

The house of the hanged man at auvers



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Question: Explain why you think this painting was dismissed so scathingly by some critics when it was exhibited with the Independents in 1874.??? The House of the Hanged Man at Auvers??™ was one of Cezanne??™s early landscape paintings, first exhibited in 1874. At this time, paintings using traditional techniques and classical themes were still the established norm accepted by the Paris Salon Jurors who, as Harrison says ??? were heavily influenced by the traditional values of the Academy of Fine Arts??™ (Harrison, Reputations 2008, p. 58) and where most artists sought recognition. Cezanne challenged this view by using new methods and techniques that expressed his own understanding of classical themes to depict his landscapes. This landscape is in a style that was, perhaps, transitional between classical art and a modernist approach.

This essay will explore what was considered artistic excellence by the Salon Jurors at this time, and why they were so dismissive of this particular painting.??? The House of the Hanged Man at Auvers??™ was painted fairly early in Cezanne??™s career, using methods that did not conform to the established traditional, classical style. Cezanne painted this landscape depicting nature in a way that he felt reflected its true meaning, ??? the immediate sensation of nature??™ (Harrison, Reputations Book, 2008 p. 73). Cezanne??™s use of paint and brushwork attracted much criticism. As the reviewer, Jean Prouvaire, remarked ??? No known jury has ever, even in its dreams, imagined the possibility of accepting a single work by this painter?? (Reputations, 2008 p. 60). The Jurors expected quality of workmanship and realistic representations, achieved to a large extent by very fine, accurate brushwork, where the viewer is unable to discern

individual brush strokes. For instance, in Bouguereau's *Bathers* (Plate 1.

3. 12, Illustration Book, 2008 p. 16) the extremely fine brushwork creates an almost photographic image. Cezanne's technique was very different, in that he treated the surface of the painting as part of the painting itself, the brush strokes being quite visible on the canvas, seemingly deliberate, as Harrison says 'where the paint never ceases to look like paint' (Reputations, 2008 p. 75). For centuries most artists were creating images that gave an illusion of reality, enabling the viewer to see through the canvas as if it were transparent, using techniques such as perspective and contouring. Cezanne's painting was not received well by the Salon jurors because he used these techniques in such an unorthodox way to create a different reality, which they didn't understand. Works such as Poussin's *Landscape with a Calm* (Plate 1.

3. 21, Illustration Book, 2008 p. 25), with its classical theme, fine brushwork and realistic perspective, were highly revered by the Salon and admired by the public.

Although Cezanne's style was very different to Poussin's, he was probably influenced by the painter's work, as he is reported as saying 'Imagine Poussin entirely remade from nature, that's what I understand by classical', (Reputations, 2008 p. 73). However, in comparison, the Jurors considered *The House of the Hanged Man at Auvers* inferior and ridiculous. This rejection of his work caused tension between Cezanne and some critics. It seems that the scathing dismissal of this painting was

because the Salon Jurors did not understand Cezanne's interpretation of nature. Compared to previous classical paintings, Cezanne's representation of nature, using techniques that were new and strange, was considered inferior by the Salon Jurors.

The painting was dismissed because they did not value this new artistic approach, failing to appreciate that this was Cezanne's expression of his love of nature.