



IMPRESSIONSIM

OLLI Sketchy Abstractions Class 2



Impression, Sunrise,[a] an 1872 Claude Monet oil on canvas painting

Public Domain

OLLI Sketchy Abstractions Class 2 – Impressionism

Moderator: Harold Dreibelbis

Sketchy describes a rapidly executed freehand drawing that is not usually intended as a finished work.

Abstraction describes art that is unconcerned with the literal depiction of things from the visible world—it can, however, refer to an object or image which has been distilled from the real world.

Impressionism:

Follow this link for information on Impressionism. Radicals in their time, the early Impressionists violated the rules of academic painting. We will discuss this for about 15 minutes in class.

[1870 – 1890s Impressionism Gallery](#) (Wikipedia)

See the entire “Academy to Abstract a timeline” on my website, [www.CW4SP | Art](http://www.CW4SP.com/Art).

Core Characteristics of Impressionism: per Wikipedia

We will work to understand the Impressionist approach to making art which included

- [visible](#) brushstrokes.
- [open](#) composition,
- emphasis on [accurate depiction of light](#) in its changing qualities (often accentuating the effects of the passage of time),
- [ordinary subject matter](#),
- [unusual visual angles](#),
- and [inclusion of movement](#) as a crucial element of human perception and experience.

Impressionist Techniques:

[Per Wikipedia](#)

Open composition

Per MS Copilot:

Open composition, in the context of **Impressionist painting**, refers to a way of structuring an image so that the scene feels **unbounded**, **casual**, and **in motion**. This contrasts with **closed**

composition (as used by academic painters) which was rather tightly framed or theatrically staged. Impressionists used open composition to make their paintings feel like **a slice of real life**, as if the viewer had just walked into the moment.

The key idea: **the picture doesn't feel "closed off" — it feels like the world continues beyond the edges of the canvas.** This is directly supported by descriptions of Impressionist characteristics, which include an **open composition to convey a sense of movement.**

What "open composition" means in Impressionism

- **Edges that cut through figures or objects** Impressionists often let people or objects be partially cropped by the frame, mimicking photography and casual observation.
- **Asymmetrical, off-center arrangements** Instead of centering subjects, they placed them at unexpected angles or positions, creating a dynamic, informal feel.
- **Diagonal lines and unexpected viewpoints** Borrowing from Japanese ukiyo-e prints, Impressionists used bold diagonals and unusual perspectives to break the static, balanced compositions of academic art.
- **A sense of ongoing movement** Scenes feel like they're happening *right now* — dancers mid-step, boats drifting, crowds milling — with no attempt to freeze the moment into a perfect tableau.
- **The world extends beyond the canvas** The viewer senses that the painted moment is just one part of a larger environment continuing outside the frame.

Why Impressionists used open composition

Open composition helped Impressionists:

- Capture **fleeting moments** and the **changing qualities of light** (a core aim of the movement) .
- Convey **modern life** as lived — spontaneous, crowded, shifting — instead of staged historical or mythological scenes.
- Break from the **rigid, centered, balanced compositions** favored by the Académie des Beaux-Arts.
- Emphasize **perception** over narrative: the viewer experiences the scene as an impression, not a story.

Examples

- **Renoir's [*Dance at Le Moulin de la Galette*](#)** Figures spill off the edges; the crowd feels larger than the canvas.
- **Monet's [*La Grenouillère*](#)** The floating platform and bathers are cropped in ways that feel accidental, like a snapshot.
- **Degas's café and [theater scenes](#)** Often cut dancers or patrons at the margins, echoing photographic framing.

All links

Google Arts & Culture

A World Tour of Impressionist Paintings — Google Arts & Culture

<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/a-world-tour-of-impressionist-paintings/HwVRWINTKvz9JQ>

Wikipedia

Impressionism - Wikipedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impressionism>

Suggested project: Do quick sketches to show each of the above concepts.

Try this: Do any subject you like to show each concept.

