

# The Morisot Sisters: The Pioneer Female Impressionist Painters

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## Abstract

This paper explores the profound contributions of Edma Morisot, Berthe Morisot, and Marie Bracquemond—three pioneering female Impressionist painters whose artistic achievements are often overlooked within the male-dominated Impressionist movement of the late 19th century. While Impressionism transformed art by emphasizing light, shadow, and the *en plein air* technique, it marginalized female artists, relegating their work to the fringes of mainstream recognition. Edma and Berthe Morisot, two sisters trained in classical techniques, defied societal expectations and familial pressures to establish a unique artistic voice, portraying intimate scenes of women’s daily lives. Edma’s career was cut short due to marital constraints, while Berthe’s continued until her death, producing notable works such as *The Mother and Sister of the Artist* and *Summer’s Day*, which reflect her skill in color palette and composition. Marie Bracquemond celebrated as one of the “three great ladies of Impressionism,” also defied conventions, presenting works like *Afternoon Snack* despite her husband’s disapproval. This study illuminates how these women navigated gendered restrictions to contribute to Impressionism, challenging patriarchal norms and enriching the movement’s legacy through their nuanced depictions of women’s experiences and intricate brushwork.

**Keywords:** *en plein air*, “la Société Anonyme des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs, etc.”, Salon des Indépendents, oil on canvas technique.

## Introduction

Inception of Impressionism can be traced to the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century when they were treated as outcasts. They were originally called “la Société Anonyme des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs, etc.” but today they are blue-chip artist with most expensive works. They are known for *en plein air* (in the open air) technique which captures the sunlight and shadow. This art movement like many others was also male dominated. The first Impressionist Exhibition was held in 1874 from then onwards the exhibition was held annually or biannually until 1886. This art movement gave rise to additional salons which are operational till today, these Salons are the Salon des Indépendents and the Salon D’Automne.<sup>1</sup>

This paper discusses the portraits by Edma Morisot and Berthe Morisot along with those by Marie Bracquemond. The stunning contribution and their artistic prowess are often neglected from the discussion of Impressionist painters. These women belonged to the intimate group of female painters and their paintings depicted the aspects of everyday life of a female in the late nineteenth century, away from the misogynistic limitation. Edma Morisot, a French Impressionist painter, had her expertise in the outdoor

<sup>1</sup> Caroline Finden, *The Women of Impressionism: The Influence of Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, and Eva Gonzalès on the Art Market*, (MA Thesis, 2023), 8-10.

scenes mainly in landscapes.<sup>2</sup> Since her childhood she had displayed interest in music and drawing, and her mother made her and Berthe attend classes under the neoclassical painter Geoffroy Alphonse Chocane.<sup>3</sup>

Both the sisters took elementary art lessons under Geoffroy Alphonse Chocane and after learning the basics they wanted to continue in art. For that purpose, madame Morisot hired a well-known French painter Joseph Guichard as their teacher.<sup>4</sup> Armand Forreau had done extensive research on Morisot sisters and in the year 1925 wrote what Guichard said to Morisot sister's mother, "With natures like those of your daughters my teaching will not confer the meagre talent of genteel accomplishment, they will become painters. Do you have any idea what that means? In your milieu of the grande bourgeoisie it would be a revolution."<sup>5</sup>

After their apprenticeship with Guichard concluded they proceeded as copyists at Louvre where they met Félix Bracquemond along with Henri Latour. After some time, they got bored of copying and started practising under famous French painter Jean Corot who made them experts in *en plein air* technique.<sup>6</sup> He made them grow good connections with established painters like Édouard Manet for whom Berthe sat as a model for seven times. However, Manet's constant portrayal of Berthe, disturbed her own work for a prolonged period i.e., from 1868-1874.<sup>7</sup>

Both the sisters had cordial relations and painted together. It is said that in the initial years Berthe took frequent advice of Edma in her works, both the sisters critiqued each other's works freely and frequently.<sup>8</sup> Edma's career and her bonding with Berthe came to a halt after her marriage with Adolphe Pontillon (a naval officer) as he didn't support Edma's art.

Berthe's career as a painter continued till her death in the year 1895. She painted her only daughter Julie on many occasions which shows that she was not as unfortunate as her sister in terms of receiving her husband's support. She became a close friend of Édouard Manet in the early 1870's and their friendship lasted till 1874 i.e., the year she got married with Manet's younger brother Eugène. The art historians are not sure whether she had cordial relations with Édouard Manet after her marriage or not, but one thing is evident that she never posed again for Manet post her marriage.

Apart from Morisot sisters, Marie Bracquemond too excelled in the Impressionist period. She was respected by contemporary artist Cézanne as he was impressed with her working style. French Art Historian Henri Follicon referred to her as one of "the three great ladies of Impressionism" (the other two being the Morisot sisters).<sup>9</sup> She was a Parisian and her training as an artist commenced in late teens. M. Auguste Vastor became her teacher who was an aged man by then and gave art classes to the women of his town.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Henry S. Francis, "Sur La Falaise Aux Petites Dalles (Mme. Pontillon, Sister of the Artist)' by Berthe Morisot", *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 37, no. 10 (1950), 206, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25141672> (accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022).

<sup>3</sup> Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot*, (University of California Press, 1993), 10-51.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Armand Fourreau, *Berthe Morisot*, (Paris, Rider, 1925), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Henry S. Francis, op.cit., 206.

<sup>7</sup> Marni R. Kessler, "Unmasking Manet's Morisot," *The Art Bulletin*, 81, no. 3 (1999), 475. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3051353> (11<sup>th</sup> May 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Anne Higonnet, op. cit., 10-51.

<sup>9</sup> Henri Follicon, *The Art of the West: Volume 1. Romanesque Art*, (United States of America, Phaidon, 1963), 107.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Paul Bouillon and Elizabeth Kane, "Marie Bracquemond", *Woman's Art Journal* 5, no. 2 (1984), 21. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1357962> (11<sup>th</sup> May 2022).

She was a gifted painter since the inception of her career. At the age of 17 her painting (depicting her mother and sister) got accepted by the Salon.<sup>11</sup> After winning such a mammoth laurel at an early age she continued her artistic career under the guardianship of famous French artist Ingres and art critic Philip Burty who had once commented Marie Bracquemond to be “one of the most intelligent pupils in Ingres’ studio”.<sup>12</sup>

In the bygone days (mid-late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe) the women were supposed to prove themselves in every field as their idol work was supposed to be housekeeping. Whenever a woman stepped out into an occupation not perceived to suit her sex, she became a fiddle in the eyes of men. Instead of teaching Marie about history, portraits of landscapes, Ingres had asked her to paint still lives, butterflies and flowers.<sup>13</sup> Something very unworthy of a gifted painter who has made her name at a naïve age. In a contemporary text Marie herself stated that “The severity of Monsieur Ingres frightened me... because he doubted the courage and perseverance of a woman in the field of painting... He would assign to them only the painting of flowers, of fruits, of still lives, portraits and genre scenes.”<sup>14</sup>

Marie married a fellow painter Félix Bracquemond in the year c.1869.<sup>15</sup> Félix was a staunch detractor of Impressionism and didn’t like her wife’s association with the movement.<sup>16</sup> She was a powerful lady and displayed in three Impressionist exhibitions even though her husband resented; these three exhibitions were held in the years 1879, 1880, and 1886.<sup>17</sup>

### Portrait by Edma Morisot

*Berthe Morisot par sa soeur Edma vers 1865* (1865) is the only surviving work by Edma Morisot. At the time of its rendering Berthe Morisot must have been in her mid-twenties. The youth and charm can be easily discerned from her oeuvre. Berthe looks contemplative, it appears that she is engrossed in herself, and her countenance resembles that of *The Balcony* (1868).

After years of training the sisters had become comfortable with the paint brush. By the 1860’s they had started practicing independently as their basics of art were clear. It appears like Berthe was unaware that her sister was painting her and she continued practicing her work naturally. The left arm of Berthe holds the colour mixing plate while the right hand holds the brush. The left hand holds a bunch of other brushes and a handkerchief too. A good amount of reflection can be seen on Berthe’s skin and her left cheek shimmers with light. She is shown concentrating on her canvas while Edma Morisot portrays her patiently. The leftmost edge of the canvas is shown towards the viewers to make them feel the canvas’ presence. The youthful face of Berthe is able to seek the viewer’s attention because of the dark composition of the room. It appears like Edma has willingly done that to make Berthe’s face the focal point of the image. The hairband and golden earrings add grace and charm to Berthe’s beautiful appearance. This way Edma has been successful in making her sister the centre of attraction in the work.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Catherine Futter, Nicole Myers and Jan Schall, *Bloch Galleries: Highlights from the Collection of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*, (United States of America, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2016), 77.

<sup>15</sup> Clement, Russell T, Houzé, Annick, Erbolato-Ramsey Christiane, *The women impressionists: a sourcebook*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000), 155.

<sup>16</sup> Jean-Paul Bouillon, Elizabeth Kane, “Marie Bracquemond”, *Woman’s Art Journal* 5, no. 2 (1984), 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1357962> (accessed 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

### Portraits by Berthe Morisot

Berthe Morisot painted *The Mother and Sister of the Artist* in the year 1870 with oil on canvas technique. She got this work accepted in a Salon exhibition the same year. This painting was also displayed in the first Impressionist exhibition held in the year 1874.<sup>18</sup> Edma spent some time in her maternal home during her pregnancy.<sup>19</sup> This portrait was rendered during those days, as Morisot considered it a perfect opportunity to paint a family portrait. Since Morisot was preparing to exhibit this portrait in Salon, she willingly hid Edma's paunch by painting her in a loose white gown.<sup>20</sup> However, she found it difficult to complete the painting on time for submission to the Salon. This has been recorded in a letter sent by Berthe Morisot to Edma Morisot, where she admits that Manet has offered to help her in completing her work.<sup>21</sup> As per art historian Marni R. Kessler, Berthe was a little nervous with the painting, since she was hiding something from the critics. Her nervousness was also caused due to the fear of rejection at the Salon. In her letter to Edma she admits to this fear. She recalled that Manet retouched the background, lower portion of the skirt, bust and the head of Madame Morisot. She feared that identification of Manet's strokes would make the grounds for her rejection at the Salon. The "corrections" (repainting) of a woman artist's work by a male colleague was not uncommon. The detection of another hand in the painting would sure have caused her rejection.<sup>22</sup> Since Manet's brush strokes differed greatly from that of Berthe. Her strokes were nervously refined in comparison to bold and confident ones of Manet.<sup>23</sup> In the painting Berthe has painted her sister, floral upholstery, and the mirror above Edma's head.<sup>24</sup>

The portrait must have grabbed the Salon's attention because of the neutral countenance of Edma. She appears to be pondering something staunchly. Along with Berthe's close bonding with her sister Edma, this portrait helps us to gaze at the cordial bonding between the painter and Manet. Unlike the self-portraits of Berthe Morisot this work is devoid of sketchiness, blurred lines and the fall of light. Morisot's self-portraits show that she is trying to capture an impression in one passing moment in time.<sup>25</sup>

Berthe Morisot painted *Summer's Day* in the year 1879 with oil on canvas technique.<sup>26</sup> The scene is based in Bois de Boulogne and shows two women seated in a boat.<sup>27</sup> The palette of Morisot is very special in this work as she rendered the blue coat of the lady with cerulean blue, a colour used by Impressionists in very rare instances.<sup>28</sup> She has used cadmium yellow in the painting (for hats).<sup>29</sup> Cadmium yellow was not used very often by the 19<sup>th</sup> century painters.<sup>30</sup> Thus, Morisot has proved her palette to be a special one by using such colours.

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<sup>18</sup> Kathleen Adler, Tamar Garb, et.al, *Perspectives on Morisot*, (Massachusetts, Hudson Hills Press, 1990), 65.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Marni R. Kessler, op.cit., 476.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Melissa Mcquillan, *Impressionist Portraits*, (Japan, Thames and Hudson, 1986), 76.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>25</sup> Liana De Girolami Cheney, Alicia Craig Faxon and Kathleen Lucey Russo, *Self Portraits by Women Painters*, (Singapore, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000), 160.

<sup>26</sup> Kathleen Adler, Tamar Garb. *Berthe Morisot*, (Oxford, Phaidon, 1987), 88.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Kathleen Adler, Tamar Garb, op.cit., 91.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

The green colour done to show foliage is rendered by mixing emerald, green, viridian, lead white, and cadmium yellow.<sup>31</sup> It appears that Berthe was sitting at the other corner of the boat while drawing this masterpiece. The lady at right gazes at the viewer directly while the left one appears enjoying her boat ride. Those days women were not supposed to be out for long and the way the lady at left enjoys her ride shows that she is finding delight in her ephemeral freedom. This is a beautiful work by Berthe Morisot and is signed by her at the rightmost side of the painting i.e., boat's corner.

*After Luncheon* was completed by Berthe Morisot in the year 1881 by oil on canvas technique. The girl portrayed in this portrait (Maire) had sat for Berthe as model in many paintings, including this one.<sup>32</sup> The red locked Maire is sitting in a conservatory in Bougival, where Berthe and her husband Eugène Manet had rented a home. Marie is shown wearing a tight fitted blue dress and the same blue colour finds place in the fan she holds in her left hand. Her head is adorned with a straw-hat having flowers on its left end. The rear part of the composition is full of blossomed flowers along with bushes. In front of her, a skin-coloured table is drawn with some fruits and a transparent jug on it.

The image was exhibited in the seventh Impressionist Exhibition in 1882 which was organized by Durand Ruel.<sup>33</sup> Despite the Impressionist brushing style the image shows focus on minor details like, fruits and jar on the table along with flowers on the hat.<sup>34</sup> The colour combination behind Marie's back and the floor appears similar to her dress. Berthe has created a differentiation between Marie's dress and the floor with the help of the chair's back. The painting was auctioned at little more than one crore dollar in 2013, a prize not expected from a female artist's work by the 19<sup>th</sup> century's patriarchal society.<sup>35</sup>

### Portraits by Marie Bracquemond

Marie Bracquemond completed *Afternoon Snack* in the year 1880 with oil on canvas technique. She met Edgar Degas in the 1870's and later they became good friends. As per Myers it was Degas who coaxed Bracquemond to join the Impressionist group in the year 1879 and she joined the group in the same year.<sup>36</sup> A glimpse of this painting can be deceiving as the model appears to be Bracquemond but the model is Louise the younger sister of the painter.<sup>37</sup>

Louise is not looking at the viewer rather she is shown trapped in a gripping novel. She appears to be looking away from the novel's page because of her head's placement. Both the shoulders of Louise cut the horizon line of the painting, while her head forms the focal point allowing the viewer to concentrate on her. This makes her the centre of attraction in the illustration. Scholars opine that Louise is seated in the garden terrace of Marie's home or Villa Brancas in Sèvres.<sup>38</sup>

In front of her a plate of grapes is placed along with a cup of tea, and a white tea kettle is placed behind the cup. It seems that she is enjoying her afternoon in the open air. France's geographical location makes

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> *After Luncheon*, The Famous Artist, <http://www.thefamousartists.com/berthe-morisot/after-luncheon> (accessed 15th March 2022).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Jean-Paul Bouillon, and Elizabeth Kane, "Marie Bracquemond", *Woman's Art Journal* 5, no. 2 (1984), 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1357962> (29<sup>th</sup> March 2022).

<sup>37</sup> Madlyn Millner Kahr, "Women as Artists and 'Women's Art.'" *Woman's Art Journal* 3, no. 2 (1982), 28–31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1358031> (22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

it a cold place. Thus, having a warm cup of tea along with fruits and accompanied with a gripping read could easily make someone's afternoon. The same is shown in the image.

Bracquemond is known for outdoor scenes, especially for the ones based in gardens (probably the garden of her house), this artwork stands as a perfect example of it.<sup>39</sup> The frequent depiction of her terrace garden shows how badly the painter was restricted to her household even though she wanted freedom and independence for her work.

She was one of many ladies (of 19th century Europe) who were supposed to choose either their household or profession. Thus, painters like Marie Bracquemond continued to work even after marriage by living as per the aspirations of the society (especially their spouse). They made use of the available resources and rendered their paintings. Thus, the garden-based scenes found frequent place in Marie Bracquemond's paintings.

Berthe Morisot was comparatively luckier than Marie Bracquemond because she had a helpful and supportive husband, a big exception during those days. Marie's Bracquemond husband may have helped her if she was not associated with Impressionism as Félix Bracquemond was a vehement opposer of the movement and loathed their loose palette with working style.

Félix urged Marie to get into the field of decorative arts as he was an art director and wanted her to enter printmaking.<sup>40</sup> Under the printmaking genre Félix always felt predilection for etching and encouraged Marie to do the same. She was trained and instructed by Félix in the same. She mastered the art of etching as it can be clearly seen in the work titled *The Umbrella* (1882). Pierre's (the son of Mary and Félix Bracquemond) accounts help one get an insight into the Bracquemond family dynamics. He had explained that his mother loved working with colours as it gave her immense joy and freedom to express herself, but she went into etching only after Félix's coaxing.<sup>41</sup> At present this beautiful art-piece can be seen in Orsay Museum and experts consider it to be at the epitome among all of Marie Bracquemond's etching works. The visual story of *The Umbrella* (1882) illustration is simple and enthralling. A lady at the leftmost corner of the painting is shown gazing at a hatted gentleman who is shown trying to rush away from the scene. Instead of opening his umbrella which he has engrossed by his left arm he is holding onto his hat in order to scurry off.

This act of the gentleman makes the art lovers ponder to this day. The whole composition appears in chaos as people are hurtling to reach a safer place and almost all of them have opened their umbrellas. The one at the back got his umbrella annihilated by a sudden gush of the wind and his depiction adds more urgency and immediacy to this work.

The painting was done like a photograph which was a typical Impressionist feature. Marie Bracquemond has cropped the corners of the painting. She has willingly abstained to show the lowermost part of the work i.e., the part below the hatted gentleman in order to show tumult in the atmosphere. She has rendered diagonal lines in this painting to show rain droplets and the closely packed diagonal lines at the rear represent a heavy breeze which has already destroyed one person's umbrella.

All the figures in the image are holding themselves up, as if they are haunted by the fear of getting carried away by the sudden breeze. The condition is so tense that no one is caring about the other person, and

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<sup>39</sup> Belinda Thomson, *The Burlington Magazine* 129, no. 1009 (1987), 254–55, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/883039> (30<sup>th</sup> March 2022).

<sup>40</sup> Jean-Paul Bouillon, and Elizabeth Kane, op.cit., 95.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

everyone is trying to save themselves from the vehement deluge of rain. In a way the countenance of the flower seller appears contradicting as she appears completely tranquil and is focusing on her work. The flower seller hints towards positivity and optimism as she still believes that even in this ferocious situation, she will be able to find a suitable client. A poster on the left-hand side's wall and the presence of a gothic dome at the background gives the composition an urban setup. Marie Bracquemond has signed this art-piece on the bottom right side, so, in a way she makes herself a part of this disturbed scene.

## Conclusion

Some of the female Impressionists discussed in the paper had different working styles but what bound them together was their courage and perseverance towards their art. All of them belonged to the affluent family background where they had never seen financial strain but still, they depicted paintings like *Girl Arranging her Hair* (1866) where a woman from the working class is depicted.

As already stated, Morisot sisters' teacher was not happy while informing the Impressionist sisters' mother that they are talented and can make a big name in the field of art. He was transfixed that if they contribute something good to this field then it will act like a revolution in the entire French society.

Thus, being talented and capable was not considered as a virtue for a woman. In that orthodox society these women were making their mark through their artwork. These women were not a miniscule part of the Impressionist umbrella; rather they served the group with immense dignity and had a good hold in it. They established themselves among the powerful individuals in the art circle. They were respected by their fellow (male) painters, and they got appreciated by them multiple times. Auguste Renoir was the biggest follower of Morisot's art and as per John Rewald "(Auguste Renoir) considered her (Berthe Morisot) the last truly feminine artist and admired the virginity of her talent."<sup>42</sup>

The hold these women had in the art society can be understood from the fact that female artists like Berthe Morisot once conducted an independent exhibition and Theodore Duret, a prominent art critic of the 19th century was one of her clients.<sup>43</sup> However, the female painters failed to receive the same amount of recognition and respect in the society as their male contemporaries used to get. The amount of injustice and inequality faced by female artists is visible from Berthe Morisot's statement (in the year 1890) "I don't think there has ever been a man treating a woman as equal to equal and that's all I have asked because I know I'm as good as they are."<sup>44</sup>

They deserve adulation not just because they stepped out of their home and followed their passion but because they had no exposure to nude painting and male nude models were never allowed to sit for female art students.<sup>45</sup> They were not allowed to give a hand at history paintings as it consisted of nudes.<sup>46</sup> Thus,

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<sup>42</sup> Henry S. Francis, "'Sur La Falaise Aux Petites Dalles (Mme. Pontillon, Sister of the Artist)' by Berthe Morisot." *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 37, no. 10 (1950), 211. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25141672> (accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022).

<sup>43</sup> Ilene Dube, *Why Berthe Morisot Was an Essential Figure in the Impressionist Movement*, Hyperallergic, <https://hyperallergic.com/468570/why-berthe-morisot-was-an-essential-figure-in-the-impressionist-movement/> (accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022).

<sup>44</sup> Liana De Girolami Cheney, Alicia Craig Faxon and Kathleen Lucey Russo, *Self Portraits by Women Painters*, (Singapore, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000), 162.

<sup>45</sup> Nicole Myers, "Women Artists in Nineteenth-Century France." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/19wa/hd\\_19wa.htm#:~:text=It%20was%20not%20until%20the,of%20the%20private%20Acad%C3%A9mie%20Julian](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/19wa/hd_19wa.htm#:~:text=It%20was%20not%20until%20the,of%20the%20private%20Acad%C3%A9mie%20Julian) (accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

for an all-round growth of an artist exposure to all the genres is a must and these female Impressionists sailed a great distance without that. Nathaniel Harris clearly states in his book “The paintings of Manet” how Berthe got jealous of Eva Gonzales as she was getting more attention from Manet than Berthe and she delighted in the struggles Eva went through in her art training.<sup>47</sup> Her jealousy was also fuelled by the fact that Manet accepted Eva as his student. Despite the feelings of jealousy what held the female Impressionists together was their struggles against the orthodox society.<sup>48</sup>

The women of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were not supposed to take part in the meetings dominated by men. This is the only reason why talented female painters like Berthe Morisot were unable to make it to the meetings and discussions held at café Guerbois.<sup>49</sup> Monet once stated (with respect to the café Guerbois meetings) that “Nothing was more interesting than these discussions, with their perpetual clash of opinion. They kept one’s spirit awake, encouraged one to disinterested and sincere research, enabled one to store away reserves of enthusiasm, which nourished one for weeks.”<sup>50</sup> Painters like Berthe Morisot, Marie Bracquemond, etc. who had amicable relations with their male counterparts would have learnt something new out of these discussions. They would have incorporated some new techniques and adopted versatility in their art style. But that didn’t happen because of the orthodoxy of 19<sup>th</sup> century French society. These female painters deserve a lot of adulation because even after living in the confines set by society they painted very well and stood shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts.

As per art historian Nicole Myer the suffering of female painters continued till the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as the doors of Academy of fine arts were shut for women till 1897.<sup>51</sup> The female Impressionist artworks would have been even more breathtaking had they taken birth in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, society became comparatively accepting of women painters. Had painters like Marie Bracquemond taken birth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, her paintings would have displayed the scenes portraying crowds, nudes (of all the sexes), etc. But that is a mere imagination, the reality is that they lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and made the art critics notice their work. A time when women were not considered as a ‘real’ artist. Their portraits tell us about their thinking, relations with fellow painters and the life they had led outside the canvas.

## Plates-



**Fig. Berthe Morisot par sa soeur Edma vers 1865, oil on canvas by Edma Morisot, 100 x 71 cm, 1865, Place: Private Collection, Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons**

<sup>47</sup> Nathaniel Harris, *The paintings of Manet*, (Spain, Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1989), 86.

<sup>48</sup> John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism*, (Netherlands, Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 220.

<sup>49</sup> Pierre Schneider, op. cit., 87.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 87-88.

<sup>51</sup> Nicole Myers, Ibid.





**Fig. *The Balcony*, oil on canvas by Édouard Manet, 170 x 125 cm, 1868, Place: Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Courtesy: Musée d'Orsay, Paris**



**Fig. *The Mother and Sister of the Artist*, oil on canvas by Berthe Morisot, 101 x 81.8 cm, 1870, Place: The National Gallery of Art, Courtesy: National Gallery of Art**



**Fig. *Summer's Day*, oil on canvas by Berthe Morisot, 45.7 x 75.2 cm, 1879, Place: National Portrait Gallery, London, Courtesy: The National Gallery, London**



**Fig. *After Luncheon*, oil on canvas by Berthe Morisot, 80.7 x 100 cm, 1881, Place: Private Collection, Courtesy: The Athenaeum**



**Fig. *The Afternoon Snack*, oil on canvas by Marie Bracquemond, 81 x 61 cm, 1880, Place: Musée du Petit Palais, Paris, Courtesy: The Art Story.com**



**Fig. *The Umbrella* by Marie Bacquemond, black chalk, graphite, gouache, ink technique, 55 cm x 38 cm, 1890, Place: Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Courtesy: The Art Story**



**Fig. *Girl arranging her hair*, oil on canvas by Mary Cassatt, 75.1 x 62.5 cm, 1886, Place: National Gallery of Art, New York, Courtesy: [nga.gov](http://nga.gov)**