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James A. Ganz and Richard Kendall, *The Unknown Monet: Pastels and Drawings*. Published by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA and distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London. 2007. xi + 313 pp. 223 color and 74 black and white illustrations, exhibition checklist, bibliography, and index. \$65.00 U.S. (cl) ISBN-13: 978-0-300-11862-9. (pb). ISBN-13: 978-0-931102-71

Review by Grace Seiberling, University of Rochester.

Given the breadth and depth of publication on the artist, it seems audacious to present a work that purports to reveal an “unknown Monet.” The book ends with a claim that it is “inconceivable that future studies of Monet’s art can proceed without taking account of these sketchbook pages and the curiously assorted sheets that accompany them.” Within the frame of reference they have established, the authors are right that future studies on Monet’s development as an artist will need to take their work into account.

Their focus on Monet as an artistic genius is in accord with the demands of a particular kind of inquiry into Impressionism, connected with museum exhibitions, and focused on the formal achievements of the sort of artistic superstars who attract paying visitors.

The book accompanied an exhibition held in London at the Royal Academy of Arts and at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts in 2007. The authors, James Ganz, Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs at the Clark Institute and Richard Kendall, an independent scholar, curator, and consultant to the Clark Institute, went far beyond the two sketchbooks and some 110 works listed in the checklist to investigate the full range of Monet’s graphic output. Lavishly illustrated with high quality color and black and white reproductions, the book presents Monet’s drawings, especially the pastels, in an attractive way. In addition to Monet’s graphic work, the illustrations include documents, some of his paintings, and a few works by his contemporaries. It is far from a coffee table book. The text is supported by meticulous research and convincing visual analysis by Ganz on the early drawings, sketchbooks and publications, and by Kendall on the drawings from the 1860s, pastels, and late works. The two voices meld harmoniously.

The authors have succeeded in revealing a side of the artist’s work that was not only unknown to the public but also given little attention by specialists. The material was in one sense available: Daniel Wildenstein’s *Catalogue raisonné*, an essential source for the study of the artist, records nearly 500 sketchbook pages, independent drawings and pastels out of more than 2,500 works. [1] The lack of attention can be explained both by the difficulty in seeing and making sense of the graphic work and by skepticism that drawing could be meaningful in the *oeuvre* of an artist who publicly denied its importance and whose focus was so obviously painting.

Ganz and Kendall address both issues. They have tracked down the widely dispersed drawings and deciphered the eight *carnets* that Michel Monet bequeathed to the Musée Marmottan Monet in 1966,

correlating the images to internal visual evidence from Monet's paintings and external evidence from diaries, and records of exhibitions, publications, sales, and gifts.

With respect to the dismissal of drawing by Monet and writers on his work, the authors explore two lines of thought: resistance on the part of the artist's viewers, and repression of the drawings by Monet himself. The authors propose that the notion of Monet as a draftsman for whom graphic studies were essential is at odds with the "orthodox view of Monet's achievement" as a supreme colorist and spontaneous creator and "perhaps to certain canons of modernism." (p. 242) This attitude was reinforced by Monet, who, in the latter part of his career when he became a public figure and gave many interviews, did not mention drawing. The artist's efforts in promoting his work and shaping his image are a recurrent theme in the book.

Ganz and Kendall nevertheless insist that drawings and pastels played an important role throughout Monet's career. Kendall points out that Monet exhibited seven pastels ("*croquis pastel*") at the first exhibition of the Impressionist group in 1874. He argues that these works, which unfortunately cannot be identified, deserve the same kind of attention as the canvases "famous as emblems of his technical and conceptual precocity and as primary statements of Impressionist themes." Such statements reveal the tacit assumption that even unknown works participated in a gifted artist's trajectory to success.

The organization of the book is partly chronological and partly thematic. The early chapters deal with Monet's sketchbooks, caricatures, and experiments with different types of drawing between 1856 and 1865. Although no academic figure drawings remain, the authors' detailed visual analysis of selected works illuminates Monet's learning process, technical variety, and links with nineteenth-century graphic traditions in style and subject, as well as with his early paintings.

Monet's caricatures are the sole aspect of his graphic work the artist and others incorporated into his biography, only to associate them with his rebellious youth, a time before his eyes "were finally opened" and he understood nature. The chapters on these and other early works draw extensively and fruitfully on a previously untapped source, the unpublished *Grand Journal* completed by Comte Théophile Beguin Billecocq in 1906. Although it was written long after the events described, the authors found it to be accurate in aspects that can be verified.

The young artist who emerges in Billecocq's and the authors' descriptions is far from the undisciplined rebel in Monet's own accounts. His family came from a more sophisticated milieu than he acknowledged, and through the Billecocqs he had early contact with Parisian culture. Using the caricatures as a springboard for discussing Monet's intellectual formation is a fruitful way of relating the drawings and his biography, since caricatures are necessarily connected to contemporary graphic arts, politics, and culture.

The non-chronological organization of chapters dealing with works made after 1866 acknowledges that the graphic works do not form a coherent body. The authors distinguish between works that had a connection with the public domain—including those exhibited, given as gifts, sold, or made for reproduction—and the private work, including barely intelligible notations in the sketchbooks.

The pastels are the most widely known and appreciated of Monet's graphic work and were displayed and sold in his lifetime. Almost all show Normandy, mostly alternative views or scenes that he did not paint. He also began making pastels of the Thames in London while waiting for his materials to arrive. Kendall argues convincingly that most were conceived as extensions to the artist's pictorial repertoire, "parallel representations of the visible world with their own technical and imaginative history."

The private sketchbooks present a different kind of problem. They are difficult to discuss in terms of chronology since the artist picked them up at intervals throughout his life. Rather than working on the pages in any discernable order, he seems to have jotted visual notes more or less randomly.

The authors are ingenious in making connections between these visual notations, which involve few direct studies, and the paintings. (The complete Marmottan sketchbooks, with many blank pages, are available in digital form: <http://www.clarkart.edu/exhibitions/monet/sketchbooks/>).

Apart from his early works and studies of the children in his blended family, Monet's drawings of his paintings for reproduction are the most conventionally satisfying. They are investigated both as a means of considering the way he used drawing to translate the color and brushstroke of his works and about his relationship to publicity.

In discussing his caricatures, the authors write that "Monet began as an artist in the age of mass media." The Monet who manipulated his public image and concerned himself with reproductions and orchestrating publicity for his shows was certainly one who operated in this sphere. The idea of Monet as a publicist and entrepreneur ties him to our contemporary interest in art as commodity. There is ample documentation of the artist's engagement with dealers, critics, and publications, and the discussion of these activities can provide a model for studying interchanges among artists, dealers and critics for others interested in the 1890s and the early twentieth-century art world.

The treatment of the reproductive prints Thornley made after Monet without the artist's assistance is an extension of the notion that reproductive work is worth discussing. Although there is no documentary evidence that Monet himself chose the works, Ganz proposes that the selection, differing from the canonical view, reflects Monet's own mini-retrospective of his recent career in 1894, the year of the highly successful exhibition of his cathedrals.

The discussion of the reproductions as artifacts stemming from the artist's creative impulse fits the overall attempt to reconstruct Monet and to see the drawings as part of the work of an artistic genius with a temperament to match. The authors allude to Monet's "obsession," seeing the artist as driven to create, with characteristically violent mood swings and self-dramatizations, but also motivated by self-consciousness about his reputation.

This project raises the question of the future of a particular kind of art history, connected with museum exhibitions and focused on artistic personalities. The wish to reveal an "unknown" Monet acknowledges the extent to which previous exhibitions and scholarship have made his work—and by implication the artist himself—known. The exhibition at the Royal Academy and the Clark Art Institute is one in a series of crowd-pleasing museum projects. Monet has been the focus of specialized exhibitions including: *Monet in London* (1988); *Monet in the '90s: The Series Paintings* (1989); *Monet and the Mediterranean* (1997); *Monet in the 20th Century* (1998); *Monet and Vétheuil* (1998); *Monet and Japan* (2001); and *Monet in Normandy* (2006).

The Clark Institute itself was host to a conference "Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University," which considered institutional pressures on scholarship. As Patricia Mainardi observed, museums are reluctant to "demote" Impressionist artists by showing their connections to popular culture or academic art in a way that would undermine the narrative of perseverance rewarded by success. [2]

Such resistance to more inclusive approaches or to looking at the works in the context of social history or gender seems to be especially true of the works of Monet, perhaps because landscape views can seem remote from modern life. Some recent attempts to think about Monet's work in larger contexts, such as

Robert Herbert's work on tourism in Normandy [3] are acknowledged in the text, but the pull of the individual stylistic or biographical model dominates. The monographic exhibition is rewarded by art museums. Funded by grants or corporations, they can facilitate the study and display of physical works of art and foster publications based on extensive first-hand scrutiny. In turn, such exhibitions and lavishly illustrated publications provide audiences and revenues for the museum.

Museum exhibitions and associated publications, however, are usually limited to topics that will appeal to a large public. Impressionism is a perennially popular draw. To amend the "orthodox view of Monet's achievement" is to take for granted the focus on an individual artist's work or genius. The wish to reveal an "unknown" Monet suggests that the goal is to know the artist, rather than to see the work as contributing to the production of meaning in the larger field of nineteenth-century culture.

As long as art museum exhibitions dominate publications in the field of Impressionism, a more complex view of nineteenth-century visual culture will need other impetuses. Richard Kendall's consideration of Monet in the context of Darwinism for the current exhibition at the Yale Center for British Art is an interesting example of the way a reframing of material can be produced by the combination of perspectives from different disciplines, including natural history. [4]

The Unknown Monet is an exemplary publication of its type. The meticulously researched results are convincingly and attractively presented, and provide insight into Monet's creative process and career strategies. It will certainly remain an important reference work for Monet studies.

NOTES

[1] Daniel Wildenstein, *Claude Monet: Catalogue raisonné, V Supplement aux peintures, dessins, pastels, index* (Lausanne: Wildenstein Institute, 1991).

[2] Patricia Mainardi, "Repetition and Novelty: Exhibitions Tell Tales," in Charles W. Haxthausen ed., *Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University* (Williamstown: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2002), p. 85.

[3] Robert L. Herbert, *Monet on the Normandy Coast: Tourism and Painting, 1867-1886* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

[4] Diana Donald and Jane Munro, eds., *Endless Forms: Charles Darwin, Natural Science, and the Visual Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2009.

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