

# Musée Marmottan Monet

ACADÉMIE DES BEAUX-ARTS

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# COLOMBET MONET

PAINTING LIKE THE RIVER





# MONET / COLOMBET

## PAINTING LIKE THE RIVER

Writer Marianne Alphant, an *agrégée* in philosophy, curator of the exhibition  
*Foreword of the catalogue of the exhibition*



Claude Monet, *Arm of the Seine near Giverny at Sunrise* – 1897 – Oil on canvas  
91 x 93 cm – Long-term loan from the Fondation Ephrussi de Rothschild, 1993  
© Christian Baraja SLB



Vicky Colombet, *From the floating world series #1436* – 2020 – Oil, pigments (Mars red, Ultramarine Violet Medium, Titanium White, Iron Oxide Black, Cobalt Oxide Green Blue) and alkyd on canvas – 91 x 93 cm – New-York, collection Dorothea Elkon et Salem Grassi  
© Bryan Zimmermann

**An artist's life has its decisive moments: Monet discovering outdoor painting with Boudin; Kandinsky coming upon one of Monet's Haystacks, Rodin dazzled by the Cambodian dancers. We also know all about the power of attraction that certain places can exert on the creative spirit, be it Lake Sils for Nietzsche, a Norwegian cabin for Wittgenstein, or Descartes' famous poêle. These are the theaters of inner experience and revelation.**

When it comes to the career of Vicky Colombet, from her birth in Paris to her working life between Paris and New York, it is not enough to simply select one or two phases—feminist movements, say, or the time in Henri Dimier's studio, or the importance of American expressionism. We need to widen the focus and place these moments in a bigger context, that of landscape. Landscape is capital in her work, and in a way that is as mysterious as it is obvious; a painting by Vicky Colombet does not represent a view of the Cévennes or the Hudson Valley.

We cannot recognize a field of oats, hills, a garden, or a shore. And yet, the viewer will say, this is water, ripples on the surface of the water, and there is the wind; and there, we have earth, particles, a chaos, a pleating of things, the world. We will not define Vicky Colombet as a landscape artist, even if some have spoken of her canvases as landscapes, but there is no denying that everything here starts with place.

With Monet, the places are famous; they gave the paintings their titles—boats at Argenteuil, rocks on Belle-Île, the cliffs of Pourville or Étretat, a tributary of the Creuse, views of Antibes—until, that is, the identity of the place disappeared in the ultimate experience of the pond and its reflections. To get away from place and its identification, to get beyond it, it was first necessary to find it, and sometimes even to experience several. If Colombet's work is itself inscribed in a surpassing of places, its troubling power also comes from being their emanation.

Some places have left a deep impression on her, such as the Asia of her childhood travels. Others have disappointed her, like Barcelona, a dream of light that fell flat. The artist moved, seeking a place to live, a studio, finally finding it by chance in the Cévennes. At the age of forty, there she was in Lasalle, in an old mill, on the banks of a river, the Salindrenque, and suddenly everything changed. Place is decisive. Not as a network of motifs, as Monet found in Vétheuil or in Giverny, but as the possibility of putting an end to motifs and dissolving them in the river. The artist knew that she was "too much a painter" to plunge her canvases into its waters (this



L'atelier de Vicky Colombet – Comté de Columbia – 2020



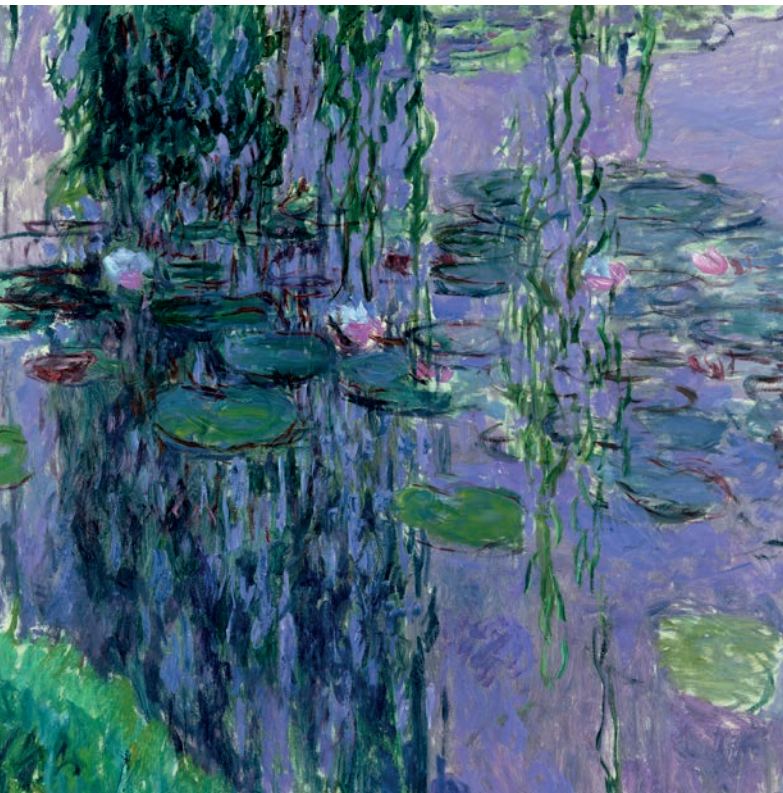


Vicky Colombet, *From the floating world series #1437* - 2020 - Oil, pigments (Mars red, Ultramarine Violet Medium, Viridian Green, Titanium White, Iron Oxide Black, Cobalt Blue Matte) and alkyd on canvas - 91 x 93 cm - © Bryan Zimmermann

fleeing attempt was soon abandoned) but now came the soothing, obvious idea of “painting like the river” and letting it have a say by allowing the elements—wind, water, earth—to take place there through the play of brush and pigments.

After the Cévennes came New York and, even more than the city, the countryside of Columbia County, that Hudson Valley which gave its name to a school of landscape painters in the nineteenth century, and whose skies Alfred Stieglitz translated into Equivalents. It was there, in the wooden studio laid out in a barn, with a garden for experimenting with permaculture, that the experience of the Cévennes could be extended: letting the elements take their place in the paintings; painting not the water, sky, or snow, but painting with them, with the marks left by rabbits, the flight of birds, the passing of does or foxes, with events from outside and the folds of the canvas.





Claude Monet, *Water Lilies* – 1916-1919 – Oil on Canvas – 150 x 197 cm – Paris, musée Marmottan Monet – © musée Marmottan Monet, Paris



Vicky Colombet, *Wisteria #1423-19* – 2019 – Oil, pigments (Ultramarine Blue R6, Cobalt Violet Dark, Titanium White, Cobalt Oxide Green Blue, Ivory Black) and alkyd on canvas 152.4 x 152.4 cm – © Christian Baraja SLB

To come back to France in order to dialogue with Monet is, quite clearly, a new challenge and test for this painter's art. Vicky Colombet, who in the past decided to let the river answer, is now choosing to look to Monet and one of his emblematic paintings, *Bras de Seine près de Giverny, soleil levant*: not to copy it, but to let its colors, format, and light inscribe themselves in her own canvases, guiding the erratic, secret, and coordinated action of the pigments in a series titled *From the Floating World*. Floating, letting things happen. One can imagine this contemplative, musical experience being accompanied by one of those haikus from Basho that the artist likes to quote: "old pond/a frog leaps in/water's sound." Or this other one, so apt for Monet: "river-wind!/pale-persimmon-robles wear/evening-cool."

Catalogue of the exhibition:

### **Monet/Colombet. Painting Like The River**

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# VISUALS

AVAILABLE FOR THE PRESS



1. **Claude Monet, *Water Lilies*** – 1916-1919 – Oil on Canvas – 150 x 197 cm – Paris, musée Marmottan Monet – © musée Marmottan Monet, Paris



2. **Claude Monet, *Water Lilies*** – 1903 – Oil on Canvas – 150 x 197 cm – Paris, musée Marmottan Monet – © musée Marmottan Monet, Paris



3. **Claude Monet, *Arm of the Seine near Giverny at Sunrise*** – 1897 – Oil on canvas 91 x 93 cm – Long-term loan from the Fondation Ephrussi de Rothschild, 1993 © Christian Baraja SLB



4. **Vicky Colombet, *From the floating world series #1436*** – 2020 – Oil, pigments (Mars red, Ultramarine Violet Medium, Titanium White, Iron Oxide Black, Cobalt Oxide Green Blue) and alkyd on canvas – 91 x 93 cm – New-York, collection Dorothea Elkon et Salem Grassi – © Bryan Zimmermann





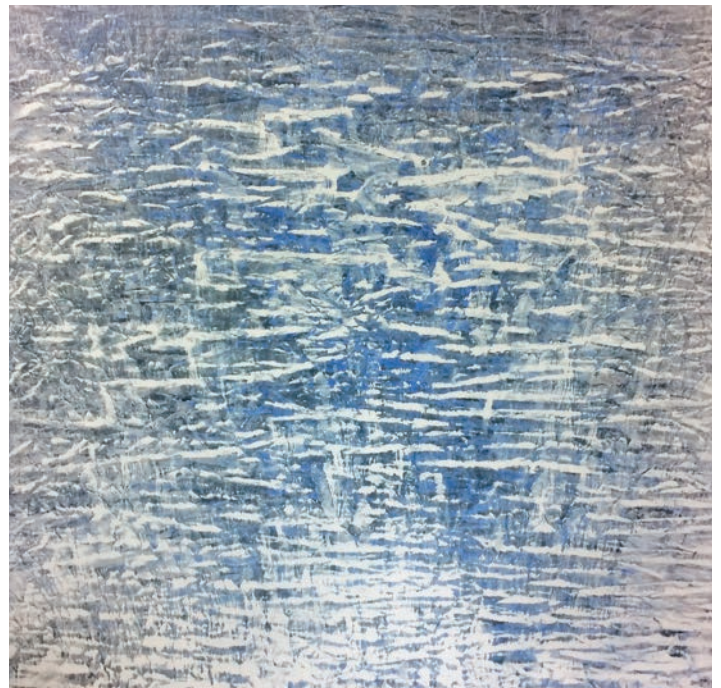
**5. Vicky Colombet, *From the floating world series #1431*** – 2020 – Oil, pigments (Mars red, Ultramarine Blue R4, Ultramarine Violet Medium, Titanium White, Iron Oxide Black, Cobalt Oxide Green Blue) and alkyd on canvas – 91 x 93 cm – New-York, collection Claire N.Creatore – © Bryan Zimmermann



**6. Vicky Colombet, *From the floating world series #1437*** – 2020 – Oil, pigments (Mars red, Ultramarine Violet Medium, Viridian Green, Titanium White, Iron Oxide Black, Cobalt Blue Matte) and alkyd on canvas – 91 x 93 cm – © Bryan Zimmermann



**7. Vicky Colombet, *From the floating world series #1438*** – 2020 – Oil, pigments (Mars red, Ultramarine Blue R4, Ultramarine Violet Medium, Titanium White, Iron Oxide Black, Cobalt oxide Green Blue) and alkyd on canvas – 91 x 93 cm – New-York, collection James Rosenthal et Kathy Bishop – © Bryan Zimmermann



**8. Vicky Colombet, *Water and Light #1355*** – 2016 – Oil, pigments (Ultramarine Blue, Mars Black, Iron Oxide Black, Titanium White) alkyd and wax on canvas – 203.2 x 203.2 cm Paris, musée Marmottan Monet – © musée Marmottan Monet, Paris





9. **Vicky Colombet, *Wisteria #1417-19*** – 2019 – Oil, pigments (Iron Oxide Black, Titanium White, Cobalt Oxide Green Blue Dark, Ultramarine Blue R2) and alkyd on canvas – 182.8 x 182.8 cm – © Christian Baraja SLB



10. **Vicky Colombet, *Wisteria #1423-19*** – 2019 – Oil, pigments (Ultramarine Blue R6, Cobalt Violet Dark, Titanium White, Cobalt Oxide Green Blue, Ivory Black) and alkyd on canvas – 152.4 x 152.4 cm – © Christian Baraja SLB



11. © Nousha Salimi – © RMN-Grand Palais (Institut de France) / Gerard Blot

