

# ORDRUPGAARD

**PRESS RELEASE**

31 January 2024

**Exhibition period**

9 February –  
20 May 2024

**Press meeting**

9 February 10 - 12 am



## IMPRESSIONISM AND ITS OVERLOOKED WOMEN

9. FEB - 20. MAY 2024

ORDRUPGAARD  
VILVORDEVEJ 110  
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**The 150th anniversary of the first impressionist exhibition in Paris in 1874 is celebrated internationally with major exhibitions. In Scandinavia, Ordrupgaard takes the lead with a magnificent exhibition highlighting the women of impressionism – both behind and in front of the canvas. The exhibition features four female impressionists and their interconnected world of sisters, daughters, and friends through what is incontestably regarded as major works of this period. Due to their gender and class, these artists did not have the same opportunities to depict the pulsating city life enjoyed by their male colleagues. Instead, their focus was on modern life as it unfolded in the home and gardens of Paris and the surrounding area. These intimate motifs were depicted in a radical fashion using bright colours, quick brushstrokes, and a sketch-like technique, which elicited both admiration and indignation from viewers and art critics alike. The exhibition traces the women's struggle for recognition and a place in art history, examining in more detail their pioneering contribution to the emergence of modern art.**

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With exceptional loans from around the world, visitors will experience main works by Berthe Morisot (1841–1895) and Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), both of whom are well-known, as well as Marie Bracquemond (1840–1916), Eva Gonzalès (1849–1883), and Marie Bashkirtseff (1858–1884)

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who, until now, have been off the radar. Marie Bashkirtseff did not belong to the impressionists as such, but in her diary, 'Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff' (Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff), published posthumously in 1887, she described the conditions of female artists at the time. Not until 1897 were women allowed to study at the French art academy École des Beaux-Arts, since contemporary conventions kept women in the confines of their homes, where they could practice art as a leisure pursuit. It was therefore perceived as barrier-breaking, even revolutionary, for a woman to make art her career – not to mention paint in public spaces.

Additionally, the exhibition features key works by Édouard Manet, Edgar Degas, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir inasmuch as they portray female models and address the exhibition theme. These artists formed close personal and artistic attachments with the exhibition's main artists. Degas, for example, invited Morisot, Cassatt, and Bracquemond to take part in the independent exhibitions that soon became known as the 'impressionist exhibitions' held eight times during the period 1874–1886 in protest against the annual Salon exhibitions organised by the École des Beaux-Arts.

### Modern life from the inside

In spite of limited educational options – only available at private art schools – women played a significant role in developing avant-garde painting during this period. Like their male colleagues, they also replied to Charles Baudelaire's famous appeal in the essay 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne' (The Painter of Modern Life) from 1863, in which the poet encouraged painters of the new age to depict modern life and its distinctive poetry. Everyday motifs featuring family members, previously considered part of the traditionally inferior genre-painting category, therefore became the chief theme for these women. Especially the innovative figurative pictures painted in a technique which highlighted the momentary made weighty contributions to modernity.

### The women portrayed in the paintings

The exhibition directs focus at several of the women overlooked by history, immortalised in several of impressionism's most iconic paintings: from the coloured models in Manet's and Degas's pictures to the numerous members and friends perpetuated in the female artists' canvases. The exhibition seeks not only to examine the technique used to paint these women but also to look at their identity, which unleashes new narratives and overlooked perspectives on impressionism and its actors.

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### Ordrupgaard and impressionism

The exhibition is a natural extension of Ordrupgaard's earlier solo presentations of Morisot in 2012 and Cassatt in 2013, respectively, and is thus a result of a long-standing effort to allocate the female impressionists their rightful place in art history. Also, the museum's founding couple, Wilhelm and Henny Hansen, shared this interest, and they acquired their first painting by Morisot as early as 1916. Two years later, another important work by Morisot followed along with one by Gonzalès. The paintings by Morisot are among the very earliest of her works to be acquired for a museum and, today, they are regarded among her most important works.

This is the first showing of works by Marie Bashkirtseff and her name sake Marie Bracquemond in Denmark and, likewise, bringing together the leading artists in the exhibition is a first of its kind in Scandinavia. We show a total of fifty-seven paintings loaned by thirty-four lenders from ten countries.

Following the showing at Ordrupgaard, the exhibition will travel to the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin.

### Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with articles on the five women featured in the exhibition written by leading specialists: Sylvie Patry, conservatrice générale du Patrimoine and artistic director of Galerie Mennour Paris; Nancy Mowl Mathews, art historian and senior curator emerita at Williams College; Marie-Caroline Sainsaulieu, art historian and author of the catalogue raisonné about Eva Gonzalès; Laurent Manœuvre, art historian and senior researcher at Musée de France under the French Ministry of Culture; and Jeanne Pillon, art historian and head of exhibitions, documentation, and archives at Musée des Beaux-Arts Jules Chéret in Nice. In addition to this, there is an introduction by Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, chief consultant, and Dorthe Vangsgaard Nielsen, senior curator, as well as descriptive museum labels written by Rikke Zinck Jensen, museum curator, Ordrupgaard.

The catalogue is published in both Danish and English.

### Curators

The exhibition is curated by Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, chief consultant and former director of Ordrupgaard, and Dorthe Vangsgaard Nielsen, senior curator.

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The exhibition is generously supported by:

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