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Van Gogh in Auvers. His Final Months

In this exhibition, we follow Van Gogh from his arrival in Auvers-sur-Oise on 20 May 1890 to the final weeks of his life. He set to work with renewed hope and ambition, yet he struggled increasingly with feelings of loneliness and melancholy. Van Gogh nevertheless continued to create powerful and heartfelt works. By the time he died on 29 July at the age of 37, he had produced some 74 paintings in Auvers, an average of more than one per day.

Van Gogh's Auvers paintings were often executed rapidly. They exhibit a great variety in painting style, with lively brushstrokes and undulating shapes. Even more than before, he simplified his compositions and his palette. Above all, Van Gogh wanted to revitalise himself in nature and convey deeply felt human feelings in his works. He achieved this masterfully in his last panoramic canvases.

This exhibition was realised in collaboration with the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, which owns important Auvers works by Van Gogh that were donated by the descendants of Dr Paul Gachet.

Exploring Auvers

After his stay in the south of France, including more than a year in a psychiatric institution, Van Gogh longed for the north. When he arrived in the picturesque artists' village of Auvers on the river Oise, he was well and truly back in the countryside. He hoped his new surroundings would do him good, although the transition to a life outside the institution was not easy.

Van Gogh found Auvers 'decidedly very beautiful' and recorded his impressions in swiftly painted studies of old houses with thatched roofs, flowering chestnut trees and colourful gardens. He also depicted Auvers' church and the river a few times. He saw something to paint everywhere he looked. Above all, he wanted to capture the warmth and security of rural life and did so with vibrant colours, in which green often predominated.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Houses in Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890

Toledo Museum of Art, Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1935.5



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

View of Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Old Vineyard with Peasant Woman, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

After just five days in Auvers, Van Gogh had completed four paintings, including Blossoming Chestnut Trees (at the right), and this large drawing. Remarkably, he used almost exclusively blue paint applied with rhythmic brushstrokes. The white of the paper that he let shine through also plays an important role, for example in the clouds. An amusing detail are the chickens scurrying among the grape vines.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Blossoming Chestnut Trees, 1890
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Houses at Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, bequest of John T. Spaulding



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Thatched Cottages in Cordeville, Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

His easel at hand, Van Gogh traversed all of Auvers and surroundings. He came across these houses at the far edge of the village, in the hamlet of Cordeville. He loved the traditional, thatched roof dwellings which reminded him of the Brabant countryside. The houses and vegetation in this swiftly painted landscape form an organic whole in shades of green against a deep blue sky with billowing clouds.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Field near Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890

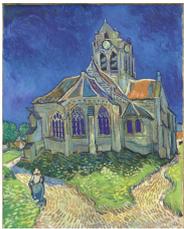
Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, former loan of the Fondation
Garengo, 1990



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Face of Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, given in memory
of Miss Dorothy Sturges by a friend, 35.770



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

The Church at Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Van Gogh painted Auvers' village church from close up and below, making it look even more monumental than it really is. He described it as 'an effect in which the building appears purplish against a sky of a deep and simple blue of pure cobalt.' He compared the work to his early paintings of the church in the Dutch village of Nuenen, 'only now the colour is probably more expressive, more sumptuous.' It is precisely this potent vibrancy that makes this painting one of his greatest masterpieces.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Stairway in Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Saint Louis Art Museum

Van Gogh found Auvers 'gravely beautiful, it's the heart of the countryside, distinctive and picturesque.' In this village scene, he recorded a little street around the corner from the inn where he was lodging. Along an old wall with a gate, pedestrians head towards a stairway that connects two street levels. The road in the middle leading into the distance along with the undulating lines lend the composition great dynamism.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Dead-End Street with Houses, 1890
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
The House of Père Pilon, 1890
Private collection

Van Gogh painted this cul-de-sac with walled gardens and houses during one of his initial forays into the village. Presumably he first made the drawing at the left, on which he jotted some notes regarding colour, on the basis of which he worked out the painting. The large house is almost entirely hidden behind a flowering chestnut tree. Van Gogh painted an increasingly darker blue sky around it, like a halo.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
The Oise at Auvers, 1890
Tate Modern, London



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Bank of the Oise at Auvers, 1890
Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit

In Auvers, Van Gogh was particularly interested in the village and fields: in fact, this is his only painting of the river Oise. The adjacent drawing presents a view of the river with a bridge at the right. In summer, there was plenty of pleasure boating on the Oise and good fishing as well. Here Van Gogh painted the boat rentals along the bank from which a woman casts a fishing rod: a cheerful scene in pronounced bright hues.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Farmhouses in Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Ateneum Art Museum, Finnish National Gallery, Helsinki



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
House in Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
The Phillips Collection, Washington



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Farmhouse, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

The Village

Auvers-sur-Oise is just under 30 kilometres northwest of Paris and surrounded by wheatfields. The quiet village on the river Oise attracted quite a few artists at the time. There was a train connection between Paris and Auvers, and on weekends scores of city dwellers flocked there to spend a day outdoors. Moreover, Auvers was home to a doctor, Paul Ferdinand Gachet, who was friends with many artists and could take Van Gogh under his wing.

Van Gogh rented a small attic room above the Café de la Mairie. He met Doctor Gachet, whom he regularly visited at his home. At first, Van Gogh found his subjects mostly in the heart of the village itself, later also in the fields on the plain above it. His radius was limited: many of the places he painted were less than 500 metres from the café or Gachet's house.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Doctor Gachet's Garden, 1890

Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Marguerite Gachet in the Garden, 1890

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

A Ready-Made Friend

Van Gogh had had a difficult time in the institution of Saint-Rémy. His self-confidence had taken a blow and he felt like a failure. Immediately after arriving in Auvers, he met Doctor Paul Gachet, who would keep an eye on him. The latter urged him to ‘work a great deal, boldly, and not think at all about what I’ve had.’

Some of the paintings that Van Gogh had brought back from Saint-Rémy afford insight into his state of mind. In moments of grief and distress, art offered him comfort and hope. Van Gogh’s self-portrait from Saint-Rémy and the portrait of Doctor Gachet from Auvers were attempts to express both the vulnerability and intransigence of human suffering. Van Gogh identified with the melancholic doctor and even considered him ‘a ready-made friend.’ Yet their contact diminished in the final weeks, as Van Gogh became more withdrawn.

Doctor and Art Lover

According to Van Gogh, Doctor Paul Ferdinand Gachet (1828-1909) was ‘rather eccentric.’ He specialised in melancholia (what we would now call depression) and was an advocate of alternative medicine, such as homeopathy. While he maintained a medical practice in Paris, he spent most of the week in Auvers. He was a widower and lived with his daughter Marguerite and son Paul in a large house full of art and curiosities.

Gachet’s real passion was art. He was acquainted with many artists, including Auguste Renoir, Paul Cézanne and Camille Pissarro, whose works he collected. He also painted himself and produced etchings on his own printing press in his home. As a doctor and an art lover, he was just the right person to support Van Gogh.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Cows (After Gachet, after Jordaens), 1890
Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille

Van Gogh painted this amusing study based on Doctor Gachet's etching (at the right) after a painting by the 17th-century Flemish artist Jacob Jordaens. Van Gogh had studied Jordaens' vivacious handling of the brush and robust shapes from close up in Antwerp. Now he painted this unusual animal piece in his own expressive colours. He presented the painting to Gachet as a gift.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Cows (After Jordaens), 1873

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Medicine kit belonging to Paul Gachet

Musée d'Histoire de la Médecine, Paris

This is Doctor Gachet's personal medicine kit with tubes filled with white granules. These homeopathic remedies were often made from mineral or vegetable raw materials. Gachet grew medicinal plants himself in Auvers. The foxglove seen in his portrait (also in this gallery) possibly refers to this. The plant was used to treat heart disease. Gachet had also offered to give Van Gogh tranquillisers 'if melancholy or something else were to become too strong for me to bear.'



v.l.n.r.

Paul Ferdinand Gachet, 1894

Marguerite Gachet, 1894

Paul Louis Gachet

Reproduction of photos from the family album of Paul Ferdinand Gachet

Wildenstein Plattner Institute, New York



Fotoalbum van dokter Paul Gachet, 1890

Reproductie van foto's uit het album met foto's van familieleden en vrienden van Paul Ferdinand Gachet

Private Collection



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Portrait of dokter Paul Gachet, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Gachet was the subject of the only etching Van Gogh ever made, which he did on the printing press in the doctor's studio. While smoking their pipes after lunch in the garden outside, Van Gogh swiftly drew Gachet's portrait on the copper plate. They then pulled several impressions of the etching together. Van Gogh was excited by the etching technique, which was new to him, and he tried out different colours.

Do not miss our presentation 'Dr Gachet & Van Gogh. Experiments in Etching' on the 2nd floor of the permanent collection.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Portrait of Doctor Paul Gachet (The Man with the Pipe), 1890

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

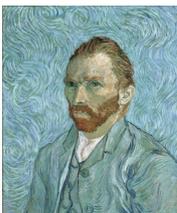


Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Doctor Paul Gachet, 1890

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

'I've done the portrait of Mr Gachet with an expression of melancholy which might often appear to be a grimace to those looking at the canvas. And yet that's what should be painted, because then one can realize, compared to the calm ancient portraits, how much expression there is in our present-day heads,' Van Gogh wrote to his sister.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Self-Portrait, 1890

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Van Gogh took this penetrating self-portrait with him from Saint-Rémy to Auvers. His facial expression is calm, but the background is turbulent. He thus visualised how he was trying to stand firm in the turmoil of his mental illness. Doctor Gachet was deeply moved by this painting. Van Gogh's portrait of him (adjacent) was, in a sense, also a kind of self-portrait. He saw the suffering of his own life reflected in Gachet's 'sad expression of our times.'



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

The Garden of the Asylum, 1889

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Pietà (after Delacroix), 1889

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

By painting, Van Gogh tried to shield himself from his melancholy. He created this Pietà after a reproduction of Eugène Delacroix's painting of the subject. The image of Mary mourning her son, the dead Christ, bespoke great sorrow, as well as profound compassion for his suffering. It was comforting. Van Gogh took the painting with him to Auvers; it probably hung in his room there, as it had in Saint-Rémy.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

The Man is at Sea (After Demont-Breton), 1889

Private Collection

Flower Still Lives

Van Gogh landed in Auvers in late May when it was 'sunny and covered in flowers' and there was 'beautiful greenery in abundance.' He produced mostly landscapes there, but also a dozen flower still lifes. Van Gogh made most of these works mainly for his own pleasure and to give away. He presented several paintings to the doctor, probably to thank him for his help.

The flower still lifes differ greatly. Van Gogh painted impressive blossoming chestnut branches and close-ups of acacia branches and ears of wheat. He made a series of studies of bouquets at Gachet's home, as there was 'what I need [...] for arranging flowers or still lifes.' Van Gogh filled several glasses and vases with flowers from the garden or wildflowers picked along the way.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Glass with Carnations, 1890
Private Collection



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Roses and Turban Buttercups, 1890
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

This colourful bouquet in a Japanese-looking vase is set on Dr Gachet's red garden table. Van Gogh painted this still life and Vase with Flowers (at the left) with an emphasis on planes of colour and contour lines. This is in keeping with the style of Japanese prints, which he so admired. The flower still lifes are painted quickly, laid down with coarse brushstrokes on the canvas in one go.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Vase of Flowers, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Vase with Red Poppies, Cornflowers and Daisies, 1890

Private Collection



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Blossoming Chestnut Branches, 1890

Emil Bührle Collection, on long term loan to Kunsthaus Zurich

The large branches Van Gogh painted here must have snapped off during a storm. Only when you look closely do you discover the pale pink vase in which the branches stand and the sloping line of a table. They are hidden behind the white and pink clusters of flowers and the leaves.

The bright blue background suggests that the scene is set outdoors. The expressively painted still life - with a wealth of paint strokes - is a splendid portrayal of nature's vitality and energy in spring.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Ears of Wheat, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Blossoming Acacia, 1890

Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

Doctor Gachet's son Paul had watched Van Gogh create this loosely brushed close-up of an acacia tree in their garden. He recalled it as follows: 'Before applying a few touches of colour to the little canvas, he threw his head back each time so that, with eyes half closed, he could view the flowers above him at the same time as the sky, which was barely visible on either side through the dense foliage.'

Youthful Portraits

When Van Gogh arrived in Auvers, he immediately intended to make portraits. He had long been convinced that 'the portrait with the model's thoughts, his soul' was the future of painting, and colour was an important means of expressing that. He portrayed Doctor Paul Gachet as a melancholic person. He aptly characterised Adeline Ravoux, the daughter of the proprietors of the inn where he was lodging, as a shy girl.

His portraits of youthful types out of doors, especially women and children, were an ode to country life. Van Gogh believed that children were much better off growing up in the countryside. He encouraged his brother Theo and sister-in-law Jo to frequently come to Auvers with their infant son Vincent. These works also reveal what he missed most of all: the love of a wife and a family.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Portrait of a Young Woman, 1890
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

The identity of the young woman who posed for this portrait is unknown. Van Gogh depicted her against an (originally brighter) pink background on which he applied light green daubs. He gave her orange dress blue dashes, yet another complementary colour contrast. The adjacent square portrait of Adeline Ravoux is the same size and has a similar composition. In it he used the contrasting colours yellow and blue. These similarities make it quite possible that he considered the portraits as companion pieces.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Adeline Ravoux, 1890
The Cleveland Museum of Art, bequest of Leonard C. Hanna, Jr.
1958



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Adeline Ravoux, 1890
Private Collection

Adeline was the 12-year-old daughter of Mr and Mrs Ravoux, who ran the inn where Van Gogh lodged. She posed in her 'first girl's dress,' she later recounted, 'quite an event!' As in his portrait of Doctor Gachet, Van Gogh painted the background a deep blue colour that harmonises with the likewise blue clothing. It highlights the pale tonality of Adeline's face and her blond hair. He gave her this painting as thanks for sitting for him.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Two Girls, 1890

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

A place like Auvers 'with children, animals, flowers and good air,' Van Gogh wrote, would be beneficial to his young nephew Vincent. He was trying to convey this idea in this double portrait of two cheerful girls, reportedly the children of the railway guard. The cosy farmhouses in the background, along with the flower in the hand of the frontmost girl, reinforce the image of wholesome country life.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Women Crossing the Fields, 1890

The McNay Art Museum, Bequest of Marion Koogler McNay, 1950.49

During one of his walks, Van Gogh encountered a mother and daughter whom he would have liked to portray: 'very healthy figures, rustic, well tanned by the open air, burned by the sun.' It inspired him to paint this landscape with strolling women on an oblong piece of paper. Its sketchy, unfinished nature suggests that it may have been meant as a study for a larger, unrealised canvas.

Drawings and Sketches

'There's a lot to draw here,' Van Gogh wrote shortly after arriving in Auvers. In addition to a large number of paintings, he also found time to make many drawn studies and sketches. He worked mainly in pencil and chalk, or mixed media for the larger, elaborate drawings.

He probably drew mostly to fill in time between painting, as a way to clear his mind or try something out. This resulted in fleeting scribbles alongside some ambitious landscapes and village scenes. His drawings and his sketchbook also include many figures walking or at work, whom he observed on the street or in the field. They reveal something of his delight in being among people again for the first time in a long time.

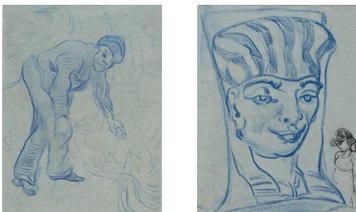


Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Marguerite Gachet at the Piano, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Gachet's 21-year-old daughter posed at the piano for a large portrait. Before Van Gogh began painting, he first made this chalk drawing as a preliminary study. In the quick sketch, he determined the composition and filled in the background and floor with dots and strokes. In the painting, Van Gogh elongated his model to make her seem longer and more elegant. This was inspired by the vertical format of Japanese prints.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Stooping Man and Egyptian Head and Figure Study, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Van Gogh's drawn work from Auvers features a wide variety of subjects. There are sheets filled with small figure studies, copies after a drawing course by Charles Bargue, with preliminary studies or ideas for paintings, as well as striking sketches, such as this one of an Egyptian head. The head Van Gogh copied here was a decorative element of the entrance gate to a mansion in Auvers that was probably meant to ward off evil spirits.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Peasant Woman Working the Land and Two Peasant Women in a Field, 1890

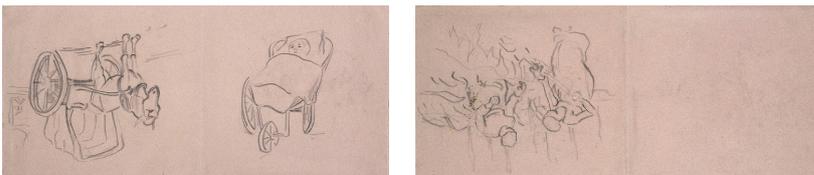
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Sitting and Standing Male Nude, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Sketches of Horse with Covered Wagon and Baby in a Pram and Sketch of Women Working, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

In Auvers, Van Gogh made several quick sketches of women with children and of young families. This focus on young children reflects his lack of domestic bliss, something his brother Theo did have by then. On 8 June, Theo, his wife Jo and little Vincent visited Auvers. Van Gogh quite possibly immortalised his nephew in the stroller in this drawing.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Auvers Town Hall and Head of a Man and Landscapes with Houses, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Horse and Carriage, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Village Street, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Glass, Pewter Jug, Arum Lily and other sketches, 1890

Private Collection

Van Gogh worked on this drawing at Gachet's home. The tin jug and the elegant drinking glass were part of the doctor's household effects. According to Gachet's son, Van Gogh drew these objects during the time that he was working on his father's portrait, in early June. He made figure sketches, adding some colour notations, over the drawing and on the back of the sheet.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Woman in Striped Skirt and Woman Seen from the Back, 1890
From sketchbook Paris-Auvers
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Rear of a Horse (recto) and Boy with Hat, 1890
From sketchbook Paris-Auvers
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Sketches of Wheatfields and Cottages in Chaponval, 1890
Enclosed in letter to Theo from 23 July 1890
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Couple with Child, 1890
From sketchbook Paris-Auvers
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Sitting Woman with Child, from sketchbook Paris-Auvers, 1890
From sketchbook Paris-Auvers
Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Sketchbook Paris-Auvers, 1890
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Van Gogh filled this sketchbook with quick impressions of what struck him or what he encountered along the way. A few of the sketches were not made in Auvers, but in Paris or elsewhere. It has not yet been determined where Van Gogh could have seen what is depicted over two pages, namely a bridge with walkers, a slope with a stairway, and houses in the background. Browse through the sketchbook on the screen for yourself.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Cottages with a Woman Working in the Middle Ground, 1890
The Art Institute of Chicago, Bequest of Kate L. Brewster

A barely visible woman is at work in the centre of the field. The row of trees at the left is reminiscent of the rows of cypress trees Van Gogh had depicted so often in Provence. The foreground is extremely coarsely laid out with broad, jagged ink lines. The horizontal, alternating blue and white bands in the sky introduce serenity into the composition, while the small tree in the foreground adds depth.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Père Eloi's Farm, 1890
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Last Landscapes

In his final weeks, Van Gogh concentrated mainly on painting the vast fields around Auvers. He produced a series of magisterial landscapes in what for him was a new, elongated format of 50 centimetres by 1 metre. They vary in subject matter and execution, featuring turbulent skies or, conversely, sun drenched haystacks. Nowhere in the fields is there any sign of human presence.

Van Gogh's mental health was deteriorating during this period. His landscapes expressed the 'sadness, extreme loneliness' he was experiencing. At the same time, these paintings were also meant to be comforting and evidenced a deep sense of peace. That these intense feelings are still so palpable to this day is testimony to Van Gogh's craftsmanship and power as an artist.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Vineyards Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Saint Louis Art Museum, Funds given by Mrs. Mark C. Steinberg

Here Van Gogh here stood on an elevation, looking out over the western part of Auvers with Doctor Gachet's tall house on the horizon at the far left. There is much to see: a group of old farmhouses, an undulating wall and in the foreground the energetically painted vineyard, which occupies most of the composition. To the left along the edge is a roughly painted yellow-green verge with bright red poppies forming a strong complementary colour contrast.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Wheatfield with Cornflowers, 1890

Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Sammlung Beyeler

Wheatfield with Cornflowers belongs to the impressive group of paintings Van Gogh made on the plain above Auvers, with dramatic skies and vast, empty wheatfields. The diagonal strip of grass with some sort of path at the left introduces tension into the composition. He would apply the powerful contrast of yellow against blue and the agitated, rhythmic brushstrokes even more forcefully a few weeks later in Wheat Field with Crows (elsewhere in this gallery).



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Poppy Field, 1890

Kunstmuseum Den Haag, long-term loan Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Wheatfields with Reaper, Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890

Toledo Museum of Art, purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1935.4



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Garden in Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Private Collection

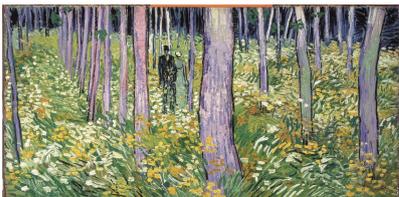


Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Daubigny's Garden, 1890
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

This is Van Gogh's first painting of the garden of Daubigny, the famous landscape painter who had lived in Auvers. Van Gogh used a piece of kitchen towel because he had run out of canvas. Two larger paintings of the garden followed later (one on view here, opposite). The adjacent garden view probably sprouted largely from his imagination. It is a close-up of flower beds and a path in a very different, decorative style: with large, flat areas of colour and contrasting dots and dashes over them.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Landscape at Twilight, 1890
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Undergrowth with Two Figures, 1890
Cincinnati Art Museum, bequest of Mary E. Johnston, 1967.1430

This is one of the most unusual compositions in a series of oblong landscapes measuring 50 centimetres by 1 metre. There is no sky to be seen, which gives it a claustrophobic feeling. Van Gogh described the work as, 'Forest view, undergrowth, lilac trunks of poplars, and underneath them some flower-dotted grass, pink, yellow, white and various greens.' Curiously, he did not mention the spectral couple who seem to float among the tree trunks.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Fields near Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Belvedere Museum, Vienna

This vast landscape is notable for its deep sense of space and the absence of people. The high horizon is little less than a narrow strip of sky whose turquoise colour merges with that of the fields. It reinforces the illusion of endless space. In the letter in which Van Gogh sketched this painting (at the right), he described the colour scheme as 'soft green, yellow and green-blue.'



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh and Jo van Gogh-Bonger with sketches of Country Girl with Straw Hat, Undergrowth with Two Figures and Fields near Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Wheatfield with Crows, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Wheatfield under Thunderclouds, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

A panoramic-sized canvas allowed Van Gogh to portray universal, all-encompassing nature even more forcefully. He painted *Wheatfield under Thunderclouds* shortly after a turbulent visit to Theo and Jo in Paris. In both this work and *Wheatfield with Crows* (at the left) he emphatically tried to convey 'sadness, extreme loneliness.' At the same time, he believed that these canvases 'will tell what I cannot express in words: what I consider healthy and fortifying about the countryside.'



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh with sketches of Daubigny's Garden, Wheatfields and Cottages in Chaponval, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Daubigny's Garden, 1890
Rudolf Staechelin Collection

The celebrated landscape painter Charles-François Daubigny had lived in Auvers until his death in 1878. Van Gogh painted his widow's house and idyllic garden on an oblong canvas: a tribute to the artist he so admired, who favoured this horizontal format. In his very last letter (in the display case), Van Gogh made a sketch of his other version of The Garden of Daubigny, 'one of my most deliberate canvases.'



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Field with Haystacks , 1890
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Sammlung Beyeler



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Rain - Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales, Cardiff



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)
Farms near Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Tate, London, Bequeathed by C. Frank Stoop

Farms near Auvers-sur-Oise is considered one of Van Gogh's last works, painted just before his death.

Parts of the painting remain unfinished, for instance in the sky and foreground. His final work was *Tree Roots* (at the right), painted on the morning of 27 July. Andries Bonger, Theo's brother-in-law, later wrote that Vincent had painted a 'sous-bois' (undergrowth) that very morning.

This can only refer to *Tree Roots*. The symbolism of roots trying to cling to the earth and yet partly yanked loose speaks volumes.



Vincent van Gogh (1853 - 1890)

Tree Roots, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Vincent's Death and Legacy

Van Gogh painted his last work, *Tree Roots*, on the morning of 27 July 1890. That evening he tried to end his life. Growing loneliness, great uncertainty about the future and the idea of only being a burden to his brother Theo may have contributed to this. '... my life, too, is attacked at the very root, my step also is faltering,' Vincent wrote.

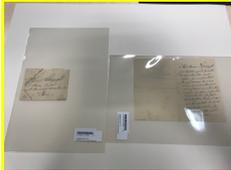
He died two days later, on 29 July, with Theo by his side. Several friends and acquaintances from Paris came to Auvers for the funeral. In the weeks that followed, Theo and his family received numerous condolences from artist friends, art critics and collectors. These expressed how much Vincent's talent was already appreciated, and what he had meant to them and to art. 'He lives for you, for us - and for everyone, in the work that he has left behind,' an artist friend wrote.



Vincent van Gogh's palette and paint tubes, c. 1890

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Van Gogh must have worn out quite a few palettes during his ten years as an artist; this is the only one that has survived. It belonged to Doctor Gachet, who lent it to him when he came to finish his daughter's portrait and had forgotten his own palette. Gachet's son Paul later donated it to the Louvre in memory of Van Gogh.



Letter from Paul Ferdinand Gachet to Theo van Gogh, 27 July 1890, and envelope, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



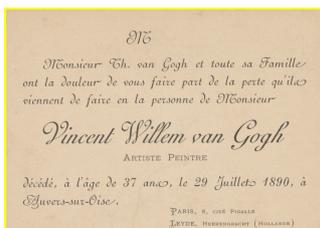
Paul van Ryssel (Paul Ferdinand Gachet) (1828-1909)

Vincent van Gogh on his Deathbed, 1890

Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Gachet was deeply affected by Van Gogh's death. Although they had not spent much time together, he had become deeply fond of Vincent as a person and an artist. He made two drawings of Van Gogh on his deathbed. A geometric pattern can be made out in the drawing as the paper was laid on a wicker chair. Gachet kept this version for himself. He gave the other one to the grief-stricken Theo with the dedication 'à mon ami Theo van Gogh le 29 juillet, P. Gachet' (To my friend Theo van Gogh, 29 July, P. Gachet).



Mourning Card for Vincent van Gogh, 1890

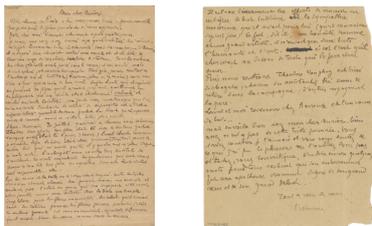
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Mourning Card, invitation tot the funeral of Vincent van Gogh, 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

The funeral took place on 30 July. Van Gogh lay in the back room of the inn in a closed coffin covered with a white cloth and topped with yellow flowers. His last paintings were hung around it. The farewell was to take place in the church of Auvers; however, the priest refused because Van Gogh had committed suicide and moreover was a Protestant. Thus the location on the printed death announcement had to be crossed out.



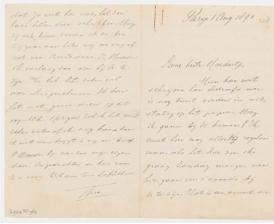
Letter from Emile Bernard to Albert Aurier, 31 July 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letter from Anna van Gogh-Carbentus and Willemien van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, 31 July 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



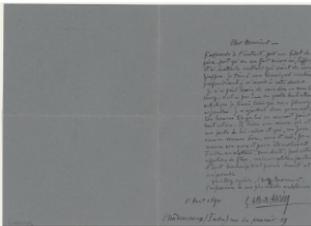
Letter from Theo van Gogh to Anna van Gogh-Carventus, 1 August 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letter from Theo van Gogh to Jo van Gogh-Bonger, 1 August 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letter from Albert Aurier to Theo van Gogh, 1 August 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



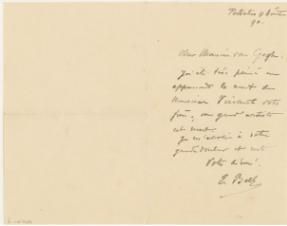
Letter from Paul Gachet to Theo van Gogh, c. 15 August 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



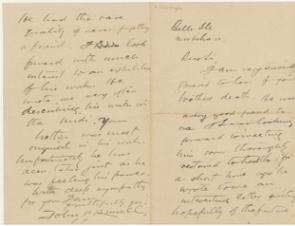
Letter from Paul Gauguin and Meijer de Haan to Theo van Gogh, 2 August 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letter from artist Eugène Boch to Theo van Gogh, 4 August 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letter from John Russell to Theo van Gogh, August 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)



Letter from Claude Monet to Theo van Gogh, 15 August 1890

Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

About Suicide

People often wonder how it could be that Van Gogh, who was painting in earnest and making new, ambitious works, so suddenly wanted to end his life. However, it is clear from his letters that his confidence in himself and those around him had reached an all-time low, and he no longer saw a future ahead of him. It had been a long process. Theo sensed something was going on, but gauged Vincent's mood differently.

A complex story underlies every suicide with various internal and external factors at play. It is never the result of a single event or circumstance, and this was no different with Van Gogh. Relatives are therefore often left with unanswered questions. There are also many misconceptions about suicide, such as 'talking about suicide encourages suicide.' This is not true. Talking about it is vital: ask about it, listen attentively and seek help together. This can be done by calling 113, the Dutch Suicide Prevention Centre, or visiting its website, for example.

Gratitude

Often, we only realise what someone means to us when they are no longer there. We share feelings of gratitude, appreciation, recognition, love and friendship with those left behind, rather than the one we can no longer say it to.

We invite you here to think about someone who means a lot to you and what you are grateful for to that person. If no one comes to mind, perhaps there is something, even minor, for which you are grateful.

- Take a card/ribbon
- Write on it: I am grateful for (...)
- Put the card in the box on the table / hang the ribbon at the exit
- And, if possible, share what you feel after your museum visit with this person. This can also be done by snapping a photo of your card/ribbon and sending it.