



# MONET/MITCHELL

Painting the French Landscape

March 25–June 25

SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

IMAGES AVAILABLE

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## ‘Monet/Mitchell’ brings together two masters of their medium

Exhibition opens at the Saint Louis Art Museum this weekend

**ST. LOUIS, March 22, 2023**—The Saint Louis Art Museum will present the first exhibition in America to examine the relationship between the paintings of two masters of their medium: the French Impressionist painter Claude Monet and American Abstract Expressionist Joan Mitchell.

[“Monet/Mitchell: Painting the French Landscape”](#) opens March 25 and continues through June 25. The museum will hold a free, public preview celebration at 4 pm on Friday, March 24.

Although from different generations—Mitchell was born in 1925, the year before Monet died—both artists engaged intensely with nature. The exhibition focuses on the ways in which the two artists responded to the landscape of northern France through 24 paintings, 12 by each artist. Monet’s late works in the exhibition were created at his home in Giverny, where he lived from 1883 until his death, while those of Mitchell responded to nearby Vétheuil, where she lived from 1968 to 1992.

Aside from “Ici,” which is part of SLAM’s permanent collection, none of the Mitchell works have been shown in St. Louis, and many of them have not been in the United States for decades, including “Plowed Field,” which was last in an American exhibition in 1983. Six of the Monet paintings have never been shown in St. Louis.

“Monet and Mitchell fearlessly and exuberantly upended the established traditions within their medium, and it is a joy to bring their monumental paintings together for our community to experience,” said [Min Jung Kim](#), the Barbara B. Taylor Director of the Saint Louis Art Museum.

From the late 1960s, critics frequently made connections between the two artists’ paintings. Initially, Mitchell embraced this association, but increasingly, she came to reject it in later years.

The opening galleries focus on Monet and Mitchell’s fascination with their gardens at Giverny and Vétheuil. Monet was particularly attached to the weeping willow trees, which he planted around his famous water lily pond. He painted not only the trees themselves but also their reflections, as in the richly colorful “Water Lilies.” Mitchell was devoted to a linden tree that grew on the terrace of her Vétheuil home and which inspired several of her paintings, such as “Tilleul.”

“By presenting the paintings of Monet and Mitchell in dialogue, we see how fervently they each depicted the beauty and

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Claude Monet, French, 1840–1926; “Wisteria”, 1919-20; oil on canvas; 39 3/8 x 118 1/8 inches; Musee Marmottan Monet, Paris 2023.100; © Musee Marmottan Monet, Academie des beaux-arts, Paris

transience of their beloved Vétheuil and Giverny,” said [Simon Kelly](#), SLAM’s curator of modern and contemporary art. “While Mitchell both embraced and disavowed comparisons between her work and that of the late Impressionist, the through lines between their paintings are both undeniable and astonishing to witness.”

In his later years, possibly due to declining eyesight, Monet’s work became more abstract and featured non-naturalistic color. When paired with the vibrant colors of Mitchell’s late works, the formal parallels are striking. Mitchell’s use of drips and paint spatter, inherited from Abstract Expressionism, sets her approach apart from that of Monet, though. Later galleries in the exhibition compare the two artists’ uses of color, abstraction, and experiments with pictorial space where they left areas of the white canvas visible making it difficult to know if a painting was finished.

### **Interpretive elements**

The exhibition is accompanied by an 11-stop audio tour that can be accessed on visitors’ own devices.

The tour includes commentaries from a variety of SLAM staff, including Kelly and Lacy Murphy, the Mark S. Weil and Joan M. Hall Professional Development Fellow, who explain Monet and Mitchell’s connection to nature, as evident in several paintings like Monet’s “Wisteria” and Mitchell’s “Tilleul.” Research assistants Molly Moog and Abigail Yoder discuss Monet and Mitchell’s respective uses of color and abstraction, and paintings conservator Melissa Gardner explains the paint choices and techniques used in Mitchell’s “Ici” as revealed through an x-ray technique done at SLAM.

Guest speakers in the audio tour include Christopher Stark, a composer and associate professor of music composition at Washington University in St. Louis, who considers the connection to music in Joan Mitchell’s “Plowed Field.” Derek Lyle, senior manager of the nurseries and greenhouses at the Missouri Botanical Garden, is also featured on the audio tour and discusses the hybrid water lily plants Monet began purchasing in 1894 for his water garden at Giverny, which would become the focal point of many of his most famous pieces. Also on the audio tour, Bill Scott, an artist and friend of Mitchell, reminisces on his first interactions with Mitchell upon meeting her at an exhibition of her work in 1980 in Paris.

Visitors to the exhibition can listen to the tour before their visit at [slam.org/audio](https://slam.org/audio) or bring headphones or earbuds to follow the tour in the galleries.

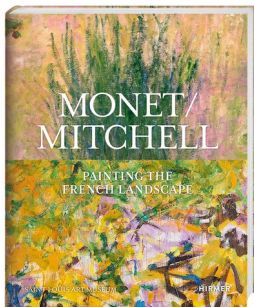
SLAM is also releasing a new online resource in connection with the exhibition. Called “Close Look,” the self-guided digital experience gives a glimpse into the details of Monet’s “Water Lilies.” Accessible at [slam.org/waterlilies](https://slam.org/waterlilies), viewers can scroll through the page to learn about Monet’s Giverny garden along with the history, technical analysis, horticultural choices, and revisions of the three-paneled painting—the central panel of which is part of SLAM’s permanent collection and can be seen in the exhibition.

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Joan Mitchell, American, 1925–1992; “Minnesota”, 1980; oil on canvas; quadriptych: 102 1/2 inches x 20 feet 4 3/4 inches; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris 2023.113a-d; © Estate of Joan Mitchell

## Exhibition catalogue



“Monet/Mitchell: Painting the French Landscape” is accompanied by an extensive catalogue examining the aesthetic and thematic dialogue between two of the most experimental painters of the 20th century. The book uncovers the similarities in the artists’ subject matter, composition, vibrant color, and gestural brushwork.

The 96-page catalogue is edited by Simon Kelly and includes essays by Kelly; Suzanne Pagé, artistic director of the Fondation Louis Vuitton; and Marianne Mathieu, the former head curator at the Musée Marmottan Monet. The book is available for purchase in the Museum Shops.

## Exhibition partners and sponsors

“Monet/Mitchell” is a partnership with the Musée Marmottan Monet, which is lending 10 late paintings by Monet, and the Fondation Louis Vuitton, which is lending 10 major Mitchell works from its collection, many of which are little known in the United States. The show is further enhanced by loans from private and institutional collections.

Support has been provided by presenting sponsors, LVMH / Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton and Bank of America.

“We are thrilled to present these two artists in dialogue with one another, and we thank the Fondation Louis Vuitton and the Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris for their generous loans to our exhibition,” Kim said. “Such a rare opportunity would not have been possible without the tremendous generosity of our presenting sponsors, LVMH / Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton and Bank of America.”

“At Bank of America, we believe the arts are a thriving part of the local economy and contribute positively to society,” said Marilyn Bush, president, Bank of America St. Louis. “We’re pleased to partner with the Saint Louis Art Museum in bringing this exhibit to St. Louis, so our community can enjoy and be inspired by Claude Monet and Joan Mitchell’s masterful work.”

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## Exhibition-related events

“Monet/Mitchell” will feature a robust schedule of community and educational programs along with special opportunities for visitors to engage deeply with the works on view, exploring the restorative and meditative potential of these beautiful paintings.

More information on these and other events are available on [slam.org/events](https://slam.org/events). Tickets to ticketed programs are available only on site at the museum or through [MetroTix](#).

- **Friday, March 24:** A free, [public preview](#) begins at 4 pm. Cocktails are available for purchase from 4 pm to 8 pm in Sculpture Hall, and [Elsie Parker and the Poor People of Paris](#) will perform French jazz standards from 5 pm to 8 pm. The evening will also include a ticketed lecture titled “[Natural Inspirations: A Conversation about Monet and Mitchell](#).” The presentation by curators from the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Musée Marmottan Monet and Saint Louis Art Museum begins at 6 pm in SLAM’s Farrell Auditorium and costs \$5.
- **Sunday, March 26:** The museum’s free [Family Sunday](#) program will focus on themes of the exhibition. Children and their adult caregivers can take an exhibition-themed nature outing with [Urban Forest Therapy](#), then personalize their own lily pad to add to our community water lily pond and create a postcard artwork.
- **Friday, March 31:** Marin Sarvé-Tarr, assistant curator of painting and sculpture at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, will deliver the free Mary Strauss Women in the Arts lecture “[Joan Mitchell’s Views from La Tour: Painting, Memory, and Landscape at Vétheuil](#).” The free lecture starts at 6 pm in the museum’s Farrell Auditorium.
- **Saturday, April 22:** This Earth Day, celebrate by exploring elements of nature, music, and painting inspired by “Monet/Mitchell.” The event—titled “[Shared Muses: Nature, Music, and Art](#)”—runs from noon to 4 pm with a performance by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra at 3 pm.
- **Sunday, May 7:** Educators are invited to the exhibition-themed workshop “[Exploring Monet/Mitchell in Connection with Local St. Louis Landscapes](#).” After a tour of the exhibition, participants will visit St. Louis’s Tower Grove Park to learn about local water lily cultivation and propagation, engage with hands-on horticulture activities, and explore this local landscape depth through art making. Throughout the workshop, educators will gain resources and ideas for connecting curricula with the work of Monet and Mitchell and St. Louis stories and landscapes. The workshop is free, but advance registration is required.
- **Friday, May 12:** Stéphane Dénève, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra music director, and Simon Kelly, SLAM’s curator of modern and contemporary art, will discuss Claude Monet and Joan Mitchell and their mutual love of music. “[Conversation: Monet, Mitchell, and Music](#)” is at 6 pm in the Farrell Auditorium.
- **Friday, May 26:** SLAM Underground will focus on “Monet/Mitchell” with a mix of performances, demonstrations, art-making activities, and a signature cocktail from 7 pm to 10 pm. Tickets are not required for the free event, which is designed for visitors 21 and over.



Claude Monet, French, 1840–1926; “Weeping Willow”, 1922; oil on canvas; 45 11/16 x 35 1/16 inches; Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris 2023.104; © Musée Marmottan Monet, Académie des beaux-arts, Paris

*The Saint Louis Art Museum is one of the nation’s leading comprehensive art museums with collections that include works of art of exceptional quality from virtually every culture and time period. Areas of notable depth include Oceanic art, ancient American art, ancient Chinese bronzes and European and American art of the late 19th and 20th centuries, with particular strength in 20th-century German art. Admission to the Saint Louis Art Museum is free to all every day. For more information, call 314.721.0072 or visit [slam.org](https://slam.org).*