

## **Audio Description transcript**

Title: The Petit Bras of the Seine at Argenteuil

Artist: Claude Monet

Date made: 1872

Oil on canvas

52.6 x 71.8cm

Font size: 16

This is an audio description of the painting 'The Petit Bras of the Seine at Argenteuil' by French Impressionist painter, Claude Monet. The artwork was painted in oil on canvas in 1872. It is a landscape painting measuring 72 cm wide by 53 cm high and is displayed in a decoratively carved gilded frame. The painting is glazed with laminated glass.

This is a soft, tranquil landscape painted in muted, earthy tones. It depicts a calm scene of a river running through a rural landscape past a row of poplar trees. This river, runs horizontally through the middle of the painting, gently curving as it recedes into the distance. It reaches its widest point towards the centre of the painting. Its surface reflects the pale sky in soft, blurred strokes, with subtle ripples catching the light. The Petit Bras (or 'small arm') of the river Seine is situated on the outskirts of Paris. It runs downstream from Argenteuil, a small suburban town on the Seine, where Monet was living at the time.

The painting follows a traditional landscape composition with a low horizon. The top two thirds depict the wide sky, the bottom third shows a flat olive-green landscape cut through with the silvery river. The earth is patchy and uneven, with hints of green grass breaking through brown soil. Slightly left of the centre, two small human figures, swiftly sketched in with a few strokes of black paint, are situated on the riverbank. Their simple indistinct presence suggests distance. It is not clear what they are doing. One figure standing the other crouches, possibly fishing, adding a quiet sense of movement.

The viewpoint is from the left bank of the river. On the right side, a tall row of around 20 spindly poplar trees lines the riverbank. Their thin trunks and fine branches create a delicate, lace-like pattern against the sky. Nearly reaching to the top of

the painting frame on the far right, these closely planted trees recede sharply into the distance. They catch our attention and lead us into the landscape. Behind the trees, partially obscured, sits a small reddish building adding a faint touch of human presence.

On the left, the landscape opens up more, with fewer trees and a wider view into the distance. A small cluster of slender trees stand on flat land near the horizon, fading into the misty atmosphere. The light is diffused and gentle, suggesting a cool, quiet day, possibly early morning or late afternoon.

The cool greys, mauves and olive colours suggest that this is winter scene.

It is an intimate scene of quiet life by the river, this serene peaceful life by the river was very appealing to Monet during the early years of him living in Argenteuil. After a year in voluntary exile in England and Holland during the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune, Monet returned to France late in 1871. He lived here until 1878 and, like many other Impressionist artists, painted its rivers, bridges, and gardens.

Features of this painting are precursors to what would later become signature motifs for Monet, who returned to paint poplar trees many times in his career, his eternal captivation with reflections in water became a distinguishing theme throughout his life, most famously in the paintings of his water lilies.

Overall, the scene feels peaceful and reflective, with a sense of stillness and subtle movement, characteristic of Impressionist landscapes.