

# Impressionism



Impressionism developed in France in the nineteenth century and is based on the practice of painting **outdoors** (plein air) and **spontaneously** ‘on the spot’ rather than in a studio from sketches.

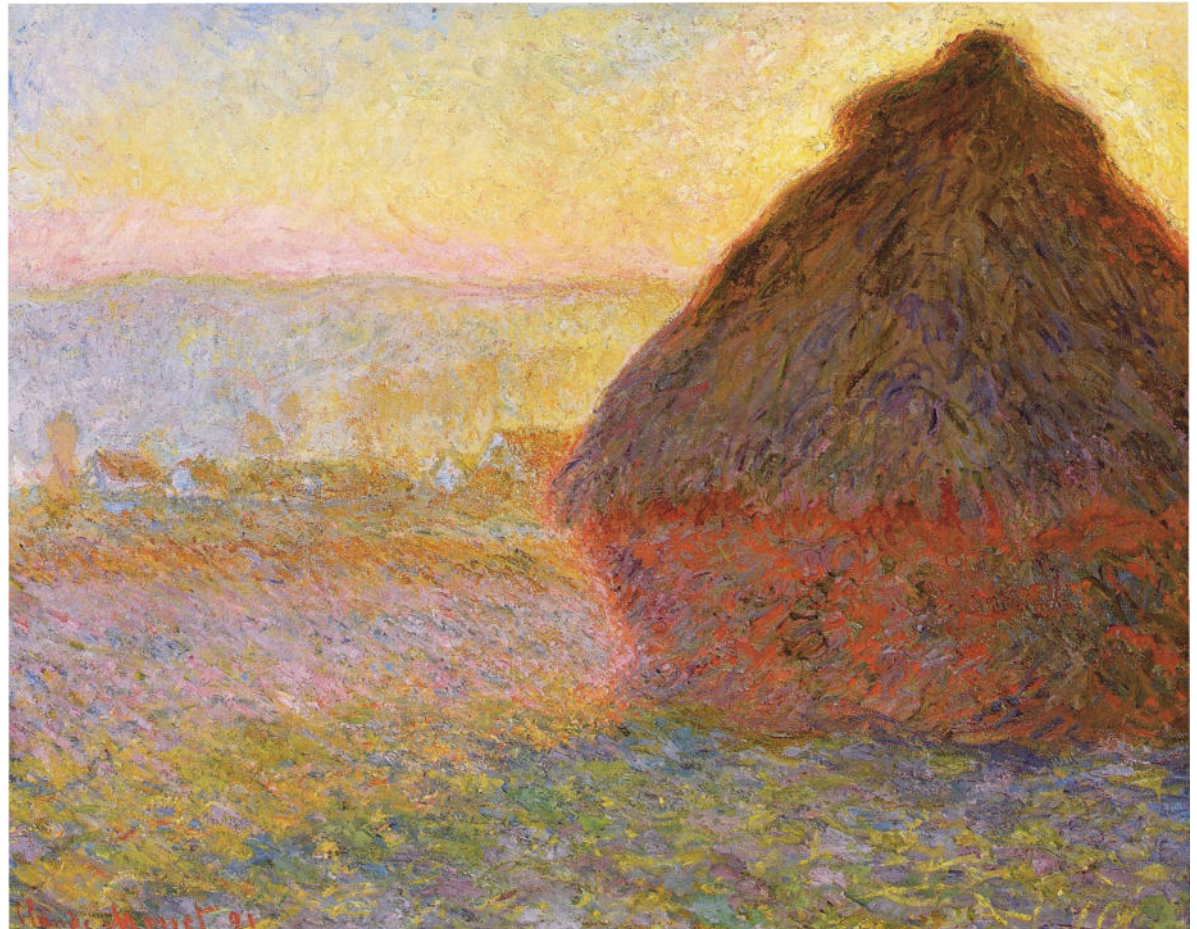
Main impressionist subjects were landscapes and scenes of everyday life.





Impressionists were often very concerned with how light played on and around their subjects. This is why much of their subject matter was landscapes and people outside.

The best place to capture interesting lighting is under the sun!



And, almost above all else, Impressionism was noted for having distinctive, short, thick strokes of paint. Often applied thick, the artists chose to have colors next to each other with limited mixing, instead of smoothly blended colors.





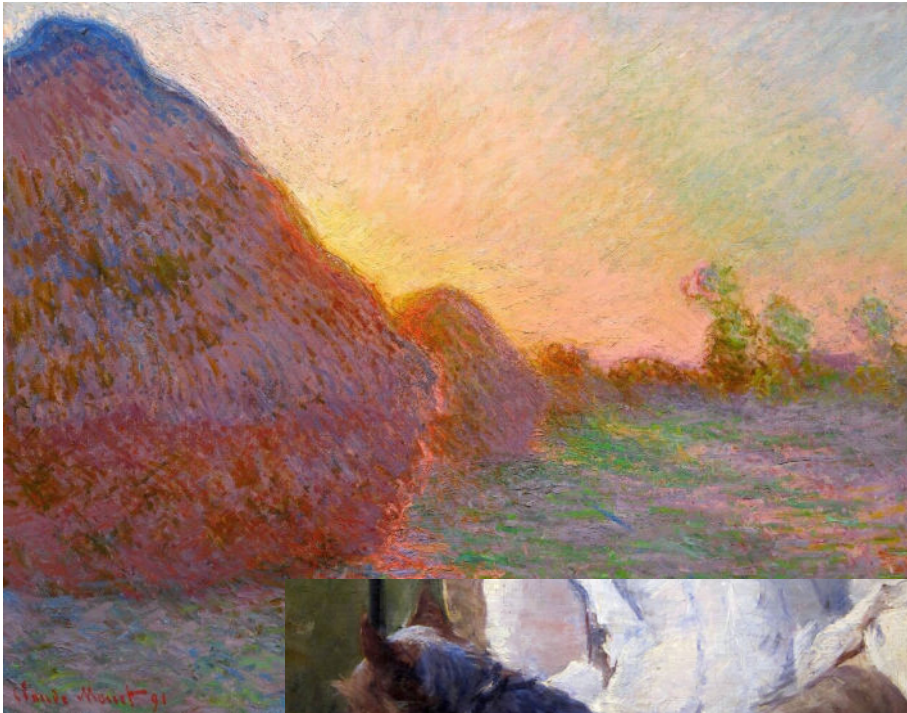
# Notable Techniques of the Impressionists include:

- Short, thick strokes of paint quickly capture the essence of the subject, rather than its details. The paint is often applied impasto.
- Colors are applied side by side with as little mixing as possible, a technique that exploits the principle of simultaneous contrast to make the color appear more vivid to the viewer.





- The play of natural light is emphasized. Close attention is paid to the reflection of colors from object to object. Painters often worked in the evening to produce effets de soir—the shadowy effects of evening or twilight.
- In paintings made en plein air (outdoors), shadows are boldly painted with the blue of the sky as it is reflected onto surfaces, giving a sense of freshness previously not represented in painting. (Blue shadows on snow inspired the technique.)



Blue shadowing



- Grays and dark tones are produced by mixing complementary colors. Pure impressionism avoids the use of black paint.
- Wet paint is placed into wet paint without waiting for successive applications to dry, producing softer edges and intermingling of color.





- Impressionist paintings do not exploit the transparency of thin paint films (glazes), which earlier artists manipulated carefully to produce effects. The impressionist painting surface is typically opaque.
- The paint is applied to a white or light-colored ground. Previously, painters often used dark grey or strongly colored grounds.

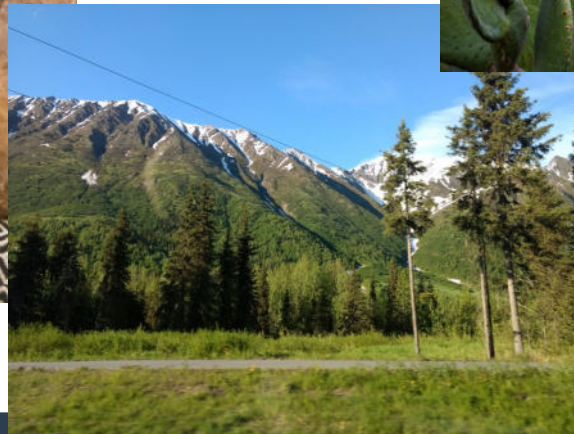




# Your Assignment...

**You will begin by photographing your own reference imagery.**

The Impressionists usually used landscapes as their subject matter but they also documented people in natural situations (think candid photography, not posed).

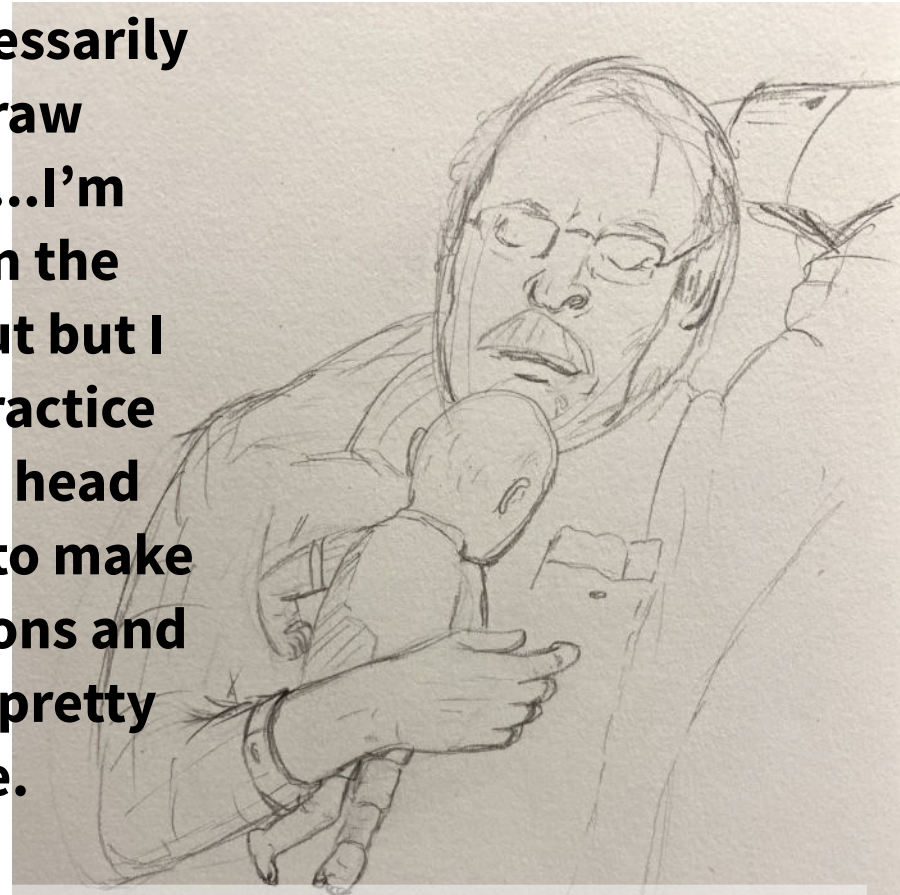




Choose your subject matter and do any preliminary sketches in your sketchbook that would benefit you in your final draft.



**You don't necessarily have to draw everything...I'm confident in the areas I left out but I wanted to practice drawing the head and babydoll to make sure proportions and angles were pretty accurate.**



**(Now that I look at it, I can clearly see that I drew the hand way too small, so this gives me a good opportunity for revision.)**



# Prepare your painting space...

Make sure you have all of your supplies:

- Paints
- Paint palette (something to put your paints on for mixing)
- Paint brushes
- Cup of water for rinsing
- Something to protect your work area ( I like to use cardboard but a large piece of paper would work too.
- Paper towel, or drying your brush





# Prime you surface

Before you even start sketching out your design, you should lay down a layer of a light color that will best work with your overall design. I have skin and a lot of browns and beiges in my composition so this light peach/tan works well.

This layer helps with areas that aren't 100% covered by your top layer of paint. There's less of a "naked background" affect going on if something is missed or the paint is applied too thin.

Make sure to use color(s) that would work well for your composition. Use a light blue in a sky area or light green for a grassy area.

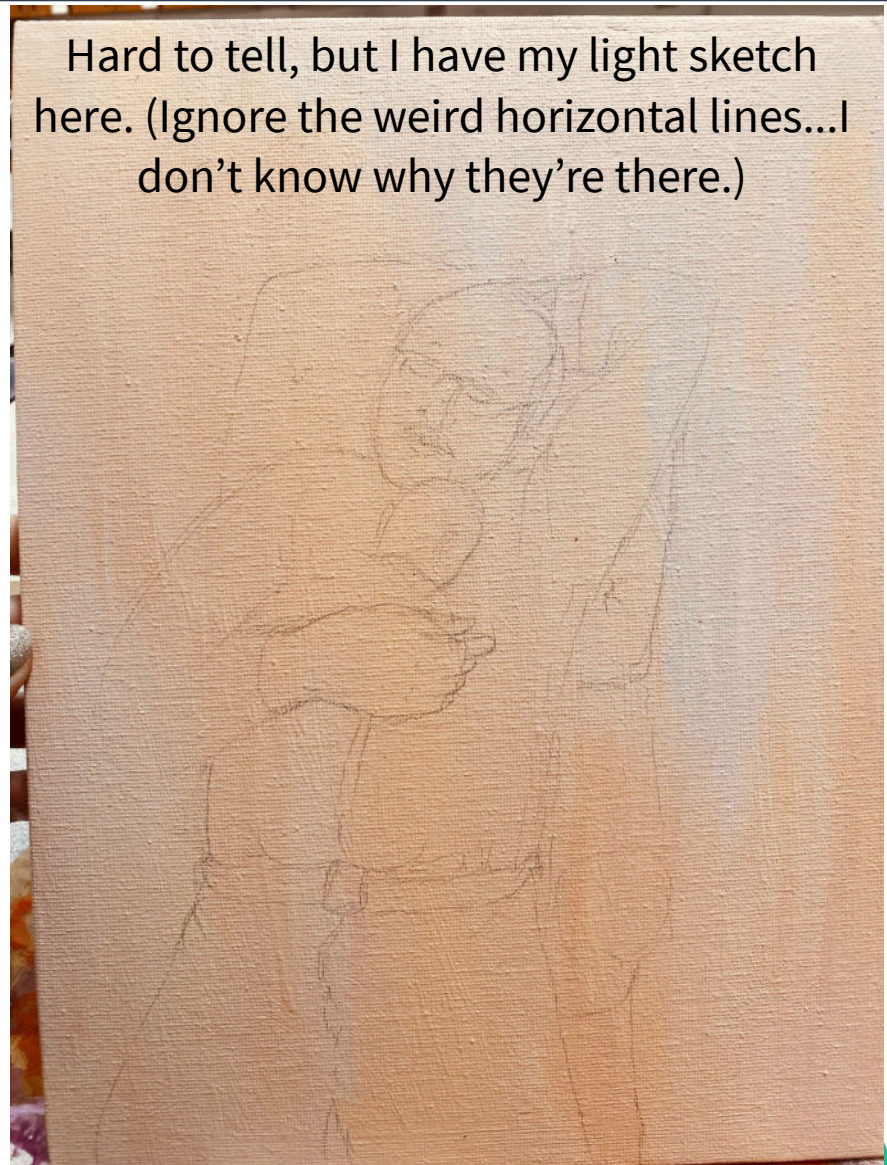




# Lightly sketch out your design

With a pencil, lightly sketch a rough outline of your design. Make sure your proportions and placement of detail are right and the composition is solid, but don't spend too much time on detail.

Impressionist paintings aren't about capturing really specific detail...they're more about capturing the "impression" of the moment and the lighting.





# To begin...



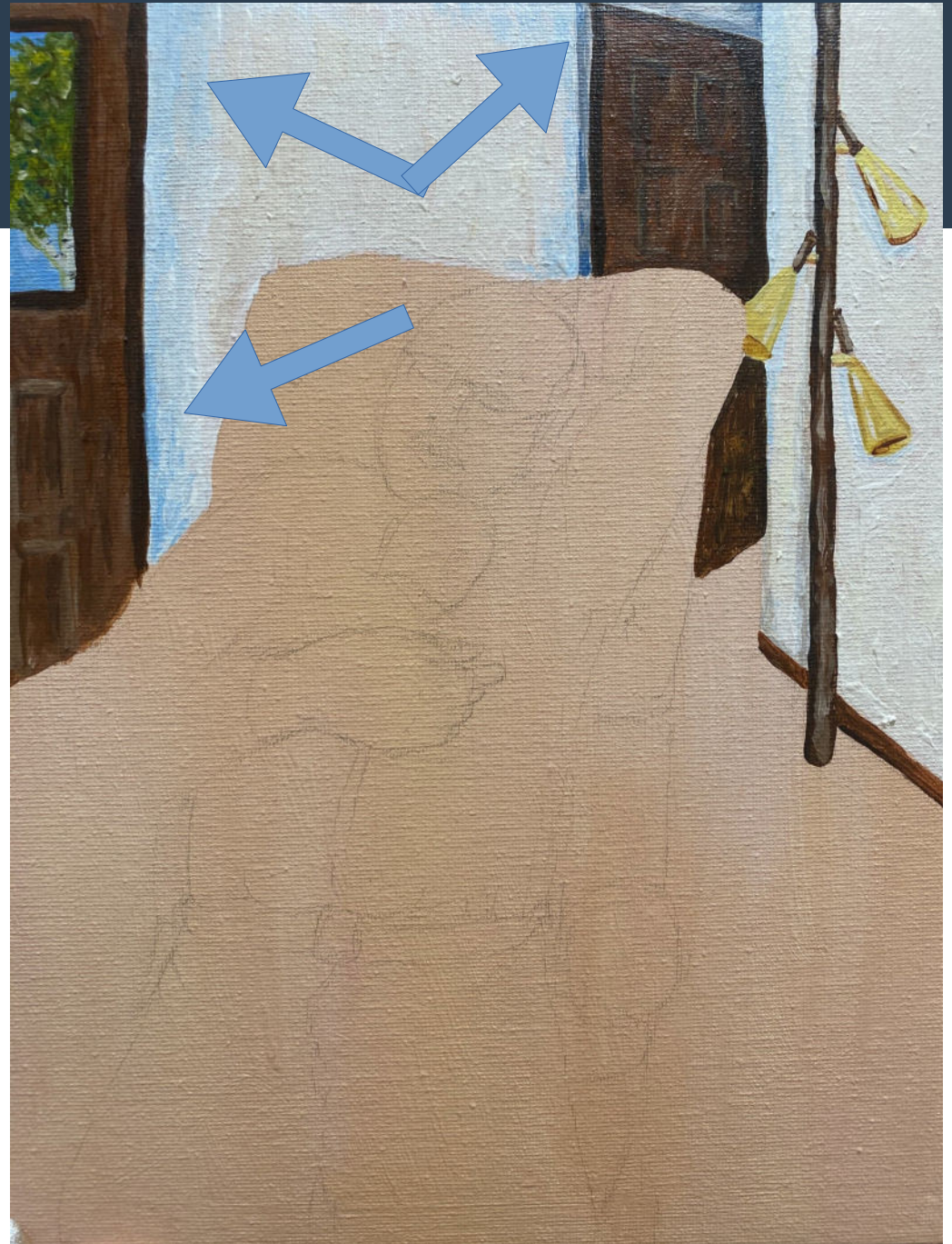
To start begin laying down a loose application of paint to your **BACKGROUND**. Don't worry about blending the paint you lay down on your canvas too much, the impressionist style preserves the brush strokes and loose nature of the application technique.

Add multiple colors (even if they're slight variations of one another) next to and on top of one another. This really makes the brushstrokes stand out.

# As you work...

Continue to add layers of paint (usually waiting for a layer to dry between applications in order to save that texture to make sure it isn't all blended together).

Remember, Impressionist really liked to use blue to represent shadows, so try playing with adding blue where your shadows would be.





Layers of distinct color are going to be key to getting a good “impressionist painting”.

The brushstrokes don't all have to look the same, but they should be noticeable and not over blended.

Think of “splotches” of color.





Even in low light scenarios  
you can still make those  
area of light pop.



Light and highlights  
are also very  
important. Make sure  
to accentuate areas of  
highlights in your  
composition.



We want to make this  
piece look like it  
glimmers in the areas  
where light is present.



# Now, go out and start creating your own!

1. Choose either a landscape or candid photograph of a subject (either a person or maybe a pet) that you already have or that you find on the internet. It's always better to use your own photography, but a internet image will work in a pinch. We will be working from a photograph, so your subject matter **cannot** a studio shot (a professional photograph of someone) or cartoon or anime.
2. Using your reference photo, sketch out your design in your sketchbook to make sure you can draw your subject matter correctly and in proportion. It doesn't have to be highly detailed, just a rough draft.
3. On your canvas (or watercolor paper) lay down a light base color that corresponds well with the color scheme of your composition.

# Now, go out and start creating your own!

4. **Starting with the BACKGROUND**, begin to paint your design. You should be using a lot of colors and keeping them as unblended as possible. Keep the brush strokes noticeable. In order to do some of these things, you may need to let layers dry before you can apply more paint.
5. Keep building layers of paint up and working toward the middle and the foreground as you progress in your process.
6. You should add your tiny details at the very end, but you're not expected to be overly detailed due to the loose, free nature of the impressionist style painting.