

G.I.'s in a Tank, Swapping Life Stories In Song

"Party Time" is an aggressively innovative show with attention-grabbing video, an imposing soundscape and other trappings generally associated with the elusive cutting edge of theater. Yet not far into it you come to an incongruous realization: this is nothing but an old-fashioned two-guys-in-a-fodoches story, with a tank replacing the foboches and the desert replacing the battlefields of Europe.

This compact work, by the Talking and the Walking, is a sort of condensed rock-and-electronica musical with a video backdrop. Paul Zimet, who wrote the piece, went by the old polar-opposites formula in choosing his two soldiers: Sal (Joe Rosseto) is white and from Brooklyn; Frankie (Will Badgett) is black and from Oklahoma.

The men are lost in the desert (presumably in Iraq, though there are no overt references), their tank's high-tech gear having failed. There's not much mystery about what's going to happen, since this is an old playbook: the two will share personal revelations, and ultimately one will go bonkers.

The presentation, though, is ar-

Moved to a desert: an old story about soldiers (one's from Brooklyn).

resting. Kit Fitzgerald's video mixes scenic images, clips of tanks rolling across sand and gruesome scenes of some battle's aftermath. The men mostly sing their stories, to music by Peter Gordon, letting the rising tension show in small ways: Sal screams at Frankie for shooting a lizard, seeing in the animal's vulnerability a metaphor for their own.

"Party Time" has jolting moments and beautiful ones, but it doesn't really add to our understanding of what soldiers today experience. On the contrary, by falling back on an old model of buddies in peril in its effort to depict modern warfare, it only underscores how little we know about what it's like to be on the ground in Iraq, facing a poorly understood enemy.

"Party Time" continues through Sunday at La MaMa E.T.C., 74A East Fourth Street, East Village (212) 475-7710 or lamama.org.



Party Time: Joe Rosseto, top, and Will Badgett in Paul Zimet's multimedia piece about a pair of stranded soldiers. Playing at La MaMa E.T.C.

The Times Book Review, Every Sunday



"Bank of the Seine," a Monet pastel on tan paper from about 1869. Monet rarely mentioned his hundreds of drawings, preferring to be known only as a painter.

A Show Will Reveal the Monet of Pencil and Sketchbook

Continued From First Arts Page

he was a truculent teenager and executing pastel drawings of seascapes when he was in his 20s. He drew in different ways using different materials, and in his final years made abstract crayon and pencil drawings as studies for his water-lily paintings.

Although Monet helped perpetrate the myth that he did not, and maybe even could not, draw, nearly 500 of more than 2,500 works mentioned in his catalogue raisonné are sketchbooks, drawings and pastels. Yet, until now, few scholars have paid much attention to them.

They figure prominently in the fifth and final volume of the catalogue raisonné, published by Daniel Wildenstein in 1981 and devoted primarily to works on paper. But when the catalogue raisonné was reprinted in 1996, that volume was dropped.

Mr. Ganz was unaware of just how little most scholars knew about Monet's drawings until he began re-

Ganz said, the more strongly he felt that there was no substantive scholarly examination of Monet's drawings.

He approached Mr. Kendall about the possibility of jointly organizing a small show centering on the Clark's Rouen drawing. But after embarking on their research, they began to envision a far larger exhibition. "We began asking colleagues about Monet's works on paper and consistently got the same reaction — a blank stare," Mr. Ganz said.

After approaching MaryAnne Stevens, a Monet scholar at the Royal Academy, who agreed that the potential show could travel there, the two American curators set out to find as many of Monet's works on paper as they could. Searching in Japan as well as in Europe and the United States, they eventually came up with the nearly 100 works that will be in the show.

The Musée Marmottan Monet in Paris, which owns eight of Monet's mature sketchbooks, dating from the 1860s through the 1920s, proved a particularly useful source. A colleague there alerted them to the existence of an unpublished journal by Count Théophile Bégün Billecoq, a friend of the Monet family who was himself an amateur draftsman. The only known firsthand account of Monet's early life, it depicts him as a young man devoted to drawing. Written over roughly a 30-year period, starting in 1854, the journal has remained in the family, passing eventually to the count's great-grandson, Xavier Bégün Billecoq, a historian of the Persian Gulf region.

"It became clear to us that we had stumbled on something quite critical," Mr. Ganz said of the manuscript. "It gave us a wealth of information."

Interspersed throughout the journal are observations about Monet. When the artist was 17, for instance, Bégün Billecoq described his rapid sketching technique as "impressionistic."

Yet the drawings themselves, he wrote, were "detailed, as precise as reality, and delicate, representing the houses, trees, people, etc., in the best possible manner."

In a telephone interview, Xavier Bégün Billecoq said that Monet often drew in the countryside or at the sea while on vacation with the Bégün Billecoq family. "They would go explore the surrounding countryside, often sketching in the woods," Dr. Bégün Billecoq said. "He drew in the country in places like Deauville and St-Germain."

The journal also captures the flavor of Parisian life in an era when friends got together to play musical instruments, attend the opera and concerts and simply draw.

"It gives a good description of the youth and social environment of Mo-



A drawing of a woman in red chalk from the 1890s.



A pastel of the Waterloo Bridge in London from about 1901.

net," Dr. Bégün Billecoq said. "You see him growing up, needing money. My great-grandfather would help him, giving him money to buy paper and supplies."

The early sketchbooks described in the journal are pencil studies of local architecture, trees, sailboats and

around 1852, the year Monet turned 22, the artist decided to be known as Claude, his middle name, rather than Oscar, his first.

Drafted into the army and sent to Algiers, Monet had been teased by his regiment about the "ridiculous" name Oscar.

"Goodbye Oscar, long live Claude," Bégün Billecoq writes facetiously. "It explains why some of the early drawings are signed Oscar and later works Claude. (Monet signed only some of his works on paper.)"

While the manuscript, titled "Grand Journal," is too fragile to be in the exhibition, the curators say, quotations from it will be incorporated into the installation as a way of telling the story of the artist's life.

Still, questions about Monet's development remain. "It's easy to separate the youthful work," said Mr. Kendall of the Clark. "It is less distinctive and powerful." By the mid-1860s, he said, Monet was making "brilliant" drawings of the Normandy coast with a waxy black crayon. "But we still don't know why he did them," Mr. Kendall said.

In the first Impressionist Exhibition in 1874 in Paris, however, Monet showed seven of his pastels, their research shows, but they were not included in the catalog or mentioned by any critics. "It's one of the puzzles in Monet scholarship," Mr. Kendall said, adding that Monet "takes it up again in the 1880s, and for two weeks in 1901 when he went to London and his canvases didn't arrive."

He added, "He wanted to work, so he made pastels of London bridges and rivers."

Of 26 pastels that can be dated to that time, 6 will be in the exhibition, along with two paintings, of the Waterloo Bridge (1891) and Charing Cross Bridge (about 1900).

Lise van Gogh, Monet also created works on paper based on actual paintings. "He's not consistent, but had many different manners of drawing," Mr. Ganz said, adding: "A lot had to do with his public-private issue. Some, that were sketchy, were meant only for his private use, while others, more in the style of his paintings, were finished works in themselves."

Mr. Ganz said he thought the most surprising drawings were those related to the water-lily paintings. Minimalist in style and not pretty like the paintings themselves, these drawings, in black, white and violet crayon, can be seen described as agitated, abstract and almost Expressionistic.

"He never meant for the public to see them," Mr. Kendall said, adding: "It all comes back to marketing. His public image was important to him, and drawings complicated that picture. In fact, they even contradicted it."

A study of sailboats and a harbor dating from the 1860s.

searching a view of Rouen drawn in crayon in 1883 and owned by the Clark Institute. "It was an object that caught my eye especially because I knew it was done after a painting," he said.

(He said the painting, which is in a private European collection, will be united with the drawing for the first time in the exhibition.)

The more he began to dig, Mr. Ganz said.

The Unknown Monet: Pastels and Drawings will be at the Royal Academy of Arts in London from March 17 to June 10 and at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Mass., from June 24 to Sept. 16.

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