

= The Magpie (Monet) =

The Magpie (French : La Pie) is an oil @-@ on @-@ canvas landscape painting by the French Impressionist Claude Monet , created during the winter of 1868 ? 1869 near the commune of Étretat in Normandy . Monet 's patron , Louis Joachim Gaudibert , helped arrange a house in Étretat for Monet 's girlfriend Camille Doncieux and their newborn son , allowing Monet to paint in relative comfort , surrounded by his family .

Between 1867 and 1893 , Monet and fellow Impressionists Alfred Sisley and Camille Pissarro painted hundreds of landscapes illustrating the natural effect of snow (effet de neige) . Similar winter paintings of lesser quantity were produced by Pierre @-@ Auguste Renoir , Gustave Caillebotte , and Paul Gauguin . Art historians believe that a series of severe winters in France contributed to an increase in the number of winter landscapes produced by Impressionists .

The Magpie is one of approximately 140 snowscapes produced by Monet . His first snowscape , A Cart on the Snowy Road at Honfleur , was painted sometime in either 1865 or 1867 , followed by a notable series of snowscapes in the same year , beginning with the Road by Saint @-@ Simeon Farm in Winter . The Magpie was completed in 1869 and is Monet 's largest winter painting . It was followed by The Red Cape (1869 ? 1871) , the only known winter painting featuring Camille Doncieux .

The canvas of The Magpie depicts a solitary black magpie perched on a gate formed in a wattle fence , as the light of the sun shines upon freshly fallen snow creating blue shadows . The painting features one of the first examples of Monet 's use of colored shadows , which would later become associated with the Impressionist movement . Monet and the Impressionists used colored shadows to represent the actual , changing conditions of light and shadow as seen in nature , challenging the academic convention of painting shadows black . This subjective theory of color perception was introduced to the art world through the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Michel Eugène Chevreul earlier in the century .

At the time , Monet 's innovative use of light and color led to its rejection by the Paris Salon of 1869 . Today , art historians classify The Magpie as one of Monet 's best snowscape paintings . The painting was privately held until the Musée d 'Orsay acquired it in 1984 ; it is considered one of the most popular paintings in their permanent collection .

= = Background = =

In the late 1850s , French landscape painter Eugène Boudin (1824 ? 1898) introduced Monet (1840 ? 1926) to the art of painting en plein air ? " in the open air " , using natural light . The invention of the collapsible metal paint tube (1841) and portable easel brought painting , formerly confined to studios , into the outdoors . Boudin and Monet spent the summer of 1858 painting nature together . Like Boudin , Monet came to prefer painting outdoors rather than in a studio , the convention of the time . " If I have become a painter , " Monet said , " I owe it to Boudin . "

The landscape paintings of Dutch painter Johan Barthold Jongkind (1819 ? 1891) influenced both Boudin and Monet and contributed to the development of early Impressionism . After meeting Jongkind in Sainte @-@ Adresse in 1862 , Monet began to cultivate an interest in Jongkind 's perspective on the changing conditions of the landscape . From Jongkind , Monet learned to substitute optical color for local color . " Complementing the teaching I received from Boudin , Jongkind was from that moment my true master , " Monet later reminisced . " It was he who completed the education of my eye " . This new way of seeing , a shift from a conceptual to a perceptual approach , formed the basis for Monet 's Haystacks (1890 @-@ 1891) , a series of 25 works showing the effects of dynamic atmospheric conditions over time on a single haystack motif .

Gustave Courbet (1819 ? 1877) had been painting effets de neige , " snow effects " , from as early as 1856 , in a landscape style preferred by Japanese , Dutch , and Flemish artists . Influenced by Courbet , Monet painted his first snowscape , A Cart on the Snowy Road at Honfleur (1865 or 1867) . A journalist observed :

We have only seen him once . It was in the winter , during several days of snow , when

communications were virtually at a standstill . It was cold enough to split stones . We noticed a foot @-@ warmer , then an easel , then a man , swathed in three coats , his hands in gloves , his face half @-@ frozen . It was M. Monet , studying a snow effect .

In A Cart on the Snowy Road at Honfleur , Monet avoided the usual hunting genre and motifs used by Courbet . Instead , he focused on light and color in a new way by reducing the number of shades . Monet chose an earth tone color scheme and increased the number of shades of blue to highlight reflections on the snow . Monet followed A Cart on the Snowy Road at Honfleur with a notable series of snowscapes in 1867 including Road by Saint @-@ Simeon Farm in Winter .

= = First Étretat campaign = =

In 1867 , Monet 's girlfriend , Camille Doncieux (1847 ? 1879) , gave birth to their son Jean in Paris . Lacking money , Monet returned to his father 's house in Sainte @-@ Adresse and lived with his aunt , leaving Doncieux and their child in Paris . Monet married Doncieux in 1870 . Mme. Louis Joachim Gaudibert , an art collector , became Monet 's first patron . Gaudibert helped Monet rent a house in Étretat for Doncieux and Jean in late 1868 . Recovering from an episode of depression , Monet joined Doncieux and Jean at the house in Étretat in October , with Doncieux in the role of muse and life model . By December , Monet was in great spirits , " surrounded by everything that I love " , and began to focus on painting . In a letter to Frédéric Bazille (1841 ? 1870) , Monet wrote :

I spend my time out in the open , on the shingle beach when the weather is bad or the fishing boats go out , or I go into the countryside which is very beautiful here , that I find perhaps still more charming in winter than in summer and , naturally I work all the time , and I believe that this year I am going to do some serious things .

Although he enjoyed living with Camille and Jean in Étretat , Monet preferred to paint alone in the countryside . He told Bazille :

Don 't you think that directly in nature and alone one does better ? ... I 've always been of this mind , and what I do under these conditions has always been better . One is too much taken up with what one sees and hears in Paris , however firm one may be , and what I am painting here has at least the merit of not resembling anyone ... because it will be simply the expression of what I shall have felt , I myself , personally .

During his time in Étretat , Monet completed three paintings of fishing boats , one of a rural road , and , sometime between late 1868 and January or February 1869 , The Magpie (W 133) . Painted five years before the first major Impressionist exhibition in 1874 , The Magpie is one of Monet 's 140 winter landscapes , the largest in its class . The exact location of the snow scene depicted in The Magpie is unknown . Ralph T. Coe proposed that Monet painted the scene near the Farm Saint @-@ Siméon above the Seine estuary in Honfleur .

= = Rejection by the Salon = =

Monet submitted The Magpie and Fishing Boats at Sea (W 126) to the Salon of 1869 . Both paintings were rejected in April . Critic Paul Richard said that the jurors rejected the painting as " too common and too coarse " . Monet 's experimental use of color and radical departure from the descriptive , academic style surprised the public and probably contributed to its dismissal by the jury . Monet told French novelist Arsène Houssaye (1815 ? 1896) , " This rejection has taken the bread from my mouth , and in spite of my low prices , collectors and dealers turn their backs on me . " A century later , The Magpie was acquired by the Musée d 'Orsay in 1984 . It became one of the most popular paintings in their permanent collection .

= = Critical analysis = =

In the painting , a black magpie is perched on a gate in a wattle fence as sunlight falls on fresh white snow , creating shadows . With no human figures present , the bird on the gate becomes the

focus . Michael Howard of Manchester Metropolitan University called the painting " an extraordinary evocation of the snow @-@ bound chill of a late winter 's afternoon . The blueness of the long shadows creates a delicate contrast with the creamy whites of the sky and landscape " . Curator Lynn Orr , then of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco , noted Monet 's interest in the changing light that depended on the hour and the vagaries of the atmosphere :

Unusual weather phenomena , such as snow and mist , fascinated Monet because they altered the chromatic appearance of familiar topography . In such paintings as *The Magpie* , one of Monet 's early masterpieces , form dissolves under the combination of a greatly restricted color range , aerial perspective , and broken brushwork . A virtuoso color performance , the painting is an essay on the variations of white perceptible in the reflection of sun on crisp new snow . Wonderfully abstract passages of flat color , such as the strong violet shades along the fence , are divorced from the spatial realities of the objects portrayed .

The Magpie is an early example of Monet 's investigation of colored shadows . In this piece , Monet makes use of the complementary colors of blue and yellow . The shadow produced by yellow sunlight shining on the snow gives the impression of a blue @-@ violet color , the effect of simultaneous contrast . French Impressionists popularized the use of colored shadows , which went against the artistic convention of portraying shadows by darkening and desaturating the color . Colored shadows can be directly observed in nature , particularly in the type of snow scene presented by Monet . In his study of Impressionism , art historian John Rewald observed that artists used snowscapes to " investigate the problem of shadows " . The problem is summarized by Fred S. Kleiner in Gardner 's *Art Through the Ages* :

After scrutinizing the effects of light and color on forms , the Impressionists concluded that local color ? an object 's true color in white light ? becomes modified by the quality of the light shining on it , by reflections from other objects , and by the effects juxtaposed colors produce . Shadows do not appear gray or black , as many earlier painters thought , but are composed of colors modified by reflections or other conditions . Using various colors and short choppy brush strokes , Monet was able to catch accurately the vibrating quality of light .

Monet 's use of colored shadows arose from color theories that were popular in the 19th century . German scientist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 ? 1832) published one of the first modern descriptions of colored shadows in his *Theory of Colours* (1810) . Goethe attempted to challenge the theory of color propounded by Isaac Newton (1643 ? 1727) in his treatise on *Opticks* (1704) . Goethe raised questions about subjective and objective color theory and perception , but his intuitive , non @-@ mathematical approach was criticized as unscientific , and his attack on Newton was dismissed as a polemic . The questions Goethe raised about color persisted . Thirty years later , French chemist Michel Eugène Chevreul (1786 ? 1889) expanded on Goethe 's theory with *The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colors* (1839) . Goethe and Chevreul 's colour theory greatly influenced the art world . It is generally thought that Vincent van Gogh , Camille Pissarro and Monet incorporated elements of these theories into their work . Georges Seurat (1859 ? 1891) came to prominence in 1886 with his technique of chromatic division , a style influenced by the color scheme theories of Chevreul and American physicist Ogden Rood (1831 ? 1902) .

= = Related work = =

Monet 's series of 11 paintings depicting the *The Bridge at Argenteuil* (1874) also explored the use of colored shadows in its portrayal of the blue and purple shadow on the top portion of the bridge . Over the years , Monet became more and more obsessed with color and light . When his wife was dying in September 1879 , Monet painted her in *Camille Monet on Her Deathbed* (1879) , noting the " blue , yellow , grey tones " . Monet told his friend , French statesman Georges Clemenceau (1841 ? 1929) , that he spent the time " focusing on her temples and automatically analyzing the succession of appropriately graded colors which death was imposing on her motionless face . " Camille died from cancer at the age of 32 . After her death , Monet largely ceased painting people , focusing instead on natural landscapes . Monet later returned to painting snow and colored shadows with *Grainstacks Snow Effect* (1891) .

= = Derivative work = =

In honor of the 150th anniversary of Monet 's birth , the Principality of Monaco issued a stamp of The Magpie in 1990 , designed by French engraver Pierre Albuisson .

French design studio Les 84 created a 3D version of The Magpie for the 2010 ? 2011 Monet exhibition at the Galeries nationales du Grand Palais .

= = Provenance = =

Thor Carlander collection , Paris (1918)

Durand @-@ Ruel collection , Paris (1941)

Guerlain collection , Paris (1946)

Musée d 'Orsay (1984)

Louvre , Paris (1984)

Musée d 'Orsay , Paris (1984)