Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996

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**Director's foreword**

The Van Gogh Museum is flourishing. The permanent collection is drawing a growing number of Dutch and foreign visitors, the exhibitions programme is simultaneously receiving a good press and reaching a public that is both large and involved. There have been a significant number of important acquisitions, not least two wonderful early landscapes by Gustave Courbet and Claude Monet, and the output of our academic staff has been considerable.

At last the start of work on our new exhibition wing is also in sight, and the adjoining premises at Museumplein 4 have become available for the accommodation of the library and documentation centre. In a number of senses, the Van Gogh Museum now occupies a central position on Amsterdam's Museumplein. Meanwhile we have been hard at work on the renovation of the Museum Mesdag in The Hague, which reopened its doors to the public on 12 October 1996.

While there is space in this volume of the *Van Gogh Museum Journal* for only the merest reflection of all these activities, the high points will be summarised in a Review covering the period up to the end of 1996. In this issue we have chosen once more to give centre stage to two facets of our work, the Museum Mesdag and our sculpture acquisitions. You will therefore find articles on the history, renovation and collections in The Hague; and also a concise catalogue of the young but fast-growing collection of sculpture in Amsterdam. In the second half of 1996, the startling exhibition *The colour of sculpture 1840-1910* was a triumphant demonstration of the élan with which sculpture has made its debut in the museum.

Beside these, in addition to a number of fascinating Van Gogh Studies, the regular sections feature articles in which items from the collection are placed in their respective contexts. As intended, this publication (whose first volume, we are happy to say, was received enthusiastically by our colleagues) remains firmly object-oriented. And with regard to this second volume, we are also delighted that the number of contributions by authors from outside the museum has already increased.

It is certainly not without a certain sadness that, on 1 December, I will be exchanging the directorship of the Van Gogh Museum for that of the Rijksmuseum. However, I congratulate the Supervisory Board of the Van Gogh Museum Foundation for finding such an excellent successor in John Leighton, who for over a decade has been the outstanding curator of 19th-century painting at the National Gallery in London. The museum could hardly be in better hands as it approaches the *fin de siècle* and crosses the threshold of the new millennium.

*Ronald de Leeuw*  
*Director*
fig. 1
*The colour of sculpture*, Van Gogh Museum, 1996
Review
July 1994 - December 1996

On 1 July 1994 the Van Gogh Museum entered a new phase in its history, taking its first steps no longer as a national museum, but as a foundation subsidised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. But even if there have been all kinds of changes in its day-to-day and financial management, the mission and the duties of the museum have, of course, remained largely the same. With the collection of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation as its unique source of inspiration, the museum has stayed on course as an innovative museum of international 19th-century art, and as the central deposit of knowledge on Vincent van Gogh.

Acquisitions

Even as a newly independent institution, the Van Gogh Museum makes its acquisitions in the name both of the state and of the collection the state entrusted to it, that of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation. We also undertake incidental acquisitions on behalf of the Museum Mesdag. Although the Van Gogh Museum's impassioned plea to the government for an acquisitions subsidy fell anew upon deaf ears, we have nonetheless been able to acquire a varied range of works. For this we can thank the steadily increasing profits of the museum shop, and the highly-valued support of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation and of the Vereniging Rembrandt. A supplement to the September 1996 edition of the Burlington Magazine on these new acquisitions, which was accompanied by a very favourable editorial, was a reminder that acquisition can significantly enhance the museum's image.

This Journal features descriptions and illustrations of every work acquired since 1 July 1994. Exceptionally, it has been decided to incorporate in the Journal all the acquisitions made in 1996. The reason is the departure on 1 December of the current director, who, after an eleven-year period of office, will be taking up the post of General Director of the Rijksmuseum. In this way we have been able to give a complete picture of the last acquisitions to be made during the author's directorship.

Unfortunately, the museum has to go without the resources it would need to buy major works by Vincent van Gogh himself. An anonymous bequest made at the end of 1995 was therefore particularly welcome; this was a work painted by Vincent in 1885, Peasant woman digging potatoes. A canvas with this theme was not previously present in the collection.

The representation of French landscape art prior to Van Gogh was also somewhat sparse, a situation that has now been much remedied by the acquisition of a number of pre-Impressionist landscapes. The canvas by Théodore Rousseau purchased at the beginning of 1994 was soon joined by works painted by Rousseau's contemporaries Chintreuil, Jongkind and Harpignies. These were capped by two imposing coastal views by Gustave Courbet and Claude Monet, which had been in private Dutch collections for over half a century, and which we have now been able to retain as part of our permanent heritage.

Other works also came from Dutch sources. These included two works of history painting, Exhausted maenads after the dance by Lawrence Alma-Tadema (once the
property of the writer and critic Carel Vosmaer); and *Consummatum est*, also known as *Golgotha*, by the French Salon painter Jean-Léon Gérôme, which was widely known as a print in the 19th century. Both pieces are now hanging in the newly-installed section on the art of the Salon, on the ground floor of the museum. Recently-acquired paintings by Gustave Boulanger and Lawrence Alma-Tadema have also been added, as well as sculptures by Barye, Carpeaux, Carrier-Belleuse and Cordier.

An important new impulse over the last period has been the acquisition of sculpture. For this we are grateful for the closer contacts with collectors and art dealers gained during the preparations for the exhibition *The colour of sculpture.* Here, Prosper d'Epinay's expressive terracotta *Medusa*, the gilded silver *Sappho* by James Pradier, and the exuberant orientalist busts by Charles Cordier are just three of the high points. An exceptional
piece of luck was the acquisition at a London auction of Jules Dalou's chef d'oeuvre *Large peasant*; now standing in dialogue with Léon Lhermitte's *Haymaking*, it is a masterful example of late 19th-century naturalism. The combination of paintings and sculpture has considerably enlivened and enriched the appearance of the museum's galleries. In August 1996, the sheer scope of acquisitions in this category made it necessary to devote an extra edition of the *Van Gogh Bulletin* to newly-acquired sculpture.

Although the collection of drawings is currently growing at only a modest pace, it nonetheless makes a good showing: recent acquisitions include sheets by Doré and Tissot, two capital *noirs* by Redon from the former Bonger collection, and also a startling view of the Seine by the young Raoul Dufy. There is now a beautiful watercolour of the heath at Laren by Van Gogh's cousin and sole teacher, Anton Mauve, of which the version in oil is in the collection at the Rijksmuseum. A new development since 1996 has been the regular presentation on the second floor of the museum of the ‘drawing of the month,’ featuring the most important new acquisition.

Loans from museums and private collections have also enhanced the quality and appeal of the permanent collection. While the Amsterdam Historisch Museum augmented the Salon installation on the ground floor with masterpieces by Decamps and Mariihat, the Stedelijk Museum loaned two large canvases by Alma-Tadema and Anton Mauve, as well as sculptures by Degas, Renoir and Rodin. Works on permanent loan from private collections included two early Picassos and fine drawings by Jan Toorop and Odilon Redon.

The renovation of the Museum Mesdag necessitated the purchase of two specially designed display cabinets for the Colenbrander ceramics. Mr and Mrs Maingay-Mesdag donated a portfolio of engravings, reproductions, leather wall hangings and a lectern that were originally the property of Taco Mesdag.

**Conservation**

1995 saw the virtual completion of the conservation work undertaken within the framework of the so-called Delta Plan for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage. The only ambitions now remaining unfulfilled concern the preservation of the old frames in the Museum Mesdag. A start has been made on the restoration of the collection of drawings, for which purpose a temporary conservation workshop has been instituted. In a project running parallel to the cataloguing of the Van Gogh drawings, Nico Lingbeek was called in for the conservation and, where necessary, restoration, of the sheets.

In recent years the condition of all the Van Gogh paintings in the collection has been assessed. Since then, an up-to-date conditions report has also been made on the state of all the remaining paintings. René Boitelle undertook the restoration of paintings in the Museum Mesdag, and a number of works by the School of Barbizon were contracted out to the Stichting Restauratoren Kollektief Amsterdam. Restorer Cornelia Peres was occupied principally with the Van Gogh collection, priority being given to canvases from Vincent's Paris period. Among the works to be restored were Van Gogh's paintings after plaster casts, his woodland scenes and *Boulevard de*
Clichy and Vegetable gardens on Montmartre, which have now regained the full splendour of their original Impressionist colouring.

Academic research

The museum is steadily revealing more and more facets of its various collections. In 1995 the totality of Van Gogh's engravings were published as volume six in the scholarly series Cahier Vincent, and, in 1996, volume one of a projected four-volume catalogue of the Van Gogh drawings contained in the collection. The museum's curator of prints and drawings Sjraar van Heugten was the author of both. Chief curator Louis van Tilborgh, supported by newcomer Marije Vellekoop as his research assistant, will shortly embark upon a projected three-volume catalogue of the museum's Van Gogh paintings. A new catalogue by Fred Leeman and Hanna Pennock of the paintings and drawings in the Museum Mesdag has just been published. Meanwhile, the previous Van Gogh Museum Journal published a full survey of paintings acquired since 1963.

At the end of 1994 the Van Gogh Letters Project got under way. Early in the next millennium, collaboration with the Constantijn Huygens Stichting will result in a scholarly annotated edition of the complete letters by and to Vincent van Gogh. The editorial principles have been established, and work on a new transcription of the letters is now proceeding. To support the project, an editorial board consisting of internal and external experts was formed; to introduce the project to the world, a multilingual brochure was also published.
Each year the Van Gogh Museum receives a constant stream of queries regarding the authenticity of works which their owners hope can be attributed to Vincent van Gogh. For our staff this is very time-consuming, and it is only very rarely that their work does not end in disappointment. In the past period, however, there have been two exceptions. First, an unknown early drawing was discovered upon its submission to our experts, and then, on 7 December 1994, a previously unpublished floral still life was convincingly attributed to Van Gogh's Paris period (figs. 2 and 3).

From 22 August to 2 September 1994, in collaboration with the Amsterdam Summer University, the Van Gogh Museum presented a two-week summer course entitled ‘Symbolism: in search of a definition.’ Participants from eight European countries took part in a programme of 25 lectures and workshops provided by 27 specialists from six different countries. Excursions were also made to a number of museums in Holland and Belgium. In 1995 an eight-day summer course was also organised under the auspices of the Amsterdam Summer University. Devoted to ‘Collecting in the Netherlands: the 19th century,’ this involved 20 participants from ten different countries.

At the end of 1996 the museum library will move to the adjoining premises at Museumplein 4. This will simultaneously solve the library’s space problems, and create more room in the museum building for the shop. Staff working on the Van Gogh Letters Project will also be accommodated in the new building. Among the recent acquisitions to the museum library has been an important collection of 19th-century Salon catalogues.

Derived principally from the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, the Van Gogh Museum's archives are one of the museum's strengths as a documentation centre. The basis of a great deal of important provenance research, the archives are currently being used by former curator Han van Crimp in preparation for an edition devoted to the exchange of letters between Theo van Gogh and Jo Bonger; this will be published in the near future. Recent computerisation also means that much of the archives can be accessed electronically. And at the end of 1995 a start was made on the transfer of the remaining archive material from the room administered by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation.

Other activities
Virtually all of the museum's academic staff had regular lecture engagements both inside and outside the museum. They also published in the museum's own publications, and collaborated on a variety of publications produced by other organisations. On 12 October 1994 we hosted a congress organised by the art restorers training institute, De Opleiding Restauratoren.
The Van Gogh Museum also participates in the Dutch Postgraduate School for Art History, of which it is one of the founding members. The school is a forum for both academic and museological art history; on 17 March 1995 its first public presentation was hosted by the museum, and on 7 and 8 December of the same year it held a symposium in the museum's auditorium on critical editions of art historical texts. On the latter occasion, the Van Gogh Letters Project was also introduced to our colleagues.

The author was an advisor with regard to the appointment of new directors for the Groninger Museum, and, in Rotterdam, for the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen and the Nederlands Architectuur Instituut. On 13 June 1995 he was also a speaker at a meeting on collections policy in Dutch museums convened by the Mondriaan Stichting. The author was also a member of the organising committee of the international art historical congress (CIHA) that took place in Amsterdam from 1 to 7 September 1996, and will be CIHA president for the next four years. Chief curator Louis van Tilborgh is an editor of the international art history review *Simiolus*, and coordinator of the ‘Bronnen & tekstedities’ (i.e., sources and text editions) of the Dutch Postgraduate School for Art History.

On 30 March 1996 it was announced that a subsidy application by the Van Gogh Museum had been accepted by the Mondriaan Stichting. Aukje Vergeest has been appointed for a two-year period as researcher on a project to catalogue all 19th-century French paintings in the collections of Dutch museums. The research will take place in cooperation with the Free University Amsterdam.

**Exhibitions**

In the autumns of 1994 and 1995 the second and third parts in the series of exhibition entitled *Vincent van Gogh and his time* were presented in Tokyo at the Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art; these were devoted to portraiture and landscapes respectively, the latter drawing no fewer than 168,000 visitors. Still lifes
were the theme of the exhibition held in the autumn of 1996. In the spring of 1996, the Van Gogh Museum and the Vincent van Gogh Foundation made an extensive loan available to an important exhibition at the Kunstforum Wien, in which the early work of Vincent van Gogh was juxtaposed with that of his contemporaries of the Hague School.

During the summer months the Van Gogh Museum goes to the greatest possible lengths to stress its core activities. In 1994 all the Van Gogh self portraits in the museum collection were shown in an exhibition that was later presented in an adapted form at the Kunsthalle in Hamburg. In the second half of the 1990s Van Gogh's output of prints and drawings have occupied a central position. In the summer of 1995 the totality of his engravings was on show, followed in 1996 by part one (Early Works: 1873-1883) of a four-part exhibition of the museum's collection of Van Gogh's drawings. This exhibition, and those to follow in the next three summers, mark the publication of a volume of the complete catalogue (see above); by the end of this four-year period all five hundred sheets will have been displayed.

Between 8 July and 27 August 1995, 30 masterpieces from the Museum Mesdag - which at that time was closed for renovation - were shown in the Haags Historisch Museum in an exhibition entitled De collectie Mesdag op bezoek.
According to custom, French artists set the tone for the remaining programme of exhibitions. In collaboration with various museums abroad, the Van Gogh Museum presented a series of monographic exhibitions devoted to Odilon Redon, Jean-Louis Forain and Maurice Denis. The extremely successful Redon exhibition was a joint initiative of the Van Gogh Museum and the Royal Academy of Arts in London, but owed much to a third partner, the Art Institute of Chicago. The catalogue, to which Fred Leeman contributed two articles, later received the Wittenborn Memorial Award.

In the spring and early summer of 1995, artists of diverse nationalities and a diversity of styles presented an innovative exhibition. In perfect harmony: picture and frame 1850-1920, in which for the first time considerable attention was paid to the phenomenon of 19th-century frames designed by artists. This exhibition then travelled to the Kunstforum Wien.

The work that was subsequently presented around the turn of the year, that by the impudent Bavarian symbolist Franz von Stuck, was such a success with the public that it was decided to extend the exhibition by two months. The manoeuvring of Stuck's bronze statue of an Amazon - 2.40m in height - over the high wall of the museum restaurant made the front page of several newspapers.

An exhibition held at the end of March 1996 was devoted to two leading figures of German Romantic painting, Caspar David Friedrich and Philipp Otto Runge. Entitled The passage of time and based upon the collection in the Kunsthalle in Hamburg (with additional works supplied by other collections), it was the quid pro quo for the exhibition of Van Gogh self portraits held in Hamburg in 1995.

From February to April 1996 the Van Gogh Museum exhibited a large group of 19th-century photographs of museums, exhibitions, monuments and sculptures; these were selected by Andreas Blühm, head of the museum's exhibition department. A new art was the title of this first exhibition to be organized jointly by the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum from the holdings of the former Hartkamp and Diepraam collections, which were acquired by the Dutch state and transferred to the Rijksmuseum in 1994 to form the National Photographic Collection.

In April, May and June 1996 the presentation in the museum atrium of two newly-renovated early 19th-century backdrops from the Royal Theatre in The Hague treated visitors to an immense visual surprise. Owned by the
Theatre backdrops in the Van Gogh Museum, 1996

Netherlands Theatre Institute, these stage decorations are seldom exhibited because of their huge size.

In addition to the Van Gogh drawings, the summer of 1996 also saw the presentation *The colour of sculpture, 1840-1910*, a highly original exhibition focusing on a much-neglected aspect of 19th century art. The show included nearly 100 sculptures by both lesser and better-known artist from various European countries and was received enthusiastically by both art historians and the general public. The accompanying full-color catalogue, which incorporates many more pieces than were in the exhibition, will, we hope, become a standard reference work on the subject.

**Education and public services**

Since the end of March 1996 the museum has had a new signage system, designed by Studio Pieter Roozen in Amsterdam. The lettering on the facade of the building has also been replaced. In the summer of 1996 the museum
published a new concise guidebook, for which there proved to be a great demand. Each visitor now also receives a free brochure containing basic information on the museum; both this and the guidebook are available in seven languages.

For logistical reasons, guided tours of the permanent collection are still not permitted. During temporary exhibitions, however, it is now possible to request tours guided by the art history bureau ARTTRA. Additionally, the contract for audio-tours arranged by Acoustiguide has been extended. However, the portable cassette-player system used since 1990, which led users on a route past the exhibits, has now been replaced: the previous commentary has been entirely updated and is now available via the so-called INFORM system. This provides a ‘random access’ facility that frees visitors from the obligation of following a fixed circuit, enabling them instead to request information on any individual work. The programme is currently available in six languages, and is to be expanded.

In 1995 the first series of lunchtime lectures was held. The addresses were provided primarily by the museum’s own academic staff, with incidental contributions by guest speakers. Interest in this activity is growing, and there is every intention that it will be continued. In addition, so-called ‘walk-in lectures’ in Dutch and English are organised in collaboration with the ARTTRA bureau.

Separate symposiums or lecture series were organised to accompany most of the large exhibitions. Beside those academics directly associated with any given exhibition, celebrated scholars in the field of 19th-century art - among them Albert Boime and Robert Rosenblum - were invited to speak.

Unfortunately, ever since it was decided to open the museum seven days a week from 10.00 to 17.00, it has been impossible to continue the popular Sunday morning concerts that were previously held in the atrium. The broadening of the opening times offers a greater service to tourists and - much welcome - helps spread the density of visitors.

The Vincent van Gogh Foundation

During a festive gathering held at the Van Gogh Museum on 13 October 1995, Mr Johan van Gogh resigned as chairman of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation. A member of the Foundation from its inception, Mr Van Gogh was chair for a period of eleven years. His successor is his nephew Willem van Gogh. Mrs. Josien van Gogh has joined the board.

Friends of the Van Gogh Museum

Thanks to the high levels of activity shown by its board, the Stichting Friends of the Van Gogh Museum is operating in an ever more professional manner. Each year special events in the museum are proposed to the Friends; they receive the Van Gogh Bulletin and also an informative newsletter three times a year.
A highly successful membership-drive conducted by a firm of solicitors celebrating its anniversary in 1995 meant that the Friends gained 115 new members in a single swoop. As a contribution, the chairman of the Friends presented the museum with a sculpture by Jean-Jacques Feuchère.

The information desk run by volunteers in the atrium meets a great need. As well as carrying out regular visitor surveys in collaboration with the Free University Amsterdam, the information desk provides useful feedback on visitors' perceptions of the museum.

**Budget for the 1997-2000 period**

At this time, the Van Gogh Museum's budget is around 14.5 million guilders per year. The largest part thereof (c. 9 million guilders) is generated by admission fees. The museum also benefits from a subsidy from the Dutch government of 4.5 million guilders. In addition, it receives 50% of the net profit of the museum shop, run by BV 't Lanthuys.

Employee salaries represent by far the greatest percentage of all expenditures (c. 45%), followed by maintenance costs (c. 15%). Around 20% of the total available budget is spent on the museum's various projects, including exhibitions.

In connection with its request for a governmental subsidy for the period 1997-2000, the Van Gogh Museum presented detailed policy papers to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science at the end of 1995. At the time of the publication of this volume of the *Van Gogh Museum Journal* it had already been announced that the museum had received the enthusiastic support of the Council for Culture, and that its recommendations had been adopted by the State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science. Unfortunately, it also appears that the subsidy will remain at the same nominal level it has been in the past. The scarcity of state funds for culture was given as the reason that no extra money could be granted for new initiatives, although they conformed with the museum's overall policy. Still more disturbing, as no account has
been taken of indexation, in absolute terms the museum continues to be financially in decline. Not only are the services and goods the museum uses subject to inflation, future wage costs will also put great pressure on the available monies. The transition from a 38 to a 36 hour work week in May 1997, with the resulting need for new staff, will take an additional financial toll.

However, in 1996 new regulations came into force regarding the Value Added Tax payable by museums; these mean that most Dutch museums now have slightly greater financial leeway. In his capacity as treasurer of the Nederlandse Museum Vereniging, the museum's deputy director Ton Boxma took part in negotiations with the Ministry of Finance; the benefits now accruing from the new VAT regulations mean that much of the credit should go to him.

**Attendance figures**

For many years the Van Gogh Museum has been Holland's second most-visited museum (the first being the Rijksmuseum). In 1994 we had a total of 872,744 visitors. With the exception of the exceptional ‘Van Gogh year’ 1990, this was a record. While the number fell slightly to 837,620 in 1995, it is expected to be about 100,000 higher in 1996: up to and including week 46 it stood at 885,119. The figures for the number of visitors during the last five years are shown here:

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
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<td>1991</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>753,264</td>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>872,744</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>837,620</td>
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**The building**

The facelift given to the building was continued in 1995. The galleries on the first and second floors were reorganised to designs by Peter Sas, and parquet was laid on all floors. To take further advantage of the situation, explanatory texts were added in the permanent collection. The permanent collection of Van Gogh's works was expanded with a display cabinet in which a combination of plaster casts and a number of oils are shown.

Discussions continued with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science regarding the Rietveld building. Both in terms of logistics and with regard to climate control it leaves much to be desired, and it would therefore be desirable if extensive renovations could run parallel to the construction work on the new wing of the museum. The insulation and technical installations are in particularly urgent need of attention. Up to now, barely half of the amount needed (approximately 25 million
guilders) has been found. In 1995 the architectural bureau Greiner & Van Goor were appointed to carry out this renovation work.

In anticipation of the projection expansion of office space, a large number of museum staff moved to quarters rented at Paulus Potterstraat 8. These are expected to provide temporary accommodation for the next few years.

Although the donation for architect Kisho Kurokawa's new exhibition wing was made in 1991, no building work could proceed until the municipal development plans for the Museumplein had been completed. This process advanced at a snail's pace, and the start on the much-needed new wing was continually postponed; the museum staff's sense of frustration was therefore considerable. In the meantime, the management team's preparations involved orientational visits to recently-built museums in Germany, Spain and Japan.

Finally, however, just as this Van Gogh Museum Journal is going to press, we are delighted to announce that building permission for the new wing was granted on 25 October 1996. We can now looking forward to our new building opening its doors to the public sometime within the next two years.

Ronald de Leeuw
Director
[The Museum Mesdag in perspective]

fig. 1
Mesdag by a window in his house, c. 1913, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Museum Mesdag Archive
The Museum Mesdag: a short history

Ronald de Leeuw

In October 1902, Hendrik Willem Mesdag called on the Minister of Home Affairs, Abraham Kuijper, ‘to discuss the donation to the Dutch state of my so widely celebrated and important museum.’ Abraham Bredius was later to place more faith in the municipality of The Hague as the heir to his collection, but Mesdag and his wife, Sientje Mesdag van Houten, threw in their lot with the state. The knot was tied on 14 May 1903 when the couple officially donated their collection to the State of the Netherlands, together with the special museum building erected in 1887 in the garden beside their house in the Laan van Meerdervoort. The Lower Chamber of parliament paid a ‘general and warm tribute to those who have made this “princely” donation,’ and Mesdag was honoured with the Grand Cross of the Order of Orange Nassau.

On 1 August the new ‘national museum’ (rijksmuseum) opened its doors with Mesdag himself as its first director and Fenna van Calcar as his deputy. An admission fee of 25 cents was charged in order to discourage ‘an undue incursion of those who are merely curious.’ At around 9,000 a year, with a peak of 11,003 in 1910, the number of visitors was certainly a cause for satisfaction in the museum's early years. The first catalogue of the collection was compiled in 1905 by the artist Philippe Zilcken (1857-1950), although it was more notable for its lyrical outpourings than for the factualness of the information it contained.

For the history of the museum in the present century one has to rely primarily on the directors' annual reports which, supplemented by the departmental archives, were also the main source for F.J. Duparc's account in his Een eeuw strijd voor Nederlands cultureel erfgoed of 1975. The annual reports make tedious reading on the whole. Work on the building is often the only noteworthy event in any year, such as 1914's ‘improved rainwater discharge’ to prevent leaks. The administrators religiously report on the state of the building and its contents (‘Furnishings and fire equipment continue in good order’), while in subsequent years there are also brief and not very informative specifications of restoration work done on the paintings.

The number of visitors soon plummeted. Public interest declined faster than the donors and the state could have foreseen, and the museum came to be regarded as old-fashioned. However meticulously the directors distinguished between Dutch and foreign visitors, between the paying and the non-paying, their numbers rarely exceeded 5,000. Admissions declined even further during the First World War due to the fall in overseas visitors, and reached a low of 1,800 in 1917.

This is a somewhat longer version of my article included in F. Leeman, H. Pennock, et al., Museum Mesdag: catalogue of paintings and drawings, Zwolle 1996.

1 This article is based primarily on the published annual reports of the directors of the Rijksmuseum H.W. Mesdag (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Museum Mesdag Archive), supplemented with information from F.J. Duparc, Een eeuw strijd voor Nederlands cultureel erfgoed, The Hague 1975. No further reference will be made to these sources, since the data is easily available simply by looking up the year in question. I am also grateful to Fred Leeman for supplying information and drawing my attention to relevant items of correspondence.

2 Deed of gift, dated 14 May 1903.
Sientje Mesdag had died on 20 March 1909, and she was followed on 10 July 1915 by Mesdag himself, who had long been ill. The Minister of Home Affairs may have delivered a eulogy at his graveside, but the government was not prepared to pay the 200,000 guilders that the artist's heirs were asking for the adjoining residence and its art collection and contents. Mesdag's will stipulated that this offer should be made, and the government's refusal dashed his expressed desire to create 'a rare historical entity providing a picture of the life's work of an artist and patron of the arts whose like the Netherlands has never seen.' Even essential repairs to the building were held up as a result of the slump in the economy. The building was repainted in 1916, but this left only enough money to redecorate part of the interior, with the rest of the work being postponed for years. In 1920, a large part of the collection from Mesdag's
house was sold at auction in New York, but the plan to reline the walls of his museum with fabric had to be abandoned, and ‘paper was used instead in order to keep costs to a minimum.’ In the annual report for 1922 one reads of an operation to tone down the character of the original decoration. The painted wainscoting was given a layer of mat varnish, ‘with the result that the gilded borders, which had been too shiny, took on a more muted tone, making for a more subdued overall impression.’

The director in these straitened times was the artist Willy Martens, who had succeeded deputy director Fenna van Calcar in 1911, and then Mesdag himself in 1915. When the walls were relined, Martens took the opportunity to rehang some of the pictures, ‘thus showing them to better advantage.’ Apart from that, his efforts were limited to giving guided tours and urging artists to come and copy in the museum.

**Steenhoff's intervention**

In 1924, Martens was succeeded by Willem Steenhoff, who had become surplus to requirements after a reorganisation of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Steenhoff had been responsible for bringing Impressionist art into the Rijksmuseum and had, incidentally, helped to install the major Van Gogh retrospective of 1905 in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum. He immediately set about a ‘general rearrangement - and pruning - of the collection of paintings.’ He removed so many works from the permanent display that new storage space was needed, and in 1925 half of the studio that Mesdag had built for Martens in the garden was used for these reserves.

Admissions that year rose slightly to 8,227.

Steenhoff's actions, however responsible by the prevailing standards of museum management, ran into heavy opposition from Mesdag's family, who demanded strict observance of the conditions of donation. Article 3c of the deed of gift obliged the state ‘to make as few alterations as possible to the positions of the paintings and works of art.’ Steenhoff's fiercest opponent was Sam van Houten, a former government minister and Mesdag's brother-in-law. He took serious exception to the proposed exhibition of the Van Gogh collection in the Museum Mesdag, for which V.W. van Gogh had already given his permission. Despite

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support for Steenhoff from Pulchri Studio, the Hague artists' society, the incumbent Minister of Home Affairs bowed to the pressure brought by Mesdag's heirs and ordered Steenhoff to restore the original hanging and even reverse the changes made by Martens.

For the first time the aloof, official tone of the annual report wavered, allowing Steenhoff's annoyance and frustration to show through. Under the heading 'Condition of the collection,' he wrote with barely suppressed indignation 'The museum had a turbulent year in 1926. Very soon after taking up my post I came to the conclusion that a general rearrangement - and pruning - of the paintings was extremely desirable, first and foremost in order to make the nucleus of this magnificent and, for our country, unique collection stand out more clearly, and also because
a more well-considered arrangement would provide a more harmonious and instructive survey of the products from a period of artistic development in France that was partly responsible for the flowering of Dutch painting in the second half of the 19th century. Nowadays, when a gratifying improvement can be noted throughout the world of museums, and when the realisation has at last dawned that the sepulchral nature of many museums prevents them from achieving their purpose of nurturing the minds of the masses, the director of such a superb, albeit limited collection should certainly not be backward in this fruitful work of reorganisation. I therefore considered it my moral duty, both to the state and to the community, to do the best I could with the means at my disposal to endeavour to make this museum as culturally productive as possible. [...] Not only did I intend providing a succession of [temporary] exhibitions, I also proposed repeatedly altering the arrangement of the paintings in the museum itself, for I believed that new and instructive combinations could be made, even with this limited material. [...] Then suddenly, very shortly after the exhibition had opened, Your Excellency requested me to close it again and to await further instructions concerning the situation in the other rooms, on account of a complaint that had been lodged by the heirs of Mr Mesdag, who regarded the alterations as an infringement of one of the conditions under which the donation had been accepted by the state. The following explanation may serve to account for my professional error, namely that it was prompted by my belief that a museum curator is above all called upon to serve the cultural interests of the community, taking into consideration that state property is also the property of society, and as such communal property. Moreover, I had not suspected that the next of kin of Mr and Mrs Mesdag, out of a certain feeling of filial devotion, would be so strict in adhering to the letter of the testamentary disposition.’

His bitterness resurfaced in the 1928 report: ‘The arrangement of the galleries remained unchanged, needless to say.’ There was little left for Steenhoff to do before his retirement but devote himself to the task of cataloguing the collection, and when he left in 1928 he was able to report that the ‘newly edited Dutch catalogue’ was finished. On 1 January 1929 he was succeeded by Miss Ida C.E. Peelen, who thus became the first woman director of a Dutch museum. During her term of office the
caretaker, Jan C. Traas, whose talent for restoring paintings had been discovered by Steenhoff, was officially promoted to the post of picture conservator. Miss Peelen was also director of the Rijksmuseum Lambert van Meerten in Delft. She left in 1934, and until 1990 responsibility for the Rijksmuseum Mesdag

5 The Museum Mesdag proved to be a good breeding ground for restorers. In 1961, Mr L. Kuiper was appointed assistant to Jan Traas, and succeeded him the following year. Kuiper also carried out restoration work for the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, the Rijksmuseum Twenthe and the Rijksmuseum Meermanno-Westreenianum. A Rembrandt from the Musée Jacquemart-André, which had to be treated for the Rembrandt exhibition in 1969, was not only restored in the Museum Mesdag but also went on display there for a short time. In 1970, Kuiper left the museum for a better-paid job as picture conservator at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and was succeeded on 1 April by Mr J.J. Susijn. In 1984, the restorer moved to Kazernestraat 3 in The Hague, the building occupied by the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, pending the provision of a new conservation studio, which was later opened in the Mauritshuis. Since 1991 the care of the Mesdag collection has been the responsibility of Mrs Cornelia Peres, the picture conservator of the Van Gogh Museum. Some paintings were conserved by the Stichting Restauratorenkollektief in Amsterdam, whose director, Claes Hulshoff, got his first practical experience as a restorer while working as an intern in the Museum Mesdag. In 1995, René Boitelle was contracted specifically for conservation work on the Mesdag collection.
lay with the director of the Mauritshuis, a position that was filled by Prof. W. Martin until September 1953.

The number of visitors had again fallen alarmingly, but a new signboard on the gate helped to boost the figure by 657 in 1936. With war threatening, various precautionary measures were taken in 1938, and admissions again slumped due to the absence of foreign tourists, reaching a new low of 2,336 in 1939. The worsening international situation led to the decision to move some of the most important works to safety elsewhere. The second floor was closed to the public in 1941, and the following year the bulk of the collection was transferred to the government's war storage depots. In 1944 the building suffered some minor damage in the fighting.

**The post-war years**

The museum faced a threat of a very different kind after the war. At the beginning of the 1950s plans were drawn up for widening the Laan van Meerdervoort, which would have meant demolishing the museum. Although the project was later abandoned, the government was understandably reluctant to commit substantial sums for the building's maintenance until its future was clear. Martin's successor, A.B. de Vries was particularly incensed by the poor lighting, but it took years of badgering the authorities before even the most basic artificial lighting was installed. Under his directorship, the nature of the interior was gradually ‘modernized,’ always with the best of intentions. Areas of the wooden floors, for example, were covered with linoleum. In 1959, the ‘simple yet acceptable’ lighting that De Vries had been fighting for was finally installed: fluorescent strips that were simply screwed onto the ceiling beams. Admissions rose slightly in 1960, which De Vries immediately attributed to the improved lighting. When the interior was repainted, he decided to tone down the colour scheme even further, and chose ‘different colours, guided by the principle that they should not be too obtrusive.’ At the same time, the decorative arts collection, part of which had been distributed throughout the rooms, was now consigned to the reserves.

De Vries tried to gain more publicity for the museum by distributing posters and folders at home and abroad, and this did help boost admissions (6,178 in 1956, around 1,350 of them foreign visitors). Part of this increase, however, was a consequence of that year's Rembrandt exhibition.

In 1954 an agreement was reached between the state and the board of N.V. Panorama Mesdag, which had been the official representative of Mesdag's heirs since
1930. This led to some relaxation in the terms of the donation, and to a rehanging of the collection in 1957. P.N.H. Domela Nieuwenhuis, the curator, grouped the best works of the Barbizon School on the second floor of the museum, so that visitors could view ‘a band of related artists in their context.’ The works on paper, which had formerly been dispersed throughout the building, and had faded badly as a result, were brought together on the walls of the dark staircase. The directors of N.V. Panorama Mesdag were invited to approve the new arrangement, and did so. De Vries, however, still felt it necessary to remark in the annual report for 1959 that ‘The situation remains precarious for closed collections,’ and announced that he would continue to work for further ‘rejuvenation’ within the constraints imposed on him.

Domela Nieuwenhuis moved to the Gemeentemuseum in Arnhem in September 1961, leaving behind the completed manuscript of a new catalogue of the foreign, mostly French, paintings, which was published in French in 1964. It was not until 1975 that Miss A.E. van Schendel wrote a new catalogue of the Dutch paintings.

Admissions rose to 7,385 in 1964, and to almost 9,000 the following year, due not only to improved publicity but also to a renewed interest in the Hague School. The Museum Mesdag loaned seven works to the major Hague School exhibition curated by W. Jos de Gruyter in The Hague's Gemeentemuseum in 1965. The School of Barbi-
zon was also enjoying a revival, and the museum loaned four works to the large Rousseau exhibition in the Louvre. In 1968 and the beginning of 1969 a selection of its French paintings could be seen in the Institut Néerlandais in Paris and in the Wildenstein Gallery in London.

Crisis

In 1970, A.B. de Vries was succeeded as director of the Mauritshuis and of the Museum Mesdag by Dr S.J. Gudlaugsson, who unfortunately died soon afterwards. A.J.M. van der Vaart was appointed acting director, and announced his intention of making the Museum Mesdag even more austere in the 1970 annual report. This time it was the frames' turn. They were in rather poor condition, and Van der Vaart decided to make a virtue of a necessity. ‘It is to be recommended that the heavily gilded frames, most of which are extremely broad, gradually be replaced with narrower, less ostentatious ones, so that the walls are no longer covered half by frames and half by pictures, as they are now.’

The new director of the Mauritshuis, H.R. Hoetink, did not mince his words in his first annual report (1972), saying that in his view the museum lacked many of the preconditions for a healthy, flourishing institution. ‘As a result of its static nature, the Museum Mesdag has never gained the reputation that it deserves and for which it has every potential, given its superb collection. The inflexible terms of the deed of gift of 1903 make it impossible to organise exhibitions or to acquire paintings. This is most regrettable, since the collection is cherished by many private individuals, and because there is a growing interest in the 19th century.’ The location was another problem. ‘The building is poorly sited, there is very little parking space. Moreover, the building is unsuitable for activities of any kind; it has no basement or storage space.’

It is probably no coincidence that it was in this very period, when it seemed that the museum had no future, that F.J. Duparc in his standard work, *Een eeuw strijd voor Nederlands cultureel erfgoed* of 1975, asked whether the

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6 It is perfectly true that many of the frames are in a poor condition. The conservation backlog has only been partly eliminated under the Delta Plan for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage. Interest in old frames was only reawakened in the 1980s and 90s, and in the case of 17th-century frames was sparked off in the Netherlands by the exhibition *Prijst de lijst* in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum in 1984. The spotlight was turned on 19th-century artists' frames in the exhibition, *In perfect harmony: picture & frame*, 1850-1920, held in the Van Gogh Museum in 1995.
state had been wise to accept the gift under such stringent conditions back in 1903. He questioned the appeal of ‘frozen’ institutions, ‘where corn and chaff are quite often exhibited alongside each other, and where the design and the arrangement no longer meet demands imposed at a later date. It is, however, true that these museums provide a striking and often fascinating picture of the ideas and tastes of collectors of a bygone age, but one still wonders whether the authorities, national or municipal, are acting responsibly by resigning themselves to financial sacrifices year after year in order to run institutions of this kind.’

In order to break the deadlock, Hoetink submitted a plan in 1978 ‘that was initially accepted in order to provide the museum with better premises. The building at Plein 1 formerly occupied by the Colonial Ministry was earmarked for the Rijksmuseum H.W. Mesdag. The plans for conversion were already at an advanced stage.’ Architect Gees Dam was asked to produce an initial design, and the directors of N.V. Panorama Mesdag not only backed the director

7 From the paltry sums spent on the Museum Mesdag in the present century one can only conclude that those ‘sacrifices’ were not really that demanding.
8 Letter from H. Hoetink to Mrs O. Smit-Van Calcar, 7 July 1978; Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Museum Mesdag Archive.
fig. 6
Front room on the ground floor of Mesdag's house, c. 1915

fig. 7
Back room on the ground floor of Mesdag's house, c. 1915
fig. 8
Room on the ground floor of Mesdag's house, c. 1915

fig. 9
Room on the ground floor of Mesdag's house, c 1915
fig. 10
Front room on the first floor of Mesdag's house, c. 1915

fig. 11
Room facing the garden in Mesdag's house, c. 1915
fig. 12
Back room on the first floor of Mesdag's house, c. 1915

fig. 13
Mesdag's studio, c. 1915
figs. 6-13
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Museum Mesdag Archive
but even described his proposal as ‘decidedly attractive.’ The building would not only house the Mesdag Collection but would serve as an annex for the Mauritshuis, and would also have a modern conservation studio, reserves, educational facilities and a coffee shop. In the end, though, the Dutch parliament decided that it wanted the building for itself. On 1 October 1980, Hoetink suggested the alternative of 34 Lange Voorhout, which was about to be vacated by the Royal Library.

The uncertainty surrounding the future of the Museum Mesdag was to last until 1990. It had gradually become enveloped in a sense of crisis, and its position became very shaky indeed in the 1980s. At that time the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs began re-assessing its policy with a discussion of (and criteria for) ‘museums of national importance,’ in order to identify museums that should be the responsibility of the state and those that should not. It was felt that the museum had too narrow a base, and it was suggested that it be transferred to a lower tier of government. Director T. Meijer, of the ministry’s Museums, Monuments and Archives Directorate, did consider the collection to be of a ‘high quality,’ but, as he stated in a letter to the Panorama board of 4 December 1984, ‘as a result of its restriction to the Hague School and a number of related French paintings, it covers too narrow a theme for it to continue as an independent museum of national importance.’ The ministry was heavily in favour of transferring it to the Hague municipality, ‘in some form or other.’ Discussions to this end were held with the directors of the Panorama Mesdag, and The Hague's Gemeentemuseum was sounded out.

In a report of 1919, the National Museums Commission had already come to the conclusion that it might be better if the Museum Mesdag ‘freed of overly restrictive conditions, could be merged with the municipal collection.’ Article 4 of the deed of gift did, in principle, allow for the possibility of moving the museum to another location within The Hague, under certain circumstances. ‘If, as a result of compulsory purchase of the donated immoveable property in the public interest, or for any other cause arising from force majeure that makes it impossible to continue meeting the above conditions, the state shall retain its rights to the gift but shall be obliged to transfer the art collection, at its own cost, to another, suitable location within the municipality of The Hague, and to keep it in being as a museum.’

In early 1985 a number of alternative locations for the Museum Mesdag were again proposed: the Johan de Witt House on 14 Kneuterdijk and 15 Lange Vijverberg, Lange Voorhout Palace, as well as transfer to the Gemeentemuseum. A straight swap between the state and the municipality of the Museum Mesdag in exchange for the Museum Bredius was also mooted. It turned out, however, that the Gemeentemuseum was only interested in a few top works from the Mesdag collection. In the meantime, all sorts of other options were circulating in The Hague. Partly as a result of the international success of the Hague School exhibition in 1983, it was argued that there should be a separate museum devoted to that school, in which the Museum

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9 Letter from Mrs O. Smit-Van Calcar to H. Hoetink, 22 November 1978; Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Museum Mesdag Archive.
10 Letter from H. Hoetink to R. Hotke (Director-General, Cultural Affairs), 1 October 1980; Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Museum Mesdag Archive.
11 See note 2
12 The Hague School: Dutch masters of the 19th century, Paris (Grand Palais), London (Royal Academy) and The Hague (Gemeentemuseum) 1983
Mesdag might have a part to play. It was even suggested that both the Panorama and the Museum Mesdag should be moved to the boulevard at the seaside resort of Scheveningen, where they could serve as a tourist attraction. Not surprisingly, the people of The Hague were beginning to get worried.

In an advisory note of 16 August 1985, the National Museums Commission argued that the collection should be kept intact as a national museum. The Ministry of Culture did not immediately agree, and continued negotiations with the municipality of The Hague. The idea now was to transfer the collection to the municipality and to house it and the equally moribund Museum Bredius in Lange Voorhout Palace. This torpedoed a final initiative by Hoetink to make room for the Museum Mesdag in the Johan de Witt House, which was nearer to the centre of the city, even though that proposal, too, was backed by the board of the Panorama Mesdag. When Hoetink, as director, was then excluded from the negotiations with the municipality, the joint directors of the country's national museums issued a furious protest. In a letter of 24 January 1986 they accused the department of spending its time more on an *ad hoc* ‘buildings policy’ than on a ‘museum
policy,’ and roundly condemned ‘the combination of Mesdag and Bredius’ as displaying ‘not the slightest vestige of museological vision.’

One of the directors' arguments was that the ministry would ‘lose one of the best trumps [it had] in preparing the policy for the presentation of the 19th century [art].’ And indeed, as it turned out, the ultimate solution for the problems besetting the Museum Mesdag was found within the framework of the discussion on the more focused presentation of this period, along the lines of the recently opened Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Ultimately Holland was not to get a separate museum, but the three great museums on Amsterdam's Museum Square - Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum and Stedelijk Museum - defined their areas of interest more precisely, with the result that the Van Gogh Museum began concentrating specifically on 19th-century art in its international context. As a logical consequence, the Van Gogh Museum took the initiative at the end of 1989 to see whether the Museum Mesdag, which was still threatened with closure, could not be better administered by this national museum in Amsterdam than by the Mauritshuis. One argument was that the Van Gogh Museum covered virtually the same area as the Museum Mesdag - international 19th-century art, with emphasis on France - so that a greater thematic and logistical benefit would accrue from their merger than from that with the Mauritshuis, which focused mainly on the Golden Age of the 17th century. The Van Gogh Museum did insist on a further relaxation of the conditions surrounding the museum's presentation and loans policy.

In a memorandum presented by the author in late 1989, which had the support of the board of the Panorama Mesdag, approval was sought for: the presentation of temporary exhibitions in the building; a relaxation of the loans policy; the principle that additions could be made to the collection, provided they were on a modest scale and were in keeping with the specific nature of the Museum Mesdag.

On 3 April 1990 the administration of the Museum Mesdag was transferred to the director of the Van Gogh Museum, and when the first national museums became independent on 1 July 1994, the Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh and the Rijksmuseum H.W. Mesdag were amalgamated in a new foundation: the Stichting Van Gogh Museum. The two institutions now operate under the shorter names by which they have been known for years: ‘Van Gogh Museum’ and ‘Museum Mesdag.’

There was a stroke of luck in 1991 when two houses beside the Museum Mesdag on the Laan van Meerdervoort, numbers 9 and 11, came up for sale. They were Mesdag's old home and that of his brother-in-law, Sam van Houten (the minister responsible for the Child Employment Act of 1874), and they were bought with funds generated by the successful Van Gogh commemorative year of 1990. This reunification of museum and residence partly compensated for the government's oversight in 1915. The gardens of the three buildings were joined together to create a superb outdoor area.

When the administration of the Museum Mesdag was transferred to the Van Gogh Museum, it was also insisted that there should be a realistic prospect of a thorough renovation of the building, the original character of which had been spoiled by ‘modernising’ operations in the three decades from 1950. Because of the museum's uncertain future, very little major maintenance had been carried out over the years.

Now that it was to make a fresh start, funds were allocated for a complete renovation in order to restore the building to its original state. The purchase of the adjoining house made it possible to draw up a comprehensive plan aimed at returning the museum building to its former glory as far as possible. Mesdag's residence would contain the new entrance, a storage area, a small reception room and other public facilities. The installation of a lift made the rooms on the first and second floors accessible to the disabled. The addition of Mesdag's house to the complex meant that the demands of the modern age and respect for the museum's historical context now dovetailed.

Two Hague Rotary Clubs, ‘Des Indes’ and ‘Lange Voorhout,’ set up a Stichting Woonhuis Mesdag to raise funds for the interior of the new additions to the complex. The fund-raising scheme was launched on 8 November 1991 in the premises of the Westland-Utrecht Hypotheekbank on Lange Voorhout, not far from Mesdag's own Pulchri Studio society. A benefit concert was held on 1
April 1993, and eventually more than 500,000 guilders were raised for the cause.\textsuperscript{14} Rather optimistically, the museum was closed to the public at the beginning of 1992, but unfortunately the renovation programme took longer to get under way than had been planned. An initial, ambitious design by the architect Frank Wintermans was not only much too expensive but was in fact far more radical than necessary. The two complexes were finally linked in a design by Rob Stringa that is as simple as it is effective.\textsuperscript{15}

While the museum was closed for renovation, large parts of the collection were conserved and restored, partly with funds supplied under the Delta Plan for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage (fig.5).\textsuperscript{16} The bulk of the collections of paintings and ceramics was stored in the Van Gogh Museum, while some of the finest works, like Jozef Israëls's \textit{Alone in the world} and Delacroix's \textit{Evening of the Battle of Waterloo}, were temporarily integrated into the permanent display in Amsterdam. In the summer of 1992 a selection of works from the Museum Mesdag went on show as the Van Gogh Museum's summer exhibition, and at the beginning of 1994 a large number of paintings made a short tour of the museums in Liverpool and Edinburgh under the title ‘Treasures from the Mesdag collection.’ Moreover, for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} The board of the extremely energetic Stichting Woonhuis Mesdag consisted of P.G. Jager (chairman), J. Felderhoff, W.F. Falter, F.C.M. Rijckevoorsel, J.S. de Boer and J.J.R. Bakker.
\item \textsuperscript{15} The Government Buildings Department initially entrusted the renovation to the architect Frank Wintermans. Rob Stringap produced the final design in the second phase, after the first design had been abandoned. Paul den Boer was responsible for the restoration aspects of the plan. The first project director at the Government Buildings Department was Bert Disser, who was succeeded by Winfried Lentz, with Floor Kazen as project manager. The Van Gogh Museum was represented by Cor Krelekamp as project director, assisted successively by Tjeerd Wierda and Ernst Verduin.
\item \textsuperscript{16} The conservators were Renée Velsink, Jo Driessen and Suus Franken (frames), Christien Smits, Christine Ketel, Margot van Schinkel (ceramics), Michiel de Vlam (furniture), Jennifer Barnett (textiles), Evert Moll, Jeanine van Reekum (bronzes), Nico Lingbeek, Wim Smit (works on paper). Lulu Welther (paintings).
\end{itemize}
five successive years from 1993, selections from the Museum Mesdag played an important part in providing an artistic framework for several Van Gogh presentations in the Seiji Togo Memorial Yasuda Kasai Museum of Art in Tokyo. One result of all these temporary shows was to bring the Mesdag collection to the attention of an international public in a very short space of time. The works were seen by many more people than the total number who had ever seen them in the museum's official home.

**A period piece**

As the annual reports of the successive directors make abundantly clear, the Museum Mesdag suffered from chronic neglect and poverty. The lack of public interest and shortage of government funding frequently led to inadequate or penny-pinching solutions for the problems it faced, and in the long term it seemed impossible to break the downward spiral. As so often happens, that niggardliness and the vacillation of the administrators - and not forgetting the attitude of the Mesdag family, so often criticised by art historians - in the end actually preserved the character of the museum complex. None of the interventions was so fundamental that it could not be reversed. Only one action was irreversible, and that was the decision to demolish the garden studio that Mesdag had built for his successor Martens. It had been erected on inadequate foundations, with the result that there was serious subsidence over the years, and it was not in itself very distinguished. Attempts to preserve it were accordingly no longer in reasonable proportion to the cost of restoration, and in addition it could not have served a useful public purpose without drastically altering its character. The demolition of the studio and of the very obtrusive 1960s staff residence greatly improved the look of the garden. It was redesigned by the landscape architect Edwin Santhagen and now merges harmoniously with the gardens of the Peace Palace next door. The garden had always been closed to visitors to the museum, but now, weather permitting, it will be open in the spring and summer months.

The directors of the Museum Mesdag often complained that the upkeep of the building was being neglected, but it turns out that the paint brushes were not entirely idle in all those decades. Investigation of the paintwork preceding the restoration of the interior revealed numerous layers of colour on the woodwork. It was often possible to establish the date of a particular colour scheme, but inevitably
some decisions had to be made on a rather arbitrary basis. In order to be as consistent as possible it was decided to make an integral choice of paintwork and wall-coverings for each floor. The wainscotting in some of the rooms was given a wood stain, in mahogany or oak, partly decorated with plain gold borders. This return to the original colour schemes has virtually eliminated the white so beloved of 20th-century museum directors. Even the walls of the staircase are now mustard yellow, and many of the ceilings have the same colour as the wainscotting: green or green-blue. This has resulted in a far more varied and colourful interior than the uniform sea-green of the past few decades.

Although a few fragments of the original fabric wall-coverings were discovered, no attempt was made to weave reconstructions of them. Paul den Boer, the restoration
The architect, did succeed in finding existing fabrics which came close to the looks of the originals. The same is true of the choice of materials for the Turkish portières, which now give the doorways in the museum a more festive appearance. Although some of the original portières had survived, they were too fragile to be restored, and merely served a documentary purpose.

The original wooden floors were retained almost throughout, although they did require a little repair work. In keeping with the ‘ungarnished chic’ that was so typical of Mesdag, they were simply stained and covered with oriental carpets and runners. A tapestry was woven to a design by T.C.A. Colenbrander for the new ceramics gallery in Mesdag's house.

As a consequence, some of the rooms underwent a complete transformation. The large salon on the ground floor, which was turned into a painting gallery around 1960, regained its sumptuous verdure tapestries, whose wooded landscapes echo the garden beyond. The two flower still lifes painted by Jan Mortel in 1705, which had served as overdoors, were reinstalled in their original positions. Two fine tapestries were returned to the first-floor corridor opposite the central room, and on the second floor the three large canvases painted by Mesdag and his wife to block off the windows on the front of the house are back in place.

Today’s stricter requirements governing the admission of daylight frequently created dilemmas for the restorers. It was decided, for instance, not to install the two skylights that Mesdag had planned for the roof. A number of smaller showcases, modelled on two already in the museum, were made for the display of 19th-century oriental bronze objects in the cabinets facing the windows overlooking the Laan van Meerdervoort. It would have been reckless to continue exhibiting paintings in those rooms because of the sunlight streaming through the windows. The group of oriental bronzes and ceramics is now shown almost in its entirety, and two rooms in Mesdag’s adjoining house have been given over to a reconstruction of his studio and a display of Colenbrander ceramics, for which appropriate period showcases were acquired.17

The opportunity to display a wide range of objets d'art from Mesdag's collection unfortunately only partly compensates for the loss to the presentation of his collection.

17 See the article and catalogue by Christien Smits on Colenbrander in this volume of the Van Gogh Museum Journal.
of drawings and prints. This was not an easy decision, given their considerable importance within the totality of Mesdag's collection, but all the drawings and watercolours he owned had to be withdrawn from the permanent display. They had suffered badly from decades of exposure to light, and it would have been irresponsible to continue showing them. In future they will only be removed from their portfolios for temporary exhibitions.

Against this, the museum's collection of paintings has been augmented with a number of appropriate long-term loans and recent purchases, occasionally replacing works by the very artists whose works on paper had to be withdrawn from the display. The Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst in The Hague loaned several of Mesdag's sketchbooks, and, fully in line with his taste for unfinished works, of art the museum acquired two oil sketches by August Allebé and Balthazar Stroebel, as well as one of the finest works by the Hague Realist Theo Mesker.
Most of the gallery walls are now covered in fabric for the first time in decades and, in an irony of history, the paintings are now hung very much as they were around 1900, the arrangement having been approximated on the basis of information in old lists and Baedekers. These are all major changes, and they imply that there is no longer an attempt to stress the art-historical connections which so preoccupied successive directors from Steenhoff to De Vries. The key concern in the display is to reflect the taste and views of the collectors. The renovation has brought the museum's presentation full circle, almost 100 years after its creation as a national institution, and has largely restored the layout envisaged by Mesdag and his wife. Although, as we have seen, in 1975 Duparc had no high opinion of such a display ‘where corn and chaff are quite often exhibited alongside each other,’ the present staff of the museum is convinced that this ‘striking and often fascinating picture of the ideas and tastes of collectors of a bygone age’ offers new insights that no other presentation of 19th-century art in the Netherlands can quite provide. The artist's house and museum have been reunited, and the interior has been given its original appearance, not in response to demands made by Mesdag's heirs, but in the awareness that at least as much attention must be paid to the historical aspect of the ensemble as to the supposedly ‘timeless’ appreciation of individual works of art.

The renovated Museum Mesdag has now been clearly positioned as a collection museum. Its appeal has been sought in the new and much-appreciated unity of building and objects, which were created for each other as part of a clearly defined vision by the artist-cum-maecenas Mesdag and his wife. As such, in terms of museum history it is no less unique as a 19th-century period piece than The Hague's Prince Willem V Gallery is for the late 18th century and the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo for the Interbellum. It was deliberately decided not to involve the museum further in the march of progress with a blaze of publicity or a ‘lively’ exhibition programme. Its long history demonstrates that there is no great danger of it being inundated by ‘an undue incursion of those who are merely curious,’ as the founders initially feared.

In The Hague, which already has a rich and varied offering of museums, the Museum Mesdag fulfils the role of a small jewel whose glory lies in its limitations. Its character is more that of a ‘lieu de silence,’ like the Mauritshuis and the Museum Bredius, than of institutions taking a broader or more topical view like the Gemeentemuseum and the small Palace on Lange Voorhout. Now that the Museum Mesdag has been renovated it is once again ‘of its age,’ but no longer needs to be ‘up to date.’ The modernisations of the past that robbed the borders of the wainscoting of their gleam and the paintings of their gilded frames have been overcome, and prove to have been of less than permanent value. Given the modern appreciation of the individuality of the late 19th century there is no need to worry about Steenhoff’s ‘sepulchral nature’ or similar doubts about the viability of a ‘closed’ or ‘frozen’ collection. The national interest appears to be perfectly well served if connoisseurs and art-lovers and, it is to be hoped, the residents of The Hague above all, will rediscover the route to it.

Enriched with a marvellous garden, this jewel of a museum is ideally suited to the

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18 The members of an ad hoc committee for drawing up the guidelines for the initial renovation and interior design plans were Titus Eliëns (University of Leiden), Ebelitje Hartkamp-Jonxis (Rijksmuseum), Henk Douna, Fred Leeman (chairman), Ronald de Leeuw, Cornelia Peres and Stefan van Raay (Van Gogh Museum). A design working party was later formed under the chairmanship of chief curator Louis van Tilborgh.

Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
contemplation of the intimate, emotive art of the Hague and Barbizon Schools that the founders collected with such discrimination.
Museum Mesdag in Perspective
The Museum Mesdag in 1996

Ground floor centre room
Ground floor centre room

Ground floor centre room
First floor corridor
Second floor centre room
Ground floor
First floor centre room
Second floor
On the occasion of the reopening of the Museum Mesdag

Henri Loyrette

Often somewhat besotted with itself, art history thinks only of schools, style and influences, and is only too happy to neglect such adjacent sciences as history and geography. Today, in honouring the Museum Mesdag, I am going to borrow chiefly from genealogy and morphology.

I would like you to think back to 1903 and to Ernest Lavisse's monumental twenty-eight volume history of France, and specifically to the preamble by Paul Vidal de la Blache, his admirable Tableau de géographie de la France. Here great stress is laid upon the natural links uniting France with her northern neighbours, links that enable one to glide from the plains of the Ile de France towards Flanders and Holland without encountering the slightest obstacle. ‘Even from Paris,’ he adds, ‘one has a sense of contact with the canals, factories, and railways pressing in through the open fissure that runs between Ménilmontant and Montmartre; the very plain itself seems to flee northwards.’ Lying between France and the Netherlands, the geographer informs us, modern Belgium has a vocation as a ‘country of transit’ - and indeed, this was a role that proved essential to Mesdag's discovery of French art; for it was not only via Roelofs, but also via Belgium that Mesdag discovered a significant number of French painters.

Vidal de la Blache wrote these lines at the same time that Degas, already an old man, recalled his youth in a fashion that is now rather striking: for when we see his first works the thought does not readily occur that he was thinking of Holland as he painted them. ‘When we began, Fantin-Latour, Whistler and I,’ he confided to a friend, ‘we were, all three of us, on the same road, the one to Holland.’ Degas did not complete his journey down this road; Mesdag, however, travelled precisely the same route, but in the opposite direction.

It is a strange coincidence that the same year, 1903, should be the year in which Mesdag donated his collection to the state. It is a coincidence equally strange that when he did so - just at the time the geographer was drawing up his Tableau of France, and Degas was reminiscing - the same much-travelled road from France to Holland was falling into relative disuse. For, increasingly, artists were heading south, to the Midi: the Midi of Cézanne, and of Mesdag's compatriot, Van Gogh.

That is why, when the Museum Mesdag opened its doors, it in fact bore witness to a bygone era, bringing with it the nostalgia of that departed time. It was a collection of an art that was still modern but no longer contemporary. The French works, if for a moment we restrict ourselves to these, are of one French school, the School of Barbizon, whose apogee had come half a century earlier. Thus, when Mesdag started collecting them in 1870, they were - to resort to a convenient neologism - no longer avant-garde. I would like to emphasise this slight time-lag even though it is almost imperceptible to us now, for it is what made the museum so particular and its creator one of the most original collectors of the 19th century.

We should once again praise this collection for its range and quality. We all know that the Barbizon painters can often be repetitive, and that nothing can be more tiring.

This article is a translation of the speech given by Henri Loyrette, director of the Musée d'Orsay, on the occasion of the reopening of the Museum Mesdag in The Hague on 12 October 1996.
than the dull juxtaposition, room after room in many a museum, of those deep forests, those muddy seas, those sheep, those peasants enclosed in their great gilded frames. Mesdag, however, gathered together masterpieces, and many of them: by Corot, Courbet, Daubigny, Millet and by Théodore Rousseau. His selection of difficult canvases such as Millet's *Hagar and Ismael* (one of the artist's * chefs d'oeuvre *) demonstrated a taste that was both singular and true. Mesdag avoided works that were precise,
pretty or finished, favouring instead those that were sketchy, barely commercial, and sometimes violent. This is what distinguishes Mesdag from his peers.

Nonetheless, within a European context, he was far from unique, and many examples might be given of fine collectors in France, Belgium and the German-speaking countries. For instance, in Brussels there was the politician Jules van Praet, who, in the 1860s, collected Millet, Troyon, Delacroix, Théodore Rousseau and Corot. In Paris there was Alfred Chauvard, the proprietor of the Grands Magasins du Louvre, an amateur of the same artists; his collection was dominated by Millet's *Angelus*, now at the Musée d'Orsay. There was also Thomy Thiéry, who, between 1880 and 1895, collected comparable works that were later bequeathed to the Louvre.

Mesdag was not, then, unique; and his tastes were shared by many of his solid bourgeois contemporaries. From then on, the painters he collected were widely appreciated and widely sought, and therefore expensive. The difference is that Mesdag was himself a painter, and this was a factor that made him profoundly distinct from the names cited above; it brought him great homogeneity, and an approach to acquisition that was both considered and perceptive. Unlike Chauvard, who amassed masterpieces at vast prices with all the vanity of a nouveau riche, Mesdag made his selections with the love and patience of the true art-lover, leaving to the wealthy bourgeoisie the more conventional paintings that had been made for show.

Mesdag's particularity can also be measured in terms of the artists he refrained from collecting. Meissonier is just one of these, a painter so capable and so precise that certain of his adulators saw in him the rebirth of the Dutch Golden Age. This ‘giant among dwarves,’ as Degas characterised him, was widely represented in the collections of Van Praet, Chauvard and Thomy Thiéry. But, naturally, he is absent at Mesdag's: his smooth meticulousness is the exact opposite of everything the collector appreciated: the quickness and vivacity of the *esquisse*, the taste for paint itself. Mesdag's cousin Alma-Tadema was not mistaken when he said that Mesdag might one day become a Courbet, but never a Meissonier.

Neither was Mesdag unique as a painter who loved painting; if one confines oneself to the French domain he might simultaneously be reminiscent of Bonnat and Degas: the former a collector of 17th-century Spanish painters, but also of Ingres and Puvis de Chavannes; the latter a collector of Ingres, Delacroix, Manet, Cézanne, Gauguin and many others. In the case of Bonnat, however, the painter and the collector appeared to be two entirely different people - indeed, almost to be at odds with one another. And with regard to Degas, it is known that he assembled a large number of

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*fig 1.*

The Msdags, c. 1906, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Museum Mesdag Archive

*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
fine works at the end of the century with the purpose of founding a museum, but then abandoned the idea. Mesdag is thus unique after all, and his museum along with him.

His strategy was nonetheless similar to that of Degas, who collected canvases by his immediate predecessors and his contemporaries, and then added works by himself, stating that he did not wish (in contrast, for example, to Gustave Moreau) to devote a museum to his glory alone, but to be surrounded by his brethren. By giving such a prominent place to Ingres and Delacroix, Degas reconciled them and presented himself as the third member of a glorious trinity that closed the 19th century in a grandiose fashion. In a similar manner, Mesdag, by adding his works to those of the Barbizon and the Hague Schools, established his own position, acknowledged his friendships - and also made a plea pro domo. By being opened to others, the museum became a manifesto. And it is here that we must speak of genealogy, trace relationships, and return to distant ancestries.
It has often been said that the works collected by Mesdag, including his own, belong to the tradition of 17th-century Dutch landscape painting. Two centuries on, Mesdag saw the many and richly-varied lines of descent, the greater part of which had become disseminated abroad, to Belgium and France. Its proponents were all artists of simple tastes, who gave pride of place to mundane motifs and defied sentimentality and the picturesque. They rejected theatrical impulses and refused to ‘make compositions,’ which had been one of the key concepts in academic teaching at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Nothing could be a better illustration of this will towards simplicity than Mesdag’s reported judgement of *The wave*, Courbet’s submission to the Salon of 1870. ‘Magnificent,’ he is supposed to have said, ‘but is it really the sea?’ For, like many of his contemporaries, Mesdag took nature according to the precept of Théophile Gautier: ‘nature is as it is.’ What he admired in Daubigny was clearly what the French poet admired: paintings in which ‘the painter did not mix his personal sentiments into his reproduction of the location’; paintings that are ‘pieces of nature, cut up and surrounded by a golden frame.’ And he could easily have claimed as his own the pronouncement on Théodore Rousseau made by the champion of realism, Castagnary: ‘simple, calm, imbibed with naturalism, he respects the precise relationship between trees, animals, man and the sky.’

Curiously, Mesdag did not admit to this lineage those later artists who also turned gladly to the Dutch painters of the 17th century and posed as the legitimate heirs of the Barbizon painters, the Impressionists. We know of the debt that Monet, Pissarro and Sisley confessed to owe to the painters of Barbizon and to Courbet; we know of their filial feelings towards the one they called ‘papa Corot.’ For Mesdag, however, they were not part of the same family; they were not of the same blood. Van Gogh underlined the fierceness of Mesdag’s attitude towards them: ‘Mesdag and the others should stop making fun of the Impressionists.’ It was thus, in the 1860s, that Mesdag viewed the subtle transition from Realism to Impressionism, from Courbet to Manet, and soon to Monet and Degas - rejecting it, and considering its heroes not as the legal inheritors, but as the offspring of a younger line bastardised by misalliances and dubious parentage. As far as Mesdag was concerned, French art ended with the generation of 1840. For him, the real descendants were Belgians such as Louis Artan - and the Dutch.

In the museum he built, his own paintings belonged to this filiation. Naturally, he paid homage to Corot, Courbet, Daubigny, Decamps, Diaz, Dupré, Millet and Rousseau, but then these painters also served to justify Mesdag himself. He became the child of Millet and of Rousseau, just as in his own museum Degas would have been the child of Ingres and Delacroix. Yet, to me, curiously, Mesdag's own painting
seems to be far removed from the French manner, and if it were necessary to identify his closest kinsman, I would indicate the Franco-Belgian artist Alfred Stevens. Completely oriented towards an earlier age, Mesdag's painting probably suffers from this slight time-lag, whereby it is no longer quite of its own time.

Mesdag's true masterpiece is his museum. Previously it was hard to see this; today it is blindingly clear. Containing so many beautiful works collected together solely for the pleasure of looking at them, this committed and partisan collection is a fascinating reflection upon the history of 19th-century art. It is also, quite simply, a beautiful story, that of a determined painter, a latecomer to his vocation, presenting himself among his own fraternity. Today, there are many reasons to salute Mesdag. There are many reasons that we French should follow in the footsteps of so many others and take the road to Holland.
fig. 1
Mesdag as ‘Mayor of St Luke's,' 1895, The Hague, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD)
Hendrik Willem Mesdag and the artistic life of The Hague

John Sillevis

‘Take Mesdag, a real mastodon or hippopotamus. Yet he manages to sell his pictures.’ Vincent van Gogh

In a booklet from 1880 in which Johan Gram describes an imaginary visit to the various members of the painters' association known as Pulchri Studio, the journalist and art critic wrote the following about Mesdag: ‘If anyone, it is Mesdag who has acquired, as if by magic, par droit de conquête, an independent place for himself in the art world. Many still recall the objections that were raised in the bosom of Pulchri Studio in 1869 against admitting the then unknown Mr Mesdag as a “working member.” In the title of the painting he exhibited that year in The Hague - What will become of them? - the “them” was sarcastically changed to “him” and applied to the author. Yet the doubts about Mesdag's vocation were brilliantly belied when his painting Breakers in the North Sea was crowned with the gold medal of honour at the Paris Salon in 1870, a distinction very few Dutch artists had won. With that, Mesdag's name was established, and he assumed his singular place in our artists' association. A few years before, no one who had seen Mr Mesdag working in the banking business in Groningen would have augured such a future for him.’

The ‘Breakers in the North Sea’

There is something slightly ironic about Gram's account of Mesdag's meteoric career after the triumph of his Breakers in the North Sea at the Paris Salon, but no trace of irony or sarcasm can be found in later profiles of the artist. Mesdag had become a man of influence, with a position in The Hague's artistic life that there was no getting

1 J. Gram, Onze schilders in Pulchri Studio, Rotterdam [1880], pp. 55-56: ‘Zoo iemand, dan heeft Mesdag als bij tooverslag, par droit de conquête, zich in de kunstenaarswereld eene zelfstandige plaats verworven. Menigene herinnert zich nog, welke bezwaren er in 1869 in den boezem van Pulchri Studio geopperd werden om den toen nog ongerekend heer Mesdag als “werkend lid” op te nemen. In den titel zijner in dat jaar te ’s-Gravenhage tentoongestelde schilderij: “Wat zal er van hem worden?” was sarcastisch het hen in hem veranderd en op den maker toegepast. Eene spoedig daarop volgende gebeurtenis gedenkte echter op schitterende wijze dien twijfel aan Mездsags roeping, toen zijne schilderij Les brisants de la Mer du Nord” in 1870 in het Salon de Parijs bekroond werd met het gouden eerepenning, eene onderscheiding, die nog zeer zelden een Hollandschen kunstenaar te deel gevallen was. Van toen af was Mesdag's naam gevestigd, en nam hij zijne afzonderlijke plaats in onze kunstenaarsbent in. Eenige jaren tevoren zou niemand, die den heer Mesdag in den geldhandel te Groningen werkzaam gezien had, hem een dergelijke toekomst voorspeld hebben.’
around. One must not forget, however, that Gram was writing in 1880, that is, before the Panorama was painted, and before Mesdag's legendary presidency of Pulchri Studio. Aside from that, one would be wrong to infer from Gram's article that Mesdag only joined Pulchri after his success in Paris: he joined the painters' association as early as January 1869. Whether his relations in Brussels, such as Alma-Tadema and Willem Roelofs, were instrumental in having him admitted is not known.

When Mesdag left Brussels and moved to The Hague he was fully aware of the significance of membership in artistic societies such as Pulchri Studio. While still living in the Belgian capital he had joined the Société libre des Beaux-Arts, which was established in 1868.\(^2\) Even after moving to The Hague he made a point of keeping up his membership in the Société for some time; as he wrote his Belgian friend Alfred Verwee on 15 November 1869, ‘Dites au secrétaire de la Société libre des Beaux-Arts que je continuerai à payer ma cotisation annuelle: fr. 25. Veuillez les payer pour moi. Je vous les rendrai à ma visite à Bruxelles.’\(^3\)

From the time of its foundation in 1847, Pulchri offered its members numerous facilities which were of particular importance to aspiring artists. There they could draw from the draped model and take part in art viewings. From 1867 Pulchri began organising its own shows, in which members were welcome to take part; moreover, the board was responsible for the organisation of the Tentoonstelling van Levende Meesters, the exhibition held every third year in The Hague, and otherwise by turns in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

In the first half of the 19th century, opportunities for artists to show new work to art lovers and buyers were rather rare. Besides the biennial presentation of living artists, the Levende Meesters, no other exhibitions of contemporary art were mounted on a regular basis. It was only toward the end of the century that dealers began presenting one-man shows of artists they represented and associations did the same for their members - and still only very hesitantly, at that.

Contemporary collections were amassed by well-meaning artistic associations in the hope of one day establishing a museum for modern art. It was not until the very last years of the century that exhibitions became a common feature of Dutch cultural life, but early in Mesdag's career membership in an artists' association was a prerequisite for future success.\(^4\)

The viewings at Pulchri provided the opportunity for a direct encounter between the artist (‘the working member’) and the collector-art lover (‘the art-loving member’). General viewings occurred twice a year under the supervision of commissioners whose task it was to monitor the quality of the works submitted, which they had the right to reject. The commissioners were also involved in sales; the association received a modest percentage of the sale price.


In addition to general there were also special viewings, where only one collection was shown. In contrast to the former, the purpose of the latter was not commercial. G.H. Marius, author of a standard work on 19th-century Dutch art, described the procedure of the viewings as follows: ‘At first they were held only in the evening. We sat at long tables and the drawings were passed around [...]. The watercolour collections of Prince Alexander, Völcker van Soelen, Mesdag, Langerhuyzen, already began at these viewings, which would continue to be held at Arti et Amicitiae (in Amsterdam) and at Pulchri for a long time. When the membership became larger, or as a result of the evolution of this art, the drawings were placed on lecterns. Around 1880 the public was rather reactionary as regards art, and we remember the orations which expressed concerns about the dangers for the future of art that were held there about the delightful colour drawings of Jacob Maris, since his sketches, as Maris' drawings were called, were presented as though they were finished works of art; it was a buzzing of flies over very highly worked watercolours [...].’

Thus, Mesdag managed to kill two birds with one stone: besides the chance to display his own work, the viewings were also an excellent opportunity for him to expand his collection independent of the art trade. Around 1880, moreover, the art-loving members of Pulchri were

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5 G.H. Marius, _De Hollandsche Schilderkunst in de negentiende eeuw_, 2d ed., The Hague 1920, pp. 189-90: ‘Het was in den aanvang alleen des avonds. Men zat aan lange tafels en de teekeningen werden doorgegeven [...]. De waterverfcollecties van Prins Alexander, Völcker van Soelen, Mesdag, Langerhuyzen, zijn reeds begonnen bij deze kunstbeschouwingen, waar de teekeningen, toen het leedental groter werd, of ook al volgend den gang dezer kunst, op lessenlaars geplaatst werden, en nog lang in Arti en Pulchri gehouden zijn. Het publiek was omstreeks 1880 in Den Haag nog al reactionair inzake kunst, en wij herinneren ons de oraties, welke daar voor de verrukkelijke kleurteekeningen van Jacob Maris gehouden werden, bedenkingen voor het gevaar van de toekomst der kunst, sedert men schetsen, zoals men de teekeningen van Maris noemde, voor compleet werk liet zien; het was een gegons van vliegen over zeer geserreerde aquarellen [...].’
definitely not yet accustomed to the Hague School. The irritation over the ‘buzzing of flies,’ as Marius so evocatively described the reaction of the conservative collectors, must certainly have contributed to the establishment of the society of watercolourists known as the Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij - or, more popularly, the HTM - in 1876, in which Mesdag played a decisive role.

In the span of several years Mesdag had gone from an unknown amateur painter to an international celebrity. The bronze medal he won at Antwerp in 1867 was only a beginning, at most a stimulus for Mesdag himself, but the gold medal at the Paris Salon was of historical significance. In 1872 The Hague refused to be outdone: there, too, the artist came away with gold. Bronze followed at London in 1873, and gold again at Lyons in 1874. The Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876 brought the artist yet another gold medal."

In 1873 Mesdag was honoured with a royal visit to his studio. Other artists of his generation had waited years for such a recognition, if they received it at all, whereas Mesdag seemed to go from height to height. It must of course be said that he left little to chance. The surviving fragments of his correspondence evince his unflagging ambition to reach the top.

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In the critic J. van Santen Kolff's famous article in *De Banier*, which introduced the Hague School in 1875, Mesdag was cast as one of the most important painters of the new movement. In the list of members that the author gave, Mesdag's name is mentioned first. At one point Van Santen Kolff asks rhetorically, ‘Can anyone other than a Dutchman see, conceive and represent nature this way, or put down such a wealth of poetry in the most unadorned, sober rendering of the simplest reality? I doubt it. At least for nature in Holland, the first masters of our landscape school - such as Mauve, Apol or Maris - are peerless specialists.’ Mesdag's submission to the Levende Meesters exhibition of 1875, *On the Dutch seacoast* (present location unknown) showed that he was the preeminent exponent of the ‘realism of the true, most healthy sort,’ a beacon for his fellow artists. ‘It is my heartfelt conviction,’ Kolff wrote, ‘that all our landscape and marine painters sooner or later should give expression to that side if they wish to continue creating in the spirit of our time.’

The Dutch Watercolour Society

It had not taken Mesdag long to convince those around him of his qualities as a representative of modern Dutch art; not much later he got the chance to prove that he also had administrative talents. On 31 January 1876 he helped found the aforementioned HTM;° on the first board sat Mesdag, Jacob Maris and Anton Mauve.

The apparently unsatisfactory handling of the art viewings at Pulchri Studio and the inadequacy of the association's attempts to reach private collectors contrasted sharply with the example of the Société Belge des Aquarellistes. Mesdag's teacher Roelofs was one of the founders of this successful watercolour society. As early as 1858, three years before the establishment of the Société, Hardenberg, who was on Pulchri's board, had asked the Belgians whether it might be possible for members to participate in the Société's exhibitions in Brussels. No answer from Roelofs was forthcoming. The founders of the HTM took a different approach, one in which Mesdag's influence is unmistakable. The watercolourists' association was founded independently of every other artists' organisation - including Pulchri - and therefore set out to find its own exhibition space and sources of income. The goal was clear: to carve out a separate niche for the watercolour (or ‘coloured drawing,’ as it was then called) as a finished work of art in its own right. This was to be achieved through annual exhibitions, in which members and guests would participate. The guests,

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8 Ibid., p. 187: ‘[...] realisme van de ware, allergezondste soort’; ‘Dien kant moeten, naar mijn innige overtuiging, onze landscap- en zeechilders allen vroeg of laat uit, willen zij naar den geest van onzen tijd, blijvends scheppen.’

known as ‘honorary members,’ hailed from every part of Europe. Clays and Madou were invited from Belgium; from Italy, Mosè Bianchi and Vincenzo Cabianca; from England, Herkomer and from Germany, Max Liebermann, to name only a few.

Mesdag was a born chairman. He looked for exhibition space with drive and eventually the burgomaster of The Hague placed the hall of the Akademie van Beeldende Kunsten at his disposal for every August. The first show was a huge success: entrance fees and catalogue sales brought in over 670 guilders, the watercolours themselves another 6,130 - an enormous sum in those days. Every member participated except David Bles, who thus did not comply with the regulations (formulated at the meeting of 27 March 1876), one of which stated that ‘Every ordinary member must submit at least one drawing for each exhibition.’ Mesdag was not one to draft regulations and then forget them, as Bles would soon discover. As the chairman wrote him on 25 June 1877, ‘Last year we were sadly bereft of your highly admired submissions. The board therefore urgently requests your cooperation, in the confidence that this year our second exhibition may be graced with your important contribution.’

In 1879, when the Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij organised an exposition at the Grosvenor Gallery, London, Mesdag had already taken the initiative vis-à-vis Bles, and asked Pieter Stortenbeker to lend one of his drawings.

10 ‘Brieven,’ cit. (note 3), p. 4: ‘Ieder gewoon lid is gehouden tot hetinzenden van minstens éene teekening voor iedere expositie.’ ‘Het vorige jaar bleven wij van uwezeer gewaardeerde inzendingen verstoken, daarom roept het bestuurmeeandrang uwemedewerking in, inhett vertrouwen dat dit jaar, onze tweede tentoonstelling met uwebelangrijke bijdrage mogewordenopgeluisterd.’
entitled *Orangists*, for the exhibition. Mesdag notified Bles of this on 18 November 1879, and took the opportunity to add that ‘In accordance with the regulations of the Grosvenor Gallery, all drawings shall be framed in gold. [Sir Lawrence Alma-] Tadema will arrange things as best he can for us in London. We shall cover the cost of framing, of course. The point is to give the people of London a look at forty beautiful Dutch drawings. At the Grosvenor they [will be] hung together as a group and they will be mentioned in the catalogue.’\(^{11}\) Bles sent his refusal by return post, at which point Mesdag's patience ran out: ‘Pursuant to your request,’ he replied, ‘I shall notify Mr Stortenbeker that the drawing in question, *Orangists*, may not be sent with the others for display at the Grosvenor Gallery: *I am terribly sorry.*’\(^{12}\)

Bles could no longer expect mercy. On 1 April 1884 he received the following letter from Mesdag, co-signed by David Artz and Albert Neuhuijs, who were on the board of the HTM at the time: ‘At the recent meeting of the Gentlemen Members of the Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij the minimal interest you have shown in the Maatschappij in your capacity as *Founding Member* came up. You have submitted nothing to the last Exhibitions. As a result, and at the request of many members, the Board feels it must ask you to resign your membership in the Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij, so that your place as founding member can be filled by another, ordinary member.’\(^{13}\)

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11 Ibid., p. 5: ‘*Alle teekeningen zullen in gevolge het reglement der Grosvenor Gallery in goud worden geincadereerd. Tadema bezorgt één en ander bestens voor ons te London - de kosten van encadrement komen natuurlijk ten onzen laste -. Het doel is om eens een 40-tal mooye Hollandsche Teekeningen aan het Londonse publiek te laten zien. Ze worden in Grosvenor afzonderlijk in een bloc gehangen en in de catalogue vermeld.*’

12 Ibid., ‘*Ingevolge uw verzoek zal ik den Heer Stortenbeker berichten dat de bewuste teekening *Oranjeklanten* niet mèe ter expositie voor The Grosvenor Gallery kan gaan: *het spijt mij wel.*’

13 Ibid., p. 8: ‘*Op de onlangs gehouden vergadering van Heeren Leden der Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij kwam ter sprake de geringe belangstelling door UEd. in uwe hoedanigheid als *Lid-Oprigter* jegens de Maatschappij betoond. Op de laatste Tentoonstellingen toch zond UEd. geen uwer werken in. Naar aanleiding daarvan en op verzoek van vele leden heeft het Bestuur gemeend UEd. te moeten verzoeken voor het lidmaatschap der Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij te bedanken, opdat uwe plaats als lid oprigter door een ander gewoon lid kan worden vervuld.*’

*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
Politely but resolutely Mesdag removed David Bles from the rolls. Nor did he shrink from using the organisation as a pressure group. In 1876, that is, just prior to the
society's foundation, Mesdag had objected to the fact that King William III had awarded the gold medal to Herman Koekkoek, Jr at the Levende Meesters exhibition organised by Arti in Amsterdam. Together with a number of fellow artists he wrote a 'Petition from The Hague artists to H.M. the King' and had it published in the Kunstkrant. The signatories were, with one exception, members or founding members of the HTM. The tone of the petition was again polite but resolute: 'In making this great gold medal available it was undoubtedly Your Majesty's intention to incite the Dutch masters to add as much lustre as possible to the aforementioned exhibitions by submitting their most beautiful works, and urging them to do their utmost to make important contributions. It is [the artists'] deepest conviction that the commissioners charged by Your Majesty with the award of that medal have acquitted themselves of their task in such a noticeably peculiar fashion that Your Majesty's purpose was not served. They have therefore decided they are no longer able to conceal from Your Majesty the fact that for them the great royal medal has lost all its value, and that they henceforth shall refrain from competing for this royal honour.'

William III's reaction is not recorded, but given his highly volatile personality he was undoubtedly enraged by this audacious statement from his 'faithful subjects.' In 1882 the king thus lost no time conferring the designation Koninklijk (or Royal) on the recently founded Genootschap van Nederlandsche Aquarellisten, whose membership was largely opposed to the Hague School and to the modern movement in Dutch art. He even invited them to use the Gotische Zaal opposite Paleis Noordeinde for exhibitions. Vincent van Gogh was among the visitors to the first exhibition of the newly initiated society.

Mesdag's reaction was prompt. The foundation of the Koninklijk Genootschap was the main point of business at the meeting of the HTM on 4 January 1882. A conciliatory missive addressed to the members of the HTM had arrived from the board of the Koninklijk Genootschap, Messrs Herman ten Kate, Charles Rochussen and Cornelis Springer. The commissioners of the new watercolourists' association were: Jan Willem van Borselen, Johannes Stroebel, Jan Smits, Mari ten Kate and Elchanon Verveer. Rochussen, Van Borselen and Verveer were already members of the HTM,

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15 'Brieven,' cit. (note 3), pp. 2-3: ‘Bij het beschikbaar stellen dezer groote gouden medaille heeft zeker bij Uwe Majesteit de bedoeling ten grondslag gelegen, de Nederlandsche meesters op te wekken om door het inzenden hunner schoonste werken aan genoemde tentoonstellingen zoo veel mogelijk luister bij te zetten, en hen aan te sporen al hunne krachten in te spannen om belangrijke bijdragen te leveren. Het is hunne immige vertuiging dat de commissiën, aan wie door Uwe Majesteit de toekenning dier medaille was opgedragen, zich op zulk eene in het oog lopend vreemde wijze van hare taak hebben gekweten, dat daardoor Uwer Majesteits bedoeling niet is bereikt. Op grond hiervan hebben zij gemeend, niet langer voor Uwe Majesteit te mogen verwijzen dat voor hen alle waarde aan de groote koninklijke medaille is ontnomen geworden, en zij zich voor ’t vervolg van mededinging naar deze koninklijke onderscheiding zullen onthouden.’
16 As Vincent wrote his brother [266/232]: ‘I have gone to see the drawings in the Gotische Zaal; I thought the Rochussen was splendid. [...] There were also very beautiful things by Allebé, drawings from Artis and then a landscape with pine trees on the rocks at the coast, where in between one sees a fisherman's house at the bottom.’ The drawing is now in the Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam, under the title De Golf van Arcachon (inv. no. 1980:36). See exhib. cat. Hollandse aquarellen uit de 19de eeuw, Rome (Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe) & Amsterdam (Rijksprentenkabinet) 1985, no. 2.
but had concealed their involvement in the new society; Rochussen's membership was even honorary.

According to the minutes, ‘The consensus was that the new association had been established under the protection, direct or otherwise, of H.M. the King to take action against our association and to that end to hold exhibitions of drawings on the premises obligingly lent for that purpose by H.M. the King. [...] there was general indignation about this policy, to which three members of our association, entirely unknown to the board, have assisted, namely Mr C. Rochussen, honorary member, and Messrs J.W. van Borselen and E. Verveer, ordinary members.’ An invitation to exhibit was unanimously declined. ‘Mr Bosboom proposed what he thought would be a polite and dignified form of refusal. [...] The chairman [H.W. Mesdag] wished the assembly success with this unanimous decision, and expressed the hope that the next exhibition would prove that there is power in harmony.’

In fact, the HTM was in a strong position. The minutes of the same meeting proudly stated that the 1881 exhibition had earned no less than 25,135 guilders, as compared to 6,130 in 1876, and that there had been a total of

17 Tholen, op. cit. (note 9), pp. 21-22: ‘Algemeen was de overtuiging dat de nieuwe maatschappij zoo niet onmiddellijk dan toch onder bepaalde bescherming van Z.M. den Koning was tot stand gekomen om tegenover onze maatschappij op te treden en daartoe op denzelfden tijd exposities van teekeningen te houden in het lokaal daartoe door Z.M. den Koning bereidwillig afgestaan. [...] algemeen was de verontwaardiging over deze handelwijze, waartoe drie leden onzer vereeniging geheel buiten weten van het bestuur hunne medewerking hadden verleend, en wel de Heer C. Rochussen, eere lid, en de Heeren J.W. van Borselen en E. Verveer, gewone leden. [...] De heer Bosboom droeg hierop de vorm voor waarin het bedanken zijns inziens beleefd en waardig zoude kunnen worden ingekleed. [...] De voorzitter wenschte de vergadering geluk met dit met eenparige stemmen genomen besluit en sprak den wensch uit dat de eerstvolgende tentoonstelling het bewijs mogt leeveren dat eendragt magt is.’

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4,349 visitors. One piquant detail was that Prince Alexander - King William's son - had purchased a work at the exhibition costing 8,900 guilders. A year later the opening was attended by Princess Marianne of the Netherlands and Prince Albert of Prussia.

Van Gogh, who was generally very generous in his admiration for other artists, refused to be dragged into the controversy between the Koninklijk Genootschap and the HTM, though he himself would have liked nothing better than to join the latter. Indeed he was still thinking about membership when he left for Drenthe: in a letter to Theo he wrote ‘My plan is to make plenty of headway with painting in Drenthe, so as to be eligible for the Teeken-Maatschappij when I return.’18 As it happened, William III's plan to thwart the HTM failed: in three years' time the Koninklijk Genootschap was disbanded, whereas the Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij flourished until the early 20th century.

Mesdag served as chairman of the HTM until 1885, at which point, despite the pleas of the members, he stepped down. He was succeeded by Jozef Israëls.

### Barbizon exhibitions

The success of the HTM must have stimulated Mesdag to collaborate on an entirely different project, namely the bicentennial exhibition of the Haagse Akademie van Beeldende Kunsten in 1882. Called simply the Tentoonstelling van schilderijen uit particuliere verzamelingen (or Exhibition of paintings from private collections), it included works from the collections of H.W. Mesdag, his brother Taco, F.H.M. Post and Verstolk Völcker. For the first time in the Netherlands, the Barbizon School could be seen in depth. There were ten works by Corot, eight by Diaz, four by Dupré and Troyon, and three by Théodore Rousseau. The critic who wrote for Het Vaderland suggested the students of the Akademie pay close attention: ‘[...] they could learn what probity, finish and distinction are, and at the same time that one can take all of that to heart and still be true to nature.’19

One of the more observant visitors to the exhibition was Van Gogh. To his brother he wrote, ‘I recently saw the exhibition of French art from the collections Mesdag, Post, etc. There are a lot of beautiful things there by Dupré, Corot, Daubigny, Diaz, Courbet, Breton, Jacque, etc. I thought that large sketch by Théodore Rousseau from the Mesdag collection was really beautiful as well: a drift of cattle in the Alps.’ He was referring to Cattle in the Jura Mountains, now in the Museum Mesdag. ‘The Duprés are superb, and there is a Daubigny - large thatched roofs against the slope of a hill - which I can't get enough of. So, too, a small Corot, a coastal scene, and Lisière de bois on a summer morning, around 4 o'clock or thereabouts. A single small

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18 384/319: ‘Mijn plan is het in Drenthe een eind ver te brengen met het schilderen, zoodat ik in de termen val voor de Teekenmaatschappij als ik terug kom.’
pink cloud indicates the sun will rise soon. A stillness, a calmness, and a peace which are enchanting. I'm happy to have seen all of that.\textsuperscript{20} Mesdag was rewarded for his efforts on behalf of the Haagse Akademie with an honorary membership. The other new honorary members were David Bles, Johannes Bosboom, Herman ten Kate and Jozef Israëls.\textsuperscript{21}

In 1890 a one-man show followed - a novelty in those days - devoted to Daubigny, and in 1892 a Millet exhibition, both in the galleries of Pulchri Studio. Mesdag was once again one of the principal lenders, as he was to subsequent Pulchri exhibitions devoted to modern French art - in 1896 and 1900, for example.

\textsuperscript{20} 247/215.
Pulchri Studio

Given Mesdag's many successes, and particularly the fame he won with his 'Panorama maritime,' it seems curious that he was elected chairman of Pulchri Studio so late. On 1 October 1889 the day finally arrived. With energy and resolve Mesdag led the Schilderkundig Genootschap (or Painters' Society), as it was officially known, until 1907. During his watch Pulchri became much more international. It was represented at many important exhibitions, where Mesdag effectively promoted the professional interests of the participating members. Pulchri Studio and the Hague School became almost synonymous. Whenever modern Dutch art was shown abroad, painters of the Hague School were generally involved and almost all of them belonged to Pulchri.

In the 1880s the artists of the Hague School were still considered innovative, but in the last years of the 19th century they could no longer be regarded as the young avant-garde. Nearly all of them were now established, well-paid artists; their position was uncontested, and many young imitators eagerly adopted their themes and painting method in the hopes of sharing in the glow of their success. For aspiring artists who took a more independent stance vis-à-vis the Hague School and its bastion Pulchri Studio, it was an uphill battle.

As far as Mesdag was concerned, modern art was defined primarily by the Barbizon School, within which he had a definite predilection for Daubigny; he also admired Courbet. That he collected so many works by Antonio Mancini, with his highly unusual painting techniques, may point to a personal sympathy for the Italian which accompanied his admiration for the works' purely artistic qualities. Impressionism, Pointillism, and Symbolism lay outside Mesdag's field of vision; so great was his influence within Pulchri, in fact, that these movements gained little or no entrance to the association.

Although Mesdag had participated - by invitation - in the annual exhibition of Les Vingt in Brussels in 1885, in the years that followed he apparently neglected his contacts with this group of Belgian avant-garde artists. As early as 1886 a new generation was on offer at Les Vingt: Odilon
Redon, James McNeill Whistler, and the Dutch artists Isaac Israëls and George Hendrik Breitner were now among the invités. Jan Toorop, who had joined in the meantime, submitted no less than 21 works. A year later, Seurat and Pissarro were the pezzi grossi. The same Hague School painters who had had to defend themselves against the older generation in the 1870s, could now not stop talking about ‘modernists’ and ‘vandals.’

In 1892 there was even a row over the tableauxvivants at Pulchri, which had long been famous: that year, Albert Verwey read his own poetry beside five scenes from the Old Testament, designed by Marius Bauer in collaboration with Philippe Zilcken. Considered all too modern, this sparked a vociferous protest and was decrised as the work of jokers, the ‘Huns and Vandals of the Nieuwe Gids.’ Mesdag stayed at the helm despite the uproar, but Bauer and Zilcken were forced to resign their administrative posts. Mesdag’s defence of Bauer and Zilcken was a bit lukewarm. He explained to the press there was no question of experimenting with ‘modernists’; the two gentlemen had been on the board for years. Yet the very accusation of modernism was sufficient cause for dropping them, although it was only to preserve the peace.

Clearly, the younger generation had to find its own quarters. This prompted the foundation of the Haagse Kunstkring on 1 May 1891 in the Café Riche, on the corner of the Passage and the Buitenhof. The new society aimed ‘to promote painting, sculpture, literature, music, applied arts, as well as association and cooperation with the practitioners of these various arts’ or, in other words, to be a Dutch embodiment of the new ideal known as the Gesamtkunstwerk. One of the founders was Théophile

de Bock. Although Bock was said to have been bitter about his collaboration on Mesdag's Panorama, there was no animosity between Pulchri and the Kunstkring. Many artists were members of both associations, and in the first years work by Hague School painters, such as the brothers Maris and
Jan Hendrik Weissenbruch, was regularly presented at the Kunstkring. But if the citizens of The Hague wished to see the recent work of Les Vingt, Toorop or Van Gogh, they could do so only at the Haagse Kunstkring.

Mesdag's life as chairman of Pulchri Studio seems to have revolved around tributes, gala dinners, tableaux-vivants, masked balls, birthday parties, wedding feasts and honours. Despite this social schedule he continued to be very active on Pulchri's behalf. At first the association had been housed in the Boterhuis on the Grote Markt; in 1861 it had moved into the Regentenzaal of the Hofje van Nieuwkoop at the end of the Prinsegracht, and in 1886, just before Mesdag became chairman, into premises of its own, complete with exhibition space, at Prinsegracht 57. However, Mesdag had even grander ideas in mind. In 1896 he proposed that the board of Pulchri acquire Lange Voorhout 15, the former residence of Minister Van Tienhoven. In actual fact, together with his brother Taco, Mesdag had advanced the funds with which to purchase property for the society. His proposal was accepted by acclamation. On 9 August 1900 Mesdag laid the first stone for the transformation of the splendid 18th-century building into a worthy seat for the Schilderkundig Genootschap. A year later the exhibition rooms were inaugurated. The purchase of the property was made possible by the Mesdag brothers; the funds were raised by selling a number of paintings donated by members, and a financial contribution from Mesdag and his wife in the form of a gift and a loan. Johan Gram wrote enthusiastically about the Pulchri's new home: ‘Already the hallway leading to those bright, evenly lit rooms is cheerful and refreshing. As one enters, the spacious white marble vestibule puts one in a pleasant frame of mind, the large, well-lit cloakroom keeps one in the desired good humour, the white marble staircase with chased bronze railings and the charming glimpse into the cheerful garden prepare one more and more for what is coming. [...] Not only is the light on the walls even


and mild, but also the oak cornices and domes above them, containing the lanterns, form, along with the dark red fabric of the walls, a harmonious ensemble,
which is very much to the benefit of the displayed art works.' In 1901 Mesdag became an honorary member of Pulchri, in 1906 the Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij followed suit, and in 1907 his chairmanship of Pulchri was converted to an honorary chairmanship. By the time he died in 1915, he had left an indelible mark on the artistic life of The Hague: monumental premises for Pulchri Studio on the Lange Voorhout, a unique panorama on the Zeestraat and a museum of rare quality on the Laan van Meerdervoort.

27 J. Gram, 's-Gravenhage voorheen en thans, The Hague 1905, pp. 120-21: ‘Reeds de gang naar die heldere, gelijkmatige lichtverspreidende zalen is opwekkend en verkwikkend. Stem het wit marmeren, ruime voorportaal den binnentredende aangenaam, houdt de goed verlichte en groote vestiaire hem in de gewenschte goede luim, de wit marmeren trap met gedreven koperen leuning en het bekoorlijke kijkje daarnaast in den lachende tuin bereiden al meer en meer voor op hetgeen te wachten staat. [...] Niet alleen is ‘t vallen van ‘t licht op de wanden gelijkmatig en mild, maar de eikenhouten kroonlijsten en koepels daarboven, waarin de lantaarns gevast zijn, vormen met het donkerrood bekleedsel der vlakken een harmonieus geheel, hetwelk zeer ten bate van de tentoongestelde kunstwerken.’
fig. 1
Hendrik Willem Mesdag, *An interior*, 1867, private collection (photograph courtesy of Stichting Mesdag, Wassenaar)
Cousins and colleagues: the lives of Hendrik Willem Mesdag and Lawrence Alma-Tadema

Hanna Pennock

The painter Lourens Alma Tadema (1836-1912) - more commonly known to the English-speaking world as Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema - was born in 1836. He was a grandson of Riemke Mesdag, and therefore a cousin of the marine painter Hendrik Willem Mesdag (1831-1915), who was five years old at the time. Though it is not certain whether Lawrence and Hendrik saw much of one another as children, they lived nearby in any case: Alma-Tadema in the Frisian village of Dronrijp and thereafter in the provincial capital of Leeuwarden, Mesdag in another northern Dutch city, Groningen. In later life, we know the two painters were good friends and that their immediate families were close as well. Particularly largely unpublished letters shed a great deal of light on their friendship. Alma-Tadema had a profound influence on Mesdag's early development as a painter. Though the art and artistic views of the two cousins eventually diverged, they had a great deal in common: both men married women who likewise became painters, participated intensely in the cultural life of their day, collected pictures and objets d'art, and enjoyed international renown during their lifetimes.

Lawrence's parents were Pieter Tadema, a notary in Dronrijp who died in 1840 (while Lawrence was still small), and Hinke Brouwer, a woman of ‘perseverance and unflagging devotion.’¹ She wanted her son to become a lawyer, but he preferred to paint; indeed, he painted several portraits while he was still in his teens. Though his mother encouraged him, it was nonetheless against her will that Lawrence left for ‘the Catholic country’ in 1852, where he enrolled in the academy of Antwerp.² In 1863 Alma-Tadema married the Frenchwoman Marie Pauline Gressin, with whom he settled in Paris the following year. Two years later the couple moved to Brussels, where their daughters Laurence and Anna were born, and where, in 1869, Marie Pauline died.

Hendrik Willem Mesdag likewise lost a parent - his mother - in childhood; she died in 1835. We know that his father Klaas, a grain merchant who later became a stock-broker and banker, was an art-lover. A collector who was also an amateur painter and draughtsman, he saw to it that his sons Hendrik and Taco learned how to draw.³ In 1868 Klaas wrote his son Hendrik that he had shown someone by the name of Bastiaans his pictures. The visitor liked them so much ‘that he offered me

¹ G. van Mesdag, Het Geslacht Mesdag, n.p. 1946, p. 148. Lawrence would later add his middle name Alma to his last name and, depending on the country in which he was living, spell his first name ‘Laurens’ or ‘Lawrence.’

+ This article was originally published in Dutch in Jong Holland 9 (1993), no. 1, pp. 8-19. Some of the documents cited here as preserved in The Hague, Panorama Mesdag, have now been transferred to the Van Gogh Museum (Museum Mesdag Archive).
one hundred sacks of coffee for the six on the south wall upstairs. I did not know I was so rich!”

When Hendrik eventually went to work for his father, he had a splendid career in banking ahead of him. In 1856 he married Sina van Houten, whose father owned a flourishing timber company. Seven years later their son Klaas was born, but died already at the age of seven. The fortune Sientje inherited from her father in 1866 enabled her husband to fulfil what was apparently a long-cherished

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4 Klaas Mesdag to Hendrik Willem Mesdag and Sientje Mesdag-van Houten, Groningen, 18 October 1868; The Hague, Algemeen Rijksarchief, S. van Houten archive, inv. no. 173 (henceforth Van Houten archive).
dream: he became a painter.’ As he wrote his cousin Lawrence, who was painting in Brussels, in the spring of 1866: ‘I'm 35 years old. I've a wife and child. I've been trained for business, but am not cut out for it. I'm a painter; help me.’

Judging from Alma-Tadema's answer of 22 April, he acted as a mediator between Mesdag and a Dutch colleague, Willem Roelofs (1822-1897), who had been living in Brussels ever since 1847. Roelofs was prepared to take Mesdag on as a pupil for 1,200 francs a year. A comment he made in a letter at about that time suggests that it was the financial aspect of the arrangement that most interested him: ‘In the autumn (September) I'm expecting a new pupil, a cousin of Tadema, Mr Mesdag from Groningen. The 1,200 francs His Honour gives me is nothing to sniff at.’ Alma-Tadema was pleased with his cousin who, having embraced the same profession, had become ‘doubly interesting’ to him.

On 21 May 1866 he wrote Mesdag that while he had not spoken to Roelofs again, he was convinced ‘the deal has been clinched, given the fact that both sides have accepted the conditions without comment.’ Alma-Tadema was writing from London, where he and his wife were visiting friends for ‘some distraction.’ In the end, however, he got more of it than he bargained for. He was staying with the eminent art dealer Ernest Gambart, with whom he had signed a contract in 1864. Gambart had organised a fancy-dress ball for the evening of 16 May and invited the international beau monde. Gas lamps were installed especially for the occasion. In his letter to Mesdag, Alma-Tadema described what happened on the day of the party: ‘A great misfortune has befallen the friends with whom we were staying [...]. Last Wednesday, at eight in the morning, a gas explosion all but demolished their house and its magnificent furnishings. None of us were harmed, but some of the servants were not so lucky. Two of the chambermaids were seriously injured, one of whom has meantime died from her wounds. The gardener was also very badly hurt, while the coachman and the groom were seriously injured as well. [...] Fortunately we were still in bed when all of a sudden we saw our furniture partly destroyed and daylight streaming through a terrible crack in the wall.’ As Alma-Tadema assured Mesdag, he ‘would not
willingly go through such an experience again.’ Yet his own house in London suffered a similar blow when a ship loaded with gunpowder exploded in 1874.

**Mesdag and Alma-Tadema in Brussels**

Before setting off for Brussels, Mesdag and his wife went to Oosterbeek to paint *en plein air*. Roelofs had received a letter from Mesdag in the meantime, to which he replied from Brussels on 27 May 1866: ‘As I’ve already told Alma-Tadema, nothing would give me greater pleasure than helping you with your study of landscape, and I hope to be able to stimulate you to make progress in our art.’ Roelofs heartily approved of Mesdag’s plan to spend the summer making sketches directly from nature, ‘since, if you were here, I could advise you to do nothing better.’

Jeremy Maas described the event in detail; he tells that ‘the Alma-Tademasa hadden woken earlier, and, smelling gas, had, with great presence of mind, opened their bedroom window; when the explosion occurred they clung to each other in terror, as their bedroom lurched to one side, and a wide crack in the wall appeared through which daylight streamed.’ A picture by Alma-Tadema was also heavily damaged by the explosion. See J. Maas, *Gambart: prince of the Victorian art world*, London 1975, pp. 189-99, esp. pp. 194-95.
The first lesson began immediately: ‘Try and rid yourself of all so-called manner and, in a word, try and imitate nature with feeling, but without thinking about others' work. Paint studies of parts, a bit of land for instance, a stand of trees or something of the kind, but always in such a way that it can be grasped in connection with the entire landscape [...]. - These studies [are] in order to become acquainted with nature bit by bit. - Further studies of a whole, preferably very simple subjects. - A meadow with the horizon and a bit of sky [...]. Paint all these studies not so you can bring home something beautiful [...] but for yourself.’

In September 1866 Mesdag arrived in Brussels, where he would remain for three years. At first he painted as Roelofs and Alma-Tadema had advised him to do. Now and then Roelofs went to visit the aspiring artist in his studio, which is apparently where the lessons took place. As the remarks quoted earlier clearly indicate, Roelofs, himself a landscape painter, placed particular emphasis on the study of landscape, and especially on colour and technique. Yet most of Mesdag's paintings from his Brussels period are detailed figure studies or portions of interiors. His penchant for meticulous observation can be attributed in part to his contact with such Brussels Realists as Louis Dubois and Alfred Verwee. More than anything else, however, it betrays Alma-Tadema's influence, as was already apparent to Anna Croiset, a good friend of the Mesdags: ‘They have survived, those dry but nonetheless fruitful studies. Strikingly accurate and scrupulously detailed, they evince stubborn patience and unfailing loyalty to the lofty principle: representing nature as one observes it, down to the most minute details. That was indicative of Alma-Tadema's point of view.’

Alma-Tadema had concentrated on figure pieces which included all the particulars of the setting. One canvas that clearly illustrates Mesdag's debt to his cousin is An interior, painted in 1867 (cf. figs. 1 and 2). The carved wood of the couch and the motifs of the various fabrics and carpets are depicted with the greatest precision. His series of street scenes, in which every stone in the pavement and the walls is shown with equal precision, likewise recalls Alma-Tadema's painstaking manner (fig. 15).

11 Van Houten archive, inv. no. 177: ‘Niets zal mij, zooals ik reeds aan Tadema zeide, aangenamer zijn, als UEd. van nut te kunnen zijn, in het voortzetten Uwer landschapstudie en hoop ik er in te slagen om U vorderingen in onze schoone kunst te doen maken. [...] Tracht u van alle zoo genaamde manier te ontdoen en tracht in een woord de natuur met gevoel maar zonder denken aan het werk van anderen, na te volgen. Schilder studies van gedeelten, bv. een stuk grond, een boomgroep of dergelijke maar toch altijd zóó dat men die in verband met het geheele landschap begrijpen kan [...] - Deze studies om de natuur bij gedeelten te leeren kennen. - Verder studies van een geheel, liefst zeer eenvoudige sujetten - Eene weide met horizon en stuk lucht [...] Schilder al die studies niet om iets mooi's thuis te brengen [...] maar voor u zelf.’
13 See his ‘Theorieën’ in H.F.W. Jeltes, Willem Roelofs: Bizonderheden betreffende zijn leven en zijn werk, Amsterdam 1911, passim.
14 De Bodt, op. cit. (note 7), pp. 67 and 61.
15 Croiset, op. cit. (note 12), p. 432; ‘Nog zijn zij bewaard gebleven, die dorre, maar niet minder vruchtbare studies. Treffend waar en scrupuleus uitvoerig, spreken zij van taal geduld en onbezworen trouw aan het boven alles verheven beginsel: de natuur weêrgeven, zooals zij wordt gezien en tot in de geringste onderdeelen. Het was Tadema's opvatting, die daaruit sprak.’ ‘Nature’ signifies observed reality in this context, the subject of the painting.
16 Poort, op. cit. (note 3), no. 1867.1.
‘Painting won't take orders from anyone’

In two letters from 1867 (the only ones by his hand that the Museum Mesdag preserves) Mesdag, in turn, advised his friend A.J. van Prooijen in Groningen on painting. His comments reveal which of his cousin's views he had absorbed.17

Dated 7 January 1867, by which time Mesdag had been in Brussels for over three months, the first letter is a response to one from Van Prooijen of 20 December 1866 on his work. During the previous summer the two men had apparently discussed painting at length in Oosterbeek. Mesdag wrote of his discovery that even ‘great’ artists had to struggle: ‘I've now observed three really great masters working at close range, namely Bilders,18 Tadema and Roelofs, and all three of them have to fuss and slave over

17 The second letter is to Van Prooijen; it is not clear to whom the first is addressed, but it was almost certainly also intended for him. Albert Jurardus van Prooijen (1834-1898) was born in Groningen. He was three years younger than Mesdag, whom he must have known in childhood. He painted town views and landscapes.

18 In Oosterbeek, during the summer of 1866, Mesdag had taken lessons from the landscape painter Johannes Warnardus Bilders (1811-1890).
their work just as much as we do, and often even more.’ He continued to believe that ‘rich tone and depth can only be got working constantly on a piece,’ a notion that derived from Roelofs: ‘Roelofs's advice is to paint thickly by all means, that is, to apply plenty of paint, preferably without oil or turpentine [...] I hope you understand what I'm saying: not thick colours, for of all people he is the one who achieves that haze and those powerful colours only by over painting repeatedly.’

Mesdag thought it essential to ‘just to keep grinding away,’ to work a lot and learn a lot, ‘that's all I intend to do. [...] I'm still working on my still life - and four weeks ago I thought it was almost done. I work on it daily from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon and it's still far from finished. It's while one is actually working that one realises repeatedly how much more powerful nature is in the end, and that one can only expect to arrive at halfway matching colours by painting something over and over again.’ It is best ‘to keep on searching [...]. Whenever I ask Roelofs and Tadema what manner of painting I should follow, they both say we can't say anything about that, we ourselves don't know how pictures get painted, now one way and then another. Always follow your intuition at the moment; painting won't take orders from anyone.'
In the second letter, dated 2 November 1867, Mesdag reiterated the importance of painting from nature. He kept on making studies because he had not yet managed to produce a painting 'that was really good. That's why I just go on painting pieces after nature. It can be a piece of ground, a flower, some grass, or some such thing; or something from my studio or a stairway landing. So whenever
you're not working on your paintings, do what I do, for instance: from your window a view of the river A - of a ship or something, and I think you'll see for yourself how different it becomes and how powerful the colour gets.'

These last tips in particular can probably be traced to Alma-Tadema. Making a study of a corner of his atelier, including a detailed rendition of the fabrics and motifs, coincides with Alma-Tadema's approach. Laura and Nellie Epps, who later began painting under Alma-Tadema's watchful eye as well, worked in the same fashion (figs. 11-14). Whereas Mesdag had a view of the street in Brussels, Van Prooijen looked out on the water. The point was to reproduce a slice of carefully observed reality, framed by the window. The idea of painting a stairway landing certainly stems from Alma-Tadema, who had often done so when he was starting out. It was a good exercise not only in perspective, but also in rendering shadow and light (fig. 3).

Mesdag was also busily studying perspective, which he found ‘not so amusing’ but important. Though he had obviously made progress, he felt he still had a long way to go: ‘Meanwhile I'm gradually beginning to place greater demands on myself, which is why I'm less satisfied with my work. Yet I always enjoy working, and hope that with perseverance I'll someday learn how to make a good painting, which demands so much time that one really despairs of ever getting that far.’

The artist concluded his letter with good advice, revealing something of his business sense: ‘Work as much as possible with pleasure and good cheer. Try making drawings in the evening, and apply yourself: at least they are easier to sell than paintings.’

20 2 November 1867; The Hague, Museum Mesdag: ‘[…] Daarom schilder ik maar altijd brokken botweg naar de natuur. t'Zij een brok grond, een bloem wat gras of zoo iets; of wel iets van mijn atelier [of] een trapportaal. - Wanneer gij nu eens niet aan uwe schilderijen werkt, doe dat dan ook, bijv: uit uw raam een gezicht op der A - op een schip of zoo iets en mij dunkt gij zult zelve zien welk ander werk en kracht aan kleur er in komt.’

21 Alma-Tadema painted four staircases between 1854 and 1856; see Vern G. Swanson. The biography and catalogue raisonné of the paintings of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, London 1990, nos. 15, 24, 26 and 27.

Hendrik Willem Mesdag, *Interior with stairs*, 1868, The Hague, Panorama Mesdag
Breakthrough

In the meantime, Alma-Tadema’s star was rising. At first he painted scenes set in the Middle Ages and in ancient Egypt; later on he preferred Classical Antiquity. He received awards, including a gold medal at the Tentoonstelling van Levende Meesters in Amsterdam as early as 1862; in 1867 he was represented at the Exposition Universelle in Paris with 14 pictures, all but one of which belonged to his dealer Ernest Gambart. His prices rose commensurate with his fame. In 1868 he submitted two pictures to the Exposition de la Bienfaisance in Brussels, for which he asked high prices. Roelofs was rather disdainful, but perhaps also somewhat jealous: ‘Alma Tadema has also deigned to send a couple [of pictures], one that's been in Arti - not very good - and another bit of trash he threw some extra paint on for the occasion. His pretentiousness beats everything and his prices are absurd: 12â®francs! and the little one for 3â®!’

Alma-Tadema submitted a painting to the Paris Salon that same year: *La siesta en Grèce* (Madrid, Prado). By this time his fame was greater in Paris than in Holland or Belgium. Indeed he claimed that a French amateur who expressed interest in his pictures did so more out of a desire ‘to own one of my works than because he admired it.’ He received good notices and no less than four caricatures of his painting had already been made, ‘something that makes one famous. […] Everyone knows me there.’ Yet he was dissatisfied with the head of the old man in his Salon painting: it seemed ‘to be any old man one might come across in the street. So I got a brush and spent a few mornings in the Louvre studying some ancient Greek heads.’

Mesdag, too, was gradually becoming an independent talent. By January 1869 things were apparently going so well for him that he was overdoing it in his father's eyes. This called for a bit of paternal advice: ‘Now that you're being successful you're on a slippery road. Ambition is absolutely necessary but can also get out of hand.’ Following a sojourn on the German island of Norderney, where he discovered the sea as a subject for painting, in the spring of 1869 Mesdag decided to settle in The Hague, in order to have his favourite motif close at hand. His breakthrough came

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23 Letter to Mr P. VerLoren van Themaat, Brussels, 25 January 1868; The Hague, Gemeentearchief; published by Jeltes, op. cit. (note 8), p. 137: ‘Alma Tadema heeft goed gevonden er ook een paar te zenden Een dat in Arti geweest is - niet gelukkig en een ander klein vodje dat hij bij die gelegenheid wat heeft opgelapt. Hij heeft een pretentie, die alles te boven gaat en vraagt ridicule prijzen: 12â® fr., voor het kleine 3â®!!’ The pictures involved were, respectively, *La lune de miel* (Swanson, op cit. [note 21], no. 98?) and *La sieste* (ibid., no. 99), which were shown by the Société Néerlandaise de Bienfaisance: see H.H. [Henri Hijmans], *Journal des Beaux-Arts* (31 January 1868), p. 13. With thanks to Saskia de Bodt.

24 Alma-Tadema to Mesdag, Brussels, 8 June 1868; Van Houten archive, inv. no. 167. This letter is the only known evidence that Alma-Tadema was in Paris at that time and planning to live there; see Swanson, op. cit. (note 21), pp. 34-35. *La siesta en Grèce* (ibid., no. 101), is a large, elaborate version of the diminutive panel he had shown in Brussels (see note 23).

25 Klaas Mesdag to Hendrik and Sientje Mesdag, Groningen, 4 January 1869; Van Houten archive, inv. no. 173.

26 An additional reason for settling in The Hague was that Sam van Houten, Sientje's brother, had become a member of the Dutch Parliament (Tweede Kamer) that same spring. The Mesdags moved into the house next to his, which was empty; see Croiset, op. cit. (note 12), p. 435.
in 1870, when his *Breakers in the North Sea* (Wassenaar, Collection J. Poort) won a gold medal at the Paris Salon. Thereafter he devoted himself primarily to marine pieces and his brushwork became looser.

After the death of his wife Pauline in May 1869, Alma-Tadema did not do much more painting. His own health was poor and at the suggestion of his dealer Ernest Gambart, he went to London in December of that year for an operation. While he was there, it was through the English painter Ford Madox Brown that he met one of Brown's pupils, Laura Theresa Epps (1852-1909), and fell in love with her on the spot. The second time Alma-Tadema saw the young woman, he is said to have asked in his broken English: ‘Vy have I never seen any of your paintings? I know the work of both your sisters and dey are very goood [sic]!’ To which Laura replied, ‘You haven't seen any because I haven't done any! I am not a painter I am a musician.’ ‘I'm sure you be able to draw and paint,’ countered Alma-Tadema. ‘Vy not let me give you some lessons. I shall teach you how to paint!’27 They married in 1871.

27 According to Sylvia Gosse; quoted in Swanson, op. cit. (note 21), p. 159.
Before Alma-Tadema left Brussels for London he received an interesting request from the Home Secretary in The Hague. Thanks to a letter he wrote to Mesdag we are well informed about it, since he enclosed a copy of his answer to the minister. Though Alma-Tadema's letter is not dated, it must have been written in Brussels in May or June 1870. The Home Secretary had asked him to become director and professor (‘directeur l¹ Hoogleeraar’) at the Rijksacademie that was to be established in Amsterdam.\(^{26}\) Alma-Tadema's refusal was somewhat hesitant: ‘Having pondered the matter for some time I must admit that it would be daring indeed for a young person such as myself, who is busy finding his way and thus still [has] little experience and only modest talent at his disposal, to place himself at the head of the art academy which officially must be considered the first of our country.’ To the copy of his reply to the minister he sent Mesdag he added: ‘I think it's important that people in Holland know what I have written, for my words could be misinterpreted. Therefore please keep the enclosed in case it is needed.’\(^{29}\) His designation of Mesdag as his spokesman in Holland would seem to suggest a certain vanity on Alma-Tadema's part.

Despite his misgivings, it appears that Alma-Tadema was interviewed for the post nonetheless. On 2 July Mesdag informed a mutual friend, the Belgian painter Alfred Verwee, that Alma-Tadema had been in the Netherlands and that he could understand why he had declined the appointment.\(^{30}\) We may assume that Alma-Tadema had no regrets about his decision to become a painter. In September 1870 he left for London once and for all, taking with him his two daughters and his sister Artje. A brilliant future lay ahead of him.\(^{31}\)

\(^{28}\) See M. de Roever, ‘August Allebé (1838-1927), zijn leven, zijn loopbaan,’ in exhib. cat. Waarde Heer Allebé: Leven en werk van August Allebé, Haarlem (Teylers Museum), Dordrecht (Dordrechts Museum) & Assen (Provinciaal Museum van Drenthe) 1988, p. 31


\(^{29}\) Van Houten archive, inv. no. 167: ‘Na veel wikken en wegen moet ik bekennen, dat het wel gewaagd zoude zijn voor een jong mensch als ik ben, die bezig is zijnen weg te banen en dus nog weinig ondervinding, daarbij slechts zwakke middelen tot zijne dienst heeft, zich aan het hoofd te stellen van het kunstonderwijs, dat officieel als het eerste van ons land moet worden beschouwd. […] Ik houd er veel aan dat men in Holland wete wat ik geschreven heb want mijn woorden mogten valse geïnterpreteerd worden. [D]aarom gelieve nevengaande te bewaren voor bij gelegenheid.’

\(^{30}\) ‘Notre ami Tadema vous aura parlé de sa visite en Hollande; je regrette pas du tout pour lui qu’il a refusé le professorat à l’académie d’Amsterdam’; The Hague, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (hereafter RKD); published in Poort, op. cit. (note 3), p. 514. On 1 October 1870 Bastiaan de Poorter was appointed director. According to his ‘Necrologium,’ ‘It was only after Alma-Tadema had refused to accept the conditions under which the government had offered him the directorship that the choice fell to Mr de Poorter’; see Nederlandsche Kunstdbode 2 (1880), no. 5, p 39. This also suggests there was further discussion.

\(^{31}\) Various reasons for his departure were given. Besides his love for Laura Epps the threat of the Franco-Prussian War has also been cited; see Swanson, op. cit. (note 21), p. 36. Much later Alma-Tadema himself gave another, obvious reason: ‘Simply because I believed that there would be a future for my art there’; see Anon., ‘Bij Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema,’ Algemeen Handelsblad, 9 January 1911 (the evening edition).
Overseas contacts

Although Alma-Tadema and Mesdag were now living at quite some distance from one another, the quantities of notes and letters that have survived show that they stayed in close touch. In the 1870s they saw one another regularly. During these visits they inevitably discussed artistic matters.

Together with his brother-in-law Sam van Houten, Mesdag had a house built on the Laan van Meerdervoort in The Hague, containing studios for both himself and his wife (fig. 4). It was in this house that Lawrence and Laura, who had recently married, stayed with them in August 1871.

As for Alma-Tadema, he bought Townshend House in London, near Regent's Park. His dealer Ernest Gambart introduced him to the artistic and cultural life of London. As he proudly wrote his friend Verwee even before settling in the capital, ‘Je connais déjà toute la clique préraphaëlite.’ Not only did the Alma-Tademas attend other people's soirees, they also organised their own ‘At Homes.’ Frequently attended by celebrated guests, these weekly gatherings were spent conversing, dining and concertising. The company was always international: ‘This afternoon (Monday) was our reception as usual, when I must speak so many languages one after the other that it sometimes comes out all jumbled up.’

32 In Brussels Sientje had also started painting; see Croiset, op. cit. (note 12), p. 433.
33 London, 26 January 1870; RKD. With thanks to Saskia de Bodt.
Alma-Tadema’s circle of friends included the literary scholar and archeologist Carel Vosmaer (1826-1888), who, like Mesdag, lived in The Hague. The artist often turned to him for information about ancient details in his pictures. With the help of the opus numbers Alma-Tadema assigned to his paintings and watercolours, Vosmaer began to assemble a catalogue of his friend's oeuvre, but died in 1888 before he could finish the task. The unpublished manuscript is still a mine of information about Alma-Tadema’s work.

On 26 July 1871, Alma-Tadema wrote Vosmaer that he planned to wed in three days’ time. ‘On Saturday [29 July] I'm getting married, and will be in The Hague from 8 until 15 August to visit my friend Vosmaer, naturally.' On this first stay with the Mesdags, however, the couple remained not a week but a month. Alma-Tadema did little work at the time; he was on his honeymoon, after all. It was probably then that he painted the small portrait of his wife Laura that is still in the Museum Mesdag (fig. 9). In 1872 Mesdag paid a return visit to the Alma-Tademas, which was his first exposure to London. Then in December 1872 Alma-Tadema

36 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.
37 London, 26 July 1871; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet: ‘Zaturdag [29 juli 1871] ga ik trouwen en kom inden Haag van 8e August tot 15e natuurlijk vriend Vosmaer bezoeken.’ See also Swanson, op. cit. (note 21), p. 39. In the ‘copy book’ (copie boek) that Mesdag kept of his business correspondence, a letter to Pilgeram & Lefèvre of 30 July states that Alma-Tadema and his wife were expected to arrive several days hence; on 29 September he writes H. Wallis that Alma-Tadema is his guest for four (crossed out) several weeks. Of these copy books, five from the period 1871-75 are preserved in the archive of the Panorama Mesdag; see also Poort, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 53-56. On 7 November 1871 Mesdag also wrote to Verwee that Alma-Tadema had spent a month with them and that they had talked about art; RKD; see also Poort, op. cit. (note 3), p. 515. All these letters have recently been published: J. Poort, *H.W. Mesdag: de Copieboeken of de Wording van de Haagse School*, Wassenaar 1996.
38 That Alma-Tadema did indeed work during his visit in The Hague can be inferred from a note he made on a newspaper article about the prices fetched at an auction: ‘[...] on which I was working during my visit to The Hague in 1871’; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.
39 As early as the spring of 1871 Mesdag had wanted to visit his cousin in London, but Alma-Tadema was then still busy moving house: Mesdag to Verwee, The Hague, 3 July 1871; see Poort, op. cit. (note 3), p. 515. The visit was postponed until May or June 1872; see the copy of a letter from Mesdag to Ch. Deschamps, 10 June 1872 and to Pilgeram & Lefèvre, n.d. [c. 1 August 1872]; The Hague, archive of the Panorama Mesdag.
and his wife arrived unexpectedly on the Mesdags' doorstep and stayed two days. In his friend's honour, Mesdag organised a dinner party to which he also invited Vosmaer: ‘Our friend Alma-Tadema has arrived here unexpectedly with his wife; he is staying until Saturday; would you and Madame do us the pleasure of coming to dine with us tomorrow afternoon at five?’

40 Thursday, 19 December 1872; The Hague, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Vosmaer archive, inv. no. 253. Mesdag probably met Vosmaer through Alma-Tadema. In a short letter of 4 April 1871 he invited Vosmaer to come look at two paintings in his studio (ibid.). Later on, Vosmaer would write about Mesdag's art and about his collection.
It is not known whether the two couples visited one another in 1873. Two letters from Laura Tadema to Sientje Mesdag have been preserved, illustrated with composition sketches and a caricatural drawing (fig. 5). In the second she writes about Tad (as she called him), about his work and the fact that she and her sister Nellie had had three and a half hours of perspective lessons from him, using the base of a column. She also enthusiastically described the remodelling of their house: her studio had become ‘exceedingly pretty,’ furnished entirely in 17th-century Dutch style. The room had become available when her sister-in-law Artje, who had lived with them, ‘steamed off’ to Puerto Rico to get married. According to Alma-Tadema she was very content there; her letters fairly ‘burst the envelopes, there is so much happiness described in them.’

To judge from a letter Artje wrote her cousin Hendrik Willem Mesdag from Puerto Rico, the Mesdags were back in London in the spring of 1874. The same letter makes it clear that the Alma-Tademas thoroughly enjoyed their visits. But Mesdag’s motives for visiting London were not solely personal: he always tended to his commercial interests as well. On 20 January 1870 the artist wrote Verwee that he thought establishing oneself in England was important. Though he started negotiations with London art dealers at this point, it was not until 1871 that Mesdag began doing serious business with them and that his work was regularly shown in galleries and exhibitions. On 30 July 1871 he wrote with evident self-assurance that he had no doubts about his future there. ‘Visiting your exhibition I hope to see that my pictures look so well as you say’ was how he announced his arrival on more than one occasion;

41 N.d. [September 1873] and 25-26 October [1873] respectively; Van Houten archive, inv. no. 168. The first sketch is after a painting by herself, the small sketch below it after the painting *Water pets* by Alma-Tadema, which assumed its definitive form in 1874; the present location of the work is unknown; see Swanson, op. cit. (note 21), no. 171.
42 Alma-Tadema to Vosmaer, London, 14 September 1873 and 26 December 1873 respectively; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.
43 22 July 1874; Van Houten archive, inv. no. 175: ‘We’ve heard from the Londoners about your visit to Townshend House, but I haven’t been able to make out how long you stayed. Were things as they used to be, did you visit Hampton Court again, and did you have such a turbulent return in the evening? I still often think of the pleasant distraction your visit afforded us then’ (‘Van de Londoners vernamen we uw bezoek in Townshend House, ‘k heb echter niet kunnen opmaken, hoe lang gij er vertoefd hebt. Was het daar nogal bij ’t oude en hebt gij Hampton-Court ook weer bezocht en zulk een woelige terugreis gehad, ‘s avonds? Ik denk nog vaak aan de aangename afleiding welke uw bezoek ons toen verschafte heeft’).
45 To Pilgeram & Lefèvre; The Hague, archive of the Panorama Mesdag. Many of the copies of Mesdag’s letters are addressed to art dealers in London. There is still no detailed investigation of his business contacts with the English capital.
fig. 5
Page from a letter from Laura Tadema-Epps to Sientje Mesdag-van Houten, 25-26 October 1873, The Hague, Algemeen Rijksarchief
the dealers in this case were Wallis & Son, but there is a copy of a similar letter addressed to Pilgeram & Lefèvre, in which he gave Alma-Tadema's house as his London address. His contacts with these dealers had begun already in 1870. In 1867 Henry Wallis had taken over Ernest Gambart's French Gallery, Pall Mall. Léon Lefèvre, a nephew of Gambart, and F.J. Pilgeram assumed the management of Gambart's King Street gallery in January 1870. Most likely Alma-Tadema was instrumental in bringing his cousin into contact with these dealers, who after all were the successors of Gambart, his own promoter in England.

In the summer of 1874 the Alma-Tademasmay have returned to The Hague again, en route to Germany. And Mesdag appears to have been in London a year later for the spring exhibitions at the Wallis Gallery and the Royal Academy. There is thus reason to believe that the friendship between the two artists was still alive. Regarding a debt Vosmaer owed him at one point, Alma-Tadema suggested that he 'give it to Mesdag when you have the chance, since I always have something to settle with him.' On another visit to the continent in November 1875, the Alma-Tademasmay have stopped in The Hague again; they were certainly there in early January 1877, for the wedding of a niece of Alma-Tadema's.

Not much correspondence has survived subsequent to 1877, but Alma-Tadema's letters to Vosmaer make it clear that he was still in regular contact with Mesdag. There are occasional indications that they saw one another from time to time, such as a postcard from Mesdag in 1879 announcing

46 Copy of a letter dated 14 March 1874; The Hague, archive of the Panorama Mesdag.
47 29 April 1874; The Hague, archive of the Panorama Mesdag.
49 Swanson, op. cit. (note 21), p. 46.
50 Copies of letters to Pilgeram & Lefèvre, 16 February 1875 and to H. Wallis & Son, 4 March 1875 respectively; The Hague, archive of the Panorama Mesdag.
51 London, 31 March 1875; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.
52 Swanson, op. cit. (note 21), pp. 49 and 51 respectively. Letter from Alma-Tadema to Vosmaer, London, 14 December 1876; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet. See also Bastet, op. cit. (note 35), p. 135. Swanson thinks that this niece was a daughter of Mesdag, but he had no other children. Her father may have been Sam van Houten, Mesdag's brother-in-law and neighbour.
that ‘This spring we took a trip to Brussels, Paris, London and saw a great many pictures ... including some really bad ones.’ That same year, in the autumn, Alma-Tadema was in The Hague, again on his way to Germany. Together with Mesdag, he attended an editorial meeting of De Nederlandsche Spectator; Vosmaer played an important role in this periodical. During this visit, the two artists may have discussed an exhibition of work by members of the Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij at Grosvenor Gallery, which had been arranged through Alma-Tadema.

Though there is little evidence that Alma-Tadema and Mesdag were still in touch in the following decades, we may assume they were. It stands to reason that the contact would not have been as close as before: by this period, both artists had acquired international reputations, which must have placed considerable demands on their time. In 1885 Alma-Tadema moved to a larger house in Grove End Road, which he extensively remodelled to make even more luxurious. By 1888 he was ready to receive guests such as Mesdag and Vosmaer. ‘Here we are now at 17 Grove End Rd.,’ he wrote the latter in the spring. ‘Not yet completely installed, but enough to express the hope that you and your wife will honour us with a visit. Mesdag has already promised to come in May. May I therefore ask that you discuss the matter with them to make certain you are here at the same time, and that you provide us with some pleasant, memorable days enjoying art and friendship together?’ As it happened Vosmaer died three months later, before he could take Alma-Tadema up on his invitation; is not known whether Mesdag ever visited his cousin in his new house.

In 1901 Alma-Tadema served on the committee formed to organise the celebration of Mesdag’s 70th birthday. For the menu he drew a portrait of his cousin wreathed

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53 Card to Jan Kruseman at Soerabaya, The Hague, 30 May 1879; The Hague, Gemeentearchief: ‘Dit voorjaar maakten wij een uitstapje naar Brussel, Parijs, London en zagen een massa schilderijen ... waaronder veel slechte.’

54 Bastet, op. cit. (note 35), p. 137; see also p. 8. On p. 139 Bastet states that Alma-Tadema was with Vosmaer also in 1882.

55 Mesdag to David Bles, The Hague, 18 November 1879; The Hague, Gemeentearchief.

56 Alma-Tadema to Vosmaer, London, 12 March 1888; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet: ‘Hier zijn we nu in 17 Grove End Rd. Noch niet geheel geïnstalleerd maar toch genoegzaam om de wensch te uitem dat gij & vrouw ons met een bezoek zoudt vereeren. Mesdag heeft ons al beloofd in Mey te komen Mag ik u dus verzoeken het met hun zoo te overleggen dat gij niet dezelfde tijd zoudt kiezen & ons eenige aangename gewagvolle dagen te verschaffen gewijd aan gezamentlijk genot in kunst & vriendschap?’
by raised glasses (fig. 6). In 1905 the Alma-Tademas sent a photograph of themselves with best wishes for the New Year (fig. 7), and three years later Laura wrote Sientje a long letter to thank her for ‘the Hague biscuits’ and bring her up to date on family news. The last letters date from 1909 and 1911. In 1909, Laura Tadema sent Mesdag a letter of condolence.

57 He had borrowed the idea from a drawing in honour of himself, made when he was knighted in 1899. For an illustration, see Russell Ash, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, New York 1990. I am grateful to Teio Meendendorp for this information.

58 London, 28 December 1908; Van Houten archive, inv. no. 168.
following the death of his wife: ‘we did love her, and are sad that it is so many years since we saw her.’\textsuperscript{59} Laura herself died that same year. Alma-Tadema wrote his cousin about her illness and about what a heavy blow her death had been to him: ‘precisely three weeks ago the best of all women passed away, for me at least that's what she was entirely.’\textsuperscript{60} In an interview he gave in 1911, Alma-Tadema spoke of having visited Mesdag recently in The Hague.\textsuperscript{61} That was to be the last time they saw one another. Alma-Tadema died in 1912, Mesdag in 1915.

### Mesdag and Alma-Tadema as collectors

Both Mesdag and Alma-Tadema were insatiable collectors. Their houses were richly furnished and Alma-Tadema in particular was fond of combining the most divergent styles. In 1877 he still had to think twice about purchasing two antique embroidered cushions: ‘10 guilders will buy a lot of potatoes. I mustn't spend so much on antiques.’\textsuperscript{62} At the time of his death, however, his collection of objets d'art and pictures comprised over 1,500 items.\textsuperscript{63} Mesdag collected primarily Barbizon and Hague School

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{59} Letter to Sina van Houten (daughter of Sam van Houten), London, 21 March 1909; The Hague, archive of the Panorama Mesdag.
\item\textsuperscript{60} London, 5 September 1909; The Hague, archive of the Panorama Mesdag.
\item\textsuperscript{61} Anon., op. cit. (note 31).
\item\textsuperscript{62} Alma-Tadema to Piet Stortenbeker, London, 13, 24 and 29 January 1877; The Hague, Gemeentearchief: ‘[...] voor 10 koopt men nog al vrij wat aardappelen. Ik mag zoo veel geld niet voor antiquiteiten geven.’
\item\textsuperscript{63} Catalogue of the well-known and interesting collection of antique furniture and objets d'art formed by the late Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, London (Hampton & Sons), 9-13, 16 June 1913.
\end{itemize}
paintings. At its earliest stages his taste was apparently formed in part by his younger, but more worldly, cousin; as Anna Croiset put it: ‘there is reason to believe the friendship with Tadema and his family caused Mesdag's taste and artistic sense to develop and improve.’ In 1887 Mesdag's collection was so large that he had to build a museum beside his house on the Laan van Meerdervoort, which he later presented to the state: in 1903 it became the Rijksmuseum H.W. Mesdag. After his death in 1915, his estate was sold. Alma-Tadema and Mesdag also collected one another's work, as well as work by other members of their collective family.

As early as 1868, when Mesdag was still living in Brussels, he had his eye on Alma-Tadema's picture The education of the children of Clovis (private collection), which was completed in October of that year. Apparently he wrote his father that he wanted to buy it. Mesdag senior, himself an art collector, was not surprised: ‘that his new Clovis makes your mouth water I can easily imagine and understand, but I must advise you against such things.’ He also took the opportunity to give him the practical advice of shortening the lessons his son Klaas was receiving, so that ‘the Master will speak just as much but cost you less money.’ The father presumably objected to the purchase because Hendrik had bought another work by Alma-Tadema shortly before, which now belongs to the Museum Mesdag: Boating (fig. 8) is an anecdotal scene of Roman life, showing a young Roman drawing a skiff closer to the water's edge for his beloved. Alma-Tadema's first wife Pauline probably modelled for the Roman lady. The palette of this early work is still moderate, whereas that of his later pictures is brighter and more vibrant. Judging from an X-ray, the picture was painted over another, entirely different scene.

A second acquisition was the previously mentioned portrait of Laura Tadema, which Alma-Tadema presented to Sientje (fig. 9). The work dates from August 1871, while the Alma-Tademas were on their honeymoon. It was probably painted at the home of the Mesdags,

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64 Croiset, op. cit. (note 12), p. 432: ‘[…] er is reden te gelooven, dat de vriendschappelijke omgang met Tadema en zijne familie op Mesdag's smaak en kunstzin ontwikkeld en veredelend werkte.’
66 Sale catalogue: Lijst van schetsen etc., The Hague (Panorama Mesdag) 21-22 January 1916; Voorwerpen uit de collectie Mesdag, Amsterdam (F. Muller) 1916 (the sale was cancelled); The notable private collection of the famous modern Dutch artist the late Hendrik Willem Mesdag, New York (The American Art Galleries), 8-10 March 1920.
67 9 October 1868; Van Houten archive, inv. no. 173.
fig. 9
though the interior cannot be identified with theirs. In the months before and after their wedding he portrayed his wife several times, but eventually stopped for fear that he might ‘paint her out of my life.’” Despite her typically English demeanour, Laura often modelled for Alma-Tadema's Roman scenes. In this portrait she wears her hair up, à l'antique.

In 1877 Mesdag bought the narrow, horizontal Roman gardens, described in Alma-Tadema's list of opus numbers as ‘A panel [sic] for mr. H.W. Mesdag's Studio door’ (fig. 10). Still mounted on the original English stretcher, the painting never served this particular purpose. Alma-Tadema used parts of the picture more than once in other contexts. Roman gardens is a capriccio in which the painter combined various individual elements. The background, with statues of Hermes (Rome, Vatican Museum) and Hercules, and the fountain, were inspired by the Villa Borghese. Mesdag's estate also included a watercolour and the original drawing for the menu in honour of his 70th birthday (fig. 6), both by Alma-Tadema.

**Laura and Nellie Epps**

Mesdag also owned several works by Laura Tadema. Laura and her sister Ellen (Nellie) Epps (1850-1929) belonged to a London family known as ‘Epps the chemists,’ in token of the fact that their grandfather, father and uncle were pioneers in the field of homeopathic medicine. Laura started out studying drawing under Ford Madox Brown, then took lessons from her future husband. She painted primarily flower still lifes and women and children in a style reminiscent of the 17th-century Dutch masters of the high-gloss finish, known as fijnschilders. Her predilection for this period is further evidenced by the 17th-century Dutch furnishing of her studio.

The mirror of 1872 (fig. 11) is one of Laura's early efforts. This finely painted still life contains a self-portrait at the easel seen as a reflection in the mirror. The work is essentially a double portrait, Alma-Tadema's presence being symbolised by the tulip. In another double portrait, this one by Alma-Tadema himself, dating from 1871 (Leeuwarden, Fries Museum), a tulip also serves as an allusion to his nationality, while the rose signifies Laura's English background. The still life with crocuses against a Japanese tray also dates from 1872 (fig. 12). The contents of Mesdag's

68 Swanson, op. cit. (note 21), p. 163.

residence that were sold at auction included two more paintings and a watercolour by Laura.

Like her sister, Nellie Epps also took lessons from Ford Madox Brown and then from Alma-Tadema. In 1875 she married the writer, poet and literary critic Edmund William Gosse, whom she had met at one of the Pre-Raphaelite
The organisation of their wedding was left entirely to the Alma-Tademas, to whom the couple remained close for the rest of their lives. Through Alma-Tadema, Gosse became acquainted with his Dutch colleague Carel Vosmaer.

Little is known about Nellie's painted oeuvre, which must have consisted primarily of landscapes. Mesdag owned two of her pictures. One of them - sold after his death and presently in private hands (fig. 13) - is a portrait of Laura Tadema emerging from her bathroom in Townshend House. Alma-Tadema's influence is manifest in the meticulous rendering of detail. The work gives us a glimpse of the sumptuous interior, with a large, 17th-century Dutch linen cupboard, rugs, flowered wallpaper, pictures and a basket of keys on the chair. Alma-Tadema had taken the cupboard.

with him when he left Belgium. Together with a matching bedstead, it figures in his *A birthchamber, 17th century* (London, Victoria and Albert Museum) of 1869.\(^7\) Alma-Tadema's collection of old Dutch cupboards was destroyed in the aforementioned explosion of a gunpowder ship in 1874. With what remained, he furnished the room in Townshend House known as the Panel Chamber.

\(^{71}\) Swanson, op. cit. (note 21), no. 110.
The picture by Nellie Epps in the Museum Mesdag was probably painted especially for Mesdag and his wife (fig. 14). It shows the *Hall in Townshend House*, a ‘salon in which two columns enhance the impression of a Pompeian casa.’\(^{72}\) The precise rendering of every detail must have reminded Mesdag of his own early oeuvre, such as the *Interior* (fig. 1). Both of Alma-Tadema's daughters figure in the picture: Laurence appears behind her younger sister Anna (cf. fig. 16). That same year, 1873, Alma-Tadema painted their portrait (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum; see also pp. 182, 194).

The picture seen in the background of *Hall in Townshend House* is an early work by Mesdag belonging to the series of streets he made under Alma-Tadema's guidance (fig. 15). Painted in 1867 or 1868, it hung at first in Alma-Tadema's studio.\(^{73}\) Whether Alma-Tadema purchased the picture or received it as a gift is not known; after his death it was sold along with the rest of his estate.\(^{74}\) Several authors have called it a curiosity from the first stage of Mesdag's career. According to Vosmaer, it was prompted by Alma-Tadema's advice ‘to study whatever he saw before him strictly and faithfully’ during the winter.

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72 C. Vosmaer, ‘Een en ander,’ *Feuilleton*; galley proof in Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.
74 *Catalogue of the well-known and interesting collection*, cit. (note 63), *Study of a road*, no. 651 (present location unknown).
fig. 14
Nellie Gosse-Epps, Hall in Townshend House, 1873, The Hague, Museum Mesdag
fig. 15
Hendrik Willem Mesdag, *A street*, 1867 or 1868, present location unknown

fig. 16
Lawrence Alma-Tadema with his two daughters Anna (left) and Laurence, c. 1910, The Hague, Panorama Mesdag
months, when it was impossible to work outside. But the most delightful anecdote about the canvas was recorded by Alma-Tadema himself, in a letter to Mesdag of 1868: 'They've finally begun paving our street; a frightful racket, as you can imagine. [...] Speaking of streets, a few days ago while I was upstairs sitting [in my studio] and staring, and my eldest daughter was keeping me company, she said to me - Papa, est-ce qu'il n'y a donc jamais du monde qui passe là? and pointed to your street study.'

After Mesdag became famous, his fluent brushwork was associated with Roelofs's sketchlike manner more often than it was with Alma-Tadema's fine touch. Yet Alma-Tadema thought he should also receive some of the credit for Mesdag's success. As he put it rather acidly in 1909, 'those [journals] always give such peculiar information that it's impossible to imagine where they get it. I remember that in one or two of those very favourable articles about Sientje [written after her death], you were always called a pupil of Roelofs.' Alma-Tadema was right. Mesdag was indeed greatly indebted to his cousin, who not only taught him the foundations of art but also helped to form his taste. Moreover, it was through Alma-Tadema that Mesdag became known in England. Although contact between the two artists was most intensive around 1870, they were in fact lifelong friends.

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75 He states also that it was painted from Mesdag's studio at 244, Rue Rogier; C. Vosmaer, Onie hedendaagsche schilders: Hendrik Willem Mesdag, Amsterdam 1882.
76 Brussels, 8 June 1868; Van Houten archive, inv. no. 167: 'Men is eindelijk begonnen met onze straat te plaveyien eene verschrikkelijke herrie zoo als ligt te begrijpen valt. [...] A propos van straat gesproken voor een paar dagen toen ik boven zat te koekeloeren en mijne oudste dochter mij wat gezelschap hield zoo zeide zij mij - Papa est ce qu'il n'y a donc jamais du monde qui passe là? en ze wees mij je straat studie.' Alma-Tadema's estate included a painting by Mesdag, entitled Shipping, and a watercolour by Sientje; see Catalogue of the well-known and interesting collection, cit. (note 63), nos. 573 and 678 respectively. In 1892 Alma-Tadema painted a view from a window which may have been inspired by Mesdag's Street: Swanson, op. cit. (note 21), no. 149.
77 Op. cit. (note 60): 'die [journalen] geven de inlichtingen altijd zoo zonderling dat men niet begrijpt van waar ze de nodige inlichtingen weghalen. Ik herinner mij wel dat in een of twee van die hoogschattende artikelen over Sientje [na haar overlijden] gij altijd als leerling van Roelofs genoemd werd.' Compare the interview of 1911, op. cit. (note 31): 'Yes, at that time Mesdag [...] came to Brussels and wanted to meet Roelofs. Indeed it was with Roelofs that he worked initially, but before long he came to me. Three years later he won the gold medal at the Salon in Paris, and the Salon catalogue of 1888 therefore refers to him as my pupil.'
fig. 1
Theodoor Colenbrander, drawing from the *Huldigingsalbum Mr. A.J. Wetens*, Leiden, Bibliotheek van het Gemeentearchief
Theodoor Colenbrander and Hendrik Willem Mesdag

Christien Smits

Between 1885 and 1889, Hendrik Willem Mesdag bought a large number of ornamental ceramics from an art pottery, Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg. Nearly all of these had been designed by the decorative artist Theodoor Christiaan Adriaan Colenbrander (1841-1930), who was the factory's artistic director in the period during which these purchases were made. With his surprising and highly individualistic designs and decoration for ceramics, Colenbrander was one of the first in Holland to apply new theories of ornamentation from abroad.

Colenbrander and the Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg

Although he had trained as an architect, from the very beginning Colenbrander's talents had probably lain in decoration rather than in construction.\(^1\) When, in 1867, his design for a new town hall in Amsterdam received an honourable mention, the jury found that his embellishments for the main façade 'were reminiscent of an enchanted palace from *The 1001 nights.*'\(^2\)

In that same year Colenbrander left for Paris, where, among other activities, he assisted in the preparations for the Dutch section at the 1867 Exposition Universelle. From the few details on his life that remain, we learn that he returned to the Netherlands in around 1869 and that he eventually settled in The Hague in 1876, where he worked as an architectural draughtsman.

Colenbrander started to design ornaments in his spare time. One of the earliest known examples of this work, from 1882, is the jubilee album presented to A.J. Wetrens, the choirmaster and director of the music school in Leiden.\(^3\) This contains 33 pages of congratulatory messages framed within Colenbrander's colourful decorations. These are striking in their references to a variety of architectural styles and for the fanciful styling of their flowers and leaves, which are modelled both on fresh and dried plants (fig. 1).

In 1884 Colenbrander was approached by Wilhelm Wolff Freiherr von Gudenberg, who had heard of his 'very first assays of ceramic designs,' and who asked for permission to produce these in his new art pottery factory.\(^4\) Colenbrander agreed. This decision was to provide an important boost to Holland's depressed pottery industry. As early as the 18th century, Delftware, once highly praised, had been superseded by new types of English pottery. The technical advances and more efficient production methods that had begun in England caused a drastic decline in manual work. However, as these new techniques spread, so too did a style of excessive

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2 Ibid, p. 12 and *Bouwkundige Bijdragen* 16 (1868-69), appendix to part 3, pp. 57-60; the design was returned to its contributor by the Maatschappij tot bevordering
4 Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Department of Applied Art, ‘Letters from Colenbranderto D.J. Hulshers (1917-29),’ 9 December 1925. See also Weltens, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 15-17.
decoration that made random combinations of historical motifs. Accordingly, in the years around 1850, a number of English and French pottery works started to improve the aesthetic quality of their products by employing artists as designers. These new lines were decorated by hand. The results were good, both qualitatively and in terms of sales.

The first Dutch earthenware works to adopt these ideas was the sole remaining producer of Delftware, De Porceleyne Fles. In 1876 the company was taken over by Joost Thooft. Adolf Le Comte, a lecturer in the theory of ornament at the Polytechnische School in Delft, was appointed
designer. For the first time in years the decoration was once more applied by specially-trained pottery painters. Using a formula that had already been successful for some years abroad, Le Comte had plates, tiles and other articles painted with representations of famous paintings. Despite being relatively highly priced, they sold well.

Wolff von Gudenberg had been employed at De Porceleyne Fles for a short period before founding his own art pottery works in the centre of The Hague in the autumn of 1883. It was his shareholders' dissatisfaction with the first product range that led him to ask Colenbrander to supply designs in 1884. The first of these appeared in the factory shop a year later. In 1885, following complaints in the neighbourhood and renewed problems with the shareholders, Gudenberg re-established the works at an outlying country house, Rozenburg, hence the company's new name, Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, adopted in 1886. On this point, Colenbrander remarked, 'I was also involved in the factory's early history [...]'. At the new works he became artistic director. He was responsible both for the supervision of the workers who executed his models and of the painters who applied the decorations.

Colenbrander's work attracted attention as soon as it appeared on the market in 1885. The fancifully-shaped flowers and leaves of the 1882 jubilee album and the 'enchanted oriental palace' that had occupied him in 1867 still appeared to please him as much as ever. He designed a remarkable number of sets of lidded vases with accompanying cups of matching contours. Besides vases, bowls and candlesticks, there were also many decorative dishes and plaques. The accompanying patterns were executed in bright glazed colours.

With their curves and constrictions, the striking shapes of these pieces most resemble embossed metalwork from the Near and Far East. Sometimes they are reminiscent of the domes and minarets of an Arab mosque, or of a Chinese pagoda. The names of the designs listed on the factory order forms are equally evocative of oriental inspiration: turban vases and turban cups compete with pagoda vases, pagoda cups and Japanese vases. Clearly, these were names that had been devised by Colenbrander and then maintained in the descriptions provided in the catalogue.

The painted decorations are even more remarkable. These embellishments, entirely flat, have been applied in rich colours onto a creamy white or salmon-pink ground. In most cases the contours of the designs have first been drawn on the body with dark lines, and have then been coloured in. In some cases, however, they have been left blank on a plain background. Although a significant proportion of the motives are derived from nature, they are highly stylised and no attempt has been made to

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5 For the history of De Porceleyne Fles, see M.R. Bogaers, K. Gaillard and M.L. ten Horn-van Nispen, De Porceleyne Fles: de wedergeboorte van een Delftse aardewerkfabriek, Utrecht & Antwerpen 1986.


7 The Rozenburg archive is at The Hague, Gemeentearchief. See beheersnr. 249, inv. nr. 10, note D, for a pencil-written letter answering a note to Colenbrander from the publicist L. Simons, 21 August 1888. This letter is one of the few remaining documents concerning Colenbrander, as he later destroyed all personal documentation pertaining to Rozenburg's.

8 Rozenburg's order lists from the years 1886-89 can be found in the correspondence files The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. nrs. 8-11.
create effects of shade or depth. Indeed, in some cases they are hard to decipher. Flowers, leaves, fungi, birds and insects have been transmuted into brightly coloured patterns such that the original form has been reduced to a collection of coloured fields whose outline is simultaneously wavy, jagged and curling. In a similar fashion, natural phenomena (such as moonlight or rainfall), or a view of Constantinople, are transformed into a colourful blend of bright fields and planes.

While Colenbrander's decorations make occasional reference to the ancient arts and crafts of the Far East, the designer must have drawn the greater part of his inspiration from ceramics produced in the Ottoman-Turkish town of Iznik during the 16th and 17th centuries. This work featured natural motifs similarly reduced to two-dimensional patterns on a white, and sometimes on a salmon-pink ground. Carnations, roses and tulips, and leaves - curling or split - are spread loosely over the surface, or, their stems bound together, are arranged in symmetrical compositions. They are also shown, highly-stylised, as components of a geometrical figure, or are woven into arabesques of trailing tendrils. Insects, birds (especially peacocks) and calli-
graphic proverbs occasionally appear in the work. For the rims, an extensive repertoire of embellishments are used, into which geometrical figures and stylised leaves and flowers are incorporated. The motifs frequently have a dark outline (fig. 2).

All of these features can be found in Colenbrander's designs for the decorative pottery made in the Rozenburg factory. There are even motifs resembling Arabic script. These are not, however, straight copies. Instead, while the principles of the Turkish works are applied in a recognisably individual style, the shapes of Colenbrander's vases, cups, jars and plates are often more complex, the stylisation of his motives is more developed, and his patterns are more fanciful. At Rozenburg's, he also had a far greater range of colours at his disposal than the blue, turquoise, red and green used in Iznik. It should also be added that during Colenbrander's time at the factory, Rozenburg's range included imitations of Islamic ceramics, although it is not known whose responsibility these were.

Colenbrander was by no means alone in his admiration for Middle Eastern pottery. Interest in Islamic art was widespread in Europe in the period from 1850. Miniatures, fabrics, carpets, ceramics, glassware and embossed metalwork from a variety of countries including Persia and Turkey could all be seen at the international exhibitions, and these quickly found their way into the art trade, private collections and museums. Mesdag was just one owner of items from the region. Naturally, likenesses soon appeared. At the 1867 Paris Exposition Universelle - in which Colenbrander collaborated - the Frenchman Théodore Deck presented not only his modern fayences d'art, but also fine reproductions of Iznik ceramics. It is possible that these inspired Colenbrander's interest.

The use of natural motifs in Middle Eastern decorative art was demonstrated to European artists as early as 1856 by Owen Jones, the British author of an extremely influential book on decorative art. In his opinion, contemporary

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10 T. Martin, 'De Rozenburg fabriek (1883-1917),' in Rozenburg 1883-1917, cit. (note 6), pp. 17-19 and 118, figs. 21 and 22; p. 121, fig. 28; and p. 139, fig. 71.
12 Exposition Universelle de 1867, Catalogue général, 3e Livraison, Mobilier, Groupe III, Paris 1867, p. 26, Classe 17, no. 84.
13 Owen Jones, The grammar of ornament, London 1856. Later, some attention was paid to Jones's views in the Netherlands; see, '“Over de ware grondbeginselen in de kompositie der versieringen van de verschillende tijdperken”: voorlezing gehouden in het Koninklijk Instituut van Britsche architekten door Owen Jones,' Bouwkundige Bijdragen 18 (1871), pp. 189-210.
ornamentation could benefit from a return to nature as a source of inspiration, and oriental art would provide the best basis for the development of a new and original style. The final chapter of his book showed examples of a modern manner in which new patterns could be created from flowers and leaves by means of their reduction to simple outlines. Similarly diagrammatic motifs are conspicuous in Colenbrander's work (fig. 3).

Jones's innovative views were reflected in 1882 in another English book, *Every day art*, by Lewis Foreman Day. A Dutch adaptation by Carel Vosmaer, an art connoisseur and man of letters from The Hague, appeared two years later. In this work, *De kunst in het daaglijksch leven*, Vosmaer
expressed the view that the work Colenbrander executed for Rozenburg's was the perfect embodiment of the principles Day had expounded. As he wrote in an early review: ‘In his limitless imagination he sometimes seems to be distant kin to the Japanese, and a Persian in his luxuriance, freshness and contrasts. Yet, in its utter originality, it has no exact parallel in any previous work. Here, his embellishments are of a fine blue, soft-edged rather than hard; there, they are harmonies of a deeper blue, green and lemon yellow, on occasion with a purple flower. Of unusual form, such totalities entwine themselves around objects equally unique in shape, winding tendril-fashion around body and neck, and rippling their fresh, harmonious colours, stems, foliage and buds overall. [...] Here one finds vases and cups - and even the smallest of miniature sets - that are an inexhaustible source of pleasure to the eye and the imagination.’

When the second edition of Vosmaer's book appeared in 1886, it included as a supplement an amalgamation of two more recent articles he had written on Rozenburg's. It is worth noting that in 1887 Vosmaer became both a shareholder and a member of Rozenburg's executive board.

In 1888 the critic L. Simons did not hesitate to describe the products of the Rozenburg works as full-fledged works of art: ‘They are vibrant with the life they knew in the soul of their creator, vibrant with the shocks of their conception and of their nativity. [...] in these works I see and hear


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the trembling and quaking, the wailing and sighing, the crying and rejoicing of modern man, who feels himself propelled ever onwards by the ever-faster revolution of life, and who finally, still panting, begins to attain the respite, peace and rest that he has craved with such ardour.16

In order to realise Colenbrander’s design objectives to the maximum, full use was made of contemporary technology.17 Gudenberg carried out extensive investigations in England and Germany, sparing himself nothing in his desire to introduce the latest innovations to the company. Naturally, there were accidents. In the early years very few premium quality goods were produced and significant losses were made.

The bodies designed by Colenbrander were either cast or thrown on the wheel in cream-coloured English clay, and were biscuit-fired before being painted, glazed and fired for a second time. Gudenberg’s travels had turned up a wide variety of new pigments resistant to burning at the high temperatures needed to melt lead glaze, and which could therefore be used under the glaze. Until far into the 19th century many colours had been matt, as they could only be applied to the glaze after firing and then refired at lower temperatures. Rozenburg’s glossy new colours made a great impression. Once again, Simons described them in ecstatic terms as ‘a glowing red, a flashing green, a roaring yellow, a stiff, introverted brown, and, resting between them, an earnest grey, an amiable light green, an intimate, caressing creamy yellow.’18

As head of the painters’ studio, Colenbrander maintained a strict supervision of the artists charged with applying his designs to the biscuit. Each pattern was destined for a specific body shape, and was not to be applied to others at random. In the rough draft of a letter dating from 1888 he wrote that designing for pottery had initially caused him some difficulty, but that he had finally become very adept: ‘In the beginning, neither a shape nor a pattern was quick to come. Now, however, it is only rarely that neither of them immediately appears in its definitive form. The imagination is now well trained.’19 Colenbrander himself painted examples of the appropriate patterns on biscuit-fired models, painting in contrasting watercolour in order to indicate clearly to the painters the differences between the various fields. Any pattern could be painted in a number of colour combinations with the pigments he specified.20 Once Colenbrander had approved the decorated body, this could be glazed and fired for the second time. After firing, Colenbrander inspected each item and displayed it in the sales depot at no. 39, Lange Poten.21

During the early years a modest number of tiles were painted at Rozenburg's. Little is known about any designs Colenbrander may have made for these. Vosmaer wrote in 1885 that Colenbrander had ‘designed a series of fine decorations for tiles, that

16 L. Simons Mz., ‘De Haagse plateaubakkerij “Rozenburg,”’ Eigen Haard (1888), p. 619; this article was corrected by Colenbrander himself, see note 7.
18 Simons, op. cit. (note 16).
19 The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. nr. 10, note N.
20 In 1917 The Hague’s Gemeentemuseum acquired a collection of 255 biscuit models that had been painted by Colenbrander; see M. Boot and R. Hageman, ‘De tijd na de sluiting,’ in Rozenburg 1883-1917, cit. (note 6), p. 63. In a letter to H.E. van Gelder, 30 October 1918, Colenbrander wrote concerning the intention of the biscuit models; see The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 515, inv. nr. 96.

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may be composed in a great variety of ways,’ but up to the present only one single tile has been ascribed to him.\textsuperscript{22} It is known that several young artists from The Hague, among them Willem de Zwart, had been engaged during Colenbrander’s time as artistic director and that they were free to paint tiles, tile panels or plaques as they saw fit. For this work they used special colours developed by Gudenberg, including a brown sepia.\textsuperscript{23} In addition, reputed artists from The Hague, such as Christoffel Bisschop, Johannes Bosboom and Hendrik Willem Mesdag allowed the painters to copy their work onto such panels or plaques.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22} Vosmaer, op. cit. (note 15); the tile attributed to Colenbrander is illustrated in Rozenburg 1883-1917, cit. (note 6), p. 179.


\textsuperscript{24} Vosmaer, op. cit. (note 15) and minutes of the meeting of the board of Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg, 29 December 1886, The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. nr. 1.
Although Colenbrander's designs were received with enthusiasm in artistic circles, sales were sluggish. The most important reason for this probably lay in the fact that rising production costs had necessitated a very high selling price. And although Gudenberg, in his capacity as technical director, invested large sums in expensive resources and materials, he frequently forgot to make notes of his findings. In this way a number of developments were lost and the factory repeatedly had to contend with expensive failures. Board and shareholders expressed their dissatisfaction, and on 1 June 1889 Gudenberg felt compelled to resign.

After his departure, relations between Colenbrander and the board also became strained. Finally, on 15 August 1889, Colenbrander, too, decided to leave. To his great dissatisfaction, however, the factory continued to manufacture to his designs for a number of years, albeit at vastly inferior standards.

It was only between 1893 and 1895 that the finances of the works became healthy. From 1895, when the architect Jurriaan Kok was appointed as artistic and financial director, the company began to flourish. Under his leadership, the eggshell porcelain was developed that would lead to the ‘Royal’ designation for Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg and to world fame.

Following his resignation from Rozenburg's, Colenbrander devoted himself to designing for interiors, work which included wallpaper and textiles. According to T.K.L. Sluyterman, who succeeded Le Comte as lecturer in the theory of decorative art at the Polytechnische School in Delft in 1895, Colenbrander had designed carpets sometime around 1875, i.e., at approximately the same time he drew his first designs for pottery. He is also supposed to have shown this work to a number of carpet mills; however, none of these had dared to take on what Sluyterman termed such ‘madness.’

It was probably around 1889 that the Deventer Tapijtfabriek first produced carpets designed by Colenbrander. In the spring of 1893, Colenbrander's new work was shown at the Haagsche Kunstkring. This included designs for carpets, portières, curtains, upholsteries and braids, and for runners in Smyrna and Persian weave with matching wallpapers. Critics reported that there was a variety of beautifully-coloured, two-dimensional patterns to be seen; once again it was plain that artefacts from the Middle and Far East had been their inspiration. Johan Gram, who had reported seeing carpet designs by Colenbrander at private Saturday-evening sessions of the artists' association Pulchri Studio some years earlier, was enraptured by the runners with tulip-motifs; by the curtains and wallpapers with ‘a ground of Moorish arches’; and by those ‘whose circular figures are reminiscent of mosques.’

Eventually, in 1896, a group of his admirers were able to secure a regular position for Colenbrander by taking over the Tapijtfabriek Garjeanne & Co., a carpet factory in Amersfoort. Founded three years earlier, they had already manufactured carpets to Colenbrander's designs; now, under the new name of N.V. Amersfoortsche Tapijtfabriek, it continued in business with Colenbrander as artistic director. His

carpets sold well, and when the factory merged with Deventer Tapijtfabriek in 1901, it was with Colenbrander as designer (fig. 4). It was only when he was nearly 80 years old that Colenbrander had another opportunity to carry out his own designs for ceramics. Following the failure of a collaborative venture with the earthenware producer Zuid-Holland in 1913, plans were drawn up for the foundation of a factory dedicated to the production of his own art pottery. It was thus that the RAM art pottery works was created in Arnhem in 1921. Colenbrander's imagination was far from exhausted, and within a short number of years he had created dozens of shapes and hundreds of decorations to accompany them. The new patterns were even more exuberant and abstract than those he had designed at Rozenburg's. He was to remain occupied with new plans for ceramics until the time of his death in May 1930.

**Mesdag and Colenbrander**

There is no doubt that Mesdag was one of the first admirers of Colenbrander's new decorative art. The few records that remain concerning their relationship show that Mesdag defended and supported Colenbrander whenever

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he could, while Colenbrander in turn had a great respect for Mesdag's opinion and was certainly grateful for his help.

Although it is unclear when the two first met, it can safely be assumed that they knew one another when, in 1883, Colenbrander was appointed ‘extraordinary member’ of Pulchri Studio. At that time both had been long-time residents of the town. Mesdag was 52, a wealthy man and successful painter. Colenbrander, who was ten years younger and who until then had supported himself as an architectural draughtsman, was, in the following year, to begin work as a pottery designer at Rozenburg's.

It is possible that Mesdag became involved with Rozenburg's at an early stage. Carel Vosmaer reported in 1885 that Mesdag had made one of his paintings available for copying to a tile panel. Mesdag soon had a financial interest in the factory. When it was decided to turn the works into a limited company, he and his fellow-artists Bisschop, Bosboom and Jozeïf Israëls wrote a testimonial in praise of Rozenburg's products, and an appeal was made to citizens of The Hague to invest in ‘this new art enterprise.’

When at last the company was officially incorporated on 29 April 1887, Mesdag, in common with his cousin Jacob Dijk, had bought three 1,000-guilder shares. Mesdag's elder brother Taco (himself a painter) also bought a share. Carel Vosmaer, an acquaintance of Mesdag's from The Hague, simultaneously became a

30 The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. nrs. 130 and 131.
31 Jacob Dijk (1854-1917), son of Wijtse Dijk (1818-1874) and Ellegonda Mesdag (1827-1866), sister of Hendrik Willem Mesdag; married his cousin Johanna Willemina Mesdag (1859-1931), daughter of Gilles Mesdag, brother of Hendrik Willem.
32 The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. nr. 135, lists shareholders in N.V. Haagsche Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg from 1887.
shareholder and a member of the executive board, and enthusiastically threw himself into working for the new company. However, his state of health compelled him to withdraw in February 1888. In his letter of resignation he urged that the shareholders be prepared to make sacrifices for ‘a new industry and a new art.’ He was of the opinion that Colenbrander ‘as a draughtsman, colourist, and inventor of compositions, had developed a style that was simultaneously of such great singularity and of such great beauty that another country would be envious - and that this, in another country, would certainly transcend all objections and be valued and supported as something very remarkable.’

Mesdag was Colenbrander's greatest support after Vosmaer's departure from Rozenburg's. The minutes of board meetings and shareholders' meetings frequently make reference to Mesdag as an intermediary and adviser. Colenbrander had repeated clashes with directors and board members, who thought that he too often interfered in matters beyond his artistic ambit. He was, for example, opposed to a measure whereby prices would be cut and economies made on the wages of the decorators. Time after time Mesdag managed to calm the members of the board and persuade Colenbrander to take a more flexible stance. In one matter, however, Mesdag himself consistently opposed the board's policy, whose intention it was to guarantee a basic source of income for the factory by means of manufacturing white tiles. He believed the company should limit itself to producing art pottery, and argued that tests for manufacturing tiles on a larger scale would unnecessarily drive up costs.

In 1888 Colenbrander expressed his great appreciation of Mesdag by designing a special plaque bearing an apposite motto. In the summer of that year he wrote to the author of an article in Eigen Haard, ‘There is a dish bearing the aphorism “La Richesse du Coeur est Le Soleil de l'Existence.” [...] I request you not to mention [this], as it is to be a surprise for someone.’ Clearly, Mesdag was delighted with the plaque, as space was made for it in his house. It was sold by his legatees to the Haags Gemeentemuseum shortly after his death in 1916 (fig. 5).

Mesdag was unable to prevent Colenbrander's eventual resignation when, in 1889, directors and board demanded that he unconditionally accept their policy guidelines. After this final and unsuccessful attempt at mediation, Mesdag devoted a few more years to Rozenburg's. In 1893 he even financed the submission of the factory's works to the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. However, on the appointment of Jurriaan Kok as director he finally withdrew. On 19 July of that year Kok sent Mesdag a letter in which he expressed his thanks for everything he had done for the factory. Hereafter, meetings of Rozenburg's shareholders made no further mention of Mesdag.

Together with members of his family, Mesdag had undoubtedly continued to support Colenbrander following the latter's resignation from Rozenburg's six years...
earlier. He may also have helped him find commissions. Mesdag certainly made some of Colenbrander's work available for exhibitions. Similarly, in the spring of 1893, a number of rooms were completed in the house of Mesdag's cousin Jacob Dijk at 49, Laan van Meerdervoort; the panelling, carpets, murals and ceiling decorations were all to designs by Colenbrander.\textsuperscript{38} In 1896 Dijk was also to become one of the eight shareholders of N.V. Amerfoortsche Tapijtfabriek (see above).\textsuperscript{39}

Many years earlier, Colenbrander had decorated the drawing rooms in Mesdag's house at 9, Laan van Meerdervoort. This was before the addition of the museum building


\textsuperscript{39} Bijvoegsel tot de Nederlandsche Staatscourant 96 (24 April 1896), no. 151.
fig. 5

Of this work the following was written by Philippe Zilcken, who devoted a book to Mesdag and his art collection (published in 1896; it appeared in French and English): ‘The drawing-room, arranged throughout by Colenbrander, who designed every part even to the most trivial ornament, even to the carpets, which harmonise in colour and style with the general effect of the whole, are all decorated in light, cheerful flower tinted hues. The walls are of a dull gold tone, perfectly uniform, with a quiet border of pale green and violet, in original designs, but with a style of their own such as none but Colenbrander can impart. The wall-space over the doors, always difficult to treat, is filled with a decoration suggesting a banner hanging in folds, on which are inscribed the names of the great masters: Daubigny, Millet, Dupré, Rousseau, Courbet, Corot, Troyon and Diaz.’\footnote{Philippe Zilcken, \textit{H.W. Mesdag. The painter of the North Sea}, London 1896, p. 32.}

Colenbrander may also have been responsible for the exceptional colours of the woodwork in Mesdag’s house. As early as 1889, Johan Gram remarked that the stairs leading from the house to Mesdag’s studio had been varnished in red, while in 1893 another visitor was astonished by the ‘singular colour of the paint that has been applied to the doors, stairs etcetera.’\footnote{J. Gram, ‘Het Museum Mesdag,’ \textit{Haagsche Stemmen} 39 (25 May 1889), p. 481, and \textit{De Tribune} (11 February 1893); see The Hague, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD), Afdeling persdocumentatie. See also J.H. Kraan, ‘De particuliere kunstverzameling van H.W. Mesdag,’ \textit{Oud Holland} 104 (1990), no. 3/4, pp. 306-07.} It is no coincidence that red was one of Colenbrander’s favourite colours. In 1905 Sluyterman recounted the ‘diverting tale’ that Colenbrander had once used so much red in the preparation

\[\text{Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996}\]
of a colour sample for the ceilings of the Haagsche Kunstkring that vermilion had temporarily become unobtainable in The Hague.  

Colenbrander's ceramics were also a colourful element in Mesdag's interior. These were surrounded by paintings and drawings by Dutch and French artists, and by objects from the great collections of western and eastern decorative art.  

During the time of Colenbrander's employment by Rozenburg's, Mesdag and his wife Sientje van Houten purchased his ceramics in liberal quantities. With approximately 165 pieces, the Mesdags' collection was the only one in Holland to constitute a representative sample of this work.  

It included exemplary items from the 1885-89 period, among them the very first five-piece cabinet set of tower vases and tower cups entitled *Dag en Nacht* (‘Day and night’). Colenbrander later called this ‘the most successful artistique work of my time.’  

The Rozenburg archives show that the Mesdags' outstripped themselves in 1888. Dozens of items were bought, possibly destined for the museum that had just been added to their house. In February and March 1888, Mrs Mesdag, accompanied by her nieces Barbara E. van Houten and Johanna Willemina Dijk-Mesdag, made a number of purchases, both ex-factory and at the depot at 39, Lange Poten. Mesdag also selected a significant number of items, both then and in August (fig. 6).
It is striking that the Mesdags were undeterred in their purchases by the technical problems to which the minutes of the Rozenburg board refer. In the collection there are pieces whose glaze has not totally adhered to
the body, or on which, in parts, the glaze has burnt to a black metallic blotch. In some, the glaze is slightly pitted due to the formation of air bubbles during firing. In one or two cases value was even seen in an out-and-out reject. In the article he wrote after viewing Colenbrander's ceramics in the Mesdag house in the summer of 1888, L. Simons stated: ‘Why is it precisely these first, less perfect products hold a particular attraction for many of our painters is entirely comprehensible to those who have themselves learned to experience the attraction of such works of art; whose very imperfection reveals the groping semi-consciousness of the artist, and in which there reverberate the suddenness and immediacy of creation.’

If Colenbrander's intentions were manifested to a sufficient extent, the Mesdags were satisfied, or so it seems. And in this regard, it is important to emphasise that Mesdag's collection of paintings does indeed show a predilection for studies and sketches.

The greater part of Colenbrander's ceramics were placed in a becoming position on the first floor of the museum. The pieces were arranged in wooden display cabinets lining the walls of a room that was connected to Mesdag's studio by a short flight of steps. The floors and walls were decorated with Persian carpets and gold-embroidered Turkish portières. The room was further embellished with richly-inlaid Turkish and Persian copperware, and with Japanese and Chinese bronzes. On the walls there was also space for a small number of watercolours; on the windowsills and tables stood oriental pottery and porcelain. If Colenbrander had been seeking understanding of his ceramics, or works to complement them, he could hardly have hoped for better.

fig. 1
Letter to Theo van Gogh, c. 6-7 December 1883 [412/345], Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)
‘As it came into my pen’: a new edition of the correspondence of
Vincent van Gogh

Hans Luijten

At the end of 1994 work began on a new, scholarly edition of the letters of Vincent van Gogh. This is a joint project of the Van Gogh Museum and the Constantijn Huygens Institute for Text Editions and Intellectual History in The Hague. The edition will contain the original texts of the letters with parallel English translations, and there are plans for separate English commentaries with annotations of the letters. The work is in the hands of art historian Elly Cassee and Dutch language scholars Leo Jansen and myself.¹

The correspondence as it has come down to us comprises over 900 letters, about 80% of which are in the possession of the museum. The vast majority is addressed to Vincent's brother Theo. Only about 40 replies have been preserved. Other correspondents include Vincent's mother and father and his sister Willemien as well as artists such as Anthon van Rappard, Emile Bernard and Paul Gauguin.²

This is far from the first time that the letters have been the object of attention. Immediately following Van Gogh's death in 1890 the original manuscripts already commanded interest, and they circulated among the friends of Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, Theo's wife. After Theo's death - shortly after Vincent's - she devoted herself to gaining widespread recognition for Van Gogh's work. She was responsible for the publication in 1914 of Letters to his brother, the first edition, in three volumes. Increasingly comprehensive Dutch editions appeared in 1952-53, 1973 and 1990 (the latter containing modernised renderings of the letters and Dutch translations of all those written in French), each in turn spawning translations, enabling intensive use to be made of the letters over the years. Virtually every study of Van Gogh has drawn on and quoted from the correspondence.

In spite of this, we are still without a reliable edition. It is to fill this gap that the present project has been launched. The edition is being prepared with an international and scholarly readership in mind, which has had consequences for its structure.

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¹ This article was written in close consultation with my colleagues Leo Jansen and Elly Cassee.
² An Editorial Board has been formed to provide the necessary support for the project, composed, aside from the executive editors, of Ronald de Leeuw, Louis van Tilborgh and Sjraar van Heugten - all of the Van Gogh Museum - and Dick van Vliet, Director of the Huygens Institute. To facilitate discussion of specific questions in various sub-areas, other than technical editorial problems, an advisory panel to the editors has been called into existence. This panel consists of Maarten van Buuren, Modern French Literature scholar (Utrecht University), the Van Gogh specialists Roland Dorn (Zürich) and Evert van Uitert (University of Amsterdam), the Dutch Language and Literature scholar Dick van Halsema (Free University, Amsterdam), and the art historian Rudi Ekkart (Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie [RKD], The Hague).

Sixteen of the letters to Willemien have been preserved, 58 to Van Rappard, 22 to Bernard and 16 from Gauguin.
Methodology

The early months of the project were largely taken up with compiling inventories of the letters owned by the Van Gogh Museum itself, ascertaining the status of the copies and drawing up guidelines for the transcriptions. A start was also made on the material description, including dimensions, watermarks and embossing, as well as the type of paper and writing medium used. We have also determined which letters are, or may be, missing, and we have made efforts to determine their current whereabouts.

3 The material description of all the letters will be gathered in a database. This will not only serve as documentation but may also prove helpful in the dating of sheets or in making decisions concerning which sheets belong together. Some scholars contest certain juxtapositions, and not without cause. Roland Dorn has made several new proposals on the basis of information external to the letters: see Roland Dorn, et al., exhib. cat. *Van Gogh und die Haager Schule*, Vienna (Kunstforum) 1996, p. 162, note 3; see also p. 191, note 1.
The annotated, letter-for-letter transcriptions will include all variants: in this way, every slip of the pen, deletion and addition will be registered. Whether a separate list of these variants will also appear in the final edition has yet to be decided. One possibility would be to include only a selection of textual variants here, but a conceivable alternative option in the light of recent developments would be to add all the transcriptions to the edition in the form of a CD-ROM.

As of now, a number of the letter-for-letter texts have been turned into what are known as reading texts and provided with linguistic annotations. It is these reading texts that will appear in the forthcoming edition, and the English translations will be based on them. Once the reading text has been definitively approved, so that reliable texts of the letters are available, the commentary can be expanded to embrace annotations such as biographical, literary and topographical notes as well as comments in the realm of art and cultural history.

The commentary volumes will be followed by an account of the transcription method employed and an overview of the emendations. Furthermore, every work of art referred to by Van Gogh, if at all possible, will be identified. If it proves feasible, these may be included in a separate illustrated volume, or perhaps in the CD-ROM referred to above.

When preparing the reading texts we were struck by the liberties that previous editors had taken with Van Gogh's letters. We, too, shall sometimes be unable to avoid a measure of intervention in this new edition, given the casualness of Van Gogh's style of writing - he concerned himself little with punctuation, there are numerous slips of the pen, and personal (19th-century) expressions call for clarification or emendation. But in comparison to our predecessors we shall exercise a good deal more restraint, and leave as many of Van Gogh's idiosyncracies as possible intact in the reading texts.

Characteristics and idiosyncracies

‘I have written to you in this matter just as it came into my pen, I hope you will be able to make something of it’ wrote Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo from London in January 1874. Hundreds more letters would follow, and in many of them Van Gogh gave vent to his feelings, often in the frankest of terms. Reading the original letters, one is frequently surprised by their directness, sincerity and fervour, not only in their tone but also in the manner in which they were written - with little concern for finishing touches, sometimes in haste, or under the visible influence of emotion. He committed his thoughts, ideas and opinions to paper without any reservation. The ensuing imperfections in the finished text are characteristic of Van

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4 17/13. Cf. also: ‘Je t’écris un peu au hasard ce qui me vient dans ma plume’ [154/133] and ‘[…] omdat ik toch met U heb afgesproken Theo dat ik U de dingen maar zou vertellen zoo op mijn eigen manier/zooals ’t uit mijn pen komt [...]’ [because I agreed with you Theo that I would simply tell things in my own way as they flow from my pen] [210/181]. In the passages quoted, an, indicates a comma we have inserted ourselves, and a _ likewise indicates a full stop added by us.

5 Cf. in this connection Van Gogh's own words to Theo from The Hague on 7 or 8 January 1882 [198/169]: ‘Wilt gj dat ik zal voortgaan te schrijven net zoo als ik in den laatsten tijd
Gogh's often impassioned style of writing, and up to a point this ‘loose’ style will therefore be preserved.

This is not the only reason for keeping the reading text as close as possible to the original. The nature of the edition and the intended readership make it possible to present a version which does justice to different aspects of the text of the letters in comparison to those which prevail in an edition targeting a wide public. Furthermore, all existing editions contain more or less ‘reworked’ and/or abridged - sometimes drastically so - versions of the texts.⁶
The reading text obviously has to be intelligible, but this is not to say that it must be ‘flawless’; most ‘flaws’ do not lead to a misunderstanding, and Van Gogh makes so many that they are among the most conspicuous features of his style of writing.

For this reason, inconsistencies in spelling or the use of capital letters and missing punctuation have not necessarily been corrected. However, ‘flaws’ preserved in the reading text are generally untranslatable; these include Van Gogh's renderings of words as he himself pronounced them and those which can be regarded as belonging to the regional dialect of Noord-Brabant, where he grew up. Nuances of this kind are lost in translation. A concise linguistic annotation can alleviate this problem, as illustrated in the following examples:

- Kersmis: variant form of Kerstmis [= Christmas]
- de klus kwijt: variant form of de kluts kwijt [= in a state of nerves]
- herrinneren: read as herinneren [= to recall]
- defineeren: read as definiëren [= to define]
- tout effet: read as tout à fait [= entirely]

Besides these examples, there is a category in which carelessness or slips of the pen result in obscurities or create scope for misunderstanding. To avoid uncertainty about the meaning, emendations are made at these places in the text - that is to say, the text is corrected - and each emendation will be justified.

In short, Van Gogh's style of writing deviates substantially from standard Dutch. This is partly due to the fact that there are words, expressions and spellings that could be designated personal or familiar idiom, and partly the result of Van Gogh's lack of concern for finishing touches in the text. For instance, he was very erratic in the matter of spacing: he would sometimes incorrectly write an expression as one word, sometimes the space between the letters of a word or between two arbitrary words is strikingly large, and final letters are often reduced to little squiggles or left out altogether. Reproducing the text of the letters as faithfully as possible must not mean that the reader of the edition is left to construe the intended meaning himself; there will thus be a need for explanations, whether lexicographical, grammatical, or in relation to emendations - particularly in the realm of punctuation and the use of capital letters.

Deletions

Two examples will suffice to indicate the kind of deletions that are encountered in the letters. On 31 May 1877, Van Gogh writes:

‘Geloof in God, door het geloof kan men worden “droevig maar altijd blijde” en ever green en hoeven wij niet te klagen “als onze jeugd verdwint bij ’t rijpen onzer krachten”.’

7 At this stage of the research our knowledge of Van Gogh’s French is too incomplete to make pronouncements about it.
[Faith in God, through faith may one become ‘sorrowful yet always rejoicing’ and ever green and need we not lament ‘when our youth vanishes with the maturing of our powers.’]"

Before the word ‘hoeven’ [need] in this passage, the phrase ‘il n'y a point de vieillarde’ is crossed out, a clue that while writing this Van Gogh was thinking of Michelet, whose work he so admired. Three years before, on 31 July 1874, he had written, echoing Michelet, ‘“Il n'y a pas de vieille femme!”’ and had added in explanation: ‘Dat wil niet zeggen dat er geen oude vrouwen zijn, maar dat een vrouw niet oud wordt zoolang zij bemint & bemind wordt. -’

[This is not to say that there are no old women, but that a woman does not become old as long as she still loves and is loved.]

Here is a second example. It is widely known that Van Gogh was no paragon of refinement in daily life. He confessed to Theo:

‘Over dag in 't dagelijks leven zie ik er soms even ongevoelig uit als een wild varken misschien en kan ik mij best begrijpen dat de menschen mij grof vinden.
Toen ik jonger was dacht ik zelf ook veel meer als nu dat het hem zat in toevalligheden of kleine dingen of misverstanden die geen gronden hadden.’

8 118/99.
9 27/20 (emendation bemint for bemind). The quotation from Michelet is found again in letters 115/96 and 191/164.
[In day time in daily life I sometimes look as insensitive as a wild boar perhaps and I can well understand that people find me crude. When I was younger I myself also thought much more than now that it had to do with coincidences or small things or misunderstandings that were without any foundation.]  

After ‘grof vinden’ [crude] Van Gogh had originally written ‘Het is met de menschen als met de penseelen: die er het fijnst uit zien werken niet het fijnst’ [People are much like brushes: those with the finest looks are not the finest in practice] (figs. 1 and 2). Although he later deleted this striking analogy, he did write it.

**Additions**

Up to now, the underlinings in Van Gogh's letters, in editions and anthologies, have always been italicised or actually printed as underlinings. Yet in many cases, these sentences and phrases say much less than one might think. At any rate, studying the original versions reveals that these underlinings have often been added by a later and hence different hand.

The cases in question concern moments in Van Gogh's biography which have attracted a great deal of attention or which could point to his destiny as a painter: - the underlining of an entire sentence: ‘Die Rijkswijksche weg heeft voor mij herinneringen die misschien de heerlijksten zijn die ik heb. Als wij elkaar eens spreken hebben wij het daar misschien nog wel eens over.’ [The Rijkswijk road possesses for me recollections that are perhaps the most wonderful that I have. When we meet again we will perhaps speak of it];  
- the underlining of the comparison ‘evenzeer als voor het schilderen’ [just as much as for painting] is not Van Gogh's own in the sentence ‘Voor het werk van mannen als Pa en D' Keller van Hoorn, oom Stricker en zoovele anderen is ook heel wat oefening noodig evenzeer als voor schilderen’ [For the work of men like Father and Rev. Keller van Hoorn, Uncle Stricker and so many others, a great deal of practice is required just as much for painting];
To someone interested in knowing what Van Gogh wished to emphasise or nuance, his own additions, on the other hand, are often of greater importance. After finishing a letter, he would frequently not only go over loops on letters with upright strokes or descenders, or case endings, but he would also add words, phrases or entire sentences.

In descriptions of landscapes or works of art he makes such additions in an attempt to evoke the picture more fully: where he adds descriptions of blue skies and towers jutting out above the horizon his aim is to reinforce the evocative power of the whole; adjectives are added to make details more precise: ‘heidegrond’ [heath] becomes

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11 In letters 11/10; 114/95; and 147/126 respectively.

Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
‘bruine heidegrond’ [brown heath]; canals are described as ‘vol’ [full] and later ‘boordevol’ [brimful] of water, and comparisons are added for the sake of stylistic embellishment. The desire to polish up the text in this way was something Van Gogh acquired largely during his stay in Amsterdam.

Examples would also be added: ‘Het zijn zulke aardige menschen, ontmoette hen onlangs op eene lezing en zij staken bij het overige publiek af als een bemosten ouden appelboom of een rozenstrijk van het kerkhof zou afsteken bij allerei onnatuurlijke uitheemsche gewassen.’ [They are such pleasant people, met them recently at a lecture and they stuck out from the rest of the audience like a mossy old apple-tree or a rose-bush in a graveyard would stick out among all manner of unnatural outlandish undergrowth.] After the word ‘kerkhof’ [graveyard] he could not refrain from adding ‘of een iepenboom met kraaijennesten’ [or an elm with crows' nests]. Van Gogh, acute observer as he was, would constantly be delving into his visual memory, and often improved on his initial description. The pen would be dipped in ink again, and the result would usually enhance the expressiveness of his letter. In many cases he introduced nuances by adding either broader strokes or, in contrast, more refined touches. 12

12 Some examples are found in the following letters (with additions enclosed thus: <+>):
27/20: ‘Dat een vrouw “een heel ander wezen” dan een man is, <+& een wezen dat wij nog niet kennen, tenminste maar heel oppervlakkig> zooals je zegt, ja, dat geloof ik zeker. - En dat een vrouw & een man één kunnen worden, zegge één geheel <+& niet twee halven>, dat geloof ik ook. -’
[That a woman is ‘quite a different creature’ from a man, and a creature that we do not yet know, or at least only very superficially, as you say, Yes I am sure this is true. And that a woman and a man may become one, say one whole, and not two halves, this I believe too.]

55/43: ‘Gij zult wel dikwijls voelen dat noch ik noch Anna zijn wat we hopen te worden en wij nog ver van Pa en anderen af zijn. - <+dat ons soliditeit en eenvoudigheid en ongeveinsdheid ontbreekt, men is niet op eens eenvoudig en waar.>’
[You will often feel that neither I nor Anna are what we hope to become and we are still far from Father and the others, that we lack solidity and uprightness and ingenuousness, one cannot in a moment become sincere and true.]

83/70: ‘En onwillekeurig dacht ik <+levendig> aan de personen die daar te Hampton Court geleefd hebben [...]’
[And my thoughts turned involuntarily and vividly to the persons who lived there at Hampton Court.]

125/105: ‘Naar zoo ontzettend veel zaken heb ik groote begeerte en als ik geld had zou ik het misschen spoedig uitgeven aan boeken en andere zaken waar ik best buiten kan en die mij van de onmiddelijk noodige studie zouden aftrekken <+zelfs nu is het niet altijd gemakkelijk tegen de afleiding te vechten en als ik geld had zou dat nog erger worden> En men blijft hier op de wereld toch altijd arm en behoeftig, dat heb ik al wel reeds gezien [...]’

[There are so terribly many things I greatly desire and if I had any money I might spend it straight away on books and other things I can perfectly well do without and which would take me away from the immediate necessity of study. Even now it is not always easy to ward off distraction and if I had money that would become worse still. And one always remains poor and needy here in the world, I have already seen that.]

79/54: ‘Dezen morgen vroeg was het ook mooi, alles was toen helder waar nu <+min of meer> een nevel hangt. -’
[Early this morning it was also beautiful, everything was clear then where now there is a mist, more or less, hanging there.]
For an editor these additions are not without their problems, as Van Gogh did not always indicate where they were supposed to go; there are numerous cases in which it is unclear whether a sentence belongs in a letter or not (and if so, where) or if it is intended as a postscript. The following is a difficult example. It is included in a letter written in French, dated about July 1880 and sent from the Borinage. In this letter we see that Van Gogh added comparisons, at different stages, in the upper margin. Here he compares visual artists with writers (and paintings with books) and draws comparisons between artists from different periods, on the basis of correspondences of theme, of sentiment, or of manner of representation. Contemporary criticism, in the Netherlands and other countries, has remarked on this keenness on analogy. In this fragment Van Gogh compares, for instance, Eugène Delacroix to Victor Hugo, Harriet Beecher Stowe to Ary Scheffer, and John Bunyan to Matthijs Maris and Jean-François Millet. The addition of more and more comparisons has shades of amplificatio, a classical rhetorical device. The letter-for-letter transcript of the fragment concerned (cf. fig. 3) is printed below.

Key: on the left is the line number; a ‘+’ sign means text added; ‘-’ means text deleted; ‘→’ means written over; ‘☐’ is an open space; ‘/’ is the end of a line; the pointed brackets ‘<’ and ‘>’ enclose variant forms:

158  [...] Seulement voyez vous il y a plusieurs/

159  choses qu'il s'agit de croire et d'aimer → il y a du Rembrandt dans

160  Shakespeare et du Corrège <+ou du Sarto> en Michelet et du Delacroix dans V. Hugo/

fig. 3
Letter 154/133 (detail of the additions), Amsterdam. Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

[in upper margin]

160a
<+et dans Beecher Stowe il y a de
<S→l'A>ry> Scheffer>/

[in upper margin, above line 160a]

160b
<+Et dans Bunyan il y a du M Maris ou
du Millet une réalité pour ainsi dire plus
reelle que la réalité mais/

160c
il faut savoir le lire alors il y a la dedans
l'inouï et il sait dire des choses
inexprimables>/

161
et puis il y a du Rembrandt dans
l'<e→E>>vangile ou de l'Evangile/

162
dans Rembrandt comme on veut cela
revient plus ou moins au même/

163
<selon qu'on> pourvu qu'on entende la
chose en bon entendeur, sans/

164
vouloir la détourner en mauvais sens <+et
si on tient compte des équivalents des
comparaisons/

164a
qui n ont pas la pretention de diminuer
les/

164b
merites des personalités/

164c
originales>/

154/133. This letter-for-letter transcription could appear as follows in the reading text:
'Seulamente voyez vous il y a plusieurs choses qu'il s'agit de croire et d'aimer: il y a du
Rembrandt dans Shakespeare et du Corrège ou du Sarto en Michelet et du Delacroix dans
V. Hugo et dans Beecher Stowe il y a de l'Ary Scheffer. Et dans Bunyan il y a du M. Maris
ou du Millet, une réalité pour ainsi dire plus reelle que la réalité mais il faut savoir le lire,
alors il y a la dedans l'inouï et il sait dire des choses inexprimables, et puis il y a du Rembrandt
dans l'Evangile ou de l'Evangile dans Rembrandt comme on veut, cela revient plus ou moins
au même pourvu qu'on entende la chose en bon entendeur sans vouloir la détourner en mauvais
Misreadings

One has to be constantly on one's guard for misreadings. An incorrect transcription is easier to make than it may appear. The editors who preceded us often had to work without consulting the original documents and frequently had far less time at their disposal. Yet every questionable word, every construction has to be assessed from different angles, with details being checked in dictionaries, libraries or archives. All this takes time. In addition, it is advisable in the case of manuscript sources to have the transcripts checked by at least two other readers, as has been done in the present case. Without any wish to detract from the important work done by our predecessors, some cases of incorrect transcriptions are given below.

In February 1885, Van Gogh was in good spirits because he had seen in a copy of *L’Illustration* reproductions of the exhibits in the 1884 Salon. He commented on some:

sens et si on tient compte des équivalents des comparaisons qui n'ont pas la pretention de diminuer les mentes des personalités originales. It has not yet been decided to what extent adjustments will be made to the accents in French.
‘Wat mij ook trof was een meisje figuurtje van Emile Levy, *Japonaise* en ‘t Schij van Beyle, *Brûleuses de Varech* en dat van Collin, *L’Été*, 3 naakte vrouwenfiguren.’

[I was also struck by the figure of a girl by Emile Levy, *Japonaise* and the painting by Beyle, *Brûleuses de Varech* and that by Collin, *L’Été*, three nude female figures.]

While previous editions give the name Cottin here, the reference is in fact not to (Pierre) Cottin but to the French painter Louis-Joseph-Raphaël Collin (1850-?). A reproduction of Collin's *L’Été* was printed in *L'Illustration* of Saturday 3 May 1884. The misreading may be explained by the similarities between Van Gogh's ‘*i*’s and his ‘*t*’s (making it difficult to distinguish, for instance, between the French ‘*les*’ and ‘*tes*’, and between ‘*ta*’ and ‘*la*’).

The need for caution when dealing with names is also clear from a different passage. Here too, information extraneous to the text of the letter is needed to make a correct transcription:

‘Laatst ben ik nog eens terug geweest bij Hillen, had hem de vorige keer toen ik hem bezocht een paar van die Christus Consolator en pend1, zoolals ik er van U heb gekregen, gegeven en die hingen nu reeds op zijne kamer want hij had ze zelf onder glas gebragt, ik ben blij dat zij daar hangen.’

[I recently went back to see Hillen, when last I visited him had given him the Christus Consolator and its pendant [i.e. Christus Remunerator] like those I received from you, and they were already hanging in his room as he had put them under glass himself, I am glad that they are hanging there.]

Van Gogh apparently returned to see his Hague catechist. In the most recent edition this sentence was included for the first time, but the man's name is given there as Helleu. The letters have been misread (which, given the handwriting, is again easy to understand) without the trouble having been taken to identify the figure. This same Hillen, it may be added, also occurs elsewhere in the correspondence.

The following fragment was written in Amsterdam on 18 September 1877, three days before the beginning of autumn:

‘Heb Gij het goed, schrijf eens spoedig en kom maar spoedig want het is goed elkander eens weder te zien en eens te praten, misschien kunnen wij *dan zamen* nog wel eens die tentoonstelling die dezer dagen wordt geopend gaan zien. - Groet ook Uwe huisgenooten. Jongen wat moet het toch heerlijk zijn om een leven achter zich te hebben als Pa [...].’

[Are you well, write soon and come soon for it is good to see each other again and to talk, perhaps we could *then together* go to that exhibition that is opening one of these days. Give my greetings to the rest of the household. My, old fellow, it must be wonderful to have a life behind one like Father.]
The words we have italicized could be read as *den zomer* [in the summer], and this reading has indeed been given in the past. This is acceptable as far as the shape of the letters is concerned, but is illogical in terms of content. Firstly, summer may be said to be almost completely over by 18 September, and secondly, ‘the exhibition that is opening one of these days’ must have been that of the *Levende Meesters*, which took place that year in Amsterdam. From Thursday, 20 September 1877 the public could visit the exhibition, for the admission price of 25 cents, in the Hall of the former Koninklijke Akademie van Beeldende Kunsten.\(^{18}\)

**Status of the sources**

None of the previous editions have clarified the status of the sources: do we possess originals, photographs, photocopies or transcriptions, or has the text come down to us in other ways? Until now, the reader has been left to guess at this. For instance, all the letters to Van Rappard are available in photocopy only, which is prejudicial to the accuracy of the transcriptions. Two examples will serve to

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demonstrate the importance of exercising caution when the original document is missing.  

A short note addressed to M.A. de Zwart, who was then Van Gogh's landlord, has come down to us only in the form of a transcription made in Paris on 17 July 1963 by V.W. van Gogh, the son of Theo and Jo. It includes the remark: ‘Verl. Maandag heb ik aan Giesenberg betaald niet alleen de die datum verschuldigde f 4,60 doch bovendien nog f 10,- Ingevolge van ‘t in mijn schrijven van Il maand behandelde met betrekking tot het zolderkamertje.’ [Last Monday I paid Giesenberg not only the 4 guilders 60 owed on that date but moreover another 10 guilders. In accordance with what was discussed in my letter of last month in respect of the attic.]

This transcription was then copied using a typewriter on which the letter ‘I’ was identical to the number ‘1’. While the original letter evidently read ‘Il maand’ (an abbreviation for ‘laatstleden maand’ meaning ‘last month’) the typed version read ‘11 maand,’ which was changed without comment in the 1990 edition, apparently because it seemed to make no sense, into ‘11 maart’ [11 March]. The inevitable result of this was to call into existence a ghost letter. The letter of ‘last month’ is known [321/-], but no letter to De Zwart of 11 March will ever turn up.

Another case in which it is important to know the status of a copy concerns a letter to the painter Arnold Hendrik Koning (1860-1945). The source is the transcription in De Telegraaf daily newspaper of Wednesday, 29 November 1933. It was included in the Verzamelde brieven (1952-53 and 1973) and in De Brieven published in 1990. On the previous day, Tuesday, 28 November, De Telegraaf reproduced a facsimile of ten lines of the transcription. Once one studies this facsimile, it becomes clear that the copy is unreliable. It includes the remarks: ‘over te laten of ik al dan niet - gek, ingebeeld gek, of wel in eene slechts uit beeldhouwwerk bestaande inbeelding als gek beschouwden geweste van noog ben.’ [to decide whether I am or am not mad, have a delusion of madness, or have been considered, or still am, mad in a delusion that exists solely as a ‘sculptured’ creation.] The insertion ‘ingebeeld gek’ [have a delusion of madness] was missed out in the transcription shown in the newspaper, and is hence omitted in all the editions referred to. This provides an additional reason for referring explicitly to a source of this kind that has been taken from a newspaper, and to present it with the necessary caveat.

Dating

The dating of many of the letters is one of the most difficult tasks. Van Gogh specialist Jan Hulsker, in particular, has done a good deal of excellent research in this area,

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19 Possession of the original does not, however, always guarantee a flawless reading. Our reading of the text of letter 489/396, from March 1885, is severely impeded by ink damage caused by a heavily accentuated drawing on the other side of the paper.
20 331/-, The Hague, before or on 14 March 1883.
21 745/571a (c. 23 January 1889). Another case in which we have no first-hand knowledge is letter 74/60 (Ramsgate, 17 April 1876), addressed to Father and Mother Van Gogh. The word ‘copie’ [copy] has been added at the top by the scribe. Previous text editions made no mention of the fact that this letter is not in Vincent's handwriting. The writing-paper and hand-writing suggest that Theo copied out the letter.
proposing numerous useful re-datings.\textsuperscript{22} Scores of letters are undated, and in certain other cases the date has been tampered with by another hand. The combination of facts from different letters, the family correspondence as it has been passed down to us, and other external information may help us determine dates more precisely.

A detail that Van Gogh supplies in one of his letters from Dordrecht comes to mind: ‘Today an early sermon was given here for the first time, which I attended.’ If the date on which the first early sermon was given in Dordrecht could be ascertained, by consulting the church records for instance, the letter could be dated more accurately still.\textsuperscript{23} One could also refer to the time when Van Gogh wrote of ‘warm’ and ‘cool’ colours in his own work. The note in which he does so [193/165a] to one of his uncles, is currently dated 1881-83, but is undoubtedly of a

\textsuperscript{22} Collected in Jan Huisker, Vincent van Gogh: a guide to his work and letters, zwolle 1993.
\textsuperscript{23} 110/90. It was probably the Sunday before Easter, i.e. 25 March 1877.
fig. 4
Letter to Theo van Gogh, probably between 16 and 22 September 1876 [86/68], Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)
later date. It is highly likely that he used these terms under the influence of his reading of Félix Bracquemond's *Du dessin et de la couleur*.

A third example is the day on which Teunus van Iterson, a colleague of Theo's, brought with him, from Isleworth, a pencilled note and two booklets for Theo (cf. fig. 4):

Dear Theo,

v. Iterson just came and surprised me, I am pleased that he comes but it is as if he is a man from the other world, so much lies between the time when we were together in the business and now.

I am sending you the ‘wide wide world’ and another little book, give one of them to Carolien.

How I wish that you too could see what it is like here some time.

On Saturday morning at 4 o'clock I hope to walk to London to visit Gladwell and others. I wish that you could walk with me. A hearty handshake in my thoughts.

à Dieu, believe me,

Your very loving brother

Vincent

In all probability this letter should be moved from mid-August 1876 to the latter half of September, on the basis of several remarks made in a letter of 3 October 1876:

24 193/165a. I should like to thank Roland Dorn for drawing our attention to this point. *Du dessin et de la couleur* is first mentioned in letter 532/423 (September 1885). The loose fragment 534/- (currently dated c. September 1885) ties in with the comment: ‘[...] Het boek van Bracquemond heb ik gehouden omdat bij eerste lezing ik hetgeen hij zegt van chaud et froid niet begrepen nog heb maar ik geloof het iets belangrijks is dat hij van het licht zegt. Dat is waar ik ’t mijne nog nader van hebben moet en dien te herlezen. De andere hoofdstukken zijn ook belangrijk en zijn definities goed doordacht.’ (Italics mine.) [I have kept Bracquemond's book because on first reading I did not understand what he says about chaud et froid but I think that it is something important that he says about the light. That is what I have to fathom and should reread. The other chapters are also important and his definitions well considered.]

In the last letter to Van Rappard [533/R58], too, Van Gogh refers to reading the work of Bracquemond.

25 86/68
That Saturday 8 days past was Saturday, 23 September 1876. This suggests that letter 86 was written between 16 and 22 September 1876.

**Emotional handwriting**

The new edition will also point out cases in which the handwriting is particularly expressive or emotional. Unusually large or sweeping script, multiple underlinings and highly uneven handwriting are all matters worthy of attention. In the example given below, single underlinings are italicised and words underlined two or three times appear in small capitals (in the forthcoming edition, examples of this kind will always be accompanied by a marginal note).

At the beginning of December 1883 Vincent informed Theo of his dissatisfaction with their father's attitude (fig. 5):

‘Gij moogt van mij denken wat gij goedvindt Theo maar ik zeg U dat het geen verbeelding van mij is, ik zeg U Pa wil niet.
Ik zie nu wat ik zag toen, ik sprak toen vierkant Tegen Pa, ik spreek nu in elk geval hoe het ook loope wederom TEGEN PA als willende NIET, als makende het ONMOGELIJK. Het is verdomd beroerd broer, de Rappards handelden intelligent maar hier!!!!!!! En al wat gij er aan deed en doet, het wordt 3/4 vruchtelooos door hen__ Het is lam broer [...]’
[You may think of me what you will Theo but I tell you that it is not my imagination, I tell you Father will not cooperate. I see now what I saw then, I flatly Contradicted Father then, I shall now speak out in any case whatever might happen AGAINST FATHER once more because he does NOT want it, he makes it IMPOSSIBLE. It is damned awful brother, the Rappards acted intelligently but here!!!!!!! And everything one has done and is doing about it, it is rendered 3/4 useless because of them. It is tiresome brother.]²⁷

In extreme examples of this kind, it will be a relief to have a facsimile.

‘Complete’ correspondence

In time, the new edition will take its place as a source for further research on Van Gogh's life, work and use of language. But before this stage has been reached, scores of decisions remain to be made, concerning such things as the relationship between numerous marginalia to the body of the letter. Van Gogh's use in his letters of quotations from the Bible, from hymn books and from works by his favourite authors, decisions on what should be done with quotations from his letters in other sources,²⁸ and which enclosures belonged with which letters.

²⁷ 412/345. Van Gogh underlined the words ‘tegen Pa,’ ‘niet’ and ‘onmogelijk’ (against Father; not; impossible) three times. Another example is letter 227/193 (14 May 1882) in which the words ‘in damned earnest’ were written with a brush, in extremely large letters.

²⁸ There are places in which we find quotations from letters, but where it is questionable how accurate those quotations are. A case in point is Vincent's ‘umbrella-comment’ in ‘English,’ quoted in a letter from his sister Anna. On 24 February 1874 she wrote to Theo from Leeuwarden: ‘But I am very glad for Vincent that he has found such a kind family to live, you know now yourself, how agreeable it is. He seems to be always in good-spirits. In the last letter he writes me: “I fear that after all the sunshine I enjoy from there could be very soon rain - but I will only enjoy as long as possible the sunshine, and have my umbrella in the neighbourhood for the rain that could come”’ (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Vincent van Gogh Foundation, family correspondence, letter b2689 V/1982; italics mine.) Or is this Anna's own translation?
One rather remarkable appendix was discovered to a letter that Vincent wrote to Theo from Ramsgate, on 17 April 1876 (fig. 6). In it, he relates: ‘Yesterday evening and this morning we all went for a walk on the sea front. I enclose a sprig of seaweed.’ Although Van Gogh often enclosed little items, such as rye bread, the fact that this 120-year-old little English sprig has been preserved may be deemed exceptional. It was found in the archives, a few letters further on, and has recently been reunited with the original letter.29

It would not be entirely accurate to say that we can look forward to a complete edition of Van Gogh’s correspondence appearing in the new century. For we are compiling a list of ‘presumed’ letters, letters that must have existed once (as may be inferred from comments such as ‘Thank you for your letter of yesterday’; ‘I am enclosing a few words for...’; ‘I have already written to Father and Mother...’). And this list is growing much faster than anticipated.

External information, too, makes it clear that a great many more letters must have existed in the past. One indication of this is provided by a remark made by J. Tersteeg, one of the children of the Hague art dealer Hermanus Tersteeg, who, from 1902 onwards, together

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29 75/61: ‘Gisteren avond en dezen morgen deden wij allen eene wandeling aan den zeevont. Hierbij een takje zeewier.’ We have been unable to discover the feather of a rook found at Hampton Court, which was sent three months later.
with his father, ‘began to run the business.’ On 25 June 1917 this J. Tersteeg confided to the art historian H.E. van Gelder that they had decided one day to raise the heating by a few degrees: ‘And we quite deliberately threw two or three hundred letters from Vincent van Gogh which were in our way into the fire; my father did not consider all that writing so important - rede nicht Künstler;ilde! [...]’ And this was not all. ‘Letters from masters of the Hague School also went into the fire from time to time - they were poor writers: what would have been the point of keeping all that? Their work spoke for them.’

Perhaps it would be best for us to say that we are working on an anthology of Van Gogh's correspondence, but a very special one.

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30 ‘En in koelen bloede gooiden we twee- of driehonderd brieven van Vincent van Gogh in de centrale, als ze ons in de weg lagen; mijn vader vond al dat geschrijf zo belangrijk niet - rede nicht Künstler;ilde! [...]’. Ook brieven van meesters van de Haagse School gingen op z'n tijd 't vuur in - povere penvoerders waren ze: waar toe dat alles te bewaren? Hun werk sprak voor hen.’ This letter is in the archives of H.E. van Gelder (1876-1960), and belongs to Van Gelder's heirs. It has been placed in the custody of The Hague's Gemeentearchief (no. 796, file 19). My thanks are due to Agnes van den Noort-Van Gelder, Scheveningen. We also have a remark made by Vincent's sister Lies, E.H. du Quesne-Van Gogh, in an interview printed in the evening edition of the _Algemeen Handelsblad_, on 5 May 1934: ‘His letters? Yes he wrote an incredible amount, sometimes about the same subject three times on one day, Mother would hidethe others from Father. That all those letters to Theo, full of intimacies, have been published, was something we greatly deplored. Vincent and Theo would have detested it; an anthology from them would have been so much better! For a good understanding of his artistic expression, I believe that the publication of his letters to Tersteeg, who was his former head at the art dealer's, would have been far more valuable. When Tersteeg moved away from The Hague and settled in Baarn, he had a chest of drawers crammed full of letters from Vincent, but they were all destroyed then.’ ‘Zijn brieven? Ja hij schreef ontzettend veel, soms driemaal hetzelfde op één dag, moeder hield de andere dan achter voor vader. Dat al die brieven aan Theo, vol intimiteiten, zijn uitgegeven, hebben wij heel diep betreurd. Vincent en Theo zouden het verfoeid hebben; wat zou een bloemlezing daaruit niet veel beter geweest zijn! Voor het goede verstaan zijner kunstuitingen was, meen ik, van nog groter waarde geweest een uitgave van de aan zijn vroegeren chef in den kunsthandel, Tersteeg, gerichte brieven. Toen deze zich uit Den Haag te Baarn kwam vestigen, had hij een chiffonière met laden vol brieven van Vincent, die toen echter alle vernietigd zijn.’
fig. 1
Vincent van Gogh, *Shepherd with a flock near a church at Zweeloo*, November 1883, present location unknown
‘Dark and dreary days’: dating Van Gogh's letters from Drenthe

Wout Dijk

Sandwiched between Van Gogh's Hague and Nuenen periods are the 12 weeks he spent in the north-eastern province of Drenthe. 23 letters have survived from this foray into the wilds of this moorland region. Only two can be dated precisely: the postcard [392/327] that he sent to his brother in Paris, which is postmarked 24 September 1885, and letter 409/342, in which he states that the date was ‘Monday, 26 November.’ The remaining letters, like the bulk of the correspondence from the other periods, were not dated by Van Gogh himself, and have had to be given a date on the basis of their relationship to other letters or from isolated remarks. This absence of secure dates not only makes it difficult to say precisely how long Van Gogh spent in Drenthe, but also leads to uncertainty about the chronology of the letters. This article sets out to date the Drenthe letters more accurately on the evidence of Vincent's descriptions of the weather and his remarks about how he spent his days. The interrelationship of the letters is also examined.

Van Gogh's last letters from The Hague [386/321, 387/322] leave no shadow of a doubt that he took the train to Hoogeveen on Tuesday, 11 September 1883, and this is confirmed by the start of his first letter from Drenthe: ‘Hoogeveen, Tuesday evening.’ His date of departure from Drenthe, however, has been uncertain until now. In letter 411/344 of early December 1883, his first from Nuenen, he wrote: ‘My journey began with a good six-hour walk across the heath - to Hoogeveen. On a stormy afternoon in rain and snow.’ The Nederlandsch Meteorologisch Jaarboek (Dutch Meteorological Yearbook; hereafter cited as NMJ) for 1883 reports that it snowed in the early afternoon of 4 December and that a fierce storm swept over the north of the country. The weather was completely different on the other days of the week, so Van Gogh's Drenthe period can now be dated precisely: it lasted from Tuesday, 11 September to Tuesday, 4 December 1883.

Van Gogh also mentions the weather a few times in the other letters from Drenthe, and this helps to narrow down the date or confirm the one proposed in the Brieven van Vincent van Gogh. On the evening of his arrival in Hoogeveen, Van Gogh picked up his pen to write to his brother Theo, who was working in Paris at the Goupil & Cie art gallery. He finished it the following day, writing with great enthusiasm: ‘I got up very early this morning because I was rather curious. The weather was splendid, the air is clear and bracing, as in Brabant.’ This description matches the weather report in the NMJ, and supports the dating of letter 388/323 to Wednesday, 12 September 1883. In letter 390/325, which has been dated ‘c. 17 September 1883,’ Vincent wrote: ‘It is beautiful grey weather this morning, no sun for the first time since I got here.’

This article is based on my unpublished graduate thesis (Open Universiteit, 1994).
1 They are published in De brieven van Vincent van Gogh, ed. Han van Crimpen and Monique Berends-Albert, 4 vols., The Hague 1990. The dating in that edition of the letters is mainly based on the studies of Jan Hulsker, who summarised his findings in J. Hulsker, Vincent van Gogh: a guide to his work and letters, Zwolle 1993.
2 These yearbooks are in the archives of the KNMI (Royal Dutch Meteorology Institute) in De Bilt.
3 According to the 1883 yearbook, the sky was bright on the morning of 12 September but clouded over in the afternoon.
The NMJ reports that it was misty at 7 in the morning on 16 September, as it was on the following four days, but that there was no mist the previous days. Given the remark ‘for the first time,’ this letter can be firmly dated to Sunday, 16 September.

The lovely autumn weather did not last, though, changing on 21 September to bring rain for the final days of the month. This emerges not only from the letters but from the meteorological records as well. It rained steadily on 21, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 September, and continued to do so for the first three days of October. Letter 393/328 shows that Vincent found it difficult to cope with this rainy period. ‘We have gloomy, rainy days here [...]. It is above all this rainy
weather, which we can expect to continue for months to come, that handicaps me so much. […] While the weather was fine I did not mind the troubles because I saw so many beautiful things; but now that it has been pouring incessantly these last days I see more clearly how I have got stuck here and and feel ill at ease.’ His tone changed in letter 394/329, partly, no doubt, because there had been a brief improvement in the weather: ‘This morning the weather was better again, so I went out to paint.’ These statements enable both letters to be dated two days later than the 26 and 27 September proposed in the *Brieven*. It emerges from the *Meteorologisch Jaarboek* that the morning mist only lifted on 29 September, allowing the sun to break through for a while. Letters 393/328 and 394/329 were therefore written on 28 and 29 September respectively.

The wet weather continued for the first few days of October, but despite the rain - or perhaps because of it - Vincent moved from Hoogeveen to Veenoord/Nieuw-Amsterdam. In the first letter from his new address [395/330] he described ‘an endless expedition on a barge.’ There is no mention of rain, merely a description of the evening sky, from which one gets the impression that it had been a cloudy day. Moreover, he enclosed a sheet of sketches which, given the rural subjects, must have been made from the deck of the barge. This suggests that it had remained dry, and the only day that fits is Thursday, 4 October, for it rained steadily for the first three days of the month, and on 5 October as well. This letter, with the fine description of Van Gogh's journey, was written on the evening of his arrival at Hendrik Scholte's hotel in Veenoord, and must therefore be dated 4 October.

Van Gogh enthusiastically set to work again in Veenoord. After ‘nosing around this place for some days,’ he wrote his next letter to Theo [396/331], which contains the following fragments: ‘Yesterday I drew some decayed oak roots, bog trunks as they are called [...] And a stormy sky over it all. [...] I often think of Van Goyen on these misty mornings, the cottages are just like his, that same peaceful and naive aspect.’ It was windy on 5 October, but calm for the next three days, and there was only a mist on the morning of the 5th. The most likely date of this letter is therefore Saturday, 6 October.
Letter 400/334 to Van Gogh's parents must have been written towards the end of October, in view of the remark: ‘Here beautiful clear autumn days alternate with stormy ones.’ Research in the archives shows that the week of 16-23 October was stormy but that the rest of the month was windless.

At the end of letter 403/338, until now very roughly dated ‘between 20 October and 15 November 1883,’ Van Gogh wrote: ‘Well, brother, to change the subject, it is snowing here today, in the form of enormous hailstones. I call it snow because of the effect.’ In the whole of October and November hailstones only fell twice, on Sunday, 11 November, just before eight in the morning, and on Monday, 19 November, but not until nearly nine at night, when it was already dark. In view of Vincent's mention of an ‘effect,’ as well as the internal chronological evidence, the most probable date for this letter is 11 November.

The letter containing the description of the outing that Vincent made to Zweeloo is the one most quoted from the Drenthe period [407/340]. There is considerable difference of opinion on when it was written, but in fact it can be dated precisely. Vincent travelled by cart with Scholte, ‘who had to go to the market in Assen.’ At the end of the
letter he wrote: ‘Today it is Friday,’ and a few lines before: ‘That return of the flock in the twilight was the finale of the symphony I heard yesterday.’ It can be concluded from the above that Van Gogh went to Zweeloo on a Thursday, and that there must have been a market in Assen that day. Archival research reveals that the annual market took place on Thursday, 1 November 1883. All the other, weekly markets were (and still are) held on a Wednesday. This letter can therefore be firmly dated Friday, 2 November 1883.

The chronology followed in the Brieven now has to be altered slightly, because there letter 407/340 is dated ‘probably Friday, 16 November.’ Unfortunately, it contains little internal evidence that would link it to other letters, for it deals almost exclusively with Van Gogh's trip to Assen. It does end, however, with the remark that he had still not received a letter from Theo, which would have contained the sorely needed first instalment of his November allowance. At this time Theo was sending his brother 50 francs three times a month, around the 1st, 10th and 20th.

Letter 408/341 shows that Vincent had now received the money, together with a short note. That letter must have been written around Sunday, 4 November. As was almost always the case, Theo's letter with the first instalment of the allowance would have arrived towards the end of the first week of the month.

The next letter in the published correspondence is 409/342, which is known from the first line to have been written on Monday, 26 November. Theo had been under great pressure and, most unusually for him, had not sent the second instalment on time, which left Vincent very short of cash.

The redating of the ‘Zweeloo letter’ and letter 408/341 obviously leads to a re-ordering of several other letters. The delay in sending the second instalment of the allowance must have been due to something that Vincent had written. In letter 408/341 he gave his brother an ultimatum: ‘[...] it is my intention to refuse your financial help as soon as you bind yourself to Goupil & Cie for good.’ This is a reference to the ‘Goupil & Cie affair,’ a disagreement between Theo and his superiors on the one hand, and Vincent's wish that Theo should become an artist on the other. It was entirely because of Vincent's dramatic announcement that he received no letter, or money, from Paris between 4 November and the end of the month.

‘May I draw your attention to the fact that the post of Monday, 26 November, has just gone by, without having brought your letter.’

Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
In order to arrange the as-yet-undated letters in their proper order one has to follow the narrative line closely. Letter 398/333 of around 13 October was written ‘in all calmness’: ‘I do not wish to hurry you, I only want to say, don't go against nature.’ Letter 406/339b is dated ‘around 3 November 1883’ in the Brieven, but must be moved forward by some weeks to around 17 October, for in it Vincent reacts to Theo's report of the trouble he was having with his superiors with the words: ‘Just wait and see how things turn out, but do not flatter yourself with much hope of a reconciliation.’ He calmly says that the plan they had made would have to be respected by their parents, not frustrated. The same calm, deliberate tone is evident in letters 399/335 and 401/335 of a few days later: ‘I ask only this: don't thwart your own best thoughts.’ Theo was wondering whether or not to give up his job, and Vincent's reaction can be read in letter 402/337: ‘I respect
all your hesitations and doubts, I respect your weighing all the pros and cons, I will not try to force an immediate decision upon you.’ There then follows the ‘Zweeloo letter’ and the reply to the note from Theo with the first instalment of the November allowance. In letter 403/338 of 11 November, Van Gogh refers his brother to correspondences between physiognomy and character, reaching the conclusion: ‘two brothers painters.’ In his next letter [404/339] he pursues the subject of brother painters, but now puts on the pressure: ‘[...] but under the circumstances it is only because of my own wretched financial position that I do not say much more decisively: come here at once. I would not, in other circumstances, say any more than that.’ This letter must have been written around 15 November, and gives not a hint of the explosion to come, which was due in part to the delay in sending the second part of the month’s allowance. The disagreement between the brothers reached its nadir in letter 405/339a, in which Vincent made it clear that he was sick of all the dawdling and hesitation: ‘Dear brother - I cannot speak; at the present moment I am glad I can express myself stumblingly, incoherently, roughly.’

In his last letter written from Drenthe [410/343], Vincent thanked his brother for the letter and ‘the enclosure,’ and here one gets a good idea of what had all gone wrong. Vincent backs down, attributes all the strain between them to a misunderstanding, and suddenly says in the postscript: ‘I shall be able to write to you more calmly from home.’ That letter, with its mention of the second part of the November allowance, can be dated before 1 December, for that was the date when Vincent received the third November instalment from Theo, as can be read in letter 411/344 of 5 December.5

5 411/344: ‘But first I must thank you for your letter of 1 December, which I have just received here at Nuenen.’ That it contained the third instalment emerges from letter 415/346: ‘[...] I paid my expenses for a long period in Drenthe out of the money of 20 November, which arrived on 1 December, because there had been some delay then that was later put right.’
Van Gogh's stay in Drenthe came to an unexpected end on 4 December. He must have travelled light, for he was still planning to return. ‘There is certainly work for me to do in Drenthe, but I must be able to undertake it somewhat differently from the very outset, and have more financial security.’

We know that he never went back to Drenthe and that financial problems dogged him for the rest of his life.
## Chronology and dating of the Drenthe letters

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<th>Letter</th>
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fig. 1
Letter to Theo van Gogh, 12 November 1881 [181/157], Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)
In love: Vincent van Gogh's first true love

*Elly Cassee*

Legends about artists gather around every stage of their lives. The first signs of rare gifts as a child, the heart-rending pain of rejected love, the grinding poverty, the lack of recognition, and then the twilight years basking in fame - each and every myth is chronicled, glowingly cut in stone.

The biography

The ‘true’ artist. Van Gogh as well, is presented as a tormented soul who, utterly alone, strikes out on his own path in the face of uncomprehending opposition, and is also unhappy in love. This intrigues readers, because it makes the artist so recognisable.1 The legends woven around Van Gogh's love life have been given growing prominence in a series of biographies in which fiction vies with fact. Particular stress is placed on Van Gogh's first, youthful love, the theory being that he was so devastated when he was turned down by the one he worshipped that it stamped an indelible mark on the rest of his life.

All the biographers base this view of events on a single story, one told by Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, the widow of Vincent's brother Theo. In 1914 she was responsible for the first edition of Vincent's letters to Theo, and in the opening ‘Memoir’ she gave an account of Vincent's life that has been reprinted in all subsequent editions of the correspondence. In it she said that Vincent had spent the happiest year of his life in London. He had been working at the Goupil gallery there since June, and for a year from August 1875 he lodged with Mrs Ursula Loyer, a widow aged over 50 who ran a day school for young children together with her 19-year-old daughter, Eugénie.2 Vincent fell in love with the girl, but discovered she was secretly engaged. That, according to Jo van Gogh-Bonger, was the cause of Vincent's first great sorrow. He was crushed when Eugénie refused to break off her engagement (‘he was thin, silent and dejected - a different being,’ in the words of Jo van Gogh-Bonger).

In all the early biographies that appeared after 1914, the serious as well as the romanticised, this disillusionment became the cornerstone of a new theory. The fact that Van Gogh had been rebuffed by the one he loved led him to pursue a ‘deliberately painful life.’ The effect on his character and inner life was appalling. Depression set in. Vincent agonised over everything, turned in on himself and avoided the company of others. He became a loner, a solitary and a fanatically pious zealot. His view of art also changed, became more melancholy.3 One commentator even reconstructed Van Gogh's train of thought: the girl couldn't help the fact that she was already engaged, he couldn't blame her for anything. On the contrary, he was grateful to her.

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1 With thanks to Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten and Louis van Tilborgh.
2 Van Gogh called it a ‘school for little boys’ [13/11].
3 W. Vanbeselaere, De Hollandsche periode (1880-1885) in het werk van Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), Antwerp 1937, pp. 7, 18 and 19.

*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
for coming into his life at a crucial moment. What he now had to do was change, become a better person.\textsuperscript{4}

Van Gogh's state of mind was dissected even further in Irving Stone's romanticised biography of 1934. According to him, after Vincent left the Loyer household and moved to another address in London, he found it an unbearable torture to know that she was so close yet so unattainable. 'Pain did curious things to him. It made him sensitive to the pain of others. It made him intolerant of everything that was cheap and blatantly successful in the world around him. He was no longer of any value at the gallery [Goupil's]. The only pictures in which he could find reality and emotional depth were the ones in which


\textit{Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996}
the artists had expressed pain. ’5 He had been a solemn child, to quote Nordenfalk's more serious biography, but his broken heart made him even gloomier, and he became preoccupied with religious questions. 6

Vincent's own words

Vincent does not say much on the subject in his correspondence with Theo. Only in two letters does he speak of a youthful love affair, and they are worth quoting at length. ‘I gave up a girl and she married another, and I went far away from her and kept thinking about her. Fatal,’ he wrote on 12 November 1881. ‘But precisely because love is so strong, usually in our youth (I mean at 17, 18 or 20), we are not strong enough to hold our tiller straight. The passions are the little boat's sails, you see. And someone who entirely gives way to his feelings in his 20th year catches too much wind and his boat fills with water and - he goes under or... manages to get over it. [...] The first case, of the man whose little boat capsized in his 20th year or thereabouts and sank, did he not - or no - who recently came to the surface again - is really that of your brother Vincent, who writes to you as one “who has been down but yet came up again” [in English] (fig. 1). [...] What kind of love did I have in my 20th year? It is difficult to define, my physical passions were very weak in those days, possibly due to a couple of years of great poverty and hard work. But my intellectual passions were strong, and by that I mean that, without asking for anything in return, without wishing to accept pity, I wanted only to give but not to receive. Foolish, wrong, exaggerated, haughty, rash. For in matters of love one must not only take but give as well, and by the same token not only give but also take. Whoever deviates either to the right or to the left will fall, there is no avoiding it. So I fell, and it was a wonder that I got over it.’ There is another relevant passage in a letter that he wrote shortly before: ‘When I was younger I once half-fancied that I was in love, and with the other half I really was. The result was many years of humiliation. May all that humiliation not have been in vain.’ These are the only clues that Van Gogh himself gives us. They refer to something that had happened when he was around 20, so their meaning must have been clear enough to Theo, but they do not provide much information for later readers. Consequently, they served to fuel wild speculation, and have always been associated with Vincent's stay in London. Jan Hulsker was the only author to have his doubts, but even he could not avoid following Jo van Gogh-Bonger, the creator of this tale of young love in London. 9

The first London period

7 181/157.
8 180/156.
Vincent wrote affectionately of Mrs Loyer and her daughter, but described his relationship with the girl as that between a brother and sister, no more. He announced this to his sister Anna, and she in turn reported it to Theo on 6 January 1874. ‘Monday morning at breakfast I found a letter from London which contained a letter from Vincent and one from Ursula Loyer, both were very kind and amiable. She asks me to write her and Vincent wished very much we should be friends. I'll tell what he writes about her. “Ursula [sic] Loyer is a girl with whom I have agreed that we should consider ourselves each other's brother and sister. You should look on her as a sister too and write to her, and I think you will then soon find out what kind of a girl she is. I'll say nothing more than that I never saw or dreamed of anything like the love between her and her mother.”—Then there follows a description of Christmas and New-year and then still the following phrase. “Old girl, don't think there is more behind it than I wrote just now, but don't tell them at home: I must do that myself. But again: Love her for my sake.” I suppose there will be a love between those two, as between Agnes and David Copperfield. Although I must say, that I believe there is more than a brother's love between them; I send you here Ursula's letter so you can judge for yourself.”

10 An odd slip of the pen. He must have meant Eugénie.
11 Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Vincent van Gogh Foundation, family correspondence, letter b 2679/V1982. Anna wrote in English because her teacher at the boarding school thought it would be good practice for her. The extract from Vincent's letter she left in Dutch, here translated. The enclosure ‘Ursula's letter,’ has not been found.
More than a month later, on 24 February 1874, Anna told Theo that she had received a letter from Vincent in which he wrote that Eugénie (now given her correct name) had a fiancé, ‘a good natured youth,’ as Vincent called him, ‘who would know to appreciate her [sic].’ ‘He [Vincent] seems to be always in good spirits.’

That cheerfulness is also apparent in his letters to Theo. There is little evidence of a failed attempt to get Eugénie to break off her engagement and a subsequent depression in the summer of 1874, at least not in the correspondence. On the contrary, Vincent was enjoying himself and working hard. On 10 June, Theo's father wrote to him saying that Mr Goupil, Van Gogh's employer, had told him that Vincent was very ambitious in his work. At the end of June Van Gogh left London for a fortnight's holiday at his parent's home in Helvoirt. He and Anna returned to London on 13 July, and she, too, lodged with the Loyers. They went on many walks together, and the letters show that they were having a pleasant time. The Reverend Van Gogh told Theo on 4 August that he had received yet another letter from Vincent and Anna that morning. They greatly enjoyed each other's company, and Anna said that the Loyers were good people who did everything they could to please her and Vincent. In short, there were no signs that anything was amiss. And Vincent in love? There is nothing in the letters to suggest it.

Theo's sadness

Now Anna clearly relished match-making, for in the first of her letters to Theo quoted above she mentioned a second candidate upon whom Vincent's eye had supposedly fallen. ‘You must try to find out more about Annet Haanebeek for if I know more of it, I should like to write about it to Vincent himself.’ And in her next letter to Theo she said: ‘I am very curious to know more about him [Vincent] and Annet. We two are just old people who try to know all about persons who are in love. But I am very glad for Vincent that he has found such a kind family to live, you know now yourself, how agreeable it is.’

Annet Haanebeek was related to the Van Goghs. Her mother was the sister of J.P. Strieker (known as Uncle Stricker), who was an uncle of the Van Goghs, having married Mrs Van Gogh's sister. The Haanebeeks lived in Lange Poten in The Hague. Theo regularly called on them, and passed on Vincent's respects. Annet then fell seriously ill. Theo wrote about her, not only to Anna and Vincent but to his sister Lies as well, as shown by her reply of 26 April 1875. ‘That poor Annet Haanebeek whom you wrote to me about, she is so young to have to die already.’ On 8 May
1875 Vincent asked Theo: ‘How is the patient? I had already heard from Father that she was ill, but I did not know it was as bad as that.’ And a little further on: ‘I hope and believe that I am not what many people think I am just now. We shall see, some time must pass; they will probably say the same of you in a few years time, at least if you remain what you are: my brother in a twofold sense. Farewell, and my regards to the patient.’

On 19 June he wrote: ‘I had hoped to see her before she died, but that was not to be. Man proposes and God disposes. In the first crate that we will send to Holland you will find a photograph of that picture by Ph. de Champaigne of which Michelet says: “It remained in my mind for 30 years, persistently coming back to me.”’ And he closed the letter with the words: ‘I am sure you will not forget her or her death, but keep it to yourself. This is one of those things which, as time goes by, makes us “sorrowful yet always rejoicing,” and that is what we must become.’

Vincent's rather cool reaction to the news of Annet's death does not suggest that he had any special feelings for her. He did not write a letter of condolence to her father until November 1875, and that certainly does not hint at any romantic attachment, as Anna had once suspected. No,

17 33/26 It is interesting that Vincent never mentions Annet by name in any of his letters. He could not just have meant the Haanebeek family when he spoke of ‘the Poten.’
18 35/28.
19 57/45.
the loss was Theo's. The Reverend Van Gogh realised that he was sad, and very cautiously offered him some advice in a letter of 8 July 1875. ‘My dear Theo [...] I have found that your spirits have been low lately, that you are not as cheerful as you used to be. Am I wrong? Can I do anything to make you happier? Is it also possible that your gaze is directed too much to one side? And now another question that I put to you with the idea that I am not speaking to a child but to a young man, to my son, who is our joy. You must consider, and consider deeply, without fear of being prejudiced, might it also be that the tone that prevails in the Haanebeek household as a result of the singularly sad circumstances that came to pass there, might it also be that the tone that prevails there is too gloomy, too one-sided, too closed. [...] Your mood used to be different, I am sounding you out, of course, what brought about the change? Is it not true that that is almost the only house you visit? That made me wonder, might an association with just one family, at least almost solely with one family, might that also lead one to lean too much to one side? I know very well that there is much that is excellent in those people, and I would not like to appear to be causing trouble, or gossiping, but I do think it would be desirable for you to follow up association with that family by seeking out other people.’

Vincent's love

So if it was Theo, and not Vincent, who entertained special feelings for Annet Haanebeek, for whom did Vincent have them? By staying closer to home and examining the letters from Van Gogh's first period in The Hague and those from Paris one discovers that something was going on before he went to London.

To whom did Vincent send such beautiful poems with his letters apart from Theo? For whom had he wanted to send Keats's tremulously erotic poem, ‘The eve of St Agnes,’ but for the fact that ‘it is a little long to copy down’? And towards whom did he adopt a completely different tone, complete with grandiloquent words written on splendid blue writing paper? (fig. 2). Who was preparing for her

21 A few examples will suffice to show how Van Gogh tried to sound grand. ‘If, some time, you have a moment at your disposal,’ ‘Excuse the poor handwriting,’ ‘What you say about the winter is quite right [the last two words in English],’ ‘I sometimes begin to believe that I am gradually becoming a true cosmopolitan, in other words not a Dutch man, English man or French man [the nationalities in English], but simply a man.’
wedding at the time when Vincent wrote to Theo: ‘Theo, I strongly advise you to
smoke a pipe; it's such a good remedy if you're down in the dumps, as I have been
from time to time lately.’ And who is always addressed affectionately in the letters
as ‘Old girl,’ and to whom does he expressly ask to be remembered, with no mention
of her husband, who on one occasion was merely sent ‘many happy returns’ on his
birthday, while she received a personal letter of congratulations on hers? To whom
did Van Gogh send photographs of works of art for a ‘scrapbook’? Whom should
Theo above all visit in person, and after whom did he assiduously enquire? Who
received a little book, and to whom did he

22 5/5.
23 42/35.
25 86/68.
‘recommend’ the writer George Eliot? 26 One and the same woman: Caroline van Stockum-Haanebeek, Annet's sister and (before her marriage) a collector for the State Lottery in The Hague. 27 It was her, she and none other, who was the subject of the quotation at the start of this article: ‘What kind of love did I have in my 20th year [in 1873, in other words]? I gave up a girl [she was a few months older than him] and she married [on 30 April 1871] another [Willem van Stockum], and I went far away from her [to London, in June 1873] and kept thinking about her [see above]. Fatal.’ 28

So two brothers fell in love with two sisters: Theo with Annet Haanebeek and Vincent with Caroline. If one accepts this reading, all sorts of other details fall into place. The statement: ‘My physical passions were very weak in those days, possibly due to a couple of years of great poverty and hard work’ becomes easier to understand. Van Gogh had very little money in his first two years in The Hague, and he was not really happy, as he himself said in a letter of February 1883 in response to a letter about ‘love’: ‘I sometimes think of years ago when I came to G[oupil] & Co. in The Hague for the first time, and of the three years I spent there; the first two were rather unpleasant, but the last one was much happier.’ 29

It now also becomes clear why, in the period 1874-75, Vincent copied out Saint-Beuve's ‘Sonnet’ after Uhland, which is about two sisters, on p. 18 of Theo's poetry album. Ludwig Uhland was the poet who wrote ‘Der Wirth in Töchterlein’ that is mentioned in a letter cited below, and that poem is in both Theo's and Vincent's poetry albums. 30

### Setting a good example

In one of his first letters to Theo, Vincent recalled a walk that they had taken to the mill at Rijswijk in the summer of 1872. In August of that year, Johan Andries Stricker, the father of J.A. Stricker, celebrated his 80th birthday in Huis te Hoorn at Rijswijk, which stood beside the Rijswijk barge canal, and both brothers very probably attended the reception. In the photograph taken on the occasion (fig. 3), almost all the people present have been identified, including Vincent. Theo was staying with his brother in The Hague at the time. During that walk they must have discussed private matters. What did they speak about by that mill? Their feelings for the Haanebeek sisters, perhaps? The stroll left Vincent with ‘memories [...] which are perhaps the most beautiful I have,’ and he later returned to the subject on several occasions. 31

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26 87/73.
27 Carolina Adolphina Haanebeek (1852-1926). After marrying Willem van Stockum she lived in the Varkenmarkt in The Hague. Her fiancé was also a collector for the State Lottery. They had three daughters, who were born on 17 February 1874, 7 May 1875 and 17 March 1881.
28 Eugénie Loyer, on the other hand, did not marry her fiancé, Samuel Plowman, until 10 April 1878; see Martin Bailey, Young Vincent: the story of Van Gogh's years in England, London 1990, p. 28.
29 314/266.
31 11/10. See also letters 154/133, 235/205, 249/217, 251/219 and 416/347 and 347a,b.
Theo(dorus) and Mother Anna and Uncle Vincent and Aunt Cornelia were two Van Gogh brothers married to two Carpentus sisters. Vincent's father and uncle, whom he adored at the time, were thus ‘brothers in a twofold sense,’ as he described himself and Theo in the letter about Annet quoted earlier.

The aftermath

After Caroline married, Vincent's feelings towards her changed in the sense that he began adoring the state of motherhood. In 1877, Caroline fell very ill, as her sister Annet had done. On 5 August of that year Vincent wrote, tellingly, to Theo: ‘In the midst of life we are in death, that is a phrase that touches each one of us personally, it is a truth we again see confirmed in what you tell me about Caroline van Stockum, and formerly we saw it in another member of the same family. It has touched me, and with all my heart I hope she may recover. Oh, what sorrow, what sadness and suffering there is in the world, in public as well as in private life, “Seek and ye shall find” is also true of that. How much has changed in that house, compared to the way it was a few years ago. “Das war vor langen Jahren, wenn wir beisammen waren” [that was many years ago, when we were together].’ And that was the time of Der Wirthin Töchterlein. Longfellow says: “There

32 Van Gogh also used this free quotation from Clemens Brentano's ‘Der Spinnerin Lied’ in letter 18/13a to Caroline van Stockum-Haanebeek.
fig. 3
Group picture taken on the occasion of the 80th birthday of J.A. Stricker, August 1872. Theo and Vincent can be seen at the middle rear, Caroline Haanebeek and Willem van Stockum at the left. Private collection.
are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,” but above all it is written: “Let him who puts his hand to the plough not look back,” and: “Be a man.” [...] If she should soon recover enough to be moved to The Hague, and if you see her then, remember me to her. If you can find words that will cheer her or give her courage, that will remind her of how much reason she has to exist and, in a manner of speaking, the right she has to live, above all for her children's sake, say them and you will be doing a good deed. With a mother, faith in God is renewed; what she feels for her children is sacred, comes from above, from God, and he says to every mother: “Raise this child for me and I shall reward thee.” Spoken in time, forceful words from the heart can cheer and comfort.'

Just how much Vincent had suppressed his former feelings for Caroline is shown by the stunningly Freudian leap he made in his letter of 18 August 1877 from Amsterdam: ‘This morning I had a talk with Mendes [Vincent's teacher of classical languages in Amsterdam] about M. Maris, and showed him that lithograph of those three children, and also “A baptism,” (fig. 4) and he understood it very well. [...] Have you heard anything more about Caroline? Went to Utrecht and back on the day of Hendrik's wedding reception, and congratulated them on your behalf as well. It was a very grand affair, lots of beautiful greenery in the room, the bride looked sweet enough. Uncle Jan seemed happy.’

In Van Gogh's free association, the image of cousin Hendrik's bride had merged with that of Caroline, the bride he had dreamed of for himself and who was now the mother of two children. Her right to exist, in Van Gogh's vision at least, now resided above all in her motherhood.

The consolation of books

In his letter about young love cited at length above, Vincent included an interesting piece of information about the remedy he had sought for his broken heart. ‘What gradually helped me recover my balance more than anything else was reading practical books on physical and moral illness. I learned how to look deeper into my own

![fig. 4](image)

Albert Anker, *A baptism*, 1864

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33 125/105.
34 He had already praised this work in letter 14/11 a to Willem and Caroline van Stockum-Haanebeek: ‘“A baptism,” after Anker, a Swiss who has painted a variety of subjects, all equally delicate and intimate.’
35 126/106.
heart and into that of others. Gradually I began to love my fellow men again, myself included, and increasingly my heart and soul revived, which for a time had been withered, blighted and stricken through all kinds of great misery. And the more I returned to reality and mingled with people, the more I felt new life reawakening within me.’

Vincent consoled himself first with the book *L'amour* by Jules Michelet. In the first lines starting: ‘From here I see a lady’ of the chapter ‘Les aspirations de l'automne,’ Michelet describes an older woman, simply dressed, who reminds him of a female portrait by Philippe de Champaigne (1602-1674) in the Louvre which, Michelet writes, ‘remained in my mind for 30 years.’ Vincent was so impressed by the idealised vision of womankind sketched in this fragment that he urged Theo to read it too, and even copied it out several times, for himself and for Theo's poetry album. He also wrote it down for Caroline Haanebeek (fig. 5), instead of the erotic poem by Keats he had originally thought to send. A reproduction of the painting accompanied him on all his travels and, as we know, he also sent one to Theo to console him after the death of Annet Haanebeek. It was not for nothing that Vincent quoted Michelet's admiring words for Philippe de Champaigne's depiction of this woman dressed in mourning several times: ‘No woman is old,’ and that he later repeated
the words: ‘It remained in my mind for 30 years, persistently coming back to me.’

This way of absorbing books and passages from them was typical of Van Gogh.

His reading of *L'amour* and, later, *La femme*, in which Michelet extols the glories of motherhood, led him to sublimate his love for Caroline. He created a new ideal for himself: the older woman, the mother, marked by life. It is no wonder that he was so happy in London. Ursula Loyer was the personification of

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36 Cf. letters 27/20, 35/28, 115/96, 118/99 (in an erasure) and 191/164. In letter 89/82a-2 he asked Theo to copy out the page with the words ‘Je vois d'ici une dame’ for him, and he repeated the request in his next letter [90/82a-1]. Just how important this page was to him emerges again from the following lines in letter 102/85: ‘Old boy, send me that page from Michelet again, the one you sent me before. It is in the box in my desk, and I need it again.’


38 In letter 191/164, for instance, Van Gogh explains his attitude to women and to reading Michelet.
that female ideal, and was also, in Van Gogh's eyes, a good mother, witness the remark in his letter to Anna, while he had an asexual, 'brother-sister’ relationship with Eugénie. In November 1876, long after Van Gogh had left London and was living in Isleworth, he even went back to visit her. ‘The day before I had made a long hike to London. [...] then on to Clapham to visit Mrs Loyer again, whose birthday was the day before. She is indeed a widow with a heart in which the psalms of David and the chapters from Isaiah are not dead but slumber. Her name is written in the book of life.'

That non-erotic and thus innocuous admiration for the mother also applied to her daughter. It speaks volumes that he identified Philippe de Champaigne's portrait of a woman with Ursula Loyer, and consequently adored her daughter.
'When I get the chance I will send you a French Bible and the *Imitation of Christ*. The latter was probably the favourite book of the lady painted by Ph. de Champaigne. In the Louvre there is the portrait of her daughter, a nun, also by Ph. de Ch., she has the *Imitation* on the chair beside her.'

**The letters**

It is not surprising that Johanna van Gogh-Bonger said nothing about Vincent's love and its later consequences. She never saw the letters to Caroline van Stockum-Haanebeek, which were first published in the 1953 edition of the correspondence. It is also likely that Theo was economical with information about the past, and never told his wife about his own youthful loves, or Vincent's. It is interesting to see that Anna had suspected that something was up but did not know precisely what, and that many years later Jo van Gogh-Bonger did know that love had been in the air around 1873 but did not know precisely who the loved one was. That was a secret known only to the 'brothers in a twofold sense.'

The only serious biographer who had his doubts about the legend created by Jo van Gogh-Bonger was Jan Hulsker. In 1985 he wrote: ‘Vincent knew in February (not June or July as stated in the Memoir) that she [Eugénie] was engaged, but that did not stop him from being “always in good spirits.” It is possible that his love later intensified, but I have so far been unable to find a shred of evidence for this, and must conclude that the whole episode has come down to us in a highly dramatised and exaggerated form through the Memoir.’

As a result of a close reading of Van Gogh's letters to Theo and to Caroline Haanebeek it seems that the myth about him falling in love during his first stay in London is now untenable. As baseless as the claim that his disillusionment forced him there and then to take a different view of life - and art.

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40 38/31. The painting is reproduced in De Leeuw, op. cit. (note 37), fig. 9.
41 The letters to Caroline and Willem van Stockum-Haanebeek were offered to Ir. V.W. van Gogh as a gift on 8 October 1953. They had belonged to Miss Hester den Tex, and her mother, Mrs C.A. den Tex, donated them to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation on her daughter's death; see Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, Vincent van Gogh Foundation, family correspondence, letter b 1552/V1962 (8 October 1953). It is not known how they had come into the possession of Miss Den Tex.
42 She did, however, know, that Theo had had ‘a beautiful cousin who had died young,’ whom she called Bertha Haanebeek. Vincent had referred to a B.H. in letter 19/14. From the context, ‘Watch your heart, old boy,’ it seems that Vincent was warning Theo not to fall in love. There is no known Bertha Haanebeek in this particular family; the third sister was called Cornelia.
43 See note 9
fig. 1
Vincent van Gogh's Chinese lacquer box with sixteen balls of wool, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)
Strands interlacing: colour theory, education and play in the work of Vincent van Gogh

Laura Coyle

One of the most curious objects preserved at the Van Gogh Museum is a slightly battered Chinese red lacquer box containing 16 colourful balls of wool and a few loose strands of yarn (fig. 1). Some of the balls are a single colour, a golden yellow, or an intense blue-green, while others combine two or three colours of twisted yarn, such as dark violet and bright yellow, or yellow-orange and light green. It is known for certain that the balls of yarn belonged to Vincent van Gogh because his close friend, the artist Emile Bernard, mentioned them in an elegiac article on Van Gogh written shortly after he died. Bernard noted that during a visit with Van Gogh in Paris he saw on a table, along with some Japanese crépons, a few ‘balls of wool whose interlaced strands played a surprising symphony’ of colours.

This unusual box of yarns relates to the artist's understanding of colour theory, and derives from a specific educational practice. To explain the significance of this box and how Van Gogh used its contents, I will examine the most important threads that make up his understanding of colour theory. I will also show how these threads weave together to reveal a complex pattern of fundamental social and philosophical questions that revolve around how ideas and practices travel and change, and how notions of childhood, learning, creativity and genius are intertwined. This singular box of yarns provides a valuable key to understanding Van Gogh's formation as an artist, and how his development dovetails with changing ideas about education and art education sweeping across 19th-century Europe.

I am grateful to Louis van Tilborgh for showing the box of yarns to me; Fieke Pabst at the Van Gogh Museum for her gracious and unfailing assistance with many questions; Professor Debora Silverman, who first brought this box to my attention in a lecture at Princeton University and encouraged me to pursue my research on it; and Professor Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Vincent DiGirolamo, April Masten, Sally Mills, Amy Ogata and Gennifer Weisenfeld, who gave me extremely useful comments on a draft of this paper.

1 The box is illustrated in colour in Ronald de Leeuw, *Van Gogh at the Van Gogh Museum*, Zwolle 1994, p. 88. It is too large to be a tea chest. The labels in Chinese pasted inside do not indicate its original contents, but it may have been used to store paper. I would like to thank Dr Fen-Dow Chu for his assistance with the identification of the box and the labels. The 16 balls of yarn consist of the following colours: 1) pink (faded) and blue, 2) yellow and blue (very saturated), 3) yellow, green and red, 4) orange and light blue, 5) yellow, one colour (the colour of corn), 6) yellow, one colour, darker than 5, 7) yellow, two colours (the colours of 5 and 6), 8) dark violet and bright yellow, 9) violet and yellow (the colour of corn), 10) light violet and yellow (the colour of corn), 11) orange and red, 12) yellow (more than one shade the colour of corn) and pink (two shades, one dark and one light, both faded, 13) yellow-orange and light green (very fine wool); 14) blue-green and bright yellow, 15) blue-green, and 16) violet (two shades). There are also a few loose strands of yarn in violet, light pink, and blue. Louis van Tilborgh pointed out to me that because red dyes are fugitive, the red, orange and pink yarns are probably faded. It is also possible that some of the pinks were originally red.

2 Emile Bernard, ‘Vincent van Gogh,’ *Les hommes d'aujourd'hui*, no. 390 (1891), n.p.: ‘Sur la table, parmi les crépons japonais, des boules de laine dont les fils entrelacés jouaient des symphonies imprévues [...]’
Van Gogh and colour theory

Van Gogh appears to have used this box of yarns not only to experiment with colour, as Bernard described, but also to help define the palette for specific pictures. Some of the balls of yarn can even be matched to particular paintings. A ball of harmonised yellow tones relates closely to *Still life with white grapes, apples, pears and lemons* (fig. 2), and another consisting of yellow, green and red yarns is comparable to *Apples* (Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum). Since paintings with colour schemes like those of the balls of yarn first appear in the period when Van Gogh was in Paris and had had the chance to see impressionist painting, he probably did not assemble the yarns until he arrived there in March 1886. He certainly had them before he left for Arles two years later, since it was in Paris that Bernard met and worked with Van Gogh and later remembered seeing them.

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3 This has been noted by De Leeuw, op. cit. (note 1), p. 88.
Cornelia Peres was the first to point out that these balls of wool could provide information about Van Gogh's colour theory. Debora Silverman also discussed the box briefly in an intriguing article that explored the impact of the painter's Dutch upbringing on his art. She argued that the role of religion and the constraints on individuality in 19th-century Holland led Van Gogh to consider his art as a kind of craft labour, and that he self-consciously emulated the Nuenen weavers in his paintings. With regard to the box of yarns, she pointed out that Van Gogh had used the same method as the chemist Michel-Eugène Chevreul, ‘operationalizing’ the chemist's discoveries. She claimed that while Van Gogh was in Nuenen, he simultaneously absorbed Chevreul's ideas and observed the weavers at work. In Paris, she wrote, he was exposed to new ways of painting and there ‘amplified the pre-existing lessons of paint as threads and colour as fiber to be worked into the fabric of the picture surface.’ These effects, which initially appear as a ‘woven stroke’ in a few early Nuenen-period still lifes, and much more frequently in his Paris flower still lifes, are carried over into some of his later and most celebrated paintings, such as the Van Gogh Museum's *Sunflowers*.

6 For example on the pot that holds the brushes in *Still life with paintbrushes in a pot* (present location unknown) and on the double-handled pot in *Still life with pottery and two bottles* (Pasadena, Norton Simon Foundation).
Van Gogh was already keenly interested in colour theory before arriving in France. He encountered it primarily in two publications by Charles Blanc, *Les artistes de mon temps*, in the chapter devoted to Delacroix, and the *Grammaire des arts du dessin*, in a special section on the laws of colour. Van Gogh's commitment to Blanc's ideas remained remarkably consistent, from the time he first mentions them in his letters to the end of his career. However, to understand why Van Gogh did not study colour theory with the help of yarn until he arrived in Paris, it is necessary to review in some detail how he understood that theory before leaving the Netherlands.

Blanc's colour theory is the same in both publications, and is deeply indebted to Chevreul's *Dé la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs* (1839), which the chemist had published while he was head of the Gobelins tapestry works. Studying different colour combinations of dyed wool in tapestries, Chevreul had observed that a given colour is always influenced by the one next to it. To explain these effects, he formulated the laws of simultaneous and successive contrast. Although Chevreul intended his work primarily for decorative arts designers, he believed it could be useful to painters. This proved true, and it is not an exaggeration to say that nearly every late-19th century painter in France was familiar with at least some aspect of his work. However, Chevreul's book was long and technical, and most painters seem to have learned of his ideas the way Van Gogh did, through popular interpretations such as Blanc's, written specifically for fine artists.

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7 For Van Gogh's colour theory and painting technique during the Nuenen period, see IJsbrand Hummelen and Cornelia Peres, "To paint darkness that is nevertheless colour": the painting technique of *The potato eaters*, in Louis van Tilborgh et al., *The potato eaters by Vincent van Gogh*, Zwolle 1993, pp. 49–69. For a thorough discussion of the sources of Van Gogh's colour theory before and during his stay in Paris, see Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, "Color theory in Paris," *Vincent van Gogh: his Paris period, 1886-1888*, Utrecht & The Hague 1976, pp. 64-127.


10 Welsh-Ovcharov, op. cit. (note 7), pp. 67 and 111.

11 The following section is indebted to Welsh-Ovcharov, op. cit. (note 7) and Silverman, op. cit. (note 4).

12 The law of simultaneous contrast dictates that when two colours are seen side by side, each colour will tint the other with its opposite, thereby heightening the contrast. The law of successive contrast states that when we look at one colour for a time and then look elsewhere, the second place we look will be tinged with the pale opposite of the first colour. Although Chevreul confused the way coloured light mixes with how coloured pigments behave when mixed, as was pointed out in a popular book published by Ogden Rood, *Modern chromatics, with applications to art and industry*, New York 1879, his theory remained very influential on painters.

13 At the end of a long letter [539/428] explaining to Theo how the colour theory he learned from Blanc guided him in painting specific pictures in Nuenen, Van Gogh summarised his understanding of Blanc's writings, which interestingly foreshadows the painter's later use of colour: ‘These things concerning complementary colours, simultaneous contrast, and the neutralizing of complements, this question of [complementary colours] is the first and principal one; the second is the mutual influence of two kindred colours, for instance carmine on vermilion, a pink-violet on a blue-violet. The third question is a light blue against the same dark blue, a pink against a brown-red, a citron yellow against a chamois yellow, etc. But the first question is the most important.’ See also Georges Roque, ‘Chevreul and Impressionism: a reappraisal,’ *The Art Bulletin* 78 (March 1996), pp. 26-39.
Silverman argued that it was his daily observance of the weavers in Nuenen that ‘activated’ Van Gogh to imitate thread and fiber with paint.\(^{14}\) However, before arriving in Paris, Van Gogh used the woven stroke only in a few still lifes and in a way that hardly suggests fabric at all. He did not imitate weaving in his painting, use a threadlike stroke or appear to have used yarn to experiment with colour until later. This suggests that Van Gogh’s exposure to certain ideas and ways of working then current in Paris were relatively more important than Silverman has implied.

It seems that Van Gogh did not fully understand who Chevreul was until after he moved to the French capital.\(^{15}\) Not only was the chemist well known in Van Gogh’s Parisian circle, but he also turned 100 the year the painter arrived and was celebrated as a national hero.\(^{16}\) One of the


\(^{15}\) The chemist is not mentioned in any of the many letters Van Gogh devoted to the weavers or colour theory. This may be because while Blanc mentions Chevreul’s name in both Les artistes and the Grammaire, he is vague about how much he relied on the chemist in both books. Moreover, he does not refer to Chevreul’s relationship to the Gobelins tapestry works at all. Instead he associated the colour theory he discussed closely with Delacroix. He wrote that Delacroix first learned the laws of colour intuitively and then set about to master ‘scientifically and thoroughly’ the theories of colour developed by contemporary scientists such as Chevreul; see Blanc, op. cit. (note 8), p. 64 and idem, op. cit. (note 9), p. 564. When Van Gogh mentioned colour theory in his Dutch-period letters, he, like Blanc, emphasised Delacroix’s role, at one point claiming that the romantic painter was the first to formulate and bring the laws of colour to light [541/430 (early November 1885)]. On the relationship between Chevreul’s theory and Delacroix’s painting, see Lee Johnson, Delacroix, London 1963, pp. 7-8, 83-72.

places Chevreul’s achievements were noted was in a remarkable and very early essay in photojournalism by Félix Tournachon, better known as Nadar. He interviewed him for *Le journal illustré* and accompanied the article, which included a discussion of colour theory, with photographs he had made during their conversation. In 1886, therefore, it would have been nearly impossible for Van Gogh not to have learned of the connection between Chevreul and the Gobelins tapestry works, and of the importance of his research for artists. During his Paris period, Van Gogh began to use strokes in his painting that strongly evoke cloth and thread, frequently in the backgrounds of his paintings. Significantly, Chevreul had pointed out that it was this area of a painting that often posed the greatest challenge to the artist and the place where his theories could be most useful.

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18 ‘How many times,’ Chevreul asked Nadar, ‘have you heard [painters] say that nothing is more difficult and yet more absorbing than the value of the background? And yet what is the reason for these difficulties in obtaining harmony, if not the knowledge of colour relationships? [...]’ Horace Vernet, who often came to seem me at the Gobelins, [...] told me how much trouble the background of his *Portrait of Brother Philippe* had given him and how many times he had to rework it. I believe I may say that a thorough knowledge of the law of colours would have spared him time and effort’; Nadar, op. cit. (note 17), p. 287, cited and translated in Levin, op. cit. (note 16), p. 145.
In *Vase with asters and phlox* (figs. 3 and 4), for example, the painting is keyed to Chevereul's simultaneous contrast of predominantly red and green flowers in the vase. In the background, brushstrokes of red and green are woven together to create a neutral but harmonious backdrop of what Blanc and Chevreul called *tons rompus*, an unequal mixture of complementary colours that allows one to dominate. In *Vase with gladioli* (figs. 5 and 6), Van Gogh draws on two different aspects of Chevreul's colour contrast harmonies described by Blanc. The foreground is again harmonised with a simultaneous contrast of primarily red and green, but the distinctly woven background is made of different shades of blue, creating a monochromatic contrast of analogous hues and tones, a harmony composed of that ‘infinite variety of tone of one same family’ Van Gogh first admired in Nuenen. While less common after 1886, the woven stroke does appear in some important later paintings, again usually in the background, and once as the rug, created out of red, green and yellow strokes, below Gauguin's armchair (fig. 7).

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19 Welsh-Ovcharov, op. cit. (note 7), p. 76 discussed this effect in Van Gogh's three paintings of gladioli, F 237, F 242, and F 248b, p. 76.

20 As Welsh-Ovcharov notes (ibid, pp. 97-98), the most consistent group of paintings that are monochrome overall are the Paris *sous-bois*. These monochrome paintings are no less guided by Blanc's colour theory than those of complementary contrast.
While it is likely, as Silverman suggested, that Van Gogh sought to emulate the weavers in his painting for ideological reasons, these were not the only ones. Nor was he the only painter in Paris to evoke cloth in his work. An examination of Georges Seurat's recreation of the effects of tapestry in his work sheds more light on why making paintings that looked like fabric might have appealed to Van Gogh. As Jeroen Stumpel has argued, Seurat, who like Van Gogh was greatly interested in colour theory, consciously tried to imitate tapestry in his paintings. Both detractors and supporters of Neo-impressionism recognised the relationship between this painting style and textiles. Unfriendly critics called it ‘la méthode à petit point,’ and Seurat's work was compared to ‘painted Gobelins, just as unpleasant as the originals.’ On the other hand, in the pamphlet

on the new technique that accompanied the work's exhibition in the spring of 1886, Seurat's influential friend and apologist Félix Fénéon admiringly described *Sunday afternoon on the island of La Grande Jatte* (The Art Institute of Chicago) as a ‘patient tapestry.’

For Seurat, imitation of the weaver's craft was a means of ridding his work of naturalism, adapting the highly popular decorative effects of tapestry to paint. As Stumpel noted, Blanc discussed the characteristics of tapestry at length in his *Grammaire* and how it differed from painting, concluding: 'In the end it is fortunate that
the shortcomings of the art of weaving give it its most beautiful qualities by forcing it to be what it must be: simply decorative.’ Stumpel has proposed that Seurat radically challenged Blanc's conservative separation of painting from the decorative arts and 'subjected painting to the principles of weaving.’

The formal issues of naturalism that troubled Seurat were also ones with which Van Gogh wrestled. Van Gogh, however, consistently tried to find a synthesis between a representation grounded in nature and a decorative effect guided, in part, by colour theory. As a result, he often managed to create the decorative harmonies he sought not by changing the natural colours of objects, as other artists such as Paul Gauguin did, but rather by choosing subjects to paint that easily fit his colour theory.

This helps explain why Van Gogh painted so many still lifes early on during his stay in Paris. In this genre, he had complete control over the subject and its composition. In a letter to the painter Horace Mann Livens in the fall of 1886, he frankly referred to his flowers as ‘a series of colour studies in painting, simply flowers, red poppies, blue corn flowers and myosotys, white and rose roses, yellow chrysanthemums - seeking oppositions of blue with orange, red and green, and yellow and violet seeking les tons rompus et neutres to harmonise brutal extremes. Trying to achieve intense colour and not grey harmony.’

22 See Charles Blanc, Grammaire des arts décoratifs, Paris 1882, p. 95: ‘Il est heureux enfin que les défauts de la tapisserie soient, encore une fois, la source de ses plus belles qualités en lui créant la nécessité d'être ce qu'il faut qu'elle soit: simplement décorative’; quoted in Stumpel, op. cit. (note 21), p. 213; see also ibid., p. 214. In 1887, when Van Gogh was most attracted to divisionism, his painting reveals a pronounced stippling which is related to, but less uniform than, the more dotlike stroke of neo-impressionist painting. In certain paintings, such as Fritillaries (Paris, Musée d'Orsay), which is built upon a strong blue-orange contrast, the woven background of many earlier Paris flower still lifes is replaced by an array of small blue, green, yellow and white strokes that bear comparison to Seurat's petit point. Van Gogh did not, however, attempt or desire to achieve the grey tonality produced by optical mixture that seems to have been one of Seurat's goals. Perhaps in Fritillaries, and in other paintings where he capitalised on a divisionist stroke, Van Gogh consciously mimicked fabric in his painting in a way analogous to Seurat's, but without sacrificing the control of the harmonies or vibrancy of colour. See Welsh-Ovcharov, op. cit. (note 7), pp. 99-105 on the impact of divisionism on Van Gogh's stroke and his rejection of optical mixture (p. 101). See Stumpel, op. cit. (note 21), p. 223 on intentional graying in Seurat's work. See Silverman, op. cit. (note 4), p. 164, for the relationship this stroke bears to cloth.

23 In my dissertation in progress, The still life paintings of Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh, I am exploring the reasons why late-19th century artists painted still lifes.

24 572/459a. Other letters describing the flowers as colour studies are 571/460 and 576/W1.
By carefully choosing his models, Van Gogh could at once create decorative pictures harmonised by the rules of simultaneous and successive colour, and a representation that was essentially true to nature.\(^{25}\) When Van Gogh felt he had begun to master colour in his painting in Paris, he applied the principles of colour theory more widely to other genres, such as landscapes, interiors, and portraits.\(^{26}\)

**Froebel’s ‘gifts’**

But what exactly prompted Van Gogh to roll balls of wool to explore colour theory? The answer springs from a surprising quarter: the kindergarten. The idea of learning about colour with balls of wool does not originate with Van Gogh, or even Chevreul. Rather, it can be traced to the German philosopher of education, teacher and creator of kindergarten, Frederick Froebel (1782-1852). Froebel was inspired by, yet critical of, the teaching practices of the Swiss educational reformer, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). Inventor of the ‘object lesson,’ Pestalozzi encouraged children to learn by doing rather than by copying.\(^{27}\) Froebel, however, believed that Pestalozzi’s methods seriously neglected spiritual development, and his own Christian and mystical philosophy of education inspired him to develop revolutionary methods of teaching.\(^{28}\) Certain that early education had been woefully ignored, he began work on a new

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25 Welsh-Ovcharov has also noted that in Paris Van Gogh tended to choose subjects, especially flowers, that complemented his colour theory; Welsh-Ovcharov, op. cit. (note 7), pp. 80-81.

26 Ibid., pp. 80-92. She further noted that Van Gogh also invented a decorative scheme in which two primary colours dominate. While paintings in blue and yellow, for example, suitably express the blue-skied, golden-grained landscapes of Arles, Van Gogh actually introduced this idea in Paris; see ibid., pp. 110-12. These colour combinations cannot be accounted for in the writings of Blanch or Chevreul, but they do appear in Van Gogh’s box of yarns.


institution in the 1830s in Germany, one that would educate groups of children as young as three or four outside the home. He called this new establishment ‘kindergarten.’

Froebel's theories and practices were grounded on the Lockean premise that ‘all intellectual development take[s] place through the senses.’ Between 1835 and 1850, he developed didactic materials to help very young children learn. Later called ‘gifts and occupations,’ these learning tools were to be introduced to the children serially and formed an essential part of Froebel's method. Many made use of drawing, painting, building, modelling and weaving, and all the gifts and occupations were designed to encourage the children to learn through play.

Probably the best known are the building blocks Froebel invented (fig. 8). Frank Lloyd Wright, for example, claimed in his autobiography that playing with a set of these ‘smooth shapely maple blocks’ helped inspire him to become an architect.

The first ‘gift,’ described by Hermann Goldammer in the most important kindergarten manual, bears a striking resemblance to Van Gogh's lacquer chest: a ‘box containing six worsted balls crewelled over in different colours, three showing the primary colours - red, yellow, and blue - and three the secondary colours - green, violet, and orange’ (fig. 9). Intended to be introduced to infants well before they reached kindergarten, this gift was to be a lasting one.

29 Froebel to his cousin in 1840; Frederick Froebel, Froebel's letters on the kindergarten, ed. Emilie Michaelis and H. Keatley Moore, London 1891, p. 63.
fig. 8
Goldammer devoted his first chapter - 27 pages and 30 illustrations - to these balls of yarn (fig. 10), describing games that children could play with them from the age of three months through the kindergarten years and beyond.

By the time the children came to kindergarten, they would have already learned their colours, in part by playing with the balls. As every gift and occupation was designed to express the essential harmony and unity of nature, Froebel and his followers believed that it was important not only that children be able to identify colours, but also that they understand the relationships among them. Writing in this instance about a game with coloured building blocks rather than balls, Froebel explained: ‘There still remains the change of colours. The colours must make amongst themselves a complete colour-harmony. For instance, red and green (green being made up of the other two primaries, blue and yellow); yellow and violet (violet being composed of blue and
red); blue and gold or orange (orange being composed of red and yellow). [...] You see that the two harmonising colours in each varying combination and between them all the three primary colours. Now the colours may be grouped in all kinds of ways upon the same ground form, wherein we get true colour-games [...]. The essence of the game lies in each successive alteration of form or arrangement of colours [...] evolved [...] from the previously existing [...] form or colour.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{34} Froebel to Mme Schmidt, 9 December 1842; \textit{Froebel's letters}, cit. (note 29), p. 125.
The coloured balls could also be used in complex ways. Goldammer described exercises designed to introduce the children to sophisticated understandings of colour and colour harmonies. For, as Goldammer wrote, by the time a child is three or four, he ‘is no longer merely to receive a certain sum of impressions as formerly, but must be induced to make personal efforts, to observe, and to give expression to what he observes.’

Songs associating colours with objects were to be followed by questions asking the children to come up with the names of other things that matched the colours of different balls. The spectrum could be demonstrated with two balls crewelled in different ways, with the bands of colours wrapping either longitudinally, meeting at the poles, or latitudinally, running parallel. Rotating the balls would give different effects: ‘The latter when made to revolve at the end of a string will show the image of a rainbow, the more distinct the quicker it revolves. In the former on the contrary the colours will become more and more indistinct as the speed increases, and will at length subside into a dirty black.’ The concept of secondary colours, even of optical mixture, could also be demonstrated by spinning balls half covered with one primary colour, half in another.

Although Van Gogh used his balls of yarn specifically in relation to his painting, which extended standard kindergarten practice, both he and the kindergartners who presented the ‘gifts’ believed that they were a simple yet useful and direct way to learn about the laws of harmony and contrast of colour. Significantly, the idea that underlies both Van Gogh’s practice and Froebel’s method is the same: that sensory experience and free experimentation - play, in other words - is the best way to learn.

Van Gogh probably used his balls of wool in a number of ways. By imitating the colour combinations described by Blanc and others, the painter could see for himself the effects of the different colour medleys often described with few or no illustrations in texts on colour theory. With a particular subject in mind, he could also have tried out various colour combinations with yarn, as an inexpensive alternative to paint. Van Gogh never had enough money for all the paints he wished to buy. One can imagine him selecting, combining and recombining different coloured strands of yarn to help him decide which colours to invest in. It is notable that it was in Tanguy’s shop, where Van Gogh bought most of his materials while he lived in Paris, that Bernard remembered seeing Van Gogh’s box. Finally, keeping the box of yarns would have been a tidy and convenient way to save colour ‘symphonies’ he found particularly striking in order to study them again later.

Van Gogh and Froebel

But did Van Gogh know about Froebel’s first gift when he wound his own balls of yarn? Since he does not actually mention Froebel in his letters, one can only speculate.

35 Goldammer, op. cit. (note 30), vol. 1, p. 20.
36 Ibid., p. 21.
37 Ibid., p. 22.
38 Ibid., p. 22.
Considering how widespread the kindergarten idea was by 1886, however, a good case for his familiarity with the German pedagogue can be made.

During the last half of the 19th century, hundreds of kindergartens based on Froebel's method were established across Europe, in the United States, even as far away as Australia, India and Japan.\(^{39}\) By the time Van Gogh reached Paris, over two thousand books and articles specifically on Froebel, mostly in German but also in French, English and Dutch, had appeared.\(^{40}\)

In 1857, the Baroness Berthe von Marenholtz-Buelow, Froebel's well-connected, articulate and extremely effective disciple, introduced the idea of kindergarten to the Netherlands. There, Froebel's ideas received support in influential places.\(^{41}\) A friend of the baroness, Elise van Calcar, translated Froebel into Dutch and promoted ‘the Cause’ in Holland for 35 years. The kindergarten, or as it is still known, \textit{Fröbelschool}, thrived.\(^{42}\)


\(^{40}\) In 1881, Louis Walter published a pamphlet of 197 pages devoted to the publications explaining, attacking or defending Froebel's work since 1838: Louis Walter, \textit{Die Fröbelliteratur}, Dresden 1881, cited in Bowen, op. cit. (note 31), p. 200. In a recent bibliography of the Froebel literature, Helmut Heiland identified 2,244 publications by or about Froebel between 1820 and 1887; see Heiland, op. cit. (note 33). Many of the publications in Heiland are intended for a scholars, but numerous articles not listed there, which appeared in magazines intended for a popular audience, are listed under ‘Froebel’ and ‘Kindergarten’ in William Frederick Poole (ed.), \textit{Poole's index to periodical literature}, rev. ed., 5 vols., Gloucester, Mass. 1963 and Helen Grant Cushing and Adah V. Morris (eds.), \textit{Nineteenth century reader's guide}, 1890-1899, 2 vols., New York, 1944.

\(^{41}\) Woodham-Smith, op. cit. (note 39), pp. 26-27. Amélie, the daughter of the Duchess Ida von Weimar, who had known Froebel and who had helped to establish kindergartens in Weimar, married Prince Heinrich of the Netherlands; see ibid., p. 28.

\(^{42}\) Ibid. Heiland, op. cit. (note 33) lists several books in Dutch on Froebel by Elise van Calcar that appeared between 1858 and 1910. In \textit{Frederick Fröbel: hoe hij opvoeder werd en wat de kinderwereld hem openbaarde}, The Hague 1879, Van Calcar discussed the gifts in chapter 12, ‘De kinderen Fröbels leermeesters,’ pp. 92-111 and listed at the back of the book(p. 218), where the ‘Fröbel-Artikelen’ could be purchased by mail and their prices. A complete set of gifts sold for 16.50 guilders; the ‘1ste Gave: doos met zes gekleurde ballen’ for 1.20 guilders.

\textit{Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996}
Although Van Gogh would have been at just the right age for the gifts and occupations when kindergarten was brought to his native country, these progressive forms of teaching were probably not practiced so early in the small town of Groot-Zundert where he briefly attended the village school, nor would they have been known by his governess. As Van Gogh grew up, however, and the international kindergarten movement spread, he likely learned of Froebel's idea by word-of-mouth and through the press.

One of Van Gogh's favorite writers, Jules Michelet, for example, wrote warmly of Froebel in his book on education, *Nos fils.* 43 In his examination - which he based on readings by and about the pedagogue, a lively discussion with the Baroness von Marenholtz-Buelow, and on visits to a kindergarten - Michelet emphasised how Froebel's method fostered creativity. 44 In an early article intended for a more general audience, an English writer, full of admiration for 'a very interesting method of infant training,' described a visit to a London kindergarten. 45 Each of the teaching materials, including the coloured balls, is described in some detail. 46 The author, the father of a 'fine spirited two-year old baby,' was particularly impressed with the indestructible, as well as educational nature of gifts. Another early piece in a popular magazine appeared in the weekly *All the Year Round* 47 in which Charles Dickens published his serialised novels. Van Gogh read very widely in Dutch, English and French, and still other articles on the kindergarten appeared in publications he is known to have enjoyed. 48

Few now remember the gifts and occupations that formed such a central part of Froebel's kindergarten. This, however, would not have been the case 100 years ago. Froebel's early disciples encouraged orthodoxy, not only in theory but also in practice. An article in *Lippincott's Magazine* recounted the extensive training of a young

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44 Michelet wrote, describing Froebel's method (ibid., p. 454): ‘Créer, produire! quel bonheur pour l'enfant. Si c'est son bonheur, c'est aussi sa mission. Créer, c'est l'éducation.’
46 Ibid., pp. 743-45: ‘The first thing that occured to us on entering the school was, that toys were substituted for books, and that instead of having finished materials, such as dolls and animals, the most simple and inexpensive things were used, and that the children made their own lessons. It is, in a word, play organised in a system of labour for the child, so that, whilst he is amused and delighted, every faculty of body and mind is properly educated. [...] The first thing shown to us was a number of balls, of all the colours of the rainbow. This, which is called the first gift, is intended for very young children, and belongs to the nursery rather than the school. It teaches motion and colour. The ball is used also in the movement games and gymnastic exercises.’
47 Anonymous, ‘At home and at school,’ *All the Year Round: A Weekly Journal Conducted by Charles Dickens with which is Incorporated Household Words* 24 (8 October 1859), pp. 571-73.
48 Articles on the kindergarten appeared in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Harper's Weekly, Century*, and *Scribner's*, popular magazines Van Gogh mentioned reading in his letters. For a discussion of his taste in literature with a detailed index to the publications he mentioned or alluded to in his letters, see Fieke Pabst and Evert van Uitert, ‘A literary life, with a list of books and periodicals read by Van Gogh,’ in Evert van Uitert and Michael Hoyle (eds.), *The Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh*, Amsterdam 1987, pp. 68-84.
‘kindergartner’ and followed her through her teaching session.” ‘To all “improved” suggestions,’ the author wrote, ‘she gave a peremptory negative. Mrs. K-‘s Froebelian models, pure and simple, were the only ones she would tolerate.’ Describing the key role colour played in Froebel's teaching, the teacher explained: ‘We use color continually in combinations that are always governed by laws of harmony. One of the prettiest of our gifts is the colored geometrical tablets or plane figures. The children are


50 Ibid., p. 728. When asked what she needed for a kindergarten, she began with the first gift: ‘First, I want the six worsted balls and six strings in colors, the three primary and the three secondary. When asked what the varied colours were for, she replied: “the child is to gain a familiar but systematic acquaintance with them - in their powers and relations as well as their names. [...] Red, blue and yellow are one, two three, found by him, and so fixed for him, one after the other in their proper order and in the most easy and infantile way”’; ibid., p. 730.
led to arrange them in numberless forms of beauty, forms of knowledge and forms of life (so Froebel classifies them); and in this kind of play, guided by the system the kindergartner has learned, they unconsciously become as familiar with the shapes, the relations and the composition of all geometrical figures as they are with their dolls and marbles. But every combination made with different colors must be laid down with harmony. The habit of doing this develops a sensitiveness to harmonious or discordant effects like that produced in an ear thoroughly accustomed to harmony and guarded from discord in music.  

Descriptions of the gifts and occupations published in many languages, such as Goldammer's *Guide* and Barnard's *Kindergarten papers*, made certain that Froebel's methods were not only widely disseminated, but could also be closely imitated. Froebel's gift of weaving, for example, described and illustrated in popular kindergarten manuals, is featured in *Harper's Magazine* (fig. 11). Many teachers adopted these methods in their classrooms but it appears Van Gogh was the only artist to adapt Froebel's widely-known first gift for his use as a painter.

**Van Gogh and art education reform**

However exceptional Van Gogh's box may be, it should be noted that certain progressive methods of general education, which emphasised individuality, creativity, and the arts (usually in the form of drawing and design) were clearly relevant to the waves of reform in fine-art education that swept Europe in the second half of the 19th century.  

While the system of academic training for a fine artist was not

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51 Ibid., p. 729.
52 See notes 30 and 39.
dismantled overnight, and it took a very long time before the idea of self-education for an artist was widely accepted as an alternative - or even a complement - to regular training.

ultimately the time-honoured system collapsed. The reasons for its persistence, then eventual demise, are complex, but it can be argued that progressive general education practices, which date from about the 1830s and culminated in universal, free and compulsory education across Europe by the end of the century, played a role in the steady erosion of traditional art education. Changes in art education cannot be considered apart from these broader changes.

Methods such as Froebel's, which made extensive use of art and craft materials to foster expression and creativity in very young children, in an environment where children make instead of copy, find a complement in the new ways of teaching drawing not only to future artists, artisans, designers or engineers, but also to all school-age children as part of their general education. Proponents of these methods

However, the broadest tenets of progressive philosophies of education were widespread and shared across Europe and America. The relationship between progressive theories and practices of education and art education is explored in my dissertation in progress.

Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
attacked the *dessin copié*, the traditional foundation of an artist's education, and instead suggested means that consisted of one or more of three components: descriptive geometry, drawing after nature, or drawing from memory.\textsuperscript{54}

These new approaches gained the attention and even support of some fine-art academicians, those who had the greatest stake in preserving the customary system. To cite but one interesting example, the Belgian Louis de Taeye, professor of art at the academy at Louvain, insisted that drawing instruction - not only for would-be artists but for every school child - be based on a program that first introduced students to the principles of geometric drawing and then to drawing after nature. He argued this point in his influential book on the state of drawing instruction in Belgium, which also included a history of drawing instruction stretching back to Antiquity.\textsuperscript{55} To justify his own position, De Taeye put himself and his method in line with the theorists and practitioners of modern progressive education, mentioning among others Coméniius, Rousseau, Helvétius, Pestalozzi and Froebel.

Although De Taeye believed some of Froebel's methods were too sophisticated for very young children, he clearly recognised the importance of his concept of art education, devoting a chapter of his book to ‘Les écoles Froebel.’\textsuperscript{56} Summarizing the reformer's contribution, De Taeye wrote: ‘In his *Education of man*, the creator of kindergarten analyses at length the importance of artistic study. He demonstrates the usefulness of art, presents a method of drawing for the youngest children, initiates the young student to the knowledge of colours and has them resort to [...] generalization. [...] It is necessary to lovingly study works of art, says Froebel, and it is necessary to initiate all students to an intuition of form.’\textsuperscript{57}

Progressive theory dictated that the creative, expressive aspects of a child's nature had to be taken into account. This would have held great appeal for someone like Van Gogh, who was interested in primitivism; perhaps by imitating the creative play of children and methods of the kindergarten,

![fig. 12](image)

Drawing from Camille Bellanger, *Traité de peinture à l'usage de toute le monde*, Paris [1888]

\textsuperscript{54} An influential example that encouraged working from nature instead of copying as the basis of drawing training is Alexandre Dupuis, *De l'enseignement du dessin sous le point de vue industriel*, Paris 1836. The most important source for drawing from memory is Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran, *Education de la mémoire pittoresque*, Paris 1848.


\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., pp. 204-25. De Taeye wrote that in 1884 almost all 866 *écoles gardiennes* in Belgium, serving 81,959 children, were modelled on the Froebel system (pp. 210-11).

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., p. 177: ‘Dans son *Education de l'homme*, le créateur des Jardins d'enfants analyse longuement l'importance des études artistiques. Il expose l'utilité de l'art, présente une méthode de dessin applicable à la première enfance, initie le jeune élève à la connaissance des couleurs et fait ressortir la nécessité de généraliser toujours, autant que possible, la connaissance du langage de la forme. Il faut s'attacher avec amour à l'étude des œuvres d'art, dit Froebel, et il faut initier tous les enfants à l'intuition de la forme.’
he believed he could tap into the spontaneous, naive, creative expressiveness associated with children. Progressive pedagogues also hoped to create a school environment where children essentially educated themselves. While theory often diverged from practice, the implications of this idea can be related to the option increasingly open to students of art in 19th-century Europe, that of acquiring some of their training independently. This was especially true of drawing, which could be self-taught with any one of a great range of manuals. As is well known, Van Gogh himself followed independently and painstakingly two of Charles Bargue's courses in order to master drawing.

It took longer for painting instruction to emerge from the almost sacred confines of the studio system, but by the end of the century strong evidence of change emerges, and not only among the avant-garde. The traditionally-trained history and genre painter Camille Bellanger, for example, published a manual in 1898 for art students that provided a complete course of self-instruction in drawing and painting. This program entailed a wholesale rejection of copying and emphasised learning by trial and error. Notably, begin-

58 An extensive list of drawing manuals may be found in Albert Boime, ‘The teaching reforms of 1863 and the origin of modernism in France,’ *Art Quarterly* 1 (autumn 1977-78), especially note 34.

59 These were *Exercices au fusain* and *Cours de dessin*. On Van Gogh's use of Bargue, see Anne S. Wylie, ‘An investigation of the vocabulary of line in Vincent van Gogh's exploration of space,’ *Oud Holland* 85 (1970), pp. 210-35 and Albert Boime, ‘The teaching of fine arts and the avant-garde in France during the second half of the nineteenth century,’ *Arts Magazine* 14 (December 1991), pp. 53-54. See also, most recently, Sjaar van Heugten, exhib. cat. *Vincent van Gogh, drawings: the early years, 1880-1883*, Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) 1996.

60 Camille Bellanger, *Traité de peinture à l'usage de toute le monde*, Paris n.d. [1898].
ning students of painting were strongly encouraged to begin as Van Gogh had in Etten, and later as he taught in Nuenen, that is with simple, original compositions in still life (fig. 12).

Many of the ideas specifically associated with an artist's traditional training in the late 19th century, such as a familiarity with the rudiments of colour theory, experience with different kinds of materials, and an initiation to the ‘intuition of form’ were increasingly becoming an integral part of even a very young child's education. Furthermore, progressive theories like Froebel's challenged the widely-held notion of the artist-genius. Proponents assumed that every child had the potential, even the need, to be creative and expressive, and that these ‘artistic’ qualities were essential to the learning process. But these pedagogues also recognised that these impulses in children needed to be encouraged and that techniques to channel expression had to be taught.

This had both negative and positive implications for artists. It irrevocably undermined their special status as chosen recipients of the gift of creative vision and expression, but it also granted them a certain power over the cultivation of their talents. Still, the notion of genius remained extremely potent, and even today the conflict between competing ideas of art making as a process and a product of education on the one hand, and art making as the result of divinelike inspiration on the other, remains unresolved. While the impact of both conceptions often can be found in Van Gogh's way of teaching himself, working process and writing, the tension between them is nowhere more apparent than in his equivocal statement on genius: ‘The laws of colour are unutterably beautiful, just because they are not accidental. In the same way that people nowadays no longer believe in fantastic miracles, no longer believe in a God who capriciously and despotically flies from one thing to another, but begin to feel more respect and admiration for and faith in nature - in the same way, and for the same reasons, I think that in art, the old-fashioned idea of innate genius, inspiration, etc., I do not say must be put aside, but thoroughly reconsidered, verified - and greatly modified. However, I do not deny the existence of genius, or even its being innate. But I certainly do deny the inference that theory and instruction should, as a matter of course, always be useless.'

This statement came at a time when Van Gogh had been working hard to teach himself to paint and to master the basics of colour theory on his own. One way to explain his reservations about genius and his determined course of self-instruction is the influence of contemporary ideas about the creative process of learning, the expressive nature of the child and progressive methods of education.

In this essay, I have discussed three ways in which the origin of Van Gogh's box of coloured balls of yarns, and the way the artist experimented with the balls of wool, can be associated with contemporary theories and practices of education. First, he used the yarns to help master colour theory, which he believed would improve his painting. As I have shown, this should be related to one of the broadest tenets of progressive pedagogy which held that everyone can be creative and expressive, but that even those blessed with great talent needed to master tools and learn techniques to express themselves effectively.

Second, Van Gogh's experimentation with coloured yarns should be seen as a noteworthy component of his largely autodidactic art training. Van Gogh's course
of art education was still unusual for his time. But by the end of the century, general education theory, which held that even within schools students should learn as much as possible on their own, appears to have encouraged many art students to pursue some or all of their art education independently.

Finally, Van Gogh's idea of using multicoloured balls of yarns to experiment with colour probably had its origins in Froebel's kindergarten method. While many artists, including Van Gogh, struggled to master colour theory from texts, young children were exposed to the same ideas through their games with rainbow-coloured balls. It appears that like Froebel, Van Gogh also discovered learning about colour, contrast and harmony could be as easy, stimulating and rewarding as child's play.

[The collection in context]
fig. 1
Prosper d'Epinay, *Head of Medusa*, c. 1866, Amsterdam,
‘Une beauté sauvage’: Prosper d'Epinay's Head of Medusa

Andreas Blühm

With the acquisition of the Head of Medusa (c. 1866, fig. 1), the Van Gogh Museum has added an unusual work by the French sculptor Prosper d'Epinay to its collection. Not only its place within the artist's oeuvre, but also questions of style, iconography and execution give grounds for an examination of the sculpture within a broadly conceived context.

Medusa

Few mythological figures have been given such contradictory external forms as Medusa, the mortal among the three Gorgons. Since Antiquity she has been represented as both terrifying and beautiful.¹ In the Archaic period, her forbidding countenance was used (particularly on buildings) for what was believed to be its apotropaic quality. Hellenistic art developed the image of the Gorgon with a pained but classically noble face. Her surprising alternation between the repulsive and the attractive was already described in Ovid.² Whether as a distorted grimace or a lovely face, however, her effect on those who dared look at her was equally fatal: her gaze turned them to stone. According to legend, Perseus overcame this danger with a trick: using a mirror in order not to look at her directly, he approached the demon while she slept and decapitated her. This had been Athena's idea and she was given the head as a trophy. A mask of Medusa then came to decorate her breastplate.

Medusa's gaze turns the viewer to stone. This fear of deadly metamorphosis is a primal one and so it is not surprising that Medusa has been a permanent presence in art and literature since ancient times. The way her story has been interpreted, however - as is the case with most myths - has been subject to change. What was it about this snake-haired demon that so fascinated artists? As an apotropaic sign, Medusa's head was the epitome of ugliness, a challenge to the ideals of art. Not every Medusa,

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² Ovid, Metamorphosis, 4.790-803.
however, is unsightly, and sometimes she is even depicted as too beautiful to be frightening. These different approaches are, of course, the key to the deeper meaning of an individual work. In the latter case, the viewer was expected to play an active role: he needed to use his knowledge of the myth in order to foresee that death lurked behind her lovely features. Medusa thus became an allegory of deception, a symbol of the discrepancy between appearance and reality.

‘Medusa’ forced the artist to make a choice, and a work depicting her is always in some sense an unmediated statement about beauty and ugliness, about what is and is
not allowed in art. It was this conflict that made the subject so attractive for painters and sculptors, and it was not the least famous among them who tried their hand at it. Periods in which she appears only rarely were followed by those in which one encounters her frequently. Her ‘heydays’ were Mannerism and the Baroque and then again in the 19th century. This oscillation between vision of horror and beautiful mask was repeated in modern times in quick succession until the break with the classical tradition around 1900.

**Physiognomy**

‘Medusa, both fair and hideous, is the arresting emblem of that productive conflict we call Mannerism,’ and indeed the 16th century is full of Gorgons. The almost caricature-like, abstract, primitive masks of the Archaic could no longer serve as models for artists, who had been given the status of scientists. In order to make fear and pain believable, even in a handsome face, a conscientious study of human physiognomy was a prerequisite.

Systematic research into facial features began with Leonardo da Vinci. He quantified them and produced studies that went beyond the grimaces found in late Medieval northern European art. His so-called ‘grotesque heads’ are not only preserved in numerous drawings, but are also reflected both in his own paintings and those of his followers. Physiognomy provided a means of giving the internal qualities of mythical figures - as well as historical and contemporary personages - visual expression. Although this new method was intriguing in itself, its moral implications were even more so: what conclusions, if any, could be drawn about a person's character from his or her exterior? Many physiognomists made comparisons with animals, whose characteristics were supposed to correspond to those of the human subject. Leonardo wanted nothing to do with this kind of pseudo-science; for him, physiognomy was mainly a theory of expression. Since, however, he did believe that appearance was formed by experience, it was still possible to judge the personality of the person depicted.

Whether they chose to use the animal analogy or concentrated purely on facial expression, artists were given a tool to aid them in illustrating human feeling, one which became increasingly refined in the course of time.

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Ancient remains provided numerous examples. The *Laocoon* group, excavated in 1506 (fig. 2), became the model for the depiction of pain. The forehead and knitted eyebrows were often adopted almost formulaically. Medusa was another motif suited to these studies and she quickly became the preferred excuse for the representation of extreme emotions. Leonardo himself had painted a shield with Medusa's head, now only known through Vasari's description. What it might have looked like can be seen in a painting in the Uffizi once attributed to him and in a shield of Athena from the School of Fontainebleau.  

The Medusa's heads of the Leonardo circle fulfill his prescription for the depiction of anger: "The angry figure will have his hair standing on end, his eyebrows lowered and drawn together, and teeth clenched, with the two lateral corners of his mouth arched downward."  

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Medusa is the ‘horribile monstro’ so vividly described in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499). If art was to become a science - as Leonardo propagated - then deformity needed to be studied with as much care as beauty. To transform ugliness into an aesthetically powerful work of art was an artistic challenge. Although there was some controversy as to whether or not this kind of objectivity was really the goal of art, important artists of the following generations - from Benvenuto Cellini and Caravaggio to Gianlorenzo Bernini and Andreas Schlüter - were certainly guided by physiognomic theories in their representations of Medusa.

The three sculptors used the Gorgon to give expression to the concept of pain. Cellini’s masterpiece is one of the few works to represent Medusa's death in all its drama and to present it in a highly public space (fig. 3).

Interestingly, the expression of the cut-off head, proudly held up for the population to examine, was prepared in numerous studies and even these exercises were cast in bronze. The Medusas of Caravaggio, Bernini and Schlüter demonstrate that anger and distress are related emotions, one the result of internal processes, the other of external influences. The wide-open eyes and the scream interrupted by death prove

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the painter among them to be the heir of Leonardo and Michelangelo, whose equally
tortured damned from the *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel he would have known.³
The sculptors of the later generation made studies in expression in which Medusa's
suffering almost makes one forget her monstrosity. Bernini masterfully applied his
research into *Laocoon* and physiognomic theory not only to his marble Gorgon (fig.
4) but to a number of other works: both his *Anima Beata* and *Anima Damnata*

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³ Avigdor W.G. Posèq, ‘Caravaggio's Medusa shield,* Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 113 (April
suppose a connection between appearance and character (Rome, Palazzo di Spagna), and his St Theresa of Avila in Santa Maria della Victoria in Rome has often been read (even by his contemporaries) as an exploration of the proximity of agony and sexual arousal. Schlüter's Medusa (fig. 5) is part of his series of Dying Warriors for the Zeughaus in Berlin. Like Bernini, he, too, was educated on the Laocoon.

Idea and theory went hand in hand in the drive to turn art into a science. As Thomas Kirchner recently emphasised, the study of physiognomy played an important role in the professionalisation of the fine arts. Leonardo's treatise was published in 1651, three years after the foundation of the Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture, the first of its kind. On 2 July 1667 Gérard Van Obstal gave a lecture for its members entitled ‘Sur la figure principale du groupe de Laocoon’ which focused on the new science. Still more influential in the coming decades was court painter Charles Le Brun's ‘Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière,’ held on 7 April 1668. It was printed in 1698, accompanied by reproductions of his drawings.

According to Le Brun, the position of the eyebrows was of utmost importance (fig. 6), as it was from them that one could read the general tenor of any of the passions. Overly schematic depictions were, however, to be avoided. Even at the beginning of their studies, artists would have found it too banal to simply represent one kind of feeling: the challenge
was to represent mixed emotions. These latter were the focus of Le Brun's investigation and were later to become the basis for the Prix d'expressions, founded in 1759 by the Comte de Caylus. The analogies applicable to the Medusas of the Baroque are to be found in Le Brun's interpretations of hate (la haine), anger (la colère) and contempt (le mépris). Of course, the ugliness which resulted from these negative feelings was only permissible when depicted according to Le Brun's strict academic rules. Those who did not adhere to them - like the great Austrian sculptor of physiognomic studies Franz Xaver Messerschmidt - were destined to remain outsiders.

The aesthetic value of the representation of extreme emotions was the focus of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Laokoon, published in 1766, a work which did much to determine what was and was not permissible in art and poetry. The enthusiasm for this ancient sculpture had its roots in the respect for its Greek creator, who had managed to evoke the anguish of mortal struggle without resorting to banal realism. Winckelmann and Goethe were also among the statue's admirers. In 1786, during his trip to Italy, the latter had come under the spell of another work of Antiquity, the Medusa Rondanini, the most classic and elegantly proportioned mask of the Gorgon, a work in which even the snakes coil in decorative symmetry (Munich, Glyptothek). For the Neo-classicists, she was the model for the representation of an emotionless Medusa. Antonio Canova's interpretation of around 1800 (Rome, Vatican Museum) is one such ideal depiction, leaving no room for any element of horror. Here, Medusa's power cannot be divined from her strict facial symmetry and even features; Canova completely relied on the viewer's knowledge of the myth when he chose the Medusa Rondanini as the basis for his own work, which gives almost no expression to either triumph or pain.

It was only much later that Ernst Buschor recognised in this 'beautiful' Medusa a copy of the gorgoneion on the shield of Phidias's Athena Parthenos. At the beginning of the 19th century, however, archaeologists still argued about what this mask had actually looked like. Based on the ancient sources, one had always assumed it to have been frightening; on the other hand, it was difficult to credit Phidias with the creation of something hideous. When, in 1855, Charles Simart presented the public with his colossal

![Image of a sculpture](image.png)

fig. 6
Charles Le Brun, Studies of human eyes and eyebrows, 1670s, Paris, Musée du Louvre

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13 Buschor, op. cit. (note 1).
François Rude, *La Marseillaise* (detail), 1836, Paris, Arc de Triomphe

chryselephantine reconstruction, commissioned by the Duc de Luynes (Château de Dampierre), it was this detail - besides the outrageous use of polychromy - that caused the most controversy: a distorted mask of the Gorgon was perhaps appropriate to a militant female figure, such as François Rude's *Marseillaise* on the Arc de Triomphe (1836, fig. 7), but not for a noble statue of Athena designed by the greatest of Greek sculptors.

Those who chose to depict Medusa as beautiful either accepted that her ‘effect’ would only be felt by those who knew her story, or consciously sought to play on the idea that a demonic character could be hidden behind a charming face. The Gorgon thus became the embodiment of the *femme fatale*. Since she entrapped the - male - viewer with her attractive exterior, she could easily be made a symbol of female falsity. With their reference to Eve and original sin, the snakes, which either form her hair or decorate her head like a crown, only added to this notion.

Medusa and Eve were certainly not the only female figures to have been given the doubtful honour of representing the evil of the world. The Romantics chose a number of mythological and historical women as subjects for the artistic exploration of the principles of lust and repentance. It is, however, no accident that Mario Praz began his famous standard work *The romantic agony* with a chapter on the Gorgon: ‘Beauty of the Medusa, beloved by the Romantics, beauty tainted with pain, corruption, and death - we shall find it again at the end of the century, and we shall see it then illumined with the smile of the Gioconda.’

Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem ‘On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine gallery’ of 1824 has been cited by Praz and others as proof of the Romantics' interest in the myth. Little attention has been paid, however, to the lines in which the poet describes the demon's facial features:

> Yet it is less the horror than the grace  
> Which turns the gazer's spirit into stone,  
> Whereon the lineaments of that dead face  
> Are graven, till the characters be grown  
> Into itself, and thought no more than trace; [...]  

Shelley here once again emphasises Medusa's importance for the study of physiognomy. He appears to be exploring the underlying psychological meaning of her features much as Leonardo had done. It is unclear whether the poet knew the Italian's treatise directly; a more likely source of inspiration would have been a translation of Johann Kaspar Lavater's popular *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* of 1775-78. Whatever the case, the iconography of Medusa was to remain the most important interface between classical mythology, modern theories of physiognomy and their representation in art.

**Medusa in the mid-19th century**

15 This is unfortunately not the place for an examination of the - literal - intertwining symbolism of snakes and hair. The western tradition contains examples ranging from medieval representations of Mary Magdalene to the female figures of Edvard Munch.


It is generally believed that after Romanticism the interest in *femmes fatales* (and thus in Medusa) only resurfaced at the end of the 19th century. On the contrary, the history of the representation of the Gorgon is a continual one, as a number of now forgotten, but formerly quite famous, examples demonstrate. Interestingly, some of the more important works of the mid-century were created by women.

In the *Medusa* by Harriet Hosmer (fig. 8), an American student of John Gibson's, all aspects of repulsiveness are banished as the demon bends her head gracefully to one side. The bust is the pendant to a *Daphne* and, according to William Gerdts, is part of a series of tragic heroines which includes *Oenone*, *Beatrice Cenci* and *Zenobia*. Many a contemporary viewer was so enchanted by the work that one could almost say it had the feared effect: ‘The folded beauty wings above the hair on each side of the face give an air of majesty to the head. It was hard for me to look away from this statue; if long gazing could have turned one to stone, the old tradition would have been fulfilled.’

18 The statement was written by a friend of the sculptress's, Reverend Robert Collyer; quoted in Gerdts, op. cit. (note 1), p. 104. Gerdt correctly states that neither Shelley's poem nor *The Gorgon's head* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (published in 1852) can be taken as the literary source for Hosmer's work since both focus on Medusa's frightening aspects. Harriet Hosmer was highly literate and was friends with both Hawthorne and the Brownings. See also Dolly Sherwood, *Harriet Hosmer: American sculptor 1830-1908*, Columbia, Missouri 1991, pp. 83-87.
In 1865, the Swiss sculptress Adèle d'Affry, comtesse de Castiglione-Colonna, who exhibited under the name Marcello, also created a bust of Medusa (fig. 9). Inspired by a performance of Lully's opera *Persée*, she sought to model a Gorgon: ‘One day,’ she recalled, ‘Mme R. sung Lully's aria of the Gorgon. I asked her to stop so that I could quickly get some clay in order to capture her expression. You will see, I told her, I am going to make a head of Medusa whose beauty is a mixture of contempt, fury and defiance.’ The work was to become her greatest success. It was shown at the Royal Academy in

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London in 1866 and at the Exposition Universelle in 1867, and was also cast in bronze in many variations. The critics were full of praise and Théophile Gautier designated her ‘[the] George Sand de la sculpture contemporaine.’ Marcello's interpretation forms a sort of stylistic link between beauté sera un mélange de mépris, de fureur et de défi.’ See also Henriette Bessis, Marcello sculpteur, Fribourg 1980 and exhib. cat. Marcello 1836-1879, Adèle d’Affry, duchesse de Castiglione Colonna, Fribourg (Musée d’Art et d’Histoire) 1980.  
Harriet Hosmer's, with its harmless, abstracted gaze, and later, once again unprepossessing versions.

The desire to express a ‘mixture of defiance and honour’ was also the inspiration for Marcello's more famous Pythia, at first also conceived as a Gorgo. In this life-size figure of the priestess of Delphi, installed in the Paris Opéra in 1875, the sculptress rejected both Neo-classicism and the Renaissance, demonstrating a clear preference for art of the Baroque. In 1869, that is, at the time she was working on this piece, Marcello resided in Rome. There she was in close contact with the French colony and must have known her colleague Prosper d'Epinay, although there is no direct evidence they were acquainted. Épinay, too, - of the same generation as Marcello and also of aristocratic background - was influenced by the works of the Roman Baroque, a style the Neo-classicists had adamantly rejected.

**Prosper d'Epinay**

Épinay's *Head of Medusa* (fig. 1) is a clay *bozzetto* and it seems the work never went beyond this early stage. More finished versions in other materials are not known. The terracotta allowed the sculptor to create a highly effective - and rather Bernini-like - haptic contrast between hair and skin. The sculptor's painterly conception did not

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21 Alcantara, op. cit. (note 19), p. 133.
end with the furrowing of the clay: he also coloured the work in various shades and painted the eyes. The discussion about polychromy in sculpture had reached its first climax by this time, and we can be sure that the Frenchman knew - or at least knew of - the *Tinted Venus* by the Briton John Gibson. It was not only executed in Rome but was also first shown there, later being put on display at the International Exhibition in London in 1862.\(^{22}\)

While Marcello's finished marble *Medusa* (fig. 9) is much more demure than Epinay's interpretation, an undated, probably preliminary wax sketch by her hand could have served as his inspiration (fig. 10). Given the differences between stone and wax or terracotta, one has, of course, to be careful with such equations. Henry Cros's clay *Head of Medusa* of the 1870s (fig. 11), however, offers a much more ‘classical’ interpretation of the subject, despite the soft material. Thus, Marcello's and Epinay's expressive versions can perhaps best be seen as a *conscious* reaction against the polished, gentile Medusas of Neo-classicism.

When, in the 1860s, Prosper d'Epinay approached this theme - one which any number of the greatest sculptors before him had attempted - he was only at the beginning of his career. Son of a lawyer, he was born on Mauritius in 1836. He began his studies in Paris with Dantan jeune and moved to Rome in 1861 where, with the exception of a visit to his island birth-place, he lived for the next 16 years. In 1880 he settled permanently in the French capital. His contributions to exhibitions in Paris and London demonstrate that he was a most versatile sculptor. The female nude entitled *The golden belt* was the success of the Salon of 1874 and was recreated in numerous variations. Occasionally, Epinay was even accused of catering to fashionable taste. His portraits and statues with mythological subjects, as well as his genre figures, were indeed very popular, both with the general public and those in high places. Willem III, King of the Netherlands, for example, bought a number of works and even awarded the artist the Golden Lion of Nassau. Among his models were many female members of the most important ruling families of Europe.

Should certain suspicions prove correct, however, then it was a personality of much lower rank who stood model for the *Head of Medusa*, namely the wife of a highwayman. Patricia Foujols has recognised an astonishing similarity between the *Medusa* and Epinay's *Portrait of Assunta* (fig. 12), exhibited in London in 1868. The prominent eyebrows, the closed, slightly turned-down mouth, the sunken cheeks and the concise chin all have the same

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23 I would like here to express my thanks to Patricia Foujols, who was extremely generous in allowing me to examine her as yet unpublished material on Prosper d'Epinay. Her monograph had not yet appeared at the time this article was delivered.

24 On the *Ceinture dorée* see also Nathalie Bondil in *The colour of sculpture*, cit. (note 22), no. 9.

*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
somewhat severe attractiveness. The upper eyelids partially cover the pupils, which emphasises the determination, even harshness, of her gaze. If one relates the description of Assunta to the myth of Medusa the justification for this striking likeness may have a basis in content as well.

Notes among the artist's papers record the history of the creation of the bust of Assunta and allow the reader to feel some of the effective force she must have exercised over those who saw her. Epinay reports how in December 1864 all of Rome flocked to the trial of an infamous band of brigands from the Campagne who had been carrying on a running battle with the occupying French troops. The bandits had been supported not only by the rural population but also by their own wives, who had likewise been arrested, and the public demonstrated particular interest in these women 'because of their costumes, their emblems and their savage charm, as well as by their unbelievably naive and cynical depositions.' A friend had told Epinay of the incredible beauty of one of these peasant women, the wife of a certain Della Ruella, and had helped the sculptor to obtain a good seat for viewing the proceedings. According to Epinay, his friend had not exaggerated. When Assunta entered the courtroom a kind of murmur went through the crowd: ‘[she had] the regular profile of Bonaparte, much like the one seen on those handsomely executed portrait-medallions of the First Consul during the Italian campaign; but this classical profile was more powerful, more rugged, I might even say more ferocious. Her gaze was steady, implacable; her upper lip stuck out wonderfully; her cheek-bones were prominent; in short, her features were startlingly impressive.’25 The artist immediately became obsessed with the idea of obtaining leave to make her portrait. Permission was granted and, accompanied by two guards, Assunta was brought to Epinay's studio. The sittings stretched over several days. Although the sculptor wanted to learn more about his model, all attempts to draw her into conversation were greeted by silence and a condescending look.

The Van Gogh Museum's sculpture (fig. 1) has precisely these same features. The only real difference is the hair, which in the Medusa surrounds the face like a circle of flames. Strange as it may sound, it would be no surprise if Epinay had in fact chosen the striking Assunta as his model: her face, too, caused people to stop and stare; it was capable of petrifying those who looked at her. Perhaps even more interesting for the sculptor, however, was the seeming contradiction between her beauty and her criminal history. In the end, the court was not blinded by appearances; even comparisons with Napoleon and the statues of Ancient Greece could not prevent a harsh sentence. Assunta was no new Phryne.

One should also see Epinay's interpretation in the light of the late-19th century obsession with physiognomy. The subject itself, the artist's interest in both the Baroque and the academic tradition all point in this direction. The sculptor was also certainly acquainted with Rude's Marseillaise (fig.7), interesting not only for the Medusa mask on her breastplate, but because she can be considered the quintessential depiction of anger and determination. Epinay's teacher was, after all, Dantan jeune, probably best

25 Manuscript from the artist's estate; ‘[...] le profil régulier de Bonaparte, tel qu'on le voit sur ces médailles si belles exécutées d'après le premier consul pendant sa campagne d'Italie; mais ce profil classique était plus puissant, plus rude, je dirai presque farouche. Le regard était ferme, implacable, la lèvre supérieure avançait prodigieusement, les pommettes étaient saillantes; bref, le masque était saisissant.’ With special thanks to Patricia Foujols.
known for his caricatures, a genre to which Epinay himself turned towards the end of his career.\footnote{The third great French sculptor of the previous generation, David d'Angers, had also been interested in physiognomy and had even studied Humbert de Superville's \textit{Essai sur les signes inconditionnels dans l'art}. Superville had left behind a manuscript in which he discussed the myth of Medusa. His work, however, leaves the usual interpretations behind and would hardly have had any influence on artistic practice even had it been published; see Barbara Maria Stafford, \textit{Symbol and myth: Humbert de Superville's essay on absolute signs in art}, London 1979.}

Of course, a portraitist must necessarily be interested in physiognomy, particularly one who wishes to fathom the personality of his sitter. The phenomenon of the ‘beautiful thief,’ \textit{belle} and \textit{bête} in one, leads us to the contemporary debate on criminality and the question of whether it was innate or the result of environmental influences. Since mid century, French and Italian anthropologists had carried out investigations of the face and body in order to discover the causes of abnormal behaviour; in 1879, however, these attempts to assign wrongdoing to hereditary factors suffered a setback: Parisian youths had committed a horrendous double-murder, and - like Assunta - had been remorseless and unrepenting after their arrest. Still more shocking were the police photographs of one of the boys, Pierre Gille, an innocent-looking blond of 16. The Parisians
were puzzled: if appearances could be so deceiving than the ‘science’ of physiognomy was useless; anyone was capable of anything. As Douglas Druick has shown, Degas's *physionomies criminelles*, were executed under the spell of these events and the great uproar they caused.27

This crisis resulted from physiognomy's own most essential tool, empiricism. The facade was not to be trusted and to judge character by external factors could lead to dangerous, even lethal, mistakes. No myth was more suited to express this realisation than that of Medusa. Little wonder then that this branch of her iconography experienced an unprecedented revival in the last decades of the 19th century. Medusa was the ideal embodiment of the *femme fatale*, the one who hides her true and deadly intentions.

The number of Symbolists who dealt with the subject is legion. The list stretches from Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and George Frederick Watts to Fernand Khnopff, Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer, Jean Delville, Felicien Rops, Carlos Schwabe, Charles Van der Steppen, Arthur Craco, Arnold Böcklin, Franz von Stuck and Carl Strathmann, to name but a few. Medusa's 'sisters,' Circe, the Sphinx, Eve, Cleopatra, Semiramis and Salome, Salammbô, Lilith, Lamia, or simply Sin and Maleficia, were also popular among these artists.28 The merry Franz von Stuck, whose humble family background gave him a healthy attitude quite different from the bloodless decadence of many of his contemporaries, could already make fun of the morbid fascination with Medusa. With reference to the *mascheroni* of Federico Zuccari and the famous Bocca della Verità, he used a Medusa mask for the opening of the letter box of his Munich villa, as a kind of apotropaic sign (fig. 13). Whether or not she was able to prevent evil mail from landing on his desk, however, is not known.

Prosper d'Epinay's *Head of Medusa*, when looked at through the eyes of the Symbolists, seems serene and formulaic. It is, however, more than just a mid-way connecting point between the interpretations of the Romantics and the Fin de siècle. Epinay's work draws attention to physiognomy, its study and the debate surrounding it. Furthermore, the *Medusa* indicates the connection that artistic activity can and did have with the broader social themes of the day, without being reduced to mere timely anecdote.


Interestingly, the copy of Cesare Lombroso's *L'uomo delinquente* (Turin 1924) I used for my research for this article has a Medusa on the cover.

28 In addition to the works listed in fin. 1, the following also place heavy emphasis on the literary treatment of the *femme fatale* in all her various forms: Margaret Hallissy, *Venomous woman: fear of the female in literature*, New York & Westport, Connecticut & London 1987; Anne-marie Taeger, *Die Kunst, Medusa zu töten: Zum Bild der Frau in der Literatur der Jahrhundertwende*, Bielefeld 1987; and Mireille Dottin-Orsini, *Cette femme qu'ils disent fatale*, Paris 1992.
fig. 13
Franz von Stuck, letter box of the artist's villa in Munich
René Princeteau, *A dragoon on watch on a snowy hillside*, c. 1879-81, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (on loan from The Hague, Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst)
René Princeteau's *Dragoon* and the depiction of the Franco-Prussian War

Rachel Esner

René Princeteau's *Dragoon* (c. 1879-81, fig. 1) represents a mounted cuirassier standing guard on a snowy hillside. His helmet is pulled down over his eyes, his face impassive and expression all but unreadable; only the raised pistol lets us know that he is alert and ready for action. The horse, too, seems aware of its mission, its head slightly cocked to one side, ears pointed and eyes wide open. Both the snow and the inclusion of another mounted figure, barely visible in the background, let us know that this is neither a portrait nor a painting depicting a routine manoeuvre, but rather a scene from the active life of a soldier in war, in this case the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. The oppressive darkness, the cold, and the grim determination of the cavalry-man are all clues that help the viewer situate the canvas within the mental space of the defeated French nation.

Princeteau and Toulouse-Lautrec

Until it was lent to the Van Gogh Museum in 1994, this painting hung in the stairwell of the Ministry of Defence in The Hague. The decision to borrow it from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst was partly based on the fact that Princeteau was the teacher of Vincent van Gogh's friend Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and that the latter had made a copy of this very painting in 1881 (fig. 2).  


1 Although undated, it seems likely that the *Dragoon* was created in the wake of the artist's Salon triumph of 1879 (*The sentinel*, see below) rather than before, as has been previously suggested (see Van Gogh Museum, *Jaarverslag 1994*, p. 36). Given its scale, had it been painted earlier it surely would have been shown in the annual exhibition. The date of Lautrec's copy gives us a *terminus ante quem*; see M.G. Dortu, *Toulouse-Lautrec et son oeuvre*, 6 vols., New York 1971, vol. 2, p. 100. Princeteau's picture has retained its original frame. The *Dragoon* is not listed in Schmit - despite the fact that Toulouse-Lautrec's copy has been published and the work itself is illustrated in the Rijksdienst's catalogue: The Netherlands Office for the Fine Arts, *Old Master paintings: an illustrated summary catalogue*, Zwolle & The Hague, n.d., no. 2111. Princeteau's painting at one time belonged to the Rotterdam collector Willem van Rede (1880-1953), whose works went to the state after his death; see Ronald de Leeuw, 'De schilderijenverzameling,' in Nicoline Zemering (ed.), *Willem von Rede (1880-1953): Een verzamelaar uit hartstocht*, The Hague 1990, pp. 119-40. The Van Gogh Museum has a number of other works from his collection (also loaned by the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst), see *Van Gogh Museum: aanwinsten - acquisitions 1986-1991*, Zwolle 1991. Military scenes were a favourite of Rede's. In addition to the *Dragoon*, he also owned *Hussars fighting* by Hermanus Koekkoek (1815-1882), one of the rare Dutch artists who specialised in this genre and, interestingly, a copy of Neuville's *Last cartridges* (see below), painted by Henricus Ioannes Melis (1845-1923); these are also now part of the Rijksdienst's collection (nos. 1371 and 1940).
The older artist was in fact a good friend of the Lautrec family, as his *Equestrian portrait of Comte Odon de Toulouse-Lautrec* demonstrates (private collection).¹ As is well known, Henri was a sickly child who was forced to spend long periods bed-ridden. Already in his early years he was attracted to horses, races and the hunt. He drew them continuously so that by the time he began his formal training he already had a large body of juvenilia on these subjects, works that reflected his aristocratic family's way of life in an intimate and naive manner. These themes had a long-standing tradition among the Anglophile French upper class, and so it was only natural that Toulouse-Lautrec would have sought to emulate painters like Princeteau, Edmond-Georges Grandjean, John-Lewis Brown, Georges de Busson, and Clement-Galleran when he took up painting in the late 1870s.³

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2 Schmit 1995, no. 99. This work was exhibited at the Salon of 1878: *Salon de 1878*, Paris 1878, no. 1838. In a letter to his grandmother from 17 April, Lautrec mentions seeing his uncle posing in Princeteau's studio; see The letters of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, ed. Herbert D. Schimmel, intro. Gale B. Murray, Oxford 1991, p. 20 (letter 25).

3 *The letters*, cit. (note 2), pp. xxiv-xxv.
Given this and the family connection, Princeteau was an obvious choice as a first teacher. In addition, on a visit to Paris in 1875, Lautrec had seen and admired Princeteau's *Washington*, and his letters between 1879 and 1882 bear witness to his deep personal attachment to the artist, strengthened by their shared disabilities. He entered the studio in 1878, first informally and then regularly in 1881; he also spent several months there in 1882. Princeteau encouraged his pupil to further his studies with other masters, introducing him finally to Léon Bonnat. The two were apparently

4 Ibid., p. 14 (letter 17). Lautrec also owned two ‘Princeteau albums,’ which he requested be sent to him in Paris in 1882; ibid., p. 60 (letter 69).

5 See ibid., pp. 62 and 67 (letters 71A and 73). Despite the fact that he had since moved on, Lautrec referred to himself as ‘élève de Cormon et Princeteau’ in the catalogue of the
inseparable in these years, going to the Louvre to study the Spanish Old Masters, but especially to the races. One can easily imagine what an odd couple they formed, Princeteau tall and thin next to his much smaller and rounder companion. Lautrec himself parodied their affiliation, and also illustrated their enthusiasm for their art, in a caricature in a letter to his uncle, Charles de Toulouse-Lautrec (fig. 3).  

Beyond this, however, Princeteau was Lautrec's most important stylistic and thematic inspiration at this time. Although it would probably be going too far to attribute 

6 The letter is dated May 1881; ibid., p. 49 (letter 59). There is another caricature of Princeteau, executed in 1883; see Dortu, op. cit. (note 1), vol. 4, D.818.
Lautrec's later flattened decorative style directly to works like *Groom leading a stallion* (fig. 4), the similarities are indeed striking. In 1881 he painted a portrait of Princeteau so like the older artist in feeling and *facture* that could almost have been a self-portrait (fig. 5).  

Princeteau wrote of his pupil: ‘Young Henri is working valiantly in my studio and making miraculous progress; he imitates me like a monkey.’ He also referred to him as ‘son nourisson d'atelier,’ a comment not only on the Lautrec's age (he was 14 when he joined Princeteau's studio) but also on their relationship. In addition to the subjects one would expect to find in a young artist aspiring to be a fashionable sporting painter, Lautrec also painted and drew a number of scenes of contemporary military manoeuvres as well as mounted guardsman (fig. 6).

In May 1881, Henri's mother wrote that her son was busy copying a work by Princeteau. As no other exact copies are recorded, it is safe to assume that she is referring
to the *Dragoon*. The work is signed with Lautrec's monogram and inscribed ‘d'après Princeteau,’ as well as dated ‘1881’. This would make it one of the first works he produced after officially entering the studio.\(^\text{12}\) It is in some ways a remarkable choice, as the older man’s oeuvre offered any number of works which would have appealed to Lautrec’s tastes and been even more suited (while more complex in composition) to such an exercise. It is possible that it was only recently completed and was therefore available in the studio. Or perhaps Lautrec, having already executed several pictures on military themes, was drawn to it for that reason. Already of a generation that was to demonstrate little interest in the Franco-Prussian War or the *revanche*, we must assume that the choice had such prosaic foundations and that it did not stem from an interest in the deeper meanings of the subject as discussed below.

As would be expected in a copy, the young painter strove to imitate his master as closely as possible. Although more from inexperience than innate anti-academicism,\(^\text{13}\) Lautrec’s version is (still) more awkward and abstract than his teacher’s. Whether intentionally or not, the young painter has avoided most of the details, preferring instead to use the occasion to practice the scumbling technique he had so often admired and borrowed from Princeteau. Lautrec’s enthusiasm for art, and particularly for Princeteau’s art, is thus made palpable. The bond between the two men is given visible form in this homage and provides reason enough for a closer examination of Princeteau’s life and œuvre.

**Biography**

Very little has been written about the author of the *Dragoon* (fig. 1), probably best known as a painter of horses, the racetrack and hunting scenes.\(^\text{14}\) Except in connection with Toulouse-Lautrec his name is not one of those which has survived into the 20th...
century. A brief biographical sketch is therefore necessary, particularly since in many ways Princeteau's life, his upbringing and heritage, is the key to his work.

René-Pierre-Charles Princeteau (1843-1914) was born in Libourne, in the Dordogne region. His father was a courtier en vins and the family belonged to the upper bourgeoisie of the Second Empire. Although a deaf-mute, René was given an excellent education and enjoyed all the privileges of a young man of his class and era. He visited Paris frequently, attending the openings of the annual Salon and the races. In general, one can say that from the earliest age he belonged to the fashionable elite of the period and this served him well in his later career. It provided him with subject matter that was appealing to both modernists and the more traditional, and made him a favourite among wealthy collectors. Although his behaviour sometimes appeared a bit strained and artificial due to his handicap, far from preventing him from entering Parisian society it in fact allowed him to view it from a very particular angle. He was simultaneously an insider and an outsider, and this position marked his vision of the world around him.

Princeteau's talent for sculpture, drawing and painting were recognised early. He began his studies in sculpture in Bordeaux and in 1865, at the age of 22, he entered the Ecole Impériale des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he worked in the studio of Augustin Dumont, famous for his decorations for Napoleon III's new Louvre. While still a student,
Princeteau won two medals for composition. He began exhibiting at the Salon in 1868 (his first submission was an equestrian statuette entitled *Pilote*)\(^{16}\) and continued to take part in these exhibitions until 1902.\(^{17}\) The would-be sculptor soon turned to painting, beginning with academic historical and mythological subjects. Like many others of his generation, however, he eventually abandoned these themes and began to paint scenes from contemporary life in a more modern manner. Beginning in the 1870s, his particular interest became horses, always popular at the Salon, and a topic especially appropriate to a man of his background.

Like Monet, Renoir and countless other painters of his age he spent the terrible year 1870-71 in London, where he probably encountered works by all the famous ‘sporting painters,’ particularly George Stubbs - pictures which certainly had a profound impact on his stylistic and thematic development. On his return to France, he became fascinated with the recent war. Unlike Edouard Detaille (1848-1912) and Alphonse de Neuville (1835-1885), the two most famous military painters of the early Third Republic, he had no personal experience of the events, and his interest arose from the stories he had read. His approach to the subject, as we shall see, was therefore a highly literary one. Already at the Salon of 1872 he exhibited *Uhlan patrol ambushed by snipers* (fig. 7). This was followed by a number of other works, discussed below, including the Van Gogh Museum's *Dragoon*. Interestingly enough, however, with one exception these later pictures were never shown at the Salon.

In 1874, Princeteau opened a studio in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, in the same grande impasse where John-Lewis Brown and Jean-Louis Forain also worked. All three artists dealt in similar themes and they probably influenced one another to some extent, as a work like Forain's *Horsewoman* (1882, Memphis, Tennessee, Dixon Gallery and Gardens) demonstrates. Princeteau soon had five students, among them Joseph Emanuel Verheyen (1851-1913), a self-styled Dutch baron and sculptor, and, somewhat later, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

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16 *Salon de 1868*, Paris 1868, no. 3812. Princeteau also exhibited a plaster medallion portrait (no. 3813).

17 His efforts were rewarded on a number of occasions: at the Salon of 1881 he received an honorable mention; in 1883 a médaille 3e classe; in 1885 the médaille 2e classe; and a bronze medal at the Exposition Universelle of 1900. He became a sociétaire of the Société des Artists Français in 1887.
The oeuvre

The Bois de Boulogne and the racetracks were Princeteau's favourite haunts, and one of his greatest pleasures appears to have been hunting. These passions are reflected in his art; they are themes he took up in the mid-
1870s and he remained true to them throughout his career. Like his subject matter, he developed his style early and it changed little in the course of his artistic life. It can best be described as both realist and expressive, almost to the point of Romanticism in some cases, combining the loose brushstroke and coloration of the Impressionists with subject matter that was both traditional and contemporary.

Most of the artist's oeuvre consists of scenes that in some way involve horses: stables, races and the hunt, subjects with a long history and which were equally fashionable in both the Second Empire and the Third Republic. He also executed a number of equestrian portraits, of amazones, jockeys, the nobility, and military and political figures. The most important of these was of Marshal MacMahon, a veteran of the Franco-Prussian War and president of the Republic (fig. 8). For this highly official commission the artist changed his style drastically, exchanging his generally loose brushstroke for a facture reminiscent of the paintings of contemporary history created for the Galerie des Batailles at Versailles under Louis-Philippe. Probably along much the same stylistic lines is the mounted portrait of general Ducrot (1872, private collection), a man who had played an important role in a number of battles during the siege of Paris. In the later 1870s and early 80s he also painted a Portrait of George Washington (1875) for the American Embassy in Paris, as well as one of Jules Tardiveau (private collection), and a certain colonel Chabrol (private collection), both military figures of the day.

Sources and inspiration

In order to better characterise Princeteau's approach to this subject matter, it is perhaps useful to compare his works with those of his predecessors in the horse-related genre, namely George Stubbs, Eugène Delacroix, and, of course, Théodore Géricault. Despite his seeming modernity, Princeteau's influences came mostly from these artists of the past, and his highly expressive brand of Realism/Impressionism was very much indebted to the Romantic tradition. In his own period, however, his works

18 Compare, for example, Horace Vernet, Louis-Philippe and his sons at the gate of Versailles, 1846 (Versailles, Musée Nationale).
19 Schmit 1995, no. 96; not illustrated.
20 Schmit 1995, no. 94. This work was also shown at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876.
21 Schmit 1995, nos. 93 and 95bis.
can best be examined in relation to those of Edgar Degas.

At the Salon of 1875 Princeteau exhibited *Horses frightened by a passing train* (private collection),\(^{22}\) a work based on an incident he had observed in the company of Toulouse-Lautrec.\(^{23}\) Although the actual event had involved work-horses, Princeteau replaced them with riding horses in the finished work, a change which made the whole more strongly reminiscent of such works as *Horse frightened by a lion* (1770, Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) and *Horse attacked by a lion* (1762-65, London, Tate

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22 *Salon de 1875*, Paris 1875, no. 1679; Schmit 1995, no. 73. The work was also shown at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876.

23 In fact, the original sketch was executed by Toulouse-Lautrec while the actual painting was done by Princeteau; see Schmit 1995, p. xiv.
Gallery) by George Stubbs, or even Carle Vernet's *Horses frightened by a storm* (Musée d'Avignon). The Frenchman's hunting scenes, too, recall those of Stubbs, but are considerably more lively and realistic. Like Stubbs, Princeteau also made numerous 'portraits' of horses, some of them commissions. In contrast to the British painter, however, these are generally much less formal and stylised. The animals do not appear to be posing, but are rather depicted in natural positions. They are, however, sometimes placed against abstract, brushy backgrounds, calling to mind Stubbs's famous *Whistlejacket* (London, Kenwood House). Once again, however, Stubbs's animal seems aware of the viewer's gaze (in fact, it almost seems to be trying to seduce the onlooker), whereas Princeteau's exist for themselves. His individual horses are not mere objects or possessions, but rather something living and independent.

Although in some ways his brushstroke can be said to resemble that of Delacroix, Princeteau was never interested in the exotic. His horses and riders are not Arabs on fiery steeds, as in Delacroix's famous *Massacre at Scio* of 1824 (Paris, Musée du Louvre), but modern Frenchmen pursuing the pleasures of the hunt, as, for example in *The jump* (Bordeaux, Musée des Beaux-Arts) or *Hunters in action* (Musée d'Albi). Nor was he particularly concerned with expressing the violent nature of his animals, as was the great Romantic in a work such as *Arabian horses fighting in a stable* (Paris, Musée d'Orsay). And he certainly would never have considered depicting horses in the throes of death or as mere corpses, as Delacroix did in a stirring painting in the Museum Mesdag in The Hague (*Evening of the Battle of Waterloo*, 1825). Princeteau's horses are peaceable creatures (fig. 9), well-trained - one might even say as civilised as their owners - saving their energy for the racecourse or the hunt.

In the case of Géricault, there are a number of stylistic and thematic parallels, although again the overall mood of the works is quite different. Both artists sought to depict the grace that is a natural and essential part of the animal, accompanying it like a shadow through all its daily activities. Both artists were also fascinated by the specifics of anatomy and its expressive possibilities, as a comparison between works like Géricault's (in)famous *Croupes* (private collection) and Princeteau's *Horse in a stable (from behind)*

![fig. 9](Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996)

René Princeteau, *Three horses*, 1870-72, private collection (photograph courtesy of Galerie Schmit, Paris)

(Private collection) demonstrates, or between the older artist's *Grey horse* (Musée de Rouen) and a depiction of the same type by Princeteau.

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24 See, for example, Schmit 1995, nos. 1-12.
It was the horse in its environment that interested both artists and the animal as something eminently alive, with a very particular kind of sensibility. However, although both made what can best be described as ‘horse-portraits,’ Princeteau's never have the sense of mystery or even unheimlichkeit that one finds so often in Géricault (fig. 10). For Géricault, the horse had more than a material reality: it was both a symbol of primordial energy and something almost fantastical. These aspects are particularly well demonstrated by the various versions of his Course de chevaux libres and, especially, the so-called Derby d'Epsom (Paris, Musée du Louvre). It is even true of his depictions of working horses, a subject in which Princeteau was not in the least interested. For him, horses were something straightforward and directly beautiful. A race or a hunt were simply that and not the expression of psychological and social turmoil as they were for Géricault.

Edgar Degas and the Impressionists were all contemporaries of Princeteau's. In addition, he and Degas had similar backgrounds and thematic interests. Their approaches to the subject of the racetrack could not, however,

have been more different. Whereas Degas's works tend to focus on the social aspects and marginal (though tense) moments of the event, as, for example, in *At the races in the country* (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts) or *Before the races* (Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art), Princeteau's fascination was with the horses and the race itself. The crowds who gathered at Longchamps and elsewhere never appear in his paintings, the way they do in works such as Degas's *Racehorses before the stands* (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) or Manet's *Race at Longchamps* (The Art Institute of Chicago). Even at their fastest and most powerful, as in *The finish of the Prix du Jockey-Club at Chantilly, 29 May 1892* (private collection) or *The steeplechase* (private collection),

Princeteau's horses and riders remain distinct and clearly recognizable in a way that would have been foreign to 'true' Impressionists like Degas or Manet. His animals are not what Robert Herbert has referred to as 'mobile stock coupons,' 'embodiments of industrial capital's drive for productivity and speed,'

but rather belong to an older, more conservative - both stylistically and ideologically - world: that of the landed gentry of the Second Empire. In many ways more comparable is Renoir's *A morning ride in the Bois de Boulogne* (Hamburger Kunsthalle): one finds the same tone and even a similar style in paintings by Princeteau such as *Madame Jean Fourcaud-Laussac en amazone* (Musée de Libourne) or the *Equestrian portrait of François de Cossé, the eleventh duke of Brissac* (private collection).

Considering the realistic, spontaneous, and even snapshot-like nature of Princeteau's images, the question arises as to his relationship to and use of photography. His

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non-official portraits, for example of jockeys, certainly have a photographic precision, but are also somewhat distorted to emphasise the character of the sitters. The artist was certainly well aware of the research of photographers like Muybridge; for the sake of expression, however, in many cases he preferred to follow his own sensibilities. One such example is The finish of the Prix du Jockey-Club. At a date when one already knew how a horse's legs really moved, he employed Géricault's famous gallop volant from the Derby d'Epsom. The painting can thus be seen as both an homage to Géricault and an indication of the artist's independence, his desire to capture the energy and speed of movement in a subjective way. This, too, may be an sign of his innate conservatism: the artist was willing to be modern, but only up to a point; he refused to accept art as a form of science. Likewise, he employed an impressionist technique, but was reluctant to go the final step that would have led to a disintegration of form. Accepting these two aspects would have meant embracing modernity in a way that would certainly have gone against his ingrained class attitudes.

Clearly, this type of subject matter executed in this style meant that his patrons were mostly of the upper bourgeoisie and nobility - that is, the class to which he himself belonged. Many of his commissions were to paint the racehorses of dukes, counts and barons, and he is known to have gone hunting with the likes of the princes of Orléans and the duc d'Aumale. Considering this, and the generally uncomplicated nature of his works, their cheerfulness, energy, sense of well-being and material satisfaction, their richness, both literally (brushwork, thick paint) and figuratively, it is all the more surprising that he devoted a considerable amount of attention to depicting the darkest chapter of recent French history, namely the Franco-Prussian War.

**Picturing the defeat**

For the art historian interested in French painting of the late 19th century, it is surprising (and even puzzling) to discover that episodes from the Franco-Prussian War were among the most frequent subjects found in the paintings exhibited at the annual Salon. It appears that despite the fact that the defeat of Napoleon III's army at Sedan and the capitulation of Paris were not only political, but also deeply psychological traumas for the French nation, the attempts to artistically analyse the events of 1870-71 were extremely numerous. Nonetheless, there has been little interest in these pictures in the past and they remain to a large extent unknown.

Faced with these images, a number of questions arise. In the first place, it is important to ask in which ways they might be considered perfectly suited to both the political and artistic conditions of the Third Republic. What was the interpretation of contemporary history they encouraged, and what did these works, in their pictorial analysis of events shameful in themselves, provide? What was their function in the mental and political economy of a defeated people? What were the visual means used to establish a certain interpretation of 1870-71 - an interpretation which was to help France out of the internal and external crisis caused by the defeat? It is within this general context that the paintings by Princeteau, including the canvas in the Van Gogh Museum, should be seen.

The Franco-Prussian War can be divided into two phases: the Imperial, with its famous battles of Froeschwiller, Rezonville, Gravelotte, and Saint-Privat, leading up to the defeat on 1 September at Sedan; and the Republican, led by Gambetta and the Government of National Defence, which continued on several fronts throughout the winter, most
importantly around the besieged capital. The Napoleonic forces had been decimated by the fighting of July and August and little remained for the government but to create a new army, practically from scratch. Gambetta, hoping for a rebirth of the spirit of 1793, placed all his hopes in a ‘nation in arms.’ These men - young, untrained, ill-clothed and ill-equipped - did manage, with the help of such unorthodox figures as the famous franc-tireurs (snipers), to stave off a final defeat for nearly five months. This phase of the war, ‘la guerre à l’outrance,’ as Gambetta called it, was of no use to anyone and the losses suffered here only made the capitulation in January all the more bitter. Napoleon and his officers, many of whom had gained their positions through personal friendship with the Imperial couple, were generally given the blame for the defeat and not the common soldier, of whose individual bravery there was never, especially after the war, any doubt.

Given these facts, one is forced to ask why images of a war which had ended in such deep humiliation were desirable at all? The answer lies in the inexorable connection of the defeat at Sedan with the birth of the Third Republic. It was this connection which made the paintings not only possible but even necessary, and it informs the vision of the war found in the works from beginning to end. As Miriam Levin has pointed out, the Republicans were strong believers in the power of art to communicate ideas: painting, sculpture, and architecture were means of both expressing Republican values and of encouraging them in the viewer.

Thus, even images of a lost war, if properly presented, could serve in the struggle for a new France, unified, strong and prepared for action.

Because of the inseparability of the events of 1870-71 and the new political order, it is obvious that a critical representation of the war would not have been possible. Using the three things all Frenchmen had in common (the war, the defeat and the desire for revenge), this art aimed instead to propagate the Republican definition of French society, one in which all classes and groups were reconciled. It was also designed to aid in the formation a nation devoted to a strong military, which was seen as the guarantee of future security and power. Above all, it was to train the next generation to Republican beliefs and the idea of the revanche. It was therefore indispensable that the painted version of the events be a positive one, one which showed that France was great even in defeat, and that with the help of the Republic and all its citizens a revenge could be had that would make it greater still. The banner under which this was to be achieved was called gloria victis, and was given visual form in Antonin Mercié's sculpture of the same name (Paris, Musée d'Orsay). The question facing the painters of the Franco-Prussian war was: what could be depicted and how?

The first difficulty to overcome was the changed nature of combat. By the time of the Franco-Prussian War, battles were being fought in an entirely new way. The battlefield could now be anywhere; modern weapons were extremely powerful and of long range; the enemy was not always visible and direct contact was rare. War was no longer about enthusiasm, bravery or personal heroism, but rather about tactics, weaponry, and strategic positions. The individual soldier was unknown to his

34 The scholarly works on the Franco-Prussian War are numerous. Michael Howard's, The Franco-Prussian War: the German invasion of France, New York 1961, provides a basic history in English.
commanders and even to his comrades; he was in a sense invisible, disappearing in the smoke of forceful artillery.\textsuperscript{36} In reality, he fought and died alone. This kind of warfare, however, could not be represented and exploited, and was therefore unfit for propaganda purposes. If this art was to function at all it had to appeal to the individual man, to give him something to identify with; without this, the purpose of his sacrifice would remain obscure. Thus, the soldier in these works is anything but anonymous, and even if he stands alone he stands for something.

The painters' second problem was the changes that had occurred in both history painting itself and its reception during the course of the century. In the Third Republic, the audience for art was a very different one than it had been, and these new viewers, schooled in the immediacy and realism of popular media, were not interested in allegories and \textit{grandes machines}. In order to appeal to them, it was necessary to cater to their taste for the narrative and the incidental. Yet, although it was desirable that the works should give the impression of actuality, it was equally important that they not fall into banality: they could not be mere chronicles but had to communicate a message, as \textit{grand style} painting had once done.

In spite of the fact that modern warfare was incompatible with these aims, it was necessary to develop a form that was both pictorial and that still seemed to make no concessions in matters of truthfulness. Above all, if the paintings were to serve the Republican cause, the audience had to be able to recognise itself in them. In short, events had to be emotionalised and yet seem true. Only in this way could the paintings achieve their aim.

The artists of 1870 overcame the formal and ideological difficulties presented by both the war and the state of history painting by focusing not on great battle scenes but on the narrative ‘episode.’ As Charles Baudelaire had written already in the 1850s, ‘a real battle is not a picture [...] a military picture will only be intelligible and interesting on the condition that it is a simple episode of military life.’ Although the visual imagery of the Franco-Prussian War does not lack its fill of ‘traditional’ battle scenes, these types of images are in the minority. There are also relatively few allegorical or symbolical works - exceptions being, of course, the two works by Puvis de Chavannes in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, The pigeon and The balloon. As would be expected in a Republican art, the high-ranking officer, observing and directing the battle - as, for example, in Ernest Meissonier’s Napoleon III at Solferino (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) - rarely appears. The true hero of the Franco-Prussian War was the common soldier. It is his ‘portrait’ and actions that appear most frequently in the paintings, particularly those depicting the Republican phase of the war in the autumn and winter of 1870-71.

The concept of the soldier which gained such popularity with painters and public alike was developed in Alphonse de Neuville's The last cartridges (fig. 11), exhibited at the Salon of 1873. Here, all elements of the French army and the French nation are brought together to face the enemy. They are anonymous, simple soldiers and, at the same time - as the revanchist author Paul de Saint-Victoire wrote - the incarnation of la Patrie. For him (and others as well) they were ‘Duty,’ ‘Resolution,’ and ‘Bravery’ incarnate. These men had sacrificed themselves for their country; the fact that they had fought and lost only made them all the more patriotic, all the more imitable. Contemporary critics saw The last cartridges not as mere genre but as history painting. It was not only a document, it also communicated a message, one which was to save and restore the French nation. As A. de Pontmartin wrote: ‘I boldly add that it [the painting] has a moral value; it counteracts against the feelings of humiliation, discouragement and sterile rage that a nation like ours has difficulty in resisting in disaccustoming itself to victory. M. Deneuville's [...] little group embodies the words of François I: HONOUR IS SAVED!, echoing from Reichshoffen to Gravelotte, from Wissembourg to Pataye and from Coulmiers to Villerssexel.’

37 See Robichon, op. cit. (note 33), pp. 63-66.
39 See the collection of Salon criticism on this painting entitled M. Alphonse Deneuville: son tableau ‘Les dernières cartouches’ sous point de vue du sentiment patriotique, Saint Omar 1873.
40 Ibid., n.p.: ‘[...] j’ajoute hardiment qu’il [the painting] possède une valeur morale; car il réagit contre le sentiment d’humiliation, de découragement, et de rage stérile dont une nation comme la nôtre a peine à se défendre en se déshabituant de la victoire. La petite groupe de M.'
Next to his willingness to fight even in desperate situations, the painters of 1870 emphasised the warrior \textit{élan} with which the French soldiers sought to protect their country against the invader. This aspect is illustrated by innumerable scenes by artists such as Paul Boutigny, Paul Grolleron, Eugène Berne-Bellecour and many others of the defence of Paris and its environs. In this same spirit are the works representing guerilla warfare, such as the destruction of railway lines, the ambush or any other of the activities of the much mythologised \textit{franc-tireurs}.

The ‘defence of Paris’ works make up a large number of the total of all the those representing the war, and generally have titles such as \textit{Charge!}, \textit{To your weapons} or \textit{The last effort} which underline the energy with which the French soldier faced every new challenge. Generally, only a few figures are placed together on the canvas so that each one becomes important as an individual, an effect underlined by the exactitude of the representation in terms of physiognomy and dress. Further, the artists sought to capture a precise moment of the action in all its contingency without, however, abandoning a sense of drama through the use of rhetorical gestures and expressions. In this way,
fig. 11
Alphonse de Neuville, *The last cartridges*, 1873, Bazeilles, Maison de la Dernière Cartouche
the viewer was able to recognise himself in his compatriots, was made to feel physically part of the action and thus came to be convinced not only of their bravery but of his own duty to do as they had done in the future.

And what of the enemy? Very often he is simply invisible, or, if present at all, then generally through the form of gun-smoke. One of the most famous examples is Detaillée's Charge du 9e cuirassiers, à Morsbronn (Salon of 1874; Rheims, Musée Saint Rémi). It is left up to the public's imagination to make its own picture of the (enormous) odds the men of 1870 faced, a strategy that draws the viewer into the battle, making him play an active role and increasing his belief in the truth of what he is being shown.

The reaction of the French public to these paintings was overwhelmingly positive and had an intensely emotional character often described in the criticism. In 1873, for example, an entire pamphlet was published containing selections from the Salon criticism praising Neuville's Last cartridges in the highest patriotic tones (see above). Emile Zola, in his Salon review of 1875, claimed this artist's Fire attack on a barricaded house (Paris, Musée d'Orsay) caused women to burst into tears and men to ball their fists in rage, and in 1876 he described a work by Detaillée: ‘The whole scene vibrates with emotion, a kind of fierce and anguished silence.’ Similar reactions were to be found to the works of other artists, most particularly in the writings of Jules Richard, who from 1886 to 1888 published the lavishly illustrated Salon militaire, devoted almost entirely to the art of 1870.

What made these paintings so effective was not their subject matter alone, but rather the subject matter presented as reality. It has often been stated that the Third Republic's preferred style was realism. Having said this, however, the concept must be defined more closely. The type of realism the regime supported was neither that of Courbet nor that of the Impressionists. Recalling the Republicans' belief in the power of art to communicate ideas, and their need to speak to a large audience, it becomes clear that the type of realism they would have supported would have been one that presented the facts clearly and legibly, and yet also communicated a higher meaning. Their ideal of history painting was a form that presented both the reality of an event and its interpretation simultaneously: works which focused on the spectacular and momentary, which suggested the presence of the eye-witness account and yet at the same time conveyed the kind of message only an invented image was capable of transmitting. The artists of 1870 sought to meet the challenge of the popular image and to create something easily consumable without, however, sacrificing art's ability to deliver a political message in the older tradition of history painting.

Although the explanations for the debacle of 1870-71 ranged from the idea of a godly punishment to the decadence of the Latin race in general to a purely political interpretation which blamed everything on Napoleon III, we do not find any of these reflected in the art produced during the next three decades. Instead, the painters closed ranks with the novelists and chauvinistic patriots, who sought to propagate the idea that the defeat was brought about by the barbarity of the Germans and their unorthodox methods and that the French soldier - brave, individualistic, fighting to the last full of warrior élan - had been simply crushed by this invading mechanical mass from the east: in other words, gloria victis. This idea of the soldier of 1870-71

42 Ibid., p. 186: ‘Toute cette scène vibre d'émotion, d'une sorte de silence farouche et angoissé.’
may be said to represent the Republican interpretation of the war: since the individual Frenchman fought so bravely, nothing had actually been lost - in fact, everything had been gained, namely a new form of government. Behind all these images stands the idea of the unity of the nation, that all Frenchmen, regardless of age, class, political or religious beliefs or even colour, fought together against the enemy. Aside from demonstrating this unity in a time of war, these works sought to encourage its continuation in the present. The aim of this art, like that of the popular novels it so resembled, was to enrage the viewer, to move him, to restore his belief in the French nation and, especially, to prepare him for the revanche.

Princeteau's 'militaires'

Although his scenes of the Franco-Prussian War do not make up a major part of his oeuvre, Princeteau's interest in the military and his involvement with other painters devoted to creating such images makes his interpretation an interesting one. Having collaborated with Neuville on two major projects - the panoramas of the battles of Champigny and Reichshoffen (both exhibited in 1878), for which he painted the horses - he was well aware of the importance of these images for a recovering France.
René Princeteau, *The wounded cavalryman*, c. 1870-71, Libourne, Musée de Libourne (legs Robin)

Not surprisingly, it was scenes in which horses were involved that intrigued him the most, that is, cavalry battles, mounted patrols and guards. Already in 1870-71 he painted *The wounded cavalryman* (fig. 12), representing a soldier being thrown violently from his horse into the snow. It is strongly reminiscent of Degas's famous *Steeplechase: the fallen jockey* (Mr and Mrs Paul Mellon) of 1866, which he could have seen at the Salon. Probably executed shortly after his return from England, the scene already exhibits features characteristic of several of his later works on the subject. The artist's main concern appears to be the violence and energy propelling both the horse and rider. As in so many images of this war the enemy is invisible, so that the viewer immediately begins inventing a narrative to accompany the action and thus becomes involved with the work in an unmediated way.

Princeteau's submission to the first Salon after the war (1872) was *Uhlan patrol ambushed by snipers* (fig. 7). These guerilla fighters were among the most popular figures of the post-war period, admired for their bravery and daring; innumerable songs and poems were dedicated to their deeds as well as any number of paintings. Princeteau's enormous canvas once again depicts a winter landscape. Now, however, it is the French who are invisible, hiding in the woods in the background and firing from between the trees; we recognise them only by the flashes from the muzzles of their guns. In the foreground, the German soldiers fall dramatically from their frightened and rearing horses. The artist has captured a contingent moment, not a great and decisive battle but one small episode in which the French were triumphant. By painting it on such a large scale, the artist sought to raise this one event to the level of the history paintings of the past, perhaps even comparable with the great battle paintings of Antoine-Jean Gros. He aimed to invest it with the ideological importance and deeper significance of such works and to recreate their emotional effect. The viewer was thus presented with the idea that although the war had been lost there had been great moments, moments of bravery and daring comparable with the heroic deeds of bygone eras. The restorative power of such an image - particularly in 1872 - should not be underestimated, as we have seen in the critical reaction to Neuville's *Last cartridges*.

43 Another version exists in a private collection: Schmit 1995, no. 90.
44 *Salon de 1872*, Paris 1872, no. 1274.
The artist's next such scene exhibited at the Salon was of a very different nature. *The sentinel* (private collection), displayed in 1879, depicts a lone guardsman in a snowy landscape. He sits motionless on his horse, in his right hand a standard with the tri-colour flag. Despite the obvious cold, he sits erect, intent on his mission. The work was a great success, and probably provided the inspiration for the Van Gogh Museum's *Dragoon* (fig. 1).

These two images, along with a third by the same artist, *Velite de la garde* (fig. 13), illustrate yet another aspect of the iconography of the Franco-Prussian War: the single soldier as a symbol of stoical bravery. Lone guards and guard posts were a popular theme with many artists, as were 'portraits' of the various kinds of soldiers who participated in the war (*mobiles*, *zouaves*, etc.). These gave the artist the chance not only to display his knowledge of uniforms and weapons but also allowed him to concentrate on a single figure, presented both as an individual and as a type with whom the viewer could identify. Similar depictions, although without the added political/psychological dimension of many of the Franco-Prussian War works, can be found in earlier 19th-century art as well, for example in Géricault's *Trompette des husards* (fig. 14) or in works by Gros, Nicolas-Toussaint Charlet and Denis-Auguste-Marie Raffet. Among his contemporaries they were a kind of specialty of Edouard Detaillé and Alphonse de Neuville. They may well have had a special attraction for Princeteau who, as a deaf-mute, must have in many ways lived a closed existence. Although technically speaking his dragoon is not alone, the second figure is placed so far in the background and is depicted so unclearly that his presence is barely noticeable. There can be no question that the artist intended the viewer to focus completely on the foreground, adding the second dragoon almost as a (compositional) after-thought and in many ways he seems to emphasise the figure's isolation. He does not contribute to the narrative of the work, so that we cannot speak of this as a genre scene but rather, as I will in the following, of a portrait of an heroic individual.

It is perhaps revealing to compare Princeteau's *Dragoon* with two similar works, one from the beginning of the century and one exactly contemporary: Géricault's *Wounded cuirassier* (fig. 15) and Meissonier's *The outpost* (fig. 13)
René Princeteau, *Vélite de la garde*, 1893-97, private collection (photograph courtesy of Galerie Schmit, Paris)

fig. 14

The former was conceived as a pendant to the more obviously dramatic *Charging light cavalryman* of 1812 (Paris, Musée du Louvre) and both differ in many respects from all previous military paintings. Unlike earlier battle scenes, both Géricault's works invest the anonymous and isolated modern soldier with the potential for heroism; for the first time, as Thomas Crow has written, the individual figure ‘is made to do the meaningful work normally reserved for the complex internal narratives of Classical history painting.’

Princeteau returned to this interpretation, which had had little consequence for the battle paintings of the intervening period. Perhaps because he himself did not participate in the fighting, and as a result had no opportunity to make the detailed studies which characterise the pictures of Detaille and Neuville, Princeteau's images have a certain awkwardness and abstraction which might also be compared with Géricault. In both cases, deficiencies in drawing and composition are compensated by emotional tension and the bravura handling of paint, particularly in Princeteau's treatment of the snow. In Géricault's painting, although we do not see it, everything tells us that the wounded soldier is in mortal danger as he leaves the battlefield and this gives the canvas an added narrative element which is meant to draw the viewer in. This same strategy is employed by Princeteau: although it is still invisible, there is a sense of danger here, as the drawn pistol and the horse's ears clearly indicate. It is also perhaps possible to see in both figures symbols of an 

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heroic nation in defeat, which would be equally appropriate to the year 1814 and to the post-Franco-Prussian War period.

Meissonier's *Outpost*, although completely different in feeling, is so similar in composition that one almost needs to ask if it did not in fact serve as a direct inspiration. The mounted cavalryman, a member of the Napoleonic army, is depicted atop a grassy hill, overlooking a valley which stretches out below him. He has apparently just spied some kind of activity in the distance to the left, for both he and the horse gaze attentively in this direction. Like Princeteau's dragoon he has his rifle ready for action, and the horse seems to be listening for suspicious noises. Meissonier's painting, however, is far more literal than Princeteau's. His interest, as always, was in the accurate reproduction of historical detail. Horse and rider are placed at a distance from the viewer: we are meant to admire the artist's skill and objectivity, not to suffer with the man depicted. Although both riders are clearly confident in their own abilities we fear an approaching tragedy in the Princeteau, whereas in the Meissonier there is no emotion at all. His is simply a man performing his duty, while Princeteau's is this and also, as we have seen here and in so many other images of the period, a symbol of something greater and potentially healing.

Interestingly, the work was not exhibited at the Salon. Instead, during the 1880s the artist seems to have concentrated primarily on more cheerful and less political subjects, for example scenes with farm animals, four of which were shown at the Salon (1883-86). An exception was *Leading the charge* of 1887 (present location unknown), which depicts a cavalry charge very much in the manner of Edouard Détaille's *En batterie!* (Paris, Musée de l'Armée). In the 1890s, however, Princeteau returned once again to military themes, painting two copies of *The sentinel* (1893 and 1897), *Vélie de la garde* (fig. 13), and *The trumpeter* (fig. 17). Of these later works one, *Before the attack* (fig. 18), was given the subtitle 'épisode de la
guerre de 1870. ’ Although still a popular theme for both artists and writers, the Franco-Prussian War had been over for several decades at the time of its execution, so that the painter must have thought it necessary to give his audience a key to the subject matter. The scene depicts a strategic discussion before a cavalry charge and once again brings to mind a work by Meissonier, namely Moreau and Dessoles before Hohenlinden (1876, Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland), depicting an event from the Napoleonic Wars. Executed in a loose impasto technique that blurs the individual features of both the protagonists and the landscape, Princeteau's painting once again seeks to capture the mood rather than the precise historical detail of the event. Still more abstract and almost Courbet-like in its use of the palette knife, Cavalry in the snow (fig. 19) exudes the same air of mystery, chilly silence and uncertainty as, for example, Edouard Détaille's Coup-de-main (Musée du Dunkerque).

These were Princeteau's last paintings in this genre. In the later 1890s and for the rest of his career he painted only those subjects for which he had become known
among his upper-class patrons - the racetrack, the stable and the hunt. At the Salon he exhibited pictures with titles such as *Préparations du départ, Dechargement du foin, Neuf heures du matin* and *La semaille* (all present location unknown), works with pastoral and, above all, purely peaceable themes.

Although by no means the most powerful work in its genre, Princeteau's *Dragoon* is a highly personal and therefore interesting interpretation of a popular theme. Particularly with regard to technique, it exhibits a certain independence and unconventionality which was certainly appealing to his student Toulouse-Lautrec and remains so for us today.
fig. 19
René Princeteau, *Cavalry in the snow*, 1893-97, private collection (photograph courtesy of Galerie Schmit, Paris)
fig. 1
John Watkins, photograph of Lawrence Alma-Tadema, private collection
The Exhausted maenads: Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Carel Vosmaer

Carel Vosmaer's novel *Amazone* was published in November 1880, by Martinus Nijhoff in The Hague. Within a matter of months the book was sold out, and reprints and translations followed in quick succession. The novel centres on the Frisian painter Aisma, who while in Italy makes the acquaintance of several compatriots, including a Mr Van Walborch and his niece Marciana van Buren, and an American sculptor named Askol. A romance develops, but this story line is subordinate to the detailed description of the countless art treasures which the group has come to see.

Aisma was patterned after the painter Lawrence Alma-Tadema (fig. 1), while Van Walborch combines the features of Carel Vosmaer himself and his father Gualterus. The model for the sculptor Askol was the American artist Mozes Ezekiel. Writing to his friend Jacques Perk, the author says of the main characters in his book, ‘Do not be too inclined to see portraits in these characters, for I have intentionally avoided making them so. They are, as Beets said in the *Camera*, a nose of recognition upon a face of imagination.’ But Alma-Tadema, too, had seen the likeness. In one of over a hundred letters the painter wrote to his friend Vosmaer, he said, ‘Aisma is perhaps a bit too much Tadema [...], as a human being, however, he is less so. Ezekiel is good. But, above all, your impressions of Italy are excellent.’

We do not know exactly when Alma-Tadema and the writer and art critic Vosmaer first met. The earliest surviving letter is dated 5 November 1869, when the painter was still living in Brussels. In it the painter addresses Vosmaer as ‘amice,’ which suggests that the two men had been acquainted for some time. This is supported by the contents of the letter.

In 1878 Vosmaer travelled to Italy in the company of Martinus Nijhoff. While in Rome they met Alma-Tadema, and together they visited Tivoli and different sights in the capital. Vosmaer kept a diary during this trip, here and there enlivened with comical little drawings. Vosmaer and Alma-Tadema kept in touch, meeting at Vosmaer's home in The Hague, or in London where the artist was then living. During one of his visits to the Netherlands (in 1871) Alma-Tadema did a handsome portrait of his host (fig. 2).

\[+\] My special thanks to Cindy van Weele.

1 Over a period of twenty years the book went through six editions. Moreover, there were translations into French (1883), German (1884) and English (1884), while a paperback version also appeared in the United States (1884).


3 Letter from Alma-Tadema to Vosmaer, 9 January 1881: ‘Aisma is misschien wel een beetje veel Tadema, [...] als mensch is hij het echter minder zoo. Ezekiel is goed. Maar bovenal uwe indruk(k)ing(en) van Italië zijn voortreffelijk.’ The correspondence between Alma-Tadema and Vosmaer is now in Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.


*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
fig. 2
Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Portrait drawing of Carel Vosmaer*, September 1871, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet
fig. 3
Carel Vosmaer's season ticket for the winter exhibition of 1882-83 at the Grosvenor Gallery in London, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet

The ‘Maenads’

When Alma-Tadema entered 130 works to the large winter exhibition at the prestigious Grosvenor Gallery in 1882-83, Vosmaer not only visited the exhibition (fig. 3) but was also a guest in the artist's home, the famous Townshend House on the edge of Regents Park. In describing the house, Vosmaer wrote: ‘There is no need to search for it, for it immediately reveals itself, with its coloured frames around the doorposts, its “Hail!” above the door, its colourful balcony and pillars draped in ivy. There it stands, the charming villa amid its gardens, in one of the large parks of which there are many in London, oases within the colossal stone mountain of the city, which alters the measure of human standards.’

Vosmaer reviewed the exhibition at length in De Nederlandsche Spectator. For years he had been planning a catalogue raisonné of Alma-Tadema's work, and for this reason he took an interest in anything and everything the artist did. All the bits of information he collected were entered on cards, but the planned publication never materialised.

One of the paintings shown at the exhibition was After the dance (fig. 4), then owned by H.F. Makins. A note in Vosmaer's own catalogue reads: ‘firmly modelled - soft brown flesh - warm - delightful tone against the brown-black bearskin. Dark clay pot with garland - thyrsus with yellow bands.’ These notes were intended for his exhibition review, where he finally described the painting as follows: ‘a nude Bacchante with a tambourine and thyrsus staff lying on the ground. The sleeping body, warm brown in hue, rests upon the black-brown bearskin. In the drawing and modelling of the nude this is surely one of the most excellent of the artist's works

5 Carel Vosmaer, ‘Een en ander,’ Het Vaderland, 22 October 1874: ‘Men behoeft er niet naar te zoeken, het toont zich terstond, met zijn gekleurde lijsten om de posten, zijn salve boven de deur, zijn kleurig balkon en met klimop beschilderde zuil schachten. De lieve villa en tuin liggen daar rustig in een van die groote parken, zooals Londen er velen heeft, oasen in de kolossale steenphooping der stad die menschelijke maatstaf verandert’
7 This provisional oeuvre catalogue is now in Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.
8 Exhib. cat. Winter Exhibition, London (The Grosvenor Gallery/New Bond Street) 1882-83, no. 105; the annotated catalogue is preserved in Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.
Vosmaer considered the body of this bacchante, lying exhausted on the ground, ‘gloriously painted, warm and yet bright in the contrast with the dark skin of the bear skin on which she rests, together with tambourine and thyrsus.’ He examined the most significant of the numerous works on show in similar fashion.

At home, in Townshend House, Alma-Tadema brought out a number of unfinished canvases ‘large and small’ to show his guest, including the work recently acquired by the Van Gogh Museum, Exhausted maenads after the dance (fig. 5). The painting depicts three Bacchantes, lying asleep on the ground, ‘tired out by the frenzy.’ The nude woman closest to the viewer corresponds in every respect to the maenad portrayed in the completed painting After the dance, which Vosmaer had just seen at the exhibition. In the diary which he kept during his London visit Vosmaer made a drawing of the work

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9 De Nederlandsche Spectator, 10 February 1883, p. 45: ‘[...] eene naakte bacchante met tambourijn en thurousstaf nederliggend op den grond. Slapend rust het lichaam, warm bruin van tint, op het zwartbruine beerenvel. Als tekening en bootseering van het naakt (half leven) is dit wel een van de voortreffelijkste werken des schilders [...]’

10 Ibid.: ‘[...] heerlijk geschilderd, warm en toch helder in de tegenstelling met de donkere dierhuid waarop zij met tamboerijn en thursos rust.’

fig. 5
Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Exhausted maenads after the dance*, c. 1875, Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum

fig. 4
Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *After the dance*, 1875, private collection

It is not clear what led Alma-Tadema to choose this theme. We may assume that he did not consult Plutarch every day; moreover, the *Moralia* was not in his own library. In Antiquity, the maenads were often shown on vases and works of sculpture, and both Rubens and Poussin represented them regularly. The artist turned to the same subject again in 1887 in *The women of Amphissa* (fig. 7), but this
work is much less daringly painted than the previous two versions. In this large canvas, measuring 122 × 183 cm, Plutarch's account is followed literally, and the artist depicts the moment when the maenads awake. Alma-Tadema was apparently quite fond of this story, for in his studio in Grove End Road, where he moved in 1885, he had a copper relief by William Reynolds-Stephens on the same theme.¹⁴

Almost all the paintings that left Alma-Tadema's studio were finished works and thus tell us little about the artist's working methods. Exhausted maenads is an exception. He set out the composition with rough brushstrokes, and then began working out the bodies of the first two figures in the foreground. The attributes, such as the thyrsus (a long staff decorated with foliage and ribbons and crowned with a pine cone), the tambourine and the bowl, are still only a suggestion of their ultimate form. The way in which the painter built up his figures against a light background - his preferred manner - is apparent in this unfinished work, and is also referred to in a letter to Vosmaer dated 11 February 1875. In it he made a small sketch of a reclining female figure that bears a resemblance to the maenad draped in red. As he wrote, he intended to do a lithograph of this figure: the first stone would contain 'the outlines of the figures and objects [...] sketched,' and would be printed on white paper. A second stone would then be prepared 'with a solid blue for the surface outside the contours' (fig. 8).¹⁵

It is clear that in 1875 Alma-Tadema was deeply involved with the theme of the resting maenad, and this would appear to justify the dating of the Van Gogh Museum's painting. In Exhausted maenads after the dance there is little trace of his usual sophisticated style, which sometimes renders his work a trifle dry and 'over-refined.' We do not know why the canvas was never completed. It has been suggested

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¹⁵ Letter from Alma-Tadema to Vosmaer, 11 February 1875; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.
that the artist's dealer, Ernest Gambart, did not want him to give away completed works. In any case, Vosmaer was extremely fond of this 'sketch'; he had it mounted in a sober gold frame and hung above one of the bookcases in his study at 73 De Ruyterstraat in The Hague, so that he could see it from behind his desk (fig. 9). After his death, the work remained in the Vosmaer family for over a hundred years.

Collections of books and photographs

Many of Alma-Tadema's motifs were based on classical or medieval sources. He had a large library, consisting of over 3000 titles, many of which dealt with Classic Antiquity. Moreover, he had at his disposal an enormous collection of photographs and other reproductions, including over 160

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17 The provenance of the painting is as follows: In 1883 Alma-Tadema gave the canvas to Carel Vosmaer (1826-1888). Swanson, op. cit. (note 11), p. 173, erroneously gives 1874 as the year it was presented, and it is on this that he bases his dating of the painting. Until 1989 it remained in the family (G.C.J. Vosmaer, C.J.J.G. Vosmaer, Mrs D.M. Vosmaer-Hudig and her children). In that year it was sold by Christie's in London (23 November 1989, lot no. 80) to the art dealers Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox of London. In 1996 the work was acquired by the Van Gogh Museum, with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt. It has been exhibited on several occasions: see P. Hoenderdors (ed.), exhib. cat. Ary Scheffer, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Charles Rochussen of De Vergankelijkheid van de Roem, Rotterdam (Lijnbaancentrum/De Rotterdamsche Kunststichting) 1974, p. 24; exhib. cat. De wereld van Alma Tadema, Leeuwarden (Gemeentelijk Museum Het Princessehof) 1974, no. 38; and J.F. Heijbroek (ed.), exhib. cat. De verzameling van mr. Carel Vosmaer (1826-1888), Amsterdam (Rijksprentenkabinet) 1989, pp. 141-43.
Carel Vosmaer's study in the house at 73 De Ruyterstraat. The unfinished *Exhausted maenads after the dance* can be seen above the bookcase. Private collection

portfolios with photographs arranged according to subject. After his death, this collection was donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum, together with his library. In 1947 the museum transferred both photographs and books to the Special Collections Department of the Birmingham University Library.\(^{18}\) The photograph collection features views of a great many Egyptian, Greek and Roman monuments. The themes range from complete buildings to architectural details; the sculptural work on pediments, metopes, and other structural components is also well represented.

Besides the many anonymous photographs, there are prints by J. Pascal Sébah, Maxime Du Camp, Francis Bedford, Félix Bonfils, Auguste Salzmann, William James Stillman,\(^ {19}\) James Robertson and Felice Beato. The collec-

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18 In 1915 a 'checklist of books' of the Alma-Tadema library was drawn up. This is now preserved at the Birmingham University Library.

tion also contains photographs of art objects from the Musée Cluny by Paul Robert, and the porch of the Notre-Dame by Bisson Frères. In addition, there are portfolios of animals, plants and flowers, trees, overcast skies, hairstyles, costumes, etc. Most of the flowers were done by the London photographer Frederick Hollyer. Nor was the artist's interest confined to Europe and the Middle East. There are various views of India by Bourne and Shepherd, and an album of 45 photographs by Isidore van Kinsbergen, with a dedication to Alma-Tadema (dated 31 March 1870). He also owned a small collection of Japanese prints, some by Hiroshige. At the back of several of these portfolios are signed drawings by Alma-Tadema, which illustrate how he used the images. Not only did he use motifs taken from photographs, he also had the Belgian photographer Joseph Dupont, who lived in the same house in Brussels, photograph his works as they were nearing completion. The painter used these photographs to correct compositional and tonal differences, in order to harmonise the various components of the painting.

Whenever Alma-Tadema needed further textual or visual details on one of the classical themes he was painting, he could always call on his friend Vosmaer in The Hague. He, too, had a collection of photographs, albeit much smaller, which consisted primarily of ancient statues and monuments. Many of these had been purchased from Fratelli Alinari. He also had a number of photographs and a stock list of Roman sculptures and monuments by the English photographer James Anderson. Moreover, he could draw from his large collection of reproductions, which reveals a particular interest in ornament. On occasion he was able to assist his friend by searching out passages from classical writers or illustrations which the painter wanted to incorporate into this or that work. Vosmaer's library, which was at least the equal of Alma-Tadema's, is unfortunately no longer intact.

### Gérôme's preparations

Until recently, nothing was known about the type of paint Alma-Tadema used. Because his canvases were regularly painted over and worked up, they often exhibit a great deal of craquelure. He referred to this in a 1902 letter to Dr J. Six, explaining

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20 Album III, nos. 12727-12771, Birmingham University Library.
21 On Alma-Tadema's use of photographs see, for example, L. Lippincott, Lawrence Alma-Tadema: Spring, Malibu 1990.
24 Many of the books were sold after his death; see Catalogue de livres sur les beaux-arts, d'ouvrages à figures et une collection d'eaux fortes et de gravures, portraits de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, etc. formant une partie des collections de Feu M.C. Vosmaer [...], The Hague (Martinus Nijhoff), 30 April 30-1 May 1890. In the 1980s, Van Gendt Book Auctions also sold portions of the Vosmaer collection. The last part of the ‘Bibliotheca Vosmaeriana’ went under the hammer at Van Stockum in The Hague, 3-5 December 1986.
that the work entitled *Queeen Fredegonda at the deathbed of Bishop Praetextatus* was the last in which he had employed ‘boiled oil.’ Up until then, the paint on several of his works had shown signs of cracking. ‘As you perhaps know, my *Vénantius Fortunatus* was brought here from the museum in Dordrecht some years back, and restored while I looked on. The poor thing did look frightful, all full of cracks. It must have been hung over a stove or something similar, as it was painted using the same colours and oils as *Fredegonda*, and only three years earlier.’\(^{25}\) When his work was exhibited in Paris in 1865, Alma-Tadema had paid a visit to Jean-Léon Gérôme ‘in order to hear from him which preparations he used for his painting. [...] I learned from him how to paint with *Copal à l’huile*: the varnish protects the colours against the influence of the atmosphere but when mixed with oil does not prevent the oil from evaporating. Since then I have always used this *Copal à l’huile de Durosin.*’\(^{26}\) We know little more than this about his use of paint.

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25 Letter from Alma-Tadema to J. Six, 21 July 1902; Amsterdam, Gemeente Archief, Archive 331 (VVHK), no. 4: ‘U weet misschien dat mijn *Vénantius Fortunatus* in het museum te Dort voor eenige jaren hier geweest is om onder mijn oogen gerestaureerd te worden. Die arme schilderij zag er toen naar uit, overal barsten. Dit moet echter een kachel of zooiets gehangen hebben, want ze was ook met de zelfde verven & olies geschildert als Fredegonde en dat slechts 3 jaren vroeger.’ My thanks to Ester Wouthuysen, who brought this letter to my attention. The artist is referring to *Queeen Fredegonda at the deathbed of Bishop Praetextatus* (Swanson, op. cit. [note11], no. 58), dated 1864. *Vénantius Fortunatus* (ibid, no. 15) was painted in 1862.

26 Tadema to Six, op. cit. (note25): ‘[...] om van hem te vernemen met welke preparaten hij schilderde en leerde toen van hem om met *Copal à l’huile* te schilderen, de vernis de kleuren tegen den invloed van de atmosphère beschuttende & met olie gemengd zijnde het uitdampen der olie niet verhinderende, sints heb ik alttijd met die *Copal à l’huile de Durosin* geschildert.’ *Copal à l’huile* is a kind of resin-based varnish. It is not clear what Alma-Tadema meant by ‘Durosin,’ but it could be simply the name of the manufacturer.
‘Our modern painters’

In 1881 Vosmaer embarked upon a series of prose sketches entitled *Onze hedendaagsche schilders* (Our modern painters). Each instalment opened with a portrait executed in woodbury type (fig. 10). Vosmaer then discussed the career of the various artists (based on a previously completed questionnaire), and provided a more or less chronological overview of their work. In some cases he did not confine himself to factual information, but also made value judgements. In most cases, these were quite positive. Alma-Tadema was the subject of the fourth volume, and Vosmaer's opinion of his work was naturally very high. Three of the four drawings reproduced here were gifts to Vosmaer from his artist friend. One of these, *An...*
*Egyptian game*, dating from 1865 (fig. 11), is linked to one of the Egyptian scenes the painter had been doing since 1863. The two others (figs. 12 and 13) are studies for the paintings.

guilders’; letter from Alma-Tadema to Vosmaer, 28 May 1873; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet.

*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Study of a seated figure for ‘The pyrrhic dance,’* 1869, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet

*The pyrrhic dance* (Guildhall Art Gallery, London) and *Last roses* (present location unknown). Vosmaer wrote of it: ‘Here we see several Greek men in full armour and the high-crested feathered helmet, such as none of the more recent painters would have dared to depict, performing their war dance [...] while youths and respectable greybeards sit under the stoa, enjoying the spectacle. Very Greek.’ The drawing *Last roses* portrays ‘a young woman who offers the last roses of summer upon a white marble altar.’

What is missing from this last part in the series is the personal note, such as can be found in Vosmaer's long description - as yet unpublished in English - of Alma-Tadema's villa just after it had been severely damaged as a result of a gunpowder explosion. In his column ‘Een en ander’ (One thing and another) in *Het Vaderland* Vosmaer wrote: ‘The devastation was terrible. The entire roof has been destroyed, the walls cracked, all the windows, glass and frames have been smashed, as well as the doors; even the one-inch-thick front door lay in the hall, broken in two. Everything was strewn with glass and plaster from the ceiling [...] At the moment they [Alma-Tadema and his wife] are

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Vosmaer, op. cit. (note 27), fourth instalment, p. 5: Hier, zien wij eenige Grieksche mannen in volle wapenrusting, met de hoogkammingen helmbos, zooals noch nooit een nieuwere schilder had durven afbeelden, dien krijgsdans uitvoeren [...], terwijl jongelingen en achtbare grijsaards onder den zuilengang het schouwspel zitten te genieten. Echt Grieksch van karakter.”

*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
living in a kind of ruin, in the lower portion of the house. In the studio, which was painted entirely in Pompeian style, three-quarters of the ceiling has come down. The whole house was furnished with the most exquisite taste, and decorated with the extraordinary refinement which so characterises this painter of life in Classic Antiquity. Colours, decorations, shapes, arrangements - all evoke the atmosphere of Pompeii and Herculaneum, although modern comfort has in no way been sacrificed. The unusual colours and typical patterns of the fabrics, the coloured carpets hung low along the walls, the ceilings and the parquet floors, the ambiance and the light which dominates each and every room, the ingenious decoration, handsome bronze and china pieces, and the various paintings all bear the stamp of the owner's imagination. Upstairs there was a salon in which two columns added to the impression of a Pompeian casa. Adjacent to this salon was the painter's studio, illuminated by one large window. Here and there a sketch or study hung on the wall; the bookcases contain magnificent reproductions and his treasury of books, all of which bear witness to his profound study of Antiquity; canvases and
Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Girl jumping rope* (wall decoration for his studio). This chalk drawing was reproduced in *Onze hedendaagsche schilders.* Present location unknown.

panels on the easel or leaning against the wall await completion or finishing. The now largely ruined walls and ceiling were completely covered with drawings by the painter. The ornate decorations were done in the style of those in Pompeian houses; they [were] divided into sections and “compartments,” as we refer to those done during our own 16th century, and tastefully decorated in alternating colours, with all manner of flower and leaf garlands, bands, bows, masks and figures. Here we see Greek jousts in which warriors battle one another with the round shield and sword or with the lance, quite beautifully captured and skilfully drawn; elsewhere we see a dancing nymph with a goat, and another who is jumping rope (fig. 14), and all sorts of other motifs, executed in bright or pastel colours.³⁰

³⁰ Vosmaer, op. cit. (note 5): ‘De verwoesting was vreeselijk. Het geheele dak is vernield, de muren gekraakt, al de ramen, kozijnen en glas zijn ingeslagen evenals de deuren, zelfs de 1 duim dikke voordeur lag doormidden gebroken in den gang. Elke plek was bezaaid met glas en pleister van de zolderingen [...]. Thans wonen zij [Tadema en zijn vrouw] als in een ruïne, in het benedengedeelte van het huis. In het atelier, geheel in pompejaanschen geest beschilderd, is de zoldering voor drie vierden in gruis naar beneden gekomen. Dit geheele huis was op ongemeene wijze met de smaakvolste vinding ingericht en toont den fijnsten zin voor decoratie, die den schilder van het leven der oudheid kenmerkt. Kleuren, versieringen, vormen, schikkingen herinneren overal aan Pompeji en Herculanum, en de moderne comfort heeft er toch waarlijk niet onder geleden. De ongemeene en karakteristieke kleuren en patronen der stoffen, de gekleurde matten van onderen langs den wand, de parketten en plafonds, de toon en het licht, die in de vertrekken heerschen, het vernuftig dekoratief, de fraaie porselein en bronzen, enkele schilderijen, alles draagt den stempel der fantasie van den bewoner. Boven is een salon waarin twee kolommen den indruk van eene pompejaansche casa verhoogen. Des schilders atelier is daarnaast, door een groot venster verlicht. Een enkele schets of studie versiert den wand; in de boekenkasten liggen de schoone plaatwerken en de boekenschat, die de grondige oudheidstudie van den bewoner verraden; doeken en paneelen op den ezel of tegen den muur staand wachten op de voltooiing of de laatste hand. De nu grootendeels verwoeste muren en zoldering van dit atelier waren geheel beschilderd naar teekeningen van den schilder. De rijke versieringen waren behandeld in den stijl van die der pompeïsche huizen, ’t zijn op smaakvol in kleur afwisselende vakken en “compartimenten,” zooals we bij ons in de 16e eeuw zeiden, allerlei bloem- en bladfestoenen, banden, strikken, maskers, figuren. Hier griezelske wapsenspelen; krijgers met het ronde schild en ’t zwaard of met den stok, die elkander bevechten, aardig van karakter en tekening; elders een dansende nimf met een geit, of een andere die touwtje springt, en allerlei motieven meer, in levendige of zachte kleuren uitgevoerd.’ Four lithographs (published by S. Lankhout & Co., The Hague) after design drawings of these studio decorations were published in *De Kunstkronijk* in 1877.
One would have liked to have read in the final instalment a magnificent characterisation such as that given by Frans Netscher of Vosmaer himself. He describes how the timid author paid his first visit to Jozef Israëls, and paints the following picture of him: ‘I can still see his narrow, slightly pointed head, the two flat sides and his greying hair that was combed in a strange way, so that it stuck out above the ears on either side of his face (fig. 15). Always reserved, sparing with his words, his eyes calmly going from one visitor to the other, he sat there for a long time without uttering a word. They had to address him directly in order to force him to break his silence; his voice was quiet, almost a whisper, and hoarse, like someone who has not spoken for a long time; he used short sentences, polite and evasive, as if he were afraid that someone would initiate a conversation about art - a needless fear.’

Grove End Road and De Ruyterstraat

Various journalists visited Alma-Tadema's home. There is a lovely description of his first villa, Townshend House in Kensington, by M.E. Haweis, which parallels Vosmaer's impression after the catastrophe with the gunpowder ship. Vosmaer never actually saw the megaloma-

31 Frans Netscher, ‘Jozef Israëls,’ Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift 1 (1891), no. 1, p. 224: ‘Ik zie nog dikwijls voor mijn geheugen het smalle, puntige hoofd van Vosmaer, met zijn twee platte kanten, en met grijzend haar, dat door een eigenaardige opkomming boven de ooren, buiten de gezichtslijn stak. Altijd gereserveerd, weinig spraakzaam, kalm met zijne oogen gaande van de eene bezoeker naar den ander, zat hij lange tijden zwijgend in zijn stoel. Dan moest hij aangesproken worden om hem de stilte te doen verbreken, en dan klonk zijn stem zacht, zoo'n beetje fluisterend en schor, als van iemand die in lang niets gezegd heeft; en hij gebruikte korte zinnetjes, beleefd en ontwijkend, als bang voor gesprekken over kunst, die hij vruchteloos vreesde.’


33 Vosmaer, op. cit. (note 5).
niac house at 17 Grove End Road (now number 34) in St John's Wood, where the painter moved in 1885. Various visitors, including Lodewijk van Deijssel, gave their impressions of this imposing edifice. They describe it in detail, room for room: the paintings, the furniture and the inscriptions. Over the years a great many photographs were taken. Much less is known about the house where Vosmaer lived, almost up to his death in 1888. There are several photographs of his study and a single brief description of the interior by ‘a friend of Flanor’s,’ P.A.M. Boele van Hensbroek, writing directly after Vosmaer's death: ‘The very moment one entered the house, one was aware of the spirit of the resident. Swift, elegant Graces, modelled on the Pompeian murals and done by Vosmaer himself, greet one. And mounting to his inner sanctum, the eye was also agreeably struck by the low, comfortable bookcases with here and there an inscription in Greek along the edge of a shelf, but nothing too noticeable, without any show, without pretension. A sketch by his friend Alma-Tadema, a few etchings, here and there a small statue, a thyrsus; everything orderly without being stiff, casual but with a certain regularity. And opposite the desk, against a richly hued carpet, was enthroned Aphrodite's immortal image.’

As different as Alma-Tadema and Vosmaer were, there was one saying which was a favourite of both men. It was mounted over a door in the artist's studio in the sumptuous house on Grove End Road and Vosmaer had it painted in white letters on the edge of one of the olive-green bookcases in his study in the house on De Ruyterstraat: ‘As the sun colours flowers, so art colours life.’

fig. 15
Jozef Israëls, Portrait of Carel Vosmaer, 1881, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet


Documentation

colour plates

Gustave-Rudolphe Boulanger
Phryne 1850
James (Jacques-Joseph) Tissot
Study for ‘The triumph of will: the challenge’ c. 1877
Jean-Léon Gérôme
Golgotha (‘Consumatum est’) c. 1868
Henri-Joseph Harpignies
View of the Chateau d'Hérisson 1871
Gustave Courbet
‘La Méditerranée’: view of the Mediterranean at Maguelone, near Montpellier 1858
Lawrence Alma-Tadema
Our corner 1873
Lawrence Alma-Tadema
Exhausted maenads after the dance 1875
Johan Barthold Jongkind
The jetty at Honfleur 1865
Claude Monet
Coastal landscape c. 1864
Odilon Redon
The source c. 1880-81
Odilon Redon
Drawing ‘à la Goya’ (At the window) 1878
Jean François Raffaëlli
Woodcutters at the end of the day c. 1880
Vincent van Gogh
Peasant woman digging potatoes 1885
Raoul Dufy
Laundry boats on the Seine c. 1904
Louis Valtat
Red cliffs near Anthéor c. 1903
Carl Moll
Schönbrunn c. 1910
Catalogue of acquisitions: paintings and drawings
July 1994 - December 1996

This catalogue contains all paintings and drawings purchased for the Van Gogh Museum from July 1994 to December 1996. Each work has an inventory number made up as follows: the first letter stands for the technique (s=painting, d=drawing); this is followed by a reference number and then by a capital letter (B=loan, N=State of the Netherlands, S=Van Gogh Museum [after 1 July 1994], SM=Van Gogh Museum [for the Museum Mesdag], V=Vincent van Gogh Foundation) and the year of acquisition.

A selection of works on loan to the museum in 1996 has been included here. A separate list of all loans now forming part of the collection can be found on pp. 253-59.

Paintings

Alma-Tadema, Lawrence
Dutch, 1836-1912

Exhausted maenads after the dance
  c. 1875
  Oil on canvas, 59.1 × 132 cm
  s 458 S/1996 (colour pl. p. 183)

Alma-Tadema's fame rests on his scenes of Roman and Greek antiquity, with which he captured the hearts of the prosperous middle classes in Victorian England. The bacchanal was one of his favourite subjects, but he always managed to keep the suggestion of debauchery within the accepted bounds of decency. The painting shows three inebriated maenads, as the followers of the wine god Dionysus were called, overcome by sleep. They are recognisable by their attributes: a silver wine goblet has rolled across the floor, at top left there is a cymbal, and in the foreground a staff of Bacchus. The scene is taken from Plutarch's *Moralia*, which relates how female devotees of Dionysus from Phocis strayed by mistake into nearby Amphissa after a night of revelry. They were on enemy territory, for the city was allied to Thebes, which was at war with Phocis. The revellers collapsed on the steps of the temple, where they were discovered by the women of Amphissa. The latter, worried about the reactions of their menfolk, took the maenads under their protection. The female baccants were allowed to sleep off their debauch and were then helped on their way to the safety of their own territory. It is not entirely clear why the canvas, which Swanson dates 1873-74, was left unfinished. Perhaps the artist found the foreshortening of the woman on the left too difficult. What is more likely is that Tadema's patron, the art dealer Ernest Gambart, felt that the depiction of the three naked, entwined women was not exactly suitable for his public. It is certainly significant that Alma-Tadema restricted himself to just the woman in the foreground in a second, finished version of the subject. That painting, *After the dance* of circa 1876 is virtually the same size as the *Exhausted maenads*. The canvas remained in Alma-Tadema's studio, and in 1883 he gave it to his friend Caret Vosmaer.
(1826-1888), the writer and man of letters. The latter hung it over his bookcase, as can be seen in a photograph of his study, and even made a small, clumsy sketch of it. (See also the article by J.F. Heijbroek in this volume of the *Van Gogh Museum Journal*.)
Provenance Carel Vosmaer (1883-1888); heirs of Vosmaer; Christie's (London), 24 November 1989, lot 80; Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London; purchased by the Van Gogh Museum with support from the Vereniging Rembrandt, with the help of the Prins Bernhard Fonds (1996).


Our corner: portrait of Anna and Laurense Alma-Tadema 1873
Oil on canvas, 56.4 × 47.8 cm
Signed, dated and inscribed at upper right:
L. Alma-Tadema 1873, Op. CXVI
s 454 S/1995 (colour pl. p. 182)

Alma-Tadema's work is rightly associated with subjects from classical antiquity, but another side of his art is demonstrated in this lovingly painted portrait of 1873 of his daughters Anna and Laurense, in which he also illustrated their hobbies. The six-year-old Laurense, who stands as stiff as a ramrod in the foreground, is holding some sheet music, and probably played the piano. Her sister Anna, two years her junior, who appears to have withdrawn to the sofa in a sulk, had not progressed that far: she was fond of picture books. The artist painted his children in a corner of Townshend House, which he had bought in 1871. ‘Our corner’ was the fitting title given to the work when it went on display in the Dudley Gallery two years later. Alma-Tadema gave the work an opus number, CXVI, and as usual had it photographed. The engraving that his friend Leopold Löwenstam made from the photograph was published in the Art Journal in 1878, together with a somewhat disdainful commentary on the painter's effort: ‘The picture in its entirety can only be accepted as an example of this clever artist's idiosyncrasies; it may, however, be remarked that it is painted with his acknowledged attention to detail.’
It is known from a letter to the writer Carel Vosmaer that the artist intended the portrait as a present for his wife Laura Epps. Her own studio (she was also a painter) was furnished in the 17th-century Dutch style, and it was evidently for that reason that the picture was given a black, wooden frame. Anna and Laurense were the children of Alma-Tadema's first marriage; Laura Epps was their stepmother. Interestingly, that same year Laura's sister Ellen also made a portrait of the two children which is now in the Museum Mesdag in The Hague. Tadema's daughters inherited the portrait on their stepmother's death in 1909. Laurense died in 1940, Anna three years later. (See also the article by Hanna Pennock in this volume of the Van Gogh Museum Journal.)

Provenance Laura Alma-Tadema Epps (1873-1909); Anna and Laurence Alma-Tadema, London; C.M. Dyson-Perrins; Sotheby's (London), 22 April 1959, lot 70; Miss Katherine Lewis; Mrs Elizabeth Wansbrough, Lechlade (until 1995); Peter Nahum, London; purchased by the Van Gogh Museum (1996).


Hadrian visiting a Romano-British pottery 1884
Oil on canvas, 159 × 171 cm
Signed and inscribed at lower right:
L. Alma-Tadema Op. CCLXI B
s 137 B/1996

This painting was originally part of a large work depicting Hadrian in England: visiting a Romano-British, pottery, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1884; the artist later cut the picture into three pieces, one of which is the canvas on loan to the Van Gogh Museum. As in The sculpture gallery and The picture gallery, Alma-Tadema has here concentrated on the commercial aspect of art production in the ancient world. The direct inspiration for the work was probably Georg Eber's novel The emperor, published in 1881, which placed particular emphasis on Hadrian's support for local industries in the provinces. The emperor visited Britain in 121 of
A.D., and it is presumably an - albeit invented - episode from that trip that Alma-Tadema has depicted. The scene shows the emperor conversing earnestly with the workshop's proprietor, while his female companions inspect the items for sale. As in Eber's novel, he is characterised as genuinely interested in the well-being of his subjects, appearing almost in the guise of a fatherly philosopher or orator. The true meaning of the work, however, is indicated in the inscription just to the left of the staircase: Salve Lucri or ‘Hail to gain.’

**Provenance**
Oldenzeel gallery, Rotterdam (1886); H. Koekkoek Jr, London and Amsterdam (until 1894); M.P. Langhuizen, Hilversum and Craaielo; Amsterdam (Frederik Muller), 29 October 1918, lot 101; Vereeniging tot het Vormen van een Openbare Verzameling van Hedendaagse Kunst, Amsterdam; donated to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1949); on loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1996).

**Literature**

**Boulanger Gustave-Rudolphe**
French, 1824-1888

Phryne 1850
Oil on canvas, 140 × 106 cm
Signed and dated at lower left: GUSTAVE. RODOLPHE. BOULANCER./ROMA (A) MDCCCL;
inscribed centre left (on cushion): ☐ RYNH.
s 456 S/1996 (colour pl. p. 177)
The orientalising beauty regarding us provocatively from her couch is identified by an inscription on the left of one of the richly-upholstered cushions: she is the classical courtesan Phryne. She owed her fame to the fact that, as the sweetheart of the celebrated Greek sculptor Praxiteles, she was the model for one of the most renowned sculptures of Antiquity, the Aphrodite of Knidos.

As a pupil of Paul Delaroche, Gustave Boulanger was part of a group of young artists with a passion for archaeologically-correct reconstructions of classical scenes, which earned them the title néo-grecs. Like his colleague Jean-Léon Gérôme, Boulanger combined an interest in antiquity with a great love of the Orient. In 1845 he had spent eight months working in Algeria, and in 1848 he made his debut at the Paris Salon with *Indians playing with panthers* and *A moorish café*. In the following year he rounded off his studies by winning the Grand Prix de Rome with his painting *Ulysses recognized by Euryclea* (Paris, École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts), a virtuoso work in néo-grec style which the prominent critic E.J. Delécluze described as ‘something asiatic, oriental and quite peculiar.’ Boulanger arrived in Rome in 1850. That same year, as a proof of his ability, he sent his *Phryne* to Paris. His was hardly a conventional theme at this time, although, quite by coincidence, the name of Phryne also featured in Charles Baudelaire’s contemporaneous poem ‘Lesbos.’ The canvas met with a cool reception at the Institut. The professors accused Boulanger of having ‘neglected to too great a degree the natural and the simple’; he was advised to learn from ‘the great examples of true grace that Italy offered to his eyes [...]’ He seems, however, to have had little interest in the ‘natural and the simple,’
for his figures continued to display a considerable eccentricity. Delécluze felt that Boulanger's work represented 'an elegance that was more contrived than natural,' and that his figures were sometimes 'rather too colossal.'

While the theme had occurred sporadically throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the only significant 19th-century precursor of Boulanger's work was the Phryne executed by the sculptor James Pradier in 1845, which is known in a number of variants. An unfinished canvas painted by Charles Gleyre in 1858-59 was based on Pradier's figure; Gleyre abandoned this work when he heard that Gérôme was engaged in a painting on the same theme. The latter's Phryne before the judges (Hamburger Kunsthalle), which was presented at the Salon of 1861, was to remain among the most famous depictions of Phryne.


Bremmer, Rudolf
Dutch, 1900-1993

Portrait of Hendricus Petrus Bremmer

1955
Oil on canvas, 55.4 × 45.1 cm
s 446 N/1995

This portrait of Hendricus Petrus Bremmer (1871-1956) by the subject's son Rudolf shows the painter and celebrated art teacher at a very advanced age. The work is neither signed nor dated, but the deeply-lined face bears a great resemblance to a drawing of Bremmer that was also made by his son and is dated 1955. The painting
was probably executed around that time, and thus shows Bremmer at approximately the age of 84.

H.P. Bremmer started teaching art appreciation in 1893. His students were drawn mainly from wealthy backgrounds; some were already collectors, while, under Bremmer's tutelage, others developed a taste for this activity. In this way Bremmer placed a particular stamp on a whole generation of private collections in Holland. Patrons such as Ribbius Peletier and Van Baaren received much guidance from him, but his most memorable influence was on the collection of Hélène Kröller-Müller, which now constitutes the core of the works assembled in the eponymous museum.

Vincent van Gogh occupied an important - perhaps predominant - position in the pantheon of modern artists that Bremmer presented to his students. Bremmer had a great fondness for Vincent's work, which he himself collected. In 1911 he published his *Vincent van Gogh: inleidende beschouwingen*, the first monograph devoted to the artist.

**Provenance** Kunsthandel Monet, Amsterdam; purchased by the Van Gogh Research Foundation; donated to the State of the Netherlands for placing in the Van Gogh Museum (1995).

**Chintreuil, Antoine**
French, 1816-1873

**The ruins of the castle of Mont Chauvet**
Oil on canvas, 40 × 64 cm
Signed at lower right: Chintreuil
s 459 S/1996

Although the landscape painter Chintreuil is considered one of Corot's most remarkable pupils, he was in fact largely an autodidact. He made his Salon debut in 1847 and in 1867 he was finally awarded a medal there. His poor health and uncompromising sincerity meant that he had lifelong difficulty in supporting himself by painting. According to his biographer La Fizelière, he possessed 'the intuition of the mysterious language of nature’ to a remarkable degree. Odilon Redon praised the painter for his ‘severe and chaste’ art, whose ‘discreet form and deep, passionate reserves find an echo only in a few elect souls.’

As with Corot, Chintreuil's strength lay primarily in his depictions of nature in misty morning moods or on hazy autumnal days. He also excelled at capturing the infinite varieties of fresh greenness in springtime landscapes. Here, for example, the
gently undulating woodland provided the painter with an ideal pretext for a virtuosic display of innumerable nuances of green. Glimpsed with some difficulty in the distance beyond the treetops is the castle of Mont Chauvet, which gives the canvas its title. When Chintreuil died in 1873, the painting was in the possession of his colleague Charles Daubigny, whom he had befriended in 1850.

**Provenance** Charles Daubigny (1874); Collection Brame, Paris; G. Père, Paris; Galerie Berne-Bellecour, Paris (1893-96); A. Ray, Marseilles (1896); Stoppenbach & Delestre Ltd, London; purchased by the Van Gogh Museum (1996).

**Literature** A. de La Fizelière, *et al., La vie et l'oeuvre de Chintreuil*, Paris 1874, no. 279.

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**Courbet, Gustave**  
**French, 1819-1877**

‘La Méditerranée’: view of the Mediterranean at Maguelonne, near Montpellier 1858  
Oil on canvas, 92 × 135 cm  
Signed at lower right: G. Courbet./58  
s 455 V/1996 (colour pl. p. 181 )

This painting is one of the artist's earliest marines. It is immediately striking for its total absence of human activity: there are no figures, no ships on the horizon. The beautifully-painted sky accounts for two thirds of the total surface. Water and rocks are the only other elements on the canvas, whose *facture* is also striking: the whole painting has been executed with the palette knife.

In 1854, on the invitation of Alfred Bruyas, Courbet travelled to the Mediterranean for the first time. He stayed with Bruyas in Montpellier for three months. In essence, the two small canvases of the Mediterranean near Palavas that he painted during this visit (Fernier numbers 152 and 153) were heralds of the compositional elements present in the museum's recent acquisition. Although the ships visible on the horizon have been excluded in this later work, there is the same vast expanse of sea with rocks at the foreground right.

Courbet repeated his visit to Montpellier in 1857 and 1858. In a letter dated 23 June 1857 he wrote to Armand Gautier that he had produced three marine sketches. He announced his intention of ‘painting two serious works of a metre 1/2 in
length’; this would appear to be a reference to this work and to a nearly identical, similarly-sized version that is now in the museum at Sankt Gallen (La Mer aux rochers). Both of these works are dated 1858.

Although the present work does not feature in Fernier's oeuvre catalogue, some details concerning its provenance are mistakenly included under his no. 238, the Sankt Gallen painting. Since that time, however, Mr Jaap Brouwer has convincingly unravelled the data relating to the provenance of the two works (see provenance below). Another work akin to these two paintings is a slightly smaller canvas (Fernier no. 610) in the Pushkin Museum, executed in 1867.

It was suggested (on Fernier's authority) in Pierre Courthion's L'opera completa di Courbet, Milan 1985 (p. 86) that the Van Gogh Museum's work was shown at the Courbet exhibition in 1867. The painting's provenance from the Cantin collection, however, speaks against this assumption.

The presence on the frame of a label from the firm of Sala suggests that the current frame was supplied by this well-known Dutch firm.

**Provenance** In 1867, no. 44 at the ‘Exposition des oeuvres de M.G. Courbet’ at the Rond-Point du Pont de l'Alma as ‘Vue de la Méditerranée, à Maguelonne, près Montpellier (Hérault, 1858)’ belonging to the Cantin collection; sale Cantin collection, Paris (Hôtel Drouót), 19 April 1895, lot 20 (as 'Marine'); Gérard, Brussels; Fritz Meyer, Zürich; Joh. Koch; E. van Essen; on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1915-22); sale Van Essen collection, Amsterdam (Frederik Muller, assisted by E.J. van Wisselingh), 8 May 1923, lot 22; private collection, the Netherlands; purchased by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (1996).

Decamps, Alexandre-Gabriel
French, 1803-1860

A Turkish school 1846
Oil on canvas, 117 × 94 cm
Signed and dated at lower right: DECAMPS 46
s 156 B/1996

Thanks partly to a long-term loan from the Amsterdams Historisch Museum, the Van Gogh Museum is now able to show a small but exquisite group of orientalist paintings. Their interest is enhanced by the fact that these were among the first Dutch acquisitions of works of their type. In the years around 1860 approximately fifteen paintings by Decamps had owners in Amsterdam. The work illustrated here came from the collection of the Amsterdam merchant Carel Joseph Fodor (1801-1860).

Provenance Sale Thévenin collection, Paris (Hôtel des Ventes Mobilières), 27 January 1851, lot no. 22; C.J. Fodor; Fodor Bequest to the City of Amsterdam (1860); Amsterdams Historisch Museum; on loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1996).

Literature Exhib. cat. Levene Meester: De schilderijenverzameling van C.J. Fodor 1801-1860, Amsterdam (Amsterdams Historisch Museum) 1995, no. 34 and pp. 100-01 (with extensive bibliography); Ronald de Leeuw, De collectie Europa: Het verzamelen van buitenlandse kunst in Nederland, Amsterdam & Zwolle 1995, p. 34.

Gérôme, Jean-Léon
French, 1824-1904

Golgotha (‘Consumatum est’) c. 1868
Oil on canvas, 63.5 × 98 cm
This painting is a reduced replica of Gérôme's submission to the Salon of 1868 (no. 1072), which was acquired in 1990 by the Musée d'Orsay. This smaller version was painted for the purposes of a later lithograph; although they are now concealed by the frame, this can be seen from the broad ochre borders along the top and bottom edges of the canvas. The quality of the replica is extremely high and the differences between the two versions very small, the most striking being the signature, which is arched in the larger version, and straight in the reduction. The work is known under a variety of names, including Consumatum est, Jerusalem and The crucifixion. The artist himself, however, seems to have preferred the title Golgotha. When Gerald Ackerman's 1986 Gérôme oeuvre catalogue was published, the replica was still unknown. This is the reason that the provenance of the Salon version in the Musée d'Orsay was confused with that of the replica.

The painting shows a panoramic view seen from a bare mountain; in the distance are Jerusalem and its temples under a torrent of rain. A procession of Roman soldiers winds its way from the mountain towards the city gate. Two soldiers look back at the three long shadows cast on the rocks by the crosses of Jesus and the two thieves. With a nearly surrealist inventiveness, Gérôme's refined composition evinces effects whose causes are unspecified or unpainted. Partly because of the great topographical precision of the view of Jerusalem, the canvas can be regarded as an attempt to depict the story of Jesus's suffering as an historical event, here strictly and scientifically reconstructed, rather than as an element of dogma. Gérôme had visited the holy city in April 1862, where devoted close study not only to the architecture but also to the weather: there was, he noted, ‘incessant rain’ and a ‘violent wind.’ Gérôme's innovative interpretation was vigorously attacked by elements of the press. Théophile Gautier described Golgotha as ‘more picturesque than religious,’ but he praised Gérôme's ‘striking power of invention.’ However critical the press may have been, the popularity of the work is demonstrated by the sheer number of times it was reproduced. And in his Salon critique, Thoré-Bürger wrote: ‘Such is the subtle invention of M. Gérôme,'
assuredly a very artistic caprice, that it might have inspired Goya to a lively aquatint or Daumier to a lithograph.' In 1871 Goupil published a large etching by Herman Eichens that took the Amsterdam replica as its model. The replica was also the basis for the folio gravure bound into Fanny Hering's Gérôme (New York 1892). Finally, during the 19th century in the Netherlands, Joh. de Liefde of Utrecht published a lithograph after the work, with a pendant print of Judas's betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane (examples at The Hague, Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, inv. nos. AA 428 and 429). [With thanks to Gerald M. Ackerman and Jan de Hond.]

Provenance Dowager W.J. Royaards van den Ham, Utrecht; Amsterdann (Frederik Muller), 8 November 1910, lot 27; private collection. The Netherlands; Pieter Hoogendijk, Baarn; purchased by the Van Gogh Museum (1995).


Gogh, Vincent van
Dutch, 1853-1890

Peasant woman digging potatoes 1885
Oil on canvas on panel, 42 × 32.5 cm
s 452 S/1995 (colour pl. p. 189)

Peasant woman digging potatoes is typical of the figure studies that Van Gogh produced during his stay in Nuenen (1884-85). He wanted to record the traditional, unsullied existence led by the local rural population at the time. During his first year in Nuenen he concentrated on scenes of weaving, the typical cottage industry of Brabant, but in the following year he focused almost entirely on work on the land. To economise as much as possible, he portrayed the workers mainly in drawings, and only on a few occasions did he give in to the temptation to depict his motifs in the much more expensive medium of oils - although even then he still opted for a small format. In his correspondence he only mentioned these small studies in passing. ‘I have mainly been working in quite a small format recently’ [529/R57] he wrote at the end of August to his friend Anthon van Rappard. There are nine known paintings devoted to this theme, four of which show figures digging potatoes.

This particular scene was painted in the summer of 1885, but it is not known precisely when. The work of lifting potatoes probably began at the end of July or beginning of August and was finished by late September. The painting could not have been made in the latter month, though, because by then Van Gogh's supply of
modelshaddriedup. The local Catholic priest had put pressure on his parishioners to stop posing for the artist.

The painting is above all an exercise in form, not colour. After painting his *Potato eaters* that spring, Van Gogh realised that he was not modelling his figures convincingly. The torsos were too flat, he decided, and immediately set about correcting the error. Eventually he began achieving results, as this well-observed, gnarled figure shows. He also practised perspective, for a figure bending forwards is difficult to render convincingly. Here he was less successful, for the woman's torso is too small relative to the rest other body.

**Provenance** Oldenzeel gallery, Rotterdam (1904); Jan Smit, Alblasserdam; Amsterdam (Mak van Waay), 10 February 1919, lot 33; John James Enthoven, Voorburg; W. Brinkman, Schipluiden (1952-61); private collection (1962-94); bequeathed to the Van Gogh Museum (1995).

**Harpignies, Henri-Joseph**  
**French, 1819-1916**

View of the Chateau d'Hérisson 1871  
Oil on canvas, 41.2 × 63.5 cm  
Signed and dated at lower left: *h.j. harpignies 1871*;  
iscribed at lower right: *Hérisson*  
s 450 S/1995 (colour pl. p. 180)

Lost while a member of a hunting party on the family estate of one of his pupils in September 1869, Harpignies suddenly came upon the ruins of the fortress of Hérisson, to the south of Bourges. So great was his enchantment that it featured prominently in his correspondence until November of that year. He was subsequently to visit it each summer until 1878, accompanied by a group of students, the so-called ‘Hérisson School.’

The dilapidated castle stands right in the centre of this recently-acquired work. An inscription on the stretcher informs us that this view was painted ‘from the road to Bel-Air in May 1871.’ The clarity of the landscape is striking, with the silhouette of the ruins accentuated by Harpignies's subtle use of backlighting. The hazy
atmosphere of the overgrown slopes is beautifully rendered; here and there, blue-grey smoke curls upwards from chimneys. Blue is used in remarkable abundance; on one of his journeys to Italy, Harpignies had already pronounced, ‘In nature, gentlemen, cobalt predominates.’

**Provenance** Sale Cronier collection, Paris (Georges Petit), 11-12 March 1908, lot 50; Arnold; London (Sotheby's), 5 July 1961, lot 185; Sir Ronald Pruin, Weybridge (Surrey); Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London; purchased by the Van Gogh Museum (1995).

Israëls, Isaac  
Dutch, 1865-1934

Woman reading next to Van Gogh's ‘Sunflowers’  
Oil on canvas, 60.6 × 40.6 cm  
Signed at lower right; *Isaac Israëls*  
s 451 N/1995

In 1919, Isaac Israëls had a number of Van Gogh paintings on loan from Johanna van Gogh-Bonger: *Sunflowers*, *The yellow house* and *The bedroom*. The latter can be seen in an Israëls sketch at the Van Gogh Museum (d 736 V/1982). The *Sunflowers* (in both cases the version now hanging in the National Gallery in London) features in two paintings by Israëls at the Van Gogh Museum, one of which is this donation of 1995. Van Gogh's still life stands on a painter's easel. To the left, a woman sits reading a book. Somewhat remarkably, she is clad in a heavy coat and wears a hat.

**Provenance** Mrs Sonja B. Wertheimer-Weijl; bequeathed to the State of the Netherlands for placing in the Van Gogh Museum (1995).

Jongkind, Johan Barthold  
Dutch, 1819-1891

The jetty at Honfleur 1865  
Oil on canvas, 33.7 × 43.2 cm  
Signed and dated at lower right: Jongkind 1865  
s 460 V/1996 (colour pl. p. 184)
Jongkind occupies a place in art history alongside the precursors of Impressionism. In 1900, Claude Monet, who worked with him in the mid-1860s, wrote: ‘He amplified what I had already learned from Boudin, but from that moment it was Jongkind who was my real teacher. To him I owe the crucial training of my eye.’

The jetty at Honfleur projected far into the water, and was a popular vantage point from which to view the boats entering or leaving the harbour. This recently-acquired painting, *La jetée à Honfleur*, dates from Jongkind's last stay there, which took place at the end of August and during September 1865. It is one of the most powerful and compact compositions the artist ever made on this theme, and is closely allied to the etching *The wooden jetty at Honfleur*, which also dates from 1865. The existence of a painting similar in terms of composition (auctioned at Galerie Georges Petit, 3 March 1919, lot 31) gives rise to the assumption that both works were painted from the same preliminary study or watercolour.

In *Le Figaro* of 12 June 1864, Jongkind's friend Jean Rousseau described a similar view of Honfleur harbour as ‘a small miracle. For colouring there is nothing in this world that is finer or better judged, not even the delightful landscapes of Corot. Both painters share a sense of naivety; they have the same milky and pearl-like skies, the same frank and limpid light. Mr Jongkind, however, is a Corot à l'état sauvage.’

**Provenance** Probably Théophile Bascle, Bordeaux; Paris (Georges Petit), 12-14 April 1883, lot 83; sale collection M.C.V., Paris (Georges Petit), 27 May 1920, lot 48; C. Vignier, Paris; Jacques Dubourg, Paris; E.J. van Wisselingh and Co., Amsterdam; Laing Gallery, Toronto (1948); Mrs T.P. Lownborough, Toronto (c. 1948-56); E.J. van Wisselingh and Co., Amsterdam (1956); private collection, Chicago (1957); New York (Christie's), 22 May 1996, lot 101; purchased by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (1996).


**Marilhat, Prosper-Georges-Antoine**

French, 1811-1847

Landscape with caravan fording a river
Oil on panel, 34.5 × 62 cm
Signed at lower left: *P. MARILHAT*

s 158 B/1996
Marilhat died young, and in the Netherlands his work is scarce indeed. In the third quarter of the 19th century there was, in the collection of Van Walchren van Wadenoyen, another depiction of a caravan (Paris [Durand-Ruel & Petit], 24-25 April 1876, lot 52, with ill.); and recently a wooded landscape was auctioned (Amsterdam [Sotheby's], 16 April 1996, lot 118), that once belonged to the well-known De Kuyper collection.

Carel Joseph Fodor bought this painting shortly be-
fore his death. It was much admired by the painter Gerard Bilders, who had special praise for the painting of the sky: ‘There is a sky above that landscape so brilliant, so sunny, so true, that is seems to me I have never previously seen its like in a painting.’ Earlier, in 1857, Fodor had purchased a drawing by Marilhat that also featured a caravan.

**Provenance** Sale Dubois collection, Paris (Hôtel Drouôt), 16 February 1860, lot 20; C.J. Fodor; Fodor Bequest to the City of Amsterdam (1860); Amsterdams Historisch Museum; on loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1996).


**Mauve, Anton**  
**Dutch, 1838-1888**

Woodcutters  
Oil on canvas, 111 × 160 cm  
Signed at lower right: *A. Mauve. f.*  
s 138 B/1996

Thanks to this loan from the Stedelijk Museum, the Van Gogh Museum is finally able to do proper justice to Van Gogh's cousin-by-marriage and only teacher. While our collection admittedly contains a few minor scribbles and *Bleaching field*, a watercolour acquired in 1980, this ambitious canvas now shows for the first time a full-size painting by Mauve. In addition, its subject is both typical of the artist and is one that Van Gogh himself tried on a number of occasions. Earlier in the century, in his painting *Le Massacre des innocents* (The Hague, Museum Mesdag), Théodore Rousseau had turned a realist depiction of woodcutters tearing down branches of big forest trees into an impressive protest against human interventions in nature. Mauve's treatment of the same subject seems to have had no such environmental connotations. Instead, he stressed the harmony of the working man with his surroundings, an approach that would later characterise his pupil Van Gogh. The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston possesses a fine *Woodcutters in the forest* in which the same motif is shown in close-up.

**Provenance** Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; on loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1996).

Moll, Carl
Austrian, 1861-1945

Schönbrunn c. 1910
Oil on panel, 35.5 × 35.5 cm
Signed at lower left: C. Moll
s 448 S/1995 (colour pl. p. 192)

As a reaction to the ‘natural’ English style of gardening, the Vienna Secessionists discovered the beauties of austerely-designed Viennese gardens in the years around 1900. Proceeding from the rectilinear forms and the linear distribution of space in interior design, landscape gardeners returned to designs featuring tightly-clipped hedges, dividing walls and narrow avenues opening onto a vista. The small, square panel Schönbrunn, a sunny glimpse into the gardens of this Viennese palace, is a fine example of this interest in the gardens of the Baroque. With a touch influenced by Impressionism - airy yet pastose - and with many nuances of colour, Moll painted a neat row of orangerie trees flanking an avenue leading to a fountain. The soft pastel colours so characteristic of his palette, pink, grey-blue and pale green, contrast with the deep dark green of the trees. The shaded areas in the foreground, with the bright sunlight occasionally filtering through, are especially successful. Other features of Moll's work are its flatness and the careful balancing of the composition. His division of the canvas into horizontals and verticals was in accordance with the so-called Flächenstil, an ornamental style influenced by Japanese prints and applied art; it was characteristic of the group of Stylists within the Vienna Secession to which Moll belonged.


Monet, Claude  French, 1840-1926

Coastal landscape c. 1864  
Oil on canvas, 53.2 × 80.7 cm  
Signed at lower right: C. Monet  
s 461 S/1996 (colour pl. p. 185)

This lovely coastal landscape is an early work by Monet, from the period in which he began to develop the tonal art of the School of Barbizon in the direction of a lighter palette and looser brushwork. Although undated, Wildenstein's catalogue places it in 1864, namely among the two dozen earliest works known from the artist's hand. Here, the painter has still signed with ‘C. Monet,’ while pictures painted after 1865 generally bear his full signature. This work was probably painted in the vicinity of Honfleur, where Monet spent a considerable amount of time in the second half of the 1860s. In a certain sense, the emphasis on the vegetation unites the worlds of Barbizon, Boudin and Jongkind, so that we may presume a dating shortly after the artist's stay in Fontainebleau.

It was at Easter in 1863 that Monet and his friend Frédéric Bazille spent their vacation painting in Chailly for the first time, on the edge of the forest at Fontainebleau, two kilometres from Barbizon. This visit was repeated a year later, this time with Renoir and Sisley as well. The works by this group of young, like-minded painters bear a certain resemblance at this time. Moving on to Honfleur, they at first chose motifs allied to the forest landscape at Chailly. In a letter to his mother dated 1 June 1864, Bazille described how he and Monet had found the ideal surroundings for their art in this region: ‘As soon as we arrived in Honfleur we began to look for motifs for our landscapes. They were easy to find, as this area is simply paradise. Nowhere are there more lush fields with more beautiful trees. [...] The sea, or rather, the Seine at its widest, makes a fantastic horizon to these waves of green.’

This type of viewpoint - looking down at the water from above, with rich vegetation in the foreground - was a favourite of Monet's, and he employed it over and over again, first in some of his river landscapes near Argenteuil and, in the 1880s, for his paintings of the Mediterranean coast near Antibes. Even his well known composition...
of the toll house at Pourville can be seen as a descendant of this 1864 experiment. Particularly striking is the luxurious vegetation, depicted using highly differentiated strokes. This interest in plants culminated soon afterwards in one of his most beautiful early flower still-lifes.

Until now, no Dutch museum has possessed a Monet landscape from his pre-Impressionist period. Thanks to this acquisition, this gap has now been filled. Moreover, this attractive *Bord de mer* can now be seen in an ideal context, namely among the early French landscapes the Van Gogh Museum has been able to acquire in the last few years.

**Provenance** Gallery André Schoeller, Paris; Huinck & Scherjon gallery, Amsterdam (1936-37); private collection, The Netherlands; New York (Christie's), 11 May 1995, lot 109 (withdrawn from the auction); purchased by the Van Gogh Museum, with the support of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation and the Vereniging Rembrandt, with the help of the Prins Bernhard Fonds, on the occasion of the departure of Ronald de Leeuw as director (1996).


**Picasso, Pablo**  
**Spanish, 1881-1973**

- Public garden 1901  
- Oil on cardboard, 32 × 47 cm  
- Signed at lower right: *Picasso*  
- s 133 B/1995

In October 1900 the young Picasso left Barcelona for Paris, where he established himself in Montparnasse. There he became more closely acquainted with the work of Toulouse-Lautrec, whose subject matter - Parisian nightlife - came entirely to dominate.

![Image of Picasso's work](image-url)
his choice of motifs. After a return to Spain, Picasso again went to Paris in May 1901, where he exhibited with Vollard, receiving a fine review in *La Revue Blanche*: ‘Like all pure painters, he adores colour for itself and each substance has its proper colour.’ In addition to the nightlife scenes, Picasso turned regularly to the everyday sights he observed in the streets and sunny parks of Paris: flower vendors, travellers on the omnibus, elegant ladies promenading in Auteuil. This scene of children playing in one of the capital’s public parks fully conveys his interest in vivid colour. There is also a second version of this subject (present location unknown). This is the Van Gogh Museum's second loan of an early work by Picasso, whose Van Gogh-like ‘Still life with irises’ has also been on loan from a Dutch private collection since 1994.

**Provenance** Paul Pétridès, Paris; Paris (Galerie Charpentier), 1 December 1959; Mr and Mrs Silvan Kocher, Solothurn; private collection, the Netherlands; on loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1995).


**Quost, Ernest**

**French, 1844-1931**

Garden with hollyhock  
Oil on panel, 42 × 54 cm  
Signed at lower right: *E. Quost*; inscribed on the back: *A Theo van Gogh/Ce tableau qu’aime tant mon ami Vincent/Bien amicalement/E. Quost*  
s 457 V/1996

Quost, who began his career decorating porcelain for the Sèvres factory, was primarily a flower painter. He studied at the Academy Julian in Paris, and found his subjects in rural Montmartre, where he had his own garden. Although he made his debut at the Salon des Refusés in 1863, his impressionistic style also brought him success on the official circuit. The state bought several of his works, and between 1880 and 1900 he won no fewer than five medals at mainstream exhibitions.

Vincent van Gogh, who probably met Quost for the first time in 1886, sung his praises as the painter of
the ‘roses trémières’ [854/626], and set out to follow in his footsteps with his own still lifes. In 1890 both he and Theo were captivated by a work by Quost at the Salon, and Vincent came up with the idea of acquiring a sample of the artist's work. ‘I would like you to have a Quost, we can probably make an exchange’ [896/644]. After the Salon closed Theo wanted to display the painting in the window of the gallery he managed in Montmartre, alongside a flower piece by his brother.

It is not known whether the proposed exchange ever took place. The only work by Quost in the surviving collection of the Van Gogh family is a drawing. Recently, though, a painting by this French flower specialist did turn up with a provenance that definitely began with Theo van Gogh. ‘A Theo van Gogh Ce tableau qu’aiment tant mon ami Vincent Bien amicalement E. Quost,’ is the inscription on the stretcher. The canvas is typical of Quost's work: a domestic garden with hollyhocks painted in soft pastel tones. It is tempting to identify this painting with the one that Theo and Vincent admired so much, but in fact there is no evidence that would support this. The work exhibited at the Salon appears to be of another subject. The catalogue lists it as *Fleur de Pâques*.

**Provenance** Theo van Gogh; Galerie Elstir, Paris; purchased by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (1996).

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**Sluijters, Jan**

**Dutch, 1881-1957**

Paris at Whitsuntide 1906  
Oil on canvas, 33.2 × 41 cm  
Signed and dated at lower left: Jan Sluijters - 06; annotated at lower right:  
*Pentecôte. Au Pont*  
s 449 V/1995

The literature on Sluijters made no mention of this work before its purchase in 1995. It dates from 1906, when the young artist was staying in Paris after winning the Prix de Rome. In 1987 the Van Gogh Museum bought another painting from this period, the shocking *Two women embracing*, which has Parisian nightlife as its theme.

This new acquisition shows Paris at its sunniest, bedecked...
with festive tricolours and with promenaders on Pont Alexandre III, close to the Grand Palais, whose dome is visible at left. The inscription tells us that it is Pentacost 1906. Reporting from the capital on 26 June 1906, the artist wrote that he was working on ‘six studies for townscapes,’ including ‘a pair of studies for a fair at Pont Alexandre.’ This richly-decorated bridge had been built on the occasion of the 1900 Exposition Universelle. Two of the gilded bronze sculptures on their tall pillars are visible in Sluijters's painting.

The loose, colourful technique - the ubiquitous red! - betrays the careful attention Sluijters must have paid at the Salon des Indépendants, where work by Signac and by Fauves such as a Braque, Derain and Van Dongen had all been present in abundance.

**Provenance** Private collection; purchased by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (1995).


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**Ter Meulen, François Pieter**

**Dutch, 1843-1927**

Sand wagons before 1893

Oil on canvas on panel, 56.5 × 98 cm

Signed at lower left: *ter MEUlen*

s 16 SM/1995

Ter Meulen was a pupil of both Hendrikus and Julius Jacobus van de Sande Bakhuyzen, and Vincent van Gogh remembered seeing him at work in the latter's studio. He became a disciple of Anton Mauve, whose example he followed when choosing to paint a horse-drawn sand wagon virtually parallel to the picture plane. He settled in The Hague in 1875, where he specialised mainly in scenes of livestock in dune and heath landscapes. His heyday came in 1886, when the newly-opened Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam bought his painting *In the woods*. The Museum Mesdag already owned a large watercolour of sheep by Ter Meulen. In 1899 *Sand wagons* was illustrated in Max Rooses's *Schildersboek*.

**Provenance** Private collection; donated to the Museum Mesdag (1995).

**Literature** F.P. ter Meulen, ‘Herinneringen,’ *Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift* 5 (1892), pp. 557-74;
In the early 1890s Valtat developed a highly individual style derived from Impressionism, one marked by agitated brushwork and bright colours. Viewed superficially, his work resembles that of the Fauves, but he never abandoned the conventional Impressionist depiction of space for the sake of pure colour.

In 1889 Valtat had settled at Anthéor on the Côte d'Azur in a house called ‘Roucas Rou’ after the red rocks of the local coastline. Those cliffs feature prominently in many of his landscapes, as does a female figure. In a letter of 19 June 1995, Louis-André Valtat, the painter's grandson, confirmed to the museum that the model was probably Suzanne Noël, the artist's wife. A photograph of her in very much the same pose is still extant.

This painting of a rocky coast covered with pine trees must date from around 1903. It is modelled with vigorous, snaking brush strokes that appear to lead a life of their own - a feature no doubt influenced by Valtat's encounter with the work of Van Gogh. Valtat may have seen the Dutchman's work at the 1901 retrospective exhibition held at the Bernheim Jeune gallery. In addition, the dealer Ambroise Vollard, with whom Valtat had had a fixed contract since 1900, had more than two dozen Van Goghs in stock.

The first owner of the canvas was Christian Cherfils, who also owned two paintings by Van Gogh (F 319 and F 445).
Provenance Christian Cherfils; Laura Cherfils; private collection, New York; Marc de Montebello Fine Art, New York; purchased by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (1994).

Drawings

Doré, Gustave
French, 1832-1883

‘This seraph-band, each waved his hand: It was a heavenly sight!’

Design for a wood engraving to accompany Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The rime of the ancient mariner*, London 1875

Pencil, pen in black ink, brown and grey wash, heightened with white, on wove paper, (sheet) 58.7 × 46.1 cm; (drawing [including outline]) 50.7 × 41.9 cm

Signed at lower right: G. Doré; red stamp at lower left: Atelier G. Doré; annotation at bottom centre: No 4

d 1043 S/1995

Although Doré produced nearly 10,000 illustrations, only a few hundred designs have survived. One of these is this virtuosic pen-and-ink drawing, a design for one of the wood engravings for *The rime of the ancient mariner*. The designs were transferred to the woodblocks by means of a photographic process and then engraved by a professional engraver. In Coleridge’s seven-part poem, an elderly sailor recounts the fate that befell his ship after he had shot an albatross. Each of his fellow crew members perished. However, angelic spirits entered their bodies and guided the ship safely homeward. Once arrived, they left the bodies once more to stand above them. This is the moment, from the sixth part of the poem, that is illustrated here: ‘This seraph-band, each waved his hand/It was a heavenly sight!’ As the annotation ‘No 4’ at lower centre possibly suggests, it was the fourth illustration to the sixth part.

The sheet may be one of the drawings incorporated in the sale catalogue for Doré’s estate under lot 98: ‘Quatre dessins pour l’*Ancient Mariner’.


Dufy, Raoul
French, 1877-1953

*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
Laundry boats on the Seine c. 1904
Watercolour and gouache on three horizontal strips of vergé paper on cardboard, 68.8 × 56.5 cm
Signed at lower right: Dufy
d 1045 S/1995 (colour pl. p. 190)

On various occasions in the early years of the century Raoul Dufy painted scenes featuring boats on the Seine in Paris; among them is this attractive large sheet, which is thought to date from 1904. The boats we look down upon are almost certainly bateaux-lavoirs, the laundry boats where well-to-do Parisians had their washing done.

The artist assembled this sheet with three horizontal strips of vergé paper. True to the spontaneous style of Dufy's early work, the whole has been executed rapidly and without preliminary drawing.


Houten, Barbara van
Dutch, 1862-1950

Living room corner c. 1886
Watercolour, 47 × 31 cm
Signed at lower right: B van Houten
d 22 SM/1996

Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
After the death of his second wife, Samuel van Houten, Barbara's father, moved to the Riouwstraat in The Hague. Before this time, the Van Houtens had lived with the Mesdags in the grand house on the Laan van Meerdervoort the couples had built together in 1869. Following the move, Barbara began to take care of her father and was thus more or less bound to the house. The artist made a series of large-scale watercolours of her new domicile, some of which are in the Rijksprentenkabinet (Rijksmuseum) in Amsterdam. The Van Gogh Museum's work, as a comparison
with a photograph in Storm de Grave-Smit's book of 1991 on the artist demonstrates, depicts the corner of the spacious living room, with a glazed verandah in the background. Above the table hangs a seascape, probably a work of Barbara's uncle, H.W. Mesdag.


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**Mauve, Anton**

**Dutch, 1838-1888**

Heath at Laren c. 1887

Watercolour, 52.5 × 81.5 cm

Signed at lower right: *A. Mauve d 1046 S/1996*

Anton Mauve worked and lived in the Gooi from 1885 onwards, some years after Jozef Israëls had drawn his attention to the beauty of this area, which lies to the east of Amsterdam. When urban pressure began to make The Hague less attractive to painters, the region around the small town of Laren became a kind of promised land to Mauve and others.

In terms both of theme and of composition, this monumental watercolour is almost identical to the well-known painting from the Drucker-Fraser Bequest in the Rijksmuseum. It cannot be established with any certainty whether the watercolour precedes or duplicates this 1887 work. In 1886 Mauve exhibited a drawing with the same subject at the Hollandsche Teeken-Maatschappij; it may well have been this work. Its expressiveness derives from the contrast between the ‘woolly’ foreground with the sheep and the monumental group of trees outlined against the horizon, a motif strongly reminiscent of Millet.


Raffaëlli, Jean-François
French, 1850-1924

Woodcutters at the end of the day c. 1880
Pencil, black chalk, pastel and oils on cardboard, marouflé on panel, 56.9 × 75.3 cm
Signed in pen at lower left J.F. Raffaëlli
d 1041 S/1995 (colour pl. p. 188)

Raffaëlli showed this drawing at the Exposition Universelle in 1889. It is in a variety of media and was then entitled Hommes venant de couper des arbres. And indeed, the men have just finished their job; the rearmost figure is laying the last trunk on a pile of timber. Raffaëlli depicted a great variety of occupations, frequently choosing - as here - a moment when the exponent could be seen at rest. The men acting as models for him in this painting feature in different roles in other works.

Raffaëlli experimented eagerly with a number of techniques, and in his drawings he often sought to express painterly qualities, as this work shows. He himself developed the oily pastel which was used here. The brush strokes that can be seen in some places were no doubt intended to enliven the scene.

Provenance Mr Blumenthal; Antonio Santamarina; sale Adolfo Bullrich & Cia collection, lot 70; Galerie Andreas Watteau, Paris; London (Christie's), 5 July 1968, lot 40; Hammer Gallery, New York; New York (Christie's), 15 February 1995, lot 56; purchased by the Van Gogh Museum (1995).


Redon, Odilon
French, 1840-1916

Drawing ‘à la Goya’ (At the window) 1878
Charcoal on light brown paper, 39.3 × 32.7 cm
Signed at lower right: Odilon Redon
d 1048 V/1996 (colour pl. p. 187)
Windows and doorways, sometimes barred, are an important leitmotif in the art of Odilon Redon; in
the noirs of the 1890s they play an especially prominent role. It is not hard to understand why the artist entitled this sombre drawing ‘à la Goya.’ The man it depicts also bears a certain resemblance to Des Esseintes, the decadent hero of Joris-Karl Huysmans's book, *A rebours*. In Andries Bonger’s collection the work was known as *Chevalier à la fenêtre*. It is in the context of this drawing that Druick and Zegers speak of ‘existential imprisonment’ and ‘psychological alienation,’ seeing the figure in the window as ‘an outsider.’

This charcoal drawing belonged to Andries Bonger (1861-1936), Theo van Gogh's brother-in-law, from whose collection the museum has been able to acquire a number of works in recent years; these include three fine pastels and two noirs by Redon. The drawing has an attractive wooden frame, which, to surmise from the label of a Brussels firm, was probably chosen by its first owner, the Belgian writer Edmond Picard. At the auction of Picard's estate, Bonger also bought the noir entitled *Yseult*, and possibly *Girl's head in left profile, with flowers*.

**Provenance** Sale Picard collection, Brussels, 26 March 1904, lot 94; A. Bonger (1904-36); F.W.M. Bonger-Baroness van der Borch van Verwolde, Almen; private collection; purchased by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (1996).


To Redon, centuries-old trees had a special significance. Visiting The Hague in 1878, he wrote enthusiastically about the woodland known as the Haagse Bos: ‘There is
[here] a relic of a druid wood that leaves one with a sense of nostalgia.’ This yearning for the distant past, to which these forest giants bore witness, was also a yen for his own childhood and for the family estate near Bordeaux, where he had spent nearly every summer.

The theme of this *noir* is not entirely clear, which may explain the variety of titles by which it was known: *La Source, Intérieur d'un bois, Deux druides près d'un étang*, etc. A naked man sits on the riverbank with something resembling a beaker in his hand, while the standing figure, classically draped, appears to be instructing him. The drawing seems to allude to the opposition between good and evil, the enlightened and the primitive, white and black. These are all central themes in Redon's *noirs*, as we can also see in his 1877 drawing *Angel and demon* (Bordeaux, Musées des Beaux-Arts). The Van Gogh Museum work dates from around 1880.

Andries Bonger obtained most of his collection of Redon works directly from the artist, but in this case the purchase was made in about 1930 from the Haarlem dealer De Bois.

**Provenance** J.H. de Bois, Haarlem (1913-30); A. Bonger (to 1936); F.W.M. Bonger-Baroness van der Borch van Verwelde, Almen; private collection, The Netherlands; purchased by the Van Gogh Museum (1995).


**Tissot, James (Jacques-Joseph)**
**French, 1836-1902**
Study for ‘The triumph of will: the challenge’ c. 1877
Brush drawing in grey, with flesh colour over black chalk on blue paper, 54.7 × 39.9 cm
Signed at lower right: James Tissot
d 1042 S/1995 (colour pl. p. 178)
In this so-called drapery study, all the artist's attention has been directed towards the depiction of the tigerskin, which is executed in colour, and the way in which it falls about the slender body of the boy, which is shown only in outline and grey. The boy's face is the only other element to be depicted in detail. There are clear signs that the study was painted straight over an earlier study of a female figure, which has been insufficiently erased.

A tigerskin is also featured in the painting Le petit Nemrod, which dates from around 1882 (Besançon, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie), a work with which this attractive drawing was therefore initially thought to be connected. (The subject of that particular painting is children playing in an autumnal park; children were repeatedly the subject of Tissot's work in this period.) It later came to light that our study was of an earlier date, and was associated with Tissot's short-lived 1877 project to create an allegorical series entitled The triumph of will. The boy with the tigerskin appears in the only section to be completed, The challenge; he represents the figure of Daring. The canvas shows how Will, a fair woman with sword and armour, who is also assisted by Daring and Reserve, strides over Vice. A scutcheon bears the motto ‘Audere, volle, tacere.’ The drawing was shown in 1877 at an exhibition in London's Grosvenor Gallery, where it was praised by no lesser personage than John Ruskin.

Although Tissot's reputation rests largely upon his depictions of sophisticated and fashionably-dressed women, the artist also painted a number of didactic and allegorical series. One of these, his four-part Prodigal son in modern life, won a gold medal at the 1889 Exposition Universelle.


**Toorop, Jan Theodorus**
**Dutch, 1858-1927**

Cor Cordium 1890-91
Toorop regularly turned to literature for the inspiration for his designs. The drawing *Cor Cordium* ('heart of all hearts') owes its genesis to a poem of the same name by Albert Verwey (published in *Nieuwe Gids* 1/2 [1886], pp. 469-77):

‘Woe is me! Seated in my house, I heard / Thoughts voicing once more within me, / Coming slowly from afar, like the rush / Of wind between the houses: / But strange it was, this sound; as one might hear / When travelling from northern regions to the south / Amongst other peoples; might hearken word by word. / To deaf walkers speaking in a foreign street / In southern tongues: - and I saw, and see! / Deep in the dusk of my soul / A throng of figures move, such as at times / I saw. / Crossing the bridges as I left my house, / Walking the canals where the mist stole / Of a November morning: the wind lay / Irresolute above the town: so it was in me.’

The throng of figures can be clearly discerned in the foreground, and do indeed appear to be crossing a bridge. Other elements, however, seem to have sprung rather from Toorop’s imagination than from the poem. A Japanese woman's head, probably derived from a Japanese woodcut, can be seen in the upper half of the picture, between the female figures thatloom like a dark mist from between the houses in a street. The drawing was first owned by the Dutch poet Albert Verwey, in whose family it remained until acquired by its present owners.

**Provenance** Albert Verwey, Noorwijk aan Zee; Mrs Dr M. Nijland-Verwey, Santpoort; heirs of Dr M. Nijland-Verwey; private collection, Utrecht; on loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1996).

Catalogue of sculptures 1963-1996
colour plates

Prosper d'Epinay
Head of Medusa c. 1865-70
James Pradier
The birth of Cupid c. 1840
Antoine-Louis Barye
Tiger devouring a gavial 1831/1874
Charles Cordier
Arab sheik c. 1862
Charles Cordier
Jewess from Algiers c. 1862
Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse
Petite Marie 1861
George Minne
Solidarity (‘La barque humaine’) 1898

Constantin-Emile Meunier
Motherhood c. 1902
Aimé-Jules Dalou
Large peasant c. 1899/after 1902
Catalogue of sculptures
1963-1996

This catalogue contains all works of sculpture purchased for or loaned to the Van Gogh Museum in the years 1963 to 1996. Each work has an inventory number made up as follows: the first letter stands for the technique (v=sculpture); this is followed by a reference number and then by a capital letter (B=loan, M=Van Gogh Museum, MM=Museum Mesdag, N=State of the Netherlands, S=Van Gogh Museum [after 1 July 1994], SM=Van Gogh Museum [for the Museum Mesdag], V=Vincent van Gogh Foundation) and the year of acquisition or loan.

Anonymous

William Shakespeare
Bronze, 35.5 × 14 × 12 cm
v 74 M/1992

This jaunty little figure of Shakespeare is a good example of a genre of sculpture that became extremely popular with the middle classes in the second half of the 19th century. These *etagère* statues of historical, oriental or mythological figures were cast in large unnumbered series, and are mostly French, Belgian or Italian in origin. One celebrated and productive sculptor of this Salon art was the Frenchman Jean Jules Salmson (1823-1902), who in addition to several monumental works in Paris made his name with small full-figure portraits of historical personages like Mary Stuart, Charles I, Shakespeare, Milton, Van Dyck, Rubens, Walter Scott, George Washington and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Salmson's well-known *Shakespeare*, casts of which still regularly turn up at auction, shows the famous playwright at a younger age than in this particular figure, and is more expressive and dashingly dressed. That being said, there are features that link this sculpture with Salmson, or more probably, with his circle, notably its emphatically portrait-like character, the free positioning of the legs and the size. Unfortunately, at some stage the figure was separated from its base, which was probably round, so it lacks the artist's signature and the foundry mark.

Provenance Mr B.J. Beijer, Amsterdam; bequeathed to the Van Gogh Museum (1992).

Barye, Antoine-Louis
French, 1795-1875

Tiger devouring a gavial 1831/1874
Bronze, $41 \times 101$ cm
Signed at the left: BARYE; foundry mark on the base at the back: Syndicat des FABRts de bronze/UNIS FRAN
v 101 S/1996 (colour pl. p. 211)

‘The lion is dead. Hurry!’, Delacroix wrote to Barye, sending his friend on ahead to the Jardin des Plantes, where the two artists were to attend the autopsy. These two founders of the Romantic school were united by a scientific interest in the animal kingdom and a fascination with the primal instincts that animals evoke. Barye was the father of the animaliers, those - mostly French - sculptors who produced extremely popular figures of animals in the second half of the 19th century. His works often consist of groups of exotic beasts locked in a fierce struggle of life and death.

Un tigre ayant surpris un jeune crocodile le dévore is the official title of the plaster model that signalled Barye's breakthrough at the Salon of 1831. The first two bronzes were cast in 1832 and 1834 by the famous founder Honoré Gonon. The first is now in the Louvre, the second in the Musée des Beaux Arts at Dunkirk, while the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen has one cast by Barye himself.


Carpeaux, Jean-Baptiste
French, 1827-1875

Neapolitan fisher boy 1857/c. 1874
Bronze, $90 \times 48 \times 55$ cm
Signed on the base at the back: JBte Carpeaux; foundry mark: propriété Carpeaux
v 92 M/1994

The plaster model exhibited at the Salon of 1857 was the starting point for this and all subsequent bronze casts. With the Fisher boy, Carpeaux proved himself a gifted
student of his teacher François Rude, whose Young Neapolitan fisher boy of 1831 provided the essential inspiration. The open mouth and visible teeth were still quite daring features. The sculpture successfully combines a careful study of the famous Roman Spinario for the boy's body with a painstaking attention to realistic detail. The cap, the shell, the net and the various sea-creatures on the ground - an hexagonal piece of beach - are represented with equal conscientiousness. As many other, similar sculptural motifs, Carpeaux's Fisher boy was at the height of fashion. This genre figure also represents the sculptor's first triumph with the public and was to remain one of his most popular inventions. The many variations and editions show that Carpeaux also knew how to exploit this success commercially.

The attribute of the net was first added after 1873. The Van Gogh Museum's cast also has an interesting patina: the boy's body is brownish, while the ground is green.
Provenance Private collection; purchased by the Van Gogh Museum (1994).


Carrier-Belleuse, Albert-Ernest
French, 1824-1887

Petite Marie 1861
Terracotta, 55 × 30 × 23 cm
Signed on the right: A. Carrier
v 102 S/1996 (colour pl. p. 214)

Carrier-Belleuse was one of the most prominent sculptors of the Second Empire and head of a large studio. With this intimate portrait of his daughter Marie-Gabrielle, however, he demonstrates that he was also a highly sensitive artist. The little girl, one of eight siblings, was nine years old at the time. Carrier-Belleuse here rejects all the neo-rococo pathos that generally characterises his public work, as well as any hint of sugariness. Here, as elsewhere, the influence of the great sculptors of the Ancien Régime, Clodion and Houdon, can be felt in the fine modelling and in the overall style. An earlier portrait of Marie-Gabrielle is preserved in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. The Van Gogh Museum bust is an original, formed by Carrier-Belleuse himself.

Provenance Atelier Carrier-Belleuse; Jules Chéret; Galerie Elstir, Paris; purchased by the Van Gogh Museum (1996).
Clésinger, Jean-Baptiste
French, 1814-1883

Triumphant bull c. 1868
Bronze, 30 × 31.5 × 12.2 cm
Signed on the pedestal:
Taureau Vainqueur J. Clésinger
v 72 M/1992

In 1859, Clésinger scored a resounding success at the Paris Salon with a statue of a Roman bull. The poet Armand Barthez, a childhood friend of the artist's, lauded it in an article that closes with the words: ‘This bull is a miracle. If Clésinger had never done another thing, on the basis of this bull alone, he would be in the first ranks of modern sculptors.’ The writer and critic Charles Baudelaire was also pleasantly surprised by the work, and wrote that Clésinger's ‘Roman bull has received well-deserved praise from everybody; it is really a very fine work.’

The popularity of the subject is also apparent from the many replicas and variants that Clésinger made, one of which is the Taureau Vainqueur in the Van Gogh Museum. It is an extremely realistic sculpture in which great care has been lavished on the details, and it was this hyper-realism that made Clésinger so famous. The attention devoted to the eyes and gaze of the bull prompted 19th-century viewers to invest the animal with human traits. They were probably thinking of such classical myths as Europa and the bull, or Theseus and the Minotaur. In any event, this sculpture gained Clésinger a place alongside Antoine-Louis Barye, the leader of the animal sculptors of the French Romantic era.

Provenance Mr B.J. Beijer, Amsterdam; bequeathed to the Van Gogh Museum (1992).


Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
Cordier, Charles-Henri-Joseph  
French, 1827-1905  

Jewess from Algiers c. 1862  
Onyx, bronze, silvered bronze, gilt, enamel, semi-precious stones, 92.8 × 63 × 31.2 cm  
v 105 S/1996 (colour pl. p. 213)

Cordier's busts of Mediterranean and African peoples originated in a commission from the Muséum de l'histoire naturelle. Here, ethnographic study could be combined with a skilful exploitation of picturesque materials. Cordier's ‘types’ were particularly popular in the wealthy circles of the Second Empire. The sculptor was glad to meet the demand for replicas in various formats and more or less luxurious editions. One of his most successful works in this genre was the Juive d'Alger, although not all contemporary critics were able to appreciate the mix of materials. Particularly the union of metal and enamel - a technical innovation for which the sculptor could justly claim the copyright - was seen as irrational, a combination of substances that had no relation to one another. Paul Mantz, critic for the Gazette des Beaux-Arts, claimed Cordier had sunk even lower than the waxworks. Such attacks were not surprising: the debate about polychromy in contemporary sculpture had begun just one year earlier with the exhibition of John Gibson's Tinted Venus in London.

The different materials are employed in a highly decorative manner in the Jewess from Algiers. Even the bronze of the skin and the hair are differentiated. The inlaid eyes add to an overall lifelike effect. Other versions can be found in Troyes, Musée des Beaux-Arts and in a private collection in Switzerland.


Arab sheik c. 1862
Onyx, bronze, gilt, 94.2 × 58.5 × 41 cm
Signed on the right shoulder: CORDIER
v 106 S/1996 (colour pl. p. 212)

The Cheik arabe was probably conceived as a pendant to the Jewess from Algiers. The positivist, anthropological approach of the original commission here gives way to a more decorative conception, confirmed by the similarity of the Arab's features to the famous Head of Brutus in the Pallazzo dei Conservatori in Rome. The painterly combination of dark skin and light-coloured clothing is a trademark of Cordier's so-called sculpture ethnographique. The rediscovery of the onyx quarries in French-occupied Algeria allowed for a revival of the Roman tradition of ‘natural’ polychromy, which unifies different kinds of stone to create a realistic and colourful whole. Cordier was the most famous artist who worked in this manner.


Literature see above; Andreas Blühm, et al., exhib. cat. The colour of sculpture, Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) & Leeds (Henry Moore Institute) 1996, no. 48.

Dalou, Aimé-Jules
French, 1838-1902
Large peasant c. 1899/after 1902
Bronze, 197 × 70 × 68 cm
Signed on the right of the plinth (behind the left foot). DALOU 6/8;
inscribed on the vertical on the back of the plinth: SUSSE FONDEUR
PARIS, followed by the firm's foundry mark
v 100 V/1995 (colour pl. p. 216)
Dalou was the child of Parisian working-class parents, and always remained true to his radical convictions. Ironically, he made his breakthrough in London high society, after fleeing to England in the wake of the Commune in 1871. When he returned to Paris in 1880 after the general amnesty his fame had preceded him, and he received numerous commissions for monuments. His supreme achievement was undoubtedly the _Triomphe de la Republique_, which was unveiled on the Place de la Nation in 1899.

Dalou spent the final years of his life working on the _Monument of labour_. The _Large peasant_ is the only part that he executed full-scale in plaster. After his death a limited series was cast in that size by the founders Susse Frères. The _Grand paysan_ in the Van Gogh Museum is the sixth in a series of eight.

Under the influence of his discoverer and teacher Carpeaux, Dalou evolved a freer style of interpretation without every repeating the gracefulness of his maître. His social commitment and direct observation made Dalou the Zola of sculpture. Like his contemporary Meunier, Dalou set out to portray the deprivations and dignity of working people in the dozens of sketches he made of peasants and workers.


_Degas, Edgar_

_French, 1834-01917_

The tub c. 1886/1889
Bronze, 20 × 41 × 43 cm
Signed: _Degas_
_v 148 B/1996_

The original model, a figure in red-brown wax, lying in a lead tub filled with plaster water, the whole fastened to a plank and draped with a cloth soaked.
in plaster, is now in Washington, D.C. (National Gallery of Art). After the artist's death, probably around 1919-20, a bronze cast was made by A.-A. Hébrard (Pasadena, Norton Simon Museum), from which a number of others were then derived. The exact relationship of the work illustrated here to this series remains unclear.

John Rewald has related *The tub* to the many pastels of bathers Degas executed in 1886, while Charles Millard has proposed a later date, based on a letter the artist wrote on 13 June 1889 in which he spoke of ‘a small wax model’ with a ‘messy socle made of cloth dipped in plaster’ on which he was hard at work.

*The tub* is one of the first sculptures designed to be viewed from above, as a kind of table-top relief. Although Degas seems to have been striving for an extreme naturalism in his original choice of colours and materials, looked at in this way the piece is transformed into a rigorously geometric abstract composition.

**Provenance** Galerie Max Kaganovitch, Paris; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1955); on loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1996).

D'Epinay, Prosper
French, 1836-1914

Head of Medusa c. 1865-70
Terracotta, 42 × 32.2 × 20 cm
Signed on the back: d'Epinay
v 96 S/1995 (colour pl. p. 209)

This head was probably created by Epinay at the beginning of his stay in Rome. For this bozzetto in clay, he employed a more or less baroque vocabulary, proving himself a skilled eclectic. The sculptor probably learned to distinguish face and hair in the manner seen here by studying the work of Bernini, and it is possible he even saw the master's own Medusa (Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori). Epinay additionally emphasised the painterly quality of the bust by giving the hair a blueish tone. It appears almost as if he had kneaded the colour into the clay while modelling the wild curls, which do not yet have the appearance of snakes.

It is thought that the Medusa is a portrait of a certain Assunta, the wife of Dambrosio della Ruella, a bandit whom the French had sentenced to death in Rome in 1866. Among the many 19th-century variations of this mythological creature, Epinay's head takes a middle position between Neo-classicism and the Neo-baroque. (See also the article by Andreas Blühm in this volume of the Van Gogh Museum Journal).


Feuchère, Jean-Jacques
French, 1807-1852
Feuchère made his Salon debut in 1831, and won a medal there three years later. It was at that same Salon of 1834 that he also exhibited the plaster model for Satan. The following year he unveiled a bronze version, probably the one that is now in the museum at Douai.

The Van Gogh Museum's sculpture may be a preliminary version of the bronze. The oval base and smaller dimensions differ from the one in Douai, and the absence of a foundry mark may indicate that this Satan was cast by Feuchère himself, who had learned bronze founding in his youth while working for various foundries and goldsmiths. Satan was one of the Romantics' favourite figures, and depictions of him were inspired by numerous literary works. The immediate source for Feuchère's bronze, however, was an impression he owned of Dürer's engraving Melancolia. The seated pose, with the hand cupped under the chin and the all-enveloping bat-like wings, is quite clearly derived from the print. The figure's hunched pose, which inspires both fear and awe at the same time.
as arousing compassion, would later influence famous sculptors like Carpeaux (Ugolino) and Rodin (The thinker).


Gauguin, Paul
French, 1848-1903

Vase c. 1886-87
Clay, partly glazed, 14 × 12.9 cm
Signed on the front at lower left: P. Go
v 37 V/1978

In the spring or summer of 1886, after his friend Félix Bracquemond had introduced him to the ceramic artist Ernest Chaplet, Gauguin enthusiastically took up the medium. In the six months prior to his departure for Martinique in April 1887 he produced some 55 works which were clearly inspired by the art of Peru, where he had once lived. They sold badly, despite all the efforts of his art dealer, Theo van Gogh, who received this vase as a gesture of thanks. In one of his notebooks Gauguin wrote the words ‘van Gog pot donné’ alongside a pencil sketch of the vase.

The scene was directly inspired by Puvis de Chavannes's Hope of 1872 (Paris, Musée d'Orsay). Gauguin, however, took a satanic pleasure in paraphrasing his revered colleague in his own peculiar way: instead of the awakening virgin of the painting he modelled a sensual apparition who flirts with the beholder. Gauguin named his vase after Cleopatra, who had been regarded as the incarnation of the femme fatale since the dawn of Romanticism. The pigs rooting around under the tree are yet another allusion to the darker side of this legendary nymphomaniac.

Provenance Theo van Gogh, Paris (1888-91); Johanna
G. van Gogh-Bonger (1891-1925); V.W. van Gogh (1925-78); transferred to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (1978).


Gauquié, Henri-Désiré
French, 1858-1927

The sower
Bronze, 61 × 42 × 25.5 cm
Signed at the bottom: H. Gauquié; and centre rear: Vrai Bronze Baranti Paris
v 71 M/1992

Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
Beginning in 1880, Gauquié exhibited numerous portraits of artists and politicians at the annual Paris Salons. Beyond these, however, his oeuvre consists of an enormous diversity of subjects, executed in various sizes, from monumental sculptures such as Perseus or Bacchante and satyr to a Madonna in the cathedral of Rouen. His highly-detailed homage to Watteau stands in the Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris and is a work which brings the age of the Rococo to life again. His smaller statuettes, too, bear witness to a revival of the influence of this 18th century style, particularly in the details.

The sower belongs to a group of allegorical sculptures which brought Gauquié much praise and which were particularly popular around the turn of the century. His bronze Vae victis - a muscular young man with a raised sword - won him a gold medal at the Salon of 1900. A variation on The sower was auctioned in 1986 (Lokeren [De Vuyt], 31 May 1986, lot no. 242). Although the pose is identical, the heroic nude of the auctioned piece, which bears the inscription Fac et spera, has been transformed in the Van Gogh Museum's sculpture into a contemporary clothed peasant. Symbolism has here been replaced by anecdote. The special attention paid to anatomical detail is, however, the same in both works and gives the flexed muscles a similar tension.

Provenance Mr B.J. Beijer, Amsterdam; bequeathed to the Van Gogh Museum (1992).


Gemito, Vincenzo
Italian, 1852-1929

The water vendor, a figural fountain c. 1886
Bronze, 55.5 × 20 × 28.5 cm
Signed on the jug: GEMITO; inscribed on the back: DALL ORIGINALE/PROPTA DEL RE DI NAPOLI/SM FRANCESCO II/NAPOLI GEMITO
v 54 M/1991

The Water vendor is a fine example of verismo, the style of unadulterated naturalism in late 19th-century Italian sculpture. Gemito was one of the chief representatives of this movement. Born in a poverty-stricken part of Naples, he combined a gift for observation with traditional craftsmanship in his bronzes of the street life in southern Italy. King Francesco II had gone into exile in Paris, and when he commissioned Gemito in 1881 to make a sculpture that would remind him of his beloved people and city, the sculptor struck on the subject of the scugnizzi, the cheeky water-sellers of Naples. This resulted in a sculpture that combines and confronts classical antiquity and contemporary reality. The street urchin is depicted as a modern-day faun.
The wax model for the Water vendor is in the Galleria Communale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Rome. There are numerous casts, several of which are in public collections. The earliest, which are recognisable from the inscription PROPRIETA ARTISTICA, were made by Gemito himself. The majority, though, including this one with a gold patina, were produced as series by the founders Laganá after Gemito's own foundry went bankrupt in 1886.


**Klinger, Max**

**German, 1857-1920**

Head of New Salome 1893/1903
Bronze, 71 cm
v 107 S/1996

Next to his Beethoven, the New Salome is Klinger's best-known figure. The inspiration for the sculpture can be found in contemporary French literature. Klinger was greatly interested in these writings and often examined the theme of the femme fatale. The sculptor was busy with the preparations for this work - his first ‘polylithic’ sculpture - between 1886 and 1891. The plaster model for the half-figure is preserved in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen in Dresden; the finished version, in which Klinger
employed not only different kinds of marble but various other materials as well, was completed in 1892-93 and can now be seen in Museum der bildenden Künste in Leipzig. Bronzes of the head with a pointed torso were cast by the Berlin foundry Gladenbeck beginning in 1903; they were sold through Carl Lorck in Leipzig. The Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne has a painted plaster version that was probably the model for the bronze busts.

Mendes da Costa, Joseph  
Dutch, 1863-1939

Vincent van Gogh (figure) c. 1914-20  
Bronze, 39 × 13.5 cm  
Monogrammed on the top of the base, behind the left foot: JM; inscribed on the vertical of the base: MIJN GOD MAG HET/VINCENT VAN GOGH;  
foundry mark: Fonderie Nationale des Bronzes J. Petermann, St. Gilles-Bruxelles.  
v 49 V/1981

Although Mendes da Costa's small bronze of Van Gogh is persistently dated 1908 in the literature, it was actually made some time between 1914 and 1920. On 19 September 1914 the sculptor wrote to H.P. Bremmer, the famous art educationist and champion of Van Gogh: ‘And now that I am writing to you I would like to tell you that immediately after reading Van Gogh's letters I felt the desire to make something out of them. [...] I will endeavour to produce the final impression that I got after reading this life, namely the moment of utmost effort during work, the sob

\[\text{Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996}\]
and prayer “Oh God, let it be”. [...] I hope that I may succeed, in these dreadful times, to invest this moment in a manikin’ (The Hague, Gemeentearchief, Bremmer archive).

A few years before, Bremmer had suggested that Mendes design a series of figure portraits of people from the worlds of the arts and sciences. Mendes proceeded to model statuettes of Jan Steen, Francis of Assisi, Spinoza and, as the last in the series, Vincent van Gogh. The design of this full-length portrait is very closely related to Mendes's Christiaan de Wet, the monumental statue of the ‘peasant general’ from the Hoge Veluwe region, which he created at around the same time. There are casts of this figure in the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo, the Haags Gemeentemuseum, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Hannema-De Stuers Fundatie in Heino.


Meunier, Constantin-Emile
Belgian, 1831-1905

Motherhood c. 1902
Bronze with black patina, 64.8 × 45.8 × 45.8 cm
Signed on the back at centre: C. Meunier; along the lower edge: JB JB LU 9; on the label: Dresden Haupt (Zoll) Amt

In 1890, Meunier exhibited a relief at the Brussels Salon L'industrie that was designed for his Monument to labour, on which he worked for the rest of his life. The final design was only unveiled in Berlin in 1907, two years after his death, and consisted of four bronze panels in relief, arranged in a semicircle and interspersed with larger than life-size figures and groups in stone. A bronze Sower, which was also a favourite subject of Van Gogh's, was to be placed in the middle. In 1930, 25 years after the artist's death, the Monument to labour was finally installed on Jules de Trooz-plain in Laken, although not entirely in accordance with Meunier's original plans. Motherhood was part of the monument, and was placed in front of the right half of the semicircle. The bronze in the Van Gogh Museum was cast in sand. Meunier based his depiction of motherhood on a photograph of his wife and children, and the inspiration for the enclosed, almost block-like composition was the pose of Michelangelo's Madonna and Child in the Basilica of Our Lady in Bruges.


Minne, George
Belgian, 1866-1941

Solidarity (‘La barque humaine’) 1898
Bronze with black patina, 66.5 × 66.5 × 27 cm
v 90 V/1993 (colour pl. p. 215)

In 1898 the Belgian Labour Party commissioned Minne to produce a plaster monument three metres high. It was intended as a memorial to the Socialist leader Jean Volders. Minne was convinced that an allegory of brotherhood would do more justice to Volders's fiery and noble character than a conventional statue.

Two almost identical nude youths stand facing each other in a boat, anxiously trying to keep their balance as they brave the storm. Their thin, almost emaciated bodies, which are so typical of Minne's figures, were inspired by Gothic sculpture. Minne was often taken to task for his 'primitivism,’ but according to the Belgian writer Emile Verhaeren, that was his main strength. The German critic Julius Meier-Graefe was also full of praise for Minne's Solidarity. The Labour Party, though, disliked the design and refused to pay for it to be executed. Minne's friend, the artist Henry van de Velde, described how the furious sculptor hacked the plaster monument to pièces in his studio. Fortunately, the plaster model survived from which this small version was made in both marble and bronze.

Provenance Private collection, Brussels; Patrick Derom gallery, Brussels; purchased by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (1993).

Literature Julius Meier-Graefe, ‘Die fünfte Ausstellung der Libre Esthétique,’ Die Nation, 26 March 1898, p. 384; Die Kunst 4 (1901), pp. 182-83 (with ill. on p. 191); Julius Meier-Graefe, ‘George Minne,’ Ver Sacrum (1901), no. 2, pp. 31-41; Karel van de Woestijne,

**Pradier, James**

Swiss, 1790-1852

The birth of Cupid c. 1840
Bronze, partially gilt and patinated in three colours, 14 × 21.5 × 9 cm

During the July Monarchy, Pradier was the most popular sculptor in France. He modified the strict classicism of the preceding generation and preferred subjects of a more poetic inspiration, as works like Sappho and La poésie légère demonstrate. Having no antique precedents, Pradier's interpretation of the theme of the birth of Cupid is by necessity highly original. Cupid is a winged putto and, like his mother, represented half asleep. The open shell is not only a kind of cave or womb but also a reference to the mythical birth of the goddess herself. The exhibition catalogue Statues de chair lists variations of this work in bronze, plaster and marble. The version in the Van Gogh Museum, unpublished until this year,

![Image](https://example.com/image.jpg)

is a particularly elaborate one. A comparison with Benvenuto Cellini's famous saltcellar is certainly not farfetched, as Pradier represents the goddess in a glittering
gold that stands out against the bronze. The non-gilt parts are also given different patinas: the shell is dark brown, while the waves are green.


Standing Sappho c. 1848/1851
Silvered bronze on gilt base, 49 cm

In the 1840s, the Swiss Neo-classicist James Pradier specialised in heroines and mythological female figures from Antiquity, or from contemporary literature inspired by it: Phryne, Chloris, Nyssia, and, after Sappho, Pandora, Medea and Atalanta. Sappho, the Lesbian poetess, is represented in deep thought, standing on the stump of a column. The pair of doves and the sheet of paper (with, on the original, a Greek quotation from her ode to Aphrodite), indicate that she is here meant to symbolise unhappy love and that she is mourning the loss of Leucates. Richly decorated with jewellery and attributes, this elegant figure is one of the artist's most successful inventions. Although Pradier's original version, an 89 cm-high bronze exhibited at the Salon of 1848, remained unsold at first, the Susse foundry took the model as a starting point for a much admired silver statuette only a short time later. At the Great Exhibition in London (1851), Victor Paillard presented a smaller variant in a limited edition from which the Van Gogh Museum's work probably originates. Paillard was known for his silver and gold plating of bronze. As he himself was one of the pioneers of polychrome sculpture, these colourful versions certainly met Pradier's approval.

A second, seated Sappho of 1852, the original marble of which is in the Musée d'Orsay, was the sculptor's last work and has remained an even more famous treatment of the subject.


Literature Exhib. cat. Statues de chair: sculptures de James Pradier (1790-1852), Geneva (Musée d'art et d'histoire) & Paris (Musée du Luxembourg) 1986, no. 16 (other cast).
Renoir, Auguste  
French 1841-1919

The Judgment of Paris 1914  
Bronze, 75 × 93 × 15 cm  
Signed at bottom right: VII Renoir 1914 v 149 B/1996

In 1913, Ambroise Vollard had the idea to ask a student of Maillol's, Richard Guino, to create sculptures after designs by - and under the supervision of - Renoir. This allowed him to circumvent the exclusive contract the painter had with Paul Durand-Ruel. After some hesitation, Renoir, whose hands were already severely crippled by rheumatism, agreed to the arrangement. His cooperation with Guino lasted until 1917 and resulted in 14 sculptures and reliefs, all of which were sold by Vollard.

This relief was inspired by a photograph of a Renoir drawing executed in circa 1908 (Washington, D.C., Phillips Memorial Gallery). The artist also based a number of paintings on this drawing. Before he began working on this large scale, Guino also made a small plaque of the design (Haesaerts, no. 5).

Provenance Galerie Rosengart, Luzern; purchased by the City of Amsterdam (1955); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; on loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1996).


Rodin, Auguste  
French, 1840-1917
St John the Baptist preaching (bust) 1878/1985
Bronze, 54 × 37 × 26 cm
Signed on the right of the bronze base: A. Rodin No. II/IV; inscribed on the left: c by MUSEE RODIN 1985; inscribed on the back: E. Godard Fondeur.
v 116 B/1993

Rodin's St John the Baptist preaching of 1877 reflects the artist's fascination with one of his models, a 40-year-old peasant from the Abruzzi called Pignatelli, who had called on him unannounced. Rodin later said: ‘Seeing him, I was seized with admiration: that rough, hairy man, expressing in his bearing and physical strength all the violence, but also all the mystical character of his race. I thought immediately of a St John the Baptist; that is, a man of nature, a visionary, a believer, a forerunner come to announce one greater than himself.’ Rodin deliberately made the statue larger than life, for he had been criticised the previous year for making a cast from the live model for his Age of bronze. While working on the figure of the Baptist he also made a bust, which was exhibited in patinated plaster at the Salon of 1879 and was cast in bronze the following year. Prior to 1900 the series of the bust was limited to six, but in 1967 a second series was cast under the supervision of the Musée Rodin, and it is to this set that the one in the Van Gogh Museum belongs.


Jean d'Aire c. 1884-95
Bronze, 205 × 65 × 57 cm
Signed on the base at right: A. Rodin; stamped at the back of the base: ALEXIS RUDIER/FONDEUR PARIS
v 150 B/1996
The figure of Jean d'Aire is drawn from the famous group of *The burghers of Calais*. In 1884, Rodin, then unknown, received a commission from the
city of Calais to create a monument to this dramatic episode from the Hundred Years' War. The chronicler Jean Froissart described how six leading citizens, dressed in rags and bound by ropes, turned themselves over to the King of England in exchange for his relieving the siege on their town. Rodin saw this commission as his chance ‘to create a masterpiece.’ The highly original composition of the group, conceived for a low (and thus non-heroic) base, and the extreme expressivity of the figures with their oversized limbs met with considerable opposition from Rodin's patrons, who felt that ‘their defeated postures offend our religion.’ For the sculptor, it was essential that the work have no socle, as this allowed the ‘passersby to elbow [the men], and through this contact come to feel the emotion of the living past in their midst.’ In addition to various casts of the whole group, there are also numerous versions of the individual figures and parts. It is not known when exactly Alexis Rudier created this cast. In 1920, for example, he made a cast of the entire work (Paris, Musée Rodin). In 1930 this *Jean d'Aire* was first shown in an exhibition devoted to Rodin at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; it was then bought by the City of Amsterdam for that institution through the art gallery Buffa.

**Provenance** Buffà gallery, Amsterdam; purchased by the City of Amsterdam (1930); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; on loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1996).


Bust of Madame Fenaille c. 1898
Plaster, 74 × 52 × 36 cm
The woman represented here was the wife of Maurice Fenaille, a wealthy industrialist, art lover and art historian. Fenaille was one of Rodin's close associates and gave him various commissions, among others for the decoration of his swimming pool. Madame Fenaille was one of the grandes dames who began to frequent Rodin's studio after he had become a famous public figure. Her portrait was the first in a series of these society ladies. There are numerous versions of this work. In the Musée Rodin alone there are two in marble and one in plaster, the latter more finished than the one illustrated here. Rodin worked on Madame Fenaille's bust beginning in 1898, and in 1900 he exhibited a completed plaster version at the Exposition Universelle. The plaster cast in the Van Gogh Museum appears to record an earlier stage in the development of the portrait. Madame Fenaille's asymmetrically represented dress softens the
transition between bust and pedestal and creates a kind of counterbalance to her remarkably closed look and modest pose; the impression is of a captured moment in the life of a discrete and withdrawn personality. Unhampered by naturalistic details, the unfinished quality of this version accents the way in which the figure is turned in upon itself.

**Provenance** Maurice Fenaille; Baron Chassériau; Général Nouvion; Mr and Mrs William Henry Singer Jr.; donated to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1940); on loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1996).


- Hand with a female torso (‘La main de Dieu’) 1917
- Bronze, 23 × 11 × 15 cm
- Foundry mark: Alexis Rudier Fondeur Paris
- v 65 B/1991

Rodin's earliest experiments in enlarging modelled hands into sculptures in their own right date from around 1900. He had recorded the hands in dozens of sketches in preparation for monumental commissions like *The burghers of Calais* of 1884-85. In fact, there is a direct relationship between *The hand of God* and the hands of two of the men in that group. *The hand of God* exists in three sizes. The original model was probably the same size as the sculpture in the Van Gogh Museum, and formed the basis for a reduced and an enlarged version. There are specimens in plaster, bronze and marble.

With his *Hand of God* Rodin harked back to the image of God in medieval and Renaissance iconography. It is significant that he chose this subject when he was at the height of his powers. He was undoubtedly fascinated by the three-dimensional problem of enlarging a modelled preliminary study, but beyond this there may have also been some element megalomania on the part of this deeply religious artist, who felt that he, like his Creator, was giving form to the unformed.


De Rudder, Isidore
Belgian, 1855-1943

The potato digger 1913
Bronze, 47.5 × 34.8 × 22 cm
Inscribed on the base: FAC ET SPERA; 7 Août 1913
v 73 M/1992

In addition to painting, De Rudder also studied sculpture at the Académie royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, under the Belgian Romantic sculptor Eugène Simons. Among De Rudder's more well-known pieces is The nest, a typical work of genre on the subject of motherhood, the plaster model of which was exhibited in Paris at the Salon of 1883 and then carried out in marble (Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten). De Rudder worked in a broad range of idioms, from monumental allegorical figures and fountain sculptures to busts and medallions. He was also active in the decorative arts from c. 1892 onwards, designing, among other things, carpets and porcelain. His style may be described as eclectic, inspired on the one hand by the Italian Renaissance and, on the other, by contemporary Art Nouveau.

Stylistically speaking, The potato digger is quite different from De Rudder's more lyrical works (such as The nest), which are generally smoother and more decorative, without the emphasis on physical strength we see here. The rough treatment of the surface and the unfinished character of The potato digger give the impression that the Van Gogh Museum's piece is in fact a bozzetto. Whatever the case, the strong modelling and sketch-like appearance of this allegory of work are reminiscent of the sculptures of De Rudder's compatriot Constantin Meunier.

Provenance Mr B.J. Beijer, Amsterdam; bequeathed to the Van Gogh Museum (1992).
Rueb, Gerharda Johanna Wilhelmina
Dutch, 1885-1972

Bust of a woman
Marble, $49.5 \times 55.5 \times 28$ cm
Signed at lower right: G.R.
v 115 B/1991

Gra Rueb was a student of the Belgian sculptor Toon Dupuis, who, among other things, made a portrait bust of Mesdag (The Hague, Museum Mesdag and The Hague, Panorama Mesdag) and
Antoine Bourdelle. This *Bust of a woman* shows traces of the influence of both masters, the former in the more conservative smooth and descriptive treatment of the face, the latter in the conception as a whole. Still half caught in the marble, with bent head and closed eyes, the figure demonstrates the artist's ambition to give her work a universal expressivity in the tradition of Bourdelle.


**Stuck, Franz von**  
**German, 1863-1928**

- Athlete 1891-92  
  Bronze with dark brown patina, 65 cm  
  Signed on the base: *Franz Stuck*; stamped: *GUSS LEYRER MÜNCHEN*  
  v 94 S/1994

The *Athlete* is widely regarded as Stuck's first bronze, and is his best-known and most widely distributed sculpture, along with the *Amazon* (see below). It shows a muscular young man lifting a heavy shot and holding it at eye level, precisely at its apogee. Unlike his other sculptures, which are heavily indebted to the ideas about line and contour advocated by the sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand, this *Athlete* is designed so as to present a different three-dimensional aspect from every side. The smooth, polished surface and the rendering of the hair echo Hellenistic bronzes like the seated *Fist-fighter* in the Museo Nazionale in Rome.

The importance that Stuck attached to the sculpture is demonstrated by a letter of circa 1892-93 to the writer Fritz von Ostini, in which he proudly announced that he had already sold ‘thousands’ of copies of the *Athlete*, to the Nationalgalerie in Berlin and Hamburger Kunsthalle among other institutions.
Provenance Mr T. Baumgarten, Munich (Galerie Rithaler, Munich); donated to the Van Gogh Museum (1994).


Amazon 1897
Bronze with dark brown patina, 64.8 × 39.4 cm
Inscribed: Franz Stuck;
stamped: GUSS LEYRER MÜNCHEN
v 89 M/1992
Franz von Stuck was a true polymath and a great advocate of the *gesamtkunstwerk*. In addition to graphic work, paintings and the design of the entire interior and exterior of his villa, he also made sculptures. Not surprisingly, the subjects are closely related to those of his paintings, as with this *Amazon* - a motif that he depicted on several occasions.

The design for the bronze, spear-throwing Amazon dates from 1897, and it brought Stuck international fame as a sculptor. The young horsewoman, her body arched backwards, is hurling a spear straight at an imaginary foe. The balanced composition, circular silhouette, smoothly finished, patinated bronze and lack of detail are typical of Stuck’s Neoclassicist approach, as too is the decorative interplay of line, which betrays the influence of Jugendstil.

Stuck had a monumental version of the *Amazon* cast for the garden of his villa, but it was only after his death that it was installed, in front of the portico of the main entrance.


Fighting fauns 1903-04
Plaster, painted, 62 × 100 cm
Signed at bottom centre: Franz Stuck
v 98 M/1994

Stuck made several versions of this relief in different materials: plaster, bronze and stone. In style and subject it is related to his 1889 painting of Fighting fauns. Here, too, everything centres around the liveliness, energy and youthful vitality of the two young fauns, who are butting their heads together.

The plaster plaque shows the more erotic and humorous side of this ‘Kampf ums Weib’ (battle over a woman), as do several of Stuck's paintings. The two fauns in the relief also symbolise the Dionysian vital urge, and radiate a feeling of licentiousness. The background is neutral and gives no indication of the setting, thus placing the action in an intangible, supranatural world 'beyond good and evil.' Stuck's treatment of the theme of fighting fauns is a highly original combination of classical motifs: distinctly high-spirited Bacchanalian figures with goat's legs; pugnacious wrestlers as depicted on Greek amphora from the 5th century B.C.; and bronze figures of Etruscans fighting.

Provenance Collection of Joey and Toby Tanenbaum; New York (Sotheby’s), 26 May 1994, lot 140 (unsold); purchased by the Van Gogh Museum (1994).


Wezelaar, Henri Matthieu
Dutch, 1901-1984

Dr V.W. van Gogh 1971-72
Bronze, 27 × 18 × 21 cm
Signed on the right of the neck: W Cast by the Binder foundry, Haarlem
v 15 B/1978

Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
Engineer Vincent Willem van Gogh and the sculptor Han Wezelaar got to know each other in the town of Laren, where the latter had moved into Mendes da Costa's house after his colleague's death. For Wezelaar this was a brief intermezzo in a life spent largely in Amsterdam and Paris, where he had lived for ten years.

On his return to the Netherlands, where the prevailing expressionist sculpture of the Amsterdammers Krop, Rädecker and Polet held sway, Wezelaar caused a stir with his sensitive realism focused on the human figure, which is classical in concept but contemporary in character. Together with others of his generation, like Sondaar and Andriessen, he came to be regarded as one of the artists who freed sculpture from the clutches of architecture, thus opening the door to the first abstract style in Dutch sculpture.

In Wezelaar's postwar work, pure classicism made way for a more naturalistic and monumental approach, which reached its apogee in his portraiture. That is undeniably true of this ‘feather-light’ bust of Engineer Van Gogh. It is a harmonious and sensitively characterised portrait in which the sculptor used the means at his disposal to strike a balance between psychological characterisation and plastic conception.

**Provenance** Purchased from the artist by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Recreation and Social Work; Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague; on extended loan to the Van Gogh Museum (1978).


**Zadkine, Ossip**

**French, 1890-1967**

The Van Gogh brothers seated (Les frères Van Gogh assis) 1956-63/1965

Bronze, 46 × 34 × 35 cm
Signed on the right at the back: *O. Zadkine 2/3*
v 8 V/1977

See following entry.
Provenance Purchased from the artist by the Theo van Gogh Foundation (1965); transferred to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (1977).


Design for the monument to the Van Gogh brothers (Projet de Monument aux frères Van Gogh) 1963
Bronze, 79 × 28 × 23 cm
Signed and dated on the plinth: O.Z. 63
v 9 V/1982

In the course of the 20th century, Vincent van Gogh not only became a public hero but also served as an inspirational example to his later colleagues. It is not surprising that such an emotional talent as Ossip Zadkine venerated Van Gogh as a god. In the 1950s and 60s this French artist of Russian descent became the sculptor of Van Gogh monuments. He made no fewer than four: at Wasmes in the Borinage (1958), Auvers-sur-Oise (1961), Zundert (1964), and Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (1966). In the period 1956-66, Zadkine worked ceaselessly on sketches for these monuments. He described the journey of discovery to the heart of his beloved subject as ‘enthralling labour’, and eventually considered the combination of the two brothers to be the most successful design, for ‘one cannot separate them, either in life, in death, or in art’. In both these versions he allowed the symbolic aspect of their fraternal entwinement to predominate over the pure portrait. The design of both studies rekindles the cubist-expressionistic idiom that Zadkine had evolved in the 1920s and 30s.

Provenance M.E. Tralbaut; M. Tralbaut-Dewachter; purchased by the Theo van Gogh Foundation (1977); transferred to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation (1982).

Catalogue of Colenbrander ceramics in the Museum Mesdag

Christien Smits

The following pages describe all those pieces of ornamental pottery in the collection of the Museum Mesdag that were created at the art pottery Haagse Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg under T.C.A. Colenbrander's supervision. Works bought from Rozenburg's by H.W. Mesdag subsequent to Colenbrander's departure in August 1889 are not included. These works were first catalogued by Philippe Zilcken, *Museum Mesdag: Catalogus der schilderijen, teekeningen, etsen en kunstvoorwerpen*, The Hague 1905 (referred to below as *Museum Mesdag 1905*).

The descriptions follow the model established in the book *Rozenburg 1883-1917: geschiedenis van een Haagse fabriek*. This was published in 1983 to accompany the exhibition of the same name held in the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague; it is still the standard work. In references it is indicated by the abbreviation exhib. cat. Rozenburg 1983.

The articles are classified according to the year of their production, starting in 1885. The standing pieces (i.e., vases and covered jars) are listed first from small to large, followed by the flat pieces (i.e., wall plaques and dishes), also from small to large.

Unfortunately, although the Rozenburg factory identified most shape designs by means of a model name, these names were never systematically recorded. Many of the model names in the Mesdag collection were traced through the list of models in the Rozenburg catalogue referred to above (pp. 94-101), which was itself compiled on the basis of data from a variety of sources. The so-called foot chalice featured in the collection was identified after comparison with a biscuit model decorated by Colenbrander himself, upon which the model name had been written; this biscuit model is in the possession of the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague. The name of the ‘tower vases’ was found in a letter written by Colenbrander to the director of the Gemeentemuseum, H.E. van Gelder on 3 November 1918, in which he described his ‘first tower set’ (The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 515, inv. no. 96). In some cases the numbers written on the stamps affixed to the undersides of the items also proved useful. Comparison of these numbers with data contained in Rozenburg's surviving sales books provided certainty with respect to a number of model names. Equally helpful was an undated notebook among the Rozenburg documents in the Gemeentearchief in The Hague (beheersnr. 249, inv. no. 734 A), in which drawings of some of the designs are accompanied by their names and prices.

The ornamental patterns painted onto the articles were also named; when known, these are indicated here in inverted commas. These pattern names were written on the undersides of the respective items or were found on the biscuit models in the Gemeentemuseum. Thanks are due to the curator, Marjan Boot, for her generous assistance in this regard. It should be noted that each of the different decorative designs made by Colenbrander for the same model have received the same inventory number in the Gemeentemuseum. The names of two patterns were found thanks to the captions under illustrations in contemporary literature.

From 1885 to 1 June 1889, the pottery produced under Colenbrander's direction at Haagse Plateelbakkerij Rozenburg was marked on the bottom with the letters.
W v G, the initials of the director, Wilhelm von Gudenberg. An open flag on a long pole is drawn through the letter v; under the initials the words Den Haag, den Haag or Haag are written. From 1 June 1889, following Gudenberg's resignation from the pottery, these initials were replaced by the word Rozenburg. Furthermore, from 1885 onwards, an annual date-letter was marked above the factory-mark: A=1885, B=1886, C=1887, D=1888 and E=1889. The marks of the individual pottery painters are only listed here in the event that they could be identified on the basis of the marks listed in the Rozenburg catalogue. The pottery in the Museum Mesdag has no painter's work-order numbers; and only in one case was a casting-shop number found.
1

Four-piece set of turban vases and turban cups 1885
Lidded vases 27 cm and cups 19 cm
Factory-mark: W v G Haag
Date-mark: A (1885)
Model nos. 25 (lidded vases) and 26 (cups)
Inv. no. 670

Two nearly identical, barrel-shaped lidded vases on a constricted, conical foot; covered by a turban-shaped lid with a tall, twice-constricted conical finial; and two nearly identical, funnel-shaped cups on a long campanulate stem with a constricted foot. Decorated overall with a stylised pattern of foliar motifs and abstract figures with jagged and curling outlines. Painted in ochre, rust brown, sky blue, grey, pale green, purple, pink and black on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 128; exhib. cat. Rozenburg 1983, p. 113, fig. 3

2

Two point cups 1886
16.5 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Model no. 45
Inv. no. 687

Two nearly identical, beaker-shaped vases with a constricted rim, on a curved foot with a globular stem. Decorated overall with stylised sprigs of flowers, curling leaves and an insect. Painted in green, yellow, brown and blue on a cream ground.
Two point vases 1886
20.5 cm
Factory-mark: W v G Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Model no. 44
Inv. no. 649
On stamps affixed to the underside: 3311 I and 1,25

Two nearly identical, ovoid lidded vases on a conical foot with a cylindrical neck, covered by a conical lid with a pointed, tapering finial. Decorated overall with abstract, angular and curling figures which, on the neck and body, are contained within a scalloped field. Painted in pale green, dark green and black on a cream ground; the scalloped field is green.

Lidded vase 1886
19.4 cm
Factory-mark: W v G Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 676
Lidded vase in the shape of a double bell, on a campanulate foot and with a number of constrictions; covered by an ovoid lid with a curved and constricted rim and bobbin-shaped finial. Decorated with two flower stems; the lid with five different insects. Painted in yellow, green and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 129
Lidded vase 1886
19.4 cm
Factory-mark: W v G Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 677

Lidded vase in the shape of a double bell, on a campanulate foot and with a number of constrictions; covered by an ovoid lid with a curved and constricted rim and bobbin-shaped finial. Decorated with two flower stems, and the lid with five different insects. Painted in turquoise, green and black on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 129

Lidded vase 1886
19.6 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 688
Lidded vase in the shape of a double bell, on a campanulate foot and with a number of constrictions; covered by an ovoid lid with a curved and constricted rim and bobbin-shaped finial. Decorated overall with a variety of geometric and abstract figures. Painted in rust brown, green, yellow, grey, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 130; exhib. cat. Rozenburg 1983, p. 110, fig. 7

![Image of two turban vases]

**7**

Two turban vases 1886
25 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Model no. 25
Inv. no. 685
On stamps affixed to the underside: no. 40 and f 10,- and 4068 WG

Two nearly identical, barrel-shaped lidded vases on a constricted, conical foot; covered by a turban-shaped lid with a tall, twice-constricted conical finial. Decorated overall with a pattern of three vertical stripes, between which there are branches with pointed, curling leaves; and, on the shoulder of the vase, with three repeats of an abstract motif. Painted in rust brown, grey-blue, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 130

![Image of a single turban vase]
‘Paauweveer’ (‘Peacock feather’) pillar cup 1886
26.1 cm
Factory-mark: W v G Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Model no. 24
Inv. no. 662
On a stamp affixed to the underside: 3
Biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum.
MC 32*-1917

Cylindrical vase on a broadened, moulded foot, with a moulded, flaring mouth. Decorated overall with two repeats of a symmetrical pattern of branches and flower stems. Painted in dark green, pale yellow, ochre, mauve-grey, pink, dark blue and black on a cream background.

Literature *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 127
Two foot chalices 1886
27.3 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Model no. 39; cf. biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 79a-1917
Inv. nos. V 9 MM/1993 and V 10 MM/1993

Two beaker-shaped vases with a constriction above the moulded foot and a convex ring above the middle line. Decorated around the inner side of the rim with a pattern of stylised flowers and leaves. Painted in ochre, rust brown, dark green, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

Lidded vase 1886
28.2 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. V 14 MM/1993

Cylindrical lidded vase with a turban-shaped shoulder, lid and finial; on a campanulate foot with five constrictions. Decorated overall with stylised flowers and leaves. Painted in ochre, rust brown, dark green, dark blue and black on a cream ground.
11

Two vases 1886
29.8 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 654
On a stamp affixed to the underside of one vase.
1:4335 and 8 and f 10,-

Two nearly identical, cylindrical vases with a narrowed neck and a flaring mouth; each on a curved foot whose rim has a hollow moulded profile. Decorated overall with a pattern of flower stems, leaves, an insect and fanciful figures; with a narrow line along the outer edge; and, on the foot and on the inside of the neck, with a border resembling a branch with leaves. Painted in dark blue, rust brown, light brown, ochre, green and black on a cream ground.

Literature *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 126

12

Two ‘Roos’ (‘Rose’) lidded vases 1886
40 and 40.3 cm
Factory-mark: W v G Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 684
Biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 82⁷-1917
Two nearly identical, pouch-shaped lidded vases on a cylindrical foot with four bands in sharp relief, and, on the body, three constrictions; covered by a domed lid with a conical finial with eight constrictions. Decorated overall with stylised flowers and leaves. Painted in pale green, dark green, ochre, pale yellow, light brown, mauve-grey, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 130
13

Lidded vase 1886
40 cm
Factory-mark: W v G Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 689
On a stamp affixed to the underside: 3111 B and f 7,50 and 44

Pouch-shaped lidded vase on a cylindrical foot with four bands in sharp relief. With three constrictions on the body; covered by a domed lid with a conical finial with eight constrictions. Decorated overall with an abstract pattern of flowers and leaves and unpatterned bands. Painted in green, yellow, rust brown, mauve-grey, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 131

14

Bowl 1886
Ø19.3 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 650

Calyx-shaped bowl with a constriction halfway up the side, and on a conical foot-ring. Decorated along the edge with a toothed line, under which on both the inner and the outer sides there are three repeats of an undulating and curving abstract ornament;
in the centre of the well there is a six-pointed star in a circle formed by means of a toothed line. Painted in yellow, green, salmon pink, brown, rust brown, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 126**

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**15**

Bowl 1886
φ 19.4 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 651

Calyx-shaped bowl with a constriction halfway up the side, and on a conical foot-ring. Decorated under the edge on both the inner and outer sides with three repeats of an undulating and curving abstract ornament; within this, on the inside, birds are depicted. Painted in pale yellow, ochre, green, claret red, rust brown, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 126**

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**16**

‘Kool’ (‘Cabbage’) plaque 1886
φ 23.4 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 626
On a stamp affixed to the underside: f 2,-
Biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 18*-1917

Coupe on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with two identical patterns of stylised flower and leaf motifs that are contained within a foliar field with
a jagged outline; around the edge there is a thin line. Painted in turquoise, pink, dark blue, yellow and green on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 124
17

Plaque 1886
ø 23 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 682

Coupe on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a motif of curling leaves and a thin line around the edge. Painted in rust brown, dark blue, green and yellow on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 130

18

‘Distel’ (‘Thistle’) plaque 1886
ø 27.5 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 611

On a stamp affixed to the underside: 3327 and w a Biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 19*-1917

Flat round plate with a curved rim, standing on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a sprig of flowering thistle and a curling and pointed foliar shape contained within a field with an undulating and curling outline. Painted in pale yellow, ochre, rust brown, light brown, green, dark blue and black on a cream ground. The space between the field and the rim is black.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 122
19

Plaque 1886  
ø 40 cm  
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag  
Date-mark: B (1886)  
Inv. no. 360a  
On a stamp affixed to the underside: 1X:4479 and f 30,-

Shallow dish with a twice-pleated ledge, on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a six-lobed rosette, around which there are six repeats of a motif of stylised flowers and leaves. Painted in green, ochre, rust brown, light brown, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 104

![](image1)

20

Plaque 1886  
ø 39.8 cm  
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag  
Date-mark: B (1886)  
Inv. no. 360b  
On stamps affixed to the underside: f 25,- and 3921 AE

Shallow dish with a twice-pleated ledge, on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with stylised floral and foliar shapes and with abstract motifs. Painted in dark green, pale green, yellow, rust brown, mauve-grey, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 104

![](image2)
Plaque 1886
Ø 39.7 cm
Factory-mark: W v G Haag
Date-mark: B (1886)
Inv. no. 360c

Shallow dish with a twice-pleated ledge, on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with an asymmetric foliar shape with a jagged outline, around which there are stylised flowers and fungi. Painted in dark green, turquoise, mauve-grey, ochre, rust brown, light brown, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 104
Cylindrical vase on a twice-constricted, campanulate foot, with flaring rim and a convex ring below the neck. Decorated around the body with six repeats of an ornament of geometrical fields; around the foot with a plain line and a border constituted of rows of short diagonal stripes; and on the flat edges of foot and rim with a serrated line. Painted in yellow, rust brown, green, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** Cf. exhib cat Rozenburg 1983, p. 109, fig. 2
Beaker-shaped vase with a constricted rim, on a curved foot with a globular stem. Decorated overall with stylised sprigs of flowers and leaves. Painted in black on a red-brown ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 129

24

Point cup 1887
15.7 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Model no. 45
Inv. no. 679
On a stamp affixed to the underside: f2,-

Beaker-shaped vase with a constricted rim, on a curved foot with a globular stem. Decorated around the edge with a toothed line, around the shoulder with stylised foliar motifs, and halfway down the body with an irregular line upon which there are small abstract motifs. Painted in green, yellow, black, claret red and blue on a cream ground, and coloured in below the line in light brown.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 129

25

Two point cups 1887
16.1 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Model no. 45

*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
Inv. no. 647
On stamps affixed to the underside of each vase: No. 1 and f 1,25

Two nearly identical, beaker-shaped vases with constricted rims, each on a curved foot with a globular stem. Decorated around the edge with a toothed line; overall on the body there is a decoration of fancifully curling abstract motifs. Painted in pale green and light yellow on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 126 (erroneous date-letter); exhib. cat. Rozenburg 1983 p. 124, fig 34 (erroneous dating)
26

Two turban vases 1887
25.3 and 25.6 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Model no. 25
Inv. no. 674
On stamps affixed to the underside: no. 28 and f 2.50

Two nearly identical, barrel-shaped lidded vases on a constricted, conical foot; covered by a turban-shaped lid with a tall, twice-constricted conical finial. Decorated overall with three repeats of a split leaf motif; in a field around the edge, with curling foliar located between three pointed shapes; and around the lid with six repeats of a guttate motif containing a rosette with an arrow-shaped heart. Painted in claret red, mauve, light brown and black on a salmon-pink ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 129

27

Turban vase 1887
25.3 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Model no. 25
Inv. no. 686
On a stamp affixed to the underside: 6035 and f 4.- and 41

Barrel-shaped lidded vase on a constricted, conical foot; covered by a turban-shaped lid with a tall, twice-constricted conical finial. Decorated overall with stylised foliar motifs, and with fields with a curling and undulating outline; and around the foot with a band with geometric figures. Painted in yellow, grey and black on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 130
28

Four ‘Goudhals’ (‘Gold-throat’) pillar cups 1887 and 1888
a: 26.2 cm; including stilt fused to the bottom 27.2 cm; b: 26 cm; c: 25.6 cm; d: 25.7 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887) (d) and D (1888) (a, b and c)
Model no. 24
Inv. nos. 655a, b, c and d
On a stamp affixed to the underside of c: f17,- and on two stamps affixed to d: 1:X1320 and f10,- and 1:4704 and f10,-
Biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 32*-1917

Four cylindrical vases on a broadened, moulded foot, and with a moulded, flaring mouth. Decorated on the inside and under the outer edge with stylised, curling and angular foliar shapes. Painted in ochre, claret red and green on a cream ground. The lower half of each vase is dark blue.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 126

29

Two pillar cups 1887
25.7 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Model no. 24
Inv. no. 664

On a stamp affixed to the underside: f 2,- and 18

Two cylindrical vases on a broadened, moulded foot, and with a moulded, flaring mouth. Decorated on the flat upper edge with a plain line, and on the outside under
the edge with three repeats of an abstract ornament. Painted in yellow, claret red, green and dark blue on a cream ground. The lower half of each vase is dark blue.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 127
30

Foot chalice 1887
26.2 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Model no. 39; cf. biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 79a-1917
Inv. no. 663

Beaker-shaped vase with a constriction above the moulded foot and a convex ring above the middle line. Decorated overall with a pattern of stylised flowers and leaves, with a toothed line around the upper edge and a band with angular figures around the foot-rim. Painted in ochre, rust brown, dark green, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

Literature *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 127

31

Foot chalice 1887
26.8 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Beaker-shaped vase with a constriction above the moulded foot and a convex ring above the middle line. Decorated overall with three repeats of abstract symmetrical motifs. Painted in ochre, brown, claret red, dark green, dark blue and black on a salmon-pink ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 128

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Cylindrical vase with a narrowed neck and a flaring mouth; on a curved foot whose rim has a hollow moulded profile. Decorated overall with a pattern of flowers and leaves left blank in a mottled field. On the curve of the foot there is a border with stylised, curling leaves; around the edge of mouth and foot there is a toothed line. Painted in light brown, yellow and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 127
‘Roodkeel’ (‘Red-throat’) vase 1887
30.3 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Inv. no. 660
On a piece of paper affixed to the underside: 14
Biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 29*-1917

Cylindrical vase on a broadened, moulded foot, and with a moulded, flaring mouth. Decorated overall with an asymmetric pattern of floral sprigs and leaves, and on the inner side of the neck with six repeats of a band formed by two angular figures. Painted in light brown, ochre, dark green, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 127
Vase 1887
29.7 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Inv. no. 661

Cylindrical vase on a broadened, moulded foot, and with a moulded, flaring mouth. Decorated on the inner rim and the outside with a pattern of flowers and leaves; the colours have run slightly. Painted in dark blue metallic lustre, ochre, dark brown and black on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 129

Two 'blaauw patroon' ('blue pattern') vases 1887
30.3 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Inv. no. 672
On stamps affixed to the undersides: 26, no. 5337 and f 12,50 and 5338 and f 12,50
Biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 29*-1917

Two nearly identical cylindrical vases on a broadened, moulded foot, and with a moulded, flaring mouth. Decorated around the inner rim with a highly abstract pattern of flowers and leaves and with toothed, serrated and dotted bands. Painted in ochre and black on a rust brown ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 128

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**36**

Plaque 1887  
ø 22.7 cm  
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag  
Date-mark: C (1887)  
Inv. no. 361c  
On a stamp affixed to the underside: 6609 and f 7,50, 4 and 50

Coupe on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a stellate motif in a circular field surrounded by a broad band of fanciful patterns; under the rim with abstract figures with curling outlines; and around the edge with a toothed line. Painted in yellow, salmon-pink, green, grey, rust brown, dark blue and grey-blue on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 104

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**37**

Plaque 1887  
ø 22.6 cm  
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag  
Date-mark: C (1887)
Inv. no. 361d
On a stamp affixed to the underside: 6610 and f 7,00 and II and 50

Coupe on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a stellate motif in a circular field surrounded by a broad band of fanciful patterns; under the rim with abstract figures with curling outlines; and around the edge with a serrated line. Painted in yellow, salmon pink, green, grey, rust brown and dark blue on a cream ground.

**Literature** Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 104
38

‘Zwarthart’ (‘Black heart’ pattern) plaque 1887
ø 22.7 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C: (1887)
Inv. no. 361f

Coupe on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a twelve-pointed star surrounded by narrow bands of geometrical figures, itself surrounded by four repeats of a sinuous flower-and-leaf motif; with a scalloped line around the rim. Painted in ochre, orange, green, rust brown and light brown, grey-blue and black on a cream ground.


39

‘Distel’ (‘thistle’) plaque 1887
ø 22.8 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Inv. no. 374
On two stamps affixed to the underside: 605 and 13 and f 4

Shallow plate on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with an asymmetric, stylised thistle motif, and around the edge with a narrow line. Painted in rust brown, yellow, green, grey and dark blue on a cream ground.
40

Plaque 1887
ø 22.7 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Inv. no. 627
On a stamp affixed to the underside: f 2,50

Shallow plate on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a sectional trilobate flower contained in a field with a curling outline. Painted in claret red, grey, pale green and blue-black against a blue-black background on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 124

41

Two ‘Blauwrand’ (‘Blue-rim’ pattern) plaques 1887
ø 22.8 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Inv. no. 656
On a stamp affixed to the underside of a: no. 10 and f 3; b: f 0,75

Two shallow plates on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with two repeats of stylised flowers and curling leaves contained in a field with a twisting outline. Painted in rust brown, yellow, green and dark blue on a cream ground; between the outline and the edge it is coloured in dark blue.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 127. Cf. fig. in Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift 2 (July-December 1892), vol. 4, p. 639

Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
Plaque 1887
φ 22.9 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Inv. no. 690
On a stamp affixed to the underside: f 2.50

Shallow plate on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a sectional trilobate flower contained in a field with a curling outline. Painted in claret red, light brown, green and black against a dark brown background on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 124; exhib. cat. Rozenburg 1983, p. 115, fig. 18

Plaque 1887
φ 27 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Inv. no. 669
On a stamp affixed to the underside: R H and f 5,- and 2 and 4

Flat round plate with a turned-up rim; on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with stylised floral and foliar shapes, and with a dotted line around the edge. Painted in ochre, rust brown, green, dark blue and black against a yellow background on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 128
Plaque 1887
Ø 28.4 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: C (1887)
Inv. no. 668

Flat round plate with a twice-pleated ledge, on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with stylised floral and foliar shapes, and with a dotted line around the edge. Painted in pale yellow, rust brown, black and cobalt blue against an olive green background on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 128

Two ‘Groen patroon’ (‘Green pattern’) turban cups 1888
17.9 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Model no. 26
Inv. no. 659

Two nearly identical, funnel-shaped cups on a tall campanulate stem and with a constricted foot. Decorated overall on the exterior with six repeats of stems and leaves interspersed with six arrow-shaped figures; decorated around the inside upper edge and on the edge of the foot with a toothed line. Painted in light brown, green and black on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 127
Two turban cups 1888
17.6 and 17.7 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Model no. 26
Inv. no. 671
On stamps affixed to the underside: 3319 and f 2,50; as stated in
Rozenburg's sales book, p. 5 (August 1888), The Hague, Gemeentearchief,
beheersnr. 249, inv. no. 797.

Two nearly identical, funnel-shaped cups on a tall campanulate stem and with a
constricted foot. Decorated overall with three repeats of a long foliar shape; between
these, there are three repeats of a stylised flower. Painted in light brown, green and
black on a salmon pink ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 121
Stoppered bottle 1888
21.1 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Inv. no. V 6 MM/1993

Vase on a conical foot with an onion-shaped body, a cylindrical stem with a raised profile, a curved shoulder with eight constrictions, a cylindrical neck, a splayed mouth, and a stopper with a globular, moulded finial. Decorated overall on neck and body with a pattern of twisting lines; on the finial with a quatrefoil motif; around the upper edge with a ravelled line; around the shoulder and the finial with plain lines; and around the edge of the foot with a scalloped line. Painted in blue-black on a salmon-pink ground.

Two vases 1888
25 and 25.2 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Inv. nos. V 7 MM/1993 and V 8 MM/1993

Two nearly identical vases on a curved foot with a moulded profile. The saccate body has twelve constrictions; the neck widens upwards to a flaring mouth. Decorated around the neck with a pattern of twisting lines. Painted in blue-black on a salmon-pink ground.
49

‘Groen’ (‘Green’) turban vase 1888
25.6 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Model no. 25
Inv. no. 675
On a stamp affixed to the underside: 3371 and f 12, - and 30

Barrel-shaped lidded vase on a constricted, conical foot; covered by a turban-shaped lid with a tall, twice-constricted conical finial. Decorated overall with two repeats of a symmetrical pattern of stylised foliar shapes; around the edge of the foot with a toothed line; and around the lid with four repeats of a foliar shape, between which there is a stylised flower with an arrow-shaped stem. Painted in light brown, pale green, dark green and black on a salmon-pink ground.


50

Three ‘Groen patroon’ (‘Green pattern’) turban vases 1888
25.6 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Model no. 25
Inv. no. 683

Three nearly identical barrel-shaped lidded vases on a constricted, conical foot; covered by a turban-shaped lid with a tall, twice-constricted conical finial. Decorated overall with two repeats of a symmetrical pattern of stylised foliar shapes; around the edge of the foot with a toothed line; and around the lid with three repeats of a
foliar shape, between which there are three stylised branches with an arrow-shaped bud. Painted in light brown, dark green and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 130
Two ‘Zwart font’ (‘Black ground’) swan-necks 1888
26.6 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Model no. 29
Inv. no. 462b
On stamps affixed to the underside: no. 3238, paar and f 28,-; as stated in Rozenburg's sales book, p. 5 (August 1888), The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. no. 797.

Two nearly identical candlesticks on a campanulate foot with a moulded profile. The pieces have a bellied body and a tall cylindrical neck that has two constrictions at the bottom and widens to a broad cylindrical mouth. Decorated with bands upon which geometrical and abstract figures are alternated with curling foliar forms and a variety of lines. Painted in dark green, dark brown, dark blue and black on a salmon-pink ground.

**Literature** Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 111

Two ‘Naalden’ (‘Needles’) swan-necks 1888
27 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Model no. 29
Inv. no. 665
On a stamp affixed to the underside: no. 1818, paar and f 15,-; as stated in Rozenburg's sales book, p. 5 (August 1888), The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. no. 797. Biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 5*-1917

Two nearly identical candlesticks on a campanulate foot with a moulded profile. The pieces have a bellied body and a tall cylindrical neck that has two constrictions at the bottom and widens to a broad cylindrical mouth. Decorated with a variety of
bands upon which angular and pointed figures are alternated with curling foliar shapes. Painted in pale green, brown, grey and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 128

53

Five-piece set of ‘Tulp’ (‘Tulip’) ledge vases and ledge cups 1888
Lidded vases 35.5, 36 and 36.8 cm and cups 26.2 and 26.5 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Model nos. 62 (vase) and 63 (cup)
Inv. no. 648
On stamps affixed to the underside: nr. 3804 and Stel and f 65,-

Three nearly identical tulip-shaped lidded vases on a twice-constricted shaft and a flat foot with a moulded profile; covered by a lid in the shape of a pagoda with three segments and bulbous finial. Decorated overall with three repeats of stylised floral and foliar shapes.

The above are accompanied by two nearly identical cups, which are tubular on a rounded base and articulated into four segments by means of three thickened rings. The cups stand on a stepped foot and have a flaring mouth.

All pieces are decorated overall with three repeats of an abstract pattern and are painted in dark green, pale green, ochre, light brown, dark brown, mauve-grey and dark blue on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 126; exhib. cat. Rozenburg 1983, p. 119, fig. 24

54

Three-piece set with one ‘Kant’ (‘Lace’) pagoda vase and two ‘Kant’ pagoda cups or candlesticks 1888
Lidded vase 46.4 cm and cups/candlesticks 33.5 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Model nos. 21 (vase) and 22 (cup/candlestick)
Inv. no. 462a
On a stamp affixed to the underside of the vase: no. 1954 and 35; under the cups/candlesticks: f35,- and paar; as stated in Rozenburg's sales book, p. 5 (August 1888), The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. no. 797.
Biscuit model of the vase in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 69*-1917. Cf. two identical candlesticks in the collection of The Hague, Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. MC 9-1992), under which the pattern-name ‘Kant’ is written.

One lidded vase, ovoid with a cylindrical neck; standing on a wide, globular shaft with five constrictions, and on a curved foot with a moulded profile; covered by a calyx-shaped lid with five con-
striction and a very sharp point. Decorated with bands within which geometrical and abstract figures alternate with curling foliar shapes, and, around the lid, with three repeats of abstract motifs. The vase is accompanied by two nearly identical cylindrical candlesticks with a tulip-shaped mouth widening downwards to a campanulate foot with three constrictions. Decorated with bands within which geometrical and abstract figures alternate with curling foliar shapes.

All the pieces are painted in ochre, light brown, dark blue and black on a salmon-pink ground. This was originally a four-piece set, from which one piece was lost after 1905.

**Literature** Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 111; exhib. cat. Rozenburg 1983, p. 118 fig. 23

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55

Two large Japanese vases 1888
45.7 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Model no. 71
Inv. no. 411

Two nearly identical ovoid vases with flaring mouths. The cream-coloured ground is completely covered with a transparent pale green glaze. Over this, on the outer side from the mouth downwards, a dark blue glaze runs to six points at the bottom.

**Literature** Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 108

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56

Five-piece set of three ‘Pauw’ (‘Peacock’) tower vases and two tower cups
1888
Lidded vases 64.3 cm and cups 43.5 cm
Three nearly identical lidded vases on a high conical foot. The belly, in the shape of a double cone, curves at the bottom; the upper part of the tall, cylindrical neck has three constrictions. The campanulate lid has various constrictions and features a flattened bulbous finial on a beaker-shaped stem. One side of each vase is decorated with a peacock, its fan spread; the other is decorated with a pattern of stylised peacock's feathers. The lids are decorated overall with three repeats of an abstract pattern. The vases are accompanied by two nearly identical cups on a concave conical foot. These have a conical body on a cylindrical ring; the upper part of the tall cylindrical neck is moulded with three concave profiles, and has a splayed mouth. The cups are decorated overall with three repeats of a pattern with peacock's feathers and abstract motifs. All pieces are painted in dark green, pale green, pale yellow, ochre, brown, claret red, mauve-grey, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 107; exhib. cat. Rozenburg 1983, p. 119, fig. 25

‘Ster’ (‘Star’) bowl 1888
ø 19 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Painter's signature: W.F. Abspoel (born 14.1.1871)
Inv. no. 657
Biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 9*-1917

Calyx-shaped bowl with a constriction halfway up the side, and on a conical foot-ring. Decorated on the inner side with a star-shaped pattern composed of three sharp points, between which there are three rounded, curling forms. On the outer side there are three repeats of a motif of two stylised insects. Painted in light brown and dark blue on a cream ground.

**Literature** Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 127
58

Plaque 1888
ø 22.5 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Inv. no. 361a

Coupe on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a star-shaped ornament consisting of a six-sided core surrounded by six equal, pointed segments containing figures with angular and curling outlines; around the rim with six repeats of a symmetrical ornament formed by small three and four-sided fields; and, around the edge, with a serrated line. Painted in grey-green, light brown, ochre, rust brown and black on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 104; exhib. cat. Rozenburg 1983, p. 122, fig. 28a (given as inv. no. 361d)

59

Plaque 1888
ø 22.7 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Inv. no. 361b
On a stamp affixed to the underside: III and f 10.00

Coupe on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with an asymmetric pattern of a stylised flower and curling leaves. It is painted in light brown, rust brown, dark blue, green and black on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 104
60

Plaque 1888
ø 22.3 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Inv. no. 361e
On a stamp affixed to the underside: nr. 1729 and f 6,00; as stated in Rozenburg's draft invoice book, p. 16 (March 1888), The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. no. 653.

Coupe on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a partially-visible stellate motif surrounded by a wide border with fanciful patterns; on the rim, with a border of abstract figures with curling outlines; and, around the edge, with a serrated line. Painted in pale yellow and ochre, green, white, rust brown and dark blue against a mauve-grey background on a cream ground.

**Literature** Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 104

61

‘Zwarthart’ (‘Black heart’ pattern) plaque 1888
ø 22.4 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Inv. no. 361g
On a stamp affixed to the underside: X 1729 and f 7,00

Coupe on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated in the centre with a twelve-pointed star, surrounded by narrow borders with geometrical figures, around which there are four repeats of a sinuous flower-and-leaf motif; and, around the rim, with a scalloped line. Painted in yellow, orange, green, rust brown, dark blue and black on a cream ground.

**Literature** Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 104. Cf. exhib. cat. Rozenburg, p. 124, no. 35
Plaque 1888
ø 28.5 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: D (1888)
Painter's signature: H.D. Schild (born 7.9.1872)
Inv. no. 511
On a stamp affixed to the underside: X 1717 and f 10,-; as stated in Rozenburg's draft invoice book, p. 16 (March 1888), The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. no. 653.

Flat round plate with a curved rim standing on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole.
Decorated with stylised floral and foliar shapes, and around the edge with a narrow line. Painted in cobalt blue, blue-black, yellow, claret red, rust brown, dark brown and light brown, green and black against a cobalt blue background on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 114

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**63**

Plaque 1888  
ø 28.4 cm  
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag  
Date-mark: D (1888)  
Inv. no. 667

Flat round plate with a twice-pleated ledge, on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with stylised floral and foliar patterns; and, around the edge, with a dotted line. Painted in ochre, rust brown and cobalt blue against a blue-black background on a cream ground.

**Literature** *Museum Mesdag* 1905, p. 128

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**64**

Four ginger jars, c. 1889  
c. 14.5 cm (The bottom is uneven due to drops of glaze.)  
Factory-mark: none  
Date-mark: none  
Model no. 3  
Inv. nos. 601 and 629

Four nearly identical, ovoid pots with a turban-shaped lid. Painted overall with a blue-black metallic lustre, with transparent green on the edges.

*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, pp. 122 and 124. Cf. exhib. cat. Rozenburg, pp. 153 and 155, fig. 102. Ginger pots such as these feature in Rozenburg's draft invoice book from as early as April 1888, p. 16, The Hague, Gemeentearchief, beheersnr. 249, inv. no. 653

65

Two vases 1889
29.8 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: E (1889)
Inv. no. 454
On stamps affixed to the underside: 55

Two nearly identical, cylindrical vases with a narrowed neck and a flaring mouth; each on a curved foot whose rim has a hollow moulded profile. Decorated overall with a pattern of flower sprigs and leaves; the colour of this has run. Also decorated around the edge with a narrow line, and, around the foot, with a diagonally striped band. Painted in brown, yellow, green and black on a cream ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 111

66

Large Japanese vase 1889
46 cm
Factory-mark: Rozenburg den Haag
Date-mark: E (after 1 June 1889)
Work order no.: 144 (scored inside vase)
Model no. 71  
Inv. no. 412

An ovoid vase with flaring mouth. The inside is coated overall with a mottled brown glaze, the outside with a blue-black metallic lustre glaze.

67

‘Wit fond, grassen’ (‘White ground, grasses’) plaque 1889
ø 24.2 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: E (1889)
Inv. no. 680
On a stamp affixed to the underside: 4388 and f 7,50 Biscuit model in The Hague, Gemeentemuseum: MC 16*-1917

Round convex plate with a bulging edge, on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a symmetrical ornament formed by stylised flowers and leaves. Painted in mauve-grey and in various tints of dark brown on a red-brown ground.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 129

68

‘Blaauwfond’ (‘Blue ground’) plaque 1889
ø 25 cm
Factory-mark: W v G den Haag
Date-mark: E (1889)
Inv. no. 681
On a stamp affixed to the underside: no. 4912 and 36

Round convex plate with a bulging edge, on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Decorated with a scalloped field, within which a central ornament consisting of a moon and three stars is surrounded by three alternate repeats of a stylised floral motif and of three sectional flower buds. Painted in yellow, green and dark blue against a dark blue background on a cream ground.
69

Plaque 1889  
ø 28 cm  
Factory-mark: Rozenburg den Haag  
Date-mark: E (after 1 June 1889)  
Inv. no. 375

Flat round plate with a curved rim, on a conical foot-ring pierced with a single hole. Glazed with blue-black metallic lustre glaze. The underside has a scratched and spotted transparent blue glaze.

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 105

70

Dish, c. 1889  
ø 33.8 cm  
Factory-mark: none  
Date-mark: none  
Inv. no. 443

Round, shallow dish with convex well and flattened rim. Glazed entirely with blue-black metallic lustre

Literature Museum Mesdag 1905, p. 110
Works on loan to the Van Gogh Museum
1973-1996

The following is a list of paintings, drawings and sculptures lent to the Van Gogh Museum between 1973 and 1996 and which still form part of its collection. Each work has an inventory number made up as follows: the first letter stands for the technique (s = paintings, d = drawings, v = sculpture); this is followed by a reference number and then by a capital letter (B = loan) and the year of loan. The lending institution is also given.

Paintings

**Aarts, Johan Joseph**  
Dutch, 1871-1934  
Le Raccard  
Oil on canvas, 47 × 69 cm  
Signed at lower right: A  
s 63 B/1991  
Loan from the Josefowitz Collection

**Alma-Tadema, Lawrence**  
Dutch, 1836-1912  
Through a Roman archway 1874  
Oil on panel, 35 × 28.5 cm  
Initialled and inscribed at upper right on keystone: LAT Op. CXXXIX  
s 101 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

**Alma-Tadema, Lawrence**  
Dutch, 1836-1912  
Hadrian visiting a Romano-British pottery 1884  
Oil on canvas, 159 × 171 cm  
Signed and inscribed at lower right:  
*L. Alma-Tadema Op. CCLXI B*  
s 137 B/1996  
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

**Alma Tadema-Epps, Laura Theresa**  
English, 1852-1909  
Airs and graces  
Oil on canvas, 56.5 × 41 cm  
Signed and inscribed: *Laura Theresa Alma Tadema Op CX*  
s 107 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Andriesse, Erik
Dutch, 1957-1993
Untitled (Amaryllis)
Acrylic on birch triplex, 155.3 × 155.5 cm
s 12 B/1988
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Angrand, Charles
French, 1854-1926
View of the Seine, St. Ouen 1886
Oil on canvas, 46 × 55.5 cm
Signed and dated at lower left: CH. ANGRAND-86
s 33 B/1991
Loan from the Josefowitz collection

Apol, Lodewijk Franciscus H.
Dutch, 1850-1936
Snowy forest
Oil on canvas, 61 × 81 cm
Signed at lower right: Louis Apol
s 111 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Bernard, Emile
French, 1868-1941
Bathers with waterlilies c. 1889
Oil on canvas, 92.7 × 72.4 cm
Signed at lower right: E. Bernard
s 24 B/1991
Loan from the Josefowitz Collection

Bernard, Emile
French, 1868-1941
Self portrait 1897
Oil on canvas, 52 × 42 cm
Dedicated, signed and dated at upper left: A nos amis de Hollande
Emile Bernard 1897
s 73 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
**Boch, Anna**  
Belgian, 1848-1936  
Female figure in a landscape 1890-92  
Oil on canvas, 101 × 76 cm  
Signed at lower right: *A. Boch*  
s 139 B/1996  
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

**Bonheur, Auguste**  
French, 1824-1884  
Animals drinking  
Oil on canvas, 68.5 × 98.5 cm  
Signed at lower left: *Auguste Bonheur*  
s 141 B/1996  
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

**Bilders, J.W.**  
Dutch, 1811-1890  
Forest  
Oil on panel, 34.5 × 28 cm  
Signed at lower right: *W. Bilders*  
s 108 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

**Bonvin, François**  
French, 1817-1887  
Still life with oysters 1858  
Oil on canvas, 36 × 54 cm  
Signed and dated at lower left: *F. Bonvin 1858*  
s 27 B/1991  
Loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

**Bonvin, François**  
French, 1817-1887  
Still life 1871  
Oil on canvas, 45.5 × 36 cm  
Signed and dated at the lower left: *1871 / F. Bonvin. London*  
s 74 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

**Boulard, Auguste**  
French, 1825-1892  
The meal  
Oil on canvas, 88.5 × 73 cm  
Signed at lower left: *A. Boulard*  
s 75 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Breton, Émile Adélard
French, 1831-1902
The breakers 1874
Oil on canvas, 48 × 70.5 cm
Signed and dated on the lower right: Emile Breton 74
s 152 B/1996
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Caillebotte, Gustave
French, 1848-1894
Paris in the sun 1880
Oil on canvas, 100.5 × 74 cm
Signed at lower left: G. Caillebotte
s 30 B/1991
Loan from the Josefowitz Collection

Carrière, Eugène
French, 1849-1906
Grief c. 1900
Oil on canvas, 41 × 33 cm
Signed at lower right: Eugène Carrière
s 28 B/1991
Loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

Corot, Jean-Baptiste-Camille
French, 1796-1875
Landscape with pollard willows
Oil on panel, 40 × 30.5 cm
Signed at lower left: Corot
s 76 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Souvenir of Les Landes
Oil on canvas, 38 × 56.5 cm
Signed at lower left: Corot
s 77 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Woman playing a mandolin (Berthe Goldschmidt) 1850-60
Oil on canvas, 46.5 × 31 cm
Signed at lower left: Corot
s 140 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Courbet, Gustave
French, 1819-1877
View of the forest of Fontainebleau 1855
Oil on canvas, 82 × 102 cm
Signed and dated at lower left: 55. G. Courbet
s 78 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Still life with apples 1872
Oil on canvas, 59 × 48 cm
Signed at lower left: G. Courbet; inscribed and dated at lower right: 
St Pélagie 1872
s 79 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Couture, Thomas
French, 1815-1879
Lust for gold
Oil on canvas, 35 × 45 cm
Signed at lower right: T.C.
s 80 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Cross, Henri-Edmond
French, 1856-1910
Fishermen on the Mediterranean (Var)
Oil on canvas, 38 × 46 cm
Signed at lower right: Henri Edmond Cross
s 29 B/1991
Loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

Daubigny, Charles-François
French, 1817-1878
Orchard
Oil on canvas, 55 × 107.5 cm
Signed at lower left: Daubigny
s 81 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Landscape
Oil on panel, 24.5 × 54.5 cm
Signed at lower right: Daubigny
s 82 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Evening landscape 1866
Oil on canvas, 28 × 60.5 cm
Signed and dated at lower right: Daubigny 1866
s 37 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague
Seascape 1876
Oil on canvas, 100 × 200 cm
Signed and dated: Daubigny 1876
s 105 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Daumier, Honoré
French, 1808-1879
The reading
Oil on panel, 27 × 35 cm
Signed at lower right: h. Daumier
s 84 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Christ and his disciples
Oil on canvas, 65 × 81 cm
Signed at lower right: h. D.
s 83 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Decamps, Alexandre-Gabriel
French, 1803-1860
Searching for truffles
Oil on canvas, 98.5 × 132.5 cm
Signed at lower right: D.C.
s 85 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
A shepherd with his flock 1843
Oil on canvas, 80 × 117 cm
Signed and dated at lower left on a rock: Decamps 1843
s 22 B/1991
Loan from the Amsterdam Historisch Museum (Fodor Collection)
A Turkish school 1846
Oil on canvas, 117 × 94 cm
Signed and dated at lower right: DECAMPS 46
s 156 B/1996
Loan from the Amsterdam Historisch Museum
At a town in Asia Minor 1846
Oil on canvas, 30 × 44 cm
Signed and dated at lower right: DECAMPS 46
s 157 B/1996
Loan from the Amsterdams Historisch Museum (Fodor Collection)

Delacroix, Eugène
French, 1798-1863
The agony in the garden 1861
Oil on canvas, 32 × 42 cm
Signed and dated at lower left: Eug. Delacroix 1861
s 86 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Diaz de la Peña, Virgilio-Narcisso
French, 1808-1876
Nymph with cupids 1851
Oil on panel, 44.5 × 32.5 cm
Signed and dated at lower left: N. Diaz. 51
s 23 B/1991
Loan from the Amsterdams Historisch Museum (Fodor Collection)
Idyll 1853
Oil on panel, 38 × 55 cm
Signed and dated at lower right: N. Diaz. 53
s 87 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Dupré, Jules
French, 1811-1889
The broad way
Oil on canvas, 91 × 118 cm
Signed at lower left: Dupré
s 8 B/1986
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Duran, Emile-Auguste-Carolus
French, 1838-1917
The footman 1861
Oil on panel, 59 × 18.5 cm
s 26 B/1991
Loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo
The housekeeper 1861
Oil on panel, 59 × 18.5 cm
Signed and dated at lower right: Carolus Duran 61
s 25 B/1991
Loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996
**Fantin-Latour, Henri**  
French, 1836-1904  
Still life with grapes and apples  
Oil on canvas, 32 × 40.5 cm  
Signed at upper right: **Fantin**  
s 16 B/1990  
Loan from a private collection  
Still life with flowers 1887  
Oil on canvas, 72 × 60 cm  
Signed and dated at lower right: **Fantin 87**  
s 89 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

**Forain, Jean-Louis**  
French, 1852-1931  
The defence c. 1900  
Oil on canvas, 60 × 73 cm  
Signed at lower right: **Forain**  
s 31 B/1991  
Loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

**Gestel, Leo**  
Dutch, 1881-1941  
Girl playing the piano 1909  
Oil on canvas, 65 × 47 cm  
Signed and dated at lower right: **Leo Gestel 09**; inscribed at the back: **Leo Gestel, Dag en lampstudie Winter 1908-09. Woerden.**  
s 32 B/1991  
Loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo  
Autumn day 1909  
Oil on canvas, 50 × 65 cm  
Dated on the back: **1909**  
s 38 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague
Self portrait
Oil on canvas, $98 \times 54$ cm
s 155 B/1996
Loan from a private collection

**Gogh, Vincent van**
Dutch, 1853-1890
Forest 1887
Oil on canvas, $50 \times 65$ cm
s 119 B/1993
Loan from a private collection

**Hayet, Louis**
French, 1864-1940
Blue hills c. 1888
Oil on canvas, $51 \times 73$ cm
Signed at lower right: *L. Hayet*
s 34 B/1991
Loan from the Josefowitz Collection

**Israëls, Isaac**
Dutch, 1865-1934
Portrait of Willem Steenhoff 1927
Oil on canvas, $100 \times 65$ cm
Signed at lower right: *ISAAC ISRAELS*
s 161 B/1996
Loan from the Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

**Jongkind, Johan Barthold**
Dutch, 1819-1891
River landscape at Rouen c. 1852
Oil on canvas, $52 \times 73.5$ cm
Signed at lower left: *jongkind*
s 142 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

**Mancini, Antonio**
Italian, 1852-1930
The poor child
Oil on canvas, $148 \times 81$ cm
Signed at upper right: *A. Mancini*
s 91 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

**Marcke de Lummen, Emile van**
French, 1827-1890
Farmer with dogs
Oil on canvas, 38 × 55 cm
Signed at lower right: Em. van Marcke
s 153 B/1996
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

**Marilhat, Prosper-Georges-Antoine**
French, 1811-1847
Landscape with caravan fording a river
Oil on panel, 34.5 × 62 cm
Signed at lower left: P. MARILHAT
s 158 B/1996
Loan from the Amsterdams Historisch Museum

**Maris, Jacob**
Dutch, 1837-1899
Landscape
Oil on panel, 16 × 39 cm
Signed at lower right: J. Maris
s 112 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague
Bridge
Oil on canvas, 25 × 35.5 cm
Signed at lower right: J. Maris
s 114 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

**Maris, Matthijs**
Dutch, 1839-1917
Study of a nude boy
Oil on panel, 62 × 35 cm
s 39 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague
Head of a sheep
Oil on panel, 41.5 × 44.5 cm
Signed at lower right: M.M.
s 143 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

**Mauve, Anton**
Dutch, 1838-1888
Woodcutters
Oil on canvas, 111 × 160 cm
Signed at lower right: A. Mauve. f.
s 138 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

**Mellery, Xavier**
French, 1845-1921
Wintry day
Oil on canvas, 67 × 53.5 cm
Signed at lower right: X Mellery
s 35 B/1991
Loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

Mesdag, Hendrik Willem
Dutch, 1831-1915
Ships at sunset
Oil on canvas, 49 × 59 cm
s 1 BM/1990
Loan from a private collection

Millet, Jean-François
French, 1814-1875
Girl carrying water c. 1855
Oil on canvas, 41 × 33 cm
Signed and dated at lower right: J.F. Millet
s 93 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Monet, Claude
French, 1840-1926
Flowers
Oil on panel, 91 × 48 cm
Signed at lower right: Claude Monet
s 94 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Bulb fields and windmills near Rijnsburg 1886
Oil on canvas, 65 × 81 cm
Signed and dated at lower right: Claude Monet 86
s 40 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague
Picasso, Pablo
Spanish, 1881-1973
Public garden 1901
Oil on cardboard, 32 × 47 cm
Signed at lower right: Picasso
s 133 B/1995
Loan from a private collection
Vase of flowers 1901
Oil on canvas, 56.5 × 70.5 cm
Signed at upper right: Picasso
s 130 B/1994
Loan from a private collection

Pissarro, Camille
French, 1830-1903
Rue de l'Epicerie, Rouan 1898
Oil on canvas, 81.9 × 65.4 cm
Signed and dated at lower left: C. Pissarro 98
s 129 B/1994
Loan from a private collection

Pissarro, Lucien
French, 1863-1944
Prairie at Thierceville 1886
Oil on canvas, 50 × 60 cm
Signed and dated at the lower left: Lucien Pissarro 1886
s 102 B/1991
Loan from the Josefowitz Collection

Princeteau, René
French, 1844-1914
A dragoon on watch on a snowy hillside c. 1875
Oil on canvas, 131 × 97.5 cm
Signed at lower right: Princeteau
s 120 B/1994
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Raffalt, Johann Gualbert
Austrian, 1836-1866
The horsepond 1858
Oil on panel, 26.2 × 33.9 cm
Signed and dated at lower left: J.G. Raffalt [1]858
s 95 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Redon, Odilon
French, 1840-1916
Flowers in a blue vase  
Oil on canvas, 60.4 × 73 cm  
s 104 B/1992  
Loan from a private collection

Ribot, Augustin-Théodule  
French, 1863-1891  
The kitchen boy  
Oil on canvas, 94 × 54 cm  
Signed at middle right: t Ribot  
s 64 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Robertson-Bisschop, Suze  
Dutch, 1857-1922  
Peasants' room  
Oil on panel, 34.5 × 27 cm  
Signed at lower right: Suze Robertson  
s 113 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Roelofs, Willem  
Dutch, 1822-1897  
River view with ship, windmill and cottage  
Oil on canvas, 42 × 64 cm  
Signed at bottom left: Roelofs f.  
s 162 B/1996  
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Rousseau, Philippe  
French, 1816-1887  
Still life  
Oil on canvas, 98 × 131 cm  
Signed at lower right on napkin: R  
s 66 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Rousseau, Théodore  
French, 1812-1867  
Forest of Fontainebleau c 1855  
Oil on canvas, 100 × 88 cm  
Signed at lower left: th.r.  
s 144 B/1996  
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Rijsselberghe, Theo van  
Belgian, 1862-1926  
Seascape 1899  
Oil on canvas, 46 × 55 cm
Signed and dedicated at lower right: vR à Jenny Lutens en affectueux souvenir Juillet 1899
s 145 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Scheffer, Ary
Dutch, 1795-1858
Christ Consolator 1836-37
Oil on canvas, 184 × 248 cm
Signed and dated at lower left: Ary Scheffer 1837
s 10 B/1987
Loan from the Amsterdams Historisch Museum (Fodor Collection)

Schuch, Carl
Austrian, 1846-1903
By the woods
Oil on canvas, 67.5 × 54.7 cm
Signed at lower right: C. Schuch
s 67 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Segantini, Giovanni
Italian, 1858-1899
The kiss on the crucifix 1882-83
Oil on canvas, 54.5 × 35.5 cm
Signed at lower right: G. Segantini
s 146 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
A goat with her kid 1890
Oil on canvas, 42 × 71.5 cm
Formerly inscribed on the verso: G. Segantini, Savognino, 1890,
‘Pasqua’ Op. LXXXVII
s 97 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Signac, Paul
French, 1863-1935
The Seine at Mantes 1900
Oil on canvas, 46 × 55 cm
Signed and dated at lower left: P. Signac 1900
s 36 B/1991
Loan from the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo
**Sluijters, Jan**
Dutch, 1881-1957

The prophet Elijah and the son of the Sunamite woman  
Oil on canvas, 150.8 × 120.6 cm  
Signed at upper right: *JS*  
s 134 B/1995  
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague  

Woman in yellow  
Oil on canvas, 77.2 × 69.5 cm  
Signed at upper right: *Jan Sluijters*  
s 19 B/1991  
Loan from a private collection  
The sculptor's studio 1909  
Oil on canvas, 92.5 × 105 cm  
Signed and dated at lower left: *Jan Sluijters 09*  
s 103 B/1991  
Loan from the GIM Gemeenschappelijk Kunstbezit, GIM Algemeen Vermogensbeheer, Eindhoven  
Portrait of the art collector Beffie c. 1910  
Oil on canvas, 108 × 86 cm  
Signed at upper left: *Jan Sluijters*  
s 68 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

**Stengelin, Alphonse**
French, 1852-1938

Landscape in Drenthe  
Oil on canvas, 61 × 79 cm  
Signed at lower left: *A. Stengelin*  
s 154 B/1996  
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

**Stevens, Alfred**
Belgian, 1823-1906

Girl in front of a mirror c. 1900  
Oil on canvas, 126 × 67 cm  
Signed at lower right: *Alfred Stevens*  
s 69 B/1991  
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

**Tholen, Willem Bastiaan**
Dutch, 1860-1931

Wharf in Enkhuizen  
Oil on canvas, 71 × 57 cm  
Signed at lower right: *WB Tholen*  
s 2 BM/1992  
Loan from a private collection
Troyon, Constant
French, 1810-1865
Beach view with capstans
Oil on panel, 36 × 47 cm
Signed at the lower left: C. Troyon
s 98 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Vogels, Guillaume
Belgian, 1836-1896
The Grote Zavel in Brussels 1875
Oil on canvas, 40.7 × 61.5 cm
Signed and dated at lower left: G. Vogels 75
s 72 B/1991
Loan from Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Vollon, Antoine
French, 1833-1900
Harbor view in Dunkerque
Oil on panel, 62 × 36 cm
Signed at lower right: A. Vollon
s 109 B/1991
Loan from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Weissenbruch, Johannes Hendrik
Dutch, 1824-1903
Storm on the Zeeland coast 1900
Oil on canvas, 112.5 × 157 cm
Signed at lower left: J.H. Weissenbruch 1900
s 147 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

Ziem, Félix
French, 1821-1911
View of Venice c. 1898
Oil on panel, 51 × 83 cm
Signed at lower left: Ziem
s 9 B/1986
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Drawings

Andriesse, Erik
Dutch, 1957-1993
Untitled (sunflowers in three parts) 1983
Acrylic, chalk, paint on paper, 65 × 50 cm
(each of three parts)
Inscribed: 3 9 [19]83
d 13 B/1988
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Fantin-Latour, Henri
French, 1836-1904
Cupid disarmed by Venus
Pastel on canvas, 93 × 61.4 cm
d 127 B/1994
Loan from a private collection

Gabriël, Paul
Dutch, 1828-1903
Landscape with a pool
Charcoal on paper, 65.5 × 98.7 cm
Signed at lower left: Gabriël
d 4 B/1986
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Gogh, Vincent van
Dutch, 1853-1890
Vincent van Gogh's boarding house in Hackford Road, Brixton, London 1873-74
Gouache, pencil on paper, 9.1 × 16.6 cm
d 3 B/1973
Loan from a private collection
Man with rake 1883
Pencil on paper, 44 × 22 cm
d 1 B/1974
Loan from a private collection
Park in Arles with a corner of the yellow house 1888
Pen, reed pen and ink on paper, 35 × 26 cm
d 117 B/1993
Loan from a private collection
Corner of the enclosure behind St Paul's hospital 1889
Pencil on paper, 25 × 33 cm
d 118 B/1993
Loan from a private collection

**Looy, Jacobus van**
Dutch, 1855-1930
Paris by night
Coloured chalk on paper, 51 × 56 cm
d 5 B/1986
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

**Mesdag, Hendrik Willem**
Dutch, 1903-191
Seven sketchbooks
t 7-t 13 BM/1993
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

**Mesdag-van Houten, Sientje**
Dutch, 1834-1909
Eight sketchbooks
t 14-t 21 BM/1993
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

**Redon, Odilon**
French, 1840-1916
Twisting spider c. 1881
Charcoal, black chalk on paper, 48 × 36.5 cm
Signed at lower left: *Odilon Redon*
d 62 B/1991
Loan from a private collection
‘La nébuleuse’
Pencil on paper, 46.8 × 37.6 cm
Signed at lower right: *Odilon Redon*
d 132 B/1994
Loan from a private collection

**Toorop, Jan Theodoor**
Dutch, 1858-1928
Cor Cordium 1890-91
Black chalk and pencil on paper, 58.5 × 54.4 cm
Signed and annotated at lower right: *naar de ‘COR CORDIUM’ van / Alb. Verwey / J Th Toorop*
d 135 B/1996
Loan from a private collection

**Weissenbruch, Johannes Hendrik**
Dutch, 1824-1903
Landscape with windmills
Watercolour on paper, 37 × 54 cm
Signed at lower right: *J.H. Weissenbruch*
d 7 B/1986
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Sculpture

**Degas, Edgar**
French, 1834-1917
The tub c. 1866
Bronze, 20 × 41 × 43 cm
Signed: *degas*
v 148 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

**Renoir, Auguste**
French, 1841-1919
The Judgment of Paris 1914
Bronze, 75 × 93 × 15 cm
Signed at lower right: *VII Renoir 1914*
v 149 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

**Rodin, Auguste**
French, 1840-1917
St John the Baptist preaching (bust) 1878/1985
Bronze, 54 × 37 × 26 cm
Signed on the right of the bronze base: *A. Rodin No. II/IV*; inscription on the left: *c by MUSÉE RODIN 1985*; inscribed on the back: *E. Godard Fondeur*
v 116 B/1993
Loan from the Gerald B. Cantor Collection
Jean d'Aire c. 1884-95
Bronze, 205 × 65 × 57 cm
Signed on the base at right: *A. Rodin*; stamped at the back of the base: *ALEXIS RUDIER/FONDEUR PARIS*
v 150 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
Bust of Madame Fenaille c. 1898
Plaster, 74 × 52 × 36 cm
v 151 B/1996
Loan from the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
Hand with a female torso (‘La main de Dieu’) 1917
Bronze, 23 × 11 × 15 cm
Rueb, Gerharda Johanna Wilhelmina
Dutch, 1885-1972
Bust of a woman
Marble, 49.5 × 55.5 × 28 cm
Signed at lower right: G.R.
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

Wezelaar, Henri Matthieu
Dutch, 1901-1984
Dr V.W. van Gogh, 1971-72
Bronze, 27 × 18 × 21 cm
Signed on the right of the neck: W Cast by the Binder foundry, Haarlem
Loan from the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague

compiled by Fieke Pabst
Exhibitions in the Van Gogh Museum
July 1994-December 1996

1994

The Parisian self-portraits by Van Gogh
10 June - 9 October
(travelled to the Hamburger Kunsthalle)

Odilon Redon
21 October - 15 January 1995
(organised in conjunction with The Art Institute of Chicago and the Royal Academy of Arts, London)
(ISBN 0 86559 123 3)

1995

Jean-Louis Forain
10 March - 14 May
(organised by the Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, Tennessee)

In perfect harmony: picture and frame 1850-1920
31 March - 25 June
(travelled to Vienna, Kunstforum Bank Austria)
Exhib. cat. *In perfect harmony: picture and frame 1850-1920*, Zwolle 1995
(ISBN 0 295 97478 8)

Vincent van Gogh as printmaker
19 May - 27 August 1995
(ISBN 90 400 9760 7)
Maurice Denis
7 July - 17 September
(organised in conjunction with the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne and the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool)
Exhib. cat. Maurice Denis, 1870-1943, Ghent 1994
(ISBN 90 5349 130 9)

Franz von Stuck: eros & pathos. Paintings, sculpture, furniture
29 September - 21 January 1996

1996

A new art: 19th century photographs. Museums and monuments
10 February - 28 April
(organised in conjunction with the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam)
(ISBN 90 5349 193 7)

Philipp Otto Runge and Caspar David Friedrich: the passage of time
29 March - 23 June

Vincent van Gogh: the drawings of the Van Gogh Museum. Part I: the early works 1873 - 1883
10 May - 15 September

The colour of sculpture
25 July - 17 November
Exhib. cat. The colour of sculpture, 1840 - 1910, Zwolle 1996
(ISBN 90 400 9847 6)
Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema
29 November - 2 March 1997
Exhib. cat. *Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema*,
Zwolle 1996
(ISBN 90 400 9847 6)

*compiled by Andreas Blühm*
Van Gogh works on paper acquired by museums worldwide 1970-1996

This list contains all the works on paper by Van Gogh which, as far as is known, entered a public collection after the publication of De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue, *The works of Vincent van Gogh* (Amsterdam 1970) - either as loans or as new acquisitions. Because the list is intended as a supplement to this oeuvre catalogue, no account has been taken of the fact that some of the works may since have been called into question. Unfortunately, not all museums supplied their inventory numbers.

In De la Faille's oeuvre catalogue, three drawings in public collections were mistakenly omitted. Although strictly speaking they should not be included here, for the sake of completeness they have, in fact, been incorporated. Also included, in the case of the Van Gogh Museum, are those drawings belonging to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation which were only transferred to the museum after 1970.

To facilitate research, an index has been added listing the works by their F numbers. The index also includes the paintings acquired by museums worldwide since 1970, as published in the *Van Gogh Museum Journal* 1995, pp. 215-20.

**Belgium**

**Mons, Musée des Beaux Arts**

The diggers (after Millet) 1880
Pencil, 35 × 55 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 828 JH 8 C.B.
Inv. no. 1019
Acquired 1979

**Tournai, Musée des Beaux Arts de Tournai**

Olive trees. Montmajour 1888
Pencil, quill and reed pen with brown and black ink, 48 × 60 cm
Signed: Vincent
F - JH -
Inv. no. 71/677
Bequest of Henri van Cutsem via Guillaume Charlier, 1925

**Canada**

**Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada**

The swamp 1881
Pen and pencil, 46.8 × 59.3 cm
F 846 JH 8

*Van Gogh Museum Journal 1996*
Inv. no. 15461
Acquired 1967

**Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario**
The vicarage at Nuenen 1884
Ink, chalk and paint on wove paper, 24 × 36 cm
F 1343 JH 475
Inv. no. 81/556
Acquired 1982

**France**

**Paris, Musée du Louvre (Cabinet des Dessins)**
Weaver, facing right 1883
Watercolour, 32 × 47 cm
F 1108 JH 451
Inv. no. RF 36508
Gift of the Hammer Collection, 1977

**Germany**

**Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett**
Arles, view from the wheat fields 1888
Reed pen and sepia ink, 31.2 × 24.2 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1492 JH 1544
On loan from the Berggruen Collection since 1996

**Karlsruhe, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe**
A factory in The Hague 1882
Pencil and pen, 24 × 33 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 925 JH 117
Inv. no. 1982-39
Acquired 1982

**Wiesbaden, Kunstmuseum Wiesbaden**
L'homme à la pipe: portrait of Doctor Gachet 1890
Etching, 18.8 × 15.5 cm
F 1664 JH 2028
Inv. no. KR 419
Gift from a private collection, 1976
Great Britain

Walsall, Walsall Museum and Art Gallery
‘Sorrow’ 1882
Pencil, pen and ink, 44.5 × 27 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 929a JH 130
Inv. no. GR 128
Acquired 1973

London, The National Gallery
Arles, view from the wheat fields 1888
Reed pen and sepia ink, 31.2 × 24.2 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1492 JH 1544
Inv. no. NG L.559
On loan from the Berggruen Collection, 1990-96

Iran

Teheran, Teheran Museum of Contemporary Art
At Eternity's gate 1882
Lithograph, 50.0 × 35.0 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1662 JH 268
Inv. no. 1031
Acquired 1975

Israel

Jerusalem, The Israel Museum
Peasant woman digging 1885
Black chalk, 48.1 × 32.7 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1252 JH 890
Inv. no. 243.78
Gift of Mr and Mrs H.L. Herring, 1978
The Netherlands

Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum

Vincent’s boarding house in Hackford Road, Brixton, London
1873/1874
Gouache, silver pencil, 9.1 × 16.6 cm
F - JH -
Inv. no. d 3 B/1973
On permanent loan from Mrs K. Maynard since 1973

The church, Austin Friars 1876
Pen, 10 × 17 cm
Juv. XXV JH -
Inv. no. d 405 M/1973
Gift to the Van Gogh Museum, 1973

‘En route’ 1881
Pencil, pen and ink, 9.7 × 5.8 cm
Annotated: En route
F - JH -
Inv. no. d 294 V/1972
Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1972
A man sitting by the fire: ‘Devant les tisons’ 1881
Pencil, pen and ink, 9.8 × 5.8 cm
Annotated: Devant les tisons
F - JH -
Inv. no. d 295 V/1972
Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1972

Portrait of Vincent van Gogh, the artist’s grandfather 1881
Pencil, brown ink, heightened with white, washed, on vellum, 33 × 25 cm
F 876 JH 14
Inv. no. d 1040 V/1994
Acquired by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1994

Peasant with hatchet 1881
Black chalk, 49.2 × 35.2 cm
F 895 JH 21
Inv. no. d 383 M/1971
Acquired by the Van Gogh Museum, 1971

Sower 1881
Pencil, 29.9 × 22.5 cm
F - JH 44
Inv. no. d 302 V/1972
Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1972

Men digging (recto) 1882
Head of a man (verso) 1882
Pencil, 19.8 × 11.2 cm
F - JH 132/133
Inv. no. d 322 V/1972

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Little child 1882
Black lithographic chalk, washed, on watercolour paper, 33.4 × 26.5 cm
F 912 JH 318
Inv. no. d 778 M/1981
Gift of Mrs. A. Cohen Tervaert-Henny to the Van Gogh Museum, 1981
Gas tanks in The Hague 1882
Pencil, chalk, heightened with white, 24 × 33.5 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 924 JH 118
Inv. no. d 776 M/1980
Acquired by the Van Gogh Museum, 1980
Pawnshop in The Hague 1882
Pencil, pen and ink, heightened with white, 23.5 × 33 cm
Signed: Vincent
F - JH 126
Inv. no. d 374 V/1975
Acquired by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1975
Portrait of Sien 1882
Pencil, 29.1 × 22.9 cm
F - JH -
Inv. no. d 777 V/1980
Acquired by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1980
The soup kitchen 1883
Pencil, pen and ink, heightened with white, 9.9 × 10.5 cm
F 1020 JH 333
Inv. no. d 319 V/1971
Acquired by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1971
Man with rake 1883
Pencil, 44 × 22 cm
F 979 JH 314
Inv. no. d 1 B/1974
On permanent loan from H.J. Nolte since 1974
The soup kitchen 1883
Pen and ink, black chalk, heightened with white, 56.5 × 44.4 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1020a JH 330
Inv. no. d 783 V/1982
Acquired by the Theo van Gogh Foundation, 1972
Transferred to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1982
Heath at nightfall 1883
Watercolour, 41.5 × 53.7 cm
F 1099 JH 399
Inv. no. d 386 M/1977
Acquired by the Van Gogh Museum, 1977
White horse 1883
Pencil, black chalk, washed, 50.5 × 63.5 cm
F 1032 JH 368
Inv. no. d 808 V/1986
Acquired by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1986
Heathland in Drenthe at dusk 1883
Pencil, pen, ink, heightened with white, 31.2 × 42.3 cm
F 1104 JH 424
Inv. no. d 810 M/1986
Acquired by the Van Gogh Museum, 1986
Man winding yarn 1884
Watercolour, 46.7 × 34 cm
F 1140 JH 487
Inv. no. d 387 V/1977
Acquired by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1977
The pond in the vicarage garden at Nuenen (The kingfisher) 1884
Pen and ink, heightened with white, 39 × 53 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1135 JH 468
Inv. no. d 775 M/1982
Acquired by the Van Gogh Museum, 1982
Head of a peasant woman with cap 1885
Pencil, pen and ink, 15.2 × 10.2 cm
Signed: Vincent
F - JH -
Inv. no. d 308 V/1972
Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1972
A mill and two figures (recto) 1886
Pencil on sketchbook paper, 19.9 × 11 cm
A man writing (verso) 1886
Pencil, black chalk, on sketchbook paper, 19.9 × 11 cm
F - JH -
Inv. no. d 299 V/1972
Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1972
A couple copulating (recto) 1886 Study of a leg of a plaster statuette (verso) 1886
Pencil, black chalk, 26.9 × 22.1 cm
F - JH -
Inv. no. d 303 V/1972
Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1972
The zouave, seated 1888
Pencil, reed pen and brown ink, heightened with white, 52 × 66 cm

Signed: Vincent
F 1476 JH 1485
Inv. no. d 752 M/1979
Acquired by the Van Gogh Museum, 1979
Park in Arles with a corner of the yellow house 1888
Pen, reed pen and ink, 35 × 26 cm
F 1476 JH 1409
Inv. no. d 117 B/1993
On loan from a private collection, 1993
Corner of the enclosure behind St Paul's hospital 1889
Pencil, 25 × 33 cm
F 1559 JH 1717
In. no. d 118 B/1993
On loan from a private collection, 1993
Study of a moth (recto) 1889
Pencil, pen and ink, on squared paper, 13.7 × 21 cm
Study of a beetle (verso) 1889
Pen and ink, on squared paper, 2.5 × 2.7 cm
F - JH -
Inv. no. d 313 V/1970
Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1970
Sketch of the interior of an inn (recto) 1890
Sketches of a hen and a cock (verso) 1890
Pencil on squared paper, 13.3 × 8 cm
F 1654 JH 2069/2070
Inv. no. d 384 M/1975
Acquired by the Van Gogh Museum, 1975
Sketch of a man's head 1890
Black chalk, 31 × 24.2 cm
F - JH -
Inv. no. d 296 V/1972
Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1972
Sketch of a woman's head (recto) 1890
Sketch of four figures at table (verso) 1890
Black chalk, 23.8 × 32.8 cm
F - JH -
Inv. no. d 385 V/1970
Vincent van Gogh Foundation, 1970

The Hague, Haags Gemeentemuseum
The bakery in the Geest, The Hague 1882
Pencil and ink, 20.5 × 33.5 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 914 JH 112
Inv. no. T 17-1986
Gift 1986
The railway station Rijnspoor, The Hague 1882
Pencil and pen, 24 × 33.5 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 919 JH 123
Inv. no. T 18-1986
Gift 1986

Utrecht, Centraal Museum
A girl raking 1881
Black chalk and watercolour on laid paper, 58 × 46 cm
F 884 JH 57
Inv. no. 21785
On loan from the Stichting Van Baaren Museum since 1980
Orphan man with cap and walking stick 1882
Black chalk, 48 × 24.5 cm
F 963 JH 297
Inv. no. 2179
On loan from the Stichting Van Baaren Museum since 1980
Spain

Madrid, Fundación Colecion Thyssen-Bornemisza
The potato eaters 1885
Lithographic chalk, lithographic ink, 26.5 × 32.5 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1661 JH 737
Inv. no. 558 [1975.9]
Acquired 1978

United States of America

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts
Landscape with bog-oak trunks 1883
Ink and pencil, 31 × 37.5 cm
F 1095 JH 406
Inv. no. 1975.375
Gift of John Goelet, 1975
Young girl 1883
Pencil, lithographic chalk, pen, brush, ink, heightened with white,
48.3 × 25.4 cm
F 1685 JH 300
Inv. no. 1970.468
Acquired 1970

Dallas, Dallas Museum of Art
Head of a peasant woman 1885
Charcoal, 26 × 21 cm
F 1169 JH 631
Inv. no. 15.1989
On loan from the estate of Mr and Mrs L.S. Pollock, 1989
Head of a peasant woman 1885
Charcoal, 31 × 21 cm
F 1183 JH 596
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Interior with a woman at the left by a fireplace 1885
Watercolor and gouache, 32 × 43 cm
F 1223 JH 894
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On loan from a private collection since 1993
Cafe terrace at night 1888
Reed pen and ink over pencil, 62 × 47 cm
F 1519 JH 1579
Inv. no. 1985.R.79
Gift of the Wendy and Emery Reves Collection, 1985
L'homme à la pipe: portrait of Doctor Gachet 1890
Etching, 18 × 14.7 cm
F 1664 JH 2028
Inv. no. 1985.R.81
Gift of the Wendy and Emery Reves Collection, 1985

Houston, The Menil Collection
Garden with weeping tree, Arles 1888
Brown ink with traces of charcoal or graphite on wove paper, 24.5 × 32.1 cm
F 1451 JH 1545
Inv. no. 78-172-E (V 112)
Acquired by John and Dominique de Menil, 1951

Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum
Portrait of Joseph Roulin 1888
Reed pen and quill and brown ink and black chalk, 32 × 24.4 cm
F 1458 JH 1536
Inv. no. 85.GA.299
Acquired 1985

New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Road with pollarded willows and a man with a broom 1881
Black chalk, ink and watercolour on laid paper, 39.5 × 60.5 cm
F 1678 JH 46
Inv. no. 1975.1.774
Acquired 1975 (Robert Lehman Collection)
Florist's garden on the Schenkweg, The Hague 1882
Pencil, pen and brush, brown ink, white gouache, 29.6 × 58.5 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 930 JH 138
Inv. no. 1972.118.28
Bequest of Walter C. Baker, 1971

New York, The Museum of Modern Art
The potato eaters 1885
Lithographic chalk, lithographic ink, 21.5 × 31.4 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1661 JH 737
Inv. no. 239.63
Gift of Mr and Mrs A.A. Rosen, 1983

New York, The Pierpont Morgan Library
Wheat field 1889
Quill and reed pen and brown ink on cream wove paper, 46 × 61 cm
F 1548 JH 1726
Inv. no. 1973.13
Gift of Mrs Gerard B Lambert, 1973

New York, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
Boats at Saintes-Maries 1888
Pencil and ink on wove paper, 24.3 × 31.9 cm
F 1430a JH 1526
Inv. no. 78.2514 T21
Gift of J.K. Thannhauser, 1978
The zouave 1888
Ink on wove paper, 31.9 × 24.3 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1482a JH 1535
Inv. no. 78.2514 T23
Gift of J.K. Thannhauser, 1978
The road to Tarascon 1888
Pencil and ink on wove paper, 23.2 × 31.9 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1502a JH 1531
Inv. no. 78.2514 T22
Gift of J.K. Thannhauser, 1978
Head of a girl 1888
Ink on laid paper, 18 × 19.5 cm
F 1507a JH 1466
Inv. no. 78.2514 T20
Gift of J.K. Thannhauser, 1978

Northampton, Mass., Smith College Museum of Art
Orphan man with top hat, holding a cup 1882
Pencil, 48.9 × 24.5 cm
F 957 JH 242
Inv. no. 1996:3
Gift of Mr Chapin Riley, 1996
Orphan man with walking stick 1882  
Pencil, 48.5 × 26 cm  
F 958 JH 251  
Inv. no. 1984:30  
Acquired 1984

**Pasadena, Norton Simon Museum**  
The back garden of Sien's mother's house, The Hague 1882  
Graphite, black ink and white gouache on brown toned paper, mounted to paper, 46.3 × 60.7 cm  
Signed: *Vincent*  
F 942 JH 147  
Inv. no. M.1980.5.D  
Acquired 1980  
L'homme à la pipe: portrait of Doctor Gachet 1890  
Etching, 18 × 14.8 cm  
F 1664 JH 2028  
Inv. no. F.76.11.G  
Acquired 1976

**Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts**  
Marsh with water lilies, Etten 1881  
Pen and india ink, 23.5 × 31.4 cm  
Signed: *Vincent*  
F 845 JH 7  
Inv. no. 85.777  
Gift of Mr and Mrs Paul Mellon, 1986  
A trunk of a tree, Arles 1888  
Pen and sepia ink on buff paper, 43.2 × 52.1 cm  
F 1509 JH 1494  
Inv. no. 95.33  
Gift of Mr and Mrs Paul Mellon, 1995

**Rochester, Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester**  
L'homme à la pipe: portrait of Doctor Gachet 1890  
Etching, 19.1 × 16 cm  
F 1664 JH 2028  
Inv. no. 77.151  
Anonymous gift, 1977

**Saint Louis, Saint Louis Art Museum**  
Fishing boats at Sainte-Maries-de-la-Mer 1888  
Reed pen and brown ink and graphite on wove paper, 24.3 × 31.9 cm  
F 1433 JH 1528  
Inv. no. 137:1984  
Gift of a private donor, 1984

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San Francisco, The Fine Arts Museums
Path between garden walls 1890
Charcoal with stumping and graphite on cream laid paper, 32 × 40.2 cm
F 1589a JH 2078
Inv. no. 1975.2.5
Gift of The Ruth Haas Lileinthal Estate, 1975

Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art
Old man carrying a bucket 1882
Pencil, heightened with gray and black wash, 47.6 × 21 cm
F 964 JH 273
Inv. no. 1991.217.67
Gift of Armand Hammer, 1991
Man polishing a boot 1882
Black chalk, pencil, heightened with white and gray wash, 48.9 × 27.9 cm
F 969 JH 211
Inv. no. 1991.217.68
Gift of Armand Hammer, 1991
Ploughman in the fields near Arles 1888
Reed pen and brown ink over graphite on wove paper, 25.3 × 34.1 cm
F 1517 JH 1374
Inv. no. 1992.51.6
Gift of Armand Hammer, 1992
The harvest 1888
Pen and brown ink over graphite, 31.7 × 24.3 cm
F 1491 JH 1516
Inv. no. 1985.64.91
Gift of Mr and Mrs Paul Mellon, 1985
Harvest: the plain of La Crau 1888
Reed pen and brown ink over graphite on wove paper, 24.2 × 31.9 cm
Signed: Vincent
F 1486 JH 1527
Inv. no. 1992.51.10
Gift of Mr and Mrs Paul Mellon, 1992

Washington, D.C., The Phillips Collection
Moulin de la Galette 1886-87
Charcoal, graphite pencil, and brown ink, 51.5 × 39.4 cm
F 1396a JH 1185
Inv. no. 0798
Acquired 1953
Yugoslavia

Belgrade, Narodni Muzej
Man writing, facing left 1881
Pen, pencil and watercolour, 31.5 × 22.5 cm
F 1085 JH c.b.
Acquired 1970(?)

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*compiled by Monique Hageman*
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