

The Boy Who Loved Colors



By Sérgio Valle Duarte (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0]

Jacob Abraham Camille Pissarro was born in 1830 in the Virgin Islands. He was born on the island of St. Thomas. The Virgin Islands are in the Caribbean Sea.

Jacob was different from his siblings. He didn't want to go to school. He didn't want to work in his family's store. He only wanted draw and paint. And the island was full of colorful things to paint.

There were bright red and green parrots. There were startling yellow birds. There were vivid green iguanas. The island was covered with tropical trees. The Flamboyant tree was the most spectacular. In summer, the tree was covered in stunning orange blooms.

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Jacob loved to draw nature. He filled his canvases with many colors. Sometimes people thought there was something wrong with his eyes. He didn't see the sea as blue. He saw aquamarine, turquoise, powder blue, deep greens, light greens, even yellows.

Jacob's family sent him to stay with family in Paris, France. Paris was the center of the art world. It had the best art schools. Many of the best artists flocked to Paris for that reason. Jacob became an art student. He started to go by his third name, Camille, which is a French name.

In France, Jacob—now Camille—began a new way of painting. It is called impressionism. He painted his impressions of what he saw. His paintings didn't look like photographs. They were filled with hundreds of different colors and shades. He saw each leaf and each blade of grass as made up many different splotches of colors. And this is how he painted.

Camille Pissarro returned to St. Thomas for a few years to help with his family's business. But his heart was in his art. Soon after, he began to travel around Central and South America. He painted what he saw and lived off money he made from sketching people in the street.

Eventually Pissarro moved back to France for good. He became known as the father of impressionism. Many other famous artists hung out with him. They shared their ideas and styles.



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During his lifetime, Pissarro did not sell many paintings. He was poor but happy to be a painter. Today, Pissarro's paintings sell for millions of dollars. They hang in museums all over the world.



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