

# Cézanne : the late work : [brochure]

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# Cézanne

## The Late Work

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

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The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

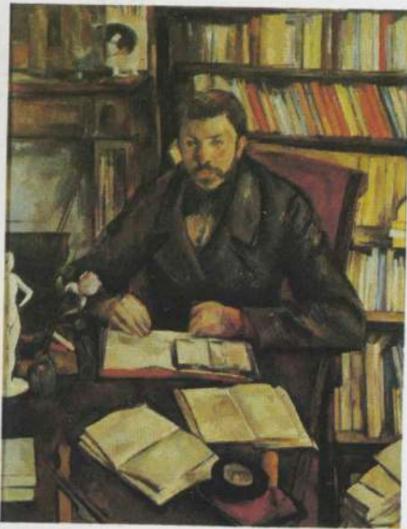
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# Cézanne The Late Work

**PORTRAITS** Cézanne's late portraits reveal a new direction within his work in this genre. His earlier portraits, mainly of himself and of Mme Cézanne, are frequently dispassionate records that show little of the sitter's psychology. In the late period, Cézanne paints a wider range of types. Beginning in the early 1890s with many pictures of local peasants, Cézanne goes on to portray sympathetic art-world figures, old and young women, intimate friends, and finally Vallier, his old gardener. The late portraits are distinguished from the earlier ones by their rich, often dark colors and irregular lighting; they project somber, almost mysterious moods. In many paintings the sitters seem to be lost in melancholy (as with the *Young Italian Girl*). Others project a monumental grandeur (for example, *Vollard* or *Vallier*). Taken as a whole, the late portraits illustrate most clearly the complex pictorial means and new psychological tenor of Cézanne's painting in his final decade.



*Portrait of Gustave Geffroy.* 1895  
Oil on canvas  
Musée du Louvre, Paris, life interest gift



*Young Italian Girl Resting on Her Elbow.* c. 1900  
Oil on canvas  
Collection Dr. and Mrs. William Rosenthal, New York

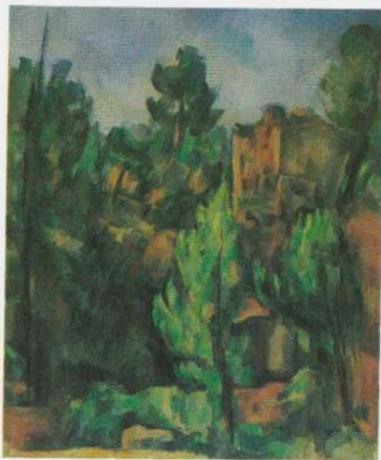


*Portrait of Ambroise Vollard.* 1899  
Oil on canvas  
Musée du Petit Palais, Paris

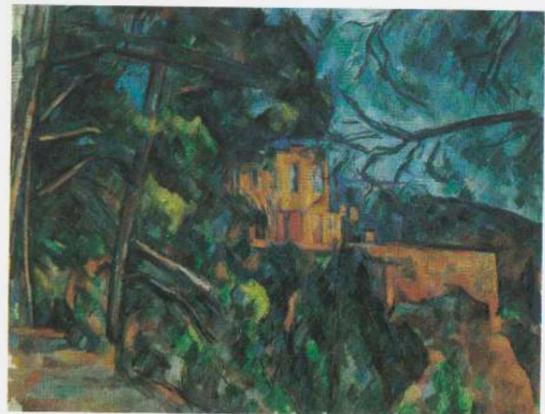


*Portrait of Vallier.* 1906  
Oil on canvas  
Private collection

**LANDSCAPES** Although Cézanne had inherited a sizable fortune and could easily have afforded to travel, he left France only once in his life. The great majority of his landscapes were painted in his native Provence. During the late period the old artist almost exclusively painted landscape motifs close to Aix, scenes that were familiar to him since childhood. "I think that I could be occupied for months without changing my place," he wrote in 1906, "simply



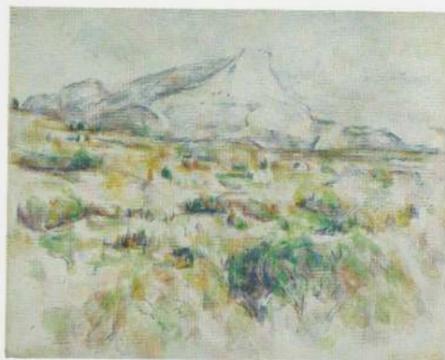
*Bibémus Quarry.* c. 1898  
Oil on canvas  
Private collection, Los Angeles



*Château Noir.* 1904-06  
Oil on canvas  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, gift of Eugene and Agnes Meyer

bending a little more to the left or right." In the rugged solitude of the Bibémus quarry or the dense forest around the Château Noir, Cézanne repeatedly discovered subjects for his pictures.

Cézanne's treatment of Mont Sainte-Victoire provides the most sustained celebration of his native Provençal terrain. Especially in those pictures painted from Les Lauves, the plateau above his studio, Cézanne transforms the mountain into a visionary icon by situating the distant, upward-thrusting mass upon a straight horizontal line. The execution of these paintings—passionate and nearly abstract—reflects his parallel work in watercolors. Cézanne mastered the limpid, ethereal watercolor medium during the late period and transferred its daring freedom of line and color to his last oil paintings.



*Mont Sainte-Victoire.* 1902-06  
Pencil and watercolor  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, anonymous gift, donor retaining life interest



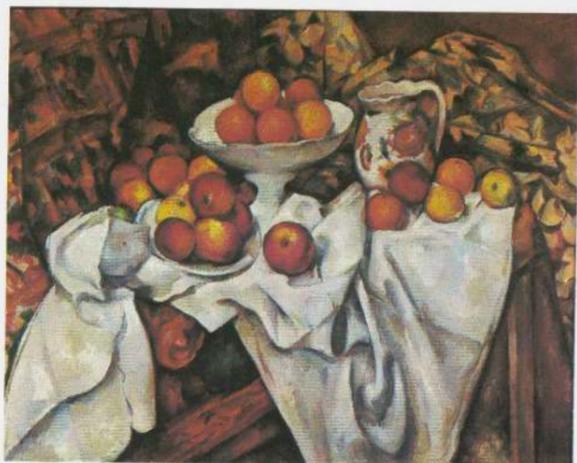
*Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves.* 1902-06  
Oil on canvas  
Private collection

# Work

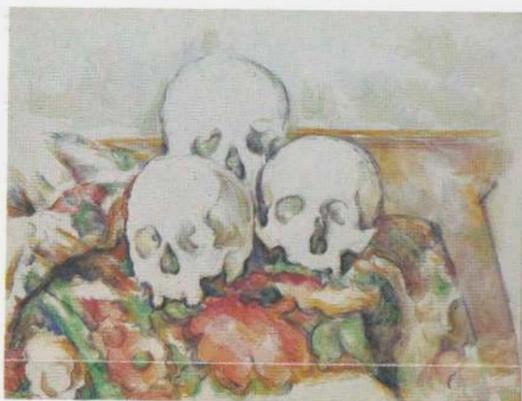
"We must not be satisfied with retaining the beautiful formulas of our illustrious predecessors. Let us go forth to study beautiful nature, let us try to free our minds from them, let us strive to express ourselves according to our personal temperaments. Time and reflection, moreover, modify little by little our vision, and at last comprehension comes to us." (Letter from Paul Cézanne to Emile Bernard, 1905)

**STILL LIFES** In his many still lifes Cézanne was able to infuse ordinary fruit, flowers, and humble studio objects with a solemn grandeur. Before painting, he would carefully arrange the tilt of an apple or the fold of a cloth as he grouped the elements of this intimate, familiar, and perfectly controllable world. The late-period still lifes form a rich genre in which the complex issues—thematic and formal—of Cézanne's last years are readily visible.

Some of these late pictures are structurally complex and filled with a profusion of colors, shapes, and textures that speak of a Baroque richness. Others



*Apples and Oranges*  
1895–1900  
Oil on canvas  
Galerie du Jeu de Paume,  
Musée du Louvre, Paris



*Three Skulls*, 1900–04  
Pencil and watercolor  
The Art Institute of Chicago



*Still Life with Apples*, 1895–98  
Oil on canvas  
The Museum of Modern Art,  
New York,  
Lillie P. Bliss Collection



*Bottles, Pot, Alcohol Stove, Apples*  
1900–06  
Pencil and watercolor  
Collection Mr. and Mrs.  
Leigh B. Block, Chicago

**BATHERS** Although Cézanne wanted to paint his *Bathers* pictures from nude models posed outdoors, his own inhibitions and fear of causing a scandal prevented it. They are therefore his only works not rooted in direct observation. Moreover, the clumsy non-sensuous figures are far removed from the voluptuous nudes of Rubens and Delacroix that Cézanne admired and hoped to rival.

Cézanne's male compositions derive from memories of his youth, when he, Zola, and Baille had spent many happy days swimming in the River Arc. The spacious friezelike arrangement and vigorous poses of the male figures suggest a virile, robust ideal.

Cézanne's pictures of bathing females—different in mood and structure—are, however, his most monumental compositions. As the size and complexity of the female bathers increase, Cézanne clarifies and emphasizes the confining triangular structure. In Cézanne's *Large Bathers*, unfinished at his death, the constraining geometry of the landscape renders the nudes sensually inert as it locks them into their pictorial environment. Generalized and asexual, Cézanne's privately expressive figures became the models for Matisse, Picasso, and other twentieth-century artists.



*Seven Bathers*, c. 1900  
Oil on canvas  
Collection Ernst Beyeler, Basel

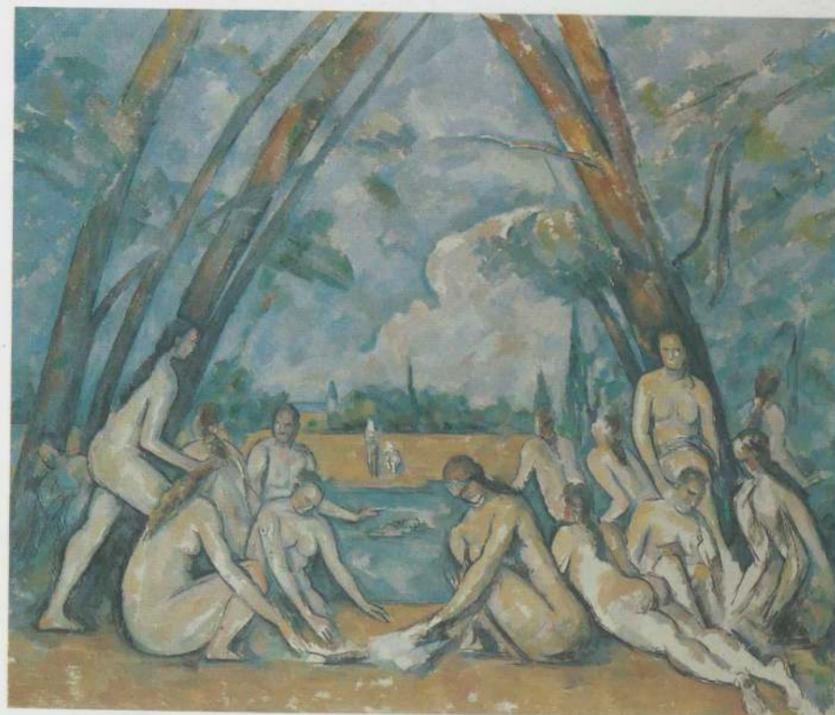


*Bathers*, 1900–06  
Oil on canvas  
National Gallery, London



Left: *Bathers*, 1902–06  
Oil on canvas  
Private collection, Zurich

Below: *Large Bathers*  
1899–1906  
Oil on canvas  
Philadelphia Museum of Art,  
W. P. Wiltach Collection



display a reductive composition pervaded by a melancholy mood, most notably the macabre pictures of skulls. Many of Cézanne's later still lifes challenge traditional notions of finish by displaying broad areas of unpainted canvas, yet the subtle color harmonies and taut structures of these pictorially satisfying works preclude labeling them incomplete. The sparkling watercolor still lifes painted during his last years illustrate yet another aspect of Cézanne's late style. In these works—characterized by floating, luminous colors, loose and painterly drawing, and stark, simple arrangements—Cézanne dematerializes matter into a weightless state of shimmering spirituality.

## CHRONOLOGY

**Cézanne's Early Career 1839:** Paul Cézanne is born on January 19 in Aix-en-Provence. **1852:** He and Emile Zola become close friends at the Collège Bourbon. **1859–60:** Begins law studies, but wants to become a painter. **1861:** Moves to Paris in April after a long struggle to obtain his father's permission and support to study painting. Meets Camille Pissarro at the Académie Suisse. Returns to Aix in September, discouraged with his first attempts at an artistic career. **1862:** Moves back to Paris in November and meets Bazille, Guillaumin, Renoir, and Monet. **1863:** Exhibits one painting at the Salon des Refusés. **1864–69:** Rejected yearly at the official Paris Salon. **1870:** Lives and paints at L'Estaque during the Franco-Prussian war to avoid the military draft. **1872:** Cézanne, his mistress Hortense Fiquet, and their son Paul move to Pontoise, where Cézanne paints with Camille Pissarro. **1874:** Participates in the first Impressionist exhibition with three paintings, including the *House of the Hanged Man*. **1876–79:** Rejected yearly at the official Salon. **1877:** Exhibits sixteen pictures at the third Impressionist exhibition and is ridiculed by most critics. Rejoins Pissarro at Pontoise in late spring. **1880:** Spends most of the year in Paris but seldom visits his old Impressionist friends.



*House of the Hanged Man*. c. 1873  
Oil on canvas  
Galerie du Jeu de Paume,  
Musée du Louvre, Paris



*Still Life with Compotier*. 1877–79  
Oil on canvas  
Private collection  
(formerly owned by Paul Gauguin)

**1881:** Works with Pissarro at Pontoise from May to October and meets Paul Gauguin. **1882:** Exhibits his first and only picture at the official Salon as a "student of Guillemet." **1883–84:** Paints in and around Aix and has little contact with Parisian friends. **1886:** Cézanne and Hortense are married on April 28. The publication of Zola's novel *L'Oeuvre*, in which the main character unflatteringly resembles Cézanne, causes the final break in their long relationship. The death of Cézanne's father on October 23 leaves the artist in control of a sizable fortune, including the Jas de Bouffan estate. **1887:** Cézanne rents a small room at the Château Noir that he will use until 1902. **1889:** Victor Chocquet manages to have Cézanne's *House of the Hanged Man* exhibited at the Paris World's Fair, but it draws no critical attention. **1890:** Exhibits three paintings with Les XX in Brussels. Returning to Aix after a summer trip to Switzerland, Cézanne begins to paint the *Cardplayers* series. At about this time the artist starts to suffer from diabetes. **1891–93:** Frequently alternates between living in Aix and Paris. **1894:** Visits Monet at Giverny, where he meets Auguste Rodin and the critic Gustave Geffroy, who had written admiringly of Cézanne's work in March.

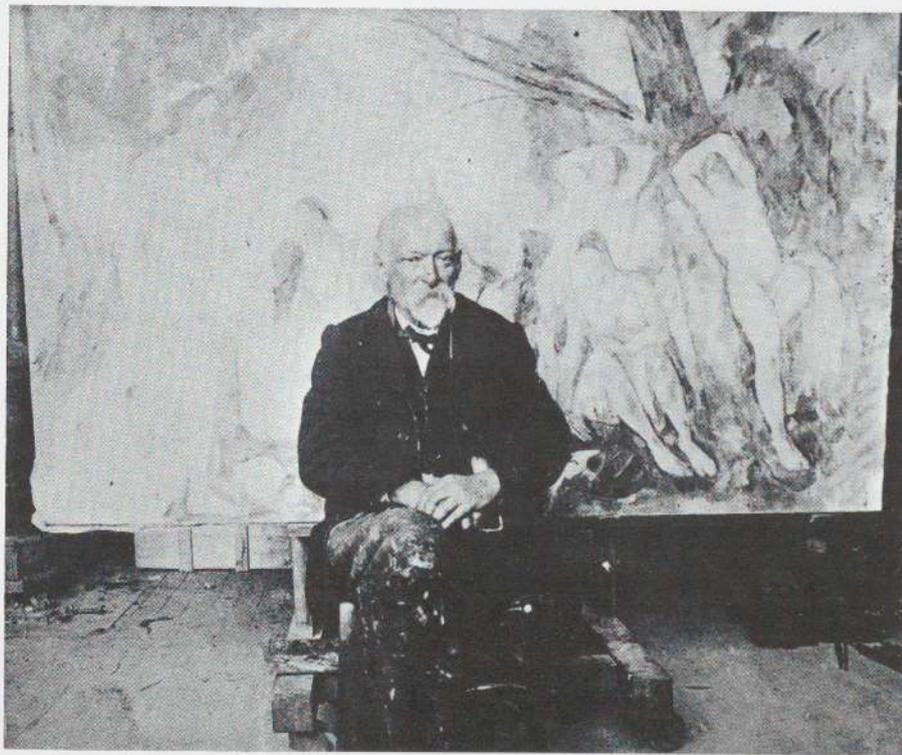


*Self-Portrait with Palette*. 1885–87  
Oil on canvas  
E. G. Bührle Foundation, Zurich



*The Cardplayers*. 1890–92  
Oil on canvas  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
bequest of Stephen C. Clark

**The Late Period 1895:** Cézanne begins to paint the *Portrait of Geffroy* in April, although his summer return to Aix interrupts the work. Two of his pictures enter the Luxembourg Museum as part of the controversial Caillebotte bequest of Impressionist paintings to the nation. In November Cézanne rents a small shack at the Bibémus quarry, and his first one-man exhibition opens at Vollard's gallery in Paris. **1896:** Spends the summer at Vichy and then Talloires, where he paints Lake Annecy. Returns to Paris in the autumn. **1897:** In Aix by June, Cézanne paints at Le Tholonet and the Bibémus quarry. On October 25 his mother dies. **1898:** Remains in Aix throughout the summer and works frequently at the Château Noir. In the autumn he returns to Paris and stays almost one year—his last lengthy residence outside of the Aix area. Vollard presents a second Cézanne exhibition at his gallery. **1899:** Cézanne works in and around Paris until the fall, painting a series of elaborate still lifes and the *Portrait of Vollard* (which he abandons upon his return to Aix) and sketching daily in the Louvre. The *Jas de Bouffan* is sold in order to settle the family estate, and Cézanne rents an apartment at 23 rue Boulegon in Aix. Three of Cézanne's pictures are hung at the Salon des



Cézanne in his studio at Les Lauves seated in front of the earliest of his *Large Bathers*; photograph taken by Emile Bernard in 1904 (Photo courtesy John Rewald)

Indépendants, and a third Cézanne exhibition is presented at Vollard's. **1900:** Roger Marx arranges to have three Cézannes prominently displayed at the Paris Centennial Exhibition. **1901:** Cézanne exhibits two paintings at the Salon des Indépendants and one in Brussels with La Libre Esthétique group. **1902:** Moves into his new studio at Les Lauves, a two-story structure overlooking Aix that includes a large, well-lighted work space on the second floor. Exhibits three pictures at the Salon des Indépendants and two with the Société des Amis des Arts in Aix. **1903:** Cézanne is attacked in the popular press when Emile Zola's collection, including ten of Cézanne's early paintings, is sold in March (Zola had died in September 1902). Cézanne is included in the Berlin and Vienna Secession exhibitions. **1904:** Participates for the first time in the Paris Salon d'Automne and is given an exhibition by the Galerie Cassirer in Berlin. Emile Bernard visits Cézanne at Aix. **1905:** Exhibits ten paintings at the Salon d'Automne. Maurice Denis and K.-X. Roussel visit the old artist and take photographs of him at work. **1906:** Cézanne paints along the Arc River to escape an intense summer heat wave, made all the more uncomfortable by his diabetes. Ten of Cézanne's pictures are shown at the Salon d'Automne. On



Interior of Cézanne's studio at Les Lauves as it appeared before World War II, with many of the artist's still-life objects visible (Photo courtesy Erle Loran)

October 15 Cézanne is caught in a rainstorm while painting and collapses on the road; he is brought home in a laundry cart by a passerby. On October 22 Paul Cézanne dies at Aix. **1907:** The Salon d'Automne mounts fifty-six of Cézanne's paintings in a memorial exhibition that confirms his importance for contemporary art, and especially for the emerging Cubism of Braque and Picasso.

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