

Georges Seurat

(ser-AH) French Painter

1859 – 1891

Vocabulary: Pointillism, Impressionist, Monochromatic, Reflection, Shadow, Horizon Line, Shading, Complementary Colors, Warm/Cool Colors

31



Georges Seurat is noted for devising the technique known as pointillism. His *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, was a 19th-century icon and initiated Neo-impressionism.

Seurat was born in Paris. His father grew wealthy from speculating in property. Georges studied art at the École des Beaux-Arts and pursued a formal art education until 1879 (20), when he left for military service.

After a year at Brest Military Academy, he came back to Paris. He worked at mastering monochromatic (using different shades of one color) drawing. He studied **Delacroix** and his use of color. He spent 1883 (24) working on *Bathers at Asnières*, depicting young men relaxing by the Seine in a working-class suburb of Paris. Although influenced by Impressionism in color and light tone, Seurat departed from Impressionistic ideals by preparing with drawings and oil sketches before starting in his studio.



Photo of Georges Seurat, 1888 (29).

The Suburbs, 1882–1883 (23–24).

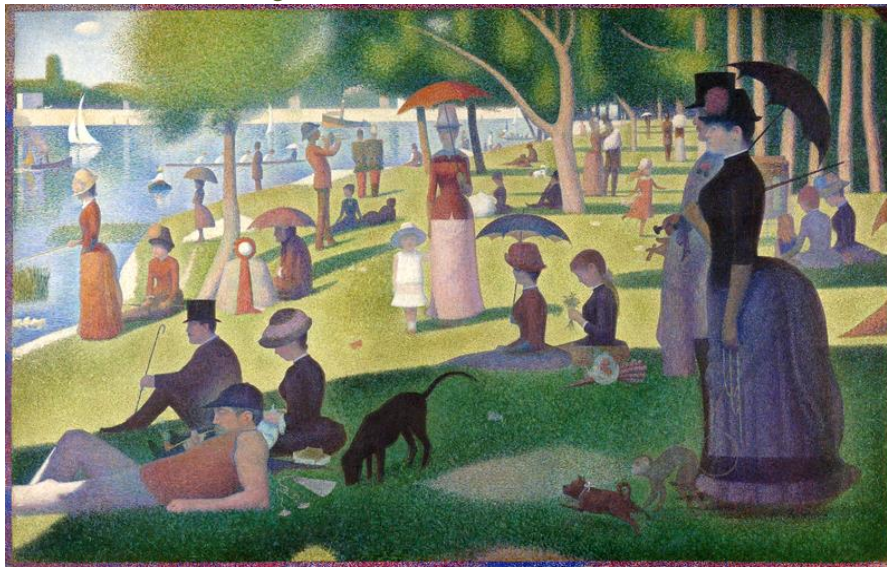
Two Examples of Monochromatic paintings.

Fishing in The Seine, 1883 (24).
Bathers at Asnières, 1884 (25).

Main source of document: Wikipedia, WikiArt. *N

When the Paris Salon rejected it, he showed *Bathers at Asnières* at the Groupe des Artistes Indépendants in 1884 (25). Disillusioned by the poor organization of the Indépendants, Seurat and some of the other artists in the group – including Charles Angrand, Henri-Edmond Cross, Albert Dubois-Pillet and Paul Signac – began the Société des Artistes Indépendants. Seurat's ideas on pointillism were to have a strong influence on Signac, who subsequently painted in the same idiom.

A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte

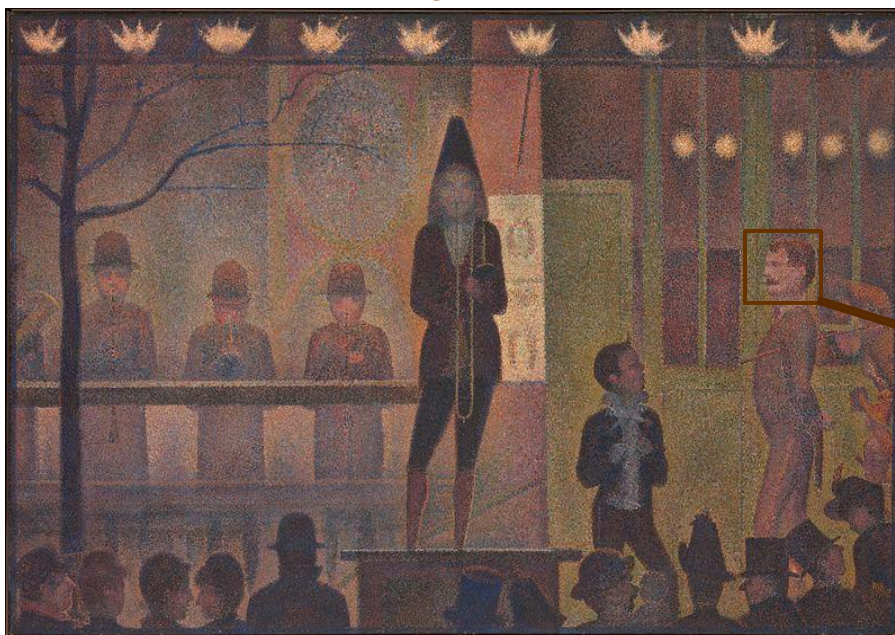


A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte and a section showing detail, 1884–1886.



In 1884 (20), Seurat began work on *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. The painting shows members of each social class participating in park activities.

The tiny dots of multi-colored paint allow the viewer's eye to blend colors, rather than having the colors physically blended on the canvas. It took Seurat two years to complete this 10-foot-wide painting, much of which he spent in the park sketching in preparation (there are about 60 studies). The painting inspired Stephen Sondheim's musical, *Sunday in the Park with George*.

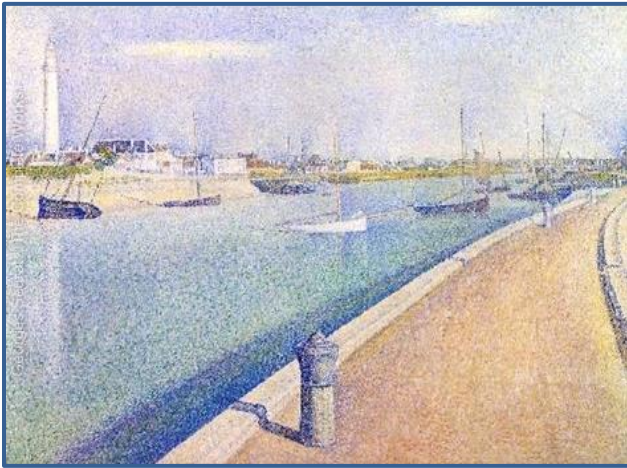


He moved to a quieter studio, where he lived secretly with a young model, Madeleine Knobloch, whom he portrayed in *The Woman with the Powder Puff*. In 1890 (31), she gave birth to their son, Pierre Georges.



Circus Sideshow and section detail view, 1887–88 (23-24).

Detail from The Woman with the Powder Puff, 1889–90.



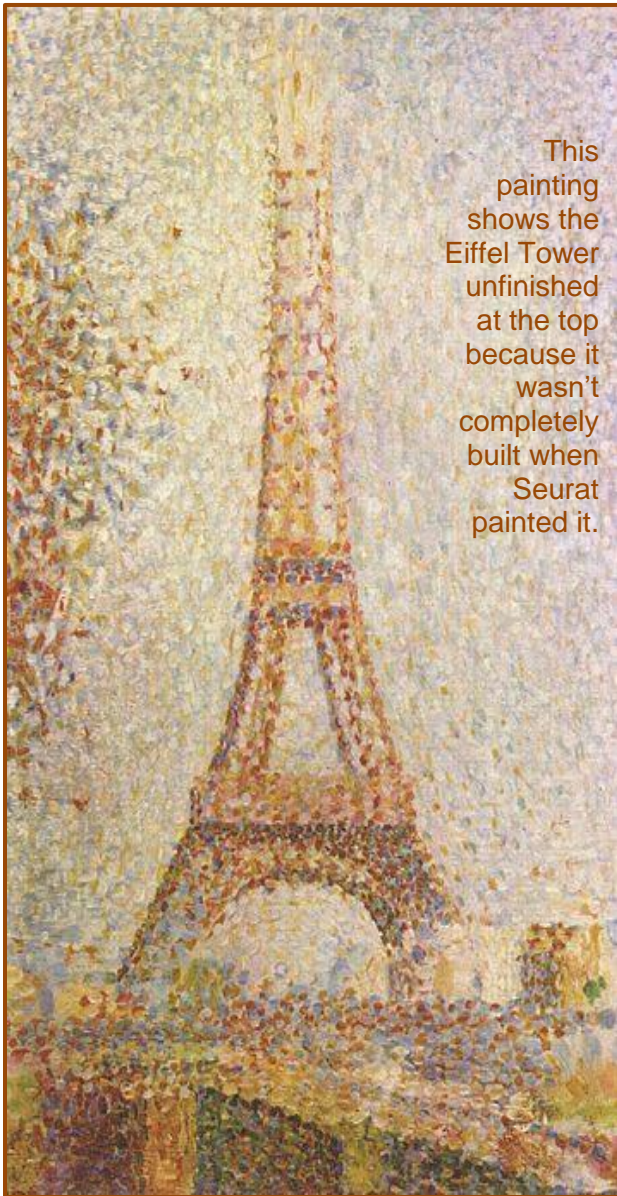
After expending a lot of energy organizing and putting on the 1891 exhibition, Seurat took ill, dying nine days after the exhibition closed. He was 31. The cause of his death is uncertain. His son died two weeks later of the same illness.

Seurat spent the summer of 1890 on the coast, painting four canvases including *The Channel of Gravelines, Petit Fort Philippe, 1890 (31)*.

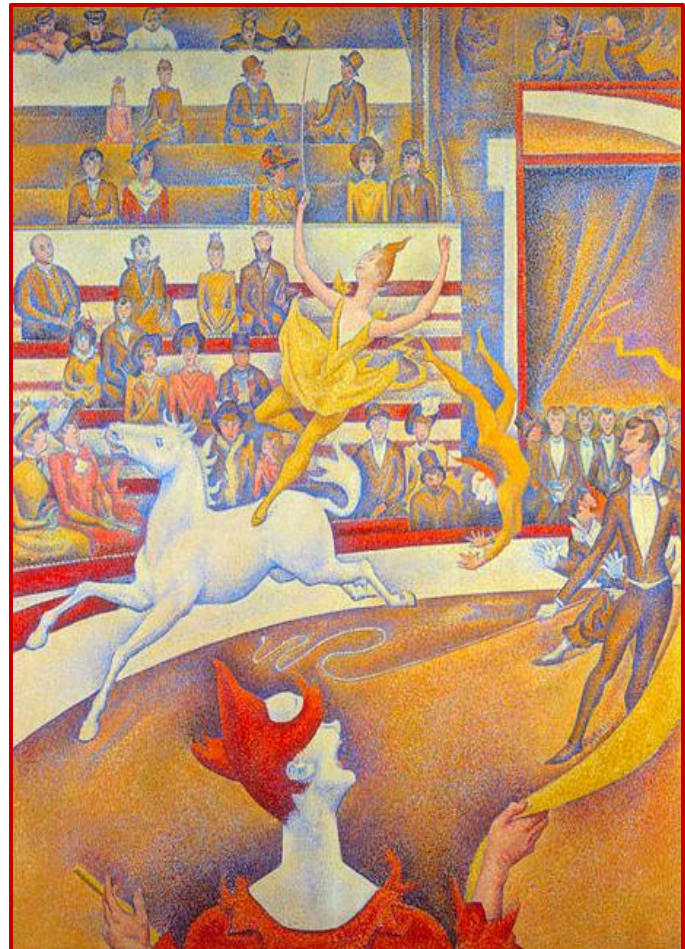


Gray weather, Grande Jatte, 1888 (29).

His last ambitious work, *The Circus*, was left unfinished at the time of his death.



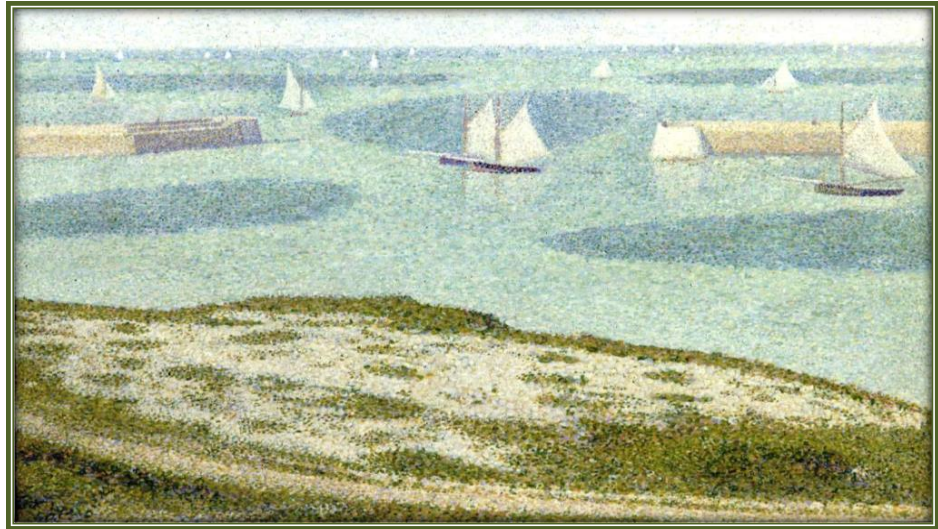
This painting shows the Eiffel Tower unfinished at the top because it wasn't completely built when Seurat painted it.



The Eiffel Tower, 1889 (30). *The Circus*, 1891 (31).

What do you remember?

1. Seurat is famous for creating his technique of painting called _____.
2. A painting which uses only different shades of one color is called _____.
3. The 10 foot wide painting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* took _____ years to complete.



4. Georges Seurat, like many artists, practiced at his craft until, in his aged years, physical deformity caused him to stop painting. T or F. _____.
5. What of Georges' spiritual journey?



What Historical Timeline

- 1859 - 61 – **Steamroller**
- 1864 – **Pasteurization**
- 1867 – Nobel invents **dynamite**, Strauss *Blue Danube Waltz*
- 1869 – **Suez Canal** opens
- 1870 – Franco – Prussian War
- 1873 – Tolstoy *Anna Karenina*
- 1880 – **Edison's** electric **light**
- 1882 – **R.L. Stevenson** *Treasure Island*
- 1883 – **Brooklyn Bridge** open
- 1884 – Mark Twain *Huckleberry Finn*
- 1884 - 85 – Chinese – French War
- 1886 – **Statue of Liberty** dedicated
- 1889 – **Eiffel Tower** opens

Who

- 1840 – 1893 – Pyotr **Tchaikovsky**, Russian
- 1847 – 1931 – Thomas **Edison**
- 1853 – 1890 – Vincent **van Gogh**
- 1869 – 1948 – Mahatma **Gandhi**
- 1870 – 1924 – Vladimir **Lenin**
- 1879 – 1955 – Albert **Einstein**
- 1879 – 1953 – Joseph **Stalin**
- 1882 – 1945 – F.D. **Roosevelt**
- 1883 – 1945 – Benito **Mussolini**
- 1887 – 1975 – Chiang **Kai-Shek**

Fishing Fleet at Port-en-Bessin, 1888 (29). Le Chahut, (The Can – Can), 1890 (31).