

Reflections On My Trip to Paris

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I had the pleasure of spending a week in Paris recently. Since it was August and vacation time for many Parisians, I was unable to meet silk painters or see silk exhibits as I had hoped. My main goal of receiving inspiration was easily met, however. There was no way to miss in the home of so much great art.

I feel a special connection with Monet, who has had a major influence on my painting. Although I have been to his home and gardens at Giverny, it is in Paris that I most feel the beauty and power of his painting. This year I discovered the Musee Marmottan, which has a large collection of work donated by Monet's son. No reproduction I have ever seen has done justice to the way he varies color, brushstroke, paint thickness, and the placement of paint. The depth of feeling Monet evokes with a few simple strokes and the illusion—or impression—of a shape thus created was astounding to see in person. Nothing was sacrosanct. At times Monet dealt haphazardly with the edges, or even left them unpainted, sacrificing them to the essence of the moment. His sunlight was always captivating. At times it glistened with life as iridescent paint bounced off the canvas and grabbed my attention.

Wandering the streets Monet frequented also brought me closer to his work. I stopped to study the interplay of colors on Notre Dame Cathedral as the sun was setting. For a moment the cars, crowds and noise vanished as I imagined Monet there with his easel, hurrying to capture the image on canvas. When the light was gone for the day, I could see him peacefully packing up his paints, turning and walking a few steps to the Seine to relax before going home.

I was inspired just walking down the street. I would get lost in the beautiful architecture, often set off by the angles and shapes created as three or more streets poured into a central spot. And, of course, there's the fashion. I didn't need to look in store windows when the streets were filled with French women displaying their gift for style, grace and elegance. The flow, shape and drape of their outfits delighted me--a slit here or there going up to this height or that, and then suddenly a slanted line or unexpected detail would catch my eye. The variety and intrigue was endless. As I lingered at cafes, museums, famous squares, and

fountains, ideas came to me as if a flood gate had been opened. I carried paper and pencil so as not to lose even one idea.

The beauty, the spontaneity and the joy of the city speak to my heart. I go into a kind of shock when I leave, which takes me days to shake. Bit by bit I reawaken to the surroundings of my own home. Yet a piece of me remains in Paris, thriving and forming a bridge to my life across the sea.

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