

FIG. 3 *Sorrow* (F929a), 1882. Black chalk, 17½ x 10¼ in. (44.5 x 27 cm). The New Art Gallery Walsall.

In 1920 the Montross Gallery in New York staged the first retrospective exhibition in the United States centered on a wide selection of paintings, drawings, and lithographs for sale from the family collection that showed the “evolution” of the Dutch-born artist to the American public for the first time (see, for example, F111, F771; plates 10–11). According to one critic, it also shed light on the influence of Anton Mauve and the “Old Masters” of the Dutch tradition, “which Van Gogh studied for a long time.”³³ Another critic wrote that the works of “the famous Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, which are not yet very well known in America,” elicited “admiration and appreciation.”³⁴ For the time being, however, this did not translate into sales. After the exhibition, the gallery owner Newman E. Montross and Jo van Gogh-Bonger decided “to carry on displaying the works of the Dutch artist.” Up through May 1923, apparently only three works were sold, all to the clergyman Theodore Pitcairn. One of them, the 1882 drawing *Sorrow* (F929a; fig. 3), may have been the first work from Van Gogh’s Dutch period to enter an American collection.³⁵

Walter Pach Plays a Part

It is thanks to the efforts of the artist, critic, consultant, and agent Walter Pach that Van Gogh’s reputation grew in America after 1913. Pach had played a part in organizing the Armory Show, and through his good relationship with Jo van Gogh-Bonger, was the de facto organizer of the Montross exhibition. He was thoroughly abreast of the developments taking place in the arts in Europe, where he visited almost every year beginning in 1903, when he was attending the famous painting lessons given by William Merritt Chase in Haarlem. There, Pach is said to have seen some Van Gogh drawings for the first time in 1906. In 1908, as a young artist, Pach had six works at the twenty-fourth *Salon des Indépendants* in Paris, where he also frequented the salons of Leo and Gertrude Stein.³⁶

It was in this period that Pach published his first dedicated articles about painters of the “modern (French) tradition”: Manet, Matisse, Monet, Cézanne, and Renoir. For half a century, Pach attempted in more synthesizing studies and articles to explain the importance and the significance of modern art—the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, the Cubists, the Futurists, and others, and the art of his own day—specifically in relation to the development of contemporary American art—and place it in a broader, more universal tradition.

Van Gogh was one of the artists Pach was interested in early on. He wrote a number of lengthy articles about the Montross exhibition he had helped to organize. Pach saw his mission clearly: following the solo and group exhibitions he had been instrumental in organizing—Matisse (1915), Cézanne (1916, 1917), Gauguin (1920)—the Van Gogh exhibition, “aside from Seurat ... rounded out fairly well the circle of great men who have been the initiators of the art of to-day.”³⁷



SUSAN ALYSON STEIN

Van Gogh in New York: Picturing the First Years (1912–29)

It may be long before "the good public" finds in his hard won achievements anything other than "caricature" but it is well worth while to make him known in a country unaccustomed to such intensity as his.

—*The New York Times*, September 15, 1912¹

By the time America enjoyed its first glimpse of works by Vincent van Gogh in 1913, his pictures had been featured in some two hundred venues abroad. They had attracted a strong following among artists, collectors, and dealers in France, the Netherlands, Russia, and especially in Germany where interest and prices were booming. Van Gogh's bold use of color and line had claimed the adulation of the Fauves and the Expressionists; weathered the mockery and shock of British audiences; and cemented his fame, alongside Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin, as one of the trailblazers of modern art. Closer to home, news that Van Gogh's works were coming to this country proved topical enough for a *New York Times* reporter to announce the "worth while" prospect with great fanfare in a full-page, illustrated spread.

Van Gogh's reputation abroad assured him top billing and a prominent central gallery when he debuted in the United States at the eye-opening *International Exhibition of Modern Art*. Nicknamed for Manhattan's cavernous Sixty-ninth Regiment Armory, which hosted the 1,300-work New York venue in February 1913, the Armory Show traveled in smaller versions to Chicago and Boston. This ambitious undertaking was spearheaded by American artists Arthur



JILL SHAW

The Heartland Steps Up: Van Gogh in the Midwest, 1913–36

In a 1929 article in *Vogue*, Alfred H. Barr Jr., the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, laid out the case for a new museum in the city that would focus on promoting and exhibiting modern and contemporary art. He appealed directly to his readers:

And now our most important question—our museums—what have they done? Have they kept pace with the progressive spirit of our collectors and critics, and the general public?

The answer to this question embodies strange contradictions. In Detroit, Dr. Valentiner has brought together a very stimulating collection of modern paintings, American, German, and French. The Chicago Art Institute houses the magnificent Birch-Bartlett room of masterpieces by Cézanne, Seurat, Picasso and Matisse... San Francisco, Cleveland, Minneapolis, and Worcester have excellent modern pictures of the non-academic kind. But in New York, that vast, that exceedingly modern metropolis, we discover a curious anomaly. The Metropolitan, the foremost museum in America, owns no Van Gogh, no Gauguin, no Seurat, no Toulouse-Lautrec, men long dead...¹

Despite its hyperbolic promotional agenda, Barr's statement is enlightening for reasons *not* having to do with New York. Notably and likely surprisingly, many of the American institutions mentioned as leading promoters of modern art were Midwestern ones: Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, and Minneapolis. Other press surrounding the opening of MoMA likewise cited the importance of "America's Middle West, where, oddly enough, modern art has enjoyed the most success."²





PLATE 55. *Wheat Fields with Reaper, Auvers, 1890* (CAT. X)



PLATE 54. *Houses at Auvers, 1890* (CAT. X)

Several other factors helped Goetz to persist in his claim, including the intervention of the US Department of the Treasury and a previously unpublished letter by Van Gogh to his sister Willemien, which De la Faille interpreted to suit his argument.⁵² Goetz himself continued to exhibit the work as authentic (fig. 11), and in 1959 it was included in a show of his collection at San Francisco's Palace of the Legion of Honor.⁵³ In the introduction to the catalogue, director Thomas Carr Howe praised the collection as a whole, calling it "the most distinguished of its kind in the West." He complimented the Goetzes on their faultless taste and "unerring connoisseurship." On the presumed self-portrait, he noted: "Occupying a commanding position among the Goetz pictures is the striking Van Gogh *Self-Portrait*, known as *Étude à la Bougie*, in which the artist has portrayed himself with the features of a Japanese, according to a recently-published letter written at Arles to his sister, Willemien. Despite its essential starkness, the canvas glows with striking luminosity."⁵⁴

The 1970 edition of De la Faille's catalogue, completed by committee after his death, passes no judgment on the work, but the authors cite an article by Irving Stone as an argument for its authenticity⁵⁵—proving once again that *Lust for Life* was a powerful tool of interpretation. The issue was definitively laid to rest only recently: following extensive technical research that delivered a negative verdict in 2013, the Goetz heirs are now satisfied that the picture is indeed a forgery.⁵⁶

FIG. 11 William and Edith (Mayer) Goetz in their living room in Beverly Hills in front of *Study by Candlelight* (F476a), January 1, 1952.



1933

JUNE 1—NOVEMBER 1. *Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture* opens at the Art Institute of Chicago as part of the Century of Progress Exposition, a world's fair commemorating the founding of the City of Chicago and designed to lift the nation's spirit during the time of the Great Depression. The exhibition is assembled almost entirely from American sources to be a testament to the breadth and quality of American collections.¹³⁶ Fifteen of Van Gogh's paintings and drawings come from the Art Institute of Chicago; Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington, DC; the New York collectors Julius Oppenheimer, A. Conger Goodyear, and Chester Dale; Dorothy Sturges in Providence; and Robert Treat Paine in Boston. Dealers Marie Harriman, Knoedler, and Chester Johnson also contribute loans.¹³⁷ The Century of Progress Exposition is a resounding success and reopens for a 1934 season, at the end of which over 30 million fairgoers had visited the exposition.¹³⁸ The second exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago held from June 1 to November 1, 1934, presents seven of Van Gogh's works; this time examples from the Art Institute of Chicago's collection are joined by loans from Stephen C. Clark, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and Wildenstein Galleries.¹³⁹

NOVEMBER 25—DECEMBER 31. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art presents *Five Centuries of European Painting*, "a collection of European paintings from the early Renaissance to the modernists," loaned by Wildenstein Galleries. *Wheat Fields with Reaper, Auvers* (F559; plate x) and *Portrait of Père Tanguy* (F364) are on view.¹⁴⁰

FIG. 18 Visitors to the Century of Progress Exhibition, Art Institute of Chicago, 1933.



1934

JUNE 8—JULY 8. *French Painting from the Fifteenth Century to the Present Day* at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco includes eight of Van Gogh's works; the loans come from Anna Eugenia La Chapelle Clark in New York (F426, F593), Marie Harriman Gallery (F588), Marie Sterner Gallery ("Malmaison Carnations"), and Wildenstein Galleries (F364). Lenders also include the Crocker family from Hillsborough, California: Ethel and William Henry Crocker (F419) and Ruth and William Willard Crocker (F743, F625).¹⁴¹

NOVEMBER. *French Impressionists and Post-Impressionists* opens at the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio. The exhibition includes *The Bedroom* (F484; plate x) lent by the Art Institute of Chicago, *Wheat Fields with Reaper, Auvers* (F559; plate x) from Wildenstein Galleries, and *Houses at Auvers* (F759; plate x) from Durand-Ruel, shown at their New York gallery earlier in the spring.¹⁴² The latter two paintings, along with Pissarro's *Peasants Resting*, also on view, will be acquired by the Toledo Museum of Art and accessioned into its permanent collection in 1935.¹⁴³



PLATE 71. Paul Cézanne (French, 1839–1906), *Still Life with Milk Jug and Fruit* (CAT. X)



CAT. X
The Bedroom, 1889
Oil on canvas
29 x 36¼ in. (73.6 x 92.3 cm)
The Art Institute of Chicago, Helen Birch Bartlett
Memorial Collection, 1926.317
F648 / JH1771
Plate 42



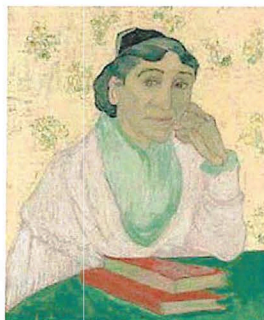
CAT. X
Two Peasants Digging, 1889
Oil on canvas
29¼ x 36¼ in. (74 x 93 cm)
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, A411
F648 / JH1833
Plate 22



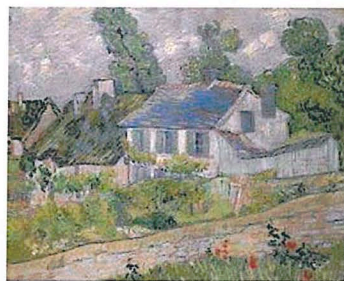
CAT. X
Roses, 1890
Oil on canvas
27¾ x 35¼ in. (71 x 90 cm)
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, gift of Pamela
Harriman in memory of W. Averell Harriman, 1991.671
F681 / JH1976
Plate 54



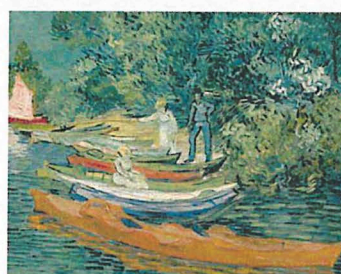
CAT. X
The Man Is at Sea, 1889
Oil on canvas
26 x 20 in. (66 x 51 cm)
Private Collection, USA
F644 / JH1805
Plate 63



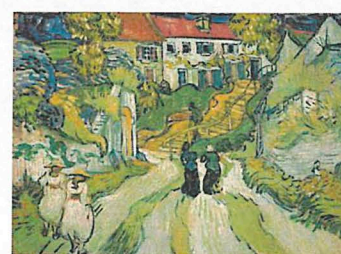
CAT. X
L'Arlesienne, Madame Ginoux, 1890
Oil on canvas
25 x 21¼ in. (65 x 54 cm)
Private Collection
F543 / JH1895
Plate 39



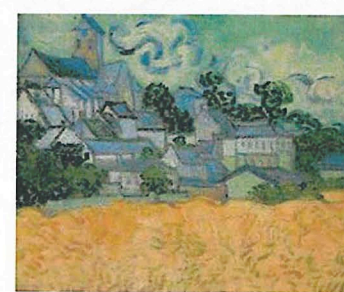
CAT. X
Houses at Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas
23¼ x 28¼ in. (60 x 73 cm)
Toledo Museum of Art, purchased with funds from the
Libbey Endowment, gift of Edward Drummond Libbey,
1935.5
F759 / JH1988
Plate 56



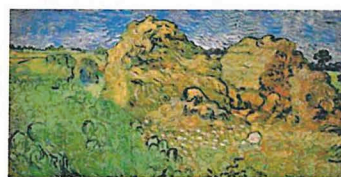
CAT. X
Bank of the Oise at Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas
28 x 36¼ in. (71.1 x 93.7 cm)
Saint Louis Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 1:1935
70.159
F798 / JH2021
Plate 7



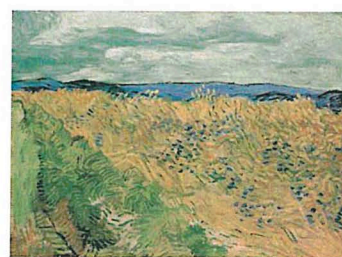
CAT. X
Stairway at Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas
19¼ x 27¼ in. (50 x 70.5 cm)
Saint Louis Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 1:1935
F795 / JH2111
Plate 57



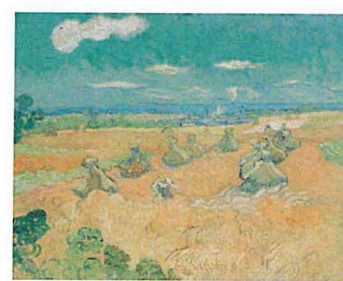
CAT. X
View of Auvers-sur-Oise, 1890
Oil on canvas
13¼ x 16¼ in. (34 x 42.1 cm)
Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, given
in memory of Miss Dorothy Sturges by a Friend, 35.770
F800 / JH2122
Plate 70



CAT. X
Wheat Stacks, 1890
Oil on canvas
19¼ x 39¼ in. (50 x 100 cm)
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Collection Beyeler, 98.1
F809 / JH2098
Plate 5



CAT. X
Wheatfield with Cornflowers, 1890
Oil on canvas
23¼ x 31¼ in. (60 x 81 cm)
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Sammlung Beyeler, 97.1
F808 / JH2118
Plate 6



CAT. X
Wheat Fields with Reaper, Auvers, 1890
Oil on canvas
29 x 36¼ in. (73.6 x 93 cm)
Toledo Museum of Art, purchased with funds from the
Libbey Endowment, gift of Edward Drummond Libbey,
1935.4
F559 / JH1479
Plate 55