

THE ARTIST'S GARDEN AT GIVERNY

Michael Cole-Fontayn, Chairman of Europe, Middle East & Africa
Ann Dumas, Curator, Painting the Modern Garden: Monet to Matisse
February 2016

Michael: Monet's painting of his garden at Giverny is a particularly captivating piece and it has a little bit of a connection to BNY Mellon, because indeed, it used to belong to the collection of Mr and Mrs Paul Mellon.

Why is this painting so special, and what garden design influences do we see here?

Ann: Well this is a view of what was called the 'Clos Normand', a sort of enclosed Norman garden at Giverny.

The garden was divided into two halves: the flower part, and then the other part was the water lily garden. And as we can see, Monet has painted a profusion of the irises that he grew here.

Irises were one of his favourite flowers, and he apparently grew as many as 22 different varieties of irises at Giverny. He owned horticultural and gardening books, which we are sharing in the exhibition, with beautiful botanical illustrations of the irises, and I think it's worth noting the way he's planted, because you can see it's in a kind of loose drift of colour, which is very different from the formal, much more geometric planting that one often associates with French gardens.

I think here, he's influenced by the great English garden designers of the late 19th century, especially William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll, who advocated this much looser, more informal, natural way of planting.

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