



INSIDE MONET - LUCCA

INTRODUCTION

Ami: Good morning to each one of you. Let's arrange ourselves in a semicircle and put our smartphones in airplane mode. Do you have all the travel tools? Very well. Around our neck we have a small radio connected to our headsets. Please, let's turn it on by pointing the cursor towards the word "on", our channel number is (*radio channel number*).

If you hear me, but it's too loud or too low, you can adjust the volume by using the small wheel that is located right in the centre.

Whereas, looking at the lower part of the visor, you will notice a protruding, silver button. Can you see it? Well, we do not need this, but right next to it we have the power button. When I will invite you to do so, you only need to touch it once before putting on the visor and enjoying every Virtual Reality experience.

On the opposite side, you will notice the plus and minus symbols, which we will use to adjust the volume only of the music and Monet's first-person narration.

Once the visor is worn, the play symbol will appear: the typical small triangle inside the circle. Moving your head, you will see a yellow dot in front of you. Just place it right on play to choose the language, and then, after a few seconds, the journey through time will start!

There will be five stops that we will make, always starting from his atelier and then entering the paintings of the great Master, whose story I will tell you shortly.

When the time comes to enjoy the first experience together, do not worry. I will briefly remind you of these simple instructions, and remember that even during the immersive experience, all you have to do is raise your hand and me or the angel will be ready to help you. My name is (*name of the actor*), and next to me is (*the actor says the name of any staff member*). We are happy to welcome you to **Inside Monet**, the new **WAY EXPERIENCE** project, dedicated to the great Master.

We are a younger company, founded in 2019. Yet, since then we have met thousands of visitors to try to create, together, unique experiences, with the objective of disseminating culture, knowledge, and beauty through journeys capable of enriching anyone who chooses to experience them. If this is possible, it is thanks to you. That is why, we are grateful to have you here, in the heart of the city of Lucca.

Are any of you from Lucca?

(*Possible response or reaction of the visitors*).

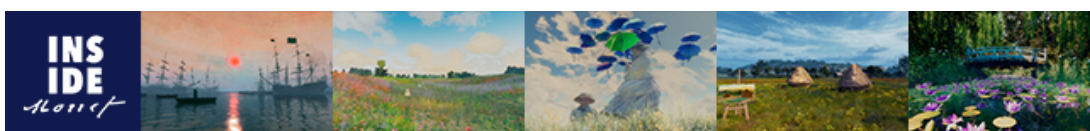
But from the Lucca area or Lucca-Lucca?

(*Possible response or reaction of the visitors*).

Ami: Wonderful! And as Lucchesi, you know well that we are in front of the greatest example in Europe, of walls preserved completely intact in a large city. The ideal place for walks among nature and architectural beauty.

One of Lucca's princesses was, from 1805 to 1814, Elisa Bonaparte Baciocchi, sister of Napoleon.

There are so many anecdotes and historical and cultural stories. I am thinking, for example, of the Napoleonic principality which, in this city, was brief but very intense, contributing to redesign and reorganize places, squares, streets...significant renovations, reforestation with plants and beautiful trees, just as well as there are many curiosities related to this place!





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I can think of one precisely involving Elisa Bonaparte Baciocchi.

It seems that on one occasion she had herself hoisted up by a pulley over the walls and enter the city without opening the gates!

Returning to our journey, ladies and gentlemen, how could we not tell you about Napoleon III and the **Salon des Refusés**, the Exhibition of Rejects.

An exposition established by him in 1863, to allow artists rejected by the **Salon** of the **Académie des Beaux-Arts** in Paris, to have a place where to display their works. Among big names such as Degas, Manet, Renoir and Pissarro, we find Monet himself.

History is part of us all and perhaps helps us to better understand the present to imagine the future.

Today, we are going on a real journey through time with the tools we have given you!

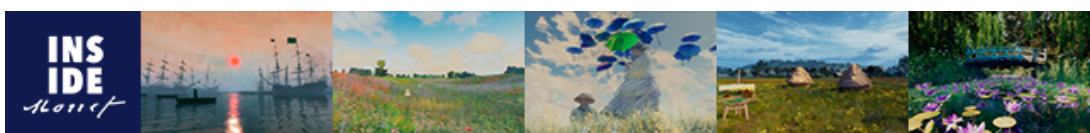
It is the **Pico G2 4K!** Thanks to these special virtual reality headsets, we will be able to immerse ourselves in the adventure at 360 degrees. What do we have to do? It is really simple, I will explain. In a few moments, I will invite you to unplug the jack cable from the radio and plug it into the visor. We will do this for all the stops. Once we have finished viewing, we will remove the jack from the visor and plug it back into the radio.

Very well, the time has come to set off on our journey through time and meet the great Master! It will be exciting because we will be entering some of Monet's great works...with Monet.

Are you ready to go to his home in Giverny? Please, plug in your earphones and put on your visor.



NOW WATCHING: VR SCENE 1 - IMPRESSION, SUNRISE





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Ami: “Parisian from Paris”, he called himself, like Lucchese from Lucca.

Actually, **Oscar-Claude Monet** was born in **Paris**, although when he was only five years old, his family moved to **Le Havre** and it was there, on the coast of **Normandy**, that the young Claude received his training.

A training that did not follow a classical path, because it seems he was a little undisciplined child, and with little desire to follow the rules! In short, he was his parents’ despair.

At the beginning, he did not really like school. What he did love, however, was drawing!

We make our way to a new station.

During lessons, he filled sheets with pencil sketches and caricatures dedicated to his classmates, teachers and...we must say, those drawings were so much liked that, at some point, they even started to earn him a little something.

There was a small frame shop in **Le Havre** that displayed them in the window, as if they were real works of art. I think that for Monet that was the beginning of everything...

The boy who would later become the heart of the Impressionist movement, began by making caricatures of his fellow citizens and since the pocket money that his parents gave him was perhaps a bit...small, what did he do? He began to sell them to anyone who asked him! How much did he charge for them? Well, the price varied based on how rich or poor his clients were.

But let’s get back to us, or ! Because we have come up with a small challenge for you!

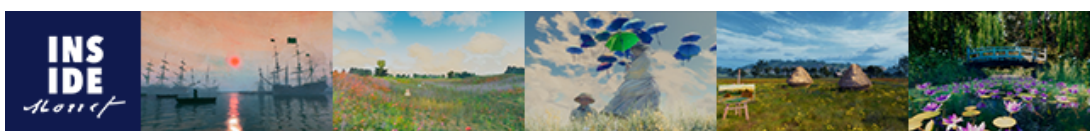
Well, we know that the caricature technique came within everyone’s reach only after the **Révolution française**. How? Thanks to the use that the press will make of it. From that moment on, caricatures have never ceased to make people smile or...reflect.

You are probably thinking, “thank you for the historical reference, but what is the challenge you were talking about?”

Thanks for asking. I will give you a drawing folder and a pencil. You will have a minute and a half to try to make a caricature, even a stylised one, of the model you have by your side!

At this point... you will say: “But I don’t know how to draw!!!”. Thank you so much for saying that because you allow me to add, “that’s better!” It is a game. We will try with a few lines to make our own caricature! I will help you with a few rules:

- 1) Let us observe our model. You can start by defining the shape you want to give the face, for example a circle. So, inside, we can draw the guidelines to position eyes, nose, ears, and mouth.
- 2) You can choose one or more aspects to emphasise, such as choosing to draw a big nose, a small nose...or very large eyes, long hair reaching the ground.
- 3) The rest of the body may be smaller than the face.
- 4) The aim is to bring a smile to your model’s face. Therefore, you can indulge in funny poses. Do not forget to pay attention to details that distinguish them such as eyeglasses, a scarf, earrings, etc.
- 5) Last rule is do not judge yourself, it’s the **“le jeu de la satire”**, it is just a game, ladies and gentlemen. If you get the stroke or proportions wrong, don’t start again! Leave the error as it is in full view and include it in your sketch! Once time is up, we only ask you to stop, sign your drawing and do not show it, I repeat, do not show it to anyone!





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Is everyone ready? Very well! Let us observe our models, to whom we ask to remain motionless for about a minute, looking into each other's eyes!

Let's start from...now!

Ladies and gentlemen, time is running out, 10 seconds...5, 4, 3, 2, 1. **"Arrêt"**. Stop.

Thank you very much... I have seen masterpieces that promise rosy prospects for the future! Well, the challenge continues because now I ask you to sign or initial your drawing, gently turn the sheet over and hand the folder to the person you have portrayed. "Why?", you would ask with amazement. Because **"Mesdames et Messieurs"**, we are reversing roles, the artist becomes the model and vice versa! We know the rules by now. Ready, set, and...go! One minute starting from now, come on!

And...stop! That's good. Remember to put down your signature or initials, please. Now...attention. Look at your model, find all the courage you need and on the count of three, show your masterpiece! 1, 2...3!

Great! Now, you will notice a perforated line at the top of the worksheet. Gently separate your work and give it to the protagonist as a token of thanks or apology! It is up to you. What is certain is that you chose to take some risks, this was the real challenge! Come on, give yourselves a round of applause!

Heading towards scene 2

Speaking of choices, I respect Monet's caricatures and aspiration! We know that his mum supported him in pursuing his aspirations, but what did his dad think of the idea of having a son that is a painter?

In short, he was nothing short of shocked, to say the least, by this decision. But by then the path was marked and, somehow, it was precisely at that moment that his artistic career began, which then, as we will see, took a completely different direction than the simple "caricature". In fact, it is precisely thanks to that little shop of frames that Monet...meets **Eugène Boudin**, the landscape painter.

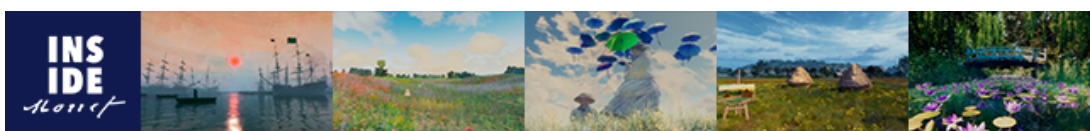
To tell the truth, the young Monet, did not really like those landscape paintings, yet...Boudin becomes his first real teacher! In a short time, passion is channelled through technique and Claude begins to be enchanted and won over by landscape painting.

As he will demonstrate this throughout his life.

But was Boudin his only mentor? Not at all, ladies and gentlemen. One of the most important was also Dutchman **Johan Barthold Jongkind**.

The story goes that at about twenty years old, after leaving for the war in **Algeria**, where he spent a year, Monet went to the hills, this time arming himself with...canvas and easel! One day, like many others, he decided to try painting a cow! That is right! Except that the cow kept moving.

We have seen the small difficulties in portraying a motionless subject. Imagine painting a cow in motion! It is very difficult! A real feat! At that point, a man walking by, and English gentleman, seeing the situation...offered to hold it still. Yet, without success! The cow was untameable. Nevertheless, the scene was so funny that the two immediately became friends...Chatting about this and that, it turns out that both are great admirers of Johan





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Barthold Jongkind, another famous landscape painter of the time! But there is more! the Englishman knows something else: Jongkind lives in **Honfleur**! Just across the Seine from Le Havre, and so, our two friends decide to organise with him a **“bon dîner”**, a nice dinner!

From that moment on, Monet and Mister Jongkind become friends, often wandering around for the sheer pleasure of painting together, always carrying with him...his colours, his palette.

Even when Monet decides to move to Paris, Jongkind will always find a good opportunity to visit his **“bon ami”**! Three years after they met, in **1865**, Monet was able to exhibit two canvases at the **Salon**, the most important art exhibition of the time, organized by the **Academy of Fine Arts of Paris**.

Soon, however, the desire to break the mould and experiment of this group of young artists comes into conflict with the academic art of the *Salon*, which wants to remain in the traditional painting styles. A way of thinking that for some of them is really limiting, too limiting! Because it was in conflict with the desire for new ideas, to fly beyond the rules imposed by the “barons”.

These were the Impressionists!

“Impression” Ladies and gentlemen. We must say that the term “impression” was not new, as it was already part of the technical vocabulary. It was the first layer of colour applied to the canvas: thus indicating the quickly executed sketches that served to fix the immediate reaction of the artist to a subject. However, it is true that **“impression”** was a synonym with **“sensation”**, and that Monet, in choosing such a particular title, had clearly wanted to play with the double meaning of the term. The subject of the work is, therefore, not the dawn itself but, as the chosen title correctly indicates, the impression and sensation of the sunrise.

But what were the subjects, if we may say so, that attracted the Impressionists? Here, the question becomes complicated because the Impressionist movement never had a manifesto describing its intentions. As I said, many devoted themselves to natural or urban environments to study the nuances of light, the mystery of shadow.

Not that there was a lack of human figures, quite the contrary, but the tendency was to focus precisely on environments like what was happening with the art of photography, a still young but already popular tool, which allowed the early Impressionists to plan the composition of the images that they would then create to study how light really behaves. Light, ladies and gentlemen, a topic that Monet explored in great depth throughout his life.

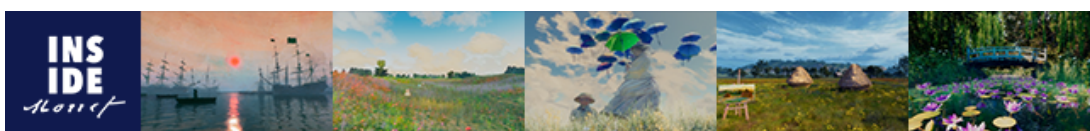
Let us try it too. I ask you to take a photo by choosing the angle that you prefer to portray the Walls.

Ready to take a shot? Please, go ahead!

At the end of our journey, I will show you the importance of this outdoor photograph.

Speaking of the outdoors, we have heard how important it was for Monet to experience painting **“en plein air”**. But it did not invent it, although we are certainly in the historical period in which this choice became very popular.

The reason is simple, it is mainly a matter of practicality. You must know that some time before, the very first industrial colours were marketed in tin tubes, which could be transported very easily.





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While until then artists had to buy the pigments and personally create their own colours, now they could directly buy the shade they wanted and use it without any further preparation. If you think about it, it was something unimaginable until a short time before!

Needless to say, the Impressionists immediately took advantage of this, also using another aspect of the technical progress of the period: until the middle of the century, the bristles of the brushes were still attached with string, which made the tool very delicate. With the introduction of the metal ferrule, brushes became much sturdier, which allowed Impressionists to use them more forcefully than their colleagues in the past could, enabling them to experiment a more vigorous painting, without fear of damaging the brush.

Another characteristic of industrial colours is that they were inert colours. So, by mixing for example, red and yellow...which, then, it is easy to say yellow. Yet are you aware of how many shades of yellow are there?

To date, there are at least forty shades among Pastel Yellow, Straw, Naples Yellow, then Canary, Amber, Saffron Yellow, Chartreuse Yellow, Macaron Yellow...

Anyway, as we were saying, if until a short time before one was not sure of getting the desired result, from then on by mixing for example, yellow and red, one was always sure of always getting orange, thus allowing artists to devote themselves mainly to their painting. When he returned from England, Monet settled in **Argenteuil** where he lived until **1878**. These years were a period of great pictorial achievements, despite the financial difficulties due also to the critics' hostile reviews of the **1874** exhibition. Supported by his art dealer, **Paul Durand-Ruel**, Monet, finally finds the bright landscapes that allowed him to explore the potential of the *en plein air* painting.

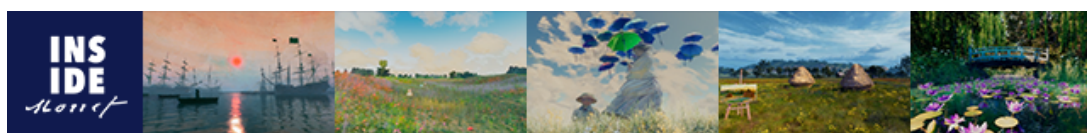
In the work Poppies, which we will see shortly, Monet evokes the vibrant atmosphere of a walk through the fields on a summer day, diluting the contours and building a colourful rhythm with spots of paint starting precisely from a splash of poppies. The disproportionately large spots ...the visual impression... are a first step towards abstraction.

No preparatory sketch, no studies of figures, but colours from the palette to the canvas. One the characteristic of Impressionism is the classical "spot" painting, which does not faithfully reproduce the contours of what it depicts but limits itself to suggesting shapes through its apparently disordered brushstrokes.

Before seeing this masterpiece, let us resume Monet's story, returning once again to his atelier!



NOW WATCHING: VR SCENE 2 - POPPIES





Heading towards scene 3

Ami: Now I would like to tell you about Camille, **Camille Doncieux**. As well as being his wife, she was also Monet's favourite model, posing in many of his paintings, as in *Women in the Garden*. Although she also posed for other artists, such as **Manet** and **Renoir**, Camille was mainly his muse!

Camille and Monet were married in a civil ceremony in Paris and then, to fulfil a last wish of his beloved, in a religious ceremony in extremis only on **August 31st, 1879**, just six days before his wife's death in **Vetheuil**. Camille was only thirty-two years old.

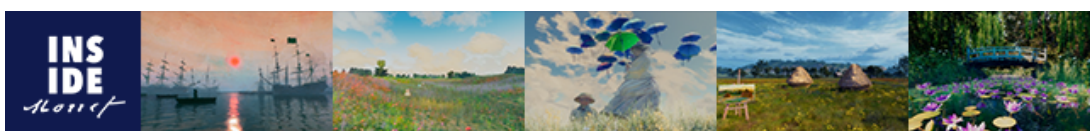
He portrayed her for the last time on her deathbed, ashen and transfigured, with such rapid brushstrokes that it seems to be a single current of blue waves flowing over the figure.

The pain for the loss of his beloved is such that Monet changes the way he paints. Whereas human figures had been an important part of his painting, with the death of Camille, he begins to take an interest mainly in representations of environments and spaces. It is not that human subjects completely cease to be present in his works, but they lose a bit of importance: instead of being central figures, they become a framework of elements, like extras in a film or an opera, useful to describe the place they are in.

Go ahead, ladies and gentlemen, the story continues!



NOW WATCHING: VR SCENE 3 - THE STROLL





Heading towards scene 4

Ami: Follow me! This way.

To that which has already been narrated, I can only add that the emotional and affective void was deflagrating and was perhaps partly filled thanks to **Alice Hoschedé**. A woman so different from Camille. A woman who will spend the rest of her life watching him immerse himself totally in painting, absorbed and often seemingly distant.

Subsequently, Monet moved from **Argenteuil** to **Giverny**, where he bought what would be his permanent home, surrounded by wonder, and by dreams. Environments that allowed him to renew his creative spirit. Thus, he also returned to travelling, and it was in **Bordighera**, in the **Riviera dei Fiori** between the **Côte d'Azur** and **Sanremo** that he rediscovered the colours and that light capable of restoring an enthusiasm that seemed almost lost. Then, it was the turn of the **Côte d'Azur**, of **Brittany**, of **Normandy** where, right in **Rouen**, we find the astonishing gothic cathedral built between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. He painted at least thirty canvases of it, many of them with the same framing, to show the delicate change of the gothic decorations depending on the time, day and weather conditions. It was necessary to paint with extreme speed! You would not have believed it, but often in his series, the artist worked with several canvases placed side by side, moving on to the next one when the light changed.

Today, we find the series of the Rouen Cathedral scattered amongst the Metropolitan in New York, the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, the Pushkin Museum in Moscow but also in Belgrade, in Japan... Basically, we can say that today, Rouen is all over the world thanks to Monet! As well as **London**, for example, where he was fascinated by the mystery of the fog.

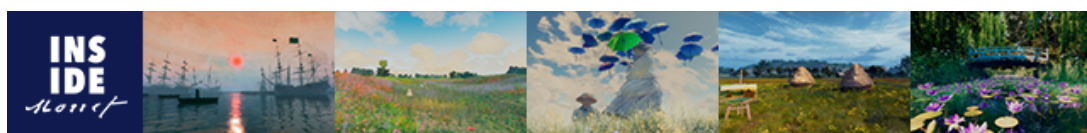
Returning to our country, how can we not tell you about Venice, where he was so enchanted by Doge's Palace, to the point that he said: *"The artist who designed this palace was the first of the Impressionists. He did not have to paint it. He let it float on the water, rise from the water and shine in the air of Venice as the Impressionist painter let his brushstrokes shine on the canvas to convey the sensation of the atmosphere"*.

If with the previous series Monet had some practical difficulties with the locals who, not understanding his art, continually sabotaged him by the moving and of undoing the haystacks, or cutting trees, even forcing him to purchase a row of trees so that he could finish the poplar series in peace...well, at that point, the environment he desired was totally under his control.

A little curiosity: not everyone knows that it was precisely the poplars, so much loved by the maestro, to be the first trees to be planted on the walls of Lucca. Today, we find more than thirty wonderful species such as platanus trees, majestic horse chestnuts, cedars... Furthermore, some trees were planted as early as 1500 to ensure that the roots would help to strengthen the walls themselves! We are talking about 440 thousand bricks, as documented in the State Archive. Please ladies and gentlemen, let us go back to him, let us return to Monet.



NOW WATCHING: VR SCENE 4 - HAYSTACKS





Heading towards scene 5

Ami: What I personally find fascinating about the figure of Monet is the creative torment that never abandons him. He is never completely satisfied with the outcome of his paintings, a dissatisfaction that, if on the one hand had perpetually oppressed his artistic career, on the other it urged him to pursue new ideas.

In the early 1900s, Monet began to have problems with his eyesight, which were reflected in his paintings. Starting from some years back, in fact, the colours used, begin to change. White becomes more yellowish, while the light blue shifts towards violet. His perception of the world changes, and so do his paintings! One day, he said, **“I would like to paint everything before I can no longer see”**.

We can therefore imagine what his joy must have been when, in **1923**, an operation succeeded in restoring his sight, allowing him to enjoy the lost light for at least another three intense years of his life.

It is the **5th of December in 1926** when, unfortunately, Monet leaves us.

The entire population of Giverny wanted to attend the funeral to say goodbye to him and, perhaps, to say just one word: thank you! Thank you for the light, for the wonders that he conveyed through every single piece of work.

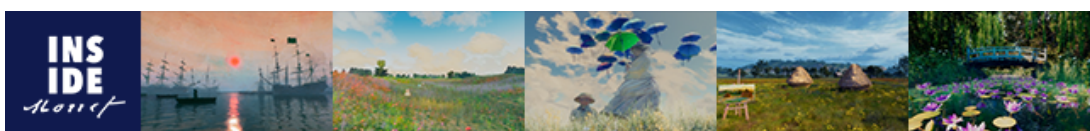
Who knew him well, was well aware of how important all this was for him: the colours, the reflections...and his friend **Georges Clemenceau** knew it very well. Upon arriving in Giverny, he found a black drape placed on his coffin! A sign he cannot accept, hence, in honour of Monet, he tears the drape and replaces it with a colourful curtain found in the room, vehemently saying: **“Non! Pas de noir pour Monet!”**, “No black for Monet”. Just like black was not a recurring colour for the Impressionists, as shadows were painted through a combination of colours...” coloured shadows”.

We can say that in those last years, Impressionism is no longer brutally hindered by critics. On the contrary, the value of Impressionist’s works is widely recognized. Impressionist painters are no longer the young rebels with the desire to change everything. They have become adults, capable of creating extraordinary works and who, chasing a dream, have changed the history of art forever!

Ami: I am more than happy to take you, one last time, to our friend Monet.



NOW WATCHING: VR SCENE 5 - WATER LILIES STUDIO





Ami: Well, ladies and gentlemen, after having walked through the water lilies, our **Inside Monet** journey comes to an end, but I hope you can always carry with you some of the feelings we have experienced together because **“What keeps my heart awake is colourful silence”**, he always said.

At this point, I can only thank you for having been with us. À bientôt mes amis! See you soon.

Thank you! I also recommend the routes organized by the municipal guides. They will assist you to learn more about the history of this city and discover enchanted places such as the municipal Orto Botanico, two hectares of wonderment where our beloved water lilies will naturally be there.

(The municipal Orto Botanico of Lucca is a scientific institution founded in 1820 by Maria Luisa Borbone. It is located in Via Giardino Botanico, in the historic centre of Lucca and is home to hundreds of plant species).

On the way back, do not forget the experiment! Try comparing your photo to observe the differences! Because, as we said, with the *en plein air* technique, one of the Impressionists' challenges becomes capturing the light, capturing the changing and the very expression of all things!

The adventure does not end here! Because **John Pedferri**, journalist for **SKY TG24**, who is in love with our journey, has thought about a podcast dedicated to all the guests of **“Inside Monet”** to tell an incredible story of smuggled art. On all audio streaming platforms, just search for **“Trafug'Arte. Il furto dei Monet”** – “Art Smuggling. The stealing of Monet's paintings” - to continue your journey through time.

