

Cunningham Creek Elementary
Meet the Artist

- **Cezanne, Paul - Mount St. Victoire & Canaletto, Giovanni Antonio - The Square of St. Mark**



ARTIST: CEZANNE, PAUL (1839-1906)

PRINT: MOUNT SAINTE- VICTORIE

Date: 1902-1904

Oil on canvas

28 3/4 x 36 3/16 inches (73 x 91.9 cm)

The George W. Elkins Collection, 1936

ARTIST: Paul Cézanne

Paul Cézanne was born in 1839 in Aix-en-Provence (ex-on-pro-VAHNCE), a small town in southeastern France. (The town is sometimes called Aix, and is in the region known as Provence.) He explored the countryside around Aix when he was growing up and felt closely linked to this landscape throughout his life. In his paintings he returned again and again to scenes he knew from childhood, including Mont Sainte-Victoire, the peak of a low range of mountains near Aix.

Cézanne studied painting and drawing in Aix. His father, a wealthy banker, discouraged his artistic career and persuaded him to enter law school. Cézanne later withdrew from law school and convinced his father to support his move to Paris, where he met Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) and other artists who came to be known as the Impressionists. He worked alongside Pissarro, who encouraged him to paint outdoors and to concentrate on observing nature closely. From him, Cézanne learned to use lighter colors and smaller brushstrokes to capture the effects of sunlight. Cézanne showed his paintings with the Impressionists in 1874 and 1877.

After 1878, he spent much of the rest of his life painting in Provence. Relatively isolated from the Paris art scene, Cézanne pursued his own artistic path. While the Impressionists depicted changing light and atmospheric effects, he was more interested in studying the underlying structure of the landscapes he painted. He said, "I wanted to make of Impressionism something solid and enduring like the art in museums." Few of his works sold and he did not show his art publicly for almost twenty years.

Cézanne gradually achieved recognition later in life. In 1895 an art dealer in Paris showed a large number of his paintings at his first solo exhibition and public interest began to grow. Cézanne, who vowed to die painting, became ill after painting outdoors in Aix in 1906 and passed away soon afterward. The next year, he was honored with a large retrospective (an exhibition that shows an artist's life work). His paintings continue to inspire artists today, over one hundred years later.

PRINT:

- Which parts of this landscape seem closest to you? Which seem farther away? How does the artist show that?
- How would you describe the colors that Cézanne used?
- Which parts of this painting are described in more detail? Which are less detailed?
- Think about a place outdoors that you know well. Why might an artist return again and again to paint the same landscape?

Mont Sainte-Victoire is a mountain in Provence (pro-VAHNCE), the region in southeastern France where Cézanne was born and spent most of his life. It can be seen from a hillside near a studio called Les Lauves (lay loave) that Cézanne built in 1902. The mountain's name, which translates as "Mountain of Holy Victory," was associated with a celebrated victory by Provence's ancient Roman inhabitants against an invading army. Cézanne painted more than sixty versions of what he called "his" mountain, yet none of the paintings looks exactly the same.

We can imagine Cézanne looking out over this landscape and noticing how the shapes of the rooftops or the profile of the mountain changed as he shifted his viewpoint. In this painting Cézanne was not concerned with reproducing the exact details of the scene before him. He hoped instead to create a "harmony parallel to nature." We can see that goal fulfilled in his carefully harmonized patches of color that fit together like pieces in a mosaic.

No one is sure why Cézanne returned to this subject so often. The mountain stands out boldly from its surroundings, just as Cézanne stood apart from his fellow artists, and both are closely linked to the artist's native Provence. Perhaps his many paintings of this mountain reflect his love of Provence, or his interest in discovering new aspects of a familiar place.

ARTIST: CANALETTO, GIOVANNI ANTONIO

PRINT: The Square of Saint Mark's, Venice

Date: 1742/1744

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Mrs. Barbara Hutton

ARTIST: Canaletto (1697-1768) is best known for his painted views of his native city, Venice. Capturing its appearance and distinctive character, his paintings transport viewers to this famous city on water.

Giovanni Antonio Canal was born in Venice in 1697 to a family of artists. Both his father and uncle painted scenery used in theater sets and opera productions, and Canaletto was taught to paint at an early age by his father. Giovanni was nicknamed Canaletto ("the little Canal") to distinguish him from his father.

Canaletto became a specialist in topographical views—paintings that describe the landscape and architecture of a particular place. He painted his native city most often and made a successful career selling his work to wealthy tourists. Canaletto's paintings were popular because he recorded the activities and appearance of the city in vivid detail. In order to achieve convincing realism in his scenes, Canaletto first made sketches outside. He then took them back to his studio to paint the final picture, working out the architecture before adding the figures. The people in his views provide a sense of scale and suggest the daily hubbub of a busy city. Canaletto's pictures are much more than the painted equivalent of a photograph: he often composed his works to create an improved view of the city, making them look better even though they were not entirely accurate!

PRINT: The Square of Saint Mark, or Piazza San Marco, is the heart of the city. There you will find the Church of Saint Mark with its mosaics shimmering in the sunshine. To the right of the church is the pink marble Doge's Palace, once home to Venice's elected rulers. Find three bronze flagpoles in the piazza. Around them merchants are setting up tables, taking goods out of trunks, and displaying bolts of cloth at umbrella-covered booths. These activities, and the ships off in the distance, highlight Venice's role as a center of trade. Strolling through the piazza was a popular activity. Canaletto included about two hundred figures in this painting! Find gentlemen in capes and three-cornered hats, fashionable women, monks, laborers, children, and pets. What are some of the things the people are doing?

. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is happening in the paintings? If you were there, what could you see, hear, smell?
2. Would you buy the painting? Why?

3. What time of year is it? How do you know?
4. What techniques of the artists used? Are they similar or different in what way?
5. Are the paintings realistic?
6. How have the artists used color?

RELATED ACTIVITIES

1. Create/draw/paint your own landscape. Will it be somewhere you have visited or where you live? Will your work be realistic? Will you include people?
2. Go on a short walk around the school playground and make some sketches of the landscape. (Please discuss this option with the teacher before you come in, as it might not be viable).
3. Use picture books to look for different landscapes and discuss similarities and differences with a partner.