

## Press Release



Musée  
d'Orsay

# **Manet, The Man who invented Modernity**

Level 0,  
Main exhibition area  
5 April – 3 July 2011



Édouard Manet, *Amazone / l'été [Woman in a Riding Habit, Full Face]*, 1882  
Oil on canvas, 74 x 52 cm  
Madrid, Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation  
© Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

There has been no exhibition exclusively devoted to Manet in France since 1983, the date of the memorable retrospective produced by Françoise Cachin and Charles S. Moffett. In the ensuing twenty-five years, however, there has been much valuable research and fruitful reflection. A rejection of formalism and a return to history, personal as well as collective, characterise the best of this work, whether documenting Manet's life story or analysing his work, how it was exhibited and received. Our understanding of French painting from the period 1840 to 1880 has at the same time become more refined and freed from over-Manicheistic interpretations. From these two developments, in which the Musée d'Orsay continues to be involved, a new image of Manet and his generation has appeared.

This exhibition aims to demonstrate this in a most clear and attractive way. More than just a strictly linear, monographic retrospective, it constructs its premise around some twelve questions, each one closely related to the historical process from which Manet cannot be separated. Simplifying his modernity to an iconographic register or bringing it down to a few stylistic elements, comes, as we know, from a reductive approach. Manet is modern primarily because he embraces, as much as Courbet yet differently, the changes in the media that marked his era, and the unregulated circulation of images; secondly because imperial France, the backdrop to his developing career, was modern. And finally because the manner in which he challenged the masters of the Louvre was modern, extending beyond his militant Hispanism. It is clear that the aesthetic he forged after 1860 demands a broader definition of realism than is normally ascribed to him.

With this objective in mind, the exhibition aims to revisit the many links, visual, literary or political, between Manet's art and Romantic culture. It will focus on the teaching of Thomas Couture, Baudelaire's support and encouragement, the reform of religious art, erotic imagery and its unresolved issues, etc. But the originality of an artist as unpredictable as Manet cannot be reduced to the sum of the sources from which he distils his art. Other sections of the exhibition try to throw light on the art of the fragment(ed), his relationship with women painters (Berthe Morisot, Eva Gonzalès), his decision to remain outside the main Impressionist movement and his complicity with Mallarmé at his darkest. The final reminder of the exhibition at the Gallery *de la Vie Moderne*, the last one-man show, in 1880, of a painter obsessed by the Salon, raises the question of what "the freedom to create" meant to him. This means that "Manet, the Man who Invented Modernity" highlights later works that are less well known and, more importantly, little understood if regarded as simply a stage in the process towards "pure painting".

**Curator: Stéphane Guégan, curator, Musée d'Orsay**

**Sections:**

- The Couture School
- The Baudelaire Moment
- On the Future of Christian Art
- From the Prado to the Alma
- "The Promises of a Face"
- Impressionism trapped
- 1879 - a turning point
- Less is more ?
- The end of the Story...

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**Around the exhibition**

**Publications**

- *Manet, the Man who invented Modernity*, Exhibition catalogue by Stéphane Guégan, Musée d'Orsay / Gallimard, 336 pages, 280 illustrations, €42 approx.
- *The Danger of Manet*, exhibition album, Stéphane Guégan, Musée d'Orsay / Gallimard, 48 pages, €8 approx.
- *Manet, Heroism and Modern Life* by Stéphane Guégan, Découvertes Special edition, Musée d'Orsay / Gallimard, 40 pages, €8.40

**Manet-Baudelaire Evening**

- Tuesday 10 May at 6.30pm to 8pm, round table discussion: *Baudelaire and Modernity* led by Claude Arnaud and from 8-10pm lecture and film: *Manet without Baudelaire* by Stéphane Guégan followed by the film *Manet, a Worrying Strangeness* by Hopi Lebel, Les Films d'ici, Rmn - Grand Palais, Paris / FTD, 52 mins, 2011.

**Guided tours for young people /Les Ranc'arts**

- Tuesday - Friday at 3.30pm, guided tour *Manet. Manet? Manet!* for 11 - 16 year olds

**Family tours**

- Saturdays 16 and 30 April and 21 May at 3pm for children from 8 to 12 years, and their parents

**Practical information**

Opening times: daily, except Mondays, 9.30am – 6pm (ticket desks close at 5pm), Thursdays until 9.45pm and Saturdays until 8pm

Admission: museum entrance ticket: full rate: €10; concessions: €7.50

Access: through the main entrance, 1, rue de la Légion d'Honneur, 75007 Paris

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