

IMPRESSIONIST PAINTING
FOR BEGINNERS

CLAUDE MONET – PART TWO

Leigh Cohn
Leigh@LeighPaintings.com

CLAUDE MONET 1840-1926

Recap of PART ONE



47-years-old 1887

- Monet was the stereotypical starving artist, always broke, borrowing money, and skipping out on the rent.
- When she came into an inheritance, he married his mistress, Camille Doncieux, the mother of their son Jean.
- By 1874, sales had improved, he painted with friends, and became the face of Impressionism.
- Later, they had a second son, Michel; Camille became ill, and the Hoschedé family moved in.
- After Camille died, the mixed family stayed together with marriage between Monet and Alice 12 years later.
- In 1883, they moved to Giverny—he was 43 years old, the midpoint of his life, and he never moved again.

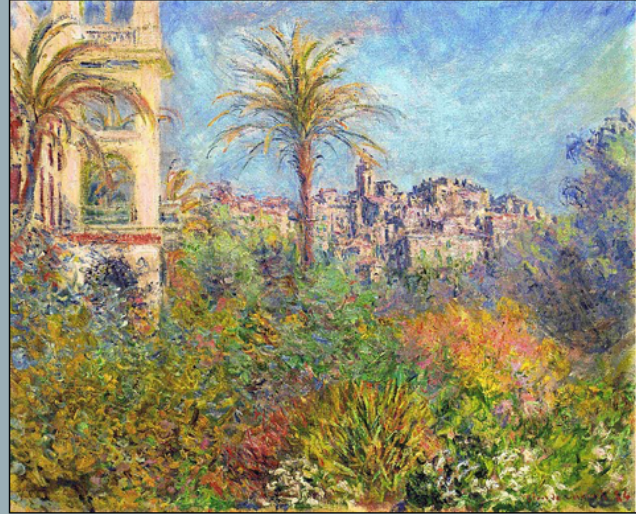
TRAVEL: EARLY TO MID 1880S



*Low Tide at
Pourville
1882*

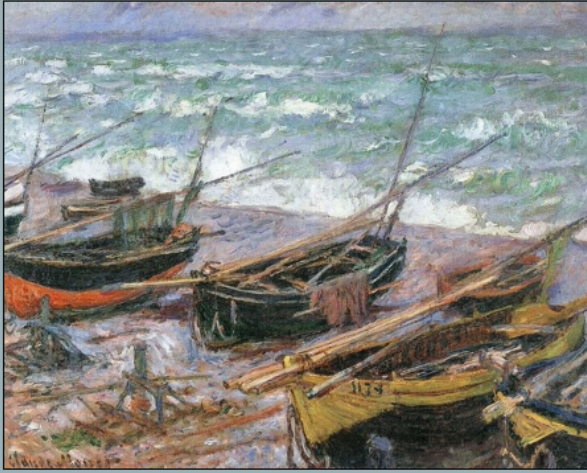


Rock Arch at Étretat 1883



Villas in Bordighera 1884

After Camille's death in 1879, Alice took control, and Monet began traveling for new subjects to paint, and no doubt to escape her and their eight children. She started by ordering Monet to destroy all of Camille's letters. When he traveled, she insisted that they write back and forth every day, and that he read and destroy her letters, though he secretly kept them. When he proposed bringing a model back from an excursion, she wrote to him that he would have no home or family to return to.



Fishing Boats at Étretat 1885



Tulip Fields in Holland 1886

Alice wasn't the bad guy here. An intelligent woman from an aristocratic family, she pushed Monet to be successful. She also promoted his work through her contacts, and she not only ran the enormous household but also dealt with his temperamental needs.

GIVERNY



Taking a Walk 1887



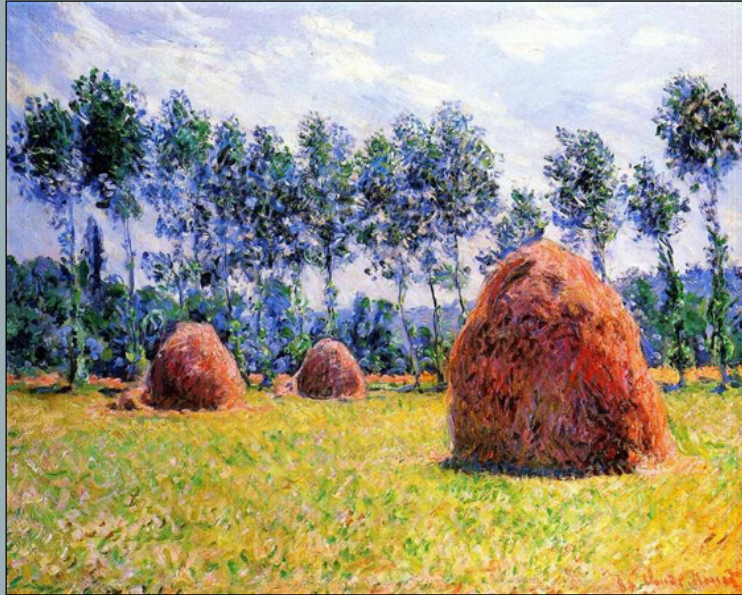
In the Woods at Giverny, Blanche Hoschedé Monet at Her Easel with Suzanne Hoschedé Reading 1887



Jean-Pierre Hoschedé and Michel Monet on the Bank of the Epte 1888

No one in history has painted more beautiful pictures than Claude Monet, but he could be a pain in the ass. He generally did well with his friends, though sometimes got exasperated. He fought with his dealer, Paul Durand-Ruel and was said to be rude with some buyers. He had terrible fits of depression and self-doubt, and he burned, slashed or otherwise destroyed hundreds of canvases. He was demanding, adhered to a firm schedule of: gourmet meals with wine, long sessions of painting, both en plein air and in his studio, and supervised the landscaping.

Incidentally, Jean-Pierre Hoschedé, who was born in 1877 was rumored to be his son.

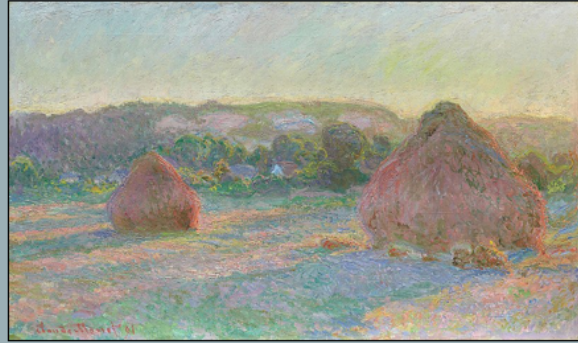


Haystacks, Hazy Sun 1884

Two popular themes for Monet in Giverny were haystacks and poplars.

Monet liked to paint the same scene in different light and from different perspectives. Although he had followed that practice, for example with the Rock Arch in Étretat, the Haystacks Series was his first single-subject exhibition.

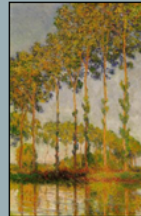
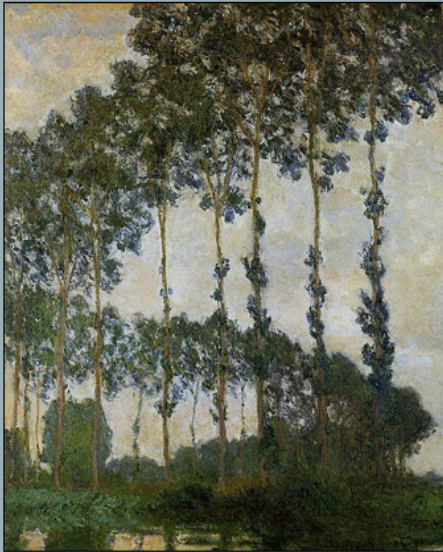
HAYSTACKS 1888-91



In 1890, helped by an advance from Durand-Ruel, Monet bought the Giverny house and property for 22,000 francs. The following May, Durand-Ruel's gallery opened a show with 15 Haystacks paintings, all of which sold by the end of the year. They started at about 1,000 francs per painting but increased, and Pissarro—who also had paintings in the exhibit—wrote to his son, “People want nothing but Monet's... Worst of all they want “Meules’ at prices of 4, 5, and 6,000 francs.”

In 1891, Monet earned 97,000 francs from Durand-Ruel and another dealer, equivalent to nearly \$8 million dollars today. In 2019 the one on the left sold for \$110.7 million, breaking the record for an Impressionist work of art. Monet probably would have complained that the price wasn't high enough.

POPLAR TREES 1891-92



Monet next moved on to a line of poplar trees less than 2 kilometers away by row boat, though much further by road. He was mid-series when they went up for auction by the village, and he petitioned the mayor to hold off on the sale, but was refused. Finally, Monet made an agreement to pay a timber merchant extra money over the top bid to buy and delay the cutting of the trees, complaining, "And so it turned out; my wallet felt the damage." The winning bid was less than 6,000 francs, probably worth the same as one of his paintings.

ROUEN CATHEDRAL 1892-94



For his next series, Monet rented rooms for several months in Rouen, a couple of hours away from Giverny. Although he finished about 50 paintings from various locations, this view is best known. Many were unsigned, but those that were had a date of '94, even though they'd been painted earlier.

He “worked unreasonably hard” on 10 or 12 at a time, shifting between them depending on the light. Sometimes the light would be a certain way, and he'd look for the correct painting that matched the moment, and by the time he found it and got it up on the easel, the light had changed once again. He worked on each painting several times, both in Rouen and back in Giverny; but, the early part of the process was particularly torturous. He wrote, “I shall never manage anything good.”

In 1894, when the paintings were ready, Monet pitted Durand-Ruel against other dealers to drive prices up. He wanted 15,000 francs per painting, but Durand-Ruel would not be intimidated, said he would use the gallery for other shows, and would postpone the Rouen series until the following year. Monet relented, and the show began in October. However, he held back the best pieces for private sales.

INFLUENCED BY HOKUSAI



Hokusai
c. 1830



Cézanne
1895



Mount Kolsaas 1895

Painting the same subject over and over worked as a form of mass production to meet the high demand for his paintings. Monet has always been described as trying to “capture the light” with these series paintings, but they were also a business decision. Finding fresh new compositions is much harder than painting a great layout over and over.

In early 1894, he was effected by the deaths of three good friends, including Gustave Caillebotte, who left 67 paintings to French museums, 19 of which were Monet’s. This event resulted in falling prices in the art market. For another friend’s widow, Monet helped organize a fundraising auction, which was less successful than hoped. The highest price was only 3,000 francs, for a Bordighera canvas he donated. The others fared worse, 215 francs for a Cézanne, 185 for Sisley, and 110 for Gaughin.

For the next few years he hit the road again, most notably to Norway in 1895. There he did a series of Mount Kolsaas that show the influence of the Japanese artist, Hokusai. His dinning room was decorated with Hokusai prints, and many of the Impressionists collected Japanese prints. The influence on Cézanne is also obvious.

MORNING ON THE SEINE NEAR GIVERNY 1896



Monet's love of nature is evident in his paintings. Back home in Giverny, he battled local authorities to preserve a marshland in 1895. Despite his objections, an agreement was reached to sell the area to someone who wanted to build a factory there. The developer offered 900 francs plus an annual percentage. Monet fought and fought for a year until the municipality agreed to a conservancy for the land for 5,000 francs. As a result, Monet became a more appreciated local figure than just being famous.

He also found a location for a new series near home, which led to a transformation in his art and life.

CHANGING TIMES



Vincent
Van Gogh
1889



Toulouse-Lautrec
1895



Paul Gauguin
1894



Henri-Edmond
Cross 1896

By this time, Impressionism had become much more popular. Durand-Ruel and his competitors expanded their sales internationally and the original group of painters were thriving. In fact, Pissarro was able to pay Monet back for a 5,000 franc loan.

Monet's prices remained the highest among his peers, but not the older academy painters. At an auction of 200 modern paintings in 1897, Monet's were a bit lower than expected—ranging from 6,000 to 12,000 francs, though his 1874 "The Road Bridge at Argenteuil" fetched 21,500. However, among older artists, Corot reached 55,000 francs and a Meissonier 94,100.

However, a new wave of "Post Impressionists" was less interested in the old guys and were inspired by Cézanne, Degas, and Pissarro. As a result, the next evolution of painting was underway. Next time, I'll talk about the many changes that took place, including how Impressionism spread around the world.

In two weeks, I'll focus on the best known of the Post Impressionists, Vincent Van Gogh. And then, in the final presentation, I will complete Monet's story of reinvention and its effect on the future of art.