

Fruit Pointillism Paintings

Exploring Texture and Color

by Noormah Jamal, CMA Artist in Residence 2023-24

In this lesson, students will draw inspiration from the works of Georges Seurat, particularly "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte." We will explore the artistic technique known as pointillism, discussing how colors and layers create depth and detail in paintings.



Materials

- Pencil
- Eraser
- Paper
- Black, white, red, blue, yellow, and green paint pre-swatched on a paper plate
- Cotton swabs
- Sponges cut to 1 x 2.5 inches [the size of a steak fry]

First, Let's Look at Pointillism!

1.

Pull up an image of [A Sunday on La Grande Jatte, Georges Seurat, 1884](#)

2.

Look at the painting from 2 inches. If viewing this image digitally, zoom into the image as close as possible. What colors do you notice?

3.

Now look at the painting from one foot away, or zoom out a little further. Do you notice anything different?

4.

Now look at the painting from five feet away, or zoom out as far as you can. How does looking at the painting feel from this distance versus from close-up?

Exploring Blending Techniques

5.

Primary colors are colors that cannot be created by mixing other colors together. They are red, blue, and yellow. Find an example of a primary color in the painting. Look at it up both close and far away.

6.

Secondary colors are created by mixing two primary colors together. They include orange [red + yellow], green [yellow + blue], and purple [blue + red]. Find an example of a secondary color in the painting. Look at it up both close and far away.

7.

Tertiary colors are created by mixing a primary color with a secondary color. They are yellow-orange, red-orange, red-purple, blue-purple, blue-green, and yellow-green. Find an example of a tertiary color in the painting. Look at it up both close and far away.

Step 1: Drawing Fruits

Take a look at reference images of various fruits. Pick one that interests you the most and start to draw it from observation. Pay attention to its shape, size, and any bumps or ridges you see. While you draw your fruit, think about the colors that you see. Where does the light hit the fruit? Where are the shadows? What colors do you see in these spots of light and dark?

Step 2: Layering Color

Take a moment to explore the colors available to you. Using the Q-tips and sponges provided, apply the paint to your fruit drawings by gently dabbing and layering the colors. Pay attention to how much paint is on your brush. Too much paint will make it difficult to layer colors. How does using different amounts of pressure affect your mark-making?

Step 3: Reflection

Take plenty of moments to step back and observe your painting from a distance to get a better understanding of how your colors interact. This will help you assess how effective your layering and blending technique is. Identify any areas that may need more color or blending.

Noormah's Notes

1.

In this exercise, the aim is to layer dots on the painting instead of blending colors on the palette. Before students start their own paintings, a demo may be helpful to encourage students to “mix on the painting, not on the palette.” Show how secondary and tertiary colors can be made by small dots of primary colors alone.

2.

By layering small dots of different colors on top of each other, artists can achieve a wide range of hues and tones. This layering technique allows for subtle variations in color and shading, resulting in rich and vibrant compositions. Additionally, the overlapping of dots creates optical blending, where colors visually mix together when viewed from a distance, enhancing the illusion of depth and dimension in the artwork. I was surprised by how quickly students were able to grasp this technique, relating the marks on the paintings to individual pixels in a photograph.

3.

Sponges proved to be a time-saving tool, particularly for younger students who may take longer to draw. For older students, the option to remove the sponges altogether can increase the complexity of the assignment, making it a versatile activity for teaching color theory and mixing/layering colors

Examples From the Field:

Fifth Graders at Children's Workshop School, NYC

Process Shots



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Finished Works



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