

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Seeing the still life in a fruit bowl

Maurice Amiel · Tuesday, January 25th, 2022

“Quand la couleur est à sa richesse, la forme est à sa plénitude. (The richer the colour, the fuller the form.)”

— Paul Cézanne

What Cézanne means, I think, is that rich colors have a visual depth that can express best the fullness of form.

The feature image, reprised below, is from a painting by Cézanne that goes by the title “Still life with cherries and peaches” and that I have chosen to illustrate the above quote.



Cézanne, “Still life with cherries and peaches,” ca 1885.

Let us note how his “strategic” use of complementary colors such as red cherries near the green pot and the blue curtain near the orange peaches cannot but make the fullness of the fruit dishes perceptually amenable and to make them seem to come out of the canvas.

Here comes the light.

Inspired by Cézanne's observation, the following photos are of a fruit bowl that occupies the center of my dining table.

Lit naturally and artificially for studied effect, I have chosen them for their property of richness of colors and consequent fullness of form to be discussed in each case.



The magic of dark indigo blue to carry the other colours into forms

Oranges and red apples inside a dark blue ceramic bowl placed at the center of a cloth covered table.

Note how the play of shade and shadows helps to delineate the volumetric of the fruits...helped in great part by the complementariness of the bright orange and dark blue colour of the bowl and table cloth.



The wizardry of odds in form espousing colours

An orange and two red apples against a uniformly deep dark blue-black background that heightens the softly lit fruits and vividly renders the illusion of their three-dimensionality.



Here comes the green

By replacing the orange with a green pear and a pinkish grenade I felt the need to introduce the blue and yellow of the table cloth as background while the bowl interior, turned almost black provided a visual frame to the fruits.

The shape and size of the fruits, the details of their 'anatomy', and their relative light reflectivity have become volumetric points of interest, rather than the harmony of their colors, against the out of focus background.



Check the shadow

This night-lit fruit bowl gives volumetric pre-eminence to the fruit texture, colours and detail

The shaded parts of the fruits would completely blend in the background were it not for the shiny bowl edge and the fruit stems that, in a way, steal the show by visually pulling the fruit forward.

Discussion

Cézanne, his persona and work, has been a subject of fascination since my boyhood.

It is only recently that I was able to appreciate the particular quality of his still lives, a quality explained by his understanding of the relationship between color and form.

I hope my images and accompanying comments can be construed as a modest homage to the master.

Credits

Credit image of Cézanne painting to LACMA, as published by [Retrospect Group](#) for their *Paul Cézanne 2019 calendar*

Credit the other photos to Maurice Amiel

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