

**Monet's "Angel": The Artistic Partnership of Claude Monet and  
Blanche Hoschedé-Monet**

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Claude Monet's *Grandes Décorations* were his last and greatest works. How did Monet complete them? The scale is massive, so is the number of paintings. Monet was an old man, beset by infirmities that included bad eyesight and arthritis. Gone were the days when Monet set off to paint *en plein air* in all weathers. After the death of his wife Alice in 1911, Monet ceased to work, confiding to Rodin, that he felt "lost, annihilated."<sup>1</sup> Suddenly, in 1914, he began the *Grandes Décorations*.

Blanche Hoschedé-Monet was Monet's stepdaughter and daughter-in-law. An accomplished artist, she was trained and encouraged by him. In 1914, at forty-nine, Blanche had returned to live at Giverny. Their close working relationship made it possible for Monet to begin – and complete – the *Grandes Décorations*.

Blanche's work is largely unrecognised. It has not been thoroughly assessed either in relation to the Impressionist movement or to the women artists associated with it. While Berthe Morisot, Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzalés and Marie Bracquemond have been canonised as official members, Blanche remains excluded, challenging the view that "feminist art historians have exhaustively documented the work of women Impressionists."<sup>2</sup> Nor has the significance of Blanche's relationship with Monet been evaluated: as his student, artist-companion, studio assistant and *agent provocateur* of

his late work.

In 1876, Monet was artist in residence at Château de Rottembourg, Ernest and Alice Hoschedé's splendid mansion at Montgeron, where they lived with their six children. They had commissioned Monet to complete four huge canvases to decorate the dining room. His arrival was eagerly anticipated and Blanche, then eleven, recalled the "*grand artiste*" with his long hair.<sup>3</sup>

Ernest Hoschedé was an enterprising collector committed to modern art, snapping up Monet's *Impression, Sunrise* (1872, Musée Marmottan, Paris), the work that gave the Impressionist movement its name. The Hoschedé wealth was founded in the textile trade but Ernest had no head for business. Though cracks had begun to appear in his empire, Ernest was determined to keep up appearances and continued to entertain lavishly.

When the Hochedés' fortune crashed and they were declared bankrupt, Monet took pity on his former patrons, inviting them to join his household in the village of Vétheuil. Camille, Monet's wife, had been diagnosed with cancer. Alice nursed Camille through the final stages of her illness, as well as caring for the children and running the home. Alice was fired with an enthusiasm for art similar to her husband's. Like Monet, she loved the countryside and it is probably Alice who gazes into *The Pool at Montgeron* (1876, Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg), one of the works Monet completed for the château's dining room.

In 1882, Monet rented a holiday house, Villa Juliette, at Pourville where Alice and the family joined him in June. By that time, Alice and Ernest had separated and Alice was living with Monet as his wife. That summer proved a turning point for sixteen year old Blanche: she began painting *en plein air*. In precisely realised studies, she concentrated on Villa Juliette, situated in the centre of town, a large, half-timbered house typical of Normandy. Blanche's first artworks depict her home, the emotional and artistic centre of her life.<sup>4</sup>

When Blanche decided to devote herself to art, Monet took her ambitions seriously, inviting her to accompany him on outdoor painting expeditions, as well as advising her about the practical matters of technique and of advancing her career. Blanche was Monet's "most assiduous assistant." After a hearty breakfast, the two would load their gear into a wheelbarrow and "make their way through the dewy countryside" to watch the sunrise or have themselves driven by horse-drawn cart to some "remote spot." Monet disliked the idea of painting lessons but he was always ready with advice. As Claire Joyes notes, their easels were "never very far apart."<sup>5</sup>

Studying art was not unusual for nineteenth century middle-class girls. "Drawing and painting were more important parts of a standard bourgeois

education for girls than arithmetic, the sciences or history.”<sup>6</sup> The desired outcome was not a career but attributes that would enhance the girl’s home, either of her father or her husband, like singing or needlework – *les arts des femmes*. Berthe Morisot was a friend of Monet’s. Morisot’s teacher had warned her mother that if Berthe became a painter “in the upper-class world to which you belong, this would be revolutionary, I might say almost catastrophic.”<sup>7</sup> While Morisot’s mother had to find a drawing teacher for her daughter, Blanche had tutelage from a modern master. Blanche did not, however, attend art school and never learned to draw from the figure. It made her commitment to landscape painting an advantageous one. When she painted figures, as in *Au bord de l’eau* (1929, Musée Marmottan, Paris), the result is less confident.

Unlike the other women Impressionists, Blanche did not choose to paint the domestic interior where women are depicted caring for children, sewing, reading or reposing in fashionable gowns. However artists such as Mary Cassatt or Berthe Morisot framed images of femininity, their subjects call attention to women’s circumscribed lives.<sup>8</sup> Blanche ignores such boundaries and positions herself outside. Her gaze is fixed beyond the home. For metropolitan women artists, domesticity was their prescribed domain: they were not at liberty to wander the boulevards unchaperoned, choose men outside the family as their subjects or congregate in cafes, unless they were prepared to leave polite society behind. Blanche had the freedom, and the permission of Alice and Monet, to paint the landscape.

For women artists, *plein air* painting proved liberating. It was a cheap and convenient alternative to renting a studio and hiring a model, and to the academic conventions of large scale works and laborious painting techniques. A landscape painter’s equipment consisted of a field stool, a small easel, a canvas umbrella and a travel box for brushes and paints and it meant the artist could choose where and when she wished to work. Women found it difficult to gain prominence in the art world. To haggle about exhibitions and prices was deemed unladylike while to frequent bohemian haunts meant becoming a social outcast. Blanche, however, was ensconced at the centre of the Impressionist circle. During the summer at Pourville, Durand-Ruel and Renoir were both guests, Renoir staying until August.

Away on a painting trip, Monet wrote Blanche a cheerful letter, observing how, on her own, she made more effort: he was eager to see her new work. When Blanche decided to exhibit at the 1888 Paris Salon, Monet and Alice discussed her chances. Monet was unsure how to advise Blanche because he had not seen the recent paintings. “If she doesn’t fear refusal and if she is keen on what she is doing,” Monet considered, “then she

should [submit work] straightaway." He reminded Alice that entries for the Salon closed in mid-March but he fretted that rejection might dishearten Blanche. Monet knew the feeling: he had been rejected by the Salon several times early in his career. He wanted Blanche to "seriously involve herself in painting in a total way."<sup>9</sup> Blanche was not accepted by the Salon.

Monet's images of Blanche as an artist are not only respectful and admiring but rare—in Monet's oeuvre and in the history of art. *In the Woods at Giverny: Blanche Hoschedé at her easel and Suzanne Hoschedé reading* (1887, Los Angeles County Museum of Art) shows the artist at work, palette in one hand as she paints with the other.<sup>10</sup> Straight-backed, she works with concentration and determination. Suzanne sits nearby, lounging against a tree. Monet often depicted the women of his clan engaged in leisurely pursuits – reading, strolling, boating, fishing. But none are at work as Blanche is, as Monet was. For Blanche and Monet, the landscape is not the site for an outing but the opportunity to rapidly transcribe its shapes, colours and moods. It is a professional arena where they test themselves as artists.

*In the Woods* also offers contrasting models of femininity. The figure of Suzanne presents Monet's typically placid female subject. Her skirt, with its flecks of white, pink, yellow and blue, seems liquid, melting into her surroundings, identifying her with qualities of acquiescence and pliability. Blanche is an upright, resolute figure, intently focused on her work. By painting her in profile, Monet shows to advantage her alert gaze beneath her perky, red-brimmed bonnet and her upraised arm as brush touches canvas at the vivid moment of creation. Blanche's energetic stance is echoed by the sharp, left-leaning angle of the easel and the trees behind her. She is distinct from her environment, its commentator and interrogator.

As photographs from the mid-1880s show, Suzanne, tall and slender, was the family beauty. Yet *In the Woods* distinguishes Blanche as noteworthy while Suzanne's body is rendered as loose and formless. It is almost as if Monet is comparing them: pretty, passive Suzanne with enterprising, active Blanche. To be a woman artist, in Monet's eyes, was to lose no feminine charm. Renoir, Monet's close friend, thought differently. "The woman artist is merely ridiculous," he scoffed, like all professional women who were "monsters and nothing but five-legged calves."<sup>11</sup>

In *Blanche Hoschedé painting* (c.1887, private collection), she looks directly at Monet. In the background, Suzanne watches an artist at his easel, perhaps John Singer Sargent or Theodore Butler.<sup>12</sup> Suzanne married Butler in 1892. It seems Monet and Blanche are painting one another. Virginia Spate observes how Blanche's gaze entwines with his "undermining her role as the passive object of his painting and allowing her the status of

an observing painter.”<sup>13</sup> Blanche wears a bright red jacket with a wide pink collar and a large hat decked with red flowers. Suzanne also wears a red jacket. Like *In the Woods*, Blanche stands out from her surroundings. Once again, Suzanne and Blanche are “compared.” Suzanne is the passive muse while Blanche provides the inspiration for Monet's painting and the agency for her own. Her glance is affectionate and a smile hovers on her lips.

The Impressionist circle is known for its women artists who formed friendships with the male painters – most notably Morisot with Manet and Cassatt with Edgar Degas. The circle's liberal attitudes meant the women exhibited alongside the men, and were welcome visitors to their salons and studios, though not, of course, to their libertine hang-outs. Though Manet and Degas often sketched and painted Morisot and Cassatt, they did not depict them as artists. Did they consider it inappropriate, preferring to represent them within the rigidly hierarchical conventions that governed middle-class women?

Blanche followed Monet's lead. When he began the *Grainstacks* series in 1890, she painted several, too. The habit of painting alongside Monet meant Blanche shared his ideas. Monet worked on about 24 paintings of the grainstacks from the summer of 1890 through the winter, including perhaps three months of work in the studio, before exhibiting 15 at Durand-Ruel's gallery in May 1891. It was a breakthrough for Monet, an innovative idea where he concentrated on a single motif to record changes in light and season, one that met with unprecedented success.

Blanche's *Grainstack, Giverny* (1890, Private Collection) celebrates the autumn sunrise.<sup>14</sup> The subtle tonal range, together with the brushstrokes' artful flurries, contrive a deliciously vibrant effect. Dawn's pink haze engulfs form so sun and sky, fields and grainstack, near and far, are enveloped in the same liquid, mobile, fantastic atmosphere. The landscape seems to be at once bursting into radiant life and dissolving before our eyes. The highpoint of Blanche's career, *Grainstack, Giverny*, shows her debt to Monet as well her own formidable skill. Due to the small number of Blanche's remaining works, and because she rarely dated them, her oeuvre is difficult to assess. Paintings from the 1890s, in particular, are few. It is one of the reasons her reputation has languished.<sup>15</sup>

The following spring, Monet began the *Poplar* series, depicting the sylph-like trees that grace the banks of the Epte. Monet worked on the series in his little studio-boat, bobbing on the river's tranquil, sun-dappled waters. As John Singer Sargent illustrates in his oil sketch, *Monet in his Bateau Atelier* (c.1887, Private Collection), Blanche often worked beside him.

*Along the River Epte* (c.1891, RH Love Galleries, Chicago) shows

Blanche's confident, delicate touch. The poplars' slender forms are set against the pale evening sky, their trunks mauve in the fading light, forming a harmony with the deep greens and blues of the river and its bank. Behind the poplars swirls a circle of smaller trees, intersecting with the poplars' verticality and creating a strong decorative rhythm. On a visit to Giverny in 1893, Julie Manet, Berthe Morisot's daughter, recalled, "Mlle Blanche showed us some of her paintings, which are of a lovely colour, two of them trees reflected in the Epte [that] are very like M. Monet's painting."<sup>16</sup> Blanche's association with Monet conferred excellent connections. When Mary Cassatt introduced Bertha Palmer, the wife of wealthy Chicago businessman Potter Palmer, to the Impressionist circle, Bertha not only acquired works by Monet, but three of Blanche's *Grainstacks* series.<sup>17</sup> Theodore Robinson was also impressed by Blanche's *Grainstacks*, which he deemed "greatly improved."<sup>18</sup>

In June 1897, Blanche married Jean, her step-brother, Monet's older son, and the couple moved to nearby Rouen. Each weekend they returned to Giverny and stayed in a specially designed apartment above Monet's studio. Blanche continued to paint, exhibiting with the prestigious Salon des Indépendants in Paris and with the local Salon de la Société des Artistes Rouennais. She became Madame Monet and began to sign some of her paintings "Blanche Hoschedé-Monet."

In 1909, Monet's *Les Nymphéas: Series de paysages d'eau*, was exhibited at Durand-Ruel's to critical and public acclaim. Monet had found the subject he would paint for the rest of his life. But a series of tragic events derailed him. The following year, Alice was diagnosed with leukemia. Meanwhile, Monet was suffering headaches that gave him eyesight problems. Though he avoided an operation for cataracts by treating his eyes with various ointments, his sight remained a problem. From the time that Alice became ill, Monet had difficulty working. When she died, Monet's ability to paint faltered.

Jean, too, was ill. Following his death, Blanche settled at Giverny. Monet's friends Gustave Geffroy and Georges Clemenceau, who had been worried by his crippling depression, were delighted. Geffroy told Blanche he was "very happy with your decision to stay with Monet, happy for him and happy for you. Your mutual misfortune makes your reunion stronger and more intimate."<sup>19</sup> Clemenceau showered Blanche with praise, calling her Monet's "angel."<sup>20</sup> Monitoring Monet, Blanche and Clemenceau became allies.

Soon Monet joyously announced that he was "feeling marvellous and obsessed with the desire to paint." More than that, he had an exciting new project: "large things" based on studies only recently re-discovered. "Clem-

enceau saw them and was amazed,” Monet commented.<sup>21</sup> What was the cause of Monet's sudden return to painting, his burst of vitality, his renewed ambition? Was he responding to the agitated atmosphere that preceded the declaration of war in August 1914? Did failing sight spur him on? Was it Clemenceau's encouragement?

It seems Blanche was responsible for Monet's renaissance. After several bleak and lonely years, he had at his side his faithful assistant, a fellow artist he admired. As Gustave Geffroy writes, “Monet found the courage to survive and the strength to work because of the presence of his devoted daughter, who kept the house intact and who encouraged him to take up his paints, receiving his friends as her mother did in the past.”<sup>22</sup>

Monet and Blanche were consumed by their new painting project. From the start, Monet conceived of it in the most ambitious terms. “I'm pursuing my idea of a *Grand Décoration*. It's a huge thing that I've undertaken, above all, at my age.”<sup>23</sup> The idea of mural-scale paintings had been on Monet's mind for years. It probably dated back to Montgeron, where, in the rotunda-shaped dining room, he had composed four huge canvases.<sup>24</sup>

A photograph taken in July 1915, shows Blanche and Monet side by side at the lily pond. Beneath the white canvas umbrella, Monet paints while Blanche watches. She is waiting for him to complete as much of the study as possible before supplying him with a new canvas. Monet had to change canvases constantly because, as the light changed, so did the effect he was trying to capture. By 1915, Monet had also recognised that the size of the new paintings – often two metres high by three metres long – had outgrown the second studio. Construction began on a third, larger building, despite the difficulties of finding labourers during the First World War. It made Blanche's involvement – and her physical strength – even more important because the outbreak of the war depleted Monet's staff, including the gardeners, who were conscripted. The war also meant Blanche and Monet were marooned at Giverny, anxiously awaiting news of Michel Monet and Jean-Pierre Hoschedé, who were both in the army.

Clemenceau's account of Blanche's involvement is specific. “She worked on his canvases. She did the grounds (of his paintings) for him.”<sup>25</sup> Aside from Blanche, no one was closer to the progress of the *Grandes Décorations* than Clemenceau. In 1918, Monet wrote to Clemenceau, who was both premier of France and minister of war. Monet wished to celebrate the Allied victory by donating two recent paintings to the nation and suggested the Musée des Arts Décoratifs as the recipient. But Clemenceau and Gustave Geffroy had a better idea: a specially designed, public gallery in the centre of Paris that would house Monet's decorative panels as a monument to peace. Monet was thrilled by the prospect. Clemenceau sug-

gested that the Orangerie in the Tuileries Gardens would make an excellent site: it was in the centre of Paris, close to the Louvre as well as to the Seine, the river that Monet had painted all his life, and it needed only to be renovated.

But the process was slow and stressful. Monet argued with everyone, including Clemenceau and the two architects. Blanche was the negotiator and peace-maker, managing to stay quietly but firmly in control, even when Clemenceau lost patience with Monet's mercurial demands and threatened to cancel the whole business. Overseeing the project made Clemenceau a regular visitor to Giverny. As Blanche notes, Clemenceau arrived every fortnight to discuss progress and view the work, having a meal and staying as long as he could. He and Monet "had such long, friendly discussions that it was a great joy for me to organise these gatherings of old friends who loved each other so much."<sup>26</sup> When Monet felt daunted by the task, Clemenceau encouraged Monet "to paint the impossible."<sup>27</sup>

Jean-Pierre Hoschedé writes that his sister "completely renounced" her own painting in order to devote herself to Monet, but Clemenceau offers another opinion: she was Monet's assistant, actively involved in the preparation of works under his guidance.<sup>28</sup> How Monet physically completed the *Grandes Décorations* is a puzzle. Not only is the scale huge, so is the number of paintings in the series. By 1920, Monet reckoned that he had painted between 40 and 50 panels. Most were 2 metres (6 and a half feet) high by 4.25 (14 feet) long. He also painted at least 60 large – up to 2 metres square – studies related to the *Décorations* and did a number of easel paintings.<sup>29</sup>

Monet's love of fine food had given him an enormous girth. Gone were the days when Monet set off for the Normandy coast to paint in all weathers or tramped the fields searching for subjects. By 1914, a stroll to the pond was the extent of his exercise. How, for example, did Monet paint the lower sections of the works, a few inches from the floor? Though the gardeners were summoned to heave the enormous canvases around the studio that was often Blanche's job, too. As one guest observed, Blanche would "tackle the weighty easels" and arrange them for visitors to the studio.<sup>30</sup>

Clemenceau's revelation about Blanche's role appeared in his "autobiography" published in 1929, the year he died. Titled "Clemenceau painted by himself," it was compiled from notes made by his former secretary Jean Martet, and it took the form of a dialogue between the two men. In Blanche's short memoir of Monet's life, intended for her family and not for publication, she is unequivocal on the topic. "Contrary to what has been said and what has been written, I didn't make a brushstroke on [Monet's] canvases. It would have been a sacrilege."<sup>31</sup> She also wrote to Martet, tak-

ing him to task.

Though Martet gallantly told Blanche he would remove the offending passage from future editions, his opinion was unchanged. It was well known that “the discreet but fervent collaboration of one or a number of their students” was involved in major projects by great artists.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps one reason Clemenceau's claim has not been previously explored is because Martet was as good as his word. In the English edition of the book, published the following year, Clemenceau's statement reads only, “She helped him prepare his canvases.”<sup>33</sup>

Preparing a canvas for oil painting is a straightforward task any studio assistant could acquit. First the canvas is stretched and framed, before it is sized – or sealed – to protect the surface, then a ground is applied, usually of gesso, which provides a uniform colour, level and absorbency. After about an hour, when the surface has dried, sandpaper is used to lightly smooth it, before another layer of gesso is added that primes the canvas for the application of paint.

Monet's method of painting was complex and unusual. As conservators at New York's Museum of Modern Art point out, this method was “anything but spontaneous: the multilayered paint surfaces are laboriously constructed and give, in places, almost an effect of low-relief sculpture.”<sup>34</sup> It is also evident from the *Water Lilies* in MoMA's collection that a number of panels were worked on over long periods, perhaps years. Their colour and texture have been developed through many additional layers of paint, and Monet used a variety of types and combinations of brushstrokes, including a dry brush technique. Eugena Ordonez, who has done extensive research on MoMA's *Water Lilies*, has counted up to fifteen layers of paint before reaching the “ground” or base coat.<sup>35</sup> With such a long period to paint and rework the surfaces, the possibility that Blanche assisted Monet is even greater because the Impressionist style of rapid, spontaneous brushstrokes was abandoned in the *Water Lilies* in favour of a much slower process.

Given the sheer scale of the surfaces to be covered in the *Grandes Décorations*, it is logical to consider that Monet had an assistant, and who better than Blanche? Someone must have helped Monet with the massive layering of the dense grounds on the paintings. After Monet had completed the great freehand loops of the water lilies, an assistant could have then laid in areas of colour for the reflections – the open water reflecting clear sky or the shadowed water reflecting clouds or trees. Monet was responsible for the gestural brushwork – Blanche was not capable of such original and sophisticated strokes. But, as *Grainstack, Giverny* indicates, she certainly had the ability to beautifully interpret and emulate the master's style.

If Blanche *had* participated in the *Grandes Décorations*, why keep it a

secret? Perhaps she considered it could damage Monet's stature as well as the authenticity, and therefore the market value, of his work. She may have felt it was imperative to protect Monet and her family's honour. In fact, Monet's reputation and his prices slumped immediately after his death. Impressionism was suddenly old-fashioned. Picasso and Matisse had stolen the torch. Even Clemenceau had to admit that scarcely anyone bothered to visit the Orangerie. It was not until 1955, when the Museum of Modern Art bought one of the late *Water Lilies* that artists, critics and historians began to rediscover the late Monet. Subsequently, Monet was lauded not only as an important Impressionist, but as a visionary twentieth century painter.

In her memoir, Blanche briefly but movingly describes Monet's death in 1926. "On the 5th of December, at midday, he left us forever. It was the soul of the house who left...Everything here was illuminated by him."<sup>36</sup>

Blanche did not attend the official opening at the Orangerie in May 1927. Perhaps it was too distressing. She also declined Clemenceau's offers to travel to Paris and to view the Orangerie with him. But, at some point, she must have visited the oval rooms with their underwater light to see the panorama of paintings that she knew so well, profound, emotional and delicate works, in whose creation she had played her part.

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Letter to Rodin, 16 July 1911, Daniel Wildenstein, *Claude Monet: biographie et catalogue raisonné*, (Lausanne, Paris: La Bibliothèque des arts, 1985), v IV, L 1972.
- <sup>2</sup> Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 215.
- <sup>3</sup> Jean-Pierre Hoschedé, "Notes Posthumes de Blanche Hoschedé-Monet", *Claude Monet, Ce Mal Connu* (Geneva: Pierre Cailler Editeur, 1960), 158.
- <sup>4</sup> Jean-Pierre Hoschedé comments that two of BHM's early paintings—a study of the Villa Juliette and a bouquet of four sunflowers in a vase—were in his possession and that they attest to Blanche's gifts as a future artist. Jean-Pierre Hoschedé, *Blanche Hoschedé-Monet, peintre impressionist* (Rouen: Lecerf, 1961), 11. Wildenstein also comments that he saw these "precisely realised studies." Location now unknown. Wildenstein, *Monet*, v II, 8, fn. 74.
- <sup>5</sup> Claire Joyes, *Claude Monet, Life at Giverny* (Paris: New York, Vendome Press, 1985), 42.

- <sup>6</sup> Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, 215.
- <sup>7</sup> As others have noted: “[T]he state art school, the École des Beaux Arts remained closed to women until 1897 and even then was only opened after a long and vociferous struggle led by prominent women artists.” Anne Higonnet, *Berthe Morisot, A Biography* (London: Collins, 1990), 12. “For the most part, women were unwilling to tackle the theme of the nude, inhibited as they were by their restricted training and by current notions of decency.” Kathryn Adler and Tamar Garb, *Berthe Morisot* (London: Phaidon, 1995), 10; 94. Women art students studied the human form by drawing from plaster casts.
- <sup>8</sup> In her essay, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” Griselda Pollock explores spatial devices as a metaphor for social processes in the works of Morisot and Cassatt, arguing that the spatial construction of several of Morisot’s paintings demarcate boundaries “not between the public and private but between the spaces of masculinity and of femininity inscribed at the level of both what spaces are open to men and women and what relation a man or a woman has to that space and its occupants.” Proximity and compression characterise Cassatt’s work, “a shallow pictorial space which the painted figure dominates” which forces the viewer “into a confrontation or a conversation’ with the figure.” Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference, Feminism, femininity and the histories of art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 87-89.
- <sup>9</sup> Wildenstein. *Monet*. To Alice Hoschedé, 4 March 1888, v III, L849; To Alice Hoschedé, 26 April 1888, v III, L 877.
- <sup>10</sup> Monet painted a similar study, probably the same day: *Suzanne Reading and Blanche Painting* (1887. Location Unknown). Wildenstein, *Monet*, v.III, cat.no.1132. He also painted *Blanche Monet [sic] Painting with her sister Suzanne on the riverbank* (1887, Private Collection). Wildenstein, *Monet*, v.III, cat.no.1149. In *Promenade Temps Gris* (1888, Location Unknown) Monet paints Blanche in the foreground, one hand on her hip, her characteristic gesture, with Suzanne, Germaine and Michel in the background. Wildenstein, *Monet*, v.III, cat. no.1203.
- <sup>11</sup> Quoted in Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*, 215.
- <sup>12</sup> Spate queries Wildenstein who dates the painting c.1892. See Wildenstein, *Monet*, v III, p. 158, cat. No. 1330. Spate suggests c.1887 as the work is similar in subject and style to *In the Woods at Giverny: Blanche Hoschedé painting and Suzanne Hoschedé reading*. Wildenstein suggests it is Theodore Butler being watched by Suzanne, but it may be John Singer Sargent. Virginia Spate, *The Colour of Time*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992) 327, fn 88. Singer Sargent spent several summers at Giverny at Monet’s invitation. See Richard Osmond, *John Singer Sargent, Paintings, Drawings, Watercolours*, (London: Phaidon, 1970), 41-42. Stuckey suggests it is Breck. Charles Stuckey, “American Courtships with Giverny,” in *In Monet’s Garden, Artists and the Lure of Giverny*, eds. Joe Houston, Dominique Vasseur and M. Melissa Wolfe, (Columbus Ohio; Paris; London: Columbus Museum of Art, Musée Marmottan, Scala, 2007), 58.
- <sup>13</sup> Spate, *The Colour of Time*, 182. There is no extant portrait of Monet by BHM.
- <sup>14</sup> Though Hochedé-Monet’s *Grainstack, Giverny* is dated 1890 verso, it is likely it was painted in 1891, given its similarity to Monet’s *Grainstack, Sun in the Mist*,

(1891, Minneapolis Institute of Arts). [Wildenstein, v III, 1286]. Hoschedé-Monet's *Grainstack, Giverny* is h.19.9 x w. 32 in/h.50.5 x w.81.3cm while Monet's *Grainstack, Sun in the Mist* is h. 23 x 45 in/h.60 x 116.2cm. I would like to thank Molly Eppard and Sarah Richardson, Hollis Taggart Galleries, New York, for giving me access to this painting and for pointing out that the work has an estate stamp, not a signature, lower left.

- <sup>15</sup> Fifty-five works are catalogued in *Blanche Hoschedé-Monet, 1865-1947: une artiste de Giverny*: Exposition/realisée par le Musée municipal AG Poulain, Vernon, 6 avril–3 juin, (Vernon: Musée municipal 1991). Hoschedé-Monet's works in public collections in France: Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi; Musée Clemenceau, Paris; Musée Marmottan, Paris; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen; Musée des Augustins, Toulouse; Musée de la Cohue, Vannes; Musée AG Poulain, Vernon. In the US, Hoschedé-Monet's works are held by RH Love Galleries, Chicago [*Along the River Epte*, (c.1892)] and Art-Giverny, Oakland, CA, [*House of Claude Monet* (undated), *Plains des Ajoux, Giverny* (undated), *The Nymphéas in Claude Monet's Garden* (undated) and *La Rosarie Claude Monet's Garden* (undated).] The private galleries have websites where the works can be viewed online.
- <sup>16</sup> On the same visit, Monet showed the Morisot family paintings from Rouen Cathedral series. Julie, who married the painter Edouard Rouart in 1900, was also an artist. Of the Hoschedé sisters, she was friendly with Germaine. Julie Manet, *Growing up with the Impressionists, the diary of Julie Manet*, eds. and trans. Rosalind de Boland Roberts and Jane Roberts, (London: Sotheby's, 1987), 43-44.
- <sup>17</sup> Theodore Robinson, *Diaries*. vol 1. July 3, 1892. Frick Art and Reference Library, New York.
- <sup>18</sup> Joyes, *Life at Giverny*, 45. Joyes refers to the year as 1893 but Blanche writes that the journey on *La Normandie* took place in February 1895, after Monet's visit to Norway. At that time, Tsar Nicholas II was yet uncrowned. "Notes Posthumes de Blanche Hoschedé-Monet," in Jean-Pierre Hoschedé, *Claude Monet, Ce Mal Connu*, (Geneva : Pierre Cailler Editeur, 1960), 164. Wildenstein does not mention the voyage.
- <sup>19</sup> Gustave Geffroy to BHM, [April],1914. Hoschedé, *Blanche Hoschedé-Monet, peintre impressionist*, 42.
- <sup>20</sup> Clemenceau quoted in Hoschedé, *Blanche Hoschedé-Monet, peintre impressionist*, 15.
- <sup>21</sup> To Gustav Geffroy, 30 April 1914, Wildenstein, *Monet*, v IV, L 2116.
- <sup>22</sup> Gustav Geffroy, *Monet, Sa Vie, Son Temps, Son Oeuvre*, (Paris: Editions G Gres et Cie, 1922), 332.
- <sup>23</sup> To Raymond Koechlin. 15 January 1915. Wildenstein, *Monet*, v IV, L 2142.
- <sup>24</sup> Though Monet began work on the *Grand Décorations* in 1914, he had explored the same subject twice before. He painted several *Water Lilies* between 1897-1900 (see Wildenstein, *Monet*, v IV, cat. nos. 1501-1508). In 1897, Monet discussed the prospect with *Le Figaro's* Maurice Guillemot. The journalist visited Giverny in August, rising at dawn and accompanying Monet to the river where he was painting *Mornings on the Seine*, a series of superb pastel-hued waterscapes. Guillemot saw several *Water Lily* paintings. They were "the models for a decora-

tion ... Imagine a circular room, the dado below the wall moulding entirely filled with a plain of water scattered with these plants, transparent screens sometimes green, sometimes almost mauve. The calm and silent, still waters reflecting the scattered flowers, the colours evanescent, with delicious nuances of a dreamlike delicacy." (Quoted in Spate, *The Colour of Time*, 235.) It is a prescient description of the *Grand Décorations* in the Orangerie, thirty years prior to their installation. It is to these Guillemot refers. Between 1903-1909, Monet painted a second, more substantial series, *Les Nymphéas: Series de paysages d'eau*. Forty eight were exhibited at Durand-Ruel in May 1909. When Monet wrote to Geffroy announcing the start of the *Grand Décorations*, "[Y]ou will see some old trials which I found in a cellar," he is referring to works from the second series. Wildenstein, *Monet*, April 30, 1914, v IV, L 2116.

- <sup>25</sup> Jean Martet, *M. Clemenceau peint par lui-même*, (Paris: A. Michel, 1929), 52-53.
- <sup>26</sup> "Notes Posthumes de Blanche Hoschedé-Monet", 163.
- <sup>27</sup> Monet noted that Clemenceau visited him "nearly every Sunday." Wildenstein, *Monet*, v IV, 93.
- <sup>28</sup> Jean-Pierre Hoschedé, *Blanche Hoschedé-Monet, peintre impressionist*, 15.
- <sup>29</sup> Spate, *The Colour of Time*, 271.
- <sup>30</sup> Agathe Rouart-Valéry. Quoted in Spate, *The Colour of Time*, 280.
- <sup>31</sup> "Notes Posthumes de Blanche Hoschedé-Monet," 163. Jean Pierre Hoschedé found the notes after Blanche's death and published them in *Claude Monet, Ce Mal Connu* (1960).
- <sup>32</sup> Martet to Blanche Hoschedé-Monet. January 21, 1930. Martet continued, the "glory of [Jacques-Louis] David was not diminished" because his hand alone was not responsible for vast paintings such as *Sacre (The Coronation of Napoleon)* (1805-1807, Musée du Louvre) or *The Distribution of the Eagle Standards* (1810, Musée du Louvre). Quoted in Jean Pierre Hoschedé, *Blanche Hoschedé-Monet, peintre impressionist*, 85.
- <sup>33</sup> Martet, *Clemenceau*, 217.
- <sup>34</sup> "Monet,Genesis of a Restoration," accessed March 29 2010. [http://www.moma.org/explorer/conservation/monet/genesis\\_restoration.html](http://www.moma.org/explorer/conservation/monet/genesis_restoration.html)
- <sup>35</sup> "Monet,Genesis of a Restoration," Accessed March 29 2010. [http://www.moma.org/explorer/conservation/monet/genesis\\_restoration.html](http://www.moma.org/explorer/conservation/monet/genesis_restoration.html)
- <sup>36</sup> "Notes Posthumes de Blanche Hoschedé-Monet," 164.