

For SBMA docents and staff use only

Lady Leslie (1924-2022) and Lord Paul Ridley-Tree (1916-2005) were philanthropists who gave to many organizations in Santa Barbara. The Ridley-Tree Cancer Center at Sansum Clinic and Westmont Ridley-Tree Museum of Art are but two examples. They deeply believed in the transformative power of education, especially art education. Over the past three decades, the Ridley-Trees were fully or partially responsible for adding 54 artworks to the museum for this purpose. Moreover, Leslie was the driving force behind the Ridley-Tree Education Center at McCormick House, a satellite of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art on Santa Barbara Street that hosts art classes and summer art camps.

In the spirit of art education, these artworks are treated as windows into the past to show that 19th-century artists confronted issues relevant today. With 33 artworks gifted by the Ridley-Trees, this exhibition explores the adverse impact of humans on the environment, including deforestation; the changes wrought by industrialization and a population explosion; the professional difficulties women artists faced; and escape from the unpleasant present through fantasies about medieval life or imagining alternative worlds.

This exhibition is made possible through the generosity of the SBMA Women's Board, SBMA Dead Artists Society, the Elizabeth A. Chalifoux Fund for the Museum Collection, and Mullen & Henzell, L.L.P.

INFOGRAPHIC TIMELINE DETAIL



A legacy of giving

Though they did not first meet and marry until later in life, Leslie and Paul Ridley-Tree's relationship became the basis for some of the most fruitful philanthropy in recent Santa Barbara history. Locals know the Ridley-Tree name from its appearance on buildings and in connection with charitable organizations, but may not know the extent of the gifts the couple made to the community. This timeline provides just some of the highlights of Leslie and Paul's history of generosity to the people of Santa Barbara, of which the 19th-century artworks hanging in these galleries are also a part.



1988

Leslie and Paul Ridley-Tree are married on February 14 and settle in Montecito.

1990

The Ridley-Trees endow a scholarship fund at SBMA to support qualifying children and families' participation in art classes and workshops with the Museum.

1991

The Ridley-Tree Education Center at McCormick House opens. Located at 1608 Santa Barbara Street in a historic home once owned by Stanley and Katharine Dexter McCormick, it provides a space for SBMA to host art classes, workshops, and other educational events.



1994

Leslie Ridley-Tree becomes President of the SBMA Board of Trustees. During her two-year tenure, she spearheads the addition of the Jean and Austin H. Peck, Jr. Wing, which today houses the Museum Store, the Family Resource Center, and the Ridley-Tree Gallery. She also initiates the Teens for Teens program, which provides local high school students a chance to create museum programming for their peers and gain experience in museum education.

1998

The SBMA's Peck Wing opens, and with it the brand-new Ridley-Tree Gallery. Selections from the Ridley-Trees' spectacular collection of 19th-century French paintings are displayed as part of Santa Barbara Collects: Impressions of France.

1999

The Ridley-Trees receive SBMA's Wright S. Ludington Award, presented to a member of the SBMA family in recognition of unique and distinguished service.* The same year, they make a lead gift to the Santa Barbara Zoo's Discovery Pavilion, which includes the Ridley-Tree Animal Kitchen, where meals for the Zoo's animals are prepared.

2000

Leslie Ridley-Tree becomes a member of the honorary Board of Directors of Girls Inc. of Greater Santa Barbara, through which she supported educational programming for girls beginning as early as 1990.

2005

After Paul Ridley-Tree's passing, Leslie Ridley-Tree takes over as CEO of his aircraft parts company, Pacific Air Industries.

2010

The Westmont Ridley-Tree Museum of Art opens on Westmont College's campus in Montecito.

2011

Leslie Ridley-Tree makes a significant donation towards the construction of the Lurla Education Center at the Music Academy of the West.

2013

The Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree Endowment Fund is established at UC Santa Barbara to benefit outstanding students facing a barrier to education, continuing Leslie's support for students in need at UCSB since 1998.

2017

The Ridley-Tree Cancer Center opens at Sansum Clinic. The same year, Leslie's support of Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics allows them to pay off the mortgages on the Eastside Neighborhood Medical and Family Dental Clinics.

2020

Leslie makes a major gift to the Santa Barbara Symphony, an organization for which she and Paul underwrote many concerts and programs over the years.

2022

Leslie Ridley-Tree passes away at the age of 98.

SECTION TITLES AND DIDACTICS

All text panels to be 2' - 3' wide

Factories and Farms

In Britain and France, the population increased exponentially in the 19th century. Cities like Paris and London grew rapidly: Paris went from around 785,000 people in 1831 to around 2,450,000 by 1891. Meanwhile, factories sprung up, the air was polluted, pristine waterways were fouled, and poor sanitation spread disease. Against this background, railroads sped artists and day-trippers to the countryside in an early form of mass tourism. Rural settings became nostalgic symbols of a way of life on the verge of disappearing. In fact, some of the paintings displayed here, such as the landscape by Paul Signac, selectively hide nearby industry. Others, like Claude Monet's view of the Seine, give no indication of pollution. Childe Hassam's picture of Pont Aven shows a formerly remote region of France that had been newly opened to tourism and become popular with artists seeking what they considered authentic subjects.

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Barbizon

About 35 miles from central Paris is Barbizon, a small village in the royal Forest of Fontainebleau. By the 1830s, artists ventured there to paint, and the arrival of the railroad to nearby towns eventually brought even more artists and day tourists. The artworks displayed in this section depict ancient groves of oaks, beeches, and birches set amid large areas of brush, stones, heather, and the occasional shallow pond. Also in the 1830s, the forest's managers began planting large stands of Scotch or Baltic pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)—row upon row of identical trees. In 1852, out of horror at this development, painter Théodore Rousseau successfully petitioned Napoleon III, asking for parts of the forest to be allowed to age without felling or intervention. Among the earliest instances of government-mandated preservation, this happened nearly 20 years before Yellowstone became a national park.

I don't think there has ever been a man who treated a woman as an equal, and that's all I would have asked for—I know I am worth as much as they are. —Berthe Morisot

SECTION TITLES AND DIDACTICS

This didactic on red wall

Forging a Career

In the 19th century in Europe and the United States, women were admitted to some art schools but denied access to sketching live models and discouraged from pursuing art as a career. Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot were key members of the Impressionist group. Both exhibited in most of the eight Impressionist exhibitions between 1874 and 1886—Morisot in seven (more than even Monet), and Cassatt in four, initially at the invitation of Edgar Degas. While both steered toward subjects like children and family life to which they had access, they are seen today as more inventive and experimental than the men. Cassatt was part of the first wave of American feminism in the 1840s and 1850s and became a suffragist, campaigning for women to have the right to vote. Morisot, while not politically active, did write about the misogyny she experienced. Both had significant careers, obtained critical recognition, and had books written about them during their lifetimes.

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Brand Management circa 1870

Gustave Courbet understood long ago what many social media influencers bank on today: negative publicity is still publicity. The inherent quality of a commercial product or an artwork is not necessarily enough to make it successful. Courbet participated in the Commune, a short-lived socialist takeover of Paris in 1870, and he spent six months in jail. Surprisingly, he speculated that his notoriety would increase the going price of his paintings.

In 1869, Courbet and Narcisse Diaz de la Peña summered together at Étretat, a beach town on the English Channel. Commercially successful, Diaz changed his style to fit the market, and Courbet had learned that seascapes could be quickly painted and sold. These two artists with a knack for publicity and generating sales both landed on a similar landscape format that appealed to collectors. This shared approach was dominated by deft brushwork, with a hard-to-discern horizon line, and filled with brooding emotion.

When I am no longer controversial, I will no longer be important. —Gustave Courbet

SECTION TITLES AND DIDACTICS

History & Fantasy

Other sections in this exhibition begin with an observation about the real world. This section, however, is more representative of 19th-century art, with its mythological and historical subjects, and its imposed stereotypes about femininity. This art holds the forces of modernization and change at bay. Cloaked in medieval revivalism, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Merciless Lady* shows a young man entranced by the specter of a dead woman at the expense of the living one tugging at him. Finally, by invoking angelic imagery, Henri Fantin-Latour affords the controversial French composer Hector Berlioz the accolades that were denied him in life.