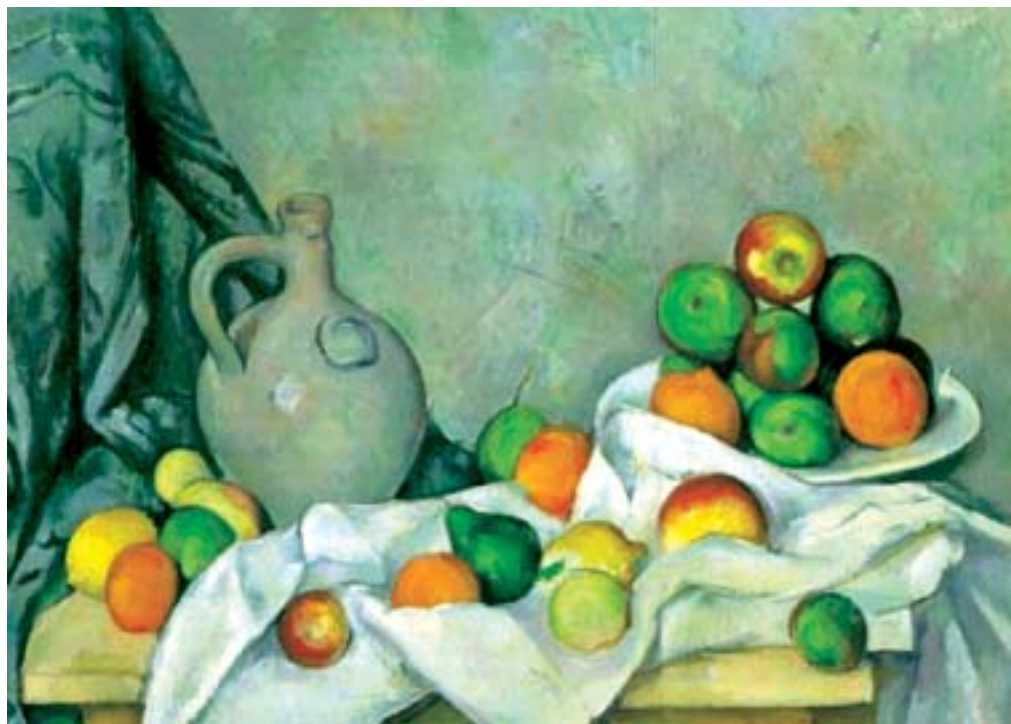


Cézanne

1839-1906

By Sunil K Sukumaran

Paul Cézanne was born in the southern French town of Aix-en-Provence on 19 January 1839. Son of a wealthy banker, he has often been called the father of modern art, who strove to develop an ideal synthesis of naturalistic representation and abstract pictorial order. Among the artists of his time, Cézanne perhaps has had the most profound effect on the art of the 20th century. He was the greatest single influence on both the French artist Henri Matisse, who admired his colour, and the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso, who developed Cézanne's planar compositional structure into the cubist style. In fact, an oft quoted line attributed sometimes to Matisse and at other times to Picasso that Cézanne "... is the father of us all ..." cannot be easily refuted. His work laid the foundations for the transition of 19th Century artistic



Rideau, Cruchon et Comptoir
(Curtain, Pitcher and Fruit Dish)
c. 1893-94; Oil on canvas; 60 x 73 cm

Self-Portrait with Rose Background
c. 1875; Oil on canvas, 66 x 55 cm;
Private collection



endeavours to a new and radically different conception of art in the 20th Century. Cézanne can be said to form the bridge between late 19th Century Impressionism and early 20th Century's most startling new line of artistic enquiry, namely Cubism. His geometric essentialization of forms went on to influence Pablo Picasso's, George Braque's, and Juan Gris's cubism in profound ways; one only needs to closely examine cubist paintings together with Cézanne's late work: it is immediately clear that a direct link exists between the two.

In 1858, Cézanne graduated from Collège Bourbon, where he had become an intimate friend of his fellow student Émile Zola. Incidentally, *L'Oeuvre* (The Masterpiece), the 1886

Cézanne's work laid the foundations for the transition of 19th Century artistic endeavours to a new and radically different conception of art in the 20th Century.

A Modern Olympia

c. 1873-74; Oil on canvas,
46 x 55.5 cm; Musée d'Orsay, Paris

novel by Zola (part of his twenty-volume series *Les Rougon-Macquart*), is a lightly fictionalized account of his childhood friendship with Cézanne, as the fictional painter 'Claude Lantier' who fails in his life's work to create a work of art that would survive the ages. Cézanne and Zola disagreed and never reconciled over Zola's fictionalized depiction of Cézanne, and the book ended their friendship forever. From 1859 to 1861, Cézanne studied law in Aix, and developed his early love of art by taking drawing lessons. Going against the objections of his father (eventually though, his father accepted and supported him), he pursued his artistic development and left for Paris to join Zola in 1861. In Paris he met other impressionist painters and briefly attended the Atelier Suisse with Camille Pissarro. He often painted with Pissarro whose influence is noticeable in his paintings. In 1862, Cézanne began long friendships with Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. For the next twenty years, Cézanne divided his time between the Midi and Paris.

Ironically, Cézanne's paintings were shown in the first exhibition of the Salon des Refusés in 1863, which displayed works not accepted by the jury of the official Paris Salon. The Paris Salon rejected Cézanne's submissions every year from 1864 to 1869!



In 1870, following the declaration of the Franco-Prussian War, Cézanne left Paris for Aix and then nearby L'Estaque where he continued to paint. He made the first of several visits to Pontoise in 1872; there, he worked alongside Pissarro. He participated in the first Impressionist exhibition of 1874. From 1876 to 1879, his works were again rejected for the Paris Salon ... Cézanne showed again with the Impressionists in 1877 in their third exhibition. At that time, Georges Rivière was one of the few critics to support his art. In 1882, finally the Paris Salon accepted his work for the first and only time! Beginning in 1883, Cézanne resided in the South of France, returning to Paris occasionally.

"I want to make of impressionism something solid and lasting like the art in the museums."

Portraits of MME CÉZANNE



On his first Paris trip, Cézanne met Marie-Hortense Fiquet, the model who eventually became his wife and the mother of his only child. Poor Hortense! She never liked Provence, and she never understood her husband. The feeling was mutual. Cézanne didn't understand women at all and she was no exception; she didn't like his pictures much either. She preferred the city lights to the south of France, so they lived apart much of the time. Nevertheless, she dutifully posed for her husband during summers in Aix, but these portraits show her with a remote, inscrutable look, with eyes that never meet the viewer's.

Madame Cézanne in a yellow chair
1888-90; Oil on canvas, 81 x 64.9 cm;
The Art Institute of Chicago

Madame Cézanne with unbound hair
1890-92; Oil on canvas, 61.9 x 50.8 cm;
Philadelphia Museum of Art



Mont Sainte-Victoire & Bibémus

The Sainte-Victoire Mountain and the dramatic quarry at Bibémus near Cézanne's home in Aix-en-Provence were one of his favourite subjects and he is known to have painted them many dozens of times. He was fascinated by the rugged architectural forms in the mountains of Provence and painted the same scene from many different angles. He would use bold blocks of colour to achieve a new spatial effect known as 'flat-depth' to accommodate the unusual geological forms of the mountains.



Mont Sainte-Victoire
1885-87; Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Mont Sainte-Victoire
1900; Oil on canvas, 78 x 99 cm; Hermitage, St. Petersburg



Bibemus: The red rock
c. 1897; Oil on canvas, 91 x 66 cm;
Musée du Louvre, Paris,
Walter-Guillaume Collection



Bibemus Quarry
1898; Oil on canvas, 92 x 72.8 cm;
The Barnes Foundation, Merion,
Pennsylvania



Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Bibemus Quarry
c. 1897; Oil on Canvas, 64.8 x 81.3 cm;
The Baltimore Museum of Art



Mont Sainte-Victoire
1902-06; Pencil and
watercolour on white
paper, 42.5 x 54.3 cm;
The Museum of Modern
Art, New York

**Mont Sainte-Victoire
seen from Les Lauves**
1904-06; Oil on canvas,
60 x 72 cm;
Kunstmuseum, Basel



Still Life with Water Jug
c. 1892-3; Oil on canvas,
53 x 71.1 cm;
Tate Gallery, London



In 1890, Cézanne exhibited with the group Les Vingt in Brussels and spent five months in Switzerland. He travelled to Giverny in 1894 to visit Monet, who introduced him to Auguste Rodin and the critic Gustave Geffroy. Cézanne's first solo show was held at Ambroise Vollard's gallery in Paris in 1895. From this time, he received increasing recognition. In 1899, he participated in the Salon des Indépendants in Paris for the first time. The following year, he took part in the *Centennial Exhibition* in Paris. In 1903, the Berlin and Vienna Secessions included Cézanne's work, and in 1904 he exhibited at the Salon d'Automne, Paris. That same year, he was given a solo exhibition at the Galerie Cassirer, Berlin.

Cézanne's early work is often concerned with the figure in the landscape and comprises many imaginatively painted groups of large, heavy figures in the landscape. Later on in his career, he began working from direct observation, and he gradually developed a light, airy painting that was to influence the impressionists enormously. In Cézanne's work, we see a development of a solidified, almost architectural style of painting, in which the visual field is broken down into small, often very regular brushstrokes that build up the image in planes and areas of colour. His famous words, "I want to make of impressionism something solid and lasting like the art in the museums," seem to indicate that his struggle was to

**Houses on the Hill
(River Bank)**
1900-1906;
Oil on canvas;
60.3 x 79.2 cm;
McNay Art Museum,
San Antonio,
Texas; Bequest of
Marion Koogler McNay



Château Noir
1900-04; Oil on canvas, 73.7 x 96.6 cm;
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C



Château Noir

The château in these paintings derives its name from rumours about its owner, rather than from its appearance. It was built in the 18th century by an industrialist from Marseilles who manufactured lampblack paint (derived from soot). He also used it to decorate the interior walls and furniture of the château, which resulted in him being associated with black magic among the local people.



The Bather
1885-1887; Oil on canvas,
50 x 38 1/8 in;
Museum of Modern Art, New York

Bathers

This was yet another of Cézanne's themes. Women bathers are usually presented in large pyramidal groups, overlapping, mostly with their backs to the viewer. His men generally face forward, almost in a frieze. They are individuals in the same scenery, neither interacting nor overlapping. There is no eye contact between any of them. Cézanne's only real passion was his art, but that passion was never revealed on the canvas itself.



Bathers
c. 1890-91; Oil on canvas, 54.2 x 66.5 cm; The Hermitage,
St. Petersburg



Château Noir
1902-05; Oil on canvas, 70 x 82 cm; Collection Jacques
Koerfer, Bern

develop a hitherto unknown authenticity of observation of the seen world by the most accurate method of representing it in paint that he could find, and this, for him, involved breaking the surface of the painting into small, often repetitive strokes of the brush. He structurally ordered whatever he perceived into simple forms and colour planes to create the most telling image of his subjects.

During the greater part of his own lifetime, Cézanne was largely ignored and worked in increasing artistic isolation, remaining in the South of France, in his beloved Provence, far from Paris. He concentrated on a few subjects: still lifes, studies of bathers, and especially the Mont Sainte-Victoire,

which he painted a great many times. He mistrusted critics, had few friends, and, until 1895, exhibited only occasionally. He was alienated even from his family, who found his behaviour peculiar and failed to appreciate his revolutionary art. However, by the time of his death in Aix on 22 October 1906, he had attained the status of a legendary figure. And, in 1999—nearly a century after his death—Cézanne's still life *Rideau, Cruchon et Compotier* sold for US\$60.5 million, the fourth-highest price paid for a painting up to that time. In 2001, *Montagne Sainte Victoire*—his landscape on one of his favourite subjects—fetched US\$38.5 million.