THROUGH VINCENT'S EYES

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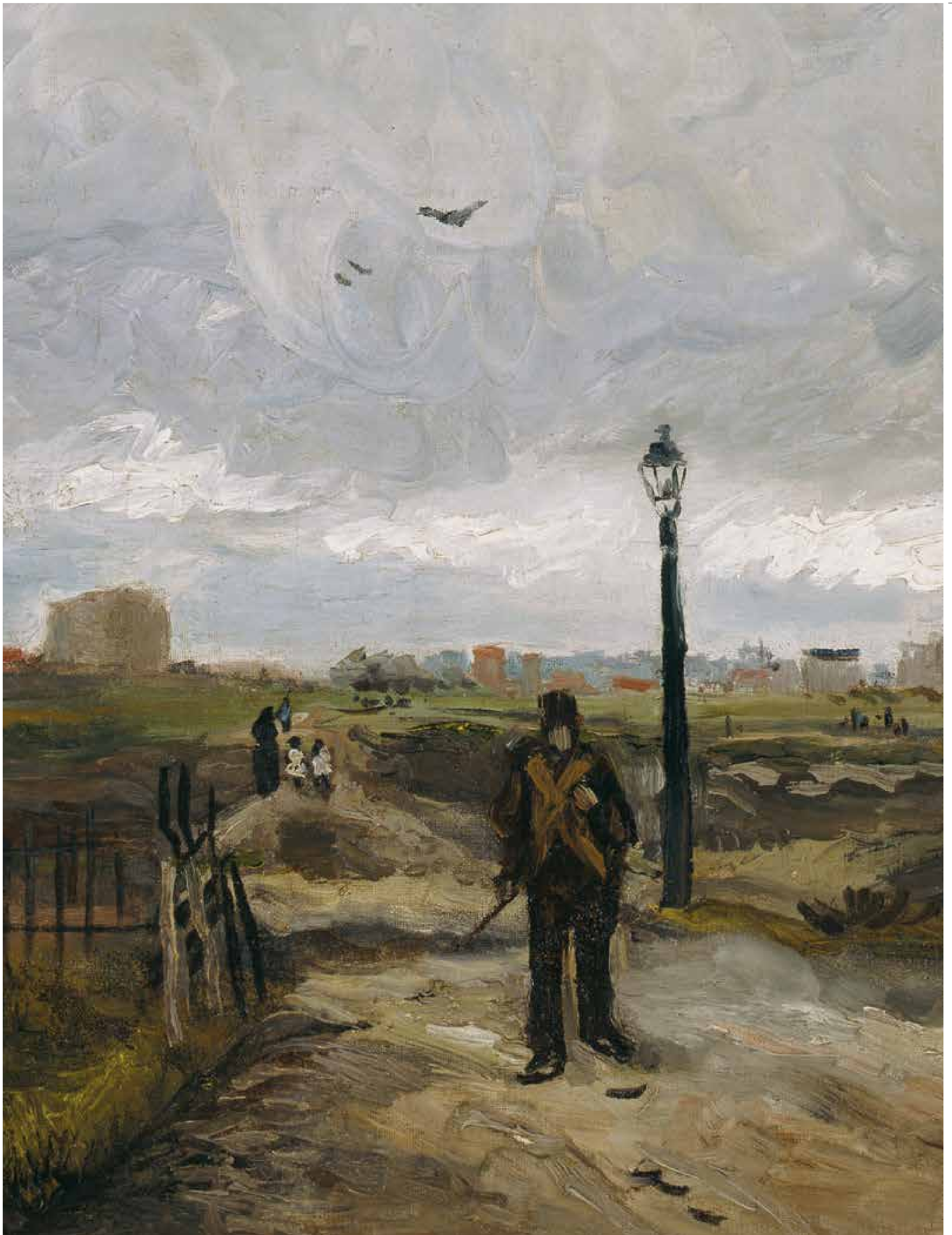

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SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM OF ART
IN ASSOCIATION WITH YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW HAVEN AND LONDON

THROUGH VINCENT'S EYES

VAN GOGH AND HIS SOURCES

Edited by Eik Kahng

Todd Cronan
David Misteli
Rebecca Rainof
Rachel Skokowski
Sjraar van Heugten
Marnin Young

This exhibition was organized by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in partnership with the Columbus Museum of Art.

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FREQUENTLY CITED SOURCES

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Jan Hulsker. *The New Van Gogh: Paintings, Drawings, Sketches: Revised and Enlarged Edition of the Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of Vincent van Gogh*. Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1996.

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Chris Uhlenbeck, Louis van Tilborgh, Shigeru Oikawa, Lynne Richards, and Diane Webb. *Japanese Prints: The Collection of Vincent van Gogh*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2018.

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Chris Stolwijk and Nienke Bakker. *Vincent's Choice: Van Gogh's Musée Imaginaire*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003.

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DIRECTOR'S PREFACE

We had long dreamt of bringing a major Van Gogh exhibition to Santa Barbara. *Through Vincent's Eyes* is the first major international loan exhibition to be presented in some of the newly renovated galleries at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. When the Museum first opened in 1941, it staged an exhibition of seventeen paintings by Van Gogh. How very fitting it is that now, eighty years later, Santa Barbara opens its newly renovated galleries with an even more ambitious Van Gogh exhibition, an exhibition with twenty works by Vincent van Gogh and some seventy-five by sixty-two of the artists he admired, one of the most ambitious exhibitions ever organized by the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. This exhibition welcomes both Santa Barbarans and visitors from afar to a beloved structure that has undergone an extensive four-year renovation. The Museum now meets the strictest codes to safeguard people and art in case of seismic activity and assures the preservation of a rich permanent collection for the people the Museum serves for at least the next century.

For our partner, Columbus, the exhibition is equally momentous. A keen interest in Van Gogh has been ever present: between 1936 and 1971, Van Gogh was the subject of no fewer than four exhibitions held at the Columbus Museum. The last, which ran in May and June of 1971, was titled (presciently it now seems) *Van Gogh's Sources of Inspiration.* More recently, several special exhibitions at CMA, thematically aligned to some extent with *Through Vincent's Eyes,* seem to have foreshadowed its arrival in Columbus. The first, *Beyond Impressionism: Paris, Fin de Siècle: Signac, Redon, Toulouse-Lautrec and Their Contemporaries* (2017–18), was organized by the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. In 2019, an international partnership resulted in *Life in the Age of Rembrandt: Dutch Masterpieces from the Dordrecht Museum,* which surveyed the impact of Rembrandt through the late nineteenth century and included paintings of The Hague School.

Through Vincent's Eyes would not have been possible without the dedication and talent of numerous individuals and multiple voices. First and foremost, Santa Barbara deputy director and chief curator Eik Kahng is to be lauded for her scholarship and the direction of the intellectual content of the exhibition here in Santa Barbara, and for her tireless, yearslong efforts to arrange loans of such iconic masterworks by Van Gogh as the *Roses* from the National Gallery in Washington; the *Wheat Sheaves* from the Dallas Museum of Art; the *Hospital at Saint-Rémy* from the Hammer Collection; and the *Tarascon Stagecoach* from the Pearlman Foundation Collection, on long-term loan to the Princeton University Art Museum. These and so many other extraordinary works come from museums across the United States and Europe: from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to the San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts, from the Van Gogh

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Fig. 1
Barbara Jane Idleman and Mary Bills hanging Vincent van Gogh's *La Roubine du Roi,* 1941. Courtesy Santa Barbara Historical Museum.

Museum in Amsterdam, the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo, and the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid. Such loans join important works from our own collections, which have significant holdings by the artists that Van Gogh admired, and spectacular loans from private collections. Earlier in her career, Eik Kahng organized an important exhibition of the work of Eugène Delacroix, an artist Van Gogh idolized, and whose tutelage in the laws of simultaneous contrast helped inspire the colors of Van Gogh's mature art.

My deepest gratitude goes to my counterpart in columbus, Nannette Maciejunes, the Executive Director of the Columbus Museum of Art. We are also grateful to David Stark, chief curator of the Columbus Museum of Art, who is a specialist in the work of Charles de Groux, an artist mentioned often and lovingly in Van Gogh's letters. David, with a guest curator, oversaw the presentation and interpretation of the exhibition in Columbus, with many of the paintings in this catalogue, but with many others as well, allowing for an examination of this intriguing subject from another curatorial perspective.

We would also like to acknowledge the contributing authors who participated in the creation of this title; a book that we hope will continue to find new audiences well beyond the ephemeral lifetime of this exhibition. The essayists, whose work is more substantively introduced in Dr. Kahng's introduction, are

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Todd Cronan (Emory), Rebecca Rainof (Princeton), Sjraar van Heugten (former curator of the Van Gogh Museum), and Marnin Young (Yeshiva University). Catalogue entries were authored by Dr. van Heugten, Dr. Kahng, David Misteli (independent scholar), and SBMA curatorial exhibitions research assistant Dr. Rachel Skokowski. This publication was produced by Lucia|Marquand and co-published by Yale University Press. The book's elegant design was conceived by Jeff Wincapaw and edited by Charles Dibble, another favorite collaborator of Dr. Kahng.

Our colleagues from museums around the country and overseas have been extremely supportive of this project. On behalf of all of us, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the following for their invaluable assistance: Paloma Alarco, Lynne Ambrosini, Helga Aurisch, Nienke Bakker, Cynthia Burlingham, Melissa Buron, Helen Chason, James Clifton, Ashley Dunn, Eric Gordon, William Griswold, Wobke Hooites, Cameron Kitchin, Dorothy Kosinski, Lulu Lippincott, Tom Loughman, Mary Morton, Nicky Myers, Patrick Noon, Theresa Papanikolas, Lisette Pelsers, Thomas Rassieur, William Robinson, Britt Salvesen, Annette Schlagenhauff, Howard Shaw, Guillermo Solana, Susan Stein, Naoko Takahatake, Michael Taylor, Oliver Tostmann, Chelsea Troper, Sjraar van Heugten, Marije Vellekoop, Brian Weinstein, and Ghenete Zelleke.

International loan exhibitions of this magnitude can only happen through the efforts of nearly every member of our talented Museum staffs. With Dr. Kahng, we would like to acknowledge the following SBMA staff members for their unique contributions to this project: Mary Albert, Hannah Barton, Susan Bradley, Katrina Carl, John Coplin, Wendy Darling, Sean DeLouche, Alex Grabner, Huber Guadarrama, Lauren Karazijia, Karen Kawaguchi, Mac Kelly, Phil Lord, Kelsey McGinnis, Chris Park, Joseph Price, and Mike Woxell. Dr. Kahng would like to call out in particular SBMA research assistant Rachel Skokowski for adding her many gifts to the project, as well as her infectious enthusiasm.

We extend our sincere thanks, likewise, to the following CMA staff members for their contributions to this project: Lucy Ackley, Rod Bouc, Maureen Carroll, Tyler Cann, Melissa Ferguson, Cindy Foley, David Holm, Elizabeth Hopkin, Greg Jones, Amanda Kepner, Hannah Mason-Macklin, Gabriel Mastin, Tricia Mitchell, Jennifer Poleon, Nicole Rome, Jennifer Seeds, Cameron Sharp, Jeff Simms, Jordan Spencer, and Tess Webster.

Finally, our most heartfelt thanks are extended to the museums and private collectors who have so generously lent their treasures. We are also very grateful to each of the many generous benefactors who funded this ambitious exhibition. Our lead sponsor, Bank of America, deserves special recognition and our sincere thanks.

We are honored to share the art of Van Gogh and the artists he so admired through this remarkable exhibition.

Larry J. Feinberg
Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Director and CEO
Santa Barbara Museum of Art

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Eik Kahng

WHY VINCENT (AND NOT "WHY, VINCENT?")

GIVEN THE ENORMOUS EFFORT presented to any fine art museum that chooses to mount an exhibition on the art of Vincent van Gogh, the question that cannot be escaped is a simple one: "Why?" The compelling reason is that, for many, the sophistication and complex nature of the artist still requires further exploration, precisely because of the prevalent mythology that his celebrity has created. This is the Van Gogh who sacrificed himself slavishly to the calling of his art; the misunderstood, alienated Vincent who defied his family's bourgeois expectations and set off on a path of inevitable struggle and poverty; the Vincent who ultimately died alone, succumbing to insanity that resulted in his suicide; and most crucially, the Vincent who, posthumously and almost immediately after his tragic demise, rose phoenixlike to become the most sought-after and emulated artist in the history of art.

To some degree, this is an affirmation of the story of so-called High Modernism, built on the presumed authenticity of avant-garde art at the turn of the last century, when individual expression might rage against the spiritual deadening that was the presumed consequence of the new era of global industrialization. Van Gogh, more than any other artist that we still hold dear from this golden age of expressive possibility, achieved the coveted trifecta: (1) aloof of societal norms of value, he sought a "true" calling that served the disenfranchised and clung to older models of societal integrity built upon the class divisions residual to an absolutist era; (2) forever and necessarily misunderstood

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due to his unprecedented originality (and this is a term that remains crucial, despite its attempted undoing by postmodernist critiques), Van Gogh painted like no one else before him and in an inimitable "style" that cannot be extricated from his pure subjectivity; and (3) Van Gogh's brief ten-year career has been spectacularly rewarded by the near cultlike adulation that his art has received since his death. If Van Gogh personally never reaped any financial benefit from his art, its skyrocketing value is synonymous with its aesthetic and critical status as befits an artist of shattering genius (or so this story goes).

Growing awareness of some of the general, Modernist mythologies around Vincent has begun to correct this romanticized view of the artist,[1] and recent questions about his presumed suicide have spurred reevaluation. Witness the publication in 2011 of what many view to be the definitive biography of our artist, titled simply *Vincent van Gogh: The Life*, coauthored by Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a more thoughtful and exhaustive account, drawing as the authors do from every imaginable documentary source. The controversy the book occasioned is Naifeh's and Smith's calmly reasoned conclusion that the presumed suicide was in fact the result of accidental mischief: a rather mundane incident involving teenage boys, who could not resist bullying this foreigner in their midst, with his unkempt appearance and idiosyncratic way of speaking. Unsurprisingly, this deflatingly ordinary explanation of our artist's tragic demise at the age of thirty-seven has not been recognized by some specialists, no matter how seemingly irrefutable the forensic evidence.[2]

Of course, this has not a little to do with how this would interrupt one of the most common narratives in the interpretation of Vincent's art. What, then, will we do if we can no longer read the ominous *Wheatfield with Crows* (fig. 1) as the artist's tragic awareness of his own exiting of this world? If Vincent did not kill himself, one is forced to realize that so much of the heavy gloom and doom attributed especially to the art produced right before the end of his brief life, might in fact be entirely misplaced.

In many ways, a strictly biographical reading of Van Gogh's art is the product of his own doing: Van Gogh was an inveterate, eloquent letter writer, and the much admired correspondence, especially the hundreds of letters exchanged between himself and his brother Theo, have left a rare documentary record. Now translated into multiple languages and editions and available online in searchable form, it is almost possible to imagine that one can follow Van Gogh's very thoughts, if not day to day, then at least month to month, especially during his headiest days of artistic fervor leading up to the near-legendary two months that he spent with the irascible Paul Gauguin in Arles at the Yellow House in 1888. Like his artist-hero Eugène Delacroix, whose journals inform so many accounts of his art, Van Gogh possessed a rare sophistication in prose, accrued through a lifetime of reading and constant looking at other works of art, both of the past and of his own day. As every biography recounts, Van Gogh was nothing if not obsessive once he had chosen a certain path, and his manic overidentification, whether with certain authors, artists, or even fictional characters, offers a rich backdrop by which to measure his intentional framework.[3] The downside, however, to such rare access to primary documentation and so many words, whether in Dutch, English, or French, to guide interpretation, is at times an

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Fig. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Wheatfield with Crows*, Auvers-sur-Oise, July 1890. Oil on canvas, $19\frac{7}{8} \times 40\frac{9}{16}$ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0149V1962 / F779).

overemphasis on a biographical reading of some works of art. Like the best art of any period, Van Gogh's drawings, prints, and paintings should sustain hard looking. As numerous scholars have demonstrated, formal analysis and various other approaches can open up the work of art to any number of interpretive directions and not just a simple symbolical emphasis on psychological content, whether from Vincent's point of view, the point of view of his chosen subjects, or that of his intended viewers.

Surprisingly, unlike, say, Paul Cézanne, the slightly older French painter, or Gustave Courbet, another older Realist with whom Van Gogh readily identified, the art of Van Gogh has not enjoyed quite as many of the methodological approaches applied to the work of these two equally compelling painters. There have been many notable and valuable publications that expand our knowledge beyond a strictly biographical approach, such as Griselda Pollock's 1980 essay "Artists Mythologies and Media Genius, Madness and Art History."[4] She dwelled specifically on the case of Vincent van Gogh (abbreviated to VG throughout, as if to blunt the distraction of his celebrated name).

Pollock points out the fallacy of the Romantic desire to see the artist as liberated by madness, which according to age-old myth is the precondition for artistic genius. Although her approach astutely considers the formal effects of the composition of *Wheatfield with Crows*, much of the work's complexity remains somewhat elusive. Pollock recognizes that Van Gogh's use of the wide-format canvas of these years is emulative of his artistic mentor Charles-François Daubigny (1817–1878), and she notes how its subject matter parallels the work of Van Gogh's other revered mentor, Jean François Millet (1814–1875). Yet even for Pollock, who employs an illuminating Marxist approach, the work of looking remains somewhat freighted by the weight of biography, as she continues the largely biographical impulse, substituting the troubled relationship with brother Theo instead of suicide as its subtext. As other scholars have noted, we must also

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account for many other aspects of the work, such as his now-trademark staccato brushwork, applied thickly so that the pigment takes on a sculptural quality with its edges casting shadows. As explored in a recent exhibition catalogue devoted to the subject and broadly recognized in the literature,[5] shouldn't the painterly technique of Adolphe Monticelli (1824–1886) be brought into the mix, given the palpable facture and the reddish brown ground? Further, as Pollock astutely points out, the agrarian theme of solitude is hardly new during this part of the nineteenth century, with artists like Millet, Léon-Augustin Lhermitte (1844–1925), and even the more academic Jules Breton (1827–1906), treating the harvest endlessly. Millet's crows were remarked on by Van Gogh in the letters and had become a favorite motif, after all.

In other words, stripped of any melancholy cast by the misplaced specter of suicide, is it even possible to resee this painting as optimistic—the path ahead accompanied by crows that shepherd us toward the horizon? Or even to dip back into the biographical rationalization, as a hopeful version of a career path, now at least clearly hailed by one prominent critic, Albert Aurier, who had only six months earlier crowned Vincent van Gogh the new leader of the Symbolist school?[6]

Pollock's call for a more nuanced set of readings of Van Gogh's art was answered by T. J. Clark's landmark text *The Painting of Modern Life* (published in 1984), in which *The Outskirts of Paris* (fig. 2) features. Here, Clark valiantly situates the artist's activity of choice within the visible consequences of the social spaces of a city continually in flux. According to Clark, Van Gogh has settled on a *banlieue* (suburb) that was perceived to be the consequence in the 1880s of the redefinition of urban areas because of Haussmannization, that is Georges-Eugène Haussmann's (1809–1891) modernization of Paris, at the command of Napoleon III, through an urban design meant to promote rapid transit and commerce through wide boulevards, cutting through what had previously been dense knots of small streets. As Clark points out, the ill effects of this spectacular overhaul of the city were quickly noted by critics such as Louis Lazare, who accused the baron of having created a "second Industrial Paris on the edge of the old," where the working class would automatically be drawn away from the newly enriched neighborhoods at the center of the city. It is worth recalling Clark's carefully worded description of this modestly scaled painting to test its mettle one more time. After quoting a passage from Victor Hugo's 1861 edition of *Les Misérables*, in which the author describes these transitional areas as "amphibian," "bastard countryside, somewhat ugly but bizarre," which Van Gogh, the devourer of novels, plausibly would have known, Clark prefaces his analysis of the painting thus:

> The *banlieue* was the place where autumn was always ending on an empty boulevard, and the last traces of Haussmann's city—a kiosk, a lamppost, a cast-iron *pissotière*—petered out in the snow. It was the territory of ragpickers, gypsies, and gasometers, the property of painters like Jean-François Raffaëlli and Luigi Loir.[7]

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Fig. 2
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch 1853–1890), *The Outskirts of Paris*, Paris, 1886. Oil on canvas, 18 × 21⅛ in. Private collection in memory of Marie Wangeman (F264).

Clark then brings in the further literary imagery provided in Émile Zola's *L'Assommoir* (another novel that we know Van Gogh inhaled vigorously), an organic entrance to his memorable ekphrasis:

> Of course the picture has its share of desolation. It is mostly laid on or suggested by the unrelieved drabness of the colours, and by having objects and persons reduced to fluid, approximate, almost apologetic smears of paint. The paint is as slippery as the rained-on clay at the crossroads in the foreground, and as liquid as the cloud cover—that waterlogged, tumescent grey in which the very birds seem bloated and lumbering. The *banlieue* was supposed to look like this: the weather is suitably hopeless and the brushwork insists on the mud-caked, deliquescent character of everything, even the lamppost. Whatever separate forms there are seem half embedded in the general ooze, but nonetheless van Gogh has been at pains to make them readable, and by means of them he draws up a kind of inventory of the edge of Paris—he does so matter-of-factly, bit by bit. There are the birds and the gaslight; there is a windmill in the distance and two or three tall narrow houses with red-tiled roofs, and on either side of the horizon large, lumpish grey buildings with rows of identical windows. There is some ragged grass, a broken fence, weeds, a line which changes from ochre to pink at the right, which may be wheat or barley, or perhaps another path, and a trace of vermilion at the left which might be meant for poppies growing on fallow ground. Two men are dressed in workers' smocks, one near, and one far, the nearer keeping company with a woman in black; two children dressed in white are being taken for a walk through the fields, and there are half a dozen other figures, tiny to the right, working or

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> walking in the distance. On the path in front of the gaslight stands a character with a stick and a cap, a shapeless brown jacket, and a face which is one unworked block of grey paint.
>
> None of these details are innocent, and most of them tell the same story. The factories—for that is what those lumpish buildings are—will replace the windmill, and the villas will march across the mud and cornfields until they reach the premonitory gas standard. This is a working landscape, with anonymous citizens mostly moving fast, going about their business, not stopping or sauntering, not sitting on the grass. There are no dreamers here. . . . There are those who blamed Baron Haussmann directly for all of this—the factories, the mess of fields and paths and stranded gaslights. As early as 1870 the grandest of Haussmann's enemies, Louis Lazare, had accused the baron of building a second industrial Paris on the edge of the old, and waiting for low rents and the promise of work to lure the working class out to it.[8]

There are many virtues to Clark's approach here, not least of which is his decision to take this modestly scaled landscape and have it stand for a nexus of ideas related to the experience of the newly modern spaces created by this brutal Haussmannization of the imperial city of Paris. While touching on the fact of Vincent's empirical experience of such liminal areas (he was a tireless walker, though the opposite of a *flâneur*, as we shall see), he chooses not to employ a psychobiographical approach, in which, perhaps, one might reasonably bring up Van Gogh's sense of dislocation in Paris, his longing for the natural environs of the countryside, or his attraction to the familiar silhouette of the inevitable Georges Michel–like windmill, and the earthy palette of seventeenth-century Dutch landscape specialists like Ruisdael or Hobbema that this patch of open land loosely resembles.

Here, again, the difficulty is not so much the subject matter at hand. (Yes, this is indeed the space of the suburb, those marginalized areas already colonized by the great Raffaëlli, though Van Gogh differs conspicuously from Raffaëlli in his desire to achieve a closer sympathy with the disenfranchised—and not the urbane distance of Raffaëlli's "types de Paris.") But the manner in which Van Gogh paints is a bit more ambivalent than Clark wants to allow. He appropriately describes the paint application as liquid (probably because it was thinly painted, most of it quickly and on the spot, as indicated by the fact that the figural elements are painted over the top of successive ground layers of pigment while it was still wet, and were not preplanned as reserve shapes).[9] But the representational values he settles upon embody a clarity that runs counter to the notational quality of the brushwork. Are the birds "bloated and lumbering," when they are hardly more than two flicks of the brush? The outline of a windmill is just identifiable, but the buildings are barely described by more than patches of hue. We might readily accept the decision to identify the man in blue as wearing a workman's smock, but is he walking with the woman in black or in fact, walking past her? Can we really say anything more generic than that there are multiple peregrinating figures dotted throughout the expanse of space? How can we know that there are two children "being taken for a walk" or that the figures in the distance, no further articulated than dots of brown and black, are "working or walking"?

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Curiously, the one figure who might be most specifically identified (classed, really) is the central one next to the single gaslight, and the gaslight itself is forcefully positioned and defined compared with all the other compositional elements. A photogravure of a Zouave for hire from Édouard Detaille's *Types et uniformes: L'armée française* (Paris, 1885–1889), articulates the recognizable banding and, therefore, implies that Van Gogh has also indicated the long-handled musket he would have been carrying (fig. 3). To me, the distinctive crisscrossed banding on the chest clearly identifies this wanderer in the *banlieue* as, if not a Zouave in particular, some type of military man, still wearing the battered uniform of his service (fig. 4).[10] After the Franco-Prussian war, conscripted and now-unemployed soldiers were a part of the urban landscape and were especially visible in these blighted outskirts of the city.

It seems right to compare the fluidity of Van Gogh's mark-making in this unusual and transitional work of the Paris period to the suppleness of Manet's mature works from the 1860s, such as his *View of the 1867 Exposition Universelle* (fig. 5). While it is unlikely that Van Gogh would have seen this unfinished oil sketch at the home of Auguste Pellerin, who purchased it at the auction following Manet's death in 1883, it displays a similarly liquid and summary paint application, especially in the distant background elements. There are a variety of unrelated inhabitants in this much more upbeat, celebratory scene of spectacle, who are so schematically blocked in that their faces, as in Van Gogh's *The Outskirts of Paris*, are little more than flesh-colored touches of paint. The only recognizable

Fig. 3
Édouard Detaille (French, 1848–1912), *Zouaves*, 1886. From Édouard Detaille, *Types et uniformes: L'armée française*, Paris, 1885–1889. Photogravure, 11½ × 8⁷⁄₁₆ in. Royal Academy of Arts, London (15/4550).

Fig. 4
Cham (Amédée de Noé, French 1818–1879), *Eh bien ! . . . Vous vous découragez déjà?* Colored lithograph, 9⅛ × 7½ in. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

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Fig. 5
Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883), *View of the 1867 Exposition Universelle*, 1867. Oil on canvas, 42½ × 77³⁄₁₆ in. Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo (NG.M.01293).

figure might be said to be Léon Leenhoff, Madame Manet's son, walking his dog in the right foreground. Like Van Gogh's gaslight, a centralized spire just to the left of center anchors the composition.

Even more interesting is the emphasis that Manet places in figures seen from behind, a device that immediately provides a placeholder for our imagined position within the landscape, thereby emphasizing the sense of visual expanse that we would feel if we too were standing on this promontory overlooking the myriad temporary tents and buildings that the Exposition occupied down the hill (fig. 6). Similarly, in Van Gogh's *The Outskirts of Paris*, there is a certain ambiguity that the artist seems to have invited in how we read the movement of these summarily described figures that dot the landscape. The centralized soldier can actually be read as either walking toward us or walking away from us; a push and pull that is a consistent feature of many of Vincent's most famous works, including *Wheatfield with Crows*.

I want to pause to consider Van Gogh's treatment of space in his oeuvre overall, for the work of visual characterization of his strange and seemingly unaccountable art continues to elude, despite the exhibition catalogues that crowd the shelves. A primary objective of our exhibition and this book is to counterbalance the effect of monographic presentations, which tend to emphasize the artist's self-invention, rather than the more messy actuality of three-dimensional experience in a late nineteenth-century art world teeming with many possible directions. As art historians are quick to point out, Van Gogh was hardly a visual illiterate.[11] Exposure to works of art through reproductive prints was a natural consequence of his responsibilities as a young clerk first starting out at Goupil's boutique in The Hague in 1869, his transfer to the London branch in 1873, and, finally, to the Paris branch in 1874 (he was summarily let go in April 1876 for poor job performance). As the correspondence with Theo reveals, the

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Fig. 6
Universal Exposition of 1867 Palais du Travail Stereoscopic View, 1867. From the collection of the Stéréo-Club Français.

list of the many artists that Vincent admired is surprisingly long and varied (we feature more than sixty of them in our selection), including Old Masters of his Dutch heritage such as Rembrandt; the familiar Paul Gauguin, his combative roommate in the Yellow House; as well as a host of lesser-known artists, covering the whole range of academic to avant-garde practitioners. Van Gogh's interest in printmaking as an affordable means for him to disseminate his work and for the common man to collect soul-cleansing art was coincident with the time spent in London, when he became an avid fan of the periodical called *The Graphic*, which included prints that he amassed in the hundreds. Our selection also includes examples of illustrations from *The Graphic* that inspired Van Gogh, most of which share a Dickensian crusade to expose the poverty and squalor of industrialized London.[12] Certainly, Vincent's attraction to the expressive possibilities of black in the early drawings and paintings leading up to his early masterpiece, *The Potato Eaters*, is related to his close attention to these monochromatic illustrations, both in subject matter and technique.

The challenge we present to the visitor to our exhibition and you, the reader of this book, is this: How can we reinsert the art of Van Gogh in this visual complexity and understand how it engages with the larger art world of the nineteenth century? Rather than automatically assuming that Van Gogh's genius alone can account for the compelling aspects of his art, how can we reconnect him to the expressive possibilities he admired in the art of his time? How can we characterize his artistic objectives so that he is once again a participant and not an anomalous fluke who somehow stumbled unwittingly through the door of full-blown twentieth-century modernism?

To illustrate the exceptional resistance that Van Gogh's seemingly singular art can present to attempts at analysis, let me return to *The Outskirts of Paris*, which in many ways hardly resembles the mature style of just two years later. Like so many of the works produced during the transitional Paris period, there is a searching quality to the artist's technical experimentation, both in type of mark-making and subject matter and, as is often remarked, an increasing

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awareness of the expressive aptitude of ever more highly keyed juxtapositions of complementary hues. We can certainly watch Van Gogh's gradual absorption of the lessons gleaned in Paris from his exposure to the masters of the "grand Boulevard" (Van Gogh's words, per letter 584, the original members of the Impressionist group, including Manet, Monet, Pissarro, and Degas) as well as masters of the Petit Boulevard (again, Van Gogh's terminology) with whom he wished to be identified (Gauguin, Bernard, Anquetin, Signac, Seurat, Toulouse-Lautrec). The fluid, Manet-ish brushwork of this painting is more the exception than the rule, though there are a number of easel-sized urban landscapes that are made up of the same kind of compositional elements (buildings, windmills, streetlamps, and summarily described anonymous passersby). Studies of flowers and birds coincident with these landscapes show his grappling with Theo's exhortation to lighten his palette, replacing the earthen tones of his early style with the beginnings of a luminous one that will finally burst into full power under the influence of the dazzling Mediterranean sun in Arles.

But if there is a residual quality of Manet's verve in *Outskirts*, as in the group of related urban street scenes that he tackled around this time,[13] all presented at a distance as though through the lens of a camera, it is debatable as to whether the visual experience Van Gogh is after has anything to do with the spectacular, fleeting vision of Manet's Paris, as persuasively articulated in Clark's book. Rather what seems to motivate Van Gogh's project is the opposite: not the flux of spectacle or the casual easy vision of Gustave Caillebotte's *flâneur*,[14] but the Realist's objective of seamless interconnection between viewer and viewed. And for Vincent, the utopian dream of capturing "it,"[15] that ineffable feeling of joyful suffering universal to the sympathetic soul, could be realized in paint through two things: an exaggeration of one-point perspective that equated the canvas with that quivering visual field designated by the implied membrane of an artist's tool he used known as a "perspective frame"[16] and a thick encrustation of paint that stilled and locked its image so that *here* and *there* are physically fused.

Van Gogh's early difficulties with perspective are well known, and he describes the version of a perspective frame that he mocked up for himself in a letter to Theo between February and June 1882,[17] based on the recommendations he would have known through Armand Cassagne's 1866 treatise in which it is described (and perhaps through the famous print made by Albrecht Dürer to illustrate the device in an instruction manual published in 1525 [fig. 7]). It consisted of a wooden frame, strung with threads to create a grid through which one would view the desired subject and then transcribe what one sees in each square of the grid on a piece of paper marked with a similar grid, thereby automatically solving the problem of relative proportion and foreshortening.

It isn't possible, in this brief introduction, to do much more than touch upon several paths by which to begin to account for the aesthetic effect of Van Gogh's celebrated art of the last three years of his career. I would, however, like to call attention to several aspects of his practice that are open to further exploration: (1) Van Gogh's visual experience and the type of spectatorship implied by his use of the perspective frame, which clearly distinguishes his artistic project from that of the Impressionists, as I have just described; (2) Van Gogh's mark-making and the implication of his painterly emulation of the repeated patterning

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associated with the print medium; and (3) what I speculate to be his painterly project: a utopian inextricability of here and there, where his technique uses forms associated with evanescent effects, such as tremulous gaslight, flickering flames, rippling water, curling smoke, rising steam and the like to trigger an automatic effect of *vanitas*, no matter what the subject matter, while simultaneously fixing such evanescence through an insistent materiality of pigment that forever clamps that longed-for belonging in the world, in the diaphragm of the imaginary perspective frame. Most importantly, I want to begin to probe what it is, precisely, about the way that Van Gogh paints that registers with viewers, even today, as so emotionally saturated?

That Van Gogh began his initial forays into art through drawing is clear, developing a signature and unique manner of mark-making with the reed pen, which he discovered when he settled in Arles in February 1888. As many have commented, Vincent's innovations as a draftsman subtend his signature painterly technique of the last two years.[18] The rhythmic quality of the pen finds its way into the paintings more and more, in our exhibition, as exemplified by the Thyssen *Les Vessenots in Auvers*, or the Dallas *Sheaves of Wheat*. But perhaps what has been less frequently remarked is the generative intermediality of Van Gogh's mature style, where the methods of mark-making associated with drawings or prints find their way into the paintings. This is not something unique to Van Gogh but can be said to be normative to the Grand Boulevard and Petit Boulevard painters whose work the artist knew and admired.[19] Indeed, it could be said that such intermediality is a hallmark of all avant-garde practice, beginning with Impressionism and continuing long thereafter into later modernism. Almost any of the artists Vincent met and grew to admire during the Paris period could be cited as an example: consider Degas, for example, and his engagement with printmaking, photography, pastel, and in the latter part of his career, three-dimensional wax sculpture. It could be easily argued that the fleeting or momentary effect of Impressionist technique derives from its imitation of the silken effects of pastel and its association with direct observation in the service of portraiture. All the artists of the Grand and Petit Boulevards experimented with printmaking. For example, even pointillism can be related to the stippling of reproductive prints of Signac's and Seurat's day. Certainly, their unprecedented

Fig. 7
Albrecht Dürer (German, 1471–1528), *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman*, ca. 1600. Woodcut, 3 1/16 × 8 7/16 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Henry Walters, 1917 (17.37.314).

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approach to drawing relates to photography's monochromatic effects of silhouetting, as well as to the peculiar mechanical disengagement from the artist's hand that is specific to the representational effect of the print.

Van Gogh's artistic development centered from the very beginning on the print. Mentions of specific prints pepper his correspondence, and his penchant for copying prints as a means of self-tutelage, as well as for personal pleasure, and late in his career, when illness prevented him from doing anything else (as in the remarkable series of small paintings that he did after Millet's seasonal laborers), are frequently cited in the literature. Long recognized, too, has been the importance played by Japanese woodblock prints and ink paintings, especially in the work associated with his move to the South, which coincided, significantly, with his discovery of the superior suppleness of the reed pen—in some ways a crude approximation of the Japanese ink brush, with its variable thickness of line dependent on the pressure applied.[20] But perhaps, less explored is Van Gogh's unique synthesis of the graphical effects associated with very disparate types of printmaking in the mature work, especially of his last two years.[21] Take, for example, the Dallas *Sheaves of Wheat* (fig. 8), which is one of the series of thirteen wide-format paintings that he made in the last months of his life. If the staccato dashes replicate the type of graphical pattern found in Japanese woodblock prints (fig. 9), the viscosity of the pigment at times is enough to create cast shadows; something entirely alien to Japanese technique, whether in woodblock prints (*ukiyo-e*) or in ink painting (*sumi-e*). This kind of textured surface is one of the elements that is unique to Van Gogh and would become one of the most imitated aspects of his paintings. While the use of complementary hues (and this is a relatively subtle example, given the pale yellow and lavender of the palette and liberal use of white) can be related to pointillism, the overall effect of the composition with its close perspective and all-over visual interest is akin to the patterning of an etching or engraving. Curiously, the ridges of protruding pigment are a

Fig. 8
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Sheaves of Wheat*, July 1890. Oil on canvas, 19⅞ × 39¾ in. Dallas Art Museum, The Wendy and Emery Reves Collection (1985.R.80).

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Fig. 9
Katsushika Hokusai (Japanese, 1760–1849), *Fuji Seen from the Katakura Tea Plantation in the Suruga Province*, ca. 1830–32. From the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*. Color woodblock print, 10 × 14¾ in. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, lent by Janet Way Vlasach (L.2001.1.12).

reversal of the gouged lines of the copperplate or woodblock, but the invitation to close vision is the same. No matter how near or far we are to the painted surface, its patterning retains its representational legibility in spite of our simultaneous awareness of the decorative, repeated dashes of which the entire composition is made up. As in the print, the support itself becomes integral to figuration, in this case, reading as both foregrounded and distant elements. The composition hugs the edges of the strongly horizontal canvas. While Van Gogh had long outgrown any dependence on the perspective frame, the composition is organized around a clearly centralized stack of wheat sheaves, with rapid recession in the upper fifth of the canvas accomplished summarily through relative scale of the single green tree at the upper left corner. Again, there is a peculiar ambiguity as to whether these easily anthropomorphized, skirted figures are sweeping toward us or away from us, a sensation that Van Gogh seems to have courted throughout his career.

An inventory of the type of repeated shapes figured by Van Gogh's assertive brush in the paintings of the last two years includes a ubiquitous use of sinuous line. In this landscape, the wheat sheaves bend and bow like cooing pigeons, and the curvilinear contours seem to pinch the triangular piles of wheat at the waist. In the history of art, the sinuous line has long been equated with ideal beauty, whether in terms of the canonical grace of the Lysippean curve in antique sculpture or as in William Hogarth's serpentine line.[22] Interestingly, Van Gogh's increasingly insistent imposition of this shape, whether or not organic to the object of depiction, comes to dominate in the last two years. Many, many canvases fit this category, but to cite just a few, consider the marvelous 1889 *Cypresses* (fig. 10), in which the flame-like silhouette of the towering trees is generated through swirling arabesques that are echoed throughout the composition, from the waving grasses below to the drifting clouds of the sky. Or consider the equally marvelous *Portrait of Dr. Gachet* (fig. 11), the last print produced

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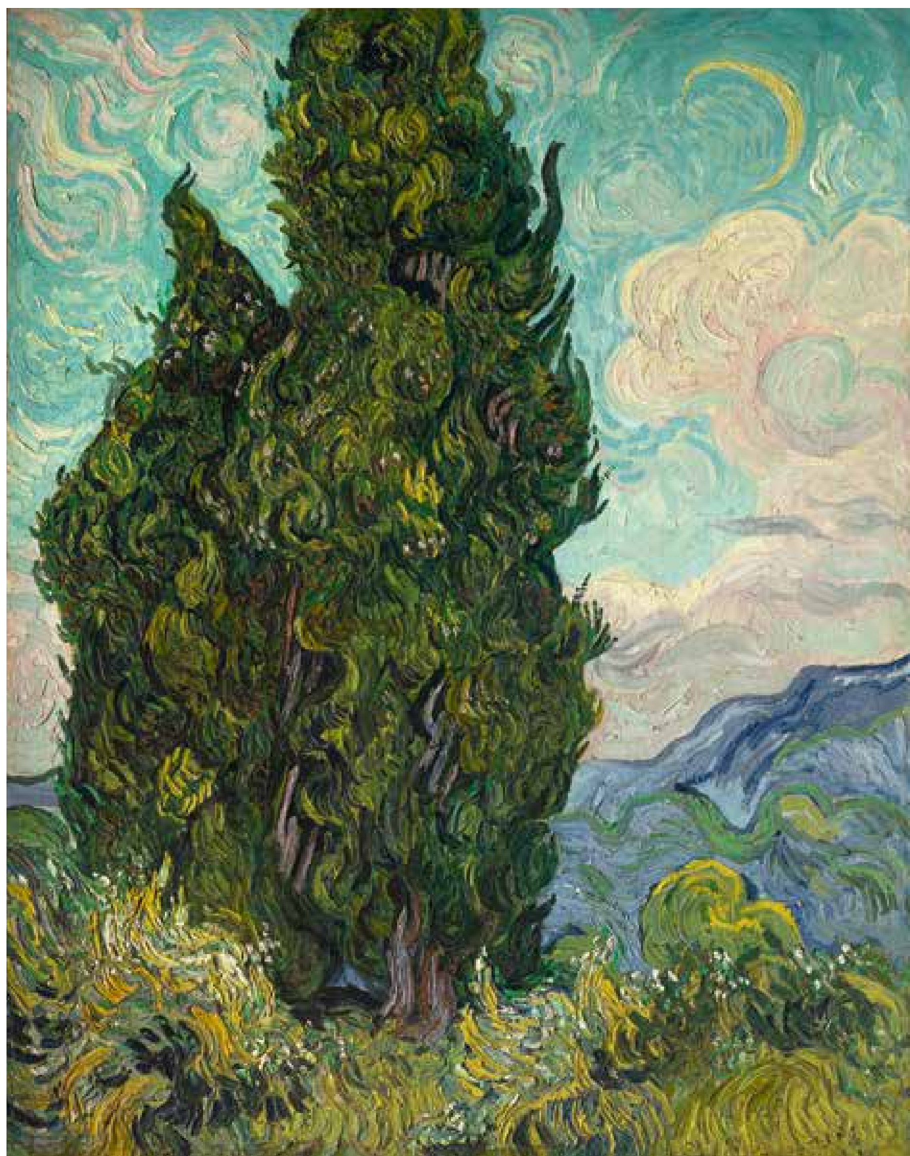

Fig. 10
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Cypresses*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 36¾ × 28¾ in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, purchase, The Annenberg Foundation Gift, 1993 (49.30).

by Van Gogh for his kindly supporter, in which the sinuous line predominates, whether in the articulation of the good doctor's bulbously tipped right hand, the curvilinear silhouette of the arm, the generous billowing opening of his sleeve, or the individual features making up his alarmingly left-leaning visage.

While the repeated striations of line describing Dr. Gachet's coat and hair might recall Japanese woodblock prints, and the stylized shape of his broadly domed forehead and lima bean–shaped face seems to echo Kunisada's three-quarter-view portraits of Kabuki actors (fig. 12), the emotional immediacy of Van Gogh's sinuous line is in fact still lodged in Western conventions of the print and, specifically, *not* the most cutting-edge kinds of prints contemporaneous with his practice. Instead, in the mature paintings and drawings of the last two years, Van Gogh's deep and, at this point, nearly unconscious assimilation of

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the mark-making of the reproductive etching or the reproductive prints (often woodcuts) found in the illustrated novels he so adored, could arguably be identified as the source.[23]

In the portrait of Dr. Gachet, Van Gogh seems to delight in the summoning of smoke through the S-shaped arabesques wafting from his sitter's pipe, through which we see the striations describing the fence behind. The support itself is allowed to signify the see-through quality of smoke, something that Vincent would have closely studied in the many illustrations he knew intimately from *The Graphic* or from the detailed woodblock prints that animate the Fielding edition, for example, Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*.[24] Even a random selection of the graphical approach to describe these kinds of evanescent effects in this edition of the book points up the resemblance between Van Gogh's sinuous line and these typical abstractions to conjure transient immaterial effects, whether steam (fig. 13, detail), candlelight[25] (fig. 14, detail), or water (fig. 15). Note how the scalloped shape of the rising steam contrasts with the repeated straight lines used to describe the wall "behind it" and visible "through it." Or how the white of the page is used to stand for the glow of a lit candle, with radiating diagonal lines allowed to signify the brilliance and compass of the candle's illumination. Van Gogh has wittingly transposed these conventions of the print that stand for such evanescent effects in the sinuous curve of these repeated strokes of the brush or etching stylus, precisely because the arabesque carries with it the melancholic associations of *vanitas*. And I would also argue that Van Gogh's aggressive use of the representational function of the canvas support itself in the work of the last

Fig. 11
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Portrait of Dr. Gachet*, May 15, 1890. Etching, $7 \times 5\frac{3}{8}$ in. Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Bruce B. Dayton, 1962 (P.13.251 / F1664-C).

Fig. 12
Utagawa Kunisada (Japanese, 1786–1864), *An Actor in the Role of Momonoi Wakasanosuke*, from the series *Mirror of Fashionable Relief Portraits in Fabric*, Edo, tenth month 1859. Color woodcut, $14\frac{9}{16} \times 10\frac{1}{4}$ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (n0279V1962).

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Fig. 13
Frederick Barnard (English, 1846–1896), *Mr. Micawber in His Element*, 1870. From Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1870), 201. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Study Collection, Gift of Les and Zora Charles, SC.2020.3.

Fig. 14
Frederick Barnard (English, 1846–1896), *"Read it, Sir," He Said, in a Low Shivering Voice. "Slow, Please. I Doesn't Know as I Can Understand,"* 1870. From Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1870), 224. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Study Collection, Gift of Les and Zora Charles, SC.2020.3.

two years also relates to the same in the manner by which translucent immateriality, whether water, light, smoke, or steam, is effectively relayed in the print by the page or paper itself.

Again, Van Gogh's adaptation of these shapes to signify transitory effects in the print in the mature work of the last two years is not the only way in which his painterly technique draws from the print: the paintings, especially those of the last two years, also display a similar property of simultaneous decorative flatness and representational legibility, no matter the viewing distance. And like the print, Van Gogh's canvases beckon close viewing, as though urging our physical absorption into the painting. One cannot help but suspect that the readerly absorption one imagines that Van Gogh enjoyed in his compulsive consumption of illustrated novels like Dickens's *David Copperfield* can only have been deepened through the close scrutiny that these pictures, rife with small details, invite. Take, for example, the word picture that precedes the illustration of *Mr. Micawber in His Element* (fig. 13): "He [Traddles] was delighted to see me, and gave me welcome, with great heartiness, to his little room. It was in the front of the house and extremely neat, though sparely furnished. It was his only room, I saw; for there was a sofa-bedstead in it, and his blacking brushes and blacking were among his books—on the top shelf, behind a dictionary. His table was covered with papers, and he was hard at work in an old coat."[26] I might even venture to suggest that it is the peculiar absorption achieved by the illustrated novel that Van Gogh's greatest works strive to achieve.

I want to close this introduction with a brief mention of the overall aim of this publication, which in many ways, we hope will find its use well beyond the brief life span of this exhibition. Our hope, as I have tried to demonstrate in this meditation on the many-faceted relationship between the print medium and Van Gogh's unique manner of painting, is to acknowledge other avenues by which to engender fruitful analysis and interpretation of Van Gogh's art. The aim of the exhibition and catalogue is to float a selection of Van Gogh's paintings, drawings,

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Fig. 15
Frederick Barnard (English, 1846–1896), *The Storm*, 1870. From Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1870), 396. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Study Collection, Gift of Les and Zora Charles, SC.2020.3.

and prints in a veritable sea of art by other artists to enable viewers and readers to understand Van Gogh's work in a larger visual, literary, and cultural context. Our essayists have each tackled this objective in distinct ways: Sjraar van Heugten offers an expert overview of the salient artistic sources that gripped Vincent over the course of his life and career, both reminding us of the generic outlines of the chapters of his life (typically called after his place of residence) and succinctly recounting those artists who played the greatest role in his overall development. Todd Cronan considers Van Gogh's sensitivity to the framing edge through an extended analysis of a selection of works of art, including the early weaver pictures done in Neunen and the floral still lifes done between 1885 and 1890, to suggest the "immersive connection between the aesthetic and the everyday." Marnin Young revives the period understanding of a host of neglected French Realists, most especially Jean-François Raffaëlli, whose painting established a clear path for Van Gogh to follow, and who was thought of as the artistic heir to Millet by nineteenth-century critics and viewers, including Van Gogh. Finally, Rebecca Rainof attempts to delve beyond a superficial analogy between Van Gogh's painterly project and the Victorian writers whose work he had thoroughly assimilated, such as George Eliot and Charles Dickens, reaching for imagistic parallels that exceed mere choice of subject matter.

This book does not pretend to provide comprehensive accounts of any of the works included in the exhibition, though the catalogue entries written on the works by Van Gogh seek to enact the close looking that has often eluded art historians while situating the works of art, once again, to a host of possible visual

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and/or literary sources. Color plates of the works displayed in our exhibition are accompanied at times by quotations from the correspondence, in an attempt to quickly conjure Van Gogh's unique and often highly sensitive understanding of the artists he had come to admire.

If we are successful in this endeavor, visitors and readers will come away with many more questions than answers to pose about an artist so famous, and a body of work so familiar in this digital age that we have become less sensitive to its actual complexity—a complexity that can only be regained once we learn to see *Through Vincent's Eyes*.

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NOTES

A special, additional note of thanks to Sjraar van Heugten, who so generously offered his expertise in the editorial process for the entire manuscript, as well as invaluable assistance with critical loans.

1 For a fascinating account of the canonization of Van Gogh as a cultural hero, constructed according to the patterns of a Christian saint's rise to recognition, see Nathalie Heinich, *The Glory of Van Gogh: An Anthropology of Admiration*, trans. Paul Leduc Browne (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

2 See the follow-up article published in *Vanity Fair* by Naifeh and Smith, "NCIS: Provence: The Van Gogh Mystery," December 2014, in which the authors talk about the resistance with which their theory was met by some "flame-keepers."

3 See Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, *Vincent van Gogh: The Life* (New York: Random House, 2011) for a bracing portrait of Van Gogh's various enthusiasms, whether with respect to vocation, artistic credo, favorite (and then no longer favored) authors such as Jules Michelet.

4 *Screen* 21 (no. 3) (1980): 57–96.

5 See the exhibition catalogue *Van Gogh–Monticelli* (Marseille: Centre de la Vieille charité / RMN, 2009).

6 Albert Aurier, "Les Isolés," *Mercure de France*, January 1890, 24–29.

7 Timothy J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 26.

8 Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 28–29.

9 Van Gogh, *The Outskirts of Paris*, F264; "Notes on Painting Technique and Condition," unpublished report prepared by the Van Gogh Museum at the request of Travers Newton, 2003.

10 My thanks to Gülru Çakmak for suggesting this image as a point of comparison.

11 Sjraar van Heugten's essay in this catalogue eloquently recounts Van Gogh's deep visual literacy, but this topic is also covered in multiple publications produced by the Van Gogh Museum over the years, the most notable of which is the exhibition catalogue titled *Vincent's Choice: Van Gogh's Musée Imaginaire*, edited by Chris Stolwijk, Sjraar van Heugten, Leo Jansen, and Andreas Blühm with the assistance of Nienke Bakker, published in 2003 by the Van Gogh Museum and distributed by Thames & Hudson. This show, which did not travel, closely parallels our own, and the accompanying catalogue includes a wealth of material on the subject of Van Gogh and his sources.

Needless to say, the incredible amount of documentation on Van Gogh now available to scholars and the public alike is the result of the Van Gogh Museum's commitment to exploring the artist's life and career in the form of many exhibitions dedicated to every conceivable aspect of his art. This research is indispensable for any inquiry into his life and art, and our authors have all benefited from it.

12 For more on this subject, see the essay by Rebecca Rainof in this volume.

13 For example, Faille 229, 230, 266 / Hulsker 1176, 1177, 1175.

14 Gustave Caillebotte (1848–1894) is best known for his paintings of the urbane inhabitants of the broad boulevards of Haussmann's Paris. The plunging perspective he employed aptly communicates the fashionable self-possession of the sophisticated Parisian gentleman (*le flâneur*, a term first coined by Charles Baudelaire to signify those who stroll the streets of the city to consume not its things, but its experiences and sensations; especially, in its modern aspect).

15 Chapter 11 of Naifeh and Smith's biography is titled "Das Is Het" (loosely translated in English as "This Is It") to describe Vincent's appropriation of his cousin Mauve's use of the phrase to denote anything that evoked this new and mysterious conjunction of art and religion. "You will find *it* everywhere," he said; "the world is full of it." He found *it* in a group of old houses on a little square behind the *oosterkerk*—a vignette of humble persistence just waiting for an artist to see. He found *it* in a sermon on the death of a child—"this was it," too, he said. Whether encountered in a painting or a sermon, it evoked feelings of joyful consolation. *It* both illuminated the human condition—the way art had always done—and, like religion, gave life meaning in the face of inevitable suffering and inescapable death" (Naifeh and Smith, *Vincent van Gogh*, 174).

16 For a detailed discussion of Van Gogh's reliance on the perspective frame, see Teio Meedendorp, "The Perspective Frame" in

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Van Gogh's Studio Practice, edited by Marije Vellekoop, Muriel Geldof, Ella Hendriks, Leo Jansen, and Alberto de Tagle (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2013), 132–41. See also Todd Cronan's essay in this volume, pages 61–89.

17 Meedendorp, "The Perspective Frame," 135.

18 As commented by Sjraar van Heugten, "The reason Van Gogh nevertheless displayed a preference for the pen, apart from the fact that he proved so adept at it, may therefore be sought, yet again, in examples of graphic art. Since his youth, he had seen hundreds and hundreds of line etchings, including many attractive impressions made in a very draughtsman-like manner with an emphasis on the line. . . . Van Gogh's belief, expressed in a letter, that drawing with the pen was good preparation for learning to etch, is also true in reverse: studying many etchings and other graphic works inspired, and to some extent preconditioned his manner of drawing." Sjraar van Heugten, *Van Gogh Drawings: Influences & Innovations* (Arles: Actes Suds, 2014), 71.

19 As noted by Ivins: "In 1828 Delacroix illustrated Goethe's *Faust*. Its effect was like that of a bombshell. Paris was rapidly filled with practitioners of the new technique, among whom were many of the best painters of the day. In 1830 Phillipon started the *Caricature*, which was followed in 1832 by the *Charivari*. Phillipon began to publish Daumier's work early in the thirties, and, with one short interval in the middle of the century, his work continued to appear until 1871. Few of the French painters of the nineteenth century who achieved great and abiding renown did not at one time or another try their hands at lithography. A mere short list of some of them—Prudhon, Ingres, Decamps, Diaz, Géricault, Delacroix, Chassériau, Daumier, Millet, Corot, Puvis, Manet, Degas Cézanne, Pissarro, Renoir, Gauguin, Redon, and Toulouse-Lautrec—is sufficient. Alongside these painters there were professional makers of prints, as, for instance Isabey and Raffet, Gavarni and Doré, who greatly affected public taste and thought. It is to be doubted whether any of all of the mediums for making prints called to itself in so short a time such a group of great masters as made lithographs in Paris between 1825 and 1901." In other words, the painterly crossover to lithography was natural to such creative talents. It is but a small step to believe the reverse was also true.

20 For a recent overview of the topic of Van Gogh and Japanese woodblock prints, see *Japanese Prints: The Collection of Vincent van Gogh*, edited by Chris Uhlenbeck, Louis van Tilborgh, and Shigeru Oikawa (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018).

21 Sjraar van Heugten makes several insightful observations on Van Gogh's intermixing of the effects of etching and similar effects in drawing, commenting specifically on what Van Gogh describes as "undeburred" drawings. He cites a letter where Van Gogh writes, "I found something you said about the look of some drawings as having a *je ne sais quoi* that can be best compared to an undeburred etching, correct to some extent. I believe, though that this curious effect which connoisseurs set great store by—rightly so, in my opinion—is caused in drawings (not in etchings, of course, since there it's the burr of the plate) more by a peculiar trembling of the hand [caused more so] when one works with emotion than by the materials with which one draws." This is an odd comment given that the "undeburred" effect, typically prized by connoisseurs of prints, signifies a relatively early impression before the incised lines of an engraving or etching plate have been worn away by repeated printings, and has little to do with any perceived emotional affect.

22 William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (first published 1753), edited by Ronald Paulson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997).

23 In other words, as William Ivins might say, Van Gogh's investment was in the "stupid" kinds of prints that are often highly conventionalized translations of paintings or drawings that likely convey nothing of the aesthetical effect of the original. Van Gogh was not a connoisseur of prints, then, in the sense normally expected. He prized certain Western prints for their subject and the overall emotional efficacy of the way the subject had been rendered, with no concern for its distance from its referent (an original drawing or painting), nor for the pristine condition of the impression. "The great influence of Italy on the north, and later that of Paris on the rest of Europe, was exerted through reproductive prints which carried the news of the new styles. If we would understand those influences and the forms they took, we must look not at the Italian and Parisian originals but at what for us are the stupid prints which the publishers produced and sold in such vast quantities. This is a point that is all too often overlooked by art historians." William Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication* (Cambridge, MA: MIT

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Press, 1953), 69. My thanks to Peter Parshall for steering me toward this classic primer on the history and "syntax" of prints.

24 In L235, Vincent talks at length, for the benefit of his artist-friend Anthon van Rappard, about his love of Dickens and the illustrations of his favorite novels that he had known since he was a boy. My thanks to Rebecca Rainof for this primary reference. From this letter, we also know that he owned the Household Edition of Dickens's oeuvre. It seems likely that he would have known the illustrations that I have chosen here to exemplify the graphical conventions used to capture the evanescent effects that I am claiming Van Gogh has emulated in his mature painting technique of the last two years, although there are myriad other prints that we know Vincent owned that feature a similar use of curvilinear forms to capture evanescent effects. For example, Rembrandt's *Three Trees*, the famous etching that is included in this exhibition (pl. 83), features curvilinear shapes to suggest the clouds in the restive sky while also using the support itself to suggest their relative ethereality relative to the repeated slashing diagonal lines used to anchor the composition overall.

25 Van Gogh uses precisely this simple device of radiating lines to indicate the illumination of the lantern suspended above in *The Potato Eaters*, both in the painting and in the lithograph (see cat. no. 3).

26 Charles Dickens, *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1870), 200.

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Sjraar van Heugten

ADMIRATION AND GUIDANCE: VAN GOGH'S PERSONAL PANTHEON OF ARTISTS

VINCENT VAN GOGH felt unrestrained admiration for artists, and at times, especially in his younger years, his admiration bordered on downright fanaticism. The artists of the Barbizon School, those innovative painters of landscapes and peasants who began to find recognition around the mid-nineteenth century, were his early idols, in particular Jean-François Millet (pls. 41, 42). On June 11 or 12, 1875, Van Gogh visited a sale exhibition, held at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris, that featured ninety-five pastels and drawings by Millet from the collection of Émile Gavet. A short time later—Millet had meanwhile become a true hero in Van Gogh's personal pantheon—he wrote to his brother Theo: "When I entered the room in Hôtel Drouot where they were exhibited, I felt something akin to: Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (36).[1]

In March 1880, having failed miserably in a series of occupations and desperately in search of a new path, Van Gogh embarked on a rough journey from the Belgian Borinage, where he was living at the time, to Pas de Calais in the north of France. There he tried—unsuccessfully—to find work. But this was also the rural region that had been captured in the work of the peasant painter Jules Breton (who, in Van Gogh's eyes, was almost on a par with Millet), and this prompted him to undertake a pilgrimage of sorts: he set out for Courrières, where Breton lived. Six months later he told Theo about this experience:

> I haven't seen Barbizon, but . . . last winter I saw Courrières. I made a trip on foot mainly in the Pas de Calais, not the Channel but the department. . . . I'd said to myself, You must see Courrières. I had only 10 francs in my pocket, and having started out by taking the train I'd soon exhausted those resources, and having stayed on the road for a week, I trudged rather painfully. Nevertheless, I saw Courrières and the outside of Mr Jules Breton's studio. . . . I wasn't able to get a look at the inside. Because I didn't dare to introduce myself, so as to go in. I looked elsewhere in Courrières for some trace of Jules Breton or of some other artist; all I found was his picture at a photographer's shop and then, in the old church, in a dark corner, a copy of Titian's Entombment, which in the darkness seemed to me to be very beautiful and of a masterly tone. Was it by him? I don't know, being unable to make out any signature. . . . But at any rate I saw the Courrières countryside then, the haystacks, the brown farmland or the almost coffee-colored marly soil, with whitish spots where the marl appears. . . . Furthermore, there were the farmhouses and sheds that had still preserved their mossy thatched roofs, God be praised and thanked for it; I also saw hosts of crows, famous from the paintings of Daubigny and Millet. Not to mention first of all, as one should, the typical and picturesque figures of the workmen: different diggers, woodcutters, a farm-hand driving his team, and the occasional outline of a woman in a white bonnet (158).

Van Gogh thus saw a number of elements that were typical of Breton's painting (and of his poetry too, which he also admired greatly). Despite the difficulty of this undertaking, it had given him a big boost: "I felt my energy return and . . . I said to myself, in any event I'll recover from it, I'll pick up my pencil that I put down in my great discouragement and I'll get back to drawing, and from then on, it seems to me, everything has changed for me, and now I'm on my way and my pencil has become somewhat obedient and seems to become more so day by day."

In those days he was still drawing merely for pleasure, to keep himself grounded in difficult times, but in August of that year he set out on the path to becoming an artist. The Barbizon painters—Jean-Baptiste Corot (pls. 11–14), Millet, Breton (pls. 8–9), Jules Dupré, Théodore Rousseau (fig. 1; pl. 61), Constant Troyon (pl. 68), Henri Harpignies, Charles-François Daubigny, the Swiss artist Karl Bodmer, and also their predecessor, Georges Michel (pl. 40)—were his heroes and remained so for the duration of his career. Not only did Van Gogh admire them as individual artists and human beings, but he was also impressed by the artists' colony they had formed. All these painters worked in the forests of Barbizon and Fontainebleau. Vincent had their example in mind when he tried, in the autumn of 1883, to persuade Theo to become an artist and come work with him in Drenthe: "Think of Barbizon, that's a wonderful story. The ones who originally started there when they got there—by no means all of them were outwardly what they really were *au fond*. The country shaped them, all they knew was: it's no good in the city, I must go to the country; I imagine they thought, I must learn to work, become something entirely different, yes, the opposite of what I am now" (396). The tight-knit character of the Barbizon group also appealed to Vincent, and this inspired him in his endeavor, years later in Arles, to found a similar community of artists.

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Fig. 1
Théodore Rousseau (French, 1812–1867), *Massacre of the Innocents*, 1847. Oil on canvas, $37\frac{5}{8} \times 57\frac{11}{16}$ in. The Mesdag Collection, The Hague (hwm 293).

In addition to his early and enduring love of the Barbizon painters, Van Gogh was also open to new discoveries. He had wide-ranging tastes, which were increasingly shaped by distinct preferences and ideals. This development was not yet apparent, however, when he first began to immerse himself in art.

Budding Love

Three of Vincent's paternal uncles were art dealers and collected art themselves: Uncle Hein (who had to stop working in the art trade because of illness), Uncle Vincent (called Uncle Cent), and Uncle Cor. The last two, in particular, had an influence on his development. The close ties within the family ensured Van Gogh's acquaintance at an early age with art and the art trade, so it seemed only natural for him to become, in July 1869 at the age of sixteen, the youngest employee at The Hague branch of the art dealership of Goupil & Cie, in which Uncle Cent was a partner. Although his duties, such as packing and unpacking artworks, were at first simple and straightforward, his job brought him into daily contact with art. Goupil sold not only original works of art but also high-quality reproductive prints, and young Vincent consequently saw large numbers of works by dozens of artists. Whether original works or reproductions, these works represented the established art of the time. Academic artists alternated with Realists, artists of the School of Barbizon, and painters of The Hague School.

Art soon became an important topic in the letters Vincent exchanged with his brother Theo, who had started to work at Goupil's branch in Brussels in January 1873. In one of his earliest letters, Vincent told Theo about a visit to Amsterdam: "Last Sunday I was at Uncle Cor's and had a very pleasant day there and, as you

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can well imagine, saw many beautiful things. As you know, Uncle has just been to Paris and has brought home splendid paintings and drawings. I stayed in Amsterdam on Monday morning and went to the museums again. Did you know that a large, new building will take the place of the Trippenhuis in Amsterdam? That's fine with me; the Trippenhuis is too small, and many paintings hang in such a way that one can't see them properly" (4). The "large, new building" under construction was the Rijksmuseum, which Van Gogh would visit shortly after its opening in 1885.

Vincent and Theo wrote to each other about the art they saw as well as the art they admired. In a letter of January 1874, by which time Vincent had been transferred to Goupil's London branch and Theo was working in The Hague, Vincent drew up a list of more than sixty of his favorite artists, ending with: "But I could go on like this for I don't know how long, and then come all the old ones, and I'm sure I've left out some of the best new ones" (17). The list contains such diverse artists as Ary Scheffer (pl. 62), Paul Delaroche, James Tissot (pl. 66), Charles de Groux (pls. 71–72), Félix Ziem, Eugène Boudin (pls. 6, 7), Jean-Léon Gérôme, Bernard Cornelis Koekkoek, and Andreas Schelfhout. The small number of names that never occur again in the surviving letters include Hamon, Madrazo, and De Tournemine: Van Gogh found them interesting in his younger years, when he enthusiastically fastened upon a wide range of artists, but they disappeared from view after he had gained a better understanding of art. In later years Delaroche was mentioned only as an example of how art was not supposed to be. Nevertheless, the eagerness of the young Van Gogh is typical of his enthusiastic approach to art.

Van Gogh had two personal reasons for holding certain artists in high esteem. First, he was a genuine nature lover, having grown up surrounded by nature in a family for whom nature was an all-important part of life. This led to a predilection for painted landscapes and to a characteristic phenomenon: in many of his letters, Van Gogh sees nature through the eyes of the landscape painters he admired. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the artists of the Barbizon School are also well represented in the list, as are several painters of The Hague School, such as Jan Hendrik Weissenbruch (pl. 70) and Anton Mauve (pl. 38). Van Gogh was personally acquainted with the last two artists, and sought them out in their studios (Mauve, moreover, was married to Van Gogh's cousin). The other reason for Van Gogh's attraction to the work of these two groups of painters was his strong interest in figure pieces, particularly if they represented simple, everyday life. This preference for "ordinary" subjects can be traced in part to the literature he devoured, for Van Gogh was a voracious reader. Breton, Jozef Israëls (fig. 13; pl. 30), and, above all, Millet would become his guides, but he also admired figure pieces by more conservative painters, such as Hendrik (Henri) Leys, Charles de Groux, and George Henry Boughton (fig. 4).

As soon as he began working for Goupil, Vincent began to collect prints, and Theo followed suit. They gave each other (and other family members) prints as gifts: two scrapbooks survive that presumably belonged to Theo. Both contain many graphic works by the Barbizon masters, such as the volume with *Scraps* embossed on its cover, which contains prints by Constant Troyon, for example—

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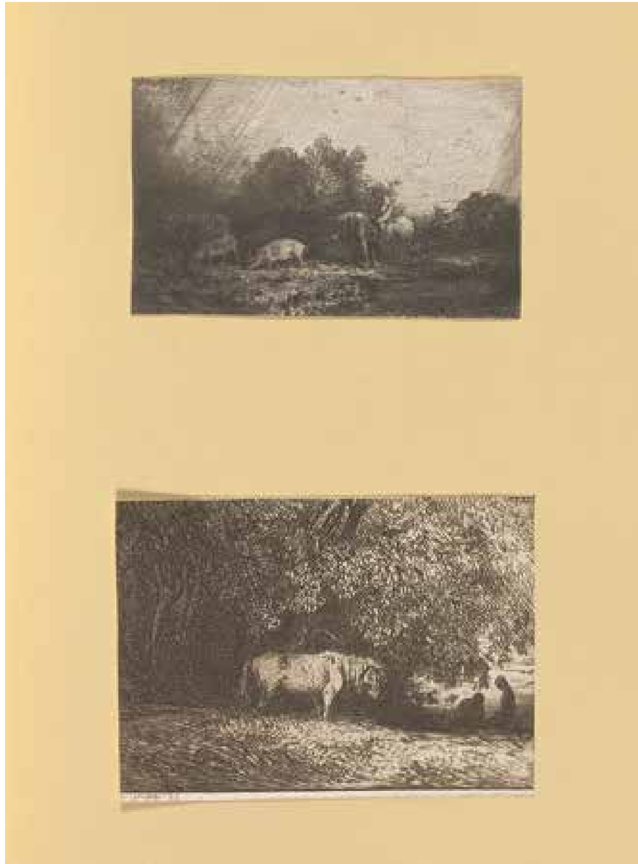

Fig. 2
Charles Émile Jacque (French, 1813–1894), *Landscape with Man on Horseback, Pigs and Cow & Horse in a wood*, 1846. Etching and drypoint on paper. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (t1487-05V1963).

works mentioned in letters in which Vincent writes that he is sending them to Theo (fig. 2).

Van Gogh could see Old Masters at the Mauritshuis, only a few minutes' walk from Goupil's gallery on De Plaats, a central square in The Hague. Though he never mentions a specific occasion in his correspondence, he must have visited the museum frequently. In a letter of August 1881, he approvingly paraphrases Théophile Thoré's opinion of Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaas Tulp*: "That painting's only fault is not to have any faults" (171).[2] In November 1885 he reminded Theo of the overwhelmingly vivid palette of Vermeer's *View of Delft*.[3] Such seventeenth-century painters as Vermeer, Van Ostade, Ruisdael, Frans Hals, and most of all Rembrandt always remained important to Van Gogh. He studied Rembrandt's etchings in the Trippenhuis a number of times in 1877, when he was living in Amsterdam (fig. 12; pls. 59, 82–83). There he also admired the graphic work of Albrecht Dürer.

In London

Before his transfer to London in May 1873, Van Gogh spent several days in Paris, where he visited the annual Salon with works by contemporary masters, the Musée du Luxembourg, where the state-owned work of modern masters was

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Fig. 3
John Everett Millais (English, 1829–1896), *Chill October*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 48 × 73½ in. Private collection.

on display, and the Louvre. He arrived in the English capital around May 19 and, apart from a two-month intermezzo in Paris at the end of 1874, ended up staying there for nearly two years.

Goupil's London office was considerably less interesting than The Hague branch; it ran a wholesale print business, without a gallery, and its lack of paintings even prompted Vincent to ask Theo to keep him abreast of the canvases he saw in Brussels. That situation changed in 1875, when Goupil took over a print dealership and converted it into a gallery. Van Gogh was put to work in this establishment, where the familiar stock of paintings included works by masters of the Barbizon School and The Hague School.

By contrast, there was an immense amount of culture on offer in the metropolis, at that time the largest city in the world. Van Gogh visited the British Museum, the National Gallery, the Wallace Collection, the South Kensington Museum—now the Victoria and Albert Museum—and, just outside London, the Dulwich Picture Gallery. He also saw important exhibitions, including the annual summer exhibition of living artists at the Royal Academy, as well as that same institution's annual winter exhibition of Old Masters. In the early months of 1875, he wrote about the latter show: "There's a beautiful exhibition of old art here, including a large Descent from the Cross by Rembrandt, 5 large figures at twilight, you can imagine the sentiment. 5 Ruisdaels, 1 Frans Hals, Van Dyck. A landscape with figures by Rubens, a landscape, an autumn evening, by Titian. 2 portraits by Tintoretto and beautiful old English art, Reynolds, Romney and *Old Crome*, landscape, magnificent" (29).

Van Gogh also immersed himself in writings about art and urged Theo to do the same: "You must in any case go to the museum often, it's good to be acquainted with the old painters, too, and if you get the chance read about art, and especially magazines about art, the Gazette des Beaux-Arts &c. When there's an opportunity I'll send you a book by Bürger about the museums of The Hague

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and Amsterdam; when you've finished it there will be an opportunity to send it back to me" (15). The previously mentioned Théophile Thoré, a leading critic, exerted a great influence on Van Gogh's artistic development. Under the pseudonym W. Bürger, he published two books, *Musées de la Hollande: Amsterdam et La Haye* (Paris, 1858) and *Musées de la Hollande*, II: *Musée Van der Hoop à Amsterdam et Musée de Rotterdam* (Paris, 1860). Thoré was a gifted writer with a keen eye; among other achievements, he was the rediscoverer of Vermeer, who, with his small oeuvre, had sunk into oblivion. The impressive knowledge Thoré displayed was a revelation to Van Gogh, whose love of seventeenth-century masters had developed largely under his influence.

Contemporary British art was not to Van Gogh's taste at first, but after a while he came to appreciate the work of such artists as J.M.W. Turner, George Henry Boughton, and John Everett Millais, whose autumn landscape *Chill October* he admired (fig. 3).

His knowledge of graphic art was duly augmented in London, and one category in particular would come to be of immense importance to his artistry. The venerable *Illustrated London News* and its younger competitor, *The Graphic*, published their illustrated magazines weekly. Van Gogh admired these publications so much that he went every week to look at the latest prints in their display windows in the Strand, near Goupil's. Artists like Sir Samuel Luke Fildes (pl. 73), Hubert Herkomer, William Bazett Murray, Joseph Nash, Frederick Walker, Matthew White Ridley (pl. 74), and Frank Holl saw their drawings translated into prints—mostly wood engravings—by experienced specialists, such as Joseph Swain, whom Van Gogh admired a great deal and even visited in his studio. The artists also displayed their own prints and their original drawn designs, executed in black and white, in so-called Black and White exhibitions at the publishers' offices. Van Gogh studied those sheets too. This exercise proved to be of seminal importance in his Hague years (late 1881–September 1883), when he started his collection of hundreds of magazine prints and began to work in black and white himself. In the summer of 1883, Vincent and Theo even talked about whether Vincent should perhaps settle in London and look for work there as an illustrator.[4]

The socio-realistic subject matter of the English artists also appealed greatly to Van Gogh and would come to play a leading role in his own work. In London he likewise discovered the novels of Charles Dickens, with their narratives based on everyday life. These factors had a strong formative influence on a young man trying to find his way in the world.

In Paris

At the end of October 1874, Van Gogh was transferred temporarily to Goupil's branch in Paris, after which he resumed his work in London. In mid-May 1875 he was assigned permanently to the Paris branch, where he stayed until his dismissal in April of the following year. In the weeks after his arrival in the French capital, he visited the Louvre, the Musée du Luxembourg, the Salon, a retrospective exhibition on Corot at the École des Beaux-Arts, and the previously mentioned sale exhibition of work by Millet.

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Van Gogh had a room in Montmartre, which he decorated with prints by or after his favorite artists. He described them in a letter to Theo, and the list gives a good idea of his preferences: “I want to tell you which prints I have on the wall.”

Ruisdael	The bush
Ditto	Bleaching fields
Rembrandt	Reading the Bible (a large, old Dutch room, (in the evening, a candle on the table) in which a young mother sits beside her child’s cradle reading the Bible; an old woman listens, it’s something that recalls: Verily I say unto you, ‘for where 2 or 3 are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’, it’s an old copper engraving, as large as ‘The bush’, superb).
P. de Champaigne	Portrait of a lady
Corot	Evening
Ditto	Ditto
Bodmer	Fontainebleau
Bonington	A road
Troyon	Morning
Jules Dupré	Evening (resting place)
Maris	Washerwoman
Ditto	A baptism
Millet	The four times of the day (woodcuts, 4 prints)
Van der Maaten	Funeral in the cornfield
Daubigny	Dawn (cock crowing)
Charlet	Hospitality. Farmhouse surrounded by fir trees, winter scene with snow. A peasant and a soldier before a door.
Ed. Frère	Seamstresses
Ditto	A cooper. (37)

Modern developments seem to have completely passed him by in Paris. The Impressionists had meanwhile become the irrepressible avant-garde, but Van Gogh seems to have taken no notice of them. Their first two group exhibitions, in 1874 and 1876, took place at times when he happened not to be in Paris, but even the commotion their innovations must have caused seems to have had little or no effect on him. It was not until the end of November 1882 that Vincent gave any sign—in a letter to Theo, by this time an art dealer in Paris—of having heard of Impressionism, but when he might have done so is unclear.[5] By no means did Van Gogh move in avant-garde circles, which is hardly surprising, given the much more conventional art on which Goupil focused. Although his cultural explorations in Paris had broadened his knowledge, on the whole his taste remained the same. It was not changed much either by the important turn his life would soon take: in mid-1875, Van Gogh began to develop a fanatical interest in religion that would last for several years. His letters became peppered with biblical passages (comparable to the one inserted in his listing of the Rembrandt print above), and he took a special interest in religious representations of this kind.

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Religion and Art

Van Gogh's fervent religious bent upset even his pious family members. He lost interest in the art trade and, more remarkable still, in the literature that had hitherto been so important to him. "I'm going to get rid of all my books by Michelet &c. &c., you should too," he wrote in September 1875 to Theo, who must have read this announcement with dismay (50). Earlier that month, Vincent had sent his mother a birthday present: a print of *Saint Augustine and Saint Monica* after Ary Scheffer's painting.[6] Scheffer, a popular painter of portraits and history pieces, produced many religious scenes, often in numerous variants. Goupil stocked various prints after his work, including the engravings after *Christus Consolator* (pl. 62) and *Christus Remunerator*. After leaving Goupil, Van Gogh had found a job as a teacher in Isleworth. In a letter in which he also mentions a visit to Hampton Court, where he admired the Old Masters, he asks Theo hopefully: "Will I be getting the *small* engravings (like those Pa and Ma have) of Christus Consolator and Remunerator that you promised me?" (85). He again decorated his room with prints, among them the *Christus Consolator* and two other religious representations after Scheffer.[7] This artist was mentioned in many letters until sometime in 1880, but during Van Gogh's years in France—by which time he had long renounced his faith—he would characterize Scheffer as rather unpainterly and a weak colorist.[8] In those early days Van Gogh had been captivated by the works' subjects and not so much by their artistic qualities.

Van Gogh had deep respect for George Henry Boughton, and when he was given the chance, in late October 1876, to give a sermon in a church in nearby Richmond, he drew inspiration from Boughton's religiously charged *God Speed! Pilgrims Setting Out for Canterbury* (fig. 4), a metaphor for life as a pilgrimage.[9]

Fig. 4
George Henry Boughton (American, 1833–1905), *God Speed! Pilgrims Setting Out for Canterbury*, 1874. Oil on canvas, 48 × 64⁹⁄₁₆ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (s0380M1986).

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Fig. 5
Jacobus Jan van der Maaten (Dutch, 1820–1879), *Going to Church for the Last Time (The Funeral in the Cornfield)*, 1862. Lithograph, 10¼ × 13 9/16 in. Universiteitsbibliotheek UvA, Amsterdam (Ms. XIII C13a).

It was the start of a new period in Van Gogh's life: he resolved to follow in his father's footsteps and become a clergyman.

His family took this news badly and persuaded him at first to accept a job with a bookseller in Dordrecht. There, too, he decorated his room with prints, including the engravings after Scheffer. In Amsterdam, where he went to study theology—being determined to have his way and become a clergyman after all—he was given a print by Jacobus Jan van der Maaten, *The Funeral in the Cornfield*. This lithograph was of special importance to him, for it also hung in the study of his clergyman father, who at that time served as a shining example to him.[10] He presented this lithograph to his Greek and Latin teacher, Maurits Mendes da Costa, and inscribed biblical quotations on his own impression of it (fig. 5).

All Van Gogh's efforts to become a clergyman or even a simple evangelist ended in failure, and in the summer of 1879 he found himself in a desperate situation. He saw no way out of this impasse, and his family could not give him any useful advice. After a year of somber self-reflection, his religious fanaticism evaporated. Van Gogh would always hold a rather pantheistic belief in nature as a higher power, and the figure of Christ continued to fascinate him. But he distanced himself more and more from his father's faith, and his relationship with his parents deteriorated. After August 1880, the point at which he decided to become an artist, religious representations would never regain the importance they had held for him in the preceding years. Even so, he did not avoid them. Religiously tinted works by Charles de Groux attracted Van Gogh's enduring interest, chiefly because the figures were so well painted, and from 1886, when he settled in Paris as an artist, his thinking was greatly influenced by Delacroix's *Jacob Fighting with the Angel* and *Christ Asleep during the Tempest* (see fig. 17). However, this was due largely to Delacroix's painting technique and palette; clearly, Van Gogh's priorities had shifted.

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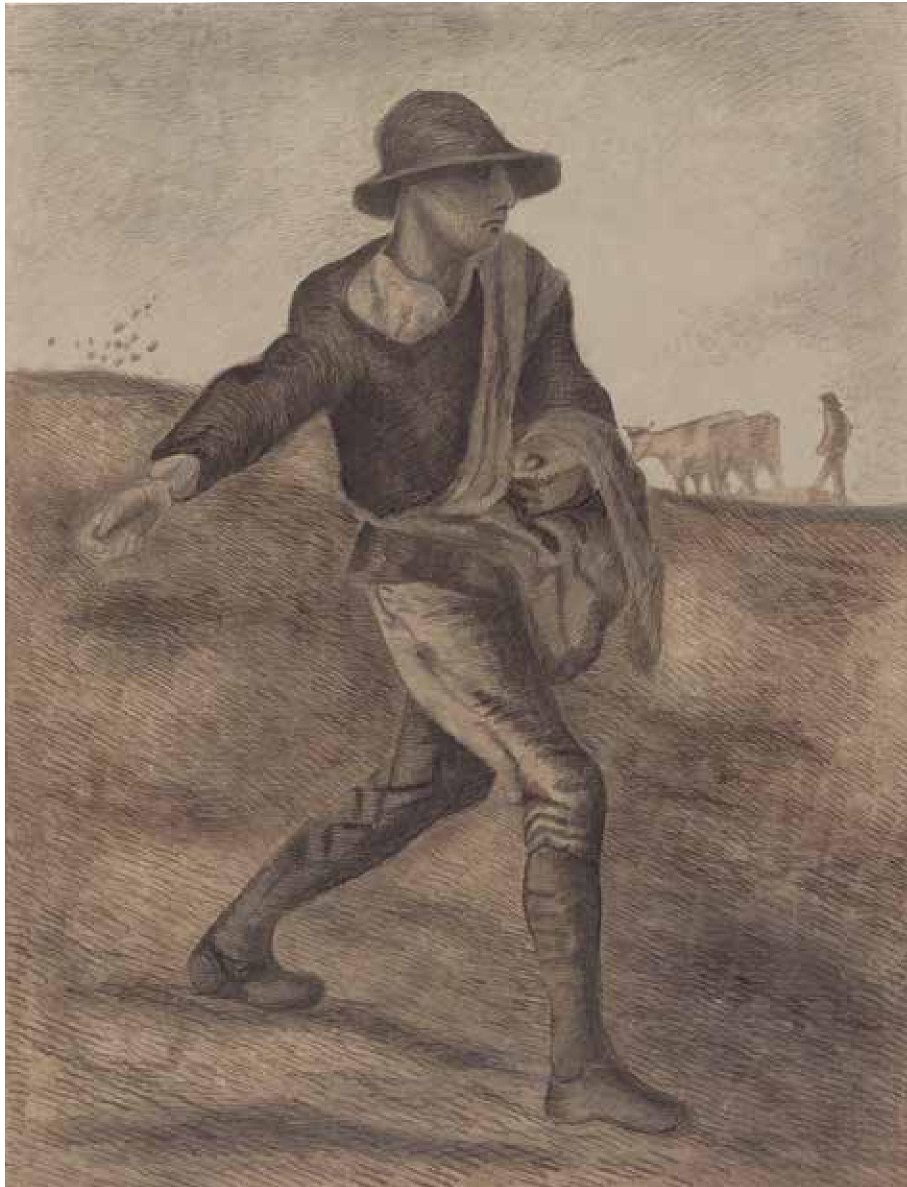

Fig. 6
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Sower (after Jean-François Millet)*, 1881. Pencil, pen, brush and ink, watercolor on paper, 17¾ × 14⁷⁄₁₆ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d443V1962 / F830).

Van Gogh the Artist

Van Gogh was at first hesitant to train himself as an artist, but when he finally took the plunge, it was obvious which artists he wished to emulate: the painters of Barbizon and The Hague School, with Jean-François Millet foremost among them. To practice his draftsmanship, he fell back on the academic practice of copying prints. To this end he used purpose-made drawing examples, as well as prints after works by Millet. Thus his favorite artist took him by the hand, as it were, and he made dozens and dozens of copies after Millet's work, displaying a distinct preference for *The Sower*, which he copied again when he moved in with his parents in Etten in 1881 (fig. 6).

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As an artist Van Gogh would gradually acquire broader tastes and begin to judge artistic works more on their technical merits, as he searched not only for personal themes but also for his own idiom, perspective, and palette, and all the other aspects that would enable him to make convincing works of art. He did not progress quickly, however; even though he had been drawing for pleasure for many years, he had never displayed any special talent for it. Now, however, he threw himself wholeheartedly into his new calling, persevered in his copying, and moved in October 1880 to Brussels in the hope of making more headway there. He enrolled at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in order to study drawing from plaster casts of sculpture from antiquity and the Renaissance.[11] It was not a success: when examinations were held, he finished last in his class and decided to leave the Academy.

Of more importance than the Brussels Academy, however, was the fact that the city gave Vincent an opportunity to meet fellow artists. Through Theo, he met Willem Roelofs, a renowned painter of The Hague School, and the young artist Anthon van Rappard (pl. 69). He did not develop any special bond with Roelofs, but despite a bumpy start, Van Rappard became his closest friend and remained so for the next five years. Van Rappard was five years younger than Van Gogh, but he had already spent five years training as an artist and had a studio where the two men could work together. Despite his aristocratic background and the fact that he was considerably more good-natured than his older friend, Van Rappard had the same artistic and personal sentiments as Van Gogh. After Van Gogh moved in with his parents in Etten in April 1881, Van Rappard came to see him in June, for all of twelve days, and visited him again in October. On both occasions they worked together and exchanged ideas. Van Rappard, who shared Van Gogh's preferences for certain artists and subjects, would become his foremost sympathizer with regard to one field in particular: the black-and-white prints by English artists that Van Gogh had come to appreciate so much in London. Van Gogh collected large numbers of these prints, as well as magazine illustrations by French artists, and these sheets became indispensable to his artistic grounding.

Following in the Footsteps of the English and French Realists

Van Gogh moved to The Hague at the end of December 1881. The immediate reason was a violent argument with his father, but another decisive factor was his need for instruction. In the summer of 1881, Van Gogh had spent several days working in Anton Mauve's studio, and he returned there in late November and early December, this time for more than three weeks. Thanks to his experience in the art trade in The Hague, he already knew quite a few painters there, but now he also became acquainted with the painters in Mauve's circle, such as Johannes Bosboom, and renewed his acquaintance with Jan Hendrik Weissenbruch, whom he had met years before. Now, however, Van Gogh was an artist among artists. He saw the Mesdag Panorama, which made a deep impression on him. The Hague School left a strong mark on his early work, and he had the highest regard for Jozef Israëls in particular. Yet in spite of these influences, his print collection was all-important at this time, and it provided him with daily inspiration.

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Fig. 7
Paul Gavarni (French, 1804–1866), *January. The New Year Presents*, 1839. Lithograph, 13 3/8 × 19 5/16 in. Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Frank Altschul, B.A. 1908 (1955.74.318.3).

Van Gogh's collection—preserved in the Van Gogh Museum and comprising more than 1,400 sheets—was once larger, for many prints that he mentions in his correspondence are no longer present. Many of these sheets were simply cut out of magazines, but sometimes he also bought the more expensive special impressions printed on paper of higher quality. In addition to the previously mentioned English magazines, he cut prints out of comparable French publications, such as *L'Illustration*, which published the work of French artists like Auguste Lançon and Edmond Marin. He owned wood engravings by Paul Gavarni (fig. 7) and Gustave Doré (including, by the latter artist, the prints of modern London). Van Gogh kept them in no fewer than eighteen portfolios, sometimes dedicated to a specific theme, sometimes to an artist by whom he had a great deal of work.

The depth of Van Gogh's knowledge of such works is also apparent from a list of twenty names that he sent to Van Rappard so that his friend could recognize the artists by their initials (see p. 36). A random selection from this list: "WS—Small . . . F.B. Buckman, (you have the London dustyard by him) . . . F.H. Frank Holl . . . L.F. Fildes . . . A.L. Lançon . . . H.H. Herkomer . . . M.W.R. Ridley" (273).

Given this extraordinary immersion in contemporary popular graphics, it is not surprising that Van Gogh described his prints to Van Rappard as "a kind of Bible for an artist, in which he reads now and again to get into a mood" (311). His admiration for the artists of *The Graphic*, in particular, was even greater because he knew that theirs was a collaborative venture of the kind he idealized and had appreciated so much in the Barbizon painters. Inspired by their black-and-white prints, he began in the autumn of 1882 to make drawings with a range of black drawing materials (fig. 8).

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1	portfolio	Irish characters, miners, factories, fishermen &c. for the most part small pen sketches.
1	"	Landscapes and animals, Bodmer, Giacomelli, Lançon, also some landscapes
1	"	Labors of the fields by Millet, also Breton, Feyen-Perrin, and English prints by Herkomer, Boughton, Clausen &c.
1	"	Lançon
1	"	Gavarni, 23 supplemented with lithographs, but no rare ones
1	"	Ed. Morin
1	"	G. Doré
1	"	Du Maurier, very numerous. } illustrators for Punch.
1	"	Chs Keene and Sambourne } illustrators for Punch.
1	"	J. Tenniel, supplemented with the Beaconsfield cartoons. } illustrators for Punch.
		Missing here is John Leech, but this gap can easily be filled because there's a reprint of his woodcuts that isn't expensive.
1	"	Barnard
1	"	Fildes and Charles Green &c.
1	"	small French wood engravings, Album Boetzel &c.
1	"	Scenes on board English ships and military sketches.
1	"	*Heads of the people* by Herkomer, supplemented with drawings by others and by portraits
1	"	Scenes from everyday London life, from the opium smokers and Whitechapel and The Seven Dials to the most elegant ladies and Rotten Row or Westminster Park. Together with corresponding scenes from Paris and New York, the whole forms a curious 'Tale of those cities'.
1	portfolio.	The large prints from the Graphic, London News, Harper's Weekly, L'Illustration &c. including Frank Holl, Herkomer, Fred Walker, P. Renouard, Menzel, Howard Pyle.
1	portfolio.	The Graphic portfolio, being a separate publication of impressions of several woodcuts, not from the printing plates but the blocks themselves, among them the Homeless and hungry by Fildes.

Several illustrated books, including Dickens and the Frederick the Great by Menzel, small edition. (235)

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Fig. 8
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Old Man with a Top Hat*, December 1882–January 1883. Pencil, lithographic crayon, pen, brush and ink on paper, 23⅝ × 14³⁄₁₆ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d183V1962 / F985).

Fig. 9
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Old Man Drinking Coffee*, November 1882. Lithograph, 16⅞ × 10⅝ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d0077V1964 / F1682).

This also led to his ambitions in the field of graphic art. From Van Rappard he had received the abridged version, published as an article, of a lecture by Hubert Herkomer that had sent him into raptures. Herkomer argued strongly in favor of high-quality graphic art, to which art lovers had a right: "to you, the public, the art offers infinite pleasure and edification. For you it is really done"[12] Van Gogh agreed fully with these words and quoted the passage approvingly to Van Rappard and Theo.[13] At about this time, a new illustrated Dutch magazine, *De zwaluw* (the *Swallow*) provoked his anger because of the poor quality of the prints, and he decided to take action himself. Under the motto "from the people for the people," he resolved to make affordable art for the people, preferably in collaboration with a group of artists (291, 294). Even though he never realized his dream of working in an artists' community, he began to experiment on his own with lithographs after drawings he had previously made of common people and workers (fig. 9). Two new lithographs followed in the summer of 1883, and in April 1885 he made a lithograph in Nuenen after *The Potato Eaters*, and immediately conceived a plan for a series called "Peasants at Home" (493). The influence of the artists of *The Graphic*, in particular, was still very tangible, and this was also

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the case when, during preparatory work for his large figure painting of peasants, he began to paint studies of heads (cat. no. 2), emulating Hubert Herkomer's *Heads of the People* series, of which he owned a few examples (pl. 74).

A list of the artists whom Van Gogh admired—culled from his Hague correspondence—is so long that it is almost impossible to do justice to them here. Yet a number of them were crucial to his artistic formation. Paul Gavarni's graphic work, with its ironically tinged realism, filled its own portfolio. Van Gogh initially rated Gavarni higher than Honoré Daumier (pl. 17) but admitted to Theo that he was less well acquainted with Daumier's work and asked whether there were inexpensive prints of it.[14] The surviving collection contains dozens and dozens of prints by Daumier, who would often occupy Van Gogh's thoughts years later, during his time in Arles.

A great discovery in The Hague was the work of the painter Léon Lhermitte, whose impressive drawings and paintings (pl. 33) were frequently turned into prints, often of a large size. In many letters Van Gogh mentions them in the same breath as Millet, and he even considered Lehrmitte Millet's worthy successor: "To me, that man is MILLET II in the *full* sense of the word; I idolize his work as I do that of Millet himself. I think his genius on a par with that of Millet I" (528). In 1885 the French magazine *Le Monde* published Lhermitte's series *Les Mois rustiques* (The rural months), which portray the peasant labors typical of every month of the year (fig. 10), and Van Gogh eagerly awaited the sheets that Theo continued to send to him. Like Millet, Lhermitte gave the motif of the sower a prominent place in his oeuvre, and in Arles these two masters would guide Van Gogh when he decided to give that subject, which he had already depicted many times, a modern makeover.

Van Gogh's admiration of Jean-François Millet became stronger in March 1882 upon reading Alfred Sensier's biography of the artist, *La Vie et l'oeuvre de J.F. Millet* (Paris, 1881). "It interests me so much that I wake up at night and light

Fig. 10
Clément Edouard Bellenger (French, 1851–1898) after Léon Lhermitte (French, 1844–1925), *Plowing*, from *Le Monde Illustré* 29 (March 28, 1885). Wood engraving. Van Gogh Museum Library, Amsterdam.

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the lamp and go on reading," he wrote to Theo; "what a man that Millet was!" (210). More than ever, Van Gogh saw Millet not only as the painter of a magnificent oeuvre but also as an exemplary man worthy of emulation.

In September 1883, Van Gogh decided to leave the city and seek more rural surroundings. A three-month stay in the unspoiled province of Drenthe ended in ignominious failure, owing to a lack of materials and models. But he often found the nature in Drenthe truly inspiring, and his superb descriptions of it are among the most lyrical passages in his correspondence. Typically for Van Gogh, he frequently saw the landscape through the eyes of his favorite artists, such as Ruisdael and the Barbizon masters. He found the heath disappointing in the daytime, but, as he wrote to Theo, the same "irritatingly tedious spot—in the evening as a poor little figure moves through the twilight—when that vast, sun-scorched earth stands out dark against the delicate lilac tints of the evening sky, and the very last fine dark blue line on the horizon separates earth from sky—can be as sublime as in a J. Dupré" (387). This led to the above-mentioned unrealistic attempt to persuade Theo to become an artist too, and to join him in Drenthe.

In early December 1883, Van Gogh left Drenthe and traveled to Nuenen, where he moved in with his parents, who had been living there since August 1882.

New Discoveries

In Nuenen, Van Gogh found the rustic motifs he had been hoping for—weavers, the peasants and their way of life, an old peasant cemetery, and the lovely landscape that surrounded the village—but he was bereft of art there, apart from the prints in his own collection. His artistic discoveries were made chiefly in books with black-and-white illustrations, and it is remarkable indeed that these publications led him to discover color and color theory as well as a new guide: Eugène Delacroix (fig. 17; pls. 20, 21).

Until this time Delacroix had not occupied a place of any importance in Van Gogh's pantheon of favorite artists. He knew Delacroix's work from his time with Goupil in Paris, when the master's ceiling painting in the Louvre and other of his paintings on display there could not have escaped Van Gogh's notice. But in those days the drama permeating so much of Delacroix's work might have been perceived by Van Gogh as melodramatic. Now, however, what he read about Delacroix mainly involved ideas about color, and Delacroix became in the field of color what Millet had long been with regard to the human figure: a true guide for the rest of Van Gogh's career. François Gauzi, a fellow student in the Paris studio of Fernand Cormon, later remembered Van Gogh's obsession: "Color drove him mad. Delacroix was his god, and when he spoke of this painter his lips trembled with emotion."[15]

Van Gogh gained his knowledge of Delacroix mainly from books by Charles Blanc, a highly prominent art theorist and critic. In June 1884 he read Blanc's *Les Artistes de mon temps* (The artists of my time) (Paris, 1876), which discussed artists whom Blanc knew or had known personally; the most extensive essay by far was devoted to Delacroix. In August, Van Gogh acquired another book by Blanc, *Grammaire des arts du dessin, architecture, sculpture, peinture* (Grammar of the

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arts of design, architecture, sculpture, painting) (Paris, 1870). He now read about simultaneous contrasts and how colors influence one another and enable the artist to transpose observed reality to the canvas in a convincing way. Without having even one painting by Delacroix (or any other painter) as an example, Van Gogh set to work, but with the gray gamut of color in his Nuenen palette he could not produce the strong color contrasts that Delacroix intended. This did not diminish Van Gogh's enthusiasm, however; although he experimented with abandon, it would take him another two years to acquire a real understanding of the possibilities of color and color theory.

Jean-François Raffaëlli (pls. 54–58) was an artist—chiefly a figure painter—whose work was little known to Van Gogh until the summer of 1885. However, in July of that year he received a catalogue from Theo that rectified this situation: "I think the drawings in it are masterly" (512).[16] The catalogue contained, moreover, a long essay by Raffaëlli in which he explains what he hoped to express with his figures: "What he himself also says about '*character*' is interesting. His writing is a mixture of very simple words that come from the heart and from a nervous artistic emotion—they're moving—and further—of words that I think Raffaëlli himself understands as little as one who has to read them. Thus it is writing full of very fine things and full of mistakes—I would rather read that than anything else. For what he's talking about is mightily complicated." The essence of Raffaëlli's work was his determination to give his predominantly everyday figures a characteristic aura that epitomized their "ordinary" character; this elicited strong approval from Van Gogh, who was striving to produce something similar in his own work.

Years later, Theo, who shared Vincent's enduring enthusiasm for Raffaëlli's work, presented an exhibition of sixty-one works by the artist at the Montmartre gallery of Boussod, Valadon & Cie. from May 27 to June 21, 1890. Vincent had just settled in Auvers-sur-Oise on May 20, after spending several days with Theo and

Fig. 11
Frans Hals (Dutch, ca. 1581–1666). and Pieter Codde (Dutch, 1599–1678), *Militia Company of District XI under the Command of Captain Reynier Reael, known as "The Meagre Company,"* 1637. Oil on canvas, 82¼ × 168⅞ in. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, on loan from the City of Amsterdam (SK-C-374).

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Fig. 12
Rembrandt van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669), *Isaac and Rebecca*, known as *"The Jewish Bride,"* ca. 1665–69. Oil on canvas, 47¹³⁄₁₆ × 65⁹⁄₁₆ in. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, on loan from the City of Amsterdam (A. van der Hoop Bequest) (SK-C-216).

his wife and infant son in Paris. Another trip to the hectic city would undoubtedly have been too much for him, but he let Theo know how sorry he was: "I really regret not seeing the Raffaëlli exhibition" (881).

A Visit to Amsterdam

In Nuenen, Van Gogh's long abstinence from great works of art came to an end in early October 1885, when he went with his friend Anton Kerssemakers on a three-day trip to Amsterdam, to visit the recently opened Rijksmuseum and the Fodor Collection. Upon his return, he wrote in a regretful tone to Theo: "I don't propose going for so long again without seeing paintings" (534). Now, too, he regarded art with a technical eye: "I get too much out of it—for my work, and when I look at the old paintings, which I can decipher as regards technique very differently from before—then perhaps I have precious little need for conversation anyway." He gave Theo a detailed description of *Militia Company of District XI under the Command of Captain Reynier Reael, known as "The Meagre Company"* by Frans Hals and Pieter Codde (fig. 11). Entirely in accordance with his interest in color, he devoted a great deal of attention to this aspect, and rounded off his description with the statement: "Delacroix would have adored it—just adored it to the utmost."

He also waxed lyrical about Rembrandt's *Isaac and Rebecca* (fig. 12), and in this case we have an eyewitness account of his enthusiasm. In 1912, Anton Kerssemakers recorded his recollections, which were published in *De Amsterdammer*. Van Gogh, who already knew many of the works on display from his visit to the Trippenhuis (the forerunner to the Rijksmuseum), led Kerssemakers around, showing him the paintings by Van Goyen and Bol, but above all those by Rembrandt, including *Isaac and Rebecca*. Van Gogh stayed behind to study this

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Fig. 13
Jozef Israëls (Dutch, 1824–1911), *Past Mother's Grave*, 1856. Oil on canvas, 96¹⁄₁₆ × 70⅛ in. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (A 371).

painting, and Kerssemakers found him there still, when he returned much later. When asked whether it wasn't time to leave, Van Gogh looked up with surprise and said: "Can you believe it, and I mean this sincerely, I would give ten years of my life if I could remain sitting here in front of this painting for two weeks with a crust of dry bread to eat."[17] Even allowing for a bit of exaggeration, that quotation says everything about Van Gogh's veneration of Rembrandt. Van Gogh went on to mention works by Ruisdael and Van Goyen, masters who had stolen his heart years before.

The two friends also visited the Fodor Collection, where Van Gogh could see works by another of his idols, Jozef Israëls, including the famous painting *Past Mother's Grave* (fig. 13). "Listen—the *technique*, the mixing of color, the modeling of the Zandvoort fisherman, for instance, is to my mind Delacroix-like and superb, and the present-day cold, flat greys—don't mean much in terms of technique,

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Fig. 14
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Poplars near Nuenen*, October 1885. Oil on canvas, $30\frac{11}{16} \times 38\frac{9}{16}$ in. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (1239 (MK)).

become *paint*, and Israëls is beyond the paint." Here, once again, Van Gogh was misled by his outdated knowledge of the work of Delacroix, who actually made much more use of color contrasts than Israëls did, with his gray-toned palette.

Misconceptions aside, the visit to Amsterdam did have a visible effect on Van Gogh's use of color. Despite the layers of yellowed varnish that must have covered many of the Old Masters, he saw a richness of color that was lacking in his own work; even Israëls's painting of the fisherman and his child, with its tonal palette, was brighter in color than Van Gogh's Nuenen canvases. Soon after returning from Amsterdam, Van Gogh painted, among other things, a number of autumn landscapes that broke with the dark and heavy palette of his preceding works (fig. 14). They display a high degree of freshness that allows the subdued autumnal colors to show, to advantage, an effect that he had not previously been able to achieve. His chief role models now not only provided him with the kind of motifs that he admired but also took him by the hand as he strove to develop his painting technique.

There were various reasons for Van Gogh's departure from Nuenen, including the need for more artistic tutelage and the cultural opportunities available in a big city. These considerations led him to Antwerp, where he also hoped to sell his work.

In Antwerp

Van Gogh had hoped that Antwerp would give him an opportunity to immerse himself in the study of the human figure, but he was disappointed by the instruction on offer. Nor did he succeed in selling any work, because the art trade was

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Fig. 15
Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1577–1640), *St Theresa of Avila through Christ's Intervention Rescuing Bernardinus of Mendoza from Purgatory*, ca. 1630. Oil on canvas, 76 × 54¾ in. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp (inv. nr. 299).

going through difficult times. On the other hand, the city's cultural offerings were very much to his liking. He visited the former home of the history painter Hendrik Leys, who had decorated his dining room with figure paintings, and went to museums and churches. There he again saw the Dutch Old Masters, and the work of Flemish painters such as Jordaens and Rubens (fig. 15). The latter, in particular, became a new source of inspiration: "Rubens is certainly making a strong impression on me. I find his drawing immensely good, by which I mean the drawing of heads and hands in themselves. I'm utterly carried away, for instance, by his way of drawing the features in a face with strokes of pure red or, in the hands, modeling the fingers with similar strokes. I go to the museum quite often and then look at little else but a few heads and hands by him and Jordaens. I know that he isn't as intimate as Hals and Rembrandt, but those heads *are so alive* in themselves. I probably don't look at the ones that are most generally admired. I look for fragments such as those blonde heads in St Theresa in Purgatory" (547). As time went by, he decided that the expression of Rubens's figures left something to be desired, often being "superficial, hollow, bombastic, yes, altogether conventional" (552). But Rubens the colorist left clear traces in Van Gogh's work. In Antwerp he painted a number of portraits in which he again made strides in his use of color. Rubens's influence is clearly visible in these works, particularly in the flesh tones of the faces (fig. 16).

It was in Antwerp that Van Gogh first mentioned Japanese prints in his correspondence: "My studio's quite tolerable, mainly because I've pinned a set of

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Fig. 16
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Portrait of a Woman*, December 1885. Oil on canvas, 23⅝ × 19¾ in. Private collection.

Japanese prints on the walls that I find very diverting. You know, those little female figures in gardens or on the shore, horsemen, flowers, gnarled thorn branches" (545). This passage clearly shows that both he and Theo were familiar with this art form, although it is not clear how they became acquainted with it. Yet the ukiyo-e prints would become a mainspring in the spectacular modernization of Van Gogh's work after his move to Paris.

Paris: New Discoveries, Old Loves

When Vincent went to live with Theo in Paris around February 28, 1886, he was confronted with dozens of new artists. Theo had drawn his attention to the Impressionists on numerous occasions, but Vincent, in rural Nuenen, had been unable to form a clear idea of the group. Not only had they meanwhile become household names, but even the young avant-garde who followed them had already been exhibiting for years.

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Fig. 17
Eugène Delacroix (French, 1798–1863), *Christ Asleep during the Tempest*, ca. 1853. Oil on canvas, 20 × 24 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, H.O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H.O. Havemeyer, 1929 (29.100.131).

Van Gogh's acquaintance with the Impressionists was not love at first sight, and he refused to let go of the artists he had long cherished. At the Louvre and the Musée du Luxembourg, he could see their work whenever he liked, and exhibitions increased such opportunities. Now, for example, he could study Delacroix's work in detail at the Louvre and elsewhere—this time with an artist's eye. *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* in the Church of Saint-Sulpice showed him how to bind masses together in a composition, and a canvas he saw at a sale exhibition held at the Hôtel Drouot in June 1886, *Christ Asleep during the Tempest* (fig. 17), was crucial to his understanding of color.

Van Gogh gradually came to appreciate the Impressionists, but in a letter written from Arles he told his sister Willemien about his initial reaction to their work: "People have heard of the Impressionists, they have great expectations of them . . . and when they see them for the first time they're bitterly, bitterly disappointed and find them careless, ugly, badly painted, badly drawn, bad in color, everything that's miserable. That was my first impression, too, when I came to Paris with the ideas of Mauve and Israëls and other clever painters. And when there's an exhibition in Paris of Impressionists alone, I believe a host of visitors come back from it bitterly disappointed and even indignant" (626).

The first chance he had in Paris to see a large number of Impressionist works was in May–June 1886, when he visited the eighth and last exhibition of the Impressionists. Since their first show in 1874, the group had become less coherent. Monet (pls. 43–47), Sisley, and Renoir were lacking; Degas, on the other hand, and a group of his artist friends clearly left their mark on the event. He

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presented a sizable group of pastels of nude women bathing. Pissarro (fig. 18; pls. 52–53), who had meanwhile embraced pointillism, exhibited a large ensemble of works, mostly landscapes, and a series of etchings. He also introduced his young friends Paul Signac (pl. 64) and Georges Seurat; the latter presented his masterpiece *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* and other divisionist works. Paul Gauguin, who had been participating since the fourth exhibition in 1879 and whose paintings were still overwhelmingly Impressionist in character, had submitted nineteen works.

There was another opportunity in June–July 1886, when the 5th International Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture took place at the Galerie Georges Petit. The works on display included recent paintings by Monet and Renoir, artists whom Van Gogh could now study in detail for the first time. At the Montmartre branch of Boussod & Valadon, where Theo van Gogh was manager, a small number of paintings by Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, and Sisley had been on offer for quite some time. Theo's superiors, who had more conventional taste, turned a blind eye to this, though they were cautiously open to exploring new possibilities. It was not until 1887, however, that Theo would step up the sales of Impressionists, which Vincent could therefore view at his leisure in the gallery.

In the spring and summer of 1887, it became obvious that the influence of the Impressionists—who by now had made a name for themselves—had taken root in Van Gogh's own work. Camille Pissarro and his son Lucien became personal friends of Vincent and Theo. According to Vincent, Sisley was "the most tactful and sensitive of the Impressionists" (677). Renoir, too, remained in his thoughts: "I very often think of Renoir here and his pure, clean drawing. That's just the way objects or figures are here, in the clear light" (603). He called Degas "a little lawyer" because of his aloofness but nevertheless rated him highly: "Degas's painting is virile and impersonal precisely because he has resigned himself to being personally no more than a little lawyer, with a horror of riotous living" (655). In the south he found himself thinking more than once of Paul Cézanne, and felt that this painter from Aix-en-Provence had portrayed "the harsh side of Provence so forcefully" (624). None of them, however, received the admiration he felt for Monet, as evidenced by this heartfelt cry from a letter written in early May 1889: "Ah, to paint figures like Claude Monet paints landscapes. That's what remains to be done despite everything, and before, of necessity, one sees only Monet among the Impressionists" (768).

The Young Avant-garde, the "Petit Boulevard," and the Brothers' Collection

Van Gogh had a special name for the group of young artists to which he himself now belonged: the "painters of the Petit Boulevard." The group also included Émile Bernard (pls. 2, 3), Louis Anquetin, Armand Guillaumin (pls. 28, 29), Georges Seurat, Charles Angrand, Toulouse-Lautrec (pls. 67, 84), Paul Signac, and Lucien Pissarro. They were the counterparts of the older Impressionists, who were meanwhile selling their work at famous galleries on the boulevards around the place de l'Opéra, and whom Van Gogh therefore labeled the "Impressionists of the Grand Boulevard" (584). He called his own circle "the Petit Boulevard"

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Fig. 18
Camille Pissarro (French, 1830–1903), *Landscape with rainbow*, 1889. Pencil and watercolor on canvas, 11¹³⁄₁₆ × 23⅝ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d0685V1962).

because these painters had their studios near the boulevard de Clichy and boulevard Rochechouart in Montmartre.

Vincent and Theo held the work of these young artists in high regard and began to form a collection of their avant-garde art.[18] This course of action was driven in part by their financial possibilities. No doubt they would also have liked to buy paintings by such artists as Millet, Daubigny, Breton, and Dupré, but the work of these established masters was beyond their means. Theo, admittedly, earned a rather comfortable living, but his salary was not so generous that he could afford to operate in that segment of the market. The work of Monet and Degas—admired by both brothers, and highly esteemed by Theo—was also beyond their means, and apparently these painters did not offer their dealer a discount. It is known that the brothers had two otherwise unidentified Renoirs, and after Vincent's death, Theo traded an unspecified painting with Pissarro, which, however, did not come into the possession of his widow, Jo, until long after his death and was later sold, as were the Renoirs, to the dealer Ambroise Vollard. Earlier, in 1889, Jo had received a gouache from Pissarro (fig. 18). Theo had also acquired a group of etchings and lithographs by Edouard Manet.

The work of the younger generation was still affordable: Theo bought, for example, a very impressive drawing by Seurat for sixteen francs (fig. 19). Works were also exchanged for those of Vincent, such as the self-portraits of Bernard, Gauguin (fig. 20), and Charles Laval. The untimely death of both brothers meant that their collection—now preserved in the Van Gogh Museum—remained small.

Monticelli

The vast majority of artists whom Van Gogh admired eventually acquired great renown, which most of them still enjoy, but this is not true of Adolphe Monticelli

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Fig. 19
Georges Seurat (French, 1859–1891), *Woman Singing in a Café Chantant*, 1887. Black chalk, white opaque watercolor on paper, $11\frac{5}{8} \times 8\frac{7}{8}$ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d0692V1962).

Fig. 20
Paul Gauguin (French, 1841–1903), *Self-Portrait with Portrait of Émile Bernard (Les Misérables)*, 1888. Oil on canvas, $17\frac{1}{2} \times 19\frac{13}{16}$ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s224V1962).

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Fig. 21
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Chinese Asters and Gladioli in a Vase*, August–September 1886. Oil on canvas, 24¹⁄₁₆ × 18⅛ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0177V1962 / F234).

(pls. 48–50). His work enjoyed some degree of popularity for a while, but ultimately his still lifes and figure pieces—often depictions of elegant garden parties—remained largely unappreciated. Vincent, however, adored his work, as did Theo: the brothers acquired six of his paintings.

With respect to color, Van Gogh considered Monticelli the equal of Delacroix, but Monticelli also offered Van Gogh something that he found in the work of few other painters: a distinct, personal brushstroke with which he created a heavy impasto. Van Gogh's own handling of paint was already idiosyncratic and robust, but now he found features in common with Monticelli that could help him to go on developing his technique. He had become acquainted with Monticelli's work

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soon after his arrival in Paris, and Monticelli's influence is noticeable in the still lifes he painted in the summer of 1886, which were experiments in his search for a new style (fig. 21). The fact that Monticelli served as an example is understandable, but it is remarkable that he continued to do so during the Arles period, by which time Van Gogh had found his own modern idiom, featuring a powerful palette that makes Monticelli's wan in comparison. As late as 1890, when the critic Albert Aurier praised Van Gogh's work in a review, he responded by pushing Monticelli forward.[19] In a letter to Aurier, he said that "as far as I know there is no colorist who comes so straight and directly from Delacroix; and yet it is likely, in my opinion, that Monticelli only had Delacroix's color theories at second hand" (853). Around this same time, Theo fulfilled a long-held desire of Vincent's: "You often used to say that a book should be published about Monticelli. Well, I've seen about twenty very fine lithographs after him done by someone called Lauzet. There will also be text, the artist is to come and see our paintings to see if there are any he wants to reproduce" (825). The book, *Adolphe Monticelli*, was published, under Theo's supervision, in June 1890.

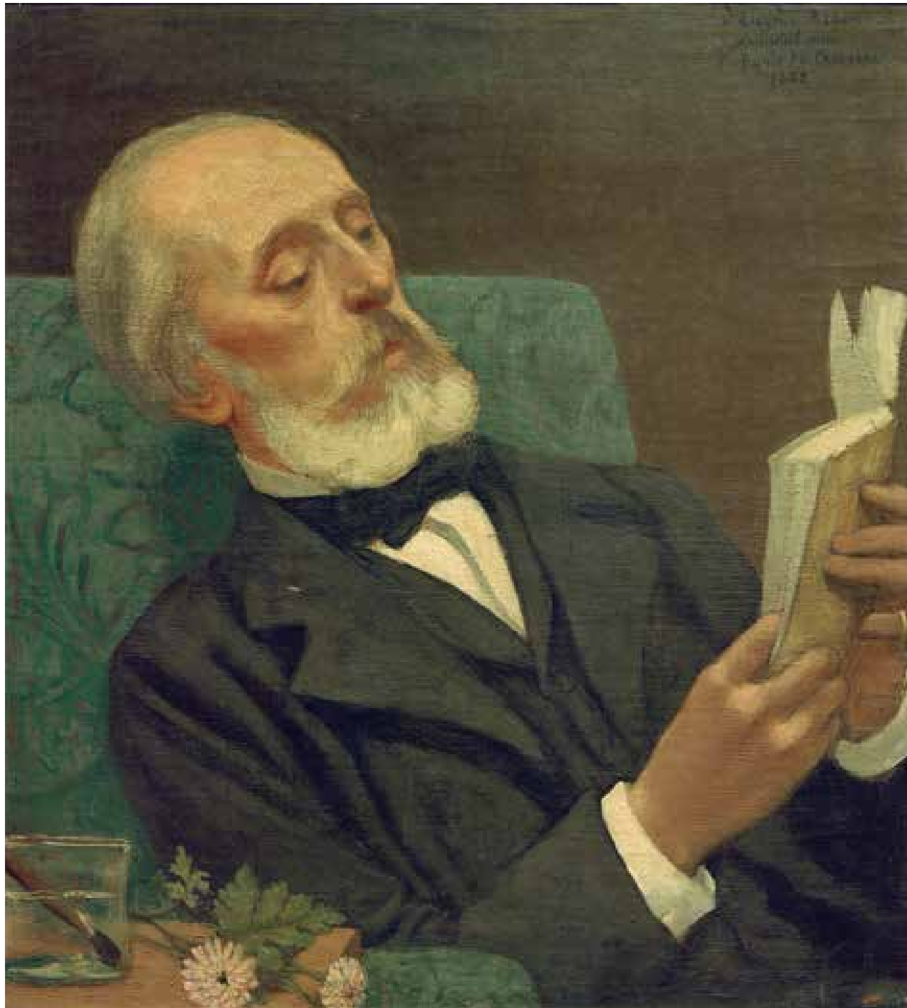

Fig. 22
Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (French, 1824–1890), *Portrait of Eugène Benon*, 1882. Oil on canvas, $23\frac{7}{8} \times 21\frac{7}{16}$ in. Private collection.

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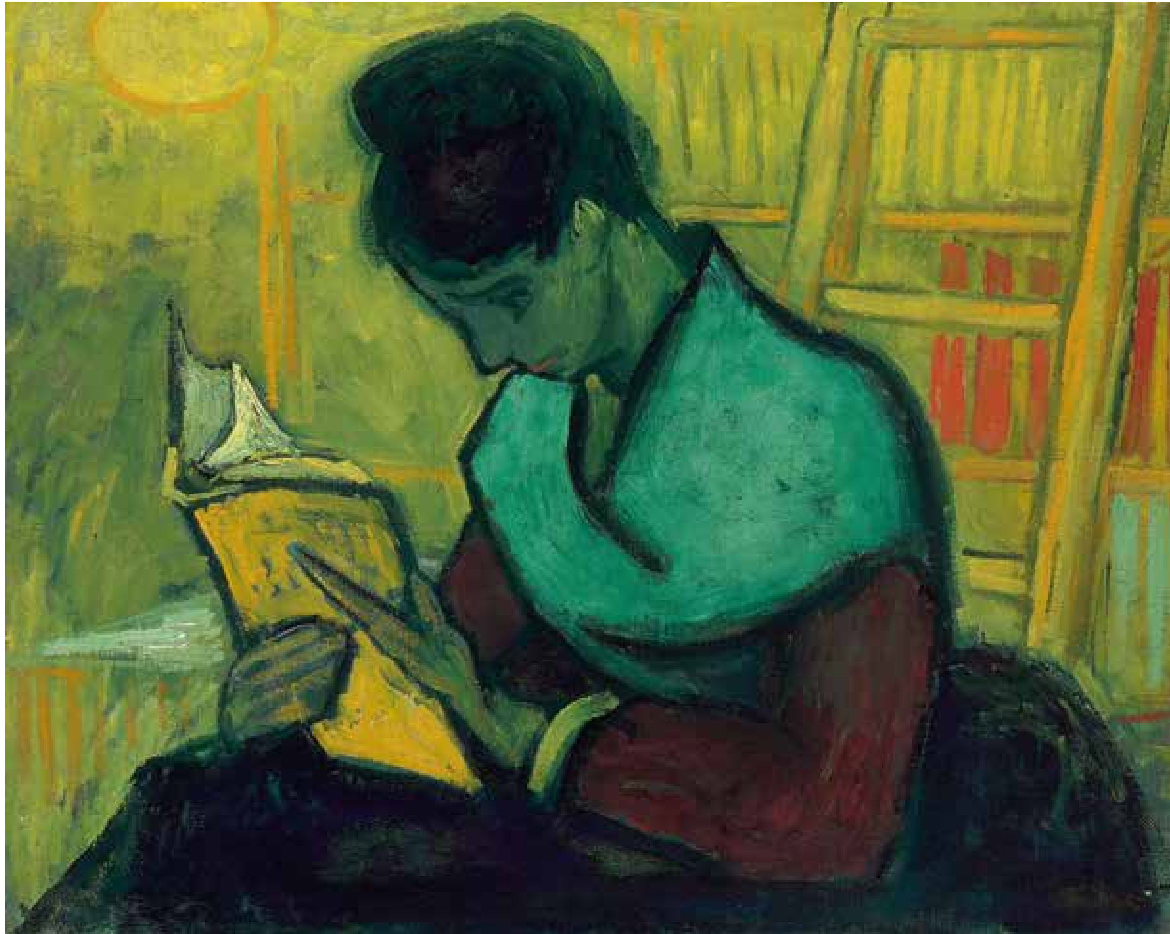

Fig. 23
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Novel Reader*, November 12, 1888. Oil on jute, 28¾ × 36¼ in. Private collection.

Pierre Puvis de Chavannes

While still in Nuenen, Vincent had heard from Theo about the work of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes and afterward became well acquainted with it in Paris. At the Galerie Durand-Ruel he saw the *Exposition de tableaux, pastels, dessins par M. Puvis de Chavannes*, which was held there from November 20 to December 20, 1887. Van Gogh was deeply impressed by the serene character of the pictures by Puvis that he saw at the exhibition. In May 1888, he wrote to Theo about the comfort he derived from that work: "That Hope of Puvis de Chavannes is such a reality. There's an art in the future and it will surely be so beautiful and so young that, really, if at present we leave it to our own youth, we can only gain in tranquility" (611). In the Provençal landscape he recognized something of the subdued landscapes of Puvis.[20]

This painter also influenced Van Gogh's portraiture. Van Gogh greatly admired Puvis's *Portrait of Eugène Benon* (fig. 22): he not only tried to reproduce its intimate character but also borrowed such pictorial elements as the books and the flowers for use in his own portraits. A woman reading in a library (fig. 23), one of Van Gogh's most experimental works, stems directly from Puvis de Chavannes.

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Japan, a Dream

The few Japanese woodcuts that Van Gogh had purchased in Antwerp were the beginning of the serious collection he later assembled in Paris. Some five hundred prints are still preserved in the Van Gogh Museum, but the collection was once much larger. He could buy prints at various places, but the great majority undoubtedly came from the gallery of Siegfried Bing in rue de Provence.[21]

Oddly enough, not one of the more than forty artists in the collection was ever mentioned by Van Gogh in his correspondence, not even Hiroshige, who by then was already famous. In fact, Van Gogh owned a number of his prints, and had even freely copied two of them as paintings (figs. 24, 25). If indeed Van Gogh had been told the artists' names when he purchased the prints, later he would have had little to go on, given that he was unable to read the Japanese inscriptions on the dozens of sheets he had acquired. Nevertheless, during his time in Paris, these prints served as a sort of Bible to him, just as his magazine illustrations had done in his Dutch period. They taught him to approach his compositions differently by, among other things, conceiving large areas of daring colors and abandoning traditional perspective. Gradually that influence fused with other innovations to become, in Arles, an inalienable element of his art. And it would remain so, even though in Saint-Rémy and Auvers-sur-Oise it was more understated than in his Arles oeuvre.

Fig. 24
Utagawa Hiroshige (Japanese, 1842–1904), *The Residence with Plum Trees at Kameido*, from the series *One Hundred Views of Famous Places in Edo*, 1857. Woodcut, $14\frac{9}{16}$ × 10 in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (n0077V1962).

Fig. 25
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Flowering Plum Orchard (after Hiroshige)*, October–November 1887. Oil on canvas, $21\frac{7}{8}$ × $18\frac{7}{16}$ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0115V1962 / F371).

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The ukiyo-e prints and the literature he read about Japan made him dream of Japan as a land of bright light and a serene atmosphere, and with that picture in mind, he left for Arles. In Provence he hoped to find a similar landscape, and this wish was indeed fulfilled. No doubt thinking of other eminent examples of artists who worked in communities, Van Gogh had formed an idealized—but mistaken—image of Japanese artists, whom he imagined as collaborating very closely. These utopian ideas were at the root of his hope to found an artists' colony in Arles.

In the South

His two-year stay in Paris had enabled Van Gogh to absorb all the abovementioned influences, and he succeeded in assimilating this new knowledge in a personal, modern style of painting that found recognition in his artistic circle. In February 1888 he traveled to Arles, where he would undergo further, spectacular development. As he had done with his previous living quarters, he now decorated his studio in the Yellow House with his artistic examples: "I've arranged all the Japanese prints in the studio, and the Daumiers and the Delacroixs and the

Fig. 26
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Sower with Setting Sun*, November 1888. Oil on canvas, 28 15/16 × 36 5/8 in. Foundation E.G. Bührle, Zürich.

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Géricault. If you come across the Delacroix Pietà, or the Géricault, I urge you to buy as many of them as you can. Another thing that I'd very much like to have in the studio is Millet's Labours of the fields and Lerat's etching of his Sower that Durand-Ruel is selling for 1.25 francs. And lastly the little etching by Jacquemart after Meissonier, The reader. A Meissonier that I've always found admirable. I can't help liking Meissoniers" (686). Van Gogh's admiration for Meissonier's meticulously executed paintings shows how, even now, it was still the subject of a work that could fill him with enthusiasm.

Van Gogh had conceived a plan, which involved his brother, to put the Impressionists on the map by marketing their work in such places as The Hague and Marseilles. He also remained true to his own circle in his striving to found an artists' colony in the South. As emerges from many of his letters, however, his new heroes could not knock his old idols off their pedestal. Finding himself once again in rural surroundings had put the big city out of his mind and made him hearken back to painters who had defined his early career. In June he made an ambitious attempt to follow in the footsteps of Millet and Lhermitte, both of whom had portrayed the motif of the sower with monumental intensity a number of times. Delacroix naturally resumed the role of color guide, and the complementary contrasts of yellow-purple and blue-orange were dominant. He considered his first attempt, made in the summer of 1888, a failure; several variants followed, but in November he was finally satisfied with the result (fig. 26).

Daumier was frequently in his thoughts in Arles; Van Gogh saw everyday scenes and people who, he imagined, could have stepped right out of Daumier's oeuvre: "Now the surroundings, with the public garden, the night cafés, the grocer's shop, aren't Millet, of course, but failing that, it's pure Daumier, pure Zola. Now that's quite enough to find ideas in, isn't it?" (682). Not only did he demonstrate his loyalty to the older painters, but he also distanced himself at times from contemporary art, for example by impressing upon Theo that "in modern art history there are names like Delacroix, Millet, Corot, Courbet, Daumier, who dominate everything that was produced in other countries. Yet the clique of painters who currently stand at the head of the official art world is resting on the laurels won by those earlier men, and is in itself of much lesser caliber" (626). In a later letter he wrote: "Millet gave us the essence of the peasant, and now, yes, there's Lhermitte, it's true there are one or two more, *Meunier* . . . and have we now more generally learned how to see peasants—*no*, hardly anyone knows how to polish one off. Isn't it partly the fault of Paris and the Parisians, fickle and disloyal like the sea? Well then, you're damned right to say, let's go quietly on our way, working for ourselves. You know, whatever becomes of sacrosanct Impressionism, I'd still myself have the wish to do the things that the *previous* generation, Delacroix, Millet, Rousseau, Diaz, Monticelli, Isabey, Decamps, Dupré, Jongkind, Ziem, Israëls, Meunier, a heap of others, Corot, Jacque . . . could understand. Ah, Manet was really really close to it, and Courbet, to marrying form and color. Me, I'd be quite happy to stay silent for 10 years doing nothing but studies, then do one or two figure paintings" (657).

In August 1888 their sister Willemien visited Theo in Paris. Wil was extremely interested in literature and art. Vincent, who at that time was working on his sunflower still lifes, felt obliged to take her by the hand: "I hope that you'll often go

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Fig. 27
Philips Koninck (Dutch, 1619–1688), *River Landscape*, 1676. Oil on canvas, 37⁷⁄₁₆ × 44¹⁄₁₆ in. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Dupper Wzn. Bequest, Dordrecht (SK-A-206).

and look at the Luxembourg and the modern paintings in the Louvre so that you get an idea of what a Millet, a Jules Breton, a Daubigny, a Corot is. You can keep the rest. Except—Delacroix. Although people are now working in yet another very different manner, the work of Delacroix, of Millet, of Corot, that remains and the changes don't affect it" (667).

His beloved Dutch Old Masters were likewise in Van Gogh's thoughts in Arles, and the flat landscape that surrounded the city made him think of their landscapes. He associated one of his masterpieces from the summer of 1888, *The Harvest*, executed as a painting and in drawings (fig. 10 in Cronan's essay, p. 75), with the panoramic landscapes of Philips Koninck (fig. 27).[22] The modern Van Gogh, too, was firmly rooted in the past.

A Discordant Friendship

On October 23, Gauguin joined Van Gogh in Arles. After a few weeks of harmonious collaboration, friction arose. Their disagreements were partly of a personal nature, but they also had widely divergent artistic preferences, and Gauguin considered them irreconcilable. He wrote to Bernard: "In general, Vincent and I see eye to eye on very little, especially on painting. He admires Daudet, Daubigny, Ziem and the great Rousseau, all of them people I can't stand. And on the other hand, he detests Ingres, Raphael, Degas, all of them people whom I admire; I reply, you're right, soldier, for the sake of a quiet life. He likes my paintings very much, but when I'm doing them he always finds that I'm wrong in this and that. He's a romantic, and I'm more drawn towards a primitive condition. From the

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point of view of color, he sees the possibilities of impasto, as in Monticelli, and I detest manipulated brushwork and so on."[23]

On December 16 or 17, Van Gogh and Gauguin visited the Musée Fabre in Montpellier, where the work of such artists as Delacroix and Courbet was on display, and Van Gogh reported to Theo that it had made a big impression on him.[24] During that visit, however, their differing preferences for particular artists became even more obvious, and after their return to Arles, this led to vehement discussions that marked the beginning of the end of their collaboration. Van Gogh suffered a mental collapse on December 23, and Gauguin left Arles two days later.

The Canon

In Arles, Van Gogh learned little about new artists, since the provincial town offered scant opportunity to broaden his knowledge of artistic developments. His voluntary admission to the asylum of Saint-Paul-de Mausole in Saint-Rémy in May 1889 cut him off almost completely from the outside world. After Paris, Van Gogh's canon of cherished artists largely remained the same. In September 1889,

Fig. 28
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Evening (after Millet)*, October–November 1889. Oil on canvas, 29¾⁄16 × 36⅝ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0174V1962 / F647).

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this became abundantly clear when, prevented by his illness from working out of doors, he took up the comforting work of copying black-and-white prints. This time, however, instead of drawing them in black, as he had done at the beginning of his career, he translated them into colorful paintings. To this end he chose works by his favorite masters: Rembrandt, Delacroix (pls. 20, 21), and above all Jean-François Millet, of whom he copied a large number of works (fig. 28).

In Auvers-sur-Oise, where Van Gogh settled in May 1890 and died on July 29, it was mainly the masters of Barbizon who were in his thoughts. Daubigny had lived in the village, and his widow was still living there; Van Gogh painted her garden a number of times. When the critic Joseph Jacob Isaäcson wrote an article praising his paintings, Van Gogh reacted—just as he had done to Albert Aurier—by emphatically putting forward other artists: "Millet is the voice of the wheat, and Jules Breton also" (RM21). This illustrates how faithful Van Gogh remained, until the end of his days, to the examples that had shaped him as both artist and man.

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NOTES

1 All quotations from the letters are to *Vincent van Gogh—The Letters: The Complete Illustrated and Annotated Edition*, ed. Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker, 6 vols. (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 2009); hereafter cited in the text as letter number followed by page number.
2 See note 10 to this letter.
3 Letters 538 and 539.
4 See, among others, letters 361, 375, and 376.
5 Letter 288.
6 Letter 41.
7 Letter 98.
8 Letters 551 and 673.
9 The correctness of this identification has been questioned, because Van Gogh's description differs in some points from the picture (see note 12 to letter 89). This is hardly surprising, since Van Gogh described this rather full composition from memory. The identification is therefore upheld here. Another possibility is that he saw a comparable variant (no longer known) of this painting, perhaps a preparatory study: in letter 99, he again writes about a "pilgrim's progress" by Boughton, but calls it a "sketch."
10 In letter 36, Van Gogh says that a number of prints would go well with Van der Maaten's print, which was already hanging in the room.
11 See Bart Moens, "Van Gogh in Brussels," in *Van Gogh: The Birth of an Artist*, ed. Sjraar van Heugten (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2015), 114.
12 Hubert Herkomer, "Drawing and Engraving on Wood," *Art Journal* n.s. 44 (1882): 13–36, 165–68.
13 Letters 283 and 284.
14 Letter 277.
15 François Gauzi, *Lautrec et son temps* (Paris: Perret, 1954), 28.
16 *Catalogue illustré des oeuvres de Jean-François Raffaelli, exposées 28 bis, avenue de l'Opéra. Suivi d'une étude des mouvements de l'art moderne et du beau caractériste* (Paris, 1884).
17 Anton Kerssemakers, "Herinneringen aan Vincent van Gogh," *De Amsterdammer: Weekblad voor Nederland* 1912, no. 1816, p. 6, and no. 1817, pp. 6–7. His recollections of the visit to the Rijksmuseum are in no. 1816. Included in its entirety in Susan Alyson Stein, ed., *Van Gogh. A Retrospective* (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1986) 48–55.
18 Only a brief overview of the collection is given here. A more detailed picture of the brothers' holdings is given in Sjraar van Heugten and Chris Stolwijk, eds., *Theo van Gogh, 1857–1891: Art Dealer, Collector, and Brother of Vincent* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1999).
19 Albert Aurier, "Les isolés: Vincent van Gogh," *Mercure de France*, January 1890, 24–29.
20 Letter 683.
21 See https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/japanese-prints; and Chris Uhlenbeck, Louis van Tilborgh, and Shigeru Oikawa, *Japanese Prints: The Collection of Vincent van Gogh* (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 2018).
22 Letter 623; Van Gogh mistakenly calls him Salomon Koninck.
23 See Victor Merlhès, *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin: Documents, témoignages* (Paris: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1984), 284.
24 Letter 726.

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Todd Cronan

"A LAST FINE LINE AGAINST THE HORIZON": VAN GOGH AT THE EDGE

It *simply musn't be seen* without this *enclosure* to it.
—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, April 30, 1885

"I AM PAINTING A LOOM—of old oak gone greenish brown—with the date *1730* carved into it," Vincent writes Theo in February 1884 (428/106). He goes on to describe the scene: "Next to that loom, by a little window through which one can see a small green field, there's a high chair, and the little child sits in it, watching the weaver's shuttle fly back and forth for hours."[1] He insists again, in the next sentence, on enumerating the details, "the loom with the little weaver, the small window and that high chair in the wretched little room with the clay floor." Rather than a painting (as he suggests), he is likely referring to *Weaver, with a Baby in a Highchair* (fig. 1 in Rainof essay, p. 125), a pencil, pen, and ink drawing from this moment. It is an imagery of containment, of enclosure (of the weaver behind the loom, the child in the high chair), and of opening or view (onto the old tower of Nuenen, a subject he frequently painted). It is part of a series of thirty-four works in paint, watercolor, and drawing of Nuenen weavers at work made between December 1883 and August 1884.[2] Several months earlier, in March 1883, Van Gogh had developed a sense of the world he was going to find before he ultimately came to represent it. "A weaver who must control and interweave many threads has no time to philosophize about how they fit together, but rather he's so absorbed in his work that he doesn't think but acts, and *feels* how it can and must work out rather than being able to explain it" (327/303). The polarity here is stark, action versus thinking, work versus philosophy, and it was an ongoing

temptation in Van Gogh's practice to imagine something like a vision of action that went beyond "endless convention" to embody something like "nature" itself (439).[3] But it is also, I will contend, more of a theoretical temptation, in that his work tends to complicate his deepest fantasies of immediacy, largely by virtue of an ongoing emphasis on the frame, both at the level of thematics and by formal acknowledgments of the framing edge.

The weaver series gives vivid expression to Van Gogh's basic ambivalence toward his subjects; the absorption of the worker in his task is matched or perhaps countered by the boredom of the child in the high chair, who sits and stares from morning until night. In other instances, it is the weaver who appears bored beyond reprieve, while the poignantly framed view outside suggests a prohibited freedom. *Weaver Facing Right*, likely from the start of the series, seems determined to confirm his earlier view of the weaver's world (fig. 1). We are brought in close, we are meant to feel the weight of the correspondence between the artist's practice and that of the weaver with his tools, his right hand deploying an instrument that appears as though it could write or mark a surface.[4] The cloth stretched across the frame, cut off by his body at left and the edge of the picture at right, suggests a painted surface with an abstract pattern on it. Debora Silverman rightly observes a "pattern of identification with the craft labor of the weavers. In executing the weaver series, Van Gogh articulated the equivalence between his artistic work, what he called his *métier*, and the work of the weaver at his loom, *le canut à son métier.*"[5] And yet, viewing the series as a whole, it appears that only the earliest images in the sequence attempt this kind of direct identification with the sitter, as though enacting a kind of loss of boundaries between artist and subject.

The half-length portraits of the weaver at work were displaced by more inclusive views of the weaver and his workshop, standing back to include more and more aspects of the weaver's world. The paintings and drawings from this point forward seem to tack back and forth between informative, quasi-documentary surveys of the laboring subject and more immersive renderings, projecting the viewer into the weaver's space, although Van Gogh now eschews the visual and emotional proximity of the half-portrait format. *A Weaver's Cottage*, likely from later in the series, suggests something entirely more portentous than immersive identification with the laborer (fig. 2). If part of the point of the series was to suggest that the sun was setting on a way of life (that "1730" cut into the weaver's frame), a hand-craft ideal that was being overtaken by automated machinery, then here Van Gogh suggests that process had already begun to take root in the very heart of craft production. "When that black monster of begrimed oak with all its slats somehow shows up like this against the greyness in which it stands, then *there*, in the center of it, sits a black ape or goblin or apparition, and clatters with those slats from early till late," he writes to Van Rappard in March. The frame here "shows up," as though it and its laboring subject were ghosts conjured up against his will. Van Gogh wanted to highlight this phantomlike emergence in an attempt to set off the black of the weavers' frame against the gray of his surroundings. It is a minimal, but essential, contrast. At this time Vincent writes Theo about his desire to set off his pictures from the (gray?) wall with "black wooden frames. . . . I prefer to see my work in a deep black frame." He adds that

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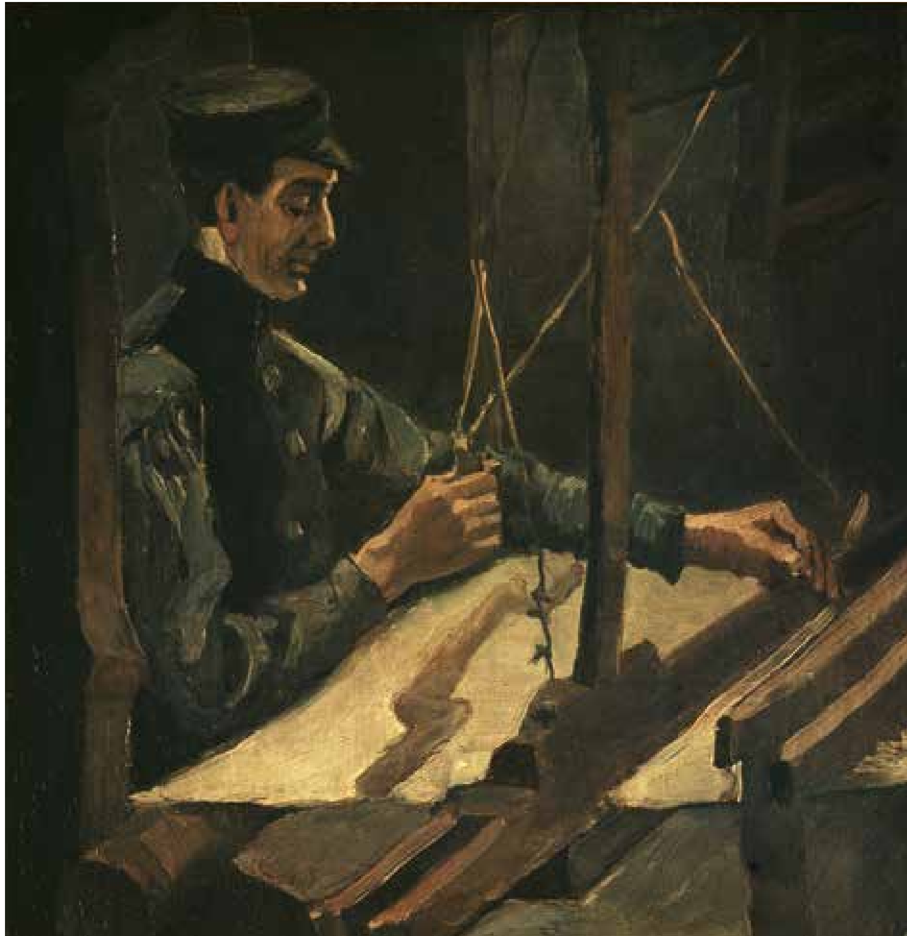

Fig. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Weaver Facing Right*, 1884. Oil on canvas, 18⅛ × 18⅞ in. Private collection (F26).

he would rather have them unseen than displayed in the typical "fluted frames" of gallery pictures (432). The effect of the fluted frame would be to generate a third level of contrast—gold against black against gray—that would undermine the fundamental contrast he was trying to achieve.

Like the child in the high chair, in *A Weaver's Cottage*, it is the worker who monotonously tilts away from morning until night. He noted that he registered the "shape of a weaver" with a few "scratches and blotches,"[6] insisting that the figure was not the point, but rather the "HAUNTING" of the picture by the "*workman*" (437). What mattered was that one could hear the "sigh or lament . . . come out of all that clutter of the slats" in the absence of a figure, an effect he found impossible with drawings by mechanical engineers. At left, the six panes of the window frame open out onto a landscape with windmill, although most of the information is contained within the top left and middle panes, while the middle pane at bottom is totally obscured, as is part of the one to the right. We are meant to grasp the complex relations drawn between the window frame, the frame of the weaver's loom, and the frame of the painter's canvas. The loom is divided into seven sections, creating a multipart and irregular pattern. And while the weaver is not actually "sitting . . . inside" his loom, the sense of his seemingly fatal entwinement with his instrument is evident. The weaver's face is, as

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Fig. 2
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *A Weaver's Cottage*, 1884. Oil on canvas, 18⅞ × 24 in. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (1237 (MK)).

Van Gogh noted, apelike; its blank affective register suggests something of the monotony of his task. There is an unmistakable sense in which the sitter's head is caught between the upper two crossbars, the figure's right hand pulling down on the reel that seems to further reinforce both the sense of claustrophobia and of increasing pressure exerted on the figure's face and body. If *Weaver Facing Right* suggested a heightened mode of empathetic identification between artist and subject, then *A Weaver's Cottage*, offers something like an opposite set of cues, a kind of enclosure and entrapment, as though the weaver is ensnared by his complex framing devices.

Silverman has elaborated at length on the significance of the artist's perspective frame for understanding his work, a device that plays a special role throughout the weaver series. Van Gogh first sketched the frame in a letter to Theo from August 1882, and there is little doubt he marshaled it, sometimes submissively, at crucial moments throughout his career to generate a stronger sense of pictorial order in his works. Writing of the weaver series, Silverman reflects how the

> perspective frame is incorporated in the loom's frame in several ways: the threads of the loom are suspended in a pattern echoing that of the perspective device, and the wooden stakes supporting the loom's oblong frame are

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marked by a series of notches. The notches replicate the functional holes on van Gogh's perspective tool that served as adjustable points for fixing the wooden frame to the two poles. By highlighting the resemblance between his own tool and the weaver's, van Gogh visibly attached himself to the craft labor process depicted, uniting the distinctive feature of the frame of art with the frame of the loom.[7]

Silverman is no doubt correct to see the depth of connection drawn between the artist's perspective frame and the weaver's frame. She further suggests an identity between Van Gogh's "craft habits," including both "framing tools and woven facture."[8] Part of my point will be to suggest that the woven painted surface and its continuous qualities stands in some kind of conflicted relation to the framing edge (and the perspective frame), but more generally my claim is to say that the nature of Van Gogh's vision of identification between himself and world, between picture and viewer, was far more *ambivalent* or *conflictual* in its expression than the picture of identification that saturates the literature.[9] Van Gogh was undoubtedly driven by a desire to identify between his artistic *métier* and the worker's, part of a broader act of artistic empathy between himself and others, but those connections were more often than not freighted with distinct signs and marks of disconnect, of opacity between the artist and his subject, an opacity that was exemplified by the mediation of the perspective frame (which both unites and detaches), but—more significantly—a range of formal and thematic framing elements featured in his work. Further still, these signs of opacity or disconnect are by no means simply negatively charged (as they may be in *A Weaver's Cottage*), but more like a fact of artistic expression, the mark of finitude and separateness from others and the world and even oneself (as evidenced by many of the self-portraits). My point is in no way to discount the pervasive view of Van Gogh's identificatory practice, but rather to say that identification for Van Gogh occurred within a context of mediations, of separateness, of frames—thematic enclosures and formal acknowledgments of the literal framing edge.

Painted in a mode of deliberate contrast to *A Weaver's Cottage*, *Weaver near an Open Window*—a close relative of Van Rappard's *Weaver*—returns to the basic setup of *Weaver Facing Right* (F24) of a few months earlier but includes a fuller view of the loom as well as a view through an open window. Everything that was airless and claustrophobic about *Weaver Facing Right* is mitigated by the displacement of the weaver behind his loom to the left, as well as the view toward the church and peasant before it. Van Gogh had painted the view beyond the window many times during this period, and a work like *The Old Tower* comes close to the view within the painting.

I want to consider now a closely related view, *The Old Church Tower at Nuenen* (fig. 3), one of the most ambitious works of the Nuenen period, a work Van Gogh sent off to Paris in June. Writing of the churchyard, he observes how "perfectly simple death and burial happen, coolly as the falling of an autumn leaf—no more than a bit of earth turned over—a little wooden cross." The "bit" of earth, the "little" cross: Van Gogh makes a pointed contrast between the touching fragility of the grave and the cross against the ruined monumentality of the tower itself. These fragile counterpoints to the tower are further exemplified in a more surprising set of elements. He observed how the "fields around—where the grass of

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the churchyard ends, beyond the little wall, they make a last fine line against the horizon—like the horizon of a sea" (507). The space beyond the wall is contrasted at once with the cemetery and with the tower. Van Gogh notoriously eschewed overt religious imagery, preferring instead to embed religious sentiments in the particulars of the visual world, an approach he always identified with his idol, François Millet. Describing the sentiment of the picture to Theo, he reflected how "faith and religion mouldered away" and yet the "life and death of the peasants" will "always be the same," an attitude he associated with the work of Victor Hugo (who had died a few weeks prior). He went on to describe how those lives, like "the grass and the flowers that grow" in the yard, were continually "springing up and withering" away. Van Gogh made a pointed contrast between established religion (in the space of the cemetery) and the space beyond the wall. The old tower, slowly decaying, defies the pressures of time, aging, and death, as though refusing the natural order. The wooden crosses, by contrast to the tower, are fragile and temporary; they fit into their setting rather than setting themselves against it. And yet the contrasts do not end there, as Van Gogh describes another feature of the scene, comparing the crosses with the thin space beyond the wall but before the sea, the figurative line of the horizon, which is also a thin green *painted line*: the fullest emblem of Van Gogh's vision. The line along the edge sits between two worlds: the world of (religious) conventions and infinite space beyond. It was this "last line," the worked "bit of earth," defined by two opposing worlds—conventions and the inhuman cosmos—that was Van Gogh's great subject.

In the famous April 30, 1885, letter to Theo about *The Potato Eaters* (cat. 3, ill. 1)—"If a peasant painting smells of bacon, smoke, potato steam fine"—Vincent

Fig. 3
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Old Church Tower at Nuenen ('The Peasants' Churchyard')*, Neunen, May–June 1885. Oil on canvas, $25\frac{9}{16} \times 34\frac{5}{8}$ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0002V1962 / F84).

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drew an elaborate comparison between the painting and the "weavers [who] weave those fabrics" (497). Vincent then abruptly turns to the issue of framing. Unlike the black frames he desired before, and unlike the black/gray contrast of the weaver pictures, this was "a painting *that looks well in gold*, I'm sure of that." It could be hung against a wall that "had a deep tone of ripe wheat," he observed, but whatever happened "it *simply mustn't be seen, though*, without this *enclosure* to it." And if the weavers were a study in black against gray, *The Potato Eaters* depicted a "very grey interior" that required anything but a "*dark* background." (It's not black that he refused, only "*dull*.") Complicating matters further, Vincent insisted that in "*reality*" the scene was framed in gold due to the reflections from the "hearth and the light from the fire on the white walls." He stressed that in "real life" this light threw "the whole thing backwards" but that when the light/gold frame appeared "*outside* the painting," it drew the painting "closer to the viewer," an effect he clearly embraced (497). We are to take our place at the table within this cramped space of the family meal. And yet this invitation seems frustrated by the presence of the girl in the foreground; she covers the space at the table edge that seems designed to open out to, and to invite in, the viewer. The fact that she appears to be standing suggests something of Van Gogh's hesitation around this figure that at once serves as audience surrogate and simultaneously blocks our full involvement.

The lengthy period he worked on *The Potato Eaters* was taken up with an extensive series of peasant portrait heads as well as a series of cottages, digging peasants, still lifes, and birds' nests. Despite the variety of subjects, Van Gogh clearly thought of them as variants on a single theme. Vincent first mentions the nests in the June letter to Theo in which he described *The Old Church Tower at Nuenen* and another painting, *The Cottage* of 1885 (502.7). In June he makes a direct connection between the figurative work and the nests, reflecting how "the cottage with the mossy roof reminded me of a wren's nest," and then, in a complicated turn of phrase, notes that he must "go bird nesting with a number of variations of these '*people's nests,*' which remind me so much of the nests of wrens" (507). He reiterates the idea in October, reflecting that he feels for "*the brood and the nests*—particularly those *human* nests, those cottages on the heath and their inhabitants" (533). In the sketch that accompanies the letter (JH943), he included a number of birds clinging to the branches around the nest, not unlike the images of peasants laboring in the vicinity of their cottages. There is a kind of collapsing of difference between cottage and nest, human enclosures and animal ones, that more broadly connects with the thematic I have been exploring around figured and literal frames. Consider, for instance, *Birds' Nests* of September–October 1885 (fig. 4); with five nests, it is one of the most ambitious of the series. Van Gogh was concerned to be as accurate as possible in depicting the variety of nests, noting his collection of "thrush, blackbird, golden oriole, wren, chaffinch" (526). The most striking feature of the setup is the leftmost nest (perhaps a blackbird's), tilted on its side with four thin branches spread out to create a starlike shape that holds up the form and stretches out into space around it. The uppermost branch bears two shoots, like "fingers" creating a *V*, the right one just touching the edge of the largest and vertically oriented nest at back center. Notice, too, how the leftmost branch appears to reach

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Fig. 4
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Birds' Nests*, Neunen, September–October 1885. Oil on canvas, 15½ × 18⁵⁄₁₆ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0001V1962 / F111).

into space, but this time it touches, or grazes, the edge of the picture plane where it meets the frame. Directly across from the leftmost branch, one sees a knotted shape like an extended finger directed toward the other side of the picture plane although falling short of the framing edge. Above this thin horizontal shape is a smaller variant of the central nest; its rightmost edge rests up against the edge of the picture surface at the point of the frame.

This arrangement is far from casual and reveals a pattern that Van Gogh explores throughout his extensive body of work. The pattern emerges earlier in a bizarre work, *Flying Fox* from the fall of 1884 (fig. 5).[10] Here the fox's wings are graphically displayed in an outward gesture, capturing presumably the (present-tense) look of mid-flight, while a hidden light source radiates behind the creature, spread along the surface like a horizontal frieze. At the lower-right edge, the fox's wing touches but does not cross the border between the picture plane and framing edge. And if that moment of touch dramatizes the framing edge, so the extended wing along the left side seems to barely cross over the edge into the space beyond the picture limits.

Consider now the modest *Still Life with a Bouquet of Daisies* of 1885 in the Philadelphia Museum of Art (fig. 6). The daisy at center left, facing outward, is the dramatic highlight of the picture. More curious is the flower and stem angled downward to the left, diagonally crossing the space as though reaching out toward the containing edge. There is a kind of phantom version of this jutting stem along the right side, handled with the most cursory black line. At bottom right, below this dark and thinly applied flower lies a group of three daisies on

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Fig. 5
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Flying Fox*, Neunen, October–November 1884. Oil on canvas, 16⁵⁄₁₆ × 13⅜ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0136V1973 / F177a).

the table, which is also the lower corner (he has all but identified the shape of the table with the shape of the canvas along the lower edge). Along the upper section of the canvas, the daisies seem to just break free of the constraining edge, as they gather to the right of center, creating a counterplay to the "reaching" but contained form at bottom left. A brief comparison with two later still lifes made in the last weeks at Saint-Rémy—*Irises* at the Van Gogh Foundation (F678) and *Irises* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (F680)—point to the ongoing fascination with the imagery of outward extension, containment, and abundance. The vertically oriented *Irises* at the Van Gogh Museum bears a strong diagonal sweep from bottom right to top left as the iris leaves stretch or reach toward the lower corner and upper-left edge. The sense of the canvas's limits are doubled in the shape of the vase, although the forces of containment are little match for the flowers, which might strike the viewer as imaginatively continuing to grow within their container. The horizontally oriented *Irises* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, by contrast, bear a more sober sense of natural flourish. Here one senses the extension and reach of a flower along the left as it grazes the edge, while several leaves seem to spread themselves outward to the framing edge at right. It bears noting that the two later pictures, while the internal elements seem to strain toward the edges, never attempt to violate that edge as do (in a kind of nominal way) the early works. I will return to a group of related works, a series of blossoming and blooming flowers, at the end.

A similar arrangement occurs with another work from the summer of 1886, *Still Life with Red Herrings* in Basel (F283), a subject Van Gogh returned to in March 1889. In this horizontal arrangement, the artist has arranged four herrings stretching the length of the picture plane. Consider how the fins along the right touch up against the edge of the picture surface at the space of the frame, while the head of another at center similarly reaches up to touch, but does not traverse, the edge to the right of center along the upper edge.

Or again, consider an early black-framed *Still Life* from 1884 or 1885 (F178r), now in The Hague. Seven elements—cup, flask, three bottles, and two stacked containers at upper left—crowd a small space. The two upright bottles get near but do not touch the upper edge, while the tilted bottle along the right appears

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Fig. 6
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Still Life with a Bouquet of Daisies*, 1885. Oil on canvas, 16⅜ × 22½ in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1978-1-33, Bequest of Charlotte Dorrance Wright, 1978 (1978-1-33 / F197).

to lean just past the containing edge of the picture. Along the congested left side forms are turned as though to come close to the edge, while the handle of the red container seems to touch the edge near the center left.

Van Gogh's overall commitment to a kind of nesting and figurative containment is signaled in a picture like *Peasant Woman with Child on Her Lap* of 1885 (fig. 7), part of the extensive peasant-portrait campaign around *The Potato Eaters*. Here the woman's ungainly and oversized right hand abuts the edge of the picture surface, the middle finger touching the lower-left edge of the picture. Just below, bottom-left corner, the child's feet (they seem to visually blend with the mother's behind) rest on the lower edge of the canvas, suggesting a kind of physical pressure exerted against the frame. The back of the chair, turned slightly away from the sitter and set into darkness, lines up awkwardly with the picture edge, slightly exceeding the limits of the frame. Finally, the line that tops the woman's cap aligns closely with the top edge of the picture, further reinforcing the sense of the enclosure of the figures within the room (that the chair is recessed and extends slightly beyond the picture only underscores the sense of enclosure). Moreover, the theme of the child resting on the woman's lap, her left hand entwined with his left hand under his arm, is itself an image of weight and pressure and a kind of nesting of bodies with one another.

As Vincent explained to Theo, *The Potato Eaters* (fig. 10, p. 107)—his masterpiece of the Nuenen period—contained a kind of internal framing device in the

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Fig. 7
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Peasant Woman with Child on Her Lap*, 1885. Oil on canvas on cardboard, 16 5⁄16 × 13⅝ in. Private collection (F149).

relation between the light (both from the hanging oil lamp and the hearth) and the dark gray of the foreground space. Beyond this light/dark contrast, key elements double the framing edge, along the left side with the chair back and the right side with the woman's massive left arm as well as the barely visible part of her chair back, which lines up with the framing edge. The hanging clock at upper left, whose face is turned outward, abuts the frame while mirroring its shape. The sense of weighted mass against the lower edge is apparent in the seated man at left, and more subtly in the pot resting on a cabinet at bottom right. These weighted qualities are countered by the rising steam, lit by the lamp, at center. More complicated is the upper register, as the place where the lamp hangs from (or beside) the beam is painted in such a way as to relieve the weight of the roof, lessening to a degree the strain of the otherwise claustrophobic enclosure (notice, for instance, the partially shuttered window at back left). Recall that

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Vincent implored Theo to give this picture an "*enclosure*" before displaying it for sale. What the external enclosure (a gold frame) was intended to do was to set off the internal sense of both enclosure and lightness, a dialectical relation that was difficult (if not impossible) to convey without a clear sense of the literal frame.

Looking back on their time together in Nuenen, Anton Kerssemakers described an incident that revealed something crucial about Van Gogh's general approach to the natural world, one that seemed strongly mediated by artistic sources. Here is Kerssemakers:

> Whenever he saw a beautiful evening sky, he became ecstatic, so to say. One day when we were coming from Nuenen to E[indhoven] toward evening, he suddenly stood still before a splendid sunset, and using his two hands to frame it somehow, and with his eyes half closed, he cried out: "My God, how does such a fellow—whether God, or whatever you want to call him—how does he do that? We must be able to do that, too!"[11]

What exactly is "God" doing here that needs to be imitated? Is he creating a sunset, or creating pictures of sunsets? This might appear to be a strained understanding of Van Gogh's attitude here, but there is broad evidence to suggest that he saw the world in terms of its framed or delimited views. Van Gogh clarifies his artistic approach most succinctly in a letter to Émile Bernard in which he reflects how he did "not invent the whole of the painting; on the contrary, I find it ready-made—but to be untangled—in the real world" (698). The picture is there in the world; the artist is there to pull on the right threads to show us what is always before us. There is a remarkable casualness to Van Gogh's identification of art and world, as though the two were variants on each other, art being the patient extraction of meaning as it resides in things. Reading the letters as a whole, one is immediately struck by the sheer *density* of artistic reference that saturates his relations to others and the world, as though the most direct or casual encounter were mediated by artistic sources, literary and pictorial. Perhaps the most famous instance of this collapsing of art and world was his remark to Willemien about living in Arles, "I don't need Japanese pictures here, because . . . *I'm in Japan here*" (678). Van Gogh sees Japanese prints as themselves instances of the collapsing of art and world, evidence of the immersive connection between the aesthetic and the everyday.

Most significant for my concerns is a late letter to Theo, written from his new room at Saint-Rémy. Here he describes the (unremarkable) chair as "speckled like a Diaz or Monticelli" and how "through the iron-barred window I can make out a square of wheat in an enclosure, a perspective in the manner of Van Goyen, above which in the morning I see the sun rise in its glory" (776). Notice the drift from the room's iron bars to the walled enclosure beyond the window. Was it the bars on the window that suggested a reference to the Van Goyen or the walled-in field outside? Further still, as he notes, it is above this scene out of Van Goyen—a scene he painted and drew many times between late May 1889 and May 1890 (I will address this sequence further on)—that the "glory" of the sun appears to him. Once again, it is as though the multiple layers of framing—understood as the framing action of the picture frame, the iron bars, the wall, the lingering

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image of the perspective frame, and in the ongoing formal articulation of the framing edge—render the world available for depiction. Whatever the impulse to identification with others and with the world at large—no doubt it was central—it was always nested within a series of implicit and explicit frames. Silverman further points to a similar moment as far back as 1882; writing to Theo, he notes he is "studying the meadows and the carpenter's yard with my perspective frame." Behind the roofline he sees "an infinity of delicate, gentle green, miles and miles of flat meadow, and a grey sky as still, as peaceful as Corot or Van Goyen" (250/116). What is so striking here is the elision of a view of "infinity" caught in the perspective frame with an artistic model.

At this point I want to break with the chronology and move ahead to 1888 at Arles and consider together four ambitious works all likely from June. Although they have never been conceived this way, I see them as a group by virtue of resemblances at the level of form and significance. At first glance the only thing these four works might share is their period of creation and stylistic commonalities. They are highly divergent at the level of theme, handling, size, scale, and the location of execution. I see *Seascape at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer* (fig. 8), *The Harvesters* (fig. 9), *The Harvest* (fig. 10), and *Canal with Washerwomen* (fig. 11) as a group in terms of their shared approach to their differing subjects, one centered on a relationship between suggested temporality and how that quality of time relates to the containment of the scene within the frame.

On June 2, Vincent wrote Theo from Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer on the shore of the Mediterranean. He expressed concern about the nature of the light and atmosphere at the seaside, worried that the sun played tricks on the surface of things, where everything has "color like mackerel, in other words, changing—you don't always know if it's green or purple—you don't always know if it's blue—

Fig. 8
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Seascape at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer*, Arles, June 1888. Oil on canvas, 19$\frac{7}{8}$ × 25$\frac{5}{16}$ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0017V1962 / F415).

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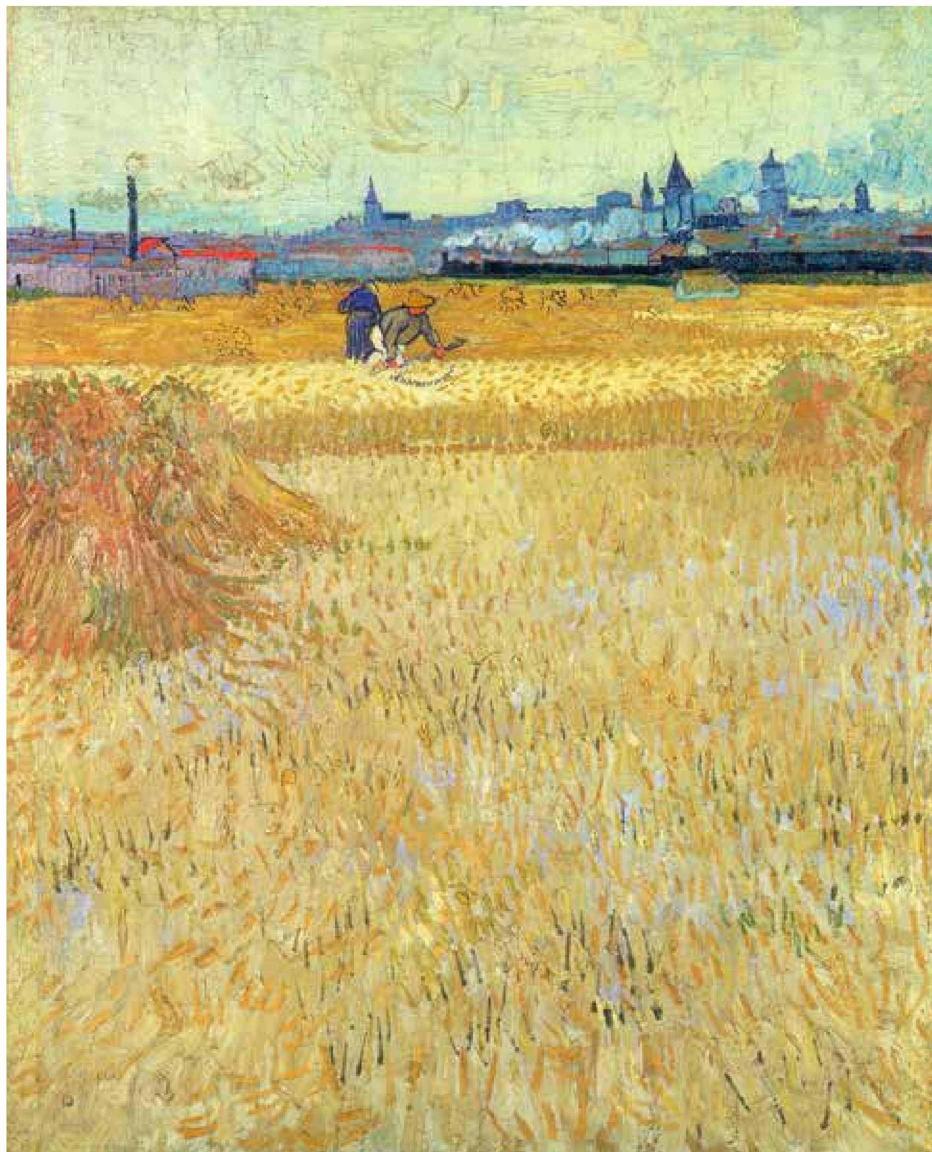
Fig. 9
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Harvesters*, June–July 1888. Oil on canvas, 28¾ × 21¼ in. Musée Rodin (P.7304 / F545).



because a second later, its changing reflection has taken on a pink or gray hue" (619). Richard Kendall cites this as evidence of "how deeply ingrained certain of the notions of impressionism were,"[12] but far from desiring to capture the constantly shifting order of nature like Claude Monet, Van Gogh aimed to contain and condense these elements within the limits of the canvas. We know at this point that Van Gogh had dispensed with the perspective frame and begun to paint "very quickly, like a lightening flash," a quality he saw as definitive of Japanese art, although he was quick to warn against identifying the rapidity of execution with the pictorial effect of speed, an effect he typically tried to foreclose. Compared to *Street in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer*, color in *Seascape* is more reserved, with close-valued shifts between deep blues, watery greens, and pure whites. The bright red of the signature—an unusual addition—was an effort to get a "red note in the green." The colorism of the whole lends itself to a novel

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Fig. 10
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Harvest*, Arles, June 1888. Oil on canvas, 28⅞ × 36⅛ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0030V1962 / F412).

quality of projected temporality, the sense in which there is a pronounced *drift* in the picture from right to left. The fishing boat to the left of center, just below the horizon line, is in movement, a little figure at the stern pulling up his catch. If the horizon line suggests stillness, then the central wave line seems to drift gently to the left. Notice, too, the three horizontally oriented dabs of dark blue paint that appear just along the left edge of the painting near the center, as though drawing the wave at center to a conclusion. Their descriptive function seems minimal, sitting as they do upon the surface, registering the picture plane near the edge where the water meets the frame. Below that, across the lower part of the painting, is a more turbulent wave of white, green, blue, and red (the signature), the marks dragged by a palette knife, which carries a more intense suggestion of leftward movement than the line at middle (the curving stroke of black just above the “ce” in “Vincent” seems to interrupt the wave above). Kendall astutely observes how the oils and pigments here conjure up the “transparency of the ocean and the opacity of the beach beneath.”[13] If that is the case, Van Gogh is signaling the hard surface along the lower edge where we stand and watch the movement of waves and boat both out before us and below our feet.

With this set of concerns in mind, I want to consider a better-known work from roughly two weeks later, *The Harvesters*, now in the Musée Rodin. Without dwelling in detail on this ambitious work, I would draw attention to the train near the horizon at the city edge moving left just above the two reapers in the field. The space where the train meets the reapers is similar to the location of the boat in the *Seascape*, and like that earlier picture it implies a slow but steady leftward drift, as though the laborers pick up some metaphorical movement from the mechanized vehicle above. Once again, I would suggest that the

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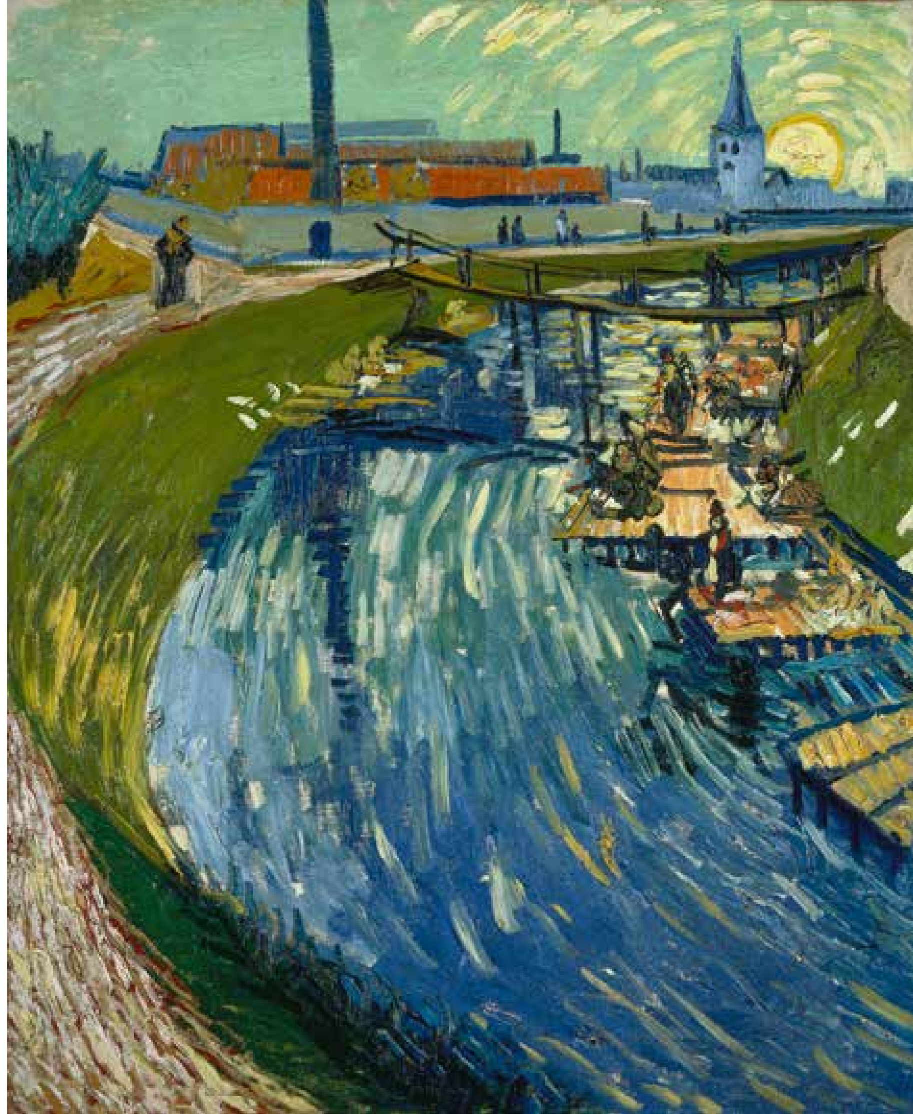
Fig. 11
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Canal with Washerwomen*, 1888. 23⅝ × 29⅛ in. Private collection (F427).



leftward pressure is redoubled or intensified by the massing, here of haystacks, against the left edge of picture near the center. The latter effect of weighted pressure against the edge—one that is both implied (by the chugging movement of the train) and given thematic weight (by the stacks of hay)—is analogous to the effects achieved in *Seascape* made just prior to it.

The Harvest from the same moment as *The Harvesters* is undoubtedly the most ambitious and successful of this group of paintings. If *The Harvesters* is immersive in its approach to the depiction of labor, then *The Harvest* takes a more detached and inclusive view of the setting. Rather than address the work as a whole, I would point again to aspects that are suggestive of its wider meaning and what it shares with works made from the same period. I draw attention first to the great blue cart at center, one whose handles rest near a patch of unmowed field to the right, while on the left the cart seems to be open; on the ground, to the left, is a pile of white material. What I am again struck by is the sense of slow,

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unfolding time in the drift of elements, in a kind of rhythmic up and back, right to left, and then perhaps back again, an effect enforced by the recession along the diagonal axis. While the figure within the enclosed orchard just below the cart faces left, the wheeled cart faces right, with its back open to the vast haystack along the left. To the right of the blue cart lies another unmanned red cart, wheels turned along the diagonal axis. If the cart has just emptied its contents to the left, then we have a sense of its future movement with the seemingly miniaturized version above and to the left, moving from left to right. This up-and-back rhythm is evoked by the figure that stands in or beside a horse-pulled cart in the upper right, the cart facing left while the figure faces right. Van Gogh described how the painting was "worked on with patience," and the picture seems to project that quality of patient labor in its makeup (notice, for instance, the clear delineation of the individuated grape stakes, creating a slow rhythmic beat across the foreground space). Like in *The Harvesters*, the haystacks are piled against the left edge, now with two ladders resting on them. There is a small perceptual puzzle here, as the figure above the rightmost ladder against the stack seems at once to be atop the ladder and yet he is surely on the ground behind it. The effect is to further monumentalize the stack, suggesting a kind of vast scale. The effect of weight applied against the left edge is reinforced by the convergence near this area of the lower two fences, the haystack (with a smaller neighbor to its right), as well as the small orchard beyond the foreground fence just below the cart and stack. Early on in his career, Van Gogh had described his process as one of "working one's way through an invisible iron wall that seems to stand between what one *feels* and what one *can do*." The most pressing question was "How can one get through that wall?" His answer at the time was that "one must undermine the wall and grind through it slowly and patiently" (274/177). *The Harvest*, as powerful an image of slow and patient labor as I know, no longer imagines something like breaking through the wall to the other side. Rather, as the fences and haystacks seem to suggest, the wall is something like the condition *for* feeling, rather than an obstacle to be broken through.

Finally, consider another work from this moment, *La Roubine du Roi* or *Canal with Washerwomen*, a picture described to Theo on June 16. Most remarkable is the perspectival construction; it seems to combine a sense of looking down from a high wall above an embankment to looking out at the canal, which takes an almost ninety-degree angle in the far distance. This remarkable evening view again takes labor, and its peculiar temporality, as its subject. The washerwomen ranged along the right side of the canal lean over the edge of a series of docks, four of which are visible. Most striking is the dramatically accentuated curve of the space, a kind of vast green wave, which takes up nearly the whole of the work from the bottom edge to the distant upper-right corner below the gasworks and church. The water appears to move from top right, billowing and pressing outward at the center and just below it, then moving out along the bottom edge to the right, forming a great swell. Standing atop the embankment wall at lower left, we can follow the path along the left with figures walking across it. We look down precipitously: the space before us seems to expand outward to the left but also bulges upward before narrowing at the top right. The picture, in a sense, combines the "lived perspective" defined by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in

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the foreground and middle distance with an ocular or recessional perspective as it stretches away from the viewer in the upper register.[14] I would add that the sun setting behind the church and buildings at the top right offers comparison with the space of the artist standing this side of the picture space atop a high wall and looking down. Although the sun is largely hidden behind the architecture, the arc of light from it is picked up in highlights in the canal and in the sweep of curve (a grassy embankment?) around it; both sun and artist are hidden entities that nonetheless generate the life we see before us. Vincent warns Theo about seeing the picture as something produced "too fast." "Don't you believe a word of it," he insists. Rather than speed, he pondered how the strokes "come in a sequence and in relation to one another like words in a speech or a letter" (631). It is the effect of a sequentially achieved yet related whole that describes the effect of the group as a whole, a sense in which the slow but steady drift of marking and movement from right to left (or back again as in *The Harvest*) creates a weighted and continuous whole, a sense of continuity that is given form and definition by the literally weighted shape of the picture frame.

A drawing from later in the summer at Arles, *Garden of a Bathhouse* (fig. 12), exemplifies the concerns of the earlier group in a more thematic register. At the center of the drawing is a small island of sunflowers, whose branches and petals seem to strain at the limits of their enclosure. Situated around the edge of the flower bed are a series of diminutive potted plants, their forms visually dwarfed by the flowers towering above and behind them. The picture in a sense is about containment and overflow, of the tiny potted plants seen against the profusion of nature. At top right the needles of a pine tree touch the upper range of the sunflowers, suggesting a wider universe of abundance beyond the framing edge of the drawing. Most poignant is the bucket at bottom right, clearly delineated against the ground and against the flower bed with the potted plants. Van Gogh has put his signature on the bucket, which might signal more than an amusing gesture. To sign the bucket would put the artist in some proximity to the small pots to the left, a symbol of both containment and, more vividly, of the limits on one's capacity to contain nature's profusion. Then again, Van Gogh has not exactly signed the bucket here; it is of course the signature on the drawing itself, as though the drawing *is* analogous to the bucket, an act of enclosure and containment, even if a limited one, of the bounty of the natural world.

I turn now to a set of works made from May 1889 to May 1890, during his time at Saint-Rémy. In his last letter from Arles, written to Theo on May 3, just prior to checking into the the hospital of Saint-Paul de Mausole, Vincent reflects back on the lessons of Impressionism and of what came before it. Let's "think . . . of what we have loved in our time, Millet, Breton, Israëls, Whistler, Delacroix, Leys." He feels "fully assured . . . that I shan't see a future beyond that, nor moreover desire one." And even though "we'll always retain a certain passion for Impressionism," he sees himself "returning more and more to the ideas I already had before coming to Paris" (768).[15] It is a remarkable assertion, given the nature of the work he produced over the subsequent months. And yet, beyond the clear and decisive impact of Impressionist color and a pattern of overall mark-making, there is a sense of continuity between the early work in Nuenen and his last works at Saint-Rémy and Auvers.

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Fig. 12
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Garden of a Bathhouse*, Arles, August 1888. Pencil, reed pen and brush and ink on paper, 23⅞ × 19⅜ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d0175V1962 / F1457) .

In a letter to his mother, he notes how at Saint-Rémy he never saw those "mossy peasant roofs on the barns or cottages" he painted at Nuenen (788). And yet he soon found a substitute for the lost "human nests" in the walled enclosure beyond his room at the asylum. I cited earlier his May 22 letter to Theo, in which he first described his room at the asylum. "Through the iron-barred window I can make out a square of wheat in an enclosure, a perspective in the manner of Van Goyen, above which in the morning I see the sun rise in its glory" (776). This view, looking east, with a view to the rising sun, both from the window on the first floor and on the ground in the field, becomes one of his most frequent motifs during his time at Saint-Rémy. As Ronald Pickvance notes of the series, "He observed the field exhaustively throughout the seasons: the predominantly green wheat in early June [F611]; the ripe yellow wheat being reaped in late June [F618, F617]; the stacks of wheat at moonrise in early July [F735]; the ploughing in late August [F625]; the ploughed field in early October [F641]; the newly sown

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Fig. 13
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Wheatfield with a Reaper*, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, September 1889. Oil on canvas, 28¾ × 36¼ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0049V1962 / F618).

wheat in the rain in early November [F650]; and finally the same young wheat, more advanced, in [*Wheat Field with Rising Sun*, F737]."[16] Most of the canvases are size 30—92 by 65 centimeters—and the series comprises roughly a dozen paintings and numerous drawings.[17] The first work he made on the grounds of the hospital—*Wheatfield after a Storm*—was of the field he saw from his room from weeks prior. He offers a brief description of it to Theo: "In the foreground a field of wheat, ravaged and knocked to the ground after a storm. A boundary wall and beyond, gray foliage of a few olive trees, huts and the hills. Finally, at the top of the painting a large white and gray cloud swamped by the azure" (779). As this letter suggests, Van Gogh construed the scene as zones comprising four parts: wheat, wall, trees-hut-hills, and the sky, often with sun.

Throughout the sequence, he treats the featured wall in a dual fashion. On the one hand, its dividing function is minimized—the view nearly always stretches well beyond the wall into deep space—and when he includes the sun, there is a sense in which the scene is presented as part of a vast cosmic order, the most distant reaches often sharing the same colors as the most proximate. There is a strong sense of a view onto a universal continuum, one that stretches from artist to human and natural worlds as part of a grand order. On the other hand, the wall takes on thematic force as limitation, as a break in the continuum, ruthlessly dividing the world into insides and outsides, this side and that. In this sense, Van Gogh seems to have conceived of the wall as marking the limits of human understanding, or better, the fragility of the connection between oneself and the world. What is so striking about the series as a whole is how the weighting of significance of the various zones alters with each picture. Each characterization changes the balance between foreground space of the field (from broad and

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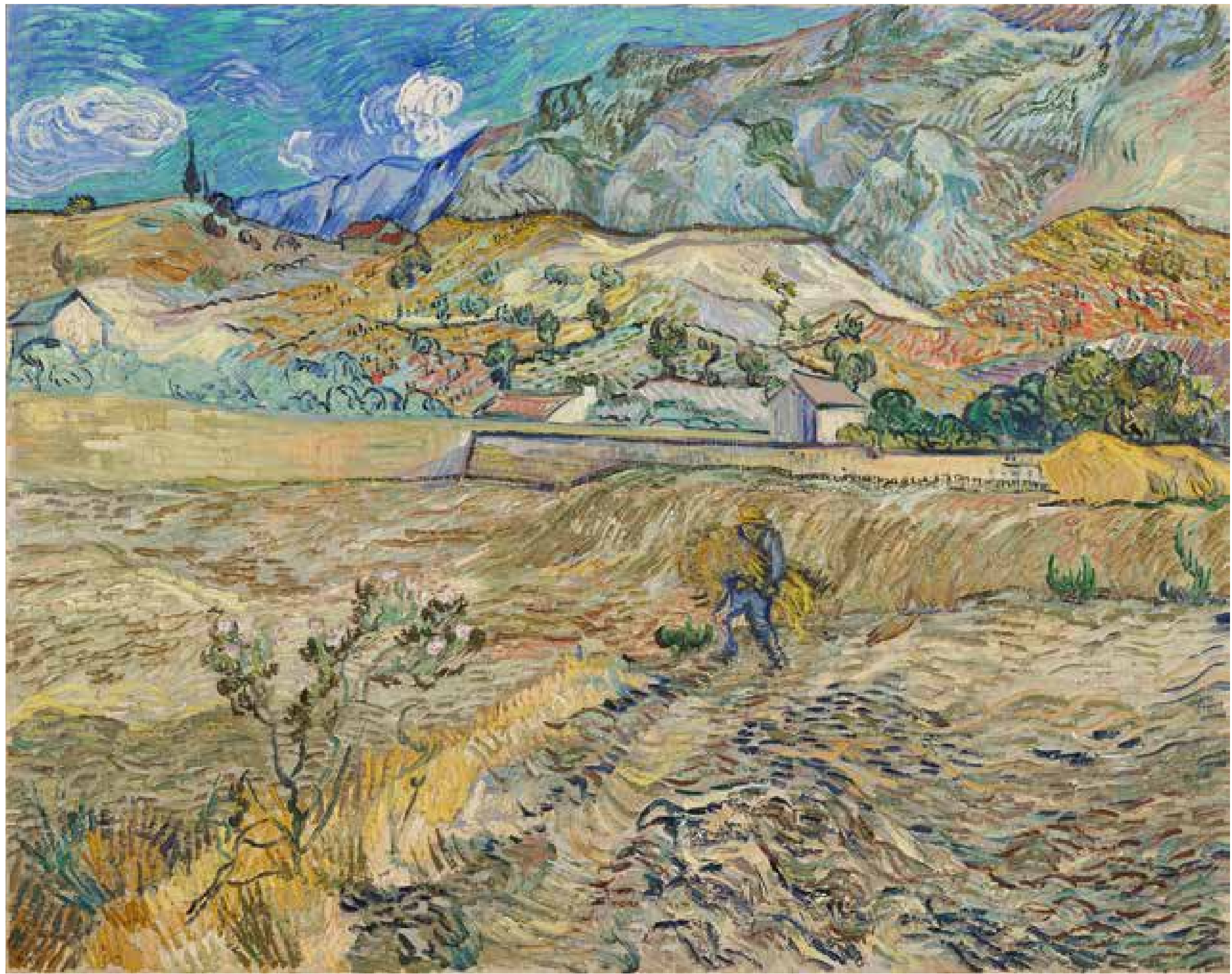

Fig. 14
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Landscape at Saint-Rémy (Enclosed Field with Peasant)*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 30 × 37½ in. Indianapolis Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. James W. Fesler in memory of Daniel W. and Elizabeth C. Marmon, 44.74 (F641).

undulating to dry and flat, to mist-covered and ephemeral); the character of the wall itself (from mobile and shifting to hard and implacable); the space beyond the wall with houses, olive trees, and hills (from chaotic jumble to carefully plotted and matter-of-fact); and the sky above and beyond (from storm-tossed and threatening to sun-drenched and cosmic). As Pickvance rightly observes, these changes are frequently keyed to the changing time of year and changing state of the harvest. Rather than engage the series as a whole, I want to consider two central instances, the famous *Wheatfield with a Reaper* (fig. 13) and *Landscape at Saint-Rémy (Enclosed Field with Peasant)* (fig. 14). Van Gogh conceived of the two works as complementing each other: "For the reaper appears done at random and this [*Enclosed Field*] with it will balance it" (810). He conceived the two as yellow against violet, "smiling" versus "harsh," symbolic vision against patient perceptual rendering.

Writing to Theo on September 5, he famously calls the *Reaper* "an image of death" but one that is "almost smiling." He immediately recalls the absent frame that generated the vision: "I myself find that funny, that I saw it like that through the iron bars of the cell" (800). Presumably he found it humorous that the bars were in some way responsible for a view of the world that turned death into a

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Fig. 15
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Wheat Field with Cypresses*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 20¼ × 25⁹⁄₁₆ in. Private collection (F743); *detail of top right*.

cheerful vision. Turning to the picture, one is immediately struck by the symbolic character of the whole as the intensity of the yellow unmistakably suggests a world aflame. The wall at center is minimized and disappears entirely along the upper reaches at the right. The lines of the wall just below the house at left curves, at once rendering its weight immaterial but also assimilating it to the undulating hills above and to the right. The whole of the field is saturated with anthropomorphic energy. It would not go too far to see in the wheat the outlines of (dead) bodies lying on a diagonal at bottom left, while the sweep of the reaper's scythe appears to have just cut down a "figure" kneeling to his right. The whole of the scene seems to press at the limits of perceptual viability, as though we are witnessing the natural world become symbolic before our eyes.

By contrast, Pickvance is right to see *Enclosed Field* as "accurate topographically," with great care taken to describe the hut and cottages but also in the delineation of vegetation and trees. He further notes the "variegated surfaces" creates with a "series of short, slender, brick-shaped brushstrokes," changing his mark to characterize different kinds of materials.[18] I want to focus on one moment in particular, the complicated space near the center of the work where the two walls meet just below a house on the other side. Consider, for instance, the indigo line that defines the wall coming in from the right. When that line

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reaches the neighboring wall near the house at center left, the vertical line where the walls meet can be read as defining the rear of the house on the far side of the wall. Of course that is not the case, but Van Gogh has nonetheless arranged the elements to suggest exactly this kind of perceptual puzzle. What would motivate such a visual confusion? In a work that is driven by a patient perceptual recording (not unlike *The Harvest*), we are nonetheless left with a kind of opacity at the center, or something about the perceptual encounter generates the opacity (it is here that he crosses paths with Paul Cézanne's landscapes). Van Gogh seems to be suggesting something about the figurative and literal nature of walls and enclosures, how they both block and obscure one's view of the world and yet, at seemingly the same moment, are the conditions for visibility

Fig. 16
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Butterflies and Poppies*, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, May–June 1889. Oil on canvas, 13⁹⁄₁₆ × 10¹⁄₁₆ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0188V1962 / F748).

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as there is (literally) nothing to see without occlusions. Further one might think of the other two houses at left and right, both of which are more clearly defined, as loosely framing the house in the middle. The one along the left not surprisingly lines up with the left edge of the canvas, its left side mirroring the framing edge.

A final group of works, a series of blooming and blossoming flowers made over the last year of Van Gogh's life will bring this discussion to a close. Before addressing this group I want to touch on an aspect of his work that bears an almost universal quality but is hard to adequately capture in reproduction: the way in which Van Gogh's mark-making takes the containing edge as a kind of absolute in his later work. That is to say, despite or rather in light of the sometimes overwhelming profusion of natural elements, a kind of outward expansion and overflowing of the contained image, the actual facture treats the contained surface as an irrevocable given. This commitment to retaining the integrity of the picture surface stands in the sharpest relief against Impressionist attitudes toward the nature of the picture edge. Consider, for instance, a detail from his *Wheat Field with Cypresses* from the summer of 1889 (fig. 15) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Notice how the blue and white lines to the left of the cypress sweep and swirl toward the top edge but notably stop short (on the right), or barely graze (on the left) the limits of the picture surface, as though acknowledging the ontological difference between picture and world beyond, a difference that is categorically (that is, casually) violated by Monet in his later work.

This kind of approach to the edge is of particular import for the last group of works I want to consider. *Butterflies and Poppies* of 1889 (fig. 16), *Almond Blossom* of 1890 (fig. 17), *Blossoming Chestnut Branches* of 1890 (fig. 18), and *Acacia in Flower* of 1890 (fig. 19) all take as their subject the charged moment of blooming or blossoming. What differentiates this group from the ones discussed to this point is the seeming reassurance, even delight, of the artist's treatment of the containing edge. So while the poppies seem to bend and wilt along the sides, as though in direct response to edges, they also appear on the verge of bursting into bloom. One might read the pressure exerted on them from the sides as a generative force in their opening and expansion. This dual effect is captured in the relation between the two butterflies as the one with closed wings generates a more emphatic sense of flight than the one with wings spread below it.

The famous *Almond Blossom*, a gift to Van Gogh's brother at the birth of his son, positively exalts in the reciprocal relation between all-over expansion and the containing edge. The major branch below bends toward the left (likely looking up at the tree), while blossoms touch the edge three times along the side (as in the Arles group, the left side is the site of continual address). Throughout the branches seem to reach out to touch but not violate the limits of the canvas. Along the top, like the much earlier still life with daisies, the forms seem to gather in a tangle but nonetheless remain within the space just below the upper limit.

Blossoming Chestnut Branches in the Bührle Collection in Zurich is a far more exacerbated image than the previous two, although it shares a similar theme. Here too one notes the leftward drift of the whole as the forms on a table almost lean against the left side of the picture. The ends of the leaves at bottom right and center point to, but do not touch, the lower edge. At top a dangling leaf

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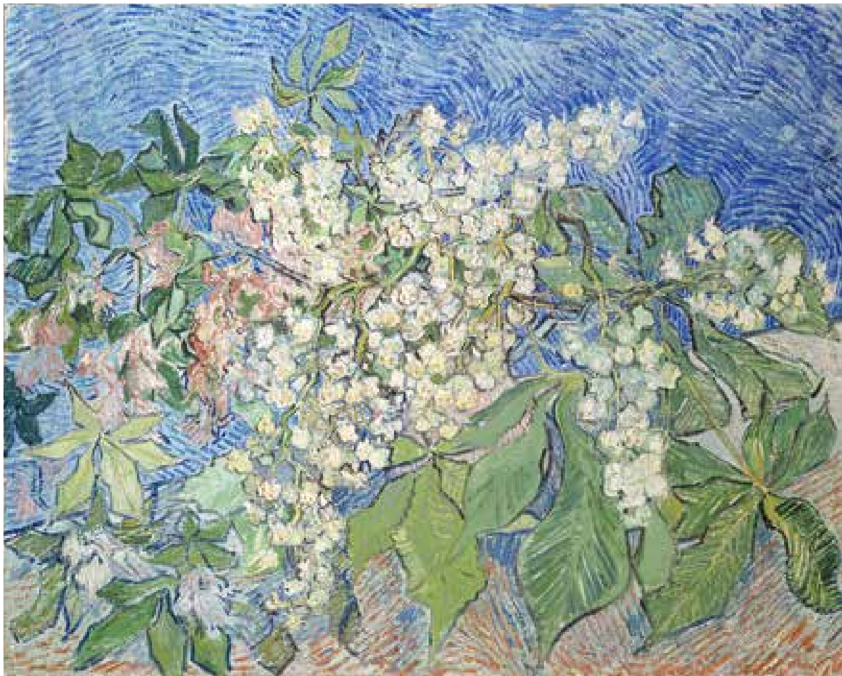

Fig. 17
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Almond Blossom*, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, February 1890. Oil on canvas, 28¹⁵⁄₁₆ × 36¼ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation (s0176V1962 / F671).

Fig. 18
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Blossoming Chestnut Branches*, 1890. Oil on canvas, 28¾ × 36¼ in. Foundation E.G. Bührle Collection, Zurich (F820).

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Fig. 19
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Acacia in Flower*, 1890. Oil on canvas, 37 × 12 13/16 in. National Museum, Stockholm (NM 5939 / F821) .

struggles as it were to reach the upper limit, while the leaves along the left tend to either touch or slightly breach the containing edge.

Finally, *Acacia in Flower* seems to reach the limits of recognizable imagery, and could be taken for an abstract composition. The startling array of mark-making here ranges from bare canvas to thin washes, to a thick impasto, which almost physically embodies the bursting energy of the flowering plant. Again the central branch tilts leftward from bottom right to top left, while the leaves spread out from it, largely overtaking the underlying form. What is most remarkable is the way the densely applied marks stop short of the canvas edge. The green horizontal patches at lower left step out toward the edge and pile up, four atop one another, in a manner very similar to the three marks along the left side of *Seascape at Saintes-Maries*. The central vertical line of flowering shapes just to the right of center seems to climb up the surface only to gather and then break at the upper limits. The effect is as though the vertical branch with flowers hangs from the upper edge. What the late group as a whole suggests is how the containing edge becomes something like the cue or spark for an explosive burst of life within the picture. There is no sense, in other words, of the containing frame as a site of frustration, but something like the source of release, of forces liberated by virtue of their limitations.

A last word about a related set of practices in the work of another Dutch artist, Piet Mondrian. Although efforts have been made to see the impact of Van Gogh on Mondrian's work, it seems the connection can be most closely drawn in terms of Mondrian's central and lifelong engagement with the nature of the picture's framing edge. And while a full discussion of this matter is well beyond the confines of this essay, I would mention that a work like *Blossoming Apple Tree*

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of 1912, part of a major series of trees made between 1908 and 1913, is directly indebted to issues explored above in terms of Van Gogh's engagement with the limits of the picture surface. Specifically, I would point to Van Gogh's blooming and blossoming series as models for the kinds of qualities Mondrian seeks in this key work from his so-called cubist period. The kind of debt being paid here obviously does not involve color—which is related to cubist models—but rather to the sequence of curving lines that turn, bend, and imaginatively grow toward the edges but do not violate them. It is by virtue of these framing edges that the spreading energy of the lines gather force as though to burst into flower before our eyes, although no flowers are in sight.

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NOTES

1 Looking back, we might be reminded of a picture of several years later, *La Berceuse* of 1889, where Madame Roulin holds a cradle rope to rock her daughter, a child who is situated *this* side of the picture surface. That kind of outward appeal to the beholder does not seem available to him until after his engagement with Parisian art.

2 For a useful discussion of the series, see Eliza Rathbone, William H. Robinson, Elizabeth Steele, and Marcia Steele, *Van Gogh Repetitions* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 43–50.

3 At this moment Van Gogh equated nature with calculation, as though artifice might grasp something like the underlying natural order. In a June 1884 letter to Theo, Vincent affirms Jules Dupré's use of color as "*carried through, intended, manly* . . . [and] *surprisingly* CALCULATED and yet simple and infinitely deep, like nature itself" (450/158). Anton Kerssemakers similarly relayed Van Gogh's advice to him, which frequently turned on mathematics, "Painting is like algebra, one thing relates to another or is equal to another" (Anton C. Kerssemakers, "Vincent in Nuenen, North Brabant [1884–85]," in *Van Gogh in Perspective*, ed. Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974], 25).

4 Van Gogh compared the making of *The Potato Eaters* (1885) to "holding the threads of this fabric in my hands the whole winter long," a process of finding the "definitive pattern—and if it's now a fabric that has a rough and coarse look, nevertheless the threads were chosen with care" (497/231). As Debora Silverman and others have noted, Van Gogh frequently borrowed the language of weaving to describe his work. See Silverman, *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Search for Sacred Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000), 139–143, 405–413.

5 Silverman, *Van Gogh and Gauguin*, 141.

6 The editors of *The Letters* observe that the work is unidentified but that "the only possibility might be *Weaver* (F1124/JH456)." In addition to the pen-and-ink drawing, I would point, as several others have, to *Weaver* (F27), where the central figure bears many of the features of the "hobgoblin" form mentioned to Van Rappard.

7 Silverman, *Van Gogh and Gauguin*, 141.

8 Ibid., 418.

9 Sigmund Freud reflected at length on the nature of ambivalent identification. Describing the emotional tonality around the death of a loved one, he observed how with "an intense emotional attachment to a particular person we find that behind the tender love there is a concealed hostility in the unconscious. This is the classical example, the prototype, of the ambivalence of human emotions. This ambivalence is present to a greater or less amount in the innate disposition of everyone." Freud, "Taboo and Emotional Ambivalence," in *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. James Strachey (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 70, 21–86.

10 Dating of this work has ranged between 1884 and 1886.

11 Quoted in Sjraar van Heugten, Joachim Pissarro, and Chris Stolwijk, *Van Gogh and the Colors of the Night* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 45.

12 Richard Kendall, *Van Gogh's Van Goghs* (New York: Abrams, 1998), 105.

13 Ibid.

14 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," in *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 14. Merleau-Ponty's wider sense of the meaning of style in Van Gogh, the formal and emotional pattern that drives his work, is closely related to my concerns here. His "'inner schema' which is more and more imperious with each new painting . . . is legible *for Van Gogh* neither in his first works, nor even in his 'inner life'. . . . It *is* that very life, to the extent that it emerges from its inherence, ceases to be in possession of itself and becomes a universal means of understanding and of making something understood, of seeing and presenting something to see—and is thus . . . diffused throughout all he sees" (Merleau-Ponty, "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," in *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964], 53). In 1928 Henri Focillon offered a related, if less philosophical, mode of describing this active pattern of seeing, reflecting how Van Gogh "never knew *la passivité*." For him, the world was filled with "expression, urgency, magnetism; all forms, all countenances admit of an astonishing *poétique*" (Focillon, *La peinture au XIXe siècle: Du réalisme à nos jours* [Paris:

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Flammarion, 1991]), 278; my translation. It is the burden of my discussion to describe the nature of this conflictual *poétique*, although I would add that both Merleau-Ponty and Focillon perhaps fail to sense the full weight of Van Gogh's perceptual commitments, that no matter how much he enters into and suffuses life into the things he sees, there is a sense in which all he sees is figured as outside the self.

15 According to Richard Kendall, with *Wheatfield with a Reaper* "we are unashamedly taken back to the beginning of his career in this combination of history and elemental landscape" (Kendall in *Van Gogh's Van Goghs*, 120).

16 Ronald Pickvance, *Van Gogh in Saint-Rémy and Auvers* (New York: Abrams, 1986), 139.

17 Significant instances include F611, F617, F618, F619, F625, F641, F650, F706, F718, F722, F724, F735, F737, and drawings F1546, F1552, 1550, 1551r, and 1728sd.

18 Pickvance, *Van Gogh in Saint-Rémy and Auvers*, 138. I owe thanks to Charles Palermo for sharing his ever-sharp observations about *Enclosed Field*.

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Marnin Young

VAN GOGH'S REALISM

When people conceive of realism in the sense of *literal* truth—namely *precise* drawing and *local* colour. There's something other than that.
—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, April 21, 1885

VINCENT VAN GOGH'S ART virtually defines the emergence of the avant-garde in the nineteenth century. In his own lifetime, famously, critics and collectors, to say nothing of the public, largely overlooked his work. Today, his art towers over the cultural landscape. To see the crowds milling around *Starry Night* in New York or Paris is to see an artist far ahead of his time. Van Gogh's own taste in art, however, can seem oddly discordant with his avant-garde ambitions and accomplishments. Jules Breton and Jules Dupré, to name but two of his favorite painters, are more consistent with what we would now call academic art. Relying on conventional modes of representation, their art was largely oriented toward a middle-class audience. How to make sense, then, of this disjunction between avant-garde practice and seemingly backward-looking taste?

The easiest explanation is chronological. While isolated in a Dutch and Belgian context, Van Gogh's access to the new art emerging in Paris was limited. Barbizon painters and The Hague School were among his primary touchstones. After arriving in the French capital in early 1886, his horizons broadened. His paintings quickly adopted a more colorful palette associated with Impressionism and a controlled, pointillist brushstroke derived from the Neo-Impressionists. "He is trying hard to put more sunlight in them," wrote his brother Theo in May 1886.[1] The heightened color and expressive brushwork of 1888 followed logically. But this account, however accurate its broad-brush rendering, fails to recognize

several important facts. First, it does not acknowledge that Van Gogh knew quite a bit about color theory and French art in general prior to 1886.[2] Second, it does not recognize that the painter's interest in Naturalism, both artistic and literary, persisted throughout his life.[3] Most importantly, and perhaps least recognized in the art historical literature, it does not allow for the fact that many of the seemingly "academic" artists whom Van Gogh admired were considered in their own time to provide a serious, often complementary, alternative to Impressionism. Though largely forgotten in the twentieth century, painters like Jules-Bastien Lepage (pl. 1), Alfred-Philippe Roll, and Jean-François Raffaëlli (pls. 54–58) were greatly admired by a range of contemporary critics. In many respects, their art offered not so much a Naturalist variant of academic art as a complex iteration of a more radical mid-century Realism.

This later phase of Realism has come to occupy an increasingly central place in historical accounts of nineteenth-century art. Kirk Varnedoe was the first to identify it as a "special kind of realism that appeared throughout Europe in the 1870s and early 1880s."[4] He argued that this "unstable strain of later Realism" bypassed Impressionism and served as a bridge to certain Symbolist and Post-Impressionist concerns.[5] Art historians like Gabriel Weisberg have likewise recovered a range of painters in the last quarter of the nineteenth century working within the "Realist tradition."[6] Institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Musée d'Orsay, and the Van Gogh Museum have made these artists much better known to a wider public, but the differences between Realism, Impressionism, and Naturalism in the 1870s and 1880s have often remained unclear.[7]

In my 2015 book, *Realism in the Age of Impressionism: Painting and the Politics of Time*, I argue that the defining characteristic of later Realism is its emphasis on a distinctive pictorial temporality.[8] Impressionism proposes a tripartite harmony between a fugitive subject matter, the speed of producing painting, and the instantaneity of perception. While Naturalism can be understood to depict similarly transient modern motifs such as strolling in the city or suburban picnics, it retains a highly detailed, academically oriented rendering that allows for extended viewing. By contrast, Realism in both its mid-century and later manifestations combines a worked-over technique with durational, extended, or repetitive motifs—peasant labor, idleness, reading, listening—that prompt a slow time of beholding. Although Realism in this definition arguably collapsed and disappeared by the mid-1880s, its marked political charge and its temporal distinction from Impressionism allowed it to serve as a frame of reference for the next generation of artistic innovation. The work of Georges Seurat, James Ensor, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, for example, can be understood as assimilating and transforming aspects of later Realism.

How, then, does Van Gogh relate to the later Realist generation? Born in 1853, he was in fact closer in age to Raffaëlli than to his more direct peers, Seurat or Toulouse-Lautrec. Before 1886, his practical and theoretical concerns in painting do indeed align very closely with conceptions of mid-century Realism. Evert van Uitert has said outright that he "can safely be called a realist or a naturalist."[9] Like many later Realists, Van Gogh looked back admiringly to the peasant painting of Jean-François Millet. He took this work as a model for his own

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practice, and an interest in Millet and the representation of rural labor never really disappeared from his art. The older painter was arguably the dominant source for Van Gogh's self-understanding as an artist—"counsellor and guide in *everything*," as he once put it (493). Ultimately, however, he came to recognize the limits of a Millet-style Realism. Like Seurat and others, he worked through this older style to an art that explicitly rejected most of its tenets, even as he continued to admire its accomplishments.[10]

Van Gogh's interest in Realism informs his art throughout his career. It is especially prominent in the early 1880s, but key aspects ground his later work as well. In order to better grasp the role Realism played in his overall career, to explain how a backward-looking turn to Millet provided the possibility of an artistic advance, it would be helpful to dig a bit deeper into the status of Realism in the 1870s and 1880s. In turn, Van Gogh's relation to later Realists of the time should become clearer. This essay will thus proceed in four steps. First, it will examine the significance of Millet for Van Gogh. Then, it will look at two artists whom Van Gogh and others considered to be the direct heirs of Millet. Next, it will introduce the work of Raffaëlli, an artist with strong artistic ties to the same artistic concerns, but who developed a distinctively urban iconography. Finally, it will return to Van Gogh's engagement with Millet in the late 1880s and early 1890.

Millet as Model

Millet shines as the lodestar in Van Gogh's artistic career. The earliest record of his reverence for the artist can be found in letters written from London to his brother Theo in late 1873 and early 1874. At the time Van Gogh consistently listed Millet, along with Breton and others, among the artists he most admired. After reading Alfred Sensier's 1881 biography of the artist, Van Gogh increasingly elaborated a theoretical defense of Millet as a model for his own art.[11] In dozens and dozens of letters, he repeatedly refers to, praises, and interprets the work of "père Millet" (493). Even toward the end of his life, Van Gogh was still obsessed with Millet in a way that sets him apart from other sources and models. Famously, he painted some twenty copies of Millet's pictures while in Saint-Rémy, starting in September 1889.[12] And then, just weeks before his death, he offered Millet as the gold standard against which contemporary art had to be measured: "probably soon," he wrote to Theo on June 17, 1890, "one will see Impressionists working who will hold their own with Millet" (889). Why, then, did Millet occupy this elevated place in Van Gogh's pantheon?

Millet was widely admired, but also much debated, during Van Gogh's lifetime.[13] Along with Gustave Courbet, and to a lesser extent Breton, he occupied a central place in the political and artistic debates around Realism in the two or three decades following the Revolution of 1848. Some saw in his art a radical representation of the rural poor. The Belgian critic Jean Rousseau claimed to spot, lurking in the background of *The Gleaners* of 1857, "the pikes of the popular uprisings and the scaffolds of '93"—here referring to the guillotine and the Terror during the French Revolution (fig. 1).[14] At the same time, Millet could stand as a more conservative counterpoint to Courbet's continual political

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Fig. 1
Jean-François Millet (French, 1814–1875), *The Gleaners*, 1857. Oil on canvas, 32⅞ × 43 5⁄16 in. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (RF592).

provocations. Jules-Antoine Castagnary put it pointedly in relation to the same *Gleaners*: "This canvas, which recalls dreadful poverty, is not, like some paintings by Courbet, a political lecture or a social cause: it is a very beautiful and very simple work of art, frank in its declamation."[15] Perhaps more significant, however, than these political interpretations, was the substance of the artistic debates Millet's painting prompted.

Many of the critics who admired Millet implicitly defended his place within what Michael Fried has called the "antitheatrical" tradition.[16] Fried argues that his art "was controversial throughout the 1860s precisely because of the single-mindedness with which it sought to evoke the total absorption of peasant men and women in their repetitive, automatistic, in that sense machinelike labors."[17] As such, Millet matched the long-standing attempt dating back at least to the 1750s to produce antitheatrical paintings in which "the representation of absorption carried with it the implication that the figures in question were unaware of the presence before the canvas of the beholder."[18] Artists achieved this effect mostly by depicting figures engaged in activities involving mental concentration: playing cards, reading books, sewing, listening to music, or praying, for example. They also relied on representations of physical labor either in the fields or in the factories: harvesting, gleaning, stone breaking, weaving, mining, or iron rolling. Finally, a range of pictures showed figures at rest or sleeping. An absorptive thematic continues to appear in a wide swath of European art from the 1860s on, but it is especially distinctive in France. Pictures exemplifying the use of absorptive devices would include François Bonvin's *Old Man Sitting and Smoking*; Edgar Degas's *The Breakfast*; Ernest Ange Duez's *Woman in Grey on Board Ship, Gazing at Sea*; Pierre-Édouard Frère's *A Pot of Porridge*; Armand Guillaumin's *Woman Reading*; Anton Mauve's *The Potato Diggers*; Raffaëlli's

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Nous vous donnons vingt-cinq francs pour commencer; and Théodule Augustin Ribot's *The Reader* (pls. 5, 18, 22, 26, 28, 38, 57, 60).

Viewers recognized the antitheatricality of Millet's paintings. Maxime Du Camp for one stated that "his personages never pose"—this is from a review of the Salon of 1861—"[they] are entirely absorbed [*absorbés*] in the activity in which they are engaged."[19] Millet himself expressed to Sensier his distaste for the "effects of theatre" and "posing" in the work of other artists.[20] Ernest Chesneau summarized the general view in an 1875 essay in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*: "In Millet nothing is posed."[21] Millet apparently observed his subjects so attentively that he had no need to record what he saw in person; he could simply remember it. The outcome was the depiction of figures in action or at rest that do not look as if they had even been seen. Chesneau offered Millet's *Vineyard Laborer Resting* (fig. 2) as a key example: "If he knows he's observed, do you think he will retain this sagging of the whole body, this characteristic curve of his inner ankles, this gaping mouth, this dull and vacant look? Not at all."[22] The pastel appeared prominently in a large exhibition of the Gavet collection of works on paper by Millet in the spring of 1875.[23] After visiting this show in Paris, Van Gogh proclaimed the experience to be like walking on "holy ground" (36). He almost certainly read Chesneau's article at the time, and his admiration for Millet likewise relates to the artist's ability to convey the uncontrived, or what he would call the "true," nature of the peasant.

Despite the widespread admiration for Millet's seemingly authentic depictions of rural life, many other artists and critics saw quite the opposite. As Fried puts it, they "were repelled by the obviousness of Millet's ostensibly antitheatrical aims,

Fig. 2
Jean-François Millet (French, 1814–1875), *Vineyard Laborer Resting*, ca. 1869–70. Pastel and black conté crayon on paper, 27¾ × 33 in. The Mesdag Collection, The Hague (hwm0268).

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which for them had the contrary effect of too blatantly seeking to persuade the beholder that the figures in the painting were oblivious to his presence. So that Millet's figures seemed to them, not in fact absorbed in their labors and hence unaware of being beheld, but merely pretending to be both—which is to say they found his painting egregiously, unbearably, theatrical."[24] Paul de Saint-Victor, for example, found the *Gleaners* full of "pretention" as if they were merely "striding across the boards of a theater."[25] Critics were thus divided about Millet, and the crux of their disagreement was the relative success or failure of his depiction of the absorption of peasant labor.

The ambiguity or doubleness in Millet's painting prompted certain artists beginning in the early 1860s to adopt what Fried has called a "double structure, at once ostensibly denying and implicitly acknowledging the beholder's presence."[26] This arose from the positive sense that "an 'excess' of absorption (as in Millet) gave rise to effects of intensity, instantaneousness, facingness, and strikingness."[27] This double structure is most prominent in the early work of James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Henri-Fantin Latour, and the Franco-British painter Alphonse Legros, whom Van Gogh greatly admired. It carries forward in works like James Tissot's *Foreign Visitors at the Louvre* of 1883–85 (pl. 66). Here the artist has depicted several men absorbed in viewing works of art, while a young woman gazes across the picture plane as if addressing the beholder directly. The difference from Breton's *The Pardon* of 1872 (pl. 9), a profile view of a woman in prayer, is striking. The ruling presumption of this earlier painting is that the woman is so absorbed in her prayers and in the concentrated sensation of the turning of her prayer beads that she could not be aware of someone beholding her.

At bare minimum, Van Gogh had a strong intuition of these issues in his own aesthetic orientation. In November 1885, for example, he laid out an intriguing parallel argument. It is worth quoting in full to establish the Dutch painter's awareness of the problem of theatricality and his own sympathies for an antitheatrical art. This is from a letter to Theo, in which Vincent discusses an impending trip to Antwerp:

> As for Rubens, I'm very much looking forward to him, but—don't you often find that in terms of conception, in terms of the sentiment in his religious subjects, Rubens is theatrical [*theatraal*], even badly theatrical [*schlect theatraal*]? Look here—take Rembrandt—Michelangelo—take Michelangelo's Pensieroso. Meant to be a thinker, isn't he? But—his feet are small and swift, but—his hand has something of the lightning speed of a lion's paw, and—that thinker is at the same time a man of action, one sees that his thinking is concentration, but—in order to leap up and to act in one way or another. Rembrandt does it *differently*, his Christ in the Pilgrims at Emmaus is above all a—soul in a body that is anyway not *the same* as a torso by Michelangelo, but yet—the gesture of persuasion, there's something *powerful* in it that—well, just put a Rubens next to it, one of the many figures of meditative people—and they become folk who've retired into a corner for the purposes of aiding their digestion (543).

As Van Gogh describes it, Peter Paul Rubens unsuccessfully seeks to depict his figures in such a way as to pass off ordinary people sitting in front of the painter

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as personages of religious significance. Paintings representing the "Magdalen or Mater Dolorosas," he wrote, "always just remind me of the tears of a pretty tart who's caught the clap, say, or some such petty vexation of human life" (552). Van Gogh's familiarity with Michelangelo's more compelling depiction of a figure absorbed in contemplation and imminent action probably came from seeing a print in an issue of the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in January 1876, only several months after the publication of Chesneau's antitheatrical account of Millet in the same journal.[28] The possibility seems great that the painter's understanding of the problem of theatricality in Rubens originated in the same discursive formation that arose around Millet.

Van Gogh's admiration for the Dutch artist Jozef Israëls would seem to confirm such aesthetic predispositions. A leading member of The Hague School, Israëls briefly trained in Paris, and he was, like Millet, noted for his sympathetic representations of the poor (pl. 30).[29] Van Gogh singled out his contribution to the Salon of 1882 for especially high praise. The canvas in Philadelphia now known as *Old Friends (Silent Conversation)* was shown in Paris as *Dialogue silencieux* (fig. 3). In a letter to Theo in late winter 1882, Van Gogh explicitly compares it with Millet, and he provides an astonishingly sympathetic description of the picture:

> an old man sits in a hut by the fireplace in which a small piece of peat barely glows in the twilight. For it's a dark hut the old man sits in, an old hut with a small window with a little white curtain. His dog, who's grown old with him, sits beside him—those two old creatures look at each other, they look each other in the eye, the dog and the old man. And meanwhile the man takes his tobacco box out of his trousers pocket and he fills his pipe like that in the twilight. Nothing else—the twilight, the quiet, the loneliness of those two old creatures, man and dog, the familiarity of those two, that old man thinking—what's he thinking about?—I don't know—I can't say—but it must be a deep, a long thought [*lange gedachte*], something, though I don't know what, surfacing from long ago, perhaps that's what gives that expression to his face—a melancholy, satisfied, submissive expression, something that recalls that famous verse by Longfellow that always ends, But the thoughts of youth are long long thoughts (211).

There are a number of fascinating things to note in this passage. Perhaps most obviously, Van Gogh zeroes in on the old man's compelling absorption in three layered activities: his interaction with his dog, his preparation of his pipe, and his "deep" thought, almost a reverie. Just as significant in Van Gogh's reading of the picture is the related temporal structure. The time of day is, as he twice suggests, twilight. The old man's thoughts, as he repeats in both Dutch and English, are "long." The slow unfolding of the early evening thus harmonizes with the man's activities, which will remain unchanged for many long minutes.

Such "protracted temporal effects" in Realist painting are typical.[30] As Fried has argued, "Pictorial realism in the West has often involved a tacit or implicit illusion of the passage of time, of sheer duration."[31] This is precisely the quality that later Realist painters took as a positive virtue during a period when Impressionism came, by contrast, to offer a pictorial instantaneity more closely

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Fig. 3
Jozef Israëls (Dutch, 1824–1911), *Old Friends (Silent Conversation)*, before 1882. Oil on canvas, 52⅛ × 69¹⁄₁₆ in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The William L. Elkins Collection, 1924 (E1924-3-10).

cognate with the perceived acceleration of modernity. Duration and instantaneousness came to characterize the range of pictorial temporalities in the years around 1880, and the political and social valences of such artistic representations of time were exceedingly complex. Later Realist painters like Bastien-Lepage and Raffaëlli used pictorial duration to critique the new temporal disciplining coming to dominate in rural and urban spheres of life. In doing so they evoked a slower, premodern time.

No painting better exemplifies Realism's nostalgic resistance to modern temporality than Millet's *Angelus* (fig. 4). At a certain point the painting became intertwined with a reactionary view of rural France—"idiotic sentimentalism," according to Camille Pissarro[32]—but accounts of the picture in the years immediately following Millet's death in 1875 were less overwrought.[33] Here, for example, is the description of the scene as it appears in Sensier's biography, a text Van Gogh read as closely as the Bible: "As the sun sets, two peasants, a man and a woman, hear the pealing of the Angelus. They rise, stop their work, and standing with heads uncovered, eyes cast down, they recite the traditional words: *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariæ* [The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary]. The man, a true peasant of the plains, his head covered by a mass of short straight hair like a felt hat, prays in silence; the bowed woman is lost in meditation."[34] Sensier emphasizes especially the religious nature of the scene, the peasants absorbed in the Angelus prayer. He also relates this action to the ringing of the bell, likewise called the Angelus. In this reading, presumably based on close dialogue with Millet himself, the title of the painting refers both to the slow unfolding of the recitation and the striking ringing of the bells.

A notable pull in *The Angelus* thus emerges between a durational and an instantaneous temporality. The flock of flying birds in the sky only emphasizes

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this tension. Seen as a Realist depiction of intense absorption, the painting could stand as an emblem of a durational unfolding of natural or religious time outside or even in opposition to modernization. But for those critics who read Millet as excessively absorptive, that is to say theatrical, the instantaneousness of the bells and the birds might take priority. One former owner of the work seemed to confirm this account. In 1880, Jules van Praet explained why he had not kept the painting: "It's clearly a masterpiece, but in front of these two peasants whose prayers interrupt an instant of work, everyone believes they hear the bell of the neighboring church, and this endless ringing had ended up bothering me."[35]

Fig. 4
Jean-François Millet (French, 1814–1875), *The Angelus*, 1857–59. Oil on canvas, 21⅝ × 25⅝ in. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (RF1877).

The doubleness in the pictorial time of the painting stood in profound relation to the cultural restructuring of time in the nineteenth century. In 1800, the tolling of church bells in France marked the call to prayer at dawn, midday, and twilight, but by 1900 they universally rang at specific hours of the day: 6:00 a.m., noon, and 6:00 p.m.[36] This new "clock time" gradually pervaded every aspect of modern life, from the working day to travel by train. Although it is now ubiquitous, in the mid-nineteenth century it was widely contested. In both practical

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terms and in cultural representations, the notion that time would be universally synchronized was by no means a foregone conclusion. Although clock time had largely triumphed by the 1870s, *The Angelus* could still be understood as a depiction of an earlier, religious experience of time, measured by the sun and the bells, rather than the clock. This is the basis of Millet's nostalgic and resistant politics of time.

A range of paintings by Millet exhibit similar temporal qualities. For instance, the critic Rousseau noted, admiringly, the slow time of the *Gleaners*: "They walk with a visible slowness; they do their work with tranquility and solemnity."[37] *The Sower* is another example (pl. 41). Théophile Gautier pointed to a kind of temporal tension in the painting. "The sower walks with rhythmic step, flinging grain in the furrows, and he is followed by a flight of pecking birds"—this is from a review of the Salon of 1850–51—"life spreads out from his large hand, and, with a superb gesture, he, who has nothing, leaves behind the bread of the future upon the ground. . . . There is something magnificent and stylish in this figure, with its violent gesture, its proudly dilapidated demeanor, which seems to be painted with the earth he sows."[38] Between the repetitiveness of the "rhythmic step"—"synchronized like the rhythm of a mysterious song"[39] as Sensier would have it—and the strikingness of the "violent gesture" is a move from the durational and seasonal to the instantaneous and even "revolutionary." The sower "curses the circumstances of the rich, as he angrily throws his seeds at the sky."[40]

Van Gogh knew *The Angelus* and the *Sower* quite well. In January 1874, he singled out the former painting for special praise, saying, "That's rich, that's poetry" (17). While in Paris in 1876, he purchased a print after *The Angelus* from the Durand-Ruel gallery. Around this time he also obtained a print reproduction of the *Sower*, and he owned prints from several series after Millet, including the *Four Times of the Day*. Beginning in late 1880, he produced a number of drawings based on these prints. The *Sower* in particular became a touchstone for years and years, a source for some thirty or more drawings and paintings throughout the decade. The early copies in particular indicate the artist's selection of a certain set of iconic pictures that reinforced a dawning and still inchoate understanding of the stakes of Realist painting at this late date.

In telling ways, Van Gogh on occasion modified or even "misread" the earlier Realist representation of time.[41] In a drawing done in April 1881, for example, he transformed the pecking birds in the background of Millet's painting into the sower's tossed grains, frozen instantaneously against the sky (fig. 5). Whether this was an initiate's error or a strong critical engagement is hard to say. As Joan Greer has argued, Van Gogh's interest in a seasonal temporality probably grew from his deeply engrained religious formation, but it also responded to the broader transformation of the cultural use and understanding of time, a phenomenon that was becoming more and more notable around 1880.[42] On the whole, it seems fair to say that Van Gogh's chosen sources coincide clearly with those works that best exemplify the larger critical and artistic debates about Millet's mobilization of absorptive devices and its accompanying temporality.

Van Gogh's encounter with Sensier's biography of Millet must have come like a shock of recognition. From March 1882 to January 1890, he continually refers to

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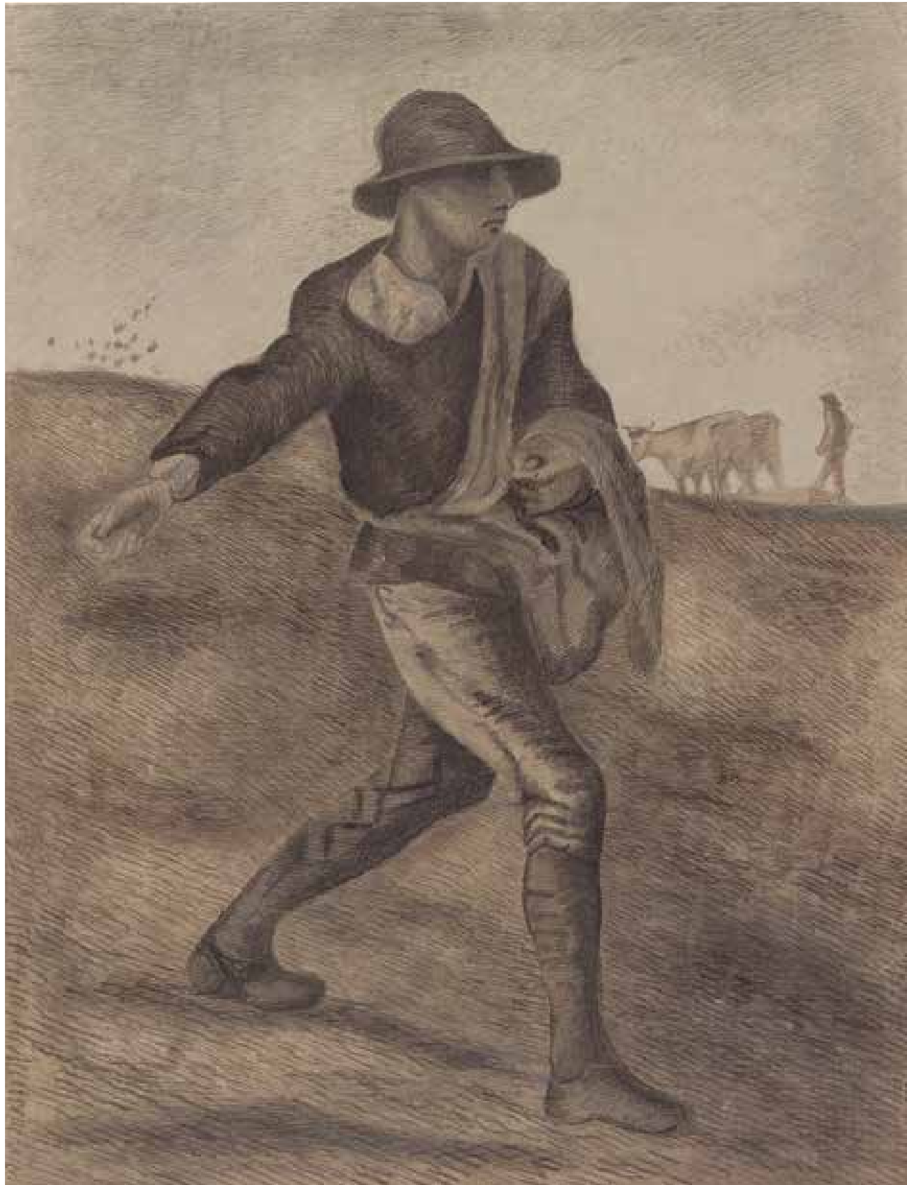

Fig. 5
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Sower* (after Millet), Etten, April 1881. Pencil, pen and brush and ink, watercolor, on paper, 17¾ × 14⁷⁄₁₆ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d443V1962 / F830).

the text as a kind of *vade mecum* for the life of an artist. One of the central lessons he took from the book is that Millet's ability to achieve compelling depictions of peasants arose directly from the fact that he lived the life of a peasant.[43] Van Gogh twice quotes the passage from Gautier, reprinted in Sensier, that asserts that in Millet "his peasants seem to be painted with the soil they sow" (495, 499). His enthusiastic embrace of this line strongly suggests that he was also deeply aware of Gautier's description of the temporal pull between the "rhythmic" and the "violent" in Millet's painting.

From an engagement with Millet's complex pictorial strategies and Sensier's presentation of him as model of the artist, Van Gogh was able to establish a certain frame for his own emergent practice. He was also able to locate other

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models for a new, modern "peasant painting" (493), bringing his own practice in line with later Realists who had come to similar conclusions independently.

Millet II

In a letter to Anthon van Rappard in August 1885, Van Gogh proclaimed his continual veneration of an artist he called "Millet II." "I idolize his work," he declared, "as I do that of Millet himself. I think his genius is on a par with that of Millet I" (528). That artist was Léon Lhermitte. Ten years older than Van Gogh, the painter had come to prominence in the late 1870s and early 1880s for his depictions of harvest scenes and rural life (pl. 33). The Dutch artist first encountered Lhermitte's work in a series of prints that appeared regularly in French publications of the 1880s. Even before he saw these reproductions, he repeatedly wrote to Rappard in early 1883 declaring how impressed he was by reviews that compared Lhermitte favorably to Millet and Breton.[44]

The first Lhermitte work Van Gogh saw, if only in reproduction, was *The Grandmother* now in Ghent (fig. 6). The canvas was shown to acclaim and awarded a medal at the Paris Salon of 1880.[45] It is a good example of Lhermitte's emerging interest in the kind of double structure so common in a range of later Realist painting—Van Gogh astutely compares it to Legros—and was almost certainly a model for Lefebvre's later work with a similar iconography. An old woman sits on a bench in church, a Bible or book of prayer open on her lap, the fingers of her right hand tracing the lines on the page. She is not reading. Instead, her eyes stare blankly ahead, toward but not across the picture plane, implying complete self-absorption or a limited visual acuity if not actual blindness. Depicted in profile, at her feet kneels a child, her granddaughter presumably, putting her hands together in prayer. The two figures share an absorption in religious activity, but they do so in decidedly different ways with different relations to the possibility of being beheld.

Lhermitte's picture stayed in Van Gogh's mind for days after he first saw it, and it prompted him to reflect on what made the work so successful. In a letter to Theo in early spring 1883, he outlined his theory: "Lhermitte's secret, it seems to me, is none other than that he knows the figure in general—namely the sturdy, severe workman's figure—through and through, and takes his subjects from the heart of the people" (333). This is consistent with Sensier's proposal that Millet successfully depicted peasants by living as one and working from memory. Such forms of observation operated effectively with the absorptive thematics of such works as *Harvesters Resting* (pl. 33). Theo apparently had his doubts about Lhermitte, however, and the two exchanged a series of testy letters about the merits of the artist. It is possible that Theo, whose knowledge of modern art was more expansive, better understood the conventionality of Lhermitte's devices. Where Vincent remained somewhat mystical about the power of Millet and Lhermitte to convey the authenticity of peasant life, Theo surely knew that paintings of peasants had become commonplace at the Paris Salon, and the lack of authenticity was precisely what many critics and artists regularly lamented.

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Fig. 6
Léon Lhermitte (French, 1844–1925), *The Grandmother*, 1880. Oil on canvas, 62 × 51¾ in. Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent (1880-E).

No painter of peasants divided the critics more consistently in this regard than Bastien-Lepage. His breakthrough work, *Haymaking (Les Foins)*, appeared at the Salon of 1878 (fig. 7). The picture depicts two paid laborers taking a midday break from the June harvest of hay in the painter's home region of the Meuse. It spurred an emerging revival of peasant painting in the French Third Republic, among which Lhermitte, Julien Dupré, and others became central. The followers of Bastien-Lepage were legion. By 1883, a critic could declare that "everyone today paints so much like Mr Bastien-Lepage that Mr Bastien-Lepage appears to paint like everyone else."[46] His critics, too, were legion. To take but one prominent example, Joris-Karl Huysmans declared him a fraud, "a sly trickster who fakes naturalism in order to please."[47] Like Millet before him—he was "haunted" by the older Realist[48]—the division surrounding *Les Foins* ultimately turned on the question of absorption. Many critics understood the peasant woman

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Fig. 7
Jules Bastien-Lepage (French, 1848–1884), *Haymaking*, 1877. Oil on canvas, 73¾ × 63 in. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (RF 2748).

Fig. 8
Jules Bastien-Lepage (French, 1848–1884), *October*, 1878. Oil on canvas, 71⅛ × 73¼ in. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Felton Bequest, 1928 (3678-3).

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in the middle of the canvas to be completely engrossed in her own sensations, "absorbed by some vague thought," as Paul Mantz phrased it.[49] For those less admiring of the painting, she was entirely staged; the female figure appears as if she were merely acting, facing toward the picture plane, if slightly turned away. Paul de Saint-Victor, the same critic who decried the "pretention" and "theater" of Millet's *Gleaners*, said she showed "pretention" in the pose and "affectation" on the face.[50] The next year he returned to this line of attack, declaring that Bastien-Lepage's latest Salon painting, *October*, a depiction of the potato harvest, showed "Parisian workers playing at rustic naturalism" (fig. 8).[51]

Van Gogh mentions Bastien-Lepage's *October* only in passing, but his comments resonate with his intuitive understanding of the problem of theatricality in Realist painting. In a letter to Theo in April 1885, he wrote that Millet was able to paint peasants because he lived among them. By contrast, "when *city-dwellers* paint peasants, their figures, *splendidly* painted though they may be, nonetheless can't help reminding one of the Parisian suburbs. I've also had that impression sometimes (although, to my mind, the woman digging potatoes by B. Lepage is certainly an exception), but isn't it precisely because the painters are so often not deeply enough involved *personally* in peasant life?" (493). Although Van Gogh clearly means to say that certain artists cannot achieve a compelling depiction of peasants for lack of intimate knowledge of what it is like to live as a peasant—Bastien-Lepage grew up in the small village of Damvillers and thus had first-hand knowledge of agricultural production—his ability to assess this must have relied on pictorial cues rather than on biographical data. He could find a truth in Bastien-Lepage for the same reason Mantz or other viewers did: the painter had made use of a very modern structure of address and denial that nonetheless compelled them to see the peasant subjects as uncontrived, unposed, natural, and "true."

Lhermitte's *Paying the Harvesters* of 1882 carries forward these ambitious pictorial devices that Bastien-Lepage had perfected in the years before (fig. 9). In the back right of the picture, a man dispenses a wage to one of his hired hands. Next to him, a harvester awaits his pay, while another counts his coins in the middle of the composition. A woman feeds her baby. The older man at left nonetheless dominates the painting. He sits after a day of labor, facing toward but not directly at the picture plane. Criticism of the painting concentrated on the posed quality of this man, as it were immobilized in front of a camera. Admiration for the painting likewise turned on a view of the old man as exhausted and thus unaware of his being beheld: "he rests as he worked," wrote Louis de Fourcaud, "without thinking of anything complicated."[52] His absorption was thus, like the peasant woman in *Les Foins*, the pivot of praise and criticism.

Paying the Harvesters hung side by side with *Les Foins* at the Musée du Luxembourg as early as 1886.[53] Together the pictures came to emblematize the image of the peasant in the Third Republic, and Van Gogh would certainly have noted their similarities. One of their key differences is the way they approach the changing structure of rural labor, wages, and time in France. *Les Foins* is a painting that grapples profoundly with the shifting nature of agricultural labor.[54] The two resting peasants in the picture are day laborers, a category of work that was becoming more and more like industrial or urban work: paid by the hour,

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Fig. 9
Léon Lhermitte (French, 1844–1925), *Paying the Harvesters*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 84⅝ in. × 8 ft. 11 in. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (RF333).

with time as the key determinate of compensation. Historically, however, such laborers had been seasonally hired locals who earned a set amount of the harvest in compensation. By depicting a peasant man and woman at their midday rest, Bastien-Lepage circumvented the charged temporal restructuring of rural labor. His very modern pose of the central woman staring straight ahead, held still in reverie or self-absorbed sensations (smelling the hay) made the work an emblematic depiction of peasant life in a period of marked modernization. In his review of the Salon of 1878, Mantz acknowledged the encroaching structure of temporal disciplining in the painting's depiction of this peasant woman: "The sound of a bell," he wrote, "the call of the haymakers' boss, will soon enough pull her back from mute contemplation."[55] Here church bells such as those in Millet's *Angelus* ring not for prayer but for the end of the lunch hour.[56] By 1882, Lhermitte's painting straightforwardly represented peasants receiving a wage, even as he similarly freezes the central peasant figure in a forward-facing absorptive pose of total exhaustion. The natural rhythms of the sun and the body and the seasons have been replaced by a disciplined worktime in Lhermitte's painting.

Lhermitte was on Van Gogh's mind again in early 1885 as he began work on his first major painting, *The Potato Eaters* (fig. 10). It is possible that he borrowed compositional aspects from Lhermitte's *Réveillon*, a picture depicting a peasant

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dinner that appeared in *Le Monde illustré* in 1884.[57] The French painter certainly provided a model for his working procedure. Writing to Theo from their parents' home in Neunen in March, he explained: "seeing his work encourages me, for I see (in details in heads and hands, for instance) how artists like Lhermitte must have studied the peasant figure not only from a fairly great distance but from very close to, not *now*, while they create and compose with ease and certainty, but *before* they did that" (485). Following up in mid-April, he once again connected his practice with his Realist predecessors: "it's not for nothing that I've spent so many evenings sitting pondering by the fire with the miners and the peat-cutters and the weavers and peasants here" (493). Van Gogh spent long hours with a local peasant family, the De Groots, in their dark cottage. Yet he came to insist that he was, like Millet and others before him (Eugène Delacroix notably), painting the picture "FROM MEMORY" (496). The effect he surely hoped was a depiction of peasant life, uncontrived and true, like Millet or Lhermitte, "*as if done by a peasant who can paint*," "*painted with the soil*" (500, 505). The dirty palette, the awkward rendering of the figures, and the cramped space of *The Potato Eaters* all speak to this intention. And so too the artist's choice to represent the peasant family resting after a hard day's work—he completed a series of sketches of the laborious potato harvest around the same time—absorbed in their simple meal.[58]

The earliest audience for the picture failed to appreciate any of this. Upon seeing Van Gogh's lithographic version (completed before the painting now in Amsterdam), Van Rappard expressed his disappointment in the strongest terms (cat. no. 3). "You can do better than this," he lamented, "but why, then, observe and treat everything so superficially? Why not study the movements? *Now* they're posing. That coquettish little hand of that woman at the back, how untrue!" After showing the finished painting to the dealer Arsène Portier, Theo

Fig. 10
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Potato Eaters*, Nuenen, April–May 1885. Oil on canvas, 32¼ × 44⅞ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0005V1962 / F0082).

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tried hard to muster enthusiasm in a letter to their mother on May 19, 1885: "Several people saw his work, either at my place or Mr Portier's and the painters, in particular, think it's very promising. Some of them find a great deal of beauty in it, precisely because his characters are so true, for it is after all a certain truth that among the peasant men and women in Brabant one finds many more on whose faces the harsh lines of hard work and of poverty too are expressed than one finds pretty little faces among them" (See letter 505, note 5. FR b901). As if defensively responding to Van Rappard's criticism, Theo insists here on the fundamental truth of Vincent's Realism, a truth that flowed from the artist's immersion in peasant life and the acknowledgment of its fundamental lack of prettiness. "Van Gogh's clumsiness," as Meyer Schapiro puts in slightly less mystified terms, "conveys also, as he intended, the clumsiness of his people."[59]

Van Gogh's interest and admiration for Lhermitte and to a lesser extent Bastien-Lepage as the heirs to Millet and as "peasant painters" reached an apex in the months following his completion of *The Potato Eaters*. His conviction of these painters' greatness—contra Theo's doubts—seemed confirmed in Mantz's review of the Paris Salon of 1885.[60] Vincent enthusiastically praised the critic's analysis, which focused on Millet's legacy. Mantz considered that the recently deceased Bastien-Lepage had "taken up the torch from Millet's dying hand," although his art had, in the end, too much unmodified "observation." Lhermitte belonged to the same "intellectual movement"—what we might now call later Realism—but he offered a more compelling reconciliation of detailed observation and stylistic choices that were "compatible with the modesty of rural life." Mantz contrasted this with Roll's *Chantier de Suresnes*. "When you study it for a long time," he wrote, "you perceive that the activity of the pieceworkers is merely an appearance and that the work is not moving forward."

Van Gogh completely agreed with Mantz about Lhermitte but took exception to his dismissal of Roll. Given his sensational contribution to the Salon of 1880, *The Miner's Strike*, Roll was "matchless." Vincent thought criticism of the artist just did not distinguish clearly enough between rural and urban subjects. In a letter to Theo from May 22, 1885, he wrote, "When Paul Mantz says that Roll's labourers don't work very hard. . . . Well now—it's a nice conceit and there's something to it. The only thing is that it's precisely because it's Paris, and not the down-to-earth work in the fields. After all, a workman in the city is just exactly the way Roll paints him" (502). The problem of painting subjects in and around a major modern metropolis like Paris was something Vincent increasingly thought about in the run-up to his move in 1886. And no artist for him better exemplified the issue than Raffaëlli.

The Parisian Millet

In the summer of 1885, Van Gogh came to adopt Raffaëlli as Lhermitte's urban twin. He especially admired the illustrations in the catalogue of Raffaëlli's one-man exhibition of 1884. He gushingly declared "how *outstandingly* good" he found Raffaëlli, whose work like Lhermitte's was "*thought out* through and through, sensible and honest" (512). This time, Theo seems to have shared his brother's enthusiasm, ultimately working with the artist on an exhibition at Goupil in 1890.

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As he well knew, Raffaëlli had garnered widespread praise in a series of exhibitions dating back almost a decade.

In the 1870s and early 1880s, Raffaëlli had come to prominence with the support of a number of influential critics. At the Salon of 1877, Edmond Duranty singled out *The Family of Jean-le-Boîteux* for unusually high praise (fig. 11). One of the most important defenders of artistic Realism in the nineteenth century, Duranty was especially fascinated by the picture's combination of details of "such a rigorous truth" with a composition of figures grouped as if by a "village photographer."[61] The critic set up his account by praising and reproducing two intensely absorptive paintings by Fantin-Latour and Lhermitte.[62] Raffaëlli follows, as it were, from this implicitly antitheatrical tradition. He is a late Realist. Yet Duranty reproduced only the artist's drawing of the central, forward-facing woman, as if to emphasize the striking double structure of address and denial.

Fig. 11
Jean-François Raffaëlli (French, 1850–1924), *The Family of Jean-le-Boîteux, Peasants from Plougasnou*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 74¾ × 60⅝ in. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (LUX730).

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Like Millet, Lhermitte, and Bastien-Lepage, the question of contrivance and truth would follow him for years.

The appearance of the *Return of the Ragpickers* (pl. 54) at the Salon of 1879 sparked the interest of one of Raffaëlli's most devoted defenders. Huysmans's review of the Salon focuses on the artist's representation of the gritty Parisian suburbs, known as the *banlieue*, praising its depiction of "the sad charm of wobbly shacks, the skinny poplars showcased on the endless roads that peter out from the ramparts to the sky."[63] This turn to a more urban or sub-urban subject soon came to define Raffaëlli's work. The artist's illustrations for Huysmans's 1880 *Croquis parisiens* in particular helped secure this association. An etching illustrating the story "La Bièvre," for example, depicts the smokestacks and grime at the edge of the city seen from the southeast (fig. 12). It was reprinted in the 1884 catalogue, where Van Gogh certainly saw it. Both publications also contain notable pictures of ragpickers, so-called *chiffonniers*, a subject that became synonymous with Raffaëlli's work around 1880. Critics understood that such pictures were based on intensive firsthand observation of the lives of the desperate poor living outside Paris, not far from the artist's home in Asnières. They also led more than one critic to compare him with Millet. Huysmans considered him to be a "kind of Parisian Millet."[64] The more conservative Albert Wolff agreed: "like Millet he is the poet of the humble. What the great master did for the fields, Raffaëlli begins to do for the modest people of Paris. He shows them as they are, more often than not, stupefied by life's hardships."[65] For such critics, no painting summed up the artist's accomplishments better than *Les Déclassés*, his central contribution to the Impressionist exhibit of 1881 (pl. 56).

A sensation when first shown, the painting emblematized Raffaëlli's work for many years after. His defenders immediately recognized it as a complex summation of his distinctive ambition to combine the artistic concerns of

Fig. 12
Jean-François Raffaëlli (French, 1850–1924), *La Bièvre*, 1880. From Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Croquis parisiens* (Paris: Henri Vaton, 1880), 54. Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan.

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mid-century Realism with a new iconography of poverty outside Paris. Huysmans was especially sensitive to these concerns in his description of the painting of "the sad land of the déclassés": "he shows them to us, seated in front of glasses of absinthe, at a cabaret under a bower where, climbing up, thin vines stripped of leaves twist, with their depraved paraphernalia of clothes in rags and boots in shreds, with their black hats whose threads have gone brown and whose cardboard has warped, with their unkempt beards, their hollow eyes, their enlarged and seemingly watery pupils, head in hand or rolling cigarettes. In this picture, a movement of a bony wrist pressing on a pinch of tobacco held in its paper says a great deal about daily habits, about the miseries endlessly reborn from an inflexible life."[66] As Huysmans knew full well, the picture's mixing together of absinthe, the wastelands of the *banlieue*, and these downtrodden and marginalized "déclassés" offered a volatile political cocktail. And each of these elements powerfully suggested a slowing of time, an experience of duration that harmonized with Raffaëlli's sometimes finicky technique in a way that does indeed call to mind Millet. Yet his two figures sit absorbed not in prayer but in drunken reverie, their idleness offering a charged and provocative counterpoint to the synchronization and disciplining of time under modernity. No "idiotic sentimentalism," no nostalgia here.

Whether Vincent ever saw *Les Déclassés* is unclear, but there is little doubt it would have exemplified for him all the best qualities of the "Parisian Millet." Theo certainly thought so. On May 8, 1889, he wrote about the painting, which had just returned to public view: "In the Salon there's a very fine painting by Raffaëlli, two absinthe drinkers. I find him strongest when he paints these people who have come down in the world" (770). Based on his earlier enthusiasm for Raffaëlli, Vincent almost certainly would have agreed. In July 1885, he had written Theo a very significant analysis in which he contrasted the painter of Asnières to more academically inclined painters: "a Raffaëlli—is *someone*, a Lhermitte is *someone*, and in many paintings by virtually unknown people one feels that they were made with a *will*, with *emotion*, with *passion*, with *love*. The TECHNIQUE of a painting from peasant life or—like Raffaëlli—from the heart of urban workers—entails difficulties quite different from those of the slick painting and the rendering of action of a [Gustave] Jacquet or [Jean-Joseph] Benjamin-Constant" (515). He continued: "It's harder for someone like Raffaëlli, who paints the rag-pickers of Paris *in their own small quarter*, and his work is more serious. *Seemingly there's nothing simpler than painting peasants or rag-pickers and other labourers* but—*no subjects in painting are as difficult as those everyday figures!*" (515). Even though he "paints something very different from peasants," Raffaëlli stood with Millet and Lhermitte against the contrivances of "slick" academic painting, a model and a source for the Dutch artist as he ramped up his own artistic ambitions.

Van Gogh's enthusiasm for Raffaëlli in 1885 was based on fairly limited visual material. Perhaps the earliest work he encountered, again in reproduction, was *The Blacksmiths*, a painting that Theo had probably seen at the Salon of 1885 (fig. 13). A typical picture of working poor in the *banlieue* of Paris, the picture also contained important similarities to *Les Déclassés*. Its implication of the empty, repetitive time of drinking in the working-class *banlieue* echoes that in the other picture. The straw-covered stools and the leafy bower in both paintings likewise

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Fig. 13
Jean-François Raffaëlli (French, 1850–1924), *The Blacksmiths*, ca. 1884. Drawing and oil on cardboard, mounted on wood, 30⅜ × 22½ in. Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai (Inv. 2083).

mark an identical setting: a shabby drinking hole near Asnières. And such a setting is exactly what Van Gogh sought out when he arrived in Paris in March 1886.

Initially fascinated with the still-liminal spaces of Montmartre, Vincent soon enough drifted down to the edge of the city. The *Outskirts of Paris* in Santa Barbara—a picture of a dead space outside the city fortifications in the northwest Plaine Saint-Denis—has long stood for the fascination many artists came to have with the "environs of Paris" around 1886 (cat. no. 8). Most notably, both Seurat and Paul Signac had exhibited paintings set in the *banlieue* at the final Impressionist exhibition that spring. In his analysis of the painting of Paris

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Fig. 14
Vincent van Gogh (seen from the rear) and Emile Bernard by the River Seine at Asnières, near Paris, c. 1886. Van Gogh Museum (Tralbaut archive) (T-0716).

after Haussmannization, T.J. Clark presumes that Van Gogh produced his little painting on the heels of Seurat's Neo-Impressionist manifesto, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte—1884*. Both works suggest an implicit dialogue with Raffaëlli. Armand Guillaumin, for example, thought Seurat was just "doing a Raffaëlli."[67] While Seurat might have shuddered at the comparison, Van Gogh would have taken it as a badge of honor. When he and Émile Bernard had themselves photographed in Asnières, they tellingly approximated Raffaëlli's absinthe-drinking déclassés (fig. 14).

In a variety of paintings produced outside Paris in 1886 and 1887, Van Gogh sought to transform and to modernize Raffaëlli's late Realist taxonomy of the region. In the Santa Barbara picture, the central figure ambling past a lonely gaslight lamppost and a dilapidated fence recalls nothing so much as Raffaëlli's ragpickers of the *banlieue*.[68] The muddy plain is rendered in muddy brushstrokes forming the ground plane, mimicking the cognate dirtiness of the *Potato Eaters*. Unlike his earlier, dark and gray picture, however, vivid greens and oranges appear on the horizon. The seeds of Seurat's divisionist color theory and pointillist technique had already been sown, and by the summer of 1887 they had blossomed in Van Gogh's later painting of the *Road to the Outskirts of Paris* (cat. no. 9). Raffaëlli's ragpickers have disappeared, but in their place, curiously enough, a Millet-style "peasant shouldering a spade" has reappeared.

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Fig. 15
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Sower*, 1888. Oil on canvas, 25⅞ × 31⅝ in. Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (KM 106.399).

The Sower with Color

The reemergence of Millet as a model in the summer of 1887 was hardly coincidental. A major exhibition at the École des Beaux-Arts at that time had already begun to fire up a nationalistic pride in the painter's vision of rural France, a phenomenon that culminated in a set of record-breaking auctions of *The Angelus* in 1889 and 1890. Pissarro was of course appalled. Huysmans was more circumspect. His review of the 1887 show sought to ground the myth of the "peasant painter" in the training and practice of an ambitious artist: "Millet was a painter, that is a talented man with commendable dexterity and a certain agility of the eye."[69] Van Gogh ultimately worried about the monetary value attached to the humble painter of the poor, but he no doubt reveled in the newfound enthusiasm for old Millet. The painter certainly haunted him as he headed south in early 1888.

Throughout the year he repeatedly mentions Millet in his letters. It is not always with unfettered fondness, however. "My God," he wrote from Arles on June 19, "if only I'd known this country at 25, instead of coming here at 35—in those days I was enthusiastic about grey, or rather, absence of colour. I was always dreaming about Millet" (628). The task now, he declared two days later, was to render the peasant in color: "For such a long time it's been my great desire to do a sower, but the desires I've had for a long time aren't always achieved. So I'm almost afraid of them. And yet, after Millet and Lhermitte what remains to be done is . . . the sower, with colour and in a large format" (629). The immediate result was the brilliantly colored canvas that hangs in the Kröller-Müller Museum (fig. 15). All the problems of absorption and temporality that still undergirded his copy of *The Sower* in 1881 evaporate in the striking effect of the saturated yellow

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Fig. 16
Jacques-Adrien Lavieille (French, 1818–1862), after Jean-François Millet (French, 1814–1875), *Mid-Day (La Méridienne)*, from the series *Four Times of Day*, 1860. Wood engraving on chine collée, 5⅞ × 8⅝ in. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1926 (26.84.2).

Fig. 17
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Siesta* (after Millet), 1889–1890. Oil on canvas, 28 × 35 in. Musée d'Orsay, Paris (RF1952-17).

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and violet hues that stand in for the sun and the soil. The sower still strides his furrows, and birds still peck at his feet. But Van Gogh knows that simultaneous contrast works on a different order from Millet and Realism. Questions of contrivance and truth no longer bog down in pose and the authenticity of lived experience. Like Delacroix before him, his art "speaks a symbolic language through colour itself" (634). Or so he believed.

Whether Van Gogh held to this conviction, whether he could truly divest himself of a certain hard reality as the foundation of his art—Pissarro called it "sensation"—has never been a settled matter in art history. Certainly, the model of Millet never disappeared. In Saint-Rémy, short of subjects and spiraling into ever more obsessive production, Van Gogh undertook a score of copies of his old idol. One of the more impressive is a version of a picture called *La Méridienne*, or *Mid-Day*. Millet's pastel had been displayed at the Gavet exhibition in 1875, but Van Gogh knew it primarily through an 1860 print by Jacques-Adrien Lavieille (fig. 16). His copy, completed in early 1890 and now in the Musée d'Orsay, is fairly faithful to the basic composition (fig. 17). A pair of peasants rest from the labor of harvesting, sleeping in the shade of the haystack they have just assembled. The sickles were old-fashioned even by the 1870s, and by 1890 they were almost antiquated as mechanized harvesters became the norm in France. No church lurks in the background, no bells threaten to wake them from the sustained and durational absorption of their midday nap. Time for these peasants is still Millet's, nostalgic and resistant. Only the brilliant blue and yellow of Van Gogh's canvas twists it round to the viewer's time, the time of modernity: sharp and punctuated, striking and instantaneous.

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NOTES

1 Theo van Gogh to Elisabeth (Lies) Huberta du Quesne (van Gogh), May 1886, as quoted in Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, *Van Gogh: The Life* (New York: Random House, 2011), 534.
2 On Van Gogh's knowledge of color theory, see letter 536.
3 See Judy Sund, *True to Temperament: Van Gogh and French Naturalist Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
4 Kirk Varnedoe, *Gustave Caillebotte* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 13.
5 Varnedoe, *Caillebotte*, 15.
6 Gabriel P. Weisberg, *The Realist Tradition: French Painting and Drawing, 1830–1900* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980). See also Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism: The Naturalist Impulse* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992).
7 On Naturalism and its relation to Realism and Impressionism, see Gabriel Weisberg, ed., *Illusions of Reality: Naturalist Painting, Photography, Theatre and Cinema, 1875–1918* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum; Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2010); Richard Thomson, *Art of the Actual: Naturalism and Style in Early Third Republic France, 1880–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); and Alex Potts, "Social Theory and the Realist Impulse in Nineteenth-Century Art," *Nonsite* 27, Special Issue "The Nineteenth Century," ed. Bridget Alsdorf and Marnin Young (February 11, 2019), https://nonsite.org/article/social-theory-and-the-realist-impulse-in-nineteenth-century-art.
8 See Marnin Young, *Realism in the Age of Impressionism: Painting and the Politics of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).
9 Evert van Uitert, "Van Gogh's Taste for Reality, on Earth as It Is in Heaven," in Chris Stolwijk et al., eds., *Vincent's Choice: Van Gogh's Musée Imaginaire* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 73. See also Van Uitert, "Vincent van Gogh, Painter of Peasants," in *Van Gogh in Brabant: Paintings and Drawings from Etten and Nuenen* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1987), 14–46.
10 On Seurat and Millet, see Robert L. Herbert, "City vs. Country: The Rural Image in French Painting from Millet to Gauguin," in *From Millet to Léger: Essays in Social Art History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 44.
11 Alfred Sensier, *La Vie et l'oeuvre de J.-F. Millet* (Paris: A. Quantin, 1881). Van Gogh first mentions the book in early 1882. See letter 210.
12 Louis van Tilborgh, "Van Gogh's Copies after Millet," in *Van Gogh & Millet*, ed. Tilborgh (Zwolle: Waanders / Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh, 1988), 86–90.
13 For more on the wider interest in Millet, see Simon Kelly, *Jean-François Millet: Sowing the Seeds of Modern Art* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).
14 Jean Rousseau, "Salon de 1857. II: Les Indépendants," *Figaro*, July 9, 1857, p. 5. On Millet and politics, see T.J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France, 1848–1851* [1973] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Neil McWilliam, "Le Paysan au Salon: Critique d'art et construction d'une classe sous le Second Empire," in *La Critique d'art en France, 1850–1900*, ed. Jean-Paul Bouillon (Saint-Etienne: CIEREC/Université de Saint-Etienne, 1989), 81–94.
15 [Jules-Antoine] Castagnary, "Philosophie du Salon de 1857," in Castagnary, *Salons, 1857–1870*, ed. Eugène Spuller, 2 vols. (Paris: Charpentier, 1892), I:24.
16 See Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, 1st ed. [1980] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
17 Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism; or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 188.
18 Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 189.
19 Maxime Du Camp, *Le Salon de 1861* (Paris: Librairie nouvelle, 1861), 114.
20 Millet, quoted in Sensier, *Millet*, 54.
21 Ernest Chesneau, "Jean-François Millet," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 2:11 (May 1, 1875): 434.
22 Chesneau, "Millet," 435.
23 The exhibition was held in advance of the auction of the Gavet estate at the Hôtel Drouot. For a list of works shown and sale prices, see "Mouvement des arts et de la curiosité: Collection de M. Gavet," *La Chronique des arts et de la curiosité* 24 (June 19, 1875): 217–18.
24 Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 190–91.
25 Paul de Saint-Victor, "Salon de 1857," *La Presse*, August 4, 1857, p. 2.
26 Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 405.

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27 Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 405.
28 See Eugène Guillaume, "Michel-Ange sculpteur," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 13:1 (January 1876): 101.
29 See Max Eisler, "J.F. Millet en J. Israëls," *Onze Kunst* 10 (1911): 117–27.
30 Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 296.
31 Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 291. On Fried's theory of pictorial temporality, see Marnin Young, "The Temporal Fried," *Nonsite* 21, Special Issue "Art and Objecthood at Fifty" (July 17, 2017), http://nonsite.org/article/the-temporal-fried.
32 Camille Pissarro to Lucien Pissarro, May 16, 1887, in Janine Bailly-Herzberg, ed., *Correspondance de Camille Pissarro*, vol. 2: *1886–1890* (Paris: Editions du Valhermeil, 1986), 169.
33 On the work's broader reception, see Bradley Fratello, "France Embraces Millet: The Intertwined Fates of *The Gleaners* and *The Angelus*," *The Art Bulletin* 85:4 (December 2003): 685–701.
34 Sensier, *Millet*, 190–91.
35 Charles Tardieu, "Le Cabinet de M. Jules van Praet," *L'Art* 4:23 (1880): 301.
36 Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
37 Rousseau, "Salon de 1857," 5.
38 Théophile Gautier, "Salon de 1850–51," *La Presse*, March 15, 1851, p. 2.
39 Sensier, *Millet*, 124.
40 Sensier, *Millet*, 156.
41 A "misreading" in this sense is a "creative correction." See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd ed. [1973] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 30.
42 Joan E. Greer, "'To Everything There Is a Season': The Rhythms of the Year in Vincent van Gogh's Socio-Religious Worldview," in Sjraar van Heugten, *Van Gogh and the Seasons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 72.
43 On the largely fictitious nature of Sensier's account, see Christopher Parsons and Neil McWilliam, "'Le Paysan de Paris': Alfred Sensier and the Myth of Rural France," *Oxford Art Journal* 6:2 (1983): 38–58.
44 See *The Graphic* 11 (June 12, 1875): 571.
45 See Monique Le Pelley Fonteny, *Léon Augustin Lhermitte (1844–1925): Catalogue Raisonné* (Paris: Cercle d'art, 1991), 95.
46 Jules de Marthold, "Le Salon," *Ville de Paris*, May 1, 1883, p. 1. My thanks to Emily Talbot for sharing her research on this review.
47 Joris-Karl Huysmans, "Le Salon officiel de 1880," in *L'Art moderne* (Paris: Charpentier, 1883), 134.
48 Joris-Karl Huysmans, "Salon de 1879," in *L'Art moderne*, 39.
49 Paul Mantz, "Salon de 1878," *Le Temps*, July 4, 1878, p. 1.
50 Paul de Saint-Victor, "Salon de 1878," *La Liberté*, June 18, 1878, p. 3.
51 Paul de Saint-Victor, "Salon de 1879," *La Liberté*, June 8, 1879, p. 3.
52 Louis de Fourcaud, "Le Salon: M. Léon Lhermitte," *Le Gaulois*, May 12, 1882, p. 2.
53 See Thomson, *Art of the Actual*, 108. See also Monique Le Pelley Fonteny, *Léon Lhermitte et "La paye des moissonneurs"* (Paris: Musée d'Orsay, 1991).
54 See Young, "1878: The Motionless Look of a Painting," in *Realism in the Age of Impressionism*, 15–52.
55 Mantz, "Salon de 1878," 2.
56 In 1878, Mantz was editing Sensier's biography of Millet, in which he describes the bells of *The Angelus*. He also wrote the book's introduction. See Mantz, "Alfred Sensier," in Sensier, *Millet*, i–vi.
57 See Maureen S. Trappeniers, "The Potato Eaters," in *Van Gogh in Brabant*, 177.
58 Belinda Thomson compares the painting with Israëls's 1882 *Peasant Family at Table* and concludes the latter depicts more convincingly the peasants "absorbed" in their world. See Thomson, *Van Gogh Paintings: The Masterpieces* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2018), 31.
59 Meyer Schapiro, *Vincent van Gogh* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1969), 52.
60 Paul Mantz, "Le Salon," *Le Temps*, May 10, 1885, pp. 1–2. All quotations in this paragraph from page 1.
61 Edmond Duranty, "Réflexions d'un Bourgeois sur le Salon de peinture," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 15:6 (June 1877): 552.
62 On antitheatricality in Duranty's art criticism, see Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 186–95 and 259–62; and Michael Fried, "The French Response to Menzel: Edmond Duranty," in *Menzel's Realism: Art and Embodiment in Nineteenth-Century Berlin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 125–39.
63 Huysmans, "Le Salon de 1879," 42.
64 Joris-Karl Huysmans, "L'Exposition des Indépendants en 1881," in *L'Art moderne*, 246.
65 Albert Wolff, "Courrier de Paris," *Le Figaro*, April 10, 1881, p. 1.
66 Huysmans, "Indépendants en 1881," 245–46.

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67 Georges Seurat to Paul Signac, June 16, 1886, as quoted in T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 26.
68 On the iconography of Van Gogh's painting and its relation to Raffaëlli, see James Cannon, *The Paris Zone: A Cultural History, 1840–1944* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 62. On the gaslight in the painting, see Hollis Clayson, *Illuminated Paris: Essays on Art and Lighting in the Belle Époque* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 30–32.
69 Joris-Karl Huysmans, "Chronique d'art: L'Exposition de Millet," *La Revue indépendante* 4:9 (July 1887): 44.

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Rebecca Rainof

VAN GOGH'S LITERARY IMAGINATION

"I HAVE A MORE OR LESS irresistible passion for books" (155), Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo. While living in England and "homesick for the country of paintings," Vincent turned to reading for consolation, discovering a productive tension between his two irresistible passions: "the love of books is as holy as that of Rembrandt, and I even think that the two complement each other . . . one must learn to read, just as one must learn to see and learn to live" (155). This statement does more than merely elevate reading to the level of seeing. Instead, it foregrounds a deeper reciprocity between the two acts: reading, in Vincent's estimation, can properly be said to be a part of seeing, integral to developing his painter's eye.

At the nexus between reading and seeing, questions of Van Gogh's historical influences take on formal urgency. If reading infused his art, where does novelistic narration meet painterly perspective, character description meet portraiture, setting meet landscape, text meet texture? Although several studies survey Van Gogh's literary sources, only rarely have his influences been examined from the perspective of literary aesthetics and form.[1] In *Van Gogh: A Literary Mind*, Wouter van der Veen despairs that it is nearly impossible to address "everything that has been written about Van Gogh," yet there are "few studies in which the subject of Van Gogh's reading matter plays a significant part" (14). Even fewer studies analyze Van Gogh's life as a reader who engaged with and reflected on literary methods of representation, not simply with literary themes and subject matter. What would it mean to think about Van Gogh as working in continuity with writers he revered on an aesthetic and formal level?

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To approach such questions requires an understanding of Van Gogh's literary context and his engagement with specific works. A fluent reader of both English and French, Van Gogh loved realist fiction and turned to books by "writers like Dickens and Eliot and Currer Bell" (232), citing Charlotte Brontë by pen name. Nearly two hundred letters discuss Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Émile Zola alone, but his letters also reflect on Brontë, Hans Christian Andersen, John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe, Guy de Maupassant, Alexandre Dumas, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Homer, Victor Hugo, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Rabelais, Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Shakespeare, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Leo Tolstoy, Voltaire, Walt Whitman, Dinah Craik, the Bible, and many other works of literature. His letters reveal that books offered him life-sustaining engagement in the form of companionship, diversion, and comfort, but they also offered him something more: vocation and vision. Literature for Van Gogh can be said to have given him his earliest apprenticeship as a visual artist, forming his choice of subject, approach to color and texture, and on a broader level, his ethical mandates and drive toward social realism.

Examining his life as a reader during early years in England and the Borinage primarily—a period of avid reading before he declared himself an artist in 1880—reveals the crucial development of his literary imagination. Studying this period in turn discloses a new view of how books by writers like George Eliot and Charles Dickens influenced his art on levels as discrete as the brushstroke and as pervasive as ethics, ideology, and vision.

Van Gogh, Victorian?

> It's a pity that the artists here know so little about the English. . . . Mauve always says, 'That is literary art,' but doesn't realize that the English writers like Dickens and Eliot and Currer Bell, and among the French Balzac, are so astonishingly 'plastic'. . . . Dickens himself sometimes used the expression, I have *sketched* (232).

It is perhaps surprising that Van Gogh, an artist synonymous with modernity, was in part a product of Victorian England. He lived in England as a youth between 1873 and 1876, working first as an art dealer and then, when that career failed, as a lay preacher in what he described as those "remote parts of London, in Whitechapel—that extremely poor area which you'll have read about in Dickens" (98). After moving back home, he brought his fascination with Victorian art and letters to bear on his first drawings.[2] Yet, despite this fact of historical coincidence, Van Gogh and Victorian culture occupy different poles in the popular imagination.

Perhaps we don't think of the Victorian period as suitably revolutionary to have formed his unconventional choices, both aesthetic and personal. After all, Virginia Woolf satirized the Victorian era in *Orlando* as a turn away from the artistic freedom we associate with modernism toward an inescapable "damp" of the "mind": "[S]tealthily and imperceptibly, none marking the exact day or hour of the change, the constitution of England was altered and nobody knew it. . . .

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Men felt the chill in their hearts; the damp in their minds. . . . Love, birth, and death were all swaddled in a variety of fine phrases. The sexes drew further and further apart."[3]

This modernist satire of Victorian moral, sexual, and intellectual confinement arose at the same time that the Bloomsbury circle began shaping the cult of Van Gogh in England, a move already underway in Europe starting soon after Van Gogh's death.[4] Roger Fry's exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* at the Grafton Galleries in London (November 8, 1910–January 11, 1911) marked a rising obsession with the artist, reflecting and consolidating modernist sensibilities, and later being associated with Woolf's statement that "on or about 1910 human character changed."[5] The exhibition also shaped an emerging tendency to position Van Gogh as modern at the expense of addressing Victorian homage in his work.

Literary criticism continues this pattern in often passing over Van Gogh's Victorian influences in favor of talking about the writers he influenced a generation later. It is not uncommon to find his avant-garde visual poetics mirrored in Ezra Pound's modernist injunction to "make it new." His iconic shoes accordingly find their corollary in Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, when Jacob's mother receives his shoes post-mortem. Likewise, his Post-Impressionism has found its literary counterpart in Woolf's "Kew Gardens" and D.H. Lawrence's use of color.[6] This relationship has recently gained more attention in a fascinating exhibition at the Tate, *Van Gogh and Britain*, but there is still a tendency in literary critical scholarship to dissociate Van Gogh from the literary methods of Victorian writers and associate him with the aesthetic effects of literary modernism instead. The fact remains that Van Gogh, who came to embody modernist radicalism, was in many ways insistently, confessedly, and counterintuitively a Victorian, an artist deeply influenced by his youth in England and lifelong fascination with nineteenth-century British and French literary culture.[7]

Newspapers and magazines also hold special place in discussions of Van Gogh's visual method and developing style, and weekly trips to the Strand in London to read British periodicals gave him what might be considered his first tutorial in graphic arts.[8] As he reflected years later, "I used to go every week to the display case of the printer of The Graphic and London News in London to see the weekly publications. The impressions I gained there on the spot were so strong that the drawings have remained clear and bright in my mind, despite everything that has since gone through my head. And now it sometimes seems to me as if nothing lies between those old days and now—at any rate my old enthusiasm for them is now greater rather than less than it was originally" (307).

The British news became such a potent force of artistic affiliation that he would go on to create a collection organized into portfolios of nearly two thousand prints from periodicals like *The Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*.[9] Nor did he fully divorce those images from the texts in which they appeared. As he lamented to his brother Theo, his desire to display specific images on his walls often met with an internal resistance to cutting and mounting them, to separating images from the words that appeared alongside them.[10] The pinholes found in his collection speak to the value he placed on images from *The Graphic* and

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other publications as occupying a role as crucial to him as the highest "fine art."[11] It becomes clear that even when he isolated prints for display, he often never fully divided them from their accompanying texts. Instead, he developed his own methods for rendering word and image inseparable, techniques that speak to the origin of our modern practices of adaptation and to the influence of contemporary writers on Van Gogh, perhaps no one more so than George Eliot, whom Van Gogh deemed to stand at "the forefront of modern civilization" (187).

George Eliot and Adaptation

> Eliot is masterly in her execution, but quite apart from this there is a genius-like quality about which I should like to say, Perhaps one improves when one reads those books—or, These books possess an awakening power . . . . What I am trying to say in this letter is this. Let us try to master the mysteries of technique to such an extent that people are deceived by it and will swear by all that is holy that we have *no* technique. Let our work be so savant that is seems naïve and does not stink of our sapience (43).

Van Gogh's drawing of a weaver and child (fig. 1) and his weaver series from 1883–84, completed early in his career as an artist, tell a larger story about our modern concept of adaptation in the period: how it was being rigorously and self-consciously theorized by artists like Van Gogh and writers like George Eliot working in unspoken dialogue. As Linda Hutcheon notes in her study of adaptation, "The Victorians had a habit of adapting just about everything—and in just about every possible direction; the stories of poems, novels, plays, operas, paintings, songs, dances, and *tableaux vivants* were constantly being adapted from one medium to another."[12] Van Gogh was part of a culture obsessed with exploring the interrelation between the arts, a culture that in turn shaped our modern conception of adaptation as a practice before the term came into current usage.

His drawing of a weaver and child recalls with striking clarity scenes from Eliot's *Silas Marner*, a novella he loved and reread many times during his life, urging the book on his brother Theo.[13] Later the two gave Eliot's works to their father as a birthday present. Van Gogh records spending time with "Pa and Ma": "In the evenings we . . . occasionally read from Silas Marner by Eliot, the story of a weaver" (146). In many ways, then, *Silas Marner* and Eliot's early fiction came with Van Gogh in 1883–84, when he traveled to Nuenen to observe weavers. During that period he produced roughly thirty illustrations of weavers, which he intended to be sold as a complete and unified series.[14] In explaining why he chose weavers, he wrote that they "still constitute a race apart from other labourers. . . . I should be happy if one day I could draw them so that those unknown or little known types could be brought before the people" (158). He further describes the weaver as having a "dreamy air, somewhat absent-minded, the somnabulist," and as "a black ape or goblin or apparition that clatters with those slats from early morning to late at night" (473). These descriptions closely echo Eliot's language in *Silas Marner*, in her opening depiction of weavers as "pallid, undersized men, who, by the side of the brawny country folk looked like the remnants of a disinherited race" and as "emigrants from the town into the country . . . to the last

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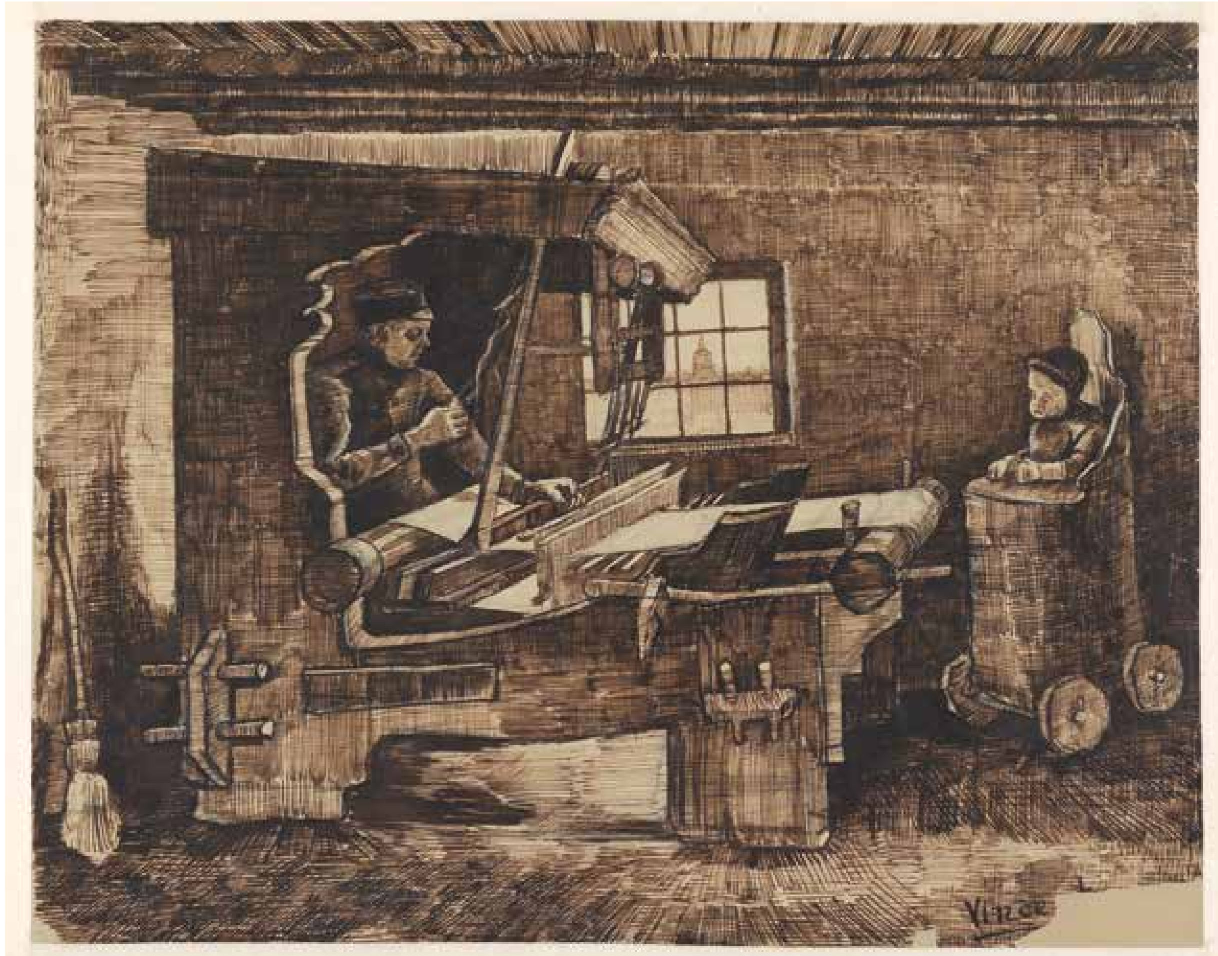

Fig. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Weaver, with a Baby in a High Chair*, Neunen, January 1884. Pencil, pen and ink, watercolor on paper, 12⅜ × 15⅜ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d0082V1962 / F1118).

regarded as aliens by their rustic neighbors."[15] Her protagonist, Silas, is likewise called an "apparition" by townspeople because of his somnambulism, or narcoleptic fits, and Van Gogh's insect imagery further borrows from Eliot; we are told Silas "seemed to weave, like the spider, from pure impulse, without reflection." This verbal overlap has been addressed by critics such as Carol Zemel, Griselda Pollock, and Ronald Pickvance, but it is still necessary to clarify that Van Gogh's duplication of Eliot's language does more than prove a detailed, reverent knowledge of her work.[16] The verbal echoes, considered alongside his drawing of a weaver and child, show how her novella colored his very way of *seeing* the working subjects he approached, so much so that this early drawing looks like an extraction from her novella—and this despite his claim that "I've tackled that affair just as it is in reality, the loom with the little weaver, the small window and that high chair in the wretched little room with the clay floor" (428).

Van Gogh echoed Eliot's language not only in his letters; he also seems to have captured her descriptions of weavers in his drawings and early paintings. In several of his works for the weaver series, the weavers are confined by looms that contain them, their faces shadowed behind machinery or otherwise obscured from the viewing audience behind turned backs. In *A Weaver's Cottage* (fig. 2)

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the figure resembles an ape or spider hidden behind the tools of his trade, the brushstrokes that compose his facial features resembling the grain of the wood of the loom. This image, and several others in the series, oscillates between dark nightmarish pictures of labor, in which the worker is both animalized and assimilated into the loom, or alternatively, clinical studies of looms, in which the worker is almost completely subsumed. Van Gogh expressed a technical desire to document looms as fully as possible, writing that "if one draws a machine like this . . . one should make it as mechanical as possible if one wants the study to be of any use" (437). Yet within this same letter he expresses a view that is less clinical, with an almost sentimental mysticism in his sense of the deep connection between machines and their workers. If, in Eliot's fiction, men like Silas Marner come to appear like the tools of their trade, Van Gogh seems to argue that the reverse might be true as well: machines come to resemble, and even evoke, their humans: "putting my study next to a drawing by a mechanical engineer . . . mine would more clearly express that the thing's made of oak begrimed by sweaty hands, and . . . *even if* I *absolutely did not* draw him in, or even if I drew him out of proportion . . . every now and then you couldn't help thinking of the *workman*, whereas absolutely no ideas of this kind would occur to you looking at the design for a loom by a mechanical engineer" (437).[17]

Fig. 2
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *A Weaver's Cottage*, 1884. Oil on canvas, 18⅞ × 24 in. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (1237 (MK)).

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The weaver and child image is an extension of these technically driven renderings while also appearing to depart from their severity. On the surface, the drawing appears unique in its inclusion of a domestic context, a move that might speak to Eliot's influence. Van Gogh had complained of how tight the space seemed in weavers' cottages while he observed them at work. "These folk are difficult to draw because in the small rooms one can't get far enough away to draw the loom" (419). In this drawing he embraces these close quarters, including them to a greater extent than in other images. The loom becomes like a home within a home, its wooden beams echoing those of the cottage ceiling. The visual frames in the drawing multiply within one another: the loom, within the room, within the image's borders. The high chair further reproduces the enclosing framework of the loom. Some have read this as a harbinger of the baby's future life of drudgery,[18] and indeed spatial closeness in the illustration cuts both ways: the tight space of the cottage is both cozy and claustrophobic, at once a scene of warm familial relations and also an illustration of the encroachment of mechanical production into the home space. Yet, viewing this image through the lens of Eliot's influence allows for an understanding of the humor and tenderness that pervades this scene of domestic work. Everyone in the scene, as in Eliot's novella, appears ensconced and busy in his or her own cottage industry. The tone captures that of Silas's domestic life with his adopted daughter Eppie, resembling in spirit Van Gogh's rendering after Millet of a baby taking its first steps. The baby in the image of the weaver's cottage provides levity, as she does in *Silas Marner*, drawing out the figure of the weaver by revealing the familial role that exists outside of—and alongside—his work.

The inclusion of the church in the background is also in keeping with Eliot's novella, for the church plays a role in *Silas Marner* that is at once central in motivating characters' actions but also peripheral to the main story of the miser's transformation into an adoptive father. Van Gogh was especially fond of Eliot for her depictions of Evangelical religion, the irony being that as an adult Eliot actively distanced herself from the religion of her upbringing. Her critique is clear in *Silas Marner* in the harsh representation of the Lantern Yard congregation and its eventual obliteration. Van Gogh did not fully absorb the significance of the novella's conclusion, judging by his synopsis: "In one of his books, Eliot describes the life of factory workers &c. who have joined a small community and hold religious services in a chapel in 'Lantern Yard,' and he says it is 'God's Kingdom upon earth', nothing more nor less" (82).[19] Not only did Van Gogh hold a mistakenly positive view of the role of Evangelical religion in the novella, he also assumed that George Eliot was a man, perhaps revealing another form of shortsightedness.[20]

Despite his skewed reading of Eliot's depiction of religion, Van Gogh took important inspiration from her novella, and the weaver and child image points both forward and backward at once, for it reflects growing worries about industrial textile production while also appearing like a throwback to the Golden Age of Dutch painting.[21] Yet, for all its apparent nostalgia, the drawing is fundamentally a work by a nineteenth-century artist grappling with nineteenth-century issues. This engagement can been seen as developing in continuity with the visual realism of his friend Athon van Rappard's weaver studies from 1883, as well

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as with the works of realist and social realist writers, including Dickens's weaver hero Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times*, Zola's miners in *Germinal*, and Eliot's lonely weaver. Nevertheless, there is a contrary tendency to read Van Gogh's weaver series as an aesthetic wedge driven between his distinct modernity and the conservatism of Victorian writers. We see this pattern in Carol Zemel's assertion that "writers like Eliot and Carlyle saw conditions clearly enough, but they suffused their criticism with a sweetened memory of the past" creating, in effect, "a utopian legend of continuity, rural community, and craftsman's skill" (*Progress* 64). Van Gogh is contrastingly seen as producing "unsettling images within a traditional frame" (*Progress* 61). Yet, it can be counterargued that this very approach—that of creating "unsettling images within a traditional frame"—is *exactly* what Van Gogh inherits from George Eliot, particularly in her treatment of Dutch art.[22] In fact, this statement of Zemel's, meant to differentiate Van Gogh from George Eliot, would be the perfect back-of-book blurb for *Adam Bede*: Come for the traditional frame, stay for unsettling images of murder and exile. Her stories of dispossession, religious renunciation, transgression, unwed pregnancy, and infanticide unfold from within the framework provided by fairy tales,[23] as she labeled *Silas Marner*, the literary sketch as deceptively informal form, and also Golden Age Dutch art as a residuary for the commonplace and prosaic.[24]

In his weaver series, Van Gogh creates a visual analogue to Eliot's self-professed "old-fashioned" tale as well as an analogue to the literary sketch. His drawing, distilled from initial sketches made in weavers' cottages or even from the passages outside of cramped rooms, takes on the immediacy of these first sketches. The darting crosshatching could be said to capture a feeling akin to that of the studied informality of the literary sketch as an art form. What appears on its surface to be a work of sweet nostalgia made under conditions of immediacy remains at its core, much like Eliot's novella, a carefully crafted work of contemporary foreboding. Whereas Eliot's publisher declared in surprise her sketch to be "sad, almost oppressive,"[25] Van Gogh's drawing might be said to have the same unexpected undertow, a formalized oppression under the guise of being a lightly sketched vision of domestic life.

We must consider, then, how we frame Eliot's influence. Van Gogh does not simply invoke Eliot to push past her toward his own avante-garde aesthetics. On the contrary, he achieves his signature style through an act of contemporaneous collaboration, a style and technical repertoire developed in response to her imperatives, and in particular, her insistence that nineteenth-century writers model their work with care on seventeenth-century Dutch painting. As she famously states in chapter 17 of *Adam Bede*: "It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that I delight in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence."[26] Her guidelines for using Dutch art to capture commonplace life recur in her essay "The Natural History of German Life," when she warns that a distortion can occur when an author seeks to set down "the picture-writing of the mind," especially when those pictures involve working individuals: "Art is the nearest thing to life. . . . All the more sacred is the task of

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the artist when he undertakes to paint the life of the People. Falsification here is far more pernicious than in the more artificial aspects of life."[27]

Curiously, at both junctures, her discussion of the perils of representing "the life of the People" inevitably becomes interwoven with a discussion of artistic adaptation. "Where, in our picture exhibitions, shall we find a group of true peasantry?" She raises this question to protest the "notion that peasants are joyous . . . and village children necessarily rosy and merry," revealing these bromides as "prejudices difficult to dislodge from the artistic mind, which looks for its subjects from literature instead of life. The painter is still under the influence of idyllic literature."[28] The problem she identifies here is one of artistic honesty but also one of how to approach adaptation ethically, and Van Gogh took her warning to heart in translating her realist mandate back into Dutch painting, his own reciprocal act of adaptation, a case of Dutch art redux.

And thus we come full circle and can ask: If Eliot's own "picture-writing of the mind" was influenced by Dutch painting, how do we read Van Gogh's pictures of her mental "picture-writing"? These pictures might look a lot like those in his weaver series. Yet it is possible to take this argument further. If Van Gogh's drawing of a weaver and child can be said to give a "picture" of Eliot's approach in her fiction, it can also be viewed as a visual response to her critical writing on artistic responsibility and adaptation or the debate, via Horace, regarding *ut pictura poesis*.[29] Van Gogh can be said to have performed an Eliotic act of adaption on many levels, at once capturing the complex sentiment of scenes from her fiction (like a weaver with a child), formal approaches (like the use of the sketch as deceptively informal form), and on a larger level, he would seem to have adapted George Eliot's approach to adaptation itself. Even his apparent departures from her model reveal his responsiveness to Eliot's ethical mandates. Rather than simply looking for "subjects from literature instead of life," as Eliot chides painters for doing, Van Gogh demonstrated a commitment to combining reading with seeing, observing workers in the field for himself. In sharing an approach to adaptation and ethics, Van Gogh and George Eliot were thus far more than distant contemporaries: in their portrayals of weavers, and their approach to adaptation, they remain to this day inextricably woven together.

Textiles, Texture, Texts

> I can readily understand that people find *me* coarse . . . [following words crossed out in letter] People are like brushes—the ones that look the best do not work the best. . . . Very fine pens, like very elegant people, are sometimes amazingly impractical, and in my view often lack the suppleness or elasticity that most ordinary pens have to some degree (L 410—and repeated in L 325).

The tightness of the weave between writers and artists of the period becomes clear when one considers the textural vocabulary that pervades Van Gogh's writing, from his love of Carlyle's "philosophy of old clothes"[30] to his defense of peasant beauty in textural terms that echo Eliot's *Adam Bede*:

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> A peasant girl is more beautiful than a lady—to my mind—in her dusty and patched blue skirt and jacket, which have acquired the most delicate nuances from weather, wind and sun . . . one would be wrong, to my mind, to give a peasant painting a certain conventional smoothness. If a peasant painting smells of bacon, smoke, potato steam—fine—that's not unhealthy—if a stable smells of manure—very well, that's what a stable's for. . . . But a peasant painting mustn't become perfumed. . . . Painting peasant life is a serious thing, and I for one would blame myself if I didn't try to make paintings such that they give people who think seriously about art and about life serious things to think about (497).

The phrase "conventional smoothness" reads as almost tautological. To confront convention demanded a revolt that registered on the haptic level, a studied coarseness that mediated any technical "stink of sapience," which Van Gogh reviled as being less desirable than the smell of manure. It is significant that this realist ethos articulates itself for both Eliot and Van Gogh through tactility as well as scent—touch and smell arising as phantom senses in both her novels and his letters.

But touch holds a special status in realist aesthetics. On the most topical level, the feel of rough homespun linen appears in repeated references to "coarse" and "rough" characters and garments in her novels and his letters—fabric, character, and class being conflated. We see this tactile approach in *Adam Bede*'s depiction of Bessy Cranage, the blacksmith's daughter, as a dubiously "delicate bit of womanhood" via textiles (300). With "large red cheeks and blowsy person," she cries at receiving an unwelcome award for winning the "sack-race." Her prize: "a heavy gown" made of "lots o' good grogram and flannel" (301). The overdetermined texturizing of Bessy is accomplished by enveloping her in sack upon sack of rough cloth, the final layer being the roughness of the dialect Eliot gives both Bessy and her chiding mother, "the matron Bess." The textural effects in Eliot's writing and Van Gogh's art can be said to transcend the diction of coarseness and finery, appearing in the linguistic texture of Eliot's use of dialect, the topography of Van Gogh's impasto, and the boldness of his line.[31]

His peasant portraits in particular visually reify Eliot's reclamation of the "ugly" majority whose "squat figures, ill-shapen nostrils, and dingy complexions" rarely find representation in "lofty" paintings of "cloud-borne angels" (195). If Woolf insisted that all great novelists are expert colorists, Eliot's multifaceted dinginess finds spectral and textural fulfillment in Van Gogh's *Head of a Peasant Woman* (cat. no. 2). The broad strokes shadowing her chin, downturned mouth, and heavy sweep of earlobe only subtly differentiate themselves from the brushstrokes that compose the rough fabric of her bonnet and dress. Her garments further melt into the earthen tones of her background. Likewise, his images of diggers (cat. nos. 4, 5), much like his drawing of the weaver and child, give a textural index of class through the crosshatching of the garments. The garments in the weaver and child image can almost be said to have the same texture as the rushes that compose the broom.

The methods on display in these sketches of field laborers and his drawing of a weaver and child are more thoroughly realized, if not refined, in *The Potato Eaters* (cat. no. 3),[32] which reveals how Van Gogh's sense of texture and line

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evolved in relation to both textile production and a convergent mechanical process: printmaking. Van Gogh's friend Anton van Rappard initially criticized *The Potato Eaters* for its awkward and rough central figures, targeting the qualities Van Gogh prioritized unflinchingly and would go on to elevate, quite literally, in his impasto. The tactile and textural quality of his painting itself can be seen as evolving in reverse from the hewn convexity of engraved wooden images that Van Gogh admired in periodicals.

Taking his textural approach even further, Van Gogh achieved effects that moved from Eliot to Zola and Dickens, from digging to mining, from linen to soil. Reading *Germinal* for the first time, he declared it "splendid" and remarked on a new project of depicting the heads of miners, his *Head of a Woman*, a study for *The Potato Eaters*, revealing a textural turn that can be said to visually give a sense of the movement in literature from realism to social realism and naturalism.[33] "This time I haven't smoothed out the brushstroke," he records, "and besides the colour is very different too. I haven't yet made a head that's so much *painted with the soil*, and more will certainly follow now" (505).[34] This emergent approach to portraiture required new efforts born of his experiments with lithography, of "putting texture character into the heads, hands and feet especially" (322).

The line from lithography and engraving that would come to characterize Van Gogh's paintings; this "engraving-like" mode of delineation made using carpenter's pencil and lithographic crayon proved to be a technique that Van Gogh found more "personally intimate."[35] It became, as Carol Jacobi observes, an "efficient means of educating his eye," which helps account for "the extraordinary rapidity with which Van Gogh evolved a distinctive and forceful graphic language that was as important for his painting as his drawing."[36] These bold, heavy lines, seen in sketches in his letters where the pencil nearly tears the paper, are the "outlines very forcefully expressed, such as those by Régamey, those by Pinwell and Walker and Herkomer" (358)—the outlines, in other words, of illustrators for *The Graphic* and other illustrated newspapers. This quality of line, borrowed from the engraved image, became a constitutive part of Van Gogh's method for depicting character, present in portraits that point us in the direction of affiliated literary and visual sources, specifically: Dickens and the Victorian illustrated British news.

Delineating Character: Dickens, Illustration, and the Victorian News

> I find *all* of Dickens beautiful. . . .There is no writer, in my opinion, who is *so* much a painter and black-and-white artist as Dickens. He's one of those whose characters are *resurrections* (325).

To understand the stark contrasts in Dickensian characterization is to understand, in no small part, Van Gogh's approach to portraying individuals too. It can be said that Van Gogh performed his own "resurrection" of Dickens in his portraits of the poor, working class, and overlooked. Meyer Schapiro declared Van Gogh's depictions of individuals "the first democratic portraits,"[37] an assessment

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he divides into subject and technique. Van Gogh, like his favorite novelists, sought to represent "perfectly anonymous folk" who were "portrayed with the same unfailing sympathy." Just as Van Gogh saw George Eliot's depictions of peasants and Dickens's witness of the "extremely poor" as an important ideological shift in representation, so did he enact this class shift in his art. To elevate "peasants, young people, a baby, a mother, a zouave, a neighbor, a one-eyed man," and other "perfectly anonymous folk" to portraiture's gaze is, in essence, to both undermine portraiture's status as an elite art commodity and claim it, perhaps paradoxically, for the "anonymous."[38] This move defies portraiture's call to historic specificity linked with class, a purchased visual record of existence, and also renovates it. What makes the portrait "democratic" in Schapiro's view is a quality that Patricia Andersen explores through defining "mass" and "popular" art against "high art." If "high" as a category "refers to the objects of fine arts" associated with "economic privilege," then "popular" art is defined as being "generally accessible," to the "taste of a majority of ordinary people" and a "commercial success," a movement she particularly links with "high-circulation pictorial magazines."[39] These were the very magazines that Dickens contributed to, edited, ran, and made famous—and the same magazines that Van Gogh assiduously collected with his brother. They were also perhaps the showcases for the first truly "democratic" portraits, which were likely not done in oil paint but in printer's ink, and sought to create effects through literal "impression," the bold outline pressed into the paper, which Van Gogh reproduced and then, through his impasto, wrought in convex, giving the outline a tactile effect.

Portraiture, in particular, provided an avenue for a new species of art that Van Gogh wanted to create: an art that dissolved the high–low cultural divide, unifying meticulous technique with subjects and styles found in mass print publications. "I always have hopes that a great revolution still awaits us in portraiture. . . . Ah, what portraits we could make from life with photography and painting!" (700). The portrait provided this subversive renovating potential given both its original upper-class commodity status, as well as its figurative insistence on historicizing individuals by giving their identities duration and record.[40] Portraiture, an art form already counterposed to the prestige of history painting, was nevertheless inextricably linked with commercialism, and with the transition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries between a landed gentry that authenticated its existence in baronetage records and costly oil paint, and a growing populace of ahistoric individuals.

The question arose of how portraiture could now capture those whom it had traditionally overlooked, faces that never before would have made it into the portrait's gilded frame. The difficulty of capturing this status boiled down to a problem at once aesthetic and ethical: How is it possible to present someone as invisible in a visual medium? How do you capture someone who is being overlooked in plain sight? One might create character portraits like that of Stephen Blackpool in Dickens's *Hard Times*, a book that Van Gogh revered, or images like those in the *Heads of the People* series that he admired in *The Graphic*, and that he vowed to remake in his portraits of peasants.[41]

Dickens embraced an aesthetic precariousness between capturing the individual and the type, a "heartbroken tenderness" and "glimpse of a superhuman

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infinite" that Van Gogh associated with Shakespearean characterization and Rembrandt (784), and yet simultaneously, with caricature and cartoon. As E.M. Forster famously noted, "Dickens' people are nearly all flat. . . . Nearly every one can be summed up in a sentence."[42] Rather than dismiss this flatness as simplistic or primitive, Forster hailed it as an important aspect of Dickens's contribution to literature: "Part of the genius of Dickens is that he does use types and caricatures, people whom we recognize the instant they re-enter, and yet achieves effects that are not mechanical and a vision of humanity that is not shallow."[43] We see this effect in Stephen Blackpool from Dickens's *Hard Times*, a worker Van Gogh greatly admired. Stephen appears to readers as a curiously devalued protagonist:

> A rather stooping man, with a knitted brow, a pondering expression of face, and a hard-looking head sufficiently capacious, on which his iron-grey hair lay long and thin, Old Stephen might have passed for a particularly intelligent man in his condition. Yet he was not. He took no place among those remarkable 'Hands,' who, piecing together their broken intervals of leisure through many years, had mastered difficult sciences, and acquired a knowledge of most unlikely things. He held no station among the Hands who could make speeches and carry on debates. Thousands of his compeers could talk much better than he, at any time. He was a good power-loom weaver, and a man of perfect integrity. What more he was, or what else he had in him, if anything, let him show for himself.[44]

Dickens insists on Stephen's flatness as a character, and that readers accept a rendering of his person done only, figuratively, in outline. Although Dickens's protagonist might "have passed for intelligent" given his capacious cranium and worried expression, Dickens insists: "Yet he was not." With this testy staccato the narrator shuts down our expectations about how literary portraiture works, especially for central characters: namely, that the narrator describes the outer physical appearance of a character as an entrée for describing his exceptional inner qualities. Nothing doing. Dickens, in a figurative beheading, cuts off access to Stephen's inner workings, going so far as to call his very interiority into question. We will only be given a view of Stephen's "hard-looking head," each of these three words—"hard," "looking," and "head"—fulfilling the same shared function of resisting and even negating space for insight. This phrase also clearly undermines portraiture as a genre focused on faces. The emphasis is on Stephen's "head" rather than his face, on its "hard" surface appearance, not inner qualities. As Richard Brilliant writes in his book *On Portraiture*, "The aim of painting is to give insight, and the creation of an appearance is important only as an expression of thought."[45] Yet Dickens insists on rendering appearances without expressing thought. We are pushed to doubt whether Stephen's full character is being hidden from us or whether there is nothing there to hide. As the narrator says, "what else he had in him, if anything, let him show for himself." Dickens thus performs a curious move, presenting Stephen as both a central personage and yet insisting that he must simultaneously be viewed as a stock character—rendered, not coincidentally, in the visual iconography of the news portrait and the stock news image.

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Fig. 3
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Carpenter's Yard and Laundry*, 1882. Pencil, black chalk, pen and brush in black ink, brown wash, opaque watercolor, scratched, traces of squaring, on laid paper, 11¼ × 18⁷⁄₁₆ in. Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo.

Van Gogh inherently linked Dickens and the illustrated news on both an emotional and aesthetic level. As he wrote his brother Theo, "I often felt low in England for various reasons but *those*, the Black and White and Dickens, are things that make up for it all" (305). He would add that "For me the English draughtsmen are what Dickens is in the sphere of literature. It's one and the same sentiment, noble and healthy, and something one always comes back to. . . ." In many of his comments on Dickens's influence, the writer's prose is lauded alongside and in continuity with praise of British illustrators, several of whom illustrated Dickens's works as well. Van Gogh purchased the complete illustrated *Household Edition* of Dickens for these illustrations as well as for the prose. He records:

> I have in front of me a volume of the Household edition of Dickens, with illustrations. They are excellent and are drawn by Barnard and Fildes. They show parts of Old London, which take on a very different appearance from the carpenter's yard, for example, also because of the peculiarities of the wood engraving. Yet I still believe that the way to get that boldness and daring later is to quietly carry on observing as faithfully as possible now. As you see, there are several planes in this drawing, and one can look around in it and peer into all sorts of nooks and crannies. It lacks that ruggedness as yet, at least doesn't by any means have that quality to the same extent as the above illustrations, but that will come with practice (235).

The sketch is titled *Carpenter's Yard and Laundry* (fig. 3), a rendering of the view outside Van Gogh's window in The Hague. This image and many others reveal how Van Gogh's works were influenced not simply by Dickens's writing,

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Fig. 4
William Small (British, 1843–1929), “The British Rough” from the series, *Heads of the People Drawn from Life*, from the magazine *The Graphic*, June 1875. Wood engraving and letterpress printing on paper, 19 15/16 × 12 in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (t0132V1962).

but in a complex web of adaptation, also by the author’s artistic interpreters like Fildes, Mahoney, Hablot K. Browne, and Frederick Barnard—artists who also illustrated British periodicals that Van Gogh purchased as well. Dickens, his British illustrators, and the draftsmen associated with the rise of popular British print culture impressed themselves on Van Gogh’s consciousness, an influence that pervades his portraits, both in their chosen subjects and method of representing individuals.

This method of social realist portraiture can also be understood as coming to Van Gogh by way of *The Graphic*’s portrait series, “Heads of the People.” The first image in the series was “The British Rough” (fig. 4). In its aggressive curtailing of this portrait in profile, this image seemingly beheads its main figure, his neck muscles straining against two strong arms that disappear, much like his body, outside of the frame. This image fits with a genre of illustrations in this period of criminals resisting having their likeness taken after arrest, but this portrait is unique for its striking composition. It appears as though the man is both resisting arrest and the indignity of partial representation, or rather he seems to be fighting against the encasing pictorial frame as well as against the arms that restrain him.

A related form of curtailment or occlusion occurs in portraits of sorrowing and hunched figures. These works evoke pathos by evacuating the defining

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Fig. 5
Sir Samuel Luke Fildes (British, 1843–1927), *The Empty Chair, Gad's Hill—Ninth of June*, 1870. Watercolor on paper, 15 × 25 in. Courtesy of the Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia, Elkins bequest, 1947 (cdc102108).

feature of the portrait: the human face. Subjects are depicted sorrowing behind their hands or with downcast and shadowed faces, their emotional state being posed as at once exceeding, eluding, and defying representation. The masking or cloaking gesture reveals a bid for privacy that must, in effect, be snatched away from within the exhibitory form of the portrait. The downcast posture functions in several ways all at once: as a resistance against viewing but also as a typecasting. Indeed, the word "downcast," so often applied to these images, captures a key duality, for the ways of *seeing* and of *being seen* are here conflated. To *look down* and to be *looked down upon* become visually inseparable, revealing a process by which individuals are converted from seeing agents into sights.

It is this process of reduction that is at once performed and protested in an image that had particular power for Van Gogh, *Houseless and Hungry* (pl. 73) by Luke Fildes, which appeared in *The Graphic*'s inaugural issue in 1869, and was later made into a well-known oil painting of the subject, *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*, exhibited in 1874 at the Royal Academy.[46] In this group portrait, no single gaze meets the eyes of the viewer. At its very center we find the face of a slumped man, his body almost dislocated at the torso next to a downcast neighbor who has fallen on hard times, signified by his shabby top hat. These downward glances appear throughout the line, notably in the faces of two mothers who bookend the portrait, both turning inward toward the center and gazing downward. The woman on the left in particular, hiding her face and her child's behind her shawl, seems to fend off the inquiring looks of viewers both inside and outside the frame. As Fildes recalled in recounting this scene as one he witnessed in person, this woman was fleeing an abusive husband with her children.

Fildes's image drew people into reading *The Graphic*, and also prompted Dickens to contact him and request that he be the illustrator for *Edwin Drood* (and, in effect, Dickens's last self-appointed illustrator). When Dickens died in 1870, Fildes was commissioned to do "The Empty Chair" (fig. 5), using, one might argue, the same central vacancy that he employed in his portraits of the poor to

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memorialize Dickens. Dickens's death—and its memorialization by Fildes—rose up for Van Gogh as an instigating force for his creative process. Fildes, Herkomer, Frank Holl, William Small, and other illustrators inspired Van Gogh's "respect" and reverence for "something holy here, something noble, something sublime." Imagining the beginnings of "that group of great artists" in "foggy London," he created for himself a mythic story of his own artistic origins vicariously by imagining the group of British draftsmen who preceded him coming together.

> Deeper in my imagination I see the draughtsmen in their various studios setting to work with the best kind of enthusiasm.
>
> I see Millais going up to C. Dickens with the first No. of The Graphic. Dickens was then in the evening of his life, he had a paralyzed foot, walked with a kind of crutch. Millais says, while showing Him the drawing by Luke Fildes, *Homeless and hungry*—the poor and vagabonds outside a night refuge—Millais says to Dickens, give him your Edwin Drood to illustrate, and Dickens says, 'Very well'.
>
> Edwin Drood was Dickens's last work, and Luke Fildes, having got in touch with D. through those small illustrations, comes into his room on the day of his death—sees his empty chair standing there, and so it was that one of the old Nos. of The Graphic had that striking drawing THE EMPTY CHAIR.
>
> *Empty chairs*—there are many, more will come, and sooner or later instead of Herkomer, Luke Fildes, Frank Holl, William Small &c. there will only be *Empty chairs* (293).

Van Gogh desperately wanted to become a draftsman for *The Graphic* or the *London Illustrated News*, and to take his place among that imagined pantheon of chairs, keeping the seats from going empty. He laments the end of this era of draftsmen, protesting a turn to greater commercialism and away from the originality of those emerging social realist prints he associated with the time of Dickens. If *Houseless and Hungry* ushered in a new visual era of social realism, it also influenced Van Gogh's portraits of the downcast, including *At Eternity's Gate*, also known in sketch form and lithography as "Old Man with His Head in His Hands," "Sorrowing Old Man," and "Worn Out" (fig. 6), and also in his striking image of a downcast woman, "At Eternity's Gate."[47] As with Dickens's description of Stephen Blackpool as "rather stooping," Van Gogh's hunched and sorrowing portraits resist exposing the individual to an audience's penetrating gaze. The turning away of the face, an act of self-obscuring, takes on a heroic and iconic status in these images.

Like the artists in *The Graphic* and the books of Dickens, Van Gogh embraced a visual starkness associated with caricature. This approach is not without its challenges: to center on a flat character runs counter, in many respects, to novelistic protocols; likewise, the boldly outlined figures that Van Gogh created in *The Potato Eaters* earned him immediate criticism. That Dickens and Van Gogh employed these methods so insistently speaks to their aesthetic and ethical commitment, a stance that paralleled trends in the pictorial press in inverting the high and the low by conjoining the stock image and the singular portrait, the stock character and the central hero. Novels and visual images alike played with the sheer reproducibility, the commonness and also the "coarseness" of the

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Fig. 6
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *At Eternity's Gate*, The Hague, November 1882. Lithograph, $19\frac{11}{16} \times 13\frac{7}{16}$ in. Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (p0007V1962 / F1662).

stock image, as a way of capturing the problem of the unseen multitude of downcast people. The effect is to give the marginalized a new centrality and iconicity. Artists and writers alike made use of the newly unstable status of portraiture to uphold "low" reproducible art as the means for exalting the common, the unexceptional, and the stooping, turning the disregarded, or only partially viewed, into subjects of the highest regard, attention, and respect.

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Point of View and Perspective

> I refuse to accept that a painter may or must do nothing but paint. I mean that while many regard, for instance, reading books or something else as what they'd call a waste of time, it seems to me on the contrary that—far from working less or less well if one attempts to learn about another area that's nonetheless directly related—one works more and better as a result—and at any rate the point of view from which one sees things and one's approach to life is a matter of importance and a great influence on the work (345).

In *Adam Bede*, the narrator invites us to approach the rural village of Hayslope through the eyes of an unnamed solitary traveler. The passage follows the traveler's wending path, painting a picture of cornfields as lush and inviting as Constable's. "High up against the horizon were the huge conical masses of hill, like giant mounds intended to fortify this region of corn and grass against the keen and hungry winds of the north" (22). Eliot's ekphrasis gives us a landscape painter's view in fictional form, a setting framed as through a Claude glass for full picturesque effect. Yet the narrator interrupts this immersive experience, gesturing at what lies immediately beyond the traveler's field of vision outside of the Claude glass's enclosing frame: "Doubtless there was a large sweep of park and a broad glassy pool in front of that mansion, but the swelling slope of meadow would not let our traveller see them from the village green" (23); he "might have seen other beauties in the landscape if he had turned a little in his saddle . . . towards the green corn-fields and walnut trees of the Hall Farm." Observations about what the traveler cannot glimpse but only imagine remind us of our constricted and mediated view as readers, a vision that is cropped, framed, and shaped by the agency of the author. Like blinkered horses, we can only ever see so much; all representations, even the most expansive, are partial views.

Van Gogh and the writers he most admired well understood the longing that arises from the constraints of subjectivity. To hold one view, to be offered a glimpse from one hilltop, window, expanse, or vantage, is to foreclose holding another vista in the same moment. But artists and authors, while teasing us with the limits of representation and of human subjectivity, offer the illusion of being able to open a window onto another view, one that exists outside of our own limited subject positions. These other subjectivities fascinated Van Gogh and the writers he revered, fueling the sympathetic realism of George Eliot, the social realism of Dickens, and nineteenth-century draftsman for *The Graphic*. These limitations can birth a desire to see and feel from another's perspective, and artists and writers offer the illusion of fulfilling such desire—even while calling attention to the labor of artifice, the legerdemain behind all acts of sorcery: "With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader" (*Adam Bede*, 9). Van Gogh and the writers he revered offered their audiences a kind of magic: insight into the lives of others, vistas onto scenes at once familiar, far-reaching, and unknown. Eliot's incantatory opening to *Adam Bede* reminds us that the adjacent words "sorcerer" and "undertake" do not truly stand in opposition; the illusion of effortless conjuring takes effort, the mastery of technique.

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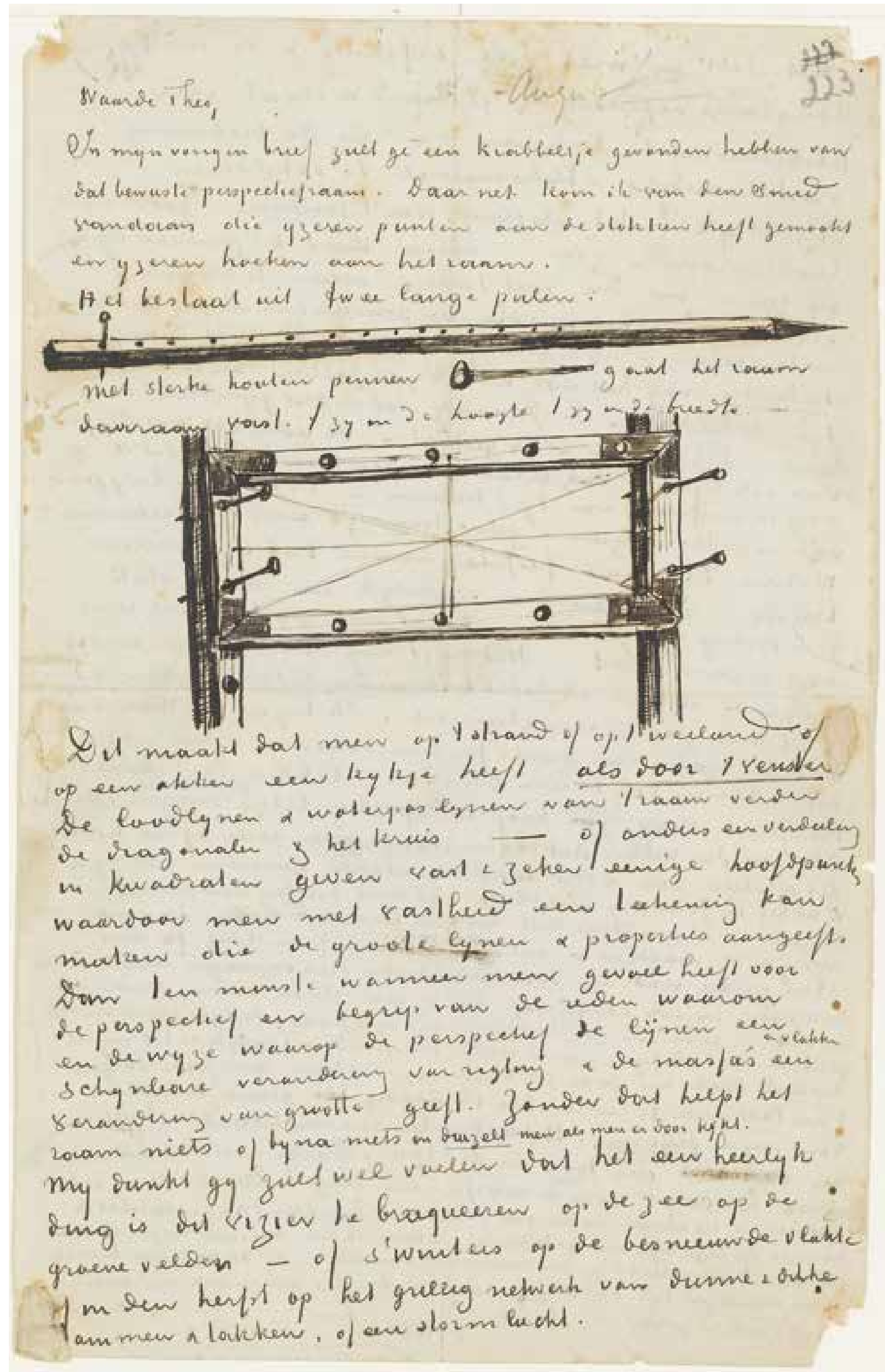
Waarde Theo,

In mijn vorigen brief zult ge een krabbeltje gevonden hebben van dat bewuste perspectiefraam. Daar net kom ik van den smid vandaan die yzeren punten aan de stokken heeft gemaakt en yzeren hoeken aan het raam.
Het bestaat uit twee lange palen:

met sterke houten pennen gaat het raam daaraan vast. 't zy in de hoogte 't zy in de breedte —

Dit maakt dat men op 't strand of op 't weiland of op een akker een kykje heeft als door 't venster.
De loodlynen & waterpaslynen van 't raam verder de diagonalen & het kruis — of anders een verdeeling in kwadraten geven vast & zeker eenige hoofdpunten waardoor men met vastheid een teekening kan maken die de groote lynen & proporties aangeeft.
Dan ten minste wanneer men gevoel heeft voor de perspectief en begrip van de reden waarom de perspectief de lijnen een schynbare verandering van richting & de massa's en vlakken een verandering van grootte geeft. Zonder dat helpt het raam niets of byna niets en duizelt men als men er door kykt.
My dunkt gy zult wel vatten dat het een heerlyk ding is dit vizier te braqueeren op de zee op de groene velden — of 's winters op de besneeuwde vlakte of in den herfst op het grillig netwerk van dunne & dikke stammen & takken, of een stormlucht.

Fig. 7
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh with sketches of Post for Perspective Frame, Peg for Perspective Frame and Perspective Frame (recto), The Hague, August 5 or 6, 1882. Pen and ink on paper, 8¼ × 5⁵⁄₁₆ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (b0245V1962r).

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Fig. 8
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Country Road*, The Hague, March–April 1882. Pencil, pen and brush and ink, watercolor, on paper, $9\frac{11}{16} \times 13\frac{9}{16}$ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d0428V1962 / F1089).

In this spirit, Van Gogh proudly wrote to Theo about a new acquisition that would launch him as a landscape artist, a perspective frame (fig. 7).

> In my last letter you'll have found a little scratch of that perspective frame. I've just come back from the blacksmith, who has put iron spikes on the legs and iron corners on the frame.
>
> It consists of two long legs: The frame is fixed to them by means of strong wooden pegs, either horizontally or vertically. The result is that on the beach or in a meadow or a field you have a view AS IF THROUGH A WINDOW" (254).

Where does visual perspective meet literary point of view? Where does one's physical angle of vision, the windows one opens onto the world, meet the literary representation of subjectivity and interior states? To ask these questions is to ask where Van Gogh's landscapes meet Eliot's narration, where his drawing of a country road (fig. 8),[48] one of his first experiments with the new perspective frame, meets his appreciation of the scene of Hetty's "Journey in Despair" (chapter 37) in *Adam Bede.* Her wandering pregnant and alone, the scene that made the greatest impression on him, appeared to him as though Eliot had created a landscape painting by Michel. As he wrote to Theo, "You well understood that girl in Adam Bede. That landscape—in which a dull yellow sandy road leads over the hill to the village, with mud or whitewashed huts with green, moss-covered roofs

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and here and there a blackthorn, on either side brown heather and bunt and a grey sky, with a narrow white strip above the horizon—is by Michel" (30).

The scene he favored is replete both with descriptions of landscape and with Eliot's use of free indirect discourse, a technique for narrating in third person that gives first-person insights into a character's inner thoughts. "How she yearned to be back in her safe home again, cherished and cared for as she had always been! . . . Where should she go? . . . At last she was among the fields she had been dreaming of, on a long narrow pathway leading towards a wood. If there should be a pool in that wood!" (412–13). This passage opened for Van Gogh a vision as moving as those he witnessed with his first experiments using a perspective frame. As he wrote excitedly to his brother, "I expect you can imagine how delightful it is to train this view-finder on the sea, on the green fields—or in the winter on snow-covered land or in the autumn on the fantastic network of thin and thick trunks and branches, or on a stormy sky" (254). He confessed that this technical innovation wrought changes that altered his path as an artist in ways he had not conceived at the outset. "I would have gone on for longer with just black and white and the outline. *But there's no turning back now*" (254). Literary frames both limit and reveal, offering increased attention, a sense of boundaries that inform the very content itself, the discontents themselves functioning to hem in and well up meaning. This narrative principle guided Van Gogh's training as well, which owed much not only to the devices that shaped his perception but to the books that shaped his outward and inward vision too.

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NOTES

Thank you to the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals for funding research at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, and to participants in "A Single Drop of Ink for a Mirror: A Symposium on Nineteenth-Century Literature and the Visual Arts" at Princeton University for their helpful suggestions.

1 In *Van Gogh: A Literary Mind* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2009), Wouter van der Veen surveys studies of Van Gogh's literary sources, arguing for an approach that eschews "seeking to know what Van Gogh took from the Bible, from Michelet or from Zola and apply the data extracted to his paintings better" (19). He draws a critical arc from the 1940s and 1950s, starting with Carl Nordenfalk's "Van Gogh and Literature," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 10 (1947): 132–47, and Jean Seznec's "Literary Inspiration in Van Gogh, *Magazine of Art* 43 (December 1950): 282–88, 306–7, to A.M. Hammacher's "Van Gogh–Michelet–Zola," *Vincent Bulletin* 4, no. 3 (1975): 2–21; and exhibition catalogues from the early 2000s.

2 See *Van Gogh: The Birth of an Artist*, ed. Sjraar van Heugten (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

3 Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998 [1928]), 228.

4 See Carol Zemel's *The Formation of a Legend*: *Van Gogh Criticism, 1890–1920* (UMI Research Press, 1980): "[B]y the turn of the century a heroic image of struggle, perseverance, and self-sacrifice had been formed, largely through the essays of Albert Aurier, Octave Mirabeau, and Emile Bernard. . . . In January 1890, [Aurier's] story of van Gogh was published as the feature article on painting in the newly Symbolist *Mercure de France*. Widely read the essay not only offered the first critical discussion of Vincent's art, it also linked his style to his temperament, and presented both style and personality as embodiments of the Symbolist ideal" (62–63).

5 An emerging modernist self-definition took shape by way of identification with Van Gogh and Post-Impressionist art, an impression solidified by Roger Fry's subsequent "Retrospect" in *Vision and Design*, which Woolf reviewed. Later, Leonard Woolf was involved in a second Van Gogh Exhibit in 1912, also organized by Fry, that followed the success of the first Grafton show. Van Gogh's bold color and texture spoke vividly in modernist circles, and his biography, already being shaped as inextricable from a public fascination with his work, hearkened back to Romantic and Symbolist insistence on the artist as a conduit for passion.

6 For examples, see Marlene A. Briggs, "Vincent van Gogh, Virginia Woolf, and Old Shoes: A Cross-Cultural Iconography of Historical Trauma from the Great War to the Iraq War," in *Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary Woolf* , ed. Ann Martin and Kathryn Holland (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 50–56. Surveying the effect of the exhibition on Woolf, Benjamin Harvey writes that "Post-Impressionism . . . provided Woolf with a compelling aesthetic model" (154) in "Virginia Woolf, Art Galleries and Museums," *Edinburgh Companion to Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, ed. Maggie Humm (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 140–59. Also see Jack F. Stewart's work on Van Gogh and modernism, for example, in "The Vital Art of Lawrence and Van Gogh," *D.H. Lawrence Review* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 123–48, and his assertion that Woolf "made raids on postimpressionist painting in the experimental writing of 'Kew Gardens' (1919) and 'Blue & Green'" in "'A Need of Distance and Blue': Space, Color, and Creativity in *To the Lighthouse*": *Twentieth-Century Literature* 46, no. 1 (Spring, 2000): 78–99. Humm's "Visual Modernism: Virginia Woolf's 'Portraits' and Photography," *Woolf Studies Annual* 8 (2002): 93–106, compares Woolf's literary portraiture to Van Gogh's "paintings of peasant women" in that "[b]oth equally exaggerate women's laboring bodies" (99).

7 See Ronald Pickvance, *English Influences on Vincent van Gogh* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974); and *Van Gogh: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in England*, eds., Martin Bailey and Debora Silverman (London: Lund Humphreys, 1992).

8 Van Gogh reflected in his letters upon the Strand "where the offices of the illustrated magazines are (Ill. Lond. News, The Graphic, Seeley &c.), not far from Booksellers' Row either, full of all kinds of bookstalls and shops where one sees all kinds of things, from the etchings of Rembrandt to the Household edition of Dickens. . . . I also cling to the church and to the bookshops" (133).

9 See Vincent Alessi's "It's a Kind of Bible: Vincent van Gogh's Collection of English Black-and-White Illustrations: Analysis and Influence" (PhD diss, La Trobe University, 2009).

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10 "You'll understand that I'm in two minds about the following question. If I cut the prints out and mount them, they look better like that and can be arranged by the draughtsmen who made them. But then I damage the text, which is useful in many ways if one wants to look up something, about exhibitions say, although the reviews of them are very superficial. One also damages, for example, the novels, like Hugo's" (306).

11 For a discussion of the pinholes, see Andrea Korda, *Printing and Painting the News in Victorian London: The Graphic and Social Realism, 1869–1891* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 13. Van Gogh's copies of these images reside in the Van Gogh Museum, in Amsterdam. One of his two copies of *The Graphic*'s "The Miner" from the *Heads of the People* series displays signs of particular admiration, judging by the pinholes and resin fingerprints found on its corners and margins.

12 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), xi.

13 See Colta Ives, *Vincent van Gogh: The Drawings* (New York and New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2005), 94: "Van Gogh took his inspiration for *Weaver, with Baby in a Highchair* from George Eliot's *Silas Marner*."

14 Eliza Rathbone, Steele Elizabeth, William H. Robinson, and Marcia Steele, *Van Gogh Repetitions* (Washington, DC: The Phillips Collection, 2013), discusses the difficulty of dating individual works from the weaver series, as well as Van Gogh's identification as an artist with weavers as artisans in the section on "Weavers" (43–51). It also relates how Sjraar van Heugten dates them by Van Gogh's increasing comprehension of the loom's workings.

15 George Eliot, *Silas Marner* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003 [1861]), 5.

16 See Carol Zemel's *Van Gogh's Progress: Utopia, Modernity, and Late-Nineteenth-Century Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ronald Pickvance's *English Influences on Vincent van* Gogh (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974); and Griselda Pollock's *Van Gogh: Artist of His Time* (New York: Dutton, 1978).

17 *Van Gogh Repetitions* (44) discusses how his work resembles designs by mechanical engineers, citing Gabriel van der Brink's important observation that Van Gogh's methods of selection are steeped in social realism and an "abiding sympathy of the common people" and "moral commitment to the weak."

18 Zemel, *Van Gogh's Progress*, 56–57.

19 Also, see *The Drawings* (94) for an account of the classification by Stan Leurs and Mark Edo Tralbaut of this image as illustrating "faith." "Der verdwenen kerk van Nuenen: Door Vincent van Gogh levend gebleven in de herinnering," *Brabantia*, February 1, 1957, 29–68 and 52–53.

20 In addition to the works cited above, Debora Silverman's essay "A Pilgrim's Progress" in *Van Gogh: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in England*, ed. Martin Bailey (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1992) gives an important vision of Van Gogh's approach to religious texts and iconology.

21 Zemel, *Van Gogh's Progress*, 56.

22 See Ruth Bernard Yeazell's exploration of how "George Eliot began her career by defiantly identifying her art with Dutch painting" (91) in *The Art of the Everyday: Dutch Painting and the Realist Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). For information on the influence of Dutch Golden Age painting on nineteenth-century visual culture and literature by way of France, with French reception in turn potentially influencing Van Gogh's relation to seventeenth-century Dutch predecessors, see *The Rise of the Cult of Rembrandt: Reinventing an Old Master in Nineteenth-Century France* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004).

23 See Eliot's letter to her publisher, John Blackwood, January 12, 1861, in *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 3: 371.

24 Indeed, Eliot and Van Gogh may have seen the same works by the Old Masters on display at the Royal Academy and in European galleries, Van Gogh recording his visit to see Old Masters at Hampton Court [85] in 1876 and at the Royal Academy in 1875 [29]. George Eliot also regularly visited the Royal Academy, as related by Leonée Ormond, "George Eliot and the Victorian Art World," *George Eliot Review* 36 (2005): 25–37.

25 John Blackwood to George Eliot, February 19, 1861.

26 *Adam Bede* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008 [1859]) 195. Quotations from the text will be cited parenthetically.

27 George Eliot, "A Natural History of German Life," *Westminster Review* 66 (o.s.), 10 (n.s.) (July 1856): 51–79.

28 Ibid.

29 For discussion of these debates, see Joseph Wiesenfarth's "*Middlemarch*: The Language of Art," *PMLA* 97, no. 3 (May 1982): 363–77; and Hugh Witemeyer's *George Eliot and the Visual Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

30 Carlyle's unconventional *Sartor Resartus* was first published in *Fraser's Magazine* serially from November 1833 to August 1834. As Van Gogh recorded in March of 1883, "At the moment

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I'm reading his 'Sartor resartus'—the philosophy of old clothes—under 'old clothes' he includes all manner of forms, and in the case of religion all dogmas. It's beautiful—and honest—and humane. There's been a lot of grumbling about this book, as with his other books. Many regard Carlyle as a monster. One nice comment on 'the philosophy of old clothes' is the following. Carlyle not only strips mankind naked but skins it too. Something like that. Well, that isn't true, but it's true that he's honest enough not to call the shirt the skin—and far from finding a desire to belittle man in his work, I for one see that he puts man in a high position in the universe. At the same time, more than bitter criticism, I see love of mankind in him, a great deal of love" (325).

31 Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) discusses Eliot's use of dialect in textural terms, viewing her class distance from the peasants she depicts as "a break in the texture of the novel, an evident failure of continuity between the necessary language of the novelist and the recorded language of many of the characters" (169).

32 In *Vincent van Gogh: The Drawings*, his ambitions to learn printmaking are discussed, from his early work in 1882 to 1883 using a lithographic crayon to his final lithograph made in 1885, "a copy of his painting *The Potato Eaters*": "Some of Van Gogh's earliest efforts were modeled on engravings clipped from periodicals that he had stashed in portfolios. From these dark images rendered in an abbreviated system of marks that assured their survival in the mangle of industrial presses he adopted a distinct phraseology and pathos." Also see Van Heugten's discussion of different versions in *The Graphic Work of Vincent van Gogh* (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1995) 74–78, and the printer's shock that "[w]ithout even making a preliminary sketch he began working directly with lithographic crayon. He worked from memory. With broad, heavy lines he produced angular, rugged heads of a peasant family at table. . . . Although this was apparently the first time he had drawn on a stone it did not bother him in the least" (74). The lithographer reportedly "looked on such work with contempt" (74).

33 See *Hard Times: Social Realism in Victorian Art*, ed. Julian Treuherz (London: Lund Humphries in association with Manchester City Art Galleries, 1987).

34 In his study of *The Potato Eaters* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1993), Louis van Tilborg discusses how the work's "sombre colours" were criticized as seeming to "have been extracted from peat" (9).

35 Carol Jacobi, "Black and White: Van Gogh's British Books and Prints," in Carol Jacobi, ed. *Van Gogh and Britain*, exh. cat., Tate Britain (New York: Rizzoli-Electra, 2019), 50.

36 Ibid.

37 *Masters of Art*: *Van Gogh* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1969), 15.

38 Ibid.

39 Patricia Andersen, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790–1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 8–9.

40 These portraits, Roy Strong writes, "were an expression of class and status. We have virtually no visual records of the mass of the population at all. British portraits give us the likenesses above all of the aristocratic and gentry classes extending out as time progressed to include the professions, such as clerics and writers, and to the middle classes. It is only today, with the advent of inexpensive photographic equipment and processing, that the portrait has become the prerogative of Everyman." See introduction to *The British Portrait: 1660–1960* (New York: Antique Collectors Club, 1991), 10.

41 See Van Heugten, *The Graphic Work of Vincent van Gogh*, for a discussion of this series and how the "large engravings published in this magazine, many of which covered two pages, were also issued separately on a superior grade of paper," and reflected "the prevailing taste for social realism" (11).

42 E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, 1985 [1927]), 71.

43 Ibid.

44 Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003 [1854]), 66.

45 Richard Brilliant, *On Portraiture* (New York: Reaktion Books, 2013), 58.

46 Susan Casteras comments that this image "seems almost single-handedly to have ushered in a new era and a new way of looking at urban reality" in "'Seeing the Unseen': Pictorial Problematics and Victorian Images of Class, Poverty, and Urban Life," in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 264–88 at 275.

47 Van Heugten's *The Graphic Work of Vincent van Gogh* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1995) gives insight into how Van Gogh's work with lithographs shaped his oeuvre, in particular *Worn Out* (p. 54) and *Sorrow* (p. 40).

48 "Van Gogh used the long linear elements so typical of this landscape to produce a successful exercise in two-point perspective" (*The Drawings*, 72).

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CATALOGUE ENTRIES
FOR WORKS BY VAN GOGH IN THE EXHIBITION

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1 MARSH WITH WATER LILIES, ETTEN, JUNE 1881

In 1881, some ten months after deciding to embark on an artistic career, Vincent executed this remarkable drawing. A letter to Theo, written by the end of June that year, identifies the site: an enormous marsh called the Passievaart in Holland's picturesque Brabant province. This is in fact close to where Vincent's family had been living since 1875 when his father, Theodorus van Gogh, had taken up a position as minister of the village of Etten, and it is where Vincent returned after attending the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1880. The same letter describes Vincent's practice of plein air sketching: "We went on a fair number of excursions together, several times to the heath at Seppe, among other places, and the so-called Passievaart, a huge marsh. . . . While he was painting I made a pen drawing of another spot in the marsh where many water lilies grow" (168). The companion on those excursions was fellow painter Anthon van Rappard (1852–1892), whom Vincent had befriended during his sojourn in Brussels. Though Vincent was five years older, Van Rappard was the more adept artist; he had trained in various artists' studios and at art schools and thus had assumed the role of mentor to Vincent's initial artistic endeavors. Van Rappard's own *Passievaart near Seppe* (pl. 69) resulted from one of their joint trips to the marsh in the summer of 1881.

Both drawings overlook the flat marshlands, whose vast extent is indicated by the high horizon and suggested by the horizontal layering of the compositions. In the upper third of Vincent's drawing a long sequence of short parallel lines traverses nearly the entire breadth of the picture. It delineates an embankment, or perhaps, on the evidence of Van Rappard's representation of the middle ground, a shallow patch in the bog. It is repeated again further behind to the left, directly beneath the main horizontal line, conveying a sense of ever-increasing distance toward the village of Seppe located on the horizon. Van Rappard's composition puts the distant scenery with church and trees at center. The flickering pencil scrawls of reed grasses in the foreground imbue the scene with an atmospheric sense of vision.

In setting the horizon significantly higher than in Van Rappard's sketch, Vincent's drawing provides no scenic feature that demands the viewer's attention. The church amounts to little more than an inconspicuous shape to the left on the horizon. Instead, we are drawn to the spot "where many water lilies grow." In the foreground, amid the ovals that define the floating water lilies, we encounter an abundance of pictorial marks. By means of quick pen strokes, Vincent registered the flora of the marshlands: lily pads, blossoms, patches of reed grass. The tight web of pictorial marks induces a striking sense of visual immersion into the landscape. What is more, it is reflective of the artist's physical orientation toward his surroundings in the act of drawing: probably sitting on the grass, bent over a tablet resting on his lap, it was the immediate foreground that filled the artist's visual field. In the June 1881 letter to Theo, he mentions studying the popular *Traité d'aquarelle* by Armand Cassagne (1875), which also gave instructions on perspective. The drawing attests to Van Gogh's talent, even in this early period, for making captivating landscapes and his aptitude with pen and ink.

DM

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Cat. no. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Marsh with Water Lilies, Etten, June 1881

Pen and India ink on paper, with pencil under drawing,
9¼ × 12⅜ in.
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. Collection of Mr. and
Mrs. Paul Mellon (85.777 / F845)

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2 HEAD OF A PEASANT WOMAN, NOVEMBER 1884–MAY 1885

When Van Gogh decided to become an artist in August 1880, his highest ambition was to follow in the footsteps of admired artists like Jean-François Millet (1814–1875) and Jules Breton (1827–1906): like them, he wanted to become a painter of peasant life. In April 1881 he moved in with his parents in the rural village of Etten and wrote to Theo: “Diggers, sowers, ploughers, men and women I must now draw constantly. Examine and draw everything that’s part of a peasant’s life. Just as many others have done and are doing. I’m no longer so powerless in the face of nature as I used to be” (172).

For the first three years of his new career, he concentrated largely on drawing the human figure, convinced that “drawing is the root of everything” (349). But when in December 1883 he moved to Nuenen, where his parents now lived, painting became a major focus. During the winter of 1884–85 he started developing plans for an ambitious figure piece. For the time being he had no clear idea what it would be, but he was certain of the necessity of getting a grip on the peasant physiognomy by making dozens of studies of peasant heads, this profile of a peasant woman among them. In April 1885 this very disciplined approach would lead to the two versions of *The Potato Eaters*, Van Gogh’s most ambitious painting from his Dutch years (see cat. no. 3). As he set off to make these head studies in December 1884, he referred to them as “heads of the people” after the much-admired series by Hubert Herkomer (1849–1914) that he had in his collection of prints (pl. 74).

In his models Van Gogh was looking for faces that had been marked by life and accentuated the roughness of the peasant faces. His friend Willem van de Wacker noted in his recollections of Van Gogh that he always chose “the ugliest models.”[1] Van Gogh was also interested in theories of physiognomy and so-called phrenology, in which facial characteristics are linked to personality. He read an abstract of the theories of Johann Caspar Lavater and Franz Joseph Gall, most likely Alexandre Ysabeau’s *Lavater et Gall: Physiognomonie et phrénologie rendues intelligibles pour tout le monde* (Paris, 1862).

Although their dark palette does not readily suggest it, studies like these peasant heads (ill. 1) were also experiments in color for Van Gogh. He had become fascinated by the color theories of Eugène Delacroix, about which he had read in books by Charles Blanc.[2] Here he learned, among other things, about complementary colors—the strongest color contrasts possible: yellow against purple, red against green, and blue against orange. Especially in the Cincinnati study, Van Gogh uses the red in the face against several shades of green. While the peasant woman seen in profile wears her simple daily head wear, the woman seen from the front has dressed a bit more elaborately. She has put on a shawl and the white cap that would be worn only after work, not during the day.

SVH

Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Head of a Peasant Woman*, December 1884. Oil on canvas, 17¼ × 13⅝ in. Saint Louis Art Museum, Gift of Charles H. Yalem by exchange, and funds given by Bruce and Kimberly Olson, Mrs. Alvin R. Frank, Sam and Marilyn Fox and the Fox Family Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Jack C. Taylor, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew C. Taylor, the Ruth Peters MacCarthy Charitable Trust, The Arthur and Helen Baer Charitable Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. David C. Farrell, The Jordan Charitable Foundation, Nancy and Kenneth Kranzberg, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas K. Langsdorf, Mr. and Mrs. William C. Rusnack, and the Gary Wolff Family (90:2000).

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Cat. no. 2
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Head of a Peasant Woman, November 1884–May 1885
Oil on canvas on wood panel, 14⅞ × 9⅝ in.
Cincinnati Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John J. Emery (1962.15 / F135)

1 Van de Wacker's recollections were published in Benno J. Stokvis, "Nieuwe nasporingen omtrent Vincent van Gogh in Brabant," in *Opgang*, January 1, 1927, pp. 11–14.
2 Charles Blanc, *Grammaire des arts du dessin, architecture, sculpture, peinture* (Paris, 1870); and Charles Blanc, *Les artistes de mon temps* (Paris, 1876).

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3 THE POTATO EATERS, APRIL 1885

After having studied the physiognomy and anatomy of the peasants in the winter of 1884–85, Van Gogh gradually began to develop an idea for a complex figure piece. He decided on the subject of peasants at their meal. In a letter of Monday, April 6, 1885, he mentioned to Theo that he planned to "start this week on that thing with the peasants around a dish of potatoes in the evening, or—perhaps I'll make daylight of it, or both, or—'neither one'—you'll say" (490). In the end he opted for the latter and started conceiving *The Potato Eaters*, intended as no less than a master proof that would demonstrate that he had become a mature artist.

The composition was painted in the cottage of the family De Groot-van Rooij, and in all likelihood members of the family (who numbered seven) served as models. There are two versions of the painting, a large study now at the Kröller-Müller Museum (ill. 1), and the final painting, which is kept in the Van Gogh Museum.

Van Gogh was so pleased with the study that he wanted to tell friends and fellow artists about it and decided to make a lithograph after the painting. He had some experience with that technique: in The Hague he had made eight lithographs, seeking to produce inexpensive prints with everyday subjects '*from the people for the people*' (291, 294).[1] For these prints he had drawn the images on transfer paper, which made it possible to transfer the drawing to the stone. After printing, the image would be identical to the original drawing. Now, however, Van Gogh went to the Eindhoven printing works of Dirk Gestel, where he purchased a lithographic stone and started drawing on it immediately. Since he did not reverse the image, the printed result is a mirror image of the painting. It refueled the ambition for a graphic project, but now dedicated to peasant life: "this is to be the first in a series of lithographs, which I'm planning to start again. I'm thinking of making a series of subjects from peasant life, in short—*the peasants at home*' (493).

Van Gogh's high spirits about his achievement were severely deflated by a letter from Anthon van Rappard, who had received one of the prints of *The Potato Eaters*. Van Rappard was extremely critical and adopted a sarcastic tone: "You'll agree with me that such work isn't intended seriously. You can do better than this—fortunately; but why, then, observe and treat everything so superficially? Why not study the movements? *Now* they're posing. That coquettish little hand of that woman at the back, how untrue! And what connection is there between the coffeepot, the table and the hand lying on top of the handle? What's that pot doing, for that matter; it isn't standing, it isn't being held, but what then? And why may that man on the right not have a knee or a belly or lungs? Or are they in his back? And why must his arm be a metre too short? And why must he lack half of his nose? And why must the woman on the left have a sort of little pipe stem with a cube on it for a nose? And with such a manner of working you dare to invoke the names of Millet and Breton? Come on! Art is too important, it seems to me, to be treated so cavalierly" (503).

Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Potato Eaters*, April–May 1885 (F 78 JH 734). Oil on canvas mounted on panel, 29¹⁄₁₆ × 37½ in. Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (KM 109.982 / F78).

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Cat. no. 3
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
The Potato Eaters, April 1885

Lithograph on paper, $13\frac{5}{16} \times 16\frac{3}{4}$ in.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)
(p0477V1962)

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Van Gogh was shocked to the core by Van Rappard's comments, and their friendship came to an end soon afterward. But he nonetheless realized that there was some truth in it, and that his grasp on the human figure needed more work. In the spring and summer of 1885, he started to make drawings of peasants, first small (cat. nos. 4, 5), but soon as figures at work on a large scale.

Despite his disappointment, Van Gogh always remained true to his Dutch masterpiece. In Saint-Rémy he considered "redoing the painting of the peasants eating supper, lamplight effect" (863), but such a modern version was never realized. Theo van Gogh also fully understood the importance of *The Potato Eaters* in his brother's oeuvre. As his widow, Jo Van Gogh-Bonger, recalled in her introduction to the letters,[2] it was in the dining room of their Paris apartment. In January 1889, Theo also gave an impression of the print to Paul Gauguin, who wrote to Vincent: "Your brother gave me a lithographed reproduction of an old painting of yours, Dutch—very interesting as regards color in the drawing. In my studio next to your portrait." For Van Gogh, who no doubt still had a vivid recollection of Van Rappard's harsh words, it must have felt like a vindication.

SVH

1 For all the graphic works by Van Gogh mentioned in this text, see Sjraar van Heugten and Fieke Pabst, *The Graphic Work of Vincent van Gogh* (Zwolle and Amsterdam 1995).

2 See *De brieven van Vincent van Gogh*. ed. Han van Crimpen and Monique Berends-Albert. 4 vols. The Hague 1990., vol. 1, p. 36. The complete text also on http://www.vggallery.com/misc/archives/jo_memoir.htm.

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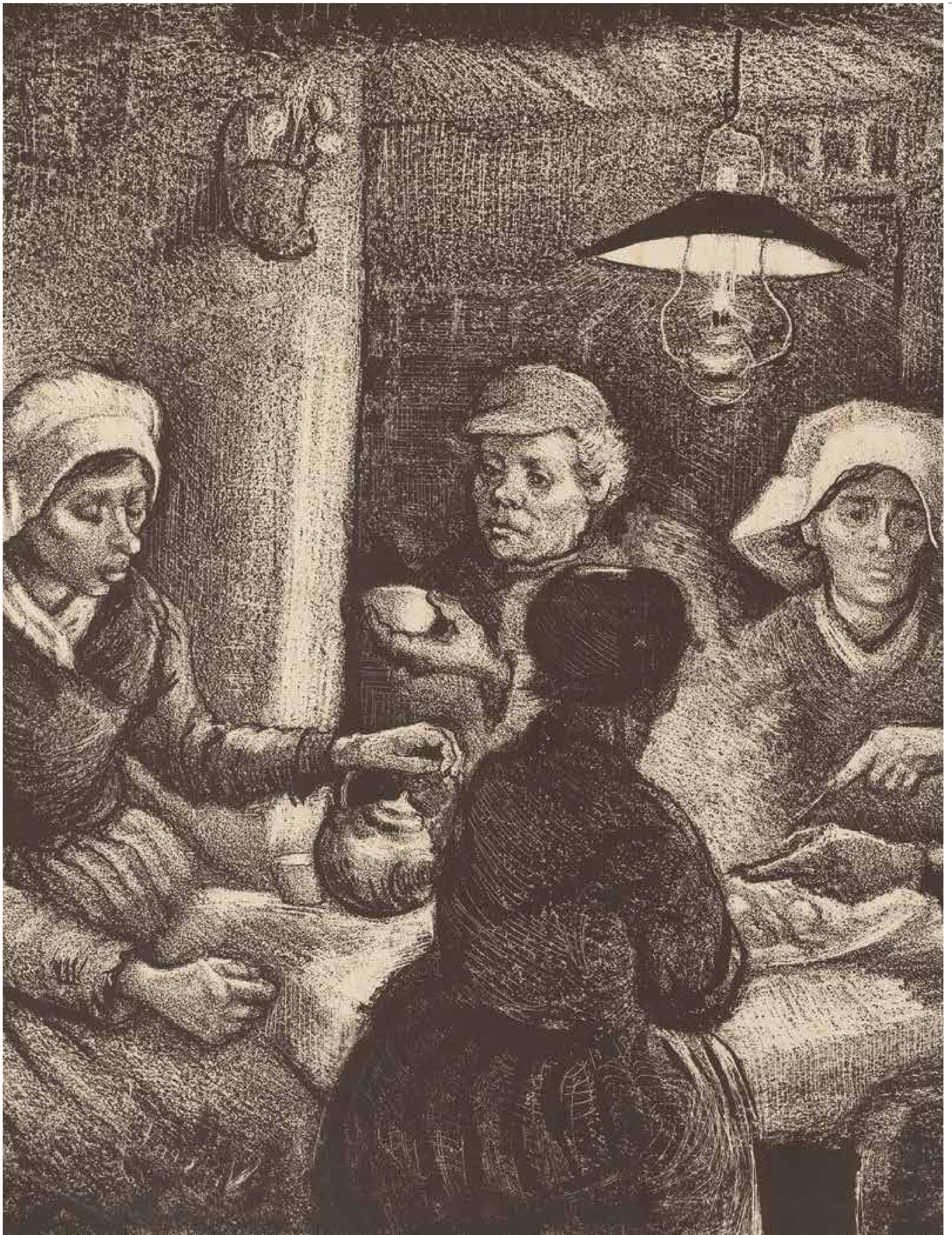

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4 DIGGER, MAY–JUNE 1885

5 TWO WOMEN DIGGING, JULY–AUGUST 1885

Despite the hurt he felt after Anthon van Rappard's harsh remarks on the figures in his lithograph of *The Potato Eaters* (cat. no. 3), in spring 1885, Van Gogh had to admit that he needed more study of the human figure—the field, after all, in which he wanted to excel. As he had done while preparing for his large figure piece, he again started a disciplined campaign. Eugène Delacroix had earlier been his guide in the field of color; now he also provided Van Gogh with insights for a new approach in figure drawing. Theo had sent him a book by Jean Gigoux, *Causeries sur les artistes de mon temps* (Paris, 1885), in which Gigoux had assembled his recollections of fellow artists. He paid much attention to his friend Delacroix, and one particular reminiscence struck Van Gogh. In a letter to Van Rappard, with whom the friendship still lingered for a while on a low level he wrote in August: "Something else—the painter Gigoux comes to Delacroix with an ancient bronze and asks his opinion as to whether it's genuine: It's not from antiquity, it's Renaissance, says D. Gigoux asks him for his reason. Look—my friend—it's very fine, but it starts from the line, and the ancients started from the centres (from the masses, from *cores*). Then he adds, 'Look here a moment', and draws a few ovals on a scrap of paper—*he connects* these ovals *to one another* with delicate little lines, with *almost nothing*, and creates a rearing horse from them, full of life and movement. That, he says, is what Géricault and Gros learnt from the *Greeks*, to express the *masses* (almost always egg-shaped) *first*, then derive the outline and the action from the position and proportion of these egg shapes" (526). Van Gogh adopted Delacroix's method of defining masses of the human body with ovals and egg forms soon after reading about it and announced in a letter to Theo from about May 22 that he had started "*drawing* little figures" (502). It led to a long series of men and women with remarkable compact bodies, due partly to his new approach, which focused on seeking body mass. The *Digger* belongs to this group, and especially in the lower part it is evident how Van Gogh was employing his new system.[1]

Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Reaper*, Nuenen, July–September 1885. Chalk on paper, 17⅝ × 22³⁄₁₆ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d0172V1962 / F1317).

These studies, done in black chalk, were intended as preparation for a more ambitious campaign: the harvest of the crops, especially of the wheat, was coming soon, and Van Gogh planned to make the most of it. The small figures are models that posed for him, often in a way suitable to a particular labor that they were supposed to be performing. Van Gogh did not yet have the ease to translate that into a convincing feeling of

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Cat. no. 4
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Digger, May–June 1885
Black chalk on laid paper, 13 11/16 × 8 1/8 in.
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (KM 122.987 / F1311)

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action, and most of the working figures, again as witnessed by the *Digger*, are slightly awkward, stiff and clearly standing still in Van Gogh's studio.

Van Gogh's fervor soon started yielding results and in July 1885 he turned to a larger format. That summer he produced drawings of working peasants that demonstrate how he achieved what he had been looking for: figures in true action, almost monumental in appearance (ill. 1). He also started experimenting with small, more complex compositions of two figures such as *Two Women Digging*.[2] It is not only a figure study but also an experiment with light and darkness, notably in the woman to the left, whose upper body is seen against a dark background.

In the end, all the studies of that spring and summer served one purpose, as Van Gogh explained to Theo when he asked him to bring back drawings that he had sent to him: "These figure studies—I'd like you to bring them back with you when you come, though. For there are going to be many more that I need for painting. They're to serve for figures that are definitely not larger than a span, say, or even less—so that what's in them becomes even more concentrated" (513). A span is the distance between the tips of the thumb and little finger on one hand, when spread as wide as possible, about eight inches, and Van Gogh was preparing himself again for a complex figure piece. That was, however, not to happen.

SVH

1 For this drawing, see also Teio Meedendorp, *Drawings and Prints by Vincent van Gogh in the Collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum* (Otterlo, 2007) 290–91 and 307.
2 Meedendorp, *Drawings and Prints*, 310–11.

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Cat. no. 5
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Two Women Digging, July–August 1885
Black chalk, gray wash, on laid paper, 7¾ × 12½ in.
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (KM 127.978 / F1295)

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6 VASE WITH POPPIES, SUMMER 1886

Van Gogh's rapid transformation from a relatively conservative, dark palette to the intensely vibrant hues that characterize his mature work occurred during the two years that he lived with his brother Theo in Paris, starting in late February 1886.[1] It has long been recognized that the numerous floral still life pictures produced in the spring and summer of 1886 and another group in 1887 were instrumental to this transformation as crucial experiments in color. Exhorted by Theo to lighten his palette and under the direct influence of the Impressionists and the color theories of Eugène Delacroix, Van Gogh, like so many other artists before him, turned to the depiction of flowers to test his new understanding of the laws of color. He had fully grasped the implications of the laws of complementary contrast, the pursuit of which he connected to these flower pictures, which he described in a letter to his friend, the British painter Horace Mann Livens (1882–1936): "seeking oppositions of blue with orange, red and green, yellow and violet, seeking THE BROKEN AND NEUTRAL TONES to harmonize brutal extremes. Trying to render intense COLOR and not a GRAY harmony."[2] Unlike the models he required for figural works, still-life subjects were relatively cheap: the bouquets were dropped off for him by friends (though we don't know precisely who); their eventual decay presented the only time constraint for prolonged study; and they could be arranged and edited to produce the dramatic color contrasts that Van Gogh now actively sought.

We know that Van Gogh had encountered paintings by Adolphe Monticelli (1824–1886), including examples of the more expressive late work at the gallery of Joseph Delarebeyrette, who acted as Monticelli's representative in Paris. It seems that Van Gogh was directed to Delarebeyrette's gallery by the Scottish dealer Alexander Reid, with whom Vincent became acquainted.[3] While the two remained friends (they quarreled and had a parting after their brief time together in Paris), they shared an enthusiasm for Monticelli, whose project as an expressive colorist Van Gogh immediately recognized. The flower studies that Van Gogh produced in Paris are often said to have been inspired by Monticelli's late floral still lifes, a theory that can be tested by comparing the Wadsworth *Poppies* with the *Floral Still Life with Copper Pot* from the Kreeger Museum (pl. 48).

Monticelli's late work is distinguished by an increasingly thick facture, jewel-like tones, and an all-over pictorial interest in which the object and its background are clamped together. In the Kreeger still life, hue is applied as much for intensity of feeling as it is in the service of description. Scumbled blues and greens texturally applied in the background to the left of the composition emanate like a mystical aura that defies logical explanation. Indeterminate deep shadow at the right side of the canvas creates even sharper contrast for the vivid gold, red, and eye-popping white pigments that compose this relatively squat bouquet, which has been crowded into a decorative copper pot whose articulated surface is scarcely suggested (claw feet, possibly a lion's head medallion, encircled by a decorative ring can just barely be made out). The highly textured paint throughout emphasizes the canvas surface with an equanimity that dissipates only when viewed at a distance, so that the relative tonal values allow the pot of flowers to disengage from its background.

In comparison, the Wadsworth *Poppies* is relatively thinly painted (in fact, so thinly painted that this painting, along with a related floral still life featuring the same vase,[4] was doubted, until conservation analysis established indubitably that it is indeed autograph).[5] Van Gogh's wide-ranging experimentation with different combinations of hue and brushwork in the flower pictures produced in 1886 often feels disconnected from the more familiar, sculptural impasto and vibrant coloration of the last two years. However,

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Cat. no. 6
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Vase with Poppies, Summer 1886

Oil on canvas, 21½ × 17¾ in.
Wadsworth Atheneum, Bequest of Anne Parrish Titzell (1957.617)

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we can recognize in this comparison Van Gogh's similar wish to resist detailed description in favor of a generalized sense of tonal values that constantly underscore the pictorial interest of the entire canvas surface. As with Monticelli's *Flowers in a Copper Bowl*, the vase and its effusive bouquet of poppies at varying stages of bloom become fully present when seen at a proper distance. Like Monticelli's *Still Life in a Copper Bowl*, the background is given its own vitality through directional brushwork, highlighted with white at the left side of the composition, and a deeper navy toward the right, generating a strong contrast with the vivid red of the blossoms.

Of course, Monticelli was not the only influence at work in Van Gogh's voracious consumption of new painterly models during the Paris years. Van Gogh commented on the deep impression made by one of Edouard Manet's paintings of peonies, closely related to the version we include in our selection (pl. 35), that he saw with Theo at the auction sale of John Saulnier's collection on June 5, 1886.[6] The summary handling again suggests more than it describes, an approach that Van Gogh clearly attempted to emulate in his flower studies. One shared point of inspiration for both Manet and Van Gogh, as well as for many artists active in Paris during the 1870s and 1880s, would have been the eighteenth-century still life painter Jean Siméon Chardin. While we have no documentary evidence that Van Gogh saw the installation of the renowned Marcille collection,[7] which famously boasted an array of paintings by the "great magician," including the exquisite floral still life in a blue-and-white vase now housed in the National Gallery of Scotland, it is not difficult to see a consistency in diffuse attention between the Wadsworth *Poppies* and Chardin's flower picture.

The Rococo revival promoted forgotten eighteenth-century artists such as François Boucher, Chardin, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Nicolas Lancret, and Antoine Watteau, who were "rediscovered" by major collectors, such as the La Caze and Marcille families. The latter received visits regularly from interested artists and other literati. Van Gogh credibly could have seen the collection of Camille Marcille as early as fall 1874 when we know he was in Paris for several months, though we have no record of his having made the trek to Oiseme, which is about 45 miles from Paris. He was also in Paris, working at Goupil's during the private and public viewing of the estate sale of the Marcille collection on March 4 and 5, 1876, in which we know that Chardin's floral still life was included.[8]

Van Gogh's admiration for Chardin was not restricted to his art. As in the case of Jean-François Millet, Georges Michel, and Monticelli, Van Gogh also found a comforting kinship in the lives they led: impassioned artists, untainted by materialism (or so Van Gogh assumed about Chardin,[9] though we know now that Chardin was rather more privileged than the Goncourt brothers, for example, made out in their account), and naturally sympathetic to both working-class existence and unvarnished nature. Like the eighteenth-century art critic and *philosophe* Denis Diderot and so many other nineteenth-century admirers, Van Gogh recognized Chardin's grasp of the value of *non finito*:

> I'm more and more convinced that the true painters didn't finish in the sense in which people all too often used finish—that's to say clear if one stands with one's nose pressed to it. The best paintings—precisely the most perfect from a technical point

Ill. 1
Jean Siméon Chardin (French, 1699-1779), *A Vase of Flowers*, early 1760s. Oil on canvas, 17 4⁄5 × 14 3⁄5 in. Scottish National Gallery, Purchased with the aid of the Cowan Smith Bequest Fund 1937 (NG 1883).

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of view—seen from close to are touches of color next to one another, and create their effect at a certain distance. Rembrandt persisted in this despite all the trouble he had to suffer as a result (the worthy citizens thought Van der Helst much better for the reason that one can also see it close to). In that respect, Chardin is as great as Rembrandt.[10]

Is it possible that Chardin's hauntingly beautiful, if simple, arrangement in a blue-and-white Delft base could even have been lodged in Van Gogh's highly retentive visual memory when he painted the Wadsworth *Still Life with Poppies* a decade later? Like Chardin's still life, the objects depicted are at a one-to-one scale with their models. The predominant tones are blue and red, with touches of intermediate colors like pink and olive green scattered throughout the bouquet. The porcelain vase in Van Gogh's still life was probably decorated with a floral pattern of its own, and as in Chardin's blue-and-white vase, the decoration is only vaguely described. Vision, in both compositions, is thus presented as relaxed, and the illusion is only secured once the canvas is viewed at a certain distance. Otherwise, the painter's mark is insistently present—one of the reasons that Chardin was hailed as a precursor by Manet and the Impressionists, and so deeply admired by Vincent van Gogh.

EK

1 For an overview of Van Gogh's floral still life and still life in general, see the exhibition catalogue *Van Gogh: Still Lifes*, Museum Barberini, (New York: Prestel, 2019), especially the essays by Sjraar van Heugten, "The Power of the Everyday: Vincent van Gogh's Still Lifes" (12–27), and Stefan Koldehoff, "'He Is Painting Flowers Mostly': Van Gogh's Parisian Floral Still Lifes," (66–85).

2 Letter 569, To Horace Mann Livens, September or October 1886, Paris.

3 Aaron Sheon, *Monticelli: His Contemporaries, His Influence* (Pittsburgh: Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, 1978), 82–83.

4 *Still Life with Meadow Flowers and Roses*, Paris 1886–87, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, inv. no. KM 100.067(F 278, JH 1103).

5 See Oliver Tostmann, "Van Gogh or Not: Forgeries, Copies, and Misattributions in Van Gogh's Still Lifes" in *Van Gogh: Still Lifes,* 100–13.

6 See cat. no. XX.

7 Camille Marcille (1816–1875) was the son of the amateur and collector Francois Marcille (1790–1856) and the brother of Eudoxe Marcille (1814–1890). Camille Marcille received visitors, most notably Jules and Edmond de Goncourt, and Camille Corot, to view his collection at his residence in Oiseme, near Chartres.

8 *Catalogue de tableaux et dessins formant la collection de M. Camille Marcille*, M. Charles Pillement commissaire-priseur (Paris, 1876), 10, no. 18.

9 But *Chardin*. I've often longed to know something about the man. (Watteau was exactly as I thought.) *Third Estate.* Corot-like as far as bonhomie is concerned—with more sadness and adversity in his life. (Letter 539, to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about Saturday, November 7, 1885).

10 Ibid.

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7 SELF-PORTRAIT WITH PIPE, SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER 1886

Before he left for Paris in late February 1886, Van Gogh had never portrayed himself. That is a remarkable contrast with the following two years in Paris, where he made some thirty self-portraits, and more were to follow in Arles and Saint-Rémy. A very simple reason for the complete lack of earlier self-portraits is probably that Van Gogh had never possessed a good-sized mirror before, an absolute necessity for such a painting. In Paris he lived with his brother Theo, who clearly had a mirror in his apartment that also served as Vincent's studio. It is very doubtful if Vincent would have had one in his studio in Nuenen.

Van Gogh complained about the fact that he could not get models in Paris, and this has been given as a reason why he turned to himself as a model. The many self-portraits have also often been regarded as a kind of psychological soul searching. But so many of the self-portraits are mere quick studies that it is difficult to maintain that view. Others, like the *Self-Portrait with Pipe*, give little indications of introspection. There are a few ambitious self-portraits that Van Gogh indicated in his letters had a deeper meaning.

The *Self-Portrait with Pipe* was painted somewhere in the period of September–November 1886.[1] Van Gogh had realized after arriving in Paris that his use of very dark color was very old-fashioned, and he had started to experiment with stronger and brighter colors, at first going back and forth between his old manner and new insights. The painting is still reminiscent of his Dutch palette. It is carefully worked out and shows Van Gogh as a self-assured, well-dressed, and even rather distinguished man with a calm expression.

The work bears witness to a particular studio practice of Van Gogh. Especially during his Dutch and Paris years he often would reuse canvases of paintings that he considered unworthy and paint a new one on top of it. Radiographic images can reveal the lost work; in this case Van Gogh painted his own image over a portrait of a woman.

SVH

1 For more details on this work, see Ella Hendriks and Louis van Tilborgh, *Vincent van Gogh Paintings: Antwerp and Paris, 1885–1888* (Zwolle and Amsterdam 2011), cat. 75.

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Cat. no. 7
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Self-Portrait with Pipe, September–November 1886

Oil on canvas, 18⅛ × 14$\frac{15}{16}$ in.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)(s0158V1962 / F180)

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8 THE OUTSKIRTS OF PARIS, AUTUMN 1886

9 ROAD TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF PARIS, MAY–JUNE 1887

Van Gogh had a fascination for the frayed, almost barren edges of the city. In The Hague in 1882 he received a commission from his uncle C.M.—as the art dealer Cornelis Marinus van Gogh was called within the family—for two series of drawings with cityscapes. Several of the subjects that Van Gogh chose can hardly be called picturesque, such as a drawing featuring gas works and a sheet showing a factory.[1] Sheer beauty was not what Van Gogh was looking for in these works; for him, a certain worn-out character had a much stronger appeal.

Paris provided such motifs as well, and Van Gogh sometimes sought them out. *The Outskirts of Paris* is one of the results. With the man in the middle it brings to mind Raffaëlli, in whom Van Gogh had detected a kindred spirit when Theo sent him an illustrated catalogue with an essay in which the artist wrote about his ideas: "*Character* is the essential beauty, in a positivist era. *Characteristic beauty* must at the same time be natural beauty, intellectual beauty and artistic beauty, finally leading to moral beauty. *Characteristic beauty* must be a means of judicial action in all manifestations of freedom."[2] These words greatly appealed to Van Gogh. The beauty of a city was thus not in its boulevards, churches, and other monuments but in the simple streets, neighborhoods, and gardens found on Montmartre and on the fringes of the city. The painting does not offer enough clues to establish an exact location.

The Outskirts of Paris has an autumnal look, as do several works that are closely related in style, such as two paintings of the Moulin de Galette.[3] Van Gogh did not surrender immediately to a modern style in Paris, and these works are still related to his Dutch palette. No exact dates can be put on them, but autumn 1886 is very likely.

Although also located on the edge of Paris, *Road to the Outskirts of Paris* is in many ways exactly the opposite. It is clearly a spring scene, with the bright attractive colors and the blossoming chestnut trees in the background. Influenced by Georges Seurat and most of all Paul Signac, with whom he developed a friendship and worked together in spring-summer 1887, Van Gogh experimented with Neo-Impressionist techniques for a while. Usually he ignored the strict methods of Seurat and Signac, adopting a much livelier variety of brushstrokes: dots, commas, and short lines. *The Outskirts of Paris* is stricter in its approach.

A painting of a blossoming chestnut tree, dated to mid-May 1887, was probably a preparatory study done on the spot (ill. 1).[4] *Road to the Outskirts of Paris*, with its time-consuming technique, was certainly conceived in the studio afterward, probably in late May–June. Van Gogh at first gave the walking man a female companion, but on second thought probably considered that too idyllic, especially with the spring atmosphere that defines the painting.[5] The laborer with his spade on his way to the fields echoes similar motifs in works

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Cat. no. 8
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
The Outskirts of Paris, Autumn 1886
Oil on canvas, 18 × 21⅛ in.
Private collection, in memory of Marie Wangeman

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by such peasant painters as Jean François Millet, Léon Lhermitte, and Jules Breton.

The buildings of Paris can be seen in the background and to the right, but again there is not enough to point out a precise location for the scene.

SVH

Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Horse Chestnut Tree in Blossom*, Paris, May 1887. Oil on canvas, 22 × $18\frac{5}{16}$ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0126V1962 / F0270a).

1 F 924 JH 118 and F 925 JH 117, respectively.
2 *Catalogue illustré des oeuvres de Jean-François Raffaelli, exposées 28 bis, avenue de l'Opéra. Suivi d'une étude des mouvements de l'art moderne et du beau caractériste*. Paris 1884.
3 F 227 JH 1170 and F 228 JH 1171.
4 Ella Hendriks and Louis van Tilborgh, *Vincent van Gogh Paintings: Antwerp and Paris, 1885–1888* (Zwolle and Amsterdam 2011), cat. 103.
5 Ronald Pickvance, "Paris, Musée d'Orsay: Van Gogh à Paris," *Burlington Magazine* 130 (1988), 311–13.

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Cat. no. 9
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Road to the Outskirts of Paris, May–June 1887
Oil on canvas, 18⅞ × 29½ in.
Private Collection, Larry Ellison (F361)

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10 BRIDGE ACROSS THE SEINE AT ASNIÈRES, SUMMER 1887

This is one of a group of works dated to the summer of 1887,[1] when Van Gogh would regularly make the trek to the village of Asnières, which is almost four miles (six kilometers) from Paris, walking over the very bridge depicted. Asnières had become a leisure destination for Parisians with the construction of a railway bridge in 1837.[2] It is one of some thirty to forty paintings he made starting in the late spring and continuing on through July; judging by its relative scale, it may have been a member of one of the three triptychs, so described by Andries Bonger in 1890,[3] though it is not possible to know for sure which canvases these were. One of the triptychs was titled "Bord de la Seine à Asnières."

The view shown in this painting is what Van Gogh would have seen standing on the riverbank in front of one of the restaurants facing the Seine and looking toward the more industrialized town of Clichy. At the left edge of the composition, one can make out the circular form of one of the seven gasometers (large storage tanks for gas) that were built not far from the docks of Clichy, a motif that Paul Signac had also depicted the year before.[4] The rhythmic arches of the pedestrian bridge would have been paralleled by the bridge for the train, which we glimpse underneath the arch closest to us. Van Gogh was clearly eager to experiment with the same motifs tackled by the Impressionists before him. Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir had set the precedent for plein-air paintings in Asnières, and the subsequent generation of "Petit Boulevard" painters (Georges Seurat, Paul Signac, and Van Gogh's good friend Émile Bernard; both Signac's and Bernard's parents lived in Asnières) also sought out motifs to paint in the village of Asnières.

While the bright palette, repeated dashes of color, and rapidly applied pigment are consistent with Impressionist technique, the relatively structured composition, with its plunging orthogonal, also recalls the clarity and heightened perspective of Japanese woodblock prints, such as Utagawa Hiroshige's *Sudden Evening Shower on the Great Bridge*, a print that Van Gogh carefully copied in oil some time in 1887. The scumbled effect of the sky recalls the movemented skies of Alfred Sisley (pl. 65),[5] but the distinctly pastel palette of pinks, blues, and purples derives from ukiyo-e prints, such as Hiroshige's *The Yoshitsune Cherry Tree*, another print that Van Gogh copied in the upper right corner of the background in the portrait of Père Tanguy in the late autumn of the same year (Musée Rodin). From the lit gas lamps of the bridge, one might deduce that this is the beginning of sunset at the height of summer when the days are long, and that Van Gogh may have been attempting to capture the same pink light (as seen in particular in the bases and reflections in the water around the pylons) in which Barbizon school painters, such as Théodore Rousseau,[6] specialized. Van Gogh could not have known that a dozen years later Monet would extend a similarly pastel palette even further in his famous series of another bridge, this time crossing the river Thames a dozen years later (pl. 47).

EK

1 Other related compositions include *Le pont d'Asnières*, Bührle Collection, Zurich, F 301; JH 1327.

2 *Vincent van Gogh Paintings: Antwerp & Paris, 1885–1888*, volume 2, cat. 105, 387.

3 Andries Bonger, *Catalogue des oeuvres de Vincent van Gogh*, 1890, nos. 70, 81, 82 as cited in *Vincent van Gogh Paintings: Antwerp & Paris, 1885–1888*, cat. 105, 387.

4 For a discussion of Signac's drawing that includes this type of gas storage tank, see *Van Gogh à Paris*, Musée d'Orsay, Reunion des musées nationaux, 1988, cat. 114, 300.

5 In Letter 743, Van Gogh mentions having seen works by Monet and Sisley in the collection of the baritone Jean-Baptiste Faure (1830–1914) at "a framer's shop on Rue Lafitte," as quoted in *Vincent van Gogh Paintings: Antwerp & Paris, 1885–1888*, volume 2, cat. 107, 395n5. Theo had begun to show Monet's works in his gallery in May 1887.

6 There are many examples of this distinctly pink light in Rousseau's landscapes at dusk. See, for example *Summer Sunset*, 1866, oil on canvas, Cincinnati Museum of Art.

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Cat. no. 10
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Bridge across the Seine at Asnières, Summer 1887
Oil on canvas, 33 × 40¾ in.
Private Collection, Larry Ellison

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11 SHELTER ON MONTMARTRE, JULY–AUGUST 1887

Van Gogh had lived in Paris from May 1875 until April 1876, when he was employed at the main branch of art dealer Goupil. At the end of June or beginning of July he had rented a room on Montmartre. The area much appealed to him as attested by a letter to Theo from May 13, 1878, when Theo had settled in Paris, and Vincent warmly reminisced about Montmartre.[1] Later, Theo's descriptions of things he had seen on Montmartre, where by then he was working at the Goupil branch, would please him immensely.

Vincent came to live with Theo around the end of February 1886, first at rue Laval, moving to a larger apartment on rue Lepic in early June. Both streets are on Montmartre, no doubt much to Van Gogh's liking.

Montmartre had become urbanized, and many of the rural aspects that Van Gogh admired so much in the landscapes of Georges Michel had disappeared. But the northwest side of the hill was still mostly untouched by the city and had a largely agricultural character. Van Gogh, who loved the countryside, sought and found many attractive motifs in that area, *Shelter on Montmartre* among them. During his two years in Paris, the modern city did not leave a significant mark on his oeuvre. Modern life had become a staple subject in the works of the Impressionists and the young avant-garde to which Van Gogh belonged, and Van Gogh was deeply interested in literature that portrayed everyday life, such as Émile Zola's novels. But in Paris, whenever possible, he looked for rural motifs rather than urban themes.

Shelter on Montmartre belongs to a group of four related works, three paintings and a drawing, all done in the summer of 1887 near an old farmhouse of the Debray family, to which this shed also belonged.[2] One painting features the house itself, another a large sunflower near a shed with a woman in the background.[3] A watercolor was made on the same location as *Shelter on Montmartre*, but at a slightly different angle and with the addition of a toddler standing on the path (ill. 1). In the drawing remnants of lines that reveal the use of a perspective frame can be detected, and undoubtedly Van Gogh used that device for the painting as well. Sunflowers bloom in July and August, so the drawing and the painting can be dated to these months. Van Gogh had by then found a vigorous new pictorial language, and *Shelter on Montmartre*, with its confident lively brushstrokes and bright colors is evidence of his new artistic possibilities.

SVH

Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Shed with Sunflowers*, Paris, July–August 1887. Pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, on paper, 12 7/16 × 9½ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (d0352V1962 / F1411).

1 Letter 144.
2 For a detailed discussion, see Ella Hendriks and Louis van Tilborgh, *Vincent van Gogh Paintings: Antwerp and Paris, 1885–1888*, Zwolle and Amsterdam 2011, cats. 114, 115.
3 F 810 JH 219 and F 388v JH 1307. The latter painting was dated second half of July by Van Tilborgh and Hendriks.

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Cat. no. 11
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Shelter on Montmartre, July–August 1887

Oil on canvas, 14 × 10¾ in.
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Bequest of Frederick J. Hellman (1965.28)

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12 THE WHEATFIELD, JUNE 1888

Vincent van Gogh was raised in a family where nature was an essential part of the children's education. It played an important role in the Protestant movement of the Groningen School to which his father, the vicar Theodorus van Gogh, adhered. Even as a child, Vincent took long walks, collected insects, and showed a clear fascination with nature that would stay with him the rest of his life and would put a huge stamp on his work as an artist. He admired the cycles of life as reflected in the seasons, and when painting became of increasing importance in Nuenen in 1884 he contemplated the palette of those times of the year:

> The spring is tender green (young wheat) and pink (apple blossom). The autumn is the contrast of the yellow leaves against violet tones. The winter is the snow with the little black silhouettes. But if the summer is the opposition of blues against an element of orange in the golden bronze of the wheat, this way one could paint a painting in each of the contrasts of the complementary colours (red and green, blue and orange, yellow and violet, white and black) that really expressed the mood of the seasons (451).

In exploring the country life, he was following his artistic guides such as Jean-François Millet, Léon Lhermitte, and Jules Breton.

Nowhere were the seasons more evident to him than in the life of the peasants and their agricultural work, most notably the sowing, growing, ripening, and harvest of the wheat, motifs that he also admired in the works of his cherished peasant painters. In the summer of 1885, the harvest of the wheat was of prime importance for his studies (cat. nos. 4, 5). During his stay of two years in Paris there were no opportunities to paint such subjects, but when he moved to Arles in 1888, country life became very significant again, starting with the blossoming trees in spring, and followed by the harvest of the wheat in summer. It kept him so busy that on June 17 he apologized to John Peter Russell for not writing sooner, explaining: "We have harvest time here at present and I am always in the fields" (627). A few days later he told Theo: "I've had a week of concentrated hard work in the wheatfields right out in the sun, the result was some studies of wheatfields, landscapes and a sketch of a sower" (629).

The painting of a wheat field with stacked sheaves is one of these works. It is a motif with which Van Gogh had already experimented in Nuenen, in drawings and in a small painting. More ambitious undertakings were on his mind at the time, but none were realized. In Arles, Van Gogh aimed high and started working on the sower mentioned in the letter, which was his first—in his own eyes unsuccessful—attempt at a truly modern figure piece, following the famous example of Millet (pl. 41) with the color theories he had learned from Delacroix.

These same theories defined the harvest landscapes that Van Gogh made that summer. *The Wheatfield* is a fine example, with the bronze-yellow wheat contrasted against the complementary purple of the earth. Although it is of a modest size, the painting has an impressive presence, and Van Gogh was clearly pleased with it: in July–August he made two series of small drawings after his best paintings from Arles for Émile Bernard and Russell and included an image of *The Wheatfield* for both.[1]

To Émile Bernard he stressed the importance of the subject: "I don't hide from you that I don't detest the countryside—having been brought up there, snatches of memories from past times, yearnings for that infinite of which the Sower, the sheaf, are the symbols, still enchant me as before" (628). Van Gogh still had religious feelings, but they were now more pantheist in character and inspired by nature. The simple composition of wheat sheaves in a field thus acquires a profound meaning, referring to the never-ending cycles of life and the infinity of nature.

SVH

1 Bernard received F 1488 JH 1571; the drawing for Russell is F 1489 JH 1530.

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Cat. no. 12

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)

The Wheatfield, June 1888

Oil on canvas, 21¾ × 26¼ in.
Honolulu Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Richard A. Cooke and Family in memory of Richard A. Cooke, 1946 (377.1 / F561)

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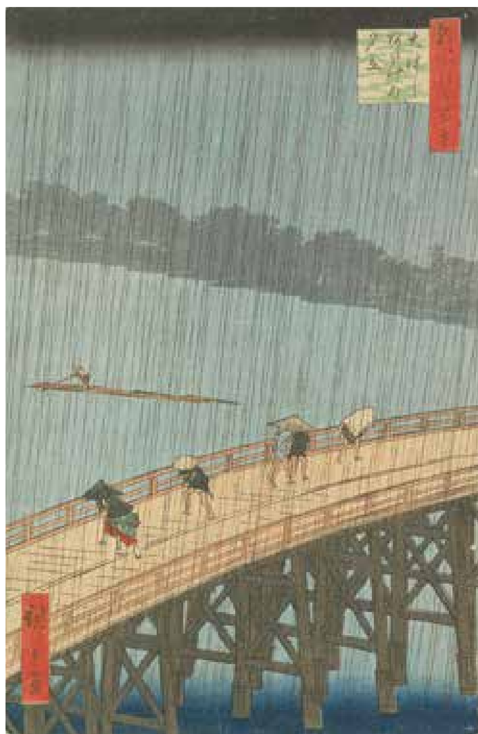
13 THE LANGLOIS BRIDGE, JULY 1888

As early as 1883, when Vincent explored the heath of the picturesque province of Drenthe in the northeast Netherlands,[1] he began to incorporate bridges into his repertoire of landscape motifs. Subsequently, from canvases such as *Bridge across the Seine at Asnières*, today in the Emil Bührle collection in Zurich, to the Van Gogh Museum's *Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige)*, both of which he painted in Paris in 1887, bridges continued to appear in his œuvre, in part because they represented a convenient subject for experiments with composition and perspective. The latter painting after an ukiyo-e print by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858) also points to the increasing importance of Japanese prints in Vincent's aesthetic after 1885 (ill. 1). As a regular patron of the art dealer Siegfried Bing in Paris, Van Gogh quickly amassed a sizable collection of Japanese prints, some of which he took to the south of France.



Ill. 1
Utagawa Hiroshige (Japanese, 1797–1858), *Sudden Evening Shower on the Great Bridge near Atake*, from the series *One Hundred Views of Famous Places in Edo*, ninth month 1857. Color woodcut on Japan paper, 8$\frac{7}{8}$ × 13$\frac{5}{16}$ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (n0081V1962).

In 1888 the artist executed a number of works—five paintings, one watercolor, and three drawings—centering on a bridge that crossed the Arles-Bouc canal in the southwest of Arles. *The Langlois Bridge*, or *Drawbridge with a Lady with a Parasol*, as the pen-and-ink drawing is also known,[2] forms a part of this ensemble. Like the strolling women in *Hospital at Saint-Rémy* (cat. no. 15), the female figure crossing the bridge with a parasol in this drawing suggests a fascination with Japan, which Vincent had come to identify with Provence. "This part of the world seems to me as beautiful as Japan for the clearness of the atmosphere and the gay colour effects. The stretches of water make patches of beautiful emerald and a rich blue in the landscape, as we see it in the Japanese prints" (587), he wrote to fellow painter and friend Émile Bernard not long after his arrival in Arles. Built by a Dutch engineer, the bridge represented an occasion for Vincent to synthesize the drawbridge motif associated with his northern homeland with the "clearness of the atmosphere" that he associated with Japanese art.

Indeed, this drawing displays a pervading sense of calm and compositional clarity. The blank sky reveals nothing but the crisp white of the wove paper, and the stock-straight stillness of the two cypresses on the left bank of the canal indicates the absence of the usually ever-present mistral wind that blows across southern France. The calm also translates to the quiet water of the canal. A few horizontal strokes register the reflections on the water's surface, interrupted only by the small ripples caused by a washerwoman kneeling at the waterfront just to the side of the bridge. Van Gogh's drawings with the reed pen during his stay in Arles show how well this instrument suited him, and

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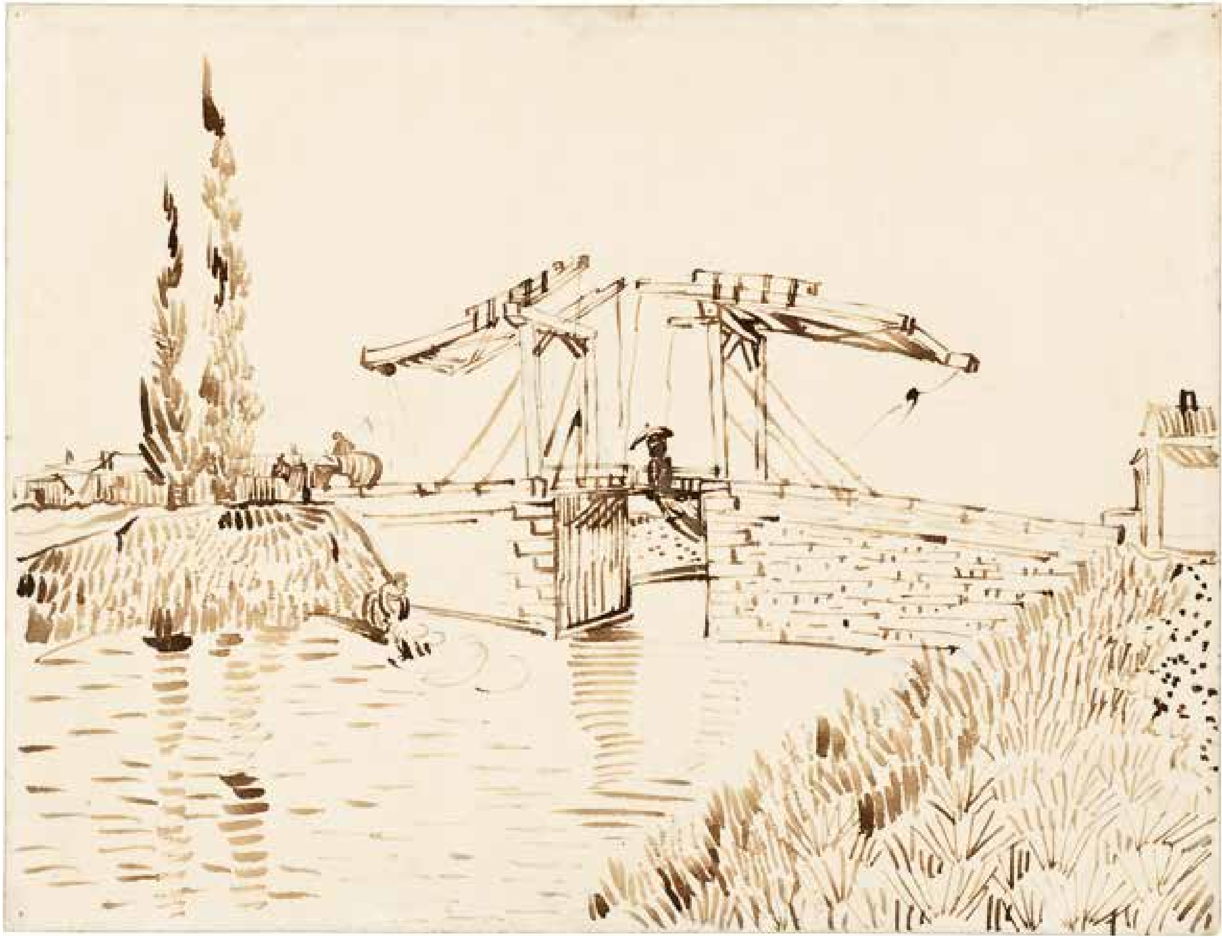

Cat. no. 13
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
The Langlois Bridge, July 1888

Brown ink over traces of black chalk, 9⅝ × 12⁹⁄₁₆ in.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, George Gard De Sylva Collection (M.49.17.2 / F1471)

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this sheet attests to his mastery of it. This is most notable in the controlled manner of the strokes: there is no excess in this drawing, no swirling, nor any undulating lines that criss-cross and transform the depiction into a kind of sensory overload. Rather this sheet represents a well-thought-out and quite schematic application of vertical and horizontal strokes, with a range of verticals reserved mainly for the vegetation, the buildings to the left and right of the canal, the slow ripples in the water, and the stony structure of the bridge. Even the wood and metal structure of the drawbridge is described with the same spareness as the translucent lines that depict the web of cables and cords used to open and close the bridge.

The Langlois Bridge was in Émile Bernard's collection, together with another drawing after *Sheaves of Wheat* (cat. no. 20). During the summer of 1888, Vincent completed about thirty-two drawings, fifteen of which he sent to Bernard; others went to the Australian painter John Peter Russell (1858–1930), and of course to Theo. This drawing is a repetition after an already completed oil painting, *The Langlois Bridge*, 1888, now in the collection of the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne, which allowed for a rigorous and inventive reassessment of Van Gogh's painted motif.[3]

DM

1 Compare, for example, *Drawbridge in Nieuw-Amsterdam*, 1883, Groningen, Groninger Museum.
2 Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker, eds., *Vincent van Gogh—Painted with Words: The Letters to Émile Bernard* (New York: The Morgan Library & Museum, 2007), 215.
3 Colta Ives et al., eds., *Vincent van Gogh: The Drawings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 250.

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14 TARASCON STAGECOACH, OCTOBER 1888

In a letter to his brother Theo written on October 13, 1888, Vincent described with excitement this very painting—one of some fifteen that he completed as part of a decorative ensemble for the Yellow House in Arles that he had prepared to welcome the painter Paul Gauguin:

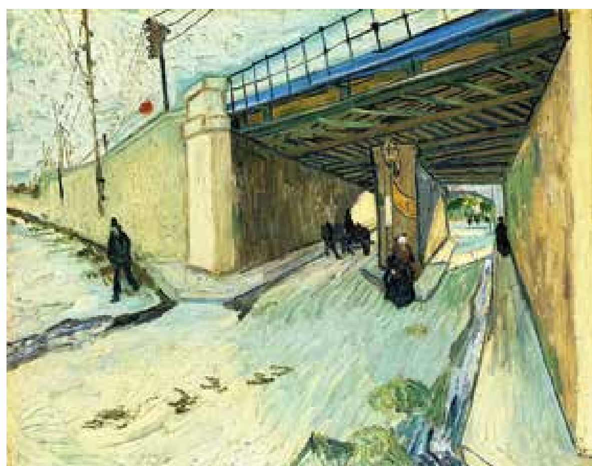
> What a funny part of the country, this homeland of Tartarin's![1] Yes, I'm happy with my lot; it isn't a superb and sublime country, it's all something out of Daumier come to life. Have you re-read the Tartarins yet? Ah, don't forget to! Do you remember in Tartarin the lament of the old Tarascon diligence [the French term for this kind of stage coach]—that wonderful page? Well, I've just painted that red and green carriage in the yard of the inn. You'll see (703).

He accompanied the letter with a quick sketch of the composition and a word picture to describe its colorful palette, calling out both Adolphe Monticelli (for the thick impasto) and Claude Monet (for the vivid hues) as sources of inspiration. The letter then trips lightly on to describe some of the other paintings he had produced in a rush of creativity. The optimism of the moment is apparent in his phrasing: "But yes, good old Tartarin's country, I'm enjoying myself there more and more, and it will become like a new homeland for us. I don't forget Holland, though; it's precisely the contrasts that make me think of it a lot."

Of course, what would happen over the course of the next two months when Gauguin did arrive in Arles on October 23 is the stuff of legend.

There are dense associations, then, around this particular subject. First is the allusion to specific passages in a novel by Alphonse Daudet that are the literary source for the Tarascon stagecoach that the artist "recognized" in the battered carriages he saw parked outside the inn in Arles. That novel (first published in 1872) is a farcical Quixotic satire. Its absurd protagonist, Tartarin, is a somewhat corpulent fellow, determined to make good on his claims to being a fearless lion hunter. In the novel, Tartarin falls asleep while journeying in a similar vehicle. He dreams that the carriage itself, in the voice of an old woman, recognizes Tartarin as one of the jolly group that "she" had once transported back and forth in their native Tarascon (a small town ten miles north of Arles), and laments the disrepair into which she had fallen in the wilds of Algeria. Second, is Vincent's acknowledgment of Monticelli as the source of inspiration for the thick impasto we find in this canvas and of Monet for its lively color scheme (and in particular, a landscape of boats at Etretat that Vincent remembered had once been in Theo's gallery).[2] Third is the association, perhaps via the imagery of the Daudet novel, of Arles with the slightly provincial character types of rural France and its charm compared with the urban spaces of Paris that he had abandoned almost eight months earlier that year.

In fact, all these associations intertwined for Van Gogh, since both Monticelli and Tartarin were



Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *The Railway Bridge over Avenue Montmajour*, 1888. Oil on canvas, 28¾ × 36¼ in. Private collection.

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Cat. no. 14

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)

Tarascon Stagecoach, October 1888

Oil on canvas, $28\frac{1}{8} \times 36\frac{7}{16}$ in.
The Henry and Rose Pearlman Foundation, on loan to the Princeton University Art Museum (L.1988.62.11 / F478a)

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identified in his mind with the Provençal landscape. (Monticelli was born in Marseille and was, thus, a Provençal, and Daudet's best-loved adventure stories, including the short story *L'Arlésienne* [1869] were set in Provençal towns like Tarascon.) For Van Gogh, the South thus represented a place of creative fecundity, precisely because of its distance from the Parisian art world.

But what is there to say about the look and feel of this ambitiously scaled painting (as Vincent details to Theo, one of 15 of the "no. 30"[3] canvases he had used for the decorative ensemble he intended to welcome Gauguin)? We know from a subsequent letter to Theo, composed two days later (October 16, 1888), that he conceived of *The Bedroom* (Van Gogh Museum) in contrast to *Tarascon Stagecoach* and the *Night Café* (Yale University Art Gallery). If Monticelli's facture drove *La diligence*, it was the smooth, "flat tints like Japanese prints" that he used to communicate the calm of *The Bedroom*. The stillness of the empty bedroom was meant to be "suggestive here of rest or of sleep in general." From this, we might deduce that the idea behind the *Tarascon Stagecoach* could be the possibility of movement or, perhaps, its recent cessation; of the traveler just arrived or one preparing to leave. If so, his decision to employ the textured brushwork of Monticelli, which he would have seen in a painting like *Woman at a Well* (1870–71, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Vincent van Gogh Foundation),[4] well suits the objective of suggesting movement. Like Monticelli's paintings, the entire surface of this canvas is activated by the visible trace of the slathered-on paint in directional swipes, as if with a putty knife. Conjoined in this canvas are the vivid hues we find in the suite of paintings prepared by Vincent as an ensemble to decorate this "Studio in the South": ocher yellows (like that found in the famous *Sunflowers*, F 456 and F 454), sky blues (like those used in the other landscapes in the group),[5] and last, a tender gray, tinged by violet, that distinguishes this composition from the other fourteen of the group. Did Van Gogh rely on the perspective frame to master this rather complex motif, with the intricate detailing of the carriage, especially in the coach to its right? The plunging orthogonal set up by the receding bushes behind the diligence is opposed by the overlapping coach, whose wheels, in relative scale, betray a spatial inconsistency that throws the proximity of the carriages, to one another and to ourselves, into question. Their conspicuously old-fashioned appointment stands in stark contrast to two paintings of the ensemble of fifteen, one depicting the concrete staircase leading up and down the distinctly modern-looking, metal structure of the Trinquetaille bridge[6] and the other focused on the underpass of a railroad bridge (ill. 1).

The two stagecoaches, parked and awaiting customers, or perhaps, just abandoned by new arrivals to Arles, seem to commune in dialogue. Were they meant to stand for Vincent's dream of a fellow-artist, who would stay for a while in easy conversation and creative, brotherly communion? If so, he was about to be sorely disappointed.

EK

1 He refers to the fictional character Tartarin de Tarascon, the protagonist of the novel by Alphonse Daudet, first published in 1872, and frequently mentioned by Van Gogh with affection in his letters.

2 It remains unclear precisely which painting from the series is the one that Van Gogh meant; it may be either the one from a private collection now on deposit at the Seattle Art Museum or the related version preserved at the Art Institute of Chicago.

3 This term refers to a commercially available, standard-sized canvas, commonly available in the nineteenth century. The group that Van Gogh created for the Yellow House in landscape format are all in the range of 28–30 inches by 36–38 inches.

4 A group of seascapes were included in a major exhibition held at the Centre de la Vieille Charité, Marseille, in 2008; see in particular *Van Gogh Monticelli*, Musée des beaux-arts, Musées de Marseille, Réunion des musées nationaux, plates 33, 34, 35.

5 These included *The Poet's Garden* (Art Institute of Chicago) and/or possibly *Entrance to the Public Garden* (F 566), but more probably *The Public Garden with a Couple Strolling* (Private collection), *Path in the Public Garden* (Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo), and *Entrance to the Public Garden* (The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC), *The Furrows* (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam), and *The Green Vineyard* (Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo).

6 *The Trinquetaille Bridge*, 1888, oil on canvas (Private collection).

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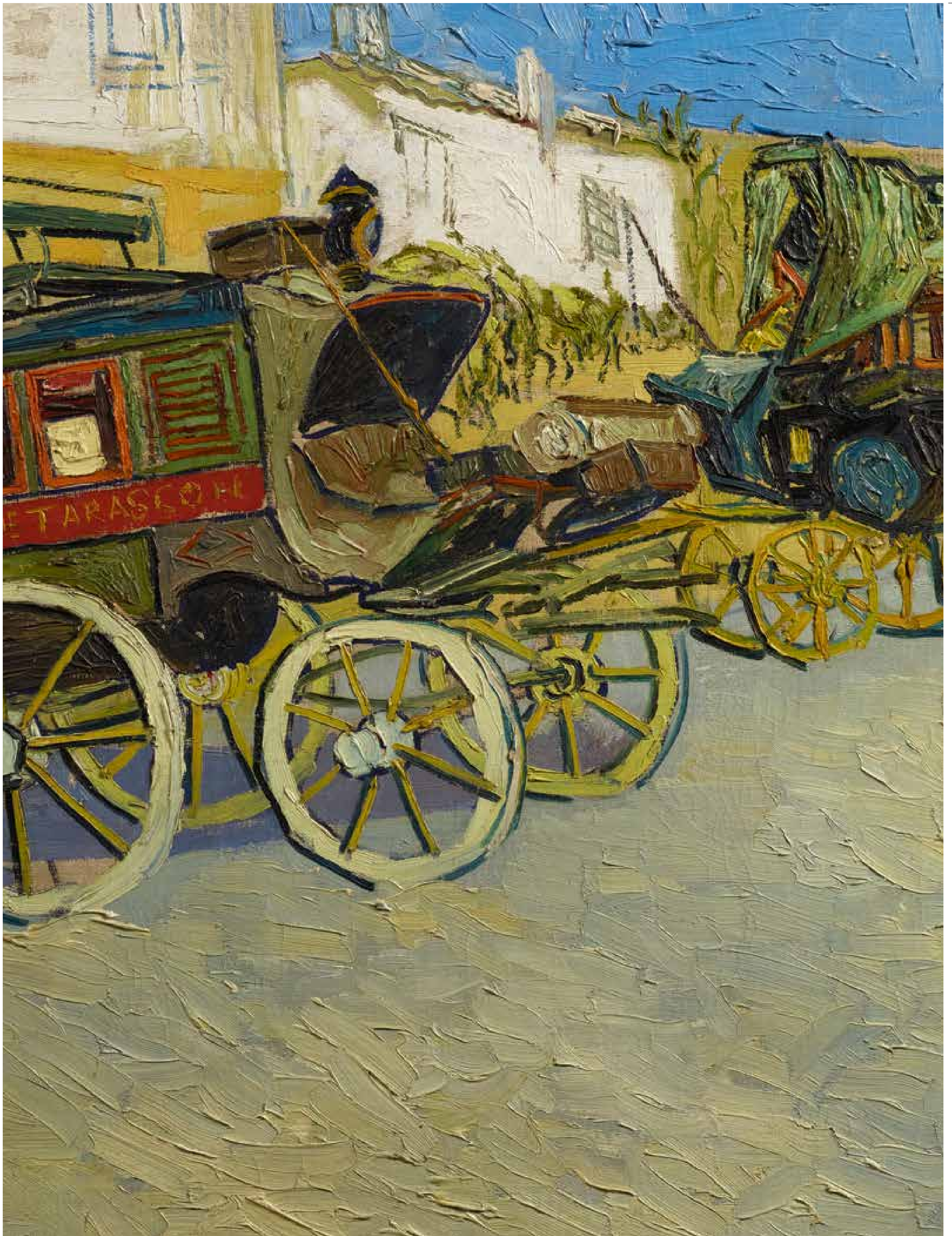

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15 HOSPITAL AT SAINT-RÉMY, OCTOBER 1889

Autumn was Van Gogh's favorite season, and in Saint-Rémy he started to prepare himself already in late September for a series of paintings, "for there are fine autumnal effects to do"(805). Early October 1889 brought beautiful weather, and he worked in the countryside around the asylum, as well as in the garden. *Hospital at Saint-Rémy* is one of the paintings from that time, in which "this place appears most agreeable. I tried to reconstruct the thing as it may have been by simplifying and accentuating the proud, unchanging nature of the pines and the cedar bushes against the blue" (810). Indeed, the painting has a serene atmosphere, and it seems related to the autumnal park scenes that he had painted a year earlier in Arles, featuring the small park on Place Lamartine (ill. 1). He associated those works with Petrarch and Boccaccio and gave four of them the title *The Poet's Garden*. Most of these works also feature strolling people and amorous couples, and though the latter could of course not be seen in the garden of the asylum, *Hospital at Saint-Rémy* has the same tranquility of people enjoying a fine day in beautiful natural surroundings.

Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Path in the Park*, ca. September 17–18, 1888. Oil on canvas, $28\frac{7}{16} \times 36\frac{5}{8}$ in. Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (KM 100.251 / F470).

Van Gogh, who in his correspondence was involved in an intense discussion on artistic issues with his friends Émile Bernard and Paul Gauguin, was searching at the time for new stylistic possibilities. Theo had expressed doubts about some of his recent paintings, but Vincent explained: "the fact is that I feel myself greatly driven to seek style, if you like, but I mean by that a more manly and more deliberate drawing," and added "I dare urge you to believe that in landscapes one will continue to mass things by means of a drawing style that seeks to express the entanglement of the masses. Thus, do you remember Delacroix's landscape, Jacob's struggle with the angel?" (816). The painting he referred to was one he had closely studied in Paris in the Church of St-Sulpice, *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*. In Saint-Rémy it inspired him to work in a rhythmic style, almost weaving patterns of lively brushstrokes that both defined and connected the volumes of the composition. *Hospital at Saint-Rémy* is a result of those experiments.

Throughout his artistic career, Van Gogh gave trees an important role in his work, tending to anthropomorphize them. In The Hague he had formulated something that would remain characteristic for his view of nature: "In all of nature, in trees for instance, I see expression and a soul, as it were. A row of pollard willows sometimes resembles a procession of orphan men" (292). "Orphan men" were the old men who resided in a nursing home, and Van Gogh appreciated their gnarly figures and faces, often using them as models.

The pine trees in Saint-Rémy awakened similar anthropomorphic associations. In October, Van Gogh studied them in a group of more than twenty sketches, a significant sign of their importance.[1] To Émile Bernard he wrote about another painting in which he cast pine trees as key players:[2] "Now, the first tree is an enormous trunk, but struck by lightning and sawn off.

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Cat. no. 15

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Hospital at Saint-Rémy, October 1889

Oil on canvas, 36 5/16 × 28 7/8 in.
The Armand Hammer Collection, Gift of the Armand Hammer Foundation. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (AH.90.81 / F643)

"And the skies—like our northern skies, but the colours of the sunsets and sunrises are more varied and more pure. . . . I also have two views of the park and the asylum in which this place appears most agreeable. I tried to reconstruct the thing as it may have been by simplifying and accentuating the proud, unchanging nature of the pines and the cedar bushes against the blue."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, on or about Tuesday, October 8, 1889 (Letter 810)

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A side branch thrusts up very high, however, and falls down again in an avalanche of dark green twigs. This dark giant—like a proud man brought low— contrasts, when seen as the character of a living being, with the pale smile of the last rose on the bush, which is fading in front of him. Under the trees, empty stone benches, dark box. The sky is reflected yellow in a puddle after the rain. A ray of sun the last glimmer—exalts the dark ochre to orange—small dark figures prowl here and there between the trunks. You'll understand that this combination of red ochre, of green saddened with grey, of black lines that define the outlines, this gives rise a little to the feeling of anxiety from which some of my companions in misfortune often suffer, and which is called 'seeing red'" (822).

Though in a sense an optimistic counterpart, the pine trees in *Hospital at Saint-Rémy* speak a similar language. They are the true subject of the painting, dwarfing people and the hospital building like benevolent giants and emphasizing the greatness of nature. With images like this, Van Gogh, who himself sought peace of mind in nature, art, and literature, wanted to give his own form of consolation to those who saw his paintings.

SVH

1 Some of these sketches may date from March 1890, see Marije Vellekoop and Roelie Zwikker, *Vincent van Gogh Drawings: Auvers, Saint-Rémy, Auvers-sur-Oise, 1888–1890*, cats. 377–394, about the eighteen drawings in the Van Gogh Museum.

2 There are two variants of this painting, F 660 JH 1849 and F 659 JH 1850.

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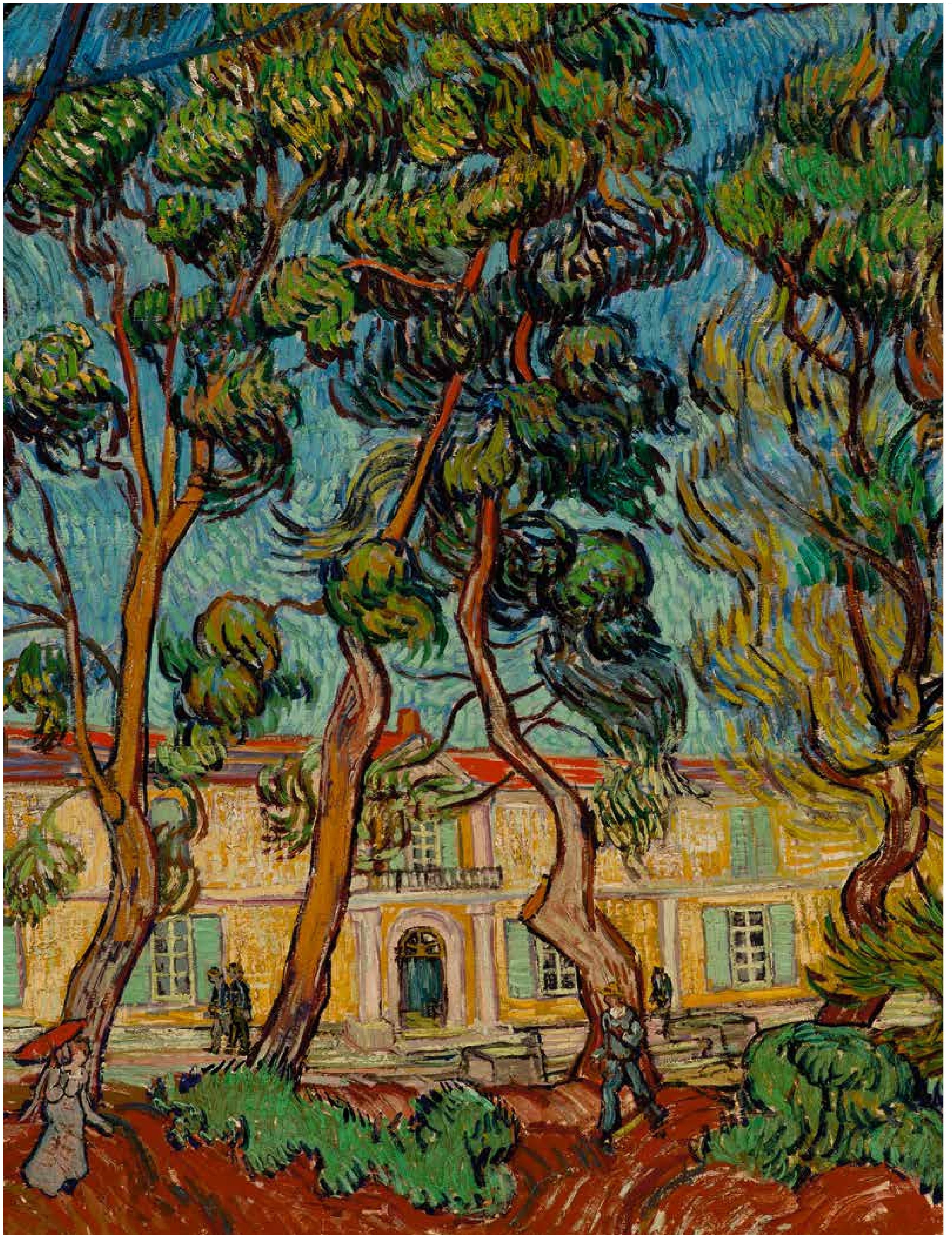

16 ROSES, MAY 1890

Just before leaving the Asylum of Saint-Rémy in May 1890, Van Gogh painted two vases with irises and two with roses, which can be seen as a celebration of spring and as a salute to leaving the hospital and Provence behind and venturing into a new period.

In Nuenen, Van Gogh had made dozens of still lifes, but only a few were flower still lifes. That changed drastically after he moved to Paris in early 1886. He came to recognize that his style needed a thorough modernization; an important means of doing so was to paint bouquets of flowers, in search of a brighter palette and a forceful brushstroke. Most of these works are merely studies, but in the course of the two years he spent in Paris he clearly started to attach more value to the genre, as is shown by an ambitious work like *Four Sunflowers Gone to Seed* (ill. 1).

When Van Gogh moved to Arles in February, it was the Provençal landscape that demanded his attention. But still lifes had become an intrinsic part of his oeuvre, and although he painted only a few flower still lifes, a series among them ranks as one of the highlights in his oeuvre: the four vases with sunflowers that he painted in August 1888 as part of a decoration for the Yellow House, and as a welcome to Paul Gauguin, who had admired his Paris sunflower paintings. In January 1889 Van Gogh painted two replicas of two of the still lifes from August.

In May 1889 Van Gogh had himself voluntarily admitted to the asylum of Saint-Rémy. For the time being he was not allowed to work outside other than in the garden of the asylum, which gave him plenty of motifs. He began just in time to paint the irises, roses, and lilacs that bloom in spring, but flower still lifes are rare in the year he spent in the asylum. He had precious few opportunities, because apart from the spring flowers, his later garden views show no flowers that he could have used for bouquets.

But shortly before leaving Saint-Rémy, Van Gogh availed himself of the newly flowering irises and roses and must have borrowed vases from the clinic's staff. He had recently suffered a severe attack of his illness and wrote to Theo:

> At the moment the improvement is continuing, the whole horrible crisis has disappeared like a thunderstorm, and I'm working here with calm, unremitting ardour to give a last stroke of the brush. I'm working on a canvas of roses on bright green background and two canvases of large bouquets of violet Irises, one lot against a pink background in which the effect is harmonious and soft through the combination of greens, pinks, violets. On the contrary, the other violet bouquet (ranging up to pure carmine and Prussian blue) standing out against a striking lemon yellow background with other yellow tones in the vase and the base on which it rests is an effect of terribly disparate complementaries that reinforce each other by their opposition (870).

The painting from the National Gallery of Art, as can be deduced from the letters, was the first in the sequence.[1] There are a vertical and a horizontal version of each of the still lifes. Once more Van Gogh was using his formidable talent for color to create strong complementary contrasts, but the opposition of the purple irises against a yellow background and the red roses against a green one has since lost its intended coloristic force: a red organic pigment in the irises and roses faded, turning them respectively blue and mostly white. But the paintings maintain a strong expressive force, with virtuoso thick brushstrokes that forced Van Gogh to leave them behind when he left Saint-Rémy in May 1890 because the paint would not be dry enough to transport them. A kind employee of the asylum had them and other works shipped to Auvers-sur-Oise. On June 24, Vincent, clearly pleased, wrote to Theo: "Now the canvases from down there have arrived, the Irises have dried well and I dare believe that you'll find something in them; thus there are also some roses" (891).

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Cat. no. 16
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Roses, May 1890

Oil on canvas, 27 15/16 × 35 7/16 in.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Pamela Harriman in memory of W. Averell Harriman (1991.67.1 / F681)

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Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Four Sunflowers Gone to Seed*, August–October 1887. Oil on canvas, 23 7/16 × 39 3/16 in. Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (KM 105.570 / F452).

1 For this and other aspects of the four works, see Eliza Rathbone, “Van Gogh’s Late Still-Life Paintings: From Still to Life,” in Michael Philipp et al., *Van Gogh: Still Lifes*, Potsdam (Museum Barberini), 2019–2020, pp. 86–99; on the four still lifes: pp. 93–98.

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17 LES VESSENOTS IN AUVERS, MAY 1890

"Really it's gravely beautiful, it's the heart of the countryside, distinctive and picturesque" (873), Vincent wrote to Theo and Jo on May 20, 1890, the day of his arrival in the small village of Auvers-sur-Oise, north of Paris. *Les Vessenots in Auvers* beautifully captures Vincent's unique approach to landscape, which flourished during the final months of his life spent in Auvers. In a period of astonishing productivity, Vincent produced seventy-two paintings, thirty-three drawings, and one print in the two months before his premature death, most of them landscapes. On display in *Les Vessenots* is Vincent's personal "Morse code," his visual vocabulary of dashes and dots, striations and stippling, characteristic of the mature painting style developed in Saint-Rémy the year prior.

Les Vessenots combines Van Gogh's engagement with both the village houses in Auvers and the large expanses of wheat fields surrounding the town. The single red roof at top center acts as a focal point, signaling Vincent's interest in the contrast between these new tile roofs and the traditional thatched roofs in the village. He writes in a letter to Theo and Jo on May 25, 1890,

> Here we're far enough from Paris for it to be the real countryside, but nevertheless, how changed since Daubigny. But not changed in an unpleasant way, there are many villas and various modern and middle-class dwellings, very jolly, sunny and covered with flowers. That in an almost lush countryside, just at this moment of the development of a new society in the old one, has nothing disagreeable about it; there's a lot of well-being in the air. I see or think I see a calm there à la Puvis de Chavannes, no factories, but beautiful greenery in abundance and in good order (873).

Beyond the changing architecture of Auvers, Vincent's attention to the "development of a new society in the old one" is epitomized by his dual reference to Charles François Daubigny (1817–1878), a hero of the Barbizon movement who had died twelve years earlier, and to Pierre Henri Puvis de Chavannes (1824–1898), the standard-bearer of a new approach to landscape painting.[1]

Daubigny and Puvis de Chavannes, as well as Camille Pissarro (1831–1903) and Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), act as key reference points for mapping Vincent's network of artistic influences and inspiration in Auvers. Daubigny lived and worked in Auvers for many years, and Vincent made several pilgrimages to his house, where his widow still resided, painting three canvases as a tribute to the landscape master. While Vincent's approach to working directly from nature captures the essence of Daubigny's artistic practice (who was famous for using his floating studio, *Le Botin*, in Auvers), canvases such as *Les Vessenots* also draw on more avant-garde approaches to landscape painting. Pissarro and Cézanne worked in Auvers in the 1870s, and Vincent recorded seeing works by both artists at Dr. Gachet's house.[2] We might see the inspiration of Pissarro in particular in the bright color palette and the dotted yellow flowers in this canvas, although the treatment is different from the more overtly pointillist technique adopted by Vincent in earlier canvases such as *Road to the Outskirts of Paris* (cat. no. 9).

Vincent's characteristic use of the high horizon line in *Les Vessenots* draws on the innovations of Cézanne, Puvis de Chavannes, and Pont-Aven landscape painters such as Paul Sérusier (1869–1927) (pl. 63), while also echoing the aerial perspective of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) (pl. 77) and others, which so fascinated nineteenth-century artists. Unlike the more traditional format of Barbizon landscapes, which usually accorded equal focus to land and sky, the almost vertiginous perspective in *Les Vessenots* immerses the viewer entirely in the field. The boundaries between land and sky are further blurred by Vincent's technique: the hills at top are indicated by lines of green paint with the blue of the sky still visible underneath, merging the two. At the same

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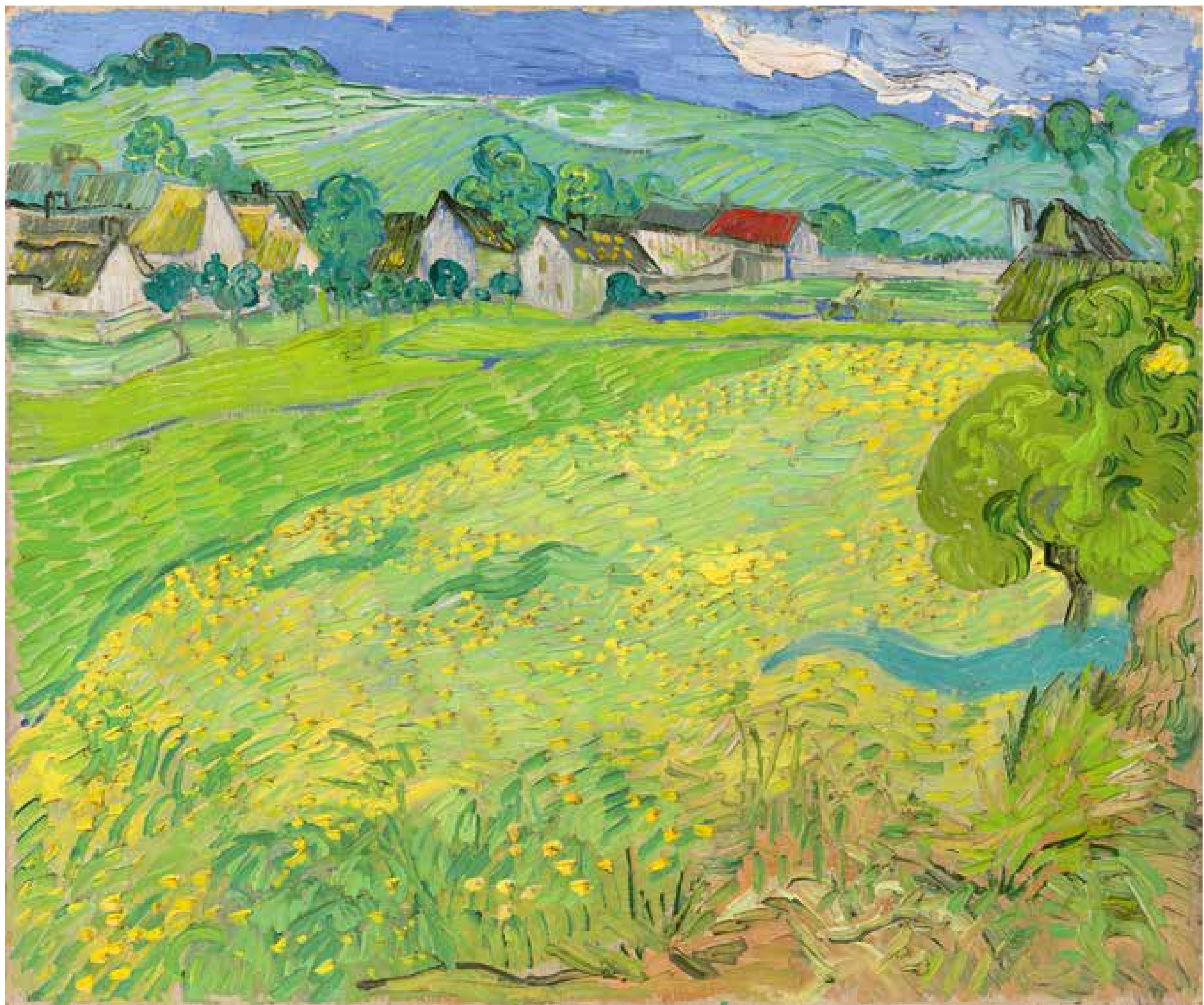

Cat. no. 17
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Les Vessenots in Auvers, May 1890
Oil on canvas, 21⅝ × 25 9/16 in.
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid (559, 1978.41)

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time, the cast shadow of the tree at right or perhaps a snaking river bend, painted in a bright turquoise, floats uneasily on top of the field, reading almost as a misplaced piece of sky. Finally, the smoothly flowing parallel strokes denoting the fields and houses at top left dissolve into a chaotic profusion of untamed brushstrokes in the lower right corner—unruly nature here acts as a visual counterweight to the ordered, human world of the village. As a negotiation of the relationship between land and sky, nature and the domestic world, traditional landscape painting and the avant-garde, *Les Vessenots* is emblematic of the productive tensions vibrating through Vincent's Auvers landscapes.

RS

1 Guillermo Solana interprets Van Gogh's interest in the contrast between old and new in Auvers as a reflection on his own changing work, noting that Vincent viewed his entire oeuvre in Theo's apartment in Paris immediately before traveling to Auvers. Guillermo Solana, *Van Gogh: The Last Landscapes* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisz, 2007).

2 Letter 240. *Les Vessenots* would also enter Dr. Gachet's collection after Vincent's death.

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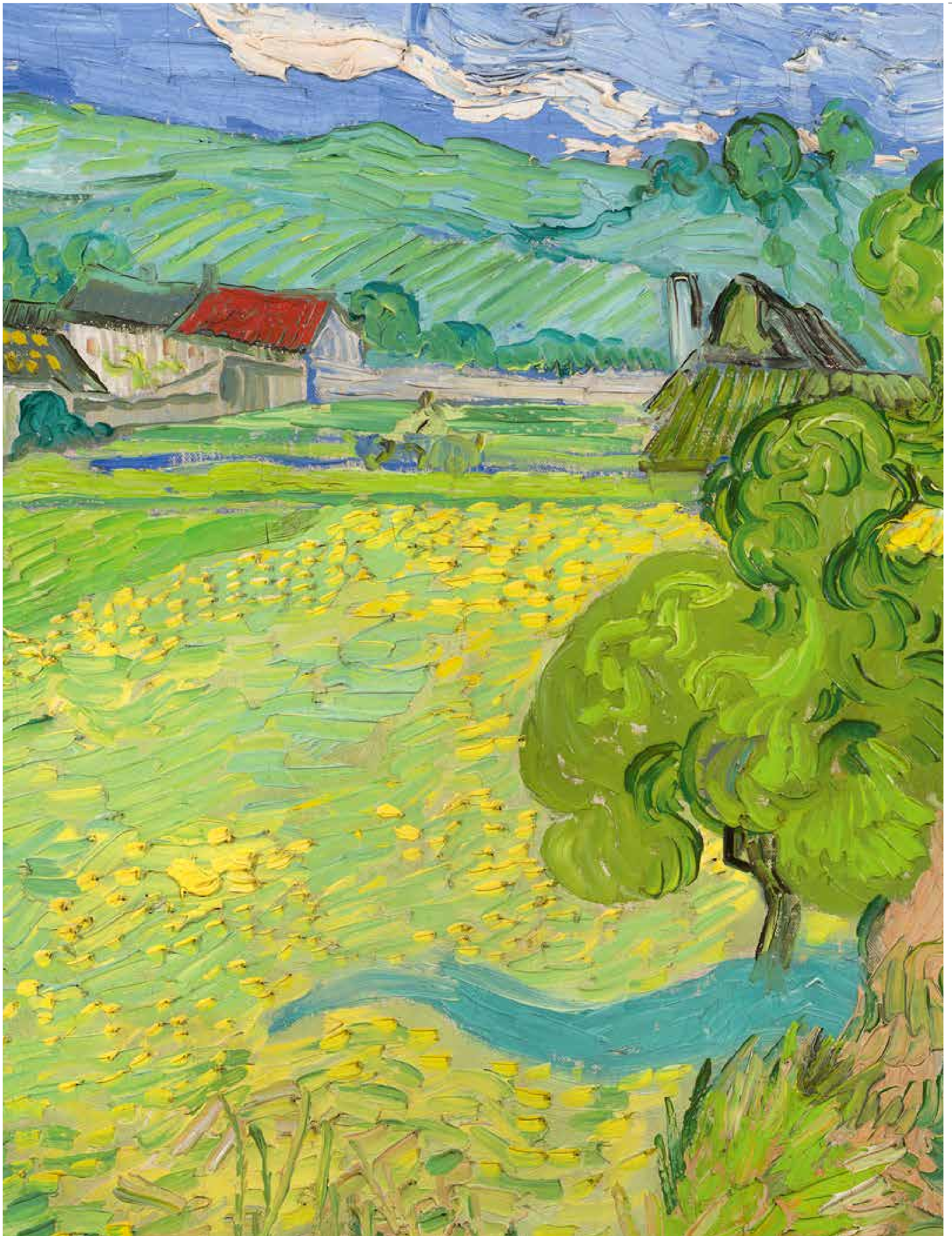

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 195 8/16/21 4:32 PM

18 PORTRAIT OF DR. GACHET (AUVERS-SUR-OISE), JUNE 15, 1890

Van Gogh traveled to Auvers-sur-Oise on May 20, 1890, and that same day met Dr. Paul Ferdinand Gachet, who had promised to keep an eye on Van Gogh's health. The men soon developed a mutual sympathy. Gachet was a collector, friend of Paul Cézanne and Camille Pissarro, and an amateur artist himself.

As explained elsewhere, Van Gogh had ideas about making truly modern portraits (cat. no. 19). Gachet would become the subject of two paintings and one print—the only etching Van Gogh ever made. Gachet was a gifted amateur etcher and had a press at home. When Van Gogh came to have lunch with him on June 15, 1890, the doctor handed him a varnished copperplate and asked him to draw on it. Van Gogh decided it should be the portrait of his new friend.

Confusingly, the print bears the inscription "15 Mai 1890"—an impossibility since Van Gogh had not yet arrived in Auvers-sur-Oise on that day. Comparison with Gachet's handwriting on some of his own etchings proves that it is his, and he must have been confused when scratching it in, mixing up two months.[1]

Van Gogh and Gachet immediately started making impressions. They did four in color, using oil paint (ill. 1). A group of impressions in black and white show a remarkably heavy inking, which must have been Van Gogh's doing. After Van Gogh's death, Dr. Gachet kept making impressions, donating at least some of them to artists. His son continued that idealistic practice, although sometimes his considerations were of a commercial nature. The print on show here was printed by Gachet Jr.

After his experiments with nine lithographs in the Netherlands, Van Gogh lost his graphic ambitions, partly because of the costs involved.[2] But he must have been delighted to make an etching, since even as young men he and Theo had loved prints in that technique, collected them, and exchanged them (see pp. 26–27 in this catalogue). His own pen drawings owe much to his intense study of etchings. It is therefore hardly surprising that he developed a new plan: "I really hope to do a few etchings of subjects from the south, let's say 6, since I can print them free of charge at Mr Gachet's; he's very willing to run them off for nothing if I do them. It's certainly a thing that must be done, and we'll act in such a way that in some way it forms a sequel to the Lauzet-Monticelli publication, if you approve" (889). The publication Van Gogh is referring to and that prompted his own plans is a book about the work of Adolphe Monticelli that Theo was preparing with the artist Auguste Lauzet.[3] Van Gogh's plan for a series of etchings did not materialize.

SVH

Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Portrait of Dr. Gachet*, Auvers-sur-Oise, June 1890. Etching in sanguine, 7¹⁄₁₆ × 5¹⁵⁄₁₆ in. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (p0469V1962 / F1664-007).

1 For a full discussion of this complex issue and other aspects of the print, see Sjraar van Heugten and Fieke Pabst, *The Graphic Work of Vincent van Gogh* (Zwolle and Amsterdam, 1996), 29–30 and 79–86.
2 See letter 701 to Gauguin.
3 *Adolphe Monticelli* (Paris: Boussod, Valadon & Cie, 1890).

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Cat. no. 18

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)

Portrait of Dr. Gachet (Auvers-sur-Oise), June 15, 1890

Etching, 7 × 5⅜ in.

Lent by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Bruce B. Dayton, 1962 (P.13.251 / F1664)

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19 ADELINE RAVOUX, JUNE 1890

On May 20, 1890, after a brief stay in Paris with Theo and his young family, Vincent van Gogh moved to Auvers-sur-Oise, where he lodged at the Auberge Ravoux, run by Arthur Gustave and Adeline Ravoux. They had two daughters, thirteen-year-old Adeline and two-year-old Germaine. Young Adeline would become an important source of knowledge about Van Gogh's Auvers period: she carefully wrote down her recollections—based partly on those of her father—many years later.[1] She remembered him warmly as a man who spoke little but when addressed was always friendly. The family called him "Monsieur Vincent." Van Gogh was fond of children and every evening after supper would take little Germaine on his knee and make a drawing for her.

Van Gogh asked young Adeline to pose for him around June 23 (ill. 1) and gave the portrait to her. He then made a second slightly larger repetition for Theo.[2] The smaller square painting from Cleveland must have been done a bit later from memory, since Adeline insisted: "What I can affirm is that I only posed for one portrait."[3] She added: "I admit that I was only moderately satisfied with my portrait; it was somewhat of a disappointment, for I did not find it true to life. However, last year a person who came to interview me about Van Gogh, in meeting me for the first time, recognized me from the portrait that Vincent had executed and said, 'Vincent divined not the young girl that you were, but the woman you would become.'"[4]

Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Portrait of Adeline Ravoux*, ca. June 23, 1890. Oil on canvas, 26⅜ × 21⅝ in. Private collection.

Ill. 2
Photograph of Adeline Ravoux. Van Gogh Museum Archive.

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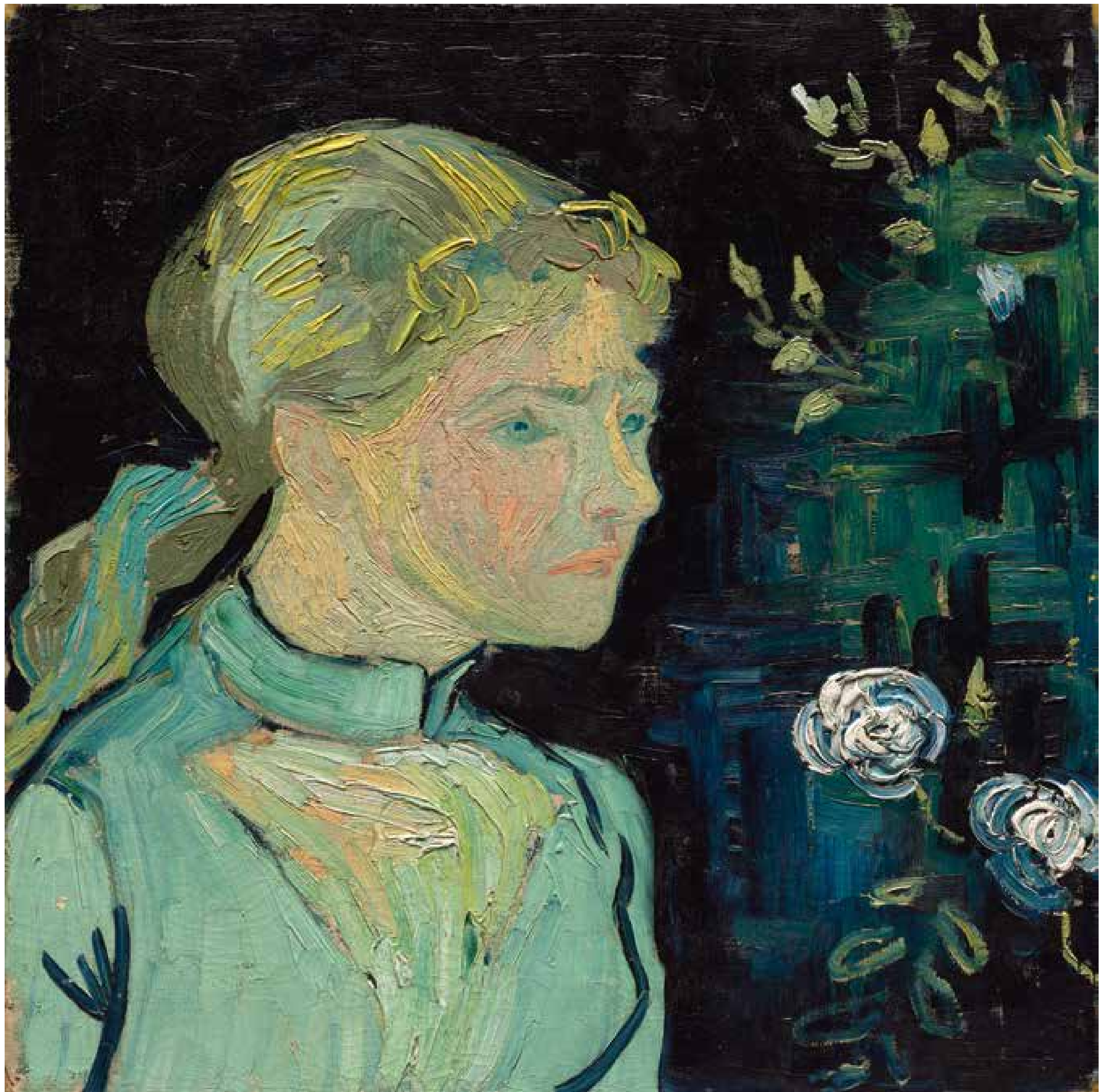

Cat. no. 19
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Adeline Ravoux, June 1890

Oil on fabric, 19¾ × 19⅞ in.
Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Leonard C. Hanna Jr. (1958.31 / F786)

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The three portraits are the result of an important ambition that Van Gogh initiated in Auvers. He wanted to paint portraits with a truly modern character, as he explained on June 5 in a letter to his sister Willemien: "What I'm most passionate about, much much more than all the rest in my profession—is the portrait, the modern portrait. I seek it by way of colour, and am certainly not alone in seeking it in this way. I would like, you see I'm far from saying that I can do all this, but anyway I'm aiming at it, I *would like* to do portraits which would look like apparitions to people a century later. So I don't try to do us by photographic resemblance but by our passionate expressions, using as a means of expression and intensification of the character our science and modern taste for colour" (879). This search for expression and intensity is the raison d'être for the third version. The two profile paintings show a rather shy-looking girl, while the bust portrait makes her look more passionate and even a bit fierce. The strong contrast of the figure against the dark blue background further emphasizes that effect. The flowers and leaves at the right add a more poetical element. Van Gogh frequently included floral elements in portraits. Their meaning can often only be guessed at, but in this case the blooming white flowers and fresh green leaves can be associated with the youth of the girl.

The Ravoux family was sitting on the terrace of the inn when Van Gogh stumbled home after having shot himself on July 27. He passed away on July 29, leaving the family members "in mourning as if for the death of one of our own."[5]

SVH

1 Originally published in French in 1957, they are included in an English translation in Susan Allyson Stein, ed., *Van Gogh: A Retrospective* (New York, 1986), 211–19. See also http://www.vggallery.com/misc/archives/a_ravoux.htm.
2 F 769 JH 2037, Private Collection.
3 Stein, *Van Gogh: A Retrospective*, 213.
4 See for the painting also https://www.clevelandart.org/sites/default/files/documents/exhibition-catalogue/4_AdelineRavoux.pdf, which includes notes on the painting technique.
5 Stein, *Van Gogh: A Retrospective*, 216.

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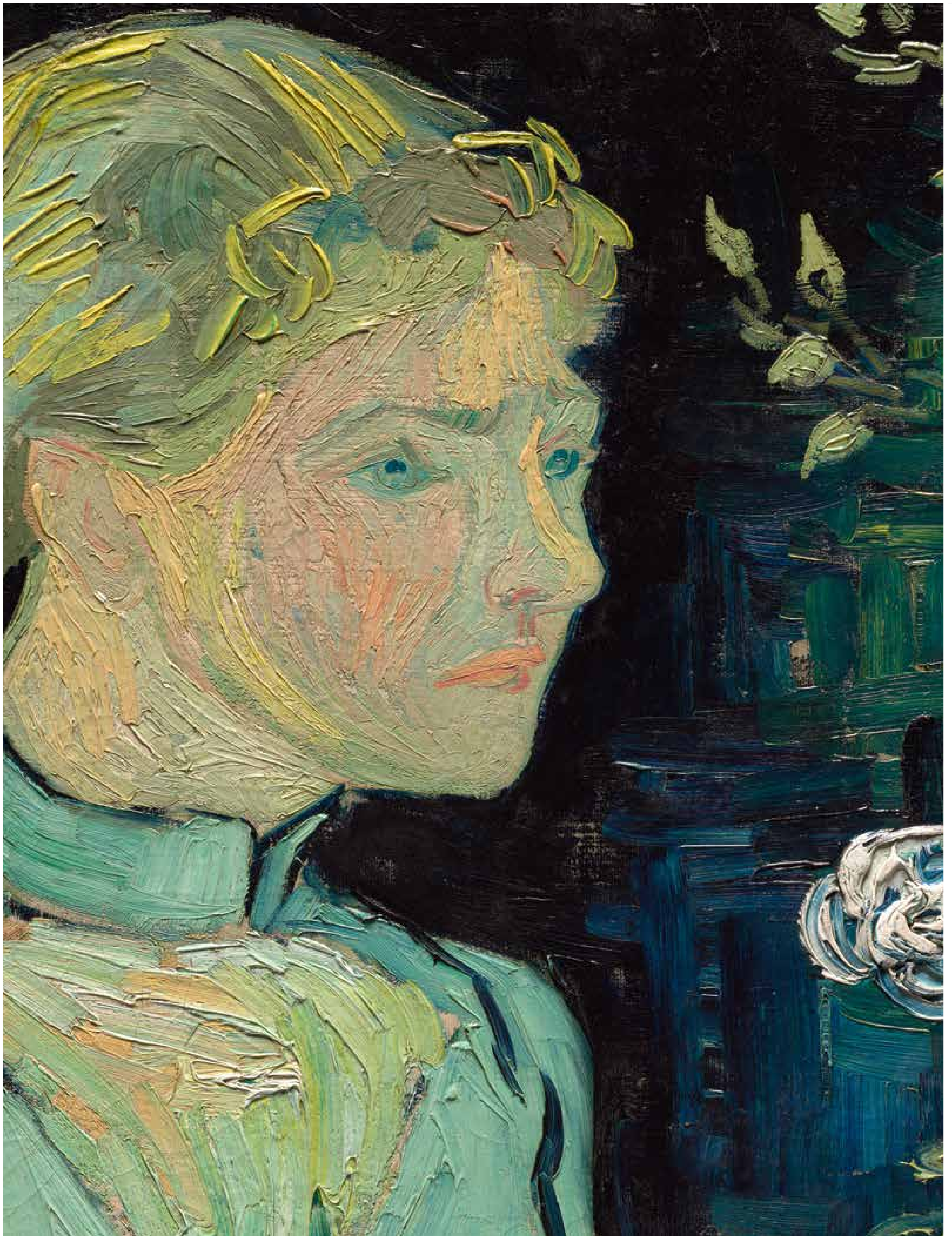

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20 SHEAVES OF WHEAT, JULY 1890

Even for an extremely productive painter like Van Gogh, his output in Auvers was astonishing. Among the dozens of paintings, a series of thirteen stands out. They all measure 50 by 100 centimeters (20 by 40 inches) and have become known as the double squares. *Sheaves of Wheat* is one of these paintings.

Van Gogh was no stranger to such a long, stretched horizontal format and in using it was probably inspired by one of his beloved Barbizon painters, Charles-François Daubigny, who frequently worked on elongated canvases. In Van Gogh's work they appear as early as 1881 in Etten, and letters prove that there were more that are now lost.[1] Van Gogh used a very oblong horizontal format frequently in The Hague, most notably in the summer of 1883, when he made large drawings with complex compositions of people performing different labors. Some are known only from sketches in the letters or as a black-and-white photograph.[2] One of them, showing peat diggers, measures exactly 50 × 100 cm.[3] A painting from that time, *Potato Digging (Five Figures)* (ill. 1), has an even longer elongated format. A large watercolor from Drenthe with a drawbridge was also made on a prominent horizontal format.[4] In Nuenen, Van Gogh made a group of large paintings in August–September 1884 with figures in rural scenes that represented the seasons, again on a remarkably oblong format.[5]

After moving to France in early 1886, Van Gogh hardly used this type of format anymore, until settling in Auvers-sur-Oise and adopting it again for the series of thirteen. What may have triggered it is that he now was working in the village where Daubigny had lived and where his widow still resided in their house. That building and its garden would be the subject of two of the double squares.

Except for one portrait (in which Van Gogh used the canvas in a vertical format), all the other paintings are images of the landscape around Auvers, notably the wheat fields that once more enthralled him and that feature also in many paintings in other sizes. Back in the north, he became again inspired by the Barbizon masters, and felt, as he wrote in late May 1890: "Millet is the voice of the wheat, and Jules Breton also" (RM 21). Just after his arrival, the wheat fields had still been green, and he observed the ripening of the crop and the harvest in July. *Sheaves of Wheat* is one of the harvest paintings, and it has the same deeper significance as the smaller *The Wheatfield*, June 1888, from Arles. The sheaves of wheat, majestic and moving at the same time, represent the never-ending cycles of life and express the feelings of a higher force that Van Gogh perceived in nature. Van Gogh, who once had seen himself become primarily a figure painter, now hardly ever added figures to harvest scenes. Apart from one painting with a reaper, none of the wheat-field paintings from Auvers-sur-Oise feature figures; nature, obviously, could very well speak for itself.

SVH

Ill. 1
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890), *Potato Digging (Five Figures)*, August 1883 (F 9 JH 385). Oil on paper on canvas, 15⁹⁄₁₆ × 37³⁄₁₆ in. Private collection.

1 F 875 JH 4 and F 850 JH 15, see letters 172, 173 (where he specifies that they were large drawings) and 174.
2 Letters 350 and 352, with sketches of people working on a rubbish dump. F 1034 JH 372, featuring sand diggers, is known only from a photograph, without further data.
3 F 1031 JH 363. The other works mentioned may have had the same measurements.
4 F 1098 JH 425.
5 F 41 JH 513, F 42 JH 517, F 43 JH 516, and F 172 JH 514, with measurements ranging from 67 × 120 to 70.5 × 170 cm (26⅜ × 47¼ to 27¾ × 67 in.).

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Cat. no. 20
Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Sheaves of Wheat, July 1890
Oil on canvas, 20 × 40 in.
Dallas Museum of Art, The Wendy and Emery Reves Collection (1985.R.80 / F771)

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4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 204 8/16/21 4:38 PM

COLOR PLATES OF WORKS BY OTHER ARTISTS

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Plate 1
Jules Bastien-Lepage
(French, 1848–1884)
The Ripened Wheat, 1884
Oil on canvas, 37½ × 43 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by Suzette and Eugene Davidson and the Davidson Endowment (1995.34)

"For ever so long I have been wanting to write to you—but then the work has so taken me up. We have harvest time here at present and I am always in the fields."

—Vincent van Gogh to John Peter Russell, Arles, on or about Sunday, June 17, 1888 (Letter 627)

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Plate 2

Émile Bernard (French, 1868–1941)
Women Walking on the Banks of the Aven, 1890

Oil on canvas, 28 × 36¼ in.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum purchase funded by Mr. and Mrs. Raymond H. Goodrich, by exchange (92.9)

"You ask who Bernard is—he's a young painter—he's twenty at most. Very original. He seeks to do modern figures as elegant as ancient Greeks or Egyptians. A grace in the expressive movements, a charm through daring colours."

—Vincent van Gogh to Willemien van Gogh, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, Monday or Tuesday, December 9 or 10, 1889 (Letter 827)

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Plate 3

Émile Bernard (French, 1868–1941)
Still Life with Apples and Breton Crockery, 1892

Oil on canvas, 32¼ × 45⅝ in.
Collection of Timothy H. Eaton

"Young Bernard—according to me—has already made a few absolutely astonishing canvases in which there's a gentleness and something essentially French and candid, of rare quality."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, Tuesday, June 18, 1889 (Letter 782)

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Plate 4

Albert Besnard
(French, 1849–1934)
Woman with Red Hair,
ca. 1896–1902

Oil on canvas, 20⅝ × 17⅞ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Katharine Dexter McCormick in memory of her husband, Stanley McCormick (1968.20.3)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 210 8/16/21 4:40 PM

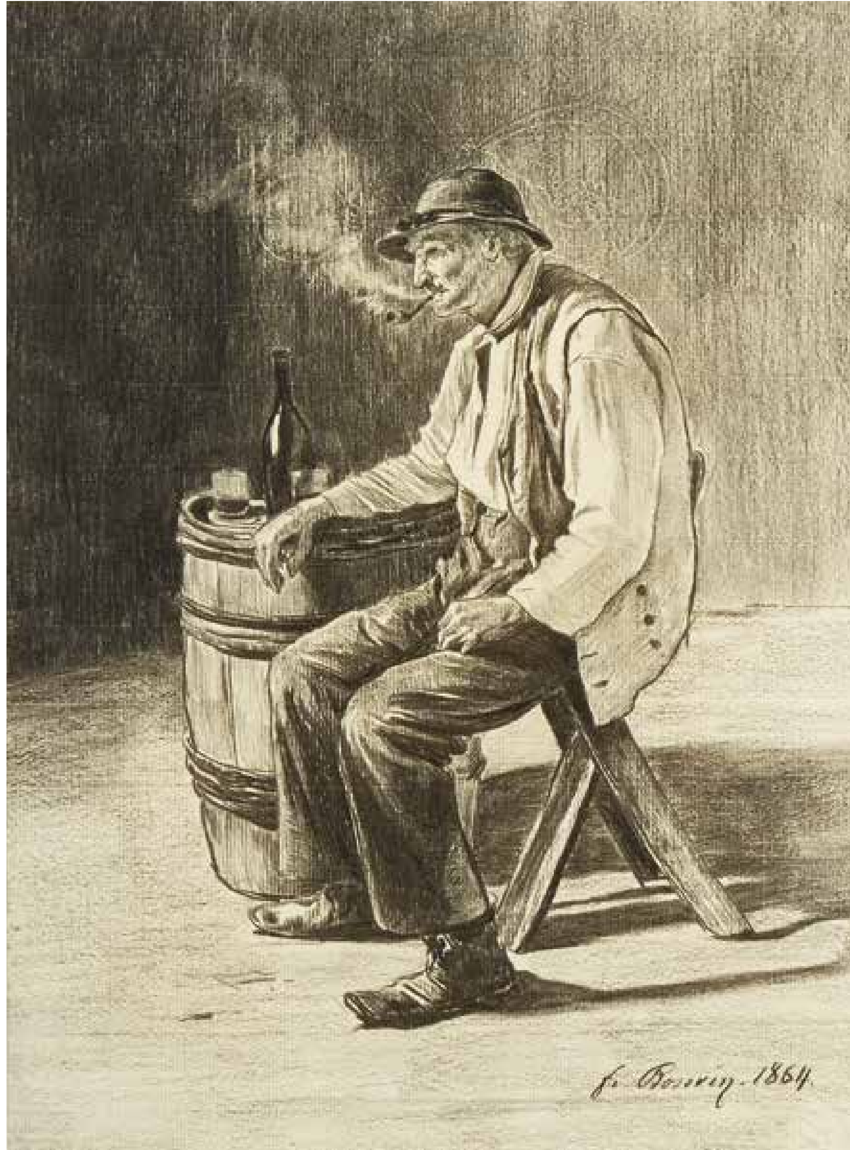

Plate 5

François Bonvin
(French, 1817–1887)
Old Man Sitting and Smoking, 1864

Compressed charcoal with stumping and lifting, fixed, on laid paper, 15¾ × 12³⁄₁₆ in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

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Plate 6
Eugène Boudin
(French, 1824–1898)
Camaret, Boats in the Harbor,
1871–73

Oil on canvas, 14⅛ × 23 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of
Harriet K. Maxwell (1983.32)

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Plate 7

Eugène Boudin
(French, 1824–1898)
Bordeaux, Boats on the Garonne,
1876

Oil on canvas, 19½ × 29 in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio,
Museum purchase, Derby Fund,
(1983.008)

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Plate 8

Jules Breton (French, 1827–1906)
The Return from the Fields, 1867

Oil on canvas, 41 × 61 in.
Courtesy of Karen and Glenn Doshay

"Nonetheless, there was still progress up to Millet and Jules Breton in my view, but as for surpassing these two men, don't talk to me of that. Their genius may be equalled in past, present or later ages, but to surpass them isn't possible. If one reaches that high zone, one is amid an equality of geniuses, but one can't climb higher than the top of the mountain."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, The Hague, Sunday, November 5, 1882 (Letter 280)

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Plate 9

Jules Breton (French, 1827–1906)
The Pardon, 1872

Oil on canvas, 47⅝ × 34 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Kenneth W. Watters in Memory of Elizabeth Converse Strong Watters (1989.43)

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Plate 10

Jean Siméon Chardin
(French, 1699–1779)
Still Life with a Leg of Lamb, 1730

Oil on canvas, 15¾ × 12¹³⁄₁₆ in.
Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston (BF.1992.4)

"I'm more and more convinced that the true painters didn't finish in the sense in which people all too often used finish—that's to say clear if one stands with one's nose pressed to it. The best paintings—precisely the most perfect from a technical point of view—seen from close to are touches of colour next to one another, and create their effect at a certain distance. Rembrandt persisted in this despite all the trouble he had to suffer as a result (the worthy citizens thought Van der Helst much better for the reason that one can also see it close to). In that respect, Chardin is as great as Rembrandt."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about Saturday, November 7, 1885 (Letter 539)

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Plate 11
Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
(French, 1796–1875)
View of Saint-Lô, 1850–55

Oil on canvas, 14$\frac{5}{16}$ × 10¼ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio,
Bequest of Frederick W. Schumacher
(1931.300)

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Plate 12

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
(French, 1796–1875)
The Glacis of a Ruined Castle-Fort,
1855–65

Oil on canvas, 14½ × 9¼ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of the A.E. Clegg Family (1991.89.1)

"Corot's figures may not be so well known as his landscapes, but that doesn't mean that he didn't make them. For that matter, in Corot every tree-trunk is drawn and modelled with attention and love as though it were a figure."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Etten, Friday, August 26, 1881 (Letter 171)

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Plate 13
Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
(French, 1796–1875)
The Little Bird Nesters, 1873–74

Oil on canvas, 26 × 35½ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio,
Museum Purchase, Derby Fund
(1986.006)

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Plate 14
Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot
(French, 1796–1875)
Pleasures of the Evening, 1875
Oil on canvas, 44½ × 65¼ in.
Collection of the Armand Hammer Foundation

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Plate 15

Gustave Courbet
(French, 1819–1877)
Still Life with Apples, Pears, and Pomegranates, 1871–72

Oil on canvas, 10⅝ × 16⅝ in.
Dallas Museum of Art, The Wendy and Emery Reves Collection (1985.R.18)

"Ah, Manet was really really close to it, and Courbet, to marrying form and colour."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, Wednesday, August 8, 1888 (Letter 657)

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Plate 16

Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (French, 1852–1929)
Peasants in a Field Watching a Train Passing through La Valla, 1879

Chalk heightened with white on paper, 13 × 19 13/16 in.

Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

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Plate 17
Honoré Daumier
(French, 1808–1879)
The Strong Man, ca. 1865

Oil on wood panel, 10⅝ × 13⅞ in.
The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, acquired 1928

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Plate 18

Edgar Degas (French, 1834–1917)

The Breakfast, ca. 1885

Pastel and graphite pencil over monotype on cream paper, laid down, $15\frac{5}{16} \times 11\frac{7}{16}$ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund (1991.001.008)

"I'm thinking of squarely accepting my profession as a madman just like Degas took on the form of a notary. But there it is, I don't feel I quite have the strength needed for such a role."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, Sunday, March 24, 1889 (Letter 752)

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Plate 19

Edgar Degas (French, 1834–1917)
Houses at the Foot of a Cliff (Saint-Valéry-sur-Somme), ca. 1895–98

Oil on canvas, 36¼ × 28⅝ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund (1991.001.007)

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Plate 20

Eugène Delacroix
(French, 1798–1863)
Winter: Juno and Aeolus, 1856

Oil on canvas, 24 × 19½ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase, Ludington Antiquities Fund and Ludington Deaccessioning Fund (2013.41)

"I hope that you'll often go and look at the Luxembourg and the modern paintings in the Louvre so that you get an idea of what a Millet, a Jules Breton, a Daubigny, a Corot is. You can keep the rest. Except—Delacroix. Although people are now working in yet another very different manner, the work of Delacroix, of Millet, of Corot, that remains and the changes don't affect it."

—Vincent van Gogh to Willemien van Gogh, Arles, Tuesday, August 21, or Wednesday, August 22, 1888 (Letter 667)

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Plate 21
Eugène Delacroix
(French, 1798–1863)
The Last Words of Marcus Aurelius, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 25⅝ × 31¾ in.
The Asch van Wyck Trust

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 229 8/16/21 4:50 PM

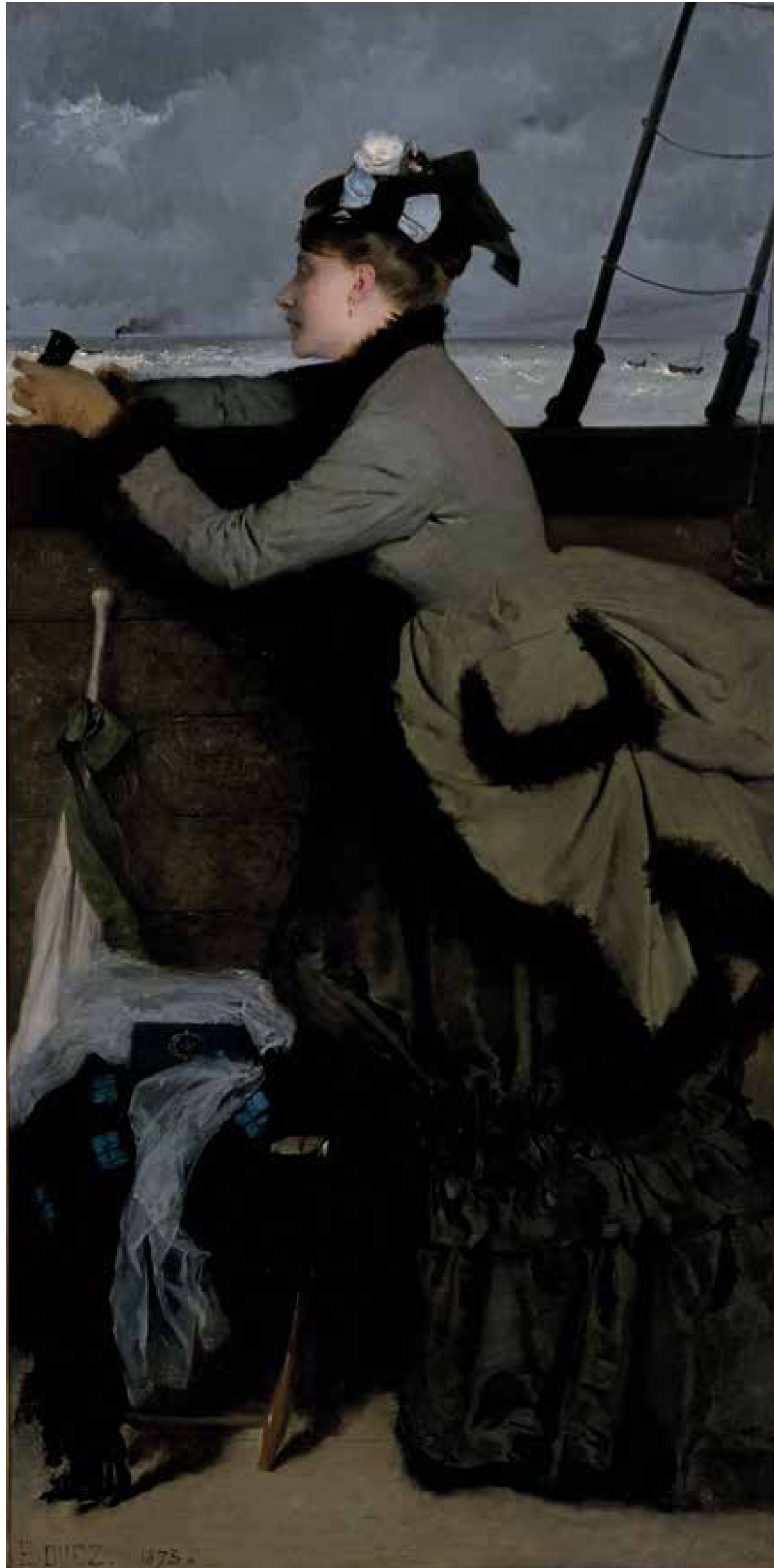

Plate 22
Ernest Ange Duez
(French, 1843–1896)
Woman in Grey on Board Ship, Gazing at the Sea, 1873

Oil on canvas, 47½ × 23½ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art,
Museum purchase with funds provided by the Suzette and Eugene Davidson Fund (1994.21)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 230 8/16/21 4:50 PM

Plate 23
Jean Alexandre Joseph Falguière
(French, 1831–1900)
Phryné, n.d.

Bronze, 32¾ × 11¼ × 11¼ in.
Lent by the Minneapolis Institute of Art,
Bequest of Bruce B. Dayton (2016.33.28)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 231 8/16/21 4:51 PM

Plate 24

Henri Fantin-Latour
(French, 1836–1904)
Chrysanthemums of Summer,
ca. 1887

Oil on canvas, 18⅛ × 15 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of
Mary and Leigh Block (1987.58.12)

"I know little by *Fantin-Latour*, but what I saw I thought *very good*. *Chardinesque*. And that's a lot."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Neunen, on or about Monday, March 2, 1885 (Letter 484)

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Plate 25
Jean Louis Forain
(French, 1852–1931)
Portrait of Giuseppe De Nittis, 1884
Pastel on paper, 25⅞ × 17⅝ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art,
Bequest of Margaret Mallory
(1998.50.31)

"I still have to thank you for your last letter as well as for the consignment of colours from Tasset and several issues of *Le Fifre* with drawings by Forain. The latter have often had the effect on me that what I manufacture becomes very sentimental in comparison."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, on or about Thursday, April 4, 1889 (Letter 754)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 233 8/16/21 4:52 PM

Plate 26
Pierre-Édouard Frère
(French 1819–1886)
A Pot of Porridge, n.d.

Oil on panel, 10⅛ × 8 in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 234 8/16/21 4:52 PM

Plate 27

Paul Gauguin (French, 1848–1903)
Christmas Night (The Blessing of the Oxen), 1902–3

Oil on canvas, 27¹⁵⁄₁₆ × 32½ in.
The Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, Samuel Josefowitz Collection of the School of Pont-Aven, through the generosity of Lilly Endowment Inc., the Josefowitz Family, Mr. and Mrs. James M. Cornelius, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard J. Betley, Lori and Dan Efroymson, and other Friends of the Museum (1998.169), discovernewfields.org

"Of course there's no question of me doing anything from the Bible—and I've written to Bernard, and also to Gauguin, that I believed that thinking and not dreaming was our duty, that I was therefore astonished when looking at their work by the fact that they give way to that."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, Tuesday, November 26, 1889

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 235 8/16/21 4:53 PM

Plate 28

Armand Guillaumin
(French, 1841–1927)
Woman Reading, ca. 1898

Oil on canvas, 25¼ × 32 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Bruce and Laurie Maclin (2017.22.1)

"I believe that, as a man, Guillaumin has sounder ideas than the others, and that if we were all like him we'd produce more good things."

—Vincent van Gogh to Émile Bernard, Paris, about December 1887 (Letter 575)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 236 8/16/21 4:53 PM

Plate 29
Armand Guillaumin (French, 1841–1927)
Banks of the Creuse, 1903

Oil on canvas, 21 × 25⅝ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Dwight and Winifred Vedder (2006.54.6)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 237 8/16/21 4:54 PM

Plate 30

Jozef Israëls (Dutch, 1824–1911)
Woman in Landscape, n.d.

Oil on canvas, 18⅝ × 31⅜ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Sanford and Mary Jane Bloom (1992.54)

“[Uncle] C.M. asked me if I didn’t find the Phryné by Gérôme beautiful, and I said I would much rather see an ugly woman by Israëls or Millet or a little old woman by E. Frère, for what does a beautiful body such as Phryné’s really matter? Animals have that too, perhaps more so than people, but animals don’t have a soul like the one that animates the people painted by Israëls or Millet or Frère [. . .]”

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Amsterdam, Wednesday and Thursday, January 9 and 10, 1878 (Letter 139)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 238 8/16/21 4:54 PM

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 239 8/16/21 4:54 PM

Plate 31
Charles-Émile Jacque
(French, 1813–1894)
The Shepherdess, 1867

Oil on canvas, 32½ × 26 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift
of Mr. Robert Woods Bliss (1944.8)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 240 8/16/21 4:55 PM

Plate 32

Johan Barthold Jongkind
(Dutch, 1819–1891)
The Cathedral of Notre-Dame as Seen from the Pont de l'Archevêché, 1849

Oil on canvas, 13¾ × 23⅞ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art,
Museum purchase with funds
provided by the 19th-Century
Acquisition Fund (1999.1)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 241 8/16/21 4:55 PM

Plate 33

Léon-Augustin Lhermitte
(French, 1844–1925)
Harvesters Resting, n.d.

Pastel, 16½ × 19⅞ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art,
Museum purchase, The Schott
Madonna Fund (1985.31)

"A great deal is said about—Poussin. Bracquemond talks about him, too. The French call Poussin their greatest ever painter among the old masters. Well it's certain that what's said about Poussin, whom I know so very little about, I find in Lhermitte and in Millet. But with this distinction, that it seems to me Poussin is the original grain, the others are the full ear. For my part, then, I rate today's superior."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Neunen on or about Wednesday, September 2, 1885 (Letter 531)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 242 8/16/21 4:56 PM

Plate 34
Maximilien Luce
(French, 1858–1941)
Rue des Abbesses, 1896
Oil on canvas, 25½ × 31¾ in.
Collection of Robert and
Christine Emmons

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 243 8/16/21 4:56 PM

Plate 35

Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883)
Peonies, 1864–65

Oil on canvas, 23⅜ × 13⅞ in.
Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of Joan Whitney Payson, 1975 (1976.201.16)

"Do you remember that one day at the Hôtel Drouot we saw a quite extraordinary Manet, some large pink peonies and their green leaves on a light background? As much in harmony and as much a flower as anything you like, and yet painted in solid, thick impasto and not like Jeannin. That's what I'd call simplicity of technique. And I must tell you that these days I'm making a great effort to find a way of using the brush without stippling or anything else, nothing but a varied brushstroke. But you'll see, one day."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, Thursday, August 23, or Friday, August 24, 1888 (Letter 668)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 244 8/16/21 4:56 PM

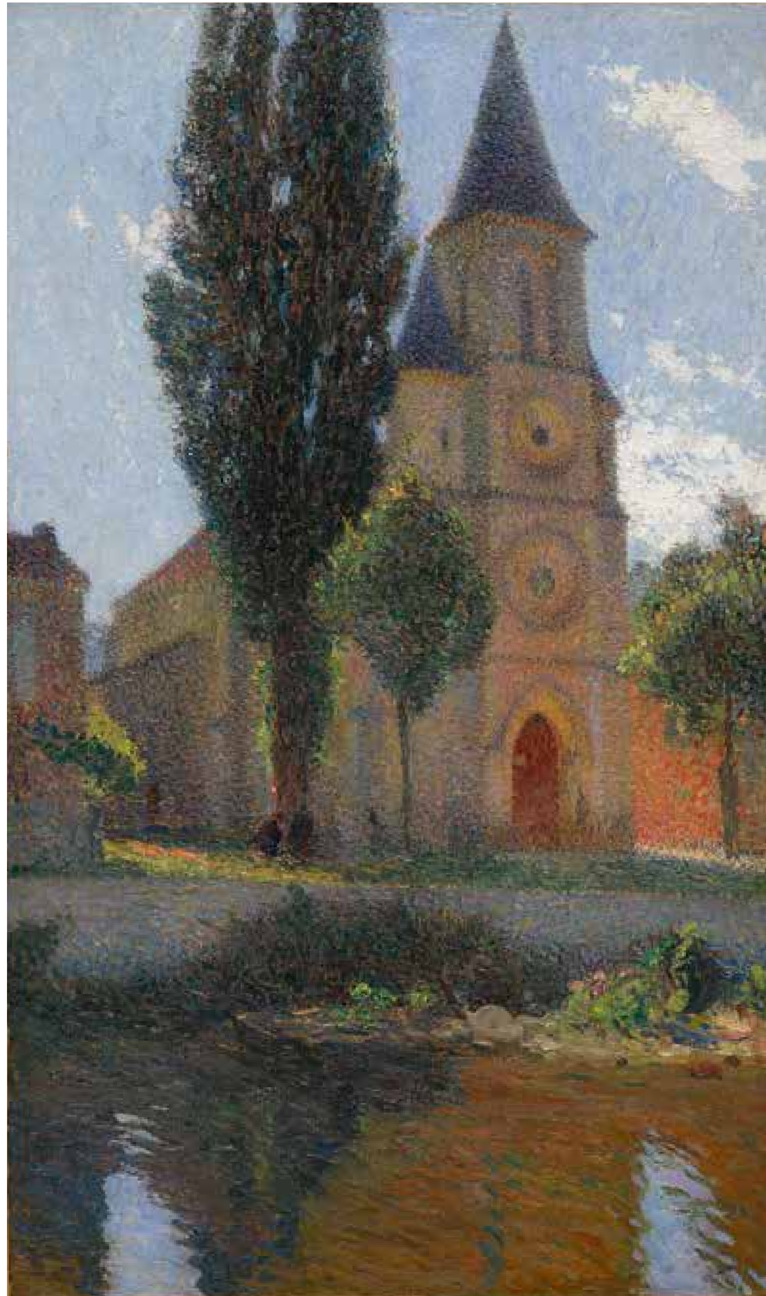

Plate 36

Henri Jean Guillaume Martin
(French, 1860–1943)
The Church of Labastide-du-Vert,
A Summer Morning, ca. 1898

Oil on canvas, 38½ × 23 in.
Collection of John L. Wirchanski,
Columbus, Ohio

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 246 8/16/21 4:57 PM

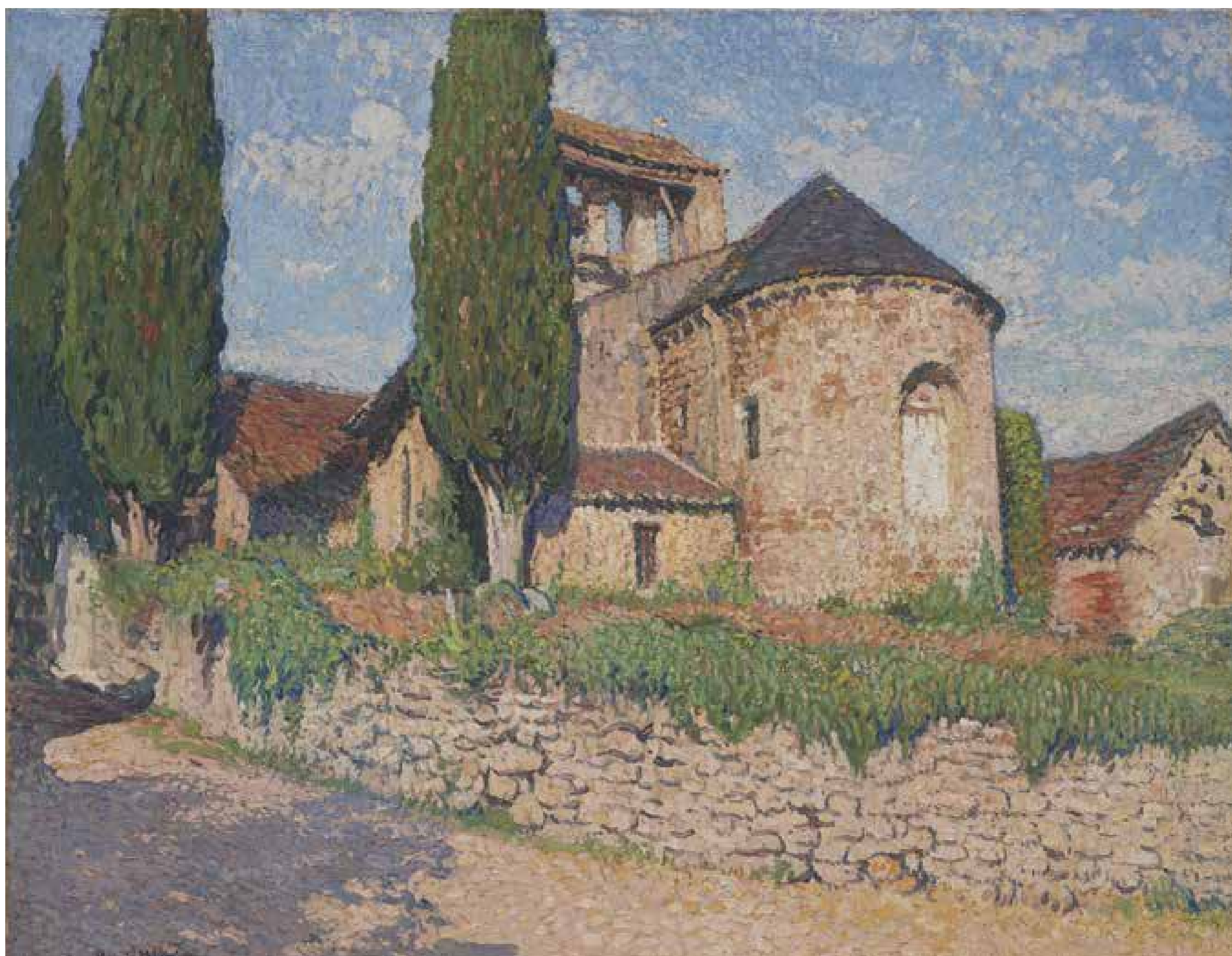

Plate 37

Henri Jean Guillaume Martin
(French, 1860–1943)
The Bastide of Anglass Guillac, n.d.
(ca. 1926)

Oil on canvas, 32¾ × 42¼ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of
Mrs. Harriet Maxwell (1981.31)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 247 8/16/21 4:58 PM

Plate 38

Anton Mauve (Dutch, 1838–1888)
The Potato Diggers, n.d.

Oil on canvas, mounted on board, 12⅛ × 15 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Sanford and Mary Jane Bloom (1991.106)

"I spent an afternoon and part of an evening at Mauve's and saw many beautiful things in his studio. My own drawings interested Mauve more. He gave me a great many suggestions, which I'm glad of, and I've sort of arranged to pay him another visit fairly soon when I have some more studies. He showed me a whole batch of his studies and explained them to me—not sketches for drawings or designs for paintings but true study sheets, apparently insignificant. He wants me to start painting."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Etten, August 26, 1881 (Letter 170)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 248 8/16/21 4:58 PM

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 249 8/16/21 4:58 PM

Plate 39

Constantin Meunier (Belgian, 1831–1905)
June, ca. 1893

Bronze on marble base, 22½ × 17¾ in. Santa Barbara Art Museum, Museum purchase, The Suzette and Eugene Davidson Fund (1991.126)

"Anyway—if they should happen to remember me—which I'm not keen on—there'll be enough to send something coloured to the Vingtistes. But I'm indifferent to that. What I'm not indifferent to is that a man who is far superior to me, Meunier, has painted the female thrutchers of the Borinage and the shift going to the pit and the factories, their red roofs and their black chimneys against a delicate grey sky—all things I've dreamed of doing, feeling that it hadn't been done and that it ought to be painted. And still, there's an infinite number of subjects there for artists, and one should go down into the depths and paint the light effects."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Saint-Remy-de-Provence, on or about Tuesday, October 8, 1889 (Letter 810)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 250 8/16/21 4:58 PM

Plate 40
Georges Michel (French, 1763–1843)
Landscape, n.d.
Oil on panel, 9⅞ × 14 in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

"These days Montmartre no doubt has those curious effects painted by Michel, for example, i.e. that withered grass and sand against the grey sky. At any rate the colour in the meadows at present is often such that one thinks of Michel. The ground yellow, brown withered grass with a wet road with puddles, the tree-trunks black, the sky grey and the houses white, tonal from a distance and yet still having colour, in the red of the roofs, for example."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, The Hague, Sunday, February 11, 1883 (Letter 312)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 251 8/16/21 4:59 PM

Plate 41

Jean François Millet (French, 1814–1875)
The Sower, after 1850

Oil on canvas, 41½ × 33¾ in.
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, 19th Century or Earlier Painting Purchase Fund and with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Casey and Mr. and Mrs. George L. Craig, Jr. (63.7)

"There was also something I wanted to ask you about Millet. Do you think that Millet would have become Millet if he'd lived childless and without a wife? He found his inspiration the more easily and sympathized with the simple folk better and deeper because he himself lived like a labourer's family—but with infinitely more feeling than an ordinary labourer. Millet's motto was: God blesses large families—and his life proves that he meant it. Would Millet have been able to do this without Sensier? Perhaps not. But why did Millet break with those men who were originally his friends and from whom he had an annuity? Sensier says enough about this to make out that the trouble was that they rated both Millet's person and Millet's work as mediocre, and plagued both themselves and Millet with it until that pitcher finally broke, having been too many times to the well. And yet Sensier doesn't go into details about those days—just as if he understood that Millet himself found that time a dreadful bore and preferred not to think of it. Sensier says somewhere that when Millet thought about his first wife and the struggle of those days, he would clasp his head between his two hands with a gesture as if the great darkness and inexpressible melancholy of that period overwhelmed him again. His domestic life was more successful the second time—but he wasn't with those original people any more."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, between about Wednesday, March 5, and about Sunday, March 9, 1884

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 252 8/16/21 4:59 PM

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 253 8/16/21 5:00 PM

Plate 42

Jean François Millet (French, 1814–1875)
Maternity: A Young Mother Cradling Her Baby, 1870–73

Oil on canvas, 46⅛ × 35⅝ in.
Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati, Ohio, Bequest of Charles Phelps Taft and Anna Sinton Taft (1931.448)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 254 8/16/21 5:00 PM

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 255 8/16/21 5:00 PM

Plate 43
Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)
The Church of Varengeville and the Gorge of Moutiers Pass, 1882

Oil on canvas, 23½ × 32 in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur J. Kobacker (1981.015)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 256 8/16/21 5:01 PM

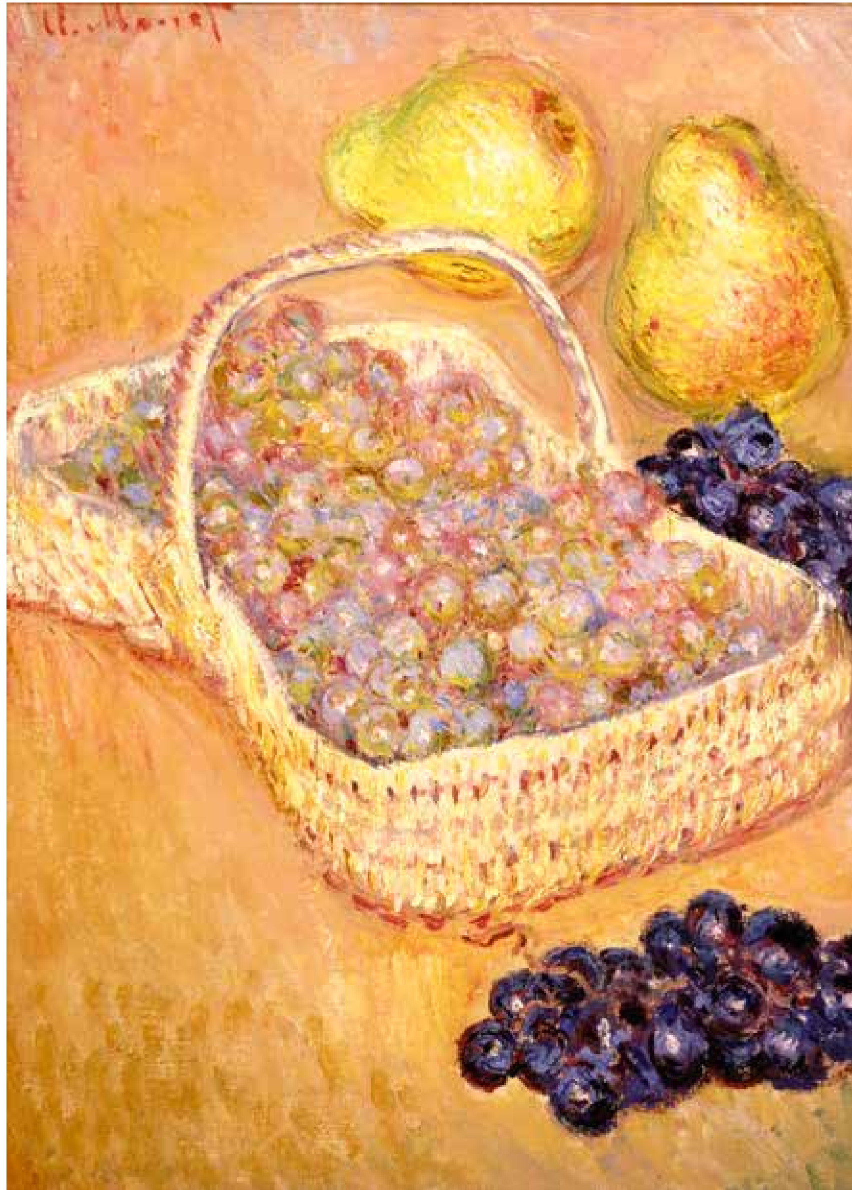

Plate 44

Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)
Basket of Grapes, 1883

Oil on canvas, 20⅛ × 15 in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund (1991.001.040)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 257 8/16/21 5:01 PM

Plate 45

Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)
Villas in Bordighera, 1884

Oil on canvas, 29 × 36⅜ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art,
Bequest of Katharine Dexter McCormick in memory of her husband,
Stanley McCormick (1968.20.5)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 258 8/16/21 5:02 PM

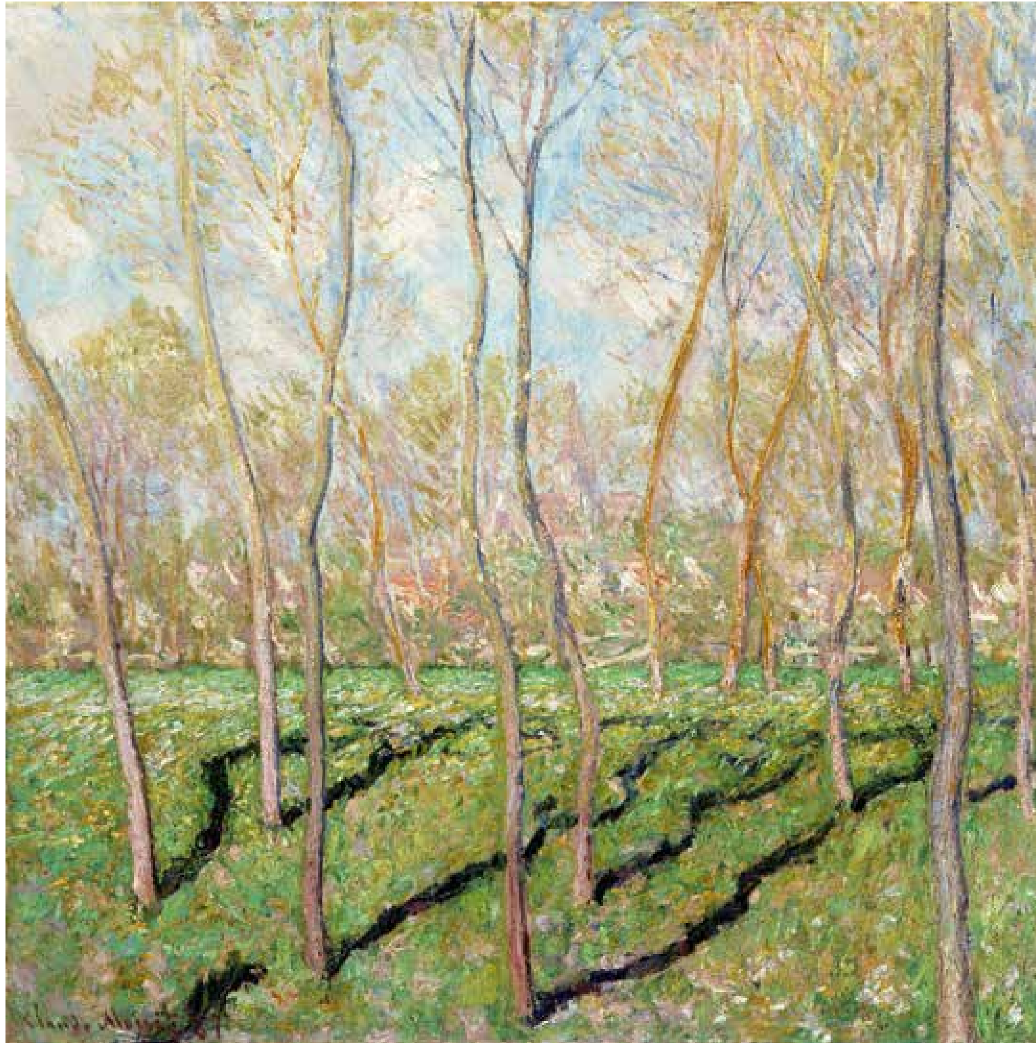

Plate 46

Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)
View of Bennecourt, 1887

Oil on canvas, 32⅛ × 32⅛ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Excellence, and the Derby Fund (1991.001.042)

"Ah, to paint figures like Claude Monet paints landscapes. That's what remains to be done despite everything, and before, of necessity, one sees only Monet among the Impressionists."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, Friday, May 3, 1889 (Letter 768)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 259 8/16/21 5:02 PM

Plate 47

Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)
Waterloo Bridge, 1900

Oil on canvas, 25¾ × 36½ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Bequest of Katharine Dexter McCormick in memory of her husband, Stanley McCormick (1968.20.7)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 260 8/16/21 5:02 PM

Plate 48
Adolphe Joseph Thomas
Monticelli (French, 1824–1886)
Flowers in a Copper Bowl, ca. 1875

Oil on wood, 17¼ × 22½ in.
The Kreeger Museum, Washington, DC
(1961.6)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 261 8/16/21 5:03 PM

Plate 49

Adolphe Joseph Thomas Monticelli (French, 1824–1886)
Park Scene, 1875–78

Oil on wood panel, 16⅜ × 26⅛ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. John D. Graham in memory of Buell Hammett (1948.28.1)

"Yesterday, at sunset, I was on a stony heath where very small, twisted oaks grow, in the background a ruin on the hill, and wheatfields in the valley. It was romantic, it couldn't be more so, à la Monticelli, the sun was pouring its very yellow rays over the bushes and the ground, absolutely a shower of gold. And all the lines were beautiful, the whole scene had a charming nobility. You wouldn't have been at all surprised to see knights and ladies suddenly appear, returning from hunting with hawks, or to hear the voice of an old Provençal troubadour. The fields seemed purple, the distances blue. And I brought back a study of it too, but it was well below what I'd wished to do."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, Thursday, July 5, 1888 (Letter 636)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 262 8/16/21 5:03 PM

Plate 50

Adolphe Joseph Thomas Monticelli (French, 1824–1886)
Amiable Conversation, n.d.

Oil on wood, 17½ × 13⅝ in.
The Kreeger Museum, Washington, DC (1967.11)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 263 8/16/21 5:03 PM

Plate 51

Hippolyte Petitjean
(French, 1854–1929)
Standing Nude, ca. 1895

Watercolor on paper, 21 × 14½ in.
Collection of Robert and Christine Emmons

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 264 8/16/21 5:04 PM

Plate 52

Camille Pissarro (French, 1831–1903)
The Stone Bridge and Barges at Rouen, 1883

Oil on canvas, 21⅜ × 25⅝ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund (1991.001.053)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 265 8/16/21 5:04 PM

Plate 53

Camille Pissarro
(French, 1831–1903)
Meadow at Eragny, 1895

Oil on canvas, 21 × 25½ in.
Private collector

"What Pissarro says is true—the effects colours produce through their harmonies or discords should be boldly exaggerated. It's the same as in drawing—the precise drawing, the right colour—is not perhaps the essential element we should look for—because the reflection of reality in the mirror, if it was possible to fix it with colour and everything—would in no way be a painting, any more than a photograph."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, on or about Tuesday, June 5, 1888 (Letter 620)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 266 8/16/21 5:05 PM

Plate 54
Jean-François Raffaëlli
(French, 1850–1924)
The Return of the Ragpickers, 1879
Oil on canvas, 34¼ × 34¼ in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

"There you are, I think that's perfectly true—I ask you, what sort of a man, what sort of a visionary/observer or thinker, what sort of a human character is there behind some of these canvases praised for their technique—often, after all, nothing. But a Raffaëlli—is someone, a Lhermitte is someone, and in many paintings by virtually unknown people one feels that they were made with a will, with emotion, with passion, with love. The TECHNIQUE of a painting from peasant life or—like Raffaëlli—from the heart of urban workers—entails difficulties quite different from those of the slick painting and the rendering of action of a Jacquet or Benjamin-Constant."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about Tuesday, July 14, 1885 (Letter 515)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 267 8/16/21 5:06 PM

Plate 55

Jean-François Raffaëlli
(French, 1850–1924)
The Ragpicker, ca. 1879
Oil on board, 32⅝ × 24 in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

"I ask you, what sort of a man, what kind of a prophet, or philosopher, observer, what kind of a human character is there behind certain paintings, the technique of which is praised? —In fact, often nothing. But a Raffaëlli is a personality, Lhermitte is a personality, and before many pictures by almost unknown artists, one feels that they are made with a will, with feeling, with passion and love."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about Tuesday, July 14, 1885 (Letter 515)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 268 8/16/21 5:06 PM

Plate 56

Jean-François Raffaëlli
(French, 1850–1924)
The Absinthe Drinkers, 1881

Oil on canvas, 42½ × 42½ in.
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum purchase, Roscoe and Margaret Oakes Income Fund, Jay D. and Clare C. McEvoy Endowment Fund, Tribute Funds, Friends of Ian White Endowment Fund, Unrestricted Art Acquisition Endowment Income Fund, Grover A. Magnin Bequest Fund, and the Yvonne Cappeller Trust (2010.16)

“In the Salon there’s a very fine painting by Raffaëlli, two absinthe drinkers. I find him strongest when he paints these people who have come down in the world. . . .”

—Theo van Gogh to Vincent van Gogh, Paris, Wednesday, May 8, 1889 (Letter 770)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 269 8/16/21 5:06 PM

Plate 57
Jean-François Raffaëlli
(French, 1850–1924)
We will give you twenty-five francs to start (Nous vous donnons vingt-cinq francs pour commencer), ca. 1883

Oil on wood panel, 19 11/16 × 25 13/16 in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 270 8/16/21 5:07 PM

Plate 58
Jean-François Raffaëlli
(French, 1850–1924)
The Woodcutter, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 32 × 39¾ in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 271 8/16/21 5:07 PM

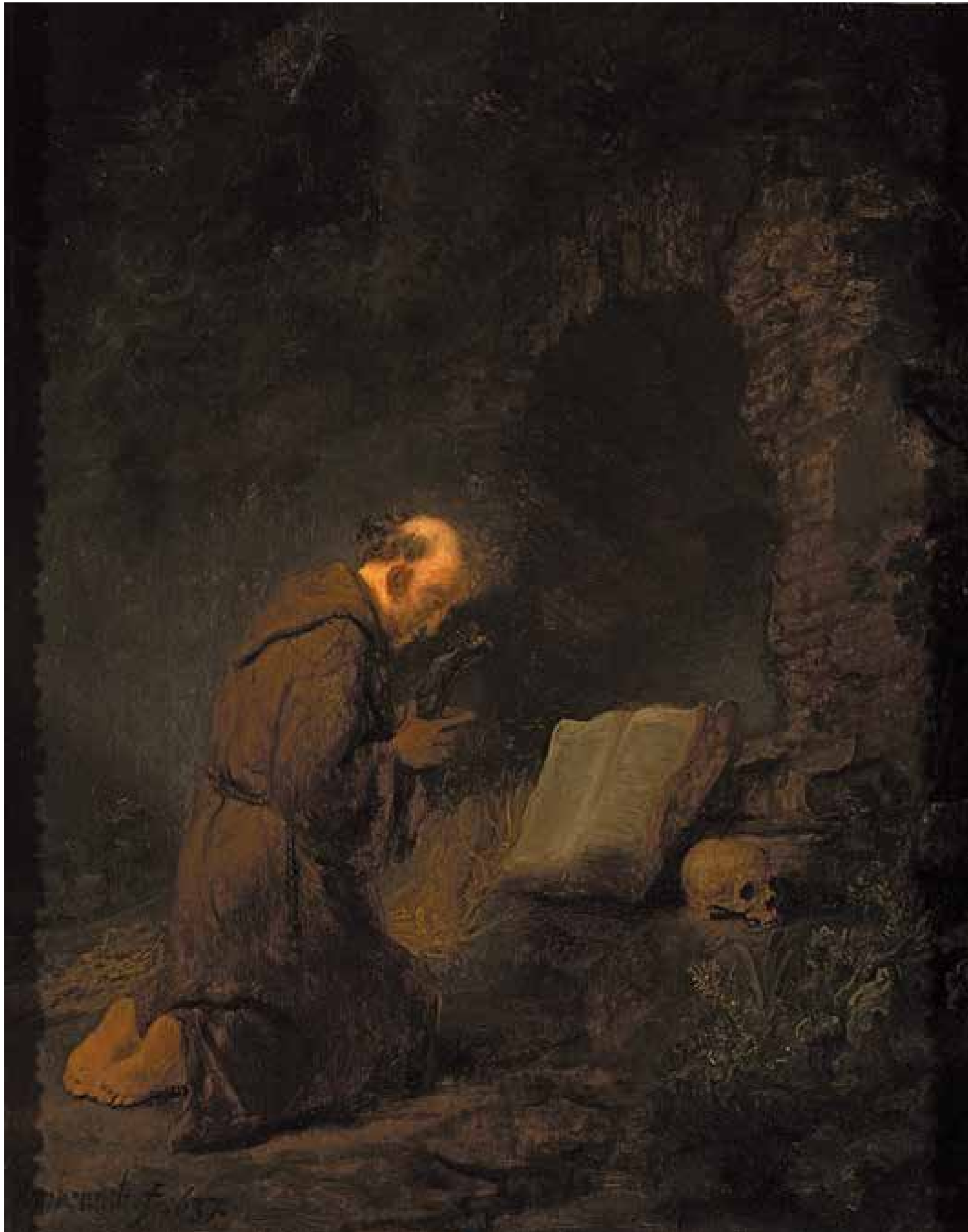

Plate 59

Rembrandt Harmensz. Van Rijn
(Dutch, 1606–1669)
St. Francis Praying, 1637

Oil on panel, 24 × 19 in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio,
Museum purchase, Derby Fund
(1961.002)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 272 8/16/21 5:08 PM

Plate 60
Théodule Augustin Ribot
(French, 1823–1891)
The Reader, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 18⅛ × 15 in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 273 8/16/21 5:09 PM

Plate 61
Théodore Rousseau
(French, 1812–1867)
Valley of Saint-Ferjeux, Doubs,
ca. 1860–62

Oil on canvas, 33⅜ × 53¼ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Lady Ridley-Tree in honor of Phillip M. Johnston (2007.37)

"I believe more than ever in the eternal youth of the school of Delacroix, Millet, Rousseau, Dupré, Daubigny, just as much as in the current one or even in artists to come."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Saint-Remy-de-Provence, between about Friday, May 31, and about Thursday, June 6, 1889 (Letter 777)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 274 8/16/21 5:10 PM

Plate 62

Ary Scheffer (Dutch, 1895–1858)
Christus Consolator, 1851

Oil on canvas, 25⅝ × 34½ in.
Lent by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Given in memory of Rev. D.J. Nordling by Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Dassel, Minnesota (2008.101)

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4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 276 8/16/21 5:10 PM

Plate 63
Paul Sérusier (French, 1864–1927)
Landscape at Le Pouldu, 1890

Oil on canvas, 29¼ × 36¼ in.
The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Gift of Alice G. Simkins in memory of Alice Nicholson Hanszen (79.255)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 277 8/16/21 5:10 PM

Plate 64

Paul Signac (French, 1863–1925)
Herblay—The Riverbank, 1889

Oil on canvas, 23¾ × 36 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Partial and promised gift of Lord and Lady Ridley-Tree (2001.65)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 278 8/16/21 5:10 PM

Plate 65

Alfred Sisley (French, 1839–1899)
Saint-Mammes, Banks of the Seine, 1885

Oil on canvas, 21⅜ × 28¾ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Bequest of Katharine Dexter McCormick in memory of her husband, Stanley McCormick (1968.20.6)

"But what would Mr Tersteeg say about this painting? He who, looking at a Sisley—Sisley, the most tactful and sensitive of the Impressionists—had already said: 'I can't stop myself thinking that the artist who painted that was a little tipsy'. Looking at my painting, then, he'd say that it's a full-blown case of delirium tremens."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, September 9, 1888

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 279 8/16/21 5:11 PM

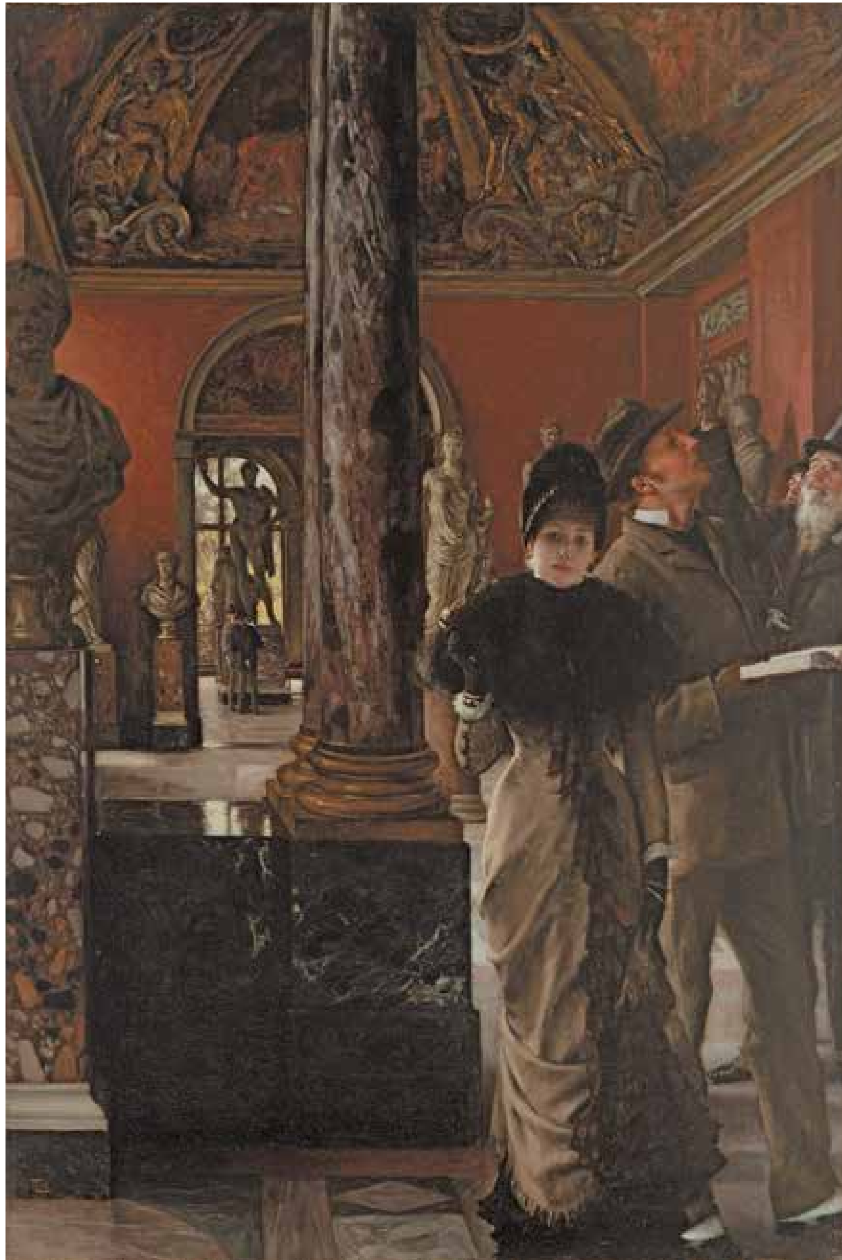

Plate 66

James Tissot (French, 1836–1902)
Foreign Visitors at the Louvre,
ca. 1883–85

Oil on canvas, 29 × 19½ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of The Estate of Barbara Darlington Dupee (2015.32.1)

"I hear Tissot has an exhibition—have you seen it? It all comes down to the degree of life and passion that an artist manages to put into his figure. So long as they really live, a figure of a lady by Alfred Stevens, say, or some Tissots are also really magnificent."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, Monday, May 4, and Tuesday, May 5, 1885 (Letter 500)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 280 8/16/21 5:11 PM

Plate 67
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec
(French, 1864–1901)
A Convalescent, 1891

Oil on canvas, 31¾ × 25½ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio,
Museum purchase, Howald Fund
(1956.053)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 281 8/16/21 5:11 PM

Plate 68
Constant Troyon
(French, 1810–1865)
Under the Trees, ca. 1847
Oil on canvas, 28¾ × 36¼ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of
Michael and Jan Schwartz (2005.93.5)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 282 8/16/21 5:11 PM

Plate 69

Anthon van Rappard
(Dutch, 1858–1892)
The Passievaart near Seppe,
June 13, 1881

Pencil on paper, 4 11/16 × 6 3/8 in.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
(d1130S2006)

“Don’t get angry now—read on—until the end—if you get angry, don’t tear up this letter without reading it—first count to ten. One—two—three &c. . . . That’s calming . . . something really bad is coming, though! What I want to say is this: Rappard, I believe that even when you’re working at the academy you’re striving to become more and more of a true realist, and at the academy, too, you stick to reality. However, without being aware of it yourself, without knowing it, that academy is a mistress who prevents a more serious, a warmer, a more fertile love from awakening in you. Let the mistress go and fall madly in love with your true love, Dame Nature or Reality.”

—Vincent van Gogh to Anthon van Rappard, Etten, Saturday, November 12, 1881 (Letter 184)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 283 8/16/21 5:12 PM

Plate 70
Hendrik Weissenbruch
(Dutch, 1824–1903)
Canal near Noorden, Sunset, 1893
Oil on board or oil on canvas laid on board, 34½ × 50 in.
Collection of Bram and Sandra Dijkstra

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 284 8/16/21 5:13 PM

Plate 71
Charles de Groux
(Belgian, 1825–1870)
Old Woman, 1854
Etching, 31¼ × 4¼ in.
Collection of David E. Stark

Plate 72
Charles de Groux
(Belgian, 1825–1870)
Musician and Child, 1855
Etching, 3¼ × 3¼ in.
Collection of David E. Stark

"Now listen—do you remember that right at the very beginning I always spoke to you of my great respect and sympathy for the work of père Degroux? I think about him *more than ever* these days. [. . .] One must see [. . .] above all, the simple Brabant types."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about Tuesday, 16 December 1884 (Letter 476)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 285 8/16/21 5:13 PM

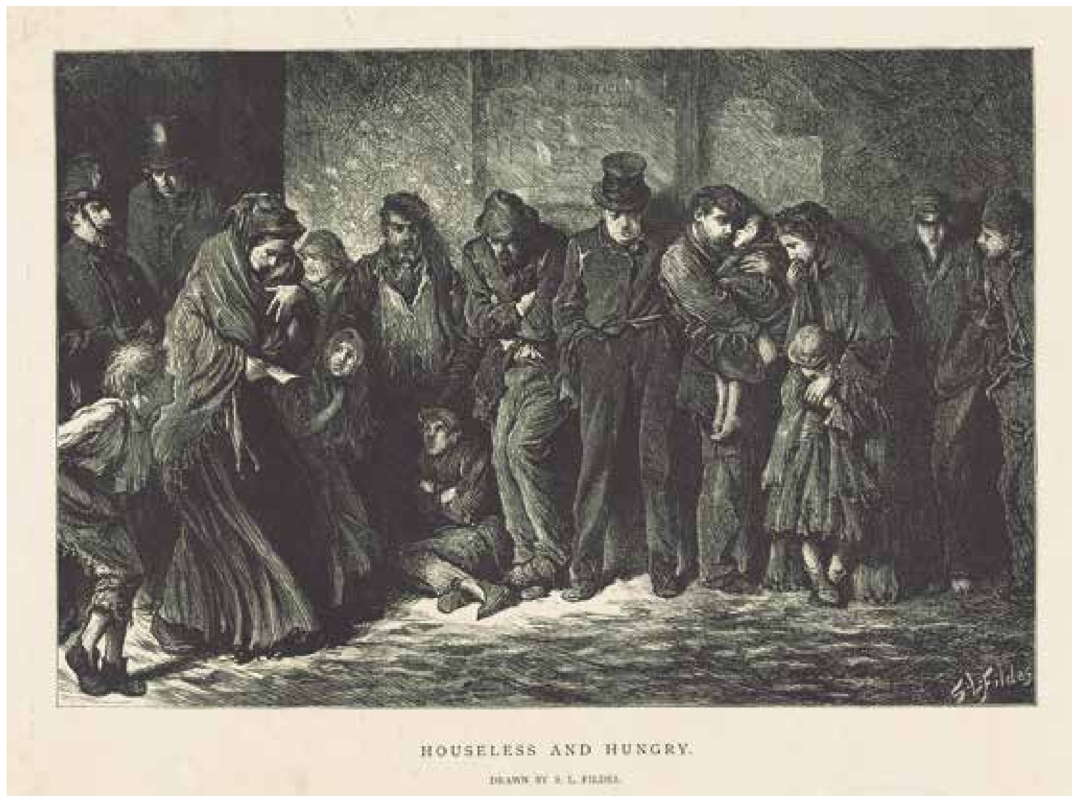

Plate 73
Sir Samuel Luke Fildes
(British, 1844–1927)
Houseless and Hungry, from
The Graphic: An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper (1877)

Line block and letterpress printing on paper, $12\frac{7}{16} \times 15\frac{13}{16}$ in.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (t0151V1962)

Plate 74
Matthew White Ridley
(British, 1837–1888)
The Miner from the series *Heads of the People*, from *The Graphic: An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper* (April 1876)

Wood engraving and letterpress printing on paper, $16\frac{7}{16} \times 12\frac{5}{16}$ in.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (t0123V1962)

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Plate 75
Utagawa Hiroshige
(Japanese, 1797–1858)
Maiko Beach, Harima Province,
from the series *Views of Famous Places in Sixty-Odd Provinces*,
ca. 1853

Color woodblock print, 13½ × 9⅛ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Collection of Frederick B. Kellam (1971.3.82)

Plate 76
Utagawa Kunisada
(Japanese, 1786–1864)
Woman with a Sword, n.d.

Color woodblock print, 13¾ × 9¼ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Genevieve Kline (URU.2000.31.45)

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Plate 77

Katsushika Hokusai
(Japanese, 1760–1849)
Fuji Seen from the Katakura Tea Plantation in the Suruga Province, from the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, ca. 1830–32

Color woodblock print, 10 × 14¾ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Lent by Janet Way Vlasach (L.2001.1.12)

"I want to begin by telling you that this part of the world seems to me as beautiful as Japan for the clearness of the atmosphere and the gay colour effects. The stretches of water make patches of a beautiful emerald and a rich blue in the landscapes, as we see it in the Japanese prints. Pale orange sunsets making the fields look blue—glorious yellow suns."

—Vincent van Gogh to Émile Bernard, Arles, Sunday, March 18, 1881 (Letter 587)

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Plate 78
François-Joseph-Aimé de Lemud
(French, 1816–1887)
Wine, 1840

Lithograph, first state, 11⁵⁄₁₆ × 14¼ in.
Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.56.24)

Plate 79
François-Joseph-Aimé de Lemud
(French, 1816–1887)
Coffee, 1840

Lithograph, first state, 11³⁄₁₆ × 14¹¹⁄₁₆ in.
Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.56.23)

"At the same time as the drawings that I have on the go I'll send you two lithographs by De Lemud, 'Wine' and 'Coffee'; in 'Wine' there's a Mephisto character who makes you think a little of C.M. when younger, and in Coffee—it's absolutely Raoul—you know that perpetual old bohemian student type whom I knew last year. What a talent, in the style of Hoffmann or Edgar Poe, this De Lemud has. And yet there's somebody who's spoken of so rarely. You'll perhaps not like these lithographs very much at first glance—but it's precisely when looking at them longer that they grow on you."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, Monday, August 6, 1888 (Letter 656)

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Plate 80

Célestin François Nanteuil
(French, 1813–1873)
Descent from the Cross (*Pietà* after Eugène Delacroix), 1854

Lithograph, 8¾ × 5½ in.
Courtesy of Eik Kahng

"When I see that crises here tend to take an absurd religious turn, I would almost dare believe that this even necessitates a return to the north. Don't speak too much about this to the doctor when you see him—but I don't know if this comes from living for so many months both at the hospital in Arles and here in these old cloisters. Anyway I ought not to live in surroundings like that, the street would be better then. I am not indifferent, and in the very suffering religious thoughts sometimes console me a great deal. Thus this time during my illness a misfortune happened to me—that lithograph of Delacroix, the Pietà, with other sheets had fallen into some oil and paint and got spoiled.

I was sad about it—then in the meantime I occupied myself painting it, and you'll see it one day, on a no. 5 or 6 canvas I've made a copy of it which I think has feeling—besides, having not long ago seen the Daniel and the Odalisques and the Portrait of Bruyas and the Mulatto woman at Montpellier, I'm still under the impression that it had on me. This is what edifies me, as does reading a fine book like one by Beecher Stowe or Dickens."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, Tuesday, September 10, 1889 (Letter 801)

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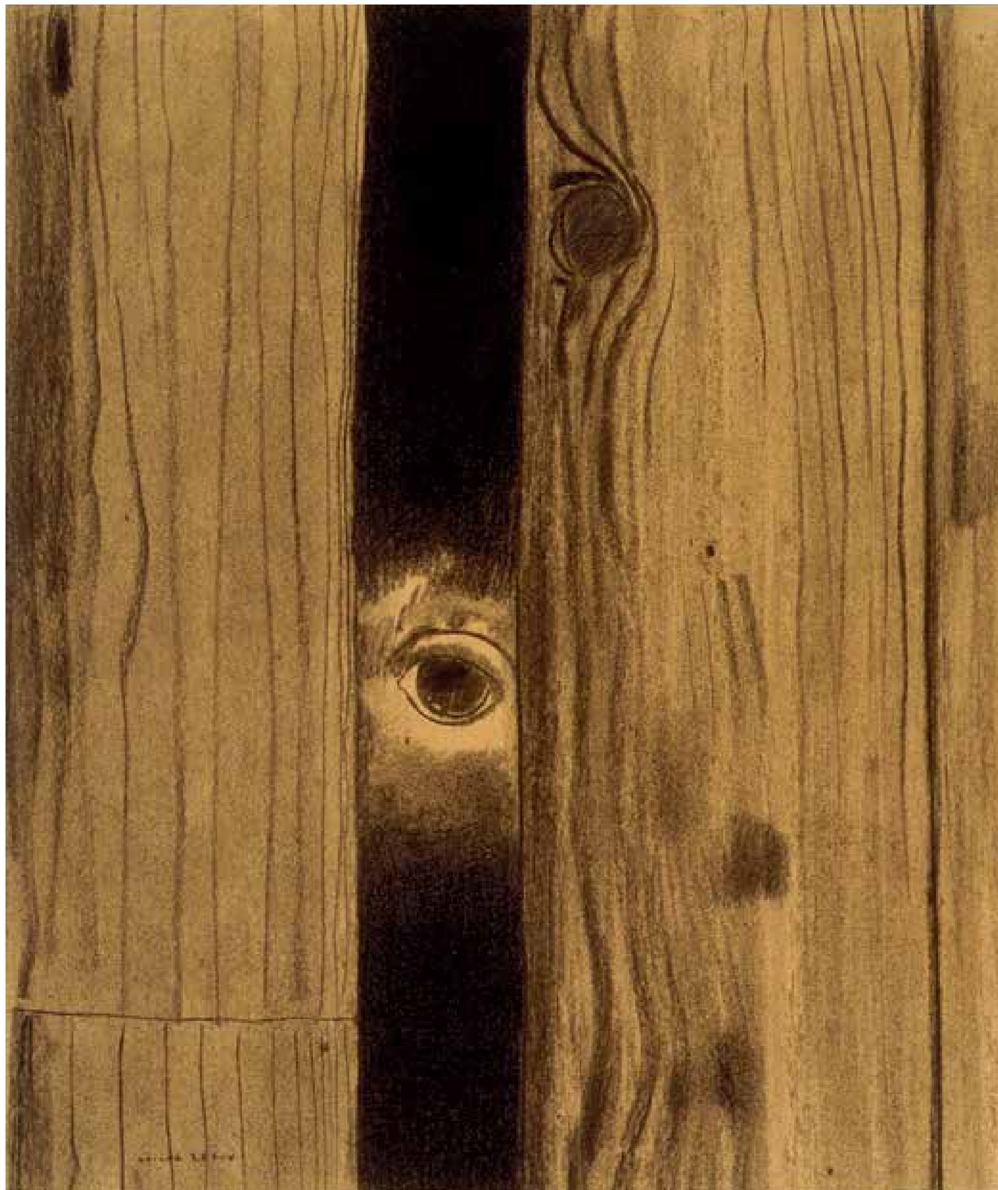

Plate 81
Odilon Redon (French, 1840–1916)
The Tell-Tale Heart, 1883

Charcoal on brown paper, 15¾ × 13⅛ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase (1959.39)

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Plate 82

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn
(Dutch, 1606–1669)
The Angel Departing from the Family of Tobias, 1641

Etching with touches of drypoint,
$4\frac{1}{16} \times 6\frac{1}{8}$ in.
Lent by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, The William M. Ladd Collection, Gift of Herschel V. Jones, 1916 (P.1.242)

4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 292 8/16/21 5:16 PM

Plate 83

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn
(Dutch, 1606–1669)
The Three Trees, 1643

Etching, drypoint, and burin,
8½ × 11⅛ in.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
Los Angeles County Fund (58.31)

"But you see, there are several things that are to be believed and to be loved; there's something of Rembrandt in Shakespeare and something of Correggio or Sarto in Michelet, and something of Delacroix in V. Hugo, and in Beecher Stowe there's something of Ary Scheffer. And in Bunyan there's something of M. Maris or of Millet, a reality more real than reality, so to speak, but you have to know how to read him; then there are extraordinary things in him, and he knows how to say inexpressible things; and then there's something of Rembrandt in the Gospels or of the Gospels in Rembrandt, as you wish, it comes to more or less the same, provided that one understands it rightly, without trying to twist it in the wrong direction, and if one bears in mind the equivalents of the comparisons, which make no claim to diminish the merits of the original figures."

—Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Cuesmes, between about Tuesday, June 22, and Thursday, June 24, 1880 (Letter 155)

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Plate 84
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec
(French, 1864–1901)
La Revue Blanche, 1895

Color lithograph, 50 × 36 in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift
of the Beaux Arts Auxiliary (1954.030)

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LIST OF WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

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4131 Through Vincent's Eyes [JL 7-30].indd 296 8/16/21 5:16 PM

Jules Bastien-Lepage (French, 1848–1884)
The Ripened Wheat, 1884
Oil on canvas, 37½ × 43 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by Suzette and Eugene Davidson and the Davidson Endowment (1995.34)

Émile Bernard (French, 1868–1941)
Women Walking on the Banks of the Aven, 1890
Oil on canvas, 28 × 36¼ in.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum purchase funded by Mr. and Mrs. Raymond H. Goodrich, by exchange (92.9)

Émile Bernard (French, 1868–1941)
Still Life with Apples and Breton Crockery, 1892
Oil on canvas, 32¼ × 45⅝ in.
Collection of Timothy H. Eaton

Albert Besnard (French, 1849–1934)
Woman with Red Hair, ca. 1896–1902
Oil on canvas, 20⅝ × 17⅜ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Katharine Dexter McCormick in memory of her husband, Stanley McCormick (1968.20.3)

François Bonvin (French, 1817–1887)
Old Man Sitting and Smoking, 1864
Compressed charcoal with stumping and lifting, fixed, on laid paper, 15¾ × $12\frac{3}{16}$ in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

Eugène Boudin (French, 1824–1898)
Camaret, Boats in the Harbor, 1871–73
Oil on canvas, 14⅛ × 23 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Harriet K. Maxwell (1983.32)
Santa Barbara Only

Eugène Boudin (French, 1824–1898)
Bordeaux, Boats on the Garonne, 1876
Oil on canvas, 19½ × 29 in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Museum purchase, Derby Fund (1983.008)
Columbus Only

Jules Breton (French, 1827–1906)
The Return from the Fields, 1867
Oil on canvas, 41 × 61 in.
Courtesy of Karen and Glenn Doshay

Jules Breton (French, 1827–1906)
The Pardon, 1872
Oil on canvas, 47⅝ × 34 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Kenneth W. Watters in Memory of Elizabeth Converse Strong Watters (1989.43)

Jean Siméon Chardin (French, 1699–1779)
Still Life with a Leg of Lamb, 1730
Oil on canvas, $12\frac{13}{16}$ × 15¾ in.
Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston (BF.1992.4)

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (French, 1796–1875)
View of Saint-Lô, 1850–55
Oil on canvas, $14\frac{5}{16}$ ×10¼ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Bequest of Frederick W. Schumacher (1931.300)
Columbus Only

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (French, 1796–1875)
The Glacis of a Ruined Castle-Fort, 1855–65
Oil on canvas, 14½ × 9¼ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of the A.E. Clegg Family (1991.89.1)
Santa Barbara Only

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (French, 1796–1875)
The Little Bird Nesters, 1873–74
Oil on canvas, 26 × 35½ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Museum Purchase, Derby Fund (1986.006)
Columbus Only

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (French, 1796–1875)
Pleasures of the Evening, 1875
Oil on canvas, 44½ × 65¼ in.
Collection of the Armand Hammer Foundation

Gustave Courbet (French, 1819–1877)
Still Life with Apples, Pears, and Pomegranates, 1871–72
Oil on canvas, 10⅝ × 16⅝ in.
Dallas Museum of Art, The Wendy and Emery Reves Collection (1985.R.18)

Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret (French, 1852–1929)
Peasants in a Field Watching a Train Passing through La Valla, 1879
Chalk heightened with white on paper, 13 × $19\frac{13}{16}$ in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

Honoré Daumier (French, 1808–1879)
The Strong Man, ca. 1865
Oil on wood panel, 10⅝ × 13⅞ in.
The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, acquired 1928

Charles de Groux (Belgian, 1825–1870)
Old Woman, 1854
Etching, 31¼ × 4¼ in.
Collection of David E. Stark

Charles de Groux (Belgian 1825–1870)
Musician and Child, 1855
Etching, 3¼ in × 3¼ in
Collection of David E. Stark

Edgar Degas (French, 1834–1917)
Houses at the Foot of a Cliff (Saint-Valéry-sur-Somme), ca. 1895–98
Oil on canvas, 36¼ × 28⅝ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund (1991.001.007)
Columbus Only

Edgar Degas (French, 1834–1917)
The Breakfast, ca. 1885
Pastel and graphite pencil over monotype on cream paper, laid down, $15\frac{5}{16}$ × $11\frac{7}{16}$ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund (1991.001.008)

Eugène Delacroix (French, 1798–1863)
Winter: Juno and Aeolus, 1856
Oil on canvas, 24 × 19½ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase, Ludington Antiquities Fund and Ludington Deaccessioning Fund (2013.41)

Eugène Delacroix (French, 1798–1863)
The Last Words of Marcus Aurelius, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 25⅝ × 31¾ in.
The Asch van Wyck Trust
Santa Barbara Only

Ernest Ange Duez (French, 1843–1896)
Woman in Grey on Board Ship, Gazing at the Sea, 1873
Oil on canvas, 47½ × 23½ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by the Suzette and Eugene Davidson Fund (1994.21)

Jean Alexandre Joseph Falguière (French, 1831–1900)
Phryné, n.d.
Bronze, 32¾ × 11¼ × 11¼ in.
Lent by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Bequest of Bruce B. Dayton (2016.33.28)

Henri Fantin-Latour (French, 1836–1904)
Chrysanthemums of Summer, ca. 1887
Oil on canvas, 18⅛ × 15 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Mary and Leigh Block (1987.58.12)

Samuel Luke Fildes (British, 1844–1927)
Houseless and Hungry, from *The Graphic: An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper (1877)*
Line block and letterpress printing on paper, $12\frac{7}{16}$ × $15\frac{13}{16}$ in.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (t0151V1962)
Santa Barbara Only

Jean Louis Forain (French, 1852–1931)
Portrait of Giuseppe De Nittis, 1884
Pastel on paper, 25⅞ × 17⅝ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Bequest of Margaret Mallory (1998.50.31)

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Pierre-Édouard Frère (French 1819–1886)
A Pot of Porridge, n.d.
Oil on panel, 10⅛ × 8 in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan
Santa Barbara Only

Matthew White Ridley (British, 1837–1888)
The Miner from the series *Heads of the People*, from *The Graphic: An Illustrated Weekly Newspaper* (April 1876)
Wood engraving and letterpress printing on paper, 16⁷⁄₁₆ × 12⁵⁄₁₆ in.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (t0123V1962)
Santa Barbara Only

Paul Gauguin (French, 1848–1903)
Pont-Aven Breton Woman in Profile, 1886
Watercolor and black crayon on paper, 7⅞ × 5½ in.
Collection of Ceil Pulitzer

Paul Gauguin (French, 1848–1903)
Christmas Night (The Blessing of the Oxen), 1902–3
Oil on canvas, 27¹⁵⁄₁₆ × 32½ in.
The Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, Samuel Josefowitz Collection of the School of Pont-Aven, through the generosity of Lilly Endowment Inc., the Josefowitz Family, Mr. and Mrs. James M. Cornelius, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard J. Betley, Lori and Dan Efroymson, and other Friends of the Museum (1998.169), discovernewfields.org

Armand Guillaumin (French 1841–1927)
Woman Reading, ca. 1898
Oil on canvas, 25¼ × 32 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Bruce and Laurie Maclin (2017.22.1)

Armand Guillaumin (French, 1841–1927)
Banks of the Creuse, 1903
Oil on canvas, 21 × 25⅜ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Dwight and Winifred Vedder (2006.54.6)
Santa Barbara Only

Utagawa Hiroshige (Japanese 1797–1858)
Maiko Beach, Harima Province, from the series *Views of Famous Places in Sixty-Odd Provinces*, ca. 1853.
Color woodblock print, 13½ × 9⅛ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Collection of Frederick B. Kellam, (1971.3.82)
Santa Barbara Only

Katsushika Hokusai (Japanese, 1760–1849)
Fuji Seen from the Katakura Tea Plantation in the Suruga Province, from the series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji,* ca. 1830–32
Color woodblock print, 10 × 14¾ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Lent by Janet Way Vlasach (L.2001.1.12)
Santa Barbara Only

Jozef Israëls (Dutch, 1824–1911)
Woman in Landscape, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 18⅝ × 31⅜ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Sanford and Mary Jane Bloom (1992.54)

Charles-Émile Jacque (French, 1813–1894)
The Shepherdess, 1867
Oil on canvas, 32½ × 26 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. Robert Woods Bliss (1944.8)
Santa Barbara Only

Johan Barthold Jongkind (Dutch, 1819–1891)
The Cathedral of Notre-Dame as Seen from the Pont de l'Archevêché, 1849
Oil on canvas, 13¾ × 23⅞ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase with funds provided by the 19th-Century Acquisition Fund (1999.1)

Utagawa Kunisada (Japanese, 1786–1864)
Woman with a Sword, n.d.
Color woodblock print, 13¾ × 9¼ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Genevieve Kline (URU.2000.31.45)
Santa Barbara Only

François-Joseph-Aimé de Lemud (French, 1816–1887)
Coffee, 1840
Lithograph, first state, 11³⁄₁₆ × 14¹¹⁄₁₆ in.
Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.56.23)

François-Joseph-Aimé de Lemud (French, 1816–1887)
Wine, 1840
Lithograph, first state, 11⁵⁄₁₆ × 14¼ in.
Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.56.24)

Léon-Augustin Lhermitte (French, 1844–1925)
Harvesters Resting, n.d.
Pastel, 16½ × 19⅞ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase, The Schott Madonna Fund (1985.31)
Santa Barbara Only

Maximilien Luce (French, 1858–1941)
Rue des Abbesses, 1896.
Oil on canvas, 25½ × 31¾ in.
Collection of Robert and Christine Emmons
Santa Barbara Only

Édouard Manet (French, 1832–1883)
Peonies, 1864–65
Oil on canvas, 23⅜ × 13⅞ in.
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, bequest of Joan Whitney Payson, 1975 (1976.201.16)

Henri Jean Guillaume Martin (French, 1860–1943)
The Church of Labastide-du-Vert, A Summer Morning, ca. 1898
Oil on canvas, 38½ × 23 in.
Collection of John L. Wirchanski, Columbus, Ohio
Columbus Only

Henri Jean Guillaume Martin (French, 1860–1943)
The Bastide of Anglass Guillac, n.d. (ca. 1926)
Oil on canvas, 32¾ × 42¼ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Harriet Maxwell (1981.31)
Santa Barbara Only

Anton Mauve (Dutch, 1838–1888)
The Potato Diggers, n.d.
Oil on canvas, mounted on board, 12⅛ × 15 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Sanford and Mary Jane Bloom (1991.106)
Santa Barbara Only

Constantin Meunier (Belgian, 1831–1905)
June, ca. 1893
Bronze on marble base, 22½ × 17¾ in.
Santa Barbara Art Museum, Museum purchase, The Suzette and Eugene Davidson Fund (1991.126)
Santa Barbara Only

Georges Michel (French, 1763–1843)
Landscape, n.d.
Oil on panel, 9⅞ × 14 in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan
Santa Barbara Only

Jean François Millet (French, 1814–1875)
The Sower, after 1850
Oil on canvas, 41½ × 33¾ in.
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, 19th Century or Earlier Painting Purchase Fund and with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Casey and Mr. and Mrs. George L. Craig, Jr. (63.7)

Jean François Millet (French, 1814–1875)
Maternity: A Young Mother Cradling Her Baby, 1870–73
Oil on canvas, 46⅛ × 35⅝ in.
Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati, Ohio, Bequest of Charles Phelps Taft and Anna Sinton Taft (1931.448)

Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)
The Church of Varengeville and the Gorge of Moutiers Pass, 1882
Oil on canvas, 23½ × 32 in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur J. Kobacker (1981.015)
Columbus Only

Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)
Basket of Grapes, 1883
Oil on canvas, 20⅛ × 15 in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund (1991.001.040)
Columbus Only

Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)
Villas in Bordighera, 1884
Oil on canvas, 29 × 36⅜ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Bequest of Katharine Dexter McCormick in memory of her husband, Stanley McCormick (1968.20.5)
Santa Barbara Only

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Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)
View of Bennecourt, 1887
Oil on canvas, 32⅛ × 32⅛
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Excellence, and the Derby Fund (1991.001.042).

Claude Monet (French, 1840–1926)
Waterloo Bridge, 1900
Oil on canvas, 25¾ × 36½ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Bequest of Katharine Dexter McCormick in memory of her husband, Stanley McCormick (1968.20.7)
Santa Barbara Only

Adolphe Joseph Thomas Monticelli (French, 1824–1886)
Park Scene, 1875–78
Oil on wood panel, 16⅜ × 26⅛ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. John D. Graham in memory of Buell Hammett (1948.28.1)
Santa Barbara Only

Adolphe Joseph Thomas Monticelli (French, 1824–1886)
Amiable Conversation (Conversation galante), n.d.
Oil on wood, 17½ × 13⅝ in.
The Kreeger Museum, Washington, DC (1967.11)
Santa Barbara Only

Adolphe Joseph Thomas Monticelli (French, 1824–1886)
Flowers in a Copper Bowl, ca. 1875
Oil on wood, 17¼ × 22½ in.
The Kreeger Museum, Washington, DC (1961.6)
Santa Barbara Only

Célestin François Nanteuil (French, 1813–1873)
Descent from the Cross (*Pietà* after Eugène Delacroix), 1854.
Lithograph, 8¾ × 5½ in.
Courtesy of Eik Kahng
Santa Barbara Only

Hippolyte Petitjean (French, 1854–1929)
Standing Nude, ca. 1895.
Watercolor on paper, 21 × 14½ in.
Collection of Robert and Christine Emmons
Santa Barbara Only

Camille Pissarro (French, 1831–1903)
The Stone Bridge and Barges at Rouen, 1883
Oil on canvas, 21⅜ × 25⅝ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of Howard D. and Babette L. Sirak, the Donors to the Campaign for Enduring Excellence, and the Derby Fund (1991.001.053)
Columbus Only

Camille Pissarro (French, 1831–1903)
Meadow at Eragny, 1895
Oil on canvas, 21 × 25½ in.
Private collector

Jean-François Raffaëlli (French 1850–1924)
The Return of the Ragpickers, 1879
Oil on canvas, 34¼ × 34¼ in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan

Jean-François Raffaëlli (French 1850–1924)
The Ragpicker, ca. 1879
Oil on board, 32⅝ × 24 in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan
Santa Barbara Only

Jean-François Raffaëlli (French 1850–1924)
The Absinthe Drinkers, 1881
Oil on canvas, 42½ × 42½ in.
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum purchase, Roscoe and Margaret Oakes Income Fund, Jay D. and Clare C. McEvoy Endowment Fund, Tribute Funds, friends of Ian White Endowment Fund, Unrestricted Art Acquisition Endowment Income Fund, Grover A. Magnin Bequest Fund, and the Yvonne Cappeller Trust (2010.16)

Jean-François Raffaëlli (French 1850–1924)
We will give you twenty-five francs to start (*Nous vous donnons vingt-cinq francs pour commencer*), ca. 1883
Oil on wood panel, 19¹¹⁄₁₆ × 25¹³⁄₁₆ in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan
Santa Barbara Only

Jean-François Raffaëlli (French 1850–1924)
The Woodcutter, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 32 × 39¾ in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan
Santa Barbara Only

Odilon Redon (French, 1840–1916)
The Tell-Tale Heart, 1883
Charcoal on brown paper, 15¾ × 13⅛ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Museum purchase (1959.39)

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669)
St. Francis Praying, 1637
Oil on panel, 24 × 19 in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Museum purchase, Derby Fund (1961.002)
Columbus Only

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669)
The Angel Departing from the Family of Tobias, 1641
Etching with touches of drypoint, 4¹⁄₁₆ × 6⅛ in.
Lent by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, The William M. Ladd Collection, Gift of Herschel V. Jones, 1916 (P.1.242)

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn (Dutch, 1606–1669)
The Three Trees, 1643
Etching, drypoint, and burin, 8½ × 11⅛ in.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Fund (58.31)

Théodule Augustin Ribot (French, 1823–1891)
The Reader, n.d.
Oil on canvas, 18⅛ × 15 in.
Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan
Santa Barbara Only

Théodore Rousseau (French, 1812–1867)
Valley of Saint-Ferjeux, Doubs, ca. 1860–62
Oil on canvas, 33⅜ × 53¼ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Lady Ridley-Tree in honor of Phillip M. Johnston (2007.37)

Ary Scheffer (Dutch, 1895–1858)
Christus Consolator, 1851
Oil on canvas, 25⅝ × 34½ in.
Lent by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Given in memory of Rev. D.J. Nordling by Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Dassel, Minnesota (2008.101)

Paul Sérusier (French, 1864–1927)
Landscape at Le Pouldu, 1890
Oil on canvas, 29¼ × 36¼ in.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Gift of Alice C. Simkins in memory of Alice Nicholson Hanszan (79.255)

Paul Signac (French 1863–1925)
Herblay—The Riverbank, 1889
Oil on canvas, 23¾ × 36 in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Partial and promised gift of Lord and Lady Ridley-Tree (2001.65)

Alfred Sisley (French, 1839–1899)
Saint-Mammes, Banks of the Seine, 1885
Oil on canvas, 21⅜ × 28¾
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Bequest of Katharine Dexter McCormick in memory of her husband, Stanley McCormick (1968.20.6)
Santa Barbara Only

James Tissot (French, 1836–1902)
Foreign Visitors at the Louvre, ca. 1883–85
Oil on canvas, 29 × 19½ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of The Estate of Barbara Darlington Dupee (2015.32.1)

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (French, 1864–1901)
A Convalescent, 1891
Oil on canvas, 31¾ × 25½ in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Museum purchase, Howald Fund (1956.053)

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (French 1864–1901)
La Revue Blanche, 1895
Color lithograph, 50 × 36 in.
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Gift of the Beaux Arts Auxiliary (1954.030)
Columbus Only

Constant Troyon (French, 1810–1865)
Under the Trees, ca. 1847
Oil on canvas, 28¾ × 36¼ in.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Michael and Jan Schwartz (2005.93.5)

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Anthon van Rappard (Dutch, 1858–1892)
The Passievaart near Seppe, June 13, 1881
Pencil on paper, 4¹¹⁄₁₆ × 6⅜ in.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (d1130S2006)
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Hendrik Weissenbruch (Dutch, 1824–1903)
Canal near Noorden, Sunset, 1893
Oil on board or oil on canvas laid on board, 34½ × 50 in.
Collection of Bram and Sandra Dijkstra

Works by Vincent van Gogh

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Marsh with Water Lilies, Etten, June 1881.
Pen and India ink on paper, with pencil under drawing, 9¼ × 12⅜ in.
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon (85.777)

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Head of a Peasant Woman, November 1884–May 1885
Oil on canvas on wood panel, 14⅞ × 9⅝ in.
Cincinnati Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John J. Emery (1962.15)

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Head of a Peasant Woman, November 1884–May 1885
Oil on canvas, 17¼ × 13⅝ in.
St. Louis Art Museum, Gift of Charles H. Yalem by exchange, and funds given by Bruce and Kimberly Olson, Mrs. Alvin R. Frank, Sam and Marilyn Fox and the Fox Family Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Jack C. Taylor, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew C. Taylor, the Ruth Peters MacCarthy Charitable Trust, The Arthur and Helen Baer Charitable Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. David C. Farrell, The Jordan Charitable Foundation, Nancy and Kenneth Kranzberg, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas K. Langsdorf, Mr. and Mrs. William C. Rusnack, and the Gary Wolff Family, 90:2000
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Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
The Potato Eaters, April 1885
Lithograph on paper, 13⁵⁄₁₆ × 16¾ in.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (p0477V1962)
Santa Barbara Only

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
The Potato Eaters, April 1885
Lithograph on Japan paper, 10½ x 12¾ in.
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid (558, 1975.9)
Columbus Only

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Digger, May–June 1885
Black chalk on laid paper, 13¹¹⁄₁₆ × 8⅛ in.
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (KM 122.987)
Santa Barbara Only

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Two Women Digging, July–August 1885
Black chalk, gray wash, on laid paper, 7¾ × 12½ in.
Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo (KM 127.978)
Santa Barbara Only

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890),
Vase with Poppies, Summer 1886
Oil on canvas, 21½ × 17¾ in.
Wadsworth Atheneum, Bequest of Anne Parrish Titzell (1957.617)

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Self-Portrait with Pipe, September–November 1886
Oil on canvas, 18⅛ × 14¹⁵⁄₁₆ in.
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) (s0158V1962)
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Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
The Outskirts of Paris, Autumn 1886
Oil on canvas, 18 × 21⅛ in.
Private collection, in memory of Marie Wangeman

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Road to the Outskirts of Paris, May–June 1887
Oil on canvas, 18⅞ × 29½ in.
Private Collection, Larry Ellison

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Bridge across the Seine at Asnières, Summer 1887
Oil on canvas, 33 × 40¾ in.
Private Collection, Larry Ellison

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Shelter on Montmartre, July–August 1887
Oil on canvas, 14 × 10¾ in.
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Bequest of Frederick J. Hellman (1965.28)

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
The Wheatfield, June 1888
Oil on canvas, 21¾ × 26¼ in.
Honolulu Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Richard A. Cooke and Family in memory of Richard A. Cooke, 1946 (377.1)

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
The Langlois Bridge, July 1888
Brown ink over traces of black chalk, 9⅝ × 12⁹⁄₁₆ in.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, George Gard De Sylva (M.49.17.2)
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Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Tarascon Stagecoach, October 1888
Oil on canvas, 28⅛ × 36⁷⁄₁₆ in.
The Henry and Rose Pearlman Foundation, on loan to the Princeton University Art Museum (L.1988.62.11)

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Hospital at Saint-Rémy, October 1889
Oil on canvas, 36⁵⁄₁₆ × 28⅞ in.
The Armand Hammer Collection, Gift of the Armand Hammer Foundation. Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (AH.90.81)
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Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Roses, May 1890
Oil on canvas, 27¹⁵⁄₁₆ × 35⁷⁄₁₆ in.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Pamela Harriman in memory of W. Averell Harriman (1991.67.1)

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Les Vessenots in Auvers, May 1890
Oil on canvas, 21⅝ × 25⁹⁄₁₆ in.
Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid (559, 1978.41)

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Portrait of Dr. Gachet (Auvers-sur-Oise), June 15, 1890
Etching, 7 × 5⅜ in.
Lent by the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of Bruce B. Dayton, 1962

Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Adeline Ravoux, June 1890
Oil on fabric, 19¾ × 19⅞ in.
Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of Leonard C. Hanna Jr. (1958.31)
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Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853–1890)
Sheaves of Wheat, July 1890
Oil on canvas, 20 × 40 in.
Dallas Museum of Art, The Wendy and Emery Reves Collection (1985.R.80)
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First Editions & Illustrated Books

Charles Dickens, *The Household Edition*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1871–1879. 11 volumes.
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Study Collection, Gift of Les and Zora Charles, SC.2020.3

Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress*. London: Richard Bentley, 1838. 3 volumes.
Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1843.
Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

Charles Dickens, *The Personal History of David Copperfield*. London: Bradford & Evans, 1850.
Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1859.
Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

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Alexandre Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1846. 2 volumes. Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers; or, the Feats and Fortunes of a Gascon Adventure*. London: Bruce and Wyld, 1846. Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

George Eliot, *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1861. Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*. London: Hurst & Blackett, 1862. 3 volumes. Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Croquis Parisiens.* Paris: H. Vaton, 1880 Collection of Raj and Grace Dhawan.

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven and Other Poems*. New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845. Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales*. New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845. Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

Jean-François Raffaëlli, *Les Types de Paris*. Paris: E. Plon, 1889. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Study Collection, SC.2020.3.

Alfred Sensier, *La vie et l'œuvre de J.-F. Millet*. Paris: A. Quantin 1881. From the Art & Architecture Collection, UC Santa Barbara Library, University of California, Santa Barbara. Santa Barbara Only

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Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co, 1886. Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*. New York: William S. Gottsberger, 1886. 6 volumes. Courtesy of the Dreier Family.

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Title page: Vincent van Gogh, *The Outskirts of Paris* (cat. no. 8), detail: Private collection, in memory of Marie Wangeman. Photo: SBMA.

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Rebecca Rainof, Van Gogh's Literary Imagination

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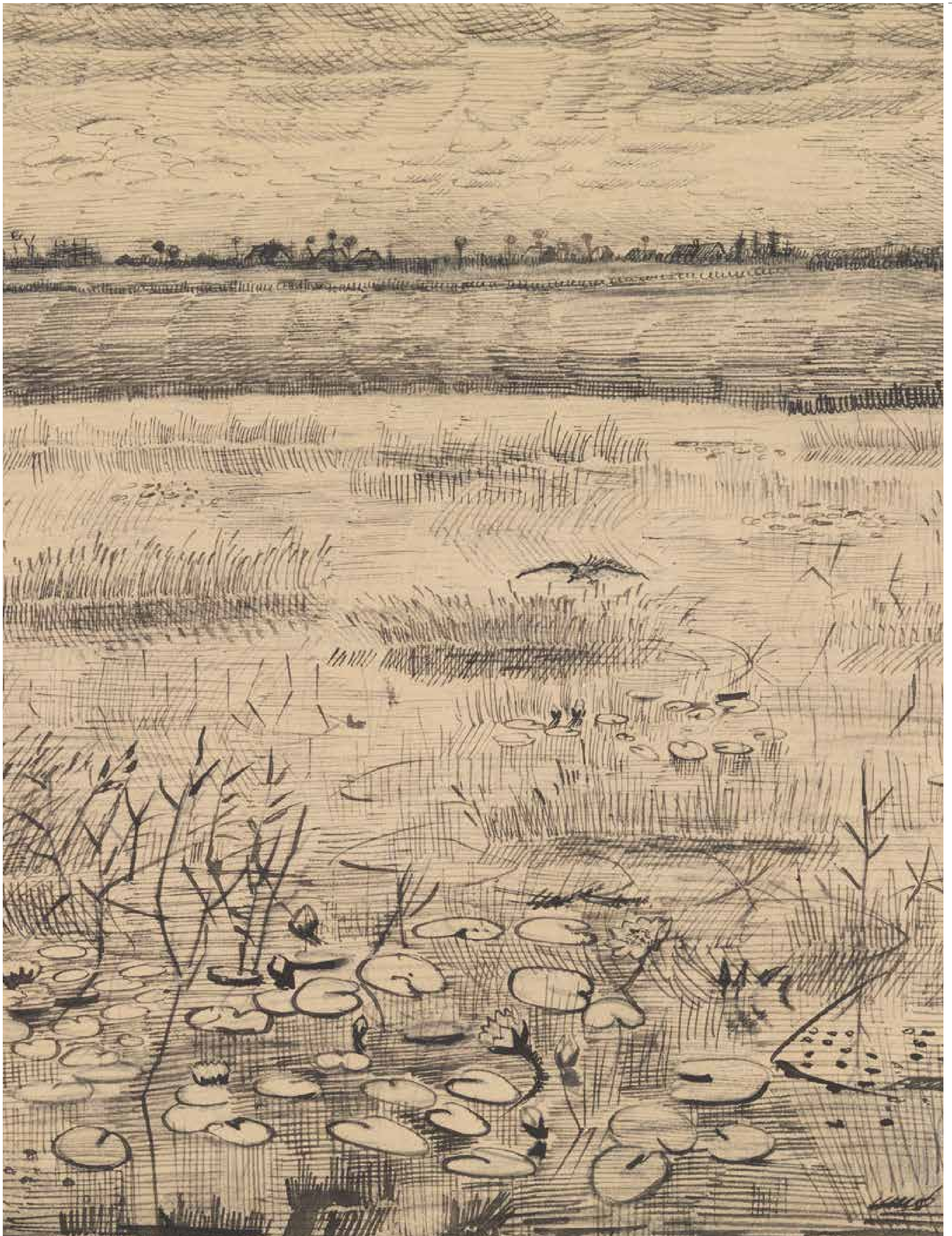

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