



MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA

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Monet, Renoir, Pissarro and more: 100+ masterpieces of French Impressionism come to Melbourne direct from Boston's Museum of Fine Arts

French Impressionism | NGV International | 4 June – 3 October 2021 | Admission fees apply

1 March 2021: In an international exclusive, the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) will present a major exhibition of more than 100 masterworks of French Impressionism in partnership with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), an institution renowned world-wide for its rich holdings of Impressionist paintings. Opening in June 2021 as part of the Melbourne Winter Masterpieces exhibition series, *French Impressionism* will feature works by **Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro, Mary Cassatt and more** – including 79 that have never-before-been exhibited in Australia. These important loans from the MFA's iconic collection provide the rare opportunity to see a significant grouping of Impressionist masterworks in Australia.

French Impressionism will chart the trajectory of the late-nineteenth century artistic movement, highlighting the key milestones and figures at the centre of this period of experimentation and revolution in modern art. Through an arresting display of paintings and works on paper that showcases the breadth of the movement, the exhibition will evoke the artistic energy and intellectual dynamism of the period by placing emphasis on the thoughts and observations of the artists themselves, revealing the social connections, artistic influences and personal relationships that united the group of radical practitioners at the centre of this new art movement.

Presented thematically across ten sections, the exhibition will open with early works by Monet and his forebears, Eugène Boudin and painters of the Barbizon School, illustrating their profound influence on Monet's use of the then radical method of painting outdoors *en plein air* ('in the open air') to capture changing conditions in nature.

The growth of the movement in subsequent decades is mapped through an exploration of the favoured subjects and ideas of the Impressionists. Moving through an immersive exhibition design, audiences will experience the hallmarks of Impressionism, including distinctive brushwork, unique points of view, arresting use of colour, as well as places dear to the artists, such as Paris, Fontainebleau Forest, Pontoise, Giverny, the Normandy coast and the South of France. Many artists also placed equal weight on recording movement and change in urban and domestic realms. Still life paintings, intimate interiors and street scenes by such artists as Manet, Renoir and Gustave Caillebotte will also feature.

These broader themes are punctuated by focused sections of the exhibition that examine significant moments and characteristics in the practices of a selection of artists, including Renoir and his experimentation with pictorial effects in the 1880s, as well as Pissarro and his role as mentor to a number of other artists.

An exhibition highlight will be a breathtaking display of sixteen canvases by Claude Monet, arranged in an immersive display reminiscent of the distinctive, oval gallery Monet helped design for his famous *Water Lilies* at the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, between 1922 and his death in 1926. Painted over a thirty-year period, these paintings depict many of Monet's most beloved scenes of nature in Argenteuil, the Normandy coast, the Mediterranean coast and his extraordinary garden in Giverny. Together, these paintings demonstrate the full scope of the artist's immeasurable contribution to the Impressionist movement.

MFA Boston's significant collection of French Impressionism benefitted from the collecting efforts of individual Bostonians, some of whom visited the artists in France during the movement's height. Mary



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Cassatt, an American-born artist integral to the French Impressionist movement and whose work is featured in the exhibition, advocated among her fellow Americans for their patronage of her French colleagues, ensuring that many great Impressionist paintings found their way into important American collections.

Danny Pearson MP, Minister for Creative Industries, said: 'This exhibition is set to be another blockbuster for the NGV and a drawcard for Melbourne and Victoria. Not only do exhibitions like *French Impressionism* provide Victorians with the opportunity to see some of the world's biggest names in art in their own backyard, they attract visitors who inject millions into the economy - supporting Victoria's recovery and strengthening our reputation as the creative state.'

Tony Ellwood AM, Director, National Gallery of Victoria said: 'Paintings by the Impressionists are beloved world-wide for the artistic innovation and visual curiosity they represent, as well as for their breath-taking use of colour. This exhibition will give audiences the extraordinary opportunity to study more than 100 masterworks up-close, including Monet's radiant scenes of the French countryside, and to discover the truly revolutionary origins of this important moment in modern art history.'

'We are grateful to our presenting partner, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, whose rich collection of Impressionist paintings has the unique capacity to narrate the history of French Impressionism with nuance, depth and flare. This is the first time the MFA Boston has lent such a large selection of works to Australia, and we are incredibly grateful to them for entrusting the NGV with these extraordinary treasures. A thematic presentation of this calibre and breadth will not be seen in Australia for many years,' said Ellwood.

Matthew Teitelbaum, Ann and Graham Gund Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, said: 'We are delighted to share these iconic works with the people of Australia, so that they may experience this transformational moment in the history of art. *French Impressionism* highlights artists and their relationships, their shared ambition and mutual support—ideals that are reflected in our relationship with the National Gallery of Victoria. We are grateful to their extraordinary team for creating a beautiful showcase for our treasured works. Our mutual endeavor has been one of vision, creativity and collaboration. This exhibition is a joyous celebration of our connections and a reminder that individuals and institutions thrive through reciprocity and generosity.'

French Impressionism, presented by the National Gallery of Victoria in partnership with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, will run 4 June to 3 October 2021 at NGV International, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Further information is available via the [NGV website](#).

About the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Founded on February 4, 1870, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), stands on the historic homelands of the Massachusett people, a site which has long served as a place of meeting and exchange among different nations. The Museum opened its doors to the public on July 4, 1876—the nation's centennial—at its original location in Copley Square. In 1909, the MFA moved to its current home on Huntington Avenue and today, the Museum houses a global collection encompassing nearly 500,000 works of art, from ancient to contemporary. For nearly fifty years, the MFA has shared its deep collections and curatorial expertise with audiences around the world through traveling exhibitions.

The Museum is located at 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts, USA. For more information visit mfa.org or follow the MFA on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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ORGANISING INSTITUTION



Exhibition organised by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in partnership with the National Gallery of Victoria

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