



Claude Monet: Water Lilies (MOMA Artist Series)

Ann Temkin, Nora Lawrence

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Claude Monet (1840-1926) devoted the last 25 years of his career to paintings of the Japanese-style pond and gardens of his house in Giverny, France. Two of these luminous panels--"Reflections of Clouds on the Water-Lily Pond," a mural-sized triptych, and "Water Lilies," a single canvas--are among the most well-known and beloved works in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. The aim of these paintings, according to the artist, was to supply "the illusion of an endless whole, of water without horizon or bank." These late works were for many years less appreciated than Monet's classic Impressionist works, oftentimes seen as unstructured, even unfinished. But with the emergence of Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s, Monet became an extraordinarily relevant predecessor. In 1955, The Museum of Modern Art became the first American museum to acquire one of Monet's large-scale water lily compositions. In 1958, when a fire destroyed this and another water lily painting, the public's widespread expression of loss led to the acquisition of the works currently in the collection. This lively volume recounts the history of Monet's water lilies at the Museum underscores the resonance of these paintings with the art and artists of the last half-century.

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