Introduction:
The Reading of the Model

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Paul Cézanne was born in Aix-en-Provence on 19 January 1839, and died there aged sixty-seven on 23 October 1906. He made almost 1,000 paintings, of which around 160 are portraits. This publication accompanies the only exhibition exclusively devoted to these works since 1910, when Ambroise Vollard, who had been the artist’s dealer, showed twenty-four ‘Figures de Cézanne’. The present, much larger selection was chosen with the aims of providing a guide to the range and development of Cézanne’s portraits, the methods of their making, and the choice of their sitters. Also, more broadly, it is intended to raise the question of what the practice of portraiture meant for Cézanne when he was painting – or, as he said, reading and ‘realising’ – the model.

OLD RULES

When Cézanne began painting portraits in the early 1860s, portraiture in France had long been acknowledged as a genre second in importance only to paintings of historical and mythological subjects. It was growing in popularity, and it would continue to do so during the period of Cézanne’s career: in the late 1880s, a National Portrait Gallery would be proposed for Paris, as well as a special gallery for portraits in the Louvre. It was during the 1860s and 1870s, however, that many ambitious painters found themselves enquiring what a portrait should aim to do. They no longer needed to ask, as they had in earlier times, what comprised a landscape painting, a still life, or a figure composition. But what was a portrait? That was the question they had to address.

The first reason that they had to do so was a matter of historical change. A traditional notion of portraiture, based on precisely detailed, idealised images of the public faces of people who lived public lives, had all but come to an end – at least, the followers of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres had dragged out this approach beyond plausibility. What remained by default was the rudimentary understanding that a portrait, still a social art, should provide a physical and psychological likeness of its sitter. But this was complicated by the emergence of new, highly personalised...
approaches to portraiture by artists such as Gustave Courbet, Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas and, among others, Cézanne. They raised the issue as to whether the claims of painting overall were being elevated over those of portraiture in particular; and, if so, whether invocation of the individuality of the sitter was being supplanted by expression of the individuality of the artist. Also open to interpretation was whether muting a sitter's individuality in favour of that of the artist depersonalised, or even objectified, the sitter. Such charges, first made against Manet’s portraits, were also made against Cézanne’s.

Conversely, the question arose as to whether acceptance of a commission to paint a portrait would compromise both the claims of painting and the individuality of the artist. This, however, was a perennial problem: the art historian E.H. Gombrich described it crudely as ‘quarrels between great artists and pompous sitters whose stupid wives insist there is still something wrong around the mouth’. Stupid husbands and friends, too. The English painter-critic Walter Sickert, writing in 1910, more carefully divided portraits into two kinds: ‘pictures painted by artists as servants of their customers’ and ‘pictures painted by artists who are masters of their customers’. But aspiring French painters of the 1860s and 1870s, Cézanne included, had long mastered a third kind: pictures not painted for customers, but rather of people they knew.

An additional reason why portraiture needed to be redefined came as the result of an invention. The enormous popularity of photographic portraits, especially of small, informal cartes-de-visite, did not compromise the viability of portrait painting – a common claim – but did offer what historian Carol Armstrong nicely calls a ‘boldly strange’ alternative to the painted portrait that caught the attention of many critics and artists, such as Cézanne; and worried others. The example of photography, a young, mechanical, reproductive medium opposed to but influencing the old, personalised, imaginative one, expanded the question of depersonalised representation, attaching it to concerns about modern alienation and loss of identity in an age of mass production. Cézanne, although attracted to photography and himself accused of depersonalisation, was traditional in his views of the world and highly suspicious of modernisation, famously complaining about the introduction of electric street lighting in Marseille because it spoiled the twilight.

This meant that the subject of modern life was of no interest to Cézanne, separating his practice of portraiture from its urban, social locus as practised by most of the Impressionists. The poet and critic Charles Baudelaire contended that fashionable dress was appropriate to modern life; there are at best a half-dozen portraits of fashionably dressed women, and the same of men, among Cézanne’s portraits. Manet’s portraits effectively tell us that there is no self except a social one; Cézanne’s that there is no self within a social one.

In an ambitious essay on Impressionist portraits, focused mainly on the work of Degas, art historian Linda Nochlin asserted that they ‘should not on the whole be considered as portraits but rather should be seen as part of a broader attempt to reconfigure human identity by means of representational innovation’. This innovation included ‘liberating portraiture from restrictions of categorization’ and ‘overturning
the conventions of the portrait pose. The former meant, for example, that a painting by Manet of nightlife in Paris was also a portrait of his friends; portraiture thus escaped from the studio into the social world. Cézanne was utterly uninterested in thus liberating portraiture: he made some figure compositions based on portraits, but it remains fairly clear which genre is which, and portraiture firmly belonged in the studio or in the domestic interior. The only exceptions were a group of fantasy figure compositions, painted in the early 1870s, into which Cézanne inserted his own likeness, and his occasional attempts at painting portraits out of doors, of which more to follow.

The other representational innovation to which Nochlin refers was the discarding of the ‘morally and posturally upright’ way of showing a portrait subject; for example, by painting a portrait of a man with his feet propped up on chair, of a woman powdering her nose, of another pretending to be a bullfighter. Cézanne will have none of this. He paints his father reading a newspaper (cat. 4.1) and his future wife Hortense Fiquet sewing (cat. 7.2), but apart from these and very few other exceptions, nobody does anything in Cézanne’s portrait paintings, except pose motionless for Cézanne. There is no lounging. Everyone has to follow the rules – the old rules.

By this point, it should be obvious that Cézanne was traditional not only in his life but also in his notion of portraiture. He was, however, the very opposite of traditional in the making of his portraits – more so than any of his fellow artists – not despite but because he accepted portraiture as it was. (Only Vincent van Gogh, among his ambitious contemporaries, shared the same indifference to reforming the species.) The Impressionist painter whom Cézanne most admired, Camille Pissarro, would write in 1884: ‘Don’t bother trying to look for something new: you won’t find novelty in the subject matter, but in the way you express it.’ Some fifty years later, the poet and critic T.S. Eliot would rephrase this thought, asserting: ‘The perpetual task of poetry is to make all things new. Not necessarily to make new things.’ Both precepts apply to Cézanne’s portraiture. Initially, though, they did so because Cézanne learned from what was new; not only from new painting in Paris by Courbet and Manet, but also from photography.

NEW MEANS

Cézanne’s first portrait was a self-portrait (cat. 1.1) made from a photograph (p.44), which exaggerated the ‘boldly strange’ character of the source in the harshly lit appearance that he gives himself. More than forty years later, the painter-critic Emile Bernard observed, ‘To my great astonishment, Cézanne had no objection to a painter’s use of photography; but in his case, it was necessary to interpret this exact reproduction just as he would interpret nature itself.’ In 1862, interpretation meant hyperbole – and soon thereafter hyperbole not in the depiction of a face but in the means of realising it.

The year 1866 was critical; before it ended, Cézanne had found his own artistic voice through the practice of portraiture. However, as late as in the autumn he was momentarily deflected by the radical idea, shared by Impressionists including Claude...
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Monet and Frédéric Bazille, of going one big step further than Manet’s studio-painted *Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe* of 1863, and making portraits out of doors in natural light. By mid-October, he had produced an oil sketch of his friends Antoine-Fortuné Marion and Antony Valabrègue heading out to paint a landscape (fig. 100). As he wrote to his closest friend, Emile Zola:

> All the paintings done indoors, in the studio, will never be as good as things done outdoors. In showing outdoor scenes, the contrasts between the figures and the ground are astonishing, and the landscape is magnificent. I see some superb things, and I must resolve to paint only out of doors.15

Cézanne’s aim was to create a large composition from the oil sketch, but it was either never made, or did not survive. And so suddenly did he then drop *plein-air* portraiture that we can only conclude, given what followed, that this one attempt to paint figures in the magnificence of an outdoor setting was enough to show that it was impossible – impossible for him, at least – to produce a sufficiently potent reading of them as individuals. Over the decades that followed, he would sporadically return to the problem and find that time and again it defeated him.16 But then, at the very end of his life, he more than succeeded by all but eliminating ‘the contrasts between the figures and the ground’ in outdoor portraits of his gardener Vallier (cats 26.2, 26.3).

Towards the very end of 1866, the portraits that followed this failed experiment were explicitly studio productions. They were akin to photographs in their restriction to monochrome, in their abrupt contrasts and suppression of internal modelling, and in the frank matter-of-factness of their imagery.17 The series of portraits that Cézanne painted of his uncle, Dominique Aubert, in 1866–7 (cats 2.1–2.6, figs 22–5) may also owe something to grids of portrait photographs of the same person being made in Paris (fig. 2)18 – an arrangement that Cézanne’s dealer Ambroise Vollard would recapitulate some forty years later by exhibiting a grid of photographs of portraits by Cézanne (fig. 1). That said, the early portraits are also very far from being photographic, sharing with Cézanne’s landscapes, figure paintings and few still lifes of the period an effacement of the detail and a repudiation of the slick surfaces that made photographs as popular as Salon paintings. Their highly personalised, bulging impasto showed disregard of conventional niceties and an unmitigated assertion of the physicality of the medium, often carried to the point of sheer coarseness.

These works have commonly and quite rightly been characterised as rebellious. But rebellion is less the cause of their motivation than the effect, which presents itself as the same intense need to externalise an inner experience, whether of the actual or the imagined, that had produced the sado-masochistic, erotic poems in his youthful letters to Zola, and would soon produce his violent and erotic figure paintings. Art historian André Dombrowski has argued that, rather than resulting from Cézanne’s personal fixations, they comprise an alternative, law-breaking version of how modern experience could be translated into paint.19 In fact, whether personal or social in impetus, both the matter-of-factness and the crude treatment of the early portraits may be seen as setting back painted portraiture to a primitive stage.
Their search for truth-to-experience, although indebted to the Realism of Courbet (fig. 3), is more basic and rudimentary; although modelled on the objectivity of Manet (fig. 4), it is not cool and impersonal. It was, perhaps, because Cézanne’s portraits of the 1860s were so elemental, appearing to occupy a point zero of portraiture, that it was by making these works in particular that he found his own, individual artistic voice. At the end of that decade he would say, ‘I paint as I see, as I feel – and I have very strong sensations.’ The young painter was determined that the subjectivity of his response to his subjects be noticed. And no matter how apparently depersonalised his paintings might become, he would always speak in the first person singular.

The materiality of his early paintings was certainly noticeable. In fact, that term is hardly adequate, especially for the palette-knife portraits of 1866–7 (cats 2.1–3.1). At the very beginning of the decade, Zola had admonished his friend, writing, ‘As I’ve told you before: in the artist there are two men, the poet and the worker. One is born a poet, one becomes a worker.’ However, these portraits are not merely the result
of working hard. Seeing how Cézanne had built figure and ground alike from heavy slabs of paint, his friend and portrait subject Valabrègue called it ‘mason’s painting’, implying not merely a worker’s but a working man’s art. That is closer to what they are, but it is too dry a description. Even in their present desiccated state, their surfaces remember something of the wet stickiness of 150 years ago. The patches of paint were, in fact, pockets of liquid paint, together forming a plenum held in place by a drying skin. Imagining what they were like when Cézanne painted them, Jean-Paul Sartre’s extended paean to le visqueux, the viscous and slimy, comes to mind, and, with it, the realisation that their representation of bodily substance was a matter of creating not only a resemblance but also an analogy in the paint, its surface an epidermis implying flesh beneath. It was body work that Cézanne was doing.

FIG. 3
Gustave Courbet, Portrait of Champfleury, 1855
Musée d’Orsay, Paris

FIG. 4
Edouard Manet, The Smoker, 1866
Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minnesota
Cézanne's often-remarked brutalising and coarsening of his social and personal presentation was the corollary of his approach to portrait painting. His famous refusal to shake hands with Manet because his own were dirty was, I think, prompted not by concern for Manet's personal hygiene but to avoid being infected by debonair Parisian painting any more than he already was.

It is unsurprising, then, that those identifiable sitters of Cézanne's early portraits are all family and friends from Aix. He was as proprietorial about his subjects as his manner of portraying them. That is to say, he was beginning to realise how description could be complicit with and analogous to ownership. He wanted his very own language, one that would differentiate his strong sensations about the world he occupied from those – less strong, is the implication – experienced by the owners of the practice of painting in Paris. That meant portraying people in his own immediate circle: also being suspicious of outsiders to it, the staid locals in Aix as well as figures from the Parisian art world. He was happy to see his method of painting become a house style for other young Aixois artists. Another friend, Fortuné Marion, observed that it was spreading 'like the germ of an epidemic, and all the painters, even the glass-makers, are beginning to work with a thick impasto'. On the other hand, Cézanne would always be on the lookout for outside predators: his later, continuous complaining that Gauguin had stolen his style from him became legendary. A much later portrait subject, the critic Gustave Geffroy (cat. 17.1), recalled Cézanne's consuming 'desire to possess the things he sees and admires'; to possess them in 'the restricted [restreint] space of a canvas'.

This synergy of personally felt images, an aggressively material style, and familiar portrait subjects set the pattern for Cézanne's subsequent portraiture, which overwhelmingly comprises people whom he knew, and local working-class people with whom he felt comfortable. Portraiture does imply reciprocity of some kind between artist and sitter. Cézanne's refusal to be pictorially ingratiating required subjects who didn't expect it. But how to do that? His two early portraits of Valabrègue are especially telling. In the first portrait, dated 1866 (cat. 3.1), Valabrègue does his best not to appear to be posing, but the clenched hands are a giveaway; rather, Cézanne finds himself not quite able to hide his friend's self-consciousness. In the beautiful second canvas, 1869–70 (cat. 3.2), Valabrègue is self-absorbed rather than self-conscious. Cézanne has learned how empathy may be depicted without a cloying effect. But the elemental quality has gone.

'There are two ways of understanding portraiture – either as history or fiction.' Baudelaire's epithet in his 'Salon de 1846' is well known; less so is how he defined the two alternatives. History uncontroversially meant exactness of representation, but not excluding idealisation; Cézanne knew how to avoid that. Fiction, however, meant 'to transform the portrait into a picture – a poem with all the accessories, a poem full of space and reverie'. The poet Rainer Maria Rilke, thinking about Cézanne's work of the later 1870s, would dismiss this in a parenthesis, saying 'that's how the painting of moods came about (which is in no way better than the painting of things)'. But, ten years earlier, Cézanne was tempted. It takes nothing away from the beauty of the second Valabrègue portrait to say that it is a painting of fiction,
but the first is a painting of fact. In 1869–70, he was painting not, or not only, ‘the thing regarded, but the thing remembered, imagined, desired’; which is to say, he was getting perilously close to Parisian notions of what portraiture should be. Had he continued in this vein, he would be remembered as the last of the great Realist portrait painters. Instead, in 1872, in order to learn how to paint out of doors, he joined forces with Pissarro, the elder statesman of the Impressionists, soon to become a very different kind of artist – and, initially, hardly a portrait painter at all.

**EXPERIMENTATION**

The patient record of light and shade on landscape that Cézanne learned from Pissarro unsettled the stillness and solidity that he had been building into his paint; it was not easy to know quite how to shape an obdurate human presence with means designed to record a continuous, ever-changing, visual array. It wasn’t until the mid-1870s that the first new kinds of portraits began to appear. In an extraordinary rush of experimentation, he had moved through three radical approaches by 1880.

Again, self-portraiture begins the process. In the 1860s, the expressive materiality of the surface had been somewhat at odds with creating a sense of rounded volume in the painting of heads; and Cézanne only got that right when he adapted his palette-knife technique to the brush, modelling with irregular swathes of usually beige-brown paint. The first new self-portraits (cats 5.1, 5.2), painted around 1875, picked up on that approach, ratcheting up the palette in emulation of the portrait that Pissarro had just painted of him (fig. 5), while maintaining enough of the earlier, charged handling to distinguish it from portraits by any Impressionist. And now the creation of volume had a new subject, his own prematurely bald head. Of this, art writer Adrian Stokes was right not to joke that, ‘considering the wonderful volume he always achieved for the dome of his skull’, being bald on top ‘was very fortunate for the artist’.

And Rilke was even more right, and droll, when, speaking of the ‘utter primitivity’ of one of these portraits (cat. 5.2), he observed how, ‘without even remotely interpreting his expression or presuming himself superior to it, he reproduced himself with humble objectivity, with the unquestioning, matter-of-fact interest of a dog who sees himself in a mirror and thinks: there’s another dog.’

Then Cézanne experimented with a new kind of handling. In the head of his friend Victor Chocquet, 1876–7 (cat. 6.1), he recovered in an exaggerated form the weaving of strands of colour by Eugène Delacroix, whose work they both loved, which lay behind the optical mixtures of Impressionist painting. It is – and was received as – an aggressively physical work; in its own way, as much a construction of paint built to form a homogeneous, corporeal surface as the palette-knife paintings of a decade before. And that is its link to the startlingly different next step that Cézanne took, notably in a portrait of Hortense Fiquet, of c.1877, with whom he had been living since 1869 (cat. 7.1).

Rilke admired this work even more than the self-portrait; and, in the letter that he wrote about it, he made a tiny drawing of the wallpaper pattern in the background – ‘a cross with the centre left out’; he called it. This motif quietly
implies a gridded substructure, a multicoloured pattern—half billowing tapestry, half jigsaw—of bands, blocks and curved pieces of varying sizes. The consistency of the composition lies in part in that settled order, and in part in the density of the pictorial surface, the method of its building revealed in the less finished lower-right corner. Within this splendour Hortense sits, cool and composed. There is nothing quite like this in the previous history of portraiture.

The ruthlessness of finding and then surrendering, or at least modifying, a new means of proceeding continued into the early 1880s. This included Cézanne’s use in his portraits of a technique he had begun to use when making landscapes, that of so-called ‘constructive brushstrokes’: patches of paint of a similar size applied in a parallel, usually diagonal, direction running more or less continuously across facial features, and across figure and ground alike. As uniform aggregated units, they create,
more explicitly than the continuous surface of the Chocquet portrait, an updated, potentially livelier form of the palette-knife method. Cézanne used this technique for the figure but not for the ground in a self-portrait of 1879–80 (fig. 39), but was using it for both in self-portraits painted shortly thereafter (cats 8.1, 8.3). And, wanting to try out the approach on heads close in shape to his own, he explored it in a series of small, close-up studies of the head of his young son, Paul, begun in the mid-1870s and continuing through the first half of the following decade.38

Unlike previous pairs or sets of portraits, these were explorative works of comparison, none completely finished. They contrasted the new constructive brushstrokes method (fig. 6) with the quieter blending of patches of colour of a similar value (fig. 7), in both cases using paint more thinly applied than in his self-portraits. And they also considered how, modelled in either way, the oval shape of his son's head – charmingly in reverse of his own, covered on top but clean around the chin – could be preserved. How best to attach the ears was critical; and the conclusion Cézanne reached was that they should not interfere with the integrity of the oval, to which end perhaps one of them could be dispensed with (see fig. 7). The constructive touch was judged to be optional. An equal visual texture, especially one implying a field of arrested movement and somewhat mechanically applied across carefully balanced compositions, risked producing ‘resolutions of things already resolved’, to borrow a phrase by art critic Clement Greenberg on the later Monet.39
In another experiment of the early 1880s, Cézanne tested how necessary was the presence of the sitter (Chocquet) in comparative portraits painted from life (fig. 8) and from a photograph (figs 9, 97), and in a self-portrait made by copying a pastel portrait that Renoir had made of him (figs 10, 11). It may be significant that it was in the copies, and not in the portrait painted from observation, that he used the more mechanical, constructive brushstrokes.

The early and mid-1880s produced two pairs of self-portraits that may be thought to extend the Chocquet photography experiment: in each case a painting in full colour succeeded by one in almost monochrome (cats 8.1, 8.3; 10.2, 10.3). But while both comprise a modernist paragone, comparing the merits of two means of objective representation, the second pair also makes a traditional painting comparison between an explorative esquisse, or painted sketch, and a fully realised tableau. Cézanne would repeat neither the paragone experiment, if it is one, nor the traditional method. But he did paint another self-portrait from a photograph in the mid-1880s (cat. 10.1), and he did continue the practice of comparing differing treatments of the same subject. Indeed, the 1880s was a decade of serial, comparative portraiture.
Of the some 160 portraits that Cézanne painted, Hortense Fiquet was the subject of twenty-eight or twenty-nine. Fully seventeen of these he painted in five years, during the second half of the 1880s, the most intense, continuous examination of the features of any one person that he ever made. This compares to roughly the same number of self-portraits that he made in the twice-as-long period that preceded and just overlapped the start of this sequence of works. Art historian Joseph Rishel suggested that Cézanne’s self-portraits are about ‘taking inventory’. We might reasonably ask ourselves why Cézanne ceased his self-inventory to take up an inventory of Hortense.

There is a practical explanation. After a lengthy period with more separation than cohabitation, the couple spent a year together in Gardanne before and after their marriage there in April 1886; then, after another period of frequent separation, they spent another year mostly together in Paris in 1888–90. Hortense was now Madame Cézanne and was there to be painted — many times, in many different ways.

This said, Hortense’s availability allowed, but does not explain, either the systematic manner in which Cézanne proceeded from canvas to canvas to form short sets of two
to four closely related portraits; or the character of the changes from one canvas
to the next. We have seen that, in 1866–7, he made an extended series of portraits
of his uncle, Dominique Aubert. In taking up serial imagery again, one influence
must certainly have been its increasing popularity in Paris among printmakers and
photographers, whose mediums facilitated its production, and among Impressionist
painters.42 This new fashion affected Cézanne's landscapes, still lifes and, notably, his
Bathers compositions, which in the mid-1880s were assuming a grander form. Like
them, and unlike, say, Monet's series paintings, the multiple portraits of Hortense
were painted neither to meet market demands (Cézanne was hardly selling
anything at the time) nor to complement each other in a display (he had virtually
stopped exhibiting). They were new vehicles of experimentation; each work a
variation of another. In the case of the portraits, the experiment was initially
in the depiction of affect.

The depiction of emotions and expressions had been a topic of great interest
among French artists since the seventeenth century, first gaining currency in
Charles Le Brun's posthumously published Conférences sur l'expression of 1698, and
in appreciation of the expressive heads of Cézanne's admired Nicolas Poussin, which
may have been in his mind as he set about painting his own.43 Moreover, the term
tête d'expression, describing portraits depicting emotion and the subject of a national
competition established in the late eighteenth century, remained in currency.44

Notwithstanding the suggestions, mentioned earlier, that new French painting
privileged expression of the individuality of the artist over that of the sitter, there
is plenty of personality in Impressionist portraits – by Degas, Monet, Renoir; and
even in Manet's work, despite the often-repeated claim that he always objectified
his sitters. Likewise, Cézanne's portraits had nearly always invoked a sense – and, in
the case of the self-portraits, a vivid sense – of the character of the person painted.
However, it is usually a sense of a settled permanence of character rather than
of someone caught in a particular mood; therefore, not a 'fictional' portrait in
Baudelaire's sense of the word. Complaining of such 'painting of moods', Rilke had
commended Cézanne for keeping emotion, meaning expressed emotion, out of his
work. I don't think he would have liked Cézanne's portraits of Hortense made in
1885–6 (cats 11.1–11.4).

This set of four paintings, and the sets that followed it through the remainder of
the 1880s, do reveal expressed emotion. Moreover, they reveal alterations in emotion
from portrait to portrait across the first set, and from set to set in those that follow.
However, unlike traditional têtes d'expression, designed to specify a single emotion
– anger, joy, pain, sorrow, fright – these paintings obstruct such single readings.
Especially so in the case of the first set: what Hortense is feeling is all but impossible
to specify. Was Cézanne projecting his own feelings into what appear to be depictions
of hers? It raises the unanswerable question: did Cézanne ask Hortense to assume
particular expressions when he posed his wife? Whether he did so or not, he obviously
controlled the portrait's mode of address. Yet, in doing so, he seemed also to be offering
Hortense a means of presenting herself, for we feel no clear line between the painter's
control and the sitter’s self-presentation. Such a portrait – one that affords the sitter, with the cooperation of the painter, the means of presenting him- or herself – speaks of a quality of intimacy between the two, whether or not the presentation they collaborate to produce also expresses mutual affection.

Taking the pair of portraits that followed (cats 13.2, 13.3), it is commonly understood that it doesn’t, but rather expresses a sullenly alienated Hortense; while the final four (cats 14.1–14.4) suggest an automaton rather than a person. Perhaps they do. Still, any hope that Cézanne might start to conceive of portraiture as a charitable art is bound to be continually dashed. The closer the subject to him, the more condescending a benevolent painting would be. And Hortense is painted as extremely close. A large majority of these portraits address the viewer, a privilege previously reserved mainly for Cézanne’s self-portraits; and they also face the viewer, something reserved mainly for family portraits, but a recent feature of the photography experiment with Chocquet. In the first set, Cézanne compares a pair of two facing portraits with a pair in which Hortense looks away. After that, though, the frontality of address in these portraits is commensurate with the quality of isolation they convey. The figure regarded is painted as coolly disregarded, neither imagined nor desired.

The systematic grouping and development of these portraits contributes to what Rilke called both ‘humble’ and ‘limitless’ objectivity. Insistent repetition may reinforce a common identity despite changes of affect and appearance. Hence, Cézanne’s experiments with the oval of his own head, then his son’s, found their consummate resolution in his studies of his wife’s. Creating an unimpeded oval for her head became an increasing obsession – that is not too strong a word – as one set of portraits succeeded another. It came to mean flattening both ears, to a somewhat discomforting effect if one notices it (see cat. 11.1); or exposing a continuous, sculptural contour on one side, usually her right, eliminating the ear on that side if necessary, to achieve a more noticeable, audacious effect that delivers the uncanny purity of a head by Brancusi (see cat. 11.2). In the final set of these 1880s portraits of Hortense, four works that show her wearing a red dress, the form of her head, like that of a cast sculpture, appears to be voluminous without being solid; that is to say, hollow.

Repetition that reveals comparative differences in a single portrait subject may also impose an awareness of how changes have been made. To follow the oval head as transformed from one painting to the next is to experience it not only as a figural motif but also as a pictorial one, carried upon Hortense’s neck much like a sculpture on a base. And another, more radical example of Cézanne’s manipulation of the subject image occurs in these four portraits. He appears to have painted one of them, and most probably two, not directly from Hortense, but by copying them in her absence from other works in the series. And in the copies, the head of Hortense noticeably grows in importance, actually swelling in size. Writing about Cézanne in 1907, the painter-critic Maurice Denis quoted a remark by a fellow artist, Paul Sérusier: ‘The subject disappeared; there is only a motif.’ He didn’t mean it literally, but sometimes it was literally true.
NAMES AND NO NAMES

Shortly after 1890, Cézanne began to live more or less continually apart from his wife and son. Even while they were also living in Aix, he no longer asked them to be painted, or they no longer chose to be. Instead, he turned for subjects to various farmhands, local workmen and domestic servants, engaged by his mother and sister at the Jas de Bouffan, the family estate, or working for acquaintances. As Mary Tompkins Lewis has observed, appreciation of the rural population of France as its ‘granite foundation’ had been growing since the mid-1880s; and Cézanne, long

FIG. 12
Edouard Manet,
Portrait of Emile Zola, 1868
Musée d’Orsay, Paris
fiercely attached to his native Provence, and increasingly conservative, was quickly making highly sympathetic portraits of his new subjects. However, his major focus in the early 1890s were his Card Player paintings – the serial approach applied to figure compositions – which, to a considerable extent, subsumed and replaced his portraiture to picture the community rather than the individual. But whether painting one or many figures, nearly all of them are anonymous. Before this point, the subjects of nearly all Cézanne’s portraits can be identified. Now he was mainly painting portraits without names.

At mid-decade, however, this changed. Cézanne’s first solo exhibition, at Ambroise Vollard’s gallery in Paris in 1895, brought him increasingly wide attention, to his definite discomfort at times. In any event, he found himself again painting names, mainly in Paris, as well as no names in Aix; and more prominent names than he had painted before.

In 1895–6, he painted his portrait of Gustave Geffroy (cat. 17.1), a portrait almost without precedent in Cézanne’s art: almost, because it picks up from the final portrait in the final set of the 1880s portraits of Hortense Fiquet (cats 14.1–14.4). In that canvas, for the first time, figure and interior are equally components of a portrait that is also a composition with a figure. The same is true of the Geffroy portrait, and of one no-name portrait, Woman with a Cafetièr(e) (cat. 17.2), painted around the same time.

Cézanne invariably reminds us of his aims with regard to painting as well as to portraiture, but rarely does his allegiance to the former go so far as to challenge the plausibility of the latter. Yet it does here. We can, and I think do, believe that these scenes existed, and that Cézanne stood in front of them. But we cannot, I think, believe that Geffroy actually arranged the shelving of his books in the upright, slightly slanting, strongly diagonal, then back to the vertical sequence that so impressed Roger Fry; or that the coffee pot stood so much to attention as to match the stiff uprightness of the domestic servant; or that parts of the room flew in space around Hortense in her portrait. Modernist taste admires such anomalies, but they were something that Cézanne chose not to pursue. These three works are so uniquely, consciously staged that we must wonder if he deliberately tried out this approach using these three very different portrait subjects. We don't know. If the Geffroy portrait was the last of the three, the difficulties he had with it may have discouraged him from attempting something so ambitious again.

Still, the problems that Cézanne had with the Geffroy portrait were not directly related to such anomalies, but with implications of the form that the painting took. It followed the example of canvases by Manet and Degas in showing a man of letters in his library; the former shows Cézanne’s childhood friend Zola (fig. 12), the latter the critic Edmond Duranty (see fig. 61). Degas’s painting may be thought of as the conceptual, as well as compositional, model of Cézanne’s portrait insofar as both embody Duranty’s ideas on portraiture, promulgated in his La Nouvelle peinture, published on the occasion of the second Impressionist exhibition of 1876. For Duranty, the painter needed to leave his studio and come ‘out into the real world’; should ‘no longer separate the figure from the background of an apartment or the street’, but be shown surrounded by ‘the furniture, fireplaces, curtains, and walls that indicate
his financial position, class, and profession'; and this appearance should ‘reveal temperament, age, and social condition’, especially in the face and the hands.\textsuperscript{53}

The face and especially the hands of Cézanne’s portrait of Geffroy are unfinished. It is as if he had tried to follow Duranty’s instructions, and managed to do so wonderfully, but couldn’t bring himself to complete the painting. As Mary Tompkins Lewis has explained, portraits of journalists and writers had become popular in the early 1890s, which may have prompted this work.\textsuperscript{54} So may the fact that, a year earlier, Geffroy had written a glowing article about Cézanne and the two had recently met in Claude Monet’s home.\textsuperscript{55} But Cézanne had never before painted anyone with whom his relationship was primarily a professional one; neither had he before painted anyone in a context that would indicate his sitter’s ‘financial position, class, and profession’. He had also never accepted a commission; and this came perilously close to one.

The Geffroy-Duranty experiment, once tried, was never repeated. The other portraits of names – of the Aixois poet and critic Joachim Gasquet (cat. 20.1), of Gasquet’s father, Henri, an old friend (fig. 69), of Vollard (cat. 20.2), and of a young Norwegian painter, Alfred Hauge (cat. 20.3) – would be done in the studio, the sitters posed against the ‘neutral or vague backgrounds’ that Duranty wanted to prohibit.\textsuperscript{56} The ways in which the sitters are dressed divide those portraits made in the capital and those made in Provence. However, the dark formality of the Parisian men’s jackets and the shapeless, earth-toned no-name Provençal clothes were equally appropriate to the darkness that descended on Cézanne’s portraiture in the 1890s. And the occasional brighter and more colourful settings were there for both city and country dwellers.

A problem, though, was that Cézanne admired his working-class sitters not only for what they were, but also for what they were not. As he came to view particularly elderly working people as unselfconsciously heroic figures, people who lived in the old ways, the urban professionals seemed inauthentic, resisting the laws of time.\textsuperscript{57} Cézanne, like Jonathan Swift, could admire the individual while disliking the species; otherwise he would not have painted professionals at all. However, perhaps it was because he was less comfortable with them than with his working-class subjects that they gave him problems. Like the Geffroy portrait, those of Gasquet and Vollard were left incomplete, and Cézanne cut the Hauge portrait into pieces with a knife.

\textbf{WHAT VOLLARD SAID}

Cézanne’s acts of painting comprise so large a subject that only those most relevant to his portraiture have been mentioned in this account of its development. However, Vollard’s famous description, published in 1914, of Cézanne painting his great 1899 portrait allows us to highlight the most important and controversial aspects of his procedures. One of these concerns the time it took him to paint his portraits, Vollard observing that Cézanne required 115 sittings for his, only to remain dissatisfied with it and to abandon it unfinished.\textsuperscript{58}
This remark passed quickly into the mythology of modern picture-making, validating the importance of canvases that had taken (or were claimed to have taken) Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse almost as long to paint.\(^5^9\) A year after the artist’s death, Maurice Denis had written rapturously of Cézanne’s ‘labour’, with St Paul in mind, as evidence of a struggle of flesh and spirit. (A ‘Chardin of decadence’, he called him.)\(^6^0\) Cézanne’s principal lesson, it seems, was that a worrying, revisionary process could have an intrinsic value. As Picasso said in 1935, it was Cézanne’s anxiety that mattered, not what he did.\(^6^1\) In 1945, the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty felt it was Cézanne’s doubt that mattered, opening his now-celebrated essay on this subject with the gratuitous statement that Cézanne required 150 sittings to paint a portrait, and 100 for a still life.\(^6^2\)

Delacroix, whom Cézanne passionately admired, wrote that ‘easy won pleasure ceases to be pleasure, and easy works of art are like easy pleasures; they make little impression on those who look at them and also on those who have made them’.\(^6^3\) However, even leaving aside as examples of youthful exuberance his small portraits of his Uncle Dominique, each one supposedly painted in a single afternoon, we find not only canvases that Cézanne must have reworked and reworked, but also others that appear to have been made fairly quickly and with which he seems to have been satisfied. But the question remains: why did Cézanne, according to Gasquet, ‘sometimes remain still for twenty minutes between two strokes of the brush’?\(^6^4\)

I think the art historian T.J. Clark’s answer is a good one. To simplify what he said, Cézanne was trying to recreate the structure of experience out of the units of that experience. The brush mark seems precisely to match one unit of visual experience, yet it will be – from start to finish – one of many, with none guaranteed to retain that match as they accumulate.\(^6^5\) The seriality of this approach is, in miniature, equivalent to that of Cézanne’s painting-to-painting seriality, sharing its implications of a manipulation of what is experienced by the artist for the artist; and, if the marking is in the form of ‘constructive brushstrokes’, of manipulation by mechanical means. To complicate things further, the ‘non-identity of mark and marked’, as Clark puts it, is exacerbated by the mind’s dreaming and imagining, even as it is seeking (in Cézanne’s celebrated phrase) ‘the logic of organised sensations’;\(^6^6\) and even as the eye is looking and the hand is recording, the hand will stray.

This brings us to an aspect of Cézanne’s practice as famous as his long, revisionary process: he failed to complete many of his canvases. In another often-repeated remark, Vollard tells of Cézanne warning him that if he arbitrarily filled in the few unfinished patches on the hands, he would have to start all over again.\(^6^7\) This, however, was in 1899. Only two or three portraits made around 1890 and a half-dozen made after 1895 reveal small unpainted patches, some very minor, of the kind to which Cézanne referred.\(^6^8\) The unfinish of his canvases is often intrinsically admired, and we rightly cannot help but admire those of Gasquet, Geffroy and Vollard, with their unfinished patches. However, we cannot pretend that Cézanne was satisfied with them.

Neither can we pretend that he was satisfied with canvases entirely without unfinished areas, witness his attempted destruction of his portrait of Alfred Hauge...
(cat. 20.3). The portrait of Vollard came perilously close to this end, too. Here again, Delacroix’s experience aids our understanding:

At the start of any work, one’s imagination catches fire and promises something very different from what it can actually achieve. So that when one has finished one can only cast a regretful glance at the shapeless blend of good and bad, which is called an artist’s production.69

Delacroix also spoke of how ‘putting the finishing touch is a most difficult matter’, adding: ‘The danger consists in reaching the point where remorse no longer serves any useful purpose, and I am much addicted to remorse.’ 70 Cézanne was an addict, too. For Cézanne, the crux of the warning was, better to leave a work without its finishing touches than risk creating something gratuitous, after which remorse becomes useless and the canvas has to be repainted, discarded, or destroyed.

Vollard’s third and most celebrated report on sitting for his portrait included the words of the artist when he started fidgeting: ‘Do I have to tell you again you must sit like an apple? Does an apple move?’71 This has two implications: first, that Cézanne required the sitter’s continual presence; second, that he required the sitter’s immobile presence, as he wanted to paint a portrait much as he would paint an apple, the most central and controversial issue in his portraiture.

To take the first implication, the evidence is contradictory. On the one hand, we have reports like Vollard’s of very many sittings; and we have statements by the artist himself such as, ‘Two sittings a day with the model are more than enough to wear me out. And that is how it has been for several weeks.’72 On the other, we have Gasquet saying that he sat for his portrait only five or six times, then adding this remarkable postscript:

I thought that he had given up the picture. Later, I discovered that he had spent roughly sixty sessions on it … that he worked on it after I had left … During numerous sittings, Cézanne would seem to make but a few brushstrokes, but he was constantly boring into his model with his eyes … I emphasise that, since it has often been claimed that Cézanne was only able to paint directly from the model, and never worked in any other way. He had a memory for colours and lines like almost no one else.73

Gasquet is known for embroidering, perhaps inventing, statements by Cézanne, but this is a factual account that deserves careful consideration.74 As we saw earlier, he appears to have made revised versions of one and possibly two of the portraits of Hortense without her presence. He also worked simultaneously on two portraits of his gardener, Vallier (cats 25.1, 25.2), presumably not always with Vallier there.75 The visual evidence of certain paintings and watercolours suggests that Cézanne advanced from memory frameworks drawn directly from a motif;76 and paintings for which there are studies in oil or watercolour may also have been executed partly or entirely without the presence of the model.77 If Cézanne could paint from a photograph, he could paint from a study that he himself had made – but
apparently not from his sketchbook drawings; they were lessons in the reading of the model rather than precursors to a painted realisation.  

Another and clear indication that Cézanne did not only paint direct from the model are the signs of revision revealed by the surfaces of the later portraits in particular. The Old Woman with a Rosary (cat. 18.1) was clearly revisited a number of times. So were the dark-toned portraits of Vallier (cats 25.1, 25.2), with their deeply encrusted surfaces and – as in other paintings – narrow, drawn lines of paint set down on top of a dried paint surface, their purpose being mainly to revise contours. Moreover, since Cézanne usually built up his surfaces gradually on the basis of a thinly painted foundation, we cannot discount the possibility that, on occasion, time elapsed between the initial laying-in of paint and the more developed surface: many canvases show areas of both.

The fifth of Cézanne's celebrated 'opinions' that Bernard recorded in 1904 reads: 'There are two things in the painter, the eye and the mind [cerveau]; the two should aid each other. It is necessary to work at their mutual development; in the eye for the vision of nature, in the mind for the logic of organised sensations, which provide the means of expression.' Mutual does not necessarily, or exclusively, mean simultaneous.

STILL LIFE

To return to the essential, yet most radical, aspect of Cézanne's portraiture, the Parisian critic Charles Morice wrote in 1905: 'Cézanne takes no more interest in a human face than in an apple.' Nine years later, however, Vollard would claim that Cézanne had said to him that, while the subject 'must sit like an apple', nonetheless 'the goal of all art is the human face.'

There are logical and ethical objections to Morice's claim, but neither answers the practicalities. One reason was that Cézanne couldn't concentrate if the sitter moved. Another was that he didn't want the sitter even to think about posing. Baudelaire, one of those who thought photography's influence on painting was pernicious, wrote in his 'Salon de 1859' that photography encouraged people to grimace and play theatrical roles in front of the camera – and, therefore, in front of the painter. However, the photographer A.A.E. Disdéri, and perhaps others, apparently scolded sitters for grimacing, even for smiling, and loudly insisted that they did not move. Cézanne, like such a photographer, demanded stillness and did not want any role-playing from his subjects. And he didn't want people playing themselves, either. Gasquet tells a perhaps apocryphal story of Cézanne abandoning a portrait of the radical statesman Georges Clemenceau because Clemenceau was basically too full of himself. This was why, as Bernard observed in 1904, Cézanne had come to prefer painting 'good, local people' in Aix as opposed to 'dandies and socially polished types whose corrupt taste and worldly insincerity he loathed.' No posing, no acting, no reaching out to the beholder; nothing demonstrative, that was the rule. The single communicative gesture in all of Cézanne's portraits is the limp raised hand of Uncle Dominique playing at being a lawyer (cat. 2.5). And if we
were to place a more typical, Cézannean non-pose, say, that of himself in his 
*Self-Portrait with Palette* (fig. 13), next to the eager-to-please appearance of James 
Tissot in Degas’s portrait (fig. 14), the point is obvious.

Zola said that while Manet was painting his portrait (fig. 12) he ‘had forgotten 
about me, he no longer knew I was there, he copied me as if he were copying any 
human creature’. It is often said that Zola, in this portrait, is treated no differently 
from the inanimate objects that surround him; and that Manet – and Cézanne 
followed his example – did not merely redefine but repudiated the traditional 
humanistic premises of portraiture in acts of depersonalisation. Rilke, as usual, saw 
the matter differently, writing in 1907 that ‘it is this limitless objectivity, refusing 
any kind of meddling in an alien unity, that strikes people as so offensive and 
comical in Cézanne’s portraits’. (This is also a warning to us not to meddle in 
the alien unity of the portraits by pressing upon them our own feelings.)

Expanding on this position, the writer and amateur painter D.H. Lawrence not 
only defended Cézanne for his ‘be an apple’ approach, but also realised that ‘while 
he was painting the appleyness, he was also deliberately painting out the so-called 
humanness, the personality, the “likeness”, the physical cliché’. By doing so, Cézanne

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**FIG. 13**

*Self-Portrait with Palette, 1886–7*

(see also cat. 12.2)

Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection, Zurich; F.W.N. 499

**FIG. 14**

*Edgar Degas, Portrait of James Tissot, 1867–8*

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
could ‘make the human form, the life form, come to rest. Not static – on the contrary. Mobile but come to rest.’

This quality of coming to rest, which was there almost from the beginning, was especially conspicuous as his career was coming to an end.

There were no more urban portraits of named people after 1900. During his last six years, Cézanne seems to have been comfortable painting only people he knew, or who had no reason to expect anything from him except a pittance for posing. Stillness had become meditative on earlier occasions, but in the late portraits its enhanced application to working-class subjects is an ennoblement of them.

Defenders of the fact that Cézanne simply objectified his sitters claim that he did not depict ‘human beings who do normal human things like talk, laugh, or move’. Do we think that these labourers are incapable of such things? Surely not; rather, that they have refrained from such actions out of respect for being painted by a venerable old man who, in turn, respected them. The reciprocity between artist and sitter expressed in these portraits includes that of a shared sense of community; and it is this, expressed in the dignity of these dark canvases, that justifies their comparison to works by Rembrandt (fig. 15).
Still, we need to resist either sentimentalising these portraits or pathologising them. On occasion, Cézanne would test how far sentiment could be expressed without falling into sentimentality (see Old Woman with a Rosary); at other times, he would explore the gestures of an old man, perhaps Vallier’s open hands resting upon his knees, and show that they need not be read as a supplication (cats 25.1, 25.2); and, in his self-portraits, although sick and tired, he demonstrated how resilient he remained (cat. 22.1, fig. 76). Much has been made of a premonition of death in Cézanne’s late works, and his letters confirm his awareness of his infirmity and mortality. Nonetheless, we do injustice to the continuing, vital invention of these canvases to place them all in a waning light. In fact, in Cézanne’s last years, he did not have what is commonly called a ‘late style’. He had two.
In portraiture, these are exemplified by the darker- and the lighter-toned sets of paintings of Vallier (cats 25.1, 25.2; 26.1, 26.2). The two sets invoke not only two different people, but also two different conceptions of portraiture. Those that Cézanne painted in the studio may be thought to show a dark harbinger; those painted outside show a figure whose body is infused with the patterns of landscape. The dark style looks to the past, producing portraits as sunless as his youthful palette-knife pictures. The light style looks further back, to Cézanne's earlier, frustrated attempt to paint portraits out of doors in natural light, finally achieving that early aim by keeping these canvases as openly composed and luminous as his recent plein-air watercolours. Nothing is gained, though, by slotting these works into the simple, alternative categories popularly understood to be characteristic of late styles: complex and difficult (Beethoven's late string quartets) or harmonic and resolved (Matisse's late cut-outs); an artist who abhorred cliché deserves better than having clichés applied to him. Was he not, recapitulating his beginnings as a portraitist, keeping his options open to the very end?

The critic and essayist Elaine Scarry has written of how, in Jean-François Millet's paintings of farm labourers, ‘the labourer's physical presence stops not at what would be conventionally understood as the boundaries of his or her body, but at the boundaries of the canvas’. These paintings illustrate ‘the recognition that the land and the tool are a literal prolongation of the working body’, something confirmed by phenomenological experience: you can ‘feel’ the action of the tool you are working with. ‘The recognition of this same reach of sentience, and the unity of sentience with the things it reaches,’ Scarry suggests, is to be found in Karl Marx's understanding of the body's presence in both agriculture and a made object. For Marx, writing when Cézanne was beginning painting, ‘the activity of “making” comes to be the activity of “animating the external world”, either described as a willed projection of aliveness ... or as a more passive occurrence arising from sheer proximity to real human tissue.’

Unlike Millet, Cézanne very rarely showed labourers at work, only resting afterwards. His completed paintings record their suspended labour along with his, which (it is implied) at once recapitulates and relieves theirs. The ‘mobile but come to rest’ quality that D.H. Lawrence noticed in Cézanne’s portraits in general is especially present in these late works. The activity of their making may be thought to have animated both them and the external world – and brought both to rest. Clark claims that the late portraits are ‘rigid, and ineffectual, against the surrounding pressure of the void’. Yes, they are. But there is also a fiercely willed projection of still-aliveness about them, in their presence and in their analogy of real human tissue, which colours even the darkest and stiffest of them all.

Everything definite, nothing definitive, seems to be the rule. The realisation of the reading of the model is specific; the reading itself is not. It is apt that Cézanne leaves us in Vallier's hands (fig. 16), hands unable or unwilling to grasp either something or nothing at all.
Notes

Abbreviated works are those specific to Cézanne that were consulted in the preparation of this publication. Full details can be found in the Select Bibliography on p.246. For a key to other abbreviations, see Note to the Reader, p.43.

1 ‘The reading of the model, and its realisation, is sometimes very slow in coming for the artist.’ Camoin, a friend of Henri Matisse, was a young artist, who visited and corresponded with Cézanne, receiving pithy advice from the elderly painter.

2 This is far fewer than Cézanne's landscapes (roughly 320), but not many less than his still lifes (almost 190) and more than either his figure compositions (about 130) or his Bathers (80 paintings). See The Paintings of Paul Cézanne, online catalogue raisonné (Walter Feilchenfeldt, Jayne S. Warman and David Nash) for precise numbers; http://www.cezannecatalogue.com.


4 E.H. Gombrich, The Mask and the Face: The Image and the Eye. Further studies in the psychology of pictorial representation (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1982), p.106. Gombrich is embroidering on John Singer Sargent’s reported statement: ‘A portrait is a picture in which there is just a tiny something not quite right about the mouth.’


7 See Cézanne’s letter to Paule Conil, 1 September 1902.


9 Dombrowski 2013, p.102.

10 Nochlin in Bailey 1997, as note 3, p.55.

11 A portrait of his son and one of his friends could form the basis of a Mari Gras composition of Harlequin and Pierrot, a farmworker; whose portrait Cézanne had painted, could be asked to pose in a Card Players composition. However, FWN places the double portrait included here (cat. 3.3) in the category of Figure Compositions; and in Portraits some paintings excluded here on principle, for example one of a studio model naked from the waist up (FWN 422); there is bound to be some ambiguity.


14 When Bernard visited Cézanne in 1904, the display of works by the artist at that year’s Salon d’Automne included not only nine portraits but also photographs of nine others in a single frame (fig. 1). According to Bernard, Cézanne said he wanted to replace the figure of his friend Victor Choquet in an Apothèse de Delacroix he had painted earlier (FWN 687; see p.146) with Bernard’s figure and even had a photograph made of me in the proper pose, but he died before he could complete the project. Bernard 1907, p.609, reprinted in Doran 1978, p.129; Doran 2001, p.69.

15 Cézanne to Zola, c. 9 October 1886.

16 Most of these works were made in the 1870s and are, like the 1866 painting, small oil sketches. A somewhat larger work (FWN 674, of c.1890) bypasses the figure-ground problem by showing a figure reclining in the grass. In one of the two full-size canvases (FWN 455, Madame Cézanne in the Garden, of 1879–80), the canvas was abandoned before the outdoor setting was painted; in the other (FWN 439, Portrait of Victor Choquet, of c.1889), the outdoor setting is no more than a single background screen of foliage. Worth noting here is that Cézanne’s early deflection from straight portraiture into another area of Impressionist interest – interior genre scenes with portrait subjects – fared only a little better of the two most ambitious such works, the so-called Overture to Tannhäuser of 1865–70 (fig. 21) caused him enormous difficulty, while Paul Alexis Reading a Manuscript to Emile Zola of the same date (cat. 3.3) was abandoned, unfinished. Again, it was much later that Cézanne found his own, individual solutions to this kind of subject: in his Mari Gras paintings of 1889–90 (FWN 668–72) and his Card Players series of 1890–96 (FWN 680–6).

17 These features associate Cézanne’s emulation of photography with that of Manet, on whose relation to photography see Michael Fried, Monet’s Modernism on: The Face of Painting in the 1860s (University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1996), pp.323–6, and the sources he cites there.

18 The image reproduced here was illustrated in Charles Stuckey, ‘The Predications and Implications of Monet’s Series’, in The Repeating Image: Multiples in French Painting from David to Matisse, exh.cat., The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, 2007, p.112. It originally appeared in the historic 5 September 1886 issue of Le Journal illustré, honouring the 100th birthday of the great scientist Eugène Chevreul, and bears an interesting comparison to Cézanne’s costume studies of Uncle Dominique, painted some two months later. We know that Cézanne did read the Parisian illustrated magazines, and may well have seen this image. Stuckey also illustrates a twelve-photograph grid by Nadar, p.96, with multiple views of the photographer’s own head, a project not too dissimilar to that of the small Uncle Dominique heads. This subject awaits study, as does the relationship to Cézanne’s practice of the full-plate portrait photographs of the period.


20 Rewald 1934, p.8; Rewald 1986, pp.85–6.

21 Emile Zola to Cézanne, 16 April 1860.

22 Aix-en-Provence 1984, p.120.


raise questions about the nature of that relationship: I touch only briefly on them in what follows, but interested readers may wish to read Fried’s arguments with these works in mind.


Rilke 2002, p.46.


As long recognised, this painting contains an acknowledgement of Courbet, a caricature of whom is depicted in the background, and Manet, being generally based on Manet’s portrait of Zola (fig. 12).

Stokes 1947, p.22.

Rilke 2002, pp.7–5.

Rilke 2002, p.70.

FWN is imprecise on the dating of these works, but Jayne Warman, in an email to me, proposed the following plausible dates on the basis of the likely age of Paul Bixi, in each case: FWN 456: c.1879 (aged three or four); 457: c.1878 (aged about six); 458: 1878–80 (aged about six to eight); 459: 1881–2 (aged nine or ten); 460: c.1882 (aged ten); 465: 1883–4 (aged eleven to twelve); 469: c.1882–5 (aged ten to eleven); 470: 1883–4 (aged eleven to twelve).


The Boy in a Red Waistcoat paintings, contemporaneous with the final series of portraits of Hortense, when taken as a group (cats 14.1–4, 15.1), comprise something akin to a serial development from the former to the latter.

See Stuckey in Baltimore 2007 (as note 18), pp.83–125, which meticulously plots this development, including Claude Monet’s first documented display of series art, which took the form of seven Gare Saint Lazare paintings in the third Impressionist exhibition of 1877 (pp.106–8). Cézanne also showed his own works there, was friendly with Monet, and would have seen these canvases.


At the Salon d’Automne of 1905 within which Cézanne’s famous memorial exhibition was featured, Henri Matisse exhibited a portrait utterly devoid of emotion under that title with a straight face. We must wonder whether, given Matisse’s worship of Cézanne, this gesture was intended, or at least read, as a homage to the then-famous lack of expression in Cézanne’s portraits. Matisse’s painting, in the Barnes Foundation, is now known as The Red Madras Headdres, a title that nicely distracts our attention from the subject’s face.

The following year, Matisse’s famous ‘Notes d’un Peintre’ followed Cézanne in explicitly rejecting expression understood as ‘passion bursting from a human face or manifested by violent movement’. See Jack Flam, Matisse on Art (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995), p.38.


Rilke 2002, pp.58, 74.


Delacroix to Frédéric Villot, 15 September 1838. Eugène Delacroix: Selected Letters 1813–1863, ed. Jean Stewart (Deyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1971). For this and the reference to Delacroix cited in notes 69 and 70, I am indebted to Richards’s article, see note 33.

Gasquet 1921, p.57; Gasquet 1931, p.114.

of a lengthy, rich argument within a study with also other concerns.


57 Vollard 1914, pp.85–8; Vollard 1927, p.79.

58 Vienna/Zurich 2000 is the fullest consideration of its subject, too large to discuss in depth here. However, three points deserve noting. First, as opposed to Cézanne’s portraits, larger areas of exposed canvas, and fewer small empty patches, are to be found in his still lifes, and especially his landscapes, from around 1890 onwards. Second, Cézanne may be referring to the two different kinds of unfinish when, writing to Bernard on 23 October 1905, he refers to how ‘the colouring sensations (sensations colorantes) that create light are the abstractions that do not allow me to cover my canvas, nor to pursue the delimitation of objects when their points of contact are subtle, delicate; the result of which is that my image or painting is incomplete.’ Third, in this same letter, he attributes the problem to his old age; there are other reports of his having problems with his eyes.

59 Delacroix to Théophile Thérèse, 2 March 1837. See Eugène Delacroix 1971 (as note 65), and for the following quotation.

60 ‘To Constant Dutilleux, 2 April 1859.

61 Vollard 1921, p.92; Vollard 1937, p.77.

62 Cézanne to Émile Bernard, dated 25 February, Paris, and thought by Rewald and others to have been written in 1899.


64 True, Émile Bernard observed that ‘Cézanne’s imagina
tion was not great, but he had a very refined sense of
composition. He did not know how to draw without a

65 However, this does not disqualify the possibility that
Cézanne advanced a drawn framework from memory. But, complicating the question of Gasquet’s veracity, he writes also of Cézanne proceeding in a similar way in the painting of his father, which he appears to have witnessed, and that of Vollard, which it is extremely unlikely he did. See Gasquet 1921, p.37; Gasquet 1991, pp.113–14.

66 Vollard reported that Cézanne dressed himself in
Vallier’s clothes. See Gasquet 1921, p.67; Gasquet 1991, p.132.

67 But he may have been embroidering on Cézanne having taken away the clothes that he himself posed in, so that he might continue working on his portrait. The discovery of a wooden head in the Lauves studio (Illum
minated in London–New York 2010–11, p.59) may mean that Cézanne set up mannequins from which to paint.

68 This topic awaits fuller discussion. I have studied the
Pearlman watercolour at the Princeton University Art Museum: some (notably RW 634) do allow that interpretation.

69 For example, F.W. 482, for which there is an oil study, F.W. 491; the head of F.W. 534, for which there is an oil study, F.W. 535; F.W. 547, for which there is a related watercolour, RW 638; and F.W. 548, for which there are two related watercolours, RW 639, 640.

70 There are very few drawings that unquestionably can be related to painted portraits, and it is uncertain whether these few unquestionably are studies for their related portraits.

71 This is on record for other studio compositions: visitors in January 1905 reported Cézanne as having said that he had been working on a large Bathers composition since 1894, an earlier visitor that he said he had been painting a still life full-time for a month. Rivière and Schnerb 1907, pp.81–7; Bernard 1907, reprinted in Doran 1978, pp.109, 162; Doran 2001, pp.58, 60. Yet another spoke of a typical Cézanne painting, ‘most often unfinished, scraped with a knife, overlaid with turpentine-thinned pentimenti, repainted several times, encrusted to a state of relief.’ Denis 1920 (as note 48); Doran 1978, pp.285–6; Doran 2001, p.173.


73 Ibid., pp.17–18.

74 Here, we must remember that, since Cézanne hardly exhibited or sold canvases in the almost twenty years between his showing at the third Impressionist exhibi
tion in 1877 and his first solo exhibition at Vollard’s gallery in 1895, he would have had a lot of paintings in
his possession tempting revision until Vollard bought the contents of his studio in 1899.

75 Doran 1978, p.76; Doran 2001, p.38.

76 However, Denis – relating the two ways of seeing to Poussin’s Aspect (receiving light rays in the eye) and
Prospect (applying reason and judgement to them) – says that in Cézanne ‘the two operations . . . are no longer separate’. Denis 1910, p.280.

77 Charles Morice, ‘Le XVe Salon des Indépendants’,
Mercure de France, 15 April 1905, p.322.


79 This is the common English translation, but the French is ambiguous. Vollard writes: ‘L’aboulisement de l’art, désistit-l, c’est la figure.’

80 First, logically the contrary is therefore true. Second, as Richard Shiff points out, it is demeaning for an
objectivity can actually encourage such meddling is
the painter Elizabeth Murray’s response to the final
dress portrait of Hortense (cat. 14.4). ‘Hortense
is regarding her husband, not with disdain, but as if
she’s saying, “You old fool.” And all this emotion, this
anger, this frustration is in the picture.’ Quoted in
Danchey 2012, p.175.

81 Julia Miller, ‘Intrusion to these Paintings’, The Paintings of D.H. Lawrence (Mandrandek Press, London, 2010), excerpted in Wechsler 1975, pp.91–2. Lawrence’s highly perceptive (and eccentric) essay, pinpointing the
come-to-rest quality of Cézanne’s portrait subjects, aids an understanding of their difference from the static, ‘frozen or immobilized’ appearance of Manet’s models (Fried 1996, as note 17, p.580).

82 Julian Barnes recently argued that they don’t when
Cézanne is painting them, in a review of Danchey 2012: The Times Literary Supplement, 21 and 28 December 2012, p.4.

83 Comparisons made between the work of the two
artists is the subject of Richard Verdi, ‘Rembrandt and
Cézanne’, Burlington Magazine, CLVII, September 2015, pp.610–14. See also Alison McQueen, The Rise of the Cult
of Rembrandt: Reinveting an Old Master in Nineteenth-
Century France (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2003).

84 Most recently and eloquently in Clark 2001, as
note 65, pp.110–12.

85 Elaine Scarry, The Body in Pain. The Making and

86 Clark 2001, as note 65, p.111.