

Cezanne, Lowry and Landscapes

Cezanne

Paul Cezanne, who was the son of a wealthy banker, became a painter in the 1860s in Paris when he quit his studies of Law. By 1874 he was painting landscapes in the Impressionist manner and had some of his work included in their first exhibition held during that very same year. He painted in the Impressionistic manner, but sheared off in a different direction to the main body of Impressionist painters. The main body of Impressionist painters were concerned with the 'fleeting effects of light and colour', and in order to capture the surface impression of that moment 'they had to work fluently and quickly'. Cezanne's analysis was far more prolonged and pains-taking; He spent so long analysing his subjects that some of his work was never finished. He began to be more concerned with the use of colour in modelling objects and landscape and as a way of expressing their underlying form. The basic ideas of Cubism have been claimed to be present in his philosophy. His theory was that the painter could always find the cone, the sphere and the cylinder in Nature, and that all natural shapes were composed of these shapes at their most basic form. He inherited sufficient wealth to live in rich seclusion in Provence near Aix. He needed this solitude or he found it difficult getting on with others: being naturally ill at ease, neurotically sensitive and suffering from outbursts of temper. His great contribution to art was to make Impressionism solid: to restore the careful analysis of form and structure that pervaded the old masters but to combine this with an intensity of colour and harmony, full of personal expression. In his landscapes he showed a deep feeling for the force of nature in each sweeping line and chopping stroke of the brush, in the intense orange earth against the clear Provence skies.

Always dissatisfied with his efforts, struggled unceasingly to reveal the truths of nature. He made many landscape paintings of the area where he lived and through them he achieved great success even in his old age. Many of these landscapes like "Route-Tournante" pulse and glow with his free and painstaking analysis. Part of the vitality of this picture lies in the loose and patchy technique. The effect is particularly striking in the subtle greens of the trees and the subtle earth tones. Part of the interest of lies in the balance he creates between the abstract and the real. The forms of foliage, rocks and road are so simplified and generalised that they appear almost abstract. But as they dissolve into tonal marks we are still conscious of the reality of the scene, the way the road twists out of sight past the rocks into a cool tree-filled valley. His way of working is so explicit; as we look at the surface of the picture we are aware of his every brushmark, and we can imagine his subtle colour mixing and careful balancing of colour and tone. He used colour not to fill in outlines, but, as a true colourist used it to create forms. He believed that colour and line were inseparable and interwove them, applying one over the other in his work. His angled brush strokes set up a nervous sense of agitation in his late works like "Route Tournante". This may be a combination of his irascible temperament with an ageing painter's awareness of the need to realise his objectives while he still had time.

was a great painter of the immediate landscape of Provence around his home, often painting the view seen from his studio. The quality of this landscape - the light, the colour of the earth, the roll of the hills affects the way the artist reacts to it. Many artists who work from landscape begin to identify with feelings that the physical area arouses. One can argue that we are all affected by the physical nature of the area

where we live. In this sense was similar to many other landscape artists, many of who have come to be associated with the place Lowry with the industrial North of England. Constable with Suffolk. Gauguin with the South Seas.

Because he was interested in nature, Paul went to the South of France. The way in which he painted light inspired younger artists, such as Henri Matisse and Andre Derain, who searched for similar ways to express themselves.

In an abandoned quarry near Aix-en-Provence, studied the huge, jagged rocks, and made this dramatic composition, called Bibemus Quarry by contrasting sizes, shapes, and angles.

The painting is a circular composition. This is achieved by arranging rock shapes in a pattern. has framed the painting using rocks. Large stones on the left and right guide our eyes into the painting. The horizontal shelf in the middle leans towards a wedge-shaped outcrop that sweeps upward. Soft green plants creep up the slope to a tree on the horizon. The diagonal trunk of a tree cut off by the edge of the painting takes us back along sharply tilted pocks to the middle of the painting.

Every stroke of 's brush makes the rocks look solid. He painted patches of red, brown, orange, and grey side-by-side and created 'weightless clouds' in the hazy-looking sky with short brushstrokes, in many shades of green and blue.

LAURENCE STEPHEN LOWRY

The work of Lowry appears to be childlike and 'naive in style', but he is an immensely skilful painter in my eyes, and one who deserves a lot more credit than he did receive before he died in 1976. Lowry did receive some recognition before the war, he was always underrated, and 'elusive'. It wasn't until a large exhibition was held in 1966 that Lowry became recognised as a unique painter of industrial England. The Royal Academy show of 1976, (the year in which he died) split the critics' opinion. They took very different views of the greatness of Lowry. Some of his critics saw him as a man of unique vision, but others 'downgraded him to a minor artist with only limited social interest'. Whatever the critics might say, he remains today one the most popular, best loved and easily recognised British artists of the 20th century.

This painting combines all of Lowry's most potent images. This vast, treeless landscape from hell, is dominated by many chimneys and a slag heap. In the distance we can see rows of tight, stiff, red-brick terraces oppressed by rows of belching smokestacks. The whole landscape, like the people and the local economy, has been controlled and shaped by the process of industrialisation. Although matchstick in shape his figures and dogs are often full of meaningful expression.

The paintings are always disturbing. Lowry loves the working people of towns like this, and yet he loathes their harsh existence. The people are always so tiny and thin, the factories so massive and the chimneys so black that the viewer of the painting is left with the feeling that people are inconsequential in comparison with the relentless process of industrialisation. The images of the industrial landscapes of Northern England are not portrayed in a positive light, but not all hope has been buried in the slag and the soot. 'The people still skip and the dogs still bark'.

GEORGES MICHAEL

Georges Michael belonged to a school of artists called the "Barbizon School" (also the "1830 School" or the "Fontainebleau School". The members of this school were the forerunners of the Impressionists. A reproduction of one of his paintings has been included, as I believe that he was very influential in the forming of the Impressionist movement.

IMPRESSIONISM

The artists in this school of painting were Georges Michael, Theodore Rousseau, Jean-Francois Millet, Jules Dupre, Constant Troyon, Virgile-Narcisse Diaz de la Pena, Charles-Francois Daubigny, Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, Charles-Emile Jacque, and other minor landscape and animal painters - e.g Brascassat/Rosa Bonheur.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the school became more and more famous - the number of painters in the "school" also increased.

Barbizon was the name of the area in France where members of this school settled down to paint. Jean-Francois Millet, together with Theodore Rousseau, became the centre - the nucleus of the Barbizon community, and the reference point for all the other Barbizonners - the other members of the Barbizon school. Millet settled down in Barbizon in 1849.

has often been described as the initiator of the Impressionist movement, and indeed he did develop many of the ideas that we saw in the movement as it developed. It could be said that Lowry painted landscape in an Impressionist fashion as well, as his pictures are painted in such a way as to make the viewer aware of the message behind the picture rather than the actual picture which has been depicted using brushstrokes from a man of incredible painting skill. A painting by has been included with this essay, along with a reproduction of one of Lowry's pictures.