Pointillism

What is Pointillism?

Pointillism is a technique developed by artist Georges Seurat. The technique takes advantage of additive color mixing. It is created with dots of pure primary colors placed close together creating an optical blended effect. This is because the light reflected from the dots of color gets optically blended at the level of the eye. The result is brighter, more vibrant colors since there was no physical mixing of colors.

Brief History of Pointillism:

There are three artists whose names come up when discussing pointillism. Those names are Georges Seurat, Paul Signac, and Henri-Edmond Cross. All three were part of a French art movement which began in 1886. This movement, called Neo-Impressionism emphasized the key role of optics in art[1]. The idea was that if pigment was applied separately it would produce more brilliant color vibrancy than the mere blending of pigments. Georges Seurat was the founder of the movement, as well as the inventor of pointillism. His most infamous example of pointillism is titled "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte"[2] In this painting he demonstrated the way tiny dots of paint could be used to create a blended effect and portray many different colors. Art critics of the time period ridiculed Seurat's technique and perhaps due to such harsh reception there were not many artists who practiced it.

Reflection:

This was a very frustrating project for me. I did the entire piece in five colors, green, red, blue, yellow, and black. For the face and headdress I used every color except black. It was very difficult to figure out what concentration of dots I need to produce a certain color, and how close together they needed to be. Also, it was very difficult to create the illusion of an edge when many of the colors ran together, or when I needed to mix the same colors. Something I also noted was that different people saw the image very differently, some saying the face looked yellow, and others saying peach, and still others saying it looked orange. For me, as soon as I got far enough back, the details were lost although the color did still blend.

The inspiration for this piece was drawn from Johannes Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring."

SOURCES

1. HTTP://WWW.EHOW.COM/ABOUT_5480718_HISTORY-POINTILLISM.HTML
2. HTTP://WWW.ARTFORTUNE.COM/POINTILLISM/