BROOKLYN MUSEUM

This is a large-print version of the exhibition text in *Monet and Venice*

LARGE PRINT

“Venice . . . no, I will not go to Venice.”
—Claude Monet

In October 1908 Claude Monet made his first and only trip to Venice. The French Impressionist painter was accompanied by his wife, Alice, who hoped it would be a regenerative interlude for him. The sixty-eight-year-old artist was reluctant to leave his Giverny home and the water lily pond he had begun to paint there. But like many artists throughout the centuries, he became enchanted by the spectacle and splendor of Venice. At first Monet lamented that Venice was "too beautiful to be painted." He worked there for two months and ultimately produced thirty-seven paintings that captured the city's distinctive topography and pearly, vaporous light. The couple planned to return, but Alice became ill and died in 1911. Grief-stricken, Monet worked in his studio to finish the paintings he started in Venice. In May 1912 twenty-nine of them debuted at the Galerie Bernheim Jeune in Paris, in what would be the artist's last exhibition of new works. The final gallery of *Monet and Venice* reunites a significant group of these ethereal paintings. Monet was a painter of water and reflections his entire career, and Venice's architecture mirrored in the lagoon offered an ideal incarnation of this subject. Turning his fleeting sensory impressions into harmonious, colorful fields of paint, Monet transformed the familiar image of this historic city, making it his own.

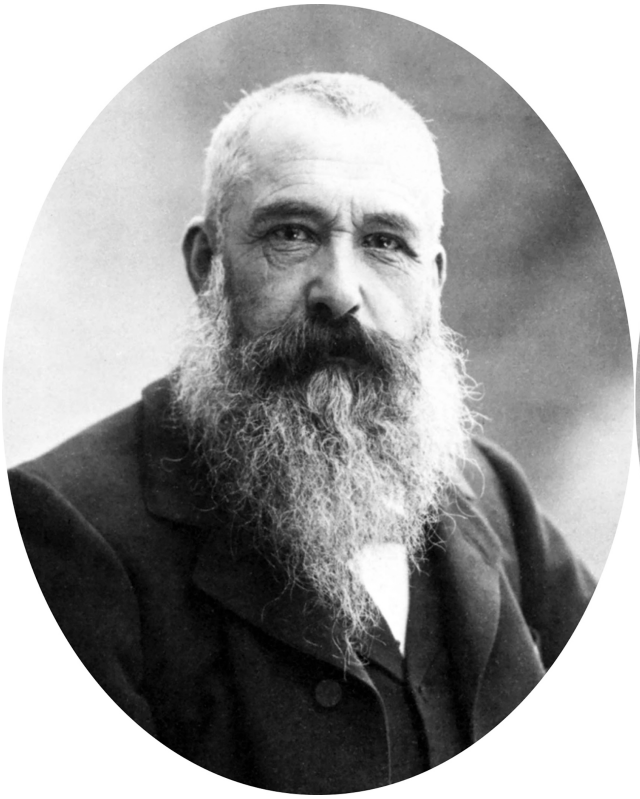
All works unless otherwise noted are by Claude Monet (Paris, France, 1840–1926, Giverny, France).

Note: This exhibition contains scent and sound elements.

Monet and Venice is organized by the Brooklyn Museum and the Fine Arts Museum s of San Francisco. The exhibition is curated by Lisa Small, Senior Curator of European Art, Brooklyn Museum, and Melissa Buron, Director of Collections

and Chief Curator, Victoria and Albert Museum. Original symphonic installation by Niles Luther, Composer in Residence, Brooklyn Museum. Lead Sponsor Significant support is provided by the Ford Foundation, Constance Christensen, Mr. and Mrs. Alan Howard, the Arnold Lehman Exhibition Fund, and Jessie and Charles Price. Generous support is provided by The Achelis and Bodman Foundation, Catherine Hannah Behrend, the Norman and Arline Feinberg Exhibition Fund, Leslie and David Puth, Kerry and Jeffrey Strong, and David E. Weisman and Jacqueline E. Michel.

CLAUDE & ALICE MONET



Left: Nadar, *Claude Monet*, 1899. Silver print. (Photo: Pictures from History/Bridgeman Images); Right: Nadar, *Alice Monet*, 1899. Silver print. (Photo: Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, France/Bridgeman Images)

CLAUDE MONET (Paris, France, 1840–1926, Giverny, France) embodied confidence and anxiety in equal measure. While sometimes appearing arrogant and stubborn, he was also generous and supportive of family, friends, and fellow artists. Nature was his passion, and painting its everchanging appearance was, as he described, "a great joy and a great suffering." Growing up in the port city of Le Havre, he sketched the surrounding landscape and became known for his caricatures, which he sold at a local frame shop. In the early 1860s, he attended life drawing classes and studied with an established history painter in Paris. Uninspired, Monet renounced traditional techniques and subjects. Using pure colors and gestural brushwork, he sought to paint "directly

from nature with the aim of conveying [his] impressions in front of the most fugitive effects." Although the state-sponsored art exhibition in Paris—called the Salon—accepted some of his works, Monet and other artists formed a cooperative and staged their own independent display in 1874. The Impressionist movement, which initially attracted some critical derision, took its name from one of the sketch-like paintings Monet exhibited there. He participated in five of the eight Impressionist exhibitions held between 1874 and 1886. At the same time, he sold his work directly to collectors and established relationships with the art dealers who helped create the market for Impressionist painting. Throughout his long career, Monet was dedicated to painting outdoors (en plein air). However, he would often revise and finish his compositions in his studio. In different seasons and weather conditions, he captured city boulevards and parks, peaceful suburbs, cathedrals, country fields, seaside cliffs, harbors, rivers, and railway stations. In his later years, he focused exclusively on his gardens and pond at Giverny. By the time of his death from lung cancer in 1926, he was regarded as France's greatest landscape painter.

ALICE RAINGO HOSCHEDÉ MONET (Paris, France, 1844–1911, Giverny, France) was from an upper-middle-class family that owned a business manufacturing clocks and decorative bronzes. In 1863 she married Ernest Hoschedé, a department store magnate, a pioneering collector and dealer of Impressionist art, and one of Claude Monet's most significant patrons. Alice met Monet in 1876, a year before Hoschedé went bankrupt. In an unconventional arrangement born of financial hardship and complicated by the spark between Alice and Claude, the Hoschedés and the Monets moved together to Vetheuil in 1878. While Hoschedé spent his time in

Paris, Alice and her six children lived with Monet, his first wife, Camille Doncieux, and their two children. When Camille became gravely ill, Alice cared for her. After Camille died in 1879, Alice raised the Monet children alongside her own. Hoschedé died in 1891; the following year, Claude and Alice formalized their long union by marrying. Alice was educated, intelligent, sensitive, elegant, and resourceful. She loved watching wrestling matches and was a devout Catholic. Like Monet, she experienced bouts of anxiety, and she suffered from a devastating depression in the years after her daughter Suzanne's death in 1899. But she also shared her husband's delight in gardening, and in the beautiful light and colors of nature. Alice was Monet's partner in life and in art; as he wrote to her in 1886, "My pictures... are all spread out, and I wanted you right there, next to me, to have your impressions."

“My enthusiasm for Venice increases by the day. It is so beautiful.” —Claude Monet

For centuries, artists have portrayed Venice’s gondola-filled waterways, evanescent light, and magnificent architecture. Such widespread imagery has made the lagoon city an indelible presence in the world’s cultural imagination and a symbol of melancholy, merriment, fragility, and timelessness. Welcoming an estimated thirty million sightseers a year, the city remains as author Thomas Mann described it in 1912: “half fairytale and half tourist trap.” Venice’s wondrous sights, as well as its crowded quays, piazzas, and canals, appear today much as they did during Monet’s 1908 sojourn. In this introductory multisensory space, we invite you to experience the vistas, reflections, details, and colors of Venice. Immerse yourself in the moods and moments that enveloped Monet and that inspired his luminous paintings of this unique city.

This installation was designed and produced by Potion, featuring a film by Joan Porcel Studio and a soundscape by Niles Luther, Composer in Residence, Brooklyn Museum. Scent direction and experience by Frederick Bouchardy of Joya.

“No one enters Venice as a stranger.”
—Francis Turner Palgrave, *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, 1842

THE MONETS IN VENICE

Alice and Claude Monet were invited to Venice by arts patron Mary Hunter. They arrived by train on October 1, 1908, and initially stayed in the Palazzo Barbaro, which Hunter was renting. By October 15 they relocated to the Grand Hotel Britannia. The Monets spent their first week in Venice enjoying gondola rides, visiting churches, and sending postcards, some of which are on view here. This section also highlights the types of travel books, prints, and films that helped shape the image of Venice for tourists like themselves. Most of Monet's chosen motifs —the churches of Santa Maria della Salute and San Giorgio Maggiore, the Palazzo Ducale, and private palazzi—were close to his accommodations. He adopted a strict painting schedule in Venice, generally painting from early morning to sunset and dividing the day into intervals that were each dedicated to a specific location. Every two hours, he moved to the next spot and took up whichever of his in-progress canvases corresponded to what he saw that day. Painting a subject during the same period every day deviated from his typical practice of painting a motif at different times and under varying conditions.

“I have been here for a month in rapture, it is wonderful, and I am trying to paint Venice.”
—Claude Monet

JOHN SINGER SARGENT
Florence, Italy, 1856–1925, London, England

An Interior in Venice
1899
Oil on canvas
Lent by the Royal Academy of Arts, London

The American couple Daniel and Ariana Curtis purchased the Palazzo Barbaro in 1885. There, they hosted artists and writers such as Henry James. John Singer Sargent spent the summer of 1899 as their guest and painted the Curtises, their son Ralph, and daughter-in-law Lisa in the grand salon. The furnishings and fabrics reflect the sparkling light streaming in through the window overlooking the Grand Canal. In fall 1908, the Curtises rented the palazzo to art patron Mary Hunter, who invited the Monets to stay with her.

Paolo Salviati, Palazzo Barbaro, Grand Canal, Venice, late 19th century. Albumen print. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (ARC.003946)

The Red House
1908
Oil on canvas
Collection Galerie Larock-Granoff, Paris

I am doing a few canvases there just in case, to preserve the memory of it.
—Claude Monet

Monet's painting of houses on the Fondamenta Bragadin is one his few depictions of Venice's smaller byways. He would have considered this canvas a "beginning," a quick laying down of an initial framework of forms and colors. He opted not to elaborate on the painting further in his studio, and it was not among those exhibited at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in 1912.

The gallery that loaned this painting was established a century ago in Paris by the influential dealer Katia Granoff, who was instrumental in the mid-twentieth-century rediscovery of Monet's large water lilies, several of which she sold to the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Venice, Palazzo Dario
1908
Oil on canvas
The Art Institute of Chicago, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Larned Coburn Memorial Collection, 1933.446

The Palazzo Dario was visible to Monet from his lodging at Palazzo Barbaro across the Grand Canal. The structure's polychrome marble facade and the rippling water beneath it are harmonized through brushwork and color. An empty gondola emphasizes the absence of human activity, a hallmark of his Venetian paintings. Although Monet planned to paint in Venice and shipped canvases ahead, he also purchased some canvases on-site, including this one, from Venetian art supplier Emilio Aickelin. He also bought a sketchbook there that contains his only known drawing of Venice, as seen in the image below.

Inside cover of Monet's sketchbook with art supplier label (left); first page featuring his pencil sketch of the Palazzo Dario (right). (Photo: © Musée Marmottan Monet)

CASE:

Venetian Palace (Palazzo Dario)
n.d.
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5145.2014.195

GEORGES ALLIÉ
France, active 1920s

View of Claude Monet's Salon-Studio, Giverny
ca. 1920
Gelatin silver print
Collection Philippe Piguet, Paris

Like many of Monet's Venetian subjects, the Palazzo Dario was among the city's most well-known and documented structures. This motif likely held personal significance for him, especially as he grieved Alice's death while preparing for his *Venise* exhibition. He kept one of his own paintings of the Palazzo Dario as a souvenir of their happy time together in Venice. That painting, similar to the one on view here, is visible in this photograph of his Giverny gallery.

CASE:

JOHN RUSKIN
London, England, 1819–1900, Coniston, England

Le repos de Saint-Marc: Histoire de Venise pour les rares voyageurs qui se soucient encore de ses monuments
(originally published as *St. Mark's Rest,* 1877–84)
1908
Paris: Hachette
Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives

PIERRE GUSMAN
Paris, France, 1862–1941, Grosrouvre, France

Venise
1904
Paris: Librairie Renouard
Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives

CASE:

JOHN RUSKIN
London, England, 1819–1900, Coniston, England

The Stones of Venice
edition on view ca. 1900; originally published ca. 1851–53
Boston: Dana Estes & Company
Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives

Art critic John Ruskin was enthralled by Venice. In his influential work *The Stones of Venice*, he praised the city's Gothic architecture and craftsmanship for their moral and aesthetic superiority. Ruskin also voiced concerns about Venice's future due to both decay and" thoughtless refurbishments." Many tourists used his book as a city guide. This illustration, one of many based on Ruskin's own drawings, depicts the colorful marble panels on the facade of the Palazzo Dario, a motif Monet painted multiple times.

CASE:

ELIZABETH FRANCES BATTY
England, 1791–1875, England

Venice, from *Italian Scenery from Drawings Made in 1817* by Miss [Elizabeth Frances] Batty
1820
Single-bound book
London: Rodwell & Martin
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts

SAMUEL PROUT
Plymouth, England, 1783–1852, London, England

S. M. della Salute, Venice, from *Sketches in France, Switzerland and Italy*
ca. 1840 Color lithograph
London: Hodgson & Graves
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts

As tourism in Venice grew in the 1820s, illustrated travel books became more common. Their picturesque images of noteworthy Venetian sites and activities were informed by the well-known eighteenth-century compositions of artists such as Canaletto and Michele Marieschi (on view in the next gallery). Echoed in the new medium of photography and later in film, this repeated imagery constitutes an algorithmic archive. While Monet’s artistic response to Venice was

personal, he depicted many of the same popular landmarks and views, suggesting that he was not immune to these established visual codes.

AUGUSTE LUMIÈRE
Besançon, France, 1862–1954, Lyon, France

LOUIS LUMIÈRE
Besançon, France, 1864–1948, Bandol, France

Venice
1896
Filmed by Alexandre Promio (1868–1926)
Film (black and white, silent): excerpt 1 min., 15 sec.

WILLIAM KENNEDY-LAURIE DICKSON
Le Minihic-sur-Rance, France, 1860–1935, Twickenham, England

Venice
1898
Film (black and white, silent): excerpt 2 min., 42 sec.

Venice, Queen of the Adriatic
1912
Gaumont Chronochrome (color, silent): 4 min., 42 sec.
GP Archives

These film excerpts capture sights similar to those that Monet would have encountered during his 1908 trip to Venice. Notably, the earliest footage is believed to be among the first instances of a moving camera capturing stationary objects, filmed from a boat by a camera operator working for the cinema pioneers Auguste and Louis Lumière. Other scenes include tourists and pigeons in the Piazza San Marco, gondolas, vaporetti (canal buses), steamships in the lagoon, and markets.

POSTCARD CASE:

“Perpetual Enchantment”

Alice Monet’s letters to her daughter Germaine Hoschedé Salerou document her love for Venice, where she was living “in a dream” and the days passed in “perpetual enchantment.” Often written while her husband—whom she always referred to as “Monet”—was painting beside her, they provide valuable information about his work habits. She was thrilled that he was so inspired—”Venice has got hold of him and won’t let go”—but she also reveals his emotional turmoil as he tried to capture his sensations as well as the toll it took on her: “What crazy and sad days I’m going through right now. . . . Monet, who sees that everything changes, cannot really tear himself away from his motifs. You know him, you know the extreme jumps, from the beautiful to the ugly, from the good to the bad . . . I need great energy and a good dose of courage, because alone like this, it’s painful and he has his work, and me, my thoughts.”

POSTCARD CASE:

1
Venice, Grand Canal and Palazzo Franchetti, n.d.
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5145.2014.196

During their trip, the Monets purchased these postcards, which Alice sent to her daughters and grandchildren. Two are marked to show the location of the Palazzo Barbaro on the Grand Canal. They also brought back blank postcards, several of which feature the same famous landmarks Monet painted. He likely used photographs as memory aids for his London paintings, which he completed in Giverny in 1903. For his Venice paintings, he may have adopted a similar strategy.

2
Alice Monet surrounded by pigeons, Piazza San Marco, Venice October 1908
Silver print postcard
Collection Philippe Piguet, Paris

Pigeons, much like gondolas, are symbolic of Venice. As seen in the film footage nearby, feeding pigeons in Piazza San Marco was a popular tourist activity. The Monets posed for several photographs with pigeons, and Alice had this one made into a postcard to send to her granddaughter Sisi, Germaine’s daughter.

POSTCARD CASE:

3
Venice, Grand Canal
Postcard addressed to Blanche Hoschedé, October 3, 1908
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5181.2013.1083

Alice marked this postcard and the one below it to indicate the location of the Palazzo Barbaro on the Grand Canal.

4
Venice, Grand Canal
Postcard from Alice Monet to Simone Salerou, October 10, 1908 Collection Philippe Piguet, Paris

5
Letter from Alice Monet to Germaine Hoschedé Salerou on Grand Hotel Britannia letterhead, October 17, 1908
Collection Philippe Piguet, Paris

On this letterhead, Alice marked the location of their room and noted the boat they took to the town of Chioggia. She found the electrified rooms of the hotel “truly magical,” and they inspired Monet to install electricity at Giverny.

POSTCARD CASE:

6
Venice, Palazzo Grand Hotel Britannia
Back of postcard from Alice Monet to her granddaughter Alice (Lily) Butler November 25, 1908
Collection Philippe Piguet, Paris

7
Venice, Molo
Postcard from Alice Monet to her granddaughter Alice (Lily) Butler, October 25, 1908
Collection Philippe Piguet, Paris

8
Venice, Rialto Bridge
Postcard from Alice Monet to her granddaughter Alice (Lily) Butler, October 7, 1908
Collection Philippe Piguet, Paris

9
Venice, Grand Canal, Redentore Procession
Postcard from Alice Monet to her granddaughter Alice (Lily) Butler, November 27, 1908
Collection Philippe Piguet, Paris

POSTCARD CASE:

10
Venice, Piazzetta San Marco, from the Sea, n.d.
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5145.2014.193

11
Venice, Piazza San Marco from the Royal Palace, n.d.
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5145.2014.194

12
Venice, Grand Canal, with Regattas, Panorama, n.d.
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5145.2014.192

13
Palazzo Ducale de Venise, External Loggia of the Palazzo Ducale and the Island of S. Giorgio, n.d.
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5181.2013.1164

14
Venice, Panorama of San Giorgio and Gondola, n.d.
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5145.2014.197

POSTCARD CASE:

15
Venice, Fishing Boat, n.d.
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5181.2013.1118

LA SERENISSIMA

[Canaletto's] views of this town are most scrupulously exact, to such a degree that we knew all the famous towers, steeples, etc., before we reached them.
—Hester Lynch Piozzi, writer, 1789

Venice has long been celebrated for its remarkable beauty and amphibious topography. In the eighteenth century, this city of canals and bridges, historically referred to as "La Serenissima" (The Most Serene), was often represented through the genre of scenic painting called *vedute* (views). Canaletto was that tradition's most significant practitioner. His panoramic and meticulously detailed depictions of Venice's famed sites and cultural spectacles were purchased by wealthy tourists as souvenirs. Such Venetian views established a visual template for the city, making it one of the most recognizable locations in Europe. By the time Monet arrived there, Venice—as an artistic motif and cultural touchstone—was considered to be an already known, received experience. It was through and against this formidable and ubiquitous legacy, from Canaletto's painted vistas to inexpensive picture postcards, that Monet articulated his own visions of La Serenissima.

ATTRIBUTED TO ALESSANDRO DALLA VIA
Italian, active 1680–1720

Regatta on the Venetian Grand Canal honoring Ernest Augustus IV of Hanover, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, presented in 1685 to his local and foreign guests
1686
Engraving
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of William Eddelman

FREDERICK DE WIT
Gouda, Netherlands, 1629–1706, Amsterdam, Netherlands

View of Venice
Late 17th century
Engraving
Victoria and Albert Museum

Venice was a major international commercial power from the ninth to the fifteenth century. Although the Republic of Venice gradually declined over time, dissolving in 1797, the city remained culturally influential. Printed maps of the historic city were popular souvenirs. Designed for decoration rather than navigation, these maps showcase the city's numerous churches and a variety of boats, emphasizing the importance of its shipbuilding and maritime trade. The Venetian waterways also hosted public spectacles, such as the elaborate boat races called regattas.

CANALETTO (GIOVANNI ANTONIO CANAL)
Venice, Italy, 1697–1768, Venice, Italy

Venice, the Grand Canal Looking East with Santa Maria della Salute
1749–50
Oil on canvas
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum purchase, Gift of Diane B. Wilsey in celebration of the Legion of Honor Centennial and in memory of Ann Getty

Bell towers and domes rise from a pink-tinged horizon while Venetians of various social classes mingle on the quay in front of Santa Maria della Salute. A British patron of the artist commissioned this work as a souvenir of Venice, and Canaletto completed it in London, working from memory and prints made after his other paintings of the same subject. Darker paint on the quay indicates algae traces at the waterline. Scientists have analyzed such details to determine how much climate change has raised sea levels since Canaletto’s time.

CANALETTO (GIOVANNI ANTONIO CANAL)
Venice, Italy, 1697–1768, Venice, Italy

The Bucintoro at the Molo on Ascension Day
ca. 1745
Oil on canvas
Philadelphia Museum of Art, The William L. Elkins Collection, 1924

This painting depicts the gilded barge known as the *Bucintoro* along the *molo* (quay) in front of the Palazzo Ducale. On Ascension Day, which commemorates Christ's ascension into heaven, this barge carried the doge (the ruler of the Venetian Republic) into the Adriatic Sea to cast a gold ring into its waters, symbolizing Venice's union with the sea and its maritime power. To compose his paintings, Canaletto used his own sketches and tracings from a camera obscura, the forerunner of the photographic camera. They are filled with architectural details like the jagged edge of the bell tower seen here. It was struck by lightning in 1745, suggesting an approximate date for this painting.

Monet vs. Canaletto

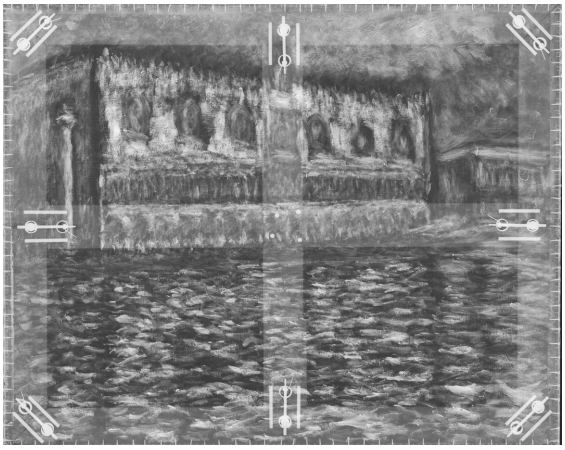
Caneletto was perhaps Monet's best-known predecessor who painted Venice. Both artists depicted landmarks, such as Santa Maria della Salute and the Palazzo Ducale. Monet finished his Venice paintings in his Giverny studio, and Canaletto also sometimes completed his works away from the city. Yet where Canaletto offered precise renderings, Monet captured Venice's vaporous atmosphere and the fleeting interactions of light and water. One anecdote purports that the young Monet critiqued Canaletto's paintings at the Louvre for their lack of detail: "Look, he does not even put in the reflections of the boats!" Monet's Venetian sites are instantly recognizable but possess an ethereal quality that transcends traditional topography. Reviews of his 1912 *Venise* exhibition noted how Monet's imagery transformed Canaletto-style views: "Venice is there, very present and recognizable, but it is not in the foreground, built, sculpted, inventoried; it is suspended in the mist and in a distance of space."

Palazzo Ducale
1908
Oil on canvas
Brooklyn Museum, Gift of A. Augustus Healy, 20.634

When the Venice paintings debuted in 1912, critics recognized their stillness and air of desertion. Monet had “returned Venice to nature,” freeing it from myth, fantasy, and history. He renewed and reclaimed for it, in touches of paint, its essence: stone, water, and iridescent reflection. There is no evidence of the ever-present crowd of people on the Molo or sailing in the lagoon, although the curved strokes of dark blue paint at the water line indicate a row of gondolas. The dabs of yellow paint under the arches along the palazzo base evoke the glint of their metal prows. Monet painted this view from a gondola anchored in the waters. The gondoliers struggled to find the same spot each day for his painting sessions. According to Alice, this caused him to give up and return to the hotel one day “absolutely furious and regretful.”

Conservator's Eye

Monet painted the *Palazzo Ducale* on a pre-primed linen canvas with a stamp from the Parisian supplier L. Besnard on the reverse, indicating it was among those he arranged to have shipped to him from Paris. The canvas has a manufacturer-prepared double ground with a textured layer (visible at the edges) applied using diagonal brushstrokes over a smooth layer. Monet painted on this ground using a dry, stiff paint that was deposited across the high points of the surface, enhancing the raised, tactile quality evident in the completed work. As with the other paintings he made in Venice, Monet started *Palazzo Ducale* on-site and later finished in his studio. An X-ray suggests the two large windows on the right side of the palazzo were made both smaller and lower during painting. This change made the painted palace more faithful to the actual appearance of the building's facade.
—Lauren Bradley, Associate Paintings



Conservator X-ray detail showing the rightmost two windows originally placed higher in *Palazzo Ducale*. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

The Palazzo Ducale, Seen from San Giorgio Maggiore
1908
Oil on canvas
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Thannhauser Collection, Bequest, Hilde Thannhauser, 1991

This painting is one of six that Monet made of the Palazzo Ducale, in a pale haze as seen from the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, whose embankment is visible at the bottom. This spot was likely where he worked first each morning according to Alice. She often wrote her letters sitting beside him there, once noting the “frightening” number of painters at work nearby: “There are five of them, plus a woman and Monet.” During Monet’s visit, the Piazza San Marco bell tower was still under reconstruction after its 1902 collapse. He completed this painting in Giverny around 1912, by which time the tower had been rebuilt. Drawing from his memory and possibly photographs, this iteration of the motif shows the fully restored tower, with its green copper spire.

MICHELE MARIESCHI
Venice, Italy, 1710–1743, Venice, Italy

Magnificentiores Selectioresque Urbis Venetiarum Prospectus (Views of Venice)
1741
Etchings and engravings

Grand Tourists (wealthy eighteenth-century travelers) often purchased large view paintings of Venice, like those seen in this gallery. There was also a thriving market for prints, which were more affordable souvenirs available in picture shops across Europe. This set of twenty-two prints, published by Michele Marieschi—an artist in Canaletto's circle—depicts Venice's famous vistas and monuments. Marieschi carefully rendered architectural and figural details while conveying atmospheric movement with elements like clouds, chimney smoke, fluttering flags, and rippling water. Print sets like these were similar in subject and purpose to the nineteenth-century souvenir photograph album displayed nearby or the postcards Alice Monet purchased during her 1908 trip.

Unless otherwise noted, Marieschi prints are courtesy the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts.

12
Courtyard of the Palazzo Ducale

13
Campo Santi Giovanni e Paolo

14
Piazzetta di San Basso

15
Cannareggio

16
Canal Grande
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum Collection

17
Campo San Rocco
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum Collection

18
Rialto

19
The Molo and Santa Maria della Salute

20
Piazza and Piazzetta

21
Campo dei Frari

22
The Regatta

CARLO NAYA
Tronzano Vercellese, Italy, 1816–1882, Venice, Italy

Procuratie Vecchie and Clock Tower, Piazza San Marco
ca. 1870s
Albumen silver print mounted in leather-bound album
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Elizabeth D. Moyer, PhD and Michael C. Powanda, PhD in honor of Robert Flynn Johnson and James Ganz

By the mid-1850s, commercial photography firms had emerged in Venice to serve the growing number of upper-and middle-class tourists arriving by steamship and railway. Carlo Naya was a notable photographer known for capturing the city's iconic landmarks and panoramas. His images were available on-site and across Europe and the United States, with visitors able to purchase individual photographs or souvenir albums like this one.

Venice and the Grand Tour

From the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, wealthy young men (mostly British) undertook the Grand Tour, a leisurely educational journey through Italy to experience its good weather, food, art, and archaeological treasures. Venice was a key stop. Colorful annual Carnival celebrations, masquerades, gaming, and opera houses, as well as its reputation for sexual revelry, made it a particularly attractive destination. Its picturesque scenery was also captivating. As one Grand Tourist remarked, “A city built in the ocean is surely one of the wonders of the world.”

THE PAINTER OF WATER

These works from the 1870s and’80s demonstrate why art critic Théodore Duret called Monet “the painter of water.” Attracted to its inherent changeability (liquid, vapor, and solid), Monet depicted water throughout his career, from the Seine, the Atlantic Ocean, and his Giverny pond to the Thames and Venetian canals. He was introduced to plein air (outdoor) painting by mentors such as Eugène Boudin, who was known for his seascapes and harbor scenes. Painting with Boudin along the coast of Normandy in the late 1850s and early 1860s, Monet learned to immerse himself in nature, capturing the transient effects of sunlight and reflections on the water’s surface. He was also influenced by Gustave Courbet’s seascapes and the expansive river scenes of Charles-François Daubigny, who painted from his “floating studio.” Monet emulated Daubigny’s practice of painting from water level. He built his own studio boat that he used frequently on the Seine; in Venice, a gondola served the same purpose.

“I want always to be before the sea or on it, and when I die, I want to be buried in a buoy.”
—Claude Monet

Waves Breaking
1881
Oil on canvas
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Prentis Cobb Hale

Monet was fascinated and challenged by the churning waters of the English Channel coast. In this painting made in Fécamp, Normandy, the agitated brushstrokes evoke the rush of seafoam and the brilliance of sunlight, highlighting his gestural technique and the texture of the paint itself. In its focus on just water and sky, the painting recalls Gustave Courbet's seascapes from years earlier, with which Monet was familiar.

Gustave Courbet, *The Wave (La Vague)*, ca. 1869. Oil on canvas. Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mrs. Horace O. Havemeyer, 41.1256. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

Rising Tide at Pourville
1882
Oil on canvas
Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mrs. Horace O. Havemeyer, 41.1260

In 1882 Monet spent five and a half months painting along the coast of the small fishing village of Pourville where, as he wrote to Alice, "one could not be any closer to the sea than I am." In this dramatic view, he portrayed the rolling, white-capped sea and windswept vegetation with vigorous brushstrokes. He emphasized the isolated cottage, now lost to erosion, by cropping the view on the right and presenting it from a steep angle.

Conservator's Eye

In this work, Monet captures the effects of wind, water, and sun in a seemingly effortless composition. He dedicated significant time to the canvas, working on it over multiple sessions. Close looking at the buildup of paint underscores this slow and economical process. The light gray ground layer is visible throughout the composition, showing his restraint in paint application. Monet also allowed each paint layer to dry before adding the next one. The green strokes for the grasses at the cliff's edge skip over the thickly textured white and blue waves without the paint mixing, indicating that there was ample drying time between sessions.
—Ellen Nigro, Assistant Paintings Conservator

Detail of paint layers in *Rising Tide at Pourville*. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

Sailboats on the Seine at Petit-Gennevilliers
1874
Oil on canvas
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Bruno and Sadie Adriani

From 1871 to 1878, Monet lived in the picturesque Parisian suburb of Argenteuil, popular with day-trippers and artists. Its green promenades, bridges, and sailboats became enduring symbols of Impressionism. This colorful and complex composition of moored boats across the Seine in Petit-Gennevilliers, with smokestacks visible in the distance, highlights the influence of Monet's mentor Eugène Boudin.

Eugène Boudin, *Le Havre, The Port (Le Havre, Le Port),* 1884. Oil on panel. Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mrs. Carll H. de Silver in memory of her husband, 13.48. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

Banks of the Seine at Lavacourt
1879
Oil on canvas
The Frick Pittsburgh

In 1878 Monet and the Hoschedé family moved to Vétheuil, a rural village thirty-seven miles northwest of Paris and across the Seine from Lavacourt. Although he was struggling financially and his first wife Camille was very ill, the move sparked a productive period. He shifted his focus from the leisure scenes of suburban Argenteuil to nuanced explorations of light, weather, and the changing seasons in works that rarely included human figures. Monet was drawn to views like this one in which sky and water meet at the horizon, with clouds, foliage, and buildings above and their reflections below.

CHARLES-FRANÇOIS DAUBIGNY
Paris, France, 1817–1878, Paris, France

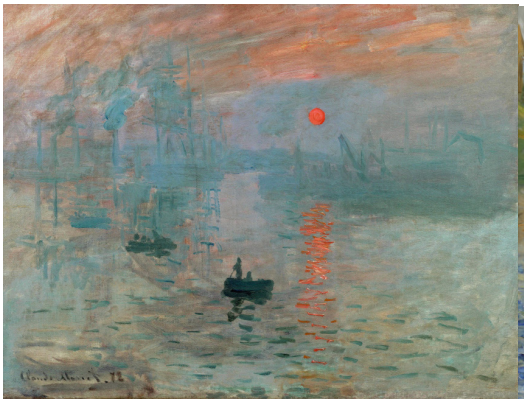
Le bateau-atelier (The Floating Studio), from the album *Voyage en bateau (Boat Trip)*
1861
Etching
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Art

In 1857 Charles-François Daubigny transformed a barge into a floating studio he called “Le Botin” (The Little Box). From this vantage point, he captured scenes along the Seine and other rivers, painting directly from a water-level perspective. Here, he depicted himself painting the view, which is framed by the window of his boat. The practice of painting outdoors directly from nature inspired the next generation of Impressionist artists, including Monet. Monet was inspired by Daubigny’s river landscapes. He also emulated the artist by building his own studio boat in the 1870s.

Charles-François Daubigny, *River Scene*, 1859. Oil on panel. Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of William H. Herriman, 21.134. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

Impressionism

Impressionism emerged in the 1870s, named after Monet's painting *Impression, Sunrise* (top). The revolutionary movement was pioneered by artists such as Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Berthe Morisot, who used bright, unblended colors and dynamic brushwork to capture the transient effects of light and atmosphere in landscapes and scenes of modern life. Before they eventually gained widespread admiration, Impressionist paintings were rejected by the official art world. Central to Impressionism was the practice of painting outdoors, or en plein air, engaging directly with the subject (bottom). Monet always worked on the spot, often over many sessions, but he also refined his works back in the studio.



Monet is depicted with his first wife, Camille, in his studio boat; on the easel in front of him is likely the painting *Sailboats on the Seine* (on view in this gallery).

Left: Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*, 1872. Oil on canvas. Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, France, inv. 4014. (Photo: Bridgeman Images)

Right: Édouard Manet, *Claude Monet Painting in His Studio Boat*, 1874. Oil on canvas. Neue Pinakothek, Munich

ENVELOPPES AND REFLECTIONS

As Monet's interest in painting human presence diminished in the 1880s, he became increasingly preoccupied with what he called the *enveloppe*, the ephemeral, colored atmosphere that surrounded and transformed his landscape motifs. As he explained, "Other painters paint a bridge, a house, a boat... I want to paint the air in which the bridge, the house, and the boat are to be found—the beauty of the air around them, and that is nothing less than the impossible." Whether along the Seine, in London's fog, or in the Venetian haze, Monet painted "what lies between the motif and me," rendering *enveloppes* in which objects and their reflections interact and harmonize in multihued touches of paint.

“I need to work very hard to render what I’m seeking: ‘instantaneity,’ especially the *enveloppe*, the same light spread everywhere.”
—Claude Monet

The Break up of the Ice
1880
Oil on canvas
University of Michigan Museum of Art, Acquired through the generosity of Russell B. Stearns (LS&A, 1916), and his wife Andree B. Stearns, Dedham, Massachusetts

I was woken by a terrifying noise. I ran to the window and I could see blocks of white falling; it was the real breakup of the ice floes.
—Alice Hoschedé

We have had a terrible thaw here, and naturally I have tried to make something of it. —Claude Monet In the winter of 1879–80, the Seine froze. When it began to thaw, large ice floes caused significant damage to the Vétheuil countryside, where Monet and his family lived. He made a number of paintings that captured the disaster's aftermath at varying times and weather conditions —like the pale blue-gray light bathing this scene. Here, trees and their reflections, intermittently obscured by ice blocks, form an abstract rhythm across the canvas, a pictorial strategy he would emphasize in his later water lily paintings.

The Seine near Giverny
1885
Oil on canvas
Frederic C. Hamilton Collection, bequeathed to the Denver Art Museum

In this painting, likely made from his boat, Monet concentrated on the lush vegetation mirrored in the Epte River along a section where it joins the Seine. The composition features two horizontally symmetrical halves, tonally united under an *enveloppe* of soft summer light, yet subtly distinguished by a network of varied brushstrokes. Dabs of paint depict individual leaves quivering in a breeze. A more uniform series of longer strokes represent their ephemeral reflections on the water's rippling surface.

Japanese Footbridge, Giverny
1895
Oil on canvas
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of F. Otto Haas, reserving the life interest of his wife Carole Haas Gravagno, 1993–151–2

This is one of Monet's earliest paintings of his garden in Giverny. After renting a house in the village in 1883, he purchased it in 1890 and later expanded the property to build his water lily pond. A passionate horticulturist, Monet said he designed his garden "for the pleasure of the eye and also for motifs to paint." No lily pads are yet visible here; reflected in the water below are only the Japanese-style bridge and the bright spring foliage surrounding it.

A Cliff at Pourville in the Morning
1897
Oil on canvas
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Purchase, John W. Tempest Fund

I needed to see the sea again. . . . And so I have set to work with ardor.
—Claude Monet

In 1896 Monet revisited some of his favorite motifs on the Normandy coast. Unlike the crisp light of his earlier Pourville works, here the beach and cliffs are suffused by a softly shimmering atmospheric *enveloppe*. The scene takes on the kind of visionary, ethereal quality that would characterize the Venice paintings less than fifteen years later.

Low Tide at Pourville, near Dieppe
1882
Oil on canvas
Cleveland Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Henry White Cannon, 1947.196

Like Venice, the Normandy coast was a tourist destination by the mid-nineteenth century, and images of its rock formations and seascapes were widely reproduced in guidebooks. Monet painted many of these popular views, like this one from Pourville, in which the vivid blues of water and sky in bright afternoon light are balanced by the cliff's shimmering yellows, greens, and pinks. Black dots on the shoreline represent bathers and were probably among his last additions to this canvas, which he worked on over many sessions. He would later adopt a similar palette and composition for his depiction of the cliff-like Palazzo Ducale (on view in the previous gallery).

Waterloo Bridge: Effect of Sunlight in the Fog
1903
Oil on canvas
National Gallery of Canada, Purchased 1914

Every day in London there is beautiful, absinthe-colored weather. Is not that enough to lure you here?
—John Singer Sargent to Monet, 1894

From his room at the Savoy Hotel, Monet observed light from the fog-cloaked sun, which he called the “pretty red ball,” shimmering on the water, where a few ghostly scullers are visible. He considered London's smoky conditions essential to achieve the effects he sought. As he wrote to Alice, he was “terrified” one morning when he perceived no fog: “I was devastated and already imagined that all my canvases would be ruined, but little by little the fires were lit, and the smoke and fog returned.” An X-ray of the painting reveals that when Monet reworked the painting in Giverny, he obscured the towers and smokestacks on the far bank and darkened the entire scene.

Monet and Series Painting

Throughout his career, Monet created groups of paintings of the same theme for practical and artistic reasons. Producing multiple images, such as the cliffs at Pourville or the ice floes at Vethueil, allowed him to capitalize on his growing market. In the 1880s, his desire to capture every shift in *enveloppes* of colored light intensified. He was also challenged by a paradox: rendering fleeting impressions was a long process, requiring many outdoor sessions and revisions. By the 1890s, his serial practice evolved accordingly. He observed the same subjects under varying atmospheric conditions, working on several canvases simultaneously. After refining these paintings in his studio, he exhibited them as an ensemble. His London and water lily paintings are examples of this practice.

Houses of Parliament, Sunlight Effect
1903
Oil on canvas
Brooklyn Museum, Bequest of Grace Underwood Barton, 68.48.1

The Thames was pure gold. Heavens, it was beautiful, and I set to work with a frenzy, following the sun and its glitter on the water.
—Claude Monet

Monet made nineteen paintings of this view from the balcony of Saint Thomas's Hospital in London. He was inspired by the city's infamous smog—a term coined in 1905—which softened sunlight, blended colors, and created an ever-changing *enveloppe*. Like the Venice paintings, which also feature grand urban architecture seen from across the water, Monet began these luminous works on location and then revised and completed them in Giverny.

“Rose Veil” and “Sulfurous Vapors”

Air pollution was pervasive during Monet’s lifetime. Sulfur dioxide from coal smoke created the smog that enhanced the atmospheric visual effects he sought in London. Venice was industrialized by the early twentieth century, filled with smoke from factories, steamboats, and trains—critics noted the ”rose veil” and ”sulfurous vapors” in his paintings of the city. While their hazy appearance cannot be solely attributed to pollution, it helped to create the tonally unified *enveloppes* he captured in his paintings of London and Venice.

The Rio della Salute
1908
Oil on canvas
Hasso Plattner Collection, Museum Barberini, Potsdam

The Rio della Salute, which Monet painted from a gondola, is one of two Venice motifs to feature a minor canal, and the only one to include foliage: a splash of green leaves behind a garden wall. Beyond the arched bridge—which Monet may have likened to his own Japanese bridge at Giverny—the rounded apse of San Gregorio church is visible. Stone and water dissolve into each other, contrasting the facades' more delineated architectural elements, all rendered in luminous strokes of yellow, orange, and violet.

The Palazzo Ducale
1908
Oil on canvas
Hasso Plattner Collection, Museum Barberini, Potsdam

This is the only one of Monet’s Palazzo Ducale paintings to feature a west-facing perspective and dynamic diagonal orientation. The foregrounded mooring posts (*pali*) enhance the sense of depth and contrast with the misty, colored light that envelops the architecture and the single gondola in the background. The slice of ground at the bottom of the canvas appears in other views of the Palazzo Ducale (on display in the last gallery), indicating Monet's own position across the lagoon on the embankment of San Giorgio Maggiore island. Here, however, his specific location for this view remains unclear.

This painting was confiscated from Jakob Goldschmidt on February 18, 1941, by Nazi agents and restituted to Erwin Goldschmidt on February 8, 1960.

Ceux de chez nous (Those of Our Land)
1915
Directed by Sacha Guitry (1885–1957)
Film (black and white, silent): excerpt 1 min., 35 sec.
INA mediapro

Directed by the French actor Sacha Guitry, this footage captures seventy-four-year-old Monet painting beside his water lily pond in Giverny. The film was produced during World War I and paid tribute to France's greatest living artists and the significance of their work for the nation. Wearing a pristine white suit and smoking a cigarette, Monet works on one of his water lily paintings, glancing back and forth between the pond, his canvas, and Guitry, his off-camera interlocutor. Monet wrote to art dealers Gaston and Jossé Bernheim-Jeune on November 15, 1915, expressing his excitement about attending the Paris premiere of this "excellent film." •

VISTAS AND VIGNETTES

During the nineteenth century, Venice's reputation as a dreamlike place of ruined grandeur and melancholy attracted new generations of European and American artists. They portrayed the city's natural and architectural beauty using a variety of compositional modes, from vista to vignette. Joseph Mallord William Turner combined Canaletto's panoramic vision with lush color effects and gestural brushwork. Monet's friends James McNeill Whistler and John Singer Sargent challenged Venice's grand visual tropes with their partial or unexpected viewpoints. In his etchings, Whistler focused on the city's quiet byways and working-class locals. Sargent's sparkling watercolors offer what seem to be quick glimpses of busy canals and light-struck architecture. Other of Monet's contemporaries, such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Paul Signac, were not immune to the thematic conventions of Venice, but they, too, rendered the city according to their own pictorial vocabularies.

“I saw from out of the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanter’s wand . . .”
—Lord Byron, “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage,”
canto 4, 1818

Venice and the Nineteenth-Century Cultural Imagination

Venice has loomed in the cultural imagination for centuries. By 1800 the city was considered an open-air museum and a spectacular work of art itself. It also came to symbolize beautiful decay—a dreamlike place of lost grandeur, caught between life and death. This melancholy image was popularized by Romantic poet Lord Byron, who described its palaces as “crumbling to the shore.” His conception inspired many artists and writers, including John Ruskin, whose own evocative description of Venice resonated in the minds of many nineteenth-century tourists: “A ghost upon the sands of the sea, so weak—so quiet—so bereft of all but her loveliness, that we might well doubt, as we watched her faint reflection in the mirage of the lagoon, which was the City, and which the Shadow.”

WILLIAM BELL SCOTT
Edinburgh, Scotland, 1811–1890, South Ayrshire, Scotland

Upper Portion of the Facade of St Mark's, Venice
1862
Watercolor
Victoria and Albert Museum

William Bell Scott was associated with the Pre-Raphaelite art movement, a style that prized naturalism and vivid details. Like John Ruskin, he appreciated Venice's architecture. Here, he focused on the ancient bronze horses above the loggia of the Basilica of San Marco, framed against the distant lagoon. The horses were stolen from Constantinople by Crusaders in 1204 and then looted by Napoleon in 1797, finally returning to Venice in 1815. Their imposing presence contrasts with the nearby pigeons. About the city's ubiquitous birds, Ruskin quipped:
"The glory of the creatures is not in being pigeons, but in being Venetians."

JOHN RUSKIN
London, England, 1819–1900, Consiton, England

The South Side of the Basilica of San Marco from the Loggia of the Palazzo Ducale
ca. 1850–52
Watercolor over pencil, highlighted with bodycolor
Private collection

This watercolor relates to the large-scale prints published to accompany John Ruskin's masterwork *The Stones of Venice*. The composition is loosely based on a daguerreotype taken by his assistant. Ruskin omitted the modern gas lamps already installed outside the Basilica of San Marco, which he disliked. During his visit to San Marco, Monet may have admired the lily patterns carved on the capitals of the basilica’s north and south portico columns, visible here. Ruskin praised them for their beauty, describing how the sun moved across their “marble veil, and touches with the white lustre of its rays at midday the pointed leaves of its thirsty lilies.”

FROM TOP LEFT, CLOCKWISE:

JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM TURNER
London, England, 1775–1851, London England

San Giorgio Maggiore
ca. 1835
Gouache on gray paper
Victoria and Albert Museum

The Grand Canal, Venice, with the Palazzo Balbi and the Mocenigo Palaces, and the Rialto Bridge in the Distance
1840
Graphite and watercolor on paper
Tate, Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856

Boats at the Entrance to the Canale della Giudecca, Venice, off Santa Maria della Salute and the Dogana
Possibly 1840
Graphite, watercolor, bodycolor, and pen and ink on paper
Tate, Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856

The Campanile and Piazza of San Marco (St Mark's Square), Venice, with the Pilastri Acritani beside the Basilica, from the Porta della Carta of the Palazzo Ducale
1840
Gouache, graphite, and watercolor on paper
Tate, Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856

The Piazzetta, Palazzo Ducale and New Prisons from the Bacino, Venice, with Moored Boats
1840
Watercolor on paper
Tate, Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856

The Grand Canal, Venice, near the Accademia, with Santa Maria della Salute in the Distance
Possibly 1840
Gouache, graphite, and watercolor on paper
Tate, Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856

The Dogana and Santa Maria della Salute, Venice, across the Grand Canal from the Hotel Europa (Palazzo Giustinian) at Twilight
1840
Graphite, watercolor, and pen and ink on paper
Tate, Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856

Joseph Mallord William Turner was celebrated for his images of Venice, despite only visiting the city three times between 1819 and 1840. In contrast to Canaletto's precision, Turner's depictions were freely rendered and atmospheric, portraying the city's magnificent architecture, glittering water, and ever-changing skies bathed in colorful, diffused light. After Turner's death, John Ruskin, a devoted admirer, lamented that sunshine and sky had lost their great witness. These watercolor studies exemplify the delicate, expressive effects for which Turner was known. Created on-site, sometimes from a gondola or from his hotel room window, they served as memory aids when he worked on paintings back in his studio. Monet first saw Turner's work in London in 1870, and the English artist remained a significant artistic reference point for him. Images like these likely came to Monet's mind during his own Venetian sojourn.

THOMAS MORAN
Bolton, England, 1837–1926, Santa Barbara, California

Sunset Santa Maria and the Ducal Palace, Venice
1902
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Thomas Moran achieved success with his dramatic landscape paintings of the American West. After visiting Venice in 1886, he was committed to painting lyrical Venetian scenes, influenced by Joseph Mallord William Turner. Moran depicts colorful sailboats in the Bacino, Venice's central harbor basin, bathed in a golden sunset glow. He arranged the panoramic composition to include two landmarks—San Marco's bell tower and Santa Maria della Salute's domes—in a single view.

EDWARD STEICHEN
Bivange, Luxembourg, 1879–1973, West Redding, Connecticut

Late Afternoon, Venice 1907, published in*Camera Work*, 1913
Photogravure
Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives

ALVIN LANGDON COBURN
Boston, Massachusetts, 1882–1966, Rhos-on-Sea, Wales

The White Bridge, Venice 1906, published in*Camera Work*, 1908 Photogravure
Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives

Early twentieth-century photographers Edward Steichen and Alvin Langdon Coburn created haunting, softly focused images taken from low vantage points that emphasize Venice’s gleaming expanses of water and reveal the impact of the Impressionist aesthetic. It is not known whether or not Monet was aware of these photographs, but their resemblance to his own compositions underscores the allure and ubiquity of certain Venetian motifs.

CASE:

UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHERS FOR
F. FRITH AND COMPANY

Piazza San Marco
Venice from San Giorgio
Island of San Giorgio
ca. 1850–70
Whole-plate albumen prints from wet collodion glass negatives Victoria and Albert Museum, Acquired from F. Frith and Company, 1954

Francis Frith was among the most successful commercial photographers in the 1850s and ’60s. He established England’s largest photographic printing business, which maintained an extensive inventory of historical and topographical views from around the world taken by several different photographers. These are reference copies, inscribed with the subject and negative number to facilitate the easy retrieval of sellable prints. Intended for tourists and armchair travelers who wanted to remember or imagine foreign locations, these photographs were precursors to mass-produced postcards, such as those Alice Monet purchased in 1908.

UNIDENTIFIED PHOTOGRAPHER

Palazzo Dario on the Grand Canal, Venice, Italy
ca. 1860–80
Albumen print
Victoria and Albert Museum, Given by S. E. Bunney

This photograph belonged to artist John Wharlton Bunney (1828–1882). John Ruskin frequently commissioned architectural drawings of sites in Italy from Bunney, who may have used this image as a reference.

PIERRE-AUGUSTE RENOIR
Limoges, France, 1841–1919, Cagnes-sur-Mer, France

Venice, The Palazzo Ducale
1881
Oil on canvas
Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts

Monet first visited Italy in 1883 with PierreAuguste Renoir. However, Venice was not on their itinerary. Renoir had visited in 1881, and painted its famous views like this one, just as Monet would do twenty-seven years later. Renoir wasn't alone in depicting this location—as he noted in a letter, "There were at least six of us queuing up to paint it." His scene is rendered in creamy, animated brushstrokes that nonetheless delineate the facade with relative clarity. He also includes lively lagoon traffic, something Monet took care to avoid in his own compositions. This is likely one of two Venetian views by Renoir that art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel loaned to the 1882 Impressionist exhibition.

JEAN-BAPTISTE-CAMILLE COROT
Paris, France, 1796–1875, Paris, France

View of Venice (Santa Maria della Salute from Campo della Carita)
1828
Oil on paper laid on canvas
Gallery 19C

View of Campo della Carita toward the Dome of the Salute
1834
Oil on paper laid on canvas
Gallery 19C

There is only one master here—Corot. We are nothing compared to him, nothing.
—Claude Monet

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot painted these two plein air oil studies from the same location in Venice, six years apart. He made hundreds of such sketches in Italy, meant to serve as preparatory material for his large studio paintings. In the earlier work (left), the immediacy of his swift visual impression is highlighted by the note “Venise, 12 Juillet,” which he wrote in the wet paint with the brush handle. The later work (right) offers a similarly spontaneous view. Although Monet likely wasn’t familiar with these particular sketches, he admired and was influenced by Corot, and would have appreciated the artist’s free handling of paint, bright colors, and brilliant light.

HENRI LE SIDANER
Port Louis, Mauritius, 1862–1939, Versailles, France

The Palazzo Ducale
ca. 1906
Oil on panel
La Salle University Art Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,
Gift of Richard M. Thune

During his 1905 and 1906 trips to Venice, Henri Le Sidaner recorded the city's jewel-like colors and atmospheric effects, particularly at night. Here, he shows part of the Palazzo Ducale's facade, glowing against a dark sky, with a few lights glimmering on the distant horizon. Dappled brushwork reveals his affinities both to Impressionism and to the pointillist dots characteristic of Neo-Impressionism. Quick paint application and use of an easily portable surface—in this instance, a cigar case—suggests a study made rapidly on-site.

EMMA CIARDI
Venice, Italy, 1879–1933, Venice, Italy

La Scala dei Giganti (the Giant's Staircase)
1911
Oil on beaver board
Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Estate of Emil Fuchs, 32.1759

Emma Ciardi studied with her father, an artist specializing in Venetian scenes. By her late teens, she became a professional painter and found success exhibiting her own Impressionistic views of Venice. This richly textured, sun-dappled image depicts the Giant's Staircase at the Palazzo Ducale, flanked by sculptures of the gods Neptune and Mars symbolizing the Republic's maritime and military strength. In 1913 Ciardi was among the artists who joined the modern American painter William Merritt Chase's summer art class in Venice. Chase wrote to his wife about Ciardi, saying, "She is a splendid artist."

LUCIEN LÉVY-DHURMER
Algiers, Algeria, 1865–1953, Le Vésinet, France

The Grand Canal at Night
1895
Pastel on paper
Collection of Celia Morrissette and Keith Johnson,
New York/New Jersey

During the 1890s, Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer was linked to the Symbolist movement, which favored the suggestive and emotional over the literal. Here, he conjured Venice as a dreamscape. The velvety texture and soft tones that he achieved with pastels in this aerial view heighten the city's moody, melancholic qualities. Monet evoked a similar aura of silence and mystery, particularly in his palazzo facade paintings, on view in the last gallery.

PAUL SIGNAC
Paris, France, 1863–1935, Paris, France

Venice
1908
Watercolor
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5074

In the early 1880s, Paul Signac wrote to Monet to express his deep admiration for his work. After seeing Monet's 1912*Venise*exhibition, Signac wrote again, praising his "superb interpretation of those motifs I know so well." Monet recognized Signac's talent, too. In 1909 he purchased this watercolor, which the younger artist had made the previous year.

PAUL SIGNAC
Paris, France, 1863–1935, Paris, France

The Lagoon of Saint Mark, Venice
1905
Oil on canvas
Chrysler Museum of Art, Gift of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., 77.344

Paul Signac's mosaic-like brushstrokes were well suited to depicting the luminosity of Venice. During the artist's 1904 trip, he created hundreds of sketches that were the basis for large-scale studio paintings such as this one. Influenced by Joseph Mallord William Turner's grand views of Venice, Signac vividly portrayed a bustling lagoon filled with *bragozzi* with their colorful sails and gondolas carrying tourists holding parasols. •

FROM LEFT, CLOCKWISE:

JOHN SINGER SARGENT
Florence, Italy 1856–1925, London, England

Santa Maria Della Salute, Venice
ca. 1904–9
Watercolor on paper
Victoria and Albert Museum, Given by Mrs. Ormond and Miss Sargent in memory of their brother

The Bridge of Sighs
ca. 1903–4
Translucent and opaque watercolor with graphite and red-pigmented underdrawing

Venetian Boats
ca. 1903–8
Watercolor on paper

The Giudecca
ca. 1904
Translucent watercolor and touches of opaque watercolor and graphite with graphite underdrawing

La Riva
ca. 1903–4
Opaque and translucent watercolor with graphite underdrawing

Brooklyn Museum, Purchased by Special Subscription, 09.819,.845, .890,.828

John Singer Sargent visited Venice nearly every year from 1898 to 1913, attracted by family, friends, and the city's sublime architecture. He and Monet had been friendly since 1876, and it was Sargent who introduced Monet to his future hostess in Venice, Mary Hunter. Among Sargent's nearly two hundred Venetian works, perhaps the most captivating are his watercolors of reflective canals filled with boats and gondolas, surrounded by sun-brightened buildings. Like Monet, Sargent painted from the water. Many of his compositions are cropped, suggesting the ever-changing views he experienced while gliding through the canals. Some include the prow of his boat, inviting viewers to share his perspective. His varied and innovative watercolor techniques—scraping, blotting, layering, and applying colors side by side, while reserving areas of blank paper—evoke sparkling light and movement.

EMILY SARGENT
Florence, Italy, 1857–1936, Zurich, Switzerland

Interior of the Frari
1885
Watercolor over graphite
Brooklyn Museum, Anonymous gift, 2022.57.1

The recent discovery of watercolors by John Singer Sargent's younger sister Emily has enhanced her reputation as a talented artist in her own right. She traveled extensively with her brother, often painting alongside him. This watercolor of Venice's Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari reveals her artistic process. She started with a perspective pencil sketch, then filled in color, and finished with adding details such as the hanging lamp chain to the right.

JOHN SINGER SARGENT
Florence, Italy, 1856–1925, London, England

The Church of San Stae
ca. 1907–13
Oil on canvas
Private collection

John Singer Sargent loved Venetian architecture, but his depictions of it often focused on fragmentary elements. He chose angled, partial viewpoints that emphasized patterns and details. This example draws attention to the lower segment of the church's ornate facade, with a glimpse of an unrelated red building alongside it.

JANE EMMET DE GLEHN
New Rochelle, New York, 1873–1961, New York, New York

Canal View, Venice
ca. early 1900s
Oil on canvas
Collection of Mary McClean

Jane Emmet de Glehn came from an accomplished family, with two sisters and a cousin who were all successful artists. Although she was not as prolific as her relatives, she was a professional artist her entire life. In 1904 she married British landscape painter Wilfred de Glehn, who was a close friend of John Singer Sargent. Sargent enjoyed portraying Jane, sometimes while she was herself at work, as shown in the image below. The three of them frequently traveled together, including to Venice, where she made this vibrant plein air painting.

John Singer Sargent,*The Fountain, Villa Torlonia, Frascati, Italy,*1907. Oil on canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago, Friends of American Art Collection, 1914.57. (Photo: The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY)

WILLIAM MERRITT CHASE
Nineveh, Indiana, 1849–1916, New York, New York

The Antiquary Shop
1879
Oil on canvas
Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Mrs. Carll H. de Silver in memory of her husband, 13.53

William Merritt Chase was known for his eclectic style that drew from both Old Masters and his modern European contemporaries. This painting of a dimly lit Venetian courtyard filled with antique collectibles demonstrates a Realist's attention to detail and texture, as well as an Impressionist's interest in capturing atmosphere—here, a sense of murkiness. The items on display—a mosque lamp, gilded plates, a shield, a helmet, and framed pictures—are the types of objects Chase acquired on his European trips to use as painting props and studio decorations.

FROM LEFT, CLOCKWISE:

JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER
Lowell, Massachusetts, 1834–1903, London, England

Nocturne: Furnace
1879–80
Etching on paper
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Osgood Hooker

The Mast
Etching on paper

The Beggars
Etching on paper

Bead Stringers
Etching on paper

The Doorway
Etching and drypoint on paper

Fruit Stall
Etching on paper

The Palaces
Etching and drypoint on paper

1879–80

Brooklyn Museum, Gifts of Mrs. Charles Pratt,
57.188.72,.71,.68,.70, .69,.67

I have learned to know a "Venice in Venice" that others never seem to have perceived.
—James McNeill Whistler

In 1879 James McNeill Whistler accepted a commission from London's Fine Art Society to create etchings of Venice. Over fourteen months in the city, he produced around fifty prints, with thirty-eight featured in two "Venice" sets published in 1880 and 1886. Whistler's etchings offer a distinctive vision of Venice. Instead of grand vistas, he preferred intimate vignettes of places and people that most tourists overlooked: alleyways, obscure canals, laborers, and other local inhabitants. Drawing on-site, directly on copper plates, he employed various incising techniques and manipulated the ink to evoke the city's dynamic light and atmosphere. Each etching bears a small tab with Whistler's signature butterfly and the abbreviation "imp." (from the Latin *impressit*), indicating that he printed the impression himself.

JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER
Lowell, Massachusetts, 1834–1903, London, England

Nocturne
1879–80
Etching
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Bequest of Lucie Stern

Nocturne
1879–80
Etching printed in brown ink
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum purchase, William H. Noble Bequest Fund

These two impressions of the same image—a large sailing ship and the church of San Giorgio Maggiore—demonstrate James McNeill Whistler's ability to convey light effects through varying ink density and plate-wiping techniques. Monet admired his friend's use of nuanced tones and emphasis on subjective sensations. The spare composition and varied atmosphere in these impressions foreshadow Monet's own group of San Giorgio Maggiore paintings, each depicting the church suspended between sea and sky (on view in the last gallery).

ROBERT FREDERICK BLUM
Cincinnati, Ohio, 1857–1903, New York, New York

Venetian Gondoliers
ca. 1880–89
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Many American artists began arriving in Venice in the late 1870s and’80s, including John Singer Sargent, James McNeill Whistler, William Merritt Chase, and Robert Frederick Blum, who painted this serene image of gondolas in the lagoon’s milky-green waters. Despite the growing presence of large steamships, gondolas remained a common sight and staple of Venice’s iconic imagery. While they were emblems of the city’s distinct charm, they also had a more somber association: their black hull and *felze* (passenger cabin) often caused them to be likened to hearses.

WATER LILIES

Several years before visiting Venice, Monet began a series of spatially complex paintings of clouds and sky reflected on the surface of his lily pond in Giverny. The perennially anxious artist became dissatisfied with his progress and canceled a planned exhibition of the works. A few months later, Alice convinced him to go to Venice. There, she was happy to see him work passionately on motifs other than what she described as “endless water lilies.” When he returned to Giverny, Monet announced that he was ready to continue with the water lilies: “My trip to Venice has had the advantage of making me see my canvases with a better eye.” Venice, and its expanses of reflective water, replenished the immersive vision he was developing at his pond. In 1909 his abstracted *Water Lilies* astonished the public; three years later, his Venice paintings debuted. Some critics recognized a resonance between the two motifs, with one asserting, “There’s only one step, there and back, from the water lily pond to the lagoon where the colorful palaces bloom.”

“These landscapes of water and reflections have become an obsession.”
—Claude Monet

Self-Portrait on the Surface of the Water Lily Pond, Giverny
ca. 1905
Modern silver print
Collection Philippe Piguet, Paris

This poignant photograph, believed to have been taken by Monet, captures the shadow of his head and hat on the surface of the lily pond. He was likely gazing down into the water from the Japanese bridge in his garden, embodying the immersive perspective that is suggested in his water lily paintings.

Water Lilies
1914–17
Oil on canvas
Diane B. Wilsey

Here, long brushstrokes depict undulating underwater grasses and the reflections of willow trees. This painting's saturated pigments and matte surface are also characteristic of the mural-sized canvases Monet had begun developing around this time and that he would ultimately donate to France as a symbol of peace and in memory of those lost in World War I. Those*grandes décorations*, as he called them, have been on view at the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris since 1927. Monet's concept of a room decorated with panoramic water lily paintings first emerged around 1897. In 1909, after returning from Venice, where he admired the encompassing sixteenth-century painting cycles by Tintoretto in the Palazzo Ducale and Scuola di San Rocco, Monet expressed a renewed desire to create an interior with his water lilies "covering the walls, unifying them."

Left: Room 2 of the*Water Lilies (Nymphéas)*, 20th century. Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris. (Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY; Photo: Hervé Lewandowski)

Right: The Doge's Palace, Sala del Maggior Consiglio (The Great Council Hall). (Photo: Cosmo Condina Western Europe / Alamy)

Water Lilies
1914–17
Oil on canvas
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum purchase, Mildred Anna Williams Collection

Around 1914 Monet began using larger canvases and even more gestural brushwork to depict blossoms floating on his pond's surface amid reflections and shadows of the trees and sky above and vegetation below. The pink water lilies in this painting were new hybrid varieties Monet discovered at the 1889 Paris Exposition. Some contemporaneous poets and writers described Venice using floral metaphors, calling it "a torn flower borne on the sea" and "a city like a water lily, less seen than reflected." Monet's guidebook described the city as "blooming like an aquatic plant... with luminous petals, vibrant, majestic, and magical."

Water Lilies
1907
Oil on canvas
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Michel Monet bequest, 1966, inv. 5168

The essence of the motif is the mirror of water, whose appearance alters at every moment.
—Claude Monet

Monet devoted the last two decades of his life to painting the ever-changing surface of his Giverny pond. Around 1907 he abandoned the horizon line to focus on a boundless, illusory field where water, clouds, flowers, and paint merge, making it more difficult to distinguish between top and bottom, near and far, and above and below. Lily pads float on reflections of trees, separated by a band of golden light, evoking a moment at once brief and infinite. When he debuted his Venice paintings three years after his successful 1909 exhibition of his water lily series, critics noted that “the shimmering of the lagoon could evoke the iridescence of the pond.”

Pond and Palazzo

After Monet's death, some in the art world dismissed his late water lily paintings as irrelevant. But by the 1950s, these works were rediscovered by artists and critics who recognized their subtle motifs and large-scale, all-over painterly compositions as an important influence on Abstract Expressionism. While Monet did not think of his water lily paintings as abstract, they are considered an essential part in the evolution of twentieth-century modern art. Monet's Venice paintings, which date from a moment in his career now largely defined by his water lily series, have sometimes been described as anomalies, partly due to their subject matter. By the time he visited, Venice had become synonymous with "cliché." Although his paintings of the city display the rich pictorial and color effects of his other late works, including the water lilies, their focus on recognizable sites draws attention to Venice's deeply embedded romantic, picturesque, and touristic associations. More legible, the Venice compositions interrupt modernism's narrative about Monet's progression toward abstraction.

MEMORIES OF VENICE

The moment has now come to leave this unique light. I've spent some delightful hours here, almost forgetting that I'm now an old man. —Claude Monet

Venice resonated with Monet's artistic concerns and practices, enchanting the artist with its iridescent light, ephemeral atmospheric effects, and the interplay of stone, water, and reflection. Like the Giverny gardens and pond he designed to provide painting motifs, Venice's architecture rising from the lagoon offered a confluence of art and nature. The city symbolized both the suspension and passage of time. Monet faced a similar temporal paradox: an "instant" took a long time to capture in paint. Monet told his dealers that he would bring back only a few canvases of Venice, just to "have a record of the place." His plan to return to the city ended with Alice's death, and the works he started there in 1908 remained untouched until 1911. The artist thought of her constantly while completing the paintings in his studio, refining and harmonizing the effects he had first perceived en plein air. Balancing observation, sensation, imagination, and painterly expression, he created a modern and personal vision of Venice, imbued with his "memory of the happy days spent with... dear Alice."

NILES LUTHER
born New York, 1996

Souvenir: Venise d'après Monet
2025
4.1.4-channel spatial audio installation

Niles Luther, the Brooklyn Museum's Composer in Residence, wrote the symphony in this gallery after immersing himself in the Venetian environment that inspired Monet. Luther's practice transposes the essence of visual artworks into the language and experience of music. *Souvenir: Venise d'après Monet* mirrors the structure of the paintings. Its movements are titled after and correspond to their motifs—the Palazzo Ducale, San Giorgio Maggiore, Le Grand Canal, the Palazzo Contarini— and a central passacaille (a musical form based on repetition, evoking Monet's approach) reveals the emotional core beneath the artist's shimmering surfaces. Contemporaneous critics often interpreted Monet's late paintings through the lens of musicality, citing his symphonies of color and subtle harmonies, and likening his delicate brushstrokes to the notes of an orchestra. For one writer, the Venice paintings were "variations upon a theme of color analogous to those of sound." Like Luther's symphony, Monet's paintings envelop, unfold, and are continually renewed with each encounter. We invite you to look and listen.

Take this musical experience with you. Scan here to hear Niles Luther’s symphony:

1
Claude Monet: Venise
1912
Paris: Galerie Bernheim-Jeune
Collection of Paul Hayes Tucker, lent in honor of
Robert L. Herbert

Art dealers competed for Monet's Venice paintings even before his return home. He agreed to sell them to the brothers Gaston and Jossé Bernheim-Jeune. Twenty-nine of them, including those on view in this gallery, were shown at Galerie Bernheim-Jeune from May 28 to June 15, 1912. The accompanying catalogue featured an essay by Monet's friend Octave Mirbeau. The exhibition earned critical acclaim, including by the noted champion of Cubism, Guillaume Apollinaire. By 1913, twenty paintings had been sold to collectors in the United States and Europe. Of the thirty-seven existing Venice paintings, eight were not shown in 1912. Three were sold or given as gifts by Monet, while the others entered the market later.

In this image, one of Monet's Palazzo Dario paintings hangs on the wall.

Édouard Vuillard,*Portrait de Messieurs Jossé et Gaston Bernheim-Jeune*, 1912. Oil on canvas. Private collection, Courtesy Bernheim-Jeune

2
San Giorgio Maggiore
1908
Oil on canvas
Private collection

3
The Palazzo Contarini
1908
Oil on canvas
Hasso Plattner Collection, Museum Barberini, Potsdam

4
The Palazzo Contarini
1908
Oil on canvas
Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Ernst Schürpf-Stiftung, acquired 1950
This exhibition includes four of the eight paintings Monet devoted to the ornate palazzo facades across the Grand Canal from the Palazzo Barbaro. Attracted to the movement of color and light across water and stone, he created compositions that oppose solid and liquid elements. The reflections of mooring posts and windows link these components, while the frontal viewpoint focuses attention on the rhythmic pattern of architectural details, which appear nearly abstracted. During Monet's time in Venice, this palazzo was also known as the Palazzo Polignac. It was owned by the sewing machine fortune heiress Winnaretta Singer and her husband, the

Prince de Polignac. An artist and arts patron, Singer owned several Monet paintings. It is likely the Monets attended a party at the palazzo in early October 1908.

5
The Palazzo da Mula
1908
Oil on canvas
Private collection

Some of Monet's palazzo paintings include a sliver of sky, but here it is completely absent. As in his *Water Lilies*, it is only implied through reflections on rippling water. The lack of sky and a rich palette of blues, greens, violets, and grays create a mysterious, desolate mood, intensified by the empty gondolas. In this group of palazzo motifs, Monet comes closest to evoking the image of Venice as a once-glorious city now decaying and suffused with melancholy. Following Alice's death, this romantic trope became deeply personal for him. These painted "souvenirs" resonated with his sense of loss.

6
San Giorgio Maggiore at Dusk
1908
Oil on canvas
Amgueddfa Cymru, Museum Wales

This view of San Giorgio Maggiore against a blazing sky seems inspired by the Monets' evening gondola excursions. Alice described a Venetian sunset to her daughter as "the sky all red and blue, but so soft, the waves of fire and mother-of-pearl." Monet's glowing colors may be partly due to Venice's smoke pollution, which could heighten sunset hues. In his studio, the artist may have amplified these observed colors, possibly in response to the vivid Fauvist works he saw in 1906, like André Derain's bold image of London.

André Derain, *Big Ben*, 1906. Oil on canvas. Musée d'Art Moderne, Troyes, France. © 2025 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. (Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY; Photo: Gérard Blot)

7
The Grand Canal, Venice
1908
Oil on canvas
Private collection

This composition is identical to the one next to it except for its more scintillating water and the steps in the bottom-left corner. The inclusion of the steps may owe to the slight change in perspective between his view from the gate of the Palazzo Barbaro and the lower, slightly different vantage point of a gondola. Varying tide levels also could have affected what was visible. Or, Monet might have simply decided to include the steps as a compositional variation when working on the canvases in his studio.

8
The Grand Canal, Venice
1908
Oil on canvas
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Osgood Hooker

The seventeenth-century church of Santa Maria della Salute, seen from the Grand Canal, is one of Venice's most iconic views. In this painting, Monet juxtaposes the vaporous church with rows of mooring posts (*pali*) that blend into shades of blue where they meet the water. One post nearly divides the composition, offering a bold chromatic note against the soft contours of the church and counteracting the sense of space created by the other receding posts.

The placement and emphasis of the posts recall the telescoping effects of near and far seen in many of the Japanese woodblock prints that Monet admired, including one depicted below, of which he owned an impression.

Katsushika Hokusai, *Ejiri in Suruga Province*, from the series*Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1830–31. Color woodblock print on paper. Brooklyn Museum, Gift of Frederic B. Pratt, 42.74. (Photo: Brooklyn Museum)

9
The Church of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice
1908
Oil on canvas
Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, The Lockton Collection, 70.76

10
San Giorgio Maggiore
1908
Oil on canvas
Amgueddfa Cymru, Museum Wales

The foggy, low-contrast atmosphere of these horizontally bisected views creates an overall effect of diminished visibility. Divisions between water and sky are blurred, with the bell tower and dome nearly disappearing and the horizon obscured. This flattening, almost monotone effect is only interrupted by the gondolas that, as critic Gustave Geffroy noted in 1912, skim across the water like “black swallows.”

11
San Giorgio Maggiore
1908
Oil on canvas
Alon Zakaim Fine Art, London

Enveloped in pearlescent afternoon light, the monumental church of San Giorgio Maggiore appears to float on the horizon. Although Monet likely captured this vista from his window at the Grand Hotel Britannia, he includes no indication of his own position.

Monet set up his easel on San Giorgio Maggiore island, depicted here in the distance, to paint the views of the Palazzo Ducale across the lagoon. Several of these palace views are also displayed in this gallery.

12
The Palazzo Ducale Seen from San Giorgio Maggiore
1908
Oil on canvas
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles S. McVeigh, 1959 (59.188.1)

Monet was drawn to views of architecture across bodies of water. Similar to the views he painted in Lavacourt and London, in these airy images the churches and palaces hover above their reflections. Stone, water, and colored air are equalized in paint. Critics in 1912 noted that he made the historic city seem to vanish (*se volatiliser*), as if it were evaporating in the mist. Monet turned Venice into a mirage and a memory.

13
The Palazzo Ducale Seen from San Giorgio Maggiore
1908
Oil on canvas
Private collection

There are no series among these views of Venice, but only different motifs repeated once, twice, or three times.
—Claude Monet

The Venice paintings share characteristics with his other series work, but Monet did not use that terminology to describe them. His series, such as those of London, focused on the same motifs under changing conditions throughout the day. In Venice, however, he painted the same subjects at the same time every day, usually seeking consistent light and atmospheric conditions. His paintings thus make time seem to stand still in this “timeless” city. Monet struggled for years with the challenge of seizing fleeting moments in paint, and in these carefully refined and harmonized studio works, time no longer appears present and particular, but immutable.

14
The Palazzo Ducale Seen from San Giorgio Maggiore
1908
Oil on canvas
Kunsthaus Zurich, Donated by Walter Haefner, 1995

From his position across the lagoon on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Monet could see Venice's famed waterfront, the Riva degli Schiavoni. His paintings of this view include (from left to right) Piazza San Marco, the Palazzo Ducale, the Ponte della Paglia, and the Prigioni Nuove. The bell tower of San Marco, which had collapsed in 1902, is visible but truncated, as it was still under construction during his visit. He referred to his own position in all his paintings of this motif by including a geometric slice of the San Giorgio Maggiore embankment at the bottom of the composition.

“I am overcome with admiration for Venice.”
—Claude Monet

OUTRO

“You can’t come to Venice without wanting to come back.”
—Claude Monet

Brooklyn Museum Lantern Slides

Lantern slides, also known as gelatin dry-plate positives, are transparent photographs made on glass and viewed using a “magic lantern,” which is a predecessor of the slide projector. Invented in 1849, they became widely available commercially and were often used for entertainment or educational purposes. The Brooklyn Museum’s curator of fine arts, William Henry Goodyear, began our lantern slide collection in the late nineteenth century. Today, our library holds 11,710 glass lantern slides that depict objects and sites from around the world, as well as our building and collections. The wallpaper in this gallery is made from some of the Museum’s lantern slides of Venice.

KAY C. LENSKJOLD

Grand Canal, Venice
Early 20th century
Lantern slide
Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives

Venice, Santa Maria della Salute
Early 20th century
Lantern slide
Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives

Dreamland at Coney Island

The images featured on this wallpaper were taken at the Canals of Venice attraction at Dreamland, an amusement park in Coney Island that operated from 1904 to 1911. This attraction included a model of Venice within a scaled-down replica of the Palazzo Ducale. During the same period that Monet was in Venice, visitors to Dreamland could enjoy a gondola ride along a simulated Grand Canal, where they passed by celebrated sites of the city reproduced on a 54,000-squarefoot canvas.

Mural images from top right, clockwise: Images courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC; Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives; Coney Island History Project; Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC; Shorpy Archive