

The Works



CLAUDE
MONET

Luncheon on the Grass, central panel

Oil on canvas
248.9 cm × 218 cm
(98 in × 85 $\frac{7}{8}$ in)

1865–1866



During the nineteenth century, the annual Paris Salon exhibition was the centre of the Western art world, but in 1863 so many works were rejected by the jury that a Salon des Refusés was arranged. Among the paintings was the modern masterpiece *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (*Luncheon on the Grass*), by Édouard Manet (1832–1883). Due to its subject matter and Manet's painting technique, the work caused outrage.

Monet's own *Luncheon* can be viewed as both a homage and challenge to this landmark painting. He began making studies for the immense canvas shortly after his successful 1865 Salon debut with *La Pointe de la Hève at Low Tide* (page 8). But what a difference in subject matter! The intention was to submit *Luncheon* to the Salon the following year, but time and money concerns got in the way. Monet eventually cut the canvas into sections, including the central panel we see here.

With its representation of Parisians picnicking in a shady forest, this work asserted Monet's place in an avant-garde art movement that took as its subject matter scenes of modern life. And unlike Manet's shocking inclusion of a nude woman among the picnickers, Monet presents a straightforward scene of sun-dappled, unabashed pleasure.

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'The motif is secondary; what I want to capture is what there is between the motif and myself.'

- Claude Monet



