Class Discussion – 15 minutes

POWERPOINT #1

Today we are going to talk about color. Let’s see what you already know!

There are three colors that cannot be made by mixing other colors. They are called primary or pure colors.

- Do you know what they are? (red, blue, yellow)

POWERPOINT #2

- If I take red and yellow and mix them, what do I get? (orange)
- Blue and Yellow? (green)
- Blue and Red? (violet)

These colors are called secondary colors.

POWERPOINT #3

- Does anyone know what happens when I mix all three primary colors? (brown)

Did you know that black and white are not really considered colors! White is considered the presence of all color and black is considered the absence of all color. By adding black and white to colors you can make them darker and lighter.

Today we are going to look at one of the most famous paintings found at the Art Institute of Chicago. It is called A Sunday on La Grande Jatte and it was created by Georges Seurat. Seurat was born in Paris, France in 1859.

POWERPOINT #4

Seurat was the developer of a very scientific way of painting known as pointillism. He used tiny dots of pure color, side by side to build form in his paintings.
Pointillism is a technique of painting in which a lot of tiny dots are combined to form a picture. The reason for doing pointillism instead of a picture with physical mixing is that, supposedly, physically mixing colors dulls them. Most of the painters of Seurat's time blended the colors to make a picture with a smoother feeling than Seurat's bright, dotty works.

When two colors are right next to each other your eye mixes them in a process called, "optical mixing." Using optical mixing rather than physical mixing can create a brighter picture. Painting a pointillist piece is a slow and painstaking process. Seurat's famous "A Sunday in the Park on the Island of La Grande Jatte" (more commonly known as "Sunday in the Park"), which covered a wall (81 inches by 120 inches), took him two years to complete. He was known for amazing devotion and concentration. The dots in a pointillist painting can be as small as 1/16 of an inch in diameter! Based on these measurements, "Sunday in the Park" has approximately 3,456,000 dots!

Look at the brushwork that Seurat used on the painting:

You may not realize it, but Seurat used only primary colors plus black and white. Seurat put down patches or dots of colors and our eyes mix them. Look at all of the green in this picture:

- How do you think he created green if he did not use green paint? (he put down many dots of blue and yellow so that our eyes see green)

- Where do you think he put more blue than yellow?
- Who can find the dog in this picture?
- What color do you see above the dog?
POWERPOINT #8

Let’s look at a close up of the dog:

- *What colors did Seurat use to create the color?*

POWERPOINT #9

Let’s look at 2 more areas of close up.

- *What colors do you see?*
- *How did Seurat make the colors?*

POWERPOINT #10

Grande Jatte was Seurat’s first Pointillist work. It is clear that Seurat was developing his Pointillist style, for the brushwork varies greatly within the painting: Seurat uses tiny dots of red green and white to depict the grass, small brown, green, and white vertical lines to depict the tree bark, and slightly larger brushstrokes paint the clothes and flesh of the characters in the foreground. Before exhibiting the painting, Seurat also touched up the painting with a pointillist border, which consists of fine dots of complimentary color to the color the border touches at a certain point (e.g. the border is red where it touches green, and is blue where it touches orange, etc). Grand Jatte is Seurat's first Pointillist work, however he continued to develop the style after the painting's completion.
Second Grade

Seurat

Project – 15 minutes

Materials in PTO room:
- White construction paper – cut in half

Materials in classroom:
- Markers
- Pencil

Materials from Home:
- None

Activity Background for Parents:
Allow a few minutes in your preparation time to cut the construction paper in half for this activity.

Explanation to students:
Today you are going to create a pointillism painting. You are going to create a picture using only dots. You will use markers but should only use the points.

- Each of you will be given a small piece of white paper. Take a minute and with pencil draw a picture of a fish.
- Make it an original fish.
- Decorate it any way you want.
- When you have finished with the drawing of your fish you should take your marker and fill in the colors of the fish.
- Use the tips of your markers to make dots on the page. The dots should be small.
Influenced by the Impressionists’ experimentation with color, Postimpressionist painter Georges Seurat worked with innovative techniques. On an enormous canvas, the artist depicted city dwellers gathered at a park on La Grande Jatte (literally, "the big platter"), an island in the River Seine. All kinds of people stroll, lounge, sail, and fish in the park.

Using newly discovered optical and color theories, Seurat rendered his subject by placing tiny, precise brush strokes of different colors close to one another so that they blend at a distance. Art critics subsequently named this technique Divisionism, or Pointillism. The artist visited La Grande Jatte many times, making drawings and more than 30 oil sketches to prepare for the final work. With his precise method and technique, Seurat conceived of his painting as a reform of Impressionism. The precise contours, geometric shapes, and measured proportions and distances in Seurat's masterpiece (not to mention its monumental size) contrast significantly with the small, spontaneous canvases of Impressionism.

Over the past several decades, many scholars have attempted to explain the meaning of this great composition. For some, it shows the growing middle class at leisure. Others see it as a representation of social tensions between modern city dwellers of different social classes, all of whom gather in the same public space but do not communicate or interact.

Seurat was only 26 when he first showed A Sunday on La Grande Jatte—1884 at the eighth annual and final Impressionist exhibition in 1886. In scale, technique, and composition it appeared as a scandalous eruption within Impressionism, a deliberate challenge to its first practitioners, such as Renoir and Monet. It immediately changed the course of vanguard painting, initiating a new direction that was baptized "Neoimpressionism."

Seurat died at age 31. He created other ambitious canvases, but La Grande Jatte has remained his definitive achievement. Although the picture was only rarely seen in the three decades following his death in 1891, its visibility was dramatically increased in 1924, when Frederic Clay Bartlett purchased the picture and placed it on loan at the Art Institute. It has hung there ever since. Seurat's first major painting to enter a public collection, La Grande Jatte has become an icon, one of the art world's most recognizable images.