

## **PAUL CÉZANNE**

France, 1839–1906

### ***Un Clos (A Close)*, ca. 1890**

Oil on Canvas

Purchase, Robert Allerton Fund and donations from Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Clark, Jr. and Academy friends, 1980 (4845.1)

*Un Clos* exemplifies Paul Cézanne's approach to nature: a desire to delve beyond its external appearance and express its essential order and stability. Carefully ordering his forms, Cézanne built them into a structural unity through the use of a limited color scheme—green, blue, violet, with occasional flickering touches of ochre and tan—interwoven into a shimmering mass of parallel brushstrokes. Cézanne drew with color, creating movement and depth as the colors recede and advance. Above, patches of sky are visible through the foliage, with the bright blue triangle in the upper right opening up the painting. The magnificent tangle of branches demonstrates the dynamics of Cézanne's composition—thrusts and counterthrusts, curves and countercurves, a network of opposing and interlocking triangles. *Un Clos* brings the viewer in contact with the artist's inner spirit, providing inspiration as well as instruction.

## PAUL CÉZANNE

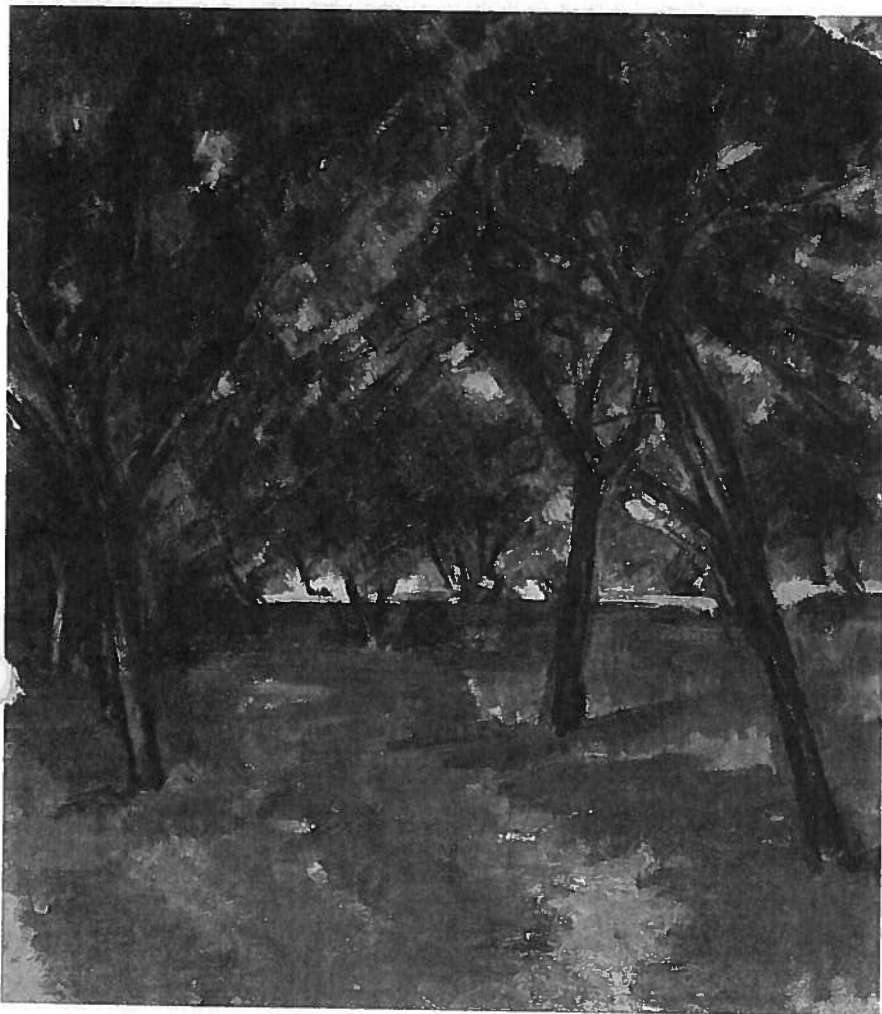
France, 1839–1906

### *Un Clos (A Thicket)*, ca. 1890

Oil on canvas

Purchase, Robert Allerton Fund and donations from Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Clark, Jr. and Academy friends, 1980 (4845.1)

Paul Cézanne sought to delve beneath external appearances to express the essential order and stability of nature. In this painting of a thicket, he has deliberately composed his forms, building them into a structural whole by interweaving a limited palette—green, blue, violet, ochre, and tan—into a shimmering arrangement of parallel brushstrokes. Cézanne drew with color, creating movement and depth as tones advance and recede. Patches of blue sky are visible through the foliage, itself a magnificent web of interlocking triangles that further energize the composition. *Un Clos* brings the viewer into contact with the artist's mind, providing inspiration as well as instruction.

**PAUL CÉZANNE**

French, 1839–1906

*Un Clos (A Close)*, ca. 1890

Oil on canvas; 24¼ × 20½ in. (61.6 × 52.1 cm.)

Purchase, Robert Allerton Fund and donations from Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Clark, Jr., and Academy friends, 1980 (4845.1)

“Painters must devote themselves entirely to the study of nature and try to produce pictures which will be an education,” Paul Cézanne wrote shortly before his death. *Un Clos*, painted at the beginning of his important last period, exemplifies Cézanne’s approach to nature: a desire to delve beyond its external appearance and express its essential order and stability. In this work he recorded his sensations of the dense canopy of a grove of trees. Carefully ordering his forms, Cézanne built them into a structural unity through the use of a limited number of colors—green, blue, violet, with occasional flickering touches of ochre and tan—interwoven in the shimmering mass of parallel brushstrokes that depict the foliage and masterfully hold together the cross-directional accents of tree trunks and branches. Cézanne drew with color rather than line, creating movement and depth as colors recede or advance. Here, the viewer is drawn by a path into the

vibrant green meadow between the foreground trees, through the cool, shaded grove to the line of warm accents that suggest brilliant sunlight shining in a clearing beyond. Above, patches of sky are visible in the foliage, the remarkable bright blue triangle in the upper right subtly opening up the composition. There the eye connects with a tree branch, which leads to the magnificent tangle of branches that demonstrates the dynamics of Cézanne’s composition—thrusts and counterthrusts, curves and countercurves, a network of opposing and interlocking triangles, all enmeshed by a vigorous, agitated brushwork that sets up rhythms almost akin to musical sensations. Just above is a stroke of crimson red, a visual spark that ignites the painting’s color harmonies. Imbued with sensitivity, perception, and technical mastery, *Un Clos* brings the viewer in contact with the artist’s inner spirit, providing inspiration as well as instruction. JJ

"Un Clos" (A Close) #4845.1  
Academy Purchase (1980)  
Oil on canvas; H. 24 1/4"; W. 20 1/2"

UNL 1

Paul Cezanne (French)  
1839-1906  
c. 1895  
Gallery 1

Artist: Paul Cezanne was born in Aix-en-Provence on January 19, 1839. His father was co-founder of the Cezanne/Cabanol banking firm, which insured Paul's future in a well-to-do Bourgeois family. From 1841 to 1849, Cezanne attended school in Aix (the Rue Epinaux and the Pensionnat St. Joseph). In 1852 he attended the College Bourbon, where he formed a strong friendship with Emile Zola. In 1856, Cezanne attended drawing courses of Joseph-Marc Gilbert at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Aix, where he worked primarily in an Academic style. He enrolled in law school in 1858 so as not to disappoint his family, but later that year he also enrolled in the School of Design in Aix, having decided to dedicate himself to painting. Cezanne moved to Paris in 1861 where he studied Caravaggio and Velazquez at the Louvre. After a brief period of self-doubt during which he returned to Aix and re-enrolled at the School of Design, Cezanne once again moved to Paris. This period was very important to his development for during this time he saw the Salon des Refuses, the great exhibition of Delacroix, and met Pissarro. However, in 1864 he returned to Aix, with a strong distaste for city life, although he continued to alternate his stays in either place. On one of his visits to Paris (1869), he met Hortense Fiquet with whom he lived for a while and later married. Cezanne's friendship with Pissarro blossomed after the War of 1870. Cezanne recognized the value of Pissarro's color researches and the importance of painting "en plein air." His paintings were repeatedly refused by official salons, until in 1882, when he was finally accepted as a pupil of Guillemet. Cezanne's friendship with Zola came to an end in 1886 after Zola published L'Oeuvre. The hero was modeled on Cezanne and represented as a failure. The 1890's were difficult years for Cezanne; he began to suffer from diabetes in 1890; his mother died in 1897; and in 1899 Cezanne was forced to sell a country house, which had belonged to the family and provided him peace of mind while nearby Paris. His paintings were becoming

more popular by the turn of the century. He exhibited in the famous Exhibition of 1900 in Paris and in 1904 and 1905 at the Salon d'Automne. However, on October 15, 1906, after being overtaken by a storm while painting outdoors, Cezanne's health worsened. He died on October 22, 1906.

Subject: Landscape painting which depicts a dense, canopy of shade trees in the fore- and middle-ground and a vibrant, green meadow in the distance. Patches of blue sky show through the dense foliage.

Medium and Technique: Oil on canvas. Cezanne utilizes primarily greens, blues and violets with occasional patches of tan and ochre. The colors have been applied in short, parallel brushstrokes and very little line has been used in rendering form.

Style: "Un Clos" was painted at the beginning of Cezanne's important last period, which produced his greatest and most characteristic works. His mature style is marked by a strong sense of composition and, in particular, a well thought out structure or underlying order in nature. Cezanne uses very little line in his paintings. Instead, he builds form through color, which is often applied in planes or patches in short, parallel brushstrokes. His colors are at times heightened by the strategic placement of a single stroke of complimentary color. His paint is applied thickly in certain areas of the canvas while other areas have been left untouched.

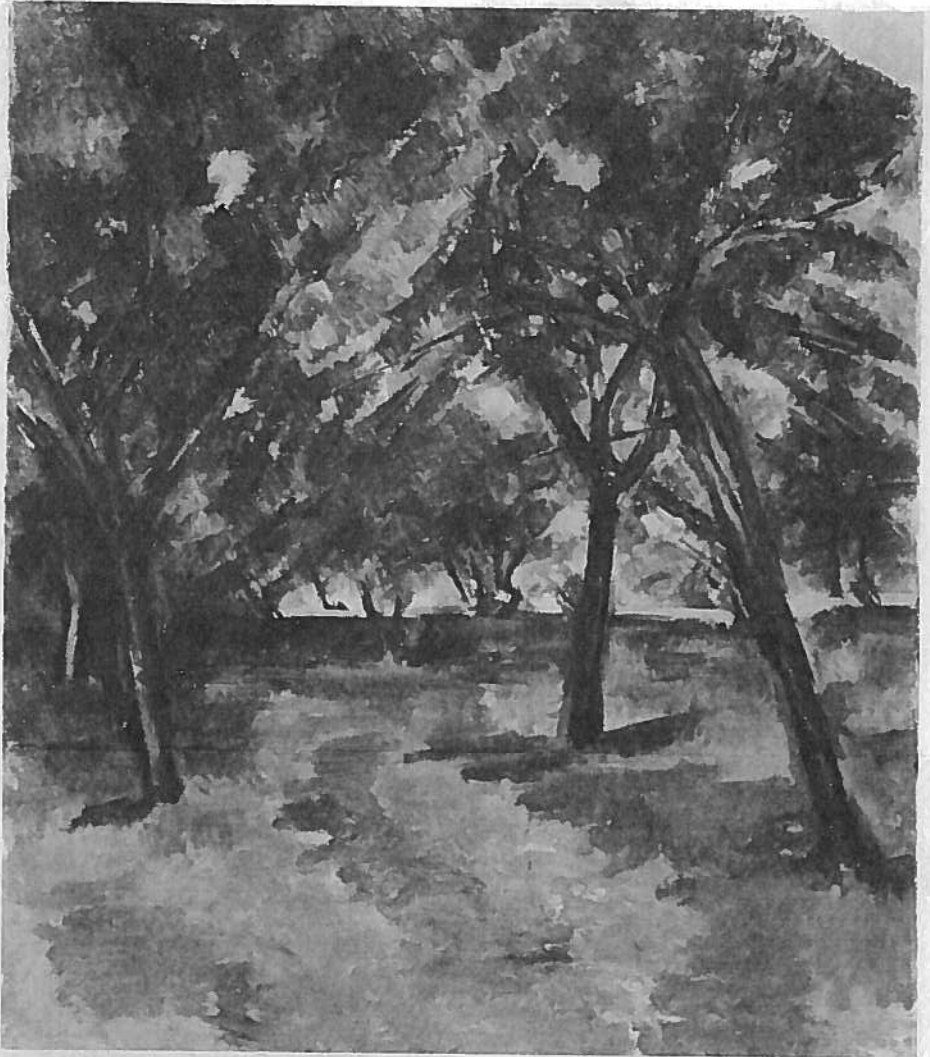
#### Instructional Aids:

- Compare and contrast with Monet's "Waterlilies," especially in terms of brushwork and speed of execution.
- Explain why painting "en plein air" was a significant change from earlier 19th century French painting. What advantages/disadvantages would it have?
- Contrast with "La Pomme" by George Braque and discuss how Cubism was a logical offshoot of Cezanne's painting theories.
- Discuss space and movement in "Un Clos."
- Determine what sort of season or day it appears to be.
- Determine how Cezanne creates a sense of order or stability in nature.

PAUL CEZANNE  
4845.1

Paul Cezanne, 1839–1906, France  
*Un Clos (A Close)*, c. 1895  
oil on canvas; h. 24¼", w. 20½" (61.6 x 52.1 cm.)  
This work is being purchased for the collection, and funds are now being raised by the Academy for this purpose. On view in gallery 1.

4845.1



“ ‘Painters must devote themselves entirely to the study of nature and try to produce pictures which will be an education,’ Cezanne wrote shortly before his death. Yet he could hardly foresee how exemplary his own pictures would become: since then, almost every major painter, even if less devoted to nature than he, has found in his work a source of instruction as well as inspiration. For Klee he was ‘the teacher par excellence,’ for Matisse ‘the father of us all,’ for Picasso ‘a mother who protects her children.’ As is evident from their work, each of them responded to another aspect of Cezanne’s complex and constantly evolving art, and the same is true of all those modern painters who, from Gauguin in the 1880s to Jasper Johns eighty years later, have taken it as a model or ideal.” (quoted from Theodore Reff, “Painting and Theory in the Final Decade,” in *Cezanne: The Late Work*, Museum of Modern Art, 1977).

The Academy is indeed pleased to announce the acquisition of an important work, *Un Clos*, by this pivotal figure in the development of modern art — the most significant addition to the collection of Western art in recent years and the capstone to gallery 1, which already contained works by artists profoundly influenced by Cezanne, such as Gauguin, Matisse, Picasso and Braque, to name only a few. *Un Clos* was painted c. 1895, at the beginning of Cezanne’s important last period, which produced the culmination of his art. *Un Clos* exemplifies Cezanne’s approach to nature: he desired, as John Canaday wrote, “to express the grandeur, the life, the power, yet the eternal order and stability of nature,” and his chief aim was, in the words of Mather, “to create the color equivalent for the truth of nature’s structure, the residual important thing remaining after the accidental appearance had been thought away.”

*Un Clos* is a superb example of Cezanne’s mature style. The artist recorded his

sensations of the dense canopy of a grove of trees, carefully ordering his forms, building them into a structural unity through the use of a limited number of colors — green, blue, violet, with occasional, flickering touches of ocher and tan — interwoven in the shimmering mass of parallel brushstrokes which depict the foliage and masterfully hold together the cross-directional accents of tree trunks and branches. Every stroke was laid on with thought and the canvas left uncovered here and there with intention. Cezanne drew with color rather than line, creating movement and depth as colors recede from or advance to the eye. Here, the viewer is drawn as by a path into the vibrant green meadow between the foreground trees, through the cool, shaded grove to the line of warm accents which give a sense of brilliant sunlight shining in a clearing beyond. The eye is lifted to the foliage above, in which are visible patches of sky, the remarkable bright blue triangle in the upper right corner subtly opening up the composition. There the eye connects with a tree branch, which brings it forcefully down

to the magnificent tangle of branches where one becomes ever more involved in the dynamics of Cezanne’s sense of composition — thrusts and counterthrusts, curves and countercurves, a network of opposing and interlocking triangles, all enmeshed by the vigorous, agitated brushwork which sets up rhythms akin to almost musical sensations Cezanne felt in the air. Just above is a stroke of crimson red, seemingly an overlooked accident but no doubt a deliberate addition by Cezanne, for it is a visual spark which ignites the color harmonies, sending the eye reverberating throughout the painting and drawing it back again.

*Un Clos* is a masterpiece among the late paintings which Fritz Novotny described as “landscapes of timeless peace and breathless quiet.” Imbued with Cezanne’s sensitivity, perception and technical mastery, *Un Clos* conveys a personal, charged experience which brings us into contact with the artist’s inner spirit and provides inspiration as well as instruction. NOV 80