CARDIFF, UNITED KINGDOM

National Museum Cardiff: Masterpieces

Twenty paintings, from Welsh landscapes and portraits to El Greco, Claude, Manet and Renoir



National Museum Cardiff holds natural history and other collections as well as art. Its paintings take in Welsh artists and British painting more widely, along with a notable group of French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist pictures formed partly through the collecting of the Davies sisters.

This selection draws mostly on the Welsh and British pictures, and the strongest thread running through it is place. Thomas Jones looks towards the Carneddau from near his family home at Pencerrig. Turner works inside Ewenny Priory. Penry Williams, who appears three times, moves between a waterfall in the Vale of Neath and the bay at Pozzuoli. Place shades into work in pictures of a board school classroom, women carrying loads and a procession crossing the sands to Swansea market. The older European paintings are mostly religious, from El Greco's Saint Peter to Claude's Saint Philip. The French group is small, with three pictures by Meissonier, Manet and Renoir, and it is not a survey of the museum's Impressionists and Post-Impressionists.

The twenty works were chosen from the museum's documented holdings, independently of the museum. Dates and attributions keep the qualifications given in the linked 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/national-museum-cardiff

The selection · 20

1. Effect of Snow at Petit-Montrouge
   Édouard Manet · 1870
2. Transept of Ewenny Priory
   J. M. W. Turner · c. 1797
3. Carneddau Mountains from Pencerrig
   Thomas Jones · c. 1776
4. Saint Peter
   El Greco · c. 1610
5. Landscape with Saint Philip Baptizing the Eunuch
   Claude Lorrain · 1678
6. Hagar and Ishmael in the Wilderness
   Andrea Sacchi · c. 1630
7. The Sacrifice of Jephthah’s Daughter
   John Everett Millais · 1867
8. Fair Rosamund, Study
   John William Waterhouse · 1916
9. Richard Wilson
   Anton Raphael Mengs · 1752
10. Crossing the Sands to Swansea Market
    Edward Francis Drew Pritchard · 1856
11. Board School Children
    Barnett Samuel Marks · 1874
12. Griffith Owen, Harpist to the Corbet Family
    Benjamin Marshall · c. 1812
13. The Bal Maidens
    Emily Mary Osborn · c. 1870
14. Girl in a Field
    George Clausen · c. 1900
15. Cilgerran Castle
    William Havell · c. 1805
16. Pozzuoli
    Penry Williams · 1831
17. Sgwd yr Henryd, Vale of Neath
    Penry Williams · 1819
18. Mass for the Reapers
    Penry Williams · 1858
19. Innocents and Card Sharpers
    Ernest Meissonier · 1861
20. La Parisienne
    Pierre-Auguste Renoir · 1874

01 / 20

Effect of Snow at Petit-Montrouge

Édouard Manet

1870 · National Museum Cardiff



Édouard Manet. Effect of Snow at Petit-Montrouge. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The snow at Petit-Montrouge has not settled into a clean sheet. It lies in uneven patches on the roofs and the street, and warmer surfaces and other traces of the city show through between them. With no dramatic figure or incident to follow, your attention goes to Manet's whites, which shift by small steps of tone from one patch to the next. The buildings still give the view its urban scale, though the weather makes them harder to read.

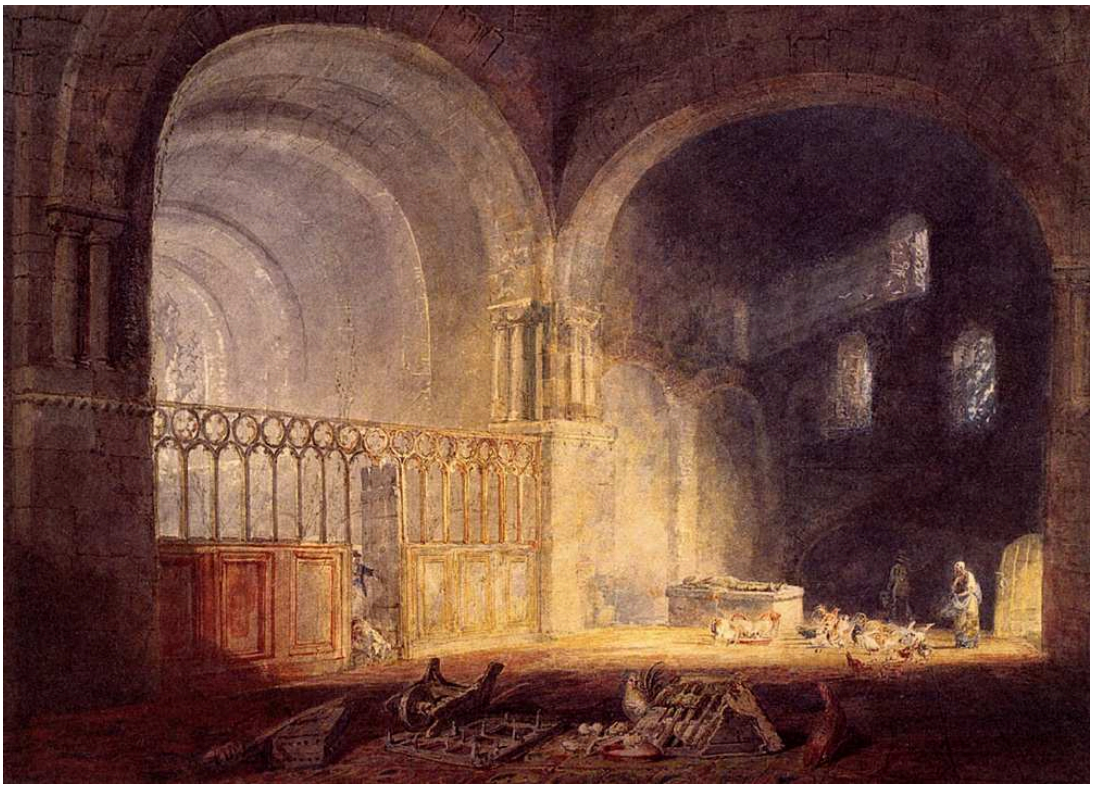
Object source · Open artwork

02 / 20

Transept of Ewenny Priory

J. M. W. Turner

c. 1797 · National Museum Cardiff



J. M. W. Turner. Transept of Ewenny Priory, Glamorganshire. Image credit: J. M. W. Turner. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Turner shows the transept only as far as the light allows. It catches parts of the screen and a stretch of floor, while the upper walls and the recesses sink into shadow. As a record of the building, it leaves a good deal out.

Object source · Open artwork

03 / 20

Carneddau Mountains from Pencerrig

Thomas Jones

c. 1776 · National Museum Cardiff



Thomas Jones. Carneddau Mountains from Pencerrig. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/thomas-jones/carneddau-mountains-from-pencerrig-1776 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

The museum identifies this as country near Jones's family home at Pencerrig. The nearer slopes are plainly in use, crossed by tracks and divided by field boundaries. Further off, the land recedes in orderly stages to the distant peaks of the Carneddau. It is hard to say whether that order comes from the terrain or from the way Jones arranged it. Probably it is a little of each.

Object source · Open artwork

04 / 20

Saint Peter

El Greco

c. 1610 · National Museum Cardiff



El Greco. St. Peter. Image credit: El Greco. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Peter's raised hand, held close against his chest, competes with his pale face for attention, and nearly wins. Blue drapery and elongated forms carry the eye between the two and on through the figure, which turns and lifts with an upward tension. Beyond cloud and shadow there is almost no setting, so everything rests on the body and that one gesture.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: NMW A 3915

05 / 20

Landscape with Saint Philip Baptizing the Eunuch

Claude Lorrain

1678 · National Museum Cardiff



Claude Lorrain. Landscape with St. Philip Baptizing the Eunuch. Image credit: Claude Lorrain; Source credit: Princeton Art Museum. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Proportional resize and JPEG compression; full source frame retained. · Public domain

The baptism takes some finding. It happens in a small group beside the carriage, sheltered by tall trees, and beyond them the land opens into a long distance. The title does begin with the landscape, after all. Claude seems to treat the biblical episode as one incident in the travellers' longer journey, and he gives most of the picture to the journey.

Object source · Open artwork

06 / 20

Hagar and Ishmael in the Wilderness

Andrea Sacchi

c. 1630 · National Museum Cardiff



Andrea Sacchi. Hagar and Ishmael in the Wilderness. Image credit: Andrea Sacchi. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Hagar holds up the exhausted Ishmael, and their distress is close at hand and physical. The angel, though, gestures away from them, and Sacchi uses hands and glances to tie the pair's plight to another part of the landscape. The canvas itself is shaped, and the three figures curve together to fit it.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: NMW A 9

07 / 20

The Sacrifice of Jephthah’s Daughter

John Everett Millais

1867 · National Museum Cardiff



John Everett Millais. Sacrifice of Jephthah’s Daughter. Image credit: John Everett Millais. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Millais paints an embrace rather than the sacrifice named in the title, and it is the affection that makes it terrible. A young woman holds her father, who sits armed. In the biblical story Jephthah has made a vow, and her greeting will lead to her death. Other figures surround the pair and react to them, so the embrace is never seen on its own.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: NMW A 180

08 / 20

Fair Rosamund, Study

John William Waterhouse

1916 · National Museum Cardiff



John William Waterhouse. Fair Rosamund (study). Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

A woman looks towards a window, and Waterhouse leaves out whatever she sees there. The room gets far more description: a patterned textile, a tiled floor and other decoration. That imbalance may simply be because this is a study. She seems to be waiting, but the picture does not say for what or for whom.

Object source · Open artwork

09 / 20

Richard Wilson

Anton Raphael Mengs

1752 · National Museum Cardiff



Anton Raphael Mengs. Richard Wilson. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/anton-raphael-mengs/richard-wilson-1752 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

This is one painter's portrait of another, and an unpretentious one. Mengs brings Wilson close, his face turned, in a soft cap and warm clothing that stand out against a greenish ground. There is no studio around him. The palette and brushes at hand are enough to say what he does.

Object source · Open artwork

10 / 20

Crossing the Sands to Swansea Market

Edward Francis Drew Pritchard

1856 · National Museum Cardiff



Edward Francis Drew Pritchard. Crossing the Sands to Swansea Market. Image credit: Edward Francis Drew Pritchard; Source credit: Art UK. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

For a picture named after a journey to market, this gives the travellers remarkably little room. Pritchard gives most of it to water, boats and a broad sky, and the people and cattle bound for Swansea are small figures crossing a large tidal landscape.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: NMW A 522

11 / 20

Board School Children

Barnett Samuel Marks

1874 · National Museum Cardiff



Barnett Samuel Marks. Board School Children. Image credit: Barnett Samuel Marks; Source credit: Art UK. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

The children share the benches of a board school classroom, but not their attention. Some read, some wait and some look elsewhere, and books, turned faces and the placing of hands show which is which. Marks paints distinct pupils rather than one idealised type, and the classroom is more convincing for it.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: NMW A 4971

12 / 20

Griffith Owen, Harpist to the Corbet Family

Benjamin Marshall

c. 1812 · National Museum Cardiff



Benjamin Marshall. Griffith Owen (1750–1833), Harpist to the Corbet Family of Ynysymaengwyn. Image credit: Benjamin Marshall; Source credit: Art UK. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Griffith Owen's harp very nearly upstages him. Its curved frame rises above and around him and fills a large part of the picture. The instrument does more than tell us his profession. It decides how he sits, held within its curves with one hand near the strings.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: NMW A 14301

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The Bal Maidens

Emily Mary Osborn

c. 1870 · National Museum Cardiff



Emily Mary Osborn. The Bal Maidens. Image credit: Emily Mary Osborn; Source credit: Art UK : entry 160807. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Three women walk away from a workplace together, and the weight of their loads shows in the way they move. Osborn keeps them distinct through small details: each has her own apron and her own way of covering her head.

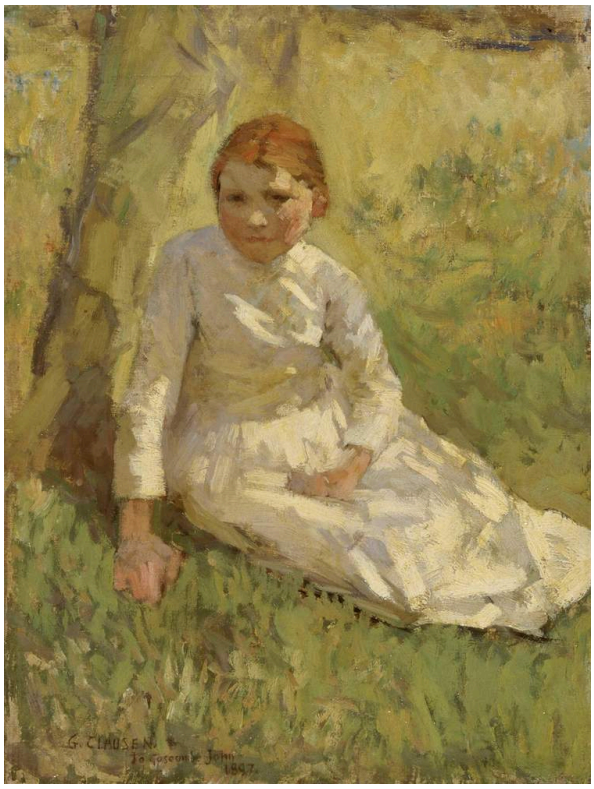
Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: NMW A 5012

14 / 20

Girl in a Field

George Clausen

c. 1900 · National Museum Cardiff



George Clausen. Girl in a Field. Image credit: George Clausen. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

The girl sits low in the grass, stiller and more distinct than the loose, broken marks of the field around her. Clausen does not cut her out of it, though. He paints figure and setting in related ways, and the same outdoor light falls on both.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: NMW A 175

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Cilgerran Castle

William Havell

c. 1805 · National Museum Cardiff



William Havell. Cilgerran Castle. Image credit: William Havell; Source credit: Art UK. Wikimedia Commons. Public domain (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/). Resized and JPEG-compressed; selected source frame preserved. · Public domain

Havell comes at Cilgerran Castle from the river, past wooded banks and boats in the shadowed foreground. From this low route, the castle's height can be judged against the ground around it.

Object source · Open artwork · Inventory: NMW A 475

16 / 20

Pozzuoli

Penry Williams

1831 · Oil on canvas · National Museum Cardiff



Penry Williams. Pozzuoli. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/penry-williams/pozzuoli-1831 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

Williams changes his handling as the view recedes. On the nearer slope he picks out animals and rough ground one by one, giving them a distinct texture, while the broad bay beyond is laid in with larger areas. In this view of Pozzuoli, buildings along the far shore mark a settlement but leave the water open.

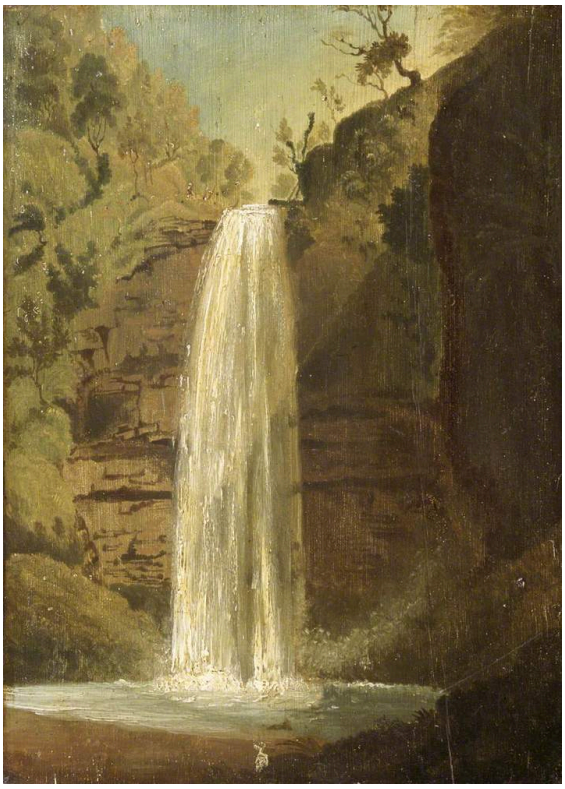
Object source · Open artwork

17 / 20

Sgwd yr Henryd, Vale of Neath

Penry Williams

1819 · Oil on board · National Museum Cardiff



Penry Williams. Sgwd yr Henryd, Vale of Neath. WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/penry-williams/sgwd-yr-henryd-vale-of-neath-1819 · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

After the open bay at Pozzuoli, this view closes in. The pale fall of water stands out sharply against dark rock and vegetation. The ravine is narrow and the cliff encloses it, so the water has little room to spread sideways and the drop is what counts.

Object source · Open artwork

18 / 20

Mass for the Reapers

Penry Williams

1858 · National Museum Cardiff



Penry Williams. Mass for the Reapers. Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

Of Penry Williams's pictures here, this is the one built around a crowd. The Mass is held out on the land the reapers work, in the middle of their working day, and the chapel is modest beside the people resting around it. Bright clothing and open fields give the gathering warmth and an informal air.

Object source · Open artwork

19 / 20

Innocents and Card Sharpers

Ernest Meissonier

1861 · National Museum Cardiff



Ernest Meissonier. Innocents and Card Sharpers (A Game of Piquet). Image: WikiArt. Public domain (WikiArt label). Proportionally resized and JPEG compressed; no crop. · Public domain (WikiArt label)

The title gives the game away before the picture does. Hats, hands and faces press close together as the players watch their cards and one another. No single large gesture betrays the deception. It shows only in how unevenly their attention is spread, and Meissonier leaves posture and glance to do the telling.

Object source · Open artwork

20 / 20

La Parisienne

Pierre-Auguste Renoir

1874 · Oil · National Museum Cardiff



Pierre-Auguste Renoir. La Parisienne ("The Blue Lady"). WikiArt source label: Public domain. Proportional resize and JPEG compression; no crop. Source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/pierre-auguste-renoir/la-parisienne-the-blue-lady · Public domain (WikiArt source label)

La Parisienne names a type rather than a person, and much of the painting's care goes into what she wears. She stands in a blue dress and hat that give her a public presence, against a lightly indicated background. Small shifts of light separate the parts of the costume without breaking up its overall shape. Her gloved hands, held together near the waist, make the one contained gesture.

Object source · Open artwork

Around the working day

Several of these pictures are about work, yet few show anyone in the middle of it. Pritchard's procession has not yet reached Swansea market. The bal maidens are on their way out of the workplace, and the reapers have stopped for Mass. Griffith Owen sits within the curve of his harp but is not playing it. Even in Marks's classroom only some of the children are reading. The people most obviously busy at their trade may be Meissonier's card sharpers.

Further reading

Impressionism: A Centenary Exhibition

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

Anne Dayez, Michel Hoog and Charles S. Moffett wrote this exhibition catalogue on Impressionism, which you can read online or download. It gives background on the movement for Manet's snow scene and Renoir's La Parisienne, the only pictures in this selection that fall within its subject.

Museum website · Official collection guide

Sources and visitor information checked: 2026-10-12
