Nadar also had his studio (see pages 350–52 and fig. 339). His repertory of subjects to be photographed was wide, ranging from architecture to portraiture, but he defined himself best by focusing his camera on nature, both woods and sea, with results that often parallel Courbet's own landscape and marine paintings. Like many painters, Le Gray was partial to the forest of Fontainebleau, which by the mid-1850s had taken on the status of what in the United States would come to be called a National Park, a protected, unspoiled area where visitors from the modern world, often following recommended trails, could escape into the cleansing purity and picturesque disorder of primeval nature. In a photograph of 1856 (**fig. 270**), Le Gray finds a perfect spot, harder to come by near Paris than in the landscape of the Jura mountains where, at the same time, Courbet had begun to explore similar retreats hidden inside the density of the nearby forests. Although Le Gray believed that the art of photography should be essentially different from the art of painting, his depiction of the Fontainebleau forest seems almost the work of a painter who has learned the skills of layered spatial mysteries by manipulating contrasts of intensely dark shadow and engulfing light, of objects perceived in crystalline detail and similar objects blurred into a hazy distance. In black-and-white reproduction, in fact, Courbet's landscape paintings might almost be mistaken for the hand-made counterparts of Le Gray's photographs, yet another indication of the way in which painters and photographers so often shared the visual languages of their time.

The 1860s: Manet and Painting in Paris

It was an artist of a younger generation, Édouard Manet (1832–83), who, among his countless other roles, would wipe out the vestiges of Romantic mystery, timelessness, and contemplation that still clung to works by even so avowed a Realist as Courbet. And it was Manet, too, who played most completely the role of a public man and artist determined to record in a seemingly detached, uninvolved way the onslaught of new urban and suburban experiences that greeted any Parisian who was young, alert, and observant during the heyday of the Second Empire. The timing could not have been better, for the eighteen-year-old Manet, the son of well-to-do parents in governmental positions, had entered the studio of Couture in 1850, the year before Louis Napoleon's coup d'état; and the maturation of his art and life thereby coincided closely with the changes that followed the new regime. But, if Manet's art may be interpreted as a marvelously accurate mirror of the world around him—the boulevards, the parks, the newspaper headlines, the cafés, the racetracks, the fashionable ladies and gentlemen, the well-to-do prostitutes—it also poses problems of interpretation that have intrigued one generation after another, with results that offer a welter of contradictions. For some, Manet was the purest painter who ever lived, totally uninterested in his subjects except as neutral excuses for a light-dark contrast or a patch of lilac or lemon-yellow. For others, Manet constructed symbolic cryptograms, in which everything, from an orchid or a crane to a captive balloon, could be deciphered in a private but intelligible way. For some, Manet was the first genuinely modern painter, who liberated art from its mimetic chores and asserted the primacy of flattened pattern and color. For others, Manet was essentially the last great "old master," rooted in a multitude of art-historical references. For some, Manet was a technically defective painter, incapable of compositional and spatial coherence. For others, it was exactly these "defects" that made up his intentional contribution to drastic redirections of pictorial structure. As is often the case with a genius of Manet's stature, almost all of these contradictory points can be plausibly argued, the only certainty being that future generations will put forward quite different opinions.

What, to begin with, can be made of the *Concert in the Tuileries* (**fig. 271**), completed in 1862? As a painting representing a crowd of city people enjoying the leisure of what seems the cheeriest of Sunday afternoons, it belongs squarely to a type already established in such works as Hummel's painting of Berliners strolling in a pleasure garden (see fig. 162) or Frith's of Londoners enjoying an outing at the races (see fig. 250). But unlike these earlier works, Manet's appears uncalculated to the point of accident. Garden chairs and children in the foreground turn this way and that; the heads of elegant top-hatted gentlemen peer in and out at the edges; standing crowds extend backward, sideward, forward, every which way. For the instant, each figure is an individual, willfully ignoring, perhaps even parodying, the compositional rules that dominated the multi-figured *Romans of the Decadence* by Manet's master Couture (see fig. 158) or that could even be sensed in the stable congregations of humanity Courbet assembled in *A Burial at Ornans* (see fig. 228) or *The Painter's Studio* (see fig. 234). Manet's touch is here rapid and fluid, a far cry from the density of Courbet's almost weighty paint surfaces and at opposite extremes from the meticulous descriptive surfaces of Frith. We feel, instead, a perfect correspondence between a scene that captures a moment of agreeable confusion and a technique that swiftly slurs over details, reducing, say, the foreground parasol to an almost paper-flat scalloped pattern of gray and beige, or fusing, at the right, the elaborate bonnets, ribbons, and shawls of Second Empire clothing to a confetti-like sprinkle of sharp-hued pigments. Initially illegible, many such passages suddenly reveal more information than one expected—yet another parasol, or bobbing top hat, or restless child, or, more surprisingly, even a patch of light blue sky that aerates the verdant density of the trees,

Fig. 271 **Édouard Manet**, *Concert in the Tuileries*, 1860–62. Oil on canvas, 30 × 46½". National Gallery, London.

which refuse to line up in any kind of regimented order. In this flickering sea of light and shadow, inky blacks and starchy whites supply the equivalent of a candid snapshot, which misses not only the main event (the concert that is being overheard) but even the main characters, should there be any.

But here, Manet displayed his usual elusive wit; for the painting, in addition to mirroring the elegant communal pleasures of Paris (which were often illustrated in popular magazines and newspapers and usually in journalistic styles as abbreviated and sketchy as Manet's), also provides, here and there among the anonymous crowds, a portrait gallery of Manet's friends and family, an updated, infinitely more breezy, outdoor equivalent of the personal universe Courbet presented so pretentiously in his *Painter's Studio*. The overall tone, in fact, is not that of the rugged, breast-beating radical from the country, but of a sophisticated city dweller, a gentleman who conforms closely to that nineteenth-century concept of the dandy which was written about and imitated on both sides of the Channel: an aloof observer, of impeccable dress and refinement, who watches from a poised distance the spectacle around him and who finds it vulgar to display either emotional or physical exertion. The cast of characters in Manet's *Concert* includes a roster of Second Empire celebrities—among them composer Jacques Offenbach (whose operatic spoofs of classical legends bear analogy with Manet's own pictorial parodies), Gautier (who had early written about Manet's talents and his affinities with Spanish art), Baudelaire (who had also figured in Courbet's entourage), Baron Taylor (who had helped select Louis-Philippe's Musée Espagnol—see page 237)—and it also includes, at the extreme left, the artist himself, a dapper, bearded, frock-coated gentleman who is both part of and separate from the crowd and who holds in his gloved hand what is perhaps a walking stick but is tilted at an angle that suggests the brush of an artist who, as if before an easel, records what he sees of this chic Parisian society. Here, occasionally recognizable portraits are jostled by the anonymous faces and backs of the ambient crowds, a modern social phenomenon ever more apparent in the growing throngs of people who moved about the streets and parks of the capitals of Europe.

Already in 1845, Baudelaire, in his account of the Salon, had begun to recognize the need for artists who could seize what he found to be the epic, heroic qualities of modern life, of the dignity and beauty of contemporary clothing, especially the black hats, coats, and boots worn by gentlemen. In 1859, he wrote *The Painter of Modern Life*, in which he discussed earlier Realists like Daumier and Gavarni (see figs. 181–83) as approaching such goals, but not realizing them as fully as did Constantin Guys (1805–92). A kind of artist-journalist who had even covered the Crimean War for the *Illustrated London News*, Guys was best known for his

Fig. 272 **Constantin Guys**, *Two Ladies in a Calèche*, c. 1857–59. Pencil and watercolor on paper, 7½ × 12⅓". Louvre, Paris.

rapidly sketched drawings and watercolors of the elegant promenades of well-to-do Parisians and their horse-drawn carriages along the new boulevards and parks of Second Empire Paris (fig. 272). For Baudelaire, these vignettes of fashionable modern city life, which were totally unrelated to the official art world of the Salon (Guys was even self-taught), escalated in importance to fulfill his abstract ideal of a painter who at last fully reflected contemporary society; but by the time Baudelaire's essay was published, in 1863, Manet's *Concert in the Tuileries* could well have prophesied, even realized, the art Baudelaire had dreamed of. Far from being the dashing work of a successful illustrator, the *Concert*, for all its ostensible directness of observation, is rich with art-historical references, not only to the austere tonalities of black, gray, and white and the virtuoso brushwork which were so conspicuous in the paintings of Velázquez and other Spanish masters who were inspiring many younger French artists, but to those magically loose-jointed and hedonistic scenes of communal leisure in Arcadian parks painted by Watteau and other French Rococo masters whose stars had been rising through the 1850s and 1860s.

Such allusions to the art of the museums became far more explicit in Manet's most notorious painting, the *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* (translatable as *The Picnic*; fig. 273). Along with two of his other paintings, the *Déjeuner* was rejected by the jury for the Salon of 1863, which had been particularly restrictive that year, refusing more than half of the five thousand submissions. As discontent welled among the twenty-eight hundred artists excluded, the government and art establishment appeased them by offering an exhibition space in the Palais des Champs-Élysées where the public could examine their work. Napoleon III himself, having seen samples of the rejects, could find little difference between them and those selected for the official Salon, and the temporary exhibition space seemed a happy compromise. This so-called Salon des Refusés, however, immediately took on the stature of a counter-establishment manifestation, where artists at war with authority could be seen and where the public could go either to jeer or to enlarge their ideas of what a work of art could be. The counter-Salon opened on May 15, two weeks after the opening of the official Salon, and immediately attracted hordes of Parisians, who numbered as many as four thousand on a Sunday, when admission was free.

The focus of artistic innovation and public outrage was Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, which the artist had originally titled *Le Bain (The Bath)*. As in the *Concert in the Tuileries*, it was contemporary experience that challenged him, in this case the sight of bathers in the Seine near the suburban village of Argenteuil. But again, he would rephrase this modern scene in the language of the old masters, at once competing with them as well as underlining the vast difference beetween life in Paris in the 1860s and life in, say, sixteenth-century Italy. The subject of country leisure, with picnicking, wading, and swimming, was already deeply rooted in Western art and letters, and seemed especially topical at a time when escape from city life—to the seashore or the woods—became mandatory for those who could afford it. Both in popular illustration and high art, such images abounded. A picnic scene by Auguste-Barthélémy Glaize (1807–93), painted c. 1850 (fig. 274), may exemplify an earlier vision of the nineteenth-century weekender's Garden of Eden, a graceful and prettified view, in modern costume, of decorous courtship rituals in an updated version of the Rococo *fête champêtre*, a party in a country setting. Even Courbet in his *Young Ladies of the*

Banks of the Seine (see fig. 235) offered his own low-class variation upon this essentially urban theme, as practiced by vulgar Parisian prostitutes. But Manet's painting is of another order, disconcerting in the immediacy of its glaring confrontation.

Refusing to look anywhere but at the spectator, the prominent nude (who was Manet's model Victorine Meurent) immediately establishes an insolently unblinking eye contact that forces the viewer to continue exploring the scene for some explanation. Her companions are two completely dressed gentlemen (identifiable as one of Manet's brothers, probably Gustave, his hand extended in a rhetorical gesture of discourse, and as his brother-in-law-to-be, Ferdinand Leenhoff, who seems quite distracted from the others) and a woman in a shift, who wades in the background. The shock of total female nakedness (her clothing has been tossed in a heap with the picnic still life) side by side with proper male attire was an instant assault on Second Empire propriety, baldly displaying licentious behavior in the country that would be unthinkable, say, in the city confines of the *Concert in the Tuileries*.

But Manet had several cards up his sleeve. Like every other art student and Louvre visitor, he was aware of (and had actually copied) Giorgione's *Concert Champêtre*, a pastoral concert which depicts a similar country outing of clad men and unclad women but which, because of its venerability, caused no raised eyebrows. Why couldn't this Venetian scene be translated into the language of modern Paris? Moreover, the composition itself was derived from a most respectable model, a grouping of river gods in an engraving after Raphael's *Judgment of Paris*. Manet's references to such Renaissance authority gave the *Déjeuner* a demonstrably learned pedigree; but they also gave the effect of an irreverent take-off, like Offenbach's comic operas based upon such noble classical themes as Orpheus (1858) or Helen of Troy (1864). The spirit is that of a Beaux-Arts ball, with students acting out famous paintings in modern dress, thereby giving a sense of both the humor and the irretrievability of

Fig. 273 **Édouard Manet**, *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 6′ 9″ × 8′ 10″. Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 274 **Auguste-Barthélémy Glaize**, *The Picnic*, c. 1850. Oil on canvas, 18 × 45½". Musée Fabre, Montpellier.

the distance that lay between the modern world and the one enshrined in the museums and the academies.

Manet's inspired impudence would have been less apparent had his style not been equally daring. As in the *Concert in the Tuileries*, he imposed on the scene his aesthetic preference for intense contrasts of light and dark, a contrast wittily telescoped in the pairing of Victorine's unshod and his brother's shod foot and one that produces silhouetted patterns that rupture conventional illusions of fully modeled forms in receding spaces. The profiled expanse of Victorine's flesh seems summarily modeled, lacking middle tones that would round it, and asserting a sharpened edge. And as a hostile critic, Castagnary, put it: "No detail is in its final, precise, and rigorous form. . . . I see fingers without bones and heads without skulls. I see sideburns painted like two strips of black cloth glued on the cheeks." Moreover, the space behind the foreground figures appears to move toward us, so that the diminutive wading figure at the top of the stable compositional triangle seems almost to be reaching down to touch an outstretched hand in the foreground. In fact, the more we look at this painting, the more the implied coherence of its sources falls apart. For all the unity of the grouping, each figure is a separate entity, engrossed in his or her own gaze, thought, or activity, so that no narrative connections can explain this grand ensemble. And this sense of breakdown, as if the very structure of the old masters, of intelligible sequences of events had crumbled before our eyes, pertains as well to

the cornucopian still life of a fruit-laden picnic basket and discarded clothing, which almost seems to belong to a separate painting, its cool color and profusion of tumbled objects constantly distracting us from the human players. Slowly, the *Déjeuner* seems to disintegrate into a kind of collage of disparate parts—still life, a female nude, male figures in modern city dress, a bathing figure, landscape—only momentarily held together by the borrowed semblance of Renaissance harmonies, and finally breaking every traditional hierarchy.

With the collapse of inherited order, the sympathetic viewer inevitably wishes to find here a new kind of order, which, for many later generations, was of a purely aesthetic kind, that is, the savoring of Manet's painted surfaces, with their velvety blacks set against the chill of pale flesh or their muted variations on green provided by a shaded landscape. In this, Manet's position parallels that of the novelist Gustave Flaubert. Both might be put in the Realist category for their insistence on telling the disjointed, graceless, amoral facts of modern life; but both are preoccupied with viewing such data through the highly refined screen of personal style, which imposes the dandy-like barrier of art and polished elegance upon dull, commonplace truths. As Flaubert has been considered the writer's writer, in his exquisite craft, Manet has equally been considered the painter's painter. In this respect, it is revealing that both Émile Zola, whose novels insisted on journalistic reportage of modern life in Paris, and Stéphane Mallarmé, whose ivory-tower poetry extracted from words the most evocative, exquisite nuances, were, for almost contrary reasons, passionate admirers and friends of Manet.

Still, a purely aestheticized approach to Manet has been found more and more inadequate, and recent scholarship has sought out internal systems of symbolic interpretation that, in the case of the *Déjeuner*, have even seized upon the bullfinch, fluttering over the group like the Holy Ghost, as conveying its traditional meaning of lewdness, or upon the frog, concealed in the lower left-hand corner, as an allusion to one in a famous painting of a young bull by Paulus Potter, a paragon of Dutch seventeenth-century realism. Moreover, with sometimes strained agility, Manet scholars have attempted to disclose more complex allegorical meanings in the painting, such as its referring to a new Judgment of Paris, Paris being the modern city, and the victor being Victorine. Yet Manet always remained close-mouthed about such cryptic readings, leaving it to future spectators to construct their own sense from the jigsaw-puzzle pieces of fact that he assembled in such enigmatic juxtapositions.

This curious sense of decomposition, of the possibility of a painting having no traditional structure of form or subject, was most explicitly demonstrated in a work accepted for the Salon of 1864, the *Incident in the Bullring*, which now exists only in two fragments (figs. 275 and 276) but can be reconstructed with the aid of verbal descriptions and a contemporary caricature by Cham (fig. 277). The original painting depicted the drama of death in the afternoon, an enraged bull with his bullfighter victim stretched out dead in the foreground, sword and cape still in hand. As such, it conformed to the mid-century French taste for almost everything Spanish: the troupes of Spanish dancers whom both Courbet and Manet painted; Gautier's account of Spanish tourism (1843); or the enthusiasm for those painters from Velázquez to Goya who seemed to prophesy the goals of Realism; and not least, the new Empress from Spain, Eugénie de Montijo, who in 1853 had urged the introduction of bullfighting in France. Dehodencq's *Bullfight in Spain* (see fig. 231), from the Salon of 1850–51, may already move in Manet's direction, insofar as the narrative components are diffuse and the space of the makeshift arena oddly contracted; but Manet leaps ahead to something that must originally have been as baffling in its whole as it still is in its two surviving parts. As one critic described it, "On waking up, a bullfighter sees a bull some six miles away; undisturbed, he turns over and heroically falls asleep once more." The caricature makes clearer this odd disjunction of space and narrative drama, with the bull seemingly located in another spatial system (like the cows in the lampoon of Courbet's *Young Ladies of the Village*; see fig. 229) and the dead bullfighter ironically aloof from the danger. Within months after its exhibition, Manet cut the painting into two fragments (something he had done before, and would do later with other paintings), both of which seem to make as much (or as little) narrative and pictorial sense as the whole. The very fact that he could do this suggests his indifference to, and reversal of, the conventional procedures of picture-making, which lead from the parts to the whole and not the other way around. *The Dead Toreador* now exists as an engimatically pathos-less corpse, whose fresh bloodstains seem to add more aesthetic delight (a touch of red against the somber blacks) than gory drama. His foreshortened posture, possibly derived in part from the just-assassinated Caesar in one of Gérôme's versions of this classical drama (see fig. 253), as well as from a painting then attributed to Velázquez, gives him the casualness of any inanimate object lying on the floor; and the curious spacelessness of the ground plane creates a kind of mid-air suspension where detached objects simply exist as floating facts without a context. In the preserved upper fragment (see fig. 275), the other bullfighters seem no less detached from the drama than the victim, their costumes, like the heads of the crowd peering over the wall, providing a decorative splatter of paint that serves as a foil to the huge black silhouette of the charging bull. For Manet, even the spectacle of a fatal goring, now thought to document a fatal drama that actually took place in a bullfight held in Paris, could be broken down into parts of an aesthetic continuum in which the trivial and the momentous are of equal importance and in which the

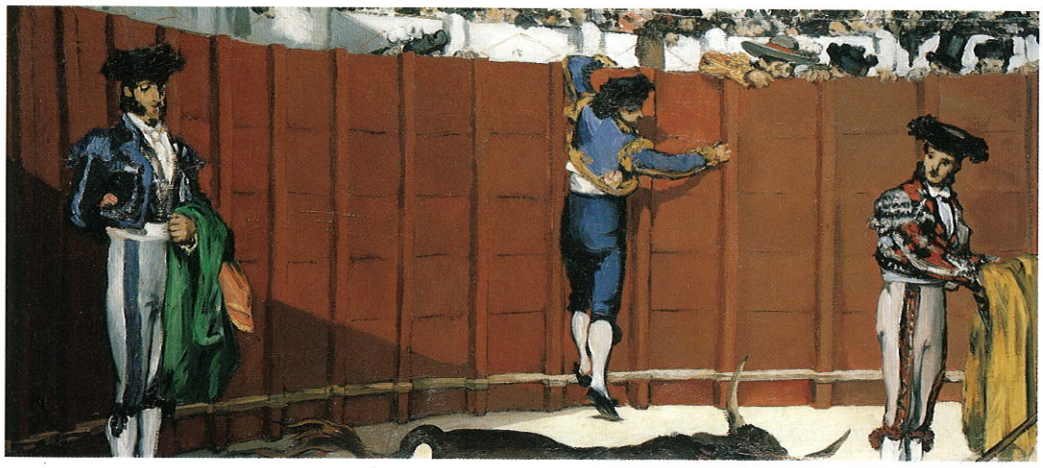

Fig. 275 **Édouard Manet**, *The Bullfight*, 1864. Oil on canvas, 18⅞ × 42⅞″. The Frick Collection, New York.

Fig. 276 **Édouard Manet**, *The Dead Toreador*, 1864. Oil on canvas, 28⅞ × 60⅜″. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 277 **Cham**, *Incident in the Bullring* (caricature from *Le Charivari*, May 22, 1864). Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

picture's rectangular field is the equivalent of a camera's viewfinder picking its image at random.

Yet the effect of the accidental, especially for an artist deeply rooted in old-master painting, involved as many careful decisions and calculated rejections of order as the effect of the planned. (Flaubert himself had complained how endlessly difficult it was to capture in his novels the character of ordinary, meaningless conversation.) Manet constantly balanced, especially in the 1860s, the inherited order of the past with experiments in the disorder of modern life. Thus, for many of his early masterpieces, like the *Déjeuner*, he alluded to tradition by way of offering a measurement of the distance between a familiar sense of pictorial structure and what artists and writers began to sense as something exciting and drastically new. *Olympia*, painted in 1863, but not exhibited until the Salon of 1865, is one of these works (fig. 278), even bolder than the *Déjeuner* in its parody of a Renaissance masterpiece and in its flagrant display of modern sexual mores. Based closely on Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, which Manet had copied in Florence in 1853,

it repla[illegible] goddess of love and beauty with a high-class Parisian prostitute of a cast far more worldly and elegant than Courbet's gross young women on the banks of the Seine (see fig. 235). Moreover, the model is again recognizable as Victorine from the *Déjeuner*. Totally unabashed by her nakedness, indeed, proud of it, she once more stares down the spectator, as if it were he who offered the flowers held by the black servant (a model named Laure) but grandly ignored by Olympia herself. To underline the easy identification of her profession, her name, Olympia, had instant associations for a Parisian audience, being a common name for prostitutes of the period, of whom the most famous was Marguerite's rival in *La Dame aux Camélias* (1848–52), a popular novel and play by Dumas *fils*. And to add to this onslaught of the facts of modern sexual life, Manet replaced the lapdog in Titian's *Venus* with, at Olympia's feet, a velvety, foreshortened blot of a black cat, whose back is arched, whose tail is raised, and whose presence evokes not only a hissing animal in heat, but a stream of erotic associations especially close to the cat imagery in Baudelaire's poetry.

As in the *Déjeuner*, it was not only the subject—which here is not far from moderately pornographic photographs of the period—but the style which alarmed the Salon-goers. Even Courbet, who claimed not to flinch at reality, found the pressing closeness of *Olympia* disquieting, commenting that it was flat and unmodeled, that "it looks like a Queen of Spades getting out of the bath." Although meant negatively, this nevertheless helps us to see how daring Manet's challenges to conventional modeling and perspective were in 1865. The lighting is a head-on glare, which minimizes the illusion of roundness and maximizes a brash, almost heraldic pattern of lights and darks which at first could seem as crude as Courbet's playing card. Yet, on inspection, these extremes reveal a bravura subtlety worthy of the masterpieces of Velázquez so admired by Manet. In each polarity, black and white, there are exquisite refinements—within the dark values, the servant's head and the black cat against the deep green curtain; within the light values, the distinctions made among the sheets, pillows, skin, shawl, servant's dress, and wrapping paper. And if, for 1865, everything seems jammed flat into the foreground, like the figures, chairs, toys, and parasol that bluntly delimit the bottom of the *Concert in the Tuileries*, the screenlike recession of layered planes, from the bed linen hanging over a glimpse of upholstery to a view behind a parted curtain, is

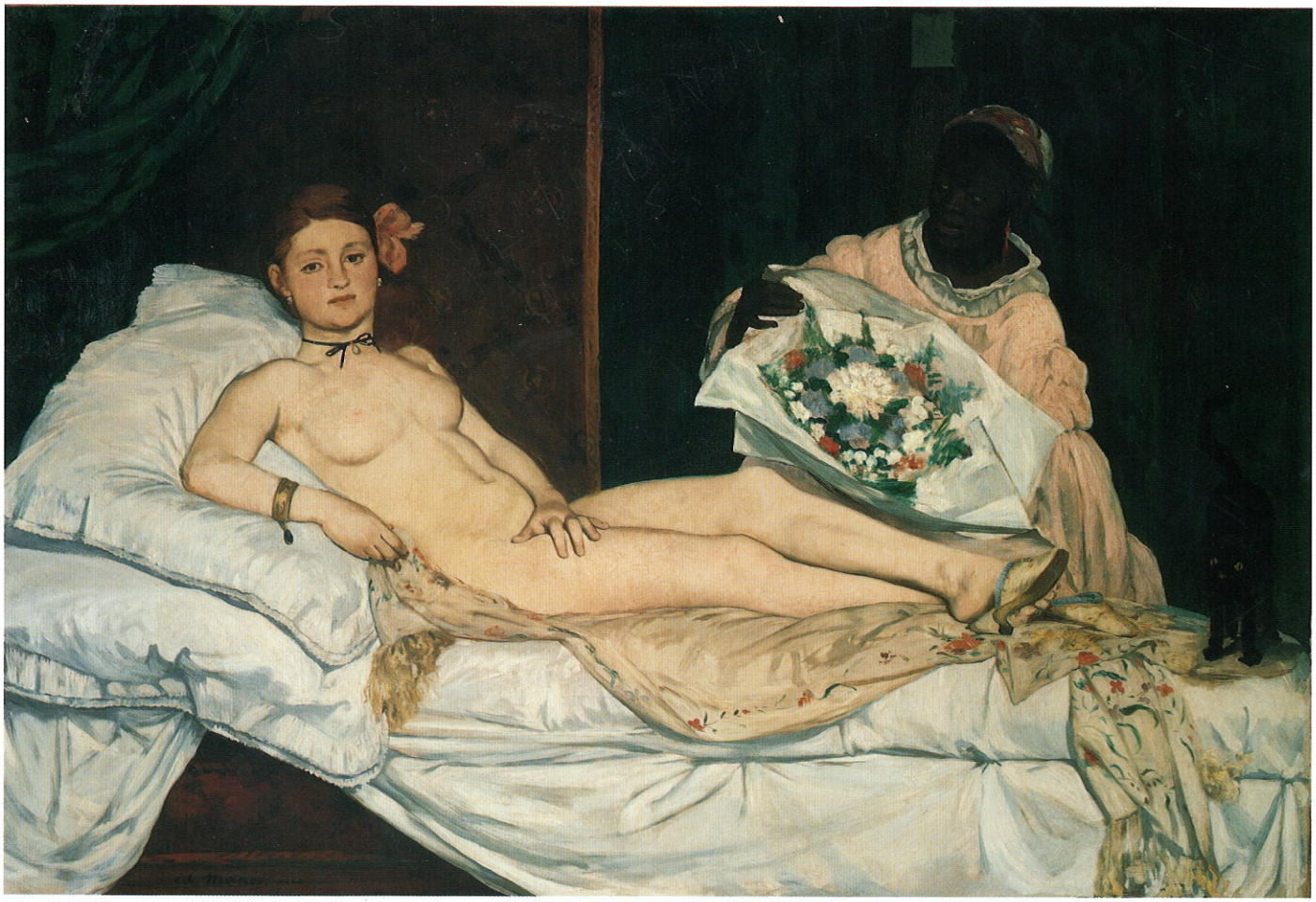

Fig. 278 **Édouard Manet**, *Olympia*, 1863 (Salon of 1865). Oil on canvas, 51 × 74¾". Louvre, Paris.

of an amazing spatial complexity that moves from the overt to the concealed.

It is conventional, and still informative, to contrast *Olympia*, scoffed at by the Salon audiences as ugly and incompetent, with the kind of Second Empire nude which won official favor, such as *The Birth of Venus* (fig. 279) by Alexandre Cabanel (1823–89), one of three paintings of Venus at the 1863 Salon and one which was singled out for purchase by Napoleon III himself. Olympia's ribbon necklace, gold bracelet, and informal footwear (one mule on, the other off) are as unthinkable in this pearly seashore idyll as would be Cabanel's airborne cupids floating over this modern goddess of commercial love and announcing her birth by blowing conch shells. Yet as Manet's friend and champion Zola was to put it in 1866, Olympia would have been presentable had Manet borrowed Cabanel's rice-powder puff for her cheeks and breasts. As for double standards of erotic propriety, Cabanel's Venus, seemingly born depilated and powdered, twists herself backward in a pose of professionally voluptuous abandon dependent upon Ingres's odalisques (see fig. 130), a pose that simply turns Manet's aggressive modern female into a passive receptacle of the male spectator's sexual wishes. Even in terms of upsetting the balance of male–female power, Manet's prostitute, so coolly and toughly holding her own, posed a threat to the status quo.

Cabanel's efforts to perpetuate inherited beliefs, not only in the timeless beauty of classical legend but in the function of the painted female nude as a fantasy of easy sexual conquest, pertain as well to his style. As described by Castagnary, who maligned the *Déjeuner* in the same year: "From the depths of the canvas, the procession comes toward us." This measured movement from distant illusion to the foreground produces exactly the opposite effect of Manet's paintings, in which near and far cling so stubbornly to the surface that everything becomes an insistent confrontation. Cabanel's circuitously modeled anatomy conveys the illusion of a totally carved and palpable marble, just turned into pink Rococo flesh, whereas Manet's prostitute seems, like many of Ingres's nudes, modeled as a cameo, all projected surface, with the invisible other side simply annihilated in the imagination. Even Manet's edges contribute to this flattening crispness, for Olympia's contours, unlike Venus's, are occasionally emphasized with a rapid dark outline that underlines the two-dimensional effect. The remote and the ideal have become harshly immediate facts of modern life; and venerable systems of picture-making yield to the artist's right to construct private aesthetic worlds that, when necessary, will jettison all conventions of perspective, of chiaroscuro modeling, of focused narrative or composition.

Manet's polarized position between an art that was at once reportorial, bringing contemporary truths from outside the Salon into its sacred precinct, and aesthetic, seeking out new kinds of visual coherence that would satisfy his unique sensibility, was apparent not only in his records of

Fig. 279 **Alexandre Cabanel**, *The Birth of Venus*, Salon of 1863. Oil on canvas, 52 × 90″. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Fig. 280 **Édouard Manet**, *The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian*, 1868. Oil on canvas, 8′ 3″ × 10′. Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim.

modern morality but even in his major contributions to the imagery of dramatic military and political events of the day. These included an American Civil War episode of naval combat between a Union and a Confederate ship off the coast of Cherbourg in 1864 as well as one of the great mid-century affronts to Western standards of diplomacy and morality, the execution in 1867 of the Austrian Archduke Maximilian, the Hapsburg who had been transported and placed on the throne of Mexico in 1864 (**fig. 280**). After the departure of Napoleon III's troops, which had first supported his puppet government, Maximilian was left to face the welling native opposition led by Juárez, which brought him to trial and death at Querétaro. This shooting of a European monarch on remote, godforsaken soil was considered an act of chilling barbarism and one which Napoleon III and his court officially mourned, despite the considerable responsibility of the French for the tragedy.

Manet found here the stuff of modern history and battle painting, in the tradition not only of Napoleonic, but even of Anglo-American reportage. He must have seen Copley's *Death of Major Peirson* (see fig. 6) when it was shown by his Paris dealer, Martinet, in 1863, and, far more timely, paintings that documented the American Civil War by the Bostonian Winslow Homer (1836–1910), who was trained as a journalistic illustrator and sent to the front in this capacity by *Harper's Weekly*. Visiting Paris in 1866, Homer submitted two Civil War paintings to the Exposition Universelle of 1867. One of these, *Prisoners from the Front* (**fig. 281**), which had first been shown with great success at New York's National Academy of Design in 1866, almost matches Manet's coolly documentary

Fig. 281 **Winslow Homer**, *Prisoners from the Front*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 24 × 38″. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

detachment, recording here not the rhetorical splendor or tragedy of battle, but rather the commonplace confrontation by an almost dandy-like Union officer with a group of Confederate prisoners, one of whom, the officer, retains his dapper bearing even in defeat, while the others present a sorry cross-section of bedraggled enlisted men, from young to very old, standing before two surrendered rifles. Homer's highly descriptive style may tell us more per square inch than Manet's, but his stance of a quiet observer before even the facts of war and his candidly loose-jointed composition of figures silhouetted against a high ground plane parallel what Manet was soon to do with his highly charged subject.

As before, Manet chose a famous painting to be his point of departure for translating the expired values of the past into the amoral language of the present, in this case Goya's *The Third of May 1808* (see fig. 34), a comparison which immediately underlines what appears to be Manet's almost chillingly dandified detachment in the face of an event still more gruesome and infinitely more consequential than the death of a bullfighter. Goya's sense of outrage, of a moral structure turned inside out, of individual despair versus collective brutality, of black and white as conveyors of good and evil, life and death have all been obliterated here in favor of what seems the most inappropriate mix of shattering subject matter and aesthetic refinement. The streaks of gunpowder smoke and the uniforms of the firing squad (which mixed both French and Mexican elements, and for which Parisian soldiers posed) are marvels of those black and white silhouettes Manet explored; and the cursorily described coarse brick wall of the enclosure provides a flattened screen against which these opaque patterns, both chic and funereal, can best be savored. Most startling as a symptom of this ostensible indifference to manslaughter is the casual posture of the officer at the right who reloads his gun, an inclusion which, for contemporaries, had especially shocking connotations since it was well known that Maximilian was not killed immediately, but had to be given, as a final degradation, the *coup de grâce* close up as he lay squirming on the ground. Again, conventional perspective has collapsed: the trio of victims appears both too close to and too far from the line of fire, hovering instead in a spatial limbo between the wall and the steeply tilted ground plane.

Was Manet totally unaffected by this grim official murder, painting it as he would the fashionable assembly of black-costumed gentlemen in the Tuileries, or was he perhaps proposing for the first time that the hierarchy of moral values associated with life and death had totally crumbled? No longer a miniature vignette like Meissonier's

view of [illegible] (see fig. 220), *The Execution of Maximilian* is a grand-scale statement of a willfully impersonal, quasi-documentary approach even to such chilling subject matter, the equivalent of photographic reportage. Moral readings, responses of horror are left to the beholder, with Manet remaining as poker-faced as the contemporary newscaster who recounts world disasters on a television screen. The inscribed date of the event in the lower left-hand corner, June 19, 1867, emphasizes this goal, as it does in the title of Goya's painting, and contributes to the function of the painting as an accurate image of what really happened. In fact, *The Execution*, which was politically inflammatory in France as a reminder of Napoleon III's disastrous foreign policy, was censored from public view, and seen in 1879–80 only in New York and Boston, where some critics found in it much of the drama and tragedy which later spectators have often found puzzlingly absent. Manet's seeming casualness about his subject may be borne out by the fact that he cut other versions he had made of the theme into fragments, as he had done with the *Incident in the Bullring*; but why, if he were so callous, would he have selected such a subject to begin with? The complex mechanisms of irony, of the contradictions between art and life, are prominent issues here, and seem to have fascinated Manet as they still do us. Could he even have been making subtle symbolic comments about this tragedy by offering allusions to other kinds of martyrdom: to the crucifixion of Christ (Maximilian's halo-like sombrero surrounded by the good and bad thieves in the guise of his generals Mejía and Miramón) or to the spectacle of the bullring suggested by the Goya-like crowd of low-class spectators, who, as in the *Incident in the Bullring*, peer over the barrier at the ritualized death below?

Although we may never know the definitive answers to the questions Manet's paintings continue to pose for us, we at least always sense the full-scale conviction behind his work, an integrity that he himself once articulated in words. In 1867, at the time of Paris's second Exposition Universelle, Manet, instead of showing at the Salon, followed Courbet's example of 1855 and arranged, at his own expense, a pavilion where he presented some fifty paintings. In the catalogue preface, possibly written with the help of Zola, Manet writes of himself with predictable detachment in the third person, and explains in a matter-of-fact way that the contemporary artist does not wish to protest, but that "it is sincerity that gives the work the character of a protest, whereas the painter only wanted to render his own impression." And he explains, too, that the most important thing for an artist is to exhibit, for "after looking at something for a while, one becomes familiar with what was once surprising or even shocking." With such comments, Manet quietly defined the predicament that was to face so many painters of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who experienced something new, felt compelled to depict it in an unfamiliar way that grate[illegible] conventions, and often discovered, years [illegible] that their art, initially unintelligible, would [illegible] into comprehensible traditions. At the Salon of [illegible] the ultra-conservative Cabanel would recognize [illegible]'s genius officially by awarding him the second-class medal.

For his innovations of the 1860s, Manet had the written support of Zola, who, in his role as an art critic for the weekly *L'Événement*, began in 1866 to herald Manet as the outsider who would revitalize French art, claiming the *Déjeuner* and *Olympia* as masterpieces, defending Manet's right to follow his own visual and intellectual instincts however much they defied academic rules, and challenging the concept of beauty as an absolute, universal standard. Zola's public support of Manet's art and his right to make it was soon reciprocated in the winter of 1867–68, when Manet painted Zola's portrait (**fig. 282**), which generally displeased or puzzled spectators at the Salon of 1868. As the painter Odilon Redon expressed it, the portrait "is more of a still life . . . than the expression of a human being," and it is true that attention to Zola's almost profiled head (a position which minimizes emotional probing) is largely deflected by the complex clutter of still-life objects that surround the writer at his desk. The tumble of bound books and the casual stacking of pamphlets (of which the foremost is Zola's on Manet, whose printed title wittily serves as the painter's signature) is especially conspicuous amid the rectilinear rigidity of a Japanese screen and a framed pinboard that encloses three overlapping works of art. The image of Zola, with his dapper clothing and cool composure, almost projects more of Manet's self-image as a dandy than of Zola's earthy and forceful personality; but the peacock feather just visible behind the pinboard and over Zola's head refers more specifically to the writer, evoking a crowning laurel that symbolically complements the quill pen of his writing tools. Typically for Manet, what may be seen as an accidental decorative accessory may also make sense as part of an allegorical program.

On this level, it is the seemingly casual inclusion of diverse works of art that begins to evoke a coherent personal avowal, a veritable inventory of sources that supported Manet's achievements. In the foreground, the black-and-white photograph of *Olympia* not only corresponds to his taste for composing with abrupt contrasts of colorless light and dark, but perhaps alludes as well to the importance for him of the ubiquitous new imagery purveyed by photography, whether of vulgar nudes, of press photos of the execution of Maximilian, or of the portraits of famous people taken by Manet's friend Nadar—all materials which helped to root his acutely personal sensibility in the public visual world around him. Less than half visible behind this photographic reproduction of his own painting is another kind of reproduction, Goya's etching after Velázquez's *Drinkers*, a pairing of Spanish masters, old and modern,

Fig. 282 **Édouard Manet**, *Portrait of Émile Zola*, Salon of 1868. Oil on canvas, 57 × 45″. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

that suggests Manet's awareness of his own pedigree in the Spanish tradition. Many lesser French painters of the 1860s were similarly attracted to Spanish art, as was Courbet in the 1850s; but, in general, their admiration was of a more overtly historicizing kind in both style and subject. Thus, at the Salon of 1867, Théodule Ribot (1823–91) exhibited *The Torture of Alonso Cano* (fig. 283), representing, in the popular nineteenth-century category of Vasari-like episodes from the lives of famous artists, the ordeal of this seventeenth-century painter, who, falsely accused of murdering his wife, was interrogated by torture, which he withstood. Its style, appropriately, also resurrects that of the period depicted, suggesting a reprise of the Christian martyrs of Ribera. But Manet's absorption of Spanish style was of a far subtler order, transporting the somber blacks, grays, and whites or the bravura brushwork of, say, Velázquez's court portraits into the modern realm of contemporary costume and faces.

Fig. 283 **Théodule Ribot**, *The Torture of Alonso Cano*, Salon of 1867. Oil on canvas, 59 × 82¼". Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen.

Fig. 284 **Alfred Stevens**, *The Visit*, Paris Exposition Universelle, 1867. Oil on canvas, 25⅜ × 18⁹⁄₁₆". Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

As for the Japanese components, the screen at the left and the print of a wrestler (by Kuniaki II) next to the Goya were again common enthusiasms of the period. Ever since 1853, when Commodore Matthew Perry first sailed into Tokyo Bay and demanded that ports be opened to foreign trade, Japanese painting, sculpture, decorative arts, and even architectural specimens quickly infiltrated the West. Japanese ambassadors themselves arrived at Marseilles in 1863, bound for that year's International Exhibition in London, which featured a Japanese courtyard where Westerners marveled at the beauty and craftsmanship of even the most ordinary household objects displayed. Japanese decor was an immediate success in fashionable circles, as may be seen in *The Visit* (fig. 284), a painting shown at the 1867 Exposition Universelle by the Paris-based Belgian Alfred Stevens (1823–1906). Mirroring the same elegant society frequented by Manet, whose friend he was, Stevens here depicts two chic Paris women, one of whom sits idly by her easel, an unseen painting in progress, as the other pays a call. An early admirer of Japanese arts and crafts, Stevens includes in this wealthy Second Empire interior a vase, screen, and fan of a kind common in Manet's work, yet such exotic artifacts in no way permeate Stevens's pictorial style, which belongs to Meissonier's mode of highly detailed miniaturist description (see fig. 220). In the Zola portrait, however, the