The Art and Impact of Paul Cézanne
Lena Bondar
Background:

- (1839-1906)
- Born in Aix-en-Provence, southern France
- Newly-wealthy, money-lender family
  - Overbearing father
- Received a sound, traditional education
  - Little exposure to excellent art, however
  - Initial interests inclined toward literature
- Reluctantly Studied Law
- 1861: Travelled to Paris to paint
Early Work

• Painted and studied at the Atelier Suisse
  • Model provided, but no instruction
  • Wished to enter the Ecole des Beaux-Arts
• Met with frustration, ridicule, and rejection
  • Lack of technical skill in comparison to other students
  • Sensitivity to criticism
• Rejected the academic style
• However, consistently visited the Louvre to study and copy the works of masters
  • “the Louvre is the book from which we learn to read.”
Challengers of Academic Style

• Ecole des Beaux-Arts: a renowned art school, sponsored by the French Academy of Fine Arts.

• The Academy also hosted an annual Salon:
  • Historical and literary subjects preferred.
  • Salon judges, trained in the “classical” style, advocated similar works

• The public looked to Salon reviews to define “good art.”

• Entries by Cézanne were derided and rejected as disruptive of art values.
Many rebellious, young artists met at the Café Guerbois in Paris—Including Manet, Degas, Renoir, Pisarro, and Monet.

Cézanne sometimes visited the Café.

He was withdrawn and brusque in personality—Did not easily fit into company.

Pisarro was patient with Cézanne and became his mentor and friend.

Impressionist influences on Cézanne:

- Camille Pisarro: Orchard with Floweirng Fruit Trees, Springtime, Pontoise, 1877
- Paul Cézanne: Orchard in Pontoise, 1877
Cézanne’s Technique

• Pencil outline of contours on bare canvas
• Retrace/augment initial line with blue-gray, thinned in turpentine
• Dark outer contours lain in 1st, throughout canvas
  – Complete, continuous outline of planes is infrequent
  – Foreground fuses with space
  → Work is simultaneously flat and deep!
• High key palette
  – Changing colors create volume
  – Optical Properties of color utilized: Recognized that Cézanne’s Technique
Cézanne’s Technique

• General, fairly consistent light source

• Distortion and alteration of subject matter!
  – Creates tension and dynamism
  – intentional in his mature works
  – Visual representation of the passage of time

• Small, angled brushstrokes
  – Unblended
  – Direction shifts in different parts of the canvas
  – Unlike Van Gogh, Cezanne did not follow the direction of forms

• Objects are sized not in accordance with scientific perspective, but due to
Cézanne’s Impact

• Distortion = non-scientific abstraction
  • *revealed* and celebrated the artifice of art:
  • *representation* of nature in 2 dimensions = a structured illusion
  • “I would like to know whether anyone has ever seen a natural work of art” (Picasso)

• Interest in Time and its visual representation:
  • Abstraction visually represents synthesis of knowledge through space and time
  • Searching for the underlying structure in nature via geometric patterns (later work)

• Art increasingly becomes *conceptual*

• A new generation of artists embraced Cézanne as the “father” of Modernism
  • Numerous movements fall into this category
Inspiration From Cézanne
Completed Painting
Reflection

I feel that making this painting deepened my understanding of Cezanne’s style and of my own. I found it much harder to apply his principles in practice than appreciating them in his works, which testifies, in my opinion, to the fluidity of “style”. I began to appreciate it as a process that no single work can formulate.

It was not my goal to copy Cezanne but to learn from him. The more I studied his aesthetic, the more differences I discovered between my style and his. I prefer organic, instead of structured, forms and abstraction—for me—lies in distortion of color in order to express a personal connection to the subject. However, incorporating Cezanne’s emphasis on line and the optical properties of warm and cool colors...
References:


“The Paul Cezanne.” **Museo Global.** Departamento de arte. UACJ. 14 Feb. 2006