

Summer School: Cultivating One's Own Garden (Paris et al., 8–12 Jun 26)

Ile-de-France and Normandy Region, Jun 8–12, 2026

Deadline: Mar 15, 2026

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Cultivating one's own garden, expanding horizons.

Mapping the personal and the collective through history of art and the humanities, from Impressionism to the present day.

Led by Paris Nanterre University, the Impressionnisme programme is part of the Axe Seine interregional development project, reaching out from Paris to Normandy and beyond our borders. This part of France has shaped the history of the Impressionist movement, which, in turn, left a lasting mark on the land. The research framework of this programme places the focus on this influential geographical backdrop, as part of a broader reflection on our regions. While we've been seeing Impressionism studied under the lens of landscape, climate, mobility and modernity for some time, other areas remain fairly underexplored. Housing traditions, ways of life, social structures, land uses, and the impact of agricultural and industrial development on the landscape are just some of the lines of research that require further study. This summer school aims to open up new perspectives through cross-disciplinary collaboration while experimenting with scales of analysis, to reflect on the experience of land from the most personal to the most universal.

This research area was presented for the first time at the international symposium *L'impressionnisme à travers champs* [Impressionism across the fields], held in 2024 in collaboration with the Musée d'Orsay to mark the 150-year anniversary of the Impressionist movement. We will be further exploring this research area in 2026, coinciding with the centenary of Claude Monet's death, with a summer school held in the regions of Île-de-France and Normandy.

Emblematic of this relationship with the land, Monet continuously surveyed, inhabited and depicted both familiar and distant environments. From the nature surrounding his home to the rural landscapes distilled in his paintings, his body of work provides us with a geography and relationship with space that are both intimate and deeply rooted in their era.

With this very filiation in mind, the aim of the summer school is to collectively explore this concept of "land" and ways of inhabiting it at different scales, from the private sphere of everyday life to shared and collective spaces. "Cultivating one's own garden, expanding horizons" also embodies the idea of a reciprocal movement between the individual experience of place and forms of the common. Since it studies the manifestations and processes of creative practice, history of art—and the history of Impressionism in particular—constitutes a valuable observatory of these forms of geo-specific appropriation, experience and depiction.

To unravel these threads, from the "smallest parcel of the world" to the "totality of the world" (Michel Foucault), from microcosm to macrocosm, our summer school will focus on four key

themes.

Theme 1 – The home: living spaces and artist houses

The landscape of the private sphere is primarily composed of spaces that are experienced, inhabited and used on a daily basis. Man-made or natural, “home” is artistic existence at the smallest scale. The house of the artist, situated at the convergence of private life, creative practice and representations of the self, is an essential entry point for analysing relationships between domestic space and artistic creation.

A family hearth, a workspace, a place to socialise... The artist’s house combines multiple functions, which may coincide or change over time. More than a simple living space, it functions as a spatial device, used to establish the material conditions of the domestic acts, artistic practice and self-display that coexist under the same roof. The house’s location, architecture, interior design and extensions (studio, outbuildings, garden) influence the artist’s work routines, production methods and interactions between the public and private spheres. By analysing these spaces, we can further examine the specific ways in which artists use and appropriate these spaces, as well as their effects on creative practice and the imaginary.

The private realm, covert by nature, can be at least partially uncovered by means of analysis. While we do catch glimpses of it from time to time in works of art, contributing to an iconography of the private sphere, questions on sources and methods remain: how should we perceive the artist in their domestic environment and professional and family relationships without viewing these spaces as mere explanatory tools?

Artist houses—Monet’s house in Giverny being an iconic example—have ultimately become places of memory widely embraced by the public. They are the object of high expectations, based on the idea that this organisation of domestic space allows one, in the most intimate sense, to peel back the curtain on an artist’s personality and creative universe.

Through various case studies, these houses will be approached as subjects in their own right—be they visual or literary, real or imaginary, past or contemporary—and as heritage, raising modern-day questions on conservation, mediation and management.

Theme 2 – Land as experience

Beyond the domestic realm, the personal is anchored within a larger area, shaped by landscapes, land uses and local forms of sociability. The artist’s home, whether chosen or imposed, permanent or temporary, provides an experience of the land that leaves a lasting mark on the imaginary, practice and forms of artistic creation.

This landscape, which is experienced, travelled and invested in over time, forms part of a biographical and artistic trajectory. The characteristics of temporary living arrangements or the home (natural environment, vernacular architecture, social networks, financial constraints) contribute to the gradual appropriation of a place and structure its uses. For many artists, particularly landscape painters, this experience sustainably imprints upon their choice of motifs and representational approach: the land becomes a space that has been simultaneously lived in, worked in, and portrayed.

Nevertheless, the traces left behind by these artists are, for the most part, indirect. Often, all that remain are the visual and literary representations (artworks, letters, sketchbooks, stories, etc.) that offer a window onto these experiences of the land. This situation raises questions concerning methodology and heritage: should we attempt to preserve these environments in their supposed original state? And how do we restore an area that is, in essence, a historical and artistic

palimpsest?

These are particularly sensitive issues in areas marked by the gazes of multiple artists, such as certain parts of the Seine Valley or cities like Rouen. These places fascinate art historians, geographers and land use planners alike, particularly when the promotion of cultural heritage clashes with contemporary forms of development.

Finally, the association and labelling of an area in relation to an artist calls for further reflections on heritage designation and historical tourism. If this conservation helps to boost visibility and stimulates the local economy, it can also be a source of imbalance, as we have seen in the contemporary challenges of overcrowding and overtourism. Using Giverny as an example, how can we approach this consolidation of an emblematic site with its surrounding environment? How do we find a balance between artistic memory, contemporary uses and local or regional development?

Theme 3 – Broadening horizons: from personal landscapes to shared environments

The individual experience of land is always anchored in collective, social and historical contexts. Artistic representations play an essential role in piecing together this co-constructed gaze, helping to forge landscapes, local or regional imaginaries and the “distribution of the sensible” (Jacques Rancière).

Beyond the act of artistic representation, this theme questions this transition from personal to common, examining the way in which artists contribute to this making of environments, and how, in return, natural features and appropriations of space inform artistic practice and form. The distribution of images, repetition of subjects and public exposure help to establish a *genius loci* and to crystallise a shared imaginary. This confirms art history’s role as an essential tool in analysing the discourses, uses and representations that come together to define a specific area.

Works of art can also document, in a nuanced way, changes in the landscape and its uses (transport, tourism, use of beaches, etc.), while playing an active role in the definition of heritage. Just like the Seine Valley, which has been shaped by the presence and gaze of the Impressionists, other areas influenced by artistic communities, in France and beyond, may be studied as historical objects and heritage sites, raising modern-day challenges of conservation and mediation.

Theme 4 – Beyond borders: migrations, otherness and globalisation

The experience of land takes another form when the artist confronts geographical, cultural or political otherness. Whether it be migration, travel, or temporary relocation, these situations shift the framework of lived experience and representation, inviting a reflection on the lands crossed, appropriated or remembered beyond borders.

From the cosmopolitan city of Paris to the international port of Le Havre, the Seine Valley can be viewed as a geographical point of confluence. A place of movement, arrivals and departures, it connects the surrounding regions with more distant lands. By looking at artists’ journeys, whether they be migrants, travellers or temporary residents, this theme aims to examine what it means to be foreign in a specific local or regional context. How does the artist represent these unfamiliar spaces? How do they appropriate these spaces through artistic creation, and how does art become a tool for recollection?

These questions are part of a broader history of migration and cultural transfer, indissociable from the history of 19th and 20th century globalisation. A particular focus will be placed on colonised lands, their representation, their recognition or absence in art, as well their role in processes of emancipation and independence.

Fields of study, organisation and key dates

These themes can be explored across all disciplines of the human and social sciences. Although not an exclusive criterion, we would particularly appreciate proposals that include a reflection on artistic, literary, scientific representation, real or imaginary, in sources, archives and research methods, from the 19th century to the present day. We welcome proposals that look beyond France's borders to adopt more of a pan-global perspective, as well as those that use Impressionism as a starting point to explore other artistic movements.

Organisation of the summer school

The summer school will take place from 8 to 12 June 2026 and will bring together a group of 15 to 20 participants. The summer school is open to students, from those finishing their first year of graduate studies to postdoctoral students, and young professionals whose work aligns with the proposed themes.

Organised as a workshop, the summer school will be composed of participant presentations and contributions, meetings with professionals, field visits, round-table discussions and seminars. The agenda will include excursions around Île-de-France and Normandy.

The presence of participants is required throughout the duration of the summer school, as well as their participation in all of its sessions.

Funding

Most accommodation, transport and catering expenses will be covered by the Impressionnisme programme. Each participant is responsible for their own transportation costs to the summer school.

Languages

Proposals may be submitted in French or English, and presentations can be done in either of the two languages. However, applicants are informed that a basic level of French comprehension and speaking is required, as meetings with professionals, seminars and round-table discussions will be held primarily in French.

Applications

Applications must be provided as a single Microsoft Word file and must include:

A research proposal (2,000 characters or 300 words) explaining how it fits into one of the areas included in the call for participation

A proposal for a discussion on a work chosen from the catalogue of the Musée d'Orsay, the Musée de l'Orangerie, the Museum of Modern Art André Malraux or the Musée des Impressionnismes in Giverny (150 words or 1000 characters).

Your CV (primary roles, awards, and publications - 2 pages maximum)

A written bio-bibliography (100 words or 600 characters)

Please include the applicant name in the file name and send it to the email address programme.impressionnisme@gmail.com.

Deadline

Final deadline for applications: 28 February 2026

Notification of results: end of March 2026

Institutional and scientific framework

The Impressionisme research programme is led by the History of Arts and Representations Laboratory (Histoire des arts et des représentations) at Paris Nanterre University, with the support of Fondation Université Paris Nanterre. The programme was launched in 2018 in partnership with the project Normandie Paris Ile-de-France: Destination impressionisme and funded by the Seine Valley Government-Regional Interregional Plan Contract (CPIER).

Since its foundation, the programme has organised two international symposia: “Collecting Impressionism” (“Collectionner l’impressionisme”, 2020), conducted in partnership with the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen, the proceedings of which were published in French and English by Silvana Editoriale in 2023; and “Impressionism Across Fields” (“L’impressionisme à travers champs”), in partnership with the Musée d’Orsay, the proceedings of which are currently being published.

Organising committee: Margot Degoutte, Félicie Faizand de Maupeou, Ségolène Le Men, Paul-Louis Roubert

Reference:

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