

= Vincent van Gogh =

Vincent Willem van Gogh ( Dutch : [ ˈvɪnʃənt ˈvɒŋ ] ; 30 March 1853 – 29 July 1890 ) was a Dutch Post-Impressionist painter whose work had a far-reaching influence on 20th-century art . In just over a decade he produced over 2100 artworks , including around 860 oil paintings , the majority created in the last two years of his life . They include portraits , self-portraits , landscapes , still lifes , olive trees , cypresses , wheat fields and sunflowers , and are characterised by symbolic colourisation and dramatic , impulsive and highly expressive paintwork . He sold only one painting during his lifetime and was largely unnoticed by critics until his suicide , aged 37 , which followed years of restless anxiety , poverty and mental illness .

Born into an upper-middle-class family , Van Gogh drew as a child , was thoughtful and intellectual but evidenced signs of mental instability . He worked as an art dealer as a young man , but became depressed after he was transferred to London . He turned to religion , spending time as a preacher in southern Belgium , and later drifting in ill health and solitude . He was keenly aware of modernist trends in art , music and literature , and after moving back home with his parents , took up painting in 1881 ; supported financially by his younger brother Theo with whom he had a long correspondence of letters . His early works are mostly depictions of common and peasant labourers , and contain few signs of the vivid colourisation that distinguished his mature period . In 1886 he moved to Paris and discovered the French Impressionists . From then his paintings grew brighter in colour as he developed a style that became fully realised during his stay in Arles in 1888 . There he lived in the so-called " Yellow house " , and with Paul Gauguin developed a concept of colour that would symbolise inner emotion .

Van Gogh suffered from continued psychotic episodes and delusions . His friendship with Gauguin came to an end after a violent encounter during which he threatened the Frenchman with a razor , and in a rage , cut off most of his own right ear . He committed himself to a psychiatric hospital in Saint-Rémy , where his condition stabilised , leading to one of the more productive periods of his life . After he moved to Auberge Ravoux ( now a French historic landmark ) in the village of Auvers-sur-Oise under the care of the homeopathic doctor and artist , Dr. Gachet . While he was there , Theo wrote that he could no longer support him financially ; a few weeks later , on 27 July 1890 , Van Gogh walked into a wheat field and shot himself in the chest with a revolver . He died two days later .

Considered a madman and failure in his lifetime , Van Gogh 's emotionally charged paintings , spontaneous vivid colours , broad oil brushstrokes and early death have led to his current position in the public imagination as the quintessential misunderstood genius . His widespread critical , commercial and popular success began after his adoption by the early 20th-century German Expressionists and Fauves . His reputation grew steadily during the 20th century ; today he is remembered as an important but tragic painter , whose troubled personality typifies the romantic ideal of the tortured artist . Art historians typically view him as an exceptionally talented , major influential artist whose mental instability inhibited and frustrated his artistic progression .

= = Letters = =

The most comprehensive primary source for understanding Van Gogh is the correspondence between him and his younger brother , the art dealer Theo van Gogh , who saved all of his brother 's letters . Theo provided his brother with financial and emotional support , and access to influential people on the contemporary art scene . The brothers ' lifelong friendship and most of what is known of Vincent 's thoughts and theories of art is recorded in the hundreds of letters they exchanged between 1872 and 1890 . There are more than 600 from Vincent to Theo , and 40 from Theo to Vincent . Many are undated , but art historians have been able to mostly place them in chronological order . Problems remain , mainly with those from Arles . While there , Vincent wrote around 200 letters , in Dutch , French and English . The period when he lived in Paris is the most difficult to analyse because the brothers lived together and had no need to correspond . Along with those to and from Theo there are other surviving letters , including to Van Rappard , Émile Bernard , Van

Gogh 's sister Wil and her friend Line Krusse .

The letters were annotated by Theo 's widow , Johanna van Gogh @-@ Bonger , who later said that she was reluctant to publish because she wanted to avoid details of the artist 's life overshadowing his work . She had the letters published in 1913 . Art historian and editor of the letters Arnold Pomerans writes : " For the serious reader and the art historian , the publication of these letters added a fresh dimension to the understanding of Van Gogh 's artistic achievement , an understanding granted us by virtually no other painter . "

= = Life = =

= = = Early years = = =

Vincent Willem van Gogh was born on 30 March 1853 in Groot @-@ Zundert , in the predominantly Catholic province of North Brabant in the southern Netherlands . He was the oldest surviving child of Theodorus van Gogh , a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church , and Anna Cornelia Carbentus . Vincent was given the name of his grandfather , and of a brother stillborn exactly a year before his birth . His father , Theodorus , was a clergyman , his mother came from a petite bourgeoisie family in The Hague . The two met when Anna 's younger sister , Cornelia , married Theodorus 's older brother Vincent ( Cent ) . Vincent 's parents married in May 1851 and moved to Zundert . Anna was a rigid and religious woman who raised her family in accordance with Victorian respectability . She emphasised the importance of family to the point of claustrophobia for those around her . Vincent was a common name in the family : his grandfather , Vincent ( 1789 ? 1874 ) , received a degree in theology at the University of Leiden in 1811 , and had six sons , three of whom became art dealers . His brother Theo was born on 1 May 1857 . There was another brother , Cor , and three sisters : Elisabeth , Anna , and Willemina ( known as " Wil " ) . In later life Vincent remained in touch only with Willemina and Theo .

The family took walks together , and gardened in Anna 's large flower garden . Meals were important , family history was recited and they read aloud each night . In Zundert they represented the top of the social hierarchy . Although Theodorus ' salary was modest , the Church supplied the family with a house , a maid , two cooks , a gardener , a carriage and horse , and Anna instilled in the children a duty to uphold the family 's social position .

Vincent took after his fretful mother . He resembled her , moved quickly like her , learned to draw from her , and as a child his attachment was strong , but as he grew older he perceived her coldness toward him as rejection . Naifeh and Smith describe him as a difficult child to raise . The frequent and severe punishment he endured at the hand of his parents alienated him from the home and he turned to nature . He enjoyed exploring the countryside alone , taking long walks , often at night in the rain . He was devoted to his brother Theo , four years younger , but the attachment was strained during these years .

A serious and thoughtful child , Vincent was taught at home by Anna and a governess , and in 1860 was sent to the village school . In 1864 he was placed in a boarding school at Zevenbergen , where he felt abandoned , and campaigned to come home . In 1866 he moved to the middle school in Tilburg , where he was deeply unhappy . Vincent 's interest in art began at a young age ; his early drawings are expressive , but do not approach the intensity developed in his later work . Constantijn C. Huysmans , a successful artist in Paris , taught the students at Tilburg . His philosophy was to reject technique in favour of capturing the impressions of things , particular nature or common objects . Vincent 's profound unhappiness seems to have overshadowed the lessons and had little effect . In March 1868 , Van Gogh abruptly returned home . Later he wrote that his youth was " gloomy and cold and sterile . "

In July 1869 , Vincent 's uncle Cent obtained a position for him at the art dealers Goupil & Cie in The Hague . Just after Christmas in 1871 his parents moved from Zundert to Helvoirt . After completing his training in 1873 , Vincent was transferred to Goupil 's London branch , at 17 Southampton Street , and took lodgings at 87 Hackford Road , Stockwell . This was a happy time for

Vincent ; he was successful at work , and at 20 was earning more than his father . Theo 's wife later remarked that this was the best year of his life . He became infatuated with his landlady 's daughter , Eugénie Loyer , but was rejected after confessing his feelings ; she was secretly engaged to a former lodger . Vincent grew more isolated , and religiously fervent . His father and uncle arranged a transfer to Paris , where he became difficult and resentful at issues such as the commodification of art , and was eventually dismissed by Goupil .

Vincent returned to England , taking unpaid work as a supply teacher in a small boarding school in Ramsgate . When the proprietor relocated to Isleworth , Middlesex , Van Gogh moved with him . The arrangement did not work out and he left to become a Methodist minister 's assistant . His parents had meanwhile moved to Etten ; in 1876 he returned home at Christmas for six months and took work at a bookshop in Dordrecht . He was unhappy in the position and spent his time either doodling or translating passages from the Bible into English , French and German . He immersed himself in religion , became increasingly pious and monastic . According to his room @-@ mate of the time , ( Paulus van Görlitz ) , Van Gogh ate frugally , avoiding meat .

To support Vincent 's religious convictions and his desire to become a pastor , in 1877 the family sent him to stay with an uncle in Amsterdam to begin studies in theology . Vincent prepared for the entrance examination with his uncle Johannes Stricker , a respected theologian . He failed the exam , and left his uncle Jan 's house in July 1878 . He undertook , but also failed , a three @-@ month course at the Vlaamsche Opleidingsschool , a Protestant missionary school in Laeken , near Brussels .

In January 1879 , Vincent took a post as a missionary at Petit Wasmes in the coal @-@ mining district of Borinage in Belgium . As a show of support for his impoverished congregation , he gave up his comfortable lodgings at a bakery to a homeless person , and moved to a small hut where he slept on straw . His squalid living conditions did not endear him to church authorities , who dismissed him for " undermining the dignity of the priesthood " . He then walked the 75 kilometres ( 47 mi ) to Brussels , returned briefly to Cuesmes in the Borinage , but gave in to pressure from his parents to return home to Etten . He stayed there until around March 1880 , which caused concern and frustration for his parents . There was particular conflict between Vincent and his father , who considered committing him to the lunatic asylum at Geel .

Vincent returned to Cuesmes , where he lodged with a miner until October . He was interested in the people and scenes around him , and recorded his time there in his drawings after Theo 's suggestion that he take up art in earnest . He travelled to Brussels later in the year , to follow Theo 's recommendation that he study with the Dutch artist Willem Roelofs , who persuaded him ? in spite of his aversion to formal schools of art ? to attend the Académie Royale des Beaux @-@ Arts . He registered at the Académie in November 1880 , where he studied anatomy and the standard rules of modeling and perspective .

= = = Etten , Drenthe and The Hague = = =

Van Gogh returned to Etten in April 1881 for an extended stay with his parents . He continued to draw , often using his neighbours as subjects . In August 1881 , he went on long walks with his recently widowed cousin , Kee Vos @-@ Stricker , daughter of his mother 's older sister Willamina and Johannes Stricker . Kee was seven years older and had an eight @-@ year @-@ old son . Vincent surprised everyone by declaring to her his love and proposing marriage . She refused with the words " No , nay , never " ( " nooit , neen , nimmer " ) . After Kee went back to Amsterdam , Van Gogh went to The Hague to sell paintings and to meet with his cousin , Anton Mauve . Van Gogh wanted to apprentice himself to Mauve who was successful , had a nice studio , was , according to Naifeh and Smith , " the artist Vincent wanted to be " . Mauve invited Van Gogh to return in a few months and suggested he spend the time working in charcoal and pastels ; Van Gogh went back to Etten and followed that advice .

Late that November , Van Gogh wrote a strongly worded letter to Johannes Stricker , and left for Amsterdam . Kee would not meet him , her parents wrote that his " persistence is disgusting . " In desperation , he held his left hand in the flame of a lamp , with the words : " Let me see her for as

long as I can keep my hand in the flame . " He did not recall the event well , but later assumed that his uncle blew out the flame . Kee 's father made it clear that her refusal should be heeded and that the two would not marry , largely because of Van Gogh 's inability to support himself .

From Amsterdam , Van Gogh returned to The Hague and asked Mauve to take him on as a student . Mauve introduced him to watercolours , which Van Gogh spent the next month working on , before his father came to take him home for Christmas . That Christmas he refused to attend church , quarreling with his father as a result , and left the same day for The Hague . He relocated to The Hague in January 1882 . Mauve introduced him to painting in oil and lent him money to set up a studio . Within the month , they fell out , possibly over the viability of drawing from plaster casts . Van Gogh could only afford to hire people from the street as models , which Mauve seems to have disapproved of . In June he suffered a bout of gonorrhoea and spent three weeks in hospital . Soon after , he first began to paint in oil , using money borrowed from Theo . He liked the medium , and spread the oils liberally , scraping from the canvas and working back with the brush . He wrote that he was surprised at how good the results were .

Mauve seems to have suddenly gone cold towards Van Gogh and stopped replying to his letters . Van Gogh supposed that Mauve had learned of his new domestic arrangement with an alcoholic prostitute , Clasina Maria " Sien " Hoornik ( 1850 ? 1904 ) , and her young daughter . He had met Sien towards the end of January 1883 , when she had a five @-@ year @-@ old daughter and was pregnant . She had previously borne two children who died , but Van Gogh was unaware of this ; on 2 July , she gave birth to a baby boy , Willem . When Van Gogh 's father discovered the details of their relationship , he put pressure on his son to abandon Sien and her two children . Vincent at first defied him , and considered moving the family out of the city , but in late 1883 he left Sien and the children . Perhaps lack of money pushed Sien back into prostitution ; the home became less happy and Van Gogh may have felt family life was irreconcilable with his artistic development . Sien gave her daughter to her mother , and baby Willem to her brother .

Willem remembered a visit with his mother in Rotterdam around aged 12 , when his uncle tried to persuade Sien to marry in order to legitimise the child . Willem recalled his mother saying , " But I know who the father is . He was an artist I lived with nearly 20 years ago in The Hague . His name was Van Gogh . " She then turned to Willem and said " You are called after him . " He believed Van Gogh was his father , but the timing of his birth makes this unlikely . In 1904 , Sien drowned herself in the River Scheldt . Van Gogh moved to the Dutch province of Drenthe , in the northern Netherlands . That December , driven by loneliness , he went to stay with his parents , who had been posted to Nuenen , North Brabant .

= = = Emerging artist = = =

= = = = Nuenen and Antwerp ( 1883 ? 86 ) = = = =

In Nuenen , Van Gogh focused on painting and drawing . He completed several sketches and paintings of weavers and their cottages . In late 1884 , Margot Begemann , a neighbour 's daughter and ten years his senior , often joined him on his painting forays . She fell in love , and he reciprocated ? though less enthusiastically . They decided to marry , but the idea was opposed by both families . As a result , Margot took an overdose of strychnine . She was saved when Van Gogh rushed her to a nearby hospital . On 26 March 1885 , his father died of a heart attack .

There was interest from collectors in Paris . In May he completed his first major work , The Potato Eaters , and the series of " peasant character studies " ; the culmination of several years of work . In August his work was first exhibited in the windows of the paint dealer Leurs in The Hague . After one of his young peasant sitters became pregnant that September , Van Gogh was accused of forcing himself upon her and the village priest forbade parishioners to model for him .

Van Gogh painted several groups of still lifes in 1885 . During his two @-@ year stay in Nuenen , he completed numerous drawings and watercolours and nearly 200 oil paintings . His palette consisted mainly of sombre earth tones , particularly dark brown , and showed no sign of the vivid

colouration that distinguishes his later work . When he complained that Theo was not making enough effort to sell his paintings in Paris , his brother responded that the paintings were too dark and not in line with the current style of bright Impressionist paintings . Van Gogh moved to Antwerp in November 1885 , where he rented a small room above a paint dealer 's shop in the Rue des Images ( Lange Beeldekensstraat ) . He lived in poverty and ate poorly , preferring to spend the money Theo sent on painting materials and models . Bread , coffee and tobacco were his staple intake . In February 1886 , he wrote to Theo saying that he could only remember eating six hot meals since May 1885 . His teeth became loose and painful . In Antwerp he applied himself to the study of colour theory and spent time in museums ? particularly studying the work of Peter Paul Rubens ? and broadened his palette to carmine , cobalt blue and emerald green . Van Gogh bought Japanese ukiyo @-@ e woodcuts in the docklands , later incorporating elements of their style into the background of some of his paintings .

Van Gogh began again to drink heavily , especially absinthe . He was treated by Amadeus Cavenaile , possibly for syphilis ; the treatment of alum irrigation and sitz baths was jotted down by Van Gogh in one of his notebooks . Despite his rejection of academic teaching , he took the higher @-@ level admission exams at the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp , and in January 1886 matriculated in painting and drawing . For most of February , he was ill and run down by overwork , a poor diet and excessive smoking .

=== Paris ( 1886 ? 88 ) ===

Van Gogh relocated to Paris in March 1886 , beginning a series of moves that the art historian Melissa McQuillan believes also reflects later changes " in style , his reorientation of his enterprise [ which ] might be linked " . She believes that " moving on became a way of avoiding conflict , " and a coping mechanism for when the highly idealistic artist was faced with the realities of his then current situation .

In Paris he shared Theo 's Rue Laval apartment in Montmartre , and studied at Fernand Cormon 's studio . In June , they took a larger flat at 54 Rue Lepic . Because they had no need to write letters to communicate with each other , little is known about this stay in Paris . In Paris , he painted portraits of friends and acquaintances , still life paintings , views of Le Moulin de la Galette , scenes in Montmartre , Asnières , and along the Seine . During his stay , he collected more Japanese ukiyo @-@ e woodblock prints ; he became interested in Japonaiserie when , in 1885 in Antwerp , he used them to decorate the walls of his studio . He collected hundreds of prints . In The Courtesan or Oiran ( after Kesai Eisen ) ( 1887 ) , Van Gogh traced the figure from a reproduction on the cover of the magazine Paris Illustre , which he then graphically enlarged in the painting .

After seeing the portrait of Adolphe Joseph Thomas Monticelli at the Galerie Delareybarette , Van Gogh adopted a brighter palette and a bolder attack , particularly in paintings such as his Seascape at Saintes @-@ Maries ( 1888 ) . Two years later , Vincent and Theo paid for the publication of a book on Monticelli paintings , and Vincent bought some of his works to add to his collection .

For months , Van Gogh worked at Cormon 's studio , where he frequented the circle of the Australian artist John Peter Russell , and met fellow students Émile Bernard , Louis Anquetin and Henri de Toulouse @-@ Lautrec ? who painted a portrait of Van Gogh with pastel . The group congregated at Julien " Père " Tanguy 's paint store ( which was , at that time , the only place where Paul Cézanne 's paintings were displayed ) . He had easy access to Impressionist works in Paris . In 1886 , two large exhibitions were staged , in which Neo @-@ Impressionism was first exhibited , bringing attention to Georges Seurat and Paul Signac . Though Theo kept a stock of Impressionist paintings in his gallery on Boulevard Montmartre , Van Gogh seemingly had problems acknowledging the new developments in art .

Conflicts arose between the brothers . At the end of 1886 , Theo found that living with Vincent was " almost unbearable " . By early 1887 , they were again at peace , and Vincent had moved to Asnières , a northwestern suburb of Paris , where he became acquainted with Signac . He adopted elements of Pointillism , a technique in which a multitude of small coloured dots are applied to the canvas such that ? when seen from a distance ? they create an optical blend of hues . The style

stresses the value of complementary colours ? including blue and orange ? to form vibrant contrasts that are enhanced when juxtaposed .

While in Asnières , Van Gogh painted parks and restaurants and the Seine , including Bridges across the Seine at Asnières . In November 1887 , Theo and Vincent befriended Paul Gauguin who had just arrived in Paris . Towards the end of the year , Vincent arranged an exhibition alongside Bernard , Anquetin , and probably Toulouse @-@ Lautrec , at the Grand @-@ Bouillon Restaurant du Chalet , 43 Avenue de Clichy , Montmartre . In a contemporary account , Bernard wrote that the exhibition was ahead of anything else in Paris . There Bernard and Anquetin sold their first paintings , and Van Gogh exchanged work with Gauguin . Discussions on art , artists , and their social situations started during this exhibition , and continued and expanded to include visitors to the show , like Pissarro and his son Lucien , Signac and Seurat . In February 1888 , feeling worn out from life in Paris , he left , having painted over 200 paintings during his two years there . Only hours before his departure , accompanied by Theo , he paid his first and only visit to Seurat in his studio .

= = = Artistic breakthrough , final years = = =

= = = Arles ( 1888 ? 89 ) = = =

Ill from drink and suffering from smoker 's cough , Van Gogh sought refuge in Arles . He seems to have moved with thoughts of founding a utopian art colony ; The Danish artist Christian Mourier @-@ Petersen became his companion for two months , and at first Arles appeared exotic . In a letter , he described it as a foreign country : " The Zouaves , the brothels , the adorable little Arlésienne going to their First Communion , the priest in his surplice , who looks like a dangerous rhinoceros , the people drinking absinthe , all seem to me creatures from another world . "

Van Gogh was enchanted by the local landscape and light and his works from this period are richly draped in yellow , ultramarine and mauve . He made several excursions into nature during his time there . His paintings include harvests , wheat fields and general rural landmarks from the area , including The Old Mill ( 1888 ) , a picturesque structure bordering the wheat fields . This was one of seven canvases sent to Pont @-@ Aven on 4 October 1888 in an exchange for works with Paul Gauguin , Émile Bernard , Charles Laval and others . Van Gogh 's portrayals of the Arles landscape are informed by his Dutch upbringing ; the patchwork of fields and avenues appear flat and lacking perspective , but excel in their colourisation . His newfound appreciation is seen in the range and scope of his work . That March he painted landscapes using a gridded " perspective frame " ; three of which were shown at the annual exhibition of the Société des Artistes Indépendants . In April , he was visited by the American artist Dodge MacKnight , who was living nearby at Fontvieille . On 1 May , he signed a lease for 15 francs per month in the eastern wing of the Yellow House at No. 2 Place Lamartine . The rooms were unfurnished and uninhabited for some time .

He moved from the Hôtel Carrel to the Café de la Gare on 7 May , having befriended the proprietors , Joseph and Marie Ginoux . The Yellow House had to be furnished before he could fully move in , but Van Gogh was able to use it as a studio . He wanted a gallery to display his work , a series of paintings including Van Gogh 's Chair ( 1888 ) , Bedroom in Arles ( 1888 ) , The Night Café ( 1888 ) , Cafe Terrace at Night ( September 1888 ) , Starry Night Over the Rhone ( 1888 ) , and Still Life : Vase with Twelve Sunflowers ( 1888 ) , all intended for the décoration for the Yellow House . Van Gogh wrote that with The Night Café he tried " to express the idea that the café is a place where one can ruin oneself , go mad , or commit a crime . " In his letters he said that he sought to express the " terrible passions of humanity " by means of red and green . When he visited Saintes @-@ Maries @-@ de @-@ la @-@ Mer that June , he gave lessons to a Zouave second lieutenant ? Paul @-@ Eugène Milliet ? and painted boats on the sea and the village . MacKnight introduced Van Gogh to Eugène Boch , a Belgian painter who stayed at times in Fontvieille , and the two exchanged visits in July .

= = = Gauguin 's visit = = =

When Gauguin agreed to visit Arles , Van Gogh hoped for friendship , and the realisation of his utopian idea of an artists ' collective . While waiting that August he painted sunflowers . When Boch visited again , Van Gogh painted a portrait of him , as well as the study The Poet Against a Starry Sky . Boch 's sister Anna ( 1848 ? 1936 ) , also an artist , purchased The Red Vineyard in 1890 .

In preparation for Gauguin 's visit , Van Gogh bought two beds on advice from his friend , the station 's postal supervisor Joseph Roulin , whose portrait he painted . On 17 September he spent the first night in the still sparsely furnished Yellow House . When Gauguin consented to work and live in Arles with him , Van Gogh started to work on The Décoration for the Yellow House , probably the most ambitious effort he ever undertook . Van Gogh completed two chair paintings : Van Gogh 's Chair and Gauguin 's Chair .

Gauguin , after much pleading from Van Gogh , arrived in Arles on 23 October , and that November the two finally painted together . Gauguin depicted Van Gogh in his The Painter of Sunflowers : Portrait of Vincent van Gogh , while , uncharacteristically , Van Gogh painted pictures from memory ( deferring to Gauguin 's ideas ) and his The Red Vineyard . Among these " imaginative " paintings is Memory of the Garden at Etten . Their first joint outdoor venture was at the Alyscamps , when they produced Les Alyscamps pendants .

They visited Montpellier that December , where they saw works by Courbet and Delacroix in the Musée Fabre . Their relationship began to deteriorate ; Van Gogh admired Gauguin and desperately wanted to be treated as his equal , but Gauguin was arrogant and domineering , traits that frustrated Van Gogh . They often quarrelled ; Van Gogh increasingly feared that Gauguin was going to desert him and the situation , which Van Gogh described as one of " excessive tension , " rapidly headed towards crisis point .

= = = = December 1888 = = = =

The exact sequence of events that led to Van Gogh 's removal of his ear is not known . Gauguin claimed , fifteen years later , that the night followed several instances of physically threatening behaviour . Their relationship was complex , and there may have been money owed by Theo to Gauguin , who was suspicious that the brothers were exploiting him financially . Van Gogh seems to have attacked Gauguin on the night of 23 December , possibly with a razor , but this is uncorroborated . It seems likely that Van Gogh had realised that Gauguin was planning to leave and that there had been some kind of contretemps between the two . That evening , Van Gogh wholly severed his left ear with a razor , inducing a severe haemorrhage . A note from his doctor Félix Rey , written in 1930 for Irving Stone and including a drawing of the severed ear , made clear that Van Gogh had cut off his whole ear , except for a small part of the lobe . He bandaged the wound , wrapped the ear in paper , and delivered the package to Gabrielle Berlatier , a farmer 's daughter nicknamed Rachel , a teenager who worked at a brothel frequented by both him and Gauguin . Van Gogh was taken by Roulin to either his home or a hotel , where he collapsed . He would have likely bled to death had he not been found unconscious the next morning by the police and hospitalised .

Gauguin 's account implies that Van Gogh left his ear with the doorman as a memento for Gauguin . Van Gogh had no recollection of the event , and it is plain that he had suffered an acute psychotic episode . Family letters of the time make it clear that the breakdown had not been unexpected . He had suffered a nervous collapse three years before in Antwerp , and as early as 1880 his father had proposed committing him to an asylum at Geel . The hospital diagnosis was " generalised delirium " , and within a few days the local police ordered that he be placed in hospital care .

During the first days of his treatment , Van Gogh repeatedly and unsuccessfully asked for Gauguin . The French artist asked a policeman attending the case to " be kind enough , Monsieur , to awaken this man with great care , and if he asks for me tell him I have left for Paris ; the sight of me might prove fatal for him . " Gauguin wrote of Van Gogh , " His state is worse , he wants to sleep with the patients , chase the nurses , and washes himself in the coal bucket . That is to say , he continues the biblical mortifications . " Theo was notified by Gauguin and visited , as did Madame Ginoux and Roulin . Gauguin fled Arles , never to see Van Gogh again .

Despite the pessimistic diagnosis , Van Gogh recovered and returned to the Yellow House by the beginning of January , but spent the following month between hospital and home , suffering from hallucinations and delusions of poisoning . That March , the police closed his house after a petition by 30 townspeople ( including the Ginoux family ) who described him as " le fou roux " ( the redheaded madman ) . Paul Signac spent time with him in the hospital , and Van Gogh was allowed home in his company . In April , he moved into rooms owned by his physician Dr Rey after floods damaged paintings in his own home . Around this time , he wrote , " Sometimes moods of indescribable anguish , sometimes moments when the veil of time and fatality of circumstances seemed to be torn apart for an instant . " Two months later , he left Arles and voluntarily entered an asylum in Saint @-@ Rémy @-@ de @-@ Provence .

= = = = Saint @-@ Rémy ( May 1889 ? May 1890 ) = = = =

Van Gogh entered the hospital at Saint Paul @-@ de @-@ Mausole on 8 May 1889 accompanied by his carer , Frédéric Salles , a Protestant clergyman . The hospital was a former monastery in Saint @-@ Rémy less than 30 kilometres ( 19 mi ) from Arles , and at the time run by a former naval doctor , Dr. Théophile Peyron . He had two small rooms : adjoining cells with barred windows . The second was to be used as a studio .

During his stay , the clinic and its garden became the main subjects of his paintings . He made several studies of the hospital interiors , such as Vestibule of the Asylum and Saint @-@ Remy ( September 1889 ) . Some of his work from this time are characterised by swirls , including The Starry Night . He was allowed short supervised walks , which led to paintings of cypresses and olive trees , such as Olive Trees with the Alpilles in the Background 1889 , Cypresses 1889 , Cornfield with Cypresses ( 1889 ) , Country road in Provence by Night ( 1890 ) . That September , he produced a further two versions of Bedroom in Arles .

Limited access to life outside the clinic resulted in a shortage of subject matter . He was left to work on interpretations of other artist 's paintings , such as Millet 's The Sower and Noon ? Rest from Work ( after Millet ) , as well as variations on his own earlier work . Van Gogh was an admirer of the Realism of Jules Breton , Gustave Courbet and Millet , and he compared his copies to a musician 's interpreting Beethoven . Many of his most compelling works date from this period . His The Round of the Prisoners ( 1890 ) was painted after an engraving by Gustave Doré ( 1832 ? 1883 ) . It is suggested that the face of the prisoner in the centre of the painting and looking toward the viewer is Van Gogh himself , although the Van Gogh scholar Jan Hulsker discounts this .

Between February and April 1890 he suffered a severe relapse . Nevertheless , he was able to paint and draw a little during this time , and he later wrote to Theo that he had made a few small canvases " from memory ... reminisces of the North . " Amongst these was Two Peasant Women Digging in a Snow @-@ Covered Field at Sunset . Hulsker believes that this small group of paintings formed the nucleus of many drawings and study sheets depicting landscapes and figures that Van Gogh worked on during this time . He comments that ? save for this short period ? Van Gogh 's illness had hardly any effect on his work , but sees a reflection of Van Gogh 's mental health at the time . Also belonging to this period is Sorrowing Old Man ( " At Eternity 's Gate " ) , a colour study that Hulsker describes as " another unmistakable remembrance of times long past . "

In February 1890 , he painted five versions of L 'Arlésienne ( Madame Ginoux ) , based on a charcoal sketch Gauguin had produced when she sat for both artists in November 1888 . The version intended for Madame Ginoux is lost . It was attempting to deliver this painting to Madame Ginoux in Arles that precipitated his February relapse . His work was praised by Albert Aurier in the Mercure de France in January 1890 , when he was described as " a genius " . That February , he was invited by Les XX , a society of avant @-@ garde painters in Brussels , to participate in their annual exhibition . At the opening dinner , Les XX member Henry de Groux insulted Van Gogh 's work . Toulouse @-@ Lautrec demanded satisfaction , while Signac declared he would continue to fight for Van Gogh 's honour if Lautrec surrendered . Later , while Van Gogh 's exhibit was on display with the Artistes Indépendants in Paris , Claude Monet said that his work was the best in the show . In February 1890 , following the birth of his nephew , he wrote about the new addition to the



family " I started right away to make a picture for him , to hang in their bedroom , branches of white almond blossom against a blue sky . "

=== Auvers @-@ sur @-@ Oise ( May ? July 1890 ) ===

In May 1890 , Van Gogh left the clinic in Saint @-@ Rémy to move nearer to both Dr. Paul Gachet in Auvers @-@ sur @-@ Oise and to Theo . Gachet was an amateur painter and had treated several other artists . Camille Pissarro had recommended him . Van Gogh 's first impression was that Gachet was " iller than I am , it seemed to me , or let 's say just as much . " In June 1890 , he painted several portraits of his doctor , including Portrait of Dr. Gachet , and his only etching . In each the emphasis is on Gachet 's melancholic disposition .

During his last weeks at Saint @-@ Rémy , Van Gogh 's thoughts returned to his " memories of the North " , and several of the approximately 70 oils painted during as many days in Auvers @-@ sur @-@ Oise , are reminiscent of northern scenes . Barbizon painter Charles Daubigny had moved to Auvers in 1861 , and in turn drew other artists there , including Camille Corot and Honoré Daumier . In July 1890 , Van Gogh completed two paintings of Daubigny 's Garden ; one of which is likely his final work . There are other paintings that show evidence of being unfinished , including Thatched Cottages by a Hill .

Van Gogh 's late paintings show an artist at the height of his abilities , according to art critic Robert Hughes , " longing for concision and grace " . Many of these works are somber , and reflective of a desire to return to lucid mental health . Yet some reflect deepening concerns . In July 1890 , Van Gogh wrote that he had become absorbed " in the immense plain against the hills , boundless as the sea , delicate yellow . " He had become captivated by the fields in May when the wheat was young and green . In July he described to Theo " vast fields of wheat under turbulent skies " . He wrote that they represented his " sadness and extreme loneliness " , and that the " canvases will tell you what I cannot say in words , that is , how healthy and invigorating I find the countryside . " Wheatfield with Crows is a painting Hulsker discusses as being associated with " melancholy and extreme loneliness . " Hulsker identifies seven oil paintings as following the completion of the Wheatfield with Crows in July 1890 while in Auvers .

== Style ==

== Development ==

Van Gogh was a later starter . He drew and painted with watercolours while at school , but only a few examples survive and the authorship of some has been challenged . When he took up art as an adult , he began at an elementary level . In early 1882 , his uncle , Cornelis Marinus , owner of a well @-@ known gallery of contemporary art in Amsterdam , asked for drawings of The Hague . Van Gogh 's work did not live up to expectations . Marinus offered a second commission , specifying the subject matter in detail , but was again was disappointed with the result . Nevertheless , Van Gogh persevered . He improved the lighting of his studio by installing variable shutters and experimented with different drawing materials . For more than a year he worked on single figures ? highly elaborated studies in " Black and White " , which at the time gained him only criticism . Today , they are recognised as his first masterpieces .

In August 1882 , Theo gave Vincent a donation , used to purchase materials conducive to working en plein air . Vincent wrote that he could now " go on painting with new vigour " . From early in 1883 he worked on multi @-@ figure compositions , on which he based on his drawings . He had some of them photographed , but when his brother remarked that they lacked liveliness and freshness , he destroyed them and turned to oil painting . Van Gogh turned to renowned Hague School artists like Weissenbruch and Blommers , and received technical support from them , as well as from painters like De Bock and Van der Weele , both second generation Hague School artists . When he moved to Nuenen after the intermezzo in Drenthe he began several large paintings but destroyed most of

them . The Potato Eaters and its companion pieces are the only ones to have survived . Following a visit to the Rijksmuseum , Van Gogh was aware that many of his faults were due to lack of technical experience . So in November 1885 he travelled to Antwerp and later to Paris to learn and develop his skill .

Theo criticised The Potato Eaters for its dark palette , which he thought unsuitable for a modern style . During Van Gogh 's stay in Paris between 1886 and 1887 , he quickly tried to master a new , lighter palette . His Portrait of Père Tanguy ( 1887 ) , shows his success with the brighter palette ; with its colour innovations it is evidence of an evolving personal style . Charles Blanc 's treatise on colour interested him intensely , which led him to work on with complementary colours . Van Gogh came to the conclusion that colour went beyond descriptive ; he said that " colour expresses something in itself " ( LT429 ) . According to Hughes , Van Gogh perceived colour as having a " psychological and moral weight " , as characterised in the garish reds and greens of The Night Cafe , a work he wanted " to express the terrible passions of humanity " . Yellow was the colour that meant the most to him , which he spent the most time in mastering , because it symbolized emotional truth . Yellow was the colour he used as a symbol for sunlight , life , and God .

Throughout his career Van Gogh strove to be a painter of rural life and of nature , and during his first summer in Arles he brought the more modern palette to bear on landscapes and traditional rural life . His belief that a power existed behind the natural led him to try to capture a sense of that power , or the essence of nature in his art , sometimes through the use of symbols . His renditions of the sower , at first copied from Jean @-@ François Millet , reflect Van Gogh 's own religious beliefs : the sower as Christ sowing life beneath the hot sun . These were themes and motifs he returned to often to revise , rework and develop . His paintings of flowers are filled with symbolism but not traditional Christian iconography ; rather he made up his own where life is lived under the sun and work is an allegory of life . In the summer in Arles , under a hot sun and having gained confidence after a bout of painting spring blossoms and learning to capture bright sunlight , he was ready to paint The Sower . The juxtaposition of saturated complementary colours and the single figure in the landscape represents a unique innovative style .

Van Gogh stayed within what he called the " guise of reality " , and was critical of overly abstract or stylised works . He did try his hand at stylisation and abstraction , notably with Starry Night ? but he said about that painting that reality had " receded too far in the background " . Hughes describes Starry Night as a moment of extreme visionary ecstasy : the stars are in a great whirl , reminiscent of Hokusai 's Great Wave , the movement in the heaven above is reflected by the movement of the cypress on the earth below , and the painter 's vision is " translated into a thick , emphatic plasma of paint . "

Between 1885 and his death in 1890 , he appears to have been building an oeuvre , a collection that not only reflected his personal vision , but could be commercially successful . He was influenced by Blanc 's definition of style , that a true painting required optimal use of colour , perspective and brushstrokes . Van Gogh applied the word " purposeful " to paintings he thought he had mastered , as opposed to those he thought of as studies . He painted studies and went so far as to create many series of studies . Most of his studies were of still lifes , many executed as colour experiments or as gifts to friends . The finished paintings ? such as Night Cafe and Starry Night , are the works he considered part of his oeuvre . The work in Arles contributed considerably to his oeuvre : those he thought the most important from that time were The Sower , Night Cafe , Memory of the Garden in Etten and Starry Night . With their broad brushstrokes , inventive perspectives , colours , contours and designs , these are the paintings that represent the style he sought . He considered The Bedroom his best work of that period , because the inventive use of perspective , combined with Impressionist techniques , resulted in the style he sought .

In the end , the style he found was revolutionary " in the very look of his pictures , their coarseness and deliberately unfinished quality , the vigor with which they were painted . " His art , with its emphasis on the common people and a wish for a better world , is the precursor to the 20th century and to Modernism .

= = = Major series = = =

Van Gogh 's stylistic developments are usually linked to periods he spent living in different locations across Europe . He was inclined to immerse himself in local cultures and lighting conditions , although he maintained a highly individual visual outlook throughout . His evolution as a painter was slow , and he was aware of his painterly limitations ; many of his early works could be described as gauche . He moved home often , perhaps to expose himself to new visual stimulants and through exposure develop his technical skill .

= = = = Portraits = = = =

Van Gogh is best known for his landscapes , but he seemed to have believed that portraits were his greatest ambition . He said of portrait studies , that they were " the only thing in painting that moves me deeply and that gives me a sense of the infinite . " He wrote to his sister that he " should like to paint portraits which appear after a century to people living then as apparitions ... I do not endeavour to achieve this through photographic resemblance , but my means of our impassioned emotions ? that is to say using our knowledge and our modern taste for colour as a means of arriving at the expression and the intensification of the character . " Those closest to him are mostly absent from his portraits ; he rarely painted Theo , van Rappard or Bernard . The portraits of his mother were from photographs .

Portraiture represented his best opportunity of earning money . Some of the portraits are studies . Those with greater significance , which he considered finished paintings , are identifiable with the subject holding an object such as a book , and tend to exhibit more stylisation than his other work . In December 1888 , he painted *La Berceuse* ? a figure that he thought as good as his sunflower still lifes . It had a limited palette , varied brushstrokes and simple contours .

= = = = Cypresses = = = =

The cypresses , numbering some fifteen canvases , are among Van Gogh 's most popular and widely known series . In mid @-@ 1889 , at his sister Wil 's request , he made several smaller versions of *Wheat Field with Cypresses* . The trees , traditionally associated with death and cemeteries , held a symbolic value for Van Gogh , and he brought life to them . The works are characterised by swirls and densely painted impasto , and include one of his best @-@ known paintings , *The Starry Night* .

Other works include *Olive Trees with the Alpilles in the Background* ( 1889 ) *Cypresses* ( 1889 ) , *Cypresses with Two Figures* ( 1889 ? 90 ) , *Road with Cypress and Star* ( 1890 ) and *Starry Night Over the Rhone* ( 1888 ) . *Road with Cypress and Star* ( 1890 ) is as compositionally unreal and artificial as *The Starry Night* . It represents an exalted experience of reality , what both Van Gogh and Gauguin referred to as an " abstraction " . Referring to *Olive Trees with the Alpilles in the Background* , on or around 18 June 1889 , in a letter to his brother , Van Gogh wrote , " At last I have a landscape with olives and also a new study of a *Starry Night* . " While in the asylum , he went outside to paint olive trees ; these are rendered as gnarled and arthritic ; as Hughes explains , they are seemingly filled with " a continuous field of energy of which nature is a manifestation " .

= = = = Orchards = = = =

The series of *Flowering Orchards* , also the *Orchards in Blossom* , are among the first groups of work that Van Gogh completed after his arrival in Arles in February 1888 . The 14 paintings are optimistic , joyous and visually expressive of the burgeoning spring . They are delicately sensitive , silent , quiet and unpopulated . He painted swiftly , and although he brought to this series a version of Impressionism , a strong sense of personal style began to emerge during this period . The transience of the blossoming trees , of the passing of the season , seemed to align itself with his own sense of transience and belief in a new beginning in Arles , and it presented him with a world of Japanese motifs which he revelled in . Vincent wrote to Theo on 21 April 1888 and said he had 10

orchards and : " one big [ painting ] of a cherry tree , which I 've spoiled " .

During this period he mastered the use of light by subjugating shadows and bringing light to the forefront of the trees as if the trees and blossoms themselves are the source of light ? almost in a sacred manner . Early the following year he painted another smaller group of orchards , including View of Arles , Flowering Orchards . Van Gogh was consumed by the landscape and vegetation of the south of France , and often visited the farm gardens near Arles . Because of the vivid light of the Mediterranean climate his palette significantly brightened .

= = = Flowers = = = =

Van Gogh painted several landscapes with flowers , including the View of Arles with Irises , and Irises , Sunflowers , and the lilacs and roses sequences . Some reflect his interests in the language of colour , and also in Japanese ukiyo @-@ e woodblock prints . He completed two series of sunflowers . The first dated from his 1887 stay in Paris , the second during his visit to Arles the following year . The Paris series shows living flowers in the ground , in the second , they are dying in vases . The 1888 paintings were created during a rare period of optimism for the artist . He intended them to decorate a bedroom where Gauguin was supposed to stay in Arles that August , when the two would create the community of artists Van Gogh had long hoped for . The flowers are rendered with thick brushstrokes and heavy layers of paint .

He wrote to Theo in August 1888 , " I 'm painting with the gusto of a Marseillais eating bouillabaisse , which won 't surprise you when it 's a question of painting large sunflowers ... If I carry out this plan there 'll be a dozen or so panels . The whole thing will therefore be a symphony in blue and yellow . I work on it all these mornings , from sunrise . Because the flowers wilt quickly and it 's a matter of doing the whole thing in one go . "

= = = Wheat fields = = = =

Van Gogh made several painting excursions during visits to the landscape around Arles . He made paintings featuring harvests , wheat fields and other rural landmarks of the area , including The Old Mill ( 1888 ) ; a good example of a picturesque structure bordering the wheat fields beyond . At various points , Van Gogh painted the view from his window ? at The Hague , Antwerp , Paris . These works culminated in The Wheat Field series , which depicted the view he could see from his adjoining cells in the asylum at Saint @-@ Rémy .

Many of Van Gogh 's late paintings are sombre , but essentially optimistic and , right up to the time of his death , reflect his desire to return to lucid mental health . Yet some of his final works reflect his deepening concerns . Writing in July 1890 , from Auvers , Van Gogh said that he had become absorbed " in the immense plain against the hills , boundless as the sea , delicate yellow . " He was captivated by the fields in May when the wheat was young and green . His Wheatfields at Auvers with White House shows a more subdued palette of yellows and blues , against the growing wheat and corn , which creates a sense of idyllic harmony .

The weather worsened in July . He wrote to Theo of " vast fields of wheat under troubled skies " . In particular , the work Wheatfield with Crows serves as a compelling and poignant expression of the artist 's state of mind in his final days , a painting Hulscher describes as a " doom @-@ filled painting with threatening skies and ill @-@ omened crows . " Its dark palette and heavy brushstrokes conveys a sense of impending doom , of menace .

= = = Self @-@ portraits = = = =

Van Gogh produced many self @-@ portraits during his lifetime ; he drew or painted more than 43 between 1886 and 1889 . Generally the self @-@ portraits were studies ; he wanted to learn to paint figures , but lacked models and so used himself . They vary in intensity and colour ; some portray the artist with beard , some without , and others with bandages ? in the period after he had severed his ear . Self @-@ portrait without beard , from late September 1889 , was one of the most

expensive paintings at the time of its 1998 sale , when it sold for \$ 71 @. @ 5 million in New York . It was Van Gogh 's last self @-@ portrait , intended as a birthday gift to his mother .

Self @-@ portraits from Saint @-@ Rémy show the head from the right , hiding his severed ear . During the final weeks of his life in Auvers @-@ sur @-@ Oise , he produced many paintings , but no self @-@ portraits , as he returned to painting the natural world .

His self @-@ portraits reflect the intense degree of self @-@ scrutiny that is seldom if ever apparent in an artist , according to Hughes .

= = Death = =

He underwent a further crisis in February 1890 . Although depressed and unable to bring himself to write , he continued , however , to draw and paint . For a year he " had fits of despair and hallucination during which he could not work , between long clear months in which he could and did , punctuated by extreme visionary ecstasy . "

On 27 July 1890 , aged 37 , Van Gogh shot himself in the chest with a revolver . There were no witnesses . The location of the shooting may have been in the wheat field he had been painting recently , or a local barn . The bullet was deflected by a rib and passed through his chest without doing apparent damage to internal organs ? probably stopped by his spine . He was able to walk back to the Auberge Ravoux , where he was attended by two doctors . Without a surgeon present the bullet could not be removed . The doctors tended to him as best they could , then left him alone in his room , smoking his pipe . The following morning , Theo rushed to his brother as soon as notified , and found him in surprisingly good health . But within hours Vincent began to fail , suffering from an untreated infection resulting from the wound . He died that evening , 29 hours after the gunshot . According to Theo , Vincent 's last words were : " The sadness will last forever " .

He was buried on 30 July , in the municipal cemetery of Auvers @-@ sur @-@ Oise . The funeral was attended by Theo van Gogh , Andries Bonger , Charles Laval , Lucien Pissarro , Émile Bernard , Julien Tanguy and Dr. Gachet among twenty family , friends and locals . Theo suffered from syphilis and his health declined rapidly after Vincent 's death . Weak and unable to come to terms with Vincent 's absence , he died six months later , on 25 January , at Den Dolder , and he was buried in Utrecht . In 1914 , the year she had Van Gogh 's letters published , Jo Bonger had Theo 's body exhumed , moved from Utrecht and re @-@ buried with Vincent at Auvers @-@ sur @-@ Oise .

There has been numerous debates as to the nature of Van Gogh 's illness and its effect on his work . Over 150 psychiatrists have attempted to label its root , with 30 different diagnoses . These have included schizophrenia , bipolar disorder , syphilis , poisoning from swallowed paints , temporal lobe epilepsy , and acute intermittent porphyria . Any of these could have been the culprit , and could have been aggravated by malnutrition , overwork , insomnia and alcohol , especially absinthe .

= = Posthumous fame = =

Vincent van Gogh is one of the most famous artists in the world , despite that he was virtually unrecognized during his lifetime . After his first exhibitions in the late 1880s , his reputation grew slowly but steadily among artists , art critics , dealers and collectors . In 1887 André Antoine installed Van Gogh 's paintings alongside Georges Seurat and Paul Signac , at the Théâtre Libre in Paris some of which were acquired by Julien Tanguy . In 1898 his work was described in " Le Moderniste " by the poet Albert Aurier as characterised by " fire , intensity , sunshine " .

Soon after Van Gogh 's death in July 1890 his work was collected by Gauguin , Émile Schuffenecker and Émile Bernard . Some works were resold fairly quickly , as in the case of Gauguin who consigned his versions of Sunflowers around 1895 to Ambroise Vollard , who sold them , but failed to pay . Theo 's death in January 1891 removed his most vocal and well connected champion . Theo 's widow , Johanna van Gogh @-@ Bonger , was left with only an apartment in Paris filled with a few items of furniture and the then near valueless works of her brother @-@ in @-@ law Vincent . Memorial exhibitions were held in Brussels , Paris , The Hague and Antwerp .

His work was shown in a number of high @-@ profile exhibitions in 1890 , including six works at Les XX , in Brussels that January , ( in 1891 a retrospective ) , and ten paintings were shown at the " Société des Artistes Indépendants " . The following year the art critic Octave Mirbeau wrote that Van Gogh 's suicide was " infinitely sadder loss for art ... even though the populace has not crowned to a magnificent funeral , and poor Vincent van Gogh , whose demise means the extinction of a beautiful flame of genius , has gone to his death as obscure and neglected as he lived . "

In 1896 , the Fauvist painter Henri Matisse , then an unknown art student , visited the artist John Peter Russell on the island of Belle Île off Brittany . Russell was an Impressionist painter ; Matisse had never previously seen an Impressionist work directly , and was so shocked at the style that he left after ten days , saying , " I couldn 't stand it any more . " The next year he returned as Russell 's student and abandoned his earth @-@ coloured palette for bright Impressionist colours , later stating , " Russell was my teacher , and Russell explained colour theory to me . " Russell who had been a close friend of Vincent van Gogh ( who was unknown at the time ) introduced Van Gogh 's work to Matisse and gave Matisse a Van Gogh drawing .

Retrospectives were held in Paris in 1901 and 1905 , and at the Stedelijk , Amsterdam in 1905 . Important group exhibitions with the Sonderbund artists in Cologne in 1912 , the Armory Show , New York in 1913 , and Berlin in 1914 followed . In 1905 his work was exhibited at Galerie Ernst Arnold in Dresden , which influenced German painters of the Die Brücke ? particularly Erich Heckel , Karl Schmidt @-@ Rottluff , and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner . After that exhibition Henk Bremmer was instrumental in teaching and talking about Van Gogh . By 1906 Johanna van Gogh @-@ Bonger could still show a complete set of his works . Johanna was in correspondence with artists , galleries , critics , dealers throughout Europe , and her correspondence shows the role she played with Berlin dealer Paul Cassirer who put on 10 exhibitions , and staged tours to see Vincent 's work . His fame reached its first peak in Austria and Germany before World War I , aided by the publication of his letters in three volumes in 1914 . These began a compelling mythology of Van Gogh as an intense and dedicated painter who both suffered for his art , and died young .

In 1934 American novelist Irving Stone published an account of Vincent van Gogh 's life entitled *Lust for Life* , and according to Stone he relied on Van Gogh 's letters to Theo . This book and later the 1956 movie of the same name added to further enhance the artist 's fame .

In 1957 , Francis Bacon based a series of paintings on reproductions of Van Gogh 's *The Painter on the Road to Tarascon* , the original of which was destroyed during World War II . Bacon was inspired by both an image he described as " haunting " , and by Van Gogh himself , whom he regarded as an alienated outsider , a position which resonated with him . Bacon identified with Van Gogh 's theories of art and quoted lines written to Theo : " [ R ] eal painters do not paint things as they are ... [ T ] hey paint them as they themselves feel them to be . "

Today his works are among the world 's most expensive paintings . Those sold for over US \$ 100 million ( today 's equivalent ) include *Portrait of Dr. Gachet* , *Portrait of Joseph Roulin* and *Irises* . *A Wheatfield with Cypresses* was acquired in 1993 for US \$ 57 million , and *Self @-@ Portrait with Bandaged Ear* was sold privately in the late 1990s for an estimated US \$ 80 ? 90 million .