

Jill Newhouse Gallery presents two concurrent exhibitions of works from private collections by **Odilon Redon** (1840-1916) and by **Pierre Bonnard** (1867-1947). Spanning each artist's career, the shows includes prints, paintings and works on paper.

**Odilon Redon: Vision and Sight  
and  
Bonnard in the Back Room**



Odilon Redon, *Astral Head*, c. 1905, Oil on composite board, 20 x 26 1/4 inches, Signed lower left

**Odilon Redon** was a uniquely creative artist whose personal psychological voyage is made starkly visible in the images he created. Born into a wealthy Bordeaux family in 1840 but suffering with illnesses that kept him in isolation throughout his youth, Redon developed an early affinity for the fantastic and the macabre through the literature of Flaubert, Baudelaire and Edgar Allen Poe. Trained in the visual arts by the academic painter J. L. Gérôme and the eccentric lithographic genius Rodolphe Bresdin, Redon began his career working in black and white, producing large charcoal drawings called *Noirs* depicting fantastic images that were eerie, poignant and emotionally charged. A female face seen in profile is frozen in a silent scream; a male head is dangling from the stem of a sinuous swamp flower; and a naturalistic landscape of entwined trees (inspired by similar compositions by J.B.C. Corot, whom Redon admired) becomes imbued with eerie nuance.



Odilon Redon, *Ecstasy*, 1880s, Charcoal on buff paper, 19 1/2 x 14 3/4 inches



Odilon Redon, *Swamp Flower*, 1881, Charcoal on cream wove paper, 20 x 16 5/8 inches, Signed lower left



Odilon Redon, *The Birth of Venus*, c. 1910, Oil on paperboard laid down on cradled panel, 9 3/4 x 12 1/2 inches, Signed lower left

By the 1880's, the original imagery and the masterful technique of these drawings brought Redon recognition from critics and artists, and in 1884, Joris-Karl Huysmans's novel *À rebours* (*Against Nature*), so important in defining the Symbolist aesthetic, described a decadent aristocrat who collected Redon drawings.

With this success, Redon's life started to turn. He married and had a son, finding new personal happiness and his lifelong depression began to lift. He began to work in color using both oil and pastel, enlivening the landscapes he had previously depicted with blue skies and green seas, or making still lifes with flowers and butterflies that included female portraits, allowing the then popular impressionist palette to enhance his imagery. Much like the earlier *Noirs*, *Astral Head* (1905) ([cat. no. 11](#)) and *The Birth of Venus* (1910) ([cat. no. 12](#)) still depict imaginary subjects, but are now vibrantly colored in yellow, blue, red and green.

Although **Pierre Bonnard** was born twenty years after Redon, the two artists corresponded, and Bonnard is known to have said: “I have the greatest admiration for Redon... (his work) is the reunion of two opposing qualities which are almost opposites... all of our generation fell under his charm and received his advice.” By 1902, their friendship solidified as Redon produced a portrait lithograph of Bonnard, and Bonnard made a portrait of Redon’s son Ary.

As a member of the Nabi group of painters active in the late-nineteenth century, Bonnard’s early work was heavily influenced by Paul Gauguin and Symbolism with its flat, non-objective color and decorative patterns. Like Redon, Bonnard’s graphic work of this period made bold use of black and white, as seen in his 1893 drawing “O, Ombre” ([cat. no. 1](#)) from a proposed children’s book on the alphabet. Both artists avoided the literal. But whereas Redon favored fantastic imagery, Bonnard depicted the everyday, made fantastic through through the lens of his memory.



Pierre Bonnard, *House in the Valley*, c. 1922, Watercolor, oil, gouache and pencil on paper, 11 x 15 3/8 inches, Signed lower left



Pierre Bonnard, *O, Ombre (Dessin pour Un Alphabet sentimental)*, 1893, Brush and India ink with pencil on paper, 7 1/4 x 7 7/8 inches, Stamped with monogram lower right



Pierre Bonnard, *The Little Street or Boulevard des Batignolles*, c. 1903, Oil on canvas, 12 1/8 x 8 1/2 inches, Signed lower right

In the early painting *The Little Street or Boulevard des Batignolles* ([cat. no. 2](#)) Bonnard depicts his future companion Marthe strolling down the pearl-gray boulevards of Paris carrying a baker's box. A forecast of the future, Bonnard would obsessively paint Marthe - whom he first met on the streets of Paris - for the rest of his life, even after she had passed away.

Later in his career, Bonnard turned increasingly to landscape subjects, from the verdant riverside views near his country house in Vernon to the shimmering ports of Deauville and Trouville ([cat. nos. 4,5](#)) where he vacationed in the summer. After 1930, his house in Le Cannet provided endless opportunities to paint the sparkling hills of southern France. These grand panoramas were a counterpoint to the intimate interior scenes of his home, as seen in *L'Escalier* ([cat. no. 7](#)), - the view of Marthe and their dog seen from the top of a staircase.

When Bonnard painted in his studio, it was from memory, and he would often work on more than one painting at a time. For Redon, subject matter was derived from myth and literature, reorganized to portray his emotional story. For both artists at the end of their careers, color became their muse.



Pierre Bonnard, *Panoramic View of Cannes*, c. 1930, Oil on canvas, 19 x 21 1/4 inches, Estate stamp lower left



Pierre Bonnard, *L'Escalier*, c. 1932, Oil and gouache on paper, laid down on canvas, 25 1/4 x 19 1/2 inches, Signed lower left

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