

BERTHE MORISOT

1841 – 1895

A leading Impressionist who helped shape modern art

“I am not a lady-painter. I am a painter.”

— Berthe Ruysot



Portrait of Berthe Morisot by John Singer Sargent, 1884

TIMELINE

- 1841 Born in Bourges, France
- 1857 Begins painting lessons
- 1864 Meets Édouard Manet
- 1868 First exhibits at the Salon
- 1874 Exhibits with the Impressionists
- 1881 Marries Eugène Manet, Édouard Manet's brother
- 1892 Health declines
- 1895 Dies in Paris

THE ARTIST

Berthe Morisot was born into a cultured and artistic family. Her father, Théodore Morisot, was a respected painter, and from an early age she received serious artistic training. She became a close friend and admirer of Édouard Manet, who encouraged her boldness and originality. Morisot was the only woman to exhibit regularly with the Impressionists from the first exhibition in 1874 until 1886. She balanced a successful artistic career with family life, painting many intimate scenes of her daughter Julie.

A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

- Exhibited at the Salon from 1868
- Key member of the Impressionist exhibitions
- Works in major museum collections
- Respected by peers and critics
- Balanced art and family with grace
- International recognition in her lifetime

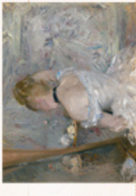
HER ART

Morisot's paintings capture modern life with freshness, spontaneity and light. She had a remarkable ability to suggest atmosphere and movement with loose, confident brushwork and a refined palette. Her subjects—women, children, interiors, gardens and everyday moments—were treated with sensitivity and psychological insight.

LOOKING BEYOND THE MYTH

Because Morisot was a woman who painted “feminine” subjects and lived a relatively quiet life, later critics sometimes underestimated her ambition and influence. In reality, she was an innovative artist who played a vital role in the development of Impressionism. We should remember her because she was a brilliant painter whose work helped redefine the possibilities of modern art.

MASTERPIECES: SIX WORKS THAT SHOW HER GENIUS



Woman at Her Toilette, 1875
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



The Cradle, 1872
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Summer's Day, 1879
National Gallery, London



In the Bois de Boulogne, 1879
The Art Institute of Chicago



Tea at Bougival, 1880



Young Woman with a Fan, 1882
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

WHY HISTORY OVERLOOKED HER

- Art history was written largely by men who favoured male “geniuses”.
- Her delicate style was seen as less “serious” than history painting.
- She was pigeonholed as a “female Impressionist” rather than a major artist in her own right.
- Many works remained in private hands for generations.
- Academic critics were slow to accept the Impressionists.

History did not deliberately erase her. Shifting priorities and gender bias gradually pushed her into the background.

WHY HER WORK MATTERS

- A pioneering Impressionist and key figure in the movement.
- Her work captures the modern world with extraordinary sensitivity.
- She expanded the range of acceptable subjects in art.
- She proved women could be innovative, professional artists.
- Her legacy continues to inspire artists today.



DID YOU KNOW?

Morisot was the only woman to exhibit regularly with the Impressionists from their very first exhibition in 1874.

AT A GLANCE

- Nationality: French
- Movement: Impressionism
- Specialty: Painting modern life
- Patrons: Private collectors and supporters
- Reputation: Recognised in her lifetime; key member of Impressionism

HER CONTEMPORARIES

- Édouard Manet 1832–1883
- Claude Monet 1840–1926
- Pierre-Auguste Renoir 1841–1919
- Camille Pissarro 1830–1903
- Mary Cassatt 1844–1926

Morisot was not a follower—she was a creative equal who contributed uniquely to Impressionism.

WHERE TO SEE HER WORK

- Musée d'Orsay, Paris
- National Gallery, London
- Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- The Art Institute of Chicago
- Private collections worldwide

CONTEMPORARIES FOR CONTEXT

- Édouard Manet 1832–1883
- Claude Monet 1840–1926
- Pierre-Auguste Renoir 1841–1919
- Camille Pissarro 1830–1903
- Mary Cassatt 1844–1926

Morisot stood alongside the greatest artists of her generation and helped shape the future of modern art.

“When I am painting, I am doing what I want. I love it as much as any man.”

— BERTHE MORISOT