

<p>Paul Cézanne, <i>Mont Sainte-Victoire</i>, 1902-04, oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm (28 x 35")</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Initial analysis</p> <p>An eloquent description regarding aspects of Cézanne's practice was provided by Gottfried Boehm in his 2000 essay, 'Precarious Balance: Cézanne and the Unfinished'. Part of this essay appears on my <i>edublogs</i> site. Boehm's work was preceded by the considerable work of M. Merleau-Ponty in his extended essay, 'Eye and Mind', the last work he saw published in January 1961. This was reprinted after his death in 1964 and appears in English as part II of <i>The Primacy of Perception</i>, Northwestern University Press.</p>	<p><i>Mont Sainte-Victoire</i>, is one of eighteen using this subject in the period 1885-1906. He first wrote to Émile Zola in 1878 conveying enthusiasm for the view of the Mountain from the railway.</p>
<p>The picture plane can be divided into three defined by horizontal sections. These may be described as foreground, middle ground and back ground. The foreground and middle ground have been factured in green and ochre with red. The immediate foreground has a darker hue rendered by the use of blues and purples. The foreground partly defines roofing emphasised by drawn lines, sometimes in green and sometimes in blue in contrast to the red terra-cotta rooves. The foreground blurs into the middle ground so that the distinction between them is not firmly defined except by the darker hues. Some of the darker hues are continued in patches in the middle ground.</p>	<p>The background depicts the main subject, Mont Sainte-Victoire, and the sky. These have both been rendered in a variety of blues and purples with some traces of green, brown and light red. The mountain is clearly defined with drawn edges sharpening elements of the peaks and curves of the rock forms and also distinguishing the mountain form from the horizontal plane.</p>  <p>The horizontal line that divides the foreground and middle ground from the background, that is between the landscape plane and the mountain, uses the golden section proportion derived from Classical geometry. Cézanne had used this geometry in his first major, albeit unfinished painting, <i>Paul Alexis Reading a Manuscript to Émile Zola</i> more than thirty years earlier in 1869-70.</p> <p>This is the first of two paintings of this subject in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The subject provided Cézanne with an intensity of feeling conveying, in Meyer Shapiro's words 'a stormy rhapsody in which earth, mountain, and sky are united in a common paean, an upsurge of colour, of rich tones on a vast scale'.</p>	<p>In 1953 Meyer Shapiro wrote, 'The mountain rises passionately to the sky and also glides on the earth. Its surface is like a perspective network of ascending lines, converging to the peak as a goal. The sky in turn bursts into a dance of colours, an explosion of clouds of blue and green, as deep and strong as the blues and greens of the earth – tremendous volumes of sonorous colour which form a tempestuous halo of pure tones around the glorious mountain and give the latter a more living, dramatic quality. The earth approaches chaos, yet is formed of clear vertical and horizontal strokes in sharp contrast to the diagonal strokes of the mountain and the many curving strokes of the sky. These reappear in the lower foreground in blues and purples and violets, a reversed echo of the distant mountain. Under all this turbulence of brushwork and colour lies the grand horizontal expanse of the earth.'</p>
	<p>The Meyer Shapiro quotations are from <i>Paul Cézanne</i>, New York: Harry N. Abraham, 1953.</p>	