

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide

a journal of nineteenth-century visual culture

Alexis Clark

exhibition review of

Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau

Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide 16, no. 1 (Spring 2017)

Citation: Alexis Clark, exhibition review of *Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau*, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2017), <https://doi.org/10.29411/ncaw.2017.16.1.10>.

Published by: [Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art](#)

Notes:

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Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau

J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

June 21–September 11, 2016

Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen

October 31, 2016–January 8, 2017

Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau.

Scott Allan and Édouard Kopp.

Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2016.

224 pp.; 140 color and 15 b&w illustrations; checklist, references cited, index.

\$49.95

ISBN: 978-1-60606-477-1

“Where to begin?” This question typically precedes a litany of complaints: What about this? Or what about that? Yet with *Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau*, this question should be read as the sincerest of compliments to J. Paul Getty Museum curators Scott Allan and Édouard Kopp, together with Line Clausen Pedersen (Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek). *Unruly Nature* provided its visitors with a rich myriad of entryways into the processes and practices of Rousseau, whose work, as shown throughout the exhibit, harmoniously synthesizes painting and drawing (fig. 1). In reference to Rousseau’s dalliance between these media, “unruly” indeed aptly describes his elision of proscribed boundaries in art and art history; but it in no way describes this exhibition’s careful curation.



Fig. 1, Entrance to the J. Paul Getty Museum West Pavilion with signage for *Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau*. [\[larger image\]](#)

To date, there have been few exhibits wholly dedicated to Rousseau. Since the centenary of his death in 1967, most of them have been driven by New York-based dealers, thus making *Unruly Nature* an important monographic exhibition to present the artist on the West coast. [1] Otherwise, Rousseau’s work has been included in exhibitions mapping the artistic terrain of Fontainebleau: *In the Forest of Fontainebleau: Painters and Photographers from Corot to Monet* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2008) and *La forêt de Fontainebleau: un atelier grandeur nature* (Musée d’Orsay, 2007). At times, though, this well trodden territory has seen Rousseau and his Barbizon compatriots pushed to Impressionism’s long shadow, for instance *The Origins of Impressionism* (Grand Palais, Paris

and Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994–95) or *Inspiring Impressionism: Daubigny, Monet, Van Gogh* (National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, 2015).

Occupying four rooms in the Getty's West pavilion, *Unruly Nature* included drawings and paintings seemingly selected because they demonstrate Rousseau's common formal approach to differing media (fig. 2). The artworks on exhibit here could be alternately appreciated as painterly drawings or sketchy paintings, with some of the drawings more detailed than their painted counterparts. In this way, *Unruly Nature* used Rousseau's oeuvre to raise questions around the distinction between works regarded as finished and those classified as complete.^[2] At stake here was how, historically and today, the boundary between finished versus complete has served as a useful (or not) way in which to classify works of art. As the Getty's curatorial team demonstrates, where Rousseau considered some paintings ready-for-exhibition, critics exasperatedly complained that the same works lacked the necessary *fini* (degree of finish) for display at the Salon.



Fig. 2, Entrance to *Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau*, exhibition at the J. Paul Getty Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

A short but smart panel at the exhibition's outset introduced Rousseau as the epitome of innovation: "one of Europe's preeminent landscapists," "one of the Romantic era's great independents," and, with regard to the destination of the Forest of Fontainebleau, one of its "pioneering artists" (fig. 3). This unabashed admiration for the painter-draughtsman signals the underlying *raison d'être* for this survey of his output. Rousseau, as Timothy Potts and Flemming Friberg write in their foreword to the accompanying catalogue, possessed an

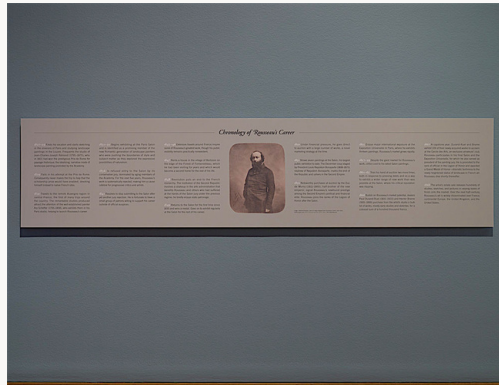


Fig. 3, Wall panel with biographical timeline on Théodore Rousseau, Installation shot of the exhibition at the J. Paul Getty Museum. [\[larger image\]](#)

incredibly varied and experimental artistic practice . . . [that] exemplifies like no other's the vitality of mid-nineteenth-century French landscape art. Greatly esteemed in the decades after his death, Rousseau came to be neglected as tastes shifted in the early twentieth century, and to this day he remains an unappreciated figure. While scholarly and curatorial interest in his work—and in that of the so-called Barbizon School, of which he was a principal figure—has been steady since the 1960s, there persists the sense that his pictures are more retrograde than modern in their nostalgic vision of rural life and of uncultivated nature . . . (ix).

The Rousseau initially presented, then, was a Rousseau at once singular in his production and respected in his time, but erroneously underappreciated and sidelined in the history of art; a Rousseau retrieved by, but also subsumed by, studies of the Barbizon School; and a Rousseau marginalized due to the persistence of modernist teleologies that push all landscape painting's nineteenth-century trajectory towards the climax of Impressionism. On first impression, *Unruly Nature* may seem to have had the makings of the familiar romanticized artist's mythologies. Indeed, already in his own time, as Kopp has acknowledged in his catalogue essay, Rousseau was mythologized "as a lonely, misunderstood, and persecuted genius" (45).

Importantly, though, the Getty's in-depth examination of Rousseau's formidable work neither trafficked in these romanticized myths nor crusaded to rescue an artist from art historical oblivion (worthy though such crusades may be). What appeared on its walls instead interrogated the artist's technical dexterity and versatility. The unruliness of Rousseau's oeuvre challenges us to rethink how objects have been classified by medium and by *fini*. His vast oeuvre encompasses a panoply of media, from oil painting (on canvas, paper, and panel) to watercolor, charcoal, pencil, and pen and ink. This impressive outlay, as Kopp summarizes in his essay on the drawings, means that his art becomes "most innovative in terms of their mark-making and technical hybridity, as they tend to blend freely graphic and painterly media" (11).

The inclusion of painting and works on paper also led *Unruly Nature*'s curators to reflect on other ways in which Rousseau may be understood as "unruly." His production encompassed both public Salon pictures and private *tableautins* (small paintings), both small and large scale, and both the finished and unfinished, (and all the stages in between as Allan has ably shown in a catalogue essay) (23–44). Failing to win the Prix de Rome, he instead traveled and painted throughout France, trekking around the valley of the Seine and Auvergne to the Jura and then to Les Landes and, of course, the Forest of Fontainebleau and village of Barbizon where he settled. His ties to art historical periods and artistic schools spanned his initial training in the Neoclassical landscape tradition to his embrace by Romantics and Realists alike. His career experienced ups and downs, with his success in official circles early in the July Monarchy followed by refusal from the Salon late in that Monarchy, only to culminate in his celebration in the Second Empire at the 1855 and 1867 Exposition universelles. And his exhibition practice combined the mainstay of the Salon with auctions and early collaborations with dealers Paul Durand (and thereafter his son, Durand-Ruel) and Hector Brame, who diversified his market strategies and disseminated his work far and wide to international collectors throughout France, continental Europe, and the United States.^[3] For all these reasons, then, Rousseau remains unruly, which makes it all the more remarkable that Allan and his fellow curators have successfully narrated a coherent and comprehensive story on the walls of four rooms.

In its attempt to impose a system of order onto that oeuvre, each of the exhibition's rooms roughly corresponded to a decade in the artist's career, from the 1820s and 1830s through to the 1860s. However, even with that clear chronological organization scheme and each work's detailed object label, the curators seemed more keen to spark visitors' appreciation of Rousseau than didactically demanding they appreciate him in a certain way. Encouraging this appreciation on multiple levels—from marveling at his technical skill to admiring his intimate depictions of the natural realm to closely scrutinizing his processes and practices—may be seen as one of *Unruly Nature*'s main aims and accomplishments.

The first room documented graphic and painterly studies made in the 1820s and 1830s. Early on, critics expressed concern with his facture, complaining about "greasy brushwork" and "tormented, vigorously hatched touch"; later, in the early 1850s, that criticism turned from his mark-making to his lack of finish (45, 52). With the early painting, *A Village in the Valley*, visitors seemed to stand alone, psychologically and physically distant from the panoramic landscape that unfolds before them through a series of horizontal registers (the pathway, the fence, the rooftops, and the distant hills) (fig. 4). The viewer then has been left to contemplate its fields and pastures as they descend into this valley dotted with trees. More serene than tormented in its technique, *A Village* blends painterliness of the brushy grasses with the spindly posts of the rickety fence that seem almost drawn in ink onto the scene. A charcoal of the same site as the *Village*, the *Valley of the Seine* wields its gradations of dark black and lighter, almost silvery charcoal to create an atmospheric landscape with the thin spires and towers in the distance seemingly drawn on with pencil (fig. 5). The object labels here also drew attention to how the artist's technical processes imitated other media. His *Valley of the Seine* with its tonal treatment of the landscape resembles lithography, for instance; his pen and black ink in the *Loing River* etching.



Fig. 4, Théodore Rousseau, *A Village in the Valley*, late 1820s. Oil on paper mounted on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo courtesy Wikipedia Commons. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 5, Théodore Rousseau, *The Valley of the Seine*, 1834. Black chalk and graphite on paper. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon. Photo courtesy of the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon. [\[larger image\]](#)

From this introduction, the second room further demonstrated Rousseau's work to be at once precise and painterly, studied and spontaneous. While inspired by landscapes like those of Jacob van Ruisdael and Claude Lorrain and by the introduction of English landscapes to France like those of Richard Parkes Bonnington and especially John Constable, Rousseau painted in the tradition of *paysage champêtre* (rustic landscape), learned under Jean Charles Joseph Rémond. Melding those influences and that instruction, he drew *Under the Birches*, *Evening* and painted its accompanying *Evening (The Parish Priest)* (fig. 6). This painting, with its bold stretch of blue sky and oaks painted in complementary colors of crisp orange and scintillating gold, appears markedly different from those surrounding it, though each could be loosely classified as romantic. Compared with this almost crystalline scene, *A Swamp in Les Landes* with its marshes with clumps of indistinct earth-toned reeds and grasses has been painted in varied brushstrokes, from small flecks of white highlighting pools of water to broader sweeps to indicate windblown vegetation (fig. 7). That all these works were produced in the same period means that Rousseau could work as capably in expressive as well as more restrained styles, and that, even those paintings that seem so spontaneous now, developed from extensive preparatory work that often looks more refined and detailed than its painted counterpart.



Fig. 6, Installation shot of *Unruly Nature* (left to right): *Evening (The Parish Priest)*, 1842–43. Oil on panel. Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo; *Under the Birches, Evening*, 1842. Black chalk on brown wove paper. Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo; and *Edge of the Forest, Sun Setting*, 1845–46. Oil on canvas. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 7, Théodore Rousseau, *Swamp in Les Landes*, 1846. Oil on panel. The Walters Museum of Art, Baltimore. Photo courtesy of The Walters Museum of Art. [\[larger image\]](#)

As Allan and Kopp relate, Rousseau's work from nature blurred the separation between the *étude* (study) and the *tableau* (painting), as did his embrace of such romantic principles as "artistic freedom and individuality. It [Romanticism] located the authentic sources of art in the artist's personal feelings, sensations, or impressions on the one hand, and in the seemingly inexhaustible natural world on the other."^[4] This second room culminated in his romantic tour-de-force, *Mont Blanc Seen from La Faucille, The Storm* (fig. 8). Similar to Claude with its broken, splintered trees treacherously askew, Rousseau has plied brushstrokes of varied sizes—from the expansive to the minute—to depict a foreground expanse of brown and grey, enlivened by black outlines and broad swishes of white that rivet and undulate throughout the composition, all of which lends the scene a liveliness and dynamism. Technically, *La Faucille* exemplifies that, as Allan has observed,



Fig. 8, Installation of *Unruly Nature* (left): *Mont Blanc Seen from La Faucille, Storm Effect*, begun 1834. Oil on canvas. Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen. [\[larger image\]](#)

Rousseau's facture was as complex and variable as the material structure of his paint surfaces. He used a wide range of brush sizes, and his brushwork is alternately broad and minute, fluid and graphic, smooth and textured. He worked accretively, in superposed washes, strokes, and dabs, but also by way of judicious subtraction (37).

Texture and depth have further been produced by the addition and subtraction of thin and thick layers of wash painted onto *La Faucille*. The thinness of those layers leaves the canvas' coarse grain clearly visible. Through all this technical complexity, *La Faucille* sets a mood: a sense of doom and foreboding, perhaps even a sense of the sublime pervades this scene, with its battered trees, muddy terrain, and ominous dark clouds drawn back like curtains to reveal the peak of Mount Blanc.

Flanked by drawings and *tableautins* sold by dealers to the bourgeois market, the third room was installed with paintings and drawings of Les Landes and Fontainebleau. Perhaps due to his partnership with Durand-Ruel and Brame, Rousseau's production noticeably split between "major Salon paintings, more experimental private work, and somewhat formulaic cabinet pictures, or 'tableautins,' calculated to appeal to collectors" (62). Where, at the Salon, he showed "work that displayed different degrees of finish and precision, with the more seemingly sketch-like paintings breaching long standing codes of decorum for the *tableau*," these intimately scaled *tableautins* show a remarkable degree of crisp detail (45). Size, as the exhibition made plain, did not necessarily dictate the degree of *fini* (fig. 9). So the *tableautin* *The Farm (Cottage at the Edge of a Marsh)* sparkled on the Getty's muted walls, while a wall hung with larger works traced the steps of painting from *étude* to *esquisse* (sketch) to *ébauche* (preliminary underpainting in oil).



Fig. 9, Théodore Rousseau, *The Farm (Cottage at the Edge of the Marsh)*, ca. 1860. Oil on panel. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown. Photo courtesy Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. [\[larger image\]](#)

This latter wall schooled visitors in methods deployed by mid-century landscapists who may have made initial studies and sketches en plein air, but then wiled away hours in their studios perfecting these scenes. Such a wall moreover reminded visitors that the Impressionists fabled painting en plein air should not be mistaken as an exactly new practice. Indeed, painting out-of-doors in order to more spontaneously capture the effects of nature had been a standard academic practice, one that Rousseau learned from Rémond. So, for the undergraduate student of art history, this wall skillfully demonstrated the extensive processes entailed in nineteenth century painting's production—processes more exciting to see than read about.

Of course, these processes ultimately underscore the care with which Rousseau created his paintings and drawings alike. The artist labored for years over the highly articulated painting *Farm in Les Landes*, for instance (fig. 10). Hung alongside an equally large grisaille of the same site, the pair underscores how Rousseau produced almost entirely complete compositions as drawings, adding only animals, people, and spare farm implements to the painting (fig. 11). The grisaille and its companion painting thus raise prickly questions about how we define finished and unfinished. Is a coat or two of paint all that it takes to make a work *fini*? Or a work of art's public display that makes it finished? And how finished was a *tableau fini* circa 1830? Circa 1850? That separating a painting from a sketch constituted something of a problem becomes apparent in a painting like *Morning Effect*, panned by *salonniers* (Salon critics) as unfinished, but likely seen as finished by many a twenty-first century eye. Only his beloved trees show signs of detailed brushwork, leaving the fisherman with his nets and poles slung over his shoulder hazy in the morning's misty light.



Fig. 10, Théodore Rousseau, *The Farm in Les Landes*, ca. 1852–67. Oil on canvas. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown. Photo courtesy of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

[\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 11, Théodore Rousseau, *Farm in Les Landes*, ca. 1844–47. Charcoal, dilute paint (medium undetermined), and touches of white oil paint on canvas. Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen.

Photo courtesy Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek. [\[larger image\]](#)

The fourth and final room continued the exhibit's focus on the interchange between the artist's painting and drawing late in his career, once more highlighting Rousseau's defiant persistence in the sketchy painting or painterly sketchiness that had been vociferously condemned but a decade before.^[5] It was in the fourth room that the Getty displayed the painting inspiring the entire exhibition: its 2007 acquisition of *Forest of Fontainebleau, Cluster of Tall Tress Overlooking the Plain of Clair-Bois at the Edge of Bas-Bréau* (fig. 12). One can clearly see why Allan and Kopp would take this *ébauche*, as inspiration to interrogate what defines the painterly and the draughtsmanly. Rousseau, we learned from the object label, used the end of his brush to scrape away patches of paint, while applying black paint in thin, sharp strokes recalling lines drawn in ink.



Fig. 12, Théodore Rousseau, *Forest of Fontainebleau, Cluster of Tall Trees Overlooking the Plain of Clair-Bois at the Edge of the Bas-Bréau*, ca. 1849–52. Oil on canvas. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

[\[larger image\]](#)

The room's other paintings and works on paper all reflected varying degrees of *fini*, from the spectacular return to Mont Blanc in *View of Mont Blanc, Seen from La Faucille* shimmering like enamel to *Sunset on the Sand Dunes of Jean-de-Paris* painted atop another scarcely concealed composition (fig. 13). Where the exhibit's first display of Mont Blanc showed Rousseau to have eschewed "formulaic academic effects . . . [in order to pursue] a more spontaneous and intuitive mode of pictorial expression," this second Mont Blanc appeared almost classical in its restraint and order. These two paintings represent two poles of Rousseau's oeuvre: calm and chaos, classicism and romanticism, the ruled and the unruly. With its pristine blue sky broken only by the flight of birds, the Alpine landscape surrounding Mont Blanc dwarfs a family walking in the mountain's shadow. The landscape has here been portrayed in crisp registers of color. All seems restored to order, the promise of peace after the initial storm.



Fig. 13, Théodore Rousseau, *View of Mont Blanc, Seen from La Faucille*, ca. 1863–67 (1865). Oil on canvas. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis. Photo courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Art. [\[larger image\]](#)

From there, the exhibition concluded with a sequence of sketches and paintings depicting nature at sunset—an apropos denouement to this survey of Rousseau's career. Hanging *The*

Pond beside *Summer Sunset* illustrated that his choice between loose and tight brushstrokes and warmer and cooler palettes (the blues and greys of a cloudy day versus pinks, oranges, and reds of dusk) could set entirely different moods in these almost identical scenes with their cattle stopped at a pond beneath the shade of the same clutch of trees (figs. 14, 15). Perhaps the most impressive, *Sunset on the Sand Dunes of Jean-de-Paris* depicts the dip and rise of the earth with cloisonné-like black lines that delineate the topography and clumps of green strokes to indicate scrubby vegetation, much like the tapestries of broad patches of color spun decades later by Paul Ranson and Edouard Vuillard (fig. 16). Painted over another painting, the *Sunset* burns in reds and pinks, while clearly revealing Rousseau's process of constantly working and reworking his compositions. *Sunset* further bears a close similarity to *A Plain at Sunset* (hung in the third room). Drawn on pink paper, Rousseau here relied on materials and not his own artistry to create the mood. That Rousseau worked simultaneously in different styles should lead to further reflection on art history's continued tendency to discuss style in terms of serialized periods, in which one style ends before another begins with little or no overlap (e.g. Picasso's analytic cubism followed by his synthetic cubism).



Fig. 14, Théodore Rousseau, *The Pond*, ca. 1866. Oil on canvas. Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati. Photo courtesy Taft Museum of Art/Tony Walsh. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 15, Théodore Rousseau, *Summer Sunset*, 1866. Oil on canvas. Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cincinnati. Photo courtesy Cincinnati Museum of Art. [\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 16, Installation shot of paintings by Théodore Rousseau (left to right): *The Pond*, ca. 1866. Oil on canvas. Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati; *Summer Sunset*, 1866. Oil on canvas. Cincinnati Museum of Art; *Sunset on the Sand Dunes of Jean-de-Paris*, ca. 1864–67. Oil on canvas. Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum of Art, Hartford; and *The Woods and Apple Trees of Belle-Marie*, ca. 1860–62. Ink or water-based paint, with touches of oil paint, on canvas. Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen. [\[larger image\]](#)

Throughout, Rousseau's landscapes led exhibition visitors to question their relation to the landscape or, alternately, their positions in the landscape. This is an ethical or even existential question as much as a practical one. In a painting like *Felling of Trees (The Massacre of the Innocents)* in which small figures lash ropes to tall trees in order to pull them down, are we the lumberman (fig. 17)? An early environmentalist like Rousseau who lamented the loss of France's old growth forests due to the onset of industrialism and age of the Anthropocene? Or even one of the artist's beloved trees soberly awaiting destruction? Or are we like the lone farmworkers, herdsmen, and fishermen repeated across the scenes, likely painted from memory while Rousseau toiled in his studio? Just how important are we humans to Rousseau's vision of nature? Not very, so it would seem.



Fig. 17, Théodore Rousseau, *Felling Trees on the Ile de Croisy (The Massacre of the Innocents)*, 1847. Oil on canvas. The Mesdag Collection, The Hague. Photo courtesy the Mesdag Collection. [\[larger image\]](#)

Compared with Rousseau's insignificant, stock types of rural workers, one would think that his trees would be individuated, even anthropomorphized as the protagonists in those quiet dramas. Yet his deep reverence for trees, does not translate into their individuation. They too become stock types: a tall but crooked tree with a sturdy bough leaning to one side that divides into smaller, separate branches crowned with leaves; a majestically singular tree

soaring high and occupying a place near the composition center; or the straight trunked tree with a single limb shot out to the side with a spindly branch extending upwards. While these may have been trees that Rousseau at some point observed, that the same tree species appear across multiple compositions indicates that his compositions are not faithful translations of nature taken down on the spot, but are instead studio-based constructions.

Insistent that we “consider [Rousseau’s art] on its own terms, with all of its internal inconsistencies and complexities,” the exhibition catalogue explains Rousseau’s rise and fall from fame. Allan’s “Rousseau’s Market, 1830, 1914” traces the artist’s critical (mis)fortunes, by deftly explaining his prominence in the nineteenth-century art market:

Landscapes like Rousseau’s offered city dwellers a reassuring, nostalgic vision of a stable rural and natural order during a period of massive urbanization and industrialization, a period that also saw the concomitant rise of regional nature tourism, of which artists like Rousseau were but the vanguard. As economic expansion and political liberalization promoted the rise of a huge middle-class public for art, the new modes of naturalistic landscape proposed a democratic aesthetic that enshrined private sensation and individual sensibility while jettisoning the overly intellectualized conceptions of art preceding it. Requiring no special erudition, this was, in a way, the ultimate bourgeois art, and its appeal to many newly rich collectors would be strong indeed. Furthermore, it transcended national barriers in an increasingly interconnected world (59).

Purchased by July Monarchy royals and aristocrats, Rousseau experienced initial success at the Salon. His career spiraled downward in the late 1830s, as he suffered refusal after refusal from that official exhibition. Rousseau was buoyed by private patrons and friends such as George Sand, Narcisse Diaz de la Peña, and Jules Dupré in the 1840s, all of whom promoted him to potential collectors who, in turn, took an interest in his more sketch-like compositions. His friends’ financial support enabled him to remain financially afloat during this difficult period. Compared with this period of uncertainty, in his last two decades he reveled in “official, critical, and market success” (60). A picture came to be purchased for France’s premier museum of contemporary art, the Musée du Luxembourg, in 1850–51; other purchases and commissions soon followed. After returning to the Salon in 1849 (which, for that one year, following Louis Napoleon’s coup d’état had been opened to all artists), honors, awards, and accolades rained down upon him. Still, critics were not always so receptive to his late landscapes produced in the 1860s, some of which he instead sold at auction.

By the late nineteenth century, an international market had developed for Rousseau’s work, both small and large, finished and unfinished. Prices for Rousseau at times skyrocketed, as Paris based dealers bought and sold and rebought his work while peddling biographies about him (like those of Alfred Sensier) that attempted to incite enthusiasm in the marketplace. But, in the case of sketches and less finished works, those prices dipped in the early twentieth century until the centenary of his death in 1967 (73). Even so, museums steadfastly purchased smaller and less finished works made for the artist’s private study and use—a collecting interest carefully documented in the thoroughly researched exhibition checklist that includes each exhibited artwork’s provenance and exhibition histories, together with a short bibliography (this checklist alone makes the catalogue critical to future studies of the

Barbizon or Rousseau). Since 1967, enterprising curators, art historians, and dealers have stoked renewed interest in the École de Barbizon and so in Rousseau. The J. Paul Getty Museum has further abetted Rousseau's art historical fortunes through its presentation of this substantial monograph. *Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau* stands as a testament to the beauty and the beautiful complexity of Rousseau and his legacy.

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Notes

[1] In 1991, the Jill Newhouse Gallery surveyed Rousseau's drawings. In 2002, the Sanders-O'Reilly Galleries organized *Théodore Rousseau: The Language of Nature*.

[2] That the finished and the complete are not synonymous has been thoroughly explored by the late John House. See John House, *Impressionism: Paint and Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

[3] Scott Allan and Édouard Kopp, *Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2016), 59. "Landscapes like Rousseau's offered city dwellers a reassuring, nostalgic vision of a stable rural and natural order during a period of massive urbanization and industrialization, a period that also saw the concomitant rise of regional nature tourism, of which artists like Rousseau were but the vanguard. As economic expansion and political liberalization promoted the rise of a huge middle-class public for art, the new modes of naturalistic landscape proposed a democratic aesthetic that enshrined private sensation and individual sensibility while jettisoning the overly intellectualized conceptions of art preceding it. Requiring no special erudition, this was, in a way, the ultimate bourgeois art, and its appeal to many newly rich collectors would be strong indeed. Furthermore, it transcended national barriers in an increasingly interconnected world."

[4] Ibid., 1, 4. "The emphasis placed by Rousseau and other artists loosely associated with the so-called Barbizon School on working in and directly after nature had profound consequences. It effectively upended received notions of composition, as the boundaries began to blur between the more informal and analytical *étude*, conducted outdoors, and the carefully arranged *tableau*, a work of creative synthesis executed in the studio. It also advanced the Romantic aesthetics of the sketch, as it was in that comparatively free arena that the artist could express sensations of fugitive nature with the greatest spontaneity and immediacy."

[5] Ibid., 54. Kopp has recalled that not all were impressed by his painting in the 1860s that "daringly verged on semiabstraction and made forms visible from a distance but hardly legible from up close."

Illustrations

Unless otherwise noted, photographs courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.



Fig. 1, Entrance to the J. Paul Getty Museum West Pavilion with signage for *Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau*. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Entrance to *Unruly Nature: The Landscapes of Théodore Rousseau*, exhibition at the J. Paul Getty Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)

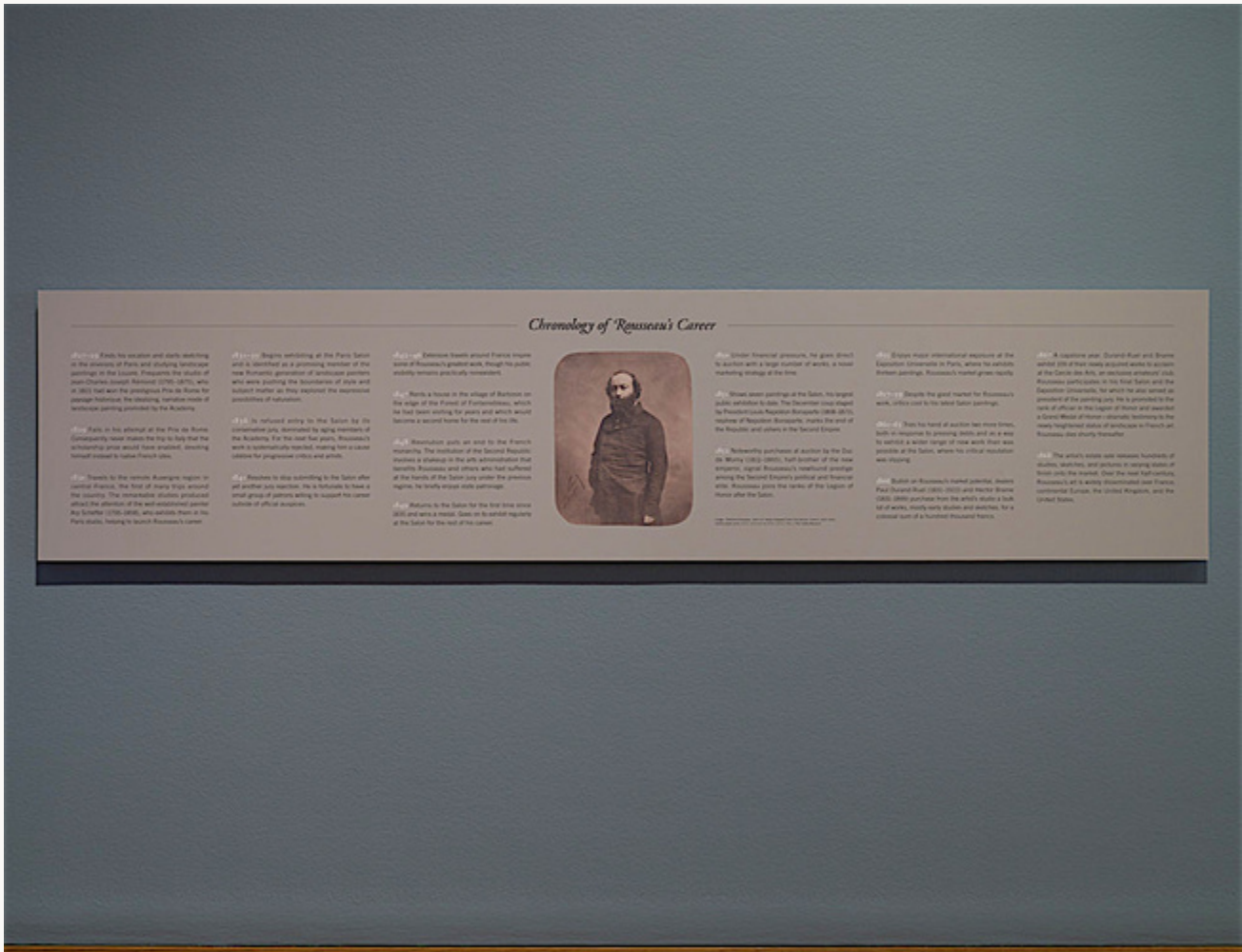


Fig. 3, Wall panel with biographical timeline on Théodore Rousseau, Installation shot of the exhibition at the J. Paul Getty Museum. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 4, Théodore Rousseau, *A Village in the Valley*, late 1820s. Oil on paper mounted on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Photo courtesy Wikipedia Commons. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 5, Théodore Rousseau, *The Valley of the Seine*, 1834. Black chalk and graphite on paper. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon. Photo courtesy of the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 6, Installation shot of *Unruly Nature* (left to right): *Evening (The Parish Priest)*, 1842–43. Oil on panel. Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo; *Under the Birches, Evening*, 1842. Black chalk on brown wove paper. Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo; and *Edge of the Forest, Sun Setting*, 1845–46. Oil on canvas. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, Théodore Rousseau, *Swamp in Les Landes*, 1846. Oil on panel. The Walters Museum of Art, Baltimore. Photo courtesy of The Walters Museum of Art. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 8, Installation of *Unruly Nature* (left): *Mont Blanc Seen from La Faucille, Storm Effect*, begun 1834. Oil on canvas. Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 9, Théodore Rousseau, *The Farm (Cottage at the Edge of the Marsh)*, ca. 1860. Oil on panel. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown. Photo courtesy Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 10, Théodore Rousseau, *The Farm in Les Landes*, ca. 1852–67. Oil on canvas. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown. Photo courtesy of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.
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Fig. 11, Théodore Rousseau, *Farm in Les Landes*, ca. 1844–47. Charcoal, dilute paint (medium undetermined), and touches of white oil paint on canvas. Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen.
Photo courtesy Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 12, Théodore Rousseau, *Forest of Fontainebleau, Cluster of Tall Trees Overlooking the Plain of Clair-Bois at the Edge of the Bas-Bréau*, ca. 1849–52. Oil on canvas. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

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Fig. 13, Théodore Rousseau, *View of Mont Blanc, Seen from La Faucille*, ca.1863–67 (1865). Oil on canvas. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis. Photo courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Art. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 14, Théodore Rousseau, *The Pond*, ca. 1866. Oil on canvas. Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati. Photo courtesy Taft Museum of Art/Tony Walsh. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 15, Théodore Rousseau, *Summer Sunset*, 1866. Oil on canvas. Cincinnati Museum of Art, Cincinnati.
Photo courtesy Cincinnati Museum of Art. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 16, Installation shot of paintings by Théodore Rousseau (left to right): *The Pond*, ca. 1866. Oil on canvas. Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati; *Summer Sunset*, 1866. Oil on canvas. Cincinnati Museum of Art; *Sunset on the Sand Dunes of Jean-de-Paris*, ca. 1864–67. Oil on canvas. Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum of Art, Hartford; and *The Woods and Apple Trees of Belle-Marie*, ca. 1860–62. Ink or water-based paint, with touches of oil paint, on canvas. Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 17, Théodore Rousseau, *Felling Trees on the Ile de Croisy (The Massacre of the Innocents)*, 1847. Oil on canvas. The Mesdag Collection, The Hague. Photo courtesy the Mesdag Collection. [\[return to text\]](#)