

**Mont Sainte-Victoire, 1927 [red mountain]
Marsden Hartley (American, 1877-1943)**

Hartley used color to press background and foreground into a single plane.



Oil on canvas; 20 x 24 inches. Private Collection, courtesy of Gerald Peters Gallery. Photo courtesy of Gerald Peters Gallery, NY

Marsden Hartley was captivated by the reddish color of the earth around Mont Sainte-Victoire, comparing it to the vivid colors of stained glass windows. He wrote, “Such color exists nowhere outside of the windows of Chartres & Sainte-Chapelle—the earth itself seems as if it were naturally incandescent & seems fired from underneath somehow—yet withal so restrained and dignified.”¹

If you had to deliver a weather report for this landscape on this particular day, how would you estimate the temperature?

- Red, orange, and yellow are usually called *warm colors* because they suggest fire or bright sunshine.
- If Hartley were to paint the mountain and hill in winter, he might use icy blue tones instead.

Cover the large dark blue shadow area between the hillside and the mountain. Do the mountain and hillside appear equally close to you? What is the purpose of this shadow?

- Red, orange, and yellow are colors that seem to advance toward us, while blue, green, and purple seem to recede or hold back. Hartley pulled the mountain forward with his reds and yellows but used the dark blue shadow to push back, keeping the mountain behind the hillside.

The clouds in this painting are very active. How did Hartley keep the sky from competing with the mountain?

- The sky is made of red, orange, yellow, pink, and blue just like the rest of the painting. But since its values are much higher, these pastel colors allow the intense reds of the mountain to dominate the landscape.

Imagine Hartley painting this work. How do you think he moved his brush in different parts of the canvas?

- Hartley constructed the entire mountain and hillside with large parallel patches of color, moving diagonally from left to right.
- The brushstrokes do not describe any particular features of the landscape. Instead, they suggest its energy and vitality.

¹ Hartley in *Marsden Hartley: The Biography of an American Artist* by Townsend Ludington, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 178.