



PAUL CÉZANNE (1839-  
1906)  
"FATHER OF MODERN ART"

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Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), *Self-Portrait in Front of Pink Background*, 1875, 66 × 55 cm, Musée d'Orsay

- The Post-Impressionist Paul Cézanne is arguably the artist who most influenced the development of modern art. He is seen as a stepping stone from Impressionism to Cubism.
- The artists who acknowledge his influence reads like a roll call of 20th century art history.
  - Picasso said, "Cézanne! Cézanne was the father of all of us." and "he was the only master for me ..., he was a father figure to us: it was he who offered us protection." By protection he meant that Cézanne had broken the mould and taken the criticism thus protecting later artists.
  - Henri Matisse described him as "A kind of dear god of painting" and the feeling was lasting, when he was eighty (in 1949) he said he owed the most to the art of Cézanne.
  - In their book *Cubism* Albert Gleizes (pronounced 'glez') and Jean Metzinger described Cézanne as "One of the greatest of those who changed the course of art history...His work proves without doubt that painting is not—or not any longer—the art of imitating an object by lines and colours."
- The way to understand Cézanne is as a **breaker of conventions** regarding perspective, colour and representation. He wanted to produce work as **long lasting** as the old masters but not be limited by the styles and conventions of

the past, he wanted to **reinvent art** as a form that represented what he saw as an individual rather than use the conventional way to represent the object. He strove to **combine naturalistic representation, personal expression and an abstract application of paint.**

- He was **notoriously slow**, a portrait might require 150 sittings, but he was a prolific artist who painted over 1,300 paintings (900 in oil and 400 watercolours). I have selected just 40 paintings that represent the different stages in his life, and provide an insight into the artist's motivations, techniques, and style.

### NOTES

- There are about a hundred and sixty portraits among the thousand or so paintings that he made between around 1860 and his death, of pneumonia, in 1906
- There was misunderstanding, the reinterpretation of nature as cylinders, spheres and cones as Cubism misunderstood Cézanne who meant that in searching to represent nature accurately he found these forms.
- In his later work, Cézanne gave up conventional artistic techniques such as the usual arrangement of elements, single point-of-view perspective, and outlines that enclose colour.
- Cézanne did not date his work and it has proved difficult to assign an accurate date to much of his work.
- No recognisable light source, no shadows, wanted to depict what is permanent in nature. He constructed a picture. He would destroy paintings if he could not achieve the effect. He used multiple viewpoints, later used by Picasso. He didn't use live models, he removed the sensual and the erotic to concentrate on the composition. He used sketches of paintings he made in the Louvre and live drawings he had made at college.
- Cézanne was full of self-doubt but refused to make compromises. He was a loner and regarded as an oddball by his contemporaries but Pissarro, Renoir, Monet and Degas were enthusiastic about his work. Pissarro said, "I think it will be centuries before we get an account of it."
- "In his 1945 essay entitled "Cézanne's Doubt", Merleau-Ponty discusses how Cézanne gave up classic artistic elements such as pictorial arrangements, single view perspectives, and outlines that enclosed colour in an attempt to get a "lived perspective" by capturing all the complexities that an eye observes. He wanted to see and sense the objects he was

painting, rather than think about them. Ultimately, he wanted to get to the point where "sight" was also "touch". He would take hours sometimes to put down a single stroke because each stroke needed to contain "the air, the light, the object, the composition, the character, the outline, and the style". A still life might have taken Cézanne one hundred working sessions while a portrait took him around one hundred and fifty sessions. Cézanne believed that while he was painting, he was capturing a moment in time, that once passed, could not come back. The atmosphere surrounding what he was painting was a part of the sensational reality he was painting. Cézanne claimed: "Art is a personal perception, which I embody in sensations and which I ask the understanding to organise into a painting." " (Wikipedia)

### **BIO:CEZANNE**

- Paul Cézanne (19 January 1839 - 22 October 1906) was born in Aix-en-Provence the son of a milliner who was later a banker. His parents married five years after he was born. He had two younger sisters and an older sister. His father became co-founder of a bank that was successful and gave Cézanne financial security later in life.
- When he was 10 he entered the Saint Joseph School in Aix and when he was 13 the Collège Bourbon in Aix where he became friends with Émile Zola. With one other they became known as The Three Inseparables and read Homer and Virgil and discussed art.
- In 1857, he began attending the Free Municipal School of Drawing in Aix, where he studied drawing under Joseph Gibert.
- His father saw him taking over the bank and insisted he enrolled in the law faculty of the University of Aix in 1859 to study jurisprudence. He neglected his studies and spent his time drawing and writing poetry. He took evening classes in art and won second prize in the figure studies course.
- In 1859 his father bought an estate, the Jas de Bouffan (House of the Wind) which became his home and workplace. He painted the building and the Rees in the park surrounding the property. He painted four murals in the drawing room which he ironically signed Ingres, an artist whose works he did not appreciate.
- Encouraged by Zola, he left for Paris in 1861 against his father's wishes in order to pursue a career in art. His father eventually accepted his choice and left him 400,000 francs in his will removing all his financial worries.

- He was turned down by the École des Beaux-Arts and instead attended the free Académie Suisse, where he devoted himself to life drawing. He met Camille Pissarro there and they copied works in the Louvre together but Cézanne did not settle and returned to Aix to work in his father's bank. The following year he moved to Paris again with a small allowance from his father. He attended the Académie Suisse again and met many young artists including Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Alfred Sisley.
- Cézanne though was influenced by Eugène Delacroix and the realist Gustave Courbet whose followers believed 'high' art should be brought down and represent everyday life.
- The rejection of Manet, Pissarro and Monet by the Salon de Paris led to Napoleon III creating a Salon des Refusés where Cézanne was exhibited in 1863. The Salon continued to reject his work until 1882 when a friend became a member of the jury and got his work accepted by saying he was his pupil.
- In 1865 Cézanne returned to Aix. Zola's debut novel about their childhood friendship was published and in 1866 Cézanne painted a number of still lifes and portraits using a palette knife.
- In 1869 he returned to Paris and met Marie-Hortense Fiquet at the Académie Suisse.
- In 1870 he was best man at Zola's wedding and during the Franco-Prussian war he lived with Fiquet in Marseilles. He avoided conscription and was denounced as a deserter but managed to avoid being caught.
- They returned to Paris and a son was born. His mother knew but his father was not told to avoid being disinherited.
- From 1872-74 he lived with his wife and child in Auvers-sur-Oise where he met the doctor, amateur artist and art lover Paul Gachet who later became Vincent Van Gogh's doctor.
- In 1872 he painted with Pissarro in the Oise Valley and Pissarro convinced him to use only red, yellow and blue in order to lighten his palette.
- His young friends in Paris set up their own exhibition in 1874 later called the Impressionists exhibition. Cézanne was influenced by their style but his social relations with them were inept—he seemed rude, shy, angry, and given to depression. In addition to Cézanne, Renoir, Monet, Alfred Sisley, Berthe Morisot, Edgar Degas and Pissarro, among others exhibited. Manet declined participation, for him Cézanne was "a mason who paints with a

trowel". The exhibition was a failure but Cézanne sold *The Hanged Man's House* for 300 francs to Count Doria.

- In 1875, Cézanne met the customs inspector and art collector Victor Chocquet, who, mediated by Renoir, bought three of his works and became his most loyal collector and whose commissions provided some financial relief. Cézanne did not take part in the group's second exhibition, but instead presented 16 of his works in the third exhibition in 1877, which in turn drew considerable criticism. Another patron was the paint merchant Julien "Père" Tanguy, who supported the young painters by supplying them with paint and canvas in exchange for paintings.
- In 1878 his father discovered his relationship with Hortense and cut his monthly allowance but later that year he increased it to 400 francs. He still travelled to Paris frequently but after he had a studio built at the Jas de Bouffan he spent most of his time from then on in the South. He was visited by Renoir, Paul Gauguin and Pissarro but during the 1880s moved away from the Impressionists and the period 1880 to 1888 are known as the Constructive Period. Despite their strained relationship Hortense was the person he most often portrayed and he painted 26 portraits during this period.
- By this time, Zola had become a successful writer and had a luxurious summer house. He thought Cézanne a failure and wrote a novel about a failed painter who committed suicide. Cézanne thought it was modelled on him and their relationship was broken although they did still write.
- Although his relationship with Hortense had broken down he married her in 1886 in order to legitimise the rights of his fourteen-year-old son Paul who he loved. Later that year his father died and the family continued to live in the house. Cézanne was left an income of 25,000 francs.
- In 1890 Cézanne contracted diabetes making it even harder for him to maintain relationships with his friends. His relationship with Hortense deteriorated further and he moved in with his mother and sisters and Hortense lived in separate quarters. In 1891 he turned to Catholicism, the religion of his youth.
- He exhibited with Les XX in Brussels and attended Monet exhibition in 1895 by which time Monet was a successful artist.
- He rented a cottage with his friend in the village of Le Tholonet, where he lived in the "Château Noir", which is located on the Montagne Sainte-

Victoire. He often took the mountains as a theme in his paintings. He rented a hut at the nearby Bibémus quarry; Bibémus became another motif for his paintings.

- Ambroise Vollard, a gallery owner, held a one-man exhibition for Cézanne. He bought paintings by Cézanne, Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard and when Cézanne's paintings increased in value a hundredfold he benefitted.
- In 1897 a museum purchased his work for the first time, the Berlin National Gallery.
- When his mother died in 1897 he sold the Jas de Bouffan and moved into a small apartment in Aix. His paintings now sold for high prices (4,000-5,000 francs) but still well below Manet, Monet and Renoir.
- In 1901 he bought a piece of land north of Aix and built a studio which is now the Atelier de Cézanne. He moved there in 1903 the year his old friend Zola died. He suffered from diabetes and depression to the point of paranoia. He still received poor reviews and threatening letters. One critic described how people had laughing fits in front of his work and he was described as an ultra-impressionist. He was hated by the public in Aix and he received letters accusing him of dishonouring the town and telling him to leave. He said, "I don't understand the world and the world doesn't understand me, so I withdrew from the world".
- In 1903 he was exhibited for the first time at the Salon d'Automne (Paris Autumn Salon) and in 1904 an entire room exhibited his work.
- On September 5, 1906 he wrote to his son Paul: "Finally, I want to tell you that as a painter I am becoming more clairvoyant to nature, but that it is always very difficult for me to realise my feelings. I cannot reach the intensity that unfolds before my senses, I do not possess that wonderful richness of colour that animates nature."
- He was caught in a storm but carried on working in a field for two hours. On the way home he fainted and was carried home. He regained consciousness and painted one last work *Portrait of the Gardener Vallier* but fainted again and was put to bed and died a few days later of pneumonia on 22 October 1906 aged 67.

### **PERSONALITY**

- Mercurial, shy, impulsive, stubborn, single-minded and passionate.
- A perfectionist in art who destroyed many of his paintings.

- Afraid and mistrustful of women.
- He had an aggressive manner and an excited way of talking with a fierce looking appearance but underneath he was "the gentlest nature possible".
- At school a boy, who was sliding by down the banister, gave little Paul a vicious kick in the rear. "The kick was so strong and unexpected that ever since I have been obsessed by fear that something of the kind might happen again; hence my uncanny horror of even the slightest physical contact", said Cézanne.
- He had few real supporters and distrusted praise. He could break down in laughter or tears, then sincerely thank the person and immediately violently accuse them of flattery.
- He clung tenaciously to his Provençal identity, deliberately cultivating an image of himself as an ill-mannered rustic. He once announced, 'I won't offer you my hand, Monsieur Manet. I haven't washed in eight days.'
- Monet arranged for him to meet Auguste Rodin at Giverny and Rodin shook his hand. Later on their way back to the hotel Cézanne kneeled in the dusty road to thank Rodin for the handshake.
- If he was unhappy with a painting he would throw it out of the window. The olive trees below were festooned with paintings and he would sometimes retrieve a painting to continue work on it.
- If a model moved he would curse, throw his brushes and stop work, once when a model dozed off and again when one dared turn her head at a joke.
- The people of Aix-en-Provence considered him a 'lunatic' and a loner.

### MAIN PERIODS

- **The Dark Period 1861-1870**, influence by Delacroix and Courbet, thick paint, dark tones, demonic-erotic subjects, the palette-knife paintings.
- **Impressionist period 1870-1878**, painted with Pissarro, brighter colours, palette of yellow, red and blue, more landscapes.
- **Mature period 1878-1890**, broke from Impressionism, solidified forms, eliminated perspective, focused on balancing the composition, mostly landscape, still lifes and figure paintings. The form and volume was built using dabs of paint.
- **Final or Late period 1890-1906**, lyrical period, the cycle of bathers, figures in a landscape, he used sketches and photographs as he disliked naked models. Five versions of *The Card Players* (1890-5). He painted several

views of Montagne Sainte-Victoire. "In order to paint a landscape correctly, I first have to recognise the geological stratification". Primarily concerned with watercolours. Paul Cézanne was the first artist to begin breaking down objects into simple geometric shapes.

### QUOTES BY CÉZANNE

- "I want to make of impressionism something solid and lasting like the art in the museums."
- "All the painter's intentions must be silent. He should silence all voices of prejudice. Forget! Forget! create silence! Be a perfect echo. [...] The landscape is reflected, becomes human, thinks in me. [...] I climb with her to the roots of the world. we germinate A tender excitement seizes me and from the roots of this excitement then rises the juice, the colour. I was born in the real world. I see! [...] In order to paint that, then, the craft must be used, but a humble craft that obeys and is ready to transmit unconsciously."
- "Treat nature according to cylinder, sphere, and cone and put the whole in perspective, like this that each side of an object, of a surface, leads to a central point [...]"
- "Painting from nature does not mean copying the object, it means realising its sensations".
- On 5 September 1906, he wrote to his son Paul: "Finally, I want to tell you that as a painter I am becoming more clairvoyant to nature, but that it is always very difficult for me to realise my feelings. I cannot reach the intensity that unfolds before my senses, I do not possess that wonderful richness of colour that animates nature."

### QUOTES ABOUT CÉZANNE

- Pissarro said: "**I think it will be centuries before we get an account of it.**"
- Henri Matisse described him as "**A kind of dear god of painting**" and the feeling was lasting, the eighty-year-old Matisse said in 1949 that he owed the most to the art of Cézanne
- "**Cézanne is a teacher par excellence for me**" — Paul Klee
- Jasper Johns described him as the most important role model alongside Duchamp and Leonardo da Vinci.
- Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger wrote: "**Cézanne is one of the greatest of those who changed the course of art history ... From him we have**



learned that to alter the colouring of an object is to alter its structure. His work proves without doubt that painting is not—or not any longer—the art of imitating an object by lines and colours, but of giving plastic [solid, but alterable] form to our nature." (*Du "Cubisme"*, 1912)

- "Paul may have the genius of a great painter, but he will never have the genius to actually become one. The slightest obstacle drives him to despair." (Émile Zola, 1861)

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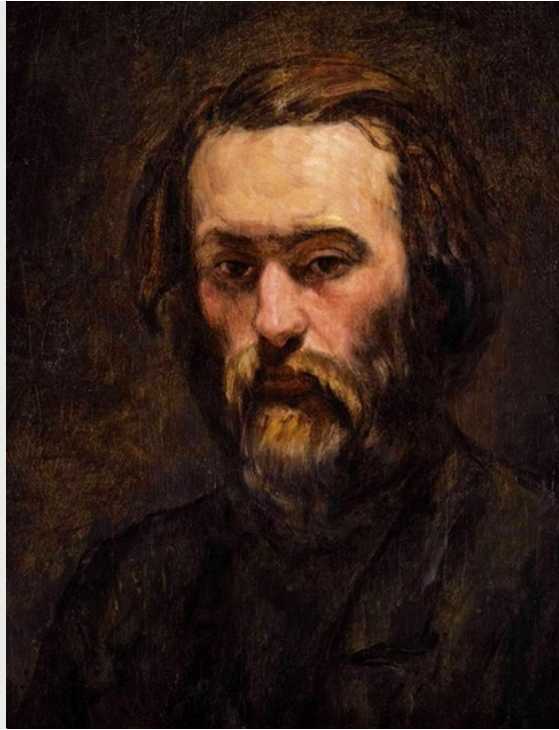
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<https://returnofanative.com/stories/the-inseparables-paul-cezanne-and-emile-zola/>

Self-Portrait, 1862-64, 46 x 37 cm,  
private collection



*Self-Portrait*, 1862-64, 46 x 37 cm, private collection

- This self-portrait is one of his earliest and was painted when he was 23-25.
- He has painted a **dark, brooding person** and he was an unusual person—**shy, impulsive and awkward**. In the company of sophisticated Parisian colleagues, he felt like an outsider, an unrefined provincial with his strong Provençal accent. He found it difficult with newcomers but people seemed to like him when they got to know him. He could switch from politeness to anger without warning and for no apparent reason.
- There were three particular aspects of his personality worth describing.
  - He was afraid of being touched which he put down to being kicked from behind when he was a child although the explanation does not seem sufficient to explain his fears. Once when walking with his friend Émile Bernard Cézanne stumbled and Bernard steadied him. Cézanne became angry and shouted, "No one dares to touch me... I won't let anybody get his hooks into me. Never! Never!". He later apologised. The work 'hooks' is interesting as he did not want to be restricted by any existing style, technique or manner of painting, he regarded all these as mental blockages or hooks that had constrained artists as revolutionary as Gauguin and Van Gogh.
  - He was extremely shy with women to the extent he had a fear of women. One biographer believed it was rooted in an uncontrollable lust for women. Rather than use nude models he would turn to books with poor

reproductions or rough sketches he made in art galleries resulting in his poorly executed nude figures although we shall see there were exceptions and some believe his solid, monumental bathers were designed to avoid any erotic associations.

- He was given to sudden angry outbursts. For example, throughout his life he had few supporters and distrusted any praise. If praised he might scream, laugh or break down in tears, thank the person and then violently accuse them of flattery. Yet, he was at times humble, on one occasion Auguste Rodin shook his hand and later Cézanne kneeled in the middle of a dusty road to thank him for the handshake. He was not being sarcastic or obsequious, he was honestly grateful as he admired Rodin.
- Although he was a prolific painter **he took a long time on each painting** and never finished many. Models and sitters dare not move during the many long sessions he required to paint a portrait. If they did he would sometimes refuse to continue painting their portrait. This happened with Zola's wife. She laughed at someone's joke during a session and he refused to continue painting her. When he was dissatisfied with a painting he would throw it out of the window. This happened so often the olive tree outside was covered in part finished sketches and he would sometimes go out and retrieve one to finish it.

### NOTES

- Once the boy, who was sliding by down the banister, gave little Paul a vicious kick in the rear. "**The kick was so strong and unexpected that ever since I have been obsessed by fear that something of the kind might happen again; hence my uncanny horror of even the slightest physical contact**", said Cézanne.
- He had right wing views, took an antisemitic position on the Dreyfus affair and in the 1880s he became a fervent Catholic. Cézanne along with Degas, Renoir and Rodin was anti-Dreyfus but he was not a hardliner.

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Male Nude, 1863-66,  
black chalk, with  
touches of stumping,  
on mottled blue-gray  
laid paper, altered to  
a light-gray tone, 31.4  
× 46.1 cm, The Art  
Institute of Chicago

*Male Nude*, 1863-66, black chalk, with touches of stumping, on mottled blue-gray laid paper, altered to a light-gray tone, 31.4 × 46.1 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Dorothy Braude Edinburg to the Harry B. and Bessie K. Braude Memorial Collection, 2013.911

- He could draw nudes. He had a conventional training at art school as shown by this male nude. At art school he won second prize in the figure studies course.
- Let us start at the beginning. He was **born in Aix-en-Provence the son of a milliner who later became a successful banker**. His parents married five years after he was born and he had two younger sisters. His mother supported his talent but his father and his sisters were dismissive of his work. His father gave him a meagre allowance until he died when Cézanne inherited a substantial sum that gave him financial security for the rest of his life.
- When he was 10 he entered the Saint Joseph School in Aix and when he was 13 the Collège Bourbon in Aix where he became friends with **Émile Zola** who later became the famous writer. With one other (Baptistin Baille) they became known as **The Three Inseparables** and read Homer and Virgil and discussed art. They spent long days in the countryside reading poetry, swimming and bathing and relaxing in the hot sun. These happy, carefree times were to have a lasting influence on his work. They studied there for six years, Cézanne wrote poetry in Latin which Zola greatly admired although Cézanne regarded it as just a hobby.
- In 1857, he began attending the École Gratuite de Dessin (Free Municipal School of Drawing) in Aix, where he studied drawing under a Spanish monk

called Joseph Gibert (1806-1884).

- Cézanne was always indecisive and **unsure of himself**. Zola, whose father had died went to Paris to seek his fortune. In a letter he wrote to Cézanne, he described him as **lacking the strength of character to stand up to his father and he urged him to come to Paris**. His father wanted him to take over the bank and insisted he enrolled in the **law faculty** of the University of Aix in 1859 to study jurisprudence. Cézanne agreed to his father's wishes and did well in his first year but then began to neglect his studies and spend his time drawing and writing poetry.

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Spring,  
Summer,  
Autumn,  
Winter,  
1860, 315 × 98  
cm, Petit Palais,  
Paris

Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, 1860, 315 × 98 cm, Petit Palais, Paris

- In 1859, when Cézanne was 20, his father bought an estate, the Jas de Bouffan ('House of the Wind', pronounced 'jar der boofon') which became his home and workplace. The house was the former summer residence of the governor of Provence but it was run down when his father bought it.
- **It was the following year when he was 21 that he started to paint.** He painted the Jas de Bouffan and the park surrounding the property and father agreed he could paint four murals in the drawing room, which we see here. You can see that Summer and Winter were the first to be painted and how his technique had improved by the time he painted Spring and Autumn. He signed them Ingres, which we know was an artist whose works he disliked so it may have been a derisive or amusing reference. A statement to the effect—this is the way my father and Ingres would wish me to paint but is not the way I wish to paint. I guess for his father it was a test of his son's skill and Cézanne needed to prove himself to his father.

### NOTES

- Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) was a French Neoclassical painter. Ingres was profoundly influenced by past artistic traditions and became the guardian of academic orthodoxy. He famously said, "**It takes 25 years to learn to draw, one hour to learn to paint.**" Cézanne thought the opposite. Cézanne considered Ingres a minor painter, steeped in tradition despite the

fact that he was Director of the French Academy and became a strong influence on Degas, Picasso and Matisse.

- When the estate was sold in 1899 Cézanne's dealer Ambroise Vollard must have arranged for the murals to be removed from the walls as they were found as part of the dealer's estate in 1950.
- The first two to be painted were probably Summer and Winter as they are less skilfully painted.

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The Avenue at the Jas de Bouffan, 1868-70 or c. 1874-5, 38.1 x 46 cm, National Gallery, London on loan from Tate



*The Avenue at the Jas de Bouffan*, 1868-70 or c. 1874-5, 38.1 x 46 cm, **National Gallery**, London on loan from Tate

### **DARK PERIOD (1861-70)**

- This early period is known as **the Dark Period** for reasons that will become obvious later.
- This painting is part of the estate of the Jas de Bouffan and we can see the beginnings of his later style, the flattened landscape and the square brushwork.
- **Finally, in 1861, encouraged by Zola, he left for Paris against his father's wishes in order to pursue a career in art.**
- In Paris he met leading artists such as **Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir** but he **felt like an outsider** and wrote, "**I am wasting my time in every respect**". Zola wrote to their mutual friend about how strange a fellow he was, no sooner had he arrived in Paris than he wanted to go home. From then on he travelled backwards and forwards between Paris and Aix not feeling comfortable in either location. Although his mother encouraged him he received no support from the rest of his family and he hated them, calling them "**the nastiest people in the world.**"
- Because of his unconventional style he was **turned down by the École des Beaux-Arts** (pronounced 'ay-col day bose are') and instead **attended the Académie Suisse**, where he devoted himself to **life drawing**. He copied works in the Louvre with Camille Pissarro but he could not settle and **returned to Aix to work in his father's bank**. No sooner had he started at the bank than he

wanted to be back in Paris. His father realised he would **never become a banker** and allowed him a **small allowance** and to return to Paris as long as he studied seriously. He lived on this small allowance until he was 47 (in 1886) when his father died leaving 400,000 francs and this removed all his financial worries for the rest of his life.

- On returning to Paris he was **turned down again** by the École des Beaux-Arts. This was the leading art school and was regarded as essential training for any artist who wished to become successful.
- It was about this time, in 1863, that two-thirds of the paintings submitted to the annual Salon de Paris were rejected including works by Manet, Pissarro and Monet. Sensitive to public opinion Napoleon III created a **Salon des Refusés** ('Exhibition of Rejects') where Cézanne was exhibited along with all the other rejected artists. A thousand visitors a day crowded in to mock, laugh and make fun of the paintings.
- The Salon continued to reject Cézanne's work every year until 1882 (19 years) when a friend became a member of the jury and got his work accepted by saying he was his pupil. By then he was 43 and the Salon's popularity was declining as the public wanted to see Impressionist works.
- **Let us go back to his early life.** In 1865 when he was 26 he **returned to Aix again** and painted a series of still lifes and portraits.

### NOTES

- His father was Louis Auguste Cézanne (1798–1886) co-founder of the banking firm Banque Cézanne et Cabassol.
- The exhibition program for the Salon des Refusés lists 780 works by 64 sculptors and 366 painters, along with a small number of printmakers and architects. Famous painters whose works were shown, included: Edouard Manet (1832-83), Gustave Courbet (1819-77), Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), Johan Jongkind (1819-1891), James Whistler (1834-1903) and Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904).
- Academie Suisse much smaller and more informal than the École des Beaux Arts. Academie Suisse charged 5 US dollars a month and provided a male model for three weeks and a female model for one week. Suisse died in 1859 and the artist Etienne Prosper Crébassol (1806–1883) took over. Students included Alexandre Cabanel, Paul Cézanne, Camille Claudel, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, Gustave Courbet, Honoré Daumier, Eugène Delacroix, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet

and Camille Pissarro.

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*The Artist's Father, Reading "L'Événement"*, 1866, 198.5 × 119.3 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC



*The Artist's Father, Reading "L'Événement"*, 1866, 198.5 × 119.3 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, 1970.5.11

- This is one of those portraits, perhaps the best known. It is *The Artist's Father, Reading "L'Événement"* ('The Event', pronounced 'lay-ven-mon'). **L'Événement was a liberal paper that employed Emile Zola as an art critic** (the year this was painted). His father would never read this paper. Instead he would read the conservative **Le Siècle** ('The Century'). So this may be witty comment or an attempt to reconcile his father's life with his artistic aspirations. He has placed his father awkwardly on the chair, the floor slopes unnaturally towards us and behind him is a painting by Cézanne.
- Cézanne continued to shuffle between Aix and Paris, in 1867 Paris, 1868 Aix and in 1869 he was back in Paris again and it then that he met **Marie-Hortense Fiquet** (pronounced 'ma-ree or-tonse fee-kay'), a bookbinder's assistant and part-time model at **Académie Suisse**. She was 19 and he was 30 and they started a relationship but he did not tell his father as he was afraid he would lose his small allowance.
- In this painting of his father he used the **palette knife**. **A technique** he copied from Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), a strong influence on his work, but to understand the influence I need to step back a moment and explain the conflicting art movements of the period.

## NOTES

- It was probably this painting that was exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1882 thank

to his friend Antoine Guillemet (pronounced 'gee-a-may') becoming a Salon jury member. He claimed Cézanne was a pupil as every jury member was allowed to show a picture painted by one of his pupils.

- There is another version, *The Painter's Father*, Louis-Auguste Cézanne, c .1865, 167.6 × 114.3 cm, The National Gallery, London.

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Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), *A Burial at Ornans*, 1849-50, 315 × 668 cm, Musée d'Orsay

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830, 260 × 325 cm, Louvre Museum

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne*, 1806, 259 × 162 cm, Musée de l'Armée

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne*, 1806, 259 × 162 cm, Musée de l'Armée

Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830, 260 × 325 cm, Louvre Museum. Commemorates the French Revolution of 1830 (July Revolution) on 28 July 1830.

Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), *A Burial at Ornans*, 1849-50, 315 × 668 cm, Musée d'Orsay

- The École des Beaux-Arts, as I mentioned, was the pillar of the artistic establishment and Jean-Auguste-Dominique **Ingres** (1780–1867) was the **leading French Neoclassical painter** and he had been the leading professor at the school. This is one of his best known paintings that exemplifies the Neoclassical style, *Napoleon I on his Imperial Throne*, of 1806. Line was emphasised over colour and paintings were based on **very detailed drawings** which were then coloured in. Subjects were portraits of the famous and historical and mythological subjects. Landscapes and still life painting was considered a lower form of art.
- (CLICK) Then, in the second quarter of the century, **Romantic artists, such as Eugène Delacroix** (1798-1863) challenged this approach. **Romanticism regarded colour as more important than line** and the artists individual sensibilities as more important than conventions. As a result the art world split in two. The debate was so widely discussed it even became the subject of cartoons in the popular press.

- (CLICK) **Then along came Gustave Courbet** (1819-1877) who cut across both these schools by painting everyday life in all its rawness and truthfulness.
- This is *A Burial at Ornans* (pronounced 'or-non') which was denounced as it showed a everyday ritual on a scale which would previously have been reserved for a religious or royal subject. In the words of one historian (Sarah Faunce) "**[it] had thrust itself into the grand tradition of history painting, like an upstart in dirty boots crashing a genteel party**". The critics accused Courbet of a deliberately pursuing ugliness. Eventually, the public became interested in this new Realist approach, and the fantasy of Romanticism lost popularity. Courbet said, "**Burial at Ornans was in reality the burial of Romanticism.**" Courbet became a celebrity and was spoken of as a genius, a "socialist" and a "savage". He encouraged the press to present him this way and achieved fame and notoriety.
- All of this is to explain **the art world in Paris as Cézanne found it in the 1860s** and all the influences that pressed in on him. So when I said he used the **coarse strokes of a palette knife** to paint his father's portrait you can now see he was associating himself with the Realists and with the **modernity and scandal of Courbet's style.**
- Let us look at another example...

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Portrait of Uncle Dominique,  
1866-1867, 79.7 x 64.1 cm,  
The Met, New York

*Portrait of Uncle Dominique*, 1866-1867, 79.7 x 64.1 cm, The Met, New York  
Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), *The Sleepers (Le Sommeil)*, 1866, 135 x 200 cm, Petit Palais. The models are Joanna Hiffenan and Constance Quéniaux

- In the autumn of 1866, the same year he painted the portrait of his father, he painted **nine portraits of his maternal uncle Dominique Aubert**. His uncle was a farmer in Provence and in these portraits we can see Cézanne struggling to find a style which is influenced by Romantics, the Impressionists he had met in Paris and the Realists, such as Courbet.
- Again he applied the paint directly to a coarse canvas **using a palette knife** to give what he called a 'gutsy' character to the portrait. Despite the coarse application of paint there is an attention to detail, particularly in the way he captures the texture of the clothing and the folds in his skin.

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Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), *The Sleepers (Le Sommeil)*, 1866, 135 × 200 cm, Petit Palais



*Women Dressing*,  
c. 1867, 22.5 × 33  
cm, private  
collection

*Women Dressing*, c. 1867, 22.5 x 33 cm, private collection

- While painting the portraits of his uncle he also painted what he called 'manière couillarde' (pronounced 'man-e-air coo-yar', from 'couilles', testicles) paintings which is a coarse expression that I just translated as 'gutsy' but more accurately translated as 'ballsy'. These works were inspired by another type of controversial painting by Courbet.
- CLICK) It was the year **he painted this work** which **has smooth brushwork and is controversial in other obvious ways**. Cézanne was inspired by the controversial nature of Courbet's subject matter (CLICK) but Cézanne was expressing darker, deeper emotions. Courbet had painted his work as a private commission for an Ottoman diplomat (Khalil Bey) although many others saw the work. (He also painted *The Origin of the World* as part of the same commission, a painting of the lower half of a naked women with her genitals in the centre of the painting. It was not exhibited in public until 1988.)
- This work was a breakthrough and has been described as the invention of modern expressionism.

### NOTES

- The red-haired woman was probably his muse Joanna Hiffernan. The painting was for a private collector (the Turkish ambassador Khalil Bey) together with *Origin of the World*. If it had been titled 'Diana and Callisto' it might have been accepted by the public as were lesbian scenes with this title by Peter Paul Rubens and François Boucher.

- According to postcard sales, in 2007 *L'Origine du monde* was the second most popular painting in the Musée d'Orsay

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Francisco Goya (1746-1828), *Scene of Rape and Murder*, 1808-12, 30.5 x 39.8 cm, Städel, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

*The Murder*, 1867-70, 64 x 81 cm, National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery,



*The Murder*, 1867-70, 64 x 81 cm, National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, Purchased by the Walker Art Gallery with the assistance of Art Fund in 1964

Francisco Goya (1746-1828), *Scene of Rape and Murder*, 1808-12, 30.5 x 39.8 cm, Städel, Frankfurt am Main, Germany

- As I said, this is known as his **Dark Period** (1861-1870) and it was influenced by **Delacroix and Courbet**. He painted in thick paint, dark tones and used a palette-knife. Many of his paintings are of violent, dark, demonic and erotic subjects.
- We are now at the end of the 1860s when **Cézanne was reaching 30**. These dark themes reflect the mood at the time as, for example, in the **novels of his friend Emile Zola**. In his novel *Thérèse Raquin* the heroine murders her husband. In this painting a man is stabbing a woman held down by his female accomplice.
- (CLICK) the style is also reminiscent of the **Spanish artist Francisco Goya** (1746-1828) who was at the height of his popularity in the mid-1860s.(CLICK).
- He met and was living with **Marie-Hortense Fiquet** (1850–1922) when, in 1870, the Franco-Prussian war started (July 1870 to January 1871) and to avoid call-up he and Hortense fled from Paris to L'Estaque, then a small village about 10 km from Marseilles (and only 20 km from Aix) where he painted landscapes. Cézanne was declared a deserter but the war ended the next month and they

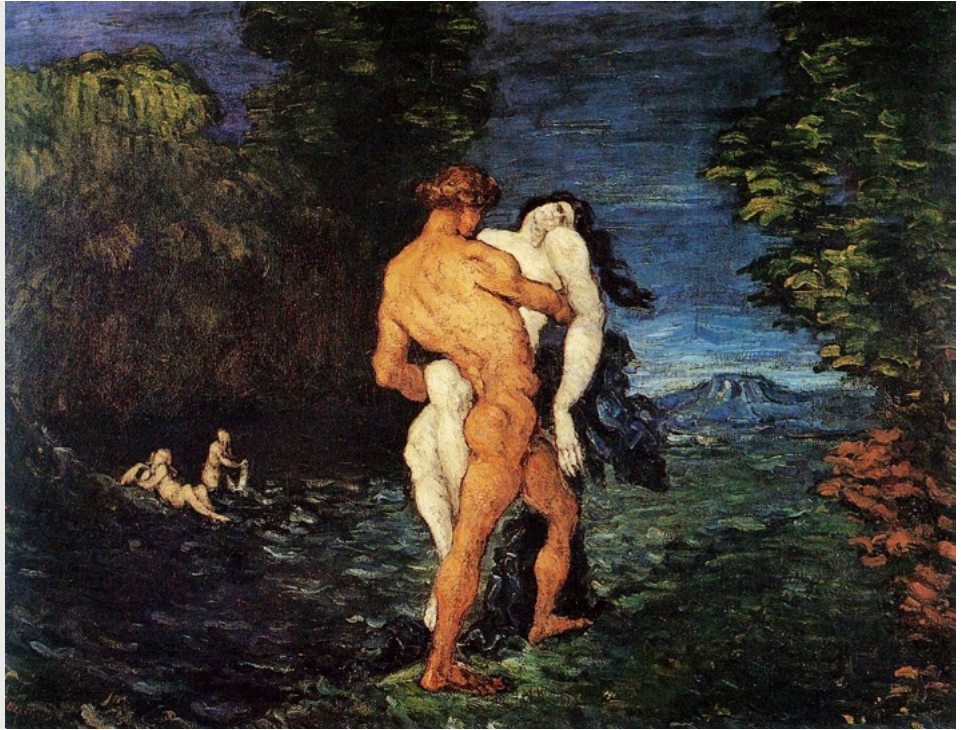
moved back to Paris. In 1872 they had a **child Paul** (who lived until 1947, aged 75) and Cézanne's father still knew nothing of the relationship. His mother knew but kept it secret as she and her son were frightened his father would cut off his meagre 100 franc monthly allowance as he had no other income.

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*The Abduction or The Rape (L'Enlèvement)*, 1867, 90.5 × 117 cm, The Provost and Fellows of King's College, Cambridge (Keynes Collection), on loan to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge



*The Abduction or The Rape (L'Enlèvement)*, 1867, 90.5 × 117 cm, The Provost and Fellows of King's College, Cambridge (Keynes Collection), on loan to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

- During his Dark Period (1861-70) he was obsessed with scenes of abduction, rape, and murder. He would look for and share **sensational news reports of murder, theft, accidents and kidnappings** which would inform Zola's stark realism and Cézanne's imagined scenes.
- It has been suggested that this is Hercules and Alcestis, whom he has rescued from the Underworld. However, it is more generally believed that it represents the abduction of Proserpine (pronounced '**proh-SUR-pih-na**') by Pluto, as recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

### NOTES

- Alcestis was a beautiful princess promised to anyone who could yoke a lion and a boar to a chariot. With the god Apollo's help King Admetus achieved this and married her but after the wedding he forgot to make a sacrifice to the goddess of the hunt, Artemis so she required his early death. Apollo managed to get the fates to agree that anyone else could take his place but no one volunteered except for his wife Alcestis. As thanks for King Admetus's hospitality Hercules rescued Alcestis from the underworld.
- Proserpine (pronounced '**proh-SUR-pih-na**') is **abducted by Pluto**, king of the underworld, and **mistakenly eats six pomegranate seeds** he offers her. This means she must stay in the underworld half the year. When she returns her

mother Ceres who has blighted the world in despair then causes the crops to grow and flowers to blossom until Proserpine must return to the underworld, thus explaining the cycle of the seasons.

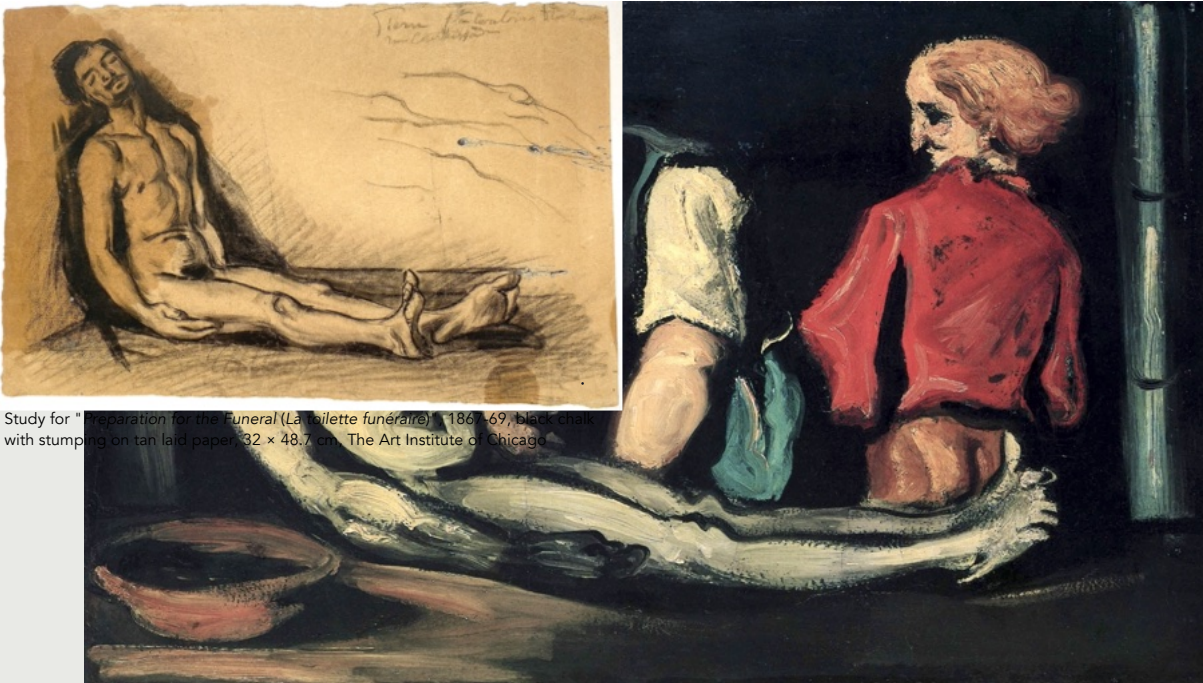
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Study for "Preparation for the Funeral (La toilette funéraire)", 1867-69, black chalk with stumping on tan laid paper, 32 × 48.7 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago

The Preparation for the Funeral (La toilette funéraire), 1869, 49 × 80 cm, private collection; courtesy of Pym's Gallery, London

*The Autopsy*, 1869, 49 × 80 cm, private collection; courtesy of Pym's Gallery, London

Study for "*The Autopsy*", 1867-69, black chalk with stumping on tan laid paper, 32 × 48.7 cm, The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Tiffany and Margaret Blake, 1947.3

- The painting is often known as *The Autopsy* but there is no scalpel or scientific apparatus. It is more correctly called *Preparation for the Funeral (La toilette funéraire)* and with this title is probably refers to an interest Cézanne and other painters at this time, had in the historical depictions of the dead Christ. All his life Cézanne was a devout Catholic and his religion influenced his work. He once said; "**When I judge art, I take my painting and put it next to a God-made object like a tree or flower. If it clashes, it is not art**". Later in life (1880s) he became a fervent Catholic.
- It is interesting to compare it with the study he made in preparation.
- (CLICK) We can see that the drawing made from life exhibits all the detail of a carefully draw figure while the painting has a loose style. Clearly he simplified the form of the body to make a stronger statement.



Édouard Manet (1832–1883), *Luncheon on the Grass (Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe)*, 1863, 208 × 264.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay



*Pastorale (Idyll)*, 1870, 65 x 81 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

*Pastorale (Idyll)*, 1870, 65 x 81 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Édouard Manet (1832–1883), *Luncheon on the Grass (Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe)*, 1863, 208 × 264.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay. The models are Victorine Meurent, Eugène Manet and Ferdinand Leenhoff

- Another dark work influenced by Manet. This is *Pastorale (Idyll)* and we see naked bodies in an unreal moonlit scene. There are three naked women and three clothed men on a sea shore.
- (CLICK) The painting can be interpreted as his personal response to Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe*, which scandalised the Parisian art world in 1863.
- In Cézanne's painting is an island with an phallic construction, one of many he included in his paintings at this time. (CLICK)
- The reflection seems to be entering a bottle on the shore. To the right is a boat with a man facing away and smoking.
- Cézanne had an unusual relationship with women. He frequently painted the nude but he seldom used nude models. He was said to be uncomfortable with naked sitters. "**I paint still lifes,**" he once told Renoir, "**Women models frighten me.**" Instead he studied the work of other artists and used drawings he had made of nude models when he was at art school in Paris.

### NOTES

- The Manet painting is large, the figures are almost life size. The perspective is intentionally distorted and flattened. The naked woman's clothes are discarded



on the ground and her legs are intertwined with two clothed men suggesting she is a sex worker and this is reinforced by the small frog in the lower left as the word for frog is 'grenouille' in French, then a slang word for a prostitute.

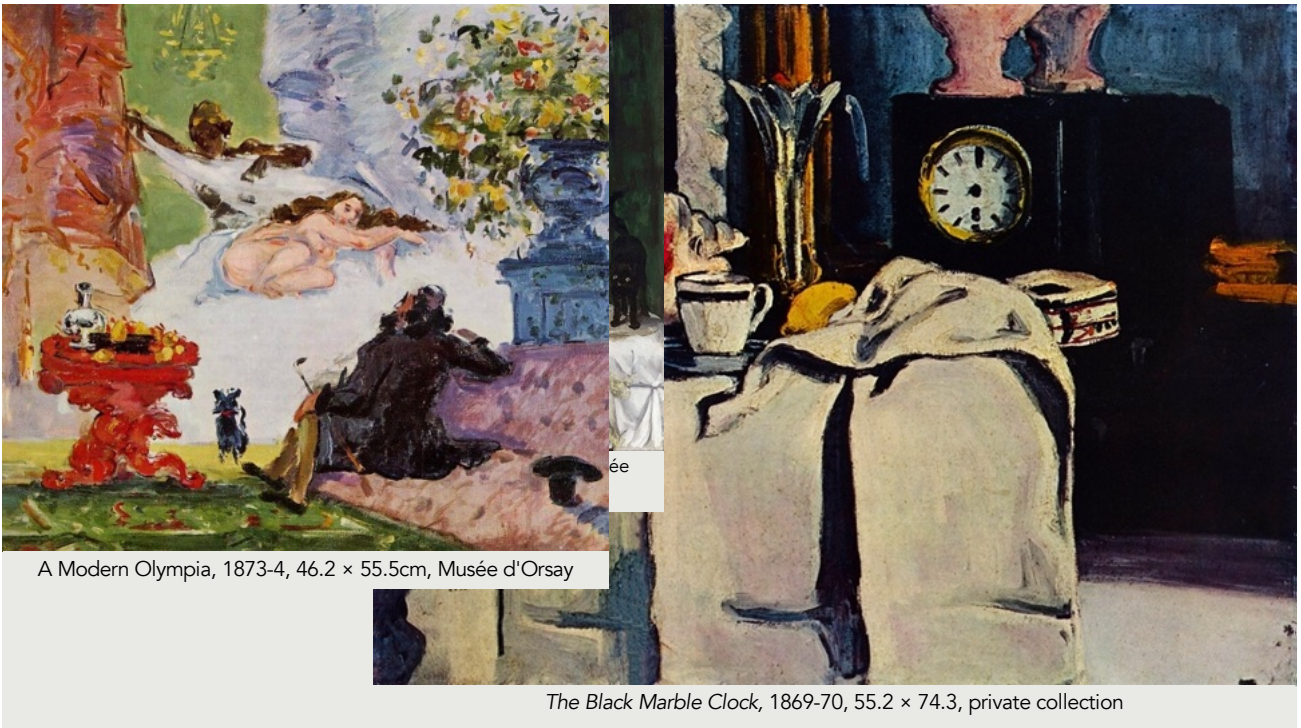
- A smaller, earlier version of *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* at the Courtauld Gallery, London.

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*The Black Marble Clock*, 1869-70, 55.2 × 74.3, private collection

Édouard Manet (1832–1883), *Olympia*, 1863-5, 130 × 190 cm, Musée d'Orsay

*A Modern Olympia*, 1873-4, 46.2 × 55.5cm, Musée d'Orsay

- By 1869, he was struggling financially and had been **rejected by the Salon**. "The Black Marble Clock" was created during this time, and it depicts a still life of a clock, vase, and fruit on a table. It has the **dark palette, emphasis on structure, and thick application of paint** of the Dark Period.
- It was created in Paris, where he was **heavily influenced by the works of the Impressionists, particularly Édouard Manet**. It depicts an interior scene with a **marble clock without hands** as the central object, showcasing the artist's interest in still-life and his focus on light and shadow. On the left is a **sea shell with a gaping red opening**, perhaps with sexual overtones.
- (CLICK) Manet was a good friend of Zola who championed his work. In particular his controversial work *Olympia* first exhibited in 1865. Notice how the composition of *The Black Marble Clock* mimics that of *Olympia* in many ways from the table cloth to the sheets and the red shell, to the orchid behind the prostitute's ear, to the clock face echoing the wrapping of the bouquet.
- (CLICK) Cézanne was influenced by *Olympia* as he painted *A Modern Olympia* at this time but we don't know how consciously he mimicked the aspects of the painting in this work. In Cézanne's work the strange juxtaposition of objects seems menacing and dark suggesting the overt rape and death scenes he had been depicting in the many other works of this period but somehow

internalised—gone underground.(CLICK)

### **NOTES**

- The objects in the painting belonged to Zola and Cézanne gave it to him as a gift.

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Afternoon in Naples, 1876-77, 37 × 45 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

*Afternoon in Naples*, 1876-77, 37 × 45 cm, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1985

- A typical erotic fantasy of this period. Italy was seen in France as a place of freedom, of the sensual life and gaiety. The scene is again inspired by Manet's *Olympia* although the two figures on the bed and the pose of the woman have little to do with Manet's hard woman with her direct gaze.

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Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory of a Seven Year Phase in my Artistic (and Moral) Life*, 1855, 359 x 598 cm (11.7 x 19.6 ft), Musée d'Orsay, Paris

*The Eternal Feminine*, c. 1877, 43.5 x 53.3 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

*The Eternal Feminine*, c. 1877, 43.5 x 53.3 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory of a Seven Year Phase in my Artistic (and Moral) Life*, 1855, 359 x 598 cm (11.7 x 19.6 ft), Musée d'Orsay, Paris

- Men are gathered round a single female figure and appear to be talking about, painting and celebrating her. The men are a **bishop, musicians, writers, lawyers and possibly a portrait of Cézanne himself**. She has a blank face and may represent the role of women as seen by men, such as the Virgin Mary, a saint or Venus.
- (CLICK) It has been compared with **Courbet's *The Painter's Studio*** but Cézanne places the woman in the centre and **she is unashamedly naked** whereas in the Courbet the model **demurely holds a sheet** against her body.(CLICK)
- His shyness with women lasted all his life and, later, when he lived in Aix **he stopped using female models completely**, partly because of his prudish neighbours and partly because of his discomfort with women.

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'La Saison', *Journal Illustré des Dames*, 1873



*The Conversation*, 1870-71, 92 × 73 cm, private collection

*The Conversation*, 1870-71, 92 × 73 cm, private collection, sold 20 June 2018 at Christies for £1,208,750

'La Saison', *Journal Illustré des Dames*, 1873

- **The Conversation** comes at the end of Cézanne's Dark Period and this appears to be an innocent representation of two fashionably dressed women in a garden.
- He has not painted from nature, like the Impressionists, but from **illustrated fashion plates** like this one (CLICK). It is from **The Illustrated Journal of Ladies** and such magazines were popular showing genteel ladies fashionably dressed and at home or taking the air in cultivated gardens.
- You may wonder why he used fashion plates. Six years previously **Charles Baudelaire** in an essay called **The Painter of Modern Life** comments on the fashion plate as representing the philosophic thought with which an age was most preoccupied and saw them as conveyors of '**moral and aesthetic feeling**'.
- On the other hand his friend Emile Zola wrote that contemporary painters did not create works that '**resemble banal and unintelligent fashion plates ... Their works are, instead, alive, because they have taken them from life, and because they have painted them with all the passion they feel for modern subjects**'. Cézanne seems to have combined the two views by modifying fashion plates to include his passion for modern life. He has included two men facing away from the women and men are rarely seen in these fashion plates. **On the left we glimpse a phallic tower** with the French tricolour on top

referring to the sexual undertones represented by the men nearby and the war with Prussia at this time.

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*The House of the Hanged Man (La Maison du pendu, Auvers-sur-Oise), 1873/4, 55.5 × 66.3 cm, Musée d'Orsay*

*The House of the Hanged Man (La Maison du pendu, Auvers-sur-Oise), 1873/4, 55.5 × 66.3 cm, Musée d'Orsay*

### **IMPRESSIONIST PERIOD (1870-78)**

- **We are now entering his Impressionist period from 1870 to 1878 and this painting is regarded as a masterpiece of this period in his life.**
- He lived in this area from 1872-74 to be near his friend and master Pissarro. In the town he met the doctor and amateur artist Paul Gachet, later van Gogh's doctor, who made his studio available to Cézanne.
- Cézanne described himself as Pissarro's pupil and called him "**God the Father**" as well as saying "**We all stem from Pissarro**". Taking Pissarro's advice he abandoned the dark style of his earlier work. The surface was described as laid on with a trowel and is granular and dense. He would first paint a sketch composition and build up successive layers of paint that created a three-dimensional canvas anticipating Monet's painting of Rouen Cathedral and unlike anything that Pissarro produced. He used brighter colours, a palette of yellow, red and blue, and he painted more landscapes as he felt Pissarro's advice was bringing him closer to his goal.
- It was painted in **Auvers-sur-Oise** (pronounced 'oh-ver-sur-warz') and shows a dilapidated building known as the **House of the Hanged Man**. It was one of three exhibited at the **First Impressionist Exhibition of 1874**. It was **bought by the collector Count Doria for 300 francs** and was one of the **few pictures sold** at the exhibition by any artist. Following the exhibition his nickname



became 'Le Pendu' ('The Hanged Man'). Despite the title **no one was hanged in the house** which is believed to be a corruption of the name of the owner Penn'Du which sound like the French word for hanged man 'pendu'.

- It was exhibited several times in his lifetime which suggests he was happy with the work. This was unusual as he was a perfectionist and rarely happy with his work and **destroyed many paintings**.

### **NOTES**

- In the Tarot pack the Hanged Man is a hero and adventurer who attains nobility of character by overcoming various problems and dilemmas.
- The term 'Impressionist' was used by the art critic Louis Leroy as a derogatory description. He took it from the title of a work by Monet and it was adopted by the artists who used it in the title of the Second Impressionist exhibition of 1876. Cézanne was almost banned but Pissarro insisted he should be exhibited. The other artists regarded Cézanne as rude, shy, often angry and given to depression and they thought his work would harm the exhibition.

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Self-Portrait with Pink Background, c. 1875, 66 × 55 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

*Self-Portrait with Pink Background, c. 1875, 66 × 55 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris*

- Painted in 1875, **Cézanne was 36** and balding. He is looking directly at us with a **serious expression**. He shows himself as a **troubled artist in deep thought** who was developing his craft despite the barriers and frustrations experienced by artists.
- He combines the **lively brushwork of the Impressionists** with the **dark palette of the Realists, like Courbet**, and the **subjective feeling of the Romantics, like Delacroix**.
- In 1875 he met the customs inspector and art collector **Victor Chocquet** (pronounced 'shoe-kay'), who bought three of his works and became his most loyal collector and whose commissions provided some financial relief.

#### **REFERENCES**

<https://www.thehistoryofart.org/paul-cezanne/self-portrait-with-pink-background/>

*The Sea at L'Estaque*,  
1876, 42 × 59cm,  
National Gallery, London



*The Sea at L'Estaque*, 1876, 42 × 59cm, National Gallery, London, on loan from a private collection 2018

- Leaving Northern France where he was working alongside Pissarro, Cézanne returned to his native South in spring 1876, **staying at L'Estaque**, a fishing village near Marseille. He worked out-of-doors, immersed in the **dazzling Mediterranean light** and its ability to both **enhance colours and flatten volumes**. "It's like a playing card", he wrote, "**Red roofs against the blue sea**".
- Cézanne did not take part in the Second Impressionist Exhibition of 1876 but this was **one of sixteen works** he submitted to the **Third Impressionist Exhibition of 1877**, which was the last he attended.

#### REFERENCES

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/paul-cezanne-the-sea-at-lestaque>

*The François Zola Dam*,  
1877-78, 53.5 × 72.4 cm,  
National Museum Wales,  
Cardiff, UK



*The François Zola Dam*, 1877-78, 53.5 × 72.4 cm, National Museum Wales, Cardiff, UK, Bequeathed by Gwendoline Davies, Amgueddfa Cymru, 1951

### **MATURE PERIOD (1878-90)**

- This is the beginning of his Mature Period and a bit of background first. In **1878 his father found out about Hortense Fiquet and their son Paul and halved his allowance**. Cézanne and his family entered a difficult period financially and he had to ask Zola for help until his father relented and increased the allowance from 150 to 400 francs a month.
- Cézanne and Hortense did not marry until 1886 and were married in Aix in the presence of his parents. He did not marry for love as the **relationship had long since broken down** and he was **terrified of being touched and was shy of women**. He married in order to secure the future of his son Paul whom he deeply loved.
- **Later in 1887 his father died and Cézanne, his mother and his sisters inherited the estate**. This gave him and **income of 25,000 francs a year** and the substantial manor house into which he moved his family. Hortense tried to live in Paris with her son but financial need meant she had to return to Aix where she lived in a separate part of the house. Cézanne moved in with his mother and sisters.
- **This work signifies the beginning of his Mature Period from 1878 to 1890. He broke from Impressionism, solidified forms, eliminated perspective,**

focused on balancing the composition, and he produced mostly landscape, still lifes and figure paintings. Like the Impressionists, the form and volume was built using dabs of paint. When on loan to the Tate Gallery in 1922, Roger Fry praised it as '**one of the greatest of all Cézanne's landscapes**'.

- The Zola lake is about 5 km from Aix and the dam is **named after Francois Zola** (1796-1847) the father of Émile Zola. He was an engineer and the family moved to Aix to build the dam when Émile was three. His father did not live to see the dam built but it was completed and is still in operation. However, he was a better engineer than businessman and when he died he left substantial debts and lawsuits. His mother bravely fended off debt collectors helped by her parents who came to live with her.

### NOTES

- This painting is a masterpiece of Cézanne's late style. By 1885 it belonged to Gauguin, who copied it in gouache and mused that '**the path winding across the broken ground through the young trees reminded [him] of the lonely path along which Christ wandered in sombre thought towards the Mount of Olives**'.
- "Cézanne frequently visited the hills of l'Estaque, a short distance to the west of Marseilles. This midday view of them is painted on paper, laid down on canvas, and dates from 1878-79 or 1883-84. By 1885 it belonged to Gauguin, who copied it in gouache and mused that 'the path winding across the broken ground through the young trees reminded [him] of the lonely path along which Christ wandered in sombre thought towards the Mount of Olives'. The remarkably flat and simply articulated composition recalls Cézanne's observation that the Provençal landscape was 'like a playing card, red roofs over the blue sea...The sun is so terrific here that it seems to me as if the objects were silhouetted in blue, red, brown, and violet... this seems to me to be the opposite of modelling'. Gwendoline Davies purchased this work in Paris in 1918.

### REFERENCES

<https://museum.wales/collections/online/object/f27043d0-41b2-3959-9300-52574465dc68/The-Francois-Zola-Dam/>

[https://museum.wales/art/online/?action=show\\_item&item=339](https://museum.wales/art/online/?action=show_item&item=339)



*Venus Rising from the Sea (Venus Anadyomene)*, about 1520, Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), National Galleries of Scotland



*Three Bathers*, 1879-1882, 67 x 70 cm, Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la ville de Paris

*Three Bathers*, 1879-1882, 67 x 70 cm, Petit Palais, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la ville de Paris

*Venus Rising from the Sea (Venus Anadyomene)*, about 1520, Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), National Galleries of Scotland

- During this period, Cézanne began to **experiment with the theme of bathers**, which would become a **recurring subject** in his later works. The painting features three women bathing in a natural pool, and highlights the artist's interest in the human form and his desire to capture the essence of nature.
- It was a theme he returned to again and again. Over his career he painted about 200 works devoted to male and female bathers.
- (CLICK) The painting of nude women in an idealised setting was a common subject for Renaissance artists, such as this work by Titian. Note that she is holding her hair in a similar way to the dark-haired woman in the painting by Cézanne. (CLICK)
- The human body provided an **ideal subject** for Cézanne as it enabled him to explore form and structure with its complex poses and perspectives. It also appealed because of its classical references and it was a common subject of the classical masters and Cézanne sought to reinterpret the subject and modernise it in his unique style. **Bathing gives a reason for the figures nakedness** and enables the body and nature to be combined in a harmonious way the unify organic forms with the geometric forms of nature. Bathing naked in nature is a reminder of his school days and their isolation is a reminder of his **own isolated**

life.

- He said "**I want to make of impressionism something solid and lasting like the art in the museums**" and to do that he maintained he was creating Poussin but 'after nature'.
- The artist Henri Matisse was a great admirer of this painting and considered it an important work. He stated, "**I have drawn from it my faith and my perseverance**". He acquired it at great financial cost from the influential art dealer Ambroise Vollard in 1899 and owned it for more than 30 years. He would often use the painting as an example when teaching his students at the Académie Matisse. Eventually he donated it to the Petit Palais in 1936

#### **REFERENCES**

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three\\_Bathers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Bathers)
- [https://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/renaissance\\_nude/inner.html](https://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/renaissance_nude/inner.html)



*The Bridge at Maincy*, (1879-1881) 1879-80, 58.5 × 72.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

*The Bridge at Maincy*, (1879-1881) 1879-80, 58.5 × 72.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

- Between April 1879 and March 1880 he **lived in Melun** about 30 miles (44 km) south-east of Paris. Nearby in Maincy he painted this bridge crossing the Almont, a tributary of the Seine. There are no people present and so he avoids any attempt to tell a story or animate the picture with human activity. It is a tangle of geometric shapes constructed from rectangular brushstrokes which tie the painting together but do not attempt to replicate foliage. He started to experiment with this **mosaic method of using brushstrokes** at Melun and this marks his **breakaway from the Impressionist** practice of breaking up forms in space.
- He begins to see the natural world as mathematical solids. In a letter to Emile Bernard (April 15, 1904), he writes:
  - ***May I repeat what I told you here: treat nature by means of the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, everything brought into proper perspective so that each side of an object or a plane is directed toward a central point. He gradually began to abandon the conventional method of creating perspective in a picture by spacing out planes towards the horizon with converging straight lines and carefully graded colour. Instead, he flattened and compressed space; background and foreground began to merge in patches of brilliant colour.***



## **REFERENCES**

<https://www.paulcezanne.org/the-bridge-at-maincy.jsp>

<https://www.artforum.com/print/197708/cezanne-on-solids-and-spaces-35965>



Portrait of Madame Cézanne  
with Loosened Hair, 1885-87,  
62 × 51 cm, Philadelphia  
Museum of Art

*Portrait of Madame Cézanne with Loosened Hair*, 1885-87, 62 × 51 cm,  
Philadelphia Museum of Art

- **Marie-Hortense Fiquet Cézanne** (22 April 1850 – 1922) was the person he portrayed most often, he painted twenty-six portraits for which she sat motionless.
- This *Portrait of Madame Cézanne with Loosened Hair* is one of his **most intimate and personal works**. The painting depicts his wife with her hair down, rendered in a palette of soft blues, pinks, and greens. The painting conveys a sense of **tenderness and intimacy**.
- **When they met** at Academie Suisse her main job was as a bookseller or bookbinder, but she combined this with part-time work as a model. They started a relationship and when the Franco-Prussian War broke out in 1871, they left Paris together for L'Estaque in the south of France. Afraid of offending his father and compromising his allowance, he went to great lengths to **conceal his liaison** with Fiquet. The existence of their child Paul, born in 1872, was kept from Louis-Auguste for some years. Fiquet and Cézanne married on 28 April 1886, in the presence of the artist's parents, though by that time he had publicly said that he no longer had any feelings for her.
- He felt she did not understand or take any interest in his work and found her fickle and shallow, and once remarked, "**My wife only cares for Switzerland and lemonade**". The sensitivity and depth we see her is his personality projected onto her image. By this time **their relationship had broken down**.

They were to live separately for most of their married life, he disinherited her and left his entire estate to his son Paul (1872-1947). He reached a settlement with his mother but she squandered it away gambling.

- **In 1886 Zola publishing a novel about a failed painter who committed suicide.** At this time Zola was a wealthy, sophisticated successful writer and saw Cézanne as a failure. Their long friendship which began at school when Cézanne defended Zola against bullying cooled at this point. Cézanne wrote thanking Zola for the book but they rarely spoke again although occasionally corresponded.

#### **REFERENCES**

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait\\_of\\_Madame\\_Cézanne\\_with\\_Loosened\\_Hair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Madame_Cézanne_with_Loosened_Hair)

Madame Cézanne in a  
Yellow Chair, 1893, 80.9 ×  
64.9 cm, Art Institute  
Chicago



*Madame Cézanne in a Yellow Chair, 1893, 80.9 × 64.9 cm, Art Institute Chicago*

- As I said, in 1887 his father died and Cézanne, his mother and sisters inherited 400,000 francs leaving him wealthy and independent for the rest of his life.
- Cézanne needed many sessions to paint any portrait and this work **may have been undertaken over several years**. Cézanne was **not interested in the personality of the sitter but in the overall formal characteristics**, was the picture integrated and balanced. Do the people look right, does it compel our attention. To achieve this some sections of the painting **convey volume and others are flat, he misaligns parts** from one side to the other, such as the dado rail. Some parts are almost unfinished and the canvas shows through. The overall feeling is static yet the two main centres of attention, the head and the hands push forward as active elements.
- It is a moment captured yet the image is timeless. Pablo Picasso said, "**there is no past or present in art. If a work cannot live always in the present, it must not be considered at all.**"
- He lived increasingly in Aix and worked in a studio at the top of Jas de Bouffan that his father had built. Renoir visited him there and they worked together in the studio.
- In 1890 he **contracted diabetes** which made it even harder for him to deal with other people.
- He spent a **few months in Switzerland** with Hortense and Paul to improve their relationship but it didn't work out. She went to Paris with Paul but financial

necessity meant she had to return to Jas de Bouffan but she lived in a different part of the house and Cézanne moved in with his mother and sister. In 1891 he became more committed to Catholicism.

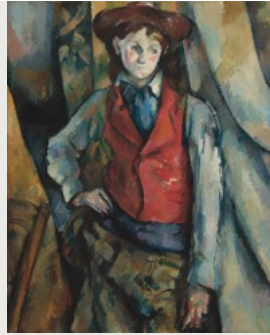
- Also in 1890 he exhibited in Brussels with the group Les XX which included James Ensor and Fernand Khnopff.

#### **REFERENCES**

<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/62371/madame-cezanne-in-a-yellow-chair>



Boy in a Red Vest, 1888–1890, 81 × 85 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York City



Boy in a Red Waistcoat 1888–1890, 92 × 73 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



Boy in a Red Waistcoat, 1888–1890, 66 × 55 cm, Barnes Foundation, Marion, Pennsylvania



The Boy in the Red Vest, 1888–1890, 80 × 64 cm, Foundation E.G. Bührle, Zurich

*The Boy in the Red Vest*, 1888–1890, 80 × 64 cm, Foundation E.G. Bührle, Zurich

### **MATURE PERIOD 1880-190 AND FINAL, LATE OR LYRICAL PERIOD 1890-1906**

- I have combined the work of his Mature and Final Periods and divided them into four subjects—portraits, still lifes, Mont-Sainte-Victoire and bathers.
- This portrait painting depicts a young boy in a red vest or waistcoat. Cézanne was interested in capturing the essence of his subject, rather than just their photographic likeness. Following his father's death his improved financial position meant that he was able to hire a professional model to pose for the boy, Michelangelo di Rosa.
- (CLICK) He painted three other oil portraits of this Italian boy in a red waistcoat. This is the most famous. It was stolen in 2008 and recovered in Serbia in 2012. **It was valued by the museum at the time at \$91 million, their most valuable painting.**

### **NOTES**

- The Foundation E.G. Bührle said, "**There is a perfect balance here of high compositional intelligence and spontaneous painterly intuition**".
- Also see
  - *Boy in a Red Vest*, 1888–1890, 81 × 85 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York City
  - *Boy in a Red Waistcoat*, 1888–1890, 92 × 73 cm, National

Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

- *Boy in a Red Waistcoat*, 1888–1890, 66 × 55 cm, Barnes Foundation, Marion, Pennsylvania

**REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Boy\\_in\\_the\\_Red\\_Vest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Boy_in_the_Red_Vest)

*The Card Players*, c. 1894-5, 97 × 130 cm, private collection



*The Card Players*, c. 1894-5, 97 × 130 cm, private collection

- **The Card Players is now the third most expensive painting of all time.** It was bought by the Royal Family of Qatar in 2011 for a price somewhere between \$250 million and \$300 million.
- **During the 1890s, Cézanne became increasingly interested in painting people,** and he completed a series of works known as "The Card Players". The paintings depict peasants playing cards and are noted for their **restrained palette, flattened forms, and geometric composition.** "The Card Players" is considered one of Cézanne's most important works.
- It is one of a series of five paintings depicting peasants playing cards. Cézanne was inspired by the simplicity and honesty of the peasants he saw around him, and sought to capture their essence in his work.
- Cézanne was adapting a **theme used by 17th-century Dutch and French artists** of card games often played by drunk and rowdy gamblers. Instead, Cézanne has **sombre, stony-faced and serious Provençal card players.** The players concentrate on their hands and there is no sense of fun, they have been described as 'human still life'.
- This painting of the Card Players says 'private collection', but **some of you will be thinking you saw it in the Courtauld or in the Musée d'Orsay, or at the Met in New York or in Philadelphia.** You are all right, Cézanne painted five



versions over a few years.

#### **NOTES**

- In April 2011 the **Greek shipping magnate George Embricos sold this version to the State of Qatar by private sale.** The price is unknown but is **believed to be between \$250 and \$300 million.** At the time this was the highest price ever paid for a painting.

#3



Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) *The Card Players*, 1890-92, 134 x 181.5 cm, Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, c. 1894-5, 97 x 130 cm, private collection



Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, 1890-92, 65.4 x 81.9 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art



Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, 1892-95, 60 x 73 cm, Courtauld Institute of Art



Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players* (#5), c. 1894-5, 47.5 x 57 cm, Musée d'Orsay

Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), *The Card Players*, 1890-92, 134 x 181.5 cm, Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, c. 1894-5, 97 x 130 cm, private collection

Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, 1890-92, 65.4 x 81.9 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, 1892-95, 60 x 73 cm, Courtauld Institute of Art

Paul Cezanne (1839-1906), *The Card Players*, c. 1894-5, 47.5 x 57 cm, Musée d'Orsay

- **They vary in size, number of card players and the setting and I have arranged them here in order of size, largest top left.** The largest is in Philadelphia, then the one sold privately to the State of Qatar, then the one at the Met, the one at the Courtauld in London and finally, perhaps **the one that is reproduced most often, the one in Paris at the Musée d'Orsay.**
- All five were painted in what is called **his final period in the early 1890s.** He also drew and painted numerous drawings and studies.
- It is thought the **largest at the top left is the one he painted first.** It has the most figures and the standing figure in the background

creates a sense of depth and three-dimensions

- The next one he painted is the **one below it at the Met**. It is less than half the size and the composition has been simplified and condensed.
- The versions on the right are likely to be the final three he painted and the Musée d'Orsay version, bottom right, is **the smallest**, the most constrained, the most closely cropped and is likely to be the one **he painted last**.

#### REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Card\\_Players](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Card_Players)



*Still Life with Apples and a Pot of Primroses*, 1890-94, 1890, 58 × 91 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

### THE STILL LIFES

- I now turn to his still-lives.
- He rarely painted flowers as he took so long to paint them that they wilted before he had finished. He sometimes included potted plants (in only three still lifes) but his principal interest was the apple.
- Cézanne is known for the statement he once made, "**I should like to astonish Paris with an apple**". He intended to astonish because, as he said, to "**Painting from nature does not mean copying the object, it means realising its sensations**".
- Cézanne was the first artist to begin breaking down objects into simple geometric shapes. He wanted to simplify forms to their geometric essentials: he wanted, as he said, to "**treat nature in terms of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone**".
- *Still Life with Apples and a Pot of Primroses* is a beautiful example of Cezanne's still life paintings. It features a simple composition of fruit and flowers arranged on a table, rendered in a palette of soft pinks, yellows, and greens. The painting is notable for its use of light and shadow to create depth and three-dimensionality.

### REFERENCES

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/435882>

<https://applesandpeople.org.uk/stories/painted-apples/>



*The Basket of Apples*, 1890–94, 65 × 80 cm, Art Institute of Chicago

*The Basket of Apples*, 1890–94, 65 × 80 cm, Art Institute of Chicago

- Cézanne was fascinated with still life paintings and painted many during his career. *Still Life with Apples* is a painting that depicts a simple arrangement of apples on a table. However, Cézanne's use of colour and form elevates the painting beyond a simple still life. The apples are depicted with an almost sculptural quality, and the colours used are vibrant and bold.
- This still life painting depicts a basket of apples on a table. Cézanne was interested in the relationship between objects and space, and sought to capture the essence of both in his work. The use of simplified shapes and muted colours creates a sense of stillness and balance in the painting.

### NOTES

- Paul Cézanne once claimed, “**Art is a harmony running parallel to nature**”, not an imitation of nature. In his quest for underlying structure and composition, he recognised that the artist is not bound to represent real objects in real space. Thus, *The Basket of Apples* contains one of his signature tilted tables, an impossible rectangle with no right angles. On it, a basket of apples pitches forward from a slablike base, seemingly balanced by the bottle and the tablecloth's thick, sculptural folds. [1]

### REFERENCES

[1] <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/111436/the-basket-of-apples>



*Still Life with Apples*,  
1893-4, 65.4 × 81.6 cm,  
The John P. Getty  
Museum, Los Angeles

*Still Life with Apples*, 1893-4, 65.4 × 81.6 cm, The John P. Getty Museum, Los Angeles

- **“Painting from nature is not copying the object,”** Paul Cézanne wrote, **“it is realizing one’s sensations.”** *Still Life with Apples* reflects this view and the artist’s steady fascination with colour, light, pictorial space, and how we see.
- **“Of an ordinary painter’s apple you say, ‘I could take a bite out of it.’ . . . Of an apple by Cézanne one says: ‘How beautiful!’ ”**, Paul Sérusier (1864-1927), French painter and pioneer of abstract art.

#### **REFERENCES**

<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103QT5>

<https://applesandpeople.org.uk/stories/painted-apples/>



*Still Life with Plaster Cupid*,  
c.1894, 70.6 x W 57.3 cm,  
Courtauld Gallery, London

*Still Life with Plaster Cupid*, c.1894, 70.6 x W 57.3 cm, Courtauld Gallery, London

- The cupid is a cast of **Pierre Puget's Cupid** and in the background is his *The Flayed Man*. We have many sketches he made of these 17th century sculptures.
- **The perspective is intentionally distorted, the floor comes up towards us, the far apple is too large.** The fruit and onions are anachronistic but tie the composition together. The blue drapery seems to merge into the painting against the wall (his *Peppermint Bottle* of 1893). Depictions of the **real fruit on the studio table and the ones painted** on the propped-up canvas become **virtually indistinguishable**, creating an ambiguous and **paradoxical relationship**. The **onion stem is cut off at the point where it joins the painting behind it**. It is a painting about the artificiality of painting.
- "This is one of Cézanne's most complex late still lifes. Beyond the foreground table on which stands a plaster Cupid, the space and the arrangement of figures become highly ambiguous. The **green apple on the floor in the far corner seems too large** and the floor itself appears tilted. The blue drapery in the painting, propped up against the wall at the left, merges with a similar fabric in Cézanne's own still life. Cézanne may have been using these paradoxes to stress the artificiality of the composition, and perhaps, to comment on the act of painting itself." [1]

### NOTES

- Pierre Paul Puget (1620–1694) was a French Baroque painter, sculptor, architect and engineer



## **REFERENCES**

[1] <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/still-life-with-plaster-cupid-207079>

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre\\_Puget](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Puget)

<https://www.ilsegnodeltempo.com/prodotto/an-anatomical-model-france-circa-1860/>



*Mont Sainte-Victoire with  
Large Pine, 1885–1887,  
67 × 92 cm, Courtauld  
Institute, London*

*Mont Sainte-Victoire with Large Pine, 1885–1887, 67 × 92 cm, Courtauld Institute of Art, London*

### **MONT-SAINTE-VICTOIRE**

- **Mont Sainte-Victoire was a mountain near Cézanne's hometown of Aix-en-Provence**, and he  **painted it repeatedly** throughout his career. He painted more than **30 oil paintings and 45 watercolours** of the mountain from which I have selected three.
- (CLICK)Its distinctive broken top dominates the surroundings as shown in this photograph from roughly the same position.(CLICK)
- This is the most highly finished of the three he painted from this location.
- He used contrasting colours to create a feeling of expanse and breadth from the greens and yellows to the cool blue of the mountain. The sweeping pine follows the contours of the mountain.
- The timeless scene is interrupted by the modern railway viaduct with its trail of steam left by a passing train.
- When it was first exhibited in Aix it met with incomprehension and he ended up giving it to a poet (Joachim Gasquet) in thanks for his sincere appreciation. It is one of the few paintings signed by Cézanne after 1880.

### **NOTES**

- Although it is not high (3,317 feet) the "Mountain of Holy Victory" it is steeped in local legend.

- Cezanne painted this piece during a period of self-imposed isolation in his studio in Aix-en-Provence. The painting is a depiction of Mont Sainte-Victoire, a mountain that Cezanne was fascinated with. The painting is characterised by its bold use of colour, especially in the depiction of the mountain and the pine tree in the foreground.

#### **REFERENCES**

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mont\\_Sainte-Victoire\\_with\\_Large\\_Pine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mont_Sainte-Victoire_with_Large_Pine)

<https://courtauld.ac.uk/highlights/montagne-sainte-victoire-with-large-pine/>

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/cezanne-mont-sainte-victoire-1937995#:~:text=Montagne Sainte-Victoire, a mountain,the course of his life.>

*The Quarry at Bibémus, c. 1895, 65 × 81cm, Museum Folkwang, Essen*



*The Quarry at Bibémus, c. 1895, 65 × 81cm, Museum Folkwang, Essen*

- The quarry was not far from his home and was the subject of a number of his paintings. This is believed to be the first of those paintings. The rocks of the quarry seem alive, like a herd of prehistoric animals on the move. This partly because we cannot see the earth floor and partly the dynamic composition which abandons the forms of classical composition.
- **The painting was bought shortly before his death** from his dealer **Ambroise Vollard** (by Karl Ernst Osthaus). Vollard had 150 works that Cézanne sent him. He also bought works from the, at that time, unknown artists Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh. **Prices for Cézanne's work rose one-hundred fold** and Vollard profited from the increase.
- **In 1897, a Cézanne painting was purchased by a museum** for the first time (for the Berlin National Gallery). In the same year his mother died and at his sister's insistence he sold Jas de Bouffan and moved into a small city apartment at 23, Rue Boulegon, Aix.
- **By 1899 Cézanne's painting** were described as of the **first rank** and were being sold at very high prices (4-5,000 francs) although less than the Impressionists.
- **In 1901 he bought some land and built a studio** near a view of Mount Sainte Victoire. The studio is now open to the public and has been maintained as Cézanne left it when he died.
- This painting was **confiscated by the Nazis in 1937** and ended up with a

banker in Berlin who gave it to a friend to take to New York. In 1960 it was obtained by a art dealer who arranged for its return to the Museum Folkwang in 1964.

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Mont Sainte-Victoire, Seen from Les Lauves, 1904-6, 65 x 81 cm, Kunsthaus, Zurich

*Mont Sainte-Victoire, Seen from Les Lauves, 1904-6, 65 x 81 cm, Kunsthaus, Zurich*

- Cézanne admired the Impressionists but was seeking to achieve an entirely different effect. He said he wanted to make Impressionism into something permanent, like the art in museums.
- He saw Impressionism as capturing a moment but he wanted to create a form of timelessness but one that incorporated change and suppleness. He took a long time to create a painting, sometimes many years and he would destroy the painting at the end if he was not happy with the result.
- He said, "**Nature is not on the surface; it is in the depths. Colours are the surface expression of this depth. They grow up from the roots of the world. They are its life, the life of ideas.**"
- Consider this painting and note the light areas of canvas. We do not know if it is unfinished but consider his thought process. He would pace up and down for hours trying to decide what colour to apply. He was not trying to reproduce what he saw but to create a balanced composition, balanced tones and hues. So imagine you are Cézanne, look at a patch of canvas and consider what colour you would apply. Is it light or dark, yellow ochre or green or perhaps a patch of blue. It must balance what is there and create a harmonious whole.
- Émile Bernard wrote of Cézanne's unusual way of working: "**He began with the shadow parts and with one spot, on which he put a second, larger one, then**

a third, until all these shades, covering each other, modelled the object with their colouring. It was then that I realised that a law of harmony was guiding his work and that these modulations had a direction preordained in his mind."

- Theodore Rousseau, Jr. writes in *Paul Cezanne* "The Mont Sainte-Victoire dominates all the countryside around Aix like a huge marble pyramid. The people of the region foretell the weather by the way it looks and has certain superstitious beliefs about it. Cézanne painted it over and over again, and at the end of his life it had become almost his only model."

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Nicolas Poussin, *Nymph with Satyrs*, c. 1627, 66.4 × 50.3cm, National Gallery, London



*Bathers*, c. 1890, 60.5 × 82.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay

*Bathers*, c. 1890, 60.5 × 82.5 cm, Musée d'Orsay

Luca Signorelli (1450–1523), *Figures in a Landscape: Two Nude Youths*, c. 1488-90, 67.9 × 41.9 cm, Toledo Museum of Art

Nicolas Poussin, *Nymph with Satyrs*, c. 1627, 66.4 × 50.3cm, National Gallery, London

## BATHERS

- This is the **beginning of his Late Period** also known as his Final or Lyrical Period which is characterised by figures in the landscape. From the 1870s Cézanne painted around **140 paintings and sketches of bathers**, male and female from which I have selected three. He focused on the structure and form of the bodies, rather than the flesh as Renoir did.
- He is referring back to classical painting that showed men and women in idealised Arcadian landscapes. (CLICK) In this painting the standing male with a towel or cloth seems to have been **inspired by a Luca Signorelli** (c. 1441/5-1523) drawing and the **overall arrangement from Nicolas Poussin** (1594-1665). [1] (CLICK)
- Cézanne wanted to avoid any sexual overtones with his naked bathers and so **he would not mix the sex**, they are either all men or all women. To avoid having to use naked models he used sketches, reproductions from books and photographs.

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Giorgione and/or his disciple Titian (who probably finished the painting after Giorgione's death in 1510), *Pastoral Concert*, 1509, 110 × 138 cm, Louvre Museum



*The Bathers*, 1894–1905, 127 × 196 cm, National Gallery, London

*The Bathers*, 1894–1905, 127 × 196 cm, National Gallery, London

Giorgione and/or his disciple Titian (who probably finished the painting after Giorgione's death in 1510), *Pastoral Concert*, 1509, 110 × 138 cm, Louvre Museum

- *The Bathers* is one three pictures of female bathers that he worked on during the final decade of his life. He was working within a classical tradition of nude or semi-nude figures in a pastoral landscape, particularly mythological the nymphs and goddesses of the (CLICK) **Venetian Renaissance painted by artists such as Titian**. However, in this case there is no narrative, no story of ancient goddesses. It is a classical scene brought up to date with a **strong composition, monumental solid figures** and a **unifying colour palette** that celebrates our union with nature.(CLICK)
- His said, "**I want to make of impressionism something solid and lasting like the art in the museums**".
- Now regarded as one of the great masterpieces it was derided in his home town. In 1903 their was **an auction of Cezanne's paintings** that had been in Zola's (1840-1902) possession. This resulted in **laughing fits** among the petty bourgeoisie of Aix and a highly critical essay being published called "**Love for the Ugly**". For many days Cézanne had threatening messages left on his doorstep accusing him of dishonouring the town and telling him to leave.

#### REFERENCES

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/paul-cezanne-bathers-les-grandes->

[baigneuses](#)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Bathers\\_\(Cézanne\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bathers_(Cézanne)) (six versions shown)

*The Bathers*,  
1906, 208 ×  
251 cm,  
Philadelphia  
Museum of Art



*The Bathers*, 1906, 208 × 251 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art

- In 1903, **Zola died** leaving him profoundly depressed despite their estrangement. His health deteriorated and his distrust of others increased to the point of **delusions of persecution**. Despite his increasing recognition he still received hateful criticism and threatening letters from the petty bourgeoisie of Aix demanding he leave the town "**he was dishonouring**" because of the bad publicity he was receiving.
- Yet, also in 1903 he was exhibited for the first time at the newly established prestigious **Paris Autumn Salon** and the following year an entire room was dedicated to his work.
- ***The Bathers*** in the Philadelphia Museum of Art is **one of Cézanne's most ambitious works and was created during the final years of his life**. The painting depicts several nude figures in a landscape, rendered in Cézanne's signature style of geometric shapes and bright colours. Cézanne painted many works called Bathers and this version is known as ***The Large Bathers*** because of its monumental dimensions.
- By 1900 **Cézanne was no longer using female models** because of his fear and distrust of women so this must have been painted from his imagination and possibly earlier sketches he had made. **He did not intend to create realistic naked women bathers or idealised nudes**. He was concerned with the overall sense of balance and harmony, as well as its novel exploration of the human form and **this work is considered one of the great masterpieces of modern**

**art.**

- Cézanne worked on this painting for **seven years**, constantly adding and changing elements to create a sense of harmony and balance. It remained **unfinished at his death**.

#### **REFERENCES**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Bathers\\_\(Cézanne\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bathers_(Cézanne))



*Mount Sainte-Victoire, 1904, 70 × 92 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art*

- **One day in 1906 he was caught in a storm** while painting Mont Saint-Victoire and he continued painting for two hours until he was taken home (CLICK) to 23 Rue Boulegon (pronounced 'boule-a-gone), in Aix-en-Provence, by a passing carriage. The next day he fainted, the model he was painting called for help and was put to bed but died a few days later on 22 October 1906 of pneumonia at the age of 67. (CLICK) He was buried in Saint-Pierre Cemetery in Aix-en-Provence. In his will he excluded his wife Hortense and made his son Paul the sole heir.
- (CLICK) If you visit Aix-en-Provence make sure you visit his studio on Avenue Paul Cézanne. You can tour the studio which is just as he left it. (CLICK) Then fifteen minutes further up the road is a path that leads to the spot where he often painted Mont Sainte-Victoire, a mountain which for him epitomised his beloved Provence.

### **NOTES**

- 28 Rue de L'Opera is where Paul Cézanne was born on January 19th, 1839, about 10 minutes walk east from the city centre (regarded as the Palais de Justice).
- In 1902, Paul Cézanne bought Studio Les Lauves on the outskirts of the city in view of Mont Sainte-Victoire. It is about a 20 minute walk north from the city centre and you can tour the studio. About 15 minutes further out of town up Avenue Paul Cézanne there is a path leading to the Terrain des Peintres ("The

Painters Field'). This was his favourite spot for painting Mont Sainte Victoire.

- Cézanne's father bought Jas de Bouffan and owned it from 1859 to 1899. It's a 25 minute walk west from from the city centre.
- He bought 23 Rue Boulegon, a studio apartment in the city, after the family sold Bastide du Jas de Bouffan. It is 5 minutes walk north of the city centre near the Cathedral St. Sauveur.
- A bit further down at 13 Rue Boulegon, is the bank branch his father owned and where Paul worked for a short period. It is now a shuttered four-storey house.
- Cathedral St. Sauveur is where Cézanne's funeral took place on October 24, 1906.
- A 20 minute walk east from the city centre is St. Pierre Cemetery where he is buried.
- Seven kilometres east of Aix down the Route Cézanne is a village called Le Tholonet, one of Cézanne's favourite places with views of Mont Sainte-Victoire. 1.5 km north is the Zola dam and lake and 2km west by path is the Bibémus quarry although it is much further by road.
- There are five marked trails from the city center of Aix to Le Tholonet, the Jas de Bouffan, the Bibémus quarry, the banks of the River Arc and the Les Lauves workshop.



PAUL CÉZANNE (1839-  
1906)  
"FATHER OF MODERN ART"

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Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), *Still Life with Bowl, Glass, Knife, Apples, and Grapes*, c. 1880, 46 x 55 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York

- **Until the late 1890s his work provoked incomprehension and public ridicule.** Cézanne was full of self-doubt but refused to make compromises. He was a loner and regarded as an oddball by his contemporaries but **Pissarro, Renoir, Monet and Degas were enthusiastic about his work** but Pissarro said, "**I think it will be centuries before we get an account of it.**"
- In 1895 the art dealer Ambroise Vollard opened the first solo exhibition of his work in Paris which led to a broader appreciation. One critic (Gustave Geffroy) wrote "**He is a great truth fanatic, fiery and naive, harsh and nuanced. He will go to the Louvre.**" He became seen as a master by young artists who visited his studio in Aix. Shortly after his death (in 1910 and 1913) his work was exhibited internationally and he became seen as one of the leading Post-Impressionists (a term coined by the English art critic Roger Fry) along with Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin.

### NOTES

- Painters face the impossible challenge of representing the complex ever-changing world around us as a fixed, collection of pigments on a flat surface. Cézanne sometimes paused twenty minutes between brushstrokes trying to capture the essence of his subject.
- In his later work, Cézanne gave up conventional artistic techniques such as the usual arrangement of elements, single point-of-view perspective, and outlines



that enclose colour.

- No recognisable light source, no shadows, wanted to depict what is permanent in nature. He constructed a picture. He would destroy paintings if he could not achieve the effect. He used multiple viewpoints, later used by Picasso.
- "In his 1945 essay entitled "Cézanne's Doubt", Merleau-Ponty discusses how Cézanne gave up classic artistic elements such as pictorial arrangements, single view perspectives, and outlines that enclosed colour in an attempt to get a "lived perspective" by capturing all the complexities that an eye observes. He wanted to see and sense the objects he was painting, rather than think about them. Ultimately, he wanted to get to the point where "sight" was also "touch".
- **He would sometimes take twenty minutes to put down a single stroke** because each stroke needed to contain "**the air, the light, the object, the composition, the character, the outline, and the style**". A still life might have taken Cézanne one hundred working sessions while a portrait took him around one hundred and fifty sessions. Cézanne believed that while he was painting, he was capturing a moment in time, that once passed, could not come back. The atmosphere surrounding what he was painting was a part of the sensational reality he was painting.
- D. H. Lawrence wrote "**After a fight tooth-and-nail for forty years, he did succeed in knowing an apple, fully; and, not quite as fully, a jug or two. That was all he achieved.**" But Lawrence added "**I can think of nobody else who has done anything.**" Cézanne realised the difficulty, he once said, "**With an apple I want to astonish Paris**".

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