

It's Winter!

What better time than winter to showcase artwork that depicts winter in all its snowy glory! It's a great way to appreciate snow without actually having to shovel it.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569) was a Dutch Renaissance artist who broke away from the typical style of his contemporaries, painting scenes of the common people and landscapes rather than religious works.

The artist's *Hunters in the Snow (Winter)* is one of series of six paintings, five of which still survive, depicting the seasons.



Pieter Bruegel, *Hunters in the Snow (Winter)*, 1565, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

Bruegel's painting below has been called "perhaps the first painting of a White Christmas". Although titled *The Census at Bethlehem*, the scene has been relocated to Northern Europe.



Pieter Bruegel, *The Census at Bethlehem*, 1566, Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium

Although not nearly as famous as either Rembrandt or Vermeer, Hendrick Avercamp (1585-1634) was possibly the most able of the Dutch Golden Age artists when it came to painting winter in the Low Countries. Born deaf and mute, Avercamp learned to skate as a child and became a specialist in winter scenes, painting during one of the coldest periods of the last millennium.



Hendrick Avercamp, *Winter Landscape with a Windmill*, c. 1615, private collection.



Hendrick Avercamp, *Winter Scene on a Frozen Canal*, 1620, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

The British artist, J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851), captured the ferocity of winter in his *Snowstorm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*. In this painting, Hannibal appears as a tiny figure riding an elephant, overwhelmed by a whirling blizzard as mountain dwellers attack his troops.



J.M.W. Turner *Snowstorm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*, 1812, Tate Gallery

Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) was a German Romantic landscape painter, generally considered the most important German artist of his generation. In the painting below, the artist depicts the shipwreck of the HMS Griper, a British vessel on an expedition to the North Pole. The iceberg dwarfs the ship, giving the impression of being a gravestone.



Caspar David Friedrich, *The Sea of Ice*, 1824, Kuntshalle, Hamburg

Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) was a French artist who led the Realism movement in France, rejecting the Romanticism of the previous generation. He was an acknowledged master of the snow scene. The painting below not only captures the vastness of the winter landscape, but the chaos arising from the diligence (ox or horse drawn coach) accident in the deep snow.



Gustave Courbet, *The Diligence in the Snow*, 1860, National Gallery, London

Édouard Manet (1832-1883) was considered to be a revolutionary in his time. The French artist defied traditional techniques of representation, was met with hostility by critics, and but was greatly admired by young painters who would become central to the Impressionist movement. The painting below was completed while Manet was a member of the National Guard during the 1870-71 Siege of Paris during the Franco Prussian War.



Édouard Manet, *Effect of Snow on Petit-Montrouge*, 1870, National Museum Cardiff, Wales

Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) was a Danish-French artist, born in what is now the US Virgin Islands. He has been referred to as the first Impressionist and the “dean of Impressionist painters”. He was forced to leave France during the Franco Prussian war; upon his return to France after the war, he found that of the 1,500 works of art he had left behind, only about 40 remained, the others destroyed by soldiers. His *Route de Versailles, Louveciennes, Winter Sun and Snow* is one of twenty-two canvases of the effects of light, seasonal weather, and movement on *Route de Versailles* in Louveciennes that he painted between the autumn of 1869 and the summer of 1872.



Camille Pissarro, *Route de Versailles, Louveciennes, Winter Sun and Snow*, 1869, Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

Alfred Sisley (1839-1899) was one of the Impressionist artists inspired by both Manet and Pissarro. Born in, and lived most of his life in, France, Sisley retained British citizenship. He was almost exclusively a landscape painter, rarely undertaking figurative art. In contrast to other Impressionist artists, Sisley consistently painted en plein air. The painting below demonstrates why the snow motif was ideal for the Impressionists. Of this painting, the art collector and philanthropist, Duncan Phillips, wrote "Snow at Louveciennes, with its hush of snowflakes falling over roofs and garden walls, is a lyric of winter, enchanting both in its mood and in its tonality of tenderly transcribed 'values'."



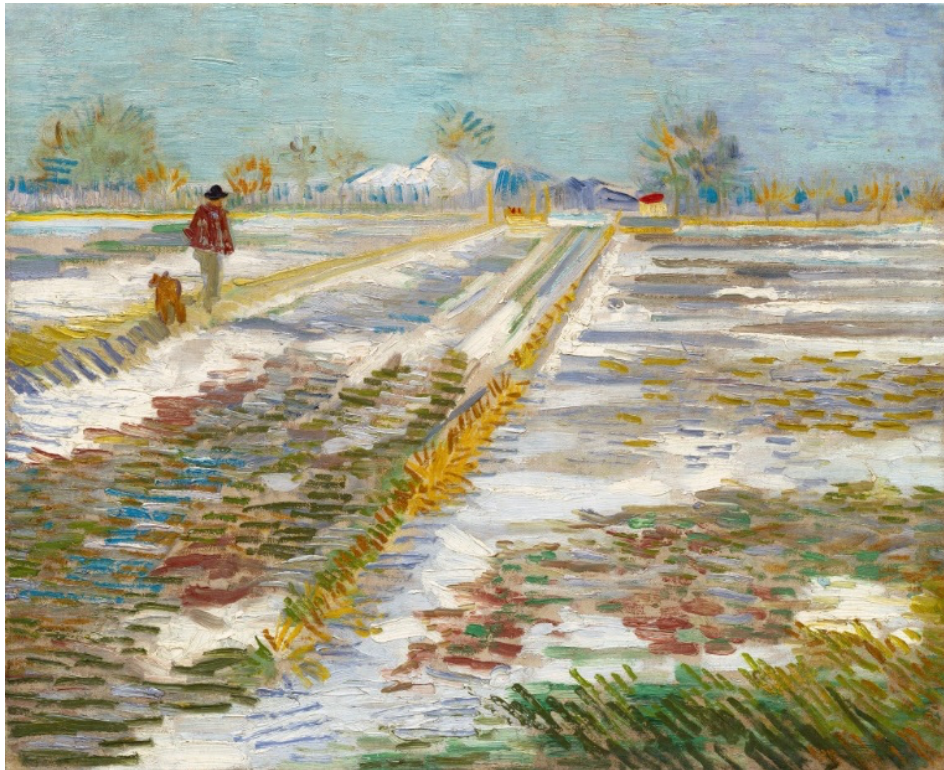
Alfred Sisley, *Snow at Louveciennes*, 1874, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

Gustave Caillebotte (1848-1894) was a member of the French Impressionist movement, although his work tended to be more realistic than most of his colleagues. He was less well known as a painter during his lifetime than his contemporaries, e.g., Monet and Degas, than as a patron of the arts. Caillebotte was a collector of photographs and his paintings often borrow characteristics of photography. The painting below explores the effects of snow on Paris, the City of Light.



Gustave Caillebotte, *View of Rooftops (Effect of Snow)*, 1878, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), the Dutch Post-Impressionist artist, painted more than 2,100 works of art during his relatively short life, most of them in the two years before he died. Not commercially successful during his life, posthumously he became one of the most influential artists of the Western Hemisphere. Van Gogh spent the last two years of his life in Arles, having sought a sunny bucolic escape from the cold urban atmosphere of Paris. Upon arrival, he found a snowy landscape, depicted in the painting below.



Vincent Van Gogh, *Landscape with Snow*, 1888, Guggenheim Museum, NY, NY

Winslow Homer (1836-1910), although a contemporary of the Impressionists, is more of a Realist than an Impressionist. The painter, considered by many to be the foremost American artist of the 19th century, is best known for his marine subjects. However, his snowy painting below, his largest, has been called “arguably his greatest painting of any kind”.



Winslow Homer, *The Fox Hunt*, 1893, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA

Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), a French Post-Impressionist, Symbolist and Primitivist, is probably best known for his bright colors and figures and scenes from his time living in French Polynesia. But Gauguin also spent time in Bretagne, which inspired the snowy painting below.



Paul Gauguin, *Breton Village Under Snow*, 1894, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) was one of the principal leaders of the Impressionist movement, famous for his paintings of sensual and beautiful women. Later in his career, Renoir became skeptical of Impressionism, turning to a more classic style. The painting below is one of only a few Renoir snowscapes, given the French artist's dislike of cold temperatures and snow.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Skaters in the Bois de Boulogne*, 1868, private collection of William Koch

Claude Monet (1840-1926) was one of the founders of Impressionism, painting the people and places he knew best. Monet was a master of the winter scene; he painted more than 100 of them. Apparently, when Manet saw Monet's snowscapes he abandoned any effort to make his own. The painting below is Monet's largest winter painting, depicting a single black bird on a fence in Étretat. At the time, his use of blue rather than a conventional black to depict the shadows on the snow was considered shocking.



Claude Monet, *The Magpie*, 1868, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Childe Hassam (1859-1935) was a pioneer of American Impressionism, one of its most prolific and successful practitioners. His personal credo was that “the man who will go down to posterity is the man who paints his own time and the scenes of every-day life around him.” Many of his paintings depict three urban centers that he loved: Boston, New York and Paris. Snowy scenes were a favorite, as in the painting below.



Childe Hassam, *Late Afternoon, New York, Winter*, 1900, The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY

Paul Signac (1863-1935), along with Georges Seurat, developed the method they called Pointillism. Unlike Impressionism, the Pointillists applied paint in what might be described as a scientific system of dots.



Paul Signac, *Snow: Boulevard de Clichy, Paris, 1886*, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN

Edvard Munch (1863-1944) was a Norwegian painter. His work, *The Scream*, first rendered in pastels in 1893, has become one of Western art's most iconic images. Munch's work was banned in Nazi Germany. Fortunately, most of his work survived World War II. His distinctive style has been dubbed "soul painting".



Edvard Munch, *New Snow in the Avenue*, 1906, Munch Museum, Oslo, Norway

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) was one of the pioneers of Abstraction in Western art. Born in Moscow, he became a French citizen five years prior to his death. Perhaps an apocryphal story, Kandinsky is said to have recognized the power of abstraction upon seeing one of his paintings hung upside down. His work was exhibited as "Degenerative Art" by the Nazis. The painting below is one of Kandinsky's last figurative compositions before turning entirely to abstraction.



Wassily Kandinsky, *Winter Landscape*, 1911, The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia

Another iconic painting, at least to American audiences, is Grant Wood's (1891-1942) *American Gothic*. The artist was part of the Midwestern Regionalism group which flourished during the 1930s and became known for his scenes of his home state of Iowa. Among those is the painting below of snow-covered Iowa cornfields.



Grant Wood, *January*, 1941, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH

Rockwell Kent (1882-1971) was an American painter, muralist, illustrator, printmaker, memoirist, humorist and adventurer. His paintings frequently reflect the influence of Transcendentalism and the mysticism of Thoreau and Emerson. The painting below was based on the landscape from his studio in Vermont from the time that he lived there.



Rockwell Kent, *The Trapper*, 1921, Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, NY

The art of snow has not been limited to painters. The American sculptor, Alexander Calder (1898-1976), known for his mobiles, creatively captured the effect of snow. Between 1948 and 1959, Calder created at least seven Snow Flurry mobiles. One of these is shown below, with the snow flakes highlighted against a dark background. One of these mobiles (1948) is on display at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC.



Last but certainly not least, Peter Doig (1959-present), is a Scottish-Canadian artist, called one of the most renowned figurative painters. Of Doig, the art critic Jonathan Jones said, "Amid all the nonsense, impostors, rhetorical bullshit and sheer trash that pass for art in the 21st century, Doig is a jewel of genuine imagination, sincere work and humble creativity." I had never heard of him before, but I can't wait to see some of his work up close and personal. The painting below is the first of Doig's snowy landscapes, inspired by his growing up in rural Canada and the opening scene of the film, *Citizen Kane*.



Peter Doig, *Charley's Space*, 1991