Cézanne part two: Mountain of Victory

"Art is a harmony running parallel to nature"

"He was the Father of us all" **Pablo Picasso**

In the early 1880s the Cézanne and his family stabilized their residence in Provence where they remained, except for brief sojourns abroad, from then on. The move reflects a new independence from the Paris-centered impressionists and a marked preference for the south.

Several times during 1878 he had to ask Zola to send money to support Hortense in Marseilles. In September his father after intercepting another letter intended for Hortense, relents and increases his allowance to 400 francs a month. In July he rented a house in L'Estaque, and over the next few years moves between here, Paris and Marseilles.

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THE GREAT LEAP FORWARD: The Constructive Period (1878-1885)

For an Impressionist to paint from nature is not to paint the subject, but to realize sensations.

How does he Cézanne do it? He cannot put two touches of colour on a canvas without its being very good. **Renoir**

The paintings of this period from 1878 to 1888 are sometimes known as "the Constructive Period"

In 1876 he had been commissioned by Chocquet to paint several views of L'Estaque. When these studies were shown at the third Impressionist exhibition in 1877 Zola wrote of them: "Cézanne is without a doubt the greatest colourist of the group."

It was in L'Estaque that he discovered his 'altered gaze.' Where Cézanne became Cézanne, Cut off from the influence Paris and academic theories, he undertook to "make of Impressionism something solid and enduring like the art of the museums."

Writing to Emile Bernard, the year before his death, he said that his aim was "to pursue the realisation of that part of nature that, spread before our eyes, gives us the painting" and "to recreate the image of what we see, forgetting everything that has gone before."

In this early representation of ***The Bay of Marseille from L'Estaque*** (c.1878–79) he is still using the 'Impressionist' brushstroke–small vertical dashes– which he developed while working alongside Pissarro. A strong diagonal divides the greens and ochres of the land from the deep blues of the bay.

Mountains in Provence, or ***Midday in L'Estaque*** (c.1879) is constructed of near abstract shapes, with a prominent vertical rectangle (the side of a building in sunlight) resting at a focal point on the base of a diagonal curving down from the patch of trees and shadows on the right. The pale buff colour is repeated in the hooked shape of a path (?) below and the terraced fields. Dotted about are the greens of the trees: five conical shaped trees, evenly spaced near the bottom imply a rightward sweeping line, countering the leftward curve of the path.

The sea is almost out of his vision, indicated by a flat horizontal strip of blue lake.

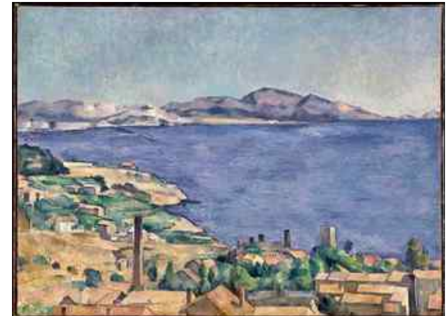
Rocks at L'Estaque (1882-5) is one of the few places which has remained very much the same today as when he painted it.

The spectacular close-up view of the rocks restricts the sea to a blue sliver near the top, dramatising the space by the use of predominantly dark colours–monochromatic greens and greys–shaped by small, closely aligned brushstrokes.

Cézanne specialist Joseph Rishel wrote: “In the end the effect is more brooding than heroic...the prevailing mood is ponderous and introspective.”

His location high above the bay widened his field of vision to panoramic proportions. In ***The Bay of Marseille from L'Estaque*** (1885) his analysis of light, the lack of modelling and his advance towards a rigorous pictorial structure he is moving further away from Pissarro and the subtle handling of impressionism.

In a letter to Pissarro in he had written “I've begun two small views of the ocean...It's like a playing card. Red roofs against the blue sea. If the weather improves I might be able to finish them...The sun here is so terrific that objects appear silhouetted not only in white or black, but in blue,red, brown, violet. I may be wrong, but it seems to me the opposite of modelling.”



The Bay of Marseille from L'Estaque (1885) is painted from a position a few metres apart from the previous work, using a high viewpoint. In both, the foreground is composed of overlapping geometrical forms, having the effect of raising the background and tilting the perspective, so that the blue of the sea dominates the ochres and reds of the land.

Vertical lines of chimneys contrast with the horizontal 'tiling' of the roofs and introduce a sense of depth, in contrast to the essential flatness of the picture. The deep blue, flat expanse of the sea takes up a large area, pushing the buildings to the bottom edge.

Provence represented to the people of Paris a sun kissed land of promise, a healthy country opposed to the pestilential city with its grey skies and muddy streets. It had taken on an almost mythical reality, the site of an 'imagined modern-day antiquity.' Aix, from the seventeenth century, was known as the “Athens of the Midi.” The association of antiquity with Provence was underlined by paintings such as **Puvis de Chavannes' *Marseilles, Greek Colony*** (1869).

Puvis de Chavannes (1824-98) was highly regarded not only by the critics and aficionados of the prevailing neo-Classical styles, but also by the younger generation of artists. n this painting the scene is bathed in a silvery, antediluvian light. Contemporary newspapers described Provence as “a new Attica” with the “azure always cooled by zephyrs” a “country...full of breezes and light.” The blue curve of the bay recalls Cézanne's paintings of the same scene.

In this later portrayal, ***L'Estaque with Red Roofs*** (1883-85), he abandoned the oblique view to look directly over the rooftops and the church and directly across the open sea to suggest a hot sunny day in the Mediterranean.

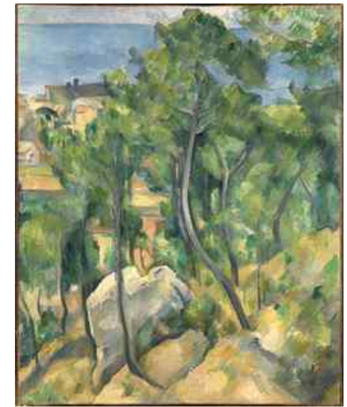
In comparing his L'Estaque paintings to 'playing cards' in his letter to Pissarro he was asserting the essential modernity of his approach to rendering space in painting. In an exchange between Courbet and Manet, repeated by the younger artists, Courbet compared Manet's Olympia with the queen of Spades in a pack of cards, coming out of a bath, where-upon Manet is said to have retorted that Courbet's ideal was a billiard ball.

With a high angle viewpoint the mid-ground is tipped up and brought closer. In ***View of L'Estaque Beneath the Trees*** (1878–79) the planes of the sea, the mid-ground and the foreground overlap, and the verticals and curves of the tree branches either side frame the view. A sliver of wall along the bottom edge completes a triangular, almost enclosed space, echoing the pyramidal arrangement of the houses. While glimpsed between the leaves at the top is a horizon line with some flecks of pink, which may represent the opposite side of the bay, and completing the framing effect.

Picasso and Braque were directly influenced by Cézanne's L'Estaque paintings in the early development of Cubism; as we see in **Picasso's *Brick Factory at Tortossa*** (1909).

In ***View of L'Estaque and the Château D'If*** (1883–85) the red shards of the houses, interspersed with green note of trees, fit into a curved V shape. The picture is arranged in three bands, cross-ed by the verticals of the framing trees.

Later in his life he included some of his L'Estaque paintings in the 1905 Salon d'Automne. A critic wrote maliciously: “Monsieur Cézanne is exhibiting a few works that are as dull, clumsy, ugly but also as naïve and sincere as usual, including a view of L'Estaque that transforms this delightful spot of gold and sapphire into a gloomy swamp of leaden blue upon which the sun can never have smiled.”



In ***Rocks, Pines and Sea at L'Estaque*** (1883–85) he leaves out the tall chimneys, references to the industrial aspect of the town. Although the foreground rocks and the clumps of leaves are larger than the background buildings, they are composed of similar sized clusters of shapes, a device which Cézanne increasingly uses to unite background and foreground, to flatten the picture, while still maintaining an impression of space and perspective, and create a painting which is a unified whole.

The buildings in ***Houses in Prov-ence, the Riaux Valley near L'Estaque*** (c.1883) are depicted with strong contrasts of sunlight and shadow, forming a geometrical pattern which is continued as abstract patterns in the rocks and grassy banks of the surroundings.

This house had a special significance for Cézanne as it was believed at the time to be the home and studio of the Baroque painter and sculptor Pierre Puget (1620-94), born in Marseilles, for whom he had a high regard.

The year 1886 was a turning point for the family. Cézanne married Hortense, legitimising his son, Paul. Later that year, on 23rd of October his father died and he, along with his sisters, inherited the Jas de Bouffan estate. He was 47.

In the painting ***Jas de Bouffan*** (1885-87) the house is shown from the sunny south side. The high studio window which his father had built on the top floor is on the north facing side. The farm buildings on the right are no longer there. The house, with much-reduced grounds, is now owned by the city and is open to the public on a restricted basis.

High Trees In Jas de Bouffan (1885-7) is executed with small parallel brushstrokes, a technique Cézanne favoured in the 1880s, creating a shimmering effect; so that the leaves of the trees seem to rustle and quiver in the breeze. However, he has no interest in representing the 'look' of leaves. Rather, he exploits the massing of the foliage to realise an abstract pattern of shapes, in which the surface is dissolving into a shallow space closing off and opening out in a rhythmic display which entices the eye on a journey around and through the fragmented forms.

Jas de Bouffan (1890–94) represents his farewell to the Jas de Bouffan as a motif for landscape painting. Henceforth all paintings made there were indoors, still-lifes and the card players. Here he paints not the manor house itself but the view between the trees, bringing a distant house closer, and in its geometric form relating it to the gate pillars on the edge, and the slate blue of the pool with the lozenge of the distant red roof.

The decade from 1885 to 1895, when he was painting Gardanne and the vicinity of Montbriand and Bellevue, was a pivotal period in both his life and work. His painting was "moving inexorably towards permanence, immutability and monumentality of form."

He lived in Gardanne, to the south of Aix, with Hortense and Paul, from the end of 1885 for most of the following year. The number of works from this period are relatively few as he may have destroyed many of them.

The horizontal format of ***Gardanne (horizontal view)*** (c.1885) allows for a panoramic view of the village that centres on the staggered, geometric structures of the orange-roofed houses. By setting the vantage point in the east, he was able to focus on the vertical nature of the terrain and highlight historical features such as the bell tower at the centre.

The vertical, rectangular gap between the buildings at the bottom of the town makes a geometrical form of the negative space which is repeated in the brown door nearby, the windows and sunlit walls higher up. The 'step' line formed by the boundary of the gap and the edge and roof of the shed, and up along the shadowed edge of the building behind is a structural element repeated in the side and roof line of the penitents' chapel, with its turret-shaped belfry, to the edge of the bell tower silhouetted against the sky; a structural device which may be found in many of Cézanne's landscapes and still-lifes.

The oval shaped clumps of trees, separated to the left of centre and clumped together on the right, frame the central geometric abstraction of the village

For the view of the town in ***Gardanne (vertical view)*** (c.1885-86) he moved a little higher up and slightly to the left of the horizontal view, raising the tower and emphasising the block-like, buildings rising up the sloping hillside. The green patches of field are geometric in form and incorporated into the proto-cubist structure of the abstracted design. All three versions are dominated by the 1772 bell tower, which is all that remains of the church today.

All three paintings show shadows indicating the time of day, but more significant is the abandonment of the "impressionist" brush-stroke in favour of thinner more transparent pigments, and a freer application which makes it seem as though the paint itself is radiating light. This was his major achievement and pointed the way to his future development.

Gardanne in the Afternoon (1885–86) shows the village further from the west. The light, warmest and most intense on the inert geometrical forms,permeates with a unifying glow; and the scene has been condensed to emphasise the vertical format.

The composition of the painting is complex: a broken diagonal runs up from the bottom left, roughly dividing the trees, depicted in waving, plant-like lines, from the rigid lines of the buildings which climb up the hillside to the bell tower. The step lines, characteristic of his compositional devices, can be found repeated in various parts of the painting. The penitent's chapel is to the lower right of the tower, while the cylindrical forms of the abandoned windmills on the hill top are now shifted from the right to the left of the tower, due to the change in viewpoint.

The block like buildings in ***Hamlet at Payennet, near Gardanne*** (1886-90) lead the eye up to a view of Mont Sainte-Victoire from the south. The long flank is painted to show the changes of light, from grey to light and darker blues and touches of pink.

In December 1886, following the death of Louis-August, Rose and her husband acquired the property Bellevue near Montbriand, to the south west of Aix.

In this early representation, ***The House of Bellevue on the Hill*** (1878–79), the house tops a rising hill, filling the bottom half of the picture in a mosaic of thickly applied brushstrokes. The house is half hidden among the trees.

Painted a little to the right, and probably ten or twelve years later, ***Bellevue and the Dove-cote*** (1890–92) is painted in freer thinner strokes. Green predominates the wavy central band of trees and bushes, separating the red-ochres of the buildings and ground.

Cézanne wrote to Victor Choquet in1886: “Green is one of the gayest of colours, and most pleasing to the eye. To conclude I can tell you that I am still busy painting and that there are treasures to be taken away from this country, which has not yet found an interpreter worthy of the riches it offers.”

In 1921 author and poet Joachim Gasquet wrote in *Cézanne,* his reminiscence of his friend: “One day we were sitting under a tall pine tree on the edge of a green and red hill, overlooking the Arc valley....The sky was blue and the air fresh, with a first hint of autumn on that late summer morning....Before us were the huge mass of Sainte-Victoire, hazy and bluish in the Virgilian sunlight, the rolling hills of Montaiguet, the Pont de l'Arc aqueduct, the houses, rustling trees and square fields of the aix countryside. This was the landscape Cézanne was painting. He had planted his easel in the shade of a clump of pines....he had been working for two months on one canvas in the morning, another in the afternoon. The work was 'going well.' The session was nearing its end, and he was in a happy frame of mind. The painting was becoming denser and more balanced.”

The Dovecote of Bellevue (c.1890) offers the best view of the main house, although partly cut off by the crown of the hill and partially obscured by trees. The dovecote on the right stands out clearly and contrasts its vertical form with the horizontal shape of the house. The areas of flat colour used for the architecture contrast with the regular angled strokes that structure the vegetation. The main mass of tree leans in from the left, countering and strengthening the vertical lines of the dovecote, and counter-balanced by the spindly tree trunks curving in on the right.

He painted the house and its outbuildings from different angles. For this work, ***The Dovecote of Bellevue*** (1889–90), he is some distance from the house and the perfectly cylindrical form of the dovecote.

Seen from a low angle the entire complex is taken in. The main features of the painting: geometric and organic shapes, a pattern of verticals, horizontals and curves, forming a frieze in a central band across the picture; between the blues of the sky and the oranges and ochres of the soil.

In ***The Dovecote of Bellevue*** (1889–90) he has moved up the hill and much closer to paint this view, which includes the grassy ground and bushes at the base, making the abstract form of the dovecote the main feature.

A division into three elements contrasts the pale mauves and oranges, and the geometry of the dovecote with the curves and arabesques of the dark green trees; while in the right-hand section tall green trees intermingle with the blue shadow end of the main house and the angles of the roof line to create a pure abstract pattern–a combination and variation on the preceding sections. A slight tilt to the buildings, another of Cézanne's compositional devices, imparts a dynamic element to an otherwise static form.

Bellevue (c.1890) is a view from the north. It shows the success-ion of walls, roofs, lean-tos and terraces that comprise the most complex view of Bellevue's architecture. No anecdotal element is permitted which would distract the viewer from the geometry and structure of the painting, and the play of ochres, greens and delicate blues which flood the picture.

The pine trees, which were beginning to invade Cézanne's image of the Provençal countryside become taller, more vertical and more geometrical.

AN APPLE WILL MAKE A REVOLUTION: A Landscape on a Table, Still-life (1885-1895)

"People think how a sugar basin has no physiognomy, no soul. But it changes every day."

"Fruits... like having their portrait painted.
They seem to sit there and ask your forgiveness for fading..."

In 1886 Zola published his novel ***L'Œuvre*** known in English as *The Masterpiece.* It refers to the struggles of the protagonist Claude Lantier to paint a great work reflecting his talent and genius; and is thought to be a thinly fictional account of Zola's friendship with Cézanne. Misunderstood by an art-going public as a groundbreaking artist, and unable to live up to his potential, he hangs himself in front of his final canvas on which he had been struggling for some time.

Cézanne regarded this as a betrayal by Zola. He thanked him for sending him a copy, and it is generally thought that Cézanne at that point permanently broke off his friendship with Zola. Recently, however, letters have been discovered that refute this. A letter from 1887 demonstrates that their friendship endured at least for a short time after.

With his paintings of still-life, Cézanne effectively reinvented and reinvigorated a neglected subject, and greatly influenced on artists of the 20th century.

They are not the traditional portrayals of the agriculture and produce of Provence, however; Cézanne's still-lifes are exercises in balance and composition: a new approach to painting based on formal construction. Over the course of four decades he made approximately two hundred such paintings.

A major influence on early twentieth-century modernism, Cézanne laboured to restore structure and intellectual control to painting following the era of Impressionism. He said "I want to make of Impressionism something solid, like the art of the Museums." In his mature paintings of the 1880s and

1890s, and particularly in his later landscapes and still-lifes, Cézanne portrayed the visible world as an architectonic interlocking of colours and simple, reductive forms, a tight and "permanent" semi-abstraction that would in time inspire the Cubism of Picasso and Braque

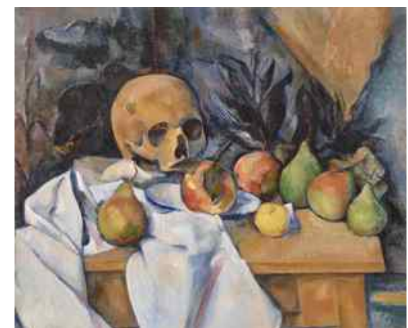
Still-life with Fruit Dish **(1879–82)** depicts a shallow, compressed space that flattens the sculptural volumes of dish, glass, and fruit. The circle of the fruit dish is compressed into a flattened oval, the far side being lifted up and more roundly curved, in variance with actual visual experience and with traditional rules of perspective.

Art historian Meyer Schapiro states: “In its proportion, it approaches the rectangular divisions of the canvas and in its curves is adapted to the contrasted forms of the apples and grapes, the straight lines of the chest, the curves of the fruit below, and the foliage on the wall. A line drawn around the six apples on the cloth would describe the same curve as the opening of the compotier. If we replace it by the correct perspective form, the compotier would look banal; it would lose the happy effect of stability and masculine strength.”

The painting was owned by Paul Gauguin, who described the picture as "an exceptional pearl, the apple of my eye." It was only when he needed money for medical care that Gauguin unhappily parted with it.

As in his earlier *Still-Life with Black Clock* the main objects in ***Still-life with Chest of Drawers*** (1887–88) are arranged along a central axis. The white cloth is a complex field of straight and curved lines arranged in a triangle with one steeply sloping side; which, as has been pointed out, echoes the silhouette of Mont-Sainte Victoire. The diagonal line running up through the cloth continues up and left brushing the tops of the ginger pot and vase, containing the main objects. The dish of fruit, which is tilted onto a different plane to the table, has a flattened curve to its front edge, linking it to the flattened ovals of the vase and ginger pot. The recurring flattened curves and ovals of the vessels, countered by the vertical ovals of the key hole plates on the chest of drawers, is a theme which holds the flux of shapes together in a coherent design. The drawer of the table is slightly open, producing a dark rectangular upright shadow which thrusts up the corner of the cloth. The right hand corner of the table is pushed up' out of alignment with the other corner, so that it forms a 'step' with the corner of the cloth. The colourful rectangle of wallpaper at top left, with its curved arabesques, initiates a movement stepping down right, linking it to the vase, ginger pot and cloth. The green vase, ginger pot and table are motifs which recur in many of his paintings.

A soft golden light is cast over this still life, ***Fruit and Ginger Pot*** (1890–93),: the fruits and objects look calm and rounded. Arranged around a framework of horizontals and verticals, a sense of balance and harmony is brought to a composition which may look like a random collection of fruit and objects. A sense of stability which is instantly offset by the bunched up folds of the white cloth. The plate is tilted to the right and the oval of the ginger pot indicates this is also slightly tilted in relation to the basketwork holder. Cézanne's objects often do not sit flat on the table as he would jack them up with corks to give them the right angle for the composition.



In ***Still-life with a Skull*** (1890-93) he has replaced the ginger pot with skull, traditionally a *momento mori.* Much of the other objects is retained, although with a different and less complex background, concentrating the forms and emphasising the pyramidal structure of the composition.

In the tradition of European still-life painting, this genre had been seen as a richly varied metaphor for transience: the eternal cycle of life arising and passing away, a metaphor for human existence. Cézanne, however, decidedly rejects this symbolism in his search of the inner life of colour and form.

The items in ***The Blue Vase*** (1889-90 are arranged almost like a frieze on the narrow space, or 'like pieces on a chess board', of the table top. The apples and the blue vase to the front, the plate behind and a small pot, possibly an ink pot, teeters on the far edge. A brown bottle on the far left is cut in half by the edge of the picture. Depth is suggested by the diagonal of the wall/floor line behind and the picture frames, or stretchers lying against the wall. The crinkled edge of the vase is echoed by the scalloped plate, the broken oval of which is echoed by the tipped up oval of the lip of the small pot.

The rich blue of the vase is diffused over the painting through the grey blues of the background and delicate touches of blue on the plate and the table, which the critic Meyer Schapiro described as “an exhalation upward and into depth.”

The central image of ***Still Life with Cherub*** (1895) is of a copy of a cherub by the Baroque sculptor Puget. Deep space is suggested by the raking line of the floor and the canvases stacked against the wall. However, the floor seems tilted up towards us, as though we are looking over and down, an effect which is further emphasised by the green apple in the background, painted the same size as those on the table in the foreground. The figure is looking out of the picture, to the right, but the twist of the body brings the hips around to a three quarter view, and the extended foot almost pointing towards the viewer; the slight angle being perpendicular to the large canvas on the left indicated by the horizontal stretcher bar.

Cézanne is playing with the idea of spacial relationships and multiple viewpoints, which is a summation of different impressions and closer to our actual experience when entering a room and taking in the furniture and objects in a sweeping gaze.

The Basket of Apples (1890–94) is noted for its disjointed perspective. Cézanne is challenging the idea of linear perspective that persists from the Early Renaissance.

It has been described as a representation of sight in motion, with objects viewed from varying viewpoints. He deconstructed the image, by suggesting different perspectives: the cakes are depicted in the plate, with a flatted edge, but appear as seen from the side, but also slightly from above. The right hand far edge of the table doesn't match up with the left bit glimpsed behind the box or brick which is propping up the fruit basket and spilling the apples out onto the sharp angled folds of the 'landscape' of the white and blue-greys of the cloth, which is arranged into a rough diamond shape pushing up into the central plane of the painting.

The distortion displayed in this painting was a process that influenced the work of Picasso and Braque. This was noted by Braque in 1957, who stated, "The hard-and-fast rules of perspective which it succeeded in imposing on art were a ghastly mistake which it has taken four centuries to redress; Paul Cézanne, and after him Picasso and myself, can take a lot of credit for this."

Still-life with Onions (1996-98) features the scalloped edged table which is seen in many of his still-lifes and is preserved in his final studio. The curves are repeated in the curves of the onions and fruit. The cloth in the instance, tumbles down like a waterfall over the right edge, but frozen into a vertical pillar echoing the cylindrical grey-green bottle and a glass, part filled with water, which is barely visible, its transparencies blending with the smoky grey background wall. The misshapen oval rim of the glass is echoed by the grey top of the cork. A knife lying on the table and pointing into the picture (a frequent device traditionally found in still-lifes) gently breaks the line of the table

edge. This rather busy composition of forms is set against a plain background, unarticulated by his usual constructions of paintings, flowered wallpaper etc.

Cézanne would change his position when painting his later still-life works to concentrate on each object individually.This resulted in the perspective of his work to shift slightly. This can be seen in ***Still-life with Tea Pot*** (1902-06), a late work painted in his final studio in which the plate appears to bend and the table legs do not correspond with the angle of the table top.

The perspective of the table is distorted, with the legs at an angle, and the top tilted up to allow the fruit the tea pot an.d the sugar basin, which are observed slightly more from a side or three quarter view, to partially separate out and reveal more of their intrinsic shapes.

The fruit has been described as peaches, although art critic David Sylvester stated, "...we don't really know if they are and which of them are apples, oranges, apricots and we don't care. What we know as we look at them, know it physically in our bodies, is the feeling of having the shape of a sphere, a shape that is perfectly compact...."

PROVENCE, PLAIN AND MOUNTAIN: Landscape (1882-1895)

"Treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, everything in proper perspective so that each side of an object or a plane is directed towards a central point."

In this early view of ***Mont Sainte-Victoire view from Montbriand*** (c.1882) the "impressionist" brushstroke is regular and mostly vertical, and the pigment applied thickly. The high viewpoint, with the plane receding before him, like the tipped up table tops of his still-lifes, enables him to construct from the fields, red soil, bushes and farmhouses overlapping tiles of colour, leading back to the curved hill and the pink and grey truncated triangle of the mountain, framed between trees. A shallow V shape, formed by the bank and tops of the trees near the bottom of the picture, frames the open space of the landscape.

A distinctive feature of the view is the recently constructed railway viaduct crossing the far side of the valley.

This version, ***Mont Sainte-Victoire and the Viaduct of the Arc River Valley*** (1885-7), painted some years later is from near the same spot, but a little lower down, The brushstroke is more varied with areas of more transparent, luminous colour.

Cézanne was interested in the simplification of naturally occurring forms to their geometric essentials: he said "treat nature in terms of the cylinder, the sphere and the cone." His desire to capture the truth of perception led him to explore binocular vision graphically, rendering slightly different, yet simultaneous visual perceptions of the same phenomena to provide the viewer with an aesthetic experience of depth different from single-point perspective. His interest in new ways of modelling space and volume derived from the interest in stereoscopy of his era and from reading the Berkelean theory of spacial perception in the writings of Hippolyte Taine.

In this more finished view from lower down in the plain, ***Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Bellevue*** (1885), the geometric forms of the buildings are carried through into the landscape and the angled planes of the mountainside. Each shape carefully balanced, in a total harmony of forms; nothing appears out of place.

The classical landscapes of **Poussin**, often painted from a high viewpoint, in their concern for balance and a vision of harmonious order were behind his attested desire to “re paint Poussin fro nature.”

This example, ***The Finding of Moses*** (1638), which he would have seen in the Louvre, with its river scene and arched viaduct linking the two sides of the picture may have been reminiscent both of his boyhood swimming parties with Zola and friends in the river Arc, and of the newly built railway line crossing the valley on a viaduct which features in these views with the mountain forming a backdrop.

Although Cézanne had never visited Italy his interest in Virgilian landscape, as described in his writings, came from his love of the classics and his love of the Poussin's which he saw in the Louvre.

In the Aix countryside he found echoes of their rhythmic arcades and ancient aqueducts in the modern railway viaduct that had traversed the Arc valley since1875.

There are two paintings with the same title, ***Mont Sainte-Victoire with Large Pine*** (1885-87), painted from the same spot, only a metre or two apart. This version is in the Courtauld Gallery, London, which, due to the passion of Samuel Courtauld for Cézanne's paintings, has the largest collection in the UK.

The distinctive craggy, broken top, dominates the countryside.Areas yellow and red ochres interspersing the green, suggests a sensation of expanse and breadth, leading the eye back and to the towering Sainte-Victoire, painted in cool blues and pinks; tiny touches of red in both foreground and background create a sense of visual unity. The sweeping pine branches in the foreground follow the contours of the mountain. The timeless quality of the setting is interrupted only by the modern railway viaduct on the right and the trail of steam left by a passing train.

When the painting was first shown at an exhibition of amateur artists in Aix, it met with incomprehension. Cézanne gave it to the poet Joachim Gasquet in appreciation of the young man’s sincere admiration:

In these paintings he is framing the mountain between vertical tree trunks, and as if gently caressing the distant mountain with undulating branches.

Although having a sense of space and distance, at the same time Cézanne wishes to hold the fragmented and interlaced shapes of his landscape on the surface of the picture, asserting the essential flatness of the picture: the birth of modern art.

This view, ***Mont Sainte-Victoire with the Parasol Pine*** (1890–92), is probably from the terrace of the farm seen in the previous paintings to the left across a small dip in the ground.

In later works the trees, an element which brought depth to the pictorial space, is eliminated, freeing the mountain from the constraints of the framework. The landscape is expanded and opened out.

He wrote to Gasquet: “For a long time I was unable to paint Sainte-Victoire; I had no idea how to go about it because, like others who just look at it, I imagined the shadow to be concave, whereas in fact it is convex, it disperses out from the centre. Instead of accumulating, it evaporates, becomes fluid, blueish, participating in the movements of the surrounding air.”

In ***Road in Provence*** *or* ***Hill in Provence*** (1890-92) the bare foreground road sets off the landscape like a craggy shoreline cliff. The the steep, fractured rocks, like an abstract pattern running across the painting, is dramatically illuminated–ruddy in the sunlight and purple-grey in the shadows. The colours are repeated in the distant fields of the gently rising hillside, and in the building, which also picks up the chunky, cubist shapes of the rocks.The curved S shaped shadow cutting across the rocks continues up and is echoed by the curve of the tree trunk.

The foliage of the trees in the middle-ground blends seamlessly into those on the distant hill; a device used by Cézanne to unify the foreground and background.

In ***Large Pine and Red Earth*** (1890–95) painting the branches spread out beyond the picture frame, and the ochres seep into the broader areas of more transparent colour. “The work seems to be conceived as a search for rhythm and perfect composition, a sort of intellectual abstraction.”

He had long been attracted to trees, in particular pine trees. Gasquet commented of Cézanne that ”He had no real friends except tree.”

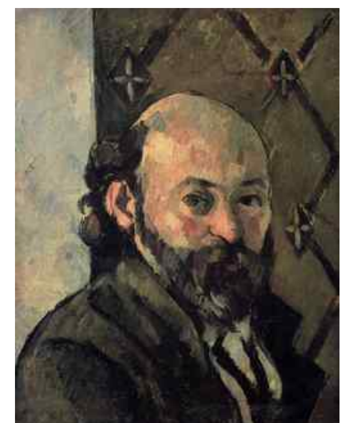
The young painter Joseph Ravaisou, who was acquainted with “the master of Aix” during his last years said: “He was a sensualist in art. He loved nature with a passion, perhaps to the exclusion of all else; he painted in order to prolong in himself the joy of living among the trees.”

POSE LIKE AN APPLE: Portraits (1880-1899)

“There is no model; there is only colour.”
“When the colour achieves richness, the form attains its fullness also.”

The year 1886 was a turning point for the family. Cézanne married Hortense. In that year also, Cézanne's father died, leaving him the estate purchased in 1859; he was 47. By 1888 the family was in the former manor, Jas de Bouffan, a substantial house and grounds with outbuildings, which afforded a new-found comfort. This house, with much-reduced grounds, is now owned by the city and is open to the public on a restricted basis.

Self-Portrait with Palette (1890) depicts the artist fifty one. He is using a modern rectangular pallet, rather than the traditional kidney shaped. He tilts it up almost vertically, presenting it to the flat picture plane. The horizontal plane of pallet at a slight angle to the picture plane is in contrast to the vertical and slightly tilted canvas, the space between them forming a notional V. The pale horizontal line of his thumb points towards the canvas, and is mirrored by the pale fragment of the stretcher bar.



In his ***Self-Portrait with Olive-Coloured Wallpaper*** (1880-81) he paints his flesh with the same ochre colours and downward brushstroke that he applied to his landscapes with the red provencal earth. He sets the simple rock-like oval of his head against the complex diamond shapes of the wallpaper design; which indicates that this was painted in Paris.

The rough oval of the head is isolated against the background, the dark tones of which are picked up by the dark jacket; the curve of his shoulders being echoed by the curve of his head. The vertical bar of pale blue and pink on the left forms a foil with the oval of the head, pushing it out into the space between the picture plane and the wall.

The heavy black line of the wallpaper descending from the top right corner

is repressed in its continuation beyond the intersection to a mere faint indication as it reaches the head. What can we understand from this in regard to Cézanne's method of composition? Firstly that he never allowed the reality before his eye to dominate or interfere with the progress of the composition: a lesser artist would have put it in just because 'it was there', and so bringing effectively joining the background, with a 'stabbing' line, to the head. Secondly, if we imagine ourselves looking at this person standing in front of the patterned wallpaper, focussed on his eyes, we would be aware of the striking bold design in the background, but around the head there would be a sort of out of focus 'halo' detaching it from background chaos of forms. In this he is attempting to record on a flat surface our actual experience of a three dimensional world, rather than a traditional 'keyhole', stationary perspective view.

in Cézanne's mature work there is the development of a solidified, almost architectural style of painting. Throughout his life he struggled to develop an authentic observation of the seen world by the most accurate method of representing it in paint that he could find. To this end, he structurally ordered whatever he perceived into simple forms and colour planes.

In these three paintings of Hortense we see his method of building his compositions in terms of architectonic structure.

Portrait of Madame Cézanne with Loosened Hair (1883-7) places her inclined head against a vertical line. The dark blue dress with waving silvery vertical lines (like the trunks of his trees) forms a strong static base on which the dynamic pale oval of the head rests, a little pensively.

Madame Cézanne in a Red Dress (1886-90) has a slightly unsettling dynamic feel as she leans to the right, the movement counterbalanced by the dark dado rail behind. She is framed on the left by vertical rectangular forms, which impose stability on the painting, and on the right by the more organic shapes of the patterned cloth–the same one which he used in many of his still-life paintings.

Painted in the conservatory in the Jas de Bouffan ***Madame Cézanne in the Conservatory*** (1891) is the only outdoor portrait of Hortense. She is shown sitting peacefully on a garden chair in a closely fitted dark blue dress with a full skirt, seeming to enclose her in a protective shell. The broad skirt forms a pyramid from which the stately torso rises in a confident and dignified manner, set against the ochres and greens of the fussily painted background. It is a portrait of a majestic woman with a serene oval face, contemplating the viewer with a slight tilt of the head.The model for ***Woman with a Coffeepot*** (1890-95) was a servant, who would have posed for the sittings in Paris. Venturi noted that “she is standing there as firm as a tower.” The dark hands indicate someone accustomed to domestic work.

The statuesque, weighty bulk of the upper figure sits like a tower on the crest of the apron, its severe grey-blue sharp angled folds reminiscent of the Mont Sainte-Victoire. Set against a pale brown grid of rectangular drawers, the dress is painted in voluptuous shades of blue, with touches of green and violet. The little silver-grey spoon is like an attenuated figure standing upright in the cup, in a reflection, and parody of the statuesque hieratic figure of the woman.

The vertical forms of the coffee pot and cup, echo the solid verticality of the figure in relation to its surroundings. This carefully balanced composition implies an image of immutable time.

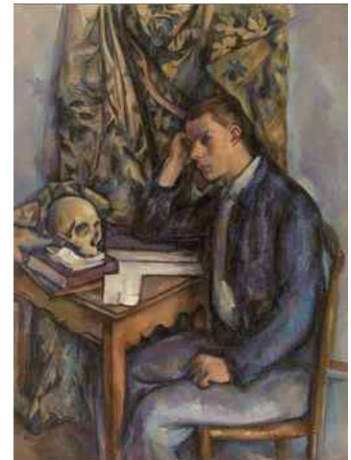
Cézanne painted four oil portraits of this Italian boy in the red vest. In this version, ***The Boy in the Red Waistcoat*** (1888-90), the boy is depicted in a melancholic seated pose with his elbow on a table and his head cradled in his hand.

The painting's first owner, Claude Monet, said it was the best picture he owned, and added "Cézanne is the greatest of us all."

The out of proportioned figure, exaggerating the right arm and legs, shows that Cézanne was not interested in painting well proportioned figures. He uses the various elements to construct a unified painting – not a flattering portrait. A strong diagonal runs through the picture from the bottom left corner, curving out at the right, and echoed by another, steeper diagonal, trapping the upper body of the figure in a sharp V. The looping curve of the left arm and the L form of the the arm nearest to us cut across and counters the severity of the imprisoning wedge space.

Matisse, some twenty or thirty years later, may have found in compositions such as this the 'permission' and freedom to distort his figures for the sake of the requirements of a balanced, harmony of forms. In an anecdote, which might be applied to this painting, a woman complained to Matisse that the arm of a woman in one of his portraits was too long, to which he is said to have replied, “Madam, you are mistaken, that is not a woman, it is a painting.”

Cézanne's health problems began with the onset of diabetes in 1890, destabilizing his personality to the point where his personal relationships were again strained. He travelled in Switzerland, with Hortense and his son, perhaps hoping to restore their relationship. Cézanne, however, returned to Provence to live; Hortense and Paul junior, to Paris. Financial need prompted Hortense's return to Provence but in separate living quarters. Cézanne moved in with his mother and sister. In 1891 he turned to Catholicism.



Young man With a Skull (1896-98) may be recollection of a painting of an old man with a skull in the Granet museum.

Painted at the Jas de Bouffan it shows a melancholy youth, possibly his son, Paul, meditating on the meaning of the death's head. As with the previous painting the figure is confined within a rigid arrangement of vertical and diagonal lines. The white papers, one resting flat and one propped against the books, form the familiar step shape, which butts against the chest of the model. This harshly contrasted form is echoed, more softly, by the pose: lower to upper leg to line of the back.

The subject has an allegorical meaning. Skulls feature in a number of his paintings and serve as a *memento mori*, or reminder that life is limited, and has a long tradition in painting's such as representations of Mary Magdalene and Saint Jerome.

Pierrot and Harlequin or ***Mardi Gras*** (1890), along with three single figure paintings of Harlequin, are the only example of Cézanne depicting people in costume. It was painted in Paris and is one of his more highly finished works, so he clearly set great store by it.

His son, Paul posed dressed as Harlequin, proudly leading an imaginary procession, while Paul's friend Louis Guillaume, in Pierrot's costume, follows in his footsteps and looks as if he is about to steal Harlequin's baton. Exceptionally for Cezanne the looks and gestures reveal a close relationship between the two young people.

Art historian Kurt Badt (*The Art of Cézanne*) makes a good case for interpreting Paul/Harlequin as a surrogate for himself, while his good friend Louis stands for his own youthful friend Zola, who, in his 'betrayal' through portraying him in his novel *L'Oeuvre* as the failed painter Lantier, is attempting to steal Harlequin's baton, the symbol of his art. Harlequin/Cézanne, however, is not to be disturbed and strides forward in confidence. Badt relates this to a youthful drawing which he sent to Zola in Paris (see below: *The Card Players*).

The two figures on the left of the drawing, entering through a door Badt describes as representations, in this case, of Zola in the lead with Cézanne behind pointing to the scene in the room. The pointing arm of 'Cézanne' forms a T shape with 'Zola's' vertical arm. The T shape is repeated here, but is now absorbed into the figure of Pierrot/Zola.

Cézanne ensured that his painting suggest space without destroying the unity of the surface by making use of the knowledge that cold colours, such as blue and green, appear to recede, and warm colours - red, orange, yellow - seem to stand out from the surface. The deliberate flouting of the laws of perspective, with the floor coming down steeply, emphasizes the expression of the attitudes and accounts for the distortions. For example, Harlequin's feet have to be lengthened so that he can stand. The two characters seem to be emerging from the wings of a theatre, and this is suggested by the large drapes of the same leafy material that Cezanne used in his still-lifes.

Gustave Geffroy was a French novelist and art critic noted as one of the earliest historians of Impressionism. He wrote favourably of Cézanne, believing, "He is a great teller of truth. Passionate and candid, silent and subtle, he will go to the Louvre. Cézanne expressed thanks in letters to Geffroy and, in a display of gratitude, he offered to paint Geffroy's portrait: ***Portrait of Gustave Geffroy*** (1895)

Geffroy sat for Cézanne each day for three months in the study at his home in Paris. However, becoming disappointed with the results, Cézanne left for Aix. In a letter to Monet, who had set up their meeting, he explained, "I am a little upset at the meagre result I obtained, especially after so many sittings and successive bursts of enthusiasm and despair." Although it does seem complete enough.

It is not a revealing study of the face, but an image of the author amongst his books. He is happier with models who are passive or immersed in their tasks, and do not impose their personalities on the artist. He treats the portrait as a still-life.

The portrait has been described as angular, with the figure of Geffroy centred as an immoveable pyramidal surrounded by shelves, books and figurines, barricaded between his chair and the table. The table is tilted up, with the open books forming a procession towards the figure, and in counterpoise to the wall of books behind. Warm and cool stokes on the side of his brow lie in parallel to the slope of the books behind his head and the slope of his moustache. In the words of Meyer Schapiro the painting is “a rare union of the realistic vision of a piece of space, seen directly...with a powerful, probing, rigorous effort to adjust all that is seen in a coherent balanced structure....[which] looks intensely contrived and intensely natural....If the little feminine statuette [on the edge of the picture] softens the severity of the books, it is also in its axis and bent arm a counterpart to the rigidity of the man; the tulip in the blue vase is inclined with his arm; and his delicately painted, living right hand recalls the distant books above.

Ambroise Vollard saw Cezanne's work in the window of Père Tanguy's paint shop in Montmartre. He recalled, "I felt as though I had been punched in the stomach." Vollard built a reputation and influence as an avant-garde and anti-establishment art dealer.

He was instrumental in raising Cézanne from an obscure painter to a renowned artist. At the time, Cézanne was in his mid-sixties, living in Provence, and was still unknown within the art world. However, Vollard managed to track him down. He secured approximately 150 works from Cézanne's son, who acted as his father's business manager. Vollard hosted Cézanne's first solo exhibition in November 1895, which transformed Cézanne's status and solidified his reputation as a master. Following the exhibition, many artists purchased Cézanne's artwork. The exhibition established Cézanne as one of the most influential artists of his time.

Portrait d'Ambroise Vollard (1899) was the only portrait to have been commissioned by Vollard. Despite the long hours invested in its creation, the work was eventually abandoned by Cézanne,

apparently with the comment that “the shirt collar was not too bad.” and remained unfinished. The painting was treasured by Vollard until his death.

Cézanne's approach to portraiture has been likened to his still-life paintings of fruit, in that he rendered the subject in terms of round geometric forms and was only interested in depicting what he could see in front of him, rather than conveying the subject's mood or status. For this portrait, Vollard had to sit completely still in silence for hours (from 8 am till as 11:30 pm) over the course of 115 sessions by balancing on a stool on top of a platform. He recalled how Cézanne reacted when, during one long sitting, he shifted his position, causing the artist to demand, "Do I have to tell you again you must sit like an apple? Does an apple move?"

Vollard noted:

“Very few people ever had the opportunity to see Cézanne at work, because he could not endure being watched while at the easel. For one who has seen him paint, it is difficult to imagine how slow and painful his progress was on certain days. In my portrait there are two little spots of canvas on the hand which are not covered. I called Cézanne's attention to them. 'If the copy I'm making in the Louvre turns out well,' he replied, 'perhaps I will be able tomorrow to find the exact tone to cover up those spots. Don't you see, Monsieur Vollard, that if I put something there by guesswork, I might have to paint the whole canvas over starting from that point?' The prospect made me tremble. During the period that Cézanne was working on my portrait, he was also occupied with a large composition of nudes, begun about 1895, on which he laboured almost to the end of his life.”

Towards the end of his life Cézanne made several portraits of his gardener seated under the lime tree at the Le Lauves studio. It is suggested that he saw a mirror image of himself in the work worn and aged retainer. There was a trust and affection between these two elderly men, to the extent that by Vallier's testament he was the only person permitted to touch Cézanne, who reportedly could not tolerate physical contact.

The Gardener Vallier (1905-06) follows Cézanne's method of capturing the exact tone of each element – both the shade of colour and its degree of luminosity – in distinct but overlapping brushstrokes, sometimes reflecting slight shifts in the artist’s perspective. Cézanne's ability to combine such elements into a single, unified composition was a very significant influence on the development of Cubism. The repetitions of colour patches, linking together different parts of the painting, imbeds the figure within the total composition. Although left unfinished at his death there is a sense that no part, no brush-stroke could be eliminated without affecting the whole. It has the power of a musical concerto orchestrated around the image of the seated figure.

DESIGN AND DESTINY: The Card Players (1890-1895)

“Drawing and colour are not separate at all; in so far as you paint, you draw. The more the colour harmonizes, the more exact the drawing becomes.”

Cézanne's stylistic approaches and beliefs regarding how to paint were analysed and written about by the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty who is primarily known for his association with phenomenology and existentialism. 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 apperception, which I embody in sensations and which I ask the understanding to organize into a painting."

The series of card players is considered by critics to be a cornerstone of Cézanne's art during the early-to-mid 1890s. The models for the paintings were local farmhands, some of whom worked on the Cézanne family estate. Each scene is depicted as one of quiet, still concentration; the men look down at their cards rather than at each other.

The largest and probably first version is the most complex, with five figures; it is in the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia. It displays a suppressed storytelling of peasant men in loose-fitting garments with natural poses focused entirely on their game.

It features three card players at the forefront, seated in a semi-circle at a table, with two spectators: a man standing behind, smoking a pipe, and a boy. In the top left corner is a shelf with a vase, half out of the picture. A framed painting, also part out of the picture, and a pipe rack is on the back wall. A heavy curtain is draped across the right side of the wall.

The central figure is bent over, concentrating on his cards forming a stable triangle, as in the portrait of Geffroy. His legs beneath the table is in a V, forming, along with the chair legs and legs of the other players an 'abstract' composition.

This curious youthful drawing was in a letter to Zola, who was in Paris, dated January 17, 1859, when he was nineteen years old. It is known as the Ugolino drawing, after the episode in Dante's Inferno where Count Ugolino is sentenced to die in a tower prison with his children and grandchildren and considers cannibalism. It depicts five people seated at a table contemplating a skull, Two figures, dressed as travellers, enter on the left, as if on a stage. A painting hangs on a wall behind the seated figures, again a testament to his chosen career as an artist. Art historian Kurt Badt analysed the drawing as an expression of Cezanne's hatred for his father for not allowing him to be an artist. Badt's thesis is that he references this drawing in the Card Players series.

In the top left corner is a cartouche stating: "death reigns in this place." In the first version of the Card Players the shelf with the vase occupies this space. A picture on the wall, attesting to his desired career as an artist, is directly referenced by the painting on the wall of the first version. Beneath the drawing Cézanne wrote a dialogue indicating that the father, on the right, was encouraging his offspring to eat from the head on the plate. The children ask, variously for different parts of the head. According to Badt the father stands for Cézanne feeding the head of his own father to his (yet unborn) children: i.e his paintings. The four children are represented in the painting by the single child looking intently at the card play before him. Another association is the angle of the legs of the father and the eldest child (each have only one leg and the children behind the table have none) with the legs of the central card player, now brought together in a V.

We have seen that the two figures entering on the left can be interpreted as Zola in the lead, with Cézanne following. However, as he makes clear they represent as surrogates for himself and his friend with Dante and Virgil the guide behind pointing to the horrifying scene.

Card players is a popular theme throughout European art. This painting, ***Card Players*** (1640-45) by one of the **Le Nain Brothers** is in the Aix Granet Museum, so would have been known to Cézanne. It is widely cited as as a model for his own explorations of the theme. However, whereas previous paintings on the subject are inconsequential illustrations of heightened moments of drama, often with a humorous or social comment, Cézanne's portraits have been noted for their lack of drama, narrative, and conventional characterization. So he probably wouldn't have though highly of this jocular genre painting. Other than an unused wine bottle in the two-player versions, there is an absence of drink and money, which were prominent fixtures of the 17th-century genre.

He made a number of studies of a man smoking a pipe or playing cards, possibly as preparations for the card players, for which he used his estate employees as models.

A more condensed version of this painting with four figures, thought to be the second version, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It is less than half the size of the Barnes painting. Here the composition remains virtually the same, minus the boy, with viewers' perspective slightly closer to the game, but with less space between the figures. In this version all the men hatted. Also gone are the shelf to the left with vase and lower half of a picture frame in the centre of the wall, leaving only the four pipes and hanging cloth to join the smoking man behind the card players. The painting is brighter, with less focus on blue tones, than the larger version.

The tabletop creates a clear focus of attention. It supports the players' arms and hands, which, in turn, provide a frame for some objects: a pipe, cards, and a prominent grey rectangle—perhaps a tobacco pouch or another card. Even while they share the same space, Cézanne's figures retain a sense of independence and self-containment. They are engaged, as one art historian aptly put it, in a game of "collective solitaire."

In his representation of the men he had no interest in portraying their occupations, or mythologising the dignity of labour, as Millet, Daumier and van Gogh had done. "His aim was to convey the inner burden of individuals confounded by destiny...He wished to convey through pictorial means the intensity of their existence." (Denis Coutagne)

In the final three versions of *The Card Players*, the spectators and other "unnecessary detail" are eliminated, displaying only the "absolute essentials": two players immersed in their game. In each of the two-player paintings, a sole wine bottle rests in the mid-part of the table, said to represent a dividing line between the two participants as well as the centre of the painting's "symmetrical balance". The wall behind has been replaced by a wooden dado and a window with a dark night-time view.

The two men study their cards intently, but no movement or move appears imminent. The details of the game have receded still further and life has been stilled.

In this version the figures are placed further back, but there is a greater sense of concentration on their faces; at the same time they are less like portraits of individuals, and take on a more impersonal, monumental quality. Cézanne's portraits have been noted for their lack of drama. The stark highlight of the reflection on the bottle, which appears in the other two versions, is here eliminated; (possibly because, as the patchiness of the paint and white untouched areas indicate that this version is in a less finished state) making the division between the two men less apparent.

The last of the series was described by art historian Meyer Schapiro as "the most monumental and also the most refined" of the versions, with the shapes being simpler but more varied in their relationships.

The composition is more compact, with the back of the right hand figure being cut off by the edge of the picture, concentrating the attention more on the cards at the centre. The poses of the figures are a mirror image; however, there are differences which define them as separate and distinct characters in the silent intense drama.

The man on the left is sitting more erect, his confident posture reinforced by the vertical line of the chair-back. His expression is more confident, assured–he is the more experienced and intelligent player; while the posture of the other suggests he is less assured and pensive. His cards are in shadow, the others catching the light; he is more bulky, more of a labourer, his hands larger and his physical presence closer to the viewer.

The corner of the table cloth on the left is a stable right-angle, that on the right is a dynamic and more uncertain triangle with a curved lower edge. The hat of the left man, with its downward curving brim, is possibly a bowler, that of a man used more to thinking, the upturned brim of the other man suggests a cloth hat used to protect him from the sun.

The degraded mauves of the coat on the left, is contrasted with the degraded yellows of the right, while in the trousers the colours are exchanged. The knees and space between, framed by the table legs, form a pure abstraction.

ABSTRACTION AND SUMMATION: Bibemus Quarry and the Chateaux Noir (1895-1905)

"I have not tried to reproduce nature: I have represented it."

"The painter unfolds that which has not been seen."

In October 1886 Cézanne's father died and the estate was divided between him and his sisters.

Following his first solo exhibition in 1895, despite the increasing public recognition and financial success, Cézanne chose to work in increasing artistic isolation, usually painting in Provence.

His mother died in October 1897 aged 83. She had lived for some years at her house on the Cours Mirabeau the main boulevard in the centre of Aix.

In September 1898, at the behest of his brother-in-law the Jas de Bouffan was sold. He left it never to return, and took the second floor of a house in the town, where he had a studio built under the eaves. He lived there alone, apart from a housekeeper, with occasional visits from his wife and son.

In 1895, he made his first visit to Bibémus Quarries and climbed Mont-Saint-Victoire.

By the 1890's the quarry had been abandoned. It was a silent, isolated place where Cézanne was able to work undisturbed. Moreover, it offered shade from the sun in summer and shelter from the wind. He rented a small cottage there where he could keep his paintings and equipment. It was close to the Château Noire and afforded views of the Mont Sainte-Victoire.

The fragmented rocks and clusters of green foliage of ***Bibémus Quarry*** (c.1895) are woven into an almost abstract painting. The uniformity of the brush-strokes, unifies the surface, emphasising the flatness of the canvas, while the isolated tree in the centre stabilises the composition, adding a touch of greater realism and a sensationa of distance.

Cézanne's geometric simplifications was to affect profoundly the development of modern art. Picasso referred to Cézanne as "the father of us all" and claimed him as "my one and only master!"

T.J. Clark said “the view from Bibémus is at one level a view from the tomb.” Intimations of mortality are frequent in Cézanne's late work. In ***The Bibémus Quarry*** (c.1895) “we might feel not only a sense of the primordial strata of nature, but also, overwhelmingly, as if we are being lowered into a funeral vault, so uncompromising is the wall of rock, which obstructs any lingering view of our world.” (Philip Conisbee)

The paintings he made in the quarry are an exploration of the geographic and tonal variations that occurred in this remote, rough, partially man-made, and intensely chromatic landscape. His restless strokes and intermittent patches of complementary colours form passages of flatness and volume that create at once a diaphanous surface pattern and an illusion of great depth.

The geometrical shapes and fragmentary surface of ***Bibémus*** (1894–95) may be seen as a harbinger of Cubism.

In their 1912 book *On Cubism* Alberto 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.”

A model for Cézanne's paintings of the quarry may have been the example of **Courbet**, an artist he much revered. Similarly he was deeply attached to the landscape of his own childhood around Ornans, where, as in ***The Crumbling Rock*** (1864) he depicts the natural drama of the shattered rocks in a deep gorges with grassy tops and scrubby bush-strewn depths of an alien landscape.

In the silent and shady depths of the quarry he painted some of his most innovative and personal works.

Trees and Rocks (c.1900) displays similarities with Courbet's painting.

The pale purplish wall of the mountain, with its characteristic long slope and rugged stepped end, rises above the red and ochre wall of the quarry in ***Mont Sainte-Victoire from the Bibémus Quarry*** (c.1897).

In ***Rocks and Branches at Bibémus*** (1900–04) the artist’s unique sensations of the terrain are manifest as a radiant tapestry that heralds the imminent advent of abstract painting.

Cézanne's paintings were not well received among the petty bourgeoisie of Aix. After the auction of paintings that had been in Zola's possession in 1903 a highly critical article entitled *"Love for the Ugly"* appeared in *L'Intransigeant* describing how spectators had supposedly experienced laughing fits, when seeing the paintings of "an ultra-impressionist named Cézanne". The people of Aix were outraged, and for many days, copies of the newspaper appeared on Cézanne's door-mat with messages asking him to leave the town "he was dishonouring".

Cézanne ventured daily into the surrounding Provencal landscape in search of subjects to paint. He was attracted to the Chateau Noir, a recently constructed neo-Gothic castle designed to mimic aged ruins. He painted it several times and also painted from its grounds, where he had an unobstructed view of Mont Sainte-Victoire.

A web of branches screens the view in ***Château Noir* (1900–04)**. The place is crabbed and remote—difficult and forbidding. The blue of the sky is no longer airy, but leaden, darkened with touches of purple and green. The pale buildings have become a deeper ocher.

Cézanne's paintings after about 1895 are more somber, more mysterious than those of earlier years. His colours deepen, and his brushwork assumes greater expression. Spaces become more enclosed.

Château Noir (1903–04) is a long and intense meditation, an attempt to "realize"—to use Cézanne's word—his complete sensation of this place, which involves his temperament, his vision, and his mind equally.

The Château Noir was the subject of local legends and had earlier been called Château Diable, "Castle of the Devil." With its Gothic windows and incomplete walls, it has the look of a ruin. Late in his life Cézanne was attracted not only to the fundamental order of nature, but also its chaos and restlessness. The moody loneliness of this place seems matched to his own.

In the foreground of ***Mont Sainte-Victoire and Château Noir*** (1904–06) the brushstrokes form a dense growth of trees into a single block of colour.

Painted in the open air, directly in front of his subject, as impressionist Camille Pissarro had encouraged him to do, this is far from a quick recording of fleeting visual effects. It is a long and intense meditation, an attempt to "realize"—to use Cézanne's word—his complete sensation of this place, which involves his temperament, his vision, and his mind equally. From this viewpoint he compares the geometric shape and stepped outline of the orange building with the edge of the mountain. As is typical of landscapes executed late in his career, Cézanne applied thick paint in broad, multihued swatches.

He rented a small room in the house from 1897 to 1902, and continued to paint in the grounds until his death in 1906.

In his final years Cézanne was increasingly drawn to harsh landscapes untouched by human intervention. Dense woodland that writhes up from the rocks forms a screen that almost blocks out the sky, which we only glimpse towards the top of the picture as areas of pale blue. The sombre colours contribute to its somewhat oppressive, and claustrophobic atmosphere.

In the Park of the Château Noir (1898–1900) and ***The Grounds of the Château Noir*** (1900–04) fill the picture surface with a dense mosaic of colour patches. They are, on the one hand, enclosed and airless spaces which offer little in the way of a safe foothold, but on the other display a richness of colour and precision of brushed strokes, which is classically-inspired and the antithesis of the romanticism of his youthful works, and the wilder freely painted brushstrokes of expressionism. They are the product of long, patient observation of the overgrown, rocky inclines, and the striving to render his 'sensation': like meditations on the observed world.

FIGURE AND GROUND; FUSION: The Large Bathers (1895-1905)

"Doubtless there are things in nature which have not yet been seen."

"If an artist discovers them, he opens the way for his successors."

"There are two things in the painter, the eye and the mind;each of them should aid the other."

"I wish to repaint Poussin from nature."

Throughout his life he struggled to develop an authentic observation of the seen world by the most accurate method of representing it in paint that he could find. To this end, he structurally ordered whatever he perceived into simple forms and colour planes. His statement "I want to make of impressionism something solid and lasting like the art in the museums", and his contention that he was recreating Poussin "after nature" underscored his desire to unite observation of nature with the permanence of classical composition.

Around 200 of Cézanne's works depict male and female nude bathers, either singly or in groups, in a landscape. The three *Large Bathers* which he worked on during the final decade of his life represent the culmination of his lifelong investigation of this subject and the climax of his entire career, and were hugely influential on early twentieth-century art.

The Large Bathers (1894–1905), the first of three, was started at his studio in Aix and then transferred to the studio at L'Lauvers. The series became his major project of his final years. It is now in the National Gallery.

The subject of women relaxing in a woodland glade beneath an azure sky draws on a classical tradition of pastoral scenes of nude or semi-nude figures in an idealised landscape. More particularly, it recalls pictures of bathing nymphs and goddesses, especially the mythological scenes of Venetian Renaissance art. Cézanne's painting, however, has no clear narrative or literary source. The composition, which echoes the pyramidal base of a mountain, as well as the use of colour, serves to integrate the women with the landscape. Cézanne's last paintings might perhaps be seen as his final celebration of nature and our union with it.

Of the three paintings, the National Gallery's is arguably the strongest and simplest in composition. It is also the most fully painted and richly coloured. We are looking at a frieze-like group of 11 nude women relaxing in a woodland glade beneath an azure sky. The picture does not include the water in which the women bathe. Placed before them is a still-life and a black dog. Several of the women have their backs towards us, and their faces are either mask-like or turned away. Filling the foreground, most of them lean in towards the middle of the picture. The strong diagonals of their bodies form the base of a pyramid that has echoes of Mont Sainte-Victoire. Although each woman is distinct, they also form a single, almost sculptural mass. Throughout the picture, space is flattened and compressed. Cézanne has not used the conventions of atmospheric recession to create, for example, an effect of a distant sky that becomes paler towards the horizon – indeed, the blue here becomes darker nearest the clouds. The brilliant blue of the sky is as intense as other areas of the picture, and Cézanne has cancelled perspective by making the sky and clouds as substantial as the earth, trees and women.

In Cézanne the landscape is not just a setting for the figures and the story telling, it integral to the sense of a unified and indivisible whole. As solid as the ground they lie upon, the women become one with the landscape they inhabit. Cézanne's last paintings might perhaps be seen as his final celebration of nature and as an idyllic, even utopian, vision of our union with it.

Cézanne would have known this painting by **Poussin**, ***Apollo and Daphne*** (1664), in the Louvre. The theme of nude figures in a landscape, an image of a 'lost' Arcadia, was popular in Western Art and appealed to him. However, Cézanne was

among, possibly the first, to take the figure as an opportunity to develop ideas of structure, and integrate it into the landscape as an element in the unified compositional whole. In Cézanne the landscape is not just a setting for the figures and the story telling.

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes was a pivotal figure poised at the threshold of modernism. His Classically inspired allegorical themes, such as ***The Sacred Grove, Beloved of the Arts and the Muses*** (1874), invoke a timeless, pre-industrial past.

His visions of a Golden Age, of man in harmony with nature, were greatly admired by the younger generations of artists, his influence can be traced in the works of Cézanne and Gauguin at the end of the nineteenth century to Matisse and Picasso in the twentieth.

Cézanne took from Puvis the disposition across the canvas of his figures, rather than creating an in depth sensation using perspective.

Martha Lucy says of the canvas in the Barnes Foundation, ***The Large Bathers*** (1895–1906), it is "in many ways the most ambitious of the trio...[it} is an intensely physical painting... [which] bears the marks of a long, laboured working process, with a surface so impossibly thick with paint that it rises up in clumps in some areas and forms sculptural ridges in others.

The subject is perfectly conventional: a group of nudes relaxes in a landscape, with trees arching overhead and still-life elements in the foreground, tropes borrowed from a long tradition of pastoral imagery. There is nothing conventional, however, about the way this scene is painted. While Cézanne's contemporaries often presented bathers in harmony with the landscape, here nature seems menacing, and the landscape's relationship to its human inhabitants is difficult to understand. Clouds are heavy, with an almost oppressive weight, and the blue sky peeking through them is rendered with paint so thick that it literally projects. One tree leans into the centre, its sharp branches cutting aggressively across the sky in three parallel spokes. One wonders why, in this scene that presumably takes place in summer, these branches are bare; patches of green in the background suggest foliage, but the foreground trees around which the bathers gather are emphatically, eerily, dead.

The figures themselves are at once beautiful and unsightly. They are elegantly arranged, in postures borrowed from classical sculpture and baroque painting. An unusual ridge of thick blue paint surrounding each of the figures lends the group an air of slowness, or serenity, even as it suggests artistic struggle. Colours are often breathtaking, as in the reds that spread across cheeks and hair, and in the pale blues and lavenders that suggest shadows. At the same time, Cézanne undermines 19th-century standards of beauty: skin is composed of patches that shift suddenly from one colour to the next, and gender is difficult to read. Is the bather leaning against the tree a man or a woman? Paint pulled down between that figure's legs seems to want to obliterate sex. Anatomies are distorted, sometimes to disturbing effect—feet, hands, and fingertips often do not exist. The face of the figure leaning against the tree registers as a blank, with features buried beneath a blanket of brushstrokes. Even more jarring is the walking figure at left, whose towel cascades theatrically into the foreground but whose head is a mere knob of flesh. The 1904 photograph reveals that this figure did at one time have a fully resolved face and head, but Cézanne painted it out, in just one of this picture's many radical moments.

The largest version of ***The Large Bathers*** is in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Cézanne worked on it for seven years and it remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1906.

The exceptionally large (210.5 x 250.8 cm.), near square format allows a large expanse of sky, and the convergence of the framing trees to form a near arch; reflected by the arms of the two nearest figures making the familiar V shape. The forms of the nude figures are adapted to fit the triangular pattern of the trees and river. Although all three versions are set on a river bank, this is the only one in which the water is clearly depicted.

Cézanne's often crude distortions of the body may in part be the result of his awkwardness in figure drawing. He also admitted to the painter Emile Bernard that he was too shy to hire models when working on these pictures, relying instead on memories from visits to museums and the academic studies of his youth. But these distortions also give the women an architectural quality that harmonises with their surroundings, as seen most obviously in the standing woman on the left. As solid as the ground they lie upon, the women become one with the landscape they inhabit. Cézanne's last paintings might perhaps be seen as his final celebration of nature and as an idyllic, even utopian, vision of our union with it.

With each version of the *Bathers*, Cézanne moved further away from the traditional representation of the figure in order to suggest a timeless quality to the work. The painting was featured in the 1980 BBC Two series *100 Great Paintings*.

He was not at ease asking even professional models to pose for him. These two late studies from life, ***La Toilette*** (c.1900) and ***Standing Female Nude*** (1898–99), were done in Paris, with a model supplied to him by his dealer Vollard.

THE MOUNTAIN OF VICTORY: The Studio at Les Lauves (1901 - 1905)

"The world doesn't understand me and I don't understand the world, that's why I've withdrawn from it...."

"He who does not have a taste for the absolute is content with quiet mediocrity."

In 1901 he bought some land along the Chemin des Lauves, an isolated road on some high ground at Aix, and commissioned a studio to be built there. As with the Jas de Bouffan, the area has since become a suburb of Aix, and the views he would have had of the surrounding countryside are lost. After his death it became a national monument, Atelier Paul Cézanne, and is open to the public.

From 1903 to the end of his life he painted in his studio.

Late in life Cézanne acquired an almost mythical status among younger artists as a recluse living in the south, isolated from the Paris art scene, and discouraging visitors. A few, younger artists, however, managed to break through his reserve, were welcomed, and met 'the Master of Aix'.

In 1904 Émile Bernard came, staying as a house guest for a month. He photographed Cézanne seated in front of his second version of the *Bathers.* In 1906Ker-Xavier Roussel (1867-1944), a painter associated with the Nabis group, after seeing a Cézanne exhibition travelled south and photographed him at work near his studio.

Homage to Cézanne, by **Maurice Denis**, painted in 1900, shows the members of *Les Nabis* gathered in front of a painting by Cézanne. The painting on the easel is the *Still-life with Fruit Dish* (1879-82) that was owned by Gaugin.

In the latter years of his life Cézanne was preoccupied by the Mont Sainte-Victoire and countryside which it dominates. He was "above all a lyric poet of the brush" and the mountain and the Arc valley below it were permeated with resonances of the classical Mediterranean landscape; it was Cézanne's "living Arcadia."

Mont Sainte-Victoire (1904–06) was probably painted from a little further up the hill from the Les Lauves studio. The distant motif of the mountain, bathed in blue shadows and patches of sunlight sits on the broad central band, which is slightly inclined, imparting a suggestion of movement in an otherwise static picture. The intervening landscape appears to be dissolving in a pure orchestration of coloured notes, in which we can pick out suggestions of buildings, fields, the olive grove beyond the strip of field in the fore-ground and patches of trees seen as a vague, out of focus 'impression', much as we would experience if looking across it from the high vantage point, to the distant mountain Silhouetted against the sky. The patch of ochre field at the base of the painting distances the viewer from the plane.

A watercolour of the same view, ***Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Les Lauves*** (1902-06), may have been a preparatory painting. In each painting there is a strip of land in the fore-ground and the edge of a meadow planted with olive trees as we look across a band of treetops and the red roofs of farm buildings, and the ridges and fields of the plane. Both works are full of light and air, with areas left unpainted; which in the watercolour creates a sense of luminosity. The two works "display free, lyrical, even joyful brushwork."

He painted a series of watercolours from the terrace of the Les Lauves studio, depicting the view across the city of Aix.

The Cathedral of Aix, view from the studio at Les Lauves (1904–06) captures the delicate modulations of of the changing light and atmosphere towards the end of the day. His watercolours become ever more diffuse, sparse and fragile looking, with transparent layers of colour.

He suffered from diabetes, which may have affected his vision. In a letter to Émile Bernard he said: "Now, being old, nearly seventy years, the sensations of colour, which give the light, are for me the reason for the abstractions, which do not allow me to cover to cover my canvas entirely, nor to pursue the delimitation of the objects, where their point of contact are fine or delicate, from which it results that my depiction in the painting is incomplete."

We see in his last works his total mastery of colour as his vision penetrates the scene and calls into being his sensations of pure harmony, held in balance by the bands of fragmented notes, like the musical texture of polyphony, or the richly dense alloys of a Bach fugue.

In ***Mont Sainte-Victoire view from the studio at Les Lauve*** (1902–06) Cézanne moved to the edge of the olive grove, with the effect of pitching the viewer directly into the plain. Ochres and greens, with accents of the red roofs, with touches of blue and violet evoke a sense of atmosphere. The image is built from a

variety of short vertical, slanting and horizontal strokes, like individual notes orchestrated into a construction suggestive of visual music, that give weight and density to the plain, leading the eye to the massive peak crowning the horizon.

They anticipate not only the future direction of painting, through cubism and abstraction, but the revolutionary musical compositions of Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Messiaen.

Joseph Rishel, a one time curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and a specialist in the art of Paul Cézanne, wrote of ***La Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauve*** (1904–06): The agitation and density of the brush-strokes and the ridges of layered paint are extraordinary....Intense dashes of orange, seeded with vivid strokes of red, dominate the plain; over which play the sharp greens that gain the upper hand in the strip of meadow and trees in the foreground. Similar but less densely applied greens appear in the sky amidst purples and dark blues. There, against the white of the canvas showing through, the crisp strokes are more visible than they are in the foreground, where they seem smothered under thick pigment. In comparison to the cold, bright splendour of the sky and the foreboding darkness of the plain, the mountain seems extremely sensual. Opaque strokes of lavender, pink and violet sit among more transparent blues and greens. For all this encrustation and dark compression, this painting is neither a depressing vision nor Cézanne's Götterdämmerung. He has given it too much energy, too much passion."

The painter Lawrence Gowing in an eloquent description of Cézanne's colour wrote: "Cézanne's patches do not represent materials or facets or variations of tint. In themselves they do not represent anything.It is the relationships between them–relationships of affinity and contrast, the processions from tone to tone in a colour scale, and the modulations from scale to scale–that parallel the apprehension of the world. The sense of these colour patches rests on their juxtapositions and their alignments, one with another."

Le Cabanon de Jourdan (1906) is said to be his last painting. On 15th October 1906 he set off on foot to an outdoor motif. He worked for several hours and collapsed on the way home; where he remained until a passing driver of a laundry cart found him and took him home to the rue Boulegon. His old housekeeper, who was not normally allowed to touch him, rubbed his arms and legs to restore the circulation; as a result, he regained consciousness.

On the following day he went to the Les Lauves studio to continue working on his portrait of Vallier and later on he fainted. He was returned to his home and put to bed. His sister Marie reported that he was seriously ill. However he found the strength to turn his wife's dressing room into a makeshift studio, but died there on 23rd of October at the age of 67.

His attachment to his place of birth, the countryside of the Arc valley, echoes throughout his correspondence and much of his work. It was this, his native soil, infused with memories of his boyhood and his intimate knowledge of the terrain, with which he identified on a personal and subjective level. The late views embody something more than the mythologised idyll of his youth however; it could be said that he felt himself to *be* the *pays d'Aix*–he had, in a sense, become the landscape which he painted as a matter of life and death. In his loneliness, in his struggle and in his ultimate triumph he had become the victorious mountain.

Further reading:

Mountain of Victory, a biography of Paul Cézanne; Lawrence Hanson
Cézanne by Himself; Edited by Richard Kendall
The Art of Cézanne; Kurt Badt
Cézanne in Provence, catalogue of the 2006 centenary exhibition; Philip Conisbee and Denis Coutagne