

ÉDOUARD'S FRIENDS

Manet: Portraying Life is at the Royal Academy, Burlington House, London W1, until 14 April

Édouard Manet could afford to be both an artistic outsider and a Parisian socialite. His well-heeled family paid for him to study painting for 5 years, to take the Grand Tour, and to set up his own salon in 1856. Visitors to the Royal Academy will be confronted by a large reproduction of Fantin-Latour's *L'Atelier aux Batignolles*, which has Manet painting Zacharie Astruc, while Zola, Renoir, and Monet look on. He counted among his friends Offenbach, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Charles Beaudelaire, to whom his wife reputedly played Wagner at his death bed. He scandalised the Paris Salon with *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe* and *Olympia*, with its confrontational *demi-mondaine*, black cat, and black servant. These paintings were shown only in the Salon de Refusés: a small version of the *Dejeuner* has been borrowed from the Courtauld for this show, while *Olympia* remains in the Musée d'Orsay. Strangely, *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, also in the Courtauld, is not on show at all.

As well as attracting public derision, a number of Manet's works shown here

Édouard Manet. Berthe Morisot with a Bouquet of Violets. 1872. Oil on canvas, 55.5 x 40.5 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Acquis avec la participation du Fonds du Patrimoine, de la Fondation Meyer, de Chine Times Group et d'un mécénat coordonné par le quotidien Nikkei, 1998.



Photo copyright RMN (Musée d'Orsay)/Herve Lewandowski.

baffled critics, and continue to do so. What is going on behind Leon's back in *The Luncheon?* and what are we to make of the child and her nanny as the train, unseen, vanishes in a cloud of smoke in *The Railway?* The fabulous portrait of one of his muses, Berthe Morisot, which is used in the poster for the exhibition, shows how much Manet owed to his study of the Spanish masters, Goya and Velasquez, in their use of black and light and shade. The languid study of Mallarmé is a gem, as is the charming *The Monet Family in their Garden at Argenteuil*. The intensely modern *Interior at Arcachon* was painted in 1871 after the Manet family had fled the Paris commune.

Manet suffered with syphilitic locomotor ataxia and died in 1883, aged only 51, 10 days after a leg was amputated for gangrene. He may or may not have been the father of Impressionism — he never exhibited at the big impressionist shows in Paris and preferred the studio to the *plein air* — but he was a terrific portraitist, although the really great works are somewhat diluted in this rather sprawling show. The audio guide is worth listening to; Julian Barnes has been roped in to make some fairly esoteric observations.

Roger Jones
Email: rjones@rcgp.org.uk

10.3399/bjgp13X664388

RED ROSES

It was the end of my first house job and life was wonderful. I was working on a mixed medical ward with many dermatology patients (it was the day when your boss could be a generalist with an interest) and I'd just had an amazing weekend away in the middle of the Yorkshire dales with my other half (fellow houseman, met as medical students), where I thought he may propose. I got back on the ward on the Monday morning to find the biggest bunch of red roses I'd ever seen waiting for me on the nursing station. I thought I'd find a ring in the middle of one of the stems but no, it was from one of the older ladies who'd been discharged home the previous week. She'd been admitted with a skin condition that included quite aggressive fluid restriction. The note read:

'To Dr Burgess — thank you for arguing with the consultant that I needed an extra 100 ml for a cup of tea to get me going every morning. It made such a difference to me.'

It's always the little things, the personal things, that people appreciate most.

Helen Lester
Email: h.e.lester@bham.ac.uk

Footnote

I've spent most of my adult life 'arguing' with authority one way or another, usually about ways to improve patient care, and Huw proposed the following week in the much more romantic setting of the hospital canteen.

Excerpt from *Good Trainee Guide*, RCGP Publications, 2013, in press.

DOI: 10.3399/bjgp13X664397

100 mls by Helen Wilson.

