

Cezanne and Provence: The Painter in His Culture

Nina Maria Athanassoglou-Kallmyer



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Cezanne and Provence: The Painter in His Culture Nina Maria Athanassoglou-Kallmyer In 1886 Paul Cézanne left Paris permanently to settle in his native Aix-en-Provence. Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer argues that, far from an escapist venture like Gauguin's stay in Brittany or Monet's visits to Normandy, Cézanne's departure from Paris was a deliberate abandonment intimately connected with late-nineteenth-century French regionalist politics.

Like many of his childhood friends, Cézanne detested the homogenizing effects of modernism and bourgeois capitalism on the culture, people, and landscapes of his beloved Provence. Turning away from the mainstream modernist aesthetic of his impressionist years, Cézanne sought instead to develop a new artistic tradition more evocative of his Provençal heritage. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer shows that Provence served as a distinct and defining cultural force that shaped all aspects of Cézanne's approach to representation, including subject matter, style, and technical treatment. For instance, his self-portraits and portraits of family members reflect a specifically Provençal sense of identity. And Cézanne's Provençal landscapes express an increasingly traditionalist style firmly grounded in details of local history and even geology. These landscapes, together with images of bathers, cardplayers, and other figures, were key facets of Cézanne's imaginary reconstruction of Provence as primordial and idyllic—a modern French Arcadia.

Highly original and lavishly illustrated, *Cézanne and Provence* gives us an entirely new Cézanne: no longer the quintessential icon of generic, depersonalized modernism, but instead a self-consciously provincial innovator of mainstream styles deeply influenced by Provençal culture, places, and politics.

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