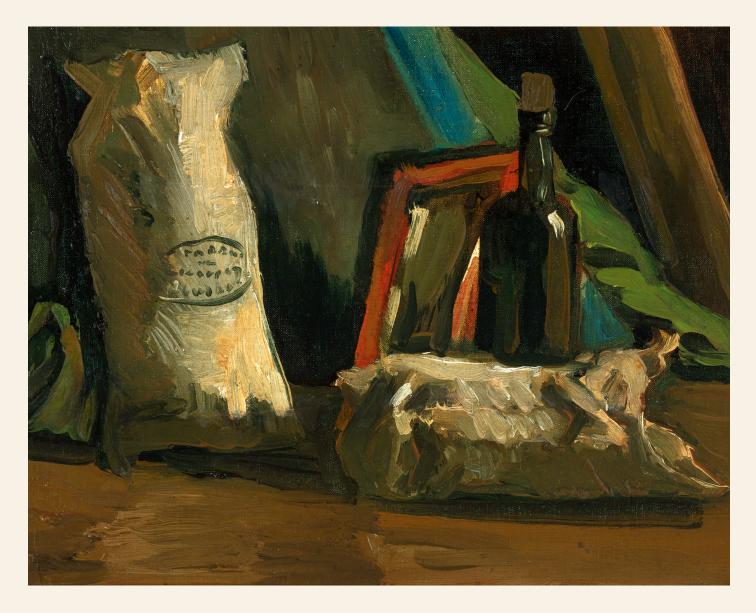
Vincent van Gogh

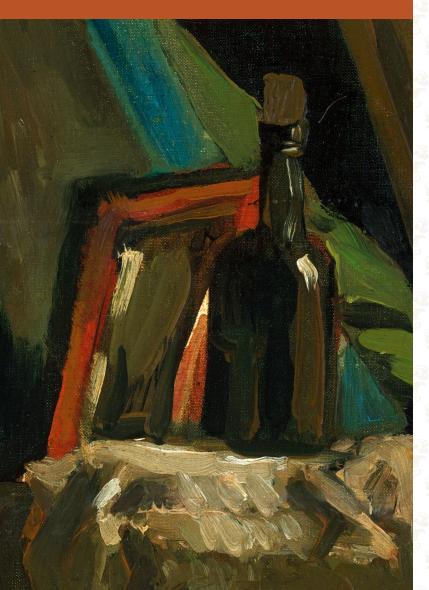


1853-1890 | DUTCH

Still Life with Two Sacks and a Bottle



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Oil on canvas laid on panel | November 1884 **Canvas**: 11 ³/₄" high x 15 ¹/₂" wide | 29.85 cm x 39.37 cm **Frame**: 19 ¹/₈" high x 23 ¹/₈" wide x 2" deep 48.58 cm x 58.74 cm x 5.08 cm

"

What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything?

- Vincent van Gogh





OVERVIEW

incent van Gogh remains one of the most iconic and influential artists in history. His rare works that reflect his personal world are in museums worldwide. *Still Life with Two Sacks and a Bottle* captures a pivotal moment in his journey, created during a period of introspection and reconnection with his roots. Featuring wine and tobacco—two of van Gogh's cherished indulgences the painting offers an intimate glimpse into his life, revealing the emotional depth and raw brilliance that define his legacy.

By 1883, van Gogh returned to his family's home in Nuenen, where, despite strained relationships with his parents and a sense of isolation, he discovered a renewed sense of purpose and direction in his art. Nuenen's rural environment and connection to Dutch artistic traditions allowed him to explore new subjects and reconnect with his heritage. This transformative period ultimately culminated in *The Potato Eaters* (1885), one of his most celebrated works.

In this period, van Gogh mostly dedicated himself to studying still lifes—a foundational genre in the history of art. As he taught painting to local students to support himself, he found opportunities to reinterpret the traditional still life, infusing his works with his emerging personal style. In a letter to his brother Theo, he expressed excitement about teaching still life to villagers as his technique was improving, hinting at his innovative approach. For van Gogh, still lifes were more than technical exercises-they embodied his artistic ambition. This work, with a brighter, more vibrant palette than most from the period, features two of his cherished comforts: tobacco and wine. These simple indulgences brought warmth and familiarity to a young artist navigating the struggles of his career, offering fleeting joy in his pursuit of greatness.

This painting offers a unique opportunity for a private collector to acquire a pivotal work from van Gogh's important Dutch period—a crucial example of his relentless drive for artistic evolution. Interest in van Gogh's Nuenen works is considerable; for instance, *Head of a Woman*, a smaller painting from the same period, was recently acquired by the Noordbrabants Museum in the Netherlands for \$9.34 million.

Born the son of a pastor in Groot-Zundert in the southern Netherlands, van Gogh was unsuccessful in several ventures in his early life. In 1880, he decided to study art, and in 1886 he traveled to Paris to join his brother Theo, who was managing Goupil's gallery. There, van Gogh studied with Fernand Cormon and met such Impressionists as Camille Pissarro, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet and Paul Gauguin, who would play a key role throughout van Gogh's life. Though his death ended a brief career devoid of artistic acclaim, van Gogh has since been exalted as one of the greatest artists of all time.





PROVENANCE

C. Mouwen Jr., Breda Kunstzaal Oldenzeel, Rotterdam H.P. Bremmer (1871-1956) and his heirs, The Hague H.P. Bremmer's Estate Galerie Klopfer, Zurich, 1983 Galerie Koller, Zurich, Catalogue, 25 May 1984, no. 5111 M.S. Rau, New Orleans Private Collection, Pennsylvania M.S Rau, New Orleans

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Antwerp, Zaal Comite voor Artistieke Werking, Tentoonstelling Vincent van Gogh en zijn Hollandse Tijdgenoten, 1955, preface by Mark Edo Tralbaut, no. 7

Essen, Villa Hugel, Vincent van Gogh, 1957, no. 188

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's-Hertogenbosch, Noordbrabants Museum, *Van Gogh in Brabant*, November 2, 1987-January 10, 1988, p. 230-234



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- R. Jacobsen, "Une Exposition van Gogh a Groningue," L'Art Flamand et Hollandais, 1904, vol. II, pp. 13-20
- H. P. Bremmer, Vincent van Gogh...mit zijn Hollandsche perlode, Amsterdam, 1907

H. P. Bremmer, Vincent van Gogh, Amsterdam, 1911

Jacob Baart de la Faille, *L'Oeuvre de Vincent Van Gogh: Catalogue Raisonné*, Paris and Brussels, 1928, vol. I, p. 26, no. 55

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Jacob Baart de la Faille, *The Works of Vincent Van Gogh; His Paintings and Drawings*, Amsterdam, 1970, p. 62, no. F55, illustrated

Paolo Lecaldano, Tout l'oeuvre peint de Van Gogh, 1881-1888, Paris, 1971, pp. 97 and 99, no. 75, illustrated

Jan Hulsker, The Complete Van Gogh: Paintings, Drawings, Sketches, 1980, pp. 124-125, no. 532, illustrated

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Jan Hulsker, The New Complete Van Gogh, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, 1996, p. 124-125, no. 532, illustrated

Louis van Tilborgh and Marije Vellekoop, *Vincent van Gogh Paintings, Dutch period 1881-1885*, Amsterdam, 1999, p. 78-82

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J.-B. DE LA FAILLE

L'OEUVRE

DE

VINCENT VAN GOGH

CATALOGUE RAISONNÉ

Ouvrage accompagné de la reproduction de plus de 1.600 tableaux, dessins, aquarelles et gravures du Maître

TOME PREMIER

TABLEAUX

TEXTE

PARIS ET BRUXELLES LES ÉDITIONS G. VAN OEST 1928

11 11

Jacob Baart de la Faille, *L'Oeuvre de Vincent Van Gogh: Catalogue Raisonné*, Paris and Brussels, 1928, vol. I, p. 26, no. 55, illustrated



ÉPOQUE DE NUENEN

Novembre-Décembre 1884.

Bois, H. 37, L. 45 cent.

Collection M^{mo} H. Kröller-Müller, la Haye, nº 195 du Cat. 1921.
Collection L. C. Enthoven, Voorburg (vente Fréd. Muller et C¹⁰, Amsterdam, 18 mai 1920, nº 221 du Cat.). Reproduit : nº 5 des 40 Photocollographies d'après ses tableaux et dessins. W. Versluys, Amsterdam.

Voir Lettres à son frère, tome II, lettre 387, p. 451-452.

53. Nature morte.

26

Sur un entablement sont posés un bassin en terre cuite brune dans lequel est une cuillère en bois, puis à gauche deux bols blancs, l'un dans l'autre; à droite, un bol blanc à l'intérieur et turquoise à l'extérieur. Derrière le bol, un pot en grès gris de Cologne à ornements bleus et trois bouteilles de vin. Plan de couleur sombre. Fond vert bouteille sombre.

Id.

Toile sur bois, H. 39,5, L. 56 cent.

Collection V. W. van Gogh, Amsterdam. Collection M^{me} J. van Gogh-Bonger, Amsterdam. Exposition Musée municipal, Amsterdam, juilletaoût 1905, nº 23 du Cat. Voir Lettres à son frère, tome II, lettre 387, p. 451-452.

54. Nature morte.

Sur un plan brun sont posés de droite à gauche : une paire de sabots, une écuelle à anse en faïence ocre clair, une bouteille vert noir et une cruche brun clair. Derrière ces objets un pot en grès gris. Fond vert olive foncé.

Collection H. P. Bremmer, la Haye. Collection C. Mouwen Jr., Breda (vente Frederik Muller et C¹⁹, 3 mai 1904, nº 17 du Cat.).

Toile sur bois, H. 42, L. 54 cent. Reproduit : De Week, 14 novembre 1903. Voir Lettres à son frère, tome II, lettre 387, p. 451-452.

55. Nature morte.

A gauche, une blague à tabac remplie; à droite, une autre à moitié pleine et renversée. Derrière cette dernière une bouteille noire et un petit miroir à cadre rougeâtre. Fond formé par un rideau vert.

Id.Toile sur bois, H. 30,5, L. 41 cent.Collection H. P. Bremmer, la Haye.Voir Lettres à son frère, tome II, lettre 387,
p. 451-452.

56. Nature morte.

Id.

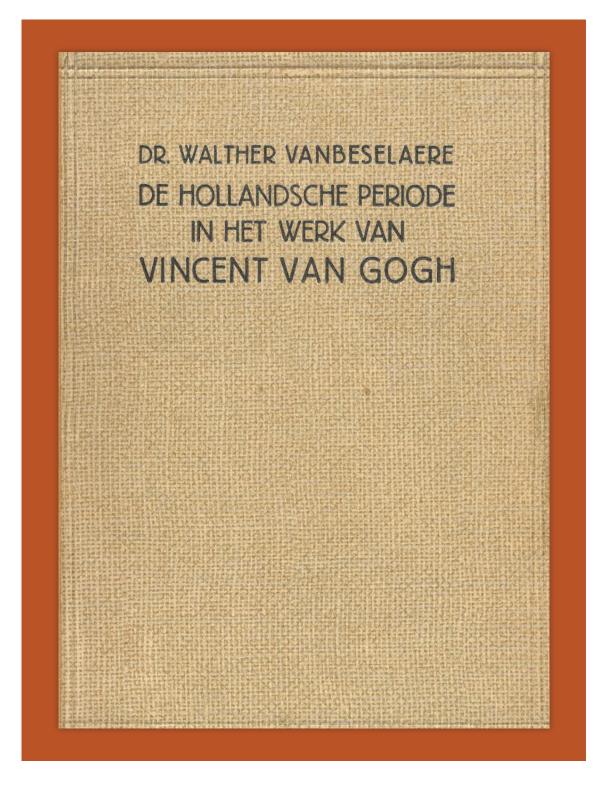
Au milieu trois cruches brunes, une quatrième en travers devant les autres. A gauche, une bouteille verte à étiquette blanche. Une fenêtre constitue le fond à gauche, tandis que le fond du côté droit est un volet ouvert.

Collection H. P. Bremmer, la Haye.

Toile, H. 46,5, L. 56 cent. Voir Lettres à son frère, tome II, lettre 387, p. 451-452.

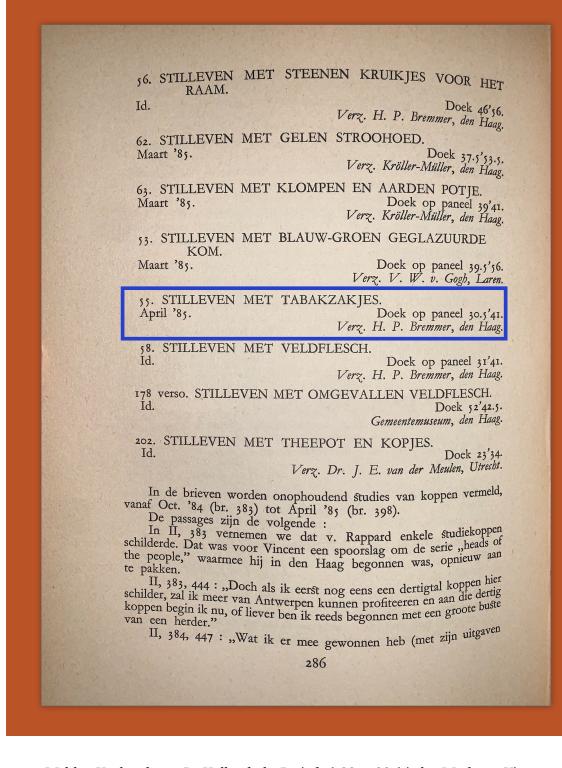
Jacob Baart de la Faille, *L'Oeuvre de Vincent Van Gogh: Catalogue Raisonné*, Paris and Brussels, 1928, vol. I, p. 26, no. 55, illustrated





Walther Vanbeselaere, De Hollandsche Periode (1880-1885) in het Werk van Vincent van Gogh, Anvers, 1937, p. 286, 414





Walther Vanbeselaere, De Hollandsche Periode (1880-1885) in het Werk van Vincent van Gogh, Anvers, 1937, p. 286, 414



		d. Haag	20	Oct. '83	00.	
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41	Aug. '84	id.	73	FebrMa. '85	id.	
42	Aug. '84	id.	74	April '85	AprJuni '85	
43	Aug. '84	id.	75	April '85	AprJuni '85	
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48 48 ^{bis}	Nov. '84	id.	80	April '85	Jan. '85	
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Walther Vanbeselaere, *De Hollandsche Periode (1880-1885) in het Werk van Vincent van Gogh*, Anvers, 1937, p. 286, 414





J.-B. DE LA FAILLE

WITH A FOREWORD BY

CHARLES TERRASSE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY PRUDENCE MONTAGU-POLLOCK

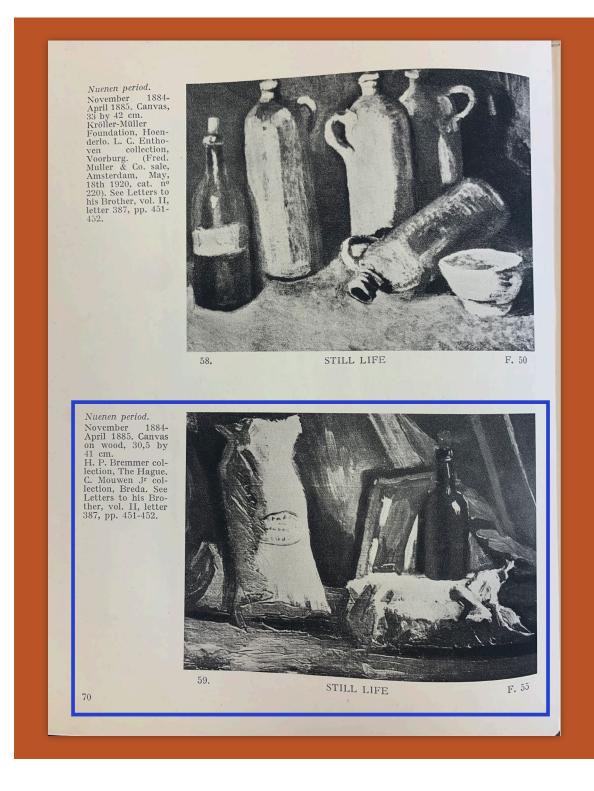
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Jacob Baart de la Faille, Vincent van Gogh, Paris, 1939, p. 70, no. 59, illustrated





Jacob Baart de la Faille, Vincent van Gogh, Paris, 1939, p. 70, no. 59, illustrated



J-B. de la Faille

The Works of Vincent van Gogh

His Paintings and Drawings

Reynal & Company

Jacob Baart de la Faille, *The Works of Vincent Van Gogh; His Paintings and Drawings*, Amsterdam, 1970, p. 62, no. F55, illustrated





62 Nuenen December 1883–November 1885













F 51 [H 55] STILL LIFE WITH BRASS BOWL

Canvas 65 × 80 [25] × 314] Nuenen September 1885 [7] LITTER 542 [end September] 'The pictures I have for you are a few still lifes...a brass kettle, etc, which I made especially with a view to modeling with different colors...

dtfferent colors...' 427 [October] 'Today I forwarded post-paid a box marked V 4 containing the still lifes.' LITBRATURE Vanbeselaere 1937, pp 300-1, 330, 436, 441: September-October 1885; Ietter 424 collectrion Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh [Vincent van Gogh Foundation, inv nr F 51]

F 52 [H 56] STILL LIFE WITH COFFEE MILL, PIPE CASE AND JUG

Panel 34×43 [13]×17] Nuenen November 1884 or shortly later L&TTER X7[before 20 November] See F 49 LITER X7 URE A. Plasschaert, Onze Kunst 1903, part 2, p 174, Vanbeselaere 1937, pp 284-5, 330, 367-7, pt 214, Voermber-December 1884; 1etters 385, 387; probably painted at Hermans' house coLLECTON Olterlo, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, inv nr 239-20, cat van Gogh 1970, nr 187

F 53 [H 65] STILL LIFE WITH CUPS, BOWLS AND THREE BOTTLES

Canvas on panel 39,5 × 56 [15] × 22] Nuenen first months of 1885 LITERATURE Vanbeselaere 1937, pp 284-6, 330, 347, 349, 441: on stylistic grounds March 1885 COLLECTION Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh [Vincent van Gogh Foundation, inv nr F 53]

F 54 [H 60] STILL LIFE WITH CLOGS AND POTS

Canvas on panel 42×54 [16½×214] Nuenen November 1884 or shortly later LETTER 37 [Defore 20 November] See F 49 LITERATURE Wereldkroniek 1993, p 514 [with reproduction]. A. Plasschaert, Onze Kunst 1904, part 2, p 152. Vanbeselaere 1937, pp 284-53, 30, 346-7, 414: November-December 1884 COLLECTION Utrecht, Museum van Baaren Foundation in vre foa Foundation, inv nr 63a

F 55 [H 59] STILL LIFE WITH A BOTTLE AND Two bags

Canvas on panel 30.5×41 [12×16] Nuenen November 1884 or shortly later LETTER 387 [befor 20 November] See F 49 LITER ATURE R. Jacobsen, Onze Kunst 1903, part 2, p 60. Vanbeselaere 1937, pp 284-6, 330, 347, 349, 444: on Stylistie grounds April 1885 COLLECTION The Hague, Heirs of H. P. Bremmer

F 56 [H 61] STILL LIFE WITH FIVE BOTTLES

Canvas 46.5×56 [184×22] Compare F 50 Nuenen November 1884 or shortly later LETTER 387 [before 20 November] See F 49 LITERATURE Vanbeselaere 1937, pp 284-6, 330, 437-8, 414: on stylistic grounds March 1885 COLLECTION The Hague, Heirs of H.P.Bremmer

F 57 [H 62] STILL LIFE WITH POTTERY AND TWO BOTTLES

Canvas 40×56 [15⅔×22] Nuenen November 1884 or shortly later LETTER 387 [before 20 November] See F 49

Jacob Baart de la Faille, The Works of Vincent Van Gogh; His Paintings and Drawings, Amsterdam, 1970, p. 62, no. F55, illustrated



THE COMPLETE VAN GOGH

Paintings · Drawings · Sketches

Jan Hulsker

HARRISON HOUSE/HARRY N. ABRAMS, INC. New York

Jan Hulsker, *The Complete Van Gogh: Paintings, Drawings, Sketches*, 1980, p. 124-125, no. 532, illustrated



is finished with them and they have meanwhile had time to become thoroughly dry. I am going to rework them in order to make them into paintings" (Letter 377). It was Vincent's custom to make prelim-

It was vincent's custom to make preimi-inary studies for many of the details, and at least one of these has been preserved; it is the central figure of the painting *Wood Gatheeres* in the Snow (516) that we see also in water-color 515. It is also typical of Vincent's method of operation that the ox in his small sketch Oxcart in the Snow (511) is a copy of his own large painted black ox (505). But even by October, Vincent was not yet com-pletely finished with the commission; he wrote that Hermans had "already" copied four of the six subjects. And although Her-mans proved to be "a very nice, pleasant friend," Vincent nonetheless still grumbled a bit about his stinginess. Hermans had once given him 25 guldens for expenses, perhaps also something for models (Vincent is not very clear about this), but in any case nothing for his time and trouble (Letter 381).

Margo Begemann Once again there had been a dramatic de-velopment in Vincent's personal life that cannot have made his work any easier. His first account of it comes in a letter to Theo written about the middle of September or a little later (Letter 375). After apologizing for not yet having replied to two letters from Theo, one containing 150 francs, he wrote: "Something has happened, Theo, that most of the people around here do *not* know about or suspect, and must never come to know about, so be as silent as the grave—but it is a terrible thing. To tell you everything I would have to write a book—and that I cannot do. have to write a book—and that I cannot do. Miss Begemann has taken poison, in a mo-ment of despair, after she had spoken to her family, and evil things were being said about her and me. She got so upset that she did it all of a sudden (in my opinion, definitely in a fit of madness)." We are told something about Margo Begemann in Mrs. van Gogh-Bonger's "Memoir" to *The Complete Letters*. We learn that she was the youngest of three sisters who lived next door to the parsonage and was much older than Vincent. It is strange that Vincent said nothing in his letter to Theo of the love affair which must have preceded Margo's attempt at suicide. The inference to be drawn is that Theo had prob-ably been told about it during one of his visits. If this were not so, the way Vincent wrote about a projected marriage without any sort of introduction, would be hard to explain. Laconically and almost incidentally he said "that they put [him] off for two years" (in other words, a marriage was out of the question for two years), to which he added that he would decidedly not agree to that, "since I said that *if* there was to be a question of marriage here, it would have to be very soon or not at all."

There would, of course, be no marriage, whether V bincent wanted it or not. He cer-tainly did not have the burning love for Mar-go Begemann that he had felt for Kee Vos, about whom he had always written in quite different terms. There can be no doubt that he had felt much sympathy for the woman next door, whom he had gotten to know

124 Nuenen/November 1884







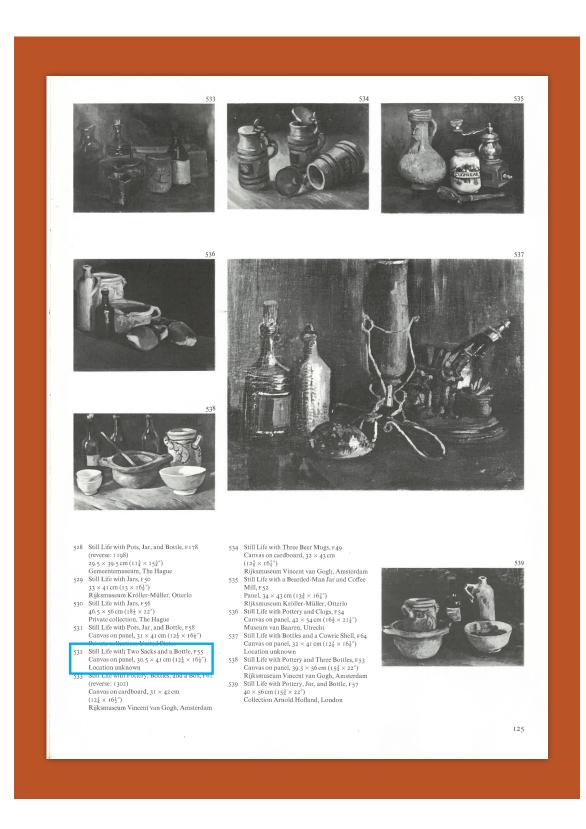
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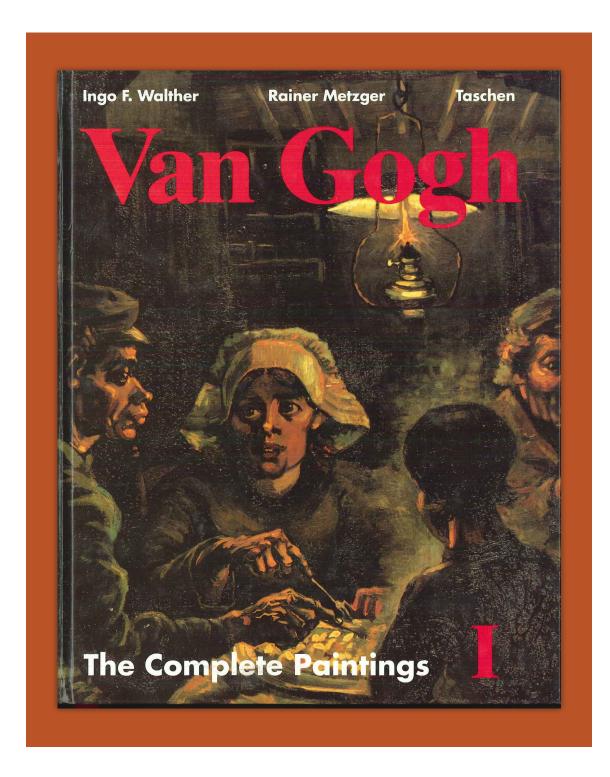
Jan Hulsker, The Complete Van Gogh: Paintings, Drawings, Sketches, 1980, p. 124-125, no. 532, illustrated





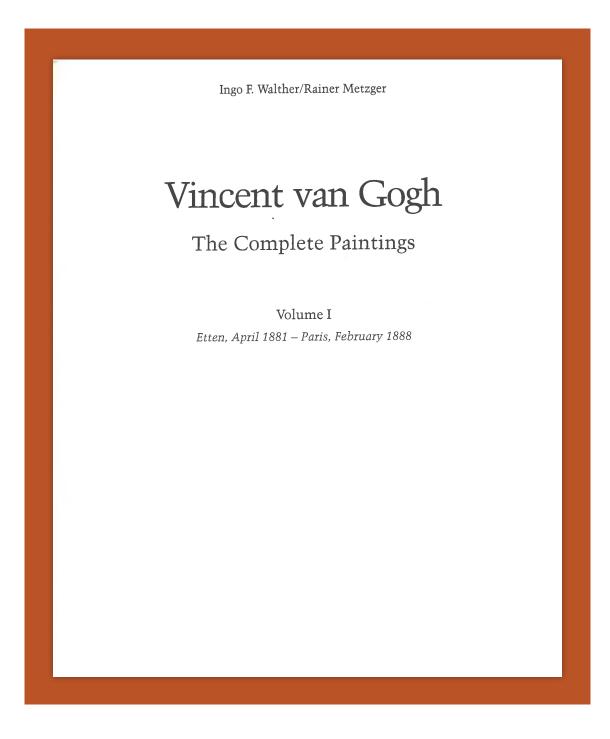
Jan Hulsker, *The Complete Van Gogh: Paintings, Drawings, Sketches*, 1980, p. 124-125, no. 532, illustrated





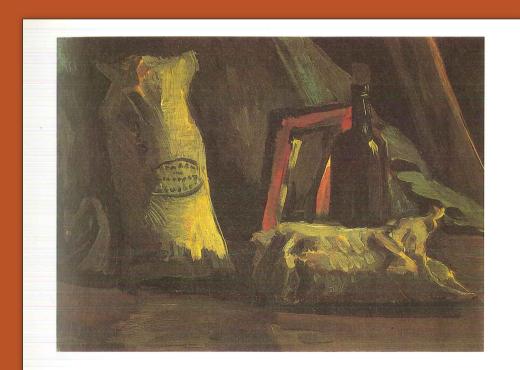
Ingo Walther and Rainer Metzger, *Vincent van Gogh: The Complete Paintings*, vol. I, Cologne, 1993, p. 61, illustrated





Ingo Walther and Rainer Metzger, *Vincent van Gogh: The Complete Paintings*, vol. I, Cologne, 1993, p. 61, illustrated





irresistible urge to go out into Nature. And he even sent his first works home, "to Pa, so that he can see I'm doing something" (Letter 138). Anton Mauve, his mother's brother-in-law and one of the best-known Dutch painters of the day, helped Vincent, introducing him to ways of handling paint and giving him essential advice. Van Gogh believed he had now discovered his true vocation, a path which might in due course earn him honour and financial rewards, and his family and relatives, tradition-minded as they were, approved. In April 1881 Vincent even went to Etten, to his parents' home, where Theodorus van Gogh was now the incumbent of the parish; and now that everything seemed to be working out he was welcomed with open arms.

Things turned out much as they had previously done, though. The career in art dealing, under the wing of his uncles, had ended in dismissal. His life as a pastor, which met his father's hopes, had come to grief in the slums of the Borinage. And now his artistic calling, approved by the whole family, presently turned out a disaster: some six months later, Vincent was thrown out of the house, and the Rev. van Gogh seemingly even decided to disown his son. All the plans van Gogh had obediently

PAINTINGS: NUENEN 1884 61

Still Life with Two Sacks and a Bottle Nuenen, November 1884 Oil on canvas on panel, 31.7 X 42 cm F 55, JH 532 Private collection [Koller Auction, Zurich, 25.-26. 5. 1984]

Ingo Walther and Rainer Metzger, *Vincent van Gogh: The Complete Paintings*, vol. I, Cologne, 1993, p. 61, illustrated







Still life with bottles and earthenware

NOVEMBER 1884-April 1885

NUENEN

9

Oil on canvas 31.5 × 41.7 cm Unsigned

Inv. s 60 V/1962 F 61r JH 533

TECHNICAL DATA

Canvas 14 × 18 (thin) threads, open weave, original edges, not relined, formerly canvas on cardboard.Cream-coloured ground, commercially primed, medium. Brush size: varying from narrow to very wide.Varnished. Details: weave imprints, transferred paint, greyish pink paint on the edges, nail holes.

Painting on the verso (fig. 9a)

PROVENANCE

1885/86-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh-Bonger; on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam;

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 1, pp. 27-28, vol. 2, pl. xv11; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 285, 330, 346-47, 414; De la Faille 1939, p. 74, no. 66; Tralbaut 1955, pp. 6, 35; De la Faille 1970, pp. 63, 614; Amsterdam 1987, p. 317, Three years had passed between the first still lifes Van Gogh painted in December 1881 under the direction of Anton Mauve (cat. 1) and the second series begun in November 1884, to which this Still life with bottles and earthenware belongs. Mauve had sought to teach him something of the genre - form, composition, the reproduction of texture and colour - but in the period that followed Vincent had concentrated on his real passion: the human figure. It is telling that he returned to still life painting just at the moment when he himself became a teacher: 'I now have three fellows in Eindhoven who want to learn how to paint, and whom I'm teaching to do still lifes,' he wrote to Theo in November 1884 [471/385]. His three pupils were the goldsmith Toon Hermans (1822-1897), the tanner Anton Kerssemakers (1846-1924) and the telegrapher Willem van de Wakker (1859-1927).1 According to Van de Wakker, Van Gogh saw 'still life painting [...] [as] the root of everything. If you can paint a still life, you can paint a forest!' - considering Van Gogh's personal artistic development a somewhat paradoxical opinion.2

According to Van Gogh, still life painting was useful because it taught the artist composition and proportion. He advised Kerssemakers to 'do a few still lifes instead of landscape[s], they'll teach you a lot more; once you've done about 50 of them you'll begin to see the progress you've made, and I'm ready to help you and to work with you on the same subject; I still have a lot to learn, and there's no better way to learn how to put objects in their proper place and to distinguish them from one another.'3 And, indeed, he kept his promise, writing to Theo in mid-November 1884 that the week before he had 'painted still lifes day in and day out with the fellows in Eindhoven' [473/387].

An effective technique for suggesting volume is chiaroscuro. particularly the treatment of the shadows. In a letter to Kerssemakers from mid-January 1885, Van Gogh stressed its importance. He suggested they spend another few days painting together 'because the question of clair obscur and colour and

78



NUENEN

no. 1.65; Hulsker 1996, pp. 124-25, 132.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 23 [Dfl. 400]; 1924 Amsterdam, no. 8; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 5; 1929 Utrecht, no. 2 [not for sale]; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 4; 1932 Manchester, no. 1; 1947 Groningen, no. 4; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 5; 1998-99 Amsterdam, no catalogue.

> 1 Van Gogh later also taught the draughtsman Dimmen Gestel (1862-1945); see Gestel's letter to A. Plasschaert, 16 August 1912 (inv. b 3039 V/1983).

2 Stokvis 1927, p. 14

3 Kerssemakers 1912, 1.

4 See Hummelen/Peres 1993, p. 58.

5 Charles Blanc, Les artistes de mon temps, Paris 1876, pp. 64-66. Van Gogh copied this passage into letter 497/401. Blanc had adopted his ideas from the physicist Michel Eugène Cherreul (1756-883), who published the theory in De la loi du contraste simultané des

couleurs, Paris 1839. 6 In 1928 De la Faille was the first to identify

10 In 1920 De la l'anno tant na Juan 2010 the 16 still lifes with bottles and earthenware as a group (F 49-64) and to date them to November 1884. The JH numbers are: 534: 529: 925: 535: 538: 536: 532: 530: 539: 531: 921: 540: 533: 922: 920: and 337. respectively.

7 See letters 471/385, 473/387, 481/-, 492/397 and 493/398.

8 Vanheselaere 1937, pp. 284-86. 9 He correctly added two works (F 178r JH 528 and F 202 JH 738) and dated two others, somewhat later again correctly, (cat. 35 and F 59 JH 921).

10 The two pictures Van Gogh painted in The Hague are F δ_2 JH g_{22} and F δ_3 JH g_{20} . At least six works, cats. 3537, and F 50 H 529. F 56 JH 530 and F 57 JH 530 can be related to the summer of 1885, thanks to the discovery of underlying images: see Van Heugten 1995, pp. δ_2 - β_3 . In terms of style, format and objects depicted, F 59 JH 921 is quite similar to cat. 35, deep of tone in the shadowed parts is an eternally difficult $o_{ne'}(_{4^{8i/-1}})$. It is thus rather curious that although he managed to get the tone of the shaded areas right in his own still life, he seems to have paid little attention to the direction of the shadows in relation to the light source – a not unimportant element in achieving the effect of weight and mass.

In the same letter, Van Gogh also wrote of the significance of colour theory in mastering *chiaroscuro* in addition to painting a lot oneself and watching others. He had begun studying the laws of colour in May-June 1884, when he first read Charles Blanc's *Les artistes de mon temps*. Van Gogh sought to conquer not only the rendering of *chiaroscuro*, but also the laws of colours and tonal painting.⁴ These issues were also central to the still lifes he painted beginning in November 1884, both individually and in combination. This amalgamation of colour and *chiaroscuro* is most obvious in the shadows: while the artist initially used black for the dark areas, after reading Blanc he turned to such deep colours as dark blue, dark green and dark brown.

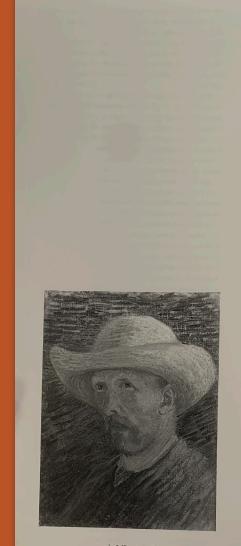
For Blanc – and thus for Van Gogh – a successful combination of tone and colour lay in the use of what he called 'ton rompu.'s 'Broken colour' are achieved by mixing unequal amounts of two complementary colours. Combining equal parts lead to a neutral grey; the other method, however, produces a *coloured* grey that takes on the shade that had been added in larger quantities. An unequal mix of the complementary colours red and green, for example, can lead to either a reddish or a greenish grey. The result weakens the contrasting effect. If, on the other hand, pure colours are placed side by side, they strengthen each other, creating a so-called complementary contrast.

Several of these effects can be seen in *Still life with bottles* and earthenware. Van Gogh painted the darker elements in various colours: the bottles to the left and right are dark blue, the one in the middle dark green and the one in the background to the right a dark brown. The red label on the central bottle stands out vividly, due to the contrast with the green. We see the same principle at work on the right, in the turquoise edging on the box, which contrasts with the brownish red of the object itself.

It is not possible to determine the exact date of Still life with bottles and earthenware. Initially, all the still lifes with bottles and pottery painted in Nuenen were assigned to November 1884.⁶

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9^b Self-portrait (F 61v JH 1302); verso of cat. 9. been partially superseded: some of the pictures were actually painted much earlier, in The Hague (*cat. 1*), others later, in the summer of 1885. In most cases the new dating of the latter group was based on the images found under today's paint layers, which exclude an earlier dating.¹⁰

The total number of still lifes attributed to the period November 1884 – April 1885 is nine." It is difficult to say which of them were painted together with Hermans. The 'lovely things such as old jugs and other antiques' mentioned in the letter, and the description of some of the objects as 'Gothic' might be associated with four paintings depicting such objects as a baardmankruik, an inkstand, a tobacco jar, a coffee mill, a canteen and a large shell.¹² These works also exhibit various stylistic similarities.

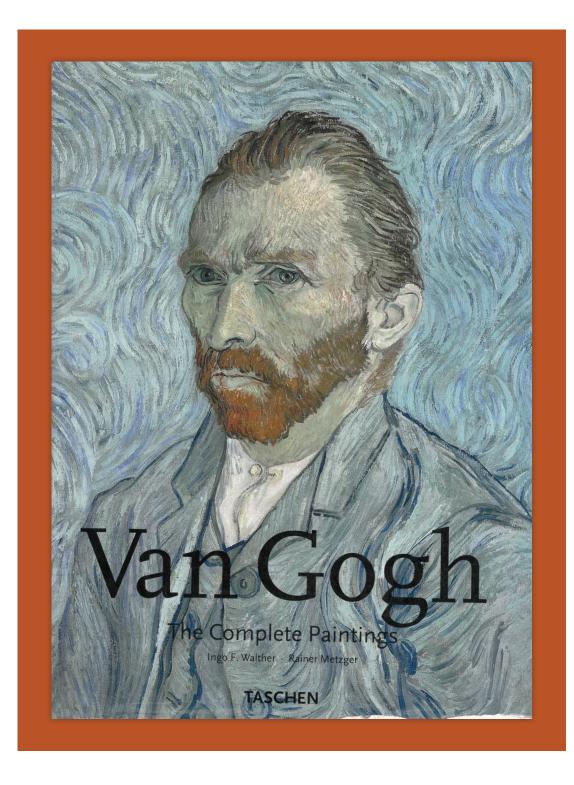
In the other still lifes, which place more emphasis on colour contrasts, the objects are somewhat more commonplace: white cups, jugs for gin, green bottles, earthenware bowls and a Cologne pot. These were probably part of Van Gogh's prop collection, or are things he saw at the homes of the Nuenen poor. The still lifes also include objects the artist himself might have used when drawing or painting, such as a pot with brushes or the darkgreen ink bottle with a red label in *Still life with bottles and earthenware*.¹³

This still life also includes a flat bottle with a large cork, a bottle with a white label and a red ceramic pitcher with, in front of it, an irregularly shaped little pot, which may have been used for holding lard.¹⁴ It has been suggested that the box in the background is a cigar-box.¹⁵ The jar next to the pitcher is a mustard jar, as can be gleaned from the initials – ABB – painted on the front: these stand for Adam Bernhard Bergrath, owner of a mustard manufactory founded in Düsselfdorf in 1726. The anchor crossing the first B is borrowed from the city's coat of arms.¹⁶ To the left behind the carefully arranged objects lies a brown cloth. This cloth, which is slightly lighter in colour than the background on the right, is painted over a darker underlayer and follows the contours of the two bottles to the left. Van Gogh probably painted it this way to increase the contrast between the bottles and the background.

In comparison to the background and the table, the objects themselves are rather thickly painted. Although in the former the

82





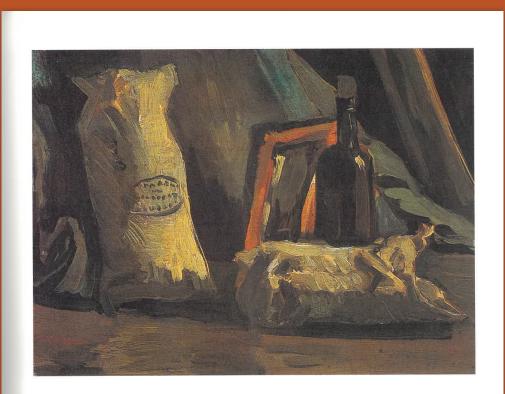
Ingo Walther and Rainer Metzger, *Vincent van Gogh: The Complete Paintings*, col. I, Cologne, 2006, p. 61, illustrated





Ingo Walther and Rainer Metzger, *Vincent van Gogh: The Complete Paintings*, col. I, Cologne, 2006, p. 61, illustrated





irresistible urge to go out into Nature. And he even sent his first works home, "to Pa, so that he can see I'm doing something" (Letter 138). Anton Mauve, his mother's brother-in-law and one of the best-known Dutch painters of the day, helped Vincent, introducing him to ways of handling paint and giving him essential advice. Van Gogh believed he had now discovered his true vocation, a path which might in due course earn him honour and financial rewards, and his family and relatives, tradition-minded as they were, approved. In April 1881 Vincent even went to Etten, to his parents' home, where Theodorus van Gogh was now the incumbent of the parish; and now that everything seemed to be working out he was welcomed with open arms.

Things turned out much as they had previously done, though. The career in art dealing, under the wing of his uncles, had ended in dismissal. His life as a pastor, which met his father's hopes, had come to grief in the slums of the Borinage. And now his artistic calling, approved by the whole family, presently turned out a disaster: some six months later, Vincent was thrown out of the house, and the Rev. van Gogh seemingly even decided to disown his son. All the plans van Gogh had obediently

paintings: nuenen 1884 61

Still Life with Two Sacks and a Bottle Nuenen, November 1884 Oil on canvas on panel, 31.7 x 42 cm F 55, JH 532 Private collection (Koller Auction, Zurich, 25.-26. 5. 1984)

Ingo Walther and Rainer Metzger, *Vincent van Gogh: The Complete Paintings*, col. I, Cologne, 2006, p. 61, illustrated



THE COMPLETE LETTERS OF VINCENT VAN GOGH

with reproductions of all the drawings in the correspondence

VOLUME TWO

A Bulfinch Press Book Little, Brown and Company Boston • New York • London



yourself more clearly, we shall *perhaps* find something in your present work, and *then* we shall not act as we do now ..." I see only a fair promise—but in reality —a ministerial fata morgana in the eyes of a fellow like me, who would rather find an outlet for his work in a more *pedestrian* way, provided that it is *at the present moment*.

There you are—*if need be* an outlet at the present moment, but preferably not with third-class dealers—and this is something I cannot demand of you, considering your position—que soit—but on the other hand you cannot demand of me that I resign myself to a ministerial fata morgana. After all, I am too practical for that !

Kindly appreciate that I call you a *good minister*—and I know well enough how damned bad the fellows elevated above solid ground are as a rule, so that I am only too happy to value a few bright spots even in the ministerial sphere. Which is *not* being intransigent, and which is really why I piss on the sanctuary of the intransigent fellows—which I do once in a while—on sanctuaries in general.

But to business—do you happen to have thought that at present my expenses amount to two guilders a day—take one guilder for models and one for canvas, colors, etc.—I cannot do it cheaper—I still have some bills to pay, and—I have to go to Antwerp.

My situation here is a bit too tense, right now my life is not pleasant, and I do not find it easy to possess my soul in patience, as they say.

At home—though there are no rows—they do not think the prospect of my staying here *too long* cheerful. Which I can very well understand.

And yet I cannot go away—either leaving completely or partly (by "partly" I mean keeping on my studio, which is my intention)—unless I go on making a lot of studies and find something new by way of security in Antwerp.

Be so kind as to take this into consideration. And if you should be willing to do your best on the financial side, so that things will be somewhat easier for me, I believe there will be a chance of keeping the peace in the future, though it will be far from real *harmony*.

Which I wish for myself as well as for others, this composure I mean. With regard to my work you say what is not there may turn up yet—and I say the same about the fata morgana in your saying "later on ... we shall *perhaps*, etc." —(see above).

At present—it is a fata morgana to me, and at all events I want to try Antwerp. Good-by, with a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent

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Dear Theo,

I suppose you already know that Father has refused the living at Helvoirt.

I was not indifferent to the decision, as in no case would I have gone with them to Helvoirt, and would either have stayed here in my studio or gone to Antwerp. Now, as far as I can see, it is, and will be, best for me simply to go on as I am, and to stay here.

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Recently I really haven't been doing so badly. It is true that I can't have any financial success with my work here, but I am making really good friends here, who I believe will become even better

Last week I painted still life day after day with the people who paint at Eindhoven.

That new acquaintance, the tanner whom I told you about, applies himself wonderfully. But I, for my part, must do something in return to keep up the friendship. But I don't see that I am the loser by it, as I work with more animation when I have some conversation.

Hermans has so many beautiful things, old jars and other antiques, that I want to ask you if I could oblige you by painting for your room a still life of some of these objects, for instance of Gothic things—those I have done with Hermans up to now are simpler in character. But just today he told me that if I wanted to paint for myseir a picture of things that were still too difficult for him, I could take them with me to the studio. Please give me an answer to this, and if you like, I shall make one for you, and will pick out the best things. I have finished a little one already. As to my asking you to send me another 20 francs before the end of this month, I hope you will do so.

I am getting on pretty well, but my expenses are not getting smaller; but by working very hard now, I am making progress.

Do help me by sending what I ask if it is at all possible. Otherwise these last days of the month will be very hard for me and the work will suffer more than is necessary.

And I will give it back to you in my work. That's all I can say about it.

At all events, I will ask for those things of Hermans' and make something for you; you will see for yourself what I told you about the color, that it is improving. I have also started another water color of the water mill.

Good-by, with a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent

I know that it is a hard time for you, but we must push on, and sure enough there will be a change for the better.

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Dear Theo,

Many thanks for your letter and the enclosure, and also for what I still received specially for St. Nicholas.

I will begin by telling you that your letter greatly amazed me—seeing that there have been no differences of any importance between Father, Mother and myself, and as to the Begemann ladies, they looked in on Father and Mother only the other day in considerable numbers—and they have done so not just once but many times. Whether they drop in quite as frequently as formerly or less frequently is something I cannot see has anything to do with me, nor am I interested in it.

That I decidedly disapproved of their attitude, and that I shall go on decidedly

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Verzameling H.P.Bremmer

9 Maart tot 23 April 1950 Gemeentemuseum 's-Gravenhage uitgave Dienst voor Schone Kunsten

The Hague, *Gemeentemuseum, Verzameling H. P. Bremmer*, March 9 - April 23, 1950, catalogue introduction by H. E. Van Gelder, no. 33



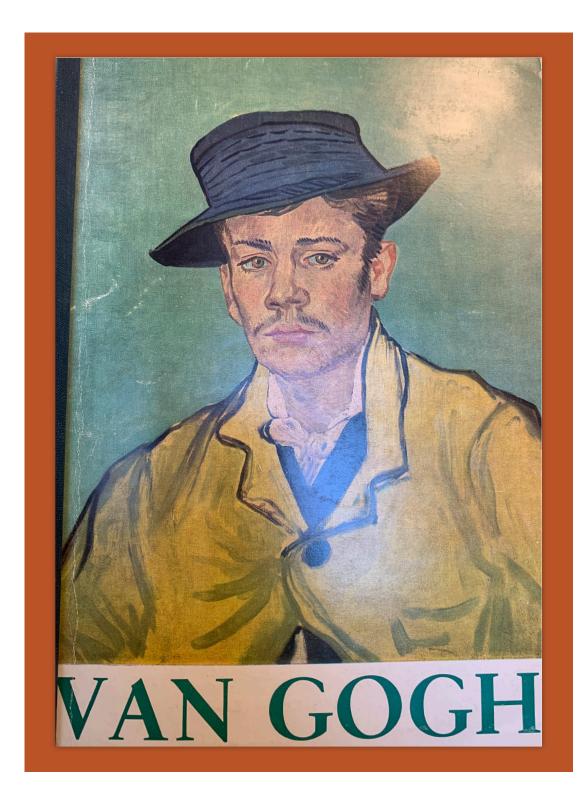
EXHIBITED

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The Hague, *Gemeentemuseum, Verzameling H. P. Bremmer*, March 9 - April 23, 1950, catalogue introduction by H. E. Van Gelder, no. 33



EXHIBITED



Paris, Musee Jacquemart Andre, Vincent van Gogh, February-May 1960, no. 9



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La couverture reproduit le Portrait d'Armand Roulin, N° 48 du présent catalogue.

Paris, Musee Jacquemart Andre, Vincent van Gogh, February-May 1960, no. 9

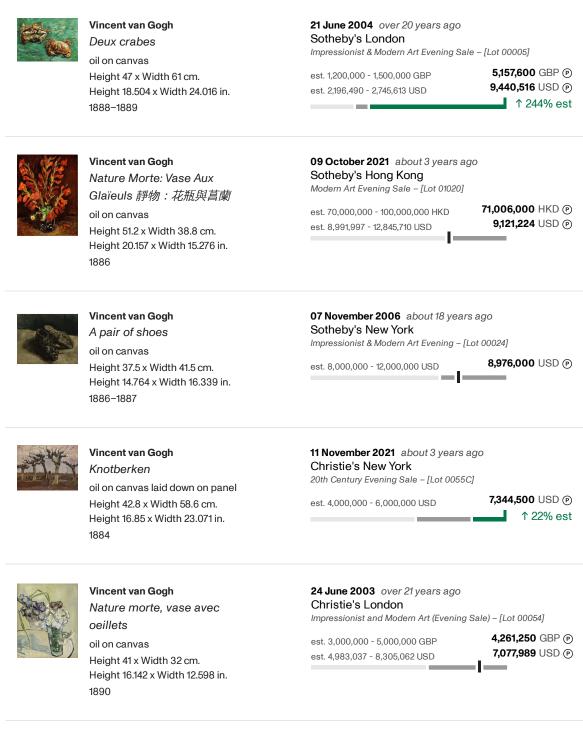


TARAC ROL	TELLE
9 NATURE MORTE AVEC BLAGUE A TABAC, BOU	TEILLE ET
9 NATURE INCOME 1884, huile sur toile sur bois, 30,5 × 41; Nuenen, novembre-décembre 1884, huile sur toile sur bois, 30,5 × 41; Succession H. P. Bremmer, La Haye, Pays-Bas.	F 55, H 59
10 L'ANCIENNE GARE D'EINDHOVEN.	
Muenen, 1884, huile sur tone, Abya-Bas. M. H. Korting, Gilze (N. B.), Pays-Bas.	
11 LE JARDIN DU PRESBYTÈRE. Nuenen, janvier 1885, huile sur toile sur carton, 52 × 76; M. L. C. Smit, Kinderdijk, Pays-Bas.	F67, H7.
12 VUE DE VILLE AVEC PONT-LEVIS. Nuenen, 1885, huile sur bois, 42 × 49; Mad. E. A. E. M. van Meeteren-van Diemen Arbeiter, La Haye, Pay	F 210, H 22 75-Bas.
13 PAYSANNE A CHALE VERT MOUSSE. Nuenen, 1885, huile sur toile, 45 × 35; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon,	F 155, H 16
 PAYSANNE PRÈS DE L'ATRE. Nuenen, 1885, huile sur toile sur bois, 29,5 × 40; M. Georges Renand, Paris, 	F158, H17
 15 NATURE MORTE AVEC FEUILLES MORTES. Nuenen, 1885, huile sur toile sur bois, 41,5 × 31; M. W. Brinkman, Schipluiden, Pays-Bas. 	F 200, H 21
16 PAYSANNE ARRACHANT DES POMMES DE TERRE Nuenen, septembre 1885, huile sur papier sur bois, 30 × 38; Musée Royal des Beaux-Arts, Anvers, Belgique.	F 98, H 107.
17 NATURE MORTE AVEC POMMES. Nuenen, octobre 1885, huile sur toile, 30 × 47; Succession H. P. Bremmer, La Haye, Pays-Bas. (Ce tableau n'est pas exposé.)	F115; H12
 18 NIDS D'OISEAUX. Nuenen, octobre 1885, huile sur toile sur carton, 43 × 57; M. J. van der Meulen (à titre de prêt au Musée Municipal de La Haye) 	F 110, H 1
19 UNE ALLÉE EN AUTOMOUT), Pays-Bas.
Nuenen, octobre-novembre 1885, huile sur toile sur bois, 99 × 66; M. le docteur W. Nolst Trenité, Rotterdam, Pays-Bas.	F 122, H 1
ANVEDS	
ANVERS. (27 Novembre 1885 — 28 Février	1886)
20 GROUDE DE	1000)
20 GROUPE DE VIEILLES MAISONS. Anvers, décembre 1885, huile sur toile sur carton, 35 × 25; M. L. C. Smit, Kinderdijk, Pays-Bas.	
30	F 204, H 2

Paris, Musee Jacquemart Andre, Vincent van Gogh, February-May 1960, no. 9



AUCTION COMPARABLES





Vincent van Gogh NATURE MORTE: VASE AUX GLAÏEULS oil on board laid down on canvas

Height 51.2 x Width 38.8 cm. Height 20.157 x Width 15.276 in. 1886 **14 November 2016** about 8 years ago Sotheby's New York Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale – [Lot 00008]

est. 5,000,000 - 7,000,000 USD

msrau.com

5,862,500 USD (P)

MUSEUM COMPARABLES

Vincent van Gogh | *Still Life with Earthenware and Bottles*

1885

Medium: Oil on canvas **Dimensions:** $15^{3/4} \ge 22^{1/8}$ inches | 40.1 ≥ 56.3 cm





Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam, The Netherlands



Vincent van Gogh | Still Life with Cabbage and Clogs

1881

Medium: Oil on paper on panel **Dimensions:** $13^{3/8} \ge 21^{5/8}$ inches | 34 x 55 cm





Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam, The Netherlands



Vincent van Gogh | *Still Life with Jars*

1885

Medium: Oil on canvas **Dimensions:** $13^{3/8} \ge 17$ inches | 33.8 ≥ 43.1 cm





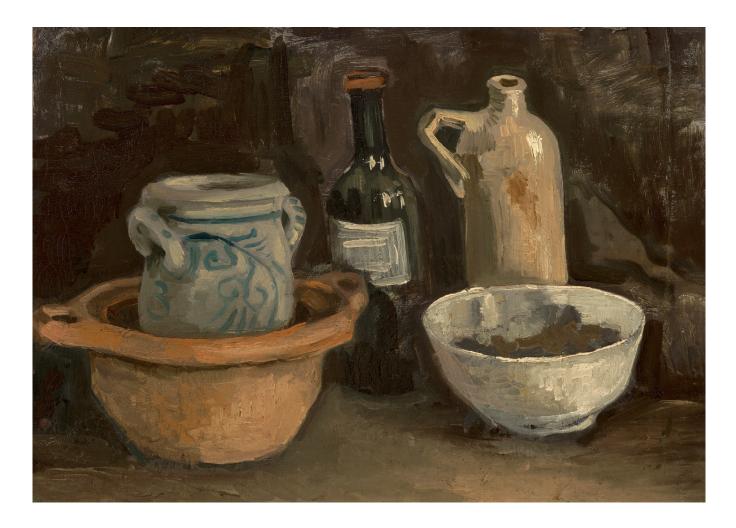
Kröller Müller Museum Otterlo, The Netherlands



Vincent van Gogh | *Still Life*

1884

Medium: Oil on canvas **Dimensions:** $15^{3/4} \ge 22^{1/4}$ inches | 40 x 56.5 cm





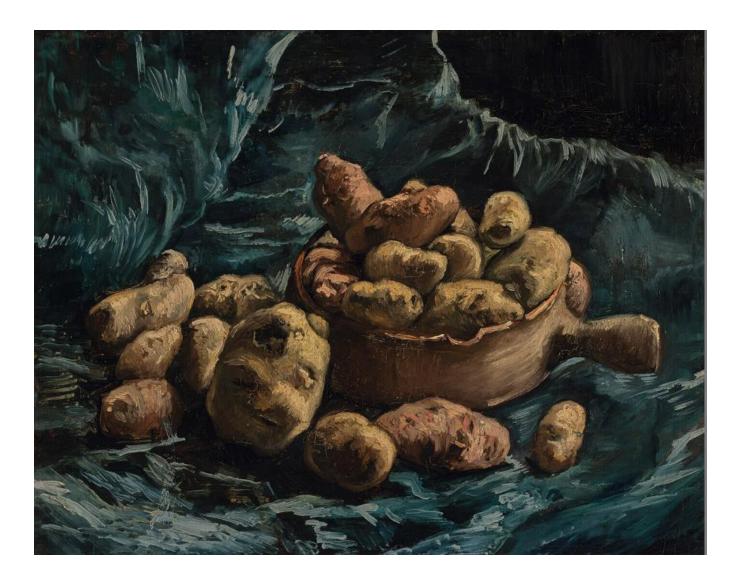
Norton Simon Museum Pasadena, CA, United States



Vincent van Gogh | *Still Life with Potatoes*

1886

Medium: Oil on canvas **Dimensions:** $18^{1/2} \ge 22^{1/2}$ inches | $47 \ge 57$ cm





Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen Rotterdam, The Netherlands





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