

Mad Enchantment: Claude Monet and the Painting of the Water Lilies

By Ross King, published in 2016

Welcome

Critic on Monet...

1. Who is Monet?

Ross King: "His paintings are famous for their serenity, but the great irony is that he was anything but serene as he painted them. He often worked himself into terrible rages if things weren't going well or if the weather wasn't cooperating. He sometimes slashed his canvases with a knife or stuck his foot through them."

Suffered from what King described as, Neurasthenia. p.37

p. 262, "Monet's volatile temper and feverish obsessions. Anguish, annihilation, and the abyss, of frenzied visions and mad enchantments, may have surprised some of Monet's other admirers."

2. How does the man in this book differ from your version of Monet?

3. Describe his paintings?

Ross King: "Monet's large-scale *Water Lilies* give us something that few other easel paintings can hope to do: a fully immersive experience. Who wouldn't want to stroll into the enchanted world of a Monet painting? He wanted these huge wraparound works to give us that chance—to transport us from our own world and into the magical atmosphere of his lily pond in Giverny."

Technique, p. 42. "paradoxically for a man who wished to give the impression of the spontaneous capture of a fleeting moment in time, he sometimes used a dozen or more layers of paint on canvas."

p. 43, "upside-down paintings."

p. 58 "Monet was always thinking about the chemical evolution of colors."

p. 103, "My Studio? I have never had a studio... This is my studio!" and "Monet was keen to foster the myth that he did not use the studio and the ha was... the first artist to start and finish a painting in front of the chosen subject."

4. Monet's Water Lilies at the Orangerie are described as an immersive experience? Why are they immersive? What was Monet trying to achieve?

King, p. 25 "Monet confided to Guillemont (1899) that he hoped to decorate a circular room with these green and mauve blossoms and reflections."

Grande Décoration was considered a "noble and illustrious role for painting"...p. 93

5. What is Giverny? Creating the "magical domain" in 1893. How does nature factor into his works?

6. What aspect of the story resonated with you?

Monet wanted to create a lasting legacy for France(?)

7. What was most surprising or intriguing aspect of the book?

8. How does Monet cope with aging? Infirmity? What impact did his failing eyesight have on his later works?

p. 280, Monet's eye surgery.

9. "Quote about legacy..." Is this possible?

10. What was Monet's affinity with the Japanese culture?

p. 246 Monet... "If you absolutely insist on affiliating me to others, let it be to the old Japanese..."

p. 244, Japanese "captain of industry" Kojiro Matsukata.

11. How does the *Grande Guerre*, or the Great War impact Monet? His work? How it's interpreted?

p. 82, "Upholding French artistic and cultural values in the face of such barbarism was an important part of the war effort."

p. 83, "German manifesto... 'An Appeal to Civilized Nations.'"

p. 168, "the war work..."

12. Are Monet's works French?

King, p. 26...the poplar is the tree of liberty, Rouen cathedral 1890s. Critic wrote in 1899, that these paintings "expressed everything that forms the soul of our race."

Image of Reims Cathedral, p. 146

13. How was Monet aided in his success? Could he have been as successful without the Blue angel, or George Clemenceau, the "Tiger."?

Clemenceau, p.15 "...but the idea of having a cycle of Monet's paintings serve as a national monument became a mounting obsession among Clem. and his artistic friends."