**University of The People**

**AHIST 1401 : Art History**

**Learning Journal Unit 7**

**Hsu Myat Mon**

**Shannon Grover (Instructor)**

**May 24, 2025**

**PART A: Influence of Cézanne on Fauvism and Cubism**

Paul Cézanne, often considered the "father of modern art," was instrumental in the shift from the 19th-century Impressionist focus on light and atmosphere to the more structured and expressive approaches that defined early 20th-century art. His innovative use of form, color, and composition deeply influenced both the Fauvist and Cubist movements, particularly the works of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso.

Cézanne’s influence on Fauvism is most evident in his approach to color and abstraction. While Fauvism was known for its wild brushstrokes and vivid, non-naturalistic colors, Cézanne laid the groundwork by moving away from the realistic rendering of objects. His use of color to construct form rather than simply to depict light and shadow inspired Fauvist artists to explore expressive possibilities through bold chromatic choices. *Woman with a Hat* (1905) is a wonderful example of Henri Matisse. In this work, Matisse uses bold, non-naturalistic colors to evoke emotion—an approach that reflects Cézanne’s use of color to convey structure and form. Matisse admired Cézanne's ability to break down natural forms into simplified, harmonious color patches, saying that Cézanne “gave me a sense of the structure of painting.”

In terms of Cubism, Cézanne’s contribution was even more direct. He often reduced natural objects to geometric shapes—cylinders, spheres, and cones—and altered perspectives within a single canvas to show multiple viewpoints. The concept of breaking down forms and viewing them from different angles laid the groundwork for Cubism. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque acknowledged Cézanne as a primary influence, particularly after viewing his retrospective at the 1907 Salon d’Automne in Paris. Picasso’s *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907) reflects Cézanne’s influence in its flattened space, distorted forms, and faceted shapes. The work marks a pivotal moment in the birth of Cubism, where traditional perspective is abandoned in favor of a more conceptual, analytical approach to form. As Artlex (n.d.) notes, Cézanne’s interest in “geometric simplification and spatial ambiguity” deeply informed the Cubist vocabulary.

Thus, Cézanne’s legacy is evident in the ways both Fauvist and Cubist artists used color and form not to mimic nature, but to convey emotional or intellectual meaning. His innovations challenged traditional aesthetics and inspired a generation of artists to rethink the fundamentals of painting.

**PART B: Personal Connection to Modern Art – *Starry Night* by Vincent van Gogh**

One modern artwork that resonates deeply with me is Vincent van Gogh’s *Starry Night* (1889). Although technically a Post-Impressionist work that predates both Fauvism and Cubism, it encapsulates many of the elements that would influence modern art movements: expressive brushwork, emotional intensity, and bold use of color.

What draws me to *Starry Night* is the emotional depth conveyed through van Gogh’s dynamic brushstrokes and swirling patterns. The sky is not just a background; it pulsates with movement and energy, reflecting the turbulence of the artist’s mind. This emotional expressiveness predates and arguably sets the stage for the intensity seen in Fauvism. The color palette, dominated by blues and yellows, creates a dreamlike yet uneasy atmosphere. The cypress tree in the foreground stretches upwards like a flame, acting as a bridge between the earth and the heavens—a symbol of longing or unrest.

The emotional impact of *Starry Night* lies in its ability to convey both chaos and serenity simultaneously. While the village below sleeps in quiet harmony, the sky above rages with cosmic energy. This contrast mirrors internal emotional states many people can relate to—outer calm hiding inner turmoil.

The artwork’s style is another key factor in its personal resonance. By using thick, textured layers of paint, Van Gogh's impasto technique gives the canvas a three-dimensional, sculpture-like appearance. It makes the emotional content of the work feel more immediate and tangible. Unlike the polished surfaces of academic painting, *Starry Night* embraces imperfection and subjectivity—qualities that resonate with a modern sensibility and make the viewer feel more connected to the artist’s inner world.

In many ways, *Starry Night* acts as a bridge between traditional painting and the more radical explorations of emotion and abstraction that would define modern art. It connects deeply with me because it shows that art does not have to be literal to be meaningful; it can reflect inner truths and speak across time through feeling and form.

**References**

* Art Movements. (n.d.). *How Paul Cézanne influenced Cubism*. Artlex.<https://www.artlex.com/art-movements/cubism/paul-cezanne-cubism/>
* Canvas Prints Australia. (n.d.). *Understanding Cézanne’s influence on Cubism and Fauvism movements*.<https://www.canvasprintsaustralia.net.au/understanding-cezannes-influence-on-cubism-and-fauvism-movements/>
* Spivey, V. B. (n.d.). *A beginner’s guide to Fauvism*. Khan Academy.<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/early-abstraction/fauvism-matisse/a/a-beginners-guide-to-fauvism>
* Harris, B., & Zucker, S. (n.d.). *Inventing Cubism*. Khan Academy.<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/cubism-early-abstraction/cubism/a/inventing-cubism>