A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE THEME WOMAN AND LANDSCAPE IN THE PAINTINGS OF PAUL CEZANNE AND WILLEM DE KOONING

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ABSTRACT

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE THEME WOMAN AND LANDSCAPE
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This thesis is a comparative study of Cézanne's Bathers and de Kooning's Woman and Woman and Landscape paintings. It examines a traditional theme through which these artists revolutionized pictorial space. The body of this essay is divided into four chapters. In Chapter I, Cézanne and de Kooning are described as originators in the context of traditional influences. Chapter II and III define how these artists were influenced in the choice of subject matter and how they went beyond these influences to integrate female form and landscape. Chapter IV is a comparative analysis of Cézanne and de Kooning's content and its relationship to the development of their pictorial space. The objective of this thesis is to demonstrate that there is a connection between the iconography of these artists and their treatment of pictorial space. This text further aims to show a link between the impersonal attitude of these artists toward their subject matter and their preoccupation with formalist aspects of painting.

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INTRODUCTION

Originally I set out to research several artists who have integrated female form and landscape within the pictorial space. However, since this topic was obviously too extensive for a master's thesis, it was necessary to concentrate on particular artists. I have chosen Cézanne and de Kooning primarily because their subject matter corresponded with my research and secondly because of my admiration for their work which played a crucial role in my art training. My earliest paintings are perhaps closest in style to de Kooning's figurative abstractions. They were probably my most innocent works since all I had was paint, a model to work from and absolutely no formalist vocabulary to analyse what I was doing. I soon acquired the latter and also discovered that subject matter was not part of the formalist language. This of course was in the 1960's and talk of subject matter has since become acceptable. The point of all this is to show that my own art background is formalist and my approach in this essay is also basically formalist. Yet I contend that the treatment of subject matter in Cézanne and de Kooning's work cannot be analysed only from a formalist point of view. My own approach to their work could be termed formalist femininism.

This thesis is not meant as a critical analysis of the paintings of Cézanne and de Kooning but as an investigation of an old theme from a new perspective. Similar treatment of the female image can be found in the works of numerous other artists. Associations can be made between Dubuffet and de Kooning and between Cézanne and Matisse or possibly between all four artists. This essay does not pretend to be a final statement but rather a starting point for further investigation into the theme of woman and landscape.

CHAPTER I

CEZANNE AND DE KOONING AS ORIGINATORS

In the course of recent art history, Paul Cézanne and Willem de Kooning have been regarded as originators. Cézanne's Bathers and de Kooning's Woman and Woman and Landscape symbolize these artists' most ambitious work. Each created a pictorial space in which figure and background became a harmonious whole. Like Cézanne, de Kooning integrated Woman into the landscape but in addition he also integrated landscape into the Woman. Beginning with traditional images and themes, they revolutionized the pictorial surface. Grounded in tradition, the innovations of Cézanne and de Kooning nevertheless went far beyond those of their contemporaries.

The significance and affinity of the Bathers and Woman lie not merely in the transition they create between tradition and innovation. Cézanne and de Kooning could have achieved this assimilation through various themes. But the fact that they both chose to do so through the female image, which strongly evokes traditional concepts in art, makes this transition more pronounced. What is more peculiar about this theme is that each of these artists selected it at a similarly crucial stage in his career. Cézanne's last and most ambitious Bathers (pl.1) was painted at the end of his life. He had by this time been accepted and even praised by artists, critics and

art collectors. This acceptance was based primarily on his landscapes, still-lives and portraits, paintings far more resolved than any of his Bathers. Similarly, de Kooning has achieved success through his black and white and colored abstractions of the late forties. It can be argued that Excavation, painted in 1950, is a more integrated and resolved painting than Woman I (pl.23), began in the same year. Yet, there was a need for both artists to make a break with what they had been doing and to expose a traditional theme to re-examination from a new perspective.

The return to figurative imagery, when abstraction was the contemporary style, was a radical move for de Kooning. It was similarly radical for Cézanne to portray female nudes in an outdoor space without the traditional support of a narrative. Cézanne's sense of space was more clearly defined in the Bathers than in his other themes. For de Kooning, Woman required an innovative space. The intention of this thesis is to expose the originality of these paintings in the context of how they were influenced by tradition and how these influences were reconciled with a new pictorial space.

Herbert Read, in agreement with André Malraux, stated that art imitates art and most often "it is not some supremely beautiful face which launches the painter on his career, but the sight of a beautiful painting... and like all deep emotions, the emotion which springs from art has a craving to perpetuate itself."[1] Before creating the new, the artist must

first imitate the past or that part of it with which he has the greatest affinity. While Read and Malraux referred to artists who were at the beginning of their careers, Cézanne and de Kooning continued to relate to the past even in their mature periods. Malraux also said that, "occasionally and artist will revolutionize art history by his ability to isolate parts of already existing forms and transform them in order to create original ones."[2] Therefore, original work of art can be created by approaching the past with a new sensibility. According to this definition, Cézanne and de Kooning can be described as originators. However, their originality derives from a special approach to tradition. Neither Cézanne nor de Kooning had regard for historical sequence. In their work they often referred to paintings, styles and concepts that were decades apart. It was irrelevant that at times the artists they most admired belonged to conflicting movements.

Cézanne was influenced by individual artists rather than styles. This is one explanation for his willingness to borrow from artists, often decades apart. The other was Cézanne's need to bring back a certain classicism to art lost through Impressionism.

> Cézanne often said that he wished 'to become classical again through nature, that is to say, through sensation'. And classicism, as he understood it, meant to 'revive Poussin in the contact with nature'. Nature was the essential element, the source of art, but one must not reproduce it, one must interpret it. By means of what? By means of plastic equivalents and color.'[3]

In the Bathers, Cézanne was attempting to integrate human forms with landscape in a classical space following the example of Poussin(pl. 10). He combined Poussin's intellectual approach to form and composition with the Impressionists' emotional approach to nature through color and light. As Malraux said, "it is by imposing a monumental style on landscape that Cézanne bodies forth our modern classicism."[4] He extended Impressionism by combining some of its traits with the enduring ones of the past. As will be seen in Chapter II, Cézanne was capable of unifying the structure of his Bathers through the use of Courbet's simplicity of forms, Delacroix' poses, Pissarro's colors, Monet's brushstrokes, Daumier's contours and Manet's flat surfaces. He could reject integral parts of traditional art such as linear perspective, yet, look to Titian, Poussin and Giorgione for their use of "planar progression, imaginary contour lines and axial movement to create space."[5] It was this ability to take elements of older art and combine them with a more contemporary use of pictorial space that made Cézanne's style unique. Even in his later years he continued his trips to the Louvre to copy and study the old masters. His mature Bathers (pls. 1,5,6) continued to reflect Cézanne's skill at adapting concurrently from various traditions, as it will be seen in Chapter II.

In the Bathers Cézanne's primary aim was to restore classicism in art. The theme of outdoor bathing was a

traditional subject, attempted by only one of Cēzanne's contemporaries, Renoir.[6] However, Cēzanne was not interested in the metamorphosis of nature by light, as were the Impressionists, but rather in what was permanent in nature. This led to his simplification of forms and to his suggestion to Emile Bernard to "see in nature the cylinder, the sphere, the cone."[7] While this statement is said to have anticipated Cubism, Cēzanne had no intentions of creating a new style but merely restoring the solidity and depth lost by the Impressionists. Cēzanne's technique of "juxtaposing areas of pure color" to compose his space led to Picasso and Braque's "breakdown of the image of perception into its dominant planes."[8] Although Cēzanne developed an original style of treating space and the human form in nature, Cubism and subsequent art history brought him closer into the twentieth century than he really was. In spite of the fact that his simplified shapes were often in an almost abstract space, Cēzanne could never have approached the flat planes of the Cubists. He said " I will never accept the lack of modeling or gradation. It's nonsense."[9] In addition he stated that, "nature... lies more in depth than in surface."[10]

De Kooning, like Cēzanne, has always been influenced by individual artists rather than styles. For de Kooning the act of painting is inspired by the act of living. Since each person's life style is different, the artist can only be inspired by individuals and not groups and styles. He found it ridiculous to uphold any style as an ideal. The artist

it ridiculous to uphold any style as an ideal. The artist should be able to borrow at random from different periods, from abstract or figurative styles, as demanded by his painting. De Kooning has stated:

> Personnally, I do not need a movement. What was given to me, I take for granted. Of all the movements, I like Cubism most. It had that wonderful unsure atmosphere of reflection - a poetic frame where something could be possible, where an artist could practice his intuition. It didn't want to get rid of what went before. Instead it added something to it... Cubism became a movement, it didn't set out to be one.[11]

In the 1920's de Kooning was influenced by Mondrian and van Doesburg, leaders of de Stijl, a group that encouraged artists to be socially active. While he admired Mondrian's Neo-Plasticist paintings, de Kooning believed that too much theory accompanied it. Art should stimulate art, regardless of theory which often gets in the way of the painting itself. With regard to theory and formal analysis de Kooning said:

> I think Cubism went backwards from Cézanne because Cézanne's paintings were what you might call a microcosm of the whole thing, instead of laying it out beforehand. You are not supposed to see it, you are supposed to feel it. I have always felt that those beautiful Cubist paintings exist in spite of the Isms.[12]

Like Cézanne, de Kooning never committed himself to a style but borrowed freely from many. For example, in the 1930's he painted both in an abstract and a detailed figurative style. He was influenced by the Surrealist Miró as well as by the vertical stripes of Mondrian. In the 1940's de Kooning was again influenced by artists from various movements. The treatment of the Queen of Hearts(pl.26)

reflects Picasso's dislocated anatomies and the background of colored squares reflects a more abstract style. Pink Angels, painted in 1945, sums up this period of de Kooning's art. This painting was influenced by Cubism, Surrealism and Dada, recalling the work of Gorky, Matta, and Duchamp. While, in this same decade, Newman, Kline, Pollock and Rothko took completely new directions, de Kooning along with Gorky and Hofmann could not abandon the influence of the past. De Kooning's paintings continued to reflect the urge "to include everything, to give nothing up, even if it means working in a turmoil of contradictions."[13] Even his innovative series of Woman reflect the influence of old masters such as Rubens and Ingres (detailed in Chapter III). What he most admired in the Renaissance artist can also be said of de Kooning: "the marvel wasn't just what he made himself, but what was there already."[14]

What de Kooning had in common with the Abstract Expressionists was his lack of concern with theory and formal analysis. The following statement by Barnett Newman best sums up the Abstract Expressionist view of theory in general. In a confrontation with philosopher Suzanne Langer on the nature of art (Woodstock, 1952), Newman stated: "Esthetics is for artists as ornithology is for the birds."[15] However, bringing figurative content back into painting marked de Kooning's greatest innovation as well as his separation from his contemporaries, the Abstract Expressionists. "In Abstract Expressionist painting, the presence of landscape space was a

sign of failure, since it carried the stigma of emotional distance. . . landscape forms, like human forms, could only be suggested."[16] For de Kooning, on the contrary, it was the recognizable female image that eliminated "emotional distance". The symmetrical Woman lent herself to both abstract and figurative interpretations and to being placed either in a classical or contemporary space. This image and his dissociation from theory enabled de Kooning to concentrate his efforts on the physical and emotional act of painting. He could also concentrate on the creation of a compositional space that encompassed both the sculptural female form and the flat pictorial surface.

The need to preserve "what was there already" and that always" something could be possible" accounted for de Kooning's incessant reworking of paintings and his difficulty in finalizing them. He scraped away paint, revealing old surfaces and reworking them with the addition of new shapes. De Kooning's paintings were in a constant state of flux. The contradictions between preserving and changing paralleled his need for both tradition and innovation.

Herbert Read said that it is the artist's intuition, the key to originality, through which "the world is not transfigured, but in which for the first time some aspect of it is revealed, is given form, and thereby, for human eyes, newly created, newly communicated."[17] Through the frequent reworking of the same traditional themes, Cézanne and de Kooning revealed something new in what was already in existence. Tradition is considered as the basis for any

original work. However, for Cézanne and de Kooning it is not merely a starting point but an integral part of the mature or innovative work. "Cézanne's late bathers stand at a crucial junction in European art and look back nostalgically at the older tradition while foretelling the newer one."[18] De Kooning's Woman also stands between the old and the new as it unites a figurative theme with abstract composition and technique at a time when the art world created a schism between them.

The paintings of Cézanne and de Kooning are inseparable from their subject matter. This subject matter is imbedded in tradition. It is the aim of the following chapters to expose how these artists took their theme beyond traditional influences to redefine the female form and pictorial space. It is also the intention to show how this process created a link between the past and future art.

NOTES

1 Herbert Read, The Origins of Form in Art (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p.25.

2 André Malraux, The Psychology of Art: The Creative Act, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Bollingen Foundation Inc., 1949), p.178.

3 John Rewald, Paul Cézanne (London: Spring Books, 1959), p.118.

4 André Malraux, Museum Without Walls, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967), p.142.

5 Gabriel Laderman, "The Importance of Cézanne", Art News, LXV (October, 1966), p.40.

6 Theodore Reff, "Painting and Theory in the Final Decade", Cézanne: The Late Work, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), p.38. Renoir: Les Grandes Baigneuses, 1885-87.

7 John Rewald (ed.), Paul Cézanne, Letters (4th ed.; New York: Haker Art Books, 1976), p.301.

8 Read, p.27.

9 Liliane Brion-Guerry, "The Elusive Goal", Cézanne: The Late Work, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art 1977), p.78-79, quoting Emile Bernard, Souvenirs sur Paul Cézanne et Lettres Paris: Société des Trente, 1912), p.39.

10 Id., p.79, quoting Paul Cézanne, Correspondance, ed. John Rewald (Paris: Grasset, 1937), p.259, lettre to E. Bernard of April 15, 1904.

11 Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1968), p.146, quoting Willem de Kooning, "What Abstract Art Means to Me", The Museum of Modern Art Bulletin, XVIII (Spring 1951).

12 Harold Rosenberg, "Interview with Willem de Kooning", Art News, LXXI (September 1972), p.55.

13 Thomas B. Hess, De Kooning: Recent Paintings (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), p.20.

14 Hess, Willem de Kooning, p.142, quoting Willem de Kooning, "The Renaissance and Order", Trans/Formation, I(1951).

[16] Amy Goldin, "Abstract Expressionism, No Man's Landsacpe", Art in America, LXIV (January-February, 1976), p.78.

[17] Read, p.32.

[18] Reff, p:44.

CHAPTER II

CEZANNE: FEMALE FORM IN LANDSCAPE

Cēzanne's Les Grandes Baigneuses (pl.1) culminated his efforts to create a monumental painting of nudes in a landscape like those of the old masters he admired. This painting is one of the three [1] large paintings of female bathers that Cēzanne completed in the last ten years of his life. According to Leo Steinberg, of the many studies Cēzanne completed, approximately 70 still exist.[2] The male and female bathers were composed on separate canvases. In this chapter we will examine how Cēzanne, through certain influences, came upon this theme and how he progressed beyond these influences to integrate female form and landscape.

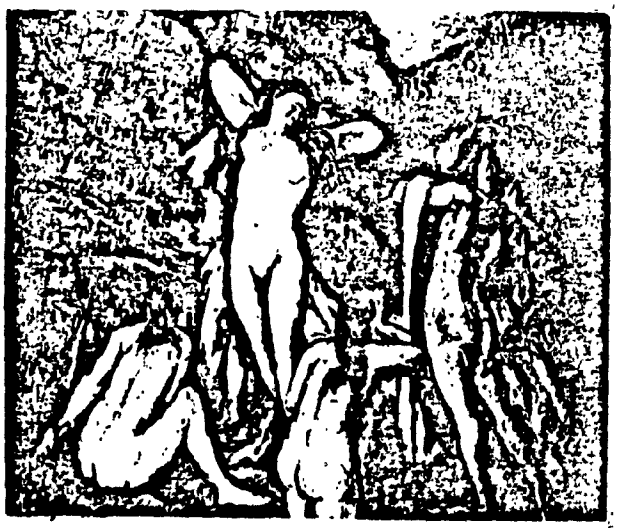
Whereas Cēzanne was able to work directly from still-life and nature, he could not paint his nude bathers from life in a landscape setting. This was partly due to his own inhibitions and partly to the moral ethics of the times.[3] He had to rely on the models who posed in his studio but more frequently on the studies he made from the paintings of old masters. The frequent lack of models and his lack of facility in the classical manner of drawing forced Cēzanne to repeat his previous poses. The origin of the theme of female bathers derived from such earlier romantic paintings as the Temptation of St. Anthony, c. 1870(pl.2).[4]

The triangular composition and poses of some later bathers can

Pl. 1. Les Grandes Baigneuses, c. 1906.
Oil on canvas, 208 x 249 cm
The Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Pl. 2. The Temptation of St. Anthony. c. 1870.
Oil on canvas, 54x73 cm.
Private Collection, Switzerland.

Pl. 3. Three Bathers. c. 1876.
Oil on canvas, 22x19 cm.
Private Collection, Paris.



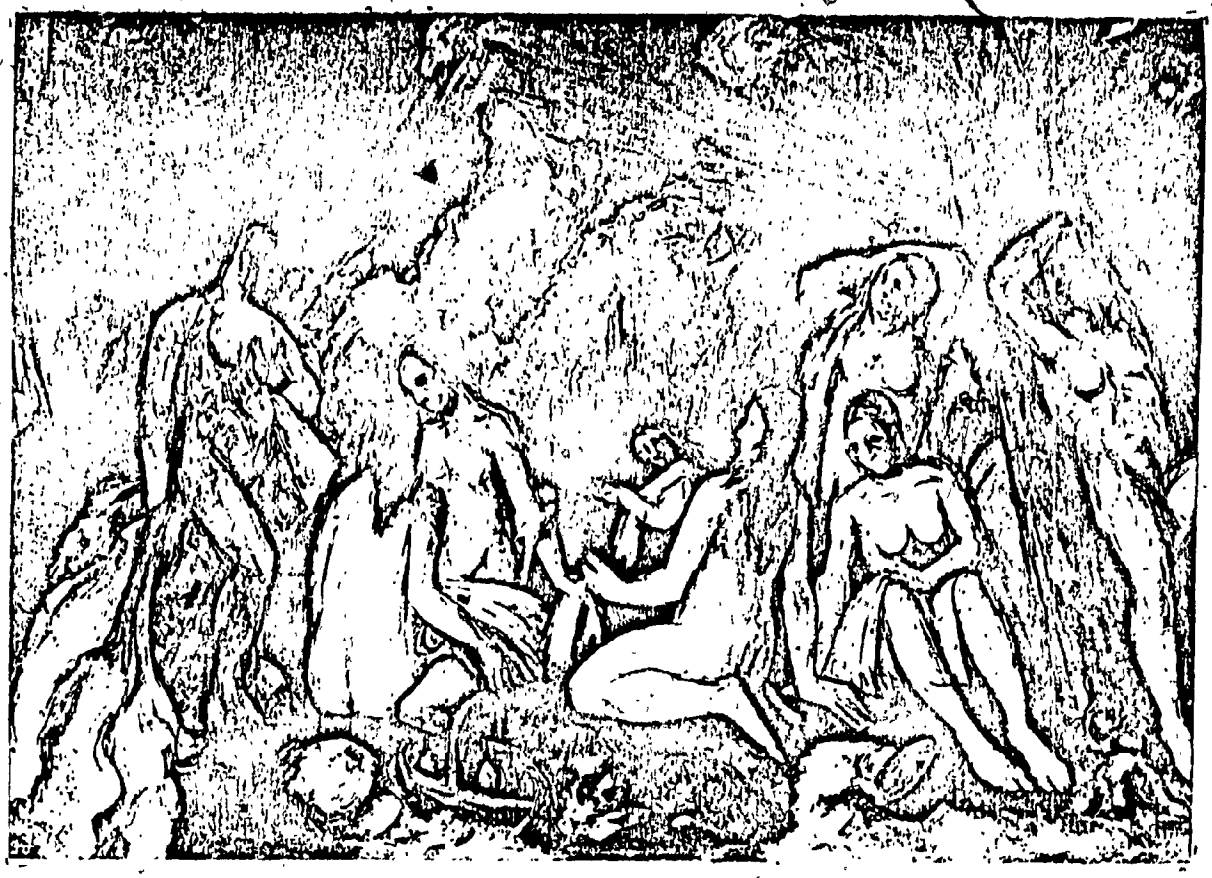
Pl. 4. Four Bathers. c. 1900.
Oil on canvas, 73x92 cm.
Copenhagen.

be traced back to this painting. A similar composition is repeated with the three central figures in Three Bathers (pl.3) and Four Bathers (pl.4). The seated woman seen from behind is repeated, with some variation, in all three works and again in the London Bathers (pl.5) and Barnes Bathers (pl.6). The central standing figure in the Three Bathers also derives from the Temptation of St. Anthony. Similarly, the reclining figure seen from the back in Les Grandes Baigneuses recurs in other paintings such as the London Bathers and Bathers of c. 1900 (pl.7).

In his paintings of Bathers, Cézanne borrowed styles and poses from old masters, more than in his rendering of other subjects. The pose, composed of a woman with hands behind her head, elbows raised and head turned, seen in Four Bathers and again in the Barnes Bathers, had been a popular one since Classical Greece (pl.8). The same pose reoccurs in Delacroix' Lady in White Stockings (pl.9) and in Rubens' The Apotheosis of Henry IV (pl.46), artists whose sensual style Cézanne tried to imitate. While Cézanne employed Delacroix' poses, he did not succeed in imitating his fluid modeling of female form. In comparison, Cézanne's forms were stiff and often awkward. It was not until the late bathers that he was able to combine lyricism and structure to create more fluid forms.

According to Barnes and de Mazia, the use of "contour-line or band of shadow"[5] to separate forms from their environment was common to Delacroix, Tintoretto and Daumier.

Pl.5. Bathers. 1900-06. Oil on canvas, 130x195 cm.
National Gallery, London.



Pl. 6. Bathers, 1895-1906. (detail) Oil on canvas, 133x207 cm.
The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pa.

Pl. 7. Bathers, c. 1900. Oil on canvas, 35x22.5 cm.
Formerly Galerie Beyeler, Basel.

Pl. 8. Greek Sculpture: Dying Niobid, 5th century B.C. Museo delle Terme, Rome.

Pl. 9. Eugène Delacroix, Lady in White Stockings. Oil on canvas, 9 x 12 in. Louvre, Paris. (detail)

This technique was adopted by Cēzanne but with exaggerated emphasis on defining forms. With the support of color, his forms were almost sculpturesque. The female forms on the frontal plane of the London Bathers are examples of this. In his article in Art in America, William Rubin cites the concept of "bas-relief" to illustrate Cēzanne's "compromise between the relative flatness of Manet... and the illusion of free-standing froms in deep space favored by the old masters." Cēzanne combined the traditionally sculptural interpretation of forms in space (Classical) with the pictorial interpretation of his contemporaries (Impressionists).

Cēzanne reduced his pictorial space to a sequence of planes extending from the foreground into deep space as in Classical art. Albert C. Barnes and Violette de Mazia contend that Cēzanne's "ordering of solid color-masses in deep space" was Venetian in style.[7] However, while influenced by the "structural, internally illuminated color" of Tintoretto, Cēzanne did not use color as the Venetjans did to blend forms and "spatial intervals". Instead, he employed a personal style (bas-relief) to separate his forms from each other and from the surrounding space, almost as if they were sculptures, as in the Barnes Bathers. In addition, Cēzanne's compositions were more disciplined than those of the Venetian painters. They were closer in style to Poussin whose "volumes and spatial intervals... tend to be placed in receding parallel horizontal planes".[8]

Cézanne, like Poussin, harmoniously integrated human forms and landscape in a disciplined space. He especially admired Poussin's painting, Myth of Echo and Narcissus (pl.10), in which the nymph is metamorphosed into the rock in the background.[9] Frank Elgar asserts that it may have been Poussin's nymphs that motivated Cézanne's body rhythms and pyramidal composition of Les Grandes Baigneuses."[10] The division of space into "receding parallel horizontal planes", further suggests that Poussin inspired this painting.

Poussin was one of many influences evident in Les Grandes Baigneuses. Cézanne's frequent trips to the Louvre to copy from works he admired also influenced this painting. Theodore Reff contends that the bather leaning against the tree has its source in the Venus de Milo; the crouching bather on the left has been adopted from a Hellenistic Crouching Venus (see pl.11); and the balanced composition of the figures relates to Veronese's Supper at Emmaus.[11] The slanting trees framing the bathers are reminiscent of traditional paintings in which drapery played a similar role. To Reff, these trees suggest "an arch reminiscent of Gothic vaulting".[12] The triangular composition of this painting too was a common design used by old masters.

Cézanne's ambition was to paint nudes in landscape as in the idyllic scenes of past art. The nude became for him as it was for Delacroix, an ideal and romantic form.' This fact is reflected by the dominance of the female forms in such earlier

Pl.10. Echo et Narcisse, Nicolas Poussin, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Pl.11. Cézanne's copy after antique
Crouching Venus. 1892-96. Pencil.
18.2 x 11.6 cm.

bathers as Four Bathers and Five Bathers of 1885-87. In the late bathers the female forms no longer dominate their space but they are harmoniously integrated with it. In the Barnes Bathers and London Bathers the figures are diminished in contrast to the earlier bathers. However, it is in paintings as Les Grandes Baigneuses and Bathers of 1902-06(pl.12) that the figures become proportionate to the landscape.

The influence of Courbet's naturalistic forms (pl.13,14) and Pissarro's colors on Cézanne are reflected in Bathers at Rest(pl.15). The theme of this painting is male rather than female bathers. Nevertheless, the significance of this painting is similar to that of paintings of female bathers of this period such as Five Nudes (pl.47), painted in the late 1870's. Of Bathers of Rest Barnes and de Mazia said:

> The stark naturalism of Courbet is preserved, though Courbet's reproduction of representative detail is discarded in favor of an emphasis upon those traits of objects which give them solidity, weight and structural strength... Cézanne's objects are not reproduced from nature (but) quarried from nature and then employed as building-stones for an edifice to which no structure actually existing in nature corresponds. Similarly, a color-scheme of blue, orange-yellow and green, largely taken over from Pissarro, is distributed through the picture with little regard for natural local color or for temporary accidents of illumination, in order to bind together various areas compositionally... [13]

Bathers at Rest was executed at a time when the Impressionists had the most influence on Cézanne. Yet it already reflects an independent Cézanne. The pyramidal composition and the placement of forms in a background of receding planes anticipated the strengths of Cézanne's mature paintings. In the Bathers at Rest and in the Five Nudes the accent on

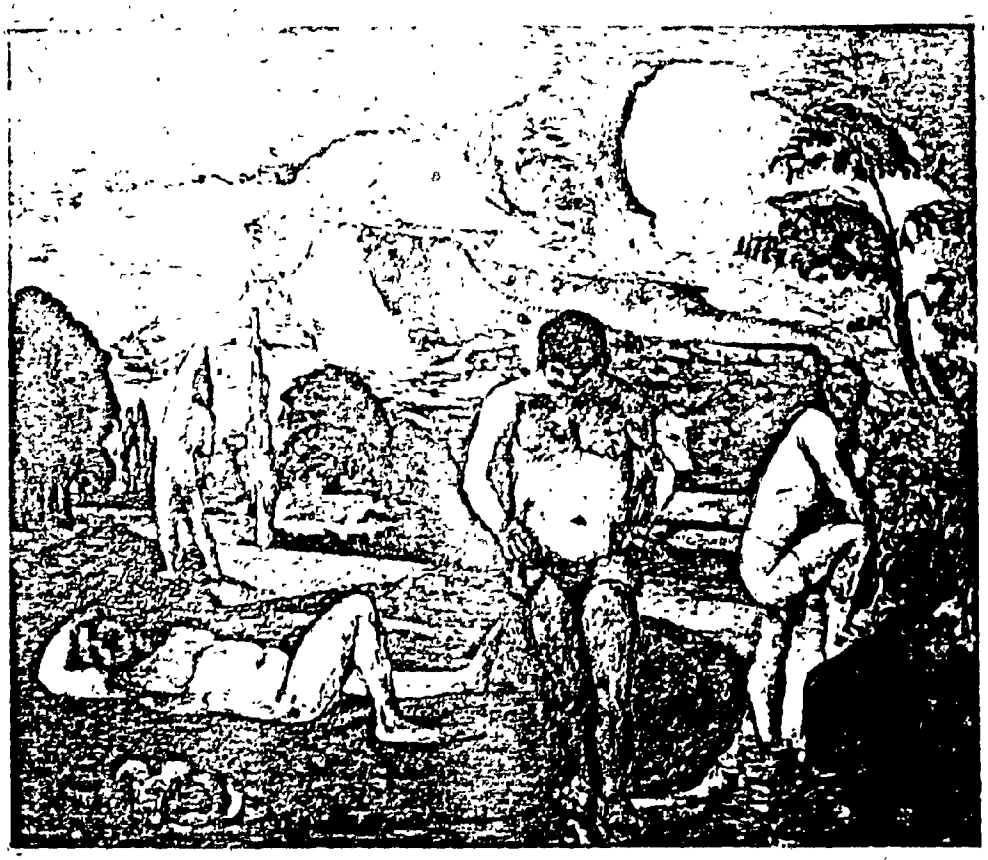
Pl. 12. Bathers. 1902-06. Oil on canvas, 73.5 x 92.5 cm.
Private collection, Zurich. (detail)

Pl.13.

Pl.14.

Pl.13. Courbet nude bather
Musée de Montpellier.

Pl.14. Cézanne's copy of Courbet's bather but changed into a male.
Cliché Musées Nationaux.



Pl.15. Bathers at Rest. 1875-76. Oil on canvas, 80x99.2 cm. The Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pa.

contour distinguishes the forms the background, though not completely separating them. This is Cézanne's technique of "bas-relief" that he perfected in such later works as the Barnes Bathers and Les Grandes Baigneuses. Cézanne's need to retain volume in space was significant enough to distinguish him from the Impressionists even at the height of their influence. Although, in the early works the handling of paint was awkward, the power of the mature works was already suggested.

Cézanne had to pass through Impressionism to reach his mature period. It is through the extension of this movement that Cézanne's powers of color and composition were manifested. His debt to Manet,[14] Pissarro and Monet cannot be overlooked, though his independence from them was apparent early. Pissarro's color combinations of orange, green and blue together with Monet's color pigments were very much a part of Cézanne's mature style. Furthermore, Manet's brushwork, illumination of colors and the treatment of shadows as forms in themselves continued to influence Cézanne's later works. Cézanne's progress beyond Impressionism was achieved through his integration of solid forms with Manet's use of flat areas.

The fundamental difference between Cézanne and the Impressionists lies in their approach to "natural appearances".[15] Cézanne agreed with the Impressionist theory that, "light on objects distinguishes them from their environment not line".[16] However, Cézanne was not concerned with the temporary effects of light but rather with what was

permanent in nature - basic form. He employed Impressionist techniques to attempt " to recover a sense of volume by analyzing appearances so that he could paint the essential, constructive planes of color"[17] Adopting the Impressionists' theory that, "drawing and color are not separate and distinct, as everything in nature has color",[18] Cézanne built and modulated his forms with patches of color. It was his concern with form that separated Cézanne from the Impressionists, carrying him beyond their influence.

Cézanne further contended that drawing and color were interrelated to technique and composition. His paintings were composed as architectural structures wherein each element was necessary to create perfect balance.

> The technique is used to build up units of color, light shadow, line and space; and the part which each of these plays in composition is so intimate that the brushstrokes which build up pattern also create volumes and set them in space; and the line that contributes solidity to objects and places them in perspective is itself usually color applied by an actual brushstroke or series of brushstrokes.[19]

Cézanne integrated his compositions so totally, that it is impossible to analyse an area or element of color, line etc. separately but only in relationship to each other and to the painting as a whole.

In Cézanne's Bathers, the integration of human forms into the structure of the painting created balanced compositions. The subject and background are treated with equal respect. Color, line, shape, composition, brushwork and distortion work together to integrate subject and background. Cézanne allied the female forms rhythmically to trees, bushes, mountains,

sky, water and patches of grass. As Joachim Gasquet noted, Cézanne wanted " to marry the curves of the women's bodies to the shoulders of the hills." [20]

William Rubin used the term "similacrum of bas-relief to describe the 'front-modelling' (as opposed to modeling in the round) and interpenetrating planes of Cézanne."[21] Cézanne achieved "bas-relief" throgh line and color. In the three large Bathers of Cézanne's last decade, closed ontours define form, suggest volume and isolate the bathers from each other as if each were a free-standing form. Although the figures are not integrated with each other, they are with the background. What the figures do have in common is the lack of detail and depersonalization in the often featureless faces. They also share the same colors and brushwork. However, the same color patches that suggest the illusion of weight and solidity of the figures also serve to flatten them. These color patches (such as blue, green and orange) are repeated throughout the picture surface, balancing the sculpturesque isolation of the figures and integrating them with the landscape. The term "bas-relief" derives from this ambivalence in Cézanne's paintings.

Ambiguities occur throughout Cézanne's painting surface. The female forms of his mature paintings are generally placed parallel to (though at times overlapping) the horizon. The figures on the sides slant toward the center and their contours are directed upward. Similarly, the contour of the trees and the foliage draping forms and framing the landscape lean toward the center, reaching upward. This compostional arrangement of trees is a Cézanne formula repeated in many of his late Bathers.

He said to the younger artist, Emile Bernard:

> See in nature the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, putting everything in proper perspective, so that each side of an object or a plane is directed toward a central point. Lines parallel to the horizon give breadth, that is, a section of nature... Lines perpendicular to this horizon give depth. But nature, for us men, is more depth than surface...[22]

Therefore, Cézanne's bathers and landscape appear to have depth. He further re-enforces depth by using the minimum amount of detail in the background, by overlapping forms and by modulating with color. However, background areas, in paintings like the London Bathers, come into focus much sooner than foreground areas. Although, Cézanne adivsed using " a sufficient quantity of blue to give the feeling of air",[23] bold flat patches of color used in the background contradict the depth aimed for in the composition. The same intensity of colors used in both background and foreground support this. The principle of "flat-depth", attributed to Cézanne by among others, Richard W. Murphy,[24] appropriately describe the ambivalent play of surface and depth in such paintings as Les Grandes Baigneuses.

The narrative content of Cézanne's Bathers is also obscure. Nudes engaged in a passive outdoor activity had been a popular theme for the old masters, among them Rubens (The Three Graces) and Fragonard (Bathers), as well as contemporary artists such as Renoir (Les Grandes Baigneuses). Their subject matter always suggested a narrative or an allegory. It was not until Manet's Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe (pl.16) that a nude female form was placed in an outdoor setting without narrative or allegorical connotations but purely for an

Pl.16. Edouard Manet. Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe. 1863.
Oil on canvas, 7'x8'10". The Louvre, Paris.

"aesthetic effect".[25] This effect was created by the tonal contrast between the nude and the two gentlemen in the dark frock coats. The lack of a narrative theme is further supported by the abscence of communication between the figures, except perhaps the outstretched hand of the reclining man which however remains unacknowledged. The still-life with fruit at the bottom of Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe adds more to the composition and color of the painting than to the luncheon theme. And in the London Bathers Cézanne's use of still-life with fruit also serves to re-enforce depth and balance of color rather than narrative content. Similarly, the activity of bathing in Cézanne's late paintings becomes irrelevant. While in the Four Bathers the nude figures convey the activity of bathing, by the later London Bathers the women lose their meaning as unclothed images. Their color and form in relationship to the background become more important than their anecdotal value. The ambiguity of Cézanne's subject matter lies in his choice of iconography. Traditionally, the theme of bathers implied a world of illusion which he used to render his world of reality.

Cézanne's world of reality consisted of nature, its colors and forms. He relied on direct observation. After 1890 Cézanne often used watercolour to render the immediate sensation of colour.[26] This enabled him to draw with a full brush directly from nature, requiring almost no preliminary drawings. Forms were suggested merely by interrupted lines and transparent patches of colour as in Bathers under a Bridge (pl. 17). At times areas were left incomplete. As Cézanne

Pl.17. Bathers under a Bridge, c. 1900. Pencil and Watercolor, 21x27.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

wrote to Bernard in 1905: "Now, being old, nearly seventy years, the sensations of colour, which give light, are the reason for the abstractions which prevent me from either covering my canvas or continuing the delimitation of objects..."[27] He saw figure and background bathed in light but never without an underlying structure. In visualizing nature, Cézanne combined his sensations with a need for Classical clarity. Form and color have more importance than the actual theme of bathing.

Cézanne's form and colour are not copied from nature but rather extracted from nature and then simplified, distorted and repeated to create a structure in which every element is necessary. It is this treatment of nature that most influenced Picasso, Braque and their followers. Cézanne's landscapes, still-lives and portraits, more resolved paintings than the Bathers, strongly influenced Cubist art (e.g. Braque's landscapes at l'Estaque, 1908), However, it was Les Demoiselles d'Avignon of 1907 (pl.18) which signified Picasso's breakthrough and the beginning of a new direction in art. This painting. though influenced by (among other things) African art, had its roots in Cézanne's motif. Although, the geometric figures and drapery are not from Cézanne's paintings, but rather from El Greco, the raised elbows and the pose of the seated woman recall Cézanne's motif for many of his Bathers. Alfred Barr stated that an earlier study of this painting (pl.19) suggests that its composition "was inspired by Cézanne's late bather pictures in which the figure

Pl. 18. Pablo Picasso. Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, 1907. Oil on canvas, 8 ft x 7 ft 8 in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. (detail)

Pl. 19. Pablo Picasso. 1907. Composition study for Les Demoiselles D'Avignon. Charcoal and pastel, 18⅞x25 in. Owned by the artist.

and background are fused in a king of relief without much indication either of deep space in the scene or of weight in the forms." [28]

The Cubists were not the only twentieth century artists who were influenced by Cézanne's Bathers. Earlier, Matisse's Joy of Life (1905-06) with its theme of nudes in a landscape setting paid hommage to Cézanne.[29] Matisse actually appropriated the pose of his Bather (pl.20) from Cézanne's Three Bathers (pl.21), which he owned.[30] According to Read, Matisse was most influenced by Cézanne's concept that "colours must be used in their 'plenitude' (Cézanne's word), and the problem was to reveal the structure while maintaining the purity of the colours." [31]

Cézanne's visual language describing the harmony of color and form and the relationship of figure and background have influenced all subsequent styles. It would be almost impossible to find a 20-th century artist who early in his career was not influenced by him: Gauguin, Picasso, Braque, Leger, Robert, Delauney, Kandinsky, Duchamp, Gorky, de Kooning... Cézanne's forms and colours, especially in the watercolours, are often so vague that they appear abstract. The extent of these abstractions together with the equal treatment of figure and background help account for his influence on abstract art. Yet, the interpretations of Cézanne's work were not always what the artist intended. For example, the Cubists over-emphasized the structural elements of his paintings and almost disregarded his direct approach to nature and color.

Pl. 20. Henri Matisse. Bather. 1909. Oil on canvas, 92.7 x 74 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Pl. 21. Three Bathers, 1879-82. Oil on canvas. Musée du Petit Palais, Paris.

Cēzanne did not intend to be original but merely to carry on a tradition that he admired. Paul Sérusier wrote of Cēzanne: "He cleaned away from pictorial art all the mold that time deposited upon it; he restored all that was sound, pure and classic." [32]Cēzanne considered the female form in landscape as the most notable image of pictorial art. The combination of woman and landscape represents a continuation of a classical theme. In this specific theme Cēzanne achieved the real transition between tradition and the future. The Bathers may not have been Cēzanne's strongest or most resolved paintings but they were certainly his most ambitious and challenging.

NOTES

[1] The other two large bathers were: Bathers of 1900-06, presently in the collection of the National Gallery of London and will be referred to as the London Bathers; Bathers of 1895-1906, of the Barnes Foundation, Merion Pa., which will be referred to as the Barnes Bathers.

[2] Leo Steinberg, "Resisting Cézanne: Picasso's 'Three Women'", Art in America, LXVI (November-December, 1978), p.118.

[3] Theodore Reff, "Painting and Theory in the Final Decade", Cézanne: The Late Work, ed. William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977), p.41.

[4] Id., p.38.

[5] Albert C. Barnes and Violette de Mazia, The Art of Cézanne (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), p.10.

[6] William Rubin, "Pablo and Georges and Leo and Bill", Art in America, LXVII (March-April, 1979), p.131.

[7] Barnes and de Mazia, p.20.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Frank Elgar, "Father of Modern Painting" (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1975), p.236.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Reff, p.42.

[12] Id., p.39.

[13] Barnes and de Mazia, p.90.

[14] Manet never accepted the term Impressionism to label his work. This term derived from Monet's paintings. Monet, however, applied Manet's ideas to his landscapes. See H.W. Janson, History of Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1967), p.492.

[15] Barnes and de Mazia, p.23.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Alfred H. Barr Jr., Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946), p.68.

[18] John Rewald, Paul Cézanne (London: Spring Books, 1959), p.172.

[19] Barnes and de Mazia, p.23-24.

[20] Richard W. Murphy and Editors of Time-Life Books, The World of Cézanne (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968) p.147.

[21] William Rubin, Art in America, LXVII, p.131.

[22] Rewald, p.172.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Murphy, p.86.

[25] Janson, p.490.
Just as Cézanne often borrowed poses from other painters, Manet took the poses for Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe from an engraving after Raphael. Id., p.15.

[26] Rewald, p.175.

[27] Id., p.177.

[28] Barr, p.54

[29] Carla Gottlieb, "The Joy of Life: Matisse, Picasso and Cézanne", College Art Journal, XVIII (1959), p.110.

[30] Murphy, p.179.

[31] Herbert Read, A Concise History of Modern Painting (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1964), p.38.

[32] Murphy, p.9.

CHAPTER III

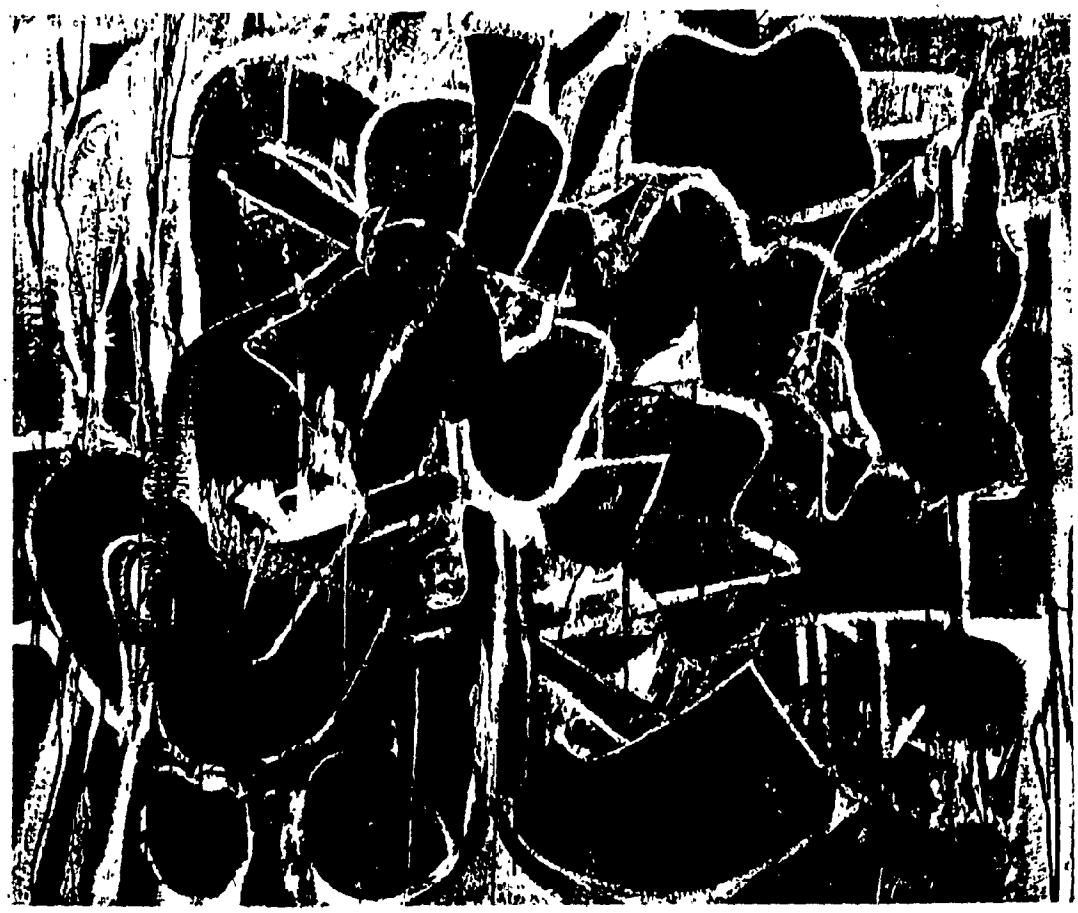
DE KOONING: FEMALE FORM IN LANDSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE IN FEMALE FORM

In 1950 de Kooning began painting Woman I and also stated his position that "Painting is inseparable from subject matter."[1] The relevance of this statement was accentuated by the fact that de Kooning was a leading Abstract Expressionist, who in 1948 established himself with a one-man show of abstract paintings.[2] The return to figurative work and to a traditional subject matter, created for de Kooning the problem of dealing with the past in context of a new pictorial dilemma. In this chapter the author will look at de Kooning's work, starting from Woman I (pl.22), tracing the evolution of the female image from its "no-environment", to integration with the landscape and finally to woman as landscape. How de Kooning was influenced by tradition and how he progressed beyond this to reconcile woman and landscape in a newly defined pictorial space will be the theme of this chapter.

Thomas B. Hess contends that de Kooning, like Spinoza, conceives that "the images of things are modifications of the human body."[3] Throughout his career, regardless of trends, de Kooning fluctuated between figurative and abstract work. Even his most abstract paintings often allude to parts of the female anatomy. The Painting of 1948 (pl.23), in which the abstract shapes resemble hips and breasts, is a case in point. Like Ingres, de Kooning found in the female nude "purity and

Pl.22. Woman I. 1950-52. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Oil on canvas.

Pl.23. Painting. 1948. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Enamel and oil on canvas.



abstraction of form" and "a source of forms both abstract and symbolic".[4] Once Ingres had fixed the pose of his bather's neck, he would re-create this shape with variation many times throughout his career. Similarly, de Kooning invented shapes which he used repeatedly, often modifying and creating new shapes from previous ones.[5] In Woman Sitting (pl.24) and in Queen of Hearts (pl.25) the shape of the eyes, neck and one of the arms are drawn similarly. Years later, the shape of the arm and the shape and direction of the eyes are recalled in Woman V, although somewhat modified (pl.26). Female shapes were often further modified to create landscape as in Woman as Landscape (pl.27).

The paintings de Kooning did between 1946-48, including the black and white abstractions, were developed from cut, collaged and transformed drawings of women.[6] However, there always remained a likeness to the original female shapes (pl.23). The technique of metamorphosis and disarrangement of humanoid forms reveal the influence of Arshile Gorky, a close friend during the thirties and forties. Ambiguity was created through the play of negative and positive spaces as the "parts of the body engage in ... shifting identities."[7] The Woman paintings of 1950-53 concentrate on a similar idea as parts of the female body often form parts of the background as well (pl.28). De Kooning never actually became a Surrealist but did accept, like Gorky, that the act of painting was as relevant as its content. The use of Surrealist biomorphic shapes, calligraphy and automatic brushwork freed de Kooning's forms

24. Woman Sitting, 1943-44. Oil and charcoal on composition Board
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Brustlein, Paris.

Pl.25.
Queen of Hearts 1943-46. Oil.
Hirshorn Museum, Washington, D.C.

Pl. 26. Woman, V. 1952-53, oil on canvas
Private collection, Chicago.

Pl. 27. Woman as Landscape, 1955
Oil on canvas, Private Collection.

Pl. 28. Woman, VI. 1953. Oil and enamel on canvas.
Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh.

from static poses, giving spontaneity to his paintings. His abstract work of the 40's also employed looser brushwork associated with Action Painting. This technique, which was process oriented, linked de Kooning with Jackson Pollock. However, what actually separated de Kooning from Surrealist automatism was his being always in control. This technique of combining accident and control remained part of his Woman and Woman and Landscape paintings.

The control in de Kooning's paintings reflects the influence of Cubism and, to an extent, Neo-Plasticism. According to Diane Waldman, his use of "random placement to offset a basically preconceived horizontal-vertical grid structure derived from Cubism." Surrealism, with its metamorphosis of human forms, enabled de Kooning to explore woman as subject and with the influence of Cubism he was able to restructure her within a two-dimensional space. De Kooning also showed an interest in Mondrian, a Neo-Plasticist, who amplified the Cubist grid structure. Like the Cubists and Neo-Plasticists, de Kooning Stayed with traditional canvases, not larger than life-size, as opposed to the monumental ones Pollock and his other contemporaries began to use. In re-enstating human figure as subject, de Kooning was retreating into tradition. He found "a new relation between post-Cubism abstraction and the late works of Cézanne, through which painting could be recharged with emotion-laden traces" based on "re-created experience".[9]

In 1963, discussing content, de Kooning said that "forms ought to have the emotion of a concrete experience."[10] This explains why he never completely abandoned imagery. He approached his images with control, but at the same time charged them with energy. His Woman, placed in the center of the canvas in a "no-environment", reflects classic symmetry and timelessness. However, his turbulent, fleshy brushwork and aggressive imagery, echoing Souting, reflect his romantic nature and Expressionist influence. This romantic nature is again seen in the paintings of the early 60's when the images of women in landscape mirror the painterliness of Rubens (pl.29). De Kooning's emotional and often loud and violent encounter with his images, his distortions and technique qualify him as an Expressionist. Nevertheless, he does not act as an observer of the outside world, is never sentimental and often his images are more witty than ferocious, thus disqualifying him as a pure Expressionist. According to Thomas B. Hess, "de Kooning looks at his environment as coolly as Cézanne; his distortions come from inside, from his art."[11]

De Kooning said: "I am an eclectic painter by chance; I can open almost any book of reproductions and find a painting I could be influenced by."[12] He had a European education which included apprenticing himself to a master at the commercial art and decorating firm of Jan and Jaap Giddings in 1916 and studying at the Academy of Rotterdam between 1916-24.[13] In the European tradition of acknowledging the influence of the

Pl. 29. Clam Diggers, 1964.
Oil on paper mounted on composition board,
Private Collection.

master and other artists, de Kooning acknowledged the influence of artists of the Renaissance, Cubism, Surrealism, Neo-Plasticism and Expressionism. All art history was open to his interpretations and needs. Like Cēzanne, de Kooning could be influenced by artists decades and even centuries apart. The women in the Clam Diggers recall the voluptuousness of Ruben's women but the strong light brings forth in Impressionist atmosphere, reminiscent of Monet. Though always aware of all other art, de Kooning invented shapes that were his own, in assembling his female forms. Nevertheless, he thought nothing of appropriating a pose from another artist. The squat-like pose of the figure in The Visit (pl.30), reminiscent of Ingres' Louis Bertin (pl.31), is a case in point.[15] However, de Kooning's application of paint and use of space took The Visit far from its source.

Although de Kooning was traditional by doing figurative paintings at the height of the New York abstract art scene of the 50's, he was, nevertheless, influenced by his contemporaries and contemporary culture. He was closely associated with Kline, Pollock, Rothko, Hofmann, Marca-Relli and other leaders of the New York art world. In 1948, he taught at Black Mountain college, headed by Josef Albers and in 1950-51 at Yale under Albers who headed the Design Department.[16] Thus de Kooning was associated with many of the best known nonrepresentational artists. However, he rejected abstraction when it existed "in and for itself, perhaps attaining its perfection in the circle, square, or cube"

Pl. 30. The Visit, 1967, oil on canvas.
M. Knoedler and Co., Inc., New York, Paris, London.

Pl. 31. Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres
Louis Bertin 1832, The Louvre, Paris.

because it resulted in creation becoming dependent on theory.[17] De Kooning also rejected the Abstract Expressionists' expansion of space by opening up the edge of the canvas. His Woman represented a return to classical space, symmetrical and centripetal in form, influenced by Cubism.

De Kooning was able to extract from both the past and present to make his statements. The influence of contemporary culture was revealed in the use of the mouth area from a Camel cigarette ad for a study for Woman I (pl.32). The wide red mouth and gleaming white teeth represented the typical American smile associated with the forties woman. At the same time the smile also had a traditional source. De Kooning said that his women were "rather like the Mesopotamian idols, they always stand up straight, looking to the sky with this smile, like they were just astonished about the forces of nature."[18] More practically, the mouth gave de Kooning a focal point to work around. In the 60's he did a number of drawings in front of a television with his eyes closed, recalling Surrealist automatism. About the same time he also did drawings, with his eyes open, of dancers and singers denoting the culture of the sixties.

De Kooning's interpretation of past and contemporary culture often revealed his sense of humour. The massive form, frontal pose and earthiness of the Woman have been related to icons and goddesses both by de Kooning[19] and his critics.[20] Yet, de Kooning's sense of humour contradicts these interpretations of Woman. The hilarity of the red mouth and teeth used as a collar in Woman and Bicycle (pl.33), painted in the same

Pl. 32. Left: T-Zone, detail from Camel cigarette ad, back cover of Time magazine, January 17, 1949;

Right: Detail from Study for Woman, 1950, with collage mouth.

Pl. 33. Woman and Bicycle, 1952-53
Oil, enamel and Charcoal on canvas
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

period as Woman I to VI, is a case in point. De Kooning's wit remains in evidence even in later work as the charcoal drawings of 1966-67 reflect (pl.34). The heart shaped lips recall Betty Grable and Marilyn Monroe and generally indicate the influence of Pop culture on de Kooning.

Femininists have often found de Kooning's Woman offensive. The large breasts, pasted savage-like smile and Amazon build all account for this feeling. Yet, it can be said that the strength evoked through the central focus and gutsiness of his women is less offensive than the idealistic treatment of women throughout earlier art. The wide grin and red lips appear to be more a parody of how the media than de Kooning saw women. The over-sized breasts that seem to offend the most, by Woman VI (pl.28) have become more important as forms than as parts of the female body. De Kooning stated that the breasts were large was due "solely because his arms moved naturally in large curves."[21] His gestures, colors, shapes and textures are as much a part of the subject of his paintings as are women. The sweeping gestures and flux in his canvases deny a calculated savagery on the part of de Kooning, comparable to Jean Dubuffet's Corps de Dames of 1950, in which the unconscious and the physical world, though contradictory, each plays a part.

The female form as subject matter has occupied de Kooning's interest since 1940. Even his most abstract paintings reveal some likeness to the female anatomy. For de Kooning as for Cézanne, the female form is a subject embodying all art traditions. The image of woman has a timelessness and

Pl. 34. Untitled. 1966-67.
Charcoal, 18x12 in.

permanence and yet it is always changing. Since de Kooning found it difficult to finish a painting, continually finding new possibilities, the female form as subject was an ideal one.

In the early 50's, de Kooning identified "the changefulness of the Woman with the perpetual shiftings of people, things, events, and impressions on the streets of Manhattan."[22] The window in Woman I does not clarify whether she is indoors or outdoors. She could be sitting anywhere occupying "no-environment"![23] This "no-environment" is apparent in Woman I to VI through the half-recognizable objects near the figure, taken from the artist's surroundings. De Kooning's Woman is in a depthless, suffocating and exchangeable space. Woman consists of forms torn apart and rearranged through the artist's technique of ripping and collaging earlier drawings. Parts of the woman's anatomy are as "interchangeable" as her environment. De Kooning stated that, "when parts are seen 'intimately', they become interchangeable: as when you hold the joint of your thumb close to your eye, it could just as well be a thigh."[24] As examples, the arms of the Woman are often legs and the shoulder taken out of context can easily be mistaken for a knee. Her parts, examined separately, become merely shapes that no longer resemble the original sources, except in color. Parts of the anatomy have become flat areas meeting the background on the same plane.

De Kooning further joins figure and background by diminishing the boundary or the contours of the figure. In Woman IV and V contours become less visible and the artist's gestures begin to invade the boundary between the Woman and her environment. Furthermore, she appears to occupy more of her space as the edge of the canvas cuts her off at the knees. By Woman VI she becomes almost the whole landscape as the landscape has become integrated within her. By 1955, in Woman as Landscape, woman becomes the landscape as "'intimate proportions' spread to let the wind of a hill as you drive under it come through to fill the image."[25] The "intimate proportions" of woman's anatomy and areas in between are treated equally further creating interchangeable backgrounds and foregrounds.

As the areas between parts of woman's anatomy grew stronger, de Kooning's "intimate proportions" gave way to abstractions. In the early sixties, landscapes become dominant and female form again emerges. The return to the "likeness" of female anatomy was marked by Rosy Fingered Dawn at Louse Point (pl.35) and Pastorale (pl.36), both painted in 1963. The flesh colors used are the first implication of this. In the former painting, the pink shape on the lower left resembles a thigh and is connected to a shape that also alludes to the female anatomy. In Pastorale "the body is a hill. The legs are cut off by tree-trunk verticals. The curves of her breasts are echoed in the sky."[26] According to Amy Goldin, "like female imagery, landscape is for him an ever-present but passing allusion in a perennial experience of

Pl. 35. Rosy-Fingered Dawn at Louse Point. 1963.
Oil on canvas. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

Pl. 36. Pastorale. 1963. Oil on canvas, 70x80 in.
Collection Thomas B. Hess, New York.

transformation and flux."[27]

Pastorale marked not only the re-emergence of female form in de Kooning's paintings but also a change in his "no-environment". The term "no-environment" has generally referred to the urban landscape. Pastorale was de Kooning's last painting in urban landscape and already indicated by its clear and bright colors the light that was to influence his pictorial environment from then on.

The small paintings of women done on paper between 1963 and 1964 further indicate the change in de Kooning's work. The most dynamic example of this period is Clam Diggers, 1964 (pl.29.). The figures recall the painterly voluptuousness of a Rubens' goddess rather than the aggressive Woman of the fifties. Their anatomies no longer appear to be torn and reassembled (as they were in a similar painting, Two Women in the Country, 1954, (pl.37) but they flow into their natural place. De Kooning said of these paintings: "The figures are flating, like reflections in the water. The color is influenced by the natural light."[28] These are no longer women of "no-environment" but figures bathed in the light of the sky, sun and water.

In 1964 de Kooning began a series of Women that were reminescent of the aggressive women of the fifties. These were painted on doors, measuring 80 x 36 inches, half the width of his earlier large paintings. The narrowness of the panels cause the women to once again crowd their environments. However, their human scale project energy even in these

Pl. 37. Two Women in the Country, 1954.
Oil, enamel and charcoal on canvas,
Joseph H. Hirshhorn Collection.

limited spaces. In Woman, Sag Harbor, 1964 (pl.38), the female façade has been torn apart and reassembled like those of the Woman of the fifties. The harsh pink color and heroic scale of the woman recall Woman I. However, her spontaneity and semi-realistic color are reminiscent of the preceeding Rubensian Clam Diggers. The woman appears to be pushed upward, as if floating, leaving room for part of the environment to emerge on the bottom of the painting. While Woman, Sag Harbor acquired a country light, de Kooning's environment was still in a transitional stage, from urban to country. The exposed background is limited and the narrow panel met de Kooning's needs until he could invent shapes to express his new environment.[29] Although the gestures and colors of the woman are echoed in the background, the relationship to figure and background established in the fifties does not yet exist.

In the next few years, environment began to reassert itself in de Kooning's paintings. Woman Acabonic, painted in 1966, again on a narrow panel, nevertheless gives a glimpse of his new environment as the lower half of the woman's body narrows, taking up less space (pl.39). The brilliance of the orange color on the left of the Figure in Watermill Landscape and the green strokes indicating grass on the bottom of the canvas further expose the new environment (pl.40). In The Visit the boundary between the figure's legs and background fades as gestures in the background invade the figure. Photos taken of the painting in progress indicate the fluctuation between figure and landscape in the upper right until this

Pl.38. Woman, Sag Harbor
Oil, 1964.
Hirshorn Museum, Washington, D.C.

Pl. 39.
Woman Acabonic, 1966
Oil on paper, mounted on canvas.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Pl.40. Figure in Watermill Landscape. 1966.
Oil on canvas, 25x30 in.

Pl.41. Two Figures in a Landscape. 1967. Oil on canvas, 70x80 in.
Collection Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

area was finalized with an ambiguous form.[30]

The Woman of the late sixties was neither aggressive nor dominant in her environment but rather subdued by the landscape. In The Visit the figure is part of the landscape but by Two Figures in a Landscape, 1967 (pl.41) the figures are submerged in it. The spread legs are only recognizable because of their flesh color. In Woman in Landscape III, 1968 (pl.42), the gestures used to define parts of the female anatomy also define the contour of the land. Woman is no longer assembled from "interchangeable" parts but from color and gesture. It is color and gesture that has become "interchangeable" between figure and ground. Through gesture, de Kooning achieved harmony of form and color and of figure and ground. Thus Woman creates a rhytmic whole with the landscape. As Woman is subdued by the landscape, she actually becomes the landscape.

In the process of creating harmony between nature and his massive Woman, de Kooning also reached an accord between the three-dimensional nature of the human figure and the two-dimensional confines of the canvas. He created a sense of gravity and impact of the human form through the gestural application of paint. He was able to re-enforce the two-dimensionality of the canvas by repeating the same gestures in the background, thus placing figure and ground on the same plane. De Kooning often used newsprint and other materials to blot out areas of paint, creating contrasts in textures as well as jumps from one area to the next. This is

Pl. 42. Woman in Landscape III. 1968 Oil on canvas
Private Collection.

evident in Two Figures in a Landscape, 1967, at the bottom and upper left of the canvas (pl. 41). Just as the edge of the canvas was no longer a boundary for the Abstract Expressionists, the contour of the woman's anatomy no longer served as a boundary between figure and ground in de Kooning's paintings. The artist's gestures could assault figure and background freely.

De Kooning further solved the problems of flatness and depth by inventing his own shapes from those abstracted from nature and the female form. Then he re-assembled these shapes to allude to the form of Woman, thereby creating the illusion of depth. While "intimate proportions" create the illusion of depth the "no-environment", with an often suffocating space, contradicts it. Areas between "intimate proportions" have importance in themselves. As they adopt a more prominent role, they become "interchangeable" with parts of the anatomy, re-enforcing the flatness of the picture surface.

In the midst of revolutionary preoccupation with flat surface in American art, de Kooning brought back a tradition based on the illusion of depth. He combined traditional subject matter with his interpretation of contemporary techniques. His colors and forms, no matter how innovative they were, always retained a "likeness" to their natural source. Juxtaposing tradition and innovation was a natural process for de Kooning who was a master of contradictions. Throughout his carrer he has scraped, blotted, cut, collaged, splashed and worked from all sides of the canvas as if he

needed to destroy his images before he could create them anew. Along the way he made many innovations in technique: retarding the drying process with a personal recipe using commercial paint, using newspaper to protect the surface from air and removing paint by blotting it, then using the resulting texture as part of the finished surface. Innovations came about as responses to the immediate needs of paintings in progress rather than from theory or imposed structure. He set no limits and followed no style. De Kooning said: "I never was interested in how to make a good painting... I didn't work on it with the idea of perfection, but to see how far one could go." [31]

De Kooning's innovations can be placed into a definite historicap perspective only up to a point, for he is still painting. His techniques, painterly gestures and his treatment of figure and ground have inspired many younger artists, among them Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. Most importantly, de Kooning continues to inspire de Kooning while remaining open to other influences. Each of his paintings feeds off previous ones. His paintings of the 70's are as abstract as those of the late 40's. Figure and background are even more integrated as "they appear almost as after-images" of color and light.[32] The surface is more evenly treated than before and he is more abstract than ever before. Nevertheless, the flesh and magenta colors of the human figure and the blues, greens and sand colors of the landscape are still visible form time to time. Figure and landscape

remain the underlying image of many of these paintings. Speaking in 1963 of the sureness he felt in approaching his work, de Kooning said: "I think whatever you have, you can do wonders with it, if you accept it."[33] Part of what he had was inherited from the past. De Kooning achieved a transition between the past and his innovations.

NOTES

[1] Harold Rosenberg, De Kooning (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1974), p.23.

[2] First one-man show: black and white abstraction. Painting, 1948 purchased by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Diane Waldman, Willem de Kooning in East Hampton (New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1978), p.132.

[3] Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1968), p.124.

[4] Harriet Janis and Rudi Blesh, De Kooning (New York: Grove Press and London: Evergreen Books, 1960), p.13.

[5] Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning (New York: George Braziller Inc., 1959), p.25.

[6] Hess, Willem de Kooning, 1968, p.51.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Waldman, p.12.

[9] Rosenberg, p.20.

[10] Willem de Kooning, Content is a Glimpse (Excepts from an interview with David Sylvester, London, Spring 1963), Vol. I no.1, cited by Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning, 1968, p.148.

[11] Hess, Willem de Kooning, 1968, p.125.

[12] Harold Rosenberg, "Interview with Willem de Kooning", Art News, Vol. 71, no.5 (September, 1972), p.54.

[13] Waldman, p.130.

[14] Id., p.21.

[15] Thomas B. Hess, De Kooning: Recent Paintings (New York: Walker and Company in association with M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., 1967), p.34.

[16] Waldman, p.132-33.

[17] Rosenberg, p.24-25.

[18] De Kooning, cited by Hess in Willem de Kooning, 1968, p.149.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Hess, Willem de Kooning, 1968, p.75.

[21] Editors of Time-Life Books, Modern American Painting (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books Inc., 1970), p.151.

[22] Rosenberg, De Kooning, p.32.

[23] Hess, Willem de Kooning, 1959, p.18.

[24] Hess, Willem de Kooning, 1968, p.77.

[25] Hess, Willem de Kooning, 1959, p.22.

[26] Hess, De Kooning: Recent Paintings, 1967, p.16.

[27] Amy Goldin, "Abstract Expressionism, No Man's Landscape", Art in America, Vol. 64 (January-February 1976), p.78.

[28] Waldman, p.21.

[29] Hess, De Kooning: Recent Paintings, 1967, p.24.

[30] Id., p.35.

[31] Rosenberg, De Kooning, p.206.

[32] Waldman, p.27.

[33] De Kooning, cited by Hess in Willem de Kooning, 1968, p.150.

CHAPTER IV

CEZANNE AND DE KOONING: CONTENT AND PICTORIAL SPACE

> The hills around my place are covered with scrub-pine, little trees, that only last about fifty, sixty years. They die, then grow up again. So the hills look pretty much now as they did centuries ago when Indians were there. So that's timelessness. Scrub-pines. Isn't it strange, with all the talk about the Timeless, that it really is commonplace.[1]

Cézanne and de Kooning created "timeless" art, using subject matter that was and is "commonplace". What actually made their work timeless was the treatment of content and the unique space their content occupied. This chapter will involve a comparative study of two aspects of the art of Cézanne and de Kooning, content and pictorial space.

Half a century of abstract art separate Cézanne and de Kooning. For Cézanne the definition of an artist involved following in the tradition of the old masters. The subject of bathers in landscape followed this tradition. Even the Impressionists, as inventive as they were, did not completely abandon traditional space and imagery. Therefore, any change either in linear perspective or figurative and natural forms was daring. By de Kooning's time, pictorial space and the form and color of images had gone through many changes. As de Kooning said: "At one time, it was very daring to make a figure red or blue. I think now it is just as daring to make it flesh colored." [2]

As far back as the early Greeks, the nude symbolized the basic concept of symmetry and design. Kenneth Clark has stated that since the Renaissance, artists "have found it

easier to compose harmoniously the larger units of a woman's torso; they have been grateful for its smoother transitions, and above all they have discovered analogies with satisfying geometrical forms, the oval, the ellipsoid and the sphere."[3] Cézanne also saw analogies between natural and geometrical forms. Learning to master the principles of perspective and drawing from geometric forms as taught in 19th century art schools, clearly influenced Cézanne. He advised Emile Bernard to "see in nature the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, putting everything in proper perspective, so that each side of an object or a plane is directed toward a central point."[4] Theodore Reff contends that "the Platonic notion of geometric forms as the origin and essence of natural ones persisted in the later 19th century" and "was imposed on Cézanne's purely praymatic advice."[5] Reff asserts that Cézanne "chose the cylinder, the sphere, and the cone not as geometric solids of Platonic purity, but as forms whose curving surfaces recede continuously from the eye."[6] Therefore, Cézanne's treatment of forms cannot be examined separately from his treatment of space, as has been done by the Cubists who merely recognized the "geometric solids". Cézanne's aim was to bring forms into traditional perspective. Thus the above advice cannot be divorced from the rest of his statement to Bernard:

> Lines parallel to the horizon give breadth, that is, a section of nature... Lines perpendicular to this horizon give depth. But nature, for us men, is more depth than surface, whence the necessity of introducing in our vibrations of light - represented by reds and yellows - a sufficient quantity of blue to give the feeling of air.[7]

Cézanne has said "that bodies seen in space are all convex."[8] Visitors seeing Cézanne's work in 1905 said that he applied this theorem to flat surface as well.[9] Lawrence Gowing notes:

> This habit seems to have reflected an awareness of the fact that the line of vision from the eye meets a flat surface at every point at a different angle... The variation in the angles at which a falt surface presents itself to the eye is thus different only in degree from the angles at which the line of vision strikes a rounded surface.[10]

This explains the modulations from warm to cool colors of the spaces between trees and of the sky in paintings such as the Bathers of 1902-06 (pl.12). The treatment of spaces parallels that of the solid forms. In fact, Cézanne visualizes flat planes in the same way as solid forms. "His brushstrokes, both singly and as organized in patches or areas, take the form of planes set in definite space."[11]

Cézanne's spatial organization included both the shaping of individual objects into volumes which have depth and solidity, and the placing of such objects at various intervals and positions in two and three-dimensional space."[12] His bathers when looked at separately ar sculpturesque. Contour lines or heavier shadow outlines, encircling each form, accentuate their relief and set them clearly in space. He further defines his figures through modeling or starting with the point closest to the viewer's eye, thus indicating depth. The repetition of brushwork and colors that modulate both background and figures also become an integral part of the two-dimensional surface. Hence, they create a flat decorative effect that is in direct contrast to the perspective of figure

and ground. Bathers (pl.12) appears to be both a tapestry of color patches and a scene of figures bathed in light and shadow. The definition "flat-depth" (cf.p.33) accurately describes the dual nature of Cézanne's space.

As well as defining his forms, line also defines Cézanne's overall space. Although his objects in the background are defined almost as clearly as those in the foreground, Cézanne does use linear perspective, with some variation. Cézanne's space is created by a motif consisting of a series of figures on a horizontal plane, framed by trees through which one views a landscape. This landscape is based on receding horizontal planes, the depth of which is accentuated by vertical lines of trees, similar in composition to the paintings of Poussin (pl.43). Cézanne uses the traditional formula of vertical lines to emphasize depth and horizontal lines to give breadth. Overlapping figures, trees, foliage and clouds further indicate depth. Although objects diminish as they recede, the background plane remains on the pictorial surface (cf.p.33) and does not converge. Trees slanting toward the center apear to replace perspectival convergence.

Cézanne juxtaposed the illusion of depth with the flatness of pictorial surface. Elements that indicate depth also stress the flatness of the canvas. In the London Bathers (pl.5), the blue of the sky is the same blue which outlines and modulates the figures and which colors the drapery in the frontal plane. Similarly, in Bathers (pl.12) the patches of color that re-enforce the horizontal planes change direction in the sky to emphasize the upward direction of the trees.

Pl.43. Nicolas Poussin. Landscape with Woman Washing Her Feet. 1650. National Gallery of Canada.

These same brushstrokes repeated throughout the painting create a flat decorative surface. In pl.12, as in his other Bathers, Cézanne succeeded in creating a space wherein elements in the background appear to be both in depth and occupying the same plane as the figures in the foreground. Cézanne's space can thus be described as two and three-dimensional.

De Kooning's use of space Woman I was the most unique invented since Cubism.[13] In his paintings space and time are one. "In his two-dimensional space, time exists as lateral movement which is the only alternative to entrapment, and is therefore itself a dimension replacing the lost one of depth."[14] His space is without depth, almost claustrophobic, "where time and space merge into doomed immediacy."[15] Figure and background are on one plane as he excludes any form of perspective. He takes parts of woman's anatomy, abstract them and reassembles them on his canvas. His shapes and colors remain on the surface. Yet his flesh tones (Woman, Sag Harbor), his greens, blues and sand colors (Woman in Landscape XI) are realistic. The large scale of the women implies volume and gravity even though parts of their anatomy appear flat. In addition one generally associates the human form with solidity and occupation of space. Therefore, in terms of content, there exists the illusion of depth in de Kooning's paintings.

Thomas B. Hess states that the word "light" has replaced "space" in the vocabulary of postwar New York artists and that

de Kooning speaks of "my light" in reference to the content of his art.[16] The word refers to the artist's environment and his interpretation of it. It is a practical word since it includes both formalist concerns and those of content. De Kooning needed a new definition of space to link a flat surface with a three-dimensional theme. De Kooning said that "the idea of space is given to an artist to change if he can."[17] In reference to this Rosenberg said that de Kooning "releases the shape that is both an abstract sign and the emblem of a concrete experience from the stasis of objects located in deep space in order to make it function in a new kind of psychodynamic composition."[18]

De Kooning not only has Cézanne's spatial dilemma of placing women into landscape but also of infusing landscape into the women. The fifties Woman is in an ambiguous environement made up of fragments of New York landscape. De Kooning referred to this space as "no-environment".[19] By Woman VI, the contour of her "intimate proportions" opened up to the surrounding space (see chapter III). In Woman as Landscape(pl.27) the woman's anatomy becomes "interchangeable" with the background. The city "no-environment" gave way to country "light" in the sixties. Pastorale and the Rubensian blonds, as described in Chapter III, are the first to indicate the colors of his new space. Even in the narrow panels of 1964-66 (e.g. Woman, Sag Harbor) in which only a limited space is allotted for background, the colors indicating landscape already give off energy.

In Woman with a Hat (pl.44) the feet are shown frontally and flat. Hess states that "it is not a Cubist multiple-view, but rather a presentation of the specific angle from which each part of the body is the most itself, and is the most like de Kooning's idea - and the painting's requirement."[20] This view of the feet, cut off at the bottom of the canvas, re-enforces the surface-like frontal image. This latter effect is almost necessary to counteract the thick flesh color that indicates volume and the light blue tone in the lower half of the canvas that hints at depth.

In the figures in landscape images, in the later sixties, it is often difficult to separate the woman's anatomy from the landscape. Woman has become Landscape. Gestures that define the female form also define the contour of the land, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Vibrant colors and gestures integrate figure and landscape as they define de Kooning's space. This was even more true of the work of the seventies (pl.45). Thus, de Kooning totally reconciled three-dimensional form with the pictorial surface.

Cézanne looked at figure and landscape from different viewpoints, not from a fixed position as did the Impressionists whose space was conceptualized in a moment in time. Cézanne was more concerned with the structure and permanence of nature than with a moment in time. He further illustrated this concern by using a "sourceless light" by which his "colors were evenly illuminated throughout the entire picture... to reinforce the unbroken continuity of form

Pl. 44. Woman with a Hat. 1966
Oil on paper, 50x21.

Pl. 45. Untitled - Two Figures in a Landscape. 1976
Oil on paper mounted on canvas, Private Collection.

and color."[21] De Kooning does not use Cézanne's "multiple-view" but in a similar way chooses angles from which "each part of the body is the most itself". However, Cézanne's view meant to reinforce depth while de Kooning reinforces the pictorial surface. De Kooning places parts of the female form within a Cubist vertical and horizontal grid structure which was influenced by Cézanne. However, Cézanne's application of vertical and horizontal planes was calculated to give the illusion of depth. De Kooning's random placement of forms within this grid counteracts this illusion. Yet it is the Cubist influence that enables de Kooning to restructure his Woman within a two-dimensional space. Cubism is also the direct link between Cézanne and de Kooning. De Kooning's light, especially of the sixties and seventies, fuses color and form similarly to the effect of Cézanne's light. While Cézanne introduces " a sufficient quantity of blue to give a feeling of air", the blue equally illuminates the whole surface. Cézanne placed female form in a space that was not only three-dimensional but also respected the two-dimensional nature of the pictorial surface. De Kooning, on the otherhand, placed his Woman in a suffocating and limited space which denied her three-dimensionality. Both artist worked with contradictions to define a new pictorial space.

Barnes and de Mazia state that the narrative aspect of Cézanne's work was replaced by "the dynamic relation of planes and solid color volumes in deep space as the principal theme of his paintings."[22]

For the old masters, whom Cézanne emulated (as seen in Chapter II), the narrative of the painting was essential, especially when portraying nudes outdoors (pl.46). In Cézanne's Bathers the activity of bathing is irrelevant. His figures are simplified isolated forms without gestures and expressions that would convey interaction (pl.47).

According to Hess, de Kooning spoke of "Cézanne's admiration for Mallarmé, and described how Cézanne had taken the poet's use of the multiple meanings of words to paint a tablecloth that also would be a mountain."[23] Similarly, Cézanne's treatment of human forms is similar to that of his mountains and apples. The female figures in Bathers (pl.12) have become an overlapping arrangement of forms, as are the apples in his still-lives. The pyramidal composition of trees in Les Grandes Baigneuses might just as well be the arch or drapery in the works of the old masters. Cézanne's forms appear to be as "interchangeable" as the parts of de Kooning's Woman.

Cézanne's Bathers are not characteristic of the archetypal woman that prevailed throughout art history. His bathers are neither motherly nor sexual beings. They are not the goddesses who inspired the old masters. In them, color and form rather than emotion predominate. And since in his paintings woman and object are treated similarly, it appears as if Cézanne did not distinguish between them. Yet, it was his greatest ambition to paint female form in landscape, like the old masters. Cézanne remained a representational artist

Pl.46. Peter Paul Rubens. The Apotheosis of Henry IV.

Pl. 47 Five Nudes. 1870. Oil on canvas, 15½x16½"
Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pa.

who insisted on "the development of art through contact with nature."[24] Therefore one cannot separate the theme of his work from its depiction.

Cézanne's late Bathers are either male or female, never together in one composition. Emile Zola suggested that this separation was related to their youth: "They had even planned an encampment on the banks of the Viorne, where they were to live like savages, happy with constant bathing... Even womankind was to be strictly banished from that camp."[25] Zola depicted the character of the painter Claude Lantier, in his 1886 novel L'Oeuvre, after that of Cézanne. His notes for the book stated:

> He was wary of women... He never brought girls to his studio, he treated them all like a boy who ignored them, hiding his painful timidity under a rude bluster... "I do not need any women," he said, "-that would disturb me too much, I don't even know what they are good for - I have always been afraid to try."[26]

Religion and the moral ethics of his day may also have accounted for the sexual division in Cézanne's paintings. His family, especially his sister Marie with whom he was close, was religious. Fearing an early death, Cézanne turned to religion in his later years.[27] To have painted men and women together in a nude scene, without an allegorical connotation would most likely have seemed sinful to him.

Cézanne's relationship with his wife was strained. After his marriage, he lived most of the time with his mother and sister in Aix while his wife and son resided in Paris. Hortense's only role in her husband's life was that of a model. When she attempted to comment in a discussion on art,

Cézanne humiliated her in front of his friends by saying: "Hortense, be still, my dear, you are only talking nonsense."[28] Hortense posed often for Cézanne and was expected to do so without moving or talking. This was not easy for Cézanne worked very slowly. At one time he reproached her for moving by asking: "Does an apple move?"[29] As with most portraits of his wife (pl.48), his Bathers show no character or emotion. The figures are interpreted as objectively as props in a still-life (pl.1,47).

Cézanne had difficulty in getting along with people in general, male and female. Male models had as much difficulty as Hortense did in posing for him. Cézanne's estranged relationship with his wife, father and friends may very well have influenced his portrayal of human figures. For whatever reason, Cézanne treated the human form much as he treated object and landscape. This treatment represents the most original and revolutionary aspect of his paintings. Although Rewald states that, "Cézanne's fear of women had grown with age",[30] his Bathers continued to be modelled after nature in color and form. Figurative content was always an integral part of Cézanne's paintings.

By de Kooning's time "abstract art had made it possible to free the metaphor from specific objects", enabling him to create forms that were not recognizable out of context.[31] He created a repertory of shapes that were renewed from one painting to the next. Yet, no matter how often these shapes changed, they continued to allude to their source - parts of

Pl.48. Madame Cézanne in a Red Armchair, 1877. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

the female body or landscape. The right arm of Woman I resembles the profile of a leg as does the right arm of Woman IV (pl.49). Nevertheless, due to its various placements the shape recalls its original source, a human arm. When these parts are examined separately, color is the clue to their origin. In his later paintings, color is the only clue to the source of images taken from anatomy or landscape, images separated from their context. The woman in Woman in Landscape XI (pl.43) is still recognizable in context but the landscape is only suggested by the sand-colored background and green strokes indicating shrubs or grass. By Untitled-Two Figures in a Landscape (pl.45), " de Kooning wrested from his environment elements of coolness and warmth and sunlight and has made the tangible forms of figure and landscape... appear almost as after-images."[32] In his paintings of the 70's only the use of flesh color and occasional titles suggest the presence of female forms. De Kooning said that "content is a glimpse of something, an encounter like a flash."[33] He derives his content from what he has seen and experienced. A shape, even distorted, can be recognized if it is placed in a familiar framework. De Kooning reduced his context to a "glimpse" of figure and landscape.

In speaking about the content of his paintings de Kooning said:

> The Women had to do with the female through all the ages, all those idols, and may be I was stuck to an extent; I couldn't go on. It did one thing for me: it eliminated composition, arrangement, relationships, light - all this silly talk about line, color and form.[34]

Pl. 49. Woman, IV. 1952-53. Oil and enamel on canvas
Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City.

It appears from what de Kooning said that the female image offered him a convenient subject. The female form lent itself to both symbolic and abstract interpretation. On the one hand, Woman implies a narrative as it relates to women painted throughout art history. On the otherhand, its form represents a basic concept of symmetry and order. Therefore, by placing such a form simply in the center of his canvas, de Kooning eliminated the problem of giving his Woman a definable location.

The massive size and frontality of the Woman of 1950-53 and the totem-like image of the women painted on doors in the 60's accounts for their being referred to as goddesses. Thomas B. Hess, as an example, called the Woman of the fifties the "Black Goddess".[35] Nevertheless, he saw her comic nature as well. De Kooning said of her in 1963:"I think it had to do with the idea of the idol, the oracle, and above all the hilariousness of it."[36] The hilariousness of the Woman derives from the juxtaposition of the earth-goddess with the "modern-icons": pinup girls and go-go dancers.[37] The ferociousness of Woman and Bicycle, pl.33 (in which the teeth and smile are repeated as a collar) is contradicted by the fact that this image pokes fun at the ad from which it was taken.

As stated in Chapter III, Woman was more a parody of the media's view of women than it was de Kooning's real view of them. Nevertheless, de Kooning chose to portray this view. His portrayal of women as gossips or seductresses cannot be

avoided. They are generally shown go-go dancing, singing (pl.34), sunning, swimming or involved in other idle activity, often in unattractive poses (pl.38,30). Bitter Rice a film made in 1949, dealing with the exploitation of women in the rice fields, was a favorite of de Kooning. He especially liked the image of women knee-deep in the wet fields (pl.50). According to Charles Stuckey, Woman, Sag Harbor imitates "the beauties standing knee-deep in their own reflections."[38] Whether satirically or not, de Kooning's work continually reflected the narrow and often vulgar perception of women by the media. One such image de Kooning chose was the pinup with the wide smile and white teeth which he made into an icon in paintings such as Woman and Bicycle. His choice implied a view of wom[redacted]aken from the vulgarity of American life.

De Kooning is not completely representational since color, form and gesture are as much a part of his paintings as are women and landscape. He stated that the largeness of the Woman's breast was due to his own gestures (cf.p.62). Yet he never carries this formal attitude to the extent that form can be totally independent of content. Many of his aesthetic choices are related to his choice of subject matter. Magenta and garish pinks are chosen to interpret his women; the blues, greens and sand tones for his landscapes. The same can be said of line, form and composition. De Kooning's content is never buried under form. Thus, there is an attitude toward Woman that de Kooning cannot bury under the aesthetic necessities of his paintings. While Cézanne did not

4 *A de Kooning favorite: still from Giuseppe de Santis's 1949 film,* Bitter Rice.

P1.50.

distinguish between woman and object, de Kooning chose not to distinguish between Woman and superficial social attitude which cast her as an object.

NOTES

[1] De Kooning quoted by Thomas B. Hess, De Kooning: Recent Paintings (New York: Walker and Company in association with M. Knoedler & Co., Inc., 1967),p.24.

[2] Willem de Kooning, "Content is a Glimpse", an interview with David Sylvester, Vol.1, no.1 (London: Spring 1963), cited by Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning(New York : The Museum of Modern Art, 1968), p.148.

[3] Kenneth Clark, The Nude: A Study of Ideal Form (Great Britain: John Murray (Publishers) Ltd., 1949), p.344.

[4] John Rewald, Paul Cézanne (London: Spring Books, 1959), p.172.

[5] Theodore Reff, "Cézanne on Solids and Spaces", Artforum, Vol. XVI, no.2 (October, 1977), p.35.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Rewald, p.172.

[8] Léo Larguier, Le Dimanche avec Paul Cézanne, (Paris 1925), p.136., cited by Theodore Reff, p.36.

[9] Lawrence Gowing, "The Logic of Organized Sensations", Cézanne: The Late Work, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), p.57.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Albert C. Barnes and Violette de Mazia, The Art of Cézanne (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), p.35.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Harriet Janis and Rudi Blesh, De Kooning (New York Grove Press and London: Evergreen Books, 1960), p.59

[14] Id., p.32.

[15] Id., p.59.

[16] Hess, De Kooning: Recent Paintings, 1967, p.38-39.

[17] Harold Rosenberg, De Kooning (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1974),p.21.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Barbara Rose, American Art Since 1900 (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc. 1975), p.155-56.

[20] Hess, De Kooning: Recent Paintings, 1967, p.21.

[21] Alfred H. Barr Jr., Picasso: Fifty Years of his Art (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1946), p.20.

[22] Barnes and de Mazia, p.3.

[23] Thomas B. Hess, Willem de Kooning (New York: George Braziller Inc., 1959), p.15.

[24] Rewald, p,173.

[25] "They" included Cézanne, Zola and Baptistin Baille. Theodore Reff, "Painting and Theory in the Final Decade", Cézanne: The Late Work, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), p.38, quoting Emile Zola, L'Oeuvre, ed. Maurice Le Blond (Paris: Bernouard, 1928), p.39-40.

[26] Rewald, p.51.

[27] Id., p.101.

[28] Id., p.100.

[29] Richard W. Murphy and Editors of Time-Life Books, The World of Cézanne (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968), p.102.

[30] Rewald, p.149.

[31] Rosenberg, p.20.

[32] Diane Waldman, Willem de Kooning in East Hampton (New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1978), p.27.

[33] Richard W. Murphy and Editors of Time-Life Books, The World of Cézanne (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968), p.102.

[34] Rewald, p.149.

[35] Rosenberg, p.20.

[36] Diane Waldman, Willem de Kooning in East Hampton (New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Foundation, 1978), p.27.

[37] Willem de Kooning, "Content is a Glimpse", p.148.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Hess, Willem de Kooning, 1968, p.75.

[40] Willem de Kooning, "Content is a Glimpse", p.149.

[41] Hess, Willem de Kooning, 1968, p.77.

[42] Charles F. Stuckey, "Bill de Kooning and Joe Christmas", Art in America, Vol.68, no.3. (March, 1980), p.67.

CONCLUSION

For Cézanne and de Kooning there was a relationship between aesthetic choice and subject matter as well as between aesthetic choice and spatial choice. Therefore, in their paintings the interpretation of space is directly related to iconography.

In their iconography Cézanne and de Kooning represented an unsentimental attitude toward women. They denied the idea of beauty traditionally associated with the female body, Cézanne by portraying the female image as an object and de Kooning by dematerializing her altogether. Both artists presented a male chauvinist attitude similar to the one attributed by femininists to formalist art theories. One can also add that the chauvinist attitude of these artists did not differ greatly from that of other members of their society.

Femininists have rejected the portrayal of woman throughout art history as a goddess or either a sexual or decorative object. These archetypes have depersonalized woman by degrading her or making her anonymous. According to John Berger, "a naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude. (The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object.)"[1] Berger refers to the European art tradition wherein woman was portrayed as "an object of vision: a sight."[2] Modern art and formalist attitudes toward woman were even more impersonal. Cézanne

did not even see woman as an object to be owned or desired but simply as an object. And according to Hess, for de Kooning woman's body served as an "objective substructure."[3] Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe found it "exasperating" that Matisse insisted on describing his paintings of blank faced women "in terms of color and line alone."[4] Like Matisse, contemporary formalists insist on the exclusion of subject matter from their language; Cézanne's paintings are prime targets. For Cézanne and de Kooning, approach to content was both formalist and interpretative. Furthermore the formalist aspects of their work depended directly on the interpretive aspect.

The question at this point is: Would the spatial choices made by Cézanne and de Kooning be the same if they had treated their subject matter differently? Cézanne gave his bathers the same concern he gave his background. Both female image and surrounding space were treated with similar color, brushwork and simplified lines. Any further clarification and humanization of the female image would have made her even more sculpturesque, thus necessitating a dominant three-dimensional space to contain her. If this were so, the duality (two-and three-dimensionality) of Cézanne's space would not have been possible. Similarly, there is coherence between de Kooning's treatment of the female image and his spatial concerns. He has restructured Woman's anatomy and opened her up to the surrounding space in order to combine her three-dimensionality with the

flatness of the picture surface. Parallel painterly techniques define both figure and ground and make them "interchangeable." Dematerialization of Woman was necessary to the exclusion of perspective. Thus for Cézanne and de Kooning the integration of figure and ground could not have been possible without an unsentimental approach toward the female body. I would contend that this appoach was an aesthetic necessity with regard to spatial choice. Their work reflects a coherence of male chauvinist attitude and a preoccupation with formalist aspects of painting.

It could be argued that Cézanne was the source of a new form of male chauvinism in art - objectifying the female form out of necessity. De Kooning's paintings reflect the same necessity. Although Cézanne's Bathers are featureless and generalized, they remain interpretative. Cézanne's form of representation made new exploration of pictorial space possible. Similarly, de Kooning's treatment of Woman does not make his work any less representational. His form of representation made new exploration of two-dimensional space possible.

Their treatment of female form resulted in a new depiction of pictorial space, and, vice versa, their treatment of pictorial space logically resulted in an objective approach to subject matter, which happened to be woman. From a formalist point of view Cézanne's approach to still-life and landscape was no different from his treatment of the bathers. Similarly, de Kooning's treatment of woman,

derived partly from the abstractions of the 40's, was no different from his treatment of landscape. In this context therefore, the treatment of woman as object becomes understandable.

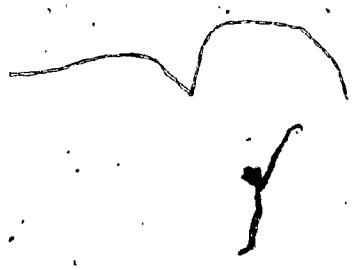
NOTES

[1] John Berger, Ways of Seeing, based on the BBC television series with John Berger(London: The British Broadcasting Corporation and Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Limited, 1972), p.54.

[2] Id., p.47.

[3] Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin (eds.), Woman as Sex Object (New York: Newsweek, Inc., 1972), p.228.

[4] Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, "Matisse the Representational Artist", Artforum, Vol. XVII, no.4 (December, 1978), p.49.



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