

(Impressionism" Cont.)

constructed properly. The same, of course, held true for the studio figure, which was built up in much the same way before it was colored. The massive darks of Corot's peasant women attest the truth of his adherence to this program. Manet himself in his greatest works of the 1860's often used browns and blacks to establish his radically simplified planes. Color too was modified with the admixture of neutral tones to control intensity and value. The bright hues of the famous Terrace at the Seaside in the Pitcairn Collection seem almost to be pitted against the neutral tones which lurk under the leaves and in the hollows of the waves. Monet was working toward his later, cleaner style here, but he had not gotten rid of this shadow entirely. The practiced eye can almost always tell a work by Renoir, or Monet, or any other member of the group done earlier than about 1871, just by the presence of this tonality which no amount of bright additional color could quite conceal.

When the true Impressionist manner was evolved, these colors were excluded, or at least they were no longer used to make forms plastic. In their place came blue, and even more frequently a wide range of violets. Now these new "shadow colors" give a very different effect, whether they are dark and intense, or pale and low-keyed. Instead of tying the picture together by a value scale, they join with other hues in a sort of color symphony in which form, at least in the traditional understanding of it, is rather a by-product than an end. In Monet's Women in a Garden (1867) the figures are, as it were, made, but the people on the street in Boulevard des Capucines (1873) somehow seem to have just happened. In the new search for light, these painters were content to have their forms as suggestions because they were not really the focus of the interest in the picture—a fact which helps to explain why Impressionism was basically unsatisfactory for such a man

as Degas, or Renoir when he was dealing with the nude figure. As will be seen later, the public and critics wanted, or thought they wanted, to have the objects they looked at constructed, and constructed according to the rules; when they sensed that forms were essentially accidents in a technique the true purpose of which they failed to grasp, they were annoyed.

The absence of neutral tones as a modeling agent for form was only one part of the new approach. Another was the frank and unabashed use of a far wider range of tints which were "natural," i.e., not obtained by mixtures worked up on the palette. The introduction of tube-encased colors after 1841 and the new variety of chemical pigments combined to offer the painter a handy source of almost any color, clean and ready for his purpose. Now that he was looking at nature to see it as light rather than form, and when he knew how to analyze the light he saw, he could match the shadows and lights with tints or combinations of tints which were applied directly to the canvas to play their specific and precise role in the effect desired. The result was that once the possibilities of brilliance inherent in a color gamut of pure hues rivaling the spectrum had been grasped, the modeling in brownish or grayish values was abandoned; it muddied the effect. Later, the painstaking researchers of Cezanne and Seurat restored the power of paint to create solidity to a position of primary importance, this time through novel uses of color itself rather than chiaroscuro (using only light and shade). In Impressionism, however, form was not insisted upon by those traditional shadows which, however arbitrary, were more capable of suggesting mass than tints of blue and violet.

The rejection of this modeling by value, and the use of clear pigments in rainbow variety, opened the way for the achievement of hitherto undreamed of effects.

continued in next edition
