

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 26, 2024

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The Phillips Collection Presents *Up Close with Paul Cezanne*

The exhibition unveils two newly conserved Cezanne paintings on view together for the first time in over 50 years alongside the museum's fully restored Cezanne holdings



WASHINGTON, DC—The Phillips Collection presents [*Up Close with Paul Cezanne*](#), unveiling two recently conserved paintings by French post-impressionist Paul Cezanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1886–87) and *Self-Portrait* (c. 1877), made possible by [Bank of America's Art Conservation Project Grant](#). A cornerstone in the permanent collection of the first museum of modern art in the country, the conserved works are on view for the first time in over 50 years alongside five works in the museum's world-renowned Cezanne collection, providing visitors new insights into the artist's process. ***Up Close with Paul Cezanne* is on view April 18–July 14, 2024.**

“While initially shocked upon seeing the work of Cezanne, museum founder Duncan Phillips came to appreciate the French artist as a ‘towering genius.’ In 1925, he acquired one of the artist’s iconic landscapes of Mont Sainte-Victoire, and by 1955, Cezanne assumed a central place in the collection with a representative group of six paintings,” says **Vradenburg Director and CEO Jonathan P. Binstock**. “The efforts of our talented team of conservators and scholars have deepened our understanding of these seminal works. Thanks to critical funding from Bank of America, our important collection of Cezannes will be seen from a new perspective.”

Over the past year, the paintings underwent extensive conservation at the museum's on-site Sherman Fairchild Foundation Conservation Studio to return their appearances to the artist's original vision. The treatments entailed removing varnishes that had deteriorated and discolored over time, obscuring the

depth and subtlety of the pictures. This effort has restored a three-dimensionality to the compositions that were lost under decades of yellowed varnish and an accumulation of airborne grime, according to **Elizabeth Steele, Head of Conservation at The Phillips Collection.**

“Cezanne’s palette appears more vibrant and the brushwork more energetic, restoring the artist’s intent for his compositions. We are seeing them essentially as he would have seen them,” says Steele. “It is rewarding to now look at the paintings with such clarity and an authenticity that speaks to the artist’s vision.”

Phillips conservators and curators collaborated with scholars to closely study Cezanne’s materials and techniques at distinct moments in his career alongside four other previously conserved paintings by the artist: *Fields at Bellevue* (1892–95), *Ginger Pot with Pomegranate and Pears* (1893), *Seated Woman in Blue* (1902–06), and *The Garden at Les Lauves* (c. 1906). The exhibition includes supplementary wall text and images inviting guests to see what conservators discovered while examining paintings prior to their treatment, such as graphite underdrawings and changes made by the artist seen with infrared imaging. In the case of *Mont Sainte-Victoire* and *Self-Portrait*, the paintings were cut down from a larger size, presumably by Cezanne’s dealer Ambroise Vollard, and in other examples, the perimeter of some were later painted in by restorers to cover portions he had left blank. The reverse of the paintings were also examined for stamps, inscriptions, and labels that map their history.

Mont Sainte-Victoire and *Self-Portrait* were the first two paintings by Cezanne to enter the Phillips’s permanent collection, in 1925 and 1928 respectively. At a time when few American museum directors supported the French modernist’s art, founder Duncan Phillips’s appreciation of Cezanne informed, refined, and educated his eye while broadening his vision of modern art. Phillips had *Mont Sainte-Victoire* on constant view during his lifetime and Cezanne’s *Self-Portrait* was the first self-portrait by the artist to enter an American museum collection.

“Duncan Phillips admired Cezanne’s innovative painting approach, which had an important influence on later developments in abstract art,” says **Phillips’s Associate Curator Renée Maurer.** “Phillips studied Cezanne’s artistic evolution for decades. The artist’s highly personal language of expression is conveyed through Phillips’s deliberate acquisition of works that highlight definitive points in Cezanne’s career and represent the motifs that inspired him.”

Presented together, the Phillips’s Cezanne unit of six oil paintings of still lifes, landscapes, and portraits, and one lithograph, all acquired by Phillips between 1925–55, provides an up-close look at the artist’s distinct and experimental process. Featured are several of Phillips’s archival letters and texts on Cezanne, displayed for the first time in this installation. *Up Close with Paul Cezanne* is the first time since 1971, when the museum mounted the retrospective *Cezanne: An Exhibition in Honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Phillips Collection*, that the entire unit has been featured in a special exhibition.

Sponsored by Bank of America, the unveiling of the conserved paintings will be commemorated with a panel discussion and other programs taking audiences behind the scenes of the treatment process and beneath the paintings’ surfaces. Led by Steele and Maurer, the panel is scheduled for June 9 at 2 pm and will feature art historians and conservators discussing the history, examination, and treatment of select works by Cezanne.

ART CONSERVATION AT BANK OF AMERICA

The Bank of America Art Conservation Project provides grants to nonprofit museums and institutions to conserve works in need of preservation or repair to promote cultural sustainability and ensure audiences can admire and learn more about their cultural and historical significance for decades. To date, more than 237 projects across 40 countries ranging from paintings and sculptures to archeological and architectural pieces have received funding.

“From neighborhood murals to pieces by the world’s most celebrated artists, works of art have the power to encapsulate so much of our dynamic society,” said **Larry Di Rita, President, Bank of America Greater Washington, DC**. “Partnering with The Phillips Collection is part of the Bank of America commitment to the DMV and will help ensure we can all continue to appreciate and draw inspiration from some of humanity’s most impactful artwork for decades to come.”

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

This exhibition is organized by The Phillips Collection and sponsored by [Bank of America](#).

Funding for the conservation of Cezanne’s *Mont Sainte-Victoire* and *Self-Portrait* was generously provided through a grant from the [Bank of America Art Conservation Project](#).

IMAGES: Paul Cezanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, 1886–87, Oil on canvas, 23 1/2 x 28 1/2 in. The Phillips Collection, Acquired 1925; The Phillips Collection’s Head of Conservation Elizabeth Steele removes darkened and yellowed varnish from Paul Cezanne’s *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1886–87). Photo: Brendan Canty.

IMAGE GALLERY

High-resolution press images are available upon request. Please contact lcantrell@phillipscollection.org.

ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection, America’s first museum of modern art, was founded in 1921. The museum houses one of the world’s most celebrated Impressionist and American modern art collections and continues to grow its collection with important contemporary voices. Its distinctive building combines extensive new galleries with the former home of its founder, Duncan Phillips. The Phillips’s impact spreads nationally and internationally through its diverse and experimental special exhibitions and events, including its award-winning education programs for educators, students, and adults; renowned Phillips Music series; and dynamic art and wellness and Phillips after 5 events. The Phillips Collection’s extensive community partnerships include Phillips@THEARC, the museum’s satellite campus in Southeast DC. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

ABOUT BANK OF AMERICA

Bank of America is one of the world’s leading financial institutions, serving individual consumers, small and middle-market businesses and large corporations with a full range of banking, investing, asset management and other financial and risk management products and services. The company provides unmatched convenience in the United States, serving approximately 69 million consumer and small business clients with approximately 3,800 retail financial centers, approximately 15,000 ATMs (automated teller machines) and award-winning digital banking with approximately 57 million verified digital users. Bank of America is a global leader in wealth management, corporate and investment

banking and trading across a broad range of asset classes, serving corporations, governments, institutions and individuals around the world. Bank of America offers industry-leading support to approximately 4 million small business households through a suite of innovative, easy-to-use online products and services. The company serves clients through operations across the United States, its territories and more than 35 countries. Bank of America Corporation stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE: BAC).

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PRESS IMAGES

Up Close with Paul Cezanne

April 18–July 14, 2024

Paul Cezanne

Mont Sainte-Victoire

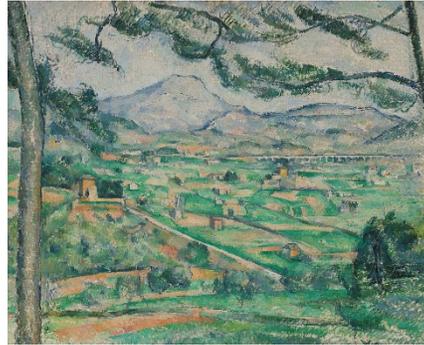
1886–87

Oil on canvas

23 1/2 x 28 1/2 in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Acquired 1925



Paul Cezanne

Self-Portrait

1877

Oil on canvas

23 3/4 x 18 1/2 in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Acquired 1928



The Phillips Collection's Associate Curator Renée Maurer and Head of Conservation Elizabeth Steele discuss the brushwork of Paul Cezanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1886–87). Photo: Brendan Canty



The Phillips Collection's Head of Conservation Elizabeth Steele removes darkened and yellowed varnish from Paul Cezanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1886–87). Photo: Brendan Canty



Page 2—Press Images: *Up Close with Paul Cezanne*

The Phillips Collection's Head of Conservation Elizabeth Steele retouches Paul Cezanne's *Self-Portrait* (1877). Photo: Brendan Canty



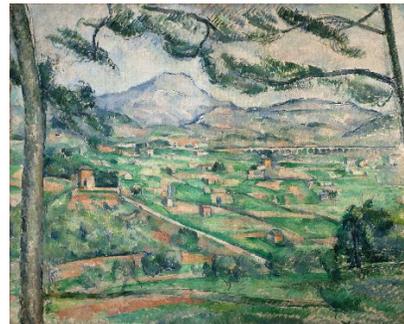
The Phillips Collection's Head of Conservation Elizabeth Steele examines the edges of Paul Cezanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1886–87) through a microscope. Photo: Brendan Canty



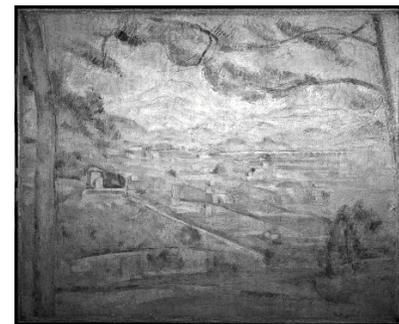
The Phillips Collection's Head of Conservation Elizabeth Steele applies putty along the edge of Paul Cezanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1886–87). Photo: Brendan Canty



Cezanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1886–87). Old, discolored varnish removed from left side; right side still uncleaned. Photo: The Phillips Collection



Infrared image of Cezanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1886–87) shows the artist's underdrawings. Photo: The Phillips Collection



Page 3—Press Images: *Up Close with Paul Cezanne*

The reverse of Cezanne's *Self-Portrait* (1877) shows stamps, inscriptions, and labels that map the painting's history. Photo: The Phillips Collection



To request access to images please contact Lauryn Cantrell at lcantrell@phillipscollection.org.

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CHECKLIST*Up Close with Paul Cezanne*April 18–July 14, 2024

Camille Pissarro*Portrait of Cezanne (State I)*

1874

Etching on paper

20 1/2 x 14 in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Acquired 1954

**Paul Cezanne***Self-Portrait*

1877

Oil on canvas

23 3/4 x 18 1/2 in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Acquired 1928

**Paul Cezanne***Mont Sainte-Victoire*

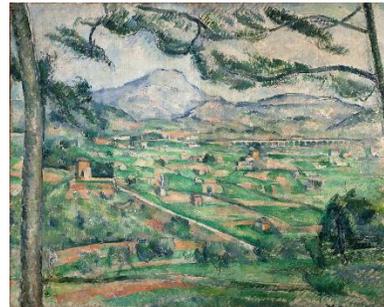
1886–87

Oil on canvas

23 1/2 x 28 1/2 in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Acquired 1925

**Paul Cezanne***Fields at Bellevue*

1892–95

Oil on canvas

14 1/4 x 19 3/4 in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Acquired 1940



Page 2—Checklist: *Up Close with Paul Cezanne*

Paul Cezanne

Ginger Pot with Pomegranate and Pears

1890–93

Oil on canvas

18 1/4 x 21 7/8 in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Gift of Gifford Phillips in memory of his father,
James Laughlin Phillips, 1939



Paul Cezanne

Self-Portrait

c. 1898

Lithograph

21 3/4 x 18 in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Acquired 1949



Paul Cezanne

Seated Woman in Blue

1902–04

Oil on canvas

26 x 19 3/4 in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Acquired 1946



Paul Cezanne

The Garden at Les Lauves

c. 1906

Oil on canvas

25 3/4 x 31 7/8 in.

The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC

Acquired 1955



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WALL TEXT**Up Close with Paul Cezanne****April 18-July 14, 2024**

Paul Cezanne (1839–1906, Aix-en-Provence, France) was revolutionary in his approach to painting. His constant experimentation and careful study of a subject gave “concrete expression to his sensations.” Museum Founder Duncan Phillips was enthralled by the influential artist’s innovative ability to construct forms with color and create tactile surfaces; his appreciation of Cezanne helped broaden his understanding of modern art. Beginning in 1925, Phillips assembled a prized Cezanne unit, with pictures dating from the 1870s to 1905. Phillips described his first acquisition, *Mont Sainte-Victoire* (1886–87), as having a “logic for every fresh touch of (the) brush and for every restful area between.” Cezanne’s *Self-Portrait* (c. 1877), acquired three years later, was the first self-portrait by the artist to enter a US museum. Both works were on constant display because for Phillips, “Cezanne’s vision of the world . . . was boundless.”

Over the past year, *Mont Sainte-Victoire* and *Self-Portrait* underwent extensive conservation to return their appearances to the artist’s original vision. This effort has been transformational, revealing the three-dimensional aspects to the compositions, as well as Cezanne’s bold brushwork and vivid color palette. While in the conservation studio, both paintings were studied in depth—along with four other paintings by Cezanne that had previously received conservation—to gain a better understanding of the artist’s process. Presented here is the Phillips’s full Cezanne unit, providing an up-close look at the great French modernist.

This exhibition is organized by The Phillips Collection and sponsored by Bank of America.

Funding for the conservation of Cezanne’s *Mont Sainte-Victoire* and *Self-Portrait* was generously provided through a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.

PAUL CEZANNE**Self-Portrait**

c. 1898

Lithograph

Acquired 1949

Cezanne first experimented with printmaking during the summer and fall of 1873 while working in Auvers with Camille Pissarro and others. At the urging of his dealer Ambroise Vollard, Cezanne experimented with lithography again in 1897. He produced this print, which shows the artist dressed in a coat and beret looking at the viewer from behind either a canvas or a portfolio. It is assumed to have been made for the unpublished third volume of Vollard’s *L’Album des peintres-graveurs* (Album of painters-engravers).

CAMILLE PISSARRO

Portrait of Cezanne (State I)

1874

Etching on paper

Acquired 1954

After meeting in Paris at the art school Académie Suisse in 1861, Cezanne and Pissarro formed a close bond and began to collaborate. In 1872, they began to paint together outdoors in the rural Oise Valley. It was a time marked by intensive experimentation and study of each other's work, which included the exchange of portraits.

ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

Cezanne, An Exhibition in Honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Phillips Collection catalogue featured *Self-Portrait* on the cover. This exhibition was on view at the Phillips (February 27–March 28, 1971), Art Institute in Chicago (April 17–May 16, 1971), and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (June 1–July 3, 1971).

On May 22, 1925, Duncan Phillips wrote to Stransky: "Cezanne was an important pathfinder and because of his universality and invention he certainly belongs in our Collection." He also references the monograph on Cezanne by Julius Meier-Graefe, which he "enjoyed immensely." The Phillips Memorial Gallery bulletin from 1931 includes Duncan Phillips's essay "A Classic Cezanne," which discusses *Mont Sainte-Victoire*.

On May 14, 1925, Josef Stransky of Wildenstein Gallery wrote to Duncan Phillips informing him of the availability of *Mont Sainte-Victoire*.

June 5, 1925: Invoice for the purchase of *Mont Sainte-Victoire*.

March 13, 1928: Invoice for *Self-Portrait* purchased for \$45,000.

May 16, 1939: Acknowledgement from Wildenstein of Phillips's intention to acquire *Ginger Pot with Pomegranate and Pears*.

On April 18, 1941, Stephen Bowen of Marie Harriman Gallery wrote to Duncan Phillips expressing the need to settle payment for *Fields at Bellevue*.

June 24, 1941: Receipt from Marie Harriman Gallery for the purchase of *Fields at Bellevue* for \$14,000.

On November 14, 1946, Duncan Phillips writes to Felix Wildenstein that he would like to acquire *Seated Woman in Blue*.

April 20, 1948: Felix Wildenstein writes to Duncan Phillips acknowledging the receipt of \$25,000 for the purchase of *Seated Woman in Blue*.

On February 4, 1955, Duncan Phillips writes to Daniel Wildenstein to except the offer of a purchase and trade option for *The Garden at Les Lauves*.

The April 4, 1956, issue of *Arts* includes an article by Duncan Phillips and this description of *The Garden at Les Lauves*: "In its present state of free intuition and unpremeditated daring it is a symbol of great art in the making." At the time of its purchase, the frame covered most of the unpainted edges of canvas.

This Duncan Phillips journal includes an undated draft essay with his thoughts on Cezanne's work, his search for a style, and his efforts to "build a bridge between impressionism and the Louvre."

Mont Sainte-Victoire, 1886-87

Oil on canvas, Acquired 1925

“I occupy myself . . . for months . . . by leaning once a little more to the right, once a little more to the left.” — Paul Cezanne

Paul Cezanne painted Mont Sainte-Victoire more than 60 times, and from the early 1880s to 1906, he featured this favorite subject in at least 25 canvases. This scene was observed near Aix-en-Provence between Bellevue and Montbriand, properties at one time owned by Cezanne family members. Cezanne would walk to this site from his family



Fig. 1: The Path of the Viaduct, Aix, 1903
Henry Ely Studio, Courtesy of the National Gallery Archives



Fig. 2: Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from Bellevue, c. 1935
Photo by John Rewald/Leo Marchutz, John Rewald Archive, Department of Image Collections, National Gallery of Art Library, Washington, DC

residence Jas de Bouffan and position himself beneath the shade of trees to paint a vast panorama framed by two pines: at left a diagonal railway (from Aix to Rognac) leading to a small house, at right the Arc River valley railway viaduct (from Aix to Marseilles), and Mont Sainte-Victoire in the distance (Figs. 1-2). Two related works have a similar composition (Figs. 3-4). The light brushwork and a bright color palette show the influence of mentor Camille Pissarro who painted with Cezanne outdoors beginning in the 1870s.



Fig. 3: *Montagne Saint-Victoire (The Arc Valley)*, c. 1885
Watercolor, with graphite, on buff wove paper, Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Marshall Field, IV

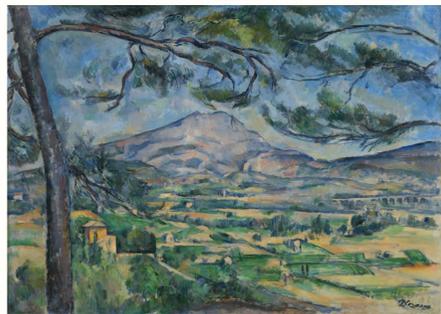


Fig. 4: *The Montagne Saint-Victoire with Large Pine*, c. 1887
Oil on canvas, The Courtauld Gallery, London (Samuel Courtauld Trust)

ACQUIRING THE PAINTING

Duncan Phillips purchased this picture in 1925 for \$45,000, and displayed it that year. In 1931 he declared: “*Mont Sainte-Victoire* is a world in itself . . . Perfect equilibrium is established . . . a symmetry like the Parthenon.”

REMOVING THE VARNISH

In 2023, a deteriorated, yellowed varnish along with airborne grime were removed for the first time since the painting was acquired in 1925 (Fig. 5). After cleaning, the appearance of *Mont Sainte-Victoire* was transformed: Cezanne’s colors appear more vibrant, the brushwork more distinct, and the landscape recedes further in

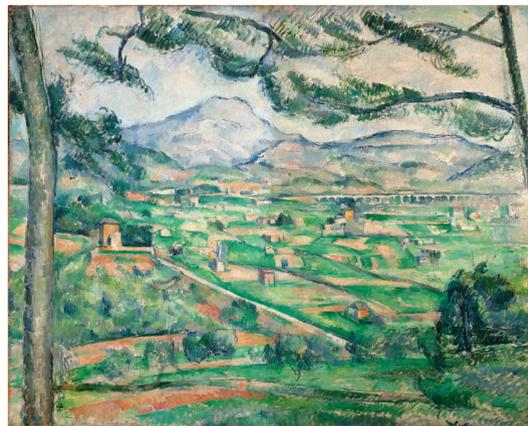


Fig. 5: Old, discolored varnish removed from left side; right side still uncleaned

space, restoring the artist’s intent for his composition. Apart from two old, repaired tears in the upper right (detectable in the infrared image, Fig. 7) and a few other small, scattered losses, the work is in pristine condition.



Fig. 6: Sketched lines for the tree trunk visible in infrared image

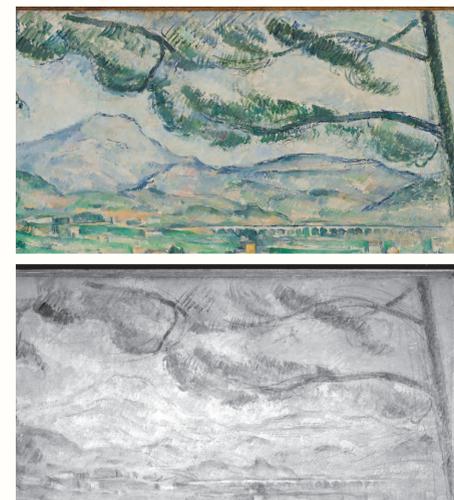


Fig. 7: Underdrawing for branches and distant landscape apparent in infrared image

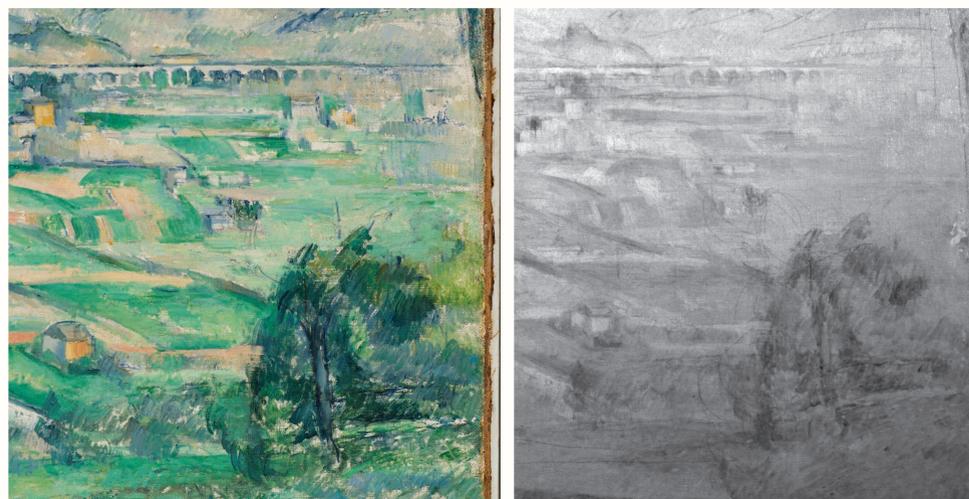


Fig. 8: Loosely drawn placement of the trees in lower right can be seen in infrared image

LOOKING BELOW THE SURFACE

Infrared imaging was used to see below the surface of the painting, which revealed underdrawing and changes made by the artist. Cezanne seems to have first loosely sketched in the landscape with graphite pencil. Although he made notations for the location of the trees that frame the landscape in the initial drawing, he did not strictly follow these outlines as he painted them (Fig. 6). Also visible in the underdrawing are contours of the hill and mountain tops, houses, railroad tracks, and viaduct in the center of the composition (Fig. 7). Hastily applied circular pencil marks fix the location of the trees and foliage at lower right (Fig. 8).

DEVELOPING THE COMPOSITION

After he finished the pencil sketch, Cezanne used a fine pointed brush and blue paint to outline the mountains and other elements, generally following the initial graphite lines. He then built up the composition using hatched brushstrokes ranging from thin washes to richer layers in hues of blue, green, yellow, and orange. He left the white ground layer visible throughout the canvas and did not bring the landscape to the same degree of completion around the edges. This is particularly noticeable along the center right edge, where the train bridge fades and is left incomplete (Fig. 8). Examination of the sides of the picture reveals that it was cut down, presumably by Ambroise Vollard, his dealer, to present a more completed look.

Self-Portrait, c. 1877

Oil on canvas, Acquired 1928

“Cezanne attained clarity and simplicity of form and construction entirely by means of modulated color, one touch laid across another, even as a builder works....Here he looks every inch the builder interrupted at his work.” —*Duncan Phillips*

There are 27 known self-portraits by Cezanne. This example, painted either in Paris or Aix, depicts the artist as an aging man. Thick color patches and thin parallel brushstrokes construct his face, beard, and hair, techniques he established while working with the Impressionists. His jacket appears sketched and the background is unadorned. When the picture was exhibited at the Paris Salon d'Automne in 1904, a critic described it as having “rough and aggressive sincerity.”

ACQUIRING THE PAINTING
In 1928, it was acquired for \$45,000 from Paul Rosenberg Gallery through dealer Josef Stansky, who, along with prominent German art critic Julius Meier-Graefe, declared it “one of the greatest paintings in the world.” With its acquisition, the Phillips became the first US museum to own a self-portrait by Cezanne. It went on view that year in the exhibition *Art Is International*, and in 1929, Phillips lent it to the Museum of Modern Art's inaugural show. For Phillips, *Self-Portrait* affirmed how Cezanne was “constructing a world in painting with its proper building material—color.”

REMOVING THE VARNISH

Multiple varnishes were applied to the painting 50 years ago during a conservation treatment. Over time, the varnish became dull and turned yellow, muting the paint colors and flattening the three-dimensional qualities of the composition (Figs. 1-2). Now, with the varnish removed, the portrait takes on a new clarity and increased boldness. The energetic brushwork that was lost under the darkened surface coating has become visible and the focus that Cezanne gave to the area around his eyes has emerged. He clearly reworked the face several times using impastoed brushstrokes, inviting the viewer to focus on his outward gaze (Fig. 3).



Figs. 1-2: Before (left) and after (right) treatment



Fig. 3: Close-up of the eyes

EXAMINING THE EDGES AND THE REVERSE

Examination of the edges of the picture reveal that the canvas was cut down from a larger size, presumably by the request of Cezanne's dealer Ambroise Vollard who was known to hire restorers for such a task. To make the composition look more complete, a restorer also added thin blue paint along the left and top sides (Fig. 4) where the canvas was left unpainted by Cezanne. At one time, the painting's perimeter may have looked like *Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat* (1875-76) (Fig. 5). Vollard's handwritten inscription, “Portrait de l'artiste par lui-même tête nue” (Self-portrait with bare head), is found on the brown paper that covers the stretcher on the reverse (Fig. 6), along with an inventory sticker of “4162,” which matches Vollard's stock book listing (Figs. 7-8).



Fig. 4: Detail of top and left side showing thin blue paint

Fig. 5: *Self-Portrait in a Straw Hat*, 1875-76
Oil on canvas, 13 3/4 x 11 3/8 in.,
Museum of Modern Art, The William S. Paley Collection



RIGHT: Fig 6: Inscription on back of *Self-Portrait*

Entrée									
Numéro	Date	Provenance	Nom & Adresse	Description	De quel Musée ou de quel	Quantité	Reçu par	Caract.	Notes
4.104			Cezanne	Portrait de l'artiste		1			
4.102			Cezanne	Portrait de l'artiste par lui-même		1			
4.103			Cezanne	Portrait de l'artiste		1			
4.104			Cezanne	Portrait de Volterra		1			
4.105			Cezanne	Portrait de l'artiste par lui-même		1			
4.106			Cezanne	Portrait de l'artiste		1			
4.107			Cezanne	Portrait de l'artiste		1			
4.108			Cezanne	Portrait de l'artiste par lui-même		1			
4.109			Cezanne	Portrait de l'artiste		1			
4.110			Cezanne	Portrait de l'artiste		1			



Figs. 7-8: Ambroise Vollard stock book and inventory sticker on back of *Self-Portrait*. Stock book A, 1899-1904; Ambroise Vollard Records [uqgkofqj], The Wildenstein Plattner Institute, Inc.

VARNISH: A thin solution of natural or synthetic resins applied to a finished painting to saturate the colors. Initially transparent, most varnishes discolor yellow or grey and need to be replaced over time, generally every 50 to 100 years.



The Garden at Les Lauves, c. 1906

Oil on canvas, Acquired 1955

“I, nearly seventy years old, find the colors sensations which give us light are the source of abstractions which do not allow me to cover my canvas nor to pursue the delineation of objects...thus my image and picture is incomplete.” —Paul Cezanne

Cezanne painted roughly 320 landscapes, and this is one of his last, found with the artist's estate after he died. Likely painted in one sitting, its loosely defined horizontal bands of color suggest the southern view from his studio where he worked from 1902–06. There, he painted on his 20-foot-wide gravel terrace, which was bordered by a low retaining wall and a small garden. In the distance he could also see Aix and, further afield, the Chaine de l'Étoile mountains. Scholars consider the violet patches at the painting's lower register to be the beginnings of the terrace wall, also represented in a related watercolor (Fig. 1). Phillips acquired *Les Lauves* from Wildenstein Gallery in 1955, which included trading an earlier Cezanne painting *Harvesters* (1875–78). He described *Les Lauves* as achieving “the painterly excitement and sense of adventure to which our best, our most poetic abstract expressionist aspire.”

Throughout his career, Cezanne left paintings in various stages of completion—with portions of the white ground layer unpainted around the perimeter—a practice that grew from his experiments with watercolors. There are no signs of underdrawing on *Les Lauves*. The artist describes his process: “To read nature is to see it under the veil of its interpretation as colored patches following one another according to a law of harmony.” Cezanne's initial impressions began with daubs of a thin wash of brown paint, seen on the left side and center (Fig. 2). Evidence that the same thin brown paint lies beneath other passages can be found in the drips of brown coming from beneath blue and green paint along the lower part of the picture.

When Phillips purchased this picture, the bottom two inches were covered by the frame (Fig. 3) to prevent the unpainted canvas from being seen. When the painting was cleaned in 1980 to remove a yellowed varnish, the picture was reframed to return the work to its original appearance.



Fig. 1: *Terrace of the Garden at Les Lauves*, 1902–06
Watercolor over graphite, 17 x 21 1/2 in., The Mogran Library and Museum, Thaw Collection



Fig. 2: Brown wash visible on top left side, and brown drips on bottom center and right



Fig. 3: *The Garden at Les Lauves*, with bottom two inches covered by frame, on view in *Cezanne, An Exhibition in Honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Phillips Collection* (February 27–March 28, 1971)



GROUND LAYER: A coating applied to the support (typically canvas, cardboard, or wood panel) to seal and prepare it for the paint layer. It is typically white and is also called the priming layer.

Ginger Pot with Pomegranate and Pears, 1890-93

Oil on canvas, Gift of Gifford Phillips, in memory of his father James Lauglin Phillips, 1939

Throughout his career, Cezanne painted still lifes filled with modest objects from his home. Examples from the 1890s show him using a lighter palette and widening the space around the objects and the table, taking in more of the room. He meticulously set up fruits of contrasting color, tilting and balancing them using coins or other items to explore line, volume, and depth. Of his almost 190 still lifes, Cezanne painted the ginger pot (a popular decorative jar) at least six times (Fig. 1). The red band at the bottom right indicates the ornamental wall treatment at Jas de Bouffan, where this work was painted. The fabric in the background is the same textile featured in *Seated Woman in Blue*.

Claude Monet purchased this painting in 1898, four years after Cezanne's visit to Giverny, Monet's home. Phillips knew the work and saw it displayed with *Self-Portrait* in MoMA's inaugural exhibition. With financial assistance from his nephew, Gifford Phillips, Duncan Phillips acquired the painting from Wildenstein Galleries for \$40,000 in 1939, and it went on view that fall.

This picture has remained in pristine condition in large part because Monet purchased it directly from the artist and displayed it in his bedroom for decades (Fig. 2). Along the lower left quadrant are unpainted portions of the off-white ground layer. Infrared imaging reveals that Cezanne initially sketched the composition using graphite pencil, as underdrawing appears around the pears (Fig. 3) and in the folds of the drapery (Fig. 4).

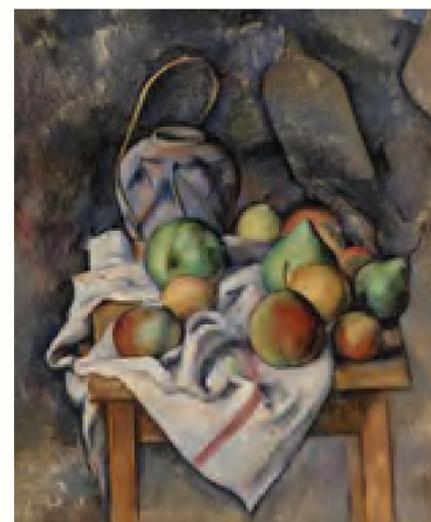


Fig. 1: Paul Cezanne, *Ginger Jar*, c. 1895
Oil on canvas, 28 15/16 x 23 13/16 in., Barnes Foundation

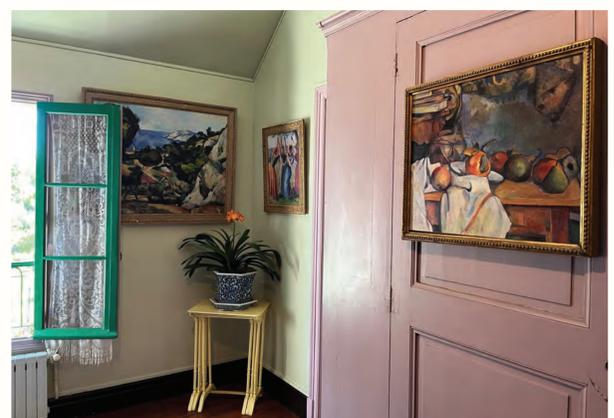
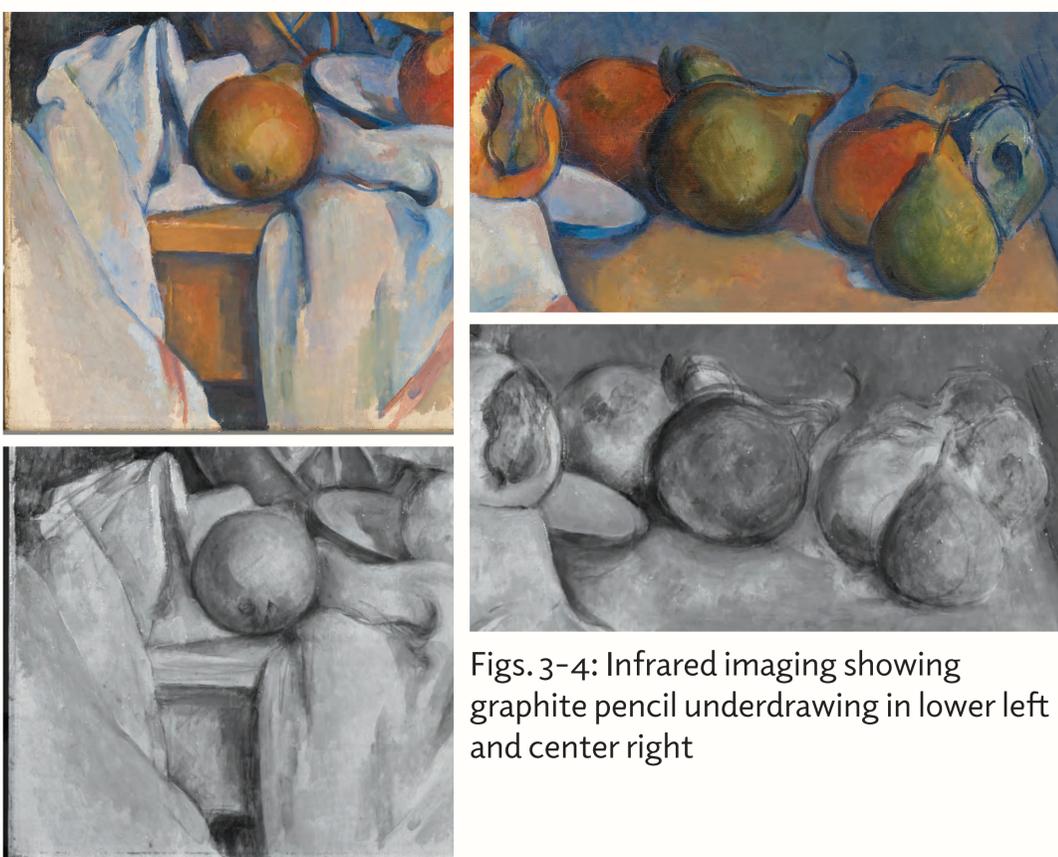


Fig. 2: Reproduction of *Ginger Pot* displayed where the original once hung at Giverny (now a museum)



Figs. 3-4: Infrared imaging showing graphite pencil underdrawing in lower left and center right

INFRARED IMAGING: A camera sensitive to infrared light can be used to detect underdrawings and changes made by the artist. Many pigments are transparent or semitransparent in infrared light, making it possible to see through certain paint layers. Others reflect (and appear white) or absorb (and appear dark) in an infrared image. The differences in transparency, reflection, and absorption frequently allow a view of what lies beneath the upper layers of paint.

Fields at Bellevue, 1892-95

Oil on canvas, Acquired 1940

“Render nature with the cylinder, the sphere, and the cone, arranged in perspective so that each side of an object or of a plane is directed toward a central point.” — *Paul Cezanne*

Situated on a hill near Aix and Mont Sainte-Victoire is Bellevue, a property acquired by Cezanne’s sister Rose Conil in 1886. This canvas may depict the Arc River valley below it, where the artist focused his attention on the structures of the farmhouses and other abandoned buildings, constructed with flat translucent geometric planes. His palette captures the longer shadows of the late afternoon.

This work was privately acquired during the artist’s lifetime. In 1939, it made its US debut at the centennial exhibition of Cezanne’s birth presented by Marie Harriman Gallery, New York. Phillips purchased it from the gallery in 1940 for \$14,000, and included it in the 1941 *Functions of Color in Painting* exhibition, and later with examples by Pierre Bonnard, Marjorie Phillips, and Berthe Morisot. For many years this picture hung in the Phillips family’s home on Foxhall Road.

The labels on the back of *Fields of Bellevue* reveal its past ownership and where it was exhibited (Fig. 1). Three labels document its inclusion in the 11th Internationale Exposition des Beaux Art in Venice in 1920: a handwritten inscription noting the owner at that time as Egisto Fabbri, Florence; a customs label; and an Italian label indicating the painting’s inventory number as 1055 (Fig. 2). Ambroise Vollard’s stock book number for the work, 3401, is on a label in the center of the stretcher crossbar, and below it, an indecipherable handwritten label in black ink may refer to a previous owner or an exhibition (Fig. 3). Customs stamps indicate that it was shipped in and out of France (Fig. 4). A torn label in the upper right can be assigned to the French shipping company De la Rancheraye et Cie (operating in Paris from 1912-24) (Fig. 5).

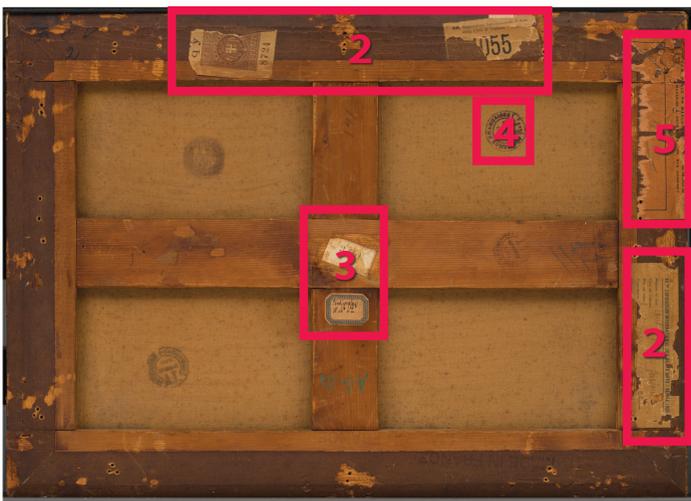


Fig. 1: Reverse of *Fields of Bellevue*

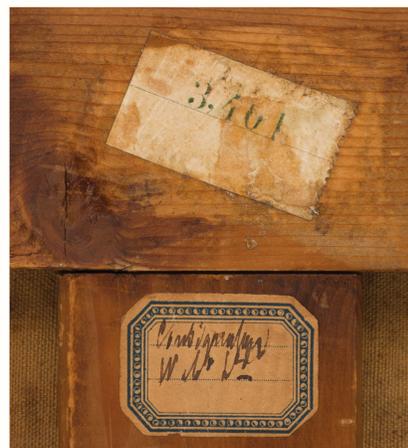


Fig. 3: Volland stockbook label and other indecipherable label



Fig. 4: Customs stamp



Fig. 2: Italian exhibition labels



Fig. 5: De la Rancheraye et Cie label

Seated Woman in Blue, 1902-04

Oil on canvas, Acquired 1946

Paul Cezanne produced almost 1,000 paintings and about 160 of them are portraits. Here, a woman wearing a tailored blue suit and a decorative hat reclines in a chair before a patterned curtain. With a book on her lap, she gazes into the distance, her features, posture, and mood appear detached. Cezanne demanded many sittings from his models. In 1904, he wrote to artist Émile Bernard, “I proceed very slowly . . . One must observe one’s model and feel very accurately, but also express oneself with distinctiveness and force.”

When Phillips purchased this work, it was thought to be a portrait of the artist’s wife. Now scholars believe that it depicts either his housekeeper Madame Brémont, or his sister Marie, known to wear fashionable dresses like this example. It is related to a larger composition (Fig. 1); both were painted at Cezanne’s residence at 23 rue Boulegon near his studio Les Lauves. Phillips acquired this work in 1946 for \$25,000 from Wildenstein Gallery.

Cezanne labored over *Seated Woman in Blue*, as indicated by the thickly painted and heavily impastoed surface. The drapery in the background seems to be the same one pictured in *Ginger Pot* (also on view), a prop that he used over and over in his works. An in-depth examination of this picture reveals that the lower right was painted by another hand—while the colors appear similar, the brushwork does not match Cezanne’s unique constructions of color patches, especially when examined using infrared imaging (Fig. 2). The painting was initially purchased by Ambroise Vollard from the artist’s son. The dealer may have hired a restorer to cover the unpainted portions of the canvas to give it a more finished appearance.



Fig. 1: *Lady in Blue*, c. 1904
Oil on canvas, 34 7/8 x 28 3/8 in.,
Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg,
Russia

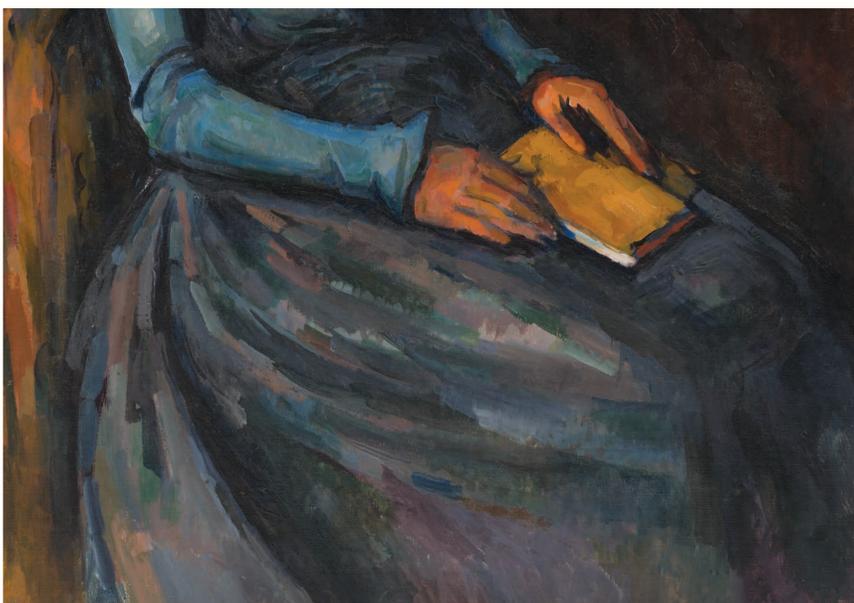


Fig. 2: Comparison of the lower right section of the painting with the infrared image

Duncan Phillips on Paul Cezanne

In the mid-1900s, as a young critic drawn to more representational art, Duncan Phillips initially criticized Paul Cezanne, calling him a “heavy-handed bungler” and “a radical.” But after his museum opened in 1921, Phillips’s growing interests in color and abstraction, his discussions with artists and dealers, his visits to exhibitions, and his readings on Cezanne helped shift his thinking. By 1924, Phillips had embraced Cezanne’s art and declared the artist a “great innovator.”

As few American museums pursued late-19th-century art, inventory was plentiful in New York. Dealers sought out Phillips, and he took action. Writing to dealer Josef Stransky in 1925, Phillips stated: “Cezanne belongs in our collection by right of his towering genius for decorative abstraction.” Stransky replied that *Mont Sainte-Victoire* was obtainable for \$45,000; that fall, the first Cezanne entered the collection.

As Phillips continued to buy, he wrote more about Cezanne’s process, saying in 1931: “[Cezanne] drew with color and thus built up his spatial designs, superimposing touches of his brush to model his world.” Phillips’s advocacy for Cezanne led to the world-renowned group of six paintings and one lithograph. Following the purchase of *The Garden at Les Lauves*, his last example, Phillips concluded: “After years of research and discipline . . . [Cezanne] had finally made himself so much the intimate master of his unique method of color construction and color design.” In 1971, a Cezanne exhibition was organized to celebrate the museum’s 50th anniversary, in honor of one of Duncan and Marjorie’s favorite artists.

Cezanne's Process and Paints

“There is no line, there is only modeling; there are only contrasts. When color is at its richest, form is at its fullest.” —*Paul Cezanne*

The works in this gallery illustrate the full range of Cezanne's techniques. In both *Self-Portrait* and *Seated Woman in Blue*, parts of the figures are heavily worked while other sections of the painting are less fully realized. Technical studies of *Mont Sainte-Victoire* and *Ginger Pot with Pomegranate and Pears* indicate some planning with graphite pencil; *Fields at Bellevue* and *The Garden at Les Lauves* show little planning, with his ideas painted directly on the canvas. Examinations also show Cezanne's experiments with paint application—from small broken brushstrokes to marks arranged in more ordered parallel lines and geometric patterns, which he called the “constructivist stroke.”

Cezanne used commercially primed, standard French sized canvases; *The Garden at Les Lauves*, for example, measures 81 x 65 cm—a “No. 25 figure” canvas. Other works purchased by Phillips have had their sizes altered in early restorations and therefore are not standard sizes.

Cezanne bought his supplies from color merchants Jean Tanguy, Briault, and Maison Chabod. He wrote to a color merchant in July 14, 1905: “Monsieur, I have received your various deliveries and now request you send to me: 5 burnt lake no. 7 (Masion Chabod), 5 Veronese green no. 7 or 8 from Bourgeois - and 5 cobalt from the same house, same number.” Artist Émile Bernard described Cezanne's palette as “the real painter's palette,” listing these colors: Yellows: Brilliant yellow, Naples yellow, chrome yellow, yellow ochre, raw sienna; Reds: vermilion, Indian red (red earth), burnt sienna, madder lake, carmine lake, burnt crimson lake; Green: Viridian (Veronese green), emerald green, green earth; Blues: Cobalt blue, ultramarine blue, Prussian blue, peach black.

Paul Cezanne: A Brief Chronology

1839: Paul Cezanne, the son of Louis-Auguste Cezanne and Anne-Elisabeth Aubert, is born on January 19 at 28 rue de l'Opéra, in Aix-en-Provence in southern France.

1844–58: Studies at Saint-Joseph's boarding school in Aix and at Bourbon school, where he befriends writer Émile Zola. At the free municipal school of drawing (now the Granet Museum), Cezanne takes drawing classes.

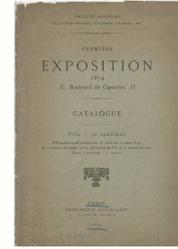
1866: In Paris, meets Édouard Manet and Claude Monet. Cezanne's works are rejected in 1865 and 1866 by the Paris Salon.

1868–69: Alternates time between Paris and Aix. In Paris, meets 19-year-old Marie-Hortense Fiquet.



Madame Cezanne in a Red Armchair, c.1877, Oil on canvas, 28 1/2 x 22 in., Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Bequest of Robert Treat Paine, 2nd

1874: Submits three paintings to the exhibition organized by the Société anonyme alongside Pissarro, Monet, Renoir, Edgar Degas, Berthe Morisot, and others, in defiance of the Paris Salon. The exhibition is later known as the "First Impressionist Exhibition" and the artists called the "Impressionists."



Société anonyme des artistes peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs, etc. Première Exposition brochure, 1874

1877: Paints portraits of Hortense. Exhibits 17 works in the Third Impressionist Exhibition.

1878: On April 14, Cezanne describes Mont Sainte-Victoire: "As the train passes . . . a stunning motif opens up on the eastern side: Sainte-Victoire and the cliffs overlooking Beaurcueuil."



Mont Sainte-Victoire and the Viaduct of the Arc River Valley, 1882–85, Oil on canvas, 25 3/4 x 32 1/8 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art, H. O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929

1894: In November, spends time with Monet in Giverny. Four years later, Monet purchases the Phillips's still life.

1895: Paris gallery owner Ambrose Vollard becomes Cezanne's dealer, and in November organizes the artist's first solo show. Vollard exhibits some 150 paintings by Cezanne on a rotating basis. Several are purchased by artists, including Monet, Degas, and Pissarro.



Later photograph of Ambrose Vollard standing in front of Pablo Picasso's *Evocation, Burial of Casagemas* (1901)

1902: Paints views of Mont Sainte-Victoire seen from the hills behind his studio.



Mont Sainte-Victoire, 1902–04, Oil on canvas, 28 3/4 x 36 3/16 in., Philadelphia Museum of Art, The George W. Elkins Collection

1904: Artist Émile Bernard visits Cezanne. In a room at the Salon d'Automne, Cezanne exhibits 31 paintings including the Phillips's *Self-Portrait* and two drawings.



Salon d'Automne, Grand Palais, Paris, Salle Cezanne, October 15–November 15, 1904

1905: Cezanne's paintings appear for the first time in London at Grafton Galleries in an exhibition organized by art dealer Paul Durand Ruel.



1839

1870



Self-Portrait, c.1877

1880



Mont Sainte-Victoire, 1886–87

1890



Ginger Pot with Pomegranate and Pears, 1890–93



Fields at Bellevue, 1892–95

1900



Seated Woman in Blue, between 1902–04



The Garden at Les Lauves, c.1906

1906

1859–60: Enrolls at the Aix law school. His father purchases the Jas de Bouffan property.

1860–1861: Leaves law school and moves to Paris. Enrolls at the Académie Suisse art school and meets Camille Pissarro, who becomes his mentor. Failing to qualify for the École des Beaux-Arts school, Cezanne returns to Aix, works at his father's bank, and studies drawing.

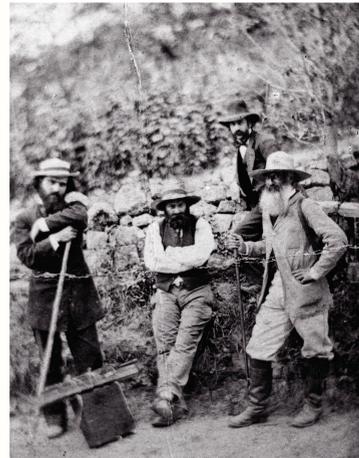


The Cezanne family residence Jas de Bouffan

1862–63: Leaves his father's bank, moves to Paris, and visits Salon de Refusés—the infamous exhibition of artworks that were rejected by the official Paris Salon for not adhering to traditional techniques and subjects. He continues his studies at the Académie Suisse where he also meets Pierre-Auguste Renoir and copies paintings at the Louvre. Paints his earliest known self-portrait.

1870–71: During the Franco-Prussian War, takes refuge in L'Estaque to avoid military service. Treaty of Versailles ends war. In July, Cezanne and Hortense move to Paris.

1872–73: Son Paul is born. Cezanne paints outdoors with Pissarro and moves with his family to Auvers-sur-l'Oise.



Cezanne (center) and Pissarro (right) with two other artists in the region of Auvers, c.1874, Courtesy of the National Gallery Archives

1881: Working outdoors with Pissarro from May–October in Pontoise, Cezanne brightens his palette and employs a looser painting style.



Camille Pissarro, *Landscape at Chaponval*, 1880, Oil on canvas, 21 1/2 x 25 1/2 in., Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Bequest of Antonin Personnaz, 1937

1882–86: His first and only painting is accepted by the Paris Salon. Paints in the South of France with Monet and Renoir. Cezanne marries Marie-Hortense. After his father's death, receives a considerable inheritance. Lives with his mother at Jas de Bouffan and later stays in Aix with Hortense and Paul. Paints several versions of Mont Sainte-Victoire, working both outside and in the studio.

1888–90: In January, hosts Renoir in Aix. Paints several still lifes at the Jas de Bouffan, including the Phillips's example. Begins to suffer from diabetes.



Still Life with a Ginger Jar and Eggplants, 1893–94, Oil on canvas, 28 1/2 x 36 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Stephen C. Clark, 1960

1891–93: Works on a series of portraits and *Fields at Bellevue*, painted near his sister and brother-in-law's estate.

1899–1900: Two years after his mother dies, Jas de Bouffan is sold. Cezanne exhibits at the Société des Artistes Indépendants and at Vollard's gallery. As Cezanne's reputation grows, Berlin's Galerie Paul Cassirer presents the first exhibition of Cezanne's paintings in Germany. *Self-Portrait* is shown in Berlin in 1904.

1901: Buys the property Les Lauves and establishes a studio.



South facing terrace in front of Cezanne's studio at Les Lauves

1906: On October 15 while painting outdoors in the rain, Cezanne collapses. On October 23, Cezanne dies in Aix and is later buried at the Cimetière Saint-Pierre.



Kerr-Xavier Roussel's photograph of Cezanne painting at Les Lauves, January 1906, National Gallery of Art, Gallery Archives, Rewald Papers

1907: A major Cezanne retrospective of 57 works is organized at the Salon d'Automne, Paris. The show has a tremendous impact on artists and collectors.