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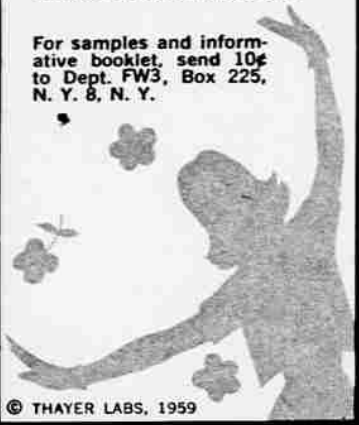
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Are These Three Pictures Worth

The Rubens, Cezanne, and Van Gogh shown here brought that fantastic sum at recent auctions—an example of how the art world currently is hitting the jack pot



"Public Gardens at Arles" by Van Gogh. Courtesy Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

THE FASHIONABLE audience in Sotheby's Art Galleries in London watched art history in the making one evening last summer. The painting on auction was a large Rubens, his "Adoration of the Magi," being sold by the family of the Duke of Westminster to pay off inheritance taxes. And since it was one of the finest examples of the painter's work not yet in a museum, everyone expected it would bring a high price.

But even the best guessers were astounded as the bidding reached—and passed—the half-million-dollar mark. Finally, only two bidders were left to fight for possession of the painting, and one dealer offered \$770,000. The bid was not topped. The Rubens canvas had just brought the highest price ever paid for a painting at an auction.

Though impressive, this is not an exceptional case. Rubens is an "old master," but even modern painting brings fabulous sums today. A few months before the Rubens sale, Sotheby's auctioned off "Boy in a Red Vest" by Paul Cézanne, the French postimpressionist who died in 1906. The painting, which had originally been sold by the artist for \$340, finally went for \$616,000.

Apparently Cézanne's paintings of subjects in bright clothes are in great demand, for last November his "Peasant in a Blue Blouse" brought \$406,000 at the

same gallery. Meanwhile a Gauguin, "I Await the Letter," sold for \$364,000, the highest price ever brought by this legendary painter who died impoverished.

What happened at Sotheby's was a repetition of what has been going on in other art centers throughout the world. The Renaissance was a definite period of art production several centuries ago. But there has never been a renaissance of art-buying to equal that of today.

In November, 1958, 7,000 buyers sought admission to an auction at the Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York, but only 2,000 got in. The others stood outside in the main waiting room and watched via closed-circuit television.

AT AN AUCTION in London the same month, a tiny sketch by Giovanni Bellini, no larger than your hand, sold for \$44,100. A pen-and-ink sketch five inches square by Albrecht Dürer went for \$11,760. At the New York auction, a Monet sold at a bargain price of \$85,000, and a Modigliani for \$66,000. (In 1944 you could have bought a Modigliani for about \$1,600.)

A painting by Vincent Van Gogh, "Public Gardens at Arles," sold in London recently for \$369,000, but during his lifetime Van Gogh sold but one work!

Probably no painter, however, would be as surprised as Cézanne at the

vogue his works are enjoying today. Cézanne, fortunately, was a man of independent means. He painted as he pleased. Often after a day of work he tossed his paintings away. He even used some old canvases for scrubbing floors, or so the legend goes. After his death, a few of his works sold for between \$9 and \$43 apiece!

Picasso, who is very much alive and prosperous, walked through Paris as a young man with his paintings under his arms. The dealers wouldn't buy them or even take them as gifts. Today you might be able to pick one up for as little as \$185,000. One was auctioned for that amount in 1957. The same painting sold just two years before for \$45,000.

The most sought-after works today are those by the impressionists, a group of French artists who broke with traditional painting in the 1870s: such men as Monet, Pissarro, and Renoir. The post-impressionists in turn broke with the impressionists: artists such as Cézanne, Seurat, Van Gogh, and Gauguin.

The boom in art has even affected people who can't afford to buy masterpieces. Many try their own hand at painting. In the last dozen years, enrollment has increased many times in the painting classes of such old schools as New York's Pratt Institute and the Art Institute of Chicago. And budding