









# **50 MODERN ARTISTS**

**YOU SHOULD KNOW**



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**Christiane Weidemann  
Christine Nippe**

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Front cover from top to bottom:

Roy Lichtenstein, *M-Maybe (A Girl's Picture)*, see page 118

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Fax +44 (0)20 7636-8004

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1804 Napoleon Bonaparte becomes Emperor of the French

1848 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels publish Communist Manifesto

1865 Abolition of slavery in the United States

1785 1790 1795 1800 1805 1810 1815 1820 1825 1830 1835 1840 1845 1850 1855 1860 1865 1870



James McNeill Whistler, *Arrangement in Gray and Black: Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, 1871, oil on canvas, 144.3 x 165.2 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris

1886 Statue of Liberty erected on Liberty Island, New York Harbor

1900 Freud's *Die Traumdeutung* (Interpretation of Dreams)

1908 First Model-T Ford produced in Detroit

1912 Titanic disaster

1914–1918 World War I

1927 Lindbergh flies solo across the Atlantic

1939–1945 World War II

1875 1880 1885 1890 1895 1900 1905 1910 1915 1920 1925 1930 1935 1940 1945 1950 1955 1960

# JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

*James McNeill Whistler is considered the first major American artist to earn an international reputation. He played an important part in popularizing Impressionism in Great Britain and North America. Whistler interpreted the Impressionist style in an original way, linking it with elements of Symbolism.*

## Pared-Down Landscape Panoramas

Born in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1834, Whistler spent part of his childhood in St. Petersburg, Russia. He lived in Europe from 1855, mostly in England, but sometimes in France, where, like many Impressionists, he enrolled at the studio of Charles Gleyre. Most influential on him, however, were his encounters with realist painter Gustave Courbet and the avant-garde artists close to him, including Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas.

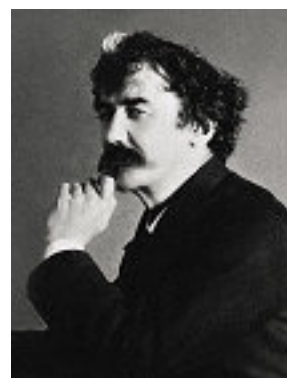
Later, in England, Whistler increasingly moved away from realism. He was particularly interested in Japanese art, a fashion that became widespread in Europe from 1860. One of the high points of that period of his career is the painting *Variations in Violet and Green*, which demonstrates a new kind of landscape picture developed under the influence of the Far East. In many of his works, he reduced the landscape to almost empty panoramas, thereby coming close to abstract representation. This made Whistler an important model for British printmaking, which he helped revitalize in the second half of the 19th century.

## Musical Works

Whistler also established a reputation as a portrait painter; one of his best-known works is *Arrangement in Gray and Black: Portrait of the Artist's Mother*. At the end of the 1870s, he did a series of nocturnal views called *Nocturnes*, including numerous views of the Thames, generally in monochromatic coloration. The subject matter recalls the Impressionist preference for urban landscapes and watercourses, but unlike those artists Whistler was mainly concerned with the harmony and aesthetics of color. In the *Nocturnes*, he attempted to render music in painting. To emphasize purely aesthetic functions, he had already begun to give his works musical designations such as “symphony” or “harmony.” The linking of art and music was not without influence on subsequent painters. Even Whistler's

design for the Peacock Room in a private London house was of art-historical importance. The decoration he did there for art collector Frederick Richards Leyland is considered a precursor of Art Nouveau.

Whistler had a certain combative streak. The personalities in French or British cultural life with whom the eccentric artist struck up an acquaintance or friendship—before ultimately dropping them—were legion. He hit the headlines in 1878 with his libel suit against art critic John Ruskin. Although Whistler won his case, the derisory damages and high court costs bankrupted him.



- 1834 Born on July 11 in Lowell, Massachusetts
- 1843 Moves with his family to St. Petersburg, Russia
- 1851–1854 Attends the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York
- 1855 Moves to Paris
- 1859 Moves to London
- 1877 Decorates the “Peacock Room”
- 1878 Sues Ruskin for libel; begins his first experiments in lithography
- 1879 Declares bankruptcy; sells his London property and possessions
- 1880 Departs for Venice
- 1885 Presents the “Ten O’Clock” lecture in Princess Hall, London
- 1890 Publishes *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*
- 1901 Closes his studio in Paris
- 1903 Dies on July 17 in London

James McNeill Whistler, December 1878, photograph, Whistler Collections, University Library, Glasgow



above

James McNeill Whistler, *Symphony in Gray: Early Morning, Thames*, 1871, oil on canvas, 45.7 x 67.3 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

right page

James McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Blue and Gold—Old Battersea Bridge*, 1872–77, oil on canvas, 68.3 x 51.1 cm, Tate Gallery, London





1826 First photograph

1857 *Madame Bovary*  
(Gustave Flaubert)1871 Prussian  
armies  
occupy Paris

1790 1795 1800 1805 1810 1815 1820 1825 1830 1835 1840 1845 1850 1855 1860 1865 1870 1875



Paul Cézanne, *Hortense Fiquet in a Red Dress*, 1888–90, oil on canvas, 116.5 x 89.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



1887–1889 Construction of Eiffel Tower in Paris    1901 \* Walt Disney    1914–1918 World War I  
1897–1899 First *Water Lilies* (Claude Monet)  
1888 *Sunflowers* (Vincent van Gogh)    1905/11 Founding of “Die Brücke” and “Der Blaue Reiter” groups of artists

1880    1885    1890    1895    1900    1905    1910    1915    1920    1925    1930    1935    1940    1945    1950    1955    1960    1965

# PAUL CÉZANNE

*“Cézanne is the father of us all.”—Pablo Picasso*

*“I am the forerunner of the new art. And I sense my work will be continued.”—Paul Cézanne*

Paul Cézanne is considered the uncontested master of Post-Impressionism, and at the same time the crucial innovator to whom the Cubists, Fauves, and Expressionists owed the essential features of their art.

After going to the lycée and art school in his hometown of Aix-en-Provence, in the south of France, Cézanne attended law school. He soon gave this up, however, to move to Paris in 1861 and enroll as a student at the Académie Suisse, an independent atelier that constituted a kind of alternative to the official academy of art. His encounter there with Impressionists associated with Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, and Edgar Degas proved all-important. Cézanne changed his palette completely, and instead of the dark tones he had used to that point, he now experimented with light, brilliant colors. Unlike the Impressionist painters, however, he was not trying to record transitory visual moments, but rather to render the essence and permanence of visual phenomena. His application of paint was also less spontaneous than that of the Impressionists. Evolving a picture was much more of a persevering struggle for Cézanne, involving a decidedly time-consuming process.

## Moving on from Impressionism

From the 1870s, Cézanne focused on landscapes and still lifes in which he sought to reduce visual objects to their basic geometric forms. In 1877, he abandoned Impressionist techniques in order to go his own way in the seclusion of Provence. Among his most famous subjects is Mont Sainte-Victoire, an impressive limestone ridge close to his hometown, which he painted directly from nature in drawings, oil paintings, and watercolors. Like his still lifes, the landscape paintings manifestly strive for a progressive simplification of elements, as Cézanne depicts houses as cubes, trees as cylinders, and the mountain as shapes layered on top of each other. He produced the impression of depth not, as was

customary, through lines and contours, but rather through the contrast between warm and cool colors. He defined objects with color, then gave them firm outlines.

## Harmony by Design

Cézanne’s painting *Les Grandes Baigneuses*, done shortly before his death, may be considered his intellectual legacy. The purely abstract approach adopted by artists later in the 20th century can already be discerned in the structure of facets and shapes in this work. For Cézanne, works of art were independent worlds of color and shape, “harmony parallel to nature”; he sought not to imitate his subjects but rather to represent them, so as to bring out their internal essence. This conviction would become an essential basis of modernism.



- 1839 Born on January 19 in Aix-en-Provence, France
- 1852 Makes friends with the future novelist Émile Zola
- 1861 Cézanne moves to Paris for the first time
- 1869 Meets his lover, Hortense Fiquet
- 1870 Lives in the fishing village of L’Estaque during the Franco-Prussian War
- 1872 Cézanne’s son Paul born
- 1886 Breaks off contact with Émile Zola. Marries Hortense in April.
- 1895 Cézanne’s first major exhibition held in Paris
- 1900 His pictures are also shown in Germany
- 1906 Dies on October 22 in his birthplace, Aix-en-Provence



Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves*, 1902–04, oil on canvas, 69.8 x 89.5 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Collection George W. Elkins



Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Drapery*,  
1898/99, oil on canvas, 54.7 x 74 cm,  
Hermitage, St. Petersburg



1826 First photograph

1837 Victoria becomes queen of  
the United Kingdom1871 Prussian  
armies  
occupy Paris

1790 1795 1800 1805 1810 1815 1820 1825 1830 1835 1840 1845 1850 1855 1860 1865 1870 1875



Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*,  
1872, oil on canvas, 49.5 x 65 cm,  
Musée Marmottan, Paris

1888 *Sunflowers* (Vincent van Gogh)  
1887–1889 Construction of Eiffel Tower  
in Paris

1914–1918 World War I

1921 Einstein awarded Nobel Prize for Physics

1905/11 Founding of “Die Brücke” and  
“Der Blaue Reiter” groups of artists

1927 Lindbergh flies solo across  
the Atlantic

1880 1885 1890 1895 1900 1905 1910 1915 1920 1925 1930 1935 1940 1945 1950 1955 1960 1965

# CLAUDE MONET

*In his long artistic career, Claude Monet was an intermediary between tradition and modernism. While considered one of the main representatives of Impressionism, which he helped to establish, he also transcended the Impressionist style in his later work.*

During the 19th century, it was repeatedly and loudly asserted that artists could adequately render nature only by directly viewing it. But it was only the Impressionists, and in particular Monet, who managed to carry this through with conviction. Indeed, even during his training as a young artist in Le Havre (where he had grown up from 1845), in northwest France, and later in Paris, Monet was a champion of open-air painting. In this, he was united with Alfred Sisley, Auguste Renoir, and other like-minded artists who joined him for painting sessions in the forest of Fontainebleau, south of Paris. It was during this period (1865–66) that he created his famous painting *Déjeuner sur l’Herbe*.

## Snapshots

Monet’s pursuit of a modern visual idiom in his early works resulted in Impressionism. In 1874, he showed his work *Impression, Sunrise* at the first group exhibition with his fellow artists. Critic Louis Leroy believed that “wallpapers at a very early stage [are] more finished than this seascape.” (He also described all of the artists mockingly as “Impressionists,” thereby giving the group its name.) The painting is an exemplary demonstration of the fundamental Impressionist principle of only aiming to render what is purely visible. In his view of the Seine estuary near Le Havre, Monet records not the objects themselves, but rather the impression he gets of them. He shows the port in a bluish haze so that ships and boats, cranes and chimneys can only be dimly perceived, just as they appeared at the moment of recording.

## The Painter of Light

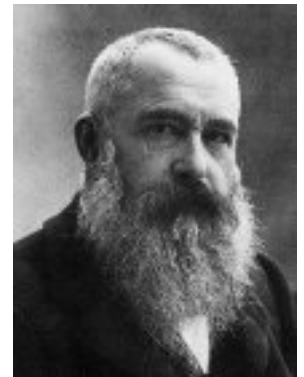
Monet was interested in light, color, and changing nature. From 1872 to 1878, he lived in Argenteuil-sur-Seine, where he did paintings of bridges and boats, views of town and country, and family scenes in the garden. This was the heyday of Impressionism. Monet attributed an intrinsic importance to every

object, and he selected the relevant shade of color without regard to the total effect of the work. He aimed to show how light changes colors and also influences the perception of reality.

Monet’s efforts to do justice to the constantly changing impressions of reality led him to abandon Impressionist techniques from 1880. His light, bright paintings gave way to works in dark tones, often showing cliffs and coastal landscapes in extreme weather conditions. After the painter had settled in the small village of Giverny, near Paris, in 1883, he began to work on series involving a single subject at different times of day—haystacks, poplars, or Rouen Cathedral.

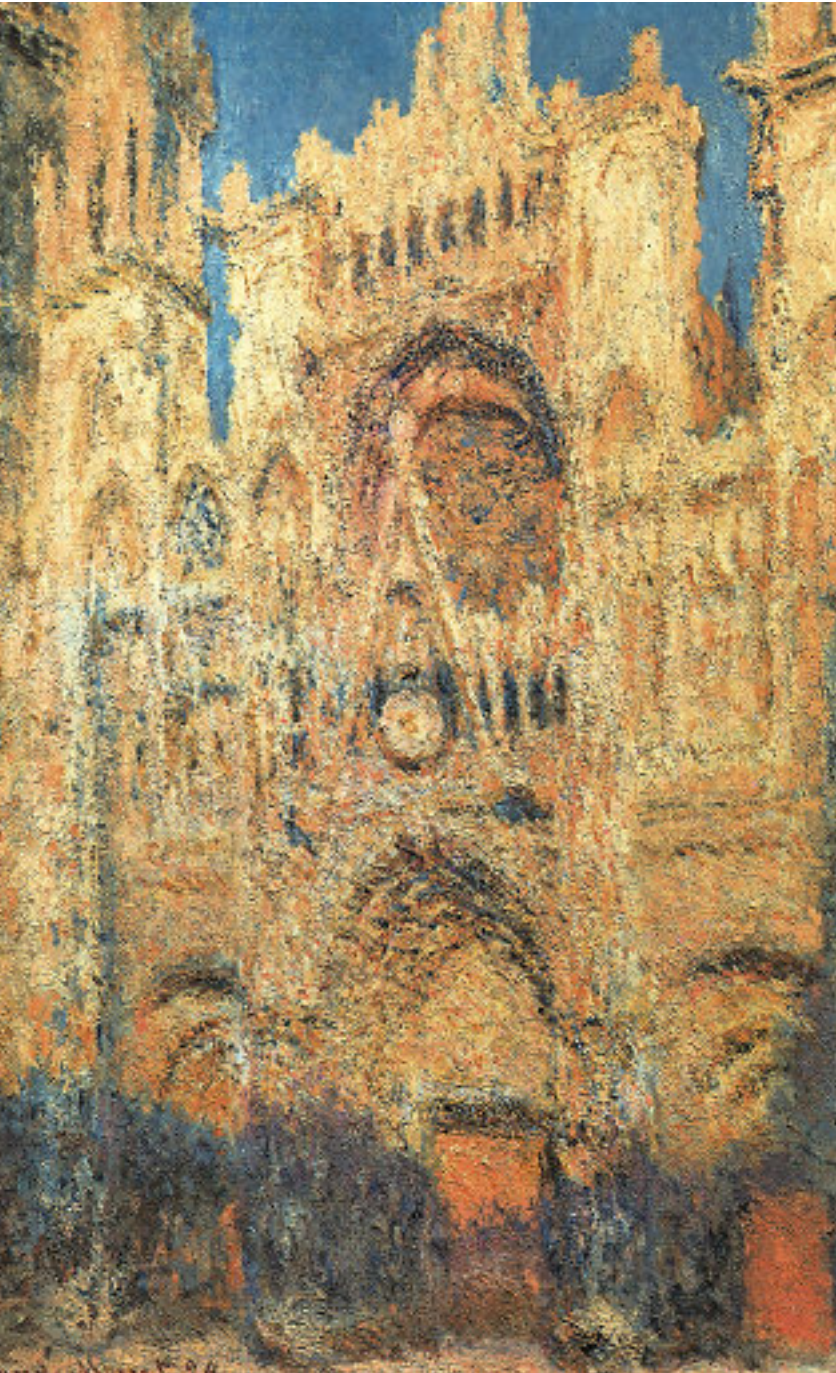
## Dissolution of Shapes

In the garden of his estate in Giverny, Monet also found the subject matter—water lilies—that would represent the greater part of his late work. As his eyesight steadily deteriorated, he often worked on canvases up to 6 meters (20 feet) wide, producing a radical rendering of what he saw in terms of pure surface. These landscapes of water and water lilies—lacking a horizon and devoid of any firmly outlined structure or perspective—come across as pictures of a peaceful, ideal world. Created apart from contemporary avant-garde developments, they were long neglected by critics and other artists. It was only in the 1950s that these expressive pictures were rediscovered, especially by the Abstract Expressionists.



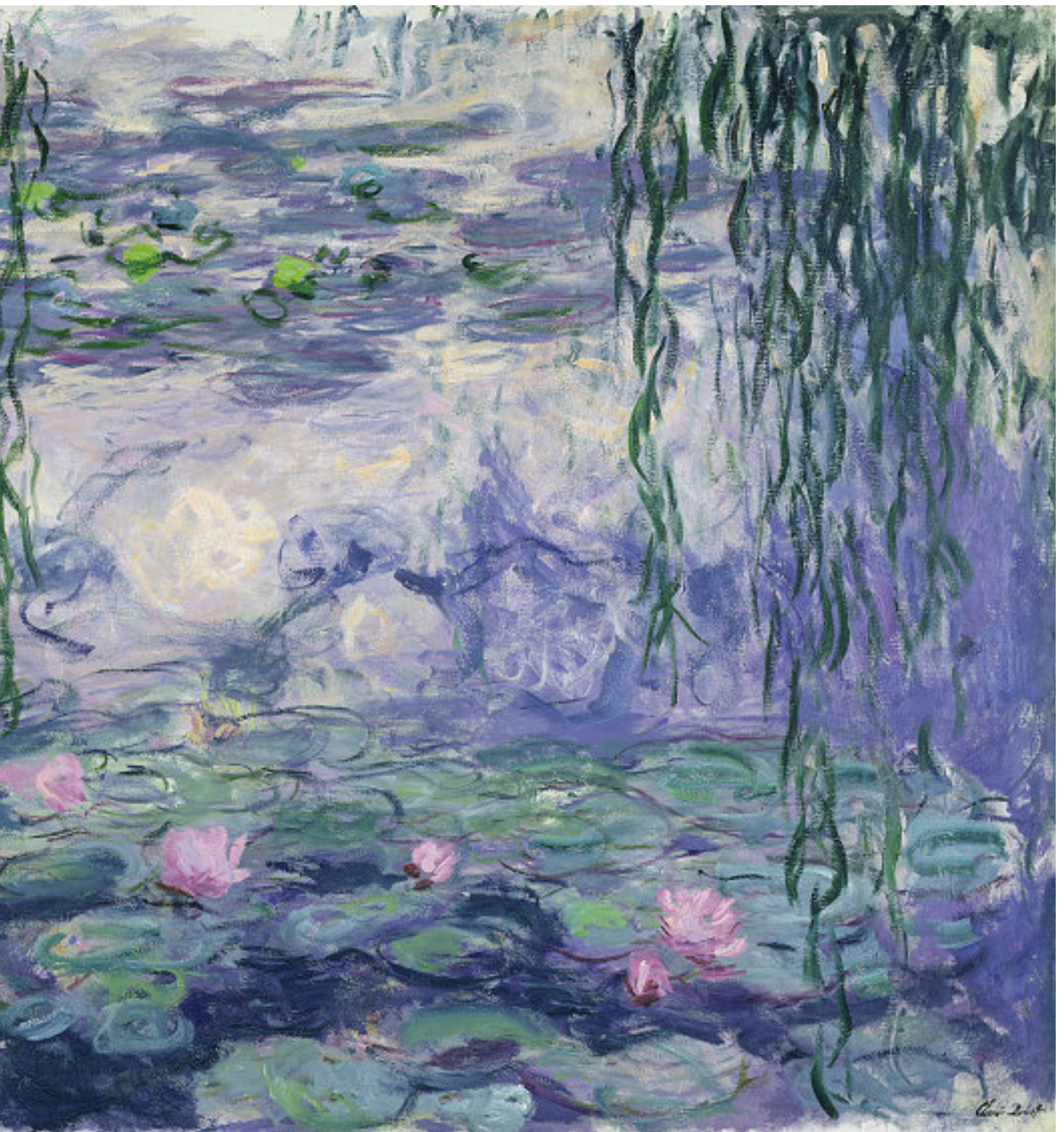
- 1840 Born on November 14 in Paris
- 1845 The Monet family moves to Le Havre
- 1856 Earns money with caricatures
- 1872 Paints river landscapes from his houseboat
- 1874 Monet’s picture *Impression: Sunrise* features at the first Impressionist exhibition
- 1883 Rents a house in Giverny, where he lays out his famous garden
- 1897 Produces his first water-lily paintings in Giverny
- 1900 His eyesight declines increasingly through illness
- 1926 Dies on December 6 in Giverny





Claude Monet, *The Rouen Cathedral in the Evening*, 1894, oil on canvas, 101 x 65 cm, Pushkin Museum, Moscow





Claude Monet, *Water Lilies*, 1916–19,  
oil on canvas, 150 x 197 cm, Musée  
Marmottan, Paris