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## Berkeley Undergraduate Journal

### Title

Modernity, Photography, and History Painting in Manet's Execution of Maximilian

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3qp6w655>

### Journal

Berkeley Undergraduate Journal, 23(1)

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### Publication Date

2010

### DOI

10.5070/B3231007679

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Modernity, Photography, and History Painting in Manet's *Execution of Maximilian*

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Eduard Manet's series of paintings entitled *The Execution of Maximilian* is the product of a highly complex historical moment. At the moment of their production, Napoleon III had only recently taken up Napoleon I's mantle and goal to transform France into a powerful Empire. Furthermore, new technology was emerging and staking its claim on public consciousness. Photography in particular had boomed as a result of Frederick Scott Archer's discovery of the wet collodion process, which produced a glossy, fine-grained image with a broad tonal range and better detail than its predecessor, the daguerreotype.<sup>1</sup> The fine arts were changing as well, with history painting gradually losing its coveted preeminence to everyday "genre" scenes in the Academy's annual Salon.<sup>2</sup> All three developments – imperialism, photography, and new artistic trends – were critical to Manet's *Execution of Maximilian*. There are five versions of the *Execution*: three paintings, a lithograph, and an oil study (Figures 1-5). The first version was begun in July of 1867. The final version now located in Mannheim, Germany, was finished in early 1869.

Blooming swiftly in these two years, Modernity challenged the old hierarchies of sight and visual expression. The beaux arts were especially threatened by photography's ability instantaneously to capture reality. As Baudelaire so bitterly put it, "If photography is allowed to supplement art . . . it will soon have supplanted or corrupted it altogether, thanks to the stupidity of the multitude which is its natural enemy."<sup>3</sup> Traditional artists realized that to stay relevant they had to adapt and change. In Manet's case, innovation came through formal transformation. His *Execution* melds a history painting with a photograph, to create a curious hybrid of the traditional and the modern. This conflation occurs both thematically and aesthetically, and Manet's *Execution of Maximilian* is in effect a history painting that attempts to carry the burden of photography.

This conflation is a complex and troublesome one. The claim that one can blend together two mediums as different as history painting and photography can be instantly challenged through physical analysis alone: the work is constructed of pigment on canvas. One could legitimately argue that the *Execution* series are paintings and nothing else, yet there is more at stake here than the material construction of the *Execution*. What is at issue instead is Manet's use of certain formal characteristics of the photograph in his painterly style. To confirm the impact of contemporary events, one can consult other art historical studies of the *Execution of Maximilian*. Almost all critics writing on the subject term the series a "contemporary history painting." This suggests that *The Execution* is a melding of both the past and the present. The history painting which is centered on the past, both in terms of subject matter and legacy of production., and

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Ann McCauley, *Industrial Madness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>2</sup> John House "Manet's Maximilian: History Painting, Censorship, and Ambiguity," in *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship*, ed. Juliet Wilson-Bureau (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 88. The Salon was the annual show of the French Academy of the Arts. Its favored artists took pride of place in the space's more favorable spots. Traditionally, there had been a strict hierarchy of subject matter in which history painting was most prominent, followed by the lesser categories of portraiture, genre paintings, and landscapes.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Mirror of Art: Critical Studies* (Virginia: Doubleday Press, 1956), 232.



photography which was becoming a means of visual mastery that had a special purchase on contemporary events.<sup>4</sup>

The mix is not a perfectly balanced one, however, nor does it produce a harmonic whole. The series' very hybridity invites the possibility of an uneven combination, or the suggestion that it is a unique product in and of itself. Manet's friend, Jacques de Biez, in his most ardent defense of Manet's work, admitted the difficulty of writing about Manet's work.<sup>5</sup> Contemporary viewers had no familiar context with which to view such innovation. Photographic imagery was scientific, objective, and cold. To insert such qualities into the history painting, a form which had traditionally depicted emotion, engagement with human figures, and warm colorism, was an absolutely radical move. Manet was not rewarded for such notions: he suffered financially, relying on his mother for money, and the *Execution* was in fact censored by the French authorities before it could even be exhibited. But was Manet's project of creating a hybrid medium, a history painting that carried the burden of the photograph, successful? Before probing into both the aesthetic qualities and reception of the *Execution*, it is important to explain the historical context of the works.

Like his fellow Frenchmen, Manet could not take his eyes off of the political drama unfolding in distant Mexico. Emperor Napoleon III had ordered the invasion of Mexico in 1861 to continue building a vast global empire. The acquisition of the Latin American nation initially appeared to be effortless. Mexico had been racked with internal fighting and seemingly unending successions of leaders over the past few decades. The French assumed that they would be greeted as liberators freeing Mexico's people from disorganized and brutal former regimes, viewing themselves as the celebrated purveyors of much-needed order and cultural urbanity. Furthermore, the United States was not expected to call into effect the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which forbade any further European interference in North America, since it had recently turned inward with the beginning of what promised to be a long and devastating civil war. By 1864, the entirety of Mexico was in the hands of Louis Napoleon. However, the French Emperor deferred turning Mexico into a colony of France. The cost of gaining the nation had been much greater than expected, as Napoleon III's forces were not greeted as champions but rather as unwelcome trespassers. The ousted President of Mexico, Benito Juarez, also posed a great threat, roaming the provinces of the nation with large armed bands of revolutionary followers. Rather than risk everything in an already crumbling and publically unpopular venture, Napoleon decided to appoint the Austrian Archduke Maximilian as Emperor of Mexico. Maximilian accepted the post and arrived in Mexico City in June 1864,<sup>6</sup> but was captured and killed by the forces of the revolutionary Benito Juarez in May 1867. On June 19, the doomed Austrian was executed on the

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<sup>4</sup> Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "Between Seeing and Believing: Representing Women in Appert's *Crimes de la Commune*" in *Making the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. Deane De la Motte and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 251.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques de Biez, *Eduard Manet*, in *Portrait of Manet: By Himself and his Contemporaries*, ed. Courthion, Pierre and Pierre Cailler (New York: Roy Publishers, 1960), 46. Biez continues: "this elegant Parisian with his casual air; his charm and wit, in which frankness, skepticism and perspicacity were all combined; and above all, with his dislike of everything banal and vulgar, but capable, nevertheless, of venting his feelings from time to time on men and things with a compassionate irony."

<sup>6</sup> John Elderfield, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Publishers, 2006), 18.

hill of Cerro de las Campanas in the city's outskirts.<sup>7</sup> Maximilian died alongside two loyal Mexican officers, Miguel Miramón and Tomás Mejía.<sup>8</sup>

Eduard Manet was not the only artist to depict Maximilian's death. However, his series is very different from popular prints of the execution that did make it past strict French censors. Theodore Duret chronicled the development of the series:

In 1867 and 1868, [Manet] painted *The Execution of Maximilian*...Its composition occupied him for many months. He first tried to discover the circumstances and details of the drama. This is why the three victims are painted so close to the execution squad, to accord with what actually occurred. When he was satisfied with the effect he intended, he began to paint his picture, with the help of the infantry platoon lent to him from a barracks, as models for the firing squad. He also asked two friends to pose for generals Mejía and Miramón, although he altered their heads. Only Maximilian's head was painted in the conventional way, from a photograph. When a first composition and even a second appeared not to match the detailed information he was finally able to obtain, he painted the work again, for the third time, in its final and definitive form.<sup>9</sup>

The first version, now in Boston, was begun only a few days after the news of Maximilian's fate arrived on July 1, 1867.<sup>10</sup> The painting was evidently carried out at considerable speed, judging from the signs of extensive scraping and repainting on the canvas's surface.<sup>11</sup> Because of the lack of information in the few days subsequent to Maximilian's death, the Boston version is a largely imaginative construction.

Nevertheless, the Boston version served to establish the basic composition and the placement of the three victims.<sup>12</sup> In all five versions, the three victims are placed on the left side of the canvas, with Maximilian in the middle surrounded by Mejía and Miramón. The firing squad is placed on the right in a tight uniformed cluster that faces away from the viewer. The soldiers' positioning does not reveal facial expressions, and individual personalities do not emerge from within the group. On the right side of the canvas, a mustachioed non-commissioned officer (NCO) holds his musket, readying himself to deliver the coup-de-grace shot. The NCO is the scene's one anomaly. He is isolated from the other figures, facing toward the viewer rather than away from them like his compatriots, representing a possible break in the carefully organized painting. Yet he is not much distanced from the other figures. The shadow extending from the last of the shooting soldiers touches his right leg, connecting him to the rest of his company. Overall, the composition proceeds cleanly from right to left, one's sight following the

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<sup>7</sup> Douglas Johnson, "The French Intervention in Mexico: A Historical Background," in *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship*, ed. Juliet Wilson-Bareau, (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 27-31.

<sup>8</sup> John Elderfield *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Publishers, 2006), 20.

<sup>9</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 48.

<sup>10</sup> John Elderfield, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Publishers, 2006), 22.

<sup>11</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 51.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

lines of the guns as the bullets just begin to enter the bodies of the victims in a single sweep of action.

Although the second version maintained the original format of the Boston work, it does deviate from it in small ways (Figure 2). For example, Manet lightened the coloring of the first painting, and darkened the outlines of the various figures. Though the second version in London is now damaged and fragmented, it has a much clearer composition than the Boston version. Shadows denote space and depth, and a horizon line in the background indicates a concrete sense of setting. The figures' faces are also much more developed: unlike the blurred Boston version, the facial expressions of the three victims and the officer at the right are easily read. Manet's choice of more vibrant colors, as well as the removal of much of the smoke that obscured Miramón's face, contribute to a more carefully organized arrangement.

In the third version, now in Mannheim, Manet inserted the wall of the cemetery behind the two figure groups in order to frame the central action (Figure 3). The artist also chose to include crowds of spectators in the background for the first time. Formally, the third version owes much to the second version for its rhythmically articulated figural groups and clear main action. However, it also eschews the crispness of the London work for the looser painterliness of the Boston composition. The crowd of spectators peering over the wall, representing the native Indians loyal to Mejía and Maximilian at Querétaro, are relegated to mere Impressionistic brush strokes in the far upper reaches of the canvas. The foremost group of spectators is largely hidden, and is subordinated in class and visual importance to the three victims. The Mannheim composition is on the whole a more solemn, heroic work; its dark and grave colors lend it an impressive monumentality.<sup>13</sup>

The lithograph and the painted study complete the series (Figures 4-5). How these two works fit into the sequence of compositions of the *Execution* has been the subject of much debate. It is known, however, that the lithograph was completed and sent to the printer Alfred Lemerrier in January 1869.<sup>14</sup> John Elderfield proposes that the lithograph and the oil sketch were created simultaneously. He cites the work of Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, who found small numbers at the edges of the oil sketch, suggesting that the composition was segmented into grids by the artist and then transferred to the lithograph stone.<sup>15</sup> The lithograph and the study position the firing squad and the victims in exactly the same way, down to the placement of the figures' feet. They both also include the officer at the right giving the order to shoot with an upraised sword, a figure deleted from the Mannheim composition, as well as crowds of spectators above the wall. The two works adopt the clarity of the London version, and contribute to the more detailed composition of the Mannheim canvas.<sup>16</sup> The lithograph's only departure from the oil sketch lies in the cemetery wall, which it transforms into a right-angled, bipartite structure. Given these cumulative characteristics, it is quite possible that Elderfield's sequencing of the five versions is correct.

<sup>13</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *The Hidden Face of Manet: An Investigation of the Artist's Working Processes* (Warwickshire: The Burlington Magazine Press, 1986), 52.

<sup>14</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet by Himself: Correspondence & Conversation, Paintings, Pastels, Prints & Drawings* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1991), 49.

<sup>15</sup> John Elderfield, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Publishers, 2006), 109.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

Manet's production of the later versions of the *Execution* was most likely influenced by a series of photographs taken by the French photographer François Aubert. The earliest of these images show the state of Maximilian's court in Mexico. Another is the Emperor's official portrait, and shows in him in full dress, upright and proud (Figure 6). Yet another captures the buildings in which the leader resided in all their pomp and splendor. The remainder of the photographs were taken subsequent to the execution and are much more somber in tone. The first is of the gravesite where three small mounds indicate where Mejía, Miramón, and Maximilian lay (Figure 7). The Emperor's bullet-riddled vest and coat (Figure 8 and 9) compose separate photos. Aubert also captured the deceased Maximilian in his coffin, his body preserved and his face unnervingly distorted by the insertion of glass eyes (Figure 10).<sup>17</sup> But perhaps the most popular image was that of Maximilian's execution squad (Figure 11). The journalist Albert Wolff described four of Aubert's images in a report published in *Le Figaro* on August 11, 1867, paying particular attention to Aubert's image of the Mexican executioners:

The first is of the church where Maximilian's body was taken. The second shows the squad responsible for the Emperor's execution. It consists of six soldiers, a corporal and an officer. The soldiers have horribly sinister expressions. The uniform looks like the French uniform: the kepi and tunic appear to be grey canvas; the belt of white leather; the trousers, reaching down to the feet, are of darker material. The corporal, the one who finally killed Maximilian, is a very handsome young fellow whose friendly appearance is in marked contrast to the gruesome task he had to perform. The most bizarre of the seven [*sic*] is the officer commanding the squad who appears to be under eighteen. The third photograph shows the Emperor's frock coat, seen from the back. It clearly shows the holes made by the bullets that struck Maximilian's chest and passed through his back...The fourth photograph...shows Maximilian's waistcoat, or rather the waistcoat lent to him by his servant. One can clearly see the traces of three bullets which struck the Emperor in the area of his stomach, [and] the trace left by the last bullet, which ended the unhappy sovereign's suffering.

Manet was very likely to have read the report, as all of Aubert's photographs were widely distributed in Mexico and Europe.<sup>18</sup> In Paris, they were some of the most popular souvenir images of Maximilian's death in the weeks after the event. They confirmed the cataclysmic event at a time when the French government was trying futilely to ignore its existence. These pictures were all that provided contemporary Frenchmen any visual evidence of the occurrence, and all that survived to satisfy the curiosity of an information-based society.<sup>19</sup> Manet doubtlessly saw and drew from these photographs for both information and inspiration.

Photography was a presence that could not be avoided in nineteenth century France. Bourgeois portraiture and even the burgeoning pornography industry were booming as a result of

<sup>17</sup> François Aubert, photographer, "[Maximilian Series.]" Photographs, 1867. From Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley (accessed February 27, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 52.

<sup>19</sup> Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "Between Seeing and Believing: Representing Women in Appert's *Crimes de la Commune*" in *Making the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. Deane De la Motte and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 238.

the popularity of the new medium. Even if Manet's records do not openly declare his reliance on photography, its influence on his work is still obvious. It was impossible to avoid the new medium, especially given the context of the *Execution*. From his distanced perch in Paris, Manet's only visual connection to the actual death site in Querétaro, Mexico, was through photographs. As a result, Manet's works take up and complete the imagery of Aubert's photographs.

None of the Aubert's pictures show the Emperor actually getting killed. The photographs are only after-the-fact remnants of the execution. The image of Maximilian's vest is visual evidence meant to convince and provide information about Maximilian's death. Aubert's images are void of context, objects plucked out of narrative time and space as free-floating signs.<sup>20</sup> Photography could not capture the single cataclysmic event and could only deal with the aftermath.<sup>21</sup> Thus we have the vest, a trace of reality riddled with loss.<sup>22</sup>

The *Execution of Maximilian* adds to the actual execution in a manner that the photograph could not at the time. In effect, it provides a much more complete account. The second version of the *Execution* can be thought of as a play, a visual account of the execution complete with main conflict, multiple actors, a setting, and props (Figure 2). The background of the painting looks like a backdrop and the soldiers' footing on the ground plane is uneven and unlikely, their bodies appearing too large for the setting. The entire scene's location appears almost abstract. Unlike photography, the emphasis of this image is the main action. The central conflict is clearly delineated. In the third version, Mejía is hit first, recoiling back violently. The other two condemned men have not yet felt the bite of the bullet, however, judging from their expressionless faces. His figure is the most dramatic of the grouping, palpably evoking death. Maximilian, to his right, stands calmly, his face a blur of peach skin and straw-colored hair blending into each other. The Emperor's eyes and dark beard almost disappear in this wash of pale color. Miramón, for his part, echoes his leader's tranquility, standing with a defined, determined, handsome face. A cloud of smoke rising from the guns conclusively signals the scene's place in the narrative of events.<sup>23</sup>

The NCO at the right represents a potential break in the tone of the painting. He is the closest figure to the viewer, and could easily look up and in the beholder's direction. However, the officer's inward absorption in his task also keeps him ensconced within the depicted conflict. A cloud of smoke rising from the guns conclusively signals the scene's place in the narrative of events.<sup>24</sup> Instead of looking up and connecting with the observer's gaze, the soldier's attention remains focused on his upcoming task and the events at hand. He holds his gun cocked and to the ready. He is indelibly linked to the violence at hand, and will only serve to prolong it. Time passes without a comforting dénouement implied; the horror only goes on, the smoke never clearing and the guns always shooting. The terrible tension of the drama lies in the fact that the end is never implied. The observer waits for Maximilian's body to be hit, but it never happens.

<sup>20</sup>Elizabeth Ann McCauley, *Industrial Madness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 17.

<sup>21</sup>Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "Between Seeing and Believing: Representing Women in Appert's *Crimes de la Commune*" in *Making the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. Deane De la Motte and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 240.

<sup>22</sup>Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 19.

<sup>24</sup>John Elderfield, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Publishers, 2006), 152.

One almost wishes to reach into the painting and stop the trajectory of the bullets. The history painting is a theatrical entity, drawing the audience in through emotion and catharsis.

Émile Zola praised Manet for the harmony of his canvases, the savagely fresh color coming together to create what he believed to be “Nature” itself. The artist chose the color, manipulated the actors, and changed the original facts to create a progression of images that clearly exhibit his thinking process. However, the nineteenth-century viewer tended to divorce the photograph from the idea of authorship. Photography focused on the depicted object, an “aloof” image that did nothing but report facts.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, one can feel Manet’s presence within the *Execution*. By the third version he had eschewed the crisp outlines and smooth surfaces typical to a photograph in favor of a more painterly style (Figure 3). Thus Maximilian’s blurred soft faces with eyes that almost disappear among the layers of thick paint, and the crowds of spectating native Mexicans, are partly physical presences and partly Impressionistic brush stroke. With this last composition, Manet took great creative license with the facts of the execution.<sup>26</sup> John Elderfield notes that “the only fact that Manet may unequivocally be said to have adopted from *Le Figaro* of July 8 was that the executions took place outdoors.” If Manet read *Le Figaro* of July 8, which he probably did, his painting nonetheless proceeded and took direction from art-historical sources, which formed the filters that passed through what was compatible in the newspaper and stopped what was not.<sup>27</sup> He opted instead to develop the paintings into his own narrative.

Manet influences also come by way of the Spanish painter Francisco Goya. By 1863, a critic had already likened *The Execution* to “Goya in Mexico.”<sup>28</sup> Manet most likely viewed Goya’s works during his 1865 visit to Spain.<sup>29</sup> Both the *Third of May* (Figure 12) and the *Execution* share a sense of conflict continuing but never being resolved. Nevertheless, Manet consciously rejected Goya’s incorporation of emotion. *The Execution* carries none of the pathos of the *Third of May*, but instead treats its subject with a sort of stark indifference.<sup>30</sup> One is struck by the casual tone of Manet’s death scene, an utter lack of outrage or protest, as the painting seems to have nothing to do with the actual event’s emotional power.

In fact, the *Execution* actually failed as a history painting. At that moment in 1867, a history painting was required to be two things: one, legible, and two, supportive of the current regime’s policies.<sup>31</sup> The *Execution* is certainly neither of these things. To begin with, it is not an image that can be deciphered on its own. It is dependent on text – the reports emerging out of Mexico concerning the circumstances of Maximilian’s death – and it is furthermore not the most communicative painting series. The figures are passively expressionless, face away from the

<sup>25</sup> Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 26-7.

<sup>26</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 38.

<sup>27</sup> John Elderfield, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Publishers, 2006), 71.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism, or, The face of painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 332.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Courthion and Pierre Cailler, eds., *Portrait of Manet: By Himself and his Contemporaries* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1960), 15.

<sup>30</sup> John House, “Manet’s Maximilian: History Painting, Censorship, and Ambiguity,” in *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship*, ed. Juliet Wilson-Bareau (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 98.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

viewer, or look down, appearing almost asleep (as in the case of the third version's NCO). Contemporary critics were constantly puzzled by the illegibility of Manet's canvases. As for the second requirement, one could hardly claim that the *Execution* supports Napoleon III's foreign policy. By making the uniforms and muskets of the soldiers appear more French than Mexican, Manet intimates that Maximilian's death occurred at the hands of Louis Napoleon himself.<sup>32</sup> Elderfield has gone so far as to suggest that the third version's NCO is a portrait of the French Emperor, whose lethargy is a condemnation of the leader's callous indifference and inaction over the events at Querétaro. Lastly, the series is ineffective as a moral image. History paintings were expected to impart some lesson from the past.<sup>33</sup> The few popular prints of Maximilian's death that did pass the censors contain a great degree of reverence for both the victims and France (Figures 13-15). In these, Maximilian appeared as pitiable victim, emphasizing his piety, innocence, and sorrow over his fate. Manet's *Execution*, contrastingly, does not pretend to entertain such notions of nationalism and divine ordination of events.<sup>34</sup> If it was not clear what Manet's figures were doing, and if they refused contact with the viewer, any passing-on of a didactic message becomes impossible. Given all of these failed requirements, it is logical to conclude that the *Execution* is not a true history painting.

This is where Manet's incorporation of the photograph begins to matter. Despite his allegiance to many aspects of the history painting, the *Execution* borrows extensively from the thematic and formal qualities of the photograph. The reason for the series' failure as a history painting is perhaps its incorporation of the aesthetic qualities of the photograph. After all, the goals of the history painting and the photograph are diametrically opposed. The history painting aims to be a self-sufficient object, communicative and edifying, while the late-nineteenth century photograph was dependent on text, impersonal, and cold. Manet produced a history painting with the qualities of the photograph: the *Execution* is unemotional and seemingly indifferent to its subject matter. It is clear why the *Execution* did not go over well with the French authorities.

The photograph was considered devoid feeling because of the particular circumstances of its production. It was viewed as an extension of both journalism and science because viewers believed it could present facts in a direct, unbiased manner. Cameras were associated with objectivity and authenticity, their products an unmediated visual registration incapable of any kind of distortion or misrepresentation.<sup>35</sup> The medium had all that the industrial age admired: precision, objectivity, speed, reproducibility, convenience, and lowered cost.<sup>36</sup> Viewers were also enchanted by the miraculous faithfulness of the camera, its seeming ability to capture God's creations perfectly. Photographs were additionally highly valued for their capacity to capture locales to which most Parisians could not afford to travel. Documentation of the outside world transformed the viewer into an anthropologist, a knowledgeable collector and owner of the

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<sup>32</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 55.

<sup>33</sup> John House, "Manet's Maximilian: History Painting, Censorship, and Ambiguity," in *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship*, ed. Juliet Wilson-Bareau (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 87.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>35</sup> Jeannene M. Przyblyski, "Between Seeing and Believing: Representing Women in Appert's *Crimes de la Commune*" in *Making the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. Deane De la Motte and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 233.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Ann McCauley, *Industrial Madness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 1.

treasures of the exotic regions of the globe. Photography vastly expanded individual perceptual capabilities while simultaneously undermining the physical bases of sensory experience.<sup>37</sup>

For example, the work of Desirée Charnay emphasizes the scientific capabilities of the camera. Charnay was a French travel photographer who published guides of the Yucatán, and was an important supporter of the occupation of Mexico which initially placed Maximilian into power. He produced pro-Mexico propaganda by publishing photographs in Paris of Mexican natives, “objective” portraits that confirmed European notions of New World barbarism and crudity. One of his most notable pictures is of two Mexican men standing before a gray wall, stripped down to nothing but their underclothing (Figure 16). His subjects are relegated to the status of specimens rather than humans, curiosities to be marveled at for their anatomy and poverty rather than their values or intelligence. Charnay’s photographs are prime examples of the indifference of the camera’s eye, which could turn human beings into curios. The *Execution*, with its stark aloofness, echoes the emotional detachment of the photograph.

Manet’s images formally replicate the austerity of the photograph. Aside from the peasants’ reaction, the scene is shockingly ascetic and lacking in emotional depth. Where is the distress over Maximilian’s death? Where does one find the sense of sorrow and blame over the demise of the three men? It is as if Manet was more concerned with the physical accuracy of the scene than its expressive ability. For instance, in the final version of the painting Mejía’s head is reared back, his hands thrown up pathetically. But then one realizes that his face does not evoke any sadness. The reason for his body positioning is to describe the force of the shots, the thud of bullet hitting flesh. The general’s gesture is not meant to be a dramatic one, but simply conform to the laws of physics.

Other aesthetic features of photography find their way into the *Execution* as well. Critics maligned Manet for two specific “mistakes” in his painting. First, his lack of lighting accuracy: the *Execution* is awash in brightness, with bold patches of color competing for the viewer’s attention.<sup>38</sup> Everything seems lit by the sun, especially in the second version, and the firing squad’s uniforms are outlined in hard black lines that hardly seem natural.<sup>39</sup> Photographs did not have a relatively wide range of tonal gradation. Captured objects ranged from brightly white to darkest black, with comparatively little subtlety of shading. Lighting was most often bright, in order to catch the subtleties of objects better, lest they be obscured in shadow. Lastly, while differently colored objects contrasted each other dramatically, in photographs they were registered as black jumping off of white on film, or vice versa. Manet’s paintings, especially the second version of the *Execution*, mimic these qualities. Although the canvas is in color, the forms of the soldiers are distinguished by their hard, shiny surfaces. The folds and wrinkles of their trousers are palpable in their crisp shadowing, and their white belts stand out brightly. Objects appear solid, outlined darkly, and the entire scene is lit in vast, all-encompassing sunshine.<sup>40</sup> Manet eschewed thickly applied, loose paint in favor of bold, flat hues. The choice seems a direct comparison to the limited coloring of the photograph.

<sup>37</sup> Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997) 51.

<sup>38</sup> Pierre Courthion, and Pierre Cailler, eds., *Portrait of Manet: By Himself and his Contemporaries* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1960), 123.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>40</sup> John House “Manet’s Maximilian: History Painting, Censorship, and Ambiguity,” in *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship*, ed. Juliet Wilson-Bureau (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 97.



The second criticism concerned the artist's disregard for narrative. Shelley Rice, writing about the mid-nineteenth century photographer Adolphe Braun, says:

Like Manet and Degas, those masters of transitory gestures whose intentions are unclear, Braun shows us the ambiguity of our bodies in time and space, those social masks that simultaneously pierce and reinforce the sheer impenetrability of the real. No matter how hard we stare or how close we get, these enlargements remain a puzzle, a "fragment whose existence never exceeds the fragment."<sup>41</sup> These passersby are not synthesized into the larger metaphoric vision of a Balzac. Instead, their absolute particularity fills the frame, inviting and simultaneously remaining impervious to explication and completion.

Braun's photographs captured the large public streets of Paris, full of various men, women, and carriages moving around the city. Manet's connection to these photographs, Rice suggests, is that the artist also captures bodies that move without explanation. What is Manet's NCO doing in the second and third version of the *Execution*? Is he nearing sleep, tired from his duties? Is he a covert portrait of Napoleon III, as Elderfield posits, representing political indifference? Or is he withdrawing into himself, thinking about and dreading the unpleasant task to come? And what are the victims' psychological states, with their blank faces? What are the soldiers'? Just as Braun's street shots do not offer up passerbyes' personalities or intentions, Manet's figures are also stubbornly uncommunicative. The painting lacks a clear narrative because the various figures refuse to interact clearly with one another, or with the viewer.

The sheer repetition of the execution scene reminds one of the endless reproductive ability of the photograph. There is indeed something mechanistic about Manet's quick production of paintings, which stretched over a period of only a few months. Of course, the copy of a photograph is identical to the original, which is clearly not the case for the *Execution*. There were significant changes made to each successive canvas. For instance, the officer in the red kepi who figures so prominently in the first two versions becomes only a red line and a hint of red cap, hidden behind the rest of the squad, in the third version.<sup>42</sup> The spacing between the three victims and the firing squad also became more diminished over time, as the artist learned that short-range execution was the norm in Mexico from newspaper accounts.<sup>43</sup> Yet the idea of reproduction still holds. Manet's initial composition is remarkably similar in all five images. The angle of fire, with the victims receding into space on the left and the firing squad ordered tightly together on the right, does not change. The five images are variations on one initial concept, and parallel the reproducibility of the photograph by virtue of their sheer number. The lithograph version, as an image to be printed multiple times and cheaply sold on the street, especially strengthens this linkage.

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<sup>41</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Third Meaning," from *Image-Music-Text*, quoted in Shelley Rice's *Parisian Views*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 71.

<sup>42</sup> John Elderfield, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Publishers, 2006), 103.

<sup>43</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 49.

If photography was valued for depicting “Nature” accurately, so was Manet. The artist was a Realist, an artist who portrayed exclusively what he saw before him.<sup>44</sup> Manet was valued in his time for his ability to put down exactly what he saw onto canvas, an instantaneous capturing that is further compounded by the fluidity and spontaneity of his paint. Zola, Baudelaire, and Proust, in their writings on the artist, all emphasize Manet’s emphasis on sight. All three authors use the terms of visibility repeatedly in relation to the artist, words like ‘see,’ ‘perceive,’ ‘observe,’ ‘watch,’ and so forth.<sup>45</sup> Manet himself once said “People living a hundred years hence will be happy—their vision will be so much more highly developed than ours, they will see so much more clearly.”<sup>46</sup> The photograph was valued in the late nineteenth century for its realization of Manet’s dream of futuristically sophisticated sight. The camera was indeed seen as a mechanized “eye”, a means of permanently recording natural vision that superseded man’s perceptual abilities.

Photographs, as previously discussed, were valued for accuracy and subservience to the indexical aims of science. Manet likewise professed a keen desire to record his surroundings precisely. Realism was prioritized over radical artistic abstraction. The artist confessed to Zola that he could “do nothing without Nature. I do not know how to invent.”<sup>47</sup> In fact, for the production of the second version of the *Execution*, the artist arranged through a family friend, Commandant Hippolyte Lejosne, to have a squad of infantrymen come pose for him in his studio. He also had another family friend, the violinist Damourette, model for the figure of Miramón. Furthermore, the artist claimed to paint best outdoors where he could more realistically observe and capture the goings-on of the world. Manet needed not only the present to paint, but the present right before his eyes, moving and changing.<sup>48</sup> The painting has everything to do with Baudelaire’s stipulation that modern art capture “the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent.”<sup>49</sup> Manet’s concern with instantaneity is a direct mimicry of the depictive abilities of the camera.

Photographs, at the time, relied on the trustworthy caption. Just as Appert’s photographs rely on text for full explanation, Manet’s paintings also rely heavily on written sources. The title “Execution of Maximilian” itself is necessary to explain the subject matter, because the painting is so starkly silent. The figures’ clothing refuses to identify them within a larger social context. For instance, to what country do the soldiers belong? While they are meant to be Juarista revolutionaries, their uniforms more closely resemble those of the French infantry. Also, who are the horrified observers, that nondescript ragtag band peering over the wall in Manet’s third version? Because of this confusion, the contemporary Parisian viewer would have had to read the textual accounts of Maximilian’s death in order fully to comprehend the scene and all its

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<sup>44</sup> John House, “Manet’s Maximilian: History Painting, Censorship, and Ambiguity,” in *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship*, ed. Juliet Wilson-Bareau (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 87.

<sup>45</sup> Pierre Courthion and Pierre Cailler, eds., *Portrait of Manet: By Himself and his Contemporaries* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1960), 129.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>47</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet by Himself: Correspondence & Conversation, Paintings, Pastels, Prints & Drawings* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1991), 45.

<sup>48</sup> Pierre Courthion and Pierre Cailler, eds., *Portrait of Manet: By Himself and his Contemporaries* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1960), 199.

<sup>49</sup> John Elderfield, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Publishers, 2006), 64.

accompanying details. For example, the accounts of the journalist Albert Wolff or that of Maximilian's cook would have made clear that the composition's depicted hill was in fact the Cerro de Las Campanas.<sup>50</sup>

Newspaper reports were, and are, essential to the intelligibility of the canvases.<sup>51</sup> How else does one identify the three doomed men? The generals and Maximilian are depicted dressed in civilian clothing, without uniforms to convey titles. Furthermore, one needs to have seen the Emperor's portrait, like Aubert's photograph, or one of the many commemorative prints of the fallen leader being distributed around Paris at the time, to identify him. Otherwise, how is he distinguished, with his blurry features and nondescript hat in the third version? The same goes for Mejía and Miramón because they were lesser known leaders. Of course, the modern viewer would doubtlessly be more troubled than contemporary Frenchmen by these questions. Given the volubility of the outcry over the *Execution*, one can imagine that the scene figured largely in the common imagination, and that Manet's topic would have been instantly recognized. Yet the paintings' completion depends on its relationship to textual newspaper accounts. Manet relied on the newspaper both to provide visual authenticity, and to give him a sense of the events which transpired in Querétaro.

However, the series' connection to contemporary journalism certainly does not end there. Manet not only borrowed the authenticity of Aubert's newspaper photographs, he also wanted to replicate their thematic qualities. The timeline of the paintings' production reveals that the *Execution* was meant to be a piece of reportage, a direct response to political events just like the photograph. The first version was in fact begun only a few days after the news of Maximilian's fate arrived on July 1, 1867 (Figure 1).<sup>52</sup> As mentioned before, x-ray analysis of the painting shows it was created quite rapidly, judging from the signs of scraping and repainting on the canvas's surface.<sup>53</sup> This is where the contemporary part of the genre title "contemporary history painting" comes into play. Just as photography tried to capture all that was modern through the instantaneity of its mechanical functioning, Manet's canvases similarly attempted to exist in the living moment. The *Execution* was begun before the full details of Maximilian's death were even known, and each of the five compositions changed in response to new information flowing in.

Plus, with the implicit criticism of the French government built into the series, Manet went even farther. The *Execution* contains the same condemnations of Louis Napoleon as contemporary newspaper articles. Émile Zola

noticed that the soldiers shooting Maximilian were wearing a uniform almost identical to that of our own troops. Fanciful artists give the Mexicans costumes from comic opera. M. Manet, who truly loves truth, has drawn their real costumes, which closely resemble those of the Vincennes infantrymen. You can understand the horror and anger of the

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<sup>50</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *The Hidden Face of Manet: An Investigation of the Artist's Working Processes* (Warwickshire: The Burlington Magazine Press, 1986), 60.

<sup>51</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 52.

<sup>52</sup> John Elderfield, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Publishers, 2006), 22.

<sup>53</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 51.

gentlemen censors. What now! An artist dared to put before their eyes the cruel irony: France shooting Maximilian!<sup>54</sup>

Manet was well known for his republican sentiments. He told his friend Pierre-George Jeannot that while riding back from Versailles, he joined the engine driver and freeman on the train he had boarded. He admired the two men, “both so calm and patient. Theirs is a dog’s life, but it’s those men who are the heroes of today.”<sup>55</sup> Manet clearly respected the common man and not the privileged crowd of Louis Napoleon.<sup>56</sup> He was openly critical of his government’s missteps and elitism. Manet manifested these anxieties and concern in his art. He inserted the *Execution* into an ongoing discourse of foreign policy, human relations, and betrayal. The Salon’s selection board did not know what to make of a painting that seemed so transparently traitorous. History paintings had traditionally lived in the inviolable past celebrating its nation’s feats. Manet’s paintings, like journalistic newspaper photos, lived squarely in the present. They removed the shadow of idealization to uncover what was truly the theme of modernity: uncertainty, imperialism, and power struggle.

Manet strove to capture what was most unsettling about the modern age. Industry was mechanizing, society was losing its strict hierarchy, and France was shedding its protective insulation by becoming a global power. It is indeed easy to forget how cataclysmic the late nineteenth century was for Paris. Everything was changing.<sup>57</sup> Yet if one could see Maximilian’s gravesite, his bullet-riddled coat and vest, and other images of his death, the trauma could be processed.<sup>58</sup> Journalism, accompanied by the photograph, addressed and involved everyday citizens in a manner that the government did not. Photography had become a way to understand, keep pace with, and accept important political events.<sup>59</sup> By 1867, it had officially become a part of the French social fabric, mimicking and commenting on real life events. *The Execution of Maximilian* series picks up on this sense of the political exchange of ideas. Just as current newspaper articles were openly critical of Napoleon III, so was Manet. His paintings carry the political connotations typical of the journalistic photograph, and also replicate their rapidity of response to the headlining story.

Manet’s relationship to photography can be explained in various ways. Perhaps the artist found fine art’s hold on the real world slipping.<sup>60</sup> Common Parisians were proclaiming the camera a miracle, a way to immortalize natural sight and capture God’s creations faithfully.<sup>61</sup> Baudelaire commented on the potential downfall of the fine arts with trepidation and despair

<sup>54</sup> John Elderfield, *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Publishers, 2006), 117.

<sup>55</sup> Pierre Courthion and Pierre Cailler, eds., *Portrait of Manet: By Himself and his Contemporaries* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1960), 11.

<sup>56</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet by Himself: Correspondence & Conversation, Paintings, Pastels, Prints & Drawings* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1991), 49.

<sup>57</sup> Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>58</sup> Jeannene M. Przyblyski, “Between Seeing and Believing: Representing Women in Appert’s *Crimes de la Commune*” in *Making the News: Modernity and the Mass Press in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. Deane De la Motte and Jeannene M. Przyblyski (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 253.

<sup>59</sup> Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>60</sup> John House, “Manet’s Maximilian: History Painting, Censorship, and Ambiguity,” in *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship*, ed. Juliet Wilson-Bareau (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 90.

<sup>61</sup> Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 10.

“This generation, in fact, both artists and public, has so little faith in painting that it spends its time in seeking to disguise it, to wrap it up in sugar pills like an unpleasant medicine...”<sup>62</sup> The status of painting as the paramount representation was being threatened. As in so many other stories of the modern age cometh, man’s ability to do something with his hands was being replaced by a machine which did it better. So was the *Execution of Maximilian* a way to stay relevant, an artist’s way of embracing new kinds of vision? Elizabeth McCauley notes that avant-garde painters during this time period frequently appropriated the crudeness, naïveté, and unidealized contemporaneity of the mass media. Doing so meant embracing photography’s challenge of the old visions and social hierarchies of traditional painting, a goal Manet absolutely wanted to achieve.<sup>63</sup>

Overall, the *Execution of Maximilian* owes much, both thematically and aesthetically, to the photograph. The *Execution* is a history painting that carries the burden of the photograph. But one must ask: does it do so effectively? That is, does the *Execution* succeed or fail as an artwork? Or was the melding of two mediums too ambitious an endeavor?

To begin with, the *Execution of Maximilian*’s reception would have been highly fraught. The contemporary viewer would not have been familiar, or comfortable, with the depiction of such a controversial and recent political event on the canvases. As aforementioned, they would furthermore not have been acquainted with the image’s genre and its attendant conventions. Without a set of preconceptions and expectations, how was the audience to absorb the content of Manet’s work? Both photography and history paintings detach themselves from their subjects. Photography does so because it advertises itself as a mechanism of sight alone, with no accompanying and distracting subjectivity inserted in the image. On the other hand, history paintings achieve another sort of remoteness for two reasons. First, because the viewer assumes the depicted time and place to be so different from their own, and secondly, because the history painting’s function is to communicate a didactic message, a position of authority that does not place it at the emotional level of the observer. So how would one approach an event like the death of Maximilian which had so recently inspired pity and disappointment in the hearts of Parisians? Other images dealing with the execution glossed over the gritty details in favor of Maximilian’s bravery, or the heroism of the event. The nineteenth-century Parisian had not yet become at ease with visual political criticism such as this. Manet’s innovation was perhaps simply too multi-faceted.

One must also remember that the *Execution of Maximilian* failed in a much more practical sense: it was censored. In January 1869, Manet submitted the stone to the lithographer M. Lemerrier. Lemerrier, in turn, submitted the work to the authorities for approval before going to print. The French administration, because of the controversial and incendiary nature of the artwork, immediately forbade its exhibition in the annual Salon.<sup>64</sup> The artist, interestingly, insisted that “Monsieur Manet has never wanted to protest,” and that his paintings were meant to be judged for their interesting perception of color and sight. Yet the *Execution* is doubtlessly more than a formalist work. Manet made no secret of his dislike of Napoleon III or his republican beliefs. He wanted the final *Execution* hung in a large space and viewed by as many

<sup>62</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Mirror of Art: Critical Studies* (Virginia: Doubleday Press, 1956), 227.

<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth Ann McCauley, *Industrial Madness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 6.

<sup>64</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet by Himself: Correspondence & Conversation, Paintings, Pastels, Prints & Drawings* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1991), 50.

people as possible.<sup>65</sup> Likewise, he wanted his lithograph printed to serve as a cheap, easily reproduced, and hopefully popular street-distributed version of the scene. However, the *Execution* was never viewed by the public.

The conclusion must be reached that in the end, *The Execution of Maximilian* is a failed project, albeit an extremely interesting one. It is indeed a history painting that attempts to carry the burden of the photograph, but in the end, this distinction proved too complex and too radical for contemporary audiences. Formally, the painting series suffers from illegibility, and lack of emotion.<sup>66</sup> And thematically, it is a piece of political propaganda that never found its voice. Republicans never took up the *Execution* as a battle cry of Napoleon's botched policies. Despite the painting series' lack of success in his own time, Manet took up its mantle one more time during the fall of the commune. His later pencil, gouache, and watercolor work *The Barricade* uses the basic composition of the earlier painting, replacing Mexican soldiers with French ones, and the three victims of Querétaro with a Communard.<sup>67</sup> This work proved to be a much more rewarding endeavor. The pathos of the confrontation of Frenchman on Frenchman is chilling, and speaks to the heightened emotion and violence of that moment in France. Perhaps the image works because of the exit of the photograph from its blurred surface. Distance—the stretch from Mexico to the walls of the French Salon—proved to be a difficult leap for Manet to manage. Keeping his focus on the extraordinary events of his native Paris created a much more immediate, arresting image to which the contemporary viewer could connect.

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<sup>65</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet by Himself: Correspondence & Conversation, Paintings, Pastels, Prints & Drawings* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1991), 49.

<sup>66</sup> John House, "Manet's Maximilian: History Painting, Censorship, and Ambiguity," in *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship*, ed. Juliet Wilson-Bareau (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 97.

<sup>67</sup> Juliet Wilson-Bareau, ed., *Manet, the Execution of Maximilian: Painting, Politics, and Censorship* (London: National Gallery Publications, 1992), 73.

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Figure 1  
Eduard Manet, *The Execution of Maximilian (I)*, 1868-69  
Oil on canvas, 48 x 58 cm  
Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen



Figure 2  
Eduard Manet, *The Execution of Maximilian (II)*, 1867-68  
Oil on canvas, 193 x 284 cm  
The National Gallery, London



Figure 3  
Eduard Manet, *The Execution of Emperor Maximilian (III)*, 1868-69  
Oil on canvas, 252 x 302 cm  
Kunsthalle, Mannheim



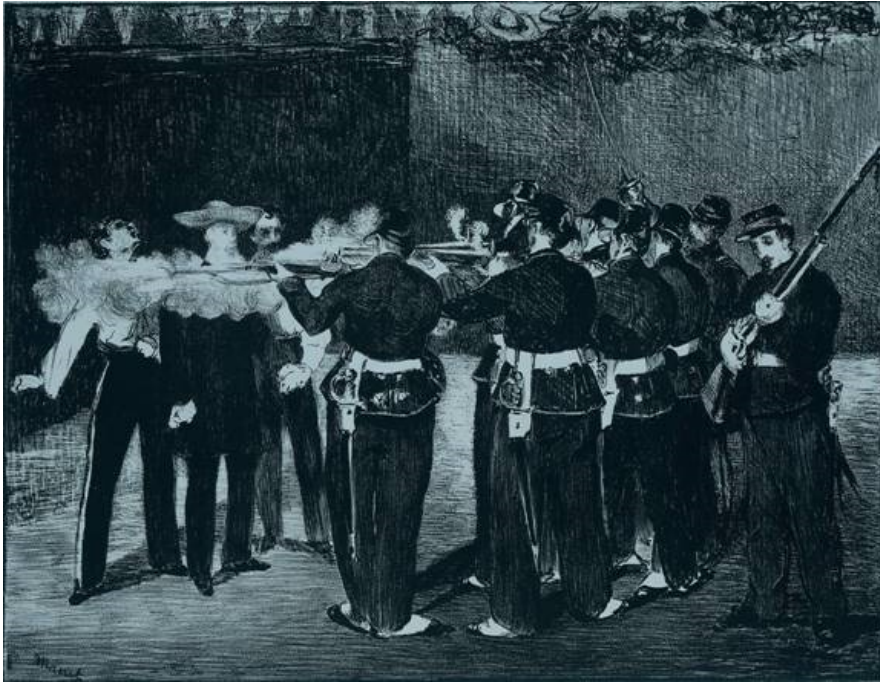


Figure 4  
 Eduard Manet, *The Execution of Maximilian*, 1868-69  
 Lithograph on chine collé, plate: 34 x 43.8 cm  
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 5  
 Eduard Manet, *The Execution of Maximilian* (sketch), 1868-69  
 Oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm  
 Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen



Figure 6

Anonymous, *Maximilian in a Mexican Hat*, 1867

Carte de visite photograph

Museo Nacional de Antropología, Castillo de Chapultepec, Mexico City



Figure 7

François Aubert, *The Three Crosses on the Cerro de las Campanas*, 1867

Albumen print photograph, 16 x 22.4 cm

Brussels, Musée Royal de l'Armée



Figure 8

André-Adolphe-Eugène Disderi (after François Aubert), *Maximilian's Waistcoat*, 186

Carte de visite photograph

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale





Figure 9

André-Adolphe-Eugène Disderi (after François Aubert), *Maximilian's Frock Coat*, 1867

Carte de visite photograph

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

Aubert's original images featured Maximilian's coat and waistcoat on supports. Disderi, another French carte-de-visité photographer, touched the supports out to focus on the clothing alone.



Figure 10

François Aubert, *The Corpse of Maximilian in his Coffin*, 1867

Albumen print photograph, 22.3 x 16.5 cm

Brussels, Musée Royal de l'Armée



Figure 11  
François Aubert, *The Execution Squad standing at Ease*, 1867  
Contact print from the original glass negative  
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Figure 12  
Francisco Goya, *The Third of May 1814*  
Oil on canvas, 268 x 347 cm  
Museo del Prado, Madrid



Figure 13

Adrien Cordiglia, *Souvenir of the Execution of Maximilian*, 1867

Carte de visite photograph

Washington DC, Library of Congress

Onto a frontal view of the wall, the two halves of the execution squad have been superimposed together with the victims – whose heads are placed on “borrowed” bodies. Maximilian’s last words appear below: “*Mexicanos, que mi sangre sea la última que se derrame y que esta regenerere este desgraciada pays (sic)*” – “Mexicans, may my blood be the last that is shed and may it revive this unhappy country.”

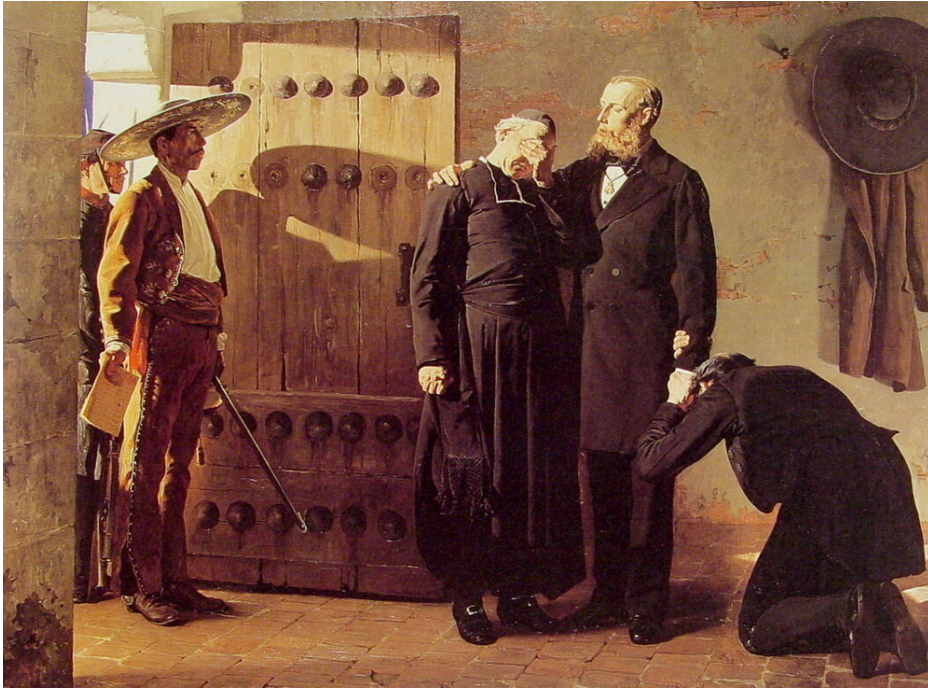


Figure 14  
 Jean-Paul Laurens, *The Last Moments of Maximilian*, Emperor of Mexico, Salon of 1883  
 Oil on canvas, 222 x 300 cm  
 Moscow, Tretyakov Gallery

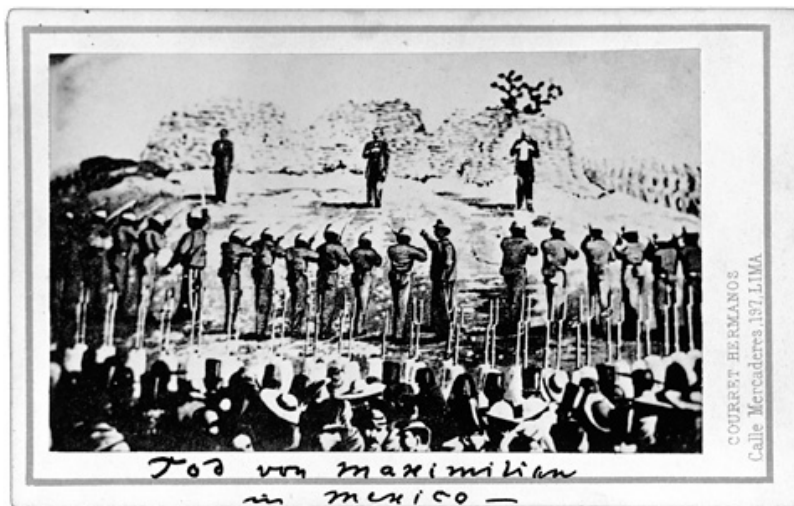


Figure 15  
 François Aubert, *The Execution of Maximilian by Three Firing Squads*, 1867  
 Carte de visite photograph  
 Commandant Spitzer Collection





Figure 16  
Desirée Charnay, *Two Maya Indians from the Yucatán*, 1880-82  
Albumen print photograph  
Collection of the Musée de L'Homme, Paris