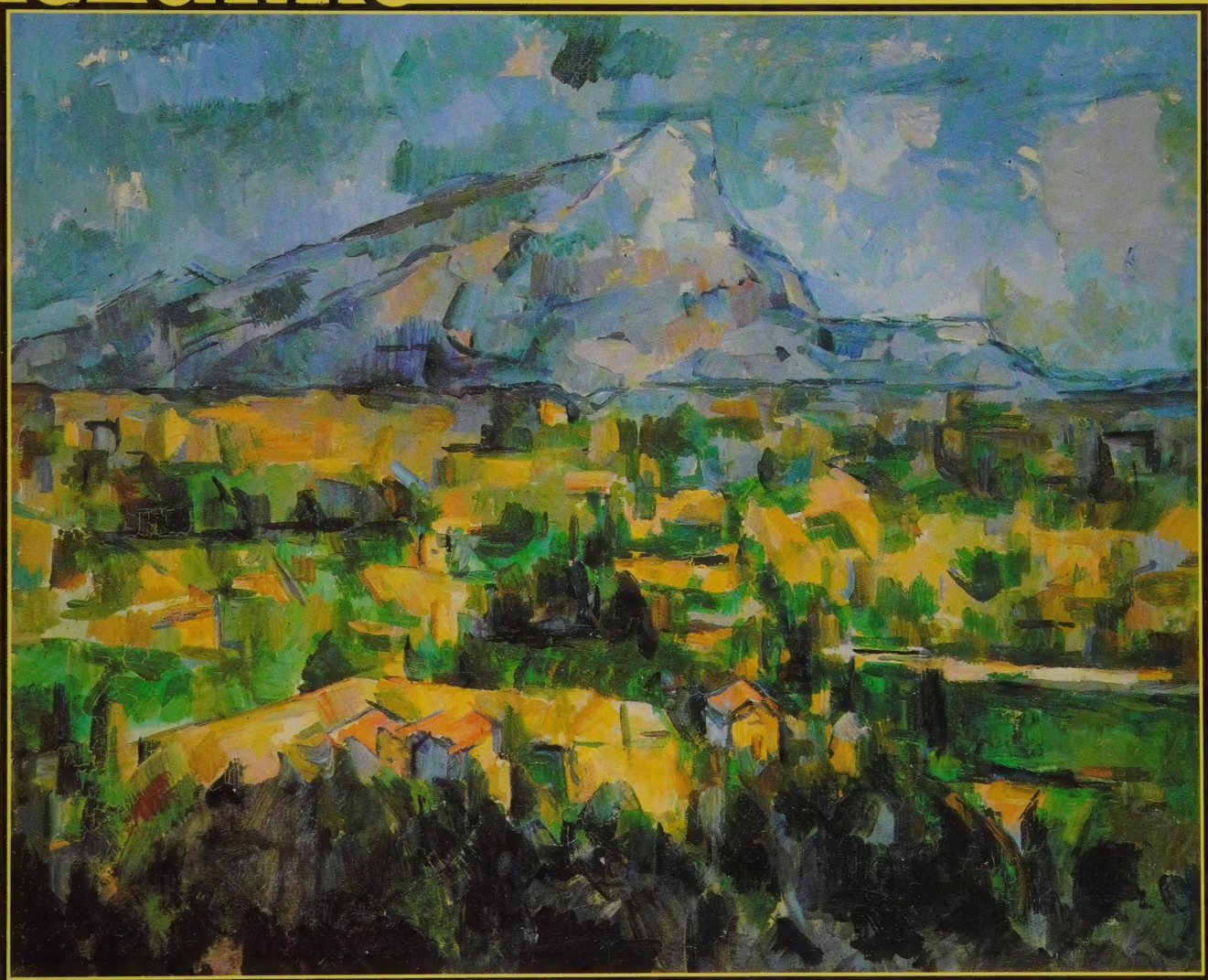



One Hundred Paintings

Cezanne



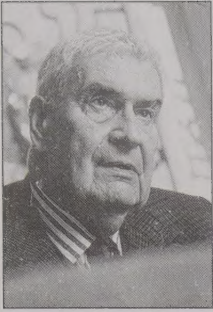
Mont Sainte-Victoire





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**FEDERICO ZERI** (Rome, 1921-1998), eminent art historian and critic, was vice-president of the National Council for Cultural and Environmental Treasures from 1993. Member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris, he was decorated with the Legion of Honor by the French government. Author of numerous artistic and literary publications; among the most well-known: *Pittura e controriforma*, the Catalogue of Italian Painters in the Metropolitan Museum of New York and the Walters Gallery of Baltimore, and the book *Confesso che ho sbagliato*.

## Work edited by FEDERICO ZERI

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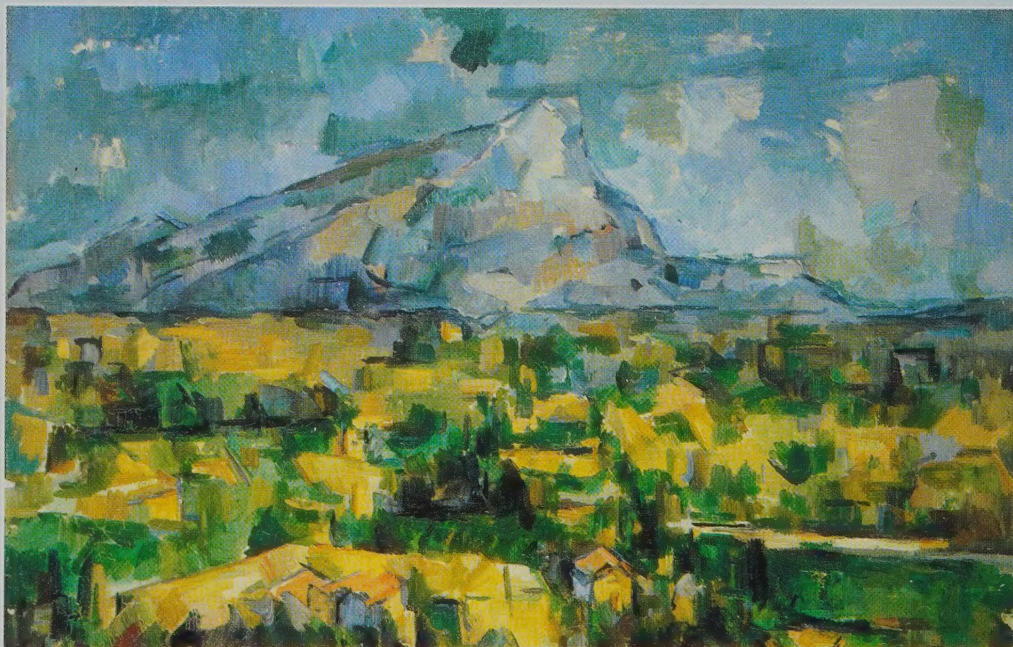
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# CEZANNE

# MONT

# SAINTE-VICTOIRE

In MONT SAINTE-VICTOIRE, Paul Cézanne synthesizes color and brushstroke to create depth. In his effort to capture the unchanging structure of the landscape, he rendered its majestic solemnity. Even though the means he used may seem limited, every



brushstroke is the fruit of careful meditation. The artist, who is often called the father of modern painting, approached his work as a laborious intellectual process.

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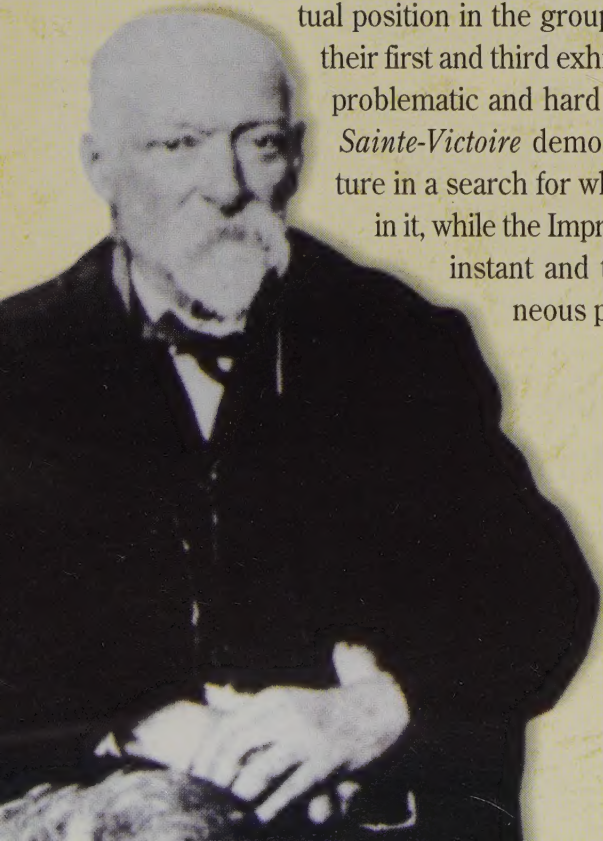
*Federa* *Jen*

# AN ECCENTRIC IMPRESSIONIST

## MONT SAINTE-VICTOIRE

1904-06

- Philadelphia Museum of Art (oil on canvas, 73x91 cm)
- Despite the fact that Cézanne led a retiring, solitary life, his work, which started a revolution in the traditional way of conceiving painting, put him in the forefront of twentieth century art.
- Born in 1839 in Aix-en-Provence in southern France into a well-to-do middle class family, he had to fight his father's opposition to devote himself to painting. This antagonistic relationship was a source of the insecurity which plagued him all his life.
- Enrolling in 1856 in the Ecole de Dessin at Aix, he made a crucial move in terms of his art when in 1861 he went to Paris, where he had trouble fitting into the worldly atmosphere of the French capital. Here he started a period of production of works in dark colors, using a thick *impasto*, with tortuous lines following the examples of Daumier (1808-1879), Courbet (1819-1877), and Delacroix (1798-1863). And he visited the Louvre, assiduously.
- But it was the Impressionists, who were just beginning to achieve public recognition, who revealed to Cézanne the possibilities of painting *en plein air* and a more spontaneous representation of nature. Thanks mainly to Pissarro (1830-1903), from the 1860s his palette grew lighter and his forms more relaxed. He admired Monet (1840-1926), worked with Renoir (1841-1919) and Pissarro, and went to meetings at the Café Guerbois. But his actual position in the group, which was consolidated in their first and third exhibitions in 1874 and 1877, was problematic and hard to define. In effect, as *Mont Sainte-Victoire* demonstrates, he approached nature in a search for what is most stable and lasting in it, while the Impressionists sought to grasp the instant and to fix on canvas an instantaneous perception.



◆ A TOTAL CALLING (1839-1906). The Provençal artist Paul Cézanne (at left in a photo from 1904) was a rude-mannered introvert, who practiced the art of painting passionately and single-mindedly, as in it he found the only way to placate and express his tormented soul.





# A RAREFIED LANDSCAPE

Cézanne's deep love for his land, to which he was attached by memories of his youth, led him to dwell on the landscape of Provence in his search for motifs. In his last phase, between 1902 and 1906, Mont Sainte-Victoire recurs as an almost obsessive presence.

● In reality, it had already appeared as a motif around 1870, and would be taken up again later, even though depicted each time from different angles. But when in 1901 Cézanne bought property in the area of Lauves, north of Aix-en-Provence, and set up his studio there, the panorama from his terrace, with the profile of the mountain rising above the cultivated plain, became the principal subject of a series of canvases.

● The painting now in Philadelphia belongs to the last phase of the artist's work and is the culmination of the process of simplification which characterizes the other views. Compared with earlier versions of the subject, the seemingly random accumulation of brushstrokes loses all objective reference to the original image.

● The composition is divided into three horizontal bands: a foremost plane where the deep green suggests the presence of trees, a middle plane where the summary shapes of houses and planted fields can be discerned, and finally, the outline of the mountain towering over the horizon.

● Despite the apparent absence of natural referents and the abandonment of rules of perspective, the painting has both depth and life. Both the juxtaposition of colors and the vertical rhythm of the short brushstrokes give depth to the view.

● The peak of Mont Sainte-Victoire, which in reality is only the beginning of a range of limestone mountains, thus becomes the only recognizable element in the picture and, with the imposing solidity given it by the less dense dabs of color, dominates the landscape with proud monumentality.

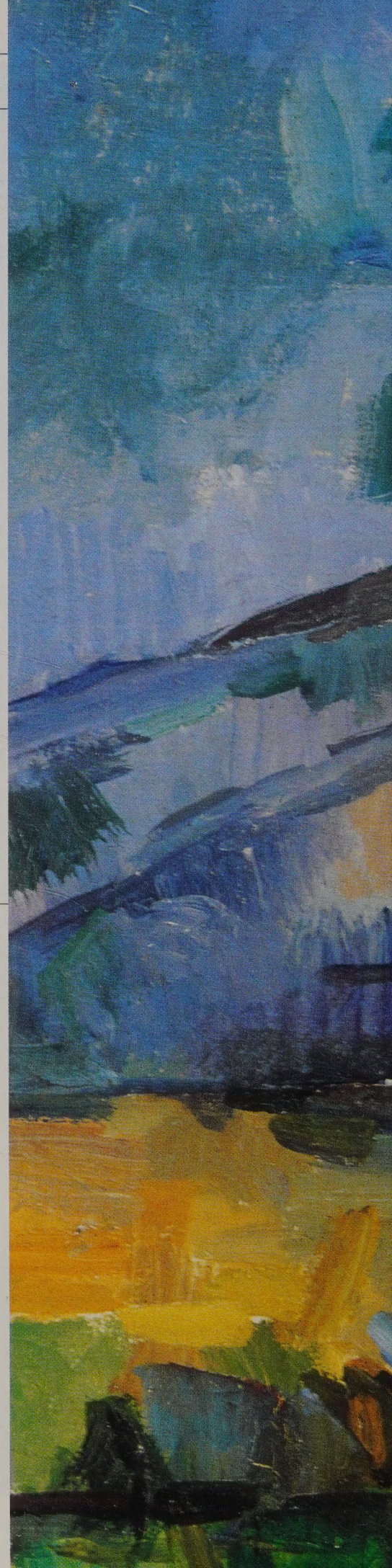


### ◆ THE MOUNTAIN PEAK

The limestone profile of the mountain (which stretches to the north-west with peaks over a thousand meters high) towers above the Arc valley: its unnatural blue color can be distinguished from the sky only by the thin black contour line.

The silhouette of its peak, with the highest point slightly toward the right, embodies the solemn, menacing pride of nature found also in another version of *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1902-06, Kansas City, Museum of Art, below).

For Cézanne, this mountaintop has a sacred significance.







◆ **THE OUTLINE OF THE HOUSES**

The only detail of the composition even slightly recognizable is the brown band that can be detected beyond the line of trees in the foremost plane. Compared to the dark, dirty green of the trees, which dilate the space in the direction

of the observer, the houses take shape with ochre-colored brushstrokes, over which just a few green marks suggest their volume. Cézanne shows that he is not interested in pure anecdotal detail, but in the perceptible mass of the houses engulfed in the vastness of the valley.

The level of synthesis at which the painter has distilled the landscape is clearly seen in a comparison with *The Great Pine* (1885-87, Washington, Phillips Collection, right). Despite the slightly off-center viewing point and the distant view of the landscape, the isolated houses

in the valley, the horizontal outline of the bridge, and the small trees on the foothill of the mountain can be distinguished. The trunk on the left also contributes to heightening the sense of broad, open space in the scene.



◆ MONT SAINTE-VICTOIRE SEEN FROM BELLEVUE (1882-85, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art). Although depicted from a less frontal, more distant viewing point, the valley shows the same airy vastness as the picture in Philadelphia. The pine rises proudly

in the center, dilating the space outwards in the same way as the green patches in the painting of 1904-06.

The synthetic brushstroke and simplified composition are signs of the incipient changes in the artist's style, which still wavers between Impressionism and Realism.



# RHYTHMIC HANDLING, A CHROMATIC SYMPHONY

Like the Impressionists before him, Cézanne attempted to reproduce on canvas his perception of nature. But compared to the other painters, more attentive to capturing the appearance of the landscape in the precarious instant, he aspired at melding the fleeting visual experience with the stability of external reality.

● *Mont Sainte-Victoire* reveals this duality. Cézanne was aware that light abstracts the shapes of the landscape and presents it to the eye on the basis of tonal relationships and modulations. For this reason he rendered the image with frenetic brushstrokes aimed both at representing the real volumes and shapes and at the same time painting them as they appear in the atmosphere. The result is a vibrant play of dabs of color.

● The canvas, apparently the result of a hasty, summary elaboration, reveals instead the careful study underpinning it, a slow, meditated process. Beyond meteorological conditions and the variations of light and color in the landscape, Cézanne pursued the expression of the immutable structure of nature, its per-

◆ MONT SAINTE-VICTOIRE SEEN FROM LES LAUVES (1905, Moscow, Pushkin Museum). Compared to the other paintings in the series, this one presents very subdued tones and an unreal light which lend a ghostly atmosphere to the landscape. The trees in the foreground can just barely be distinguished by the more linear handling of the brush, while all the other elements meld together in the magma of color.



manent condition, which is not subject to contingencies.

● Starting with observation of the real object, the artist progressively synthesizes the forms to the point almost of abstraction. Among the means at his disposal (perspective, color, drawing), he chose color, considering it the only expression true to nature. But, compared with the fluid, soft brushwork of the Impressionists, his handling appears strictly functional to the construction of the image and almost rough. Irregular in density, it becomes summary to the point of seeming im-

provised.

● Cézanne's palette, based on just a few tones of earth colors and greens, thus maintains its naturalness and re-absorbs the individual descriptive details into a unified mosaic of bits of color. The landscape is thus transformed into a chromatic symphony that, in the play of contrasts or echoes of color, shapes the image of nature without recourse to artifice. Each brushstroke is set on the canvas like a line of force until it draws to the surface the unchanging structures of nature.



◆ MONT SAINTE-VICTOIRE, SEEN FROM LES LAUVES (1904-06, Basel, Kunstmuseum). The painting, contemporary with the one in Philadelphia, shows a more advanced process of corrosion of the realistic notations made on the paint surface. It is no longer possible to distinguish the houses from the trees. Earth and sky, too, seem to melt together in the prismatic application of color.



◆ BETWEEN HEAVEN  
AND EARTH

Merging together on the horizon are the valley, the lowest foothills, and the dark sky. On a base layer of blue, the sky is scattered with pinkish and greenish clouds counterpoised to the denser, darker ones that are emerging from the left.

No natural referents appear, and the disjointed brushstrokes render the detail similar to an abstract work of contemporary art. Deprived of every recognizable form of identity, the shapes in the valley (houses, trees, and fields) are reabsorbed into one sole material: the paint. Only by comparing this picture to preceding versions can the strip across the bottom be recognized as the bridge crossing the Arc valley. The vibration of color, created by the vigorous, thick strokes of the palette knife, rivets the viewer's attention on the mountain peak, the painting's sole protagonist.

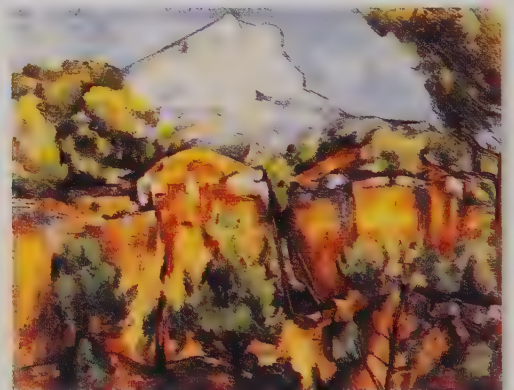
The technique of modulation, based on a use of color to build up the forms, allows Cézanne to translate onto canvas the sensations transmitted by nature, which are subjected to one sole organizing principle.





◆ **A BOILING VAT OF COLOR**  
Cézanne paints the elements of the landscape by inserting them into one chromatic network: every individual image disappears in the vision of the whole, every shape becomes purely a link in the overall symphony of colors. Even in the works

where this *mélange* is less accentuated – as in *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from the Bibemus Quarry* (c. 1897, Baltimore, Baltimore Museum of Art, below) – the master interprets nature as a source of emotions which, translated into vibrations of color, determine the overall tone of the composition.



◆ **MONTE SAINTE-VICTOIRE**  
(1902-06, New York, Museum of Modern Art). Cézanne painted some 300 oils on canvas and about forty watercolors with the mountain as his subject, varying his view point

each time. In the watercolors, the mountain appears more delicate and soothing, due also to the lightness of the medium. In these quick sketches the artist reveals an unexpected lyrical vein.



# A PROBLEMATIC FRIENDSHIP



Cézanne was born in Aix-en-Provence into a well-to-do family, which thanks to his father's enterprising efforts was able to live in great comfort. But Paul's introverted nature and his antagonistic relationship with his strict father made his life a solitary one, subject to constant restlessness.

- A key event in his life was meeting Emile Zola in 1852, when both were students at the Collège Bourbon. Their friendship would play a crucial role in the artistic and personal development of the painter, for the constant support offered him by his writer friend.

- It was Zola who urged him to stand up to his father and to believe in his own talent. But often in his letters Zola rebukes Cézanne harshly for his indecision and lack of courage. Writing to his friend Baille in 1861, Zola observed: "It may be that Paul has the genius of a great painter, but in any case he doesn't have the genius to become one. The slightest difficulty leads him to desperation." Nonetheless Zola does not fail to declare his affection, writing in 1866: "You represent my whole youth. You are tied to every joy of mine, to every pain. In this brotherhood our spirit developed side by side."

- The friendship with Zola was at its best until 1880, but began showing signs of strain when Cézanne was unable to fit in



with the worldly environment of Paris and returned defeated to the provinces.

- In Provence he worked in almost total isolation, in a solitude that has been called ascetic, interrupted only by fleeting encounters with the Impressionists, especially Pissarro and Renoir. The painter felt misunderstood and thought he was being mocked; his exasperated victimism accentuated the rough edges of his character, making him sometimes unbearable.

- The friendship with Zola slowly dwindled to a mutual affection, based on the memory of their carefree times in Aix. Their respective choices – the writer's naturalism, the artist's turn to Impressionism and later to a synthetic style of painting – drove them apart. The definitive break came in 1886, as a result of Zola's story *L'œuvre*, whose protagonist – a failed painter – Cézanne recognized as modeled on himself. But when Zola died in 1902, Cézanne's grief was deep and sincere.



◆ A WAYFARER  
AT WORK

Cézanne appears here in a photo from about 1874, dressed as a wayfarer. Armed with his stick, paints, and canvases, the painter would walk long distances and stay for hours working out-of-doors. His dream was to die painting, and fate answered his prayer: surprised by a violent storm on October 15, 1906, he contracted pneumonia, which he stubbornly neglected because he wanted to finish a painting, but on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the same month he died.

◆ SELF-PORTRAIT  
(1877-80, Paris, Musée d'Orsay).

This painting is just one of the many self-portraits the painter made.

Here, despite the apparently summary handling, he faces the viewer with his usual proud and diffident air, in a three-quarters turn, made monumental by the close viewing point.

◆ MÉDAN CASTLE  
(1879-81, Glasgow, Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum).

The painting, which is still part of his Impressionist phase, shows to the right of the castle Zola's house, where Cézanne stayed on numerous occasions. But he felt out of place at the intellectual dinner parties held by Zola, and it is said that he more than once embarrassed his host (shown in the oval at upper left).



# PRISMATIC PAINTING

Cézanne started out painting in a dramatic style – characterized by dark tones and tortuous contour lines – under the sway of the works of Daumier and Courbet. He often used a palette knife to emphasize the density of the paint and thus a sense of volume.

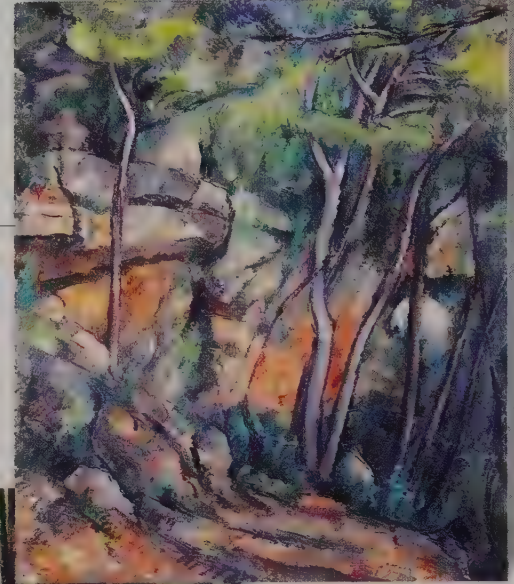
● The technique which would become his characteristic, developed in contact with the Impressionists, was adopted from 1870 on. Taking Pissarro's advice, he gave up black and lightened his palette, reducing it to a few earth colors.

● His brushstroke grew shorter and more frenetic; sequences of parallel dabs, often oriented in different directions, are juxtaposed on the canvas and absorb the forms in a mosaic of symbols. Cézanne also eschewed per-

◆ **POPLARS**  
(1879-82, Paris, Musée d'Orsay).  
The same subject as the one in this Impressionist-style painting inaugurated the famous series by Claude Monet, but, unlike Monet, Cézanne was not interested in the question of light.



◆ **IN THE PARK OF CHÂTEAU NOIR**  
(1900, Paris, Musée de l'Orangerie).  
The canvas belongs to Cézanne's last phases, even though the disintegration of form is not yet complete, as shown by the tree trunks in the foreground, placed in an amorphous space.



◆ **MAGDALENE (GRIEF)**  
(c. 1868-69, Paris, Musée d'Orsay).  
The figure wrapped in her pain is drawn out of the dark background by the ghostly pallor of her white blouse and the tormented contour line.

spective and multiplied the viewing points to the point where his compositions seemed unbalanced, unstable.



◆ **THE BLUE VASE**  
(1889-90, Paris, Musée d'Orsay).  
The painting still shows the influence of Impressionism and reveals the painter's interest in mass, emphasized by strongly defined contour lines, as in the vase and fruit. A skillful handling of the paint, still spread compactly on the canvas, infuses the scene with light even though it has no outside light source.

● From the 1880s, the artist broke up his surface, using an opaque, substantial pigment which gave actual volume to the shapes. In a *crescendo* that in the last works borders on abstraction, with broad strokes he suppressed precise outline, placed warm and cool colors on top of each other to render space, and by modulating color harmonized the single brushstrokes in an overall architectonic vision.

● He declared: "There is no line, there is no modeling, there is only contrast. When color has reached its greatest richness, then also the form achieves its fullness."



# THE ROMANTIC PHASE

Despite his enrollment in 1856 in the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Aix-en-Provence, Cézanne's first paintings were done in 1860 and reveal a tormented style, a strong sense of *impasto*, spreading the paint with a palette knife in disordered strokes and using dramatic contrasts of light and shadow.

● An exceptional case is represented by the decoration of the *salon* at Jas de Bouffan, a prestigious property a few kilometers from Aix bought by his father in 1859. Here Cézanne painted in 1860 four panels with allegories of the seasons, using a linear style, brilliant colors, and precious forms that recall the painting of Ingres (1780-1867).

● But he was more interested in color than line; even in the disquieting pictures of his beginnings his main aim seems to be catharsis: he articulates on the canvas his anguish and frustration. For its technical tension and the sometimes religious con-

notations of the scenes, this phase has been called *Romantic*. But the violent images and dark colors last only until 1872, when his encounter with Impressionism converted Cézanne to light.

● His models can be found in the expressive vehemence of Daumier, the intransigent realism of Courbet, and the chromatic force of Delacroix, discovered by Cézanne at the Louvre. He took from the first his contrasts of light and dark and the strongly defined line of the figures, from the second the livid, harshly critical tones of modern reality, and from Delacroix he borrowed the agitated rhythm transmitted by the colors.

● A final point of reference was slowly appearing on the scene: Manet. From him Cézanne learned a shiny, brilliant use of black, the suggestive force of still-lives, and the innovativeness of compositions effecting a synthesis between mythology and daily events.



◆ THE BLACK CLOCK

(c. 1870, Paris, private collection).

The painting is striking in its mysterious, symbolic atmosphere enveloping the objects, which are in reality quite unusual ones to find in a still-life.

The clock on the sideboard, onto which the sunlight throws deep shadows, has no hands, as though to indicate that time has been suspended. Next to a cup and a lemon, a large shell with bright red lips is a female symbol. The brilliant colors recall Manet.



◆ THE ABDUCTION

(c. 1867, Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum).

The dark, heavily laden surface is enlivened by the tangle of the two bodies strongly contrasting in color. A ghostly light strikes them, leaving the two figures of bathers in the shadows, along with the landscape in which a tree and some rocks can barely be seen.



◆ A MODERN OLYMPIA

(1873-74, Paris, Musée d'Orsay).

The painting, deliberately taking its inspiration from Manet, depicts a nude female figure lying on a bed. Facing her sits an elegantly dressed man with a top hat and walking stick. Despite the sketchy rendering, he can be recognized as Cézanne. Compared to Manet, the painter makes the scene even more explicit.



◆ SCIPIO THE BLACK  
(1867, São Paulo,  
Museu de Arte).

The young man pictured here was a model at the Académie Suisse, the art school Cézanne attended in Paris from 1861 to 1870. The boy's pose is ambiguous in its languor: Scipio sleeps overcome by tiredness or perhaps pain. Lending a dramatic note to the canvas are the dull dark colors and the pronounced brushstrokes, which nervously define his body, pants, and stool. The restless, disorderly style seems to express a tragic heroism. The picture, which belonged to Manet, was called by Pissarro "a masterpiece of painting."

◆ LOUIS AUGUSTE  
CÉZANNE  
(1866, Washington,  
National Gallery of Art).

The artist's father is portrayed in his armchair (the same as in the *Portrait of Achille Empereire*) as he reads *L'Événement*; behind him can be seen a still-life by Cézanne.

The choice of newspaper is ironic, as Louis Auguste, who in reality read *Le Siècle*, strongly detested it. *L'Événement* was a revolutionary paper for which Zola wrote.

Thus Cézanne in this painting shows the antagonistic relationship with his father and tries to even accounts with him. It should be recalled that at the time of this painting, Zola was urging his friend to oppose his father and follow his artistic calling.



# THE CONVERSION TO THE LIGHT

From the moment in 1858 when Zola moved to Paris, Cézanne aspired to join him. In 1861 he finally obtained his father's permission and moved to the capital, where Zola encouraged him to enroll in the Académie Suisse. Here he met Pissarro, Monet, and the other Impressionists. His bizarre behavior and his sketches were often the subject of ridicule, but he found valuable support in Pissarro, one of the first besides Zola to intuit his creative potential.

● Cézanne returned to Aix after a few months and visited Paris only occasionally, going to the Café Guerbois. In this meeting place of the Impressionists he met Manet, one of the artists he most admired.

● In 1872 he accepted Pissarro's invitation to paint with him



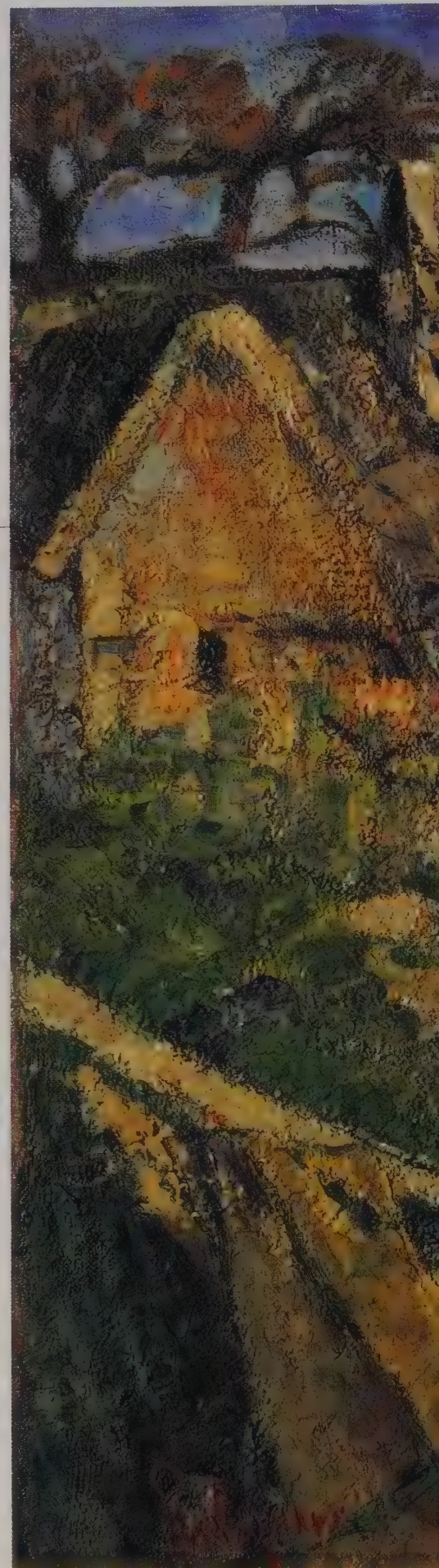
in Pontoise, and in the next two years, divided between Pontoise and Auvers-sur-Oise, his stylistic conversion took place. He learned to reduce his use of black, to analyze light values, and to paint from life, *en plein air*, putting aside his impetuous personality to let his eye get lost in nature.

● But the poetics of capturing the fleeting moment did not satisfy him: that rapid, imprecise way of painting, which merged the shapes in a vibration of light and color, seemed ephemeral to him; he aspired rather to melding perception with an understanding of reality. For this reason his handling became ever slower and more painstaking, taking him to the opposite pole from the instantaneousness of Monet.

◆ THE HOUSE OF THE HANGED MAN AT AUVERS-SUR-OISE (1873, Paris, Musée d'Orsay).

The painting, one of Cézanne's most famous, marks the beginning of his Impressionist phase. Compared to earlier canvases, with their heavily applied, tar-like paint, here the brushstroke is more fluid and the colors more luminous. The work was shown at the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874, and although mocked by many, it was purchased by count Doria.

◆ ESTAQUE (c. 1882-85, Paris, Musée du Louvre). Cézanne painted the gulf of Marseilles seen from Estaque a number of times. The various phases of his evolution as a painter can be seen in the different versions. In the 1882 version, his style is still Impressionist, but the brushstroke is solid and uniform, especially in the description of the sea, handled with a technique opposite to that of the true Impressionists. While Monet dissolves the surface of the sea to render the restless flicker of the light, Cézanne emphasizes its static, almost majestic presence and saves for the areas bordering it, where the line disintegrates, the effect of a fleeting perception.







◆ LANDSCAPE AT PONTOISE (1875-77, Moscow, Pushkin Museum). The painting was made at Pontoise, where Cézanne was the guest of **Camille Pissarro** (whose *Entrance to the Village of Voisins*, 1872, Paris, Musée d'Orsay, is seen below). Pissarro was responsible for Cézanne's conversion to Impressionism.



◆ THE MAINCY BRIDGE (1879, Paris, Musée d'Orsay). The canvas shows Cézanne's approach to Impressionism, although his feeling for form made him an Impressionist *sui generis*. In this picture, vibrating with brief brushstrokes, it seems almost possible to breathe the damp atmosphere of the woods.

◆ THE HOUSE OF DOCTOR GACHET AT AUVERS (1873, Paris, Musée d'Orsay). The painting describes the village of Auvers on a cloudy day. Van Gogh would spend his last days there in 1888. The house at the end of the road belongs to Dr. Gachet, who treated Van Gogh. Cézanne found in him a faithful supporter of his art.

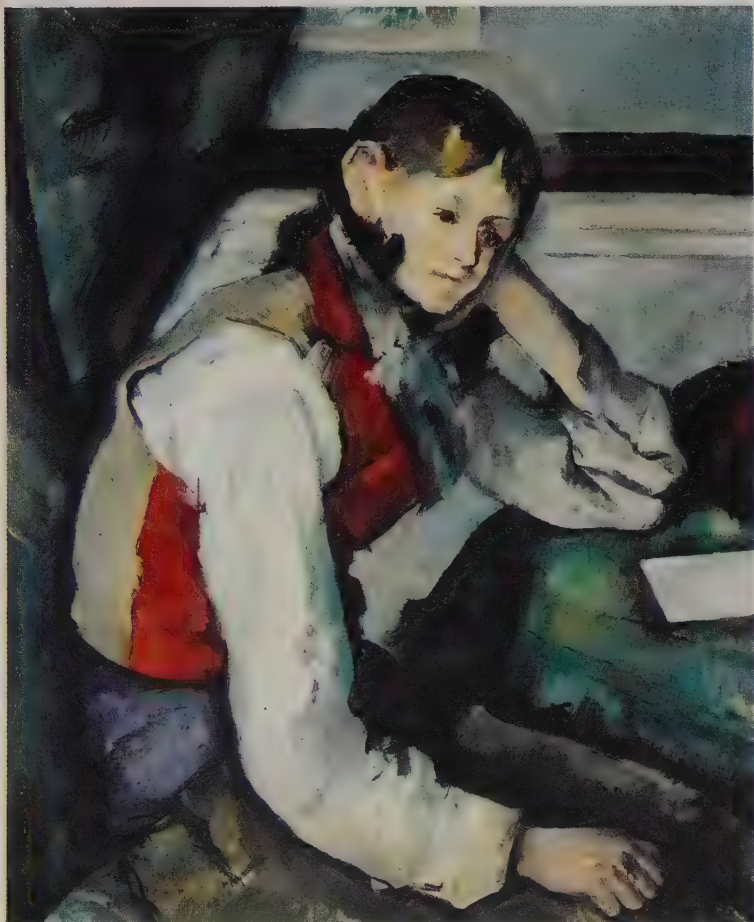


# AN ABSORBED MELANCHOLY

Cézanne's solitary, meditative nature also characterizes the figures he portrays: his models sit, their gaze lost in the void, immobile, absent. In the stiffness of their poses and the incommunicability of their attitude, we meet his own bitter isolation.

● The protagonists of his canvases are sad, lost in thought, and their inactivity suggests almost a fear of action. Recurrent is the pose traditionally assigned to the representation of saturnine melancholy: men sitting head in hand, with vacant gaze, in settings whose warped perspective evokes their lack of harmony with the rest of the world. The immobile figures painted by Cézanne possess the same silent solemnity as his mountains or still-lives.

● The toned-down palette, heavily laden brush, and diagonal compositional structure thus become instruments of expression and allow the painter to characterize, through keen, painful psychological introspection, his sitters who are almost all from humble walks of life, servants, peasants, simple townsfolk.



● Compared to his early works like *Achille Empereire*, the portraits painted in the 1890s unite a more profound expression of individuality of the subjects with a monumental air given by the structural and chromatic rigor. The progressive simplification of the forms following principles of solid geometry also helps to confer solemnity. Every element is subordinated to the overall organization of the composition, and the artist achieves a fusion of figure and environment.

● In his last portraits, an underlying religious vein unexpectedly appears. Cézanne's rediscovery of faith is also due to his worsening health from diabetes. Thus a meditation on the precariousness of life is made more explicit by the insertion of details like skulls (which would appear also in some of his still lifes). The acme of the series is reached in *Old Woman with a Rosary*: the woman holding the beads of the rosary in her hands seems almost to be grabbing onto hope.

◆ **OLD WOMAN WITH A ROSARY**  
 (1900-04, London, National Gallery of Art).  
 Against a dull, summarily sketched background emerges the curved silhouette of the elderly woman. Enlivened by a light that draws her face and large rough hands out of the darkness, she grasps her rosary tightly. With this gesture Cézanne expresses the need to continue to grab onto hope. Like a *memento mori*, the picture is an invitation to a moment of melancholy meditation.

◆ **SELF-PORTRAIT IN A VISORED HAT**  
 (1873-75, St Petersburg, The Hermitage)  
 In the course of his life, the painter made a number of self-portraits, all marked by a very close viewing point and a heavily laden brushstroke which seems to deform rather than define his face. Here, against a murky background, Cézanne appears at the same time diffident and decisive, with a rude expression and his eyes lost in thought.

◆ **BOY IN A RED WAISTCOAT**  
 (1888-90, Zurich, Stiftung Sammlung Bührle).  
 The model is an Italian boy, Michelangelo di Rosa. To accentuate his gloomy expression, Cézanne inserts the long, misproportioned figure into a setting constructed on diagonal lines that give an impression of instability to the image.



## PRODUCTION: PORTRAITURE



◆ **WOMAN WITH A COFFEE POT** (c. 1895, Paris, Musée d'Orsay). Cézanne paints his maid seated as she takes a break by a table with a coffee pot and cup. Her arms dropped heavily in her lap express her fatigue and at the same time create a closed silhouette which renders her temporary closure to the outside world. The pose of the woman, pensive and resigned, would be borrowed often by Modigliani for his portraits. The severe stiffness of the maidservant, which lends her a monumentality, is underlined by the vertical lines of the objects, particularly of the upright spoon.

◆ **THE SMOKER** (c. 1895, St Petersburg, The Hermitage). Leaning on his hand, in the saturnine pose already seen in *The Boy in a Red Waistcoat*, the man offers an extraordinary page from a lived life, embodying the unnamed malaise that Cézanne must have seen numerous times in persons encountered at the café.

The composition is constructed along a diagonal which moves the figure deep into the picture, echoing his psychological distance.

Absorbed in his thoughts, his gaze lost in the distance and his unlit pipe in his mouth, the man is captured in a moment of absorbed isolation from external reality. The setting around him is rendered in its rough irrelevance to any emotional connection.

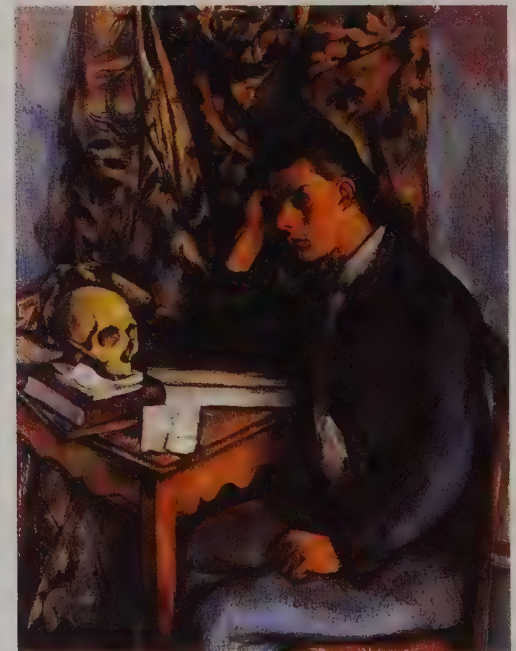


## PRODUCTION: PORTRAITURE



◆ **PORTRAIT OF VICTOR CHOQUET** (1876-77, private collection). The work depicts the determined profile of the art collector, a profound supporter of Cézanne's genius and his friend.

◆ **WOMAN IN BLUE** (1898-99, St Petersburg, Hermitage). In this canvas, too, the perspective is unsteady, and the woman's body is slightly twisted. Her gaze lost in the void expresses the dark vision usual in Cézanne's work.



◆ **ACHILLE EMPERAIRE** (c. 1868, Paris, Musée d'Orsay). His painter friend, although deformed, is imposing in the armchair. His eyes have an ironic, pained awareness.

◆ **BOY WITH A SKULL** (1896-98, Merion, Barnes Foundation). The skull introduced into the scene acts as a classical *memento mori*.



# "ASTOUND PARIS WITH AN APPLE"

In his production of still lifes, Cézanne looked to the Dutch and Spanish Baroque tradition of a table set with pitchers and fruit. But compared to the Dutch masters, he did not aim at describing or rendering his objects in detail: he painted the fruit, which can be recognized generically as apples, pears, oranges, or peaches. Any specific characteristics disappear in the brushstroke.

● Cézanne was not interested in the specific meaning of objects, but in their shape and relationships in space. Thus, from his first still lifes of 1865 onwards, he returned often to the same subjects: vases, pitchers, sometimes bottles, fruit, a crumpled white tablecloth. He was fascinated by the things present in daily life, which become metaphors for existence itself, and in their casual and even discordant juxtapositions can express the difficulty of communicating.

● Beginning with the 1880s, when the artist drew away from Impressionism, his compositions are more sumptuous and monumental, enriched with a wider angle of view that takes in draperies and glimpses of interiors. The perspective becomes more complex, the viewpoints multiply, the planes tip and lose stability, while the objects often grow to gigantic proportions.

● The apparent simplicity of the motif is overturned by the complexity of the rhythmic play of color and spatial relationships: every element is captured from different angles simultaneously, and the relationship between the different slants on the subject creates a new image with a new concept. Imitation is replaced by a mental space that prefigures the Cubist vision.

● Cézanne's obsessive recourse to apples, even though it may seem an unimportant motif or one interesting solely as a geometric shape, thus takes on a greater resonance. It cannot be a coincidence that Cézanne seems to have said he wanted to astound Paris with an apple.

◆ CURTAIN, PITCHER,  
AND PLATES OF FRUIT  
(c. 1899,  
St Petersburg,  
Hermitage).

Cézanne uses apples to study the essential forms of nature in its overall structures, beyond immediate circumstances. He follows the principle of observing it "through the cylinder, sphere, and cone, all in the proper perspective, so that every side of an object turns around a central point."







◆ KITCHEN TABLE  
(1888-90, Paris,  
Musée d'Orsay).

The picture seems to offer an inventory of the elements making up Cézanne's still lifes: the white tablecloth, sugar bowl, ginger pot, and fruit basket.

It is not always possible to identify what fruit is being pictured, because the painter is interested only in representing it as a form in space.



◆ STILL-LIFE WITH  
PLASTER CUPID  
(1895, London,  
Courtauld Institute  
Galleries).

The canvas is interesting for the contrast between the elegant form of the statue, inspired by a *Cupid* by the seventeenth century artist Pierre Puget, and the modestly ordinary quality of the onions and fruit surrounding it.

The spatial composition is based on a distortion of perspective and the twisting rhythm imposed by the twisting body of Cupid.



◆ STILL LIFE  
WITH GREEN JAR  
AND TIN KETTLE  
(c. 1869, Paris,  
Musée d'Orsay).

Compared with the more famous still lifes of his maturity, this painting still shows the influence of seventeenth century Flemish and Spanish genre painting.

The brilliant color, enlivened by a leaden light that creates strong chromatic contrasts, recalls instead the style of Edouard Manet, a painter whom Cézanne always greatly admired.

# PLAYERS AND BATHERS



In contrast with his other subjects – deserted landscapes, still lifes immersed in a stunned space, immobile portraits – beginning with the disquieting *Picnic on the Grass* of 1869-70, Cézanne experimented with compositions with a number of figures, maintaining however his characteristic suspended atmosphere.

- The master's fame is tied mainly to two cycles painted starting in the 1890s: the *Card Players* and *Bathers*. In the first case, the painter developed a suggestion taken from *The Card Players* (1635-40) by Louis le Nain, a Baroque artist he discovered in the museum at Aix.

- The five canvases he painted between 1890 and 1895 present figures at a table intent on their game, a frequent scene in French *brasseries*. In his various versions, Cézanne focuses more and more exclusively on the players, excluding the spectators, reducing his palette to a few earth tones, and simplifying the forms. The atmosphere appears heavy with silence and as though blocked, in contrast with the action depicted.

- The traditional subject of *Bathers*, which harmoniously immersed figures in a landscape, was approached for the first time in 1875 and taken up again in a series painted during Cézanne's last years. The motif also had autobiographical significance for him, his letters tell us, as they celebrate his memories of bathing in the Arc river with Zola during their youth.

- The solemn monumentality marking this cycle derives from the progressive restriction of his palette to a few colors and the elimination of narrative details like the water and trees, reduced to mere geometric structures.

- An element common to all versions, however, is his attention to the volume of the figures, which prevails in the overall conception. The *Bathers* theme celebrates a mythical Golden Age and pursues the ideal fusion of man and nature. This intent is what explains the timeless dimension of the scene and the rhythmic postures of the figures in space. With the exception of a few poses, often the gestures refer specifically to models from classical antiquity.





◆ **THE CARD PLAYERS**  
 (c. 1892,  
 New York, Metropolitan  
 Museum of Art,  
 detail in oval at left).  
 Compared to the other  
 four versions  
 of the subject, this  
 one presents four  
 figures instead  
 of the usual two.  
 The seated men and  
 the spectator, all  
 wearing hats, are  
 absorbed in the game.  
 Within the series, this  
 picture reveals  
 a greater attention to  
 descriptive detail, as  
 can be noted by  
 the treatment of  
 the background with  
 the curtain and  
 the group of four  
 pipes on the wall.

◆ **TWO CARD PLAYERS**  
 (1893-96, Paris,  
 Musée d'Orsay).  
 The picture, one of  
 the last in the series,  
 shows an almost  
 extreme simplification  
 of the scene: the cast  
 of characters is by now  
 reduced to just two  
 players, concentrating  
 on their game and set in  
 an environment which is  
 barely sketched in.  
 The figures are built up  
 with rough brushstrokes  
 and a palette based  
 only on shades of  
 umber. In the definition  
 of anatomy and space  
 are the first signs  
 of the geometric  
 synthesis which would  
 mark Cubism. Another  
 version, clearer and  
 more analytical,  
 exists of the  
 same subject.

◆ **LARGE BATHERS III**  
 (1900-05, Merion, Barnes Foundation). Compared to the other canvases in the series, this one presents a closer viewing point, which puts the emphasis on the study of the nude in various positions rather than a fusion of the figure with its environment. While those in the middle ground can barely be distinguished, those in the foremost plane are accentuated so as to constitute spatial keystones of the composition. This version lacks the motif of the river but offers a small still life at the center.



◆ **SIX BATHERS**  
 (1873-77, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art). The female figures are described as they move freely about on the river bank, infusing the composition with freshness and vitality. The poses, taken from models from antiquity, tend to underline the harmony reigning between the figures and their environment. This canvas belongs to a still Impressionist style, as can be seen in the choice of subject and the play of light on the forms. The stylistic and technical solutions closely recall Renoir, with whom Cézanne would often go out to paint during that period.



◆ **BATHERS**  
 (1890-92, Paris,  
 Musée d'Orsay).  
 In this picture  
 the artist chooses  
 to depict male instead  
 of female figures,  
 and here  
 counterbalances  
 the lightness of  
 the preceding  
 compositions with  
 a much more plastic  
 image. Here too  
 the river is missing,  
 and yet it is suggested  
 by the presence  
 of the towel in the  
 center  
 foreground.  
 Some  
 of the poses repeat  
 those found in  
 the female versions.  
 The head visible at  
 the bottom prefigures  
 Expressionism.



◆ **LARGE BATHERS I**  
 (1898-1906,  
 Philadelphia  
 Museum of Art).  
 This picture is  
 the largest among  
 the canvases  
 of this series,  
 measuring  
 208x249 cm.  
 Compared to the other  
 versions, here Cézanne  
 creates a bold  
 architectonic  
 composition, in which  
 the curving trunks of  
 the trees seem to bend  
 symmetrically over  
 the figures of  
 the bathers. In the void  
 left in the center  
 of the canvas is a glimpse  
 of the river with  
 a swimmer and,  
 on the opposite side,  
 a town with a church.  
 This work would  
 influence particularly  
 Cézanne's  
 heirs, Picasso  
 and Matisse.



# A MONUMENTAL SOLIDITY

Thanks to his contact with the Impressionists, Cézanne rediscovered nature and learned to approach it in a spontaneous, receptive manner. His landscape production at the time followed schemes learned from Pissarro, whom he considered his teacher. The traditional framing and anecdotal tendency to describe details characterize this first phase and introduce landscapes without human figures, a fundamental trait of his silent pictures.

● Starting in about 1870, his landscapes are marked by a thinly applied, vibrant handling, with bright lively colors. His application of the paint is imprecise, leaving fragments of the canvas unpainted. Compared to his earlier Romantic style dominated by black, in the 1870s his palette makes abundant use of white to capture the light.

● And yet, it is impossible to call Cézanne a true Impressionist: he was not interested in grasping fleeting impressions, but rather tried to describe receding places and the plasticity of forms, and from the outset pursued a greater compositional solidity which lent monumentality to his canvases. It would be useless to try to recognize in his landscapes the time of day or of the year when they were made: his nature is portrayed in its unchanging quality.

◆ CHÂTEAU NOIR  
(1900-04, Washington, National Gallery of Art).  
Cézanne depicts a neo-Gothic building immersed in greenery. Its volume is emphasized by the rhythmic, oblique brushstroke which blurs and evens out the details of the woody landscape.



● During the 1880s his pictures are serene and sunny, and reality is described still at some distance and with a low horizon. From the 1890s the painter moves to a higher viewing point which accentuates depth, while his palette shrinks to just a few colors: umber, green, blue. Compared to the Impressionist landscapes, in which even when there are no figures the signs of human presence still remain (usually houses), from now on nature becomes the absolute protagonist of his compositions.

● The narrative elements are progressively absorbed in a chromatic, rhythmic mosaic, as his brushwork, which until the 1880s was balanced between a curling and compact

◆ AQUEDUCT  
(1885-87, Moscow, Pushkin Museum).  
The composition is built up on a series of right angles: verticality is given by the slender tree trunks filling the surface of the painting, while the horizontal plane is marked by the strip of bare ground in the foreground and the bridge.



◆ THE GULF OF MARSEILLES SEEN FROM ESTAQUE  
(c. 1886-89, Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago).  
The painting acquires compositional value and depth of space from the plastic description of the foreground, where the buildings stand out solidly in their essential outlines.

stroke, now becomes brief and discontinuous. The forms are united in an aggregation of colors that does not reproduce a view of the landscape and only by suggestion can be linked to perceived reality. Especially in his last works, painted in 1904-06, Cézanne approaches a personal synthesis of light, color, and volume, which in the *Mont Sainte-Victoire* series comes close to abstraction.



# BETWEEN ISOLATION AND WORLDLINESS

Cézanne, born and living in the provinces, was not isolated from the most important cultural events and debates of his time. He read Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* – published in 1862 – with admiration and appreciated Wagner's music, which at the time caused a sensation; in 1868 he dedicated a picture to the topic, *Overture to Tannhäuser*.

● While his friendship in his youth with the writer Zola was almost exclusive, in Paris within a short time his most frequent companion was Pissarro. At the Café Guerbois, the future Impressionists' meeting place, he was fascinated by the personality and style of Manet. When in 1863 Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* was rejected by the jury of the official *Salon* and a *Salon des Refusés* was organized in protest, Cézanne too decided to take part.

● In 1870, surprised by the Franco-Prussian war, he took refuge in the south of France, but in 1872 he joined Pissarro in Pontoise, where he stayed for a long time. Together they painted in the small town and in nearby Auvers-sur-Oise, where he met Gachet, the doctor who treated Van Gogh in his



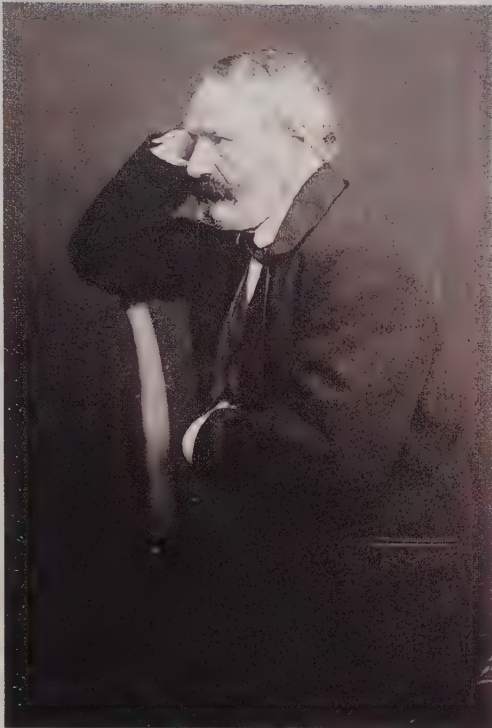
last days. But he had already met Van Gogh passing through Paris in 1874.

● Also in 1874, he participated in the first Impressionist exhibition in the studio of the photographer Nadar. In 1877, he showed with the group for the last time, at the third Impressionist exhibition in Durand-Ruel's gallery.

● In 1880, visiting Zola in Médan, he met the Symbolist writer Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907). In the course of the decade he frequently saw Renoir and Monet, met Gauguin, and sold some works through their paint dealer, Père Tanguy.

● In 1890, he participated in Brussels in the show of the Symbolist group *Les Vingt*, where paintings by Van Gogh were also shown. While Cézanne lived in increasing isolation in Provence, his works began to encounter success and from 1894 were regularly exhibited by Ambroise Vollard, the future dealer in Cubist works. On October 15, 1906 the artist, surprised by a storm while painting out of doors, contracted pneumonia. He died a week later in Aix, the city of his birth.

◆ **AMBROISE VOLLARD**  
(1899, Paris, Musée du Petit Palais).  
Cézanne portrays the Creole merchant, who owned some of his works, in a pose that expresses security and stability. The figure, circumscribed by a closed outline, is placed in the center of the canvas and dominates his surrounding environment. Vollard remembers the painter, "When he began the sitting or picked up his work after a pause, Cézanne, his brush lifted, would stare at me somewhat harshly. ... In my portrait, above the hand there are two small points where the canvas has been left bare. I pointed this out to Cézanne..."



◆ **VICTOR HUGO**  
Cézanne recalled that during his youth with his friend Zola, together they read the works of the French writer Hugo (1802-1885), one of their favorites.

◆ **RICHARD WAGNER**  
Cézanne was a great admirer of Wagner's (1813-1883) music for its daring symphonic construction. In 1861, for a performance of *Tannhäuser*, to which Cézanne devoted a painting, Baudelaire raised his voice in defense of the musician against the protests of Parisians.



He answered me: Try to understand, Vollard, if I put something there at random, I would be forced to start the whole picture all over again, starting from this point."

◆ **CLAUDE MONET**  
*Monet's Garden at Giverny. Irises*  
(1900, Paris, Musée d'Orsay).  
"Monet is only an eye. But, my God, what an eye!" With these words Cézanne summed up the pictorial lyricism of Monet, with whom he shared an interest in nature, but not its evanescent description. Cézanne, in effect, felt the urgent need to capture the unchanging substance of reality rather than the fleeting fascination of an impression.



◆ **VINCENT VAN GOGH**  
*Doctor Gachet*  
(1890, Paris, Musée d'Orsay).  
This painting could be a companion piece to Cézanne's canvas representing Gachet's house; the doctor was a friend and supporter of both artists.

# THE FATHER OF MODERN PAINTING

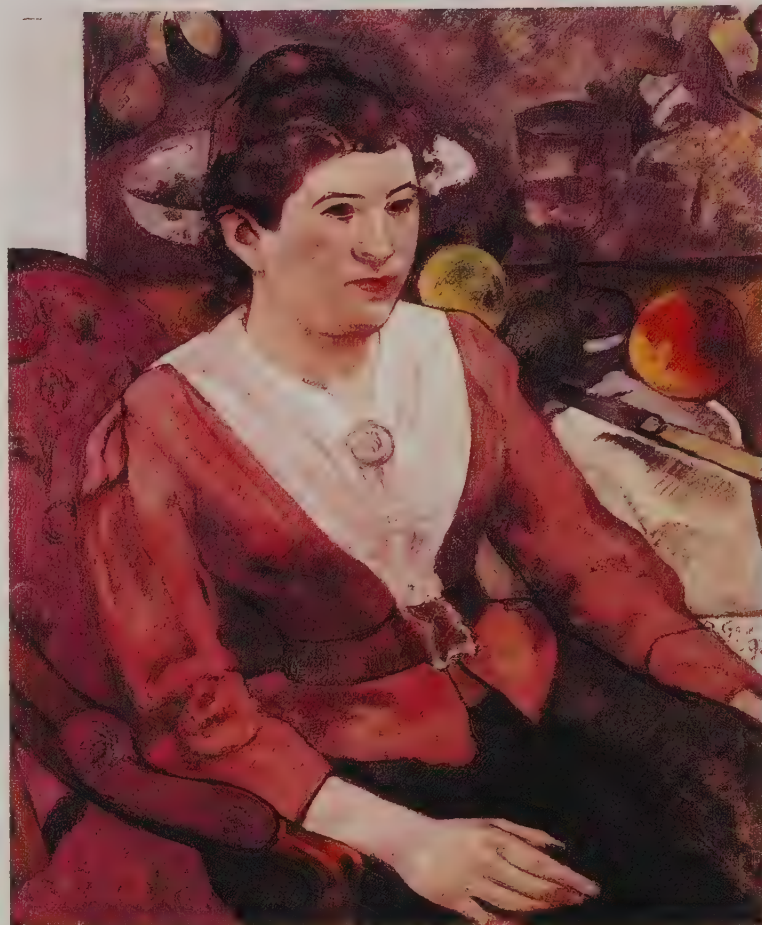
The importance of Cézanne to art cannot be grasped without considering the stylistic revolutions for which his work paved the way. Among the many exhibitions which disseminated his paintings, the most significant – for its influence on the next generation – was held in Paris in 1907.

- The rough aspect of Cézanne's paintings, which the critics viewed disdainfully, was seen by younger artists as a fundamental liberation for art and an indispensable premise for overturning figurative tradition. Out of this crisis, modern art was born.

- The aphorisms pronounced by the master, which were distorted and readapted by proponents of completely opposite styles, became famous. Artists took his declarations to heart: "When color is at its richest, form is at its fullest," and "Painting is capturing the relationships existing in nature which can be rendered only by ranges of color." Abstract art would find its justification here.

- Gauguin himself, who presented a flat, synthetic style opposed to the plasticity of Cézanne, admired him to the point of purchasing his works and imitating his manner in a canvas.

- The *fauve* Henri Matisse, who recognized, "Cézanne is the



father of us all," accepted the call to compositional freedom and did his own version of *Bathers* (of which he owned one of Cézanne's), but substituted bright lively colors for Cézanne's earth tones.

- The principal heirs of the master were, however, the Cubists, who with Georges Braque (1882-1963) and Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) reworked Cézanne's ideas until they arrived at a *simultaneous* representation. The search for the underlying structure of nature, and thus the deformation of volumes and modulation of the color – characteristic above all of Cézanne's landscapes and still-lives – led to the Cubists' geometrization of forms, which by decomposing the objects aims at transferring onto the two-dimensional surface of the canvas the three-dimensionality of things.

- An isolated case is Amedeo Modigliani, who borrowed the iconographical formula of Cézanne's portraits, using however an elegant style which preferred linearism to the constructive brushwork of the painter from Provence.



◆ PAUL GAUGUIN

*Woman in Front  
of a Still-life by Cézanne*

(1890, Chicago,  
Art Institute).  
Gauguin, who admired  
Cézanne, borrowed  
his style and poses  
for his figures,  
subduing the tones  
of the colors and  
placing behind  
the woman a citation  
of a still life.

◆ AMEDEO MODIGLIANI

*Bohémienne*

(1918, Washington,  
National Gallery).

As is the case with  
Cézanne's portraiture,  
Modigliani too likes  
to unveil the inner  
suffering of his  
characters and uses  
the same rigid poses,  
in which the outline is  
circumscribed by  
a closed line – as in  
the case of the woman  
pictured here.

Modigliani borrows  
from Cézanne's  
paintings the same  
melancholy attitude,  
vacant stare, and  
retreating frontality, but  
through his flat,  
disembodied  
style makes these faces  
even more withdrawn  
from the world.

◆ PABLO PICASSO

*Les Femmes d'Alger (O.K. Version)*

(1907, New York,  
Museum of Modern  
Art, left).

This painting, which  
revolutionized twentieth  
century art, bases its  
premises on  
the decomposition  
of space following  
the essential lines  
traced out by Cézanne.

The almost  
monochrome  
representation also  
derives from the style  
of the French artist.  
Bringing the third  
dimension to  
the surface, Picasso  
took Cézanne's  
research to its extreme  
consequences.



# THE ARTISTIC JOURNEY

For an overall vision of Cézanne's production, we have compiled a chronological summary of his principal works



◆ LOUIS AUGUSTE CÉZANNE (1866)  
The painting presents the artist's father reading *L'Événement*, the newspaper for which Zola wrote. The choice of newspaper introduces a polemical note, since in reality Louis Auguste detested it. Through this image Cézanne expresses his antagonistic relationship with his father. At the time, Zola was encouraging the young artist to rebel against his father and follow his artistic calling.



◆ SELF-PORTRAIT (1877-80)  
Cézanne's determined, proud, and diffident aspect is evident in his self-portraits, in which he likes to use a close-up view and three-quarters position. In this canvas in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, his surly gaze is accentuated by his massive body, summarily described. The painter deliberately presents a rude image of himself, which corresponds with his notoriously misanthropic nature.



◆ SCIPIO THE BLACK (1867)  
The painting is an example of Cézanne's early style: a dense, pasty pigment and subdued colors, applied with a heavily laden brush recalling the manner of Courbet. In this picture thick with paint, whose subject is charged with intense drama, Cézanne transfers to canvas his personal torment at his father's prohibition to devote himself to painting.



◆ MÉDAN CASTLE (1879-81)  
This painting, now in Glasgow, was done during a visit Cézanne made to his friend Emile Zola at Médan Castle. As is evident, by this time the artist had already restricted his palette to a few shades of brown and green and adopted the regular, diagonal brushstroke typical of his style. With his rhythmic brushwork he aimed at reproducing the spatial quality of objects.



◆ STILL-LIFE WITH GREEN JAR AND TIN KETTLE (c. 1869)  
This painting, now hanging in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, introduces Cézanne's long series of still-lives. Compared to the preceding works, this one displays a brilliant handling of the paint and a marked contrast between black and white that recall Manet. The artist's interest is still captured by the reciprocal harmony between objects more than the essence of their form.



◆ SELF-PORTRAIT WITH A BLACK HAT (1879-82)  
Cézanne's dark silhouette stands out imposingly against a French window. His three-quarters position gives the composition depth and three-dimensionality, and the figure gains emphasis also from the contrast in color. The painter's serious expression, accentuated by his dark clothes, gives an air of gravity to the painting. The light enlivens an otherwise dull image.



◆ THE BLACK CLOCK (c. 1870)  
The meticulous rendering of this scene, one of Cézanne's first still-lives, echoes examples of seventeenth century painting studied in the Louvre. An unusual selection of objects crowds the sideboard; note especially the symbolic meaning of the red lips of the shell – a female reference – and the absence of hands on the clock, alluding to a suspension of time.



◆ LARGE BATHER (c. 1885)  
In this painting in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Cézanne approaches the theme of the nude, which he would then develop in the series of *Bathers*. Indifferent to the figure's placement in a setting, which is just barely hinted at by a pure play of color, the artist expresses through the pose of the body a sense of stability and firmness. This image would have a great effect on Picasso.



◆ THE HOUSE OF THE HANGED MAN AT AUVERS-SUR-OISE (1873)  
The painting marks Cézanne's turn toward Impressionism, achieved through Pissarro, who urged him to abandon his dark, pasty colors for a more luminous palette. This canvas, now in the Musée d'Orsay, witnesses to a rediscovery of landscape, in which his interest in the mass of forms is already evident.



◆ THE GREAT PINE (c. 1885-87)  
This painting now in Washington gives a view of the valley in front of Mont Sainte-Victoire. The tree in the foreground, of which only a part of the trunk is visible, serves to extend the space outwards, giving an impression of vastness. In the background can be discerned the outline of houses – represented synthetically only as masses – and the bridge at the foot of the mountain range.



◆ DELFT VASE WITH FLOWERS (c. 1873-75)  
This canvas, in Paris at the Musée d'Orsay, belongs to Cézanne's Impressionist phase proper, and in fact the same subject appears in works by others in that group. The color is more brilliant and thinly spread, especially in the red petals. And yet, differently from the other Impressionists, Cézanne is not interested in problems of light and only approaches it in the shadow thrown to the right by the vase of flowers.



◆ GULF OF MARSEILLES SEEN FROM ESTAKE (c. 1886-89)  
This Impressionist painting at the Chicago Art Institute shows a group of houses in the foreground, whose mass is evidenced by the warm southern light. The middle ground is taken up completely by the body of water, whose color in contrast to the light tones of the houses gives a sense of depth to the scene.



◆ SHROVE TUESDAY (1888)

The canvas, now in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow, shows Cézanne's interest in an unusual subject in his production. The two Carnival masks are captured, despite their expected playfulness, in a half-serious attitude which in the *Harlequin* in Washington becomes melancholy. The two figures are immersed in a diagonal space which lends them dynamism.



◆ BOY IN A RED WAISTCOAT (1888-90)

This painting in Zurich is typical of Cézanne's portraiture: through a close-up view, which shows the figure half-length, the painter captures the boy in a melancholy, pensive mood. Like the other personages in the artist's painting, the boy is depicted as frozen in unhappy inaction. The use of a diagonal composition heightens the psychological tension. The model is an Italian, Michelangelo di Rosa.



◆ KITCHEN TABLE (1888-90)

This painting is one of Cézanne's most famous and carefully worked out still-lives. His passion for spatial values led him to prefer this theme because of its static objects, from the white tablecloth to the sugar bowl, from the ginger jar to the pears. The representation of the room, usually barely hinted at, is striking here because of its unstable perspective.



◆ TWO CARD PLAYERS (1893-96)

The painting in Paris is part of the series of five canvases on the same subject, inspired by a work by the seventeenth century painter Le Nain. Here Cézanne unites rough brushwork with a subdued palette and reduces the composition to a few essential lines. Compared to the versions with five players, a greater search for expressive synthesis is evident here.



◆ WOMAN WITH A COFFEE POT (c. 1895)

This canvas in Paris presents the painter's maid seated at a table with a coffee pot, in a static, monumental pose. The outline of the figure, solemn and immobile, is defined by an unbroken line which accentuates her sense of psychological isolation from the outside world. Her rigid pose is echoed by the upright spoon in the cup.



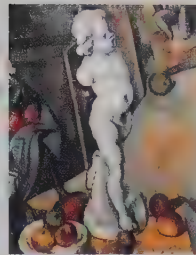
◆ MADAME CÉZANNE IN THE GREENHOUSE (1891-92)

This painting, now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, portrays the artist's wife, the model Hortense Fiquet. The setting, a sketchily described greenhouse, is structured along a diagonal line which imparts a dynamic effect to the composition. The woman's pose, with her hands in her lap, is typical of Cézanne's portraits and would be taken up again by Amedeo Modigliani.



◆ THE SMOKER (c. 1895)

The painting in the Hermitage in St Petersburg reveals the artist's ability to capture the inner essence of his sitters. As is typical of his protagonists, the man seems immersed in melancholy, absorbed in his thoughts, with an unlit pipe in his mouth. The slight twist of his body gives depth to the picture and renders his psychological distance.



◆ STILL-LIFE WITH PLASTER CUPID (1895)

The canvas in London possesses a surprising compositional originality, as it presents intersecting planes incongruous with each other, a solution which would fascinate de Chirico. The elegance of the statue, inspired by a *Cupid* by the seventeenth century sculptor Pierre Puget, contrasts with the ordinary dullness of the other objects. The twisting body of the statue animates the scene.



◆ THE LAKE OF ANNECY (1896)

The picture offers an image of intensely lyrical poetry, in a vein close to the style of Monet. Using color, the artist simultaneously synthesizes and constructs the image of the landscape, captured in its splendor with the light reflected on the water. The buildings along the shore are barely suggested by splotches of paint, and yet the painter has succeeded in transmitting a sense of their texture.



◆ LARGE BATHERS I (1898-1906)

The painting belongs to the series of *Bathers* begun in the preceding decade. Here his palette is reduced to a few earth colors, while the curved profile of the trees accentuates the monumentality of the figures. A river runs through the center of the painting. The composition, which has the air of a long ago, Arcadian time, inspired numerous artists, beginning with Matisse and Picasso.



◆ AMBROISE VOLLARD (1899)

This painting in the Petit Palais in Paris portrays the famous art dealer Vollard, who bought a number of Cézanne's paintings. The man sits with his head bowed, his large left hand well in view, immersed in the shadows. His frontal, composed posture expresses balance and security. Compared to other portraits, the background is wider, giving an air of lightness to the scene.



◆ OLD WOMAN WITH A ROSARY (1900-04)

This portrait in the National Gallery of Art in London is striking for the pose of the woman, at the same time sad and meditative. The gesture of her hands grasping her rosary expresses the religious sense that Cézanne felt deeply in his late period. The old woman is immersed in the shadows, while the light brings out only her head and rough hands. The painting, like a sort of *memento mori*, is an invitation to meditate on the meaning of life.



◆ CHÂTEAU NOIR (1900-04)

Château Noir is a neo-Gothic building which Cézanne painted frequently in his last years. Here the building is shown immersed in greenery, while there is absolutely no analytical definition of the landscape or the light source. The artist's densely laden, prismatic brushwork melds everything into a unified rhythm of signs which lends a sinister atmosphere to the painting.



◆ MONT SAINTE-VICTOIRE (1904-06)

This canvas concludes the process of disintegration of the image: Cézanne translates it into a rhythmic sequence of brushstrokes which have lost all reference to visual reality. The outlines of the houses in the foreground and the bridge crossing the Arc valley can barely be discerned. The limestone mountain peak rises majestically to dominate the scene.

# TO KNOW MORE

The following pages contain: some documents useful for understanding different aspects of Cézanne's life and work; the fundamental stages in the life of the artist; technical data and the location of the principal works found in this volume; an essential bibliography

## DOCUMENTS AND TESTIMONIES

### The judgment of his friends

*Cézanne during his lifetime: the generous, perplexed urging of Zola, the aesthetic judgment of Bernard, the "clinical" summary of Breton.*

"But is painting for you maybe just a whim that came to you once when you were bored? Is it maybe a pastime, a topic of conversation, an excuse not to devote yourself to your law studies? If this were the case, I would understand your behavior. You are right not to push things too far, not to cause a conflict with your family. But if painting is a mission for you – as I have always thought – if you feel capable of doing something in this field after having worked so hard at it, then you are an enigma to me, a sphinx, something extremely impossible and nebulous."

[E. Zola, letter to Cézanne, July 1860]

"Thus Paul Cézanne takes his place among the great painters as a mystic, because the message he gives us with his art is this: he does not see things by themselves, but in their relationship with painting, that is, in the concrete expression of their beauty. His nature is contemplative, his way of seeing is aesthetic, not objective, he expresses himself through sensitivity, that is to say, through an instinctive and emotional perception of relationships and harmonies. Since in this aspect his work approaches music, we could repeat without fear of contradiction that he is a mystic, because this latter medium is the most noble, divine. All of art that approaches music is on the path to absolute perfection. In language it is transformed into poetry, in painting it is transformed into beauty."

[E. Bernard, *Paul Cézanne*, 1904]

"Yesterday I went to Aix to see Cézanne. He is an old man, simple, somewhat difficult and bizarre. Since he was going out to work, I went with him. He talked with me in a friendly way and repeated a hundred times: 'Life is frightening.' I don't know what he has to complain about. He seems to me to be without cares, free to devote himself to his art, and he lives well. [...] I think he is a bit maniacal, worn down by his diabetes, with many provincial ideas and prejudices of every kind. All he does is talk about people who want to get him. In a word, he seems to me to be a misanthrope. In terms of art, he talks only of painting nature according to his personality and not according to art in itself. [...] Personality seems to him to be necessary for every kind of creation. For him, art is summed up totally in the optical vision, that is, in technique."

[A. Breton, letter to his mother, 5 February 1904]

### The judgment of his heirs

*The father of abstract art and a "heretical" Cubist evaluate the lesson taught by the master.*

"Cézanne, who sought a new law of form, [...] was able to transform a teacup into an animate being, or better, he was able to recognize being in that cup. Cézanne takes still-life to a height in which things that are externally dead become internally alive. He treats them as he treats men, because he can see the inner life everywhere. He gives them a chromatic expression, *i.e.*, an intimately pictorial dimension, and wraps them in a form translatable into abstract, often mathematical, shapes, which infuse harmony. He does not represent a man, an apple, a tree, but uses this material to make something intimately painterly which is called image."

[V. Kandinskij, *The Spiritual in Art*, Munich, 1912]

"To the still superficial realism of Courbet, Paul Cézanne adds new concepts, foresees that the study of primary volumes will open horizons unknown heretofore, has the premo-

tion that plastic dynamism has nothing to do with the movement which animates our streets, machinery, factories; he blazes a wide path for the future, and the generation of our painters who are now moving forward find new ground to plow. One discovers that painting, considered objective until now, is called to other destinies, an unsuspected plastic development offers itself for its investigation."

[A. Gleizes, *Tradition et cubisme vers une conscience plastique*, Paris, 1927]

"Without Cézanne I sometimes wonder what painting would be today. I worked with his art for a long time. I could not pull myself away, I never stopped exploring and discovering it. Cézanne taught me a love of form and volume and made me concentrate on design. I intuited then that this design had to be strict, in no way sentimental."

[F. Léger, *Catalogue, Musée des arts décoratifs*, Paris 1956]

### A poet educated by color

*For the poet Rilke, Cézanne's painting was a form of moral education.*

"Today I was once again in front of his paintings, the environment they create is incredible. Without considering one in particular, staying in those two rooms, one feels their presence merging into a colossal reality. As though those colors freed me once and for all from every form of indecision. The clear conscience of that red, that blue, their simple verisimilitude educate me; and if I place myself as open as possible in their midst, it is as though they did something for me... His still-lives are so miraculously concerned with themselves. Especially the white cloth, often crumpled, that strangely soaks up the predominant color close to it, and the objects placed in it, which, each with great cordiality, express themselves and let themselves go."

[R.M. Rilke, letter to his wife, 13 October 1907]

## HIS LIFE IN BRIEF

**1839.** Paul Cézanne born January 19 in Aix-en-Provence, the son of the hatter Louis Auguste Cézanne and Anne Elisabeth Aubert; they would marry only in 1844.

**1849.** His father founded, together with his partner Cabassol, cashier in a bank that had failed, the bank *Cézanne & Cabassol*, destined to a flourishing future. Their new financial situation permitted the boy to grow up in comfortable circumstances.

**1852-58.** Attended the Collège Bourbon in Aix, where he met Emile Zola, future father of the French naturalist novel. This was one of the happiest periods of his life: he wrote poetry, played in an orchestra with his friend Zola and with him took long walks in the Provençal countryside, memories of which return in his paintings. Between 1858 and 1859 attended courses in drawing.

**1859.** Studied law at the university of Aix. His father bought the property Jas de Bouffan, which became one of Cézanne's frequent subjects. Painted in 1860 for the *salon* a cycle of the *Four Seasons*. Was exempted from military duty because his father paid someone to take his place.

**1861.** Moved to Paris, where he found his friend Zola. Enrolled in the Académie Suisse and there met Camille Pissarro. Back in Aix in the fall, started work in his father's bank.

**1862-70.** Once again in Paris, where at the Café Guerbois he met Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, Albert Sisley, and the other future Impressionists. Once again attended the Académie Suisse and repeatedly visited the Louvre.

**1863.** Participated in the *Salon des Refusés*, a polemical exhibition showing the works of artists of the level of Edouard Manet, rejected by the jury of the annual *Salon*. Divided his time between Aix and Paris, painting some almost demoniacal scenes with a dark, pasty pigment and dramatic forms. Continued to spend time with Zola and the future Impressionists.

**1869.** Met Hortense Fiquet, the model who in 1872 would bear his child and whom he married in 1886.

**1872-73.** Went to paint in Pontoise, the guest of Pissarro, who pointed him in the direction of a more luminous, serene painting style. At Auvers Cézanne met Dr. Gachet, who treated Van Gogh in his last days.

**1874-77.** Took part in the first Impressionist exhibition at the studio of the photographer Nadar,

where he showed the *House of the Hanged Man at Auvers-sur-Oise*. His work was ridiculed, like that of his fellow painters.

**1877.** Showed at the third Impressionist exhibition at the Durand-Ruel gallery. As he became more aware of his own style and research he began to move away from the group.

**1882.** For the only time in his life, some of his paintings were accepted for the official *Salon*. Stayed with Zola in Médan and Pissarro in Pontoise. Painted at Estaque with Renoir, who visited him with Monet also in 1883. His painting, while respecting certain Impressionist premises, revealed a completely original structural conception.



Cézanne's studio

**1886.** His relationship with Zola hit a crisis when the writer published the novel *L'œuvre*, whose protagonist – a failed painter – Cézanne recognized as himself. Married Hortense in April, although they were estranged, linked only by their son. In October his father died, leaving him a substantial inheritance that allowed him to live comfortably the rest of his life.

**1888.** Painted in Aix with Renoir. Met Van Gogh and Gauguin.

**1890.** Exhibited in Brussels, together with Van Gogh, in the show of the group of *Les Vingt*. The first symptoms of diabetes appeared.

**1891-1899.** Lived between Aix and Paris. Sold a number of paintings and in 1895 held his first one-man show. Visited Monet in Giverny. Met the sculptor Auguste Rodin, the Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt, and the writer Gustave Geffroy.

**1900-05.** Lived increasingly in isolation. Worked on the series of *Mont Sainte-Victoire* and *Large Bathers*. Participated in numerous shows also at an international level. His health worsened as a consequence of diabetes.

**1906.** Surprised by a violent storm while painting in the country, he contracted pneumonia, and died on October 22 in Aix-en-Provence.

## WHERE TO SEE CEZANNE

*The following is a catalogue of the principal works by Cézanne conserved in public collections. The list of works follows the alphabetical order of the cities in which they are found. The data contain the following elements: title, dating, technique and support, size in centimeters, location*

AMSTERDAM (HOLLAND)

**Still-life with Bottles and Apples,** 1890-94; oil on canvas, 52.5x50.5; Stedelijk Museum.

BASEL (SWITZERLAND)

**Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves,** 1904-06; oil on canvas, 72x60; Kunstmuseum Basel.

BREMEN (GERMANY)

**Village in Provence, c. 1885;** oil on canvas, 81x65; Kunsthalle Bremen.

CANBERRA (AUSTRALIA)

**Afternoon in Naples,** 1876-77; oil on canvas, 45x37; Australian National Gallery.

CHICAGO (UNITED STATES)

**The Gulf of Marseilles Seen from Estaque,** c. 1886-89; oil on canvas, 99.6x80; Art Institute.

LONDON (GREAT BRITAIN)

**The Avenue at the Jas de Bouffan,** c. 1869; oil on canvas, 44x36; Tate Gallery.

**Old Woman with Rosary,**

1900-04; oil on canvas, 65.5x81; National Gallery.

**Large Bathers, 1900-05;**

oil on canvas, 196x126; Tate Gallery.

MALIBU (UNITED STATES)

**Antony Valabrègue,** c. 1869-70; oil on canvas, 50.2x60.4; Paul Getty Museum.

MINNEAPOLIS (UNITED STATES)

**Chestnut Trees in Winter at the Jas de Bouffan,** 1885-86; oil on canvas, 93x73.8; Minneapolis Institute of Art.

MUNICH (GERMANY)

**Mountain Cut by a Farm,** c. 1870; oil on canvas, 129x80; Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Neue Pinakothek.

**Self-portrait with White Hat,**  
1881-82; oil on canvas, 46x55.5;  
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen,  
Neue Pinakothek.

**Still-life with Chest,**  
1883-87; oil on canvas, 90.2x73.3;  
Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen,  
Neue Pinakothek.

MOSCOW (RUSSIA)  
**Interior (Portrait of Sisters),**  
1860-62; oil on canvas, 72x91;  
Pushkin Museum.

**Landscape at Pontoise, 1875-77;**  
oil on canvas, 71x58; Pushkin Museum.

**Plateau with Mont Sainte-Victoire,**  
1882-85; oil on canvas, 72x58;  
Pushkin Museum.

**Aqueduct,**  
1885-87; oil on canvas, 72x91;  
Pushkin Museum.

NEW YORK (UNITED STATES)  
**Bathers,**  
1874-75; oil on canvas, 46x38;  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**Basin and Fountain of Jas de Bouffan,**  
1880-90; oil on canvas, 80.9x64.8;  
Museum of Modern Art.

**Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from Bellevue,**  
1882-85; oil on canvas, 81x65.5;  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**Large Bather,**  
c. 1885; oil on canvas, 96.8x127;  
Museum of Modern Art.

**The Card Players,**  
c. 1892; oil on canvas, 81x65;  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**Madame Cézanne in the Greenhouse,**  
1891-92; oil on canvas, 73x92;  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.

PARIS (FRANCE)  
**Achille Empereire,**  
c. 1868; oil on canvas, 122x200;  
Musée d'Orsay.

**Magdalene (Grief),**  
1868-69; oil on canvas, 125.5x 165;  
Musée d'Orsay.

**The House of Doctor Gachet at Auvers,**  
1873; oil on canvas, 38x46;  
Musée d'Orsay.

**The House of the Hanged Man  
at Auvers-sur-Oise,**  
1873; oil on canvas, 66x55;  
Musée d'Orsay.

**A Modern Olympia,**  
1873-74; oil on canvas, 55.5x46; Musée d'Orsay.

**Delft Vase with Flowers,**  
c. 1873-75; oil on canvas, 27x41; Musée d'Orsay.

**Maincy Bridge,**  
1879; oil on canvas, 72.5x58.5; Musée d'Orsay.

**Poplars,**  
1879-82; oil on canvas, 81x65;  
Musée d'Orsay.

**L'Estaque,**  
c. 1882-85; oil on canvas, 73x59.5;  
Musée du Louvre.

**Ambroise Vollard,**  
1899; oil on canvas, 81x100;  
Musée du Petit Palais.

**Still-Life with Fruit, Napkin, and Pitcher,**  
1879-82; oil on canvas, 73x60;  
Musée de l'Orangerie.

SÃO PAULO (BRAZIL)  
**Scipio the Black,**  
1867, oil on canvas, 83x107;  
Museu de Arte.

**The Great Pine,**  
c. 1896; oil on canvas, 92x84;  
Museu de Arte.

ST. PETERSBURG (RUSSIA)  
**Self-portrait in a Visored Hat,**  
1873-75; oil on canvas, 38x53; Hermitage.

**Bouquet of Flowers in a Blue Vase,**  
1873-75; oil on canvas, 46x56; Hermitage.

**The Smoker,**  
c. 1895; oil on canvas, 72x91; Hermitage.

STUTTGART (GERMANY)  
**Bathers in Front of a Tent,**  
1883-85; oil on canvas, 81x63.5; Staatsgalerie  
Stuttgart.

WASHINGTON (UNITED STATES)  
**Louis Auguste Cézanne,**  
1866; oil on canvas, 120x200; National Gallery  
of Art.

**House of Père Lacroix at Auvers,**  
1873; oil on canvas, 51x61;  
National Gallery of Art.

**Battle of the Sexes,**  
1875-76; oil on canvas, 46x38; National Gallery  
of Art.

ZURICH (SWITZERLAND)  
**Boy in a Red Waistcoat,**  
1888-90, oil on canvas, 79.5x64; Stiftung  
Sammlung Bührle.

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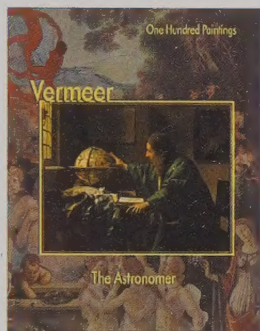
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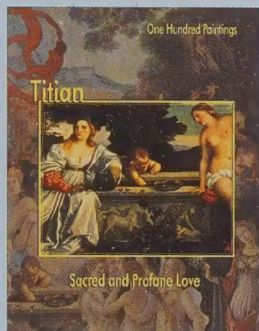
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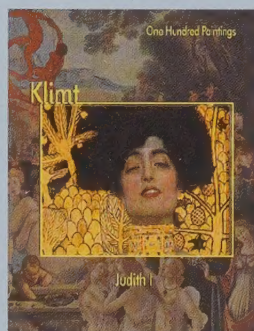
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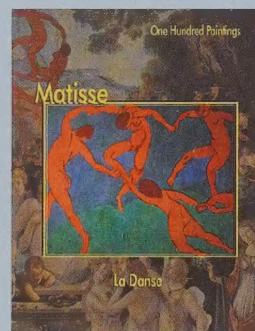
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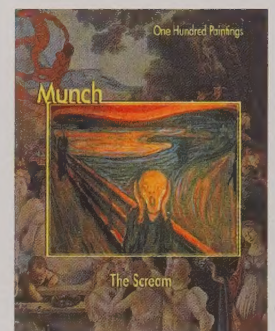
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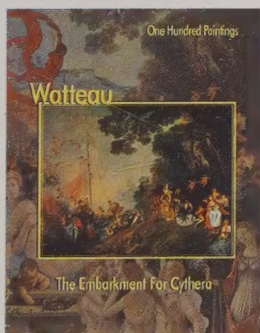
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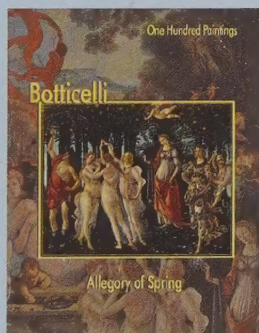
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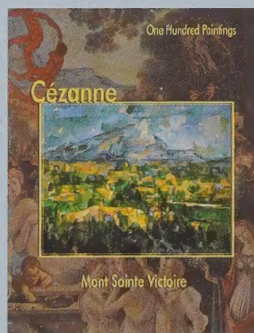
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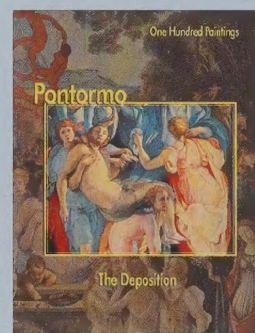
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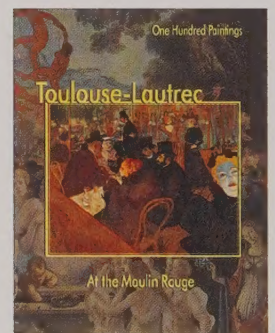
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