

EDOUARD MANET

(1832-1883)

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Luncheon on the Grass ("Dejeuner sur l'Herbe," 1863) was one of a number of impressionist works that broke away from the classical view that art should obey, established conventions and seek to achieve timelessness. The painting was rejected by the salon that displayed paintings approved by the official French academy. The rejection was occasioned not so much by the female nudes in Manet's painting, a classical subject, as by their presence in a modern setting, accompanied by clothed, bourgeois men. The incongruity suggested that the women were not goddesses but models, or possibly prostitutes.



Luncheon on the grass

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Yet in *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, Manet was paying tribute to Europe's artistic heritage, borrowing his subject from [*The pastoral concert*](#) - a painting by Titian attributed at the time to Giorgione (Louvre). But the classical references were counterbalanced by Manet's boldness. The presence of a nude woman among clothed men is justified neither by mythological nor allegorical precedents. This, and the contemporary dress, rendered the strange and almost unreal scene obscene in the eyes of the public of the day.



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Manet displayed the painting instead at the Salon des Refuses, an alternative salon established by those who had been refused entry to the official one. Like his friend Courbet, Manet influenced modern painting not only by his use of **realistic subject matter** but also by his challenge to the three-dimensional perspectivalism established in Renaissance painting. Manet painted figures with a flatness derived partly from Japanese art and resembling (as Gustave Courbet commented) the flatness of the king or queen on a playing card.



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Luncheon on the Grass - testimony to Manet's refusal to conform to convention and his initiation of a new freedom from traditional subjects and modes of representation - can perhaps be considered as the departure point for Modern Art. The modernist reinvention of pictorial space had begun.



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The painting represents a luncheon in the forest. In the foreground of the painting we can see two men and a woman having lunch. The two men are dressed elegantly. The man on the right is Gustave, Manet's brother. The other man is the sculptor Ferdinand Leenhoff, Manet's future brother-in-law. The naked woman is Victorine Meurent, a French painter and model. She became famous because she was Édouard Manet's favourite model, but she also painted some paintings that were exposed in the Paris Salon. This naked woman is more visible than the rest and she is looking directly to the viewer.



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The two men are talking and they aren't paying attention to the woman. In the foreground, to the left, we see the woman's clothes and the food of the breakfast. In the background there is another woman slightly dressed with a white dress. She is probably Suzanne Leenhoff, Manet's wife. And farther on the right there is a small boat. The figures are surrounded by trees and grass.



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It seems that they are in a studio instead of in the open air, because the painting is **roughly painted** and it gives the impression that **it hasn't got depth**. This impression is reinforced for the use of a powerful light that doesn't leave shadows. Besides, the scene illumination isn't natural and the man who is on the right is wearing a beret, which was normally used in interiors.

The style of the painting was something new for the era. Manet used an unrefined light that eliminated the half tones. It is considered a "pre-impressionist" painting. The work is classic. Nevertheless, Manet didn't try to hide the brush-strokes and the painting seems to be unfinished in some parts of the scene.



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Manet drew contrasts between shadow and light and this was new at that time. For that, people reproached him his "obsession to see with stain". The figures don't seem to be integrated in this set of the nature. The set is more suggested than painted because the perspective is ignored and it hasn't got much depth.



These were the models: at the top we can see Suzanne Leenhoff and at the bottom we can see Victorine Meurent

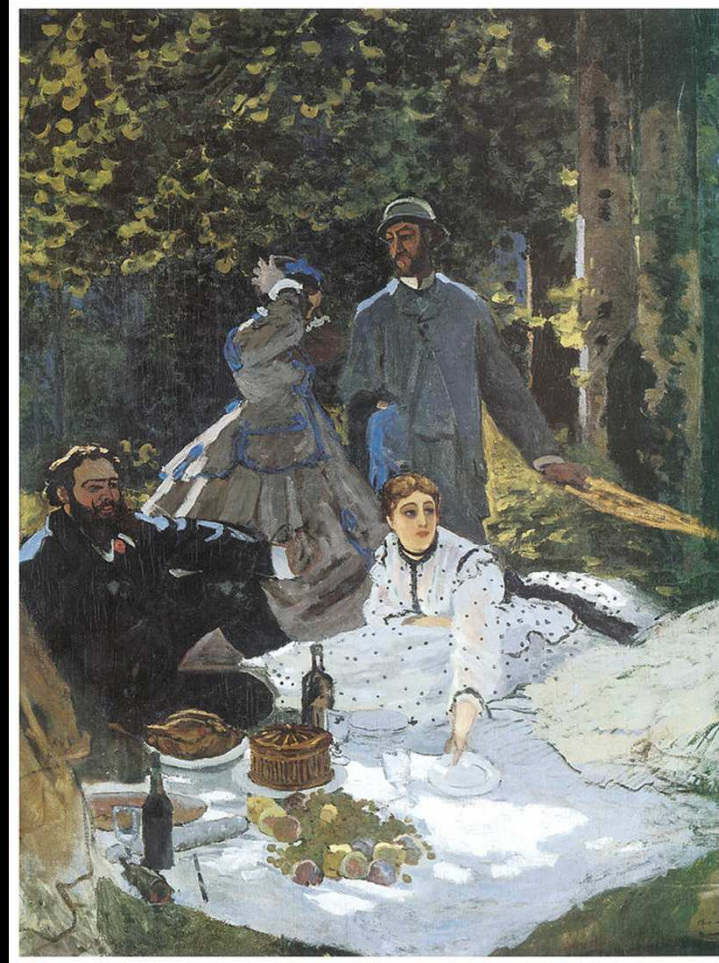


The possible meaning of this painting is to represent the uncontrolled prostitution in the Bois de Boulogne, a large park in Paris.

For this painting Manet drew inspiration from *The Pastoral Concert* by Titian. Traditionally attributed to Giorgione, *The Pastoral Concert* is now considered a work from Titian's youth. This mysterious painting is meant to be an **allegory of Poetry**, whose symbols - the flute and the pouring water - are shared between two nude women of ideal beauty. These unreal figures exist only in the imaginations of the two men they inspire, according to a taste widespread in Venice for simultaneous depictions of the visible and invisible.



Luncheon on the grass by
Monet



In 1961, Pablo Picasso made more than 27 paintings, 6 etchings and 140 drawings inspired on Manet's painting.



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Olympia 1863

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Monet Painting in his Studio Boat, 1874

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Bar at the Folie Bergere, 1882

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Argenteuil



The balcony 1869

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Chez Père Lathuille

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MOONLIGHT OVER BOULOGNE HARBOR, 1869