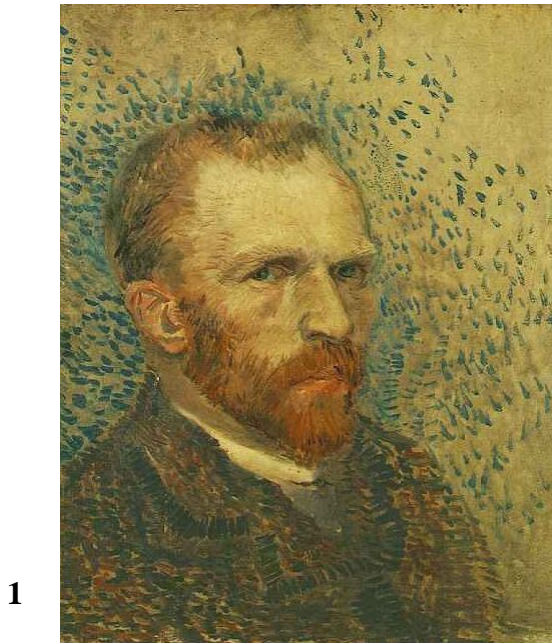


PAINTED WITH WORDS
VINCENT VAN GOGH'S LETTERS TO ÉMILE BERNARD

September 28, 2007, through January 6, 2008

Selected Press Images



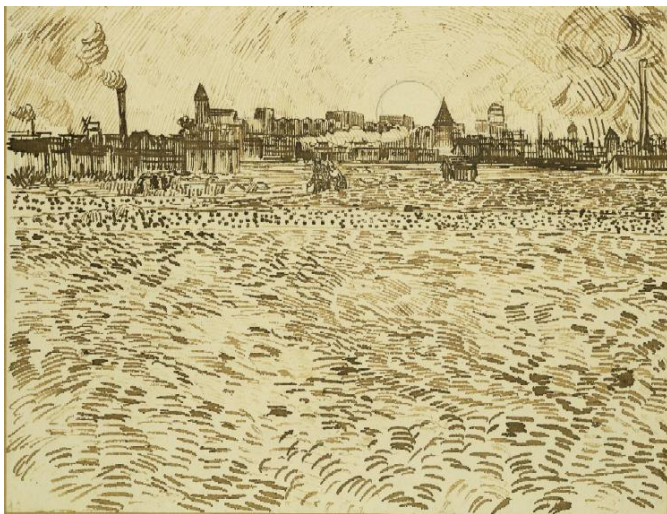
1

This self-portrait of van Gogh dressed as a bourgeois was painted in Paris, where the artist arrived in 1886 to stay with his brother Theo and continue his efforts to become a painter. Van Gogh's brief flirtation with the separate, dappled brushstrokes of pointillism is evident in this early effort, which is one of his most accomplished from that year.



2

This March 1888 letter to Bernard includes a preliminary sketch related to van Gogh's depiction of the drawbridge at Arles in the canvases *The Langlois Bridge* (Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo) and *The Langlois Bridge* (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam).



3

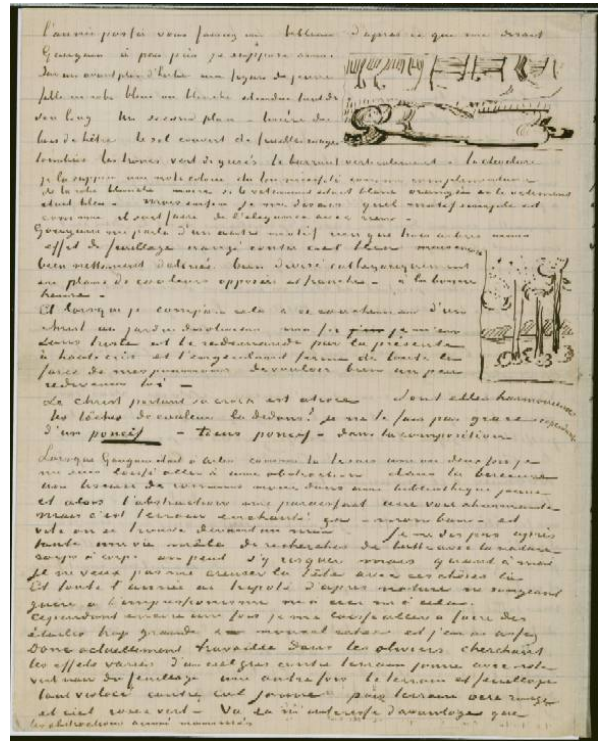
Van Gogh first mentioned his large, ambitious canvas depicting a view of Arles in the June 20, 1888 letter to Bernard, which included a sketch of the canvas (Image 4) and another of a sower at work in the fields. About a month after finishing the painting, van Gogh sent the highly finished and decorative Winterthur sheet (Image 3), along with nine other sketches, to Bernard. The letter also includes sketches after *Sower in a Wheat Field with the Setting Sun* (Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo) as well as a small sketch of farm implements.



4



5



6

After reading Paul Gauguin's description of Bernard's 1888 painting of his sister Madeleine in the forest (Image 5), van Gogh made a sketch of the composition in a November 20, 1889 letter to Bernard (Image 6). This sketch reveals van Gogh's deep interest in Bernard's work in Brittany with Gauguin, and the close relationship among the three artists, in which correspondence played a key role. The letter also includes a sketch related to Bernard's *Red Poplars* (private collection).



7



8

In a letter to Bernard from Saint-Rémy in October 1889, van Gogh writes of his admiration for Bernard's work at Pont-Aven, which encouraged the young artist. In a reverse of the common artistic practice of younger artists copying after established masters, van Gogh made a watercolor (Image 8) after a canvas (Image 7) by his young protégé, revealing his particular interest in Bernard and Gauguin's activity at Pont-Aven.



9

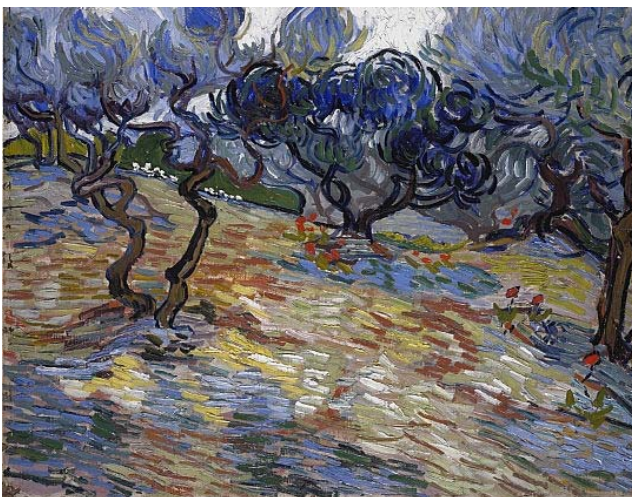


10



11

A visit to the seaside town of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer marked van Gogh's first sight of the Mediterranean and a decisive shift in his drawing to a more "harsh" linear style. During this five-day trip in the Spring of 1888, van Gogh made several sketches of the local cottages, including the one in the Thaw Collection (Image 9). He returned to his studio in Arles and used the sketches as the basis for several oil paintings. This pivotal moment for van Gogh was captured in his letters to Bernard. He sent a small sketch of one of the canvases depicting houses along a street in Saintes-Maries in a letter to Bernard (Image 10), replete with color notations conveying the palette of the freshly finished painting as well as a final, more refined study (Image 11) after the painting, made a month later for his young friend.



12

In an October 1889 letter to Bernard from Saint-Rémy (Letter 21), van Gogh described his work on a series of olive grove canvases following his stay at the sanatorium. He felt that these works would prove to Bernard that "there are other means of attempting to convey an impression of anguish without making straight for the historic Garden of Gethsemane," a critique of Bernard's literal depictions of biblical scenes.

IMAGE CAPTIONS

1. VINCENT VAN GOGH (1853–1890)
Self-Portrait: Three Quarters to the Right, Paris, summer 1887
Oil on pasteboard
41 x 33 cm (16 1/8 x 13 in.)
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam
2. VINCENT VAN GOGH, letter to Émile Bernard, Arles, March 1888 (Letter 2, folio 1)
Pen and brown ink on a single sheet of cream machine-made laid paper
13.2 x 20.3 cm (5 1/4 x 8 in.)
Thaw Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum
Photography by Joseph Zehavi, 2006.
3. VINCENT VAN GOGH (1853–1890)
A Summer Evening, July 1888
Reed pen, quill, and ink over graphite
24.0 x 31.5 cm (9 1/2 x 12 3/8 in.)
Kunstmuseum, Winterthur
4. VINCENT VAN GOGH, letter to Émile Bernard, Arles, ca. June 20, 1888 (Letter 7, folio 2)
Pen and black ink on two sheets of cream machine-made laid paper
20.5 x 26.8 cm (8 1/8 x 10 1/2 in.)
Thaw Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum
Photography by Joseph Zehavi, 2006.
5. ÉMILE BERNARD (1868–1944)
Madeleine au Bois d'Amour, 1888
Oil on canvas
138 x 163 cm (54 3/8 x 64 1/4 in.)
Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Photography Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY
6. VINCENT VAN GOGH, letter to Émile Bernard, Saint-Rémy, November 20, 1889 (Letter 22, folio 2)
Pen and brown ink on one vertically folded sheet of graph paper
41.4 x 26.6 cm (16 1/4 x 10 1/2 in.)
Thaw Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum
Photography by Joseph Zehavi, 2006.
7. VINCENT VAN GOGH (1853–1890)
Breton Women in the Plain of Pont-Aven [after Émile Bernard], Arles, October–December 1888
Watercolor
47.5 x 62 cm (18 3/4 x 24 1/2 in.)
Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milano
Scala/Art Resource
8. ÉMILE BERNARD (1868–1944)
Breton Women in a Meadow, 1888
Oil on canvas
92 x 74 cm (36 1/4 x 29 1/8 in.)
Private collection
9. VINCENT VAN GOGH (1853–1890)
Two Cottages, Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, ca. May 30–June 5, 1888
Reed pen and ink over graphite
31.5 x 47.4 cm (12 3/8 x 18 5/8 in.)
Thaw Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum
Photography by Joseph Zehavi, 2006.
10. VINCENT VAN GOGH, letter to Émile Bernard, Arles, June 7, 1888 (Letter 6, enclosed sketch)
Pen and black ink on three sheets, one vertically folded and two separate, of cream, machine-made laid paper
17.9 x 14.2 cm (7 x 5 5/8 in.)
Thaw Collection, The Morgan Library & Museum
Photography by Joseph Zehavi, 2006.
11. VINCENT VAN GOGH (1853–1890)
Street in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, mid-July 1888
Reed pen, quill, and ink over graphite
24.3 x 31.7 cm (9 5/8 x 12 1/2 in.)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1948 (48.190.1). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
12. VINCENT VAN GOGH (1853–1890)
Olive Trees, 1889
Oil on canvas
51 x 65.2 cm (20 1/8 x 25 5/8 in.)
National Gallery of Scotland