



**CLAUDE MONET'S  
CATARACTS**

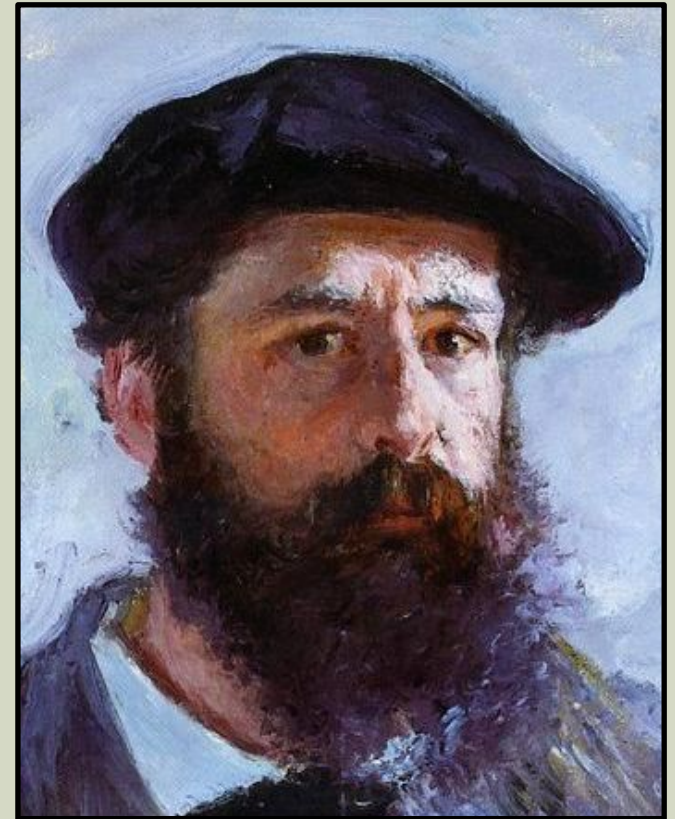
RANZCO  
Museum

Jonathan Goh

Claude Monet 1908

# OSCAR-CLAUDE MONET

- Born on 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1840 in Paris to Claude-Adolphe and Louise-Justine Aubrée Monet, Oscar-Claude Monet was to become the leader of the French Impressionist movement.
- Monet studied at the Académie Suisse in Paris where he developed the luminous style representative of the Impressionist movement. He was particularly interested in how an object takes on colour and light from its environment.
- During his studies he met with Camille Pissarro, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Alfred Sisley who went on to form the Impressionist school.



Self portrait, 1886

# OSCAR-CLAUDE MONET

- In 1883, Monet moved to an estate in Giverny where he constructed his famous Japanese bridge and water-lily garden.
- By the mid 1880's, Monet was regarded as the leader of the Impressionist movement. He often painted many series of objects seen in varying lighting, different times of the day and in different seasons.
- Many of his most famous murals, such as the Les Nymphéas (Water Lilies), were produced during his time in Giverny.



Impression, soleil levant 1872.

# MONET AND HIS CATARACTS

- Because Monet's Impressionist style was so heavily reliant on how colour and light affected objects he was painting, the development of visually significant cataracts was to have a dramatic impact on his work.
- Aged 68, Monet first reported visual problems during a visit to Venice in 1908. Over the next 10 years his vision would slowly deteriorate.
- Paintings during this time show preservation of colour, but blurring of distant objects.

# MONET AND HIS CATARACTS



Palazzo da Mula, Venice, 1908. Painted when Monet first complained of deteriorating vision, note the preserved blue colours.

# MONET AND HIS CATARACTS

- Over the next 10 years Monet's vision continued to deteriorate.

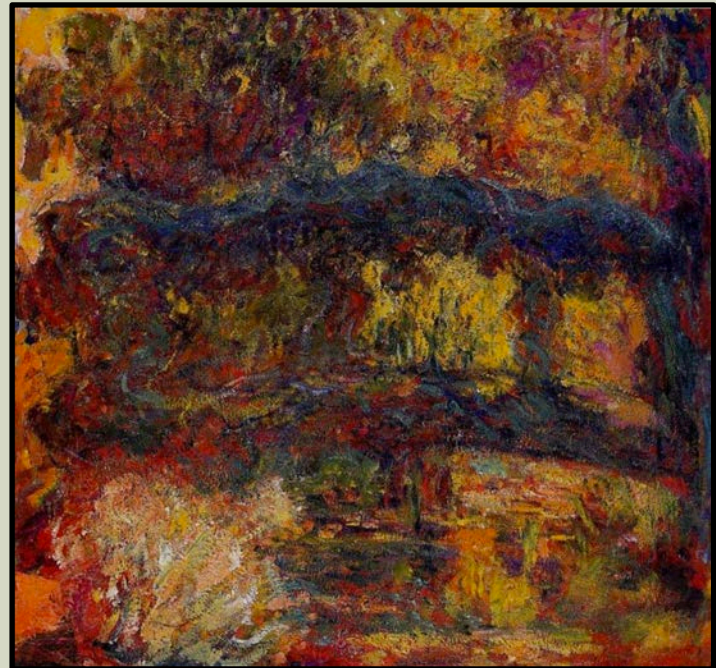
*"I no longer perceived colors with the same intensity, I no longer painted light with the same accuracy. Reds appeared muddy to me, pinks insipid, and the lower tones escaped me. As for forms. They always appeared clear."*

*"To think I was getting on so well, more absorbed than I've ever been and expecting to achieve something, but I was forced to change my tune and give up a lot of promising beginnings and abandon the rest; and on top of that, my poor eyesight makes me see everything in a complete fog. It's very beautiful all the same and it's this which I'd love to have been able to convey. All in all, I am very unhappy."*

- In an attempt to overcome his failing vision Monet made some adjustments to his painting methods. He wore a wide-brimmed panama hat and avoided painting during the midday to avoid glare. He also carefully labeled his paint tubes and placed them in a ordered fashion on his palette.
- Despite this his paintings became more abstract, objects less well defined, and the colours moved towards a muddier yellow-brown.

# MONET AND HIS CATARACTS

- As Monet's cataracts progressed the sense of atmosphere and light that his paintings were so famous for had disappeared.
- Colours became increasingly yellow and brown, while his brush strokes became broader and less well defined.



Monet's Japanese footbridge: left 1899, right 1923. Note the loss of detail and shift towards muddier yellows and browns.