

<p>Édouard Manet, <i>A Bar at the Folies Bergère,</i> oil on canvas, 1882, 96 x 130 cm (38 x 51")</p>	<p>Initial analysis</p>	<p>The painting has been on display in the Courtauld Gallery for many decades. It is currently at the National Gallery, London, and will then tour to Paris and Japan until 2021 when the Courtauld hope to have completed their rebuilt gallery.</p>
<p>A woman attends to a bar at the Folies Bergère, behind her a large mirror reflects part of the theatre and audience in front of her. The reflection includes her own person and that of a man addressing her at the bar and the top of the white rose on the bar to the right of her arm. It is as if this occurs at a different moment. The frontal view of her does not indicate that she is talking to anyone, in fact quite the contrary, she appears to be involved in self-reflection.</p> <p>On the bar before her are many bottles, some of these can be identified as bottles of beer and on at least two the label of English Bass. Also on the marble counter is a glass with two roses and a glass dish on a glass stand filled with clementine oranges. Part of the marble counter and some of the bottles are reflected in the mirror.</p> <p>She leans lightly on the bar, her sleeves rolled back above her wrists. She has a gold bracelet on her right arm. She is wearing a blue velvet top buttoned at the front. The top has a lace and frills neckline. In the centre of the neckline a bouquet of flowers is pinned. She wears a cameo held on a black cloth strip around her neck. She has a small pearl hanging from each ear. Her hair is straight and brunette and, judging by the reflection, tied in a pony tail.</p>	<p>The depiction of the vast area of the theatre in relation to the local bar and barmaid presents the fruition of an ambitious achievement. This is so with regard to the perspectival verisimilitude and tonal complexity.</p> <p>The restrained use of pigments, blues, white and smoke grey with touches of ochre (the gloves of one of the audience members, the usher's coat, the flares of light on the candelabra) and the reserved pinks for the columns and front of the audience balcony, give emphasis to the small green shoes of the trapeze artist, the prominent bowl of oranges, the colours on the bottles on the bar, some with gold foil wrappings and the brass edge of the base of the mirror frame.</p>  <p>The painting has been much commented upon. (Note 1) One of the recurring discussions is with regard to the unresolvable stance of the barmaid with her own reflection and the figure of the man. There appears to be a perspectival discrepancy. If the viewer is situated in the middle of the canvas, in the position once occupied by the painter, the angled view of the barmaid and man appear to be impossible, but that impossibility is contingent with the expectation that we are viewing one occasion rather than more than one at once.</p>	<p>In the mirror at the top left can be seen the shoed feet and part of the legs of a trapeze artist and part of the trapeze, which bisects a circular light disc. There are two large pillars also with large circular lights, presumably using the new electricity supply. Similar lights can be seen in the distance. There are parts of two large candelabra hanging in front on the area where many of the audience can be seen in what appears to be the Dress Circle of the theatre. There is a third candelabra at the back on the left. On the left hand side of the canvas one of the audience is looking through opera glasses, two others are in conversation, a champagne glass appears to be balanced on the ledge in front. To the right of this couple is an usher with a three-cornered hat.</p> <p>On the right hand side of the canvas is reflected a man with a moustache, he wears a top hat. He is in conversation with the bar maid. His left hand appears to be holding a walking cane with a metal boss. (I first thought he was wearing a pink rose, but that must wrong.)</p> <p>Note 1. One considerable example appears as the last chapter of T.J. Clark. <i>The Painting of Modern Life. Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers</i>, London: Thames & Hudson, revised 1999, pp. 205-258. His focus is on the social history of the occasion and its context.</p>