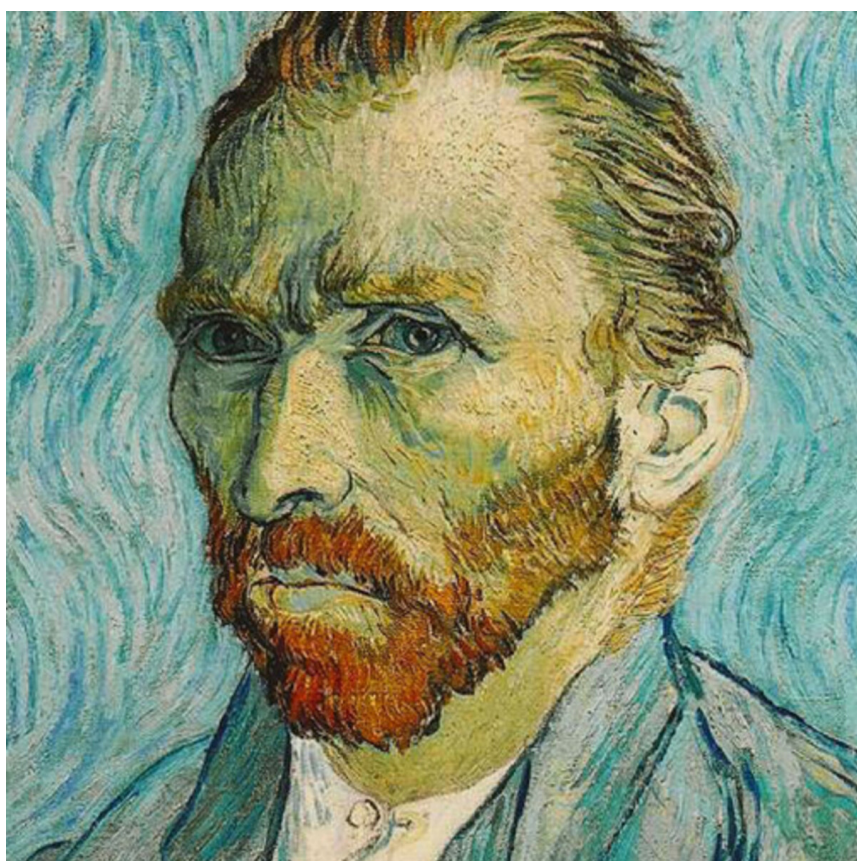


OPEN STUDIO ANYWHERE



The Art of Vincent Van Gogh



Use this kit to learn about Vincent Van Gogh, his story, and his artwork. Inside you'll find prompts, projects, and more to help you create your own art!

To learn more about Artists Creating Together, visit our website at artistscreatingtogether.org

Who is Vincent Van Gogh?

Vincent Van Gogh was born in 1853 and died in 1890. Known for his use of color and unique brushstrokes, he is considered one of the most famous artists in the history of Western art.

Click to watch a video about Starry Night!



You may have seen one of his most famous artworks, "Starry Night".

Van Gogh lived in Europe his whole life. He was born in the Netherlands, then lived in France!

Van Gogh was primarily a self-taught artist, attending art school for only a short time. He was inspired by the Impressionist and Neo-Impressionist artists whose work he saw in Paris, as well as by Japanese ukiyo-e prints.

Throughout his life he struggled with both physical illness and mental health. After his death his work began to become more popular as artists discovered and became inspired by it.



A Look at Art Movements

To understand Van Gogh's work better, let's take a closer look at what inspired him!

Impressionism

- Developed in France in the 1800s
- Based on the practice of painting outdoors and 'on the spot', rather than from sketches
- Subjects were landscapes and scenes of everyday life
- Known for short brushstrokes and emphasis on light and shadow



Claude Monet's painting "Water-Lilies"

Neo-Impressionism

- Developed as a response to Impressionism
- Inspired by the short brushstrokes of the Impressionists, they added a scientific component to their paintings
- Instead of mixing colors on the canvas, they placed small dots of color next to each other, hoping that the color would mix in the viewer's eye
- This painting is made up of tiny dots, but our eyes see it as solid color!



Georges Seurat's painting "A Sunday on La Grande Jatte"

Japanese ukiyo-e Prints

- Meaning "Pictures of the Floating World,"
- A style of Japanese woodblock print and painting from the Edo period
- The Edo or Tokugawa period is the period between 1603 and 1868

Katsushika Hokusai's print "The Great Wave off the Coast of Kanagawa"



Focus on Brush strokes

What do we mean when we talk about brush strokes?

Brush strokes refer to the size and shape of the mark left by your paintbrush! When we talk about Van Gogh's artwork, they matter because of how unique they were at the time. Let's take a closer look.



✧ Your Turn:

What do you notice about the paint in this picture?

Is it smooth, or can you see big clumps?

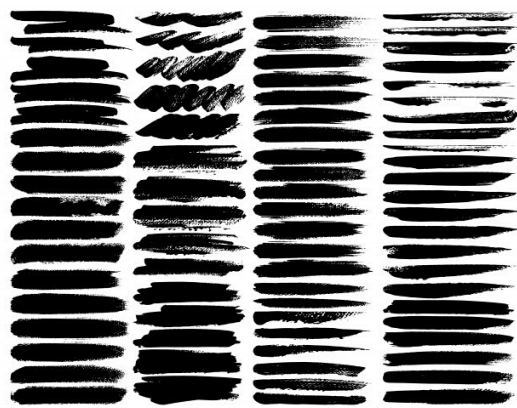
The paint looks wet, like Van Gogh just stepped away from his painting a minute ago!

Van Gogh's brush strokes here are big, bold, and expressive! You can see exactly how he moved his hand and his brush, pushing paint across his canvas.

✧ Brush Stroke Project:

Grab a piece of paper, a paintbrush, and one color of paint. If you don't have paint don't worry - you can do this with a marker too!

Try to make as many different types of marks as possible. This will get you used to using your brush in different ways! Here are some ideas.



En Plein Air

Something very important to Van Gogh was nature. He saw life and art as connected to the world around him. He often liked to paint outside, preferring to paint things how he saw them, rather than from a picture.

He believed that an artist had to truly know and understand nature. The best way to achieve that was by living and working in the middle of it!

That phrase right over there is French! It means "outdoors".
Pronounce it: ahn - plen - air



Here is a sketch of a birds nest Van Gogh did in 1885. He found the nest on a walk!



Your Turn:

Head outside and find something in nature that you want to sketch. It could be a bird nest like Van Gogh, or a flower, a tree, anything!

All you need is a pencil and paper. It doesn't have to be anything fancy - Van Gogh drew this sketch in the middle of a letter he was writing!





Sketch it Out

If you head outside, take this page with you to sketch on!



Don't worry if you have to head back inside or take a break, even Van Gogh had some struggles with the great outdoors...

"I must have picked a good hundred flies and more off the 4 canvases that you'll be getting, not to mention dust and sand — not to mention that, when one carries them across the heath and through hedgerows for a few hours, the odd branch or two scrapes across them."

-Van Gogh, 1885





Let's Get Started

We know who inspired Van Gogh, we've practiced using our brush like Van Gogh did, and now we understand more about his connection to nature. Let's make some art!

1

Gather Your Supplies:

- Paper
- Pencil
- Paint
- Paintbrush
- Cup of Water (for rinsing your brush!)
- A clipboard, easel, or book. Anything that is hard to put your paper on!



If you don't have these, don't worry! You can use markers, crayons, or anything else!

2

Head Outside! (or find yourself an awesome window!)

Start by using your sense to observe everything around you.

- What plants do you see?
- What flowers do you smell?
- What animals do you hear?

Don't worry if your view seems unexciting, when Van Gogh was in the hospital, he was only allowed out into their small garden, which he painted over and over again. He found beauty no matter his surroundings - so let's do the same!

"But what a beautiful land and what beautiful blue and what a sun. And yet I've only seen the garden and what I can make out through the window."

- Van Gogh, 1889





Sketching and Painting

3

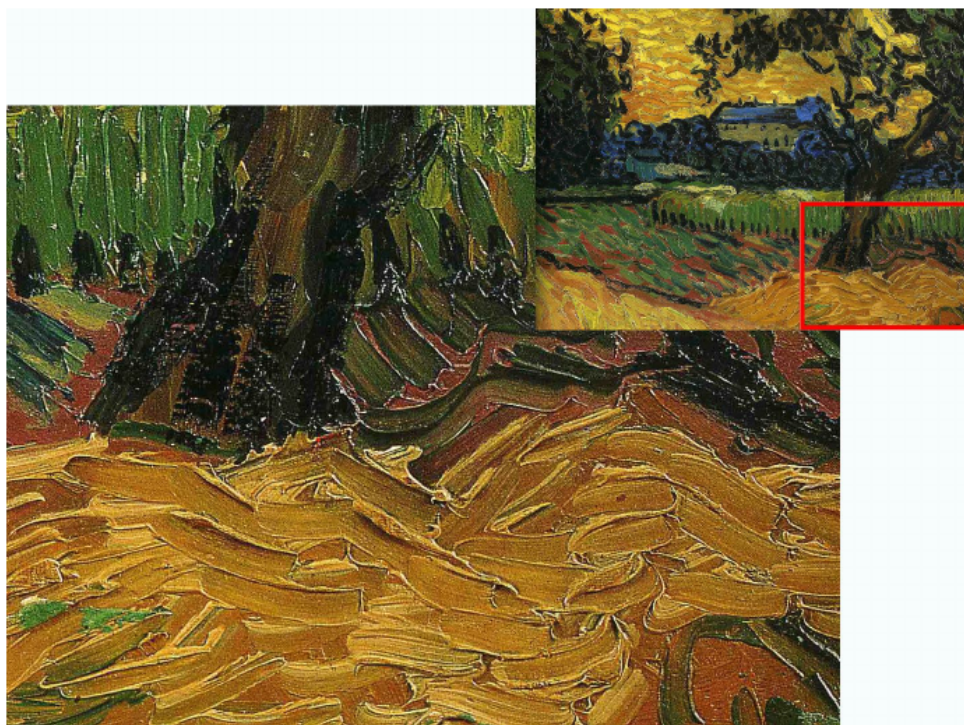
Now we're all set up, let's start sketching. Grab your pencil and start drawing what you see. Remember to not be concerned with perfection!

As a Post-Impressionist, Van Gogh was more concerned with light, color, and texture than complete accuracy!

We'll fill in with more details in our next step. Sketching gets the rough shapes of things on our page.

4

Add Color! Use your paint (or markers, pens, or crayons) to add color and texture to your artwork. Remember when we practiced brushstrokes earlier? Now is the time to put those to use!



Check out that detail! Try to add texture by layering different colors and different size brushstrokes.



More Ideas!

Can't go outside right now? Not near nature? Want a new project?
Check out some more of Van Gogh's work to get inspired!



Follow along with this cooking tutorial
to eat like Van Gogh did - just click the
picture!

Paint your bedroom!



Doesn't this sketch look familiar?

Van Gogh wrote hundreds of letters in his
lifetime, and many have been saved and
published. Try your hand at letter writing! It's
a good place to include sketches for future
paintings!





Learn more about Van Gogh

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gogh/hd_gogh.htm

<https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-life-and-work?v=1>

<https://www.vangoghgallery.com/>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/i/impressionism>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/n/neo-impressionism>

https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/imml/hd_imml.htm

<http://vangoghletters.org/vg/>

<https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/stories/inspiration-from-japan>

