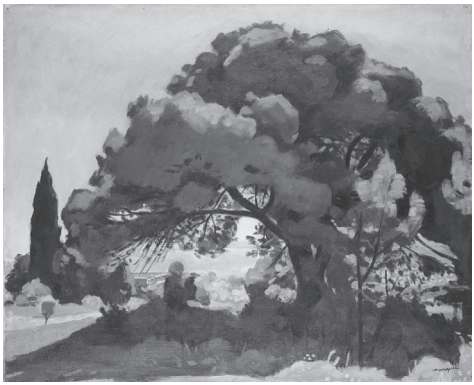
BORDEAUX culture

BORDEAUX 2017 LANDSCAPE SEASON

THE MUSEUM GOES GREEN! FOCUS ON LANDSCAPES

30th june 2017 - 7 january 2018



Albert Marquet, *Pin à Alger (The Pin in Algiers)*,1932
© Bordeaux, musée des Beaux-Arts.

Theme by theme through both wings of the museum:

- Lights of the North.
Birth of the Modern Landscape
- Poetic Charm of Ruins
- Seascapes
- Seascapes by Moonlight
- Storm Front
- Painting Nature Outdoors:
Corot and his Emulators
- Full Speed Ahead! Urban
and Industrial Modernity
- Through the Seasons

The Landscape season is the perfect occasion for the Musée des Beaux-Arts to revisit its collections and highlight one of the most recurrent pictorial genres in the history of art: the landscape. Breaking with traditional museographical codes of school or epoch, this thematic approach gives the visitor an original stance that is surprising to say the least. The sequence, introduced by the North European School from which the modern naturalistic landscape originates, unfolds in both wings of the museum and offers a range of themes: port scenes, storms, seascapes, pastoral, urban and night landscapes, as well as various interpretations of the *Four Seasons* allegory. The visitor's eye is troubled by a contrasting alternation of densely covered walls, 19th-century-style, and more minimal displays.

This selection of works covers a long period, from the 17th to the 20th century. Many of the paintings are usually kept in reserve, but can now be admired alongside other more contemporary pieces on loan from the CAPC, partner of this event. A painting by British artist Stuart Whipps will address the energy issues of geological landscapes alongside the *4.543 billion. The Matter of Matter* exhibition at the CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain of Bordeaux, where two pieces from the Musée des Beaux-Arts will be presented: *Le Vieux Carrier* (1878) by Alfred Roll and *Le Quai de la Grave à Bordeaux* (1884) by Alfred Smith.

Jan van Goyen, *Le Chêne foudroyé (The Lightning Struck Oak)* or *La Diseuse de bonne aventure (The Fortuneteller)*, 1638 © Bordeaux, musée des Beaux-Arts.

THE EXHIBITION

Lights of the North, Birth of the Modern Landscape

Representations of nature appear here and there in Europe during the Middle Ages, initially in religious scenes but also, from the 15th century onwards, in portraits and historical paintings. But only in the 17th century does the landscape take a place of its own. It no longer has merely decorative status, instead becoming a genre in its own right, just like history painting, the portrait, the still life and, later on, the genre scene. Artists from the former Netherlands leave a deep and long-lasting mark on landscape painting. In Holland especially, artists are encouraged by Calvinism – which forbids images of worship in church – and by the wealth of merchants, to turn to non-religious subjects. Scenes of everyday life, with immense botanical, topographical and atmospheric detail, firmly establish landscape painting in the real world, thanks to the excellent observational skills demonstrated by the artists. Walkers in the woods, riders stopping at the inn, battle scenes, animals grazing in meadows, and hunting scenes are some of the many subjects painted into backgrounds of peaceful nature. Jan van Goyen, particularly well-known for his river scenes, is one of the greatest representatives of the Dutch landscape school. *Le chêne foudroyé (The Lightning Struck Oak)* is exceptional in terms of both subject and format; the monumental tree with tortuous branches and the darkening sky are omens of disaster for the man having his hand read by the fortune-teller.

The Poetic Charm of Ruins

Ruins become a study item in the Renaissance period, first of all in Italy, not only for the humanist intellectuals but also for artists eager for knowledge and in search of answers on the history of Man and places. From the second half of the 15th century, ruins provide a spatial frame that make it possible to transpose scenes from the Old Testament and of the lives of the saints into backgrounds that were considered to be of their time. At the same time, they allude to the triumph of the Christian faith over paganism. 16th-century Rome is a popular destination for European artists eager to learn in direct proximity with the ancient wonders, to perfect their knowledge of the arts and architecture. The remains of the Eternal City and its surroundings are represented in compositions populated with characters going about their daily lives, as in *Marché sur le Campo Vaccino (The Campo Vaccino)* by Paul Bril or *Campement de bohémiens dans les ruines de la villa Mécène à Tivoli (Gypsy Camp in the Ruins of Maecenus' Villa in Tivoli)* by Filippo Napoletano. In the centuries that follow, the painting of ruins develops into two distinct visions: the accurate rendering of topographical reality, which is a response to amateurs' desire to learn and an illustration of recent archaeological discoveries; and imaginative compositions, in which the layout of ruins, although purely whimsical, freely conveys a fascinating past in an often picturesque manner. The concept of the sublime enters the philosophical debate mid-18th century, and extends to the romantic era with representations that conjure strong emotions of shock or deep melancholy at the ruined splendour of past civilisations.

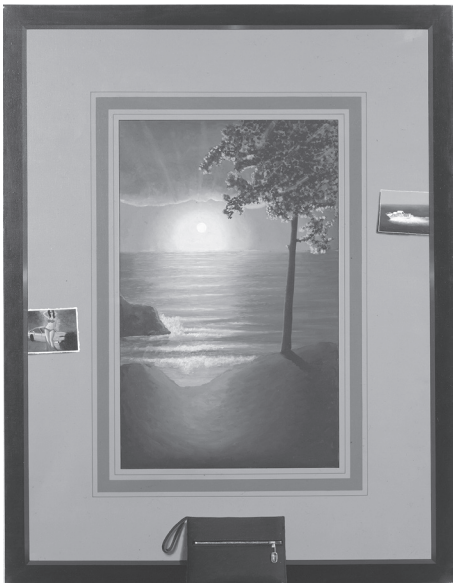
Seascapes

Seascape painting flourishes during the Dutch Golden Age. Thanks to thriving trade and the establishment of the Dutch East India Company (1602) and Dutch West India Company (1621),

and the subsequent need to defend the vast colonial empire's trade routes, the Republic of the United Provinces becomes the biggest maritime power in Europe. Some artists specialise in representations of seas and the maritime world; warships and naval battles affirm the Republic's domination of the oceans, trade vessels and ports incarnate the dynamic economy while coastal scenes and beach views decorated with modest fishing boats represent everyday life in this territory that is intrinsically linked with water. Such scenes are alibis for rendering the subtleties of marine views that are so sensitive to variations in weather conditions. Man is reminded of the perils of sailing, by agitated foamy-white waters, dark distant clouds, wind-filled sails and flailing ropes. A taste for seascapes is also evident in England, Italy and France; the atmosphere emerging from *Port de mer au soleil couchant (Seaport at Sunset)*, attributed to Joseph Vernet and painted in the 18th century, again testifies to the influence of the grandiose and serene works of Claude Le Lorrain.

Seascapes by Moonlight

Moonlit seascapes are a painting speciality highly esteemed by certain artists of the 17th and 18th centuries who use them to portray calm shores in the moonlight or, more dramatically, shipwrecks. This theme is reiterated by Alain Lestié in 1973. His representation of a sea shore under the rising moon (or the setting sun?) appears through its shades of grey to imitate a black-and-white photograph or postcard. The absence of any human presence from this bright, tranquil view is misleading, considering the work's title, *Le territoire de l'aménagement (the development territory)*, which reminds us how the landscape of the Landes, which is the artist's birthplace and is probably depicted here, changed dramatically with the land-planning policies of the seventies. The narrow frame chosen by Lestié appears to deliberately deny the realities of modernisation, ignoring the physical and tangible intervention of man, whose presence is nonetheless represented by the clever trompe-l'œil of postcards included in the feigned frame and the envelope appearing to rest on the picture.



Alain Lestié, *Le Territoire de l'aménagement (The development territory)*, 1973
© CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux

Storm Front

The romantic artists replace the serene layout of landscape paintings, dictated by the rules of Ideal Beauty, with movement and emotional diversity. Instead of scenes tamed by man in an organised calm, we now seek the spectacular and demand shivers down the spine. This new exaltation of nature and sensitivity comes from Germany alongside the literary movement "Sturm und Drang" (Storm and Passion), but also from Great Britain via the Sublime concept described by Edmund Burke in his 1757 treaty. Its main champions in France are Théodore Géricault, Théodore Gudin, Eugène Isabey and Paul Huet. At sea and on land, the storm becomes a choice vehicle for the new aesthetics. Man braves the unleashed elements and, sometimes, is annihilated by the immeasurable. Following the success of Géricault's *Le radeau de la Méduse (The raft of the Medusa)*, current affairs begin to influence paintings. Scapes and history mingle, provoking a breakdown of the barriers between the great genres - History and the Bible - and the lesser genres, such as landscapes. The latter comes of age and eventually ousts its characters, drowning them in the infinite waters, like the spectator lost in the painting.

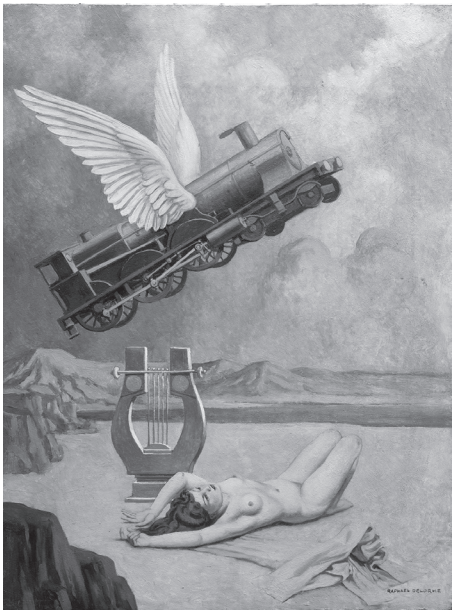
Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, *Le Bain de Diane (The Diane bath)*, 1855 © Bordeaux, musée des Beaux-Arts.

Painting Nature Outdoors: Corot and his Emulators

As early as the 1830s, Camille Corot launches a mutation among painters of the 19th century. While assuming his place in the great pictorial tradition, bringing its moment of glory to landscape painting by adding historical or mythological figures, Corot revolutionises the way such works are considered. The study of nature in the open air is perfectly normal practice as far as painters are concerned, but its systematisation and, more so, the study of new perceptions and new interpretations of reality via paper or cardboard sketches handed round among the world's painters, eventually result in these preparatory items being considered as work pieces in their own right. The attention paid to light, and a new experience of the perceptible world, require a renewed notion of pictorial practices. This is revealed with Eugène Boudin and the impressionist movement.
While he is at the root of this rupture giving new independent status to landscapes, for the rest of his life Corot remains deeply attached to the powers of imagination and memory.
In his studio, he reconstructs landscape studied meticulously during his outdoor sessions.
In parallel, a few artists - Théodore Rousseau, Narcisse Diaz de la Peña, Constant Troyon - go to work at a place called Barbizon in the Fontainebleau forest. There, they experiment with new representations of woodland and marshes along the exact lines of the 17th-century Dutch landscape painters whose prints they collect while admiring them at the Louvre.
Louis Auguin and Hippolyte Pradelles, who worked in 1863 alongside Gustave Courbet and Corot in Saintonge, at Port-Berteau, are also among their disciples, establishing a dynamic focus on this new kind of landscape painting in Bordeaux, with Amédée Baudit, Léonce Chabry and Jean Cabrit, not forgetting Paul Sébilleau and Louis Cabié.

Full Speed Ahead! Urban and Industrial Modernity

With the emergence of the steam engine and the train, 19th-century artists are confronted with a new perception of the world. Their challenge is to design an original representation of a world in full economic, social and physical mutation. Urbanisation and industrialisation are undergoing



Raphaël Delorme, *Aurore boréale (Aurora borealis)*, 1930/40 © Bordeaux, musée des Beaux-Arts.

unprecedented growth, dramatically transforming the landscape and its codes of portrayal. People travel more, modes of transport are evolving in cities and building an environment of stone and metal, revealing new facets of life in society, especially night life thanks to the invention of street lighting (Alfred Smith, Jack Pierson). The movement and speed of this headlong rush are depicted according to cleverly calculated perspectives (Miquel Barceló). At the origin of this movement lie the powers of water and fire, as well as the necessary minerals extracted from the depths of the earth by the labour and suffering of men. This infernal combination raises many questions among artists who handle them with allegory (Félix Bracquemond) or naturalism (Paul Antin) while giving the modern landscape a poetic aura, sometimes adding a touch of humour or mockery (Raphaël Delorme). Relationships with the environment, and the social and ecological preoccupations that emerged at the time, have always been examined by artists and, still today, are behind Stuart Whipps' quest for the beautiful. Here, Whipps presents a piece created from a section of shale (a gas-harbouring rock similar to schist) from the Scottish subsoil, thus making reference to the critical topic of fossil energy. The meeting of light and rock, presented as transparent, makes for an unsettling yet poetic experience.

Through the Seasons

French painter Gaspard Dughet (1615-1675) was born in Rome where he grew up at the heart of the city's artistic life, among a great number of French and Nordic landscape artists such as Paul Bril, Herman van Swanevelt and Claude Lorrain. In 1630 he becomes brother-in-law to Nicolas Poussin who naturally takes him under his artistic wing a year later. The artistic and emotional association between the two men is such that Gaspard quickly becomes known under Poussin's name, as: Gaspard Poussin or Le Guaspre.
From his teenage years, Dughet enjoys a combination of three nature-worshipping activities - art, hunting and fishing. His philosophy and way of life are reflected in his art.
He is appreciated by clients of the Roman aristocracy and in 1650 receives prestigious orders to paint the walls of some of the city's palaces in distemper. The paintings represent landscapes typical of the period, like the 1654 frescoes decorating Bernini's palace in Rome. These four frescoes of dim light intensity, now removed and transferred to canvas and wood, each represent one of the four seasons, allowing Dughet to express his sensitivity to the variations of time and season. They also incite meditation on the four ages, the different stages of human life. The format of the paintings gives the impression of a decorative frieze, each representing a melancholic landscape on which Dughet lays out his set like a stage director. Two of them show an episode of the Ovid *Metamorphoses*, *Été (Summer)* - Pan, a divinity of nature, half-man, half-goat, pursues Syrinx, the nymph, who turns into reeds to escape him - and *Automne (Automn)* - two legendary lovers, Thisbe and Pyramus, whose parents forbid them to marry, decide to flee and eventually take their own lives. *Printemps* ou *Femmes cueillant des fleurs (Spring or women gathering flowers)* and *Hiver* or *Vieillard dans un char tiré par deux sangliers (Winter or and Old man in a chariot drawn by two wild boars)* present symbolic scenes inviting the public to take part in the spectacle of nature.

Contemporary counterpoint

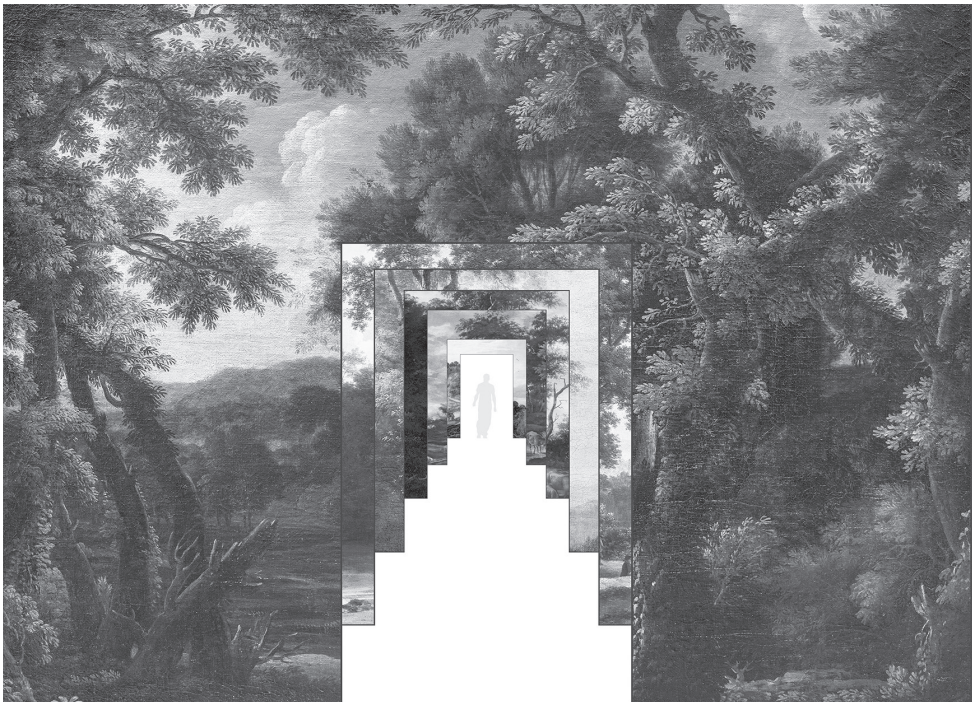
Erik Samakh

Erik Samakh was born in 1959 in the town of Saint-Georges-de-Didonne. His work has been internationally recognised since the end of the 1980s and combines new technologies with natural elements, of sound for example. His work consists in a perpetual dialogue between man and nature. The space previously occupied by the power of images is now a place for listening. Technological elements (independent acoustic modules, solar flutes and arrays of lamps, etc.) paradoxically draw our attention back to nature. Much of his work was created outdoors in places like parks, nature reserves and artistic centres (Lorraine Regional Nature Park, Haute-Provence Geological Park, Brasil's Tijuca National Park, Vassivière International Art and Landscape Centre in Limousin, etc). He has also presented work in the parks and gardens of historical monuments and museums: Chartreuse de Villeneuve-Lez-Avignon in 1987, Villa Medicis in 1994, Musée du Quai Branly in 2012, Musée Rodin in 2013, Parc Monceau in 2015, etc.

His work is followed by, among others, the philosopher and Land Art theorist Gilles A. Tiberghien and the art historien Colette Garraud. His presentation at the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Bordeaux is a multisensory celebration of his adoptive home, Hautes-Pyrénées. Throughout the visit, we are invited to listen to large tree trunks* that vibrate and echo the sounds of the forest: bird calls, cracking wood and the humming of insects, like totems of nature erected amid works of art and cultural images. These forest vibrations are discrete and confined at first, but become overwhelming as the visitor progresses, finally creating an enveloping atmosphere with no identifiable source**. At the end of the visit, the listener becomes the viewer, discovering four photographs of woodland scenes. These views, one for each season, are captured from the artist's studio and represent the very scenes from which emanate the sounds heard during the visit. The photographs, titled *Vu de l'atelier (seen from the workshop)*, are presented as an echo to Gaspard Dughet's *Quatre Saisons (The Four Seasons)* frescoes, and are on display for the first time in France.

**Au fond du bois* or *Gardiens de sommeil (In the deep of wood* or *Guardians of Sleep)*
2008-2016
"Today in the form of four sound totems, the *Au fond du bois* installation is transformed and mutated from my residence in Cameroon in 2008 in the Makalaya mountains, where the forest is almost primal. Spruce from Northern Italy was chosen for its sound-conducting properties. Known in Italian as "Abete rosso di risonanza", this wood was selected by Antonio Stradivari for making violins and cellos."
Erik Samakh
Totems 1, 2, 3 and 4: A surprise in the form of recordings made recently at the artist's Hautes-Pyrénées site.

***Parrat* is the title of the sound installation. It is the name of the place where the artist lives. The word means "passerine", a bird commonly seen in the valley.



Franck Tallon, *Détails (Details)*, 2017

Franck Tallon

Franck Tallon is a graphic designer and art director working in the cultural and institutional sectors. He lives in Bordeaux. His creations, for national and international projects, lie at the crossroads of art and production. Early on in life he became familiar with the challenges of architecture and, through his work, continually reinforces the links between graphic design and urban planning.

His work examines the power of images and texts in an overloaded urban environment.

He employs a vocabulary of formal, visual hybridisations that he kneads and pulls in every direction until its elasticity and resistance are proven. His graphics are cleverly recreational and uniquely effective, perpetually generating his renewed vitality.

The installation at the Musée des Beaux-Arts gives a theatrical feel to the museum's entrance hall, like an interface, a transition between public space (street, park) and the museum's interior (collections).

It is designed like a visiting experience, or a singular reading, like a succession of curtains revealing the museum stage: a new kaleidoscopic frontispiece, a visual medley of select "morsels" of the museum. The work is made up of twenty-four facets (twelve double-sided panels), and is split into four sequences, each with a different type of landscape: land, coastal, urban and carnal.

The installation is laid out at right angles to the main entrance, and forms an unprecedented link between the two wings of the museum – a subliminal suggestion of the initially planned architecture's third wing, supposed to connect the two current wings. It is an invitation to come and go (double-sided display), to meander and enjoy some unexpected moments before or after the visit. It is a look at the notion of painted landscapes arranged in four sequences of six panels created from the museum's collections. But it is also an invitation to explore the paintings individually, as a prelude or epilogue to the visit.

Praticale information
Museum of Fine Arts
20, cours d'Albret,
33000 Bordeaux
Tel.: 33 (0)5 56 10 20 56
musbxa@mairie-bordeaux.fr
www.musba-bordeaux.fr

Across from the museum:
Gallery of Fine Arts
Place du Colonel Raynal,
33000 Bordeaux
Tel.: 33 (0)5 56 96 51 60

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