

A parody of Monet's « Bridge upon a pond of Lilies », by Banksy
(British street artist)

This is a photograph of a painting by Banksy.

We are immediately struck by the resemblance with a painting by Monet, the French impressionist, because of the bridge and the pond. But the other striking elements are the shopping carts and the traffic cone in the foreground. Indeed these are very unexpected additions to the original painting by Monet and the idea that the shopping carts and the traffic cone should be in the water, under the bridge, both symbolizes a danger (with the cone) and pollution (because of the carts in the water). So as the carts symbolize consumption, the artist must have wanted to denounce the danger of overconsumption. By consuming too much, we cause pollution and thus cause the destruction of beautiful places landscapes like the one painted by Monet.

But the title of the painting gives us another clue too. The painting is called "Show me the Monet". Although the painting reminds us of a painting by Monet, we don't see the real work by Monet and we wonder what has become of it. We would like to see it: "Show me the Monet." But "Show me the Monet" sounds in fact like "Show me the money" and there is a pun / play on the word "Monet", which reminds us of "Money". It can also remind us of what a burglar could say when burglarizing a shop or a bank. Here Banksy stresses the importance of money in our society. He denounces the opposition between nature and consumption, nature and materialism or between art and consumption. We are deprived of the real thing. By transforming a well-known painting and spoiling it with shopping carts and a traffic cone, the artist certainly wanted to shock people or make people react. He must have wanted to raise people's awareness and show the dangers of overconsumption. If this painting were an ad in an awareness campaign, it would be very effective indeed.