

## Critical Study



**Title:** Le Potager De Pissarro, Pontoise (Pissarro's Vegetable Garden, Pontoise)

**Artist:** Paul Cezanne

**Date:** 1877

**Country of Origin:** France

**Size:** height: 48.3 x width: 59.9 cm

**Materials Used:** Oil on canvas

This particular piece of Cezanne's work was not commissioned by anyone but Cezanne himself for entertainment value as it is of Pissarro's gardens, however recently it has been displayed at the Addison Fine Arts Gallery in New York.

The piece was produced during the movement of impressionism; impressionism is a light, spontaneous manner of painting which began in France as a reaction against the formalism of the dominant Academic style. Its naturalistic and down-to-earth treatment of its subjects has its roots in the French Realism of Corot and others. The movement's name came from Monet's early work, *Impression: Sunrise*, which was singled out for criticism by Louis Leroy on its exhibition. The hallmark of the style is the attempt to capture the subjective impression of light in a scene.

Impressionist painters were considered radical in their time because they broke many of the rules of picture-making set by earlier generations. They found many of their subjects in life around them rather than in history, which was then the accepted source of subject matter. Instead of painting an ideal of beauty that earlier artists had defined, the impressionists tried to depict what they saw at a given moment, capturing a fresh, original vision that was hard for some people to

accept as beautiful. They often painted out of doors, rather than in a studio, so that they could observe nature more directly and set down its most fleeting aspects—especially the changing light of the sun.

The impressionists specialized in landscape, informal portraits in a domestic setting, and still life—genres that before the 1870s had been regarded as of lesser importance than history painting. It was a major achievement of the impressionists to overturn this prejudice. Many impressionist landscapes depict unremarkable corners of nature with no obvious point of interest.

The core of the earliest Impressionist group was made up of Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Alfred Sisley. Others associated with this period were Camille Pissarro, Edgar Degas, Gustave Caillebotte, Frederic Bazille, Edouard Manet, and Mary Cassatt. The Impressionist style is still widely practiced today. However, a variety of successive movements were influenced by it, grouped under the general term Post-Impressionism.

The painting shown clearly depicts Cezanne's realistic view of Pissarro's garden with the background view of a small French town (landscape); the main essence of the piece is to show a landscape with both foreground and background. The painting records the rapidly changing conditions of the environment, the foreground being the display of beautiful nature and the background is of the architectural presence of the town and the way in which it commands the nature from its higher location and dominance.

The painting is from an outdoor perspective and involves the use of high key colours such as blue and green and includes a variety of brushstrokes to compare the straight lines created by human buildings and the mismatchedness of nature and this creates greater tension within the piece drawing viewer's eyes towards the piece. The texture of the oil on the canvas when Cezanne used the naturalistic rough brush strokes in the foreground to create the gardens would convey the realistic rough texture of nature and smoother brushstrokes used on the background buildings exaggerates the clean lines and smooth shapes.

The painting creates mainly mixed emotions not from the colours used but the content of the piece. The main emotion is the destruction of beauty of the natural landscape created by the clean lines and earthen colours of the town, it seems unfair that the natural beauty is overshadowed by the town and this is what Cezanne is trying to depict truly.