LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

The Courtauld Gallery: Masterpieces

Twenty paintings and works on paper from the Courtauld collection, from Rogier van der Weyden, Bruegel and Rubens to Manet, Gauguin and Van Gogh.



The Courtauld Gallery, at Somerset House in central London, has a relatively small collection. It is particularly well known for its Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, among them works by Manet, Cézanne and Van Gogh.

This selection of twenty includes Manet's A Bar at the Folies-Bergère, Van Gogh's Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear, Gauguin's Nevermore and two works by Seurat. Much of it goes further back, though: a portrait by Rogier van der Weyden, Bruegel's Landscape with the Flight into Egypt, three works by Rubens, a chalk drawing by Michelangelo and a group of Italian devotional pictures. Delacroix's watercolour of a mandarin drake and a harbour scene by Dufy also find a place.

Several works answer one another, sometimes across centuries. Claude and Heemskerck both make convincing pictures that are not records of what they show: one an imaginary view, the other a reconstruction of a lost ancient monument. Rubens's three paintings handle crowds and colour in sharply different ways. Manet and Gauguin each put a puzzle at the heart of a picture and leave it unsolved.

Artline chose these works from documented Courtauld holdings, independently of the museum. Dates and attributions keep the qualifications given in the collection records.

Explore this selection in Artline

See the selected works alongside books and events from their period, or compare when the artists lived. The books and events provide context, not evidence of direct influence. Works without confirmed dates remain in this guide.

Artworks in context Who lived when?

artlines.org/guides/courtauld-gallery

The selection · 20

1. A Bar at the Folies-Bergère
   Édouard Manet · 1882
2. Nevermore
   Paul Gauguin · 1897
3. Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear
   Vincent van Gogh · 1889
4. Young Woman Powdering Herself
   Georges Seurat · 1889-1890
5. Study for Le Chahut
   Georges Seurat · 1889-1890
6. Landscape with the Flight into Egypt
   Pieter Bruegel the Elder · 1563
7. The Dream of Human Life
   Michelangelo · 1533
8. The Conversion of Saint Paul
   Peter Paul Rubens · c. 1612
9. The Coronation of the Virgin
   Peter Paul Rubens · c. 1620
10. David Slaying Goliath
    Peter Paul Rubens · c. 1620
11. Landscape with an Imaginary View of Tivoli
    Claude Lorrain · 1642
12. Portrait of a Man
    Gerolamo Forabosco · c. 1650
13. Saint Lawrence
    Girolamo da Santacroce · c. 1520–1530
14. Saint Sebastian in a Rocky Landscape with Saints Jerome, Anthony Abbot and Christopher
    Marco Zoppo · c. 1475–1478
15. A Mandarin Drake
    Eugène Delacroix · c. 1825
16. Boats at Martigues
    Raoul Dufy · 1908
17. The Colossus of Rhodes
    Maarten van Heemskerck · 1570
18. Cupid and Psyche
    Joshua Reynolds · 1789
19. Holy Family with the Infant Saint John and Saint Elizabeth
    Benvenuto Tisi · 1520
20. Man Holding a Book
    Rogier van der Weyden · 1440-1449

01 / 20

A Bar at the Folies-Bergère

Édouard Manet

1882 · Canvas; paint medium not specified · The Courtauld Gallery



Édouard Manet. A Bar at the Folies-Bergère. Image credit: Édouard Manet; Source credit: Un bar aux Folies-Bergère d'E. Manet (Fondation Vuitton, Paris); Photograph: Jean-Pierre Dalbéra (https://www.flickr.com/people/72746018@N00), explicitly credited in the Commons file Author field.. CC BY 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0). Proportional resize and JPEG compression; full source frame retained. · CC BY 2.0

The mirror is the trouble. It hangs behind the barmaid, who stands at her counter with bottles and fruit set out in front of her, and it shows the Folies-Bergère crowded with fashionable visitors. But the reflection is not arranged the way a straightforward mirror would show it. Manet painted this near the end of his life, and he built one of his most puzzling compositions into what might have been an ordinary scene of Parisian entertainment. The inconsistency is plainly there; how to read it is another matter.

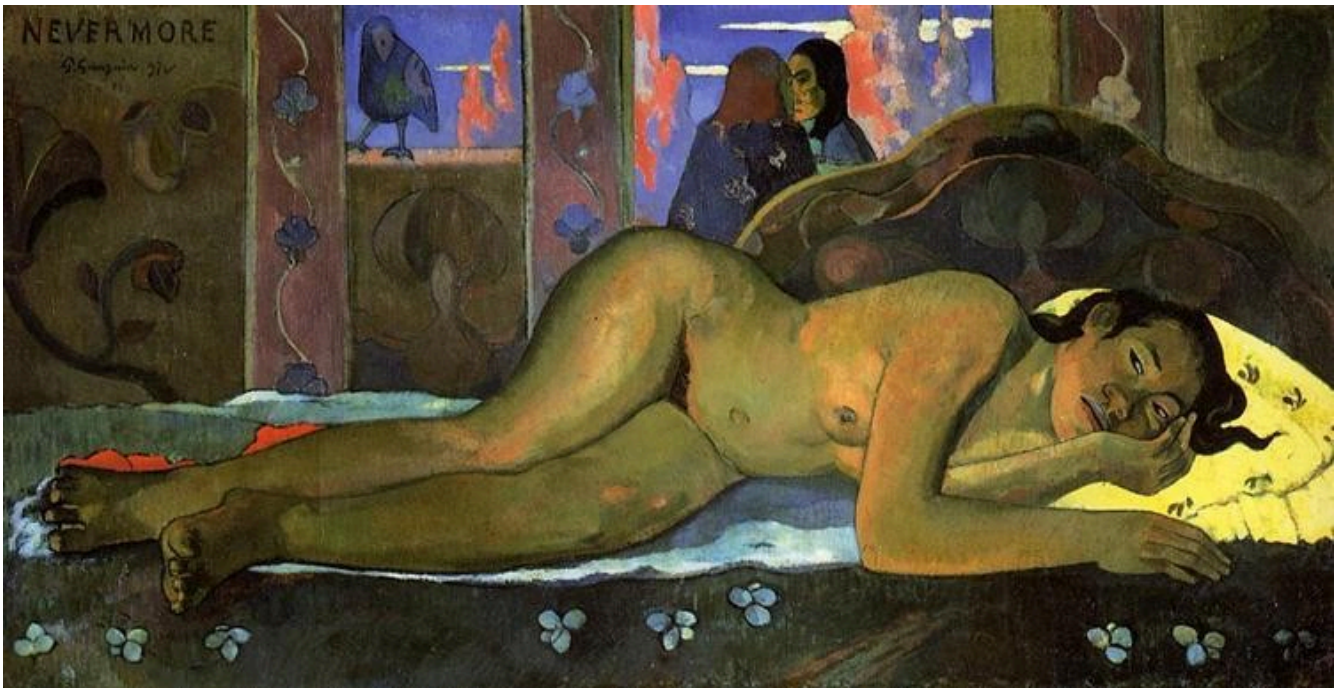
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: P.1934.SC.234

02 / 20

Nevermore

Paul Gauguin

1897 · The Courtauld Gallery



Paul Gauguin. Nevermore. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Gauguin painted the word 'Nevermore' into the picture itself, and an inscription like that might seem to promise a key. It is just one more sign, and it explains none of the others. A reclining woman turns her head towards a room where other figures and a bird appear. The picture never settles what the bird and the figures mean to her, who is watching whom, or what is being said. Nor is this a documentary record of Tahitian life. These things have been arranged, and even the mood is uncertain: ominous, melancholy or something else.

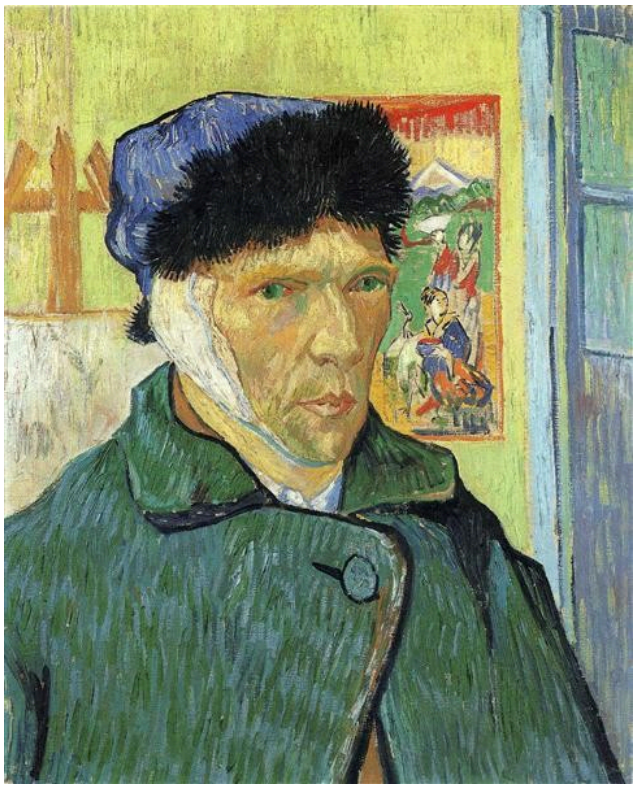
Object source · Open artwork

03 / 20

Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear

Vincent van Gogh

1889 · The Courtauld Gallery



Vincent van Gogh. Self Portrait with Bandaged Ear. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The bandage is conspicuous, and the title makes sure nobody misses it. But it is only part of what the portrait shows. Coat, cap, the studio around him and the print on the wall behind are all set down in firm outlines and distinct, separate brushstrokes.

Object source · Open artwork

04 / 20

Young Woman Powdering Herself

Georges Seurat

1889-1890 · The Courtauld Gallery



42. WOMAN POWDERING HERSELF. Probably 1889–1890. London, Courtauld Institute Galleries (Home House Trustees)

Georges Seurat. Young Woman Powdering Herself. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The raised arm has a homely explanation: she is sitting at her dressing table with a powder puff lifted towards her face. Seurat makes more of the gesture than that, though. Rounded forms echo one another across the picture: the curve of her hair, the lifted arm, the swell of her bodice, the edge of the table. And his separate touches of colour go over flesh, fabric and furniture alike, with no change of technique for skin.

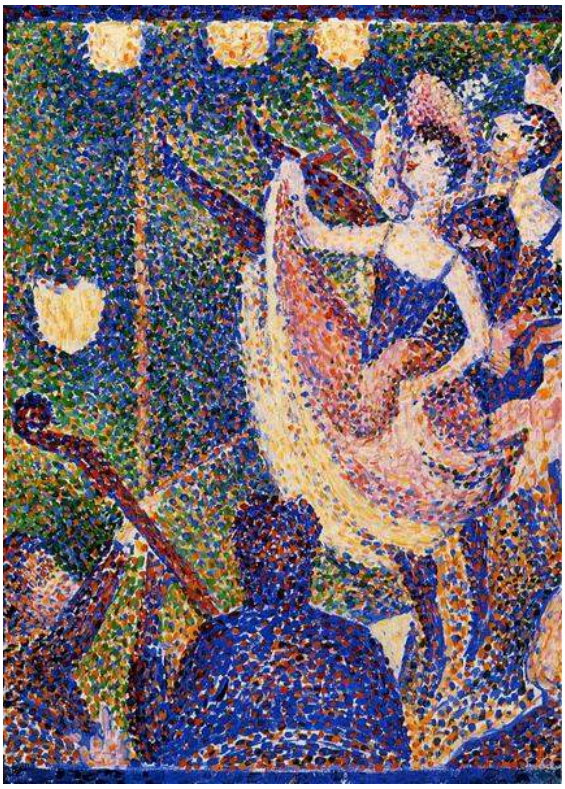
Object source · Open artwork

05 / 20

Study for Le Chahut

Georges Seurat

1889-1890 · The Courtauld Gallery



Georges Seurat. Study for The Chahut. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Seurat's other work here comes from the same years but moves from the dressing table to the stage. A dancer's leg kicks upward, and a curved form beside it repeats the rising line. As a study, it picks out these rhythms and does not try to show the whole performance, so the dancer becomes one part of a larger pattern.

Object source · Open artwork

06 / 20

Landscape with the Flight into Egypt

Pieter Bruegel the Elder

1563 · Oil on panel · The Courtauld Gallery



Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Landscape with the Flight into Egypt. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/pieter-bruegel-the-elder/landscape-with-the-flight-into-egypt-1563 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

The title puts the landscape first, and so does the picture. Bruegel's travellers, the Holy Family, are small figures beside the river, mountains and settlements that fill the panel, and at first the scene can look like nothing more than a wide view. You have to find their route within it. Once you spot them, the land changes: what seemed neutral scenery becomes ground that a vulnerable group has to make its way through.

Object source · Open artwork

07 / 20

The Dream of Human Life

Michelangelo

1533 · Chalk on paper · The Courtauld Gallery



The Dream of Human Life. WikiArt; Michelangelo. Proportional resizing and JPEG compression; source frame preserved. · Public domain

The central nude, drawn in chalk, has a weight and solidity that the smaller scenes around him lack. A winged figure comes down from above, and masks and other symbolic images press in on the body. Michelangelo seems to set different kinds of reality side by side: solid flesh at the centre, surrounded by masks and visions that suggest theatrical roles or, as the title implies, dreams.

Object source · Open artwork

08 / 20

The Conversion of Saint Paul

Peter Paul Rubens

c. 1612 · The Courtauld Gallery



Peter Paul Rubens. Conversion of Saint Paul. Image credit: Peter Paul Rubens. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Light breaks into the crowded scene, and the riders and horses stop moving together. Bodies fall, directions clash, limbs tangle. Rubens shows the conversion as a sudden loss of control that overtakes the whole group, not just Paul.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: P.1978.PG.356

09 / 20

The Coronation of the Virgin

Peter Paul Rubens

c. 1620 · The Courtauld Gallery



Peter Paul Rubens. Coronation of the Virgin. Image credit: Peter Paul Rubens. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Where the Conversion of Saint Paul lets a crowd come apart, this picture holds one together. Mary kneels among clouds, angels and movement, yet she is easy to find: large areas of red, blue and pale colour set the main figures apart from the activity around them. The composition leads the eye upwards, and Rubens gives some figures more weight than others, so the bustle never swamps the coronation at the centre.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: P.1978.PG.363

10 / 20

David Slaying Goliath

Peter Paul Rubens

c. 1620 · The Courtauld Gallery



Peter Paul Rubens. David Slaying Goliath. Image credit: Peter Paul Rubens. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

David bends over the fallen giant and raises his arm to get leverage for the blow. He is the smaller of the two, but at this point in the story he controls the fight, and the two bodies cross each other in the moment before he strikes. Rubens keeps to a narrow range of browns, a world away from the reds and blues of the Coronation, though the two pictures are dated to about the same time.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: P.1978.PG.366

11 / 20

Landscape with an Imaginary View of Tivoli

Claude Lorrain

1642 · The Courtauld Gallery



Claude Lorrain. Landscape with an Imaginary View of Tivoli. Image credit: Claude Lorrain. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

The title is honest: this is an imaginary view, not a record of the actual place. Bridge, hill, water and shaded foreground are laid out in linked stages, and light opens up the distance. Each part is plausible and the whole is coherent and entirely believable, but Claude made it up.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: P.1978.PG.64

12 / 20

Portrait of a Man

Gerolamo Forabosco

c. 1650 · The Courtauld Gallery



Gerolamo Forabosco. Portrait of a Man. Image credit: Gerolamo Forabosco; Art UK. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Girolamo_Forabosco_(c.1605-1679)_(attributed_to)_-_Portrait_of_a_Man_-_P.1947.LF.133_-_Courtauld_Gallery.jpg. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Full-frame resize and JPEG compression; applicable ShareAlike terms retained. · Public domain

Little here explains who the sitter was. Apart from his likeness and his clothes, the picture offers few possessions as clues, and the clothes take up a good deal of room: a fur-trimmed garment spreads across much of the picture and surrounds the face, which is painted more firmly. A pale architectural opening makes a contrasting edge, and his hand gives the lower part of the picture a point of focus.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: P.1947.LF.133

13 / 20

Saint Lawrence

Girolamo da Santacroce

c. 1520–1530 · The Courtauld Gallery



Girolamo da Santacroce. Saint Lawrence. Image credit: Girolamo da Santacroce; Art UK. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Girolamo_da_Santacroce_(1480-1485-1556)_-_Saint_Lawrence_-_P.1947.LF.388_-_Courtauld_Gallery.jpg. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Full-frame resize and JPEG compression; applicable ShareAlike terms retained. · Public domain

The gridiron, which refers to Saint Lawrence's martyrdom, appears here as a way of recognising him, not as a scene of suffering. He stands upright beneath hovering angels, identified by it and by a palm. Girolamo shows none of the violence.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: P.1947.LF.388

14 / 20

Saint Sebastian in a Rocky Landscape with Saints Jerome, Anthony Abbot and Christopher

Marco Zoppo

c. 1475–1478 · The Courtauld Gallery



Marco Zoppo. Saint Sebastian in a Rocky Landscape with Saints Jerome, Anthony Abbot and Christopher. Image credit: Sailko. Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 3.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. Additional source attribution: Sailko; Required attribution: I, Sailko. File page: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marco_zoppo,_san_sebastiano,_1475-78_ca._2.JPG · CC BY-SA 3.0

Sebastian dominates the rocky landscape. His bare body is larger and more prominent than the other saints, and his raised arm continues its twisting outline. Jerome, Anthony Abbot and Christopher share the setting but take part in no single event with him. They are gathered together for devotion, and the differences in size show their relative importance.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: P.1978.PG.489

15 / 20

A Mandarin Drake

Eugène Delacroix

c. 1825 · Watercolour on paper · The Courtauld Gallery



Eugène Delacroix. A Mandarin drake. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/eugene-delacroix/a-mandarin-drake · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

Plain paper, a bird in profile, feathers folded close: Delacroix's careful study gives the mandarin drake no setting at all. Watercolour picks out the breast, wing and tail in distinct touches. With so many differently marked feathers, the bird could easily have dissolved into decorative pattern. It never does, and holds together as one body.

Object source · Open artwork

16 / 20

Boats at Martigues

Raoul Dufy

1908 · The Courtauld Gallery



Raoul Dufy. Boats at Martigues. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Hulls crowd the harbour as shapes of red, green and blue, with masts rising above them, and their reflections scatter more patches of colour across the water. You can still tell they are boats. But Dufy gives their arrangement on the painted surface a force that goes well beyond describing a harbour.

Object source · Open artwork

17 / 20

The Colossus of Rhodes

Maarten van Heemskerck

1570 · The Courtauld Gallery



Maarten van Heemskerck. Colossus of Rhodes. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/maerten-van-heemskerck/colossus-of-rhodes-1570 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

The giant stands astride a harbour, and the ships and tiny people beneath its legs give a sense of the enormous size Heemskerck imagined for the ancient statue. Detailed architecture makes the reconstruction convincing. It is a reconstruction all the same, not an eyewitness record of the lost monument, and however confident the drawing, it is no evidence of how the statue actually looked or stood. Claude's title admits that his Tivoli is imaginary; this one makes no such admission.

Object source · Open artwork

18 / 20

Cupid and Psyche

Joshua Reynolds

1789 · The Courtauld Gallery



Joshua Reynolds. Cupid and Psyche. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Psyche leans forward and raises a light to see the face of the sleeping Cupid. The picture turns on that one-sided look. Her outstretched arm and bent posture are all searching, while he lies unguarded, unaware of her and unable to look back.

Object source · Open artwork

19 / 20

Holy Family with the Infant Saint John and Saint Elizabeth

Benvenuto Tisi

1520 · The Courtauld Gallery



Benvenuto Tisi. Holy Family with the Infant Saint John and Saint Elizabeth. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Benvenuto Tisi, known as Garofalo, hangs a parted curtain above a tightly packed group. The adults lean inward, and the children are set at different heights in the cramped space. Zoppo's saints share a landscape without sharing an event, but these figures are linked by touch and overlapping shapes, and none of them faces outward on its own. The curtain frames that closeness.

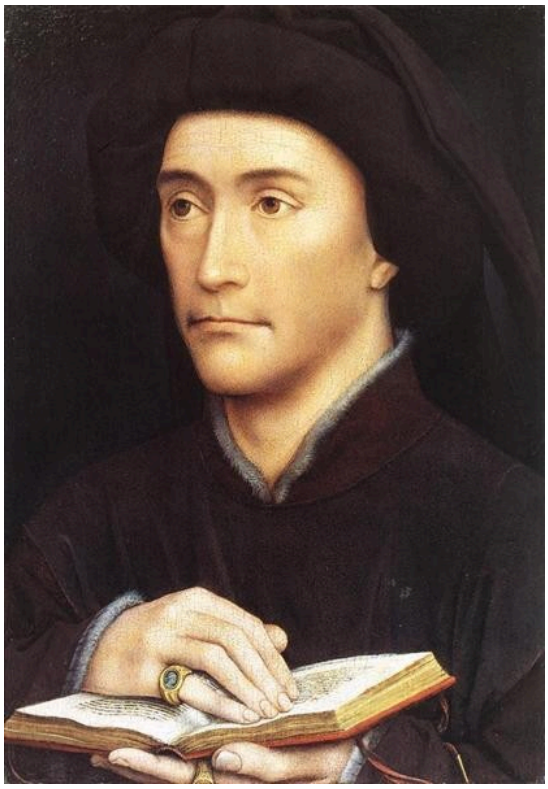
Object source · Open artwork

20 / 20

Man Holding a Book

Rogier van der Weyden

1440-1449 · The Courtauld Gallery



Rogier van der Weyden. Man holding book. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Rogier gives his sitter an occupation instead of a gesture. The open book makes a pale area around the man's hands at the front of the picture, while his dark headwear and the dark background draw attention to his face. Reading needs no dramatic movement, and Rogier has arranged the fingers, pages and features with great care. The man in the portrait attributed to Forabosco has few clues beyond his face and his clothes; this one at least has a book.

Object source · Open artwork

Records and order

Full details of each work are in the collection records. The order of works in this guide is our own and does not follow a confirmed hanging.

Further reading

Impressionism: A Centenary Exhibition

Anne Dayez, Michel Hoog and Charles S. Moffett · Read online or download · English

The catalogue of an Impressionism centenary exhibition, placing Manet, Seurat and the painters around them within the debates of nineteenth-century art. Its plates invite comparisons between scenes of public entertainment and private interiors, and between the kinds of mark used to paint them. That makes it a good companion to the Folies-Bergère and the Seurats here. It does not cover the older works in the selection.

Museum website · Official collection guide

Sources and visitor information checked: 2026-10-12

Artline · The Courtauld Gallery: Masterpieces