




اللوفر أبو ظبي  
LOUVRE ABU DHABI



**JAPANESE  
CONNECTIONS:  
THE BIRTH OF  
MODERN DÉCOR**

**EDUCATORS' GUIDE**





# THE EXHIBITION "JAPANESE CONNECTIONS: THE BIRTH OF MODERN DÉCOR"

**Curators:**

Isabelle Cahn, Chief  
Curator of Paintings,  
Musée d'Orsay

**Place:**

International  
exhibition galleries,  
Louvre Abu Dhabi

**Dates:**

From 6 September  
2018 to 24 November  
2018

The third exhibition to be held in Louvre Abu Dhabi is called "Japanese Connections: The Birth of Modern Décor". It presents a selection of decorative paintings made around the turn of the 20th century by the group of European artists who gave themselves the name "Nabis", and by the artist Odilon Redon (1840–1916). Visitors will be introduced to the Japanese influences on European artists, and discover the importance of the Japanese aesthetic to the development of modern decoration.

The Nabis group of artists was formed in the late 1880s around Paul Sérusier (1864–1927) and other painters who studied with him at the **Académie Julian,\*** a private art school in Paris. The initial group was formed by Paul Sérusier (1864–1927), Paul-Élie Ranson, Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947), Édouard Vuillard (1868–1940) and Maurice Denis (1870–1943), who were soon joined by Ker-Xavier Roussel (1867–1944). The objective of these young artists was to break down the boundaries between art forms and to place as much importance on the "decorative" arts as on the fine arts, in particular by eliminating the separation between wall decoration and the more prestigious **easel painting.\***

Divided into the four sections, the exhibition traces the dialogue between the East and West focusing on the different ways that modern decoration was affected aesthetically. Through the work of the Nabis painters and Odilon Redon, the exhibition explains how the aesthetic of Japan was incorporated by European painters in their decorative creations. The juxtaposition of Western works with Japanese prints and decorated screens demonstrates the new aesthetic principles inspired by the East that arose in Western painting at the start of the modern age.

# OBJECTIVES OF THE EDUCATORS' GUIDE

The objective of this manual is to facilitate teachers and their students' discovery of the exhibition. The following contents will allow a teacher to prepare a group visit or a guided visit. The goal of the proposed approaches to the works presented is to spark interest and direct the attention of the students to different details. The approaches are sometimes supplemented by questions relating to how the individual student reacts to the work and his or her understanding of the scene. There are no "correct" answers to the questions. The purpose is to encourage a group discussion about the work.

The manual is divided into four sequences that mirror the layout of the exhibition. Seven works have been chosen from the exhibition to be explored in depth. Each sequence then suggests follow-up activities suited to the level of the children (Cycle 1 and Cycle 2&3), which can be done later in the classroom.

## BEFORE

Teachers can prepare their visit using the practical information and worksheets provided, which are presented in the same order as the works in the exhibition. Thus teachers may choose to lead their class around the exhibition themselves.

Teachers may also present and work on reproductions of the selected works in this manual with students before visiting the exhibition. Students will then be able to compare the reproduction and the original during their visit to the museum.

## DURING

The questions presented in the manual direct the students' attention to the details to be found in each work. The students should also be allowed to consider the context in which the work was created, or invent dialogues between the characters portrayed. The questions allow the teacher to animate the group's visit.

The manual contains a chronology and a glossary of terms used. Both are designed to aid teachers during their visit to the exhibition as well as to prepare the students before the visit, or to aid them in class after it.

## AFTER

The questions for the participants can also be tackled in the classroom, working from reproductions of the works seen in the exhibition. The Focus paragraphs for each work are designed to deepen and broaden the students' knowledge gained during the visit.

Lastly, if the manual allows a teacher to address themes also found in the permanent exhibition, the visit to the temporary exhibition may be prolonged with a visit to the permanent collections to show students other works linked to the subject.



# PART 1: THE FLAT SCREEN

Unlike some of their contemporary artists, the Nabis painters did not wish to create an illusion of reality in their paintings. They preferred to give a flat representation of the world using juxtaposed and superposed planes rather than create a 3-dimensional impression on the surface of the canvas. They thus chose not to paint a **trompe-l'œil\*** but to treat the painting as though it were a mental image. An important milestone in their development was their discovery of the paintings of Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), which made use of simplified motifs and **flat tints\*** unrelated to reality.

The principle of the flat screen allowed these painters of a new generation to express a poetic, symbolic and spiritual vision of the world independent of whether the painted **support\*** was small or large. Their approach placed importance on marked contrasts between dark and light zones and on zones of bright colours painted on the support. This simplified treatment gives greater decorative importance to the outlines in the composition.



# VIEWS OF MOUNT FUJI

The subject of the print is Mount Fuji, a sacred volcanic mountain located south-west of Tokyo. The artist chose to depict the mountain without any perspective (an **aperspectival\*** view), thus it overshadows the rest of the landscape. The close framing of the mountain also allows the artist to bring out its monumentality, a quality that emphasises its sacredness to the Japanese. The trees below appear tiny in comparison. The white clouds are the only element that gives the view a sense of depth. The colours used are limited to red, white and Prussian blue (the latter is a pigment that was imported into Japan by Dutch merchants from 1820).

The work comes from a series of 36 prints dedicated to views of Mount Fuji, which the artist Katsushika Hokusai produced in 1831 and 1832. The mountain is seen from multiple viewpoints, in various lighting conditions and framed in different ways. It is one of the artist's most famous series and played a major role in the success of landscape prints.

## FOCUS: JAPANESE PRINTS

Japanese prints are created using the technique of woodblock carving. During the 19th century, with specialists like Hokusai and Hiroshige, the landscape became an established subject, allowing artists to return to the contemplation of nature linked to the ancestral tradition of **Shintoism**.\*

Throughout the seasons, the Japanese worshipped Kami (divine spirits) whose cult could occur close to an element of nature.

The opening up of Japan to the rest of the world in the second half of the 19th century allowed Westerners to discover these prints, which prompted artists to collect them (Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Vincent van Gogh and the Nabi painters).

## QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look closely at this work.**  
**What do you think the artist has depicted here?**
- **Describe the different elements in the print.**
- **How many colours are used?**  
**What are they?**
- **What technique do you think the artist used?**
- **What time of day do you think the scene shows? Why?**
- **Imagine that you are there looking at the mountain itself.**
- **What sounds and smells do you think you might experience?**



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*South Wind, Clear Sky*, from the series  
*Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, 1831-1832  
Polychrome woodblock print,  
Paris, Musée national des arts Asiatiques - Guimet

**Katsushika  
Hokusai**  
(1760–1849)



# SUNLIGHT ON THE TERRACE

This painting by Maurice Denis is an image of the terrace at the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, a few kilometres from Paris. It does not attempt to represent the scene realistically, in which case the artist would have depicted nature as we see it. Instead, it gives an almost abstract view. The flat surface of the terrace seems to dissolve in a few **flat tints\*** and sinuous lines. Denis' decision to invert the light (which he shows in a cool colour) and the shade (in a warm colour) gives the viewer the sense of being dazzled.

Like for the other Nabis painters, for Denis (he was the group's theoretician), before a painting is actually a subject, it is primarily an arrangement of colours on a flat surface. He painted this work in 1890 when he was only 20 years old. It is characteristic of the early experiences of the Nabis painters, which had begun two years earlier following their discovery of the painting *The Talisman* by Paul Sérusier (1864-1927).

In this link, you can learn more about this painting: <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-talisman/uQG018RWDQcL4A?hl=fr>

## FOCUS: THE 1889 EXHIBITION

In spring 1889, the World Fair opened in Paris to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution. The Eiffel Tower was built for this fair. An exhibition of contemporary art was shown at the foot of the tower in the Café Volpini. It was there that a small group of students from the Académie Julian (a private school in Paris for teaching painting and sculpture) were astonished by the works of Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) and Émile Bernard (1868–1941), which were composed of bright flat tints, expressive lines and simplified motifs. Their discovery led the young painters to undertake an aesthetic adventure, that of the Nabis artists.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look closely at this painting.**
- **What do you see?**
- **What forms does the artist use? What can you recognise?**
- **What colours are used?**
- **How are the colors arranged?**
- **What do you think they might represent?**



© Musée d'Orsay, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Patrice Schmidt

**Maurice Denis**  
(1870–1943)

*Sunlight on the Terrace*, 1890  
Oil on card  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay



# ACTIVITIES

## CYCLE 1

### Aim:

The aim of this activity is to have the students work on the contours of a composition and its **flat tints**.\* Like Maurice Denis, they will create a painting through the use of colour by working with formless motifs that are close to abstraction.

### Description of the activity:

The teacher first returns to the work by Maurice Denis presented in the first part of the manual, Sunlight on the Terrace. The teacher shows the students how the painting was composed using flat tints. At a later date, the students are presented with the activity of producing a painting using **flat tints**.\* The students first use a black felt pen to create the contours of the work. So that they create them using the same manner as Denis, the teacher should tell the students that they should draw the contours raising their hand from the paper as few times as possible. When the contours have been drawn, the students use the medium available to them (paint, felt pens, watercolours, etc.) to fill the forms with colours.

## CYCLES 2 & 3

### Aim:

The aim of this activity is for the students to work on Japanese prints. It is a workshop in which a design is created on polystyrene or paper that will allow them to reproduce the prints seen in the exhibition, or others that they have found on internet.

### Description of the activity:

The activity is to reproduce this printing technique using simpler means. Students can first learn about prints online and take inspiration from other Japanese models different than those in the exhibition.

Using the Hokusai print previously presented and different video links (in English) that demonstrate how Japanese prints are made, the teacher explains the principles of the technique.

## CYCLES 2 & 3

### Activity Materials:

Ink, ink-rollers, a slab of polystyrene (foam sheet), a sheet of paper.

### Procedure:

1. The students cut up the slab of polystyrene they wish to use.
2. They then prepare a rough copy of the design they wish to create using the paper and pencil.
3. They then recreate it on the polystyrene pressing with the tip of the pencil, as the polystyrene is rather soft.
4. Each outline made on the polystyrene corresponds to an empty zone during the printing operation (the contour lines of their drawings). With the outline completed, the students ink the polystyrene and then place the paper on top.
5. The entire sheet must be pressed equally so that the print is reproduced correctly. This will give a monochrome print that the students leave to dry.

Another option for this workshop is to reproduce a print by focusing on the design. The students should choose a Japanese print on internet that they want to reproduce. Here is an example of how to reproduce Hokusai's print The Wave:

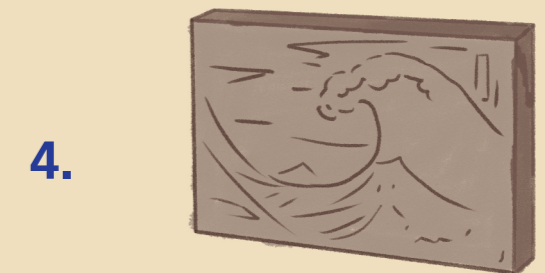
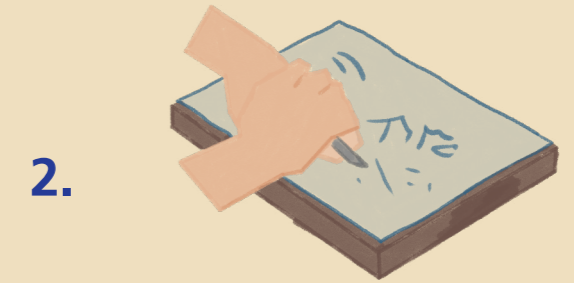
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0BgKcm\\_R9k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0BgKcm_R9k)



# ACTIVITIES

## THE STAGES OF PRODUCING A WOODBLOCK PRINT

1. A sheet of paper with the required design is glued to a wooden board.
2. The outlines of the design are engraved using a small knife.
3. The surface of the wood between the outlines is removed using two dedicated instruments: a gouge and a mallet.
4. The design on the board has been fully carved.
5. A pigment is spread in the suitable places on the board with a brush.
6. A new sheet of paper is placed on the board within a specific placement.
7. The paper is rubbed with a special tool (baren) to ensure the pigment is absorbed.
8. The procedure from step 5 is repeated for another colour. A print is created one colour at a time.





# PART 2: ARABESQUE NARRATIVES

The Nabis painters were very interested in the theatre. Some designed theatre sets for stage productions while others transferred techniques used in stage design into their painting. Their interest in stage design soon encouraged them to attempt wall painting.

Generally speaking, the characters in their compositions are shown frontally, like actors on a theatre stage. However, unlike the theatre, the stories they tell are based on immobile figures and the impossibility of describing the passing of time. The Nabis painters overcame this difficulty by a skilful orchestration of the lines and colours in their compositions. They preferred to use curved and waving lines, which are more similar to nature and the winding path of our thoughts.

Following the heritage of Japanese engravers, the Nabis painters were very aware of the notion of the continual changing of the world and were quite attached to its representation. Unlike Japanese artists, who respected proportion in their compositions, the Nabis decided to show their figures the same size as the elements around them, in order to give them symbolic importance. The combination of the colours and lines that compose the image give material form to a poetic representation that excludes all factual narration.



# DECORATIVE PANELS

These two panels show women in a natural setting. They come from a decorative cycle of a total of four panels. These paintings are dedicated to the months of September and October; the other two are April and July, which were both painted in 1892.

The panels tell the story of the engagement of a young girl: September corresponds to the period of the engagement and October to the preparation for the girl's life as a wife. The cycle is also a personal interpretation by the artist of the seasons, except for winter, which he deliberately left out.

These panels by Denis harmonise with the desire of the Nabis artists to replace **easel painting\*** with decorative painting but are also in line with the Symbolist dimension in which a painting is conceived as a dreamlike setting. The panels are also firmly rooted in their time by their use of Japanese motifs (the cat rolled up in a ball on the left, the sinuous lines of the tree bark, the high horizon) and the decorative treatment of the chestnut-tree leaves on the ground.

## FOCUS: DECORATIVE PAINTING AMONG THE NABIS

The Nabis painters developed a new concept of painting that led them to reconsider decoration. Many of their creations were made to decorate

homes. During the 1890s, the question of the role of decoration became widespread as decoration itself evolved into an important aspect of modern life. The **decorative arts\*** were, moreover, a central feature throughout the 19th century. The Nabis painters never received commissions to decorate public buildings, but from their beginnings, they were on the lookout for walls to decorate.

For more information:

[https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dcpt/hd\\_dcpt.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dcpt/hd_dcpt.htm): see the Metropolitan Museum focus on the Nabis and Decorative Painting

## QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look at these two paintings. Where do the scenes take place?**
- **How many people do you see in each painting? What are they doing? What do you think they are saying?**
- **Compare the two scenes.**
- **What differences do you see in how the colours are treated in the landscape on background?**
- **What season do you think each painting represents?**
- **Locate the lines and curves that make up these two paintings.**

1.



2.



1.

**Maurice Denis** (1870–1943)  
*October, also known as October Evening, 1891*  
 Oil on canvas  
 Paris, Musée d'Orsay

2.

**Maurice Denis** (1870–1943)  
*September, also known as September Evening or Women Sitting on the Terrace, 1891*  
 Oil on canvas  
 Paris, Musée d'Orsay, gift of Comtesse Vitali, in memory of her brother, Vicomte Guy de Cholet, 1923



# ACTIVITIES

## CYCLE 1

### Aim:

The students will create either an abstract or figurative work using curved and winding lines. It would be beneficial if this activity was guided by a visual arts teacher.

### Description of the activity:

In the first part of the activity, the teacher will present the students with works seen in the exhibition, using the reproductions in this manual. Attention should be drawn to the curves that make up the compositions: those seen in the figures and the elements of nature, which seem to ripple on the painting.

Taking inspiration from the works of Maurice Denis, the students use the technique made available by the school (painting, sculpture, modelling, etc.) to create a narrative using curved lines. They may take up the theme of the seasons in the decorative cycle or invent a new landscape. The important thing is to respect the instructions and to use only curved and winding lines.

## CYCLES 2 & 3

### Aim:

The aim is for the student to create a character that symbolises a season or an element of nature, relying on the student's individual research (internet, magazines, own photographs, etc.), and taking into consideration geography and the experience of the seasons in Abu Dhabi.

### Description of the activity:

The students are asked to do individual research on the changing of the seasons in their environment in Abu Dhabi and the Emirates, or elsewhere.

With the aim of creating a work that represents the seasons or a figure that symbolises a season, they should search for images that inspire them, either on internet, in magazines or from their own experience. They then take the results of their research and organise them on a particular **support\*** (card, paper, canvas, etc.) to create a work that illustrates their choice of season.



# PART 3: CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY

Like the generations of artists who had preceded them, the Nabis artists experimented with different formulas in an attempt to find a new way to narrate a story, one that is not linear. They inserted different points of view into the same space, thus creating forms of visual contradiction, and used deliberate interruptions in the pictorial narration. Additionally, they made particular use of the folding screen as a medium, which had been brought back into fashion by **Japonism**.\* The Nabis painters used the physical breaks between the panels as elements in their compositions.

Other painters before them, like the Impressionists, had explored the question of the representation of movement. They had chosen to use tight framing of their compositions, suggesting the continuation of the narrative outside of the painting. Whereas the Nabis artists preferred to associate the idea of movement with a fixed image. For example, in the screen, “The Nannies Promenade” by Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947), the repetition of the **carriages**\* creates a decorative frieze while also suggesting the early days of the **cinematograph**\*, in which the illusion of movement was created through a sequence of individual images.

The notion of continuity and discontinuity was a major issue for the Nabis artists, particularly in wall decorations, which were affected by the architecture of the room in which they were painted. This manner of suggesting unlimited space is typical of Japanese painting.



# FUSUMA

Fusuma are a characteristic feature of traditional Japanese architecture. They are sliding partitions lined with paper and, together with folding screens, are a favourite surface for interior decoration. These “Set of Four Fusuma” are from the Louvre Abu Dhabi’s permanent collection. You will always be able to find them in the galleries, together with other Japanese works.

The composition of this fusuma stands out for the simplicity and the regular spacing of its motifs in the image as a whole. The decorative elements are seen against a gold background, and the landscape is spread across all four panels without concern for the panel edges. The artist has shown three natural elements: air (the clouds), rocks and plants. The cranes are symbols of longevity and good omen in East Asia.

## FOCUS: THE LANDSCAPE

In the West, landscape painting is a genre in its own right, alongside history painting, portraiture, still life and the depiction of everyday life. Landscape painting is also practised in the Far East (China, Japan, Korea, etc.), where it is considered to be fundamental. A landscape may be associated with narrative elements to create a painting with more scope. In Europe in the 19th century, landscapes grew in importance as a theme in contemporary painting, in particular with the Impressionists, who painted outdoors, and the painters of the Barbizon School, who liked to work from nature.

For more information on landscape painting:

<https://www.britannica.com/art/landscape-painting>

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/l/landscape>

## QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look at these panels. What kind of elements do you recognize? How many planes can you see in the composition?**
- **Do you know the name of the birds? Do you know why the artist chose to include them in his composition?**
- **Consider the composition as a whole. How is the image in each panel constructed? How do they fit together?**
- **Imagine you are looking at this scene in nature. What noises might you hear?**
- **What smells might there be?**
- **Compare this composition with Vuillard’s panels. What similarities and differences can you see between them in the organisation of the motifs?**

1.



2.



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© RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) / Jean Schormans

1. **Set of Four Fusuma**

Japan, 18th century  
Ink, colours and gold on paper  
Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi

2. **Édouard Vuillard**  
(1868 – 1940)

*Public Gardens: Girls Playing;*  
*The Question; Conversation;*  
*Nurses; The Red Parasol, 1894*  
Glue-based distemper on canvas  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay



# NANNIES PROMENADE

The subject of this screen is known to us from a letter written by Pierre Bonnard to his mother in 1894: "I am working on a screen [...]. It is of the Place de la Concorde with a young mother walking with her children, with nannies and dogs, and on top, as a border, a **carriage**\* rank, and all on a light beige background which is very like the Place de la Concorde when it's dusty and looks like a miniature Sahara".

This screen was in fact Bonnard's third representation of the subject, having first produced a model in **tempera**\* (1894), then a painted version (1895), and finally this five-colour **lithographed**\* version (1897). Lithography made the screen reproducible, which was in line with the Nabis painters' wish that art would become part of everyday life. Bonnard was very interested in Japanese art and collected woodblock prints. Japonism made the screen fashionable and for Bonnard it was a model that he could use to tell a narrative by exploiting the divisions in the visual scene created by the different panels, and also of the continuity of the narrative created by the frieze of carriages at the top.

## FOCUS: PERSPECTIVE

The term "perspective" refers to the set of rules that allow volume to be represented on a flat surface. European artists use different expedients to create the illusion of a third dimension on a two-dimensional surface. Geometric perspective creates the illusion of depth

by reducing the size of objects as they move into the distance, and by following compositional lines that converge towards a vanishing point. Another painting technique is atmospheric perspective, in which the depth of field in different planes is given by altering the contrast and the gradation of the colours.

In the pictorial description of space, the Nabis artists preferred to use techniques employed by Far Eastern artists, which excluded any suggestion of depth. Their compositions were created around a grouping of forms distributed in the space. They used what is called "tiered perspective", in which the foreground is placed at the bottom of the composition, the middle ground in the centre and the background at the top, all without a suggestion of depth.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look at this screen. Can you identify the different elements in the picture?**
- **Locate the elements in the different planes. What is their relationship in terms of size?**
- **Where do you think this scene takes place? If you were there, what would you like to add in the background?**



© RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) / Michèle Bellot

**Pierre Bonnard**  
(1867–1947)

*Nannies Promenade, Frieze of Carriages, 1897*

Glue-based distemper on canvas

Screen composed of a series of four lithographic prints in five colours:

bistre, yellow, pale blue, red, and black; edition of 110

Paris, Musée d'Orsay; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Prints and Photographs Department



# ACTIVITIES

## CYCLE 1

### Aim:

This workshop, meant for small classes, encourages students to consider the question of narration by studying the works in the exhibition. The teacher prints and cuts out different figures and elements in the scene (whether from reproductions of works in the exhibition or not), which the students then stick onto a different **support\*** to create a narrative.

### Description of the activity:

In this activity, the teacher tackles how to tell a narrative in a divided space. Students should be told that they are to tell a story by placing figures in a setting. Different works should be found or selected beforehand and printed for the class. The idea is to get a large number of different works from which the students can choose characters, motifs and settings that they will cut out and stick on a sheet of paper to create their own story in a divided space. They can also add speech bubbles (like in a comic book) to create dialogue between the characters.

## CYCLES 2 & 3

### Aim:

Replicating the folding shape of a screen (either using a folding support or by dividing a flat surface into panels), the students are invited to create a storyboard. They should organise the cut-outs in their narrative so that importance is given to the elements that create the continuity between the panels.

### Description of the activity:

Prompted by the different folding screens in the exhibition, the students will design a narrative scene that takes into account the complex format of this support. If it is in three dimensions, they take a sheet of Canson paper that they fold to create the folding panels; if in two dimensions, they draw the individual panels on a sheet of paper. They then use the breaks between the panels in their narrative.

In the same fashion as a storyboard, they use the panels like the boxes in a comic strip to create a narrative that makes use of discontinuity (the divisions between the panels) and continuity (a coherent narrative, the background landscape that can continue between panels, etc.).



# PART 4: SYMBOLIST DRAWINGS

The Nabi painters could be described as artists who expressed ideas through painting. Their works combine intellectual, **oneiric\*** and spiritual ideas. In their decorative paintings in particular, they shifted away from reality to depict an imaginary world.

Although he was not a member of the Nabis group, Odilon Redon (1840–1916) came into contact with its painters in the early 1890s. The new development in his compositions – which moved from **lithography\*** and charcoal to centring on colour – aroused admiration among the Nabis artists. In this exhibition, fifteen of his painted panels are presented. Together they formed a set of decorative works that he painted in 1901. Of different size, the panels are decorated with motifs of nature that are seen without any surrounding context. The compositions, featuring strange flowers, trees, insects and characters, are lit by either sunlight or moonlight.



# DECORATIVE PAINTINGS BY REDON

In this set of decorative works, Odilon Redon used motifs that he had developed in his **lithographs**.\* The motifs are isolated and scattered in an unbounded space that leaves large empty zones in the composition. Redon created a mysterious, dreamlike atmosphere composed mainly of heavily stylised plant elements. He also employed a special technique: he painted with very fluid oil paints to which he added highlights using **tempera**,\* thereby creating a material contrast. This cycle of works is typical of the renewal of decorative painting that the Nabis painters had initiated at the start of the 1890s.

The 15 panels in the exhibition were all created by Odilon Redon to decorate the dining room of Baron Robert de Domecy's château at Domecy-sur-Vault. The baron was one of Redon's leading collectors from the early 1890s. He did not give Redon precise instructions, but simply asked him to use red and yellow as the dominant colours in the panels. It is this pairing of colours that gives the series its unity.

## FOCUS: SYMBOLISM

**Symbolism**\* was a literary and artistic movement that conceived in Europe at the end of the 19th century. Symbolist artists would transpose an existing image into an abstract reality, as the subject itself was primarily a pretext and the works charged with mystery and even mysticism. Symbolism asserted

the art of the hidden, the invisible, but in the visual arts it was unable to avoid the visible world, such as objects and figures. One of the principles of Symbolist painting was suggestion. The landscape in particular was a recurring theme among its painters.

For more information, see the Metropolitan Museum focus on Symbolism

[https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/symb/hd\\_symb.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/symb/hd_symb.htm)

## QUESTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Look at these paintings. What motifs are used by the artist?**
- **What colours has he used? What do you think is the dominant colour?**
- **What feelings do the paintings make you think of? How do they make you feel?**



© RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski

**Odilon Redon**  
(1840–1916)

*Branch of Yellow Flowers, 1900-1901*  
Oil, distemper, and pastel on canvas  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay



© RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski

**Odilon Redon**  
(1840–1916)

*Daisies, 1900-1901*  
Oil, distemper, and pastel on canvas  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay



© RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) / Hervé Lewandowski

**Odilon Redon**  
(1840–1916)

*Daisies and Rowan Berries, 1900-1901*  
Oil, distemper, and pastel on canvas  
Paris, Musée d'Orsay



# ACTIVITIES

## CYCLE 1

### Aim:

The aim of this workshop is to introduce students to **oneirism**.\* Using a technique that Redon was fond of (pastels), the students are asked to create an imaginary landscape, something they remember from a dream.

### Description of the activity:

The teacher presents Redon's art through the works in the exhibition, some of which are reproduced in this manual. A search can also be carried out online to find more of Redon's works. Characteristics of Redon's art that should be emphasised are mystery and oneirism.

The students are then asked to produce their own oneiric landscape, one inspired by their own dreams. In order for their work to be similar to Redon's, they should work with pastels. Each student should create his or her own landscape, inspired by a dream.

## CYCLES 2 & 3

### Aim:

The students invent a dreamlike landscape using stencils they have created beforehand. They can also share stencils so that they can diversify the themes of their works.

### Description of the activity:

The activity focuses on the dreamlike nature of Odilon Redon's art. The teacher should ask the students to find out about the artist and research the subject of oneirism.

The manual activity consists of creating a dreamlike painting using stencils. To see how to make a stencil, visit the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzQ38ER3aSg>

On a blank sheet of paper, students draw a motif in the desired size. Several can be drawn on the same sheet. They should then cut out the motif using a cutter or scissors (start in the middle of the motif) with the teacher present. Then, on another sheet (white or coloured), they should reproduce the motifs using their stencil (they can share the stencils between them) using paint, felt pens, sponges or swabs, etc. They should place the motifs to create their own oneiric work inspired by Redon's panels.



# GLOSSARY

## Académie Julian:

A private art school teaching painting and sculpture that was founded in Paris in 1866 by the French painter Rodolphe Julian (1839–1907). The first members of the Nabis group were students at this school.

## Aperspective:

The absence of perspective.

## Carriage:

A vehicle pulled by a horse and driven by a coachman. It could be hired by the hour or for a set trip. With four seats, carriages were used to move around a city. They were the ancestors of the taxi.

## Cinematograph:

A device that creates the illusion of movement through the fast presentation of a series of photographs. It was invented and first presented to the public in 1895 by the Lumière brothers.

## Decorative arts:

The art forms that combine beauty with functionality and which are practised for professional gain. They generally use materials like ceramic, wood, glass, metal, cloth, stucco, stone, etc. The term also refers to two-dimensional painted decorative

works. The decorative arts were long contrasted with the fine arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, drawing, etc.), which were considered to be nobler.

## Easel painting:

A technique in which a small or medium-sized support is placed on a wooden frame (the easel) so that it can be painted. It thus differs from a fresco, a mural and monumental painting, which do not make use of an easel.

## Flat tints:

An area of uniform colour painted without variation in either brightness or purity.

## Impressionism:

A pictorial art movement formed in France in the mid-19th century. The objective of Impressionism was to depict, through painting, the visual impressions and other perceptions experienced by the artist. A prime characteristic of this art was the freedom of touch (the quick application of the paint on the canvas, often using “comma-like” brushstrokes). Above all, the Impressionists painted nature and landscapes, which were then considered a minor genre. One of the most famous Impressionists was Claude Monet (1840–1926).

## Japonism:

The influence of Japanese civilisation on the artists and writers of the West in the 19th century.

## Lithography:

A printing technique for the creation and reproduction of multiple copies of a drawing made in pencil or ink originally on a flat limestone. To create a coloured lithograph, it was necessary to repeat the process for each colour.

## Oneiric/Oneirism:

Dreamlike or related to dreams.

## Shintoism:

Shintoism is a set of beliefs in Japan that date from ancient times. Shintoism features a huge number of Kami (spirits that guard a place) that reside in elements of nature (mountains, trees, rivers, etc.).

## Support:

The surface on which a work of art is created. In painting, this may be canvas, paper, a wall, wood, etc.

## Symbolism:

A literary and artistic movement in Europe from the end of the 19th century, based on images and the suggestion of the worlds of the real, of dreams and of imagination.

## Tempera:

A pictorial technique. Ground pigments and water are mixed with hide glue or gum Arabic immediately before use.

## Trompe-l'œil:

A term that describes a pictorial genre in which the artist tricks human visual perception to create an illusion.

## Ukiyo-e:

A Japanese term that means “representation of the floating world”. An artistic movement during the Edo period (1603–1868) in which artists took their subjects from contemporary life. They attempted to depict the fragility and fleeting nature of existence.



# CHRONOLOGY

## 1760

- Birth of Katsushika Hokusai (died in 1849).

## 1797

- Birth of Utagawa Hiroshige (died in 1858).

## 1831

- Katsushika Hokusai begins his series Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji. He completed it the following year.

## 1840

- Birth of Bertrand Redon, called Odilon (died in 1916).

## 1853

- Entry of the American fleet commanded by Commodore Perry in Edo Bay (today Tokyo Bay). Following this event, Japan opened its doors to trade with the outside world.

## 1864

- Birth of Paul Sérusier (died in 1927).

## 1867

- Birth of Pierre Bonnard (died in 1947).
- Birth of Ker-Xavier Roussel (died in 1944).

## 1868

- Start of the Meiji era in Japan (which lasted until 1912). The period marked the end of the country's deliberate isolation and the start of its policy of modernisation.
- Birth of Édouard Vuillard (died in 1940).

## 1870

- Birth of Maurice Denis (died in 1943).

## 1879

- Birth of Marguerite Gabriel-Claude (died in 1950). She married Paul Sérusier in 1912.

## 1888

- Foundation of the Nabis group around Paul Sérusier. The first group was composed only of painters from the Académie Julian.

- Paul Sérusier shows his young colleagues a painting he had done while staying in Pont-Aven (France) with Paul Gauguin (1848–1903). The painting was a strong influence on them and they called it their Talisman (it then became known by this name).
- The first exhibition in Europe of Japanese engraving is held in the gallery of Siegfried Bing (1838–1905).

## 1889

- The Paris World Fair is held to commemorate the centenary of the French Revolution. The young Nabis artists are strongly influenced by their discovery of the paintings by Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) and Émile Bernard (1868–1941) in the Café Volpini.
- Inauguration of the Eiffel Tower at the World Fair.

## 1890

- Important exhibition on Japanese engraving takes place at the École des Beaux-Arts by Siegfried Bing.

## 1895

- First cinematographic\* projection for the public held in the Indian Salon

in the Grand Café, in Boulevard des Capucines in Paris.

## 1900

- Paris holds the fifth World Fair, which saw the triumph of Art Nouveau.
- Last exhibition of the Nabis group at the Galerie Bernheim jeune.



## GENERAL INFORMATION

Educational activities are offered in **Arabic, English and French.**  
**Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday  
and Thursday, starting at 9:30am.**

Museum is **closed on Mondays.**

**Guided Tours:** 60 minutes.

**Workshops:** 90 minutes.

## CONTACT US!

**To plan your visit:**

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visit/plan-your-visit](https://www.louvreabudhabi.ae/en/visit/plan-your-visit)

**Contact the Call Centre:** 600565566

## QUESTIONS?

**Contact Louvre Abu Dhabi**

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富嶽三十六景  
凱風快晴

