

The phenomenology within Cézanne's work: a reflection

João Martins-Correia 

Paul Cézanne: *Bottle, Carafe, Jug and Lemons*, 1902–1906. Watercolour on paper. Copyright © Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, Spain.

Paul Cézanne was a soul consumed by painting, with art forming the very essence of his existence. In his art, Cézanne transmuted his vision and emotions onto canvas, rendering reality through the prism of his unique sensations. Each stroke traced a trajectory towards the realm of perception, stemming from his genuine and personal encounters with the world.

In Cézanne's oeuvre, his treatment of contour, or its deliberate absence, emerges as an element that reflects the nuanced complexities of his inner world. This approach is vividly illustrated in *Mont Sainte-Victoire* or *Château Noir*, where Cézanne uses colour and form to evoke a sense of fluidity, setting aside the need to delineate the contours of the objects on the canvas. Dissolving the boundaries that distinguish individual elements from their surroundings, Cézanne metaphorically transports us to the permeable space between self and non-self experienced in certain psychopathological states. Cézanne's strategic use of blue, applied not to outline but to imbue depth through layered gestures, further amplifies this spatial interconnectedness. By challenging the traditional opposition of form and space, Cézanne merges them into an elusive, intertwined reality that defies conventional representation.

This duality is also evident in Cézanne's self-portraits, where a sharp sense of ambiguity prevails. In *Self-Portrait with Palette*, one eye meets the gaze of the viewer, while the other appears withdrawn, turned inward as if disengaging from the external world. This juxtaposition captures the tension between the artist's desire to confront reality and his simultaneous impulse to retreat into introspection. Cézanne himself once remarked, 'The world doesn't understand me and I don't understand the world, that's why I've withdrawn from it'. The self-portrait thus becomes a site of negotiation between the internal and external realms, a meeting point where both worlds enter into a symbiotic relationship of conflict.

Cézanne's later works, such as *Bathers* or *Bottle, Carafe, Jug and Lemons*, introduce deliberate voids – areas of the canvas that remain unfinished or devoid of colour. These gaps are not mere omissions but intentional disruptions that could reflect Cézanne's recognition of the inherent limitations of artistic representation. The voids suggest a rupture between the artist's internal vision and the external reality he seeks to depict, highlighting the impossibility of fully encapsulating the complexity of the visible world. This incompleteness invites deeper contemplation of the metaphorical rupture between observed reality and perceived reality.

Cézanne's work embodies a profound exploration of perception, rooted in an intense, almost existential engagement with reality. His art transcends mere representation, inviting us to perceive the world as he did – not as a fixed and static entity, but as a fluid and evolving interplay between what is seen and what lies beyond sight. Through his paintings, Cézanne offers a rare glimpse into the depths of his mind, allowing us to experience the world through his eyes, where every brushstroke conveys the complexity of his inner vision. As he observed, 'There are two things in the painter, the eye and the mind; each of them should aid the other'.

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