

Floral Still Life, 1914
Andrew Dasburg (American, 1887-1979)

Andrew Dasburg looked to Paul Cézanne and Cubism for ways to modernize his approach to form and color.



Oil on canvas; 20 x 16 inches. Collection of Curtis Galleries, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Photo courtesy of Curtis Galleries, Minneapolis, Minnesota

While in Paris in 1909, Dasburg happened upon some paintings by Cézanne in a shop window. From that moment, which he described as “something like a bright light coming on,” Dasburg was convinced that the work of Cézanne was a model for the development of modern art.¹ Upon his return to the United States, Dasburg talked endlessly about what he had seen, trying to convince his artist friends that Cézanne offered a means of breaking away from outmoded ideas about painting.

What do you see in Dasburg’s painting that shows the influence of Cézanne?

- Flowers, leaves, and the cup are formed with small patches of color. Some color patches are distinct from each other; others blend together.
- The patches form flat planes that suggest the petals of flowers.
- The inside of the cup is rounded with curved patches ranging from light blue at the rim to darker blue nearer the bottom.

- The outside of the cup is rounded with patches of yellow (facing the light source) and brown and black (turned away from the light source).
- Portions of the flowers and leaves are outlined in black; other edges remain free of an outline.
- The point of view is ambiguous.
 - The table tips forward as if we are seeing it from above.
 - The cup is also seen from above, but the vase and sugar bowl are seen head on.
- The space between the front of the table and the back wall is very shallow, particularly on the right side where the blue of the background wall merges with the flowers.

What do you see in Dasburg’s painting that is unlike Cézanne’s work?

- Dasburg’s brilliant colors show the influence of his friend, Morgan Russell, who promoted a style called Synchronism (see Russell’s *Three Apples*).

¹ Paul Cummings, “Interview with Andrew Michael Dasburg,” March 26, 1974, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.