

# LES MARDIS



STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ  
and the artists of his circle

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS MUSEUM OF ART

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## FOREWORD

*Les Mardis*—the famous Tuesday receptions given by the poet Stéphane Mallarmé—provide the historical focus for this exhibition. To *Les Mardis* came the leading figures of the Parisian art world of the 1880's, poets, critics, novelists, musicians, and artists. A list of the latter reads like a roll call of the masters of nineteenth century art: Manet, Monet, Renoir, Morisot, Gauguin, Rodin, Munch, Whistler, Degas, Redon, Puvis de Chavannes.

There is another reason, however, for the selection of *Les Mardis* as an exhibition theme: the works brought together here present a unique opportunity for study of the complex interrelationships that existed during this period between poetry, painting and the other arts, and which manifested themselves in the aesthetic phenomenon of Symbolism. With this fact in mind the present catalogue containing scholarly essays on various aspects of the Symbolist movement has been prepared.

It is our hope that both the exhibition and the catalogue will be of interest to our visitors—students, scholars, and members of the general public alike—and that the catalogue may take its place as a genuine scholarly contribution to the knowledge of the art and literature of this important period of French cultural history.

Our deepest thanks to all those who have so generously assisted in the preparation of this exhibition, particularly to Mme. Hélène Adhémar, Conservateur au Département des Peintures, Musée du Louvre, M. Jean Chatelaine, Directeur des Musées de France, and M. Edouard Morot-Sir, Cultural Counselor of the French Embassy and Representative in the United States of French Universities, all of whom have extended every possible courtesy and have aided in countless ways. We are also grateful to the following institutions and individuals who have lent works for this exhibition:

The Art Institute of Chicago  
The Baltimore Museum of Art  
The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University  
The Library of Congress  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
The Minneapolis Institute of Arts  
Musée du Louvre  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
The University of Chicago Library  
Mr. D. Craig Craven  
Mr. William M. Ittmann, Jr.

MARILYN STOKSTAD  
BRET WALLER

## CATALOGUE

Prepared by JEANNE A. STUMP AND MICHAEL STOUGHTON

Entries are arranged alphabetically according to the artists' last names. Measurements are given in inches, height preceding width. Composition sizes of the graphic works are noted.

### PAINTINGS AND PRINTS

BRACQUEMOND, Félix (France, 1833-1914)

1. *Portrait of Edmond and Jules Goncourt*

Etching, 4 x 5¼ inches

Courtesy of The Baltimore Museum of Art, George A. Lucas Collection, The Maryland Institute

Bracquemond was one of the leading figures in the revival of original etching in the mid-nineteenth century and was a technical advisor to both Degas and Manet.

DEGAS, Edgar (France, 1834-1917)

2. *Manet Seated, Turned to the Right*, 1864

Etching, 7¾ x 5 inches

D. 16, fourth state

The Baltimore Museum of Art

Degas was well acquainted with Mallarmé who once wrote to Berthe Morisot that Degas was composing sonnets in order to distract himself from his painting problems. Mallarmé had been giving him advice and mused, "I lose myself conjecturing on these four sonnets by Degas, are they poetry? or a kind of therapeutic bath?"

DENIS, Maurice (France, 1870-1943)

3. *Les Attitudes sont faciles et chastes*

Color lithograph, 15½ x 11 inches

The University of Kansas Museum of Art

Maurice Denis, artist and art theorist for the painters known as *Les Nabis*, made one of the most notable declarations of the new Symbolist painting when, in 1890, he wrote: "Remember that a picture, before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or any anecdote whatever,—is essentially a plane surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order."

GAUGUIN, Paul (France, 1848-1903)

4. *Portrait of Mallarmé*

Etching, 7 3/16 x 5 13/16 inches

Guérin 14, II

The Art Institute of Chicago

Gauguin was introduced to Mallarmé in Paris by the writer Charles Morice. In 1891, the year this portrait of Mallarmé was executed, Gauguin prepared to leave for Tahiti. Mallarmé presided over the farewell banquet and toasted him first, saying: "Gentlemen, let's do first things first; let's drink to the return of Paul Gauguin, but not without admiring his superb conscience which drives him into exile, at the peak of his talent, to seek new strength in a far country and in his own nature."



*Oviri*

Woodcut, 8 1/16 x 4 3/4 inches

Guérin 48

The Art Institute of Chicago

These two impressions of *Oviri*, one in brown, the other in black ink, are mounted together on a card inscribed in Gauguin's own hand:

A Stéphane Mallarmé cette étrange  
figure, cruelle énigme. P. Gauguin, 1895.

They were formerly in Mallarmé's collection, then in the collection of Marcel Guérin, the cataloger of Gauguin's graphic works.

Gauguin admired Mallarmé intensely. He proudly wrote to André Fontainas that the poet, standing before one of Gauguin's Tahiti paintings, had been heard to exclaim in admiration: "It is extraordinary how he can put such mystery into such brilliance."

MANET, Edouard (France, 1882-1883)

6. *The Raven* (set of 5), 1875

Guérin 86, ex libris, a, b, c, d

Lithographs, 10 1/8 x 12 1/16 inches  
13 11/16 x 21 1/2 inches  
21 3/8 x 13 3/4 inches  
21 5/8 x 13 15/16 inches  
21 1/4 x 13 9/16 inches

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Manet's powerful lithographs interpreting Edgar Allan Poe's poem, mark not only the popularity of Poe among French intellectuals of the time, but also the kind of collaboration between visual and literary artists that the Symbolists favored.

7. *Sketch for the Portrait of Line Campineanu*, c. 1875

Oil, 21 x 17 1/2 inches

The University of Kansas Museum of Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Curry  
Mallarmé was desolate upon the death of Manet, whom he recalled as one of his dearest friends. Mallarmé defended Manet's painting when all the critics were attacking it, and always felt close to the other Impressionists because of Manet's association with them.

8. *Portrait of Mallarmé*, 1876

Oil, 10 13/16 x 14 3/16 inches

Musée du Louvre

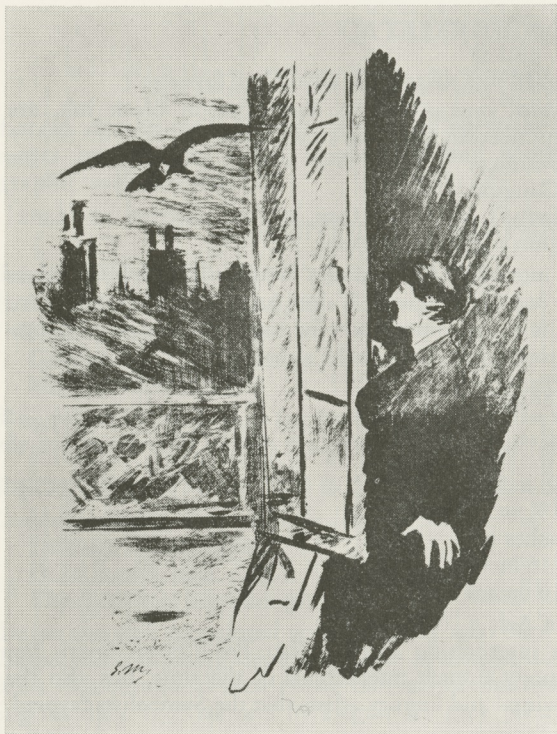
It is not known exactly how Manet and Mallarmé met. In 1874, Mallarmé moved to a new apartment, 89 rue de Rome, the site of the famous *Mardis*. Edouard Manet's studio was nearby. Mallarmé, the professor of English, tired from his day of literal translations and glosses for children, occasionally stopped to chat. Soon he was visiting Manet daily. This was the start of a friendship that lasted until Manet's death nearly ten years later.

9. *Portrait of Berthe Morisot*, 1872

Guérin 77

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Dick Fund 23.21.22

Manet and Mallarmé were close mutual friends of Berthe Morisot. The painter and the poet were fond of her imperious intelligence, her air of distinguished wildness, and the nervous disorder of her brown hair.



6. MANET *The Raven*

MONET, Claude (France, 1840-1926)

10. *Winter on the Seine, Vetheuil*

Oil, 26 x 36 inches

The University of Kansas Museum of Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. Findlay, Jr.

Mallarmé once confided to Berthe Morisot: "I am happy just to have lived in the same epoch as Monet."

MORISOT, Berthe (France, 1841-1895)

11. *Little Girl Holding a Cat on Her Lap*

Drypoint, 6 x 4 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches

The Baltimore Museum of Art

Berthe Morisot was for years the confidant of Mallarmé. Although women almost never came to *Les Mardis*, he once wrote to her: "I am late with my lecture paper, a little anxious and not going out . . . this evening (because I would like to see you before going to Oxford and Cambridge, it seems)—everything is mixed up—wouldn't you be able to come with Julie [Morisot's daughter] like a student, and sit with my friends . . . ?"



MUNCH, Edvard (Norway, 1863-1944)

12. *Portrait of Mallarmé*, 1896

Lithograph, 14 11/16 x 11 1/2 inches

Schiller 79 a/b

The Art Institute of Chicago

A letter from Genevieve Mallarmé to her father, May 23, 1897: "The Norwegian draftsman, Mr. Munch, just sent the portrait that he made of you at the beginning of last winter. It's pretty nice, but it resembles those heads of Christ printed on the scarf of a saint, with the caption: 'look long enough and you will see how the eyes close.'"

PUVIS de Chavannes, Pierre (France, 1824-1898)

13. *Au Clair de la Lune*

Oil, 18 1/4 x 15 1/8 inches

The University of Kansas Museum of Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Kaye

Poets and painters alike paid homage to the work of Puvis de Chavannes. André Fontainas recalled: "In the presence of Puvis de Chavannes we halted; time was needed for the slow and gentle charm of his grave allegories to sink in." Gauguin, Van Gogh, Seurat, and *Les Nabis* were among the painters inspired by him, although he held himself somewhat aloof from the general current of Symbolism.

6. MANET *The Raven*



REDON, Odilon (France, 1840-1916)

14. *Aurora*, 1910

Oil, 25½ x 32 inches

Private Collection

Redon, whom Maurice Denis termed "precisely the Mallarmé of painting," had qualities of mystery and poetic imagination so much admired by the Symbolists. First introduced to Mallarmé by Joris-Karl Huysmans, Redon often attended *Les Mardis*. The poet and the painter became even closer friends during their summer stays near Fontainebleau.

15. *Serpent Auréole*

Lithography, 11¾ x 8¾ inches

Collection of Mr. William M. Ittmann, Jr.

At *Les Mardis* Redon and Gauguin provided an interesting contrast: Gauguin—*ce rude gars*—noisy and voluble; and Redon, refined and a little withdrawn. Further variety was occasionally added with the appearance of Oscar Wilde carrying a sunflower.

RENOIR, Pierre Auguste (France, 1841-1919)

16. *Portrait of Berthe Morisot*, c. 1892

Drypoint, 4½ x 3 11/16 inches

Delteil 4

The Art Institute of Chicago

Mallarmé frequently enjoyed the company of Renoir at the home of Berthe Morisot. Renoir found each of them pleasant subjects for portraits.

RODIN, Auguste (France, 1840-1917)

17. *Bust of Victor Hugo*, 1884

Drypoint, 8⅞ x 7 inches

Delteil 6, II

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund 16.37.2

A piece of sculpture by Rodin was given a place of honor in Mallarmé's home; the sculptor and the poet shared an admiration for Victor Hugo.

VUILLARD, Edouard (France, 1867-1940)

18. *Les Tuileries*, 1895

Lithograph, 10½ x 11 inches

Collection of Mr. D. Craig Craven

Vuillard is listed among the painters attending *Les Mardis* at the end of 1891, along with Gauguin, Whistler, and Redon. Among the other intellectuals present were Théodor de Wyzewa, Edouard Dujardin, André Fontainas, Félix Fénéon, Gustave Kahn, Jean Moréas, Pierre Louÿs, André Gide, Paul Valéry, Oscar Wilde, Maurice Maeterlinck, Paul Verlaine, Claude Debussy, and Paul Claudel.

WHISTLER, James Abbott McNeill (U. S. A., 1834-1903)

19. *The Lagoon, Venice: Nocturne in Blue and Silver*, c. 1879-80

Oil, 20 x 25¾ inches

The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Whistler met Mallarmé in Paris, February 13, 1888. Mallarmé championed Whistler's art theory and painting in France. Whistler had been roundly ridiculed in England for his series of nocturnes and said in response: "Why should not I call my works 'symphonies,' 'arrangements,' 'harmonies,' and 'nocturnes'? I know that many good people think my nomenclature funny and myself 'eccentric.' Yes, 'eccentric' is the adjective they think for me."



20. *Portrait of Mallarmé*, 1894  
Lithograph, 3 11/16 x 2 5/16 inches  
Way 150  
The Art Institute of Chicago

21. *Portrait of Mallarmé*, 1894  
Lithograph, 3 7/8 x 2 3/4 inches  
Way 66  
The Art Institute of Chicago

Whistler lived in Paris during the nineties and frequently attended *Les Mardis*. With his sharp bursts of laughter and witty, penetrating comments, he served to "defrost" the sometimes austere atmosphere of the meetings. He had many things to say about art, and wrote in 1878: "The imitator is a poor kind of creature. If the man who paints only the tree, or flower, or other surface he sees before him were an artist, the king of artists would be the photographer. It is for the artist to do something beyond this: in portrait painting to put on canvas something more than the face the model wears for that one day: to paint the man, in short, as well as his features . . . ." Mallarmé said of one of Whistler's lithographic portraits of him: "It is wonderful, the only real study that has ever been made of me and I am smiling at myself."

## BOOKS

Entries are listed alphabetically according to author.

MALLARMÉ, Stéphane (France, 1842-1898)

22. *Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire*, 1896  
Paris, frontispiece by Félicien Rops  
The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Publication of this volume of tributes to the poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1857) by Mallarmé and many of the leading Symbolist poets was sponsored by the periodical "La Plume" as a means of raising funds for the erection of a monument to Baudelaire. The monument was to have been executed by Rodin.

23. *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, 1876  
Paris, frontispiece by Edouard Manet  
The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Manet exhibited his paintings, including the now famous *Olympia* and *Le Déjeuner Sur l'Herbe*, which were rejected in the Salon of 1876, in his studio from April 15 to Sunday, May 1, 1876. At the end of this same Sunday evening, Manet and Mallarmé signed the first proofs of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*. It was a thin volume with several drawings by Manet. The poet was happy with the typography, the painter with the reproduction of his frontispiece, floral decoration, and little vignettes at the ends of the chapters.

24. *Pages*, 1891  
Brussels, frontispiece by Pierre Auguste Renoir  
The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

A review of *Pages* in *Mercure de France* by Pierre Quillard records a contemporary critic's opinion of Mallarmé: "It seems to me that in the hierarchy of minds, the author of *Pages* holds an eminent rank. He is one of those who has an intuition for the absolute, and can perceive '*les Idées pures*.'"

25. *Les Poésies de S. Mallarmé*, 1899

Brussels, frontispiece by Félicien Rops  
The University of Chicago Library

For the first edition of Mallarmé's poetry, a frontispiece symbolizing "absolute art" was provided by Rops. The work represents a muse with a lyre, floating in the clouds. She has her feet on the heads of those who prefer the advantages of success to the agonies of perfection. Still lower, a Pegasus is ridden by the phantom of an emaciated poet who is aiming at the stars.

26. *Vers et Prose. Morceaux choisis*, 1893.

Paris, frontispiece by James Abbott McNeill Whistler  
The Library of Congress

The frontispiece of this book is said to have "cost Mallarmé curious efforts of patience." Whistler posed him over and over and "one day, as if all the attempts had added up and led the artist to the easiness of an apparent improvisation, Whistler, in a few lines, seized what had previously escaped him, and obtained from his friend an intense and mobile likeness, a fleeting but profound impression."

POE, Edgar Allan (U. S. A., 1809-1849)

27. *Le Corbeau*, 1875 (French translation by Stéphane Mallarmé)

Paris, illustrations by Edouard Manet  
The Library of Congress

Mallarmé began to translate works by Edgar Allan Poe in 1862 and continued with this interest for a period of over fifteen years.

28. *Les Poèmes d'Edgar Poe*, 1888 (French translation by Stéphane Mallarmé)

Brussels, frontispiece by Edouard Manet  
The Library of Congress, Rosenwald Collection

Mallarmé dedicated his translation "To the memory of Edouard Manet, these pages, which we read together." The Library of Congress volume includes 35 letters and post cards exchanged by Mallarmé and his publisher, Edmond Deman, concerning the publication of the book.