



Monet, 1859

Artist Resources – Claude Monet (French, 1840 – 1926)

“I floated in opulence, temporarily at least, for later we were to quarrel again, and I threw myself body and soul into the *plein air*. I was a dangerous innovation,” Monet explains [in an interview from 1900, originally published in *Le Temps*](#) in which the artist details his earliest years as an artist in Paris through his first exhibitions with his “savior” Paul Durand-Ruel in the 1870s.

In 1918, on the day following the armistice, Monet gifted a series of large-panel water lily paintings to France to commemorate the end of the war and a hopeful new era of peace. Eight of the nineteen paintings that comprise the [Nymphéas \(*Water Lilies*\)](#) cycle are housed at the [Musée de l’Orangerie](#), which [Monet designed in conjunction with the architect](#) to curate the specific viewer experience he envisioned.

“It took some time to understand my water lilies,” Monet explained in 1924 “I painted them for pleasure; I cultivated them without thinking of painting them. A landscape does not permeate you in one day... And then, all of a sudden, I had a revelation, of faeries in my pond. I took my palette, since then I have had no other model.” [In this excerpt from his book](#), Monet scholar [Marc Elder follows the artist through his Giverny](#) garden discussing the relationship between the extraordinary flora and Monet’s paintings.

In 2018, [The National Gallery hosted the first solo Monet exhibition in the UK in twenty years](#), focusing on the painter’s relationship to the industrialization and modernization of Europe, viewed through architecture-centered landscapes.

In 2019, the [De Young Museum](#) in San Francisco and the [Kimbell Art Museum](#) in Fort Worth produced exhibitions centering on the final decade of Monet’s life, during which he embarked on his famed water lilies and became increasingly abstract in style and gesture.

Local collections are at the center of exhibitions at the [Museum of Fine Art, Boston](#) and the [Art Institute of Chicago](#) in 2020. Both museums feature their entire collection of the artist’s work and celebrate the history of acquisitions and appreciation of the Impressionist, beginning in the 1880s in Chicago and 1890s in Boston. [Listen to the MFA’s curator](#) discuss her relationship with the collection, and the archivist reflect on [important Boston collectors](#).

The Denver Art Museum opened [Monet: The Truth of Nature](#) in 2020, bringing together over 120 paintings spanning the artist’s career in the most comprehensive survey on U.S. soil in twenty years. [Read an interview with the curators](#).



Monet in his Giverny studio, 1920



Claude Monet (French, 1840-1926)

Autoportrait de Claude Monet coiffé d'un béret, 1886

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2021:179.1

Claude Monet is one of the most recognizable French painters of the modern era. Known for his careful attention to light and atmospheric conditions, Monet's techniques were foundational to the development of Impressionism in the late nineteenth century. **Autoportrait de Claude Monet coiffé d'un béret (Self-Portrait of Claude Monet wearing a beret)** offers a glimpse into the artist's personal image. The self-portrait was executed when the artist was 46 years old, living on his property in Giverny, Northern France. Like other self-portraits of the time, this painting is less about presenting an accurate likeness of Monet's figure than conveying an impression of his character. Wearing a black beret and gray coat, the artist meets the viewer with a contemplative gaze. His figure seems to emerge from the impressionistic background, emphasizing the importance of painted canvas in Monet's life.

On view February 2 – May 8, 2022

Claude Monet (French, 1840-1926)

Waterloo Bridge, ca. 1899

Pastel on paper

Private Collection; L2020:35.2

Claude Monet made three pivotal trips to London between 1899 and 1901, staying at the Savoy Hotel in a fifth-floor room with a view of Waterloo and Charing Cross Bridges, which he painted at different times of day. The pioneer of Impressionism was particularly enraptured by the quintessential London fog, reflecting in a letter that the metropolis depended on fog for its beauty: “it’s the fog that gives it its magnificent breadth.” He produced over forty painted variations and twenty-six pastels of the iconic bridge floating in haze above the river Thames, frequently reworking final versions of the oil paintings upon his return to his studio in Giverny. In contrast to his painted visions, pastels such as **Waterloo Bridge** exhibit the textured and chromatic spontaneity that established Monet’s reputation in the 1870s. The landscape returns to his seminal subject matter, exploring the shifting effects of light glinting off the surface of water and the atmospheric effects of fog and steam. Architecture dissolves in the delicate violet grey of his chosen medium here, pastel on paper, as if conjured from a memory or a dream.

Extra Resources

University of Rochester’s Memorial Art Gallery’s 2018 exhibition [Monet’s Waterloo Bridge: Vision and Process](#) explored the intricacies of the series, focusing specifically on [pigment and facture](#).



On view August 5 – November 8, 2020 and February 2 – May 8, 2022