

Musée d'Orsay

Local Culture Survey

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MUSÉE D'ORSAY

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ABSTRACT

Musée d'Orsay is a museum in Paris, on the left bank of the Seine River. Formerly it was Garde d'Orsay, a Beaux-Arts railway station completed in 1900. The museum holds mainly French art dating from 1845s to 1915s, including paintings, sculptures, furniture and photography. Attracting nearly three million visitors a year, It's a major destination for art lovers which known with largest collection of impressionist masterpieces in world. In this paper,

a survey of the Orsay Museum is presented. The focus is on a general history of the museum, importance for impressionism and artworks exhibited in the museum.

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1 HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

Attracting nearly three million visitors a year, It's a major destination for art lovers which known with largest collection of impressionist masterpieces in world.

It's history is quite interesting. The building was formerly a railway station known as Gare d'Orsay, built for early French railway company Chemin de Fer de Paris a Orleans. The building finished in 1900 for Exposition Universelle by three architects: Lucien Magne, Emile Benard and Cictor Laloux.

1.1 The site

Musee d'Orsay's site has very old history.

The rue de Lille was once the central lane of the garden belonging to Henri IV's famous queen, Marguerite de Valois. On her death in 1615, the property was sold by lots, and private mansions continued to build up the neighbourhood, while on the banks of the Seine a port known as the Grenouillière served as a resting place for lumber barges and other cargo. The construction of the Quai d'Orsay began in 1708 near the Pont Royal, and was completed a century later under Napoleon I's Empire. The aristocratic vocation of the neighbourhood was already well established at the end of the 18th century, when the Hôtel de Salm (today the Musée de la Légion d'honneur) was built, between 1782 and 1788. [2]



(a) Palais d'Orsay



(b) Démolition des ruines de la cour des comptes

Figure 1: Site pictures from 19th century

Before burnt due to violent Paris Commune action in 1871, two buildings are built on the site of Orsay station. First Cavalry barracks, and then the Palais d'Orsay is built between 1810 and 1838 by Jean-Charles Bonnard and Jacques Lacornee.

1.2 The Station

Before Exposition Universelle in 1900, French Orleans railroad company asked French government to take the land of ruined palaid d'Orsay. In that time the railroad company had far located station from center of the city, which was causing them disadvatages.

French government decided to give the land to the Orleans railroad company. In 1897, the company hired three architects: Lucien Magne, Emile Benard and Victor Laloux. The task of the architects were not because of the rich surrounding culture like Louvre and Palas de la Legion d'honneur.

In July 14th, 1900, the station and hotel - built in two years - were opened. One of the architect Laloux, decided to mask the modern metallic structures with the facade of the hotel, that built in the academic style using finely cut stones from the regions of Charente and Poitou.

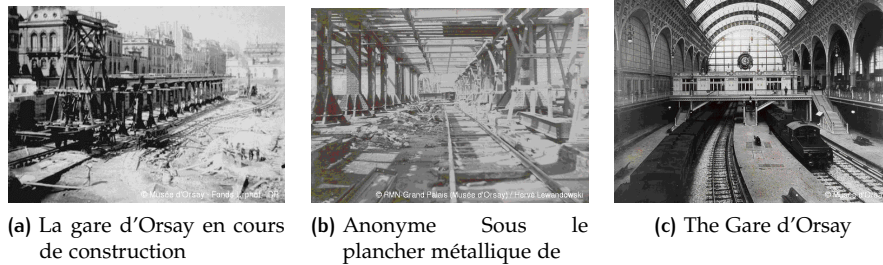


Figure 2: Pictures of the station

Inside the building, all modern techniques are used, i.e., lifts for luggages, passenger elevators, ramps, sixteen underground railtracks and electric tractions. The open porch through the great hall was approximately 32 meters high, 40 meters wide and 138 meters long.

The Gare d'Orsay, till 1939s, was main railroad network of the southwestern French. It's hotel hosted many travelers, political party meetings, and famous people. Unfortunately, after 1939, the station became short for the modern and longer trains after electrification of the railroads. Later on station only served to suburbs.

1.3 Station to Museum

Before serving as The Gare d'Orsay, the building used as many purposes, i.e, mailing center for sending packages, set for several films, haven.

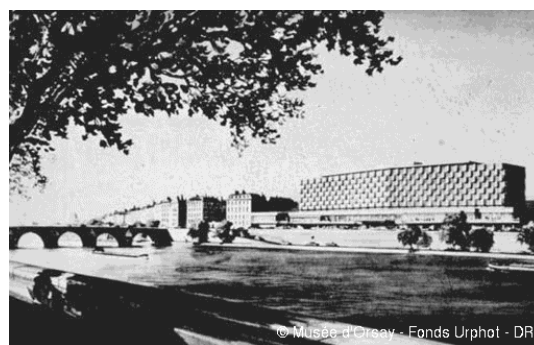


Figure 3: Projet Guillaume Gillet-René Coulon

In 1975, the Direction des Musées de France decided to build a new museum in the train station. They decided to present arts from the second half of the 19th century. In March 8, 1973, the station listed on the Supplementary Inventory of Historical Monuments. The official decision of building

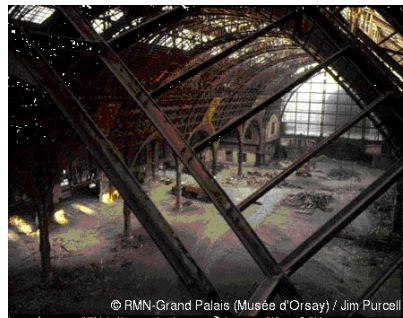
Musée d'Orsay appeared in October 20, 1977 by inter-ministerial council and President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's acts.

Then the building started to be known as a Historical Monument in 1978 and a civil commission was assembled to supervise the construction and organization of the museum. François Mitterrand, the President of the republic, introduced the new museum on December 1st, 1985, and it opened to the public on December 9th.

1.4 Architecture

"The station is superb and looks like a Palais des beaux-arts..." wrote the painter Edouard Detaille in 1900. Eighty-six years later, his prophecy was fulfilled.[2]

The architectural change of the station into a museum was done by ACT architecture group, consist of M. Bardon, M. Colboc, and M. Philippon. Their project proposal was approved in 1979 out of other six propositions. They respected Laloux's previous architecture with reinterpreting it due to new functionality. New architecture highlights its great hall using it as the main artery of the visit, and used impressively beautiful glass awning into the museum's entrance.



(a) Vue intérieure de la nef en travaux



(b) La salle du restaurant en travaux

Figure 4: Architecture pictures

Organization of the museum compose of three floor. First floor, the ground floor, many galleries are exhibited on either side of the central nave. Second floor, overlooks the first floor, opening up into additional exhibition galleries. The top floor is built above the lobby, which covers the length of the Quai, and continues into the highest elevations of the former hotel, over the rue de la Legion d'Honneur.

Not only the galleries but museum's specific exhibition spaces and different facilities are distributed throughout the three levels, i.e., the pavilion

Amont, the glass walkway of the former station's western pinion, the museum restaurant, the Cafe des Hauterius, the bookshop and the auditorium.

1.5 Facts

Here are the some facts about Musee d'Orsay:[2]

Year	Number of visitors
1994 and 2003	2,239,050
2004	2,590,316
2005	2,929,282
2006	3,009,203
2007	3,166,509
2008	3,025,164
2009	3,022,012
2010	2,985,510
2011	3,144,449
2012	3,579,130
Total over 26 years: 74,453,766 visitors	

Table 1: Annual frequentation of the museum

The Building

- Length without the awning: 173 metres (189 yards, 567'7")
- Length including awning: 188 metres (205 $\frac{31}{2}$ yards, 616'9")
- Breadth: 75 metres (82 yards, 246')

The Hall under the Nave

- Length: 138 metres (150 $\frac{3}{4}$ yards, 452'9")
- Breadth: 40 metres (43 $\frac{3}{4}$ yards, 131')
- Height: 32 metres (104'11")

The Materials

- 12 000 metric tons of metallic structures
- 35 000 square metres of glass
- 1 600 staff rose casings in the nave

A Few Technical Data

- 1 million cubic metres of air treated each hour for air conditioning
- 40,000 acoustic resonators
- 7,500 kWh of installed electric power
- 2 generating sets
- 10 escalators
- 12 elevators and lifts

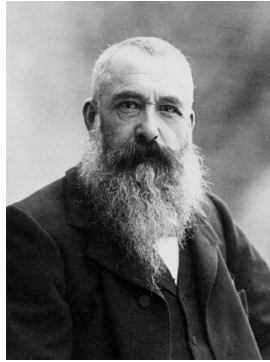


Figure 5: Claude Monet

2 IMPORTANCE FOR IMPRESSIONISM

2.1 What is impressionism ?

It's a 19th century artistic movement based on a group of Paris-based artists. They reject the rules of academic painting. Their paintings have lots of color as well as very bright and vibrant and they are mostly outdoor scenes. Using primary colors and short brushstrokes to represent the appearance of reflected light, desired result of impressionism was to capture the artist's perception of the subject rather than the subject itself.

2.2 Orsay's importance

"... the exhibition pays homage to French genius, that of Impressionism and that of the savoir-faire of the 19th century." Guy Courgeval, curator, Musée d'Orsay.

"The great Gallery of Impressionists should be rethought. There are there many masterpieces, but the addition of such a number of paintings of similar dimensions is prejudicial to visitor's vision", Mr Serge Lemoine, "Express Magazine" (in June 2002).

One of the world's most-visited museum, it houses largest collection of painting, sculpture and decorative objects produced between 1848-1914.

The Musée d'Orsay's collection of impressionist and post-impressionist paintings give taste of the finest experience of its kind in the world.

2.3 Important Impressionist Artists in Orsay

Musée d'Orsay is hosting very important impressionist artists in the world. In this section, most famous ones are listed with brief information.

2.3.1 *Claude Monet*

Monet was the founder of French Impressionism, and the most consistent practitioner of the movement. It's said that 'Impressionism' term is coming from his painting 'Impression, soleil levant'. Orsay has his 86 paintings, including *The Saint-Lazare Station*, *The Rue Montorgueil* in Paris.

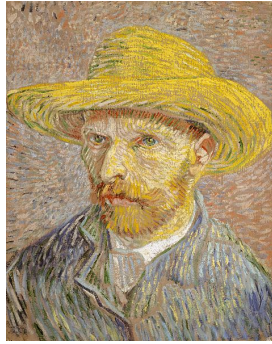


Figure 6: Vincent van Gogh



Figure 7: Édouard Manet

2.3.2 *Vincent van Gogh*

He born in 30 March, was a post-impressionist painter. His influence had big impact on 20th century art with his rough beauty, bold color and emotional honesty. The museum has his 24 works including Self Portrait, portrait of his friend Eugene Boch, The Siesta and many more famous portrait.

2.3.3 *Édouard Manet*

He was a French paintern born in 23 January, 1832 and one of the first 19th century artists to paint modern life and important figure in transition from Realism to Impressionism. Orsay museum has 34 paintings of him including Olympia, The Balcony, Berthe Morisot With a Bouquet of Violets, The Luncheon on the Grass.

2.3.4 *Edgar Degas*

He, born in 19 July, 1834, was a famous French artist with his paintings, sculptures, prints and drawings. He can be identified with the subject of dance because half of his works showing dancers. He is also regarded as one of the founders of Impressionism. The museum has 43 paintings of him including The Parade, also known as Race Horses in fron of the Tribunes, The Belleli Family, The Tub, Portrait of Eduard Manet and more.



Figure 8: Edgar Degas



Figure 9: Pierre-Auguste Renoir

2.3.5 *Pierre-Auguste Renoir*

One of the French leading painter in the development of the Impressionist style, born in 25 February, 1841. As a celebrator of beauty, and especially feminine sensuality, it has been said that 'Renoir is the final representative of a tradition which runs directly from Rubens to Watteau'. Orsay museum has his 81 paintings including *Bal au moulin de la Galette*, Montmartre.

2.3.6 *Paul Cézanne*

Born in 19 January, 1839, he was a French artist and Post-Impressionist painter whose work laid the foundations of the transition from the 19th century conception of artistic achievement to a new and radically different



Figure 10: Paul Cézanne



Figure 11: Georges Seurat



Figure 12: Alfred Sisley

world of art in the 20th century. The museum has his 56 paintings including Apples and Oranges.

2.3.7 *Georges Seurat*

He was a French Post-Impressionist painter and draftsman. He born in 2 December, 1859. He is known with his innovative use of drawing media and for devising the technique of painting known as pointillism. Orsay museum has his 19 paintings including The Circus.

2.3.8 *Alfred Sisley*

French painter born in 30 October, 1839. He was an Impressionist landscape painter who was born and spent most of his life in France. He was one of the most consistent of the Impressionists in his dedication to painting landscapes. The museum has his 46 paintings including Inondation at Port-Marly.

2.3.9 *Paul Gauguin*

Born in 7 June, 1848, he is another leading French Post-Impressionist artist who was not well appreciated until his death. Gauguin was later recognized for his experimental use of colors and synthetic style that were distinguishable different from Impressionism. Orsay museum has his 24 paintings including Tahitian Women on the Beach.

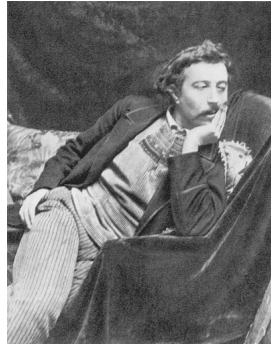


Figure 13: Paul Gauguin

3 ARTWORKS IN THE MUSEUM

In this section artworks are picked from famous artists to demonstrate brief collection of the Museum and its important masterpieces. Museum has many different type of art works. Here are some of them.

3.1 Paintings

You can see the famous paintings in Figure 14 on page 14

3.2 Sculptures

3.3 Photography

3.4 Graphic Art

3.5 Decoratives

3.6 Architecture

REFERENCES

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(a) Poppy Field



(b) Van Gogh's Bedroom in Arles



(c) Olympia



(d) Thérèse de Gas



(e) The Swing



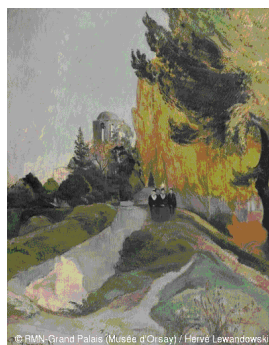
(f) The Bay of Marseille seen from L'Estaque



(g) Port-en-Bessin at High Tide



(h) Fog, Voisins



(i) Les Alyscamps

Figure 14: A number of pictures of impressionist artists