



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

The French Department

Trinity College Dublin

requests the pleasure of your company at the

Third Annual Barbara Wright

Memorial Lecture in French Studies

to be delivered by

Professor Ségolène Le Men (Professor Emerita in Art History,

University of Paris Nanterre)

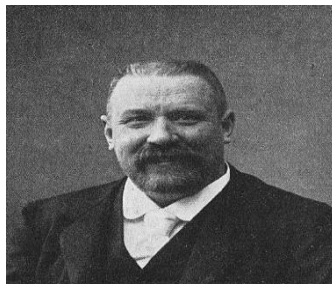
on

**The Semiotics of Display: Impressionism at Home in
19th-Century Paris — Moreau-Nélaton's Collection as
Case Study**

at 4.30 p.m. on Wednesday 24 May 2023

in the Neill Lecture Theatre, Trinity Long Room Hub,

followed by a reception in the Hoey Ideas Space



RSVP by Monday 22 May 2023 to Dr Sarah Alyn Stacey, FTCD, salynsta@tcd.ie

About the lecture

The French Department of Trinity College Dublin is delighted to announce the third Annual Barbara Wright Memorial Lecture in French Studies. The series has been established to honour the memory of Professor Barbara Wright (1935-2019) and will be inspired by her broad scholarly interests and achievements. A renowned specialist primarily in nineteenth-century literature and textual and visual studies, Professor Wright's distinction was recognised by the French Government: she was made a Chevalier de l'ordre national du mérite in 1975 and a Chevalier de la légion d'honneur in 2019. A renowned expert on painter, writer and art critic Eugène Fromentin, Professor Wright's interests extended beyond literature to art and music. The *Barbara Wright Prize*, awarded annually to the Senior Sophister in the French Department who obtains the highest result (and not less than a First) in French literature, is an inspiring and enduring testimony to her scholarly rigour. For further details see <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/people/barbara-wright-obituary-acclaimed-scholar-who-broke-trinity-glass-ceiling-1.4142965>

The lecture will be delivered by **Professor Ségolène Le Men**, Professor Emerita in Art History at the University of Paris Nanterre. Her lecture is a fitting tribute to Professor Wright's work on textual and visual studies and to the Department's fine record in teaching and research.

Résumé: The Semiotics of Display: Impressionism at home in 19th Century Paris — Moreau-Nélaton's Collection as Case Study

The word “collector” appeared in French dictionaries in the same period as the term “impressionism”, which was coined after the title of Monet's painting *Impression, soleil levant* exhibited at the first impressionist art show in 1874: this was no coincidence. At the time when the “dealer-critic system” promoted modern art, the role of the collector in the rise of impressionism is now well acknowledged, and has given way to various approaches in art history. This lecture will address the collector's role through the issue of display, usually raised rather in museology than in the history of collections, and use textual and visual studies as a method to understand the semiotics of display in 19th Century impressionist Parisian art collections.

Sources are rare, and often lacking. Nevertheless Etienne Moreau-Nélaton's remarkable private collection (including Monet's *Poppy Field*, Orsay museum) offers an exceptional case study, as it was photographed in his Faubourg Saint-Honoré *hôtel particulier* to keep memory of its final layout before the paintings were moved into the Louvre, after the donation of the collection to the museum in 1906. The collector's writings (in particular his *Mémorial de famille* and his art history books) help to interpret this 1907 unique album of photographs showing the collection at home as a visual testimony of its multifaceted meanings. The display expresses his engagement in modern art through the confrontation between paintings, from Corot to Monet. It promotes decorative arts inspired by japonism by the juxtaposition between Géricault and Delacroix's masterpieces and his mother's handmade ceramics, drawing attention to issues of gender and of *amateur* art into art history. It tells through paintings his own autobiography, at the same time as it aims at the recognition of impressionism through its entry into the museum.

About the speaker

Ségolène Le Men is Professor emerita of Art History and honorary member of Institut universitaire de France. Professor at Université Paris Nanterre (1995-2017), she has also been CNRS research fellow at the musée d'Orsay and director of studies in the humanities at the

Ecole normale supérieure. As a student at the ENS, she had a graduate scholarship in art history at Harvard. She has held visiting professorships in Canada, Germany, Ireland, Japan and Switzerland, and took part to the DEA/MPhil Textual and Visual Studies program at Trinity College, initiated by Barbara Wright and Anne-Marie Christin. She has been curator or co-curator at several major exhibitions, notably *Daumier* (Paris, Ottawa, Washington, 1999-2000) and *Cathédrales 1989-2014 Un mythe moderne* (Rouen and Cologne, 2014). Among her other publications are *Les abécédaires français illustrés du XIXe siècle* (1984), *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes Panorama social du XIXe siècle* (1993), *Lanternes magiques, tableaux transparents* (1995), *La cathédrale illustrée de Hugo à Monet* (1998 and 2014), *Courbet* (2007), *Monet* (2010 and 2022). She recently edited with Félicie Faizand de Maupeou *Collecting Impressionism A Reappraisal of the Role of Collectors in the History of the Movement* (2022).

This lecture is made possible through the generous support of the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies, Trinity College Dublin and the Trinity Long Room Hub.

