In the Name of Art

The Categorization and Labeling of the Paintings of The Macchiaioli in Paris

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Introduction

The manner in which museums label and present their collections has evolved and changed over the last two and a half centuries. As societies have changed and evolved within themselves and in relation to each other, the modern museum has found it necessary to match some of those shifts. Visitors look to the museum as an institution of authority. Museums have been beacons of culture, sophistication, and knowledge for the past two centuries. Each museum has an opportunity to offer its contents for contemplation and education. Visitors seek within the hallowed halls and galleries knowledge, insight, and inspiration. These sought-after attributes establish the museum as a place of authority, a singular destination in which to experience the world. The credibility a museum attains adds to its authority as an institution.

With the authority and credibility wielded by a museum, visitors have an expectation to be presented with accurate, up to date information. But what responsibility and obligation does a museum bear to present such information? There is no easy solution, if any solution at all, nor will there ever be. To appeal to audiences, to inform visitors, the galleries must be approachable and educational. However problematic it is, categorization is a necessity in the modern museum. Museum curators and art historians have applied genres and labels to certain time periods and styles into which we try to box artists and their work. The terms Western art history uses (Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Romantic, Impressionist, etc.) boxes in broad parameters periods of time for each of those styles. Within these there are of course countless other microcosms of style from artist to artist and even within the artist's work itself such as Picasso's Blue Period in relation to his larger body of work.

This issue of labeling and categorizing in broad strokes and my argument herein come from a personal experience. In 2013 I traveled to Paris for the first time. Entrenched in the City of Light, I toured the museums as any dutiful, cultured tourist feels they should. At the top of my list of must visits was the home of Claude Monet's *Water-lilies,* Musée de l'Orangerie. In addition to Monet's massive canvases, the museum houses just over 150 other works from Impressionist and 20th century masters: Renoir, Cezanne, Gauguin, Picasso, Matisse, and more. In addition to its permanent collection, l'Orangerie has hosted an impressive number of

temporary exhibitions. From Arno Breker in 1942 to "Georges Braque" in 1973 and most recently "Dada Africa" which closed this past February.[1] The diversity of these exhibitions belies the museum's origin as the home of Monet's *Water-lilies*. As an institution of learning, the museum stretched its boundaries with its content. It was here I encountered a temporary exhibit on a group of artists titled "The Macchiaioli, Italian Impressionists?" It stands to logical reason that l'Orangerie, as a museum dedicated to Impressionism, would brand the art of a special exhibition to fit the mold and canon it has created for itself. However, this labeling could prove to be problematic to how that art is then received, interpreted, and understood by the viewer. I will use this exhibition of Italian artist on display in a French Impressionist museum as a case study in the following pages.

I have conducted research through literature review of contemporary museum issues and examination of the exhibition catalog. I have consulted works from art historian Albert Boime and his research into the Macchiaioli and the history of Italy. Additionally, I have conducted a visual analysis of the works on display from the exhibition and compared them with appropriate works from both the French Realists and Impressionists. The images I have chosen to highlight I feel encompass the themes and values held by the Macchiaioli and the Risorgimento. I am also including four examples of paintings not included in the exhibition that in the course of my research I deemed to be notable exclusions as they encapsulate the values and style of Macchiaioli painting. I will elaborate on these later in Chapter 1.2.

The definition of Realism and Impressionism is critical to the understanding of how each group created their art. In the scope of my research, the term "Realism" is defined as presenting the world around an artist as it is, depicting everyday subjects. Painting a landscape of livestock, for example, instead of a theme from classic Greek literature.[2] Likewise, "Impressionism" made use of contemporary subjects matter and scenes although based heavily in the urban surroundings of Paris. Additionally, they style of painting shifted from that of Realism, with looser strokes and a disregard for the methods of the day.[3] While these two styles bleed together and share a common foothold in depicting their immediate surroundings,

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[1] The full list of temporary exhibitions is available at http://www.musee-orangerie.fr/en/article/chronology
[2] Adams, p. 27
[3] Rewald, p. 8.

the values of each group of artists differs drastically which I will elaborate on later in section 1.3 "Realism or Impressionism."

Within this case study, my research question emerged: In what way is the labeling and categorization of art within a museum problematic? Furthermore, how does this labeling and categorization change within the context of the modern museum? And finally, what challenges does the museum face when presenting its collection versus the temporary exhibition? My first chapter addresses the art and lives of the Macchiaioli, positioning them in the context of the socio-political climate in Italy in the mid-19th century. The second chapter addresses how the Macchiaioli exhibition was positioned within the context of the modern museum. Lastly, I introduce the concept of the post-museum from Eilean Hooper-Greenhill and her ideas of the relationship between museums and visitors in order to relate her arguments to my case study.

Chapter 1: Discovering the Macchiaioli

In order to better understand the art produced in the period between 1860-1880 from the group of Italian artists known as the Macchiaioli, it is critical to understand the context in which it was created. The group consisted of numerous artists, all male, originally drawn to Florence to study painting at the Florentine Academy. Slowly they each broke from their formal academic training and began making sketches and painting *en plein-air*. Eleven men, born between 1824 and 1838, made up the core of the group.[4] Of these eleven I will be discussing five of them at length, whose works and lives best illustrate the Macchiaioli movement and values: Giovanni Fattori (1825-1908), Silvestro Lega (1826-1895), Odoardo Borrani (1833-1905), Telemaco Signorini (1835-1901), and Giuseppe Abbati (1836-1868). Of the ninety works compiled for the Parisian exhibition, these five men alone make up over half of them. The works from these men that I have chosen to highlight are representative of the painting techniques, style, themes, and values of the Macchiaioli as artists and as revolutionaries.

In today's labels of art history throughout Europe and in the United States, this group has been called "Italian Impressionists" despite predating the French school by nearly two decades. Although being recognized in the scope of art history at all is perhaps a victory, if only a small one.[5] The Impressionists began organizing as a group in the 1870s after the Franco-Prussian War. Furthermore, the circumstances under which the two groups created their art are vastly different. Members of the Macchiaioli worked and participated actively within the revolution while many of the Impressionist painters avoided or fled conscription.[6] The parallel of painting everyday life can be made with the French Impressionists but the subject matter of the Macchiaioli was gritty while the French indulged their Bourgeois frivolity.

1.1 The Macchiaioli's Painting Revolution within The Risorgimento

In the mid-19th century, the Italy we know today existed as a series of Papal States, Kingdoms, and Duchies. Two of the richest provinces, Lombardy and Venetia, were governed from Vienna

[4] Boime 1993, p. 9.
[5] Boime 2007, p. 366.
[6] Boime 1993, p. 9.

as part of the Austrian Empire.[7] In 1848 Karl Marx's Manifesto sent all of Europe into upheaval. In Italy, this upheaval took the form of the Risorgimento. The term was used consciously as a euphemism to avoid saying "revolution" which carried with it a negative connotation. Risorgimento or "resurgence" carried with it the continuity and continuation of the Renaissance, a time of learning and sophistication.[8]

The objectives of the Italian Risorgimento were to unify the country, expel foreign rulers, and establish a secular and constitutional government. The goal was a unified Italy established on the principals of social, religious, and political equality. A side effect of the fight for religious equality was challenging the papacy. Anti-Catholicism emerged to be one of most unifying principles of the movement. There could be few meaningful reforms without confronting the papacy. The uprisings throughout Europe in 1848 undermined the church's legitimacy in eyes of the people. Its authority was challenged as desire for separation of church and state and religious tolerance grew among the public. The papacy was viewed as obsolete and Roman Catholicism as unsuitable for the democratic age.[9]

It was in the midst of this cultural, political and social revolution of the late 1850s that the group of democratic intellectuals and activists gathered in Florence at the Caffè Michelangelo. These were the men of the Macchiaioli. Their presence in Florence initially was to study painting at the Florentine Academy. However, as Italy was finding its own voice as an independent nation so too were these artists rebelling against their formal, academic painting education. Before moving to Florence, Giovanni Fattori worked as message runner for the Action Party in Livorno in 1848-49. After his arrival in Florence and involvement with the other members of the Macchiaioli he is quoted as saying he was now part of a new conspiracy: the new art movement against the tradition of the Florentine Academy.[10]

The Macchiaioli's break from formal academic painting is merely symbolic of their larger desire to break from Austrian rule of Tuscany. On 27 April 1859, a huge revolutionary street demonstration overthrew the authoritarian regime and paved the way for Tuscany to

[7] Robertson, p. 311.
[8] Grenville, p. 206.
[9] Lovett, p. 11.
[10] Boime 1993, p. 11.

join an already united Italy. The Macchiaioli took part in the planning of this demonstration and its commemoration in painting.[11] Odoardo Borrani painted *The 26 April 1859* (Fig. 1) two years after the battle in 1861. There is no heroic battle scene, an army triumphant in victory. As the title of the work describes, it is the day before the battle, 26 April 1859. A woman sits alone beside an open window, her head bent over her hands as she threads a needle. Italy's tri-color flag drapes across her lap and sewing table, the vivid red injecting the scene with a punch of color. From the rooftop visible out the window, she works in an upstairs room, perhaps an attic. The clandestine nature of the Risorgimento operating in secret rooms. She works to play her part in the revolution that will take place the following day; today it is an unassuming scene, tomorrow a reckoning will come.

The group of Italian artists and revolutionaries named themselves after the term applied to their work: "macchia." This term can be translated to mean "spot", "blotch" or in some instances "stain", or "scrub." The word had been employed to describe their work as a slight, but, according to Albert Boime, the group embraced it as a description of their political ideals.[12] Giovanni Fattori utilized the term to title one of his works depicting peasant life "Le Macchiaiole" or *The Brush Gatherers* (1865) (Fig. 2). The supplication of the root macchia here is a group of peasant women gathering brush and scrub wood. The implication is the idea of that brush and scrub wood to be used to kindle the fires of revolution. Fattori enjoyed the irony and multiple meanings of the term "macchia" and had been historically credited with naming the group because of this painting, however, "macchia" had appeared in an 1862 article ridiculing the sketchy work.[13] Ironically, *The Brush Gatherers* is a relatively clean and precise composition, it simply lacks the sharpest delineations with which academic paintings are usually executed. With a snub to the academic tradition, the scale of this painting is one reserved for history painting measuring 90 by 180 centimeters. What is characteristically macchia of the painting is the subject matter of peasant life in the Italian countryside.

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[11] Boime 2007, p. 376.
[12] Boime 1993, p. 88.
[13] *Ibidem*, p. 107.

1.2 Visual Analysis of Selected Works

Ninety works, including oil paintings, photographs, and letters from seventeen artists were assembled as a travelling exhibition appearing in Paris (10 April-22 July 2013) at Musée de l'Orangerie in a show titled "The Macchiaioli: Italian Impressionists?" and in Madrid (20 September 2013-5 January 2014). While there is certainly interest in comparing the works on display within l'Orangerie's designated exhibition space with those of the French counterparts, this direct comparison was not possible while visiting the exhibition itself. Carrying out personal study and research was the only course of action a visitor had available. In doing so, I found one painting in particular which struck me as an odd exclusion to the exhibition.

Of all the group members, Telemaco Signorini was the boldest and most forward with his social statements, perhaps due to his youth. Despite being one of the youngest members of the group, he was a spokesperson of the group and is reported by art historian Albert Boime to have been something of a scribe. It is possibly because of his brashness that much of Signorini's work focused on the societal inequalities in existence within the Italian hierarchical social structure. He turned his attention to the underside of society, those people whom the upper class had pushed aside or kept down and forgotten about. Included in the social reforms were pleas for penal reforms and better hygienic and sanitary codes for civil institutions. He married the macchia techniques of both sketching and painting *en plein-air* and light study with social commentary in *The Ghetto of Venice* (1860-61) (Fig. 3). The image depicts a series of ragged figures in the street of the ghetto. Despite the street cobbles and a large section of wall bathed in bright sun, the pitiful figures huddle in the shadows, facing away from the light. Only a small sliver of sky is visible between the crowded buildings, giving no escape from the oppressive shadows. While not included in the 2013 exhibition, *The Ghetto of Venice* stands as an early example of the social values held by the Macchiaioli and painting style of heavy contrast between light and shadow.

The painting went on display in the Promotrice exhibition in Turin in 1861. There had been a call for patriotic themed art in preparation for the exposition and one of the Risorgimento's core issues was social justice and political equality. Turin was the capital of the region of Piedmont in northern Italy and one of the most liberal cities regarding Jewish civil

rights. The ghetto of Venice was established in 1516 and was the first enforced zone of residence for Jews in Italy. Over three centuries later, it remained a harsh reminder of the oppression of the Roman-Catholic church. In the liberal city of Turin, Signorini was hopeful the work would receive rabid public praise. Unfortunately, the public's patriotism only extended so far. According to Boime, *The Ghetto of Venice* horrified a conservative portion of the public. It put on display a world they would rather avoid, a reminder of the ongoing subjugation of Jews in Italy.[14] The work was not included in the travelling exhibition although it seems its exclusion was merely a matter of not being able to obtain the piece from the private collector.[15]

One of Signorini's works that was included in the 2013 exhibition was *The Ward of the Madwomen at San Bonifazio* (1865) (Fig. 4). This work is perhaps his most poignant and unsettling commentary, even more so than the previously mentioned *Ghetto of Venice*. In his depiction of *The Ward* light floods the stark room, washing it out with an otherworldly bleached blankness. The female patients stand listlessly or sit against the walls as though trying to shrink into them. Only one agitated figure, trapped behind a table tries to stand, her fist raised in protest, her mouth open in mid-scream. Her body twists and contorts as though she is striving to reach the light flooding the room and yet none of the hapless figures are illuminated by it. Only one woman stands in the light from the window but has her back turned, looking at the floor. In 1888, Signorini visited the prison located on the island of Elba. In 1894, he completed *The Prison of Portoferraio, Elba Island* (1894) (Fig. 5), a painting of smartly dressed inspectors and prison guards examining a lineup of inmates. This piece in particular was not included in the exhibition but bears mentioning if only because it has been considered a companion piece to *The Ward* he completed 30 years earlier, a commentary on the public clamor for penal reform. The artist highlights a similar world of "madwomen" and male prisoners, locked away from society, held in institutions under horrific conditions dependent on social legislation that was tragically lacking. [16] The decision to depict a female ward is a commentary on the helplessness of women in 19th century society. Why then was this piece included while the

[14] Boime 1993, p. 237-239.
[15] Attempts to reach an exhibition assistant coordinator went unanswered. As such the reasons for exclusion of works are strictly my own conclusions.
[16] Boime 1993, p. 295.

image of incarcerated men was not? The struggle for social reforms was ongoing and Signorini's decision to revisit the theme 30 years after painting *The Ward* creates a time stamped set of images to state that not all the battles had yet been won.

The Ward of the Madwomen at San Bonifazio has most recently been a part of a traveling exhibition titled "Museo della Follia" (Museum of Folly) which appeared in Naples' Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore alla Pietrasanta from 3 December 2017 – 27 May 2018. The travelling "Museo" featured Signorini's painting on its Facebook page on 5 April 2017 remarking about the piece: "Until the end of the nineteenth century "going to Bonifazio" was synonymous with "going crazy." The "restless" of the psychiatric hospital of Florence were mentally ill women, often prey of strong agitation and excitement. Signorini portrays them with a pungent realism, which also struck the French painter Edgar Degas." [17] A personal quote from Italian poet Giuseppe Giacosa (1847-1906) who viewed the work: "(it) is a painting that puts on you the shivers of fear, it's a picture I do not like, but that exerts the appalling attractions of the abyss and that reveals in the author a rightness and robustness few are able to reach."[18]

The role of women and their equality to men was an issue wrapped into the fabric of the Risorgimento. Historian Priscilla Smith Robertson states in her book, *Revolutions of 1848, a social history,* that Italian nationalist and journalist Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) acknowledged "...there are no qualifications to women's equality. Politically as in other ways they should be on a level with men."[19] While Signorini highlighted the forgotten, pushed aside, and down trodden women, Silvestro Lega, seemingly more than the other Macchiaioli members, turned his attention to the role of women seen in a more middle class society. From 1862 to 1870, Lega lived with the Batelli family at Piagentina near Florence.[20] The time spent here provided inspiration for landscapes and an attention to domestic issues and the struggle

[17] "Fino alla fine dell'Ottocento "andare a Bonifazio" era sinonimo di "impazzire". Le "agitate" dell'ospedale psichiatrico di Firenze erano donne malate di mente, spesso preda di forte agitazione ed eccitazione. Signorini le ritrae con un verismo pungente, che colpì anche il pittore francese Edgar Degas."
https://m.facebook.com/museodellafollia/posts/1444375382281376?locale2=it_IT Accessed 11 March 2018.
[18] "La Sala delle Agitate al manicomio di Firenze è un dipinto che vi mette addosso i brividi della paura. È un quadro che non mi piace, ma che esercita le spaventose attrazioni dell'abisso e che rivela nell'autore una giustezza e una robustezza quale a pochi è dato di raggiungere" (Giuseppe Giacosa).
https://m.facebook.com/museodellafollia/posts/1444375382281376?locale2=it_IT Accessed 11 March 2018.
[19] Robertson, p. 312.
[20] Calingaert, https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T050056 Accessed 13 January 2018.

for women's equality within the Risorgimento goals. *The Visit* (1868) (Fig. 6) is composed with a formal chilliness, down to the gray tone of the paint. While this may seem to be a commentary on the banality of female life, I found that it also cleverly references compositions of Renaissance Visitation scenes, Fra Angelico's work for instance, *The Visitation* (c.1430) (Fig. 7). The compositions of the figures is similar, with the focus on two of them greeting and embracing each other. Two other figures are present in each painting, one lurking at the edge of the embracing figures and a fourth following up as a rear guard, both wrapped in red capes. *The Visit* is a wry nod to the traditional paintings of the past. While the Risorgimento promised progress for women's roles in society, nothing seemed to be changing.

It is perhaps their shared respect and admiration for women and their value which caused Lega to paint *The Dying Mazzini* in 1872-73 (Fig. 8). This work, while not included in the travelling exhibition, beautifully captures the ideals of Macchiaioli Realism. Lega painted a man at the end of his life, wrapped in a blanket, lying on his bed, hands folded over a bed sheet. He exists on canvas as he did as Lega saw him. There are no added dramatic effects of glorification. The work is currently held in the collection of the RISD Museum who attribute the quote "When Lega exhibited this portrait in Florence in 1873, critics commented on the contrast between its profound sadness and the great vitality for which Mazzini had been known."[21]

Untimely death was an inevitability in a time of revolution. Of all the Macchiaioli, it was Giovanni Fattori who most embraced the military theme. Fattori's study and subsequent painting of *French Soldiers of '59* (1859) (Fig. 9) demonstrates the shift from his academic history painting education to a depiction of the perceived experience. The year 1859 also brought about the self-acknowledged turning point of Fattori's career. Minister of the Interior Bettino Ricasoli declared a series of competitions for local artists. Fattori's sketch *Italian Field After the Battle of Magenta* won him first prize.[22] From this sketch he went on to complete a painting in 1862 of the patriotic battle's aftermath (Fig. 10). While this image may be the most important to the history of the Risorgimento and a cornerstone for the Macchiaioli, it was understandably not included in the exhibition due to its massive size. Although distanced from

[21] https://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/924_the_dying_mazzini_mazzini_morente Accessed 22 January 2018.

[22] Boime 1993, p. 145.

the traditional form of academic painting, the honor of grand scale still remains here with a canvas measuring 232 x 384 centimeters. At nearly nine square meters, the canvas would have been a liability to move and a challenge to display in a temporary space.[23]

Fattori abandoned the traditional pomp and circumstance of academic history painting. There is no heroic charge or clash of opposing armies. No banners streaming above the heads of soldiers. There is no parade with colors proudly displayed bringing victory home to its citizens. The high horizon smolders above the heads of the figures in the foreground. The central focus rests on the ambulance. Any romantic notion of fighting for a cause is erased when faced with the reality of the toll that war takes. The two opposing armies raggedly gather on opposite sides of the road cutting through the middle of the picture. Two nuns seated on the bench of the ambulance do their best to attend to the wounded while bodies of soldiers beyond their help lay crumpled in the dirt. For Fattori, there was no glory in war.

The painting included in the 2013 exhibition that perhaps most succinctly encapsulates the style, time, and attitude of the Macchiaioli is Giuseppe Abbati's *Interior of the Cloister of Santa Croce in Florence* (1861-1862) (Fig. 11). Abbati often made studies of light and shadow, experimented with the ideas of interior and exterior spaces. In *Cloister* he plays with this idea, as a cloister in and of itself is both an interior and exterior space. The church under renovation is Santa Croce in Florence and was part of civic restoration works across the city. The sun, emphasizing the new construction, highlights the white marble blocks. Furthermore, the perspective is set forcing us to look inward at the dark interior. The figure of a worker, his back to the viewer, sits cross-legged leaning against a column, his bright azure cap caught in the sun. This seemingly simple image unites the principles of painting, civic pride, and respect for the laborers and peasantry of Italy.

A theme the Macchiaioli returned to repeatedly was that of the white oxen and red cart. The white oxen motif was introduced by Giuseppe Abbati and the other members of the group latched onto the theme and repeated it throughout their work. These oxen are not only indigenous to the Italian countryside but recall an old Tuscan proverb "whoever has a cart and

[23] See note 7.

oxen does a good business."[24] Within the 2013 exhibition appearing in Paris, three examples of this theme are given: oil paintings from Borrani (1865-66) and Fattori (c. 1867), and a photograph from Christiano Banti (c. 1880) (1824-1904). While there are many more examples of the oxen and cart throughout the Macchiaioli group, representing only three in an exhibition of ninety works concisely conveys the message of the importance of the theme.

The group was represented in the 2013 by a selection of ninety works. The themes shown range from military, social commentary, landscapes, contemporary activities, and everyday people. The exhibition handles well trying to convey the core values, technique, and characteristics of the Macchiaioli. The artists and works I have highlighted here represent a microcosm of the Macchiaioli movement itself. Each of the five men approached the same subject of the Risorgimento from their own personal perspective. They embraced and depicted social themes, politics, revolution, war; but more importantly the people who made up the fabric of Italy.

1.3 Realism or Impressionism?

In order to apply appropriate terminology to the Macchiaioli as either Realists or Impressionists, I must reflect on the core values and standards of both movements. For the sake of this paper, I will only be looking at artists living and working in France as my case study of the Macchiaioli was exhibited in a French museum.

As I mentioned in my introduction, Realism has been defined as presenting the world around an artist as it is, depicting everyday subjects. According to Steven Adams, the Realist movement in France dates from the early 1840s with the artists Courbet, Millet, etc. travelling or moving to the Barbizon region to soak up inspiration from the forest of Fontainebleau and the surrounding countryside. Adams concludes the Realist movement at the end of the 1880s when contemporary art critics hailed the Impressionists as the successors to the painters of Barbizon landscapes.[25]

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[24] Boime 1993, p. 225.
[25] Adams, p. 177.

The two movements overlapped, certainly, as there can never be a clean or clear division between styles and movements. Beginning in the early 1860s, young artists who would later call themselves Impressionists such as Monet and Renoir made their way to Fontainebleau to take inspiration from the countryside but used the forest as a back drop for affluent picnics and gatherings of other bourgeois nature seekers.[26] The forest is no longer painted for its own sake but the subject has shifted from the natural landscape to the fashionable elite. The term "Impressionism" did not come into use until nearly a decade later. What the Macchiaioli and Impressionists share is that both groups adopted their names from reviews which were intended as insults. The "macchia" description from the 1862 article and the Impressionists from an 1872 review from art critic Louis Leroy. Leroy wrote the review of Monet's 1872 work *Impression, Sunrise* twisting Monet's own title to say the work itself was only an impression, a sketch. Rather than be insulted Monet, like the Macchiaioli ten years earlier, embraced the criticism and adopted the term as a titular definition.[27]

With the adoption of a title and an identity, there arises also the acknowledgment that the images on canvas are not real but only impressions, creates a new self-awareness. Now while the artists may have always been aware of this, the application of the term and title "Impressionist" left no doubt that the paintings were simply renderings of reality and not reality itself. The Realists and the Macchiaioli painted images of those scenes surrounding them: landscapes, peasants, soldiers. They presented the images as reality, of things, objects, and events that were tangible, viewable and real. They existed on canvas as they did in real life. The Impressionists also painted subjects that were real but did so in a way that acknowledged the paintings themselves were only representations of the thing itself. This creative freedom led members of the Impressionists to create series of the same subject in varying light and season as each change created its own impression.[28]

The matter of identity and self is a central concern within the work of the Macchiaioli. A strong sense of Italian pride developed during the Risorgimento which helped to inspire paintings capturing its natural beauty. Translating the countryside to canvas brought with it the

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[26] Adams, p. 8.
[27] Rewald, p. 603.
[28] *Ibidem*, p. 289.

opportunity to also depict peasant life. There is a bit of a dig in these peasant scenes at the Risorgimento. When the issue of social change and equality was discussed and fought for it did not include the right for peasants to own the land they worked. The farm workers occupied a certain niche in rural spaces but were not allowed mastery of it.[29] These landscapes also employed one of the major characteristics of the Macchia painting style of chiaroscuro.[30] Scenes flooded with light with deep, contrasting shadows. In these images of rolling grain fields, the patches of darkness can be as small as a dog's shadow or as prominent as a shaded tree line or a shadowed hillside.

The subjects chosen by the Macchiaioli are direct reflections of their surroundings and values. In a fair comparison, so are the subjects of the Impressionists, it is just the surroundings that are so drastically different. The Macchiaioli prided themselves on the depiction of peasants and the lower class. They felt the future of Italy rested on the broad shoulders of the day laborers. While some of the subject matter chosen by the Impressionists was a lower class, Edouard Manet's (1832-1883) *Street Singer* (c. 1862) for example (Fig. 12), there was a large bulk dedicated to boating, swimming, dancing, café life, and other pleasures. Gustave Caillebotte (1848-1894) created perhaps one of the most prolific images of the time with his 1877 *Paris Street, Rainy Day* (Fig. 13). Well-dressed Parisians, armed with umbrellas, in the simple act of strolling their newly cobbled boulevards. While the image may seem simple, it speaks of a time and place where leisure time was in large supply and those who had it could afford to spend it doing nothing more than strolling. To make fair argument, one can call upon Caillebotte's 1875 work *The Floor Scrapers* (Fig. 14) as showing the working class still toiling away at the yoke of manual labor. But is this image a celebration of the working class or yet another statement of the money available to the middle class to renovate and upgrade their own living conditions?

One of Fattori's later works from 1880 stylistically could be considered Impressionist with its short, streaky brush strokes. An ultimately tragic depiction of the effects of warfare, *The Stirrup* (Fig. 15), a horse bolts away from an unseen terror; his rider toppled from his saddle was

[29] Boime 1993, p. 108.
[30] *Ibidem*, p. 118.

unable to free his foot from its stirrup and dragged behind to his death. Interestingly, this painting was executed nine years after the unification of Italy. The commentary, perhaps, is one of embracing the changes brought about by the Risorgimento. Progress is inevitable. To quote Heraclitus "the only constant is change." If a man is not prepared to hold on, respond, and adapt to the changes in society he will be dragged along behind the machine of the nation. Social change, war, political strife, and religious inequality were all issues at hand during the lives of the Macchiaioli. It is impossible to separate these men from the epoch of history in which they lived and created their art.

The Macchiaioli created their art in a time of social and political upheaval. A time of revolution and radical change that created a new nation and idea of identity. The French Impressionists created their art in a new Paris after the tumultuous reconstruction.
The depictions of peasants speak to the importance of a simple life, working the earth. While Manet portrayed the less wealthy and working class of Paris, the images still glorify the lifestyle and leisure of the bourgeoisie. The dancing girls, street singers, prostitutes, and beggars are objects to be ogled, marginalized, or simply ignored. The work of the Realists paved the way for the Impressionist painters but the subject matter took a dramatic turn to the idles of the Bourgeoisie. However, it is works from Courbet, Millet and the rest of the Realists working in 18040s-50s in the countryside of France which correlates more accurately both chronologically and thematically with the Macchiaioli in Florence. The painters of Realism and the Macchiaioli not only embraced but also highlighted the working class. The Impressionists cast them aside in favor of the more pleasing subjects of dancing, drinking, boating, and frivolity.

In stark comparison to the works from Impressionist Paris, is the 1849 work *The Stone Breakers* (Fig. 16) from Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). The image depicts more than the physical struggle of manual labor. The two figures, one old one young, are dressed in the tattered remains of what used to be fine clothes. The garments are torn, stained, and patched. The figures are bent, the older man kneeling in the dust, hammer raised in preparation for delivering a blow to the titular stones. The youth behind him struggles to lift a basket of already broken rubble. This painting is a heartbreaking image of the hardship endured by the current lower class. Likewise, *The Gleaners* (1857) (Fig. 17) from Jean-François Millet (1814-1875)

highlights the struggles of the lower-class female peasants. Three women stand in a field, doubled over plucking the left behind wheat stalks from a newly harvested field. Beyond them in the background of the picture, the fresh wheat stands piled high in bounty and prosperity. Only scraps are left to be picked over by the poor.[31]

Subject matter aside, there is a common link in patronage between the Italian and French Impressionist painters. Art critic Diego Martelli (1839-1896) is featured prominently in the Macchiaioli's work. He was himself a frequent visitor of the Caffè Michelangelo. It was here he met the men of the Macchiaioli and became their patron and supporter. He also appears frequently in the Impressionists' work. Perhaps the most famous portrait of him is the one painted by Edgar Degas (1834-1917) in 1879 (Fig. 18) which, on loan from the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh, was part of the Macchiaioli exhibition. This was the only work from Degas but one of three portraits of Martelli in the exhibition. The other two were from Federico Zandomeneghi (1841-1917) also painted in 1879 and Giovanni Boldini (1842-1931) painted much earlier in 1865. The exhibition also held a painting of Martelli's wife from Fattori painted in 1867. Furthermore, Martelli's home at Castiglioncello was the subject of numerous paintings. Borrani was represented in the exhibition with eight works four of which were images and landscape from Castiglioncello. The impact and importance of their immediate surroundings to the Macchiaioli cannot be over stated.

If a fair comparison is to either be made or pulled apart, both sides must be looked at. I have already cited Lega's The *Dying Mazzini* and compare it now to Claude Monet's (1840-1926) *Camille Monet on her Deathbed* (1879) (Fig. 19). It is perhaps in comparing these two works viewers can most clearly see the contrast between the Macchiaioli's Realism and the French Impressionism. While both depict death, Monet's depiction has a dream-like quality that becomes other worldly. Lega captured what was in front of him: a once vivacious military commander living out his final days, sickly looking and frail, painted in a realist style of the subject being what it is and nothing more. It is hard to put aside emotion and certainly grief can be a powerful factor in the depiction of a subject. The more intimate relationship of the married couple transcends the practicality and realism of a more grounded portrait.

[31] Adams, p. 158.

As the Realists had their Forest of Fontainebleau and the Impressionists their streets of Paris, the Macchiaioli had the Tuscan hills. The Macchiaioli's own personal revolution found its *raison-d'être* in outdoor painting, which would become its main defining feature. The group of painters identified itself with the Tuscan landscapes, awash with sunlight; the clearly defined and deep contrast between light and shade achieved with patches of starkly contrasting color, with great conciseness in the detail within them and created through successive scenes. The repetition of a theme seems characteristic of mid to late Nineteenth century artists. There are of course the numerous studies of haystacks from Monet and his multiple series of water lily studies, the largest of which reside only a floor above where the Macchiaioli's works were hung.

Just as art cannot exist in a vacuum within a museum, it cannot exist in a vacuum of time and place. The period and location in which the Macchiaioli created their art greatly influenced each artist. The changing world in front of them was captured on canvas. The development of a singular nation, the unification of the Italian state immortalized in oil. This confluence of circumstances is impossible to recreate or apply to any other period of art. As such, the circumstances under which the Barbizon School and the Impressionists worked are unique.

Chapter 2: Positioning the Macchiaioli in Museums

As we have examined the position of the Macchiaioli within Italian history and politics, we must further examine them within the context of a museum. As a museum is dedicated to preserving the objects from a period in history, so too do artists preserve the essence of an age. The images they create on canvas preserve an essence of the time. In the case of the Impressionists, Realists, and Macchiaioli they all painted their surroundings whether it be landscape or cityscape, peasants or the Bourgeois. They preserved with them the age in which the paintings were created. Other periods of painting may not have revolved around contemporary subjects, academic historical painting for example, but while the era in which they were created is not reflected, it is instead the value of society. The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of radical change within Europe. We are fortunate in today's world to have a plethora of art immortalizing those changes and values.

As the idea and institution of what a museum could be developed, new strategies were employed and tested. From Willem van Bode to Henry Flower to John Gray to name only a few. Every director or curator had their own thoughts on what was important, what objects to display, what information to convey, and even who the intended audience should be. Divisions were made based on content. As collections grew, they found themselves too large for display in a single institution. For the purposes of this paper I will focus mainly on those museums that became fine art museums for painting and sculpture.

In the context of my research, the question arose of how to label and present the Macchiaioli's art not only outside of Italy but in the setting of today's modern museum. By looking at the evolution of the act of collecting starting as private, individual collections to large public institutions and centers of both enjoyment and entertainment, there is a change in trend of how a museum functioned within society. These changes of form, function, and content affect and influence how the objects within the museum are not only received but also interacted with by the public audience. It is critical to examine the evolution of not only the concept of a museum, which I explore through a comparison with the Boijmans Museum in Rotterdam as researched and written about by Julia Noordegraaf in her book *Strategies of*

Display, but the more specifically the evolution of museums in Paris and of Musée de l'Orangerie itself which housed the Macchiaioli exhibition.

The exhibition brought together a well thought out collection of works to represent the Macchiaioli as painters and revolutionaries. I have chosen images such as Fattori's *The Stirrup* (Fig. 15) and Signorini's *The Ward of the Madwomen at San Bonifazio* (Fig. 4) which create an unsettled feeling of nervousness or anxiety. They are not particularly pleasing images but convey the message of the values and core struggles of mid-19th century Italy. Juxtaposed then with tranquil looking landscapes such as Fattori's *The Brush Gatherers* (Fig. 2), a visitor can begin to grasp the variety of themes within not only the exhibition but also the Macchiaioli themselves, as both individuals and as a group.

2.1 Public Interaction with Museums

The way in which the public has interacted with art and artifacts held in institutions or on display in galleries has changed drastically over the last two-hundred years. If we start by looking at early collections in the *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* a visitor was accompanied by the collector to experience the objects, the visitor's own personal tour guide as it were. When museums became public institutions, information conveyance became a necessity. With the advent tourism in the mid nineteenth century, collections (no longer in the hands of the original collector) were opened up to a public not necessarily educated in the field of what they were looking at.

I relied heavily here on Julia Noordegraaf's research detailing the establishment of Boijmans Museum in Rotterdam in 1849 which serves as a prime example of one of the earliest public museums. In the midst of the Industrial Revolution, the burgeoning middle class sought entertainment for their new found disposable income. Travel and leisure were worthy expenditures but the arrival in a new city required acclimation. The visitation of new sites could be stimulating and invigorating but if confronted at a museum with an onslaught of unfamiliar objects and paintings horrendously confusing. In Rotterdam, the accompaniment of a catalog was necessary to guide visitors as they strolled through the building. The trouble with these guides is they seldom presented unbiased points of view and the authors would pass

judgement of the collection, coloring the visitors' own thoughts, feeling, and reception to the items they were viewing.[32]

The Louvre in Paris was opened, like the Boijmans, as a public institution. In contrast, it opened more than fifty years earlier in 1793 and was the result of the seizure of a royal collection for the people of France. The Louvre collection went on display as a message to the world of the greatness of French art, craft, and culture. With revolution came the advent of a museum for the people. A portion of the royal collection had already been on display in Musée de Luxembourg but was transferred to the Louvre in 1818 when Luxembourg was designated to be a museum for living artists. As time passed, works would be passed to the Louvre to become part of the great French art traditions while other new works would enter into Musée de Luxembourg.[33]

In 1852, at the behest of Emperor Napoleon III, a building was constructed on the bank of the river at the western edge of the Tuileries gardens as a winter shelter for the orange trees, called *orangerie* in French. It was designed to run on a west to east axis. The longest side facing south is made entirely of glass acting as a greenhouse for the plants. The opposite north facing side is windowless to keep out the colder north wind. After the fall of the Third Republic in 1870, the *orangerie* became the property of the state and it continued its use as winter garden and hosted various events until 1922.[34]

The creation of Musée de l'Orangerie is a story of true uniqueness. Seldom does an artist choose the building in which to display his art and thus create his own institution and even rarer is for that art the only work on display. In 1921, Claude Monet chose the converted orangery to house eight custom canvases. The artist had requested to donate decorative panels to the French government as a monument to the end of World War I.[35] Monet's intention with the creation and display of his *Water-lilies* canvases was to create a space for personal reflection, a place for the modern man with "strained nerves" to be reinvigorated.[36] The creation of a museum strictly for the enjoyment and entertainment of the public stands in

[32] Noordegraaf, p. 34.
[33] McClellan, p.200.
[34] This information provided by Musée de l'Orangerie's website.
[35] Hoog, p. 41.
[36] Georgel, p. 2.

contrast to the Boijmans Museum which sought to educate or the Louvre which served as a form of propaganda of the greatness of France. The museum was named "Musée Claude Monet" and opened in 1927 approximately four months after the artist's death. Monet executed his vision of a gift to the state and the creation of an oasis beside the Seine but never witnessed its service to the public.

The works of the Barbizon artists hang predominantly in Paris' Musée d'Orsay. Established in 1986 from a renovated train station, Gare d'Orsay. Although housed in separate buildings, both Musée d'Orsay and Musée de l'Orangerie fall under the same public administration, further strengthening the link between the Barbizon School and Impressionism. Hosting the Macchiaioli exhibition in the venue not housing the Barbizon art creates a fantastic juxtaposition. As I have discussed at length the divides between Impressionism and the Macchiaioli, having the opportunity to compare them under the same roof hopefully creates a discussion of its own. I will later discuss in Chapter 3 the divide between the offered literature and accompanying information between the museum's permanent collection and temporary exhibitions.

2.2 Standards of Exhibition Presentation

While the origin of Musée de l'Orangerie is centered around one artist and his series of *Water-lilies*, the museum evolved over the decades and of course with the implementation of a standardization. For any form of standardization, we turn of course to ICOM, the International Council of Museums, headquartered and founded in Paris. Since its founding in 1946, ICOM has set forth a code of ethics and definitions for how a museum should run and what a museum should be. These parameters, like every aspect of society, have changed and evolved over the last 70 years. It is with regard to society, I turn to a colloquium held in 1983 in London between the ICOM International Committee for Training of Personnel and ICOM International Committee for Museology. While the focus of this colloquium was on the modern museology and the appropriate training methods for entering the field, I feel the ideas of museology and display and labeling are inextricably linked.

G. Ellis Burcaw, professor of anthropology and museology at the University of Idaho, spoke at length about the role of museums in the service to society. He punctuated his paper by calling attention to where he felt the differences were within society as a whole, "the political philosophies that dominate our various societies."[37] Burclaw felt there could be no unity with the field of museology if there was no unity within the world's political systems. He advocated for "one general museology" with "special applications or emphases to suit the subject matter of the museum, and the different demands of different publics."[38] He calls out a difference in philosophies between East and West "more specifically the museums of the socialist countries...furthering the Marxist-Leninist world view."[39] He uses this divide of socialist and capitalist to illustrate a point that countries with so strong a divide of values operate differently within society. A socialist museum offers to its public a force fed acceptance of the "official political and economic stance of the government...the Marxist-Leninist world view..." while the capitalist museum "...means giving people what they want...not what the government decides the public should be given."[40] He concludes with his wish to have "one world-wide museum professions and one world-wide basic museology..."[41]

As interesting of an idea as Burclaw puts forth, it can be nothing more than an idea. If the fear of each society promoting its own values into its museological discourse had any weight, the very existence if ICOM would be negated. Indeed, every society promotes its own values, however subtly, into museum displays. There can never truly be an unbiased display, but efforts can be made to be as neutral as possible. Burclaw's explicit mention of Marxist-Leninist countries is nothing more than a manifestation of the fear Communism had a hold on people. The larger takeaway here is that museological practice and the debate surrounding it will always be in a state of flux. If museums truly are a reflection of the society in which they sit, and if society is constantly evolving, the museum will evolve with it. Publishing a guide for the best practice will only ever be a snap shot of a period of in time. From ICOM's own archive[42],

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[37] Burclaw et al., p. 11.
[38] *Ibidem.*
[39] *Ibidem*, p. 12.
[40] *Ibidem.*
[41] *Ibidem*, p. 13.
[42] http://archives.icom.museum/hist_def_eng.html

the definition of a museum has been changed seven times since the ICOM Constitution was first written in 1946. Society cannot and will not remain still, it is unreasonable to expect museums to do so.

The current definition was adopted in 2007 but at the time of the Colloquium, the definition in effect was from 1974, the third revision of the original 1946 definition. This definition, for the first time, included the phrases "non-profit" and "in the service of the society and its development" both of which have appeared in all subsequent revisions. While the Colloquium's intention was to specifically address the topic of museology and the standards of training to enter the field, the political landscape and state of the society at large during the 1980s could not be ignored.

The societies surrounding both the Macchiaioli, the Realists, and the Impressionists are likewise critical. The members of the Macchiaioli all involved themselves with the political, social happenings within Italy, whether as soldiers or couriers. Whether the surrounding societies influence the art being created, the institution presenting it, or the manner in which the art is perceived by the public the state of the contemporary society is inextricable.

2.3 Social Surroundings and Presentation

If we look at a museum as an inextricable part of the society in which it sits, we must carefully consider the history of Musée de l'Orangerie and its position within Parisian society. In the temple of the man who used the title "Impression" for the first time to describe one of his works, the application of that same label to the Macchiaioli exhibition seems appropriate. But what happened when the exhibition moved to Spain? The entire exhibition underwent a title change. "The Macchiaioli: Italian Impressionists?" became "Macchiaioli. Impressionist Realism in Italy" held from 12 September 2013 until 5 January 2014. The change is subtle but speaks volumes. There is a definite directive as to the style of the painting, but the art is now defined as Realism but with characteristics of Impressionism. Is this title more fitting? It provides a reference point of Impressionism but defines the art itself as Realism, which is perhaps lesser known of a movement. It provides a certainty of what the art is but does not invite discussion or evaluation from the visitor.

The exhibition in Spain was sponsored by MAPFRE, a local insurance company. Does the presence of a corporate sponsorship color the intention of presenting art in a museum, which, since 1974, is defined as a non-profit institution? Furthermore, there is no obligation to present any exhibition while adhering to the ICOM objectives. Does it also influence the reception of the art from the public? Does the knowledge of a third-party sponsor color the reception of the art on display? Is there a larger narrative at work to promote business for such a sponsor? Certainly, these are questions to be asked of any such exhibition one encounters but sadly cannot be answered in this particular case.

The exhibition did undergo organizational changes between its appearance in Paris and then in Madrid. While no changes were made to the content and the works themselves, they were arranged in a different layout as better suited the curator's aesthetic or agenda. A virtual tour of the exhibition as it was presented in Madrid is available on-line.[43] While no such resource is available for the Paris exhibition, an on-line article from Mercury News contains several photos of some of the works along with my own recollection of the layout in Musée de l'Orangerie.[44] The space in which the exhibition was held, Recoletos Exhibition Hall, is a private exhibition space owned by the MAPFRE Foundation which also houses a permanent exhibition of works from Catalan artist Espacio Miró.[45] While the exhibitions are open to the public with the purchase of a ticket, the MAPFRE Foundation remains a private company with no agenda or obligation other than its own.

Contrary to the original purpose of a private collection, today's museums are no longer primarily places for academics to come together to discuss the ideas of the world. They are temples for tourists to gather and see the world's masterpieces of art. While they still serve a function of education, they have become institutions of entertainment, catering to wider variety of the public. They must fulfill the needs of visitors from all backgrounds, providing information, stimulation, and comfort. This observation is by no means a criticism. Museums serve an important function in society. Whatever fears Ellis Burclaw had of a museum pushing

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[43] http://exposiciones.fundacionmapfre.org/macchiaioli/visita_virtual/visita_virtual.html Accessed 2 April 2018.
[44] https://www.mercurynews.com/2013/04/11/travel-paris-art-exhibit-asks-was-there-an-italian-monet/ Accessed 7 May 2018.
[45] https://www.fundacionmapfre.org/fundacion/en/exhibitions/recoletos-hall/ Accessed 2 April 2018.

its own society's agenda, I find them to be unfounded. A museum serves to preserve its society even in its faults. If the museum's narrative becomes a dictatorship that is when we may become concerned. Until then, we must observe and learn from the objects museums have preserved and be conscious of the history they can teach us.

With the establishment of ICOM, museums now had a standard to uphold. If we return again to ICOM's purpose "in the service of the society and its development", each museum must evaluate not only the society itself but also its place within that society. But they must also maintain an openness and remain approachable from an intellectual level. The idea of a "museum" is an institution of learning. They must cater to audiences to make themselves accessible both physically and intellectually. This obligation of education and enjoyment means museums cannot exist within only themselves. Musée de l'Orangerie was founded as a gift to the people of Paris, to reflect upon and enjoy their place in post-World War I Parisian society. The Macchiaioli lived and created their art in the middle of social upheaval and reform. The union of these two surrounding environments, to display the Macchiaioli exhibition in a museum dedicated to enjoyment and leisure, creates a fascinating juxtaposition within itself. When taken with the larger context of the same exhibition appearing in a different city under a different administration, the conversation takes on a new debate of the agenda behind the motivations for displaying the art.

Chapter 3: Today's Museum

The evolution of what it means to be a museum presents its own set of problems. Even with the ICOM standardization of what a museum should be, no two museums will be alike. The image of individual snowflakes is cliché but perhaps most appropriate. Every museum has its own point of view, its own message, and its own challenges. In larger museums, no single visitor can view every item on display. Labeling and categorizing helps the public narrow down what they wish to view and where to spend their time. In the smaller Musée de l'Orangerie the problems become engaging the visitor with a limited collection. All of these factors plus innumerable others lead to decisions being made for the best possible solution of the moment and for the art. The manner in which each museum addresses its own challenges is likewise unique.

As museums evolved and changed as institutions, the way in which the public interacted with them also changed. In the early days of the Boijmans Museum, knowledge was imparted from the museum to the visitor. It was a unidirectional exchange accepted as fact and unquestioned. As recently as 2000, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill proposed an idea of what she calls a post-museum. This new museum concept re-evaluates the relationship and interaction between the museum as an institution imparting knowledge and the visitor as an empty vessel to receive that knowledge.

There is further struggle for a museum to present its permanent collection versus a temporary exhibition. How does Musée de l'Orangerie, a museum designed around a specific set of paintings, cope with displaying the canvases it is known for while still hosting a wealth of temporary exhibitions throughout the year? Furthermore, how does presentation vary between the two gallery spaces in l'Orangerie? I will answer these questions by looking at my case study of "The Macchiaioli: Italian Impressionists?"

3.1 Challenges of Modernity

In today's world, museums face a multitude of challenges catering to its visitors. Comfort, accessibility, enjoyment, and entertainment must all be considered. They must make themselves compatible with advancements in technology, developments in new knowledge and

the application thereof. New displays, renovations, and remodels become necessities for museums to not only attract new audiences but to also hold the attention of their current audiences. These challenges differ with each museum. Every institution has its own unique characteristics that must be taken into account and either worked around or incorporated. It is no different than the challenges faced when labeling, categorizing, and presenting art.

Musée de l'Orangerie offers visitors an audio guide available in ten languages for their permanent collection, boasting in depth commentaries on over 100 "key works." An audio guide is also available for their temporary exhibitions although the language options are limited to French and English. If a visitor's experience is colored by the labeling or information given on a wall label, how much more influential is the information found on an audio guide? Does an audio guide replace the original curator, giving visitors a more personalized tour? As nostalgic as this idea might be, I feel the answer is no. The information in an audio guide is still pre-determined. Language settings can be adjusted and more in-depth information can be provided on a larger selection of works, but there can be no existence of a tailored visitor experience. Certainly, there can be more detail given than the small wall labels but it is only still a subjective snippet of what the curator deems important. A visitor's experience is only going to be what they make of it.

Giovanni Fattori's *The Brush Gatherers* (Fig. 2) is an example of the complex details and intricacies of language applied to not only the title of the painting in Italian, *Le Macchiaiole,* but also the Macchiaioli group itself. Beyond the aforementioned use of the root "macchia" as "scrub" or "brush," the suffix of both words is important: the feminine plural ending of *-e* for the title of the painting depicting female peasants and the masculine plural ending of *-i* for the name of the group consisting only of men. Boime posits Fattori's fondness for irony and double meaning led him to create the painting depicting the Macchiaioli as Macchiaiole, existing in a lower-class circle of artists away from the academic painters.[46] While this subtlety could possibly be inferred by an astute audience, it is never mentioned within the exhibition. There is too much complexity to explain clearly on a wall text or in an audio guide.

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[46] Boime 1993, p. 108.

It is not only technology within museums that is changing. Museums themselves are evolving entities in their own right. For instance, the Teylers Museum in Haarlem, the Netherlands founded in 1784 wonderfully represents the evolving function of a modern museum. As the collection expanded so too did the physical space of the building. Each new wing that was added on reflects the changing value of the particular time. Visiting today one is faced with an overwhelming onslaught of fossils, minerals, stones, bones, and various other natural materials collected and stored within massive cupboards, drawers, and cabinets. An early representation of the *Wunderkammer*. The First Painting Room presents a less confusing scene, providing a pleasant selection of paintings and prints. The paintings on the wall hang there to be admired while reproductions of some of the prints are available for visitors to extract from their over-sized drawers, place on the central table, and study under closer, personal inspection. This physical interaction creates a more personal experience, even if it is conducted with a reproduction. The Teylers Museum's Second Painting Room consists only of paintings to be observed and studied but contains an innovation aimed at visitor comfort: a sofa. In keeping with the theme of oversized furniture the museum seems to favor, a large oval sofa fills the center of the gallery. Visitors, after trekking through the previous decades of rooms, find a bit of respite to sit and contemplate the works in front of them. Constructed in 1893, 109 years after the founding of the museum, the Second Painting Room represents a shift from study to leisure.[47] The Teylers Museum is of course now equipped with a modern café and some additional modern galleries fitted with cushioned benches, but the original rooms create an illuminating experience in the development of museum ideology.

Whether or not there is a direct influence it is in this style of Teylers Second Painting Room which dominates the main galleries of Musée de l'Orangerie. Focused on visitor comfort, large oval benches occupy the majority of the floor space. There is precious little information provided giving way to a predominant emphasis on visitor contemplation and reflection. The interaction with the *Water-lilies* in these galleries becomes personal. While it may hold that one purpose of a museum is to educate, that principal is pushed aside in favor of the enjoyment of

[47] Feenstra, Nynke. "Introduction." Lecture, Museums, Cultural Heritage and Collections, Leiden University, Leiden, 6 November 2017.

the public. This sets the tone for the museum on the whole to be a place of individual experience. The interaction, then, between visitor and museum creates a new experience and definition.

For Musée de l'Orangerie the largest, most prominent galleries are reserved for the blockbuster *Water-lilies.* Naturally, there is no argument that the canvases created specifically for the museum should occupy the grandest space within the building. The positioning gives the canvases the prominence they rightly deserve but this relegates the remaining permanent collection to the sub ground floor with an even smaller corner section reserved for temporary exhibitions. The space serves its purpose as a blank canvas, to transform itself into whatever configuration is necessary to house the visiting art.

In today's world, it is Hooper-Greenhill's concept of the post-museum that is the most important concept in this case. With early museums, like the previously mentioned Boijmans Museum, visitors came to learn, to be educated, to be exposed to things they had never seen. Museums held within them a microcosm of the world through which visitors could gain those worldly experiences. While the visitor did benefit from this and gain knowledge, the experience was entirely unidirectional. The flow of information, the transfer of knowledge, only travelled from the museum (and therefore the curators or directors) to the visitor. The visitor had no opportunity for and equal information exchange, but neither was one expected. Visitors simply accepted the authority of the institution to impart its knowledge.

What Hooper-Greenhill introduces, is the idea that in a post-modern era a new type of museum must emerge. Information exchange can no longer be one sided, it must truly be an exchange. Information, knowledge, and interaction must all flow between visitor and museum, and even between visitor and visitor.[48] Experiencing a museum is a social experience. If it is a reflection of society, it is also a reflection of the interactions within that society. These experiences and interactions do not happen in isolation. It is perhaps always more pleasant to look at a painting or sculpture by yourself, maybe with a friend or spouse with whom to discuss the finer details, but in a public museum this is impossible. It may be the case that in a smaller museum such as Musée de l'Orangerie, a more personal experience is possible. With smaller

[48] Hooper-Greenhill, p. 152.

crowds and fewer people, a visitor can interact (as much as one can in a museum) with an artwork in a more intimate manner than say with the *Mona Lisa* which entertains a constant mob of viewers. That is not to say viewing the *Mona Lisa* isn't worthwhile or a moving experience, it is simply a different experience than if one were to be alone.

This relationship between visitor and art takes a new dimension experiencing art that is unfamiliar. As was my experience with the Macchiaioli exhibition, it was no longer strictly an experience for enjoyment, it introduced a relatively unknown group of artists and their art to be learned from. The exhibition introduced the topic of the Macchiaioli, gave brief context of the Risorgimento but stopped short of any deeper details. Musée de l'Orangerie provided enough information to satisfy those who only sought the cursory explanation and to pique the interest of the curious. This approach fulfills the expectation of education and incorporates Hooper-Greenhill's idea of the post-museum, creating different interactions within the exhibition. It does not, however, fulfill the post-museum idea of a multi-directional information exchange between visitor and exhibition. There were no interactive aspects of the exhibition, nothing the audience could experience on a deeper level beyond reading and listening. The exhibition was presented as a question: "Italian Impressionists?" but there was no opportunity for a visitor to provide an answer. This is not a failure on part of the Musée de l'Orangerie but perhaps a missed opportunity to engage the public in a more inclusive manner.

3.2 Interaction Between Visitor and Exhibition

The creation and use of the Renaissance *studiolo* seems most appropriate with this idea of solitude. Simply by being in the presence of an object, one could learn from it. From holding it, studying it, interacting with it, a person could learn its secrets and therefore learn about where it came from.[49] This personal interaction with objects is still important if less tangible. In today's museum the physical connection with objects is simply impossible. To unlock the secrets of an object in the spirit of a *studiolo* is a thing of the past. Any information or impart of knowledge must be conveyed strictly through written text or pre-programmed spoken word.

[49] Clark, 2013.

Without the benefit of a personal guide to provide explanation, the visitor relies on the information a museum provides. That museum, in turn, must be a trusted source of information. Only with an established canon does a museum become an authority on a subject. But where does the canon and view of authority originate? From the visitor or from the institution? Does a museum have the possibility to create within itself its own legacy and history? Dr. Nana Leigh wrote her dissertation, in part, on the Museum of Modern Art in New York as a museum which created its own image.[50] Leigh's conclusion of MoMA's self-establishment is relevant also to l'Orangerie. Being the home of one of the most famous Impressionist painters, gives Musée de l'Orangerie an authority of not only Monet but Impressionism as a whole unlike any other institution. The acute pointedness with which it exists as an institution provides unrivaled status. Much like Boijmans' and Teyler's gifts of their collections to the state for the betterment of society, Monet wished to gift to the French state pieces of art to celebrate victory in World War I. It chronicled a moment in time, a physical embodiment of victory, a monument for the citizens of Paris to enjoy in their freedom and at their leisure.

Robert L. Hebert's book *Impressionism, Leisure, and Parisian Society* creates an interesting angle on public interaction within a museum. Part of Parisian leisure and society was to attend the Salon, the theatre, cafes, or dances. To walk about the streets of Paris to not only see but to also be seen in what Hebert calls "the theatre of daily life."[51] Parisian life in the late 19th century was an exhibition of its people. The effects and interactions of each person on another is no different from Hooper-Greenhill's idea of a post-museum. While Hooper-Greenhill's idea of a post-museum has only recently come about, perhaps the first Salon de Refusés in 1863 was the beginning of this theory. Featuring works rejected for display by the official Salon jury, the Salon de Refusés created conversation among the viewers and visitors. It created a new way of looking at and interacting with art.

There can never truly be an unbiased presentation of any art. From the moment a piece is hung on a wall or positioned on a pedestal a conscious decision has been made about its

[50] Leigh, 2008.
[51] Hebert, p. 33.

placement and surroundings. Likewise, any categorization and labeling will continue to be biased and problematic. Even categorizing and arranging by years or decades can give an impression that these are the most important or the most representative works from that period. Furthermore, a line must be drawn between time periods. Wings of a building can be divided by centuries, galleries by decades but what about artists whose works span a century line? Does a work painted in 1902 hang in a separate wing from one painted in 1897? Perhaps the 1902 is indicative of a shift of style or technique. Perhaps it is a pristine example of Fauvism while the 1897 work was the artist's early foray into Post-Impressionism. Or perhaps displaying two different styles of painting from one artist side by side is more effective. This depends entirely upon a museum's definition of "effective." And so, however difficult, divides must be made.

The physical divide of space is perhaps the most impactful to a visitor. The temporary exhibition space in Musée de l'Orangerie is in the basement of the building. The only pieces of art within l'Orangerie held in space with natural light are the *Water-lilies*. The remainder of the permanent collection is displayed in the basement space, with a separated gallery reserved for temporary exhibitions. Relying entirely on artificial lighting, the museum can create the desired atmosphere for the art on display. Dim light with brighter spots illuminating the individual paintings enhanced and accented the sunny Tuscan landscapes of Giovanni Fattori giving them more vibrancy. Odoardo Borrani's previously mentioned *The 26 April 1859* (Fig. 1) hung in a darker corner with very little light. Within the painting, the only light source is a narrow rectangular window, illuminating the seamstress bent diligently over her work. By recreating the lighting conditions from the painting in the physical exhibition, the viewer is drawn in to become part of the Macchiaioli experience.

The collection of works selected for the exhibition provide visitors with broad view of the type and style of art the Macchiaioli produced. There are pieces showing peasants, landscapes, social commentary, political intrigue, and national pride. The groupings were organized in the Paris exhibition loosely within their over arcing themes. This grouping technique tightened when the exhibition moved to Madrid, trying to create a heavier impact of the subject matter. Both temporary exhibition spaces were darkened, giving an illusion of light

emanating directly from the paintings themselves. While I have no comparison for the permanent exhibition space at MAPFRE Foundation, the galleries housing Monet's *Water-lilies* are light and bright with white walls and diffused natural light for added softness. These galleries invite visitors to stay, sit, and contemplate. While the dark, windowless temporary exhibition space creates a tenser experience. I do not how the space is altered for different exhibitions but in the case of "The Macchiaioli: Italian Impressionists?" the experience was not conducive for visitors to take their leisure and contemplate the works as they are able to do in the main galleries.

Conclusion

Throughout my research I found using Hooper-Greenhill's concept of the post-museum the most helpful. While unsuccessful in creating a full immersive experience for the visitor, "The Macchiaioli: Italian Impressionists?" exhibition did invite its audience to experience a new group of artists and their art. The presentation of that art as a question created an active thought process for the viewer, for them to think and consider what they were seeing and if it fit the categorization of "Impressionist." Boime's extensive research into the Macchiaioli has proved invaluable, providing insights to the men as individuals as well as their art. Precious little research has been done into this group of artists.

While there are undoubtedly similarities between the work of the Macchiaioli and that of the Impressionists, labeling the Italian artists as "Impressionists" is, as I have discussed, problematic. Without question, it is a museum's obligation to present art in a manner accessible to as broad an audience as possible, to educate, and to introduce new ideas. Drawing parallels between art movements, while difficult, sometimes proves necessary in order to introduce new ideas. Removing art that is so closely tied to a specific nation's history from its context is nothing if not problematic. Presenting it then to an audience who is thoroughly unfamiliar with both art and the historic period it comes from is even more so. Presented with no context the art can only be appreciated as nothing more than paint on a canvas.

For the sake of a reference point in the history of art, the temporary Macchiaioli exhibition called upon the Impressionist movement to indicate late nineteenth century French art. It conveyed to the visitor a time period and a base of expectation. The exhibition's addition of "Italian" recognized the need to qualify the items on display as something different from the expected French artists. While similarities in style exist between the two movements, to label the Macchiaioli with the same title as the French movement is a disservice to both groups. Each upheld their ideals and motivations, each represented their period of history and geography. They did not exist in isolation, but their voices and perspectives are uniquely their own.

The Macchiaioli created their art as a reflection of the issues surrounding them in a society that was in the midst of redefining itself. The French Impressionists created their work

in a society that found itself with leisure time and disposable income. Comparing the two styles of painting shows some similarities in technique but when the larger context is brought into focus the differences are thrown into sharp relief. A better parallel exists to compare the Macchiaioli's art with that of the Realists such as Courbet and Millet. These two groups of artists shared more in common politically, socially, and thematically. Both groups painted what surrounded them: social struggle, the peasantry, agrarian landscapes which further underscore the differences between France and Italy in as simple a concept as natural light. Fattori's *The Brush Gatherers* is composed of bright, saturated colors sparkling in the Tuscan sun. Millet's *The Gleaners* depicts a similar subject but the colors are muted by comparison. The sun is shining, the figures cast shadows behind them, but the overall light is grey and pallid. Unfortunately, this side-by-side comparison was not possible during the exhibition. *The Gleaners* is housed in Musée d'Orsay which sits 700 meters from Musée de l'Orangerie.

Holding the exhibition "The Macchiaioli: Italian Impressionists?" at Musée de l'Orangerie afforded an opportunity for the museum's directors and curators to create a new interaction with its visitors. Presenting this art out of context was a challenge that met with a modern way of thinking and a post-museum type presentation. To label them as Impressionists in an Impressionist museum creates an image in a visitor's mind. The simple inclusion of a question mark drastically changes the tone of the exhibition. It is an invitation to think, to ponder, to question further. It is then the responsibility of the visitor to think critically about the information presented. The relationship between museum and visitor has evolved over the centuries and will continue to do so. The conveyance of knowledge can no longer be unidirectional nor should it be. The labeling, titling, and categorization of art by a museum may be influenced by society but a visitor's experiences in society will likewise influence their reception of that art. The title of the exhibition including a question mark changes the value of the exhibition. Without that simple piece of punctuation, the title would have been a directive, a dictation to the viewer what they should think about these works of art. By presenting the label as a question, the exhibition opens itself up to interpretation from each visitor. However problematic the titling and labeling of the Macchiaioli may seem, the exhibition created a dialogue and in the world of today's museums that is precisely the point.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Odoardo Borrani, *The 26 April 1859,* 1861, oil on canvas, 75 x 58 cm, private collection.

Figure 2: Giovanni Fattori, *The Brush Gatherers,* 1865, oil on canvas, 90 x 180 cm, private collection.

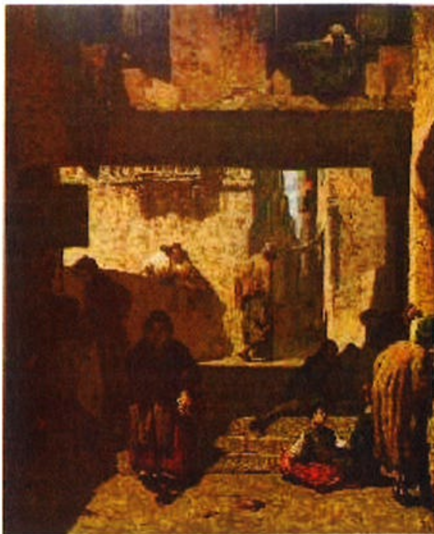

Figure 3: Telemaco Signorini, *The Ghetto of Venice,* 1860-61, oil on Canvas, 64 x 57 cm, unknown.

Figure 4: Telemaco Signorini: *The Ward of the Madwomen at San Bonifazio,* 1865, oil on canvas, 65 x 59 cm, Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Ca'Pesaro, Venice.

Figure 5: Telemaco Signorini, *The Prison of Portoferraio, Elba Island,* 1894, oil on canvas, 58 x 81 cm, Galleria d'Arte Moderne, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

Figure 6: Silvestro Lega, *The Visit,* 1868, oil on canvas, 31 x 60 cm, La Galleria Nazionale, Rome.

Figure 7: Fra Angelico, *The Visitation*, c. 1430, tempera on panel, Diocesan Museum, Cortona.

Figure 8: Silvestro Lega, *The Dying Mazzini,* 1872-73, oil on canvas, 76.5 x 100.3 cm, Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, no. 59.071.

Figure 9: Giovanni Fattori, *French Soldiers of '59,* 1859, oil on panel, 15.5 x 32 cm, Matteucci Institute, Viareggio.

Figure 10: Giovanni Fattori, *Italian Field after the Battle of Magenta,* 1862, oil on canvas, 232 x 384 cm, Galleria d'Arte Moderne, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

Figure 11: Giuseppe Abbati, *Interior of the Cloister of Santa Croce in Florence,* 1861-62, oil on cardboard, 19.3 x 25.2 cm, Galleria d'Arte Moderne, Palazzo Pitti, Florence, no. Giorn.41.

Figure 12: Edouard Manet, *Street Singer,* c. 1862, oil on canvas, 171.1 x 105.8 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, no. 66.304.

Figure 13: Gustave Caillebotte, *Paris Street, Rainy Day,* 1877, oil on canvas, 212.2 x 276.2 cm, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, no. 1964.336.

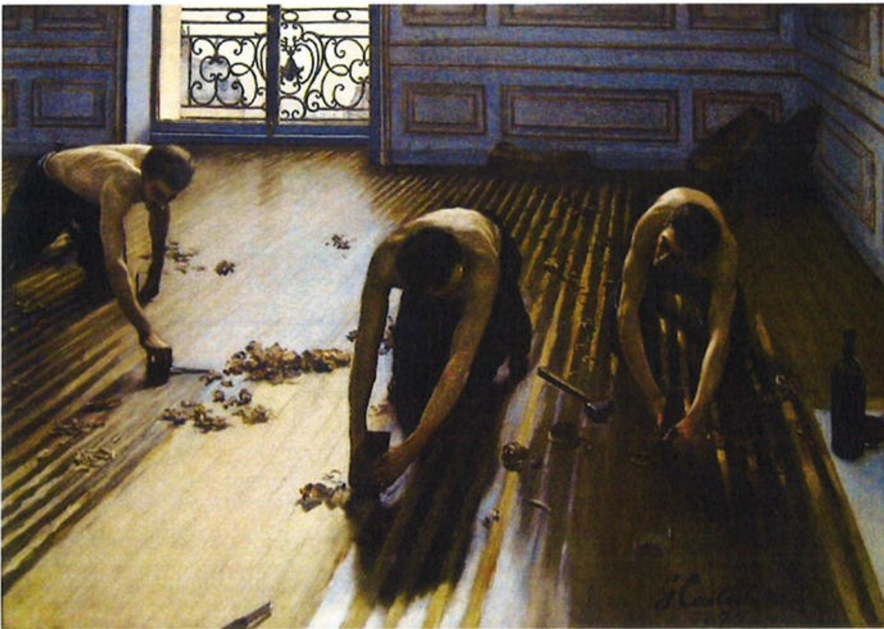

Figure 14: Gustave Caillebotte, *The Floor Scrapers,* 1875, oil on canvas, 102 x 146.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, no. RF 2718.

Figure 15: Giovanni Fattori, *The Stirrup,* 1880, oil on canvas, 90 x 130 cm, Galleria d'Arte Moderne, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

Figure 16: Gustave Courbet, *The Stone Breakers,* 1849, oil on canvas, 170 x 240 cm, destroyed during WWII.

Figure 17: Jean-François Millet, *The Gleaners,* 1857, oil on canvas, 83.5 x 110 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, no. RF 592.

Figure 18: Edgar Degas, *Diego Martelli,* 1879, oil on canvas, 110.4 x 99.8 cm, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh, no. NG 1785.

Figure 19: Claude Monet, *Camille Monet on her Deathbed,* 1879, oil on canvas, 90 x 68 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, no. RF 1963 3.

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