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The Lover (Portrait of Lieutenant Milliet), 1888

Milliet's success with women, about which Van Gogh was both amused and envious, made the lieutenant the perfect model for *The Lover*. Van Gogh depicts Milliet in the dashing uniform of the Zouaves – one of the infantry units linked to North Africa – whose star and crescent regimental emblem Van Gogh reverses (for reasons unknown) in the background. The men became friends in Arles, with Van Gogh giving Milliet drawing lessons.

Oil on canvas
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands

2

The Poet's Garden (Public Garden in Arles), 1888

The unremarkable public garden in front of Van Gogh's home in Arles was the starting point for many views in which he used artistic licence and his imagination to create idealised worlds. He described the site in which young lovers stand in the shade of a spreading fir tree as 'the poet's garden' and imagined it as a place frequented by artists and writers of the past.

Oil on canvas
Private collection

3

The Poet (Portrait of Eugène Boch), 1888

Van Gogh had detailed plans for how he would depict a poet some time before he found Eugène Boch (a painter) to be his model. Van Gogh felt Boch was ideal as he had a narrow face that reminded him of the 13th-century poet Dante. The deep blue sky behind the figure, intended to express a man 'who dreams great dreams', was essential to the symbolism of the work.

Oil on canvas
Musée d'Orsay, Paris, bequest of Eugène Boch, 1941