

MANET, EDOUARD

(1832 - 1883)

Edouard Manet was born on January 23, 1832 in Paris into the family of August Manet, an officer in the Ministry of Justice, and his wife Eugénie-Désirée, née Fournier, daughter of a diplomat. His uncle, Edmond-Edouard Fournier, gave the boy his first lessons in drawing. In 1844-1848, Manet studied at the College Rollin, where he met his lifelong friend Antonin Proust. In 1848-49, he was trained as a sea cadet on a voyage to Brazil, but in April 1849 he failed his naval examinations and decided to switch to painting. He entered the studio of Thomas Couture, where he studied for 6 years, between 1850 and 1856. In 1856, he took a long travel through Europe.

After traveling in Germany, Austria and Italy to study the Old Masters, Manet finally found the answer to all his questionings and aspirations for light and truth in the paintings of Velasquez and Goya at the Louvre. Influenced by these masters and by the example of Courbet, a French realist painter, he gradually evolved a new technique which presented modern aspects by modern methods. In 1861, his *The Spanish Singer* was accepted at the Salon and won an honorable mention. In 1862, he produced nineteen of the one hundred and eleven prints that go to make up his work as a graphic artist. His submissions to the Salon of 1863, *The Picnic* among them, were rejected and appeared at the Salon des Refusés. The large canvas became the focus of scandalized critical and public attention which made a reputation for Manet outside his small circle of artists and critics. In October 28, 1863, Manet married Suzanne Leenhoff in Holland. After a relationship lasting more than ten years, Manet finally married Suzanne after his father's death. Léon Koëlla was Suzanne's son, born in 1852. His father was almost certainly Manet.

An even greater scandal than *The Picnic*, was caused by *Olympia*, shown in 1865. The public was infuriated not only by the style, but also by the subject of the picture. When words were exhausted by some enthusiasts and critics, they tried to destroy the picture physically, and it was saved only thanks to being hung high, above the reach of the fanatics.

Although Manet was frequently in the company of members of the Impressionist group – Berthe Morisot, his sister-in-law since December 1874, Degas, and Monet in particular, and they regarded him as a leader, he had no wish to join their group. He was naturally irritated by the critics' tendency to confuse him with Monet. Manet's stylistic discoveries, such as "there are not lines in Nature", which led to his abandoning of the conventional outline and his shaping the forms by means of color and subtle gradation of tints, decisively influenced the Impressionists, but their representation of light and optical reactions to color were different. Manet never painted what could be called a truly Impressionist picture. In 1881, Manet exhibited his portrait of *Henri Pertuiset of Rochefort* at the Salon, and obtained a second class medal. The same year he was received into the Legion of Honor. In 1882, he exhibited for the last time at the Salon, showing *Spring* and *Bar at the Folies-Bergère*. After a long illness, which had been exhausting him for about 5 years, he died on April 30, 1883.

Out of the one hundred and eleven prints produced, forty-five of these were of free inspiration. Forty-three of Manet's prints were interpretations of his own paintings. The balance were illustrations he did for publications and books.