

MONET JEWELRY

THE MONET PEARL.



THE BEAUTIFUL
ENDURES

Given the current rate for an original Monet, no one would have ever imagined the master was a beggar for most of his adult life. But the

fact he actually sold his paintings door-to-door and that he constantly pleaded for loans is clearly established in his correspondence. An example is the letter sent to Renoir's patron, publisher Georges Charpentier in which Monet writes "For ten days I have been in Paris without being able to find a penny and I am unable to return to the country where my wife is so ill. You would render me a great service in giving this sum (5-6 louis) to the bearer and as soon as I have returned definitely to Paris I will come see you and reimburse you either in paintings or in money" (*Correspondence* 274).

So, you see, he was often (if not totally) in financial straits. But after he was evicted by Mme. Aubry-Vitet from her country house in Argenteuil and before Zola refused him a loan, Monet came up with a fascinating scheme.

It occurred to him shortly before Christmas, 1877 and just after Manet had visited the despondent Monet in his rundown Paris atelier. This we also know from a letter Manet wrote to his friend Théodore Duret on Monet's behalf. Manet wrote, "I went to see Monet yesterday. I found him quite broken down and in despair. He asked me to find someone who will take ten or twenty of his pictures at 10 francs each, the purchaser to choose which he liked. Shall we arrange the matter between us, say 500 francs each? Of course no one, he least of all, must know that the offer came from us." In a postscript Manet wrote, "As a gift, I left Camille a pair of gold earrings I had discovered in Clignacourt. It warmed her day" (*Correspondence* 286).

It was the gift that stirred Monet since he drew a connection among Manet, the giver; Camille, the receiver; and the earrings, the gift. And suddenly the idea of direct-mail marketing occurred to him. "Why should people go to stores to shop for jewelry?" Monet wrote to Manet in a letter dated December 25, 1877. "Why not bring jewelry to the people!" Manet was fascinated by the idea. With Monet doing the ad designs, Zola writing the copy, Camille Claudel designing the jewelry and Manet handling the finances and marketing, Monet Jewelry made its debut on January 1, 1878. The direct mail business was an extraordinary success in Paris and it was only a short time later that the marketing idea spread throughout France and Europe.

After Monet's death, his son Jean took over the business and broadened the marketing area to include both South and North America and

today, Monet Jewelry, sold by major department stores like Dayton's and Robinson/May, does an extraordinary business. Little did Monet know, starving in that Paris garret with a sick and pregnant wife, and a malnourished child, that such an idea, born in poverty, would become a multimillion dollar business far outstripping the money he could have made merely as a painter and today the reflection of those halcyon days in Giverny is seen in the beauty that endures in a Monet Pearl, home offices of which are in New York.