





1 Painter and Gardener

French artist Claude Monet (1840–1926) combined his love of nature and art by creating gardens wherever he lived. Although he spent much of his time in Paris and traveled extensively in France and abroad, Monet preferred the countryside and lived for more than fifty years along the Seine River. His interest in gardening grew over the years, from flowerbeds that brightened his first home at Argenteuil to his magnificent gardens at Giverny, which became a pleasure for the eye, a soothing place to contemplate nature, and a source of inspiration.

Monet was especially fond of drawing and painting his own gardens. Over and over again, he showed the ways light, weather, season, and time of day visually changed them. By directly observing nature, Monet captured the momentary effects of light and atmosphere on canvas.

“My garden is slow work, pursued by love, and I do not deny that I am proud of it.” Claude Monet

above: Claude Monet by his waterlily pond at Giverny (detail), summer 1905 (photo: Jacques-Ernest Bulloz), gelatin silver print, Réunion Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY

right: Claude Monet in his garden, Giverny (Eure), c. 1915–1920 © Pierre Choumoff / Roger-Viollet

In 1903 Monet added a trellis over the bridge and draped it with purple and white wisteria.

2 At Giverny

In 1883 Monet and his family moved to a former cider farm in Giverny, a small town about thirty-five miles northwest of Paris. He lived there for the rest of his life. At his new home, Monet created a spectacular garden that became the main source of inspiration for his later paintings. The garden was also a living work of art in its own right.

At Giverny, Monet converted part of the farmhouse into a studio, and he transformed the vegetable garden and the neglected two acres surrounding it into complex flowerbeds. He carefully planned out his garden to be beautiful and different as the seasons changed, planting a wide range of annuals, perennials, bulbs, and vines so there were blooms from early spring through late fall. With a painter’s eye, Monet thoughtfully arranged plants according to color and height. He liked the flowerbeds to be dense and abundant, overflowing with plants, and he built arbors, trellises, and arches to carry the blossoming color up to the sky.

An enthusiastic and skilled gardener, Monet read horticultural publications, traded seeds, and collected books on gardening. Eventually, the grounds at Giverny became too much for Monet to manage alone, and he hired a team of gardeners. Strict about upkeep, Monet wrote detailed instructions as to when and where to plant seeds and how to prune the shrubs, and he inspected the garden daily.



"My heart is always at Giverny." Claude Monet

4 The Japanese Footbridge



Claude Monet, *The Japanese Footbridge*, 1899, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Gift of Victoria Nebeker Coberly, in memory of her son John W. Mudd, and Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg

3 A Water Garden

In 1892 Monet bought a piece of land across the road from his house for an ambitious project—to create a water garden. Diverting a small stream, he formed a pool and surrounded it with an artful arrangement of flowers, reeds, willow trees, and bushes. The surface of the pond was covered with waterlilies.

Monet was fascinated by water and the way reflections constantly change on its surface. He insisted that his gardeners keep the pond very clean—he even made them dust its surface—so reflections of clouds and sky, trees and shrubs, would appear clearly on the water. The water garden became the focus of Monet's art for the last twenty-five years of his career. He created more than 250 paintings of the waterlily pond.

The water garden at Giverny was inspired in part by the distant country of Japan. Monet greatly admired Japanese paintings and prints, especially the landscapes of Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige that he saw in shops in Paris. He amassed a collection of more than two hundred prints and decorated the walls of his home at Giverny with them. Monet planted Japanese peonies and bamboo around the curving banks of the waterlily pond to evoke the feeling of a Japanese garden. He built an arched, wooden footbridge based on the bridges he studied in Japanese prints.

Painted in the summertime, *The Japanese Footbridge* is one of a series of views Monet made in 1899. The pond nearly fills the canvas, and the sky is indicated only through its reflection on the water. Pink, yellow, and white lilies float on the shimmering surface of the pond, and the foliage and grasses along the banks are mirrored in the water. Spanning the width of the painting, the bridge arcs over the water with its curved reflection below.



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858), *The Drum Bridge from the Wisteria Arbor on the Precincts of the Tenjin Shrine at Kameido*, 1856, from *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio, Mary A. Ainsworth Bequest, 1950

A master artist of woodblock prints, Hiroshige depicted the contemporary life and landscape of Japan, including famous sites such as the Tenjin Shrine.

"I have always loved sky and water, leaves and flowers. . . . I found them in abundance in my little pond." Claude Monet

explore more

Rouen Cathedral

The lily pond at Giverny wasn't the only place that Claude Monet painted repeatedly. He created several groups of paintings in which he explored the color, light, and form of a single subject at various times of day: haystacks, poplar trees, views in Venice and London, and the cathedral at Rouen in France.

In the winter of 1892 and 1893, Monet rented rooms across from Rouen Cathedral to paint the view of its looming Gothic façade at different times of day. He then reworked the canvases from memory in his studio at Giverny through 1894, making more than thirty paintings in all.

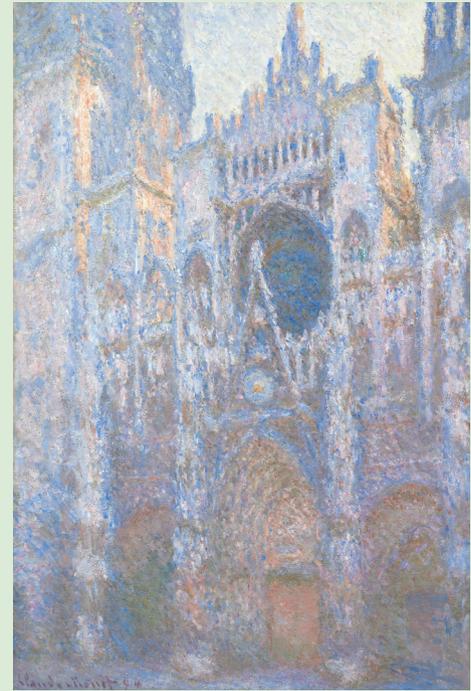
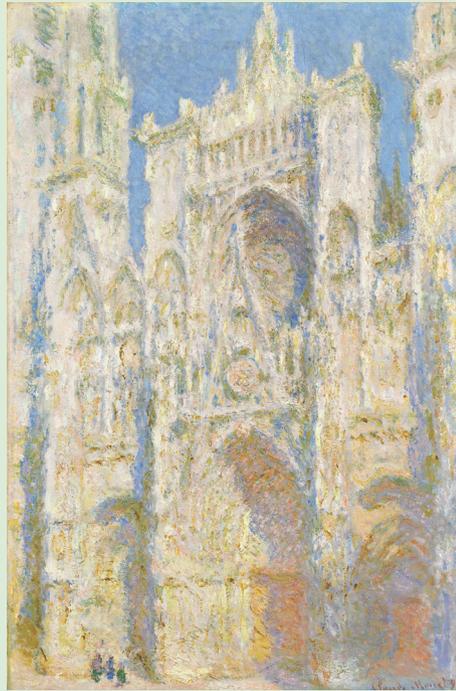
Monet was impressed with the way light creates a distinct mood at different times of day and year and as weather conditions change. In the Rouen Cathedral series, Monet studied how sunlight transformed the façade of the church, with the ever-changing light playing off the stone architecture.

Look at these two paintings

How do they compare in terms of subject matter, mood, feeling, color, shape, texture, and point of view? List five to ten things that the paintings have in common. Then, list as many differences between the works.

"Everything changes, even stone."

Claude Monet



Draw a series

Create your own series of views based on the same subject. Choose a favorite outdoor place, such as a view of your home, school, or neighborhood, that you can observe at different times of the year. Draw the scene using paints, pastels, or colored pencils. Carefully observe the colors and shadows, and try to capture a particular moment in time. Repeat this activity several times at different times of day or season. Examine how light changes the scene, and experiment with different ways of capturing these effects with color.

Reflect: What choices might you make as an artist to express the way a place looks and feels at a particular moment in time?



top left: Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral, West Façade, Sunlight*, 1894, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Collection

top right: Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral, West Façade*, 1894, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Collection

bottom: West façade of Rouen Cathedral, Clarence Ward Archive, Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library