EDUCATOR PACKET

Turner to Cézanne
Masterpieces from the Davies Collection,
National Museum Wales

October 9, 2009 - January 3, 2010
INTRODUCTION

*Turner to Cézanne: Masterpieces from the Davies Collection, National Museum Wales* is drawn from an extraordinary group of 260 nineteenth- and early twentieth-century paintings assembled largely between 1908 and 1923 by sisters Margaret and Gwendoline Davies. The exhibition speaks volumes about taste, patronage, and philanthropy. The fifty-three works included here also present a survey of modern art, from Turner’s Romantic naturalism to Cézanne’s modern aesthetic innovations. The exhibition is also a reminder of the value of creativity, and of persistence, as many of the artists were, at first, either misunderstood or scorned. Painters once rejected, like the Impressionists, are now in the pantheon of the world’s most popular artists.

Margaret and Gwendoline Davies inherited their father’s fortune, drawn from the coal and transportation industries, in the early 1900s. Having been raised in environment steeped in arts and culture, the sisters cultivated an interest in art from an early age. While their initial purchases were rather conservative, favoring established artists such as Joseph Mallord William Turner, Barbizon painter Camille Corot, and Academic master Ernest Meissonier, they quickly fell under the spell of art of the vanguard. They purchased works by Jean-François Millet that illustrate the elevation of scenes of modern life to a prominence formally reserved for subjects like portraiture, history, and religious painting. They had a particular fondness for Honoré Daumier’s acutely observed depictions of Parisian life. Their collection, as illustrated in this exhibition, sets the context for the arrival of the Impressionists on the scene in the 1870s.

Impressionism forms the core of *Turner to Cézanne*. As seen in Monet’s *Waterlilies*, the Davies sisters favored his later works, in which color, light, and textured brushstrokes combine to form a poetic abstraction that marks the apex of Impressionism. Their interest in Monet was unique among British collectors and placed them in the ranks of other visionary collectors in the United States and Europe. Cézanne’s landscapes present another interpretation of the Impressionist landscape, one based on geometry and structure rather than poetry. Finally, Manet’s view of the Seine in Argenteuil illustrates the Impressionists’ direct response to their surroundings, with belching smoke as important a part of the landscape as the boats.

Alongside these landscapes, the exhibition includes works that reflect Impressionism’s emphasis on contemporary life, from the hustle and bustle Pissarro captured in Paris on a wintry day to Renoir’s dazzling life-size canvas, *La Parisienne*. The exhibition culminates with several Post-Impressionist works, including paintings by Pierre Bonnard and Vincent van Gogh, and modern British masters, such as Augustus John and Walter Sickert, they inspired.

*Turner to Cézanne: Masterpieces from the Davies Collection, National Museum Wales* is organized by American Federation of Arts and National Museum Wales. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.
REJECTION:
A COMMON THEME IN THE LIVES OF ARTISTS

Today Impressionism is considered one of the most important periods in art history. Impressionist paintings are valued for their soft focus, distinctive brushstrokes, and subject matter. Arguably the most well known artists in history are Monet, Renoir and van Gogh. However, when the Impressionist artists first showed their work, it was rejected by both the art world and the public. The Paris salon (an important venue marking success for artists whose work was exhibited) refused to display Impressionist art and critics regularly published negative reviews. For example, one critic who reviewed the first Impressionist exhibition described the paintings as being a result of “a monkey who has got hold of a box of paints.” Given this type of reception it may not be a surprise to learn that van Gogh sold only one painting in his lifetime and Monet considered his life “nothing but a failure.”

As in the past, many contemporary artists experience the same kind of rejection. Reasons range from using unconventional materials, abstract conceptual forms and subject matter, or working in installation or performance art. In both cases it is the introduction of a kind of art that people are not familiar with and therefore not comfortable with that lead people to think “this is not art” or perhaps “this is not good art.” Another reaction experienced by both the Impressionists and contemporary artists is that their only artistic intent is to revolt against the norm or shock people.

Many artists who are initially rejected often find eventual success selling their works for high prices and landing works in the permanent collections of museums around the world.

The following examples will provide a comparison of the struggles and successes of both contemporary artists and Impressionist painters.
REJECTION IN IMPRESSIONISM

CLAUDE MONET
(b.1840, French)

Rejected For:
Blurry subject matter, lack of detail and pieces, which appeared unfinished.

Negative Response:
“…A preliminary drawing for a wallpaper pattern is more finished than this seascape.”
-Louis Leroy, French journalist and art critic on Monet’s *Impression Sunrise*, at the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874 (coined the term “impressionism” as an insult).

Eventual Success:
“It leaves no doubt of the painter's virtuoso eye and hand. Odd swatches of color assemble flawlessly into tangible forms and depth.” – John Haber
Monet has become one of the most popular and recognizable artists, with a single work earning as much as $80 million at auction.

Monet’s home at Giverny has been made into a museum, attracting over 500,000 visitors each year.

VINCENT VAN GOGH
(b.1853, Dutch)

Rejected For:
Unrealistic portrayal of subject matter, unusual brushwork.

Negative Response:
A review in the Daily Chronicle described van Gogh as “the fiery spirit of revolt” amongst the group of artists they contemplated as “maniacs or pioneers.”

Vincent van Gogh only sold one painting during his life, *The Red Vineyard* (1888) was bought by Anna Boch for 400 Francs (equal to about $1,000 today).

Another of van Gogh’s paintings entitled *Two Crabs*, was sold in 1893 to William Robinson, the then British Consul to Amsterdam. Robinson paid £17 (approximately $28) for the painting (considered a high price for a van Gogh at the time). 13 years later, in 1906, he sold the piece at auction for £8, (approximately $13) half of what he paid for it.

Eventual Success:
“…tenderness, urgency and brilliance at the core of his art.”
–Roberta Smith, New York Times Art Review

*Portrait of Dr. Gachet* broke the record for the most expensive painting in 1990 when it was purchased at auction for $82,500,000.
REJECTION IN CONTEMPORARY ART

SHEPARD FAIREY
(b. 1970, American)

Background:
Shepard Fairey is often regarded as simply a street (graffiti) artist who emerged from the skateboarding scene, unknown to many until the emergence of the 2008 Obama Hope series. However, Fairey is actually classified in the art world as a contemporary artist, graphic designer, and illustrator. He first became known for his sticker campaign, "André the Giant Has a Posse." Born and raised in South Carolina, Fairey later earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree at the Rhode Island School of Design. His work can now be found in museum collections around the world including The Smithsonian, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Rejected For:
Street art, defacing public property, using an Associated Press photograph without permission.

Negative Response:
"Pop masquerading as art, as opposed to art masquerading as pop."
- critic Dave Hickey on the work of Shepard Fairey.
Fairey has faced legal issues related to the Obama, Hope poster, because the image he used was a photograph taken by the Associated Press. The AP sued Fairey, and he counter sued. No verdict has been reached.
As part of the exhibition of his work at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston, the museum sponsored Fairey to create street art throughout the city. When he arrived at the museum on opening night police also arrived, arresting him for defacing public property.

Eventual Success:
"It's sleek, suave, unfussy, and determined to make a difference."
-Sebastian Smee, The Boston Globe Art Review
Fairey recently had his first one-man exhibition at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Boston, Massachusetts. The Obama, Hope image has become one of the most recognized political artworks since the introduction of Uncle Sam in the 1940's.

DAMIEN HIRST
(b. 1965, British)

Background:
Damien Hirst was born in Bristol, England and earned his art degree at the Leeds College of Art and Design. He became best known for his series of deceased animals preserved in formaldehyde, which earned him many negative reviews. Hirst is now recognized as part of the Young British Artists group, and has become one of the richest living artists to date, after a 2008 auction at Sotheby’s where the sale of his work totaled $198 million.

Rejected for:
Death as a focal point, using dead animals as an art material.

Negative Response:

“Have they gone stark raving mad? The works of the ‘artist’ are lumps of dead animals.” -British conservative politician on the works of Hirst in the 1997 Sensation exhibit.

Eventual Success:
“…this crosses all borders because people respond to authenticity and strength…”
—Larry Gagosian (art dealer and owner of Gagosian Gallery)
A recent 2008 auction of Hirst’s work at Sotheby’s in New York broke the record for sale of works by a single artist, with $127.2 million raised on first day alone. (The record was previously held by Picasso in 1993, with a total of $20 million).

The Kingdom was sold for $17.2 million, although it was estimated at only half of that.

For the Love of God was sold for Hirst’s asking price of $100 million.
Rachel Whiteread  
(b. 1963, American)

REJECTED FOR:  
Emptiness & vacancy with a focus on death.

BACKGROUND:
Rachel Whiteread was born in London in 1963. She studied painting at a variety of schools including The Faculty of Arts and Architecture, Brighton Polytechnic, was briefly at the Cyprus College of Art, and later studied sculpture at London’s Slade School of Art. She began exhibiting her work in 1987, with her first solo show occurring the following year.

Rachel’s mother, Pat, was also an artist and died in 2003, an event that greatly effected Whiteread. Her works are predominantly casts of vacant rooms and ordinary objects. The concept behind such work is the idea of absence, emphasizing the line and form of the structure rather than the space within it. Whiteread describes her casts as carrying "the residue of years and years of use" by her chosen subjects.

NEGATIVE RESPONSE:
“This is another example of meritless gigantism that could be anywhere, and is the least successful of the gallery’s six attempts to exploit its most unsympathetic space." — Brian Sewell, London Evening Standard, October 2005. (Review of Embankment, 2005)

"[looks] like a random pile of giant sugar cubes... Luckily, the £400,000 sponsored work is recyclable."
-Stephen Moyes, Daily Mirror, October 11, 2005  
(Review of Embankment, 2005-2006)

Sidney Gale, now 71, lived in the house that Ms. Whiteread dismantled for her piece House. When asked if he thought of the unfinished sculpture as art he simply replied, "No not really. I used to do the same thing at the seaside with a bucket and a spade."

EVENTUAL SUCCESS:
“When Whiteread looks at space, she sees personal possessions that can no longer disturb the emptiness. In her casts from these objects, she evokes entire lives that can no longer break the silence.” —John Haber, art critic

Whiteread’s work draws mixed reviews, and has been the subject of controversy over the past years. In 1993 she was presented with the prestigious Turner Prize, a monetary prize of £25,000 awarded to the best young British artist (under age 50). Previous recipients of the award include Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin. Whiteread is currently represented by Gagosian Gallery in New York, while living and working in East London.
Lesson 1:  Is it Art?

Supplies:

5 Index Cards, each printed with an image by a contemporary artist.
Pen
Paper

Directions:

Arrange students into groups of 5 or 6, and give each group one index card with an image printed on it. Give the students a few minutes to look at the image, and write down their response to the question “Is it art?” Students should include at least three reasons for liking or disliking the piece and write two sentences describing the piece as an art critic would. After each student has recorded their answers, ask them to discuss their interpretations with their group, debating with one another until a unanimous decision has been reached on whether or not the piece should be considered art. Afterward, gather the cards and place them at the front of the class (larger prints for class discussion may be helpful, or they may be used in place of the smaller images altogether). Review the images one at a time allowing each group to explain their interpretations and final decision.

Modifications:

Students may work on their own, rather than in groups. Print a selection of images on a sheet of paper and provide each student with a copy allowing them assess multiple images and artists. Students should record their reactions to the pieces, choosing the pieces they like best and least. Afterward, have the entire class discuss their findings and interpretations as a group.

Print a selection of images on a sheet and provide each student with a copy. Ask students to choose the image they are most drawn to and then write a review in the role of an art critic who has just been to the gallery where the piece was featured. Students should use descriptive words to analyze the piece, explaining what they like, dislike and why.
Resources for Additional Information

Web:
The Archive: http://www.artchive/artchive/impressionism.html

Books:

Shepard Fairey
Web: http://obeygiant.com/

Books:

Damien Hirst
Web:

Books:

Rachel Whiteread
Web:

Books:
PORTRAYALS OF LIGHT
THE IMPRESSIONISTS VS. CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

During the late 1800’s the Impressionists became fascinated by the way in which natural light affected the look and feel of their subject matter. Many of these artists such as JMW Turner, Claude Monet and James Abbot McNeil Whistler began using sunlight, moonlight, and even firelight as their only light source, which set them apart from their contemporaries.

Today, artists continue to be fascinated with the effects of light. Several have made it their central focus, both in their subject matter and material although the light sources are often artificial (such as neon or fluorescent lighting). Such artists include James Turrell, Jenny Holzer and Alyson Shotz, all of whom have become well known for their creative uses of light.

JAMES TURRELL

Initially, James Turrell did not intend to become an artist. He earned a Bachelors degree in psychology and mathematics, before pursuing an MFA at the Claremont Graduate School in California. Turrell, who is considered an installation artist, is interested with the interaction between light and space. Many of his works enclose the viewer in a space in order to control their perception of light. Turrell is best known for his light tunnels and light projections. His intention is to create an atmosphere that evokes spiritual awakening and physically expresses the depth and significance of sight, or as Turrell explains, “I want to create an atmosphere that can be consciously plumbed with seeing, like the wordless thought that comes from looking in a fire.” Light sources for such works may be natural, such as light from a sunset or they may be artificial, such as colored lights or even the glow from a television. Turrell’s inspirations are drawn from his studies in perceptual psychology and optical illusions derived from mathematics, which he believes enable viewers to see themselves “seeing” creating an experience that is all encompassing and pure. Turrell has earned multiple awards including the Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellowships.
JENNY HOLZER

Jenny Holzer is a prominent contemporary female artist, living and working in Hoosick Falls, New York. She has earned degrees from Ohio University (BA) and the Rhode Island School of Design (MFA) in addition to honorary Doctorates from each. Holzer uses language as the focal point of much of her work, often addressing torture, gender issues, consumerism, death and disease in an effort to question each and evoke responses within the viewers. Her works incorporate light as the primary medium, utilizing electronic LED signs and xenon light often projected onto wall, staircases, or the exterior of buildings. Recent works include poetry and text of declassified government memoranda regarding prisoner abuse. Holzer’s works have earned her multiple art awards including the Golden Lion from the Venice Biennial (1990) and the Diploma of Chevalier (200) from the French government. She was the first woman to represent the United States in the Venice Biennial (1999). Major exhibitions of her work have been held around the world at major museums such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York.

ALYSON SHOTZ

Alyson Shotz is a contemporary artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. She holds degrees from the Rhode Island School of Design and the University of Washington, Seattle. Her work explores space, light and perception, inspired by mathematics and the properties of geometric forms. Shotz also incorporates her own personal interest in environmental issues, resulting in pieces that create an interactive visual experience. Works are created through a variety of media including stainless steel balls, mirrors, magnets, aluminum, glass beads and steel wire. It is the complexity and beauty of these forms that has earned Shotz several awards and fellowships including The New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship (2004), the Pollock-Krasner Foundation (1999) and the Art Matters Foundation award (1996).
Lesson 2: Portrayals of Light

Writing /Poetry

Supplies:
Pen / Pencil
Paper

Directions: At home or one of your favorite places, find a place to sit where you can observe the light in the room, and write down your answers to the following questions.

- What type of light do you see? (natural, artificial, etc.)
- What color is the light?
- Where is it coming from?
- How would you describe it? (bright, gentle, glowing, etc.).
- What type of mood does it create within the setting?
- How does the light make you feel?
- What do you like and dislike about the way the light affects the space?

After you complete the questions above, write a short poem or haiku that describes the light, space and mood of the place. Share your poem with a classmate or family member and ask them to share their interpretation with you.

Repeat the above activity by choosing a new location. (If you can’t go to a new location, return to the same one but at a different time of day to see how the light has changed and affects the space differently). Compare your findings with one another to see what types of similarities and differences you found between the settings. What things did you find most surprising?

Sculpture

Supplies:
Mylar
Mirrors
Water
Artificial light sources (flashlights, desk lamps, etc.)
Natural light source (such as sunlight through a window)
Shadows

Directions:
Create a multimedia sculpture using materials (like those listed above or other objects you may think of) that explore qualities of light. Take note of the effects of light from different angels, or even at different times of day. Make multiple sculptures from different materials and compare and contrast the effects of light on each sculpture.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Web Resources
(Multiple Artists)
http://www.pbs.org/art21/
http://www.artnet.com

Alyson Shotz
Web
http://www.mmoca.org/exhibitions/index.php
Books

James Turrell
Web
http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/turrell_james.html
http://www.greenmuseum.org/content/artist_index/artist_id-11.html
Books

Jenny Holzer
Web
http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/holzer_jenny.html
Books
Joseph Mallord William Turner

1. Joseph Mallord William Turner  
   *Fort de l’Esseillon, Val de la Maurienne*, 1836  
   Watercolor on wove paper  
   9 1/2 x 7 3/8”

2. Joseph Mallord William Turner  
   *Margate*, ca. 1830s – 40s  
   Gouache and pencil on blue-grey wove paper  
   5 1/2 x 7 3/8”

3. Joseph Mallord William Turner  
   *The Storm*, ca. 1840-45  
   Oil on canvas  
   12 3/4 x 21 1/8”

4. Joseph Mallord William Turner  
   *The Leyen Burg at Gondorf*, 1840s  
   Watercolor over pencil on wove paper  
   6 7/8 x 9 3/8”

5. Joseph Mallord William Turner  
   *Morning after the Wreck*, ca. 1840  
   Oil on canvas  
   15 1/4 x 24 3/8”

Realism

6. Camille Corot  
   *Castel Gandolfo, dancing Tyrolean Shepherds by Lake Albano*, 1855-60  
   Oil on canvas  
   19 3/8 x 25 5/8”

7. Camille Corot  
   *The Pond*, 1860s  
   Oil on canvas  
   15 1/2 x 26 1/2”
8. Camille Corot  
_Distant View of Corbeil_, ca. 1870  
Oil on canvas  
9 7/8 x 13 3/8”

9. Honoré Daumier  
_The Night Walkers_, 1842-47  
Oil on board  
11 3/8 x 7 3/8”

10. Honoré Daumier  
_The Heavy Burden_, 1850-60  
Oil on panel  
15 5/8 x 12 5/8”

11. Honoré Daumier  
_Head of a Man_, ca. 1850  
Black chalk on laid paper spotted with iron gall ink  
7 1/4 x 6”

12. Honoré Daumier  
_Head of a Man_, ca. 1852-56  
Oil on canvas  
10 7/8 x 13 7/8”

13. Honoré Daumier  
_The Watering Place_, ca. 1855-60  
Oil on board  
17 5/8 x 21 7/8”

14. Honoré Daumier  
_A Third Class Carriage_, ca. 1865  
Oil on board  
10 1/2 x 13 1/8”

15. Honoré Daumier  
_A Lawyer, Walking_, ca. 1865  
Ink and chalk on laid paper  
15 3/4 x 10 3/8”

16. Jean-François Millet  
_The Good Samaritan_, 1846  
Oil on canvas  
16 x 12 3/4”
17. Jean-François Millet
_The Seated Shepherdess_, 1840-50
Oil on board
7 3/8 x 9 5/8"

18. Jean-François Millet
_The Goose Girl at Gruchy_, 1854-56
Oil on canvas
13 x 9 3/4"

19. Jean-François Millet
_Winter: The Faggot Gatherers_, 1868-75
Oil on canvas
32 1/4 x 39 3/8"

20. Jean-François Millet
_The Gust of Wind_, 1871-73
Oil on canvas
35 x 46 1/8"

21. Anton Mauve
_The Shepherdess_, 1880s
Oil on canvas
11 7/8 x 19 3/4"

**Academic and Salon Painting**

22. Charles Bargue
_The Artist’s Model_, 1874
Oil on board
9 1/4 x 6 1/2"

23. Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier
_Innocents and Card Sharpers_, 1861
Oil on board
9 1/2 x 12 5/8"

24. Alfred Stevens
_Seated Girl_, undated
Oil on canvas
8 1/2 x 6 3/8"

**Impressionism**

25. Eugène Boudin
_Venice, the Molo_, 1895
26. Edouard Manet  
*Effect of Snow at Petit Montrouge*, 1870  
Oil on canvas  
24 1/4 x 19 7/8”

27. Edouard Manet  
*Argenteuil-Boats*, 1874  
Oil on canvas  
23 x 31 1/2”

28. Berthe Morisot  
*At Bougival*, 1882  
Oil on canvas  
23 5/8 x 28 3/4”

29. Henri Moret  
*Village in Clohars*, 1898  
Oil on canvas  
21 1/2 x 25 1/2”

30. Pierre-Auguste Renoir  
*La Parisienne*, 1874  
Oil on canvas  
64 1/2 x 42 5/8”

31. Pierre-Auguste Renoir  
*Conversation*, 1912  
Oil on canvas  
17 1/4 x 25 5/8”

32. Camille Pissarro  
*Pont Neuf, Snow Effect, 2nd Series*, 1902  
Oil on canvas  
21 1/2 x 25 3/4”

33. Alfred Sisley  
*Moret sur Loing (Rue de Fosses)*, 1892  
Oil on canvas  
15 3/8 x 18 3/8”

34. Claude Monet  
*Charing Cross Bridge*, 1902  
Oil on canvas
35. Claude Monet
   *Waterlilies*, 1906
   Oil on canvas
   32 x 36 1/2"

36. Claude Monet
   *The Palazzo Dario*, 1908
   Oil on canvas
   36 3/8 x 28 3/4"

**Post Impressionism and Symbolism**

37. James Abbott McNeill Whistler
   *Nocturne: Blue and Gold, St. Mark’s Venice*, 1880
   Oil on canvas
   17 1/2 x 23 1/2"

38. Eugène Carrière
   *Maternity*, early 1890s
   Oil on canvas
   21 5/8 x 29 2/3"

39. Eugène Carrière
   *Maternity (Suffering)*, ca. 1891-92
   Oil on canvas
   32 x 25 3/4"

40. Armand Seguin
    *Breton Peasant Women at Mass*, ca. 1894
    Oil on canvas
    21 7/8 x 15 1/8"

41. Paul Signac
    *St. Tropez*, 1918
    Watercolor and crayon on wove paper
    10 5/8 x 16"

42. Vincent van Gogh
    *Rain-Auvers*, 1890
    Oil on canvas
    19 3/4 x 39 1/2"

43. Pierre Bonnard
    *Sunlight at Vernon*, 1920
    Oil on canvas
44. Paul Cézanne
*The François Zola Dam*, ca. 1877-78
Oil on canvas
21 3/8 x 29 1/4”

45. Paul Cézanne
*Provençal Landscape*, ca. 1887
Oil on canvas
32 x 25 7/8”

**Modern British and European**

46. Maurice de Vlaminck
*Village Street*, 1911-12
Oil on canvas
22 7/8 x 28 7/8”

47. Maurice de Vlaminck
*The Bridge*, 1912-13
Oil on canvas
23 1/2 x 28 3/4”

48. André Dérain
*Madame Zborowska*, 1919
Oil on canvas
29 3/4 x 22 1/8”

49. Walter Richard Sickert
*Palazzo Eleanor Duse*, Venice, 1904
Oil on canvas
21 3/4 x 18 1/8”

50. Augustus John
*Head of Dorelia*, ca. 1911
Oil on plywood
16 x 13 1/8”

51. Augustus John
*Self-Portrait*, 1913
Oil on canvas
24 x 20 1/4”

52. Matthew Smith
*Apples on a Wicker Chair*, 1915
53. Robert Polhill Bevan
*Maples at Cuckfield, Sussex*, 1914
Oil on canvas
20 1/4 x 24 1/8”