

STUDY INTO HOW MONET & KLIMT HAVE APPROACHED NATURAL LANDSCAPES

To help with my artwork, I decided to look at some work by known artists. I wanted to build knowledge of ways that other artists tackle natural forms, scenes from nature and the countryside. I decided to look at the work by Claude Monet, 'Le Bassin Des Nymphéas' (Bridge over a pool of water lilies), and Gustav Klimt's 'Unterach Am Attersee' (Unterach on the lake Atter).

My main reason for looking at Monet and Klimt in particular is that I know of both artists and like their work. I have personal links with Austria, and as Klimt is Austrian, I find it of interest to study him.

To fully understand the pieces, I decided to look into the artists history, to discover under what circumstances their works were created. I believe that when a true artists paints a picture, some of his or her personality goes into it.

Monet was born in the year of 1840 in Paris, France. When he was 16, his mother Louise Monet died. The following year he met Eugene Boudin, who encouraged Monet in his painting, particularly outdoor and natural art. When Monet was 26, his first son was born, Jean Monet. In 1868, Monet tried to commit suicide, the reasons are still unknown. Monet's second son Michel was born in 1878. In 1907 Monet began to experience problems with his eyesight. Seven years on, Jean, Monet's eldest son died. From 1916 to 1926, Monet worked on the water lilies series. They were displayed in the museum of the 'Orangey' in Paris. During the time when he painted the water lilies, Monet was nearly blind, and had an operation to remove the cataract in one eye which did improve his sight. Monet painted right until the end in 1926 when he was struck by lung cancer. He was buried in a simple ceremony in a cemetery in Giverny. Finding this history of Monet made me fully realise how difficult Monet's life must have been. I wonder if perhaps his painting was a form of escapism – many people use art, sport etc. to get away from their problems in life.

After finding out about Monet's sad life, I looked at Klimt's past.

Gustav Klimt was born in 1862 in Vienna, Austria. He was the son of a gold and silver engraver which is perhaps why Klimt used so much metallic paint in his pictures. When he was 14, Klimt joined the Vienna school of decorative arts. In 1882 Klimt opened his own studio, with another student, Franz Matsch, and his brother Ernst. In 1897, Klimt founded, with other artists, the Vienna Secession, and became its first president. The art Nouveau was an international revolt against the traditional art style, and Klimt was seen as a controversial figure. In 1905 Klimt left the secession because of disputes. He,

together with other artists, formed a new association 'Kustschau' (art show). His work continued to shock people, as it was subtly erotic and went against traditional art. Klimt suffered a stroke in 1918 and a month later died from Pneumonia.

Klimt's painting of 'Unterach Am Attersee' was done on a canvas sized 110cm x 110cm, using oil paints. He used a spotting technique to create the forest, using various shades – bright green, dark green, yellow, dark blue, and turquoise. To create the reflective quality of the lake, Klimt used the same colours as the house and forest, but made it slightly blurred to show the ripples in the water.

Monet's 'Le Bassin Des Nymphéas' was also done on canvas, using oil paints, and is sized 92.7 x 73.7 cm. The reflection on the water in Monet's picture seems to be in vertical lines, whereas in Klimt's, the lines appear to be used in a more horizontal fashion. The water seems very still, unlike Klimt's where the lake looks as if it is lapping gently on the banks. It is hard to miss in this impressionist's picture where one tree ends and another begins. I also think that it would have been hard to define where the water began, because it is so still, had the water lilies not been there, as the reflection is little different to the actual trees. Overall, I think that this lack of definition gives the painting a more dreamlike feel. I know that when Monet painted this he was having problems with his sight, so that could be the reasoning why the paintings are as they are.

Personally, these images bring a strong emotional response. Monet's work is extremely calming and restful, probably because of its dreamlike quality. You can almost hear the silence interrupted by the faint sound of leaves rustling in the breeze. It reminds me of the film Mary Poppins, where the characters jump from a chalk pavement picture into a magical experience of make believe. Klimt's 'Unterach Am Attersee' is quite a cheerful picture. The colours are bright and boldly used and suggest a place of happiness, with the bright blue sky reminding me of sunny warm Austrian days.

Monet's 'Le Bassin Des Nymphéas' was painted in the final years of his life, in my opinion, this natural, calming scene portrays the peace he was seeking after such a troubled life. Or possibly that he had already found in a piece, and wanted to share and express that feeling through his artwork.

Klimt's picture is not how a landscape would have been traditionally painted, throughout Klimt's life, he was breaking away from the confinement of traditional art, and creating his own unique style of expression. This is exactly what he did with his 'Unterach Am Attersee'.

Monet and Klimt have very different and individual styles, but both stunning pieces capture the beauty and personality of the natural landscape, leaving us, their audience well satisfied!