



POST IMPRESSIONISM

OLLI Sketchy Abstractions Class 3



Georges Seurat - A Sunday on La Grande Jatte -- 1884

PUBLIC DOMAIN

OLLI Sketchy Abstractions Class 3 – Post Impressionism

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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.

Post Impressionism:

Follow this link for information on Post-Impressionism. Post-Impressionism emerged as a reaction against Impressionists' concern for the naturalistic depiction of light and color. Post-Impressionism's broad emphasis was on abstract qualities or symbolic content. We will discuss this for about 15 minutes in class.

[1870s - 1890s Post-Impressionism Gallery](#)

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

Pointillism:

The post-impressionist movement was an umbrella under which many isms existed. We will work to understand the post-Impressionist approach to making art by looking at pointillism.

Core Characteristics of Pointillism (per MS Copilot)

- **Dots of pure, unmixed color.** - No blending pigments on the palette or canvas.
- **Optical mixing** — Rely on the viewer's eye to blend adjacent dots at a distance.
- **Scientific color theory** — Be influenced by theories of complementary colors, contrast, and optical effects.
- **High luminosity** — Because colors remain pure, Pointillist works often appear unusually bright and radiant.
- **Precise, methodical application** — Unlike Impressionism's loose spontaneity, Pointillism is slow, deliberate, and highly structured.
- **Emphasis on edges and transitions** — Instead of soft blending, edges are created through shifts in dot density and color relationships.
- **Textured surface** — Up close, the canvas looks almost mosaic-like, with a tactile, grainy pattern.
- **Static, composed scenes** — Many Pointillist works have a calm, almost architectural stillness, partly because the technique requires long planning and execution.

What Pointillism *Feels* Like Visually

- **Shimmering light** — The eye constantly “works” to fuse the dots, creating a flickering sensation.
- **Color vibration** — Complementary colors placed side-by-side intensify each other, producing a lively surface.
- **Dual experience** — Up close: chaos of dots. From afar: smooth, cohesive image.

This duality is one of the most magical aspects of Pointillism.

Why Pointillism Was Revolutionary

Pointillism wasn’t just a style—it was a **scientific experiment in perception**. Seurat and Signac wanted to prove that:

- color could be more luminous when kept pure,
- the eye could do the blending better than the brush,
- painting could be governed by optical laws rather than intuition.

It was a radical departure from Impressionism, even though it grew out of it.

Characteristics of Post-Impressionist Pointillist Art:

[Per Wikipedia](#)

Motivation: dissatisfaction with what they felt was the triviality of subject matter and the loss of structure in Impressionist paintings.

[Georges Seurat](#) and his followers concerned themselves with [pointillism](#), the systematic use of tiny dots of color.

Pointillism relies on the ability of the eye and mind of the viewer to blend the color spots into a fuller range of tones

Pointillism is focused on the specific style of brushwork used to apply the paint

[Divisionism](#) is a more technical variant of the method. Divisionism is concerned with [color theory](#).

Examples

Pointillism:

Georges [Seurat](#)

Paul [Signac](#)

Henri-Edmond [Cross](#).

Divisionism:

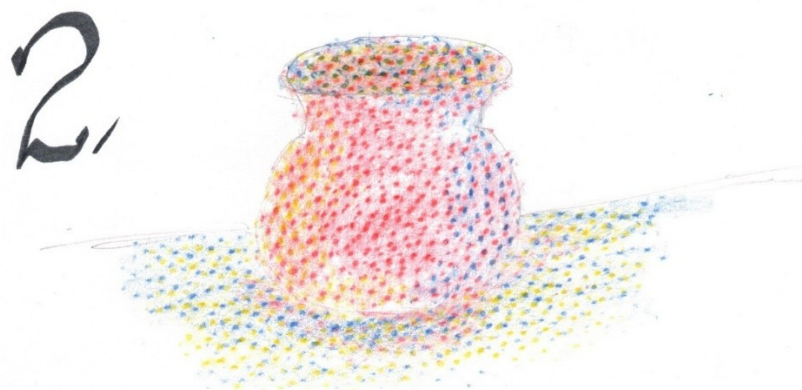
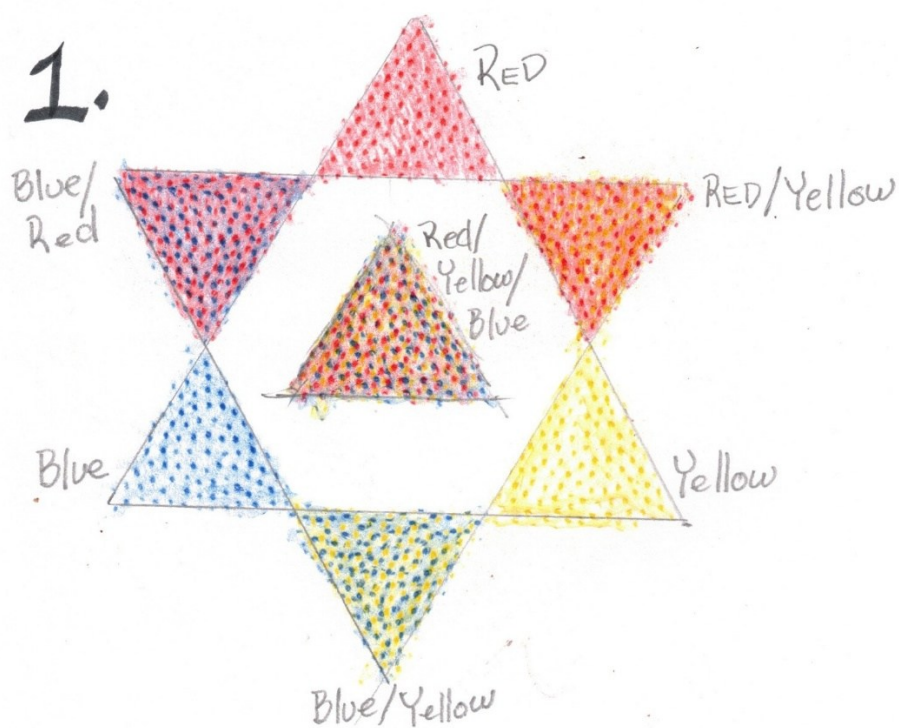
[Robert Delaunay](#)

[Jean Metzinger](#)

Suggested projects: Color Star & Sketch object.

Color Star: do in little dots of color. I used colored pencil, but you can try markers or crayons to make your dots.

Draw any object and color it in a pointillistic style. Use only red, yellow and blue. Use crayons, colored pencils or markers.



View from a minimum of 10' to see optical blending effect.