Paul

1839 - 1906

The Bridge from Impressionism to Cubism
Birth
January 19, 1839
Aix-en-Provence
Paul's home in Aix-en-Provence
Chestnut trees and farm at Jas de Bouffan, 1885
View from Paul's studio in Aix-en-Provence
One of Paul’s paintings, done using a similar view from Paul’s studio in Aix-en-Provence.
Aix-en-Provence
Parentage

The Artist’s Mother and Sister, 1868
Portrait of Louis-Auguste Cézanne, the Artist’s Father

1866
Paul came from a wealthy family and his father was very strict. He only had a few friends growing up. His best friend, Emile Zola, became a famous writer. Paul never forgot the time he spent roaming the countryside with Emile. The two friends encouraged each other throughout their lives.
Even though Paul's father didn't think much of artists, he did allow his son to take drawing lessons and even paint murals on the walls of their home. Paul studied law for 3 years before going to Paris to pursue a career in art.
Paul moved into a studio filled with young artists who were usually happy to paint in the accepted style of the day. They used realism and dark backgrounds in order to please members of the Salon who would display their paintings at the most important art show in France. So Paul gave it a try…

*The Oath of Horatii, Jacques Louis David, 1784*
…but he was too imaginative and restless to keep trying to please the Salon. This made him very unhappy and it showed in his paintings.
Because he was from a small town and kept to himself a lot, the students in his studio thought he was rude. They made fun of his accent and the way he dressed. No one liked his art and the Salon rejected his paintings. Paul also knew his father hoped he’d fail so he’d come back to work at the bank.
Paul was almost ready to give up but Claude Monet and Camille Pissaro, two fellow artists, encouraged him. They were also looking for new ways to paint and convinced Paul how much more fun it was to paint outdoors.
They showed Paul how to use a lot of bright, beautiful colors to show nature.
Paul really liked these new ideas and began spending a lot of time outdoors.

*Poplars on the Epte,*
Claude Monet
He joined with the Impressionists to show his paintings, even though his painting style was different than theirs. While the Impressionists used feathery brush strokes, Paul wanted his artwork to show nature in a more solid, permanent way.
Here's a photo of the mountain Paul painted, Montagne Ste. Victoire.
Paul didn’t think perspective was always necessary to show the beauty of nature. He thought that, since the surface of the painting was flat, it made sense to paint objects so they fit better on a flat surface.
Sometimes Paul would show several different views in one painting! In *Still Life with Fruit Basket*, you can see the side of the fruit basket at the same time you’re looking at the top of the ginger jar next to it. The left side of the table is lower and more tilted than the right.
Cezanne did this to make your eyes move from the front to the back and all around the painting as a way of giving it depth without using a lot of perspective.
Additionally, the concentrated attention with which he recorded his observations of nature resulted in a profound exploration of binocular vision, which results in two slightly different simultaneous visual perceptions, and provides us with depth perception and a complex knowledge of spatial relationships. We see two different views simultaneously; Cézanne employed this aspect of visual perception in his painting to varying degrees. The observation of this fact, coupled with Cézanne's desire to capture the truth of his own perception, often compelled him to render the outlines of forms so as to at once attempt to display the distinctly different views of both the left and right eyes. Thus Cézanne's work augments and transforms earlier ideals of perspective, in particular single-point perspective.
Paul also used lots of color, building up shapes and objects to make them feel solid. In some of his paintings, even the people seem like they’re chiseled out of stone or carved out of clay. Using colors this way was another new idea of Paul’s.
Paul wanted not only to show how nature looked – he wanted to show how he felt about it. This was something never done before! People were shocked. They thought his art looked too flat. They were not ready for such radical change.
But the people of Paris were used to paintings that showed lots of perspective like the one above. They disliked Paul’s paintings more than any of the Impressionists.
Paul was insulted and went back home to do pictures the way he thought they should be done. He no longer cared what anyone thought.
Inside Paul Cezanne's atelier, Aix-en-Provence
He started working harder than ever to express his deepest feelings with simple, solid shapes and beautiful colors. During this time Paul created his greatest works.
Cézanne was interested in the simplification of naturally occurring forms to their geometric essentials.
(This painting – without the red lines – was sold on May 10, 1999, for $60,502,500, a record price for a still-life.)
During Cezanne’s life, hardly anyone noticed or cared about his paintings. In 1906 he collapsed after being caught in a storm while painting outdoors. He died a few days later of pneumonia at the age of 67. But Paul created a new and different kind of beauty in his artwork that influenced almost every modern artist who came after him.
Cézanne's explorations of geometric simplification and optical phenomena inspired artists like Picasso to experiment with ever more complex multiple views of the same subject, and, eventually, to the fracturing of form. Cézanne thus sparked one of the most revolutionary areas of artistic enquiry of the 20th Century, one which was to affect profoundly the development of modern art.
The Magdalen, or Sorrow, Paul Cezanne
The Old Guitar Player, 1903, Picasso
Bread and Eggs, 1865, Cezanne
Bread and Fruit Dish on a Table, 1909, Picasso
Still-Life with a Kettle, 1869, Cezanne
Still-Life with Fruit, 1879, Cezanne
Now you do it!

Je M’appelle
Step 1
Step 2
Step 3
Step 5
Step 6

Make sure your name is on the back of your artwork.
Turn in your artwork.
Return supplies to proper locations.
Clean up your area.
Take a word search and work quietly so others may finish.
Paul Cezanne, 1905