

# AP Art History Snapshot ( all sections handwritten, including analysis)

Name : Rosenast Class: APAH Date Presented: 2019

Image Content area and Number : Content area 4, Image 115

Title/Designation: *Olympia*

Content Area: 4

Artist/Culture:

Edouard Manet, 19<sup>th</sup> c French

Medium: Oil on canvas

Creation Date: 1863

Location: Musee D'Orsey, Paris

Size: 130 x 190 cm

Paste Image(s) in box:



**Historical Context: What role does the context of the piece play in giving the piece meaning (culture, politics, religion, etc.)**

Manet's painting depicts a reclining nude in a bedroom with attendants. While this was subject matter that would have been familiar to any French art viewer, Manet's approach was controversial at the least and potentially revolutionary to western art. While he based his composition and subject matter on the well-known *Venus of Urbino*, a 1538 painting by the Venetian Renaissance artist Titian his approach to the subject was decidedly different. While Titian and, indeed all those who took on this topic, treated their subject with a reverence deserved of a goddess or romanticized image of a woman, Manet chose to present Olympia to us as nothing more than an everyday, modern woman, likely a prostitute no less. Rather than give us an unapproachable representation of an idealized female figure, Manet depicts Olympia as a woman unashamed of her very real body as she gazes directly at the viewer, a confrontational approach that had never been attempted before. His method caused a controversy throughout the art world that gained him much critical contempt, but also some very strong allies.

**Snapshot:** A comprehensive art critique detailing the following items:

Check boxes are for you to make sure you've included each of these as appropriate in your snapshot :

- Form -:
- Function -:
- Content -:
- Context** (include information about the original and subsequent historical and cultural milieu, location of this work, display, life of the artist, and movement, etc...) —:
- Tradition/change —:
- Interpretation** (include different interpretations when appropriate) —:
- Artistic intent —:

**Critical Analysis:** On a **separate sheet**, draft a hand written composition in which you discuss the elements in the check boxes:

**A. Interpretation –**

1. What does the work say to you?

“Look at me. I’m not here for your pleasure or admiration. I’m a person, not an object of affection. Reconsider the way you’ve been looking at art and realize It’s time to change.”

2. What is the mood?

Confrontational. Somewhat aggressive, but quiet and contemplative at the same time.

3. What is the artist saying?

Rethink your preconceived notions of what art is and the role it will play in this modern world.

4. How does it make you feel?

A little defensive at first. Curious as well as to what he’s doing with the painting. Who are these people and what’s happening here? It makes me ask questions, obviously. I want to know more about it.

**B. Judgment –**

1. What do you think about the work?

Obviously, it is not going to be as controversial to me now as it was then. I see images like this all the time. On the other hand, I have to admire his bold fearlessness. He was really taking a chance in what he did. I also really like the style of his painting. I prefer a more natural, personal approach to art. I think it displays more individuality and creativity than following a well-established format would do.

**Possible Themes/Subthemes:**

Gender roles  
 Image of women in art  
 Role of art and artist as a social commentary  
 Changing nature of modern society and art

**Possible connections with other works in the Image Set (list at least 3)**

Image #	Title/Description	Connections
80	Titian, <i>Venus of Urbino</i>	Both reclining nudes, <i>Olympia</i> references Venus in composition but deviates in function and intent
107	Ingres, <i>La Grande Odalisque</i>	Both reclining nudes, <i>Odalisque</i> differs from <i>Olympia</i> in its sense of the exotic. Ingres also employed a liberal exaggeration of anatomical proportions. Not meant as a sociopolitical statement.
126	Picasso, <i>Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)</i>	While not reclining, Picasso's prostitutes are lounging. These, however are highly abstracted and angular; almost brutishly so. They are not meant to exhibit any sense of feminine sexuality.

**Learning Objective(s) this artwork is a good example of (Style, Period, Movement, etc.) because:**

Modernist/Early Impressionist:

Manet's break from traditional painting in content, style and technique led the way for the Impressionists. They took inspiration from his rebellious attitude and approach to painting and carried them to new heights ushering the world into Modern Art.

**Cite Sources (at least 3): books, articles, URL's, etc. (Add more if needed)**

1. <https://smarthistory.org/edouard-manet-olympia/>
2. <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/introduction-ap-arhistory/a/required-works-of-art-for-ap-art-history>
3. <http://www.manet.org/olympia.jsp>

**Scoring Guidelines:**

34% Accuracy

33% Completeness

33% Overall Presentation

## Critical Analysis:

**Form:** Manet chose to use a more two-dimensional plane than had been the tradition. There is no point of perspective to draw the viewers' eye to any central point. There are simply two relatively flat planes, one before the other.

**Function:** Manet was not simply attempting to present a vision of classical beauty through the female form. Instead, through his revolutionary approach, he was attempting to confront the public with a new vision. The function of *Olympia* was to challenge traditional ideas about art in order to bring it into a modern, rapidly changing world.

**Content:** The painting depicts a woman lounging on a settee in her bedroom. She is attended to by a servant who is bringing her flowers, presumably from a lover, or possibly a client. She is also accompanied by a black cat, in an agitated state, presumably a reference to Titian's *Venus* who had a small dog in her attendance, though the dog was quite docile. The inclusion of the cat is up to interpretation.

**Context:** Most of the contextual information for the painting is included in the historical background. However, one element that is important is that the painting was initially submitted for display to the Grande Salon in Paris. The Salon was the most prestigious and traditionally conservative institution in the French art world. The significance of this is that it was a direct challenge to art establishment on the part of Manet. Had he been showing it simply in a local gallery, it would not have gained anywhere near as much notoriety or been able to make such a statement.

**Tradition/Change:** As has been noted, by basing his content and composition on Titian's *Venus*, Manet is making a direct link between his modern work and Titian's traditional work. He is following in the footsteps of the masters; however, he is taking a decidedly different direction. While his content may be similar, his style, technique and attitude toward it is remarkably different. He is taking a very modern and unheard of approach to something that should have been familiar and very comfortable to the general audience.

**Interpretation:** Most agree that Manet's meaning was clear; the world was changing and art needed to change with it. By portraying a long accepted subject in an unacceptable manner, Manet was telling the art world that they needed to rethink their role in society. Manet was embracing the new, but also warning the public that change was coming and that they needed to recognize and embrace that as well.

**Intent:** Manet was using *Olympia*, as well as the previously displayed *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, to challenge the public, but also to shock them into the realization that they were in a changing world. In doing so, he made a name for himself, not only in his lifetime, but also in history, as a revolutionary and artistic innovator.