

Jasper Francis Cropsey

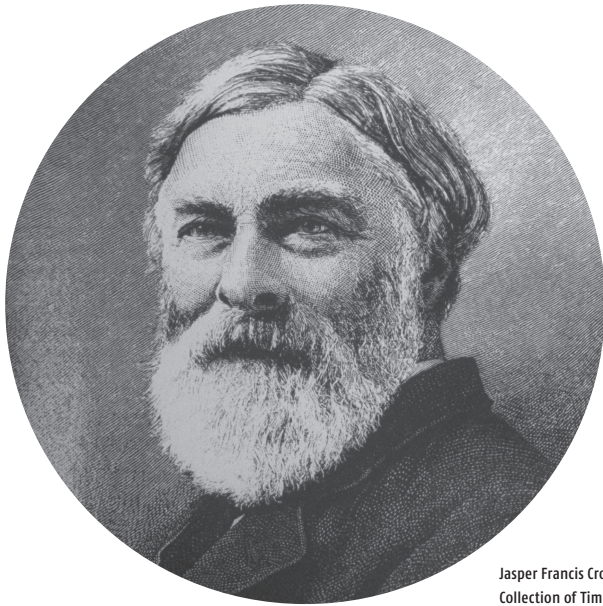


1 Cropsey's Colors

In the mid-nineteenth century, landscape painting grew in popularity among artists in the United States. Captivated by the sweeping vistas of their country, many of them explored and painted the picturesque valley of New York's Hudson River. One of these "Hudson River School" painters was Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823–1900).

Born on Staten Island, New York, Cropsey trained to be an architect, but his real love was painting. In the 1840s he made summer sketching trips to New Jersey, Upstate New York, Vermont, and New Hampshire. He and his wife moved to London in 1856, where they lived for seven years before returning to America.

Cropsey became best known for his paintings of autumn landscapes. His works were more than just descriptions of nature: they were patriotic celebrations of the wonders and promises of a young nation carved from the wilderness.



Jasper Francis Cropsey (detail),
Collection of Time & Life Pictures
(photo: Tony Linck)

2 Autumn on the Hudson

Painted in 1860, this monumental view of the Hudson River Valley shows a scene set about sixty miles north of New York City, between the towns of Newburgh and West Point. From a high vantage point on the west side of the Hudson River, a small stream leads to the wide expanse of the river. The distinctive profile of Storm King Mountain is off in the distance. Behind thick gray-blue clouds, the sun's piercing rays give a mellow glow to the hazy atmosphere. Celebrating the richness and variety of autumn foliage, tall, graceful trees in the foreground frame the view into the distance. Red oak, sugar maple, birch, and chestnut trees—having assumed their different shades of yellow, bronze, scarlet, and orange—are intermingled with the evergreen hemlocks and pines.

3 Wander into This Landscape

Autumn—On the Hudson River is a sweeping vista with precise details. The magnificent panorama, with closely observed elements, conveys an idea of the magnitude and splendor of the American landscape.

Look closely to find:

A group of hunters with their dogs

A log cabin

A winding stream

Large boulders around a pool of water

Grazing sheep

Children playing on a bridge

Cows wading in the water

Boats crossing the river

A small town nestled along the shore

Imagine you have traveled to this place

What sounds might you hear?

What might you smell?

How would you dress for this trip?

What parts of the landscape would you explore?

Where would you stand for the best view of the mountain?

What might you see from the top of a mountain?

How would this place look in the winter? In the summer?



Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Autumn—On the Hudson River*, 1860, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Gift of the Avalon Foundation

Remarkably, Cropsey painted *Autumn—On the Hudson River* while he lived in London. He relied on his memory and on sketches he made of autumn in rural New York. Cropsey's largest painting, measuring almost nine feet wide and five feet tall, took more than a year to complete, but it was an immediate success when it was exhibited in London. The painting created a sensation among English viewers who had never seen such a colorful panorama of fall foliage. (Autumn in Britain is far less colorful than in the eastern United States because there are fewer deciduous trees.) Cropsey also displayed specimens of North American leaves alongside his painting to persuade skeptical visitors that his rendition was botanically accurate.



try this

Celebrate Autumn!

Each season presents a new inspiration for artists. During the season of autumn, wander through your backyard, neighborhood, or a park.

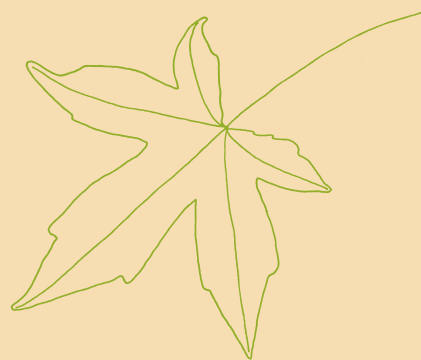
Look at leaves the way an artist might.

Examine the range of colors, from bright reds, oranges, and yellows to browns and greens.

Notice the different sizes and shapes of leaves—big, small, thin, fat, round, and pointy.

Look at the textures and vein patterns of leaves.

Collect a variety of leaves that have fallen to the ground and create a work of art with them.



Leaf Rubbing

You will need:

Leaves
Plain white paper
Crayons

On a piece of plain white paper, arrange the leaves (with the vein side up) in a pattern you like.

Lay another sheet of plain white paper on top of the leaves.

Select a crayon and peel off its paper wrapper.

Using the side of the crayon, gently rub it over the top sheet of paper.

An image of the leaf will begin to appear on the paper! Experiment with different colors and leaf arrangements.

Leaf Collage

You will need:

Leaves
Newspaper
Rubber cement
Paper
Clear contact paper

Clean the leaves you've collected by rinsing them in warm water. Carefully blot them dry with a paper towel.

Place the leaves between sheets of newspaper, and then put them between two heavy books. In about a week, the dried leaves should be flat and stiff.

Arrange the dried leaves in an interesting design on a piece of paper. Use rubber cement to glue them in place.

Let the rubber cement dry for one day. To protect the surface, cover your collage with clear contact paper.



"Have you ever reclined upon some gentle slope, some hillside in a beautiful country with your eyes half closed and your mind away from care, dreaming of . . . the lovely and beautiful in nature and art with a far away and o'er the hills feeling of the chameleon sky, the glowing sunshine and soothing shadows — the distant smoky town — the rich autumnal foliage, bits of green pasturage and nibbling sheep and stately trees, a stream of water winding in and out around some wooded headland. . . ." Jasper Francis Cropsey