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

SYNOPSIS
Paul Cézanne was the preeminent French artist of the Post-Impressionist era, widely appreciated toward the end of his life for insisting that painting stay in touch with its material, if not virtually sculptural origins. Also known as the "Master of Aix" after his ancestral home in the South of France, Cézanne is credited with paving the way for the emergence of modern art, both visually and conceptually. In retrospect, his work constitutes the most powerful and essential link between the ephemeral aspects of Impressionism and the more materialist, early 20th century artistic movements of Fauvism, Cubism, Expressionism, and even complete abstraction.

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

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

- Cezanne applied his pigments to the canvas in a series of discrete, methodical brushstrokes, indeed as though he were "constructing" a picture rather than "painting" it, thus remaining true to an underlying architectural ideal: every portion of the canvas should contribute to its overall structural integrity.

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

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

Early training
Cezanne was largely a self-taught artist. In 1859 he attended evening drawing classes in his native town of Aix. After moving to Paris in 1861, Cezanne twice attempted to enter the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, but
was turned down by the jury. Instead of acquiring professional training, Cezanne made frequent visits to the Musée de Louvre, where he copied works by Titian, Rubens, and Michelangelo. He was also regularly visited the Académie Suisse, a studio where young art students could draw from the live model for a very modest monthly membership fee. While at the Académie, Cezanne met fellow painters Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet, and Auguste Renoir, who were at that time also struggling artists, but who would soon comprise the founding members of the nascent Impressionist movement.

The early oils of Cezanne were executed in a rather somber palette. The paint was often applied in thick layers of impasto, adding a sense of heaviness to already solemn compositions. Cezanne's early painting indicated a focus on color in favor of well-delineated silhouettes and perspectives preferred by the French Academy and the jury of the annual Salon. While in Paris, Cezanne continuously submitted his works for exhibition at the Salon. All of his submissions, however, were refused. The artist also travelled regularly back to Aix to secure funding from his disapproving father. The year 1870 marked a crucial shift in Cezanne's painting, which was
occasioned by two factors: the artist's move to L'Estaque in the South of France to avoid the military draft, and his closer association with one of the most distinguished young Impressionists - Camille Pissarro. Cezanne was fascinated with the Mediterranean landscape of L'Estaque with its abundance of sunlight and the vibrancy of colors. Pissarro proved instrumental in persuading Cezanne to adopt a brighter palette, as well as to abandon the heavy and ponderous impasto technique in favor of smaller and livelier brushstrokes. In L'Estaque, Cezanne executed a series of landscapes dominated by the architectonic forms of the rural houses, the dazzling blues of the sea, and the vivacious greens of the foliage.

In 1872 Cezanne returned to Paris where his son Paul was born. His mistress, Hortense Fiquet, would finally become Madame Cezanne in 1886, notably following the artist's father's death. Cezanne painted over forty portraits of his companion, as well as several enigmatic portraits of their son, Paul.

In 1873 Cezanne exhibited in the Salon des Refusés, the notorious show of artists who had been refused by the official Salon (Cezanne could count himself among a circle including Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, and Camille Pissarro, among others). The critics slammed the avant-garde artists, which apparently hurt Cezanne deeply. In the next decade he mostly painted away from Paris, in either Aix or L'Estaque, and he no longer participated in unofficial group exhibitions.

**Mature Period**
Cezanne's experience with painting from nature led him to develop his own theory of art. He strove to depart from the portrayal of the transient moment, long favored by the Impressionists; instead, Cezanne sought true and permanent pictorial qualities of objects around him. According to Cezanne, the subject of the painting was first to be "read" by the artist through the understanding of its essence. Then, in the second stage, this essence must be "realized" on a canvas through forms, colors, and their spatial relations. The colors and forms thus became the dominant elements of his compositions, completely freed from the rigid rules of perspective and paint application as promoted by the Academy.

Depicting reality as such was never Cezanne's primary objective. In his own words, it was "something other than reality" that he endeavored to reveal.

In Cezanne's mature work the colors and forms possessed equal pictorial weight. The primary means of constructing the new perspective included the juxtaposition of cool and warm colors as well as the bold overlapping of forms. The light was no longer an "outsider" in relation to depicted objects; rather, light emanated from within. Instead of the illusion, he searched for the essence. Instead of the three-dimensional artifice, he longed for the two-dimensional truth.

These principles of painting were also applied to still lifes and portraits. In the 1880's, Cezanne executed a large number of still lifes, completely reinventing the genre in the two-dimensional mode. The central feature of these still lifes was the crucial shift of attention from the objects themselves, to the forms and colors that were potentially communicated by their surfaces and contours. This radical liberation of form and color from their carrier, the object itself, directly precipitated the basic principles of Cubism, Expressionism, and later experimentation with various degrees of abstraction.

Cezanne's portraits, including an extensive body of self-portraits, exhibit the same set of traits. The compositions are vividly impersonal, for it was not the sitter's character that Cezanne struggled to depict but the formal and coloristic possibilities of the human body and its interior nature.
Late Period and Death

In the last decade of his life, Cezanne limited his artistic pursuits almost exclusively to two pictorial motifs. One was the depiction of the Mont Sainte-Victoire, a dramatic mountain that dominated the parched and stoney landscape at Aix. The other was the final synthesis of nature and the human body in a series of so-called Bathers (nudes depicted frolicking in a landscape). The latest of the Bathers were becoming increasingly abstract in regard to how form and color seemed to fuse together on the canvas.

After contracting pneumonia, Paul Cezanne died in his familial house in Aix on October 22, 1906. The last decade of his life had been marred by the development of diabetes and severe depression, which contributed toward alienating the artist from most of his friends and family.

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

*Original content written by Ivan Savvine*

**ARTIST QUOTES**

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

"You must think. The eye is not enough; it needs to think as well."

"I try to render perspective through color alone .. One must see one's model correctly and experience it in the right way, and furthermore, express oneself with distinction and strength."

"There must not be a single loose strand, a single gap through which the tension, the light, the truth can escape."

"A painter is revealing something which no one has ever seen before and translates it into the absolute concepts of painting. That is, into something other than reality."

"I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you"   [Cezanne writing to the French artist Emile Bernard; letter dated October 23, 1905.]
Major Works:

_Louis-Auguste Cézanne, the Artist's father, Reading "L'Evenement", Paul Cézanne, 1866, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Oil on canvas_

This portrait is one of the most renowned early works by Cezanne. The rigid composition is dominated by somber hues applied in a thick impasto. The expressive premise for this piece is suggested by the artist's inclusion of his own still-life in the background, as though to solicit recognition of his talent by his famously disapproving parent. As if to force the issue, Louis-
August is portrayed reading a liberal newspaper, a highly unlikely event, as he was widely known for his conservative outlook.

*Modern Olympia*, Paul Cézanne, 1869-1870, Private Collection  Oil on canvas

This composition is Cézanne's adaptation of the theme of the *demi-mondaine*, or high-class prostitute suggested in Edouard Manet's scandalous *Olympia* of 1863. Unlike Manet's treatment, however, Cézanne portrays the prostitute as an awkwardly naked and recoiling figure, setting off the figures of her suitor (completely invisible in Manet's rendering of the subject) and an African chambermaid as transgressing "outsiders." The figures are depicted in both an expressive and abbreviated, indeed almost ungainly manner, with facial features only vaguely outlined, like masks,
while their fleshy, corpulent bodies are visually articulated by dynamic, curving contours. The interior of the room is defined by a series of sweeping diagonals and bold colors depicting draperies, fruit, and an implied floral arrangement (Manet's version of the subject sported a resplendent bouquet in the center of the canvas). The suitor may be equated with Cézanne himself, possibly referring to his well-known anxiety with the opposite sex, which he struggled with throughout his entire life.

The Bay of Marseille, Seen from L'Estaque, Paul Cézanne, 1885, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Oil on canvas

In this view of L'Estaque the artist's palette bursts with a vibrant bouquet of colors previously unseen in his work. The rigid architectonic forms of the houses define the foreground, while the rest of the picture is realized just as "solidly" through the bold blues of the sea and the sky. The complimentary colors are skillfully employed by the artist to create an illusion of pictorial depth. The entire composition reminds us the artist's stated desire to "make of Impressionism something solid and enduring, like the art in museums." Cezanne painted numerous views of L'Estaque, which was one of his favorite destinations in the South of France.
This is an example of the many portraits Cezanne painted of his mistress and eventual wife, Hortense Fiquet. Cezanne does not romanticize her form: the sitter's figure is rigidly imposing, almost soldier-like, her face bluntly plain and asymmetrical, with only one ear visible. It seems that the sitter exists purely for compositional purposes, her dress in itself serving as an excuse for the artist to experiment with various tones of red, like a convenient palette. The stark geometrical accents dissect the canvas in both horizontal and vertical directions, thus creating the impression of a carefully arranged, monumental still life, as opposed to a portrait of a life-long companion or "loved one."
Cezanne produced his series of "Card Player" paintings, drawings, and related studies in the region of Aix-en-Provence, his ancestral home in the South of France, where he found in the image of men playing cards something timeless, like the mountains cradling an ancient people. As though having come together around a simple peasant table for a seance or cosmic conference, the card players seem at once transient and unmoving, very much masters of their environment and yet weathered testaments of time’s passing.
After studying Dutch and French Old Master still-life painting at the Musee du Louvre and other Paris galleries, Cezanne formulated his own, semi-sculptural approach to still-lifes. Typically strewn across an upturned tabletop, Cezanne's pears, peaches and other pictorial elements seem at once to rest on a solid, wooden plank, and yet float across the surface of the canvas like a new kind of calligraphy. As if to press home that point, Cezanne typically includes chairs, wooden screens, water pitchers and wine bottles to suggest that the gaze of the viewer rise vertically up the canvas, rather than plunge deep within any implied corner of real kitchen.
In nearly abstract watercolor landscapes dating from the latter part of his life, Cezanne achieved a perfect balance, or equilibrium, between color, form, and relatively untouched areas of the paper. The brushstrokes themselves seemed to speak a visual poetry entirely apart from the painting's subject. In this study of trees, Cezanne is moving further toward abstraction by constructing the landscape view through various constellations of color. What seems an "unfinished" composition nonetheless successfully suggests the feeling of nature without fully representing it, the overall canvas structured by intersecting diagonals that tip and turn out of the picture plane, like leaves shifting in the sunlight. This lively arrangement, along with the artist's obvious acknowledgment of the raw canvas as a positive component, directly anticipates the "incomplete" landscapes of the Fauves and provides future generations with a method to experiment with pictorial possibilities beyond the rigid tradition of naturalistic representation.
Mont Sainte-Victoire, Paul Cézanne, c.1905, The Pushkin Museum of Fine Art, Moscow  Oil on canvas

This is one of the last landscapes of Mont Sainte-Victoire favored by Cézanne at the end of his life. The view is rendered in what is essentially an abstract vocabulary. Rocks and trees are suggested by mere daubs of paint as opposed to being extensively depicted. The overall composition itself, however, is clearly representational. The looming mountain is reminiscent of a puzzle of various hues, assembled into a recognizable object. This and other such late works of Cézanne proved to be of a paramount importance to the emerging modernists, who sought to liberate themselves from the rigid tradition of pictorial depiction.
The Large Bathers, Paul Cézanne, 1898-1906, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  Oil on canvas

The Large Bathers is one of the finest examples of Cezanne's attempt at incorporating the modern, heroic nude in a natural setting. The series of very human nudes, no Greco-Roman nymphs or satyrs, are arranged into a variety of positions, like objects of still-life, under the pointed arch formed by the intersection of trees and the heavens. The figures are devoid of any particular personality - the artist assembles them for purely structural purposes. Here Cezanne is reinterpreting an iconic Western motif of the female nude, but in an exceptionally radical way. The sheer size of the painting is monumental, confronting the viewer directly with abbreviated shapes that resolve themselves into the naked limbs of his sitters. This is not yet abstraction, but in such instances Cezanne has already moved beyond the figurative tradition.