



**art &
man**®

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WORKING

WITH

COMPOSITION

**PAUL
CÉZANNE**

"W
E
 MUST PAINT
 WHAT
 WE SEE
 AND FORGET
 ABOUT
 EVERYTHING
 THAT HAS
 BEEN DONE
 BEFORE."

—PAUL CÉZANNE



In 1881, a book was written about a young artist who visits various painters in their studios:

As I knocked, I heard something that sounded like a parrot inside. 'Come in,' a voice screamed. Hardly was I in when I thought:

But I'm in a madman's house. I was horrified. . . . The painter, bald, with a huge beard, was like his studio, indescribable and filthy. He smiled in a way I couldn't define, sly and imbecilic. At the same time, my eyes were assaulted by vast canvases hung on all sides, so terrible in color and form that I stood petrified.

The parrot's voice rang out, 'He is a great painter.'

'He's my art critic,' the painter told me with a disturbing grin.'

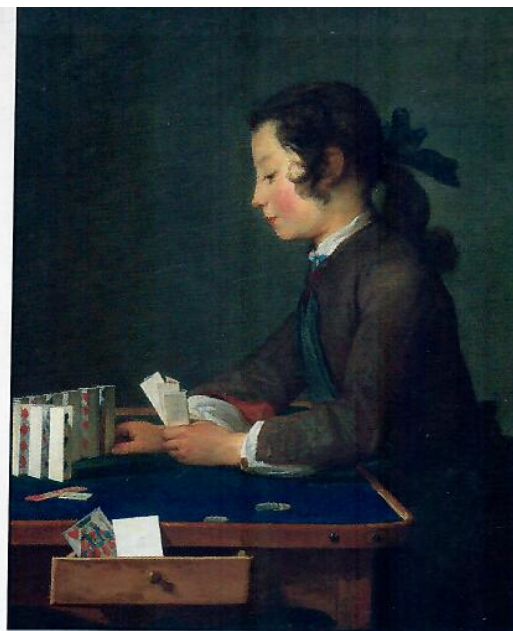
My eyes were fixed on an immense picture high up of three colossal figures. An arm here, a bit of hip there, a knee somewhere else, they all seemed to be falling off the canvas.

*'He's a great painter,' cried the parrot. **

What do you think is going on in this passage, and who is the painter the author is talking about?

At the end of the 19th century, a few artists were totally changing the way people looked at the world. Look at the painting of a boy playing with cards (above right). Does it look very "real" and solid? Is it almost as convincing as a photograph? Do you feel you might actually be able to walk into this painting? The subject of the larger painting (far right) is nearly the same, except there are two card players. The colors are similar — oranges, reds, and blues — but does it give you the same feeling as the smaller painting? Do the men look real? Do they even have faces? Why are their arms so long and their heads so small? Why are both the table and background tilted? Do you feel you could walk into this space or does the room seem very shallow? Why do you think the artist painted the scene in this way?

The larger picture, *The Card Players*, is by the 19th-century French artist Paul Cézanne. At the time, Cézanne's works



This French painting of a card player was done in 1735.

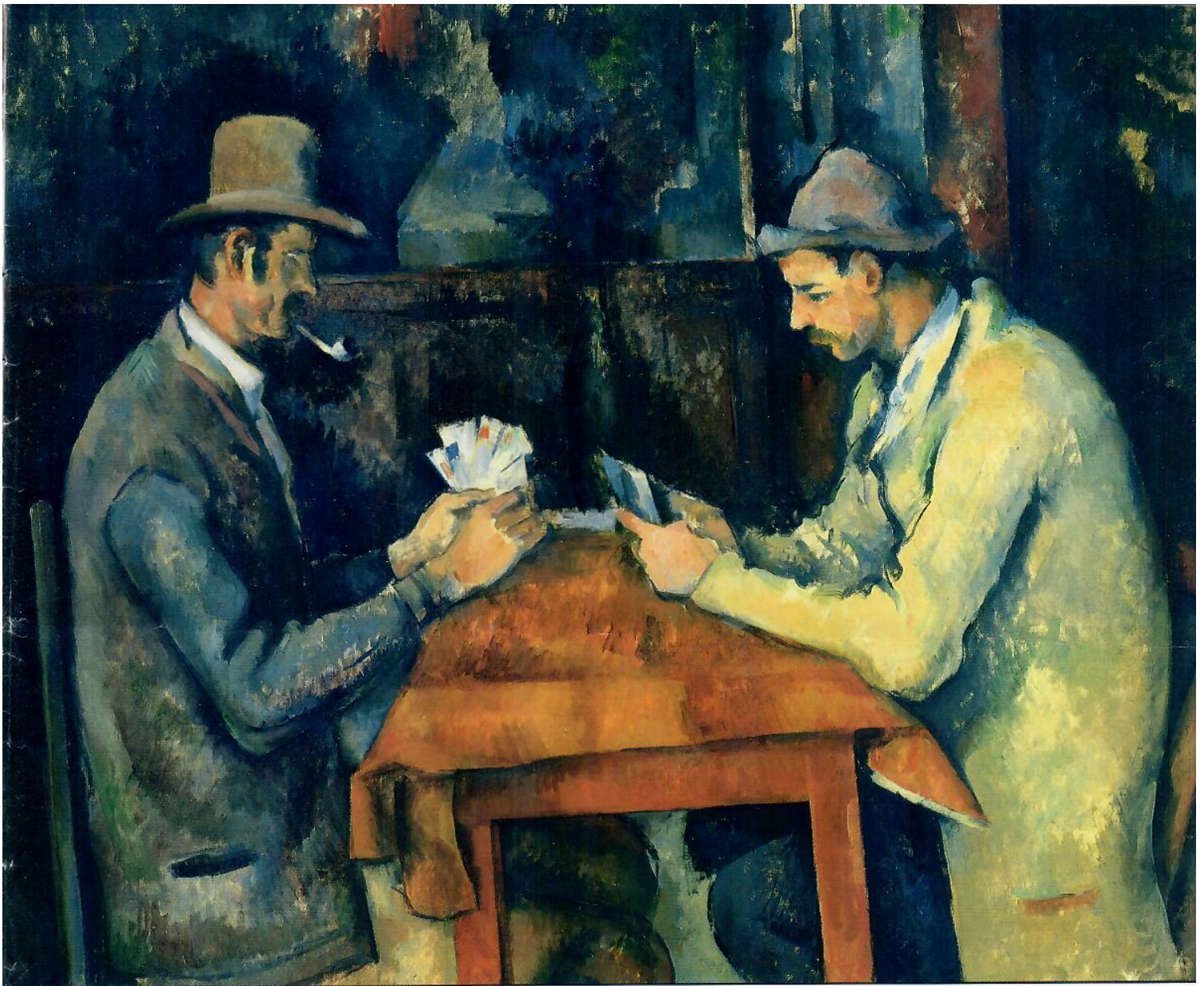
were considered so radical and different that the artist and his paintings became the subject for jokes, cartoons, and satirical novels. As you've probably guessed, "the painter" in the passage above was based on Cézanne. Look at his self-portrait (top left) and on the cover. Does he look friendly, happy, or easy to know? His best friend said, "Cézanne despises all basics: hygiene, good behavior, and polite language."

Cézanne was born in 1839 in a small town in southern France. Interested in poetry, walking in the woods, and drawing, Paul had no interest in following in his banker father's footsteps. But his father had other ideas, and he sent his son to law school. The young man studied law and even worked in a bank; but at 23, Cézanne finally told his overbearing father that he was going to Paris to study painting.

In those days, Paris was the art center of the world, and there Cézanne met a group of young painters who would later become famous — Renoir, Degas, Monet. For several years, Cézanne painted and entered his work in the exhibitions held by the official art organization called the *Salon*. Since there was no television, and few magazines existed at that time, these shows were the main way for artists to make contact with the public. But the *Salon* included only very traditional work, so year after year Cézanne

JEAN-BAPTISTE-SIMÉON CHARDIN (1699-1779). *THE HOUSE OF CARDS*, 1735. OIL. 32 3/8" X 26". NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.

A NEW WAY



was turned down and had to live on the small allowance his father sent him.

In 1872, Cézanne left the city to paint from nature in the country. His colors became brighter; to better capture the effects of light on objects, he began building up his forms with small strokes of color. By this time, the artist had a family of his own but continued to support them on his father's allowance. In 1886, Cézanne's father died and left Paul enough money to live on. Soon he began painting in the distinctive style for which he became famous. "I want to make something solid and lasting," he said, and in each painting he builds up his forms to

reveal the basic structure underneath. Ten years later, Cézanne had his first one-man show and his paintings began to sell. In the fall of 1906, Cézanne was sick, but continued to work anyway. One day, as he was working outdoors, he was caught in the rain and developed pneumonia. He died as he would have wished to — painting.

In this issue, you'll see many of Paul Cézanne's best-known paintings and find out why he is called "the father of modern art." You'll meet some contemporary artists who owe their styles to Cézanne, and finally, you'll create your own work of art based on an ordinary-looking still life.

These card players were painted more than 150 years later. Why do the two paintings look so different?

OF SEEING

A
 PILE OF
 ROCKS,
 A BUNCH OF
 FLOWERS,
 A SEATED
 WOMAN
 —WHAT
 TURNS
 THESE THREE
 EVERYDAY
 SCENES
 INTO GREAT
 WORKS
 OF ART?



Cézanne painted scenes he saw around him, like this view of the French coast.

When is a person like an orange, a mountain like a tablecloth, a flower like a stone? The answer to this riddle would be, “When they are all painted by Paul Cézanne.” When Cézanne painted portraits, he wasn’t really interested in showing the person’s character; his figures were elements for **balancing forms** and **arranging masses**. Compare the faces of the people in this issue with the stones above and the apples and oranges on pages 6, 8, and 9. They are all solid circles and ovals. Look at the landscape above and the tablecloth on pages 8-9. Cézanne painted the rocks and hills in the same way as he did the folds and creases of the cloth.

The artist wanted to give all his forms — even the human body — the concrete, eter-

nal qualities of still-life objects. But when Cézanne painted people, he forgot that, unlike objects, they were able to think and feel. He subjected his models to endless posing sessions and became so enraged when they moved that finally, hardly anyone would pose for him. One model remembered sitting so still on a rickety arrangement of chairs and packing cases that he fell asleep and crashed to the floor. Instead of seeing if he was hurt, Cézanne said, “Wretch! You’ve ruined the pose. You must sit like an apple. Does an apple move?” The model recalled, “After 115 sittings, Cézanne abandoned my portrait and left the city. ‘However,’ he told me, ‘I am quite pleased with the buttons on the shirt.’”

As you can tell, Cézanne worked and worked on his paintings to make his compo-

ROCKS AT L'ESTAQUE, 1882-5. OIL, 28 3/4" X 35 3/4".
 SAO PAULO MUSEUM, BRAZIL.

TRANSFORMING

VASE OF TULIPS, 1890-4. OIL, 23 3/8" X 16 1/2". ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO.

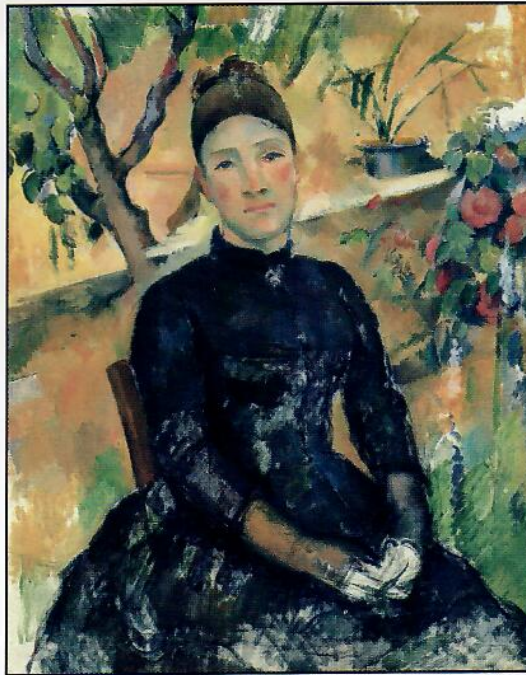


When you look at this vase of flowers (above), can you find anything geometric about it?

sitions perfect — nothing could be added or taken away. Imagine how dull an ordinary picture of rocks and hills might be. What is it that makes the work on the left one of Cézanne's most famous paintings? Where does your eye go first? Do you look at the orange cliff and hill on the left which frames the whole scene, then follow the gray rocks on the right up to the blue sea? How would the painting change without the little house on top of the ridge? How do the red brushstrokes below the house lead your eye up to it?

What is the center of interest in the painting of the woman on the right? Your

eye is drawn to her head by following the diagonal of the wall behind it. What if the wall were a straight line instead of a diagonal? Would this make the composition more active or would it have just the opposite effect? Compare the oval shape of her head and that of the vase of flowers (left). How are the compositions similar? Are the arrangements symmetrical (exactly the same on each side) or asymmetrical (different but appearing visually equal)? What is unreal-looking about the table? If you really were looking at a vase from the side, would the table under it look like this? At first glance, this may look like an ordinary vase of flowers, but it is actually a very carefully constructed geometric form composed of spheres and an oval within a trapezoid surrounded by a rectangular frame.



The artist made his models sit so still for long periods of time that finally, only his wife (left) would pose for him.

MADAME CÉZANNE IN THE CONSERVATORY, 1890. OIL, 36 1/2" X 28 3/4". METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, N.Y.

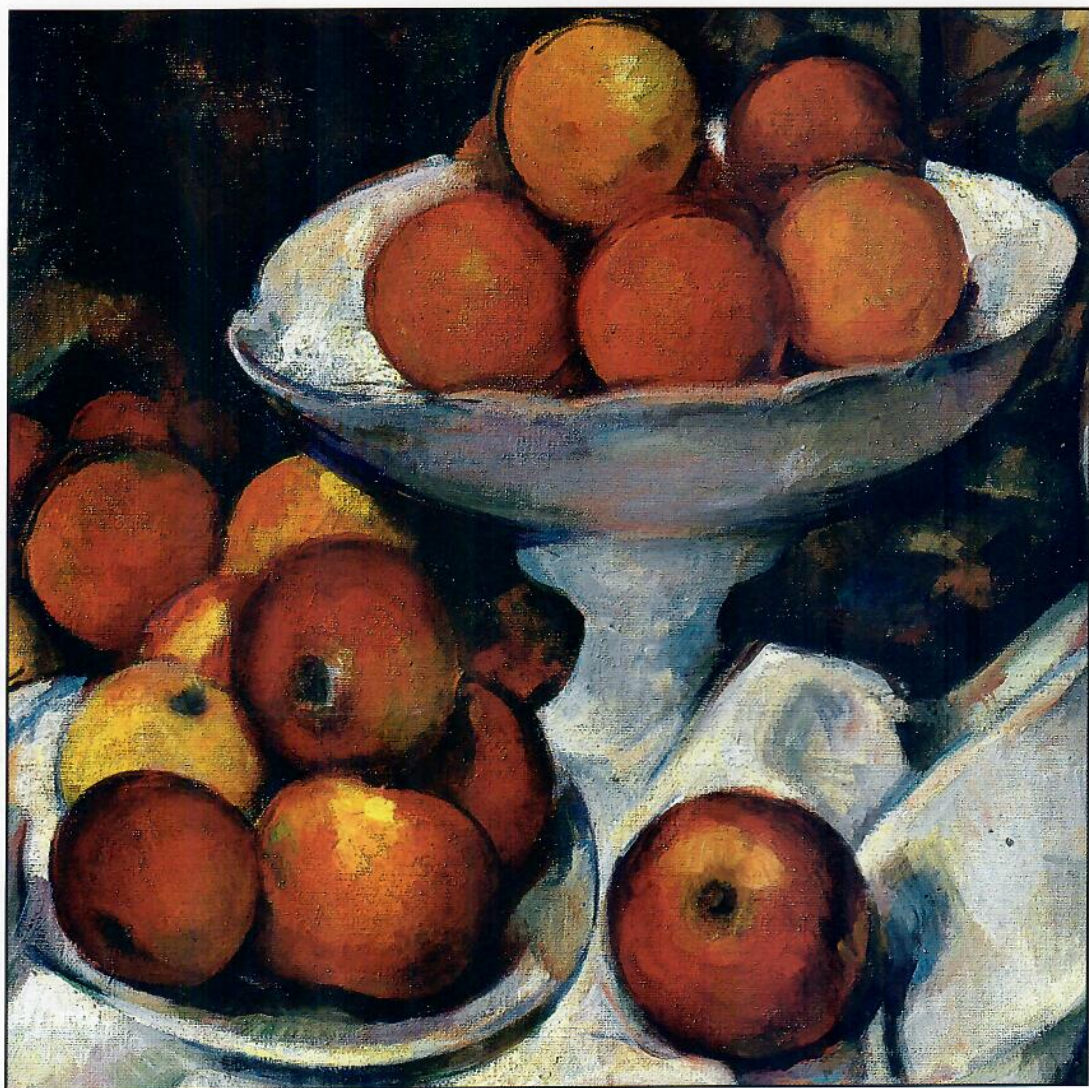
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COVER: PAUL CÉZANNE (1839-1906). SELF-PORTRAIT IN A HAT, (DETAIL) 1879. OIL. KUNSTMUSEUM, BERNE, SWITZERLAND.

THE ORDINARY

“ I WANT TO MAKE SOMETHING SOLID AND LASTING —TO SEE IN NATURE THE CUBE, THE SPHERE, THE CONE.”
—PAUL CÉZANNE



STILL LIFE WITH APPLES AND ORANGES (DETAIL), 1895-1900. OIL, 28 3/8" X 36 1/2". LOUVRE, PARIS.

In this detail from the painting on pages 8-9, you can see how Cézanne used small brushstrokes to build these solid, round oranges.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: PREVIEW

You've seen some of Paul Cézanne's paintings, learned a little of his life, and read about what kind of man he was. A friend has described the way he worked: "He would face the canvas, shaking all over. . . . chest sunken, shoulders hunched, hands trembling until the moment came. Then firm and fast the hands started to work gently and always from right to left, seeming to have a will of their own."

When you look at Cézanne's pictures in this issue, you can see that each of them is based on **geometric shapes** — cubes, cir-

cles, ovals, rectangles, triangles arranged in different ways. How could such an emotional artist work with such seemingly rigid shapes? What was he trying to express?

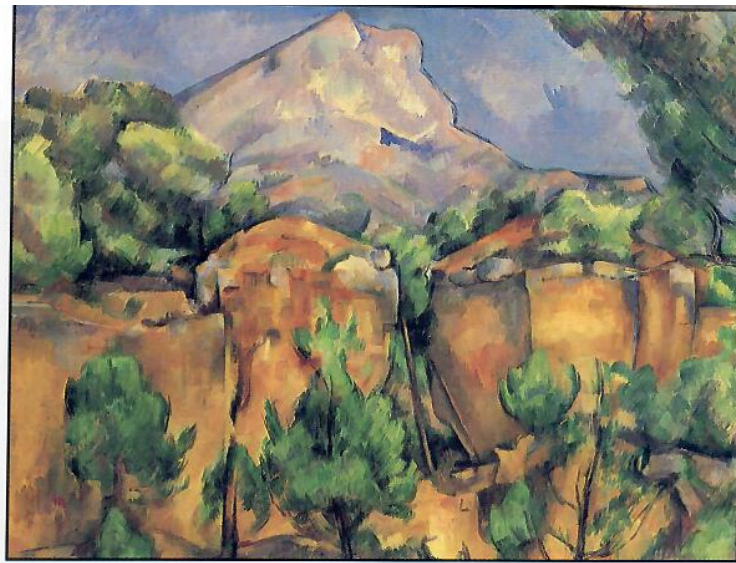
Cézanne was not concerned with creating the same kind of illusion of reality that can be captured by a camera. He wasn't interested in the traditional devices used by artists for over 400 years, such as **perspective** (objects in front seem to be larger and overlap objects in back) or **modeling** (objects with highlights and shadows look solid and round). These illusionary techniques were

A GEOMETRIC

used to create the very lifelike boy playing with cards on page 2. Cézanne felt he had to “paint what he saw,” but he had to make it even more real. And he was obsessed with his vision of a geometric structure beneath the surface of things. Oranges and apples were simplified into **circles**, houses were **rectangles**, mountains were **cones**.

Cézanne didn’t only paint what he saw, he also painted what he *felt*. His objects change shape because of his feelings about them. Cézanne’s fruit, hills, buildings, people, flowers, and trees shrink, swell, slant, and tilt. Sometimes the object seems to be stretching out, linking us to it. Handles of pitchers come toward our hands, plates lean down, mountains push forward out of the background, tables tilt toward people. He paints different views of the same object in the same picture (in the still life on pages 8-9, the pitcher is seen from the side, while the bowls of fruit are seen from the top). Cézanne releases the inner life of the object and to us it looks distorted. He breaks up the old reality that we’ve always seen and creates a new one bursting with an energy that constantly moves and expands.

The artist also uses **scale and color** to express his emotions. In *Still life with Apples and Oranges* (pages 8-9), the circular fruit in the “back” is larger than the fruit in front and the background colors are as in-



MONT. SAINTE-VICTOIRE SEEN FROM BIBÉMUS. 1898-1900. OIL. 25 5/8" X 31 7/8". BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART.

tense as those in the foreground. In the painting above, the mountain in “back” was very important to the artist; he painted scores of versions of it. Its simple, stark, conelike shape contrasts with the broken, jagged forms of the bushes and rocks at the bottom of the painting. And Cézanne’s use of color flattens and reverses the space. The light, warm blues and purples in the top of the painting seem to be in front of the cool brownish-purples and greens below. The vast mountain dominates the picture in a new and unsettling way. Somehow Cézanne has transferred to nature the tensions he felt in his own body. His still lifes and landscapes reflect his own inner struggle.

The artist did more than 60 paintings of the mountain above. On what geometric structure is it based?

PAUL CÉZANNE (1839-1906). HOUSES IN PROVENCE (DETAIL). 1880. OIL. 25 5/8" X 32". NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.



Cézanne said, “Geometry controls the universe.” And he carried out his theory by painting the houses left as cubes.

OBSESSION



STILL

LIFE

WITH

APPLES

AND

ORANGES

BY

PAUL



PAUL CÉZANNE (1839-1906). STILL LIFE WITH APPLES AND ORANGES. 1895-1900. OIL, 28 3/4" X 36 1/2". LOUVRE, PARIS.

"I FEEL
MYSELF
WASHED
BY ALL
THE COLORS
OF INFINITY.
I BECOME ONE
WITH MY
PAINTING.
...I STAND
IN FRONT
OF MY SUBJECT,
LOSE MYSELF
IN IT."

—PAUL CÉZANNE

CÉZANNE

BEYOND CÉZANNE

“One subject may be viewed from different angles, each of which is more interesting than the last. . . .
I mark the way and others will follow.” — Paul Cézanne

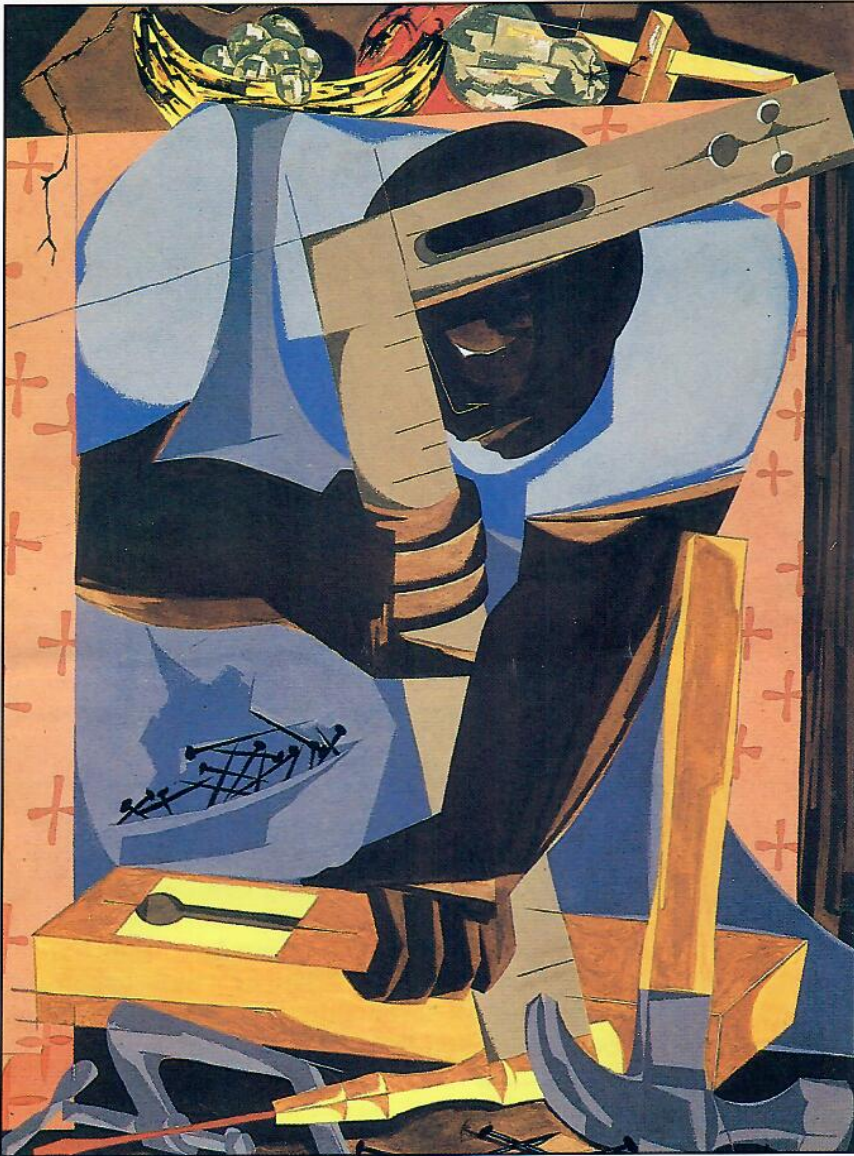
A WORLD OF LITTLE CUBES

Paul Cézanne's life spanned the 19th and 20th centuries. And although he worked mainly during the last century, the ideas and concepts he developed have had an enormous influence on modern artists. Cézanne wanted to create something solid and stable in a world that he felt was always changing. He thought he could find the hidden structure of a scene or object by looking at it in different ways. Later painters like Pablo Picasso also wanted to look beneath surface appearances. Does the “portrait” on the right by Picasso look at all like a real person? You can find the head and even some of the features, but the body and background are broken into hundreds of small **planes** (flat surfaces). Picasso cut up rectangular views from the front, side, back, and top and put them together so the viewer would be able to see all sides of a person at one time. Cézanne did this to a certain extent, but the compositions of Picasso and other artists who worked more recently became more and more **abstract** (based on, but not completely related to, the natural world). Even though the man on the right doesn't look much like a “real” person, Picasso reconstructs him for us by including, from every **point of view**, each **line**, **shape**, and **plane** in his body.



PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973), PORTRAIT OF WILHELM UHDE, 1910. OIL, 31 7/8" X 23 5/8". PRIVATE COLLECTION.

JACOB LAWRENCE (B. 1917). CABINET MAKER, 1957. CASEIN ON PAPER, 30 1/2" X 22 1/2". HIRSHHORN MUSEUM, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.



A CUBIST OF TODAY

For over 50 years, contemporary artist Jacob Lawrence has painted powerful images dealing with subjects like civil rights, labor, and poverty in America. And the **harsh, angular, Cubist** style he uses helps to get his messages across. He identifies with the *Cabinetmaker* (left) in the same way that Cézanne might have related to one of the still-life objects he painted. Lawrence paints the scene from many **points of view**: from the side, the top, from below. The colors and shapes are **flat** — no **modeling** or **perspective** are used. There is no feeling of depth as this **shallow space** is tilted toward the viewer. The geometric **angles** and **distortions** of the carpenter's body closely resemble those of his tools. How does the artist's approach make you feel about this man, so totally involved with his work he has almost become a part of it?

CUBIST CARTOONS

ELIZABETH MURRAY (B. 1940). KITCHEN PAINTING, 1965. OIL, 81" X 58" X 14". PAULA COOPER GALLERY, N.Y.

Contemporary American Elizabeth Murray discovered Cézanne when she was in college. "To get to class I had to walk through the museum. One day I saw a Cézanne still life and did a double take. I realized it wasn't a picture of something; it *was* something. That was what I wanted to do." Murray has also said, "All my ideas about art came from comic books." How has she combined these two ideas in *Kitchen Painting* (right)? When you first see one of her three-dimensional shaped canvases, it looks almost completely **abstract**, made up entirely of geometric and curved **shapes, angles, and lines**. But when you read the title and look carefully at the forms, you can see that the painting is based on **flat, stylized, distorted** still-life objects. In this work, a huge, pink spoon floats in front of a green chair containing a black figure, all set in what looks like a shallow, yellow room. Like Cézanne, Murray has used **abstract shapes** to create a new reality.



ARTIST OF THE MONTH

ADAM WOLTER



TRANSFORMING EVERYDAY OBJECTS

Eighteen-year-old Adam Wolter has been doing still lifes since he was in the fifth grade. One of his favorite approaches is to take a familiar, everyday object and create an imaginary space around it. Can you tell what kind of object the artist was working from in the dark, mysterious-looking still life on the right? (This Scholastic Art Award-winning pastel drawing is

called *Beyond Breakfast* — the title is a hint.) We recently visited Adam at his home in Williamston, Michigan, to learn more about how he created this drawing. Adam is beginning his first year at Miami University in Ohio where he is majoring in fine arts and education. When he's not working on art, he likes to spend time with friends. He also enjoys tennis and listening to the Beatles.

How did you get involved in art?

Probably back in elementary school when I was doodling instead of doing my homework. In fourth grade, my mom began teaching me. Both my parents are artists, and they've had a lot of input. Sometimes maybe too much, but I think it's helped me grow. We'll talk about art at the dinner table and my dad will critique my work when I've finished a piece. And having a studio right in our house makes everything easier. At school I'm in Independent Study, and my art teacher helps me come up with projects.

Why do you like doing still lifes?

Because I have so many options. I can set up the whole composition, or I can just work from a single

object and create the rest of the space out of my imagination. Like I did in *Beyond Breakfast*.

Was this an assignment? What is the object you worked from?

I did this drawing over the summer. The object is a bagel-cutter. I find stuff like this in the kitchen all the time — ordinary little gadgets that are very practical. Yet sometimes their shape seems out of the ordinary. I remember getting out several things and comparing them. I wanted to make the object look big. The bagel-cutter seemed to resemble larger things, maybe a satellite dish. And because it's not a very common item and people might not know exactly what it is, I could put it in just about any imaginary space I wanted.

How did you begin?

Before I started, I looked at the bagel-cutter, turning it around to find the views that had the nicest shapes. Then I experimented with light, using a small spotlight. I started sketching the shape, changing the perspective, moving it up in the space to create depth and working on the background at the same time. The first drawing didn't work. The bagel-cutter was too close and detracted from the rest of the composition. Also I had made the horizon line too low which made all the objects overlap and the whole thing got confusing.

What were you thinking of when you chose this kind of landscape?

I guess I was thinking of a faraway land, maybe another planet or a



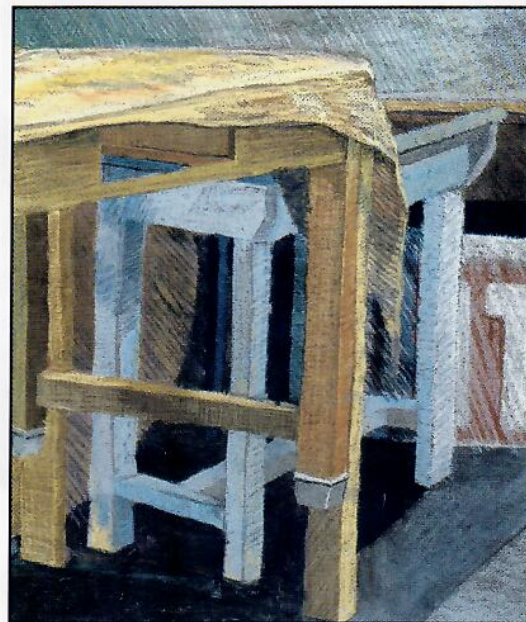
Each time I look at it, this landscape seems deeper, darker, more moody . . . and so cold. It seems familiar and unfamiliar — the kind of place you look at but wouldn't want to be in. It gives me an eerie feeling.

moon landscape. But I didn't have anything specific in mind. Only that this world was barren and dark with some strong lighting in places; almost like moonlight. I wanted a landscape that would complement the big, mysterious shapes of the bagel-cutters.

What kind of composition were you aiming for?

Usually I have some type of geometric division of space worked out. There's almost an architectur-

al quality to all my drawings [like the one of the tables shown above, right]. In *Beyond Breakfast*, I wanted to turn the bagel-cutter so it formed different angles as it went back in space. Almost everything is at an angle or going away at an angle — the path, the round shapes of the bagel-cutters. And the way these things intersect creates some nice negative shapes. And as these shapes and lines connect, they lead the viewer's eye through the piece.



Were you satisfied with the piece? Did anything surprise you?

Each time I look at it, this landscape seems deeper, darker, more moody . . . and so cold. It seems familiar and unfamiliar — the kind of place you look at but wouldn't want to be in. It gives me an eerie feeling.

What makes you keep going in art?

I guess it's the thrill of the whole process. At the beginning, you rough things out, formulate ideas, run into problems, and maybe have to start 'all over again. It's hard to get going, but once you get that final resolution and the piece comes together, it's just a fantastic feeling. The whole process is so all-encompassing. It's something I can really lose myself in.

Is there any advice you would offer about doing art?

Just practice. Sketch, study, and put a little of yourself into each piece. It may be an ordinary object you're drawing, but you can bring it to life, enhance its qualities. It's all right there to work with.

STILL LIFE INTO ART

STILL LIFE WITH APPLES AND ORANGES (DETAIL), 1895-1900. OIL, 28 5/8" X 36 1/2". LOUVRE, PARIS.



"Painting is not the realistic copying of an object but the understanding of a harmony between all the parts."
— Paul Cézanne

How do you turn an ordinary still life into an original work of art?

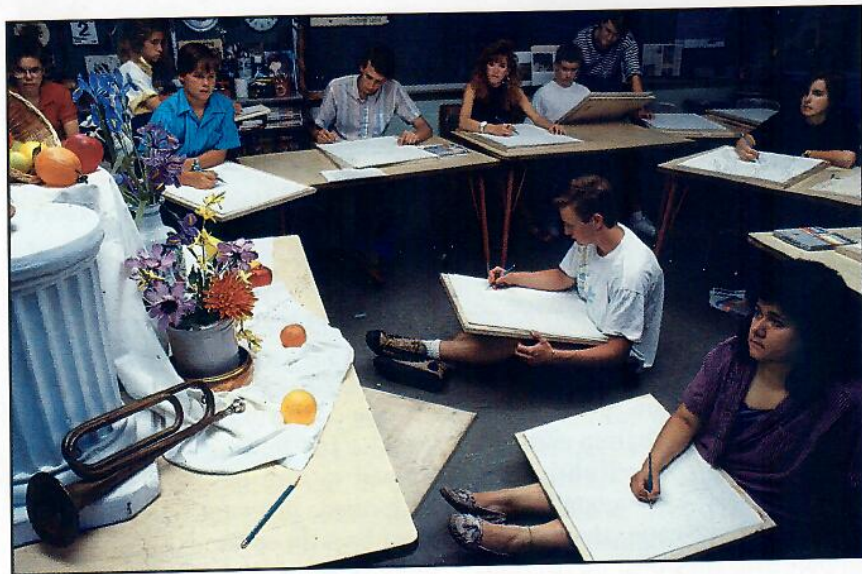
Paul Cézanne transformed the most "ordinary" objects and scenes — rocks, houses, apples, bowls, vases of flowers — into great paintings through his inventive use of **composition**. As you've seen, Cézanne's emotional response to

his subjects changed the way he depicted them. He used **scale, color, and shape** to recreate a new reality. In this workshop, you'll work from everyday objects, **distorting, rearranging, and simplifying** them to create an expressive, dynamic composition.

MATERIALS

- 18" x 24" 80lb. Sulfite paper
- 9H pencils

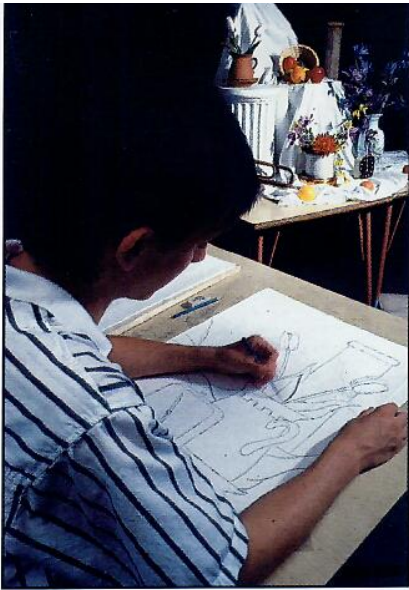
- Vinyl erasers
- Pastels
- Paper stumps or tortillions
- Hair spray or fixative



STARTING OUT

1 Set up a still life emphasizing **geometric** objects. Do a quick, loose **contour drawing** of the still life. Contour drawings are done by imagining your

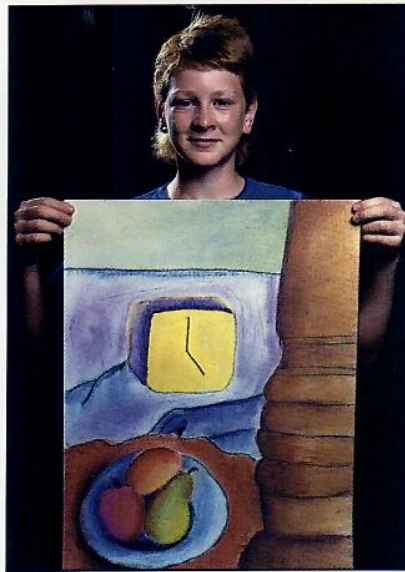
pencil is actually touching an edge of the object. Move your eyes slowly along the edge, or **contour**, and then move your pencil at the same speed. Look at the paper frequently to see where you have just drawn and to avoid overlapping.



2 Walk around the still life to find different views. Choose your **angle-of-vision** (above, below, from the side). **Simplify**, eliminating small, unimportant details. **Rearrange, change, or enlarge** parts if necessary for a more interesting composition. You can also **tilt** the perspective or picture plane.



3 When using color, **simplify** the shapes; blend pastels with a paper stump (overuse will remove color). Use **lighter** or **darker** colors to emphasize the **focal point** of the composition. **Highlight** objects with white; use black for **shadows**.



SOME SOLUTIONS

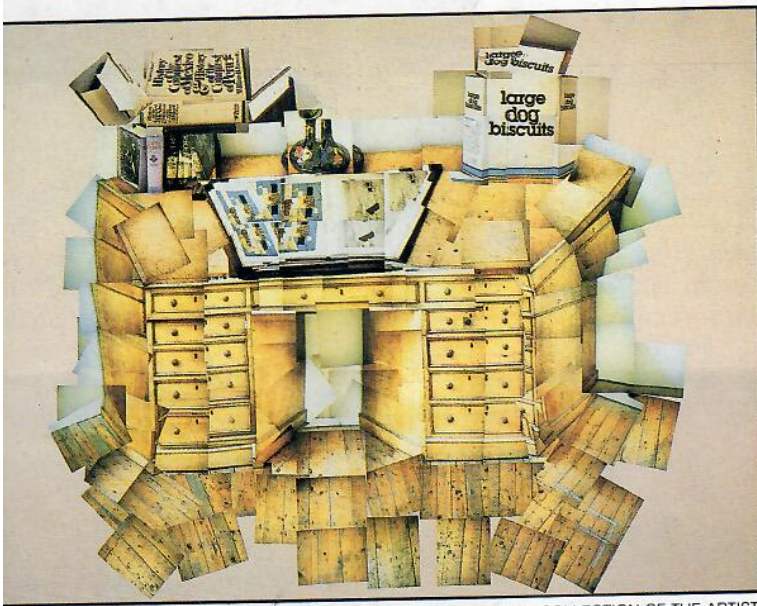
Look at the photographs of the original still life that these artists worked from. Do any of these drawings look like the photos? Did any of the artists include all the objects? How did they **arrange** the objects they **selected**? Which artists worked with **symmetrical** (elements on both sides are the same) **compositions**, and which created **asymmetrical** (elements are not the same on both sides but look visually equal) compositions? How is



each composition **balanced**? Are objects balanced by **white space** or by another object of equal **visual weight**? Can you find the **main focal point** in each drawing? Which artists used **cropping**, and which used **diagonal lines** and **rest areas** to emphasize the focal point? Can you find a composition which uses **tilting** and **distortion**? How does the use of **color** — its **darkness** and **intensity** — help draw your eye through the composition to its **center of interest**? How do the **geometric shapes** work with the **organic** ones?

ARTS ALIVE

The work of Paul Cézanne is very much alive in today's art world.



DAVID HOCKNEY (B. 1937). *THE DESK, JULY 1ST, 1984*. COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST.

CÉZANNE'S STYLE IN A MODERN MEDIUM

Paul Cézanne wanted to go beyond the restrictions of the traditional painting of his time. Contemporary British artist David Hockney has sought to overcome the limits of traditional painting and photography in his **photocollages**. The work on the left, called *The Desk, July 1st, 1984*, is composed of many prints. The artist photographed this piece of furniture the way Paul Cézanne would have painted it — from several angles. He then assembled the prints so that the desk appears to be seen from one point. Like Cézanne, Hockney uses **geometric shapes** — in this case, the rectangles of the photographs themselves. The desk and the objects on it appear to tilt toward us in **reverse perspective**. Compare Hockney's desk with Cézanne's tables in the paintings on pages 3, 5, 8, and 9. How are they similar?

CÉZANNE IN THE MAKING

Was the young Paul Cézanne shown in the self-portrait (right) a “wild-man”? The Parisian art critics of the 1860s thought so. You will be able to judge for yourself if you visit the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, from January 29–April 30, 1989. *Cézanne: The Early Years 1859–72* consists of over 60 paintings and 10 drawings done when Cézanne was in his 20s, struggling to find his own style of painting. Many of these early works contain violent themes, some of which may — even today — seem somewhat shocking. In his defiance of the art “establishment” of his day, Cézanne fully intended for these works to shock and dismay. Even though they may not be Cézanne's best-known works, or his most polished, they can show us much about how his style developed.



PAUL CÉZANNE (1839-1906). *SELF-PORTRAIT*, 1862. PRIVATE COLLECTION.

A “DOG'S PROFESSION” PAYS OFF

Paul Cézanne's father told him: “Think of the future, for one dies with genius but eats with money.” Unable to sell his paintings, Paul Cézanne was able to eat only by living on his father's money until he was nearly 50 years old. Filled with self-doubt, Cézanne came to describe painting as a “dog's profession.” Recently, Cézanne's *Landscape at Pointoise* (right)



PAUL CÉZANNE (1839-1906). *LANDSCAPE AT Pontoise*, 1879-80. OIL. PHOTO COURTESY SOTHEBY'S.

sold at auction for \$9.24 million — a record price for a Cézanne painting. Many artists and composers died in poverty long before their work was fully appreciated. What does this say about art, personalities, and mass appeal?

Compare this landscape with those on pages 4 and 7. How do the **verticals** of the trees work with the **horizontal**s of the hills? What geometric form do you find in the houses? — S. B.