

Cézanne in Cyberspace

An online catalogue raisonné will put the wide scope of the artist's achievements on a free-access website

BY TRENT MORSE

You've got to be kidding me," gripes an Amazon customer in a review of *The Paintings of Paul Cézanne: A Catalogue Raisonné*. "If you're going to put out a catalogue raisonné of an artist, you should have the majority of the works in color."

That person, like many others, was unhappy with the mostly black-and-white reproductions found in the 1996 catalogue of the Post-Impressionist painter, compiled by the late John Rewald, with Walter Feilchenfeldt and Jayne Warman.

For her part, Warman says she's well aware that the book's monochrome complexion "drives everybody crazy." It's a problem that will be remedied this year, with the launch of a web-based catalogue raisonné featuring full-color images of every confirmed Cézanne painting in existence. Warman and Feilchenfeldt have returned to spearhead the project, alongside David Nash, co-owner of Mitchell-Innes & Nash gallery in New York, who is providing the funding. Access to the catalogue will be free.

"David Nash's brainchild, about eight years ago, was to publish Cézanne's paintings in color," Warman explains. "So he started to gather images from wherever he could get them, and he had planned to publish a picture book, as far as I could tell. Then Walter and I became involved and convinced him that, really, online is the way to go."

Nash adds, "The advantages of doing it as a website were so immediately apparent."

Chief among those advantages is searchability. In book form, the illustrations are all "lumped together," as Nash puts it. With the web catalogue, users can search via almost any keyword that



▲ Using the online catalogue's search feature, type in the keyword "olive" and you'll find *Portrait de l'artiste au papier peint olivâtre (Portrait of the artist against olive-colored wallpaper), 1880-81*.

relates to a painting's content, colors, exhibition history, owner, or many other attributes. This can lead to surprisingly specific explorations.

Say you want to find all the Cézanne paintings with flowery wallpaper in the background: type in "floral wallpaper" and several examples will appear on-screen. Or you can re-create the Cézanne exhibition you saw in Vienna 14 years ago, or look at all the Cézannes owned by the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia.

The thumbnails are displayed in

relative size to one another, which is useful (especially to curators) when viewing them on a computer screen, where the scale of an artwork is not always obvious. The website is being designed by father-daughter duo Roger and Susannah Shepherd of panOpticon, who also made the online catalogues raisonnés of Mary Cassatt and John Singer Sargent.

Of course, there are other good reasons to put a catalogue in the fluid realm of cyberspace. "Any catalogue raisonné in book form is out of date the moment it is published, because there is always nearly immediately new information available," says Feilchenfeldt. "The big advantage is that a catalogue online can be constantly upgraded."

Paintings change ownership. New evidence reveals the true identity of a sitter or a site. Even the title of a piece can vary from exhibition to exhibition. All of these issues can be updated as they arise. And every so often, a previously unrecorded Cézanne will show up. So far, only one painting will appear in the

new catalogue that wasn't in the 1996 book—a small oil-on-canvas "Bathers" scene painted between 1902 and 1906, which sold for \$3.1 million at Christie's in late 2011.

"Walter and David and I looked at the painting—this was before it came up for auction—individually and together. And we decided that it was right," Warman says. "And we feel very strongly that there are a couple of other works that should be added to the Cézanne catalogue," she continues. "We're trying to look at every painting, which is impossible because some are just missing, lost during World War II."

All three contributors have long histories with the Cézanne canon. Feilchenfeldt's father, Walter Sr., introduced Cézanne's work to German audiences as a partner at the legendary

Paul Cassirer gallery in Berlin in the 1920s and '30s. He eventually opened his own gallery in Zurich after the war. Walter Jr. joined the family firm in 1966 and now concentrates on art scholarship and authentication, specializing in Cézanne and van Gogh.

Nash remembers seeing his first Cézannes at Tate Britain as a child and then being blown away by *Still Life with Pears* (1895) when it came up for sale in 1961 at Sotheby's in London, where he was working in the Impressionist paintings department. He spent 35 years with the auction house, heading up its international Impressionist and modern division in New York before opening Mitchell-Innes & Nash with his wife, Lucy Mitchell-Innes.

Warman started working for Rewald in 1979 to assist with the Cézanne watercolor catalogue raisonné, which was published in 1983. She stayed with Rewald until his death in 1994, two years before the release of the paintings catalogue. "He taught me everything I know about Cézanne," she says.

In addition to Cézanne's own work, the site will have contemporaneous photographs and postcards of the places he painted, photos and film footage of his exhibitions from more than a century ago, Rewald's scholarly texts, and links to newspaper clippings, reviews, and other original source material. Warman foresees that these items will only increase as the public learns about the online catalogue and sends more contributions. Out in the publishing world, there's also a new English translation of *The Letters of Paul Cézanne* (Getty Publications) by Alex Danchev, which includes cross-references to the Rewald catalogue.

The website is scheduled to have a soft launch on May 12, the shared birthday (30 years apart) of Rewald and Nash. At that time, Cézanne scholars and other insiders will test out the site and give feedback ahead of its debut—and then it will grow in perpetuity through updates. "We're anxious to get it out," says Warman. "It's the kind of thing that's organic. It will never be finished. It can never be finished." ■

Trent Morse is senior editor of ARTnews.



▲ Unlike a book, an online catalogue can be instantly updated. *The Aqueduct at Écluse*, 1890–94 (top), was renamed *The Burned-Out Mill at Charentonneau* when the site (seen above on an old postcard) was recently rediscovered and photographed.