

Van Gogh Letters

by
Vincent van Gogh

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By

Vincent van Gogh



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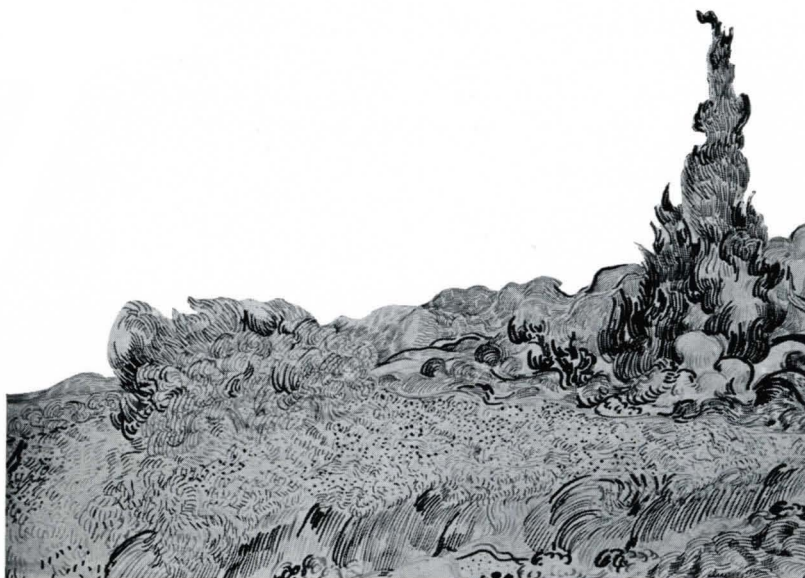


No. 82. *A Sidewalk Café at Night*. The Kröller-Müller State Museum

VAN GOGH

PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS

A SPECIAL LOAN EXHIBITION



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

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On the Cover: No. 78. Sunflowers in a Vase. Lent by V. W. van Gogh

The Metropolitan Museum joins the Art Institute of Chicago in the expression of warm gratitude to the museums and private collectors who have made this exhibition possible. Especial thanks go to the Government of the Netherlands, which has graciously consented to lend many fine paintings from the splendid collection of the Kröller-Müller State Museum, through the kind offices of Dr. H. J. Reinink, the Secretary-General of the Dutch Ministry of Education, and of the Director, Mr. A. M. W. J. Hammacher. We also wish to thank the Municipal Museum in Amsterdam, its Director, Mr. W. J. H. B. Sandberg, and Mr. H. J. Siliakus. Finally, our deepest appreciation goes to Mr. Vincent W. van Gogh of the Van Gogh Foundation, to whom the exhibition owes its inception, and, indeed, much of its realization. In our own country numerous museums and private collectors have been generous lenders, and we acknowledge their assistance with gratitude and the hope that public appreciation of this exhibition will justify their efforts to make it successful.—ROLAND L. REDMOND

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VAN GOGH

ALMOST sixty years have passed since Vincent van Gogh put a bullet into himself, bringing to a sudden close a life of tragedy, privation, and prodigious accomplishment. At his death only a handful of his eight hundred paintings and nine hundred drawings, all done in a period of less than ten years, had been exhibited. Only one canvas had been sold, and only one critic had written enthusiastically of his art.

So clearly did his career dramatize the separation of the artist from society that it was not long before Van Gogh became the martyr of modern art. The remarkable letters he wrote to his brother Theo, in which he poured out his most intimate thoughts, theories, and disappointments, fed the legend. Van Gogh emerged the archetype of the romantic artist as the nineteenth century conceived him: a lonely man, working in poverty and misunderstanding so that future generations could take him to their hearts and cry, "Here is a neglected genius." Ultimately drama turned into melodrama as every shred of Vincent's life was dragged forth and exploited. Novelists distorted his story; psychiatrists fought over the exact diagnosis of his madness. The artist was in danger of disappearing altogether, his paintings and drawings turned into mere illustrations for popular biography.

A certain logic lay behind these biographical excesses. No art is more immediately personal than Van Gogh's. Not only did Vincent look in the mirror again and again and paint his own features; in a sense everything he did turned into a self-portrait—landscape, still life, and figure, into which he injected himself, inventing a new handwriting of line and color to record his intense feelings before nature. What his eye revealed was instantly blended with what he felt about his subject. Increasingly he tried to reduce the interval between vision and execution. The whole was to be done at a flash, artist and nature, mood and design, fused into a tense, expressive unity.

It is easy to read in almost every work the artist's emotional temperature at the time it was made. The dark, lonely drawing of his father's garden at Nuenen in winter (ill. p. 27) springs from a period of subjective gloom. When he reached Arles and felt the enormous impact of southern sun and color, his palette takes on a new splendor while his plowed ribbons of paint betray an almost hectic agitation. In Saint-Rémy, shut away in an asylum with the insane, he paints the gray and desolate view seen through the "iron bars" of his captivity.

This power to identify himself with the moods of nature came only after years of struggle. No one ever felt more deeply the need to love and be loved. But as Theo wrote of Vincent: "There are two human beings in him, the one extraordinarily gifted,

8 sensitive and gentle, the other selfish and insensitive. I am sure he is his own worst enemy, for he poisons not only the lives of others but also his own life." It was only after Van Gogh had separated himself from his narrow Protestant upbringing, only after he had tried to live like Christ among the coal miners of Belgium and failed, only after family, friends, and the women he loved in vain had turned against him, that he discovered that art could offer a way of life. Vincent clearly understood that art was not "the real life," but it became a powerful substitute for normal human relationships. Only when his tremendous energies were channeled into drawing and painting did he begin to find meaning in his existence. He came to feel "alive" only when he was "slogging" at his work, and even after his mental attacks grew more and more severe his painting represented the only "distraction" from those oncoming terrors.

Rejected by his own environment, Vincent sought out peasants and miners, weavers and outcasts, drawing them with a rough, unwieldy vigor which was often more like the artist than his models. Deliberately he identified himself with the destitute and humble. He wanted to live and work like a peasant; at one time he was haunted by the idea of doing a series of prints to hang in the cottages of the poor, "making figures of the people for the people." Always unhappy in cities, he deserted Paris for the South, "to get away," he said, "from the sight of so many painters who disgusted me as men." In Arles he dreamed of substituting a brotherhood of artists for the brotherhood of men, weaving memories of medieval guilds, Japanese craftsmen, and even the Pre-Raphaelites round his "little yellow house," which he dared hope would become "for everyone the house of light."

All this explains why Vincent worked so hard to become a figure painter. His craving for human associations found its deepest release in painting men and women. With a model before him, most often a simple friend from the poorer classes, Van Gogh could experience for the moment that rapport with another human being which he was so often denied. Figures, he remarked, moved him "to the depths," and he once promised his brother that whenever he painted landscapes there would always be something of the figure in them. In southern France the broad reaches of the Crau and the Camargue around Arles delighted him more than the sea; this country was not less "infinite," yet one felt it was "inhabited."

Often too poor to pay for models and too eccentric to get them to pose for him free, Vincent poured his pent-up feelings about men into landscape and still life. This high-tensioned animism instantly distinguished his work from that of the Impressionists, from whom he learned much. For their lyricism of light and color he offered images charged with violence and love. A composition of old shoes becomes a passionate document; his trees twist and turn; his fields sweep into space; and his suns spin with a peculiarly human vibrancy. "If a man tries to create thoughts instead of children," wrote Vincent in a sudden moment of self-realization, "he is still a part of humanity."

So strong was his will to create, so profound were the ideas he longed to share, that Van Gogh could never accept the prettifying of Dutch life or landscape which made

the pictures of Mauve and Israels popular. In place of "sentimental melancholy" he sought "serious sorrow." For aid he returned to the sturdier, deeper traditions of Rembrandt and Ruysdael, seeking character in the most simple and common things. He taught himself to probe reality by strenuous bouts of drawing. "I drew a peasant with a spade as many as five times, a man digging in many different attitudes, a sower twice, and a girl with a broom twice." For the picturesque he substituted the "real," struggling to convey the dark, blunt, and ugly side of Dutch peasant life. But, unlike many realists, Van Gogh was not content to stop with simple description. Gradually he transformed realism into a powerful, symbolic method. In *The Potato-Eaters* (ill. p. 25) he chose a theme of peasants sitting round a lighted table, eating a meal of potatoes with their hands. The painting is carried out in tones of exaggerated darkness, the pigment laid on ruggedly and half awkwardly to suggest the "harshness" and "coarseness" of peasant life.

At this period Vincent confessed that he was far more interested in form than in color, but it was color which ultimately served best to symbolize emotional states and meanings. Always dependent on nature, in Arles he finally transfigured his realism by the clash and harmony of bright hues. No longer did he try to reproduce exactly what he saw but expressed, arbitrarily and forcibly, what he felt. When he came to paint the *Café de Nuit* it was through a sharp discord of blood red and various greens that he sought to convey "the terrible passions of humanity." For a while, under Gauguin's influence, he tried to work from memory. Recognizing the role of "imagination" in art he attempted to recall elements from nature and arrange them in patterns of color and line. Such effects, he admitted, became more "mysterious," but he gave up abstraction for a renewed, interior realism in which the very paint seems electric with emotion, dabbed irregularly on the canvas, thick here, unfinished there. Vincent left it at that, touched with the excitement and speed of his compulsive vision. Later, after his mental attacks, the paint grew thinner; applied in short strokes, the color sank to duller harmonies. At the asylum in Saint-Rémy he painted a picture in which the "combination of ochre, red, and green with a greyer shadow over it and black contours produces in a way the feeling of anguish from which some of our companions in misfortune suffer and which is called 'black-red'."

By similar exaggerations of line and form, by elisions and sudden extensions of space, Vincent managed to create a world of agitated movement where a few symbols appear again and again. The "high yellow note" of the southern sun is nowhere more striking than in his sunflowers; in Saint-Rémy, the writhing cypresses and reeling mountains become emotional "equivalents" for his own experience. There is the Sower, for seeding time and growth, the Reaper in the sunburnt wheat fields, for death. "To express hope by some star, the eagerness of a soul by a sunset radiance. Certainly there is nothing in that of stereoscopic realism but is it not something that actually exists?"

His belief in such "actualities" seems to come from a deeper inner conviction, so deep as to be called mystic. In his passionate reactions to nature he recognized a feel-

10 ing akin to religious ecstasy, just as when in his disturbed mental states he brooded on the infinite and the eternal. While on a walking trip in Holland he relates that from one night to the next he was lost in a dream, so absorbed in the "sad music" of the country round Drenthe that he quite forgot to eat or drink, though he stopped now and then to make drawings along the way. "I have a terrible lucidity at moments," he wrote from Arles, "these days when nature is so beautiful. I am not conscious of myself any more, and the picture comes to me as in a dream." In such trance-like moments he believed that painting could "be comforting as music is comforting." He longed "to paint men and women with that something of the eternal which the halo used to symbolize and we seek to give by actual radiance and vibration of our colors."

"Well, the truth is, we can only make our pictures speak." These words Vincent van Gogh wrote in his last letter, just before he died. In the years since 1890 they have spoken, until today he is the most famous of modern painters. How can one explain the vast hordes of war survivors who stood in patient queues at Paris and London, eager to catch even a glimpse of his work? Why were they there? What were they hoping to find?

Some other painters of his time have receded into history. Year by year Cézanne grows greater, but more remote; Gauguin, whom Vincent loved and venerated, now appears, more often than not, somewhat thinly decorative. Meanwhile Van Gogh's art spreads wider and wider circles of appreciation.

Part of his continuing appeal may lie in his unique ability to suggest those tensions and dislocations under which man lives today. When he painted his portrait of Dr. Gachet with what he called "the heartbroken expression of our time," Vincent struck a chord that still resounds in contemporary feeling. A period that idolizes Dostoevsky and makes a prophet out of Kafka will continue to react to such intense emotions stretched to the breaking point. Though Van Gogh's early influence on twentieth-century painting seemed long ago exhausted, it is significant to find that Picasso's latest work echoes more than a trace of Vincent's violence and to hear of the Spanish artist's avowed admiration for his art. It is less surprising to learn of Sartre's interest; Van Gogh's moral austerity, his grim acceptance of reality and responsibility for action, constitute an almost classical case study for Existentialism.

But beyond the instabilities and disasters of his life there lies something deeper to account for his present reputation. This is the triumph, in his art, over misunderstanding, poverty, and pain. In a period when individualism is at stake and when anonymity everywhere encroaches, Van Gogh's affirmation of personal faith finds ready response. To a confused world his vital images have what he desired above all else: the power to reveal and to console.

DANIEL CATTON RICH

CATALOGUE



EARLY PERIOD

The career of Vincent van Gogh is one of the shortest in the history of art. He was a painter for only ten years, of which more than half were devoted almost entirely to drawing.

He was born in 1853, and he killed himself when he was thirty-seven years old. His life can be broadly divided into two periods: the first, a period of bitter struggles, failures, and disappointments, when his difficult character, his personal views on life, and his highly original way of seeing were formed. The second, the period of fulfillment when he had mastered his art and was conscious of having done so.

His family was of pure Dutch stock and is recorded in Holland as far back as the sixteenth century. Among his ancestry there were artists and preachers. These two vocations, art and religion, were to dominate his life.

His father was a modest clergyman, lacking talent as a preacher but loved by his parishioners, the least successful of six brothers, among whom were a vice-admiral of the Dutch navy and three prominent art dealers. His mother was the daughter of a well-known bookbinder of The Hague. He seems to have inherited his timidity and his human warmth and generosity from his father. From his mother he took his energy, his obstinacy, and, perhaps, his talent as a writer.

Vincent was born in the village of Groot Zundert in the old Dutch province of Brabant. He was the oldest of six children, three boys and three girls. The early years of his youth in his father's parsonage were very happy, and later in his darkest moments they always came back to him. He was a charming and imaginative child who enjoyed playing with his sisters and brothers in the garden of the parsonage. But even at an early age he already loved to go off by himself and wander among the wheat fields, on the heath, and in the pine woods that surrounded the village. This sensitivity to the poetry of nature never left him.

His parents sent him away to school at a near-by village. Almost nothing is known, however, about his education, except that he must have acquired at this time his unusual taste for reading, which, in spite of his personal isolation, kept him aware of what was going on in the world.

When he was sixteen a profession was chosen for him. It was decided that he should become an art dealer, and his uncle Vincent got him a job in the firm of Goupil, of which he was a partner. This was one of the outstanding firms dealing with contem-

porary painting, with offices in Paris, The Hague, and London. Vincent was put to work in the Hague branch under the director, Mr. Tersteeg, who gave an excellent report on his work and personality at that time but who later loomed up again and again in his life as a symbol of prejudice, indifference, and even cruelty.

It is during this period that he began the letters to his brother Theo, the last of which was found on him, unfinished, the day he took his life. These letters give such a graphic account of his thoughts and of everything that happened to him and their style is so vivid, so sincere, that they can be said to rank with the great autobiographies of literature.

After three years he was transferred to the London office, where the firm had no gallery but dealt only with other dealers. This was a happy, carefree moment in his life. He was independent, living alone for the first time and in the world's greatest metropolis. He enjoyed his work and all the life he saw around him in the walks he loved to take through the city. He visited the museums of London and studied the great masters of the past, of whom he preferred Rembrandt, Hals, Ruysdael, and the leaders of the British school, Constable, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Turner, and old Crome. He decorated his room with reproductions of his favorite paintings, among them a portrait of Corot, and it was at this time that he began to love and admire the work of Millet, who influenced him throughout his life.

He read a great deal: first the Bible, from which he quoted frequently in his letters, but also the poets, and Michelet, Renan, and Dickens, who were to have a profound influence on his thinking. In their writings he found the source for his ideas about the influences that had sprung from the French Revolution, the new social justice, in short, the practice of a true rather than an official Christian way of life. This sympathy for the new revolutionary ideas had far-reaching effects throughout his life. It dominated his theories about art, the position of artists in society, and the way in which they should work together, and it was one of the chief causes of disagreement with his family and their friends.

It was in London that he fell in love for the first time. Each of Vincent's contacts with women had a fundamental effect upon his character, and this initial experience was a turning point in his life. The girl he had chosen, the daughter of his landlady, refused him. This was the first thwarting of his burning desire for human affection, and it seems to have caused a change in his whole personality. He withdrew into himself, became taciturn and unapproachable. People began to speak of his eccentricity. The loneliness that was never to leave him began, and to escape it he concentrated on religion, which seemed to provide an answer to his longing to give himself to his fellow men.

His employers transferred him to Paris in the hope that the change might make him forget his grief and bring him back to his former self. But in his new state of mind the atmosphere of a fashionable picture gallery was most distasteful to him. Taking a small room in Montmartre, he spent his evenings reading the Bible with a young Englishman, a boarder in the same house, his Sundays visiting the Louvre and Lux-

14 embourg museums. He still read a great deal, especially the poets Victor Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Longfellow, Heine, Keats. But his thoughts turned more and more away from art and towards religion. His interpretation of the books he read was religious—he destroyed what he had by Michelet and Renan and advised his brother to do the same lest he be led into temptation. The reproductions he had in his room were all of religious subjects, The Bible Lecture, The Imitation of Jesus Christ. He greatly admired his father and wanted to devote himself to bringing comfort through religion to the poor and miserable.

Finally he was dismissed by Goupil and Company and found himself without a job and with no clear idea of how to go about carrying out his wish for a life devoted to his fellow men. Through an advertisement he obtained a job as a school teacher, or rather an assistant without salary in a small school located at Ramsgate on the southern coast of England. Instead of teaching, however, he was sent to collect bills from the parents of the pupils in London. After a while he moved to another school, where he acted as a curate and did some preaching.

He still took some interest in art and visited Hampton Court, where he was particularly struck by the works of Rembrandt, Titian, and Mantegna. But he concentrated almost entirely on religion and became obsessed with thoughts of the sorrow and grief in the world. This was probably increased by his visits to the poverty-stricken quarters of London, where life was reduced to its lowest and drabbest. He also suffered from homesickness and loneliness and, perhaps as a result of this, began to neglect his health. He ate very little, smoked a lot, and imposed hardships upon himself, such as walking from the channel coast to London, a distance which normally takes over four hours by train. But in spite of all this he kept his sensitivity to the beauty of nature and wrote charming and poetic descriptions of what he saw to his family—the dawn near Canterbury, a storm on the channel, a view of a village in a valley which reminded him of a Dürer water color.

Realizing that there was no future in what he was doing, he returned to Holland and with the help of one of his uncles got work in a bookshop at Dordrecht. But he had now made up his mind to become a preacher and made arrangements to prepare for the entrance examination to the university, where he could study theology. He moved to Amsterdam for this purpose and lived with his uncle who was commandant of the Navy Yard. This new attempt to find a direction for his life, however, was also doomed to failure. In spite of his unusual vitality, persistence, and self-discipline, he proved entirely incapable of concentration on Greek, Latin, and the other subjects required of him. In addition to this he found himself totally opposed to the official church way of thinking about and carrying on the teachings of Christ. He considered this hypocritical and hopelessly bound by outmoded customs and prejudice. He wanted not to talk but to act according to the basic teachings of Christ. During this period he copied the *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis and read Lamennais, who had himself gone through a very similar crisis. As was inevitable, it ended in a breakdown, and he did not take the examinations.

This second major failure in his life had important consequences for him. It marked a fundamental change in his ideas about religion, and it separated him further from his family, not only from his uncles, who had now lost all confidence in him, but, what was much more painful to him, from his father, with whom he now found himself in almost complete and hopeless disagreement.

In spite of everything, with characteristic obstinacy, he still wanted to become a preacher. But it had to be through action, not through words and theories, and so he entered an evangelical school in Brussels where young men were prepared for missionary work among the miners in the Borinage district of Belgium. Here again, however, although he was much more advanced than the other pupils, his eccentricity, his lack of facility as a speaker, and, most of all, his rebellion against officially accepted ideas prevented his receiving a nomination. Nevertheless he went to the mining region at his own risk and began working among the poor, teaching the children and lecturing on the Bible. He did everything to share the life of the miners, went down into the most dangerous pit, stayed with them constantly. The Evangelical Committee gave him a temporary appointment and at first praised his work, especially his care of the sick and wounded after an explosion in one of the mines. After a short time, however, his enthusiasm carried him too far; he gave away all his personal belongings to the poor and went to live in a primitive hut, ate almost nothing, in short tried to sacrifice everything to the cause he was serving. This was considered an excess of zeal by the Committee, who believed that a man who neglected himself to such an extent could not be a good example for others. When his temporary appointment ended they refused to renew it, and so Vincent once more found himself without a job and, except for his family, with hardly a friend in the world.

In the months that followed, the winter of 1877-1878, he went through the great crisis of his life. Almost completely cut off from his family and his friends, a failure at everything he had tried to do, and, worst of all, having lost his faith, he looked around desperately for some way in which he could be useful to his fellow man; for unless this were possible he saw no reason for his continued existence. At first he went home to his father's parsonage, but, finding himself a stranger there, he returned to the Borinage, spent a dreadful winter of wandering, without work and often without shelter or food, for his family were not always able to send him enough money. During this time he walked many miles to the village of Courrières, where he hoped to consult Jules Breton, a successful artist whose work he admired, but when he got there he did not dare knock at the door. In spite of the depth to which he had fallen he never lost his dignity, never admitted defeat, and even in the worst moments clung to his convictions. Finally he made up his mind to devote his life to painting and through this to bring some happiness, some consolation to humanity. From this moment he regained his confidence in himself. He had a mission in life from which he did not deviate until the day he died.

He began working in the Borinage. His studio was a small room which he rented in the house of a miner, his models the miners themselves, their children, their sur-

16 roundings. He also copied reproductions after Millet, whose love for the working man he shared, and studied books on perspective. He began to read again, and his letters contain profound reflections on the meaning and interrelation of art and literature.

From this time until the end of his life he received an allowance from his brother, who had become an established art dealer in Paris. Vincent was proud, and this dependence on his brother always weighed on him. He tried to justify it by calling it a business arrangement through which his brother became part owner of everything he painted and by believing that some day he would pay it all back. However, this never really satisfied him and his complete inability to earn anything with his pictures was unquestionably one of the reasons for his final breakdown.

When winter came and it was no longer possible to work out of doors, his quarters in the miner's house became too cramped, and so he moved to Brussels. There he hoped to continue the basic study of anatomy and perspective and above all to get to know other artists, to find what he always wanted so desperately, the warmth of human companionship. He took a few lessons with a painter but failed to make any friends, with the exception of a young Dutch artist called Van Rappard, who was introduced to him by his brother and with whom he later corresponded. After a while, discouraged and worried by the poor state of his health, he decided to return to his father's house.

His father had meanwhile been appointed to another living at Etten, also in Brabant. At home, although he did not get on very well with his family, it cost him nothing and a more regular life helped him to regain his health. During the first months he worked on quietly and contentedly, but soon there arose another crisis, a second unhappy love affair, which was also to have far-reaching effects upon his life. This time he became attached to one of his cousins from Amsterdam, a young widow with a four-year-old son who had come to spend the summer with his family. Vincent was kind to her child, and they became close friends, but when he declared his love she refused him and left the vicarage. He could not believe it and blamed her attitude on the opposition of her family and his. It was only after he went to Amsterdam and she absolutely refused to see him that he lost hope.

The unbalanced intensity of his feeling came out during the visit to Amsterdam. When the girl's family told him of her refusal to see him, he put his hand over an oil lamp and begged that they allow him to speak with her as long as he could hold it there. He could not remember what happened after this. This second frustration of his desire for a woman's tenderness and companionship affected him profoundly. He withdrew completely into himself and became increasingly difficult to live with, until one day after a violent quarrel with his long-suffering father, he left for The Hague.

This break with his family, coming on top of the refusal, made him feel utterly abandoned, and he again went through a desperate period when life did not seem worth living and he almost gave up the struggle. It was at this time that he met a



No. 89. Gauguin's Armchair. V. W. van Gogh

woman who seemed even more miserable and deserted than he. She was a prostitute who had one illegitimate child and was expecting another. He helped her through the birth of the second child, took her with the children to live with him, and gave them all the love and tenderness which he had been forced to keep locked up in his breast for so long.

The illusion of having what he had always wanted, a wife, children, a home, gave Vincent a new reason for living, and the beginning of their life together was one of the happiest periods for him. His renewed confidence came out in both his work and his letters. He arranged and furnished a small studio, hired models, sketched from life in the town, and worked on landscapes in the surrounding country, on the beaches and in the dunes. He took a few lessons from the painter Anton Mauve, who was married to one of his cousins. He began painting in water color and in oil and became interested in lithography, which he believed to be a new technique of reproduction that would make it possible to bring painting cheaply to the people. He also read intensively again and kept up his knowledge of what was going on in the world of art outside of Holland. He collected reproductions of his favorite artists. The list of these shows his preference for Millet, Daumier, and the British magazine illustrators, almost always artists whose work contained some sort of social protest. It was at this time that he first had the idea of organizing a system of communal living for artists.

Unfortunately this happiness could not last. The woman was of a low type, she was pock-marked, smoked cigars, and spoke with a coarse accent. Their house was slovenly, and soon the few people who had come to see Vincent before he took her in, began to avoid him. Tersteeg, the dealer, who could have been a great help, was the first to break with him, and he influenced Mauve to do the same. Even Theo, who was always devoted and patient, showed plainly that he did not like her. Vincent himself felt that something was wrong, for he put off his plan to marry her. However, with his typical tenacity he refused to admit it and clung to the belief that her faults were due to her wicked upbringing and that, given better surroundings, she would improve.

Gradually the situation grew worse. Vincent again felt the bitterness of being isolated. His relationship with the woman was terribly limited since she had no education at all, and during the long winter evenings he sat alone in his studio longing for the visit of other painters or at least for some place where he could go to meet them. His funds were always low, and once he had bought his artist's materials there was little left for the household—sometimes food was so scarce that the poor woman did not have milk to nurse her baby. This poverty and the influence of her family, who constantly tried to tempt her back into her former, more lucrative, way of life, made her restive and upset the home to such a degree that Vincent finally resigned himself to separating from her and to leaving The Hague. The break affected him deeply. He had loved the woman in spite of her faults, and he was strongly attached to the children.

18 Whatever the final outcome, this episode stands out as a symbol of the spirit of Vincent. In it he gave himself completely as he really was, with his desire for a wife and family, his compassion for the poor and the helpless, and his readiness to make any sacrifice to obtain human warmth and tenderness.

He went to Drenthe, a remote village in the peat district, and rented a room in an inn, determined to put the past out of his mind and to lose himself in his work. He wanted to concentrate on the study of peasant types and the landscape of that part of Holland. But he found it difficult to get the peasants to pose. This, his gloomy state of mind, and the fear of falling ill made him change his plans and return once more to his parents' house.

Vincent's father had meanwhile been nominated to another living at Nuenen. In spite of the obvious difficulty of having a painter and an eccentric living in a vicarage his parents took him in and gave him a room to work in. It was an unhappy arrangement, however, for Vincent did nothing to make the relationship easier and avoided all but the most necessary contacts and conversation with his family.

Some months after his arrival his mother fell and broke her leg. Vincent devoted himself to nursing her with the same intensity which he had shown in the Borinage. This brought him closer to his family and relieved the atmosphere somewhat. He became more sociable and began to mingle with their friends. But this was not to last, for it led to another unfortunate love affair. The daughter of a neighbor, one of several sisters whom he saw constantly during the summer, fell in love with Vincent. She was a homely spinster, several years older than he, and, although he did not have as passionate a feeling for her as in his previous experiences, they planned to get married. Her family, however, objected and exerted such pressure that she attempted to commit suicide. This caused a scandal in the village and people avoided coming to the vicarage, which was, of course, embarrassing and distressing to Vincent's family.

He withdrew more completely into himself and spent almost all of his time in a studio he had rented in the village. There the only people he saw were friends such as Van Rappard who were interested in painting. He went to Amsterdam with one of them to visit the Rijksmuseum. His letter to his brother on this occasion, describing the paintings he most admired, the *Company of Captain Reynier Reael* by Hals and the *Jewish Bride* by Rembrandt, and stating why he loved the color of the former and the spiritual content of the latter, foreshadow the whole of his later development as a painter.

In March 1885 his father died, and from that time he left the vicarage and lived alone in the studio. He worked there successfully for a while until trouble arose when the Catholic priest forbade his parishioners to pose. In November he left Nuenen for Antwerp, abandoning all his work in the care of a carpenter, who later disposed of it to a junk dealer.

In The Hague Vincent had mastered drawing. In Nuenen he made his first basic progress with paint. He did not yet use his very personal scale of vivid colors. The

studies of peasants and weavers, even the landscapes are painted in somber tones of brown, blue, and black, which contrast astonishingly with his later work in France. But his writings show that he was already thinking of the color harmonies that he later used. His description and analysis of Delacroix's color system could be applied to any of his own later paintings. This sensitivity was always present in him and repeatedly given expression in his letters when he described the colors in landscapes. That he still suppressed it in his painting was probably due to the influence of painters such as Millet, Israels, and Mauve, whose palette was subdued.

He painted a series of studies of Brabant peasants at work in the fields and in their houses. In these he not only successfully defined form in paint but he also began to concentrate on bringing out those qualities which were most expressive of the character of his subjects. He emphasized the gnarled hands and block-like features of the peasants to express the quality of earthiness, and in *The Loom* he showed the man as a small ghost-like creature living inside a huge and monstrous machine.

These studies culminated in his first major composition, *The Potato-Eaters* (ill. p. 25). In this he wanted to give the essence of the Brabant peasant, to show that he was a "peasant painter." To him this picture was his first achievement; he was proud of it and sensitive to any criticism. It was due to an ill-advised statement about it that he broke off his friendship with Van Rappard, his only artist friend.

The move to Antwerp, though it was caused in part by increasing difficulties in Nuenen, was also a normal stage in Vincent's development as a painter. He wanted to work in a large center where there would be a greater variety of models and, above all, where he could meet other painters and learn from them. During his short stay there he succeeded in doing this. At first he worked alone, hiring his own models and painting them in his small rented room, which, it is significant to note, was decorated with Japanese prints. As this method of working proved too expensive he began working at the Academy and at an art students' club where models were available in the evening. For the first time he found himself among his fellow artists, could compare his work with theirs, sense the great difference between what he did and what was generally considered good, and hear their criticisms. It must have been a severe test, but in spite of his feeling of isolation, and of persecution by some of the teachers, he stuck to his beliefs and refused absolutely to conform to the accepted academic style. Though he by no means considered himself perfect, or even completely developed as a painter, his personality as he had asserted it in *The Potato-Eaters* was formed, and he knew what he wanted.

The conditions in which he had lived and the terrible strain he had put on himself began to tell. He consulted a doctor, who described his condition as near prostration. As a result, and no doubt also because he was drawn to its artistic activities, Vincent decided to go to Paris, to his brother. He left Antwerp at the end of February. For some unknown reason he took with him almost none of the paintings he had done there, and to this day the portraits and landscapes of which he speaks in his letters have never reappeared.

ALL ARE IN OIL ON CANVAS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

1. A FISHERMAN ON THE BEACH
H. 19%, w. 12% in.
August 1882. De la Faille¹ (H) 6
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
2. THE LOOM
Illustrated p. 23. H. 27½, w. 33½ in.
May 1884. De la Faille (H) 33
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
3. POTATO-PLANTING
H. 26, w. 58% in.
August 1884. De la Faille (H) 46
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
4. A WALK NEAR NUENEN
H. 30%, w. 38% in.
October 1884. De la Faille (H) 50
Lent by the Boymans Museum, Rotterdam
5. STILL LIFE: HAT AND PIPE
H. 14%, w. 21 in.
November 1884-April 1885. De la Faille (H) 70
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
6. A WOMAN IN A RED BONNET
H. 16%, w. 11% in.
- April 1885. De la Faille (H) 159
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
7. THE POTATO-EATERS
Illustrated p. 25. H. 32¼, w. 44% in.
May 1885. De la Faille (H) pl. 1
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
8. THE OLD TOWER AT NUENEN
H. 24¼, w. 31 in.
May 1885. De la Faille (H) 94
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
9. STILL LIFE: POTATOES
H. 26, w. 31% in.
October 1885. De la Faille (H) 122
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
10. THE OPEN BIBLE
H. 25%, w. 30% in.
October 1885. De la Faille (H) 121
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
11. A PEASANT WOMAN IN A WHITE CAP
H. 16%, w. 14 in.
De la Faille (H) 89
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
12. PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
Illustrated p. 24. H. 18%, w. 14% in.
1885-1886. De la Faille (H) 188
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren

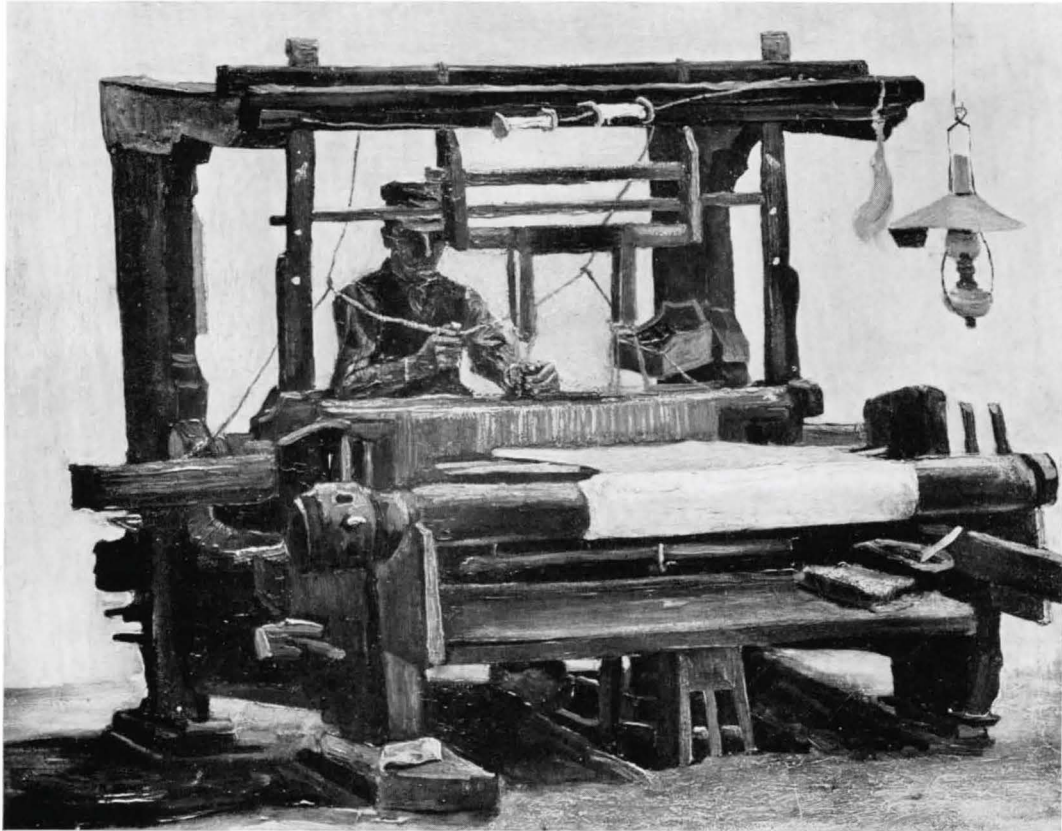
D R A W I N G S

13. THE RETURN OF THE MINERS
Pen and ink on paper; h. 16 15/16, w. 23% in.
August 1880. De la Faille¹ (F) 832
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
14. A YOUNG PEASANT
Black crayon and water color on paper;
h. 18%, w. 24 in.
September 1881. De la Faille (F) 851
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
15. A WOMAN MOURNING
Pencil and pen and ink on paper; h. 22 7/16, w. 16% in.
April 1882. De la Faille (F) 937
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo

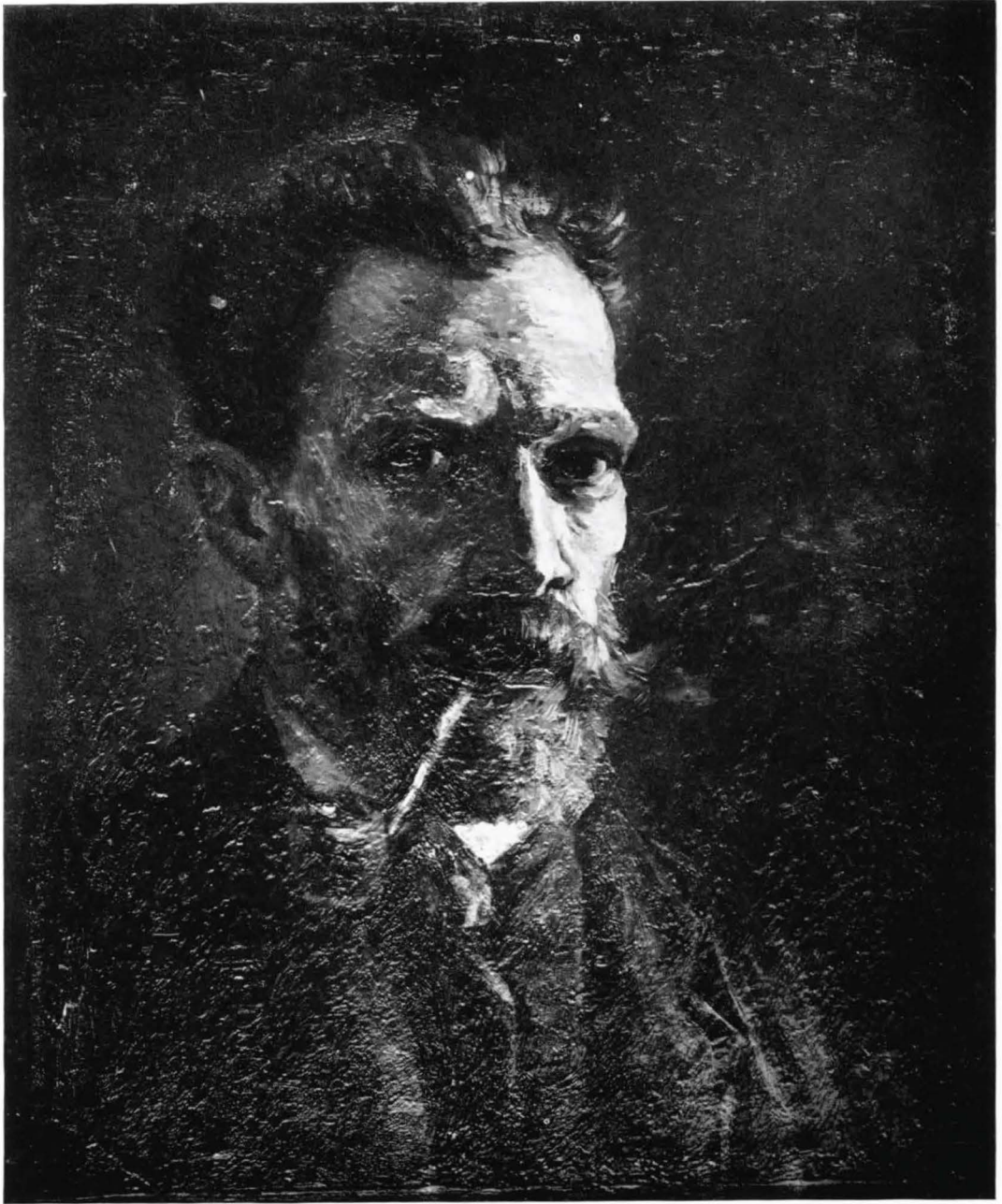
¹ The references for paintings are from J. B. de la Faille, *Vincent van Gogh*, Hypérion edition (H), 1939; those for drawings are from de la Faille, *L'Oeuvre de Vincent van Gogh, Catalogue raisonné* (F), 1928, vol. III.

16. THE HAGUE: A CORNER OF THE OLD TOWN
Pen and ink on paper; h. 9 7/16, w. 11 13/16 in.
March 1882. De la Faille (F) 918
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
17. A STUDY OF A TREE
Crayon, heightened with white, on paper; h. 19 11/16, w. 27 3/16 in.
April 1882. De la Faille (F) 933
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
18. A FISHERMAN'S HUT AT SCHEVENINGEN
Pencil and pen on paper; h. 11 1/4, w. 17 5/16 in.
May-June 1882. De la Faille (F) 938
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
19. BEHIND THE SCHENKWEG, THE HAGUE
Illustrated p. 26. Crayon, heightened with white, on paper; h. 11, w. 18 1/2 in.
June 1882. De la Faille (F) 939
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
20. THE BEZUIDENHOUT PARK, THE HAGUE
Crayon on paper; h. 7 1/16, w. 7 1/2 in.
September 1882. De la Faille (F) 952
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
21. A VETERAN WITH AN UMBRELLA
Pencil on paper; h. 18 1/2, w. 9 1/16 in.
October 1882. De la Faille (F) 972
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
22. THE STATE LOTTERY
Water color on paper; h. 14 15/16, w. 22 7/16 in.
October 1882. De la Faille (F) 970
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
23. AN OLD MAN
Illustrated p. 31. Pencil on paper; h. 18 11/16, w. 10 1/4 in.
October 1882. De la Faille (F) 960
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
24. ON THE THRESHOLD OF ETERNITY
Illustrated p. 78. Pencil on paper; h. 19 11/16, w. 12 3/16 in.
November 1882. De la Faille (F) 997
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
25. A WOMAN SEWING
Pencil on paper; h. 20 1/2, w. 14 in.
March 1883. De la Faille (F) 1026
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
26. VEGETABLE GARDENS NEAR THE DUNES, THE HAGUE
Illustrated p. 26. Ink and water color on paper; h. 11, w. 16 9/16 in.
June 1883. De la Faille (F) 1037
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
27. A VIEW AT SCHEVENINGEN
Illustrated p. 27. Pencil, black crayon, water color, and white chalk on paper; h. 17 1/2, w. 23 3/4 in.
De la Faille (F) 1041
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
28. A ROAD NEAR LOOSDUINEN
Black crayon and ink, heightened with white, on paper; h. 10 1/4, w. 13 1/2 in.
De la Faille (F) 1089
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
29. WOMEN PRAYING
Black crayon and pencil on paper; h. 16 15/16, w. 11 7/16 in.
De la Faille (F) 1058
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
30. A LUMBER SALE
Water color on paper; h. 13 3/16, w. 17 5/16 in.
January 1884. De la Faille (F) 1113
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
31. THE WEAVER
Water color on paper; h. 13 3/4, w. 17 1/4 in.

- January 1884. De la Faille (F) 1107
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
- De la Faille (F) 1243
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
32. THE GARDEN OF THE NUENEN
VICARAGE
Illustrated p. 27. Pen and pencil on paper; h. 15%, w. 20% in.
March 1884. De la Faille (F) 1128
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
33. A GARDEN IN WINTER
Pen and ink on paper; h. 11, w. 8 1/16 in.
March 1884. De la Faille (F) 1131
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
34. STUDIES OF HANDS
Illustrated p. 29. Black crayon on paper; h. 7%, w. 13 in.
January 1885. De la Faille (F) 1155
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
35. A PEASANT WOMAN IN A
WHITE CAP
Illustrated p. 28. Black crayon on paper; h. 15%, w. 13 in.
February-April 1885. De la Faille (F) 1182
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
36. A WOMAN SHELLING PEAS
Black crayon on paper; h. 16 9/16, w. 10% in.
March 1885. De la Faille (F) 1214
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
37. A WOMAN BESIDE THE HEARTH
Water color on paper; h. 13 9/16, w. 17% in.
March 1885. De la Faille (F) 1222
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
38. THE DITCH
Pen and ink, heightened with white, on paper; h. 15%, w. 13 in.
39. THE CHURCH AT NUENEN IN
WINTER
Pen and ink on paper; h. 8 1/16, w. 11 3/16 in.
De la Faille (F) 1238
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
40. A COUNTRY ROAD WITH
POPLARS
Pen and ink and black crayon on paper; h. 21%, w. 15% in.
De la Faille (F) 1239
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
41. A PEASANT DIGGING
Black crayon on paper; h. 21%, w. 16% in.
De la Faille (F) 1302
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
42. A WOMAN CLEANING A PAN
Illustrated p. 30. Black crayon on paper; h. 20%, w. 15 15/16 in.
De la Faille (F) 1282
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
43. PEASANTS DIGGING
Water color and black chalk; h. 7 11/16, w. 12 3/16 in.
De la Faille (F) 1299
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
44. A SHEET OF STUDIES
Black crayon on paper; h. 13%, w. 8 1/16 in.
De la Faille (F) 1336
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo



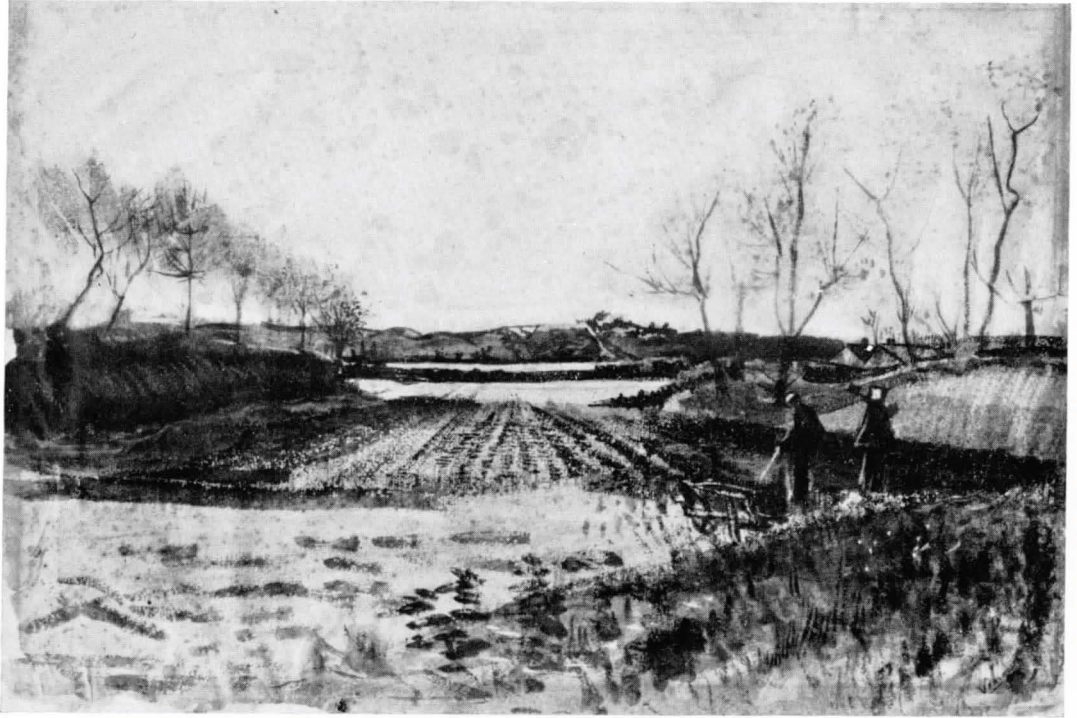
No. 2. *The Loom*. The Kröller-Müller State Museum



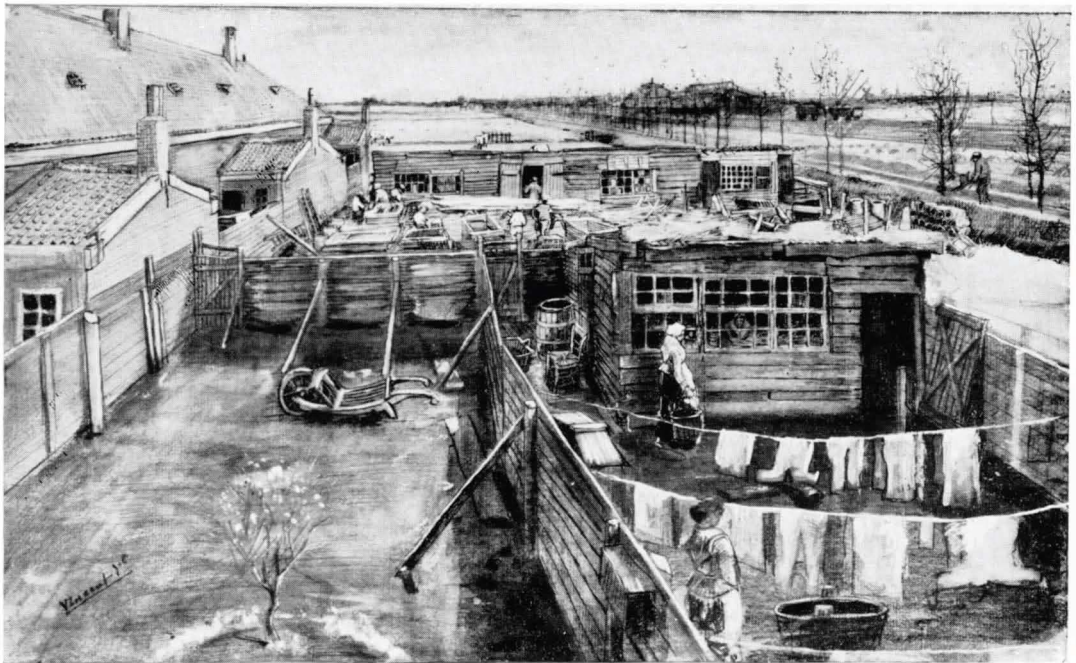
No. 12. *Portrait of the Artist*. V. W. van Gogh



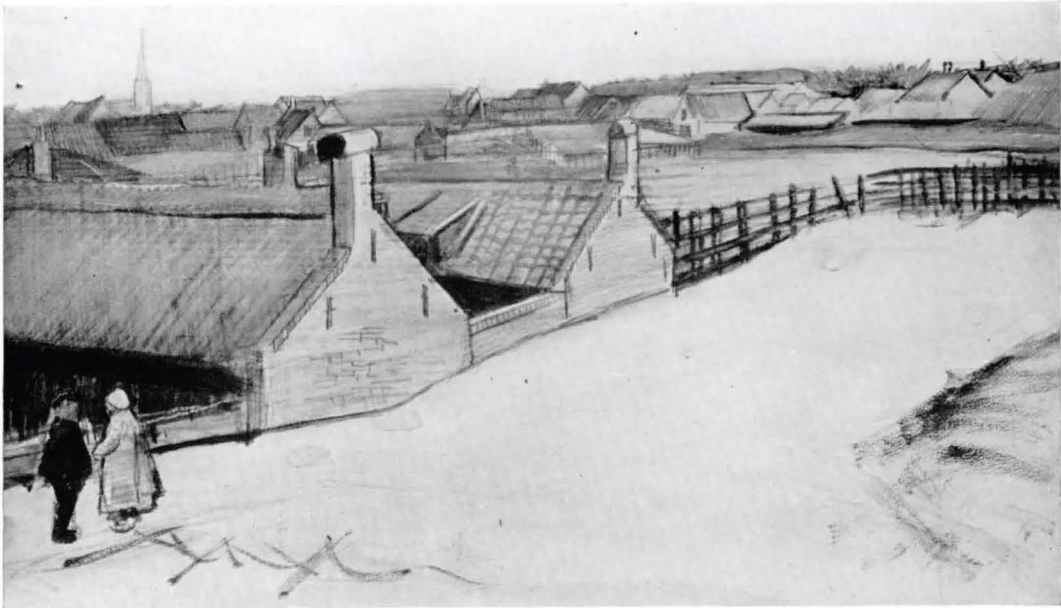
No. 7. *The Potato-Eaters*. V. W. van Gogh



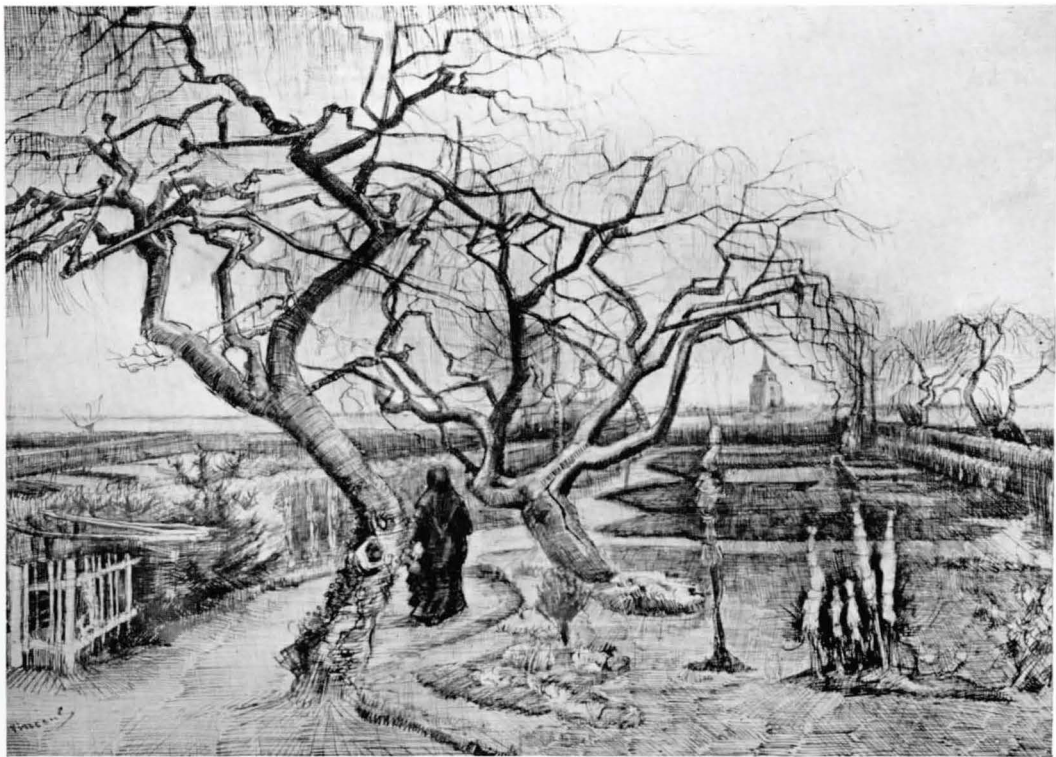
No. 26. *Vegetable Gardens near the Dunes, The Hague. The Kröller-Müller State Museum*



No. 19. *Behind the Schenkweg, The Hague. The Kröller-Müller State Museum*



No. 27. *A View at Scheveningen*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 32. *The Garden of the Nuenen Vicarage*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 35. *A Peasant Woman in a White Cap*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 34. *Studies of Hands*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 42. A Woman Cleaning a Pan. The Kröller-Müller State Museum



No. 23. *An Old Man*. V. W. van Gogh



PARIS

In Paris he shared his brother Theo's flat. At the beginning of his stay he concentrated on restoring his health, almost completely ruined by his previous fasting and bad diet, and most of his teeth had to be removed. He continued carrying out his basic training as he had planned it in Antwerp, by attending an art school run by the painter Cormon, where he applied himself strenuously to working from models and plaster casts. It was there that he met Toulouse-Lautrec and Emile Bernard, who became his friends. As he grew more familiar with the activity of the Parisian art world he came under the influence of the Impressionists and left the school for good.

This was a happy moment for him. Many friends came to visit them at Theo's apartment, and Vincent met the leaders of the new movement in painting, Pissarro, Monet, Seurat, Gauguin, and lived the bohemian life of the artists of the day, working and discussing their problems in the cafés of Montmartre and mingling with writers like Catulle Mendès and Jean Jaurès.

He spent his days painting models and still life or landscapes of Montmartre and the suburbs of Paris, Chatou, Bougival, or Asnières. Emile Bernard says that he would leave his apartment with a large canvas on his back and return with it divided up into small sketches of whatever attracted his attention—the Moulin de la Galette, the bridges over the Seine, or the island of La Grande Jatte. He exhibited in the art shop of Tanguy, the friend of Cézanne and Renoir, and with a group of his friends in the Café du Tambourin, owned by La Segattori, a former model who had posed for Corot and Gérôme, and with whom he had a love affair.

The year 1886 saw the eighth and last exhibition of the Impressionists, for whom these were crucial days. The original group, Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, and their friends, who had created the movement and fought its early battles together, was now breaking up. Their basic discovery had come to a dead end. No longer satisfied with spontaneous copying of nature as they saw it, without regard for rules or techniques, they now turned to greater discipline in drawing and painting, and became more interested in the content of their pictures. Under the leadership of Seurat, who had just exhibited his masterpiece *La Grande Jatte* for the first time, and of Gauguin they followed new tendencies. It was in 1886 that the term Neo-Impressionism was heard for the first time. Vincent had arrived at the dawn of a new period, of which he was to be one of the dominating figures.

Unfortunately, but as was to be expected, this did not last. After a while the difficult aspects of his character reappeared, aggravated by excessive smoking and drinking. He became so irascible, so violent in his arguments that friends began to avoid the apartment because of the constant quarrels. Even his brother, whose patience was certainly beyond reproach, found life with him unbearable. In Theo's letters home he complained of Vincent's strange, dual personality, sometimes sensitive and tender and then suddenly hard, cruel, and egoistic.

In Paris his painting went through a most important change and what can be called the last stage in the formation of his own personal style. This was the result partially of his visits to the Louvre and Luxembourg museums but mostly of his association with the Impressionists. The canvases painted shortly after his arrival are much more luminous than those done in Holland, though the colors are still sober and subdued, as if influenced by Mauve or Corot (see ills. pp. 36, 37). Advised by Pissarro and others, he took up the new method of direct painting without regard for drawing or technique. He became interested in bright pure colors and adopted the small broad strokes and dots which the others used. In these first attempts to follow the new style he seemed to lose much of his individuality, and paintings such as the *Woman at the Café du Tambourin* (ill. p. 42) or the landscapes of Montmartre are exercises which could have been executed by any member of the group. In his still lives and flowers he maintained his own personality to some extent, and he finally began to assert it again in the self-portrait at an easel. But, on the whole, during the Paris period the influence of Pissarro, Monet, and Seurat predominated, and although he developed his extraordinary sense of color, he concentrated only on the external, the visual aspect of his art, and did not yet combine it with his own very personal feeling for the essential character of the subject. This he was to do in Arles.

P A I N T I N G S

ALL ARE IN OIL ON CANVAS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

- | | |
|---|---|
| 45. MONTMARTRE
H. 12 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
De la Faille (H) 261
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren | De la Faille (H) 264
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren |
| 46. MONTMARTRE
H. 17 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
De la Faille (H) 370
Lent by the Art Institute of Chicago | 49. A VIEW OF THE BUTTE
MONTMARTRE
H. 16 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
De la Faille (H) 265
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren |
| 47. PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
Oil on pasteboard; h. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
De la Faille (H) 418
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren | 49A. PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
H. 16 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
De la Faille (H) 409
Lent by Adelaide Milton de Groot,
New York |
| 48. A CORNER OF MONTMARTRE
H. 13 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. | Paintings with A following the number are shown in
New York only. |

50. A RESTAURANT AT ASNIERES
Illustrated p. 38. H. 7½, w. 10¾ in.
De la Faille (H) 365
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
51. FISHING IN THE SPRING
Illustrated p. 37. H. 19¼, w. 22¾ in.
De la Faille (H) 367
Lent by Chauncey McCormick, Chicago
52. THE BRIDGE (after Hiroshige)
Illustrated p. 35. H. 28¾, w. 21¼ in.
De la Faille (H) 233
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
53. A WHEAT FIELD
H. 21¼, w. 25¾ in.
De la Faille (H) 360
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
54. A FLOWERPOT WITH HERBS
H. 12¾, w. 8¾ in.
De la Faille (H) 315
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
55. STILL LIFE: FRUIT
Illustrated p. 41. H. 17¾, w. 21½ in.
De la Faille (H) 321
Lent by the Art Institute of Chicago
56. PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
Oil on pasteboard; h. 7½, w. 5½ in.
De la Faille (H) 420
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
57. PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
Oil on pasteboard; h. 7½, w. 5½ in.
De la Faille (H) 421
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
58. LITTLE GARDENS ON THE
BUTTE MONTMARTRE
H. 37¾, w. 47¼ in.
1887. De la Faille (H) pl. iv
Lent by the Municipal Museum, Amsterdam
59. A WOMAN AT THE CAFE DU
TAMBOURIN
Illustrated p. 42. H. 21¾, w. 18¾ in.
De la Faille (H) 299
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
60. SUNFLOWERS
Illustrated p. 40. H. 17, w. 24 in.
De la Faille (H) 278
Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art
61. PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
Illustrated p. 43. H. 25¾, w. 19¾ in.
1888. De la Faille (H) 425
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren

D R A W I N G S

62. BOULEVARD DE CLICHY, PARIS
Illustrated p. 36. Pen and colored
crayon on paper; h. 14 15/16, w.
20 11/16 in.
De la Faille (F) 1393
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
63. POTTER'S FIELD, PARIS
Pen and ink, heightened with white, on
paper; h. 14¾, w. 18¾ in.
De la Faille (F) 1399
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
64. FORTIFICATIONS, PARIS
Water color on paper; h. 15 9/16, w.
21 1/16 in.
De la Faille (F) 1400
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
65. A TEA GARDEN
Illustrated p. 39. Pen and pencil, heightened with white, on gray paper; h.
14¾, w. 19¾ in.
De la Faille (F) 1407
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren



No. 52. *The Bridge* (after Hiroshige). V. W. van Gogh



No. 62. Boulevard de Clichy, Paris. V. W. van Gogh



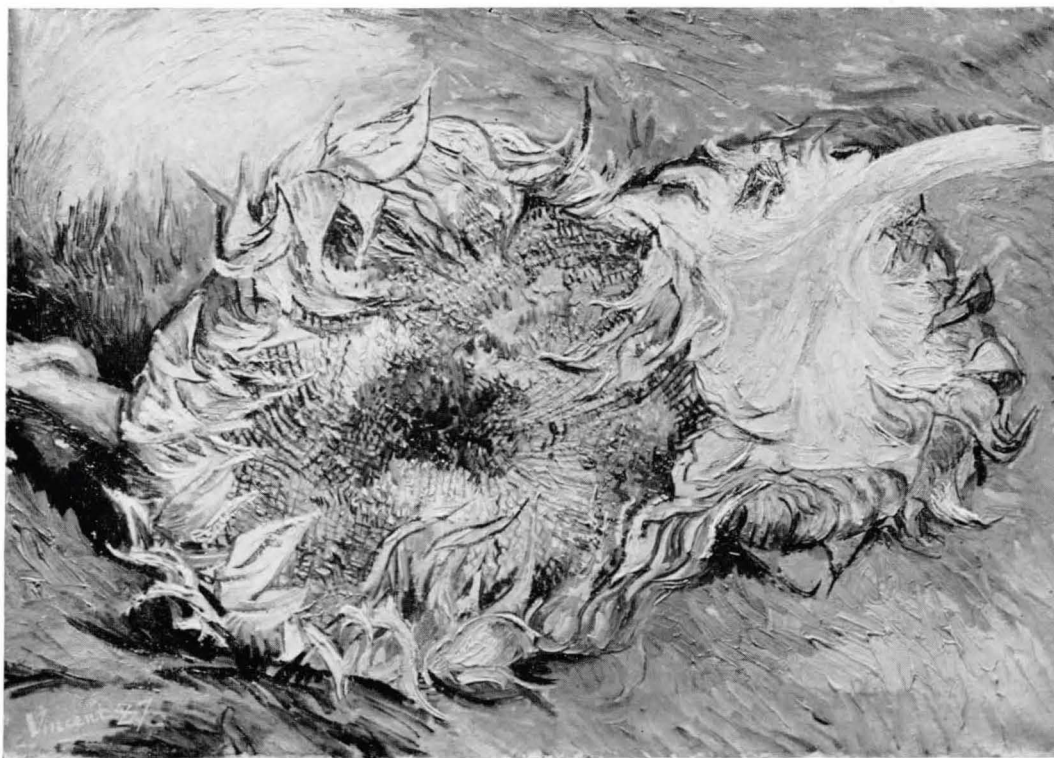
No. 51. Fishing in the Spring. Chauncey McCormick



No. 50. A Restaurant at Asnières. V. W. van Gogh



No. 65. A Tea Garden. V. W. van Gogh



No. 60. *Sunflowers*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art



No. 55. *Still Life: Fruit*. The Art Institute of Chicago



No. 59. *A Woman at the Café du Tambourin*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 61. *Portrait of the Artist*. V. W. van Gogh



ARLES

Van Gogh's primary reason for leaving Paris for the South was his health. At the end of his stay in Paris he approached some sort of a nervous crisis, which he believed was brought on by the excitement of the city and the abnormal, unhealthy, bohemian life he led there. Arles, once an important city in the Roman Empire and the capital of a kingdom during the Middle Ages, was now a sleepy provincial town basking quietly among the ruins of its former splendor. The sunshine and the pleasant climate there set him back on his feet, and he began the culminating moment of his career. The two years in Paris had matured him, and he now had a more definite idea of what he wanted from life and from his painting. As he looked around him for subjects he was not attracted by the Roman and medieval monuments but by the surrounding country, where spring had begun and there were flowers everywhere in the fields, the gardens, the vineyards, and the orchards. Painting and drawing wherever he went, he explored all the neighboring countryside, visiting the ruins of the abbey of Montmajour and traveling through the Camargue cattle country to the old Phoenician port of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer on the shores of the Mediterranean.

Although his concentration on painting brought him great happiness, the conditions in which he lived were in no way improved. He moved from the hotel in which he had settled to a small house where he had a bedroom and studio, but he was as always incapable of living normally. This was due in part to his own unstable character but also to the constant lack of funds. He never seemed to have enough money to satisfy his artistic as well as his personal needs, and when it came to a choice it was invariably the latter which were sacrificed. He fasted sometimes as long as five days, living entirely on coffee and dry bread, and working at the same time with his usual abnormal intensity. The consciousness of his ever increasing debt to his brother and the realization that his paintings never found a buyer (Tersteeg and other dealers had again turned them down) were a constant obsession to him and hung over his life like a dark and threatening cloud.

His loneliness also returned. He had almost no friends outside of Milliet, the Zouave lieutenant (see ill. p. 61), the postman Roulin, and two or three painters whom he neither admired nor felt drawn to. This lack of companionship, from which he always suffered, and his longing for a home made him think again of founding an artistic center, a sort of painters' community where all would share equally and work together

under a chosen leader, an “abbot.” The center was to be his house, the leader he chose was Gauguin, whom he had met and admired in Paris and who was at that time stranded in Brittany without money. Vincent arranged that in exchange for paintings which would go to his brother in Paris, Gauguin would come to Arles and share his house and living allowance. Working with another painter, and especially one whom he respected and admired as much as Gauguin, was for Vincent the realization of a dream which he had cherished since the early days in Brussels. While awaiting his friend’s arrival he did everything to make the house comfortable and especially to decorate it with paintings which Gauguin would admire. He worked feverishly at these and among them are some of his finest works: the *Sunflowers in a Vase*, the *Bedroom*, and the *Public Gardens* (cover and ill. p. 59). He painted the walls yellow, the color of sunlight, so that the atmosphere would always be joyful.

After many delays Gauguin got to Arles on the twentieth of October. At first his presence and companionship had a good effect on Vincent, who shortly before had felt an approaching illness—he had even expressed a fear of madness, comparing himself to Hugo van der Goes, the fifteenth-century Flemish painter who died a lunatic. However, as seemed to be inevitable with him, it was not long before difficulties began. Their discussions degenerated into quarrels and they found themselves in profound disagreement over almost everything. There was nothing astonishing in this, as two men could hardly have been more different. Gauguin was mature and cynical, always planning and theorizing, essentially an intellectual; whereas Van Gogh was spontaneous and almost childishly open-hearted, emotional, and romantic. The tension grew between them until on Christmas Eve Vincent broke under the strain. In a fit of madness he cut off his left ear, took and offered it to a woman in a brothel where he and Gauguin had spent the evening a few days before.

This caused great excitement in the small town. The police were called. Vincent was taken to the hospital. Gauguin telegraphed for Theo to come at once and himself fled to Paris, leaving his belongings behind. After a few days Vincent seemed to have recovered and was allowed to go home. He tried to begin painting again. It was at this time, his head still bandaged, that he did one of his best self-portraits (ill. p. 65). However, Gauguin’s desertion and the sight of the desolate, abandoned studio depressed him. The children and the idle of his quarter stood outside of his house and taunted him until he grew excited, screamed, and threw things out of the window. Finally the neighbors sent a petition to the mayor, stating that it was not safe to leave him at liberty and requesting that he be locked up in an institution. He was taken forcibly to the hospital. He suffered renewed attacks and was kept there for several months, during which time he gradually recovered and managed to do some painting. But when the time came for his release he was a broken man; he no longer had the courage to live alone and asked that his brother arrange for him to be interned in an institution where he would be properly cared for and allowed to regain gradually his strength and mental equilibrium.

In spite of the tragedy to which it was a prelude, Vincent’s stay in Arles marked the

46 summit of his career as a painter. Liberated from the confusing and overwhelming atmosphere of the capital, he felt free and confident in himself and created his own style. He now decorated his house with his own works, no longer with engravings after his favorite painters. Although he still read many novels and continued to be interested in the painters of the past—with Gauguin he traveled to Montpellier to visit the museum—he was now almost entirely absorbed by his painting and devoted himself to it with a kind of frenzy. He threw off the influence of the Impressionists and other Parisian schools. If he followed anyone during this time it was the Japanese print-maker, but in this case it was rather adaptation and inspiration than direct influence. He admired greatly the simplicity and directness of approach of the Japanese, and to him Provence seemed like the country that he saw in the prints.

He began to work with great intensity and great speed. He compared the painting of a picture with the playing of a part on the stage, in which the actor must think of and co-ordinate innumerable elements all at the same moment. He wrote to his brother that when he was out in the country under the blazing southern sun, he sometimes produced his pictures as if in a trance, almost unconscious of what he was doing. His method was to paint a study on the spot and then another, final, version in the studio.

Many of his best drawings were done at this time. They were executed with a reed cut in the shape of a quill and done in a highly original style inspired by but not imitative of the Japanese. In the paintings of this time the drawing is simpler and clearer than before. Outlines become increasingly important, and certain shapes of strokes are repeated, somewhat in the manner of the Japanese. His touch is no longer like that of Pissarro or Seurat as it was in Paris—repetitious, deliberate, and carefully calculated. The brush strokes now have an instinctive, spontaneous quality, broad in flat surfaces or defining the character of the forms. Color is roughly applied in simple masses and almost always in arbitrarily high intensities. He chose his tones not to correspond with what he saw before him, but rather to emphasize the feeling which he believed to be inherent in his subject. His subjects give an interesting insight into his character and show that although he wanted to paint as a Frenchman, and certainly became a great painter in France, he nevertheless always remained first and foremost a Dutchman. In *The Drawbridge* (ill. p. 50) he sought out a type of bridge which is comparatively rare in Provence but which is typical in Holland. *The Fishing Boats at Saintes-Maries* (ill. p. 51) could be on the beach at Scheveningen and the small houses with their thatched roofs also. *The Orchards* (see color plate and ill. p. 53) no doubt reminded him of Nuenen, the *View of La Crau* (ill. p. 54) of the great flat stretches of Holland painted by Koninck and Van Goyen. Even the *View of Arles with Irises* has a freshness which makes one think of Dutch tulips.

His aim was to bring out with simplicity in each painting the human feeling which he believed the subject could express most strongly. As he put it, his desire was to bring consolation to those who are unhappy. He painted *La Berceuse* as part of a triptych with sunflowers on either side to be put in the cabin of a ship so that when sailors had been many weeks at sea they would think of their homes and the lullabies

they had listened to as children. He wanted to express the tenderness and gaiety of the orchards in spring, the feeling of rest in his bedroom, the sinister atmosphere of the Café de Nuit. The self-portrait done just after his first attack has a depth of feeling similar to Rembrandt's. 47

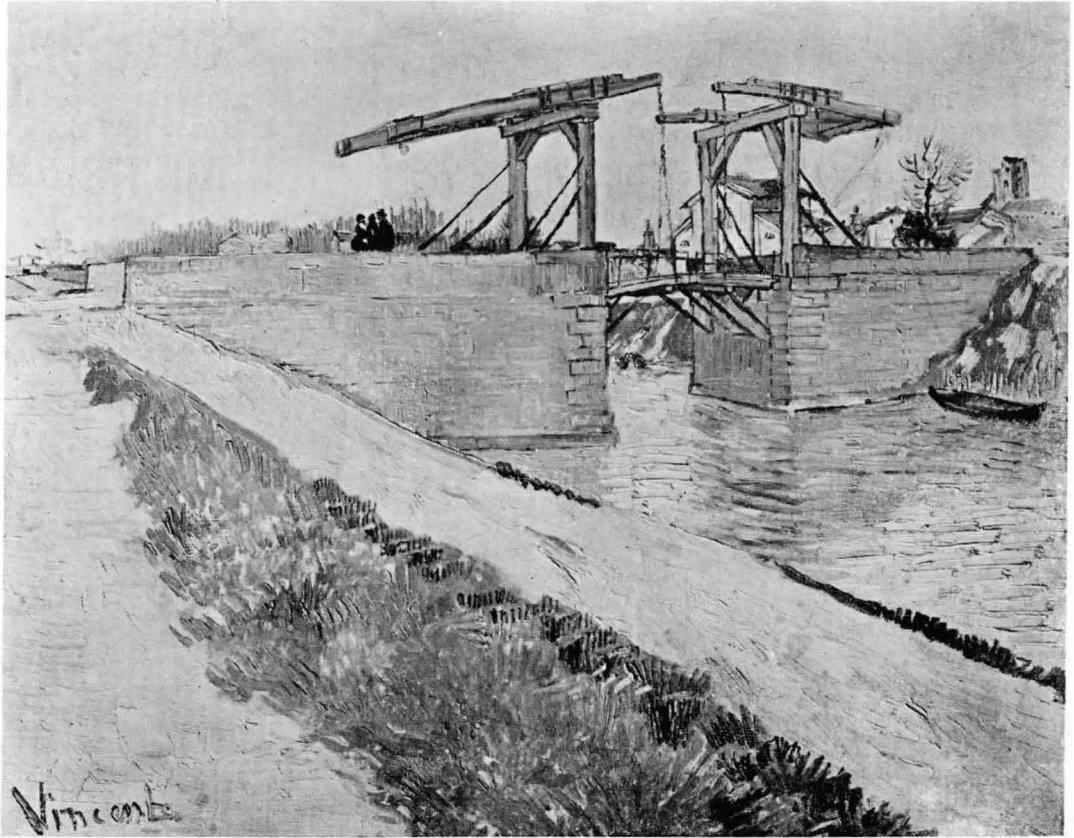
P A I N T I N G S

ALL ARE IN OIL ON CANVAS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

- | | |
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| <p>66. ALMOND BLOSSOMS
H. 9½, w. 7½ in.
February 1888. De la Faille (H) 427
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> | <p>74. A BUGLER OF THE ZOUAVE
REGIMENT
H. 25%, w. 21¼ in.
June 1888. De la Faille (H) 449
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> |
| <p>67. THE DRAWBRIDGE
Illustrated p. 50. H. 23, w. 28% in.
March 1888. De la Faille (H) 436
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> | <p>75. A VIEW OF SAINTES-MARIES
H. 25%, w. 21½ in.
June 1888. De la Faille (H) 456
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo</p> |
| <p>68. THE PINK ORCHARD
H. 25%, w. 31% in.
March 1888. Intended by the artist to be hung as a triptych with An Orchard in Bloom and The White Orchard, below. De la Faille (H) 578
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> | <p>76. A VIEW OF LA CRAU
H. 28½, w. 36¼ in.
June 1888. De la Faille (H) pl. x
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> |
| <p>69. THE WHITE ORCHARD
Illustrated p. 53. H. 23%, w. 31½ in.
March-April 1888. De la Faille (H) 432
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> | <p>77. ROULIN THE POSTMAN
H. 31¼, w. 25 in.
August 1888. De la Faille (H) 461
Lent by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston</p> |
| <p>70. AN ORCHARD IN BLOOM
Illustrated in color. H. 31%, w. 23% in.
April 1888. De la Faille (H) pl. viii
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> | <p>78. SUNFLOWERS IN A VASE
Illustrated in color. H. 37%, w. 28% in.
August 1888. De la Faille (H) 471
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> |
| <p>71. THE BLOSSOMING PEAR TREE
H. 28%, w. 18% in.
April 1888. De la Faille (H) 434
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> | <p>78A. PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
(dedicated to Gauguin)
Illustrated p. 60. H. 24%, w. 20½ in.
September 1888. De la Faille (H) 505
Lent by Maurice Wertheim, New York</p> |
| <p>72. A VIEW OF ARLES WITH IRISES
H. 21¼, w. 25% in.
May 1888. De la Faille (H) 442
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> | <p>79. THE PUBLIC GARDENS IN ARLES
Illustrated p. 59. H. 28½, w. 35% in.
September 1888. De la Faille (H) 553
Lent by the Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington, D. C.</p> |
| <p>73. FISHING BOATS ON THE BEACH
AT SAINTES-MARIES
Illustrated p. 51. H. 25%, w. 31% in.
June 1888. De la Faille (H) 451
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> | <p>80. VAN GOGH'S HOUSE IN ARLES
Illustrated p. 63. H. 29%, w. 37 in.
September 1888. De la Faille (H) 489
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> |

- 80A. CAFE DE NUIT
Illustrated p. 58. H. 27½, w. 35 in.
September 1888. De la Faille (H) 491
Lent by Stephen C. Clark, New York
81. PORTRAIT OF LIEUTENANT
MILLIET
Illustrated p. 61. H. 23%, w. 19¼ in.
September 1888. De la Faille (H) 499
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
82. A SIDEWALK CAFE AT NIGHT
Illustrated in color. H. 31, w. 24¾ in.
September 1888. De la Faille (H) 493
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
83. THE GREEN VINEYARD
H. 28, w. 35% in.
October 1888. De la Faille (H) 501
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
84. WILLOWS AT SUNSET
H. 12¼, w. 13% in.
October 1888. De la Faille (H) 540
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
85. THE SOWER
H. 13, w. 16% in.
October 1888. De la Faille (H) 480
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
86. A WALK IN THE ALYSCAMPS
PARK
H. 28, w. 35¼ in.
November 1888. De la Faille (H) 513
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
87. L'ARLESIENNE
(portrait of Madame Ginoux)
Illustrated p. 64. H. 35%, w. 28% in.
November 1888. De la Faille (H) 515
Lent by Sam A. Lewisohn, New York
- 87A. MOTHER ROULIN WITH HER
BABY
H. 36¼, w. 28% in.
November 1888. De la Faille (H) 520
Lent by Robert Lehman, New York
88. PORTRAIT OF ARMAND ROULIN
H. 25%, w. 21¼ in.
November 1888. De la Faille (H) 518
Lent by D. G. van Beuningen, Vierhouten
89. GAUGUIN'S ARMCHAIR
Illustrated in color. H. 35%, w. 28% in.
December 1888. De la Faille (H) 522
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
90. OLEANDERS
H. 23%, w. 28% in.
1888. De la Faille (H) 594
Lent by Mrs. Charles Suydam Cutting, New York
91. A DRAWING BOARD WITH
ONIONS
H. 19%, w. 25% in.
January 1889. De la Faille (H) 596
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
92. THE CRAB
H. 15, w. 17% in.
January 1889. De la Faille (H) 589
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
93. PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST WITH
A PIPE
Illustrated p. 65. H. 20%, w. 17¼ in.
January-February 1889. De la Faille (H) pl. xii
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Leigh B. Block, Chicago
94. LA BERCEUSE
H. 35¼, w. 28% in.
January-March 1889. De la Faille (H) 527
Lent by the Municipal Museum, Amsterdam

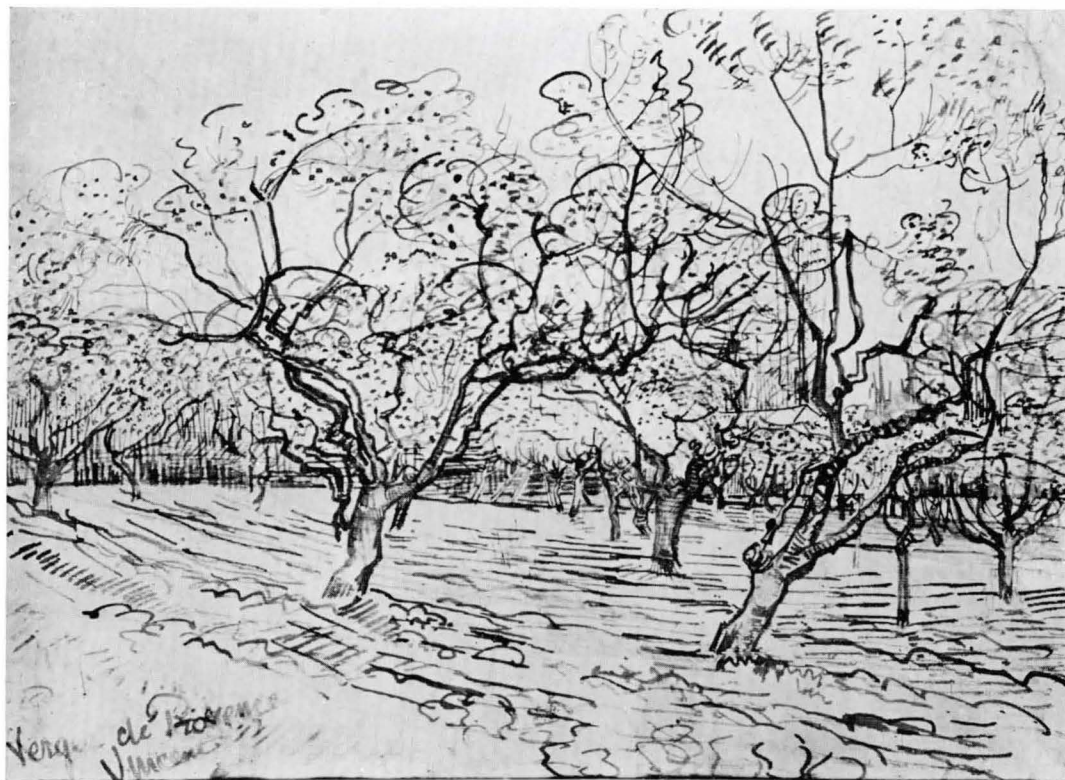
95. A COUNTRY ROAD WITH
WILLOWS
Pen and ink and pencil on paper; h.
10 1/16, w. 13 3/4 in.
March 1888. De la Faille (F) 1499
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
96. THE WHITE ORCHARD
Illustrated p. 52. Reed pen, heightened
with water color, on paper; h. 15 9/16,
w. 21 1/4 in.
April 1888. De la Faille (F) 1414
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
97. A VIEW OF LA CRAU
Illustrated p. 54. Pen and ink on paper;
h. 18 7/8, w. 23 3/4 in.
May 1888. De la Faille (F) 1420
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
98. VAN GOGH'S HOUSE IN ARLES
Illustrated p. 62. Water color and reed
pen on paper; h. 9 7/8, w. 12 in.
May 1888. De la Faille (F) 1413
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
99. THE SOWER
Illustrated p. 55. Reed pen on paper;
h. 9 7/16, w. 12 3/4 in.
June 1888. De la Faille (F) 1441
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
100. LITTLE HOUSES AT SAINTES-
MARIES
Reed pen and ink on paper; h. 11 13/16,
w. 18 1/2 in.
June 1888. De la Faille (F) 1438
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
101. FISHERMEN'S HOUSES AT
SAINTES-MARIES
Reed pen on paper; h. 12, w. 18 1/2 in.
June 1888. De la Faille (F) 1437
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
102. THE WASHERWOMEN
Illustrated p. 56. Pen and reed pen on
paper; h. 12 3/16, w. 9 7/16 in.
June 1888. De la Faille (F) 1444
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Mu-
seum, Otterlo
103. THE ROCK
Reed pen on paper; h. 19 5/16, w. 24 in.
July 1888. De la Faille (F) 1447
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
104. A BED OF FLOWERS
Reed pen and ink on paper; h. 24, w.
19 5/16 in.
August 1888. De la Faille (F) 1457
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
105. A GARDEN WITH THISTLES
Pen and ink on paper; h. 9 7/8, w. 12 9/16
in.
October 1888. De la Faille (F) 1466
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
106. THE GARDEN OF THE HOSPITAL
IN ARLES
Illustrated p. 57. Sepia on paper; h.
17 15/16, w. 23 3/16 in.
May 1889. De la Faille (F) 1467
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
107. THE BLOSSOMING FRUIT TREE
Water color on paper; h. 17 15/16, w.
12 in.
De la Faille (F) 1469
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
108. A LANDSCAPE WITH TELE-
GRAPH POLES
Reed pen and ink; h. 9 7/16, w. 12 3/4 in.
De la Faille (F) 1495
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren



No. 67. *The Drawbridge*. V. W. van Gogh



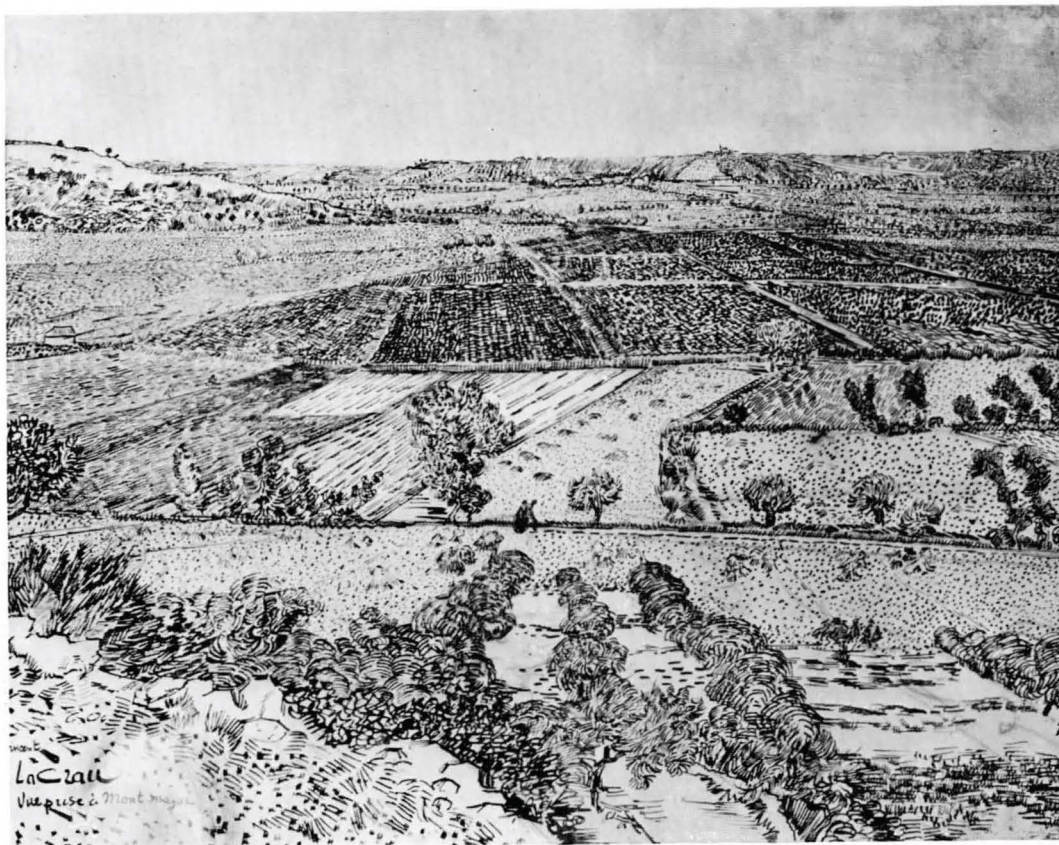
No. 73. *Fishing Boats on the Beach at Saintes-Maries*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 96. *The White Orchard* (drawing). V. W. van Gogh



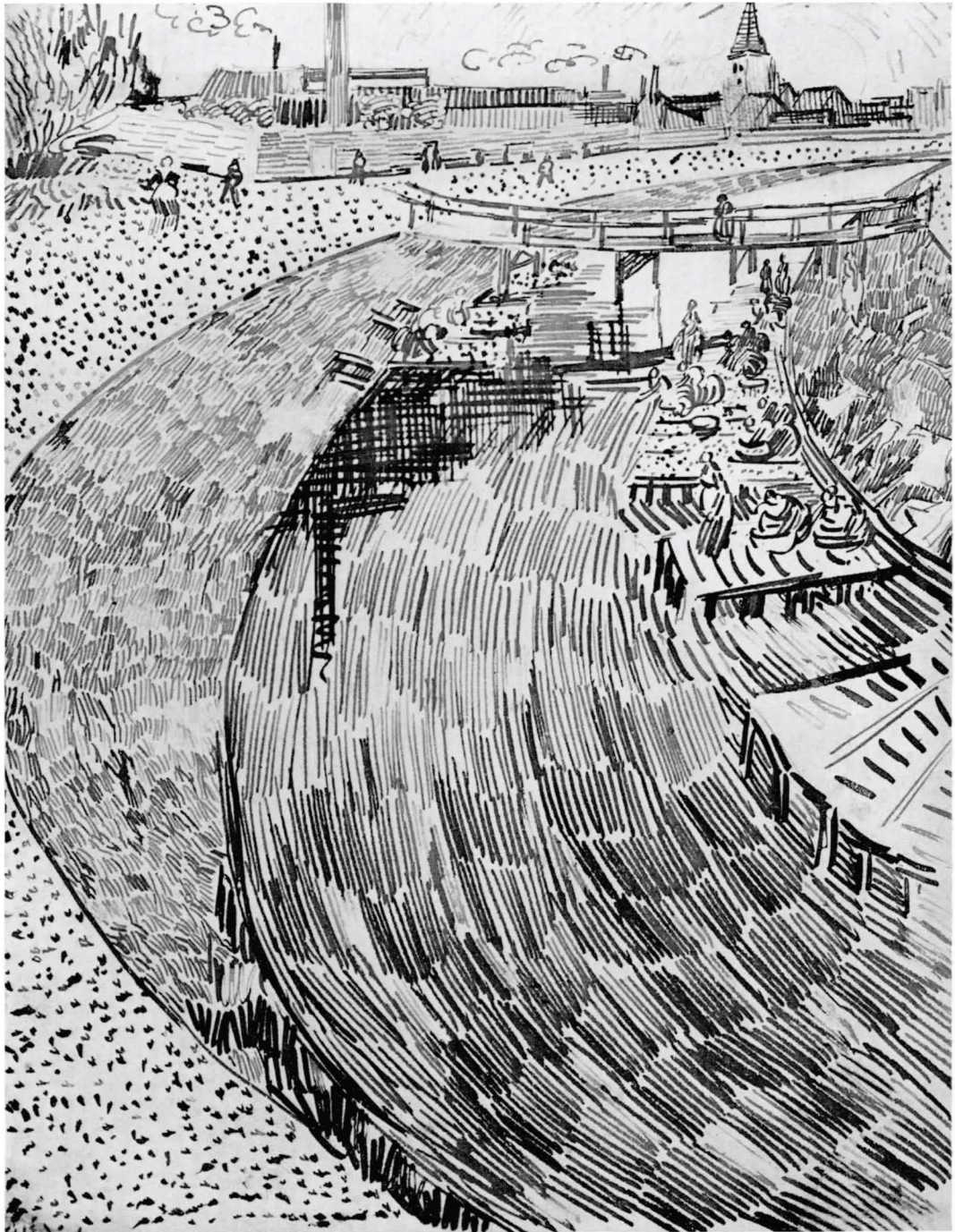
No. 69. *The White Orchard* (painting). V. W. van Gogh



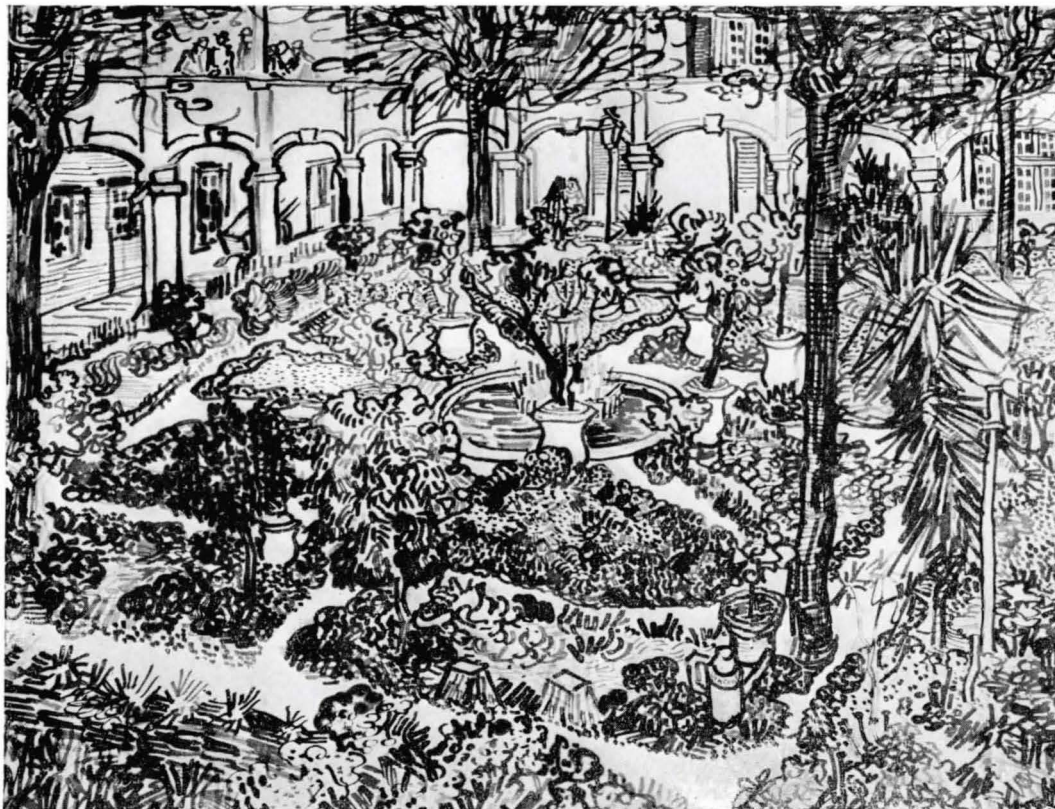
No. 97. A View of La Crau. V. W. van Gogh



No. 99. *The Sower*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 102. *The Washerwomen*. The Kröller-Müller State Museum



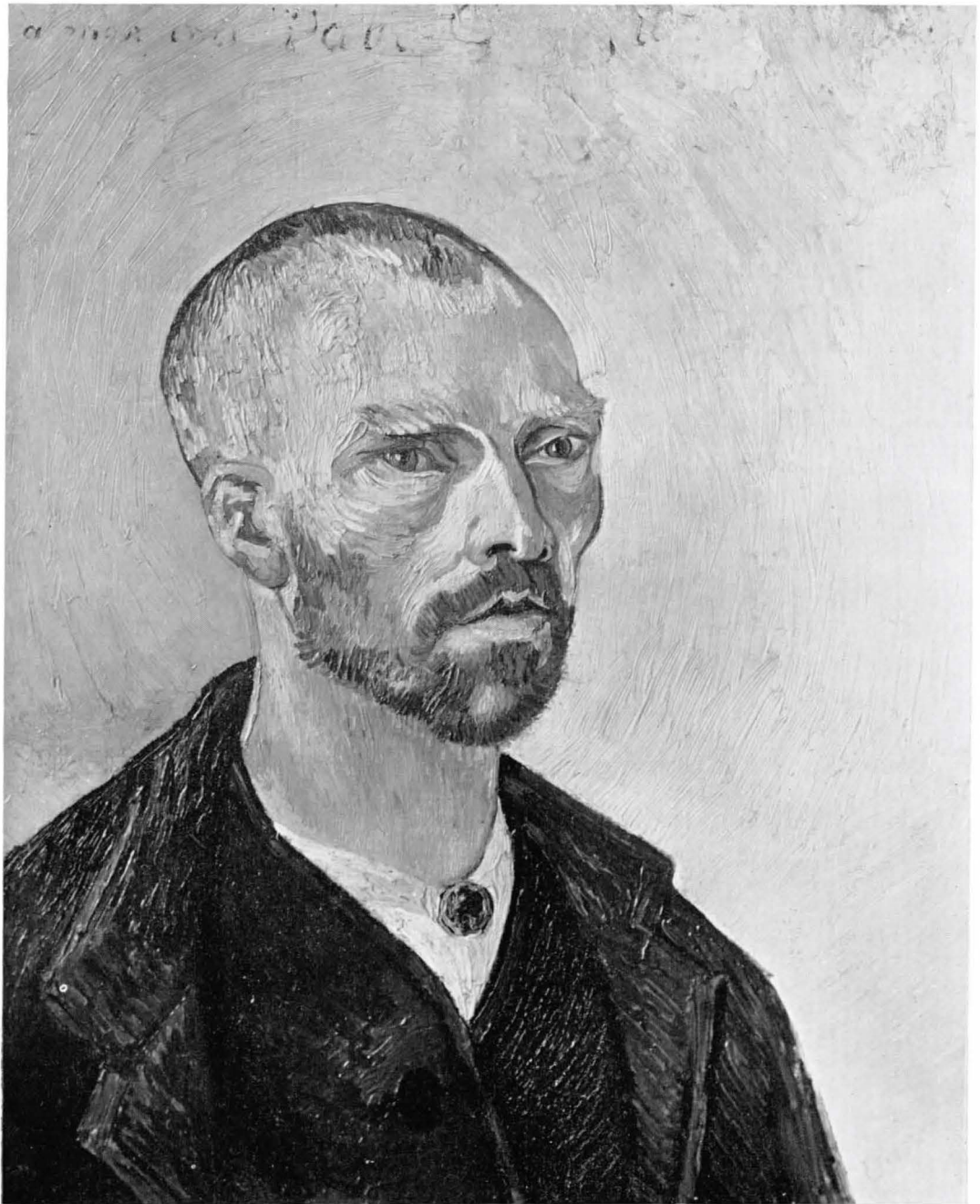
No. 106. *The Garden of the Hospital in Arles.* V. W. van Gogh



No. 80A. *Café de Nuit*. Stephen C. Clark



No. 79. *The Public Gardens in Arles.* The Phillips Memorial Gallery



No. 78A. *Portrait of the Artist. Maurice Wertheim*



No. 81. Portrait of Lieutenant Milliet. The Kröller-Müller State Museum



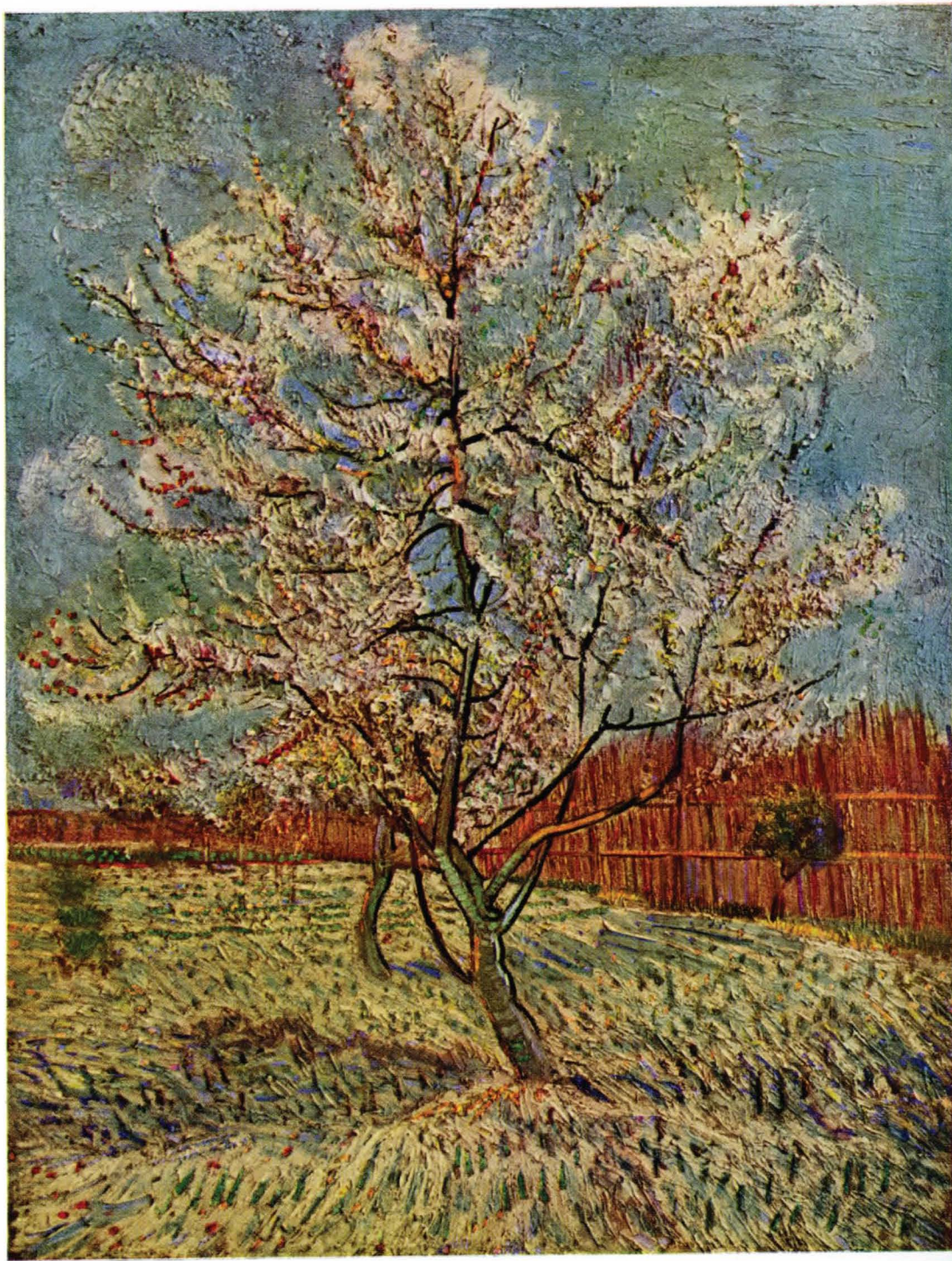
No. 98. *Van Gogh's House in Arles* (drawing). V. W. van Gogh



No. 80. *Van Gogh's House in Arles* (painting). V. W. van Gogh



No. 87. *L'Arlésienne*. Sam A. Lewisohn



No. 70. *An Orchard in Bloom*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 93. *Portrait of the Artist with a Pipe.* Mr. and Mrs. Leigh B. Block



SAINT-RÉMY

After a period of wondering whether he should move to another house in a different part of Arles, go to Brittany to join Gauguin and the group of artists with him at Pont-Aven, or return to Paris, Vincent and his brother decided he needed above all a quiet, well-ordered daily life and that the best place to find this would be the Asylum of Saint Paul near the town of Saint-Rémy, about twenty kilometers from Arles. This institution still exists and is in use to this day. It is located in the remains of a twelfth-century monastery, situated at the foot of a small range of hills, in a fertile plain of wheat fields and olive groves. In the distance, on the horizon, can be seen the ancient city of Avignon and the Alps. An avenue of tall pine trees leads to the entrance, and it is surrounded by a large abandoned park, full of flowers.

In 1889 the buildings were divided into men's and women's wards. The former occupied a long, austere wing made up of a corridor with many small cells looking out on the garden. The inmates were taken care of by nuns and wardens. They were divided into three classes according to the price they paid for their board and lodging: Vincent was in the third class. He had a room to sleep in and another for painting. He did not like the food—there were sometimes cockroaches in it—and, except for the periods which followed his attacks, when he was on a special diet, he took only soup and bread.

The director of the institution was a former naval surgeon, who had chosen this post as an easy one in which to spend his declining years. He treated Vincent kindly, allowing him to paint in the surrounding country and even to make occasional trips to Arles to see his old friends. The superior of the nuns was less lenient, but she was perhaps the only one who admired Vincent's paintings. The other inmates never came into close contact with him. At first he did not mind them, in spite of their screams and moans, which sometimes went on all night. The fact that it was shared by others made him see his own disease in a more normal light. But gradually as he lost hope for his own recovery, he grew afraid of them and became obsessed with the idea that their proximity contributed to his condition.

He spent twelve months at Saint-Rémy, and during this time he had serious attacks at intervals of about two to three months. When he arrived he was in full possession of his senses and himself explained his case to the director, describing what had happened at Arles and telling of what he believed to be hereditary aspects of the disease

in his family. He continued in this state for some time, gradually getting back his health and strength to such an extent that he almost believed himself cured. He obtained permission to go to Arles for a day to attend to the belongings he had left there; and then suddenly, a few days after this, the disease struck again. He lost his mind and suffered from the effects of the attack for several weeks. This was followed by a period of extreme depression and despair; he again picked up but only to succumb again at the moment when he least expected it. This process of recovery followed by a relapse became chronic, so that he lived in fear of the disease and found his only moments of peace and balance in his painting. Many controversial opinions have been written about the illness that afflicted him since the doctor at Saint-Rémy first diagnosed it as epilepsy, but whatever its nature one aspect of it is significant; in between the attacks he became normal again and was able to produce paintings equal in quality to the best he had done before.

After the last attack, which occurred during a trip to Arles, he became obsessed with the desire to leave the asylum and go somewhere in the North where he could be in contact with other artists again. He attributed his religious hallucinations to spending so much time in buildings which had formerly been monasteries (this was also true of the hospital at Arles) and became very strongly opposed to the nuns at Saint-Rémy, who he said encouraged such aberrations instead of trying to cure them. His antipathy to them was increased by their forbidding him to paint outside of the building and he even asked to be removed to a secular asylum, or, if this should be impossible, to be allowed to join the Foreign Legion.

Considering his illness and the fact that he was living in an asylum surrounded by lunatics, Vincent's painting suffered very little during this time. He always kept up his interest in what the other painters were doing in Paris. During the initial period of discouragement he did very little, but gradually as he grew stronger the old fire returned. When he realized that he would perhaps never recover, he worked feverishly, to use his own words, like a miner who knows that his life is always in danger. What most astonished the people at the asylum was the speed with which he painted. His color changed somewhat, from the bright Japanese-like tones to more subdued harmonies dominated in general by ochers. The stylization and use of outline which had begun to appear at Arles, particularly in his portraits, became more emphatic, and he tried consciously to give his drawing the character of early wood engraving. At first his brush strokes continued to be violent and expressive, and he applied his paint in abnormally heavy layers after the manner of Monticelli, whom he continued to admire (see frontispiece), but when he isolated himself completely and remained alone for long periods he painted more thinly (see ill. p. 74).

His choice of subjects reflected his state of mind. At first he painted what he saw around him: the view from his window, the garden, the corridor of the asylum, the portraits of the chief warder and his wife. When he was allowed out, he worked in the street of the village of Saint-Rémy and found many new subjects in the wheat fields, the olive orchards, the cypresses, and the flowers (see color plate and ills. pp. 75, 80,

68 83, 81). Again it is significant that he concentrated on nature as he had always done and showed no interest whatever in the ruins of a Roman triumphal arch and a so-called mausoleum of the Julii near by.

From the time of the first attack in Arles his homesickness and longing for everything that reminded him of his youth and Holland gradually increased. When he was confined to his room because of illness or because bad weather made it impossible to work outside, he often drew from memory scenes from the life of the Brabant peasants (see ill. pp. 78, 79, 85) or made paintings based on earlier drawings. He also copied engravings after Rembrandt, Millet, and Delacroix, producing his own very personal interpretations of their works, for which he improvised the colors, partly from his memory of their general harmonies and partly according to what he felt was most expressive in the subject (see ill. p. 82). These give us a most unusual key to his way of feeling.

Except for one or two short moments of happiness such as that occasioned by his brother's marriage and the birth of his nephew, a deep sadness dominates all this period and is communicated by the paintings. Recognition of his talent began to appear during the early part of the year 1890; but even this did not seem to lift up his spirit. He was invited by a group of Belgian artists who called themselves "the Twenty" to exhibit several paintings in Brussels, among them the *Sunflowers* and the *Orchard in Bloom* (see color plate). When one of these was sold he saw in it no cause for rejoicing. At about the same time Albert Aurier, a young critic, published an article praising his work in a Paris magazine. Even this seemed to leave him almost indifferent. He considered it exaggerated, and with characteristic modesty and loyalty to his fellow artists he wrote to Aurier telling him how much he owed to Monticelli and to his friend Gauguin.

P A I N T I N G S

ALL ARE IN OIL ON CANVAS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

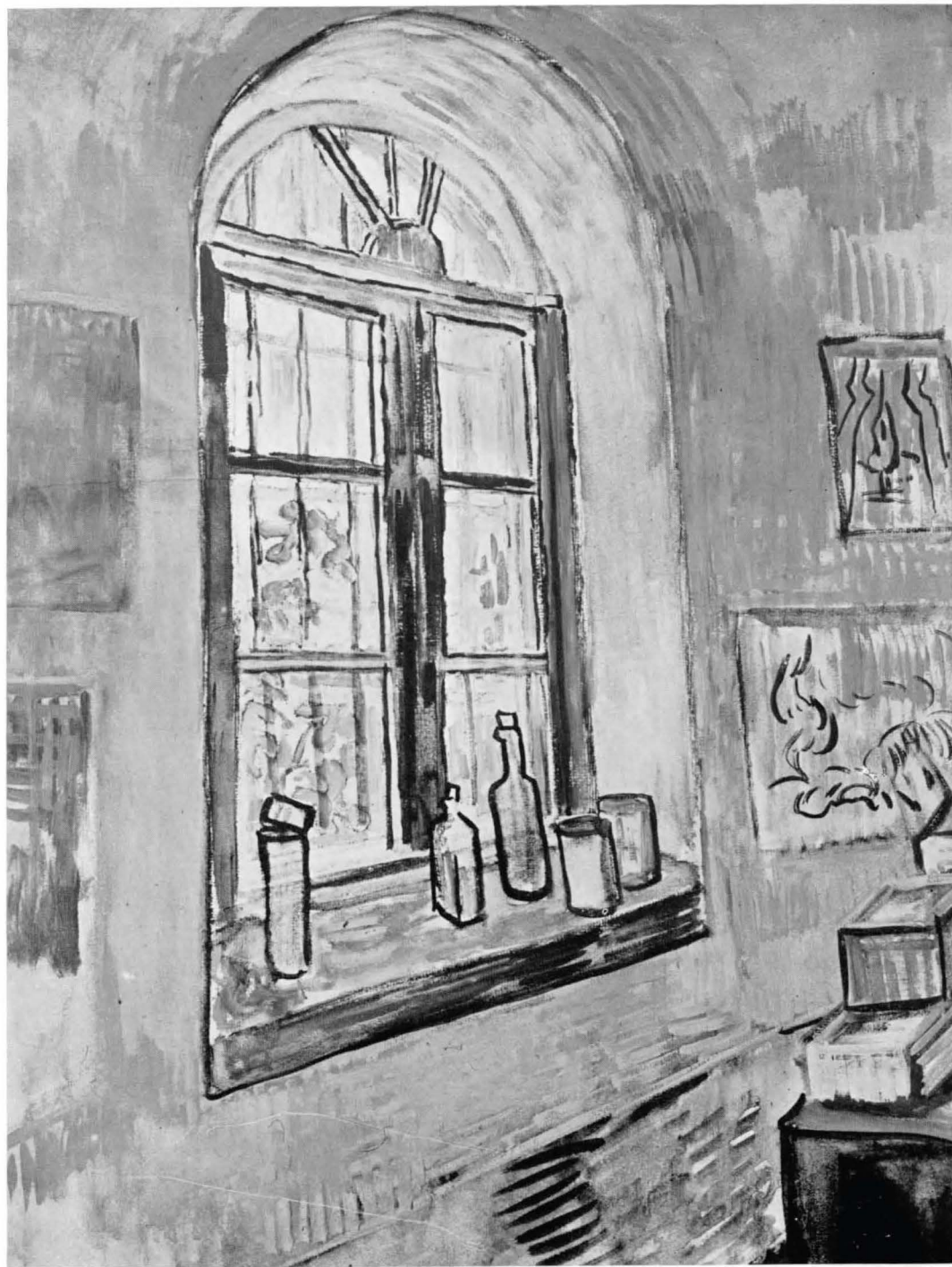
- | | |
|--|--|
| 109. THE ONE-EYED MAN
H. 22, w. 14½ in.
1889. De la Faille (H) 559
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren | May-June 1889. De la Faille (H) 741
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo |
| 110. A LANDSCAPE WITH PLOWED
FIELDS
H. 28, w. 35½ in.
May 1889. De la Faille (H) 739
Lent by Robert Oppenheimer, San Francisco | 111A. THE STARRY NIGHT
H. 28¾, w. 36¼ in.
June 1889. De la Faille (H) 612
Lent by the Museum of Modern Art, New York (acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest) |
| 111. THE HOSPITAL GARDEN AT
SAINT-REMY
H. 37¾, w. 29¾ in. | 112. CYPRESSES
Illustrated in color. H. 36¾, w. 29¾ in.
June 1889. De la Faille (H) 616
Lent by the Metropolitan Museum of Art |

113. CYPRESSES WITH TWO FIGURES
Illustrated p. 83. H. 16½, w. 10¼ in.
June 1889. De la Faille (H) 618
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
114. THE WOODCUTTER (after Millet)
H. 17½, w. 9½ in.
August-November 1889. De la Faille (H) 689
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
115. SHEEPSHEARERS (after Millet)
H. 16½, w. 11½ in.
August-November 1889. De la Faille (H) 646
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
116. THE SHEAF-BINDER (after Millet)
H. 17¼, w. 12½ in.
August-November 1889. De la Faille (H) 681
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
117. VAN GOGH'S BEDROOM IN ARLES
Illustrated p. 73. H. 28%, w. 35% in.
September 1889. De la Faille (H) 627
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
118. PIETA (after Delacroix)
Illustrated p. 82. H. 28%, w. 23¼ in.
September 1889. De la Faille (H) 625
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
119. PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST
Illustrated p. 72. H. 22%, w. 17% in.
September 1889. De la Faille (H) 624
Lent by John Hay Whitney, New York
120. AN OLIVE ORCHARD
Illustrated p. 75. H. 28, w. 35% in.
September-October 1889. De la Faille (H) 708
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
121. A STUDY OF FIR TREES
H. 16%, w. 19% in.
October-November 1889. De la Faille (H) 744
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
122. FIR WOODS IN THE EVENING
H. 35%, w. 28 in.
October-November 1889. De la Faille (H) 573
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
123. THE ROAD-MENDERS
Illustrated p. 74. H. 29%, w. 36% in.
November 1889. De la Faille (H) 667
Lent by the Cleveland Museum of Art
124. THE ENCLOSED FIELD
H. 28, w. 35% in.
November 1889. De la Faille (H) 662
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
125. THE RAVINE
H. 28¾, w. 36¼ in.
December 1889. De la Faille (H) 670
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
126. A MEADOW IN THE MOUNTAINS
H. 28%, w. 35% in.
December 1889. De la Faille (H) 730
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
127. THE FIRST STEPS (after Millet)
H. 28%, w. 36¼ in.
January-February 1890. De la Faille (H) 685
Lent anonymously
128. THE PLOW (after a drawing by Millet)
Illustrated p. 77. H. 28%, w. 36% in.
January-February 1890. De la Faille (H) 686
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
129. A WINTER LANDSCAPE
H. 11%, w. 14% in.
April 1890. De la Faille (H) 693
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
130. ON THE THRESHOLD OF ETERNITY
Illustrated p. 79. H. 31½, w. 25¼ in.
May 1890. De la Faille (H) 719
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo

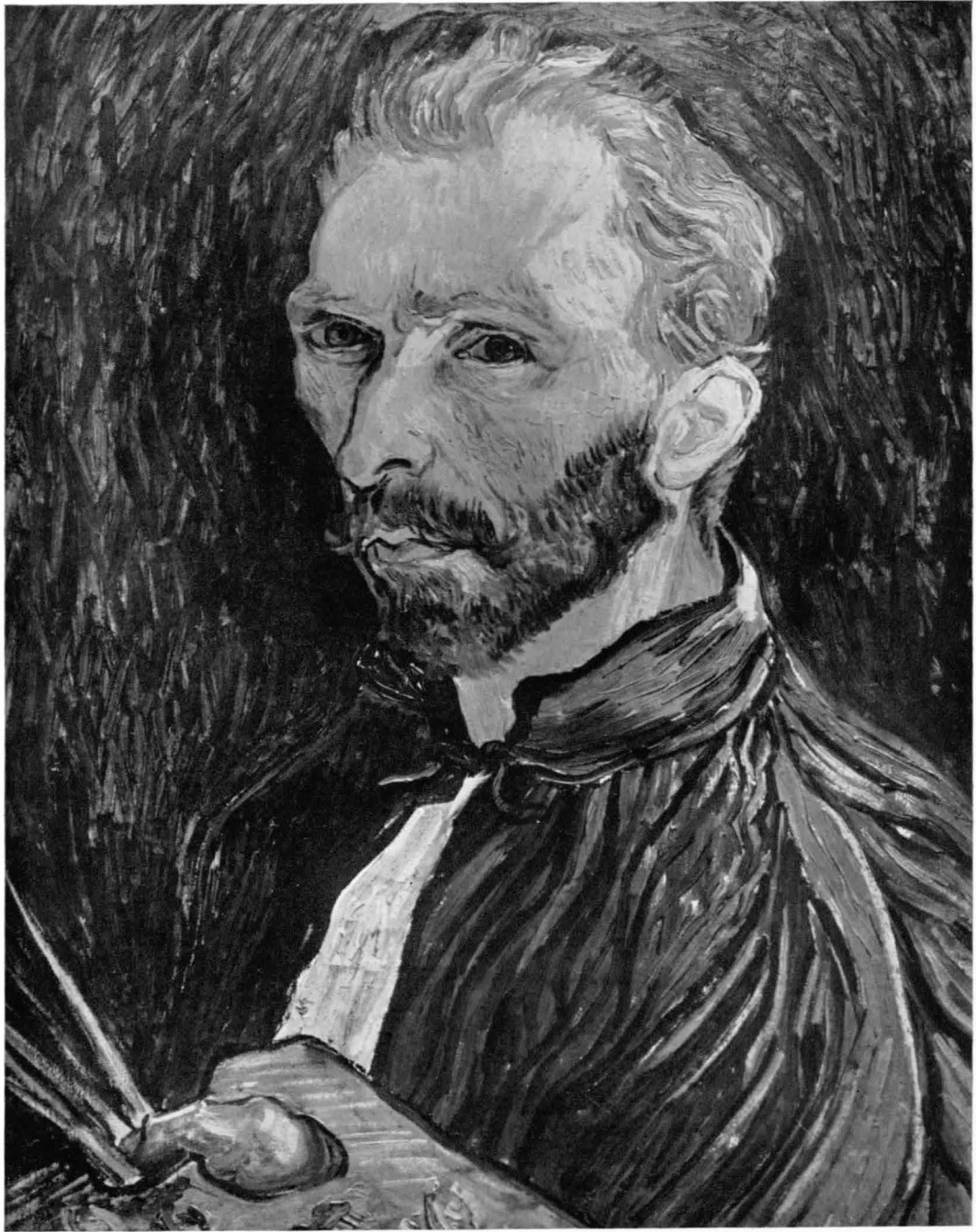
131. A ROAD WITH CYPRESSES
H. 35 $\frac{3}{4}$, w. 28 in.
May 1890. De la Faille (H) 695
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
132. IRISES
Illustrated p. 81. H. 36 $\frac{3}{4}$, w. 29 in.
May 1890. De la Faille (H) 700
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
133. TREE TRUNKS
H. 28 $\frac{3}{4}$, w. 35 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
May 1890. De la Faille (H) 697
Lent by the Kröller-Müller State Museum, Otterlo
134. THE RESURRECTION OF
LAZARUS (after Rembrandt)
Illustrated p. 76. H. 19 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
May 1890. De la Faille (H) 699
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren

D R A W I N G S

135. A PEACOCK MOTH
Black crayon and ink; h. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
May 1889. De la Faille (F) 1523
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
136. CYPRESSES
Illustrated p. 80. Reed pen and ink on paper; h. 24 $\frac{3}{4}$, w. 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
June 1889. De la Faille (F) 1525
Lent by the Brooklyn Museum
137. THE FOUNTAIN IN THE
HOSPITAL GARDEN
Illustrated p. 84. Pen and ink on paper; h. 18 $\frac{3}{4}$, w. 17 $\frac{11}{16}$ in.
De la Faille (F) 1531
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
138. A PARK
Water color on paper; h. 17 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
De la Faille (F) 1533
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
139. A CYPRESS AND A FLOWERING
TREE
Pen and ink and pencil; h. 18 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.
De la Faille (F) 1538
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
140. A PATH IN THE PINES
Black crayon on paper; h. 7 $\frac{3}{4}$, w. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
De la Faille (F) 1582
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
141. THE GIG
Black crayon on paper; h. 11, w. 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
De la Faille (F) 1587
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
142. PEASANTS AT DINNER
Illustrated p. 85. Charcoal and pencil on paper; h. 13 $\frac{3}{4}$, w. 19 $\frac{11}{16}$ in.
De la Faille (F) 1588
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
143. A WINTER LANDSCAPE WITH
FIGURES
Pencil on paper; h. 9 $\frac{1}{16}$, w. 12 $\frac{3}{16}$ in.
De la Faille (F) 1592
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
144. A LANDSCAPE AT SAINT-REMY
Black crayon on paper; h. 12 $\frac{3}{4}$, w. 9 $\frac{7}{16}$ in.
De la Faille (F) 1593
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
145. A WINDOW OF THE HOSPITAL
AT SAINT-REMY
Illustrated p. 71. Water color, oil, and charcoal on paper; h. 24, w. 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
De la Faille (F) 1528
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
146. FLOWERING STEMS
Pen and ink on paper; h. 16 $\frac{1}{2}$, w. 12 $\frac{3}{16}$ in.
De la Faille (F) 1612
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
147. A GARDEN WITH A STONE
BENCH
Reed pen and ink; h. 24 $\frac{3}{4}$, w. 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.
May 1889. De la Faille (F) 1522
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren



No. 145. *A Window of the Hospital at Saint-Rémy.* V. W. van Gogh



No. 119. *Portrait of the Artist. John Hay Whitney*



No. 117. *Van Gogh's Bedroom in Arles.* V. W. van Gogh



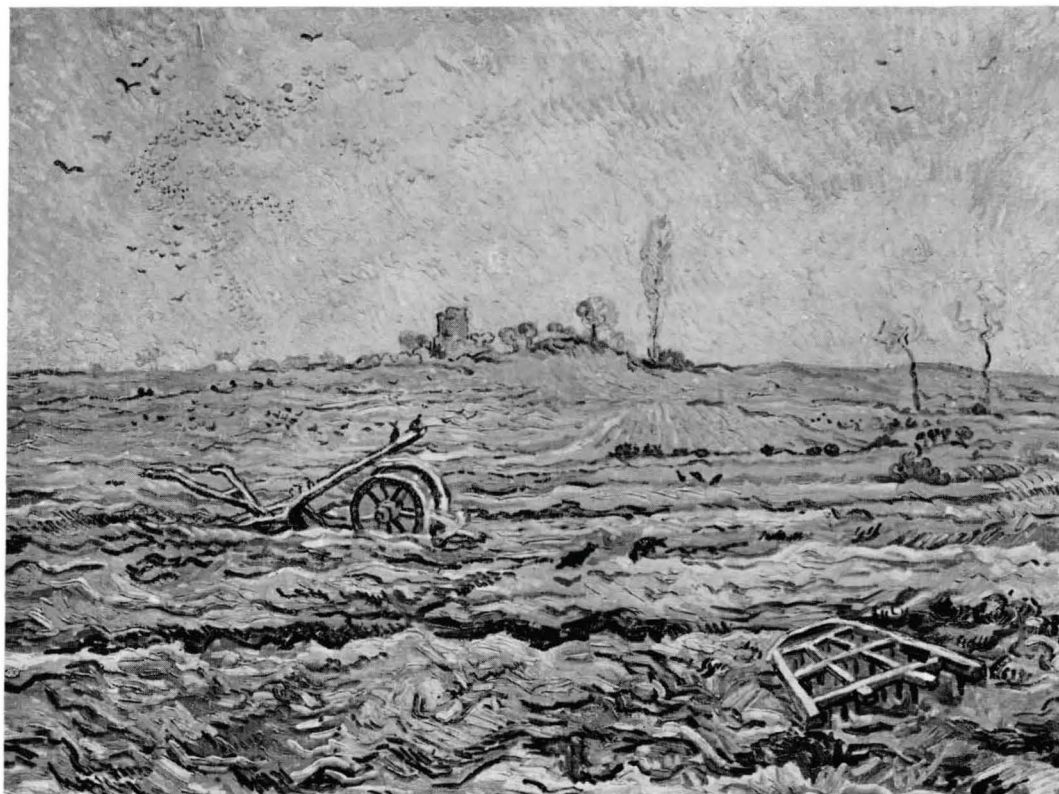
No. 123. *The Road-Menders*. The Cleveland Museum of Art



No. 120. *An Olive Orchard*. The Kröller-Müller State Museum



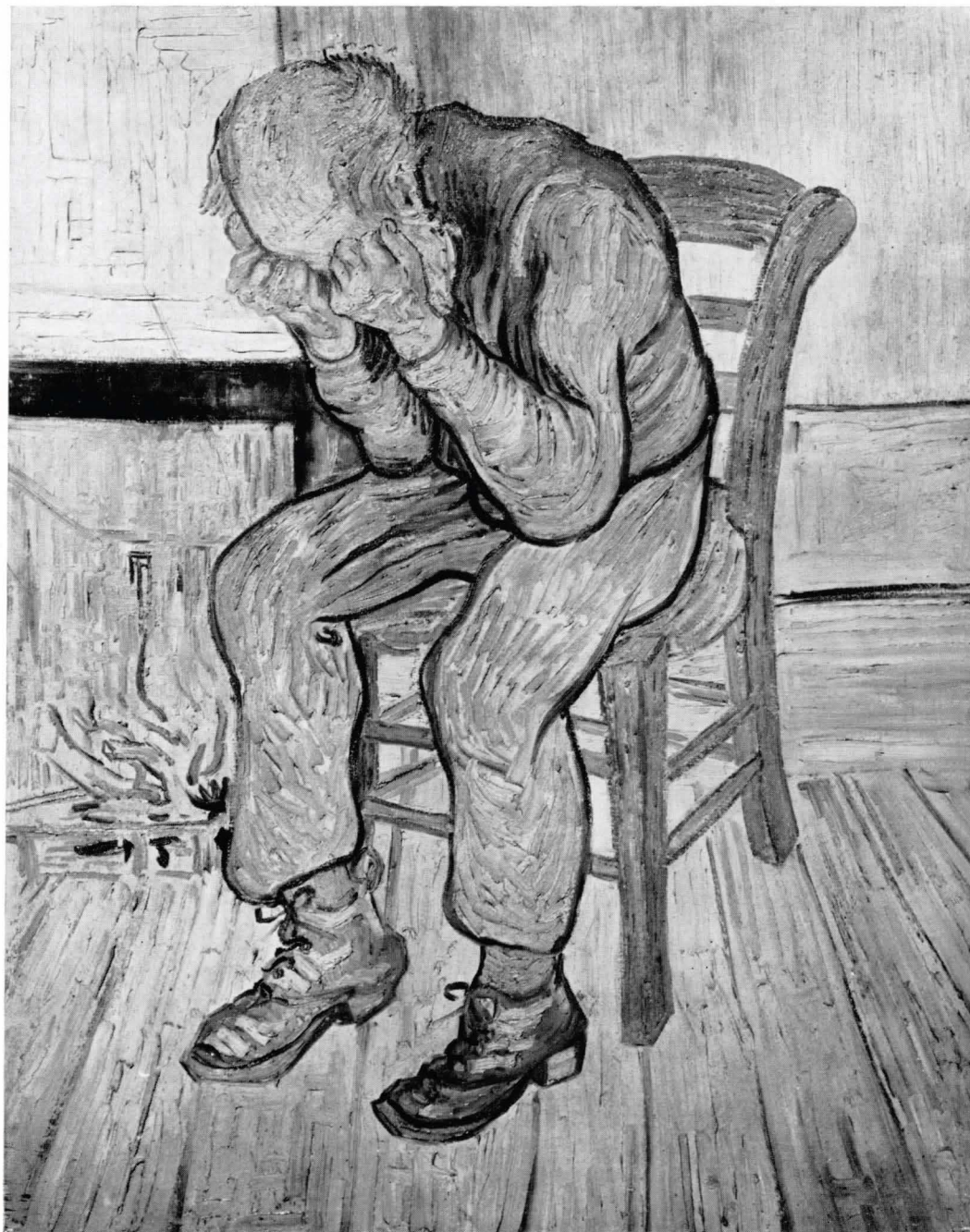
No. 134. *The Resurrection of Lazarus* (after Rembrandt). V. W. van Gogh



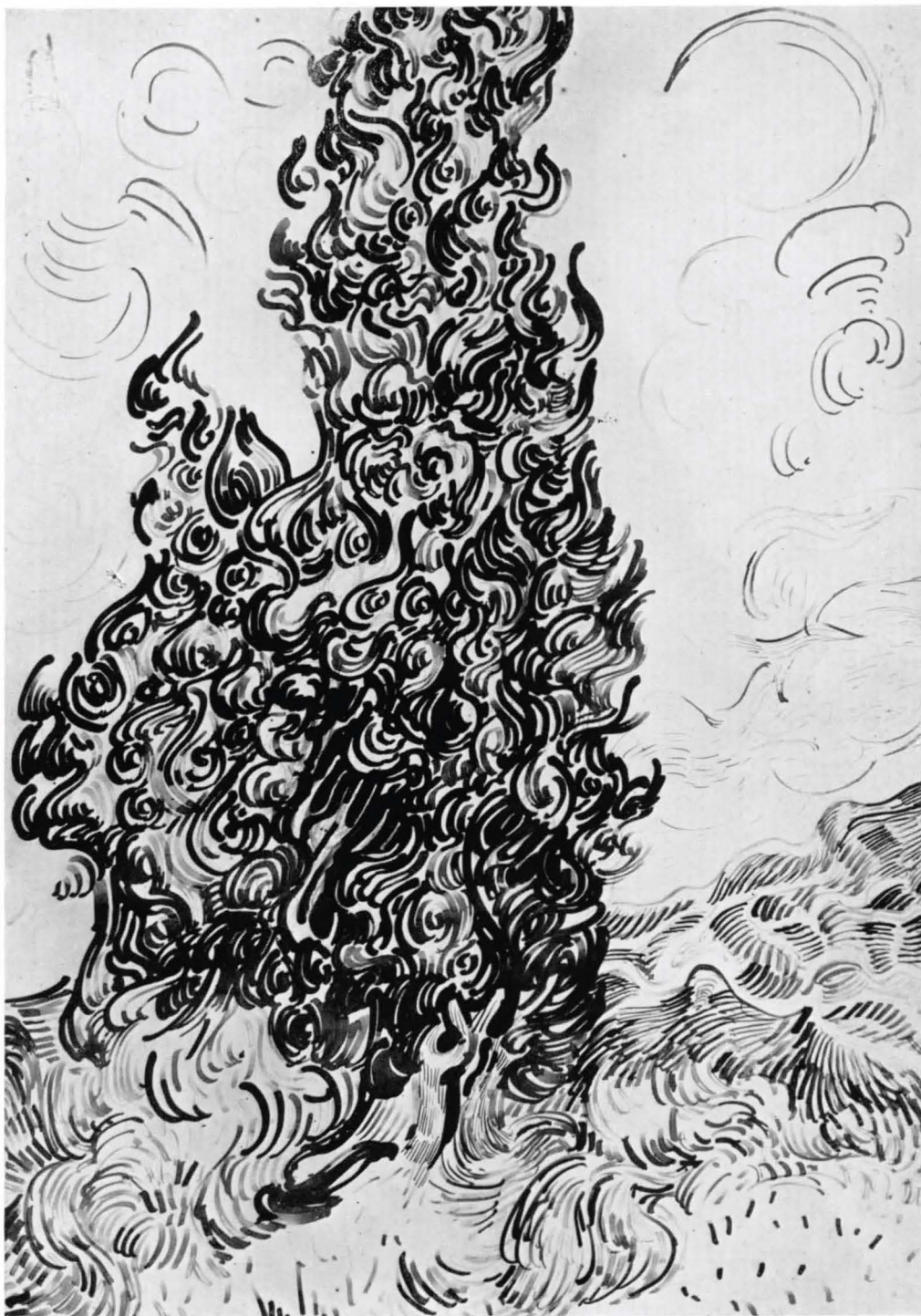
No. 128. *The Plow* (after Millet). V. W. van Gogh



No. 24. *On the Threshold of Eternity* (drawing). V. W. van Gogh



No. 130. *On the Threshold of Eternity* (painting). The Kröller-Müller State Museum



No. 136. *Cypresses*. The Brooklyn Museum



No. 112. *Cypresses*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art



No. 132. *Irises*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 118. *Pietà* (after Delacroix). V. W. van Gogh



No. 113. *Cypresses with Two Figures*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 137. *The Fountain in the Hospital Garden.* V. W. van Gogh



No. 142. *Peasants at Dinner*. V. W. van Gogh



AUVERS

Meanwhile his brother, on the advice of Pissarro, had arranged for him to go to Auvers, a village in the northern suburbs of Paris, where a certain Dr. Gachet, who had been a friend of Cézanne and the Impressionists, would take care of him. Vincent arrived in Paris on the morning of Sunday the seventeenth of May, 1890. His brother fetched him at the station and took him straight to his apartment near the Place Pigalle in Montmartre. There for the first time he met his sister-in-law and saw the baby, who had been named after him. He stayed with them three days, during which he spent most of his time studying the paintings that had accumulated during his absence. The apartment was full of them, hanging on the walls—*The Potato-Eaters* in the dining room, *The Orchard in Bloom* in the bedroom, and others in the closets, under the bed, in every available space. Vincent would spread them out on the floor and contemplate them for hours. For him it was like reading back through the story of his life as an artist.

His brother's home had again become a meeting place for the young artists whose work he tried to sell. He had only recently organized a show for Pissarro. Many of his friends came to see Vincent, who once more found himself in the circle of painters he had known two years before. But the excitement quickly tired him, and, driven by the desire to begin working again, he left Paris for Auvers.

On arriving, Vincent took a room in a small inn located not far from the Town Hall, which he was to paint, decorated for the national holiday (see ill. p. 95). Dr. Gachet met him and they quickly became friends. Vincent wrote to his brother that he knew at once that the doctor and he suffered from the same complaint. Gachet was in the employ of a French railroad company. He had a clinic in Paris, where he worked several days a week. The rest of the time he spent in Auvers, at his favorite pastime, painting, for he was an amateur painter and engraver of some standing, signing his works P. van Ryssel. He exhibited at the Salon des Independants, and had many friends among the new school of painters. Cézanne, Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley, Guillaumin all came to visit him, and he bought their pictures to decorate his house. He had even known men whom Vincent had always admired such as Corot, Daumier, and Monticelli.

He encouraged Vincent greatly in his work, frequently coming to see him and discussing his problems. They made etchings and printed them together on his press.

Vincent painted still lives in the house and did portraits of the doctor and his daughter. He was conscious of a new confidence gained in the South, and his new surroundings appealed to him both by contrast and because they reminded him somewhat of Holland: the little village with its thatched cottages nestling in the valley of the Oise, the charming river, the wooded hills, the gardens, the wheat fields, and the vineyards. Theo visited him with his family, and they spent a happy day together, Vincent playing with the baby and taking long walks in the country with them.

His work at Auvers confirmed and accentuated the tendencies which had appeared at Saint-Rémy. The drawing continued to be broad and simple, the outlines in exaggerated curves like early woodcuts. His brush stroke grew even more vital and confident, playing a more important role in the definition of form. It acquired more personality, was larger in scale, and thus became even more expressive than before. In a sense it had an abstract life of its own. The color harmonies grew cooler under the influence of the northern landscape. In addition to the old contrasts of complementaries he now sought combinations of vibrating blues and greens. His subjects remained the same, the fields stretching out before him and views of the peasant houses among the trees. He also made close-up studies of plants—wheat sheaves, tree roots, flowers—and used them as backgrounds for his portraits. On the whole his painting became more definitely stylized. Everything in his canvases seems to be moving, living; the views of the fields seem to be swelling like great waves (see *ills.* p. 93), and his plant studies have a jungle-like feeling of constant growth. In most of the pictures the mood is sad, as in the portrait of Gachet, where he wanted to paint a “heartbreaking expression.”

Trouble began again shortly after his family's visit. The baby became seriously ill, and at the same time his brother again considered the possibility of breaking with the firm of Goupil and starting a business of his own. This would have meant a reduced income for him and consequently also for Vincent. Vincent went to Paris to discuss it, but the visit was an unhappy one because his brother and his wife were distraught about the baby and he himself badly affected by the general excitement. On that day Toulouse-Lautrec lunched with him, and Guillaumain was expected later. But in spite of Vincent's desire to see the latter, he left hurriedly for the country, fearing the consequences of the nervous state he already was in. From that time his state of mind became more and more depressed; he had violent outbreaks of temper and caused scenes for trivial reasons at the Gachets. Afterwards he would go off and wander alone across the fields, talking to himself. His painting reflected this, becoming more violent and gloomy, as in the extraordinary and almost prophetic *Crows over the Wheat Fields* (*ill.* p. 93), which was his last work.

Finally he gave up the struggle, overcome by his sense of guilt at being a perpetual financial burden to his brother, by the loneliness which he had tried all his life to escape and to which his illness now condemned him, and by the fear of the attacks which he now knew would return to strike him down again and again. On the twenty-seventh of July, 1890, at the age of thirty-seven, he went out to a lonely field behind

88 the Manor of Auvers and shot himself. The wound was not fatal, and so he returned to his room in the inn and lay on his bed, face to the wall, awaiting death. He was found there by the innkeeper, who called Gachet. The doctor examined him and, finding that the bullet could not be removed, administered first aid and decided to await developments. He asked Vincent for his brother's address but got no answer. Vincent asked only if he might have his pipe and on being given it, smoked in silence. When Theo was reached and arrived the next morning he said: "I did it for the good of all." During the day he talked about his misery, his loneliness, asked often for Theo's wife and baby, but was indifferent to any hope of recovery. He died early in the morning of the twenty-ninth. His last words were: "I wish I could die now."

A few friends came to his funeral. He was buried in the little cemetery of Auvers on the hill above the village, near the wheat fields, the woods, and the flowers which he had always loved.

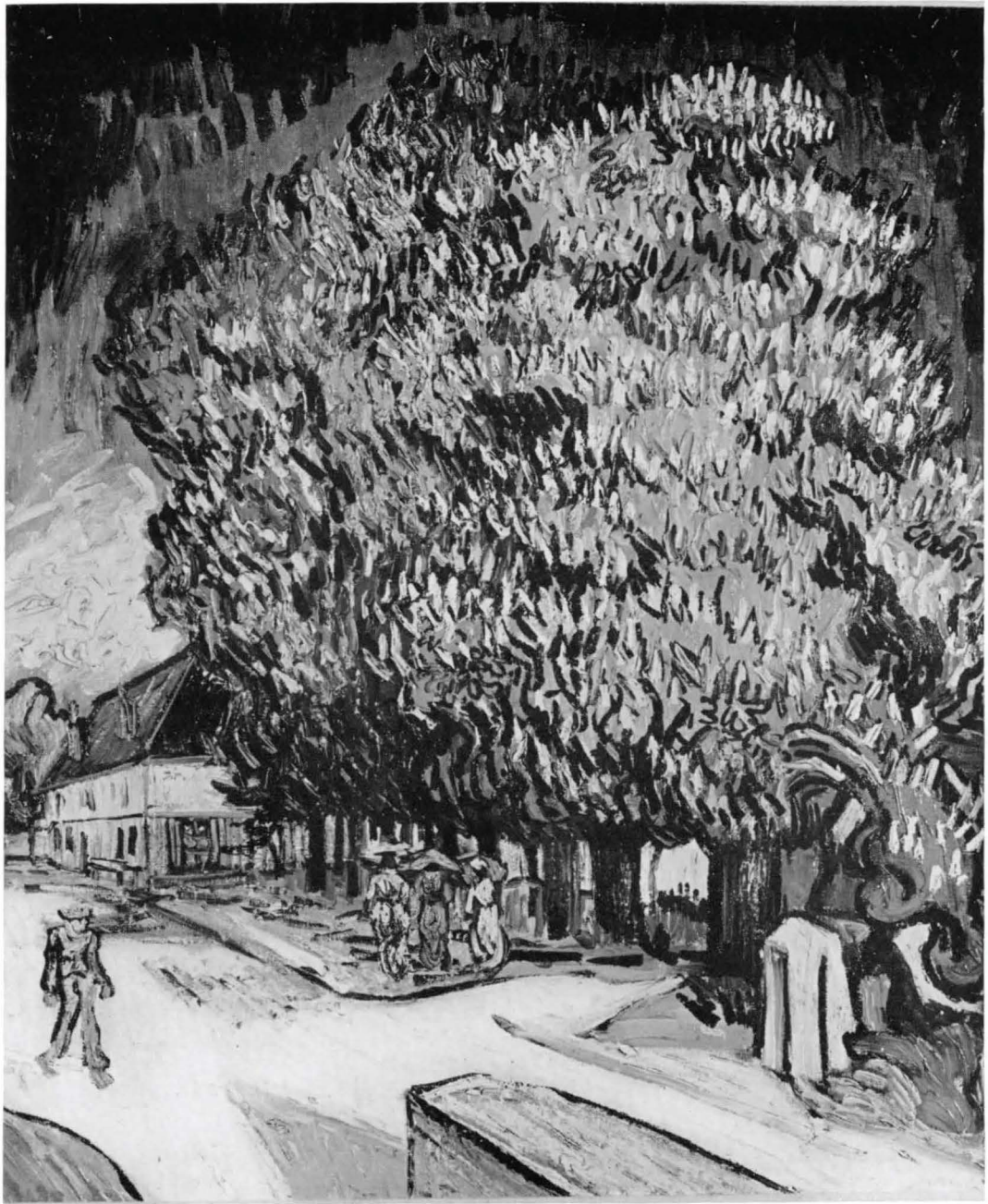
The shock of his death was too much for Theo. His mind was affected, and six months later he died insane, in Holland. His body was brought to France, and he was buried next to his brother.

P A I N T I N G S

ALL ARE IN OIL ON CANVAS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>148. CHESTNUT TREES IN FLOWER
 Illustrated p. 90. H. 27½, w. 22¾ in.
 May 1890. De la Faille (H) 749
 Lent by Mr. and Mrs. George Gard
 DeSylva, through the Los Angeles
 County Museum</p> | <p>June 1890. De la Faille (H) 783
 Lent by the City Art Museum, St. Louis</p> |
| <p>149. UNDERGROWTH
 H. 19%, w. 39% in.
 June 1890. De la Faille (H) 764
 Lent anonymously</p> | <p>151. THE TOWN HALL OF AUVERS ON
 THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY
 Illustrated p. 95. H. 28%, w. 36% in.
 July 1890. De la Faille (H) pl. xvi
 Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Leigh B. Block,
 Chicago</p> |
| <p>149A. PORTRAIT OF DOCTOR
 GACHET
 Illustrated p. 91. H. 26, w. 22% in.
 June 1890. De la Faille (H) 752
 Lent by Siegfried Kramarsky, New
 York</p> | <p>152. A FIELD UNDER A STORMY SKY
 Illustrated p. 93. H. 19%, w. 39% in.
 July 1890. De la Faille (H) 806
 Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> |
| <p>150. THE AUVERS STAIRS
 Illustrated p. 92. H. 18%, w. 27½ in.</p> | <p>153. CROWS OVER THE WHEAT
 FIELDS
 Illustrated p. 93. H. 19%, w. 39½ in.
 July 1890. De la Faille (H) 809
 Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren</p> |

154. PICKING PEAS
Reed pen and ink; h. 10 7/16, w. 13 9/16 in.
May-July 1890. De la Faille (F) 1090
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
155. WHEAT SHEAVES
Black crayon and ink on paper; h. 18½, w. 24 13/16 in.
May-July 1890. De la Faille (F) 1641
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
156. HOUSES AT AUVERS
Illustrated p. 96. Gouache and charcoal on paper; h. 17¾, w. 21 7/16 in.
- May-July 1890. De la Faille (F) 1640
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
157. THE TOWN HALL OF AUVERS ON THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY
Illustrated p. 94. Black crayon on paper; h. 9 7/16, w. 12 3/16 in.
July 1890. De la Faille (F) 1630
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren
158. BACK YARDS
Charcoal, water color, and oil on paper; h. 17¾, w. 21¼ in.
May-July 1890. De la Faille (F) 1624
Lent by V. W. van Gogh, Laren



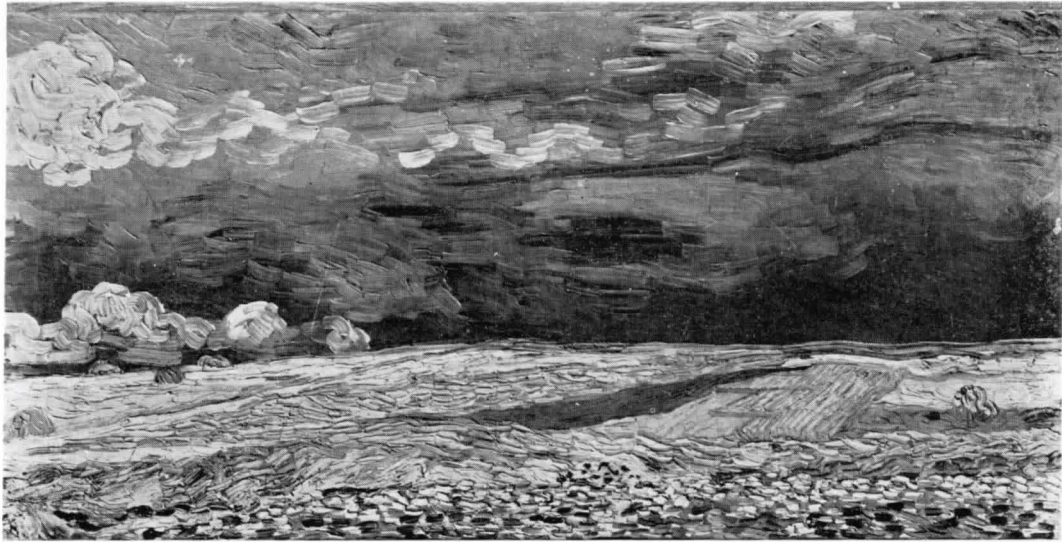
No. 148. Chestnut Trees in Flower. Mr. and Mrs. George Gard DeSylva



No. 149A. Portrait of Doctor Gachet. Siegfried Kramarsky



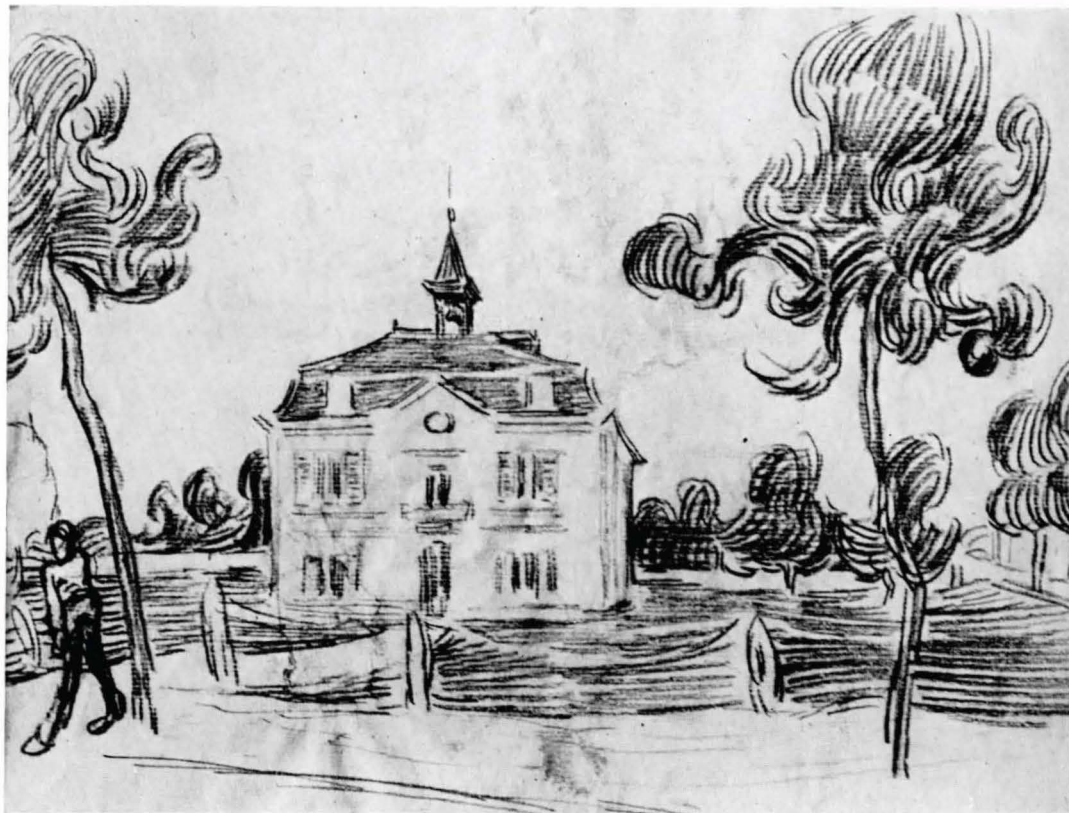
No. 150. The Auvers Stairs. The City Art Museum, St. Louis



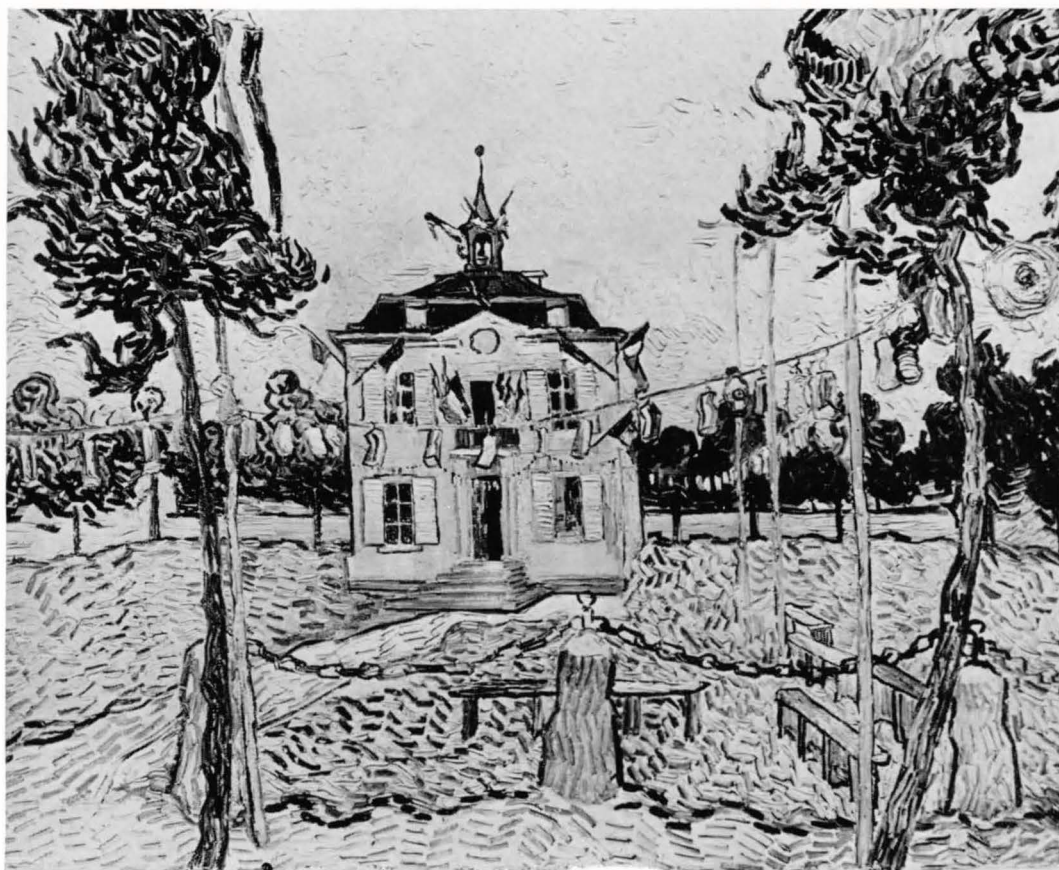
No. 152. *A Field Under a Stormy Sky*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 153. *Crows Over the Wheat Fields*. V. W. van Gogh



No. 157. *The Town Hall of Auvers on the Fourteenth of July* (drawing). V. W. van Gogh



No. 151. The Town Hall of Auvers on the Fourteenth of July. Mr. and Mrs. Leigh B. Block



No. 156. *Houses at Auvers*. V. W. van Gogh