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EXHIBITING BERTHE MORISOT AFTER THE ADVENT OF FEMINIST ART HISTORY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Kristie L. Couser
(Bachelor of Arts, Ball State University, May, 2004)

Director: Dr. Margaret A. Lindauer,
Associate Professor and Museum Studies Coordinator, Department of Art History

Virginia Commonwealth University
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Abstract

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By Kristie L. Couser, MA

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Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013.

Major Director: Dr. Margaret Lindauer, Associate Professor and Museum Studies Coordinator,
Department of Art History

Feminist art historians reassessed French Impressionist Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, a period in which her work coincidentally received steady exposure in major museum exhibitions. This thesis examines how the feminist art historical project intersects with exhibitions that give prominence to Morisot's work. Critical reviews by Morisot scholars argue that more frequent display of the artist's work has not correlated to nuanced interpretation. Moreover, prominent feminist scholars and museum theorists maintain that curators virtually exclude their contributions. Attending to these recurrent concerns, this thesis charts shifts in emphases and inquiry in writing centered on Morisot to survey the extent to which curators convey new constructions of her artistic, social, and historical identities. This analysis will observe how distinct exhibition forms—the retrospective, the Impressionism blockbuster, and the gendered “women Impressionists” show—may frame Morisot's work differently according to their organizing principles.

Introduction

Poor Madame Morisot—the public hardly knows her!

— Camille Pissarro, March 6, 1895

Penned in a private letter on the eve of French Impressionist Berthe Morisot's funeral, the preceding lament is routinely repeated in late twentieth-century art historical scholarship that discusses her work. Pissarro, like Morisot's colleagues who exhibited as the Société Anonyme des Artistes, Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs, etc., regarded her as a consummate painter, an accolade she also received from critics who typically lambasted Impressionism. By 1974, the centenary of the first Impressionist exhibition, however, Pissarro's concise observation invited questions on how Morisot remained little known while art historians certified Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir—the very men who commemorated her with a grand posthumous 1896 retrospective at Galerie Durand-Ruel in Paris—as towering art historical figures. Following the advent of feminist art history, scholars uncovered a primary reason for Morisot's neglect: persistent sexism in the construction of the Modernist canon.¹

Morisot, a regular subject of early feminist art historical surveys and “women artists”

¹ Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” *Art News* 69 (January 1971): 22-39. Eminent art historians and scholars of women's studies specifically name Nochlin's essay the first major feminist contribution to the discipline. See Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews' historiographic essay on feminist art, art history, and critical approaches, “The Feminist Critique of Art History,” *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (September 1987): 326-357, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3051059> (accessed July 29, 2012).

exhibitions, received her first major American retrospective in 1987.² This event aimed to renew Morisot's reputation as a central Impressionist figure and also stimulated academic scholarship. Feminist art historians have since written extensively, yet cautiously, on Morisot's life and work, seeking to prevent her from being uncritically subsumed into the canon as a "great" painter. Kathleen Adler, Tamar Garb, and Anne Higonnet in particular consider not only the pictorial aspects of Morisot's paintings, but also the socio-historical context in which she worked as an upper-class woman who pursued a "masculine" career outside of the State-sponsored École des Beaux-Arts and its patronage system. Morisot has featured continually in late twentieth- and early twenty-first century museum exhibitions developed coincident with the emergent body of scholarship on her work, however, exhibition reviews authored by feminist art historians consistently contend that greater exposure does not always correlate to more nuanced interpretation. Their disappointment necessitates the question: if the public now knows Morisot, *what* do they know about her?

This thesis will examine how academic recuperation and reassessment of Berthe Morisot intersects with museum exhibitions that give prominence to her work. It will chart shifts in emphases and inquiry in feminist art historical scholarship centered on Morisot to survey the extent to which curators convey in exhibitions new constructions of her artistic, social, and historical identities.

This project proceeds from an incidental remark made by eminent feminist art historian Griselda Pollock in her 2002 essay, "A History of Absence Belatedly Addressed: Impressionism

² Mount Holyoke College Art Museum (South Hadley, Massachusetts) organized *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist* in conjunction with the National Gallery of Art (Washington D.C.). The Kimbell Art Museum (Fort Worth, Texas) also hosted the exhibition. See Chapter 3 for its review.

with and without Mary Cassatt.”³ Pollock, author of major monographic and critical studies of late nineteenth-century artists, considers how curators marginalize or misrepresent American painter and printmaker Mary Cassatt (1844-1926)—“like Morisot before her”—throughout late twentieth-century blockbuster Impressionism exhibitions.⁴ Pollock maintains, “the reigning powers have ruthlessly excluded and pointedly ignored [what she named in 1988] ‘feminist interventions into art’s histories’.”⁵ This revelation compels her to conceptualize a corrective “virtual” exhibition that models feminist methodological bricolage by analyzing the interrelationship of gender and representation in the display of work by Cassatt and her contemporaries, examples of which appear in reproduction alongside artifacts not traditionally found in the art museum. Ultimately, Pollock recognizes that her exhibition will remain “virtual” in part because it rejects the restrictive temporal, material, geographic, and gendered categories arbitrarily upheld in museums.⁶

Recent essays that delineate feminist curatorial practice, a nascent area of interest within the progressive museum studies literature, complement Pollock’s impulse to lift theory off of the page and translate it into practice. Hilde Hein, feminist philosopher and museum theorist, views the museum as an “exemplary site to gauge [the] effectiveness [of feminist theorizing].”⁷ Previously,

³ Griselda Pollock, “A History of Absence Belatedly Addressed: Impressionism with and without Mary Cassatt,” in *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University*, ed. Charles W. Haxthausen, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 123-141.

⁴ Pollock, “A History of Absence,” 127.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁶ Pollock elaborates upon her conception of the “virtual feminist space” and launches her most exhaustive challenge to the dominant art historical frameworks of the museum in *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space, and the Archive* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁷ Hilde Hein, “Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective,” in *Gender, Sexuality, and*

revisionist display of works by women artists sufficed as an institutional response to the feminist art historical project, which endeavored in its earliest stage to redress women artists' historical oppression by documenting their achievements.⁸ Katy Deepwell observes in the late twentieth-century an increased number of one-woman exhibitions and gendered "specialist" exhibitions (e.g. women Impressionists).⁹ Re-installing permanent collections and organizing temporary exhibitions to display more works by women artists, however, borders on tokenism. Although feminist theory remains a "loose assemblage of themes,"¹⁰ its proponents share common goals: to critique the authority of the canon by abandoning the masterpiece (and its inherent sexist vocabulary); to reject traditional periodization and material hierarchies that severely limit interpretation; and to encourage intellectual open-endedness, plurality, and a new level of comfort with contingent meanings.¹¹

Thus, this thesis will observe how the relationship between forthright criticisms extended by feminist scholars toward museum curators about exhibition research and practice involves more than mere recuperation of the work of artists who are women or represent feminine subject

Museums: A Routledge Reader, ed. Amy K. Levin (New York: Routledge, 2010), 54.

⁸ Most feminist art historians agree on a "first-wave" of scholarship that recuperated neglected women artists. See Gouma-Peterson and Mathews, "The Feminist Critique of Art History," 326-357; Lois W. Banner, "Three Stages of Development," in *Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums*, ed. Jane R. Glaser and Artemis A. Zenetou (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 39-46.

⁹ Katy Deepwell, "Feminist Curatorial Strategies and Practices since the 1970s," in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 64-84.

¹⁰ Hein, "Looking at Museums," 52.

¹¹ See also Gaby Porter, "Seeing Through Solidity," in *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World*, eds. Sharon MacDonald and Gordon Fyfe (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 105-126; Deepwell, "Feminist Curatorial Strategies," 64-84.

matter. It will consider how distinct, conventional exhibition forms—the retrospective, the Impressionism blockbuster, and the gendered “women Impressionist” special exhibition—may frame Morisot’s work differently. Ultimately, this thesis will demonstrate that curators interpret academic scholarship in a markedly conservative manner within exhibition forms that are unsuited to convey feminist art historical knowledge.

The first chapter of this thesis will construct a historiographic survey of relevant feminist scholarship that facilitates critical assessment of exhibition practice throughout subsequent chapters. The second chapter will examine how curators frame Morisot in selected major Impressionism exhibitions mounted since the early 1970s and identify two secondary exhibition types: the Impressionist survey and the thematic grouping. Chapter Three will evaluate major Morisot retrospectives held between 1987 and 2012. The final chapter will examine the gendered “women Impressionists” exhibition type that emerged in the early 1990s. This specialized grouping typically displays Morisot’s work alongside that of three Impressionists who were also women: Marie Bracquemond (1840-1916), Mary Cassatt (1844-1926), and Eva Gonzàles (1849-1883). Catalogs, reviews printed in scholarly journals, and installation views (when available) will inform analysis of all exhibitions.

Chapter 1

Morisot: A Feminist Art Historical Project

Throughout the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries, feminist art historians authored a dynamic and substantial body of scholarship on Morisot, making ample new knowledge available to curators who organized exhibitions that gave prominence to her work. This chapter will survey feminist art historical writing since Linda Nochlin's pioneering 1971 article "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" and engage with two bodies of literature: landmark texts that define and exemplify feminist theory specific to art history (in particular those that mention Morisot) and monographic studies and critical essays written by Morisot scholars who acknowledge in earnest their feminist positions. This review will inform critical assessment of exhibition practice in Chapters 2 through 4.

Published coincidental with the first major American museum retrospective of Morisot's work, Thalia Gouma-Peterson's and Patricia Mathews' historiographic essay, "The Feminist Critique of Art History" sets a precedent for charting the major debates within feminist art history. Their invaluable undertaking gives direction to the first portion of this chapter by identifying early inquiries relevant to Morisot as a historical subject whom feminist art historians recuperated at the outset of their critique of the discipline. The second portion of this chapter reviews monographs and critical essays centered on Morisot, the majority of which reached publication after 1986. Its chronological organizational approach takes cognizance of feminist art history as a self-reflexive

“conversational community,”¹² an apt description of the Morisot literature and its producers. The selectivity and sequencing of this chapter is not meant to imply a progression or evolution of interpretation, however most scholars observe a shift from recovery to re-integration and critique.¹³ Although particular interests and goals predominate or decline in popularity at certain junctures, on balance, feminist art historical writing persists as a heterogeneous scholarly venture and this review seeks to capture its ongoing dialogue. With respect to Morisot, however, monographic or biographical studies become conspicuously absent by the late 1990s, while critical essays increasingly investigate her individual works.

In the polemical essay that galvanized feminist art historians, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” Nochlin asserts that culturally determined hierarchies of art marginalized women artists in the past, rather than any inherent weakness in women’s practice. By uncovering how art academies and other professionalizing institutions historically barred women from the training necessary to achieve artistic “greatness,” Nochlin begins to document a patriarchal process of excluding women from public accomplishment and reclaims women as active participants in the past.¹⁴ Although she exposes the nature of artistic “greatness”—an attribute especially mythologized during the nineteenth century as indefinable (if not quasi-mystical)—as socially defined as male,

¹² Griselda Pollock discusses the often collaborative and self-critical nature of feminist art historical writing in “Feminist Interventions in the Histories of Art: An Introduction,” in *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity, and Histories of Art*. (London: Routledge, 1988, repr., 2003), 21.

¹³ Gouma-Peterson and Mathews discuss two generations of feminist art historians by 1987, see “The Feminist Critique of Art History,” 346-357. Banner discusses a third generation of cross-disciplinary critique by 1994 in “Three Stages of Development,” in *Gender Perspectives* 39-46.

¹⁴ For example, Nochlin stresses how women could not excel at history painting, the genre exalted by officials and critics of the annual École des Beaux-Arts Salon in Paris and other state-sanctioned exhibitions, without access to the studio nude.

this act does not by itself challenge the authority of “greatness” as a standard for achievement.

Nochlin anticipates the recuperation and documentation of “great” women artists in droves while laying the groundwork for further investigation of social constructs that might control artistic practice and produce shared visual characteristics, such as iconographies.¹⁵

Entering into a direct dialogue with Nochlin and other feminists determined to reform art history, Rozsika Parker’s and Griselda Pollock’s *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology* (1981) investigates how historical oppression of women relates to the processes of their exclusion from art historical scholarship.¹⁶ Arguing for the deconstruction of a discipline that they believe remains ideologically patriarchal in its reverence for “Old Masters,” Parker and Pollock iterate that they do not equate recovery of dozens—or even hundreds—of “Old Mistresses” with a radical re-thinking of art history. The ubiquitous monographic form, an expected and unquestioned publication following each new discovery made by “feminists rummag[ing] in dusty basements,” wearies the authors.¹⁷ Instead of co-opting neglected women artists “into existing fields of historical knowledge through the established channels and formats,”¹⁸ Parker and Pollock encourage feminist scholars

¹⁵ Gouma-Peterson’s and Mathews’s research yielded an extensive list of 1970s monographs, survey texts, and essays on women artists. See “The Feminist Critique of Art History,” footnotes 3, 6-7, pp. 326-27.

¹⁶ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981). According to Pollock, she and Parker initially “planned [*Old Mistresses*] in 1974,” and completed it in 1978, but their publisher did not release the book until 1981 due to bankruptcy. See Pollock, see “The Politics of Theory: Generations and Geographies in Feminist Theory and the Histories of Art Histories,” in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. Griselda Pollock, (London: Routledge, 1996), 15.

¹⁷ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 45-46.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

to reformulate their approaches to writing about women in ways that expand knowledge of the period in which an artist worked and account for how she produced art despite discrimination that stemmed from her gender identity.¹⁹

Pollock elaborates on the ideology of sexual difference in *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity, and Histories of Art* (1988). This landmark volume of essays employs an eclectic, interdisciplinary feminist theoretical approach that entails selective borrowing of Marxist, semiotic, and psychoanalytic ideas to interpret several examples of nineteenth- and twentieth-century works produced by male and female artists.²⁰ Defining her pursuit of art history as an intervention into the processes that form hegemonic social structures, Pollock continually questions the theoretical bases and power structures that “write” history while re-writing historical narratives free from “Western phallocentricism.”²¹ Pollock signals a paradigm shift by informing the reader that her aim has moved beyond mere recuperation of women artists—she rejects any notion of women’s art as a homogeneous, and therefore ahistorical, entity.

The volume’s most frequently cited essay, “Modernity and The Spaces of Femininity,” attends to “difference”—the ways in which every person in history is marked by variables such as location, class, and gender—by mapping the locations in which and from which male and female

¹⁹ For example, Parker and Pollock illustrate how rigid gender roles respected in late nineteenth-century upper class households restricted Morisot’s artistic practice. See *Ibid.*, 38-44.

²⁰ Griselda Pollock, introduction to *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity, and Histories of Art*. (London: Routledge, 1988, repr., 2003), xvii-xxxviii.

²¹ In the 2003 edition, Pollock responds to critics who dismiss feminist art history as an academic “curiosity” of the late twentieth century and seeks to demonstrate how her practice endures by its nature as a “radical questioning and way of thinking” she must subtly revise with each project that works to rewrite history as *histories*. See Pollock, introduction to *Vision and Difference*.

Impressionist artists represented their subjects.²² The physical location of artistic subjects, the spatial order within an image or compositional bounding, and the viewpoint from which an artist painted become critical elements in Pollock's re-reading of Impressionist paintings. Furthermore, she defines space as a socially constructed category, a site for examining relations between artistic production, private and public spectatorship, and gender identity. After noting her sustained interest in the careers of Morisot and Mary Cassatt, Pollock asks:

But how are ...[art historians] supposed to study the work of artists who are women so that we can discover and account for the specificity of what they produced as individuals while also recognizing that, as women, they worked from different positions and experiences from those of their colleagues who were men?²³

Pollock consciously uses the phrase "artists who are women" as she analyzes the private, domestic rooms and gardens occupied and painted by Cassatt and Morisot in comparison with works by fellow Impressionists Degas, Monet, and Renoir, whose paintings convey their experiences within cafés, folies, and brothels—public sites reserved for men's leisure that became synonymous with avant-garde art and its male progenitors. Pollock's deliberate re-naming also subtly indicates a striking theoretical shift away from earlier feminist projects that essentialized gender to instead discussing "femininity" as a socially constructed, historically variable condition. Perhaps in allegiance with Pollock, scholarship centered on Morisot from the late 1980s also introduces more nuanced language in addressing gender, difference, and the writing of feminist histories.

²² Pollock first presented her paper "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity" at the British Association of Art Historians' meeting in April 1986. See, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference*, (London: Routledge, 188, repr., 2003), 70-127.

²³ Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," 76.

The earliest critical essays to employ feminist theory to advance fresh interpretations of Morisot's work debuted as seven lectures at *Perspectives on Morisot*, a symposium held in conjunction with the 1987 retrospective *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist* at the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (an exhibition discussed in Chapter 3).²⁴ Historians who specialize in nineteenth-century French art, Kathleen Adler, Beatrice Farwell, Tamar Garb, Anne Higonnet, Suzanne Glover Lindsay, Linda Nochlin, and Anne Schirrmeyer, studied Morisot's artistic subjects and distinctive gesture in relationship to her social position as an upper-class wife and mother who pursued a career as a painter. These wide-ranging lectures encourage consideration of Morisot's work with respect to her classed and gendered identity and reject a male standard of comparison. Although concise, these lectures (published as an edited volume in 1990) are worth highlighting individually because they constitute foundational essays on Morisot, three of which were later expanded into substantial monographic studies.

The first two essays in *Perspectives on Morisot* (1990) examine relationships between Morisot's artistic practice and bourgeois respectability. Adler frames Morisot within the Passy suburb or "woman's land."²⁵ After defining Passy as a domestic (and thereby feminine) space, Adler describes period social conventions that created virtual barriers limiting where women could engage with public life, asserting that Morisot's *View of Paris from the Trocadero* (ca. 1871) is both a city panorama and glimpse of suburban women's experiences in "transitional" public spaces. Beatrice Farwell also considers the relationship between Morisot's physical location and propriety.

²⁴ Mount Holyoke College Art Museum held *Perspectives on Morisot* on April 9, 1988; the lectures were later published in 1990 as a "complement to the [*Berthe Morisot—Impressionist*] catalogue." See "Preface," in *Perspectives on Morisot*, ed. Teri J. Edelstein, (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990), 6.

²⁵ Kathleen Adler, "The Spaces of Everyday Life: Berthe Morisot and Passy," in *Perspectives on Morisot*, 35-44.

Relating Edouard Manet's *Repose* (ca. 1871; Rhode Island School of Design, Museum of Art), a portrait of Morisot casually seated on a sofa, to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century iconographic motif of reclined women, Farwell demonstrates how the two artists conformed differently to bourgeois propriety.²⁶ While Manet strained the boundaries of public decorum by representing Morisot in a setting historically occupied by a demimonde actress, allegorical figure, or the artist's mistress or wife, Morisot worked in deference to her own class identity; she would have compromised herself if she had cast herself in the erotic trope used by Manet.

Garb, Higonnet, and Glover Lindsay explore how “femininity”—a variously defined concept applied to phenomena beyond the female body—affected the reception of Morisot's work. Garb examines how conventions and motifs readily apparent in Morisot's Impressionist paintings, including delicate brushwork, clarity of color, intimate scale, and an “unfinished” quality, simultaneously spoke to her strengths and weaknesses (as characterized by critics) as a woman artist who worked in a representational mode that art critics and audiences labeled as “feminine.”²⁷ While critics disparaged male Impressionists' work by characterizing it as irrational and “attached to surface” (i.e. as betraying “feminine” frivolity), they praised Morisot's individual gesture and motifs for manifesting her “inherent” femininity. Garb also includes a concise but potent summary of the scientific community's efforts to prove empirically sexual differences that demonstrate women's inferiority to men.²⁸ Higonnet interprets the composition of Morisot's “feminine self”

²⁶ Beatrice Farwell, “Manet, Morisot, and Propriety,” in *Perspectives on Morisot*, 45-56.

²⁷ Tamar Garb, “Berthe Morisot and the Feminizing of Impressionism,” in *Perspectives on Morisot*, 57-66.

with regard to the iconography and display of her self-portraits and portraits of her painted by her sister Edma and those by Manet.²⁹ Morisot produced at least five self-portraits in which she cleverly subsumes her professional identity as an artist and her familial role as a mother by depicting her daughter Julie at her side. Because Morisot never exhibited these strategic images during her lifetime, the Salon public primarily viewed her as the object of Manet's vision rather than an active artist.³⁰ Glover Lindsay briefly traces the commercial interactions between Morisot and her public (dealers and individual buyers), encouraging other scholars to identify the nuances of the artist's commercial successes and failures as a woman.³¹

The final two essays written for *Perspectives on Morisot* deal with the ways in which Morisot articulated Baudelairean modernity through an iconography of women's everyday life. Nochlin interprets Morisot's "Wet Nurse and Julie" (1879) as an image of two women at work: Morisot labors by producing a painting of her employee, a wet nurse, who breast-feeds the painter's

²⁸ Garb explores this topic further in *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (1994). Although the book closely analyzes the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs, founded in Paris in 1881 to support the public display of art by women (a group that Morisot never joined), it demonstrates the stylistic and ideological differences between the ambitious Union painters' preferred academic style of painting in the "masculine" tradition and Morisot's "feminine" brand of Impressionism. Union painters eschewed the avant-garde in their effort to achieve parity with men, whereas Morisot's alliance with male Impressionists enabled her more selectively to exhibit her work and earned her critical praise for working in a manner suited to her sex. See especially Chapter 5, "The Sex of Art: In Search of *le genie féminin*," in Tamar Garb, *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 105-152.

²⁹ Anne Higonnet, "The Other Side of the Mirror," in *Perspectives on Morisot*, 67-78.

³⁰ For example, Morisot sat as a model for Manet's *The Balcony* (1869; Musée d'Orsay) and *Repose* (ca. 1871; Rhode Island School of Design, Museum of Art), paintings that he entered in the Salons of 1869 and 1873 respectively.

³¹ Suzanne Glover Lindsay, "Berthe Morisot, Nineteenth-Century Woman as Professional," in *Perspectives on Morisot*, 79-90.

daughter.³² Arguing against the early twentieth-century view of Impressionism as primarily depicting scenes of middle-class leisure, Nochlin makes a cogent argument that women's productivity—mothering or nurturing children, serving as barmaids, and entertaining men as dancers or prostitutes—has been “assimilated into natural” or seen as an aspect essential to the female sex, rather than work. This discussion is particularly constructive insofar as the most widely known and studied Impressionist paintings are by male artists who often conflate women's work with men's leisure. Nochlin leads the reader to consider how Morisot's paintings have been equated historically to what is “natural” to the artist as a woman instead of products of professional work. Lastly, Schirrmeister argues that Morisot incorporates into her work postures and compositions appropriated from contemporary fashion plates, including the conventions of a turned away female figure and a balcony setting that overlooks an urban panorama.³³ Drawing on several strong comparisons of women's fashion illustrations and Morisot's paintings to support her claim, Schirrmeister posits that Morisot's depiction of specific types of bourgeois dress creates a symbolic language of the private, domestic sphere within which she worked. Countering historical criticism that trivialized women artists as passive, imitative artists, Schirrmeister underlines Morisot's retooling of fashion plate imagery as a purposeful act that functioned to evoke her subject's psychological states.

Following *Perspectives on Morisot*, Adler, Garb, and Higonnet continued to evaluate relationships between Morisot's work, aspects of her social identity, and the broader socio-cultural

³² Linda Nochlin, “Morisot's Wet Nurse: The Construction of Work and Leisure in Impressionist Painting,” in *Perspectives on Morisot*, 91-102.

³³ Anne Schirrmeister, “*La Dernière Mode: Berthe Morisot and Costume*,” in *Perspectives on Morisot*, 103-115.

and historical contexts within which she worked by formulating major monographic studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In *Berthe Morisot* (1987), Adler and Garb aim to correct Impressionist survey literature that typically “[accords Morisot] a marginal place” in comparison with other artists associated with the group.³⁴ Although the authors document the well-known, formative events in Morisot’s private life and artistic career—her and her sister Edma’s early and exceptional artistic training, her friendship and professional relationship with Edouard Manet, and her involvement in the Impressionist circle—their accounts avoid rehashing material from the artist’s correspondence.³⁵ Signaling an unconventional approach to their subject, Adler’s and Garb’s thematic chapter organization contributes to examining the persistent social and cultural issues of the mid- and late-nineteenth century as they intersect with Morisot’s artistic identity. This approach adds dimension to individual works by Morisot, particularly when used to interpret Morisot’s self-portraits and images of other women within “feminine” spaces, such as the bourgeois interior and suburbs.³⁶ In all, Adler and Garb skillfully expand upon their prior research to investigate how Morisot’s gender corresponded to (and often constrained) her practice, while arguing a strong case for her position as a central Impressionist figure.

Each chapter of Higonnet’s *Berthe Morisot* (1990) carries forth her central argument: that

³⁴ Kathleen Adler and Tamar Garb, *Berthe Morisot*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 7.

³⁵ Denis Rouart’s *Correspondence de Berthe Morisot* (Paris, 1950) informed much extant scholarship and exhibitions on Morisot. Adler and Garb supplied an introduction and notes to its English translation. See *The Correspondence of Berthe Morisot with her Family and Friends*, ed. Denis Rouart. (London: Camden Press, 1986), 1-11.

³⁶ Adler and Garb, *Berthe Morisot*, see chapter 4 “The Painting of Bourgeois Life,” 80-104 and chapter 5 “The Evocation of Place,” 105-124.

Morisot, through her association with Impressionism, strategically worked counter to social conventions that prevented women from being recognized as working artists.³⁷ Although Morisot desired to be on an equal footing with male artists to the point of crisis—frustration that Higonnet contextualizes as stemming from both her mother’s increasing disapproval and the fact that society did not find women capable of creative “genius”—the author avoids revising Morisot’s lived social and historical moment to misleadingly present her as a radical. In the chapters that center on the advent of Impressionism and Morisot’s immediate engagement with its technical and stylistic program, Higonnet explains clearly and plausibly the ways in which Impressionism in its radicalism enabled Morisot to specialize in traditionally “feminine” genres and themes and thus demonstrate her skill as a painter.

Manet’s eleven portraits of Morisot, paintings that regularly feature in late twentieth- and early twenty-first century exhibitions dedicated to Morisot’s work, also receive Higonnet’s critical attention in this monograph. She interprets the portraits as an equal exchange between Manet and Morisot through which he traced her “evolving sense of self,”³⁸ resisting direct comparison of the artists’ work. Higonnet’s perspective on Manet’s images mirrors her underlying narrative of a woman who becomes an increasingly self-confident painter only as she finds ways to subtly override social convention. Gender becomes Higonnet’s central concern in *Berthe Morisot’s Images of Women* (1992), as she states forcefully in her opening sentences, “Berthe Morisot became a painter despite being a woman. She painted the way she did because she was a woman.”³⁹ This

³⁷ See Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1990).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁹ Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot’s Images of Women*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 1.

book exclusively examines Morisot's representations of women and parallel images produced within the amateur art tradition and ephemeral visual culture. By tracing the history and conventions of "women's art," a tradition marginalized in art historical literature that encompasses the flower painting, animal painting, and portraiture genres, Higonnet complements progressing discourses on the gendering of artistic domains while further investigating Morisot's bourgeois feminine identity.⁴⁰ Concluding passages on Morisot's self-portraits and portraits of her daughter Julie interpret the artist's recurring "artist-and-mother" motif and her presentation of Julie as a separate person (not always identifiably the artist's daughter). Higonnet's closing discussion effectively exemplifies how Morisot attained more artistic freedom by adhering to conventions of "women's art" with a female subject.⁴¹

Following the succession of late 1980s and early 1990s monographs, Morisot's work has received far less dedicated attention from feminist art historians, featuring only in a comprehensive exposition of feminist theory and brief interpretive essays that focus on individual paintings, series, or recurring sitters and motifs. Morisot's self-portraits and portraits of the artist by other makers receive considerable attention in these critical texts.⁴²

Pollock describes Morisot as a "well-documented artist" in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (1999), a rigorous meditation on the heterogeneity of

⁴⁰ Higonnet also surveys the "feminine" elements of late nineteenth-century visual culture, primarily the chromolithographic fashion plate, in relationship to Morisot, thus expanding upon Schirmeister's work, see "La Dernière Mode," in *Perspectives on Morisot*, 103-115.

⁴¹ Higonnet expands upon her earlier work on Morisot's self-portraiture, namely "The Other Side of the Mirror," in *Perspectives on Morisot*, 67-78.

⁴² The repeated publication of Morisot's self-portraits might be explained by feminist art historians' sustained interest in sexual identities, representation, and power. In all, however, art historical and cross-disciplinary literature on artist self-representation has greatly expanded in recent years.

feminist positions that have questioned the authority of art history's selective and sexist canon since the early 1970s.⁴³ After describing her unceasing search for "ways to be able to write about artists who are men and artists who are women in order to go beyond the concept of binary gender difference,"⁴⁴ Pollock draws on psychoanalytic theory and deconstruction to articulate a new way to read for the 'inscriptions of the feminine' in representations produced by all artists—not just women artists. Pollock demonstrates how to invalidate the restrictive gender binary that produced the authorized version of modernity by re-reading work by late nineteenth-century European "masters" and the "celebrated" women of feminist art history; the plurality of subjectivities that this mode of inquiry examines—and its assertion that there is no fixed origin for the "feminine"—in effect prohibits scholars from appending women artists to the canon as a special category.

Although Pollock does not interpret any works by Morisot, she illuminates a facet of the artist's historical identity in a case study linking Morisot to two other women painted by Manet in Paris in the 1860s.⁴⁵

Several thematic surveys that focus on women's self-portraiture investigate Morisot's identity as constructed by her own hand.⁴⁶ None of such texts, however, provides as in-depth (or explicitly

⁴³ Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Routledge, 1999), 247.

⁴⁴ Pollock, *Differencing the Canon*, 34.

⁴⁵ Pollock explores Manet's repeat use of the combined trope of 'dark lady' and 'woman in white'. Engaging freely with visual and literary archives, Pollock places Morisot in "semantic relation" with Jeanne Duval, Charles Baudelaire's "mistress," and Laure, the woman who posed as the black maid in Manet's *Olympia* (1863). See "A Tale of Three Women: Seeing in the Dark, Seeing Double, at least, with Manet," in *Differencing the Canon*, 246-316.

⁴⁶ Thematic surveys that focus on primarily on women's self-portraiture in the western tradition include Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraiture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams,

feminist) an investigation as Marni Kessler's "Unmasking Manet's Morisot" (1999), an individual essay that interprets Morisot's self-portraiture as a corrective to the eleven disenfranchising portraits that Manet painted of her between 1868 and 1874. Thickly-painted fans, veils, and other fashionable accessories deform and anonymize Morisot in Manet's images, wherein she inhabits the passive role of the artist's model.⁴⁷ Approaching this body of work from a psychoanalytic perspective, Kessler posits that Manet "masked" Morisot both to literally blot out her artistic identity and to conceal his illicit attraction to her. Kessler concludes by entering Manet's "inactive" likeness of Morisot into a dialogue with the "active" self-assured painter that emerges out of open brushwork in Morisot's self-portraits, a useful contribution to an ongoing discussion about an artistic exchange frequently highlighted in exhibitions.

Thirty years after the publication of "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," Nochlin deemed the feminist critique of art history as an "integral part of a new, more theoretically grounded and socially and psychoanalytically contextualized historical practice" while recognizing that degrees of resistance to feminist scholarship persist due to its political and interdisciplinary nature.⁴⁸ The next chapter will assess how major exhibitions of Impressionism

1998); Liz Rideal, *Mirror, Mirror: Self-Portraits by Women Artists* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2001); and Liana de Girolami Cheney, Alicia C. Faxon and Kathleen L. Russo, *Self-Portraits by Women Painters*, (Washington, D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2009).

⁴⁷ Marni R. Kessler, "Unmasking Manet's Morisot," *The Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (September 1999): 477, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3051353> (accessed December 20, 2012). Kessler's approach enables her to expand upon Farwell's work on Manet's portrayals of Morisot as incongruous with bourgeois respectability and Higonnet's work on Morisot's private self-images, see *Perspectives on Morisot* (1990).

⁴⁸ Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? Thirty Years After," in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, eds. Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 30.

incorporate or ignore the “new art history” in their presentation of Morisot, an artist and woman assiduously re-written into art’s histories by feminist scholars from the inception of their project.

Chapter 2

Morisot among the Impressionists

Impressionism surged in popularity in the late twentieth-century, a period in which several art museums marked the centennial of the movement with a succession of special exhibitions devoted to its practitioners. As the Réunion des Musées Nationaux de France and the Metropolitan Museum of Art prepared to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the first Impressionist exhibition in 1974, John Rewald's pioneering *History of Impressionism*, acclaimed as the mainstay study of the movement since its 1946 debut, entered its fourth edition.⁴⁹ Rewald's meticulously researched tome chronicles the Société Anonyme des Artistes, Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs, etc. (hereafter "Société Anonyme des Artistes") from its origins and through the eight exhibitions that its members held in Paris between 1874 and 1886, formulating an Impressionist paradigm that privileges at its core Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, and Camille Pissarro.⁵⁰ Rewald accords Morisot little recognition as a founding member. For unaccountable reasons, he also omits much of the critical literature on her work.⁵¹ *Impressionism:*

⁴⁹ John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism*, 4th ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973).

⁵⁰ Rewald compiles a wealth of primary sources, including artists' correspondence and writings on their own works, exhibition records, witness accounts, and art criticism into an accessible account that aims to "reconstitute the atmosphere of the period." See Rewald, *History of Impressionism*, 9.

⁵¹ Despite the frequency with which contemporary critics acknowledged Morisot alongside her contemporaries, Rewald's definitive text comparatively rarely cites these appraisals of her work.

A Centenary Exposition, the celebratory survey exhibition hosted by the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, upheld Rewald's model by championing Impressionism's "gang of four."⁵² The combined efforts of these major European and American institutions and international private lenders gathered forty-two works with the aim:

Neither to assemble a group of works painted in 1874 nor to mount a retrospective of the Impressionist movement...our purpose is instead to bring together the most significant and distinguished Impressionist pictures executed during the difficult early years of the movement.⁵³

Curators Hélène Adhémar and Anthony M. Clark spotlight Impressionist masterpieces, which correlates with their presentation of several works each by Monet, Degas, Manet, and Renoir, while featuring only one work by Morisot: *The Cradle* (1872, now at Musée d'Orsay, Paris).⁵⁴ This painting was among nine works that she submitted to the first Impressionist exposition. Additional "important" paintings associated with Impressionism that Adhémar and Clark unsuccessfully sought for this exhibition include Manet's *Bar at the Folies Bergère* (1882, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London) and Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* (1881, The Phillips Collection, Washington D.C.), however, they do not mention any failed attempts to borrow additional Morisot works in their catalog.⁵⁵ Anne Dayez-Distel's catalog entry for *The Cradle* notes

⁵² The Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais in Paris hosted the exhibition from September 21 through November 24, 1974 before The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York hosted it from December 12, 1974 through February 10, 1975. See Anne Dayez-Distel, Michel Hoog, and Charles S. Moffett, *Impressionism: A Centenary Exposition* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974).

⁵³ Hélène Adéhemar and Anthony M. Clark, foreword to *Impressionism: A Centenary Exposition*, 11.

⁵⁴ This exhibition also included single works by Frédéric Bazille, Gustave Caillebotte, Mary Cassatt, and Alfred Sisley, artists whom art historians had not yet linked closely with the development of Impressionism. Manet never exhibited with the Société, yet curators discuss him as a highly influential contemporary and close associate of several featured painters, including Morisot.

Morisot's early and enthusiastic allegiance to the Société Anonyme des Artistes, but it neglects to estimate her contributions as an organizer and participant in seven of their eight exhibitions.⁵⁶

Impressionism: A Centenary ultimately adheres to masculinist tradition by venerating one of Morisot's paintings as a "masterpiece" at the moment when feminist art historians had only begun to ascertain the extent of her involvement in Impressionism.⁵⁷

In the wake of a "revolution in the understanding of the political nature of knowledge"⁵⁸ that forged social histories of art, scholars reexamined the Rewaldian paradigm, widening the Impressionist canon to include Morisot and other painters that were formerly unaccounted for. This chapter will assess the degree to which curators include works by Morisot in four major Impressionism exhibitions mounted after the advent of feminist art history by observing two exhibition types that support an expanded definition of Impressionism: the survey and the thematic grouping. Interpreting the movement in regard to the historical exhibiting society and its associates, Impressionism surveys designate individual artists as "masters" and select paintings as "masterpieces," masculine ascriptions of value that feminist scholars reject outright. Survey exhibition catalogues present Morisot as a marginal Impressionist by recuperating a scant number of her paintings, whereas thematic Impressionist exhibitions that explore subjects and iconographies shared among a group of artists typically give more prominence to her work.

In 1986, *The New Painting, Impressionism, 1874-1886* featured fifteen paintings by Morisot,

⁵⁵ Adéhemar and Clark, foreword to *Impressionism: A Centenary Exposition*, 11.

⁵⁶ See Dayez-Distel, *Impressionism: A Centenary Exposition*, 168-170.

⁵⁷ Parker and Pollock critique the term "master" as having no female equivalent. See *Old Mistresses*, 6.

⁵⁸ Adler and Garb, introduction to *The Correspondence of Berthe Morisot*, 1.

granting her a more appreciable presence than the 1974 centenary exhibition.⁵⁹ Organized and hosted by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, this exhibition surveyed chronologically more than 160 Impressionist paintings, aiming to “[illustrate] the movement as a wide-ranging phenomenon, with both minor and major participants.”⁶⁰ Curator Charles Moffett divided works in eight highly abridged recreations of each historic Société Anonyme des Artistes exhibition, attempting to “provide a view of avant-garde art of 1874-1886 that approximates the experience of the visitors to the original eight exhibitions.”⁶¹ Moffett, who acted as guest assistant curator for *Impressionism: A Centenary Exhibition*, argues that *The New Painting* serves “in effect, as a ninth group show,” as his checklist gleaned works directly from each of the Société Anonyme des Artistes’s exhibition catalogs to include dozens of artists whom the academy and museum typically overlooked.⁶² At the same time, he acknowledges, “with

⁵⁹ The exhibition title refers to critic Edmond Duranty’s *La nouvelle peinture: à propos du groupe d’artistes qui expose dans les galeries Durand-Ruel* (1876), which contextualized the works exhibited in the Société Anonyme des Artistes’ second group show. The National Gallery of Art hosted *The New Painting* from January 17 through April 6, 1986; the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (M.H. de Young Memorial Museum) hosted it from April 19 through July 6, 1986. See Charles S. Moffett, ed., *The New Painting, Impressionism, 1874-1886*, (Washington D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, in association with University of Washington Press, 1986). This exhibition also marks the hundredth anniversary of the final Impressionist show.

⁶⁰ The Société Anonyme des Artistes held their exhibitions in 1874, 1876, 1877, 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, and 1886 at studios and rented spaces in Paris. See Ian McKibbin White and J. Carter Brown, preface to *The New Painting*, 13.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Moffett’s exhibition features twenty-nine of the fifty-seven artists who displayed work in the eight original shows, a sizeable number compared to the few artists discussed in cornerstone Impressionist studies, such as Rewald (1973), however he still omits roughly 50 percent of participants in each gallery and includes a mere 9 percent of total works exhibited between 1874 and 1886. See Moffett, *The New Painting*, 21.

the advantage of hindsight, the work of major figures has been emphasized.”⁶³

The opening gallery of *The New Painting*, which centered on the first Impressionist exhibition, displayed a paltry eighteen of 165 works originally shown yet included six of the nine landscapes, seascapes, and portraits entered by Morisot.⁶⁴ Of the founding members of the Société Anonyme des Artistes, only Degas submitted more works to the inaugural Impressionist exhibition than Morisot; however, just one of his paintings hangs in the National Gallery of Art’s translation of the 1874 exhibition.⁶⁵ Thus, from its outset, *The New Painting* designates Morisot a significant member of an emergent Impressionist movement. Nine additional formal and informal portraits of women, one landscape, and one marine painting represent Morisot throughout the remainder of the exhibition. Given Moffett’s self-described selectivity (he researched works to be included in *The New Painting* from 1974 until 1984 when he had identified “sufficient works of high quality”⁶⁶), Morisot’s works must have stood out in the exhibition as particularly fine. Although *The New Painting* promoted Morisot’s visibility to a wide audience, readers of its accompanying catalog will find only negligible comments about her work.⁶⁷

⁶³ Ibid. Feminist art historian Norma Broude, for example, calls the exhibition a “selective anthology” in her review. See Broude, “Will the Real Impressionists Please Stand Up?” *Art News* LXXXV, 5 (May 1986): 88.

⁶⁴ Morisot’s large-scale *The Mother and Sister of the Artist* (1869-1870; National Gallery of Art, Washington), which she first exhibited in the Salon of 1870, was among the entries. See Paul Tucker, “The First Impressionist Exhibition in Context,” in *The New Painting, Impressionism, 1874-1886*, ed. Charles Moffett (Washington D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, in association with University of Washington Press, 1986), 131-136.

⁶⁵ This figure should not mislead: the exhibition includes in all twenty-two works by Degas.

⁶⁶ McKibbin White and Carter Brown, preface, 14.

⁶⁷ The catalog omits interpretive entries on individual works. Its two essays on the formation and

The New Painting received generally positive reviews from feminist art historians Norma Broude and Kathleen Adler. Broude commends the exhibition for “undermining the myth of a monolithic Impressionism,” and specifically notes its fair representation of Morisot.⁶⁸ Adler also compliments Moffett for featuring paintings by Morisot and other artists hitherto neglected by traditional Impressionism studies.⁶⁹ Whereas *The New Painting* expanded contemporary understanding of Impressionism by more closely observing the exhibition history of the Société Anonyme des Artistes—an association co-founded by Morisot—the next major survey of Impressionism would explore its earlier, mid-nineteenth-century origins, when Morisot primarily trained privately as a painter.

Origins of Impressionism, a survey exhibition hosted by the Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1994, documented the collaboration and correspondences among artists who practiced the “new painting” over the course of the 1860s.⁷⁰ Curators Henri Loyrette and Gary Tinterow interspersed paintings by early nineteenth-century Realists and Barbizon school painters such as Gustave Courbet, Camille Corot, and Charles François Daubigny with works by a younger generation of Parisian painters who later initiated Impressionism. Largely focused on Manet, Monet, Pissarro, and Renoir, this creation

duration of the Impressionist group and eight essays that contextualize the original exhibitions ignore Morisot. For example, Tucker simply includes her name among the Impressionist group’s founding members. See “The First Impressionist Exhibition in Context,” 105.

⁶⁸ Broude, “Will the Real Impressionists Please Stand Up?,” 84.

⁶⁹ Kathleen Adler, “The Phantom of the Show,” *Art History* IXI, no. 3 (1986): 379.

⁷⁰ Galerie nationales du Grand Palais held the exhibition from April 19 to August 8, 1994 and the Metropolitan Museum of Art from September 27, 1994 to January 8, 1995. See Henri Loyrette and Gary Tinterow, eds., introduction to *Origins of Impressionism* (New York: Metropolitan of Modern Art, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1994).

story featured 193 paintings by thirty-five artists and virtually dismissed Morisot by including only *Le Port de Lorient* (1869; National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.).⁷¹

A selection of paintings originally exhibited in the Salon of 1859 hung in *Origins of Impressionism*'s introductory gallery to establish history painting, realist landscape, nudes, portraiture, and still life as traditional academic genres. Subsequent galleries organized by genre illustrate the gradual disintegration of these categories and stylistic challenges to the standardized academic *fini*, or polished surface quality that renders brushstrokes invisible.⁷² The final two galleries in this sequence presented solely proto-Impressionist landscapes and scenes of modern life painted in the 1860s.⁷³ Morisot's small-scale marine painting appeared in this closing section. By its arrangement, *Origins of Impressionism* implies that the passage from academic art to the Impressionist avant-garde was inevitable and that Morisot scarcely participated in its development.⁷⁴

Origins of Impressionism excludes Morisot to all intents and purposes from the "chronology

⁷¹ Morisot's painting appeared in the Paris exhibition only. The exhibition catalog does not include an interpretive entry for this work.

⁷² Degas, Manet, Pissarro, Henri Fantin-Latour, and James McNeil Whistler made their Salon debut in 1859. See Henri Loyrette, "The Salon of 1859," in *Origins of Impressionism*, 18.

⁷³ John House explains that the Paris exhibition did not clarify which works were originally displayed in the Salon at any point in the gallery sequence. See "Origins of Impressionism. Paris and New York," *The Burlington Magazine* 136, no. 1099 (October 1994): 721.

⁷⁴ Loyrette and Tinterow organize their exhibition catalog to correspond with the exhibition plan. Kathleen Adler also observes that the small-scale, loosely painted works that fill *Origins of Impressionism*'s closing galleries problematically signaled a "smooth and 'natural' progression" that reinforces the "visual pleasure of Impressionism." See "The Magic of Impressionism," *Oxford Art Journal* 18, no. 2 (1995): 97.

of interaction” between modern “Masters.”⁷⁵ Although Morisot did not meet Manet—who is unquestionably one of the bold protagonists of the exhibition—until 1868, she trained under Barbizon painter Camille Corot in the period chronicled by the exhibition.⁷⁶ As early as 1860, Morisot painted out of doors under Corot’s instruction, “rejecting the hallowed traditions of art and joining the most advanced trends in painting.”⁷⁷ Two plein air landscapes and one figural study painted after Corot constituted her first Salon entries; she also submitted works to the Salons of 1865, 1866, 1867, and 1868.⁷⁸ Moreover, the first figure painting that Morisot exhibited in the Salon, *Étude* (1864), evinces her interest in and ability to paint the same subjects that Manet, Pissarro, and Renoir painted. Loyrette and Tinterow, however, omit Morisot’s earliest works (and any comparable works) from the exhibition and catalog. The inclusion of such work would have served to highlight the means by which Morisot trained as an artist outside of the Academy, the institution from which the artists whom the exhibition favors famously dissociated.

⁷⁵ Tinterow aimed for visitors to *Origins of Impressionism* to consider “the chronology of interaction on which all interpretive histories of Impressionism are based.” See Tinterow, “The Blockbuster, Art History, and the Public: The Case of Origins of Impressionism,” in *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University*, ed. Charles W. Haxthausen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 148.

⁷⁶ Morisot’s training under Corot is well documented by 1987, as is her association with Achille Oudinot, a student of Corot and Charles Daubigny. See Charles F. Stuckey, “Berthe Morisot” in *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist*, eds. Charles F. Stuckey, William P. Scott, and Suzanne G. Lindsay, (South Hadley, MA: Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in association with Hudson Hills Press, 1987), 19-26.

⁷⁷ Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot*, 18.

⁷⁸ Critics at the Salon of 1864 specifically remarked on correspondences between Morisot’s works and Corot’s composition and color; only one of these two landscapes survives. See Stuckey, “Berthe Morisot,” in *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist*, 19-21 and Higonnet, “First Lessons: 1857-1867,” in *Berthe Morisot*, 11-20.

Five of Morisot's portraits of female friends and family members appeared in *Faces of Impressionism: Portraits from American Collections* (1999), the first exhibition to examine Impressionist approaches to portraiture.⁷⁹ Organized by the Baltimore Museum of Art and additionally hosted by the Cleveland Museum of Art and Museum of Fine Art in Houston, this exhibition gathered more than sixty individual, group, and self-portraits to explore how the Impressionists blurred distinctions between portraiture and genre by regularly depicting their close friends or family members engaged in everyday pursuits.⁸⁰ Curator Sona Johnston's selections reveal that while male Impressionists illustrated male and female subjects posed in both public, urban settings (such as the street or workplace) and secluded domestic environs or interiors, Morisot's work exclusively pictures her sister Edma, daughter Julie, and other female relations as models in the latter settings.⁸¹ The chronological hang of this show suggests that curators might not have intended to explore how an artist's gender potentially affected his/her choice of subjects, though such organization perhaps yielded an occasional visual or spatial juxtaposition along this theme.⁸² Because the present analysis cannot benefit from installation views, nor glean from

⁷⁹ Planning for this exhibition was underway in 1996. It was held at the Baltimore Museum of Art from October 10, 1999; the Museum of Fine Art, Houston from March 25 to May 7, 2000; and the Cleveland Museum of Art from May 28 to July 30, 2000. See the exhibition catalog, Sona Johnston, Susan Bollendorf, and John House, *Faces of Impressionism: Portraits from American Collections*, (Baltimore: Museum of Art, in association with Rizzoli International, 1999).

⁸⁰ The exhibition represented fifteen artists and included a small selection of portraits by the Impressionists' immediate forerunners, such as Thomas Couture, Manet's instructor at the École des Beaux-Arts during the early 1850s, and Gustave Courbet.

⁸¹ Morisot painted women almost exclusively. Since the 1980s, feminist art historians have researched her female subjects and examined the absence of men in her work, see Chapter 1.

⁸² In the exhibition catalog, curator Sona Johnston discloses Morisot's relationship to each of her subjects and describes the relevance of public or private setting to either participant, however she

reviews that provide further insights into the organization of *Faces of Impressionism*, it considers how the accompanying exhibition catalog discusses Morisot to estimate whether the exhibition assimilated feminist knowledge.

In the catalog essay “Impressionism and the Modern Portrait,” art historian John House argues that Morisot and other Société Anonyme des Artistes members constructed their subjects’ identities by drawing on a “repertoire of forms and poses that evoke the immediacy of daily life.”⁸³ Hence, in the “new” portrait the sitter’s unique physical characteristics, personality, and informal gestures (and gestures perhaps familiar to the artist only) supersede traditional signifiers of social class and the affected conventions of the academic portrait.⁸⁴ House interprets Morisot’s *The Mother and Sister of the Artist* (1869–1870; the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.) to demonstrate how the Impressionists’ intimate family portraits might at first appear to be genre paintings rather than portraiture, particularly as they “would have been displayed in the very public Salon.”⁸⁵ House also considers how Impressionists respected public and private identities—socially defined as male and female respectively—by staging men as celebrated individuals and urban

does not associate with Morisot’s own gender this overwhelming presence of women. Her catalog entries on Morisot are largely biographical in scope and cite Rouart’s *Correspondence* (1987) and Stuckey, Scott, and Lindsay’s *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist* (1987).

⁸³ House, author of a host of critical essays on Impressionism, acknowledges in this essay Morisot’s role in the development of Impressionist portraiture together with the contributions made by canonical male Impressionists. See John House, “Impressionism and the Modern Portrait,” in *Faces of Impressionism: Portraits from American Collections*, 11-36.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁵ This particular painting was not featured in *Faces of Impressionism*, but it is a well-known publicly held and prominently displayed work. Morisot exhibited it at the Salon of 1870 and possibly at the first Société Anonyme des Artistes exhibition in 1874. *Ibid.*, 24.

flâneurs while positioning women in the home and garden.⁸⁶ In all, House conveys an accessible version of Pollock’s conception of “difference” (and its ideological and pictorial dimensions) without acknowledging her or other feminist art historians’ discourses on gendered Impressionist iconographies.⁸⁷ The thematic slant of *Faces of Impressionism* and works on view incidentally presented an *opportunity* to literally map Pollock’s schemata of spaces occupied and represented by male and female Impressionists, but the exhibition instead documented the development and novelty of Impressionist portraiture and focused on selected individuals’ successful adoption of avant-garde modes of representation.⁸⁸

Following the close of *Faces of Impressionism*, another thematic exhibition held in 2000 also attempted to revive the radicalism literally painted into Impressionism’s “benignly attractive” and overexposed canvases.⁸⁹ Contextualizing the Impressionist gesture as an affront to painting across all genres, *Impression: Painting Quickly in France, 1860-1890* (2000) comprised ninety-one Impressionist works that curator Richard R. Brettell believed to have been painted directly in one or a few sessions—including four portraits, three seascapes, one landscape, and one still life by

⁸⁶ House remarks on the absence of men in Morisot’s *La Lecture* (1888; Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg), a painting featured in *Faces of Impressionism*, however all of the paintings by Morisot and Mary Cassatt, underscore his point *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁷ House does not cite any feminist scholarship, but references Stuckey, Scott, and Lindsay’s *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist* (1987). See Chapter 1 for discussion on Pollock’s “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity” (1988).

⁸⁸ Pollock devised two such grids, see “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” 104 and 114. Pollock would later demonstrate how to translate aspects of her schemata into curatorial practice in “A History of Absence,” 130-138.

⁸⁹ Brettell, preface to *Impression: Painting Quickly in France, 1860-1890*, (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in association with Yale University Press, 2000), 13.

Morisot.⁹⁰ Seeking to “reintroduce the ‘impression’ to Impressionism,” the exhibition assessed how artists applied paint quickly or deliberately to imbue their works with spontaneity and improvisation—qualities often lambasted by period critics. Brettell devised *Impression: Painting Quickly in France, 1860-1890* to expand an exhibition circuit that traditionally focused on single artists or their subjects, however, he grouped works by maker rather than subject; in effect, this display accentuated the highly individual gestures of chosen “leading” Impressionists.⁹¹ The exhibition therefore observed in some measure Morisot’s originality, an interpretive strategy that reaffirms her artistic manner as “masterful” (Chapter 3 will discuss exhibitions that appraise Morisot’s singularity outright).

The main thrust of *Impression: Painting Quickly in France, 1860-1890* comes across as formalist, but this technical theme does not render feminist art historical scholarship irrelevant. In the exhibition catalog (the sole material available for analysis), Brettell draws on the very primary sources cited in feminist texts that interpret the Impressionist brushstroke as a gendered signifier, thereby presenting a felicitous occasion for exploring precisely how the curator and Morisot scholars differently engaged with the historical record to study her Impressionist technique.

In “Berthe Morisot and Auguste Renoir: The Wetness of Paint and the Sketch Aesthetic,” Brettell discusses the two painters together in order to demonstrate why late nineteenth-century

⁹⁰ The presentation of works by Morisot was proportional to that of Degas, Monet, Renoir, and Sisley, as well as to that of artists defined in this exhibition as “pre-” and post-Impressionists, Manet and Van Gogh. This multi-venue, international exhibition was held at The National Gallery, London November 1, 2000 through January 28, 2001; Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, March 2 through May 20, 2001; and the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, June 16 through September 9, 2001.

⁹¹ See Brettell, introduction to *Impression: Painting Quickly*, 15-18.

critics often linked their work stylistically.⁹² Notwithstanding his stated emphasis on Renoir, Brettell associates Morisot's early submissions to Société Anonyme des Artistes exhibitions with Renoir's by reason of their small scale, informality of composition, and "freely painted" manner.⁹³ Culling solely from period art criticism, Brettell characterizes Morisot's brushwork as "indeterminate" and "hurried" and her canvases "unfinished" without expounding the socially determined connotations of such historical evaluative language. In view of the theme of the exhibition, visitors (and readers of the fully illustrated catalog) perhaps understood these critical terms as literally descriptive of the physical application and visual effect of the brushstrokes that constitute Morisot's and Renoir's paintings. According to Garb, the qualities "delicate," "frenzied," and "irresolute" were linguistically and ideologically assigned to women across multiple late nineteenth-century social discourses, a finding that reveals how the reviews cited by Brettell which employ these terms oscillated between commendation and condemnation depending on the artist's sex.⁹⁴ Attending to Garb's research would have augmented the capacity of *Impression: Painting Quickly in France, 1860-1890* to provide its visitors with a sophisticated understanding of Morisot's and Renoir's initial reception while still celebrating them as artists who challenged convention by publicly displaying "unfinished" paintings.

⁹² Brettell, "Berthe Morisot and Auguste Renoir: The Wetness of Paint and the Sketch Aesthetic," in *Impression: Painting Quickly*, 152-188.

⁹³ Brettell indicates that his essay will concentrate on Renoir, asserting that the painter remains understudied in comparison with Morisot. He directs the reader to monographic studies by Adler and Garb (1987) and Higonnet (1987) and (1992), see *Ibid.*, 154, footnote 8.

⁹⁴ See Chapter 1 for review of Garb, "Berthe Morisot and the Feminizing of Impressionism," in *Perspectives on Morisot*, edited by T. J. Edelstein, 57-66. New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990. The historical gendering of Impressionism is well documented in Norma Broude's *Impressionism, A Feminist Reading: The Gendering of Art, Science, and Nature in the Nineteenth Century* (1991) and Garb's *Sisters of the Brush: Women's Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* (1994).

Upon the close of *Impression: Painting Quickly in France, 1860-1890*, Pollock asserted that an “entire generation, from the 1970s to the later 1990s, has been systematically disinforming about what happened in art in nineteenth-century Paris.”⁹⁵ Though Pollock spoke to the ways in which curators omitted Cassatt from the Impressionism exhibition circuit, the analyses of such events presented in this chapter confirm that Morisot received similar treatment. Major late-twentieth century exhibitions that championed an expanded definition of “the new painting” as initiated by the Société Anonyme des Artistes still centered on the contributions and careers of Rewald’s “gang of four,” even as feminist art historians thoroughly documented Morisot’s active role. Thematic presentations of Impressionism afforded an opening for feminist analyses in their focus on artistic subjects and iconographies, but these exhibitions primarily qualified select works by Morisot as among the “masterpieces” of the movement. The next chapter will evaluate the position that curators grant Morisot in retrospective exhibitions, independent of male Impressionist artists.

⁹⁵ Pollock, “A History of Absence,” 127.

Chapter 3

The “Original” Impressionist: Morisot in Retrospective, 1987-2012

Berthe Morisot–Impressionist, the first major American retrospective of the artist’s work and most significant internationally since the mid-twentieth century, opened in late 1987 in the very museum wing in which *The New Painting, Impressionism 1874-1886* closed just five months prior. While Impressionism surveys such as *The New Painting* appraised works by Morisot among the movement’s finest (and revised the Impressionist canon to include her), the previous chapter has shown that this exhibition type is ill suited to convey of the intricacies of her career. Intent on establishing Morisot “within the vanguard” of Impressionism, organizers of *Berthe Morisot–Impressionist* consider the retrospective as an ideal site for positioning Morisot as an artist at the center of the movement.⁹⁶

This chapter will examine the five major Morisot retrospectives held between 1987 and 2012 to demonstrate how they follow precedents of retrospective exhibitions by featuring works spanning Morisot’s full career to trace her artistic development. Whereas Impressionism survey and thematic exhibitions predominately display oil paintings, retrospectives also focus attention on the breadth of Morisot’s work in watercolors, pastels, red conté crayon, etching, and bronze sculpture. This chapter will demonstrate how Morisot retrospectives normalize her presence within

⁹⁶ See J. Carter Brown, Edmund P. Pillsbury, and Teri J. Edelstein, in foreword to *Berthe Morisot–Impressionist*.

Impressionism through basic biographical accounts and formal analyses of her work to assert her “greatness” as a consummate Impressionist without accounting for her previous exclusion from some accounts (publications and exhibitions) of the movement. Commemoration of Morisot’s creativity and originality merely justifies her position on par with her already-mythologized male contemporaries, furnishing little foundation upon which to incorporate feminist scholarship.

Berthe Morisot–Impressionist (1987) opened at the National Gallery of Art (Washington D.C.) to an American public largely unfamiliar with the artist.⁹⁷ After finding that extant accounts of Impressionism chiefly omit Morisot because of “what we now call sexist attitudes,” exhibition coordinator Charles F. Stuckey sought to rehabilitate Morisot’s career by displaying sixty oil paintings, twenty-three watercolors, thirteen pastels, and eight drawings, several of which had not been displayed publicly since her death.⁹⁸ Manet’s *Repose* (ca. 1871; Rhode Island School of Design, Museum of Art), a large-scale portrait depicting Morisot casually seated in the artist’s studio, hung prominently at the exhibition’s entrance to straightaway associate her with a well-known “great” artist.⁹⁹ Galleries constituting the retrospective proper commenced with Morisot’s

⁹⁷ Mount Holyoke College organized *Berthe Morisot–Impressionist* as part of its sesquicentennial celebration. The exhibition was held at the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. from September 6 to November 29, 1987, proceeded to the Kimbell Museum of Art in Fort Worth, Texas from December 12, 1987 to February 21, 1988, and finally traveled to Mount Holyoke College Art Museum in South Hadley, Massachusetts from March 14 to May 9, 1988.

⁹⁸ Stuckey’s statement regarding Morisot’s underrepresentation in Impressionist studies marks the sole instance in which his catalog acknowledges that Morisot’s gender affected her reputation. Instead, he believes “infrequent opportunities to see [her works] have diminished curiosity for nearly a century.” See “Berthe Morisot, Impressionist,” in *Berthe Morisot–Impressionist*, 16.

⁹⁹ Though the basis for inclusion and prominent position of Manet’s portrait serves the exhibition’s aim, Higonnet finds it a particularly retrograde step. See Anne Higonnet, “Review: In the Wrong Frame,” *The Women’s Review of Books* 5, no. 7 (April 1988): 13, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4020254> (accessed February 2, 2013).

early 1860s plein air paintings before documenting in sequence the development of her signature Impressionist style through 1894.¹⁰⁰ With its emphasis on the formal and painterly qualities of Morisot's work, this retrospective reintegrates Morisot into art history as a formative Impressionist, a recuperative endeavor with which only the initial wave of feminist art historical scholarship engages.

The exhibition catalog, however, assembles a substantial body of knowledge on Morisot from which feminist art historians and curators of later Morisot retrospectives and Impressionism exhibitions would continually draw. In the eponymous essay "Berthe Morisot, Impressionist," Stuckey critically provides the first extensive Morisot biography that also encompasses a reliable chronology of her work.¹⁰¹ Composed of countless excerpts from Morisot's correspondence with family, friends, and familiar, canonized late nineteenth-century artistic and literary figures, Stuckey's fully illustrated account presents her art as emerging from her everyday interactions with the Parisian avant-garde.¹⁰² William P. Scott's essay "Morisot's Style and Technique" complements

¹⁰⁰ Kathleen Adler's exhibition review briefly describes the spatial organization of the galleries and notes the accentuation of particular technically "experimental" series—such as seascapes—within the chronology, see "Berthe Morisot at the National Gallery. Washington D. C.," *The Burlington Magazine* 129, no. 1016 (November 1987): 766, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/883244> (accessed February 2, 2013). William P. Scott's catalog essay showcases her experimentations in a range of artistic media, see "Morisot's Style and Technique," in *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist*, 187-216.

¹⁰¹ Stuckey, "Berthe Morisot, Impressionist," in *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist*, 17-186. Though Adler and Garb annotated Morisot's correspondence just one year prior to this exhibition, their effort does not integrate the artist's work into her writings, see *The Correspondence of Berthe Morisot with her Family and Friends*, ed. Denis Rouart. (London: Camden Press, 1986).

¹⁰² Color reproductions of exhibited works and supplementary historical photographs punctuate Stuckey's narrative in lieu of catalog entries. Details regarding individual works are often limited to formal and contextual information, such as the site or occasion of the production of the painting and its initial exhibition in the Salon or Société Anonyme des Artistes' expositions, which underscores Morisot's historical identity as an "important" painter.

Stuckey's account by offering specialized discussion of the artist's unconventional working methods and handling of color and line; neither Stuckey nor Scott evaluate relationships between Morisot's subject matter, her artistic manner, aspects of her identity as a woman, and the broader social and historical contexts within which she worked.¹⁰³

More than a decade before the National Gallery of Art conceived of *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist* as the artist's "debut," feminist art historians began rectifying Morisot's erasure from art history and exclusion from major twentieth-century museum exhibitions.¹⁰⁴ Their reviews of the retrospective uniformly describe Morisot as overdue for such an event. Higonnet, who presented on Morisot's self-portraiture at the *Perspectives on Morisot* symposium (see Chapter 1), observes that the exhibition "tried especially hard to promulgate a gender-neutral picture [of Morisot]" by divulging little on her distinctly female experiences.¹⁰⁵ The curatorial decision to hang a work by Manet as a means of introducing visitors to Morisot is thus regarded by Higonnet as particularly conservative, even regressive, eliciting the rhetorical question, "Is the image which a man could make of a woman in the nineteenth-century *really* comparable, though, to the image a woman could make of herself and other women like her?"¹⁰⁶ In the late 1980s, as feminist art

¹⁰³ Though strictly formalist in its interpretive approach, Scott's essay is novel in providing the reader with numerous full-page, full color details of Morisot's brushwork, see "Morisot's Style and Technique," in *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist*, 187-216.

¹⁰⁴ For example, Linda Nochlin and Anne Sutherland Harris displayed paintings by Morisot and document her achievements in their monumental 1976 exhibition *Women Artists, 1550-1950* and its catalog, see Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁵ Higonnet, "In the Wrong Frame," 12. Leila Kinney shares Higonnet's perspective, see "Review: Morisot," *Art Journal* 47, no. 3, (Autumn 1988): 236, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/777053> (accessed December 11, 2012).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

history began to evaluate “feminine culture” on its own terms and explicate how dominant nineteenth-century ideologies of gender defined the artistic profession, *Berthe Morisot–Impressionist* uncritically accepted masculinist ideological structures to celebrate Morisot as an exceptional Impressionist, leaving unexamined the nature of her long absence from (and cause for her new visibility within) the popular Impressionist exhibition circuit.¹⁰⁷ Although *Berthe Morisot–Impressionist* (the event and its catalog) explained Morisot’s work in terms incompatible with the feminist project, these ventures bolstered the growing feminist art historical project by providing American scholars with ample historical documentation and an unparalleled look at more than one hundred works by a woman artist.¹⁰⁸

The next formal retrospective to follow *Berthe Morisot–Impressionist* in tracing the artist’s stylistic development would not be organized until 2002. However, within this fifteen-year period, in 1993, the Musée Marmottan Monet received a significant bequest of 131 artworks dating from the late nineteenth-century from Morisot’s grandson Denis Rouart and his wife Anne; this legacy included seventy-eight works by Morisot. Julien Rouart, also Morisot’s grandson, supplemented this bequest in 1996 with three additional paintings by his grandmother. Lead curator Marianne Delafond inaugurated the complete collection with the exhibition *Berthe Morisot ou l’audace raisonné: Fondation Denis et Anne Rouart* (1997), which juxtaposed eighty-one works by Morisot with works by her contemporaries, including Degas, Manet, Pissarro, Puvis de Chavannes Renoir, and

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter 1’s discussion of Parker and Pollock’s *Old Mistresses* (1981).

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter 1 for review of *Perspectives on Morisot* (which refers both to the 1988 symposium held in conjunction with the exhibition and the 1990 publication of the papers read at the event), a discussion that brings to light the academy’s vastly different contextualization and reassessment of Morisot’s work.

Henri Rouart, to encourage direct comparisons between the artists.¹⁰⁹ Though this exhibition bestowed upon Morisot a prominence typically accorded to her male peers in Impressionism blockbusters, it merely suggested a desire to reevaluate Morisot's career. Following this exhibition, however, Musée Marmottan Monet has continually loaned its Morisot collection to international Impressionism exhibitions and retrospectives of the artist's work.¹¹⁰

Fifteen years after the National Gallery of Art hosted *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist*, the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille and Fondation Pierre Gianadda (Martigny, Switzerland) organized *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895*, the first major European retrospective of the artist's work since 1961.¹¹¹ Chief curator Sylvie Patry selected for display 157 of Morisot's oil paintings, watercolors, pastel and charcoal drawings, rare engravings, and her single miniature bronze portrait bust to amend

¹⁰⁹ Delafond's title catalog essay builds a biographical narrative, and, like Stuckey (1987), features several excerpts from Morisot's correspondence with family, friends, and members of artistic and literary coteries to confirm her contemporaries' high regard of her work. Delafond draws heavily from Denis Rouart ed., *Correspondence de Berthe Morisot* (Paris, 1950), perhaps as a compliment to the benefactor; she does not cite any feminist or secondary scholarship of any kind. See Marianne Delafond, preface to *Berthe Morisot ou l'audace raisonné: Fondation Denis et Anne Rouart* (Paris: Musée Marmottan Monet, in association with Bibliothèque des Arts Lausanne, 1997).

¹¹⁰ In 2005, the Musée Marmottan Monet selected 41 Morisot works and 21 by her contemporaries from this exhibition and repackaged it as *Berthe Morisot: An Impressionist and Her Circle*, marking the first time these works were shown in the United States. Three American institutions hosted the exhibition: the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington D.C. from January 14 to May 8, 2005; the Speed Museum of Art in Louisville from June 7 to September 18, 2005; and the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art from October 7, 2005 to January 26, 2006. A translated edition of the 1997 exhibition catalog accompanied the exhibition at all three institutions. Works from the bequest also featured in the remaining retrospectives discussed in this chapter, Impressionism exhibitions (two of which are discussed in Chapter 2), and "women Impressionist" exhibitions (discussed in Chapter 4).

¹¹¹ The Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille hosted the event from March 10 to June 9, 2002 and the Fondation Pierre Gianadda hosted it from June 20 to November 19, 2002. See Sylvie Patin, et al. *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895* (Lille: Palais des Beaux-Arts, in association with Réunion des musées nationaux, 2002).

Morisot's "continued" status as an undervalued Impressionist.¹¹² *Portrait of Berthe Morisot* (1873), an oil painting by the artist's sister Edma in which Berthe stands at an easel with brush and palette in hand, introduced visitors to a painter who remained "effectivement mal connue."¹¹³ This opening selection contrasts sharply with Manet's *Repose* (featured in *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist* [1987]) by depicting Morisot as a working artist in plain clothes rather than a passive, adorned upper-class woman.¹¹⁴ The organization of Morisot's work within the retrospective's circular hall, however, appears to have approximated its American precursor by chronologically delineating the course of Morisot's career, which would have hindered careful consideration of how Morisot's artistic practice challenged normative expectations of upper-class women.

Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895 also presented eleven portraits of Morisot by Manet—including the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille's recent acquisition, *Berthe Morisot à l'éventail* (1874).¹¹⁵ Patry

¹¹² The exhibition catalog provides no clear purpose statement, though it acknowledges the rare display of her work (and work by other women Impressionists) during the 20th century, echoing Stuckey (1987). Many of featured works here also appeared in *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist* (1987), see Martine Aubry, Maire de Lille, preface to *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895*, 10-11.

¹¹³ Aubry, preface to *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895*, 10. See also Kathleen Adler, "Exhibition Review: Berthe Morisot, Lille and Martigny," *The Burlington Magazine* 144, no. 1192 (2002): 445-446. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/889622> (accessed December 14, 2012).

¹¹⁴ Edma's painting might have facilitated a narrative about Morisot's assumption of a "male" profession, a narrative absent from the 1987 retrospective, however this retrospective likely did not include any wall text, according to Marianne Mathieu, interview by the author, May 23, 2012. Berthe and Edma trained together as painters for years, but when Edma married in 1869, she subsequently abandoned painting. Berthe's artistic career, on the other hand, became more dynamic regardless of her marital status; she associated herself with the artistic avant-garde by co-organizing and participating in seven out of the eight Société Anonyme des Artistes exhibitions from 1874, the year she married Eugène Manet. The exhibition catalog highlights Edma's painting in the introduction while placing Manet's portraits after nearly 450 pages dedicated solely to Morisot's oeuvre. Adler describes the portrait as "newly rediscovered." See "Review: Lille and Martigny," 445.

¹¹⁵ The portraits by Manet appeared in Lille only and included both large-scale Salon paintings and

describes this painting as significant to the museum, if not an impetus for the Morisot retrospective event: “C’est alors que sont nés à Lille l’idée de présenter l’ensemble des portraits [par Manet] et le projet d’une rétrospective de l’œuvre de Berthe Morisot.”¹¹⁶ This special display hung in a separate gallery at the center of the ring-shaped hall, reinforcing Morisot’s status as Manet’s “modèle de predilection.”¹¹⁷ Morisot’s five extant self-portraits also featured in the retrospective, providing material with which curators could have visually explored an inquiry examined throughout the early 1990s Morisot literature: how did *she* see herself? (emphasis mine).¹¹⁸ However, the self-portraits were interspersed with her other works in the main retrospective hall. Serious engagement with this question might have encouraged curators to instead unite Morisot’s and Manet’s works in a single gallery; their coexistence would visually foreground the complexities of Morisot’s historical identity as a late nineteenth-century artist who was also a woman. Considering the conspicuous location and multiplicity of Manet’s portraits, *Berthe Morisot 1841-1895* ultimately perpetuated the practice of justifying Morisot’s position in relation to a modern Master, thereby maintaining the standard narrative of early twentieth-century art history.

small preparatory sketches and engravings. The Musée d’Orsay gave *Berthe Morisot à l’éventail* to the Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille in 2000. See Patry, *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895*, 443-471.

¹¹⁶ Patry, *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895*, 443.

¹¹⁷ Adler describes the location of Manet’s portraits, noting how the “stridently ‘masculine’ dark red walls” on which they hung mark off the grouping as a separate show, especially as the wall colors used to behind Morisot’s works were pastel. See Adler, “Exhibition Review: Lille and Martigny,” 446.

¹¹⁸ Studies of Morisot’s self-portraiture recur throughout the feminist literature, see Higonnet, *The Other Side of the Mirror*, in *Perspectives on Morisot* (1990); Higonnet, “An Image of One’s Own,” in *Berthe Morisot’s Images of Women, 195-211* (1992); Marni R. Kessler, “Unmasking Manet’s Morisot” (1999).

In her review of *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895*, Adler takes specific issue with the “mini-Manet” exhibition that accompanied the retrospective, lambasting the “prop” as being “frankly insulting [to Morisot]”¹¹⁹ Speaking on behalf of her feminist colleagues who published major monographic studies on Morisot and proposed nuanced interpretations of her work in the decade preceding this retrospective (see Chapter 1), Adler insists that “the days when it was necessary to introduce Morisot in relation to Manet, either erroneously as a pupil or in terms that hint at a sexual relationship, are surely long gone.”¹²⁰ Adler’s review reiterates the very critiques that she and Higonnet made on the occasion of the 1987 retrospective, bespeaking the gap between the academy’s progressive knowledge on Morisot and its application in the museum.¹²¹

The most recent Morisot retrospectives drew largely from the significant collection of the artist’s works held at Musée Marmottan Monet. In 2011, an institutional partnership between the museum and Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid resulted in the only exhibition in Spain to commemorate the “first woman to join the Impressionist movement”—*Berthe Morisot: La pintora impresionista* (Berthe Morisot: The Woman Impressionist).¹²² Paloma Alarcó, Chief of Modern

¹¹⁹ See Adler, “Exhibition Review: Lille and Martigny,” 446.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 446.

¹²¹ Though the exhibition followed the conventional form in its reverence for the Impressionist painter, its catalog conveys a discernable awareness of feminist scholarship on Morisot. The six catalogs essays and substantial interpretive paragraphs that accompany each of the featured works discuss a wide range of topics—the artist’s biography, Manet’s portraits of Morisot, her involvement in the Impressionist circle, and her critical reception—and occasionally cite monographic studies by Adler, Garb, Higonnet, and Nochlin. The catalog also includes in most entries an additional smaller illustration of a related painting, preparatory sketch, photograph, or period ephemera, to enhance understanding.

¹²² Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza hosted the event from November 15, 2011 through to February 12, 2012. See Jacques Taddei, Director of the Musée Marmottan Monet, preface to *Berthe Morisot: la*

Master Painting Department, worked in association with Musée Marmottan Monet curator Marianne Mathieu to highlight forty-one of the artist's works with special focus on her works on paper. This "small-scale" retrospective anticipated *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)* (2012), a more sizeable exhibition mounted in Paris that showcased eighty-one paintings watercolors, pastels, prints, and red chalk drawings from the Musée Marmottan Monet collection, alongside an additional seventy works gathered from international museums and private collections.¹²³

Two life-size reproductions of a photograph of Morisot wearing a black evening gown supported by a corset and bustle flanked the entrance to *Berthe Morisot: La pintora impresionista*, introducing visitors to a stylish and evidently affluent late nineteenth-century woman whose arms bear mid-length gloves rather than a loaded palette.¹²⁴ *The Cheval-Glass (La Psyché)* (1876)—described as a "cardinal" work held in Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza's permanent collection¹²⁵—hung

pintora impresionista, eds. Paloma Alarcó and Lauranne Neveu, (Madrid: Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, 2011), 8. Taddei's brief remark marginalizes Morisot's role as a co-founder and exhibition organizer for the Société Anonyme des Artistes by implying that the "movement" existed regardless of Morisot's contributions, however this attitude is not put forth elsewhere.

¹²³ Marianne Mathieu, curator at the Musée Marmottan Monet, described the partnership as such. The substantially larger retrospective held at her institution from March 8, 2012 through July 29, 2012 also sought to accentuate Morisot's graphic work. Because of the fragility of Morisot's works on paper, the museum does not usually agree to their loan. Marianne Mathieu, interview by author, May 23, 2012. See the exhibition catalog, *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)* (Paris: Musée Marmottan Monet, in association with Yale University Press, 2012).

¹²⁴ Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, "*Berthe Morisot: la pintora impresionista*," virtual visit, http://www.museothyssen.org/microsites/exposiciones/2011/morisot/vv/index_in.htm (accessed January 28, 2013).

¹²⁵ Guillermo Solana, Director of Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, foreword to *Berthe Morisot: la pintora impresionista*, 9. Alarcó interprets this painting her catalog essay, "Berthe Morisot: Vivir La Pintura, Pintar la Vida," 13-22. This work also received considerable attention *Mujeres impresionistas: La otra Mirada*, an exhibition held at the Museo de Bellas Artes (Bilbao) in 2001 that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

squarely in view through the first doorframe, anchoring the passage from a small room that displayed several of Morisot's early plein air landscapes and portraits to wider hall that featured dozens of domestic interiors that depict the artist's "intimate world." Titled "Vivir La Pintura, Pintar la Vida," this core gallery primarily contained portraits of the artist's daughter Julie, suggesting that Morisot's artistic practice intertwined with her maternal role. The remaining two galleries present views of gardens and parks and rural scenes.¹²⁶

Berthe Morisot: La pintora impresionista implies in its title remembrance of an Impressionist artist who was also a woman, however the exhibition lacked interpretive didactics (apart from an illustrated biographical chronology mounted in its foyer), and hence only conveyed visually genre-based interpretations of her work. Notwithstanding, Alarcó examines in her catalog essay the manner in which Morisot represented a private and specifically "feminine" experience in *La Psyché* (1876), demonstrating a familiarity with late 1980s and early 1990s feminist theory.¹²⁷

Three weeks after *Berthe Morisot: La pintora impresionista* closed, its featured works were integrated into *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)*, the first retrospective dedicated to the artist to be held in Paris since 1941.¹²⁸ A full fifteen years after the Musée Marmottan Monet became the home of the largest set of works by Morisot, curator Marianne Mathieu endeavored at last to assess the breadth of the collection. Proclaiming Morisot's "originality," a quality merited by Morisot's "innovative contribution to Impressionism ... as the only [Impressionist] who concurrently

¹²⁶ Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, "*Berthe Morisot: la pintora impresionista*," virtual visit.

¹²⁷ Alarcó distills Pollocks "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity" (1988) to discuss Morisot's spatial construction of this toilette scene. She also references Adler and Garb's *Berthe Morisot* (1990). See "Berthe Morisot: Vivir La Pintura, Pintar la Vida," in *Berthe Morisot: la pintora impresionista* 13-22.

¹²⁸ Musée Marmottan Monet presented the retrospective from March 8 to July 29, 2012.

explored drawing and experimented with the dissolution of form,”¹²⁹ the exhibition gave the artist’s fragile graphic work a prominence which it would not receive outside of the Musée Marmottan Monet. *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)* also highlighted two bodies of work as “Impressionism par excellence”¹³⁰ in their free handling, fragmented brushwork, and evocation of the passing effects of natural light: twenty-three technically experimental landscapes painted between 1871 and 1895 and fifteen portraits of the artist’s daughter Julie Manet produced between 1882 and 1889.

Consistent with the curatorial aim to commemorate Morisot as a singular artist, the exhibition opened with three self-portraits so that visitors recognized her “as a major Impressionist ... not through the lens of Manet.”¹³¹ The remainder of the exhibition displayed work chronologically within the following distinct thematic sets: “Artistic Training,” a small selection of Morisot’s early copies after Veronese and Corot; “Morisot’s Sisters and Metropolitan Ladies (1869-

¹²⁹ Marianne Mathieu, Deputy Director of the Musée Marmottan Monet (Collections and Communications), interview by author, May 23, 2012. In the exhibition catalog, Mathieu traces the shifts in Morisot’s palette and chronicles her increasing commitment to preparatory drawing and more complex compositions that blend plein air and studio work. Mathieu appraises Morisot as a graphic artist, and argues that her originality can be “effectively gauged” through her watercolors, pastels, charcoal drawings and crayon drawings—bodies of work important to the artist herself and widely celebrated in her lifetime. See “Watercolours, Pastels and Drawings in the Work of Berthe Morisot,” in *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)* (Paris: Musée Marmottan Monet, in association with Yale University Press, 2012), 19-55.

¹³⁰ Mathieu, interview. The exhibition catalog states that this favorable review originated in Phillip Burty, *L’art moderne* (March 19, 1882), quoted in Patin, et al. *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895*, 78.

¹³¹ Ibid. Two small-scale portraits of Morisot by Manet hung on a wall adjacent to Morisot’s self-portraits, but they scarcely detracted from her work in comparison with the eleven-portrait display mounted within *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895* (2002). The exhibition also displayed Edma Pontillon (née Morisot)’s *Portrait of Berthe Morisot Painting* (ca. 1865), which hung in *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895* (2002), along with Marcellin Desboutin’s *Portrait of Berthe Morisot* (ca. 1875).

1878),” portraits of Morisot’s female siblings, cousins, neighbors, and friends, who sometimes appear with a child; “To the Heart of Impressionism: Julie Manet (1878-1889) and Young Girls Out of Doors,” portraits of the artist’s daughter that hung opposite additional portraits of women in gardens or *toilette* scenes; and lastly, “Large Scale Compositions: The Last Portraits of Julie (1890-1895),” featured in the exhibition hall’s grand circular room across from “Landscapes (1871-1895).” Though Mathieu argues that Morisot’s graphic work, which constituted one-third of her entries to the Impressionist exhibition, provides the “key to understanding the evolution of Morisot’s work as a whole,”¹³² the exhibition confined works on paper to a cramped, separate gallery at the exhibition’s exit.¹³³ One interpretive wall panel accompanied each thematic set presented in the main exhibition hall, however the didactic was omitted from the room containing Morisot’s graphic work; these succinct texts mentioned at each juncture Morisot’s revised painterly and compositional approaches to her artistic subjects, encouraging the visitor to recognize at every turn the artist as the “most innovative, least dogmatic [member of the Impressionists].”¹³⁴

Whereas Mathieu defended the twenty-three featured landscapes as “[anticipating] the experiments taken up by Monet twenty years later,” positioning Morisot as a creative rival to the artist after whom the host museum is named, she framed the fifteen portraits of Julie as an

¹³² Mathieu also describes Morisot’s graphic work produced between 1879 and 1883 represents the “acme of Impressionism.” See Marianne Mathieu, “Watercolours, Pastels and Drawings in the Work of Berthe Morisot,” in *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)* (Paris: Musée Marmottan Monet, in association with Yale University Press, 2012), 26-27.

¹³³ Works on paper were located in a separate space due to the light and atmospheric sensitivity of their media.

¹³⁴ The exhibition wall text contained variations on this critical language that appraises Morisot’s originality, see Musée Marmottan Monet, “Press Dossier: *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)*,” (Paris: Musée Marmottan Monet, February 2012), 4.

independent creative endeavor.¹³⁵ Displayed under the title “To the Heart of Impressionism: Julie Manet (1878-1889),” this set literally hung at the center of the retrospective, inextricably linking the painterly effects for which Morisot is most celebrated with the arrival of her daughter Julie.¹³⁶ Indeed, Morisot gave birth to Julie just before the fourth Société Anonyme des Artistes exhibition of 1879—the only of the group’s eight exhibitions in which she did not participate—and Julie recurrently appears in her mother’s submissions through the group’s final exhibition in 1886.¹³⁷ The appreciable, expansive display of these portraits indicated to the visitor that Julie served as the artist’s primary sitter; however, didactics note that she “naturally” assumed the role.¹³⁸ If Mathieu had elaborated on why Morisot so frequently portrayed Julie, she might have deemed Higonnet’s discussion about Morisot’s “innovative” mother-daughter images to be complementary to her curatorial observations.¹³⁹ *Berthe Morisot (1841-195)* merely casts Julie as a convenient subject for Morisot’s continuing stylistic experimentation, whereas Higonnet interprets the series in light of

¹³⁵ The twenty-three landscapes produced across nearly twenty-five years of Morisot’s career were displayed sequentially as a self-contained set within the exhibition hall, breaking the overall retrospective chronology to highlight Morisot’s lesser-known and far less frequently exhibited oils, watercolors, and pastels of this genre. Mathieu, interview.

¹³⁶ Mathieu described the coordination of this centerpiece as “unavoidable” because Julie served as Morisot’s main model during this period. Ibid.

¹³⁷ Higonnet estimates that Morisot pictured her daughter more than 100 times before her death in 1895, when Julie was 17. See “A Mother Pictures Her Daughter,” in *Berthe Morisot’s Images of Women* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 213.

¹³⁸ Marmottan Monet, “Press Dossier: *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)*,” (Paris: Musée Marmottan Monet, February 2012), 9.

¹³⁹ The retrospective also included two portraits of Julie and her father, Eugène Manet, and at least two portraits of Julie and Pasie, the nanny employed by Morisot during most of Julie’s childhood. Higonnet’s analysis of how Morisot constructs a “radically new relationship [to Julie]” through these images—as an artist observing paternity and paid child care labor—would also pertain to an expanded display. See Higonnet, “A Mother Pictures Her Daughter,” 226-229.

both its formal and intellectual (and psychological) experimentation and dimensions. Higonet primarily views the extended portrait series as a document of Julie's growth and independent identity in which "closeness and distance, identification and separation, had to be expressed simultaneously" due to the artist's dual creative and maternal identity.¹⁴⁰ *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)* appears to be the only retrospective that showcased this thematic set, yet the exhibition, like its immediate predecessor *Berthe Morisot: La pintora impresionista* (2011), confines interpretation to painterly concerns.

Like *Berthe Morisot–Impressionist* (1987), the first retrospective of the artist's work organized after the advent of feminist art history, the most recent, *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895* (2012), sought to "simply present Morisot as a pure Impressionist."¹⁴¹ Rehabilitating Morisot's career on its aesthetic qualities and insisting on her creative originality and singularity has not compelled curators to review feminist art historical writings on Morisot. The next chapter will evaluate the degree to which curators emphasize Morisot's female identity in exhibitions expressly organized to bring women artists to the fore of Impressionism.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 222.

¹⁴¹ Mathieu acknowledged that she did not feel obligated to interpret Morisot's art from a feminist perspective. This statement is also reflected by her footnotes in the exhibition catalog; she only cites historical documents and the 1987 and 2002 retrospective catalogs. Mathieu, interview.

Chapter 4

Morisot the “Woman Impressionist”

Feminist art historians Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris featured five paintings by Morisot, a “significant artist in the early revolutions of the modern movement,”¹⁴² in their consequential 1976 exhibition *Women Artists, 1550-1950*. Chronologically surveying 158 paintings by eighty women, *Women Artists, 1550-1950* meditated on the place of these painters within art history, intending

to make more widely known the achievements of some fine artists whose neglect can in the past be attributed to their sex and to learn more about how and why women artists first emerged as rare exceptions in the late 1500s and gradually became more numerous until they were a largely accepted part of the cultural scene.¹⁴³

Imparting brief artist biographies and formal analyses of all featured works in an effort to “remove once and for all the justification for any future exhibitions of this theme,”¹⁴⁴ *Women Artists, 1550-1950* follows the initial thrust of feminist art history in identifying and

¹⁴² Linda Nochlin and Ann Sutherland Harris, *Women Artists, 1550-1950*, Exh. cat., (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, in association with Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 223. The exhibition was shown at Los Angeles County Museum of Art from December 21, 1976 through March 13, 1977; University Art Museum at Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin from April 12 through June 12, 1977; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh from July 14 through September 4, 1977; and the Brooklyn Museum, October 8 through November 27, 1977.

¹⁴³ Nochlin and Sutherland Harris, *Women Artists*, 11.

¹⁴⁴ Sutherland Harris, “Women Artists: 1550-1950,” in *Women Artists*, 44.

commemorating scores of women artists without revising the critical language used to evaluate their achievement.¹⁴⁵ Even so, Nochlin and Sutherland Harris admonish their audience to recognize that "... [featured] works do not share any special visual characteristics due to their female authorship. They are best viewed as part of a *musée imaginaire* where, by some extraordinary circumstance, all the artists happen to be women."¹⁴⁶ While *Women Artists, 1550-1950* firmly rejected that "women's art" constitutes an essential category, the exhibition increased the visibility of women artists, thereby encouraging further revelatory and documentary scholarship that might have induced curators to mount "specialist" exhibitions that compare works of art produced by groups of women associated with regional schools or movements.¹⁴⁷

A variant of the "women artists" exhibition emerged in the 1990s to gather the work of three to four artists associated with Impressionism: Marie Bracquemond, Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzalès, and Berthe Morisot.¹⁴⁸ This final chapter will consider how curators frame Morisot in three major "women Impressionists" exhibitions held since 1993, demonstrating how this form often draws on feminist scholarship to support its categorical focus on art by women. "Women

¹⁴⁵ Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists who were women garnered critical attention in the late 1970s as subjects for monographs and entered accounts of western art movements, however, these early feminist publications otherwise upheld traditional periodization, aesthetic hierarchies, and notions of artistic "greatness" as reliable frameworks. See Gouma-Peterson and Mathews, "The Feminist Critique of Art History," 326-328.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁴⁷ For more on the development of "specialist" exhibitions, see Deepwell, "Feminist Curatorial Strategies," 72. For an example of a "specialist" grouping of women artists in the academy, see Tamar Garb, *Women Impressionists* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1986). This slim volume, the first to discuss social and ideological forces behind "female Impressionism," highlights the life and work of four women Impressionists and pointedly dismisses a homogeneous female aesthetic.

¹⁴⁸ Although Eva Gonzalès, like her instructor Manet, never exhibited in any of the Impressionist group shows, art historians discuss her within the movement due to her painterly manner.

Impressionist” shows, variously received among feminist art historians and museum theorists, may also simultaneously encourage broad audiences to question the role of Morisot’s gender, particularly as it might relate to her artistic subjects and reception, while risking her “ghettoization” in the museum exhibition circuit.¹⁴⁹

Following a period of renewed scholarly interest in female Impressionists,¹⁵⁰ Musée Marmottan Monet held *Les femmes impressionnistes: Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzalès, Berthe Morisot* (1993), the first exhibition to feature solely work by its titular artists.¹⁵¹ Marianne Delafond and Marie-Caroline Sainsaulieu selected for display approximately thirty works by each artist, which included examples of Morisot’s work in a variety of genres and media. A selection of Morisot’s

¹⁴⁹ Higonnet describes the separate display of art by women as “ghettoization” in an essay on the founding of the National Museum of Women in the Arts in 1987, see “A New Center: The National Museum of Women in the Arts,” in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discoveries, Spectacles*, eds. Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (London: Routledge, 2003), 150-164. Pollock uses the term “reghettoization” to describe when museums only feature work by artists who are women in special or limited “all-women” exhibitions and related events, rather than integrating their work into permanent displays and regular programming. See Pollock, “A History of Absence,” 128.

¹⁵⁰ See the review of the feminist Morisot literature in Chapter 1. Cassatt also received considerable attention in the late twentieth-century; see especially Griselda Pollock, *Mary Cassatt* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980) and Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987). Eva Gonzalès did not receive her first serious monographic study until 1991; see Marie-Caroline Sainsaulieu and Jacques de Mons, *Eva Gonzalès, 1849-1883: étude critique et catalogue raisonné*. (Paris: La Bibliothèque des Arts, 1991); for the work of Marie Bracquemond, see Elizabeth Kane, “Marie Bracquemond: The Artist Time Forgot,” *Apollo* 117, no. 252 (Feb 1983): 118-21; no catalogue raisonné exists for the work of Marie Braquemond.

¹⁵¹ The Musée Marmottan Monet hosted the exhibition from October 13, 1993 through January 15, 1994. See Marianne Delafond et al., *Les Femmes impressionnistes: Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzalès, Berthe Morisot*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée Marmottan, 1993). The exhibition was later hosted at four art museums in Japan: Isetan Bijutsukan Tokyo (March 2 through April 11, 1995); Hiroshima Bijutsukan (April 16 through May 21, 1995); Takashimaya Grand Hall in Osaka (May 31 through June 13, 1995); and Hokkaidoritsu Hakodate Bijutsukan (July 1 through August 20, 1995). See Marc Restellini, *Les femmes impressionnistes: Morisot, Cassatt, Gonzalés*, Exh. cat. (Tokyo: Art Life Ltd., 1995).

infrequently exhibited pastels hung in a designated room with works on paper by Cassatt and Gonzalès. *Les femmes impressionnistes* presented these “women Impressionists” as overlooked yet first-rate Impressionist painters; the purpose of the exhibition is otherwise unstated.¹⁵² In her exhibition review, Mary Tompkins Lewis observes that didactics described Morisot’s works in “limited terms of stylistic biography,”¹⁵³ revealing that curators offered minimal pictorial analysis of her work and, paradoxically, neglected to explain why her sex—the basis upon which they selected her works for display—affected her reputation.¹⁵⁴

Les femmes impressionnistes distinguished Morisot as a “great” woman artist and accordingly, it advanced only nominal insight into her career due to what Parker and Pollock view as the primary oversight of the earliest feminist scholarship: a “failure to analyze *why* modern art history ignores the existence of women artists, why it has become silent about them, why it has consistently dismissed as insignificant those it did acknowledge.”¹⁵⁵ Restating the conviction held by Nochlin and Sutherland Harris in 1976, Tompkins Lewis still believed that the exhibition

¹⁵² The historical texts reproduced in the exhibition catalog—one essay on each artist written by a period critic—suggest that curators aimed to restore the artists’ reputations by associating them with well-known historical figures who were men. Stéphane Mallarmé’s laudatory preface to the catalog for Morisot’s 1896 posthumous exhibition represents her in this exhibition. See Marianne Delafond et al., preface to *Les Femmes Impressionnistes: Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzalès, Berthe Morisot*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée Marmottan, 1993), 7.

¹⁵³ The catalog provides minimal formal interpretations of exhibited works. Tompkins Lewis simply calls it a “disappointment.” See Mary Tompkins Lewis, “Review: *Les Femmes Impressionnistes: Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzalès, Berthe Morisot; Sisters of the Brush: Women’s Artistic Culture in Late Nineteenth-Century Paris* by Tamar Garb,” *Art Journal* 53, no. 3 (Autumn 1994): 90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/777446> (accessed March 3, 2013).

¹⁵⁴ On this note, Tompkins Lewis views the exhibition as offering a “predictable view” of Cassatt’s late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century *maternité* images, without any engagement with the then-expanding feminist scholarship on such portraits, see *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁵⁵ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 49.

“should inspire both critical reassessments and renewed inquiry into the numerous issues and contexts its selection of paintings raises.”¹⁵⁶ Yet the first exhibition to explicitly observe how Morisot was historically “positioned differently” as an Impressionist who was also a woman would not be organized until 2001—three full decades after feminist art history began examining the relationships between women artists and social institutions that discriminated against them.

Mujeres Impresionistas: La Otra Mirada (Women Impressionists: Another Look)(2001) explored how four women associated with Impressionism portrayed the everyday (and typically private) experiences of upper-class women.¹⁵⁷ Aiming to contextualize Cassatt's *Woman Sitting with a Child in Arms* (1890)—one of Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao's “most recognized works”—upon the reopening of the museum's newly reinstalled permanent galleries, curator Xavier Bray exhibited the painting among an additional twenty-one paintings and etchings by Cassatt and a combined forty-one paintings by Morisot, Bracquemond, and González.¹⁵⁸ Following an introductory display of portraits of Cassatt, Gonzalès, and Morisot made by Degas, Manet, Gonzalès's sister Jeanne, and Morisot's sister Edma,¹⁵⁹ the main exhibition hall was divided into

¹⁵⁶ Tompkins Lewis's remark also recalls feminist critiques of *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist* (1987). See “Review: *Les femmes impressionnistes*,” 91.

¹⁵⁷ The exhibition was held from November 12, 2001 through February 3, 2002. See Xavier Bray, Bill Scott, and Juliet Wilson-Bareau, *Mujeres Impresionistas: La Otra Mirada*, Exh. cat. (Bilbao, Spain: Museo de Bellas Artes, 2001).

¹⁵⁸ In the catalog's eponymous essay, curator Xavier Bray concisely surveys how French women persistently pursued painting despite their historical exclusion from professionalizing art academies, an account that owes much to Nochlin (1971), Parker and Pollock (1982), and Pollock's “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity” (1988), all of which he does not acknowledge. See Bray, “Mujeres Impresionistas: La Otra Mirada” in *Mujeres Impresionistas*, 11-29.

¹⁵⁹ Jose Ignacio Berroeta, President of the Fundación Bilbao Bizkaia Kuxta, mentions the location of the artists' portraits in his foreword to *Mujeres Impresionistas*, 8. Curator Xavier Bray does not

five thematic sections: portraits of women looking through windows (or women posed in rooms with views); *toilette* scenes; opera and theater scenes; representations of maternity and domestic responsibility; and finally, parks and private gardens. By emphasizing specific gendered and spatially-defined subjects over traditional genres or gender-neutral formal concerns, Bray cogently facilitated a study of “femininity” as a construction highly dependent upon the artist’s gaze.

Apart from two still lifes, *Mujeres Impresionistas: La Otra Mirada* included twenty-two portraits by Morisot in which women inhabit a range of distinctly female roles: daughter, sister, wife, au pair, and allegorical nude. Fourteen of these works portray Morisot’s daughter Julie, a set that intimately documents the coming-of-age of an upper-class young woman while considering the ways in which Morisot’s maternal role accommodated her artistic profession.¹⁶⁰ Because male Impressionists rarely depicted scenes of motherhood, childhood, and female adolescence, Bray vividly underlines with his selections Pollock’s view that Morisot painted such works “...with a sureness of knowledge of the daily routine and rituals which not only constituted the spaces of

explain outright why he included these works, however he refers to these figures as supportive confidants, collaborators, and sometimes influential as instructors to Cassatt, Gonzalès, and Morisot, see catalog entries one through eight in *Mujeres Impresionistas*, 54-68.

¹⁶⁰ The catalog is the only source at hand for analysis of this exhibition, however it can be inferred that Morisot’s portraits of Julie were not displayed together, but throughout two or three of the thematic sections because the featured works picture Julie in the family home, at the home of friends and other family members, and outdoors in the garden and Bois de Boulogne, among other public parks. Nonetheless, these works constitute the majority of Morisot’s representation in this exhibition and Julie’s recurrent appearance would not have gone unnoticed. As noted in Chapter 2, see Higonnet *Berthe Morisot* (1990) and *Berthe Morisot’s Images of Women* (1992) for analysis of Morisot’s portraits of her daughter. See also Chapter 3’s discussion of the 2012 retrospective *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)*.

femininity but collectively trace the construction of femininity across the stages of women's lives."¹⁶¹

Though the interpretive thread of *Mujeres Impresionistas: La Otra Mirada* demonstrates Bray's clear recognition of late 1980s and early 1990s feminist art historical inquiries into the function of gender in relationship to artistic practice, his presentation of exclusively domestic subjects raises concerns about Morisot's work being ghettoized to single-sex exhibitions. The intellectual particularity and clarity with which Bray explicated his understanding of "sexual difference" in the exhibition cannot be measured because didactics are unavailable for analysis; however, the limited (and perceptibly repetitive) scope of his selections might have inadvertently reinforced the false notion of a biologically determined "feminine Impressionism." To provoke a new way of looking at Morisot, Bray omitted the plein air landscapes (and works in other genres) that comprise a significant portion of her oeuvre; viewers uninformed about Morisot's career would not have recognized the exhibition as being a partial study and by the same token were exposed only to the shared tendencies in subject matter between Morisot and her female Impressionist colleagues. Moreover, *Mujeres Impresionistas: La Otra Mirada* did not invite viewers to consider the implications of Bray's observations about Morisot's impressionist practice, an additional aim indicated by his exhibition title, because the display isolated her art from that produced by male Impressionists as well as elements of "feminine visual culture," a source of long-established iconographies that she repurposed in constructing her images of women.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ See Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Vision and Difference*, 115.

¹⁶² The catalog for *Mujeres Impresionistas*, however, included several comparative illustrations. Pollock expresses frustration that exhibition catalogs rather than the exhibition event itself so often contain observations closely related to or directly citing feminist scholarship, see "A History

Although *Mujeres Impresionistas: La Otra Mirada* offered a novel look at Morisot's life and work as a woman who typically depicted other women—no preceding Impressionism or retrospective exhibitions had studied Morisot's commitment to female subjects—this specialist exhibition did not comprehensively contextualize the historical situation shared by Morisot and the “women Impressionists,” nor could it have revealed the means by which she continued (or disrupted) traditional modes of representation. Thus, the exhibition risked serving as “confirmation” of the existence of “women's art”¹⁶³ while acclaiming the “greatness” of less frequently exhibited Impressionist artworks without recourse to that term.

Purporting to rectify the underrepresentation of Bracquemond, Cassatt, Gonzalès, and Morisot in twentieth- and twenty-first century Impressionism exhibitions, *Women Impressionists* (2008) displayed together for the first time in both Germany and the United States the work of these four artists.¹⁶⁴ Curator Ingrid Pfeiffer assembled more than 150 oil paintings, watercolors, pastels, etchings, and drawings from a large number of international museums and private collections, forming a show “so comprehensive that it could even be described as four retrospectives rolled into one.”¹⁶⁵ Unlike *Mujeres Impresionistas: La Otra Mirada* (2001), for which

of Absence,” 129. Higonnet stresses how quickly “all aspects of women's visual culture were changing” during Morisot's career, arguing that the artist “brought stylistic, iconographic, and conceptual aspects of feminine visual culture to painting,” see Higonnet, introduction to *Berthe Morisot's Images of Women*, 1-6.

¹⁶³ Parker and Pollock warn of the drawbacks of single-sex exhibitions; see *Old Mistresses*, 41.

¹⁶⁴ *Women Impressionists* was held at Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt from February 22 through June 1, 2008 and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (Legion of Honor) from June 21 through September 21, 2008. See the exhibition catalog *Women Impressionists*, eds. Max Hollein and Ingrid Pfeiffer, (Frankfurt: Schirn Kunsthalle, in association with Hatje Cantz, 2008).

¹⁶⁵ In terms of number of featured works, this exhibition is the most comprehensive “women

Bray selected portraits by Morisot to the exclusion of all other subjects, *Women Impressionists* dealt with a diversity of the artist's subjects across genres and media. Portraits, seascapes, landscapes, and still lifes by Morisot constituted half of the exhibition, which indeed followed the conventional retrospective form by documenting the full span of her career in one of the four discrete sections constructed within an open-plan exhibition hall.¹⁶⁶ With a more expansive body of Morisot's work at hand, Pfeiffer simultaneously assessed the breadth of her work and, by accentuating Morisot's coexistence with other Impressionists who were women, explored issues related to gender identity, a major feminist theoretical concern.

Though outwardly orthodox in its retrospective-like hang, the Morisot section of *Women Impressionists* presumably featured analyses distilled from the feminist literature in the wall labels affixed by each work,¹⁶⁷ as Pfeiffer leads off the exhibition catalog by raising a question akin to one posed at the outset of feminist art history: "how is it that four women Impressionist painters gained acceptance in their period only to since become virtually unknown?"¹⁶⁸ In the essay that

Impressionists" specialist exhibition to date. See Max Hollein, Director of Schirn Kunsthalle, foreword to *Women Impressionists*, 8.

¹⁶⁶ The majority of these works are oil paintings. Works by the four women Impressionists were displayed separately in Frankfurt, however none of the sources at hand for analysis detail the exhibition's organization in San Francisco. See the exhibition checklist, in *Women Impressionists*, 304-308.

¹⁶⁷ Installation views show paragraph-length labels beside each work. Schirn Kunsthalle, "Exhibition Installation photographs by Norbert Miguletz," Exhibition: Women Impressionists at Schirn Kunsthalle, http://www.schirn.de/en/exhibitions/2008/women-impressionists/Exhibition_2.html, (accessed March 2, 2013).

¹⁶⁸ See Ingrid Pfeiffer, "Impressionism is Feminine: On the Reception of Morisot, Cassatt, Gonzalès, and Bracquemond," in *Women Impressionists*, 12-30. Parker and Pollock posed this question in 1982 as they critiqued Nochlin (1971), See *Old Mistresses*, 48-49.

follows, “Impressionism is Feminine: On the Reception of Morisot, Cassatt, Gonzalès, and Bracquemond,” Pfeiffer chronicles the often gendered reception of the work of women Impressionists—an exposition derived to a great extent from late twentieth-century feminist scholarship.¹⁶⁹ Ultimately, Pfeiffer claims that “... [women Impressionists] are still a long way from receiving the critical attention due to them, nor has the research done to date translated into any major exhibitions of their works. It is hoped that the selection of works shown here will at last fill this gap.”¹⁷⁰

Pfeiffer, along with Max Hollein, Director of Schirn Kunsthalle, further indicated their curatorial resolve to augment exhibition content with feminist knowledge by inviting eminent feminist art historians to contribute new and previously published research to the *Women Impressionists* catalog and to present papers at the symposium held in conjunction with the Frankfurt event.¹⁷¹ Pfeiffer chaired the one-day symposium “Impressionism is Feminine –

¹⁶⁹ In her concise review of the titular artist’s careers as Impressionists, Pfeiffer highlights Morisot’s successes at the Salon de Paris, her “dogged persistence” in organizing and showing work in the Société Anonyme des Artistes exhibitions, and describes her friendships with other artists and patronage. Pfeiffer heavily cites Adler and Garb’s *Berthe Morisot* (1987); Pollock’s *Vision and Difference* (1988); Higonnet’s *Berthe Morisot* (1990); several essays included in Edelstein’s *Perspectives on Morisot* (1990); Pollock’s *Differencing the Canon* (1999), as well as primary sources and texts predating feminist art history, such as Rewald’s *The History of Impressionism* (1973).

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁷¹ See Max Hollein, foreword to *Women Impressionists*, 8. The catalog featured at least one essay discussing each of the four artists, including the following scholarship on Morisot: a reprint of Nochlin’s “Morisot’s *Wet Nurse*: The Construction of Work and Leisure in Impressionist Painting” (1990; see Chapter 1); previously unpublished letters from Mary Cassatt to Morisot and Julie Manet with annotations; and an essay by Sylvie Patry, who curated the retrospective *Berthe Morisot, 1841-1895* (2002), that re-evaluates Morisot’s role as an active participant in post-Impressionist art by assessing how her red chalk drawings produced in the 1890s played a part in “redefining” Impressionism by their emphasis on decoration, a major concern in the work of the Nabis and other avant-garde artist groups, see “*Catching a touch of the ephemeral*: Berthe Morisot and

Impressionismus ist weiblich,” at which distinguished feminist art historians Garb, Nochlin, Pollock, and Anna Havemann, along with *Berthe Morisot–Impressionist* (1987) co-curator Bill Scott, examined several questions: why and how art historians historically excluded women Impressionists from the canon; the current state and function of the canon; their distinct approaches to writing art history as feminists; and how they frame the life and work of women Impressionists in their own words.¹⁷² Despite these efforts to involve feminist art historians, the curatorial approach employed to mount *Women Impressionists* perpetuated a conservative tendency: to interpret Morisot’s career within a separate, gendered category of artistic production.¹⁷³

Though “women Impressionist” exhibitions draw on feminist literature to a greater extent than other conventional exhibition forms, their continued existence illustrates a pedagogic uncertainty expressed by feminist scholars in their reviews of exhibitions that highlight Morisot: between allowing her to gain visibility or risking her isolation from more comprehensive art historical narratives.

Impressionism,” in *Women Impressionists*, eds. Max Hollein and Ingrid Pfeiffer, 68-75.

¹⁷² Schirn Kunsthalle hosted the symposium on April 6, 2008. I wrote to Schirn Kunsthalle staff in September 2012 and January 2013 regarding the availability of transcripts or other documentation of this important event and have yet to receive a response. For the event description, see Schirn Kunsthalle, “Exhibitions, 2008: Women Impressionists Symposium,” <http://www.schirn.de/en/exhibitions/2008/women-impressionists/symposium.html> (accessed October 12, 2012).

¹⁷³ Deepwell, “Feminist Curatorial Strategies,” 80.

Conclusion

In 2002, feminist art historian Griselda Pollock cursorily critiqued three decades of major international exhibitions of Impressionism, a popular circuit of surveys and retrospectives that “actively and constantly educated” millions of museum visitors, asserting that

from almost every exhibition text that claims to offer traditional, revisionist, or merely spectacular encounters with the art of the second half of the nineteenth century, any serious engagement with feminist art history is totally absent.¹⁷⁴

By tracing the historiography of feminist art historical scholarship on French Impressionist Berthe Morisot, this thesis established the artist as a fixture within the feminist project from its inception in the early 1970s. Moreover, it critically demonstrated how Morisot scholars had moved from exposing the artist’s historical marginalization in Impressionist studies to rigorously interpreting her work with special interest in the interrelationship of her gender and artistic practice by the moment when museum reevaluation of her career began in earnest with the retrospective *Berthe Morisot—Impressionist* (1987). Though Morisot’s work received sustained exposure in more than a dozen major international exhibitions mounted since the Impressionist centenary, reviews by feminist art historians often expressed disappointment—some of which borders on disillusionment—as curators routinely imparted unvarying biographical accounts and formal analyses of her work. Reading the progressively interdisciplinary body of feminist writing on Morisot in tandem with the organization of successive late twentieth- and early twenty-first century

¹⁷⁴ Pollock, “A History of Absence,” 126-27.

exhibitions which prominently featured her work corroborates Pollock's finding: curators rarely assimilate feminist research or translate theoretical concerns apposite to Morisot into exhibition practice.

Exhibitions that elicited sharp criticism from feminist scholars—primarily the Impressionism survey and retrospective—hewed to the established emphases and categorical, material, and temporal restrictions of their respective type. Impressionist surveys and thematic exhibitions characterized Morisot as an artist associated with the Société Anonyme des Artistes, if they included her among the Impressionists at all. Such acknowledgement of her active role in the Parisian avant-garde owes to early efforts of feminist art historians who exposed the exclusivity and structural sexism of the canon; however, revisionist exhibitions of Impressionism often showcased her paintings as Impressionist “masterpieces,” complacently accepting what feminist scholars had long critiqued as masculinist standards of display. Likewise, Morisot retrospectives avowed her “greatness” by detailing how her oeuvre epitomizes the formal and painterly creativity of the Impressionists, a group “heroicized in the Modernist canon.”¹⁷⁵ Though the late 1980s and early 1990s feminist literature clearly challenged the validity of an individual's asocial or unmediated artistic “greatness,” the latest exhibition analyzed in this thesis—the 2012 retrospective *Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)*—stressed her originality first and foremost without confronting the possible effects that Morisot's gender and other social distinctions had on her work. Specialist exhibitions featuring “women Impressionists,” however, specifically included Morisot because of her sex, and

¹⁷⁵ Adler and Garb caution that Morisot's relationship to this celebrated group allows for her “easy recuperation,” see “Introduction,” in *The Correspondence of Berthe Morisot with her Family and Friends*, ed. Denis Rouart. (London: Camden Press, 1986), 3.

consequently, they more frequently engaged with feminist scholarship in deliberately reflecting upon the sexist bias that historically marginalized her work.

Throughout the past decade, a period during which one major exhibition featuring (or focusing primarily on) Morisot opened practically every year, feminist art historians continued their critique of the academy while purposefully proceeding to question the authority of the museum—the public site of “encounter” with works of art.¹⁷⁶ Pollock, taking issue with the limited, “authorized” version of art history still present in the museum assumed the curatorial role after “...[finding] myself drawn more and more to the model of the exhibition as a means to elaborate the latest state of my feminist interventions in art’s histories.”¹⁷⁷ Her demonstration of feminist curatorial practice, however, exists only in print. Contributions by other feminist scholars to the expanding, interdisciplinary museum studies literature likewise continue to reevaluate museal categories and didactic language, encouraging museum visitor to consider the implications of a curator’s subjectivity on exhibition content.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Pollock, “A History of Absence,” 129-30.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁷⁸ See Porter, “Feminist Curatorial Strategies,” 118. Hilde Hein also believes that museums “face a dilemma; they must make a putative choice between presenting objective knowledge of truths certified by reliable, value-free standards, or the alarming contention that all viewpoints have equal standing,” see Hein, “Looking at Museums from a Feminist Perspective,” 56.

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Vita

Kristie Lyn Couser was born on September 14, 1986, in Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, and is an American citizen. She graduated from Greenfield-Central High School, Greenfield, Indiana in 2004. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Art from Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana in 2008.