

Art Institute of Chicago

Britannica Student Encyclopedia



Two bronze lions have decorated the main entrance to the Art Institute of Chicago

since the ...

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The oldest and largest art museum and art school in the midwestern United States, the Art Institute of Chicago was established in 1879 as the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. Its predecessor was the Chicago Academy of Design, founded in 1866. In 1882 it took its current name, and in 1893 the museum moved into its present building, which was designed by the architectural firm Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge as part of the World's Columbian Exposition. The museum has more than 300,000 works of art, including European, American, and Asian sculpture, paintings, prints, and drawings. Its collection of 19th- and 20th-century French paintings is renowned. The museum's masterpieces include paintings by Claude Monet, Georges Seurat, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. It also features photography, decorative arts, and African and pre-Columbian American art, as well as the 68 Thorne miniature rooms, each designed meticulously to represent a particular period and style.

The School of the Art Institute offers undergraduate and graduate programs in visual and related arts. The Ryerson Library and the Burnham Library have fine collections specializing in art and architecture, respectively. The Goodman Theatre was established as a gift to the Art Institute of Chicago in 1925. The Goodman School of Drama, operated by the Art Institute from 1930 to 1978, became a school of DePaul University in 1978.

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Georges Seurat

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A Sunday on La Grande Jatte—1884, oil on canvas by Georges

Seurat, 1884-86; in ...
Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago, All Rights Reserved, Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection, 1926.224

(1859-91). French neo-impressionist painter Georges Seurat is the ultimate example of the artist as scientist. He spent his life studying color theories and the effects of different linear structures. His 500 drawings alone establish Seurat as a great master, but he will be remembered for his technique called pointillism, or divisionism, which uses small dots or strokes of contrasting color to create subtle changes in form.

Georges-Pierre Seurat was born on Dec. 2, 1859, in Paris. He studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in 1878 and 1879. His teacher was a disciple of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Young Seurat was strongly influenced by Rembrandt and Francisco de Goya.

After a year of military service at Brest, Seurat exhibited his drawing *Aman-Jean* at the official Salon in 1883. Panels from his painting *Bathing at Asnières* were refused by the Salon the next year, so Seurat and several other artists founded the Société des Artistes Indépendants. His famous canvas *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grande Jatte* was the centerpiece of an exhibition in 1886. By then Seurat was spending his winters in Paris, drawing and producing one large painting each year, and his summers on France's northern coast. In his short life Seurat produced seven monumental paintings, 60 smaller ones, drawings, and sketchbooks. He kept his private life very secret, and not until his sudden death in Paris on March 29, 1891, did his friends learn of his mistress, who was the model for his painting *Young Woman Holding a Powder Puff*. (See also *Painting*.)

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Edward Hopper

Britannica Student Encyclopedia



Nighthawks, oil on canvas by Edward Hopper, 1942; in the Art Institute of Chicago.
© Francis G. Mayer/Corbis

(1882-1967). The American painter Edward Hopper used bright colors to depict ordinary scenes from everyday life. His paintings were done in such a way as to create a somber, melancholy mood. Snapshotlike compositions such as 'Nighthawks' (1942) use the eerie light of an all-night diner to isolate the customers and foster an inescapable sense of loneliness.

Hopper was born in Nyack, N.Y., on July 22, 1882. In 1899 he went to New York City to study at the New York School of Art. He was trained primarily as an illustrator, but between 1901 and 1906 he studied painting under Robert Henri, the realist painter and leader of the Ashcan School of realism. Three trips to Europe in the years 1906 to 1910 exposed Hopper to the experimentation going on in France, but the new ideas did not influence him. Apart from summers in New England, he lived in New York City.

Although he exhibited at the Armory Show of 1913 in New York City, Hopper devoted most of his time to advertising and illustrative etchings until 1924. He then took up painting full time.

Like other artists of the Ashcan School, Hopper depicted commonplace scenes from city life. His subjects included city streets, roadside lunch counters, Victorian homes, New England cottages, barren apartments, and theater interiors. All exhibit a pervasive calm with no hint of urban congestion. Among his works were 'House by the Railroad' (1925), 'Early Sunday Morning' (1930), 'Room in Brooklyn' (1932), and 'Second Story Sunlight' (1960).

Hopper's first one-man show was in 1920. Later in life he had major retrospective shows at the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City. He died in New York City on May 15, 1967.

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Marc Chagall

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Marc Chagall.
Kurt Hutton—Hulton
Archive/Getty Images

(1887-1985). In the whimsical world depicted by the Russian-born artist Marc Chagall, everyday objects seem to defy the laws of gravity. Cows and people float in space high above the rooftops of a distant village. Although he borrowed elements from cubism, impressionism, and fauvism, Chagall developed a style that cannot be classified with any artistic movement of his time.

One of nine children of a poor Jewish family, Chagall was born in the provincial Russian town of Vitebsk on July 7, 1887. He persuaded his reluctant parents to let him study art, first with a local teacher and then in the city of St. Petersburg. A characteristic work of this period is the nightmarish *The Dead Man*. Finally, in 1910, he set out for Paris.

There his education continued through visits to museums and galleries and contact with the painters and poets who made up the city's intellectual life. Fauvism and cubism, popular movements of the day, had some impact on his works, particularly in influencing him to use bright, clear colors, but scenes of life in Vitebsk continued to be the dominant subject matter of his art.

Chagall returned to Russia in 1914, planning only a short visit. The outbreak of World War I, however, prevented him from leaving. He married Bella Rosenfeld, daughter of a wealthy Vitebsk family. The embracing lovers and bouquets of flowers that began to appear in his pictures reflect the couple's great happiness, which continued throughout their life together.

After the October Revolution in 1917 in Russia, Chagall enjoyed a brief artistic triumph as a leader of the avant-garde. As commissioner of art in Vitebsk, he organized an art academy and a museum. Later he designed stage sets at the Jewish Theater in Moscow. By 1922, however, his works had fallen into disfavor with the Soviet establishment, and Chagall decided to leave. Taking Bella and their young daughter, Ida, he returned to Paris after a short stay in Berlin.

Chagall found himself idolized by the surrealists, who saw the characteristics of their own work in his 1913 *Paris Through the Window* and admired his dream imagery and the daring way he combined the figures of animals and human beings. He learned to etch and did numerous book illustrations.

Chagall became equally well-known for his designs for mosaics, murals, and stained-glass windows. Among these public works are mosaics for the First National Bank plaza in Chicago; ceiling decorations for the Paris Opéra; murals for New York City's Metropolitan Opera; windows for the cathedral in Metz, France, the Art Institute of Chicago, the United Nations in New York City, and the synagogue of Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center in Jerusalem; and murals and tapestries for the Knesset in Jerusalem.

Except for an extended stay in the United States during the Nazi occupation of France in the 1940s, Chagall spent his mature years in France. His wife Bella died in 1944. With his second wife, Valentine—called Vava—he made his home in the village of St-Paul-de-Vence

on the French Riviera. He died there on March 28, 1985. (See also painting.)

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Paul Gauguin

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The Vision After the Sermon, oil on canvas by Paul Gauguin, 1888; in the National Gallery

of ...

Bridgeman/Art Resource, New York

(1848-1903). The leading French painter of the postimpressionist period, Paul Gauguin was at his best when he could paint what he called "natural" men and women living with their fears, faiths, myths, and primitive passions. He created many of his works while living on Tahiti from 1891 to 1893 and 1895 to 1901 and the Marquesas Islands from 1901 to 1903 in the southern Pacific Ocean. Gauguin was attracted to primitivism because while working in this style he could present clearly intelligible images, use simple color harmonies, and make pictures that were decorative and pleasing to the eye.

Eugène-Henri-Paul Gauguin was born in Paris on June 7, 1848. Three years later the family moved to Lima, Peru, his mother's home. In 1855 he and his mother were back in France at Orléans. At age 17 he left home to sail around the world for six years in freighters and warships. In 1871 he went to work for a stockbroking firm in Paris. Two years later he married a young Danish woman, Mette Sophie Gad.

It was while at the business firm that he took an interest in painting. Influenced by fellow workers and friends, Gauguin developed an interest in impressionist art. He collected works by Manet, Pissarro, Monet, and others. For a time he worked with Pissarro to master the techniques of drawing and painting.



Mahana Atua (The Day of God), woodcut in black heightened with watercolour on Japan paper, ...

Courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago, All Rights Reserved, The Clarence Buckingham Collection, 1948.267

He became more absorbed in his painting after his 'Landscape at Viroflay' was accepted for an exposition in 1876. In 1883 the stock market crashed, and he lost his job. For a while he and his wife lived in Denmark with her parents. In 1885 he was back in Paris alone, determined to make a living at his art. He did not succeed. A journey to Martinique in the West Indies in 1887 introduced him to the bright colors and delights of the tropics. He also discovered primitive art, and its appeal led him to turn away from impressionism. Among the paintings for which he is justly famous are 'Vision After the Sermon' (1888), 'When Shall We Be Married?' (1892), 'Holiday' (1896), and 'Two Tahitian Women' (1899). From 1899 his health deteriorated, and he died on the Marquesas on May 8, 1903. Among the artists who learned much from Gauguin's work were the Norwegian Edvard Munch, Henri Matisse, and the young Pablo Picasso.

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Edgar Degas

Britannica Student Encyclopedia



The Dance Foyer at the Opera is an oil on canvas by Edgar Degas from ...
Giraudon/Art Resource, New York

(1834-1917). The works of French impressionist artist Edgar Degas masterfully capture the human form in motion, especially female ballet dancers and bathers. Highly innovative, he found new and brilliant solutions to the problems of form, composition, and color. Degas favored pastels, but he also used a great variety of other media in his paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures.

He was born Hilaire-Germain-Edgar de Gas, on July 19, 1834, in Paris. His father was a wealthy banker. Degas went to school at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, then studied law. In his 20s he studied art at the École des Beaux-Arts and then traveled to Italy, where he copied the works of the old masters.

Degas's early works were historical paintings of classical subjects. In the early 1860s he began painting scenes of contemporary city life, especially at the theater, racetrack, café, and ballet. The artist Édouard Manet introduced him to impressionism. Like many future impressionists, Degas was influenced by Japanese prints and began simplifying his compositions and using lighter colors. Degas, however, preferred indoor scenes over landscapes and continued to use firm lines. Also influenced by photography, he depicted informal groupings of moving figures captured seemingly spontaneously.

In 1870 Degas served in the Franco-Prussian War. In 1874 he joined several of his artist friends in organizing the first impressionist exhibition. He also exhibited inventive works in the group's subsequent shows. He began sculpting in the 1880s.



Woman Reading is a monotype in black ink by Edgar Degas from about ...
Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Rosenwald Collection

In his later years Degas led a more closed social life but experimented boldly in his art. By 1885 his eyesight began failing, but he kept working until 1912. He died in Paris on Sept. 27, 1917. (See also painting.)

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Claude Monet

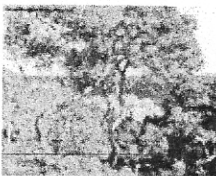
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(1840-1926). The leader of the 19th-century impressionist art movement, Claude Monet continued throughout his long career to pursue its goals. Monet preferred to paint outdoors, directly from nature. Almost all his work shows his desire to capture on canvas the changing effects of light.

Monet was born in Paris on Nov. 14, 1840, and spent his youth in Le Havre, where his father worked as a grocer. In 1859 Monet went to Paris to begin the serious study of art. He spent most of his time, however, in a café frequented by artists and intellectuals. In 1862, after an interval of military service, he returned to Paris and entered the studio of Charles Gleyre. There he met Pierre Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, and Jean-Frédéric Bazille. Soon, however, the four left Gleyre, and Monet led them on an expedition to the Fontainebleau Forest, where he introduced them to open-air painting.

After gaining acceptance into the Salons of 1865 and 1866, Monet suffered a series of reversals. He was deep in debt, and his huge painting 'Women in the Garden' was rejected at the 1867 Salon. That same year his mistress, Camille Doncieux, gave birth to their first child, a son, Jean. Without a permanent home or an income, Monet lodged with friends and borrowed what money he could. At times he was even too poor to buy paint or canvas. In 1870 Claude and Camille were married. Their financial situation became worse during the next few years. Camille's health declined following the birth of their second son, Michel, and in 1879 she died.

In the spring of 1874 Monet and some of his friends decided to have a showing of their works. Among the exhibitors were Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Renoir, Sisley, and Camille Pissarro. The group became known as "impressionists," a term applied derisively by a critic who said that Monet's sketchy landscape 'Impression: Sunrise' reminded him of wallpaper. Although the exhibit attracted attention, none of the paintings was sold.



Bordighera, oil on canvas by Claude Monet, 1884; in the Art Institute of Chicago. Courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago. All Rights Reserved, Potter Palmer Collection.

It was not until after 1886 that Monet began to enjoy his first financial success, a result of a growing market for his works in the United States. In the 1890s Monet painted several series of works—'Haystacks', 'Poplars', and 'Rouen Cathedral'—in which he rendered a single scene again and again, in all its variations of light, shadow, and season.

In 1892 Monet married Alice Hoschedé, the widow of a former friend and benefactor. They settled at Giverny, where Monet created the beautiful water garden that figures so prominently in his later paintings. Between 1899 and 1904 Monet traveled to London, where he painted his Thames series. In 1908 and 1909 he went to Venice, where he recorded the canals and palaces of that city in a series of paintings that he continued working on at Giverny until 1912. Aside from these trips, Monet was content to remain at Giverny, where he continued painting until his death on Dec. 5, 1926, at the age of 86. His home and gardens at Giverny are now a national monument.

Impressionism, as developed by Monet, sought to capture the fleeting, momentary aspects of nature, especially to convey the atmospheric effects of light. As he pursued this goal, his technique became increasingly free, causing critics to remark that the paintings looked unfinished. Instead of mixing colors on his palette, Monet applied separate strokes of pure, unmixed color directly to the canvas. The method produced a shimmering, vibrating effect that simulated the effects of natural light. In his last paintings, the 'Water Lilies' (1900-26),

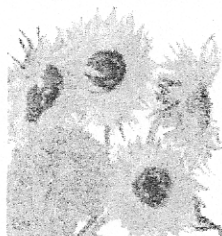
• nature as a subject began to be less significant than color.

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Vincent Van Gogh

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Detail of *Sunflowers*, oil painting by Vincent van Gogh, 1888, in

which ...

© Scala/Art Resource, New York

(1853-90). One of the four great Postimpressionists (along with Paul Gauguin, Georges Seurat, and Paul Cézanne), Vincent van Gogh is generally considered the greatest Dutch painter after Rembrandt. His reputation is based largely on the works of the last three years of his short ten-year painting career, and he had a powerful influence on expressionism in modern art. He produced more than 800 oil paintings and 700 drawings, but he sold only one during his lifetime. His striking colors, coarse brushwork, and contoured forms display the anguish of the mental illness that drove him to suicide.

Vincent Willem van Gogh was born on March 30, 1853, in Zundert in the Brabant region of The Netherlands. He was the eldest son of a Protestant clergyman. At the age of 16 Van Gogh was apprenticed to art dealers in The Hague, and he worked for them there and in London and Paris until 1876.

Van Gogh disliked art dealing, and, rejected in love, he became increasingly solitary. He began to prepare for the ministry, but he failed the entrance examinations for seminary and became a lay preacher. In 1878 he went to the impoverished Borinage district in southwestern Belgium to do missionary work. He was dismissed in 1880 over a disagreement with his superiors. Penniless and with his faith broken, he sank into despair and began to draw. He soon realized the limitations of being self-taught and went to Brussels to study drawing. In 1881 he moved to The Hague to work with the Dutch landscape painter Anton Mauve, and the next summer Van Gogh began to experiment with oil paints. His urge to be "alone with nature" took him to Dutch villages, and his subjects—still life, landscape, and figure—all related to the peasants' daily hardships and surroundings. In 1885 he produced his first masterpiece, 'The Potato Eaters'.

Feeling too isolated, he left for Antwerp, Belgium, and enrolled in the academy there. He did not respond well to the school's rigid discipline, but while in Antwerp he was inspired by the paintings of Peter Paul Rubens and discovered Japanese prints. He was soon off to Paris, where he met Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Gauguin and discovered the impressionists Camille Pissarro, Seurat, and others. Van Gogh's two years in Paris shaped his personal style of painting—more colorful, less traditional, with lighter tonalities and distinctive brushwork.

Tired of city life, Van Gogh left Paris in 1888 for Arles in the south of France. He rented and decorated a yellow house in which he hoped to found a community of "impressionists of the South." Gauguin joined him in October, but their relations deteriorated, and in a quarrel on Christmas Eve Van Gogh cut off part of his own left ear. Gauguin left, and Van Gogh was hospitalized. Exhibiting repeated signs of mental disturbance, Van Gogh asked to be sent to an asylum at St-Rémy-de-Provence. After a year of confinement he moved to the home of a physician-artist in Auvers-sur-Oise for two months. On July 27, 1890, Van Gogh shot himself; he died two days later.

Despite his deteriorating mental condition, Van Gogh's time at Arles, in the asylum, and at Auvers proved to be his greatest productive periods. At Arles he painted with great energy the sun-drenched fields and flowers; at St-Rémy the colors of his paintings were more

mutated, but the lines were bolder and the whole more visionary; in the northern light of Auvers he adopted pale, fresh tonalities, a broader and more expressive brushwork, and a lyrical vision of nature. The sale of Van Gogh's 'Irises' in 1987 brought the highest price ever paid for a work of art up to that time—53.9 million dollars. (See also Painting.)

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