

MOIRA LINEHAN'S COMMENTS on her POEM, "Portrait of the Pent Up"

Berthe Morisot was the only woman to exhibit with The Impressionists. She was also married to Eugène Manet, brother of Édouard Manet, one of that group's leaders. In the reading I have done about Morisot and Édouard Manet, innuendos suggest he was, at the very least, quite taken by his sister-in-law. Scholars say that over a six-year period, he had her pose for him eleven times.

In 2017 the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Museum mounted "Inventing Impressionism" based on its own holdings in this area. One piece I saw at that show was Manet's "The Repose of Berthe Morisot." It was a portrait of a very dark-haired woman in yards and yards of white fabric. On my first viewing of it, the painting was no more than that, though I did sit for a while in front of it, trying to note the Impressionist principles at work. One of the guards, seeing the time I was spending in front of it, approached and told me that the painting Manet included behind the love seat where Morisot had arranged herself was on display elsewhere in the museum. He gave me directions to it. Kuniyoshi's "Recovering the Stolen Jewel from the Palace of the Dragon King" was nothing like Manet's reproduction of it. Its sensuousness and building drama, as I try to describe in my poem, were not in the Manet painting when I first saw it. And then they were when I went back to it. And so, my poem about this portrait, equally about Manet as it is about Morisot.