Claude Monet, born on November 14, 1840, in Paris, France, is widely recognized as a founding father of Impressionism, a movement named after his painting 'Impression, Sunrise'. This artwork, exhibited in 1874, depicted a Le Havre port sunrise with loose brushwork and fascinating light effects, challenging the art establishment's expectations. Monet's focus on capturing the transient effects of light and color led to a revolutionary artistic approach, emphasizing the artist's perception of nature over realism. His innovative technique laid the groundwork for modern art, influencing generations of artists. Monet's insistence on painting en plein air, directly from nature, also marked a significant departure from studio-bound academic painting, fostering a more immediate, sensory experience of the landscape. Monet's personal life was marked by both tragedy and passion. He married Camille Doncieux, his first wife and frequent model, in 1870, after she had already given birth to their first son, Jean. Camille's health declined after the birth of their second son, Michel, and she died in 1879 at the young age of 32. Monet captured her final days in the haunting painting 'Camille Monet on her Deathbed'. Later, Monet lived with Alice Hoschedé and her children, eventually marrying her after the death of her estranged husband. The blended family settled in Giverny, where Monet's famous gardens would become the subject of many of his paintings, reflecting his deep connection to nature and his family. Financial hardship was a constant in Monet's early career, leading him to attempt suicide by drowning in the Seine River in 1868. His work received little to no recognition, and he struggled to support himself and his family. However, Monet's fortunes began to change in the 1880s when art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel started buying his work. Durand-Ruel's support, along with the growing patronage of American collectors, eventually brought Monet financial stability and success. By the end of his life, Monet had become one of the most famous and wealthiest artists of his time, a stark contrast to his earlier years of poverty and obscurity. Monet's artistic evolution was profoundly influenced by his travels. His trips to London and the Netherlands in the 1870s exposed him to different landscapes and light, which he captured in a series of paintings. In London, Monet was particularly taken with the fog, which led to his famous 'Houses of Parliament' and 'Waterloo Bridge' series, where he explored the effects of mist and pollution on the Thames. Later, his journeys to Venice in 1908 resulted in a mesmerizing series of canvases that captured the unique luminosity and atmosphere of the city. These travel series not only expanded Monet's artistic repertoire but also helped to establish his reputation as a painter of varied landscapes. Monet was a meticulous gardener, and his property in Giverny was his living canvas. He designed the gardens with the same care and attention to detail that he applied to his paintings. The water garden, with its famous Japanese bridge and water lilies, was created by diverting water from a nearby river. Monet's garden became the subject of his most extensive and famous series of paintings, including the 'Water Lilies' and 'Japanese Bridge' series. These works, created over the last two decades of his life, represent the culmination of his lifelong interest in the interplay of light, color, and nature, and they remain some of the most beloved and influential works in the history of art. Monet's approach to painting was both innovative and rigorous. He often painted the same scene multiple times to capture the changing light and weather conditions. This practice is exemplified in his 'Haystacks' and 'Rouen Cathedral' series, where he painted these subjects at different times of day and in various seasons. Monet's dedication to capturing the ephemeral qualities of light meant that he sometimes worked on several canvases simultaneously, switching from one to another as the light shifted. This method was both physically demanding and technically challenging, but it resulted in some of the most nuanced studies of light and atmosphere in the history of art. Despite his eventual success, Monet faced criticism and rejection from the traditional art establishment. The Paris Salon, the official art exhibition of the Académie des Beaux-Arts, frequently rejected his work, considering it unfinished and radical. The term 'Impressionism' itself was coined in a derogatory review of the exhibition that featured 'Impression, Sunrise'. Critics used the term to mock the artists' seemingly hasty and imprecise painting style. However, Monet and his fellow Impressionists embraced the term, and what was meant as an insult became the name of one of the most influential art movements in history. Monet's vision was central to his art, but it deteriorated later in life due to cataracts, profoundly affecting his work. The condition altered his perception of colors, leading to a redder palette in his paintings. After two surgeries in 1923, his sight improved, and he even destroyed some of the canvases he had painted while his vision was impaired. Monet's struggle with his eyesight and his determination to continue painting through adversity is a testament to his dedication to his art and his extraordinary ability to adapt his technique in the face of personal challenges. Monet was not just a painter but also an art collector. He collected works by his contemporaries, such as Renoir, Cézanne, and Rodin, among others. His collection was a reflection of his admiration for their talents and the close relationships he had with other artists. Monet's Giverny home became a hub for the Impressionists, and his support and encouragement were crucial to the development of the movement. After his death, his son Michel donated the Giverny property and Monet's personal art collection to the French Academy of Fine Arts, ensuring that his legacy and the works of his peers would be preserved for future generations. Monet's legacy extends beyond his paintings and directly influenced the development of the abstract art movement. Artists like Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko saw in Monet's late 'Water Lilies' series a move towards abstraction and were inspired by his use of color and form. The 'Water Lilies' murals, especially those in the Musée de l'Orangerie in Paris, are often considered a bridge between Impressionism and Abstract Expressionism. These monumental canvases encapsulate Monet's lifelong pursuit of capturing the essence of nature and have become emblematic of his pioneering spirit and lasting impact on the art world.