1.1 Nature’s Mirror
PowerPoint

McMullens Museum of Art, Boston College
Daley Family Gallery
September 10–December 10, 2017
Curated by Jeffery Howe
Warm Up

Look at the following picture. Write down the first 5 things you notice.
Warm Up

Now compare your list with a partner. What did they notice that you did not? How much detail did you each include? Why do you think you listed the things you did?

Why might someone choose to paint this picture?

François Bossuet, Ostend. La Plaine Viewed from the Top of the Dunes to the West, n.d., oil on canvas, 25.4 x 41.9 cm, Hearn Family Trust
Landscape Painting

Landscapes are a type of art in which an artist shows a scene from nature. They can be based on real life or come from the imagination. Even those based on real life will be made with different levels of detail, with some showing lots of details and others not. Landscape paintings can be a way to experience nature from around the world from someone else’s point of view.

How an artist chooses to paint a landscape might depend on his or her life experiences, where he or she lives or works, what techniques he or she wishes to practice, and what other artists are doing at the time. When you look at the following paintings ask yourself:

• What catches your attention?
• Why do you think the artist chose to paint that scene?
• What is the artist’s purpose in painting that scene?
• What personal or historic events might have influenced them?
• What does the painting remind you of in your own life? Why?

Landscape painting goes back more than one thousand years and can be found all over the world. The focus of this exhibition, however, will be landscapes in Belgium.
Belgium
Geography

**Capital:** Brussels

**Size:** 11,787 square miles (about the size of Maryland)

**Population:** Over 10.5 million (16 times the population of Boston)

97% of Belgians live in cities

**Famous cities:** Bruges, Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent, and Spa (where we get the word ‘spa’ from)

**Geographic features:**

- **Lowlands:** This means much of the land is below sea level and floods easily
- **Windmills**
- **Tulips**

http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/countries/belgium.html
Languages

• **Dutch** (also called Flemish) is spoken in the north

• **French** is spoken in the south

• **German** is spoken by a small group by the town of Liège in the east

https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/belgium/#belgium-ghent-channel.jpg
Culture

Industries: farming, oyster ‘farming,’ fishing
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Fun facts: Belgians invented what we call french fries!

The saxophone was also invented here.
History & Government

- Got its independence from The Netherlands in 1830
- Has both a prime minister and a king
- Uses the Euro like many European countries
- Helped found the European Union
- Like in America, citizens over 18 get to vote

https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/countries/belgium/#belgium-ghent-channel.jpg
In the 15th century, artists developed a new technology called **printmaking** that required lots of talented artists to work together.

Artists used this method to make many copies of a work all at once so that more people could see them.

Because these prints were made at a time when many people could not read, artists used images to tell people stories from the Bible and ancient mythology.

They would paint these stories in a setting or **landscape** that looked like their hometown rather than where the story actually took place. By making the stories look like they took place nearby, artists were able to teach viewers important lessons!
Hans Bol, engraved by Pieter van der Heyden, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Winter*, 1570, etching on paper, 10.8 x 17.4 cm, Hearn Family Trust
Joannes van Doetecum or Lucas van Doetecum, etching after sketch by Lucas Gassel, published by Hieronymus Cock, *Landscape with St. Jerome*, 1560–64, etching on paper, 22.8 x 32 cm, Hearn Family Trust
In the 18th century, people began to travel more and wanted to buy landscapes to remind them of the places they had seen.

Later on, a style called Romanticism became very popular. The goal of Romantic paintings was to show how awesome, great, thrilling, and sometimes terrifying nature could be.

Artists did this so that the person looking at the painting could experience the same emotion that they felt when they painted it. Some artists also tried to show nature in a way that is pleasant or nice to look at.
Mood and Tone

Just like an author or a director, an artist might try to make the viewer feel a certain feeling towards the work. This is called **tone**, or the **creator’s attitude** towards the topic.

**Mood** is how the work makes you feel.

*Tip:* Remember, **mood**=me and **tone**=the other person. Think of a scary movie, the creator’s **tone** might be serious, gloomy, or sad. But the **mood**, how it makes you feel, might be scared, worried, or even annoyed!
Eugène-Joseph Verboeckhoven, *Mountainous Landscape with Bridge*, n.d., oil on paper, laid down on canvas, 57.2 x 46.4 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Collection, promised gift of Wheelock Whitney III, and purchase, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles S. McVeigh, by exchange, 2003.42.55
Hippolyte Boulenger, *Flood in the Ardennes*, n.d., oil on canvas, 29.2 x 42 cm, Hearn Family Trust
Types of Realism

In the 19th century, artists were also dedicated to painting real nature and its peacefulness rather than fantasy scenes.

However, their goal was to paint the scene as they saw it, from their perspective or point of view.

When two people look at the same landscape they often represent the same scene in different ways. They choose to focus on or highlight different things and, if painting from memory, remember the scene in different ways. Everyone’s reality looks different.
Théodore Verstraete, *The Vigil*, 1888, oil on canvas, 33 x 55 cm, Hearn Family Trust
With a partner, compare and contrast these two images. What is the same in both? Can you find at least 5 differences in how the landscape is shown? What might be the reason behind these differences? Which place would you prefer to live and why?
The Impact of Industrialism

Many people were moving to cities from the country during the 1800s to find work. This was called the **Industrial Revolution**.

Many machines were invented and many factories were started that created lots of jobs in the city rather than the country.

Though there were jobs, people had to work very hard for long hours. Their environment was often dark, cramped, and unhealthy due to lots of **smog** in the air made from burning coal. Many artists during this time tried to show cities as places where people suffered.
Eugène Laermans, *The Emigrants*, c. 1891–93, etching on paper, 10.2 x 12.1 cm, Collection of Sura Levine
The School of Tervuren

In the 1800s, many people moved to cities. This inspired some artists to paint landscapes more than other subjects.

In the country of Belgium, one group that felt this way was called “The School of Tervuren.” They focused on painting quiet and peaceful scenes of nature, often of fields and forests outside the town of Tervuren.

They thought nature offered an escape from the chaos and hard life found in cities. Because of this, they wanted to paint country life like it was: calm, peaceful, and without many humans.
Joseph-Théodore Coosemans, *Pond at the Castle of Robiano-Tervuren*, 1863, oil on canvas, 53.3 x 86.8 cm, Hearn Family Trust
Jean-Baptiste Degref, *Undergrowth*, n.d., oil on canvas, 46 x 55.2 cm, Hearn Family Trust
Reality and Symbols

Artists use symbols when they want to represent something without drawing or saying anything. For example, you might draw a heart to represent love.

Artists during this time often wanted to use nature to represent emotions.
Léon Frederic, *Spring*, 1883, oil on canvas, 22.2 x 47.6 cm, Hearn Family Trust
William Degouve de Nuncques, *The Servants of Death (Nocturne)*, c. 1897, pastel on wove paper, 48 x 94.5 cm (sheet), Hearn Family Trust
The Changing Use of Symbols

One Belgian artist, Fernand Khnopff, really liked to use nature to represent emotions and feelings.

He especially liked to paint scenes from his childhood from memory to create a feeling of **nostalgia**, or a longing for the past.

He also liked to use the mirror-like quality of water to show reflectiveness, or deep thoughts especially about oneself.
Fernand Khnopff, At Fosset. The Water Rises, 1881, oil on canvas mounted on panel, 12 x 21.6 cm, Hearn Family Trust
Fernand Khnopff, *With Grégoire Le Roy. My Heart Weeps for Days of Yore*, 1889, black pencil, chalk, and colored pencil on paper, 23.2 x 14 cm, Hearn Family Trust