

ArtInfo
June 24, 2010

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Claude Monet

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Published: June 24, 2010



Musee Marmatton Monet, Paris. Photo courtesy Gagosian Gallery.

“Claude Monet “Nymphéas,” 1907. Oil on canvas, 39 1/2 x 28 3/4 inches, (100 x 73 cm). W.1714, MM 5168.



Private collection. Photo courtesy Gagosian Gallery.

Claude Monet “Nymphéas,” 1908. Oil on canvas, 36 ¼ x 32 inches, (92 x 81 cm). W.1725.

MODERNPAINTERS
**WEEKEND
REVIEWS**

"Late Work"

Gagosian Gallery, New York

Through June 26, 2010

Monet's wall-swallowing, room-flooding "Nymphéas" suites, exhibited recently at the Museum of Modern Art and year-round at Paris's **Orangerie**, are the ne plus ultra of Impressionist wall power — so overwhelming that viewers should be made to wear bathing suits. But when it comes to communicating the ideas submerged in these watery works, the smaller-scaled versions shown this spring at Gagosian Gallery in Chelsea may be more eloquent, showing over the course of 27 paintings an insight that became a vision that became a blaze.

Stocked with canvases borrowed from collections from Japan to Hawaii — the gallery says none of works in the show were for sale — the survey begins with a *Nymphéas* painted in 1904, 14 years after Monet moved to the placid countryside in Giverny. Rendered in staccato brush strokes, the scene depicts a pond surrounded by cross-hatched greenery, with individuated lily pads floating on the water. Color flows everywhere, but the pond is delineated and real. In a painting from a year later, this changes. Lily pads still float on the surface of the water, but suddenly there is an explosion beneath the surface — purple, green, and blue strokes intimate the reflections of tall trees, but completely off-kilter, refracted in the painted water into something from another dimension. In the banally simple scene, Monet wrests apart a Genesis-worthy split: above the water, representation; beneath the water, abstraction.

From these paintings, shown in the gallery's entry room, the exhibition expands into more and more elaborations on this painterly discovery, the seeds of which trace to the origins of Impressionism. Later artists seem to be prefigured, with a mess of paint on

the lower right of *Les Agapanthes* (1914-17) calling to mind one of **de Kooning's** women in the role of Ophelia, submerged in the water; *Nymphéas reflets de saule* (1916-19), with its reflection of a willow's streaming ropy tendrils, suggests a **Twombly**. (Oddly, both of these other artists are represented by Gagosian.) In exploiting the wind-ruffled refraction of the ponds on his property, Monet rockets into what remains a strange, exhilarating world.

Finally, the last room is a pure delirium. Putative paintings of bridges over ponds dissolve into nothing more than an arch of colored paint, and rose arbors swirl into vortices reminiscent of **Turner's** nightmare squalls. The surface texture of the paintings grow hard and bumpy, like the rough skin of a rhino. It's decidedly weird. This, like last year's **Picasso** "Mosqueteros" show, is what you dream of in an artist's late work.