



Joy on Main Street, Brownsville



## BARBIZON BROWNSVILLE NEWSLETTER

### Event: July 23, 2021 Main Street Brownsville

- “STAND BY ME DAY” , July 23<sup>rd</sup>, in Brownsville, OR has become a plein air (all’aperto) day for painters. Celebrating the great cult film by that name, artists will gather on and around Main Street to paint all day and exhibit their work.
- Encouraging “loose brush” impressionism, all regional and local plein air painters working in any style are welcome to participate. Register by emailing your name and contact information to Jerry Ross ([pittore44@yahoo.com](mailto:pittore44@yahoo.com)).
- Held in conjunction with the Brownsville Art Association (BAA) this annual event helps educate painters about the Barbizon movement and its ideas about painting as well as Making Brownsville an arts destination in the Willamette Valley.

An important movement in [French painting](#), the term 'Barbizon School' refers to a group of painters who, around 1848, settled in and around the French village of Barbizon near the Fontainebleau forest. They were also known as the **Fontainebleau School** and their work is regarded as the strongest movement of purely [landscape painting](#) in nineteenth century France. Noted above all for their [plein-air painting](#), Barbizon artists developed a remarkable [naturalism](#), minutely observing natural settings. In so doing, they rejected many of the canons of [academic art](#) in their quest to establish a new and prosaic form of [realist painting](#) - an idiom that led directly to the socially aware realism of Gustave Courbet.

Their paintings are mostly landscapes of plains, trees and forests, all rendered in a fluid style. The most famous representatives of the Barbizon School are **Camille Corot** and **Theodore Rousseau**, the latter being the organizer and leader of both the group and proponent of its theories.

Other noteworthy figures were **Jules Dupre** (1811-89), whose work was characterized by the sombre use of light, and **Jean-Francois Millet**, a true innovator because of his unusual subject matter, which exalted the world of peasants and rural labour.

**Charles-Francois Daubigny**, a specialist in landscapes featuring riverbanks, was also an important member of the group, as was the Spanish-born painter **Narcisse Diaz de la Pena** (1807-76).

## Origins and History

Strongly influenced by 17th century Dutch landscapes, and outdoor painters like [John Constable](#) (1776-1837) and [Richard Parkes Bonington](#) (1802-28) of the [English Landscape Painting](#) tradition, the Barbizon School was an important step in the development of French landscape art away from [Romanticism](#) towards [Realism](#).

Perhaps not surprisingly for people whose country had been ravaged by the horrors of revolution, then war, French artists willingly went out in search of nature - the 'real' France - which they portrayed in plein air Provincial settings. For conviviality and economy, they set up a number of rural artistic colonies - in places like Barbizon, and later at Grez-Sur-Loing, Pont-Aven, and Concarneau. (Similar artist colonies were set up at Skagen in Denmark, Abramtsevo in Russia, and at Newlyn, England).

In America, the Barbizon outdoor style superceded the Hudson River School thanks to the efforts of [George Inness](#) (1825–1894). These movements and groups produced many of the world's most [famous landscape paintings](#), and were instrumental in making the nineteenth century a golden age of landscape art, culminating in the decorative optics of Monet's [Impressionism](#).

## Characteristics of Barbizon Landscape Painting

Barbizon painters rejected the classical tradition of landscape painting - exemplified by the likes of Claude Lorrain (1600-82), Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) or Jean-Honore Fragonard (1732-1806) - with its carefully polished studio compositions in which intellectual scenery merely served as a backdrop for high-minded historical narratives.

Instead - in the manner of earlier Dutch painters like Salomon van Ruysdael (1602-70), [Aelbert Cuyp](#) (1620-91), [Jacob Van Ruisdael](#) (1628-82) and [Meindert Hobbema](#) (1638-1709) - Barbizon artists sought to capture the *actual* light of the countryside and the *actual* colour they saw, rather than the intellectual scenery created by the likes of Claude Lorrain (1600-82), Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) or Jean-Honore Fragonard (1732-1806).

Put another way, they painted with their eyes not their head. Their principal technique was plein-air painting: unlike previous artists, who might make a few brief sketches outdoors but then retreat to their studios to begin painting, Barbizon members spent much more of their time painting direct from nature.

This immersion in their surroundings led to a focus on the details of rural life, its seasons and - above all - its changing light and colour. The focus on everyday visual detail had a major influence on both the social realism of [Gustave Courbet](#) (1819-77) and the [Impressionist paintings](#) of Monet, Pissarro and Sisley. (In this regard see also [Realism to Impressionism](#).) However, as we shall see, Barbizon "realism" was tinged with a high degree of romanticism and stopped well short of Courbet's full-blooded radicalism. See it rather as a devotion to naturalism rather than realism proper.

## Barbizon Painters

[Theodore Rousseau](#) (1812-1867) was the driving force behind Barbizon. However, his *pleinairism* found few favours with the conservative French [Salon](#), who took several years to appreciate his talents. Rousseau's scenic paintings (eg. *Sunset in the Auvergne* (1830); *Paysage Panoramique* (1830-40); *Forest in Boisremond* (1842); *Forest of Fontainebleau, Morning* (1850) dispensed with the convention of inserting human figures in order to interpret or animate the landscape. He allowed Nature to speak for itself, thus paving the way for [Impressionist landscape painting](#). Like several others, he was part-romantic and part-realist, being animated by the spirit (Romanticism) and also by the appearance (Realism) of the countryside.

More famous than Rousseau, but no less devoted to plein-air painting, the older [Camille Corot](#) (1796-1875) created his own unique style of highly appealing soft-edged romanticism, triggering the observation that he "painted with the eye of a Realist, but the heart of a Romantic." His paintings - such as *Ville d'Avray* (1875), *Rural Scene* (1875) and *The Bridge at Narni* (1826) - reveal his feeling for colour harmony based on the use of fine tonal gradations. Indeed, his use of [colour](#) to create a sense of perspective and capture the mood of the scene is invariably remarkable. It is Camille Corot to whom the Impressionists owe the greatest debt.



**The Gleaners** (1857)  
By Jean-Francois Millet.  
Musee d'Orsay, Paris.



**The Fisherman** (c.1848)  
Louvre, Paris.



**Man With A Hoe** (1862)  
Getty Museum, Los Angeles.  
One of the most striking images  
created by [Realist artists](#).



**Ville d'Avray** (1867)  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington DC.

By contrast, [Jean-Francois Millet](#) (1814-75) - himself the son of a Normandy peasant - was a committed realist. After training under a local painter at Cherbourg and then in Paris (1837) under [Delaroche](#), he moved to Barbizon in 1849 and remained there for the rest of his life. A fundamentally devout man, many of his landscapes - like [The Angelus](#) (1859) and [Man with a Hoe](#) (1862) - portray the back-breaking almost holy simplicity of peasant life. In fact, Millet's works are closer to [genre painting](#) than landscape, but his depiction of the countryside in realistic rather than picturesque terms had a great influence on the landscape genre as a whole. The titles of his paintings alone are sufficient to convey his down-to-earth approach to [art](#): *Peasant with a Wheelbarrow* (1848-52), *Trussing Hay* (1850), *Peasant-Girls with Brushwood* (1852), *Farmer Inserting a Graft on a Tree* (1865), *Buckwheat Harvest: Summer* (1868-74), *Haystacks: Autumn* (c.1874). Also, like other rural painters, he was a strong advocate of plein air art. The Barbizon School in France never recovered from Millet's death in 1875..

# Logistics and Planning for Event

1. Bathrooms are available at BAA and at Randy's Main Street Café
2. Participants are urged to be fully vaccinated and masked when inside the Art Center or any business establishment.
3. Arrangements for exhibiting work are not finalized yet. We are working on this. A virtual online exhibit is a sure thing, however.
4. Meet around 10 am in front of Art Center and at 4 pm at end of day. Bring your own lunch or buy at Randy's.



Email me with any questions: [pittore44@yahoo.com](mailto:pittore44@yahoo.com) Jerry Ross