

January 17, 2007

**THE UNKNOWN MONET: PASTELS AND DRAWINGS PRESENTS
GROUNDBREAKING DISCOVERIES OF THE ARTIST'S CAREER, ON VIEW AT
THE CLARK FROM JUNE 24 TO SEPTEMBER 16, 2007**

**FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO WORKS ON PAPER BY MONET
INCLUDES NEARLY 100 OBJECTS FROM INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE AND
PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

***Clark-organized Exhibition opens at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, on
March 17, 2007***

For Immediate Release

WILLIAMSTOWN, MA – An unprecedented exhibition challenging the conventional, long-held understanding of Claude Monet's artistic process and life, *The Unknown Monet: Pastels and Drawings*, opens at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute on June 24 and remains on view through September 16, 2007. The Royal Academy of Arts, London, will be the first venue, from March 17 to June 10, 2007. Drawing upon recently discovered documents and a body of graphic work largely unknown to the public and scholars alike, the exhibition reveals that Monet (1840–1926) relied extensively upon drafting in the development of his paintings in addition to painting his subjects directly. Monet has long been seen as an anti-draftsman, having denied the role of drawing in his working method in an effort to advance his public image as an Impressionist.

The Unknown Monet is the first exhibition to focus on the artist's graphic works, including pastels, finished drawings, and sketchbooks. The show sheds new light on several aspects of Monet's creative process by presenting a significant body of these works, many of which have not been previously exhibited, alongside related examples of his work in oil.

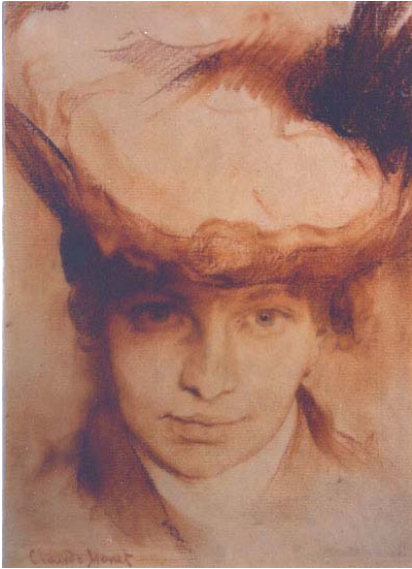
"Although critics have assumed there is nothing new you can possibly say about Monet, this exhibition disputes that idea. Through research, fresh information appears and provides new insight, and the reconsideration of these neglected works on paper offers a totally new understanding of Monet's life and work," said Michael Conforti, director of the Clark.



Étretat, the Needle Rock and Porte d'Aval,
c. 1885, by Claude Monet
Pastel on tan paper, 400 x 235 mm
Private collection

Comprised of nearly 100 works, including over 20 pastels, three dozen drawings, four sketchbooks, 20 prints and 14 oil paintings, *The Unknown Monet* provides a revolutionary new interpretation of the artist's life and work. This project is part of a continuing program at the Clark to present exhibitions that build public interest in the visual arts while advancing new scholarship. This ongoing effort, which reflects the Clark's dual mission as a major museum and as a leading international research

center, has produced such recent shows organized by the museum as *Turner: The Late Seascapes*; *Gustav Klimt Landscapes*; and *Impression: Painting Quickly in France, 1860–1890*.



Portrait of a Woman, c. 1890-95,
by Claude Monet
Red chalks with stumping, 285 x 210 mm
Private collection

The exhibition is accompanied by a 320-page catalogue containing new biographical information about the life of young Monet gleaned from an unpublished manuscript entitled the *Grand Journal* by Comte Théophile Beguin Billecocq, a friend of the Monet family. The manuscript is the only known firsthand account of Monet's early life and recounts a young man who is devoted to drawing. The journal has been passed down through the Comte's family and is currently owned by Prince Xavier Beguin Billecocq. Briefly referenced in the *Monet Catalogue Raisonné* (1974-91) by Daniel Wildenstein, it appears that he did not have access to the full text nor the original document. *The Unknown Monet* represents the

first time that scholars have utilized the *Grand Journal* in its entirety. Co-authored by curators James A. Ganz and Richard Kendall, *The Unknown Monet: Pastels and Drawings* contains 100 black-and-white and 225 color illustrations; it is published by the Clark and distributed by Yale University Press.

The Unknown Monet is organized by the Clark in association with the Royal Academy of Arts, London. It is curated by James A. Ganz, curator of prints, drawings, and photographs, and Richard Kendall, curator at large, both at the Clark. This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. The project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. Lead sponsorship is provided by Bank of America.

The Unknown Monet: Exhibition Highlights and Organization

Monet's reputation, that of Impressionist painter *par excellence*, was one that he cultivated by regaling journalists with descriptions of his original working practices. These descriptions are devoid of references to drawing, belying Monet's extensive use of sketchbooks. *The Unknown Monet* gives voice to his hidden talents as a draftsman by presenting a significant body of his pastels, finished drawings, and preparatory studies in relation to his more familiar work in oils.

The exhibition is organized into five sections that chronicle the evolving role of drawing throughout the artist's career.

Section one presents the landscape studies and caricatures produced by the young artist in Le Havre, showing Monet's early mastery of drawing in the 1850s. Little known to the general public, whimsical caricatures such as *Jules Didier*, "*Butterfly Man*" (c. 1858, Art Institute of Chicago) represent an important stage in his early artistic development and demonstrate his awareness of popular modes of journalistic illustration as practiced by professionals like Honoré Daumier (1808–1879) and Nadar (1820–1910).

Section two is both visually dazzling and revealing, as it offers the first significant concentration of Monet's pastels to be exhibited together since the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874. It was at that landmark venue that Monet showed seven pastels alongside six paintings, establishing himself as the leading pastellist of a circle that included Camille Pissarro (1831–1903) and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919). Of the sixteen pastels in this section, few have been included in modern retrospectives of the artist's work. Color-saturated finished pastels of Normandy landscapes and seascapes, including views of the dramatic cliffs of Étretat and studies of clouds, demonstrate Monet's mastery of the medium and illustrate how he used the graphic energy of pastels to bridge the divide between line and color.

Eight of Monet's sketchbooks survive intact, all in the collection of the Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris. **Section three** presents four of these sketchbooks along with interactive computer kiosks that allow visitors unprecedented access to individual sketchbook pages until now virtually unknown outside scholarly circles. The Clark is creating an interactive image database of the complete contents of the Marmottan sketchbooks that will enable visitors to "page through" the books or to search for drawings of particular subjects by date or keyword. This feature gives visitors the first opportunity to explore the contents of all the sketchbooks within the context of Monet's works in oil and pastel.

Section four documents Monet's engagement with drawing for the mass media and the appearance of his paintings in print form during his lifetime. It was through the artist's own graphic reproductions in black and white that his paintings were first reproduced in contemporary art journals. The purpose of these expressive drawings, including the Clark's *View of Rouen* (1883), was to promote his one-man exhibitions that followed the dissolution of the Impressionist group. In this section, Monet's drawn copies are reunited with his original paintings and exhibited alongside the journals in which they were published. Also featured in this section is Monet's little-known collaboration with the professional lithographer William Thornley on a portfolio of lithographs that amounts to a mini-retrospective as of the mid-1890s.

The **final section** of the exhibition explores the relationship between sketchbook drawings and Monet's later series paintings including the Clark's *Rouen Cathedral, Facade* (1894), as well as the fusion of pastel and paint in his views of Charing Cross and Waterloo Bridges in London. In a rare admission of the importance of drawing to work in oils, Monet acknowledged that such pastels as *Charing Cross Bridge, London* (1901, Triton Foundation, Netherlands) led to an artistic breakthrough that

influenced the course of his great London series. Finally, this section reveals the importance of linear design in the *Nymphéas*, or water lily paintings that absorbed the artist's attention at the end of his life. One of the most illuminating juxtapositions places Monet's large canvas *Water Lilies* (c. 1918, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) beside a group of related and little-known sketchbook studies and separate black crayon drawings from the Musée Marmottan. This group of works reveals how the element of line played a fundamental role in Monet's creative process at the end of his career.

The Clark

Set amidst 140 bucolic acres in the picturesque Berkshires, the Clark is one of the few major art museums in the United States that also serves as a leading international center for research and scholarship. In addition to its extraordinary collections, the Clark organizes groundbreaking special exhibitions that advance new scholarship and presents an array of public and educational programs. The Clark's research and academic programs include an international fellowship program and regular conferences, symposia, and colloquia. Its programs draw university and museum professionals from around the world. The Clark, together with Williams College, sponsors one of the nation's leading master's programs in art history and encompasses one of the most comprehensive art history libraries in the world.

In 2008, the Clark will open the Stone Hill Center, the first phase of its expansion and campus enhancement project. Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Tadao Ando, the wood and glass 32,000-square-foot building will house new intimately scaled galleries, a meeting and studio art classroom, an outdoor café, and the Williamstown Art Conservation Center (WACC).

The Berkshires, a region of rolling hills in western Massachusetts, has been a haven for cultural activity since the first half of the 19th century. The Berkshires are home to a wealth of cultural institutions that in addition to the Clark include: Tanglewood, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, MASS MoCA, the Norman Rockwell Museum, Williams College Museum of Art, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival, among many others. For more information, visit www.clarkart.edu or call 413-458-2303.

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