

Pierre Auguste Renoir

Pierre Auguste Renoir (“Ren-WAH”)
1841-1919
French Impressionist Painter

The French painter Pierre Auguste Renoir was one of the leading members of the Impressionist movement. He began his career in a Parisian porcelain factory gaining experience with light, fresh colors that were to distinguish his Impressionist work. When he was 21, he entered the Paris studio of artist Charles Gleyre, and became friends with Claude Monet, Alfred Sisley, and Frederic Bazille, who were also students of Gleyre. In the 1860s Renoir and his friends joined with other avant-garde artists to form a loose knit group known as the Impressionists.

Renoir was particularly interested in people and often painted his friends. His paintings of beautiful women, lovely children, lush landscapes and lighthearted picnics or dances reflected his celebration of natural beauty and the French leisure life in the countryside and cafés of Paris. Renoir masterfully rendered the shimmering interplay of light and color on surfaces using small dabs of pure color.

Following a trip to Algiers and Italy in 1881, Renoir became dissatisfied with the formal restrictions of pure Impressionism. In response, he employed a crisper, drier style using less vivid colors. After the mid-1880s, he developed a softer, more supple style, and turned from contemporary subjects to more timeless ones, particularly nudes. Although stricken with rheumatoid arthritis, which confined him to a wheelchair by the age of 69, he continued to paint right up to the day he died in 1919. His paintings of nude female figures, with their timeless feeling and lustrous skin tones, had the greatest impact on future generations. Even at the end, his paintings reflected the serenity he found in doing his life’s work.

Vocabulary

Complementary colors—Colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel (red and green, blue and orange, yellow and violet). When placed next to each other, both complementary colors seem brighter and stronger, providing

emphasis for each and creating a visual vibration or glow.

Impressionism—A style of art, originating in Paris in the 1860s, in which the main idea was to show changes in the light, color or actions of scenes with quick brush strokes of color. Impressionists had two fundamental concerns: depicting modern life and painting in the open air. Although their artistic styles and aims were not uniform, as a group they rejected the standard of the day as dictated by the Salon, the officially approved group of artists.

Art Elements

Color—The sensation resulting from reflection or absorption of light by a surface. Color has three properties: hue, which is the name of the color; value, which is the lightness or darkness of the color; and intensity, which refers to the purity of the hue. Renoir’s paintings are filled with pure hues, complementary color contrasts, and contrasts between warm colors (yellows, oranges, reds) and cool colors (greens, blues, violets).

Shape—An area that is contained within an implied line and defined or identified by color or value changes. Shapes have two dimensions, length and width, and can be geometric (triangles, rectangles, circles) or organic (found in nature, such as leaves, trees, mountains, clouds, animals, etc.) Contrasts of color define the shapes in Renoir’s paintings, and often shapes are created primarily by colors applied in broken brushstrokes.

Art Principles

Rhythm/Repetition—The visual movement of elements (color, shape, line, value, space, texture) or the visual equivalent of a musical rhythm. Rhythm is created by the repetition of elements that are the same or nearly the same in regular sequence. Repetition of colors and shapes create

Pierre Auguste Renoir

rhythm in Renoir's paintings, as well as adding visual excitement and a sense of liveliness.

Contrast—Refers to differences in values, colors, textures, shapes and other elements. Contrasts create visual excitement and add interest to a work. In his paintings, Renoir contrasted light values with dark values, and warm colors with cool colors (often complementary).

LAKE OSWEGO ART LITERACY

SAMPLE

LAKE OSWEGO ART LITERACY

SAMPLE