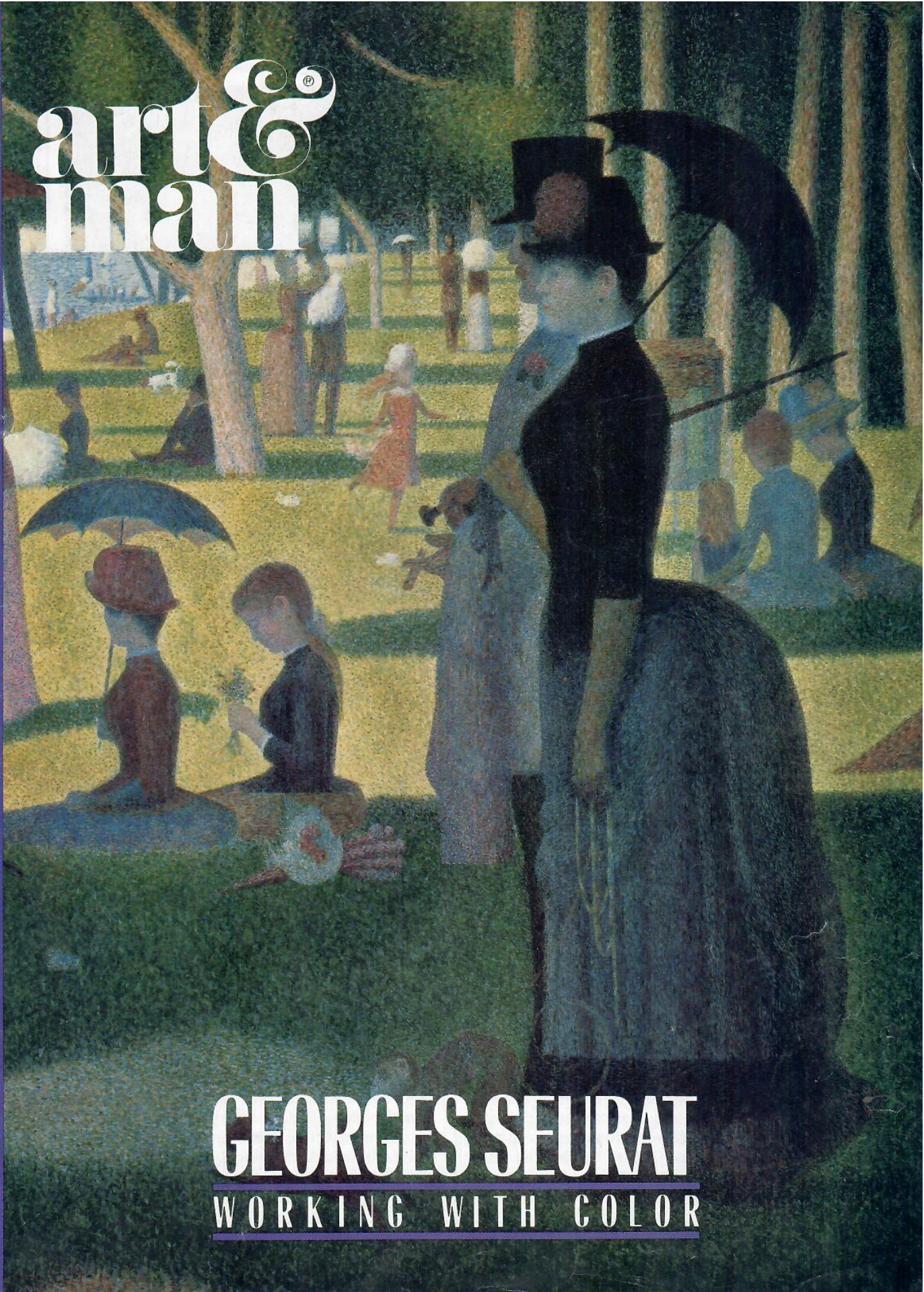


NOVEMBER, 1995 VOL. 16 NO. 2 ISSN 0004-3052 PUBLISHED BY SCHOLASTIC UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

# art & man



## GEORGES SEURAT

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### WORKING WITH COLOR



# A CHANGING VISION

WHICH OF THESE THREE PAINTINGS  
DO YOU THINK IS THE MASTERPIECE?

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (pronounced *An-gruh*) created such perfect portraits (right) that later, and often less talented, artists copied his style for years.



JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES (1780-1867). "MADAME MOTTESSIER," 1851. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C. SAMUEL H. KRESS COLLECTION.

**T**hese three fashionable young women wearing long formal dresses seem at first glance to have a lot in common. The three French artists who did their portraits all lived and worked in the same city — Paris — during the same century — the nineteenth — and used the same materials — brushes and oil paints. But do these three paintings — except for their subject — really look that much alike?

Paris at the end of the last century was a very exciting place for an artist. Young painters were breaking all the “rules” to create new kinds of art. And then, just when everyone had become used to the “new” art, even younger painters would come along and turn things upside down again. Over the years, French art had become rigid, lifeless, and artificial. Artists had to follow very strict rules. Paintings were to be based on

certain approved subjects, painted from elaborate compositions set up in the studio. Artists were to paint to certain sizes, to use certain colors, and to work only in the official technique. Portraits (like the one above left) could be done, but the sitter was to be idealized and the result was to be more realistically detailed than a photograph.

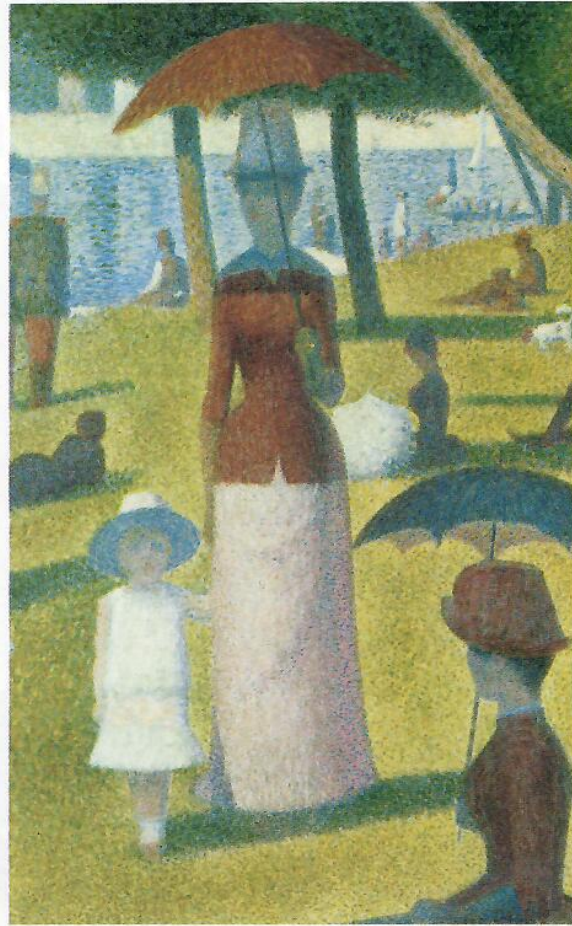
About 20 years after this painting was done, photography began to replace this kind of very realistic portrait. Around the same time, a group of young French artists began to try to paint the world they saw around them, filled with color and light. They took their paints and canvas outdoors and tried to capture the *first impression* of what they saw. The *Impressionists* painted everyday scenes (like the woman with the green umbrella, above center) quickly, on small canvases, using brushstrokes of pure, bright color. This new group of artists, which included Renoir and



CLAUDE MONET (1840-1926). "WOMAN WITH A PARASOL," 1875. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C. MR. AND MRS. PAUL MELLON COLLECTION.



Impressionist painter Claude Monet took his canvas and paints outdoors to capture a brief moment (above) on a sparkling summer day.



GEORGES SEURAT (1859-1891). "A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE ISLAND OF LA GRANDE JATTE" (DETAIL), c. 1884-86. THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO.

Georges Seurat combined Ingres' solid forms with Monet's brightly colored, shimmering brushstrokes to create a brand-new painting style.

Monet among others, held their first exhibition in 1874. Their work was so different that many critics dismissed it and most people regarded the new art as a big joke.

Georges Seurat was 14 in the year the Impressionists first showed their work in public. Seurat was born in Paris in December, 1859, attended a local high school, and when he was 17 went on to art school. He spent a year in the army, and when he returned to Paris, he saw some Impressionist paintings and became interested in the way they used color. A few years later, in 1884, Seurat did a painting (*The Bathers*, see page 5) that made him known all over the city. Withdrawing from his new-found fame, he shut himself up in his studio to create his masterpiece, *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (see pages 8-9 and details on cover and above, right).

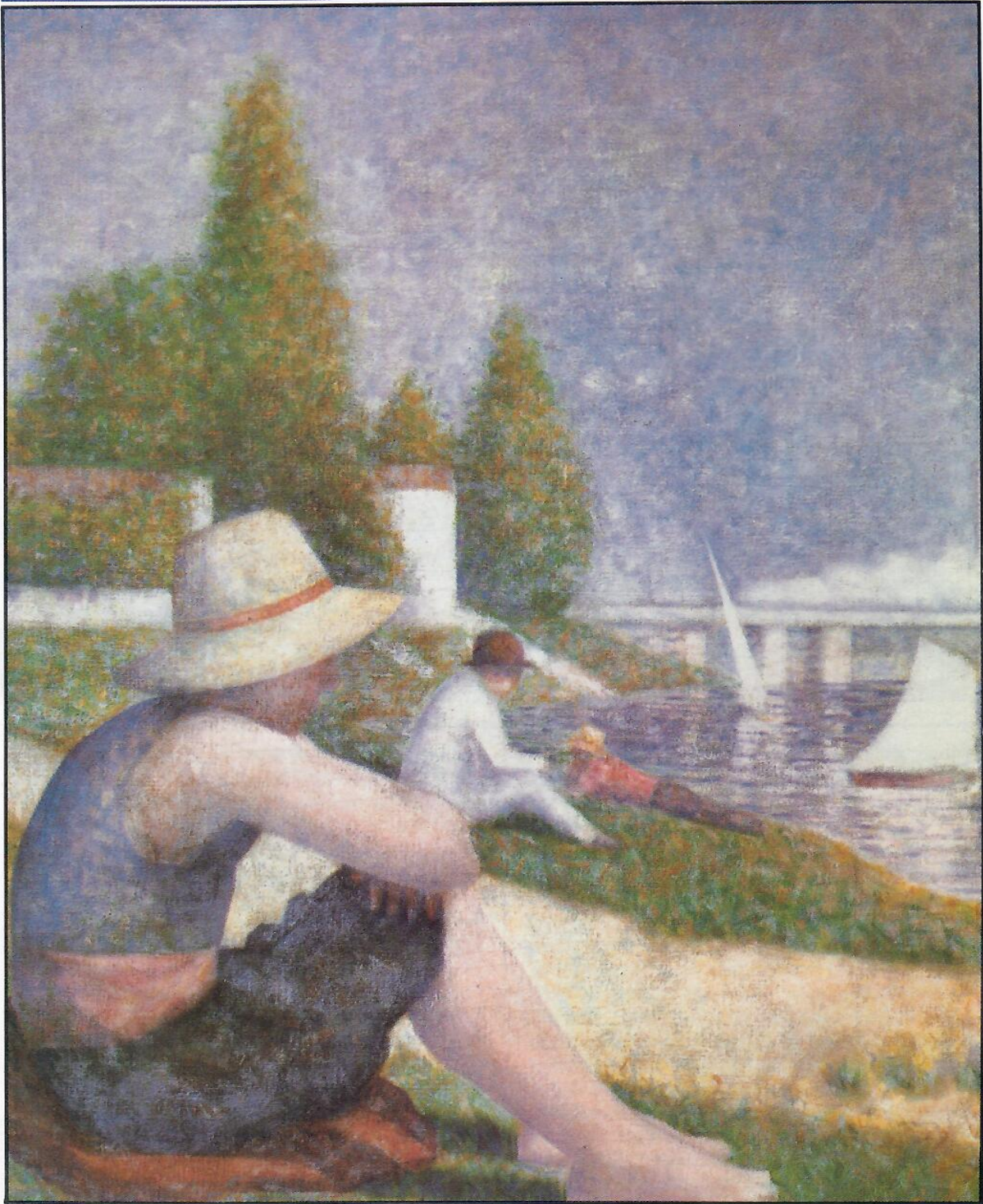
Seurat felt that the Impressionists, in trying to

capture the effects of light, had lost any sense of structure and composition. So to create the solid-looking figure of the woman with the red umbrella (above, right), Seurat painted her using only bright dots of color. He called his new color technique *Pointillism* and devoted the rest of his life to developing this style. For the next few years, Seurat painted constantly, becoming more and more secretive about his work. As another artist put it, "Not an easy man to know." In 1891 Seurat was busy putting together an exhibition of his work. Nine days later, the artist was dead of an unknown illness at the age of 31.

In this issue, you will learn more about Seurat's two most famous works and the painting techniques he invented. You'll meet some other artists who work with color, and finally, you'll be able to use Seurat's ideas on color to create a *Pointillist* work of your own.



# POINTS IN TIME



"THE BATHERS." (DETAIL).



**T**his scene was painted almost exactly a century ago, but does it really look that old? If you cover a few of the hats and perhaps the pair of high shoes, it might seem like any afternoon on a hot summer day at the beach, lake, or pool. Even the haircuts and clothing — like the cut-off T-shirt on the figure at the left — as well as the boats and factories in the background, don't look that much different than those of today.

The residents of Paris worked hard all week including Saturday, and many of them spent Sunday morning in church, so Sunday afternoon became very precious. Since they couldn't get too far out of the city, suburban areas on the bank of the River Seine were very popular. Along with everyone else, Georges Seurat went out to the suburbs, but instead of a lunch basket or a bathing suit, he carried his sketchbook. He did drawings of bathers, seated figures, boats, factories, dogs, trees. Later, back in his studio, he put them all together. But something was still missing. How could he capture the last hours of a Sunday afternoon before the hard work week began again — the feeling of a lazy summer day everyone wished would go on forever?

In this painting *The Bathers*, Seurat is searching for a color style that will create the kind of feeling he wanted to capture. At first he worked traditionally. Compare Seurat's people on these pages with the woman in the black dress on page two. In both works the form of each figure is modeled, or smoothly rounded, the main difference being that Seurat's colors are much lighter. But when you look at the river in *The Bathers*, you may notice that it is done in another style. Here Seurat has used the broad brushstrokes of bright color developed by the Impressionists. (Compare this section of the work with the Impressionist painting on page 3.) But Seurat wasn't satisfied with this technique either. "I want to get through to something new — a kind of painting that is my own." He wanted to create an orderly, scientific system of color that would at the same time seem more real than the real scene. Seurat noticed that when the Impressionists wanted a color to seem to glow or "vibrate," they would use small strokes of the color's opposite, or *complement* (see wheel, page 14). To get an idea of this effect, try staring at a very brightly colored object for about a minute, then quickly look at a sheet of white paper. What do you

# POINTILLISM IS A WAY OF LIFE, NOT A PAINTING SYSTEM.

GEORGES SEURAT



GEORGES SEURAT (1859-1891). "THE BATHERS," c.1889-97. NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON.

This is one of Seurat's most famous paintings, done when the artist was only 24.

see? (If you looked at a red object, you should see a patch of green, the complementary "after-image" of red.) So in the areas of grass in *The Bathers*, Seurat began to develop the new technique for which he became famous, *Pointillism*. Seen up close, the grass is made of tiny yellow and blue dots, but when you stand back, it becomes a green field. And when dots of green's *complementary* color (red) are added, the resulting "after-image" should make the field of grass seem to shimmer, vibrate, and almost seem to be alive.

Unfortunately it is hard to get the full impact of Pointillism from a small reproduction. Seurat himself noticed that after a few weeks his colors had dried, changed, and lost some of their vibrancy. But even in spite of this, *The Bathers* and the hushed, still, eternal world it depicts, is considered one of the landmarks of modern art.

COVER: GEORGES SEURAT (1859-1891). "A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE ISLAND OF LA GRANDE JATTE" (DETAIL), 1884-1886. THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO.

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**ART & MAN (ISSN 0004-3052; in Canada, 2-c no. 9360) is published six times during the school year, Sept./Oct., Nov., Dec./Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr./May, by Scholastic Inc., 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003-9538 for \$4.95 each per school year, for 10 or more subscriptions to the same address. 1-9 subscriptions, each: \$9.90 student, \$19.00 Teachers' Edition, per school year. Single copy: \$1.50 student, \$3.25 Teachers'; special issue: \$2.00 student, \$5.00 Teachers'; (For Canadian pricing, write our Canadian office, address below.) Second-class postage paid at Monroe, OH 45050-9998 and at additional mailing offices. Postmasters: Send address changes to Office of Publication, ART & MAN, 351 Carver Rd., Box 2700, Monroe, OH 45050-2700. Communications relating to subscriptions should be addressed to ART & MAN, P.O. Box 644, Lyndhurst, NJ 07071-9985. Canadian address: Scholastic-Tab Publications, Ltd., 123 Newkirk Rd., Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C 3G5. Available on microfilm through Xerox University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Also available on microfiche through Bell & Howell Micro Photo Division, Old Mansfield Rd., Wooster, OH 44691. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright © 1985 by Scholastic Inc. All Rights Reserved. Material in this issue may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or format without special permission from the publisher.**



# COLORFUL SPACES

DISCOVER HOW THESE ARTISTS USED COLOR TO BRING US INTO THEIR OWN PERSONAL SPACES



HENRI MATISSE (1869-1954). "THE RED STUDIO," 1911. THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK. MRS. SIMON GUGGENHEIM FUND.

## ■ A Colorful Life

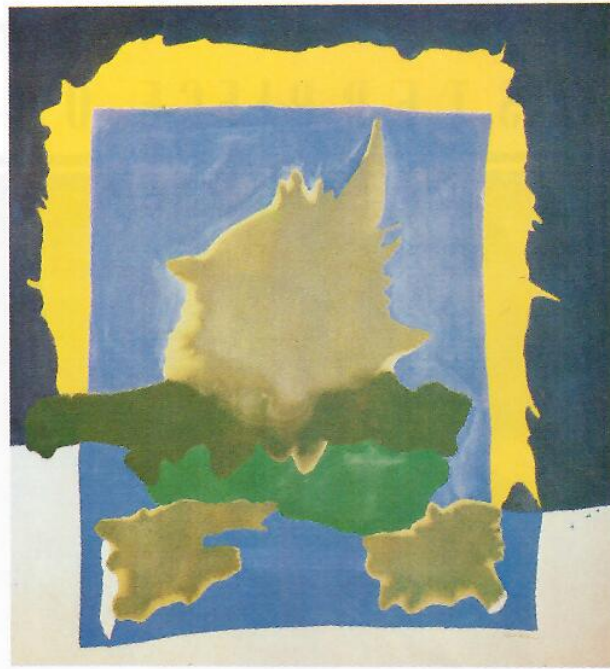
Like Georges Seurat, 20th century French artist Henri Matisse saw the world around him in terms of color. The artist liked to paint the people and surroundings with which he was most familiar, but he wanted to express what he felt and thought about them, not what he saw. Do you think Matisse's studio actually looked like this painting (above) with its red walls, floors, and furniture? The artist has used mainly one color (a *monochromatic* color scheme) to create a

statement about his work and workplace. Can you find any other colors in *The Red Studio*? Now look at the color wheel on page 14. Almost all of the other colors Matisse used — pink, light orange, lavender, and brown — are closely related to red. In a way, this painting is a kind of self-portrait. The artist has gathered his favorite objects, painted them in a favorite color, and on the far wall hung a show of his own paintings, the only solid objects in the whole work.



## Colors of the Mind

Georges Seurat broke colors up into small dots, but his subjects always remained recognizable. Even Matisse's studio, although distorted, looks like a room. In this painting, right, contemporary American artist Helen Frankenthaler has used pure color to paint an *abstraction* of her inner thoughts and emotions. What does *Interior Landscape* look like to you? Do the shapes remind you of natural objects like clouds, sky, grass, or trees seen perhaps through a door or a window? How do the colors the artist used add to this feeling? It may look as if there are a number of different colors in this painting, but how many can you actually count? When you look at page 14, exactly where are those colors located on the color wheel? Closely *related* colors (like blue, green, and yellow) are called *analogous*, and can, in a painting like this, be used to create a very calm, tranquil feeling. But do the sharp, splattered, flame-like shapes of the poured paint suggest that the thoughts in Frankenthaler's *Interior Landscape* are all peaceful?



HELEN FRANKENTHALER, B. 1920. "INTERIOR LANDSCAPE," 1964. SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF ART. GIFT OF THE WOMEN'S BOARD.

## Real Life Colors

When you first look at the very realistic painting below, do you even notice the colors? In fact, does this work by 20th century American artist Edward Hopper look more like a photograph or a painting? In the rest of this issue, you saw how Georges Seurat combined opposite, or *complementary*, dots of color in order to make the image seem to "vibrate" and create a feeling of movement or tension. Which pair of *complementary* colors (see page 14) does Hopper

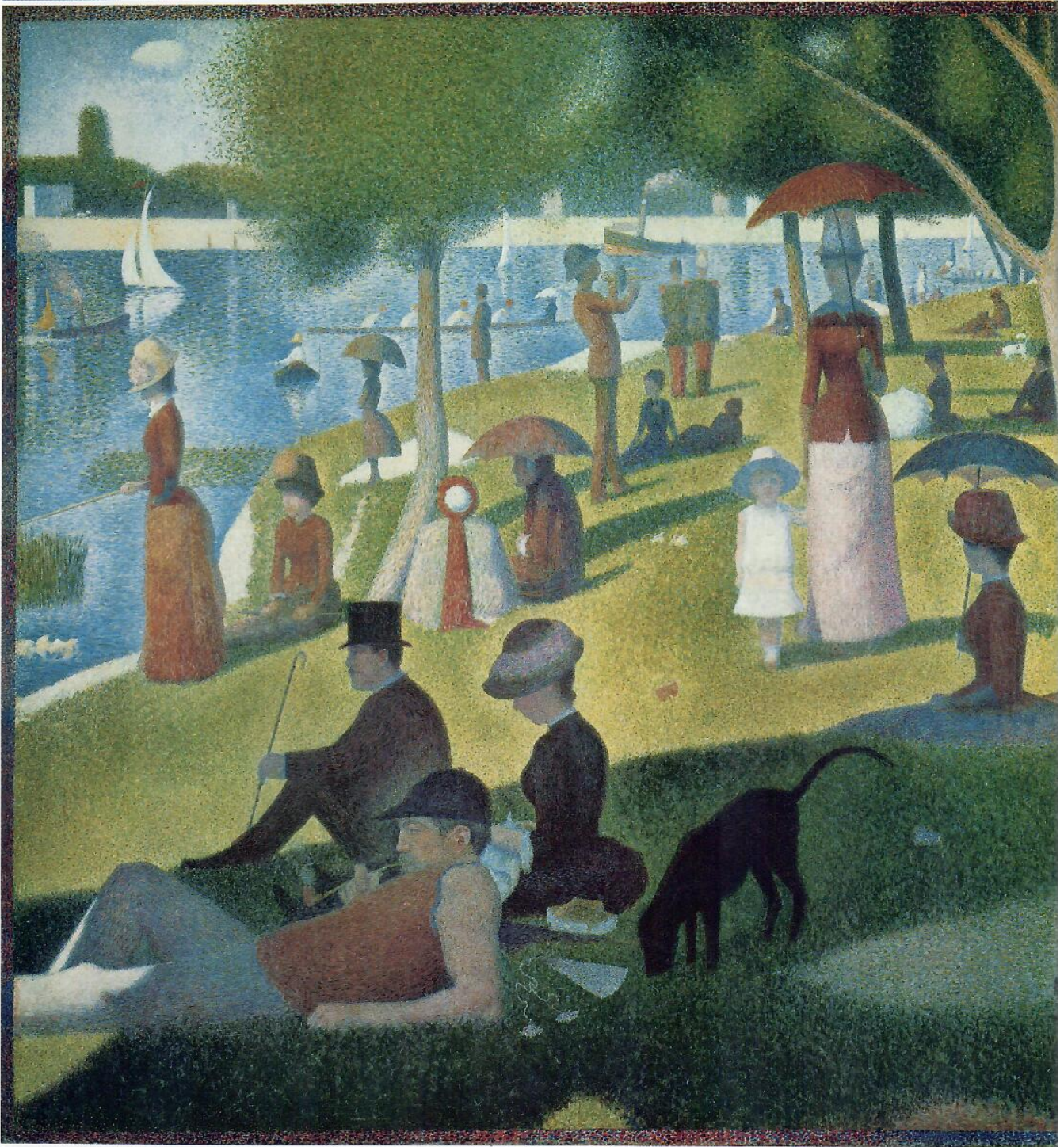
use in his famous painting *Early Sunday Morning*, and what kind of mood has he created? The long horizontal lines in the composition have a lot to do with this mood. How would the painting look if the buildings were all done in what was probably the "real" color scheme — browns and grays? Perhaps the slight vibration created by the opposites, red and green, add a quality of subtle tension that makes *Early Sunday Morning* an outstanding work of art.



EDWARD HOPPER (1882-1967). "EARLY SUNDAY MORNING," 1930. WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW YORK. PHOTO BY GEOFFREY CLEMENTS.



## MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH #2

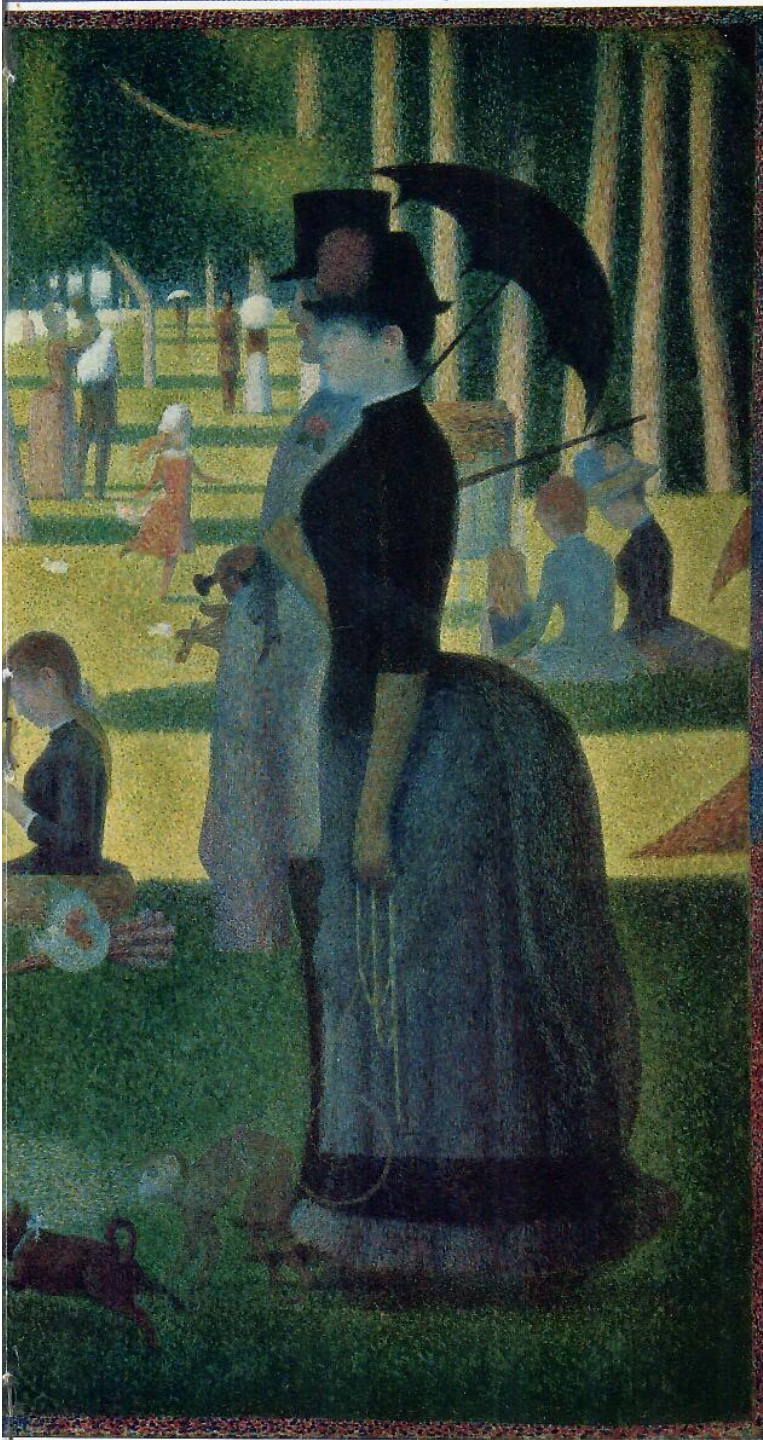


GEORGES SEURAT (1859-1891). "A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE ISLAND OF LA GRANDE JATTE," c. 1864-96. THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO.

# SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE



# BY GEORGES SEURAT



“It is  
four o'clock  
on Sunday  
afternoon  
in the dog-days  
of summer.  
On the river  
the swift boats  
dart  
to and fro.  
On the  
island itself,  
a Sunday crowd  
has come  
together  
at random  
to enjoy  
the fresh air  
in the  
cooling shade  
of the trees.”

—Art Critic,  
1886.

# ISLAND OF LA GRANDE JATTE



A B O U T T H E M A S T E R P I E C E

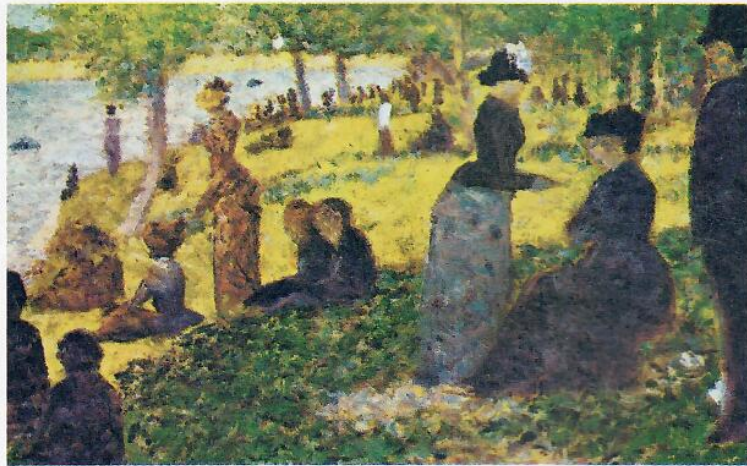
A  
WORLD  
OF  
SILENCE

“ I  
WANT  
TO  
MAKE  
MODERN  
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AS  
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TEMPLES. ”

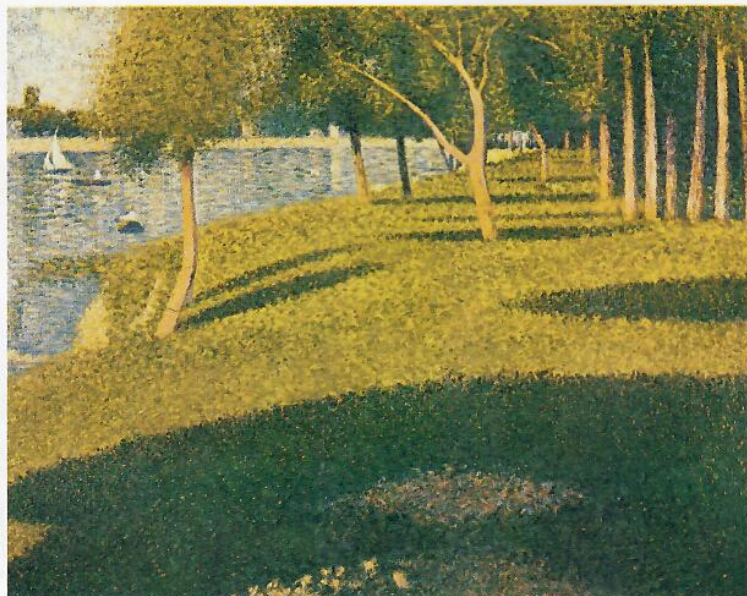
GEORGES  
SEURAT



“WOMEN NEAR THE WATER,” C. 1884-85. PRIVATE COLLECTION.



SMALL STUDY FOR “LA GRANDE JATTE,” 1884-5. PRIVATE COLLECTION.



SKETCH FOR “LA GRANDE JATTE,” 1884. PRIVATE COLLECTION.



When you looked at Seurat's *The Bathers* on page 5, did you notice a small boat in the upper right corner of the painting? It is headed toward a spot just beyond the trees on the right — a famous island outside Paris. Each Sunday, nearly the entire city gathered there to see and be seen on the Island of the *Grande Jatte*.



"WALK BY THE RIVER," c. 1882.

Seurat made this elegant woman an important part of *La Grande Jatte*, pages 8-9.

Georges Seurat had no sooner become well-known for his first large painting, *The Bathers* (page 5), than he closed himself up in his studio again with an even larger canvas. He went out rarely, and only then to La Grande Jatte to do sketches for "The Painting." Now that he knew he wanted to make a huge composition entirely out of tiny brushstrokes of pure, bright "optical" (mixed in the eye) color, he experimented with different combinations of dots (see color sketch, top of opposite page). He also wanted to carefully *compose* his work, so he did a number of landscape studies of the island, tilting the background up, almost like a stage set ready for the figures. Compare the small painting (bottom of opposite page) with the final work on pages 8-9. Can you find many changes? Is there one character that is already in place?

Seurat did sketches of the people he saw on La Grande Jatte (like those shown on these two pages), but mainly he liked to draw from studio models. He even used fashion ads from newspapers and magazines for the costumes. He placed his first row of characters — all seen from the side — in a band of deep shadow. They — especially the man on the left with the pipe — are all

fairly real-looking. Can you spot the one element that seems a little strange? (What about a pet being walked by the very fashionable woman on the right?)

The next row of people in the band of sunlight in back seem somewhat stranger, and some look almost surreal. Seurat uses multiple perspectives to heighten this feeling. We see some of the people, like

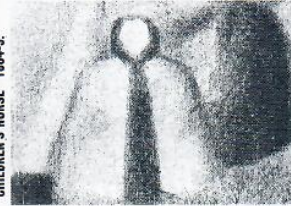
Can you find these two young women in the final version of the painting?



"YOUNG GIRLS," (DETAIL), 1884-5.

the woman and little girl in the center, at *eye level*. At the same time we seem to be looking *down* at everyone else that surrounds this pair. Do you think a woman dressed like the one on the left of the painting would be likely to be fishing? To her right is a mysterious figure seen from the back who looks more like a haystack or a large rock. Why is the uniformed musician behind both of these figures standing by himself playing a trumpet? The two women on the extreme right are cooking on a portable stove, but does it look like any stove you've ever seen before?

The last row, the people on the river, might be the strangest of all. There is a round figure fishing from a round rock in front of four round rowers. And which way does the wind seem to be blowing when you look at the two boats on the left? The answer might be different when you look at the two other boats to their right.



The artist also used this sketch of a seated nurse.

"CHILDREN'S NURSE," 1884-5.

Seurat hung this enormous canvas on his studio wall, standing on ladders in order to cover it with thousands of dots of paint. He developed an exact formula, using so many dots of a certain color to the square inch. Most painters found it difficult to work

by artificial light, but since Seurat knew exactly what he was going to do in advance, he could work all day, then on through the night, almost like a machine. He said, on one of the rare occasions that he spoke to anyone, "Work is difficult and I am seeing no one."

At the end of two years, Seurat finished his painting, just in time for the Impressionist Exhibition of 1886. He refused to put it into a conventional frame, instead painting a border around it in *complementary* colors. When people saw the painting some raved, calling *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* a masterpiece. But not everyone was pleased to see themselves at their favorite resort portrayed as frozen figures composed out of little dots. It would take a few years for this haunting work with its mysterious, isolated inhabitants and magical atmosphere to be accepted by everyone as one of the great creations of modern art.

Seurat worked on ladders to create his huge canvases.



"THE PAINTER AT WORK," 1884.



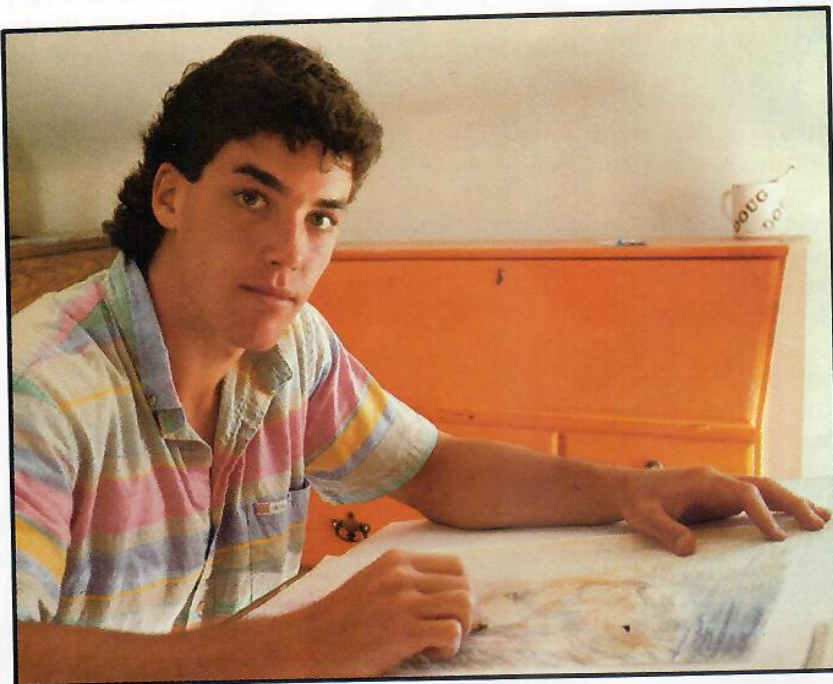
**BRIAN**  


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**WORKING**  
**WITH COLOR**  


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**WILLSE**



Look in the mirror, and you might see shades of orange, yellow, pink, or brown in your face. Look again and you might see a little blue in the shadows. But if you're 17-year-old Brian Willse, a senior at Rocky River High School in Ohio, you will discover an amazing patchwork of blues, purples, and greens. Last summer we visited Brian at his home to find out more about the artist and his Scholastic Art Award-winning self-portrait (right). Brian is also a hockey player, windsurfer, and lifeguard. Here he tells us what he finds special about art.

**When did you first get involved in art?**

I've always liked to draw. Mostly I'd doodle little cartoons of sports figures, especially hockey players. Then in my sophomore year, I took my first art course. We drew a lot from live models and still-life set-ups. The drawing (right) was a homework assignment. We were supposed to do a pen-and-ink self-portrait. But I asked if I could do mine in color.

**How did you set up the portrait?**

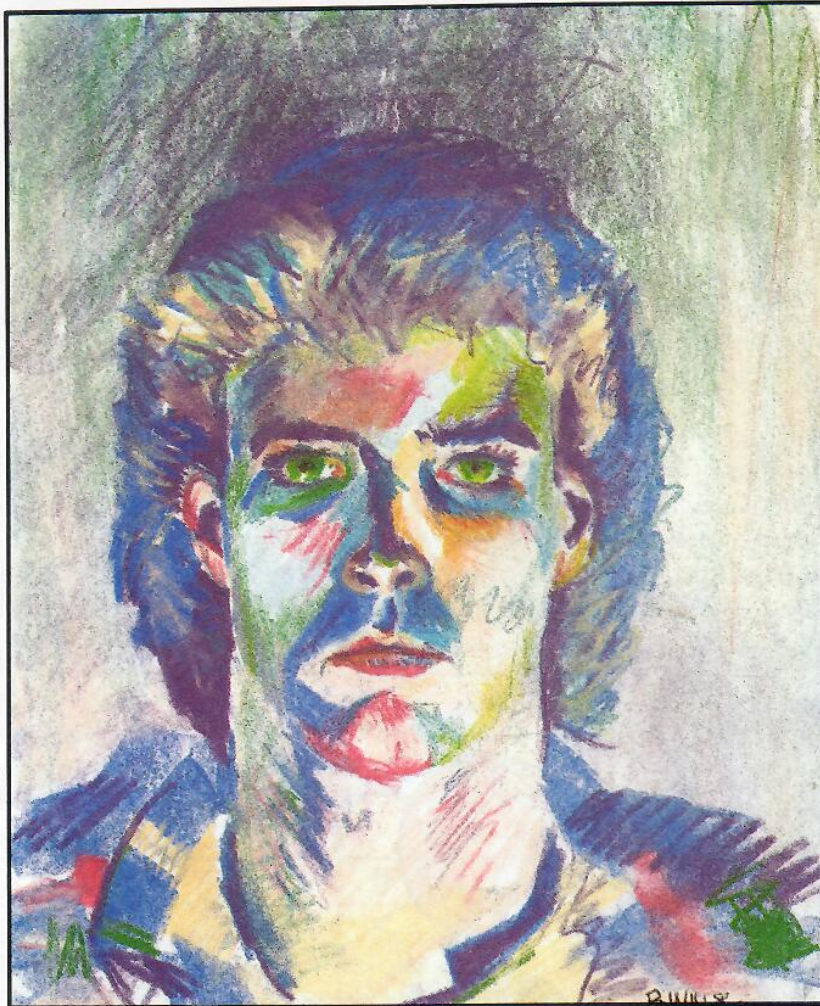
I was up in my room one night. I had a light shining down on a mir-

ror so that it would reflect back up on my face. I looked at another mirror in front of me to do the drawing.

**How did you begin?**

I just started trying to see what was there. I was feeling kind of loose about this assignment. It was more of an experiment in using color, so I wasn't that worried about making mistakes. I did a pencil sketch of the features, and then I began putting in the colors — first oranges and the regular face colors. But then I got a little more daring, putting blues and





greens in the shadows. With the light coming from below, you get unusual shadows — above the mouth, on top of the nose, on the forehead, below the eyes.

**Did you actually see all these colors in your face?**

Kind of, but I exaggerated what I saw. I'd look up at the mirror, see a color, and put it down real quick. I was on a roll. I had all my colors laid out. I'd catch a color somewhere, and I'd get it down before I lost it, catch another one, and so on. I was trying to get everything I saw. After an hour and a half like this, you feel like you're hallucinating. You really get into it.

**Did you try to use certain kinds of color combinations in the drawing?**

Not really. I like the yellow green

next to the purple because it makes the eyebrows stand out, but it just turned out that way. I was trying to go for as much color as possible. I also worked for contrast between the light and dark colors. The next day, my teacher suggested I add the shadow above the head to emphasize where the light was coming from.

**How did you know when you were finished?**

I fell asleep. No, I'm kidding, but it was really late. I guess I just knew the drawing was pretty much done. The next morning it was still sitting there. I could hardly remember doing it. It was like seeing it for the first time.

**Do you see your own face any differently after doing this portrait?**

Probably. You can see something

new every time you look in the mirror. Just lately, since I've been thinking about this work again, I'll look in the mirror and try to catch what I saw back then. But I don't think I could do the same portrait again. I see different things now.

**How do you think you would do the portrait now?**

I might use brighter colors because it's summer now and I'm in a different mood. Maybe more reds because I'm sunburned. But I couldn't really say until I did it. There's a more relaxed feeling in the summer. I'm outdoors a lot. In the winter I feel boxed in — like in this picture. It's so cold. That's probably why some of the blues are in there. I hate winter, except for the hockey season.

**Art and hockey are such different activities. One is a team sport; the other is an activity you do alone. How do you do them both?**

I get the same thrill if I do well in both of them. Also I'm a goalie, which means I'm the loner on the team. And they both take the same kind of deep concentration. You're not exactly in a trance, but you could say it's kind of meditative, waiting in front of the goal, being ready for the shots.

**What kind of career are you planning on?**

I'm inching more towards art. But I would probably go into commercial art so I could make some money. I've been looking at colleges for their art programs — and their hockey teams.

**Is there any advice on art you could offer our readers?**

Even if you're not going to make a career in art, it's a good way to relax. Things go through your mind, and it's satisfying to get them down on paper, where you can see them. I'd say just experiment and, as my teacher says, don't be afraid to make mistakes. Keep at it, and maybe you'll come up with a winner.

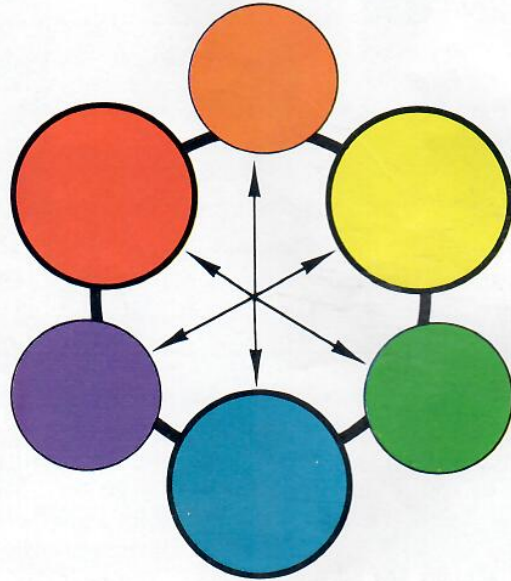


CREATING A  
POINTILLIST DRAWING

LEARN TO CREATE COLOR EFFECTS THAT ARE BRIGHTER THAN LIFE.

Georges Seurat and the *Pointillists* had the idea that combining small dots of *complementary*, or opposite, colors in their paintings produced a "vibration" that made objects and scenes appear more lifelike. When compared with photographs, Seurat's paintings may not look very "real."

And, as a matter of fact, the Pointillist techniques and stylized shapes he developed are used today by many modern "abstract" artists. In this workshop, you will discover how certain colors can be used together to create brilliant, unusual, and almost "abstract" effects.



On the color wheel, *complementary* colors are *opposite* each other while *analogous* (related) colors are *next* to each other.

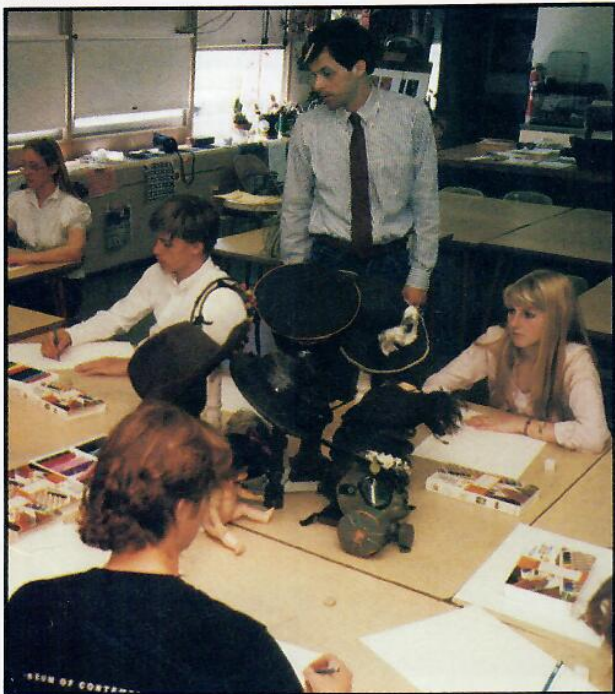
## MATERIALS

12" x 18" 80lb white sulfite paper  
Ebony pencils  
Water felt markers (primary and secondary colors)  
Vinyl erasers

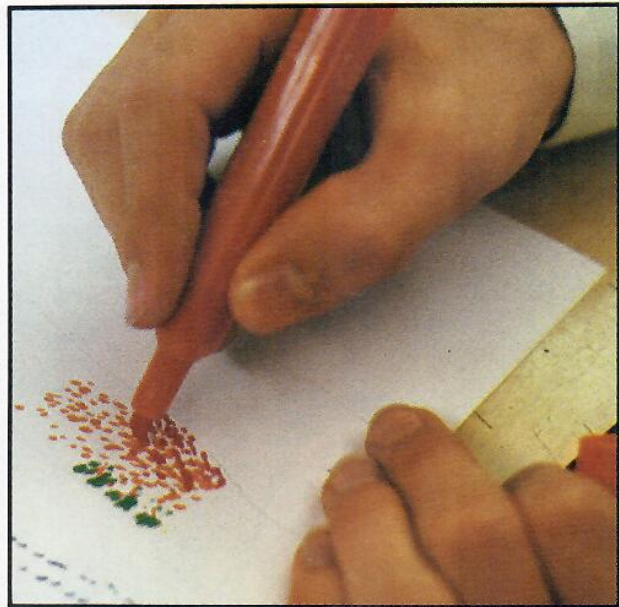
## STARTING OUT

**1** Set up a still life, choosing objects with large, simple shapes. Try to keep colors neutral, as you will not be trying to reproduce "real" objects but creating an abstract color composition.





**2** Do a *blind contour* drawing (see workshop in Sept/Oct issue) of still life. Stress boldness and shape and try to avoid small details. Carefully select a section of your drawing and enlarge it. Draw *lightly*.



**3** *Complementary* colors are those opposite each other on the color wheel (red/green, orange/blue, yellow/purple). An *adjacent complementary* color scheme consists of a pair of complementaries (like red/green) plus one of the colors next to either one of the two complementaries (like orange). What other colors could also be *adjacent* in this color scheme?

## SOME SOLUTIONS

Using two colors (opposites on the color wheel) or three colors (two opposites and one adjacent) the artists below have created *complementary* or *adjacent complementary* color schemes based on their still-life

drawings. They have used dots of color, varying the size, pattern, density, and spacing between the dots. What effects have they gotten by combining complementary dots; colors adjacent to each other; the complement opposite the two adjacent colors? What feeling do the dots give that solid colors would not?







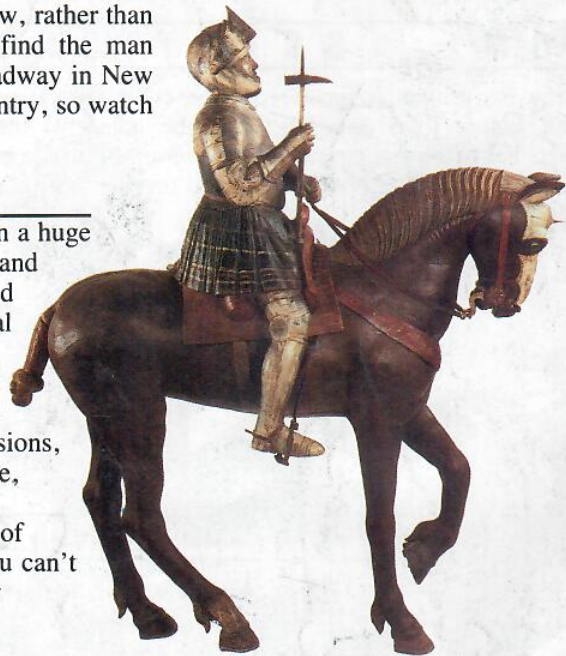
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### SEURAT ON BROADWAY

Have you seen the picture above somewhere before? This is a scene from *Sunday in the Park with George*, the only Broadway musical to be based on a painting. It is the story of the painter Georges Seurat (the man in the brown suit and hat standing in back) and his obsession with his art. Compare the photo to Seurat's painting on pages 8-9, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. What are some of the differences you notice right away? Why do the people seem to be standing in a row, rather than filling the frame as they do in the painting? Can you find the man holding the baby in the painting? The play is still on Broadway in New York City, but productions will soon begin touring the country, so watch for your chance to see a painting come to life.

### BRITAIN IN THE U.S.

Have you ever dreamed of being enormously rich, living in a huge mansion with hundreds of servants, surrounded by lavish and expensive things? A few very wealthy people actually used to live this way, and a huge new exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., will allow you to experience this kind of lifestyle for yourself—at least for a few hours. *The Treasure Houses of Britain* will recreate rooms from some of Britain's most famous ancestral mansions, filling them with the paintings, tapestries, jewels, furniture, and sculptures (like this 400-year-old, life-sized knight in armor shown at the right) collected by the owners. Many of these objects have never before been seen in public. If you can't yet afford to go to Europe, you can see this unusual show right in the U.S. from now until the end of March, 1986.



"THE LUNLEY HORSEMAN," 16TH CENTURY, ANONYMOUS.

HELEN FRANKENTHALER, (B.1928), "SUMMER BANNER," 1966, PRIVATE COLLECTION.



### COLOR TODAY

On page 7 of this issue, you saw how Helen Frankenthaler creates by combining shapes of pure color. You can see more works by this well-known contemporary American artist in a new show, *Frankenthaler: Works on Paper*

1949-1984, at the Harvard University Art Museum, Cambridge, MA until Nov. 24. It will then go to the Baltimore Museum, (Dec. 17, 1985-Feb. 16, 1986); San Francisco Museum (March 6-April 27, 1986); Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, (June 14-July 27, 1986).