

# Alternative Ways to Create Art

## History of Collage

Collage has a long and distinguished history. No matter what you may do in collage, chances are it has been done before, but certainly not like you will do it. You can study early collages of the Japanese or Dutch, for example, and then revive an old idea with a new twist, giving a contemporary look and feel to an ancient technique.

The story begins with the invention of paper in China around 200 B.C., but the earliest examples of paper collage are the work of twelfth-century Japanese calligraphers, who prepared surfaces for their poems by gluing bits of paper and fabric to create a background for brushstrokes. Later, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Near East, craftsmen cut and pasted intricate designs and used marbled papers as part of the art of bookbinding. Today's collage artists invent exciting variations of these ancient collage techniques.

Artists in medieval times, beginning in the thirteenth century, often enhanced religious images with gemstones, elegant fibers, relics and precious metals. Later, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nuns made bookmarks trimmed with cut and colored papers, which they carried in their prayer books. Frequently, the materials used were selected for their symbolism, a practice that continues in contemporary collage.

Renaissance artisans of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in western European countries pasted paper and fabric to decorate the backgrounds of coats of arms in genealogical records. Cut-paper silhouettes appeared in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. Craftsmen in prehistoric and primitive societies in many parts of the world used seed, shell, straw, feathers and butterfly wings as collage material. Shamans and holy men in some societies secured these and other materials to masks used in sacred rituals. All of these materials appear occasionally in artists' collages today.

## Antiques and Uniques

During the nineteenth century collage developed as a popular art, more of a hobby than an art form. People pasted family photographs into arrangements and hung them on the walls, glued postage stamps into albums, and covered screens and lampshades with magazine illustrations and art reproductions. In antique shops today you can find nineteenth-century scrapbooks, photo albums, silhouettes and lampshades made of assorted materials: paper, fabric, human or animal hair, and a variety of memorabilia. Most of these materials were mementos and family heirlooms, not art objects. Yesterday's elaborate valentines provide inspiration for children's craft projects today.

There were a few serious collage artists in the late nineteenth century, pasting intricate paper cutouts onto backgrounds. Hans Christian Andersen created illustrations for a book this way. Carl Spitzweg made collages for a collection of recipes with cutouts from woodcuts, which he colored by hand and pasted onto marbled papers. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, graphic artists arranged type and bold, cut-out shapes to create theater posters and illustrations. The introduction of photography led to photomontage, the combining of photographs into artistic arrangements. In time, the photos and posters themselves became collage material.

## Collage as a Modern Art

The twentieth century shed an entirely new light on collage. Katherine Hoffman stated that "Collage may be seen as a quintessential twentieth-century art form with multiple layers and signposts pointing to the possibility or suggestion of countless new realities." Art historians generally attribute the first use of collage in fine art to Pablo Picasso in 1912, when he glued a piece of patterned oilcloth to a cubist still life. Next, Georges Braques incorporated wallpaper into his artwork. The two artists experimented with *papiers collés* as an extension of cubist principles. Instead of creating an illusion of reality, they invented a new kind of reality, using textured and printed papers and simulated wood patterns on their drawings and paintings. Imagine the storm of controversy that followed these experiments. The use of foreign materials in paintings inflamed critics, adding more fuel to the creative fires of experimental artists.

The avant-garde adopted this new approach and quickly branched out. Cubists used mostly paper and paint, sometimes in a patchwork quilt fashion, with the occasional realistic object added to support a pictorial concept or philosophical viewpoint. Futurists incorporated typography for political commentary and added found objects to connect art with the real world. Dadaists found collage an ideal means of

expressing anti-art nonsense, bringing together outrageous combination of materials for shock value. The new science of the mind, called psychology, led surrealists to see collage as a revelation of unconscious thoughts brought to the surface through the random selection and placement of materials.

Information found at [http://www.kriegartstudio.com/nesting\\_cranes/susan\\_krieg\\_history\\_collage.htm](http://www.kriegartstudio.com/nesting_cranes/susan_krieg_history_collage.htm)

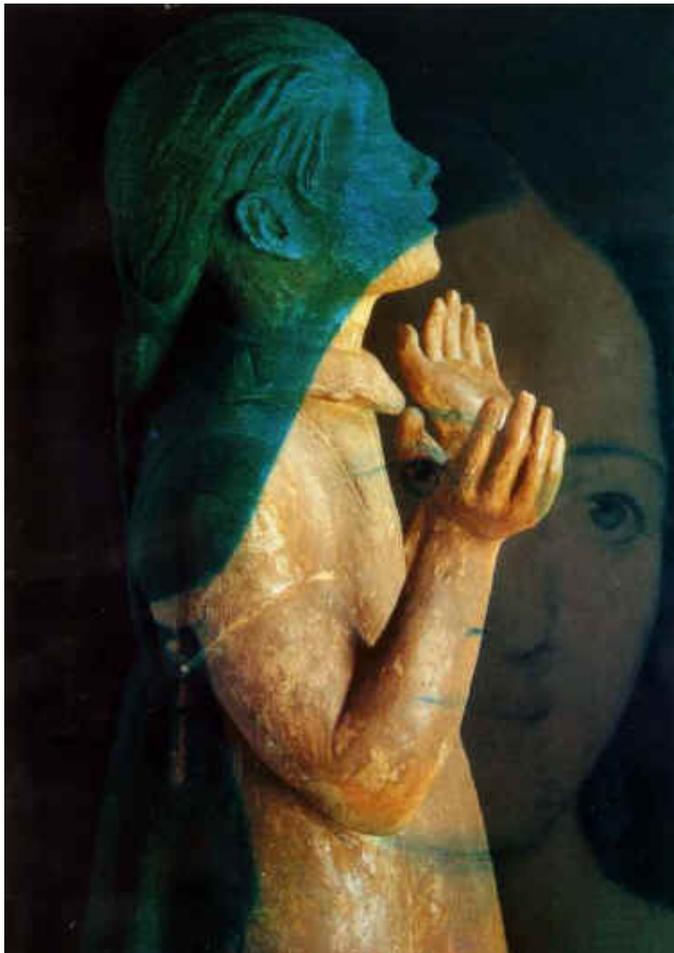
## Jiri Kolar 1914 – 2002 poet and collage artist

Jiri Kolar was born on 24 September 1914 in Protivin. Between the years 1922 and 1945, he lived in Kladno where he took up various kinds of work. During the 1940s, he became a member of the "Art Group 42" and in the 1950s was imprisoned for his activities. He could publish and exhibit only shortly in the end of the 60s. From the beginning of the 1970s up until the year 1989, Kolar did not have any books published and he could not exhibit again. He lived in Prague until 1979. However, like for other artist and authors, association with Charta 77 meant emigration and he lived in exile, mostly in Paris. After his return to the Czech Republic in 1998, Kolar lived and worked in Prague (died 2002)

It should be mentioned that this Czech artist reached more acknowledgement abroad than at home. Since the 60s he had more than three hundred exhibitions, published ten monographs and ten anthologies, children's books, catalogues and bibliophilies.

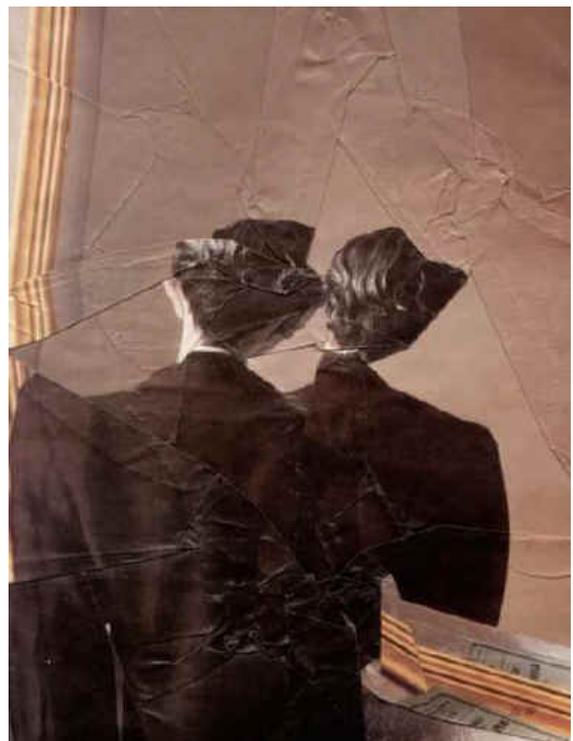
As Jiri Kolar published his poetic début "Krestny list" (1941), he had also completed his first exhibition of Collages (1937). He was incorporated into the Art Group 42 as a poet and continued to write poetry throughout the 1940s and the 1950s. He became gradually aware of the limited use of words in human communication, realized the indivisibility of poetry, and the permeability of boundaries between a word and a picture.

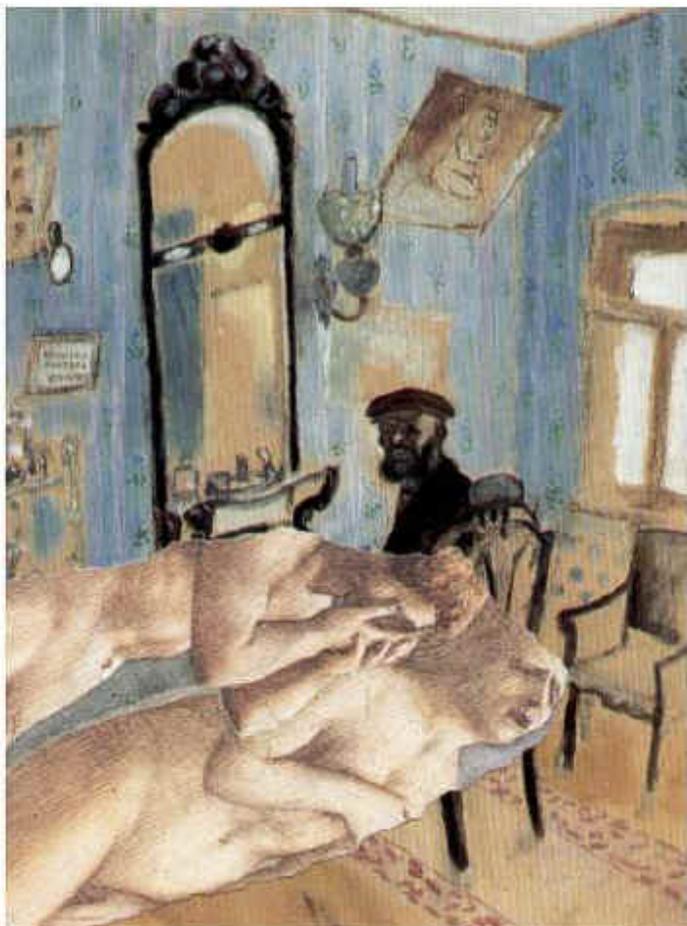
By the same playful way he disrupted speech to get to "the moment before writing down the poem", he subverted a picture to debunk, in order to reveal what makes it happen. Instead of creating with a paintbrush he used a scalpel, while colours were replaced by printed paper and glue. His collages consist of pictures, reliefs and objects that are put together by various. His style and methods ingeniously penetrate the multiple levels and twists of human existence.



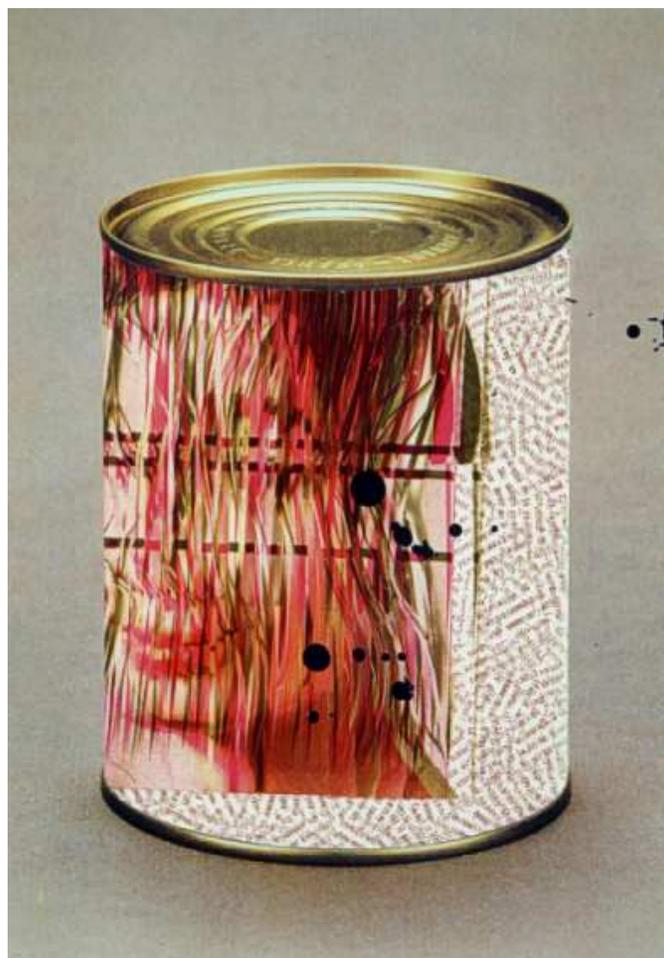
**Jiri Kolar**  
**Božena Němcová**  
collage  
26 x 24 cm, 1988

**Jiri Kolar**  
**Two Ladies**  
muchlaz  
24,5 x 18,5 cm, 1985





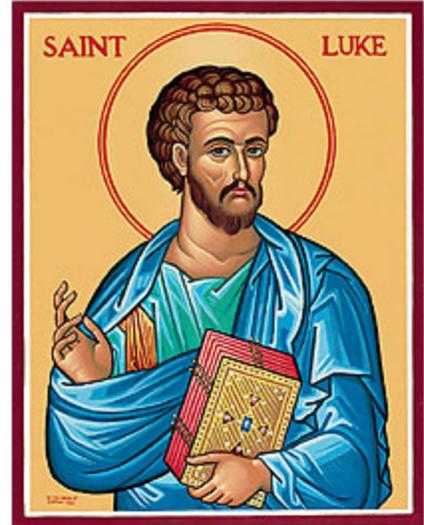
**Jiri Kolar**  
**Where you run**  
collage  
21 x 15 cm



**Jiri Kolar**  
**Tin-can**  
collage  
26 x 18 cm, 1988

## History of Iconography

ICONOGRAPHY IS THE ORIGINAL TRADITION of Christian sacred art, and has been an integral part of the worship and mystical life of Christians since apostolic times. Church tradition teaches that the first iconographer was Saint Luke the Evangelist. He painted the holy image of the Virgin Mary on a panel. There are at least five highly-venerated icons of the Virgin painted by Saint Luke which are still venerated today. He is also known to have painted icons of Saints Peter and Paul. The beginnings of iconography can also be found in the catacomb paintings of the second and third centuries.



Iconography was given special attention and favor by the early Byzantine Empire. The emperor Constantine the Great relieved of all taxation the artists who made the mosaics for the churches. Iconography flourished through the Empire, as mosaics, wall paintings (frescoes), and panel (portable) icons. It became most fully developed and widely spread in the Empire in the sixth century, under the rule of Justinian the Great.

Iconography, as an integral part of Christian life, was subject to great controversy in the seventh and eighth centuries. The Iconoclasts ("icon-smashers") were suspicious of any sacred art which represented human beings or God, and demanded the destruction of icons. The Iconodules (venerators of icons) vigorously defended the place of icons in the life of the Church. Iconoclasm may have been influenced by Jewish and Moslem ideas, and also reflected a "puritan" outlook in Christianity which saw in all images a latent idolatry.

The Iconodule position was upheld by the Seventh and last Ecumenical Council, which met in Nicaea in 787 A.D. Another attack on icons by the Emperor Leo III during the next century was overturned when the Empress Theodora permanently reinstated the veneration of icons in 843, a victory which is commemorated as "the Triumph of Orthodoxy."

One of the chief champions of icons during this period was Saint John of Damascus, who wrote in his famous "Defense of Icons": "Through the icons of Christ we contemplate His bodily form, His miracles, and His sufferings, and we are sanctified...The icons of the Saints are filled with the Holy Spirit."

After the fall of Constantinople, the Holy Mountain of Athos became a great center of iconography. The many monastic churches that can be seen at Mount Athos today are testimony of a centuries-long tradition that flowered at the hands of the monks who preserved it. The Byzantine tradition of iconography also was emulated by the Serbian and Russian Christians, whose styles of iconography have undergone their own evolution over the centuries.

## The Purpose of Icons

In describing the purpose of icons, the early Fathers used the Greek work *anagoge*, literally meaning "leading one upward." Photios Kontoglou, the renowned modern iconographer, expressed this perfectly: "Icons raise the soul and mind of the believer who sees the icon to the realm of the spirit, of the incorruptible, of the kingdom of God, as far as this can be achieved with material means." So to appreciate iconography fully, we must approach it as a liturgical art form whose function is essentially spiritual.

Since the creation of an icon is itself a sacred activity, the iconographer must be a person of prayer, not merely a technician. If his work is to inspire and illumine others, then it is essential that he leads a life of prayer and fasting that he may be inspired and illumined by the Holy Spirit, that his iconography becomes itself an expression of his spiritual life. Kontoglou writes: "The iconographers painted as they prayed."

In the Western approach to sacred art (such as those from the Renaissance) the artist most frequently depicts his subject in a purely naturalistic and representational style. He uses the same techniques as he would to depict a secular subject. The theme may be religious, but the style remains the same.

As the goal of the iconographer is utterly different, so are his techniques to accomplish this goal. Iconography depicts the saints not as they were in actual life, but as they are in eternity. He communicates his vision of the heavenly world not through symbols, such as sunsets with golden clouds or angels playing harps, but through mystical forms and colors. As Kontoglou writes, "Iconography expresses with spiritualized forms abstracted from natural phenomena, a world which is beyond phenomena, a spiritual world."



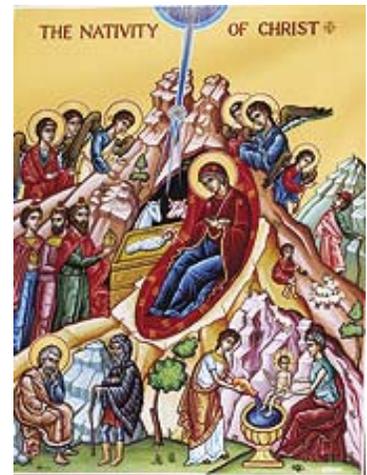
Described as "theology in line and color," iconography traditionally uses particular artistic devices and stylization to communicate the spiritual world to the beholder. One of the first things one notices is the standardization of the forms of holy persons. Upon seeing an icon we can immediately recognize that this is Christ, this is Saint Paul, this is Saint Nicholas, etc. Both the forms of the Saints and the composition of events from the Gospels are fixed and archetypal, although they will vary slightly depending on the iconographer.

Another outstanding feature of iconography is the extreme stylization and non-naturalistic depiction of the clothing of the figures. The folds of the clothes are depicted by means of geometric forms (ovals, rectangles, triangles), demonstrating a heavenly order. Again, the selection of colors is also often fixed: blue for Christ's mantle or outer garment, red for the tunic or inner garment; deep wine-red for the Virgin Mary's outer garment; etc.

This stylization also appears in all the elements of the faces and body members of the persons in the icon. Their faces do not resemble mere human beings, but through stylization they show us the faces of human nature transformed into the divine. The hands are often thin and expressive, commonly in various gestures of blessing. The halos around the heads of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints are painted as a clearly delineated circle, signifying their sanctity and drawing our attention to their faces.

Even nature itself is transformed by the hand of the iconographer. Buildings, mountains, trees and animals are usually depicted in a very simplified, schematic way, rather than attempting to render a photographic likeness.

The iconographer does not stop there in his use of technique to depict a spiritually-transformed reality. He alters both time and space. Events that took place at different times are represented simultaneously in the composition as if they took place simultaneously--such as is seen in Monastery Icons' depiction of the Nativity of Christ, for example, where we see simultaneously in one icon the Virgin with the swaddled Infant, the midwives bathing the Child Jesus, the angel announcing the Savior's birth to the shepherds, and the Magi coming to adore the Messiah. Nor does the iconographer adhere to a systematic use of perspective to create the illusion of three-dimensionality. Instead he frequently uses an inverted perspective to show, where objects in the foreground are smaller than spiritually more significant objects or persons behind them.



## Photios Kontoglou

Photios Kontoglou (1895-1965), was the foremost iconographer in Greece in the 20th century. The revival of Byzantine iconography began in 1930 mostly due to this man. Byzantine iconography has spread to Europe, America and elsewhere. This revival has also taken place in Romania and among the Russians of the diaspora.

This form of iconography is in demand everywhere. Photios Kontoglou's iconography has been misunderstood by many. He had grown in his work from being somewhat rustic to his more stylized pieces. Often he diverged from his usual way of painting the icon, in order to enhance his talent, gaining an appreciation for other techniques. Consequently, it is a mistake to stereotype his iconography.

In 1943 he began to write about this sacred art in an extensive and authoritative way, wishing to explain its features and to show its enormous value. In 1960 he wrote *Ekphrasis* - the explanation of Orthodox Iconography. This book is a valuable guide for the iconographer to learn the technique of painting the icon according to byzantine tradition.



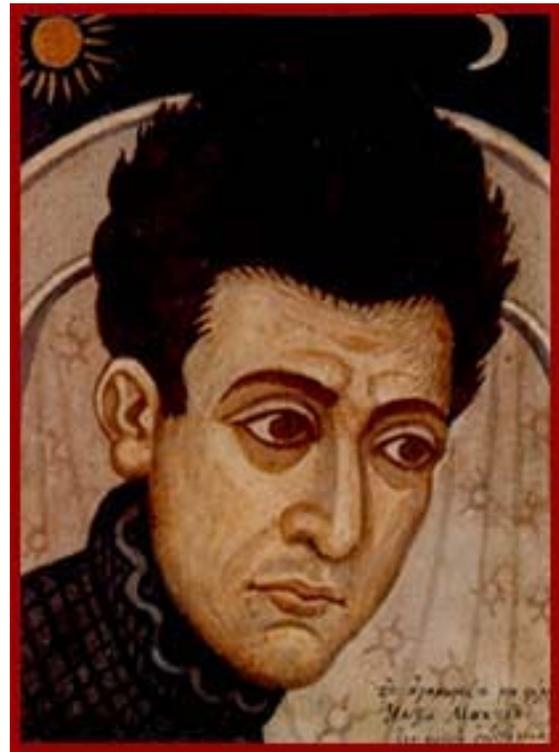
"Byzantine art," Kontoglou says, "is for me the art of arts. I believe in it as I believe in (Orthodox) religion. Only this art nourishes my soul, through its deep and mysterious powers; it alone quenches the thirst that I feel in the midst of the arid desert that surrounds us. In comparison with Byzantine art, all the others appear to me trivial, 'troubling themselves about many things, when but one thing is needed'."

Byzantine iconographers bring the spiritual world into time and space for which reasons the icon is not "naturalistic" and "realistic". Its purpose has a religious function. It wants to express sanctified things to help man see with spiritual eyes the Holy Mysteries of the Christian revelation.

Iconography offers a vision of time and eternity. Using sacred and symbolic forms and colors, Kontoglou represents that vision in a dramatic fashion. To demonstrate his purpose he employed sober colors, simple shapes and bold lines.

Photios Kontoglou never held the elitist position that painting icons was restricted to intellectuals, or professional artists. Even the illiterate have painted them. Like the Holy Scriptures, the icon is the work of the Holy Spirit.

His relics are incorrupt, a validation of his works.



## **History of Pointillism**

Pointillism is a style of painting in which non-primary colors are generated, not by the mixing of pigments in the palette nor by using pigments directly, but by the visual mixing of points of primary colors, placed in close proximity to each other.

Originally developed by Neo-Impressionist Georges Seurat, the movement is also associated with Paul Signac, Henri-Edmond Cross, and Vlaho Bukovac.

When viewed from a distance, the points or dots cannot be distinguished, and blend optically into each other. This means that with the same set of primaries, pointillists generate a different range of colors when compared to artists using traditional colors or color-mixing techniques. The result is sometimes described as brighter or purer since the eye does the mixing and not the brush. An explanation for this could be sought in the subtractive and additive theories of color.

Examples of this are Seurat's sketches for *Grand Jatte*, 1888. Usually when colors are produced by pigments being mixed physically, the subtractive color theory is at work. Here the mixing of pigments of the primary colors produces less light; so if we mix red, blue and yellow pigments (subtractive primaries), we get a color close to black. However when colors are produced by the mixing of light, then the additive color theory is at work. Here the mixing of lights of the three primary colors produces more light; so if we mix red, blue and green light (additive primaries) we get something close to white light. The brighter effect of pointillist colors could rise from the fact that subtractive mixing is avoided and something closer to the effect of additive mixing is obtained even through pigments.

The brushwork used to perform pointillistic color mixing is at the expense of traditional brushwork which could be used to delineate texture. Color television receivers and computer screens, both CRT and LCD, use tiny dots of primary red, green, and blue to render color, and can thus be regarded as a kind of pointillism.

## **George Seurat**

Georges-Pierre Seurat was born in Paris on 2 December 1859, the son of comfortably-off parents. His father, a legal official, was a solitary man with a taciturn and withdrawn manner which his son also inherited. At every available opportunity, Antoine-Christophe took leave of his family and disappeared to his villa in the suburbs to grow flowers and say mass in the company of his gardener; he was only at home on Tuesdays. Seurat's mother was quiet and unassuming, but it was she who gave some warmth and continuity to his childhood.

The family apartment was on the Boulevard de Magenta, close to the landscaped pleasure garden of "le Parc des Buttes-Chaumont", where young Georges and his mother spent much of their spare time. Such places, and the people who frequented them, were to become the subject of some of his greatest paintings.



Head of a girl, 1879,  
Washington

As a young man Seurat was tall and handsome with a quiet, gentle voice. Reserved and dignified in dress as well as manner, he was always neatly and correctly turned out: one friend described him as looking like a floor-walker in a department store, while the sophisticated and sharp-tongued Edgar Degas nicknamed him "the notary". He was serious and intense preferring to spend his money on books rather than on food or drink but his most pronounced characteristic was his secretiveness.

Seurat entered the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the official Paris art school 1878. He rejected the soft, irregular brushstrokes of impressionism in favor of pointillism, a technique he developed whereby solid forms are constructed by applying small, close-packed dots of unmixed color to a white background. Many artists imitated Seurat's method, but, except in the work of Signac, his technique remained unequalled in its perfect blending of colors. (See detail of *La Parade* at right) Seurat derived many of his theories about painting from his study of contemporary treatises on optics. His scientific bent was also evident in his work habits, which included fixed hours and the meticulous systematization of his technique.

In 1879, a year of military service broke into his artistic studies. Seurat was sent to the great military port of Brest on the western coast of Brittany, where he fitted in easily to barracks discipline and used his spare time to begin sketching figures and ships.

Returning to Paris in 1880, the young artist initially shared a cramped studio on the left bank with two student friends before moving to a studio of his own, closer to his parent's home on the right bank. For the next two years, he devoted himself to mastering the art of black and white drawing.



The year 1883 was spent on a huge canvas, *Bathing at Asnières* (left), his first major painting and the first of six large canvases that would constitute the bulk of his life's work. In this and subsequent paintings, he continued the impressionist tradition of depicting holiday outings and entertainments. He departed from impressionist style, however, in his precise application of paint and in the suggestion of depth and volume in his scenes.

In 1884, the Salon jury rejected it and Seurat changed the direction of his career. From this year on, he scorned the academic art of the Salon and allied himself with the young independent painters.

An instinctively gifted painter, Seurat also had extraordinary powers of concentration and perseverance, and took a dogged and single-minded approach to his work. He was convinced of the rightness of his own opinions, and of the importance of the "pointillist" method he was developing. Although other painters turned to him as a leader, he seems to have inspired admiration rather than affection.

### Member of the Committee

In May and June 1884, Seurat's *Bathing at Asnieres* hung at the first exhibition of the new group of Artistes Independents, mounted in a temporary hut near the ruined Palais des Tuileries. The show ended in financial muddle, but out of the ensuing arguments a properly constituted Société des Artistes Indépendants emerged, committed to holding an annual show with no jury. Seurat attended its committee meetings regularly, always sitting in the same seat, quietly smoking his pipe.

At one such meeting, Seurat struck up a friendship with Paul Signac. Signac was four years younger, a largely self-taught painter who was influenced by the Impressionists and very receptive to Seurat's theoretical ideas. The extrovert and enthusiastic Signac provided Seurat with contact and moral support as he set about making his mark within the avant-garde.

In the summer of 1884, Seurat embarked on another major canvas, again depicting the popular boating place of Asnieres, but this time focusing on the island of La Grande Jatte in the Seine. With characteristic single-mindedness, he devoted his time entirely to the composition. Every day for months he traveled to his chosen spot, where he would work all morning. Each afternoon, he continued painting the giant canvas in his studio.

After two years of concentrated, systematic work, Seurat completed the painting in 1886, and exhibited it with the Impressionist group in May of that year. *La Grande Jatte* (below) proved to be the main talking point of the exhibition, and he was hailed by the critics as offering the most significant way forward from Impressionism.



Felix Fénéon, a sensitive and sympathetic young critic, was particularly impressed. He christened Seurat and his associates the Neo-Impressionists, and became an enthusiastic spokesman for them.

## Center of controversy

Suddenly, Seurat found that he was the most controversial figure on the artistic scene in Paris. He was now occupying a studio next to Signac's on the Boulevard de Clichy in Montmartre. Here he was surrounded by artists ranging from the conservative decorator Puvis de Chavannes, whom he greatly admired, to more progressive contemporaries including Degas, Gauguin, Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec. He was at the center of artistic debates, but he kept aloof from them.

Seurat's relative financial ease meant that he was unused to dealing with potential clients, and his demands remained modest despite his new fame. Once, when pressed to name his price for the painting he was showing at "The Twenty" exhibition in Brussels, Seurat replied, "I compute my expenses on the basis of one year at seven francs a day". His attitude to his work was similarly down-to-earth and unromantic - he had no pretensions to the status of genius. When some critics tried to describe his work as poetic he contradicted them: "No, I apply my method and that is all". He was, however, very concerned not to lose any credit for the originality of his technique and guarded the details obsessively.

Seurat's life had begun to assume a regular pattern. During the winter months, he would lock himself away in his studio working on a big figure picture to exhibit in the spring, then he would spend the summer months in one of the Normandy ports such as Honfleur, working on smaller, less complex, marine paintings. Whether in Paris or at the coast, Seurat was never a great socializer and in the last year of his life he virtually cut himself off from friends. He could warm up in a one-on-one situation, but by all accounts his conversation centered on his own artistic concerns.

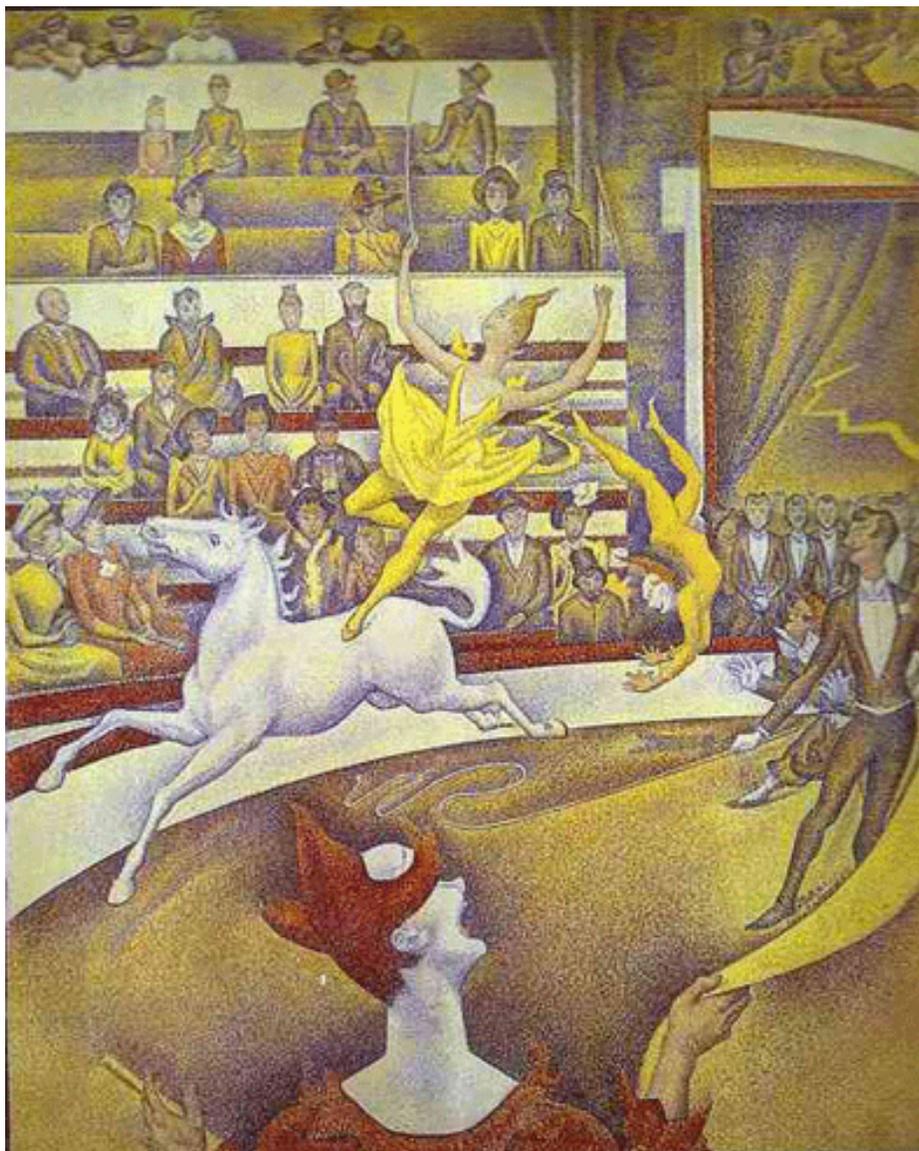


## A secret family

Late in 1889, when Seurat was approaching 30, he moved away from the bustling Boulevard de Clichy to a studio in a quieter street nearby, where unknown to his family and friends - he lived with a young model, Madeleine Knobloch. In February 1890 she gave birth, in the studio, to his son. Seurat legally acknowledged the child and gave him his own Christian names in reverse. But it was not until two days before his death that he introduced his young family to his mother.



Georges Seurat died in March 1891, totally unexpectedly: he seems to have contracted a form of meningitis. One week he was helping to hang the paintings at the Independents exhibition and worrying about the fact that his hero Puvis de Chavannes had walked past *The Circus* without so much as a glance; the following week he was dead at just 31 years of age. Signac sadly concluded "*our poor friend killed himself by overwork*".



Information found at <http://www.renoirinc.com/biography/artists/seurat.htm>