

MODERN ART COLLECTION

Claude Monet

Champ d'avoine (Oat Field)

1890

Oil on canvas

26 × 36 7/16 in. (66 × 92.6 cm)

Gift of Michael A. Singer

1999.6

French painter Claude Monet expressed the immediacy of experience by underscoring the fleeting nature of visual phenomena. During the 1860s and 1870s, Monet developed his technique for rendering atmospheric lighting effects consisting of broken, rhythmic brushwork, thus laying the foundations of the impressionist movement. In the 1890s he began a decade dedicated to the almost exclusive depiction of the landscape in the vicinity of Giverny, the French village that the Monet family had made its home since 1883. Painted in 1890, *Champ d'avoine* reveals Monet's characteristic refined color harmonies and spontaneous brushwork as well as his keen interest in the effects of changing light on one's perception of color and form.

In 1890 Monet purchased the Giverny home and surrounding property he had rented since 1883 and began improvements to his studio and grounds. Monet would spend the remainder of his life there, devoted to his painting, his family, and his gardens. Perhaps it was an increased sense of stability and permanence that led the artist to focus on the landscape of the area with renewed vigor in the early 1890s. In addition to the *Champ d'avoine* series, Monet's *Grainstacks* and *Poplars* series date to this time.

It was in the summer of 1890 that Monet began work on a series of six canvases depicting the fields of hay, oats, and poppies around his Giverny home. This vibrant landscape was one of the first subjects to be treated by the artist as a series. The six paintings represent two distinct views of the surrounding landscape, with three paintings in each group.

Together, they reveal a concern with overall atmospheric effects as well as with exploring the decorative, tapestry-like possibilities of landscape painting.

Champ d'avoine was painted in late summer when the field of oats and poppies was at its peak of maturity. The landscape unfolds into the far distance, the sky dominated by soft clouds that give way to a blue haze at the horizon.



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In October 1890, Monet sold *Champ d'avoine* to the art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel, who searched for a buyer. On April 7, 1891, Boston collector and art patron Desmond Fitzgerald sent a telegram to his close friend John Nicholas Brown of Providence, Rhode Island, explaining with much excitement that he had found “the most superb Monet” for his art collection. In a letter composed later that day, Fitzgerald described it as a poppy and wheat field with trees, praised its “delicacy and beauty,” and remarked that it was “far superior in every way” to other works Brown had admired by the artist. John Nicholas Brown belonged to the prosperous Rhode Island family after whom Brown University was renamed in 1804. He purchased *Champ d'avoine* and hung it alongside works by other major impressionists in his collection, such as Alfred Sisley, Camille Pissarro, and Paul Cézanne. The painting remained in the Brown family until 1999, when it entered the collection of the Harn Museum through the generosity of Michael A. Singer.

