



HAL
open science

Mechanisms of Canonisation Through Exposure: Paul Cézanne's Still Life with Fruit Dish (1879–80) on the Parisian Art Scene at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

Hadrien Viraben

► **To cite this version:**

Hadrien Viraben. Mechanisms of Canonisation Through Exposure: Paul Cézanne's Still Life with Fruit Dish (1879–80) on the Parisian Art Scene at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century. *Oxford Art Journal*, 2019, 42 (1), pp.1-19. 10.1093/oxartj/kcy028. hal-02188744

HAL Id: hal-02188744

<https://hal.science/hal-02188744v1>

Submitted on 20 Dec 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Hadrien Viraben

Contribution à la revue *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 42, no 1, 2019, p. 1-19.
Préprint. Version définitive publiée : <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/ky028>.

*Mechanisms of Canonisation Through Exposure: Paul Cézanne's
"Still Life with Fruit Dish" (1879–80) on the Parisian Art Scene at
the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*

Abstract :

Using hitherto unpublished documents, this essay examines the first exposures of Paul Cézanne's well-known Still Life with Fruit Dish (1879-80; New York, The Museum of Modern Art; FWN 780) on the Parisian art scene between 1900 and 1914. Already highly regarded within a circle of enlightened independent artists, the circumstances of its disclosure, its first exhibitions, auctions, as well as reproductions, showcase the mechanism of its establishment as 'a pure masterpiece' among the public opinion. This transfer taking place during Cézanne's own early recognition as a father of modern art, the example of Still Life with Fruit Dish manages to concentrate most of the issues raised by its election to this position of leadership.

Figure captions:

Fig. 1. Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Fruit Dish*, 1879-80, oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York (FWN 780). (Photo: Bridgeman Images)

Copyright : This image has been bought in order to be reproduced inside the journal as an illustration.

Fig. 2: Émile Bernard, *Still Life with Fruit Dish and Glass*, circa 1890, oil on cardboard, 41 x 52 cm. Private collection (LI 257). (Photo: Archives Wildenstein Plattner Institute, Paris)

Copyright: See permission.

Fig. 3: Maurice Denis, *Homage to Cézanne*, 1900, oil on canvas, 182 x 243,5 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. (Photo: Bridgeman Images)

Copyright : This image has been bought in order to be reproduced inside the journal as an illustration.

Fig. 4: *Room plan of the 1904 Salon d'Automne*. Copyright the Author.

Copyright : I personally created this plan.

Fig. 5: Henri Glineur, *View of Room 3 at the 1904 Salon d'Automne*, 1904, postcard, 9 x 14 cm. Private collection.

Copyright : Personal scan.

Fig. 6: Eugène Druet, *Photograph Reproduction of Still Life with Fruit Dish*, circa 1909-1910, photograph print reproduced in Élie Faure, 'Paul Cézanne', *Portraits d'hier*, no. 28, 1 May 1910, p. 105.

Copyright : Personal scan.

Fig. 7: Émile Bernard, *Still Life (Vase of Flowers, Fruit Dish, Jug, Glass, Peaches and Lemons)*, circa 1905, oil on canvas, 62,5 x 75 cm. Private collection (LI 635). (Photo: Philippe Grossot)

Copyright : See Permission.

Fig. 8: Maurice Denis, *Reproduction of Still Life with Fruit Dish*, circa 1913-1914, lithograph reproduced in Octave Mirbeau, Théodore Duret, Léon Werth, and Frantz Jourdain, *Cézanne* (Paris: Bernheim-Jeune, 1914). (Photo: Bibliothèque de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Collections Jacques Doucet 4 Est 588)

Copyright: Open Licence.

Let's consider the 'still life' hung within the long gallery, under Renoir's *Boating Party*. Some apples on a tablecloth, a fruit dish with fruits, a glass, all presented against a contrasting dark-grey background with patterns, and here is the painting, a pure masterpiece. Just like a work of marquetry which would have no meaning, one can look at it with no regards to its subject, upright, inclined, on its side, and its brushstrokes from bottom to top, from right to left, are in balance, and complement each other. See how the bright colours of the fruits, green and red harmoniously sing together on the canvas. The reason is that Cézanne, by bringing out here and there all the harmonics, has put them within *their milieu*, and the bluish stain of the tablecloth, which in reality should have been white in nature, become through this transposition of the tone true and very accurate within the local tonality of the painting.¹

¹ 'Examinons la "nature morte" placée dans la longue galerie, au-dessous des *canotiers* de Renoir. Quelques pommes sur un linge, un compotier avec des fruits, un verre, le tout se détachant sur un fond à dessins, gris foncé et voilà le tableau, un pur chef-d'œuvre. Telle une marqueterie qui n'aurait pas de sens on peut la regarder indépendamment du sujet, debout, inclinée, couchée et les taches de bas en haut, de droite à gauche, s'équilibrent, se contrebalancent. Remarquez comment les couleurs vives des fruits, verts et rouges chantent harmonieusement dans la toile. C'est que Cézanne en faisant sortir de-ci de-là toutes les harmoniques les a mises dans *leur milieu* et la tache bleutée du linge qui en réalité devait être blanche dans la nature, par cette transposition du ton devient véridique et très exacte dans la tonalité locale du tableau.' Solrac [Carlos de Castéra], 'Réflexions sur le Salon d'automne', *L'Occident*, no. 37, December 1904, p. 306. Emphasis by the author. All translations are mine.

This description written by Carlos de Castéra (1868–1943), who used the pen name of Solrac, is the sole remaining on Paul Cézanne’s *Sill Life with Fruit Dish* (Fig. 1) during its thus far undocumented display at the Salon d’Automne in 1904.² It may seem paradoxical that only one art columnist noticed the display of such ‘a pure masterpiece’ of modern art. Its presence going unnoticed even while the painting acquired wide recognition as one of Cézanne’s major works.

This fact is especially surprising given that Cézanne’s retrospective in 1904 caused quite a stir in the Parisian art world. It is still today considered a seminal historical event in the turn of the twentieth-century formation of the artist’s early reputation, and in the narrative of Modernism.³ The trajectory of this specific work thereupon coincided more than once with its author’s fast-growing canonization as a master of modern art. While being amply revered and copied by artists, it passed through the hands of owners such as the painter Paul Gauguin, or famous collectors Georges Viau and Alexandre Berthier. As an object of wide artistic admiration, as well as a collectable item of economic value, it found itself encircled by

² FWN refers to Walter Feilchenfeldt, Jayne Warman, and David Nash, *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne, an online catalogue raisonné* (2014), <http://www.cezannecatalogue.com>.

³ Regarding the Cézanne retrospective at the 1904 Salon d’Automne, see in particular John Rewald, *Cézanne and America: Dealers, Collectors, Artists and Critics, 1891–1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 89–106; Robert Boardingham, ‘Cézanne and the 1904 Salon d’automne: “Un chef d’une école nouvelle”’, *Apollo*, Vol. 142, no. 404, October 1995, pp. 31–39. See also Hal Foster, Rosalind E. Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin Heinz-Dieter Buchloh, and David Joselit, *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016), pp. 82–89 (the author mistakenly mentions the second Cézanne retrospective of 1907 as having taken place at the Salon des Indépendants, instead of the Salon d’Automne).

factions of the Parisian avant-gardes, and yet also integral to public debates on the market for contemporary art, and its manipulations.

The term ‘masterpiece’, early used by Castéra about this painting in particular, thus needs further investigation. It was not here a hyperbole from an enthusiast critic but, used in the true sense of the term, a statement delivered to a wide audience still unfamiliar with the painting. As such, it deals with a qualification that scholars have put into debate since the end of the 1970s. Walter Cahn and then Hans Belting have indeed demonstrated the highly problematical status of the concept of masterpiece for modern art.⁴ According to Cahn’s categories, *Still Life with Fruit Dish* could be both intended as a ‘classical masterpiece’, a canonical work of art worthy of being copied by younger generations and of universal admiration, but also as an ‘absolute masterpiece’, an attempt to embody and transcend art itself. This historical investigation has recently been enriched by new perspectives on the correlative problem of the artistic canon. In 2007 Anna Brzyski laid the foundation to critically analyse ‘the mechanics of the canonical system’ through a structural approach that interweaves different factors, such as art market, identity discourses, individual strategies

⁴ Walter Cahn, *Masterpieces: Chapters on the History of an Idea*, (Princeton University Press: Princeton, Guildford, 1979); Hans Belting, *The Invisible Masterpiece*, (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2001). Upon the concept of the masterpiece in modern art, see also Arthur Coleman Danto, ‘Masterpieces and the Museum’, *Grand Street*, Vol. 9, no. 2, 1990, pp. 108–127; Arthur Coleman Danto, *The Madonna of the Future: Essays in a Pluralistic Art World*, (Farrard, Strauss and Giroux: New York, 2000). Different point of views are also gathered in the proceedings of a series of conferences at the Musée du Louvre in 1998: Jean Galard and Matthias Waschek (eds.), *Qu’est-ce qu’un chef-d’œuvre?*, (Gallimard: Paris, 2000).

within art and art history worlds, which all affect the production of a hierarchy based on aesthetic and economic values.⁵

While the case study of *Still Life with Fruit Dish* exemplifies Cézanne's equivocal recognition around 1904, which far exceeded the circles of the historical avant-gardes, the purpose of this article is also to synthesize and connect several such mechanisms of canonization or taste, by calling in histories of exhibition, art criticism, the art market and modes of reproduction.⁶ These will each be conceived here as ways of exposure through which a particular painting, already famous among artists, became known and recognizable to a wider audience. Disclosure within the public sphere was essential to the painting's new canonical status at the beginning of the twentieth century. Before that, the reputation of *Still Life with Fruit Dish* first developed, but within a restricted group of admirers, during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, after Paul Gauguin acquired it in 1884, and worked

⁵ Anna Brzyski, 'Introduction: Canons and Art History', in Anna Brzyski (ed.), *Partisan canons*, (Duke University Press: Durham, 2007), pp. 1–25. The issue of canon formation and upholding has also been repeatedly debated by historians since the 1970s. See in particular Frank Kermode, *Pleasure and change: the aesthetics of canon*, (Oxford University Press: New York, 2004).

⁶ Similar mechanisms of taste (exhibition, historical and critical discourses, art market, collections, forms of reproduction) have also been examined in seminal works by Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France*, (Phaidon: Oxford, 1980); Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: the Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500-1900*, (Yale University Press: New Haven, London, 1981).

alongside Cézanne's model throughout the 1880s.⁷ Even after he sold it in 1896 to or via Ambroise Vollard, its memory still ran through his *Still Life with Grapefruits* (circa 1901; Private collection; W 631). Gauguin also made the painting his preferred example when he discussed Cézanne's work with colleagues during the years 1893 and 1894.⁸ Through his teachings, Cézanne's *Still Life with Fruit Dish* had a major influence on the Pont-Aven School, as can be seen from Paul Sérusier's interpretation of this double ascendancy in his *Still Life: The Painter's Studio* (1891; Paris, Musée d'Orsay). As Rodolphe Rapetti has demonstrated, Émile Bernard (1868–1941), who mentioned the painting in his first article on Cézanne in 1891, had already seen it at Émile Schuffenecker's home, where Gauguin had dropped off the canvas probably in the hope of selling it.⁹ Hence, Rapetti has been able to put

⁷ A very large number of Gauguin's still lifes suggest the influence of *Sill Life with Fruit Dish: Still Life with Profile of Laval* (1886; Indianapolis, Indianapolis Museum of Art; W 207); *Still Life with Japanese Print* (1888; Private collection; W 287); *Apples in Bowl* (1888; Private collection; W 291); *Oranges and Lemons with a View of Pont-Aven* (1890; Langmatt, Museum Langmatt; W 401); *Bowl of Fruit and Tankard Before a Window* (1890; London, National Gallery; W 402); *Fruit Dish on a Garden Chair* (circa 1890; Los Angeles, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; W 404); *Still Life with Apples, a Pear, and a Ceramic Portrait Jug* (1889; Cambridge, Fogg Art Museum; W 405). Gauguin also included the canvas itself as a background to his *Woman in front of a Still Life by Cézanne* (1890; Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago; W 387). W refers, in the case of Gauguin, to Georges Wildenstein, *Gauguin, I: Catalogue* (Paris: les Beaux arts, 1964).

⁸ Rodolphe Rapetti, 'L'inquiétude cézannienne: Émile Bernard et Cézanne au début du XXe siècle', *Revue de l'art*, no. 144, 2004, p. 42.

⁹ Émile Bernard, 'Paul Cézanne', *Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui*, vol. 8, no. 387, February 1891, p. 18. Rapetti, 'L'inquiétude cézannienne', p. 42.

an earlier date on Bernard's copy of the painting (Fig. 2), that of circa 1890.¹⁰ Even after its acquisition by the art collector Georges Viau at the end of the 1890s, *Still Life with Fruit Dish* remained as a 'talisman' for the Nabis circle, along with Sérusier's well-known small canvas painted after Gauguin's indications (1888; Paris, Musée d'Orsay). Maurice Denis (1870–1943), who copied Cézanne's model at Viau's home in December 1899, transcribed this particular aura while putting the painting at the centre of his well-known *Homage to Cézanne* (Fig. 3), a manifesto whose ambitions have been accurately analysed by Katherine Kuenzli.¹¹ Gathering the former Nabis and their critic André Mellerio in Ambroise Vollard's gallery, and in light of Denis's affection for Biblical iconography, Denis's homage somehow evokes an artistic and intellectual cult of the small canvas presented on an easel by Vollard. Following Kuenzli's interpretation, *Still Life with Fruit Dish* already assumed in Denis's painting the status of a work able to create a consensus of admiration, although here restricted to a group

¹⁰ Rapetti, 'L'inquiétude cézannienne', p. 42. In his first edition of Bernard's catalogue raisonné Jean-Jacques Luthi has attributed the date of 1904, based on the first encounter of Bernard and Cézanne and his subsequent article published in *L'Occident*. The last edition of the catalogue raisonné follows Rapetti. The knowledge of the presence of the painting during the 1904 Salon d'Automne does not require new hypotheses about Bernard's copy, as the artist would have found difficulties to make it amid the exhibition. LI refers to Jean-Jacques Luthi and Armand Israël, *Émile Bernard, instigateur de l'École de Pont-Aven, précurseur de l'art moderne: sa vie, son œuvre: catalogue raisonné* (Paris: Éditions des Catalogues raisonnés, 2014).

¹¹ Maurice Denis, *Journal, 1884-1904* (Paris: Éditions du Vieux Colombier, 1957), p. 157. Katherine Marie Kuenzli, 'Aesthetics and Cultural Politics in the Age of Dreyfus: Maurice Denis's "Homage to Cézanne"', *Art History*, Vol. 30, no. 5, November 2007, pp. 683–711.

of painters, the two factions of the Nabis, and potentially even to gather Odilon Redon's suffrage.

In 1900, the year Denis completed his *Homage*, and while its reputation seemed already established within a circle of enlightened artists, *Still Life with Fruit Dish* had yet to be revealed to a wide audience at its first documented public exhibition. Three years later, according to Feilchenfeldt, Warman and Nash's catalogue of Cézanne's oeuvre, its first reproduction appeared in Germany. In 1907 the painting also became an object of public competition as part of an auction. The beginning of the twentieth century saw the painting's unveiling and thus the start of its public career, just a few years before its author's death in 1906. The transferral of the painting's early reception to its new status of masterpiece matched the story of its exposure to a wider audience, as well as the phenomenon through which former enthusiasts confronted the new vogue for Cézanne between 1904 and the First World War.

The 1904 Salon d'Automne

Cézanne's participation in the 'Centennale de l'Art français', a retrospective at the 1900 Exposition Universelle organized by Roger Marx and devoted to French art from 1800 to 1889, was discreet. His three works, including *Still Life with Fruit Dish*, probably were presented in the specific room that the Impressionists had obtained from the organizers to be devoted exclusively to their ensemble, which extended also to Paul Gauguin's early paintings of the 1880s. According to the available documentation, the press did not take the time to describe Cézanne's submission, but merely included his name in the list of the triumphal Impressionist generation. He did not benefit from any exceptional treatment, whereas Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir's major paintings were granted access to the 'salon d'honneur'. This room, placed at the end of the visitor's chronological itinerary, was

conceived according to the traditional model of the Tribuna degli Uffizi in Florence or the Salon Carré in the Musée du Louvre. It gathered a series of major works of nineteenth-century French art, where Impressionism was exemplified by Monet's *Under the Pine Trees at the End of the Day* (1888; Private collection; W 1191) and Renoir's *Dancer* (1874; Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; DD 493).¹²

Still Life with Fruit Dish was thereafter part of two Impressionist retrospectives organized outside France on the occasion of annual exhibitions of secessionist groups: in January 1903, during the 16th exhibition of the Vienna Secession; and in February 1904, during the 11th exhibition of the Libre esthétique in Brussels. In October 1904 the painting thus faced the Parisian audience for a second time, on the occasion of the Salon d'Automne, within the very same rooms of the Palais d'Antin as those of the 'Centennale de l'Art français' in 1900.

The importance of the Salon d'Automne in the historiography of Impressionism and of Modernism cannot be overestimated. From 1903 to 1907, three active members of the Impressionist set, Cézanne, Renoir and Armand Guillaumin, participated in this new Salon, and subsequently brought their aura as originators of independent art to the younger generation of exhibitors. Frantz Jourdain, founder of the Société du Salon d'Automne, was indeed eager to obtain this prestigious patronage, and quite disappointed not to get

¹² See François Thiébaud-Sisson, 'Les Expositions d'art des deux palais des Champs-Élysées', *Le Temps*, no. 14206, 1 May 1900, supplement, p. 1; E. Grosjean-Maupin, 'Le Grand Palais: II. Les Grands Paysagistes', *Le Matin*, no. 5985, 15 July 1900, p. 3. W refers, in the case of Monet, to Daniel Wildenstein, *Monet: catalogue raisonné* (Cologne: Taschen, 1996). DD refers to Guy-Patrice Dauberville and Michel Dauberville, *Renoir: catalogue raisonné des tableaux, pastels, dessins et aquarelles* (Paris: Bernheim-Jeune, 2007–2014).

submissions from the two other living Impressionists, Monet and Degas.¹³ This process of constructing a historical filiation was mainly built on an innovation of the new artistic society: the inclusion of major retrospectives devoted to nineteenth-century masters alongside paintings sent by their members. These not only were part of an historiographical argument, but also intended to compete with the other annual exhibitions of artistic societies by attracting a wider audience to the Salon d'Automne than the usual public interested in contemporary art. In 1904 personal displays were thus organized in honour of Paul Cézanne, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Odilon Redon and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.¹⁴

The circumstances of the two Impressionist retrospectives of 1904 have been related by Robert Boardingham, for Cézanne's, and by Paul Perrin, for Renoir's.¹⁵ Each author has published numerous installation views of the monographic exhibitions but, in the process, each failed to mention the display of Cézanne's and Renoir's work outside the rooms that concentrated their paintings, and thus have ignored the presence of *Still Life with Fruit Dish*. In order to present clearly the sophisticated geography of the 1904 Salon d'Automne, one

¹³ About this refusal, see Frantz Jourdain, *Le Salon d'Automne* (Paris: les Arts et le Livre, 1928), p. 33; Catherine Ambroselli de Bayser and Marie-Cécile Forest, *George Desvallières et le Salon d'Automne* (Paris: Somogy, 2003), p. 88.

¹⁴ The Impressionist patronage thereafter proceeded with subsequent retrospectives devoted, before the First World War, to Manet in 1905, to Cézanne, Berthe Morisot and Éva Gonzalès in 1907 (the initial project also included Mary Cassatt), to Frédéric Bazille in 1910, and to Camille Pissarro in 1911.

¹⁵ Boardingham, 'Cézanne and the 1904 Salon d'Automne'; Paul Perrin, "Un éblouissement," Renoir au Salon d'Automne (1904-1912)', *Histoire de l'art*, no. 69, December 2011, pp. 125–134.

needs to take a look at the first floor of the Palais d'Antin's layout (Fig. 4) and understand its itinerary. The visitor climbing the main staircase initiated his or her tour with an octagonal room, and then turning left continued a circuit around the palace, before ending at its starting point. Their walk through the display of the most recent paintings sent by independent young artists was interspersed with rooms dedicated to each retrospective of that year: rooms 4 and 5 to Renoir and Toulouse-Lautrec; room 9 to Cézanne; room 10 to Puvis de Chavannes; room 13 to Redon. Meanwhile, the large gallery of room 3, conceived as well according to the model of a 'salon d'honneur', gathered major works from different painters on its main wall that faced the entrance to the first retrospectives (Fig. 5). The upper part of this wall presented a series of larger canvases: Renoir's chief work of his monographic exhibition, *Luncheon at the Boating Party* (1880-1; Washington, D.C., The Phillips Collection; DD 224); Cézanne's *Still Life with Ginger Jar and Eggplants* (1893-4; New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; FWN 856); and the two *Panels for La Goulue's Booth at the Foire du Trône* by Toulouse-Lautrec (1895; Paris, Musée d'Orsay). In a key-position, adjacent to the very large format of the Renoir above, Cézanne's small *Still Life with Fruit Dish* was particularly emphasized and signalled to the eye by the empty space that surrounded it.

Hence, well before arriving in the Cézanne room at the end of the east gallery, visitors to the 1904 Salon d'Automne could consider a topos of Modernist discourses: the association of Cézanne and Renoir as leaders of new directions for contemporary independent art.¹⁶ The parallel between Cézanne's small still life and Renoir's large contemporary scene competing with history painting signalled to the wide audience their equal quality as masterpieces, each being the 'clou' [climax] of their respective retrospectives. The hanging thus made it impossible for the audience of the Salon to miss *Still Life with Fruit Dish* which assumed,

¹⁶ Upon this association of Cézanne and Renoir, see Perrin, "Un éblouissement," *Renoir au Salon d'Automne (1904–1912)*'.

through this traditional scenography borrowed from museums, the classical status and definition of a masterpiece.

Between its first and second public exhibit in Paris, the painting had benefited from Denis's own presentation of his *Homage to Cézanne* at the Salon of the Société nationale des beaux-arts in 1901. Denis's representation of a display in Vollard's gallery literally prefigured the exhibition device of 1904 by already making Cézanne's painting the focal point of attention and an attraction. However, one cannot but notice that Denis's display device surrounded the painting with its admirers, who truly embodied the border between an aesthetic sanctuary and the everyday life outside the gallery. Conversely, the Salon d'Automne both figuratively and factually pushed the painting to the forefront of its circuit, and thus truly exposed it to a large public. This singular position corresponded both to its particular meaning for art critics as well as to its function as a teaser of Cézanne's show, organized by his dealer Vollard, for whom this display of masterworks operated as a vitrine.

Cézanne's Classicism Exemplified

Of course, the painting's earlier reputation within the Nabi circle played a role in its election as the highlight of the Cézanne retrospective in 1904, an event which, furthermore, confirmed the master's leadership over younger generations of independent artists. When Castéra, in close relation to Maurice Denis, labelled the painting 'a pure masterpiece', his commentary was embedded, explicitly and implicitly, in a growing contemporary intertextuality that surrounded Cézanne, his classicism, his purity, as well as his title of master.

For its early supporters, *Still Life with Fruit Dish* exemplified Cézanne's qualities that were especially sought after. The genre of still life already was closely related to Cézanne, and the depicted objects, repeated in his most notorious paintings, were familiar and borrowed

by his supporters, such as Gauguin, as signs of his ascendancy: apples, fruit dish, knife, white cloth. *Still Life with Fruit Dish* also belongs to a series of still lives which share the same tripartite horizontal structure, here cut by the white diagonal of the tablecloth and the fruit dish. A middle vertical line is suggested by the lock of the forefront, the green and the red apples that flank the central pyramid, the opposition between the opacity of the white fruit dish and the transparency of the glass, and the pattern of leaves at the upper corners of the painting. The picture thus seems to demonstrate its singularity as being both classical through its extensive concern for balance, and classic with its concentration of typical, almost stereotypical, characteristics learnt as being those of Cézanne.

Even though Castéra did not use the term ‘classical’, his description, by underlining its qualities of simplicity, equilibrium and completeness, paralleled the values associated with Cézanne’s classicism, whose definition was of a primary concern to his friend Denis at the same moment.¹⁷ Trained as a painter, and brother to the composer René de Castéra (1873–1955), Carlos de Castéra was indeed closely tied to Maurice Denis as a member of his extended social network within the Parisian musical world.¹⁸ At the turn of the century this connection between painting and music had a strong influence on Denis’s theorization of a modern classicism - on his conceptions of both pure painting and colour harmony - as the artist himself noted in his journal in October 1904: ‘Music, more and more, had a major power over my sensibility.’¹⁹ Furthermore, Castéra publicly signalled in his account of the

¹⁷ For Denis’s definition of Cézanne’s classicism, see Jean-Paul Bouillon, *Maurice Denis: Six Essais*, (Somogy: Paris, 2006), pp. 47–75.

¹⁸ See Delphine Grivel, *Maurice Denis et la musique* (Lyon: Symétrie, 2011).

¹⁹ ‘La musique, de plus en plus, a sur ma sensibilité un grand pouvoir.’ Denis, *Journal*, p. 224. On the influence of music in Denis’s art theories, see Grivel, *Maurice Denis et la musique*, pp. 201–212.

Salon d'Automne his debt to Denis by quoting the painter's definitions of the colouristic terms of tone and value, as they had been published in the same magazine, *L'Occident*, a few months before.²⁰ From what one can read in the extract opening this article, these definitions were the core of his own appreciation of Cézanne's 1879-80 painting. Hence, Carlos de Castéra's canonization of *Still Life with Fruit Dish*, making similar references to music and the equilibrium of forms echoing a harmony of colours, appeared as a point of view he would have shared with Denis.

According to Castéra's words, *Still Life with Fruit Dish* was not only a 'masterpiece' but a 'pure' one. The adjective could be intended in French as a simple strengthening of the nouns it refers to, or literally as an echo of the contemporary concept of purity as formulated by Maurice Denis. Indeed Castéra's appreciation of Cézanne's work without regard to its subject was, of course, aligned itself with Denis's well-known statement of 1890: 'Remember that a painting – before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or an anecdote of some sort – is essentially a flat surface covered with colours, put together in a certain order.'²¹ Apart from the analogy between painting and music, Castéra alluded in his commentary to two other diffuse metaphors for pure painting when he compared the canvas to a work of marquetry, that could additionally be looked at upside down. By using the terms of music, decoration, or the image of the upside-down painting, Castéra expressed a common ideal with Denis for a

²⁰ Maurice Denis, 'Chronique de peinture: Exposition de Mme Lisbeth (Delvolvé-Carrière)', *L'Occident*, no. 15, February 1903, pp. 141–142.

²¹ 'Se rappeler qu'un tableau – avant d'être un cheval de bataille, une femme nue, ou une quelconque anecdote – est essentiellement une surface plane recouverte de couleurs en un certain ordre assemblées.' Pierre Louis [Maurice Denis], 'Beaux-Arts: Notes d'art: Définition du néo-traditionnisme (I)', *Art et critique*, no. 65, 23 August 1890, pp. 540–543.

work of art partly released from any subject-matter, and thus made *Still Life with Fruit Dish* an incarnation of this ideal, as well as of painting itself.²²

While Castéra seems here to adapt to *Still Life with Fruit Dish* ideas and judgments he formulated through conversations with Denis, his commentary is especially interesting since Denis himself did not comment in his own publications on this particular painting that he had yet celebrated in his homage. Although separated by more than two decades, his text anticipated Roger Fry's emphasis on the same *Compotier* through a formalist reading that described it as a climax in his well-known *Cézanne, A Study of his Development* in 1927. Fry had himself been partly influenced by Denis's analysis of Cézanne's work and definition of his classicism, which he translated and published in the *Burlington Magazine* in 1910.²³ In 1927, through its lengthy analysis of the canvas, Fry's book, which had such a major influence on the artist's historiography, tried to put words to the same uniqueness of Cézanne's picture, as a perfect example of the artist's classicism.²⁴ Even Fry's particular feeling for the gravity and the tragic atmosphere of the *Compotier* found an echo in Castéra's

²² In his own articles, Denis interwove the same terminology borrowed from music and decoration in order to define his ideal of purity.

²³ The role played by this translation in Fry's appreciation of Cézanne and in the formulation of his formalism has been especially underlined by Christopher Reed (ed.), *A Roger Fry Reader*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1996), pp. 117–132.

²⁴ On Fry's reading of Cézanne's art and its influence, see Beverly Hamilton Twitchell, *Cézanne and formalism in Bloomsbury* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1987); Benjamin David Harvey, 'Formalism's first affair: What Roger Fry made of Paul Cézanne', Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002. See also Richard Verdi, 'Roger Fry's "Cézanne, a Study of His Development", 1927', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 151, no. 1277, 2009, pp. 544–547.

article.²⁵ Immediately following his depiction of Cézanne's 'pure masterpiece', Castéra described *Deserted House* (1878-79; Private collection; FWN 113) exhibited in room 9, by reinvoking the same formalist characteristics developed in relation to the still life: 'This painting through the simplicity of its composition, its equilibrium and the great truth of the tonal quality, reaches tragedy.'²⁶ Such a balance between the qualities of style and of sentiment in both Castéra's and Fry's texts could find again a common matrix in Denis's definition of Cézanne's classicism.

A final common denominator, explicit in Denis's and Fry's appreciation of Cézanne and underlying Castéra's election of *Still Life with Fruit Dish* as a masterpiece, was the reference to Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin. With its small format, the framing of the horizontal plan, the isolated and symmetrically distributed elements, as well as with its dominant blue colour, the *Compotier* was probably Cézanne's nearest exhibited painting to Chardin's model. This filiation was particularly important for Cézanne's supporters, as it legitimized the former's new status as a 'master'. Among Cézanne's partisans, the art critic Louis Vauxcelles (1870–1943) was one of the most eager to affirm this genealogy, probably partly in order to reassure the readership of his journal *Gil Blas*. He stated this comparison as an argument of common sense in two articles published on the Salon d'Automne, and repeated it again in an important

²⁵ Roger Eliot Fry, *Cézanne: A Study of His Development* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 40.

²⁶ 'Ce tableau par la simplicité de la composition, son équilibre et la grande exactitude de qualité tonale, atteint au tragique.' Solrac [Carlos de Castéra], 'Réflexions sur le Salon d'Automne', p. 306.

praise for the controversial master published a few months after the exhibition.²⁷ Meanwhile, this authoritative argument by Vauxcelles also became a main target for Cézanne's opponents.²⁸ Camille Mauclair (1872–1945), at the forefront of Cézanne's detractors at the 1904 Salon d'Automne, and attacked by Vauxcelles's headline of 1905, responded with an article where he particularly mocked this alleged association of Cézanne with Chardin.²⁹

Just a few months before the opening of the Salon d'Automne, the art historian Gaston Schéfer (1850–1921) published a new biography of Chardin, with expressions of his qualities that repeatedly echoed the ones that Castéra would thereafter use.³⁰ Parallel praise for the equilibrium of forms, and for the sentimental gravity of still life could be found, but above all similar statements on their colourist harmonies. Schéfer indeed emphasized Chardin's truthful depiction of the objects within their 'milieu', that distinguished his art from the Flemish tradition: 'In Flemish still lifes, objects are simply juxtaposed; They are studies of animals or fruits or utensils executed in different *milieux* and then gathered on the canvas.'³¹

²⁷ Louis Vauxcelles, 'Le Problème du Salon d'Automne', *Gil Blas*, no. 9109, 15 September 1904, p. 1; Louis Vauxcelles, 'Le Salon d'Automne', *Gil Blas*, no. 9138, 14 October 1904, p. 1; Louis Vauxcelles, 'Cézanne', *Gil Blas*, no. 9290, 18 March 1905, p. 1.

²⁸ Joséphin Peladan, 'Le Salon d'Automne', *La Revue hebdomadaire*, Vol. 11, October 1904, pp. 446–456; Raymond Bouyer, 'Le Procès de l'art moderne au Salon d'Automne', *La Revue politique et littéraire*, Vol. 2, no. 19, November 1904, pp. 601–605; Maurice Fourquier, 'Le Salon d'Automne', *Le Journal*, no. 439, 14 October 1904, p. 5.

²⁹ Camille Mauclair, 'Psychologie de la Nature morte', *La Revue politique et littéraire*, Vol. 4, no. 1, 1 July 1905, pp. 19–22.

³⁰ The earliest found announcements of Schéfer's *Chardin* are dated from July 1904.

³¹ 'Dans les natures mortes des Flamands, les objets sont simplement juxtaposés; Ce sont des études d'animaux ou de fruits ou d'ustensiles exécutés dans des milieux différents et

Chardin, as with Cézanne a few months later, instead transcribed the optic penetration of each to the other to the point that ‘all the objects reflect on each other as mirrors’.³² In his description of Chardin’s *Basket of Plums* (1765; Private collection; RT 174) as a ‘masterpiece of truth’, Schéfer incidentally created a bond with Castéra’s future mention of the bluish stain of Cézanne’s tablecloth: ‘When one takes a close look at [the plums] one by one, one finds them made of green reflections of the surrounding leaves, of white reflections of the light, of red, of blue, the full scale of neighbouring colours’.³³ Furthermore, Schéfer also borrowed from modern art criticism the term qualifying Chardin as a ‘pointillist’³⁴ and, by quoting Louis Petit de Bachaumont, increased Castéra’s future analogy between brushstrokes tacked together and decorative crafts: ‘He applied colours one after another, almost without combining them, in such a way that his work looks a bit like a mosaic, or pieces of marquetry, like the needlepoint tapestry we name square stitch.’³⁵

groupés ensuite sur la toile.’ Gaston Schéfer, *Chardin: biographie critique illustrée de 24 reproductions hors texte* (Paris: H. Laurens), p. 64.

³² ‘tous les objets se reflètent les uns dans les autres comme dans autant de miroirs’ Schéfer, *Chardin*, p. 64.

³³ ‘Lorsqu’on les examine de près une à une, on les trouve faites des reflets verts des feuilles qui les entourent, des reflets blancs de la lumière, de rouge, de bleu, de toute la gamme des couleurs voisines.’ Schéfer, *Chardin*, p. 67. RT refers to Pierre Rosenberg and Renaud Temperini, *Chardin, suivi du catalogue des œuvres* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999).

³⁴ Schéfer, *Chardin*, p. 63.

³⁵ ‘Il place ses couleurs l’une après l’autre, sans presque les mêler, de façon que son ouvrage ressemble un peu à de la mosaïque, ou pièces de rapport, comme la tapisserie à l’aiguille qu’on appelle point carré’. Schéfer, *Chardin*, p. 63.

Thus, Castéra's comment on *Still Life with Fruit Dish* found its bases in a large intertextuality and implicitly echoed both Denis's modern classicism and Schéfer's historical classicism. In this regard, Cézanne's still life could, on the one hand, be understood in terms of art criticism as a contemporary masterpiece which, through its purity, embodied an ideal, painting itself, to be followed by younger generations of artists. On the other hand, it was also a timeless masterpiece, admirable for everyone, which rivalled the terms used by art historians to describe works by Old Masters, just as its exhibition at the Salon d'Automne rivalled the museum scenography of these same paintings.

Confronted with Cézanne's Secondary Paintings

In his analysis of the exhibition, Boardingham has highlighted how its organizer, the art dealer Ambroise Vollard, undertook a 'conservative' selection from Cézanne's production by favouring pictures, preferably from 1878 to 1888, that 'most closely resembled conventionally finished paintings', in order to please the wide audience of the Salon.³⁶ Hence, the choice of a Chardinesque still life as the climax of the retrospective had all the reasons to satisfy this public.³⁷ Its singular position as the vitrine of his 1904 retrospective can be

³⁶ Boardingham, 'Cézanne and the 1904 Salon d'automne', p. 36.

³⁷ A preference for Cézanne's still lifes is, for example, expressed by Édouard Sarradin, 'Visites au Salon d'Automne', *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, no. 307, 4 November 1904, p. 2–3. By comparison, an opposition to this genre was the sign within Cézanne's detractors of their complete condemnation of the artist. See Fourquier, 'Le Salon d'Automne'; Camille Mauclair, 'La Peinture et la Sculpture au Salon d'automne', *L'Art décoratif*, no. 75, December 1904, pp. 222–230; François Monod, 'Le Salon d'automne', *Art et décoration*, Vol. 18, no. 12, December 1905, pp. 198–210.

explained by *Still Life with Fruit Dish*'s fulfilment of Cézanne's enthusiasts' 'horizon of expectations', as well as that of the public at the beginning of the century.³⁸

The election of *Still Life with Fruit Dish* as a masterpiece, with its underlying notions of perfection and completeness, thus also responded to the acknowledgement of Cézanne's secondary paintings. Between 1904 and 1907, his critical reception was indeed profoundly penetrated by other topoi including the unevenness and sometimes incompleteness of his production.³⁹ Even an active supporter such as Vauxcelles, who repeated again in his review of the 1905 Salon d'Automne the perpetual analogy between Cézanne and Chardin, recognized the master's 'unequal work'.⁴⁰ Therefore, the ability to distinguish within Cézanne's paintings the good ones, the 'true masterpieces', from the failed ones, was frequently claimed by art critics in order to legitimate their distribution of compliments or reproaches, even if the qualities that made a 'great Cézanne' were themselves formulaic.

³⁸ Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an aesthetic of reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

³⁹ See commentaries from Gustave Babin, 'Le Salon d'Automne', *L'Écho de Paris*, no. 7436, 14 October 1904, p. 1-2; Gustave Babin, 'Le Salon d'Automne', *L'Écho de Paris*, no. 7800, 17 October 1905, p. 1-2; Sarradin, 'Visites au Salon d'Automne'; Édouard Sarradin, 'Le Tour du Salon d'Automne', *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, no. 288, 17 October 1905, p. 3; Monod, 'Le Salon d'automne'; Louis Rouart, 'Réflexions sur le Salon d'automne, suivie d'une courte promenade audit salon', *L'Occident*, no. 72, November 1907, pp. 230–241; André Michel, 'Au Salon d'Automne (III)', *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, no. 284, 13 October 1907, p. 1; André Michel, 'Au Salon d'Automne (IV)', *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, no. 287, 16 October 1907, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Louis Vauxcelles, 'Le Salon d'Automne', *Gil Blas*, no. 9500, 17 October 1905, supplement, p. 5–6.

Carlos de Castéra also suggested in 1904 this unevenness in Cézanne's production, while stating a new distinction between a Cézanne for artists and one for a wide audience:

His name is famous and yet his paintings had rarely been in touch with the public; it would have been therefore preferable to gather less unfinished canvases. There are too many sketches, attempts that remained in limbo, tries of freshness worn out by later additions, which could only interest initiates and artists. A more cautious selection would have been more useful in order to make his work totally accepted.⁴¹

The issue of Vollard's choices was indeed crucial. In an attempt to reach a compromise between supporter and detractors during the same years, the theme of Cézanne's incompleteness eventually targeted less the artist himself than the art dealers who confused his secondary and primary works for mercantile reasons. This theme, in particular, was phrased by Mauclair who transformed his attack against Cézanne and his followers into a crusade against the modern art market.⁴² The latter was accused of speculation on the renown

⁴¹ 'Son nom est célèbre et pourtant ses œuvres ont eu de bien rare contacts avec le public ; aussi eût-il été préférable de rassembler des toiles moins inachevées. Trop d'esquisses, de tentatives restées dans les limbes, d'essais de fraîcheurs fatiguées par des retouches, qui ne peuvent intéresser que des initiés et des gens de métier. Une sélection plus circonspecte eût été utile pour faire, entièrement, accepter son œuvre.' Solrac [Carlos de Castéra], 'Réflexions sur le Salon d'automne', p. 304.

⁴² See in particular his book Camille Mauclair, *Trois crises de l'art actuel* (Paris: E. Fasquelle, 1906); and his article Camille Mauclair, 'La Peinture "nouvelle" et les Marchands', *La Revue*, Vol. 98, no. 20, 15 October 1912, pp. 429–442. Regarding Mauclair's argument against the art market, see in particular Katia Papandreopoulou, 'Camille Mauclair (1872-1945), critique et historien de l'art: "Une leçon de nationalisme pictural"', Paris: Université de Paris I, 2013, pp. 309–318.

of Cézanne, of selling his sketches as finished canvases, as well as of secret manipulations of the price for his work at auctions. Mauclair chose, in fact, to focus on Cézanne the popular paranoia against art dealers and their manipulation of public taste for modern art, whose formulation was largely based on an anti-Semitic narrative.⁴³

The interference of dealers in the contemporary art scene was clearly exposed at the 1904 Salon d'Automne. In his review, the painter Jacques-Émile Blanche drew a map distinguishing between two groups with Modernist pretensions, each embodied by a gallery: the north of the Palais d'Antin was occupied by Paul Durand-Ruel and his group of Impressionist followers such as Albert André, Georges d'Espagnat, Eugène Antoine Durenne, Gustave Loiseau, Maxime Maufra and Henry Moret, gathered in rooms 6 and 8; the south was the location of Bernheim-Jeune and their protégés, the Nabis, exhibited in rooms 15 and 16.⁴⁴ Another rivalry at the same Salon was created by the confrontation of the Cézanne retrospective prepared by Vollard with that of Renoir, organized by Durand-Ruel.⁴⁵ In 1905 Mauclair, who always preserved Durand-Ruel's reputation while attacking art dealers, lashed

⁴³ The publicity given to Impressionist painters at the Centennale in 1900 had already been attacked by Paul de Cassagnac in *L'Autorité*, Édouard Drumont in *La Libre parole* and Henri de Rochefort in *L'Intransigeant* as the result of a collusion between Jewish dealers and administrators. See Catherine Méneux, 'Roger Marx (1859-1913), critique d'art', Université de Paris IV: Paris, 2007, pp. 479–480; Catherine Fraixe, 'Art français ou art européen ? : l'histoire de l'art moderne en France', École des hautes études en sciences sociales: Paris, 2011, pp. 27–32.

⁴⁴ Jacques-Émile Blanche, 'Notes sur le Salon d'Automne', *Mercure de France*, Vol. 52, no. 180, December 1904, pp. 672–690.

⁴⁵ This rivalry is mentioned by Bouyer, 'Le Procès de l'art moderne au Salon d'Automne'.

out at the Fauves as imitators of Cézanne's flaws, qualifying them as Vollard's clique, in opposition to the Impressionist followers supported by Durand-Ruel.⁴⁶

Such concern for the interference of art dealers in the contemporary art scene became constant in Cézanne's early recognition and was revived thereafter in the story of *Still Life with Fruit Dish*. The exhibition of 1904 was clearly understood as an act of exposing the work of Cézanne to the public sphere, which thus implied a way of preventing it from inherent vulnerability to critics' attacks. *Still Life with Fruit Dish* had thus a key role which relied upon its ability, proved by Denis's *Homage*, to create consensus. This capacity increased since ambition for the painting was not only that it gather independent artists but, as Castéra underlined, that it become a consensual work admired by all. This effect relied again on the authoritative affirmation of the painting at the forefront of the exhibition, which stated to the general public its status as a classical masterpiece while preserving for its own purpose a hierarchy of art.

In the Collection of Alexandre Berthier, Prince de Wagram

Before the opening of the Salon d'Automne, the heirs of Camille Pissarro decided to sell, with the help of the famous writer Octave Mirbeau, paintings by Cézanne that were part of their common inheritance, foreseeing that the retrospective would increase the artist's market ranking.⁴⁷ By the end of October, Ludovic-Rodo Pissarro announced that the batch had been sold to the brothers Bernheim-Jeune who, according to him, were competing with

⁴⁶ Camille Mauclair, 'La Peinture et la sculpture au Salon d'Automne', *L'Art décoratif*, no. 87, December 1905, pp. 220–240.

⁴⁷ Letter from Ludovic-Rodo Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 1904, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Pissarro papers.

the collector Auguste Pellerin to organize the increase in Cézanne's market value.⁴⁸ Pissarro's son added that Cézanne's value was ready to rise, as soon as his paintings would join prestigious private collections, such as those of Camondo or Viau. In the aftermath of the Salon d'Automne, Louis Vauxcelles's already mentioned March 1905 article on Cézanne again signalled the role played by preeminent collectors in the establishment of the master's reputation.⁴⁹ Amongst these the names of Auguste Pellerin and Isaac de Camondo were well-known for their Impressionist collections, and for opening themselves to Cézanne at the turn of the twentieth century. When the Count Camondo acquired his first paintings by Cézanne between 1906 and 1908, he received acknowledgement from the brothers Gaston and Josse Bernheim-Jeune for his commitment to 'the school that we champion'.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, similar purchases by another famous collector, Alexandre Berthier (1883–1918), the fourth Prince de Wagram, made their cousin and collaborator Jos Hessel write: 'sic itur ad astra [thus one goes to the stars]!'⁵¹ Berthier had indeed made in 1906 several important acquisitions of numerous paintings by Cézanne from Ambroise Vollard and the Berlin art dealer Paul Cassirer.

During the same period, public prices reached at auction by former Impressionists obeyed an established hierarchy. Until the First World War, Claude Monet and Alfred Sisley

⁴⁸ Letter from Ludovic-Rodo Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, 1904, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Pissarro papers.

⁴⁹ Vauxcelles, 'Cézanne'.

⁵⁰ Letter from Josse and Gaston Bernheim-Jeune to Isaac de Camondo, 1 January 1908, Paris, Musée Nissim de Camondo, C.IS.3.

⁵¹ Letter from Jos Hessel to Alexandre Louis Philippe Marie Berthier, 19 May 1906, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, Berthier papers, 173bis/AP/431. Regarding Alexandre Berthier, see Anne Distel, 'Les amateurs de Renoir; le prince, le prête et le pâtissier', in *Renoir*, Grand Palais, Paris, 1985, pp. 28–44.

were among the most expensive of their set, with hammer prices regularly higher than 10,000 francs, and up to a maximum of 30,000 francs.⁵² By comparison, Renoir's paintings were subject to occasional increases, as his large figurative canvases frequently went beyond this limit of 30,000 francs.⁵³ Meanwhile Camille Pissarro's paintings, not to mention Armand

⁵² Works by Monet and Sisley obtained these prices during the following auction sales: Adolphe Tavernier (06 March 1900), Charles Guasco (11 June 1900), Louis Schoengrun (07 February 1901), Georges Feydeau (11 February 1901), Edmond Decap (15 April 1901), François Depeaux (25 April 1901), Lazare Weiller (29 November 1901), Jules Strauss (03 May 1902), Zygomalas (08 June 1903), Paul Bérard (08 May 1905), Charles Viguier (04 May 1906), François Depeaux (31 May 1906), Georges Viau (04 March 1907), Henry Bernstein (08 June 1911), Maurice Masson (22 June 1911), Henri Rouart (09 December 1912), Charles Abadie (17 April 1913). The only exception occurred at the sale of Adolphe Tavernier's collection (06 March 1900), when Sisley, right after his death, achieved a record price of 43,000 francs for his *Flood at Port-Marly* (1876; Paris, Musée d'Orsay), a record that did not reproduce itself before 1914. We are considering here current prices. A conversion in constant price would not affect our analysis.

⁵³ This is the case with the following sales: François Depeaux (31 May 1906), with 47,000 francs for *Dance at Bougival* (1882-3; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts; DD 1001); Georges Charpentier (11 April 1907), with a record at 84,000 francs for *Madame Georges Charpentier and Her Children* (1878; New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; DD 207); Henri Rouart (09 December 1912), with *A Morning Ride in the Bois de Boulogne* (1873; Hamburg, Kunsthalle; DD 247) at 95,000, and *The Parisian Girl* (1874; Cardiff, National Museum of Wales; DD 299) at 56,000 francs; Marzell de Nemès (17 June 1913), with *Henriot Family* (circa 1876; Philadelphia, Barnes Foundation, DD 206) at 75,000 francs.

Guillaumin's, never reached the same level, nor exceeded the threshold of 10,000 francs.⁵⁴ The scattered information we have about the prices asked by Impressionist painters to their dealers between 1900 and 1914 seems to follow a similar hierarchy: Monet demanding between 10,000 and 15,000 francs for his last series;⁵⁵ Pissarro between 1,500 and 2,500 francs;⁵⁶ Guillaumin between 900 and 1,200 francs.⁵⁷ Within this range, Cézanne's hammer price remained relatively low until 1907.⁵⁸

Following Cézanne's death, the sale of Georges Viau's collection on 4 March 1907 got him closer to Monet and Sisley. *Still Life with Fruit Dish* indeed achieved 19,000 francs, paid by the gallery Bernheim-Jeune on behalf of Alexandre Berthier, who also bought *Road*

⁵⁴ Only one of Pissarro's paintings, *Pont Corneille, Rouen, Morning Mist* (1896; Private collection; PDRS 1127), achieved a record of 10,000 francs before 1914, at the sale of Georges Feydeau's collection on 11 February 1901.

⁵⁵ See letters from Paul Durand-Ruel to Paul Cassirer, 30 June 1903, from Claude Monet to Joseph Durand-Ruel, 05 August 1910, from Claude Monet to Gaston and Josse Bernheim-Jeune, 29 March 1912 and 15 May 1912, in Daniel Wildenstein, *Claude Monet: catalogue raisonné* (Paris: Wildenstein institute, 1974–1991), Vol. 4, pp. 427, 379, 384 et 385.

⁵⁶ See letter from Paul Durand-Ruel to Camille Pissarro, 16 January 1903, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, Archives of Camille Pissarro, Reel 491.

⁵⁷ See letter from Armand Guillaumin to Eugène Blot, 13 November 1913, Paris, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Autographes 16.

⁵⁸ Between 1899 and 1906, the maximum reached by Cézanne at auction is 7,000 francs during the sale of Ivan Shchukin's collection (24 March 1900), for his *Still Life with Green Jar and Pewter Kettle* (1867-9; Paris, Musée d'Orsay; FWN 709).

at Pontoise (1875-7; Moscow, Pushkin Museum; FWN 100) for 11,000 francs.⁵⁹ Hence, the 1907 sale of Cézanne's 'masterpiece' appeared as a public signal to the art market of his growing reputation.⁶⁰

However, following the example of art dealers, the Prince de Wagram's Impressionist and modern collection differentiated the paintings intended for the decoration of his interior from those kept by galleries in order to be resold for profit. This was the case for *Still Life with Fruit Dish*, successively put on deposit at Georges Petit, then Adrien Hébrard, Eugène Druet and ultimately Henri Barbazanges.⁶¹ The latter, as agent for Alexandre Berthier, sold it in 1910 to the Hungarian art collector Marczell de Nemès for 20,000 francs, thereby

⁵⁹ Receipt from the gallery Bernheim-Jeune to Alexandre Louis Philippe Marie Berthier, 04 March 1907, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, Berthier papers, 173bis/AP/431. During the same sale, another of Cézanne's paintings exceeded the limit of 10,000 francs: *Farm in Normandy, Summer* (1882; Private collection; FWN 181) paid 14,200 francs, which eventually entered the collection of the Marquise de Ganay.

⁶⁰ Following this date, Cézanne's hammer price would meet the price region of Monet and Sisley during the following sales: Henry Bernstein (08 June 1911), Henri Rouart (09 December 1912), Herbert Kullmann (16 May 1914).

⁶¹ According to Berthier's papers, the painting left Adrien Hébrard's gallery in July 1909, and was probably kept by Eugène Druet until he delivered it to Henri Barbazanges in January 1910. See receipt from Adrien Hébrard, 05 July 1909, and letter from Eugène Druet to Alexandre Louis Philippe Marie Berthier, 02 February 1910, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, Berthier papers, 173bis/AP/430.

achieving minimal added value.⁶² Just three years later, the canvas reached the price of 44,000 francs during the sale of Nemès's collection, more than twice its cost in 1910.⁶³

At the same time as he started his speculation on modern paintings, Alexandre Berthier also decided to invest in the opening, in January 1907, of a new branch of the gallery Bernheim-Jeune. This partnership rapidly ceased at the end of the year with a momentous trial between the sponsor and the art dealers. Among the allegations was the overestimation of their stock by the gallery owners. Judge Ducasse then commissioned a report by the painters Édouard Detaille, Théophile Poilpot, Émile Dameron, and by an expert for the Hôtel Drouot, Maurice Mallet. The authors criticised the transformation of paintings into market values, and incidentally pointed out in a partial inventory of Bernheim-Jeune's stock the estimations that they esteemed uncertain, in particular all the canvases by Cézanne and Van Gogh.⁶⁴ After the case was dismissed by the Civil Court of the Seine in December 1907, lawyer Olivier Jallu justified an appeal on the following grounds:

The argument which MMrs Bernheim and [their lawyer] Me Doyen have particularly stressed is that of the public auction prices for Cézanne's paintings, Van Gogh's, and others... But it is well known that the prices of such sales are purely fictive... except

⁶² Letter from Henri Barbazanges to Alexandre Louis Philippe Marie Berthier, 03 August 1910, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, Berthier papers, 173bis/AP/430.

⁶³ The prices of Cézanne's painting during the sale of Marzell de Nemès's collection greatly exceeded those of Monet and Sisley with six lots sold for 40,000 francs or more, and a record of 56,000 francs reached by *The Boy in the Red Vest* (1888-90; Zürich, Stiftung Sammlung E.G. Bührle; FWN 496).

⁶⁴ Report by Édouard Detaille, Théophile Poilpot, Émile Dameron, Maurice Mallet, 06 June 1907, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, Berthier papers, 173bis/AP/431.

some dupes – the art dealers push these prices and most of the time are the successful bidders.⁶⁵

The appeal was eventually also dismissed at the end of January 1908. The fact remained that Alexandre Berthier was widely reputed to be an adventurous investor and a bad payer. His failure to make a significant capital gain with his acquisitions could be explained by both his urgent cash needs, and the deficiency of his selling strategy.⁶⁶ The trial embodied his attempt to transform his own failure as a speculator into a simplistic indictment against the modern art market. His lawyer probably counted on the tenacious conspiracy cliché that envisioned the contemporary art scene as manipulated by art dealers.

Public auction could thus appear as a second act of the painting's exposure to a general audience. It confirmed its exceptional artistic value with a corresponding economical one, which recalculated the situation of the masterpiece and its author among a public artistic hierarchy. Incidentally, this increase was here based on identification of the painting as an investment, that prevailed the decorative qualities emphasized by Castéra in the painting. As for the Salon d'Automne, this exposure of the painting again appeared as an equivocal moment which both confirmed a reputation and made it vulnerable to public debate.

⁶⁵ 'Le point sur lequel MMrs Bernheim et Me Doyen ont particulièrement insisté est celui des prix d'adjudication publique pour les Cézanne, Van Gogh et autres... Mais il est bien connu que le prix de ces ventes est purement fictif... En dehors de quelques gogos — ce sont les marchands de tableaux qui poussent et qui la plupart du temps sont adjudicataires.' Letter from Olivier Jallu, 17 January 1908, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Archives nationales, Berthier papers, 173bis/AP/431.

⁶⁶ Regarding Berthier's investment failures, see François Lalliard, *La fortune des Wagram: de Napoléon à Proust* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), pp. 324–356.

Recreating a Uniqueness

Just one year before Wagram purchased it, *Still Life with Fruit Dish* appeared for the first time in France through a photographic reproduction published in Théodore Duret's seminal *Histoire des peintres impressionnistes*.⁶⁷ The author of this first photograph remained unknown, but in 1910 the second documented reproduction of the canvas in France, in Élie Faure's important article devoted to Cézanne for the series *Portraits d'hier*, mentioned a photographic credit, which attributed it to the well-known art dealer and photographer Eugène Druet (Fig. 6).⁶⁸ Through Druet's archives, it has been possible to identify three negatives made after the painting, one made when it was still held by Viau and another during a stay at Bernheim-Jeune's gallery, probably at the moment of its sale in 1907.⁶⁹ In any event, with its

⁶⁷ Théodore Duret, *Histoire des peintres impressionnistes: Pissarro, Claude Monet, Sisley, Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Cézanne, Guillaumin*, (H. Floury: Paris, 1906), p. 189. This reproduction has yet been omitted by Feilchenfeldt, Warman, and Nash in their online catalogue raisonné. As mentioned above, the painting had already been reproduced, but in a German magazine in 1903, on the occasion of its exhibit at the Vienna Secession. Emil Heilbut, 'Die Impressionistenausstellung der Wiener Secession', *Kunst und Künstler*, Vol. 1, 1903, pp. 169–207.

⁶⁸ Élie Faure, 'Paul Cézanne', *Portraits d'hier*, no. 28, 1 May 1910, pp. 99–126. Upon Druet's activities as photographer, see Thomas Schlessler, 'Le point sur un outil, un fonds, une recherche. Le Fonds Druet-Vizzavona', *Nouvelles de l'INHA*, no. 17, April 2004, pp. 22–25.

⁶⁹ The negative inventoried as the no 6271 is a part of a list of photographs taken after paintings from Viau's collection. The negative no 3416 is indicated a having been made at Bernheim-Jeune's gallery. The database associated with Duret's archives gives a date, 5 February 1907, but without explanation. The execution of the third negative, no 4597, is not

inclusion in Druet's catalogue of photographic reproductions, that took place during the same decade of its first exhibition and auction sale, *Still Life with Fruit Dish* completed its integration into the public sphere, thereby reaching an even broader audience than the one for the 1904 Salon d'Automne.

The shift of its interpretative context, underlined by Castéra who made *Still Life with Fruit Dish* a masterpiece accessible to the general public, provoked significant reactions among its initial circle of enthusiasts. Contemplating the 'true' vogue for Cézanne among a younger generation of independent artists, from 1904 Émile Bernard reaffirmed his personal commitment to the master by publishing a well-known account of his visit to Cézanne in July.⁷⁰ In his study of Bernard, Rodolphe Rapetti underlined how the painter became aware of Cézanne's new pre-eminence on the artistic scene between 1904 and 1907, and how his interest in the master happened to be a 'tactical preoccupation'.⁷¹ Bernard especially rivalled Maurice Denis, whose *Homage to Cézanne* hurt him when exhibited at the Salon in 1901. After a first impression when mistakenly he saw himself in Denis's self-portrait, Bernard expressed surprise to the painter that 'the most important admirer of Cézanne, the one that had been maybe his closest disciple, was not represented in the painting'.⁷² His resentment was rooted in the fact that he had copied the central masterpiece nearly a decade before Denis. After his personal encounter with Cézanne in 1904, Bernard responded to Denis with his own

informed. Montigny-le-Bretonneux, Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Druet papers, notebooks 3 and 4.

⁷⁰ Émile Bernard, 'Paul Cézanne', *L'Occident*, no. 32, July 1904, p. 190.

⁷¹ Rapetti, 'L'inquiétude cézannienne', p. 36.

⁷² Letter from Émile Bernard to Maurice Denis, before 30 March 1902, in Lorédana Harscoët-Maire, Neil McWilliam, and Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov (eds.), *Émile Bernard: les lettres d'un artiste, 1884-1941* (Dijon: les Presses du réel, 2012), pp. 646–647.

‘Hommage à Cézanne’ in the form of an intimate portrait of the master (1904; Aix-en-Provence, Musée Granet; LI 604). Bernard also reaffirmed his affiliation to Cézanne, and ‘the truth’ of his personal interpretation of the latter’s art, by remaking *Still Life with Fruit Dish* in an even more ‘finished’ manner (Fig. 7).

Denis subsequently responded to Bernard with an account of his 1906 meeting with Cézanne, soon followed by an article published in 1907 on the lesson of that encounter, and a second pictorial homage, *Visit to Cézanne* (1906; Aix-en-Provence, Musée Granet).⁷³ On the eve of the First World War, Denis was also commissioned by Félix Fénéon to undertake an illustration for Bernheim-Jeune’s first monograph devoted to the painter.⁷⁴ Clearly, this publication was designed by the art dealers as an attempt to thwart controversy over mercantilism, especially following their 1910 trial against Berthier. Following the examples of Bernard and Denis, Gaston and Josse Bernheim-Jeune were indeed eager to present themselves as witnesses to the master, publishing photographs of their own encounter with Cézanne in 1902 alongside those taken during Denis’s visit in 1906. Their luxury book was also conceived in order to underline the paternity of Cézanne in all tendencies of modern independent art. Therefore, seven reproductions were commissioned from a set of their artists: the Neo-Impressionist Paul Signac; the Nabis Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis, Ker-Xavier Roussel, Félix Vallotton and Édouard Vuillard; and the Fauve Henri Matisse. The technique of lithography here paralleled the traditional academic exercise of copying Old Masters and allowed each painter a certain degree of subjectivity in his transcription. Furthermore, the

⁷³ Maurice Denis, ‘Cézanne’, *L’Occident*, no. 70, September 1907, pp. 118–133. For Denis’s interpretation of Cézanne see Jean-Paul Bouillon, *Maurice Denis: six essais* (Paris: Somogy, 2006), pp. 47–75.

⁷⁴ Octave Mirbeau, Théodore Duret, Léon Werth, and Frantz Jourdain, *Cézanne*, (Bernheim-Jeune: Paris, 1914).

selection of the model also revealed the particular tie of Bonnard, Matisse, Roussel, Signac and Vallotton to Cézanne, as each chose to reproduce a painting from their personal collection.

Such a copy had been proposed to Denis by Fénéon: ‘As a result of the visit I had the pleasure of making to you in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, I seem to recall that you have a painting by Cézanne. Why would you not work after it? Your colleagues indeed take as models their own little studies by Cézanne.’⁷⁵ Moreover, Fénéon sought to obtain Denis’s participation in the project by underlining his individual role in the history of Cézanne: ‘Your name on one of the plates would be most appropriate, because – for example – in the biography included there by Théodore Duret, he emphasises your *Homage to Cézanne*.’⁷⁶ The choice of Denis finally went to *Still Life with Fruit Dish* (Fig. 8), rather than a painting from his personal collection. His lithograph appeared thus as a double answer. On the one hand, he distinguished himself from other peers influenced by Cézanne by reinforcing his individual role within his master’s own history. On the other, his lithographic reproduction stood out from Duret’s photograph, emphasizing his personal and sentimental attachment to a work of art canonized and henceforth accessible to everyone.

⁷⁵ ‘D’une visite que j’ai eu le plaisir de vous faire à Saint-Germain, je crois me rappeler que vous possédez une peinture de Cézanne. Pourquoi ne pas travailler d’après elle? Vos camarades prennent, en effet, pour thème leurs petites études de Cézanne.’ Letter from Félix Fénéon to Maurice Denis, 12 September 1913, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, Archives départementales, Archives of Maurice Denis, Ms 3983.

⁷⁶ ‘Votre nom sur une de ces planches aurait de l’à-propos à plus d’un titre, – exemple – parce que Théodore Duret, dans la biographie qu’il insère là, parle, en appuyant, de votre *Hommage à Cézanne*.’

In this latter sense, Denis reacted to the new vulnerability caused by the painting's third exposure as a result of photography. As mechanical reproduction increased the general public's familiarity with the painting, and reinforced its status of masterpiece, it meanwhile injured its 'aura' with an elite of enlightened artists, as Denis had depicted it.⁷⁷ The ability to create consensus around its appearance ceased to be seen as a benefit, while the *amateur* now needed to create an individual connoisseurship in the face of a mediatised general awareness.

Multiple issues concerning Cézanne's early recognition are concentrated in the particular case of *Still Life with Fruit Dish* and its public career. As an example of Cézanne's classicism, it countered the incompleteness of parts of his production. Acquired by Alexandre Berthier, it revealed the growing fame of the master, and the ambiguity of this taste for modern art. Once its reputation transferred from a circle of painters to the public, it inspired strategic recreations and demonstrations of subjective and individual attachment directed towards the vogue for Cézanne among a greatly expanded younger generation and a wider audience.

⁷⁷ Walter Benjamin's famous analysis of the devaluation of the 'aura' by mechanical reproduction had since proved to be less factually true than symptomatic of the poor reputation of the photographic medium for art amateurs. For a critic of Benjamin's argument, see Nathalie Heinich, 'L'aura de Walter Benjamin : Note sur "L'œuvre d'art à l'ère de sa reproductibilité technique"', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 49, 1983, pp. 107–109; Antoine Hennion and Bruno Latour, 'How to Make Mistakes on So Many Things at Once—and Become Famous for It', in *Mapping Benjamin: the work of art in the digital age*, (Stanford university press: Stanford, 2003), pp. 91–97. For an opposite argument to Benjamin, see James Cutting, 'Mere Exposure, Reproduction, and the Impressionist Canon', in Anna Brzyski (ed.), *Partisan canons*, pp. 79–94.

Its trajectory indicates another story, on more general terms, about artistic value, and the concepts of masterpiece and canon. As it completed its integration into the public sphere through three states of exposure (exhibition, auction sale, photographic reproduction), *Still Life with Fruit Dish* became an equivocal object of taste. At this point a new difficulty indeed emerged, since the problem was no longer to appreciate the painting but, for the initiated, to like it differently from the general audience. In this respect, one must underline, with Benjamin Harvey, the bold gesture of Roger Fry, as he tried to improve the masterpiece and to recreate it, by hiding with his finger the disturbing shadow of the lock at the forefront of a reproduction probably made after Druet's photograph:

The critic, I hold, should be loyal enough to his own impressions to confess to what is probably due to his own defects. I must admit therefore that there is one passage in this otherwise consummate design of which the meaning escapes me. I cannot see the necessity of the shadow cast by a half-opened drawer in the kitchen table. This vertical shadow troubles me. It seems to check the horizontal and slightly diagonal movements of the napkin-folds and to lessen their suavity. It is precisely because otherwise this composition seems to me of so rare a perfection and so rigorous an exactitude that it disturbs me always to feel a temptation to cover this part of the canvas with an indiscreet finger. It is an experiment that the reader can easily try on the reproduction, and at least settle the point for himself.⁷⁸

Through this action, Fry as an art historian and tasteful amateur was indicating the critical quality of his judgment, similar to artists facing the celebrity of the *Compotier*. Whereas Castéra had tried to affirm the perfection of the painting established by his fellow

⁷⁸ Fry, *Cézanne*, p. 47. Unfortunately, Fry's first publication of his text in the French magazine *L'Amour de l'art* does not mention any photographic credit. See also Harvey's analysis of Fry's gesture in Harvey, 'Formalism's first affair', p. 274 and following.

amateurs to a wide audience, Fry wanted to reinstitute his eye as a connoisseur in front of consensual awareness.

Paradoxically, the canonization of *Still Life with Fruit Dish* happened at a time and in a field, modern art, where, as Walter Cahn and Hans Belting have underlined, ‘masterpiece’ itself had become a ‘myth’. As Cahn observes, the doubt emerged with the consciousness of the petty strategies and compromises which, outside of the inherent merit of the work, determined its value.⁷⁹ Moreover, while art became a public affair, as related by Belting, the old concept of ‘classical masterpiece’ only lived on among the general public as an empty ‘cliché’, whose experience had been completely dematerialized through photography.⁸⁰ Belting thus brought out the disaffection felt by twentieth-century artists and art historians towards masterpieces which rested with the masses. Described since the 1970s as an act of cultural domination from the top down, canons are imposed on the general public through exposures, which could both be described as acts of corroboration and of vulnerability. As with *Still Life with Fruit Dish*, this can soon result in a popular fame that becomes somehow oppressive to the art amateur.

⁷⁹ Cahn, *Masterpieces*, pp. 131–156.

⁸⁰ Belting, pp. 273–292.

Captions list:

Fig. 1. Paul Cézanne, *Still Life with Fruit Dish*, 1879-80, oil on canvas, 46 x 55 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York (FWN 780). (Photo: Bridgeman Images)

Fig. 2: Émile Bernard, *Still Life with Fruit Dish and Glass*, circa 1890, oil on cardboard, 41 x 52 cm. Private collection (LI 257). (Photo: Archives Wildenstein Plattner Institute, Paris)

Fig. 3: Maurice Denis, *Homage to Cézanne*, 1900, oil on canvas, 182 x 243,5 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. (Photo: Bridgeman Images)

Fig. 4: Room plan of the 1904 Salon d'Automne. Copyright the Author.

Fig. 5: Henri Glineur, *View of Room 3 at the 1904 Salon d'Automne*, 1904, postcard, 9 x 14 cm. Private collection.

Fig. 6: Eugène Druet, *Photograph Reproduction of Still Life with Fruit Dish*, circa 1909-1910, photograph print reproduced in Élie Faure, 'Paul Cézanne', *Portraits d'hier*, no. 28, 1 May 1910, p. 105.

Fig. 7: Émile Bernard, *Still Life (Vase of Flowers, Fruit Dish, Jug, Glass, Peaches and Lemons)*, circa 1905, oil on canvas, 62,5 x 75 cm. Private collection (LI 635). (Photo: Philippe Grossot)

Fig. 8: Maurice Denis, *Reproduction of Still Life with Fruit Dish*, circa 1913-1914, lithograph reproduced in Octave Mirbeau, Théodore Duret, Léon Werth, and Frantz Jourdain, *Cézanne* (Paris: Bernheim-Jeune, 1914). (Photo: Bibliothèque de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Collections Jacques Doucet 4 Est 588)