

**Media release
Tuesday 8 November 2016**

Meet Auckland Art Gallery's Monet



Claude Monet, *Le pont japonais (Japanese Bridge)*, 1918-1924, oil on canvas, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, on loan from the collection of Soichiro Fukutake.

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki has received on long-term loan its first painting by Claude Monet and will exhibit the artwork from tomorrow, Wednesday 9 November 2016.

The painting, *Le pont japonais (Japanese Bridge)* (1918 – 1924), is the first Monet under Auckland Art Gallery's stewardship. It depicts Monet's famous waterlily garden and Japanese bridge, a scene he is most celebrated for and which he painted more than 100 times.

Gallery Director Rhana Devenport says having this Monet 'waterlily' in the Gallery's collection is an historic moment.

'This is the first time Aucklanders will have frequent access to a marvellous work by one of the most admired and influential European artists of the 20th-century,' she says.

'We will endeavour to make this artwork available to view as often as possible and we hope Aucklanders and visitors will grow to love Monet's presence in our Gallery.'

It is only the second Monet to be associated with a public collection in New Zealand, the other being held in the collection of Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

The Monet was presented to Auckland Art Gallery on a five-year long-term loan by Soichiro Fukutake, initiator and owner of the Benesse Art Site in Naoshima, Japan.

‘We are extremely grateful for the generosity of Mr Fukutake, a man who has dedicated himself to securing an astonishing personal collection of Monet waterlilies, alongside exceptional collections of work by James Turrell, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Walter de Maria and Lee Ufan,’ says Devenport.

Devenport says this artwork offers an exciting artistic resonance with the outstanding early 20th-century works in the Julian and Josie Robertson Promised Gift, once it comes to the Gallery.

‘The Promised Gift includes many artworks by artists from the same era, and to see the Monet *Le pont japonais (Japanese Bridge)* alongside works by Renoir, Matisse and Picasso will be thrilling for our audiences.’

The painting will be exhibited in the Gallery’s current exhibition *Game Changers: International Modernism*.

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About the artwork

In 1883 Monet and his family moved to the rural community of Giverny, initially leasing and then purchasing a house. Ten years later he bought a marshy area across the railway lines from his house, and having gained permission, diverted a stream, gradually turning what had been unusable, derelict land into his famous water garden. From 1899 until the 1920s, Monet painted the pool and its arching blue-green Japanese bridge again and again, works that evolved from the richly coloured Impressionist landscapes of the 1890s into almost abstract evocations of light and air. He said once, ‘Paint what you really see, not what you think you ought to see; not the object isolated as in a test tube, but the object enveloped in sunlight and atmosphere, with the blue dome of Heaven reflected in the shadows.’