

READINGS: IMPRESSIONISM

Background: Eugen Weber, Impressionism
 Zola, The Realists of the Salon of 1866
 Blemont, The Impressionists
 Zola, Naturalism in the Salon

Background: Eugen Weber, IMPRESSIONISM, *Movements, Currents, Trends*, pp. 194-196.

In the plastic arts the rebellion of Realism and Naturalism was continued first by Edouard Manet (1832-1883), then by the Impressionist painters (Bazille, Pissarro, Monet, Sisley, Renoir, etc.). Like Courbet, Manet believed that art should hold a mirror up to life and that too much of the art of his time was anecdotal, allegorical, or moralistic-removed from reality. Moved by similar ideas, Pre-Raphaelites in England and so-called Nazarenes in Germany had tried to remedy this lack in contemporary academic art by turning to a sort of primitivism added by antiquarian notions of ideal beauty. This was not the way to improve matters. So, where Courbet had reacted against the prevailing idealism by shunning idealized subjects of a morally elevating kind, Manet reacted further against the still-prevalent notion of an ideal style. In doing this he completed in the 1860s the revolution begun by Courbet in the 1850's and stands with the master of Ornans as one of the great pioneers of the modern movement.

In spite of his pioneering role in art, Manet combined to a curious degree the conformist and the unconventional. Socially conservative, he was politically progressive, a constant opponent of the Second Empire, good friend of Republican figures like Gambetta, Zola, and Jules Ferry, admirer of radicals and revolutionaries like Clemenceau and Rochefort, both of whom he painted. As a young man in 1848 he had sketched those who died for liberty on the barricades; during the Commune of 1871 he was, along with Corot, Courbet, and Daumier, elected to the Federation of Paris Artists; a few years later his offers to cover the walls of the Paris Hotel de Ville with frescoes based on one of Zola's great social poems, *Le Ventre de Paris*-markets, streets, docks, and stations-remained unanswered but marked none the less the tone of his preoccupations. Yet with all that, Manet always remained the gentleman, divided by birth, taste, and social position, as well as by the limits he set to his revolutionary experiments, from most of his contemporaries.

Hence, even though the 1870's called the Impressionists *la bande à Manet*-Manet's gang-the relation between them was rather coincidental. Both played a large part in introducing the urban landscape into painting, the modern city with its railway stations, factories, canals and music halls, streets and race-courses, cobbles and steam and electric light. Zola saw Manet as a Realistic painter; in the same sense the Impressionists may be called Naturalistic. Like Naturalist writers, Impressionist painters compared nature with the work of admired and accepted masters, and found that the two did not match. They set out, therefore, to restore truth to painting by accurate; ; analytical observation and, further, to produce impressions of the moment, working outdoors and catching sensation on the wing as they had seen done in the work of English artists.

When Turner had painted "Rain, Steam and Speed," he recognized these elusive phenomena, and their peculiar problems of movement and light, as fit subjects for painting. A later Turner, "Venice in the Twilight," was concerned not with Venice, but with the twilight, stressing again that forms of reality existed which were rather atmospheric than objective, and which presented painters with a new challenge. Turner himself did not get far; but in the 1870's his perceptions fired the imagination of Monet, Pissarro, and Sisley, whom the Franco-Prussian War had driven to London, and of their friends when they returned to France. These men were out to catch the moment just as it is, if necessary in a sketchy manner, line being sacrificed to light and, hence, design to color - the latter being thought to render the requisite impression more effectively than any line.

In one sense, Impressionism marks the high point of materialistic and "objective" art, setting out to produce instantaneous photographs, dissecting reality the better to put it together again. Yet its very fruitfulness carried with it early disintegration. For, by dissecting reality the more faithfully to reconstruct it, Impressionism opened the door to Cubism and Expressionism. The solid surface of reality once shattered, it became natural and relatively easy to reach through to what lay beyond.

IMPRESSIONISM

Term generally applied to a movement in art in France in the late 19th century. The movement gave rise to such ancillaries as American Impressionism. The primary use of the term Impressionist is for a group of French painters who worked between around 1860 and 1900, especially to describe their works of the later 1860s to mid-1880s. These artists include Frédéric Bazille, Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissarro, Auguste Renoir and Alfred Sisley, as well as Mary Cassatt, Gustave Caillebotte (who was also an important early collector), Eva Gonzalès, Armand Guillaumin and Stanislas Lépine. The movement was anti-academic in its formal aspects and involved the establishment of venues other than the official Salon for showing and selling paintings.

The term was first used to characterize the group in response to the first exhibition of independent artists in 1874. Louis Leroy and other hostile critics seized on the title of a painting by Monet, *Impression, Sunrise* (1873; Paris, Mus. Marmottan; see fig. 1), as exemplifying the radically unfinished character of the works. The word 'impression' to describe the immediate effect of a perception was in use at the time by writers on both psychology and art. Jules-Antoine Castagnary's review (1874) demonstrates that it was not always used in a negative way: 'They are *Impressionists* in the sense that they render not the landscape but the sensation produced by the landscape.' The name stuck, despite its lack of precision, and came to be used by the artists themselves.

Typical Impressionist paintings are landscapes or scenes of modern life, especially of bourgeois recreation. These non-narrative paintings demonstrate an attention to momentary effects of light, atmosphere or movement. The paintings are often small in scale and executed in a palette of pure, intense colours, with juxtaposed brushstrokes making up a field without conventional perspectival space or hierarchies of forms. Despite stylistic differences, the artists shared a concern for finding a technical means to express individual sensation.

The term is sometimes used to describe freely executed effects in works of other periods in which the artist has presented an impression of the visual appearance of a subject rather than a precise notation. It is also used by analogy in music and literature to describe works that evoke impressions in a subjective way.

2. Chronology.

The artists who would later be called the Impressionists began to emerge in the 1860s, when most of them were in their twenties. Despite later denials of its importance, most of the Impressionists had formal art training. Manet and Degas were students at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris, under Thomas Couture and Louis Lamothe (1822–69) respectively. Renoir also entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts; he met Bazille, Monet and Sisley in the atelier of the academic artist Charles Gleyre and studied there until its closure in 1864. Some of the artists, including Cézanne, Guillaumin, Monet and Pissarro, also worked in 1860–61 at the Académie Suisse, Paris, where there was a model but no instruction. Despite the academic system's emphasis on the figure, the young artists discovered a common enthusiasm for landscape. Bazille, Monet, Sisley and Renoir went to Chailly-en-Bière to paint in the forest of Fontainebleau in 1864 and during the rest of the 1860s concentrated on painting *plein-air* landscapes and figures in landscape. Monet, dissatisfied with his attempt to work from sketches, submitted *Women in the Garden* (Paris, Mus. d'Orsay), a large canvas executed on the spot, to the Salon of 1867, where it was rejected. Renoir achieved some success with paintings of his mistress in outdoor settings such as *Lise with a Parasol* (1867; Essen, Mus. Flkwang). Bazille, who shared studios with Monet and Renoir, also did groups of figures out of doors. Moving away from their Barbizon antecedents, the artists also painted city views and landscapes that show the life of suburbs and seaside resorts. Rather than drawing on past art for their sources of inspiration, they looked to contemporary popular illustration and photographs but above all emphasized direct contact with nature.

Their palettes lightened, and they eliminated earth tones as they moved away from their Barbizon-inspired works of the early 1860s. Monet, Pissarro, Renoir and Sisley worked around Louveciennes in 1868 and 1869. Renoir and Monet painted together at the popular riverside resort called La Grenouillère in 1869 (respectively, Stockholm, Nmus.; London, N.G.; see Monet, Claude, fig. 1). In these canvases they began to use smaller, more fragmented brushstrokes and more intense colour in an attempt to suggest the visual appearance of light on rippled water, foliage and figures, without focusing on any detail of the scene.

Manet and Degas, whose families were members of the upper bourgeoisie, moved in different circles from those of Pissarro and the younger generation of Impressionists. Morisot, who

met Manet in 1868, was also part of this social group and married Eugène Manet, the artist's brother, in 1874. The figure paintings she exhibited in the late 1860s and early 1870s, such as *Mother and Sister of the Artist* (1869–70; Washington, DC, N.G.A.), show Manet's influence.

During the 1860s both Manet and Degas produced some history paintings, but in a non-academic style; for the most part, however, these artists devoted themselves to subjects they could readily observe. Degas concentrated on portraits of family and friends; because he did not work on commission, he was free to transform this standard genre through his interest in the characteristic gesture, the unexpected angle and the hidden light source. Like most of the artists, he became aware of the compositional possibilities suggested by Japanese prints with their daring cropping, non-Western perspective, simple outlines, lack of modelling and flat areas of colour (*see Japonisme*). *Musicians of the Orchestra* (1868–9; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay) integrates the portraits into a scene of modern urban life that includes a ballet on stage. Manet also painted contemporary entertainments such as Spanish dancers and people at the races; however, his most notorious works were those such as *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* and *Olympia* (1865; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay), which flouted conventions of spatial construction and finish and, through their presentation of nudes in situations suggesting prostitution, pointed to ambiguities in Second Empire morality. In contrast to the emphasis on painting out of doors by the other Impressionists, these two urban artists worked extensively in the studio.

The Café Guerbois in Montmartre, Paris, provided a place for the artists to meet and to discuss their work. Manet, who was the centre of the group there, began to frequent the café around 1866. He was joined by such critics as Louis-Edmond Duranty, Théodore Duret, Armand Silvestre and Emile Zola, who wrote sympathetically about the new art; Bazille, Degas and Renoir went there regularly and, less frequently, Cézanne, Sisley, Monet and Pissarro, who were living outside Paris. Lively discussions on art provided a forum for the artists to clarify their ideas. They also met some collectors there, including Dr Paul Gachet. The Café de la Nouvelle-Athènes replaced the Café Guerbois in the mid-1870s as the preferred gathering place.

During the 1860s most of the artists received some recognition at the Salon, where about half their submissions were admitted, and sold some works. However, many of them were struggling during this decade. The Franco-Prussian War (1870–71) was a major disruption and a turning-point, after which the artists (with the exception of Bazille, who was killed in 1870) settled into more stable circumstances. The Impressionists' subjects of the 1870s gave no hint of the destruction of the war. In celebrating the French countryside and the new face of Paris, they, like other citizens, seemed to be interested in putting the national humiliation behind them.

A number of the artists settled in places that provided them with consistent motifs, mostly within 50 km of Paris. Pissarro returned to Pontoise, where he had already painted in the late 1860s, and where he remained for the rest of his life. He was joined there in 1872 by Cézanne, who abandoned the dark, turbulent form and content of much of his early work in favour of directly observed landscapes, such as *House of the Hanged Man* (1873; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay; *see* Cézanne, paul, fig. 2), painted with a varied touch according to Pissarro's teachings on colour. In his subsequent paintings done in the south of France, such as his views of L'Estaque from the later 1870s and early 1880s (e.g. Paris, Mus. d'Orsay; Chicago, IL, A. Inst.), Cézanne continued to work from nature but chose motifs that did not change quickly and began to use a constructive brushstroke. Between 1872 and 1877 Monet lived in Argenteuil, where Renoir, Sisley, Manet and Caillebotte also painted. About 20 minutes from Paris by train, the town was a centre for pleasure-boating on the Seine; more than any other place, it has become identified with Impressionism (e.g. Sisley's *Bridge at Argenteuil*, 1872; Memphis, TN, Brooks Mus. A.; *see* Sisley, alfred, fig. 1).

The paintings of the Impressionists, above all, show scenes of bourgeois recreation: people boating (Manet's *Boating*, 1874; New York, Met.), strolling along rivers, across bridges (Caillebotte's *Pont de l'Europe*, 1876; Geneva, Petit Pal.; for illustration *see* [Caillebotte, gustave](#)), through fields (Monet's *The Poppies*, 1873; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay) or on the new boulevards of Paris (Caillebotte's *Paris Street: Rainy Weather*, 1877; Chicago, IL, A. Inst.); attending the opera (Cassatt's *Lydia in a Loge*, 1879; Philadelphia, PA, Mus. A.), the café concert (Degas's *At the Café Concert 'Les Ambassadeurs'*, 1876–7; Lyon, Mus. B.-A.), the race-track and other forms of urban entertainment. They also depicted domestic interiors (Morisot's *The Cradle*, 1872; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay); the public park and the private middle-class garden (Renoir's *Monet Working in his Garden at Argenteuil*, 1873; Hartford, CT, Wadsworth Atheneum; *see* fig. 2); and the rivers, roads and railway lines that made France accessible to travellers (Monet's *Arrival of the Normandy Train at Gare St-Lazare*, 1877; Chicago, IL, A. Inst.; *see also* Oil painting, colour pl. IV). Pissarro showed agricultural activities (e.g. *Harvest at Montfoucault*, 1876; Paris,

Mus. d'Orsay), as did Sisley, though to a lesser extent. These subjects, which they shared with more fashionable genre painters and popular illustrators, seemed neutral at the time, although Pissarro's cabbage patches were criticized as vulgar; it was the ways in which they were framed and executed that seemed provocative.

The style of these artists in the 1870s is considered 'classic Impressionism'. They became sophisticated in the manipulation of high-valued colours, in juxtaposed touches and flecks or soft, blended brushstrokes to convey the appearance of reflected light on water, as in Monet's many views of the Seine at Argenteuil (e.g. *Bridge at Argenteuil*, 1874; Washington, DC, N.G.A.; see also colour pl. VII), grass stroked by the wind (Renoir's *High Wind*, c. 1872; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam), complementary coloured shadows on frosty ground (Pissarro's *Hoar Frost*, 1873; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay), variations in atmosphere and the effect on the human form of reflections and incidental light (Renoir's *Ball at the Moulin de la Galette*, 1876; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay; see Renoir, auguste, fig. 1). The lack of concern for academic rules of composition that specified a hierarchy of forms and a clear placement of elements in space, as well as the sketchy quality of the works, suggested rapidity of execution and a direct response to an observed effect. Their technique signified spontaneity and originality, and, to some extent, this manner of execution became in itself a convention of the Impressionists, many of whom in fact worked deliberately.

Manet and Degas remained in Paris, continuing to lead the lives of sophisticated men about town. Degas concentrated increasingly on dancers at the Opéra, in rehearsal and performance, seen in a wide variety of postures from many angles and under different lighting (see colour pl. VI, fig. 1 and Pastel, colour pl. III). Like Manet, through his contact with the other artists he became more interested in painting outdoor scenes such as *Carriage at the Races* (c. 1872; Boston, MA, Mus. F.A.). His increasing use of pastels allowed him to work more freely with both line and colour. Manet also painted more outdoor scenes, such as *At Père Lathuille* (1879; Tournai, Mus. B.-A.), which still show a keen eye for the nuances of social phenomena. Like Degas, he also painted scenes in cafés and places of entertainment, culminating just before his death in *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882; U. London, Courtauld Inst. Gals; see Manet, edouard, fig. 3).

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Zola, *The Realists of the Salon of 1866*

I should be in despair if my readers thought for a moment that I come here as the representative of a school. To make me a Realist, a member of a party, would be to misunderstand me.

I have my own party, the party of life and truth, and that is all. I have some things in common with Diogenes who sought a man; I also seek men in art, fresh and forceful temperaments.

I do not give a hoot for Realism, in the sense that the word has no precise meaning for me. If you mean by it the need for painters to study and represent true nature, there is no doubt that all artists must be realists. Painting dreams is a game for women and children; the task of men is to paint realities.

They take nature and reproduce it, they reproduce it through the medium of their particular temper. Thus, every artist will give us a different world and I shall willingly accept all these different worlds provided each of them should be the living expression of a particular temper. I admire the worlds of Delacroix and of Courbet. Given such a statement, I do not think anyone can class me in any particular school.

Only, see what happens in our time of psychological and physiological analysis. The wind blows from the quarter of science; we are driven, in spite of ourselves, toward the exact study of facts and of things. Thus, all the strong personalities that appear, affirm themselves in the direction of truthfulness. The temper of the time is certainly realistic or, rather, positivistic. I am thus forced to admire men who seem to share a certain kinship, the kinship of the time in which they live.

I am told that I praise "the painting of the future:" I do not know what this term can mean. I believe that every talent is born free, and that it leaves no disciples. The painting of the future bothers me very little; it will be what the artists and the society of tomorrow make it.

The great bugbear, believe me, is not Realism-it is temperament. Every man who is not like others becomes by that very fact an object of mistrust. As soon as the crowd does not understand any more, it laughs. A whole process of education is necessary before genius can be accepted. The history of literature and art is a sort of martyrology which recounts the obloquy and hooting that met every fresh manifestation of the human spirit

EDOUARD MANET

. . . This is the way I interpret the development of every true artist-for instance that of Edouard Manet. Feeling that he was getting nowhere copying the old masters, painting nature seen through personalities different from his, he must have realized quite simply one fine morning that he had now to try to see nature as she is, not through the works and opinions of others. As soon as he got this idea, he took some object, a being or a thing, placed it in a corner of his studio and started to reproduce it on canvas according to his faculties of sight and understanding. He made an effort to forget everything he had studied in the galleries; he tried not to remember the advice he had received, the paintings he had looked at. All that was left there was a particular intelligence served by organs endowed in a certain manner, face to face with nature, and translating it in its own way.

Thus the artist achieved a work that was his own flesh and blood. Certainly this work belonged to the great family of human products; it had its sisters among the thousands of works that have been created; it more or less resembled some of them. But its beauty was its own, living a personal life. The different elements which made it up, taken perhaps from here and there, blended into a whole of novel flavor and particular aspect; and this whole, created for the first time, had an appearance as yet unknown to human talent. Henceforth, Edouard Manet had found his way or, more correctly, he had found himself: he saw through his own eyes, he was to give us in each of his paintings a translation of nature into that original language which he had discovered in the depths of himself.

And now I beg the reader who has read thus far and who has had the good will to understand me, to place himself at the only logical point of view that permits the sane judgment of a work of art. Unless he does that, we shall never understand each other; he would keep all the accepted beliefs, I would start from quite different axioms, and we should go on thus, drifting ever farther apart. At the end he would call me mad, and I would call him unintelligent. He must proceed as the artist himself proceeded: forget the riches of the galleries and the necessities of so-called rules; banish the memory of the paintings piled up by dead artists; no longer see anything but nature face to face, as

she is; and, lastly, seek in the works of Edouard Manet no more than a translation of reality peculiar to a temperament, beautiful because of its human interest.

At this point I am forced, to my great regret, to expound some general ideas. My aesthetic or, rather, the science that I would call modern aesthetics, differs too much from the dogmas taught up to now for me to dare speak of it before having made myself clear.

This is the crowd's opinion of art. There is an absolute beauty, existing outside the artist, toward which everyone tends and which everyone more or less attains. It follows that there is a common measure, a common standard, which is the beauty itself. We apply this standard to every work that is turned out and, according to the degree of the work's closeness or distance from the standard, we declare that it has more merit or less. Circumstances have made us gauge this standard in terms of Greek beauty, in such a manner that all the judgments of all the works of art that humanity has created are based on the greater or lesser resemblance of these works to Greek works.

See then the vast production of the human spirit reduced simply to the evidence of Greek genius. The artists of that country have discovered absolute beauty and, hence, everything has been said; the standard having been established, it was only a question of imitating it and reproducing its models as exactly as possible. And there are people who will demonstrate to you that the artists of the Renaissance were great only because they were imitators. For more than two thousand years the world changes, civilizations rise and fall, societies dash forward or languish, in the midst of ever-changing manners; and, on the other hand, the artists are born here or there, in the pale, cold mornings of Holland, in the warm, voluptuous evenings of Italy and Spain. No matter! Absolute beauty is there, immutable, bestriding the ages; all this life, all these passions and imaginations that have reveled and suffered for over two thousand years must break miserably against it.

And now, here are my artistic beliefs. I take in at a glance the mankind that has lived, that, faced with nature, at all times, in all climes and circumstances, has felt the imperious need to create in human terms, to reproduce by its arts objects and beings. Thus I see a vast show, every part of which interests and moves me profoundly. Every great artist has come to give us a new and personal interpretation of nature. Here, reality is the fixed element, and the different temperaments are the creative elements that have given different characteristics to their works. It is in these different characteristics, in these ever new aspects, that I find the powerfully human interest of works of art. I would like the canvases of all the painters of the world to be gathered in a huge hall, where we could go to read page by page the epic of human creation. And the theme would always be the same nature, the same reality, and the would be the particular and original approaches by which the artists have reproduced the great creation of God. It is in the middle of this huge ;:hall that the crowd must stand to judge works of art sensibly; here beauty is longer an absolute thing, a ridiculous common standard: beauty becomes human life itself, the human element mingling with the fixed element of r reality and bringing to light a creation that belongs to mankind. It is within its that beauty lives, and not outside. What do I care about a philosophical abstraction! What do I care about a perfection dreamed up by a small group of men! What interests me, man, is mankind, my great mother; that which affects me, that which enralls me, in human products, in works of art, is to recognize at the heart of each one an artist, a brother, who shows me nature under this new guise with all the power or all the gentleness of his personality. bus envisaged, this work tells me the story of a heart and a flesh, it speaks! of a civilization and a countryside. And when, in the midst of the vast hall where all the paintings of all the painters in the world are hanging, I glance over this great whole, I have there the same poem in a thousand different tongues, and I never tire of rereading it in every painting, charmed by the delicacies and strengths of every dialect.

I cannot go on to write here the whole book I intend to write some day on my artistic beliefs. It suffices to sketch in general lines what is, and what I believe. I overthrow no idol, I negate no artist. I accept all works of art on the same grounds, as being manifestations of the human spirit. And they all interest me almost equally, they all have true beauty: life, life in its thousand expressions, ever changing, ever new. The ridiculous common standard is no more; criticism examines a work in itself and declares it great when it finds in it a powerful and original interpretation of reality; it then affirms that the Genesis of human creation has one page more, that an artist has been born who endows nature with a new spirit and new horizons. And our creation stretches from the past to the infinite future; every society will contribute its artists who will contribute their own personality. No system, no theory can contain life in its incessant productions. Our part, as judges of works of art, is thus limited to noting the expressions of temperaments, to examining them, to saying what there is in

them of supple and vigorous novelty. If necessary the philosophers will undertake to draw up the formulas. I want only to analyze facts, and works of art are simple facts.

I have thus set the past aside, I have neither rule nor standard in my hands, I stand before the paintings of Edouard Manet as before new facts that I want to explain and comment.

What strikes me first in these paintings, is a very delicate precision in the relation of color tones. Let me explain. Fruit is placed on a table and stand out against a gray background; between the fruit, according to their proximity to each other, the range of color values runs the whole gamut of tints. If you start from a point that is lighter than the real tonality you will have to follow a scale that grows ever lighter; contrariwise, if you start from a darker tonality. This, I believe, is called the law of values. In the modern school I know only Corot, Courbet, and Edouard Manet who have constantly obeyed this law in painting figures. Their works gain thereby a singular distinctness, great truth, and much charm.

Usually, Edouard Manet starts from a tonality that is lighter than that in nature. His paintings are of a solid pallor, blond and luminous. The light falls white and wide, illuminating the objects with a bland brightness. There is not the slightest feeling of strain; the figures and the landscapes bathe in a sort of gay luminosity which fills the whole canvas.

The next thing that strikes me is a necessary consequence of the exact observance of the law of values. The artist, faced with any subject, lets himself be guided by his eyes which perceive the subject in broad tones [of color] that control each other. A head leaning against a wall is only a more or less white spot against a more or less gray background; and the garment juxtaposed to the face becomes, for instance, a more or less blue spot placed beside the more or less white spot. Hence, a great simplicity, almost no details, an ensemble of accurate and delicate spots which, from a few steps off, give the painting a striking relief. I am stressing this characteristic of Manet's works, because it stands out in them and makes them what they are. All the personality of the artist rests in the way his eye works: he sees fair, and he sees masses.

What strikes me in the third place is a slightly dry but charming grace. Let us understand each other: I do not mean the sort of pink-and-white grace that there is about the porcelain heads of dolls. I speak of a penetrating and truly human grace. Edouard Manet is a man of the world, and there are in his paintings certain exquisite lines, certain frail and pretty attitudes that bear witness to his love for the style of the salons. This is an unconscious element the very nature of the painter. And I take this opportunity to protest against the kinship that people have tried to establish between the paintings of Edouard Manet and the verses of Charles Baudelaire. I know that a lively sympathy brought poet and painter together, but I think I can say that this last was never so foolish as others have been, as to want to introduce ideas in his painting. The brief analysis of his talent that I have just given proves with what simplicity he stands before nature; if he assembles several objects and several figures, his choice is guided only by the desire to obtain beautiful harmonies, beautiful oppositions, of color. It is ridiculous to want to turn an artist of this kind into a mystical dreamer.

After analysis, the synthesis. Let us take any of his canvases and seek nothing but what it contains: bright objects, real creatures. I have said that their general aspect is of a luminous fairness. In the diffuse light, the faces are shaped in broad stretches of flesh, the lips become mere lines, everything is simplified and rises in powerful masses. The precision of the tones establishes the planes, airs the canvas, intensifies everything. People have said, jeeringly, that the canvases of Edouard Manet recalled the colored prints of Epinal, and there is a great deal of truth in this mockery which is a praise; in both cases the approach is the same, the colors are applied as if in slabs, with this difference that the workers of Epinal use pure colors without bothering about nuances and values, while Manet multiplies the tonalities and places them in correct relation with each other. It would be much more interesting to compare this simplified form of painting with the Japanese prints which resemble it by their strange elegance and their magnificent patches of color.

The first impression of a Manet canvas is rather harsh. One is not accustomed to such simple and sincere interpretations of reality. And then, as I said, there are some rather elegant rigidities of style which tend to surprise. At first, the eye notices only some broadly laid on colors. Soon the objects take shape and find their place; after a few seconds, the whole appears, forceful, and one feels real delight in looking at this bright and sober painting, which renders nature, if I may say so, with a bland brutality. Drawing closer to the painting, we see that the technique is rather delicate than brusque; the artist uses only the brush and uses it cautiously; there is no piling up of colors, but an even coat. This bold man, scoffed at for his rashness, has a very sensible technique, and if his works

look so peculiar they owe this only to the very personal manner in which he perceives and reproduces things.

All in all, if I were asked what new language Edouard Manet speaks, I should answer: he speaks a language made up of simplicity and precision. The observation he contributes is this fair brightness that fills the canvas with light. The interpretation he offers is an exact and simplified translation, proceeding in broad wholes, sketching out only the masses.

I cannot sufficiently repeat that we have to forget a thousand things in order to understand and enjoy his talent. It is no longer a question, here, of a search for absolute beauty; the artist paints neither the story nor the heart; what is called composition does not exist for him, and the task he undertakes is not to represent some given idea or historical situation. And that is why he must not be judged either as moralist or as storyteller; he must be judged as a painter. He treats the painting of figures the way, in the schools, one may treat the painting of still-lives; I mean to say that he groups his personages before him, somewhat at random, and then tries simply to fix them unto the canvas as he sees them, with the vivid contrasts they make standing out against each other. Do not ask him for anything but an interpretation of literal exactitude. He would not know how to sing or philosophize. He can paint and that is all: he has the gift, and that is his peculiar nature, to grasp the dominant tones in all their delicacy, and thus be able to model things and beings in broad planes of color.

He is a child of our age. I see in him an analytical painter. All problems are being resurrected, reinvestigated, science in search of solid foundations has returned to the exact observation of things. And this movement is not taking place only in the domain of science; all knowledge, all the works of man, tend to seek firm and final principles in reality. Our modern landscape painters are much superior to our painters of history and manners, because they have investigated our countryside and been content to interpret the first bit of forest they came across. Edouard Manet applies the same method to every one of his works. While others rack their brains to invent a new "Death of Caesar," or "Socrates Drinking the Hemlock," he calmly places a few objects and a few persons in a corner of his workshop and starts to paint them, carefully analyzing the whole. I repeat, he is a mere analyst; his work carries much more interest than the plagiarisms of his colleagues; art itself tends thus toward a certitude; the artist is an interpreter of things as they are, and his works have for me the great merit of precise description in an original and human language.

Zola, *Naturalism in the Salon*

These last few years something very interesting and instructive has been appearing under our own eyes. I refer to the independent exhibitions put on by a group of painters that have been called "the Impressionists." [. . .] I use this term "Impressionist" here, because a label is really wanting to name these young artists who, in the wake of Courbet and of our great landscape painters, have devoted themselves to the study of nature When we come down to it, as a working painter Courbet himself is a magnificent classic. [. . .] The true revolutionaries of form appear with Mr. Edouard Manet, with the Impressionists, Messrs. Claude Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Guillaumin, and still others. These propose to get out of the studio in which painters have shut themselves up for so many centuries, and go paint in the open. In the open, the light is no longer uniform, and this means a multiplicity of impressions. [. . .] This study of light in its thousand decompositions and recompositions is what has been called, more or less properly, Impressionism because by it a painting becomes the impression of a moment experienced in nature. The jokers of the press have started from there to caricature the Impressionist painter catching, so to speak, his impressions on the wing in half a dozen shapeless brush strokes; and it must be admitted that certain artists have unfortunately warranted these attacks by contenting themselves with sketches that are far too rudimentary. As far as I am concerned, it is true that one has to apprehend living nature in the expression of an instant; only, this instant must be fixed on the canvas for ever by a fully considered composition. In the end, nothing solid is possible without work. [. . .]

The public is dumbfounded when it comes face to face with certain canvases painted in the open at specific hours; it stands gaping before blue grasses, violet-colored soils, red trees, waters running with all the motley of the rainbow. And yet the artist has been conscientious; he has, perhaps, by reaction, slightly exaggerated the new tonalities his eye has noted; but, when it comes down to it, the observation is absolutely true, nature has never adhered to the simplified notation that the established schools use to treat it. [But it is this last to which the public is used.] Hence the laughter of the crowd faced with the Impressionist paintings, despite the good faith and the very honest, naive efforts of the young painters.

They are taken for pranksters, humbugs, charlatans making fun of the public and drumming up publicity around their works, when they are, on the contrary, severe and principled observers. What seems to be ignored is that most of these contenders are poor men who work themselves to death, sometimes quite literally from misery and weariness. Strange humbugs, these martyrs for their beliefs!

This is, then, what the Impressionist painters have to offer: a more exact examination of the causes and effects of light, exerting its influence both on color and design. They have been justifiably accused of drawing their inspiration from Japanese prints It is certain that our dark schools of painting, the bituminous-minded work of our established schools, has been surprised and forced to rethink things when faced with the limpid horizons, the beautiful vibrant spots of the Japanese water-colorists. There was in these works a simplicity of means and an intensity of performance which struck our young artists and drove them on to this path of painting soaked in air and light a path which all the talented newcomers take today. [. . .

The great pity is that this new formula which they all bring scattered in their works, not one of the artists of the group has realized it powerfully and definitively. The formula is there, endlessly divided; but nowhere, in any one of them, do we find it applied by a master. [. . .] Yet, while we can take objection to their personal incapacity, they remain none the less the true representatives of our time. They have plenty of gaps, their workmanship is too often slack, they are too easily satisfied, they show themselves to be incomplete, illogical, exaggerated, ineffectual. No matter: it is enough for them to apply themselves to contemporary naturalism in order to find themselves at the head of a movement and play a great part in our school of painting.