

- Presentation
- Objectives
- Before the visit
- After the visit
- The visit: list of artworks
- Bibliography

## Presentation

Art and political power, the only form of power to be examined here, are frequently and inevitably related. Power, by definition, is about being followed, obeyed, supported: artists and artworks can be precious auxiliaries to this end, although this does not imply that power will not support art and artists for other reasons, even sometimes purely aesthetic. As for the artists, they wish their work to be seen, published or exhibited, possibly bought and sometimes even celebrated. Whatever the nature of their ambitions, artists have to determine the character of their relationship with the political establishment of their time, service, opposition or indifference, with all possible nuances in between. In 19<sup>th</sup> century France, this relationship took on a special importance: revolutions and counter-revolutions succeeded each other, unstable political regimes became the norm, and it was difficult to avoid becoming involved in the debate on the social and political future of the country, especially regarding the heritage of 1789 and the principles proclaimed by the French Revolution. In addition, the social upheavals of the time had profound consequences for the status of artists. Before the Revolution, artists had barely risen above the status of courtesans: The most successful, generally members of the Academy – and who remain the best known today – had moved away from the patronage of the Church into the service of princes and men of power or, more rarely, the king himself. However, the Romantic era of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of independent artists, who stood before the world and claimed total liberty for themselves and their work: such was the message frequently advanced by Gustave Courbet to his contemporaries (*Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet* or *L'Atelier*). David had already opened the way, in particular during the relatively short period that spanned from Thermidor (1794) to the Coronation (1804), when he organised an exhibition of the *Sabines* which charged an entry fee. This will to independence grew in strength when artists determined to “break off the yoke of opinion and authority” and questioned the selection process operated by the Salon. The revolt eventually led to the 1848 free Salon, followed by a reform of the Jury and finally, on May 15, 1863, the opening of the Salon des refusés which to a certain extent, thanks to Manet, constituted a manifesto of modernity in painting. At the end of the century, the heralds of Art Nouveau were to openly describe themselves as belonging to the “Secession”.

It would be meaningless to endeavour to categorise artworks or artists according to their relationship with the establishment: those who served it, those who fought against it, the possible beneficiaries or victims of favouritism, censorship, or any other kind of discrimination. There would be too few examples unequivocal enough to illustrate each category. Artists are not wholly concerned with expressing their feelings about the

state of the world. Even when they work on a commission, they are often more interested in manifesting their own talent than in serving a cause for its own sake. It does not necessarily follow that even an artist's personal activism and commitment will be reflected in their work. The case of Pissarro, a committed anarchist and a painter of pastoral landscapes, is often used to illustrate the gap between an artist's concerns as a citizen and as an artist, even if his predilection for painting out of town settings of the simple life and of small-holders is hardly neutral, referring the collective imagination back to the “companions” of Anarchism. The artists who were sympathisers of the libertarian periodical *Temps nouveau* (Luce, Signac, Cross, Van Ruyselberghe...) found it difficult to draw “to order” illustrations requested by the editorial. Finally, it may seem a little excessive to search for political connotations in such and such item of furniture or objet d'art; to pretend to question the ideological nature of a chair or dresser. Conversely, the direct impact made by certain artworks is one of the phenomena that marked the emergence of public awareness in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819) by Géricault, *Liberty Guiding the People* (1830) by Delacroix, and possibly *The Execution of Maximilian* (1867) by Manet caused as much controversy and passion as the books by Lamartine and Michelet.

In the case of certain techniques (sculpture, decorative arts), the political aspect may be included in the commission itself and the chosen iconographic themes can be linked to collective values. Thus the dressing room furniture presented to Louise-Marie, the daughter of the dethroned king Charles X, includes allusions to the political hopes of its commissioners. In the century of Guizot and Thiers, the representation of a worker or of a manual activity may not only suggest Ceres or Vulcan, but also refers to the social question which occupied the spirit of the 1840s in a manner which was almost obsessive. Persuaded that art should elevate public morality, artists were sometimes in a position to make, through their work, more or less overt references to the great social aspirations of their times, although their liberty of expression varied according to their discipline. Architects, sculptors and craftsmen were much more dependent on commissions than painters, who sometimes ended up working exclusively for posterity: Van Gogh sold only one painting during his lifetime. The earlier artworks in the Musée d'Orsay contain only furtive allusions to the July Monarchy (1830-1848) or the Second Republic (1848-1852). Daumier's figurines, auxiliaries to his caricatures, remind us of the limitation and sometime severe restriction of political debate, under Louis-Philippe's governments. Even though it presented itself to a certain degree to be pursuing the ideals of 1789, the Empire was an authoritarian regime who drew a tight distinction between those artists who sang its praises (Barye, Winterhalter, Cabanel...) and those who were its enemies, (Daumier, Courbet...). It is very tempting to try

and determine whether these divisions correspond, if only partially, to differences in styles and schools, but the diversity of the subjects chosen should also be taken into account so as not to reduce the work of this or that artist to the mere level of role play... eventually, one has to reach the conclusion that such a quest leads nowhere: there is never a complete correlation between artistic and political movements.

However, in 1848, the Ministry of Fine-Arts not only intervened by favouring certain artists but exerted an influence in favour of realism which shook the art of its day. Under the Third Republic, the role of the Conseil Supérieur des Beaux-Arts remained altogether modest. Contrary to popular thinking, the Republic was a regime which did not in any way propound “official art” and, despite the occasional polemic, presided over its public commissions in an atmosphere of liberal eclecticism. The temporary difficulties encountered by the impressionists and their successors, by the Eiffel tower or Rodin's *Balzac* were not the result of a discriminatory attitude within the public authorities. The Republican doctrine, as stated by the deputy and future minister Charles-Maurice Couyba had not drifted away from a general principle of benevolence: after considering the various possible formulae, “Free Art in a free State, or Collective Art in a sovereign State or, finally, free Art under a patron State”, he settled on “a prudent, thoughtful eclecticism that avoids excessive encouragement of the most extreme tendencies, but does not reject any of them as long as they produce beautiful artworks, nor refuse to acknowledge genuine talent” (*Art and Democracy*, 1902). The Republic thus confirmed and advanced a French tradition which had been set in place by royal power: the State's commitment to promoting art and culture. The national specificity of a cultural policy upheld by the State has never ceased to provoke debates and controversies in France as it has in all the European countries who have been tempted to follow its example.

There are relatively few artworks produced which have an overtly militant nature. The oeuvre of the painter Detaille, a follower of General Boulanger, and the libertarian, Maximilien Luce, are no exception, although they did produce a few works with political messages sufficiently explicit to be noted here. Monumental sculpture more often contributed to the didactic popularisation of the values and themes dear to their patrons (notably the local or national political establishment): liberty, equality, fraternity, motherland, work... The erection of a statue could easily give rise to ideological battles (statues of Gambetta, Etienne Marcel, Charlemagne, Bossuet, Blanqui, etc.). When the Président du conseil, Combes, inaugurated the statue of Renan in Tréguier, aware of the risks he was taking, he wrote his will before leaving for Brittany. This extreme case illustrates the strength and fervour of public feeling which, until recent times, has so coloured the issue of civic sculpture.

## Objectives

This visit aims at helping secondary-school pupils to think about the complex relationships between art, artists and the political establishment in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It presents paintings, sculptures and objets d'art which should encourage pupils to begin to reflect on the nature and functions of artworks. It introduces the difficult debate about the possible connections between artists, styles and ideologies. It is not a substitute for a lesson, but aims to encourage reflection on the various specific interests at stake in any historic commentary made on an artwork.

## Before the visit

This visit to the Musée d'Orsay is based primarily on history, whilst presenting a number of important artworks of the period which should enable pupils to reflect on the relationship between art and politics, at a level which suits them. One should explain to the pupils that because the essential function of the Museum is to exhibit works of art, as opposed to illustrating lessons with documentation, it cannot provide an exhaustive overview of the subject in hand. As with any visit, its educational value is much enhanced by a good general and well-focused preparation. Therefore, before coming to the Museum, one should give the pupils a broad outline of the political, economic and social evolution of the period and it is a good idea to present the main artists concerned, the major movements to which they belong, and to have covered a few examples of subject specific vocabulary.

## After the visit

The visit to the Museum may be complemented by following a prepared circuit in the streets of Paris: places connected with the monarchy, the Republic, and with times of upheaval (1848 revolution, Commune and Bloody week [for instance using Jean Braire, *Sur les traces des communards : enquête dans les rues de Paris d'aujourd'hui*, Amis de la Commune de Paris, 1988]) or with moments of glory and their memorials (celebrations, palaces and exhibitions), not forgetting those noticeable absences which can be almost as meaningful (palais des Tuileries, never reconstructed after the 1871 fire, unlike the Hôtel de Ville). Visits to the Louvre, the Musée Carnavalet, both the Musée national d'art moderne, based in the Georges Pompidou Centre, the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris and the Musée d'histoire du Château de Versailles (Musée Louis-Philippe) are also worth considering depending on the selected angle of study.

Another option is to extend the theme to include the study of a relevant literary work as part of a project coordinating the teaching of history and literature. The body of available texts is enormous. Whilst it is notoriously difficult to portray well known, historical figures in literature (cinema suffers in a similar way), it is nonetheless largely through the work of novelists that we remember historical events and the atmosphere of specific eras. In this, Hugo, Flaubert, Maupassant, Zola, etc. are, of course, invaluable. *L'Œuvre* by Zola addresses the artist's condition and issues of artistic creation. A short story by Balzac, *Pierre Grassou*, provides a portrait of an establishment artist that can be transposed from the July monarchy to the second Empire. *Manette Salomon* by the Goncourt brothers may also be cited for its descriptions of studios, although the somewhat "arty" style and certain features tainted with anti-Semitism make it difficult to use in schools.

## The visit: list of artworks

N.B. this list of artworks, is indicative only and is not comprehensive. The Museum guide selects the artworks which support their presentation and which is limited to roughly a dozen artworks per visit.

- Honoré Daumier : *Les Célébrités du "juste milieu"* (the Celebrities of the "juste milieu"), 1855-1856
- François Rude : *Napoléon s'éveillant à l'immortalité* (Napoleon Awakening to Immortality), 1846
- François-Désiré Froment-Meurice : *Table et garniture de toilette* (Dressing Table and Accessories), 1847-1851
- Honoré Daumier : *La République* (The Republic), 1848
- Honoré Daumier : *Ratapoil*, 1850
- Gustave Courbet : *L'Atelier du peintre, allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique* (The Artist's Studio, a Real Allegory of A Seven-Year Phase in My Artistic Life), 1855
- Alfred Stevens : *Ce qu'on appelle le vagabondage* (What is known as Vagrancy), 1855
- Jean-François Millet : *Des glaneuses* (Gleaners), 1857
- Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux : *La France impériale portant la lumière dans le monde et protégeant l'Agriculture et la Science* (Imperial France Bringing Light to the World and Protecting Agriculture and Science), 1865-1866
- Ernest Meissonier : *Campagne de France* (The French Campaign), 1864
- Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux : *Le Prince impérial et son chien Néro* (The Imperial Prince With His Dog Néro), 1865
- Antoine-Louis Barye : *Napoléon Ier en empereur romain* (Napoleon I as a Roman Emperor), 1865
- Claudius Popelin : *Napoléon III*, 1865
- Paul-Charles Galbrunner : *Napoléon III*, 1866
- Léon Cugnot : *Napoléon I<sup>er</sup> assis sur un aigle* (Napoleon I Sitting on an Eagle), 1869
- Pierre Puvis de Chavannes : *Le Pigeon* (The Pigeon), 1871
- Pierre Puvis de Chavannes : *Le Ballon* (The Balloon), 1871
- Gustave Doré : *L'Énigme* (The Enigma), 1871
- Pierre Puvis de Chavannes : *L'Espérance* (Hope), 1872
- Jean-Paul Laurens : *L'Excommunication de Robert le Pieux* (The excommunication of Robert le Pieux), 1875
- Pierre-Auguste Renoir : *Le Bal du Moulin de la Galette* (Dance at the Moulin de la Galette), 1876
- Claude Monet : *La Rue Montorgueil à Paris. Fête du 30 juin 1878* (The Rue Montorgueil in Paris. Celebration of June 30, 1878), 1878
- Edouard Manet : *L'Évasion de Rochefort* (Rochefort's Escape), 1879
- Édouard Manet : *Georges Clemenceau*, 1880
- Léon Bonnat : *Jules Grévy*, 1880
- Alphonse de Neuville : *Le Cimetière de Saint-Privat* (The Cemetery in Saint-Privat), 1881
- Jean-Joseph Weerts : *Mort de Joseph Bara* (Joseph Bara's Death), 1883
- Jean-Paul Aubé : *Monument à Léon Gambetta* (model), 1884
- Édouard Detaille : *Le Rêve* (The Dream), 1888
- Louis Welden Hawkins : *Madame Séverine*, 1895
- Léon Frédéric : *Les âges de l'ouvrier* (The Ages of the Working Man), 1895-189
- André Devambez : *La Charge* (The Charge), 1902-1905
- Maximilien Luce : *Une rue de Paris en mai 1871* (A Paris Street in May 1871), 1905-1905

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- "La sculpture dans la ville au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle", edited by Catherine Chevillot and Nicole Hodcent, TDC Textes et documents pour la classe, n°727-728, 15 au 31 janvier 1997
  
- Jean-Paul Fargier et Pierre Sesmat, *Le Feuilletton du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle 1848-1914*, Musée d'Orsay/RMN/Les Films du Tambour de soie, 1998

• The visit: the artworks

The suggested circuit has been structured according to the order in which the artworks are hung in the Museum's usual circuit and aims to reflect the diversity of artistic movements and the versatility of the Museum's collections (paintings, sculptures, decorative arts).

## The imperial legend and Bonaparte's victory

1. François Rude (1784-1855): *Napoléon s'éveillant à l'immortalité* (*Napoleon Awaking to Immortality*), 1846 original plaster cast

Location: entrance of the central aisle, on the left

Captain Noisot, nicknamed "the Grenadier of Elbe Island" having commanded the company during Napoleon's forced sojourn there in 1814, was an old soldier who remained faithful to his Emperor and who, on retiring to Burgundy, decided to spend an inheritance he had come into, to erect a bronze monument to the glory of his hero. The sculptor, François Rude, was already known for his *Le Départ des Volontaires – The Volunteers' Departure* on the Arc de Triomphe (Place de l'Étoile) was a patriot and a liberal – therefore somewhat Bonapartist in the spirit of those times – and was also a Burgundian, and so accepted this commission asking only to be paid for his expenses (purchase and casting of the bronze, in particular). The sculpture was erected on Captain Noisot's property in Fixin, and became part of the imperial legend as it was developing under the July Monarchy. The Emperor's ashes were transferred back from the island of Sainte-Hélène in 1840 and Béranger sang his glory in his poems. The sculpture is very romantic with the prominent presence of mortuary elements, in particular the ample shroud reminiscent of the recumbent statues of 15<sup>th</sup> century Burgundian art. The dead eagle, no doubt hinting at the vulture that devoured the bound Prometheus's liver, also evokes Waterloo and Napoleon's doomed foreign policy. The July Monarchy, which practised a prudent diplomacy, was keen on tempering its praise for the legislator and reconciler of post-revolutionary France by this discreet reference to the perils of the imperial adventure. If Napoleon was in a position to awake to immortality, then the Empire must really be dead. The hero celebrated here is closer to "Bonaparte" the general or the First Consul, than to the autocratic Emperor, as testified by his young features and the evocation solely of his Italian campaigns on the crown of laurels (Rivoli, Lodi, Campo Formio, Arcole). One can make a comparison between this monument and the tomb of the Emperor by Visconti, Simart and Pradier at the Invalides (1842-1861).

2. Honoré Daumier (1808-1879): *Ratapoil*, 1850  
Location: ground floor, gallery 4

The character Ratapoil was created by Daumier in his caricatures in *Le Charivari* in which it appeared about thirty times from July 1850

onwards. Ratapoil is typical of the militant Bonapartist; adventurer and fighter, certainly a former soldier, skilled at wielding his club against his foes and at speaking in defence of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte on the boulevards and in suburban cafés. In Ratapoil, Daumier achieved "l'évidence mythique". The character's success was such that the name Ratapoil entered popular speech. It was possibly Ratapoil who inspired Zola's Théodore Gilquin in *His Excellency, Eugène Rougon*. The character disappeared from newspaper illustrations following the coup d'Etat of December 2, 1851. Was the sculpture made before or after the lithographs? In the opinion of M. Gobin, a specialist on Daumier, the artist had first modelled his character in clay, before transposing it in his engravings and in his figurines representing the "juste milieu". A friend and neighbour, the sculptor Geoffroy-Dechaume, made a plaster cast from the original model. Hidden away during the Empire, the plaster statuette reappeared in 1878. The Republican government decided to commission a bronze edition of about twenty copies, produced in 1891 [after a second plaster cast was made from the first by the mould-maker Pouzadoux]. Two other editions were to be produced later: in 1925 (20 copies) [after the same plaster cast] and in 1959-1960 (15 copies) [after the first]. The contemporary art board of the Musée du Luxembourg, eventually accepted this piece, but only after much hesitation, and then only as part of a special collection, open only on request. Perhaps it seemed too trivial an evocation of past political struggles and, twenty years after the fall of the Empire, a possible source of discord... and it came just at the time when the wave of Boulangism (support for General Boulanger), often considered by Republicans as a resurgence of Bonapartism, was only just settling down.

5. Gustave Courbet (1819-1877): *L'Atelier du peintre. Allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique* (*The Artist's Studio. A Real Allegory of A Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life*), 1855  
Location: ground floor, gallery 7

This painting, described by Courbet himself as "rather mysterious", is rich in multiple interpretations. It is aesthetic manifesto in favour of artists and their art, which was judged "disconcerting" when it was presented to the public at the 1855 Salon. Political and social aspects are not absent but neither are they important to an understanding of the work. Courbet explained: "on the right are all the stakeholders meaning; the friends, the workers, the lovers of the art world. On the left, the other world of hard existence; the masses, destitution, poverty, wealth, the exploited, the exploiters, people who make a living out of death". Among the first, Baudelaire, Champfleury, Proudhon, Bruyas, etc. can easily recognised by specialists. But it was only in 1977 that the art historian Hélène Toussaint identified the poacher as



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1. François Rude : *Napoléon s'éveillant à l'immortalité*, 1846 modèle original en plâtre, H. 215 x L. 195 x P. 96 cm
2. Honoré Daumier : *Ratapoil*, 1850, bronze, H. 43,5 x L. 15,7 x P. 18,5 cm
3. Gustave Courbet : *L'Atelier du peintre. Allégorie réelle déterminant une phase de sept années de ma vie artistique*, 1855, huile sur toile, 361 x 598 cm

Napoleon III and the robed priest as the pamphleteer Louis Veuillot, famous for his phrase: "I demand my liberty for the sake of your principles and I forbid yours for the sake of mine".

4. Claudius Popelin (1825-1897): *Napoléon III*, enamel frame, 1865, in collaboration with the enamellist Gagneré  
Location: ground floor, gallery 9

This objet d'art, painted enamel on copper and blackened wood was commissioned by Victor Fialin (1808-1872), Count, and later Duke, of Persigny. This former hussar, associated with all the exploits of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte was, in a way, the leader of the "Ratapoils", the author of as many brawls as press articles, and promoter of a popular and authoritarian Bonapartism. He served as Minister of the Interior, and ambassador in London but, as the Empire became more liberal, he was progressively side-lined, though nevertheless covered with honours. The Emperor reputedly exclaimed: "What a government I have! The empress is Legitimist, Napoléon-Jérôme is Republican, Morny, Orleanist; I am a socialist myself. There is only Persigny who is a Bonapartist, and he's mad". This plate stands as a pictorial, Bonapartist manifesto. Beneath the Ducal crown of the Fialins de Persigny and their motto "Je sers" ("I serve"), Napoleon III is shown as the inheritor of the four dynasties (Charlemagne, Clovis, Hugues Capet, and Napoleon I), a great man both by his victories: the commanding sword, evocations of campaigns and expeditions in Italy, including Magenta and Solferino, in Africa, Kampuchea, Syria and Mexico, and by his literary and historical works: the pen, *Vie de Jules César (Life of Julius Caesar)* and... *œuvres diverses (diverse works)* [sic]. Persigny even specified the fact that the Emperor was "*ex utroque Caesar*", i.e. "also a Caesar through his mother" as he was the son of Hortense de Beauharnais and therefore grandson of the Empress Joséphine...

## Legitimist nostalgia

5. François-Désiré Froment-Meurice (1802-1855): *Dressing table and Accessories*, 1847-1851  
Location: ground floor, gallery 9

Louise-Marie-Thérèse de Bourbon (1819-1864), granddaughter of Charles X, elder sister of the Legitimist pretender, married Charles de Bourbon-Parme (1823-1854) on November 10, 1845. The Legitimist ladies of France decided to present her with this dressing table by public subscription. It is a luxurious commission using gilded and enamelled silver, gilded and silvered bronze, engraved iron, enamel painted on copper, garnets and emeralds and, according to the decorative motifs, it is also a political manifesto. It was commissioned from the goldsmiths; Froment-Meurice, established in Paris since 1714. It involved the cooperation of one architect (Duban), two sculptors (Feuchère and Geoffroy-Dechaume,

the sculptor who was to save Daumier's *Ratapoil*), a draughtsman (Liénard) and three enamellists (Sollier, Grisée and Meyer-Heine). The finished table and set were exhibited at the first World Fair in London in 1851, and were later given to the princess, who had become the Duchess of Parma. The ornamentation evoked the styles of the Middle-Ages and Renaissance, thus announcing the "gothic" revival and the eclecticism that dominated the decorative arts of the second Empire. It also illustrates the historian François Furet's definition of the Legitimist as a "schism, retreat, exile, memory". The faithfulness of the old French provinces to their King is indicated by the succession of coats of arms while the illustrious ladies who served France and its monarchs are represented prominently on the caskets, particularly those related to the Bourbons, inheritors of the Capetians (Saint Clothilde, Saint Bathilde, Blanche de Castille, Anne de Beaujeu, Valentine de Milan, Anne de Bretagne, Marguerite de Valois, etc., even the protestant Jeanne d'Albret...). Women of more modest extraction are also represented: Joan of Arc, Jeanne Hachette... All belong to the Middle-Ages or early Renaissance, like the male heroes chosen: Du Guesclin, Olivier de Clisson, Lahire, Xaintrailles, Dunois, Gaston de Foix, La Trémoille, and Bayard. Their common virtue is to have shown remarkable fidelity, a virtue expected from a woman towards her spouse, but also and above all from France towards its royal family. There is a discreet reminder of difficult times past when Charles VII, the "king of Bourges", was left alone before recovering his realm, thanks to divine intervention manifested through of Joan of Arc. In a country marked by crises and revolution (1848), the Legitimists were waiting for a similar divine intervention to help restore "Henri V".

## The Republic and the Republican spirit

6. Honoré Daumier: *La République (The Republic)*, 1848  
Location: upper level, gallery 29 (Moreau-Nélaton collection)

This sketch was sent to the jury of the competition opened by the provisory government in March, 1848 in order to determine the official representation of "The Republic" in painting. Daumier was already well-known as a draughtsman, but unknown as a painter. Twenty paintings, including this one, were selected from 450 by a commission including Lamartine, Delacroix, Ingres, etc., but political events prevented the competition from reaching a conclusion. Finding inspiration in the traditional theme of Charity, Daumier's Republic is convincing in its strength and stability and the sobriety of its iconographic language. It bears the attributes that were to symbolise advanced Republic: abundant and uncombed hair, bare breasted, brown skinned and generous to her



4. Claudius Popelin : *Napoléon III*, cadre d'émaux, 1865, H. 95 x L. 74,5 x P. 7,5 cm, en collaboration avec l'émailleur Gagneré

5. François-Désiré Froment-Meurice : *Table et garniture de toilette*, 1847-1851

6. Honoré Daumier : *La République*, 1848, esquisse, 75 x 60 cm

children (it is also entitled *The Republic Feeds and Instructs Her Children*). Yet, “protective, reassuring, pacifying”, as François Furet remarked, it also shows the “the point is not to start the Revolution again, but to end it, once and for all, under the auspices of the Republic”. Eventually, despite the ups and downs of the 1848 competition, such an image has ended up becoming the image par excellence of the Republic, with all its nuances and potentialities.

7. Édouard Manet (1852-1885):  
*Georges Clemenceau*, 1880  
Location: upper level, gallery 51

At the 1880 Salon, two portraits of politicians caught the attention of the public: that of the new President of the Republic, Jules Grévy (1807-1891) by Léon Bonnat (1853-1922), and that of the leader of the radical far left, Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929) by the master of the avant-garde, Édouard Manet. Clemenceau was then député (member of Parliament) for Montmartre, and only at the dawn of his career as a “tombeur de ministères”. He had connections with Gustave and Eugène Manet, brothers of the painter. Eugène Manet, Berthe Morisot’s husband, was municipal councillor of La Chapelle (1878-1881), in the 18<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, Clemenceau’s electoral fief. Manet avoided any exterior anecdote (no setting) in favour of the intimate portrait of the orator, high cheekboned, crossing his arms in a position expressing refusal. He contrasted the black of the frock coat with the white of the shirt and sleeves. After Manet’s death, his widow gave this painting to Clemenceau, who sold it for 10 000 francs in 1896 to the American collector Louise Havemeyer. This amount represented roughly the annual salary of a deputy (9 000 francs), whereas Clemenceau, temporarily excluded from pursuing his political career following the Panama affair (1895) was in a difficult financial position. In 1927, Louise Havemeyer donated the portrait, of the man who in the meantime had become the “père de la Victoire”, to the Louvre. Clemenceau was often quoted in the unflattering comments he made about his portraits: “My portrait by Manet? Very bad, I do not have it and do not feel the worse for it. It is in the Louvre, and I wonder why it was put there”. These comments are from a late in his life and should be considered in the context of misanthropy and general bitterness that marred the final years of the former Président du conseil. After all, as a literary and art critic and a friend of Monet, Clemenceau had been a decisive supporter of the Louvre’s acquisition of Manet’s *Olympia* in 1907.

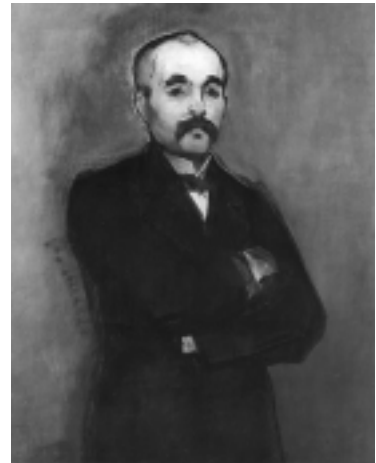
8. Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919):  
*Le Bal du Moulin de la Galette (The Dance at the Moulin de la Galette)*, 1876  
Location: upper level, gallery 32

Renoir, painter of the joys of life, children at play and bathers... famously said: “a painting must be a likeable, joyful and pretty thing. Yes: pretty. There are enough aggravating things in life for us not to

make others”. Despite his opinions, Renoir’s work can still express or evoke sentiments which do not necessarily conform to their author’s stated intentions. When Renoir painted his *Bal du Moulin de la Galette*, the Assemblée Nationale had just made its decision not to re-establish the monarchy; on the very same Montmartre hill where the Dance at the Moulin de la Galette took place, the church of the Sacré-Cœur was being erected in expiation for the crimes of the Commune. The victory of the Republicans, that of the “new strata” evoked by Gambetta, was also that of a “petty bourgeois” society and lifestyle. Jean Jaurès, the young deputy for the Tarn would soon be writing “Respect gaiety! It is French and Republican”. The freedom and joy of this people’s dance contrasts sharply with the severity and the cult of suffering preached by a conservative Church, and explains something of the reason for Republican successes in rural areas. The celebration here is urban, but this mixed gathering of working class and petty bourgeois, at a dance on the outskirts of the city, is already totally given over to the Republicans. The latest attempt to impose “moral order” (May 16, 1877 - contemporary to the painting) proposed by the President of the Republic, Marshall de Mac-Mahon, was intended to enforce controls on the bars and other centres of working-class social life and on the Republican newspapers and public meetings.

9. Claude Monet (1840-1926): *La Rue Montorgueil à Paris. Fête du 30 juin 1878 (The Rue Montorgueil in Paris. Celebration of June 30, 1878)*, 1878  
Location: upper level, gallery 32

*The Rue Montorgueil*, like its sister painting *The Rue Saint-Denis*, is often seen today as a celebration of July 14. In fact, it documents June 30, 1878, the occasion of the great closing celebration of the World Fair, a manifestation of enthusiasm that was both national and Republican in flavour and which occurred only a few months after the great confrontations of 1876-1877 between Republicans and conservatives. Less than five years had passed since the count of Chambord, “Henri V”, had destroyed all hopes of restoring the monarchy by insisting that France reintroduce the white flag, symbol of the Ancien Régime (as opposed to the “Tricolour”). This painting offers a picturesque, distanced, vision of an urban landscape by a painter who observed from a window rather than mingle with the crowd. The three colours vibrating in Monet’s painting are those of modern France, born in 1789, and accepted with enthusiasm, to a greater or lesser degree, by Bonapartists and Orleanists and Republicans. The impressionist technique with its multitude of small points of colour recreates the animation of the crowd and the waving of the flags. It was for this reason that the American historian Philip Nord considered this method of painting to be in perfect harmony with its subject; the “Republican moment” that marked the emergence of a democratic society and its rooting



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7. Édouard Manet : *Georges Clemenceau*, 1880, huile sur toile, 94,5 x 74 cm  
8. Pierre-Auguste Renoir : *Le Bal du Moulin de la Galette*, 1876, huile sur toile, 131 x 175 cm  
9. Claude Monet : *La Rue Montorgueil à Paris. Fête du 30 juin 1878*, 1878, huile sur toile, 81 x 50,5 cm

in contemporary France. It also hints at the Japanese influence on Monet, who was fond of Hokusai's and Hiroshige's harmonies of red and blue which sometimes, just as here, portrayed urban landscapes viewed from above, in vertical formats.

## Activist art ?

10. Édouard Detaille (1848-1912):  
*Le Rêve (The Dream)*, 1888  
Location: middle level, gallery 55

Detaille, like his friend Neuville, specialised in military paintings, celebrating the "glorious vanquished" of 1870-1871. Yet this large painting, presented at the 1888 Salon, is a direct, political statement. The young conscripts, on military manoeuvres, probably in Champagne, in the vicinity of the camp de Mourmelon, are dreaming of taking their revenge, as sung in Déroulède's poems. This revenge was the implicit programme of the "brave general" Boulanger, whose popularity was then at its peak. The Boulangists had mopped up all the malcontents engendered by the first decade of Republican power. Likewise, Detaille's soldiers unite the memories of French glory: although the victorious soldiers of the Revolution and Empire are prominent, they have not forgotten their comrades of the Restoration, whose white flag was also victorious at the Trocadero and in Algiers, nor the "brave people" of Reichshoffen, who were cut up by a hail of bullets, nor the gloriously vanquished survivors of Gravelotte. The Boulangist aspect of the painting was soon overlooked. Instead, in this outstanding example of the heroic genre, the public could see the army celebrated as the "sanctified ark" of the country. Detaille was awarded a medal and his painting was bought by the state and presented at the 1889 World Fair. All the Republicans praised this exaltation of the nation's army at a time when the Republic was instituting conscription for all young citizens (law of July 15, 1889). There were few criticisms: they concerned the lack of connections between the two parts of the painting or the "excessive realism of these cartridge pouches, spy-glasses and sabres" (Gabriel Séailles, *L'Illustration*, 1888). However, the libertarian writer Octave Mirbeau (1848-1917) was ironic about the content of the young conscripts' dreams; he imagined them rather as "stupefied with discipline, imbecile, stultified with torturing fatigue "dreaming" of the blessed day of their liberation" (*L'Écho de Paris*, July 25, 1889).

11. Maximilien Luce (1858-1941):  
*Une rue de Paris en mai 1871*  
(*A Paris Street in May 1871*), 1905-1905  
Location: middle level, gallery 56

The militant painter, Luce, was a collaborator on Jean Grave's anarchist weekly, *Temps nouveaux*. He was prosecuted at the trial of "the thirty" which marked the peak of the repression of anarchist actions following the series of bombings of 1895-

1894. Being painted thirty years after the event, his painting cannot be considered as reportage of the Paris Commune. No doubt influenced by Meissonnier's moving watercolour *La Barricade, June 1848*, it testifies to the vividness in the collective memory of the *Semaine sanglante* (bloody week) in working-class circles. The ceremonies of March 18 (anniversary of the beginning of the Commune) such as the march to the Mur des Fédérés in the Père Lachaise cemetery, gave structure to a militant "counter-memory". Libertarians, trade-unionists, socialists, the entire militant faction, celebrated the memory of the Commune and its martyrs. In Luce's painting, the buildings in the street seem to have suffered relatively little from the fight: monumental Paris is not in ruins, but almost radiant, treated in clear and coloured hues. By contrast, the only human presence in this silent and desolate environment, is in the bodies of the Communards, which, especially in the corpses of the woman, emphasise the brutality of the repression (over 20 000 dead within a week).

12. André Devambez (1867-1944):  
*La Charge (The Charge)*, 1902-1905  
Location: middle level, gallery 57

*The Charge* by André Devambez represents a confrontation between the establishment and demonstrators. The political faction to which these demonstrators belong is hard to identify: they may be anarchists or trade-unionists, as in the wood engraving by Félix Vallotton that bears the same title, but they may just as well be Nationalists or anti-Dreyfusards, which the place (Boulevard Montmartre) and the date would suggest. The rioters would then be "trubliions" (the neologism to describe them invented by Antole France). More certainly, Devambez sought to represent the archetype of the demonstration and its confrontation with the powers of law and order. The nocturnal atmosphere, which corresponds to historical fact (people took part in demonstrations in the evening, after a days work), highlights the uneasiness engendered by "the age of the masses" as studied by the sociologist Gustave Lebon. The policemen are charging methodically, revealing a redoubtable efficiency. The beginning of the century was also the time when techniques to enforce order developed with the emergence of a modern police force directed by the prefect Lépine (active from 1895 to 1896 and from 1899 to 1912), as part of a defined Republican order. The painting was to remain for a long time in the office of the prefect Chiappe (1927-1934), a proponent of order and specialist in the repression of street demonstrations. Its low-angled point of view may be compared with that adopted by Monet in *La Rue Montorgueil*. The composition is organised along a dynamic diagonal, with the crowd dispersing around an empty centre marked by the lamppost and he contrasts the dramatic black and grey atmosphere of the street with the light, colourful and bright atmosphere on the pavements.



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