

Painters, the Salon, and Critics, 1848-1870

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Presentation

The years 1848-1870 form a pivotal period in the history of French art. Inheriting the main trends of the first half of the 19th century: romanticism and neo-classicism, it culminates the birth of impressionism.

Profoundly marked by the academic tradition, this period was characterised by the persistence of structures that constitute what was called the "Beaux-Arts system". Artists were drawn to define themselves in relation to this system. Most of them accepted its rules and – generally – won both public and critical favour. Others, without completely calling the whole system into question, evolved on its fringe and consequently met more difficulties in having their work accepted.

The Beaux-Arts system

It was based both on principles and institutions:

1. Principles

In order to meet the requirements of the Academy, which were taught at the *École des Beaux-Arts* (School of Fine Arts) and asserted in the choice of laureates of competitions and in the Salon jury, painters had to observe a certain number of principles. These progressively became so rigid that little by little some artists and critics rebelled against what had become a yoke.

The slightly belated critical approval bestowed in the twentieth century on the "innovating" trends of the last quarter of the 19th century resulted in a rejection of the principles of the Academy as a whole, and the word "academicism" has since taken a pejorative connotation (with the phrase "art pompier" that has become its synonym). The polemic accompanying the opening of the *Musée d'Orsay*, accused of "rehabilitating" academic painting, would suggest the debate remains open.

What were the requirements painters had to meet?

- Respect the "hierarchy of genres": Formulated by Félibien (the historiographer, architect and theoretician of French classicism) in 1667, the hierarchy of genres considered history painting to be "the great genre". History paintings included paintings with religious, mythological or historical subjects that conveyed a moral message. Next came, in order of decreasing worth: scenes of everyday life (called "scènes de genre"), portraits, landscapes and finally still-lives. The hierarchy of genres had a corresponding hierarchy of formats: large format for history paintings, small format for still-lives.

This hierarchy, maintained by the Academy, was progressively called into question during the 19th century. In his report on the 1846 Salon, Théophile Gautier already stated that: "religious subjects are few; there are significantly less battles; what is called history painting will disappear... The glorification of man and of the beauties of nature, this seems to be the aim of art in the future".

- Support the prevalence of drawing over colour : The affirmation of this prevalence dates back to the birth of academies. The point was then to highlight the spiritual and abstract quality of art: lines are not to be found in nature. Artists used them, like outlines and shadows, to create the illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat surface. Colour, being present in nature, was confined to a subsidiary role and its study was not deemed to be necessary. "Drawing makes up three quarters and a half of what constitutes painting", Ingres affirmed. In his *Grammaire des Arts du dessin*, published in 1867, Charles Blanc admitted that though colour is essential to painting, its place was secondary : "the union of drawing and colour is required to engender painting, as the union of man and woman is to give birth to humanity; but drawing must keep its supremacy over colour.

Otherwise, painting will go to ruin; it will be damned by colour as humanity was by Eve"...

- Deepen one's study of the nude: (the word "académie" was also used to mean a nude). This study was based on working after antique sculpture and live models. The point was not merely to copy nature, but to idealise it, following the tradition of the art of Antiquity and of the Renaissance. Drawing the human body was the superior expression and incarnation of the highest ideal.

- Prefer the workshop to the open air: The practice of open-air painting was only tolerated to make sketches and preparatory studies, in the sole purpose of preparing large compositions painted in the workshop.

- Make "finished" pieces: Artworks had to have a finished aspect. For this, they had to look smooth and the touch be imperceptible. Ingres noted: "The touch, however clever it may be, must not be apparent: otherwise it prevents illusion and freezes everything. Instead of the object that is represented, it shows the process; instead of thought, it exposes the hand".

- Imitate the elders, imitate nature: It is by imitating old masters that one may, still according to Ingres, imitate nature: "One must always copy nature and learn how to see it well. It is for this reason that studying the antiques and old masters is necessary, not in order to imitate them, but, once again, to learn how to see. (...) You will learn from antiques how to see nature because they themselves are nature: so you must live on them, feed on them".

2. Institutions

- The School of Fine Arts The Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, created in 1648, opened, under its direct supervision, the *École des Beaux-Arts*. The teaching given to students was based solely on drawing after live models and antique sculpture. The teachers were all members of the Academy. The candidates wishing to enrol in the *École des Beaux-Arts* (women were admitted only from 1897 onwards) had to pass a competitive examination consisting in drawing a nude figure after a live model.

Each year pupils were invited to take part in numerous competitions that constituted the stages before the supreme gratification that was the *Prix de Rome*. Paradoxically, while only drawing was taught at the School, several of these competitions were based on painting. The subjects given were mostly drawn from mythology and Greek and Roman history, or from the Bible. Pupils were expected to acquire the knowledge necessary to deal with these subjects, through the courses taught within the School. For example, for the year 1857 (the year when Millet painted *Gleaners* – see the circuit), the subject of the historic landscape competition was "Jesus and the good Samaritan", and that of the historic composition was "Saint-

Lazarus's Resurrection". The famous Prix de Rome (one a year awarded for each technique: painting, sculpture, engraving, architecture, musical composition) that constituted the pupils' highest ambition allowed the winners to sojourn – with a state grant – five years in the Villa Medici in Rome, and guaranteed their subsequent career supported by official commissions.

Criticised as early as the mid-nineteenth century and blamed for encouraging perseverance rather than talent, the School was reformed in 1865. The teaching of drawing retained its supremacy, but painting and sculpture workshops were also opened.

Private workshops existed in parallel to this official teaching. Until the 1865 reform, these were the only places where pupils could learn the techniques of painting. After painting workshops were introduced within the School, these independent workshops subsisted and allowed young artists to escape the yoke, unbearable for some, of academic teaching.

The most famous of these workshops were the Swiss Academy, opened in 1815, the workshop directed by Charles Gleyre from 1844 onwards and the Julian Academy that operated from 1868.

- The Salon

The first Salon was organised in 1667 by Colbert. Defined as a "periodical exhibition by living artists", it was named after the Salon Carré in the Louvre, where it took place until 1848. It occupied an essential place in 19th-century artistic life as it was almost the only place where artists could show their work, private or personal exhibitions being rare and reproductions not circulating widely.

It was at the Salon that the Ministry of Fine Arts bought the pieces that would enter the Musée du Luxembourg (where the works of living artists were exhibited before entering the Louvre upon the death of their creators), museums outside Paris or public buildings.

The artworks intended for the Salon were submitted to a jury. The composition of this jury often varied, but it was mostly made up of members of the Academy. The selection made by the jury depended on the (growing) number of submitted pieces and, more importantly, on a fluctuating insistence on the respect of academic rules.

In 1865, the jury proved so severe (5000 pieces were rejected out of 5000 submitted by painters) that Napoleon III authorised a "Salon des Refusés" (Salon of the Rejected) to take place in a part of the Palais de l'Industrie distinct from that occupied at the same time by the official Salon (*Lunch on the Grass*, presented by Manet, was to provoke a tremendous scandal in the Salon des Refusés).

Most artists shared the aim of having their works admitted to the Salon, despite the difficulties encountered by some. However, with time, further opportunities appeared that allowed artists to show and sell their work, which put an end to the quasi-monopolistic situation of the Salon: the impressionist exhibitions (between 1874 and

1886), the birth of "underground" Salons (Salon des Indépendants) from 1884 onwards, the secession within the Société des Artistes Français that prompted the creation of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts and a new Salon on the Champ-de-Mars in 1890, and the development of the market for art in private galleries.

- Art criticism

Art criticism developed as soon as the Salon began to be organised regularly, around 1750, taking the form of newspaper reports.

In the mid-19th century, artistic production was abundant and the number of artworks submitted for the Salon rose significantly. The number of visitors went up correspondingly, and the increasing difficulty they felt in judging the worth of what they saw explains their interest for the reports offered to them in newspapers. Critics played the part of mediators between artists and the public.

Periodicals specialised in the artistic field multiplied (12 titles in 1850, 20 in 1860), and daily newspapers included columns devoted to reports from the Salon and then from exhibitions.

Most writers were journalists who occasionally practiced art criticism, but a few specialised in this field. In the French tradition after Diderot, writers also set out to give their opinion on the Salons (Th. Gautier, Ch. Baudelaire, E. Zola, J.K. Huysmans...).

If most commentators went no further than an iconographic description of the paintings, the concern to shape public taste and to take sides was often clear. The newspaper's political bent, the personal convictions of the critics, the affinities existing between some of them and certain artists, all gave their commentaries a polemical tone.

Objectives

- Learn how to look at an artwork. Though an obvious element in any museum visit, it is essential to insist on this aim. No teacher would ask a pupil to discuss the qualities of a literary text without having ensured he had mastered the mechanisms of reading. It is not so commonly admitted that one has to learn how to analyse a picture before appreciating the aesthetic qualities of a plastic work.
- Study the historical context of pictorial creation for the years 1848-1870, partly through the Beaux-Arts system and the importance of art criticism.
- Understand that "taste" is determined by the social, historical and cultural context of each age, and changes between the time an artwork is created and its posterior reception.
- Try to establish a personal critical judgement avoiding a simplified perception of artworks in terms of entirely good or bad.
- Prepare the visit by multi-disciplinary activities (literature, history and visual arts) and allow – in particular – teachers of 5th-year pupils to tackle beforehand the part of the history programme concerning cultural and artistic transformations.

Method

- Before the visit:
 - provide the necessary historical elements to understand the theme of the visit, with the help of the above information.
 - Show, through more recent artworks, including contemporary ones, how difficult it is to make an aesthetic judgement. It is possible to further the discussion by evoking the gap that exists today between artistic creation and criticism, and the taste of the general public for “sure” values (museum frequentation, attendance of large retrospective exhibitions).
- In the museum:
 - suggest a task of comparative analysis. The proposed circuit is based on “pairs” of paintings that were comparable in their themes and iconography but that were given a different critical reception.
 - give pupils representative extracts from critical documents of the time.
 - have them question the reasons that motivated the favourable or unfavourable reception of the artworks.
 - encourage them to identify the elements showing the artist’s position in relation to the Beaux-Arts system.
- N.B. : this comparative method is not risk-free : one should avoid deducing that there is necessarily a “good” and a “bad” painting, and extrapolating from the chosen artworks that the whole production of an artist fits into a single category : an artist may evolve during his career. This would be counter to the objectives listed above : avoid an oversimplified vision in terms of good and bad, make a personal judgement...

The visit: list of artworks

N.B. when following a guided tour, this list of artworks is for information only. The guide conducting the group of pupils is free to pick the pieces that support his demonstration and may, in particular, not restrict himself to the period 1848-1870 to include pieces of the impressionist movement.

- Thomas Couture :
Les Romains de la décadence, 1847
- Gustave Courbet :
Un enterrement à Ornans, 1849-50
- Alexandre Cabanel : *Naissance de Vénus*, 1865
- Edouard Manet : *Olympia*, 1865
- Jean-François Millet : *Des Glaneuses*, 1857
- Jules Breton : *Le rappel des glaneuses*, 1859
- Edouard Manet : *Lola de Valence*, 1862
- Carolus-Duran : *La dame au gant*, 1869
- Camille Corot :
Une matinée. La danse des nymphes, 1850
- Claude Monet : *Femmes au jardin*, 1867
- Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres :
La Source, 1856
- Gustave Courbet : *La Source*, 1868

After the visit

Suggestions:

- plan a second visit to the Musée d’Orsay continuing with the collections of paintings.
- plan a visit to the Musée d’Orsay during which you will follow the path of a writer and art critic (Baudelaire, Zola, Huysmans...).
- consider a follow-up work on the French literature of novelists who were also art critics.
- study a novel in which the main character is a painter: *Le Chef-d’œuvre inconnu (The Unknown Masterpiece)* by Honoré de Balzac ; *L’Œuvre (The Artwork)* by Émile Zola ; *Manette Salomon* by Jules and Edmond de Goncourt.

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Painters, the Salon, and Critics, 1848-1870

The visit: the artworks

N.B.: The following excerpts were deliberately chosen from critics who represented the mainstream opinion of their time. There were, of course; other, discordant voices: Courbet and Manet had their supporters (Champfleury, Zola,...) and Cabanel's *Venus* was described as "a marzipan prostitute", a "spineless body" on "a cardboard sea".

N.B.: within each "pair", the artworks appear in chronological order.

At the 1847 Salon, Thomas Couture's painting *Romains de la décadence* (*Romans of Decadence*) was a triumph and was awarded a 1st-class medal. At the 1850-51 Salon, *Un enterrement à Ornans* (*A Burial in Ornans*) by Gustave Courbet caused a scandal as critics focused on the dispute about realism.

1. Thomas Couture (1815-1879): *Romains de la décadence* (*Romans of Decadence*), 1847

• Location: middle of the ground floor, to the right, opposite the Courbet gallery.

• "At the feet of the great men of glorious times, their unworthy descendants are to be seen lying, with lowered heads, arms dangling, muscles relaxing, inert and napping, whereas their ancestors vanquished the world; wine and courtesans proved stronger than barbarians" (Théophile Gautier).

"An hour before the opening of the Salon, Mr Couture was no more than a promising young man, the first wave of the crowd that rushed in front of his painting brought him to the highest crest of art..." (Paul de Saint Victor).

• The aim is to have the pupils find out in what ways Couture's painting corresponds to the criteria of history painting that was then at the top of the pyramid of genres:

- the format: over 7 metres by 4 (over 275x157 inches), corresponds to that of "great painting";

- the reference to antiquity: the painting's subtitle is *A Roman Orgy*. The Salon leaflet presented it with a line from the sixth satire of the Latin poet Juvenal: "More cruel than war, vice fell over Rome and avenged the vanquished universe".

- point out in the painting: the decor, the costumes, the presence of statues (the "great men" Th. Gautier referred to: Brutus, Cato, Seneca) and of the characters observing the scene with reprobation (the "philosophers" on the right) or isolating themselves in thought and meditation (the "poet" on the left). Their attitude of moral reproof may be assimilated to that of the artist, indeed, contemporaries decided to see an allusion to present times and a judgement on the decadent mores of the bourgeoisie during the reign of Louis Philippe ;

- quotations and references: antique like statues, quotations from Veronese (*Canaa's Wedding*), from Raphael, Rubens... Thomas Couture is representative of the eclectic trend fashionable at the time. He tried to conciliate, to synthesise the

two antagonistic trends of the first half of the 19th century: neo-classicism and romanticism. His ambition was, he said, to "regenerate French art".

2. Gustave Courbet (1819-1877): *Un enterrement à Ornans* (*A Burial in Ornans*), 1849-50

• Location: Courbet gallery, middle of the ground floor, on the left.

• "If democratic painting consists in using the most common and dirty tones, in modelling the grossest forms and in making the ugliest choice, I would certainly not wish to deny that Mr Courbet is a democratic painter... By exaggerating the vulgarity and hideousness of his painting, it is the very hate of art that Mr Courbet preaches." (Philippe de Chennevières).

"A burial in such or such a place belongs to the anecdotic genre and lacks the universal and human sense that allows the use of the vastest means of painting." (Théophile Gautier).

• The point is to bring the pupils to understand how Courbet upset the established system by wanting to elevate a genre painting to the "dignity" of historical painting and common people to that of historical characters.

- the format is the large format reserved for history painting according to the hierarchy of genres;

- the complete title of the painting is *Painting of Human Figures: History of a Burial in Ornans*;

- Courbet declared: "The only possible history is contemporary history";

- observe in the painting: the way characters are represented without being idealised (all 46 characters are identified, all were inhabitants of Ornans), the contemporary costumes, the expressions reproduced crudely. All the characters are on the same plane: church officials, bourgeois and common people. There is no trace of grandiloquence in the expression of grief;

- quotations that may be noticed: besides references to the tradition of group portraits in Dutch painting and to the mourners of the tombs of the Dukes of Burgundy in Dijon, Courbet's influences are also to be found in popular culture, in particular in the engravings spread by pedlars in the countryside. Texts used to accompany these engravings, advising one to attend funerals with an attitude of dignity, modesty, decorum and to avoid affectation;

- evoke the context of political turmoil in the countryside and the fear it caused to city bourgeois. Explain the assimilation often made by critics between "realism" and political commitment in favour of the people. (In both ways, as S. Ungher, a disciple of Fourier, declared: "The people is not afraid of crude words, neither of strong pictures that fray the nerves of people of good taste" and praised Courbet's painting with these words: "Here is democracy in Art";

- the main reproach made to Courbet was not the ugliness of his characters (something which was accepted if combined with an appropriate staging) but their triviality (the word "trivial" is a leitmotif in criticism , it must be understood in the sense of 'not idealised') and, concerning his technique, his use of black was deemed to be too extensive.



1



2

The painting *The Birth of Venus* by Alexandre Cabanel, presented at the 1865 Salon, was immediately bought by Napoleon III for his private collection and entered the Musée du Luxembourg in 1881.

Olympia by Edouard Manet, painted in 1865, presented and received not without misgivings at the 1865 Salon, caused such a scandal that, very early on, the painting was displaced and hung as high as possible on the wall to pacify public and critics.

3. Alexandre Cabanel (1823-1889): *Naissance de Vénus* (*The Birth of Venus*), 1865

• Location: on the ground floor, on the right, third gallery (History paintings and portraits).

• "Venus reigns at the 1863 Salon. Painters and sculptors have endeavoured, vying with one another, to move towards the source of all beauty. It is Mr Cabanel who went highest in this attempt, his *Birth of Venus* is the greatest success in the exhibition." (C. De Sault).

"The quality of painting is in perfect harmony with the way the picture is composed. The flesh is ideal and divine, not kneaded of the gross matters of which humanity is made. Mr Cabanel has not forgotten that Venus feeds on nectar and ambrosia, and that he could not find for such a body too many pearly and soft tones" (Revue du Monde illustré. Salon de 1865).

• The point is to have pupils notice the elements that make the nude woman represented by Cabanel a mythological subject fulfilling the public's taste:

- its title that defines the character not as the portrait of a living model, but as a representation of the goddess of beauty and love ;

- the accessories that appear there as a token of

faithfulness to the reference to Antiquity: the sea and the waves reminding that Venus was born of the foam of the sea; the presence of cupids accompanying her and celebrating the birth of Venus ; the island of Cyprus in the background; - contrarily to traditional pictures, Cabanel represented the goddess lying down. Taking out her mythological attributes, what is left is a nude woman, highlighting her charms by stretching her body... But "The Birth of Venus by Monsieur Cabanel [...] charms and seduces one without exciting desire" according to the commentary of the critic Auvray. The morality seems to be safe... But can we not find here a large part of hypocrisy?

4. Édouard Manet (1832-1883): *Olympia*, 1865

- Location: Manet Before 1870 gallery, ground floor, next to the Courbet gallery.
- "The expression on the face is that of a premature and vicious creature ; the body, the colour of which reminds one of meat that has hung for too long, is reminiscent of the horror of the Morgue. A hideous negress dressed in pink is holding on her side the bouquet of a doubtful allegory, whilst a black cat arching his back comes and prints the unequivocal trace of the place in which he treaded with his paws on the sheet." (V. de Jonkevitz. Salon de 1865). "All is drawn with coal all around and soft soap in the middle" (Ego. Le Monde illustré, May 13, 1865).

These two quotations are representative of the criticism Manet received: they concern the subject matter as well as his technique.

- the title "Olympia" and the five lines by Astruc accompanying the presentation of the painting in the leaflet:

*"Quand lasse de songer, Olympia s'éveille,
Le Printemps entre au bras du doux messenger noir :
C'est l'esclave, à la nuit amoureuse pareille,
Qui vient fleurir le jour délicieux à voir :
L'auguste jeune fille en qui la flamme veille"*
(*"When, tired of dreaming, Olympia awakes,
Spring enters at the arm of the sweet black
[messenger:*

*It is the slave, looking like amorous night,
Who comes with flowers for the day delicious
[to discover:*

*The august young lady in whom the flame remains
[alight"]*)

These were considered as what would now today be called misleading advertising. Reactions were immediate: "Olympia? What Olympia? A courtesan, no doubt", "The august young lady is a courtesan", "A dirty virgin", a "Kind of female gorilla"...

- the obvious quotations from the Venus of Urbino by the Titian were also reproved "a kind of she-monkey aping the pose and movement of the Titian's Venus".

- observe the elements that made *Olympia* no longer an idealised image of femininity, but rather the representation of a contemporary woman directly addressing the spectator: the slept-in bed; the closed room; the servant bringing a bouquet (an homage from an admirer, a customer?); the

black cat ; the bracelet, the ribbon and the mule suggesting an undressed body rather than a nude ; the hand resting on her sex to hide it or to point at it ; Olympia's stare at the spectator ; ...

When Jean-François Millet presented *Des Glaneuses (Gleaners)* at the 1857 Salon, the dispute around realism had subsided. Yet the vision Millet gave of the world of peasants gave rise to a polemic of esthetical as well as political order, whereas *Le rappel des glaneuses (The Recall of the Gleaners)*, presented two years later by Jules Breton was acclaimed by critics, awarded a first-class medal and bought by Napoleon III.

5. Jean-François Millet (1814-1875): *Des glaneuses (Gleaners)*, 1857

- Location: Millet, Rousseau, Corot gallery, ground floor, on the left (3rd gallery).
- "These are scarecrows dressed as hags planted in a field, and, like scarecrows, they have no faces: these are replaced by homespun head-dresses. Mr Millet seems to think a mediocre technique is fit to paint the poor: his ugliness is without accent, his vulgarity without relief" (Paul de Saint-Victor). "Elegant Parisians, stop by this painting and understand if you can the reason why there used to be a time when your fathers, your husbands and your brothers were so often awoken by the call of the drum. Here are the rogues of the countryside, you may see those of the city as you step outside" (Léon Daléas).

Paul de Saint-Victor's words are similar to those used by most of his colleagues: ugliness, vulgarity... As for Léon Daléas, he wanted his countrymen to realise the risks entailed by ignoring popular discontent.

- The aim is to have the pupils notice in what ways Millet's gleaners do not correspond to the usual idealisation of rural work and how they take place in the trend towards realism:

- the gleaners are anonymous, one does not see their faces ;
- the title of the painting reinforces this anonymity: *Des glaneuses (Gleaners)* and not *Les glaneuses (The Gleaners)* as it is commonly misnamed ;
- the artist does not dwell on the sordid side of life: the costumes are poor, but not ostentatiously miserable;
- the toughness of the labour is highlighted: the position of the peasants, the meagreness of the gathering, contrasting with the wealth of the harvest in the background;
- they try neither to inspire pity or to seduce; they ignore both the steward who supervises them from afar and the spectator.

6. Jules Breton (1827-1906): *Le rappel des glaneuses (The Recall of the Gleaners)*, 1859

- Location: Chauchard 2 gallery, on the left on the ground floor, behind the Millet, Rousseau, Corot gallery.
- "Now let us observe the figures: the woman



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carrying a bundle of wheat on her head is beautiful in her expression, her lines and her attitude: the groups are spread in a fitting way that does not suggest calculation; in a word, this is a good piece of painting." (H. Dumesnil, 1859).

In 1867, during the World Fair where the painting was exhibited again, Marc Montifaud confirmed

3. Alexandre Cabanel : *Naissance de Vénus*, 1865
4. Édouard Manet : *Olympia*, 1865
5. Jean-François Millet : *Des glaneuses*, 1857
6. Jules Breton : *Le rappel des glaneuses*, 1859

the favorable opinions voiced eight years earlier as he declared that Jules Breton was “a vigorous talent who likes painting those forms that may be tough, but fit for the most energetic breaks of light, those physionomies tanned by the biting breathes of air, those hands rough and coarse to the touch.”

• Unlike Millet, Jules Breton represents peasants as public opinion wanted to see them and critics were under his spell: the poetry, the picturesque charm of his gleaners were praised. It should be mentioned here that J. Breton had started his career with much more realistic pieces that attracted virulent criticism.

How are his peasant women idealised?

- their misery is staged: their clothes are patched up and frayed;
- their attitude is not realistic: barefooted, posing like dancers, haughty bearing;
- their gathering has nothing to do with meagre gleaners: what they gather is almost bundles;
- signs that remind of the legal reality of gleaners' condition (gleaning must stop at sunset) are redundant: the sun's last rays, the incipient crescent of the moon, the rural policeman shouting, the peasant turning round,... but the gleaners seem to accept this condition happily enough: J. Breton gives us a reassuring picture of peasants.

In 1865, Edouard Manet exhibited 14 paintings at Martinet's, Boulevard des Italiens, including *Lola de Valence*, a portrait of Lola Melea, star dancer of a Spanish ballet that was highly praised in 1862 in Paris. The mostly hostile critical reception of the painting prefigured that of *Olympia* two years later.

In 1869, Carolus Duran exhibited the portrait of his wife, then entitled *La femme au gant* (*Lady with Glove*) or *Mme D...* at the Salon. The success of this piece was such that it launched the artist in a career of society portraitist that brought him wealth and fame. (It may be interesting to evoke, while observing these paintings, the influence of Spain on the painters of that time.)

7. Édouard Manet (1832-1885):

Lola de Valence, 1862

- Location: Manet before 1870 gallery, ground floor, after the Courbet gallery.
- “...unfortunately the *Old Violin Player*, *Lola de Valence* and a certain portrait of a flour-faced lady would certainly frighten Mr Winterhalter (*) to death if one was to bring him without warning in front of those comical paintings” (Louis Leroy). (* a society portraitist, famous in particular for his portraits of the empress Eugénie).
- “Finally, that kind of art may be extremely loyal; but it is not sane; and we will certainly not endeavour to plead Mr Manet's cause in front of the exhibition jury” (Paul Mantz).

As Astruc was to do for *Olympia*, Charles Baudelaire offered Manet a poem to engrave below the portrait or on the frame of *Lola de Valence*. Manet chose the frame to engrave this quatrain:

“Entre tant de beautés que partout on peut voir
Je comprends bien, amis, que le Désir balance;
Mais on voit scintiller dans *Lola Valence*
Le charme inattendu d'un bijou rose et noir.”
(“Between so many beauties one may see
I everywhere

*I can well understand your wavering desire;
But in *Lola Valence* one can see the glitter
Of the unexpected charm of a pink and black gem”)*

- Have the pupils feel what was shocking in the juxtaposition of the poem and the painting. Note the erotic connotation of the former.
- Have them find out the elements that make this portrait differ from the ideal representation of female beauty:

- the heavy figure (a caricature of the painting by Randon was captioned:
“*Lola de Valence* or the Spanish Auvergnate.
Neither man nor woman; but what could this be?...
I wonder...”)

- the frontal vision on face level, which induces a slightly high angle shot on the body and feet, so that the figure looks shrunken;

- the assured pose that anchors the figure in reality;

- the glance that seems to dare the spectator;

- the realism of the stage costume.

- Observe the use of bright colours laid in flat strokes, particularly on the skirt (“Those paintings that reveal in him an abundant vigour but which, in their red, blue, yellow and black medley of colour, are a caricature of colour, and not colour itself.” P. Mantz).

8. Carolus Duran (Charles Duran, a.k.a.) (1857-1917): *La dame au gant* (*Lady With Glove*), 1869

• Location: Fantin-Latour, Whistler gallery, ground floor, on the left behind the Manet before 1870 gallery.

• “With Mr Carolus-Duran, colour is glittering, sparkling, bursting. The portrait of Mrs D... is a firework display. The full-length figure has a noble aspect... Her dress, the glove, every detail pertaining to still-life are perfect” (E. About, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1869).

“Since the portrait of the *Lady With Glove* [...] masterpiece now housed in the Musée du Luxembourg, first caught the attention of the artistic world, one can say the latter has never forgotten it” (L. Enault. 1881 Salon).

• Point out the elements that make Carolus-Duran's painting belong to the school of traditional female portraits:

- the flattering pose, the reserved manners of the model;
- the young woman's elegance, the varied nuances of black of her dress;
- the touch of exoticism added by references to Spanish costume: dark clothes, head dress reminding one of a mantilla;
- the details: jewels, decor, that indicate the character's place in society;
- the absence of the body, completely hidden by the costume;
- the impression of a slight low-angle shot that



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- lengthen the silhouette;
- the influence of fashion engravings on this kind of portrait;
- the sobriety of the background: naked wall and frieze of the panelling;
- the presence of the glove on the floor that, besides provoking the circulation of the eye from a bright patch to another (face, hands, glove) and attracting the eye towards the signature, is the only sign of a degree of casualness of the model. Some commentaries interpreted it as a sign of the woman's desire for emancipation from a mundane accessory.

At the 1850-51 Salon, Camille Corot presented four paintings, including *Une matinée. La danse des nymphes* (*A Morning. The Nymphs' Dance*). Much acclaimed by critics and public opinion, this painting was bought by the State. It is the only painting by Corot that was to enter national collections during his lifetime.

In 1866, Claude Monet set out to paint a large-format piece on which he represented a group of characters in a landscape. Monet applied for its exhibition at the 1867 Salon with the title *Femmes au jardin* (*Women in the Garden*), but it was rejected by the jury.

9. Camille Corot (1796-1875):
Une matinée. La danse des nymphes
(*A Morning. The Nymphs' Dance*), undated

- Location: Millet, Rousseau, Corot gallery, ground floor, on the left (3rd gallery).

- "It is the poetry of nature I ask from Corot, and not its description. It is precisely this poetry Mr Corot is gifted for" (L. Peisse. Le Constitutionnel, dec. 50 / jan. 51).

"One day people will say 'a Corot'; for this artist has successfully played suave melodies of a new kind unheard of before on this sublime instrument, whose harmonies are infinite, that is called nature" (P. Rochery. La Politique nouvelle).

"This painting offers to our eyes the dance of nymphs on a fresh lawn in the shade of beautiful trees bathing their greenery in a pewter-white sky, and may serve as a lesson to those who claim the study of Antiquity to be for their sole use." (Ch. De Ris. L'Artiste).

- Try to insist on the reasons explaining the success of this painting:
 - remind the pupils of the context: the 1850-51 Salon was the most intense moment of the dispute about realism (cf. supra)
 - show how Corot was in the fringe of this movement: the painting is not inscribed in any particular place and time; this refusal can be felt in the very title of the painting: *Une matinée* (*A Morning*, a title that has sometimes been interpreted as an allusion to a ballet performance). No reference to the place represented, whereas it is a certain fact that the landscape was realised after a study he had made in Rome in 1826, of which Corot removed the monuments. (One may quote titles of paintings showing that, on the contrary, references to particular places were common with the Barbizon painters, Courbet and so would they be in the case of the impressionists.)
 - note that Corot did not indulge in "pure" landscape and that he kept elements characteristic of the genre known as "historical landscapes": presence of the nymphs and title of the piece;
 - show that, while integrating contemporary elements (his nymphs were in fact inspired by dancers of the Opera ballet he was familiar with, and whom he sketched many times), he did not dare to present them without transposition;
 - observe the means he used to give the whole a pastoral and idyllic atmosphere (this painting was

often said to be a "lyric landscape"): blurred outlines, subtle tones, silvery palette.

10. Claude Monet (1840-1926): *Femmes au jardin* (*Women in the Garden*), 1867

- Location: Monet, Bazille, Renoir before 1870, ground floor, on the left, after the Manet before 1870 gallery.

- The 1867 Salon jury proved particularly severe with the painters who, like Monet, did not accept the demands of academic painting.

One of them, Frédéric Bazille, whose work was rejected (like that of, among others, Monet, Sisley, Pissarro, Renoir, Cézanne), wrote to his mother:

"My paintings are rejected from the Exhibition. Do not grieve too much over that, on the contrary. I share this fate with all that was good at the Salon this year. A petition is being signed to ask for an Exhibition of the Rejected, and this petition is supported by all the painters in Paris worth noting." This petition was to no avail... It was at this time that the idea of a group exhibition germinated: "...We have therefore resolved to rent each year a large workshop where we shall exhibit as many of our paintings as we want. [...] With those people and Monet, who is stronger than any of them, we are bound to succeed". This idea was to lead to the first impressionist exhibition at Nadar's, Boulevard des Capucines, in 1874.

There are few texts left concerning criticism of *Femmes au jardin* because the painting, after its rejection from the Salon, was bought by Bazille (2500 Francs to be paid in 50-Franc instalments) and was not shown in public.

Yet one may conjecture that it was for graphical reasons, and almost as a "symbol", that it was rejected. One of the 1867 jury members declared: "It is precisely because he is making progress that I am rejecting it. Too many young people are determined to pursue this abominable direction. It is high time to protect them and to save art!".

Émile Zola (who, besides, has praised *Femmes au jardin*) thought it was its defence of the young generation in his 1866 Salon that turned the jury against it: "...the jury, irritated by my Salon, has closed the doors to all those who take the new road".

- Find out in what ways Claude Monet's painting is emblematic of this "new road":

- his characters, although partly inspired by fashion engravings, are represented in a much different way from *La dame au gant* (see above): there is no concern about resembling faces (Monet's wife, Camille, has posed for the three characters on the left). There is not the slightest desire to indicate their social rank;
- these characters are perfectly integrated in the landscape: Monet's wish was precisely to achieve this integration in a large-format painting, before finishing his painting in his workshop;
- note the influence of Japanese prints: large surfaces of bright, uniform colours;
- observe the treatment of light and shadow: vegetation and characters are treated in large patches of flat colour whose shadows are



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coloured, and not, as academic teaching would have it, rendered by the use of brown or black;

- observe the stroke: it is apparent, and one has to step back to see the motif as a whole. It was, in particular, this use of the visible stroke that explains why paintings were said to be unfinished, by comparison with the "l'éché" of academic painting;
- show the pupils that what Monet and his friends were interested in was the play on light and shadows, seizing the moment, which became the subject matter of painting.

Pupils may then be asked as a follow-up to continue this exercise by making a comparative analysis of other "pairs" of artworks, for instance: *La Source* by Ingres and *La Source* by Courbet.