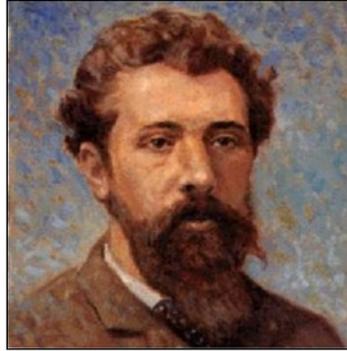


## Georges-Pierre Seurat—using color to create harmony and emotion in art

Georges-Pierre Seurat (1859-1891) was a French Post-Impressionist painter and draftsman. He is noted for his innovative use of drawing media and for devising the painting techniques known as **pointillism**. Seurat's artistic personality was compounded of qualities which are usually supposed to be opposed and incompatible: on the one hand, his extreme and delicate sensibility; on the other, a passion for logical abstraction and an almost mathematical precision of mind. His large-scale work, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884–1886), altered the direction of modern art by initiating Neo-impressionism, and is one of the icons of late 19th-century painting.



Seurat spent more than two years painting *A Sunday Afternoon*, focusing meticulously on the landscape of the park. He reworked the original and completed numerous preliminary drawings and oil sketches. He sat in the park, creating numerous sketches of the various figures in order to perfect their form. He concentrated on issues of color, light, and form. The painting is approximately seven by ten feet and is one of Seurat's most famous works. It is a leading example of pointillism technique, executed on a large canvas.

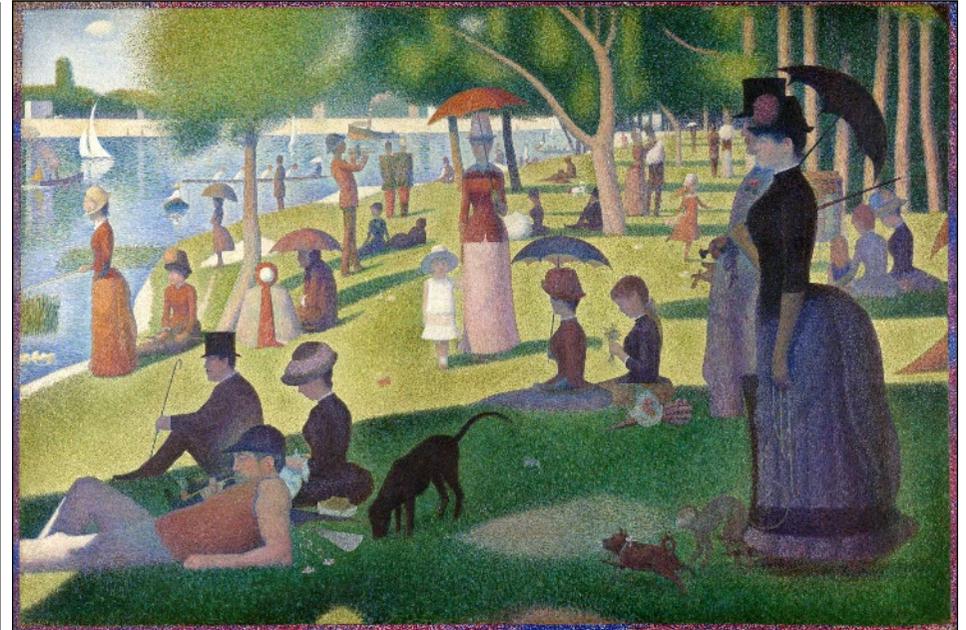
After a year at the Brest Military Academy, he returned to Paris where he shared a studio with his friend Aman-Jean, while also renting a small apartment at 16 rue de Chabrol. For the next two years, he worked at mastering the art of monochrome drawing. His first exhibited work, shown at the Salon, of 1883, was a Conté crayon drawing of Aman-Jean. He also studied the works of Eugène Delacroix carefully, making notes on his use of color.

Seurat took to heart the color theorists' notion of a scientific approach to painting. He believed that a painter could use color to create harmony and emotion in art in the same way that a musician uses counterpoint and variation to create harmony in music. He theorized that the scientific application of color was like any other natural law, and he was driven to prove this conjecture. He thought that the knowledge of perception and optical laws could be used to create a new language of art based on its own set of heuristics and he set out to show this language using lines, color intensity and color schema.

Seurat died in Paris in his parents' home on March 29, 1891 at the age of thirty-one. The cause of his death is uncertain, and has been variously attributed to a form of meningitis, pneumonia, infectious angina, and diphtheria. His last ambitious work, *The Circus*, was left unfinished at the time of his death. (Wikipedia)

**NEO-IMPRESSIONISM** is a term coined to describe an art movement founded by Georges Seurat. Seurat's greatest masterpiece, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, marked the beginning of this movement when it first made its appearance at an exhibition of the Société des Artistes Indépendants (Salon des Indépendants) in Paris.

**POINTILLISM:** This new technique consisted of making the brushstrokes more even, smaller, and into round spots. The round spot became a dot, also known as point which is where the term Pointillism derives from. This method consists of making tiny dots on the canvas but without blending the colors on the palette or on the canvas. The different colored dots are put close together creating an image that would have been created by the brushstrokes.



*A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*  
Georges-Pierre Seurat (1884-1886) • 81.7" x 121.25" • Art Institute of Chicago

### Do You See What I See?

BY LINDA MOWLES

*A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of Grand Jette* occupies an entire wall in the Art Institute of Chicago. Standing at the entrance to the hall where the painting is hung, you can feel a part of the lovely, sunny afternoon in Paris. But stand closer and all you see are yellow, red and blue dots, each carefully positioned to contribute to the painting as a whole. Seurat believed that this form of painting, called divisionism at the time but now known as pointillism, would make the colors more brilliant and powerful than standard brushstrokes. His painting teaches us a valuable lesson in perspective.

Sometimes, you have to back away from a situation to get the full picture.

Jesus understood this. For example, the people were crying “Hosanna” and “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord” while He was riding on the back of the donkey in what is called “His Triumphal Entry.”

“And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.’” (Luke 19:41-42).

He stood afar and looked at the entire scene unfolding before Him and recognized that the people were clamoring after that which would do no good and that they were ignoring the relief that He could bring which would do eternal good. Sometimes what you see depends on where you stand.

But then there are times when you must get into the picture to see what is going on—you must get into the dirt and grime of the situation in order to assist those who are helpless by themselves.

May we seek our perspective from Him who provides help far surpassing our own limits. And remember, sometimes, you have to back away from a situation to get the full picture.

(Read more from Linda at [www.lindamowles.com](http://www.lindamowles.com))