

Newsletter 19 ♦ September 2023

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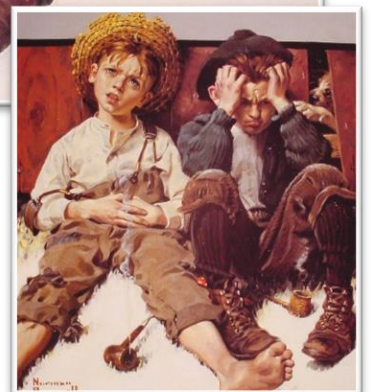
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Above: *But Wait Until Next Week*, 1920

Norman Rockwell

Storyteller with a brush



Right: *Retribution*, 1920

From the Chair With Dianne Stuart



At the Association of ADFAS Council meeting Thursday 28 September, Councillors voted in favour of the proposed new business name – Arts National. Understandably, there were some impassioned voices against the change, but the thorough process of the Rebranding Working Party and its convincing justification of the need for change, delivered the vote.

Importantly, our product and purpose remain the same. Your committee will continue to provide a friendly and relaxed environment where like-minded people enjoy quality presentations delivered by

experts across an ever-expanding range of arts-related fields.

Nationally, every effort will be made to launch and promote the name. Societies will be assisted to broaden their membership base. Not just more members, but more younger members – those who can continue to emulate and strengthen the vision and passion of our founding members such as Shirley Nelson, Nan Pulsford, Jill McCann and our numerous loyal committee members over the past 23 years.

 Dianne Stuart

Members,

Celebrate at our End-of-Year Function

6pm

Monday 20 November
A&I Hall, Bangalow

Enjoy

'The Best Offer'
featuring Geoffrey Rush
and a stellar cast

Partake in our Christmas hamper raffle,
and sign up for the Early Bird Membership.

5.30pm sharp

ADFAS Northern Rivers AGM
Show your support by endorsing your 2024
Committee members at the AGM

The Best Offer

This psychological thriller tells a tale of love and deceit. Set in Europe in the world of high-end art auctions, the story revolves around Virgil Oldman, an ageing, wealthy and eccentric managing director of an esteemed auction house who is hired by a mysterious young heiress to sell the large collection of art and antiques. All is not what as first appears – with scams, sub narratives and neuro-divergent characters thickening the plot.



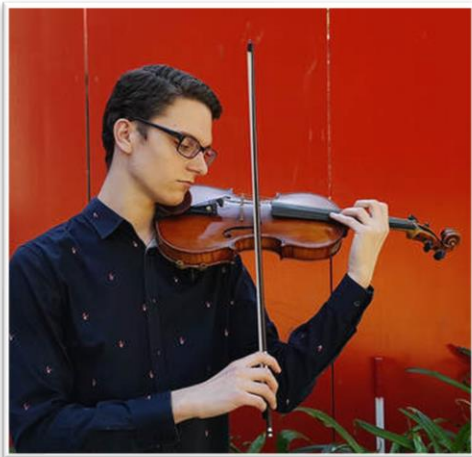
Northern Rivers 2023 Young Musician Award: Congratulations Robert Smith

At just 23 years old, Robert Smith is certainly a high achiever with a string of major prizes and awards in competitions across Australia acknowledging his exceptional talent as a violinist. As recipient of this year's \$500 ADFAS Young Musician Award, Robert said, "I am most grateful for this award, and would be happy to hold a master class with some younger students, or perform here if it can be arranged". We appreciate Robert's generosity of spirit.

Sothern Cross Soloists director, Tania Frazer believes the ADFAS scholarship highlights the amazing talent coming out of the Northern Rivers, and says that Robert is a great role model for the region's budding crop of musicians.



The exceptionally talented Robert Smith



Robert grew up in Murwillumbah and began playing the violin at the age of four. His tutors encouraged him to join the local musical scene and embrace performing opportunities. He has participated in the Murwillumbah Festival of Performing Arts, and led the Lismore-based Northern Rivers Youth Orchestra for many years. His quest for perfection is unending, and recently he undertook masterclasses with several world-renowned musicians.

Though completing his undergraduate degree with distinction at the Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, Robert continues to study at the Conservatorium with renowned Australian violinist, Michele Walsh.



He has worked with and been mentored by Queensland's top chamber music orchestras, and is an active member of the Australian Youth Orchestra. He is currently the Concertmaster of the Sydney Contemporary Orchestra – a role which sees him lead the orchestra in a number of concerts throughout 2023.

Robert's success has come from a natural talent, hard work and a passion for music. He is an enthusiastic performer and those who attended the Bangalow Chamber Music Festival may have had the opportunity to have seen this brilliant young man play.

 Marion Pescud

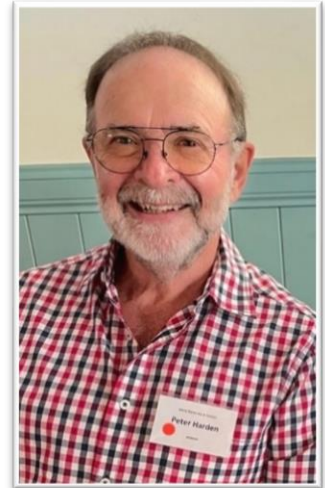
Left: ADFAS Chair Dianne Stuart presents Robert Smith with the Young Musician Award during the Bangalow Chamber Music Festival

A Word from the Treasurer

As we publish our September Newsletter and prepare for the end of ADFAS Northern Rivers financial year, I'm very pleased to confirm that we will finish in the BLACK! This will be only the second time in the past six years that we've managed to have more in the bank than we started with. With the 'C' word an increasingly distant memory and life for most of us returning to normal, we are experiencing good increases in both overall attendance and in particular, guest numbers.

There are two specific issues I want focus on:

- The ADFAS Northern Rivers committee; and
- Membership fees for 2024.



Peter Harden

Firstly, our relatively small membership base means that we rely on an active Committee to keep our society viable. Over our 20+ year history we have been indeed fortunate to enjoy a constant supply of members taking on Committee positions and this continues to be the case. We would nonetheless like a couple of extra 'volunteers', so if you can spare a few hours once a month between March and November, please speak to Di Stuart or any member of the Committee. The 'interesting' conversations while doing the washing up at the end of each lecture should be enticement enough to encourage you step forward!

In 2024 our membership fees will be \$160 per person (\$150 early bird if paid by 31/01/24) and \$280 per couple (\$260 early bird if paid by 31/01/24).

On behalf of the Committee, I'd like to thank all 78 of our members for their continued support and attendance at our lectures. We greatly value your support. Thank you.

 Peter Harden

An Urgent Call for New 2024 Committee Members

Please help us grow and expand our 2024 offerings. We require new committee members to join our volunteer group to assist with planning and organising future programmes for our society.

You will find fun in our friendly environment, and satisfaction in knowing you have helped deliver a stimulating lecture series to those who appreciate art, history and culture in our local area.

If you'd like to take up a committee position, please contact one of our existing Committee members, or Dianne Stuart (phone: 0412 370 372, or e-mail: adfasnorthernrivers@gmail.com)



Our happy 2023 committee

The Golden Age of Dubrovnik: Heydays of the 15th and 16th century Dubrovnik Republic

Nirvana Romell presented the August lecture, *The Golden Age of Dubrovnik*. She explained the historical heritage of this truly unique city – not just with a passion of an art historian but also with the insight of a native Croatian.

Dubrovnik's long history has been recorded from the 6th century when the first settlers arrived from Epidaurum. Since then, it has been ravaged by wars, sieges, fire and earthquakes, but throughout has maintained its proud identity, despite being ruled sporadically by hostile neighbours.



Nirvana Romell with Dianne Stuart

Originally named Ragusa, it was first under the protection of the Byzantine Empire, and later ruled under the sovereignty of the Republic of Venice. Between 14th and 19th centuries the city ruled itself as a free state, and was a forerunner in urban planning and introduced civil services such as a public pharmacy, orphanage, sewerage system, reservoirs and water systems centuries before some Western European countries. Thick walls and a moat were built around the city for defence; however, it was skilled diplomacy that mostly saved Dubrovnik from those who wished to control it. In the early 20th century, it belonged to the Kingdom of Dalmatia within the Austrian Empire. It became part of the Banovina of Croatia upon its creation in 1939.



Magnificent Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik's prosperity grew from maritime trade, and its reputation as Defender of the Faith was due to its geographical position as the last outpost of Catholic Christianity. Today the city is a UNESCO World Heritage site and the most popular tourist destination in Europe.

Nirvana took us on a virtual tour of Dubrovnik, revealing the history of the city and its unique buildings with facts and witty anecdotes. She explained the city's mis-matched architectural styles and its transitional art – a mixture of medieval Gothic and Renaissance.

The confusion of styles resulted from the city being rebuilt several times after been raised by some disaster, such as the Doge's Palace going 'boom' twice when some dolt decided to store munitions next to the kitchen! The authorities had different preferences for the restorations, thus Dubrovnik now has a disparate collection of art and architecture.

This was a superb lecture, delivered with informed humour. With tongue in cheek, Nirvana exposed her disdain for the 14th century Venetians who stole Dubrovnik's trees to build their boardwalks, and only used pigs to clean up their city while Dubrovnik introduced a garbage system!

August Raffle Winner

The winner of our August raffle was Ann Blackmore who received the hardcover book, *Istria: Recipes and stories from the hidden heart of Italy, Slovenia and Croatia*, by Paola Bacchia.

Istria is the heart-shaped promontory at the northern crux of the Adriatic Sea, where the cuisine records a history of its changing borders over centuries. Through personal and collective stories, the recipes in this book reflect the region's traditions and cultures.

Right: Ann Blackmore, our happy raffle winner



Shona Ewart and Nirvana Romell

Home Hosting

Shona Ewart and her family hosted lecturer Nirvana Romell during her stay. From the bus, shona brought Nirvana to her home in Byron Bay where they enjoyed a home-cooked roast lunch, then embraced the local sights on a liesurely tour.

Nirvana is certainly a fan of our beautiful Northern Rivers area – so much so that she would have loved to stay longer. She did a daytime tour of the lighthouse, then returned with Shona and her husband at night to see the light in action.

Home-hosting is a two-way benefit. Nirvana was pleased to engage with her hosts after time spent in lonely hotel rooms, although she did take some 'down time' on the day of the lecture to rest and catch up with correspondance. She appreciated the beautiful location and relaxed atmosphere in which she could please herself in what she chose to do.

Shona said Nirvana was a delight to host – with a great sense of humour, a wealth of knowledge and an interesting life story. She described home-hosting as an enriching experience, and advises anybody thinking about it to do so.

 Marion Pescud

ADFAS embracing the arts – enriching Australia



Detail from 2008 Archibald Prize winning entry by Del Kathryn Barton



'Neetan (Camp Dog)' by Craig Koomeeta 2008

August Post-Lecture Gathering

A highlight of our post lecture suppers is that members and guests have the opportunity to mingle in our welcoming environment while enjoying good conversation, food and drinks.



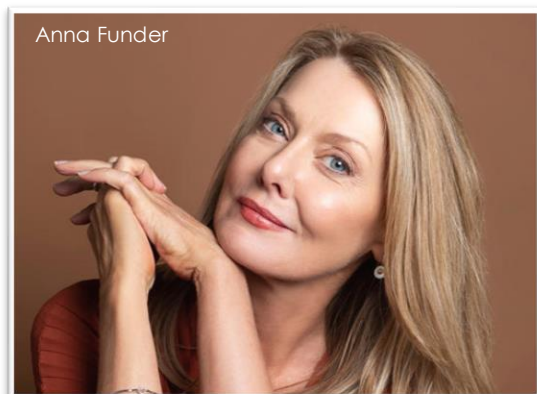
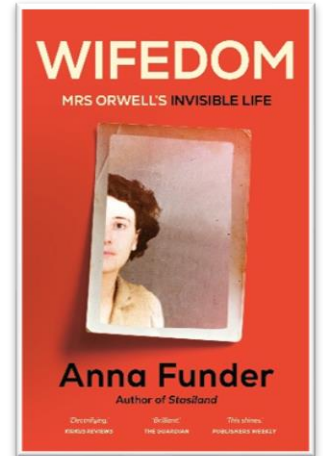
Anna Funder at the Byron Bay Writer's Festival

This year for the first time, the Byron Bay Writers Festival was held in the beautiful village of Bangalow – an excellent move which seemed to please everyone. For me, the most exciting event was the interview with Anna Funder, chaired by Sarah Kanowski – both festival favourites.

Anna began by recounting her life as a white entitled Westerner in a happy marriage with three children. Her husband Craig, is supportive of her work and she feels that they enjoy an equal partnership, however, on deeper reflection she realises that she is the one who does the majority of the work – from making and attending all the children's appointments to carrying the weight of the domestic duties.

With this recent revelation, Anna decided to free herself from the domesticity for a time and went to a local book shop where she purchased biographies on George Orwell. After reading all six books, she realised that Orwell never named his wife. Delving further, she discovered that his first wife Eileen O'Shaughnessy had been buried by history. In fact, she was an amazing woman.

From her letters to her best friend, it is clear that Eileen was funny and highly intelligent. She won a scholarship to Oxford University, and was writing her Masters' thesis when she gave it all up to marry Orwell. It was she who gave him the ideas behind *1984*, and most probably contributed to the writing of *Animal farm*. She typed his work, kept their shop, and cleaned their cold, deprived and miserable home while he sought out her friends and prostitutes. He slept with other women, then told Eileen about it. Talk about a man's world!



Anna refers to her book as 'Wifedom: a Counterfiction' and 'The Invisible Wife'. She recreates the Orwells' marriage during the Spanish Civil War and WWII, revealing more shocking details about their life together and its very sad ending.

I think this book is a must read. In addition to a commentary on the unsung work of women, it provides an intimate peek into the literary great Orwell and the woman who provided the platform for his success.

 Erica Light

- ◆ fine and decorative arts
- ◆ culture and history

Norman Rockwell Great Artist or Mere Illustrator?

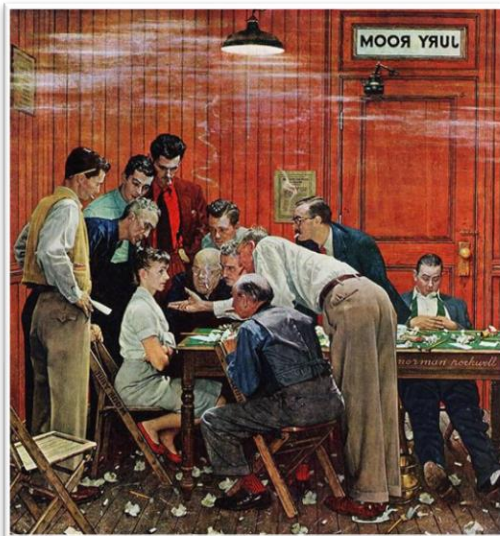
The September lecture, presented by John Ericson, showcased the extraordinary work by American artist, Norman Rockwell, who has been labelled 'a storyteller with a brush'. John's animated and witty approach made for a very appreciative audience as they unravelled the narratives threaded through Rockwell's work.



John Ericson

Born in New York in 1918, he enrolled in art school when he was 14, and graduated from the Art Students League establishment. He produced the first of his 323 original covers for *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1916. It was an association that stretched over 47 years.

Rockwell produced more than 4,000 works in his lifetime, including over 40 illustrated books. His art was at first considered overly sweet by the critics – too sentimental and idealistic. Much of this stemmed from *The Saturday Evening Post* commissions which dictated that he portray American life as 'innocent' and 'homely'. Rockwell had no qualms about this, commenting that he "painted the world as he'd like it to be". However, there was much more to his work than sweet apple pie. He was a master at portraying the human condition with sentiment, action, energy, humour and psychological insights – all woven into a marvellous story.



The Holdout, Norman Rockwell, 1959

One uses visual literacy to read Rockwell's narratives – to seek the 'who', 'where', 'what sentiment', 'what has led to it' and finally, 'how might it be resolved'. In *The Holdout*, the 'who' is obviously a jury of 11 men and one woman; the 'where' is the room in which they have been deliberating for hours (the floor is littered with spent ballots, the air is thick with smoke, and one juror has given up and dozed off); the 'sentiment' is impatience and frustration; 'what has led to it' would be the men's inability to sway the lady's vote; and the 'how might it be resolved' – in one of only two ways – but the woman doesn't appear to be budging. As he did in several paintings, Rockwell has included himself in this work (the man in the dark blue shirt directly behind the lady).

Sometimes Rockwell painted sequels – and sometimes extended to a series of works. Take another look at the cover of this newsletter. In the larger painting, titled *But Wait Until Next Week*, we see two happy, rather cocky boys, pleased with themselves at stealing tobacco and lighting up behind the barn. Next week they might even get some alcohol! The dog is apprehensive. In the smaller image, titled *Retribution*, the boys are feeling ill and the pipes have been discarded in disgust. The dog extends a sympathetic paw, but the lads know that they've been punished for their ill deed.

One of Rockwell's most famous series was *Four Freedoms*, painted in 1943 and inspired by a speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt who articulated four freedoms as universal rights. During the WWII Rockwell also painted a series of works depicting fictitious soldier Willie Gillis's journey through the war. *Homecoming G.I.* appeared on the cover of



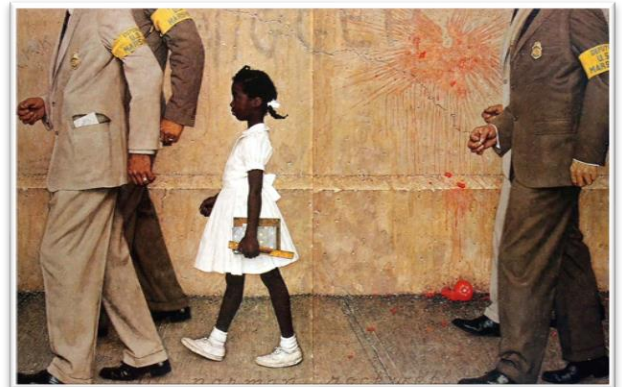
Norman Rockwell



Homecoming G.I., Norman Rockwell, 1945

The Saturday Evening Post just weeks after the war ended in Europe. It shows Willie Gillis's returning to his home in New York – and the emotional reactions of his family and friends. His mother's arms outstretched for a hug, his sisters scream with delight, his brother and dog bound toward him in greeting, neighbours peep from windows with welcoming smiles, and kids up the trees gesture their joy. The girlfriend around the corner shows some hesitation – does he still feel the same? Via the expression and posture, Rockwell has made this narrative easy to read, but there is still more. The drab tenement is juxtaposed against the radiant happiness of the characters. The building is being repaired and the trees are about to burst with spring blossom, so we know that there is hope for a promising future.

The Problem We All Live With, tackled the issue of school racial integration. It depicts Ruby Bridges, a six-year-old black girl being escorted to her classroom by white federal marshals. The child had won a scholarship to attend the school, but had to pass by jeering white protesters waving pickets. Ruby is a picture of innocence in her white dress as she passes a wall defaced by racist graffiti and the splash of a thrown tomato.



The Problem We All Live With, Norman Rockwell, 1964

While Rockwell's work was often considered banal, bourgeois and kitsch in his earlier years, he began to receive more attention as a serious painter when he altered his subject matter. This brings us to John Ericson's question, 'was he a great artist or a mere Illustrator?'

I think the term 'illustrator' in Rockwell's case was a jibe by his critics. However, I think if one studies his techniques, his command of colour, the way he used light to create atmosphere, and his marvellous portrayal of human action and emotion, one would surely come to the conclusion that Norman Rockwell was indeed a great artist. His works are now greatly sought after, with collections held by Stephen Spielberg and George Lucas and others. Rockwell's work *Saying Grace*, was sold for a record US\$46 million in New York. It was the highest price ever paid for an American painting at auction.

The Rockwells moved to Vermont in 1939. In 1949, a fire gutted his studio and much of his work was lost.

Rockwell was married three times – the first ended in divorce, his second wife died of causes due to alcoholism however, his third marriage was a very happy one and lasted until he died Stockbridge, Massachusetts, in November 1978, aged 84.

The Stockbridge house is now a museum dedicated to Norman Rockwell.

Carole Gamble and her husband Chris Abraham had the pleasure of hosting lecturer John Ericson and his wife, Janet Hanson



Janet Hanson, John Ericson, Carole Gamble and Chris Abraham

September Post-Lecture Supper



In high spirits after John Ericsson's excellent lecture on Norman Rockwell, members and guests gathered to enjoy the evening's supper.



September Raffle Winner

The winner of the fabulous book, *Best of Norman Rockwell: a Celebration of America's Favourite Illustrator*, was Neil McKenzie.

The hardcover volume was put together by the artist's son Tom Rockwell, who has selected the finest collection from his father's body of work which chronicles iconic visions of American life. This refreshed edition contains more than 150 images-oil paintings, watercolours, and rare black-and-white sketches.

Right: Raffle winner Neil McKenzie with Erica Light



Enjoying the Archies 100 Exhibition



Marion Pescud with Cherry Hood's portrait of David Helfgott

What a joy to visit the *Archies 100* Exhibition, on show for a time at Surfers Paradise's Home of the Arts (HOTA).

Viewing the masterpieces up close not only allowed one to marvel at the detail, ponder the techniques and variety of media, but to follow the Archibald story from the prize's inception to its current incarnation.

There have been controversies along the way, but each seems to have inspired greater originality from the artists, and more interest from the general public.

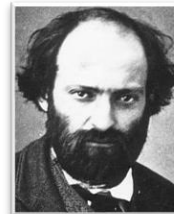
It was difficult to select a favourite, but I was enthralled by the portrait of renowned concert pianist David Helfgott, by Cherry Hood (Archibald Prize 2009).

Helfgott has struggled with a schizoaffective disorder for most of his life, and the mastery of the Hood portrait was capturing his mental frailty while infusing his powerful personality – yet by using watercolour on canvas, she has also given an ethereal quality to the work.

 Marion Pescud

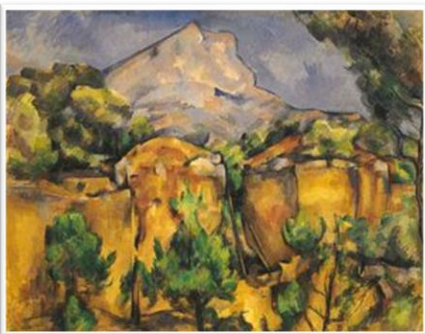
Paul and Marie-Hortense Cézanne: A Very Unhappy Union

The marriage of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) to Marie-Hortense Fiquit (1850-1922) was not made in Heaven. The French post- impressionist painter was mentally frail with a propensity for severe depression, impatience and rudeness, while his life partner was labelled mean, selfish, and 'a sour-looking bitch'. Hortense, as she was known, was a gambler and alcoholic, and said to be and somewhat 'common'.



Paul Cézanne and Marie-Hortense Fiquit

Works by Paul Cézanne



Mont Sainte-Victoire, from Bibmus Quarry



Turning Road at Montgeroult



The Basket of Apples

This may be an unfair representation of Hortense as she certainly wasn't offered a bed of roses. Cézanne was from a well-to-do bourgeois family and the son of a successful banker. At his father's insistence he entered Law School at the University of Aix-en-Provence, but hated it. With his mother's support, he convinced his father to allow him to study art in Paris. He oscillated between Aix and Paris, which is where he met Hortense in 1869, but loathe to offend his father and compromise his allowance, he went to great lengths to conceal their relationship, even after their son was born in 1872.

The couple married in 1886 with senior Mr and Mrs Cézanne in attendance. It is believed that Cézanne and Hortense did so merely to legitimise their son, because the groom let it be known publicly that he had no feelings toward the bride. For months at a time, he'd leave her in Paris while he painted in the South of France. No wonder she was sour! Cézanne's friends considered her 'high maintenance' and scathingly called her 'la boule' (the ball) in snide reference to her full figure.

After the death of his father, Cézanne left Hortense permanently and moved in with his sister and mother. "My wife only cares for Switzerland and lemonade", he claimed. Despite their cold and distant relationship, Cézanne continued to paint her.

Hortense was not the least bit interested in art, yet she posed for 29 portraits. It appears that despite the woes of their personal relationship, there was a certain dynamic between them. Some art historians believe that Cézanne's desire to paint her stemmed from his search for geometric compositions. With her 'jagged nose, bulging forehead, and scant chest' Hortense possessed the cones, cylinders and spheres that inspired him. With these he created the foundations of Protocubism.

Paul Cézanne's works and ideas were influential in the aesthetic development of many 20th-century artists, particularly those interested in Cubism. His art, shunned by the public during most of his life, grew out of Impressionism.

He was inspired by the Impressionists revolutionary spirit and their unsentimental rendering of common subjects. He admired their emphasis on colour however, he was more interested in the atmospheric, rather than the dramatic quality of light.

In 1870, while living near Marseille, he began to paint landscapes and explored ways to faithfully depict nature while simultaneously expressing the feelings it inspired in him. Under the tutelage of Camille Pissarro, he was persuaded to lighten his colours and employ shorter brushstrokes. He used Impressionist techniques, but rather than concentrating on the light on an object, he emphasised its underlying structure. He began composing with cubic masses and architectonic lines.

Dismayed by the public's adverse reaction to his works, Cézanne retreated to a type of self-isolation. He continued painting landscapes that represented a deep space and flat design, noting that "everything in nature is modelled after the sphere, the cone, and the cylinder." It was the same philosophy he had toward his portraits of Hortense.

Cézanne also applied his principles of representation to his still life works, organising them as though they were architectural drawings; giving objects significance through the intensity of the colour and simplicity of the form. He maintained a conscious search for intellectual solutions to problems of representation, and although he admired many other artists, he believed that only his own work excelled in the standard of purpose.

Cézanne was obsessed with his work, and developed a purely pictorial language that balanced analysis with emotion, and structure with harmony. By the turn of the century, he had finally gained recognition, and his paintings were sought after by galleries. His landscapes and still-lives are acclaimed, however it his portraits of Hortense that have mostly captured the critics' praise.

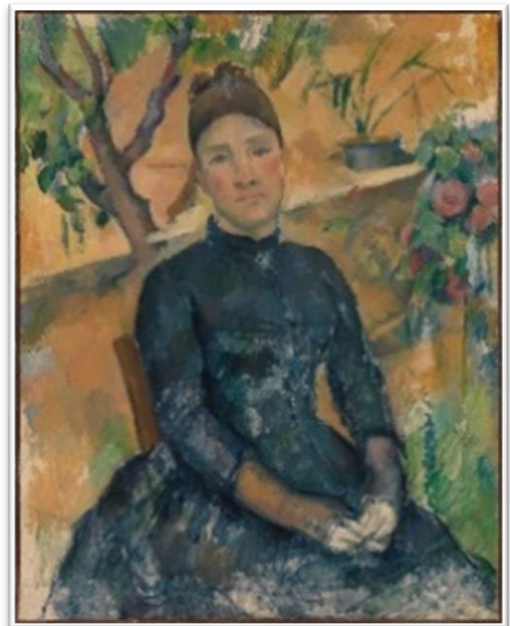
Hortense has been accused of looking 'bored rigid' in her portraits, however when one discovers how slowly Cézanne painted sympathy lies with the model. He could spend up to 20 minutes between brush strokes – pondering how to instil feeling into the pigment. He would often distort her facial colour to harmonise it with the total composition.

'I paint a head like a door,' Cézanne once wrote, implying that both were of equal importance. He viewed the human body as a series of shapes, but if he couldn't find an emotion for any part of a subject, he would leave that section blank. In this unfinished canvas of Hortense, we see her head placed off-centre while her body completes the pyramidal composition. She looks stern, or at least preoccupied, with an oval face, rectangular lips and triangular nose – all geometrically enmeshed.

Not only age and social class separated Cézanne and Hortense, but their personalities were poles apart. He suffered from depression which manifested in growing distrust of his fellow human beings to the point of delusional persecution. He also had a phobia about being touched – a legacy of childhood trauma which would have surely caused difficulty and possibly insecurities for Hortense.

It was said that when Cézanne was dying, Hortense kept an appointment with her dressmaker rather than go to his bedside – perhaps she had a foreboding that she would be disinherited. On his death from pneumonia in 1906, Cézanne left his estate to his son, who kindly provided his mother with a settlement. However, Hortense rapidly squandered it away through gambling.

While Cézanne and Hortense's personal relationship was cold, their studio relationship proved to be an outstanding success – something the art world is increasingly appreciative of.



Hortense Fiquit Cézanne