



# MONET

and the Impressionists

## EDUCATION KIT

ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES  
11 OCTOBER 08 – 26 JANUARY 09

MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND TE PAPA TONGAREWA  
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As a painter I've done what I can, and to me that seems sufficient. I don't want to be compared to the great masters of the past, and my painting belongs to the critics. That is enough.

Claude Monet 1918 <sup>11</sup>

'When you go out to paint, try to forget what objects you have before you, a tree, a house, a field or whatever. Merely think, here is a little square of blue, here an oblong of pink, here a streak of yellow, and paint it just as it looks to you, the exact colour and shape, until it gives your own naïve impression of the scene before you.'

He said he wished he had been born blind and then had suddenly gained his sight so that he could have begun to paint in this way without knowing what the objects were that he saw before him.

Lilla Cabot Perry 1927<sup>12</sup>

## MONET AND THE IMPRESSIONISTS

'What does this canvas represent? Let's look in the catalogue.

*Impression: sunrise.*

Impression, I was sure of it! I said to myself that, because I'm impressed, there must be an impression somewhere in it ... And what liberty, what ease of handling! Wallpaper in its embryonic state is more complete than this water-view!' <sup>8</sup>

*Impression: sunrise* was a painting by **Claude Monet** that appeared in an independently organised group exhibition held in Paris in 1874. The fictitious dialogue above referring to this painting was published in a satirical magazine, *Le Charivari*, where the writer, Louis Leroy, seized on the title of Monet's painting and milked it for all the humour it was worth. So it was in reference to a painting by Monet that the epithet 'Impressionist' was originally invented. Although Leroy intended to poke fun at these painters, his term was eventually accepted by Monet, **Camille Pissarro**, **Pierre-August Renoir**, **Alfred Sisley** and **Paul Cézanne**, whom the critics identified as the radical 'core' of the 1874 exhibition.

Monet's outrageous presumption, Leroy implied, was to show a mere sketch, something too crude and flimsy to be exhibited in public. The word 'impression' seemed to explain what made this painting disturbing and potentially ridiculous. After all, what is an impression? What, if anything, did conventional painting (the kind of painting considered meritorious at the time) have to do with

recording one's impressions? Weren't impressions fleeting, subjective, provisional – too insubstantial, too private, too accidental to function as the basis of works of art? An impression was open-ended, incomplete and unfinalisable. Monet's painting seemed to demonstrate that the suspended state, the immediacy and intensity of an *impression* could only be conveyed by a very summary sketch. A work of art was supposed to be the opposite of that – durable, eternal, 'finished'.

'I don't want to be compared to the great masters of the past', Monet protested, but he did acknowledge that 'Boudin was truly my first initiator' and admitted to having been 'the disciple of Courbet and Jongkind' in his youth.<sup>9</sup> Their collective endeavour, he argued, had more to do with responding to the inspiration of nature than to the art of museums. *Monet and the Impressionists* shows how Monet's artistic journey does indeed have its source in the painting traditions of the 19th century. He followed in the footsteps of a generation of artists who advocated the experience of nature *en plein air*, promoting the use of the painted oil sketch made in the landscape.

As a contemporary critic, Théodore Duret, put it: 'Corot and Courbet lessened, to a degree, the distance that used to separate a study made on the spot from a *tableau* [a fully realised composition]. They began to make the two operations – which were once successive – simultaneous. Coming on the scene later, Claude Monet finished what they had begun. With him there were no more preliminary sketches in pencil or watercolour for use in the

studio, but oil paintings begun and finished in their entirety in front of a natural scene directly interpreted and rendered. That is how he became the leader of what is properly called “the school of *plein air*”.<sup>10</sup>

Yet less sympathetic critics and artists of the time were taken aback that all the conventional means of achieving stability and coherence in painting were absent from these ‘impressions’: to them, they looked like ‘paintings without drawing’ – there was no outline, local colour, patterning of light and dark, or relationships of part to part and part to whole. Because there was no modelling of forms, there were no indications of volume and mass. Because there were no discrete parts or independently meaningful details, there was no composition (in the sense that composition was then understood). Because there was no perspectival funnel, no proscenium-like setting and no consistent aerial perspective regulating an illusion of depth, the viewer’s attention became fixed instead on the coarsely textured surface. ‘These are palette scrapings put uniformly on a dirty canvas’, Louis Leroy’s fictional companion protested.

The 1874 exhibition that Leroy satirised is generally known today as the first Impressionist exhibition. It provided an opportunity for Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley and Cézanne to show the experimental paintings they had created in relative seclusion, often working in each other’s company and given access to each other’s studios. Between 1868 and 1874 they had pursued a common approach to landscape painting in order to optimise the recording of their ‘impressions’. They had simplified their palette (using only the colours of

the prism, eliminating black and earth colours) and had greatly simplified their technique – doing everything possible to speed up their ability to record the most fleeting phenomena. Their adventurous approach to composition was influenced by their general awareness of photography, as well as by their enthusiasm for Japanese woodblock prints.

THE CURRENT EXHIBITION

*Monet and the Impressionists* consists of 58 works, mostly from the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston. Founded in 1870, the MFA is renowned for its superb Impressionist holdings, but it is also rich in works by the previous generation of artists who brought landscape painting to new prominence in France: painters associated with the Barbizon school (**Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot**, **Théodore Rousseau**, **Constant Troyon** and **Jean-François Millet**); painters in Normandy who were Monet’s first teachers (**Eugène Boudin** and **Johan Barthold Jongkind**); and those who were Monet’s mentors and role-models during his early days in Paris (**Auguste Toulmouche** and **Edouard Manet**). This exhibition traces the emergence of the Impressionist group in the 1870s, shows the consolidation of the Impressionist style in the 1880s, then reveals how the artists grew apart as the 20th century approached.

Terence Maloon

Curator, special exhibitions  
Art Gallery of New South Wales

NOTES

- All quotes are from the exhibition catalogue, except where indicated
- 1 Quoted on p 177
  - 2 From ‘Monet the founder’, *Verve*, vol 7, nos 27–28, 1952, quoted on p 191
  - 3 From ‘Monet the founder’, *Verve*, vol 7, nos 27–28, 1952, quoted on p 17
  - 4 From Roger Marx, ‘The waterlilies by Monsieur Claude Monet’, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, June 1909, quoted on p 201
  - 5 Théodore Duret, *Histoire des peintres impressionnistes*, Floury, Paris 1906, p 94, translated by Terence Maloon
  - 6 George T M Shackelford, p 107
  - 7 *The Impressionists and Edouard Manet*, 1876
  - 8 Louis Leroy, ‘L’exposition des impressionnistes’, *Le Charivari*, 25 Apr 1874, pp 79–80, translated by Terence Maloon
  - 9 Quoted on pp 178, 188, 201
  - 10 Duret 1906
  - 11 Letter to G or J Bernheim-Jeune, 24 Nov 1918, quoted on p 188
  - 12 ‘Reminiscences of Monet from 1889 to 1909’, *The American Magazine of Art*, Mar 1927, quoted on p 206

Cover: Claude Monet *Waterlilies* 1905 (detail)  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, gift of Edward Jackson Holmes

Left: Monet in his house at Giverny. Private collection. Photograph Roger-Viollet, Paris/The Bridgeman Art Library

All photographs of works © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, except *Dancer looking at the sole of her right foot* © Art Gallery of NSW, photo by Tim Marshall

SELECTED REFERENCES

***Monet and the Impressionists catalogue and website***  
*Monet and the Impressionists* exhibition catalogue by George T M Shackelford et al is published by the Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney 2008

The website contains further resources and activities: [www.monet.org.au](http://www.monet.org.au)

**Books**

- House, John. *Monet: nature into art*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1986
- Kendall, Richard (ed). *Monet by himself*, Little, Brown and Co, New York 2000
- Rewald, John. *The history of Impressionism*, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1973
- Spate, Virginia. *Claude Monet: the colour of time*, Thames and Hudson, London and Rizzoli, New York 1992
- Stuckey, Charles F. *Monet: a retrospective*, H L Levin, New York 1985
- Tucker, Paul Hayes et al. *Monet in the 20th century*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston 1998

**Websites**

Art Gallery of NSW  
[www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au)

Search the Art Gallery of NSW collection at [www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection)

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
[www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org)

Musée d’Orsay  
[www.musee-orsay.fr/en](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en)

Musée de l’Orangerie  
[www.musee-orangerie.fr](http://www.musee-orangerie.fr)

This printed education kit is also available online with extended resource material providing specific investigations and approaches for French language students, students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities and gifted and talented students across a range of curriculum areas.  
[www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/ed/kits/monet](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/ed/kits/monet)

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## MONET'S EARLY YEARS: SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

I gaze on this light that inundates the earth, that quivers on the water, that plays on clothing, and I grow faint to realise how much genius is needed to master so many difficulties. Eugène Boudin c1854–59<sup>1</sup>

Claude Monet

**Rue de la Bavole, Honfleur** c1864

oil on canvas, 55.9 x 61 cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, bequest of John T Spaulding 48.580

### K-6 LOOKING AND MAKING ACTIVITIES

**VISUAL ARTS:** **Look** closely at the contrasting light and shade in this scene. Where is your eye drawn first? How does Monet's use of perspective and dark tones differ from his later works in this exhibition? **Find out** which artists influenced Monet's early career and compare their painting styles with this work. What are the similarities?

Monet liked to work directly in front of his subjects rather than in the studio. **Draw** a street scene or a corridor in your school from direct observation, using perspective, contrasting light and shade, and limited detail. **Revisit** the same scene in different weather or at different times of day and note the variation in the shadows and light.

**ENGLISH:** **Compile** a list of words and phrases that could be used to describe works in this exhibition. Be creative and try to include some unexpected ones.

**HSIE:** **Locate** Honfleur on a map of France. **Search** the internet for aerial or street scenes of this town. **Compare** them with Monet's painting. **Find out** about the local specialities and produce from this part of France. **Imagine** what the shops might sell today. Would it have been very different in 1864?

### 7-12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

- This work reflects Monet's first encounters with Japanese ukiyo-e prints, such as *Night view of Saruwaka-mache* 1856 from the series *One hundred famous views of Edo* by the artist Hiroshige. Research how Monet and his contemporaries were introduced to Japanese woodblock printing. What impact did this have on their approach to painting?
- Create a visual timeline showing the development of Monet's impressionistic style. In what way does his early work differ from his later work yet show qualities of what was to come? Discuss how an artist's body of work is a journey of experiences and inspirations.
- Consider Monet's depiction of light and shade. Compare this tonal treatment with painting techniques of the early to mid 19th century. How has Monet captured a new sensibility in painting practice? Discuss in particular the importance of *en plein air* landscape painting and quick observations.



## MONET AND EARLY IMPRESSIONISM

Touch distinguished the various aspects of the painting (the main body of it being atmosphere) – a touch of many accents, criss-crossed, ruffled, speckled. You have to see it in close-up – what a frenzy! André Masson 1952<sup>2</sup>

Paul Cézanne

**The pond** c1877–79

oil on canvas, 47 x 56.2 cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Tompkins Collection – Arthur Gordon Tompkins Fund 48.244

### K-6 LOOKING AND MAKING ACTIVITIES

**VISUAL ARTS:** Cézanne probably painted this scene from memory in his studio. **Find** clues that he may have done sketches near the real pond beforehand. **Identify** the brushstrokes and the directions in which they are painted.

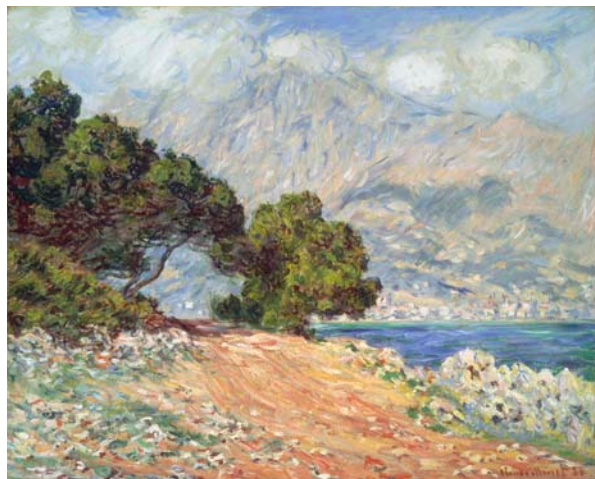
**Pose** groups of people and make sketches of them sitting, lying and standing. In the classroom, use your sketches to compose a painting of the figures in an environment of your choosing. **Select** your colours carefully and use thick brushstrokes like Cézanne's. **Display** your results.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY:** What was it about this style of painting that shocked people in the 1870s? **Research** which styles of art were popular with French audiences in the 1800s before Impressionism. **Compare** examples of these styles with Impressionist works. What do you notice? **Collate** your results and design a chart to show your findings. Which styles do you prefer? Why?

**PDHPE:** What do you think the people in this painting were doing before this scene? What might they do next? Do the characters know each other? **Invent** a conversation that demonstrates their interpersonal relationships.

### 7-12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

- Describe your first impression of this image then analyse the image further. Consider its structural qualities and the treatment of colour, form and line. Discuss the approach to applying paint onto the canvas. Research Cézanne's body of work and develop a case study exploring his vision of structure and solidity.
- Cézanne probably painted this image from memory in his studio after observations from nature. Create a landscape scene in a similar way. Revisit the scene and compare your composition. Which details did you remember and which were forgotten?
- Does your personality influence your way of seeing? Is Cézanne's personality evident in this image? How did Cézanne and Monet perceive the world? Discuss how their painting practices reflect their personal points of view. In what way did these two artists influence artists in the 20th century? Debate in class: Cézanne and Monet became the vanguard for 20th-century painters.



## MONET AND THE TRIUMPH OF IMPRESSIONISM: THE 1880s

Monet's work is one of the great turning points of painting, a commotion, the primacy of light ... Sun-loving, he saw luminosity everywhere, even in shadow, and there was nothing black in the festival he brought along with him, not even coal. André Masson 1952<sup>3</sup>

Claude Monet

**Cap Martin, near Menton** 1884

oil on canvas, 67.2 x 81.6 cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Juliana Cheney Edwards Collection 25.128

### K-6 LOOKING AND MAKING ACTIVITIES

**VISUAL ARTS: List** the shapes Monet uses and identify where they are repeated in different parts of the painting. **Record** the colours Monet uses for the road and the mountain, in particular note how many colours represent white. What effect does this have? **Compare** your experience of seeing a reproduction of this work with seeing the real work in the exhibition.

**Use** ripped tissue, crepe and coloured paper to recreate this painting (or part of it) as a collage. How different would this scene look at different times of the year and day? **Choose** a contrasting time and season and paint or collage your own representation. **Consider** your use of colour and shape.

**PDHPE/SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Locate** Menton on a map. **Find out** more about this region of the French Riviera. Why do you think Monet chose it for a holiday? Is it still popular with tourists? **Design** a poster to advertise Menton as a holiday destination; include details of its health benefits and what you can see and do there. **Research** posters from the 1880s and include aspects of their design in your own.

**DRAMA: Monet** travelled to the Riviera with fellow Impressionist artist, and friend, Pierre-Auguste Renoir to paint together. Based on the subjects of their paintings, where did they go? **Devise** a play about their travels; include details about their journey, transport, destinations and paintings. **Design** scenery and props based on the works of art they made and the equipment they used. **Perform** your play in class.

### 7-12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

- Consider the quote above and discuss why André Masson considered Monet's work a turning point and described his art practice as a 'festival'. Analyse this example to justify your point of view.
- What is your initial response to the work? Consider your reaction to the image as well as the artist who created it. Does the response of a 21st-century audience differ from that of a late 19th-century audience? Discuss how the appreciation of Monet's work changed over time.
- What is the significance of the Barbizon school in terms of Monet's art practice? What role did it have in Monet and his contemporaries forging a modern landscape style?



## MONET AND JAPANESE ART

If you absolutely insist on affiliating me to others, let it be to the old Japanese. The rareness of their taste always appealed to me, and I like the implications of their aesthetic, which evokes a presence by a shadow, an ensemble by a fragment. Claude Monet 1909<sup>4</sup>

Utagawa Hiroshige I

Publisher: Koshimuraya Heisuke

**Kai Province: Monkey Bridge** Japan, Edo period, 1853

woodblock print, ink and colour on paper, 37 x 25.4 cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, William Sturgis Bigelow Collection 11.26224

### K-6 LOOKING AND MAKING ACTIVITIES

**VISUAL ARTS: Find** other examples of Hiroshige's prints. **Discuss** what elements he uses to compose a scene. **Draw** scenes around your school or neighbourhood, and design a print using strong outlines. **Use** lino or scratch foam board to produce your print in black outline (leaving lots of white area). **Hand-colour** the white areas using ink or watercolour paints. **Print** your design in different colour-ways.

**Look** closely at Japanese works in this exhibition. **Observe** the structure of *Kai Province: Monkey Bridge*, particularly the strong diagonals, verticals and outlining. **List** the ways the influence of Japanese art is evident in Monet's paintings. Which aspects does Monet choose not to include? Why do you think that is?

**HSIE: Why** did Japanese art and culture become so popular in the 1860s? **Find** examples of how it influenced other forms of design at this time, such as architecture, furniture, household objects and fashion. **Choose** your favourite example and write a detailed account. Is Japanese art and design still popular today? **Discuss** and find examples.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: Find out** more about Monet's Japanese-inspired garden at Giverny and the paintings he produced there. **Discuss** what you might find in a Japanese garden and what these gardens look like. **Make** your own small Zen garden in a sand tray.

### 7-12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

- Consider this work by Hiroshige and discuss the qualities that might have inspired Monet's art practice, looking specifically at *Port-Goulphar, Belle-Ile* 1887, a work from the Art Gallery of NSW collection in this exhibition. Which elements in Monet's painting have been appropriated from Hiroshige and which are uniquely his own?
- Research the artist Hiroshige and analyse how he captures a sense of place. Create a PowerPoint presentation showing Hiroshige's influence on Monet and the Impressionists and discuss Japonism in late 19th-century Europe.
- Monet owned a collection of Japanese woodblock prints that he displayed in his house at Giverny. Why did he collect these images? Research Monet's life in Giverny and how it was influenced by his fascination with Japanese art. How did this influence his art?





## MONET'S SERIES

These last series mark the limit of Impressionism ... Monet arrived at the last degree of abstraction that the painter's art can sustain, at the utmost limit of the imagination allied to the real. Théodore Duret 1906<sup>5</sup>

Claude Monet

### Charing Cross Bridge (overcast day) 1900

oil on canvas, 60.6 x 91.5 cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, given by Janet Hubbard Stevens in memory of her mother, Janet Watson Hubbard 1978.465

## K-6 LOOKING AND MAKING ACTIVITIES

**VISUAL ARTS: Look** at the way the light is diffused and the colours blend in this painting. What details can you make out? What buildings can you identify?

**Make** sketches of buildings, bridges or other structures and work back into them with paint to blend and develop your scene so it is almost abstracted.

Bridges and water have fascinated many artists. Which Australian artists have painted the Sydney Harbour Bridge? **Find** examples of their work and compare their styles. Do any of these artists use a similar approach to Monet's? **Discuss** how they may have been influenced by him.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY/ MATHS:** What new technological advances helped Monet to travel between France and London's Charing Cross Bridge? What transport is available today to travel between Paris and London? **Choose** three different ways of making this journey and calculate which one is the fastest, which the most economical and which has the smallest carbon footprint.

**ENGLISH: Write** a diary account by Monet of his time in London. **Describe** the weather, the scenes he is painting and how his style is developing. **Record** things that frustrate him and what aspects of his work he is pleased with. **Read** your accounts in class.

## 7-12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

- How does Monet capture the atmosphere and light of London? Is his approach different to works he created in France? Discuss why you think Monet was drawn to London and why he declared his love for the city.
- 'The possibility of summing up the poetry of the universe within the circumscribed space was to become Monet's greatest desire ... as again and again he chose a quite limited subject and subjected it to the power of his vision.'<sup>6</sup> Discuss the meaning of this comment. What role does the subject play in Monet's art? Why do you think he chose to paint in series? Choose a series by Monet and discuss how the subject is subjected to 'the power of his vision'.
- What role have curators, critics and art dealers played in making Monet famous? Is his fame justified? Debate whether Western audiences today can see past his reputation to fully appreciate the significance of his work.



## MONET AND IMPRESSIONISM AFTER 1900

No voluptuousness there, no sentimentality here; the wise and intuitive artist [Degas] does not care to explore the trite and hackneyed view of his subject. A master of drawing, he has sought delicate lines and movements exquisite or grotesque, of a strange new beauty. Stéphane Mallarmé, 1876<sup>7</sup>

Edgar Degas

### Dancer looking at the sole of her right foot

1900-10, cast 1919-21

bronze, cire perdue (lost wax), 48 cm height

Art Gallery of New South Wales, bequest of Paul Haefliger 1982 60.1983

## K-6 LOOKING AND MAKING ACTIVITIES

**VISUAL ARTS: Stand** like the dancer. Could you hold this pose for an artist? **Draw** each other bending, twisting and balancing. **Use** drawings from many different angles to make a clay sculpture over a wire frame of a figure in action. **Try** to make the surface similar to Degas's dancer.

**List** Australian artists who were influenced by the Impressionists and find examples of their work in the Art Gallery of NSW collection.

**MATHS: Imagine** you have been commissioned to produce a large figure sculpture for a public space. **Decide** where it will be and what size would suit. **Make** a practice version (called a maquette) in wire and clay on a smaller scale and measure how much material it takes. **Estimate** how much material would be needed for the public sculpture and how much it will cost.

**MUSIC/ DANCE: Find** examples of drawings and paintings by Degas of dancers. **Research** what music was popular at the time which they may have performed to. **Listen** to some examples. **Choreograph** your own dance to a piece of your choice. Have some of the class perform the dance, while other students sketch the dancers.

## 7-12 FRAMING QUESTIONS

- Compare Monet to Degas. What qualities did they each bring to Impressionism? Why were they placed together in the Impressionist movement by art critics of the time? Consider their approach to painting and subject matter, their goals and what they were reacting to. Choose examples from the exhibition to support your argument.
- How does Degas seize a moment in time? Analyse this sculpture and discuss Degas's approach to capturing a figure in three-dimensional form. Research Western sculpture traditions and discuss how Degas's approach epitomised a new way of thinking.
- Using My Virtual Gallery on the Gallery's website ([www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/mvg](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/mvg)), create an exhibition with text panels of ten artists from the collection, including Degas, using the theme 'Moving sculpture from the 19th to the 20th century'. Write an accompanying catalogue essay outlining the reasons for your selection.