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### Subjects, Color, and Emotions

In “Art is a Different Kind of Cosmic Order,” theoretical physicist Brian Greene talks about the importance of art. He notes that while math and science are objective, disprovable truths, the human experience is a subjective , but equally important truth that is unique to every person, and is not limited to one small feeling, but can be a broad range of emotions. Art is a wonderful method of portraying these subjective truths as they are images and symbols from your brain that you bring to life for the sole reason that it matters to you. Pieces of art even made by a single artist will vary in terms of mood and style solely because there are so many feelings and thoughts artists can draw from to create their piece. Paul Cézanne, a French impressionist artist born 1839, helps prove this, as his art drastically differs from piece to piece, showing not only the different emotions and feelings of human life, but also different art styles as well. His works use both impressionism and romanticism, which are two very contrasting art styles. Impressionism is all about emphasizing color and light in an art piece, rather than the subject, and making art of everyday sights. Romanticism on the other hand, is supposed to convey darker, more violent or negative themes, like terror and despair. So, these art styles not only look different, they have different meanings



Fig 1. Cezanne, Paul. *The Artist's Father*. C.1866 National Gallery of Art, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.52085.html>

The overall emotion conveyed in the first painting, *The Artist's Father*, seems to be despondency, or emotional numbness, what you feel when you aren't doing or thinking of anything with significant meaning. The old man in the picture doesn't show much expression, other than a slight grimace and just seems to be doing the mundane act of reading a newspaper. Dark colors are very prominent, like

the door, or the man's coat, and shoes. The only lighter colors are the bright white of the chair, and the dull brownish gray of the wall and floor. Compared to his later works that were influenced by the impressionist movement, this one was influenced by romanticism, with its more dreary, and over all duller, darker color scheme, and subjects. Not only are there a distinct lack of warmer, pastel colors, the raggedness of the chair the old man sits in, the emptiness of the room the old man sits in, and the despondent look on his face give the painting a tired air to it. While it doesn't make the audience sad, it certainly conveys a weary numbness viewers can feel.



Fig 1. Cezzane, Paul. *Landscape with Poplars* .C.1885 *Pixels.com*,

<https://pixels.com/featured/landscape-with-poplars-paul-cezanne-roberto-morgen-thaler.html>

Landscape with Poplars, made later, has a significantly different vibe to it. The painting depicts a small quaint cottage surrounded by greenery, the whole scenery bathed in warm sunlight. This gives the painting a warm, ambient feel. The main colors in this painting are paler, more washed out greens and blues, in stark contrast to the gray and black of the previous painting. While the trees surrounding the house have a very organic shape, the house in the middle is made up of lines, and isn't the same green/blue color scheme as the rest of the painting making it a slight contrast. However, it isn't the focus of the picture. That would be the trees with their dark shadows. The thick but short brushstrokes used for the trees give it a fluffy texture of sorts, making them look fresh and full of life. Most of the painting is filled with something, but it is balanced as the grass doesn't have as much texture as the trees or houses, and the sky is just all simple blue. This makes sure that there isn't too much going on in the painting, disturbing the ambience, but also keeps it filled enough that there isn't an emptiness to it. Overall, this painting clearly was influenced by the Impressionist movement with its small, "rapid", but noticeable brushstrokes, bright colors, and how the various shapes aren't sharply defined, and more made of bright patches of color. These techniques give the painting a softness to it as there are no bright contrasting subjects or deep shadows for the eye to focus on. Instead, the painting is a harmony of warm pastel shapes, coming together to make a picturesque scenery.



Fig 1. Cezanne, Paul. *Pyramid of Skulls* .C.1898 *PaulCezanne.com*, <https://www.paulcezanne.org/pyramid-of-skulls.jsp>

The *Pyramid of Skulls* was made much later than the first two. While the brushstrokes are still small and “rapid” like the second painting, it greatly resembles the first painting in terms of themes and color scheme. However, the painting’s mood is on the darker side. Rather than just a numbness to it, it appears to be more bleak and filled with despair, with the skulls withering away in a dark room, shells of the humans they once were. Like the first painting, mostly dark colors are being used here. The only exception to this is the dull, bleak white of the top skull, where light seems to be hitting, and the light brown of the other two. Despite being lighter colors that in theory should warm up the painting, the lighter colors are engulfed in black on all sides, which overpowers all other colors, especially when used to an extent. This choice of using black as the dominant color leads to the painting giving a very negative feeling, like darkness will always win over the light. The fact that the subjects are skulls emphasize this point as they are the very symbol of death, when you succumb to the empty nothing. The overwhelming negativity in this painting makes it feel Cezanne

seems to have digressed back into romantic paintings rather than impressionist paintings considering most romanticism pieces aim to convey despair and terror. In fact, it seems the most inspired by romanticism out of the three due to the mood.

Cezanne's various art pieces showcase the broad range of the human experience. From dull monotony, to warm peacefulness, to bleak despair. All of these are emotions we go through. However, like Briane Greene states, it is not an objective truth to life. Emotions don't come in measured quantities. They appear in different amounts for different people for different situations. They are something that is not meant to be grasped or understood. However, with art, we can come close to understanding and interpreting the complexity of various emotions, and what they mean to both us, and other people. And that's why art matters so much.

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Quick note: for the above citation they didn't provide author or date.