

OSCAR-CLAUDE MONET

Oscar-Claude Monet is born in 1840 in Paris to Claude Adolphe Monet, a grocer, and Louise-Justine Aubrée Monet. Even early in his life, Monet displays a keen interest in art. Around 1845, the Monets move to Le Havre in Normandy, and there, during the mid-1850's, Monet begins drawing caricatures and shows them in a local art supply store. In 1856, at age 16, Monet meets Eugène Boudin, who first introduces Monet to the concept of painting en plein air, or “out of doors.” Monet said “It was as if a veil suddenly lifted from my eyes and I knew that I could be a painter.”

In 1857, Monet's mother dies and he moves in with his Aunt Marie-Jeanne Lecadre, an amateur artist who encourages Monet to study art. In 1862, at age 22, Monet begins to study with Charles Gleyre where he meets Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Frédéric Bazille and Alfred Sisley who will become some of the key artists in the Impressionist movement. Monet produces several early Impressionist paintings during this period. The Salon, an organization that judges what is “good” art, constantly rejects these paintings. Monet finally achieves recognition in 1866 when his painting *Camille in a Green Dress* is accepted by the Salon and receives a positive reception.

The woman in this painting is Camille Doncieux, Monet's favorite model. They began a long relationship, both professional – as she appears (sometimes multiple times) in many of Monet's paintings – and personal, as they started a family. On August 8 1867, Monet's first son, Jean-Armand-Claude Monet, is born. Almost three years later, on June 28 1870, Monet and Camille marry. Monet con-



tinues working and in 1874, the first exhibition by the Société Anonyme was held, which included the famed Monet work, *Impression: A Sunrise*. This work sparked the movement's name. Louis Leroy, an art critic, coined the term “Impressionism” to criticize the Impressionist's break with realism.

Monet's family life was just as turbulent as his earlier professional life. Monet's second child, Michel Monet, is born on March 17, 1878 weakening Camille's already failing health, and on September 5, 1879 she dies. Fortunately, in 1877, the Monets begin living with Alice Hoschedé, a family friend whose husband Ernest fled the country due to financial problems, and her six children. Alice cares for Camille during her illness and for the Monet boys after the death of their mother. In 1883, the Monet and Hoschedé families move to the house in Giverny. Monet and Alice marry in 1892. They live together for 19 years until 1911 when Alice dies. Monet never moves from his home in Giverny, even as World War I rages through France, until his death on December 5, 1926.

Many of Monet's most famous paintings are created in the years he lives at Giverny. Some are created during his travels, like his Rouen Cathedral Series in 1892, and his images of Venice in 1908. Others are subjects he finds in the town of Giverny and his own home, such as his haystacks series and his large collection of water lily paintings. Monet continues to paint even into his Eighties, but found he had trouble seeing his subjects. In 1923, Monet undergoes several cataract operations. Although his eyesight is never completely recovered, Monet still creates some of his most beautiful and revolutionary works in these late years.