Abstract
From around 1933 onwards, painter Léo Marchutz, in cooperation with art historians John Rewald and Fritz Novotny, began to catalogue and photograph the landscapes painted by Paul Cézanne. The important role Léo Marchutz played for their attempts to use photography for the scholarly purposes of art history and in the development of a network of Cézanne researchers interested in this methodological approach can be reconstructed in detail from their correspondence. In addition to the possibilities these documents offer for a historiographic study of the development of early research in modern art, Marchutz’ work can also be seen as an example for the often underestimated reciprocal influences between creative practice and art historic research.

Keywords: Léo Marchutz, John Rewald, Fritz Novotny, modern art, historiographic study, painting

Léo Marchutz, born 1903 in Nuremberg, began his artistic career as an autodidact. In his early years, Cézanne’s art—which Marchutz got to know by an exhibition held at the gallery of Bruno Cassierer in Berlin in 1921 and through his visits at the Neue Pinakothek in Munich— influenced his view of the possibilities and purposes of art. In his later autobiographical statements, Marchutz’ stressed the importance of his early contacts to Cézanne’s art for his rejection of academic training as an artist and his decision to develop his own style through the individual study of other artists’ works in museums (Châtelet 19). Inspite of this early fascination for Cézanne, it was rather through coincidences that Marchutz began his investigation of Cézanne’s motives, a work which he should continue throughout his whole life. Marchutz first came to Aix-en-Provence in 1928, when his later wife, Anna Kraus, offered him this journey for his help with selling a picture by Cézanne. When they decided to visit the Château Noir, they made the acquaintance of a coachman who had been working for Cézanne and therefore knew some of Cézanne’s favorite places where he regularly went to paint. It seems plausible that this coachman gave the decisive impulse to look out for these places. Arrived at the Château Noir, Marchutz spontaneously decided to rent a small apartment in Cézanne’s old residence, a decision which clearly hints at the enthusiasm he felt for his self-chosen artistic role model. This enthusiasm can also be discerned in Marchutz’ paintings from the first years he spent in Aix, where he definitively settled down in 1931. His landscape paintings with views of the Montagne Sainte-Victoire and a number of still lives painted between 1928 and 1931 show, in spite of all existing differences in style, a deliberate proximity to Cézanne, which already can be seen in the choice of subjects typically associated with Cézanne. Additionally, his interpretation shows the intention to imitate some formal characteristics, especially concerning the creation of volume through large colored patches, an intention that becomes even more obvious when these pictures are compared with his paintings of the Mount Sainte-Victoire from the 1960s, which are in all aspects much more typical for the personal style he had developed.
For Marchutz, the atmosphere of Provence played a decisive role for his study of Cézanne’s oeuvre. Until late in the 1960s, he used to cite an – unnamed – art critic of the 1920s, who, according to Marchutz, had stated that “One has to see the Cézannes in the light of Aix … it is necessary that one has the possibility, once in his lifetime, to see these pictures at the same places where they have been painted.” It seems quite obvious that Marchutz not only shared this opinion, but that he also found himself inspired to conduct his own investigation for the places where Cézanne used to paint. This, rather personal than systematical, investigation began to change when Marchutz, around 1933, got to know two art historians who played an important role in early Cézanne research: John Rewald and Fritz Novotny. At this time, Novotny had already published an article on Cézanne (Paul Cézanne, 440-50), and was planning to conduct further studies on the relation between realism and deformation in Cézanne’s works. For this purpose, Marchutz offered him his help in identifying the landscapes Cézanne had painted, to allow a direct comparison between the actual geographical facts and their appearance in Cézanne’s landscape paintings. Rewald, on the other hand, was still a student looking for a topic for his doctoral thesis, a question he frequently discussed in the letters he wrote both to Marchutz and Novotny. The letters kept by Marchutz’ son, as well as documents from Novotny’s estate kept in the archive of the institute of art history in Vienna make it possible to reconstruct their cooperation in detail. From 1933 onwards, John Rewald became a frequent guest at Marchutz’apartment in the Château Noir, and he started to accompany Marchutz on his search for Cézanne’s motives. As Novotny, who was working at the University of Vienna as an assistant, could not participate in these investigations, they frequently informed him on their findings in letters, detailing the circumstances of their work and giving precise descriptions both of the landscape and of the corresponding painting(s) by Cézanne, as e.g. in a letter written by John Rewald to Fritz Novotny on 12 August 1933:

After we briefly informed you about our ‘discovery’ yesterday, I would now like to describe the closer circumstances to you. … Incidentally, we also learned on the day before, that the cashier in the branch of ‘Crédit Lyonnais’ in Aix had formerly been C.’s driver, and indeed he gave us a quite detailed description of the place, and, what is even more important, he pointed out some new undiscovered places to us. Nevertheless, it took some hours until we found the place, but in this way the places for a number of pictures are now discovered. High atop a hill that belongs to a domain called ‘Bellevue’, there is a young forest. Stepping out of it, one finds himself in front of a vineyard. Almost exactly at their border, where wood and field meet, C. must have stood. The place is – as we can definitively state after our long search – the only one in the area where the viaduct is visible, because it is, if one only walks down a few metres, covered by the trees along a highway Aix-Marseille that runs almost parallel to it. The two trees, which close the picture so beautifully to the upper edge, unfortunately don’t exist anymore. They must have been at the edge of the now existing young forest. … The diagonal way that leads to the covered house, or, better, that runs alongside the house, is the embankment of the single-track railway Aix-Rognac. Unfortunately, it is barely visible, as bushes and trees cover it completely. Much more distinguishable and with an almost wonderful clarity one sees the formation of the mountains,
the clear, white, regular viaduct and also some single buildings in the far background.

The detailed description given in this letter allows it to identify both Rewald’s photograph (Fig. 1) and Cézanne’s painting, La Sainte-Victoire au Grand Pin, to which he referred when he bemoaned the loss of the trees.

Fig. 1: Photograph of the Mt. Sainte-Victoire, John Rewald, 1933. Source: Novotny, Fritz. Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftlichen Perspektive, Fig. 5.

It also shows the attempts of Rewald to clarify the significance of some objects which are hard to identify in the picture, as it is the case for the railroad embankment. In this love for details, an important characteristic of Rewald’s later works can already be discerned, and it seems that this trait of his personality made him an ideal investigator for the identification of exact locations he and Marchutz attempted. During the first years of their cooperation, Marchutz attached great importance to the difference between his personal motivation and the scholarly strife for completeness he observed with Rewald and Novotny. On 9 May 1934, he wrote to Rewald: “I have to remind you what made me look for the motives in the first place. It was the joy of perception, which is grounded for me in uniting the Cézanne-photograph (in lack of the painting) with the motive.” At the same time, Marchutz was aware of the change in his own attitude that slowly occurred through the steady contact and collaboration with both art historians. From 1935 to 1936, Marchutz and Rewald became co-authors of three articles, a status that in the case of Marchutz went along with a stronger identification with the higher value of completeness and systematic arrangement in the scholarly discourse. The first two articles published by Marchutz and Rewald were dedicated to relatively small groups of paintings and motives. In 1935, they published Cézanne au Château Noir in the French journal “L’Amour de l’Art”, beginning with a place which was not only of high personal significance for
Cézanne, but also for Marchutz and his involvement in the research undertaken with Rewald. In the same year, they published more of their photographs in an article called *Cézanne und der ‘Jas de Bouffan’*. Their third publication, *Cézanne et la Provence*, which followed in 1936 was much more ambitious in the range of the chosen topic and showed a more distanced and objective approach than the earlier texts. As in the first two articles, the text – essentially a biographical description with an emphasis on the subjective importance of the Provence for Cézanne’s life and work - was accompanied by photographs of some of Cézanne’s preferred motives. Additionally, the authors included a map on which they marked the routes Cézanne had frequently used to reach the places where he painted (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Map of Aix-en-Provence with marks for Cézanne’s preferred routes and motives. Source: Rewald, John and Léo Marchutz, *Cézanne et la Provence*, Le Point, 4, August 1936.

Maybe even more than the photographs, this map is an essential part of the publication, as large passages of the text are written in the form of a “virtual walk” along the routes Cézanne used to take:

When, around 1885, the painter’s brother-in-law, M. Maxime Conil, acquired a beautiful property – called Montbriand – located in the south-west of Aix, close to the Jas, Cézanne frequently went there to paint. On his way to Montbriand, he sometimes stopped to fix the panorama of the Vallée de l’Arc in a watercolour or a painting. A landscape painted midway between the Jas de Bouffan and Montbriand is in the Museum of Western Art in Moscow. Another time, it was on the way back from Montbriand, on the street that leads directly to Aix, that he
made – on a double page of his notebook that he always had with him – this sketch of a very beautiful square house with other buildings at its sides and where, in the background, on the left side, a black mass appears which is nothing else than a gasometer⁷.

It is important to note that the form Marchutz and Rewald chose for their text must not be misinterpreted as an early example for a genre of literature dedicated to tourists that became popular in the late 20th century. Rather, the form they chose reflects both authors’ personal approaches to Cézanne’s art, which was, especially for Marchutz, closely linked to an emphatic reconstruction of the circumstances under which the paintings had been created. On the other hand, the three articles show some striking similarities to Rewald’s book Cézanne et Zola that also contains 13 photographs of landscapes they had identified as motives of Cézanne’s paintings. Both in the articles and in the book, the photographs are not used for analytical comparisons between the landscape and Cézanne’s paintings, which are, in general, only rarely subjects of an analytical approach to questions of formal qualities or style. Rather than for a demonstration of either the amount of naturalism in Cézanne’s work or any changes made to fit his artistic purposes, Rewald used the photographs to develop his approach to the genre of the artist’s biography. First, the comparison between the paintings and the motives made it possible to link the places Cézanne had preferred to a specific period of time and thus to biographical aspects known from his letters and the early Cézanne biographies published by Emile Bernard and Joachim Gasquet. In this way, Rewald arrived not only at a lively picture of Cézanne, but also at a close and detailed connection between life and work missing in the earliest biographies. As both Bernard and Gasquet could only draw on their acquaintance with the already aged Cézanne, their books are not very informative on earlier stages of Cézanne’s career, which were the main area of Rewald’s interest. Drawing both on Cézanne’s letters and on his own knowledge of the environment where Cézanne had created his work, Rewald was able to create an impression of Cézanne’s personality which was – in comparison to Bernard’s and Gasquet’s books – relatively unbiased, as it did not rely solely on personal memories of more or less representative events from occasional visits to an ageing artist. On the other hand, Rewald’s interpretation of Cézanne as a person deeply linked to the landscape of Provence might also have been influenced by his intensive cooperation with Marchutz. A description of the painter’s relation to his home country given by Rewald in Cézanne et Zola gives an impression of the empathic dimension Rewald might have developed through this contact: „This landscape of wide planes, of large masses, of clearly traced lines, this landscape where mass seems to absorb the details could maybe explain why Cézanne loved so much, as he said, the configuration of his country and why he preferred it over the landscapes of the Île de France.”⁸ (119)

The exchange that developed during the 1930s between Marchutz, Rewald and Novotny did not only touch questions linked to the identification and documentation of additional motives. From 1933 onwards, Marchutz became one of the persons Fritz Novotny frequently contacted for advice on his theories. In 1934, he sent him a copy of an unfinished manuscript entitled Zur Frage des Bildausschnitts, asking him for his opinion on the ideas Novotny had developed by comparing the photographs to paintings by Cézanne. For his comparisons, he cut the part of the landscape Cézanne had depicted
out of the photographs, and glued these cut pictures on index cards, together with a miniatura reproduction of the painting. An example for the result of these operations is shown in Fig. 3. These cards that are kept as a part of Novotny’s estate show another aspect of the use of photography in early Cézanne research, which was partially opposed to the approach practiced by Rewald and Marchutz.

Fig. 3: Example of an index card produced by Fritz Novotny. Source: Archive of the institute of art history, Vienna.

For Novotny, the value of the photographs he used lay in the possibility to reproduce an objective view of the landscape. Therefore, he did not only insist on the photograph being taken from the exact point where Cézanne assumingly had positioned himself while painting, but also on the negatives not being cut before the prints were made as it was common practice. (7 October 1933, 14 November 1933)

Building upon his comparisons, Novotny argued in his manuscript that Cézanne fundamentally changed the character of the landscape by displaying a smaller part of the landscape than it would have been the case if Cézanne would have painted the result of what Novotny called the “natural view”. For Novotny, this natural view was to a high degree identical to the photograph of the landscape, as he stated in his manuscript. In his comparisons between the photographs and Cézanne’s paintings, he noticed a strong tendency to choose a smaller part of the landscape for the picture than it was shown in the photograph. From this point of departure, he began to compare the size and relative relations of all objects displayed in the painting, drawing the following conclusion:

On the one hand, the landscape is drawn forward by the smallness of the view, and the single objects are clearly enlarged in their absolute size, on the other
hand it is only the background of the landscape that is getting closer – the absence of a veritable foreground, the way how the closest parts of the landscape are cut by the picture frame contains, as the painter sticks quite closely to reality in the linear scheme, important aspects of a small portion of a distant landscape, and therefore, a strange tension in the picture space is achieved which corresponds to the characteristic, vague way of general style and to the – often very important – distance from nature.\textsuperscript{viii} (Zur Frage I, 3)

Although Marchutz’ response is unfortunately lost, Novotny’s next letter allows to draw some conclusions on the points Marchutz had criticized. Differently to Novotny, it seems that he insisted on the interpretation of Cézanne’s landscape paintings as portraits of the Provence, and that he would not agree to Novotny’s statement that Cézanne’s landscape had characteristics that were incompatible with a naturalistic view of the landscapes. It seems that Marchutz’ arguments were very convincing, as Novotny stated in his letter that “one of the results of our investigation should be the proof how much of this particular landscape is contained in Cézanne’s pictures”\textsuperscript{ix} (20 January 1934), a statement that seems rather surprising in connection with the ideas Novotny had developed in his manuscript. Comparing the early version of his unpublished manuscript with a later version of the same text, but also with Novotny’s postdoctoral thesis \textit{Cézanne und das Ende der wissenschaftlichen Perspektive}, the influence Marchutz had on the development of Novotny’s interpretation of Cézanne’s work becomes more apparent. Both in the second version of his manuscript and in his thesis Novotny adopted Marchutz’ opinion that Cézanne essentially painted portraits of the landscapes:

> Without a doubt, Cézanne had a strong tendency towards the landscape portrait. This fact, drawn from the knowledge of his biography and confirmed by the correspondence between picture and nature, as far it is still possible today, stands in a strange contrast to the style, to the artistic impression of this landscape painting. This way of experience of nature, the form, in which Cézanne depicts his Provence, is to the smallest degree one that hints at a human affection for and attachment to the depicted landscape, which is an important part of the landscape portrait in the usual sense.\textsuperscript{x} (Cézanne und das Ende, 17)

While the modification of a fragment that was never published is of interest for an attempt to reconstruct the genesis of Novotny’s complex of theories, the inclusion of Marchutz’ opinion into one of Novotny’s most important scholarly works seems to be more significant. In the end, it was maybe the combination of the idea of a naturalistic portrait that dominated Marchutz’ view of Cézanne’s landscapes with the scrupulous analysis of formal qualities favored by Novotny that led to his interpretation of Cézanne’s art as a result of his wish to reduce the role of his own personality while depicting the landscape as he saw it (in opposition to academic conventions), an interpretation that dominates in Novotny’s main argument: “All forms of reduction and simplification of the objective reality are grounded on a view directed on the elementary in the form of space and objects; they enabled the artist to create a pictorial form out of reality, without fleeing to abstract invention of form and therefore into subjectivity.”\textsuperscript{xi} (103)

From today’s point of view, the scholars involved in the use of photography as a part of early Cézanne research can be seen as a network of researchers, who, not at
least through the numerous contacts and activities of Léo Marchutz, were in permanent contact, exchanging materials and advice and discussing their ideas. From 1934 onwards, Lionello Venturi, who was working on his catalogue raisonné Cézanne Son art – son oeuvre published in 1936, regularly corresponded with Marchutz, and visited him at Château Noir. While Marchutz and Rewald helped him with photographing some motives to include them in Venturi’s catalogue (Marchutz, 9 May 1934; Rewald, 27 October 1934), Venturi provided him and Rewald with copies of all photographs of Cézanne’s works he had assembled until then (Rewald, 1 December 1934). Considering the intensity and duration of these contacts, it is not surprising that, when Marchutz got involved in the organization of the Cézanne exhibition held in Aix-en-Provence in 1956, both the organization of the exhibition and the catalogue were made by this same group of people who had shared their interest in Cézanne for over twenty years. Within the catalogue, Venturi demonstrated the enthusiasm for the possibility to see the paintings and the Provencal landscape at the same time he shared with Marchutz in an introductory note. Venturi’s introduction was followed by an excerpt from Rewald’s book Camille Pissarro – lettres à son fils Lucien, giving an interpretation of the relationship between Pissarro and Cézanne, and, therefore, between Cézanne and the Impressionists. The last text in the catalogue was written by Novotny, who also discussed Cézanne’s relation to impressionism, although on a more abstract level than Rewald, arguing that the reduction of atmosphere and the lack of interest for the depiction of the specific qualities of materials were characteristics of Cézanne’s art that separated him from the impressionists and their artistic goals. Again, this was a topic he discussed with Marchutz, although in this case they could not find a compromise. While Novotny placed his own authority as an art historian over Cézanne’s self-projection, Cézanne was the absolute authority concerning the interpretation of his work in Marchutz’ eyes, who wrote on 9 October 1962: “I will not accept [the idea of] an opposition to impressionism – of a conscious kind – and it would not have existed in Cézanne’s spirit, how could he in this case – 1901 or 02 – call himself élève de Pissarro here in Aix.”

This last letter maybe shows the most fundamental difference between the attitudes of the painter Marchutz and the art historians Rewald and Novotny, who, inspite of their varying approaches to the study of Cézanne, shared a profound skepticism towards Cézanne’s statements on art theory: while the scholars automatically, in case of a unbridgeable disagreement, tended to value their own academic knowledge higher than the personal opinion of the painter they were trying to interpret, the artist Marchutz always preferred the opinion of the painter to the scholarly discourse. Although the art historians might have influenced his own way of dealing with the work of an admired artistic model as Cézanne to some degree, he would not let the view of the artist be overruled because of theoretical reflections on art.

Notes
The notes given in this section contain the original citations from the unpublished letters and documents quoted in this article. All translations from these documents were made by the author.
A large selection of works by Léo Marchutz, including some representative examples of the mentioned time period, is on view online, at http://leo.marchutz.free.fr/

Il faut voir les Cézanne dans la lumière d’Aix … il faut que l’on puisse, une fois dans sa vie, voir ces tableaux sur les lieux-mêmes où ils ont été paint."

Before he finally decided to work on Cézanne, he considered Sisley (as mentioned in a letter by Novotny from 30 November 1933), as well as a study on the development of impressionism (letter by Rewald to Novotny, 7 December 1933).


Nun muss ich Sie daran erinnern, was mich ursprünglich zur Motivsuche gebracht hat. Es war das Erkenntnis-Vergnügen, das für mich in dem Zusammensehen des Cézanne-Fotos (in Er- mangelung des Bildes) und des Motives beschlossen ist.

Quand, vers 1885, le beau-frère du peintre, M. Maxime Conil, acquit une belle propriété - appelée Montbriand - située au sud-ouest d’Aix et à proximité du Jas, Cézanne s’y rendit souvent pour y peindre. En allant à Montbriand, il s’arrêtait parfois aussi en route pour fixer le panorama de la Vallée de l’Arc dans une aquarelle ou une peinture. Un paysage peint à mi-chemin entre le Jas de Bouffan et Montbriand se trouve dans le Musée d’Art Occidental à Moscou. Et une autre fois, c’est en descendant de Montbriand, sur la route qui mène directement à Aix, qu’il fit -- sur une double page de son carnet, qu’il portait toujours avec lui - ce croquis d’après une très belle maison carré à côté de laquelle s’alignent des dépendances et où, dans le fond, à gauche, apparaît une masse noire qui n’est rien d’autre qu’un gazomètre.

Ce paysage de larges plans, de grandes masses, de lignes tracées net, ce paysage dont les masses semblent absorber les détails pourrait expliquer peut-être pourquoi Cézanne aimait tant, comme il le disait, la configuration de son Pays et pourquoi il le préférait aux paysages de l’île de France.”

Einerseits wird durch die Kleinheit des Bildausschnittes die Landschaft nach vorne gezogen und ihre Teillobjekte werden in der absoluten Größe wesentlich übersteigt, anderseits aber be- trifft dieses Näherrücken nur den Landschaftshintergrund - das Fehlen eines eigentlichen Bildvordergrundes, die Art wie die vordersten Teile der Landschaft vom Bildrand überschnitten wer-
den, enthält doch wieder, da sich ja der Maler im linearen Schema ziemlich streng an das Wirklichkeitsbild hält, wesentliche Züge des kleinen Ausschnittes aus einer umfangreichen Fernlandschaft und so entsteht eine seltsame Spannung innerhalb der Bildräumlichkeit, der die charakteristische vage Art der Gesamtdarstellung und die oft sehr bedeutende Naturferne ... entgegenkommt.

ix Eines der Resultate unserer Untersuchung müsste gerade der Nachweis sein, wie erstaunlich viel von dieser bestimmten Landschaft in den Bildern Cézannes enthalten sind [sic].

x Zweifellos bestand eine sehr weitgehende Tendenz Cézannes zum Landschaftsportrait. Diese Tatsache, aus der biographischen Kenntnis entnommen und durch die motivische Übereinstimmung zwischen Bild und Naturreiusschnitt, soweit sie heute noch überprüfbar ist, bestätigt, steht in einem seltsamen Kontrast zu der Darstellungsweise, zur künstlerischen Gesamterscheinung dieser Landschaftsmalerei. Denn gerade diese Art der Naturerfahrung, die Form, in der Cézanne seine Provence abbildet, ist am allerwenigsten eine, welche die menschliche Zuneigung und Verbundenheit mit der dargestellten Landschaft erkennen lässt, die als ein wesentlicher Bestandteil des Landschaftsportraits im üblichen Sinne erscheint.

xi Alle Formen der Reduktion und Vereinfachung der gegenständlichen Wirklichkeit sind bedingt durch eine auf das Elementare in Raum- und Objektform gerichtete Anschauungsweise, sie ermöglichten dem Künstler, die Wirklichkeit zu einer Bildform zu gestalten, ohne den Ausweg in abstrakte Formentwicklung und damit in die Subjektivität zu nehmen.


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