

Aidan Kresak

ART 111, Art Appreciation

Art Criticism

Dustin Robertson



Claude Monet

Water Lilies

Oil Paint

1890s-1926

Aidan I.

Claude Monet's "Water Lilies" are the ideal embodiment of peace and the endless whole and easily captures the eyes of whoever gazes upon it. I will be speaking about what is perhaps Claude Monet's most memorable work and is often one of the greatest pieces of art ever created by an impressionist. Over the course of Monet's life, he has created a total of 250 oil paintings of his water lilies. For the sake of clarification, the water lilies I will be referring to are the ones that are on display at the Musee de l'Orangerie in Paris, France which I have personally seen with my eyes. There are a total of eight compositions of the water lilies in that art museum and I will be referring to all eight of those paintings for this assignment. You can expect to know the size of the painting, the methods used to paint it, and some artistic criticism on this wonderful art. Without further ado, let's begin with some of the specifics of the artwork.

According to the Musee de l'orangerie (Musee de L'Orangerie, N.D.), All of the paintings featured in the signature oval room are 6.5 ft tall but differ in length. The dimensions as well as the area covered by the painting total to an extraordinary 2,153 square feet that envelop the viewer. This is also a very historic painting as Monet commissioned this artwork to the French state the day after armistice where he would begin to paint his water lilies until his death. The inspiration and place of where he painted many of his water lilies are his vacation estate of Giverny by the Normandy coast. I have also been to Giverny and it is a very beautiful estate with a lovely pond where he painted many of his water lilies. In the oval room where the eight compositions of his water lilies are, Monet cleverly organized his paintings in a way where the outdoor weather would affect his water lily paintings inside. Now that I have covered some of

Aidan II.

the interesting facts of this brilliant piece of art, I will now speak about some of the technical aspects of this art.

When you step inside of the chamber that envelops you in Monet's work, it can be rather difficult to pick out some of the technical aspects of his art due to not having a great place to begin. The best place to start is the willow trees which stand out to you the most which is ironic due to the theme of the artwork being water lilies. That is because the main theme of this art exists in the background and is quite unconventional. As you fix your gaze to the scenery of the aquatic plants, you see that the lilies come in clusters of other lilies. This is achieved through his signature repletion's of brushstrokes in his painting. As you gaze upon the painting, you begin to notice that each lily is in a cluster of other lilies which is comprised of small brush strokes repeated again and again. As you continue to look upon this, you see that the value of this art throughout nearly the entirety of all eight panels are rather dark, moody, and gloomy at times. Your eyes might tend to follow a horizontal line that leads your sight across the room countless times to admire the piece of art. Along with that, you can't help but point out that the repetition of a dark blue to represent water with some patches of sea green for the water and the willow trees that drop from the banks. Monet had all of these in mind when painting and achieved a memorable sense of design through the patterns, repletion, and balance in this artwork. The occasional trees, choice of color, and repetition, Monet created a good sense of rhythm and movement in this art. Now that I have covered the technical aspects of this piece, I would like to give an in depth explanation behind the meaning of these specific water lilies as we can all agree that many artworks have a certain meaning behind them.

As I stated earlier, Monet painted around 250 paintings of these water lilies before his death. Although I am speaking of the Water lilies at the Musee de L'Orangerie, I would like to give an overall meaning behind all of his water lilies before I explain the meaning of these specific water lilies as the general theme of all his water lilies apply to these ones as well. When Monet painted his water lilies, he had a specific goal in mind that was not related to the lilies at Giverny. According to Monet himself on C. Monet Gallery (C. Monet Gallery, N.D.), his goal with his water lilies were to portray on an artwork and I quote “the illusion of an endless whole, of water without a horizon or bank”. One early artist might say that it was unthinkable and even impossible to portray water without a horizon or bank. However, Monet is perhaps the greatest impressionist who ever lived and such an idea could be achieved through a proper landscape and emotion. That is what Monet accomplished through this particular set of water lilies. The oval-shaped give a sense of endless whole that evokes a sense of eternal wonder into the viewer. In my opinion, The water lilies displayed at the Musee de L'Orangerie are the culmination of his other water lilies and serves as the fulfillment of his goal. This piece also had another meaning at that was of peace. I stated earlier that these water lilies were given to the state the day after the end of World War One. Monet saw that this artwork could serve as not only an endless whole, but a beacon of peace that the country of France could look to. Now that I have addressed the meaning of this piece, I would like to evaluate this piece with three different theories.

In art, there are a total of three theories that are used to evaluate art. Formal, Contextual, and Expressive. I will now evaluate this gorgeous piece with these theories. In Formal theory, Monet demonstrates wonderful technique and careful consideration when painting this oil juggernaut.

Aidan IV.

His use of color, value, repetition, and rhythm allow this art to be enjoyable to anyone who likes art because of techniques and practices involved when it was made. It is important for any artist to be able to show good technique in their art so that they can win the acknowledgement from people who have been in the business long enough to know what is good and what is not. However, this artwork does not do all too well in Contextual theory. The theme of his artwork which is that of water lilies are not related to his goals which are that of an endless whole and peace. In contextual theory, The elements displayed in art should be related to the theme of the art. This was not what Monet had in mind and that is fine. But there is one theory that was essentially made for this artwork and that is expressive theory. Monet is perhaps the greatest impressionists who ever lived, and the impressionists were often to be considered rebels in the field of art. Monet was often expressive in his work and that was what he accomplished in this piece of art. According to Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Davies, N.D.), expression theory can only be attributed to art that has a display in feeling and that is what Monet had which was a feeling of an endless whole. Now please allow me to conclude.

In conclusion, Monet's water Lilies embody the ideal of peace and that of the endless whole and is a sight that no one can get enough of. Through Monet's wondrous technique and repetition, Monet was able to create this masterpiece of an oil painting and serves as a symbol of peace. Most importantly, Monet's Water Lilies serve as the culmination of all art he has ever done and truly embodies the endless whole.

Works Cited

Musee de L'Orangerie. *History of the Water Lilies Cycle*. N.D. <https://www.musee-orangerie.fr/en/node/33>

C. Monet Gallery. *Water Lilies*. N.D. <https://www.cmonetgallery.com/water-lilies.aspx>

Davies, Stephen. *Artistic Impression*. Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. N.D. <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/artistic-expression/v-1/sections/expression-theory>