

## Interlude - Artistic Revolution #3

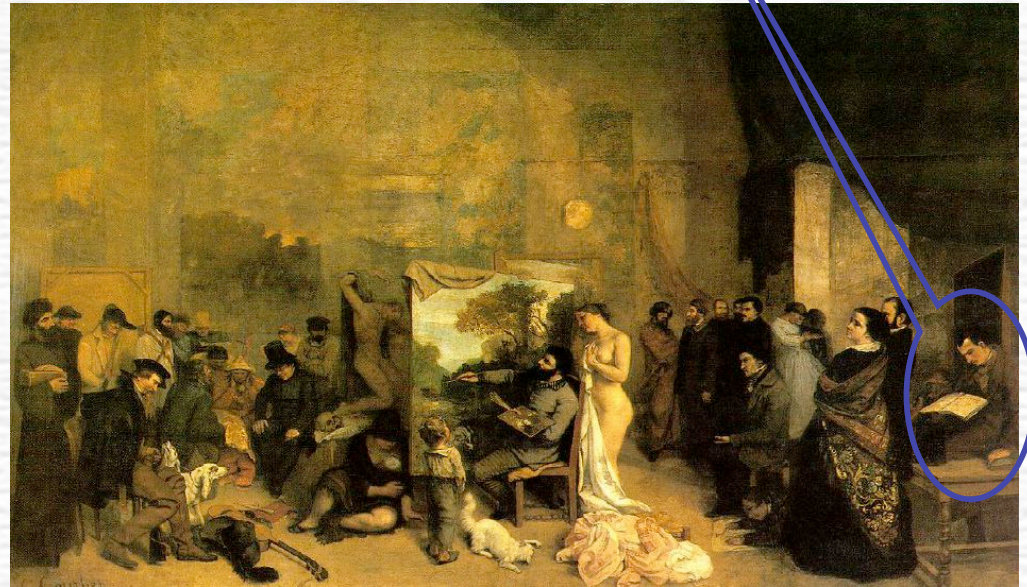
### *The Modernist Period*

## when we last left Paris...

Courbet had just rearranged the hierarchy of importance in art

- The artist was at centerstage

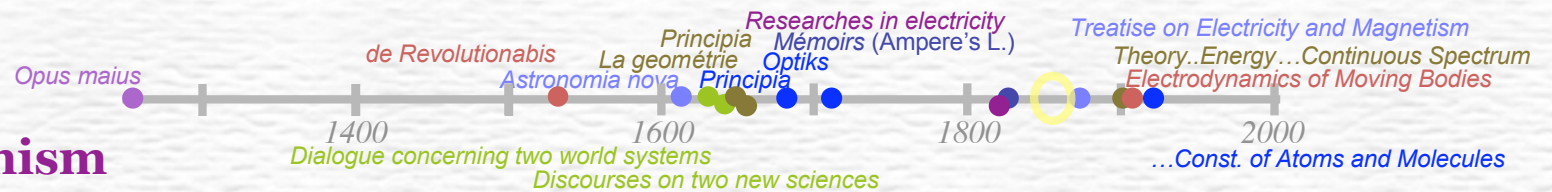
the Petrarch of Modernity wrt art: poet, art critic  
(new profession), Charles Baudelaire



This was more than just a phrase

- what the artist thinks, feels, believes becomes more important than what he/she sees
- The beginnings of “art for art’s sake”  
*although not necessarily planned, it evolved in a short while after some seminal works*

## modernism



The clarion call for a new art came from a 19C poet and critic

- Charles Baudelaire

He was responding to the newness that was apparent in the mid-1800's in industrialization, politics, demographics

- He wrote an influential essay, still quoted, or at least reacted to, today

*The Painter of Modern Life*, 1863

He argues that there are two sides to aesthetics: one which is eternal and references the whole tradition of art, and the “other half,” which is concerned with the moment

*It is the duty of the artist to represent both*

- The modern half involves the dress, manner, gestures of the day, plus the modern person's response to these new circumstances
- He insisted that people generate wholly new subjective feelings for each age and that this needs exploration in the arts
- Said another way, the classical approach to art, is outmoded and does not take into account these new, internal responses

This mitigates against the creating an illusion of the world

- which was, after all, the program of the Renaissance and all naturalistic art since

## elements of painting

These will vary with different critics:

- **Composition**  
how the pictorial elements are arranged
- **Space**  
how the positive (where stuff is) and negative (where stuff isn't) areas are used  
how perspective is, or isn't used
- **Color**
- **Line**  
this is a creative and conscious decision: as soon as a line is drawn, demarcation is done
  - that is, a decision to separate, categorize - or not - is made
  - This, to me, is like Galileo's deciding what to include and what to ignore about what he saw. It's a professional judgment.
- **Form**  
the shapes
- **Subject**  
always thought to be the more important element - what the picture is about

Sometimes the first three are called the Formal Elements and the rest, Pictorial Elements. There are also distinct Elements of Design, like balance, harmony, variety, movement, rhythm, etc.

## *Académie: Art was again bound by rules*

Especially in France

- The Academy system, begun in 17C Italy was ingrained into 19C society  
A.M. (Master of the Academy) was a sought-after title, guaranteeing prestige  
The annual show: The Salon - produced by the State, which was an avid buyer  
Painting was essentially bound by neo-classical style and subject matter
- often for decorative hangings in well-to-do homes and government buildings  
Historical, Portrait, and Allegorical Painting were the specialties



(back)

## Édouard Manet (1832-1883)

### The grandfather of modern art

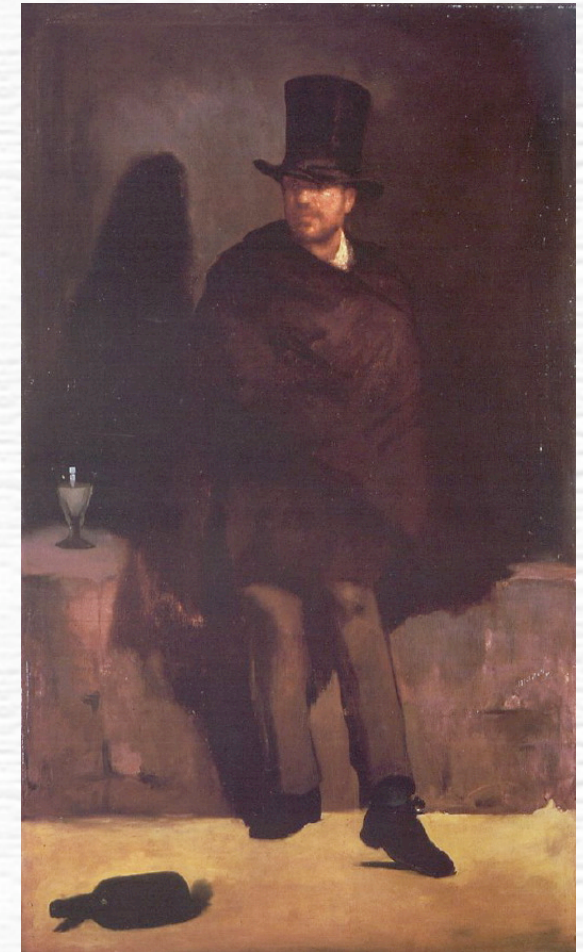
- unlikely sort - a bourgeois fellow, classically trained realistic painter of, largely, people  
student of Couture  
assiduously pursued copying of masters - 100's - as his education, which was standard
- His first attempt at showing in the strictly juried Salon in 1859 was rejected, in 1860, 2 accepted



Manet, *Portrait of M. and Mme Auguste Manet*, 1860, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Manet, *The Spanish Singer*, 1860, Metropolitan, NY



Manet, *The Absinthe Drinker*, 1858-9, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

Notice that the chiaroscuro in the left is essentially classical, that lighting is believable and that the color is standard, if not pleasing. In the Absinthe Drinker, there is less definition and broader paint strokes.

Black...is a dominant "color".

## Classical composition, does not always please

Manet was a student of art history:



Manet, *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, 1863, Louvre, Paris.

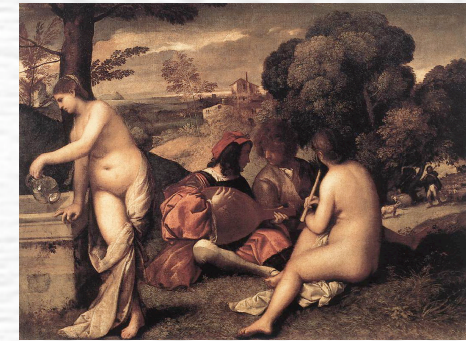
Here, he has broken out of a series of traditions: He's playing with light, mass, and the instant.

What do objects look like in the light? They are often stark, bright, with sharp distinction. Previously, studio light and the teaching of drawing from plaster and marble statues encouraged the soft, shadows of Chiaroscuro

He abandons it, in favor of shadow using color. He abandons conventional perspective, as an experiment in spatial representation by color.



Raphael, *The Judgment of Paris*, 1510



Giorgione, *The Pastoral Concert*, 1508, Louvre

There is a delicate still-life, but even though a classical scene, he's put it into modern setting...caused the woman to pointedly grab the observer's attention with the Manet Stare - and uncomfortably, bring the viewer into the forest with the participants (Manet's long-time model, his brother, and brother in law).

The storm that this generated was huge, to his surprise.

## but wait, there's more

His experiments with contrast - and bring up-to-date classical themes continued

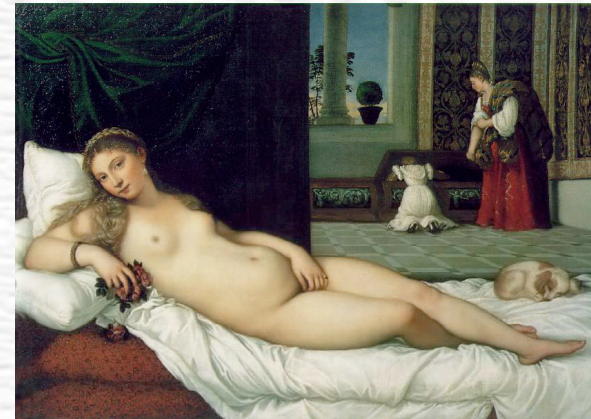
- Olympia shocked even further



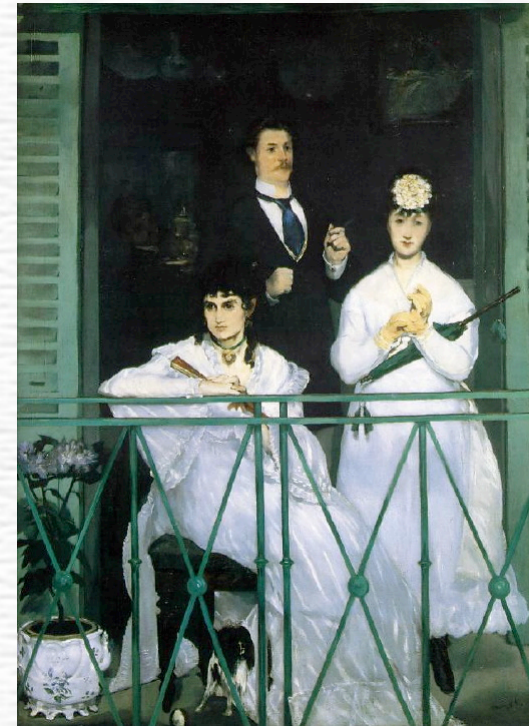
Manet, Olympia, 1863, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The lack of a classical title and the modern setting caused the audience to react with loathing. The more important elements in renaissance-enlightenment art - subject and composition - could not stand up to the rendering and frankness that Manet deployed. His experiments were with the lesser elements of color and form.

In *The Balcony*, the green, wrought iron railing creates the depth, contrary to conventional coloring schemes. In all, the Manet Stare dominates.



Titian, Venus of Urbino, 1538, Uffizi, Florence.



Manet, *The Balcony*, 1868-9, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



## flattening was the appearance

Color and contrast create depth



Manet, *Concert aux Tuileries*, 1862, National Gallery, London.

In neither of these is there perspective, even shadow in the Fifer. (It was likened to a playing card because of its flatness.)

The concert, like the previous paintings seems oddly improbable, but subject is not the issue.

Rather, again, playing with the painting as marks on a flat surface - as the painting exerting itself as no more than that - is his aim. He has distorted the verticals, there are very few straight lines, even the trees are curved. rather with color, he again tries to suggest depth...all the time, the Stare draws us into the scene.

The plan is to intentionally treat a painting as...a painting, not as an illusion of the world. This is consistent with the Modernist call.

Modern Art



Manet, *The Fifer*, 1866, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Manet has tackled an important problem:

perspective of the Alberti sort caused objects to recede from the viewer...that's the window illusion.

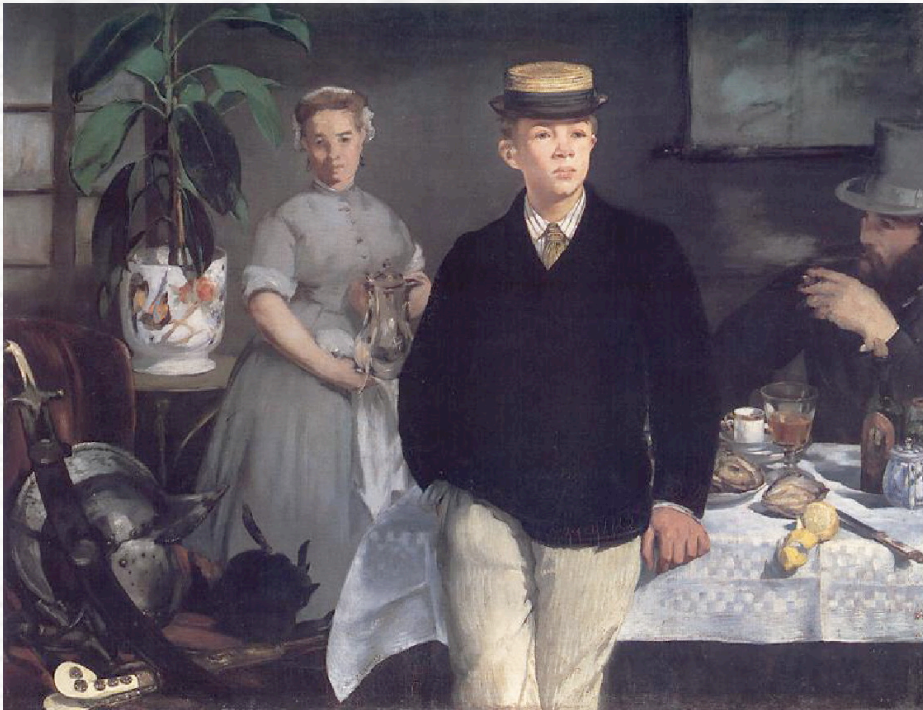
He's trying to figure out, in part, how to make objects emerge from the surface. He completely abandons conventional perspective in order to work on that. ([See parent's painting](#) and the railing)

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## the physics was not important

He insisted that he painted what he saw

- but he really painted what he perceived, after he had done some adjustments  
answering to a different calling than just copying or replicating (for example, the models in Olympia and Luncheon on the Grass are the same woman - but they are painted differently. Many other examples.)



Manet, *The Luncheon*, 1868, Neue Pinakothek, Munchen

Here, there is explicit homage to Vermeer in the light play on the glass and tablecloth.

The BLACK coat serves his need to extend the picture out to the viewer, while the knife's slant serves to instill some measure of perspective.

Modern Art



Manet, *Bar at Foiles-Bergere*, 1881-2, Courtauld Institute Galleries

This was the last major work that Manet painted, as by this time he was critically ill.

It's got the now highly developed play with light in the sub-still-lives. Notice that again, the viewer is involved and that through the mirror we see the famous Foiles-Bergere - BUT, he's ignored optics, by placing her back and her customer to the side - it's not important for his project that it be Right.



The gang of the Refused, got together and created their own Salon: the Salon des Refusés

- Manet, Monet, Pissarro, and Whistler

All intrigued and altered by Manet's project of picturing Now.

- Monet and Manet were friends and worked and socialized together

Monet declared Manet to be a critical inspiration to the Impressionists, but Manet never used the title, nor exhibited in explicitly Impressionist exhibits

Theirs was an explicit program:

- To capture the momentary impression of, primarily light's, impact on vision

This was an explicit intention, and pictorial elements were sacrificed to this end.

*Monet is the most typical and persistent of all of the impressionists, which included Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Degas, Sisley, Caillebotte, Whistler, Morisot (a sometime female model for Manet), and Cassatt.*

In part, an explicit collaboration between Monet and Renoir

## the color patch

It begins with Manet's technique of broad, monochrome strokes



Monet, *On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt*, 1868, Art Institute of Chicago

In 1874, having been refused a showing at the Salon, Monet and other like-minded set up their own show in a photographer's studio. The catalog listed a painting *Impressions: Sunrise...* and that stuck as a derogatory remark by a reviewer.

Notice that the finished feel of the Academic painters is totally lacking.

Modern Art



Monet, *The Studio Boat*, 1874, Kroller-Muller Museum

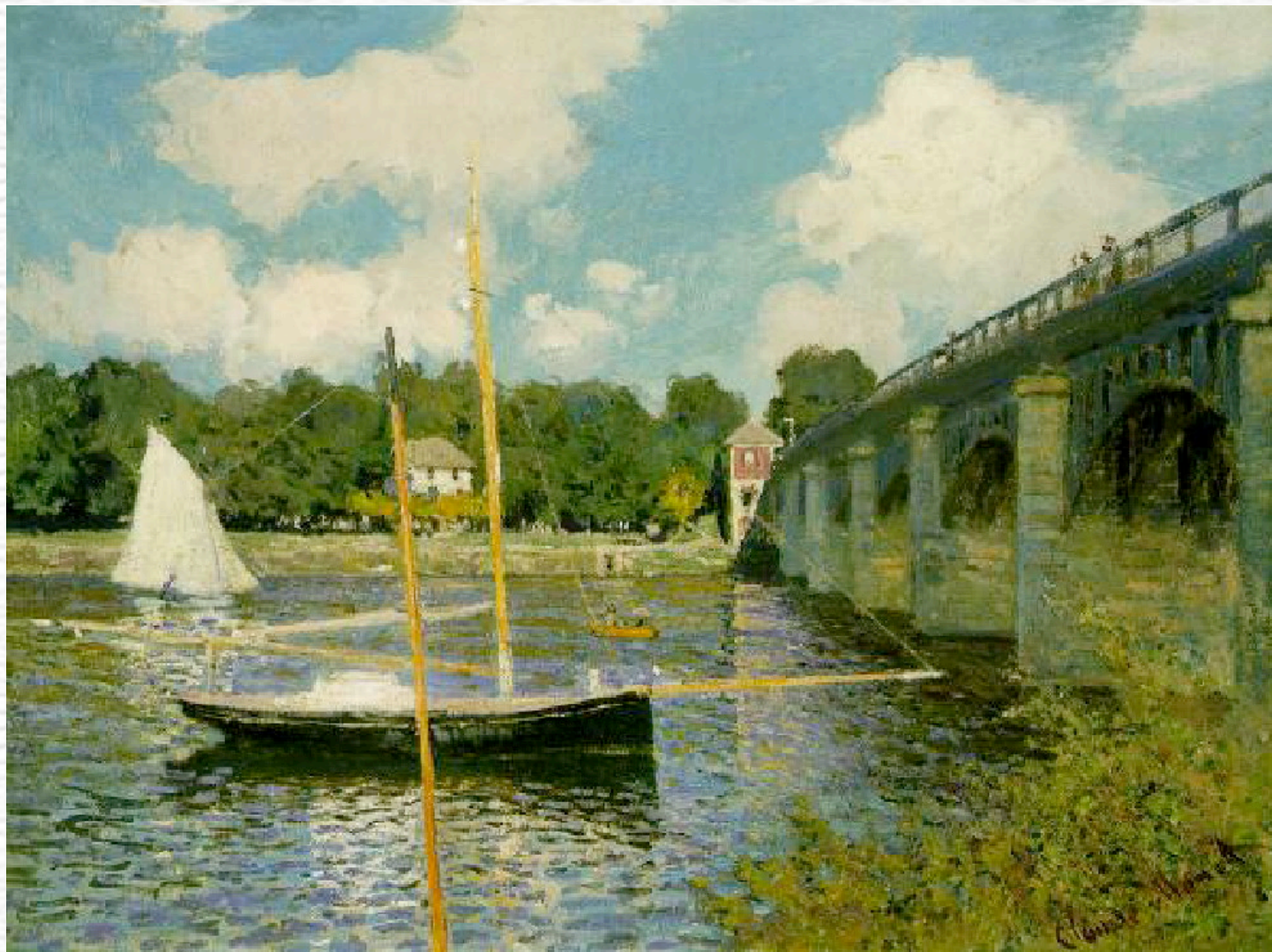
The rule was: the painting had to be done in place, out of doors - No Studio. Drawing (line) was not the first action: color was.

This was instantaneous art: the Now had to be captured in nearly real time, so it is as if a snapshot in time.

This led to his later famous series of paintings of the same place at different times of the year (haystacks, Roen Cathedral, etc)

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the dab

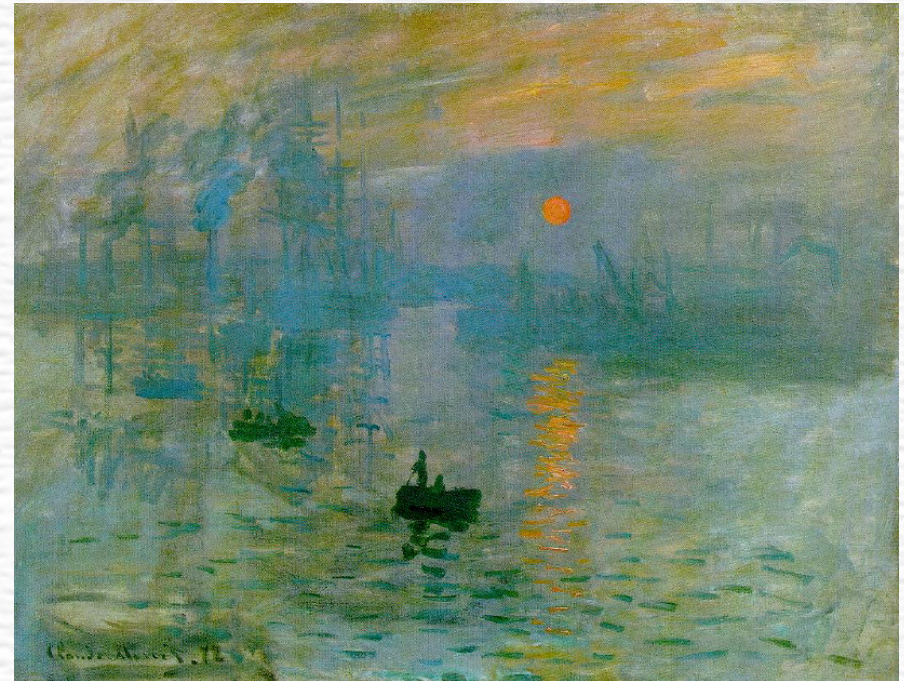


## Impressions

### Not well received:

“The rue le Peltier is a road of disasters. After the fire at the Opera, there is now yet another disaster here. An exhibition has just been opened at the Durand-Ruel which allegedly contains paintings. I enter and my horrified eyes behold something terrible. Five or six lunatics, among them a woman, have joined together and exhibited their works. I have seen people rock with laughter in front of these pictures, but my heart bled when I saw them...They take a piece of canvas, color, and brush, daub a few patches of paint on it at random, and sign the whole thing with their name. It is a delusion of the same kind as if the inmates of Bedlam picked up stones from the wayside and imagined they had found diamonds.”

People looked hard at the canvasses, saw daubs and unintelligible marks and scorned the whole affair.



Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*, 1872, Musee Marmottan, Paris

The impressionists had discovered that if given just enough information, that the brain would piece the bits together into a coherent idea.

**The paintings mean nothing without the observer.**

Remember how I defined the electric field? I explicitly imagined a point “test charge”, determined the force, and then took the charge away: what was left was the field.

**The field means nothing without something to act on.**

Here, people look like specs...are they people? or mistakes? or is this unfinished?



but you know what it is... *your brain fills in the rest.*





Frith, *The Railway Station*, 1862

How is this a representation of a railroad station?

- The Frith is a faithful replica
- The Monet is an idea

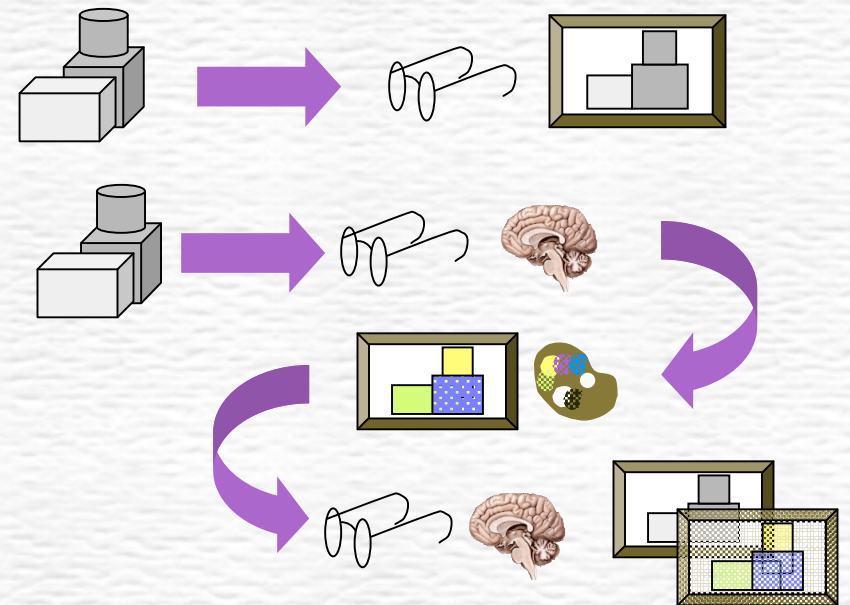
the first is about trains and stations

the second is about the play of light in smoke and the feel of the engines, the hazyness of the environment

- the subject is secondary to these other projects



M Monet, *Interior of the Gare-Saint-Lazare*, 1877, Musee d'Orsay, Paris





## post impressionism

Well, first art criticism never recovered from the lambasting that it did of the impressionists

- Because, Impressionism caught on, all over Europe and is still loved today go to Chicago!
- In part, the movement beyond had two catalysts
  - Photography had moved out of the studio
  - Japanese art had started to emerge in the west after Japan renewed contact
  - Primitive art was increasingly studied

There were a variety of projects that Impressionism spawned:

- Seurat, Van Gogh, Gaughin...and
- Cezanne
- Matisse

These guys all knew or knew of and commented on one another - not always politely.



## the point

Perhaps a natural path was to pointillism (called Divisionism by Seurat)

- a carefully calculated, precise, nesting of colors together designed to create an overall sensation of a different color



Seurat, *La Grande Jatte*, 1884, Art Institute of Chicago

This is a highly, almost over-thought, technique - Seurat spent more than a year on each large painting (so much for instantaneous impressions?).

It did have some basis in the beginnings of psychology and physiology of color - being developed at just that time. He was aware of the research.

If you stand back from one of these, the dots almost converge, but it is more like a mosaic.

There is no modeling in the figures - mass is not apparent at all and it is a technique that didn't catch on. Seurat did not live very long.

## Paul Cézanne (1839-1906)

### The Father of modern painting

- Originally a part of the short-lived Impressionist clan

But, he was uncomfortable with controversy and had a different research program in mind

- Impressionism was imprecise–messy, but brilliant
- How to represent mass, depth and the Now without resorting to the formulae of the Renaissance, which was eventually artificial

- Back in the countryside of Aix-en-Provence

He applied himself outside to what he saw

He was not about creating an illusion–the avowed program of the Masters

- He wanted to create the feeling of solidity-in-itself, not a trick of mass, but Mass itself
- And he meant to do it with color

- This is now work that is beneath the surface of appearance

This is probing the inherent substance of matter

All traditional rules are sacrificed to that end.

He worked on this through repetition

- The same mountain and landscape and
- Still life

With little acknowledgement until the last years of his long life

- after which nothing was the same.

## He generates MASS

With only color and brush strokes

- he generates mass - an age-old problem

there is a feeling of solidity to these rocks, all done with color, not shading or perspective



Cezanne, *Mountains in Provence*, 1886-90, National Gallery, London

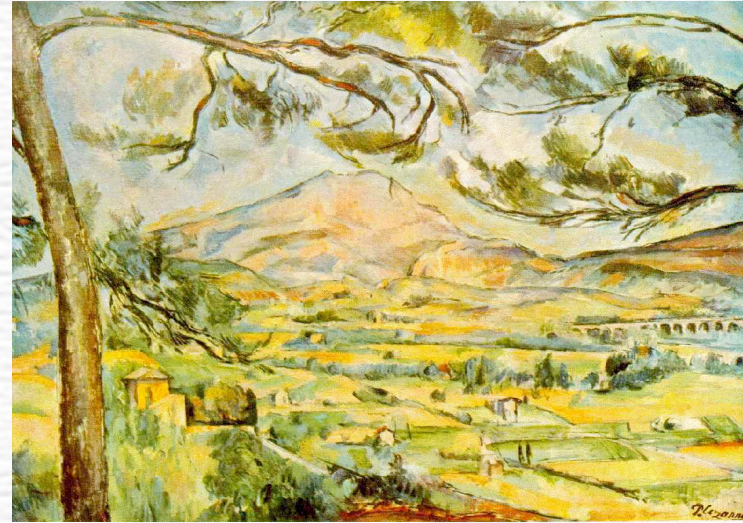
Within the confines of the 2d surface - a reality for 19C painters, remember - he's brought the left structure towards us and simultaneously moved the right structures away from us. You can't do that with conventional perspective.

He's solving the problems that Manet introduced.

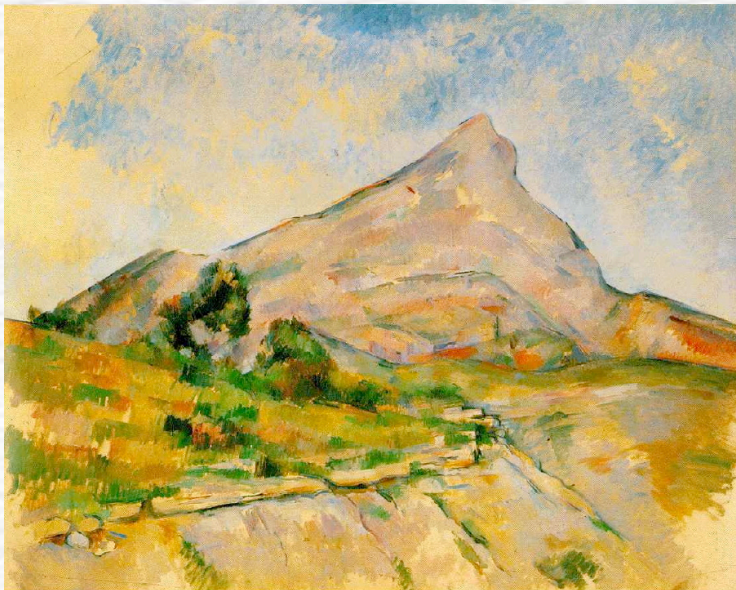
**Mt Saint-Victoire looms overhead, *and* recedes to the distance**



1895



1887



1887



1897

## a new space

With Manet, perspective space began to erode

- Cezanne reinvented the rules



There is a flatness to the space of the canvas

This was true of Manet and hallmark of the modernist tone of Baudelaire et al.

However, Cezanne carried it further inventing a space that has its own rules

It is defiantly not the illusionist space of the Renaissance. That was restrictive.

Instead of constantly receding, it does both.

Instead of objects inhabiting an empty vessel of “space”, they all tie together into a pictorial Whole.

Here, the sky is as important as the mountains, as the water, and the houses

The house in the middle comes out to us by virtue of the color and the value of the color.

The mountains recede, but with the yellow, tie to the foreground

where I intended to go:

- eventually, the project that Cezanne started, of inserting the artist into the representation would catch on completely

This was clearly the program of Van Gogh and Gauguin - Color.

- of course, by this time the privileged position of spatial perspective is gone
- at just the time that the privileged position of a Newtonian observer is gone

- The cubist experiment, a collaboration of Picasso and Braque carried the interest that Cezanne had in the **whole composition** further:

In music, there are notes and there are rests...without the rest, the composition is incomplete and impossible

In painting, and the world, there is positive space (stuff) and negative space (the places in between)

- the concept of the field made it clear that what is not visible is, in fact, full of essential elements of physical reality
- The cubist enterprise explicitly linked the objects of interest with the space in between
- It also made the observer a part of the production

*the marks on the canvas mean nothing without the brain of the observer playing a role*

*Their artistic reality is then a combination of the source (artist), the transmitted information (the work), and the receiver (the viewer)*

- Finally, just as the physicist's reality is now "under the surface" and modern algebras are created with fewer than the 'normal' number of postulates (elements)

with Kandinsky, Subject slowly ceases to be an element of interesting or useful inclusion in art: I would have gone back to the French painter, David...especially the Death of Marat, and noted how this is a study in parallels and verticals - Very Mondrian

- Again, in music (which for Kandinsky contained an almost mystical connection with painting): take a Bobby Short performance of Cole Porter, turn off his microphone, leaving just the piano..there is still considerable reality in the wordless music that's left. Cole Porter, words and music, is just one way to represent musical reality.

*So too in abstract painting: take out the subject, leaving form, line, color, composition - there's still considerable reality left, problems to be solved*

- There were many directions that this took

I would have followed only a couple, as there were too many

- Mondrian interests me, as does Rothko and of course Pollack.

*Each has a separate project: Mondrian, line and composition; Rothko, color and composition; Pollack, color, rhythm, and composition*

- The connection with physics is the parallel abstraction for which words almost don't work, that is evident in quantum mechanics and particle physics in particular