

MANET, MONET, AND THE GARE SAINT-LAZARE

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON

14 JUNE – 20 SEPTEMBER 1998



FIG. 1 Edouard Manet, *The Railway*, 1872–1873, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Horace Havemeyer in memory of his mother, Louise W. Havemeyer (cat. 21)

THE RAILWAY

Edouard Manet's *The Railway* (fig. 1, widely known as the *Gare Saint-Lazare*) caused a sensation when it was first exhibited at the official Paris Salon of 1874. Visitors and critics found its subject baffling, its composition incoherent, and its execution sketchy. Caricaturists ridiculed Manet's picture (figs. 2, 3), in which only a few recognized the symbol of modernity that it has become today.

Begun in 1872 *The Railway* was painted at a significant moment in Manet's career. The artist had just moved to a new studio in northwest Paris near the train station, the Gare Saint-Lazare, a neighborhood radically transformed by the expansion of the railroad. The view is from the backyard of a friend's apartment house on the rue de Rome (see map, page 3), looking across the railway cutting and tracks to the rue de Saint-Petersbourg on the other side. But Manet's painting not only records this new urban landscape. It also includes an autobiographical reference: the door and windows in the upper left corner are those of his studio on the rue de Saint-Petersbourg. This recent discovery sheds new light on the relation of the painting to the topography of the city. On a more symbolic level, it raises the question of the role of the artist's studio in a picture that seems to be a celebration of open-air painting.

The development of the Gare Saint-Lazare and its vicinity attracted many artists who found in the modern environment of the train station an appropriate setting for their exploration of new pictorial forms. Among the numerous artists who were drawn to this neighborhood were several impressionists, including Manet's friends Monet and Caillebotte, as well as other painters such as Jean Béraud and Norbert Goeneutte. *



FIG. 2 "The Railway. Two madwomen, gripped by incurable monomanetmania, watch the rail cars through the bars of their cell." Stop, *The Salon of 1874*, from *Le Journal amusant*, 13 June 1874, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Estampes, Paris (cat. 79)



FIG. 3 "M. Manet. Imprisoned for having failed to show due respect for the public. It's only fair." Cham, *Cham's Comical Critique*, from *Le Monde illustré*, 6 June 1874, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Estampes, Paris (cat. 78)

...YOU ASK ME, WHERE THE DEVIL CAN THE RAILWAY BE IN THE PAINTING, *THE RAILWAY*. WHERE IS IT? BY JOVE! THERE, IN THIS SMOKE WHICH LEAVES ITS MODERN GRAY TRAIL ON THE CANVAS. IT'S TRUE, THE LOCOMOTIVE IS MISSING AND ONE DOES NOT SEE THE TRAIN. THE SMOKE IS ENOUGH FOR ME, BECAUSE IT DENOTES THE FIRE, WHICH IS LIKE THE SOUL OF THE ENGINE. AND THE ENGINE, AS YOU WHO ARE LISTENING KNOW WELL, IS THE INTELLIGENCE, THE GLORY, AND THE FORTUNE OF OUR CENTURY. FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, OUR NINETEENTH CENTURY WILL BE A LOCOMOTIVE, JUST AS PAPAL ROME IS A TIARA, AS VENICE IS A GONDOLA,... AND AS OUR FRENCH MIDDLE AGES IS THE ARMOR OF A BARON. —JACQUES DE BIEZ, "EDOUARD MANET," LECTURE, SALLE DES CAPUCINES, PARIS, 22 JANUARY 1884

VICTORINE

The young woman sitting in the foreground of *The Railway* is Victorine Meurent, Manet's favorite model since the early 1860s. Manet had been attracted by her unconventional beauty, which suited his desire to paint realist subjects rather than ideal representations. Throughout the decade she had posed in several of Manet's studio re-creations of outdoor scenes, such as the notorious *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (Musée d'Orsay, Paris). One of the earliest, *The Street Singer* (fig. 4), is based on a scene directly observed by Manet one evening in his neighborhood. Although executed in the studio with Victorine as his professional model, the painting captures a glimpsed moment of modern Parisian life. "You must be of your time and paint what you see," he once declared. The strong contrasts of dark and light, summary modeling, and disproportion-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

VICTORINE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tion between the singer and the figure in the background give the image a forceful presence while emphasizing Manet's formal concerns over naturalistic considerations.

The Railway is the last work by Manet for which Victorine Meurent posed. (Subsequently the artist asked friends and acquaintances to sit for him). Her presence links this painting to Manet's earlier images of modern life—images that are at once records of contemporary truths and the product of a highly sophisticated aesthetic vision. ✱



FIG. 4 Edouard Manet, *The Street Singer*, c. 1862, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Bequest of Sarah Choate Sears in memory of her husband Joshua Montgomery Sears (cat. 14)

DOUBTLESS HE [MANET] BELONGS TO A SCHOOL WHICH, FAILING TO RECOGNIZE BEAUTY AND UNABLE TO FEEL IT, HAS MADE A NEW IDEAL OF TRIVIALITY AND PLATITUDE. HIS IS THE PAINTING OF SHOP-FRONTS AND AT THE MOST HIS ART ATTAINS TO THE HEIGHTS OF PAINTERS OF TAVERN SIGNS.—E. DUVERGIER DE HAURANNE, "SALON DE 1874," *LA REVUE DES DEUX MONDES*, 1 JUNE 1874

A VIEW FROM THE STREET: GUSTAVE CAILLEBOTTE

A wealthy law student who became an artist in 1874, Caillebotte lived and worked in the western sector of the Europe district. In the later 1870s he painted several large canvases of his neighborhood, based on numerous studies made on the spot or after photographs. He worked out these street scenes in several oil sketches characterized by a sense of freedom that contrasts with the finished paintings. While the artist's linear precision and detailed rendering appear relatively conventional in comparison with the loose impressionist brushwork of Manet and Monet, Caillebotte's striking perspectives focusing upon the massive iron superstructure of the pont de l'Europe are resolutely modern (fig. 7). ✱

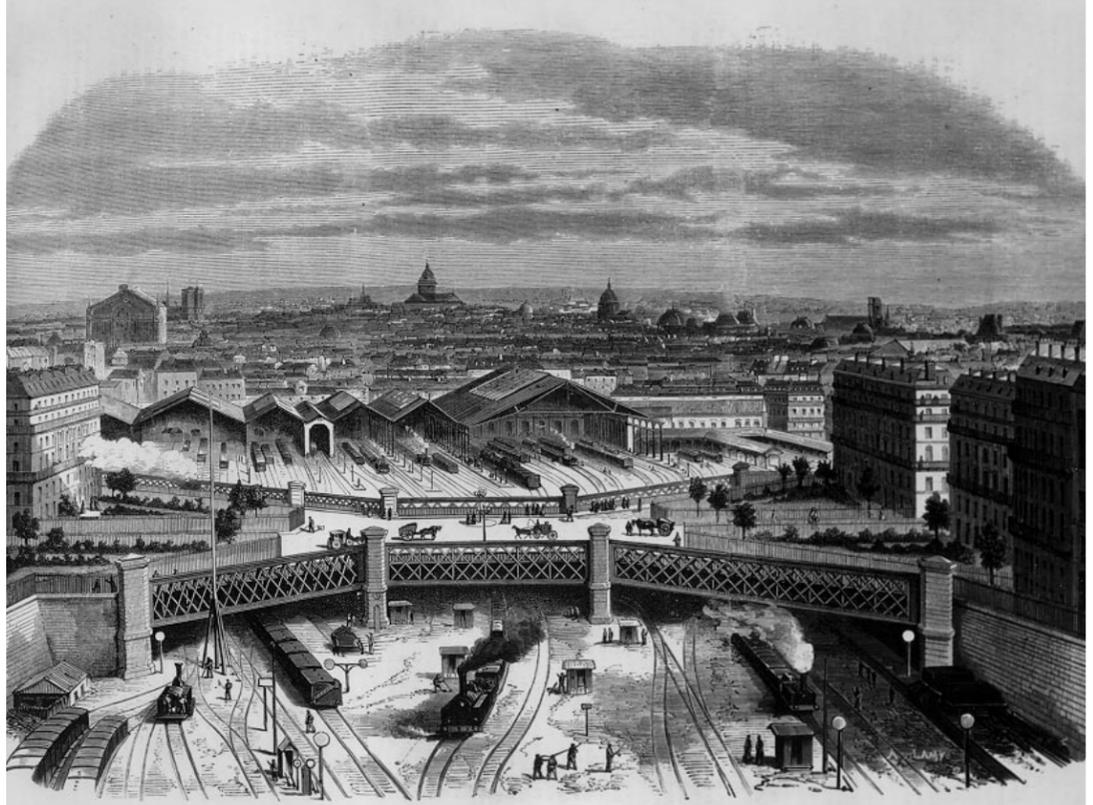


FIG. 5 Auguste Lamy, *Paris. Bridge Erected on the Place de l'Europe, over the Western Region Railway*, from *L'Illustration*, 11 April 1868

THE EUROPE DISTRICT OF PARIS

The second half of the nineteenth century saw a complete transformation of the Parisian urban landscape. Napoleon III and his prefect, the baron Haussmann, redesigned the capital by piercing wide avenues and clearing large squares to fit the demands of modern transportation and commerce. One focus of this new urbanism was the railway stations. The Gare Saint-Lazare area, where the first railroad in Paris had been located in 1835, was drastically changed by the addition of new tracks and the construction of a larger station.

The neighborhood surrounding the station was known as the Europe district. Most of its streets were named for a European capital. In the 1860s a massive star-shaped iron bridge, the pont de l'Europe (fig. 5), was built to connect six avenues over the railway cutting. Development in the area continued through the 1870s with the construction of new apartment houses along the adjacent streets. The novelty of the bridge, with its unique view of the train tracks below, made it a favorite promenade for Parisians of all social classes and an attractive subject for artists in search of dynamic images of modern life (fig. 6). When Manet sought "the true impression of a thing seen," he spoke for all the artists in this exhibition. ✱



FIG. 7 Gustave Caillebotte, *On the Pont de l'Europe*, c. 1876–1880, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas (cat. 5)



FIG. 6 Norbert Goeneutte, *The Pont de l'Europe and Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1888, The Baltimore Museum of Art, George A. Lucas Collection (cat. 12)

THE GARE SAINT-LAZARE AT THE TIME OF MANET

Emile Zola's *La Bête humaine* (1889–1890), a novel on the theme of the railway, opens with a description of the Gare Saint-Lazare as it appeared in the 1870s:

The fifth-floor window...looked over the station, a wide trench cutting through the Europe district like a sudden broadening out of the view...Opposite, in this vaporous sunshine, the buildings in the rue de Rome seemed hazy, as though fading into air. To the left yawned the huge roofs spanning the station with their sooty glass...To the right the Europe bridge straddled the railroad yard with its star of girders, and the lines could be seen emerging beyond and going on as far as the Batignolles tunnel. And right below, filling the huge space, the three double lines from under the bridge fanned out into innumerable branches of steel and disappeared under the station roofs. In front of the bridge spans, scrubby little gardens were visible beside the three switchmen's huts. Amid the confusion of carriages and engines crowding the lines, one big red signal shone through the thin daylight. ✱

THE IMPRESSIONISTS ARE ALSO KNOWN AS THE SCHOOL OF THE PLACE DE L'EUROPE, AFTER THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF MR. MANET, OF WHOM THEY ARE BOTH THE EMULATORS AND THE CONTRADICTIONISTS.—ERNEST FILLONNEAU, "LES IMPRESSIONNISTES," *MONITEUR DES ARTS*, 20 APRIL 1877

THE RUE MOSNIER

From his studio at 4 rue de Saint-Pétersbourg, Manet could see the pont de l'Europe to the left. Straight ahead was the new rue Mosnier (today, the rue de Berne), which he painted several times from his windows. *Rue Mosnier Decorated with Flags* (fig. 8) is a vivid evocation of Paris in the 1870s: the construction site on the left, where the street overlooks the railway cutting, records the transformation of the city; the flags raised for the *Fête de la Paix* of 30 June 1878 celebrate the recovery of France after the war years of 1870–1871, while the man on crutches presents a darker reminder. ✱



FIG. 8 Edouard Manet, *Rue Mosnier Decorated with Flags*, 1878, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (cat. 41)

THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR AND THE COMMUNE

France's declaration of war on Prussia in July 1870 launched some of the most dramatic events in the country's history. The consequent Prussian invasion soon led to the collapse of the Second Empire and to a grueling siege of Paris. In March 1871, the people of Paris refused to submit to the new government, which had signed a humiliating peace treaty with Prussia. The Commune, a popular insurrectionist movement, was formed and a bloody civil war followed. About 20,000 Parisians were killed before the Commune was defeated by government troops in May 1871.

Manet, who had enrolled in the National Guard to defend Paris under siege, left the city after the capitulation in January 1871, returning only after the fall of the Commune. Two of his most powerful lithographs depict the violent street fights in Paris and attest to the artist's interest in recording current events. *The Railway*, begun soon after Manet's return, may be seen as a symbol of hope in the reconstruction of Paris. The little girl with her arm raised echoes perhaps the large allegorical figure of *Hope* exhibited by the renowned classicist Puvis de Chavannes a few months earlier, at the Salon of 1872 (fig. 9). Puvis contrasts the purity of her figure with the ruins and grave markers in the war-torn landscape behind. ✱



FIG. 9 Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, *Hope*, 1872, The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore (cat. 60)

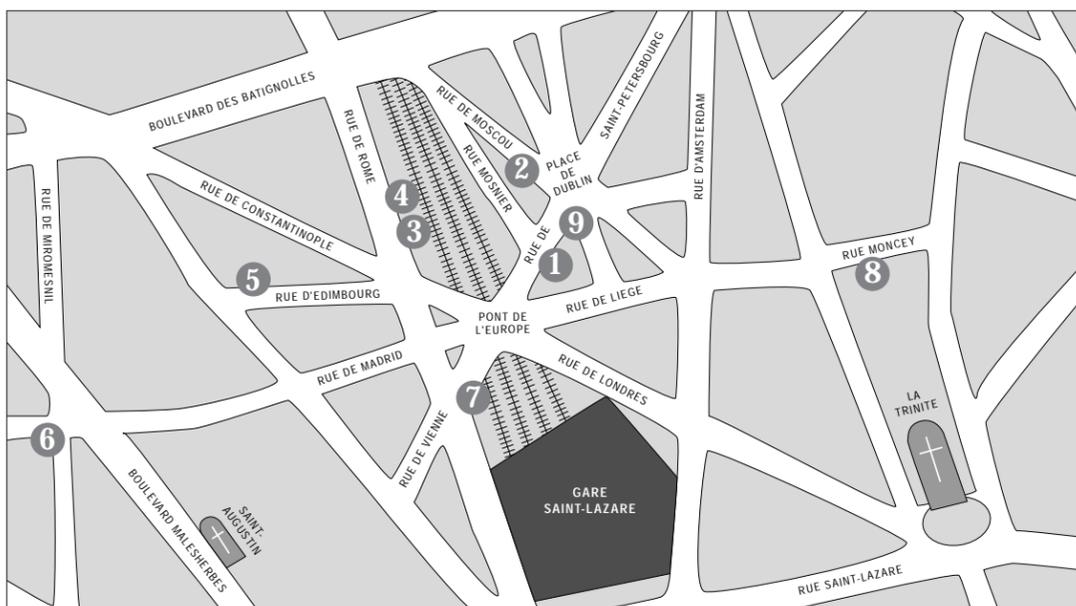
IN AND AROUND THE STATION: MONET'S GARE SAINT-LAZARE

YOU CAN HEAR THE TRAINS RUMBLING IN, SEE THE SMOKE BILLOW UP UNDER THE HUGE ROOFS... THAT IS WHERE PAINTING IS TODAY... OUR ARTISTS HAVE TO FIND THE POETRY IN TRAIN STATIONS, THE WAY THEIR FATHERS FOUND THE POETRY IN FORESTS AND RIVERS. —EMILE ZOLA ABOUT MONET'S PAINTINGS, 1877

The best-known representations of the Gare Saint-Lazare in painting are a group of eleven works by Claude Monet of 1877 (fig. 10). Unparalleled in their evocation of the steam and the smoke-filled station, they are also extraordinarily varied in their subject and technique. Some may have been painted entirely on the spot (Monet had requested official permission to paint inside the Gare Saint-Lazare). Others, more fully worked, appear to have been completed in his studio. In spite of their impressionistic treatment of the station, these works reproduce accurately the topography of the area, even allowing one to deduce the precise point where the artist must have stood to paint them. Several include the pont de l'Europe seen from the tracks, through clouds of smoke—a vision drastically different from Caillebotte's. Monet's paintings of the Gare Saint-Lazare demonstrate his exceptional sensitivity to changing light and atmospheric conditions. They also mark the first time the painter pursued a single theme through a series of variations, a method he would develop later with other subjects such as grainstacks and Rouen Cathedral. ✱



FIG. 10 Claude Monet, *Interior View of the Gare Saint-Lazare: The Auteuil Line*, 1877, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Gustave Caillebotte Bequest, 1894 (cat. 45)



- 1 4 rue de Saint-Pétersbourg, Manet's studio, 1872–1878
- 2 29 rue de Moscou, Mallarmé's apartment, 1871–1875
- 3 58 rue de Rome, Site of Manet's *The Railway* (cat. 21)
- 4 62 rue de Rome, Goeneutte's studio, 1887–1894
- 5 26 rue d'Edimbourg, Monet's residence, 1878
- 6 77 rue de Miromesnil, Caillebotte's residence, 1866–1879
- 7 Site of Caillebotte's *The Pont de l'Europe* (cats. 3, 4)
- 8 17 rue Moncey, Monet's studio, 1877
- 9 Site of Caillebotte's *Paris Street, Rainy Day* (cats. 6, 7)

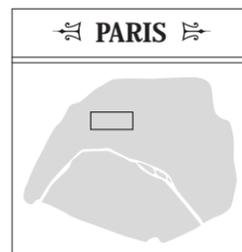




FIG. 11 *The Façade of 4 Rue de Saint-Petersbourg*, c. 1870, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Estampes, Paris (cat. 68)

MANET'S STUDIO

WE MAKE OUR WAY INTO THE STUDIO—A HUGE ROOM PANELED IN OLD, DARK OAK; THE CEILING ALTERNATES EXPOSED BEAMS WITH DARK, COLORED COMPARTMENTS. THE LIGHT THAT POURS IN THROUGH THE MULTIPANED WINDOW OVERLOOKING THE PLACE DE L'EUROPE IS CLEAR, SOFT, AND EVEN. THE TRAIN PASSES CLOSE BY, SENDING UP PLUMES OF WHITE SMOKE THAT SWIRL AND EDDY IN THE AIR. THE GROUND CONSTANTLY SHAKES UNDER ONE'S FEET LIKE THE DECK OF A SHIP IN FULL SAIL. IN THE DISTANCE, THE VIEW EXTENDS ALONG THE RUE DE ROME WITH ITS PRETTY GROUND FLOOR GARDENS AND MAJESTIC HOUSES. THEN,...A DARK AND SHADOWY HOLE: THE TUNNEL, INTO WHICH TRAINS DISAPPEAR WITH A SHRILL WHISTLE AS IF INTO A MYSTERIOUS GAPING MOUTH.

—FERVACQUES, *LE FIGARO*, 27 DECEMBER 1873

Manet's new, spacious studio on the rue de Saint-Petersbourg (fig. 11) was a former fencing hall. An oak staircase led from the large room, where Manet also entertained, to a loggia and a small apartment. In 1876, after two paintings he had sent to the Salon were rejected by the jury, Manet invited critics and the public to see them in his studio. "It is the cleanest and best-kept studio that I have ever seen," a journalist wrote on the occasion. "There is not the slightest trace of revolution in these surroundings, which are as calm and composed as Mr. Manet himself." On the invitation to the exhibition, Manet had printed the motto *Faire vrai, laisser dire* (Be truthful, let people say what they will).

Artists, writers, society women, and courtesans frequented Manet's studio and readily posed for him. The free, broad execution of these portraits and the impression of real life that they convey belie the careful elaboration of their composition. The same studio props, for instance, reappear in several works; the oriental panel in *Lady with Fans: Portrait of Nina de Callias* is also found in *Portrait of Stéphane Mallarmé*, and *Nana*.

An actress friend of Manet posed for *Nana* (fig. 12), a life-size painting of a prostitute perhaps inspired by one of Emile Zola's characters. When the painting was refused by the Salon jury in 1877, Manet arranged to have it displayed in a fashionable shop window on



FIG. 12 Edouard Manet, *Nana*, 1877, Hamburger Kunsthalle (cat. 34)



FIG. 13 Edouard Manet, *Portrait of Stéphane Mallarmé*, 1876, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Acquired with the assistance of the Société des Amis du Louvre and of D. David-Weill, 1928 (cat. 32)

the boulevards, where it created a stir. Not only did its subject defy morality, but the sketchy brushwork and light palette associated the work with the impressionists' experiments, then considered scandalous. Manet's magnificent composition is at once clever and full of irony as he echoes the curvaceous forms of the coquette in those of the couch, and balances the head of her male client on the right with a flowerpot on the left. Manet's virtuoso handling of paint suggests the gaudy superficiality of *Nana* and her demimonde. ✱

THE EXHIBITION IS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE FLORENCE GOULD FOUNDATION.

The exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

It is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

MANET AND MALLARME

Among the regular visitors to Manet's studio was the poet Stéphane Mallarmé, who would drop by on his way home from the nearby Lycée Fontane where he taught English. Although he had been publishing poetry since the early 1860s, Mallarmé became famous only after the publication in 1875 of his translation of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*, which Manet illustrated. In the 1880s his poetry occupied a central position in the development of the symbolist movement in literature.

The painter and the poet admired each other's work and shared a similar rejection of artistic conventions. By the time Manet painted Mallarmé's portrait in 1876 (fig. 13), the poet had published two articles championing Manet's art and the aesthetic of open-air painting in general, of which he considered Manet to be the chief representative. Mallarmé praised Manet as a "bold innovator" who "seems to ignore all that has been done in art by others, and draws from his own inner consciousness all his effects of simplification, the whole revealed by effects of light incontestably novel." ✱

The brochure is made possible by The Circle of the National Gallery of Art and the Gurney Foundation, Inc.

Brochure written by Isabelle Dervaux, department of exhibition programs, and produced by the editors office. © 1998 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington.