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# Manet: The Still Life Paintings



## Synopsis

The first major book to focus on a crucial aspect of Manet's work. Nearly one fifth of Manet's paintings are still lifes, a genre the artist himself considered 'the touchstone of painting'. He devoted considerable energy to still lifes, producing oils, watercolours, and prints that unite exuberant personal expression with a flawless mastery of light and detail.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The French artist Édouard Manet was delighted when a client who purchased his painting of a bunch of asparagus paid more than the asking price. So he sent a special thank-you--a tiny image of a single pale spear of the prized vegetable. These and other lushly painted still lifes of flowers, fruits, and other foodstuffs, isolated or in groups, form one of the most beguiling aspects of Manet's output from the 1860s through the early '80s. *Manet: The Still-Life Paintings*, the catalog for the exhibition at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, Maryland, through April 22, 2001, serves as a pleasant introduction to the intimate late work of the great 19th-century realist. With 106 color reproductions, including close-up details of brushwork, the modestly scaled volume makes for a satisfying browse. The most deliciously unexpected treats are the luminous watercolors of fruit, nuts, or flowers that Manet interwove with his personal correspondence. Earlier in Manet's career, still-life images played a supporting role in figure paintings. Author George Mauner, professor emeritus of art history at Pennsylvania State University, guides the reader to observe such details as the cherry falling in midair in *Young Man with Cherries*. This fascination with instantaneous effects would culminate 11 years later in the smoking rifles of the Mexican troops in *The Execution*

of Emperor Maximilian. Manet, of course, was well aware of the tradition of still life as an invocation of the senses and as a reminder of the fleeting nature of sensual pleasure (and life itself). Mauner explains how this art-historical knowledge offers clues to some of the artist's more enigmatic paintings. The quote-heavy, name-dropping style of fellow essayist Henri Loyrette seems less attuned to a general reader's interests. But the book's most grievous sin is one of omission: the failure to include even the briefest biographical outline of Manet's life and work. --Cathy Curtis

Close reading isn't just for poetry. In *Manet: The Still-Life Paintings*, George Mauner, distinguished professor emeritus of art history at Penn State, gives close and illuminating attention to some of the best-loved works in all of modern painting, reproduced here in 133 illustrations (106 in full color). Henri Loyrette, director of Paris's Musée d'Orsay, contributes an essay showing Manet's place within a long tradition of still-life painters. Subject-based sections such as "The First Flowers," "Fruits and Vegetables" and "Two Festive Tables" make a large body of work accessible and thematically coherent. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book is certainly among the best overviews of Manet's still-life paintings. If you enjoy direct, descriptive paintings with rich color, this book is likely to interest you. I especially liked seeing the "unfinished" basket of pears on page 107 (the kind of work usually left out of such books), which gave me a good idea of how Manet approached his still-lives of this period. By the way, overall, the reproductions are very good (of course, paintings are never as good in print as in real life). AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT MY ART BOOK REVIEWS: It might seem as though I rate most art books very favorably. The reason for this is that I usually visit my local library before buying a book. I'll look at all (in print and out of print) of the Rembrandt (for example) books and choose my favorite one to purchase. In the case of an artist's monograph, I try to choose one or two comprehensive books for each artist. These are generally large, well illustrated hardcovers with above average reproduction quality and informative text, often by one of the leading scholars on the artist. Thus, by the time I purchase a book, I have already found it to be among the best available on the subject. This is the best book of Manet's still-lives that I could find. My copy is a hardcover.

I do studies from this book and was taking it out of the library so often my fines were piling up. Finally bought it! One of the best available of Manet's work. Hope one day there is an update with even better reproductions.

I checked this book out from the library (and returned it multiple times) for at least half a year. It's an insightful look into a sometimes overlooked aspect of Manet's oeuvre and profound work. I'm a painter; I love owning this book.

Excellent product, very happy with this vendor. I would use again. Thank you.

Great book. Love it.

The essay by Henri Loyette in this book on the meaning of still-life paintings, sets the stage for an exquisite presentation of this collection of Manet plates. By giving us a deep exploration of the history and philosophy of still-life paintings, Loyette situates Manet's still-life paintings in the context of the overall still-life movement -- from Chardin and the Dutch Masters to the role it played in enabling the development of more abstract art. For one who admired but still kept my distance from still-life paintings, and only understood them from a distance and only "on the surface," Loyette's explanations make good sense and are invaluable to filling in the blanks in my artistic knowledge. I now feel I have a sounder intellectual basis for understanding still-life paintings generally, and for understanding Manet in particular. But this is not all, in general the explanations of Manet's paintings open up a new avenue for understanding the era of art in which he appeared. His was an important transition period to the new trends in abstract art. The plates are high quality classics that everyone who appreciates art have in their collection. Four stars.

I journeyed to the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore to see the exhibition. "MANET - The Still Life Paintings" which is on view until April 22, 2001. The show was previously at the Musee d'Orsay in Paris. It is a lovely, intimate show. The majority of these gorgeous still lifes of fruits, vegetables and flowers were painted in the last three years of Manet's life. Unfortunately, the catalogue does not begin to do these beautiful oil paintings and watercolors justice. The book's colorplates are of unsatisfactory quality and fail to capture the sumptuousness of these touching works of art. The book measures just shy of 9 inches by 9 inches, too small to get any partial enjoyment after seeing the exhibition. The text does not advance art scholarship. Not worth the price.

The beautifully reproduced paintings, with some detail shots, in this potent package remind us that Manet truly is the 'father of modernism.' The still lifes of fruit alone would make this book a must have for any art book lover. His peaches, lemons, strawberries and plums are so full of longing,

sadness, bliss and sheer beauty that they stop you in your tracks. I don't know how else to say it: Manet was an artist of cosmic proportions. The transcendent nature of the work juxtaposed against the audacious technique rightfully set Manet at the forefront of the western cannon.

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