

Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) is arguably the most famous and beloved artist in the world. Extraordinarily, the 19th-century Dutch artist had a career that spanned just a decade. And yet, the art he produced, especially in the last two years of his incandescent life, is so bound up with the popular myth of the artist as inspired madman that the mere mention of *Starry Night* immediately spins the song by Don McLean (1971) and its melancholy lament of Vincent's misunderstood genius (*Now, I think I know what you tried to say to me / How you suffered for your sanity / How you tried to set them free / They would not listen, they're not listening still / Perhaps they never will*). Van Gogh's mental instability, his apparent suicide, and the posthumous fame that immediately followed his premature death at the age of thirty-seven have only enhanced the mythology of His Life—a Life that, as we shall see through no mere coincidence, has taken on a Christ-like significance.

Paradoxically, Van Gogh's very celebrity and our over-exposure to reproductions of his art in this digital age has inhibited us from seeing him for what he was: a highly educated, deeply intelligent participant in the rich culture—artistic, literary, and philosophical—of late 19th-century Europe. The objective of our selection is to provide the means by which to recognize the works that he produced, not as some prescient anticipation of later 20th-century modernism, but rather as the unique culmination of so many strands of thought, belief, and painterly technique that were already in play by the time the twenty-seven-year-old Vincent finally decided to become an artist in August 1880. By floating twenty works of art by Van Gogh from across his brief career in a veritable sea of some seventy-five artworks by more than sixty of the artists and authors he admired the most, we hope to enable you to start to see “Through Vincent's Eyes.” ❄️

The exhibition was made possible  
through the support of

Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree

Elaine F. Stepanek Foundation

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Gina Jannotta  
Nancy and Doug Norberg  
Diane Sullivan  
Barbara Woods

Additional funding is provided by Pat Aoyama and Chris Kleveland, Christine and Michael Holland, Robert Lehman Foundation, Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York, Dutch Culture USA Program, Santa Barbara Beautiful, City of Santa Barbara Events and Festivals Grant Program, and SBMA Dead Artists Society.

The exhibition catalogue is made possible through the generosity of the Luria/Budgor Family Foundation.

This exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.