



**Art Appreciation Lecture Series 2014  
Realism to Surrealism: European art and culture 1848-1936**

**The secret garden at Giverny: a key to Monet's success**

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**Lecture summary:**

This lecture will present the water lily garden that Claude Monet made at his rural home in Giverny, Normandy during the 1890s, as a consciously mythical construction, conceived and cultivated to enchant the outside world. It will show how the design of Monet's garden at Giverny embodied many contemporary notions of secluded and exotic gardens current in *fin-de-siècle* literature and also contained many of the most sensational and costly botanical novelties of his day. But this was not simply 'art for art's sake'. The stakes for Monet – who had experienced penury, and who needed to succeed in an ever more competitive and commercialised art world – were very high. Couched in terms of nature, art and beauty, the commercial objectives underlying Monet's botanical project are easily overlooked. Monet's determination to establish a monopoly among his generation over his artistic motifs and to remain at the forefront of impressionist practice are revealed in the way he set about creating and sustaining the 'Giverny myth'. This lecture will examine the iconography of the garden, its pan-European promotion through published description, and the tight control that Monet exercised over access to his garden as aspects of this ultimate strategy. In the process Claude Monet will be celebrated not only as a painter of great talent, but also as one of the great mythmakers and marketing entrepreneurs of his age.

**Slide list:**

1. Claude Monet, *Yellow Irises (Iris jaunes)* (1924–25) Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris.\*
2. Claude Monet, *Rough weather at Étretat (Gros temps à Étretat)* (1883) National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
3. Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral, at the end of day, sunlight effect*, 1892 Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris.
4. John Singer Sargent, *Oil sketch of Claude Monet and his step-daughter, Blanche painting on Monet's boat-studio*, c. 1887. Private collection.\*
5. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Monet painting in his garden at Argenteuil*, 1873, Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford Conn.\*
6. Postcard of Giverny 19<sup>th</sup> century. Photograph.
7. 'Le Pressoir', Giverny, 19<sup>th</sup> century. Photograph.
8. Martial Caillebotte - Gustave Caillebotte (1848-94) gardening at Petit Gennevilliers, February 1892. Photograph.
9. Theodore Robinson, *Monet at Giverny*, c. 1899. Photograph.

10. American painters Theodore Robinson and William Metcalf at Giverny, 1886. Photograph.
11. Edouard Vuillard and Ker-Xavier Roussel with Claude Monet in his garden in Giverny, 1926. Photograph.
12. Monet talking to his dealer Paul Durand-Ruel (wearing a bowler hat) at a family event under the lime trees at Giverny, 1893. Photo collection Piguet
13. Monet's greenhouse. Photograph. Lilla Cabot Perry Papers Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC
14. Claude Monet, *The Bridge over the Waterlily Pond*, 1900, Art Institute of Chicago.\*
15. Artists in the café of the Hotel Baudy, Giverny c. 1893
16. Charles Conder, *Scene on the Epte*, c. 1894. Location unknown.
17. E. Phillips Fox, *Wheat stacks*, Giverny, 1892, Private Collection, Perth

### Reference:

Marina Ferretti Bocquillon, *Monet's garden in Giverny: Inventing the landscape*, Musée des Impressionismes, Giverny, 2009.

Jacqueline and Maurice Guillard, *Claude Monet at the Time of Giverny*, Centre Culturel du Marais, Paris, 1983.

Sophie Matthiesson, 'Monet's Political Garden' in Marianne Mathieu, Sophie Matthiesson, *Monet's Garden*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Victoria, 2013, pp. 31-42.

Elena Taylor, *Australian Impressionists in France*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Victoria, 2013.  
Paul Hayes Tucker, *Claude Monet Late Work*. Gagosian Gallery, New York, 2010.

**Images:**



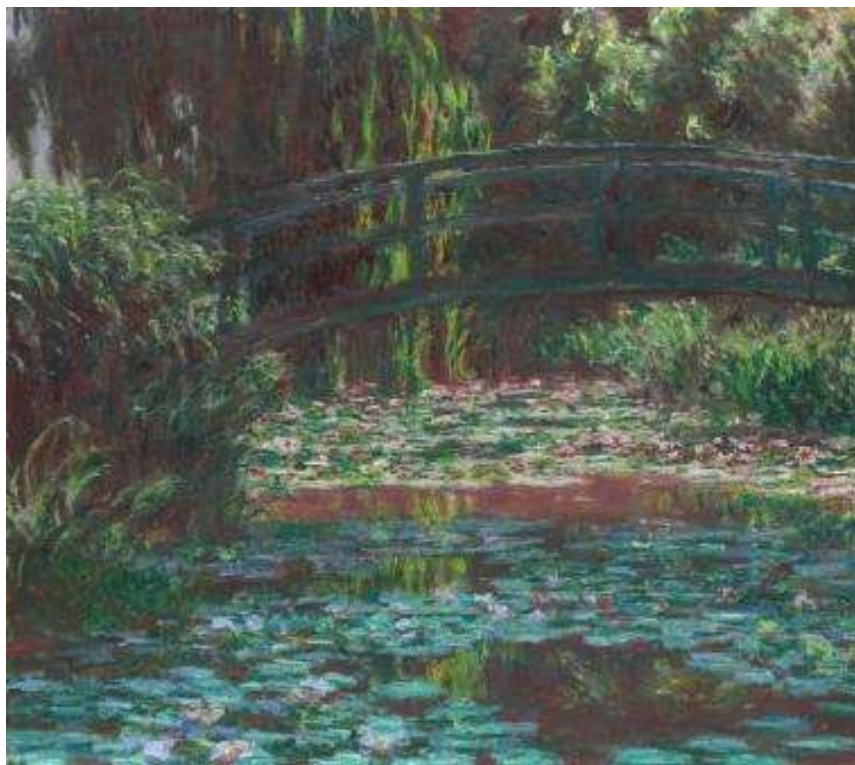
Claude Monet, *Yellow Irises (Iris jaunes)* (1924–25) Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris



John Singer Sargent, *Oil sketch of Claude Monet and his step-daughter, Blanche painting on Monet's boat-studio*, c. 1887. Private collection



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Monet painting in his garden at Argenteuil*, 1873, Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford Conn.



Claude Monet, *The Bridge over the Waterlily Pond*, 1900, Art Institute of Chicago.