

THE ARTISTS IN PERSPECTIVE SERIES

H. W. Janson, general editor

The ARTISTS IN PERSPECTIVE SERIES presents individual illustrated volumes of interpretive essays on the most significant painters, sculptors, architects, and genres of world art.

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CÉZANNE

in Perspective

Edited by

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*To my parents
Nahum and Anne Glatzer
with love*

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CONTENTS

Preface *xiii*

INTRODUCTION 1

Judith Wechsler

Reactions of Some Contemporary Painters and
Critics: 1874-1907

From "The Exhibition of the Boulevard des Capucines" (1874) 25
Marc de Montifaud

From "The Exhibition of the Boulevard des Capucines" (1874) 26
Jean Prouvaire

From "Fine Arts" (1877) 26
A. P. (Alexandre Pothey)

From "Parisian Notes. An Exhibition: The Impressionist Painters" 27
Georges Rivière

From *The Semaphore of Marseille* (1877) 28
Emile Zola

From "Naturalism at the Salon" (1880) 28
Emile Zola

To Camille Pissarro (1881)	29
<i>Paul Gauguin</i>	
From a Letter to Emile Schuffenecker (1885)	29
<i>Paul Gauguin</i>	
To J. K. Huysmans (1883)	30
<i>Camille Pissarro</i>	
Response to Camille Pissarro (1883)	30
<i>J. K. Huysmans</i>	
From "Cézanne" (1889)	31
<i>J. K. Huysmans</i>	
From "Paul Cézanne" (1894)	32
<i>Gustave Geffroy</i>	
From "Claude Lantier" (1895)	33
<i>Arsène Alexandre</i>	
From <i>Letters to His Son Lucien</i> (1895)	34
<i>Camille Pissarro</i>	
From "Paul Cézanne" (1895)	35
<i>Thadée Natanson</i>	
From "Matters of Art" (1896)	36
<i>Camille Mauclair</i>	
From "The Love of Ugliness" (1903)	37
<i>Henri Rochefort</i>	
From a Review in <i>La Lanterne</i> (1904)	38
<i>Anonymous</i>	
From "Paul Cézanne" (1904)	39
<i>Emile Bernard</i>	
From "Inquiry into Current Tendencies in the Plastic Arts" (1905)	46
<i>Charles Morice</i>	

From "On Paul Cézanne" (1906)	48
<i>Jean Royère</i>	
From "Paul Cézanne" (1907)	49
<i>Charles Morice</i>	
From "Cézanne" (1907)	50
<i>Maurice Denis</i>	
"Cézanne's Atelier" (1907)	58
<i>R. P. Rivière and J. F. Schnerb</i>	
From <i>Paul Cézanne</i> (1914)	64
<i>Ambroise Vollard</i>	
From Letters to Clara Rilke (1907)	65
<i>Rainer Maria Rilke</i>	

Reflections of Some Major Painters: 1908–1943

From "Notes of a Painter" (1908)	70
<i>Henri Matisse</i>	
From a Letter to Raymond Escholier, Director of the Petit Palais (1936)	71
<i>Henri Matisse</i>	
From <i>Concerning the Spiritual in Art</i> (1912)	72
<i>Wassily Kandinsky</i>	
From "Cubism" (1912)	73
<i>A. Gleizes and J. Metzinger</i>	
From "The Signs of Renewal in Painting" (1912)	74
<i>Roger Allard</i>	
From "The Origins of Painting and Its Representational Value" (1913)	74
<i>Fernand Léger</i>	

From "Contemporary Achievements in Painting" (1914)	74	"How Cézanne Saw and Used Colour" (1951)	125
<i>Fernand Léger</i>		<i>Gerhard J. R. Frankl</i>	
Statement: <i>Juan Gris</i> (1921)	75	From "Cézanne and the Unity of Modern Art" (1951)	131
<i>Juan Gris</i>		<i>Clement Greenburg</i>	
Statement: <i>Picasso</i>	76	From <i>Paul Cézanne</i> (1952)	133
Statement: <i>Picasso</i>	76	<i>Meyer Schapiro</i>	
Statement: <i>Picasso in Antibes</i>	77	From <i>The Art of Cézanne</i> (1956)	142
From "Statement by Picasso: 1935"	77	<i>Kurt Badt</i>	
Statement: <i>Picasso and Co.</i> (1943)	78	"Cézanne's <i>Dream of Hannibal</i> " (1963)	148
From <i>Paul Cézanne</i> (1910)	79	<i>Theodore Reff</i>	
<i>Julius Meier-Graefe</i>		Biographical Data	161
From "The Debt to Cézanne" (1914)	80	Notes on the Editor and Contributors	163
<i>Clive Bell</i>		Selected Bibliography	168
From <i>Cézanne: A Study of His Development</i> (1927)	82		
<i>Roger Fry</i>			
From "Introduction to These Paintings" (1929)	87		
<i>D. H. Lawrence</i>			
From <i>Cézanne, His Art—His Work</i> (1936)	94		
<i>Lionello Venturi</i>			
From <i>Cézanne and the End of Scientific Perspective</i> (1938)	96		
<i>Fritz Novotny</i>			
From <i>Cézanne's Composition</i> (1943)	108		
<i>Erle Loran</i>			
From <i>Art in Crisis, The Lost Center</i> (1948)	117		
<i>Hans Sedlmayr</i>			
From "Cézanne's Doubt" (1948)	120		
<i>Maurice Merleau-Ponty</i>			

PREFACE

Cézanne was a revolutionary painter. The complexity of his art has led to a considerable literature in the past one hundred years. The history of these critical stands reflects most of the core intellectual and artistic concerns of the late nineteenth and twentieth century. This book is intended to give perspective to these varied interpretations of Cézanne's painting.

The following reviews, articles and essays were chosen to capture both the development and diversity of interpretations of Cézanne's work. I have given preference, where a choice obtained, to lesser known or inaccessible sources, a number of which are translated into English here for the first time. The sequence of the selections is primarily chronological, in order to give historical perspective. Exception is made when two pieces by the same author are placed consecutively, or when the views of various contemporary painters and critics are grouped together. The date of the original publication is placed in parentheses after the author's name as the date sometimes differs from that of the edition quoted. My deletions are indicated by the sign ". . . ."

I am particularly grateful to Professor Linda Nochlin for her advice and support throughout the preparation of this material, first on my doctoral dissertation and then on this book. I think Professor Frederick Wight for his encouragement while I was writing my thesis. I have discussed various issues which arose in the introduction with Rosalind Krauss, Flora Natapoff, and Leo Steinberg. To Professor Meyer Schapiro I give special homage; it is because of him that I came to study art history.

I am indebted to all those who permitted me to reprint material. The new French translations were done for the most part by Miss Kathleen Pond, with a few shorter passages translated by Caroline Malcolm, and myself. Dr. Raymond Ockenden translated the Novotny selections from the German. S. B. Sutton read the introduction and was most helpful in her suggestions regarding style. Finally, my fondest appreciation goes to my constant companion, Dr. Benson Snyder, who was unfailing in his moral support and astute advice, and to my daughter, Johanna, for her loving patience and understanding.

INTRODUCTION

Judith Wechsler

Paul Cézanne's painting heightens our awareness of pictorial form and structure as it articulates his outlook on the world. He conceived of painting as a way of realizing his sensation before nature and not as a problem in abstract composition. The subjective element of his painting was asserted as *a way of seeing*, rather than an imposition of mood or atmosphere on a landscape or portrait. Cézanne revealed how we come to see reality when the various schemata of vision and painting are rejected. At the same time he created a new unity and cohesiveness of composition by laying bare the elements of color relationships and space definitions. He bound color to structure, surface to depth, form to content, process to realized work. In so doing Paul Cézanne evolved a new syntax for painting.

Many of Cézanne's interpreters believed that he was a "pure painter" concerned with composition for its own sake. They claimed that he paid no regard to the relation between his finished canvas and the world imagined, experienced or observed. At first sight, Cézanne's subject matter in his mature work appears neutral, objective, devoid of expression. The image character of his painting shifted from an implied stage space, a microcosm of subject and structure, to the constructive small units of composition, the pictorial micro-structure. However, the facets of his brushstroke transmitted the fragments we perceive in the process of scanning and selection of a scene.

Generations of Cézanne's critics focused on *how* Cézanne painted and ignored the questions of *what* he painted and *why*. His work was viewed simply as a matter of style and technique. Underlying Cézanne's composition is, however, an outlook which, partly unconscious as it may have been, is nevertheless necessary to decipher. Only when the preoccupation with the question of means had been exhausted could the multi-dimensionality of Cézanne's vision and pictorial composition be appreciated and his work be understood as the record of his perceptual and conceptual experience.

The richness and complexity of Cézanne's art has evoked a wide range of interpretations which reflect most of the intellectual movements

of the past hundred years. There are Naturalist, Symbolist, Neoclassical, perceptual, formalist, didactic, Marxist, psychoanalytic (both Freudian and Jungian), phenomenological and existentialist interpretations of Cézanne. To be sure, many major figures in art and literature have evoked multiple interpretations bound to aesthetic biases. One of the most serious ideological conflicts in twentieth century criticism is apparent in the Cézanne literature—the conflict between formalist and humanist interpretations. The formalist approaches consider primarily the intrinsic problems of Cézanne's composition and formal inventions. The humanistic interpretations regard Cézanne's composition in relation to his subject matter in the light of his personal, social, historical and even spiritual context. Cézanne is almost unique among nineteenth-century painters in catalyzing both the most exacting formal analyses and psychoanalytic, existentialist and phenomenological investigations. While Cézanne's painting invites a formalist approach, it also reveals the insufficiency of it. What is unique to the Cézanne literature is that it marks a shift in mid-twentieth-century criticism from a predominantly formal trend to a humanistic one.

The interpretation of Cézanne's work requires both an accurate observation of his formal structure and an overall understanding of his oeuvre, his life and times. Without a concrete perception of his composition, theories have no substance, and without a sense of reality as he perceived and recorded it, interpretation suffers from a lack of depth and coherence. We must ask whether the bias of a critic in singling out a particular aspect of Cézanne's work throws the whole perspective of his painting out of balance, or whether in elucidating a selected aspect the critic illuminates his work as a whole. By restricting the domain of investigation to a narrow band, the knowledge that is proved does not always correspond to the reality experienced. The critic's need for certainty may preclude speculations which are by nature more far-reaching and profound.

In their response to Cézanne's work successive generations of painters and critics have consciously or unconsciously reflected the aesthetic attitudes and experiences of their own intellectual and artistic milieu. What was visible to observers of Cézanne's art depended, at least in part, on what they could see as a function of their particular period. For example, the Impressionists prepared the critics to see Cézanne's color, but their frame of reference did not prepare the interpreters for a sympathetic understanding of Cézanne's use of line or his deviations from traditional perspective. Emile Zola, a Naturalist, could grasp Cézanne's early violent and impassioned subject matter, and his concern for the realized object of perception, but he could not sympathize with Cézanne's later emphasis on his own process of perception in paintings with apparently dispassionate motifs. The Symbolists were sensitive to Cézanne's formal arrangements, but explained the effect of flatness of his composition as a function of a decorative sensibility rather than a perceptual one. The advocates of tradition in French painting, the Neoclassicists of the 1890's, equated Cézanne's art with that of Poussin, ignoring his relation to Impressionism. The Cubists were the first to understand Cézanne's spatial construction in

relation to his perception. Their essentially abstract and purely pictorial transformation of Cézanne's model after nature laid the foundation for the formal understanding of Cézanne advanced by Roger Fry.

We see Cézanne through a filter of interpretations. To claim that one can bypass the critics in an attempt to see Cézanne "as he really is" ignores the extent to which all of us have a perceptual bias, whether or not we are critics. The interpretations which have accrued to Cézanne's work have become part of the conditions of our seeing. The literature on Cézanne reflects not only the need to explain his paintings, but is also a response to previous interpretations of his work. The interpretations are linked one to another in a historical network.

CÉZANNE'S FIRST CRITICS

"He belongs to a school which has the privilege of provoking criticism," noted Marius Roux in the first printed mention of Cézanne; the context, a review of Emile Zola's novel dedicated to Cézanne, *La Confession de Claude*, published in an Aix-en-Provence newspaper in 1865.¹ No specific work of Cézanne's was discussed. Although Zola requested that Roux mention Cézanne, he did not take the opportunity himself to deal with his friend's painting at this stage. Zola could easily have done so in his *Salon* reviews in which rejected painters were considered as well. Instead, in 1866 he dedicated his collected *Salon* reviews (*Mon Salon*) to Cézanne in praise of their friendship and shared ambitions.

Cézanne first exhibited his painting at the Salon des Refusés of 1863—evoking no critical response. When he showed again in 1867—this time at the Salon—he was derisively referred to by a critic, Arnold Mortier, in *Le Figaro* as Mr. Sésame, who went on to say that his work was worthy of exclusion from the Salon.² Zola defended Cézanne in *Le Figaro* by pointing out the inaccuracies of Mortier's descriptions, accusing him of never having actually seen Cézanne's work.³ In 1870 Cézanne was caricatured with his paintings which had been rejected by the Salon.

In 1874 when Cézanne exhibited at the first Impressionist exhibition, he was more widely taken up by the critics. The 1874 reviews were critical of the Impressionists' inept drawing, bizarre color and unconventional composition. Cézanne was considered the least acceptable. Both his subject matter and style were ridiculed, his particular deviations from the then accepted formal standards leading one critic, Marc de Montifaud, to characterize him as "a sort of madman who paints in delirium tremens."

Three years later, at the third Impressionist exhibition, Cézanne was again severely attacked by most of the reviewers. But there was one exception. A young critic, George Rivière, sensed in Cézanne's forms an "epic grandness" which he equated with that of the ancient Greeks.

¹ "La Confession de Claude," *Memorial d'Aix*, Dec. 3, 1865. The information in the first three footnotes is cited in John Rewald, *Paul Cézanne* (New York, 1968).

² Arnold Mortier, in *Le Figaro*, April 8, 1867.

³ Emile Zola, in *Le Figaro*, April 12, 1867.

After the generally disastrous reception Cézanne had received at the two exhibitions, he retreated from the public eye until 1889. There is no reference to new works by Cézanne in critical reviews during these twelve years. However, Cézanne continued to receive disparaging references in the early 1880's.

No account of the way Cézanne was seen at the time would be complete without some further discussion of Emile Zola's attitude toward his childhood friend. While Zola was quite well known as an art critic, particularly through his defense of Manet in the 1860's, he wrote only two explicit paragraphs on Cézanne's work, one in 1877 and one in 1880; the latter was fault-finding.⁴

A more complete reflection of Zola's views of Cézanne and the Impressionists can be gathered from his novel *L'Oeuvre* (*The Masterpiece*), published in 1886. Claude Lantier, the principal character, was portrayed as an important Impressionist painter, the leader of a new school of painting, who committed suicide in his futile attempt to "realize" his work. Zola's notes indicated that Lantier was patterned after Cézanne. What characterized a realized artist for Zola? Perhaps one whose work exhibited sufficient "finish" to be acceptable to the public. (Zola confessed to Gustave Geffroy that he was disappointed with Manet, the Impressionists and Cézanne because of their lack of finish and composition.)⁵ After all, finish and acceptability characterized Zola's own later work and success. Lantier's work, comprised largely of sketches, no longer had public acceptance. Thus Zola revealed in his novel his inability to acknowledge open-ended, at times unfinishable works, as works of art. Zola simply could not conceive of presenting as art the problems associated with the act of perception. He thought that this problem would drive the artist mad rather than sustain him. Lantier's (Cézanne's) works were too ambitious; they could never be realized—not in the sense of imposing a closed pictorial solution.

In the 1880's Cézanne was barely known outside of a small circle of painters and critics associated with the Symbolist movement. During the 1880's and 1890's Albert Aurier, Emile Bernard, Maurice Denis, Felix Fénéon, Paul Gauguin, Gustave Geffroy, J. K. Huysmans—previously a follower of Zola's Naturalism—and Paul Sérusier all expressed interest in Cézanne in their letters and articles. The founding of the journals *La Cravache* in 1886 and *Mercure de France* in 1890 gave the Symbolists two places in which to express their aesthetic aims. It was in this milieu that the first attempts were made to understand Cézanne's art theoretically.

The critics, initiated by Impressionism, were prepared to understand Cézanne's color, but not his space. The Symbolists, who flattened volumes in order to create a decorative surface, interpreted Cézanne's

equivocation between three-dimensional and two-dimensional space from the perspective of their own movement. They pressed Cézanne's pictures into the service of a theory of decorative abstraction, without considering sufficiently the role of nature in his work.

The Symbolists were the first to advance the idea that Cézanne was a "pure painter." Cézanne's maxim that one must not reproduce nature but interpret it by means of plastic equivalents was interpreted by them as a search for symbolic correspondences. Cézanne probably found the idea that his art was being linked with that of the Symbolists abhorrent. In 1904 he wrote to Emile Bernard, ". . . you will soon turn your back on the Gauguins and the Van Goghs!"⁶

The attention Cézanne received from progressive painters and critics—Bernard's article of 1891, Gustave Geffroy's article of 1893, the Caillebotte bequest of 1893, the 1894 sale of the Duret-Tanguy collection, Cézanne's participation in the 1889 World's Fair, and Pissarro's persuasiveness—all served to prompt Ambroise Vollard, the young art dealer, to organize a one-man show for him in 1895. Many painters responded enthusiastically to the exhibition. Pissarro praised Cézanne's work highly and reported in a letter that Renoir, Degas and Monet had all been deeply impressed,⁷ while regretfully commenting that many "outsiders" still did not recognize the quality of Cézanne's art.

In the next eleven years Cézanne exhibited five times in Paris (the Salon des Indépendants of 1899 and 1901, the Salon d'Automne of 1904, 1905, 1906). Artists and critics noted that his influence was to be seen everywhere. By 1907 Louis Vauxcelles, a critic, wrote that one could subtitle the 1904 and 1905 Salons "Homage to Cézanne."⁸

Cézanne interpretation between 1904 and 1907 took two basic forms: criticism in response to his exhibitions, and articles, essays and reports of conversations by progressive painters and critics.

NEOCLASSICAL CRITICS

A number of Cézanne's followers, attracted to his work by a Symbolist aesthetic, developed their interest and interpretation further when they came under the influence of the Neoclassical movement which had emerged around 1900 in music, literature and art.

Cézanne's admiration for Poussin was considered proof of his affinity to Classicism. But the extent to which the Neoclassical interpreters stressed this theory reflected their own aesthetic bias, as Theodore Reff has pointed out.⁹ These critics minimized the role of nature and dis-

⁶ Letter to Emile Bernard, April 15, 1904, in *Letters*, edited by John Rewald (Oxford, 1941), p. 234.

⁷ Letter of November 21, 1895, in *Camille Pissarro, Letters to His Son Lucien*, edited by John Rewald (New York, 1943), p. 275. See also John Rewald, *Paul Cézanne*.

⁸ *Gil Blas*, March 30, 1907.

⁹ Theodore Reff, "Cézanne and Poussin," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. XXIII, 1960, no. 1-2, January-June, pp. 150-174.

⁴ *Le Sémaphore de Marseille*, April 19, 1877; reprinted in *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1969), Vol. 12, p. 974; "Le Naturalisme au Salon," *Le Voltaire* June 18-22, 1880. Reprinted in Lionello Venturi, *Les Archives de l'Impressionnisme* (Paris, 1939), II, p. 280.

⁵ Gustave Geffroy, *Claude Monet, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris, 1924), II, p. 80.

couraged the associating of Cézanne and the Impressionists, in order to encourage a Neoclassical foundation for modern art, led by Cézanne.

Emile Bernard and Maurice Denis are the two outstanding examples of painter-writers who began as Symbolists under the influence of Gauguin and subsequently became advocates of Neoclassicism.

As early as 1891 Bernard cited Cézanne's work as "one of the greatest attempts of modern art in the direction of classical beauty."¹⁰ A lengthier article by Bernard, published in 1904 and based on conversations and correspondence with Cézanne, was authorized by the artist as an accurate representation of his views. Bernard acknowledged the pivotal role of Impressionism in turning Cézanne's eye toward nature as the source for his paintings. Cézanne, Bernard noted, believed in complete submission to the model; but the more he worked, the more his painting took on the quality of a pure conception. In a similar vein, Maurice Denis acknowledged Cézanne's passion for nature but maintained that painting is an abstraction made from the subject represented, and intended to evoke pure aesthetic pleasure. Both Bernard in 1904 and Denis in 1905 thought that Cézanne was a Classical painter in the tradition of Poussin,¹¹ a viewpoint they increasingly developed in their articles of 1907—Bernard's "Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne, et lettres inédites" and Denis' "Cézanne."¹²

Bernard described Cézanne as "a mystic precisely by his scorn for any subject, by the absence of material vision"—a notion echoed in Denis' writings as well. The epithet "mystic" reflected both Bernard's and Denis' Catholic, Symbolist leanings. It was also in harmony with Denis' participation in the Nabi movement of 1888–1899, which fostered a mystical approach to art and life.¹³ Elements of Bernard's and Denis' theoretical outlook—the emphasis on classical affinities, pure composition and mystical metaphors—reappeared in Roger Fry's essay of 1927.

Bernard's and Denis' notion of an abstract work of art conformed to their neo-Platonic conception of "pure painting," which held that painting should not represent the manifold appearance of reality but rather should correspond to an essential quality evoked in the unity of the pictorial composition. The work of art was understood in a Symbolist manner to be an equivalent of nature. Bernard and Denis were not referring to abstract painting as we have come to know it since the Cubists.

Denis made an important distinction between progressive painting with its concern for a new compositional unity, which he identified with Classicism, and the literal and sentimental representation typical of the prevailing academic painting of the time. By focusing on formal coherence, he attempted to shift the criteria of aesthetic judgment from a misplaced hierarchy based on subject matter and other external factors to the composition of the work of art itself.

However, by the 1920's, when abstract painting had become familiar, Bernard and Denis both developed reservations about Cézanne's work. To Bernard, Cézanne's painting led to academicism, while to Denis his pictures appeared philosophically limited.¹⁴ It was almost as if Denis regretted having suggested abstract art predicated on the work of Cézanne's art on "pure conception" in painting. The relationship of abstract art to the visible world was far more tenuous than Bernard or Denis had imagined. However, Denis' statement of 1900 that "a picture—before being a war horse, a nude woman, or an anecdote—is essentially a flat surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order" became the battle cry of abstract art. Denis' and Bernard's advocacy of "pure art" was meant more in a Symbolist than an abstract vein. Despite their intentions, Denis' and Bernard's essays were read in the light of the abstract movement.

Between 1904 and 1906, as previously noted, Cézanne, despite an essentially reclusive life in Aix-en-Provence, was increasingly sought out by a number of young painters, writers and others in the art world. As a result of these meetings, Ambrose Vollard, Joachim Gasquet, Gustave Geffroy, Léo Languier, Jules Borély, K. E. Osthaus, R. Rivière and J. K. Schnerb, in addition to Bernard and Denis, published their recollections of conversations with Cézanne. These accounts, however, vary in reliability, some of the articles having been published years after the encounter, but the most reliable are Bernard's essay of 1904, Rivière and Schnerb's account of 1907 and Jules Borély's report of 1905, published only in 1926.¹⁵ In contrast to the panegyric overtones of Bernard's and Denis' essays, Rivière and Schnerb, two young Parisian printmakers, presented a clear exposition of Cézanne's ideas on color and form, quite free of aesthetic biases.

CUBIST VIEWS OF CÉZANNE

In 1907, the year after Cézanne's death, fifty-six works, mainly paintings and a few drawings, were shown at a major retrospective at the Salon d'Automne, followed by seventy-nine watercolors exhibited at

¹⁰ Emile Bernard, "Paul Cézanne," *Les Hommes d'Aujourd'hui*, Vol. III, no. 387, 1891, reprinted in Linda Nochlin, *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism 1874-1904: Sources and Documents* (New Jersey, 1966), p. 101.

¹¹ Emile Bernard, "Paul Cézanne," *L'Occident*, July, 1904. Maurice Denis, "De Gauguin, de Whistler et de l'excès des théories," *L'Ermitage*, November 15, 1905, reprinted in *Théories 1890-1910* (Paris, 1912), pp. 199-210.

¹² Emile Bernard, "Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne et lettres inédites," *Mercure de France*, October 1 and 15, 1907, reprinted as *Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne et Lettres*, (Paris, 1921). Maurice Denis, "Cézanne," *L'Occident*, September 1907, reprinted in *Théories*, pp. 247-267.

¹³ The Nabi were a small group of French artists including Bonnard, Vuillard, and Maillol who rejected naturalism in favor of Gauguin's advice to paint in flat, pure colors.

¹⁴ Maurice Denis, "L'Influence de Cézanne," *L'Amour de l'Art*, December, 1920; Emile Bernard, "L'Erreur de Cézanne," *Mercure de France*, May 1, 1926.

¹⁵ R. Rivière and J. K. Schnerb, "L'Atelier de Cézanne," *La Grande Revue*, December 25, 1907; Jules Borély, "Cézanne à Aix," *L'Art vivant*, II, no. 37, July 1, 1926, pp. 491-493.

the Gallery Bernheim-Jeune. That same fall *Mercur de France* published Cézanne's letters to Emile Bernard.

Cézanne's influence was already considerable among progressive young painters. The statements of Matisse, Kandinsky, Rouault and Dufy testify to Cézanne's effect on a variety of emerging styles.¹⁶ However, his work became especially influential among those who were to engender Cubism. The Cubists viewed Cézanne's concern for purely pictorial problems as a healthy corrective and alternative to the emotionalism and decorative symbolism of other Post-Impressionists.¹⁷ But there was a divergence of opinion among the Cubists concerning Cézanne's most significant contribution, as the statements of Gleizes and Metzinger, Allard, Leger, Gris, Picasso and Apollinaire indicate.¹⁸

The 1907-1908 paintings of Picasso and Braque, the founders of Cubism, revealed their logical development of Cézanne's precepts in the use of flat planes, shallow depths and shifting perspectives. The way Picasso and Braque integrated three-dimensional vision with a two-dimensional surface stated not only a further development of Cézanne's pictorial structure, but implied that the way we come to know objects in reality is not through a single static position in space, but through shifting and successive perceptions.

A fundamental Cubist view of Cézanne held that his art was based on his concern with the process of perception. Cézanne was the first to paint the consequences of selective focus at the same time that he was concerned with his grasp of the whole, which united those multiple focuses. Cubism was based on the notion that fragmenting objects and space is a means toward reality, rather than a barrier to reality. The Cubist understanding of the question of focus and the evocation of wholeness cleared Cézanne from the accusation that he could not "realize" a painting. In the light of the Cubist vision, we could see that the task Cézanne had set for himself was to try to come closer to perceived reality through radically new means. The crux of the problem for Cézanne, and for the Cubists at the initial stage, was how to translate fragments of three-dimensional space into facets of the two-dimensional picture plane.

Cézanne's comprehension of the nature of visual cognition may have been born in the act of painting. In transposing the visual data into pictorial structure Cézanne may have discovered for himself the nature of his vision, rather than approaching the painting with a preformulated theoretical framework that dictated multiple viewpoints. His painting then became the symbolic representation of a way of seeing that had a profound effect on art in the twentieth century. The way in which Cézanne represented on canvas what he saw and how he thought came to embody more and more his *mode of interaction* with his environment, and not that environment itself. The significance of this mode of inter-

¹⁶ See the text for specific references.

¹⁷ John Golding, *Cubism, A History and an Analysis, 1907-1914* (London, 1959), p. 65.

¹⁸ See the text for specific references.

significance of this mode of interaction, and its relationship to his own life, was not examined until the idea of Cézanne's painting as a symbolization of his vision was first explored and accepted several decades later.

Though Cézanne's art, as we have just seen, was predicated on his concern with the act of seeing, the assumption that he was principally concerned with structure or pure composition evolved under Cubism. This notion of his art, characterized by the primacy of formal procedures and decisions, prevailed in the 1920's.

ROGER FRY AND FORMALIST CRITICISM

Roger Fry was the most observant, articulate, convincing advocate of the purity of Cézanne's composition. He set the standard for the next generations of Cézanne scholars and critics.

Fry first saw the work of Cézanne in a London exhibition of Impressionist art in 1905, but at the time did not consider it worth serious attention. However, by the next year Fry had come to recognize "a power which is entirely distinct and personal and though the artist's appeal is limited, and touches none of the finer issues of the imaginative life, it is nonetheless complete."¹⁹

Four years later, in 1910, increasingly impressed by the painting and new aesthetic of the "Post-Impressionists" (a term he coined to designate the painters' position in time), Fry, along with Clive Bell and Desmond McCarthy, organized a major exhibition in London. The exhibition displayed twenty-one of Cézanne's paintings, and works by Gauguin, Van Gogh, Seurat, Matisse and Picasso. Fry continued to advance the cause of Cézanne's art in the two subsequent Post-Impressionist exhibitions of 1912 and 1913. In the face of widespread criticism of the paintings among the British public, Fry maintained that Cézanne was a profoundly classic artist.

Fry had translated and published Maurice Denis' essay of 1907 in *The Burlington Magazine* of 1910,²⁰ and his Neoclassical and purist understanding of Cézanne reflected certain attitudes and ideas of Denis and Emile Bernard.

In his preface to the 1912 exhibition, Fry noted that:

All art depends upon cutting off the practical responses to sensations of ordinary life, thereby setting free a pure and as it were disembodied functioning of the spirit.

The object of these artists (is) [. . .] to attempt to express by pictorial and plastic form certain spiritual experiences [. . .].²¹

¹⁹ Desmond McCarthy, "Roger Fry and the Post-Impressionist Exhibition of 1910," *Memories* (London, 1953), p. 181.

²⁰ "Cézanne," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. XVI, 1910.

²¹ Preface to catalogue of Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, Grafton Galleries, 1912. Reprinted in Roger Fry, "The French Post-Impressionists," *Vision and Design* (New York, 1965), pp. 237, 242.

In 1917, reviewing Vollard's book on Cézanne in *The Burlington Magazine*, Fry further stated his formalist position on Cézanne:

That Cézanne became a supreme master of formal design everyone would now-a-days admit. . . . In later works . . . there is no longer any suggestion of a romantic *decor*; all is reduced to the purest terms of structural design.²²

And in 1920 he wrote: ". . . the modern movement was essentially a return to the ideas of formal design."²³

Fry believed that detached scientific evaluation of aesthetic objects, characteristic of contemporary German art history, was enormously beneficial. "The object is itself everything, its historical reference of no interest," he wrote in 1926.²⁴ Fry felt that his own task was to do for the understanding of contemporary art that which Wölfflin had done for the understanding of Italian Renaissance art. In some ways his paradigm was Wölfflin's *Classical Art*, published in 1889.²⁵

As an English critic, Fry had to contend with the prevailing aesthetic of John Ruskin, who called for morality in content. Fry countered that integrity in art consisted in the artist's fidelity to his own vision and in his devotion to the creation of form rather than the evocation of sentiment. Thus Fry developed new criteria for aesthetic judgement based on principles and priorities in the formal construction of a painting which, he believed, revealed its own order of "profound reality."

Roger Fry's full scale formal analysis of Cézanne in 1927, *Cézanne, a Study of His Development*, was first published the preceding year as notes to the Pellerin collection in the magazine, *L'Amour de l'Art*. Fry asserted in his monograph that Cézanne was perpetually concerned with articulating what the critic characterized as the artist's "passionate consciousness." In the early paintings Fry saw that quality both in the work inspired by an inner vision and by the copying of old masters at the Louvre. As his work developed, "passionate consciousness" emerged from the way of looking at things, rather than from the thing looked at.

Fry saw in Cézanne's works the expression of his own aesthetic beliefs: that the vitality and originality of a work lay not in the subject but in the formal expression of a vision. Through his study of neutral objects, Cézanne was able to concentrate on the composition itself. The still lifes, as prime examples, were presented by Fry as dramas of color, plane, volume and composition whose subject matter was irrelevant.

²² "Paul Cézanne," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. XXXI, August 15, 1917. Reprinted in Roger Fry, "Paul Cézanne," *Vision and Design*, pp. 256-257.

²³ "Retrospect," *Vision and Design*, p. 290.

²⁴ Roger Fry, "Some Questions in Aesthetics," *Transformations, Critical and Speculative Essays in Art* (New York, 1958), p. 15.

²⁵ Fry was influential in introducing the work of Wölfflin to England through his praise in a review of Wölfflin's *Das Klassische Kunst*, 1889, published in *The Athenaeum*, no. 3974, December 26, 1903, pp. 862-863, and in the introduction to his own essay, "The Seicento," *Transformations*, pp. 96-97.

The supremacy of Renaissance perspectival space had already been challenged by the Post-Impressionists' new concern for the structural quality of form and color and the Cubists' redefinition of the picture surface. These new conceptions encouraged Fry's reconsiderations of the organization of pictorial space. He was probably familiar with Hildebrand's *Problem of Form in Figurative Art* (1893), in which unity of the surface was stressed over the spatial fields.

Fry maintained that Cézanne's spatial construction was always concerned with the way the volume of a form threatens and is threatened by the surface network of design. Fry was not interested in a large-scale system of depth projection that was independent of the individual integer of design; that is, the objective space was not understood except as the individual wedges presented into and capable of prying apart the tesserae of the surface design. These wedges Fry understood as planes.

In the hierarchy of formal values, Fry appeared to view two-dimensional design, integral to painting, as superior to evocations of three-dimensional space, the vehicle of representation.

Clive Bell, like Fry, believed that meaning was to be found in pure form. Both critics maintained that a work must have "significant form" or "plasticity," the expressive quality of form, which can be measured by the magnitude of aesthetic response.

Roger Fry dramatized the search for these forms. Cézanne, Fry implied, was caught in the heroic sacrifice of subjective inclinations and in the crises of decisions which in the past had been relegated to moral or religious issues. Fry conveyed the immense seriousness of paintings without manifest content by attributing to Cézanne's search for plastic form a quasi-ethical value corresponding to the scientist's search for truth.

Fry employed the term "musicality" as a descriptive metaphor to denote pure form and its power to evoke aesthetic emotion. The notion of musicality had become quite popular from the eighteenth century onward. It prevailed in the 1900's among the Symbolist painters and writers, particularly in the aesthetic of Stéphane Mallarmé, one of Fry's patron saints. Musicality as a concept was intended to evoke the idea of authentic absolute reality which finds its outward appearance in depicted reality. Concrete reality was of a distinctly lower order in the hierarchy of values that Mallarmé and Fry shared.

As Fry wrote to Robert Bridges in 1924: "It seems to me that the emotions resulting from the contemplation of form were [. . .] more profound and significant spiritually than any of the emotions which had to do with life."²⁶ Fry characterized Cézanne's quest in his 1927 essay as "this desperate search for reality hidden beneath the veil of appearance." And of his own task Fry wrote: "I find myself like a mediaeval mystic before the divine reality, reduced to negative terms."

Fry contended that underlying the work of every Classical artist there is a suppressed Romantic strain; thus, Fry observed that Romanti-

²⁶ Cited in Virginia Woolf, *Roger Fry* (New York, 1927), pp. 229-230.

cism underwent a series of renunciations in assuming the rigors of Classicism. Yet the very notion of aesthetic sacrifice is a central Romantic metaphor. The meaning which Fry attached to pure form strongly suggests a new expression of Romanticism and neo-Platonism in its quest for significance in the forms underlying reality. One manifestation of this new Romanticism was the search for a hierarchical system which would provide art with a sense of order and values. Fry's new system replaced the previous emphasis on the evocation of sentiment with a new concern for plastic values intrinsic to the medium of painting. This new approach purified the intensity of emotion associated with "concrete reality" into "aesthetic emotion."

Elements of neo-Platonic thinking phrased in mystical language form a curious undercurrent to Fry's empirical formalism. His is an aesthetic notion of asceticism or an ascetic notion of aestheticism.

D. H. Lawrence reacted vehemently to Roger Fry's disdain for concrete reality. Cézanne was important in Lawrence's view precisely because he affirmed the concrete and the physical. Imaginative vision in Lawrence's opinion should include physical and intuitional perception. Cézanne, he wrote, had brought painting back "to form and substance and thereness, instead of delicious nowhere-ness." Referring to the critical approach of Fry and Bell, Lawrence wrote:

And I find myself equally mystified by the cant phrases like Significant Form and Pure Form. They are as mysterious to me as the Cross and the Blood of the Lamb. They are just the magic jargon of invocation, nothing else. If you want to invoke an æsthetic ecstasy, stand in front of a Matisse and whisper fervently under your breath: "Significant Form! Significant Form!"—and it will come. It sounds to me like a form of masturbation, an attempt to make the body react to some cerebral formula.²⁷

NEW FACTORS IN CÉZANNE RESEARCH

The publication in 1936 of Lionello Venturi's monumental catalogue raisonnée, *Cézanne, son art; son oeuvre*, marked a new era in Cézanne research. For the first time, all the known paintings, watercolors, drawings, lithographs and etchings were reproduced. Only six paintings had definite dates. In order to establish a chronology, Cézanne's style and development had to be reassessed with great care. While much of Venturi's dating has since been challenged (by John Rewald, Adrien Chappuis, Gertrude Berthold, Theodore Reff and Wayne Andersen) his enormous contribution to Cézanne research has been acknowledged by all.

²⁷ "Introduction to These Paintings," *The Paintings of D. H. Lawrence* (London, 1929). Reprinted in *Phoenix I* (New York, 1972), p. 567.

Up to the time of Venturi's catalogue raisonnée Cézanne had been viewed almost exclusively as a precursor of new movements. His attitude toward representation and his relation to past art other than the Neo-classical seemed to his interpreters of less consequence than his effect on new art. The publication of Venturi's catalogue raisonnée, and the major retrospective exhibition in 1936 of Cézanne's paintings and drawings, most never shown before, called for a reevaluation of Cézanne's painting, and especially his drawing. The various critical aesthetic biases, such as the Symbolist or Neoclassical, were unveiled. But above all, his drawings were considered seriously for the first time.

When Roger Fry wrote his essay on Cézanne, a significant aspect of the painter's work was almost inaccessible to the public, for Cézanne's drawings, long dismissed as inept in comparison with their academic counterparts, were rarely exhibited or seriously discussed in the literature. In 1924 Maurice Denis, in one of the first articles devoted to Cézanne's drawings, reproved the artist's maladroit handling of line.²⁸ Underlying the prejudice against Cézanne's drawing was a bias toward the role of color in Cézanne's composition and a corresponding lack of serious attention to his use of line.

The drawings were highly revealing of Cézanne's process of recording from nature, his choice of subject matter and, particularly, his copying from the old masters. Adrien Chappuis did for Cézanne's drawings what Venturi had done for the paintings. In his books of 1938, 1957, 1962, 1965, 1966 and 1973, Chappuis published the known drawings of Cézanne, setting them in chronological groupings and correcting Venturi's dating.

The study of Cézanne's drawings led to the first serious evaluations of his relationship to tradition. The pioneering studies were made by John Rewald in his 1935 and 1936 articles "Cézanne au Louvre" and "Source d'inspiration de Cézanne."²⁹ The considerable subsequent research in the 1950's will be discussed later.

Research into the way Cézanne transformed a motif from nature was also a result of the new availability of Cézanne's paintings and drawings. Between 1930 and 1944 Erle Loran Johnson, Fritz Novotny and John Rewald undertook separate studies, all three photographing the sites of certain Cézanne works in order to compare the original location with Cézanne's rendering of the scene.³⁰

²⁸ "Le Dessin de Cézanne," *L'Amour de l'Art*, V, February, 1924, pp. 37-38. André Salmon in "Dessin Inédits de Cézanne," *Cahiers d'art*, Vol. 1, no. 10, 1926, p. 263-265 praised the unacademic quality of Cézanne's drawings from a Cubist bias.

²⁹ "Cézanne au Louvre," *L'Amour de l'Art*, October, 1935; "Une copie par Cézanne d'après le Greco," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, February, 1936; "Source d'inspiration de Cézanne," *L'Amour de l'Art*, May, 1936.

³⁰ See Erle Loran Johnson, "Cézanne's Country," *The Arts*, April, 1930. (Erle Loran Johnson later published under the name Erle Loran). Fritz Novotny, *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftlichen Perspektive* (Vienna, 1938). John Rewald, "As Cézanne Recreated Nature," *Art News*, February 15-30, 1944; "The Camera Verifies Cézanne's Watercolors," *Art News*, September 1-30, 1944; "Proof of Cézanne's Pygmalion Pencil," *Art News*, October 1-15, 1944.

Along with Venturi's and Chappuis' catalogues, the biographical studies and the publication of Cézanne's letters by John Rewald were a major contribution to the broadening of perspective on Cézanne.³¹ Rewald prepared the way for later considerations of the bearing of Cézanne's life on his art. Though Rewald did not draw any far-reaching conclusions regarding the interconnection between Cézanne's painting style and the events of his life, Rewald's highly documented biography informs us of Cézanne's work as a whole.

NEW CONSIDERATIONS OF CÉZANNE'S PERCEPTION AND COMPOSITION OF SPACE

Roger Fry's essay continued to serve as a model of excellence in formal analysis while the questions he did not raise provided fertile ground for further research—informed by a new awareness of the scope of Cézanne's work. Though every interpreter had been struck by Cézanne's idiosyncratic spatial construction, the specific nature of his deviations from Renaissance perspective had never been closely examined.

Fritz Novotny first came to his study of the distortions in Cézanne's use of space in 1932, in order to explain the quality of "aloofness" and the lack of mood or atmosphere which he observed in Cézanne's landscapes.³² In his book of 1938, *Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftlichen Perspektive*, Novotny questioned whether the renunciation of illusory space and the distortions of scientific perspective were determined only by the demands of pictorial composition of the surface or whether they reflected a deeper meaning, a change in perception of visual reality (*Anschauungsrealität*). Novotny observed the growing attention to the picture surface in the nineteenth century and the increased importance of pictorial formation. This was balanced by waning fidelity to the object in reality (*Wirklichkeitserscheinung*). As the image character (*Gebilde*) of a picture became more pronounced, Novotny held, the values of representation, especially the constitutive elements of illusionary space, became of necessity more problematical.

Novotny observed that the reduction of any expressive quality in the choice and rendering of Cézanne's portraits and landscapes signaled a new attitude toward the object world. The new emphasis on the picture surface had far-reaching effects on the construction of pictorial space

and affected the way objects underwent transformation. Cézanne's art, Novotny observed, thus led away from the European pictorial tradition of independent objects and forms and moved toward a predominance of both formal and chromatic combinations.

Cézanne, however, did not actually break with scientific perspective, Novotny contended. By retaining the rudiments of a perspectival system, he guaranteed a degree of objectivity in space. Novotny observed that Cézanne's paintings produce the impression that the objects are forming themselves before our eyes, an idea subsequently developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and by Meyer Schapiro. Cézanne's painting should not be viewed as abstract, Novotny stated, because he maintained an equilibrium between the represented object and the picture structure. It was only with Cubism, according to Novotny, that scientific perspective died.

Novotny's contemporary Hans Sedlmayr, an ardent Catholic, nationalist and traditionalist, took issue with the implications of Cézanne's "expressionless" quality in his book *Verlust der Mitte, die bildende Kunst des 19 und 20 Jahrhunderts als symbol der Zeit (Art in Crisis)*, published in 1948. Sedlmayr developed Novotny's observation that Cézanne's art is divorced from life (*lebensfern*). But in a spirit antagonistic to Novotny, Sedlmayr contended that Cézanne's art was "contrary to human nature [in excluding] from the art of perception all other functions of the human mind in favor of pure seeing." Sedlmayr could not perceive that the human spirit could be expressed in other than representational form.

Erle Loran's analysis of Cézanne's composition revealed an almost exclusive interest in pictorial structure. Unlike Novotny, he did not raise questions of expression and effect. In his 1943 book *Cézanne's Composition*, Loran used a series of line and shade diagrams to demonstrate how Cézanne structured his paintings. Loran's aim was to articulate the principles of drawing and composition utilized by Cézanne, principles, Loran maintained, which had didactic value and should be adopted in art education.

Loran attributed Cézanne's greatness in the history of painting to three major contributions: the mastery over structural planes; the synthesis of abstraction and reality; and the importance of the surface. Loran was the first to assert the crucial role of line in Cézanne's painting, which defines both objects and planes. Color had always been considered the principal compositional factor in Cézanne's work. Loran, however, maintained that Cézanne's line was underestimated, and he demonstrated its structural importance through diagrams. In doing so Loran underplayed the role of color in the structuring of planes, despite the evidence in Cézanne's painting and maxims. The use of black and white photographs and line diagrams artificially flattened the view of nature while emphasizing the contours which distinguished the objects.

Despite Loran's recognition of the structural role of line, he, like previous critics, viewed Cézanne's drawing as inept. The distortion of Cézanne's line in *Les Baigneurs au Repos (Bathers Resting)* (V. 276) he judged as "clumsiness, lack of dexterity and manual skill. The dis-

³¹ Paul Cézanne, *Correspondence*, edited by John Rewald (Paris, 1937; London, 1941); John Rewald, *Cézanne et Zola* (Paris, 1936); *Cézanne, sa vie, son oeuvre, son amitié pour Zola* (Paris, 1939). See also the later publication, *Cézanne, Geffroy et Gasquet, suivi de Souvenirs sur Cézanne de Louis Aurenche et de lettres inédites* (Paris, 1959).

³² "Das Problem des Menschen Cézanne im Verhältnis zu seiner Kunst," *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, XXVI, 1932.

tortions are merely the butchering of naturalistic appearances and serve no plastic purpose.”³³

Loran’s concern with the process of painting was limited to the elements of pictorial composition and not with Cézanne’s perceptual process. Loran may have conceived of the picture space as a stage filled with discrete, consistent, complete combinations of shapes. His diagrams imply a sequential reading of the picture appropriate to a self-contained image rather than a composition based on successive perceptions.

Creative phenomena cannot be reduced to definable and diagrammatical elements without considerable loss of richness and complexity. Loran did not fully explore the distortions in the synthesis between realism and abstraction, vision and design. Though intentionally limited, his work provided one example of how one might proceed in a careful structural analysis.

The complexity and radical nature of Cézanne’s art were comprehended from a philosophical standpoint by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the French phenomenologist. Merleau-Ponty saw Cézanne’s painting as a paradigm of the balance between objective reality and subjective perception. In his essay of 1948, “Le Douce de Cézanne” (“Cézanne’s Doubt”), he explained that Cézanne’s way of organizing a painting was predicated not on abstract composition but on the continual struggle to paint the world as it appeared to him: “He wanted to depict matter as it takes on form.”³⁴ Cézanne’s spatial deviations were perceptually more accurate than those ordered according to an a priori system. The perspective we see is neither geometric nor photographic, wrote Merleau-Ponty. Cézanne’s distortions, he observed, gave the impression of an object “in the act of appearing.” If his paintings looked peculiar, it was because we had become accustomed to seeing things according to our use of them. Cézanne’s painting, Merleau-Ponty explained, suspended such habits of thought. “Cézanne’s difficulties are those of the first word.”³⁵

Cézanne was described as a vital link in the development of painting by Clement Greenberg in 1951.³⁶ Greenberg, the leading proponent of modernist criticism, advocated that painting and sculpture should develop according to a logic determined by the media themselves. Clear distinctions were made between elements that were considered to be intrinsic and extrinsic to those art forms. In “Cézanne and the Unity of Modern Art,” Greenberg argued that Cézanne was responsible for the shift from pictorial illusion to “the picture itself as an object, as a flat surface.” Surface pattern was endowed by Greenberg with “superior

³³ *Cézanne’s Composition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1943, 1950, 1963, 1970), p. 94.

³⁴ “Cézanne’s Doubt,” *Sense and Non-Sense*, translated by H. L. and P. A. Dreyfus (Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 13; first published as *Sens et non-sens* (Paris, 1948).

³⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

³⁶ Clement Greenberg, “Cézanne and the Unity of Modern Art,” *Partisan Review*, May–June 1951, pp. 323–330.

pictorial rights” because it was seen as intrinsic to painting while the representation of the third dimension was understood as illusionary. Cézanne was depicted by Greenberg as one of the first modernist painters.

Hilton Kramer, another contemporary critic, observed that as the Cubists completed what Cézanne had begun, so Greenberg completed what Fry had initiated.³⁷ Greenberg, like Fry, indicated priorities of formal arrangements which were believed by both critics to have meaning in themselves. These guidelines or strategies participated in the spirit of the painting in question, but were limited by their formalist parameters. Priorities were often phrased as a kind of historical inevitability in the progression of the formal aspect of art. At no point was the art work considered in its totality. The formal issues were isolated and the formal pursuit characterized as a kind of moral and spiritual quest.

MEYER SCHAPIRO: NEW CRITERIA FOR INTERPRETATION

Meyer Schapiro attacked formalism in its citadel when he interpreted Cézanne with an eye toward subject matter in his 1952 book *Paul Cézanne*. For the first time, Cézanne’s choice of objects, motifs and subjects was studied for meaning and correspondence to form. Schapiro converted the task of formalism from a method of justifying the object in compositional terms to a method of investigation. His approach can be characterized as a historical and psychological translation of the formal model, seeing in its elements the kernels of other levels of analysis.

Schapiro began with a formal appreciation of Cézanne, stimulated by Roger Fry and Fritz Novotny. In 1928 he wrote about Cézanne:

Except in certain erotic themes, which attracted his youth and old age, he was indifferent to the practical meanings or associations of the subject and sought only the possibilities of coherent visual combination.³⁸

Two years later, Schapiro’s growing concern with iconography and the history of style was apparent in the published version of his thesis of 1929, *The Romanesque Sculpture of Moissac*, in which he supplemented the formal descriptions and analyses with a discussion of the subject matter.

Part of the breakdown of Schapiro’s incipient formalism may be

³⁷ Hilton Kramer, “A Critic on the Side of History: Notes on Clement Greenberg,” *Arts*, October 1962, pp. 60–63.

³⁸ “Art in the Contemporary World,” *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West*, (Columbia University Press, 1928), p. 284.

attributed to his concern with social context. Influenced by Marxist thinking in the early 1930's, from then on his writings reflected a historical and contextual perspective. Modern art (or any other art, for that matter) could not be considered independent of historical conditions, he argued, and pure form could not be considered independent of content.³⁹

Five years after Schapiro's initial statement on Cézanne, he cited the painter as an example par excellence of one who was misunderstood when his dicta were applied out of context.⁴⁰ Cézanne's work, which attracted formal interpretation and served as a precursor for abstract painting, became a case in point for Schapiro's aesthetic.

It may be objectionable to some, Schapiro noted, to consider the themes of a painter as having to do with the value or character of his art. Nevertheless, he asked us to see Cézanne's paintings as images of the real world which are highly selective, idiosyncratic and often tied metaphorically to questions of style.

Schapiro explained that it was (and is) important to understand the contemporary attitude toward the role and nature of objects in painting. Even the taste for "pure painting" depended on a passive attitude to things, he pointed out. Cézanne's individual sensibility, his special response to observed forms caused his attitude toward objects to differ from that of Manet and the Impressionists.

In Schapiro's view, what was unique about Cézanne's line, color and composition was the revelation of the artist's process. Schapiro's description of Cézanne's perceptual process and the way he painted objects as they emerged through perception parallels the formulations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Schapiro observed that the activity of balance between the subjective perceiver (Cézanne) and the objective reality (objects, landscapes, people) was laid before us. Still-lives were both a source of empirical knowledge and vehicles for perception. Cézanne did not paint the object as he knew it to be in some objective, utilitarian or logical framework, but, rather, as it became "visible" to him through repeated looking.

Schapiro was the first scholar to demonstrate a continuity in Cézanne's choice of subject matter and its execution in relation to his life. Schapiro pointed out the development from Cézanne's early, often erotically charged works, strong in their naive forms and distinctive sense of color, to the last paintings, such as *Les Grandes Baigneuses* (*Women Bathers* or *The Large Bathers*) (V. 719; fig. 21). The repeated agitated lines of the Bathers suggested an ambivalent attitude toward the naked female body at the same time that they signified the fitting together of forms to reveal the painter's perceptual process.

Schapiro explored documentary evidence from Cézanne's life—his

poetry, sketchbooks, letters, the literary and pictorial sources with which he was familiar—and also introduced psychoanalytic theory for the first time to the Cézanne literature in order to elucidate further Cézanne's subject matter.

Through his perceptive analyses of form and content Schapiro suggested that the apparent coolness and neutrality of Cézanne's landscapes, still-lives, portraits and group paintings at the same time convey a highly charged emotional state brought under constructive control in the service of the unity of the painting. Cézanne's choice and manner of representing objects was bound up with the formal development of his painting.

Schapiro maintained that still-life as a genre offered a rich sphere for latent personal symbols. In an argument diametrically opposed to Roger Fry's position that still-lives were purely compositional in value, Schapiro asserted that "once established as a model domain of the objective in art, still-life is open to an endless variety of feelings and thoughts, even of a disturbing intensity."⁴¹

In his essay of 1968, "The Apples of Cézanne: An Essay on the Meaning of Still-Life," Schapiro began with an iconographic analysis of the problematic subject matter of "The Amorous Shepherd" and the "Judgment of Paris." Schapiro saw the apples in these paintings as having a highly charged content. He went on to connect the emotional significance of the apples as used here to their function in the still lifes. In this process he used psychoanalytic interpretation extensively, but he did not maintain that such an interpretation alone provided a full explanation. He pointed out that we do not really know the effects of Cézanne's personal life on the choice of subject:

The painting of apples may also be regarded as a deliberately chosen means of emotional detachment and self-control; the fruit provided at the same time an objective field of colors and shapes with an apparent sensuous richness lacking in his earlier passionate art and not realised as fully in the later paintings of nudes. To rest with the explanation of the still-life as a displaced sexual interest is to miss the significance of still-life in general as well as important meanings of the objects on the manifest plane. In the work of art the latter had a weight of its own and the choice of objects is no less bound to the artist's consciously directed life than to an unconscious symbolism; it also has vital roots in social experience.⁴²

Schapiro considered Cézanne in a more complex way than any previous critic had. His formal analysis of the paintings made possible a convincing elucidation of their perceptual, psychological and historical elements. In turn, his awareness of the complexity of Cézanne's art allowed him to see the formal composition in a new, more meaningful way. Schapiro's insistence on an acute characterization of content, then, came

³⁹ "The Nature of Abstract Art," *Marxist Quarterly*, no. 1, 1937, pp. 77–98.

⁴⁰ "Über den Schematismus in der romanischen Kunst," *Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur*, Jahrgang 1932–33, pp. 1–21.

⁴¹ "The Apples of Cézanne," *Art News Annual*, XXXIV, 1967, pp. 33–53, p. 44.

⁴² "The Apples of Cézanne," p. 40.

from a sense of the reciprocal metaphors of form and content—facing mirrors which merged into an infinite series of analogies.

CÉZANNE RESEARCH SINCE 1952

Since Meyer Schapiro's book, three lines of Cézanne research have been pursued to date: First, the religious existentialist interpretation advanced by Kurt Badt in 1956. Second, the work on chronology and sources, continuing the task of dating undertaken by Venturi and Chappuis—since the late 1950's, Wayne Andersen, Gertrude Berthold, Adrien Chappuis, Douglas Cooper, Lawrence Gowing, Robert Ratcliffe, Theodore Reff, John Rewald, and Carl Schniewind have reevaluated the criteria for dating through considerations of Cézanne's copies and working methods. Third, psychoanalytic considerations, initiating a major trend in subsequent research developed further in publications by Kurt Badt in 1956, by Theodore Reff in articles from 1959 to 1966 and by Schapiro himself in 1968.

Kurt Badt in his 1956 book *Die Kunst Cézannes (The Art of Cézanne)*, dealt with Cézanne's compositional structure, watercolor technique, use of blue as dominant color, choice of subject matter, psychological causes for symbolic content, historical position and metaphysics. He was concerned with the "ultimate aims" of Cézanne's art, contending that they were not the formal problems many critics claimed them to be. Rather, for Cézanne, "every subject became a symbolic representation of his own apprehension of the whole."

Kurt Badt's approach to Cézanne was distinguished from previous Cézanne criticism by the introduction, however cursory, of a Jungian interpretation of *The Cardplayers* and, more emphatically, a religious existentialist interpretation based on Karl Jaspers' "Existenz" philosophy.

Refuting the notion that Cézanne was a "pure painter," Badt maintained that Cézanne's technique was a cipher, his emphasis on the overall picture composition reflecting his attitude toward the world: "The merely graphic means absolutely nothing."⁴³ For example, Cézanne used blue as the "common ground for all coloration," creating both the sensation of nearness and distance, because in the equalizing of foreground and background "the eternal order of the world" was implied.

Badt described the "mystery" of Cézanne's paintings as "their perfect transcendence in thereness," a notion predicated on Jaspers' philosophy.⁴⁴ According to Jaspers, existence, the state of continually coming into "being," can only be realized directly through experiencing the particular in the world as part of an encompassing and unifying whole—in other words, through transcendence.

Badt believed that Cézanne's minimization of the objective nature

of his objects, in their self-containment as form, revealed the objects as "existing together" in a unity and harmony which transcended their individual nature.

Gertrude Berthold's *Cézanne und die alten Meister*, 1958, is the most comprehensive documentary study of Cézanne's relation to tradition. Three hundred and fifty drawings after old-master sources were catalogued. The stylistic significance and the character of Cézanne's copies were studied, a chronology of the drawings presented and the use of the models from old masters, particularly for the bather compositions, reviewed. Berthold's approach was basically that of analysis of the forms apparent in the copies without studying the significance of Cézanne's recurrent choices.⁴⁵ The predominant number of Baroque works which Cézanne copied put his relation to the classical masters into perspective; he copied Rubens' work far more often than Poussin's.

In his 1960 article, "Cézanne and Poussin," Theodore Reff unveiled the myth of Cézanne's "redoing Poussin from nature." Reff reviewed extensively the early critical literature on Cézanne and demonstrated that the advocacy of Poussin was not really a function of Cézanne's painting but of the Neoclassical movement in which Bernard, Denis and other of Cézanne's interpreters participated.

Reff observed in his dissertation of 1958, "Studies in the Drawings of Cézanne," that Cézanne's interest in traditional art was more pervasive and profound than that of any of his contemporaries; one-third of all his drawings were copies after other works of art. Reff identified the sources for Cézanne's copies and speculated as to the motivations and reasons behind the choices and transformations of known motifs. He developed Schapiro's idea that the choice of object or subject matter was related to changes in style. While Cézanne chose to copy predominantly Baroque works, Reff claimed that in the process of copying them he denied many of the qualities that must have attracted him initially, namely "extreme naturalism, completeness and intensity of expression." On the contrary, Cézanne's drawings tended to be "cool, colorless and fragmentary." Though Cézanne admired the power and completeness of Baroque art, his possibilities were "determined by his own time and temperament."

In subsequent research, Reff placed increasing emphasis on the affective content of Cézanne's motifs. Methods of psychoanalytic inquiry were applied to the study of a problematic figure, set of figures or subject, such as the Bathers motif in its various guises.⁴⁶ The paintings were discussed almost as dreams, in accordance with the model established by Freud in his *Interpretation of Dreams*. Motifs were traced through antecedents and subsequent transformations, with recurrent patterns in the

⁴³ See Theodore Reff, "New Sources for Cézanne's Copies," *The Art Bulletin*, XLII, June 1960, pp. 147-149.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Cézanne's "The Enigma of the Nude," *Art News*, LVIII, November, 1959, pp. 26-29; "Cézanne, Flaubert, St. Anthony, and The Queen of Sheba," *The Art Bulletin*, XLIV (1962), pp. 113-125; Cézanne's "Dream of Hannibal," *The Art Bulletin*, XLV (1963), pp. 148-152; "Cézanne and Hercules," *The Art Bulletin*, XLVIII (1966), pp. 35-44.

⁴³ *The Art of Cézanne* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965), p. 123.

⁴⁴ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence* (New York, 1971). After lectures delivered in 1937.

sketchbooks, poems, dreams and letters carefully noted, in order to gain insight into Cézanne's conscious goals and unconscious motives and inclinations. Reff's emphasis, like Freud's, was on the relationship between manifest and latent content—the syntax of the unconscious. Cézanne's deviations from such traditional subjects as "The Temptation of St. Anthony" were viewed against the background of historical and contemporary prototypes of the motif, in order to demonstrate that his departure from the known texts and established iconographic types was revealing of the personal content that Cézanne had invested in these motifs.

While it is impossible to definitively establish Cézanne's unconscious associations with various images and motifs, the questions and issues raised by Reff contribute to our understanding of the complex relationship between Cézanne's art and his life.

Wayne Andersen who has been lecturing in and researching on Cézanne's subject matter from a psycho-sexual point of view, has focused in his book (*Cézanne's Portrait Drawings*, 1970) and articles, on the drawings and copies in order to establish a more precise chronology. Andersen introduced a "topographical" method, based on the use of external criteria. For example, in his article on the sketchbook owned by the Art Institute of Chicago, Andersen observed that the sketches were aligned right side up or upside down depending on whether Cézanne opened the sketchbook from front or back.⁴⁷ Using evidence gleaned from various topographical analyses of the sequence of drawings, and taking into account the age of Cézanne's son at the time the boy drew in his father's sketchbook, Andersen postulated a range of dates in which the sketchbook drawings were executed. He then applied his findings to the existing chronologies. Andersen warned that one should not assume a neat linear progression through "logical stages in Cézanne's drawings since he often returned after a time to a previous motif."

Interpretations prior to Schapiro's book tended to address Cézanne's work as a whole. A more focused scholarly study of a specific issue or aspect of Cézanne's work is characteristic of the post-Schapiro literature. (Badt's comprehensive book is an exception). Recent studies have ranged from analyses of Cézanne's color, his copies from past art and chronologies of the drawings to the interpretation of an image in one of Cézanne's poems or paintings. At the same time, most of these current studies reflect a broad perspective on Cézanne. The relationship between Cézanne's art and his life is increasingly taken for granted. As Schapiro observed, "An art of personal expression has a universal sense." Or, as Picasso noted, "It's not what the artist *does* that counts, but what he *is*."

Cézanne has not been cited as a major precursor of new developments in art for nearly half a century. Yet he continues to have an impact on present artistic concerns. Questions of pictorial structure, unity and process, as Cézanne defined them, still prevail and underlie con-

temporary movements in painting and sculpture. Cézanne made painting the record of his perceptual, conceptual and compositional experience. This major contribution has remained relevant. However, while Cézanne rendered the interface of the process of perception and object of perception, recent movements in art have tended to focus on a single dimension of his work.

Abstract Expressionist painters have been concerned with the procedural aspects of Cézanne's work, and not with the quality of his formal composition. This expression of process in recorded gesture takes precedence over object in the construction of action painting. For example, the dramatic gesture of the painter flinging and pouring paint on canvas insists that the final work will embody the process by which it came to be. The process has become the painting.

Modernist painters of the 1960's have pursued questions of unity. Cézanne created cohesiveness in the small structural elements of his paintings by relating part to part, color to color. Now a simpler solution of unity is posited in the reduction of color areas to a large field, unambiguously lying on the surface of the canvas without the complex affinity with illusory depth.

Modernist painting has found the problem of representing images and objects extraneous. On the other hand sculpture, concerned as it must be with objects, has created work which intersects with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological view of Cézanne. Thus, the space we conceive is in direct relation to the space we perceive. In order to articulate this relationship the artist and spectator must become acutely aware of their experience of space and not fall back on their knowledge of how to construct an illusory space. Sculptors such as Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra and Keith Sonnier make objects which occupy the space of the spectator in such a way that seeing becomes a process of interaction between the perceiver's body and the perceived sculpture. Robert Morris reflects:

As ends and means are more unified, as process becomes part of the work instead of prior to it, one is involved more directly with the world in art making because forming is moved further into the presentation.⁴⁸

In summary, Cézanne continues to be significant to artists, critics and historians. Once again New Realist painting raises the problem of bringing the world back into the picture without resorting to previous solutions which may have less meaning for our time. Thus, Cézanne's own deviations from naturalistic representation need no longer be read as formal abstraction. His emphasis on recording the process of his perception of the natural world was his way of expressing that world in his painting. Cézanne's art is unsentimental and therefore acceptable to the contemporary sensibility. Beyond this, his art serves as a model for

⁴⁷ "Cézanne's Sketchbook in the Art Institute of Chicago," *The Burlington Magazine*, CIV, (May, 1962), pp. 196-201. See also, "Cézanne's *Carnet violet-moiré*," *The Burlington Magazine*, CVII, (June, 1965), pp. 313-318.

⁴⁸ "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making: The Search for the Motivated," *Artforum*, April, 1970, vol. VIII, no. 8, pp. 62-66, p. 66.

the present generation precisely because his revolutionary canvases expressed his conviction that vision is subjective. Cézanne, above all, makes us conscious of the way he sees and in the process dramatically extends our field of vision, our possibility of seeing. The perceptual process was primary for Cézanne. He did not, even more, he could not accept a preconceived set of rules for painting his vision of nature. Once we understand Cézanne's art in this light, we can no longer accept the notion that our seeing an object is only a function of that object itself—any more than we can accept that the object is perceived solely in a culturally determined pattern.

Cézanne's insistence on the primacy of the artist's vision revolutionized art. He also profoundly altered the ways in which the rest of us, artists or not, would thereafter view our world.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ A similar view has been expressed by John Berger, "The Sight of Man," *The New Society*, April 16, 1970, pp. 646–647; and by Gabriel Laderman, in "Problems of Criticism VIII: Notes from the Underground," *Artforum*, September, 1970, pp. 59–61.

PART ONE / Reactions of Some Contemporary Painters and Critics: 1874-1907

Marc de Montifaud

From "The Exhibition of the
Boulevard des Capucines" (1874)

The Sunday public saw fit to sneer in the face of a fantastic figure who is revealed in an opiated sky, to a smoker of opium [Fig. 3]. This apparition of a little pink and nude flesh which is being pushed before him in an empyrean cloud, by a kind of demon or incubus, like a voluptuous vision, this corner of artificial paradise, has suffocated the most courageous, it is necessary to say, and M. Cézanne only gives the impression of a kind of madman who paints in delirium tremens. People have refused to see in this creation inspired by Baudelaire a dream, an impression caused by oriental mists which it was necessary to render under the bizarre framework of the imagination. Is not incoherence the nature, the special characteristic of praiseworthy sleep? Why look for an indecent jest, a motive of scandal in the Olympia? In reality, it is only one of the extravagant forms of hashish borrowed from a swarm of amusing dreams which must still be hidden in the corners of the Hotel Pilmoden. . . .

Marc de Montifaud, "L'Exposition du Boulevard des Capucines," *L'Artiste*, May, 1874, pp. 307–313; this excerpt, p. 310.