

# Commentary

Paul Martin Lester, Editor

Édouard Manet was a French painter born in Paris in 1832, seven years before the photographic invention would be announced to the public. By the time Manet was in his twenties, the art world was riven with the fear that their talents would be reduced to copying realistic scenes knowing all the while that a camera could do the job much better, quicker, and cheaper. Hippolyte Paul Delaroche, a painter and friend of fellow Frenchman, Louis Daguerre, the co-inventor of the Daguerreotype photographic process in 1839, reportedly exclaimed when he learned of photography, "From today, painting is dead!" Whether Delaroche actually

made that assertion or not, he did understand that "Daguerre's process completely satisfies all the demands of art" and could be used by painters to capture natural scenes that could then be translated onto canvases (Leggat, 2001).

At the time, however, neither Delaroche nor anyone else fully understood how painting and other fine arts would radically change *because* of the invention and popularity of photography. Manet was one of the first who was instrumental in teaching artists that photography actually freed them to express their inner emotions on their canvases. As

such, he helped accomplish the transition from realism to a new art form that came to be known as Impressionism. Manet's last great work of art, *A Bar at the Folies Bergère*, completed in 1882, is a classic example that many consider a key piece in the transition between the real and the intuitive as expressed on canvas (Pioch, 2002).

At first glance, the painting seems straight forward enough. A young barmaid stands behind a marble counter amid various alcoholic bottles that are for sale while she, a gentleman customer, and the expansive and raucous Folies Bergère are reflected in the



*A Bar at the Folies Bergère*, Édouard Manet, 1882. Courtesy Courtald Institute Galleries, London.

mirror behind her. But all is not what it seems, of course.

Originally opened as a department store in 1860, the Folies Bergère began its music hall life in 1869 named the Folies Trévisé, after its owner, the Duc de Trévisé. During the 4-month "Siege of Paris" beginning in 1870, the building was converted into a public drinking hall. Manet, a member of an artillery unit of the National Guard during the Siege met at the hall with fellow artist Edgar Degas and his brother Eugène and no doubt talked of war, women, and art (Boime, 1996, p. 53). After the conflict, the building was converted in 1871 into an entertainment center with two large spaces for stage acts, "a covered garden, and a horse-shoe shaped theater with fixed seats and balcony" (Collins, 1996, p. 122). Manet called the place a "vast establishment of pleasure, at once theater, circus, and café-concert" (Boime, 1996, p. 53). However, the prominent Duc de Trévisé decided he did not like his name connected with a rowdy dance hall and in 1872, it was renamed the Folies Bergère after a nearby street. In English the name is strangely fitting, the "mad shepherdess." By 1880 it "was recognized as the very epitome of the Parisian ideal of pleasure" (Collins, 1996, p. 121).

When the work was exhibited at the Paris Salon the same year it was completed, critics in the French press found fault in the incongruence of the reflections of the bottles, one at the left with his name and date painted on its label, and the barmaid, whose image should be reflected directly behind her, but is strangely presented off

to one side. But in Manet's attempt to move the art world away from realism, he portrays the double, psychological life of a young, bright blonde barmaid, perhaps sad as she contemplates her fate trapped in a job that she will have until her hair turns gray and her body becomes plump, a future depicted in the view from the mirror.

Sadly, Manet would die the next year from complications of untreated syphilis, a victim of his own carnal desires.

## In This Issue

Whew. After the added work putting together the double issue on typography, it was a pleasure to work on a regular, 64-page journal this time. Also, you should notice that with the publication of this issue, we are back in synch with our seasonal counterpart.

Tracey O. Patton tackles the duo demons of racism and stereotyping and reports how so-called humorous displays during (mostly) Southern fraternity parties by Anglo students use blackface to spread, in her words, racial terrorism.

A continuing topic for researchers published in this journal and in other publications is the concern professionals and academics have about the future of photojournalism production. Mary A. Bock examines how news photography has changed because of the demands of broadband journalism.

Colleagues Jo Anna Grant and Heather Hundley looked at 246 images produced by the Associ-

ated Press photographers that illustrated various stories about those with cancer. The two researchers divided the images into 26 distinct metaphors with sports and war dominating. They concluded that cancer as a sports metaphor can have positive connotations while the war metaphor serves to isolate a patient.

As with any major American metropolis, Los Angeles has a vibrant Chinatown community with its restaurants and souvenir shops which that are enhanced by numerous art galleries that share the streets. Once a month most of the galleries have openings in which wine and egg rolls are not uncommon handful delights. More importantly are the delights of the eye. On one such foray, I happened across the work of Marc Trujillo, an urban landscape painter in the tradition of photorealism who depicts how humans share their spaces with environments that include movie theaters, service stations, and big box stores. Trujillo was gracious enough to not only allow his painting of a moment in the life of a food court at "24008 Riverside Drive" to be published but also explains the visual process he goes through to create his work.

A color photograph by Yale educated and Berkeley resident Katy Grannan caught my eye after it was published in the *New Yorker* magazine. With her carefully composed photographs Grannan explores such themes as relationship, loneliness, and transsexualism. One of her friends/collaborators, Nicole is featured in a series entitled "Another Woman Who Died in her Sleep."

Book editor Lawrence Mullen sent three book reviews this time to add to our collections. The spousal team of Sara E. McNeil and Jack Zibluk reviewed the work of another spousal team, former *JCQ* editor Julianne and Scott, my faithful friends, Newton, *Visual Communication Integrating Media, Art, and Science* and make the point why the work should be considered for visual communication classes, Gary W. Larson reviewed Dave Anderson's photographic essay of the east Texas town of Vidor in *Rough Beauty* with insightful connections between photography and point-of-view, and former book review editor Patsy Watkins wants us to consider Ewen

& Ewen's *Typecasting: On the Arts & Sciences of Human Inequality. A History of Dominant Ideas* as a tool for teaching and research.

As always Dennis Dunleavy's synopses of visually noted works are the first I read when a new *Quarterly* comes out.

## References

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