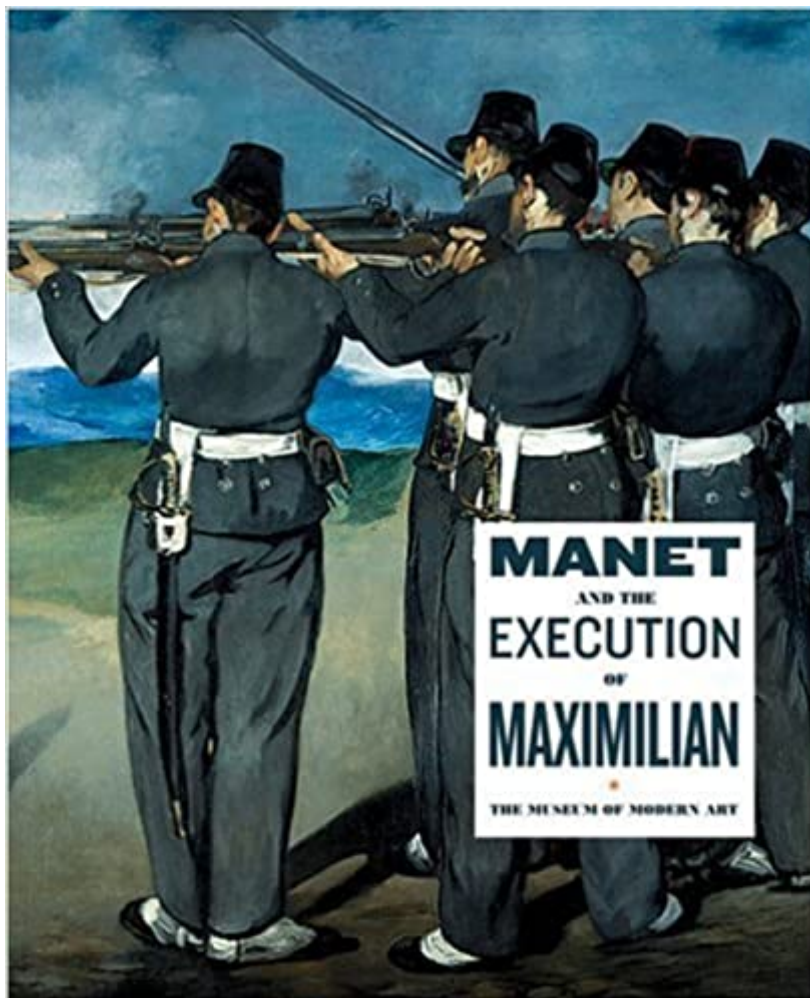


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Manet And The Execution Of Emperor Maximilian



Synopsis

The execution of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, in 1867, was the subject of a quartet of paintings by the French Impressionist and early Modernist Edouard Manet. These works are rarely shown together, and in fact cannot be seen in their entirety, since one of them exists only in fragments, but the three intact paintings and the surviving elements of the fourth are reproduced in this publication, and will be shown at The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition in the fall of 2006. Maximilian's death was an event of great public interest in France, in part because French policies shared the responsibility for it. A European aristocrat of the Hapsburg family, Maximilian had been installed in 1864 after a trio of European powers, led by Napoleon III of France, mounted an invasion of Mexico to reclaim debts upon which the Mexican government had suspended payment. But Napoleon soon withdrew, abandoning Maximilian to his fate at the hands of a resurgent Mexican army. As news of the execution reached Paris, Manet reacted with a group of works synthesizing the information as it came to him and drawing heavily on an earlier painting inspired by violent political events, Goya's *The Third of May*. In addition to analyzing and documenting the creation of these works, John Elderfield, in his text, clarifies their historical importance in the context of modern art, and in so doing, offers a capsular history of the place of current events in art.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Every art history student is familiar with Manet's painting of the Execution of Maximilian. Most have read of the history. This book is the record of a wonderful exhibition at MOMA that has brought together most of the collection--studies, lithos, sketches. You will follow the development: from

Goya's inspiration through the original concept of Mexican soldiers administering the execution. Then, the different versions of the final painting in which Manet substitutes French soldiers for the Mexicans, blaming Napoleon for the death because he deserted Maximilian. Manet's politics, influenced by his parents and the injustice and error-ridden actions of Napoleon III, led him to make a statement with his art. (Those events in Mexico remind me of the mess in Iraq.) Make it to the show if you can--in any case this volume should be in every art historian's library.

The author interestingly hints that Manet explains, through his paintings, why Maximilian was offered the throne of Mexico, and later abandoned, by Napoleon III. This interpretation provides a historical perspective, different from the generally accepted.

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