE ART OF THE 18TH CENTURY

Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard, Perronneau

18 October 2023 – 3 March 2024

Curators: Marianne Mathieu and Dominique d'Arnoult, Art Historians.

With the participation of Claire Gooden, Head of Conservation at the Musée Marmottan Monet.

From 18 October 2023 to 3 March 2024, the Musée Marmottan Monet will present a very special exhibition, entitled *Berthe Morisot and the Art of the 18th Century*. The exhibition is curated by art historians Marianne Mathieu and Dominique d'Arnoult, with the participation of Claire Gooden, Head of Conservation at the Musée Marmottan Monet.

Sixty-five art works from French and international museums, as well as private collections are brought together here for the first time to highlight the links between the work of the first female Impressionist Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) and the art of Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), François Boucher (1703-1770), Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806), and Jean-Baptiste Perronneau (1715-1783).

Based on an analysis of mainly unpublished sources (letters, press clippings, and notebooks belonging to Berthe Morisot and her husband Eugène Manet and their entourage) and an in-depth genealogical study, this exhibition and the corresponding catalogue shed new light on a subject often mentioned by historians yet never having been the focus of dedicated and exhaustive research. While it has been demonstrated that Berthe Morisot is not Fragonard's great-grand-niece and had no family ties to him, the exhibition nevertheless emphasizes the veritable foundations of their artistic affinities, retracing the chronology of their development, as well as their main characteristics.

The exhibition opens with one of Berthe Morisot's most emblematic works, *Au bal* (1875, Musée Marmottan Monet) showing the bust of a Parisian woman in a ball gown, holding an open fan decorated with a gallant scene. Two eighteenth-century silk fans, including the one depicted in this painting, both having belonged to Berthe Morisot, are brought together for the very first time and displayed for the occasion opposite the portrait. The illustration of a certain "French art de vivre", they bear witness to the legacy of the Enlightenment, which was particularly influential in the haute-bourgeoisie milieu to which Berthe Morisot belonged.

The first section explores a lifestyle where eighteenth-century art was still very much present and showcases its little-known aspects. A full-length portrait of the artist's father, the prefect Tiburce Morisot (1848, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Limoges), posing in front of a gallery of paintings, recalls his role in the creation of the two Limoges municipal museums: the Musée des Beaux-Arts featuring works from the previous century, and the Musée Adrien Dubouché. The private mansion decorated in Paris by painter Léon Riesener (1808-1878), grandson of one of the greatest cabinetmakers of the eighteenth century, Jean-Henri Riesener (1734-1806), with which the young Berthe was familiar, also boasted a rich eighteenth-century style decor. An ensemble of canvases painted by Rosalie Riesener makes it possible to reconstruct this interior, decorated with stamped furniture, panelling, and tapestries after François Boucher. It was in this context that Berthe Morisot posed for the monumental portrait dedicated to her by Adèle d'Affry, the Duchess Castiglione Colonna, known by her artist's name, Marcello (1836-1879). Therefore, the cultural resurgence of eighteenth-century painting in France, concurrent with Morisot's early artistic career, along with the organization of temporary exhibitions in the 1860s, and later the entry into the Louvre of a historical ensemble known as the La Caze bequest,

contributed to the development of a certain aesthetic used in her depiction of everyday life, as well as of fashionable society. The fusion of these two elements may be seen in the masterful works executed and signed by Morisot circa 1875-1880: *Jeune femme arrosant un arbuste* (Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts); *Femme en gris debout* (private collection) presented in dialogue with the paintings and sanguine drawings by Watteau and Fragonard.

The next section is dedicated to Morisot's triumphant Impressionism (1879-1885), revolving around a single detail, as in: *Vénus va demander ses armes à Vulcain*, a copy after François Boucher, executed by Morisot at the Louvre with the aim of adorning the living room-studio she had fitted out in the family building that she had built with her husband, on the rue de Villejust (current-day rue Paul Valéry) in Paris. The symbolism here is significant as this was the only work painted by Morisot which hung in her interior and with which she lived (her other paintings were stored). The work in this context takes on all the force of a manifesto. Associated with the grisaille sketch from the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris (as the monumental painting from the Louvre cannot be moved), it is juxtaposed with some of the most significant works from her mature period, including: *Femme à sa toilette* (Chicago, The Art Institute), *Jeune femme en toilette de bal* (Paris, Musée d'Orsay), *Jeune femme au divan* (London, Tate), *Jeune femme en gris étendue* (private collection), and *Le jardin à Bougival* (Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet). Between Boucher's works and Morisot's scenes of daily Parisian life, visitors can find the same appetite for light colours, as well as a certain conception of feminine beauty.

The following section is dedicated to Fragonard, which unfolds around one of his iconic canvases: *La Leçon de musique*, an exception loan from the Musée du Louvre. Several major Impressionist works are exhibited within close proximity, namely the illustrious *Dame au manchon* (Dallas, Dallas Museum of Art) and *Autoportrait de l'artiste* (Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet). Here, the freedom of the craftsmanship, with the visible brushstrokes dominate even more than the pinkish-brown tones. Other paintings by George Romney (1734-1802) (an exceptional loan from the Wallace Collection), Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), and Jean-Baptiste Perronneau broaden and deepen the prism of this comparison.

In 1885, the first exhibition of the Société des Pastellistes français (French Pastel Society) and its selection of eighteenth-century works marked a turning point in Morisot's practice. Profoundly marked by the art of her predecessors, Morisot systematically used pastel in her preparatory works to establish her coloured harmonies, revealing a very strong and visible link with her paintings on canvas. This rapprochement is highlighted through the ensemble of paintings and pastels here: *Fillette à la mandoline* (private collection), *Enfants à la vasque* (Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet), *Fillette au jersey bleu* (Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet), and *La Fable* (private collection). Morisot absorbed the techniques of eighteenth-century painters, their colourful reflections, and penchant for sketching. Her works teach us to better observe and look at eighteenth-century art.

In mourning for her husband, in 1892, the Impressionist Morisot once again turned to Boucher, whom she copied during a visit to the Musée de Tours: *Apollon révélant sa divinité à la bergère Issé*. The paintings by the two artists are reunited here following the acquisition by the Musée Marmottan Monet of Morisot's *Nymphes s'enlaçant*. It is obvious that the latter is far from a dutiful copy but rather a dialogue. Morisot transposes Boucher into her universe by imposing her own distinctive palette and style on the former's work. She deliberately places herself in a line of artistic filiation, which she interprets through the perspective of her own century and personality. Her *Repos* (private collection), the *Jeune fille endormie* by Boucher (Chalais, Musée de l'Abbaye Royale), and the *Portrait de Mme Perronneau endormie* (Paris, private collection) illustrate this point and bring the exhibition to a close.

In partnership with the Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, the exhibition is currently showing there until 10 September 2023.

PRESS VISUALS



1.
Berthe MORISOT
Au bal
1875
Oil on canvas
62 x 52 cm
Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet
© Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris



2.
Anonymous
Fan belonging to Berthe Morisot
18th century
Ivory and gouache on paper
28 x 51.5 cm (open)
Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet
© Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris / Studio
Christian Baraja SLB



3.
Marcello (Adèle d'Affry, Duchess of Castiglione
Colonna, known as)
Portrait de Berthe Morisot
1875
Oil on canvas
165 x 113 cm
Fribourg, Musée d'art et d'histoire
© Primula Bosshard



4.
Jean-Honoré Fragonard
Jeune Femme debout, en pied, vue de dos
c. 1762-1765
Sanguine on laid paper
37 x 25 cm
Orléans, Musée des Beaux-Arts
© François Lauginie



5.
Berthe Morisot
Jeune Femme arrosant un arbuste
1876
Oil on canvas
40.01 x 31.75 cm
Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Collection of Mr. And Mrs. Paul Mellon, 83.40
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6.
Antoine Watteau
Les Plaisirs du bal
c. 1715-1717
Oil on canvas
52.5 x 65.2 cm
London, Dulwich Picture Gallery
© Dulwich Picture Gallery, London



7.
Berthe Morisot
Femme à sa toilette
c. 1875-1880
Oil on canvas
60.3 x 80.4 cm
Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, Stickney
Fund, 1924.127
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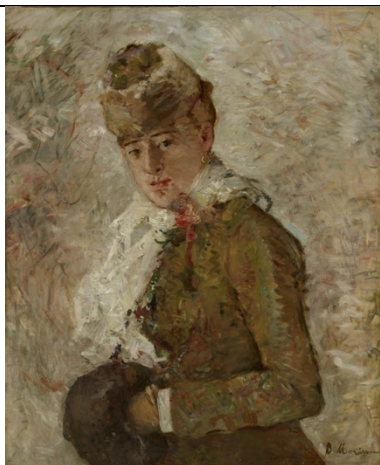
8.
Berthe Morisot
Jeune Femme en gris étendue
1879
Oil on canvas
60 x 73 cm
Private collection
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9.
Berthe Morisot
Autoportrait
1885
Oil on canvas
61 x 50 cm
Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet
© Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris



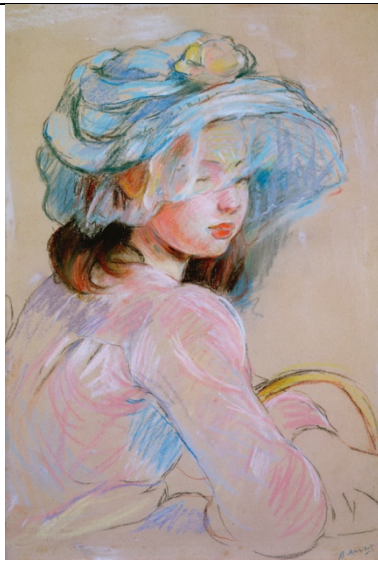
10.
Jean-Honoré Fragonard
La Leçon de musique
1769
Oil on canvas
109 x 121 cm
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Paintings Department,
gift by François Hippolyte Walferdin, 1849
Photo
© RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Franck Raux



11.
Berthe Morisot
Dame au manchon or Hiver
1880
Oil on canvas
74.9 x 61.6 cm
Dallas, Dallas Museum of Art
© All rights reserved



12.
Jean-Baptiste Perronneau
Portrait de Karl Friedrich von Sternbach
1747
Oil on canvas
59.5 x 49.5 cm Leipzig, University of Leipzig, Art
Collection
© University of Leipzig, Kustodie, photo Karin
Kranich



13.
Berthe Morisot
Fillette au panier, 1891
Pastel on paper
58 x 41 cm Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet
© Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris



14.
Berthe Morisot
Enfants à la vasque
1886
Oil on canvas
73 x 92 cm
Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet
© Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris



15.
Berthe Morisot
La Fable
1883
Oil on canvas
65 x 81 cm
Private collection
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16.
Louis Aubert
La Leçon de lecture
1740
Oil on wood
32.3 x 22.7 cm
Amiens, Collection du Musée de Picardie
© Marc Jeanneteau / Musée de Picardie






17.
Berthe Morisot after François Boucher
Apollon révélant sa divinité à la bergère Issé
1892
Oil on canvas
64.2 x 79.4 cm
Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet
© Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris



18.
François Boucher
Apollon révélant sa divinité à la bergère Issé
1750
Oil on canvas
129 x 157 cm
Tours, Musée des Beaux-Arts
© Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours, image D. Couineau



19.
Berthe Morisot
Bergère couchée
1891
Oil on canvas
63 x 114 cm
Paris, Musée Marmottan Monet
© Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris

	<p>20. Jean-Baptiste Perronneau <i>Portrait de Mme Perronneau endormie</i> c. 1766 Pastel on velum 51 x 41 cm Paris, Franck Baulme Fine Arts © Studio Christian Baraja SLB</p>
	<p>21. François Boucher <i>Jeune Fille endormie</i> 18th century Oil on canvas 59.5 x 70 cm Fondation Jacquemart-André - Institut de France, Domaine de Chaalis, Fontaine-Chaalis (MJAC-P 2067) © All rights reserved</p>
	<p>22. Berthe Morisot <i>Repos (Jeune fille endormie)</i> 1892 Oil on canvas 38 x 46 cm Private collection © Thierry Jacob</p>

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