

PRESS RELEASE

MAY 4, 2021

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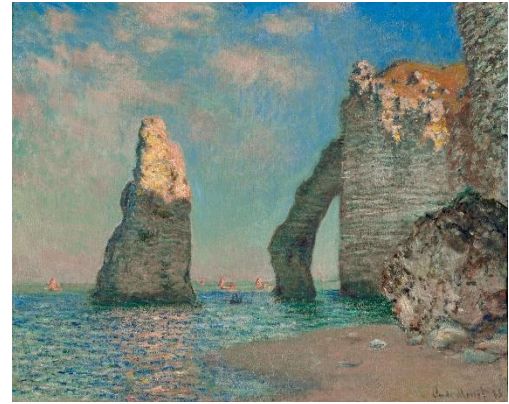
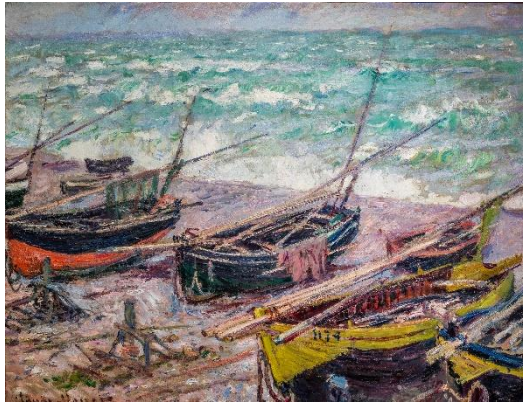
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THE SEATTLE ART MUSEUM PRESENTS MONET AT ÉTRETAT

Focused exhibition featuring 10 works by Claude Monet made during visits to the French seaside village



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SEATTLE, WA - The Seattle Art Museum presents *Monet at Étretat* (July 1-October 17, 2021), exploring the artist's engagement with Étretat, a seaside village in Normandy, France. The exhibition takes *Fishing Boats at Étretat* (1885), the only work by Claude Monet in SAM's collection, as inspiration, presenting it alongside nine other paintings by Monet from his visits to the village as well as five paintings by his contemporaries. *Monet at Étretat* offers a nuanced look at a famed artist, highlighting his artistic and personal struggles in the 1880s as he strove to create a new vision in his paintings.

Organized by SAM, the exhibition is curated by Chiyo Ishikawa, SAM's former Susan Brotman Deputy Director for Art and Curator of European Painting and Sculpture, who retired in 2019 after a 30-year career at the museum. "This exhibition reintroduces audiences to Claude Monet as a struggling artist," says Ishikawa. "When he heads to Étretat, he is in his mid-40s, widowed, and under financial and personal strains; yet he is utterly committed to his vision of a deeper relationship with nature. In these works, we see an artist pursuing what would become his legacy and make him a beloved artist to this day."

A SITE OF ARTISTIC PILGRIMAGE

The exhibition introduces Étretat as a geographical wonder and a site of artistic pilgrimage. Dominated by dramatic limestone cliff formations, the village was a popular summer destination in the mid-19th century. The exhibition includes a map outlining its four major cliffs and formations that artists and tourists alike marveled at: the Porte d'Amont, the Porte d'Aval, the Manneporte, and the Needle. Well before Claude Monet (1840-1926) first traveled there to work in 1883, painters, photographers, and writers had created a recognizable iconography of the village. His stated goal was to "try to do it differently."

The village was 16 miles northeast of Monet's hometown of Le Havre, and he had many happy memories of the Normandy coast with his wife and two sons before the tragic death of his wife Camille in 1879 at the age of 32. As he headed to Étretat in the off-season of 1883 in search of novel scenes, he was in a difficult place. He was under pressure from his dealer to produce marketable



paintings, and the physical demands of painting outdoors in changeable weather were exhausting. He was also struggling over his unresolved relationship with Alice Hoschedé, the wife of his patron and surrogate mother to his children.

Along with two paintings by Monet from this first sojourn, the first gallery features three paintings by Eugène Boudin (1824–1898), Monet’s first teacher, as well as one painting each by Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796–1875) and Gustave Courbet (1819–1877). They highlight the different approaches his contemporaries took to the site, capturing alternately the grandeur or picturesque elements of the village, rather than Monet’s goal of capturing the passage of time itself. Also on view are six albumen silver print photographs from the time period, as well as a charcoal drawing of Monet by his friend, the American artist Theodore Robinson (1852–1896).

A QUESTION OF FINISH

The second gallery focuses on the physical aspects of plein air painting, with insights from Nicholas Dorman, SAM’s Jane Lang Davis Chief Conservator. Monet, his predecessors, and his peers used a range of new pigments and commercial innovations to transform painting in the second half of the 19th century; visitors can explore their practices through paintings, implements, and technical details about Monet’s *Fishing Boats at Étretat*, as well two other works from SAM’s collection, Charles Francois Daubigny’s *The Banks of the Oise River* (19th c.) and Berthe Morisot’s *Lucie Léon at the Piano* (1892). The latter two works will be on view in a case to reveal details on the paintings’ backs.

This gallery also includes two large-scale monitors with images by the German photographer Christoph Irrgang (b. 1961) superimposed over paintings by Monet, showing how Monet followed nature as he painted. Also on view is a video from the Art Institute of Chicago exploring Monet’s changes during the painting process of their collection work, *The Beach at Sainte-Adresse* (1867).

MONET’S SECOND SOJOURN

The final gallery is devoted to eight paintings by Monet, all done during his second visit to the village in 1885. They show the varied styles he used to portray two primary subjects—fishing boats and cliffs—in changing conditions of weather, light, and viewpoint, anticipating his future breakthrough with serial paintings that would at last bring him critical and financial success. This novel approach to places is best described by the artist’s own words in 1891: “For me, a landscape does not exist in its own right, since its appearances changes at every moment, but its surroundings bring it to life—the air and the light, which vary continually...For me, it is only the surrounding atmosphere which gives objects their real value.”

Also on view in this final gallery are tourist postcards of Étretat from various time periods, as well as a copy of *Portraits of Places*, an 1884 collection of Henry James’s travel sketches for the *New York Tribune*, including dispatches from Étretat, on loan from the University of Washington Libraries’ special collections.

TICKETING INFORMATION

Museum Hours (beginning July 1)

- Closed Monday & Tuesday
- Wednesday–Sunday 10 am–5 pm
- The museum will be open on Monday, September 6 (Labor Day)

Daily Prices

- \$29.99 Adult
- \$27.99 Senior (65+), Military (with ID)
- \$19.99 Student (with ID), Teen (15–18)
- FREE for children (14 and under)
- FREE for SAM Members

Special Prices

- First Thursdays: Free to all, including special exhibitions
- First Fridays: Free general admission and \$7.99 for special exhibitions for seniors (65+)

The museum is open at a limited capacity, with timed tickets available for purchase online and in advance.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

An 80-page catalogue with 33 color illustrations published by the Seattle Art Museum and distributed by the University of Washington Press will be available for purchase on site and online at [SAM Shop](#) (\$19.99). Also titled *Monet at Étretat* (ISBN: 978-0-932216-77-9), it features a foreword by Amada Cruz, SAM's Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO and an essay by Chiyo Ishikawa.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

Monet at Étretat is organized by the Seattle Art Museum. It is made possible by:

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Image credits: *Fishing Boats at Étretat*, 1885, Claude Monet, French, 1840-1926, oil on canvas, 29 x 36 in., Seattle Art Museum, Gift of Sarah Hart, 92.88. *The Cliffs at Étretat*, 1885, Claude Monet, French, 1840-1926, oil on canvas, 25 5/8 x 32 in., Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1995.528.

ABOUT SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

As the leading visual art institution in the Pacific Northwest, SAM draws on its global collections, powerful exhibitions, and dynamic programs to provide unique educational resources benefiting the Seattle region, the Pacific Northwest, and beyond. SAM was founded in 1933 with a focus on Asian art. By the late 1980s the museum had outgrown its original home, and in 1991 a new 155,000-square-foot downtown building, designed by Venturi, Scott Brown & Associates, opened to the public. The 1933 building was renovated and rededicated as the Asian Art Museum in 1994, and it reopened on February 8, 2020, following an extensive renovation and expansion. SAM's desire to further serve its community was realized in 2007 with the opening of two stunning new facilities: the nine-acre Olympic Sculpture Park (designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architects)—a “museum without walls,” free and open to all—and the Allied Works Architecture designed 118,000-square-foot expansion of its main, downtown location, including 232,000 square feet of additional space built for future expansion. The Olympic Sculpture Park and SAM's downtown expansion celebrated their tenth anniversary in 2017.

From a strong foundation of Asian art to noteworthy collections of African and Oceanic art, Northwest Coast Native American art, European and American art, and modern and contemporary art, the strength of SAM's collection of approximately 25,000 objects lies in its diversity of media, cultures, and time periods.