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**The Women of Impressionism:
The Influence of Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, and Eva Gonzalès
on the Art Market**

By Caroline Finden

A thesis submitted in conformity
with the requirements for the
Master's Degree in Art Business
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12,135 words

Abstract

My thesis addresses three overlooked female Impressionist artists, Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, and Eva Gonzalès, the hardships that they faced during their lifetimes, the sociological and political influences that shaped their narratives, and the triumphs that allow us to call them great female artists today. Art historians and feminists alike, such as the exalted Linda Nochlin, have searched for understanding as to why so many extraordinary female artists have gone unnoticed throughout art history, often leaving more questions than answers. To better understand each of these women I analyze both an iconic work and the highest selling work at auction for each, providing an intimate perspective with which to view their lives, careers, tribulations, and accomplishments. My thesis expands the conversation to the modern art market spearheaded by Paul Durand-Ruel. I conclude with an analysis of sales data comparing recent auction sales of these three women against three comparable male peers to glean a more complete understanding of how historically neglected female Impressionists are faring in today's feminist landscape.

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Introduction

Women have shaped the course of art history, though are frequently left out of academic discourse. Even in today's feminist focused landscape, there has been limited scholarly publication examining the personal lives, oeuvres, and markets of Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, and Eva Gonzalès. With women finally gaining traction in a field that has historically been dominated by men, it is necessary to re-examine these three, iconic, female Impressionist artists who helped to shape the movement and analyze the lens through which the art market views their work today.

The retrospective exhibition titled "Berthe Morisot: Woman Impressionist" at the Barnes Foundation in 2018 marked the first critical and commercial reception of a single female Impressionist.¹ Now, one would never say think to specify "male" Impressionist when discussing Renoir, Manet, or Degas... yet the subtitle of the exhibition was in fact "woman" Impressionist. This subtitle alone speaks to the condescension that these breathtaking artists faced, not only during their lifetimes, but also in today's art historical scholarship context and art marketplace. Nonetheless, this exhibition marked an important turning point in the modern perspective of the "female" Impressionist art historical canon.

In addition to the groundbreaking Morisot exhibition, Linda Nochlin's 1971 essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?", marked a shift in the understanding of the traditional art historical canon. Nochlin argues that it is not for lack of genius, but due specifically to the demeaning societal norms throughout history that

¹ Berthe Morisot et al., *Berthe Morisot: Woman Impressionist*, ed. Sylvie Patry (New York, NY: Rizzoli Electa: Barnes Foundation, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Dallas Museum of Art, 2018).

prevented extraordinarily talented women artists from becoming as great and as well-known as their male counterparts.² Nochlin has written a large number of essays that have been included in many of the texts produced alongside exhibitions that focused on female artists. By questioning tradition, as Nochlin has sought out to do, one can discover the true genius of the female artists who were buried under the heavy weight of societal gender norms.

In addition to more intimate, sociological analyses, the modern art market operates as an interesting, if not siloed, lens in which to analyze the quantitative successes and shortcomings of all artists, both living and deceased. The late 1980's saw an enormous boom in the Impressionist market, fueled primarily by Japanese buyers. In 1990, the art market saw a massive exodus of these buyers from the sales floor, bringing the rest of the art market down with them. The impressionist market today is significantly more lackluster than it was 22 years ago, but there has been a rise in attention paid to and sales within the female artist sector overall. In a time of marked feminist mobilization thanks to movement such as #MeToo and the Women's March, the art market has responded with greater interest, though not necessarily greater investment. There is certainly a heightened appreciation for and interest in female artists, though, in total, they still make up a mere fraction of the works sold at auction.

An analysis of the market performance of these female Impressionists today, in comparison to that of their male counterparts, along with an examination of the frustrating restraints and impediments society has imposed on female artists through a comprehensive analysis of their most notable works, is necessary to gain a proper

² Linda Nochlin, Catherine Grant, and Judy Chicago, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists? 50th Anniversary Edition* (London, UK: Thames et Hudson, 2021).

understanding of how far society has come and how much farther society still must strive to progress to become a truly equal one.

Chapter One: Feminist Art History and Impressionism

I. Linda Nochlin

In 1971, Linda Nochlin, an American feminist and art historian, wrote her landmark essay titled “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”. The insightful essay, published by ARTnews, is widely regarded as the first piece of feminist art historical theory, and the one that initiated a paradigm shift in the perception of the plight of female artists and the true meaning of “great” art throughout history. The title of the article is, of course, inherently biased and it aims to mirror the innate bias of the societal assumption that there have not been any great women artists and, in turn, implies that women are in fact incapable of achieving this notion of supreme success. Nochlin’s argument, which was formulated and published at the outset of the women’s liberation movement beginning in the late 1960’s, centers around the reasons why women artists throughout history were not able to achieve greatness and could not be viewed as great, which she finds to be due primarily to the societal influences surrounding the artists at the time of the production of their art.³

The long-accepted perspective within the history of art, as well as in the history of modern society as a whole, has been that of the white, Western male. This subjective viewpoint has distorted the view of history today, as white men not only determined the dos and the don’ts, the rules and the laws, the acceptable and the unacceptable, but they also have written the history books, they have taught the university courses, and they have led the political platforms. When examining the idea of “greatness” one must

³ Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*

understand that those determining what “great” is defined as and which artists were deemed to be both qualified enough and deserving enough to reach this near mythological zenith, were, of course, close-minded, white men. The shortsightedness of these determinations formed an all-encompassing and widely accepted misconception of what is considered to be art and what makes art and its creators “great”.

The most natural way forward in the feminists search for a solution to the problem of crooked, male dominated, art historical theory is to seek out prime representations of great female artists or great works by exceptional female artists, though Nochlin asserts that the only way to truly solve this conundrum is not necessarily by finding a clear answer or explanation. Instead, one must seek a better understanding of the limitations that institutions and society have placed onto certain groups, such as women artists, that deprived artists or other creatives of the necessary opportunities required to become a “great” artist. “The fault,” Nochlin argues, “lies not in our stars, our hormones, our menstrual cycles or our empty internal spaces, but in our institutions and our education”.⁴ With the blame squarely placed on the social institutions which dictate cultural systems, and the understanding of the unfortunate reality that the standards and ideologies of these social institutions seep into all the dark nooks and crannies of societies thought processes, Nochlin notes that creating “a world in which equal achievement will not only be made possible but is actively encouraged by social institutions”⁵ is paramount.

In general, the proper situations and atmospheres to foster “great” art production are required for an artist to create this great art. When that artist is denied access to any of the many conditions productive of great artists it makes it that much more difficult for

⁴ Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, 30

⁵ Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, 31

anyone, especially those considered to be outsiders, to find success. These conditions are determined by social institutions, academia, and patronage, and women were historically denied access to institutions of higher learning that were almost always considered a requirement for the future success of a “great” artist. The demands and expectations placed on women for most of history, such as extreme propriety, marrying an appropriate match, bearing children, and remaining in, and caring for, the home and her family did not align with the requirements of exceptional creativity and the cultivation of artistic talent.⁶

Thankfully, there are exceptions to every rule. Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, and Eva Gonzalès are three groundbreaking women who managed to circumvent the rigid restrictions determined to hold them back in their pursuit of artistic success. Nochlin alleges that there are two primary traits that helped these socially handicapped groups, notably women, succeed. The first quality involves having the tenacity to embody traditionally masculine qualities such as single-mindedness, concentration, and “absorption in ideas and craftsmanship for their own sake”⁷. The second quality involves being lucky enough to have a direct avenue into the heart of the art industry, such as by way of being the daughter of an artistic or creative father, or by fostering close personal connections with a significant, well-established male artist. Morisot’s parents encouraged a creative education, and despite being denied access to the *École des Beaux-Arts* she was given the opportunity to study art at home and through well-connected tutors. Morisot would also find herself making important art world connections and would eventually become the sister-in-law of the famed Impressionist Édouard Manet. Cassatt,

⁶ Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, 51

⁷ Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, 69

like Morisot, also boldly sought an artistic education. She defied her more traditional parents' wishes and independently sought and successfully received a formal art education at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Upon continuing her studies abroad, Cassatt and Edgar Degas would form an incredibly close professional relationship. Eva Gonzalès was born to two creative parents, and entered the world squarely situated at the center of Parisian literary and artistic culture, and later she found herself becoming Édouard Manet's only student.

In 2001, thirty years after the original "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" essay was published, Nochlin published an addendum of sorts fittingly titled "Thirty Years After." In this sequel, Nochlin touches on three areas in which there has been improvement for female artists since her original publication. First, there has been a shift away from the sole importance of the idea of "greatness" of the artist towards the importance of making an impact through a creator's art and innovative technique.⁸ The basis of successful, or rather "great", art today is due to the work itself, more so than to the well-bred background and education of the artist who created it. Second, the feminist movement has culminated in both feminist art history and critical theory, as well as gender studies, finally becoming part of the conversation, and a crucial part of any art historical study.⁹ Lastly, the role of women has shifted completely. Women have moved from the private domain to the public sector allowing for a significant shift in the perception of the female presence in any field, including the art industry.¹⁰ Despite this overall improvement in the female "problem", Nochlin makes sure to underline the fact

⁸ Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, 84

⁹ Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, 85

¹⁰ Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, 89

that society is still predominately run by men. She notes that “at a time when certain patriarchal values are making a comeback, as they invariably do during periods of conflict and stress, women must be staunch in refusing their time-honored role as victims, or mere supporters, of men. It is time to rethink the bases of our position and strengthen them for the fight ahead”.¹¹

Regardless of the ever-continuous fight for relevancy and appreciation, undeterred by the mountain of obstacles before them, and with a bit of rebellion propelling them forward, each of these three women became truly great artists. Even though 19th century institutions and social constructs were put in place intending to obstruct and intimidate women like Morisot, Cassatt, and Gonzalès from achieving professional success, and despite what was surely a continuous wrestling match with self-doubt, guilt, and ridicule¹², they initiated the very beginning of a fundamental shift in thought regarding the modern woman and her extraordinary, and endless, capabilities.

II. The Impressionist Movement

Today, the term “Impressionist” is synonymous with some of the most well-known, blue-chip artists and with some of the most expensive works of art sold in the history of the modern art market. Though, at the inception of the movement, in the middle of the 19th century, these artists, associated with their quick, loose brushstrokes, painting *en plein air*, and the intangible ambition to capture the ephemeral essence of sunlight and shadow, were considered cultural outcasts. The name of the group of artistic misfits, originally known as “La Société anonyme des artistes peintres, sculpteurs,

¹¹ Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, 102

¹² Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?*, 80

graveurs, etc.” was in fact derived from a play on Claude Monet’s painting titled *Impression, soleil levant* (1872). When a critic, Louis Leroy, wrote a cheeky though mocking fictional dialogue between exhibition viewers of this piece he noted, “*Impression* - I was certain of it. I was just telling myself that, since I was impressed, there had to be some impression in it... and what freedom, what ease of workmanship! Wallpaper in its embryonic state is more finished than that seascape.”¹³

Up until 1874¹⁴, the French, and whole of the European art world was dominated by the Royal Academies of both France and England, managed by their respective monarchies. The French Salon was the official exhibition of the *École des Beaux-Arts*, formerly known as the *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*, and it was sponsored by the French monarchy system. A jury organized by the *Académie* acted as the overarching authority on the best, and therefore also the worst, art. This best and worst delineation was the academic viewpoint, though because they were the governing authority, this perspective was widely adopted by critics, collectors, and viewers alike. The Salon and its tastes were rooted in traditional artistic values and allowed submissions only from students and graduates of the *Académie*. Favoring students of the *Académie*, all of whom were men, and those works that followed the traditional, austere tastes of the Salon, the jury determined the trajectory of every artist’s career at the time.

In describing the plight of the Impressionist artist, Théodore Duret, a critical journalist who took to defending the Impressionists, said in his piece from 1878 titled “The Impressionist Painters” that

¹³ Linda Nochlin, *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874-1904: Sources & Documents*, 13

¹⁴ Henri Loyrette and Gary Tinterow, *Origins of Impressionism*.

“the public lets loose violently the critics shake their fists, call the painter a "communist" and a rascal. The poor Impressionist vainly asserts his complete honesty, declares that he only reproduces what he sees, that he remains faithful to nature; the public and the critics condemn him. They don't bother to find out whether or not what they discover on the canvas corresponds to what the painter has actually observed in nature. Only one thing matters to them: what the Impressionists put on their canvases does not correspond to what is on the canvases of previous painters. If it is different, then it is bad.”¹⁵

With the emergence of this avant-garde in the middle of the 19th century, a group who staunchly rejected the antiquated and stringent ideals to which the Salon held faithful, these progressive artists found other ways to showcase their modern-leaning art that was deemed unacceptable by the Salon. The first and most prominent of these Salon offshoots was the Salon des Refusés. In 1863, Emperor Napoleon III held this first Salon derivative¹⁶ in response to those who were unhappy with the extraordinarily finite number of works admitted to the Salon. Following this precedent, the Société Anonyme Coopérative des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs initiated the first Impressionist Exhibition in 1874. The Impressionist exhibitions would continue annually or biannually until 1886 and they would also give rise to a slew of additional salons including the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon D’Automne, both of which are still in operation today.

¹⁵ Linda Nochlin, *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, 1874-1904: Sources & Documents*, 9-10

¹⁶ "Salon des Refusés." *Oxford Reference*

With the onslaught of, primarily negative, attention directed towards this new guard of modern artists, a new type of art market also emerged, with an art dealer named Paul Durand-Ruel at its helm. Durand-Ruel inherited the Galerie Durand-Ruel from his parents, located in Paris, in the middle of the 19th century. Durand-Ruel would not only go on to expand the entire business operation, but he would also develop a new methodology for promoting and selling art. At the time that Durand-Ruel acquired the family business it primarily represented the Barbizon School of painters, the school to which landscape painters such as Théodore Rousseau, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, and Jean-François Millet belonged.¹⁷ While working to support these artists and find new ways to market their work, Durand-Ruel began to pioneer new techniques borrowed from financiers that he would eventually employ to assist the Impressionists in their rise to the top.

Durand-Ruel harbored a deep adoration and appreciation for art, and in turn an intense appreciation for the artists who created it. He strived to defend both the art itself and to support its artists, while finding new ways to promote the artists' work through individual exhibitions, continuous expansion of his global network of galleries and clientele, and an attempt to maintain a financially motivated undercurrent throughout each of his ventures. Durand-Ruel's strategic and entrepreneurial approach to this new and more commercial art market began with forging close connections to his artists. Utilizing financial principles, Durand-Ruel was able to dethrone the Académie and largely end the exclusive ownership that it held over the success or the failure of art and artists through the Salon system.

¹⁷ Sylvie Patry, John Zarobell, *Inventing Impressionism: Paul Durand-Ruel and the Modern Art Market*, 80.

An important sale of art marked the beginning of Durand-Ruel's cutting-edge tactics. Held at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris in March of 1870, Durand-Ruel initiated the "Edwards" sale. At auction today, artworks that were previously part of a prestigious collection or art that formerly belonged to a prominent figure tend to glean significantly greater profits than artworks lacking a well-known or well-respected provenance. Though, in the 19th century, marketing art in such a way was not common practice... until Durand-Ruel's entrepreneurial perspective changed the future of the industry. In a mutually beneficial, speculative, and quite shrewd business deal, the financier Charles Edwards advanced a significant amount of capital to Durand-Ruel in exchange for 37 Barbizon paintings by some of Durand-Ruel's most prized artists. Edwards was able to display the artwork in his home and then Durand-Ruel organized an auction for the sale of what could then be called "The Edwards Collection".¹⁸ The somewhat manipulative use of the term "collection" helped the sale to turn a significantly greater profit than an unnamed collection would have and it also marketed the works belonging to a school of artists which was not yet appreciated in neither the public nor the critical circles as a genre worth investing in.

By finding new ways to bolster the reputation of a particular piece of art, a particular artist, or a particular artistic genre through new marketing strategies, Durand-Ruel was able to utilize profits from these auctions to invest in more art and to more lucratively support promising artists who were part of under or not yet appreciated movements. Durand-Ruel functioned not only as an art dealer but played a valuable role in all areas of the market as a collector, patron, consultant, financier, and marketing

¹⁸ Sylvie Patry, John Zarobell, *Inventing Impressionism: Paul Durand-Ruel and the Modern Art Market*, 78.

strategist. His marketing prowess was ingenious in that he also hosted exhibitions of his young, unestablished artists, mixing their works alongside the art of more respected, well-established, and popular artists. The intermingling of new artists with masters secured their spot within the market and piqued the interest of buyers resulting in profitable sales.¹⁹

After the successful auction of “The Edwards Collection”, Durand-Ruel would go on to spend much of his career devoted to the Impressionists. Giving the likes of Monet, Degas, Pissarro, and Sisley stipends to live on and to create art with, in exchange for selling him their work and allowing him to represent them commercially, and internationally.²⁰ Through this encouragement and endorsement, Durand-Ruel propelled the Impressionist movement forward and towards eventual success.

¹⁹ Sylvie Patry, John Zarobell, *Inventing Impressionism: Paul Durand-Ruel and the Modern Art Market*, 81.

²⁰ Sylvie Patry, John Zarobell, *Inventing Impressionism: Paul Durand-Ruel and the Modern Art Market*, 88.

Chapter Two: Berthe Morisot, The Success Story

I. Berthe Morisot: Woman Impressionist

In October of 2018, a crucial monographic show of the work of Berthe Morisot titled “Berthe Morisot: Woman Impressionist” debuted at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec in Québec City, Canada. Co-organized by four institutions including the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Dallas Museum of Art in Dallas, Texas, and the Musée d’Orsay in Paris, France, the exhibition was co-curated by Sylvie Patry of the Musée d’Orsay, and Nicole Myers of the Dallas Museum of Art.

The exhibition showcased about 70 of Morisot’s works in chronological order, charting the course of her life and if her art side by side. Highlighting the growth of her artistic prowess, the show took viewers on a journey from her earliest paintings as she first began exhibiting with the newly dubbed “Impressionists” to her later works which explore her foray into the emotionally charged Symbolist style of painting.

While the exhibition was a stunning display of an extraordinary artist, what is most striking about this exhibition is its title. In spite of the curators aims to highlight the disparaging truth that Morisot has, unjustly, not been appreciated on the same level as her male counterparts, the curators felt the need to add the “female” modifier to describe Morisot as an Impressionist. In lieu of the great strides taken in Western Europe and North America to raise women up so they may compete at the same level as any other gender identity, the need to add a pejorative adjective, other than one that describes her character or nearly unparalleled talent, demonstrates that the art world is nowhere near as

progressive as it believes or proclaims itself to be. Sylvie Patry defended the exhibitions title noting “with this title we refer [to] a given and historical framework, where it can’t be denied that being a woman artist has had an impact on her career and on her posthumous recognition.”²¹ While literal, and important to note if the exhibition had debuted in the 19th century, Berthe Morisot is deserving of a more relevant adjective. Maybe “Berthe Morisot: Exceptional Impressionist” would have been a more apt description.

II. Berthe Morisot

Berthe Morisot was one artist belonging to an intimate group of female Impressionist artists to see success during her lifetime. Born in 1841²² to an upper middle-class family in France she was encouraged wholeheartedly by her parents to pursue her artistic passions, despite a severe lack of resources for most female artists at the time. Up until the time of Morisot, Rosa Bonheur was the only female artist who rose to any level of success in the legitimate art market, thanks to her connections with art dealers. Jean-Baptiste Goupil and Ernest Gambert led the development of lucrative art dealerships in 19th century Europe and supported Bonheur’s rise to relative fame. With access to the École des Beaux-Arts an impossible venture for women of her time,

²¹ Ilene Dube, “Why Berthe Morisot Was an Essential Figure in the Impressionist Movement,” Hyperallergic.

²² Anne Higonnet. *Berthe Morisot* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 8.

Morisot's craft was honed through private tutors and through her unwavering, personal determination that remained steadfast throughout her career.²³

As a female art professional in France, Morisot's networking options would have been quite limited at the time, though her social standing allowed for a few career transforming introductions to be made. Studying as a copyist at the Musée du Louvre, Morisot was lucky enough to have made the acquaintance of some of the most iconic, innovative, and of course, male, artists of the era. Her connections to Edgar Degas, Charles Baudelaire, and Edouard Manet²⁴ would spark intelligent and creative dialogue which would help inspire her to become one of the most successful female Impressionist artists of all time, despite the difficult professional atmosphere within which she was forced to find her path. Morisot, unlike many of her talented, though unknown, female contemporaries, discovered her ambitions not just to paint for the sake of creativity, but to sell her masterpieces and to become a commercial success through her craft.

Morisot's personalized approach to seemingly mundane, everyday subjects of female life, is what set her work apart. Each of her most iconic works features a very personal interpretation of what could be construed, without a discerning eye, as a peaceful life of leisure, free from misogynistic constraints. Though themes of uncertainty regarding socially acceptable plans such as marrying, bear children, and her desire to succeed in a male dominated industry, in a male dominated world, lie under the unassuming varnish of her paintings. To better glean insight into the personal trials, tribulations, and commercial successes of Morisot, analysis of her work provides a special lens in which to peek into her intimate life.

²³ Jean-Dominique Rey and Sylvie Patry, *Berthe Morisot* (Paris, France: Flammarion, 2010), 196.

²⁴ Jean-Dominique Rey and Sylvie Patry, *Berthe Morisot* (Paris, France: Flammarion, 2010), 199.

III. Berthe Morisot: Iconic Work, *Le berceau*

Le berceau, painted in 1872 and currently located at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, is undoubtedly Morisot's most iconic work. This 56 x 46 cm²⁵ oil on canvas speaks volumes about the circumstances plaguing Morisot's difficult personal decisions at the time. The seemingly serene painting depicts Morisot's sister, Edma Pontillon sitting over Edma's young daughter, Blanche, as she lies sleeping angelically in her cradle.

The interior setting, most likely a nursery or bedroom, is dimly lit, though, in a showcase of her extraordinary talent, Morisot expertly envelops the cradle and sections of the background in translucent, white drapery. This expert painterly technique brings a certain illumination to both the crib and the sleeping child in it, reminiscent of a halo. The interplay between the pale, cherubic child swathed in ethereal fabric deeply contrasts the black background, dark vestments worn by the child's mother, Edma, and the indiscernible, almost bleak, expression across Edma's face. Both Edma's expression and her positioning is dispassionate, even melancholic, as she very blankly stares at her child. Her hands, one positioned on her own cheek and one resting on the edge of the cradle's drapery, show a certain troubled distance between the mother and her child.

At the time that Morisot created this painting she was an unmarried woman entering her thirties, a predicament that in the 19th century would be deemed as spinsterhood. As a woman fighting to reconcile an attempt at a successful painting career with the socially acceptable lifestyle choice to live her life as an upper middle-class, married, child-rearing, family-focused woman, Morisot's unique conflicts are put on full

²⁵ "Le Berceau," Le Berceau - Berthe Morisot | Musée d'Orsay, accessed October 7, 2022, <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/artworks/le-berceau-1132>.

display in this work. Despite her family's attempts at finding her a suitable partner, one of whom was another painter, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes²⁶, Morisot remained focused on herself and on her nascent career. This chosen independence, unacceptable and outright unheard of for a woman at the time, created a difficult internal struggle which she chose to subtly express through her work.

Le berceau was exhibited at the first Impressionist exhibition which took place in the Spring of 1874 in Paris at 35 Boulevard des Capucines. The exhibition, showcasing the likes of Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Edgar Degas, Auguste Renoir, and Alfred Sisley, would be an important step closer towards a groundbreaking career and trailblazing life for Morisot, the first woman to exhibit with the group and the only female artist to be included in the show. The work received little attention from critics or the press, especially when compared to the works of Morisot's male peers exhibited alongside her. Additionally, the show as a whole received criticism marked with sharp disdain and mockery for the new artistic style. Nonetheless, Morisot's place was secured among the leading pioneers of Impressionism. Morisot set the price of the painting at 800 francs, whereas Pissarro and Monet asked 1000 francs for each of their paintings.²⁷ *Le Berceau* did not sell, and the work remained with the family of Edma, Morisot's sister depicted in the painting, until it was sold to the Musée du Louvre in 1930 and then to the Musée d'Orsay in 1986.²⁸

²⁶ Jean-Dominique Rey and Sylvie Patry, *Berthe Morisot* (Paris, France: Flammarion, 2010), 29.

²⁷ Anne Higonnet. *Berthe Morisot* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 111.

²⁸ "Le Berceau," *Le Berceau - Berthe Morisot | Musée d'Orsay*, accessed October 7, 2022, <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/artworks/le-berceau-1132>.

IV. Berthe Morisot: Highest Sale Price, *Après le déjeuner*

Sold at auction by Christie's London in 2013, Morisot's *Après le déjeuner* is her highest priced sale of art to date. At 10,983,245 USD the sale set a new personal record, making Berthe Morisot the leading female Impressionist painter at auction.²⁹ Though, despite being 127 years since her death, with the mobilization in the fight for women's rights, women's liberation, and the #MeToo movement in between, paintings of Morisot's male peers such as Claude Monet's *Meules* (1890), sold by Sotheby's New York in 2019, continue to set records some 100 million USD higher.

Between 1881 and 1884, Morisot rented a home at 4 de la Princesse in Bougival, France with her husband, Eugene Manet, and their daughter, Julie. The home, just outside of Paris, was appointed with a bountiful garden from which Morisot gained endless inspiration. Morisot painted a significant amount of works in Bougival, likely including *Après le déjeuner*.³⁰ In *Après le déjeuner* Morisot depicts a young, red-haired woman, assumed to be Marie Renard, who sat as a model at the suggestion of Mary Cassatt in many of Morisot's paintings.³¹ Marie is pictured indoors, in what appears to be a veranda or a sun porch, with a wall of bright, layered greenery and garden blooms filling the background, just beyond the vast windows of the interior space. The backdrop is so full and lush that the interplay between the foliage and the panes of the large windows creates the illusion of a mural or wallcovering. Marie sits at a bamboo dining table that holds a detailed glass carafe and an intricately decorated plate, multiple types of fruit, a drinking

²⁹ artnet, "Price Database Fine Art and Design." *Premium included in all sales data

³⁰ Berthe Morisot et al., *Berthe Morisot: Woman Impressionist*, ed. Sylvie Patry (New York, NY: Rizzoli Electa: Barnes Foundation, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Dallas Museum of Art, 2018), 128.

³¹ Berthe Morisot et al., *Berthe Morisot: Woman Impressionist*, ed. Sylvie Patry (New York, NY: Rizzoli Electa: Barnes Foundation, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Dallas Museum of Art, 2018), 160.

glass, and a spoon. The extremely detailed figurines and furniture featured in the foreground provide a welcome contrast to the dynamic floral background. Marie wears a purple-gray dress that is so loosely painted that it appears almost translucent and blends deftly into the muntins of the windows ensuring that her pale face and red hair stand out among the highly decorative surroundings.

This work notes a sharply decorative turn in Morisot's painting style. In comparison to the austere atmosphere of *Le berceau*, this piece showcases a drastically more ornamental scene. The sumptuous landscape swathes the entire background of the canvas in color and movement, and Morisot even brings the lush flora of the outdoors inside by way of flowers placed on Marie's straw hat. Creating this visual bridge between the indoor and outdoor space is something Morisot became known for. Utilizing the idea of thresholds, or the "in-between"³², Morisot seems to be commenting on her own place in society. In *Après le déjeuner*, she incorporates the flora of the garden into the indoor space, and the color of Marie's seemingly disappearing dress almost dissolves into the background. The place of women in the 19th century was widely considered to be the home, sequestered in the interior domain. The more public, outdoor space was a predominately male setting, and women were allowed outdoors only to fulfill required female duties such as running to the market to feed their families or taking their children to the park, and in all cases of female outdoor excursions, especially in the evening, one required a chaperone.

At auction *Après le déjeuner* sold for an incredibly impressive price 131 years after its first public exhibition. Its over 10 million USD record-setting sales price speaks

³² Berthe Morisot et al., *Berthe Morisot: Woman Impressionist*, ed. Sylvie Patry (New York, NY: Rizzoli Electa: Barnes Foundation, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Dallas Museum of Art, 2018), 128.

not only to Morisot's skilled artistic prowess, but also to the painting's impressive provenance, ownership history, and seminal exhibition history. The storied history of this work begins with the Seventh Impressionist Exhibition in 1882, a show largely made possible and run by Paul Durand-Ruel. At this show, this work, one of nine of Morisot's to be exhibited that year, was considered to be the most important contribution from her, a well-established artist by 1882, and was shown among others under the category titled "A la campagne". Morisot was not in Paris for the exhibition but her husband, Eugène Manet, handled the installation of the work meticulously ensuring appropriate lighting.³³

The exhibition history of *Après le déjeuner* includes the aforementioned 7^e *exposition des artistes indépendants* in Paris in March of 1882, the Galeries Durand-Ruel, *Berthe Morisot (Madame Eugène Manet): Exposition commemorative* at the Galeries Durand-Ruel in March of 1896, no. 60, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston as a loan from October of 1940 through October of 1941 and Museum of Fine Arts in Dallas in a show titled *Sixty-Nine Paintings from the Collection of Mrs. Albert D. Lasker* in March of 1953.

Morisot spent her life attempting to defy the societal norms and constrictions the male dominated world subjected women to in the 19th century. From childhood, she sought not only to become a professional artist, but to rival her male counterparts in quality, sales, and fame. A trailblazer in her field, and in society, Morisot was able to transcend the gender-based confinement women had been hindered by.

³³ Adrienne Everwijn-Dumas, "Après Le Déjeuner," Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) *Après le déjeuner* (Christie's, 2013), <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5650329>.

Chapter Three: Mary Cassatt, The American in Paris

I. Mary Cassatt

Mary Stevenson Cassatt, the only American to be asked to exhibit with the Impressionists, had a continental upbringing. Born in Pennsylvania in 1844, Cassatt's upper-class, prominent family was always itching for more excitement. After moving throughout the state, with a long stay in Philadelphia, the Cassatt family spent a significant amount of time traveling throughout Europe and young Mary's middle childhood development and education occurred between London, Paris, and Germany. After four years spent living abroad, Cassatt's cultural appetite continued to grow due to her sophisticated upbringing, her parent's equal encouragement of each of their children's talents and interests, and her exposure to the elite artistic community of Philadelphia society to which her family belonged.³⁴

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts would serve as Cassatt's jumping off point to an iconic artistic career. Philadelphia was one of the world's largest cities in the middle of the 19th century and had a bustling art scene to which the Cassatt family had a multitude of connections. They were connected most notably to Caleb Cope, a financier and former neighbor of the Cassatt family, who served as the president of the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts from 1859 through 1872.³⁵ The Academy was a full-time endeavor and adopted a much more modern attitude in comparison to the storied arts academies of Europe. In Philadelphia, both female and male students practiced together, studying human anatomy and both viewing and copying works that featured nude figures.

³⁴ Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

³⁵ Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 15.

In most other institutions, female and male students would have spent much of their time working separately especially in scenarios deemed sensitive or proprietary.

Not only was the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts somewhat progressive for the time in their mixing of female and male students, but a notable number of female students were enrolled at the school. Cassatt was in good company and found herself surrounded by like-minded, independent, and feminist thinking young women. Though, she still suffered from the inability to take part in classes that taught drawing or painting from the live, nude model, so she opted to study under the tutelage of Jean-Léon Gérôme in Paris. Her time spent in Paris paid off and her painting, titled *The Mandolin Player*, was accepted to the Salon in 1868. Cassatt would go on to spend time in Italy, Spain, Belgium, and the Netherlands, studying, copying, and painting, eventually settling in Paris in 1874.³⁶

Up until 1875 when Mary Cassatt was rejected from the Salon for three consecutive years, she had focused on painting portraits of Americans visiting Paris which tourists would frequently take home with them as souvenirs. Though, embittered by her Salon rejections, the outspoken painter burned a few bridges and left the rigid Salon system to join the Société anonyme des artistes peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs, etc. at the invitation of Edgar Degas. Cassatt made an innumerable number of connections in Paris with other artists and collectors alike, though her connection to Louisine Havemeyer, nee Elder, was most significant. Having introduced Havemeyer to art collecting and the Impressionist movement when Havemeyer was just 16, Cassatt and Havemeyer would continue to be lifelong friends. After Mary Cassatt's death on June 14,

³⁶ Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

1926, Havemeyer wrote a memoir titled *Sixteen to Sixty: Memoirs of a Collector* in which she advocated for Cassatt as an independent, intelligent, hardworking, and forward-thinking woman solidifying her important impact on the female art historical canon.³⁷

II. Mary Cassatt: Iconic Work, *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair*

Little Girl in a Blue Armchair, a 89.5 x 129.8 cm oil on canvas, was painted by Cassatt in 1878³⁸, and it embodies the style and theme for which she is so well known. While spending time in Paris, Cassatt became well acquainted with Edgar Degas. Not only was Degas hugely influential to her Impressionist style, but he helped Cassatt make important connections with the inner circle of the most important Impressionist artists and with the key art world players that would help make her career a success. This specific painting was likely exhibited at the fourth exposition des artistes indépendants in 1879 and was Cassatt's debut at this now respected, if not esteemed, showcase of Impressionist artists.

By this time the artists who rejected the style of the traditional Académie had officially adopted the title of "Impressionists," by which they would forever be known throughout the remaining course of art history. Cassatt had submitted two paintings to the French Salon in 1877 and both were rejected. Well known for their dismissal of the rigid and antiquated French Salon system, the Impressionists, Degas specifically, invited Cassatt to show her works at their upcoming exhibition.

³⁷ Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 323.

³⁸ "Little Girl in a Blue Armchair," Mary Cassatt: Little Girl in a Blue Armchair (National Gallery of Art), accessed 2022, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.61368.html>.

The fourth iteration of the Salon des Refusés was newly titled the “4ème exposition faite par un groupe d’artistes Indépendants, réalistes et Impressionistes” in an attempt to create greater distance between the artists involved and their title of “Impressionists”, due to negative critical reviews, though the associated artists continued to be referred to as Impressionists among outsiders and the press. There were some withdrawals from the original group. Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Alfred Sisley all began to pull away from the group, and Renoir even had a painting accepted into the Salon. Despite the separation of some of the group’s original members, the show attracted a significant number of visitors, especially when compared to the first show just five years earlier. In addition to a slew of visitors to the show, this particular exhibition also turned a legitimate profit.

Little Girl in a Blue Armchair depicts a young girl, posited to be the daughter of a friend of Degas, lounging, completely unposed in a bright blue chair. The sitting room features two other identical chairs and a settee upholstered in the same vibrant blue fabric. In the chair across from the child there sits a Brussels Griffon. This dog breed was believed to have been gifted to Cassatt by Degas, a breed which she came to adore and keep throughout her lifetime. The dark brown dog is curled up on another chair and dozes lazily, mirroring the nonchalance of the child and providing a balance to the composition and to the girl’s dark hair, sash, and footwear.

Other than the vividly upholstered chairs and luminously pale skin of the child, the remainder of the canvas is sparse. The room is unornamented, with no other color, patterns, or décor to distract the eye. The viewer is drawn to the animated brushstroke used to paint the chairs and the abstract, vaguely floral design, is mesmerizing and almost

hypnotic. In this work, Cassatt has completely embraced the fervent energy of the quick, painterly brushstrokes that epitomize Impressionist art.

The little girl's attitude is restless, bored, and unpolished, very much unlike the way in which sitters were normally portrayed in the art of the late 19th century. Figures, including young children, depicted in works of art, were frequently poised, proper, and notably stiff. The child's somewhat rebellious and overall unconcerned slouch provides an unexpected look into the normal actions of children. Much like Morisot, Cassatt as a woman would have an intimate view into domestic life and child-rearing. Despite never marrying or having children of her own, at this time, only a woman would understand the intricacies of children's temperaments, unlike any man of the era.

Despite the child's posture appearing as if she's just flung herself down, exasperated, after a temper tantrum, her attire notes the opposite. She is extraordinarily well dressed, clean, and coiffed. Her coordinating attire includes a matching sash, hair bow, and socks, to compliment her white lace dress, with shoes buffed to the point of shining, elevated by their sparkling buckles. Her appearance is notably upper class, and her rosy cheeks and pink lips denote a healthy and happy child. Though, all children, despite their family's finances or social status, are not naturally prim and proper. This insightful perspective into the psyche of a young child could have only been captured by the hand of a female artist.

The composition is severely angled, and the background draws the viewers eye to the room's corner. Cassatt noted in a letter to Ambroise Vollard, a French art dealer, in 1903, that Degas "advised me on the background, he even worked on the background."³⁹

³⁹ Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 126.

With this, Degas' influence on Cassatt's work and career was cemented. The visually interesting, upturned angle of the viewpoint suggests a certain amount of informality, matched by the pose, or rather lack of a pose, of the child. This radical image, the insouciance of the sitter and subject, paired with the Impressionist brushstroke, and vibrant palette solidify Cassatt's place among the rebellious Impressionist artists. After their collaboration on this painting and their mutual interest in the success of those outcasted by the French Salon, Degas and Cassatt remained accomplices in the development of Impressionist art movement, its artists, and the success of each other's careers.

III. Mary Cassatt: Highest Sale Price, *Children playing with a dog*

Sold at Christie's New York twice within an 11-year period, Cassatt's *Children playing with a dog* realized 6,200,000 USD in 2007⁴⁰ and in 2018, at the sale of "Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Including Property from the Collection of Herbert and Adele Klapper," *Children playing with a dog* had a final sales price of 4,812,500 USD. This 100 x 73 cm oil on canvas was painted in 1907, during the mature period of her Cassatt's artistic career.⁴¹ Well known at this point for her portrayals of mother-child relationships and of intimate scenes of the daily lives of women, this painting embodies Cassatt's modus operandi.

This scene shows a mother with her two children and a dog, a nude infant is seated on a blanket on her lap while a young girl affectionately puts her arm around a

⁴⁰ artnet, "Price Database Fine Art and Design."

⁴¹ Max Carter, "Children Playing with a Dog," Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) Children playing with a dog (Christie's, 2018), <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6181465>.

small, shaggy dog perched on a cushion in the foreground. The mother and child imagery depicted here is a timeless art historical trope stemming from portrayals of the Madonna and Child that are synonymous with Renaissance artists and early religious iconography. Cassatt spent time traveling throughout Italy and Spain studying famed Old Masters paintings, before she had settled in Paris. It is without a doubt that the frequently portrayed Madonna and Child imagery of the art historical canon fueled Cassatt's appreciation of the subject. Cassatt traveled to Italy and Spain at the end of the 19th century with Louisine Havemeyer, who, along with her husband, were iconic collectors and formed a close relationship with Cassatt. According to Louisine, "the trip... had a great impact on her own art. She set to work as soon as she got back to Paris and wrote with the mixture of enthusiasm and uncertainty with which the immersion in the old masters had left her: 'All day long I work! I am wild to do something decent after all the fine things we have seen'."⁴²

The history of the Madonna and Child imagery was not the only motivation that influenced Cassatt's portrayal of this storied mother-child image. Despite remaining childless herself, Cassatt had a close relationship with her own mother who she happened to lose around the same time this work was painted. This important mother-child bond and the grief imbued from Cassatt's loss of her mother would have certainly affected and influenced themes within her work.

At this time, the Women's Suffrage Movement was in full swing, and Cassatt, an avid supporter of the fight for the female vote, utilized the intimate scene of the domestic setting to provide insight into a woman's world. Unlike her male peers and the way in

⁴² Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 265.

which the male gaze dominated their depictions of female subjects, the perspective of female artists is notably intimate and insightful. The male gaze has sought, if even unintentionally, to objectify the female depicted. From this perspective the subject has no agency or representation and is often skewed to fit the needs or wants of the artist.

Cassatt's, like Morisot's, female gaze provides the female subject with her own identity, unmarred by a man's whim and it provides an unobstructed glimpse into the home, the nursery, the bath, or any other typically female domain.

Chapter Four: Eva Gonzalès, The Model Student

I. Eva Gonzalès

Born to upper class, creative parents in France in 1849, Eva Gonzalès like the other female artists of her time had limited access to the resources that men did. Gonzalès' father was a novelist who founded the "Société des gens de lettres", an association of writers in France, and her mother was a musician, and she therefore grew up surrounded by creative minds, mixing and mingling with the cultural upper crust of Parisian society.⁴³ Without access to the École des Beaux-Arts due to her gender, she looked elsewhere for training and inspiration. Despite the inability to attend the esteemed École her social status did grant her certain opportunities such as the personal tutelage of Charles Chaplin, the famed portraitist of the members of high society.

Chaplin had his own connections to the French Académie, and his portraiture style was closely linked to the traditional, classic style that was so highly esteemed by those who dictated the rules of the Salon. Consistently painting female subject on a three-quarter angle from the waist or knee up, Chaplin's models were lavishly dressed, or draped, with exposed skin and breasts, in pastels, tulle, and lace. They emanated a sense of demure sensuality. Chaplin's very delicate portraits exuded femininity but of course, the male gaze is a fantastical one. His models were sexually objectified for the benefit of the male viewer.⁴⁴

⁴³ Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzalès, and Berthe Morisot, *Les Femmes Impressionistes: Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzales, Berthe Morisot* (Paris, France: Musée Marmottan, Paris et Bibliothèque des Arts, 1993), 17.

⁴⁴ Brigid Mangano, "The Problem of the Woman Artist: How Eva Gonzales Was 'Seen' in Late Nineteenth-Century France," *Through Gendered Lenses*, 2011, 16.

Gonzalès would markedly shift this perspective to a definitively feminist viewpoint in her intimate mother and child portraits, but not before working alongside Édouard Manet. A friendship between the two artists developed in 1869 and Gonzalès became not only a close friend of his but also Manet's model and only student.⁴⁵ Soon, she would come to develop a style reminiscent of Manet's, dark in palette with highly contrasted light and dark tones. As their relationship developed, Gonzalès would begin to show her work alongside Manet's at the French Salon. Unlike Morisot and Cassatt who shunned the rigidity of the Salon in favor of the Impressionist exhibitions with which their artistic styles were most closely associated, Gonzalès opted to submit her work only to the French Salon. By not associating with the Impressionist exhibitions as they were, at this point in time, considered inferior to the Salon and looked down upon by critics and the press, she hoped to distance herself from the group, despite her leanings towards an Impressionist style, in an attempt to set herself up for greater professional success.

When showing their work side by side at the Salon of 1870, Gonzalès exhibiting her work at the Salon for the very first time, Gonzalès' painting was purchased by the French government and Manet unfortunately received negative reviews by the press.⁴⁶ Though, Gonzalès' works still remained overshadowed by Manet's fame, and, of course, gender. Her work at the beginning of her career was heavily influenced by Manet's signature style, though she would soon break away and set out to develop her own personal style. A foray into self-portraiture began a period of self-exploration for Gonzalès and it helped her to establish the unique depictions of women and their hidden,

⁴⁵ Brigid Mangano, "The Problem of the Woman Artist: How Eva Gonzales Was 'Seen' in Late Nineteenth-Century France," *Through Gendered Lenses*, 2011, 24.

⁴⁶ Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein, eds., *Women Impressionists* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag: Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor, 2008), 298.

inner lives that would become synonymous with the artist. With a continuous interest in a multitude of mediums, Gonzalès would become adept at pastel works in addition to oil, and these would become some of her most exalted pieces.

Unfortunately, Gonzalès would meet an untimely end when she died giving birth to her only son at the much too young age of 34 in 1883. Her sister would go on to marry her widower and spearhead the organization of a series of posthumous exhibitions of Gonzalès' works, the first in 1885 at the Salons de la Vie Moderne in Paris. Despite her short life and prematurely stunted career, Gonzalès was a somewhat prolific artist. Even with the literature on her life unfortunately lacking in comparison to her peers, art historians and admirers alike are able to glean important insight into the genius of Eva Gonzalès through the lens of her art.

II. Eva Gonzalès: Most Iconic Work, *Une loge aux théâtre des Italiens*

Painted in 1874, *Une loge aux théâtre des Italiens* is Gonzalès' most significant work. This 97.7 x 130 cm⁴⁷ oil on canvas depicts a female and male figure, assumed to be Gonzalès' sister, Jeanne, seated, with Henri Guérard, the artist who Eva Gonzalès would marry a few years later, standing next to her in a box at the famed Théâtre des Italiens. The theater was an important theme throughout the works of the Impressionists, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Mary Cassatt, Edgar Degas, and Édouard Manet, among others, portrayed the “see and be seen” locale during their illustrious careers.

The Impressionists interest in the day-to-day life of modern French society is epitomized in the depictions of the theater. The theater, and specifically the loge, was a

⁴⁷ “Une Loge Aux Italiens,” *Une loge aux Italiens - Eva Gonzalès* | Musée d'Orsay, accessed 2022, <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/artworks/une-loge-aux-italiens-346>.

relatively new venue to many people. With the steady rise of the middle class during the 19th century, the theater was no longer reserved solely for high society and the aristocracy. The *vieux riche* were forced to make space for the *nouveau riche*, and the theater quickly became a venue rife with entertaining, people-watching opportunities. Among the elegant, high-class ladies and gentlemen sat more gauche patrons, those men and women who worked hard to appear as though they belonged, or those who showed off their new money in excess. The theater provided the optimal backdrop for the powerful social commentary that the Impressionists sought to portray through their art.

The figures in the painting are framed by a heavy, deep red, velvet curtain fringed with ornate gold tassels to the left and a lush, fabric covered railing ornamented with gold nail heads along the bottom of the frame. A bouquet of pastel-colored flowers sits in the lower left-hand corner while the figures dominate the remainder of the canvas. Their pale skin jumps off of the canvas as the background is swathed in complete blackness, save for the barely-there illusion of a chair peeking out from behind Jeanne. Jeanne and Henri are elegantly dressed. Her in a romantic, pastel blue gown, complete with white gloves, fashionable jewelry, and opera glasses, and him in a tuxedo, prepared for an evening out on the town.

The pair of figures are not depicted interacting with one another, likely due to the fact that they are not romantically involved, and Henri is purely escorting Jeanne to the opera, as would be customary for a young, unmarried woman of the time to require a chaperone to such social outings. Henri looks away from the stage, detached and averting his interests elsewhere, observing the social spectacle off-stage. On the other hand, Jeanne stares mesmerized and relaxed, as if entranced in the performance. Though her

eyes seem to fixate on the viewer breaking through the two-dimensional canvas and creating an intimate relationship with the viewer of the painting. Henri seems to be at the theater to be seen, to socialize, while Jeanne is clearly engrossed in the cultural aspect of the evening. Interestingly enough, Jeanne and Henri did actually end up getting married after the premature death of Gonzalès. Whether or not this depiction of the pair together, very reminiscent of a romantic couple, was something of a premonition on behalf of the artist, is unknown.

This painting was first refused by the Salon of 1874 and was therefore shown both in Gonzalès' personal studio⁴⁸ and at the Salon triennial in Ghent. Despite the initial rejection by the French Salon in 1874 to the work, the painting would eventually go on to be admitted to the Salon in 1879, the piece was met with positive critical reviews when it was exhibited in Belgium. In a review from June of 1874, written in a critical art magazine called *L'Art Universel* by Camille Lemonnier, a Belgian art critic, he referenced the work saying "It was refused: even better. This, when it is strong, is the beginning of triumph."⁴⁹ Maria Deraismes, a female art critic and writer, authored a detailed analysis of *Une loge aux théâtre des Italiens* in *Le Droit des femmes*, a feminist journal which she co-founded. As a staunch feminist fighting for women's rights in 19th century France her perspective on female artists is one that was seldom heard at the time, which makes it all that much more necessary. Deraismes notes, in reference to the woman depicted in *Une loge aux théâtre des Italiens*, "One senses that, for this young woman,

⁴⁸ Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein, eds., *Women Impressionists* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag: Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor, 2008), 298.

⁴⁹ Camille Lemonnier, "Une Intransigeante: Mlle Eva Gonzalès," *L'Art Universel: Peinture, Gravure, Iconographie, Architecture, Sculpture, Céramique, Numismatique, Littérature, Bibliographie, Musique, Théâtre, Arts Industriels, Travaux Publics*, June 18, 1874, pp. 141-142, <https://doi.org/gallica.bnf.fr/> Bibliothèque nationale de France. Translated from the original French: "Il a été refusé: tant mieux. Ceci, quand on est fort, est le commencement du triomphe."

the songs and harmonies of the orchestra only serve to accompany the interior melody that sings within her. She follows her dream through the lyrics and the score.”⁵⁰

Importantly, in her astute analysis, Deraismes gazes not only into the soul of the depicted, but into that of the depicter as well. Her feminist viewpoint paints both Gonzalès and the women that she portrays as strong, independent, and meaningful human beings. In a society where women were delineated as “less than”, this was an unexpected, eye-opening, and imperative analysis.

III. Eva Gonzalès: Highest Sales Price, *La demoiselle d'honneur*

La demoiselle d'honneur, a pastel on canvas, showcases Gonzalès’ skilled work with a medium that she began to explore later in her career. Created in 1879, soon after Gonzalès marriage to Henri Guérard, this 44 x 37 cm⁵¹ delicate and highly feminine work depicts a bridesmaid in profile. With marriage on the mind, Gonzalès depicts the sitter, a young woman with brown curls, rosy cheeks, and pale pink lips, in a stoic yet radiant portrayal. At the left of the canvas, the bridesmaid holds a bouquet of white flowers, and she dons a pale pink dress with ruffled neckline, a bow at the collar, and a matching pink hat adorned with another large bow. It’s a simple and delicate pastel that triumphed in the eyes of viewers and critics alike at the Salon and years later at auction.

⁵⁰ Brigid Mangano, “The Problem of the Woman Artist: How Eva Gonzales Was ‘Seen’ in Late Nineteenth-Century France,” *Through Gendered Lenses*, 2011, 30. Translated from the original French: “On devine que, pour cette jeune femme, les chants et les harmonies de l’orchestre ne font qu’accompagner la mélodie intérieure qui chante en elle. Elle suit son rêve à travers le poème et la partition.”

⁵¹ “(#69) Eva Gonzalès, *La Demoiselle D'honneur*,” Sotheby's (Sotheby's New York, 2013), <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2012/so-baroni-n08857/lot.69.html?locale=en>.

The pastel was exhibited at the Salon in 1880 to unanimous praise by critics⁵², and praise from her proud teacher, Edouard Manet, who wrote “Every day, the papers are full of your praise. Forgive me if I, too, find this gratifying – for you did after all seek my advice from time to time. It would appear that the success you have so long deserved will be forthcoming this year...”⁵³.

When Eva Gonzalès died, the pastel stayed within her family for many years. First, the work was acquired posthumously in 1884 by her husband, Henri Guérard, from a sale at the Hôtel Drouot. Next, the pastel was acquired in 1897 by Gonzalès’ sister, known then as Jeanne Guérard-Gonzalès after her marriage to Henri Guérard following her sister’s death. The piece finally settled with Gonzalès’ son, Jean-Raymond Guérard, in 1924. After changing a few more hands, the piece was most recently sold on January 29, 2013, at Sotheby’s New York, for a whopping 2,546,500 USD. This particular Sotheby’s sale showcased the collection of Giancarlo Baroni. Not born into the art industry, but introduced to the industry by marriage, Baroni was driven by the intellectual aspect of collecting, and the story behind the art collected. Much of his extensive collection was made up of Old Master Paintings, though he was lucky enough to own both *La demoiselle d'honneur* and a complimentary letter from Manet to his pupil, Eva Gonzalès, both of which were sold at the 2013 sale.⁵⁴

The extraordinary collection from which *La demoiselle d'honneur* came from certainly helped to boost the sales price, as is so often the case in high profile sales at big-

⁵² Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzalès, and Berthe Morisot, *Les Femmes Impressionistes: Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzales, Berthe Morisot* (Paris, France: Musée Marmottan, Paris et Bibliothèque des Arts, 1993), 55.

⁵³ Ingrid Pfeiffer and Max Hollein, eds., *Women Impressionists* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag: Schirn Kunstahlle Frankfurt, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Legion of Honor, 2008), 299.

⁵⁴ “(#69) Eva Gonzalès, *La Demoiselle D'honneur*,” Sotheby’s (Sotheby’s New York, 2013), <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2013/so-baroni-n08857/lot.69.html?locale=en>.

name auction houses, though this exceptionally bewitching work, with all of its delicate and angelic light and movement, is much deserving of its grand sales price. This work embodies the energy and vivacity that Eva Gonzalès was able to bring to the art world and it is clear that her impact on female artists throughout history has stood the test of time.

Chapter Five: The Art Market, Then and Now

I. Market Analysis: A Brief History of the Art Market

The art market has existed for thousands of years, originating with the trade of goods, ideas, and customs. This promotion of cross-cultural interconnection and exchange in innovation has resulted in the regulated globalization that is part of our modern society and our modern art markets today. Originally, the primitive “art market” primarily consisted of trading porcelain, glassware, and textiles. The Middle Ages began to see artist commissions of a religious nature and the Renaissance bore the first true art patrons. As the first legitimate primary art structure, works were purchased or commissioned directly from the artist, or artist’s studio or workshop. The secondary art market structure in which art is purchased and then resold, today through an art dealer, auction house, or gallery, originated in the 16th century.

Paul Durand-Ruel, who could easily be called the most innovative art dealer of the modern era, revolutionized the market for the “modern school”, most notably the Impressionists. He introduced new strategies to support his artists, promote their work, and furthermore, successfully sell their work. Spearheading this new dealer-critic system, which replaced the former, rigid, academic system in which art was accepted or rejected by a jury of academics with a stringent set of rules and regulations, is what propelled the Impressionists towards success. Durand-Ruel had an existing and trusting clientele, and he was able to influence taste, and therefore drive sales in Paris, London, and eventually New York. This new method, the deep understanding of the need to exploit client tastes

to result in higher profit margins, and the ability to recognize and influence market trends is a methodology that continues to be used in the art industry today.⁵⁵

As art has grown into the important portfolio diversifying asset it is today, more and more people choose to invest in it, and unlike many assets it serves both financial and aesthetic purposes. Though, in any market, periods of highs and lows are innate, and art assets are not immune to market fluctuation. The 1980's witnessed the greatest art market boom of the post-war period. With the appearance of extremely wealthy Japanese businessmen and collectors on the scene, due to Japan's booming economy during a property market bubble, the art market reached its peak resulting in the sale of two of the highest priced works of art in history. Both works happened to be Impressionist pieces. Vincent van Gogh's *Portrait of Dr. Gachet* (1890), sold at Christie's New York on May 15, 1990, for 82.5 million USD, and Auguste Renoir's *Bal du moulin de la Galette* (1876), sold at Sotheby's New York on May 17, 1990, for 78.1 million USD, both to a Japanese buyer believed to be Ryoei Sito, a paper entrepreneur and mogul.⁵⁶

In 1991 the art market bubble officially burst. The Japanese largely withdrew from the art market after their property market collapsed and after a number of scandals were exposed, including the use of art to evade taxes and the defrauding by top executives of their own company by selling art at inflated prices. It would take almost a full decade for the art market to return to the numbers that had been seen in the late

⁵⁵ Sylvie Patry et al., *Inventing Impressionism: Paul Durand-Ruel and the Modern Art Market* (London, UK: National Gallery Company Limited, 2015).

⁵⁶ Suzanne Muchnic, "Renoir Work Sells for \$78.1 Million : Auction: The Painting 'Au Moulin De La Galette' Is Highlight of Sotheby's Offering of Impressionist and Modern Art. the Price Is the Second Highest Ever.," *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles Times, May 18, 1990), <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-05-18-mn-185-story.html>.

1980's, but the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and a significant global economic downturn would reset the market once again.

Despite these natural ebbs and flows of any regulated market, the importance of art as an asset cannot be overstated. There is an expectation, based on the rising number of high net worth and ultra-high net worth individuals, along with the overall rise of global wealth, for continued growth within the art industry. Additionally, in times of uncertainty, such as in the age of the COVID-19 pandemic, asset diversification is more important than ever to mute the overall risk of volatility. A particularly important aspect of art as an asset class, unlike other asset classes, is that it tends to appreciate over time and store value, making it a worthwhile investment in an unstable environment.

II. Market Analysis: Female Impressionists in Today's Art Market

What was once regarded as a completely revolutionary and downright crude, or even ugly, art movement, Impressionist art has grown to become the “crowd-pleaser” of the art market. Impressionist art was and remains particularly popular with Japanese clientele, as demonstrated by the outrageously high prices paid for the van Gogh and the Renoir in 1990 at the peak of the art market boom, due to the historical significance and influence Japanese prints had on Impressionist paintings. Though overall, Impressionist art, while having fared consistently well at auction does not have the same luster when leveled up against contemporary art today. Historically, with thanks to the skewed, white, male perspective of the art historical canon, male Impressionists have received significantly more consideration and have earned much higher, even exorbitant, sale

prices at auction. Though, in 2022, female artists, across artistic genres, are gaining momentum and enthusiastic appreciation from collectors and investors.

Dr. Clare McAndrew is the economist behind *The Art Market*, an annual macro-economic global art market report which originally began in 2005 for The European Art Fine Art Foundation known as TEFAF. In 2016 the report began production for Art Basel and UBS. In her 2022 art market report McAndrew studied the ratio of female artists in the collections of high-net-worth individuals versus male artists in these same collections.⁵⁷ While steadily, though slowly, increasing from 2018 through 2022, today, McAndrew's findings show that female artists make up only about 42% of high-net-worth collectors' collections. Additionally, McAndrew found that collectors in the United Kingdom and France possess the highest share of female works in their collections worldwide, at about 47%, with the United States trailing just behind at 44%.⁵⁸ Overall, works by female artists unfortunately still represent the minority in the collections of major art collectors despite the surge in interest.

Despite a lack of clear growth in the amount of or the sales prices of female Impressionist works sold at auction, the fact of the matter remains that the auction industry is running out of male artists. These brilliant female Impressionists, Morisot, Cassatt, and Gonzalès to name a very small number out of a large pool of exceptional female artists, are an overlooked sub-category in the Impressionist market. With the big-name, blue chip, male Impressionist works having changed hands many times over, and having sold for exorbitant amounts at that, new collectors, especially those female

⁵⁷ Clare McAndrew, "A Survey of Global Collecting in 2022" (Art Bsel & UBS, 2022), <https://www.artbasel.com/about/initiatives/the-art-market>, 72.

⁵⁸ Clare McAndrew, "A Survey of Global Collecting in 2022" (Art Bsel & UBS, 2022), <https://www.artbasel.com/about/initiatives/the-art-market>, 73.

collectors belonging to a younger demographic will undoubtedly gravitate towards female artists. Female and younger collectors are also much more politically inclined than the old guard of white and wealthy male collectors is today or ever was before, and the hope for the future is that female collectors will begin to choose to invest in female artists, over something from the picked over market of a more historically celebrated male artist, likely finding only a much lower quality work.

The inherent value of a work of art, despite the need to provide comparative analysis to past sales of similar works and to market trends for certain valuation specific analyses, is more accurately based on who one can guess the future buyers of that artist or genre will be, not solely on past sales. Today, women are more determined than ever to state their claim and strengthen their place in the world, and that includes the art industry. There are more female art collectors than ever before, and more women out-earning men. The future of the art industry is in their hands.

In an effort to shed light on the hopeful successes of artworks at auction in today's female driven landscape by Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, and Eva Gonzalès, an analysis of their sales compared to three male, artist peers including Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, and Alfred Sisley is necessary. When looking at sales from 1991, after the boom of the 1980's came to a head, through to today at the top three global auction houses including Sotheby's, Christie's, and Phillip's in New York, London, Paris (with the exclusion of Phillip's) and Hong Kong of these six artists, the numbers are not as demonstrative of a feminist revolution in art sales as one might hope. Despite greater interest in female artists, a high number of lots put up for auction, and a significant

number of successful sales, the sales prices for these three female impressionists pale in comparison to these three male counterparts.

A study of the sales of Morisot, Cassatt, and Gonzalès against those of Manet, Degas, and Sisley helps to elucidate this analysis. While the usual analysis of artwork valuation is based on a number of different factors, each of these factors were unable to be accounted for in this particular study. Keeping in mind that the size of the work, the subject matter, the quality or condition, and the provenance and exhibition history were not analyzed as variables in sales price or success at auction. An analysis of paintings, specifically oil on canvas or oil on panel, by these six Impressionist artists, put up for sale at Sotheby's (New York, London, Paris, and Hong Kong), Christie's (New York, London, Paris, and Hong Kong), and Phillips (New York, London, and Hong Kong) between January 1, 1991 and November 5, 2022, after the Impressionist market bubble of the 1980's burst, was conducted.⁵⁹

To begin with Berthe Morisot, she had 139 lots brought to sale at these auction houses during the 31-year time frame. Out of the 139 lots, 37 of those lots, 26.62%, were bought in and did not sell. Her highest priced sale was *Après le déjeuner* (1881) on February 6, 2013, which sold for 10,933,244 USD, at Christie's London. Adjusted for inflation that would come to 13,986,435 USD in 2022 dollars. Morisot's lowest priced sale occurred on May 20, 2011, at Christie's Paris. *Jardin* (1883) sold for 24,801 USD, or 32,858 USD in 2022 dollars. Mary Cassatt had 82 lots put up for auction, with 24 of them bought in and one withdrawn, a total of 30.49 % unsold. Cassatt's highest sales price was a bit lower than Morisot's. On May 24, 2007, at Christie's New York, Cassatt's *Children*

⁵⁹ artnet, "Price Database Fine Art and Design." All data to follow collected by the author.

playing with a dog (1907) sold for 6,200,000 USD, when adjusted for inflation that comes to 8,911,240 USD. Her lowest sales price occurred on March 3, 2010, at Sotheby's New York. *Ida* (1874) sold for 28,125 USD, 38,438 USD in 2022 dollars. Eva Gonzalès, unsurprisingly, had the smallest number of lots for sale at auction with just 41 in total, with eight of those lots bought in, leaving about 19.57% unsold. Her highest priced sale was *Bouquet de fleurs* (1873-1874) at Sotheby's New York on November 10, 2014. The painting sold for 1,565,000 USD, coming in at only 1,970,080 USD when adjusted for inflation. Her lowest priced sale was *La Danse (étude pour un éventail)* (1879-1880). This piece sold at Christie's Paris on May 23, 2007 for just 1,614 USD, 2,320 USD when adjusted for inflation.

Looking now at the male Impressionists, out of Édouard Manet's 61 lots put up for auction between 1991 and 2022, 17 of those were bought in, leaving approximately 27.86% unsold. Manet's highest priced sale was *Le Printemps* (1881) which was sold at Christie's New York on November 5, 2014. This oil on canvas sold for 65,125,000 USD and comes to 81,981,750 USD in 2022. His lowest priced sale, *Vaches au pâturage* (1873), sold on November 5, 2008, at Sotheby's New York for 86,500 USD, 119,729 USD today. Edgar Degas had 132 lots go up for auction with 19 of the works having been bought in, only 14.39%. Degas' highest price sale took place at Christie's London on June 24, 1991. The oil on panel, *Les Chevaux de courses (sortie du pesage)* (1871-1872), sold for 9,934,318 USD, what would be 21,736,755 USD today. His lowest price sale since 1991 was *Saint Antoine ressuscitant une femme tuée par son mari* (1858). Sold at Sotheby's London on October 21, 1998, the work fetched 33,242 USD, 66,776 USD in 2022 dollars. Lastly, Alfred Sisley was one of the most prolific Impressionist painters

during his career, and 459 lots came up for auction between 1991 and 2022. Only 27.89% of those works were left unsold, with 125 of the lots having been bought in and three ending up withdrawn. Sisley's *Effet de neige à Louveciennes* (1874) takes the spot for his highest selling work, selling for 9,064,732 USD at Sotheby's London on March 1, 2017, what would be 11,020,720 USD today. On November 3, 2005, *Bateau de charge sur le Loing* (1880), Sisley's lowest priced sale, was sold at Sotheby's New York for 90,000 USD, which would be 137,332 USD in 2022 dollars.

Using the figures adjusted for inflation, the lowest priced sale of the female Impressionists was Gonzalès' *La Danse (étude pour un éventail)* at 2,320 USD, which was over 64,000 USD lower than the lowest priced sale, Degas' *Saint Antoine ressuscitant une femme tuée par son mari* at 66,776 USD, from the group of male Impressionists. In fact, each of the lowest priced sales of this group of women unfortunately fall lower than the price of *Saint Antoine ressuscitant une femme tuée par son mari*. At the top of end of the spectrum, the difference between the women's highest priced sale, Morisot's *Après le déjeuner*, and Manet's *Le Printemps* is staggering. *Le Printemps* sold for 67,995,315 USD more than Morisot's famed *Après le déjeuner*. With comparable amount of lots up for sale and fairly comparable numbers of works withdrawn or bought in, the disparity between male and female Impressionist auction sales today is discouraging.

Conclusion

In the ongoing fight for gender equality, art needn't be overlooked. As an important avenue of expression, the expression of one's identity, of cultures, of intimate emotion, of innovative thought, art acts as the fiber that holds together the thread of our shared humanity. As demonstrated by the leading ladies of Impressionism, Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, and Eva Gonzalès, feminist art history is art history. Today, strides are being made in every industry, in every corner of the globe, to ensure that women are seen and heard, though the results are slow to be felt. The sales data reinforces that collectors must work harder and strive to value works by female artists as much as they do works created by male artists. Linda Nochlin's argument from 1971 rings just as true in 2022. Success will be reached only when the institutions, the scholarship, and the markets align their teachings, their histories, and their sales to promote the importance of female art and artists. The question remains: what and how long will it take for the world to properly value great women artists?

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