

Post-Impressionism and more! (1880s to early 20th century)

Key Ideas

- Paris remains the hub of the art world.
- Post-impressionist artists continue to be inspired by Japanese art, reflecting its influence in color, pattern, and composition.
- Post-Impressionism, Symbolism, Neo-Impressionism, etc....there are a plethora of avant-garde styles that develop in the late 19th century. Impressionism is a “springboard” for development into many individual styles. (Stokstad, p. 995)
- Artists continue to move forward from Impressionism...but this takes different forms:
 - Choosing one or two formal elements to fully explore and develop (line, texture, etc.)
 - Studying color and optics theories, incorporating those theories into their work.
 - Developing works that reflect universal symbolic themes or greater emotive (rather than realistic) content.

Terms and Names:

Distemper (painting technique): Glue-based tempera. Distemper requires a complicated process, involving heating of the medium and speedy application, and yields either a matte, crusted, fresco-like surface or, when thinly applied, a surface that appears open and quickly brushed. http://www.artic.edu/aic/exhibitions/easel/ex_themes/ex_themes.htm

Intimist: An artist who concentrates on intimate domestic interiors.

Les Nabis: Maurice Denis, Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard, and other students founded Les Nabis, an avant-garde group active from 1888 to 1899. (*Nabis* is a Hebrew word meaning “prophets.”) While there was no unified style within this group, the artists worked towards a synthesis between art and design, exploring many different mediums and creating works for interior decoration. They often simplified their compositions, achieving decorative or emotive effects by using flat areas of color or patterns.

Neo-Impressionism (Pointillism and Divisionism): Neo-Impressionism was a term coined by a critic in review of the last Impressionist exhibition, in labeling Seurat’s and Signac’s new pointillist technique. Divisionism (Seurat’s work) is a term that relates to the dividing or separation of individual colors in the composition, while Pointillism often refers to just the technique of using dots of paint.

Post-Impressionism: Broad term to include the movement away from Impressionism. Many artists begin a more structured exploration of the formal elements. Some develop a style known as Neo-Impressionism (focusing on color and optic theories, through Divisionism and Pointillism) while others focus on breaking down the composition in new ways, through play with perspective, line, and texture. Artists also move towards developing the emotive and symbolic content of art. Four of the most influential Post-impressionists were Georges Seurat, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, and Paul Gauguin.

Symbolism: A movement that addressed the irrational fears, desires, and impulses of the human mind in various works of art and literature. Symbolists sought a deeper and more mysterious reality beyond everyday life.

Synthetism: Gauguin’s term for his style, a synthesis of observation and the artist’s feelings in an abstracted application of line, shape, space, and color.

Mia Objects (Post-Impressionism and more!)

- Georges Seurat, *Port-en-Bessin*, 1888, 55.38
- Paul Signac, *Snow, Boulevard de Clichy, Paris*, 1886, 61.36.16
- Paul Signac, *Blessing of the Tuna Fleet at Groix*, 1923, 62.36
- Jean Metzinger, *Fields of Flowers in Bloom, near Caen*, 1904, 2012.83
- Gustaf Fjaestad, *Winter Landscape*, 1908, 2013.74
- Maximilien Luce, *Notre Dame*, 1899, 61.36.13
- Vincent van Gogh, *Olive Trees*, 1889, 51.7
- Paul Cézanne, *Chestnut Trees at Jas de Bouffan*, c. 1885-1886, 49.9
- James Ensor, *Meadow Flowers*, 1883, 56.9
- Armand Guillaumin, *Le Jardin Provincial*, late 19th/early 20th century, 2016.33.9
- Paul Gauguin, *Tahitian Landscape*, 1891, 49.10
- Paul Gauguin, *I Raro Te Oviri (Under the Pandanus)*, 1891, 41.4
- Odilon Redon, Plate III from "*La tentation de Saint Antoine*", 1889, lithograph, P.86.26.5 (not on view)
- Maurice Denis, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, 1910, 68.1
- Edouard Vuillard, *The Artist's Mother Opening a Door*, c. 1891-1892, 96.41
- Edouard Vuillard, *Place Saint-Augustin*, 1912-1913, 61.36.18
- Edouard Vuillard, *The Sunny Room*, c. 1920, 61.36.19
- Pierre Bonnard, *Dining Room in the Country*, 1913, 54.15
- George d'Espagnat, *Fruits and Vase of Flowers*, 19th-20th century, 2016.33.2
- Jules Chéret, *Musée Grévin, Théâtre les Fantoques*, 1900, 2016.33.52
- Explore the print collection, too! Bonnard, Redon, Toulouse-Lautrec, van Gogh, and Gauguin.

Quotes

Georges Seurat:

Concerning *A Sunday Afternoon on La Grande Jatte*, as explained to the French poet Gustave Kahn, "The Panathenaeans of Phidias formed a procession. I want to make modern people, in their essential traits, move about as they do on those friezes, and place them on canvases organized by harmonies of color."

<http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/27992>

“Some say they see poetry in my paintings, I see only science.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNB9Vm6MoDQ>

Paul Signac:

“Subjecting color and lines in this way to the emotion he has felt and seeks to express, the painter will do the work of a poet, a creator.”

<https://deyoung.famsf.org/curriculum/post-impressionism-quotes-artists-and-critics>

Review of the Neo-Impressionist work at the last Impressionist exhibition in 1886:

“...They’ve avoided any muddiness in their painting by using tiny brushstrokes, little dotted points, or the juxtaposition of colors: the mixture occurs in the eye, not on the palette.... They have, so to speak, restored the virginity of the eye, forgetting conventional colors in order to find, on their own, the right note. And they have succeeded.”

—Critic Jean Ajalbert, “Le Salon des impressionnistes,” *Revue Moderne*, June 20, 1886.

<https://deyoung.famsf.org/curriculum/post-impressionism-quotes-artists-and-critics>

Vincent van Gogh:

“Sometimes I long so much to do landscape, just as one would go for a long walk to refresh oneself, and in all of nature, in trees for instance, I see expression and a soul.”

December 10, 1882, to Theo van Gogh.

<http://denverartmuseum.org/article/staff-blogs/20-quotes-vincent-van-gogh>

“Well, the day is probably not far off when people will paint the olive tree in every way....The effect of daylight, of the sky, means that there is an infinity of subjects to be drawn from the olive tree. Now I looked for some effects of opposition between the changing foliage and the tones of the sky. Sometimes the whole thing is wrapped in pure blue at the time when the tree bears pale blossoms and the numerous big blue flies, the emerald rose beetles, finally the cicadas, fly around it. Then, when the more bronzed greenery takes on riper tones the sky is resplendent and is striped with green and orange; or even further on in the autumn, the leaves take on the violet tones vaguely of a ripe fig, the violet effect will be displayed in full by the oppositions of the large whitening sun in a halo of clear, fading lemon. Sometimes, too, after a shower, I have seen all the sky coloured in pink and bright orange, which gave an exquisite value and coloration to the silvery greenish greys.”—To Joseph Isaäcson, May 1890

<http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/RM21/letter.html>

Paul Cézanne:

“[I will] astonish Paris with an apple.”

<https://deyoung.famsf.org/curriculum/post-impressionism-quotes-artists-and-critics>

"I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you"

<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-cezanne-paul.htm>

Paul Gauguin:

Letter to Odilon Redon, 1890: “Even Madagascar is too near the civilized world; I shall go to Tahiti. . . . I judge that my art, which you like, is only a seedling thus far, and out there I hope to cultivate it for my own pleasure in its primitive and savage state.”

<https://deyoung.famsf.org/curriculum/post-impressionism-quotes-artists-and-critics>

“A bit of advice, don't copy nature too closely. Art is an abstraction; as you dream amid nature, extrapolate art from it, and concentrate on what you will create as a result.”

<http://denverartmuseum.org/article/staff-blogs/23-quotes-o-keeffe-picasso-van-gogh-other-artists-featured-modern-masters>

Maurice Denis:

"Remember that a picture, before being a war horse, a female nude, or some anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order." <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1999.180.2ab/>

On the influence of Gauguin: “‘How do you see those trees?’ asked Gauguin; ‘If they are yellow, then make them yellow; and that bluish shadow, paint it with pure ultramarine; and those red leaves? Use vermilion.’”

<https://deyoung.famsf.org/curriculum/post-impressionism-quotes-artists-and-critics>

Edouard Vuillard

"I don't do portraits; I paint people in their surroundings."

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/4X11DmbTxm25DGBHPC7R292/edouard-vuillard-1868-1940>):

Pierre Bonnard

“Color does not add a pleasant quality to design - it reinforces it.”

“I have all my subjects to hand...I go back and look at them. I take notes. Then I go home. And before I start painting I reflect, I dream.”

<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-bonnard-pierre.htm>

Additional Resources

Check out this great online exhibition from Smithsonian Libraries, *Color in a New Light*:

<http://library.si.edu/exhibition/color-in-a-new-light/using>

For some information on Color Context/Simultaneous Contrast, check out this page from DePaul University: http://facweb.cs.depaul.edu/sgrais/color_context.htm

For the complete archive and translated letters of Vincent van Gogh, see this website:

<http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let210/letter.html>

The Nabis and Decorative Painting, by Laura Auricchio, Department of Art & Design Studies, Parsons The New School for Design: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dcpt/hd_dcpt.htm

For an in-depth lecture by Worcester Art Museum Director Matthias Waschek on our very own Pierre Bonnard, Dining Room in the Country, check out this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C10X1L4zhpw&t=1928s>

For more information on Bonnard, check out the free catalogue (in PDF), *Pierre Bonnard: The Late Still Lifes and Interiors*, from the Met Museum:

http://www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications/pierre_bonnard_the_late_still_lives_and_interiors

Check out this resource for information on modern artists: <http://www.theartstory.org/>