

Edouard Manet: Reasons for Holding a Private Exhibition

From Theodore Duret, Manet, translated by J. E. Crawford Fitch, Crown Publishers, New York, 1937, pp. 46-48. The note of explanation for the exhibition may have been written by Zacharie Astruc.

From 1861 onwards, M. Manet has exhibited or tried to exhibit.

This year he has decided to put the whole of his works directly before the public.

When first he exhibited in the Salon, M. Manet obtained an honourable mention. But afterwards, the repeated rejection of his work by the jury convinced him that, if the first phase of an artist's career is inevitably a kind of warfare, it is at least necessary to fight on equal terms--that is to say, to be able to secure publicity for what he has produced.

Without that, the painter too easily suffers an isolation from which egress is difficult. He is compelled to stack his canvases, or roll them up in a garret.

It is said that official encouragement, recognition, and rewards are, for a certain section of the public, a guarantee of talent; they are informed what to admire and what to avoid, according as the works are accepted or rejected. But, at the same time, the artist is assured that it is the spontaneous impression which his works create upon this same public that is responsible for the hostility of the various juries.

Under these circumstances, the artist has been advised to wait.

To wait for what? Until there are no more juries.

The artist does not say today, "Come and see faultless works," but, "Come and see sincere works."

The effect of sincerity is to give to works a character that makes them resemble a protest, when the only concern of the painter has been to render his impression.

M. Manet has never wished to protest. On the contrary, the protest, quite unexpected on his part, has been directed against himself, because there exists a traditional teaching as to form, methods, modes of painting, and because those who have been brought up in this tradition refuse to admit any other. It renders them childishly intolerant. Any work not done according to their formulas they consider worthless; it provokes not only their criticism, but their active hostility.

The matter of vital concern, the *sine qua non*, for the artist, is to exhibit; for it happens, after some looking at a thing, that one becomes familiar with what was surprising, or, if you will, shocking. Little by little it becomes understood and accepted.

Time itself is always imperceptibly at work upon a picture, refining and softening its original harshness.

By exhibiting, an artist finds friends and supporters who encourage him in his struggle.

M. Manet has always recognised talent where he has met with it, and he has had no pretensions either to overthrow an established mode of painting or to create a new one. He has simply tried to be himself and not another.

Further, M. Manet has received valued encouragement, and recognises that the opinion of men of real ability is daily becoming more favourable to him.

The public has been schooled into hostility towards him, and it only remains for the artist to gain its good will.

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