

how he used real external light. Thirdly, how he also played with the place of the viewer in relation to the picture; and for this third point, I will not study a group of pictures, but a single one which, moreover, no doubt typifies Manet's oeuvre, which is, moreover, one of the last and one of the most disruptive Manets, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*.

I. THE SPACE OF THE CANVAS

So, if you will, the first group of problems and the first group of canvases: how is it that Manet represented space? At this point we are going to move to the slides, so we must turn out the lights.

Music in the Tuileries (1862)

Here you have one of the first canvases painted by Manet, a canvas still very classical; you know that Manet had an entirely classical training: he worked in the conformist studios of the period, relatively conformist, he worked with [Thomas] Couture and he mastered and possessed the whole of the great pictorial tradition; and in this canvas – it dates from 1861–62 – one can say that Manet still uses all the traditions that he had learned in the studios where he studied.⁴

Already a number of things must simply be signalled: you see the privilege that Manet accords to the great vertical lines which are represented by the trees. And you see that Manet's canvas organises itself according to, at the back, two large axes: a horizontal axis which is signalled by the last line of the figures' heads and then the large vertical

⁴Thomas Couture (1815–79), history and genre painter, tutor to Manet for six years.



1 Music in the Tuileries

1862

Oil on canvas

76.2 x 118.1 cm

National Gallery, London. Lane Bequest, 1917

axes, which are indicated here with, as though to repeat them or rather as if to emphasise them, this small triangle of light from which all the light which illuminates the front of the scene spills out. The viewer or the painter sees this scene very superficially from an aerial viewpoint, in the same way that one can see a little of what happens behind, but one does not see it very well – there is not much depth, the figures in front are in a way masking almost completely what happens behind, from which derives this effect of a frieze. The figures form a sort of flat frieze here, and the verticality extends this frieze effect with a relatively shortened depth.

The Masked Ball at the Opera (1873–4)

So now, ten years later, Manet comes to paint a picture which is in a sense the same and which is like another version of this same picture, that is 'An Evening at the Opera', sorry, *The Ball at the Opera*. In a sense, it is the same picture you see: the same types of figure, men in outfits with top hats, some feminine figures with light dresses, but you see that, already, the whole spatial balance is modified. The space has been filled, closed from behind; the depth which I was telling you was not very marked in the preceding picture but which existed nonetheless, this depth, it is now closed, it is closed by a thick wall; and as though to signal clearly that there is a wall and that there is nothing to see behind. You note these two vertical pillars and this enormous vertical bar here which frames the picture, which in a way doubles inside the picture the vertical and the horizontal of the canvas. This large

rectangle of the canvas, you find it repeated inside and it closes the depth of the picture, preventing, consequently, the effect of depth.

Not only is the effect of depth effaced, but the distance between the edge of the picture and the back is relatively short such that all the figures find themselves projected forward; far from there being depth, you have on the contrary a sort of phenomenon of relief; the advancing figures and the black of the costumes, equally of the dresses, the black absolutely blocks all that the clear colours could have done, in a way, to in fact open the space. The space is closed at the back by the wall and at the front by these dresses and costumes. You do not really have space *per se*, you have only something like packages of space, packages of volumes and surfaces which are projected forwards, towards the viewer's eyes.

The only real opening or rather the only opening which is represented in the picture is this very curious opening which is here, right at the top of the picture, and which does not open onto a true depth, which does not open onto something like the sky or the light. Remember, in the previous picture, you had a small triangle of light, a small triangle which opened onto the sky and from where the light spilled out; here, by a sort of irony, the light opens onto nothing but what? Well, you see the feet and the trousers and the rest, that is, the whole group of figures beginning to repeat; as though the picture restarted here [at the level of the balcony], as though it were the same scene and this



2 The Masked Ball at the Opera
1873-4
Oil on canvas
59.1 x 72.5 cm
National Gallery of Art, Washington.
Gift of Horace Havemeyer in memory
of his mother, Louisine W. Havemeyer

one indefinitely: the effect, consequently, of a tapestry, of a wall, the effect of painted paper that you see extending itself all along, with the irony of two little feet which swing here and which indicate the fantasy character of this space which is not the real space of perception, which is not the real space of the opening, but which is the play of these surfaces and these colours spilled and repeated indefinitely from top to bottom of the canvas.

The spatial properties of this rectangle of canvas are thus represented, manifested, exalted by what is represented in the canvas itself, and you see how Manet, by relating to the previous canvas, which treated basically almost the same subject, has entirely closed up the space, but how this time it is the material properties of the canvas which are represented in the picture itself.⁵

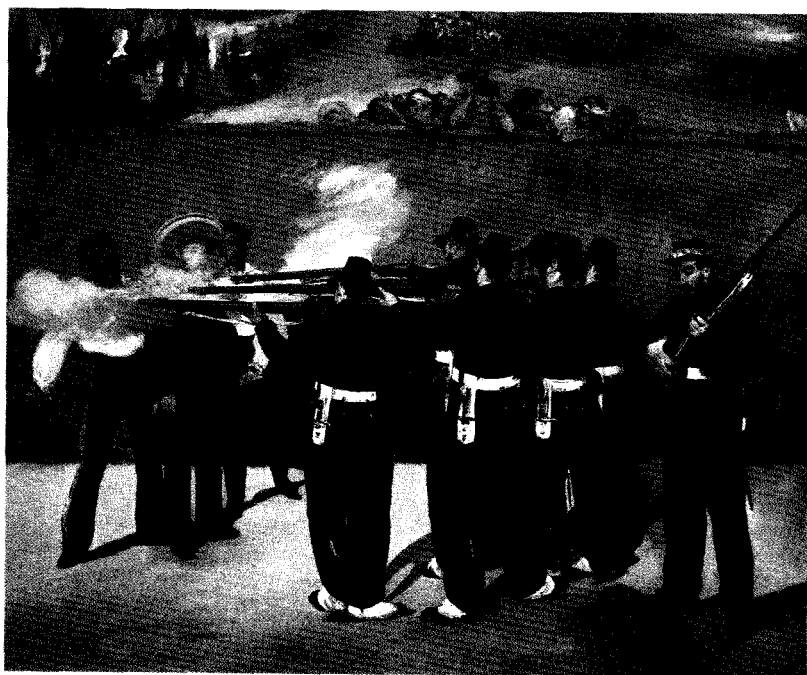
The Execution of Maximilien (1868)

Do you want to move to the next picture, which is *The Execution of Maximilien*? A picture which dates from 1867, evidently, and where you find once again, as you can see, most of the characteristics which I have just signalled with regard to *The Ball at the Opera*; this is an earlier picture, but you already have here the same procedures, that is to say a violently marked and compressed closing of space by the presence of a large wall, a large wall which is no more than the repetition of the canvas itself; whereby, as you can see, all the figures are placed on a narrow band of earth, so that you have something like a staircase, the effect of a staircase, which is to say, horizontal-vertical and, again,

something like a vertical, a horizontal which opens up with the small figures [on the wall] who are watching the scene. You see, however, that one has here almost the same effect as a moment ago in the scene in *The Ball at the Opera*, where you had a wall which was closed and a scene which began again there; and so you have here, hanging on behind the wall, again a small scene which repeats the picture.

Now, if I show you this picture, it is not simply because it gives once again, or it gives in advance these elements that one must find again later in *The Ball at the Opera*, it is for another reason: you see that all the figures are therefore placed on the same narrow little rectangle, on which they have placed their feet – a sort of staircase behind which you have a large vertical. They are all drawn close on this small space, they are all very near to one another, so near that, as you see, the rifle barrels are touching their chests. I should have mentioned, however, that these horizontals and the vertical position of the soldiers amounts, once again, to nothing more than multiplying and repeating inside the picture the large horizontal and vertical axes of the canvas. In any case the soldiers here touch at the tip of their rifles the figures that are there. There is no distance between the firing squad and their victims. Now, if you look, you can see that these figures here [the victims] are smaller than [the executioners] there, even though normally they must be of the same size, as long as they are very exactly on the same plane and they are arranged one according to the other with very little space to arrange themselves; that is to say, Manet makes use of this strongly archaic

⁵Foucault had been interested in this phenomenon for some time, having remarked in *The Order of Things* upon Velázquez's inclusion of an easel in *Las Meninas* and made the same observation in 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe', his essay on Magritte first published in the journal *Les Cahiers du chemin* in 1968.



3 The Execution of Maximilian

1868

Oil on canvas

252 x 302 cm

Kunsthalle Mannheim

technique which consists of making the figures diminish without dividing them out across the plane (which is the technique of painting before the quattrocento). He uses this technique to signify or symbolise a distance which is not actually represented.

In his picture, in the space which he gives himself, in this tiny rectangle where he places all the figures, it is very evident that Manet could not represent distance. Distance cannot be given to perception; one does not see distance. On the other hand, the diminution of figures indicates a sort of purely intellectual and non-perceptive recognition that there must be a distance between the victims and the firing squad; and this imperceptible distance, this distance which is not given to the gaze, is simply signalled by this sign which is the diminution of figures. Beginning, as you can see, to evolve in the very interior of this small rectangle that Manet gives himself and where he places his figures are some of the fundamental principles of pictorial perception in the West.

Pictorial perception must be like the repetition, the redoubling, the reproduction of the perception of everyday life. What had to be represented was a quasi-real space where distance could be read, appreciated, deciphered in the way that we ourselves see a landscape. There, we enter a pictorial space where distance does not offer itself to be seen, where depth is no longer an object of perception and where spatial positioning and the distancing of figures are simply given by signs which have no sense or function

except inside the picture; that is, by the relationship, in some ways arbitrary, in any case, purely symbolic, between the size of the figures here [the victims] and the size of the figures there [the executioners].

The Port of Bordeaux (1871)

Would you now like to move to the next picture which plays with another property of the canvas? In those which I've just shown you, *The Ball at the Opera* or *The Execution of Maximilien*, what Manet was using, what he was playing with in his representation, was above all the fact that the canvas was vertical, that it was a surface in two dimensions, that it had no depth; and in a way Manet was trying to represent this absence of depth by diminishing as far as possible the very thickness of the scene which he represents. Here, in this picture, which dates from the year 1872 if I remember correctly, what is in play, as you see, is essentially the horizontal and vertical axes.⁶ These horizontal and vertical axes are really repetitions inside the canvas of the horizontal and vertical axes which frame the canvas and which form the very frame of the picture. But, as you see, it is equally the reproduction of a sort, in the very grain of the painting, of all the horizontal and vertical fibres which constitute the canvas itself, the canvas in which it has material.

It is as though the weave of the canvas was in the process of starting to appear and show its internal geometry, and you see this interlacing of threads which is like a sketch represented on the canvas itself. If, however, you isolate

⁶It is likely that he does *not* remember correctly – this work is now generally accepted to date from 1870–1.

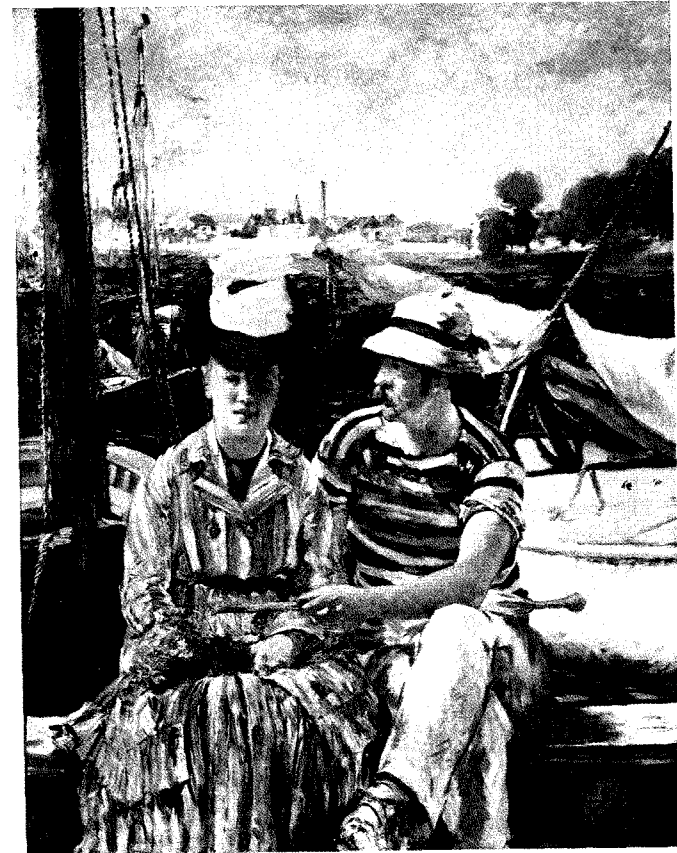


4 The Port of Bordeaux
1871
Oil on canvas
66 x 99.5 cm
Private collection, Switzerland

this part, this quarter [the top left], this sixth perhaps, of the canvas, you see that you have a game of almost exclusively horizontals and verticals, which are cut like right angles, and those among you who are in the spirit of Mondrian's picture of a tree, or rather the series of variations that Mondrian made on trees, you know, during the years 1910–14, there you see the very birth of abstract painting. Mondrian treated his tree, his famous tree out of which, at the same time as Kandinsky, he discovered abstract painting, a little like Manet treated the boats in *Port of Bordeaux*. From his tree, he finally extracted a certain play of lines which match up to the right angles and which form a sort of framework, a draughtboard, a framework of straight horizontal and vertical lines. And so, in the same way, in this tangle of boats, in all the activity of this port, Manet has come to extract this, this game of verticals and horizontals which are the geometrical representation of the very geometry of the canvas in which it has material. This game of the weave of the canvas you will see again shortly in a manner at once amusing and for this period absolutely scandalous, in the next picture which is called *Argenteuil*.

Argenteuil (1874)

Would you like to move to the next canvas? You see the vertical axis of the mast, which repeats the edge of the picture, this horizontal here which repeats this other one; and the two large axes which are therefore represented inside the canvas, but you see what it is that is represented, it is precisely the weave, the weave which comes from



5 *Argenteuil*
1874
Oil on canvas
149 x 115 cm
Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Tournai, Belgique



6 *In the Greenhouse*

1879

Oil on canvas

115 x 150 cm

Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

the vertical and horizontal lines; and the character, at once popular, unpolished, and the figures, and what is represented in this canvas, no more than a game for Manet, a game which consists of representing in a canvas the very properties of a weave and the interlacing and the matching up of the vertical and the horizontal.

In the Greenhouse (1879)

Would you like to move on to the next canvas, which is called *In the Greenhouse* and which is all the same one of the most important of Manet's canvases for understanding the manner of his play [it seems that Foucault had a problem at this point in finding his reproduction – the recording is broken here, indicating that a few seconds were lost], ... the vertical, the horizontal and this interlacing of the very lines of the picture. You see how space, the depth of the picture is restrained. Immediately behind the figures you have this tapestry of green plants which no gaze could pierce and which unrolls absolutely like a background canvas, absolutely like a wall of paper which could have been there; no depth, no lighting pierces this space, this forest of leaves and stems which peoples the greenhouse where the scene occurs.

The figure of the woman here is entirely projected forwards, the legs themselves are not seen in the picture, they extend beyond it; the woman's knees extend in a way out of the picture from which she is projected forwards for there is no depth and the figure behind is toppling over entirely towards us with this enormous face that

you can see, which is shown somehow very close to us, almost too close to be seen, while he has tipped forwards and is arranged in such a short space – the closure therefore of space and of course the game of verticals and horizontals, the whole picture barred by this stage, the back of this seat, the line of the seat which finds itself repeated firstly here, a second time there, a fourth time here, a line which is found doubled in white this time by the woman's umbrella; and now for the verticals, all of this grid here, with simply this small, very short diagonal to indicate depth. The whole picture is structured around and starts from these verticals and horizontals.

And if you now add that the folds of the woman's robe take the form of vertical folds here [below the waistband], but that you have all this fan-shaped movement of the woman's dress here [across the seat], which means that the first folds are towards the horizontal like these four fundamental lines, but that, in turning, the dress ends by almost achieving the vertical, you see that this play of folds which goes from the umbrella to the woman's knees reproduces by turning the movement which runs from the horizontal to the vertical; and it is this movement that is reproduced here. Now add that you have a hand which hangs [the woman's left hand] and a hand going the other way [the man's left hand] and you have at the centre of the picture, on a clear ground, reproducing the axes of the picture, the same vertical and horizontal lines that you find in dark lines constituting the very armature of the seat and the interior architecture of the picture. And

here, therefore, you have the whole game which consists of deleting, erasing and compressing space in terms of depth, and on the contrary intensifying the lines of verticality and horizontality.

So that is what I wanted to say to you concerning the play of depth, of vertical and horizontal in Manet, but there is still another way for Manet to play with the material properties of the canvas; because the canvas is really, in effect, a surface, a surface which has a horizontal and a vertical, but it is moreover a surface of two faces, a *verso* and a *recto*, which in a manner still more vicious and malicious, if you like, Manet will set in play.

The Waitress (1879)

And here is how: if you move to the next picture, which is *The Waitress*, one has a curious example. In effect, what does this picture consist of and what does it represent? Really, in a sense, it does not represent anything in so far as it offers nothing to see. In effect, you have in total here and for a total, in this picture, this figure of the waitress which you see very close to the painter, very close to the viewer, very close to us, who has a face turned suddenly turned towards us as though a spectacle has suddenly presented itself in front of her and attracted her gaze. You see that she is not looking at what she is doing, which is putting down her beer glass, but her eye has been attracted by something that we do not see, that we do not know, which is there, in front of the canvas. Otherwise, the canvas is composed of one, two, or at the most three other figures; in any case one or

two which we almost do not see since between them we see hardly anything but the receding profile and after that we see nothing except the hat. Rather, whoever they are looking at, they are themselves looking [back] at them in exactly the opposite direction. What do they see? Well, we know nothing about it, we know nothing since the picture is cut in such a way that the spectacle which is there, and by which these gazes are attracted, this spectacle is also hidden from us.

Consider now, if you will, a painting of the classical type – it doesn't matter which. It happens to be very traditional in painting that a picture represents people in the process of looking at something. For example, if you take Masaccio's *The Tribute Money* [c.1425], you see that the figures are in a circle and are looking at something. That something is a dialogue or rather an exchange of a coin between Saint Peter and the ferryman. There is therefore a spectacle, but this spectacle that the figures in the picture are watching, we know it, we see it, it is given in the picture.

Here though [in *The Waitress*], we have two figures who look but, firstly, these two figures do not look at the same thing and, secondly, the picture does not tell us what these figures are looking at. It is a picture where nothing is represented except two gazes, two gazes in two opposite directions, two gazes in the two opposite directions of the picture, *recto verso*, and neither of the two spectacles which are actually followed with so much attention by the two figures, neither of these two spectacles is given



7 *The Waitress*
1879
Oil on canvas
77.5 x 65 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



8 Saint-Lazare Station

1872-3

Oil on canvas

93.3 x 111.5 cm

National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Gift of Horace Havemeyer in memory
of his mother, Louisine W. Havemeyer

to us; and to underline this, you have the curious irony of this little part of a hand that you see [on the left] and this small part of a dress. The effect is that, in an earlier version of this picture, Manet has represented what was seen by these figures; what is represented is a cabaret singer from a café concert in progress there [on the left], taking place, a singer or the suggestion of a dance step (a version which can be found in London); and afterwards this version, this second version which I am showing you now.⁷ And so Manet, in this second version, has cut the spectacle in such a way that it is as though there is nothing to see, that the picture should consist of these gazes turned towards the invisible, showing nothing but the invisible and doing nothing but indicate by the direction of these opposing gazes something which is necessarily invisible since it is in front of the canvas and what is seen here is on the contrary behind the canvas. From one part of the canvas to another, you have two spectacles which are seen by the two figures but at its root the canvas, instead of showing what is to be seen, hides and conceals it. The surface with its two faces, *recto verso*, is not a place where a visibility manifests itself; it is the place which assures, on the contrary, the invisibility of what is seen by the figures that are in the foreground of the canvas.

Saint-Lazare Station (1872-3)

This is clear in this picture [*The Waitress*], clearer still in the one you are going to see now which is called *Saint Lazare Station*. Here, you have a new version of the same trick; of course you see always a new version of the same verticals

⁷Daniel Defert has clarified this, suggesting that there are not exactly two versions, but that Foucault means *Corner of a Café Concert* c.1878-80. This canvas was cut in half by Manet during its execution and the left-hand portion is now in the Oskar Reinhart Collection in Winterthur, Switzerland.

and the same horizontals that we have found before: these verticals and these horizontals which define a certain plan in the picture, in a sense the plan of the canvas, and so you have two figures as we had a moment ago in *The Waitress*, two figures who summon us, head-to-tail, one looking in our direction, the other looking in the same direction as us. One turns her face towards us, the other on the contrary turns her back to us. What the woman is watching – and you see that she watches it with a great sort of intensity – is a spectacle that we cannot see since it is in front of the canvas; and as for what the little girl is looking at, well, we cannot see it since Manet has deployed here the smoke of a train which is just passing, in such a way that we, we have nothing to see. And to have seen what they see, we would have had either to get over the shoulder of the little girl or to have walked around the picture in order to see over the woman's shoulder.

You see how Manet plays with this material property of the canvas which means that it is a plane, a plane which has a *recto* and a *verso*; and, up until now, no other painter amused himself by using the *recto* and the *verso*. Here, he uses it not only in the way that he paints the front and back of the canvas, but in a sense by forcing the viewer to have the desire to turn the canvas around, to change position in order finally to see what one senses must be seen, but all the same is not given in the picture. And it is this game of invisibility assured by the surface of the canvas which Manet sets in play inside the picture in a manner that, as you see, one could say is all the same

vicious, malicious and cruel, since it is the first time that painting has presented itself as something invisible that we watch. The gazes are there to indicate to us that there is something to see, something that is by definition, and by the very nature of the canvas, necessarily invisible.