



Claude Monet biography

SYNOPSIS

Claude Monet was born on November 14, 1840, in Paris, France. He enrolled in the Academie Suisse. After an art exhibition in 1874, a critic insultingly dubbed Monet's painting style "Impression," since it was more concerned with form and light than realism, and the term stuck. Monet struggled with depression, poverty and illness throughout his life. He died in 1926.

PROFILE

Artist. Born Oscar Claude Monet (some sources say Claude Oscar) on November 14, 1840, in Paris, France. Claude Monet is one of the most [famous painters](#) in the history of art and a leading figure in the Impressionist movement. His works can be seen in museums around the world. His father, Adolphe, worked in his family's shipping business while his mother, Louise, took care of the family. A trained singer, Louise liked poetry and was a popular hostess.

At the age of 5, Monet moved with his family to Le Havre, a port town in the Normandy region. He grew up there with his older brother Leon. While he was reportedly a decent student, Monet did not like being confined to a classroom. He was more interested in being outside. At an early age, Monet developed a love of drawing. He filled his schoolbooks with sketches of people, including caricatures of his teachers. While his mother supported his artistic efforts, Monet's father wanted him to go into business. Monet suffered greatly after the death of his mother in 1857.

In the community, Monet became well known for his caricatures, and drew many of the town's residents. After meeting Eugene Boudin, a local landscape artist, Monet started to explore the natural world in his work. Boudin introduced Monet to painting outdoors, or *plein air* painting. In 1859, Monet decided to move to Paris to pursue his art. He enrolled as a student at the Academie Suisse. During this time, Monet met fellow artist [Camille Pissarro](#) who became a close friend for many years.

From 1861 to 1862, Monet was stationed in Algiers for his military service, but he was discharged because for health reasons. Returning to Paris, Monet studied with Charles Gleyre. Through Gleyre, Monet met several other artists, including Auguste Renoir, [Alfred Sisley](#), and Frederic Bazille. The four of them became friends. He also received advice and support from Johann Barthold Jongkind, a landscape painter who proved to be an important influence to the young artist.

Monet liked to work outdoors and was sometimes accompanied by Renoir, Sisley, and Bazille on these painting sojourns.

Monet won acceptance to the Salon of 1865, an annual juried art show in Paris. The show chose two of his paintings, which were marine landscapes. The works received some critical praise, but Monet still struggled financially.

The following year, Monet was selected again to participate in the Salon. This time, the show officials chose a landscape and a portrait *Camille* (or also called *Woman in Green*), which featured his lover and future wife Camille Doncieux. Doncieux came from a humble background and was substantially younger than Monet.

She served as a muse for Monet, sitting for numerous paintings during her lifetime. The couple had experienced great hardship around the birth of their first son, Jean, in 1867. Monet was in dire financial straits, and his father was unwilling to help them. According to some reports, Monet got so despondent over the situation that he attempted suicide by trying to drown himself in the Seine River.

Louis-Joachim Guadibert became a patron of Monet's work, which enabled Monet to continue his work and care for his family. He married Camille in June 1870, and they soon fled with their son to London after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. There, Monet met Paul Durand-Ruel, who became his first art dealer.

Returning to France after the war, Monet eventually settled in Argenteuil, an industrial town west of Paris. He had visits from many of his artist friends during his time there, including Renoir, Pissarro, and Edouard Manet. Banding together with several other artists, Monet helped form the Societe Anonyme des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs (the Society of Anonymous Painters, Sculptors, and Printers).

Monet sometimes got frustrated with his work. According to some reports, he destroyed a number of paintings—estimates range as high as 500 works. Monet would simply burn, cut, or kick the offending piece. In addition to these outbursts, he was known to suffer from bouts of depression and self-doubt.

The society's April 1874 exhibition proved to be revolutionary. One of Monet's most noted works in the show, *Impression, Sunrise* (1873), depicted Le Havre's harbor in a morning fog. Critics used the title to name the group of artists the Impressionists, saying that their work seemed more like sketches than finished paintings.

While it was meant to be derogatory, the term seemed fitting. Monet sought to capture the essence of the natural world using strong colors and bold, short brushstrokes. He and

QUICK FACTS

NAME: Claude Monet

OCCUPATION: Painter

BIRTH DATE: November 14, 1840

DEATH DATE: December 05, 1926

EDUCATION: Academie Suisse

PLACE OF BIRTH: Paris, France

PLACE OF DEATH: Giverny, France

FULL NAME: Oscar Claude Monet

BEST KNOWN FOR

Claude Monet was a famous French painter whose work gave a name to the art movement Impressionism which was concerned with capturing light and natural forms.

his contemporaries were turning away from the classical painting techniques and styles. Monet also included elements of industry in his landscapes, moving the form forward and making it more contemporary.

His personal life was marked by hardship around this time. His wife became ill during her second pregnancy. Their second son, Michel, was born in 1878, and she continued to deteriorate. Monet painted a portrait of her on her death bed. Before her passing, the Monets went to live with Ernest and Alice Hoschede and their six children.

After Camille's death, Monet painted a grim set of paintings known as the *Ice Drift* series. He grew closer to Alice, and the two eventually became romantically involved. Ernest spent much of his time in Paris, and he and Alice never divorced. Monet and Alice moved with their respective children to Giverny in 1883, a place that would be a source of great inspiration. The couple later married in 1892 after Ernest's death.

In Giverny, Monet loved to paint outdoors in the gardens he helped create there. The water lilies found in the pond had a particular appeal for him, and he painted several series of them over the rest of his life.

The Japanese-style bridge over the pond became the subject of several works as well.

Sometimes Monet traveled to find other sources of inspiration. Monet rented a room across from the Cathedral in Rouen and painted a series of works in the early 1890s focused on this structure. Different paintings showed the building in morning light, midday, gray weather, and more. This repetition shows deep fascination with the effects of light.

Besides the cathedral, Monet painted several things repeatedly, trying to convey the sensation of a certain time of day on a landscape or a place. He also focused the changes that light made on the forms of haystacks and poplar trees in two different painting series around this time. In 1900, Monet traveled to London where the Thames River captured his artistic attention.

In 1911, Monet became depressed after the death of his beloved Alice. He was also plagued by eye problems soon after. In the art world, Monet was out of step with the avant-garde. The Impressionists were in some ways being supplanted by the Cubist movement, lead by Pablo Picasso and George Braque.

There was still a great deal of interest in Monet's work. He embarked a final series of 12 waterlily paintings commissioned by the Orangerie des Tuileries, a museum in Paris. He chose to make them on a very large scale, designed to fill the walls of a special space for the canvases in the museum. He wanted the works to serve as a "haven of peaceful meditation," believing that the images would soothe the "overworked nerves" of visitors.

The project consumed much of his later years. In writing to a friend, Monet said, "These landscapes of water and reflection have become an obsession for me. It is beyond my strength as an old man, and yet I want to render what I feel." His health proved to be an obstacle as well. Still battling eye problems, Monet finally consented to surgery for cataracts in 1923.

As he experienced in other points in his life, Monet struggled with depression. He wrote to one friend that "Age and chagrin have worn me out. My life has been nothing but a failure, and all that's left for me to do is to destroy my paintings before I disappear." Despite his feelings of despair, he kept working on his paintings until his final days.

Monet died on December 5, 1926, at his home in Giverny. Monet once wrote, "My only merit lies in having painted directly in front of nature, seeking to render my impressions of the most fleeting effects." Most art historians believe that Monet accomplished much more than this. He helped change the world of painting by shaking off the conventions of the past. By dissolving forms in his works, Monet opened the door to further abstraction in art. He is credited with influencing such later artists as Jackson Pollack, Mark Rothko, and Willem de Kooning.

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