

11. Still Life with Basket

Oil on Canvas

1888-90

Musee d'Orsay, Paris

Paul Cezanne

French

1839-1906

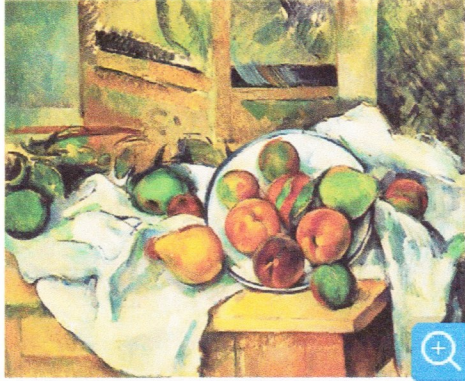


Painting Highlights: Paul Cézanne, one of the creators of modern art, was called the “solidifier of Impressionism”. And indeed he does not draw his picture before painting it: instead, he creates space and depth of perspective by means of planes of color, which are freely associated and at the same time contrasted and compared. The facets which are thus produced create not just one but many perspectives, and in this way volume comes once again to dominate the composition, no longer a product of the line but rather of the color itself. His still-lives, in their simplicity and delicate tonal harmony, are a typical work and thus ideal for an understanding of Cézanne’s art.

Most of his pictures are still lifes. These were done in the studio, with simple props; a cloth, some apples, a vase or bowl and, later in his career, plaster sculptures. Cézanne’s still lifes are both traditional and modern. The fruits and objects are readily identifiable, but they have no aroma, no sensual or tactile appeal and no other function other than as *passive decorative objects coexisting in the same flat space. They bear no relation to the colorful vegetables of Provence – gorgeous red tomatoes, purple aubergines, and bright green courgettes.* In his pursuit of the essence of art, Cézanne had to suppress earthly delights.

Artist Highlights: Paul Cezanne was born in January 1839 in Aix-en-Provence in the South of France. He was the son of a wealthy banker. Cezanne’s father did not approve of his desire to become a painter. Nevertheless, in 1861, Cezanne abandoned his legal studies and went to Paris to paint. In this respect, he is said to have taken after his mother, who has been described as *vivacious, romantic, and high strung.* Cezanne and his father eventually reconciled and his father sent him a small allowance on which to live. In the beginning, Cezanne’s paintings were considered rough and none of the art schools would admit him. His early paintings were so dark that his friend Pissarro encouraged Cezanne to paint outside. Thereafter, Cezanne’s paintings became alive with bright colors. Though he was an impressionist of sorts, he used slabs of color and his paintings were solid in appearance, as opposed to the light airy look of many Impressionists. Cezanne began to articulate form and depth, not by using light and shade, but by using contrasting colors and solid geometric shapes painted from different viewpoints. He strived to depict nature in the form of a cylinder, sphere, and cone. His technique of distorting the traditional “unified perspective” is said to be most obvious in his still-lives. His distortions are subtle, and aren’t often noticed at first glance. In 1895, Vollard, an art dealer in Paris, exhibited Cezanne’s paintings and he finally began to enjoy success.

In 1907, Cezanne’s works were included in an important exhibition and a younger generation of artists was exposed to his techniques. This next generation of artists, namely Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, were hugely influenced by Cezanne’s experiments in distorting the unified perspective, painting from many viewpoints, and using solid geometric shapes with contrasting colors to create depth. While Cezanne distorted the unified perspective, Picasso and Braque are said to have rejected traditional perspective altogether. The surface of a painting was no longer a see through window, as in Cezanne’s works. Rather, the next generation of artists used the surface of the painting to articulate form itself. Thus, the birth of Cubism. In his personal life, Cezanne was basically a loner. He had an unhappy marriage to Hortense Fiquet, who modeled for him. They met in 1870, married in 1886 and had one son together. Emile Zola, Cezanne’s childhood friend, wrote a novel about a failing artist. Cezanne took it personally and ended his friendship with her. In 1886, Cezanne’s father died and Cezanne received a large inheritance. He was 47, and had not yet achieved success as an artist. In 1902 he returned to Provence where he built a small studio outside Aix, in view of Mte. Ste. Victoire, the subject of many landscape paintings. In 1906, still a prolific painter, he died of pneumonia at age 67. It is said that he was painting until 6 days before his death. He ended his life a virtual recluse.



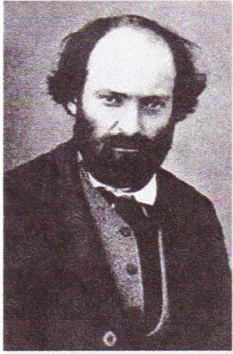
Table, Napkin, and Fruit (A Corner of the Table) (1895-1900)

Artwork description & Analysis: After studying Dutch and French Old Master still life painting at the Musée du Louvre and other Paris galleries, Cézanne formulated his own semi-sculptural approach to still lifes. Typically strewn across an upturned tabletop, Cézanne's pears, peaches, and other pictorial elements seem at once to rest on a solid, wooden plank and yet float across the surface of the canvas like a new kind of calligraphy. As if to press home that point, Cézanne typically includes chairs, wooden screens, water pitchers, and wine bottles to suggest that the gaze of the viewer rise vertically up the canvas, rather than plunge deep within any implied corner of a real kitchen.

Oil on canvas, 47 x 56 cm (18 1/4 x 22 in) - The Barnes Foundation, Pennsylvania

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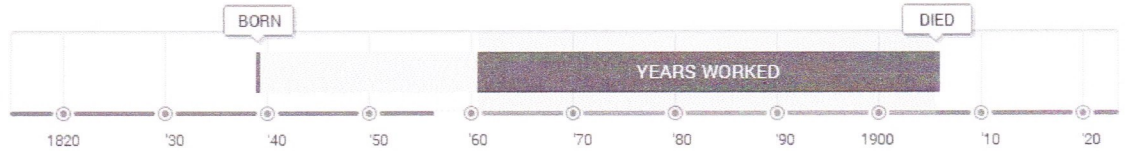


Paul Cézanne

French Draftsman and Painter

Movement: Post-Impressionism

Born: January 19, 1839 - Aix-en-Provence, France
Died: October 22, 1906 - Aix-en-Provence, France



"I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you"

P. Cézanne

Synopsis

QUOTES

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"We must not paint what we think we see, but what we see... sometimes it may go against the grain, but this is what our craft demands."

Paul Cézanne

Paul Cézanne was the preeminent French artist of the Post-Impressionist era, widely appreciated toward the end of his life for insisting that painting stay in touch with its material, if not virtually sculptural origins. Also known as the "Master of Aix" after his ancestral home in the South of France, Cézanne is credited with paving the way for the emergence of twentieth-century modernism, both visually and conceptually. In retrospect, his work constitutes the most powerful and essential link between the ephemeral aspects of Impressionism and the more materialist, artistic movements of Fauvism, Cubism, Expressionism, and even complete abstraction.

Key Ideas

Cézanne ultimately came to regard color, line, and "form" as constituting one and the same thing, or inseparable aspects for describing how the human eye actually experiences nature.

Unsatisfied with the Impressionist dictum that painting is primarily a reflection of visual perception, Cézanne sought to make of his artistic practice a new kind of analytical discipline. In his hands, the canvas itself takes on the role of a screen where an artist's visual sensations are registered as he gazes intensely, and often repeatedly, at a given subject.

Cézanne applied his pigments to the canvas in a series of discrete, methodical brushstrokes as though he were "constructing" a picture rather than "painting" it. Thus, his work remains true to an underlying architectural ideal: every portion of the canvas should contribute to its

GOT IT? overall structural integrity.

In Cézanne's mature pictures, even a simple apple might display a distinctly sculptural dimension. It is as if each item of still life, landscape, or portrait had been examined not from one but several or more angles, its material properties then recombined by the artist as no mere copy, but as what Cézanne called "a harmony parallel to nature." It was this aspect of Cézanne's analytical, time-based practice that led the future Cubists to regard him as their true mentor.

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Most Important Art



Table, Napkin, and Fruit (A Corner of the Table) (1895-1900)

After studying Dutch and French Old Master still life painting at the Musée du Louvre and other Paris galleries, Cézanne formulated his own semi-sculptural approach to still lifes. Typically strewn across an upturned tabletop, Cézanne's pears, peaches, and other pictorial elements

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Paul Cézanne Artworks in Focus:



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Biography

Childhood

Paul Cézanne was born on January 19, 1839 in Aix-en-Provence in the South of France. His father was a wealthy lawyer and banker who strongly encouraged Paul to follow in his footsteps. Cézanne's eventual rejection of his authoritative father's aspirations led to a long, problematic relationship between the two, although, notably, the artist remained financially dependent on his family until his father's death in 1886.

Early Training

Cézanne was largely a self-taught artist. In 1859, he attended evening drawing classes in his native town of Aix. After moving to Paris in 1861, Cézanne twice attempted to enter the École des Beaux-Arts, but was turned down by the jury. Instead of acquiring professional training,

young art students could draw from the live model for a very modest monthly membership fee. While at the Académie, Cézanne met fellow painters Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet, and Auguste Renoir, who were at that time also struggling artists, but who would soon comprise the founding members of the nascent Impressionist movement.

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The early oils of Cézanne were executed in a rather somber palette. The paint was often applied in thick layers of impasto, adding a sense of heaviness to already solemn compositions. Cézanne's early painting indicated a focus on color in favor of well-delineated silhouettes and perspectives preferred by the French Academy and the jury of the annual Salon.

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While in Paris, Cézanne continuously submitted his works for exhibition at the Salon. All of his submissions, however, were refused. The artist also travelled regularly back to Aix to secure funding from



his disapproving father.

Paul Cézanne Biography Continues



Legacy



When looking at Cézanne's late work, it is impossible to miss the emergence of a unique artistic approach. The rules of the Academy completely abandoned, and the aesthetics of Impressionism having been successfully employed but not copied, Cézanne offered a new way of comprehending the world through art. With his reputation evolving steadily in the late years of his life, an increasing number of young artists fell under the influence of his innovative vision. Among them was the young Pablo Picasso, who would soon steer the Western tradition of painting into yet another new and utterly unprecedented direction. It was Cézanne who taught the new generation of artists to liberate form from color in their art, thus creating a new and subjective pictorial reality, not merely a slavish imitation. The influence of Cézanne continued well into the 1930s and 1940s, when a new artistic manner was coming to fruition - that of Abstract Expressionism.

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