Rents Natalia Viktorovna
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Natalia Viktorovna Rents
University of Pittsburgh, USA

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According to standard art historical narrative, painters who are nowadays grouped under the umbrella of Impressionism brought a revolution in the art establishment of the mid-nineteenth-century France. Fundamental to this historical understanding of Impressionism becomes a vision of an artist as a struggling innovator who confronted and defeated the aesthetic as well as institutional conventions of the day [1]. The annual Salon of the French Academy of Fine Arts – the primary venue for the public exhibition of painting in mid nineteenth-century France – privileged traditional genres of history paintings, large-scale landscapes and classical nudes. The Impressionists, as it is habitually noted by scholars, struggled to subvert the standards of art for the enlightened bourgeois public and undermine the institutional framework of the Academy. In this context, Edouard Manet's ***Olympia*** marks the inauguration of the new and the conclusion of the old painting. "You are only the first in the decrepitude of your art," wrote Charles Baudelaire to Manet in 1865, certain of the inevitability of a new, modern, art regime [Cited in: 4, p. 338]. Working outside the Academy and free from the restraints of the Salon, the Impressionists reached out to a wider audience and appealed to it in a new aesthetic idiom. As put by Lionello Venturi in ***The Aesthetic Idea of Impressionism***, they painted "simple trees instead of monumental trees; peasant cottages instead of palaces; plain girls instead of great ladies; working men instead of nobleman" [13, p. 41]. Contemporary life in all its complexity with an emphasis on the physical reality became a characteristically Impressionist theme painted in a sensationally immediate, "impressionist" style further animated with lush radiant color.

Such assessment of Impressionism and its origins is underpinned by a distinctly linear view of history of painting and its developments. Within the given intellectual tradition of high modernism, the spotlight shines on a place of a given artist or an artwork under discussion in time, isolated from the circumstances of production, original reception and consumption. This theoretical framework assumes the possibility of a single set of aesthetic and moral values, which in its turn stands for a single coherent system for value appraisals, for judging art. However, when we are approaching the nineteenth-century art in historical terms, we must avoid the trap of inflicting these values in a linear succession and turn to a critical reconsideration of nineteenth-century value structures. More recently, these assumptions of high modernism have been subjected to heavy criticism.

What follows is an attempt to consider alternative visions of the movement that dominate the discipline nowadays and define how successfully or unsuccessfully recent art historical literature questions the heritage of high modernism.

I would like to make a nod in the direction of Francophone art historians and consider the theoretical stance assumed by certain scholars. For the most part, French scholars and critics challenge the notion of Impressionism as a radical and innovative art. For example, in an introductory essay to the exhibition catalogue, *Origins of Impressionism*, Henri Loyrette justly reminds the audience that back in the 1860s, it would have been erroneous to suggest that the artists – not yet known as the Impressionists – were "campaigning" for the overthrow of contemporary art [Tinterow, Loyrette, 1994]. The master of landscape, Cézanne, revered Poussin and Claude. Less than a year after Eugene Delacroix's death in 1863, Henri Fantin-Latour painted a group portrait, *Hommage a Delacroix*, which featured Edouard Manet among the painter's young devotees who were gathered around a picture of the late artist. Claude Monet studied under Boudin and always praised the art of the landscape painters of the Barbizon school, while Pissarro admired the realism of Gustave Courbet. Furthermore, Loyrette writes, the Impressionists faced the machine of the official Salon with outcomes that were not nearly as dreadful as it is oftentimes assumed. Unquestionably, there was a ground for conflict, but the documentary evidence as well as artistic criticism of the period proves that the Impressionists' exhibition and reception record at the official Salon was more uneven than negative. For example, at the Salon of 1873, both Bouguereau's *Nymphs and Satyr* and Manet's *Le Bon Bock* received triumphant reviews, but clearly not for the same reasons, and were not evaluated on the same basis. In its due time the Impressionists carved their niche in the art market, and even the government support occurred in later stages of the movement's life-span when artists received honors and awards and their paintings started being exhibited as part of French national heritage. It remains to be said that Loyrette's essay, as a part of the catalogue, is meant to support the exhibition framework, and is, therefore, limited by its own format. However, it includes welcoming fresh perspectives on the Impressionist painting and is intended to provide for the audience of the exhibition an absent context of the Paris art world in the nineteenth century.

Pierre Vaisse in *La Troisieme Republique et les peintres* snatches the flag from Loyrette and provides yet a more noteworthy account of attitudes toward Impressionism held by art institutions under the early Third Republic [12]. His is a more specific agenda, however. Vaisse intends to demonstrate that, effectively, the avant-garde did not exist during the day, and that the Third Republic government authorities were an epitome of liberalism and tolerance. *La Troisieme Republique et les peintres* thus becomes an attempt to undo the modernist value system from presumably documentary perspective of institutional history, with, again, a proclaimed disregard to personal aesthetic inclinations. Approached from this standpoint, Impressionism emerges as an extension of the past fine art tradition with its avant-garde character very much tuned down. The new painters, Vaisse states, follow into the steps of Ingres, Delacroix, and Courbet, continuing the eminent tradition of fine art in the age of modernity. I cannot argue against the thoroughly researched selection of documentary evidence supporting Vaisse's theory. I am concerned, however, with the fact that he neglects the paintings themselves, which ultimately leads to a rather synthetic interpretation of a complex artistic tradition. Without continual references to Impressionist imagery, he falls back on a more traditional way of appraising Impressionism than might seem at first, for traditional stylistic hierarchies always linger beneath the surface of Vaisse's notion of the all-encompassing French tradition

In a radical opposition to Vaisse and the critical trend his writing evokes is an opinion, in which the decisive question is not Impressionism's inclusion into a particular national artistic tradition but its rootedness in a more deliberate way in the period culture. I would like to consider Robert Herbert's work as an example of this point of view. In a major work from the 1988, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*, Herbert establishes social history of Impressionism and is concerned, accordingly, with the existing correlation between the painting and the society. The after-1852 Paris after 1852, Herbert writes, came to signify modernization and modernity with its new type of society that made commodities and leisure more readily available for a wider segment of population [7]. The daily experience of the modern city and the revisited landscapes of villages near Paris were main indicators of change, and it was this changed world that the Impressionists sought to capture in paint. Herbert eagerly acknowledges the avant-garde nature of the movement as a whole; he sees Impressionist compositions as complex and fragmented, demanding undeviating attention from the viewer to their innovative subject matter which rejected the possibility of any explicit allegorical or sentimental narrative. His approach is to work from the painting itself and let the social commentary merge into the discussion. Although he is successful in accomplishing the task, Herbert argues that Impressionists' pictorial decisions and their choice of motifs for their canvases are premeditated. In my view, it is the question of artistic intentionality that moves the general argument throughout the book and explains his choices of artists. As he examines a picture's subject matter and makes a statement about it in the light of references to social history, Herbert then goes back to confront the painting once again to resolve in what particular ways the form either supports or corresponds to the social commentary. The problem, in my opinion, is that the artist's intention remains more frequently than not out of reach. What Herbert means by intentionality is at all times unclear and changes throughout the book. Taking into consideration Herbert's Marxist stance, I believe that he means it as a premeditated departure from "factual realism" in order to synchronize the social within the pictorial. Hence, Herbert always implies the presence of intentionality, portraying the Impressionists as crusaders, whose artistic mission was exclusively related to and explained in terms of the expansion of capitalism in France.

If the reader were to recognize Herbert's formal analysis of Manet's, Degas's and other Impressionists' oeuvre as unproblematic, they would have to read into paintings artistic intentions and, consequently, meanings that were not there in the first place. As a result, Herbert is quick to simplify the complexity behind Impressionists' procedures. Emphasizing the openness and the seeming improvisation on display in Impressionist paintings, he puts forward the notion of Impressionism as a "simpler" art movement than those of the past. He demonstrates a particular dislike of Monet's version of Impressionism, which, Herbert concludes, is best understood as "factual realism," i.e. a more or less neutral, optically faithful representation of a given motif. Unlike Edgar Degas or Edouard Manet – the artists who occupy a top spot in Herbert's hierarchy of the Impressionists –, Monet is not modern enough [Ibid.]. What I take Herbert to be really saying is that Monet was not radical enough. Here, however, one finds the biggest contradiction, which Herbert is unable to see through: Monet's genre scenes of bourgeois leisure are not about the approval of social practices per se but the new subject matter and experimental form. It is the experimental character of canvases by certain painters, as I have already pointed out, which Herbert overlooks and oversimplifies, and it is the experimental character that differentiates Monet's finished product from the depicted material realities of his canvases. Herbert is at risk of misinterpreting the painter's intentions and attaching meanings to canvases that are not there to begin with.

Another, but not an altogether different view of the Impressionist painting and the point of its critical assessment were proposed by T. J. Clark in ***The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers***. Clark, as well as Robert Herbert, does not debate the fact that the Impressionists were aesthetically and intellectually related to and assimilated into culture of their day and, as a result, sought a more adequate representation of "modern life" [3]. Even nowadays, however, the very definition and the meaning of what modern and consequently modernity signifies remain ambiguous at the very least. In order to clarify these notions, Clark turns to an exceptionally extensive and revealing – for the want of a better word – collection of texts, which includes art criticism, social commentary, letters, critical document, travel writing, etc. He explores the stated and unstated takes on Impressionism and justifications of its values that these sources provide. Yet when the discussion enters the realm of art proper, his focus is entirely on those paintings that came to constitute the pantheon of high modernism. The actual objective investigation of non-vanguard canvases are peripheral and, in my view, only marginally convincing. The famous exception to this pattern is Clark's standpoint on the visual language of Manet's ***Olympia***, its relation to the established female nude iconography, and the assumptions that it embodied. Clark's discussion of ***Olympia*** brings out for the first time the point that the separation of issues of gender and sexual identity in art is highly problematic, if not impossible, from an examination of existing pictorial conventions of representation as well as ideologies underpinning them. In Clark's opinion, Manet's art with all its dissonants and contradictions should be considered most indicative of the conflicts which characterize modernist painting [2, 10]. What strikes me in Clark's account of Impressionism is a failure to extend the same competency and recognition into his assessments of landscape genre paintings. As a result, Manet's is granted priority in Clark, while Monet is not.

It would be a mistake on my part to suggest that Manet is the sole artists in Clark's design who is licensed for the title of the painter of modern life. Clark's pantheon includes both Gustave Courbet and Camille Pissarro. I believe the choice is not accidental, since what Clark seems to be suggesting is that theirs – like Manet's and unlike Monet's –, is a genuine modernism. Genuine modernism is modernism that implies a resistant stand upon the operating social values, a stand that is likely to resolve itself into principles of determined anti-capitalism. As a result, ***The Painting of Modern Life*** seems at all times to suggest the equivalence of artistic with political value hierarchies. According to Clark, therefore, modernity itself is synonymous with capitalism. But then he justly points out that the painters of modern life were up against a whole set of unprecedented demands and dilemmas when confronted with this contemporaneity. Past modes of representation were not fit to visually articulate the experience of modernity because modernity altogether denied their meaning. Clark concludes that an art with a goal of the pictorial analysis of phantasmagorical contemporaneity, an art with an unstable framework of references yet grounded in material manifestations of contemporaneity would be more openly and ideologically involved with the social conditions of its own days. What Clark chooses to ignore, in my view, is that when one regards Impressionist artworks per se the link between art and concrete socio-political realities proves ill-defined. I think ***The Painting of Modern Life*** sometimes deliberately oversimplifies the Impressionist movement by failing to observe that Impressionist optics and style were defined by a constant negotiation and compromise with the reality of commodity-fetishism.

I have demonstrated the ways in which Clark's work interprets Impressionism in political terms. From this angle, one should criticize Clark for completely minimizing the artistic into the political. It is imperative, however, to be particular about what Clark means by the political and politics. Apart from – or it is better to say together with - capitalism, there is also a long-standing influence of the Academy and the official Salon, the dominant nineteenth-century institutions, within which and against which the Impressionists had to situate themselves. It is true, indeed, that the ways in which the Impressionists were situated was not free of political sentiment. Art critics, both sympathetic to and antagonistic of the Impressionist movement, approached it with their own agendas, describing the new painting in terms and idioms loaded with political connotations. Philippe Burty, Theodore Duret, and Emile Zola should be mentioned here, for they interpreted the movement as an aesthetic correspondent to republican ideals in politics. The artists, Clark concludes, were bent on a democratization of France's exhibition system, all the better to bring to the public a modern art which, in its celebration of the pleasures of the everyday, was accessible to the common run of humanity in a secularizing age.

Another author to highlight the political aspect of the early critical reactions to Impressionism was Stephen Eisenman in 1986 [5]. More recently Philip Nord was to reposition Impressionists' enterprise in the milieu of contemporary political history in *Impressionists and Politics: Art and Democracy in the Nineteenth Century*. Nord's book offers a refreshing insight into the specific and rapidly metamorphosing political conditions in the years of the Impressionists' activity, in conjunction with but also opposite from broader socio-political interpretations of Clark, Nochlin and Eisenman. A central theme that runs through *Impressionists and Politics* is that the socio-political and cultural evolution of France of the time was of critical bearing to the artists as early as the mid-1850s and well into the 1880s. Nord suggests that this is of fundamental importance in understanding not only the subject matter the Impressionists chose to paint but also the markets and outlets they were struggling to break into [8]. What is missing, I suggest, is Nord's engagement with paintings themselves. In *Impressionists and Politics*, Nord deliberately shies away from analyzing the form of Impressionist canvases, i.e. there is no argument proposed to explain the composition of paintings and codes of representation in place. Without close scrutiny of Impressionists' pictorial structures and imagery, Nord's reader is missing the key point as to why the paintings the Impressionists put before the general audience were so notorious and challenging to the first viewers.

In regard to the above-mentioned problem in *Impressionists and Politics*, I would like to turn to an earlier essay by Richard Shiff. Shiff's *Cezanne and the End of Impressionism* and his successive publications have made a good case of what can be achieved by moving from a serious study of Impressionist painting to the vocabulary that the artists themselves used to code it, to an adequate evaluation of the issues of intellectual content, by which, I believe, Shiff means visual perception and knowledge that supported Impressionist art [9]. He very convincingly explains the Impressionists' fascination with the sensory experience and the impression and makes a predictable, but not an unjust connection to men like Hippolyte Taine and Emile Littré, the leading propagandists of positivism of the time in France, for whom all areas of human experience were essentially subjective and, hence, all general knowledge was subjective since it was grounded in human experience. For Shiff, this connection is essential for grasping the nature of Impressionism with its stress on the significance of the individual artist's role and the distinctiveness of each artist's sensory experiences as well as of their techniques of translating these on to a canvas. Consequently, the best part of the essay, in my opinion, is that where Shiff offers a reading of what "idealism" of Impressionist art meant at the time [4, p. 340]. Idealism, according to Shiff, signifies precisely the individualism of artists that correlates to their technique of informal, restless brushwork in which they laid out prismatic color creating a layered pictorial space determined by the unique impression of light and atmosphere upon their senses. *The End of Impressionism*, nevertheless, operates on a level of the philosophical investigation and Shiff's arguments never extend to encompass a broader view of the reality. He does not scrutinize what Impressionist aesthetic principles signified in relation to nineteenth-century debates on art and society.

It is also legitimate to question why Shiff, despite the close reading of Taine and Littre which leads to the impressive detailed technical analysis of Cezanne's color conceptualization, does not challenge systematically the relationship between the scientific knowledge and Impressionism. Shiff's omission is symptomatic, I believe, of how much weight is placed by scholars on the understanding of Impressionism as an empirical process. Shiff's argument stresses the "originality" of Cezanne's color in the artist's realization of his sensory experience in an effort to reconcile this conception of personalized sensation with that of objective naturalism. Unfortunately, in his endeavor to reinterpret Cezanne's artistic practice away from his fabricated modernist standing of the protoabstract painter, Shiff exaggerates difference of Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism in so far as *The End of Impressionism* participates in confirming, not dismantling the popular belief on a stronger theoretical base of Neo-Impressionism while the importance of science for the Impressionists is sadly overlooked.

I would like to conclude this essay with a discussion of one of the most illuminating accounts of what conditioned Impressionism's emergence that has been recently proposed. The work under consideration is Nicholas Green's *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in the Nineteenth-Century France*. Published in 1990, the book offers an across-the-board endeavor to adjust our understanding of nineteenth-century French art through the study of the landscape tradition of the period. In Green, Nature is regarded as a cultural idiom, or construction, rooted in historically specific visual practices. He suggests that viewed from this standpoint landscape in the pictorial motifs of the Impressionists becomes a product of the period and is best explained in terms of bourgeois disillusionment with the urban milieu, and particularly with the city of Paris [6]. Nature, thus, upon its entrance into "metropolitan ideology" becomes a part of it; the natural and organic world antagonistic to the city ceases to exist. From a theoretical perspective, Green's book is as an attempt to draw together the Marxist tradition of the Frankfurt School with Foucault's "archaeology of knowledge." Tightly bonded to the particulars of the historical circumstances and condition of France between 1820s to 1860s, Green rejects a narrowly art historical reading of the landscape imagery and moves towards an understanding of contemporary cultural discourse, acknowledging the intricate and at times outwardly incoherent link between ideology, social structure and economic power. In exploring the notion of modern landscape imagery, all the sources Green employs to argue the point – verbal or visual – are analyzed as representations, as idioms and tropes, and approached in terms of the historically specific values they stand for. Green escapes the ultimate curse of the field: he does not treat images as if they were self-sufficient illustrations.

Most clearly, in *The Spectacle of Nature*, Green is on a crusade to re-think the mythic aura of fine art and the work of art itself, as well as the notion of progressivist linear vision of art history. It should be pointed out, however, that in the process of eradicating the transcendental value of an art work, Green chooses to cast aside the fact that fine art paintings will always continue their existence as fine art. Undoubtedly Green's challenge of the postulation that artistic values surpass the social and the historical is appropriate. Yet, what is chiefly missing, in my opinion, is the evaluation of the position that fine art occupied the nineteenth-century France and an acknowledgment of the fact that the realm of fine art – of the Salon and the Academy – was distinctive, oftentimes self-referential and self-sufficient. The latter means that the practice of fine art painting back in the day stood apart from those of other visual media. Green does not acknowledge the fact that not only each medium but also each context of presentation, was distinguished by its own functionality and incorporated values exclusive to it, even if intended for – and I am generalizing here – the very same audience. Indeed, Green realizes the value of looking into the relationship between paintings and co-existent forms of landscape imagery, like for example, lithographs, engravings and, later, photographs, but fails to encapsulate the full intricacy of this relationship, reducing it to linear development, i.e. something that he attempts to question to begin with. At the same time, with all its faults, and I am inclined to think that partially due its faults, Green's book served an important purpose in establishing a new research field, that of the institutional history of the period. As a result, the generation of art historians to follow came to see that is it indeed impossible to situate an artwork historically while dismissing the physical surroundings in which it was meant to be seen.

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Борис Евгеньевич Рощин
Костромской государственный университет им. Н. А. Некрасова

РОССИЙСКИЕ ФАБРИЧНО-ЗАВОДСКИЕ КОМИТЕТЫ В 1917 Г.: ИСТОРИКО-ПРАВОВОЙ АСПЕКТ©

В настоящее время, в условиях финансового кризиса, наиболее резко обострились скрытые проблемы социально-трудовой сферы. Несоблюдение условий коллективных и индивидуально-трудовых договоров, незаконные переводы и увольнения работников, сокращение численности и штатов работников без предоставления законных гарантий и компенсаций, необоснованные увеличения объема работ и продолжительности рабочего времени, грубейшие нарушения правил охраны труда, неправомерный диктат работодателем своих условий, дискриминация в сфере труда, отсутствие, либо формальное присутствие в рамках юридических лиц представительных органов работников и другие грубейшие нарушения социально-трудовых прав, - все это актуальные проблемы правового регулирования социально-трудовой сферы российского общества.

В то же время существует действующее трудовое законодательство, (которое, несмотря на кризис, никто не отменял), регулирующее основные сегменты социально-трудовой сферы.