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0. INTRODUCTION

ERIC LEE: Hello, my name is Eric Lee. As the director of the Kimbell Art Museum I'd like to welcome you to Bonnard's Worlds. You'll be guided today by deputy director of the Kimbell Art Museum and curator of this exhibition George Shackelford, and Elsa Smithgall, chief curator at the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, which organized the show with the Kimbell. French artist Pierre Bonnard is one of the greatest painters of the twentieth century. His work forges a singular link between Impressionist and Modernist painting. His use of vibrant colors and decorative elements are hallmarks of his style, whether in landscapes or still lives. Curator George Shackelford:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:08:24] **What //you're going to see today is Bonnard, in a sense, world by world, beginning with //the biggest [00:08:42] landscape //moving into a more private space, the garden. //And then moving inside his house, but still looking outside at the landscape through an open window or an open door. //[00:09:09] From that view, //we turn our gaze inward to the spaces in which he and his family or friends lived //[00:09:27] //Around a dining table //[00:09:44] //or in a living room where there might be a vase of flowers sitting on a table top or a basket of fruit.**

ERIC LEE: From the public spaces of the house, you'll go into the most private ones—the bedroom, then the bath. And finally, you will end up in the most private space of all—the mirror in which Bonnard contemplates his own image in a striking self portrait. We hope you enjoy your tour.

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[Word count: 279]

1. EARTHLY PARADISE, 1916-20

[POSSIBLE SFX: NATURE SOUNDS, BIRDS CHIRPING, A BREEZE BLOWING, ETC.]

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:18:23] It made sense for us to start with a painting that is //indicative of //the world of the big landscape in which Bonnard lived //and spent his time.

NARRATOR: You're looking at Earthly Paradise. What resembles a biblical landscape of the Garden of Eden is actually a view of Bonnard's garden at his home, which he called "Ma Roulotte," or "My Caravan." The house is located in Vernonnet, in the Normandy region of France where Bonnard lived with his wife, Marthe. Completed in 1920 when he was 53, this painting demonstrates Bonnard's daring investigations of light, color, and space as well as his love of nature and animals.

[FADE IN SFX OF ANIMALS HONKING, CROAKING, ETC.]

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:12:03] //All around them are //strange animals, a frog, a peacock, a turkey, a monkey, [00:14:17] Throughout his career, Bonnard was fascinated by animals //from the [00:14:51] very early days of his art all the way to the very last works.

[FADE OUT ANIMAL SFX]

NARRATOR: Foliage curves into an arch framing Bonnard cast as a brooding Adam, and his wife, Marthe, as a reclining Eve, in striking greens, blues, purples and oranges. In a nod towards more classical paintings, Bonnard imagines a pastoral world where a woman is at ease, connected with nature. And where a man is alert and inquisitive, as if he's looking to understand the world.

In Earthly Paradise, we enter a peaceful world—and we're asked to surrender to nature and the color and movement of a deeply personal painting.

[Word Count: 265]

2. LANDSCAPE AT LE CANNET, 1928

NARRATOR: Bonnard and his wife, Marthe, preferred to spend the summer months in Normandy, not far from Paris, and move south to spend the winter. In 1926, they bought a house in the south of France in the hills above Le Cannet, a village near the beach resort Cannes. Here you continue to see Bonnard’s love of nature, bright colors and a sense of beauty and intimacy.

ACTOR (BONNARD): I have all my subjects in hand. I go back and look at them. I take notes. Then I go home and before I start painting, I reflect—I dream.

NARRATOR: Unlike his friend Claude Monet, Bonnard doesn’t paint outside among his landscapes—he paints completely from memory in his studio. Bonnard found the physical presence of the scene distracting as he painted. On morning walks, he made notes and sketches in a notebook for inspiration. Curator George Shackelford:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:23:37] Here Bonnard is //imagining himself //reclining on the ground, kind of like a god of the landscape.

NARRATOR: We are looking at the essence of the Mediterranean landscape with its vibrant green vegetation, warm golden sunlight, and serene atmosphere. In the center of the composition Bonnard shows us the roof of his house, under a big green tree. But he paints this for a client, not for himself.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:24:19] //It seemed so interesting //that he would share with someone else, in [00:24:37] //this world that belonged to him, the world of his experience at Le Cannet [00:24:57] //The idea of sharing your life with other people really inspires this whole idea of the way in which Bonnard’s [00:25:18] worlds, //become the subject matter for his art, shared with us as his viewers //the most private aspects of his intimate life.

[Word Count: 301]

3. TWILIGHT (THE GAME OF CROQUET), 1892

GEORGE SHACKELFORD [00:26:42] We've moved from the landscape into the garden //of Bonnard's family house in the southeast of France

[POSSIBLE SFX: Mallets clicking onto croquet balls, people laughing, a dog barking]

NARRATOR: You're looking at Bonnard's sister, Andrée, in the white dress; his father in the straw hat; and Andrée's husband, Claude Terrasse is the man in the boater hat in the background as they play a round of croquet as the sun sets.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:29:38] Bonnard belonged to a group of artists that called themselves the Nabi, a //name derived from the Hebrew word meaning prophet. // [00:29:55] They //were very strongly influenced by Paul Gauguin and also by Japanese art.

NARRATOR: We see the influence of Japanese woodblock prints here in the flattened forms and concentration on outlines for things like the shape of a dress. You can also see the way patterns of clothes don't move with the figures wearing them, but instead are flat, like the check of his father's jacket.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:31:18] //I think the figures in the background are a complete fantasy [00:31:32] //a kind of group of garden nymphs in white dresses who are having a dance.

NARRATOR: We don't really know if the nymphs dancing are inspired by reality or just an invention to make the painting more decorative and beautiful.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:31:47] //The sense of the foreground at the left so near, the distance in the [00:32:02] background so far, is part of the excitement that Bonnard brings to the picture.

[Word Count: 276]

4. THE TERRACE, 1918.

[POSSIBLE SFX: Outdoor sounds: Breeze blowing, birds chirping, etc.]

ACTOR (BONNARD): Color does not add a pleasant quality to design—it reinforces it.

NARRATOR: From the garden we move onto The Terrace with a panoramic view from Bonnard's home in Vernonnet in the Seine valley. If you look closely you'll see a seated man and bending woman in the garden below the terrace, almost blending into the background. In his work, Bonnard continually searches for a perfect union on canvas between man and nature.

ELSA SMITHGALL: [00:48:25] Hi. I'm Elsa Smithgall, chief curator at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. // [00:01:34] This is //an incredible painting //and [00:01:52] one of the things //that I love //about it is that you see the incredible foliage //that takes center stage.

NARRATOR: This painting's original title was The Wild Garden. And you can clearly see the sense of untamed nature. The background is a riot of brushwork describing overlapping masses of leaves. Explosive pops of yellow, bright green, and deep blue stand out against darker, softer colors. All through the composition Bonnard is juxtaposing cool and warm tones adding excitement and movement.

ELSA SMITHGALL: [00:06:36] //What's really important here to see //is Bonnard's //talent //for //expressing [00:06:53] emotion and feeling through color. //He is always //from the beginning through the end, //an amazing colorist.

NARRATOR: Notice how the Terrace is framed like a wide angle lens shot from a camera. Bonnard and his friends were shutterbugs in the 1890s, and Bonnard was influenced by the ways that photography and film changed the way people saw space and composed images at the turn of the 20th century.

[Word count: 302]

5. THE PALM, 1926

NARRATOR: The Palm shows us another view from Bonnard's home in Le Cannet, which he called Le Bosquet or "The Grove." He's on the shaded terrace, looking towards by the bright, Mediterranean light. He found it thrilling.

[POSSIBLE SFX: Branches hitting against windows, leaves rustling outside, sea water lapping]

ACTOR (BONNARD): My first impression of the Mediterranean coast was an experience akin to the *Thousand and One Nights*; the sea, the yellow walls, the reflections which are as colored as the light effects.

NARRATOR: The arching branches that give the painting its title shade the foreground of vines and hedges, in which deep greens mingle with brilliant yellow highlights. The masses of foliage above and below frame a radiant view of the rooftops of Le Cannet, with sun drenched tiles in tones of orange and pink, against patches of blue and violet shadow. Elsa Smithgall:

ELSA SMITHGALL: [00:11:55] //This is //beautifully [00:12:12] framed with that palm frond //at the upper level of the composition, and then //you see //this figure holding an apple. //She's sort of [00:12:28] an Eve-like //or mythological-like figure //enticing us into //the composition.

NARRATOR: Bonnard's wife Marthe, almost looks like a classical Greek goddess. Some say she represents Pomona, the Roman goddess of fruits and orchards. This painting is another example of Bonnard's desire to show humans in a pastoral setting, drawing on classical traditions. He brings the antique universe into the modern world, uniting the past with the present.

ELSA SMITHGALL 00:14:06 // He's inventing a new way forward, but like many artists, they are very much //drawing [00:14:19] //on the past. [00:14:47] So there are many different possible ways //one can //interpret that //figure, but certainly I think that the idea of //her here //in a classical sense //is [00:15:08] really quite poignant.

[Word count: 305]

6. DINING ROOM IN THE COUNTRY, 1913

[POSSIBLE SFX: Drawer opening, silverware rattling, creaky cupboard door unlatches and opens]

ELSA SMITHGALL: [00:17:11] //I love [00:17:41] this particular painting because //it allows you to wander through both the inside and the outside, and //[00:18:13] color //becomes a beautiful thread.

NARRATOR: You'll notice that we've left the garden and have gone indoors. Here we're inside Bonnard's dining room at Ma Roulotte, but still looking out onto the luminous greens of the garden. He often used windows and doors to frame and call attention to elements within a composition, like his friend, Impressionist painter Henri Matisse. It's a technique that goes back to the Renaissance. Curator Elsa Smithgall:

ELSA SMITHGALL: [00:18:20] //You see the colors of the garden //reflected on the door [00:18:33] //and there's a wonderful //rhythm and movement and feeling that is created //that //is a very //[00:18:48] provocative lens //to explore feeling.

NARRATOR: Notice the intimate man-made world of the interior with its warm reds and oranges. It complements the natural world of the landscape with its cooler greens, blues, and violets.

ACTOR (BONNARD): How many days have I spent alone with my cat... and when I say alone, I mean without a material being, for my cat is a mystical companion, a spirit.

ELSA SMITHGALL: [00:19:20] One of the things about Bonnard's work is that often you [ARE] rewarded by looking really closely //within the work. //He loved animals. [00:19:39] //One of the things you might discover //are those //cats that you see, //one on one chair on the far left and [00:19:52] one on the //right just below the //woman //peering into the room. That //is //a really fun element.

[Word Count: 278]

7. THE FRENCH WINDOW, 1932. (Also referencing Breakfast/the Radiator, and The French Window with Dog, 1927)

GEORGE SHACKLEFORD: [00:42:40] On the second floor of Bonnard's house //Le Bosquet, //there's a small //intimate //sitting room. [IN] the room. //[00:42:57] There's a fireplace on your left //and straight ahead is a wall with a window flanked by a radiator and a mirror. It's //the place where Marthe [00:43:20] Bonnard spent most of her time during the day.

NARRATOR: Before you are three paintings, each providing a glimpse of the same room, centered on the same window looking out onto the lush landscape. Let's focus on the vertical painting to the right—we see an open French Window and then the profile portrait of a Dog. Curator George Shackelford:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:44:39] This painting is very complex. //Lots of verticals, horizontals, diagonals. They [00:45:01] //begin to create a space that's a little bit baffling. Where in fact is that dog? He's on the far wall of the room, and yet he seems to be beyond it.

NARRATOR: Looking at the two horizontal paintings, you'll see to the right of the window there's a man looking out at us—what we're seeing is a mirror on the wall. Notice how Bonnard is using geometrics and shifting light to change the way we see the scenes. With that in mind, look again at French Window with Dog.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:46:44] //Our concentration is //on the interior and on the play back and forth between [00:47:01] what we see through an opening and what we see //through the frame of a mirror. [00:47:59] //in all of these arrangements of [00:48:17] rectangles and parallelograms //they become almost abstract, although every one of them is based in something real and seen.

NARRATOR: And in The French Window in the center of these three paintings we ought to be focused on Marthe at the table, but our eye is drawn away by the view of the outdoors that we can see through the window, and the reflection of the room we can see in the mirror.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:50:20] He contrasts this [00:50:38] deep view into the landscape with the //view in a mirror, where once again we see the back of Marthe's head, //and Bonnard's face looking at us all in the mirror.

NARRATOR: You'll have noticed by now that Bonnard's paintings aren't as simple as they might seem at first. The longer you look at them, the more you'll discover.

[Word count: 422]

8. THE LAMP, 1899. (Referencing The Children's Meal, 1895)

NARRATOR: As we move further indoors, we come to more cozy family moments in this next painting, *The Lamp*. Notice to its right a similar painting, *The Children's Meal*. In the 1890s Bonnard painted dozens of pictures like these, devoted to the intimate world of his family life. But ordinary storytelling was always less important to him than making a painting that would express emotion.

ACTOR (BONNARD): **It's not a matter of painting life, it's a matter of making painting come alive.**

NARRATOR: We see Bonnard's sister, Andrée, her son, and Bonnard's grandmother sharing a meal. The background is a darker brown, contrasting with the warm yellow light coming from the brass hanging lamp with a green glass shade. Curator George Shackelford:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:54:47] **Bonnard is an artist who really appreciated humor, and there are lots of things about //The Lamp, //that are funny, //the little expression on the child's face at the left //[00:55:00] //a kind of giggle, //the small cat that's sitting on the table at the right, //which //you feel //really shouldn't be there, but [00:55:12] //we're going to let you stay.**

NARRATOR: Notice how we're seated at the table and we're part of the action. Yet the action is blocked from us by the large lamp and the still life of food surrounding our place.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:55:43] **//The lamp begins to be slightly intrusive. It's a big, brassy presence in the [00:55:57] middle of the composition.**

NARRATOR: Bonnard was influenced by the French symbolist movement in art and literature, which believed that ordinary objects and scenes can take on deep symbolic or mystical meaning. In this painting the story of an ordinary dinner is given a puzzling twist by the way Bonnard plays with space and light effects. Have you noticed the brass globe in the middle of the lamp? Look closely and you'll see yourself there, a tiny, distorted reflection—seated at the table, but far, far away.

[Word count: 335]

9. WOMAN WITH DOG, 1922. (Referencing *Coffee*, 1915)

NARRATOR: You're looking at *Woman with Dog*, and to its left is a similar scene in the painting *Coffee*. Both paintings show Marthe and her beloved dachshund. In fact, the Bonnards had a series of dachshunds over the years. The closely cropped view of *Woman with Dog* shows a tender moment between owner and pet. Curator George Shackelford:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:04:07] //It's an image in which the dog is taking the place of a child that Marthe and Pierre Bonnard never had. [01:02:08] //The way [BONNARD] lets the dog //be at table like he let the cat //in *The Lamp* is so //human, so lovely.

NARRATOR: Marthe and her dog seem so lifelike that you'd swear they must have been right in front of Bonnard when he was painting them. But remember, Bonnard didn't paint straight from life but instead made drawings, with notes about the colors and shapes, and then afterwards painted from memory, with those notes as reminders of his first idea. To focus his attention, he operated in a very strange way—painting on rectangles of unstretched canvas, tacked up to a plaster wall:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [00:48:34] //Bonnard paints [01:04:23] //against a wall. // [HE'S NOT USING] //an easel, standing in [01:04:38] space out in a room. // [01:04:53] He has no other [01:04:53] spatial reference. It's //a very unusual way //of operating.

NARRATOR: Along with Bonnard's different method of painting, his choice of viewpoint is often skewed. Look at *Coffee*, to the left. Notice the way he uses a huge checked tabletop to distort space. He is fascinated by the difference in color and tone between manmade light and natural light. *Coffee* is lit by bright artificial sources, with a lamp or electric bulb.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD [01:02:26] //Look at the blue shadow of the back of the chair that's cast [01:03:04] //on the yellow wall behind [THE DOG]. That's the shadow of an electric light lighting //the dog and the chair //[01:03:21] //it falls onto the wall behind. It's //an interesting, complicated device [01:03:39] // [IN] a //fascinating //painting.

[Word count: 361]

10. THE WHITE CUPBOARD, 1931. (Also referencing *The Red Cupboard*, 1933, and *Basket of Fruit*, 1946)

[POSSIBLE SFX: Creaky cupboard door opening, sounds/clatter of dishes being stacked, silverware drawers opening, people's voices murmuring in background]

NARRATOR: These next three paintings, the large *White Cupboard* in center, the vertical *Red Cupboard* to the left, and horizontal *Basket of Fruit* to the right, are all views of a large cupboard with three sections in the dining room of Bonnard's house, Le Bosquet. Over about fifteen years, Bonnard uses the same motif to study relationships between space, light, and color. Curator George Shackelford:

SHACKELFORD: [01:19:12] //It may be hard for you to figure out the spatial relationships between these [PAINTINGS] but take a moment to look at them all and to see if you can [01:19:26] understand how Bonnard was fascinated by the interplay of flat and deep space, by the way in which we could be outside something and looking into it.

NARRATOR: In *The White Cupboard*, we're standing away from the wall—the table is in between. Notice how he divides the composition into rectangles. We see the dining room cabinets, but then we notice the way the red and white planes and grids come together to make a design that's more than just descriptive. Now look to the left at the *Red Cupboard*.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:21:09] *The Red Cupboard* might be the most spectacular painting of the three. [01:22:52] //Understand that we're looking to the left of the [WHITE] cupboard //at a slight angle. [01:24:00] It's a real //riddle. //We are meant to be perplexed by [01:24:14] //the space. //It is so concerned with geometry, //and [01:24:32] the way //that light //changes the color of things as //either brighter or dimmer.

NARRATOR: Think about how something as ordinary as a rectangular view into a cupboard and its contents on the shelves becomes an almost abstract composition. But with Bonnard, light and color bring the composition to life. The brilliant red color saturates the painting, changing even the white interior of the open door to deep mauve.

ACTOR (BONNARD): What I am after is the first impression - I want to show all one sees on first entering the room - what my eye takes in at first glance.

NARRATOR: You can see how these three paintings capture the one wall of the room. To the right is the last of these paintings, a *Basket of Fruit* painted near the end of Bonnard's life. This painting is almost a conventional view of a basket of fruit—but Bonnard wants us to see how his eye moves—and think about how our eye follows along. The Basket is sitting inside the shallow cupboard—and the woodwork acts like a fool-the-eye picture frame.

[Word count: 388]

11. **CORNER OF A TABLE, 1935.** (Also referencing Two Baskets of Fruit)

NARRATOR: *Corner of a Table* is a painting that's really about shapes and colors of objects. We are looking at Bonnard's dining room table again. Notice the bright golden yellow objects on it and the brilliant pinks and reds that surround them. This painting shows Bonnard using things he finds in his world, seeing their shapes and colors, and imagining how he can bring them together in a provocative way. Curator George Shackelford:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:29:38] [THIS PAINTING] is about how those colors are created by light and how they are in fact represented, whether it's a basket of pears and apples, a basket of grapes, or //a box //[01:29:55] that's got blue edges.

NARRATOR: But none of these everyday objects seems to want to stay put on the tabletop. The table looks like it's been turned on its side, in fact. And the dining room chair in the upper left corner has been reduced to a few lines. Everything is topsy-turvy.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:27:55] In fact, when I've looked at it, I've tried to decide whether I think it would be [01:28:13] better if you turned it 90 degrees one way or another. But in fact it really only works in this orientation, and we know because of the signature that this is the way Bonnard wanted us to look at it.

NARRATOR: If you want to see the scene from a more natural point of view, look to the left at the glorious *Two Baskets of Fruit*. Both paintings show the same table.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: 01:30:17 //By contrast, [THIS] table top lies down and behaves normally. That's not [01:31:01] what's happening in *Corner of a Table*.

[Word Count: 293]

12. MAN AND WOMAN, 1900

NARRATOR: Man and Woman is one of Bonnard's most intimate scenes . He shows us himself and his lover Marthe in their bedroom. Marthe is bathed in warm light sitting on the white bedspread. Bonnard is standing in the shadows. In between them is a dark vertical shape—you can make out the edges of a hinged folding screen. Curator George Shackelford:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:37:15] Bonnard sets up a contrast between the two people, Marthe //in the light, charming and //sweet, playing with the kittens, while his own self-portrait in the darkness seems to give off a [01:37:30] sense of, if not melancholy, at least concern and //worry. //[01:36:30] There's a kind of a back and forth, a kind of balancing of the two elements.

NARRATOR: In this part of the exhibit, you'll see there was no part of Bonnard's world that he considered off limits for making art. He took a cue from the Impressionist artist Edgar Degas, who painted public pictures of women in private--sometimes nude. Like Degas, Bonnard recognized that the worlds of the bedroom and the bath were part of everyday reality.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:38:54] //He was willing to share aspects of [01:39:15] his world with the public that many of us would feel uncomfortable letting people see, his bedroom, his bathroom, his wife unclothed. [01:40:24] //What we might see as being off limits, Bonnard saw as part of life and, therefore, a fit subject for the making of art.

NARRATOR: In retrospect we can recognize the painter and his lover as the models for Man and Woman—and we begin to wonder what part of their story the painting tells. But on another level, they stand for every man and woman, as archetypes, like the Adam and Eve of *The Earthly Paradise*.

[Word count: 305]

13. THE BATHROOM (THE DRESSING ROOM WITH THE PINK SOFA), 1908.

[SFX: Water running, splashing, someone opening a window and letting in a breeze, the sound of perfume spraying into the air, etc.]

NARRATOR: The original title for this picture of a woman in her dressing room was “Eau de Cologne,” which gives us a cue to the story it tells. The model is perfuming her body. She has finished her bath. She did her washing standing or kneeling in the shallow metal tub at her feet—which still has some water in it.

GEORGE SHACKLEFORD [01:42:45] This painting is really Bonnard's homage to the great impressionist artist, Edgar Degas, [01:48:38] //best known for his ballerinas //but also famous //for the series of paintings //he devoted to the female nude. [01:48:54] //The discovery of impressionism for Bonnard was a really fascinating moment because it gave him an opportunity to look anew at these great artists from the previous century.

NARRATOR: Look at the shimmering light entering through the window, unifying the curtains, upholstery, and the wallpaper in its radiance. The nude figure of the woman is silhouetted in a strong, joyful pose, like an antique statue—but clearly an object of desire as she turns to the light. Notice how that light enters the picture through the curtain. Curator George Shackelford:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:49:47] //The curtain breaks it up and makes it even more dappled and impressionistic than it would have [01:50:01] been without the curtain. //The light changes the color of the wallpaper, for instance. Look at how yellow it is at the right and how blue it is at the left. It's the same wallpaper.

NARRATOR: This painting is one of the masterpieces of the moment just after 1900 when Bonnard discovered how the Impressionists used light. For the next forty years, he would investigate how light and the colors it contains could elucidate the intimate world of the bath.

[Word Count: 294]

14. LA SOURCE, 1916-17

[POSSIBLE SFX: Someone turning a bath faucet, splashing the water.]

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:53:50] //The Source //is an incredibly simple painting.

NARRATOR: We see Marthe on one knee in a white enamel bathtub. A few subdued colors from her body's ochre tones contrast with the white shades of the bathtub, adding to the composition's simplicity. Against a deep blue shadow, we see a stream of water splashing on her outstretched hand.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:55:28] It's as if we can both feel it, hear it, see it at the same time. [01:55:56] //It's a painting that is so much about sensory experience, looking at it with our eyes, hearing it, touching it. It all seems to be caught up together in one unforgettable image.

NARRATOR: The more you look at Marthe, suddenly she's no longer really the person that we know her to be.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:54:36] //She becomes a kind of eternal figure, and yet she's the same thing. //She is the goddess of the spring. [01:54:54] //She's very much a modern woman, and yet she's also the eternal feminine.

NARRATOR: Bonnard is, again, harkening back to times of antiquity, presenting universal archetypes.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [01:56:44] //In thinking about Bonnard and the ancient world, I'm [01:57:04] reminded of a text written by a critic in the 1930s who said, "Bonnard is not and never was classic in the usual sense, but if classicism is not a formal mode or manner but a state of mind, and a [01:57:24] a mode of feeling, we must recognize [01:57:42] that Bonnard is the only living painter capable of evoking ancient Rome without resorting to archaeology, to stylization, or haphazard art history."

[Word Count: 285]

15. NUDE IN THE BATH, 1936.

NARRATOR: The three paintings you see here, showing three separate nudes in a bathtub, are considered among the most beautiful that Bonnard ever painted. They haven't been seen together in America in 25 years. Look closely at *Nude in the Bath* on the far left. Bonnard turns a simple room into a prismatic rainbow of violet, yellow, blue, and green pulsating around the nude's body, under water. Curator George Shackelford:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [02:14:21] **At the center of this, Marthe Bonnard rests in calm, peaceful contemplation there in the water, and the whole ambiance is magical. [02:03:14] //We see the way the water caresses her neck and her collarbones.**

NARRATOR: Marthe floats in the water like a Monet waterlily. She is not of this world somehow. She exists in her self-enclosed realm, collecting all of the light and color reflections that bounce off the tiles and water as they play across her body.

ELSA SMITHGALL: [00:37:29] **//Bonnard //is approaching the composition here, [BY] building up //the fields of color that you see //in a really [00:37:51] innovative way, //that is totally untethered from reality.**

NARRATOR: In these late paintings, Bonnard is amazingly innovative. Color flows freely. Space expands and contracts. He uses brushes, but also rags and fingers, to vary the textures of his paint. Sometimes it's thin and transparent, sometimes it's daubed on in thicker patches.

ACTOR (BONNARD): **When covering a surface with colors one must be able to renew one's approach indefinitely, to find endlessly new combinations of shapes and colors that meet the needs of emotion.**

ELSA SMITHGALL: [00:38:26] **Nude in the Bath //anticipates //abstract Expressionist work. //On the one hand, this is someone //we associate with a woman in his life, [00:38:43] //in the actual bathroom. But I think it transcends that. //When an artwork can transcend the specifics of its time and place and then continue to have so much resonance for us today, [00:38:59] so much //poignancy in its expression //that's what makes such //an amazing contribution //to the [00:39:16] history of art.**

[Word count: 344]

16. SELF PORTRAIT IN THE DRESSING ROOM MIRROR, 1945.

NARRATOR: We're a long way from the landscapes where we started this tour. Here you are looking at the very most private space in Bonnard's world, where he is alone--contemplating his image in the mirror. This view of the mirror in his private dressing room was begun during the last years of the Second World War, and completed sometime in the year before he died. Curator George Shackelford:

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [02:20:31] //He's removed his glasses, and we see his eyes rather sunken, shadowed. //He's a very old man in his estimation or in the way that he portrays himself to us. // He must be aware of how little time he has left in life.

ACTOR (BONNARD): I believe that when one is young, it is the object, the outside world that carries you away: that fills you with enthusiasm. Later, it is the interior realm, the need to express an emotion, which pushes the painter to choose this or that point of departure, this or that form.

NARRATOR: Bonnard stands under the glare of an electric light. It bounces off the wall behind him, but his face and his expression are somewhat hidden. There's an emotional play back and forth, between bright highlights and dark shadows. They are beautiful in a way, but they're tough, too.

GEORGE SHACKELFORD: [02:24:32] The deep shadow that //envelops his image, is part of what makes this painting so unforgettable. //[It's] so much an image //of [02:24:54] death. //But I think it's also an image that's about courage and about a lifetime of faith in the [02:25:27] possibilities of seeing, memory, and the ability to transcribe what you have felt.

[Word count: 284]