

Vincent van Gogh

Paintings from Paris

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Two Cut Sunflowers is an (17 x 24 inches) is housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Life in Paris placed [Vincent van Gogh](#) in the center of the most sophisticated art community in Europe. His brother Theo managed a contemporary art gallery where Vincent was able to see the latest works of [Claude Monet](#), [Edgar Degas](#),

and [Camille Pissarro](#).

Van Gogh met other aspiring painters such as [Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec](#), [Paul Signac](#), and Emile Bernard. Along with his brother, van Gogh visited artists' studios, and in November 1887, they met [Paul Gauguin](#), who showed them the vivid and colorful visions of the tropics he had painted during his recent stay in Martinique.

Van Gogh absorbed all these new influences, intent on finding his own mode of expression. But more than anything, he was determined to comprehend and master color.

In Paris, van Gogh enlivened his palette by painting bouquets of flowers in random combinations to study the range of natural hues. In writing to Theo, van Gogh equated color with vitality. "What color is in a picture," he observed, "enthusiasm is in life."

Van Gogh's time in Paris allowed him to rejuvenate his life and advance his art. His exploration of color transformed the way he painted and confirmed his conviction that his passion for art was the essential force in his life. The following pages take you to the paintings van Gogh completed in Paris.

[Wheatfield with a Lark](#): Vincent van Gogh instilled this painting with the sense of spontaneity associated with Impressionism. [He](#) painted *Wheatfield with a Lark* in the fields outside Asnières in



1887. He portrayed the [grain](#) stalks at their fullest summer height, blowing in the wind of an approaching storm. A lark soars across the still-bright sky. Traditionally, the flight of a lark indicates happiness, but van Gogh may have used the soaring bird to embody the sense of freedom he felt when working outdoors in the countryside.

***Wheatfield with a Lark* is an oil on canvas (21-1/4 x 25-3/4 inches) that is housed in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.**

- [A Pair of Shoes](#): In this still life painting, Vincent van Gogh experimented with color, introducing a deep, rich gold tonality into the somber browns of his palette.

He painted *A Pair of Shoes* in 1885. The painting's simple subject -- a pair of worn work boots -- gave van Gogh the opportunity to concentrate on the issues of color and brush stroke.

Van Gogh painted the boots in the dull browns of his Nuenen palette, but he set them against a fresh background of gold. He applied his paint thickly, leaving distinct brush strokes in the foreground and working a crosshatch pattern in the back, giving as much importance to his



surface as his subject.

***A Pair of Shoes* is an oil on canvas (14-3/4 x 17-3/4 inches) that is housed in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.**

- [The Hill of Montmartre with Stone Quarry](#): Vincent van Gogh was inspired by the artists he met in Paris.

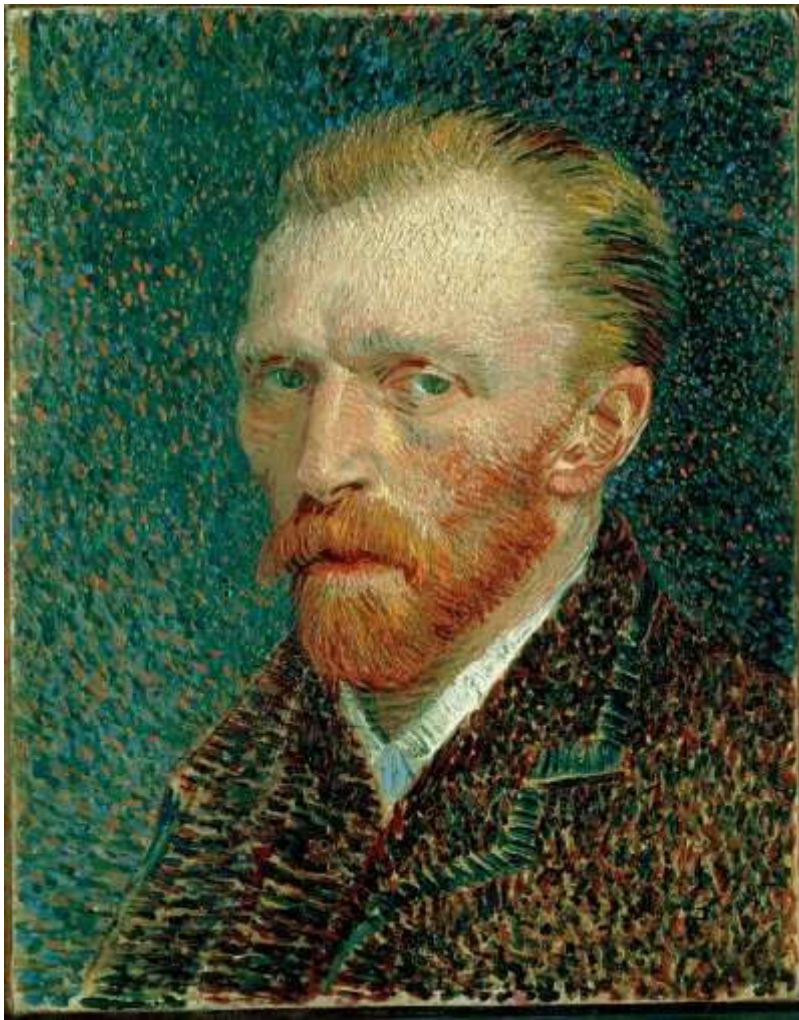


Influenced by the innovations of the Paris art world, [van Gogh](#) painted *The Hill of Montmartre with Stone Quarry* in 1886.

Van Gogh made regular visits to exhibitions in Paris and pursued introductions to artists, whom he liked to visit in their studios. This wealth of influence prompted him to experiment, as seen here with his daring introduction of violet and pink in the volatile sky and the square touch of the brush strokes, which conveys the solidity of the

rock walls of the quarry.

***The Hill of Montmartre with Stone Quarry* is an oil on canvas (22 x 24-1/2 inches) that is housed in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.**



[Self-Portrait of Vincent van Gogh:](#)

Influenced by the Neo-Impressionism approach of artists like Seurat, Vincent van Gogh experimented with pointillism when creating this self-portrait.

Vincent van Gogh's *Self-Portrait* is an oil on artist's board mounted on cradled panel (16-1/4 x 12-3/4 inches) that is housed in the Art Institute of Chicago.

Inspired by the stylistic innovations of [Georges Seurat](#), van Gogh painted this self-portrait in 1887. In this

painting, van Gogh experimented with a pointillist brush stroke.

Van Gogh's use of the color complements red and green illustrates his desire to understand Neo-Impressionism, but his stroke remained emphatically expressive in contrast to the neutral surface effect the optical approach was formulated to achieve. Rather than the cool, intellectual objectives of Seurat's pioneering theories, van Gogh's work suggests emotional turbulence.



Le Moulin de la Galette: Vincent van Gogh often preferred to paint en plein air -- out of the studio and in natural light.

***Le Moulin de la Galette* is an oil on canvas (18 x 15 inches) that is housed in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum.**

He completed *Le Moulin de la Galette* in 1886. Van Gogh created this painting while living with his brother in an apartment in Montmartre on the northern edge of Paris.

From the apartment it was an easy walk to the outskirts of the city where small cottage farms could be found nestled among the hills. Painting outdoors

helped van Gogh explore the effects of natural light, which gave his palette a sun-drenched quality that purged his rural subjects of their characteristic somber tonalities.

- **Terrace of a Café on Montmartre (Le Guinguette):** The subject of this painting often appears in the paintings of other artists, like Pierre-Auguste Renoir.



***Terrace of a Café on Montmartre (La Guinguette)* is an oil on canvas (19-1/4 x 25-1/4 inches) that is housed in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.**

Vincent van Gogh painted *Terrace of a Café on Montmartre (La Guinguette)* in 1886. Usually the setting for a lighthearted scene of leisure, notably in the work of Pierre-Auguste Renoir, the

painting's outdoor café takes on a sober note in the low autumn light.

Van Gogh works in his figures as mere suggestions of form with weighted calligraphic strokes and a dark palette of brown and carmine red. The streak of aqua on the lamppost presents a startling contrast as does the free handling of the trees and volatile sky.

- **Vegetable Gardens and the Moulin de Blute-Fin on Montmartre:** Vincent van Gogh continued his experiments with color in this painting.



***Vegetable Gardens and the Moulin de Blute-Fin on Montmartre* is an oil on canvas (17-3/4 x 32 inches) that is housed in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.**

He continued his experiments in color throughout his stay in Paris, completing

paintings like his 1887 work *Vegetable Gardens and the Moulin de Blute-Fin on Montmartre*.

Van Gogh lightened his palette further as he worked outdoors, and he shifted his interest in the interaction of complements from red and green to yellow and blue. In this vista of a cottage farm and its windmill, van Gogh also varied his application of pigment, using a pointillist touch for the fields and a broken brush stroke for the sky.

- [Agostina Segatori Sitting in the Café du Tambourin](#): The subject of this painting -- a Paris café proprietor -- often served as a model for Vincent van Gogh. Observe the relationship between the



complementary colors in this painting.

***Agostina Segatori Sitting in the Café du Tambourin* is an oil on canvas (21-3/4 x 18-1/4 inches) that is housed in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.**

He painted *Agostina Segatori Sitting in the Café du Tambourin* in 1887. The painting's namesake -- Agostina Segatori -- was the proprietor of the Café Tambourin, a cabaret frequented by painters.

Segatori allowed van Gogh to install an exhibition of his Japanese prints in her café, and she posed for him on several occasions.

Here, he surrounds her with subtle variations in green with red and aqua highlights. The effect is both decorative and disturbing, due to the chromatic vibrations that result in the pairing of complementary colors. The table is in the form of a tambourine, the namesake of the café.

- [Boulevard de Clichy](#): Vincent van Gogh again broadened his color palette when creating this



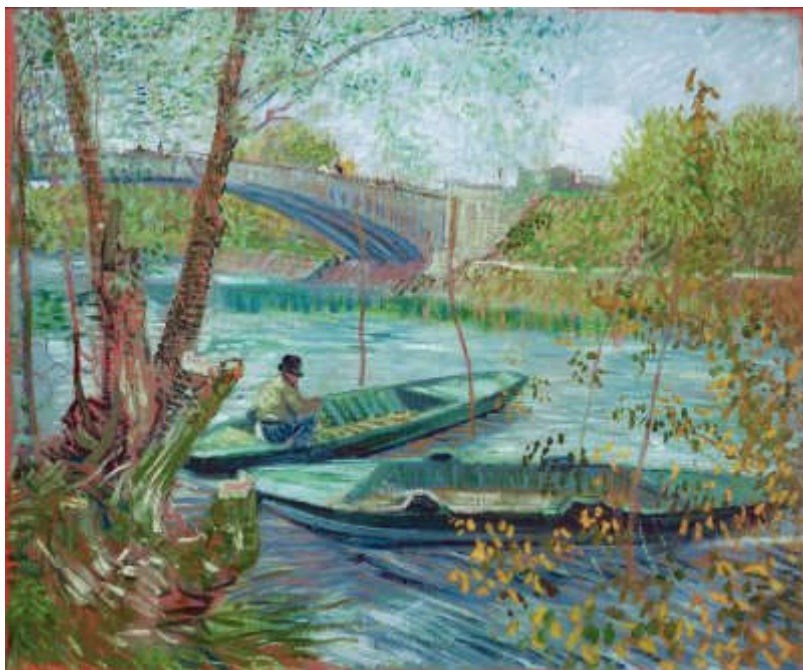
painting. Note how van Gogh infuses *Boulevard de Clichy* with floral hues and jewel tones.

***Boulevard de Clichy* is an oil on canvas (18 x 21-3/4 inches) that is housed in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.**

After years of studying flowers, [Vincent van Gogh](#) brought brighter hues to his palette with *Boulevard de Clichy*, which he painted in 1887.

With floral hues such as violet and rose, as well as jewel tones such as turquoise and burnished gold, van Gogh painted the Boulevard de Clichy with unprecedented lightness and freshness. His touch, expressive yet delicate, reveals that he had absorbed the Neo-[Impressionist](#) stroke and transformed it to his own advantage

- [Fishing in the Spring, the Pont de Clichy \(Asnières\)](#): This painting -- which Vincent van Gogh created during trips to a Paris suburb with fellow artists -- is an example of van Gogh's plein air



approach.

***Fishing in the Spring, the Pont de Clichy (Asnières)* is an oil on canvas (19-1/4 x 22-3/4 inches) that is housed in the Art Institute of Chicago.**

He completed *Fishing in the Spring, the Pont de Clichy (Asnières)* in 1887. The painting was created during regular trips to the Paris suburb of Asnières with fellow painters [Paul Signac](#) and Emile Bernard.

Van Gogh and his friends set up their easels in the park and along the riverbanks to catch the natural light. Van Gogh often built his composition up with color, as seen here.

- [Garden with Sunflower](#): Vincent van Gogh created several studies of sunflowers while living in Paris. Learn how van Gogh used contrasting colors in *Garden with Sunflower*.

He painted *Garden with Sunflower* in 1887. The painting reflects van Gogh's practice of studying flowers to learn how to paint with intense color.

In the previous year, van Gogh used a high point of view on Montmartre to paint a panoramic vista of the cultivated fields with their quaint [windmills](#) on the surrounding rolling hills to the north or the cityscape to the south. In the summer of 1887, he made several studies of cottage gardens with giant golden [sunflowers](#) nodding atop their sturdy stalks and towering above the cottage fences.



***Garden with Sunflower* is an oil on canvas (16-3/4 x 14 inches) that is housed in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.**

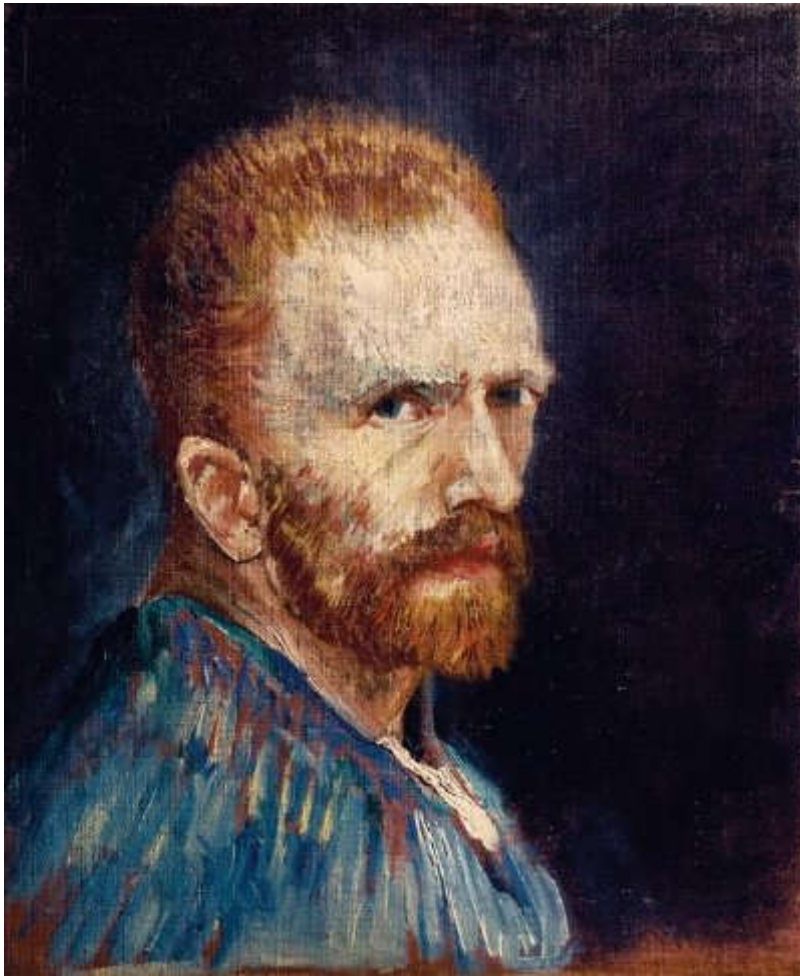
- **Flowers in a Blue Vase:** Vincent van Gogh displays a full tonal range of color -- from deep brown to opalescent pinks -- in *Flowers in a Blue Vase*.



***Flowers in a Blue Vase* is an oil on canvas (24 x 15 inches) that is housed in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.**

The successful results of his experiments in color, [Vincent Van Gogh's](#) 1887 piece *Flowers in a Blue Vase* is a fresh and luminous mixed bouquet. Bold, yet natural, van Gogh's palette displays a full tonal range from deep brown and violet shadows to pearly whites and opalescent pinks. In his letters to his sister Wil, he listed the colors he had added to his palette: "pink, soft or bright green, light blue, violet, yellow, glorious red."

- **Self-Portrait:** With its deeply shadowed background, this self-portrait of Vincent van Gogh is reminiscent of Rembrandt. Learn how van Gogh differentiated his series of self-portraits through his use of color.



Vincent van Gogh's *Self-Portrait* is an oil on canvas (15-3/4 x 13-1/2 inches) that is housed in the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford.

Throughout the summer of 1887, [Vincent van Gogh](#) painted a series of self-portraits. This self-portrait is unique in its color palette.

Although many of van Gogh's 1887 self-portraits employ a warm, yellow-based palette, here van Gogh modulated his tonalities from the ginger red of his beard and hair, the muddled greens of his jacket, to the stark pale of his complexion. Set

against a deeply shadowed background, this portrait recalls the influence of Rembrandt, who also painted his own portrait repeatedly and with great variation.

- **[Courting Couples in the Voyer d'Argenson Park at Asnieres](#):** Learn how Vincent van Gogh used complementary tones to create the vibrant figures and background in *Courting Couples in the Voyer d'Argenson Park at Asnieres*.



***Courting Couples in the Voyer d'Argenson Park at Asnières* is an oil on canvas (29-1/2 x 44-1/4 inches) that is housed in the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.**

He painted strolling couples in the park with a bright palette and an exuberant touch in his 1887 work *Courting Couples in the Voyer d'Argenson Park at Asnières*.

The foliage of the [trees](#) reflect his study of complementary tones; the sky is feathered with tiny strokes of the palest shades of blue, violet, and green. In a letter to his sister Wil, van Gogh compared the fundamental harmony of chromatic pairs that together "shine brilliantly" to a human couple declaring, the colors "complete each other like a [man](#) and [woman](#)."

- [Two Cut Sunflowers](#): For his experiments with color, Vincent van Gogh often preferred flowers to other subjects. Learn how van Gogh used bold, contrasting colors to explore the full range of yellow in *Two Cut Sunflowers*.

Two Cut Sunflowers is part of a series of studies of cut [sunflowers](#) [Vincent van Gogh](#) painted in the summer of 1887.

To contrast with the wide range of the color yellow -- from pale citron to deep ocher -- van Gogh set the flower heads against a complementary background of bright blue. The thick impasto he used to describe the radiant petals and twisted stem evoke the robust vigor of the flower in full growth.



[Le Pere Tanguy](#): Vincent van Gogh painted this Paris art shop proprietor against a backdrop of Japanese prints, which van Gogh collected and admired.

***Le Père Tanguy* is an oil on canvas (36-1/4 x 29-1/2 inches) that is housed in the Musée Rodin in Paris.**

He painted *Le Père Tanguy* in 1887. Julien Tanguy, known as "Père" or "Papa," sold artists' materials, and Vincent frequented the shop to purchase paint and to visit the informal gallery housed in the back rooms.

Tanguy displayed the work of innovators such as [Georges Seurat](#) and [Paul Cézanne](#). He also sold Japanese prints.

Van Gogh began collecting works of the

ukiyo-e masters in Antwerp, and in honor of their shared interest, he painted Tanguy's portrait in front of a selection of famous prints.