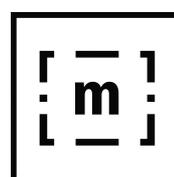
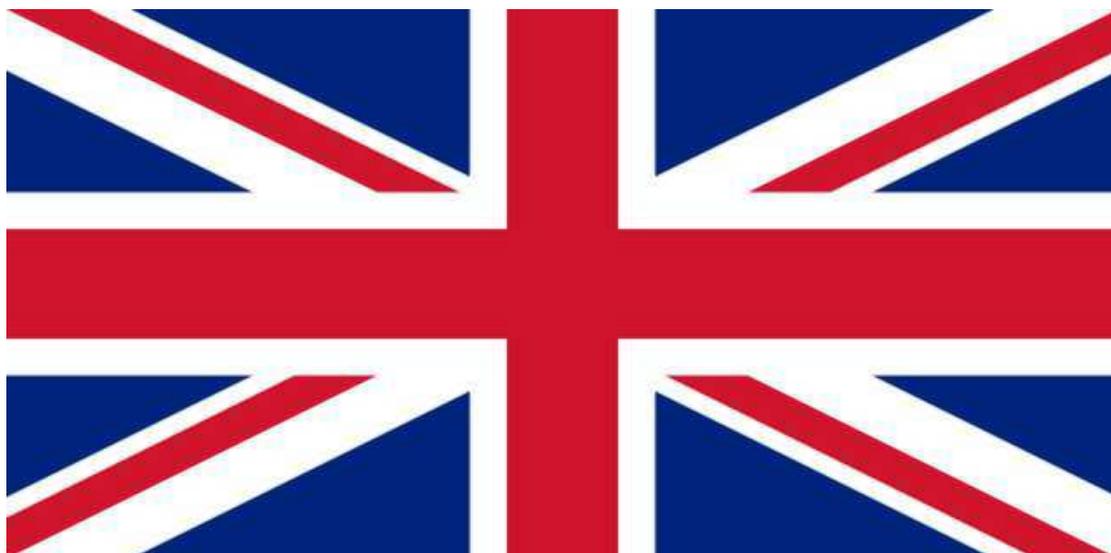


musée COURBET

Tour guide

Permanent Collections

English



The Courbet Museum

Welcome to the Museum Gustave Courbet!

The Museum has re-opened its doors in July 2011, after 3 years of work. It consists of three terraced houses, including the **Hébert hotel**, where the master of Realism has lived part of his childhood.

The renovation of the Museum was entrusted to the architect **Christine Edeikins**. The architectural project was to anchor the Museum in the town of Ornans, to open it on the Courbet landscapes by many openings and transparencies, and to combine the old and the new.

This desire to recreate the intimate and lasting relationship between the painter and his 'country' is particularly translated into unprecedented views of the Loue and the town of Ornans through a gallery, a floor and a glazed observation post.

Room 1: The Early Teachers

Gustave Courbet was born on 10 June 1819 into a family of prosperous landowners in Ornans. His father, Régis Courbet, owned extensive lands and a farm at Flagey, a village on the Amancey plateau above Ornans.

His mother, Sylvie Oudot, was from an Ornans family of republican persuasion. Thus, Courbet's life was divided between the rural life of the village and the more urban influences of the town. Courbet started school at the small seminary in Ornans where he followed the art teachings of Father Beau who used to take his pupils out to draw in the countryside. Later, at the Royal College of Besançon, where he started in 1837, he took drawing classes with the painter Charles-Antoine Flajoulot, a former pupil of David. Courbet produced his first works at that time, concentrating mainly on his home town.



Claude-Antoine Beau, *View of Ornans, The Painting Class*, around 1835, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum, Deposited at the town of Ornans



Claude-Antoine Beau, *View of Ornans*, around 1835, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum, Deposited at the town of Ornans

This painting is a view of Ornans at the beginning of the 19th century. It is an example of how Claude Antoine Beau would encourage his pupils to paint from nature, contrary to the accepted academic methods of the time. A naïve style, they nevertheless show an attention to detail that already influences Courbet.



Claude-Antoine Beau, *Gustave Courbet in Saint Vernier*, around 1835, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum, Deposited at the town of Ornans

Claude-Antoine Beau gives the traits of the young Courbet to its saint Vernier, patron of winemakers. The latter is represented standing, about to cut a bunch of grapes, with his traditional attributes: billhook, vine stock, hoe, small barrel.

You can see the bell tower of the Church and the “Castle” of Ornans in the background.



Gustave Courbet, *The Bridge at Nahin*, around 1837, oil on paper laid down on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum



Gustave Courbet, *The Loue near Ornans*, 1838, Oil on paper laid down on card, Loan from the Gustave Courbet Institute, Association ‘Friends of Gustave Courbet’

These are two works from Courbet's youth and are some of his earliest landscapes. They are views of Ornans, and include the town's oldest bridge in the Nahin quarter. There is the influence of Claude-Antoine Beau, his first master, trained with the neoclassical painter Jean-Baptiste Regnault.

Room 2: Artistic Training in Paris

Gustave Courbet was twenty when he moved to Paris to stay with the family of his cousin, Jules Oudot, a law professor. In fact, his father wanted him to take up a career as a lawyer, but Courbet quickly abandoned this path in order to devote himself completely to painting.

Far from academic training, he enrolled at several private studios including those of Charles de Steuben and Nicolas Auguste Hesse, both history painters. Following the advice of his friend, the painter François Bonvin, he copied the old masters at the Louvre, while also taking an interest in his contemporaries, Delacroix as well as Ingres, as we can see from his copy of Roger delivering Angelica found on the back of the Self-Portrait at the Museum of Fine Arts in Besançon. In 1841, he submitted to the Salon jury two portraits of his friends from Franche-Comté, Urbain Cuenot and Adolphe Marlet. Both portraits were refused, and it was not until 1844 that he had a painting accepted now being at the Petit Palais Museum in Paris.



Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Urbain Cuenot (1820-1867)*, around 1847, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

Urbain Cuenot was Courbet's closest friend, his companion when out hunting or celebrating. He accompanied Courbet on the painter's first visit to the Normandy coast in 1841. Born into a wealthy middle class family in Ornans, Cuenot was a musician and founded a choir there. On the eve of his death, Courbet wrote: "My best friend is dying and wants to see me. He has been everywhere with me throughout my life."

Room 3: Studies and Early Commissions

Courbet taught himself by copying the old Italian, Spanish and Flemish masters, as we can see in *The Awakening of Saint Jérôme*, produced from Guerchino's work at the Museum of the Louvre.

In 1847, he received his first commission to produce Saint Nicholas for the church at Saules, a village near Ornans. Later, at the request of his devoted sister Juliette, he sketched a Jesus with the Chalice, which was to adorn the altar of repose for the procession of the Fête-Dieu at Ornans. These three paintings are some of the few religious works by Courbet that remain today.



Gustave Courbet, *Jesus in Front of a Chalice*, around 1847, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

This painting, which remained as a sketch, Courbet recaptures again the iconography of Jesus in the Garden of Olives. Commissioned by Juliette, the sister of the painter, to decorate an altar, it has not been completed. The contours are quickly brushed to the canvas, leaving it visible, attesting that Courbet worked quickly.



Gustave Courbet, *Saint Nicholas Reviving the Little children*, 1847, oil on canvas Gustave Courbet Museum, Deposited at the Municipality of Saules

Saint Nicholas here has the features of Urbain Cuenot, a close friend of the painter. The iconography refers to the legend, according to which the saint resurrected three children who thought they had found a welcome at the home of a butcher who then cut them up into pieces and put them in a barrel to cure. This painting was Courbet's first official commission, and it adorned the high altar of the church in Saules until it came into the museum on permanent loan.



Gustave Courbet, *The Awakening of Saint Jérôme*, around 1840, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

It was at the Museum of the Louvre that Courbet painted this copy of the Vision of Saint Jérôme by Le Guerchin, a 17th century Italian painter, a work of remarkable, luminous, Caravaggesque contrasts. The scene illustrates the words from one of the saint's letters: "Asleep or awake, I hear the trumpet of the Last Judgment".



Gustave Courbet, *The Tinker*, 1842, oil on canvas, Loan from the Gustave Courbet Institute, Association 'Friends of Gustave Courbet'

In this sketch inspired by the Nordic genre scenes of the 17th century, a tinker is repairing the bottom of a pan by applying a layer of tin. At his side, we see his laden donkey on which he transports his mobile forge from village to village. Courbet pays tribute to this itinerant profession that had been common throughout France since the Middle Ages, but has now disappeared.

Hôtel Hébert

Courbet was the eldest of the five children in the family: Clarisse, born in 1821 died prematurely aged 13, Zoé (1824 – 1905), Zélie, in delicate health (1828 – 1875) and the youngest of the five, Juliette (1831 – 1915).

After the fire at the family farm in Flagey on 2nd August 1827, Régis Courbet and his family sought refuge here, at Hôtel Hébert. Whilst we may not know exactly where Courbet was born, we do know for certain that Juliette was born here in 1831. Life was simple and pleasurable in the Courbet household, as Jules Castagnary, art critic and a friend of the painter, recounts: "It is a household made up of well-to-do country folk, who have maintained all kinds of intellectual preoccupations, in spite of the trials and rigours of country life. Everyone enjoys themselves [...] When we had chatted enough, when old father Régis Courbet had won a game of checkers, we would play music together. Gustave's sisters sung with feeling, accompanying themselves on the piano".

There was a very strong bond between Courbet and his family and he was close to them throughout his life. His mother and sisters were completely devoted to him. Whilst very different in terms of character, Zoé, Zélie and Juliette supported their brother whole-heartedly in his career. However, from the 1870s onwards, differences set Zoé and her husband against the rest of the Courbet family once and for all.

Room 5 and 6: Courbet and Ornans: a stormy relationship

Ornans and its landscapes never ceased to inspire Courbet, and he brought his small town to the attention of the whole world through his painting. A close and long-lasting bond united the painter to his 'country' but this relationship was not without its difficulties. The story of the *Boy Fishing for Bullheads*, is clear evidence of this.

In 1860, Courbet produced a sculpture, *Boy fishing for Bullheads*, that he offered to the town of Ornans to decorate the fountain in the Place des Iles-Basses. The statue, in Courbet's words, was of a "12-year old child", who in his first version, was completely nude while fishing for bullheads, a type of small fish which was found in great numbers in the Loue river at the time. This nudity shocked the people of the town, and, using morality as an excuse, they circulated a petition demanding that the innocent boy fishing be removed, but this was unsuccessful.

However, after Courbet's participation in the Commune, the statue was vandalized, a sign that the people of Ornans disapproved of his political activity, and the mayor of the town, a committed Bonapartist, had the statue removed from the fountain on 28 May 1871 and sent back to the painter's family. Courbet, shocked by this rejection then wrote: "I'll teach this bunch of scoundrels that they have no right to criticize what they don't understand, whatever their impotence, their jealousy or their cheap politics."

He gave the original statue to his friend Alexis Chopard, a brewer in Morteau. And it was only in 1882, when Courbet was coming back into favor, that the town of Ornans paid tribute to the painter by replacing on the fountain the second edition of the Boy Fishing for Bullheads that had been carefully preserved by Juliette Courbet. This copy, vandalized once again, was finally placed in the Ornans town hall and replaced with a contemporary version.



Gustave Courbet, *Boy fishing for Bullheads*, 1862, plaster, Gustave Courbet Museum, Deposited at the town of Ornans

Here, Courbet presents a scene of everyday life in the Loue valley: a boy fishing for bullheads (known as "chavots" in the Franche-Comté). This original plaster model was made in the teaching studio that Courbet opened in rue Notre Dame des Champs in Paris. It was used for the cast-iron edition of the fountain in the Place des Iles-Basses in Ornans. It was Courbet's first sculpture, and he wrote: "My boldness and my success have quite surprised everyone..."

Room 7: Ornans Society

Courbet regularly came back to Ornans to see his family: his maternal grandparents, the Oudots, who lived in Place des Iles-Basses (now Place Courbet), his parents and his sisters as well as his childhood friends including the faithful Urbain Cuenot, Adolphe Marlet, Edouard Ordinaire, Alphonse Promayet, Max Buchon and, later, Lydie Joliclerc.

His visits to his home town were an occasion for parties, hunting, country walks and studies for his art, far away from the hurly burly of Paris. It was here that Courbet produced many portraits of his friends, demonstrating his affection for them.



Max Claudet (1840-1893), *Bust of Max Buchon (1818-1869)*, around 1850, Plaster, Gustave Courbet Museum

Poet and novelist Max Buchon, cousin of Courbet and very close to him, is part of the realistic cenacle that is formed in Paris at the Andler brewery. His writings allow the rediscovery of the songs and popular traditions of Franche-Comté. Founder of the *Salinois Democrat*, Socialist and activist newspaper, he is forced to exile after the coup of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte in 1851.



Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Madame Max Buchon*, 1864, plaster, Gustave Courbet Museum

On 8 December 1864, Courbet wrote to his friend Proudhon: “At the moment I am staying with Buchon in Salins where I have been working on a great number of portraits and landscapes as well as a sculpted medallion of Buchon and his wife.” After a long period of exile in Switzerland as a result of his republican views, Max Buchon returned to France in 1856 and married Félicie Dizien in 1862. A marble replica of this relief adorns Madame Buchon’s tomb in the cemetery in Salins.



Gustave Courbet, *Supposed Portrait of a Young Girl from Ornans*, 1842, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

This painting is one of the most beautiful portraits of a woman by Courbet. Painted when he was still a young man, it nevertheless reveals the artist's technical skill. The viewer is moved by the gentle quality of this young girl in traditional dress, absorbed in her thoughts.



Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Grandfather Oudot (1768-1848)*, around 1847, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

Jean-Antoine Oudot, a vineyard owner and wine merchant in Ornans, was Courbet's maternal grandfather. A veteran of the 1789 Revolution, and anticlerical in his views, he used to say to his grandson, "Shout loud and walk straight". Demonstrating his fondness for his much-admired grandfather, Courbet put his portrait into A burial at Ornans.



Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of a Young Girl from Salins*, 1860, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

Courbet probably painted this portrait when staying at Salins-les-Bains where he often went to visit his cousin and friend, the writer Max Buchon, as well as the sculptor Max Claudet.



Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Lydie Joliclerc (1840-1897)*, around 1869, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

Lydie Joliclerc was Courbet's friend and confidante. Married to the painter Charles Joliclerc, she lived in Pontarlier, from where she helped Courbet cross into Switzerland on 23 July 1873. She would remain loyal to him for the rest of his life.



Gustave Courbet, *Village Girl with a Goat*, 1860, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum.

Courbet also called this painting “The little Bacchante”. Painted in his studio in Ornans, it was one of 135 works that he displayed at his great private exhibition on the Pont de l’Alma in 1867.



Gustave Courbet, *View of Ornans or The mirror of Ornans*, around 1872, oil on canvas, Deposited MNR

After his imprisonment, Courbet returned to Ornans and once more started to go out into the countryside to paint. This picture shows the banks of the Loue, further down from his studio, on the road to Besançon. The crystal clear, still waters, reflecting the houses of the town of Ornans, offer a timeless image of this place that was so dear to the painter.

Room 8: Countries and Landscapes

Landscapes make up two thirds of Courbet's works. He continued to produce them throughout his career, from the early views of Ornans to the Swiss landscapes of his exile.

Though these landscapes, Courbet described his life and his world, his visits to Montpellier, Normandy and Saintonge. But it was the area where he was born that remained his absolute reference: "to paint a landscape, you must know it. I know my region and I paint it."

Courbet's bond with his natural environment is at once a physical and emotional bond. He becomes immersed in it, he becomes the fox caught in the trap, the stag running into the undergrowth or the hunters returning from the hunt... This symbiosis between the painter and his subject is what makes his art so powerful.



Gustave Courbet, *The River Loue at Scey-en-Varais*, around 1860, oil on canvas, Loan from the Gustave Courbet Institute, Association 'Friends of Gustave Courbet'

Courbet often painted the mirror-like surface of the River Loue at Scey-en-Varais. It was near Maisières, home of the Ordinaire family who loyally supported the artist. This beautiful painting is in keeping with the new concept of landscape that was developed in the mid 19th century, a concept that treated the landscape as a motif in itself rather than merely an element of the painting.



Gustave Courbet, *Grotto of the Snowy Source*, around 1866, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

This landscape evokes the grotto Sarrasine, near the source of Lison, represented several times by Courbet. During the winter of 1866-1867, the painter returned to Franche-Comté and paints landscapes he wishes to exhibit in his

'Pavilion of Realism'.



Gustave Courbet, *Snowy Landscape*, around 1876, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

Landscape of the Valley of the Loue with its cliffs under the snow, this canvas reminds the poetry of Pierre Dupont, a friend of Courbet, titled *The cold*: «...To the ramparts of eternal ice... Frost adds a lace and embroidered thousand whims. "



Louis-Joseph Leboeuf (1823-1867), *Portrait of Gustave Courbet*, 1860, plaster, Gustave Courbet Museum

A supporter of the socialist themes of the Realists, the sculptor Leboeuf met Courbet in Paris where he had moved around 1845. This statuette portrays the master painter of Ornans as a tireless walker, with his stick, his hat in his hand and his pipe in his pocket. In the words of Etienne Baudry, the painter's friend from Saintonge, "his image of Courbet is vivid and true to life".

Room 9



Louis-Edmond Cougny (1831-1900), *Courbet Sitting Palette in his Hand*, around 1855, terracotta, Gustave Courbet Museum

Sculptor from Nevers, Cougny, student of Jouffroy, also achieved a bust of Courbet currently kept at the Museum of the Castle of Versailles.



Dominique Emilien Fasanino (1851-1910), *Right Hand of Courbet* 1 January 1878, plaster, Gustave Courbet Museum, Deposited at the City of Nice

Fasanino runs the molding on the right hand of Courbet the day after the death of the painter. This Swiss sculptor then enjoys a certain reputation in the decoration of homes and hotels around the Lake Geneva.



Louis Niquet, *Gustave Courbet's Death Mask*, 1 January 1878, plaster, Deposited at the town of Besançon

This cast was taken directly from Courbet's face, the morning after his death in La Tour-de-Peilz, by Louis Niquet, a sculptor friend of Courbet also in exile in Geneva for having participated in the Paris Commune. Two laurel branches surround the painter's face, a symbol of peace, but also of the triumph of Courbet the man over the humiliations that he had to endure at the end of his life.

Room10: The large format paintings

From 1849, Courbet irrevocably changed the artistic scene and the course of art history with the works he submitted to the Salon. The paintings in question were firstly *After Dinner at Ornans*, then a trilogy consisting of *The Stonebreakers*, *Peasants of Flagey on their Return from the Market*, and *A Burial at Ornans*. These works were genuine manifestos that broke with the pictorial tradition and sparked off a war between critics.

Courbet's modernity was so strong and incisive that Castagnary pointed out: "Yesterday his name was unknown, today it is on everybody's lips". The Fourierist journalist François Sabatier also saw all the innovation in his art, and in the face of biting criticism elsewhere, wrote: "The days of painting the well-to-do are over – the future is in social art. For my part, I maintain that, far from falling into vulgarity and materialism, Mr Courbet has idealized and stylized his subject as much as it is possible, while aiming to depict what is moving and true...This is democracy in art."

Room11: The works of Courbet in the world

Today Courbet's work can be found throughout the world, from the Pushkin Museum in Moscow to the Fine Art Museum of Sao Paulo and the Murauchi Museum in Tokyo, where some of the most emblematic of the painter's works can be seen.



Gustave Courbet, *The Origin of the World*, 1866, oil on canvas, Paris, Museum of Orsay

1866 Courbet painted the Origin of the World for Khalil-Bey, Turkish diplomat residing in Taitbout street in Paris in the early 1860s. Educated mind and art lover, this latter has a hundred paintings often of erotic inspiration, as the Turkish Bath of Ingres and The Sleep of Courbet. The Origin of the World has been designed as the counterpart of Venus and Psyche, another painting by Courbet depicting a scene of lesbian love.

In his Paris apartment, Khalil-Bey places The Origin of the World out of sight, in his bathroom, under a veil. The work will remain so hidden by its various owners, until its first exhibition to the public, a century later, in 1988, at the Brooklyn Museum.

In 1878, the critic Maxim Du Camp, sees the work at Khalil-Bey, and described his presentation:

"To appeal to a very rich Muslim who paid his own fantasies to the weight of the gold and, for some time, had some notoriety due to its lavishness, Courbet, the same man whom grandly declared his intention to renew the French painting in Paris, made a portrait of a woman hard to describe. In the bathroom of the foreign character to which I have referred, we saw a small painting hidden under a green veil. When you spread the veil, we were stunned to see a woman of a real-size, frontal view, extraordinarily moved and convulsed, remarkably painted, reproduced con amore, as Italians say, and giving the last bed of realism. But by an inconceivable oblivion, the craftsman, who had copied his model in nature had failed to represent the feet, legs, thighs, stomach, hips, chest, hands, arms, shoulders, neck and head. It is a word that is used to

describe people capable of these kinds of garbage, worthy to illustrate the works of the marquis de Sade, but that word, I don't then pronounce it in front of the reader, as it is commonly used in meat products. »

It is unclear when Khalil-Bey is giving away the painting, but in 1889 it reappears in the Antoine de La Narde gallery, merchant of Parisian art, where Edmond de Goncourt, discovers hidden, this time, behind another painting by Courbet, The Castle of Blonay, from the years 1875.

On 26 November 1912, the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery buys the painting from a Mrs Vial, possible heir to Émile-Vial, scientific and collector.

In 1913, it was the baron Herzog, Hungarian collector, which acquires it but only keeps its cache, the Castle of Blonay and entrusts the nude to his compatriot and friend, Ferenc Hatvany, painter, rich heir and especially art collector.

In 1945, during the war, the Hatvany collection, is looted by the Soviet army, but he manages to buy some of it, including The Origin of the World, until it left Hungary.

Around 1955, the painting was bought by Jacques Lacan and his wife Sylvia Bataille. The famous psychoanalyst requests then to his brother-in-law, the surrealist painter André Masson, to imagine a new cache for the painting. Masson makes a strange and anthropomorphic landscape.

In 1988, for the first time, the work is exhibited to the public, at the Brooklyn Museum, then four years later, in 1992, at the Courbet Museum of Ornans.

Finally, in 1995, after Lacan died in 1981 and then Sylvia Bataille in 1993, The Origin of the World (without the sign of André Masson) was given in the collections of the Museum of Orsay, where the painting is preserved today.

Room 13: The Commune and Exile and Switzerland

After the defeat of France by Prussia in 1870 and the fall of the Second Empire, a Government of National Defence was set up, led by Adolphe Thiers. Courbet was charged with ensuring the protection of the artistic heritage of Paris, during the siege by the Prussians.

Refusing to accept the surrender of France negotiated by Thiers, the city of Paris rose up and in March 1871 set up an independent commune called the "Paris Commune". Courbet was actively involved in this both as a town councillor and as director of the Federation of Artists. After the fall of the Empire, he had proposed removing the Vendôme column, a powerful Napoleonic symbol. But, and this against the painter's advice, the communards decided that only the destruction of the column would suffice.

At the end of May, the Thiers government retook Paris and undertook a bloody suppression of the movement. Courbet was arrested on 7 June 1871. After a period in prison and after several trials, accused of demolishing the column, he was ordered to pay for its reconstruction. His assets were seized and he had to go into exile in Switzerland on 23 July 1873, to escape his creditors. He would never return to France and died at La Tour-de-Peilz on 31 December 1877.



Gustave Courbet, *Flowers*, 1871, oil on wooden board, Deposited from Fonds National d'Art Contemporain

Courbet painted this canvas while he was in the Sainte-Pélagie prison in Paris. He had difficulty in obtaining permission to paint from the prison governor. During this painful episode of his life when, in his words, he had “neither daylight nor model”, he created numerous still life composed with flowers and fruits that his sister Zoé brought him.



Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait at Sainte-Pélagie*, around 1872, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum, Deposited at the town of Ornans

Courbet depicts himself in his cell at the Sainte Pélagie prison in Paris, after being convicted of participating in the Commune. We do not know if the painting was made while he was in prison or after he was freed. He is wearing the clothes of a common criminal like all the communards, who were refused political prisoner status.



Gustave Courbet, *The Château de Chillon*, 1874, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum, Deposited at the town of Ornans

The Château de Chillon belonged to the imagery of Romanticism and also inspired Lord Byron and Delacroix. It had already become a tourist attraction, which explains why Courbet took it as a subject for a major series of paintings, essentially for commercial reasons. These paintings would pay his debts after he was sentenced to pay for the reconstruction of the Vendôme column.



Gustave Courbet, *Helvetia or Freedom*, around 1875, plaster, Gustave Courbet Museum

The idea of a bust representing the freedom comes to Courbet in 1875 during his exile as a gratitude to Switzerland for its hospitality. A bronze copy is offered by the painter to the city of La Tour-de-Peilz for the place of the Temple, another to the city of Martigny for the Freedom square. These works are visible still today but the Swiss cross, on these bronzes, is replaced by a star.

Room 14: The Followers

From the end of the 1860s, Courbet surrounded himself with painters who helped him to prepare his canvases. The best-known of these painters are Chérubino Pata, Marcel Ordinaire, François-Louis Français and Alexandre Rapin. They formed a kind of studio unit around him, which in time gave rise to a Franche Comté school of painting. First and foremost landscape painters, they revisited Courbet's favourite subjects, such as the banks of the river Loue or the cliffs of the Jura mountains. The school continued to evolve with painters Antonin Fanart, Nestor Bavoux and Victor Jeanneney and in the next generation it developed around the group who founded the Salon des Annonciades in Pontarlier (1928), including Robert Fernier, André Charigny and Roland Gaudillière.

During his stay in Saintonge in 1862, Courbet taught young painters Louis-Augustin Auguin and Hippolyte Pradelles about his perception of art and his painting technique, creating a Saintonge school of landscape painting in the process.



François-Louis Français (1814-1897), *Courbet Fishing*, around 1861, oil on canvas, Loan of the Gustave Courbet Institute, Association 'Friends of Gustave Courbet'

Born in 1814 in Plombières, François-Louis Français, student of Corot, joined Courbet in Paris in 1851. He admires his work and becomes a renowned landscape artist with him. In 1861, he painted this intimate scene, taking the painter of Ornans as a model while

fishing.



Marcel Ordinaire (1848-1896), *The Black Creek*, around 1872, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbe Museum, Deposited at the town of Ornans

Marcel Ordinaire, son of Edouard Ordinaire of Maisières, becomes a student of Courbet and learns painting "on the spot" around Ornans. The black creek is one of the favorite sites of Courbet, close to his studio in Ornans, that he painted many times. Wilderness and hidden, it fits his taste for new compositions to the tight framing.



Émile Isenbart (1846 – 1921), *Mist in the Morning at Belieu*, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum, Gift of Mr. Christian and Mr. Jean-Paul Barbier, 2014.

This Franch-Comtois painter has a keen interest in the landscapes of his region. He has many works representing views of Franche-Comté. Using themes and cherished sites to Courbet, he is considered as one of the "followers". Isenbart draws much of his inspiration in the village of Belieu (near Morteau) where he painted the opulence of nature and the countryside. He translates the atmosphere, specific to its region and masters, particularly here, the effects of mist.



Louis-Augustin Auguin (1824-1904), *The Last Beautiful Days in Bussac*, before 1882, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

Student of Coignet and Corot, Louis-Augustin Auguin is getting closer to Courbet in 1862, in Saintonge. They experience with Corot and Pradelles, a period of creation and artistic emulation that pushes Auguin to open his own workshop in Bordeaux. He became a very well-known artist in the Southwest, but its distance from Paris deprives him from a great popularity.

Room 15: Seascapes

The sea became a recurrent theme in Courbet's work during his extended visits to the Normandy coast between 1865 and 1869.

In his "paysages de mer », or seascapes, as he refers to them, the painter tries to convey his vision of the sea in all its immensity and power.

The seascapes dating from the beginning of the 1860s have a certain purity to them in terms of structure and adhere to the principles of frontality and horizon, creating an immense space for the sky. Lacking any human element, they represent the beauty of changing nature, both in the sky itself as well as in the waves. On the subject of Courbet's seascapes, Champfleury said "Who else amongst the modern masters was the able to portray a more poetic notion of deserted beaches, of the sea, of the spectacle of the clouds, without any element of surprise or sense of the fake picturesque? Not one boat, not a single fisherman. Nothing but the drama of immensity".

During Courbet's various trips to Normandy, and particularly his visits to Trouville in 1865 followed by Deauville in 1866, Courbet spent time with the painters James Whistler, Eugène Boudin and Claude Monet. These meetings with other artists were a key opportunity to share and discuss their work and were behind developments in pictorial technique and ultimately modernised painting, driving it towards impressionism. Courbet's colour palette became lighter as a result of his contact with Boudin, whilst Whistler commended the Franche Comté master for the boldness of his representations of the marine space.



Gustave Courbet, *Beach at Saint-Aubin*, 1872, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

From 1865, Courbet visited the Normandy coast and his seascapes were very popular with aristocratic visitors to the area. In 1872, when he was convalescing in the clinic of Doctor Duval in Neuilly, a prisoner on parole, he drew on his memories, and nostalgically painted this beach at Saint-Aubin where he had stayed in 1867, with his sister Zélie.



Gustave Courbet, *The Beach at Trouville*, around 1865, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

This “landscape of sea”, signed with the tip of the brush directly in the fresh paint, is made up of broad, flat surfaces bordering on the abstract, revealing the painter’s skill. Courbet played with the variations in color and texture, offering us a wonderful example of improvisation that heralded Impressionism.



Gustave Courbet, *The Beach at Etretat*, 1872, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

Working from his memories of the landscape he had observed in Normandy, Courbet painted these seascapes while he was in hospital in Neuilly. Feeling nostalgic, he made these “landscapes of sea” that resemble those he produced in great numbers during his visits to the Normandy coast. Here, Courbet evokes the famous cliffs at Etretat on the horizon.



Gustave Courbet, *Marine*, oil on canvas, Loan from a Private Collection

Courbet painted his first landscape of sea in Montpellier in 1854. The discovery of the shores led him to undertake several series of paintings featuring the sea, especially during his stay in Normandy in 1865-1866. In *Marine*, the horizon line is considerably lowered which gives the sky a special intensity. The sea and the shore share the remaining space. The gestures of the painter are lively, assured and reveal his brush strokes. Here, lights and shadows enter into a dialogue.



Gustave Courbet, *Sunset*, 1875, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

From the Swiss side of Lake Geneva, Courbet observed the Jura mountains ablaze in the setting sun. This man would end his life here, exiled, humiliated and ruined, far from his country and his family and friends, savored the beauty of this place: “I am here in a delightful country, the most beautiful in the world, on Lake Geneva, surrounded by gigantic mountains.”

Room 16



Gustave Courbet, *The Oak of Flagey, also titled Oak of Vercingetorix, Field of Caesar near Alésia*, 1864, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

In 1867, Courbet adds a subtitle to the work that refers to the quarrel opposing the villages of Alaise (Doubs) and of Alise Sainte-Reine (Côte-d'Or) for the location of the site of the battle of Alesia. The duel Alaise/Alésia synthesizes ideological confrontations: Vercingetorix against Caesar, democracy against imperialism, regional independence against centralizing power, Courbet against Napoleon III.



Gustave Courbet, *Surrender of Deer*, oil on canvas, loan from a Private Collection

Courbet deals many times the topic of surrender, place of refuge for the animal. The most famous of these is the Surrender of Deer at the creek of The Ruisseau de Plaisir-Fontaine, which he exhibits at the Salon of 1866. In many of his paintings, Courbet represents wild animals, here the deer, serene, at rest, in a typical landscape of the Jura massif.



Gustave Courbet, *Return from the Hunt or The Rustic Hunters*, 1857, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum, Deposited at the town of Ornans

In this scene of rustic hunters, as opposed to those who hunted with hounds, the painter once again includes the faces of two horsemen from his famous canvas Peasants of Flagey returning from the Market, now in the Museum of Besançon. The character on the right has the features of Régis Courbet, the artist's father. This painting was given to the town of Ornans in 1906 by Etienne Baudry, the painter's friend from Saintonge.



Gustave Courbet, *Fox Caught in a Trap*, around 1860, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

Courbet started to paint hunting scenes in 1857. No doubt he was taking advantage of the success this genre was enjoying at the Salon at that time, but adapting it to his own personal vision. Here, the painter represents the animal not as a predator but as a martyr, bringing great dramatic intensity to a simple hunting scene.



Gustave Courbet, *Summer, The Little Shepherdess*, around 1872, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum

This painting until 1890 belonged to the Francs-Comtois, Paul Mazaroz, manufacturer of furniture known under the Second Empire and friend of Courbet. It is painted after the period of imprisonment of the artist, when he returned to Ornans. Courbet excels at making the matter of rocks and trees so characteristic of his country.



Gustave Courbet, *The Calf*, around 1873, oil on canvas, Gustave Courbet Museum, Gift from M. Jean Betoulle-Beaubatie

According to the testimony of Courbet's nephew, son of his sister Zoe, this painting was painted in Chassagne, small village six kilometers of Ornans. Two versions exist of this country scene in which a calf is raised to the rank of a real character. It is regarded as the first because the landscape is less successful compared to the version dated in 1873 which is located in a private American collection.

Chronology

1819: Gustave Courbet was born in Ornans June 10 in a family of landowners.

1833-1838: Courbet followed his first artistic teaching with Claude-Antoine Beau at the small Ornans seminar, and with Charles Antoine Flajoulot at the Royal College of Besançon. His early landscapes date from this period such as the *Bridge of Nahin* in 1837 (Gustave Courbet Museum, Ornans).

Death in 1834 of his younger sister, Clarisse, at the age of 13.

1839: Courbet arrives in Paris to pursue law studies for which his father intended. He socializes with the family of his maternal cousin, Julien François Oudot, Professor of law. He soon gave up this path encouraged by his professors of painting, Carl August Von Steuben then Nicolas Auguste Hesse. But during his entire career in Paris, he will almost come back every summer to Ornans and Flagey, to be with his family.

1840: Courbet realizes his first copies at the Louvre (*The awakening of St. Jérôme* by Guerchin, Gustave Courbet Museum, Ornans).

1841: In Paris, he moved to the 4 rue Saint-Germain-des-Prés with his Franc-Comtois' friends Adolphe Marlet and Urbain Cuenot, to whom he proposed portraits at the Salon of Paris. Both are rejected.

1842: He moved to 28 rue de Buci and then 89 rue de la Harpe.

1844: First admission to the Salon with *Portrait of the Artist*, names *Courbet with the Black Dog* (Petit Palais, Paris).

1845: Courbet wrote to his parents: "In five years, I must have a name in Paris". He goes to the Andler brewery and the Artistic Bohemia, befriends with Champfleury and Baudelaire.

1846: He visits Belgium and the Netherlands, discovering the paintings of the Flemish masters whom left a deep impression.

1847: He met Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and befriends him which he admires his thought.

A child is born of his affair with his model Virginie Binet.

He commissioned at the request of the Church of Saint Nicolas resurrecting small children (Gustave Courbet Museum, Ornans).

Death of his maternal grandmother, Thérèse Joseph Oudot.

1848: February, fall of the July monarchy. Courbet peacefully participates in the revolutionary days of June with his friends Promayet, Baudelaire, Toubin and the critic Champfleury. He designed the front piece of the newspaper, *The Public Salvation*.

Death of his maternal grandfather, Jean-Antoine Oudot to whom he was very close.

1849: In Paris he settled at 32 rue Hautefeuille which will remain his workshop until his exile in Switzerland. Meeting with Francis Wey.

At the Salon, he sends, *An After Dinner at Ornans* (Palace of Fine Arts, Lille), 'event' painting by its novelty and grace at which he won a second gold medal and which is immediately acquired by the State for the Museum of Lille.

1850: He paints in his first Ornans' workshop *A burial at Ornans* (Museum of Orsay, Paris) for which the inhabitants of the city are posing. Courbet introduced it to the Salon, the painting creates scandal and amazement as more than *An After Dinner at Ornans*, the realism of everyday life is painted in the dimensions so far reserved for "noble" deemed themes (religious, historical, mythological scenes). Also appearing at the Salon "The Stonebreakers" (destroyed) and *The Farmers of Flagey Returning from the Market* (Museum of Fine Arts, Besançon). These three paintings cause strong reactions by the truth without artifice of their representation.

1852: He paints *The Bathers*, which creates a new scandal for the same reasons. Virginia Binet, his mistress, leaves Paris to Dieppe with their son Alfred Émile. Courbet, writes to Champfleury "I deeply miss my little boy." This little boy appears in several paintings by Courbet as *The Wheat Sifters* or *The Workshop*.

1853-54: In Paris, he meets Alfred Bruyas, banker and art amateur from Montpellier. Bruyas becomes the patron and friend of the painter, he visits him in Montpellier during the summer of 1854. He painted *The Meeting* and its first Mediterranean landscapes.

He began the realization of his painting *The Workshop*.

1855: Courbet, with the help of Bruyas, decides to organize a personal exhibition in a Pavilion he had built a few steps from the official salon and that he named the Pavilion of Realism. He presents his painting *The Workshop* that he defines as "A real allegory determining a phase of seven years of my artistic life".

1856: He painted *The Young Ladies on the Banks of the Seine* (Petit Palais, Paris) that he presents at the Salon the following year, again shocking the general opinion by the languid pose of the two 'young ladies'.

1858-60: He acquires land at the West exit of Ornans, as well as a former foundry to build a workshop he wants closer to nature.

Trips to Brussels, Frankfurt, le Havre.

He began his series of hunting scenes.

1860: Meeting with Jules Castagnary, art critic whom will support him until his death.

Exhibition of his works in Montpellier, where he had many friends, particularly in the Fourier circles around the critic François Sabatier.

1861: Trip to Ostend, Bruges and Brussels. Opening until March 1862 in his Studio rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs.

1862: Courbet realizes *The Fisherman of Bullheads*, a sculpture he offers to the town of Ornans to adorn the fountain in the square of Iles-Basses (currently Courbet's square). The painter stays near Saintes with his friend Etienne Baudry. He paints in particular *The Return of Conference* rejected at the Salon, creating a new scandal related to its anticlerical theme.

1863: Final break with Champfleury, the two men accusing each other to have been corrupted by the Government.

Together with Courbet, Proudhon begins writing *Du Principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale*.

1865: Following the death of the philosopher Proudhon on 19 January, Courbet painted his portrait in 36 days to be able to present it to the Salon.

Exhibition in Bordeaux, Besançon, and Toulouse. In the fall, he stayed in Trouville, where he attended socialite but also the American painter James Whistler and his girlfriend Joanna Hiffernan, of which he made several portraits.

1866: Stays in Deauville with the count of Choiseul, with painters Eugène Boudin and Claude Monet. He painted for the Turkish diplomat Khalil Bey, *The Origin of the World* (Paris, Museum of Orsay).

1870: On June 19, France declares war on Prussia. Courbet has been named Knight of the Legion of Honor, a title he refuses. On 6 September, four days after the French defeat at Sedan and the fall of the Empire, in Paris under siege by the Prussians, Courbet was elected president of the arts Commission responsible for the safeguard of the Parisian art works.

1871: In January, Paris capitulated, and in March, the Paris Commune was established. Courbet was elected municipal Councillor of the 6th District and named delegate to the Fine Arts. In May, a decree decides to demolish the Vendôme column, while Courbet is absent and that he advocated only to move. On June 7, after the "bloody week" and the crushing of the Commune, Courbet was arrested and sentenced to six months in prison and a fine of 500 francs. Three days before, his mother died at Ornans. He is transferred to Sainte Pélagie prison in September (*Self-Portrait at Sainte Pelagie*, Departmental Gustave Courbet Museum, Ornans), then at the end of December due to health problems, at the clinic of Dr. Duval in Neuilly.

On May 28, the statue of *The Fisherman of Bullheads* has been removed from the fountain of the Iles-Basses in Ornans.

1872: Out of the clinic in April, Courbet returns to Ornans. Before the influx of orders, he opened a workshop in collaboration with young painters such as Cherubino Pata and Marcel Ordinaire. He painted many landscapes of the surrounding area and also replicas of his previous Normandy seascapes. The premature death of his twenty-five years old son affects him deeply.

1873: Prosecuted for his activities during the Commune, Courbet went into exile in Switzerland with the help of his friends of Pontarlier, the Joliclerc. He settled in a pension at the Tour-de-Peilz where Cherubino Pata joined him. He began to paint a series of paintings representing the *Castle of Chillon*, which a copy is in the collection of the Departmental Gustave Courbet Museum of Ornans.

1875: The death of his sister Zélie in May.

In July, he moved to Bon-Port, in a house that overlooks the harbour of La Tour-de-Peilz. In tribute to Switzerland, he sculpted a bust of *Freedom* called *Helvetia*.

1877: On May 4, Courbet was condemned by the civil court of the Seine to pay the costs of reconstruction of the column estimated at 323,091,668 francs. In autumn, the painter's health is rapidly deteriorating and on 31 December, he died in Bon-Port.

Thank you for visiting

See you soon at the Courbet Museum

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to the front office**

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Musée Courbet, 2020

