



# Brushstroke and Emergence: Courbet, Impressionism, Picasso

*James D. Herbert*

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No pictorial device in nineteenth-century French painting more clearly represented the free-ranging self than the loose brushstroke. From the romantics through the impressionists and post-impressionists, the brushstroke bespoke autonomous artistic individuality and freedom from convention.

Yet the question of how much we can credit to the individual brushstroke is complicated—and in *Brushstroke and Emergence*, James D. Herbert uses that question as a starting point for an extended essay that draws on philosophy of mind, the science of emergence, and art history. Brushstrokes, he reminds us, are as much creatures of habit and embodied experience as they are of intent. When they gather in great numbers they take on a life of their own, out of which emerge complexity and meaning. Analyzing ten paintings by Courbet, Manet, Cézanne, Monet, Seurat, and Picasso, Herbert exposes vital relationships between intention and habit, the singular and the complex. In doing so, he uncovers a space worthy of historical and aesthetic analysis between the brushstroke and the self.

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