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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

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.

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-lifes 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.

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.

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.

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