

art. I will not be meddlesome, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is. Let who may exalt or startle or fascinate or soothe I will have purposes as health or heat or snow has and be as regardless of observation. What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me.

The old red blood and stainless gentility of great poets will be proved by their unconstraint. A heroic person walks at his ease through and out of that custom or precedent or authority that suits him not. Of the traits of the brotherhood of writers savans musicians inventors and artists nothing is finer than silent defiance advancing from new free forms. In the need of poems philosophy politics mechanism science behaviour, the craft of art, an appropriate native grand-opera, shipcraft, or any craft, he is greatest forever and forever who contributes the greatest original practical example. The cleanest expression is that which finds no sphere worthy of itself and makes one.

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These American states strong and healthy and accomplished shall receive no pleasure from violations of natural models and must not permit them. In paintings or mouldings or carvings in mineral or wood, or in the illustrations of books or newspapers, or in any comic or tragic prints, or in the patterns of woven stuffs or any thing to beautify rooms or furniture or costumes, or to put upon cornices or monuments or on the prows or sterns of ships, or to put anywhere before the human eye indoors or out, that which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly beings or places or contingencies is a nuisance and revolt. Of the human form especially it is so great it must never be made ridiculous. Of ornaments to a work nothing outre can be allowed... but those ornaments can be allowed that conform to the perfect facts of the open air and that flow out of the nature of the work and come irrepressibly from it and are necessary to the completion of the work. Most works are most beautiful without ornament... Exaggerations will be revenged in human physiology. Clean and vigorous children are jetted and conceived only in those communities where the models of natural forms are public every day... Great genius and the people of these states must never be demeaned to romances. As soon as histories are properly told there is no more need of romances. [...]

10 Various Artists, Women's Petition to the Royal Academy

Throughout the nineteenth century women were routinely discouraged from practising as artists and authors. There were individual exceptions, but any success was won in the face of repeated criticism that the female nature was unsuited to the demands of artistic creativity, particularly in the higher academic genres. A *Society of Female Artists* was founded in London in 1857 to promote the exhibition of work by women artists. Adequate training remained a problem, however. In the late 1850s a campaign was mounted to open the Royal Academy schools to women students. In April 1859 38 signatories sent a petition to all Academicians asking for their support in this project. The text of the petition was also printed in *The Athenaeum* of 30 April 1859. One woman artist gained entry the following

year (through the tactic of using her initials rather than her full name on her submission of work). Despite a handful of further entries, an Academy resolution of 1863 not to accept any more female students was passed unanimously, and although others did gain entry later in the decade, resistance long continued (see Vb9). The present text of the Women's Petition to the Royal Academy is taken from Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, London: The Women's Press, 1987, p. 46.

Sir – we appeal to you to use your influence, as an artist and a member of the Royal Academy, in favour of a proposal to open the Schools of that institution to women. We request your attentive consideration of the reasons which have originated this proposal. When the Academy was established in 1769, women artists were rare; no provision was therefore required for their Art-education. Since that time, however, the general advance of education and liberal opinions has produced a great change in this particular; no less than one hundred and twenty ladies have exhibited their works in the Royal Academy alone, during the last three years, and the profession must be considered as fairly open to women. It thus becomes of the greatest importance that they should have the best means of study placed within their reach; especially that they should be enabled to gain a thorough knowledge of *Drawing* in all its branches, for it is in this quality that their works are invariably found deficient. It is generally acknowledged that study from the Antique and from Nature, under the direction of qualified masters, forms the best education for the artist; this education is given in the Royal Academy to young men, and it is given gratuitously. The difficulty and expense of obtaining good instruction oblige many women artists to enter upon their profession without adequate preparatory study, and thus prevent their attaining the position for which their talents might qualify them. It is in order to remove this great disadvantage, that we ask the members of the Royal Academy to provide accommodation in their Schools for properly qualified Female Students, and we feel assured that the gentlemen composing that body will not grudge the expenditure required to afford to women artists the same opportunities as far as practicable by which they themselves so greatly profited.

11 Various Authors, on the Salon des Refusés

The Salon des Refusés was an important moment in the emergence of modern art, not least because of the exhibition there of three works by Edouard Manet, including his *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, then known as *Le Bain* (The Bath). The question of artistic quality was of concern in 1863, due to mounting unease about the continuing relevance of Academic criteria in a rapidly changing world. This unease was given focus by the rising number of submissions for the Salon. Out of 5,000 works submitted, 3–4,000 were rejected. The resulting outcry caught the attention of Louis Napoleon himself, and the upshot was a decision to display the rejected works in a separate exhibition: ostensibly to let the public make up its own mind, actually to confirm the jury's judgement. Many artists quickly withdrew their work because of the stigma that would attach to a public admission of rejection. (As if to confirm their fears, when the show did open, Louis Leroy, the critic of *Charivari*, dubbed the exhibitors 'pariahs of the Salon'.) The result was that the Salon des Refusés tended to mix the hopeless with the radical, the work of those who could not meet

academic standards with the work of those who rejected them. When the exhibition opened on 15 May, the public largely failed to differentiate. The critical response varied from hostility to enthusiasm. We reproduce here the original announcement from the *Moniteur*, and extracts from the comments of eight reviewers. Extracts i-viii are taken from George Heard Hamilton, *Manet and his Critics*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1954, pp. 41–50 of the 1986 edition; extract ix is from John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1973, pp. 82–5. In the present instance, we have felt justified in reprinting the fragments as already published, without further amendment or amplification, partly because of the intrinsic importance of the event described and partly because of the authority of the texts through which they have entered into contemporary art history. Ellipses conform to the existing edits of Hamilton and Rewald.

(i) from the announcement of the exhibition, in the *Moniteur*, 24 April 1863

Numerous complaints have reached the Emperor on the subject of works of art which have been refused by the jury of the exhibition [the Salon]. His Majesty, wishing to let the public judge the legitimacy of these complaints, has decided that the rejected works of art are to be exhibited in another part of the Palace of Industry. This exhibition will be voluntary, and artists who may not wish to participate need only inform the administration, which will hasten to return their works to them. This exhibition will open on May 15th. Artists have until May 7th to withdraw their works. After this date their pictures will be considered not withdrawn and will be placed in the galleries.

(ii) from Maxime du Camp's review, in the *Revue des deux mondes*

This exhibition, at once sad and grotesque, is one of the oddest you could see. It offers abundant proof of what we knew already, that the jury always displays an unbelievable leniency. Save for one or two questionable exceptions there is not a painting which deserves the honour of the official galleries... There is even something cruel about this exhibition; people laugh as they do at a farce. As a matter of fact, it is a continual parody, a parody of drawing, of colour, of composition. These, then, are the unrecognized geniuses and their productions! These are the impatient painters, those who complain, who rail at men's injustice, at their hard lot, who appeal to posterity! No more brilliant sanction could have been given the decisions of the jury, and it can be thanked for having tried to spare us the sight of such lamentable things.

(iii) from Fernand Desnoyers' brochure, *La Peinture en 1863*

Manet's three pictures must have profoundly upset the dogmatic ideas of the jury. The public also has not failed to be astonished by this kind of painting which at the same time aggravates art lovers and makes art critics facetious. You can consider it evil but not mediocre. Manet certainly has not the least bias. He will keep on because he is sure of himself in the long run, whatever the art lovers claim they find in his manner

imitative of Goya or of Couture – small difference that makes. I believe that Manet is indeed his own master. That is the finest praise one can give him.

(iv) from Louis Etienne's brochure, *Le Jury et les exposants*

A commonplace woman of the demimonde, as naked as can be, shamelessly lolls between two dandies dressed to the teeth. These latter look like schoolboys on a holiday, perpetrating an outrage to play the man, and I search in vain for the meaning of this unbecoming rebus... This is a young man's practical joke, a shameful open sore not worth exhibiting this way... The landscape is well handled... but the figures are slipshod.

(v) from Edouard Lockroy's review, in the *Courrier artistique*

The exhibition of the rejected works, which we saw only for a moment, will certainly be a triumph for the jury. More than 1,500 artists have withdrawn, and of course some of the best. Nevertheless among the remaining canvases are some which would have held an honourable place with the work which was accepted... Manet has a gift for displeasing the jury. If he had only that, we should most certainly not be grateful to him, but he has others. Manet has not yet had the last word. His paintings, whose qualities the public cannot appreciate, are full of good intentions. Manet will triumph some day, we have no doubt, over all the obstacles he encounters, and we shall be the first to applaud his success.

(vi) from Zacharie Astruc's weekly paper, *Le Salon*

One must have the strength of two to stand up under the storm of fools who pour in here by the thousands to jeer to the limit, with stupid smiles on their lips... Manet, one of the greatest personalities of our time, is its lustre, inspiration, pungent savour, and surprise. The injustice committed in his case is so flagrant it confounds... In contrast to the great natural-born talents who compel us to study first the technical aspects of their art, he imposes and, so to speak, manifests his personal vitality... He pleases or displeases at once; he quickly charms, attracts, or repels. His individuality is so powerful that it eludes technical considerations. Technique is effaced in favour of the full metaphysical and tangible value of the work. Only long afterwards are we aware of the method by which it was accomplished, the elements of colour, relief, and modelling.

(vii) from Jules-Antoine Castagnary's review, in *L'Artiste*

There has been a lot of excitement about this young man. Let us be serious. The *Bath*, the *Majo*, the *Espada* are good sketches, I will grant you. There is a certain verve in the colours, a certain freedom of touch, which are in no way commonplace. But then what? Is this drawing? Is this painting? Manet thinks himself resolute and powerful. He is only hard. And the amazing thing is that he is as soft as he is hard. That's

because he is uncertain about some things and leaves them to chance. Not one detail has attained its exact and final form. I see garments without feeling the anatomical structure which supports them and explains their movements. I see boneless fingers and heads without skulls. I see side whiskers made of two strips of black cloth that could have been glued to the cheeks. What else do I see? The artist's lack of conviction and sincerity.

(viii) from Théophile Thoré's review, in *L'Indépendance Belge*

After due thought one sees that most of the rejected paintings share a certain similarity in primary conception and technique; in their eccentricities they resemble each other. An innocent stranger who might visit this Salon thinking he was in the official exhibition would undoubtedly suppose that the French school tends with apparent unity towards the reproduction of men and nature just as we see them, without preconceived ideals or stylistic dogmas, without tradition but also without individual inspiration. It looks as if these artists were taking art back to its origins without bothering about what civilization has been able to do before them... People who begin anything have, even in their barbarism, something sincere and deeply felt, and at the same time ludicrous and incomplete, something both novel and unique. French art, as it is seen in the rejected work, seems to begin or to begin all over again. It is odd and crude yet sometimes exactly right, even profound. The subjects are no longer the same as those in the official galleries: very little mythology or history; contemporary life, especially among the common people; very little refinement and no taste. Things are as they are, beautiful or ugly, distinguished or ordinary, and in a technique entirely different from those sanctioned by the long domination of Italian art. Instead of looking for outlines which the Academy calls *drawing*, instead of slaving over details which those who admire classic art call *finish*, these painters try to create an effect in its striking unity, without bothering about correct lines or minute details...

If the artistic unrest as it appears in the work of a great many young painters signifies, as it seems to, a return to nature and humanity, we must not take exception to it. The misfortune is that they have scarcely any imagination and that they despise charm. These pioneers of the possible transfiguration of an old exhausted art are for the most part until now only impotent or even absurd. Therefore they excite the uncontrolled laughter of gentlemen well educated on sane principles. But let there appear some painters of genius, loving beauty and distinction in the same subjects and techniques, and the revolution will be quick. The public would even be astonished at having admired the nonsense now triumphant in the official Salon...

After Whistler, the artist who arouses the most discussion is Manet. He, too, is a true painter; several of his etchings, particularly the reproduction of the *Petits cavaliers* by Velasquez in the Louvre, exhibited among the rejected works, are lively, witty, and colourful. His three paintings look a bit like a provocation to the public which is dazzled by the too vivid colour. In the centre, a bathing scene; to the left a Spanish *Majo*; to the right a Parisian girl in the costume of an *Espada*, waving her purple cape in the bull ring. Manet loves Spain, and his favourite master seems to be Goya, whose vivid and contrasting hues, whose free and fiery touch, he imitates. There are some amazing materials in these two Spanish figures, the *Majo's* black

costume and the heavy scarlet burnous of the young Parisienne disguised as an *Espada*. But underneath these brilliant costumes personality itself is somewhat lacking; the heads ought to have been painted differently from the drapery, with more accent and contrast.

The *Bath* is very daring... The nude hasn't a good figure, unfortunately, and one can't think of anything uglier than the man stretched out next to her, who hasn't even thought of taking off, out of doors, his horrid padded cap. It is the contrast of a creature so inappropriate in a pastoral scene with this undraped bather that is shocking. I can't imagine what made an artist of intelligence and refinement select such an absurd composition, which elegant and charming characters might perhaps have justified. But there are qualities of colour and light in the landscape, and even very convincing bits of modelling in the woman's body.

(ix) from P. G. Hamerton's review, in the *Fine Arts Quarterly Review*

It is dangerous to allow the jury, or any members of the jury, to have any influence over the hanging of pictures rejected by the jury. Their first object is, of course, to set themselves right with the public, and, to achieve this, they have in this instance reversed the usual order of things by carefully putting the worst pictures in the most conspicuous places... The Emperor's intention of allowing the rejected painters to appeal to the public has been in a great measure neutralized by the pride of the painters themselves. With a susceptibility much to be regretted, and even strongly condemned, the best of these have withdrawn their works, to the number of more than six hundred. We are consequently quite unable to determine, in any satisfactory manner, how far the jury has acted justly towards the refused artists as a body...

On entering the present exhibition of refused pictures, every spectator is immediately compelled, whether he will or no, to abandon all hope of getting into that serious state of mind which is necessary to a fair comparison of works of art. That threshold once past, the gravest visitors burst into peals of laughter. This is exactly what the jurymen desire, but it is most injurious to many meritorious artists... As for the public generally, it is perfectly delighted. Everybody goes to see the refused pictures...

I ought not to omit a remarkable picture of the realist school, a translation of a thought of Giorgione into modern French. Giorgione had conceived the happy idea of a *fête champêtre* in which, although the gentlemen were dressed, the ladies were not, but the doubtful morality of the picture is pardoned for the sake of its fine colour... Now some wretched Frenchman has translated this into modern French realism, on a much larger scale, and with the horrible modern French costume instead of the graceful Venetian one. Yes, there they are, under the trees, the principal lady, entirely undressed, ... another female in a chemise coming out of a little stream that runs hard by, and two Frenchmen in wide-awakes sitting on the very green grass with a stupid look of bliss. There are other pictures of the same class, which lead to the inference that the nude, when painted by vulgar men, is inevitably indecent.