Claude Monet's The Seine At Lavacourt: A Visual Analysis

The Seine at Lavacour was created by Claude Monet in 1880. Claude Monet was born on November 14, 1840, in Paris, France. He first was famous by drawing the residents in his town, his talent showed up obviously, caught the attention from Eugene Boudin, a local landscape artist. After meeting with him, Monet started to explore the nature world in his art work. Boudin introduced Monet to painting outdoors, or plein air paining, which became the cornerstone of Monet's work. When he was 17, his mother, Louis Monet, who supported Monet art, passed away and changed Monet's mind. In 1859, Monet decided to move to Paris to pursue his art. There, he was strongly influenced by the paintings of the Barbizon school and enrolled as a student at the Academie Suisse. After his wife Camille Doncieux passed away when having her second baby in 1878. Monet's life was in a mess, his best friend Camille Pissarro, who gave him a lot of help during his education, also passed away. Monet drawn for both his wife and Camille. After two years, the work The seine at Lavacour was created. He described this work as "something more discreet, more bourgeois" (Dallas Museum of Art), an obvious contrast to his freer, less finished paintings. Realism is the art style during that period, Monet sought to capture the essence of the natural world using strong colors and bold, short brushstrokes; he and his contemporaries were turning away from the blended colors and evenness of classical art.

The art The Seine at Lavacour is a pretty classical but straightforward present canvas. It is a traditional oil on canvas art that shows the quiet view of the River Seine from Lavacourt. In the painting, it consists of four parts which are the river, house, sky, and the mountain. Cloudy but blue sky shows the comfortable weather and the river reflect the whole appearance of the landscape. The leafy willow tree which located at the center of the art is waving by the wind. The weather is excellent, and it is neither sunny nor cloudy day. The cloud is also separate apart to cover the sky, which remains the gap between them so that light can pass through the hole and shine the earth.

People can see things well and that type of day is the best day for travel. The light comes from outside toward the inside of the painting, which made the farther tree looks darker than closer one. Also, the type of tree is different between them, the one close to the water tend to grow horizontally, and the father one grows vertically. For the tree in the water, the reflection is even clear than the real image. The reflection shows more detail about the tree, such as the leaves.

The reflection of leaves uses more lines to show how massive the tree is. The whole painting mainly focused on the water close to the tree which caused the cloudy background, but it doesn't affect the quality of the color, its emphasis the function of water which built the sense of the purity of water. The reflection is also clear and that made the water vivid. The winding pass above the water, which caused the wave formed so that the thinking becomes cloudy. It increases the authenticity of drawing nature. Houses are located on the mid-right side of the paint, which is the different site with the mountain. It is a kind of contrast between nature and human. The landscape creates a high ridge that provides a space for the animal to grow, and human builds houses that they can live on. Between them are the trees which naturally connect two sides and make the background look solemn. Near the homes, two people are walking on the beach; small boats are parking near the river, which indicates a quiet and relaxing

afternoon.

In The Seine at Lavacourt, a light curly tree is located at the center of the painting, with high mountains and a few small houses as background. Together, these forms showed the purity of beauty of the combination between nature and human. On the left side there is almost nothing but water and dim mountains, in contrast to the right side which had so many buildings and people walking on the road. This makes the buildings a particular area of emphasis in the picture: it further draws our attention on the people, and by using the shining color for the buildings, indicates people and trees in a clear scene but also isolate them.

After losing his wife, Monet's mind was full of hopelessness, the pain is so tough that he even stopped painting a while, and he also faced financial problem to keep him drawing. During that period his life was marked as hardship, he ended his busy urban life and went to Paris's country side to live three years. Lavacourt is one of the village where Monet visited to relax his mind, and the painting of The Seine at Lavacourt is exactly Monet used to express his mind. Although the whole paint only described the beautiful water view of Seine, it also described Monet's loneliness. For example, there are only a few plants above water and nothing connect to them, showing only a few Monet's relative and friends still alive. Walking residents are facing the opposite direction of artist, no one was watching Monet and no body realized Monet was here watching them. Monet is isolated with the world. He is just a tourist passing this such beautiful world but cannot connect to everything. He was interested to join, but he knew he was not belong there, so he tried his best to paint this nice environment to remember it as a constant art. After painting, he submitted this painting to Government-Sponsored French Salon organization to inspire more creative artist to paint.

During the visit of Dallas Museum of Art, The Seine at Lavacourt was placed at the entrance of European art area. The painting was putted on the wall solely due to the size. However, it makes me feel it was the introduction of the European art. The art is only a simple landscape painting, but it shows the gorgeous style of European art, even a simple painting can let audience see many painting skills and enjoy the grace of art.

All in all, in The Seine at Lavacourt, Monet used color, space and value as elements; contrast, focal point, and emphasis as principles to depicting such a gorgeous landscape painting. Using the symmetry and reflection technologies, he expressed the sense of calm and ordered in a well-organized paint and indicated his lonely soul and best wish of finding a place to recover his mind wound.