

Homework 4

Techniques of the Impressionists

The Impressionists often painted En Plein Air in the evening. This allowed them to replicate the shadowy effects of twilight or sunset 'Effets De Soir'. The effects of light are especially visible in the evening- shadows are created and light has more reflective properties. However, Impressionists would not use black to paint shadows, they used blue to represent the reflection of the sky onto surfaces. This technique of painting outdoors helped impressionists better depict the effects of light and emphasize the vibrancy of colours.



There were many new tools that emerged in the 19th century that made these techniques possible. Painting equipment needed to be easily taken to a location so canvases tended to be small. Easels became collapsible and portable, and pre-mixed paint in lead tubes was introduced. Prior to the development of pre-mixed paint, painters mixed their own paint and stored it in animal bladders.

To capture images quickly artists used small, rapid brush strokes, the intent of the brush strokes was to capture light, and not necessarily the objects. The compositions were open, capturing a brief glimpse of a larger scene.

Monet like most Impressionists used a limited colour palette of just red, blue, yellow, green and white.



A technique known as optical mixing was used where colours were applied side by side without mixing them. The colours are mixed by the viewers eye as they look at the painting from a distance.



The paint was applied thickly which gives a vibrant surface texture, these were impasto, heavy strokes of paint. Paint would generally be applied 'wet on wet' meaning the thick dabs of paint would be applied before other layers had dried so hard edges were diffused.

The Impressionist painters used broken colour - layers of colours, leaving gaps in the top layers to reveal the colours underneath. The technique is achieved through hatching, cross-hatching, stippling, drybrushing, and sgraffito (scratching into the paint to reveal the colour underneath).

Greys and dark tones were created by mixing complementary colours. Complementary colours were also used by placing them next to each other in an image to make them appear more vibrant and vivid than they would when paired with any other colour.