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A NEW BOOK *IMPRESSIONISM, AN INTIMATE VIEW* PROVIDES INSIGHT INTO POPULAR COLLECTION AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Washington, DC--The enduring appeal of impressionist art continues to draw large crowds to exhibitions. Yet very little has been published that focuses on the intimate nature of much of impressionist art. The National Gallery of Art announces a new book that seeks to fill that gap, **Impressionism, an Intimate View: Small French Paintings in the National Gallery of Art**, by Florence E. Coman, assistant curator of French paintings, with a foreword by Philip Conisbee, senior curator of European paintings.

Presenting over fifty works by major artists, the beautifully illustrated volume takes the Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection of small French paintings in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, as its starting point. In 1969 [Ailsa Mellon Bruce \(http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/pbio?1062\)](http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/pbio?1062), daughter of Gallery founder Andrew Mellon and sister to founding benefactor Paul Mellon, bequeathed to the Gallery her extensive collection of French impressionist and postimpressionist paintings. She considered their small size suitable for modestly scaled modern interiors, such as her apartment in Manhattan. Since the original Bruce gift, Ailsa's brother Paul Mellon and his wife, as well as other donors, have added many works of modest scale but high quality to the collection of small French paintings. When the East Building opened in 1978, a series of small galleries became available for the exhibition of small French paintings; this suite of galleries on the ground floor of the East Building remains a perennial favorite of visitors.

In an introductory essay, the author explains that when the first impressionist exhibition opened in April 1874, critics were shocked at the small-scale, "unfinished" nature of the

paintings. By the time of the last impressionist exhibition in 1886, the concept of what constituted a finished work had changed. Smaller, sketchier painting was increasingly admired for its freshness and immediacy of expression, and impressionism had given way to a radical reinterpretation by a new generation of artists.

Impressionism, an Intimate View explores two important aspects of impressionism. First, it illustrates how artists like Degas, Monet, Morisot, Pissarro, and Renoir sought to capture fleeting, everyday moments and ordinary objects encountered in their own lives and those of their families, friends, and servants. The scale and subject matter of their small paintings were in stark contrast to the paintings of the official Salon. In place of large-scale academic or neoclassical subjects, the impressionists turned to self-portraits, flowers in a crystal vase, a view of dancers backstage, a sister at a window, or an interior just after dinner — works that were at once highly personal and introverted, wistful and dreamlike, transient and intimate in scale.

Second, the author shows how the painting of earlier realist and landscape artists such as Corot, Rousseau, Boudin, and Manet was absorbed into the small-scale impressionist works of an emerging generation of artists that included Monet, Renoir, Morisot, and Pissarro. The subjects, techniques, and styles of the impressionists were central to the succeeding generation of artists such as Cézanne, Van Gogh, Vuillard, Toulouse-Lautrec, Matisse, and the fauves.

Authors and Book Availability

The author is Florence Coman, assistant curator of French paintings at the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Philip Conisbee, senior curator of European paintings at the Gallery, provides a comprehensive introduction. Published by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, in association with D Giles Limited, London, the book is available from the Gallery Shops, from the Gallery's Web site at www.nga.gov (<http://www.nga.gov/home.htm>) , or by phone at (202) 842-6002 or (800) 697-9350 for \$19.95 hardcover (80 pages, 60+ color illustrations).

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General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit www.nga.gov/renovation (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>) .

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at www.nga.gov. Follow the Gallery on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt and on Twitter at twitter.com/ngadc.

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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