



Santa Barbara Museum of Art presents

A Legacy of Giving: The Lady Leslie and Lord Paul Ridley-Tree Collection

July 7 – November 3, 2024

McCormick Gallery



Paul Signac, *Herblay – The Riverbank (op. 204)*, 1889. Oil on canvas. Gift of Lord and Lady Ridley-Tree, 2001.65

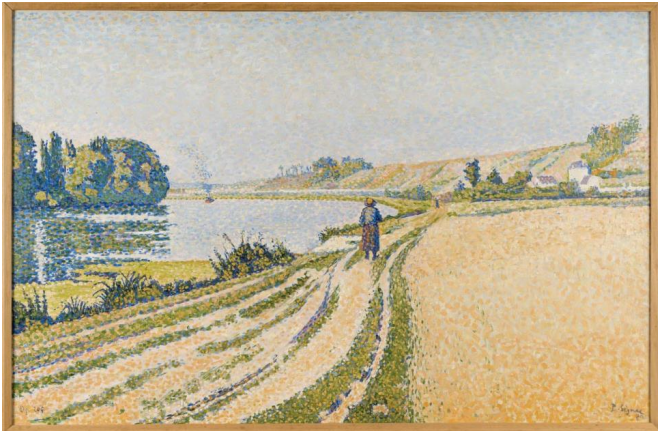
For over 25 years, Lady Leslie and Lord Paul Ridley-Tree generously supported the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in its mission “to integrate art into the lives of people.” They understood that acquiring art and building on the museum’s already strong holdings was essential. Through outright donations or partial underwriting, they brought 58 artworks into the Museum’s collection, most of which came as a recent bequest from Leslie Ridley-Tree.

This exhibition focuses on the Ridley-Tree’s gifts of primarily nineteenth-century British and French paintings. It will contain artworks by such luminaries as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot, Paul Signac, Claude Monet, Childe Hassam, Alfred Sisley, Gustave Caillebotte, Camille Pissarro, Henri Fantin-Latour, Eugène Boudin, and Gustave Courbet. The Ridley-Trees were particularly taken with the lush landscapes of the French Barbizon School (active 1830-1870), who painted the forests of Fontainebleau not far from Paris. Artists such as Charles François Daubigny, Narcisse Diaz de la Peña, Charles Émile Jacque, Francois Auguste Ortman, and Théodore Rousseau depicted ponds fringed with vegetation, productive farmland, and forests with sturdy hardwoods, like oaks and chestnuts.

Beyond celebrating these gifts, this presentation uses them as educational tools to learn about a turbulent century whose dizzying changes in technology and culture set the stage for today. Using the collection this way fits Ridley-Tree’s belief in education—and art education specifically—to open minds to new perspectives.

These artists illustrate five areas of nineteenth century life that carry into our time. First, modern day environmental conservation had an early moment with the Barbizon artists, and tourists petitioned the French government to turn the Forests of Fontainebleau into a preserve and protect its varied hardwoods from being replaced by a single species of pine tree. Second, against the background of rapid industrialization with railroads, factories, and cities growing and expanding across France and Great Britain, artists often sought out vestiges of older—and soon-to-disappear—ways of life, either eliminating these modern incursions or putting them on the periphery. Third, this collection demonstrates how women like Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot managed the difficult task of making careers for themselves by turning to the subjects of women, motherhood, domestic life, and children. Fourth, other artists, such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti or Frederick Leighton, sought refuge in fantasies of medieval life or ancient Rome rather than confront the upheavals of their own times. Finally, there were commercial galleries regularly exhibiting and selling artwork, highly publicized exhibitions at annual salons and world's fairs, and newspapers reporting on all of this to stir up interest in controversy.

Signature Images:



Herblay - The Riverbank (op. 204)

Artist: Paul SIGNAC

1889

oil on canvas

overall: 23 3/4 x 36 in. (60.3 x 91.4 cm)

frame: 33 x 45 7/8 x 2 1/2 in. (83.8 x 116.5 x 6.4 cm)

Gift of Lord and Lady Ridley-Tree

Object Number: 2001.65



Sara in a Bonnet

Artist: Mary CASSATT

pastel

overall: 23 3/4 x 17 3/4 in. (60.3 x 45.1 cm)

SBMA, Bequest of Leslie L. Ridley-Tree

Object Number: 2023.25.38



The Merciless Lady

Artist: Dante Gabriel ROSSETTI

1865

watercolor and bodycolor on paper

overall: 12 x 12 in. (30.5 x 30.5 cm)

frame: 21 x 19 3/4 in. (53.3 x 50.2 cm)

SBMA, Bequest of Leslie L. Ridley-Tree