

painting. Cézanne had to see a motif first. That is not to say that he had possible for him to do so. The process of painting itself, if it went well, was a continual revelation of the inner meaning of the scene. But the artist did have to find at least a starting point from which he could build. Lacking this, the scene had no significance for him—it became merely another one of those picturesque views that appeared, as he wrote to a friend, "in the albums of young lady tourists." This is what he meant when he wrote Zola from L'Estaque in 1883, "I have some beautiful viewpoints here, but they do not quite make motifs."

In discussing his work Cézanne complained that "the reading of the model and its realization are sometimes very slow in coming." This suggests that there were two distinct stages in the creation of a painting. The "reading," the effort to "get to the bottom of what you find in front of you" as Cézanne put it to a young artist friend, was followed by the "realization"—the formation of a painting out of whatever materials the reading had presented.

This last is important. The painting *must* be constructed out of components—the colors, forms, spatial relations—present in the model. Otherwise, it would be meaningless in terms of Cézanne's understanding of the function of art. "The painter ought to consecrate himself entirely to the study of nature," he once wrote, "and try to produce pictures that will be a teaching." If his pictures were to "be a teaching" about the significant forms and colors of the natural world, they must retain a recognizable identification with that world. They must remain, as Cézanne said many times, "faithful" to nature.

This concept of fidelity to nature has led to much confusion about Cézanne's work, for it is obvious that he did not simply reproduce what his eye saw. He was not interested in what he called "shallow imitation." Emile Bernard quoted him as saying: "We should not be content with strict reality. . . . The transposition that a painter makes with a personal vision gives to the representation of nature a new interest; he unfolds, as a painter, that which has not yet been said; he translates it into absolute terms of painting. That is to say, something other than reality."

To understand where Cézanne adhered to and where he departed from the real world, it is useful to think of his reading of the model as a kind of dismantling process. When the various components of the "strict reality" were, in a sense, spread before him, he could select those components most expressive of the meaning of the scene and unite them in a composition.

In short, the visible world was only a starting point for Cézanne—the source of the materials he needed to construct his picture. He felt no necessity for the individual objects to retain the precise identities, in terms of color or shape, they had in the real world. What was important to him was the relationship of those colors and forms in space; for him fidelity to nature was simply fidelity to these relationships. He expressed the double compulsion to be faithful to his model and to depart from it in one of his many letters to Bernard: "One cannot be too