

## *In a Forest (Fontainebleau?), 1892-94 (possibly later)* Paul Cézanne (French, 1839-1906)

**Paul Cézanne creates a forest with dabs of thin watercolor.**



About 37 miles southeast of Paris, there is a 65-square-mile forest called Fontainebleau (pronounced fawn-ten-blow) where the kings of France enjoyed royal hunting expeditions in centuries past. In the 1800s, artists flocked to the forest with paint tubes and easels to try their hand at painting out-of-doors. The Forest of Fontainebleau offered something for everyone with its large mysterious boulders, rocky gorges, open farmland, and stately trees bordering long straight walking paths.

Watercolor on paper; 17¼ x 23 inches. Private Collection. Photo by: Ali Elai, Camerarts, Inc.

Which part of the forest might Cézanne have been visiting when he painted this watercolor?

- The clear views through the trees suggest that they are arranged along walking paths.
- The trees appear to be very tall, some reaching beyond the top edge of the painting.
- The splayed-out base of the tree trunks is similar to the shape of tree trunks in a photograph of a walking path at Fontainebleau. Compare tree trunks at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/noamcphotos/2624551038/>
- The ground is clear and well-kept with no underbrush.

What do you know about these trees?

- Their trunks are quite straight. None lean or fall over as they would in a natural forest.
- They are planted at even intervals, and cast evenly-spaced shadows on the ground.
- It is easy to tell which tree trunks are in front and which are behind. However, the upper foliage of the trees merges together.
- The light yellow-green of the foliage suggests springtime when the trees would be budding and producing new leaves.
- There are no details that indicate the type of leaves or bark that one would find on these trees, but they appear to be all the same species.

How did Cézanne use his watercolor paints to create this forest?

- He started with a quick pencil sketch. His scribbly lines are easy to see.
- He added dabs or blobs of thin watercolor paint on top of his pencil lines.
- He used yellow/green, blue, pink, orange, and a little red to suggest tree trunks, foliage, and shadows.
- He left a lot of empty paper to suggest the ground and the light beyond the trees.
- He emphasized edges of some of the tree trunks with thin, broken outlines.