



THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

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## ***THE ARTIST IN THE GARDEN***

### **Two Rarely Seen Monet Paintings and His Palette Highlight the Rondina Gallery's Giverny Exhibition**

**Historical Photographs Document Monet's Horticultural Masterpiece  
and Its Crucial Role in His Life and Art**

**May 19–October 21, 2012**

*“What could be said about me...a man to whom only his painting matters?  
And of course his garden and his flowers as well.”*

—Claude Monet



Claude Monet, *Irises*  
Private Collection. Switzerland

Documenting the role that the iconic garden in Giverny played in artist Claude Monet's life and work, ***The Artist in the Garden*** in the Rondina Gallery at The New York Botanical Garden will bring together for the first time two rarely seen paintings by the Impressionist master, as well as his paint-encrusted wooden palette and an evocative array of historical photographs that show the artist creating and enjoying his garden.

On display in the Library building from May 19 through October 21, 2012, the exhibition will be a major component of ***Monet's Garden***. The Botanical Garden's multifaceted exhibition devoted to one of the most enduringly popular painters of all time will feature elements in several venues throughout the Botanical Garden, including a seasonally changing interpretation of the glorious flower garden and water lily pond at Monet's home in Giverny that inspired some of the artist's most beloved masterpieces.

“The gardens remained a constant in his life,” said Dr. Paul Hayes Tucker, the curator of the exhibition and one of America's leading authorities on Monet and

Impressionism. “He tended to them lovingly and with plenty of money and with hired hands. So they became something larger than themselves. And his efforts right up to his death in 1926 to be able to paint their poetry, their prose, their splendor reminds us not only of his diligence, duty, and discipline, but likewise of his devotion to something that is larger than all of us.”

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## Capturing a Garden's Beauty on Canvas: Two Paintings and Monet's Palette

The two paintings that will be on display in the Rondina Gallery make an ideal pair. Both are about the same size, approximately 44 inches by 45 inches, and both date from the early 20th century. *The Artist's Garden in Giverny*, painted in about 1900 and on loan from the Yale University Art Gallery, shows a large sweep of deep purple and violet irises, with a garden path leading off into the distance. *Irises*, which Monet is believed to have painted in about 1915 and comes from a private collection in Switzerland, portrays a group of one of spring's favorite flowers from a much closer vantage point.

The exact circumstances that prompted Monet to create the paintings are not known, said Dr. Tucker, who has written five books about Monet. However, Monet most likely painted them for his own artistic satisfaction.

"He was fabulously rich at the turn of the century," said Dr. Tucker, the Paul Hayes Tucker Distinguished Professor of Art at the University of Massachusetts Boston. "He didn't have to paint another picture for the rest of his life. But instead, he was driven to paint and to consciously set out on a new path."

Both are rarely seen works: *Irises* has never been shown in the United States, and they have never been exhibited together. For devotees of Monet's work, *The Artist in the Garden* will be a rare chance to deepen their understanding of this key figure in Impressionism.

Accompanying the two paintings will be a large wooden palette that Monet used to create his timeless masterpieces. The palette, on loan from the Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris, measures 24 inches by 17 inches and bears the vividly colorful splotches and smears of paint left by Monet, suggestive of the painterly freedom of an Impressionist canvas.

"I like to think of it as the metaphorical extension of the artist's hand and eye," said Dr. Tucker. "It's a very intimate object, an object of great practical importance, but something that is truly united to the body of the artist."



Monet's palette (wood) by French School (19th century).  
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, France/ Giraudon/  
The Bridgeman Art Library

## Historical Photographs Document Monet's Decades-long Devotion to His Garden

Monet loved to garden. Not until 1890, however, when he purchased his house in the small Norman village of Giverny, about 50 miles northwest of Paris, did he have the opportunity to create a living masterpiece of horticulture. Photographs, correspondence, and receipts, on display as part of *The Artist in the Garden*, testify to the considerable time and money that Monet spent to create first a dazzling flower garden in front of his house and then, after he acquired an adjacent property, the exotic water garden where he planted the water lilies that featured so prominently in his later work.

Among the photographs that will be on display are images of Monet with his gardeners and of a worker in a boat, carefully tending the water lilies. Monet had the water lilies removed every winter and then rearranged them in spring, creating a living canvas artfully controlled by Monet himself. He even instructed one of his gardeners to dunk the lily pads daily so they would glisten in the sun.

The garden was, of course, more than a hobby for the prolific artist. It was one of the most important sources of inspiration for his work. Using a touch screen, visitors will be able to flip through a digitized version of one of Monet's sketchbooks that contains a host of drawings of the water lily pond. Photographs in the exhibition show Monet at his easel in the garden, sitting under an umbrella, as well as in his studio, where he always finished the paintings that he began outdoors.

In Monet's later years, many visitors made the trek to Giverny to pay homage to the master and see the garden that he had made famous in his paintings. *The Artist in the Garden* will document this aspect of Monet's life with charming photographs of the artist and his guests, including family photographs, two images by the celebrated Hungarian photographer Nickolas Muray, and stunning views of the garden taken in the 1930s for *Country Life* magazine.

"I hope that visitors to *The Artist in the Garden* are inspired by the fact that Monet was never satisfied, even in his 60s and 70s," said Dr. Tucker. "He reminds us there's always more to be learned about one's craft, about the bounty of nature, and about one's self."

### ***Monet's Garden Offers a Full Palette of Attractions and Programs***

For ***Monet's Garden***, the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory will be transformed into a seasonally changing floral masterpiece of diverse plants, bold colors, and dramatic design. Starting in July, the Conservatory Courtyard Pools will feature Monet's most famous subjects, water lilies, including many of the varieties that he grew.

In addition, a rich assortment of programming will include concerts, poetry, tours, film screenings, a photography exhibit, and family activities. For up-to-date information on all events during the exhibition, please visit [nybg.org](http://nybg.org).

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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, and Tram Tour. For ticket pricing, please check our Web site as the date approaches. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit [nybg.org](http://nybg.org)

The New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

**Media Contacts:** Stevenson Swanson at 718.817.8512/8616 or [sswanson@nybg.org](mailto:sswanson@nybg.org); Nick Leshi at 718.817.8658 or [nleshi@nybg.org](mailto:nleshi@nybg.org) — **Images available**