

From Nana's Back Porch: Famous Artist Claude Monet

Hello, this is Nana from my back porch. Thank you for joining me today. You are all artists!

Hello and welcome. This is Nana! And I'm speaking to you from my back porch. You probably will hear airplanes going overhead, traffic from the nearby school, birds singing, my dog barking, but we're not going to let that bother us today. We're going to be celebrating one of the world's most famous and wonderful artists, Claude Monet.

His birthday is November 14th, and on that day in 1840, he was born on the fifth floor of an apartment building in Paris. As he grew up, his father wanted him to go into the family shipping and grocery business, but he wanted to be an artist. He already had the knack and the ability to be able to do portraits of neighbors and family and even people on the street. And before he turned 10, he was able to sell these portraits that were done in charcoal for, you know, just pennies, but it gave him some pocket money. Now, his mother was a singer and she supported this desire for a career in art.

As he grew older, he left home and went to Paris. One day, he happened to walk into the museum that we all know as the Louvre, where he saw other artists copying old master paintings as a way of studying their techniques. Well, that's all fine and good, and believe me, I have done it myself. Because sometimes it's easier to go into a quiet place and get a famous painting, sit down with it, and really study it and begin to see if you can replicate, or if you can make the strokes that the famous artists had made. The shadings, the light, the colors, you can learn a lot! And it's not bad to copy, not when you don't intend to sell the product.

Alright, he was at the Louvre and he was watching these students copy and study the techniques. He had brought his paints and his supplies and he decided to just sit by a window there and paint what he saw on the outside of the museum, down in the street. This is the way he always was. He didn't want to be hemmed in, or he didn't want to be boxed in by teaching lessons or by following what a teacher wanted you to paint.

I have said many times to students in my classes: You cannot paint as I do. No one can paint like the teacher. And it's frustrating, isn't it? And I didn't discover how frustrating it was until I was a grown up person. You have to paint for yourself, and this is what Claude Monet learned early on. After serving in the army, he was just disillusioned with art schools.

He did go back to Paris. He went to Paris off and on all of his life. And he met up with new friends, including Renoir. Together they shared new techniques and approaches to art, painting the effects of light, broken colors. That means... Broken color is what I consider taking a pure stroke of color and stopping and making another stroke of color. That's a broken color. And they also studied rapid brush strokes, which became known as impressionism.

Years of poverty followed, but he formed an alliance with Renoir, the artist Pissarro, and Sisley. Monet at this time used pastels as we do in early studies of his subjects. Sometimes he even painted over the outlines in his pastel work because canvas was expensive for him. He purchased a small boat, which was the beginning of his intense study of light and the way it affects everything that you paint. He had a little boat and he called it his floating studio. It was stocked with supplies like paints and brushes and canvas and drawing supplies like pastels. And he sailed up and down rivers and streams, stopping to paint wherever he wanted to.

This was a glorious release and a freedom for him that he had never had before. Can you imagine? Just close your eyes and think. You're on Monet's little tiny pale blue boat. There is an awning or a sort of umbrella over the painters so they wouldn't just bake in the heat, and it was yellow.

Monet would sit toward the back and he could set up his easel. And he had his paints and pots all around him, or he had his pastels lined up and he could paint until he tired of the scene he was looking at. And they would just go and row up another stream or a river and paint there.

Monet suffered personal tragedies in his life. The death of his first wife, Camille, and later on is increasing blindness from cataracts. But he sold enough paintings to purchase a house and acreage in Giverny, and

transferred the landscape and gardens into what has been maintained today.

His lilies. He started with beautiful white French waterlilies and he imported lilies from Africa and South America, and he grafted them together and would get beautiful different colors. Now, not only was he a painter of great renown, he knew what he wanted to be able to see in his ponds.

And his lilies, oh my goodness. He painted them hundreds and hundreds of times. He would paint them in the mornings when there was a mist over the pond. He would paint mid day. He would paint when it was raining or there was a stiff breeze. He would paint late in the afternoon and at sunset. All different times of the day, so he could capture that light on his canvases.

You remember how I would say to you: Okay, we're going to paint this apple. Now look when you start painting your apple, which side of the canvas or the piece of paper is the light on? That's always important because it gives life to your paintings.

He loved the way that colors reflected in the water and the way the water makes the clouds and the skies look. And you can see that even though he was going blind from his cataracts. He did have cataract surgery, but early cataract surgery wasn't really successful all the time. So he suffered diminished sight, but it didn't stop him. He still painted, painted and painted.

Monet died of lung cancer on December the 5th, 1926 at the grand old age of 86. He had rejected the teachings of art schools. He would not accept the rigid rules and famously freed himself from that theory of "paint my way" to saying, "I like to paint as the bird sings."

You hear the birds? I do. I hear the birds when I paint, and I love and would love to paint like that bird is singing right now to us.

Thank you for joining me today! I hope you enjoyed this little trip down a French stream and spending a day with Monet. It's been fun, we'll do it again soon. And we'll paint together again soon. Why do we do that? Because You ARE an Artist!
Love, Nana.

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"There are no mistakes in chalk pastel art!" - Nana

Thank you for listening, artist friends! Please leave a review and share this with a friend. We invite you to join us in the You ARE an Artist Clubhouse at ChalkPastel.com where we have over 500 (Yes, 500!) video art lessons. We would also love for you to join us on Instagram, Facebook, and more, and be sure to tag us when you share photos of your artwork. We cannot wait to see. I'll be talking to you again soon.

Note: Nana now has over 700 video art lessons in the Clubhouse!

