



64. *Self-portrait*, by Michael Sweerts. c.1656. Etching, 21 by 16.5 cm. (Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna; exh. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco).

The selection of works shown in the exhibition and discussed in the catalogue is outstanding and covers all the facets of Sweerts's pictorial activity. It is furthermore supplemented with Ger Luijten's very fine presentation of Sweerts's rôle as a graphic artist (nos.P1–21; Fig.64). It is only regrettable that this very balanced overview is somewhat disturbed by the presence of two *Fremdkörper* which entirely lack Sweerts's incomparable stillness and brilliant rendering of fabrics. In my view the *Young man in a grey jacket* (no.XXVIII) and the *Portrait of a man holding a skull* (no.XXX; catalogued as probably a self-portrait) are, in their romantic-looking restlessness, far from Sweerts's stylistic idiom. The second, with its soulful facial expression, seems more in keeping with a style to some extent derived from Van Dyck.

It is to be hoped that this major exhibition and its important catalogue may in their turn prove seminal, not only for Sweerts, but also more generally for a better understanding of the rôle played by the Northern *Italianisti*, both in Rome and in their own countries.

HANS VLIEGHE

Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven/Rubianum, Antwerp

¹W. MARTIN: 'Michiel Sweerts als schilder. Proeve van een biografie en een catalogus van zijn schilderijen', *Oud Holland*, XXV [1907], pp.133–56.

²R. KULTZEN and N. DI CARPEGNA: *Michael Sweerts en tijdgenoten*, exh. cat., Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam and Palazzo Venezia, Rome [1958–59].

³R. KULTZEN: *Michael Sweerts (Brussels 1618–Goa 1664)*, Doornspijk [1996].

⁴J. BIKKER: 'The Deutz brothers, Italian paintings and Michiel Sweerts: new information from Elisabeth Coymans's *Journal*', *Simiolus*, XXVI [1998], pp.277–311.

⁵*Michael Sweerts (1618–1664)*. By Guido Jansen and Peter C. Sutton, with contributions by Jonathan Bikker, Lynn Federle Orr, Ger Luijten, Willem de Ridder, Arie Wallert and Eric M. Zafran. Edited by Duncan Bull. 192 pp. incl. 48 col. pls. + 132 b. & w. ills. (Waanders Publishers, Zwolle, 2002), €29.50. ISBN 90-400-8676-1.

Lille and Martigny Berthe Morisot

The exhibition of Berthe Morisot's work, which opened at the **Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille**, and is now on view at the **Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny** (to 19th November), is the first Morisot retrospective to be held in France since 1961 (not the first retrospective anywhere, as the press release claimed), and is accompanied by a substantial catalogue.¹ It is fifteen years since the show organised by Mount Holyoke Women's College and shown there and at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and there has still been no Morisot show in Great Britain.² This is surprising on two counts, both because of the plethora of Impressionist exhibitions of every kind, and because of the interest in Morisot as a woman painter. And the current exhibition certainly argues for more frequent opportunities to see the work of this most subtle of artists.

The display opens with a portrait of Morisot by her sister Edma, newly rediscovered and recently shown also in Bilbao at the exhibition held there of women Impressionists.³ It shows Morisot aged twenty-four, working at her easel with great concentration and intensity, and provides a suitable opening introduction to this frequently surprising painter. Everything in Morisot's upbringing and background argued against her becoming a professional artist, yet her determination and single-mindedness prevailed against the expectation that painting would remain a pastime for her. This portrait conveys something of that drive and focus.

Morisot was Camille Corot's only formal pupil, and the early paintings show that she learned her lessons well. Her copy (cat. no.3; private collection) of Corot's *Tivoli. Les jardins de la villa d'Este* (Louvre, Paris) suggests how carefully she followed Corot's example, and some lessons about composition and tonality were never forgotten. But Morisot soon found her own way, as a

painting such as the delightful *Deux sœurs sur un canapé* (no.7; Fig.65) indicates. The identically dressed young women sit half facing each other, framed by the curved back of the upholstered divan, the pattern of which threatens to overwhelm the delicate blue-spotted fabric of their dresses. The Japanese fan in the background links the two figures, and the open fan held by the sister on the right reprises the motif. The painting is free and sketchy, the control of tonality and of the touches of black, for instance the ring on the finger of the left-hand figure, is complete. This is the work of an already accomplished painter, and it is no surprise that the nascent Impressionist group wished to include Morisot among their number.

By the years immediately following the Franco-Prussian war, Morisot's particular 'take' on modernity was firmly established. She painted the world in which she lived and worked, using her sisters and their children, or other members of her family as models, including the one, exceptional, male model, her cousin Marcel Boursier. A wonderful example of her approach included in this show is *Sur la terrasse* of 1874 (no.20; Fig.66). Painted at the same time as the better-known painting in the Norton Simon Art Foundation, Pasadena, it shows Morisot at her most accomplished. Her aunt, Marie Boursier, sits in an elaborate chair, while beyond, the path up the cliffs and the channel view below are indicated with great subtlety – the merging of sky and sea is a tonal distinction worthy of Corot at his pearly best. The painting also indicates one of the reasons why Morisot is still not as well known as she should be: her paintings simply do not reproduce well, the gradations of tone, the thinly applied paint and the nuancing of the coloured stripes in the dress fail to register in reproductions. This is one of the great themes of Impressionism – the seaside as a site of leisure, and Morisot gives us another way of looking at it, from the point of view of the women who congregated on balconies and terraces rather than parading on the beach.



65. *Deux sœurs sur un canapé*, by Berthe Morisot. 1869. 52.1 by 81.3 cm. (National Gallery of Art, Washington; exh. Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny).



66. *Sur la terrasse*, by Berthe Morisot. 1874. 45 by 54 cm. (Fuji Art Museum, Tokyo; exh. Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny).



68. *Dame et enfant sur la terrasse, rue Franklin*, by Berthe Morisot. 1871-72. Water-colour, 20.6 by 17.3 cm. (Art Institute of Chicago; exh. Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny).

Another key site of Impressionism, Argenteuil, was explored by Morisot from her family's home on the opposite bank of the Seine, at Gennevilliers. In *Paysage à Gennevilliers* of 1875 (no.23; private collection), we see the very familiar run of buildings and smoking chimneys of Argenteuil from another perspective, the far more rural surrounds of Gennevilliers, complete with grainstack.

Morisot's marriage to Manet's brother Eugène in 1874, and the birth of their daughter Julie in 1879 introduced two new models to many of the images. In a painting of Eugène made during their visit to the Isle of Wight in 1875 (no.28; Fig.67), Morisot confines him to the interior, gazing out of the window at a girl and a woman, the harbour at Cowes beyond. This inverts the familiar idea that women's place was in the interior, and indeed Eugène's rôle as house husband and, later, child carer, was something of a reversal of the norm for this time.

Julie became the focus of much of Morisot's art from her birth until her mother's death in 1895, and the exhibition included both familiar images and others from private and public collections that are much less well known, such as the oil and water-colour views of Julie on the beach at Nice in 1882 (no.61, private collection; no.62, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm).

Morisot's prowess with water-colour is well demonstrated in this exhibition, often accompanied by a few pencil lines that show her facility with a particular kind of drawing, capturing the ephemeral and fleeting (no.12; Fig.68). Her training, and the complete absence from it of life drawing, meant that her figure studies are sometimes less than successful, as she struggled with anatomy, but her skill at capturing a mood is consummate.

There is a second exhibition within this exhibition, bringing together all of Manet's portraits of Morisot. This is a beautiful small

show in its own right, reuniting both the big Salon paintings for which Morisot posed, *Le Balcon* from Orsay, and *Le Repos* from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence. But it has no place within a Morisot show, especially with its stridently 'masculine' dark red walls contrasted with the light 'feminine' colours of the Morisot rooms. The days when it was necessary to introduce Morisot in relation to Manet, either erroneously as a pupil or in terms that hint at a sexual relationship, are surely long gone. Morisot occupies a position as a key Impressionist painter in her own right. Her exasperation at Manet's temerity in 'correcting' part of her painting of her mother and sister reading would have been increased a hundred-fold at the apparent belief of the curators of this show that her work needed the prop of a 'mini-Manet' exhibition to accompany it. While I would have been delighted to see the Manets separate from the Morisots – perhaps in another gallery – shown in the midst of the latter as they were in Lille they were frankly insulting to Morisot. She was an artist of substance and considerable interest, an artist who grew and changed throughout her career and, while well aware of current developments in the avant-garde Parisian art world, she retained her own integrity and personal qualities of freshness of observation and lightness of touch.

KATHLEEN ADLER
National Gallery, London



67. *Eugène Manet à l'île de Wight*, by Berthe Morisot. 1875. 38 by 46 cm. (Musée Marmottan, Paris; exh. Fondation Pierre Gianadda, Martigny).

Berthe Morisot 1841-1895. By Michèle Moyne, Sylvie Patry and Hugues Wilhelm, with essays by Henri Loyrette, Jean-Dominique Rey, Sylvie Patry, Sylvie Patin, Hugues Wilhelm and Hélène Maratray. 487 pp. incl. 220 col. pls. + 124 b. & w. ills. (Edition de la Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris, 2002), €38. ISBN 2-7118-4303-3.

²This exhibition was reviewed by the present author in this Magazine, CXXIX [1987], pp.765-66.

³*Mujeres Impresionistas. La otra mirada*. By X. Bray, J. Wilson-Bareau et al. Exh. cat., Museo de Belles Artes, Bilbao [2001], no.6, p.64.