

IN THE MAKING

Paul Cézanne's five *Card Players* paintings have long been considered as some of his most important and iconic works. The series was a major undertaking and, unusually for the artist, he made a significant number of preparatory works, including drawings, watercolours and oil studies.

There are very few contemporary accounts which illuminate Cézanne's approach to producing his *Card Players* compositions, or indeed that reveal the order in which they were painted. This exhibition has provided a rare opportunity to undertake a technical and scientific study of the materials and techniques Cézanne used in creating these engaging works; one that provides fascinating insights into his unconventional approach to drawing and painting.



Many scholars have thought that Cézanne began with two multi-figure groups before moving on to three paintings that showed only a pair of card players. The multi-figure groups are now in the collection of the Barnes Foundation and the Metropolitan Museum, and the two-figure compositions now belong to the Musée d'Orsay, The Courtauld Gallery and a private collection. In each instance Cézanne was thought to have gradually refined his compositions reducing their scale in order to produce the smaller, simpler canvases.

These judgments – based on stylistic grounds – assumed that Cézanne worked against conventional 19th century painting practice. More usually, artists gradually increased the scale of their compositions. But new evidence suggests that, while still moving from the multi-figure groups to the two-figure versions, Cézanne was perhaps not quite so different to his contemporaries. Like them, it seems, he too worked from smaller to larger works.

EXHIBITION EVENTS

CARD PLAYERS LATES

Thurs 28 Oct, 25 Nov 2010 and 13 Jan 2011: until 21.00
Explore the exhibition together with our world-famous collection, listen to live music and gallery talks, marvel at card magic, watch French short films from Cézanne's time and enjoy Provençal refreshments in The Courtauld Gallery Café. *Normal admission fees apply* Supported by the

ArtFund

CURATOR'S TALKS

Wed 3 Nov, 1 Dec 2010, and 12 Jan 2011, 17.15 – 18.00

LUNCHTIME TALKS

Fri 5 Nov, 19 Nov, 3 Dec, 17 Dec 2010 and 7 Jan 2011. 13.15 – 13.30

SUNDAY TALKS

Every Sunday 24 Oct 2010 – 16 Jan 2011, 15.00 – 15.45 (except 26 Dec 2010)
Enjoy highlights of the exhibition and related works from the collection

All talks are free with admission



Please visit our website for podcasts, videos, downloadable learning resources and further information on our exhibition events: www.courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/cezanne

PUBLIC PROGRAMMES

The Courtauld Gallery offers a wide variety of workshops, tours and self-guided resources for schools, colleges and university groups. *For more information or to make a booking please contact: education@courtauld.ac.uk Tel. 020 7848 1058.*

Find out about all our Public Programmes including our renowned art history summer school, evening lectures, study trips and more: www.courtauld.ac.uk/publicprogrammes

TEACHERS' EVENING

Thurs 4 Nov 2010 17.45 – 18.45

Join us for a curator's talk and find out more about the exhibition and our education programme. Includes a free resource pack.
Booking essential: joff.whitten@courtauld.ac.uk Tel. 020 7848 2705

STUDY DAY: CÉZANNE'S CARD PLAYERS IN CONTEXT

Sat 11 Dec 2010, 10.30 – 16.15

Join us to explore the making and meaning of these celebrated masterpieces, look at Cézanne's treatment of the human figure and investigate the image and representations of peasants in 19th century French Literature. £35 (concessions £30)
Booking essential: short.courses@courtauld.ac.uk Tel. 020 7848 2678

IN THE MAKING based on research by Gabriella Macaro with thanks to Nancy Ireson, Barnaby Wright and Joff Whitten



IN THE MAKING
CÉZANNE'S CARD PLAYERS
21 OCTOBER 2010 – 16 JANUARY 2011

LARGE PRINT ON REQUEST

DRAWING AND PAINTING

Cézanne used farm labourers from his family estate at the Jas de Bouffan in Aix-en-Provence to model for his *Card Players* paintings. Interestingly, however, none of the studies show them arranged as a group. It is likely, then, that Cézanne posed his models separately and brought them together as pairings and groups, working freely on the actual canvases.

Cursory preparatory drawing in pencil or charcoal is visible beneath the paint layers of the finished *Card Players* paintings when they are viewed under infrared light (fig. 1).



Fig. 1

This reveals that the artist did not rely solely on pencil strokes to outline his compositions; more often he painted lines with a brush to map out the initial contours.

Frequently blue ultramarine paint served for this purpose. Cézanne then filled in the spaces with thicker patches of colour.

Traces of this painted drawing are sometimes visible in gaps between forms (fig. 2 and cover image).



Fig. 2

Occasionally – even in the final stages of the painting process – Cézanne reinforced a line to emphasise or exaggerate a contour (fig. 3). This was a highly unconventional way of working in the 19th-century when, more typically, artists

disguised all traces of drawn lines in their finished paintings.



Fig. 3

Cézanne also made revisions on the canvas, as is seen by comparing the pencil underdrawing for the left-hand figure in the Metropolitan Museum's *Card Players* (fig. 4) with the preparatory watercolour study of this figure (fig. 5).



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Initially, Cézanne drew the bottom of the sitter's jacket lower down the thigh, with the edge of the jacket curving up towards the torso. This outline matches the curve of the jacket in the watercolour study (fig. 5), but he decided to change its length and shape at a later stage.

However, at other times, the artist seems to have been less confident. The pencil lines marking out this sitter's fingers and knuckle are vague; this could be from the lack of detail on the equivalent hand in a study which may have served as a guide. Sometimes, when an area proved particularly challenging, Cézanne may have made an additional study before embarking on a new *Card Players* composition.

RE-THINKING THE SEQUENCE

The artist's under-drawing and his use of the individual figure drawings and watercolours challenges conventional ideas about the order in which the *Card Players* canvases were made. The hands and cards of the figure in a blue smock in the Metropolitan Museum's *Card Players* (fig. 3), a work usually thought to post-date the Barnes canvas, for example, are entirely incomplete: a problem that may have prompted him to produce a watercolour (fig. 6) in an attempt to resolve the issue.



Fig. 6

Interestingly, in the Barnes canvas, the detail did not seem to cause Cézanne a problem, which may suggest that he produced the Metropolitan painting at the very outset of the series, before progressing to a larger composition.

Moving on to the two-figure paintings, infrared images of pencil underdrawing beneath the paint layers of the Musée d'Orsay picture indicate that Cézanne worked out its composition in pencil to a much greater extent than in The Courtauld Gallery version. The latter work shows only loose painted lines beneath the concluding paint layers, perhaps because he had already practiced this arrangement of figures on previous occasions. This evidence suggests that the Musée d'Orsay picture might not be the final work of this group of Cézanne's *Card Players*, as was thought previously, but rather the first.