

Renoir

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Pierre Auguste Renoir, photograph

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## Foreword

Auguste Renoir was the great Impressionist painter of the female form. His voluptuous, seductive women appear to be as delighted to be painted as the painter delighted in painting them.

The paintings in this book include the early open air scenes along the Seine and in the gardens, as well as nudes and two portraits of the actress Jeanne Samary, one a head-and-shoulders, the other full-length. Although most of the paintings date from the 1870s and 1880s, there is a landscape dated 1902 which is strikingly different from the rest in its violent brushstrokes and the almost sketchy haste in which the artist rushed to depict the subject on the canvas. This set of beautiful, full-colour reproductions is a unique opportunity to see some of the little-known works of Renoir as well as some of the very famous ones.



# Biography

- 1841 Born on 25 February into the family of the Limoges tailor Léonard Renoir.
- 1844 Renoir's family moves to Paris.
- 1848-1854 Goes to school and sings in the choir of Saint-Eustache, where Charles Gounod was choir-master.
- 1854 Works in the porcelain-painting workshop of the Lévy brothers.
- 1858-1860 Copies Watteau, Fragonard and other masters of the past in the Louvre.
- 1862 Enters the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Studies at Charles Gleyre's studio. Meets Claude Monet, Alfred Sisley, Frédéric Bazille.
- 1863 Leaves Gleyre's studio.
- 1864 Exhibits the painting *Esmeralda* at the Salon.
- 1866 Completes his first large painting *At the Inn of the Mother Anthony*.
- 1870-1871 On the declaration of the Franco-Prussian War, Renoir is drafted as a common soldier.
- 1872 Meets Paul Durand-Ruel. Exhibits his painting *Parisiennes Dressed as Algerian Women* at the Salon.
- 1873 Exhibits *Riders in the Bois de Boulogne* at the Salon des Refusés.
- 1874 Exhibits 1 pastel and 6 paintings at the First Impressionist Exhibition.

Русини

- 1876 Exhibits 15 paintings at the Second Impressionist Exhibition. Paints *Garden in the Rue Cortot, Montmartre, Nude, The Ball at the Moulin de la Galette*.
- 1877 Exhibits 21 paintings, including *Portrait of Jeanne Samary*, at the Third Impressionist Exhibition.
- 1879 Exhibits *Portrait of Madame Charpentier with Her Children* and *Portrait of Jeanne Samary*.  
First one-man show at the gallery of the magazine *La Vie Moderne*.
- 1880 Meets Aline Charigot.
- 1881 Journeys to Algeria and Italy. Paints *The Luncheon of the Boating Party*.
- 1883 Retrospective exhibition (70 works) on the Boulevard de la Madeleine.
- 1885 Birth of son Pierre. Paints portraits of Senator Goujon's children.
- 1886 Durand-Ruel arranges an exhibition of 39 paintings and pastels by Renoir in New York.
- 1887 Completes *The Great Bathers*.
- 1892 Retrospective exhibition at the Galerie Durand-Ruel (110 works).
- 1894 Birth of son Jean.
- 1901 Birth of son Claude.
- 1915 Aline Renoir dies in Nice.
- 1919 Pierre-Auguste Renoir dies on 3 December in Cagnes-sur-Mer.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir was born in Limoges on 25 February 1841. He was the sixth child in the family of Léonard Renoir and Marguerite Merlet. Three years later, in 1844, the Renoirs moved to Paris. In 1848, Auguste began attending a school run by the Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes. Renoir was lucky with the music teacher — it proved to be the composer Charles Gounod, who took the boy into the choir at the church of Saint-Eustache.

### Portrait of the Artist's Mother

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1860

oil on canvas, 45 x 38 cm  
private collection







In 1854, the boy's parents took him from school and found a place for him in the Lévy brothers' workshop, where he was to learn to paint porcelain. Renoir's younger brother Edmond had this to say: "From what he drew in charcoal on the walls, they concluded that he had the ability for an artist's profession (...) The young apprentice set about mastering the craft seriously: at the end of the day, he armed himself with a piece of cardboard bigger than himself and headed for the free drawing courses. It went on like that for two or three years."

### Jules Le Cœur Walking in the Fontainebleau Forest with his Dogs

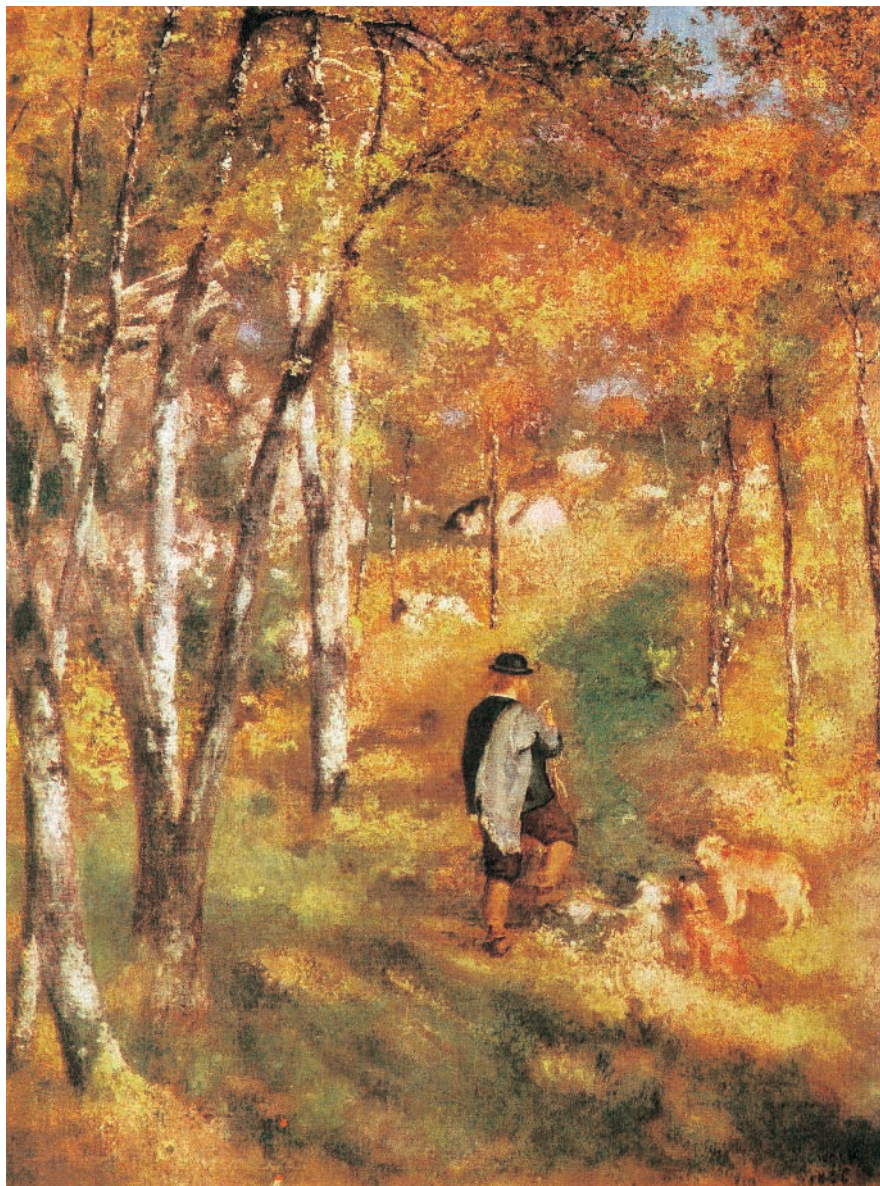
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1866

oil on canvas, 106 x 80 cm

Museu de Arte, São Paulo







He made rapid progress: a few months into his apprenticeship, he was already being set to paint pieces that they usually gave to qualified workers. That made him the butt of jokes. They called him Monsieur Rubens and he cried because they were laughing at him. One of the Lévys' workers, Emile Laporte, painted in oils in his spare time. He suggested Renoir make use of his canvases and paints. This offer resulted in the appearance of the first painting by the future Impressionist. It was solemnly presented for Laporte's inspection at the Renoir's home.

### At the Inn of the Mother Anthony

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1866

oil on canvas, 195 x 130 cm  
National Museum, Stockholm







Edmond Renoir recollected: "It's as if it happened yesterday. I was still a boy, but I understood perfectly that something serious was taking place: the easel with the celebrated painting on it was set up in the middle of the largest room in our modest dwelling on the Rue d'Argenteuil. Everyone was nervous and burning with impatience. I was dressed up nicely and told to behave myself. It was very grand. The 'maître' arrived... At a signal, I moved his chair up close to the easel. He sat down and set about examining the 'work'.

### Flowers in a Vase

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1866

oil on canvas, 81.3 x 65.1 cm  
Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris





I can see it now — it was *Eve*. Behind her, the snake was twined around the branches of an oak. It was approaching with open jaws, as if it wanted to cast a spell over Eve. The trial lasted a quarter of an hour at least, after which, without any superfluous comments, that poor old man came up to our parents and told them: “You should let your son go in for painting. In our trade the most he will achieve is to make twelve or fifteen francs a day. I predict a brilliant future for him in art. Do all you can for him.” That is how family legend recorded the birth of Renoir, the artist.

### Frédéric Bazille at His Easel

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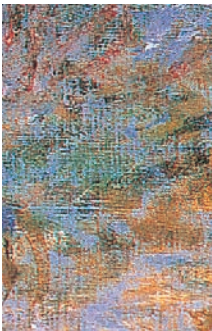
1867

oil on canvas, 106 x 74 cm

Musée d'Orsay, Paris







Auguste Renoir positively acknowledged the role his family had played in shaping his future. It was from his parents that he obtained the respect for the crafts which remained with him all his life. Renoir liked the fact that his father and mother were simple people:

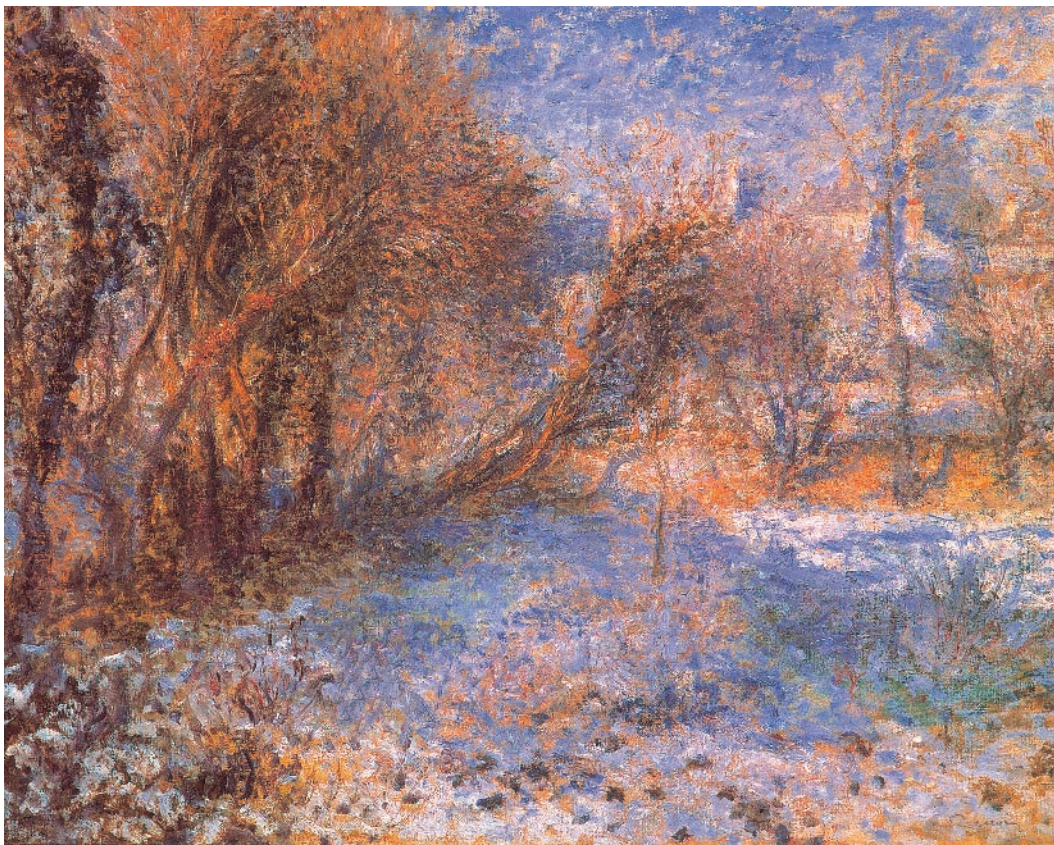
“When I think that I might have been born to intellectuals! I would have needed years to divest myself of all their ideas and to see things as they really are, and in that event I would not have had enough dexterity in my hands.”

### Snowy Landscape

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1868

oil on canvas, 51 x 66 cm  
Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris







Besides the family, however, there was one other major educator in Renoir's life — Paris. In his conversations with his son Jean, the artist constantly recollected those little corners of the capital where he had spent his childhood and youth, many of which had disappeared before his eyes. One might see the hand of fate in the fact that after moving from Limoges, Léonard Renoir installed his family in the Louvre. The houses constructed in the sixteenth century between the Louvre palace and the Tuileries for noble members of the royal guard had by the middle of the nineteenth century lost their former imposing appearance.

### Bathing on the Seine (La Grenouillère)

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1868

oil on canvas, 59 x 80 cm

Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow





Only remnants of the old decoration — coats-of-arms, capitals, empty niches that once held statues — served as reminders of the past. Now occupied by lower class Parisians, this little district had a special atmosphere about it, oddly combining the everyday and the elevated. The Renoirs lived on the Rue d'Argenteuil, which ran through the whole area down to the Seine. Here, in the courtyard of the Louvre, the little Renoir played with other boys.

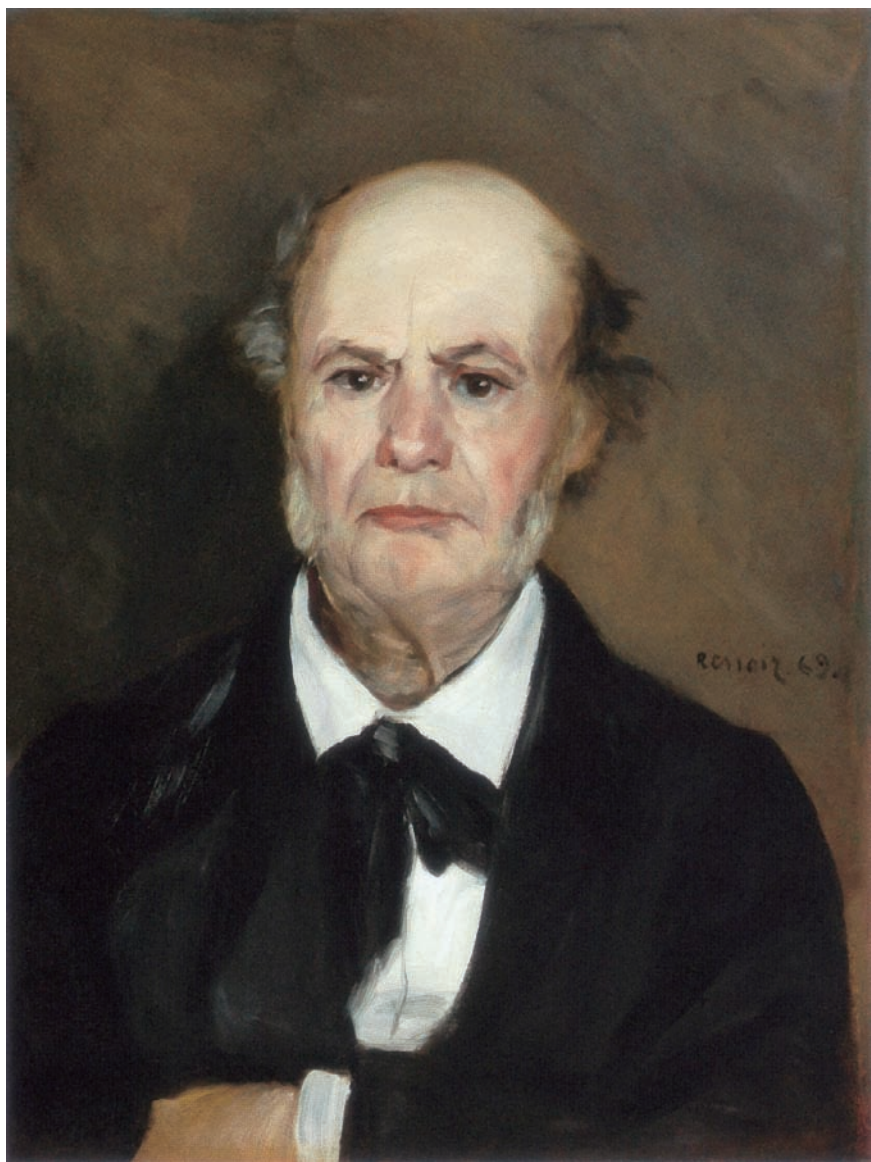
### Léonard Renoir, the Artist's Father

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1869

oil on canvas, 61 x 46 cm

Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis







It was entirely natural to go inside the palace which had become a museum at the time of the French Revolution. "When I was a boy, I often went into the galleries of ancient sculpture, without even knowing precisely why. Perhaps because I passed through the courtyards of the Louvre every day, because it was easy to get into those halls, and because there was never anyone there. I stayed there for hours, lost in day-dreams," Renoir told the artist Albert André.

## La Grenouillère

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1869

oil on canvas, 66 x 80 cm  
Statens Konstmuseer, Stockholm







The young Renoir's wanderings covered a far wider area than the Louvre district. An organic, almost physical sense of himself as part of the city was even then, in childhood, shaping the future artist's work. He saw beauty in the narrow, almost mediaeval streets of old Paris, in the heterogeneity of the elements of Gothic architecture, in the never-corseted figures of the female market traders. And he suffered from the fact that the old Paris, his Paris, was being destroyed.

### Flowers in a Vase

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c.1869

oil on canvas, 64.9 x 54.2 cm  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston