



Nineteenth-Century European Art

THIRD EDITION

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Frédéric Bazille, *The Family Gathering*, 1867. Oil on canvas, 5' x 7'6" (1.52 x 2.3 m). Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

About the Author

Petra ten-Doesschate Chu is a leading authority on nineteenth-century art. She is a professor at Seton Hall University and the author of numerous articles and essays, as well as several books, including *French Realism and the Dutch Masters*, *Courbet in Perspective*, *The Letters of Gustave Courbet*, *The Popularization of Images* (with Gabriel P. Weisberg), *The Most Arrogant Man in France: Gustave Courbet and the Nineteenth-Century Media Culture*, and *Twenty-First-Century Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Art* (with Laurinda S. Dixon). The recipient of several awards, such as a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, two National Endowment of the Humanities grants, and a Jane and Morgan Whitney Art History Fellowship, Chu is the past president of the Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art and the Co-Founder and Managing Editor of *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*.

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About the Front Cover

Frédéric Bazille, a fellow student of Claude Monet in the atelier of Charles Gleyre, is little known today, for he painted only a handful of works. A soldier in the Franco-Prussian War, he was killed at the age of twenty-nine. *The Family Gathering* was exhibited at the Salon of 1868, where it was seen by Emile Zola, who wrote in a review: "One can see that the painter loves his time, like Claude Monet, and that he believes one can be an artist while painting a frock-coat."

The painting depicts a gathering, on a terrace, of a middle-class family dressed in their Sunday best. Its original title, *Portrait of the *** Family*, indicates that this is not a casual gathering but a family portrait (indeed of Bazille's own family), not unlike the numerous family photographs that were made at holiday get-togethers. The figures are carefully, even stiffly, posed, though clearly with a view to create a sense of informality. They are not lined up in a row, but are freely distributed across the terrace, some standing, others seated, in a seemingly casual fashion. Like Monet, Bazille was greatly preoccupied with the integration of the figure in the outdoor setting, and he paid much attention to the light. His painting beautifully evokes the soft, dappled light of the tree-shaded terrace. Only in the representation of the figures was Bazille less daring than Monet, because he maintained the careful modeling of bodies and faces that he had learned in Gleyre's studio.

To learn more about Bazille and his contemporaries turn to Chapter 16, "French Art after the Commune – Conservative and Modernist Trends."

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