

The National Gallery Masterpiece Tour

Claude Monet, (1840-1926),

The Petit Bras of the Seine at Argenteuil, 1872, oil on canvas.

Bequeathed to The National Gallery by Sir Robert Hart Bt. 1971

In this quiet river view, the artist focuses on the timeless quality of the natural world. 'The Petit Bras of the Seine at Argenteuil', translates as the little arm or branch of the river Seine as it passes nearby the French town of Argenteuil.

This could be a riverbank today or centuries ago. The setting is the countryside near Argenteuil, northwest of Paris. Monet had recently moved there with his wife and young son. The Petit Bras, a small tributary of the river Seine, flows by placidly. To the right, a line of poplar trees recedes into the distance, guiding our eye towards the horizon. A house behind the screen of trees is the only trace of human presence besides the two sketchy figures on the opposite riverbank.

Just 15 minutes by train from the capital, this serene river view feels very distant from the hubbub of the modern city. Monet was 'a true Parisian' according to the writer Emile Zola. Early in his career, scenes of contemporary city life fascinated him. But in 1870, the Franco-Prussian War brought chaos and violence to Paris. Monet left France during the conflict. When he returned in late 1871, he chose a restful retreat outside the city and turned his attention to the landscape.

This calming riverscape marks a new phase of Monet's life and work. Paying close attention to the misty atmosphere of the winter day, he renders the subtle effects of muted light. His bold brushstrokes capture the river's reflections. In this painting, we see him laying the foundations for Impressionism. Monet later recognised: 'The richness I achieve comes from nature, the source of my inspiration'.

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Magic Club x Kelly Jayne Jones

Sound Town, (2025/2026), audio, looped.

Commissioned by Grundy Art Gallery.

Funded by The National Gallery as part of The National Gallery Masterpiece Tour.

MAGIC CLUB

Over the last 6 months, young people from Blackpool's charity, Magic Club, have been working with artist Kelly Jayne Jones to produce a newly commissioned sound work. The project started with the question, "What does Monet's painting sound like?" and this new composition is the young people's sonic response to Monet's work.

Guided by Jones, the Magic Club's young people have been exploring their local neighbourhood of Claremont, as well as 'green' and 'blue' spaces in Blackpool such as Stanley Park and Blackpool beach. Here, they have been listening to, making and collecting sounds. Then, working with Blackpool & Fylde College and their state-of-the-art sound production studios, the sounds have been mixed and mastered to produce this brand-new sonic artwork that you can hear today.

About Magic Club

Magic Club is a charity, working with young people aged 7-18 in Claremont, Blackpool. Magic Club opened in March 2018, and it works with approximately 170 young people each year. It delivers youth clubs, projects, residential and leadership development across the year, to ensure all young people in Claremont have the opportunity to dream big, develop strong foundations and reach their fullest potential. All of the work is free to access and accompanied by a Club-cooked meal. The experience of making this sound work, along with other opportunities provided by Grundy Art Gallery and The National Gallery Masterpiece Tour are also supporting Magic Club's young people to gain their Bronze Arts Award.

About Kelly Jayne Jones

Kelly Jayne Jones is a Manchester based artist whose work combines performance, installation and sound. She is interested in creating a multi-sensory experience that enables communication and exchange. She is currently exploring animist ideas around the breath and spirit of mountains and rivers, and how we can reconnect with our planet by means of ancient and future rituals. Her work traverses the emotions of desire and anxiety, the comfortable and uncomfortable edges of our inner spaces and social co-existence. She is interested in presence and performance as a site for potential transformation; interpersonally and communally.