

Alfred Sisley (1839-1899): Impressionist Master

Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut

January 21–May 21



Alfred Sisley (French, 1839-1899), *The Flood at Port Marly*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 50 x 61 cm
Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection on loan at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid (CTB.1974.25)
© Colección Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza on loan at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza

GREENWICH, CT, January 2, 2017 – The Bruce Museum and the Hôtel de Caumont Centre d'Art in Aix-en-Provence, France, are mounting a major monographic exhibition of the art of the French Impressionist Alfred Sisley (1839-1899). The first retrospective in more than 20 years of this purest of all the major Impressionists, *Alfred Sisley (1839-1899): Impressionist Master* spotlights about 50 of Sisley's paintings, which come from private collections and major museums in Europe and North America. The Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut, will premiere the exhibition and is the only venue in the United States. The show will then travel to France, where it will be on exhibit from June through October 2017.

Born in Paris in 1839 to well-to-do British parents, Alfred Sisley at first intended to pursue a career in commerce and spent two years in London from 1857 - 1859. During this time, he visited museums, studying both the Old Masters and the great British landscape painters John Constable and J.M.W. Turner. On his return to Paris, he was determined to become a landscape painter and enrolled in Charles Gleyre's studio, where he met the future Impressionists Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Frédéric Bazille. Initially Sisley worked in the naturalistic landscape tradition of the Barbizon School but increasingly adopted a proto-Impressionistic style, recording specific locations in a sequence of visual records of different times of the day, weather conditions and seasons. In so doing he charted comprehensively and from multiple points of view the landscapes of his residences in the villages along the Seine west of Paris and beyond the Forest of Fontainebleau at Veneux-Nadon and Moret-sur-Loing.

Sisley was first and foremost a painter of light. He knew how to imbue all of his paintings with it.

One could say that light floods his landscapes, deliciously bathing even the most modest of details. - Anonymous, "Echo de Paris," *Le Gaulois* 1899

While his landscapes are generally modest in scale and tonally relatively restrained, the magic with which he was able to capture the effects of the light dancing on water, the brilliance of winter sun on snow and hoar frost, the movement of the wind in trees, the exploration of the depth of a rural scene, and the vastness of the skies create compelling works akin to poetry. They demand close, quiet contemplation and their re-evaluation is well overdue.

His very delicate, lively sensibility was at ease before all the glories of nature... Sisley understood lovely light, the transparency of the envelope of air, the mobility and changeability of reflections, the speed of movement. – Octave Mirbeau, 1892

Curators and sponsors

The exhibition *Alfred Sisley (1839-1899): Impressionist Master* is organized by the Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut and Culturespaces. The show is curated by MaryAnne Stevens, independent art historian

and curator of the 1992/3 and 2002/3 retrospective exhibitions on the artist. It is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by Editions Hazan. Contributors to this volume, Richard Shone, who wrote a book on the painter, and Kathleen Adler, a 19th-century French specialist, bring new insights that ensure the publication will be an indispensable reference on the artist and his oeuvre.

At the Bruce Museum, *Alfred Sisley (1839-1899): Impressionist Master* is sponsored by The Charles M. and Deborah G. Royce Exhibition Fund; Florence Gould Foundation; David T. Langrock Foundation; The Malcolm Hewitt Wiener Foundation; First Republic; Guardian Life Insurance Company of America; Robert Lehman Foundation; State of Connecticut; a Committee of Honor chaired by Gale and Bob Lawrence, Pam and Bill Lawrence, Kathleen L. Metinko and Jan Rogers Kniffen, Virginia and Juan Meyer, Leah and Bob Rukeyser; and Honorary Chair Mrs. Bénédicte de Montlaur, Cultural Counselor of the French Embassy in the United States.

Background on the Second Venue, Hotel de Caumont:

Designated a historical monument in France and owned by Culturespaces, the Hôtel de Caumont is one of the most beautiful private mansions dating from the 18th century in Aix-en-Provence. The mansion was recently restored and has been home to an art and cultural center since May 2015.

Sample Lenders:

Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, Ohio
The Higgins Art Gallery & Museum, Bedford, MA
Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas
Kunstmuseum Winterthur, [Winterthur](#), Switzerland
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
Musée Calvet d'Avignon, Avignon, France
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.,
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA
The Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky
Tate, London
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT

Programs Related to the exhibition: *Alfred Sisley (1839-1899): Impressionist Master*

In addition to the Bruce Museum's regularly scheduled adult tours, school programs, and hands-on in-gallery family activities, special public programming to complement the exhibition in Connecticut will include a graduate student symposium, the only one of its kind in the region, featuring PhD students from leading art history programs who will present their original research on the multifaceted ways in which artists frame nature in their work. The show will also be a focus for visitors of special groups including the Museum's Lifetime of Looking program for guests with memory loss, and our community partner program through Abilis for visitors with developmental disabilities.

Evening Art Lectures

January 25, 6:00-8:00 PM.

Reflections on Monet's Water Lilies, by Dr. Paul Hayes Tucker, professor of art at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. He is the author of *Claude Monet: Life and Art*, *Monet at Argenteuil*, *Monet in the 90s*, and *Monet in the Twentieth Century*. This lecture is offered in conjunction with the Bruce Museum's exhibition, *Alfred Sisley (1839-1899): Impressionist Master*. Advance Registration Suggested. Admission: Free for Bruce members, \$10 for non-members. At the door: \$10 Bruce members, \$20 non-members.

- Claude Monet's most famous paintings arguably are the nearly 200 he executed of his water lily garden in Giverny from approximately 1900 until his death in 1926. This lecture will examine the intricacies of these remarkable works and their many levels of meaning.

February 2, 6:00-8:00 PM.

John Singer Sargent and Landscape Painting, by Dr. Erica E. Hirshler, Croll Senior Curator of American Paintings, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. This lecture is offered in conjunction with the Bruce Museum's exhibition *Alfred Sisley (1839-1899): Impressionist Master*. Advance registration required. Admission: Free for Bruce members, \$10 for non-members. At the door: \$10 Bruce members, \$20 non-members.

Dr. Erica Hirshler will explore Sargent's fascination with landscape painting, from his earliest sketches of the Alps to his engagement with Impressionism in the mid-1880s and his glorious abstracted mountain imagery of the twentieth century.

Monday Morning Lecture Series

Monday, February 6, 10:00 - 11:00 AM.

Dr. Susan Strauber, Professor of Art History at Grinnell College, will give a survey lecture on Impressionism. Free and open to the public.

Monday, February 13, 10:00 - 11:00 AM.

Alison Hokanson (Assistant Curator, Metropolitan Museum of Art) will speak about the works by Sisley in the Met. Free and open to the public.

Monday, February 27, 10:00 - 11:00 AM.

Laura Dickey Corey (PhD candidate at the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU) will speak about Mary Cassatt's continuing ties to the US, in her art, life, and art advising, even while taking up permanent residence in France. Free and open to the public.

Monday, March 6, 10:00 - 11:00 AM.

Heidi Hirschl, Curatorial Assistant, MoMA, will speak about her work on the recent exhibition *Edgar Degas: A Strange New Beauty*, Degas's engagement in printmaking and Impressionist prints generally. Free and open to the public.

Graduate Student Symposium and Young Scholar Day

March 5, 1:00 - 4:00 PM. "Framing Nature"

Offered in conjunction with *Alfred Sisley (1839-1899): Impressionist Master*, MA/PhD students will present interdisciplinary papers that engage the multifaceted ways that artists and architects frame nature in their work. Advance registration suggested. Admission: Free for Bruce members, and students and educators with ID, \$10 for non-members. At the door: \$10 Bruce members, and students and educators with ID, \$20 non-members.

###

Media Contact: Sandra van Boetzelaer, Director of Marketing and Communications
203 . 413 . 6735 svanboetzelaer@brucemuseum.org