



Speaker: As the pace of change starts picking up, the last quarter of the 19th-century ushers in impressionism. I have met art historians who contend that impressionism is where art really begins. Prior to impressionism, art was harnessed to journalism, portraiture, and storytelling. Impressionism disengaged art from those conventional roles. The style started in Paris and spread. One of my favorite impressionistic painters is the American painter, John Singer Sargent.

In impressionism, the way the painter worked became more important than the content of the painting. Painters strove to capture a fleeting moment, an impression which was open for huge subjective interpretation. It was characterized by sketchy loose brush strokes and lines, dabs of color that when viewed, blended together to create a fusion of several colors. Impressionists did not paint grand history paintings nor did they reference times from the past.

They were clearly in the here and now, depicting the transitory effects of light and weather, or like Renoir caption the middle and upper classes in outdoor amusements. These were pleasant moments captured on canvas. As Japan crept out of its isolationist policies, artists of Europe particularly the impressionist became enamored with the Japanese art, and the compressed and oblique viewpoints from Japanese prints were a huge influence on the impressionist painters.

Of course, when you're radical and new, people don't like you right-off-the-bat. Impressionism was soundly criticized in the beginning, however, by 1890 it was recognized as a beautiful and innovative style of art by many.

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