

ใบงานที่ 7

CLAUDE MONET: MASTERPIECES OF ART

Claude Monet : Evolution of a Master



The Water Lily Pond with the Japanese Bridge, 1899, Oil on canvas, 89.5 x 91.5 cm , Private Collection

Water Lilies

Monet had bought a parcel of land on the other side of the railway line at the bottom of his garden at Giverny. In a small pond there, he planted new hybrid types of water lilies and over the pond built a bridge – seen in his 1899 painting *The Water Lily Pond with the Japanese Bridge* - whose design was borrowed from the Japanese prints he had collected over the years. In 1901, he greatly increased the size of the pond and filled it with water lilies. It became the template for his last great challenge - a series depicting the water lilies and the water in which they grew, but above all showing the effects of the light and atmosphere upon them.

In 1909, when Durand-Ruel exhibited 48 of Monet's water lily paintings, they were received rapturously by the critics, many of whom suggested that the series should be kept together. Monet agreed. He had already conceived of a circular room in which they should be displayed.

Personal Difficulties

There were personal trials ahead, however. In May 1911, Alice died of leukaemia and Monet, now 70 years old, was distraught. A few months later he learned that he had cataracts on his eyes. They did not necessitate immediate surgery, but his vision was impaired, especially his sense of colour.

Assisted by Blanche Hoschede, the second daughter of Ernest and Alice, who looked after her stepfather until his death, Monet persevered with the water lily paintings, despite his failing vision, and in 1914 built a new studio big enough to hold the large panels. By 1918, he had completed 30 paintings, but although everyone adored them, he refused to part with them. Only when victory in the First World War was announced did he write to his old friend, French prime minister Georges Clemenceau, to offer two of the panels to the nation in celebration of her victory. When Clemenceau suggested that Monet donate the entire project to the nation, the artist agreed to hand over 12 water lily panels, but only on condition that they be displayed in a circular or oval setting. Finally, the Orangerie, a building near the Louvre in Paris, was agreed upon and in 1922, Monet signed the contract.

His eyesight was now failing badly and he agreed to an operation. By September 1923, his vision was much improved, although he was still having problems with colours. He remedied this by working very close to the surface of the canvas.

Monet kept re-painting the water lilies and even when the re-design of the Orangerie was completed, he still would not part with them. During the winter of 1925-26, however, his lifelong chain-smoking caught up with him when he was found to be suffering from lung cancer. Claude Monet died, aged 86, on 5 December 1926 and the water lilies finally became the property of France.