INSPIRATIONS OF

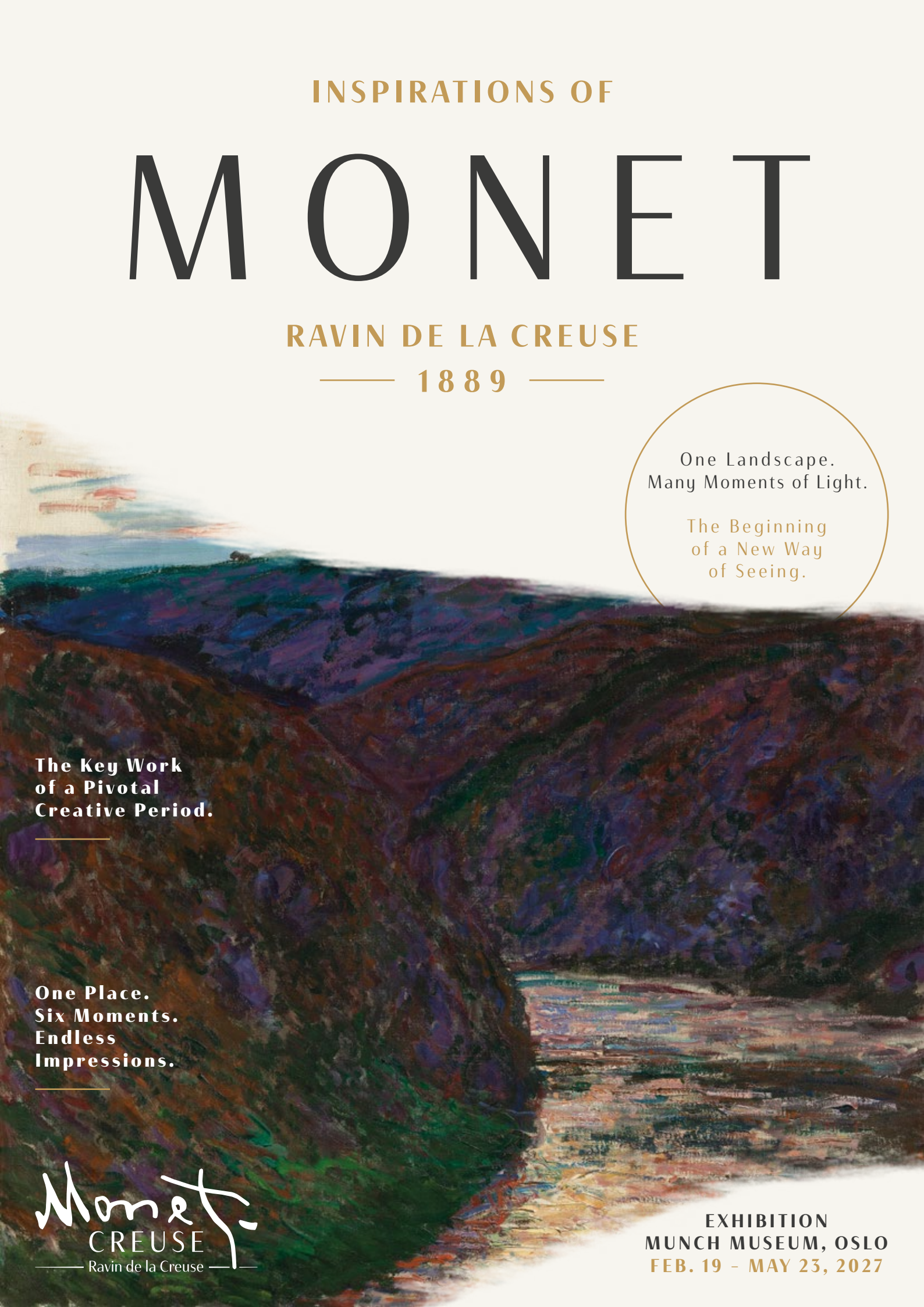
MONET

RAVIN DE LA CREUSE

1889

One Landscape.
Many Moments of Light.

The Beginning
of a New Way
of Seeing.



The Key Work of a Pivotal Creative Period.

One Place. Six Moments. Endless Impressions.

Monet
CREUSE
Ravin de la Creuse

EXHIBITION
MUNCH MUSEUM, OSLO
FEB. 19 – MAY 23, 2027

A VALLEY.
A PICTURE.
A NEW PERSPECTIVE.

SOMETIMES A NEW IDEA STARTS WITH A NEW PLACE.

In 2026, it will be 100 years since the death of Claude Monet. Born in Paris in 1840, the painter is regarded as one of the most important figures of Impressionism. Throughout his life, he was fascinated by the interplay of light, colour and nature. His paintings left a lasting mark on the art world, and he developed a style that captured fleeting moments and changing moods.

In 1889, Claude Monet's search for new subjects led him to the Creuse Valley. Far from the familiar landscapes along the Seine, he discovered a wild, untamed natural world of rocks, water, vegetation and ever-changing light.

What begins as an encounter with a new landscape develops into something greater: Monet starts returning to the same place, observing it again and again and capturing its transformations in colour and light.

Ravin de la Creuse (W 1227) lies at the heart of this early group of works. The painting offers a unique glimpse into a pivotal moment in Monet's development towards the series-based landscape painting of his later years. The Creuse series is described in the concept as an early body of work that paved the way for later series such as the Haystacks, Cathedrals and Water Lilies.

THIS MAGAZINE INVITES YOU TO DISCOVER THE STORY BEHIND THIS PAINTING.

From Monet's journey to Fresselines and the landscape that inspired him, through the creation of the Creuse paintings and the role of light, colour and serial painting, to the question of what Ravin de la Creuse means today.

Monet
CREUSE
Ravin de la Creuse

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One Painting. One Landscape. A New Perspective.

01
DEPARTURE

THE JOURNEY TO THE CREUSE

HOW MONET FOUND HIS WAY TO FRESSELINES.

In the spring of 1889, Claude Monet left Giverny and travelled to the Creuse region. His destination was Fresselines, an area in the northern Massif Central where the rivers Creuse and Petite Creuse meet.

Monet first became aware of the region through an invitation from his friend Gustave Geffroy. While in Fresselines, he also visited the poet Maurice Rollinat.

The journey brought Monet to a place that differed markedly from his familiar working surroundings. Instead of a garden or studio, he encountered a wild landscape shaped by rocks, water and ravines.

The railway had made the region more accessible, opening it up to travellers and artists alike. Monet took advantage of this opportunity—and stayed.

What had been planned as a brief visit became an intensive working period of around three months, during which he repeatedly explored and studied the landscape.

He had come to see a place.
Soon, he began to reinterpret it again and again.

AI-generated illustration

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

A LANDSCAPE BECOMES A TESTING GROUND

The Creuse makes Monet’s work far from easy.

Deep ravines, granite rocks, water and wooded slopes define the landscape.
At the same time, the light constantly transforms its appearance.

Monet begins to observe more closely.

He is interested in how colours change under different conditions.
How does a rock appear in sunlight? How does a grey sky transform the ravine?
What happens to water, vegetation and shadows when the weather shifts?

The landscape becomes a testing ground.

His aim is not to document a place as accurately as possible. What matters instead is the immediate impression—the moment in which the landscape reveals itself to the eye.

Here in the Creuse, a way of working begins to emerge that will later become central to Monet’s series: returning to the same motif to observe how it changes.

It is not just the landscape itself that interests Monet, but what happens to it.





02
THE PLACE

FRESSELINES

THE PLACE WHERE MONET PAINTED

Fresselines is Monet's starting point in the Creuse. From here, he explores the surrounding river courses and viewpoints, discovering the landscape that will later reappear on his canvases.

Between Berry and Limousin, granite, water and wooded slopes meet. The Creuse and its tributaries cut deep into the terrain, creating a landscape of rocks, ravines and constantly shifting perspectives.

Yet the region has another layer to it. Around Crozant and the ravines of the Creuse, stories and legends have endured for centuries: tales of the ruins of the old castle, of water spirits and fairies, and of the mysterious "Loup du Limousin".

These stories are part of the place's collective memory. They lend the landscape an air of mystery and perhaps enhance the very atmosphere that Monet captures in his paintings in an entirely different way.

For his landscapes are never merely topography.

They are mood, perception and memory.

THE CREUSE PAINTINGS

A LANDSCAPE IN MANY MOODS

During his stay, Monet created 24 paintings.

Together, they tell the story of a landscape that never looks exactly the same. Monet returns to rivers, rocks and slopes, exploring how their appearance changes.

At times, the landscape is bathed in bright light. At others, a grey sky darkens the ravines. The water glows, reflects its surroundings or almost fades into the background.

The paintings are therefore less individual views than different moments of the same landscape.

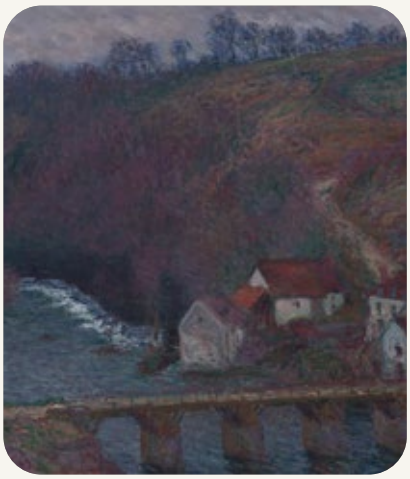
Monet does not simply paint what the Creuse is like. He paints how it appears to him.

This is precisely what makes this group of works so distinctive. Even here, it becomes clear that a motif need not remain static for Monet. Its effect emerges anew each time, shaped by light, weather, atmosphere and the artist's gaze.

A motif can remain the same.
A painting need not.









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03
THE JOURNEY
TO THE SERIES

COLOUR BECOMES LIGHT

MONET'S VIEW OF CHANGE

The longer Monet observes the Creuse, the less he sees landscape as something that can be reduced to form alone.

Colour becomes a vehicle for light.

The rocks do not simply appear grey. Depending on the weather, they may seem violet, green or brown. The water carries reflections and glimmers of light. In places, vegetation dissolves into fields of colour.

This also changes the purpose of painting.

Monet is no longer merely trying to depict an object. He is trying to capture the impression of seeing it.

In the Creuse, he can observe these changes directly and study them again and again.
He paints, compares and returns.

The landscape becomes a testing ground for perception.

And this is precisely where the journey begins from a single view to a series.

RAVIN DE LA CREUSE (W 1227) — THE ARTWORK

Ravin de la Creuse was painted in 1889 in the Creuse Valley and belongs to a group of ten works created during Monet's stay in Fresselines.

The view leads deep into the landscape: dark slopes, shimmering with violet and green, frame the bright course of the water. The river draws the eye into the distance, while the sky opens above it.

Here, Monet combines the dramatic topography of the Creuse with his intense exploration of colour, light and atmosphere.

Within the ten-work sequence, the painting serves as its crowning conclusion.

"I AM TRULY OVERWHELMED BY IT. I FEEL A PASSION UNLIKE ANYTHING I HAVE EVER FELT BEFORE." – CLAUDE MONET

ARTWORK DETAILS

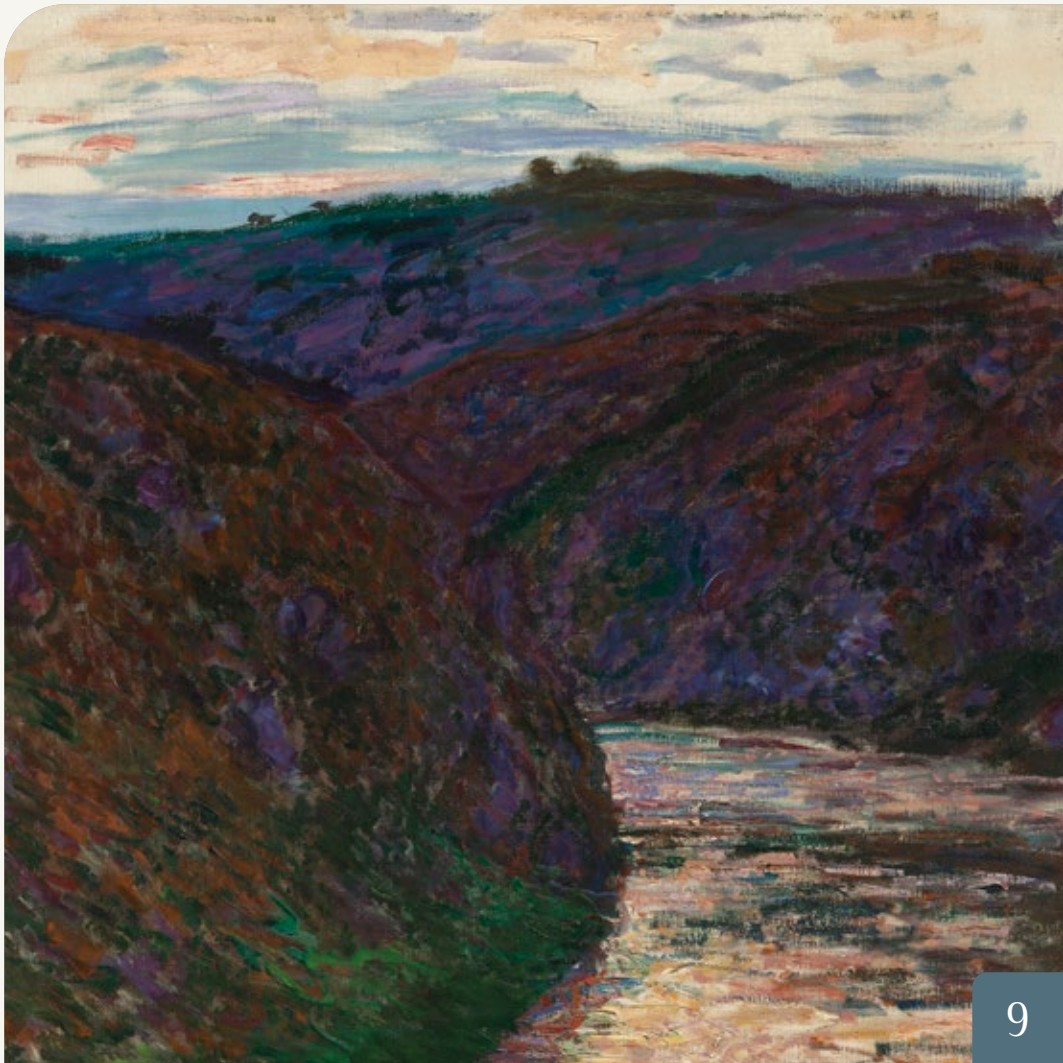
Claude Monet
1840 – 1926

Ravin de la Creuse
1889

Medium
Oil on canvas

Dimensions
73.2 × 73.2 cm

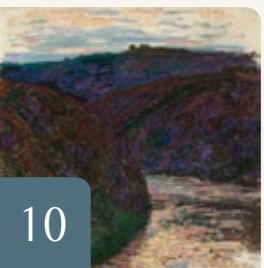
W 1227:
Catalogue Reference Wildenstein Catalogue Raisonné, Volume III, Cologne, 1996, No. 1227









ONE PLACE, MANY MOMENTS

THE CREUSE SERIES IN DIALOGUE

The ten paintings in this group do not simply depict the same landscape again and again.

They show how differently the same place can appear.

Light, weather, season and atmosphere transform our perception. A different sky shifts the colours. A different time of day alters the depth of the ravine. The water may reflect its surroundings or almost disappear.

Together, the paintings reveal something that a single work can hardly capture:

Monet painted time.

The Creuse series thus becomes a sequence of observations.

Monet is not only studying a place. He is exploring how that place changes before his eyes.

And this is precisely what makes the series so significant for his artistic development. The question first explored in the Creuse will accompany him for many years to come:

How does a motif appear now?



FROM MOTIF TO SERIES

FROM THE CREUSE TO HAYSTACKS, CATHEDRALS AND WATER LILIES

In the Creuse, we can already see what Monet would continue to develop over the following years. A motif does not have to be new each time to inspire new paintings.

All it takes is a change in light.

In the **Haystacks series,** a simple motif becomes a study of seasons, times of day and atmosphere. In the **Rouen Cathedral series,** a solid structure becomes a canvas for light and colour. In **London,** Monet explores the effects of architecture and atmosphere. And with the **Water Lilies,** landscape is ultimately built up from reflections, water, light and colour.

What begins in the Creuse evolves into one of the most distinctive approaches of his later painting.

THE MOTIF IS NOT WHAT REMAINS CONSTANT. ITS TRANSFORMATION IS.







04
THE PRESENT

WHY RAVIN DE LA CREUSE?

THE PAINTING AND ITS ART-HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Ravin de la Creuse is particularly fascinating within the Creuse group of works because it reveals the close connection between place, observation and Monet's approach to serial painting.

The painting depicts a specific landscape, yet Monet does not treat it as an unchanging template.

He explores how light and atmosphere transform its appearance.
In doing so, the landscape itself becomes the subject of his investigation.

The Creuse series thus marks an important step in Monet's development towards a way of working in which a motif is repeatedly observed and painted under different conditions.

W 1227 is therefore more than just a beautiful landscape painting.

It offers a glimpse into the moment when, in Monet's work, landscape begins to make time visible. And that is precisely what makes this painting so exceptional within the series.

MUNCH MUSEUM 2027

MONET - WILD AND TAMED

The exhibition **"MONET – WILD AND TAMED"** brings together some of Claude Monet's most famous works, offering a rare insight into the landscape painting of an artist who played a pivotal role in the development of modern art.

From 19 February to 23 May 2027, the exhibition will be on view on the third floor of MUNCH in Oslo, Norway. More than 50 works explore Monet's engagement with wild nature and cultivated landscapes. Alongside motifs from Brittany, the Creuse Valley and wintery Norway, particular attention is given to his garden in Giverny and his famous Water Lilies. The exhibition is organised in collaboration with the Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris and curated by Richard Thomson and Jon-Ove Steihaug.

A special highlight of the exhibition is Ravin de la Creuse (W 1227, 1889). The painting is privately owned and is now being presented to the public again after many years.

Today, the paintings of the Creuse series are also dispersed across various collections. Three works are held at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Other paintings can be found at institutions including the Von der Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Reims, the Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Further works are in private collections. Not all of the paintings are on public display permanently.





RAVIN DE LA CREUSE TODAY

WHY THIS PAINTING REMAINS RELEVANT

What remains of a landscape painting after more than a century has passed? The landscape of the Creuse is still there. The rivers continue to flow. The rocks have endured. The vegetation has changed. Paths and places have changed.

Yet Monet's paintings, too, change with the way we look at them.

Today, we can compare the landscape as it exists with the paintings he created. In doing so, it becomes clear that his works were never intended merely to document what the Creuse looked like.

They show how it appeared in a particular moment.

Perhaps this is precisely what gives them their timeless quality.

Monet captured a place in 1889 while creating an experience that can be renewed again and again.

Today, we see the landscape. And through Monet, we see it a second time.

CONCLUSION

ONE LANDSCAPE. ONE PAINTING. A NEW PERSPECTIVE.

Claude Monet came to the Creuse in 1889 to paint a landscape. Yet the longer he stayed, the less it was about that single place alone.

It was about the changing light. About water reflecting the sky. About rocks that appeared different just moments later. And about the question of how much of such a moment a painting can preserve.

Ravin de la Creuse is part of this search.

It depicts a landscape, but also the beginning of an approach to painting that would later lead Monet to create his most famous series. Perhaps this is what gives the work its particular power. Today, we look at a painting from 1889. Yet what we see in it is not a moment frozen in time.

The landscape changes. The light changes.
And with every gaze, the painting begins anew.

SOURCES

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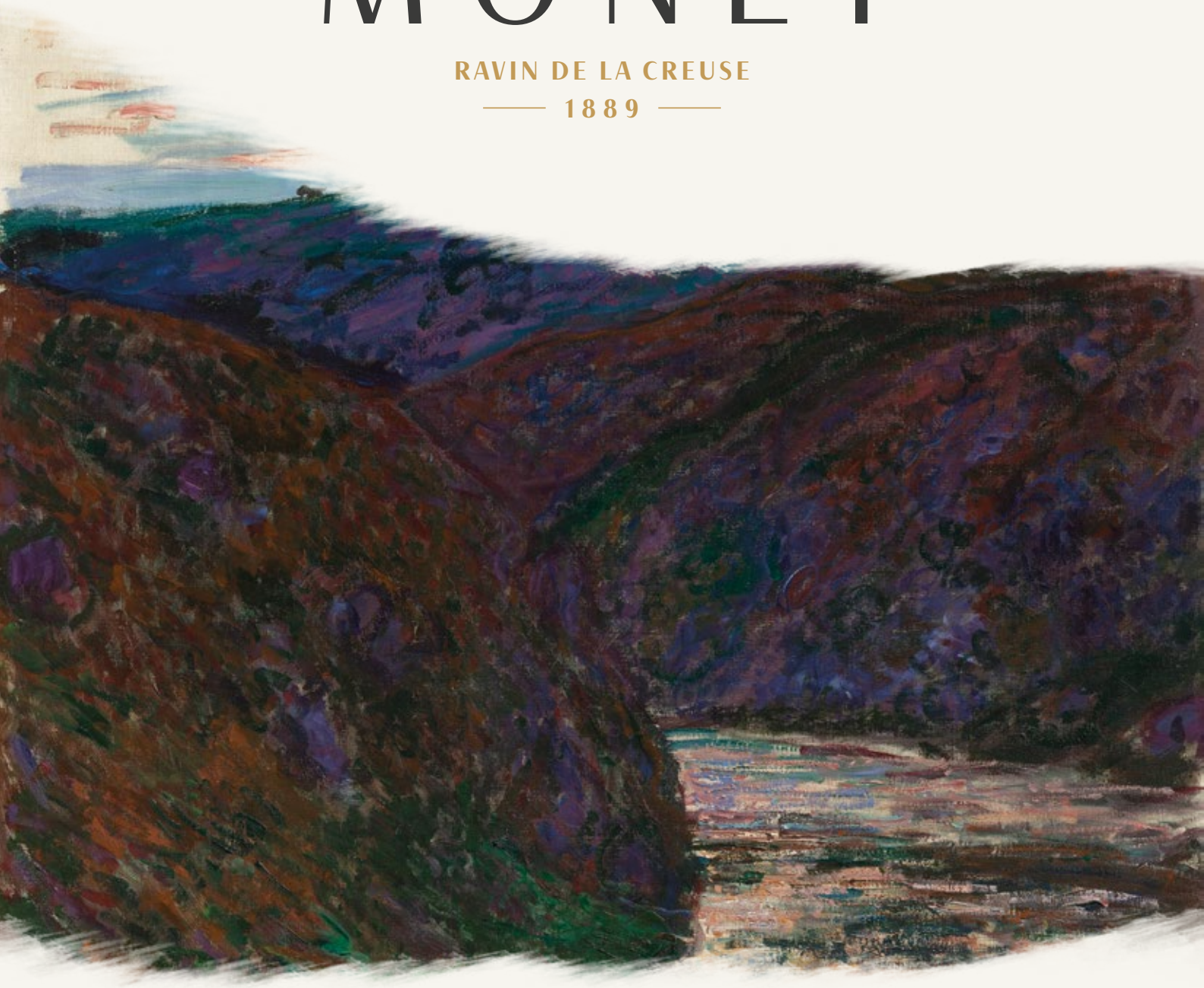
INSPIRATIONS OF

MONET

RAVIN DE LA CREUSE

1889



Monet CREUSE

Ravin de la Creuse

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