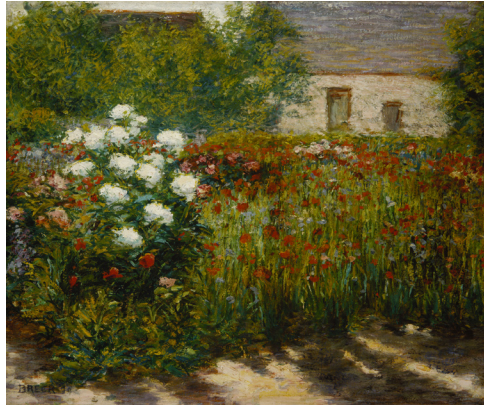


# AMERICAN IMPRESSIONISM

---



American Impressionism began in the 1890's and ran through the 1920's. American Impressionism arose from increased exposure to European art during an economic boom beginning in 1865 at the end of the American Civil War. This economic boom allowed American art students to take a "Grand Tour" of Europe and study in the European Art schools. Also, French Impressionism was exhibited for the first time in America in the 1880's. Because the Impressionist works were exhibited alongside European art of other genres America's notion of Impressionism was somewhat muddled.

French Impressionism was lead by painter Claude Monet, and Giverny, the location of his home, became a thriving artist's colony. Despite Monet's presence, Americans usually worked among themselves and very few were allowed into Monet's gardens. Even fewer artists painted with Monet. He did not believe in formal art lessons and never gave lessons in the colony. Although Monet kept his distance from the Americans, his style of broken brushwork, vibrant color, and thick atmosphere became the standard of American Impressionism

by the end of the 19th century. Some of the artists who returned from Giverny were described as "a crowd of new radicals...the Monet gang back from Europe want anything pale lilac and yellow."

Despite the name American Impressionism, American Impressionists were not simply copying or participating in the French Impressionist school. These artists were developing their own style of painting. American artists developed their Impressionist style by absorbing European trends and using them in conjunction with their own interests. Both movements shared features such as vibrant color, painterly and broken brushstrokes, casual subjects and a focus on light. Unlike the French Impressionists, Americans were hesitant to completely abandon their academic training. Americans needed to work very hard in order to be accepted into European schools and many were unwilling to relinquish what they had learned for the sake of a new painting style. Many continued to use sculptural modeling, foreshortening, and formal composition in their works as the French Impressionists would move toward more progressive styles of painting.

Image: John Leslie Breck, *Garden at Giverny*, ca. 1887-1891.  
Terra Foundation for American Art