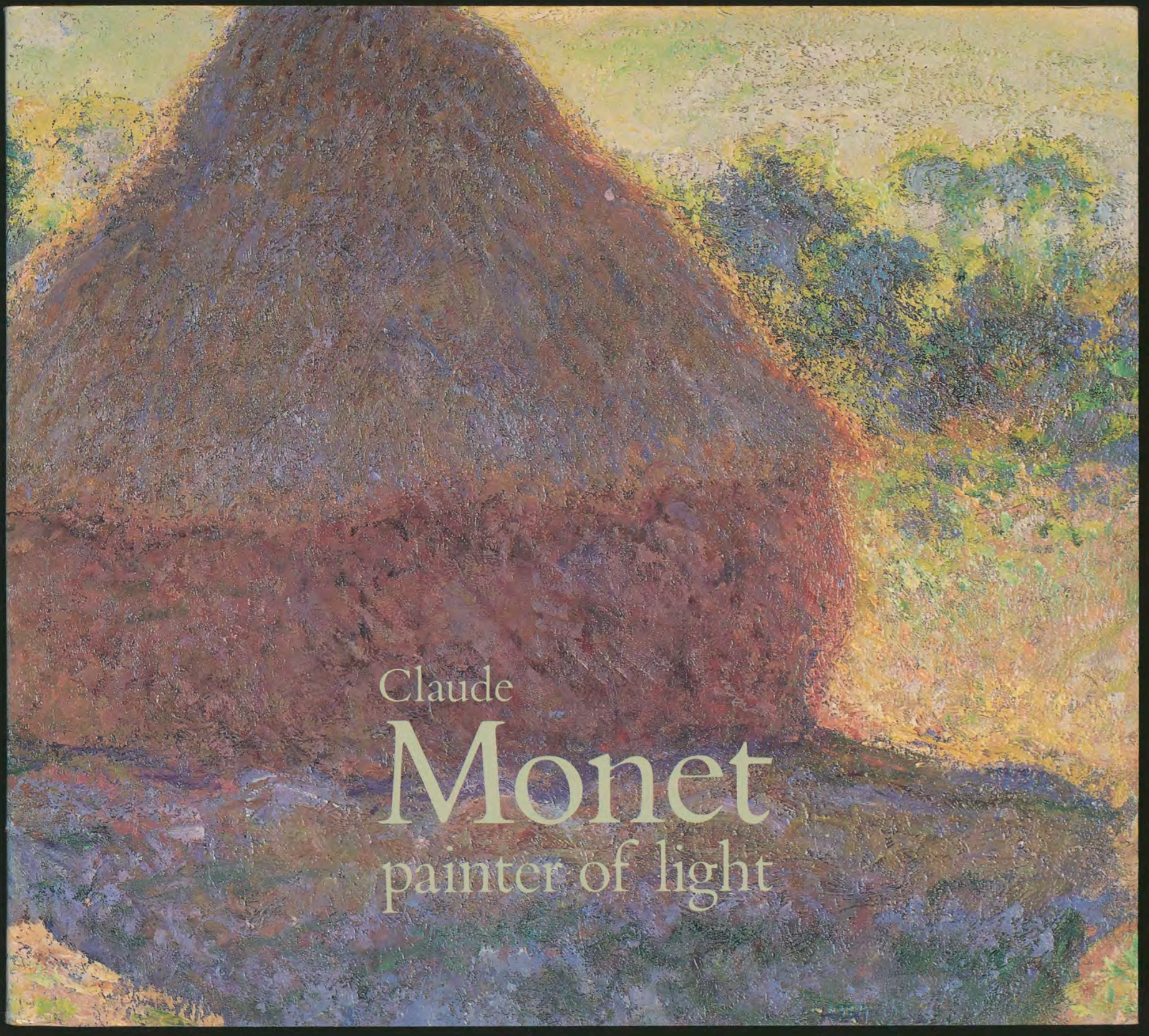
Claude
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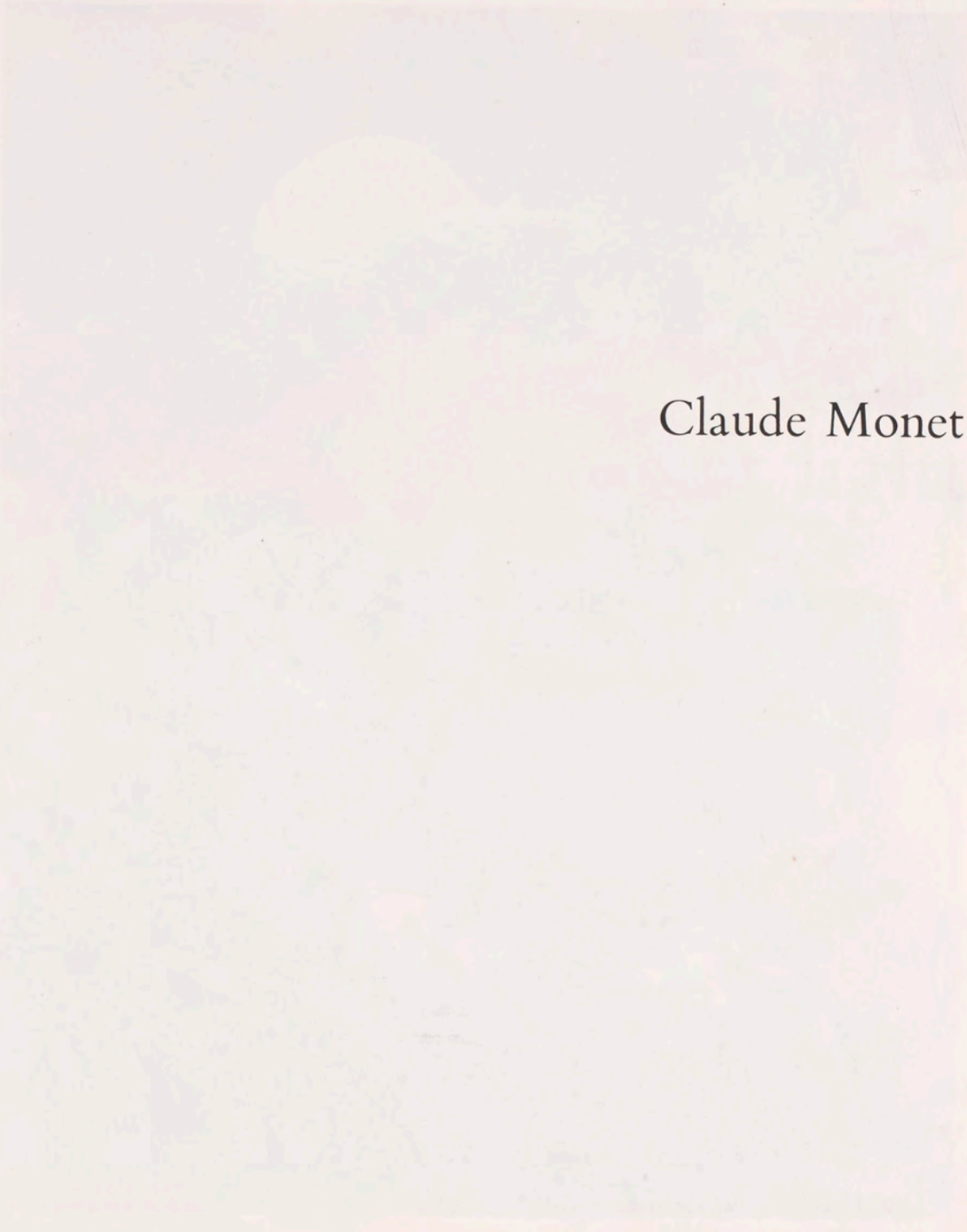

Claude Monet

Nickolas Muray *Claude Monet* c1926
Photograph courtesy of the
Museum of Modern Art, New York
gift of Mrs Nickolas Muray

Claude Monet
painter of light

Auckland City Art Gallery
NZI Corporation Limited

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This book was published on the occasion of the exhibition *Claude Monet – painter of light*, organised by the Auckland City Art Gallery.

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FOREWORDS

For several years the Auckland City Art Gallery has planned an exhibition of works by Claude Monet. This exhibition, *Claude Monet – painter of light*, is the realisation of the dream.

To assemble a comprehensive collection of works of this quality is no easy matter and we are deeply indebted to all the lenders from the United States, Ireland, France, Japan and Australia who, with remarkable generosity, have made the exhibition possible. To entrust works as unique and of such great quality as these to a journey around the world and to the care of largely unknown colleagues is an act of great magnanimity and trust. Without those lenders this exhibition and the programme of which it is part would not be possible.

Many people and agencies have participated in organising this exhibition. Dr John House of the Courtauld Institute, University of London, and Professor Virginia Spate, Power Professor of Fine Arts, University of Sydney, very generously agreed to write for the catalogue and, in Dr House's case, advise on the selection of works. To Dr John Walsh, formerly of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and now director of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, we owe the inspiration for the show. Directors, curators and registrars from the lending institutions have all participated in the formation of this memorable collection.

Our Australian colleagues, Mr Geoffrey Crow, director of the International Cultural Corporation of Australia, Mr Edmund Capon and Mr Patrick McCaughey, directors of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, respectively, who have joined us in this venture, are valued participants in an ambitious trans-Tasman exercise.

This exhibition has been made possible only by a unique partnership between NZI Corporation and the Auckland City Art Gallery. The very high costs of putting together an exhibition of this status from galleries throughout the world meant that we required assistance well beyond the normal level of sponsorship. The partnership we have formed with NZI Corporation represents a totally new concept in support for our gallery and, indeed, for art in New Zealand. NZI Corporation and the gallery have worked together in mounting an outstanding exhibition and I hope this may be the forerunner of many successful associations in the future.

Claude Monet – painter of light is the first Impressionist exhibition for New Zealand. We are confident that it will be a resounding success and that the enjoyment it will afford will justify the sacrifices and efforts of all those, named and unnamed, who have made it possible.

This exhibition seeks to do three things. It introduces the work of Monet, that giant of French Impressionism. It assembles a modest collection of paintings of supreme quality, and it describes Monet's remarkable method of working up "series" of paintings of the same motif; works describing the subject in varying conditions of light and atmosphere.

It is the last intention which makes the exhibition remarkable, for we are able to sample something of the development of almost all of the major "series" and we are able to follow closely the elaboration of one or two chosen examples. Here, more than anywhere else, we are able to see Monet develop fully the Impressionist doctrine, to rid himself of a conventionalised studio landscape-painting tradition and yet still to achieve a synthesis of the formal qualities of painting with those of the new aesthetic and its truth to the observer's perception of transient atmosphere and light.

T. L. Rodney Wilson
Director
Auckland City Art Gallery

NZI Corporation is firmly commited to corporate sponsorship of the arts and, as one of New Zealand's leading international companies, it is appropriate that one of our major projects for 1985 should be to assist in bringing to New Zealand this exhibition of major international significance.

The exhibition will provide literally a once in a lifetime opportunity for New Zealanders to see so many works of magnificent colour and beauty by one of the world's best loved painters.

We hope that, in its wide appeal, the exhibition will stimulate the interest of many who are not already dedicated arts supporters and so make a substantial contribution to the healthy development of the arts in New Zealand.

Sir Alan Hellaby
Chairman of Directors
NZI Corporation Limited

MONET AND THE GENESIS OF HIS SERIES

by John House

A single subject under different effects of light, atmosphere and weather dominated the large groups of paintings which made up Claude Monet's exhibitions of his own work from 1891 onwards. These groups became known as Monet's 'series'. Such closely integrated series were a novelty, appearing as they did in these exhibitions of Monet's later years. The idea grew out of the concerns of his previous career, and these were a reflection of some of the basic subjects of debate among painters and critics of art in nineteenth-century France. This exhibition indicates how the series evolved in Monet's art, its roots in his earlier painting, and the way he put the idea into practice in his later work. These developments are here described in a wider historical context.

The idea of Monet's series embodies a basic paradox. The paintings depict fleeting moments, transitory effects of atmosphere, but these moments were recreated in painting elaborated and reworked over a period of time. They were in no way a direct record of the initial instant. This paradox stood revealed in the way the paintings were presented in their original exhibitions: the sequence of paintings of a single subject could be experienced like a sequence of times of the day, with its changing light and weather; at the same time, the groups of pictures became a complex ensemble of relationships of form and colour, relationships which Monet emphasised by retouching the pictures as a group, in his studio, before exhibiting them. The exhibition itself, as much as the individual pictures, had become the final work of art.

These issues had a long history. In the 1760s, Denis Diderot, in his reviews of the Paris Salon exhibitions, had contrasted the particular virtues of the sketch and the finished picture; this question was to remain a central concern of art critics over the next century.[1] Pierre Henri de Valenciennes, in a celebrated treatise published in 1800, developed the theme in a discussion of the methods and aims of the landscape painter: he advised the landscapist to make quick outdoor sketches in oils of the changing weather effects on a single subject, but he did not see these sketches as finished works in their own right; his exhibited pictures were elaborate visions of nature recreated within the classical frameworks sanctioned by Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain.[2] Many outdoor oil sketches, however, by Valenciennes and others, have survived from the later eighteenth century; they show a close attention to specific effects of light and atmosphere.

The use of watercolour, a fashion which originated in England, encouraged outdoor painting, since the medium was less cumbersome to use than oils and the paint far quicker to dry. J. M. W. Turner's quick notations of light effects show particularly clearly the potential of watercolour for this sort of sketching; but even he did not exhibit these but used them, with his drawings, as the basis for the far more elaborate, detailed paintings, in watercolour and oils, which he put before the public. Sketching out of doors in oils remained, throughout the nineteenth century, a standard practice for the landscapist; John Constable's small oils, and the studies made by J. B. C. Corot in Italy in the 1820s, show the degree of freshness and finesse which the medium already allowed. The increasing availability of oil colours in metal tubes from the 1840s onwards (previously oils had been carried in bladders) simplified the mechanics of open-air painting in oils, and doubtless encouraged it still further.[3]

Sketches of this sort, though often much valued by the artists themselves, were rarely seen as suitable material for public display. Until the last years of the nineteenth century the principal outlet for modern painting in Paris was the Salon exhibition, held biennially at some periods but annually from 1863 onwards; the Royal Academy summer exhibitions fulfilled a similar role in London. In these huge mixed exhibitions, small sketches stood no chance of attracting the critical attention an artist needed in order to establish a reputation. Just as significantly, such direct studies of nature were not regarded as fulfilling what was expected of a finished work of art, that it should have a carefully organised structure and a closely identifiable and significant subject. In the Paris Salon of the earlier part of the century, exhibited landscapes generally either represented famous sites or included a narrative figure subject, biblical, classical or literary; but after the 1848 revolution and the Second Republic, a more liberal policy on the part of the Salon juries enabled pure landscape scenes to become extemely common in the Salons of the 1850s and 1860s. Critics were still troubled at times, though, by the triviality of the subjects chosen and by paintings which they considered inadequately finished. The landscapes of Charles-François Daubigny, even after he had won a first-class medal in 1853 and the Légion d'honneur in 1857, in particular, were often criticised in these respects.

The idea of exhibiting closely co-ordinated groups of pictures in public did not have so long and continuous a history. Artists had generally used exhibitions as a shop window, a place where they could display the full variety of their work, in search of prospective buyers. This was a crucial function of the Salon, especially before the 1860s, for the trade of art dealer as we know it today was only then developing, and few, if any, artists could find regular support without the initial impetus of a considerable success at the Salon. Artists such as Turner had exhibited

complementary pairs of pictures of related subjects, but when larger interrelated groups were exhibited, they were generally narrative sequences. The prehistory of Monet's concern with atmospheric variations lay not in the realm of the exhibition picture, but in the tradition of the open-air sketch.

Monet was exposed to this tradition very early in his career, through Eugène Boudin who, around 1856, introduced him to the art of landscape painting. As Charles Baudelaire wrote in his Salon review of 1859, Boudin by this date was executing "pastel studies . . . of the sea and sky . . . inscribed with the date, the time and the wind"; but Baudelaire was at pains to point out that Boudin regarded these merely as studies and "laid no claim to be offering his notes as pictures".[4] During the 1860s Boudin developed a type of finished painting which made much use of these studies of the weather in his canvases of fashionably dressed figures promenading on the Normandy beaches of Deauville and Trouville; but only his studies seem to have been executed out of doors.

Monet followed Boudin's example in his first exhibited canvases, two large views of the Channel coast around Le Havre, shown at the 1865 Salon, which were based on smaller canvases which may, in part, have been painted in the open air. His first pairs of paintings of the same size depicting a single subject were executed in the same way, one canvas as an outdoor study, one as an elaborated studio replica; but as he told his friend Frédéric Bazille in a letter, he came to prefer the initial outdoor canvases.[5] By this date Daubigny was already working out of doors on large scale canvases, and in 1866 Monet, too, undertook a very ambitious painting in the open air, *Women in the Garden* (Jeu de Paume, Paris), on a canvas two-and-a-half-metres high. He never again painted out of doors on such a vast scale; from this period onwards it was his standard-sized canvases, paintings generally measuring about a metre along their longer side, that he regularly began in the open air in front of their subjects.

This does not mean that from this time on all of Monet's paintings were identical in status. He continued to differentiate between quick sketches and paintings which he considered more fully finished. Some of the sketches have now come to be seen as the archetypal Impressionist paintings, for instance his canvases of La Grenouillère of 1869 (National Gallery, London, and Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), which acted as preparatory studies for a lost larger salon painting, and *Impression, Sunrise* (fig. 1), whose title led to the christening of the group as Impressionists when it was exhibited in 1874. Such boldly and rapidly executed canvases must be seen in their original context within Monet's working practice, and particularly alongside the similarly sized but more highly finished canvases of related themes, which he executed at the same time, such as *The Bridge at Bougival*, painted just downstream from La

fig. 1 *Impression, Sunrise* 1872
Musée Marmottan, Paris

Grenouillère in 1869 (see D. Wildenstein, I:152; the Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire), and the views of the harbour of Le Havre (cat. no. 3), one of which Monet exhibited with *Impression, Sunrise*, in 1874.

At this time, Monet, in general, regarded these more highly worked, more detailed canvases as most suitable for sale through art dealers such as Paul Durand-Ruel, who bought much of his work in 1872 and 1873; *Hyde Park, London* (cat. no. 1) and *Green Park, London* (fig. 2) are examples of these. Boudin's finished paintings fall into the same category, pictures designed for sale through dealers. The quicker sketches, by contrast, were considered more suitable for fellow artists or personal friends; when, like *Impression, Sunrise*, they were exhibited at the Impressionists' group exhibitions, they were always accompanied by more elaborated canvases.

Already in these different types of painting we find the rival claims of spontaneity and finish, the rapidly transcribed natural effect and the fully resolved work of art which Monet was later to explore in his series. It makes no sense to see either type as more representative of his work. His creation of a landscape painting must be seen in relation to the artistic frameworks within which he worked. His ambition to capture nature's passing effects was an essential part of his quest to rid landscape of its

fig. 2 *Green Park, London* 1870-71
Philadelphia Museum of Art
W. P. Wilstach collection

more artificial conventions; but neither the potential markets open to him nor his own artistic ambition could be satisfied with quick sketches alone. More finished paintings, which recreated more complex subjects with greater specificity, were always essential to his work.

The techniques of landscape sketching which he and his companions evolved are best understood as a reaction against previous landscape conventions. In landscape painting, both of the Italianate and the Dutch traditions, the arrangement of the composition and the placing of figures and focal points indicated the principal elements in a scene. They also placed the viewer of the picture in a place of privileged access, laying the scene out to be viewed to its best advantage. Such arrangements established a clear hierarchy between humankind and nature: nature was at humanity's disposal. Romantic visions of the world had upgraded the forces of nature, making them a direct reflection of supernatural forces; but nature, within the Romantic vision, still belonged to a clearly established gradation of values. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, scientific discovery was making a transcendental vision of nature increasingly hard to sustain, while patterns of political change were questioning the traditional hierarchic structures of society. In the late 1860s and the early 1870s, the Impressionists, and Monet in particular, deliberately refused to differentiate between the various ingredients of the scenes before them; refused to give a church spire a higher status than the smoke stack of a train (see cat. no. 4), refused to define a figure with more precision than a tree. The evenly weighted elements they presented on canvas undermined traditional levels of value. At the same time they rejected traditional systems of lighting in paintings, notably the chiaroscural system which artfully highlighted objects of importance. Instead they aimed to suggest the even, all-over lighting of outdoor nature where the light and colour of the atmosphere played across all objects indiscriminately.

The particular techniques of brushwork and coloration which they adopted were devised to best realise these aims. By building up their paint surfaces from coloured *taches* (touches or patches) of paint, they could suggest the effect of light playing across a scene, and could treat each

object within it as having equal significance: human beings, trees and bridges alike were an integral part of the overall spectacle. Traditional drawing and tonal modelling, and the use of outline, were banished from this vision. In place of tonal gradations, the forms of objects began to be suggested by gradations and variations of colour which indissolubly unified the objects depicted with the coloured light and atmosphere around them. Only in his later works did Monet absorb complete scenes into closely co-ordinated harmonies of colour, but increasingly, from the later 1860s onwards, he began to combine patches of light and shadow into interrelated sequences of coloured touches.

Clearly the observation of changes of lighting was integral to the development of Monet's artistic eye, but the recording of such changes did not at once become his central concern. From the later 1860s onwards he did on occasion paint more than one canvas of a single site in different conditions, but these are generally differentiated by more than just weather and light. In one of the first of these pairs, two 1867 scenes of the beach at Sainte-Adresse looking towards Le Havre (figs. 3 and 4), the tide levels are different and the principal figures on the beach are deliberately contrasted: local fishermen with their boats in one, fashionable bourgeois watching a regatta in the other. The point of such a pair lies more in contrasts between the figures than simply in the changes of natural effect. Similarly at Argenteuil in the early 1870s, when he painted canvases of closely related subjects, these are usually differentiated by the figures or boats included and by the season shown, and often by the different angle of vision from which the subject is seen (compare cat. no. 4 and fig. 5). Moreover there is no evidence that Monet at this date thought of exhibiting landscapes of closely related views as a single group. In a letter of 1876 he did write of undertaking "a whole series of new paintings" of Argenteuil, but in using this word on this occasion he seems to have been referring simply to all the canvases which he had recently painted, not to any more closely integrated group of pictures.[6]

In some of his paintings of the later 1860s and 1870s, Monet focused on specifically modern aspects of the scenes around him; in others on more timeless, unchanging aspects of the same places. He was particularly fascinated, it seems, by scenes whose elements revealed varied, contrasting facets, conjunctions of town, suburb and country, of industry and recreation, of overt modernity with timelessness or a historic past. Sometimes these contrasts are juxtaposed in a single picture (for example cat. no. 4); in other canvases, by shifting his physical viewpoint, he could make a single aspect predominate. Within a very short distance along the banks of the Seine at Argenteuil in the early to mid-1870s he found a sequence of subjects which allowed him to explore endless variations on these basic themes.[7]

This interest in contemporary subjects led him to exhibit, at the third group exhibition in 1877, eight canvases of a single subject, the Gare Saint-Lazare, the Paris railway station from which trains run to Argenteuil. The Gare Saint-Lazare paintings have often been seen as a crucial starting point in the development of Monet's idea of series (figs. 6 and 7). Again, as in the Argenteuil paintings, the viewpoints of those exhibited were varied, some showing various parts of the sheds of the station, and some the railway lines as they ran out from the platforms. The effect of the paintings, as a group, is to give fuller information about the station and what went on there than can be gained from any one picture on its own. Atmosphere and weather form parts of these variations, but the different views of the permanent structures and of the movements of people and trains assume the central role. The exhibited canvases differed greatly, too, in degrees of finish; some, like figure 6, were elaborately reworked; others, like figure 7, more rapidly and thinly executed, and some only very summarily sketched.

A similar pattern of work continued at Vétheuil where Monet lived from 1878 until 1882. In the long sequences of canvases he executed there he confined himself to a very small geographical area, the village on a loop of the River Seine and the hamlet of Lavacourt on the opposite bank with the meadows around it (cat. nos. 5-8); but within this narrow compass he explored the area from a great number of different viewpoints, sometimes focusing on the village with its church (cat. no. 5), sometimes on the cradle of hills around it (cat. no. 7); at times on the open river or on the islands in it (cat. nos. 6 and 7), and at others on the meadows opposite (cat. no. 8). He recorded the different seasons, the times of the day, the changing weather, but these variations of effect were only one part of an exploration of the place which, cumulatively, presented an ample record of its topography. The main difference from the Argenteuil canvases of the early to mid-1870s was that Vétheuil remained unaffected by progress and change, lying as it did further downstream from Paris. After the late 1870s Monet only rarely painted the specifically contemporary themes which had so interested him during the previous decade. He did not single out any group from the Vétheuil paintings as a distinct unit; when he exhibited paintings of the place he showed diverse scenes, variously treated, rather than focusing on a particular site or a particular type of effect. Monet continued into the 1880s to use the exhibitions at which he showed as a shop window for the variety of his current work.

Financial problems had forced Durand-Ruel to withdraw his support from the Impressionist group in 1874 and, in the later 1870s, Monet sold many quick sketches to raise money promptly at a time when he had no secure source of income. By the end of the decade, though, several dealers had begun to take an interest in his work, and in 1881 Durand-Ruel was once again able to buy paintings from Monet in large numbers; never

fig. 3 *The Beach at Sainte-Adresse* 1867
Art Institute of Chicago
Mr and Mrs Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial collection

again was his livelihood in doubt. As a result, he no longer needed to sell his every sketch; and the dealers who bought his work discouraged him from selling such sketches, the informality and apparent casualness of which had given the Impressionist group its notoriety at the group exhibitions of the 1870s (fig. 1).[8] Henceforth Monet concentrated on more highly finished paintings, refining his touch and so suggesting the appearances of nature more fully.

It was not only the demands of the trade which led him to finish his paintings more fully. Monet himself found that he wanted to elaborate his paintings further, though he also felt at times that he was losing his powers to capture nature's effect simply and directly. He revealed his ambitions and his uncertainties clearly in a letter to Durand-Ruel in December 1883:

> I am finding it harder and harder to satisfy myself, and I'm beginning to ask myself if I'm going mad or if what I'm doing is no better and no worse than before, but simply I'm finding it more difficult today what I used to be able to do easily. But still I think that I'm right to be more demanding.[9]

This final phrase, being 'demanding' of himself, recurs often in his letters from this period, and became a sort of watchword for his efforts to go beyond the sketch.

Monet's increasing concern with questions of finish highlighted the problems facing any landscapist who aspires to paint in the open air: nature's effects change far too quickly for the painter to capture them fully while they last. In settled weather, of course, Monet could return to a subject at the same time of day over a period of days or weeks, until the changing season and the angle of the sun transformed his subject. But in northern France such settled conditions are exceptional; more often his sessions of outdoor work must have left him with only a notation of an effect. When he painted on the Normandy coasts, the tide levels, changing to a different cycle from the times of the day, made his task still more difficult.

The changes in nature sometimes led him to alter the weather or light effect, the tide level or the season that he was painting; but more often he must have completed his canvases away from their subject, in his studio. Even during the 1870s his more highly finished paintings must have needed retouching at leisure, but during the 1880s Monet came to feel that such studio reworking was more and more necessary; he wrote to Durand-Ruel in 1886 towards the end of a spell of three months' painting on the rocky island of Belle-Isle (see cat. no. 15):

> You ask me to send you what I have that is finished; I have nothing finished, and you know that I can only really judge what I have done when I look over it at home, and I always need a moment of rest before being able to add the final touches to my canvases.[10]

fig. 4 *The Beach at Sainte-Adresse* 1867
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
bequest of William Church Osborn, 1951

Monet was unwilling to admit in public, though, to this increasing use of the studio; even as late as 1900, interviewers gained the impression that he painted only out of doors.[11] Presumably he felt that a full awareness of his methods would damage his reputation as a pioneer of a natural, open-air vision.

The brushwork in his finished paintings gradually changed. The crisp, individual touches with which he had described objects in the late 1860s and early 1870s gave way, around 1874, to smaller, much varied touches which could evoke the diverse textures of nature with great flexibility. Around 1880, in the later stages of the execution of his paintings, he began to use the brush to give his picture surfaces a stronger sense of rhythm and pattern; his touch suggested natural textures, but at the same time he used it to give his paintings a stronger sense of internal coherence in two-dimensional terms, sometimes creating dynamic movements (see cat. no. 6), sometimes softer interrelated rhythms (cat. no. 7). The arrangement of the forms in his paintings had always been a great concern for Monet; he chose the viewpoints from which he painted his landscapes with the greatest care. But this search for an increased coherence in his brushwork allowed him to relate the overall composition of his paintings to their smaller details, and to treat all their elements as

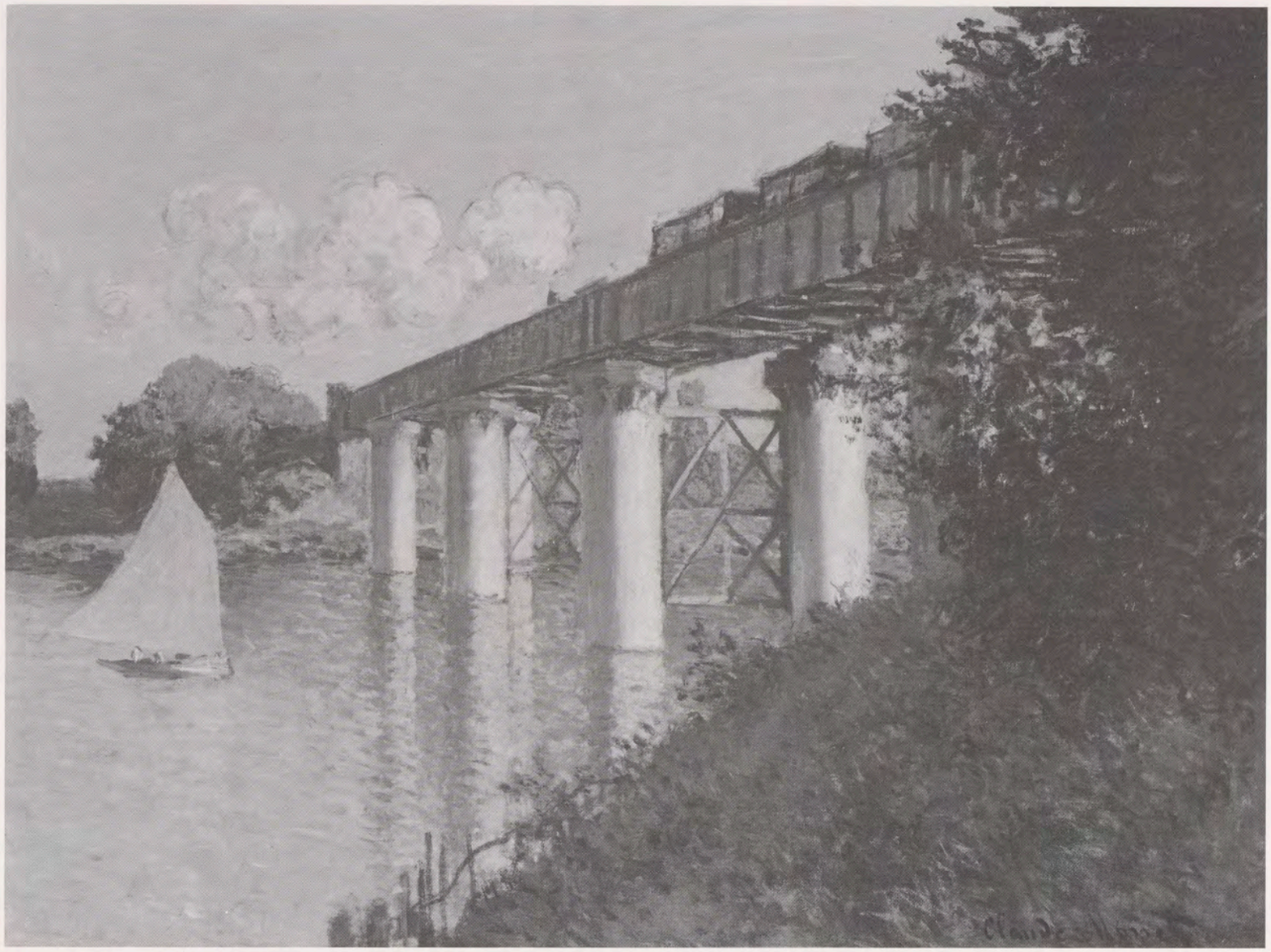

fig. 5 *The Railway Bridge at Argenteuil* c1874
Philadelphia Museum of Art
John G. Johnson collection

part of a single ensemble. At the same time, he began to introduce more closely interrelated colours to the various parts of his pictures, so that the whole was drawn into a single harmony; this evoked the unifying effects of the atmosphere, but also gave the paintings a further surface coherence.

This greater emphasis on the two-dimensional qualities of the picture was doubtless in part a result of Monet's increasing use of the studio. Working indoors, away from the natural subject, the picture was retouched not by reference back to the original natural effect, but by reference to the touches already present on the canvas. At the same time it reflects an awareness that no picture could directly reproduce the effects of nature; the depiction of nature involved recreating it in wholly new terms, in terms of coloured marks on a two-dimensional surface. This mark-making had to create rhythms and relationships of its own which could evoke nature but could not imitate it. The development of his technique suggests that Monet became increasingly aware of the inevitable artificiality of the act of painting.

Monet's regular commercial sales of the 1880s had several results. Not only did they encourage him to elaborate his pictures more; they also allowed him to travel. During the 1870s he had worked largely in the Seine Valley within easy access of Paris, but from 1880 onwards he began to travel widely to paint, initially to the Channel coasts of Normandy, but from 1884 onwards to places far more distant, the South of France, Holland, the Brittany coast. These travels, he said, were undertaken "to enlarge my field of observations and to refresh my vision in front of new spectacles";[12] they allowed him to tackle a wide range of new natural effects: stormy seas on beaches and cliffs, the dazzling light and exotic foliage of the Mediterranean, the colour-masses of the Dutch tulip fields. On his earlier trips of the 1880s to the Normandy coasts (cat. nos. 9-13), he painted very many different types of effect, but by the later 1880s he was beginning to seek a dominant mood in each place: in the rocky valleys of the Creuse in 1889 (compare cat. nos. 17-19) he found "a terrible savagery" which reminded him of Belle-Isle (cat. no. 15), in marked contrast to the tenderness and delicacy which he had emphasised in his paintings of the previous year of the Mediterranean coast at Antibes (cat. no. 16).[13] In each place he favoured weather effects which best complemented the moods he sought; storms on Belle-Isle, sombre, wintry effects in the Creuse, sunlit vistas at Antibes.

Monet deliberately used these travels to widen very greatly his range as a painter. While painting the "sombre and terrible aspect" of Belle-Isle in 1886, he wrote to Durand-Ruel: "It's of little consequence that I am the man of the sunlight, as you say; one must not specialise in a single note."[14] By the end of the decade he had established his mastery of virtually every kind of natural effect; in the interviews he gave he was at pains to emphasise this mastery and versatility, proudly telling his

fig. 6 *The Gare Saint-Lazare* 1877
Musée d'Orsay (Galeries du Jeu de Paume), Paris

interlocutors of the extremes of weather and physical discomfort to which he exposed himself in the pursuit of his art – winds, waves, snows and frosts.

His travelling necessarily increased the amount of work he had to do in the studio. Each new location needed a period of acclimatisation, and often it was only at the end of a stay of several months that he felt he had found how to convey what he saw as the essential qualities of a place and its light. Moreover, when he travelled far afield, he could not readily return to a site in the same season the following year. Often he did plan such a return visit, but a desire for new scenes generally intervened; Etretat, on the Normandy coast, not very far off from Monet's home at Giverny, was the only site to which he travelled several years in succession during the 1880s. Such return visits became more common from the 1890s onwards, notably to Rouen (1892-93), Pourville (1896-97; cat. no. 24) and London (1899-1901; see cat. nos. 28-33).

As a result, then, of the difficulties of acclimatisation in a new place, and of the limited periods he spent at each site, he often needed to do much to his paintings once he got them back to his studio. The situation he explained to Durand-Ruel on his return from the South of France in 1884 well illustrates this:

I do not have a single canvas that does not need to be looked over and

fig. 7 *The Gare Saint-Lazare, the Normandy Train* 1877
Art Institute of Chicago
Mr and Mrs Martin A. Ryerson collection

carefully retouched, and that cannot be done in a day. . . . I have worked for three months in front of nature without ever feeling satisfied, and it is only here [at home] during the last few days that I have been able to see what I can make of a certain number of the canvases. You must realise that, from the large number of studies I have made, not all can be delivered to the trade; some can work out very well, I think, and others, even though they are rather vague, can become good if I retouch them carefully, but, I repeat, this cannot be done from one day to the next.[15]

But as we have seen it was not merely external factors such as these which were encouraging him to work more in the studio. His developing concern with the surface qualities of the finished painting was making studio retouching an integral part of his process rather than a mere expedient.

As in his paintings of Vétheuil (cat. nos. 5-8), Monet concentrated during his travels on a comparatively limited range of subjects. Certain scenes he painted only once, but he explored the majority far more thoroughly in considerable numbers of canvases. Within these groups of paintings, however, there was a noticeable development during the decade. On his earlier trips he tended to vary the viewpoint from which he painted a subject, the way he framed the scene, and the formats of the canvases he used. For instance, he painted the coastguard's cottage at Varengeville near Dieppe at least seventeen times in 1882 (cat. nos. 10-12); but the pictures are endlessly varied in arrangement. Later in the decade he more often painted several canvases from identical viewpoints and with the scene identically framed, such as Antibes seen from the Gardens of the Salis (cat. no. 16 and fig. 8), and the Valley of the Creuse (cat. no. 18 and fig. 9); the latter he painted nine times from the same spot. Even in the late 1880s he did not place any special emphasis on such groups in exhibitions of his work; his public was not at this date presented with the evidence of his protracted scrutiny of single subjects in different effects of light and weather. When more than one view of a subject was shown at the same time, they were always seen with other canvases which emphasised his diversity (cat. nos. 17 and 19). By bringing such groups together today in reproductions or exhibitions we give them an autonomy which Monet did not originally envisage; it was only the canvases he painted after 1890 that Monet exhibited as integrated groups.

fig. 8 *Antibes* 1888
Toledo Museum of Art
gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

To complement the subjects he chose during his travels of the 1880s emphasising the extremes of nature, Monet chose viewpoints, and thus compositional arrangements, which best evoked the particular qualities of the landscapes. Often he painted from a high vantage point, and he often allowed the viewer's eye to leap from some nearby form directly to a distant view, creating jumps in space which denied any consecutive recession from foreground to distance (cat. nos. 11, 12 and 16). Rarely did he precisely locate his own and hence the spectator's position; frequently there is a leap in space between ourselves and the nearest objects depicted (cat. nos. 15 and 17). The result of this is to emphasise the overall effect of the scene as a spectacle, but at the same time to deny the traditional means by which the spectator associated with and appropriated the landscape by entering it in imagination.

Many of Monet's compositions of this period include silhouetted, cut-off forms, placed off-centre, which create a strong sense of patterning across the picture surface (cat. nos. 10 and 16). The types of arrangement that he chose are often reminiscent of those in Japanese landscape prints, of which he was an avid collector;[16] the characteristic compositional devices of Hokusai and Hiroshige seem to have suggested ways in which Monet could formulate in pictorial terms the types of natural effect which fascinated him:

During these same years he pursued subjects of a quite different sort from his paintings at home in the valley of the River Seine. Some of his later paintings at Vétheuil (cat. no. 8) had simply depicted open

meadows; at Giverny, where he moved in 1883, he again favoured such undramatic subjects. This choice of site of course reflects the character of the terrain; the gentle contours and soft foliage of the Seine basin around Giverny offered him raw materials very different from rocky coasts and hills. On his travels he tended to choose viewpoints which created an immediate effect, often painting scenes which were singled out in contemporary travel literature; by contrast, within his surroundings at home he sought particularly unpicturesque subjects, scenes which had no conspicuous or dominant features. Rarely did he include any reference to the life and labour of his rural surroundings; stacks of hay and stacks of grain became compositional anchors (see cat. nos. 14 and 21 and figs. 10-13). The interest of the paintings depended essentially on the way in which they were treated, on the nuances of texture and colour which cover the picture surface.

During the later 1880s, too, Monet came increasingly to focus on atmospheric effects. Some of his most celebrated paintings from earlier years, notably *Impression, Sunrise* (fig. 1), had treated such effects as their principal subject; but as he extended the range of his art in the early and mid-1880s, he had primarily concentrated on the search for pictorial equivalents for nature's rhythms and textures, for ways of recreating the movements of waves and hillsides and the endless diversity of rocks, plants and foliage. Colour, as well as the inflections of brushwork, had been of central importance in suggesting these forms; but generally the colours of the objects themselves, their 'local' colour, had been the prime factor which dictated the colour scheme of a picture, with the colour of atmosphere and lighting subsidiary. Lighting modified the colour of objects, and their forms were modelled by gradations of colour, but only rarely did effects of coloured atmosphere become the overriding element in a picture. His experiences of painting on the Mediterranean coast in 1884 and 1888, however, forced him to confront the problems of translating a distinctive atmosphere into paint colour.

In his letters from the South he often commented on the difficulties he was having in capturing the dazzling light, all blue, rose and gold;[17] in his efforts to capture such effects in the South, he began to use more richly co-ordinated colour schemes, often organised around bold contrasts of blue and salmon pink (cat. no. 16). At the same time, in his paintings of simple Seine Valley subjects around Giverny, the nuances of atmospheric change became a central concern; in 1888 he executed a group of canvases in which softly coloured morning mists effectively veiled the clusters of trees which were the ostensible subject of the pictures.

In the summer and autumn of 1890 these concerns came to a head in a sequence of paintings of meadows near Giverny, and particularly in the pictures of stacks of grain that he began late that summer (cat. no. 2 and

fig. 9 *Ravine of the Creuse in Sunlight* 1889
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Juliana Cheney Edwards collection
bequest of Robert Jacob Edwards in memory of his mother, 1925

fig. 10). Often in later years he told the story of the beginning of this series: while he was painting a group of stacks in the mists of late summer, the light effects changed so rapidly that he repeatedly had to ask his companion to return to the house to fetch him a new canvas on which he could note each new effect.[18] The paintings of stacks which he began in the summer and autumn of 1890 were not unprecedented in numbers, around six showing approximately the same grouping of stacks (cat. no. 21 and fig. 10); but during the following winter, during a long period of snow and frost, he began about sixteen more canvases of stacks, seen singly or in pairs and in various groupings (figs. 11-13), so that by the next spring he had over twenty canvases of the subject. These were varied in arrangement and endlessly varied in colour and effect, but all alike focused exclusively on the apparently unpromising theme of one or two simple, conical shapes silhouetted against a band of trees and distant hills.

The theme wholly lacked topographical interest, showing no distinctive or noteworthy sight; nor did it explore the agricultural value of these stacks – not stacks of hay like those in catalogue number 21, but thatched stacks of grain, constructed by the local farmers for prolonged storage of their harvest.[19] By focusing on the effects of light and atmosphere that played across them, Monet drained the stacks of the human significance for rural life and economy which such stacks had had

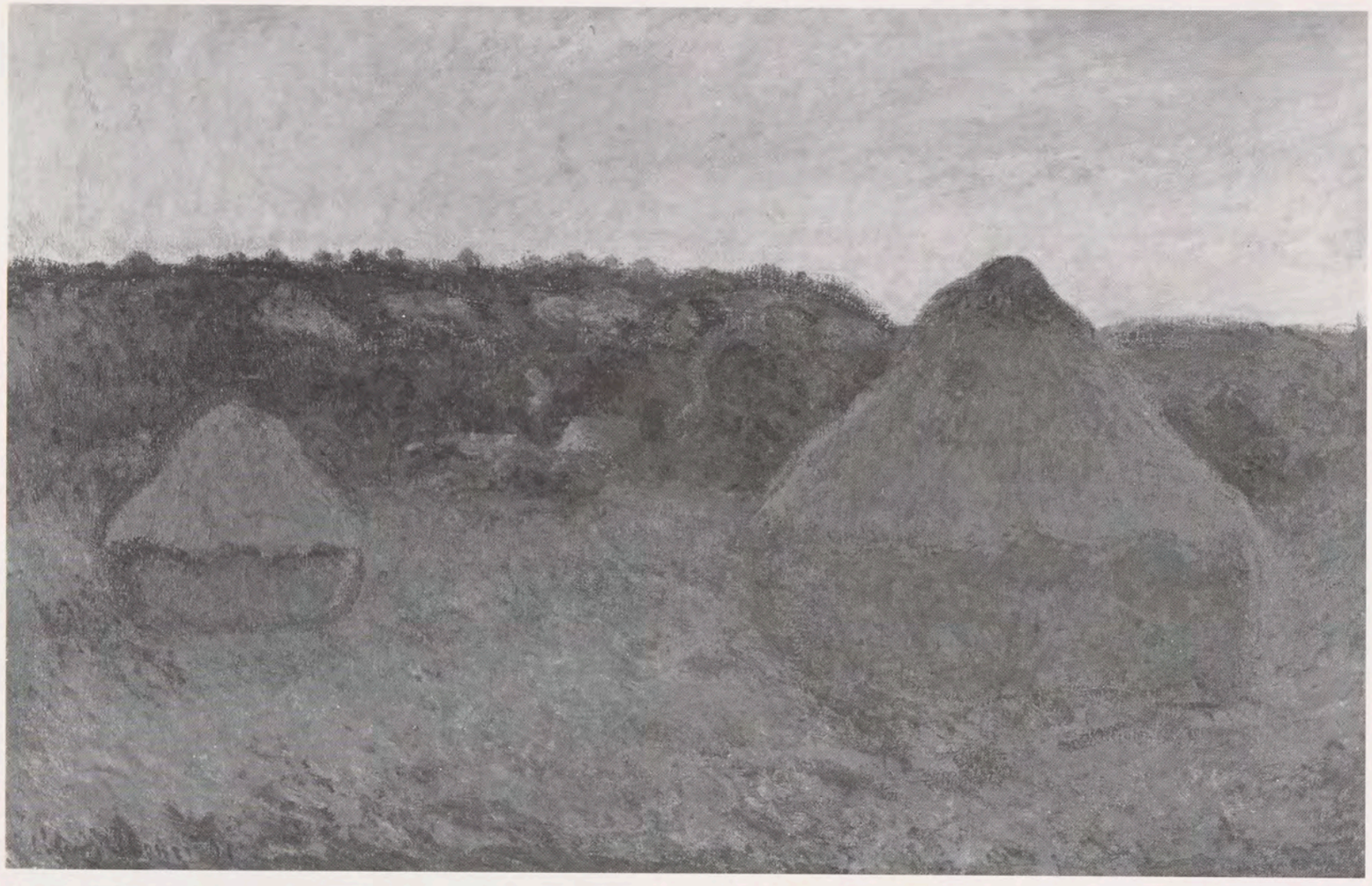

fig. 10 *Grain Stacks, End of Day, Autumn* 1890–91
Art Institute of Chicago
Mr and Mrs Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial collection

in previous paintings by, for instance, Jean Francois Millet and Camille Pissarro.

Monet's paintings of stacks gained a fresh significance in May 1891 when he made fifteen of them the centrepiece of an exhibition of twenty-two recent canvases at Durand-Ruel's gallery in Paris. These fifteen pictures hung in one row around a single room with the other seven above them; we do not know exactly how they were arranged, but they were not hung as a temporal sequence from summer to winter, since a summer effect hung in the centre.[20] In was unprecedented for an exhibition to focus on a group of paintings such as this. Three years earlier Monet had exhibited ten paintings of Antibes, but the canvases shown represented many different views of the place and its surroundings and were considerably varied in their compositions; as well, the site itself was a celebrated one. By contrast the canvases of stacks had neither the variety of forms and rhythms nor the thematic interest; everything depended on the sequences of coloured relationships by which Monet evoked the changing atmosphere. These colour relationships gave each picture a great coherence, but they also operated between the paintings as a group; Monet told a visitor to the exhibition that the paintings "only acquire their full value by the comparison and succession of the whole series".[21]

This show set the pattern for all the later exhibitions of his own work organised by Monet. In each he gave a central place to one or more such closely integrated groups of paintings. No longer did he use the exhibition as a showcase for the diversity of his production, nor was it merely the sum of the individual pictures that made it up; its unity and coherence had become his overriding concern. As he and his contemporaries soon realised, too, this unity was a short-lived thing; the pressures of the market meant that the pictures would be scattered after their first display.[22]

By 1891, through the efforts of Durand-Ruel and other dealers on his behalf, Monet had at last won considerable financial success. The exhibition of the paintings of stacks of grain reflected in two ways the new freedom he had gained. First, it meant that he no longer needed to use an exhibition as a shop window, since buyers already knew his work and would seek out his latest productions. Secondly, this financial ease finally relieved him of the need to dispose of paintings more quickly than he wished in order to raise money; he could rework his canvases at his leisure.

The 1891 exhibition bore immediate evidence of the extent to which he did rework the canvases of grain stacks: despite the fleeting atmospheric moments which had been their starting point, the finished pictures were densely painted and evidently much reworked. With later series, at least, Monet continued until the last moment to rework all the

fig. 11 *Grain Stack in the Snow, Overcast Day* 1891
Art Institute of Chicago
Mr and Mrs Martin A. Ryerson collection

canvases together in his studio, including even those which had been begun early in the sequence; it seems likely that he did this with the stacks, too. This is supported by the fact that all of the paintings of stacks which were included in the May 1891 exhibition (including figures 11-13) bore the date '91', even if, like figure 10, their starting point had been the mists of the late summer and autumn of the previous year. In several of the pictures, too, the placing of the stacks was altered during their execution (the stack in figure 12, for instance, was moved further to the left; compare also catalogue number 21), evidence of Monet's constant concern with the formal arrangement of his canvases. Thus the finished pictures were the product of an extended campaign of work which left their momentary starting point far behind.

The application of paint in the grain stack pictures and in Monet's later canvases is notably different from that of most of the 1880s canvases. The surfaces of the 1880s pictures leave visible their dynamic initial working, the sketch-like beginnings from which their final appearances were elaborated; their later retouching was often vigorous and accented, complementing the fluency of what lay below. Although the end result was often the product of considerable revision, this surface animation was a deliberate attempt to retain the effect of the sketch, to evoke the fleeting natural subject and the immediacy of Monet's initial confronting of it. In the series from 1891 onwards, by contrast, the dense underlying paint layers are far more inert, the product of superimposed strokes which

effectively mask the picture's beginnings; in 1897 Monet told an interviewer: "I want to prevent people from seeing how it is done."[23] The web of coloured touches which criss-crosses the final surface is often thin and delicate, serving to introduce further variations and nuances to the already complex colour relationships established in the layers below. Instead of evoking the movements of nature and the freedom of the sketch by the vigour of the touch, these delicate last accents create soft vibrations of colour which can only be perceived in relation to the two-dimensional surface of the finished painting.

These paint surfaces suggest that Monet, by the 1890s, had moved towards a quite different notion of the nature of the work of art from that which he had held before. In his earlier paintings the final surface remains an active record of the painter's encounter with nature and of the stages of his transformation of this into the work of art. From the 1890s onwards the masking of the underlying layers obliterates the active traces of the artist's presence. The finished work of art becomes something wholly autonomous; it is apprehended first and foremost in its own terms, as a combination of coloured forms rather than as a 'window on to nature' or as the imprint of the creative act. This sort of pictorial surface in a sense is a development from the elaborated textures and harmonies Monet had evolved in the 1880s which reflect his awareness of the artifice of painting. But the surfaces of the 1890s are unlike their predecessors in their self-conscious erasure of the archaeology of their making; in this they suggest a parallel with the aesthetic ideas of the poet Stéphane Mallarmé with whom Monet was on close terms from the late 1880s. Close comparisons of literary and pictorial techniques are always problematical because of the utter dissimilarity of the materials used; but Mallarmé's insistence on the autonomy of the word and of the piece of writing, a reaction against the dense descriptive naturalism of Emile Zola and his associates, has a clear generic resemblance to the types of pictorial experience which Monet sought to evoke from 1890 onwards by his finished paintings.

Monet also saw his serial paintings as a deliberate rejection of the sketch. He wrote to Gustave Geffroy in 1890 that he was "more than ever disgusted by easy things which come at a single stroke" and, in 1892, Theodore Robinson recorded in his diary that it was "only a long continued effort that satisfies him, and it must be an important motif, one that is sufficiently involving"; it was subjects of this sort which allowed him to "go further than a single painting".[24] Thus he closely associated his procedure of working in series with the elaboration of his processes in finishing his pictures.

Monet's later series are varied in their subjects. The monolithic forms of the stacks of grain were followed by the lattice-work of tree trunks and foliage in the Poplars series (cat. no. 22 and fig. 14), and then by the

fig. 12 *Grain Stack in the Snow* 1891
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
gift of Aime and Rosamund Lamb in memory of
Mr and Mrs Horatio A. Lamb, 1970

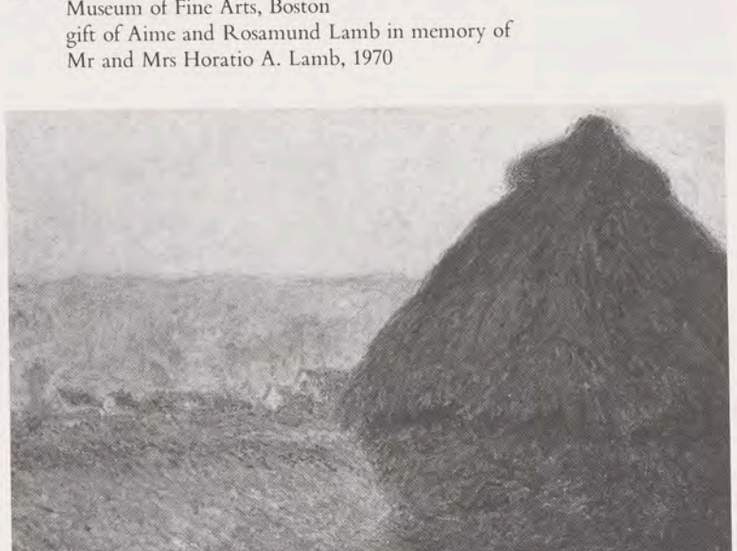

fig. 13 *Grain Stack at Sunset* 1891
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Juliana Cheney Edwards collection
bequest of Robert Jacob Edwards in memory of his mother, 1925

fig. 14 *The Poplars* 1891
Philadelphia Museum of Art
bequest of Anne Thomson as a memorial to her father, Frank Thomson, and her mother, Mary Elizabeth Clarke Thomson

complex man-made textures of the gothic façade of Rouen Cathedral. Within a single series he at times varied his physical viewpoint, particularly in the earlier 1890s, so that the Poplars and the Rouen Cathedral façade (figs. 15 and 16) were presented in varied groupings; but within each series he also sought great homogeneity of effect in the patterns, textures and colour schemes which characterised it.

Effects of lighting and atmosphere remained Monet's dominant concern. Just as he had omitted all reference to the agricultural value of the stacks of grain, so with Rouen Cathedral he made nothing of the building's history and purpose; only the mere presence of its famous façade evoked its rich chain of associations. In his paintings of London, the silhouette of the Houses of Parliament (cat. nos. 32 and 33), was given exactly the same visual weight as a group of factory chimneys. Monet's friend, James Whistler, in 1885 had sung the praises of the River Thames "when the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry . . . and the tall chimneys become campanili, and the warehouses are palaces in the night".[25] For Monet, as for Whistler, it was the transforming effects of the atmosphere and mists that gave objects their pictorial value; in 1895 Monet said: "The motif is insignificant for me; what I want to reproduce is what lies between the motif and me."[26] Even when he travelled again to paint some of the sites he had worked on in the 1880s, such as the cliffs of Pourville and Varengeville (cat. no. 24), his prime concern was now the all-enveloping atmosphere, rather than the varied textures and colours of the individual elements in the view.

These paintings of what Monet described as "the *enveloppe*, the same light spread over everything",[27] are particularly closely organised in their colour schemes; the entire pictorial surface is part of the unified sequence of colour harmonies which evoke this unifying light. But as with the series of grain stacks, the final surfaces of the pictures were the result of long periods of work in the studio, far away in time (and often in place) from the initial atmospheric moment. In the Rouen Cathedral paintings (figs. 15 and 16), this protracted reworking led to densely encrusted paint surfaces which contemporary critics likened to the surface of the stonework which makes up the cathedral's façade. In his following series, and particularly in the Early Mornings on the Seine (cat. nos. 25 and 26), Monet seems to have taken care to avoid such loaded impasto, producing combinations of texture and colour of the greatest delicacy which seem almost to transcend the physical qualities of oil paint, suggesting the immateriality of the mists themselves. Never again did he load his paint surfaces as heavily as he had in the Rouen pictures. He seems to have continued to seek effects as refined as those in the Early Mornings, but at times his own dissatisfaction still led him to rework canvases more densely, as, for instance, some of the water lily paintings of 1904-06

fig. 15 *Rouen Cathedral, the Portal, Sunlight* 1892–94
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915

fig. 16 *Rouen Cathedral at Dawn* 1893–94
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

(cat. no. 35); he continued to revise and alter these until shortly before their exhibition in 1909.[28]

Few of the London paintings exhibited in 1904 have surfaces as thick as the 1905 Water Lilies (cat. no. 35), but this does not mean that their execution was any easier. Seeking to capture the winter fogs on the Thames, Monet was more beset than ever, as he told an interviewer, by the rapidly changing effects:

> I had up to a hundred canvases under way, of a single subject. By searching feverishly among these beginnings (*ébauches*), I found one which did not differ too much from what I saw in front of me; but despite everything I modified it completely. My work done, I saw, while moving my canvases around, that I had overlooked the one which would have suited me best, and which I had near at hand.[29]

Three years elapsed between his final spell of painting in London in 1901 and the exhibition of the London series, and it was during this time that Monet was able to transform, in his Giverny studio, many of these 'beginnings' into complete works; indeed Monet himself admitted to a journalist at the time that this was the case.[30]

Problems such as these must have brought to a head the discrepancy between Monet's desire to capture such fleeting effects and his ambition to realise his aims in fully finished canvases, carefully pondered individually and as a group. It was at Giverny that he found the means of narrowing, or bridging, this gap – in his paintings of his own gardens. He had begun to plan his water-garden in 1893, and painted his first series of it in 1899-1900 (cat. no. 27), showing the footbridge with a lily-covered stretch of water beyond. After he had greatly enlarged the pond in 1901 he embarked on a second series, exhibited in 1909, in which he focused on the water surface with its lily pads and reflections (cat. nos. 34-36); then, from 1914 onwards, he made the pool the subject of the monumental decorative canvases which occupied him until his death in 1926.

In the series exhibited in 1909 there remained a dichotomy between open air and studio: much of the elaboration of the series was done indoors in the winter, when the garden was not in flower, though Monet could of course renew outdoor work on a picture the next summer.[31] The decorations were wholly executed in the studio, as their great size demanded (they are two metres high), but they were improvised from smaller canvases painted outside and from memory, from the long hours Monet spent contemplating his pond. So although the physical act of painting took place away from the subject, Monet's eyes and mind were so pervaded with it, as its designer and creator, and as its ceaseless observer, that the borderline between observation and memory became virtually irrelevant.

The water lily decorations also overcame the problem of the earlier series of being quickly dispersed by sale; their final installation around two oval rooms in the Orangerie in Paris, after his death but to plans he had approved, gave them a permanent existence as an entity.[32] Recently reopened after restoration, they allow us to see how Monet, in his last years, could transform the fleeting effects of light and shade across the surface of his lily pond into an all-embracing artistic ensemble which fused the most delicately observed nuances of nature with the most richly conceived pictorial effects.

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Notes

Abbreviations:
W refers to D. Wildenstein, *Claude Monet, biographie et catalogue raisonné*, I (1840-1881), II (1882-1886), and III (1887-1898), Lausanne and Paris, 1974, 1979. W followed by numbers refers to the catalogue raisonné of Monet's paintings; WL followed by volume and letter numbers refers to the chronological compilation of Monet's correspondence at the end of each volume.

1 See J. Wilhelm, "The Sketch in French Eighteenth Century Painting", *Apollo*, September 1962; A. Boime, *The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, London 1971

2 Valenciennes, *Eleméns de perspective pratique*, Paris 1800, 409; for such sketches see Arts Council of Great Britain, *Painting from Nature*, exhibition catalogue, 1980-1

3 For discussion of this and other aspects of artists' materials in the 19th century, see A. Callen, *Techniques of the Impressionists*, London 1982.

4 C. Baudelaire, *Art in Paris, 1845-1862*, translation by J. Mayne, London 1965, 199-200

5 Monet's 1865 Salon paintings were W51 (Norton Simon Foundation, Los Angeles), based on W38, and W52 (Kimbell Art Musum, Fort Worth), based on W40. The early pairs raise certain problems of attribution, but the most unequivocal such pairs from 1864 are W26-7 and W33-4; see Monet's letters to Bazille, 14 and 16 October 1864, WLI: 11 and 12.

6 Letter from Monet to de Bellio, 20 June 1876, WLI: 90

7 For a long discussion of Monet's sites and physical surroundings at Argenteuil, see P. Tucker, *Monet at Argenteuil*, London and New Haven 1982.

8 See Monet's letter to de Bellio, 8 January 1880, WLI: 170, in which he explained to his erstwhile supporter that the dealer Petit had promised to buy from him on condition that he ceased to sell paintings cheaply to friends.

9 Letter from Monet to Durand-Ruel, 1 December 1883, WLII: 383

10 Letter from Monet to Durand-Ruel, 9 November 1886, WLII: 741

11 For example, M. Guillemot, "Claude Monet", *Revue illustrée*, 15 March 1898, p[2]; W. Dewhurst, "Claude Monet, Impressionist", *Pall Mall Magazine*, June 1900, 216

12 Thiébault-Sisson, "Autour de Claude Monet, Anecdotes et Souvenirs, II", *Le Temps*, 8 January 1927

13 Creuse: letter from Monet to Berthe Morisot, 8 April 1889, WLIII: 943; Antibes: letter from Monet to Morisot, 10 March 1888, WLIII: 852

14 Letter from Monet to Durand-Ruel, 28 October 1886, WLII: 727

15 Letter from Monet to Durand-Ruel, 27 April 1884, WLII: 489

16 Monet's collection of Japanese prints has survived intact; see G. Aitken and M. Delafond, *La Collection d'estampes japonaises de Claude Monet*, Paris 1983.

17 See letter from Monet to Durand-Ruel from Bordighera, 11 March 1884, WLII: 442; letter from Monet to Duret from Antibes, 10 March 1888, WLIII: 855

18 For example, A. Alexandre, *Claude Monet*, Paris 1921, 95; about the significance of the year 1890 in Monet's career, see J. House, "Monet in 1890", in *Aspects of Monet: A Symposium on the Artist's Life and Times*, New York 1984

19 The clearest description of the making and purpose of such stacks is in Los Angeles County Museum of Art, *A Day in the Country, Impressionism and the French Landscape*, exhibition catalogue, 1984, 262.

20 W. G. C. Bijvanck, *Un Hollandais à Paris en 1891*, Paris 1892, 177

21 ibid.

22 The largest groups of paintings from one of Monet's series in permanent museum collections are the six grain stack canvases in the Art Institute of Chicago and the five of Rouen Cathedral in the Jeu de Paume, Paris.

23 M. Guillemot, "Claude Monet", *Revue illustrée*, 15 March 1898, [2]

24 Letter from Monet to Geffroy, 7 October 1890, WLIII: 1076; Theodore Robinson, Diary, quoted in Art Institute of Chicago, *Paintings by Monet*, exhibition catalogue, 1975, 35

25 "Mr Whistler's Ten O'Clock", reprinted in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, London 1890, 144

26 J.-P. Hoschedé, *Claude Monet ce mal connu*, Paris 1960, II, 110, quoting H. Johsen's interview with Monet in Norway in 1895

27 Letter from Monet to Geffroy, 7 October 1890, WLIII: 1076

28 For a discussion of the 1903-9 water lily series, see J. House, "Monet: le jardin d'eau et la 2e série des Nymphéas (1903-9)", in Paris, Centre Culturel du Marais, *Claude Monet au temps de Giverny*, exhibition catalogue, 1983.

29 Trévise, "Le Pèlerinage de Giverny, II," *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, January-February 1927, 126

30 M. Kahn, "Le Jardin de Claude Monet", *Le Temps*, 7 June 1904

31 See letters from Monet to Durand-Ruel, 8 and 27 April 1907, in L. Venturi, *Les Archives de l'impressionnisme*, Paris 1939, I, 408-9

32 Monet chose the canvases for the Orangerie from a large number of equally large paintings of the garden; the remainder of these canvases, and many preparatory works, have come on to the market in the past 30 years and appear in the collections of many museums; however, it is only in the Orangerie decorations that Monet's intentions can be appreciated in fully realised form. The scale of the other surviving large works has made it impossible to include any of them in the present exhibition.

TRANSCENDING THE MOMENT – MONET'S WATER LILIES *1899-1926*

by Virginia Spate

In the centre of the frenetic movement and noise of modern Paris, one can enter a modest building, the Orangerie, in which there are two unique rooms where one is entirely surrounded by huge paintings of the surface of a water-lily pool, paintings which create an extraordinarily intense, unearthly peace. These works[1] occupied Monet for the last decade of his long life, but the idea for a continuous stretch of painting which would surround the spectator had concerned him since the late 1890s, when a journalist described some large studies of his water-lily pool designed for

> a circular room whose dado below the wall mouldings would be entirely filled with a plane of water, scattered with these plants; transparent screens, sometimes green, sometimes almost mauve, the calm and silent still waters reflecting the scattered flowers; the colours evanescent with delicate nuances of a dream-like delicacy.[2]

Monet had not the means nor the will to realise this scheme until the second decade of the new century, but it must have been constantly present in his mind as he painted the *Water Lilies* series represented in this exhibition (cat. nos. 34-36). Monet began his exploration of this motif just as he was seeking ever more desperately to find a way of representing what he called 'the moment of landscape', a momentary conjuncture of a fugitive effect of light with a veil of mist, a gust of wind, a ripple of water. His attempt to grasp the transient had concerned him for all his sixty years as a painter, but as John House describes in his essay, this struggle became ever more intense in the 1890s when his sensitivity to almost imperceptible changes of light sometimes made it impossible for him to make more than a few strokes to a painting before the light changed, while his awareness of the complexity of what he saw made it necessary for him to spend more and more time on the picture.[3] In his series he not only denied the continuity of time by freezing it in isolated instants, but also came to transform nature into a reflection of art. This may be seen in the strange spectacle of him searching desperately through piles of unfinished paintings of the Thames to find one which would correspond to a change of light – as if he had to wait for nature to resemble his painting.[4] In this process nature is fragmented and consciousness is fractured: it has neither past nor future, it can exist only in the instant *now*.

These paintings are a continuation of the long tradition of European landscape, of a view snatched from the wholeness of nature; however, in the *Water Lilies*, Monet gradually developed a form of painting which transcends the momentary 'view'. After 1904 the *Water Lilies* contain nothing which can fix the mind in the single moment: they have no earth, no solid forms; nothing on which one can focus; no limits beyond those given by the edges of the painting.Thus while Monet remained fascinated by the most fragile, evanescent effects – for example, something as elusive as a ripple which captures light below the surface of the water – the structure of the paintings allows such momentary effects to melt into others, and endows the moment with continuity. Yet this continuity is tenuous: the ripple may be immobilised permanently in paint; yet it somehow conveys an anguishing sense that it may be lost, and provokes an intense desire somehow to hold it.

Monet's painting had always been inspired by a need to create something full, whole, harmonious and secure from the inexorable passage of moments, the inevitable losses brought by time. Nowhere, however, was the reparative nature of his art so profound – and so contradictory – as in his last great paintings.

It is no coincidence that Monet's most profound paintings should be of water, a theme which had fascinated him throughout his life. Water as a shapeless, colourless, constantly moving element was the perfect medium for Monet's exploration of light, for its surface is composed of countless ceaselessly moving planes into which coloured light sinks or in which it is reflected. Monet was always fascinated by the real and the irreal as embodied in the relationship between objects and their reflections.

At times (as is seen in *Vétheuil*, cat. no. 5), the submerged image has a dream-like intensity lacking in the more prosaic image of the 'real'. Yet, while water was ideally suited to Monet's artistic project considered in terms of his representation of the external world, it probably had a more profound inner significance for him. He had spent his childhood on the Norman coast, and when he returned to it in his sixties to paint motifs he had painted in earlier decades (for instance, cat. nos. 3 and 9), he wrote, "I am in my element," and later he said he wished to be buried at sea.[5] In a complex relationship between the psychological and the physical he seems to have experienced a relationship between painting, sight – on which, of course, his painting depended – and water. In 1867 he had a temporary attack of blindness, perhaps caused by a threat to his life as a painter; in 1868 he was in so desperate a financial situation that he could not see how to continue painting, and he attempted to drown

Monet in his third studio, surrounded by panels of his large Water Lily series, 1920s
Photograph by Henri Manuel
Courtesy: Musée Marmottan, Paris

himself in the Seine; in 1890, overcome by the difficulties of representing "weather, atmosphere, ambience", he wrote that he felt "bien au noir" – "really black and profoundly disgusted with painting".[6] And black for the Impressionists was the extinction of sight, of light, of life. And blindness and death were to be part of the experience which accompanied the *Water Lilies*.

Monet's *Water Lilies* depended on his other creation, his garden. Wherever he had settled Monet had made gardens, which then became the subject of some of his loveliest paintings of his wife and children enclosed by layers of flowers and foliage which excluded any note of discord from the external world. He created his most beautiful garden at Giverny, a village on a tiny tributary of the Seine where he and his rather complicated family moved in 1883 and where he lived until his death over forty years later.[7] The garden is in two parts: the earlier garden near the house, composed of a lush profusion of brilliantly coloured flowers and, across a road and a branch railway, the water-garden, begun in 1893 by damming a narrow stream. The "vast and palpable mirror of the pool" reflected the surrounding willow, alder, poplar and ash trees, as well as water irises, agapanthus, wisteria and pampas grasses.[8] Monet made extensions and changes to the pool in 1901 and 1910 when he was about to embark on new waterscape series, so his painting was directly dependent on the shaping of his water-garden, on his creation of a paradise garden, a distillation of all that he loved, a world created for re-creation in painting. It was a world dependent on the considerable riches which his art was bringing him and from which he could hope to banish all extraneous cares.

Visitors to the garden freqently commented on its Japanese character. This was not simply a question of the many Japanese plants or of aspects of garden planning, but of an attitude to the natural environment. Europeans were aware that the Japanese garden was not simply a place of recreation, but of philosophic meditation in which the composition of rocks, plants and water could embody the essential structure of nature in concentrated form. European writers also believed that the Japanese made their entire natural environment aesthetic, and this had much in common with Monet's attitude to his environment from the mid-1880s.[9] The contrast between Monet's earlier paintings of the Seine Valley at Argenteuil (cat. no. 4), and those at Giverny (cat. nos. 20 and 21) show how he gradually deprived it of its character as a lived landscape and created images of a dream-like loveliness so intense that it is a shock to read that a village council might have cut down its poplars for revenue or that the washerwomen and farmers downstream from Monet's garden worried that the damming of the stream and the introduction of exotic water lilies might threaten their clothes or their cattle.[10] Monet's garden intensified this aestheticisation of a working-landscape: it was nature as

Monet painting at the water-lily garden, c1920
Courtesy: Phillippe Piguet, Paris

Monet had desired it and as he had created it in his paintings; one which he could shape so as to exclude any imperfections. He could employ gardeners to mass flowers "like colours on a palette", to remove flower heads as they withered because he could not bear the sight of dead flowers, and even to wash the dust off the lily pads.[11] In his paintings he could further emphasise a sense of a protective enclosure by excluding views of the countryside and fences or by massing trees more densely than they really were. It was only Monet's ruthless search for "truth to his sensation" which saved his paintings from an almost claustrophobic sweetness.

Monet did not begin to paint his pool intensively for many years. He did three paintings in 1895 of the Japanese bridge seen from across the pool which show the garden bare and open to the surrounding countryside, but he did not return to the subject until 1899 when the water lilies were established and the surrounding foliage was denser.

It was as if he were waiting for the garden to close in on itself before painting works that could be exhibited. In the meantime he did paint large studies for his decorative scheme, as well as the fourteen canvases of the *Mornings on the Seine*, painted from a flat-bottomed boat on the river about a kilometre from his house, representing the summer mist in the stillness of dawn before the morning breeze breaks the water surface; the first ripples and the mist dissipating as the sun warms it (cat. nos. 24 and 25). Two years after completing this series Monet moved from the open

river to the enclosed pool to paint his first series of paintings of this motif, the *Japanese Bridge*. (One series, in 1899, was painted from directly in front of the bridge looking down the pool to a screen of willow, ash and alder trees; a second series, in 1900, was painted with a slightly less rigid composition(cat. no. 27)). The curve of the bridge cuts across the upper part of the painting, and is tied into place by the curve of its reflection; the reversed images of the dense screen of trees become one substance with the starry water-flowers, creating a sense of complete enclosure, an almost tangible space full of vibrating light; a dreamy, sensuous intensity which almost drugs the mind as it explores the repetition of the motif through all the inflections of light on a golden summer's day.

Monet was to spend a quarter of a century exploring this motif: an open pool with islands of foreshortened lily leaves receding across the surface in tension with the vertical fall of the reflections. Before returning to it, he went on with his last 'tourist' series, the paintings of the Thames, as well as a project to return to areas, such as Vétheuil, where he had painted in earlier years. Meanwhile he embarked on new works on his pool. Perhaps feeling that he needed more viewpoints if he were to realise his dream of a continuous decoration, he bought additional land, and had the pool enlarged from about twenty to sixty metres long and twenty wide, including an islet. He created the illusion of indefinite extension in the garden by obscuring boundaries and controlling viewpoints so that there was never a single complete view of it, and it is possible that such devices gave him ideas for composing his paintings. Working on a garden scale enabled Monet to structure his paintings so that they suggest infinite extension in a manner quite unlike that of his earlier works, which reduce the scale of the external world to the finite dimensions appropriate to the domestic interiors where they were hung (see cat. no. 11).

In the first paintings of the series (cat. no. 34) the only solid form is the narrow strip of the bank at the top of the painting. Thus, in one move, Monet reversed the whole earth-based structure on which Western naturalism had depended. The motif is like a detail from the many paintings where Monet had looked across the surface of still water to the opposite bank to that 'moment' where the material met the immaterial; the solid was transposed into the two-dimensional; the 'real' into its image. Monet, however, represented the bank very summarily and one can see that his attention has shifted from the relationship between bank and water to the relationship between the islands of lilies which define the horizontal surface of the water and the reflections of the unseen trees which seem to dissolve the surface, and to penetrate below it. In succeeding works, for example, catalogue number 35, the last vestige of the solid world is eliminated and the world beyond the surface of the pool is seen only through its reflection. A contemporary critic commented that it was "impossible in painting to assemble more paradoxes": Monet represented that which is above us – sky and foliage – as if in the water was 'below' us, but that 'below' is on a flat plane of painted canvas in front of us. On this vertical canvas he depicted not only the surface, but the depths of the water; not only the light which reflects from the surface, but that which penetrates its glassy depths. As if these relationships were not difficult enough to paint, they also changed constantly. Monet himself is reported to have said:

> The essence of the motif is the mirror of water whose appearance changes at every moment because of the areas of sky reflected in it. . . . The passing cloud, the freshening breeze, the seed which is poised and which then falls, the wind which blows and then suddenly drops, the light which dims and then brightens again – all these things . . . transform the colour and disturb the planes of water.[12]

It is no wonder that Monet spent longer on this series than on any earlier one and frequently despaired of representing the complexities and subtleties of what he saw. He worked on the paintings for six years, at first while working on the London series in the winters (1903-1905), then exclusively on the *Water Lilies* – on the motif in the spring and summer and in the studio in the winters. He had never worked with such concentration on a single motif (he is said to have begun one-hundred-and-fifty works of which seventy were completed), and he had extraordinary difficulties, putting off planned exhibitions from year to year, refusing to part with any paintings from the series, and destroying many in rage and frustration. He wrote to Geffroy,

> These landscapes of water and reflections have become an obsession. It is beyond my aging powers and I want nonetheless to succeed in rendering what I feel . . . I destroy some . . . I start them over and over again.[13]

In 1908 he was still working on canvases he had begun years earlier and, although he agreed with friends that some were overworked (with "three or four paintings on one canvas") he could not stop. Finally, it was only a trip to Venice which enabled him to see his works with "a clearer eye" and to let them go for an exhibition – *Water-landscapes, Nymphéas* – which opened at the Durand-Ruel gallery in May 1909.[14]

The three paintings in this exhibition represent different phases in the evolution of the motif. The Denver *Water Lily Pond* (cat. no. 34) resembles the *Japanese Bridge* series in its descriptive technique where contrasting brushstrokes and local colour clearly differentiate the texture and colour of each element. The painting thus appears like a casual view of a pond in which trees and clouds are reflected, but which will still exist when the light and hence the reflections change. Somehow this

Monet during a work session, early in the afternoon of July 1915. Blanche Monet, his stepdaughter, is by his side. To the left, in the foreground is Nitia Salerou, Monet's stepgranddaughter.
Courtesy: Phillippe Piguet, Paris

cannot be said of the Boston *Water Lilies I* (cat. no. 35). There the segment of the pool is brought much closer than in the Denver painting, so that one looks steeply down on the nearest lilies, whose leaves, like thin membranes, hover just above the water; on it (as one can see in the tension of the surface); or even partially submerged below it. Space is suggested by the rapid diminution of scale and sharp foreshortening of the more distant islands of leaves; but while in the Denver painting one can still measure space by judging the distance from ourselves across the water to the bank, in the Boston painting there is no way of measuring the distance between ourselves and the lilies or the unseen limits of the pool.

With the earlier painting it is still possible to say, "I am here; the pool is there." This is no longer possible with the Boston painting. Its space is thus limitless. Moreover, by 1905 Monet was using more abstract scales of colour, unlike the descriptive local colours and individual textures of the Denver painting, and this intensifies the dream-like detachment of the painting from the world of prosaic dimensions.

The more descriptive views of the *Mornings on the Seine* (cat. nos. 25 and 26), the *Japanese Bridge* and first *Water Lilies* can be grasped in the 'instant' (one may increase one's sense of their subtle beauties, but one cannot 'see' more than one sees in the moment of recognition). The more developed *Water Lilies*, however, can be perceived only *in time*. This is partly because of the irreconcilable tension between two 'readings' of the paintings: that which is given by the lily pads, which indicate the surface of the water; and that which is given by the reflections, which fracture the surface, appearing vertical in opposition to its inclined horizontal. One can focus on one or the other of these readings, but one cannot 'see' them simultaneously.

Drawings and unfinished paintings show that Monet began these works by drawing with very freely drawn continuous, looping lines which indicate first the position and foreshortening of the lily islands, then the outlines of the reflections.[15] There was nothing initially to suggest the water surface; this developed only as Monet painted (fig. 1). Thus the opposition between the lily islands and the reflections was inherent in the structure of the works but pentimenti show that Monet had the greatest difficulty in bringing them to the precarious balance which characterises the completed works. The tension between water surface and reflection exists in earlier paintings (cat. nos. 26 and 27), but was subordinate to the wider view. Once the motif was brought close, however, it forced the disjunction in such a way that attention must fluctuate ceaselessly between the two dimensions. As this occurs, the physical certainties of our relationship to the depicted world begin to falter; one's sense of separateness from it dissolves, and one's consciousness becomes totally absorbed in this *new* yet intensely familiar world (see cat. no. 35).

Monet may have been helped to realise this new physical space by his study of Japanese painting, especially the large, painted screens, in which there is no consistent earth-plane as in Western landscape painting, and space is suggested by overlapping vertical planes and perspectival fragments (for example, a rock surrounded by a few ripples indicates the plane of the water). Monet is reported to have said that he approved of the Japanese aesthetic which "evokes presence by a shadow, the whole by a fragment".[16] As one can see in the Boston *Water Lilies*, the fragment of a pool and reflections are the means by which Monet evokes the world and its plants, the over-arching sky and limitless light-filled space on a flat canvas only one metre long.

The painting from the Dallas Museum of Art (cat. no. 36) is characteristic of other works of 1908 in being more delicately and fluently painted as if, after his earlier struggles to find a means of representing this new world, Monet was able to relax. It was painted in thin, subtle glazes of soft blues, pinks, delicate greens and yellows, quite unlike the densely

fig. 1 *Water Lilies* c 1907
Musée Marmottan, Paris
bequest of Michel Monet

layered structure of the Boston painting where the darker tones of the lower layers of paint establish a granular surface over which he dragged thick, dry paint which catches on the striations and creates an irregular grainy surface which both receives and reflects light. The contrast between the layers enabled him to suggest not only the reflectivity but the permeability of the water. The mauves and heavy pinks evoke a sky dusky with the threat of rain suspended in the inert pool waters, while the thin, aqueous layers of the later painting evoke all the transparent brilliance of the milky summer light of the Seine Valley.

The forty-eight *Water Lilies* exhibited in 1909 were the largest number of works Monet had ever shown on a single motif. This motif, the surface of a pool on a summer's day, was simpler than any earlier one, yet was infinite in its possible variations. These ranged through all the modulations of light from the mistiness or the glassy clarity of early morning, through the golden midday hours, to twilight duskiness and fiery sunset; from the most refined harmonies to works of almost expressionistic force. Repetitive form was transformed through different scales of colour (compare the scales of violets, dusky pinks and bluey-greens of the Boston *Water Lilies* with the light blues, pinks and yellow-green ones in the Dallas painting), which were accented by different coloured water lilies. When seen together these variations on a restricted theme emphasise the abstract, 'musical' character of the series, yet this very abstraction also intensifies one's awareness of the intensity and subtlety of observation in each painting. The central paradox of Monet's painting is nowhere more clearly exemplified than in the *Water Lilies*, which are both 'abstract' and accurate, dream-like and intensely familiar.

Two of the many critical articles on the exhibition show that Monet had not forgotten his ideal of creating a continuous painting which would surround the spectator. He told one writer:

> I would have liked to have decorated a circular room of modest well-calculated dimensions: surrounding it to half human height, there would have extended a painting of water and flowers, passing through every modulation [of light]. This would have been a dining-room. . . .[17]

As the writer points out, since the paintings have no boundaries, beyond the almost arbitrary ones of their frames, it is not difficult to imagine that they might be extended indefinitely, with the different phases of light so modulated that they could melt into one another. Yet both critics write in terms which suggest that Monet's project was a dream which he had given up. Perhaps this was because Monet did not *need* to realise his dream of a total painting until his secure life as a painter at the heart of his family and paradise garden was threatened with destruction by flood, death, blindness and war. It was only then that he began to

fig. 2 *Water Lilies* c1922
Musée Marmottan, Paris
bequest of Michel Monet

create those huge, infinitely expansive paintings which embodied both the continuity of time as well as the infinite moments of its passing. During the painting of these works he moved from his conception of the *Water Lilies* as an accompaniment to the good life – the background to dining – to paintings utterly demanding in their physical presence. In this connection it is significant that he did not paint any more circular *Water Lilies* like the Dallas painting, for if the circle is the perfect model for a pictorial world which turns ceaselessly in on itself, it was perhaps too perfect and, in the huge paintings of his last years, Monet allowed the expression of imperfection, the threat of the passage of time, the anguish of loss.

Less than a year after the triumph of the *Water Lilies* exhibition, the garden upon which they depended was submerged by the raging waters of the flooded Seine. "Monet's despair," his wife wrote, "like the Epte will not abate." Six months later she wrote that although the water-garden was severely damaged, the flower garden was "paradise, everything is in bloom, the irises, the poppies, the azaleas, the roses".[18] Monet perhaps took advantage of the damage to have further changes made to the pool, in particular to have its banks curved so as to give more motifs for painting. Yet if nature and Monet's own resilience had again asserted their regenerative powers, it was evident that his sanctuary was not inviolate.

Within a year Alice Monet herself was dead. She had been the creator of that sheltered ideal family world that had provided the context of Monet's creative work. He was devastated by what he called "this appallingly cruel loss" and could not work for many months. Simultaneously he was subjected to an even more fundamental threat to his being, blindness. In 1908 he had complained of "blurred sight" which his wife ascribed to his concern over his water lilies exhibition[19] and, as I have suggested, for a man of Monet's temperament such a connection between mental state and sight is probable. This time his blindness was physical in origin and, in 1912, he was diagnosed as having double cataracts. Since the condition was developing slowly, an operation was not recommended; moreover, Monet preferred his own sight, however defective, to having it made foreign to him through an operation. He therefore did a number of paintings to test out what he could see, and then decided to return to his project of creating "a kind of synthesis" of earlier "motifs, impressions and sensations".[20] Now, however, he realised that he did not need to travel to earlier painting sites – which would be too much for a man of his age – because he found all he needed, "sky, water, foliage and flowers" in "his little pool". He did studies and drawings of the ensemble, and when "the arrangements and composition of the motifs had gradually inscribed themselves on [his] mind", he decided to have a huge studio built to house his great cycle. Its size – twenty-four by twelve metres – indicates the scale of his ambition.

In the spring of 1914 he returned to his water lilies, writing, "I have undertaken a large work which thrills me."[21] His exhilaration was destroyed by the outbreak of war in August. Work could not begin on his studio, and he was full of anguish at the threat to his country, made personal by the members of his family and friends who were called up. He gave up his "old dream", telling his friend of many years, Clemenceau, the wartime prime minister of France, that it was beyond the strength of an old man.[22] He was seventy-four, his sight was uncertain, and even his home seemed to be threatened by the German advance. Clemenceau encouraged him to persevere, perhaps by promising him that the state would acquire the paintings, for only this can explain the demands which Monet made of the government, quite astonishing at the height of the war. Monet explained his decision to resume work, saying, "There are some Frenchmen who can fight. I can do nothing but paint. I must do what I can do."[23] This explicit connection between his painting and the war confirms my suggestion of the reparative nature of his art: it had always denied the losses of time by immobilising it, but focused on aspects of nature where the effects of time were most acute. His paintings had generally been concerned with natural time in a fairly straightforward way, but now became impregnated not only with his sense of personal disintegration – blindness and death – but with the death of numberless victims of the war, the threatened destruction of French culture and of the society which had shaped his art.

There are many contradictions in the accounts of the evolution of Monet's last great cycle, probably because he was unable to plan it in relation to a specific setting until after the war. By February 1918, shortly after the threat of a German breakthrough in the Giverny area, and his demand for railway transport of his materials, he reported that he had completed eight of the twelve canvases of two-by-four-and-a-quarter metres which he planned for his decoration; yet that spring visitors reported seeing thirty huge panels in his studio. Again, part of the confusion was due to the fact that Monet had his canvases mounted on easels with wheels which he could arrange and rearrange in a huge ellipse so that he could try out different combinations of his motifs.

In 1918, to celebrate the Allied victory, Monet offered the state four triptyches, each composed of two-by-four-and-a-quarter metre canvases which he hoped would be housed in a circular pavilion in the grounds of the Hôtel Biron which his old friend Robin had left to the nation in 1917. These plans were upset by Clemenceau's defeat in the presidential elections and the French economic crisis. Ultimately it was decided to convert the Orangerie to house the *Water Lilies*, and, in April, 1922, a contract was drawn up which for the first time gave Monet a specific location for his works. Thus, when he was over eighty, Monet had to

revise his dream of a circular room to two elliptical ones, increasing the number of canvases from twelve to nineteen. He had to embark on new six-metre-long canvases to fit the new dimensions. And, even with the contract, he continued to alter the arrangement of the canvases, increasing their number from nineteen to twenty-two at his death.

It is generally assumed that Monet's inability to finish the Orangerie cycle was due to the changes imposed by an unimaginative government, but it would be truer to say that Monet simply could not give up painting what he himself had called "an obsession" . His correspondents and visitors heard his familiar anguish at his inability to realise his vision, but what is striking is that the old man who could now paint only by relying on the labels on his colour tubes and the invariable layout of colours on his palette, should still have the relentless need to create; that in 1921 he should *begin* six metre-long canvases which would be the freshest and most intensely beautiful of the entire series (fig. 2). His letters alternate between exaltation and despair, yet he continued to paint even when his sight had so deteriorated that he was forced to have two operations on his cataracts. Then he had to contend with seeing everything yellow and then blue, until he had corrective glasses which enabled him to paint with "a new joy" in the summer of 1925. Only then did his health being to fail; by 1926 he could no longer paint, but he begged that his *Water Lilies* would not be taken from him before he died. Only after his death in December were the paintings taken to the Orangerie to be fixed in an arrangement that makes permanent that which expressed his anguished sense of impermanence. It was no accident that he preferred to die before this, because for him there could be no final arrangement of his great paintings.

Yet even stuck to the walls of the Orangerie, the great late *Water Lilies* refuse to become finite: not only do they express the transience of light – clouds passing across the sky, a breeze furring the surface of water which remains elsewhere glassy – but they bear all the marks of Monet's struggle to create a complete, enclosing world.

The first of the two great rooms acts as a kind of antechamber to the second, a room of an unearthly purity. One enters it with one's senses still jangling with the fret and noise of central Paris to be confronted by huge paintings, higher than oneself, stretching for up to twelve metres; paintings which curve around one, excluding the external world, filling one's sight, absorbing one's consciousness. Each huge panel reflects unseen realities: grassy banks create shadowy green depths; rose pink clouds float on the surface; the last glare of sunset seems to burn the water surface. These walls of painted water undermine one's separate physical being, for it is impossible to know where one 'stands' in relation to them: the sky above one's head is 'below' in the pool; the pool 'below' is a wall of paint in front of one and one can 'look through' its vertical plane of paint as if into the transparent depths of water. One is drawn deep into the curve of the walls to seek the instant when paint becomes image, to grasp the miracle by which roughly brushed layers of chalky paint evoke transparency, 'wateriness', light (fig. 2).

It is with one's mind completely filled with this world of painted water that one enters the second room whose huge stretches of painting appear to be stained by an intense, luminous, transparent blue. It is only when one has reached the centre of the room and looks back to the entrance that one realises it is completed by a painting of darkness, the *Reflections of trees*, whose water is sombre, almost inert. The unity of colour and the opposition of dark and light at each end of the ellipse tempt one to experience the room in terms of the cycle of light, to find continuity from the rosy dawn of the *Two Willows* on the eastern walls to the darkness of the *Reflections of trees* in the west. One should recall that Monet originally planned a *continuous* circle of painting – which he could create with his wheeled canvases in the studio. This concept could have been influenced by Japanese sliding screens, where life-size images of water, willow trees and river-banks were continued across the corners of rooms or across empty spaces. Similarly, in his life-size paintings, Monet seems to have attempted to create invisible connections between the panels across the gap of a doorway; for example, allowing for the doorway, there is a connection between the banks, plane of water, disposition of lilies and tonality of each end of the two panels entitled *Morning* and the *Reflection of trees*.

Monet, however, was too much of a realist ever to impose a structure on nature if he had not experienced it. His damaged sight meant that he could paint only in the early morning and the late afternoon. He could not then paint the comforting certainties of cyclic light, while the promise of the perpetual rebirth of light was threatened by his incipient blindness. Monet had never admitted darkness into his painting before so its presence in this room must be significant. Surrounded by the two twelve-metre-long paintings, *Morning*, it faces the ecstatic clarity of the *Two Willows*. The *Two Willows* is seventeen metres long, and its curves are deeper than any of the other paintings, so that as one approaches it, it closes around one, its spindly trees dissolve and even the lily leaves melt before one's gaze, so that one's bodily consciousness itself seems to approach dissolution in the roseate water-that-is-light. And yet the darkness of the *Reflections of trees* is still there and, if one turns to face its sombre depths, one's mind still contains the transparent light of the other paintings. Consciousness cannot create a cycle of light in this great room, but fluctuates ceaselessly between light and darkness so that each is permeated by the other.

Death, the final extinction of light, can never have been far from Monet's mind as he worked. There was not only his own great age, and

fig. 3 *Water Lilies — Reflections of the Willow* c 1922
Musée Marmottan, Paris
bequest of Michel Monet

Monet's water-garden, view from the west toward the Japanese footbridge, c1926
Photograph by Nickolas Muray, collection of Museum of Modern Art
Courtesy: Mimi Muray

the deaths of his wife and son, but the deaths of millions in the war and its aftermath; the deaths of every one of his painter comrades who had helped create his mode of expression, as well as of those writers who had helped sustain him. He was caught between his desire to finish his great work, to create the perfect circle, and his desire not to complete, for the completion of the circle meant death.

A study for the *Reflection of trees* (fig. 2) is composed entirely of long writhing lines in which one can only just discern the darker form of the reversed tree. Many of Monet's paintings from the 1880s onwards were composed from an accretion of linear brushstrokes from which the image emerges, and into which it can dissolve, depending on the spectator's focus. This mode of expression was particularly appropriate for paintings of water, and water and wind-shaped cliffs (for instance, cat. nos. 11, 13 and 15), but it also appears in Monet's painting of his first wife, Camille, on her death-bed in 1879, where the long, drifting, thread-like brushstrokes create an extraordinary image of dissolution, as if the body were melting into a liquid element. Once again, Monet would not have imposed symbolism on perceptual experience; but this image, as well as the fact that the association between death and a return to a watery element is profoundly rooted in our culture, suggests that this symbolism had become natural. This is also suggested by Monet's wish to be buried at sea. [24]

Monet said of his *Water Lilies*, a year before his death, "I do not wish to die before saying all that I have to say, or at least trying to say it." [25]

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Notes

This essay derives from material discussed in greater detail in my forthcoming book on Claude Monet to be published by Thames and Hudson.

1 The best title for the works would be that used for Monet's 1909 exhibition, *Nymphéas – série de paysages d'eau*, that is, *Water Lilies – Waterscape series.*

2 Maurice Guillemot, "Claude Monet", *Revue illustrée*, 15 March 1898. It should be emphasised that pools with water lilies (with or without nymphs) was a fairly frequent subject in the Salon exhibitions in the 1890s. This will be discussed in my forthcoming book on Monet.

3 Letter to Gustave Geffroy, 7 October 1890, WLIII: 1076

4 Duc de Trévise, "Le Pèlerinage à Giverny", *Revue de l'art ancien et moderne*, January-February 1927, 126

5 To Geffroy, 28 February 1896, WLIII: 1327; Florent Fels, *Claude Monet*, 1925, 15

6 To F. Bazille, 3 July 1867, WL34; to Bazille, 29 June 1868, WLI: 40; to Geffroy, 21 July 1890, WLIII: 1066

7 With the two sons of his first wife, Camille Doncieux, who died in 1879, his companion Alice Hoschedé whom he married in 1892, her two sons and four daughters.

8 Guillemot, 1898. For a discussion of the gardèn and many photographs, see Claire Joyes, *et al.*, *Monet at Giverny*, London, 1975, 37-38; Robert Gordon "The Lily Pond at Giverny: The Changing Inspiration of Monet", *Connoisseur*, November 1973, 154-65

9 I am particularly indebted for ideas on Monet and Japanese art to Dr David Bromfield, who has written a doctoral dissertation and several articles on the subject. See also John House, "Monet's water garden and the second waterlily series (1903-9)", *in* Paris, Centre Culturel du Marais, *Claude Monet at the time of Giverny*, 1983, 150-165.

10 C. Joyes, 20 and 38; R. Gordon, 161

11 Joyes, 37; Trévise, 47; Guillemot, [3]. See also Marcel Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, Paris, 398

12 Thiébault-Sisson, "Les Nymphéas de Claude Monet à l'Orangerie", 1927, 44 (an article based on a visit in 1918)

13 Geffroy, *Claude Monet, sa vie, son temps, son oeuvre*, Paris 1922, 258

14 House, "Monet's watergarden", for a detailed discussion of the evolution of this series

15 Sketchbooks, Musée Marmottan, Paris. See *Les Nymphéas - Effet du soir*, 1907, a finished version of the motif, reproduced in *Monet et ses amis*, Musée Marmottan, Paris 1977, pl. 41

16 Claude Roger-Marx, "Les *Nymphéas* de M. Claude Monet", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, June 1909 (in a poeticised 'dialogue' with Monet)

17 Arsène Alexandre, "Un paysagiste d'aujourd'hui", *Comoedia*, 8 May 1909. See also Roger-Marx. It has not previously been noted that Alexandre and Guillemot's descriptions indicate that the paintings would be on the lower part of the wall with their top edge at the head level of those seated at the dining table. I am indebted to my colleague, Dr Joan Kerr, for pointing this out.

18 Letters of 2 February and 2 June 1910, in *Claude Monet at the time of Giverny*, 275-76

19 Letter of 30 March 1908, ibid., 270

20 Thiébault-Sisson, 45-52. For a detailed account of the evolution of the Orangerie scheme, see R. Gordon and C. F. Stuckey, "Blossoms and Blunders: Monet and the State", *Art in America*, January-February 1979; C. F. Stuckey, "Blossoms and Blunders: Monet and the State II", *Art in America*, September 1979.

21 *Bulletin de la vie artistique*, 6 June 1914, quoted in Gordon and Stuckey, 106

22 See George Clemenceau, *Claude Monet. Les Nymphéas*, Paris 1928

23 Arsène Alexandre, *Claude Monet*, Paris 1921, 118

24 See Gaston Bachelard, *L'Eau et les Rêves. Essai sur l'imagination de la matière*, Paris 1942, chs. 2 and 3

25 René Delange, "Claude Monet", *L'Illustration*, 15 January 1927; quoted in Stuckey, 120

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CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

All paintings are oil on canvas and all dimensions are in millimetres; height precedes width.
W refers to D. Wildenstein, *Claude Monet, biographie et catalogue raisonné*, I (1840-1881), II (1882-1886), and III (1887-1898), Lausanne and Paris, 1974, 1979.

1

Hyde Park, London

1870-71

410 x 740
signed bottom left: Claude Monet.
W164
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (42/218)

Monet spent around six months in London during the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune in 1870-71, but only around six paintings have survived from his stay – one figure subject, three views of the Thames, and two scenes of central London's parks, *Hyde Park* and *Green Park* (fig 2). The two park pictures are similar in organisation, showing groups of figures informally scattered across an elongated horizontal canvas, and both depict overcast scenes, probably of autumn; but they are only loosely a pair, since they show different parks. Moreover the composition of *Hyde Park* is more complex, with the figure groups and the paths punctuated by the undulating terrain; by encouraging the viewer's eye to range across the picture from one accent to the next, without any conventional centralised focus, Monet gave the scene its air of immediacy and informality.

The brushwork is correspondingly broad and simple, but individual elements in the scene are carefully distinguished by the differently weighted touches which describe them, notably the foliage, the figures and the chimney-pots. The figures, in particular, deftly but simply characterised with the brush, stand out from the scene beyond, rather than being absorbed into London's mists, as they were in Monet's later paintings of the city (compare cat. nos. 28 and 31). The colour is very subdued, as suits the overcast weather effect; by this date Monet was already introducing contrasting accents of clear colour in sunlit subjects.

The Paris dealer Durand-Ruel, whom Monet first met in London late in 1870, bought this picture from him in May 1872; its comparatively crisp finish made it suitable for sale through a commercial dealer.

Thick layers of dried paint beneath the surface of the present painting bear no relation to its forms; these presumably belong to a previous composition begun on the same canvas. In the earlier part of his career, before he began to sell regularly, Monet often reused his canvases (cat. no. 5).

2

The Sheltered Path

1873

545 x 655
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet. 73
W288
Philadelphia Museum of Art
given by Mr and Mrs Hughes Norment in honour of William H. Donner
(72/227/1)

In this canvas, Monet chose a particularly unpicturesque subject – presumably a scene from around Argentueil, but one quite without notable features or intriguing vistas. The whole lower half of the picture is taken up with the path and the scrubby grass and plants beside it, while the trees above are no more distinctive in their forms. The single figure gives the scene a clear sense of scale, but it is so summarily treated that the viewer is given little clue to what kind of person it is; it does nothing to characterise more fully this very characterless scene, which seems to be a quite deliberate rejection of the qualities usually expected from a worthwhile landscape view.

The interest of the canvas is focused on its surface – on its brushwork and colour. Its colour scheme is presumably autumnal, based around constant variations of greens and soft orange-browns, anchored by the darker cast shadows at the right, with hints of softer, atmospheric colour on the furthest trees. The touch is delicate and flexible throughout, in flecks, dabs and dashes of colour which animate the whole surface. In his earlier canvases (cat. no. 1), Monet had used the brush to differentiate crisply between the elements in the scene. It was only in the autumn of 1873 that he began to seek more of an overall effect in his touch, using the brush as much to evoke the play of light as to suggest the distinctive forms of objects. *The Sheltered Path* is one of the first canvases that Monet treated in this way; this treatment, with the picture's deliberately trivial subject, marks an important stage in the development of Monet's landscape painting towards the preoccupation with nuances of colour and texture which characterise his later series.

3

The Quay at Le Havre

1874

603 x 1020
signed bottom left: Claude Monet
W297
Philadelphia Museum of Art
bequest of Mrs Frank Graham Thomson (61/48/3)

The Quay at Le Havre is one of a pair of paintings, identical in size, showing the same view; the other (W296, private collection) is dated '74', and shows the scene in wet weather. This rainy version was shown at the Impressionists' first group exhibition in spring 1874; the present one, showing a crisp sunlit effect, is very similar in treatment. In an interview given in 1897, Monet spoke of *Impression, Sunrise* (fig. 1), which was also exhibited in 1874; he had entitled that painting *Impression*, he said, "because it could not pass as a view of Le Havre"; the rainy scene, by contrast, was exhibited with the title *Le Havre: Fishing Boats leaving the Port*, which shows that Monet did see it (and, by implication, the closely related present picture) as a view of the place. *Impression, Sunrise* is dominantly an effect of fog, to which the topographical setting is subordinated, while in the other two canvases the main subject is the busy life of the place, the people on the quay and the varied shipping: rowing boats, sailing boats, steamboats. Monet's attention was later to turn away from animated modern panoramas such as these towards a fuller exploration of the atmospheric effects he had sketched in *Impression, Sunrise.*

In *Quay at Le Havre* the whole surface, including the sky and water, is animated by broken touches of paint; the figures are treated in an abbreviated manner, more summary that that in *Hyde Park. London* (cat. no. 1). The overall variegation of the surface here is a marked change from the crisply individualised accents in the earlier picture. In this sunlit scene, too, the colour is clear; figures and boats are still treated in comparatively dull hues, but the play of light and shade is suggested by contrasts of colour, notably in the foreground, where the blue shadows of the figures stand out against the warm yellows of the sunlit quay. The paint does not fully cover the canvas; the light-toned priming, slightly warm in hue, is seen in many places and adds to the overall luminosity of the picture.


Claude Monet

4

The Railway Bridge at Argenteuil

c1874-75

543 x 724
signed bottom right: Claude Monet
W321
St Louis Art Museum
gift of Sydney Shoenberg Jr. (45/73)

In his paintings of Argenteuil Monet explored its river banks and bridges from many different angles and in many different conditions. This view of the railway bridge makes an interesting contrast with another roughly contemporary view of the same bridge (fig. 5). In both, a train crosses the bridge, signposting the fact that it is a railway bridge – a specifically modern element in the landscape (Argenteuil's railway bridge had been opened in 1863, and had recently been rebuilt after the Franco-Prussian War); but it is presented very differently in the two paintings. There, it is seen from close to, in sunlight and surrounded by bushes, with a sailboat alongside; here, the sky is overcast, and it is seen from a distance with the town of Argenteuil beyond; the interrelationship between bridge and town is stressed by the way the church spire (traditional focus of village scenes) and the smokestack of the train are juxtaposed, with equal weighting, above the centre of the bridge. Here, too, the figures in the foreground are the most prominent element in the scene, but they are not given any of the traditional roles of figures in landscape: they do not mediate between the viewer and the scene, nor do they add any anecdotal interest, neither do they serve to characterise their surroundings. Instead they seem quite detached from each other and oblivious of their surroundings and of us; they appear to be caught unawares, though they are placed in artfully contrived counterpoint to the rhythm of the bridge piers above them. Monet's wife Camille and his son Jean were presumably the models for the picture, but there is no hint of a conventional treatment of the mother and child theme.

In contrast to catalogue number 2 and figure 5, the picture is rapidly sketched, its forms and effects less crisply defined. Monet regarded his more highly finished paintings as suitable for sale through dealers, but sold many of his more informal sketches such as this to fellow artists or personal friends; the first known owner of the *The Railway Bridge at Argenteuil* was the painter Jacques-Emile Blanche.

5

Vétheuil

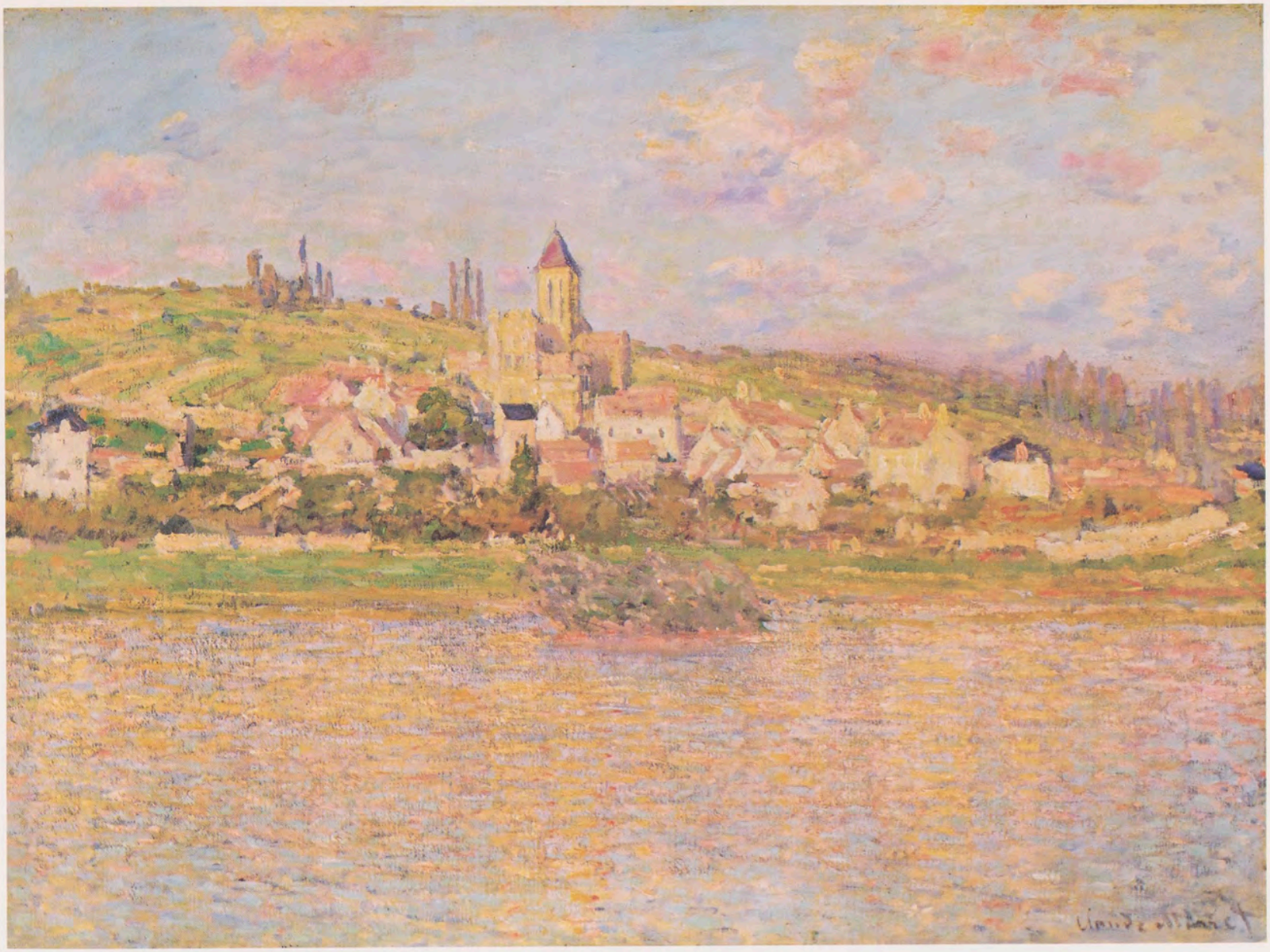
c1878-79

600 x 816
signed bottom right: Claude Monet
W533
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest 1937 (406/4)

This painting was executed early during Monet's time at Vétheuil, the village on a secluded loop of the Seine where he lived from 1878 until 1881. The church, seen from the west, dominates the village and the composition; the seemingly timeless juxtaposition of nature with the village is stressed by the way in which the church tower and the trees punctuate the horizon side by side. Monet's move to Vétheuil was a departure from a landscape that was being transformed by industry and marked the end of his preoccupation with specifically modern themes (contrast the church in cat. no. 4).

Traditional though the subject is, its treatment would have seemed very novel in its original context. The village is viewed from across the river, with no intruding foreground; thus the spectator is denied any of the traditional means of visual access from foreground to background. Moreover, the forms in the scene are not individualised in their handling; all are treated in an equally soft, unfocused touch which emphasises the overall effect of the village in the warmth of the afternoon sun, rather than highlighting any one element in it. Pinks and reds, some soft, some quite bright, run throughout – in the buildings and the landscape, but also alongside the blues in the sky and in the reflections in the water. The blue accents set up a sharp contrast with the dominantly warm hues; even the buildings are punctuated by a few deep blue roofs. The dark tones which show through the present paint surface in many parts of the water, the village and the hillside presumably belong to a different, previous picture begun on the same canvas (compare cat. no. 1).

The picture was bought by Durand-Ruel, and was probably one of his first purchases after he resumed buying from Monet in 1881.



6

The Meadow

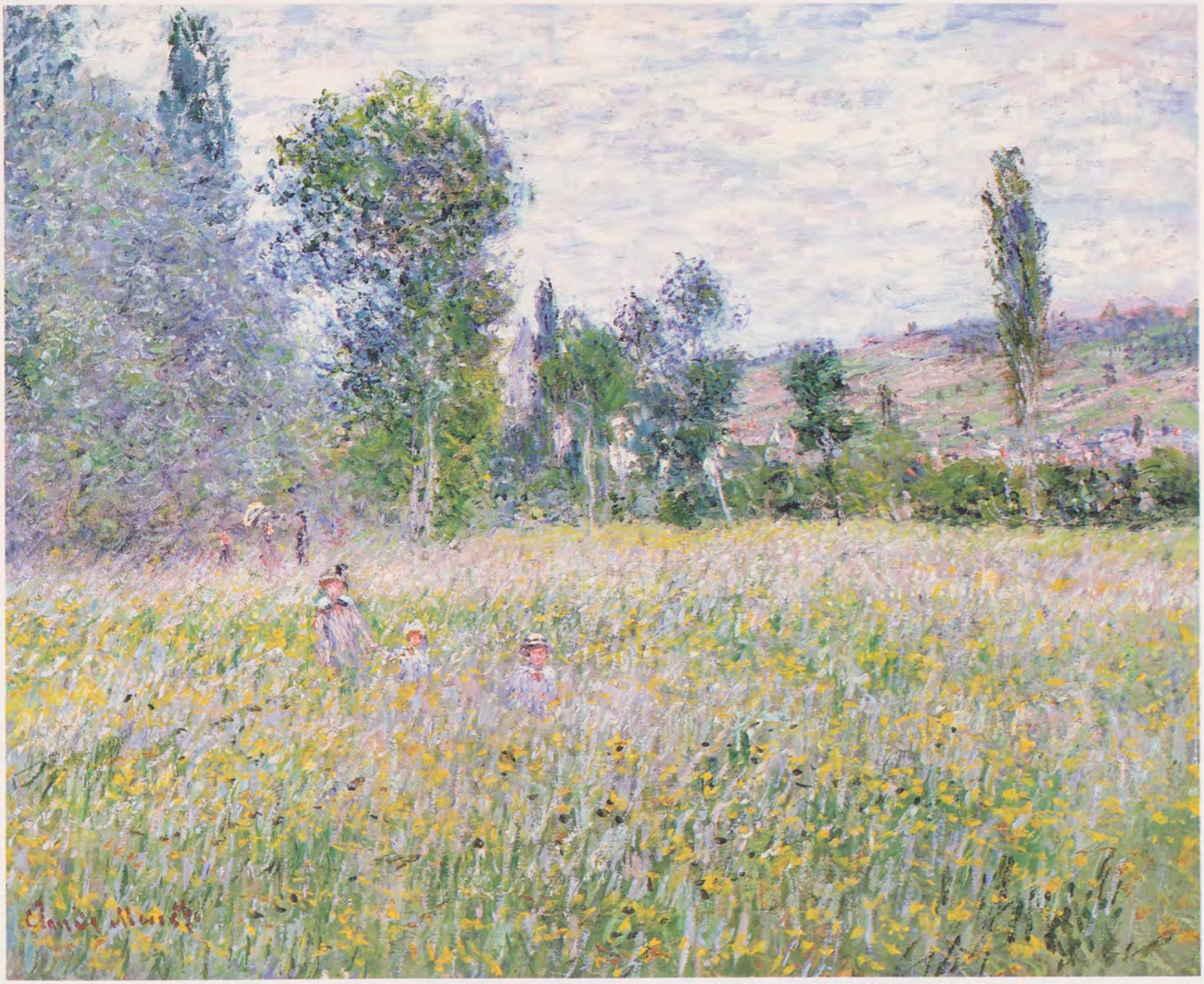
c1879

813 x 997
signed bottom left: Claude Monet
W535
Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha
gift of William Averell Harriman (1944/79)

The Meadow was painted at Vétheuil but, unlike *Vétheuil* (cat. no. 5), the village is here virtually invisible, the church tower barely seen, just to the left of centre, through the trees. Monet painted the picture from an island in the River Seine to the north-west of the village; the island lay just outside and to the left of the view shown in *Vétheuil.* From this different viewpoint he produced a quite different type of picture. The river is unseen, its presence unsuspected, though it lies all around; the dense foliage dominates the glimpses of the village beyond; and the meadow is enlivened by the figures who come towards us through the deep grasses, presumably the younger children of Monet and of Alice Hoschedé, whose families lived together even before the death of Monet's wife Camille in autumn 1879.

The varied textures of grasses and foliage are here treated with great ebullience, virtually absorbing the figures and giving the scene a great freshness. This vivacious touch can be compared with the more artfully elaborated, refined brushwork in *Path in the Ile Saint-Martin, Vétheuil* (cat. no. 7). The colour, too, is variegated throughout, dominated by greens; but these are enlivened by the clear pink accents on the little figures and the houses at the right, and by the scatter of yellow flowers across the grass.

This canvas was one of the last which Monet sold to Victor Chocquet, the customs official who had been one of his main buyers in the later 1870s; he had formed one of the finest of all the early collections of Impressionist paintings, particularly strong in works by Renoir and Cézanne, which was auctioned in 1899. After Monet began again to sell paintings to dealers around 1880, he virtually ceased to sell paintings privately at lower prices to the friends and collectors who until recently had been his mainstay.



7

Path in the Ile Saint-Martin, Vétheuil

1880

800 x 603
signed and dated bottom left: 1880 Claude Monet
W592
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
bequest of Julia W. Emmons (56/135/1)

Path in the Ile Saint-Martin shows Vétheuil church from yet another angle (refer cat. nos. 5 and 6), this time from an island in the Seine to the south of the village. Once again the river is invisible as it runs behind the trees on the right and across between the viewer and the church; though the trees dominate the formal fabric of the composition, as they do in catalogue number 6, here the church, nestling in the distance by the junction of the two hillsides, is its focal point. Of Monet's Vétheuil subjects, this is among those he painted most often: he executed six canvases from this viewpoint in 1880-81, but several of these were treated on a horizontal canvas, which gives the scene a very different effect.

The early history of this canvas cannot be precisely documented, but it is characteristic of the elaborated, more highly finished paintings which Monet exhibited and put on the market in the early 1880s. Compared with *The Meadow* (cat. no. 6), the brushwork is generally smaller and finer; it suggests the varied natural textures in the scene, but much of it is also comparatively evenly weighted, creating interwoven sequences of touches across the picture surface. The colour, too, is carefully harmonised. Varied greens dominate, but alongside them the blues of sky and distance are picked up by soft blues amid the sunlit grasses and in the foreground shadows, and the pinks of the distance echo the red poppies. The shadows are modelled dominantly by tonal contrasts, in darker, duller greens; but these areas, like the sunlit zones, are enlivened by variations of colour which evoke the play of direct and indirect light.

8

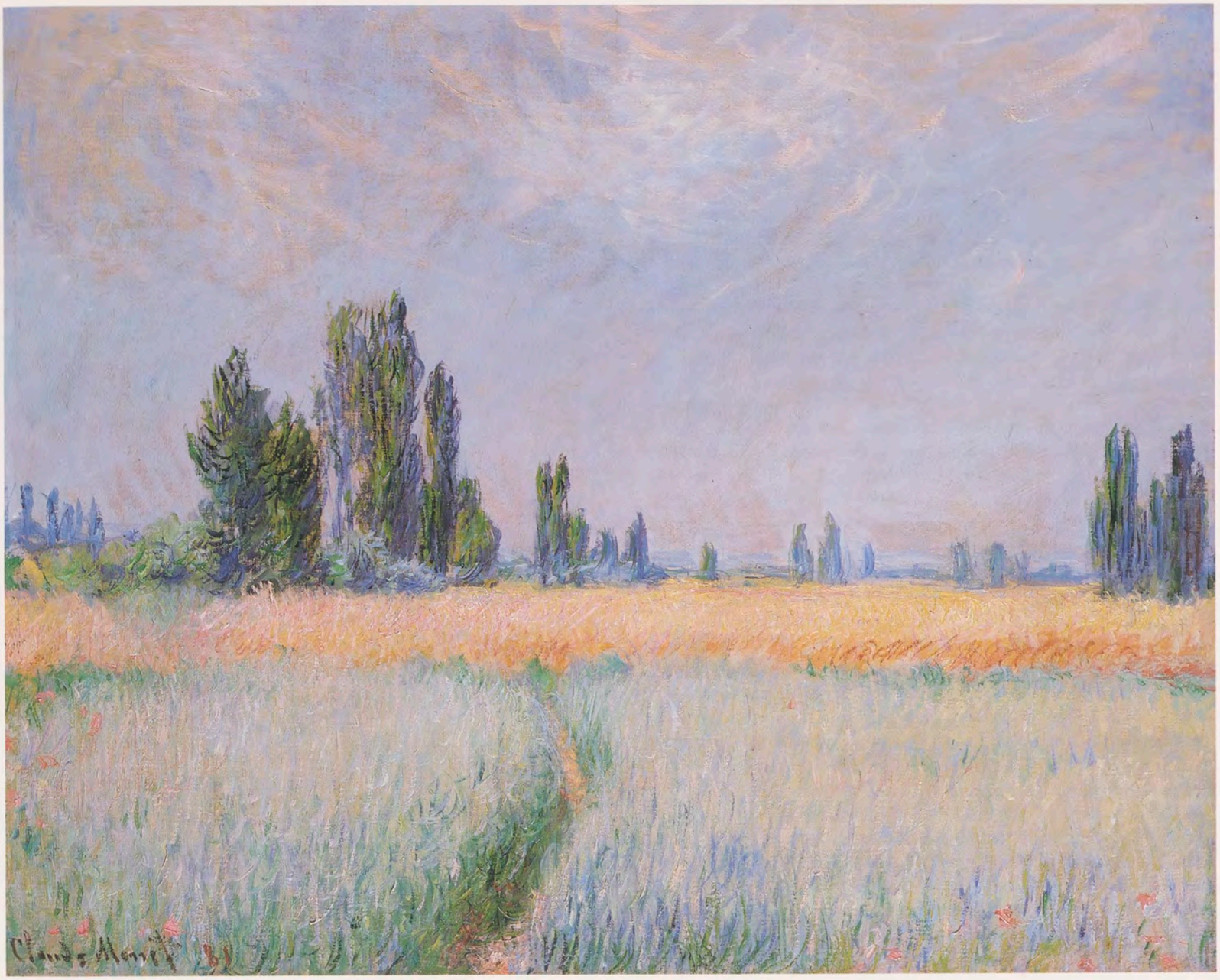
The Wheat Field

1881

655 x 813
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 81
W676
Cleveland Museum of Art
gift of Mrs Henry White Cannon (47/197)

The Wheat Field was painted in the open fields near Lavacourt, just across the Seine from Monet's home at Vétheuil. Though its subject is a traditional one, showing the abundant harvest, Monet has minimised its conventional agricultural significance by omitting any human presence or reference to labour, focusing instead on nuances of texture and lighting. It is one of the first of a sequence of paintings of such simple scenes, open fields with scattered trees, without any clear thematic focus or distinctive features; it was in these paintings, in particular, that Monet gradually developed his overriding preoccupation with atmospheric effects (cat. nos. 14, 20 and 23).

As in *Path in the Ile Saint-Martin* (cat. no. 7), the whole scene is unified by relationships of texture and colour; but in contrast to the delicacy of that picture, here the colour is brighter and more contrasting, the brushwork bolder and more rhythmic, animating the surface with vigorous dashes and hooks of paint. The sunlit field of wheat creates a band of luminous, warm hues across the centre of the canvas; the warmth of the colour here is emphasised by the pinks and oranges added on this field and along its near edge, late in the execution of the painting. A sequence of particularly vivid red dashes to the right end of the edge of the field serves, by their intense colour, to counterbalance the weightier forms of the trees on the left; a very similar red is used for the date '81' added, it seems, after the darker signature at the bottom left. Softer pinks, together with the red poppies, appear in the foreground grass. All these warm colours are set off against the blues in the sky and the far trees, but this cool colour is delicately woven into the foreground, too, in the soft blues which appear amid the grass.



9

Cliffs near Dieppe

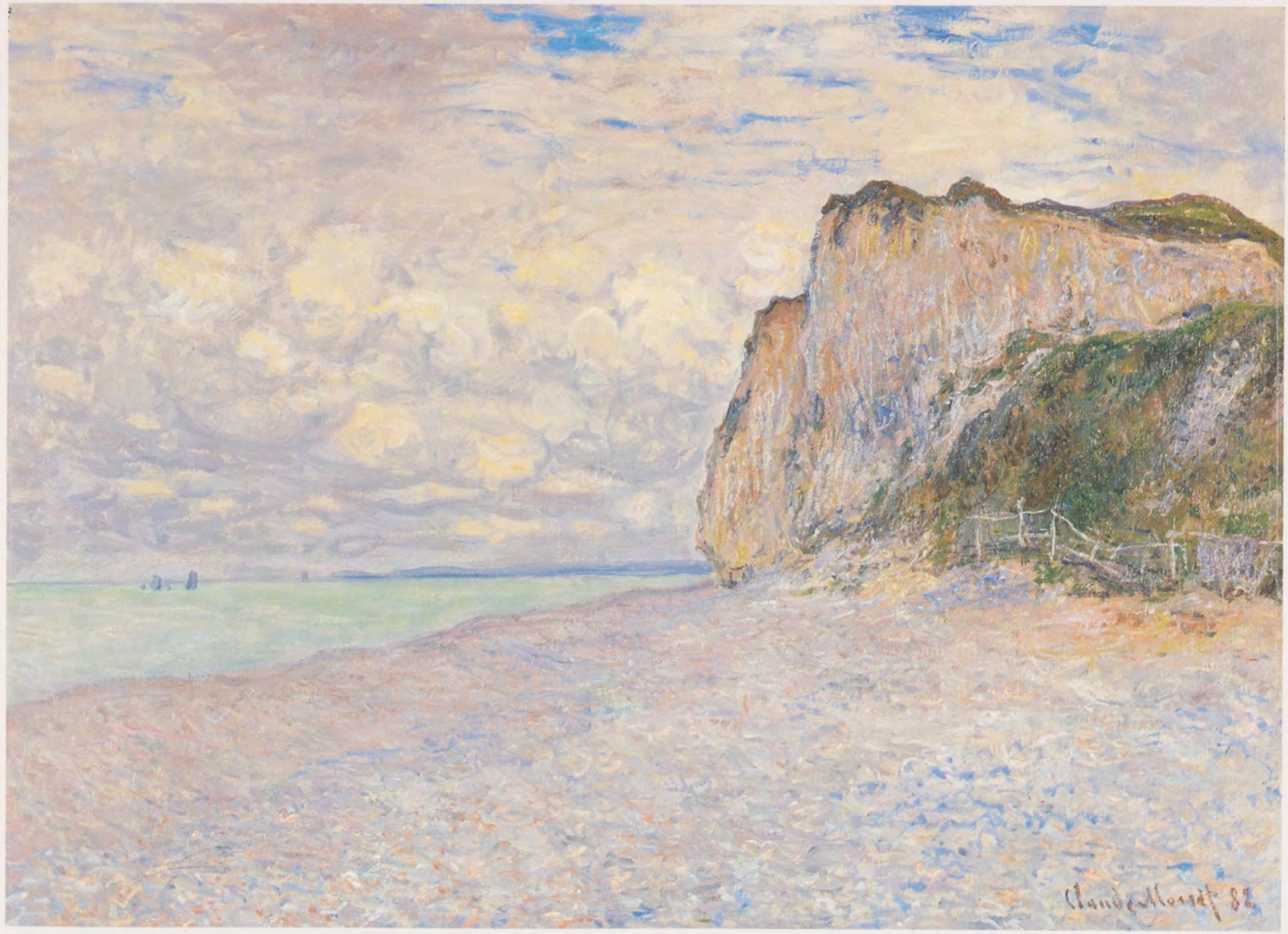
1882

597 x 813
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 82
W719
Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh
acquired through the generosity of the Sarah Mellon Scaife family (73/3/3)

In 1882 Monet spent two extended periods at Pourville, a little village on the Channel coast just to the west of Dieppe; he explored many aspects of the surrounding beaches and cliffs in different seasons and weather conditions in a long sequence of canvases.

Cliffs near Dieppe depicts the cliff at the east end of Pourville beach. It is one of Monet's most subdued paintings from this period. When painting sunlit effects he had already begun to construct his pictures from bold contrasts of colour (cat. no. 8), but here he adopted a far more restrained palette to capture the diffused light of an overcast day. But even here the whole surface of the picture is built up from soft variations and contrasts of colour, principally pinks and blues, which recur across the beach, the cliff-face and the clouds. The painting is given a rather firmer structure by the stronger blues added across the top of the sky and, in crisper, looping touches, towards the bottom right of the beach; between these, the horizon is emphasised by the blue line of the far-off cliffs and the tiny boats, also in blue. On the grassy area of the cliff-top the colour is more varied; the greens are enlivened by muted purples, oranges, blues and pinks. But here, as in the rest of the picture, the colour is not bright; the dominant effect is of a soft grey tonality, achieved by these delicately interwoven nuances of soft colour; the brushwork is correspondingly fine in texture.

The tonality of the picture links it to the tradition of luminous grey (*gris-clair*) painting which had been current in France since the mid-century, whose chief protagonist was Corot; Impressionism is more generally associated with the colourist tradition and with Delacroix, but Corot's legacy was very important in helping them to give luminosity to even the more subdued effects of nature.



10

The Coastguard's Cottage at Pourville

1882

600 x 708
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 82
W733
The Newark Museum, New Jersey (49/155)

Of all the subjects Monet painted during his spells at Pourville in 1882, his favourite was the coastguard's cottage perched on the cliffs between Pourville and the hamlet of Varengeville to the west. He depicted it in at least seventeen pictures in 1882, but no more than three of these show it from any one viewpoint. He explored the diverse effects he could gain by viewing it from many angles and in many different weather conditions. Common to all the pictures, though, is the juxtaposition of the solitary little building with the vast expanse of the sea; this reflects Monet's lasting fascination with the traditional elemental oppositions between earth and water, man and the ocean.

The high viewpoint and cut-off composition of pictures like these reflect Monet's interest in Japanese colour prints, notably the works of Hokusai and Hiroshige, of which he owned many. But he did not simply borrow their devices wholesale; rather the prints helped him to find ways of formulating in paint such natural subjects as this – views seen from high vantage points with sudden jumps in space. During his travels of the 1880s, Monet particularly sought out such dramatic views, for which the conventions of the western landscape tradition, with its consecutive recessions from foreground to distance, were quite inappropriate. Here, the traditional expectations of the viewer, expecting to be located in a defined and unambiguous relationship to the space depicted, are undermined by the complete absence of an immediate foreground; our eye leaps directly on to the hillside in the middle ground, and then again to the distant horizon, without any indication of our foothold in the scene.

11

Rising Tide at Pourville

1882

659 x 813
signed and dated bottom right: 82 Claude Monet
W740
The Brooklyn Museum, New York
gift of Mrs Horace Havemeyer (41/1260)

In this view of the coastguard's cottage (see also cat. nos. 10 and 12), the theme of elemental opposition is emphasised by the bands of waves which sweep across the sea and by the two tiny boats on the horizon, towards which the viewer's eye is directed by the receding perspective of the cottage.

The overall tonality is quite subdued, but lively colour is introduced in many parts; the crisp reds on the cottage at the right are set against the varied greens and blues of cliff, sea and sky, while softer, warm hues in the water echo those in the cottage and the far cliff. The brushwork emphasises the effect of wind and waves. Soft, broad, off-white strokes suggest the waves, but crisp loops of dull blue, added late in the painting's execution to the right of each crest, define their forms more closely as they break; the rhythm of these strokes is picked up in the brisk hooks of paint which suggest the windswept grasses on the foreground cliff.

Comparison with *Cliffs near Dieppe* (cat. no. 9) shows how skilfully Monet could adapt his paint handling so as best to convey two very different types of overcast weather effect, one still and delicate, the other windy and animated.

12

The Coastguard's Cottage at Pourville

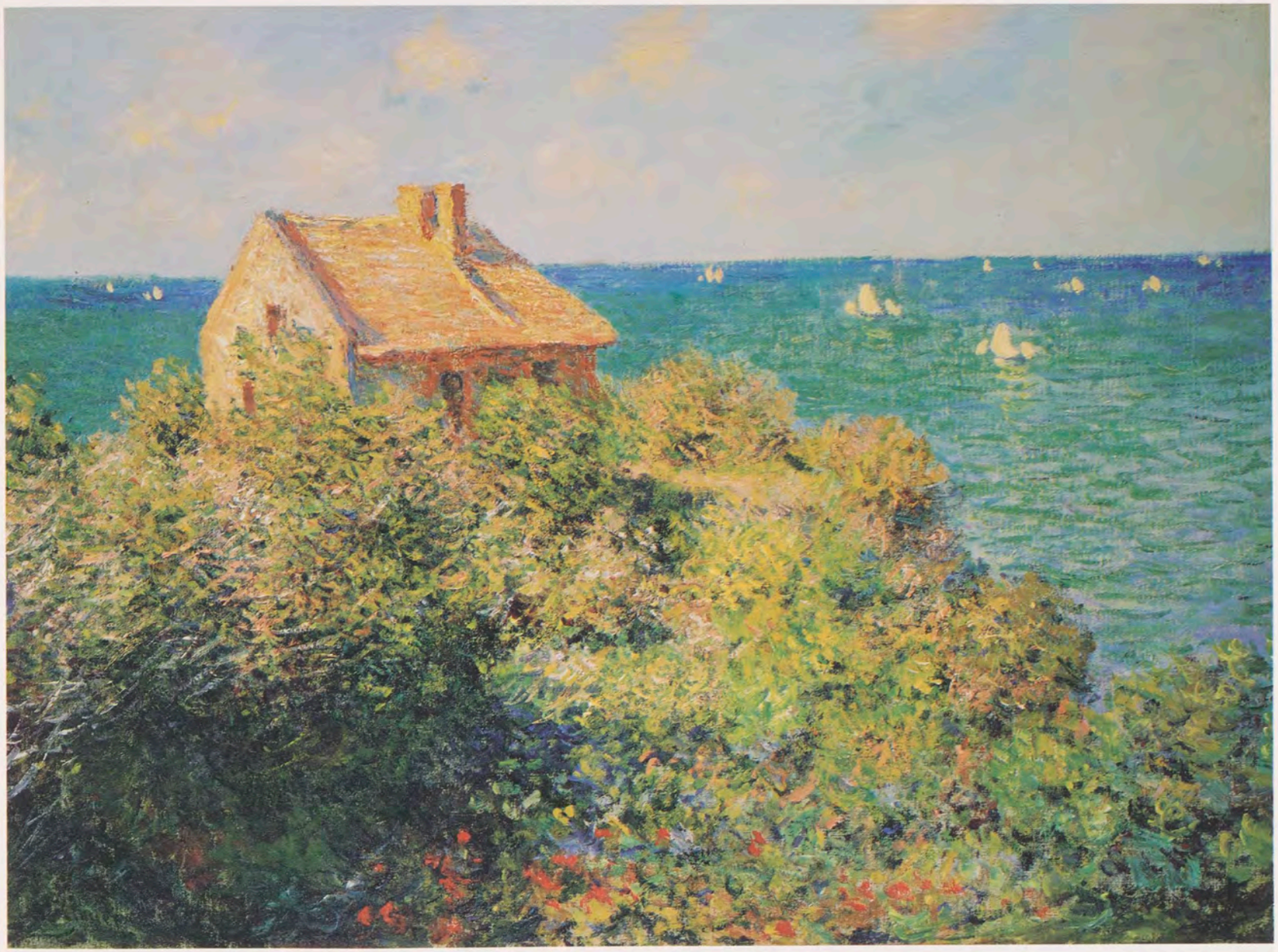
1882

605 x 815
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 82
W805
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
bequest of Anna Perkins Rogers (21/1331)

In this summer scene the coastguard's cottage is seen from slightly to the right of and rather below the viewpoint of catalogue number 10, so that its roof and chimney cut the horizon. The tiny boats which flank it emphasise the sudden leap into distance from its solid form to the sea beyond.

In its final surface, this is one of the most highly worked and elaborate of Monet's paintings of the Dieppe region of 1882. Its brushwork, particularly in the central band of foliage, is crisp and densely textured, its colour richly harmonised. At the bottom of the canvas red flowers are set against green foliage, while the blue shadows on the cottage contrast with its orange-red roof. But elsewhere in the picture these colours are carefully interwoven, with greens and blues together in the sea, and soft salmon pinks and blues introduced, along with the greens in the central foliage, to form a complex interplay of warm and cool hues.

During the execution of the picture, Monet altered its arrangement. Beneath the part of the cottage roof which cuts the horizon, there is a layer of blue paint, while blue-greens underlie the painting of the right half of the lower parts of the cottage. Without X-rays we cannot tell exactly how the painting was originally arranged, but these alterations, apparently involving the enlargement of the cottage during the painting of the picture, show how carefully Monet organised the formal design of his canvases; indeed, the absence from this picture of the fence seen in the other canvases, where the cottage is viewed from roughly the same angle, suggests that he may here have felt free to make substantial adjustments to the scene he saw before him. More usually though, his concern with the formal organisation of his pictures was exercised at the moment of selecting his viewpoint and angle of vision; less often did he alter the forms while painting a picture (but see also cat. nos. 18 and 21).



13

Rough Weather at Etretat

c1883

668 x 819
signed bottom right: Claude Monet
W826
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1913 (582/2)

Etretat, where Monet painted every year between 1883 and 1886, was famous for the dramatic chalk rock arches which flank its bays. Here, the smallest of these arches, the Porte d'Amont, to the east of the town, is seen in stormy weather, at the base of the rocks which jut out into the sea. The opposition between sea and land is emphasised by the two little figures, one gesturing at the waves, one, it seems, holding his hat on his head. In his earlier landscapes (for example cat. nos. 1 and 2), Monet had often included deftly characterised figures, but by the 1880s he only very rarely included people whose gestures are as legible as these. An interviewer at the time noted how Monet stayed on at Etretat after the summer tourists had left: "With the water running down inside his cape, he painted the storms in sprays of salt water." Accounts like this contributed to the image which Monet liked to cultivate of himself as an intrepid outdoor painter; but the viewpoint of the present picture, well above the beach and looking down on the figures, suggests that this may have been one of the Etretat canvases which he painted from his hotel window – a very understandable expedient, given the conditions.

Monet translated the waves in front of him into vigorous sweeps and dashes of paint; at one point in particular in the breaking waves, directly above the left figure and a little below the horizon, he added a remarkable calligraphic twirl of the brush to enhance the effect – even at this stage of his career, a form of drawing in paint played an important role in the final appearance of his canvases. The movement of the waves is complemented by the sharp zigzag of the water's edge on the beach, echoed in turn by the raking diagonals on the cliff top. As in catalogue numbers 9 and 11, the colour is comparatively subdued, but soft contrasts of blues and greens against pinks and dull orange tones run throughout the canvas.

14

Meadow with Haystacks near Giverny

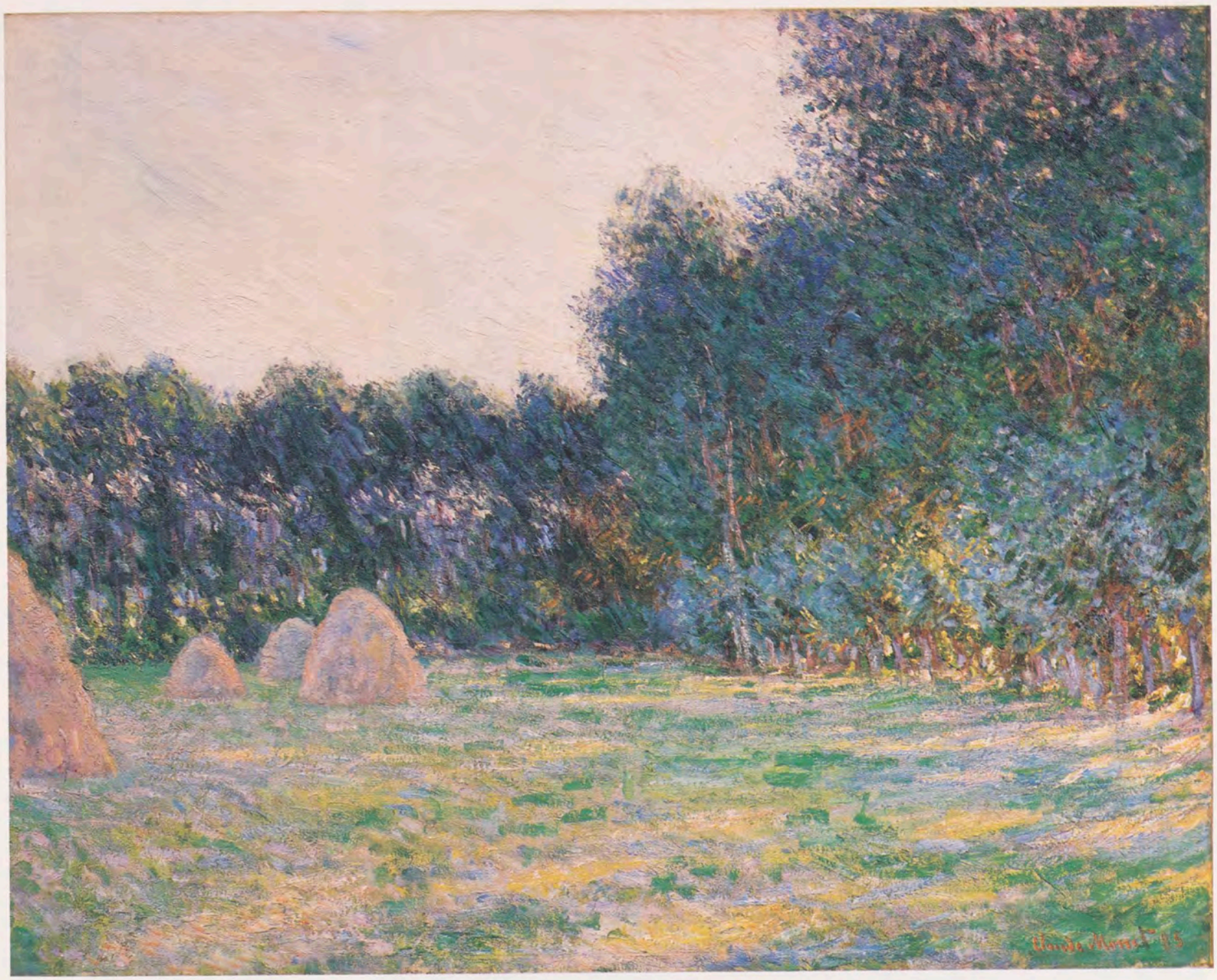
1885

740 x 935
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 85
W995
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
bequest of Arthur Tracy Cabot (42/541)

Between the village of Giverny, to which Monet moved in 1883, and the River Seine, which runs about a mile away, is a broad sweep of water meadows, on which he found many of his subjects in the 1880s and 1890s. Often he chose open-sided vistas, as he had on occasion in the early 1880s at Vétheuil (cat. nos. 8 and 20); but here the scene is framed by trees on the right, with a sequence of small haystacks leading in from the left. But the trees beyond the field screen off any conventional recession; the viewer's eye instead plays across the relationships of colour and touch which enliven the whole picture.

This is one of Monet's most richly reworked canvases painted at Giverny in the mid-1880s. Across the broader underlying paint layers the final surface is enriched with smaller coloured touches which define the light effect more sharply and enrich its colouring; yellows and blues were added on the foreground field and in the trees, and also sequences of little red-orange dashes, at the bottom left and in the foliage at back centre. The dried layers of paint beneath the picture's final coloured skin show that it was reworked over an extended period, despite the fleeting effect of late afternoon sunlight and shadow which was its subject.

The theme of haystacks in painting had traditionally been associated with the depiction of agricultural labour and the seasons; however Monet has here minimised these associations by omitting figures and any reference to the human presence apart from the stacks themselves, and by focusing so exclusively on the play of atmospheric colour.



15

Port-Goulphar, Belle-Isle

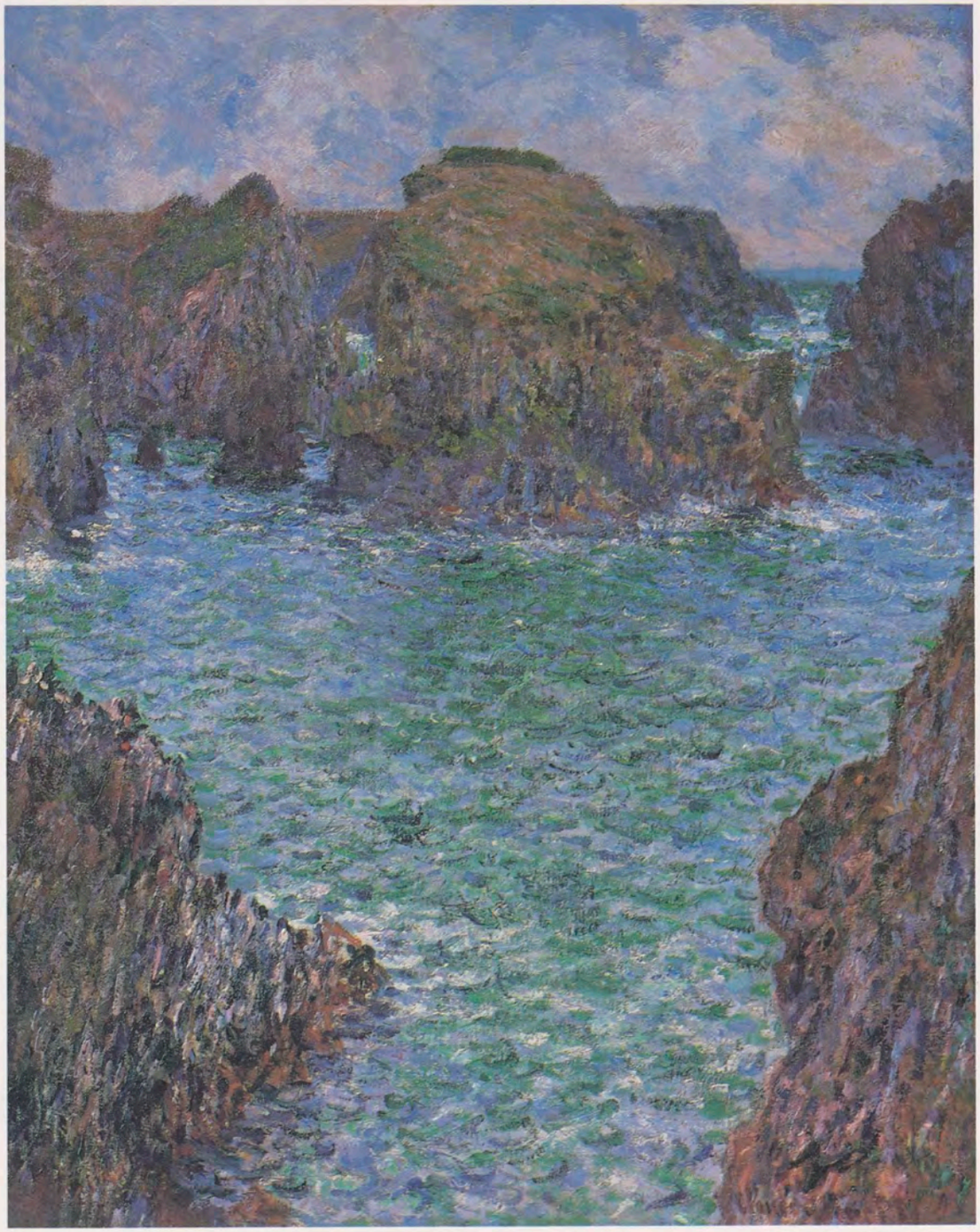
1886-87

810 x 650
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 87
W1094
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (8356)

Monet stayed from September to late November 1886 on Belle-Isle, a rocky island in the Atlantic off the south coast of Brittany. Though he had recently painted many views of the Channel coast, he found Belle-Isle very different, with its granite rocks exposed to the ocean waves; he wrote with delight to Gustave Caillebotte of this "superbly savage countryside, with terrifying accumulations of rocks and incredible colours in the sea".

To capture these effects Monet had to adopt colour schemes quite different from those he had used on the Channel coast; in *Port-Goulphar* he opposed the deep pinks, mauves and carmines of the rocks to the greens in the water. As in the earlier coastal scenes (cat. nos. 9 and 12), these contrasts are not left as bald oppositions, simply juxtaposed on the surface, but they form the basis for elaborate harmonies and variations which draw the whole picture into a single coloured composition; alongside these colour relationships, the darker hues of the rocks act as a virtually symmetrical frame for the rich greens and blues in the central water. The effect of the rock surfaces is suggested by busy, broken brushwork, which together with the crisp hooks of colour in the water, give the whole surface a vigorous animation. In *Port-Goulphar* the weather, though overcast, is comparatively calm. During his stay on Belle-Isle Monet also painted some of his most dramatic storm scenes; his painting equipment had to be fastened to the nearby rocks to enable him to sketch amid the gales and spray.

Though Monet visited Belle-Isle only in 1886, *Port-Goulphar* bears the date '87'; presumably he gave the picture the date at which he added its final touches in his Giverny studio (and see cat. no. 20).



16

Antibes, Morning

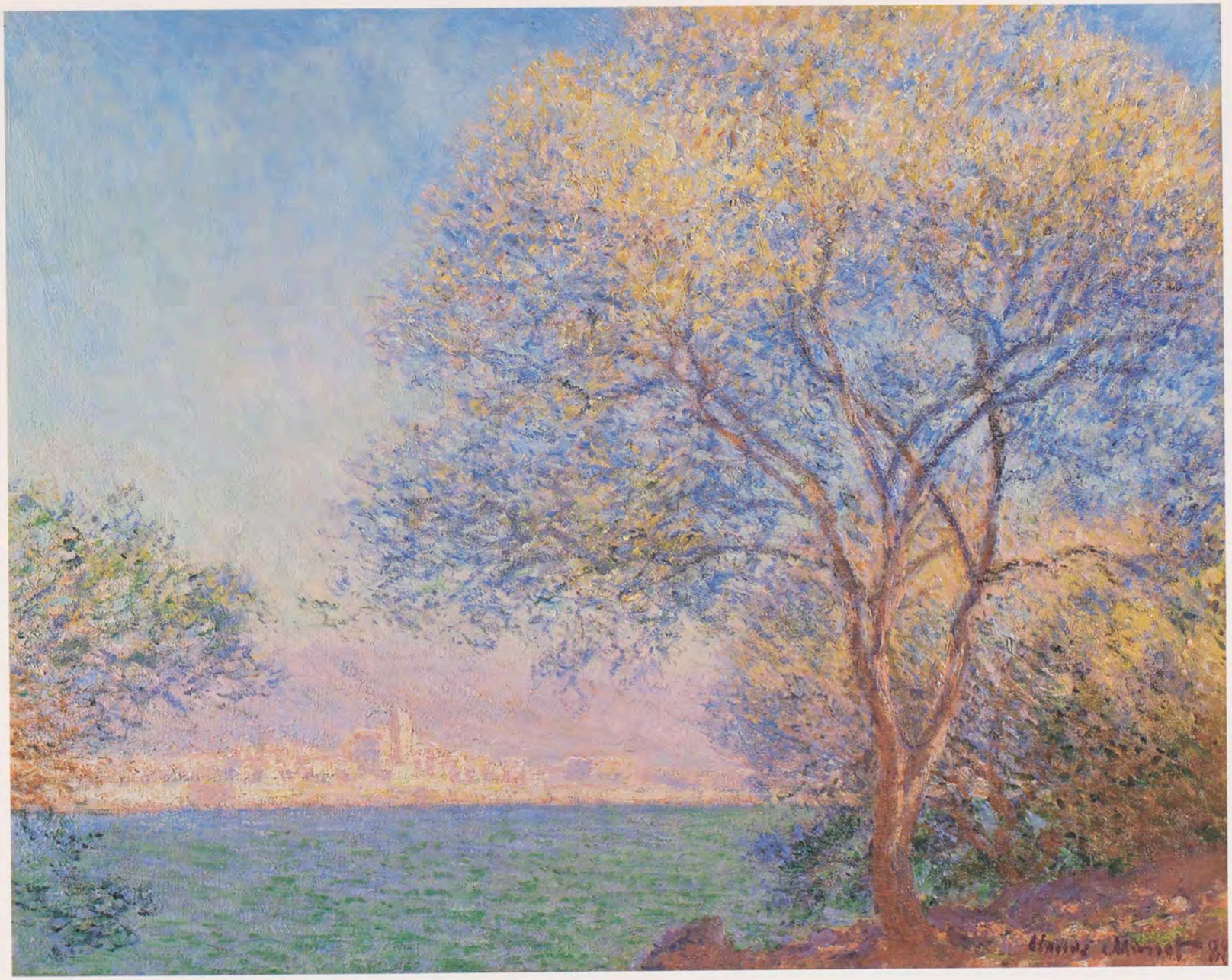
1888

650 x 810
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 88
W1170
Philadelphia Museum of Art (1978/1/22)

On his two spells painting on the Mediterranean coast, at Bordighera in 1884 and at Antibes in 1888, Monet found great difficulty in adapting his palette and his touch to the unfamiliar effects of the southern light. While working at Antibes he wrote to Berthe Morisot: "It's so difficult, so tender and so delicate, while I am so inclined to brutality"; to Théodore Duret he commented: "After terrifying Belle-Isle this will be something tender; everything here is blue, rose and gold, but, my God, how difficult it is."

Both his colour and his brushwork reflect his efforts to curb his 'brutality' (seen in his Belle-Isle paintings, for example, cat. no. 15) in order to capture the delicacy and colour of Antibes. The touch is far less vigorous than at Belle-Isle; the textures of the foliage and the water surface are subordinated to the gentle mobility of the whole surface. The colour is blond, in pastelly tones, with soft warm pinks and mauves set beside blues and greens; the buildings and towers of the old town of Antibes, seen across the bay from the Cap d'Antibes, stand out in the luminous yet hazy sunshine of a Mediterranean morning.

Monet painted this subject four times in 1888 (fig. 8, showing the scene in the afternoon), but he did not single out these canvases as a separate group in the exhibitions in 1888 and 1889 at which he showed many of his Antibes paintings.



17

Landscape on the Creuse River

1889

730 x 920
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 89
W1233
Philadelphia Museum of Art (E24/3/32)

Monet spent two months, from March to May 1889, on the valley of the River Creuse, on the north side of the Massif Central, the mountains of Central France. In these paintings he wanted to show the place in wintry conditions since, as he told Berthe Morisot, its "terrible savagery" reminded him of Belle-Isle, but he was startled by the sombre paintings he was producing there; "it will be a gloomy series," he told Alice Hoschedé. Bad weather delayed his work; when he could resume painting, the spring buds had transformed his winter effects; in order to finish one of these as he had originally conceived it, he employed workmen to strip the new buds from an old oak tree he was painting: "Isn't it extraordinary to finish a winter landscape at this time of year?" he wrote to Alice on 9 May. This story shows the importance that Monet attached to the overall mood of particular groups of paintings.

Unlike the majority of his paintings of the Creuse Valley (compare cat. nos. 18 and 19), *Landscape on the Creuse River* shows the relationship between the landscape and the works of man, depicting the mill and bridge on the river at Vervy overshadowed by the high, wooded hillsides. The colour is subdued, dominated by dull greens, red-browns and purples, with blues used in the water, and suggesting atmospheric distance in the trees along the horizon. The colour range, like the mood he was seeking in the pictures, recalls the Belle-Isle canvases of 1886 (cat. no. 15).

18

The Ravine of the Creuse

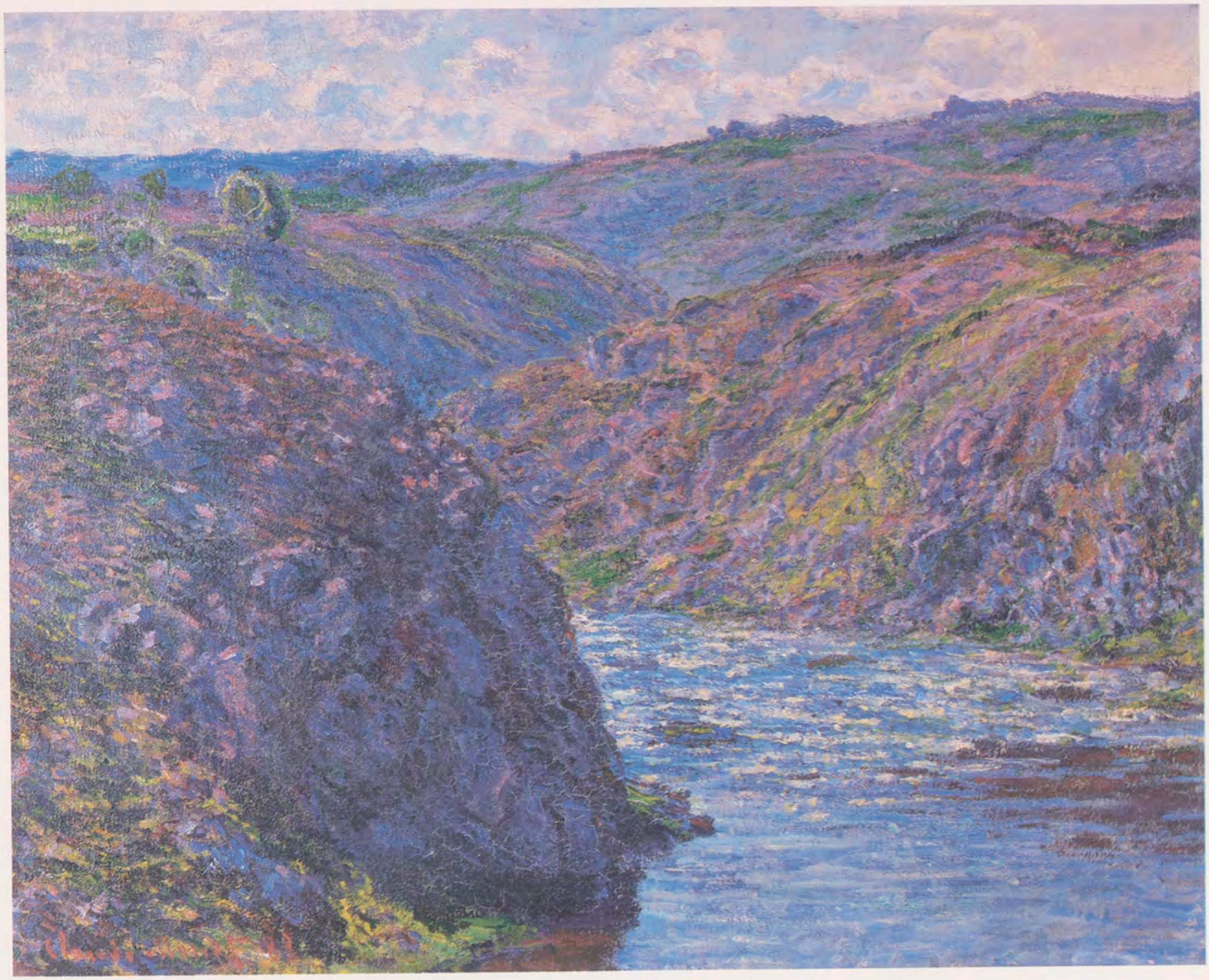
1889

signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 89
W1220
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims (192)

This canvas depicts the junction between the Petite Creuse, entering from the right, and the Grande Creuse, entering from bottom centre, to form the single river which winds away from us between the rocky slopes. Of all his Creuse subjects (cat. nos. 17 and 19) this was the one which Monet painted by far most frequently; of the twenty-three paintings of the area, nine depict this scene in varied conditions of light and weather (fig. 9). Soon after he returned from the Creuse, Monet included five canvases of the subject, perhaps including the present one, in the major retrospective exhibition of his work mounted by the dealer Georges Petit in summer, 1889. Though the poet and critic Emile Verhaeren noted the coherence of this group of five pictures, they formed only a small part of the exhibition, which included 145 paintings, revealing the diversity of Monet's work from his whole career.

The present version, showing the scene late in the day, is quite elaborately finished, with delicate dabs and fine ribbon-like strokes of colour animating the hillsides and suggesting the play of light across their rocky slopes. The colour is very varied, even in the zones of deep shadow, where soft red-browns, purples and blues, as well as dull greens, pick up the clearer hues in the more brightly lit parts.

Monet altered the placing of the forms in this picture during its execution. Beneath the right part of the cliff at bottom left, and along the base of the right hillside, thick, dry, horizontal brushwork can be seen beneath the present paint layers, which suggests that originally the river extended further up and to the left. Monet made similar adjustments to several of his Creuse paintings.



19

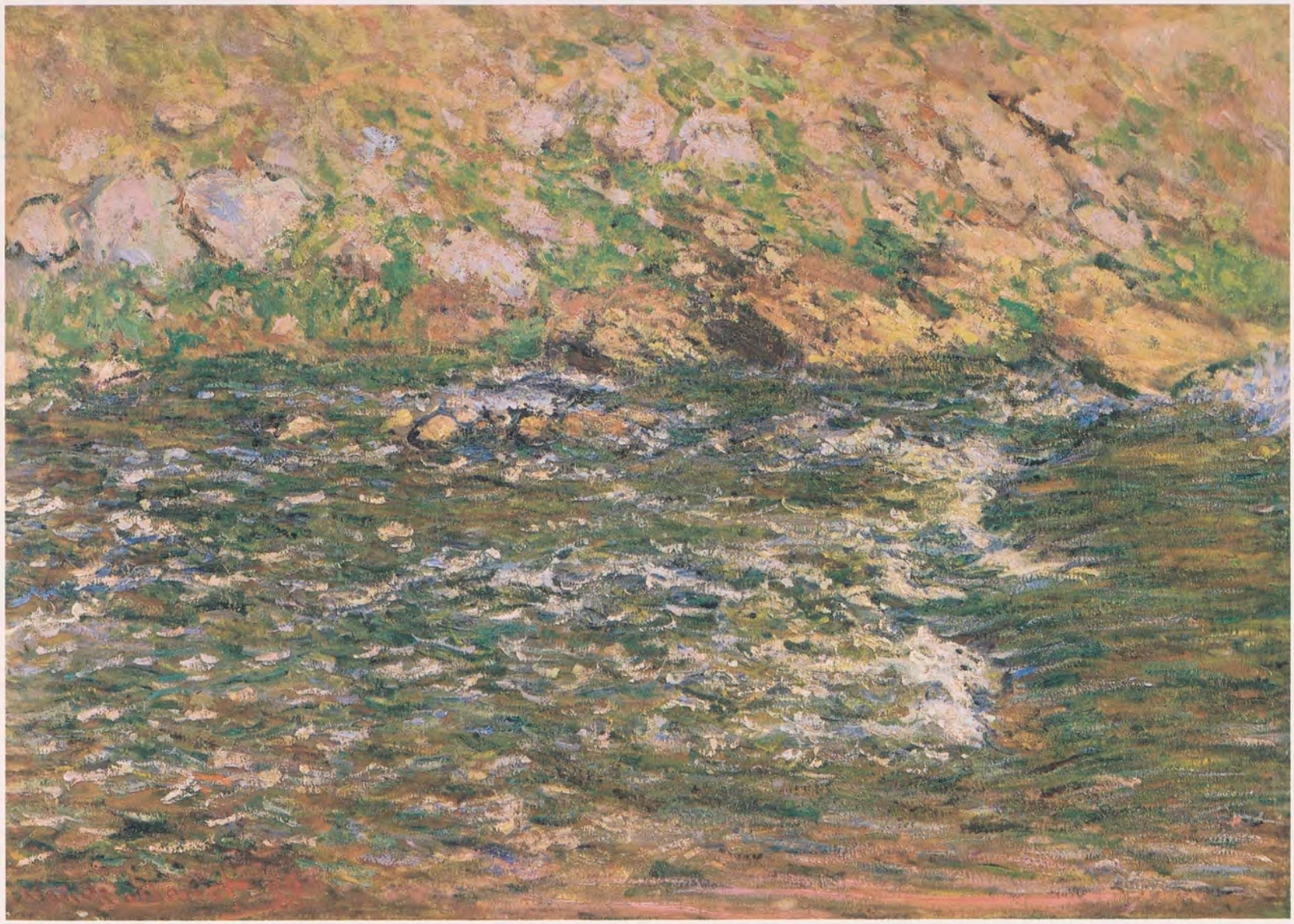
Rapids on the Petite Creuse at Fresselines

1889

654 x 918
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 89
W1239
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (67/187/88)

This painting of rapids in the Petite Creuse is one of the first in which Monet wholly omitted the sky from his composition and focused primarily on a water surface; it was only after 1900 that he began regularly to use such compositions in his paintings of his lily pond (cat. nos. 34-36).

The paint textures here are far more diverse than in the later paintings; the smoother, fast-flowing water at the right is set against the choppy, crisply brushed rapids and the more softly dabbed touches, with varied greens and pinks, on the rocky slopes at the top of the picture. Along the bottom edge of the canvas to the right, an enormously long single mauve brushstroke – about a foot long – suggests the flow of the water as it is sucked into the rapids, but it also serves to frame an image which is otherwise particularly broken in texture and especially lacking in clear compositional features. This stroke, and the crisper touches which Monet added elsewhere in the picture late in its execution, are characteristic of the retouches which Monet used when finishing his canvases during the 1880s; such brushwork serves both to sharpen the definition of the forms depicted and to tauten the two-dimensional organisation of the canvas surface. After 1890, though, the surface qualities of his finished paintings became rather different (see cat. nos. 21, 25 and 26, etc.).



20

Poppy Field

1890-91

612 x 931
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 91
W1253
Art Institute of Chicago
Mr and Mrs W. W. Kimball collection (1922/4465)

Monet's trip to the Creuse Valley early in 1889 (cat. nos. 17-19) was his last distant expedition for several years and the last trip on which his main concern was dramatic scenic effects. In his paintings of the Giverny region of the later 1880s he had become increasingly preoccupied with atmospheric effects and, from summer 1890 onwards, such subjects became his overriding concern. This preoccupation was fully realised in his series of grain stacks begun late in the summer (cat. no. 21), but earlier that year he had painted several groups of canvases at Giverny which heralded these concerns; at the time that he was painting them he wrote to Gustave Geffroy that he was seeking "to render the weather, the atmosphere, the ambience". The present picture belongs to one of these groups; it is one of four canvases showing the identical poppy field, presented in an elongated format which emphasises the horizontal nature of the composition.

These paintings are thoroughly reworked, two others of the group even more densely than the present one. Their subject is very comparable to the meadows Monet had painted at Vêtheuil ten years before (cat. no. 8), but the surfaces of the finished paintings are quite different. The vigorous brushwork of the earlier picture is a shorthand for the varied natural textures in the scene, whereas here the final touches, though distinct, are less dynamic, less descriptive; the particular textures of grasses, poppies and foliage are subordinated to the network of coloured touches, quite even in size and weight, which runs through the picture; the last touches in the foreground are very similar in rhythm to those on the trees on the left. Spatial recession is suggested primarily by colour, in the transition from the more emphatic greens and reds in the foreground – the 'local' colours of grasses and flowers – to the rich blues which suggest the shadows on the trees and the hillside beyond.

Like catalogue number 15, *Poppy Field* bears the date of its completion; with the other canvases of the same group, some of which Monet sold in autumn 1890, it was begun out of doors in summer 1890; Monet presumably retouched it in his studio in 1891.

21

Grain Stacks at Noon

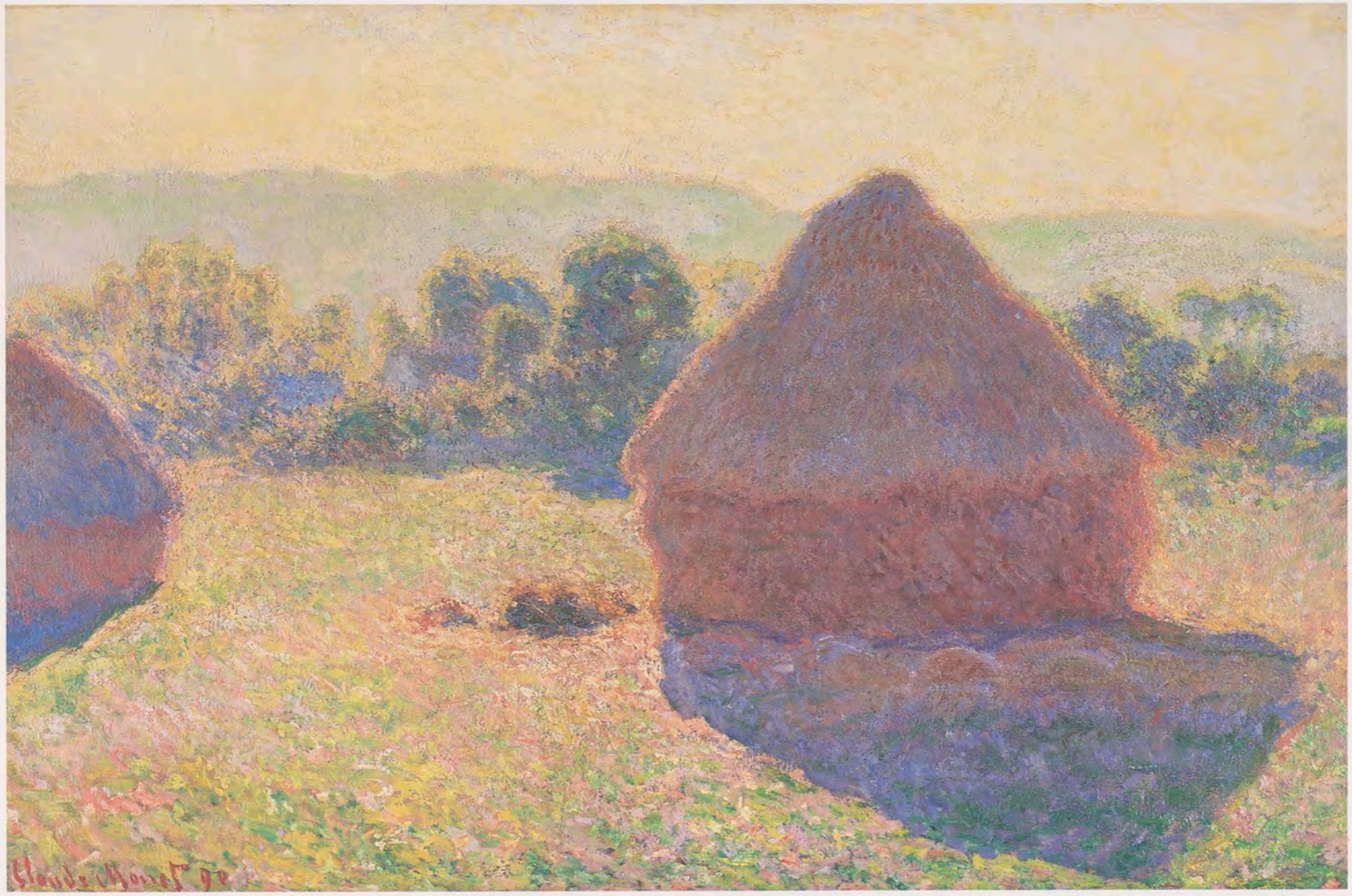
1890

654 x 1003
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 90
W1271
Australian National Gallery, Canberra (1979/16)

This canvas and figure 10 belong to the group of six pictures of a group of grain stacks in a field near his house at Giverny which Monet began in the late summer and autumn of 1890. He combined several of these with the further canvases of the subject which he painted during the following winter (figs. 11-13) in his exhibition at Durand-Ruel's gallery in May 1891, but the present painting, one of a few of the series to be dated '90' rather that '91', seems not to have been a part of this exhibition.

It closely resembles the canvases exhibited in 1891, however. In its densely worked surface, with fairly evenly weighted touches of colour, it is similar to the paintings of meadows which Monet had begun earlier in summer, 1890 (cat. no. 20), but here Monet's concern with the atmospheric effect is more predominant. By painting a *contre-jour* effect, he diminished the importance of the 'local' colours of the objects seen, focusing rather on the contrasts between the sunlit field, scattered with varied, warm pink touches, and the shadows, darker in tone, with clear blues included in them. But warm hues recur even in the shadowed areas, particularly the oranges and reds which appear on the sides of the stacks and also in their shadows. Late in the execution of the painting the liaison between lit and shadowed zones was still further emphasised by small touches like the orange-reds near the top of the larger stack, which relate to orange flecks added across the sky above.

Despite its very transitory subject, the painting was clearly elaborately reworked, presumably in the studio; and during its execution Monet altered the position of one, and perhaps both, of the stacks, evidence of the careful design which went into pictures like these. The original placing of the smaller one, in the area to the right of its present position, can be clearly seen through the superimposed paint layers, while the changing thickness of the paint in the right stack suggests that originally it was rather smaller, and occupied only the right part of its present position.



22

Poplars in Sunlight

1891

930 x 735
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 91
W1305
National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo (1959/152)

Monet began his series of poplars in the summer and autumn of 1891, and had fifteen of them ready for exhibition at Durand-Ruel's gallery in February 1892. In some, as here, the nearer row of trees is seen from close to, with only their trunks visible, while in others they are viewed from further off (fig. 14). Monet often later told the story of how he had been forced to buy the trees in order to be able to finish his series, because they had been marked for felling.

Poplars in Sunlight was one of the first of the series to be begun, since it shows a summer effect; it is also far less thickly worked than many of the series, which have surfaces as densely painted as the grain stack series (cat. no. 21). It is likely, though, that it was one of the canvases which Monet exhibited in 1892, which shows that, even at a time when he was seeking a greater elaboration in his most highly finished paintings, he wanted to exhibit alongside them canvases which captured a natural effect in a far more immediate, sketch-like way.

Even here, though, Monet determined the final effects with care. The foliage is basically painted in shades of green – the 'local' colour as modified by lighting. But late in the execution of the picture he added soft pink accents at various points – on the bank to the left, on the foliage of the further trees – which echo the pinks in the tree trunks; he also added a few crisp blue accents along the river bank and in the foliage which pick up the colour of the sky. By threading this soft opposition between pinks and blues throughout the canvas, he could create a colour scheme which suggests the unity of the atmosphere and at the same time gives it a clear two-dimensional harmony.

In the Poplars series Monet tackled a subject quite unlike the grain stacks, with the open scaffold of trunks and reflections imposing an emphatic yet flexible grid on to the picture surface. Shortly after painting the series, he spoke to the American painter Theodore Robinson of "the pleasure he took in the 'pattern' nature often gives – leafage against sky, reflections, etc.". The Poplars reflect this pleasure and, of all his later series, show most clearly the continuing importance for him of the patterned compositional effects in Japanese colour prints.

23

Meadow at Giverny

1894

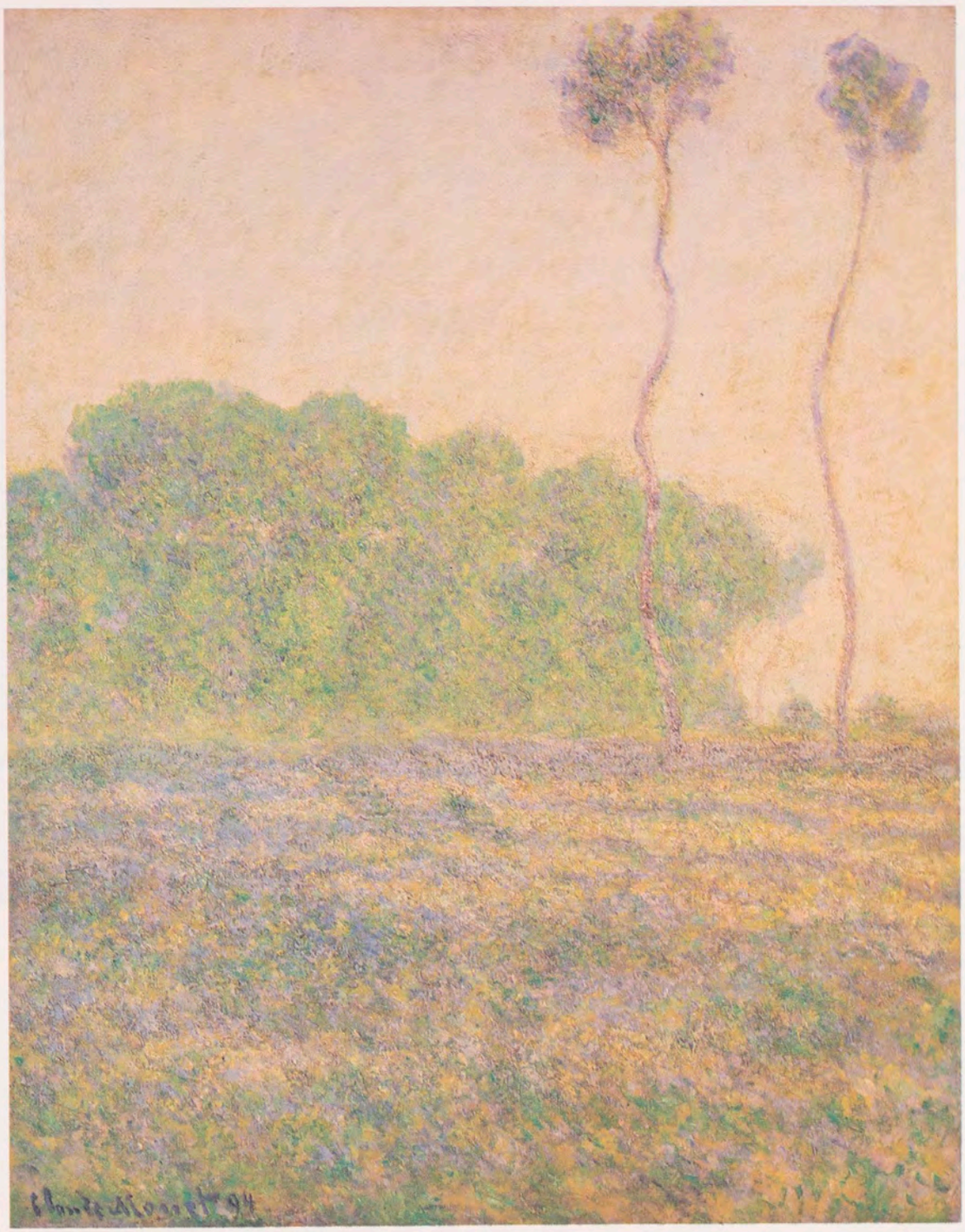
920 x 730
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 94
W1368
The Art Museum, Princeton University, New Jersey
bequest of Henry K. Dick (54/78)

The meadows around Giverny continued to fascinate Monet in the mid-1890s as they had for the past decade (cat. nos. 14 and 20). *Meadow at Giverny* belongs to a short series of which Monet exhibited three in 1895 along with twenty canvases of his Rouen Cathedral series. Its theme, raking sunlight across a field, with the cast shadows of trees, echoes *Meadow with Haystacks near Giverny* of 1885 (cat. no. 14), but here the effect is far less specific in terms of the description of natural forms, and far more unified in texture and colour; as in many of Monet's later paintings, even the colour of the signature is keyed in to the overall colour scheme of the picture.

William C. Seitz, one of the leading American art critics of the generation of the abstract expressionists, wrote an essay on this painting in 1960, in which he described its "indeterminate flatness" and "extreme simplification", and its "play between naturalism and geometry":

> From a short distance, the varied touches of pigment merge in vibrating, but flat, patterns that approach a common tonality. As one advances towards the canvas the texture of the pigment . . . asserts itself independently in a firm, strongly tactile crust.

This passage eloquently shows how Monet's later work found a new and enthusiastic audience within the visual frameworks of the New York avant-garde during the 1950s. In examining the role of the picture in Monet's own work, however, one must also define its position within Monet's changing ideas about finish in painting, and about the relationship between nature and the work of art. The apparent autonomy of the coloured relationships in it were the result of a protracted process of elaboration and refinement, first in front of the natural subject, and then in Monet's studio.



24

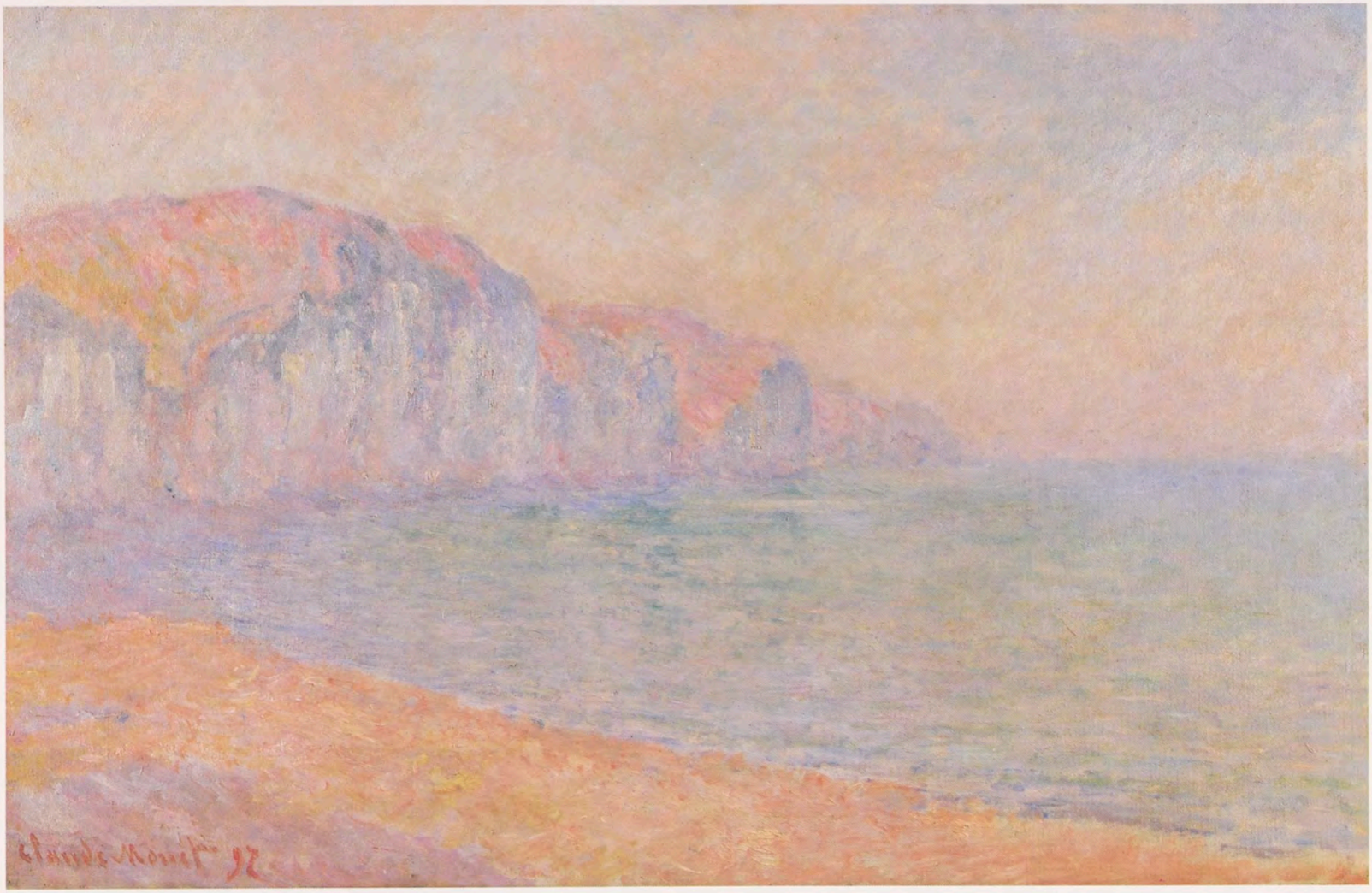
The Cliffs of Pourville, Morning

1897

640 x 990
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 97
W1441
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu (56/PA/4)

Several times in the later part of his career, Monet returned to sites which he had previously painted, intending, he told an interviewer, "to resume in one or two canvases my past impressions and sensations". He found it hard to realise this plan since, by the time of his return visits, his fascination with changing atmospheric effects led him to paint more, not fewer, canvases of his chosen scenes. He stayed at Pourville early in 1896 and again early in 1897; on these return visits he painted far fewer different subjects than he had when he painted there in 1882 (cat. nos. 9-12), but treated each in sequences of several canvases. He exhibited twenty-four of these recent cliff scenes, probably including the present one, at Georges Petit's gallery in 1898, under the collective title *Series of Cliffs*.

The Cliffs of Pourville, Morning, depicts the long range of cliffs leading to Varengeville, looking west from Pourville beach; amid them, but invisible from this viewpoint, was the coastguard's cottage that he painted often in 1882 (see cat. nos. 10-12) and again in 1896-97. He had painted several canvases of this view from the beach in 1882, and executed about a dozen more in 1896-97. Comparison between the earlier and later paintings highlights the changes in his art over these fifteen years. Whereas previously he had been fascinated by the diversity of natural textures – foliage, rock-faces, beaches, waves – now, by contrast, the forms before him were softened by the mist and absorbed into a single atmospheric *enveloppe*, and the brushwork was generally soft and quite unemphatic. In 1882 he studied the ways that 'local' colours were modified by light, and delicately wove them into complex harmonies (for example, cat. nos. 9 and 12); in 1897 the atmospheric colour was all-pervasive; pastelly hues, dominated by sequences of soft oranges, pinks, mauves and blues, give the whole picture a particularly soft range of harmonies.



25

Morning Mists

1897

890 x 915
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 97
W1474
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh
Purchased with funds from the North Carolina Art Society (Robert F. Phifer funds) and the Sarah Graham Kenan Foundation (75/24/1)

26

Branch of the Seine near Giverny

1897

814 x 927
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 97
W1481
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
gift of Mrs Walter Scott Fitz (11/1261)

Maurice Guillemot, who visited Monet at Giverny in summer 1897, described his methods of work in painting this series. Monet rose at 3.30 am, and made his way by rowing-boat to a large, anchored flat-bottomed boat, from which he painted the series, on a backwater of the Seine near Giverny. There he worked in turn on the "fourteen canvases begun at the same time, a whole range of studies translating a single motif whose effect is modified by the time of the day, the sun and the clouds". Monet worked at the series during the summers of 1896 and 1897, and exhibited fifteen pictures of the subject with the collective title *Early Mornings on the Seine* at his exhibition at Petit's gallery in 1898, where his Pourville series was also shown (cat. no. 24). The exhibition probably included both the present versions of the subject; in all he painted around twenty canvases of the scene.

All of the series show the scene from the identical viewpoint. The principal variations are in weather and lighting; some are very misty indeed, some show the background trees emerging a little more clearly (cat. no. 25), in some the forms of the trees, not just their silhouettes, can be seen (cat. no. 26), while in others the trees are caught by the early morning sun. The effect of the paintings is also varied by the different formats Monet used; in a near-square canvas like catalogue number 25, the groups of trees, one beyond the other, look like a succession of stage flats, while in 26 the horizontal format includes foliage nearer to us on the left, which gives a much clearer sense of consecutive spatial recession. In 25, too, the effect of the reflections is particularly flat: in the mists they are scarcely differentiated from the trees; image and reflection form a single complex surface pattern which balances on either side of the central axis of the horizon. In 26, the greater definition of the nearer foliage, with the ripples across the further part of the water, increase the sense of space.

It was in front of this series that Monet told Guillemot that he wanted "to prevent people from seeing how it is done". The paint surfaces are not nearly as densely loaded as in some of his current paintings, notably the Rouen Cathedral series (figs. 15 and 16); Monet seems deliberately to have been avoiding such rugged effects in his paintings of these delicate dawn impressions. But the surfaces in the "Early Mornings on the Seine" are consistently opaque; the nuances of colour and texture are enriched late in their execution. In his canvases of the 1880s the underlying paint layers remained visible in places and their vitality contributed to the effect of the finished picture (for instance, cat. nos. 11 and 14); but here the initial layers were comparatively inert, and all the visible variegation belongs to the final process of retouching. It is across this final surface that the viewer's eye plays, seeking the soft rhythms and contrasts of texture and colour which make this one of the most subtle and harmonious of all Monet's series.

cat. no. 25

cat. no. 26

27

Japanese Bridge at Giverny

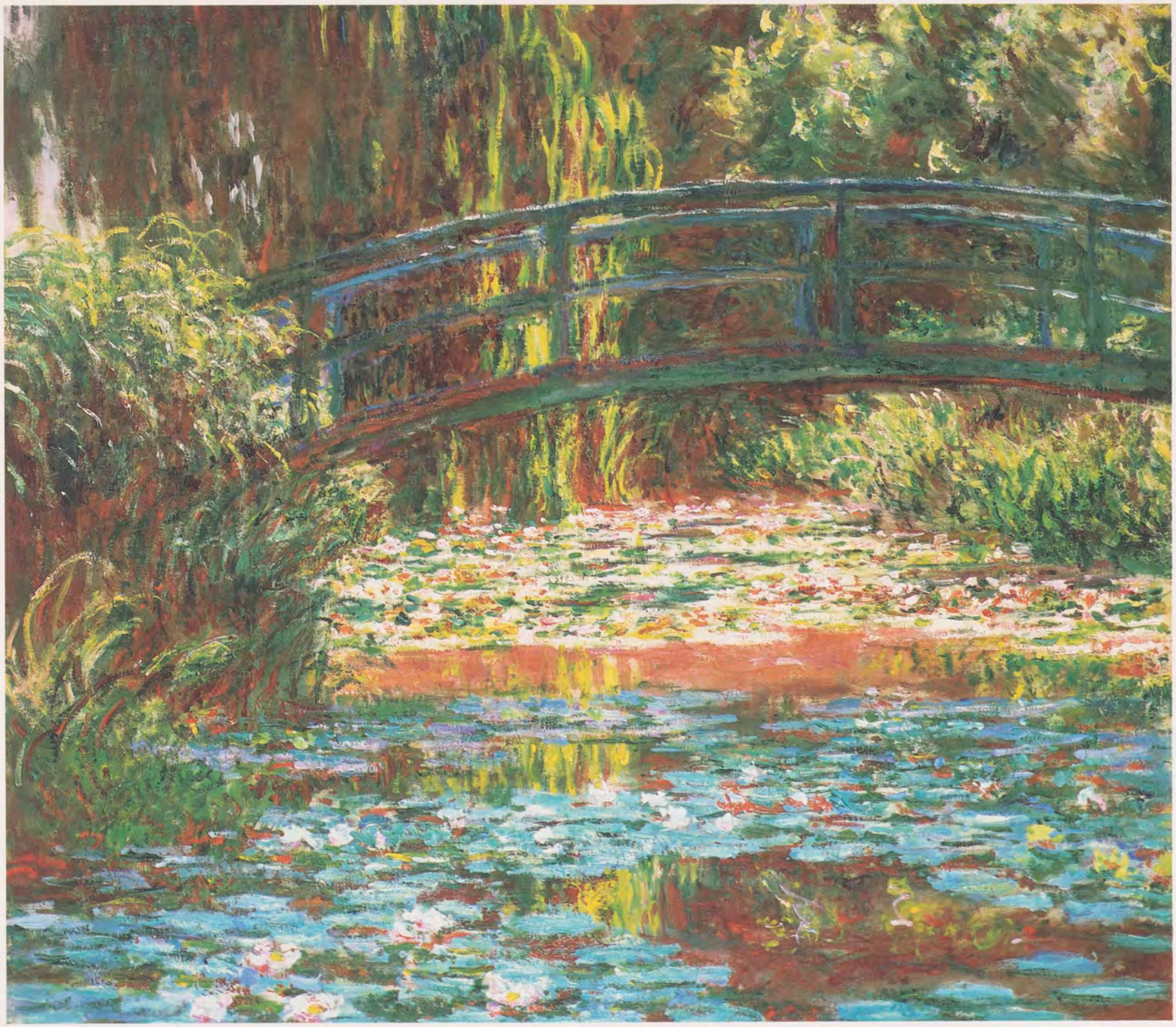
1900

898 x 1010
signed and dated top left: Claude Monet 1900
Art Institute of Chicago
Mr and Mrs Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial collection (1933/441)

In 1893 Monet began to construct a water-garden on a strip of land he had bought beside a stream just below his house at Giverny, on the edge of the water meadows which lie between the village and the Seine. By 1897 he had already conceived the idea of making a sequence of studies of his pond into a continuous decoration running around a room, but his first completed images of the pond, his series exhibited late in 1900, were more orthodox in form, showing the pond, seen through the footbridge, in a roughly square format. Though generally known today as *The Japanese Bridge*, this series was originally entitled *The Water Lily Pond.* Contemporaries often noted the Japanese quality of the bridge and of the garden itself, but Monet, though he would have known much about the design of Japanese gardens, denied that he had been seeking such a resemblance in the construction of his own garden.

In this series Monet returned to a closer depiction of natural textures than in his series of effects of mist and atmosphere of the 1890s (compare cat. nos. 23, 25 and 26). The bold, calligraphic handling of the foliage here recalls some of the paintings of the early 1880s (cat. no. 6); however, the overall effect of the pictures is given a great unity by the densely packed, interrelated textures of foliage and plants, and by the carefully co-ordinated colour schemes. Here, contrasts of varied greens and reds predominate, with soft dull reds unusually appearing even in shadowed areas of the background to set off the boldly drawn strips of lit green foliage.

The present version was not one of those exhibited in 1900; it is less highly finished than most of the series.



28

Waterloo Bridge, London, Cloudy Weather

1900

650 x 1000
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 1900
Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin

29

Waterloo Bridge, London, Effect of Sunlight with Smoke

1903

660 x 1010
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 1903
Baltimore Museum of Art
Helen and Abram Eisenberg collection (1976/38)


Claude Monet 1903

cat. no. 30

cat. no. 31

30

Waterloo Bridge, London, Effect of Sunlight

1903

730 x 920
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 1903
Milwaukee Art Museum (M1950/3)

31

Waterloo Bridge, London

1903

654 x 929
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 1903
Worcester Art Museum, Worcester
museum purchase (1910/37)

During his stay in London in 1870-71, Monet had painted a few scenes of fog on the River Thames; in the late 1880s he planned to return to London to paint the fog, but he did not realise this plan until 1899. In autumn 1899, and then again in the early months of 1900 and 1901, he stayed in London and painted from the balcony of his room, high in the Savoy Hotel, which commanded a sweeping view of the river – to the south across Charing Cross railway bridge to Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, to the east across Waterloo Bridge to the factories beyond. He made long series of each of these views, and also of the Houses of Parliament seen from across the river (cat. nos. 32 and 33). These paintings were not ready for exhibition until 1904, when he showed thirty-seven canvases from the three series together at Durand-Ruel's gallery.

A few canvases of London, among them catalogue number 28, bear the date of years when Monet did visit London, which suggests that they may have been largely painted on the spot; but the majority bear later dates, which implies that they were extensively reworked at Giverny, presumably on canvases which he had lightly sketched in while he was in London. Monet himself acknowledged that, in their final effect, his series of London was a studio series, perhaps more so than any of his previous paintings, since a longer time elapsed than ever before between his spells working in front of his subjects and the completion of the pictures.

The four present versions of the Waterloo Bridge subject show what variety Monet was able to achieve by painting a single subject in different conditions, with the added variations of differing formats and slightly differing angles of vision on the scene. All show the mists which attracted him back to London (cat. nos. 32 and 33), but in 28 and 31 the effects are clearer and less dramatic in colour and lighting than in 29 and 30. One of the canvases definitely exhibited in 1904, catalogue number 28, is rather more conventional in finish than 31; the modelling of the bridge and the indications of the traffic crossing it are painted with a comparatively unobtrusive touch, integrated with the overall effect, while in 31 their forms were re-emphasised late in the painting's execution by more distinct, sketchy brushmarks; this version was not exhibited in 1904, and was only finally completed for sale in 1910. The clear reds added to the traffic on the bridge in 31, too, give the picture a sharp colour focus across the centre, around which Monet placed the softer pinks and oranges of the rest of the canvas, set against duller blues and greens.

In 29 and 30, the sun coming through the fog creates a quite different type of effect. The bridge is very shadowy, the chimneys only dimly glimpsed in the mist. The attention is rather displaced to the gashes of light, clear colour in the water where the sunlight is reflected and, in 30 in particular, to the position of the sun itself in the sky. In his London series Monet often redefined or emphasised such bursts of sunlight very late in the execution of the painting; in 29, the coloured enrichment of both sky and water belongs, in its present form, entirely to the last stages of work on the canvas. Such additions were presumably made in the studio at Giverny; they reveal the sort of elaboration which Monet felt he needed to add to the notations of light effects which he brought back from London in order to transform them into finished paintings.

32

The Houses of Parliament, London, Effect of Sunlight

1903

812 x 915
signed and dated bottom left: Claude Monet 1903
The Brooklyn Museum
bequest of Mrs Grace Underwood Barton (68/48/1)

33

The Houses of Parliament, London

c1901-04

784 x 901
signed bottom right: Claude Monet
Art Institute of Chicago
Mr and Mrs M. A. Ryerson collection (33/1164)

It seems to have been only during his last spell of painting in London early in 1901 that Monet began to paint the Houses of Parliament from a viewpoint in an upstairs window across the river in St Thomas's Hospital. The mists reduced the building to a silhouette no more clearly defined than the chimneys seen in the background of his Waterloo Bridge paintings (cat. nos. 28-31); he regularly painted his London subjects *contre-jour*, which further emphasised their silhouettes at the expense of their three-dimensional forms. In the paintings of the Houses of Parliament, though, this famous silhouette itself would have had a strong associative content, though never in this series did he turn his angle of view far enough to the right to include the most celebrated part of the building, the clock tower, Big Ben.

Late in his life Monet described his responses to London in conversations with René Gimpel:

> I like London, much more than the English countryside; yes, I adore London, it is a mass, an ensemble, and it's so simple. What I like most of all in London is the fog. How could the English painters of the nineteenth century have painted its houses brick by brick? Those fellows painted bricks which they didn't see, which they couldn't see! I like London so much! but I only like it in the winter. In summer, it's fine with its parks, but that's nothing beside the winter with the fog, because, without the fog, London wouldn't be a beautiful city. It's the fog that gives it its marvellous breadth. Its regular, massive blocks become grandiose in this mysterious cloak.

The two present views of the Houses of Parliament are markedly different in finish. The 1903 painting, 32, is elaborately reworked, whereas 33 was left in a sketchy state and was sold only several years later, probably around 1913-14. The light effect in 32 is one of Monet's most theatrical; the sunburst at top right scatters the whole scene with orange-gold touches, while even the cool blue silhouette of the shadowy building is suffused with soft mauves which also warm the rest of the sky. In their final form these effects of light and colour belong to the last stages of work on the canvas – small paint losses on the tall tower show that there was originally duller, greener painting here – but what can be seen of the preliminary painting of the sky shows that a burst of sunlight was part of the original conception of the painting.

By contrast the surface of 33 is far freer and more open; the effects of lighting in the sky are loosely indicated by open, calligraphic brushwork; but despite the apparent spontaneity, this reworking creates a complex weave of light and colour. The water, too, is far less tightly finished than in 32. As in many canvases from the London series, the boat in the river here was added very late in the execution of the picture; in many of these pictures Monet used such boats to give some sense of the scale of the buildings. In none of the paintings is the viewer's position defined, but the boats also serve as a transition between the high viewpoint and the buildings across the water.

cat. no. 32

cat. no. 33

34

The Water Lily Pond

1904

876 x 908
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 1904
Denver Art Museum
Helen Dill collection (1935/14)

After his first series of his water lily pond, exhibited in 1900 (27), Monet bought, in 1901, an extra plot of land alongside his water-garden, and greatly enlarged his pond. In 1902 he began to paint it again, and embarked on a series which he exhibited only in 1909, focusing on the newly constructed wide spread of water upstream from the bridge.

In early paintings from this sequence, such as catalogue number 34, he still included the far bank of the pond, though omitting the sky; compositions of this type clearly recall his paintings of the rapids on the Creuse of 1889 (cat. no. 19). But the surface of 34 is far closer to those of the *Early Mornings on the Seine* (cat. nos. 25 and 26), delicately yet richly animated in its late stages by soft variegations of touch and colour. The complexity of the effect here is increased by the relationships between reflections and lily pads; both appear on the water surface, yet suggest very different spatial effects: the pads create a steady recession up the canvas into space, while the reflections evoke a lofty, tree-framed space at the base of the canvas. The forms of pads and foliage are far less vigorously handled than in *Japanese Bridge at Giverny* (cat. no. 27), but they are still treated with greater solidity and firmness than the reflections; even in the reflections, though, soft yet distinct dabs of colour keep the surface constantly mobile. The colour is organised around the contrast between the rich greens of the foliage and the reds in the upper lily pads, picked up in the signature; in the reflections, softer greens are set against the dull, muted reds on the right and the long sequences of very pale mauve strokes, mostly vertical in movement, across the reflected trees to the left.

The present canvas, like catalogue numbers 35 and 36, was one of the forty-eight which Monet exhibited in 1909 under the collective title "The Water Lilies, Water Landscapes".

35

Water Lilies

1905

895 x 1003
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 1905
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
gift of Edward Jackson Holmes (39/804)

In the Water Lilies series which he exhibited in 1909, Monet focused exclusively on the water surface in the paintings dated from 1905 and later, omitting the far bank seen in those dated 1904 (cat. no. 34). The compositional structure of these paintings depends entirely on the counterpoint between the shapes, colours and textures of the lily pads and the reflected foliage and sky; this theme is explored in many variations of light against dark, warm against cool, and in many different arrangements of pads and reflections. Here the clearer greens of the pads, with their light flowers, stand out from the cooler blues and mauves which dominate the reflections, but the mauves in the flowers and the greens in the reflections create recurrent harmonies between the two parts. Late in the execution of the painting, crisp, more linear strokes were added around the base of many of the lily pads; these re-emphasise their forms and locate them more firmly on the water surface.

The surface of the picture is quite dense; the textures of the previous paint layers, seen below the final surface, are granular, almost corrugated in places, and their patterns bear little relation to the final arrangement of forms in the picture. It has been argued that Monet deliberately planned such textural effects, but the history of this series suggests otherwise. The paintings caused Monet great trouble. The dates which they bear seem to relate to the summer in which each canvas was begun, but Monet continued to rework all of them – out of doors in the summer and in his studio in the long months when the garden was not in flower – until he exhibited them in 1909. The encrustation of paint is thickest on the paintings which bear earlier dates, like the present one; all those with late dates (cat. no. 36) are far more thinly painted. This strongly suggests that the very thickly painted surfaces are the by-product of the repeated reworking which led Monet ruefully to agree in 1908 that there were four or five different pictures on some of the canvases.

36

Water Lilies

1908

circular: 800 mm diameter
signed and dated bottom right: Claude Monet 1908
Dallas Museum of Art
gift of the Meadows Foundation Inc. (1981/128)

This is one of the five circular canvases which Monet painted in 1907-08 in the late stages of his work on the Water Lilies series which he exhibited in 1909 (cat. nos. 34 and 35). Unlike the dense surfaces of some of the paintings in the series which he began earlier (35), this canvas is very delicate in its handling, its final surface enlivened by soft, fluent dashes and curls of colour over only thin preliminary coloured layers; the effect it creates is particularly fresh and luminous. At this late stage in the series, Monet seems at last to have felt the confidence to complete a canvas quickly without the need for recurrent revisions. The present picture, like catalogue numbers 34 and 35, was one of the forty-eight that Monet exhibited in 1909.

This was Monet's only experiment with circular formats. Previously he had generally adopted whatever format best suited the subject in hand (cat. nos. 15 and 20), though at times he had painted the same subject both vertically and horizontally (7). At times he had painted near-square canvases (25), which placed, in the absence of a dominant axis, greater demands on the internal structure of the picture to give it a coherent form. With his lily pond, he had no obvious compositional co-ordinates, and experimented with various formats, of which the tondo was the most airy and free-floating: neither in the shape of the canvas nor in the image itself is there any defined vertical or horizontal. Such experimentation was also reflected during the same years by his plans to turn the water lily theme into the subject for a decoration designed to run around a room. Apparently he had already sketched ideas for such a project in 1897, and he was certainly considering it again in 1909; but it was only after 1914 that he was able to implement the idea.

CHRONOLOGY

YEAR	MONTH/SEASON	LIFE	WORK
1840	October	Born in Paris, son of a wholesale grocer.	
c1845		Monet's family moves to Le Havre, on the estuary of the River Seine.	
c1855		By now Monet is gaining a reputation in Le Havre for his caricatures of local figures.	
c1856		Eugène Boudin, a landscape painter working locally, introduces him to open-air painting.	
1859-60		First visit to Paris; meets Troyon and other painters in the realist circle; meets Pissarro.	
1861-62		Military service: visits Algeria with Chasseurs d'Afrique.	
1862	autumn	Meets Jongkind on the Normandy coast.	
1862	autumn	Enters the studio of Charles Gleyre in Paris, where he probably stays until spring 1864; there he meets Bazille, Renoir and Sisley.	
1863	summer?	First trip to the Forest of Fontainebleau.	
1864		Painting in the Forest of Fontainebleau and on the Channel coast around Le Havre and Honfleur.	
1865	spring	Two seascapes accepted at the Paris Salon.	Monet's early seascapes show the influence of Jongkind in their crisp depiction of forms, but in 1865-66 he adopts a broader, freer handling which reflects the example of Manet and Courbet. He begins to treat sunlit scenes with contrasts of clear colours, but also paints many snow scenes, with bold contrasts of dark and light tones.
	summer	Painting in the Forest of Fontainebleau; begins his project for a vast *Déjeuner sur l'herbe.*	
1866	spring	Fails to complete his *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* for the Salon; *Camille* (a life-size figure) and a landscape are accepted at the Salon.	
	summer	Working outdoors at Ville d'Avray on *Women in the Garden*; later, staying at Le Havre.	
1867	spring	*Women in the Garden* refused at the Salon.	
	August	Monet's son Jean born to Camille Doncieux in Paris; financial difficulties force him to stay with his family in Le Havre.	

YEAR	MONTH/SEASON	LIFE	WORK
1868	spring	One seascape accepted, one rejected at the Salon.	
	October	Gains silver medal at an exhibition in Le Havre.	
	winter	Living with Camille and Jean at Etretat.	
1869	spring	Submissions rejected at Salon.	In the late 1860s Monet's observation of natural effects becomes more acute, and he begins to be fascinated with the theme of reflections in water. His brushwork becomes finer and more flexible, but he continues to record individual forms in distinct, separate paint accents.
1869	summer winter	Living and working around Bougival; on occasion both Renoir and Pissarro work with him.	
1870	spring	Submissions rejected at Salon.	
	summer	Marries Camille Doncieux; they are on honeymoon at Trouville at outbreak of Franco-Prussian War in July.	
	autumn	Takes refuge with Camille in London.	
	winter	Meets Pissarro and the dealer Durand-Ruel in London.	
1871	spring	Work rejected at the Royal Academy in London.	
	summer	Leaves London for Holland; paints at Zaandam, near Amsterdam.	
	winter	Returns to Paris; settles at Argenteuil, which is his main base until early 1878.	In the early 1870s Monet executes some of his most spontaneous and improvisatory open-air sketches, but also continues to paint precisely finished canvases intended for commercial sale. He adopts bright colour in sunlit scenes, but in overcast effects his palette remains subdued.
1872-73		Durand-Ruel buys many paintings from Monet; purchases cease in 1874.	
c1872-75		Paints on occasion on the Normandy coast and pays a visit to Amsterdam, but mainly working at Argenteuil.	
1874	spring	Exhibits in first exhibition of *Société anonyme* . . . ; the title of his *Impression, Sunrise* leads to the group being called Impressionists.	From 1873-74 he begins to adopt a more broken touch across his canvases, which allows him to introduce more delicate nuances of colour and to combine the individual elements in his scenes into a total ensemble.
1875	March	With Morisot, Renoir and Sisley, mounts auction of their paintings in Paris, which obtains very low prices.	
1876	spring	Exhibits in the second group exhibition.	Though in his more highly finished paintings of the later 1870s he pursues increasingly delicate effects of colour, he sells many rapid sketches to raise money quickly.
	autumn/ winter	At Montgeron, painting decorations for the financier Hoschedé.	

YEAR	MONTH/SEASON	LIFE	WORK
1877	early	Working in Paris on paintings of the Gare Saint-Lazare.	
	spring	Exhibits in the third group exhibition.	His Gare Saint-Lazare paintings focus on effects of light and smoke inside and outside the railway station seen from many different viewpoints.
1878	January	Leaves Argenteuil, moves to Paris.	
	March	Birth of Monet's second son Michel.	
	August	Monet and his family move to Vétheuil with the family of Hoschedé, who is bankrupt.	In his paintings of Vétheuil Monet depicts the village and its surroundings in all weathers and seasons, adapting his brushwork and the tonality of his paintings with great flexibility to these varied effects.
1879	spring	Exhibits in fourth group exhibition.	
	September	Death of Monet's wife Camille.	
	winter	Painting frozen River Seine at Vétheuil.	
1880	spring	One painting accepted, one rejected at the Salon; does not show at the fifth group exhibition.	
1880	June	One-man show at offices of *La Vie moderne*, a weekly magazine run by the publisher Charpentier.	
	September	Working on Normandy coast at Petites-Dalles.	
1881	February	Durand-Ruel resumes regular purchases of Monet's work.	
	March/ April	Painting on coast at Fécamp.	On his travels of the 1880s, Monet concentrates on dramatic effects such as rocky cliffs and stormy seas, often seen from high viewpoints and in boldly asymmetrical compositions.
	August/ September	Painting on coast, probably around Trouville.	
	December	Moves from Vétheuil to Poissy with Alice Hoschedé and her children.	
1882	February/ April	Painting on coast around Pourville to west of Dieppe.	Durand-Ruël's renewed purchases of his work encourage him to bring his paintings to a higher degree of finish.
	Spring	Exhibits at seventh group exhibition, organised by Durand-Ruel.	
	June/ October	Again painting at Pourville.	
1883	January/ February	Painting at Etretat on the Normandy coast.	Monet's Etretat paintings focus on the dramatic rock arches of the bays in many weather conditions.

YEAR	MONTH/SEASON	LIFE	WORK
1883	March	One-man show at gallery of Durand-Ruel.	
	April	Moves house from Poissy to Giverny.	
	summer	First paintings of Giverny region concentrate on views of the Seine.	At home he paints simple Seine Valley subjects, dominantly horizontal in emphasis.
1884	January/ April	Painting on Mediterranean coast at Bordighera, then briefly at Menton.	In order to paint the light of the Mediterranean in 1884, Monet adopts a palette dominated by blue and rose; this richer, more carefully harmonised colour is gradually assimilated into his later paintings of Northern subjects.
1885	May	Exhibits in Georges Petit's fourth Exposition internationale.	
	September/ December	Painting at Etretat.	
1886	February/ March	Painting at Etretat.	
	April/ May	Two weeks painting tulip fields near The Hague in Holland.	The strong colours of his paintings of the tulip fields of Holland in spring 1886 is followed, that autumn, by paintings of the storms on Belle-Isle, comparatively subdued in tone, in which his brushwork reaches a new expressive freedom. Increasingly he feels the need to retouch his paintings in his Giverny studio.
	May	Exhibits in Petit's fifth Exposition internationale, but not in the eighth and last Impressionist group exhibition.	
	September/ November	Painting on Belle-Isle, a rocky island off the south-west coast of Brittany.	
1887	April	Makes first sales to Boussod and Valadon through their branch manager, Theo van Gogh.	
	May	Exhibits in Petit's sixth Exposition internationale.	Between 1886 and 1890, executes a sequence of outdoor figure paintings at Giverny.
1888	January/ April	Painting at Antibes on Mediterranean coast.	During 1888 Monet begins to focus on fugitive effects of atmosphere in scenes of the fields around Giverny.
	June	Ten Antibes paintings exhibited at Boussod and Valadon.	
	July	Refuses Légion d'honneur.	
1889	February	One-man show at Boussod and Valadon.	
	March/ May	Painting at Fresselines on River Creuse in Massif Central.	After his 1889 Creuse visit Monet begins to concentrate on subjects around Giverny, generally simple and unpicturesque in effect.

YEAR	MONTH/SEASON	LIFE	WORK
1889	June/ July	Major retrospective exhibition at Georges Petit's gallery, which encourages sales of his work.	
	autumn	Begins to organise subscription to buy Manet's *Olympia* for the State.	
1890	autumn	Begins work on series of *Meules*, continued through winter 1890-91.	In summer 1890 Monet paints several short series of meadows around Giverny. In the much longer series of stacks begun late that summer, his first true series, he recreates fleeting atmospheric effects in elaborate networks of rich colour; the final state of the paintings is the result of studio reworking.
	November	Buys house at Giverny.	
1891	May	One-man exhibition at Durand-Ruel's gallery includes fifteen paintings of *Meules*.	
	summer/ autumn	Paints series of *Poplars*.	
1892	February	Exhibition of *Poplars* at Durand-Ruel's gallery.	
	February/ April	Painting Rouen Cathedral.	Monet's paintings of Rouen Cathedral, begun in Rouen in 1892 and 1893, require extensive reworking and elaboration in the studio; the paint surfaces of the finished pictures are densely encrusted.
	summer	Begins construction of water-garden at Giverny.	
1895	January/ April	Painting in Norway.	
	May	Exhibition at Durand-Ruel's gallery includes twenty paintings of Rouen Cathedral.	
1896	February/ April	Painting on Normandy coast at Pourville, near Dieppe.	
	summer	Begins series of *Matinées sur la Seine*.	In his series of *Matinées sur la Seine*, showing the mists and sunlight of early morning on a branch of the Seine, Monet seeks very thinly and delicately worked surfaces, in contrast to the Rouen Cathedral paintings; on his return visits to Pourville, he also focuses on atmospheric effects.
1897	January/ April	Painting at Pourville.	
	summer	Continues *Matinées sur la Seine*.	
1898	June	Exhibition at Petit's gallery includes series of Pourville and *Matinées sur la Seine*.	
1899	summer	Begins first series of his water-garden, with the footbridge.	
	September/ October	Painting in London, from the Savoy Hotel.	In his paintings begun in London in 1899-1901, Monet studies effects of sun through mist and fog on the River Thames; the paintings were extensively reworked and much elaborated in his Giverny studio before their exhibition in 1904.
1900	February/ April	Painting in London.	

Monet in his first studio at Giverny, which had become the family sitting-room, c1920
Courtesy: H. Roger Viollet, Paris

YEAR	MONTH/SEASON	LIFE	WORK
1900	November	Exhibition at Durand-Ruel's gallery includes first series of water-garden.	
1901	February/ April	Painting in London.	
1901-02		Considerable alterations and enlargements to water-garden.	
1903	summer	Begins second series of water-garden, which continues until 1908.	While painting his second series of his water-garden, Monet began in 1905 to concentrate exclusively on the surface of his pond, with its water lilies. Many canvases from this series were thickly reworked before their exhibition in 1909, but the latest are treated in thin and delicate veils of colour.
1904	May	Exhibition of London series at Durand-Ruel's gallery.	
	October	Visits Madrid to see the work of Velazquez.	
1908	September/ December	Painting in Venice.	The Venice paintings, with bright and rather synthetic colour schemes, are much reworked and elaborated in Monet's studio before their exhibition in 1912.
1909	May	Exhibition of 48 *Paysages d'eau*, of the water-garden, at Durand-Ruel's gallery.	
1911	May	Death of Alice Monet.	
1912	May	Exhibition of Venice paintings at the Bernheim Jeune gallery.	
1914	August	Begins construction of new studio in his garden for execution of monumental water lily decorations.	In response to the project for making his water-garden into the theme for a monumental decorative scheme, Monet enlarges his touch and loosens his handling. During these years, gradually increasing problems from cataracts in both eyes impair Monet's vision and hinder his work.
1916		New studio finished.	
1918		First plans to present water lily decorations to the State.	
1920		Negotiations with the State about proposed donation of decorations; plans to install them in the grounds of the Hôtel Biron (Musée Rodin).	
1922	April	Decorations presented to the State for installation in the Orangerie.	
1923	February	Operation of cataract in one eye partly successful.	
1923-26		Reworking decorations when health and sight permit.	
1926	December	Dies at Giverny.	

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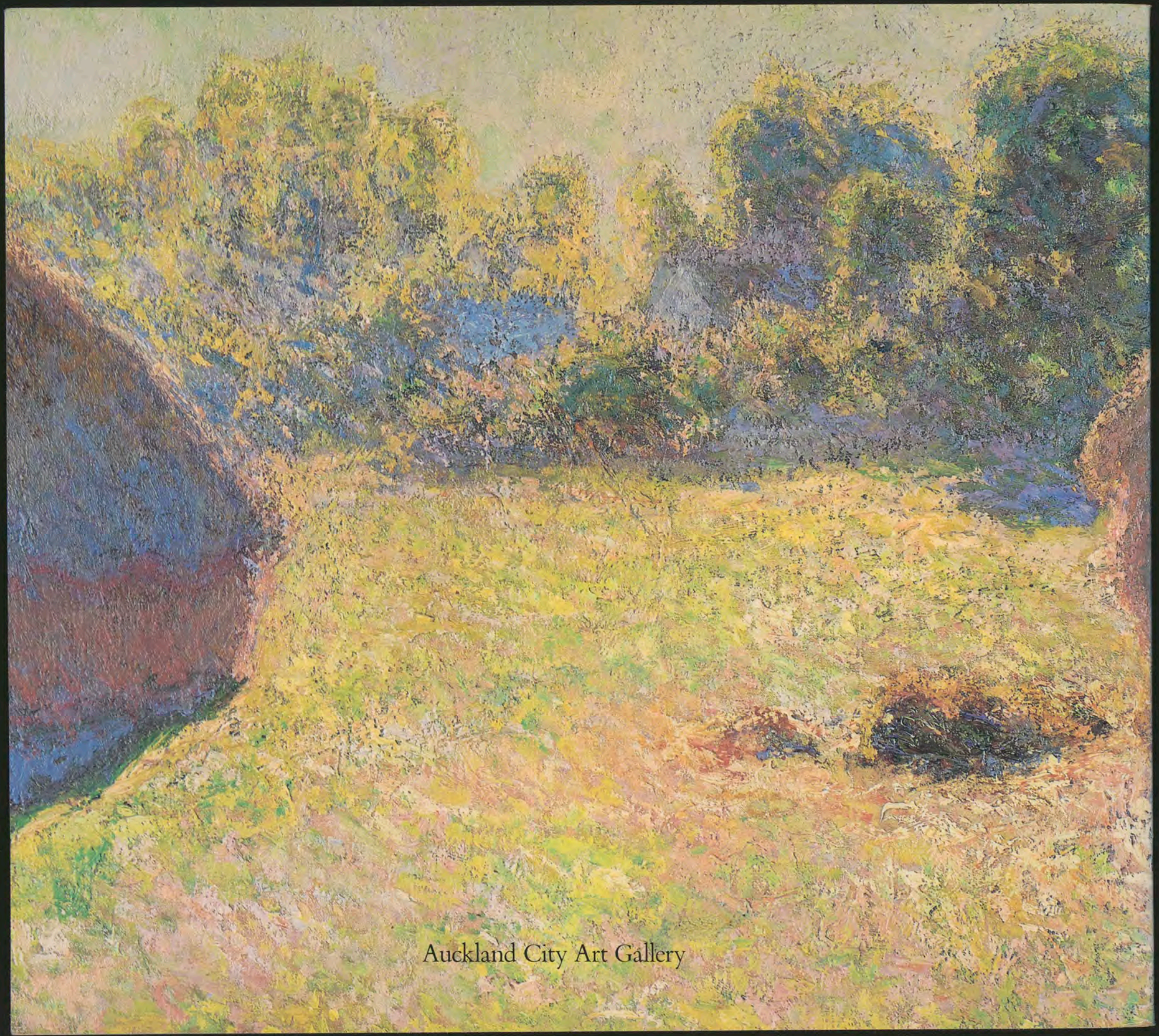
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