

Manet: A Model Family
Large Print Labels

Manet: A Model Family

Families are complicated. The family of groundbreaking French artist Édouard Manet (1832–1883) was more complicated than many. Members included a stern patriarch who died of syphilis, an immigrant wife who was once a family employee, and a stepson whose paternity is ambiguous. Despite this entangled—and potentially scandalous—web of connections, Manet’s family members cultivated close relationships with one another, served as the painter’s most frequent models, and supported his career with their considerable financial resources.

Though controversial in his own time, today Manet is a legend. His paintings fused compositions and motifs from the art of the past with depictions of contemporary Parisian life. These innovations, combined with his bold brushwork, have inspired generations of artists. His family also fueled his renown by ambitiously cultivating the artist’s posthumous legacy. Just 25 years after his death, Isabella Stewart Gardner paid dearly to acquire a portrait by Manet—a meteoric

rise for a painter who struggled to sell artworks during his lifetime.

Families remain a driving force behind artistic creativity. This exhibition, along with **Mary Ellen Mark: A Seattle Family** in the Fenway Gallery and Mickalene Thomas's **Sandra, She's a Beauty** on the Anne H. Fitzpatrick Façade, all explore the importance of families—both by birth and choice—and the ways they have shaped art throughout history.

Prologue: Even Happy Families Have Secrets

The Manet family story revolves around three main characters we can see here: Édouard, his wife, Suzanne Leenhoff, and her son, Léon. Painted on a family trip to the seaside, **The Croquet Party** (right) shows Léon turned away from the viewer. Suzanne, in gray, prepares to hit a croquet ball. In the portrait by his friend Carolus-Duran (far right), Manet poses with a boater hat pushed up and flushed cheeks, his good humor and sociability shining through.

Édouard met Suzanne, a Dutch musician from a modest background, when she worked as a piano teacher for his wealthy Parisian family. They married more than a decade later. Now, as then, questions surround Léon's paternity. Was Léon Édouard's biological son, the son of a traveling Swiss musician, or the son of Édouard's father, Auguste? The last scenario would make Léon both Édouard's stepson and his half-brother, a potentially scandalous situation. In public, Suzanne pretended Léon was her younger brother, and scholars still

debate the identity of his biological father. We will probably never know for sure. We do know that despite these questions the trio was a close-knit, happy family unit.



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

The Croquet Party

1871

Oil On Canvas

The Nelson-Atkins Museum
of Art, Kansas City Missouri
Gift of Henry W. and Marion
H. Bloch 2015.13.11



Carolus-Duran (French,
1838-1917)

Édouard Manet

1876

Oil On Canvas

Lent by Museum of Art,
Rhode Island School of
Design, Purchased with the
Frederick Lippitt Bequest
2007.68

Manet and Modern Art

Édouard Manet is often described as a founder of modern art. What makes him modern?

Landmark canvases like his **Olympia** (below left) showed contemporary Parisians—barmaids, sex workers, bohemian artists—on a scale normally reserved for royalty or historical figures. Manet's compositions also consciously quoted famous art historical precedents. The blending of old and new was groundbreaking and scandalized audiences and critics at the time. Family members were among those cast in controversial scenes, like **Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe** (see below right; that's his brother-in-law on the left and a composite of his two brothers on the right).

Manet's brushwork was particularly visible, with big strokes and contrasting blocks of color placed next to each other. His painting technique and choice of contemporary subject matter inspired the Impressionists, a group of artists who exhibited together in Paris in the late 1800s. Their work depicted modern

life in paintings that were even more radically sketchy. The group included Manet's friends, admirers, and even his sister-in-law, Berthe Morisot. Nonetheless, he declined their invitation to show with them and remained committed to succeeding at the Salon, a long-established juried exhibition at the center of the Paris art world.

Manet's talents and magnetic personality—captured in the nearby portrait—combined to make him a catalyst for broader artistic change.



Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883), **Olympia**, 1863. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Patrice Schmidt



Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883), **Dejeuner sur l'herbe**, 1863. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Benoît Touchard / Mathieu Rabeau

Meet the Cast of Characters

Use this family tree to meet the exhibition's cast of characters and understand their connections to one another. Manet's family was at the center of his world. They supported him artistically, emotionally, and financially.

Move the circles to learn more about these characters. Look for them throughout the show; they were the painter's most frequent models.

The Painter

Édouard's father wanted him to be a lawyer, but Édouard knew he was an artist. He painted with raw talent, obsessed with art of the past and depicting modern life. Like his father, he died of complications of syphilis.

The Model Wife

Suzanne was a gifted pianist. At 23, unmarried and a recent immigrant, she likely lost her job as the Manets' piano teacher when she got pregnant with Léon. She and Édouard married a decade later. The artist depicted Suzanne more than anyone else. After Édouard died, much of the Manet family cut her off financially.

The Mystery

As a teenager, Léon learned that Suzanne, the woman he thought was his sister, was his mother. He likely never knew the identity of his biological father. Léon was a frequent model for Édouard. He promoted the painter's legacy—even when the Manet family excluded him.

The Judging Father

Like his ancestors, Auguste was an accomplished lawyer. His son's interest in art was a disappointment. Nonetheless, they shared a genuine affection. Auguste may have fathered Léon when Suzanne worked as the family piano teacher. He died of complications of syphilis a decade later.

The Matriarch

Eugenie grew up with money and a hairsbreadth from royalty—the Swedish king was her godfather. Widowed at 51, she thrived as Édouard's hostess and bankrolled his exhibitions. After Édouard's death, she claimed he had no legitimate heir.

Friend, Colleague, Sister-in-Law

Berthe Morisot and Édouard inspired each other's work. Morisot posed for him nearly a dozen times but stopped modeling when she married his younger brother Eugène. As a painter, she became a legend in her own right.

The Constant Support

Eugène traveled extensively with Édouard and posed for him too. After marrying Berthe Morisot, he encouraged her to paint and exhibit her work. He doted on their only child, Julie. Eugène tried painting and writing but never found gainful employment.

The Last Manet

Her mother's favorite model, Julie was the last heir to the Manet name. Orphaned at age 16, Julie inherited considerable financial and artistic wealth. She preserved the memories of her mother, her uncle Édouard, and the many artists who helped care for her.

“ [It is] a family secret of which I never learned the last word, having been pampered and spoiled by both [Édouard and Suzanne], who indulged all my whims. We lived happily, the three of us; above all I lived happily with no concerns. Therefore, I had no need to question my birth.”

—Léon Leenhoff

Act. 1 Old Masters, New Family

In 1849, when Manet was just 17, his life changed forever. His family gave him permission to study art, and he met Suzanne Leenhoff.

Manet chafed against his formal art training but heeded his teacher's charge to engage with art of the past. He cast contemporary Parisians in compositions inspired by the Old Masters—famous European painters working before 1800—whose works he was able to see in the Louvre and other art collections. While his colleagues focused on ancient Rome, he remained firmly rooted in local subjects, apparently stating: "We are in Paris. We intend to stay here." Suzanne and her son, Léon, were critical to these experiments. Léon was an exceptionally flexible model, making chameleon-like appearances in service of Manet's artistic needs.

Manet married Suzanne in 1863. The nature of his relationship with her and Léon before the marriage remains unclear, although

paintings nearby document their closeness in this early period. Questions about Léon's paternity compound the ambiguity of their connection at this time.



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

**Monsieur and Madame
Auguste Manet**

1860

Oil On Canvas

Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Acquired thanks to the
generosity of the Rouart-
Manet family, Mrs.

Jeannette Veil-Picard, and
a foreign donor, for the
Musée du Jeu de Paume,
1977

When Manet painted this double portrait, his father was paralyzed from the effects of late-stage syphilis. The artist sought to depict Auguste in a dignified way befitting a judge and the family patriarch. Manet settled on showing him with his eyes cast down contemplatively. A single dash of red paint adorns Auguste's lapel with a ribbon, signaling his status as a **chevalier** of the Legion of Honor—a significant achievement in France. Demonstrating her role as her husband's caretaker, Eugénie stands behind Auguste and looks downward, mirroring his

frozen gaze.

This was among Manet's first successful submissions to the Paris Salon, the principal exhibition venue in 1800s Paris. Critics were unimpressed. One wrote: "M and Mme. M have more than once had reason to rue the day they put a brush in the hand of this merciless portrayer."



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

**Study for Moses Saved
from the Waters**

1852-1861

Oil On Canvas

Private Collection

This is likely one of Manet's first depictions of Suzanne. The faceless infant resembles Léon—his blond hair is reminiscent of other childhood depictions. Manet based this preparatory sketch on Italian Renaissance painter Paolo Veronese's painting of the biblical story of a pharaoh's daughter rescuing the infant Moses (below). This work is an early example of Manet's efforts to cast friends and family in scenes borrowed from historic paintings. It also testifies to the artist's closeness to Suzanne—and how she catalyzed his innovative work—between Léon's birth in 1852 and their marriage in 1863.



Jean Louis Delignon (French, 1755–about 1804) after Paolo Veronese (Italian, 1528–1588), **Moses Saved** (detail), about 1786–1808. Etching and engraving. British Museum, London. © The Trustees of the British Museum



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

**Study for Surprised
Nymph/ Moses Saved
from the Waters**

1858-1861

Oil On Board

The National Museum
of Art, Architecture and
Design, Oslo



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

La Toilette

1861

Etching

Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston. Katherine E.
Bullard Fund in memory of
Francis Bullard



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

After the Bath

about 1861

Etching

Pen and sepia ink with
wash, over red chalk, with
corrections in black chalk,
on thin wove paper

Private Collection

This oil sketch, ink drawing, and print all relate to Manet's efforts to create an ambitious early career oil painting for which Suzanne Leenhoff posed nude (below, left).

Suzanne's pose and nudity reference paintings by Rembrandt and other Dutch-speaking artists working in the 1600s who depicted scenes from the story of Susanna and the Elders (below, right). In the biblical tale, the young Susanna is falsely accused of adultery by lecherous old men and then defended by a gallant young hero, Daniel. Perhaps Susanna's story resonated with Manet, who may have felt compelled to defend Suzanne from the consequences of the

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advances of his father.



Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883), **Surprised Nymph**, 1861. Oil on canvas, 144.5 x 112 cm (56 7/8 x 44 1/4 in.) Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires. HIP / Art Resource, NY



Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669), **Susanna**, 1636. Oil on panel. Mauritshaus, The Hague



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

Spanish Cavaliers

1859-1860

Oil on canvas

Musée des Beaux-Arts de
Lyon



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

Boy Carrying a Tray

1860-1861

Watercolor and gouache
over graphite on paper

The Phillips Collection,
acquired 1922

Édouard Manet (French, 1832-1883)

Boy Carrying a Tray

1862

Etching on Japanese paper

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Otis Norcross Fund

Spanish Cavaliers is one of Manet's earliest depictions of Léon Leenhoff. Léon was around 7 years old when he posed holding a tray. The artist modeled this painting on a variety of works by Diego Velázquez and other Spanish painters from the 1600s.

In the following years, Manet revisited this image. Here, we see a watercolor where he crops the composition, focusing only on Léon. He then created a series of prints where Léon's pose is reversed.

As Manet translated this image from oil to paper, he explored how different media could change the feeling and focus of a composition. Other family models appear in print, but only Léon is routinely reversed and heavily reworked when translated into this medium.

Manet was fascinated by printmaking. It offered endless possibilities for revising and changing a composition, in addition to allowing for wider circulation. Léon was especially critical to this interest. Manet revisited the image of him holding a sword—based on an oil painting shown below—again and again. The artist reversed, manipulated, and reworked Léon's likeness for public distribution in his published collections of prints.

The image of Manet's cousin Amboise Adam in a straw hat may have been one of Manet's first etchings. The drafts for the cover for his first published collection of prints include a pile of props that had been featured in paintings of family members.



Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883), **Boy with a Sword**, 1861. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Erwin Davis, 1889



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

A Man in a Straw Hat

1861

Etching

Samuel Putnam Avery
Collection, Miriam and Ira
D. Wallach Division of Art,
Prints and Photographs,
The New York Public
Library, Astor, Lenox and
Tilden Foundations



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

**Frontispiece: Chapeau et
guitare [Hat and guitar]**

1862

Watercolor and print

Samuel Putnam Avery
Collection, Miriam and Ira
D. Wallach Division of Art,
Prints and Photographs,
The New York Public
Library, Astor, Lenox and
Tilden Foundations



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

**Frontispiece: Chapeau et
guitare [Hat and guitar]**

1862-1874

Etching and aquatint
Samuel Putnam Avery
Collection, Miriam and Ira
D. Wallach Division of Art,
Prints and Photographs,
The New York Public
Library, Astor, Lenox and
Tilden Foundations



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

**Unpublished
Frontispiece**

1862

Etching on blue paper
Samuel Putnam Avery
Collection, Miriam and Ira
D. Wallach Division of Art,
Prints and Photographs,
The New York Public
Library, Astor, Lenox and
Tilden Foundations

Édouard Manet (French, 1832-1883)

The Boy with a Sword Turned to the Left III,

Third State

1862

Etching and aquatint

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Bequest of W. G.

Russell Allen



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

**The Boy with a Sword
Turned to the Left III,**

Fourth State

1862

Etching and aquatint

Museum of Fine Arts,

Boston. Katherine E.

Bullard Fund in memory of

Francis Bullard



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

**Young Boy Peeling a
Pear**

about 1868

Oil on canvas

Nationalmuseum,
Stockholm

Unidentified French photographer

Léon Leenhoff

1800s

Carte-de-visite

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

Purchased as the gift of Mrs. Charles Engelhard
and children in memory of Mr. Charles Engelhard,
1974

Édouard Manet (French, 1832-1883)

Boy Blowing Soap Bubbles

1868-1869

Etching

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Mrs. Josiah
Bradlee

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Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

Boy Blowing Bubbles

1867

Oil on Canvas

Calouste Gulbenkian
Museum, Lisbon

Léon was never the subject of a solo portrait. Instead, when Léon was young, Manet posed him in costume to create scenes that conjured famous art of past centuries.

Manet manipulated Léon's face to serve his creative goals. In **Boy Blowing Bubbles**, inspired by an iconic painting of children from the 1700s (below, left), Léon looks like a young boy. Manet then reproduced and reversed this image in print.

Roughly a year later, Manet painted Léon as a grown man in **Boy Peeling a Pear**, on view nearby, based on a historic Spanish painting of an old man (below, right). Léon's changing face reveals his rapid transition

into adolescence and how Manet adapted his model's features to reflect the historical paintings that inspired his compositions.



Jean-Siméon Chardin (French, 1699–1779), **Soap Bubbles**, about 1733–34. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Wentworth Fund, 1949



Jusepe de Ribera (Spanish, died 1652), **The Sense of Smell**, about 1615. Oil on canvas. Abelló Collection, Madrid. Photo: © Joaquín Cortes



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

Fishing

1862-1863

Oil on Canvas

Lent by the Metropolitan Museum
of Art, Purchase, Mr. and Mrs.

Richard J. Bernhard Gift, 1957

(57.10)

Manet painted this work to celebrate his marriage to Suzanne. He based the composition on a variety of Old Master sources (see two below). In the lower right corner, Manet casts himself as one of his artistic idols, Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens, and Suzanne as Rubens's wife and muse, Helena Fourment. Together, they survey a landscape resembling the Manet family's ancestral lands just outside of Paris, presumably their shared property after their marriage.

Léon sits in the shadows on the far riverbank, holding a fishing rod. His position within the Manet family landscape remains shrouded in mystery.



Annibale Carracci (Italian, 1560–1609), **Fishing**, 1575–1600. Oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: Mathieu Rabeau



Louis Marvy (French, 1815–1850, engraver) and Auguste Trichon (French, 1814–1898, engraver) after Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1577–1640), **Landscape with Rainbow**, 19th century. Wood engraving. Photo: Christopher Campbell

Act. 2 Three Manet Women

Édouard painted three women known as “Madame Manet.” He cared deeply for all of them.

The first, his mother Eugenie, is the subject of the portrait in Isabella Stewart Gardner’s collection. In the home she shared with Édouard and Suzanne, Eugenie hosted social gatherings for her son and his friends. She helped him move easily between rowdy bohemian cafes and genteel salons. Possessing considerable wealth, she financed Manet’s career.

The second was his own wife, Suzanne. After their marriage, Édouard no longer depicted her as a nude or semi-anonymous model. Starting with a painted celebration of their wedding, he painted her only as a respectable upper-class woman.

The third was the painter Berthe Morisot. He painted her 11 times in the six years between their first meeting and her marriage to his

younger brother Eugène. When she became a member of the Manet family, Morisot stopped modeling for the painter.

While Eugenie and Berthe were upper-class Parisiennes by birth, Suzanne married into this position. It created tension—and sometimes unexpected closeness—between the three women.



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

Madame Auguste Manet

about 1866

Oil on Canvas

Isabella Stewart Gardner
Museum, Boston

After Édouard's father died in 1862, his widow Eugenie adopted customary black mourning clothes. Manet carefully depicted her shiny silk dress and dense curly hair, subtly differentiating shade, form, and texture with strokes of black-in-black paint. These passages of black contrast with her piercing stare and pale face. Here, Eugenie is a force to be reckoned with.

Manet's rendering of a powerful older woman appealed to Isabella Stewart Gardner, who acquired the painting in 1909. It inspired Mickalene Thomas's choice to present a portrait of her own mother (below) on the museum's facade.



Mickalene Thomas (American, b. 1971), **Sandra, She's a Beauty**, 2009. Reimagined for the Anne H. Fitzpatrick Façade, 2024.

“Manet became himself through resistance and by looking at and accepting the world around him—a world that had nothing to do with justice triumphing or the rendering of “correct” forms in a drawing or painting—**as it was** ... Édouard’s mother was a fact of Paris, a fact of her gender, and the fact of what her son saw in her formal blackness: a woman who, like Manet’s other women, gave the ever-yearning artist everything and nothing, just like modern life itself.”

—Hilton Als, writer and art critic
Excerpt from “Paris is A Mother” in the **Manet: A Model Family** exhibition catalog

Unidentified French Photographer

Suzanne Manet

about 1865-1868

Carte-de-visite

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

Purchased as the gift of Mrs. Charles Engelhard
and children in memory of Mr. Charles Engelhard,

1974



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

**Madame Manet at the
Piano**

1868

Oil on Canvas

This painting has complicated origins. Manet made it after his friend Edgar Degas painted a double portrait of Édouard listening to Suzanne play the piano. Displeased with how his wife appeared—or his friend’s audacity to show his wife at all—Manet slashed Suzanne’s face from the canvas (below, left). He painted this work a year later, a rejoinder to what he considered Degas’s failed efforts.

Manet once again looked to the Old Masters for inspiration. Suzanne’s portrait was partly inspired by a Dutch genre scene, Johannes Vermeer’s **The Concert** (below, right: stolen from the Gardner’s collection in 1990). In the same year Manet painted **Madame Manet at the Piano**, he saw the Vermeer in Paris; in

the 1860s it belonged to one of his friends.



Edgar Degas (French, 1834–1917), **Monsieur and Madame Édouard Manet**, 1868. Oil on canvas. Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art. HIP / Art Resource, NY



Johannes Vermeer (Dutch, 1632–1675), **The Concert**, 1663–66. Oil on canvas. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

The Convalescent

1876-1880

Etching

Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston. H. E. Bolles Fund

This print captures Suzanne recovering from an illness. Its date coincides with an 1879 letter that Manet sent to his good friend, painter Claude Monet, whose wife had recently died. Manet wrote: "I have also just suffered terribly because my wife is still lying down in bed without being able to move at all. However, she is now out of danger, and you know better than anyone what it's like to be forced to give constant care to someone ill. I don't go out, I don't see anyone..."



Édouard Manet (French, 1832-1883)
Madame Édouard Manet (Suzanne Leenhoff)
about 1873
Oil on canvas
Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot (1876-1967), 1967 (67.187.81)

Suzanne appears dressed for a stroll, with a jaunty hat and umbrella under her arm. After Manet's death, Léon used photographs of paintings left in the studio to compile an inventory. The photograph of this painting (below) demonstrates that more detail was added to Suzanne's face after Manet's death, perhaps painted by Suzanne's brothers, who were also artists.



Fernand Lochard (French, 1824-1889), **Madame Manet** (detail), in **Album of photographs of the work of Édouard Manet**, about 1883, 59r. The Morgan Library & Museum, New York (MA3950). Purchased as the gift of Mrs. Charles Engelhard and children in memory of Mr. Charles Engelhard, 1974



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

Berthe Morisot

1869-1873

Oil on Canvas

The Cleveland Museum of
Art, Bequest of Léonard C.
Hanna, Jr. 1958.34

Manet was drawn to Berthe Morisot's painterly talent and angular appearance—a contrast to Suzanne's voluptuous figure. Nonetheless, in this painting, Manet transforms Morisot into a mirror of her future sister-in-law. Like the portrait of Suzanne nearby, the usually gaunt painter appears with a full figure and an elaborate hat. Her sketchy hands also recall Manet's approach to those of Suzanne.

The sisters-in-law were close. Though she had limited money, Suzanne bought the portrait of Berthe at the posthumous sale of Manet's studio contents. When Suzanne struggled financially after her husband's death, the wealthy Berthe stepped in to provide extra funds.

“Morisot observed that Manet once reworked a canvas 25 times to achieve an image that to him appeared effortless. Her aspiration was parallel, but conversely, it was her “principle never to try to rectify a blunder.” For much of her career, she abandoned unsuccessful starts rather than rework a canvas. She lamented how Manet “talked to me about finishing my work” and added, “I do not see what I can do.” The speed at which this portrait of her appears to have been painted, with its sketchy brushwork and unfinished appearance, echoes Morisot’s own ambition and may have been Manet’s nonverbal way to acknowledge her painting desires and to show her how he would achieve them.”

—Bill Scott, painter

Excerpt from the entry for **Berthe Morisot** (1869–73) in the **Manet: A Model Family** exhibition catalog

Édouard Manet (French, 1832-1883)

Berthe Morisot in Outline

1872-1874

Crayon lithograph on chine collé

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of W. G. Russell Allen



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

Berthe Morisot in Black

1872-1874

Lithograph on chine collé

Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston. Gift of Samuel
Putnam Avery

Berthe Morisot was one of Manet's favorite models. The two prints here are some of the artist's last images of her. Manet stopped depicting Morisot as soon as she married his younger brother Eugène. Eugène, already a supporter of his elder brother's artistic efforts, dedicated himself to Berthe's budding career.



Eugène Manet (French,
1833-1892)

**Berthe Morisot and Her
Daughter, Julie Manet**
1885

Watercolor and graphite on
paper

Private Collection



Eugène Manet (French,
1833-1892)

Summer's Day

1879

Pastel on gray paper

Private Collection

Eugène Manet also painted, though he never found the success of his wife or brother. His watercolors of Berthe and their daughter, Julie, shown here, capture their shared world. Always an enthusiastic admirer of Édouard's art, Berthe seems to have been less impressed with Eugène's watercolors. In a letter, he gently noted: "I wouldn't mind at all if you were to compliment me a bit on my painting."

Act 3. Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder

In 1870, the Manets' life in Paris literally exploded. First, the Prussian army besieged the capital in the final campaign of the Franco-Prussian war. Shortly after, the Paris Commune led an insurrection against the ruling government. Amid the chaos, Édouard sent Suzanne, Léon, and Eugenie to the southwest of France while he and his brothers stayed behind to serve in the National Guard.

During the months-long separation, the artist sent letters to his loved ones by hot air balloon, the only way for mail to depart the encircled capital. Some of the letters are on display here. The artist provides updates on the deteriorating situation in the capital, waxes poetic about how much he misses Suzanne, and yearns for news from her. The family's eventual reunion in the southwest of France spurred Manet's creativity.



Édouard Manet (French, 1832-1883)

Reading

about 1868-1873

Oil on canvas

Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Gift of the Princess Edmond de Polignac (née Winaretta Singer), 1947

In the early 1870s, Manet added Léon—reading behind his mother—to a solo portrait of Suzanne he had painted in the 1860s. Perhaps the revision commemorates Manet's love for his inner family circle. Or maybe it recognizes adult Léon's contributions to the Manet family. Either way, by adding Léon later, Manet collapsed the age difference between mother and son—here, they look more like the brother and sister they purported to be in public.



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

Interior at Arachon

1871

Oil on Canvas

Clark Art Institute,

Williamstown,

Massachusetts, USA



Édouard Manet (French,
1832-1883)

**Study for Interior at
Arachon**

1871

Watercolor, brown ink, and
graphite on off-white wove
squared paper

Harvard Art Museums/
Fogg Museum, Bequest of
William G. Russell Allen

Away from the front line, Manet painted a rare double portrait of mother and son. This drawing and painting show a scene from the reunification with his family: Suzanne and Léon sitting in front of an open window at the seaside town of Arcachon. The fact that the artist both drew and painted this moment suggests its importance. Manet especially labored over the drawing, a page cut from the artist's sketchbook dense with layers of pencil, ink, and watercolor.

Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883)

Letter to Suzanne Manet from Paris

September 30, 1870

Ink on paper

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Gift of
Mrs. Henry T. Curtiss, 1971

Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883)

**Letter to Suzanne and Eugénie Manet from
Paris**

October 5, 1870

Ink on paper

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Gift of
Mrs. Henry T. Curtiss, 1971

Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883)

Letter to Suzanne Manet from Paris

December 1, 1870

Ink on paper

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Gift of
Mrs. Henry T. Curtiss, 1971

Act 4. Keeping the Manet Legacy

Édouard died young. He contracted syphilis, like his father, and passed away at age 51 from its late-stage complications.

The family came together to honor his legacy, but fractures quickly appeared. Manet's will left his portion of the family fortune to Suzanne and Léon. His mother ignored his wishes, asserting that Suzanne and Édouard had no legitimate heirs. Four-year-old Julie Manet, the only child of the artist's brother Eugène and his wife, Berthe Morisot, became the sole Manet heir.

Suzanne sold her late husband's paintings to survive. Léon created comprehensive inventories of Manet's work. He also helped his mother sell unfinished paintings that other painters had retouched to make them appear more complete and therefore more valuable. Archival evidence suggests he knowingly sold fakes after Suzanne's death.

Léon and Julie both worked extensively with
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scholars, artists, and museums to cultivate Édouard's reputation. When Léon died in 1927, Manet was famous. By the time Julie died in 1966, he was a titan of modern art.



Berthe Morisot (French,
1841–1895)

**Fillette en mauve [Little
girl in mauve]**

1883

Oil on Canvas

Cathy Lasry

Morisot painted her daughter, Julie Manet, age 4, with a signature approach: so sketchy the work appears almost unfinished. Early in life, Julie became her mother's painting companion and favored model. Like Édouard, Berthe relied on family members—her sisters, husband, daughter, and others—to pose for her.

Orphaned in her teens, Julie inherited the entire Manet estate. It included significant financial resources, real estate, and an astounding collection of paintings by Manet, Morisot, and a range of Impressionist painters.



Fernand Lochard (French, 1824–1889, photographer)
Léon Lenhoff (French, 1852-1927, compiler)
Study for Surprised Nymph, in Album of photographs of works by Édouard Manet, vol. 2
about 1883

Quarter black-brown leather over marbled paper covered boards, photographs, ink on paper
The Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Purchased as the gift of Mrs. Charles Engelhard and children in memory of Mr. Charles Engelhard, 1974

Suzanne Manet (Dutch, 1829–1906)

Carnet des comptes

1892-1900

Blue leather binding

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

Purchased as the gift of Mrs. Charles Engelhard and children in memory of Mr. Charles Engelhard, 1974

Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)

**Letter to Léon Leenhoff from Giverny par
Vernon**

December 20, 1884

Ink on paper

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

Purchased as the gift of Mrs. Charles Engelhard
and children in memory of Mr. Charles Engelhard,
1974

These archival records detailing Suzanne and Léon's activities after Manet's death present critical information regarding the painter's life and work. Artist Claude Monet sent Léon a letter about a memorial banquet for Manet. Suzanne used a small notebook to record her dwindling finances and forced sales of artworks. Léon pasted photographs onto annotated cards as part of an inventory of the contents of Manet's studio. (These were later bound into albums, including the one shown here.)

Together they demonstrate the mother and son's key—if sometimes compromising—role in cultivating Manet's legacy.

Bernard Berenson (American, 1865–1959)
**Letter to Isabella Stewart Gardner from
Sintra, Portugal**
April 10, 1909
Ink on paper
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston

The Nation (established New York, 1865,
publisher) and Bernard Berenson (American, 1865–
1959, contributor)
“Art: A Show of Fair Women, London,”
March 25, 1909
Printed ink on paper
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston

At the time of his death in 1883, Manet was a controversial artist who struggled to sell his paintings. Things had changed dramatically by 1909 when Isabella Stewart Gardner's art advisor Bernard Berenson sent this letter. He had finally located a Manet painting for her to buy—something she had long desired. Describing **Madame Auguste Manet**, on display in this gallery, as a "colossal thing," he also sent Isabella an article praising the painting. She bought it, responding to Berenson with a telegraph saying "YE MANET," as his letter instructed her to do.



Édouard Manet (French,
1832–1883)

Monsieur Jules Dejouy
1879

Oil on Canvas

Lent by Amgueddfa Cymru -
Museum Wales. Accepted in lieu
of inheritance tax and allocated
to Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum
Wales, 2020; conservation funded
by the TEFAF Museum Restoration
Fund, the Finnis Scott Foundation,
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Cymru

Manet painted this portrait as an homage to his beloved paternal cousin. An accomplished lawyer, Jules Dejouy wears the customary garb to argue in court and holds a bright blue folder of legal papers. The folder cover bears Édouard's signature, as if Jules's next case may be related to the Manet family.

In fact, Jules found himself in the middle of disputes between Eugenie and Suzanne after Édouard's death. Ultimately, Suzanne did not inherit her husband's estate—despite his wishes. Perhaps to make up for this loss, Jules let Suzanne live rent-free in a small house on family land for years.



Formerly attributed to Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883), possibly by Édouard Vibert (French, 1867–1899)

Madame Manet in the Conservatory

about 1883-1895

Oil on Canvas

Private Collection

Manet occasionally made multiple versions of his own paintings. This painting closely resembles a portrait of Suzanne in the collection of the Nasjonmuseet in Oslo, Norway (below.) Curious about the relationship between the two works, a team of conservators and art historians compared this painting to the one in Norway. Their technical analysis supported the conclusion that it is a copy by another artist—possibly Suzanne's nephew, Édouard Vibert—while the Oslo painting is by Manet.

Nonetheless, as the provenance below shows, the painting passed through the hands of collectors who knew Manet well. Notably,

his close friend Théodore Duret—who helped organize the painter's posthumous sale—owned this canvas and said Manet made it. This work highlights how the family's sometimes questionable stewardship of Manet's work presents art historical conundrums.



Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883), **Madame Manet in the Conservatory**, 1879. Oil on canvas. Nationalmuseum, Oslo. Photo: Nasjonalmuseet/Høstland, Børre

“... the garden bench portrait, hung in the couple’s bedroom, indicates that he shared something different and deeper with Suzanne, the companion of his whole adult life. Much of the background greenery, like the bench and the shawl tossed over it, appears to have been painted at top speed, but the treatment of Suzanne’s head is another matter. Described in exquisite, painstaking detail, here is a likeness ... at once tender and matter-of-fact. Before parting with it in 1895, Suzanne commissioned a copy (seen here), probably from her nephew, the sickly, eccentric Sunday painter Édouard Vibert (1867–1899). Until her death, it hung in her bedroom, marking the place of the lost original.”

—Emily Beeny, Curator, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Excerpt from “Suzanne: The Private Portraits” in the **Manet: A Model Family** exhibition catalog

Chat and Relax

Sometimes, when we learn more about an artist's biography, our view of their work shifts.

How does what you learn about Manet's family story impact what you see in his paintings?

We invite you to sit, consider, read, and discuss.