

## Renoir's Dancer

'Impressionism', perhaps the most loved of Modern Art movements, has been around for over 150 years. One of its most endearing exponents is Pierre-Auguste Renoir. In 1883 he painted *Dance at Bougival*. Double click on the link to [see Dance at Bougival](#) which is held at the Boston Museum of Fine Art.

The female model was Suzanne Valadon. She too became a painter as did her son Maurice Utrillo. Suzanne was born in Bessines in the Limousin region of France. A rebel all her long life (1865-1938) - she became an artist's model after a fall from a trapeze ended her circus career. Her artist training consisted of watching and absorbing all that Renoir and other painters did while she modelled for them. The 'prickly' French master painter Edgar Degas became her most noted sponsor. Suzanne always loved life in Montmartre, but it was not easy. In 1883 she gave birth to an illegitimate child she named Maurice. A young Spaniard – Miguel Utrillo, who may have been his father, later adopted him, but Maurice saw little of him. The bond between mother and son was very, very strong, even though Maurice from a teenager became a problem alcoholic. Suzanne remained a model and a painter all her life. In 1919 she painted *Family Portrait*. It is of her second husband Andre Utter, herself, son Maurice and her elderly mother. As a character portrait it is marvellous. Double click on the link to [see Portrait de Famille](#) which is held in the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

This is just one of her 478 paintings. Her wayward son became more famous than her. In 1928 Maurice was awarded the *Croix de la Legion d'Honneur*. It was his mother Suzanne who taught him to paint – in desperation to combat his alcoholism. His paintings were principally Parisian – Montmartre, empty evocative street scenes. His picture of *Bessines Church in the Snow* of 1927 he painted for his mother. This is now in private hands.

Why not use Google to explore these painters and their work.

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