

Leaving Cert Art History | Artist Summary

Sample Answer

Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)

Background:

Berthe Morisot was born into a cultured, upper middle-class family. She and her sister Elma took informal art lessons and successfully exhibited at the annual Salon. As a woman, Morisot struggled to be recognised as a serious artist at that time in history. Berthe painted with the artist Corte for a time, copying old masters' paintings in the Louvre. While doing this, Morisot became friends with Eduoard Manet ('the father of Impressionism'), who encouraged Berthe to paint contemporary life and introduced her to other impressionist artists who greatly benefited her, in my opinion, later on in her life. In 1874, Morisot married Manet's brother, Eugene Manet, which allowed her to have a closer relationship with Eduoard, and hence causing him to influence her style and technique even more.

Style, Technique & Subject Matter:

Morisot was the only female artist who exhibited at the first impressionist exhibition. She also organised the eighth and final exhibition and remained dedicated to impressionism throughout her career. Berthe mostly painted family scenes of her sisters, nieces and especially her own daughter, Julie. All of this was considered appropriate subject matter for a female artist at the time. Morisot also studied light and colour and how they affected each other. She painted quickly outside to capture the changing effects of the natural sunlight using short, rough brushstrokes of contrasting colours painted side by side to create optical mixing on the canvas. She also used a wet on wet oil painting technique, which gave blurred edges. Unlike her sister Edma, Morisot continued to paint and exhibit after her marriage. In spite of negative criticism in the newspapers and her difficult position as a female artist, Morist exhibited widely in Paris and New York from the 1880s onwards.