

Thoughts Out of Season

Occasional Reviews & Notes
Of Mutual Interest
Compiled by Tim Forward



Edouard Manet, Plum Brandy, 1878

At a time when the romantic tradition of the first half of the century only lingers among a few surviving masters of that time, the transition from the old imaginative artist and dreamer to the energetic modern worker is found in Impressionism,

The participation of a hitherto ignored people in the political life of France is a social fact that will honour the whole of the close of the nineteenth century. A parallel is found in artistic matters, the way being prepared by an evolution which the public with rare prescience dubbed, from its first appearance, *Intransigent*, which in political language means radical and democratic.

The noble visionaries of other times, whose works are the semblance of worldly things seen by unworldly eyes (not the actual representations of real objects) appear as kings and gods in the far dream-ages of mankind; recluses to whom was given the genius of a dominion over an ignorant multitude. But today the multitude demands to see with its own eyes; and if our later-day art is less glorious, intense and rich, it is not without the compensation of truth, simplicity and childlike charm.

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At that critical hour for the human race when nature desires to work for herself, she requires certain lovers of hers – new and impersonal men placed directly in the communion with the sentiment of their time - to loose the restraint of education, to let hand and eye do what they will, and thus through them reveal herself.

For the mere pleasure of doing so? Certainly not, but to express herself, calm, naked, habitual to those newcomers of tomorrow, of which each one will consent to be an unknown unit in the mighty numbers of universal suffrage, and to place in their power a newer and more succinct means of observing her.¹

¹ Stéphane Mallarmé, "The Impressionists and Edouard Manet," *Art Monthly Review*, 30 September 1876, p.122.