



Coleção Phillips – Washington, D.C.

O Almoço dos Remadores (Le Déjeuner des Cantonniers)
Óleo sobre tela, 1881. Pierre-Auguste Renoir

Renoir: pain fades, beauty remains

Pierre-Auguste Renoir was born in Limoges, France, on February 25, 1841. His father was a tailor who moved to Paris while little Pierre was just 3. At the age of 14, the young artist worked as a painter at a porcelain factory; afterwards painted religious patterns in textiles. His talent gained a new direction when he entered the École des Beaux-Arts, studying art under Charles Gleyre. There he met other young painters, like Claude Monet, Frédéric Bazille and Alfred Sisley.

In 1874, tired of being rejected by the official salon, several of those artists, including Renoir, Monet and Sisley, organized their own exhibit. Renoir included seven pictures in this display, which was not a commercial success, but granted the painters the title of impressionists, a term initially used to ridicule them. In order to survive, Renoir painted conventional portraits. In the second impressionist exhibition, in 1876, Renoir presented 15 works. In that period, his pictures gradually began to grow famous. Some of his works achieved great success at the 1879 salon.

In 1881 Renoir traveled to Italy, where he got so impressed by the work of Italian Renaissance painters that he concluded he knew nothing about drawing and very little about painting. From then on he began to make his lines firm and abandoned the impressionist manner of applying paints in short strokes, starting to use the traditional method of splashing them in layers and varnish. In that phase of trips, he also visited Algeria,

where he became fascinated by the exotic environment and its brightness.

Renoir, then, concentrated on creating his own new techniques. Understanding that firm lines and richness of color were incompatible, he attempted to combine what he had learned about color during his impressionist period with the traditional methods of paint application. The result was a series of masterpieces.

In 1885, a son, Pierre, was born to Renoir and Aline Charigot, who had long been his lover and model. Three years later, Renoir discovered Cagnes-sur-Mer, a place that became his winter dwelling after he began suffering from arthritis and rheumatism. He used to spend long periods in the South with Aline, who, during that time, had two more children: Jean and Claude (Coco), born in 1894 and 1901.

With his arthritis worse, Renoir experienced each time more difficulties to hold the brushes and he ended up having to tie them to his hands. He also began sculpting, hoping to express his creative spirit by means of shaping. He created *Venus Victrix*, in 1915, and the *Washerwoman*, in 1917.

Despite the serious physical limitations, Renoir continued working until the end of his life. In August 1919, he last visited Paris, where his great joy was to discover that his picture *Portrait of Madame Charpentier* had been bought by the French government and was exposed at the Louvre. Three months later, on December 3, Renoir died in Cagnes-sur-Mer, at the age of 78, leaving a small still nature with two apples incomplete on the easel.