

Divisionism - Heritage



Van Gogh (1853 – 1890) went to live with his brother in Paris in 1886, where he fell under the influence of the Impressionists and Neo Impressionists. His palette lightened and became more colourful, and he adopted the technique of painting in small dabs of contrasting colours.

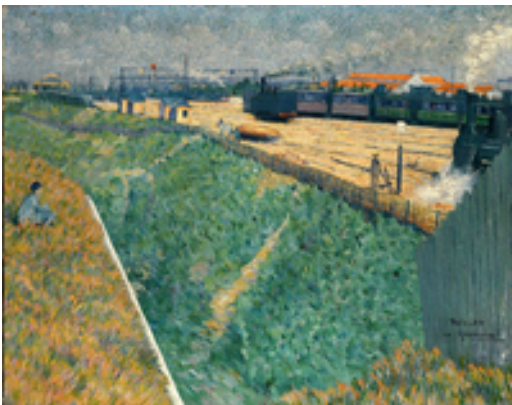
van Gogh, *Self Portrait* 1887



Luce, *Morning, Interior* 1890

Maximilien Luce (1858 – 1941) was a prolific French Neo-impressionist artist, known for his paintings, illustrations, engravings, and graphic art, and also for his anarchist activism. Starting as an engraver, he then concentrated on painting, first as an Impressionist, then as a Pointillist, and finally returning to Impressionism.

Luce aligned with the Neo-impressionists not only in their artistic techniques, but also in their political philosophy of anarchism. Many of his illustrations were featured in socialist periodicals.



Charles Angrand (1854 – 1926) was a French artist who gained renown for his Neo-Impressionist paintings and drawings. He was an important member of the Parisian avant-garde art scene in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

He moved to Paris in 1882, becoming friends with Seurat, van Gogh, Signac, Luce, and Cross. In 1884 he co-founded Société des Artistes Indépendants, along with Seurat, Signac, Odilon Redon, and others.

Angrand, *The Western Railway at its Exit from Paris* 1886

In 1887, *L'Accident*, his first Divisionist painting, was exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants. Angrand joined Seurat in plein air painting on La Grande Jatte island.



Angrand, *Couple in the Street* 1887

It has been said that he had the "ability to distil poetry from the most banal suburban scene"

Angrand's implementation of Pointillist techniques differed from that of some of its leading proponents. He painted with a more muted palette than the bright contrasting colours of Seurat and Signac.

As seen in *Couple in the Street*, Angrand used dots of various colours to enhance shadows and provide the proper tone, while avoiding the violent colouration found in many other Neo-Impressionist works.



Angrand, *The Accident* 1887

His monochrome conté crayon drawings such as his self-portrait above, which also demonstrate his delicate handling of light and shadow, were assessed by Signac: "... his drawings are masterpieces. It would be impossible to imagine a better use of white and black ... These are the most beautiful drawings, poems of light, of fine composition and execution."

**Angrand,
Ugly Man, Self Portrait
1892**

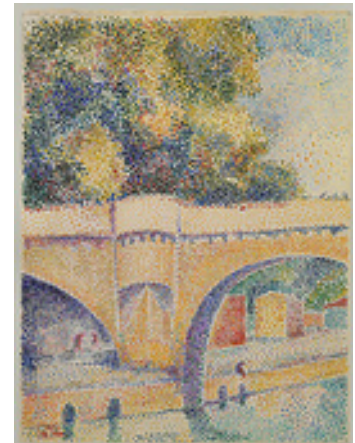


**Toorop, Portrait of
van Marie Jeanette de Lange
1900**

'Jan' Toorop (1858 – 1928) was a Dutch-Indonesian painter, who worked in various styles, including Symbolism, Art Nouveau, and Pointillism. His early work was influenced by the Amsterdam Impressionism movement.

His 1900 novel portrait, in the style of Pointillism, of his friend Marie Jeanette de Lange was made whilst she was not wearing fashionable (restrictive) clothing.

Hippolyte Petitjean (1854 – 1929,) studied under Alexandre Cabanel and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes. He was later influenced by Georges Seurat whom he met in Paris in 1884. After Seurat encouraged him to join the Neo-Impressionists, he was also influenced by Paul Signac and Camille Pissarro. He adopted the pointillist technique.



**Petitjean,
Le Pont Neuf c1912**

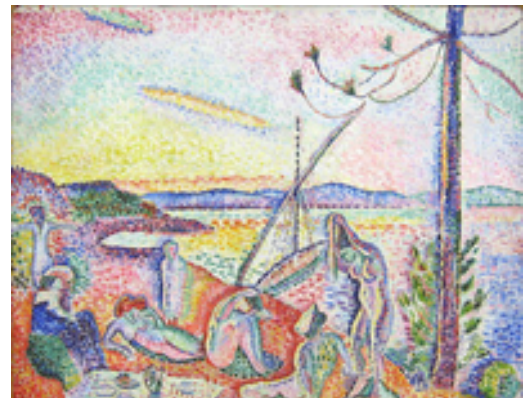


**Matisse, Still Life with Compote,
Apples and Oranges 1899**

In this early still life by Matisse in addition to areas of small strokes of contrasting colour in emulation of Divisionist technique we see the heightening small colour changes, such as the reflections in the rim of the fruit stand to an artificial intensity, and of striking juxtapositions of complementary colours.

Both foundational in the oeuvre of Matisse and a pivotal work in the history of art, *Luxe, Calme et Volupté* is considered the starting point of Fauvism. This painting is a dynamic and vibrant work created early on in his career as a painter. It displays an evolution of the Neo-Impressionist style mixed with a new conceptual meaning based in fantasy and leisure that had not been seen in works before.

It was painted by Matisse in 1904, after a summer spent working in St. Tropez on the French Riviera alongside the Neo-Impressionist painters Paul Signac and Henri-Edmond Cross. Signac purchased the work, which was exhibited in 1905 at the Salon des Indépendants.



Matisse, Luxe, Calme et Volupté 1904

The painting's title comes from the poem *L'Invitation au voyage*, from Charles Baudelaire's volume *Les Fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*):

*Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.*

There, all is order and beauty,
Luxury, peace, and pleasure.

Despite the literary source for the work's title, *Luxe, Calme, et Volupté*, it is not related to the narrative of the poem in any way.



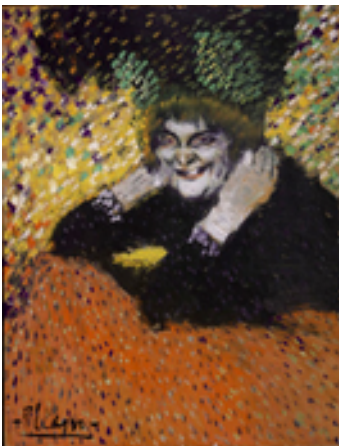
In their experiments with new ways of using colour to express space the Fauvists used an exaggerated 'pointillism' to break up the form; and an intensification of local colour to flatten the surface and express form, rather than the traditional use of tonal modulation. In this study, painted in the fishing village of Collioure in the south of France, colour alone defines distances and spacial relationships, in place of aerial perspective.

Derain, *The Drying Sails* 1905

Leo Gestel (1881-1941) was a Dutch painter. He experimented with cubism, expressionism, futurism and postimpressionism. Along with Piet Mondrian he was among the leading artists of Dutch modernism. In this image of a tree in autumn small dabs of orange and yellow express the agitation of the leaves, while longer, curved lines of blue and red create a penumbra representing the surrounding sky.



Leo Gestel, *Autumn, Nijmegen* 1909

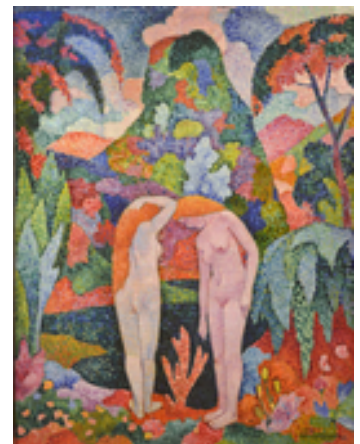


Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1971) was interested by the experiments going on in Paris when he went there as young man. Here he combines the subject matter of Toulouse-Lautrec - a dissolute old woman of cafe society - with the pointillist technique of building the image from scattered dots of colour. However, he was not interested much in the scientific theories behind Divisionism.

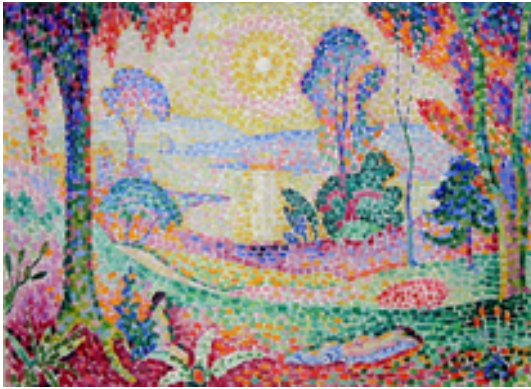
Picasso, *Old Woman (Woman with Gloves)* 1901

Jean Metzinger (1883 – 1956) was a major 20th-century French painter, theorist, writer, critic and poet, who along with Albert Gleizes wrote the first theoretical work on Cubism. His earliest works, from 1900 to 1904, were influenced by the neo-Impressionism of Georges Seurat and Henri-Edmond Cross. Between 1904 and 1907 Metzinger worked in the Divisionist and Fauvist styles with a strong Cézannian component, leading to some of the first proto-Cubist works.

In this work he is juxtaposing primary and secondary colours and using a pointillist technique of colour spots. The subject of nudes in an imaginary landscape is a far cry from Impressionism. Renoir, for instance among the impressionists was the only one to paint nudes out of doors to any extent, but they were always from live models in actual landscapes.



Metzinger, *Baigneuse, Deux nus dans un jardin exotique* c1905

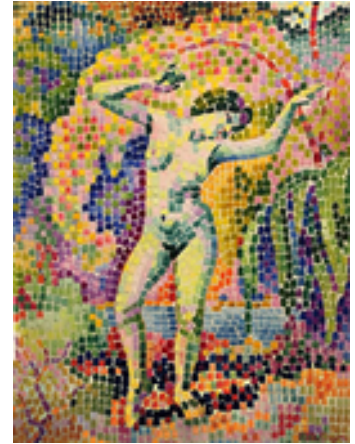


Metzinger, *Coucher de Soleil no. 1* c1906

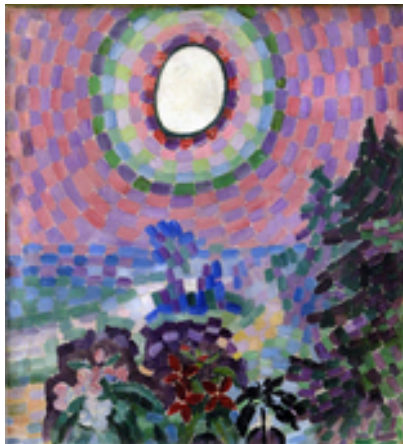
Coucher de soleil no. 1 is a work executed in a mosaic-like Divisionist style with a Fauve palette. The reverberating image of the sun in Metzinger's painting is an homage to the decomposition of spectral light at the core of Neo-Impressionist colour theory.

In this luscious setting, as in *Luxe, Calme et Volupté*, by Matisse, Metzinger makes use all the colours in the spectrum of visible light. Unlike Matisse's work, Metzinger's brushstrokes are large, forming a mosaic-like lattice of squares or cubes of similar size and shape throughout, juxtaposed in a wide variety of angles relative to one another, creating an overall rhythm.

In *La Dance (Bacchante)*, which in its title references Greek mythology, the paint is put on in small rectangles which emulates the effect of mosaic, a style which foreshadows cubism.



Metzinger, *La Dance (Bacchante)* 1906

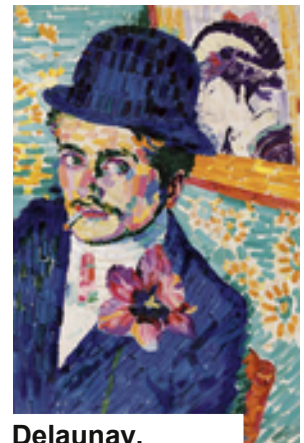


Robert Delaunay (1885 – 1941) formed a close friendship at this time with Jean Metzinger, with whom he shared an exhibition at a gallery run by Berthe Weill early in 1907. The two of them were singled out by the art critic Louis Vauxcelles in 1907 as Divisionists who used large, mosaic-like 'cubes' to construct small but highly symbolic compositions.

Delaunay, *Landscape with the Disk of the Sun* c1906

Art historian Robert Herbert, as in Metzinger's *Setting Sun No 1*, describes the vibrating image of the sun in Delaunay's *Paysage au disque* (1906–07), as "an homage to the decomposition of spectral light that lay at the heart of Neo-Impressionist colour theory..."

Robert Herbert writes: "Metzinger's Neo-Impressionist period was somewhat longer than that of his close friend Delaunay... The height of his Neo-Impressionist work was in 1906 and 1907, when he and Delaunay did portraits of each other in prominent rectangles of pigment."



Delaunay, *Man with a Tulip (Portrait of Jean Metzinger)* 1906



Delaunay, *Simultaneous Contrasts, Sun and Moon* 1912

Delaunay was later to be influenced to fragmentation of the picture surface, in the manner of Cubism, but was later to break with Cubism, declaring that he was 'was the heretic of Cubism.' He developed the Cubist aesthetic in a direction involving colour and light, in a style called Orphism or Orphic Cubism, a term coined by the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire in 1912, was an offshoot of Cubism that focused on pure abstraction and bright colours, influenced by Fauvism, the theoretical writings of Paul Signac, Charles Henry and the dye chemist Eugène Chevreul.

This movement, perceived as key in the transition from Cubism to Abstract art, was pioneered by František Kupka, Robert Delaunay and Sonia Delaunay, who relaunched the use of colour during the

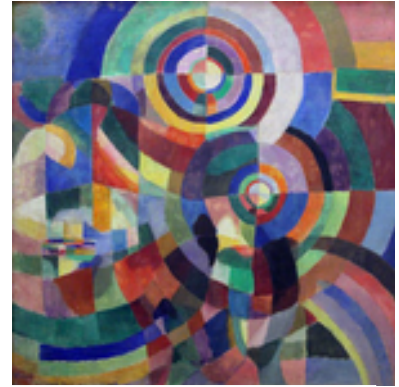
monochromatic phase of Cubism. The meaning of the term Orphism was elusive when it first appeared and remains to some extent vague.

Sonia Delaunay (1885 – 1979) was a Ukrainian-born French artist, who spent most of her working life in Paris and, with her husband Robert Delaunay and others, cofounded the Orphism art movement, noted for its use of strong colours and geometric shapes.

Sonia said about Robert: "In Robert Delaunay I found a poet. A poet who wrote not with words but with colours"

Around 1911, cubist works were being shown in Paris and Robert had been studying the colour theories of Michel Eugène Chevreul; they called their experiments with colour in art and design *simultanéisme*.

Simultaneous design occurs when one design, when placed next to another, affects both; this is similar to the theory of colours (Pointillism, as used by e.g. Georges Seurat) in which primary colour dots placed next to each other are "mixed" by the eye and affect each other.



S Delaunay,
***Prismes électriques I* 1914**



Severini,
***The Milliner* 1910-11**

Gino Severini (1883 – 1966) was an Italian painter and a leading member of the Futurist movement.

In 1900 he met the painter **Umberto Boccioni** (1882 - 1916). Together they visited the studio of **Giacomo Balla** (1871 – 1958), where they were introduced to the technique of Divisionism, painting with adjacent rather than mixed colours and breaking the painted surface into a field of stippled dots and stripes. The ideas of Divisionism had a great influence on Severini's early work and on Futurist painting from 1910 to 1911.

From 1902 to 1910, Boccioni focused initially on drawings, then sketched and painted portraits – with his mother as a frequent model. He also painted landscapes – often including the arrival of industrialisation, trains and factories for example. During this period, he weaves between Pointillism and Impressionism, and the influence of Giacomo Balla, and Divisionism techniques are evident in early paintings (although later largely abandoned).



Boccioni, *The Morning* 1909



Boccioni, *Elasticity* 1912

In one of his early works, the Dutch artist, Piet Mondrian (18-19) here follows Seurat's technique of unifying the surface by an even scattering across the canvas of similar sized dots of colour. But by enlarging them there is no attempt to make an optical mixture, rather they become an abstraction of the natural scene.



Mondrian, *Dune III* 1909

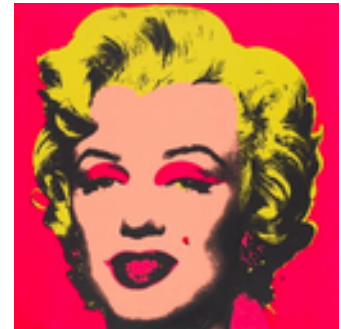


In his mature works Piet Mondrian takes the Divisionist theory of form through juxtaposition of primary colour to its most extreme and logical conclusion, in his desire to create pure works of serene balance and harmony, and devoid of reference to the natural world.

Mondrian, *Composition II in Red, Blue, and Yellow* 1930



In his silk screen portraits **Andy Warhol** (1928-1987) uses 'heightened' natural colour to create a mask like appearance to the instantly recognisable face of a Hollywood actress.



Warhol, *Marilyn*

In this work the red and blue primaries have the same tonal value. This causes them to vibrate on the retina in a manner that is jarring and causes discomfort, an effect known as dissonance.

Warhol

The American, **Chuck Close**, (b1940) is the artist who most continues the Divisionist technique, allowing the dots of colour to merge when seen at a distance.



Close, *Lucas* 1986 - 87



Riley, *Shadowplay* 1990

British artist **Bridget Riley** (b1931) has written eloquently about Seurat and the influence of his theory of colour on her own work.

Art critic Jonathan Jones comments that Riley investigated Seurat's pointillism by painting from a book illustration of Seurat's *The Bridge at Courbevoie*, at an expanded scale to work out how his technique made use of complimentary colours, and went on to create pointillist landscapes of her own, such as *Pink Landscape* (1960), which portrayed the "sun-filled hills of Tuscany" which Jones writes could readily be taken for a post-impressionist original. In his view, Riley shares Seurat's "joy for life", a simple but radical delight in colour and seeing.



Sedgley, *Looking Glass Suite* 1966

Peter Sedgley (b1930), along with his partner Bridget Riley, developed the style known as op art. In the *Looking Glass Suite* he lays out oppositions of primary and secondary colours in a simple circle and grid arrangement. He blurs the edges of the circles so that they seem to hover and pulsate in an undefined atmosphere.

In this work the dazzle is more extreme. It is as if we were looking directly into the sun and hurting our eyes.

Sedgley, *Blue Pulse*

