

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2011 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 4

The painting on the left is Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538). The painting on the right is Manet's *Olympia* (1863).

How has Manet appropriated Titian's painting to comment on social issues and to challenge artistic traditions? (10 minutes)

Background

This question asks students to analyze Edouard Manet's use of appropriation within the context of both social and artistic critique. It requires students to examine how and why Manet uses Titian's work as a basis for that critique.

"To appropriate" means "to make one's own." Artists and architects have practiced appropriation since antiquity. It is common for artists to look to previous works as inspiration for and sometimes as models for their own work. However, appropriation is not simply an act of copying; it implies a self-conscious borrowing of preexisting motifs, forms or other elements, and a translation or transformation of these elements for the artist's own needs.

Both Titian and Manet appropriated their images of women from earlier painterly traditions to create unique works during their careers. Titian's painting appropriated Giorgione's *Sleeping Venus* (Dresden, c. 1510, completed by Titian) and placed her within a domestic setting with iconographic allusions to marriage. Manet, in turn, appropriated Titian's *Venus of Urbino* and placed her within a contemporary 19th-century setting of a prostitute's boudoir.

In his appropriation, Manet subverts a traditional painting to create a contemporary dialogue about everyday life in Paris. Manet had access to Titian's painting, which hung in the Louvre; he made copies of it in anticipation of his own painting, *Olympia*. Manet used the basic composition of Titian's painting yet transformed his representation of Venus/Olympia through the elimination of all references to the woman's role as a bride in exchange for references to her role as a prostitute. For example, Manet eliminated the *cassoni* in the background of Titian's painting and replaced the sleeping dog (a common symbol of fidelity) with a cat with an arched back (a French play on words for female genitalia). The flower petals no longer serve as an iconographical attribute of Venus when they are placed in Olympia's hair and held in the hands of a servant (presumably a gift from a male client). Manet's replacement of the white attendants with a black servant enhanced the modern, unconventional nature of the work and contributed to its scandalous reception. He also changed the position of the reclining woman's hand: this hand refuses the entry of the viewer's gaze. The woman controls who has access to her body. Indeed, the name given to Manet's subject, Olympia, was not truly a classical name; rather, it had become a nickname for prostitutes in the 19th century.

Beyond the individual objects substituted by Manet in his painting, the work is painted in a different style from Titian's. This is particularly evident in the artistic handling of the female nude and in Manet's movement away from the older, more idealizing conventions of its representation, such as the visual aspects of body language, the distinction between nudity and nakedness, the confrontational orientation toward the spectator, and the elimination of mythology in favor of realism. Instead of Titian's atmospheric approach to space and the use of soft, feathery brushstrokes to evoke the sensuality of Venus's flesh, Manet emphasizes the flatness of the pictorial space and eliminates modeling of the figure. He painted with distinct brushstrokes and juxtaposed colors, including dark contour lines around the body. Manet's rejection of the rules of decorum on form and subject matter as established by Old

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2011 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 4 (continued)

Masters caused an uproar for certain 19th-century art critics. Yet because of this rejection, many critics now consider Manet to be the father of Modernism.

Two Tasks for Students

1. Analyze how Manet appropriated Titian's *Venus of Urbino* to comment on social issues.
2. Analyze how Manet appropriated Titian's *Venus of Urbino* to challenge artistic traditions.

Point to Remember

The question focuses on Manet. Titian's painting must be addressed, but responses should concentrate on Manet's reasons for appropriating Titian's work.

Scoring Criteria

4 points

Response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response uses specific visual evidence to analyze how Manet appropriated Titian's painting in order to comment on social issues **and** to challenge artistic traditions. The response may include minor errors that do not have a meaningful impact on the analysis.

3 points

Response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response uses visual evidence to analyze how Manet appropriated Titian's painting in order to comment on social issues **and** to challenge artistic traditions. However, the analysis may be somewhat unbalanced — focusing more on either social issues or artistic traditions, though both are represented — or may include minor errors that have some impact on the response, or both.

2 points

Response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response refers to visual evidence, but the discussion of that evidence is less analytical than descriptive. Discussion of either the social issues or the artistic traditions may be mostly accurate, and discussion of the other includes significant errors.

OR

The response is mostly accurate, but the discussion focuses entirely on either the social issues or the artistic traditions, not both. If both are attempted, one aspect is so weak as to be without merit.

1 point

Response demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of the question.

Although the response demonstrates some general familiarity with the issues raised by the question, the response is weak, is inaccurate, or contains significant errors.

0 points

Response demonstrates no discernible knowledge or understanding of the question.

The student attempts to respond, but the response makes only incorrect or irrelevant statements about Manet's appropriation of Titian's painting.

— This is a nonresponse, such as a blank paper, crossed-out words or personal notes.

4. The painting on the left is Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538). The painting on the right is Manet's *Olympia* (1863).

How has Manet appropriated Titian's painting to comment on social issues and to challenge artistic traditions?
(10 minutes)

Titian's *Venus of Urbino* set the standards in art for the depiction of a reclining female nude. Although Manet kept Titian's standard pose and setting in mind when portraying *Olympia*, the two paintings are drastically differing in other aspects. In Titian's painting, the model has a dog sleeping on her bed, which symbolizes fidelity. This symbol makes Titian's earlier work less risqué, as the subject is clearly loyal to only one man. In Manet's portrait however, the viewer understands that this woman is a prostitute, symbolized by the ^{dark + elusive} black cat and the flowers delivered from a lover. Thus, Manet comments on the social issues of women being degraded in society as prostitutes. Manet also incorporates a black maid into the painting to comment on the clear social discrepancies between whites and blacks in Paris in the late 1800's—also reinforced by the drastic contrast of skin color of the two women. While Titian's model shies away from the viewer, Manet's boldly stares into the face of her audience. Again, Manet's subject matter differs in social issues in that *Olympia* is unafraid and almost defiant of society's criticism on her. Manet also varied his formal composition to challenge artistic tradition—whereas Titian's work is soft, shaded, and realistic, and naturalistic-looking, Manet purposefully eliminated most of the shadow on *Olympia's* body and

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emphasized ~~the~~ the lines of her body instead as to draw attention to the canvas. Manet defies all previous artistic traditions in art to ~~not only draw~~ draw attention to the formal, compositional aspects of art instead. The two ~~are~~ paintings may at first look alike in subject matter, but in actuality, Manet's Olympia transcends Titian's Venus of Urbino in innovation in artistic traditions and social commentary.

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How has Manet appropriated Titian's painting to comment on social issues and to challenge artistic traditions?
(10 minutes)

Manet slightly changes Titian's painting in order to give some social ~~commentary~~ commentary. He changes posture of the woman's body and changes the facial expression so that the woman's body language goes from carefree sensuality to "are you next?". He also changes the background so that it would reference a specific brothel in Paris. This shows that he is trying to make a social comment because he is making sure that people who look at the artwork think about prostitution. Manet also tries to challenge artistic tradition. Instead of portraying a mysterious allegorical nude woman, he portrays a real naked woman who a few of the viewers at the time could identify the name of. Also, he challenges tradition by showing a prostitute and then calling her a Roman goddess. The last thing that ~~she~~ he does is that he elevates the black woman to the status of fine art.

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4. The painting on the left is Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538). The painting on the right is Manet's *Olympia* (1863). How has Manet appropriated Titian's painting to comment on social issues and to challenge artistic traditions? (10 minutes)

Manet's *Olympia* from 1863 has appropriated Titian's *Venus of Urbino* from 1538 in many ways. Manet's *Olympia* shows the social issues of prostitution, African Americans, and betrayal. Manet strayed away from the more modest *Venus of Urbino*. The *Venus of Urbino* was shown covering herself, next to a lap dog, and in another room than others. Titian's *Venus* was shown with a sense of weight shift from her reclining position known as *contrapposto*. Unlike Titian's, Manet's *Olympia* looks weightless meaning he didn't use *contrapposto*. Manet's is shown more scandalous in a room with someone and with a cat. A dog represents loyalty and a cat represents mischief. Titian uses a play of light and dark called modeling and Manet doesn't follow modeling as much. Titian uses strong diagonal and horizontal lines. Titian also depicts the *Venus* in a highly more realistic way. Titian's also has an atmospheric perspective showing the outside through a window and Manet does not. Titian follows the rules of a realistic artist and Manet follows "man is the reason of all things"

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meaning it is not as accurate.

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2011 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 4

Overview

This 10-minute essay question asked students to analyze Manet's use of appropriation within the context of both social and artistic critique. It required students to analyze how and why Manet used Titian's work to critique traditional styles of painting and also to comment on modern society. This comparison is a standard example of this type of artistic approach, one that has repercussions throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

Sample: 4A

Score: 4

The student analyzes Manet's appropriation of Titian's painting as a comment on both social issues and artistic traditions. The student states that Titian's reclining female nude has been transformed into a prostitute. Whereas objects in Titian's painting make the nude "less risqué," in Manet symbols such as "the dark + elusive black cat and the flowers" clarify the prostitute's profession. The racial difference in the attendants develops the idea of "social discrepancies [*sic*]" further, as does Olympia's "unafraid and almost defiant" stance in the face of "society's criticism." Appropriated artistic traditions include Manet's rejection of the "soft, shaded, realistic, and naturalistic-looking" Venus in favor of a nearly shadowless Olympia. Manet "defies ... artistic traditions ... to draw attention to the formal, compositional aspects of art instead." The response is thorough, balanced and without error.

Sample: 4B

Score: 3

The student analyzes Manet's appropriation of Titian's painting as a comment on both social issues and artistic traditions. The response contrasts the "careless sensuality" of Titian's figure with the commercial nature of Olympia's "body language," adding that Olympia seems to address the spectator as a client: "'are you next?'" Other links to prostitution are cited, such as the business aspect of the setting (a "brothel in Paris") and the contemporary social notoriety of Olympia's name. Appropriated artistic traditions are addressed, as the student differentiates the nudity associated with allegory in Titian's painting from the nakedness of realism in Manet's painting. That said, the response is somewhat imbalanced, focusing more on social issues than on artistic traditions.

Sample: 4C

Score: 2

The student discusses Manet's appropriation of Titian's painting as a comment on both social issues and artistic traditions. The response states that the image "shows" prostitution but offers minimal, mainly descriptive comments to support this point. Titian's traditional modeling technique is contrasted with Manet's more limited usage, yet this is the only correct artistic technique cited. Other references to artistic technique have errors or concentrate on Titian's painting. As such, the response is more descriptive than analytical, and there are errors, although the student does demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the question.