# Claude Monet’s Series

## Slide 1

Hi, today we’re going to look at the works of Claude Monet. Monet was an impressionist painter born in Paris in 1840 and died in 1926 who was concerned with light effects. Fortunately, recently invented tubes of paint allowed artists to paint “en plein air” or outdoors instead of sketching and then completing a work in the studio. This technique allowed Monet to paint the same subject in various light, seasons, and weather. Monet made famous the concept of painting in a series, often setting up several easels and painting multiple views of the same subject. He realized that in order to capture an instant or moment, he needed to work deliberately and slowly to record the very subtle changes that occur. The first series we’ll look at is from the Art Institute of Chicago’s collection; they have six wheat stack paintings from the original twenty-five that Monet painted in 1890/91 and four are shown here.

## Slide 2

The next image focuses on “Stacks of Wheat (End of Day, Autumn), 1890/91. The wheat stacks were located in Monet’s neighbor’s farm. This work shows the stacks with the reddish brown hue of autumn and a marvelous orange and yellow sky of the setting sun. The deep blues and greens in the distance contrast with the sky giving it a beautiful luminosity while the foreground’s multiple colors hint at the oncoming shadows of night.

## Slide 3

The next image shows “Stacks of Wheat (End of Summer), 1890/91. In this work, the sun has not yet set, but sits low in the sky so that the wheat stacks form pastel shadows on the colorful ground. The stacks themselves are not a solid color, but infused with various shades while the sky glows with a yellow light. Both works are beautiful captured moments in time.

## Slide 4

The next series we’ll look at is Monet’s Rouen Cathedrals, painted in 1892/93 and often dated 1894 since he completed them later. Monet enjoyed how the lights and shadows play around the architectural elements. This image shows three of the cathedrals displayed at the Musee d’Orsay in Paris. Once again, Monet paints the same subject but varies the time of day and season in order to capture the light and colors of a specific instant. Note the sky in each work; on the left it is blue and cloudy so the shadows on the cathedral are pinkish and slight. The center work is a bright blue and thus, the sunlight washes out the façade and causes deep shadows in the portals. And finally the work on the far right has a grey sky and uses a muted palette to show the overcast weather.

## Slide 5

Our last series depicts the Gare Saint-Lazare which is a train station in Paris. It is a large iron frame and glass building and an ideal subject for Monet to work with light and atmospheric effects. Have you ever tried to paint or draw steam, smoke, clouds, or fog? It is very hard to differentiate between them since they are similar. Monet was experimenting with those atmospheric effects in these works. This work is from the Art Institute of Chicago and dates from 1877. The vaulted ceiling frames the cloudy sky and the train which is puffing smoke. He uses the black color of the train and iron of the ceiling to contrast the white and grey of the clouds, steam, and smoke.

## Slide 6

Our last image is also the Gare Saint-Lazare from 1877 but is housed in the Musee d’Orsay. This work uses a lighter palette and concentrates even more on the puffy clouds, rising steam, and billowing smoke again framed by the vaulted ceiling of the train station.

Thanks for joining me on this look at Monet’s series works.

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