

Have you ever have the feeling when you cannot stop looking at the pictures? In the past, there was a man who had utterly changed the image of art in people's mind, his name was Edouard Manet. He was a very famous French oil painter in the 19th century who created impressionism, the mainstream of modern art. His works had reflected the society and people living in his time because many of his paintings represented the daily life of people in Paris.

Edouard Manet was born in Paris on 23 January 1832 and died in 1883 at the age of fifty-one. His works in early life were all style of realism which he learned from his teacher. After he had his own studio, he abandoned the skills he learned from his teacher and move on to work on his own style which transitioned to a more impressionist style. He preferred to work outdoor rather than inside the studio because he wanted to create pictures that are realistic in daily life rather than subjective matters that stay in the studio. He walked along the streets of Paris to observe activities and social life of people in all of the classes such as [Music in the Tuileries Gardens](#), [The Railway](#), [The Masked Ball at the Opera](#), [A Bar at the Folies-Bergere](#), [Bock Drinkers](#), [The Picnic on the Grass](#) and [Olympia](#).¹ From these examples, the content of the pictures varies; from a prostitute to an aristocrat. With these various scenes presented in many of his works, it gave way to the historian to explore into the past of people living in 19th century. For example, The Picnic on the Grass and Olympia were two remarkable evidences that reflect the image of woman in the society at that time. The two famous paintings, The Picnic on the Grass and Olympia, struck up the issue of uncontrollable prostitution occurred in the Bois de

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89douard_Manet

Boulogne, a large park in the western side of Paris, at that time. In point of fact, the Bois de Boulogne is known as a pick-up place for prostitutes and illegal sexual activity at night from 19th century till today. According to Olympia, inspired by Titian's Venus of Urbino, it was the representative of high class prostitute waiting for customer. Her accessories such as bracelet, pearl earrings, black ribbon, orchid and shawl are symbols of wealth and voluptuousness. In addition, a black cat, at the edge of the bed, is also a symbol of prostitute. For the upper class people, he painted The Masked Ball at the Opera and The Races at Longchamp to demonstrate the different levels of formality of activities of people in Paris. In The Masked Ball at the Opera, he illustrated a group of cheerful people talking and drinking with the others. Men were portrayed in black suits with top hats while women were dressed in luxurious costumes and masks. Another one is The Races at Longchamp, this picture expresses another activity of upper class people, horse racing. A woman in her luxurious dress was shown in the corner of this picture with a motion of racehorses moving toward viewers. Manet also painted pictures with subject matter of warfare. These pictures are helpful for students who study the history of French. First picture of war was Battle of Kearsarge and Alabama which was known as Battle of Cherbourg from the American Civil War that took place off the French coast. Another well-known one was The Execution of Emperor Maximilian when French interrupted Mexico.

Edouard Manet has many followers who called him the father of impressionism. He became friends with many impressionists such as Berthe Morisot, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas and etc. Eva Gonzales was only one official student of Manet. After she worked and studied with Manet for years, she improved her skills and expanded her own

techniques which were even more impressionist than Manet.² At that time, photograph was very popular as cameras became portable. As a consequence, the popularity of painting of realistic image dropped as this revolutionary invention produced faster and more realistic products.

In conclusion, Edouard Manet was the very first person who bridged the gap between realism³ and impressionism⁴. By his transition, it gave more variety of painting styles which totally and surprisingly changed the age of art to modern art. Meanwhile, his works also gave historians evidence for their studies of French history.

² http://www.artble.com/artists/edouard_manet

³ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Realism_\(arts\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Realism_(arts))

⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impressionism>