

# Impressionists in London

## French artists in exile, 1870-1904

PRESS RELEASE  
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Petit Palais  
Musée des Beaux-Arts  
de la Ville de Paris

Tuesday - Sunday, 10 am - 6 pm  
Open late: Friday until 9 pm

INFORMATION

[www.petitpalais.paris.fr/en](http://www.petitpalais.paris.fr/en)

This summer, the Petit Palais is presenting an original exhibition devoted to the many **French artists who took refuge in London** following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and the uprising of the Commune. The exhibition plunges the visitor into this troubled period, whose impact on many artists is not widely known. **In spite of their social and political differences and their diverse artistic sensibilities, many of them found themselves on the British side of the Channel, where they formed a community of exiles.**

Organised in conjunction with the Tate, the exhibition presents **140 works** borrowed from museums in Britain, including **Tate Britain, the Victoria & Albert Museum, and the National Gallery**; the United States, including the **Brooklyn Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York**; and also from French museums such as the **Musée d'Orsay**.

Works by **Monet, Pissarro, Sisley**, and also by **Tissot**

and **Legros**, as well as sculptures by **Carpeaux, Rodin** and **Dalou**, are contrasted, at specific moments in the exhibition, with works by British artists such as **Alma-Tadema** and **Watts** as a means of evoking the networks of solidarity that evolved at that time between French and British artists.



Claude Monet, *The Houses of Parliament, London c. 1900-1901*, oil on canvas, Mr and Mrs Martin A. Ryerson Collection © 2017 The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Ressource, NY

**The exhibition follows a chronological path, which helps visitors understand what led the French artists to settle in London.** Even though some, like Legros, were already living in London, it was the **Franco-Prussian War of 1870 that acted as the trigger for a whole spate of arrivals from Paris.** The British Empire was at the height of its power and London provided a safe haven. But their choice of destination was also influenced by a belief that there was a more lucrative art market in London. The Parisian art dealer **Paul Durand-Ruel** opened a new gallery there, which became a base for promoting French painting.

**The future impressionists were among the first expatriate artists.** Monet and Pissarro arrived in London at the end of 1870 and met the older painter **Daubigny**. The landscapes of London, its parks and gardens and its famous fog became their favourite subjects. However, this first visit was difficult for Monet; he failed to sell his paintings and decided to return to France in the autumn of 1871.

**Tissot**, on the other hand, like **Legros** before him, had no difficulty in adjusting to London life. Tissot adapted his style to an audience that was particularly keen on genre scenes. He depicted Victorian society in meticulous detail through his many portraits and scenes from day-to-day activities such as concerts, balls, picnics, and boat trips on the Thames. It was on the advice of his friend **Whistler** that Legros moved to London in 1863, for financial reasons. He married an English woman and soon obtained British nationality. He became the pillar of the French exile community and one of the most respected teachers of painting and drawing in the capital.

On the demise of Napoleon III, who had been his great supporter, **Carpeaux** found sanctuary in London, but he did not enjoy the success he had hoped for. His student, **Dalou**, who had been a Commune member, fled Paris in the spring of 1871 and headed for the British capital, where he spent eight highly productive years.

He was well received by English artists and gave lessons in sculpture. The informal subjects of his sculptures were hugely popular with financiers and landowners.

**Long after these difficult years, impressionists like Pissarro and Monet returned several times to London.** These visits confirmed them in their enthusiasm for working in the open air. The many parks and gardens in the British capital – Hyde Park and Kew Gardens, for example –, and the Thames with its boating pleasures became recurrent motifs in their paintings. From 1899 to 1901, Monet chose the river and the infinite variations of light on the water as the subject of a long series of paintings. He painted over a hundred pictures of Charing Cross Bridge, Waterloo Bridge and Westminster Bridge. The paintings of the Houses of Parliament are among the most beautiful. The buildings served as a pretext for immortalizing the view of the Thames and its fogs, which were subject to a multitude of chromatic variations depending on the time of day. **The exhibition ends with Derain** paying tribute to Monet, in 1906-1907, by painting the same subjects. He defied the master by developing his own artistic expression and proposing a new image of London.

**Visitors are guided through the exhibition by several mediation devices.**

**A sound track** broadcasts the conversations of two English characters chatting about social issues: Arthur Gordon, a journalist who worked in Paris before the war, and his young cousin, Dorothy Bailey, who studied painting in London. Their exchanges provide an opportunity for visitors to discover the artistic controversies of the time and to follow them in the places frequented by the French community in London.

**An interactive table in the «art club»**, a space designed like a London club, features a map of the city with 80 entry points giving access to information on artists, personalities, meeting places and the locations depicted in the paintings in the exhibition.

Finally, the **«art studio»**, an educational space located on the exhibition trail; it evokes a late 19th century artist's studio. With the help of interactive learning aids and original works (paintings, engravings and sculptures), visitors are encouraged to discover and experiment with the techniques of the artists featured in the exhibition. Free activities, for young and old alike, for which reservation is not required, can be enjoyed throughout the exhibition.



Camille Pissarro, *Kew Green*, 1892, huile sur toile, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, en dépôt au musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, legs de Clément et Andrée Adès, 1979 © Lyon, MBA – Photo Alain Basset

Exposition organisée par la Tate, en collaboration avec le Petit Palais



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#### CURATORS:

**Isabelle Collet**, Head curator at the Petit Palais  
**Dr Caroline Corbeau-Parsons**, curator at Tate Britain,  
Christophe Leribault, director of the Petit Palais  
With academic curatorship from **Amélie Simier**, director of the Musée Bourdelle.

#### #impressionnistesLondres

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