Exhibition
Monet’s Garden in Giverny: Inventing the Landscape

May 1st – August 15, 2009
May 1st – August 15, 2009  
Curator: Marina Ferretti-Bocquillon

During the 1880s, the French Impressionist group began to disband, and artists worked in isolation from one another. The apparent spontaneity which characterized their pictures gave way to a working method that was more meditative and complex. After several difficult years, Claude Monet’s career took a favorable turn when he settled in Giverny in 1883. It was there that he began to encounter true success and to be recognized as one of the major painters of his time. For Monet, this new life began with a profound renewal of his work. After having earned attention as the initiator of impressionism – the most significant artistic revolution of the nineteenth century – Monet would become one of the major French painters of the twentieth century. His garden in Giverny was at the heart of this evolution. Inventing a motif that he would paint for the rest of his life, the artist in effect reversed the traditional approach of the landscape painter.

The exhibition is divided into three sections and will include approximately thirty paintings, thirty photographs and numerous archival documents. Entirely devoted to the garden of Giverny, the exhibition will emphasize this essential phase in the artistic career of Claude Monet.

This exhibition received exceptional loans from the Musée d’Orsay.

Conference
Tuesday 12th May  
Le Garden of Monet: The invention of the Landscape Jardin  by Marina Ferretti, Curator ot the exhibition (auditorium of the Musée d’Orsay)

Sunday 17th May  
Claude Monet by Pascal Bonnafoux
15 h au musée des impressionnismes Giverny

Sunday 14th June  
The Water Lilies, a Work in situ by Philippe Piguet, art critic, critique d’art 15 h (auditorium of the Musée des impressionnismes Giverny)
1. Inventing the Landscape (1883-1904)

Monet had always loved to paint nature and gardens, and, in Giverny, for the first time, he had the chance to design his own garden. In the original “Clos Normand”, he organized a series of extraordinary, abundant flowerbeds. He then created a fascinating water garden where nature and its reflection were inextricably intertwined. The development of the garden was slow and laborious: Monet had to acquire land and face lengthy administrative procedures. These transformations lasted approximately twenty years – from 1883 to 1904 – and the artist again modified the contours of the pond in 1910. During this time, Monet painted his first series: poplars, grainstacks, cathedrals, and the “morning on the Seine” in the area near his house. He also travelled to find new motifs, notably to Bordighera, Norway, Holland and London. But, with the exception of a few works painted between 1887 and 1897, he did not yet explore the pictorial possibilities of his garden. The exhibition traces its development, step by step, through photographs, letters and archival documents.
2. Monet, Painter of the Twentieth Century (1899-1926)

Everything changed at the turn of the century. In 1899, Monet began to paint his Giverny garden, and it quickly became his favorite subject. The format of his canvases – round, square, or elongated – became increasingly varied and increasingly large. The compositions, often off-center, became less easy to read. Progressively, Monet invented a new pictorial language; henceforth he worked slowly and with great difficulty as his correspondence demonstrates. Less and less objective, his paintings were completed or produced entirely in his studio. At the beginning of the 1910s, the artist devoted himself to the large decorative canvases that would develop into the ensemble at the Orangerie. Although American abstract painters of the 1950s declared themselves his heirs, Monet never abandoned subject matter. The immersion in nature and the proximity to the garden were necessary for him. Such closeness to nature inspired a powerful lyricism which was absent from his early impressionist works. In Giverny, Monet stopped being the painter of modern life and became the champion of luxuriant nature.

3. The Creation of a persona (1905-1926)

Monet, who had invented impressionism in painting La Grenouillère side by side with Auguste Renoir in 1869, rarely permitted other painters to represent his garden. Instead it remained almost exclusively “his” subject. On the other hand, numerous photographs depict him in his garden. In 1905, Louis Vauxcelles published the first photographs of the garden where the artist posed as a gentleman-farmer, a figure that would be replaced quickly by that of the patriarch of Giverny imposing himself on posterity. The final photographs of Monet in his garden were taken by Nicholas Murray around 1926. With the eyes of the artist hidden behind dark glasses, these pictures irresistibly evoke the figure of Homer, the blind poet. Approximately thirty photographs will attest to the creation of the new public image of the artist.
Born in Paris in 1840, Claude MONET spent his adolescent years in Le Havre where he met artists Eugène Boudin and Johan Barthold Jongkind who taught him plein air painting. In 1859, he enrolled at the Académie Suisse in Paris where he met Camille Pissarro. Then from 1862 through 1864, he pursued his training in the studio of Charles Gleyre and became friends with Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, Frédéric Bazille.

From 1872 to 1878, he settled in Argenteuil. In 1874, Monet, Paul Cézanne, Armand Guillaumin, Berthe Morisot, Renoir, Pissarro, Sisley and Edgar Degas organized the inaugural exhibition of the Impressionist movement at the photography studio of Félix Nadar. Monet exhibited Impression Sunrise (Paris, musée Marmottan) and attracted the irony of the critic Louis Leroy who entitled his article “The Exhibition of Impressionists”. In 1877, he began a series of paintings in and around the Saint-Lazare train station. The following summer, he moved to Vétheuil with his wife Camille, their two sons, and the Hoschedé family. In 1881, after the death of his wife, Monet settled in Poissy with Alice Hoschedé. Here he endlessly explored the changing light throughout the day on this little branch of the Seine.

In 1883 Claude Monet moved to the village of Giverny with Alice Hoschedé where he would live until his death in 1926. Monet rented and then acquired the house of the “Pressoir” surrounded by an extended garden. During the following years, he continued to travel in Normandy, Brittany, on the Mediterranean coast and in the Creuse, in the center of France. His friends visited him often – artists and writers like Renoir, Pissarro, Cézanne, Georges Clemenceau, Octave Mirbeau…
Monet played an important role in the beginning of the Giverny artists’ colony although he did not invite artists to work in the village. His famous series of haystacks from 1891 immediately attracted the attention of artists and many colonists chose to depict the same subject, perhaps as a tribute to the French master. In Argenteuil and Vétheuil, Monet painted views of the gardens he had cultivated himself; while in Giverny, this enterprise would take on another dimension. He transformed the orchard, known as the Clos Normand into a garden of flowerbeds. In 1893 he purchased a strip of land on the other side of the railroad to create his water garden to which he added a Japanese bridge in 1895. In 1901, he acquired yet more land to enlarge his pond. From 1916 to 1926, Monet devoted himself to the large, mural-sized paintings of waterlilies (the “Grandes Décorations”) for the Orangerie in the Tuileries Gardens in Paris.

Monet died December 5 1926 in Giverny. May 17 1927, The Grandes Décorations were inaugurated in the Orangerie.
This catalogue relates the elaboration of a garden that is unique in the world and attests to the garden’s importance in the evolution of Claude Monet’s art. The catalogue is published on the occasion of the exhibition “Monet’s Garden in Giverny: Inventing the landscape” at the Musée des Impressionnismes Giverny May 1st through August 15th, 2009.

It contains three texts by eminent specialists, Marina Ferretti Bocquillon, Françoise Heilbrun and Gabrielle van Zuylen, as well as a detailed chronology established by Vanessa Lecomte. The catalogue includes numerous color reproductions, including all the works in the exhibition as well as a large selection of documents and archives.
The Authors

Specialist of Impressionism and post-impressionism, Marina Ferretti Bocquillon is curator at the Musée des Impressionnismes Giverny. She is affiliated with the Musée d’Orsay, and with the city of Cannet for the creation of the Musée Bonnard, and she is also responsible for the Signac Archives. Co-author with Françoise Cachin of the catalogue raisonné of Paul Signac paintings, she has published many essays and studies, including Signac aquarelliste in 2001, L’Impressionnisme (« Que sais-je ? ») in 2004 and Seurat et le dessin néo-impressionniste in 2005. She has organized numerous exhibitions in France and abroad, in particular Signac (Grand Palais, Vincent van Gogh Museum and Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), Le Néoimpressionnisme. De Seurat à Paul Klee (musée d’Orsay, 2005), Bonnard photographe/Bonnard photographié (Le Cannet, Espace Bonnard, 2007), and Seurat, Signac et le néoimpressionnisme (Palazzo Reale de Milan, 2008).
François Heilbrun, chief curator of the Musée d’Orsay, created the photographic collections of the museum. Among her publications are the exhibition catalogues Charles Nègre (Musée du Luxembourg, 1980), Félix Nadar (Musée d’Orsay, 1994), New York et l’art moderne, Alfred Stieglitz et son cercle (1905-1930) (Musée d’Orsay, 2004). She recently published La photographie au musée d’Orsay, (Musée d’Orsay, 2008). She has explored the relationship between photography and painting in numerous books and essays: Petit Larousse de la peinture (Paris, 1979), Un jour à la campagne, l’impressionnisme et le paysage français (Grand Palais, 1984) and Le paysage des impressionnistes (Paris, Hazan, 1986). She has also written and edited monographic texts and catalogues, such as Bonnard photographe (musée d’Orsay, 1987), Henri Rivière (Musée d’Orsay, 1987), Charles Nègre-Das Photografische Werk (Munich, Schirmer Mosel ,1988), Actes du colloque Degas (Musée d’Orsay, 1991) and, more recently, Gauguin-Tahiti (Grand Palais, 2004), Impressionnisme et naissance du cinématographe (Musée des Beaux Arts de Lyon, 2005), Maurice Denis intime, photographies (Musée d’Orsay, 2006).

Gabrielle van Zuylen, born in France, studied in the United States. An historian of gardens, she has published with Anita Péreire an important book entitled Jardins privés en France (1984), with a preface by Russel Page. This first book received an award from the Académie française. Her second book Les Jardins de Russel Page (1992) was awarded the prize « best book on gardens » by the Garden Writers Association of America, in 1991. Member of the International Dendrological Society and of Amateur Gardeners, she has received the honor of Chevalier de l’Ordre national du Mérite Agricole. She is herself a gardener. She is also the author of Tous les jardins du monde (1994).
Monet moves to Giverny and rents a house named « Le Pressoir » which he purchases seven years later. He settles his family there, together with Alice Hoschedé and her children. He soon devotes the kitchen garden and the orchard ( “Clos normand”) entirely to flowers in order to paint them in poor weather.

Monet paints in Bordighera and responds to the luxurious vegetation of its Mediterranean gardens. In the following years Monet travels frequently throughout France. He continues to paint Giverny and its surroundings but does not paint his garden.

A joint show with Rodin in Georges Petit’s gallery achieves success and heralds Monet’s more comfortable circumstances.


Monet builds greenhouses on the property and continues to transform the garden. On July 16, 1892, he marries Alice Hoschedé (nee Raingo).

Monet purchases a tract of land adjoining a minor tributary of the Epte River, the Ru, located beyond the railroad tracks at the bottom of his property. He undertakes the creation of a pond, installs a water trough from the Ru and has two footbridges built across the new pond. As early as 1894, Monet orders water lilies from the Latour-Marliac horticultural catalogues. Subsequently the garden and its pond become Monet’s primary concern.

Monet has a new building erected on his property and devotes the ground floor to accommodate the gardeners he has hired.

Monet begins to paint the series of Japanese Bridges.

Monet paints the lily pond as well as the orchard and the central path of the garden. His exhibition at Durand-Ruel’s, Paris (November 22 – December 15, 1900) features 26 canvases including 13 showing the lily pond and the water lilies.
Monet purchases another tract of land bordering the Ru, which allows him to extend the pond. On November 13, 1901, he is granted permission to divert the Ru into his property.

Monet begins the second series of Water Lilies paintings.

The Japanese bridge is equipped with a trellis for wisteria plants; Monet places a second order of water lilies from Latour-Marliac plant nurseries.

Photographs of Monet’s garden are published for the first time - to illustrate an article by Louis Vauxcelles in L’Art et les Artistes.

48 canvases are exhibited in a solo show at Durand-Ruel’s gallery in Paris, “Water Lilies. Series of water landscapes by Claude Monet”.

Begins work to enlarge the lily pond.

Alice Monet, Monet’s second wife, dies.

Monet is diagnosed with cataracts.

Clemenceau and other friends encourage Monet to paint an ensemble of large panels inspired by the lily pond; Monet has a third studio built on his property.

Cataract trouble gradually damages Monet’s eyesight.

La Chronique des Arts announces that Monet intends to donate twelve large canvases of the water garden to the State. Depressed, Monet tries to withdraw his donation in 1921.

Monet undergoes a cataract operation that partially restores sight in his right eye. During the summer, he has another operation on his eyes, after which his vision is veiled and colours are distorted. In November, Monet resumes painting.

Monet dies in Giverny.

The Water Lilies of the Orangerie are officially inaugurated.
Thérèse Bonney, Claude Monet near the Water Garden
Ca. 1920, tirage original, 17.4 x 22.8 cm
© Paris, Musée Clemenceau

Thérèse Bonney, Claude Monet on the Japanese Bridge in his Giverny Garden, vers 1920, tirage original, 22.5 x 17.4 cm, © collection du musée Clemenceau

Georges Clemenceau, Claude Monet, and Lily Butler, 1921, Original Silver Print, 19.8 x 24.5 cm, © Paris, Musée Clemenceau

Nickolas Muray, Claude Monet seated in this garden in Giverny, 1926
Original Silver print, 19 x 23.5 cm. © Paris, Musée Clemenceau

Etienne Clémentel, Claude Monet Standing before the Water Lilies in the Giverny Garden, vers 1920, autochrome, © musée d’Orsay, Dist RMN © Patrice Schmidt

Anonymous, Claude Monet before his House in Giverny, 1921
Autochrome
© Musée d’Orsay, Dist RMN - © Patrice Schmidt

Claude Monet, The Water Lily, Symphony in green
1899, Oil on canvas , 89 x 93.5 cm
© musée d’Orsay, Dist RMN
© Hervé Lewandowski

Thérèse Bonney, Claude Monet near the Water Lilies, ca. 1914
Oil on canvas
Private Collection 135 x 145 cm
© All rights reserved

John Leslie Breck, Jardin à Giverny (Dans le jardin de Monet), c.1887, huile sur toile, 46 x 55.6 cm
© Terra Foundation for American Art, Chicago, Collection Daniel J. Terra

Claude Monet, Water Lilies, 1904
Oil on canvas, 87 x 93 cm
© Paris, Musée d’Orsay, Dist RMN © Hervé Lewandowski

Claude Monet, The Artist’s Garden, 1920, Oil on canvas, 81 x 92 cm, © Musée d’Orsay, Dist RMN © Patrice Schmidt

Claude Monet, Water Lilies, 1904, Oil on canvas, 87 x 93 cm, Ville du Havre, Musée Malraux © Florian Kleinfeinf
Musée des Impressionnismes
Giverny
99 rue Claude Monet
27620 Giverny
02 32 51 94 65
www.mdig.fr

INFORMATION
Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m
From May 1 to July 13: open daily.
From July 14 to October 31: open Tuesdays through Sundays
Galleries will be closed from August 16 to August 22

Free entrance on the 1st Sunday of the month
Free under 12 years
Adults: 5.50 € Reduced price: 3 / 4 €