

## The Art Institute of Chicago

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Renoirs in the Institute

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago (1907-1951)*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Mar., 1925), pp. 31-33

Published by: [The Art Institute of Chicago](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4113990>

Accessed: 27/02/2012 13:22

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CONTINUATION OF KUNG HSIEN MAKIMONO

that a scholar should feel himself well equipped to produce a work in a graphic art. Indeed, such a belief has been by no means confined to China, although scholars in other countries have not been adepts with the brush.

In most of the paintings of the *bun jin* school the sweeping brush-stroke, so dear to the Sung painter, has been replaced by a shorter and "fuzzier" stroke, somewhat as if the brush had been pushed down vertically upon the paper rather than swept across it. In inferior work a general messiness results which is not necessarily inherent in that type of brush-stroke so much as in the messiness of the thought processes of many of the *bun jin* school. A really good painter of this school is as successful as a really good painter of any school, and this landscape makimono of Kung Hsien is a true work of art.

The keen delight in water and mountains which the Chinese have seemed always to possess is clearly shown in all three of these paintings.

The paintings are typical of the honest work of their periods, and as such make a valuable addition to our collection.

C. F. K.

## RENOIRS IN THE INSTITUTE

AUGUSTE RENOIR (1841-1919), at nineteen a student in the academic atelier of Gleyre, came into fortunate contact with Monet and Sisley. There began the discussions of the painting of light and atmosphere, which soon carried

them beyond the influence of their instructor. Renoir learned, nevertheless, from painters of the past; he recognized his kinship with the French masters of the eighteenth century; he copied pictures by Delacroix, earnestly studied Rubens, Velasquez, Titian, Poussin. His own first efforts were classed as of the school of the realist, Courbet. It was not until his experiments in color and technique had cost him admission to the Salons of 1872 and 1873 that he was persuaded to send his work to the independent exhibition of 1874. Even later he felt that he was not breaking with the true tradition of French art, but rather trying to awaken it from a drugged sleep.

His forty years of painting represented Impressionism in all its forms, for he tried all with varying success, contributing a new sense of rhythm and form. The technique of the new school, which was devoted by the others to landscape, was brought by Renoir to the study of women, Parisian life, children, flowers. "He was the painter of joy, youth, grace." His multitude of nudes seem to spring like poppies of delicate sensuality from the common soil, to be animated and unfolded by light and warmth. These flowers of the sun are refined by perfection of breeding in his sophisticated Parisiennes, their animality overlaid with poise and mystery, their personalities developed and armed. He was wholly delightful in his approach to children. He painted his own (whose nursemaids were often the models for his nudes), his shopkeepers', his patrons', those that



PORTRAIT OF RENOIR. ANDRÉ

were entirely artless and those that were sensitively bred. In almost the same spirit he could enter into and extract the exuberance of a bouquet of garden flowers. His technique continually developed new phases. In regard to his manner of painting he once said: "I like painting as rich, sleek, oily as possible. . . . I painted two or three canvases with the palette knife, according to the process dear to Courbet, then I painted with a brush fat with pigment. . . . In this I was perhaps successful in a few cases, but I never found it suitable for working over. . . . After the first séance I could not change the placing of a figure without scraping the canvas. In order to pass easily from one tone to another I tried painting with little touches; but this manner produces a crumbly surface. I don't like that." Color, form, rhythm of line, were uppermost in his thought in different periods, finally coalescing into a very personal style in which the manipulation of color dominated, form resolving itself into its component hues.

At the Art Institute may be found a marine, four figure compositions, two still-life studies, a portrait of a child and one of a woman of fashion. Three of the figure

groups and the marine are in the Palmer Collection. The remainder are lent by Martin A. Ryerson. The Print Department contains also a lithograph, "La Dame au Grand Chapeau," and a dry point profile of Berthe Morisot, with whom Renoir enjoyed one of his most solid friendships. Two portraits of the artist are in our possession; the oil by André and the pencil sketch by Forain.

"The Wave," painted in 1879, shows that at this time he had discarded the traditional black and burnt umber for a purely chromatic palette. This is not the only similarity to the work of Monet. The colors leave the palette thick and clear, to be mixed lightly on the canvas. Monet's clarity and sparkle are transformed, however, into glow and diffusion by the feathery touch that characterized Renoir's landscapes and marines.

The figure compositions form a series of special interest as showing Renoir's development through twenty years, and those the most fruitful. The first of these, "In the Circus," or, as Rivière calls it, "Jongleuses au Cirque," presents light as a radiant envelope and, thus ridding itself of shadow, allows the colors to assume the task of modelling. There is notable design in the opposition of the two figures and their relation to the curve of the circus pit. One stands in the graceful repose of a growing plant, her head turned slightly, her eyes remote, smiling, mysterious. The other twists swiftly on her feet, which are



NEAR THE SHORE. RENOIR. PALMER COLLECTION

separated at a wide angle, and as she begins the gesture of a sweeping bow, she commands the audience, her profile alert, imperious, mobile. The circus was the delight of Montmartre in 1875, where the little Spanish troupe of Fernando and his daughters, a clown and a performing ass furnished the simple entertainment. Degas' painting of "Lola" records the same incident of artistic Paris.

The second figure painting, "Near the Lake Shore," shows strongly the Monet tendency. Sunlight strikes through very green foliage in blots of clear yellow. A crude red intensifies these unmodified colors on which the Impressionists insisted in the early stage of their experiments. The sunlit figures of the eager, questioning little girl and her father belong to a sequence of out-of-door figures begun as early as 1864 when Renoir painted "Lise."

"Breakfast by the River," also in the Palmer Collection, was painted about the same period as the last, during the height of a canoeing fashion of 1879-'80 that brightened the face and banks of the Seine. It was one of a series of paintings in the same spirit leading up to the more complex composition, "Déjeuner des Canotiers." Here is a more delicate adjustment between the warm and cool colors. Nasturtiums on a trellis, an orange racing canoe, and a brick house across the river, give the necessary contrast to the green and violet blues. Renoir shows himself entranced



IN THE CIRCUS. RENOIR. PALMER COLLECTION

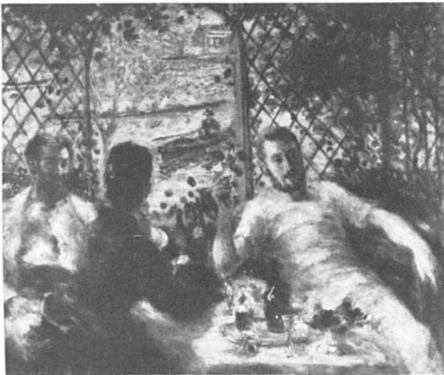
with color when this wealth of blue was painted. From orange the color falls away in a shower of yellow and green—in the sunlit white apparel of the man on the left, the fruit, the table-cloth, and bottle—to the blue shadows in the boating suit on the right and the foliage above; it leaps the blue-green arch of the trellis to the lady's shoulder, plays there with a contrast of orange, and plunges into the headlong blue of her costume. The masses of color seem to drift in an aura, like prismatic lights seen through vapor.

(To be continued.)

## A STILL LIFE BY CHARDIN

**I**F Jean-Baptiste Chardin had artistic antecedents, they were not French.

He was born in 1699, fifteen years later than Watteau, twenty-six years before Greuze. His art derived as little from the *Fêtes Galantes* of the older man as the pretty, sentimental moralizing of the younger had affinity with the honest, earnest work of Chardin himself. Chardin's disarranged table tops and his groupings of bottles and knives and loaves of



BREAKFAST BY THE RIVER. RENOIR. PALMER COLLECTION