



VINCENT  
VAN GOGH  
DRAWINGS

VOLUME 2

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NUENEN

1883-1885

VAN GOGH MUSEUM

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SJRAAR VAN HEUGTEN

VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM

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Vincent van Gogh: Drawings

Volume 2: Nuenen 1883-1885

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Complete series of drawings and paintings,  
8 volumes

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## Author's preface

This second volume of the catalogue of Van Gogh drawings in the museum covers those executed between December 1883 and November 1885 in the Brabant village of Nuenen. For the reasons given in the Preface to Volume 1, it does not include sheets that can be traced back to a surviving sketchbook, or letter sketches.

The Introduction provides a general account of the artistic developments revealed by the drawings, and examines various aspects of Van Gogh's working method. Specific questions of content and technique are discussed in the catalogue section. The aim of this twofold approach is to present the works in the museum's collection in the context of the complete oeuvre from this period.

The structure of the catalogue section differs from that of Volume 1. In Nuenen, Van Gogh made dozens of studies of hands, heads and figures that form distinct groups. Discussing them individually would not do justice to their essentially autodidactic qualities, so they are dealt with as groups. In addition, Van Gogh often devoted several works to specific subjects, and in some cases it proved worthwhile to examine such series or partial series as composite units.

When the Nuenen drawings were examined it became clear that a scene of a woodland hut (F 1126 JH 605) has always been wrongly assigned to this period. It has now been redated to Etten 1881, and should therefore have been included in Volume 1. This and other belated insights, which are unfortunately inherent in the phased publication of a catalogue, will be explained in an appendix to Volume 4.

Appendix 1 in Volume 1 contains seven works that Van Gogh would normally have thrown away but which have somehow survived. Very much the same applies to an isolated sketch on the verso of catalogue number 114 (*fig. 108a*; F 1150v JH –). It would be going too far to devote a separate appendix to this single jotting; instead it and a few other unpretentious sketches will be brought together in an appendix in Volume 4.

My colleagues in the museum once again gave me the generous support so indispensable when writing a book of this kind. Monique Hageman was the unwearied compiler of the documentary section of the catalogue: provenances, exhibitions and literature. In this she was assisted by Marije Vellekoop (for the provenances in particular) and Fieke Pabst. Time and again the three of them helped me solve specific problems as they arose.

The editorial committee for this volume, consisting of Jan Robert, Louis van Tilborgh and Marije Vellekoop, greeted each new entry with a gentle but merciless demonstration of the author's fallibility. Elly Cassee, Leo Jansen and Hans Luijten also commented on



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part of the manuscript, as well as checking the quotations from Van Gogh's letters against the originals. Frans Stive made the drawings readily accessible for examination. Han Veenenbos, who is attached to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, alerted me to little-known archive material. I would also like to thank all those colleagues who enabled me to work on the book by freeing me from my day-to-day curatorial duties.

I also received assistance from individuals outside the museum. The searching questions and comments of Michael Hoyle, the translator of the English edition of the book, caused me to modify the Dutch text at various points. Nico Lingbeek, Francien van Daalen, Marieke Kraan and Lara van der Linde, who have been commissioned by the Van Gogh Museum to undertake the lengthy task of conserving and restoring the drawings, regularly drew my attention to interesting technical details. Nico, in particular, helped me dissect Van Gogh's more complex working methods.

Gerard Rooijackers of the P.C. Meertens Instituut in Amsterdam was as generous as ever in sharing his knowledge of the cultural history of 19th-century Brabant. He identified numerous obscure details, and even a woman with close-cropped hair (*cats. 114, 115*) prompted some unexpected insights. Ali Büyükçinar and Jan Esman of the Dutch Textile Museum in Tilburg helped me gain a better understanding of the weaver's craft and explained the construction and operation of looms. Martha op de Coul (Netherlands Institute for Art History) was always willing to answer our questions. In Nuenen I was able to rely on the assistance of J.C. Jegerings, who gave me access to his magnificent collection of photographs of old Brabant, as well as supplying information on topographical questions. Ton de Brouwer of the Van Gogh Documentation Centre in Nuenen, ever a mine of information on matters pertaining to the village, once again put his expert knowledge at my disposal.

All these valuable contributions notwithstanding, this book could never have been written without the steadfast support of my partner, May Rijs, who provided the tranquility so essential for the shaping of words.

Sjraar van Heugten

# The rustic drawings: Van Gogh in Nuenen

Vincent van Gogh left the Brabant village of Etten at the end of December 1881 after a bitter row with his parents, and more especially with his father, the Reverend Theodorus van Gogh. He then lived in The Hague for a year and nine months before spending three months in the eastern province of Drenthe. The quarrel with his parents subsided somewhat during those two years, but the fundamental lack of understanding persisted on both sides, driving a wedge between Vincent and his father. The letters that Vincent wrote to his brother Theo from Drenthe are littered with rancorous remarks about 'Pa's' narrow-mindedness. The Reverend Van Gogh also received letters from his eldest son, and one that came at the end of November 1883 did little to allay his fears. Vincent was again being 'awkward' and 'argumentative', he reported to Theo.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter of 30 November 1883 from Theodorus van Gogh to his son Theo, inv. b 2247 V/1982: 'tegen den draad [en] in een bui van de contra-mine.' Vincent's letter does not seem to have survived.

When Van Gogh returned to live with his parents on 4 December 1883, everyone was nervous about the future, and with good reason. The old animosity flared up again, and Vincent and his father were soon at odds. Despite this lack of common ground, his parents did continue supporting him, although they must have had their misgivings. On one occasion the Reverend Van Gogh was remarkably enthusiastic about some pen-and-ink drawings that Vincent had made soon after his arrival (see *cats.* 69-71).

## GROWING SELF-CONFIDENCE

Shortly after Van Gogh settled in the Brabant village it became clear that he was looking for a market for his more successful drawings. He had regarded almost all his Hague sheets as mere studies whose purpose was to help him to master his craft with as few concessions as possible. He was often very brusque when pressured to make his work more commercial, and refused to be 'forced to send work out into the world that does not bear the stamp of my own character', as he put it in March 1882 [209/180]. He knew that the personal touch would gradually emerge, but it would have to come naturally. In the meantime he practised over and over again to acquire skills like drawing from the live model, rendering perspective and learning the various drawing techniques. Once or twice he did tentatively explore the possibility of selling work, and at the end of 1882 even had serious plans for a series of inexpensive prints for the general public. After a few experiments, though, he had to concede that even more study was needed.

Although Van Gogh had produced some fine drawings during his stay in Drenthe, the shortage of artists' materials and models had made it a lean harvest. In Nuenen, as in The Hague, he concentrated on studies with varying degrees of finish that were intended solely for his own use. At the same time, though, he made more detailed drawings, some

of them quite large, which were considerably more ambitious and, in his eyes, fit for sale. In early 1884 he became more business-like in his approach to Theo in his capacity as an art dealer. 'I will be sending you some watercolours from here towards the beginning of March. If you do not want them I will take them elsewhere, *but I prefer to deal with you.*' The moment to send his work 'out into the world' was fast approaching [430/360], and he expected Theo to make some serious efforts on his behalf. From now on he wanted to treat his monthly remittance from Paris as payment for goods supplied.

The relationship between the brothers was complex at this time, both personally and on a business level. Theo was in a difficult position as an art dealer. He did not have a gallery of his own, but ran the Montmartre branch of Boussod, Valadon & Cie. Selling his brother's work there would have been tricky, and the situation was made all the more complicated by the fact that Vincent had been dismissed from his post with the firm's predecessor, Goupil & Co. Theo was not on the best of terms with his superiors, and the last thing he wanted was to be accused of nepotism. Nor, though, does he seem to have made much of an effort to pass Vincent's work on to other colleagues in the art world. Some of the Nuenen drawings definitely deserved better. Theo was probably right in believing that there was no market for Vincent's dark paintings with their cheerless peasant subjects, but he could not have been blind to the very obvious merits of landscapes like *Winter garden*, *Pollard birches*, *The kingfisher* and *Avenue of poplars (cats. 89-92)* that Vincent had sent him, probably in May 1884. However, there is not the slightest evidence that he ever made any determined attempts, directly or indirectly, to bring even the most successful of the Nuenen sheets to the attention of the art-buying public. Vincent's disappointment would have been aggravated by the fact that it was Theo who had advised him to become an artist.<sup>2</sup> Vincent now expected something more than dutiful financial support.

Van Gogh had so much faith in his drawings that he was unwilling to rely solely on his brother, and came up with the idea of 'selling something in Antwerp' [434/358]. He also sent some drawings to his friend Anthon van Rappard (1858-1892) so that he could show them to people he knew.<sup>3</sup> Van Rappard had previously made a similar suggestion in connection with works that Van Gogh had made in The Hague.<sup>4</sup> The subject was raised again during the latter's visit to Van Rappard in Utrecht in December 1883,<sup>5</sup> and this time Van Gogh took him up on the offer (see *cats. 78, 89-92, 94, 95*). Van Rappard was enthusiastic about some of the drawings but was unable to find any buyers.

Van Gogh's belief that some of his works were commercially attractive emerges not only from passages in his letters and from the fact that he sent them to others, but can also be deduced from the drawings themselves. The ambitious sheets are much more highly finished than the studies, and are usually signed. Many also have a carefully drawn border around the scene, and some were given titles, those in French being designed to appeal directly to Theo's Paris clientele.

Van Gogh must have been disappointed by the lack of interest in his drawings, and that is probably why his output of ambitious works gradually declined in the second half

<sup>2</sup> See *Drawings 1*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> See letters 435/R41, 438/R44 and 440/R43.

<sup>4</sup> See letter 358/295.

<sup>5</sup> See letter 434/R40.

of 1884. A more important factor, though, was the amount of time he was devoting to painting and all its attendant problems. He became fascinated by colour theories, and realised that, in contrast to drawing, he still had much to learn about painting. In the second half of 1884 he spent far more time drawing studies, many of which were exercises to help him master the art of depicting the human figure. This, in turn, would benefit his painting. That does not mean that Van Gogh no longer regarded drawing as an autonomous medium. He simply realised that it was an important basis for painting, and until he had learned how to work in oils, the one technique buttressed the other. A relatively small number of sheets provide evidence that Van Gogh still felt that there was a market for his drawings, such as the *Sale of building scrap* (cat. 161, fig. 1), which is signed, and the *Woman shelling peas* (cat. 203, fig. 2), both of which were sent to Theo complete with French titles. The *Peasant woman lifting potatoes* (cat. 194) may have been another



1 *Sale of building scrap*, cat. 161.



2 *Woman shelling peas*, cat. 203.

that Theo received. It is not known whether he sent *A Sunday in Eindhoven* (cat. 206) to Paris, but it is significant that he gave it a French title and added his signature. Other works lack internal clues of this kind but have a degree of finish that raises them above the common run of studies (cats. 150, 195, 196, 199, 200).

#### SUBJECTS

Before his arrival in Nuenen Van Gogh had great expectations of its rustic nature, and he was not disappointed. Modern life had only impinged on it in small doses, and the local people had not yet been contaminated by 'civilisation' – which was great praise, coming from him.<sup>6</sup> Crafts, peasant life and villagers 'of the old Brabant race' [532/423] provided him with a wealth of subjects for almost two years.<sup>7</sup>

Van Gogh felt that the times in which he lived were hard and decadent, and that this was reflected in much of contemporary art. There was a lack of the simplicity and higher values which he believed had been prevalent only a few decades before. These had been loftily expressed by the painters of the Barbizon School, Jean-François Millet foremost among them, and Van Gogh wanted to follow in their footsteps with a contemporary variant of the rustic genre in which the principal parts were played by peasants. He saw his contribution to modern art as being the depiction of '*the peasant's figure in action*' [522/418]. It was in that action that renewal lay, since the figures in old art, he believed, rarely if ever worked. His views on this point were heavily influenced by the French historian Jules Michelet.

The many weavers in Nuenen provided Van Gogh with the chance of dealing with a subject that had fascinated him since the very beginning of his career (see cat. 78). He hoped to make a series of drawings of 'Brabant artisans' [436/359], following an age-old tradition of portraying crafts. Although many scenes with weavers have survived, the series never materialised.

Van Gogh tried to record as many aspects of peasant life as possible: the arduous labour on the land, women's work in the home, and domestic scenes like family meal-times. Isolated events like the sale of lumber or building scrap supplied him with subjects out of the normal run of daily life (cats. 77, 159-161).

Dozens of drawings demonstrate how Van Gogh studied the faces of his models, searching for a head that would exemplify 'the peasant'. Most were studies for more complex figure pieces, not drawings capable of leading a life of their own. In some cases, though, Van Gogh may have regarded them as serious subjects in their own right, a case in point being a series of small pen drawings, several of which are signed (cats. 108-118). There was little demand for such work on the regular art circuit, but there was another market that was very keen on subjects of this kind, namely illustrated magazines and publishers of popular series of graphic art. It seems likely that Van Gogh produced this kind of work with that potential outlet in the back of his mind. Such publications, which included picture postcards, were popular until well into the 20th century, and occasion-

<sup>6</sup> See letters 422/351, 501/404, 505/408, 512/413 and 529/R57.

<sup>7</sup> There are so many publications on the themes depicted by Van Gogh that only a brief summary is given here. Specific subjects and their significance are discussed in the catalogue entries. Among other works see Amsterdam 1980-81, Amsterdam 1988-89, Den Bosch 1987-88, Kodera 1990, Pollock 1980, Pollock 1987, Pollock 1988, Van Tilborgh 1993, Sund 1988, Werness 1972 and Zemel 1985.

<sup>8</sup> Locations in Eindhoven feature quite regularly in Van Gogh's work, although usually in sketches; see Van Hoek 1996.

ally one saw a 'Brabant type' in a face, not so much in the physiognomy as in the ravages of time that had shaped it (fig. 3).

It was not just in figure pieces that Van Gogh depicted peasant life. To him, subjects like the peasant cemetery beside the old church tower in the fields (*cats.* 69, 70) and the cottages of the local people (*cats.* 156, 195) also expressed the simple nobility of rural existence. Some of the harvest scenes contain figures, but others show just the stooks of wheat on the stubbled field (*cats.* 197-202).

Van Gogh was also fascinated by the local landscape, and there are many such sheets that demonstrate his considerable skill in this genre. He sought his landscape subjects not just in Nuenen and its immediate surroundings. There is also the occasional townscape, of Eindhoven in this case (*cat.* 206).<sup>8</sup> The landscapes are not always topographically correct, for he had no qualms about reshaping reality if it would improve the composition (see *cat.* 91).



3 *Brabant type*, postcard after a drawing, 1930. Nuenen, J.C. Jegerings photograph collection.

## STUDIO

It was with mixed feelings that Van Gogh had left The Hague in November 1883, mainly because it meant giving up his family life with Sien Hoornik and her children. In addition, he must have missed his studio in Schenkstraat that he had fitted out with so much care and which had become so important to him.

His studio arrangements in Nuenen were decidedly makeshift at first. His parents were willing to do what they could to help, but simply had no suitable room to offer their son. At his request the mangle-room was turned into a working area, as the Reverend Van Gogh told Theo. 'He wanted the mangle-room fitted out for him. Although we do not consider it really suitable, we have had a proper stove installed, and are also having a sort of wooden platform made, since the room has a stone floor. We are having it done up a little and have even put in a small bedstead, once again on a wooden platform. We are going to get it properly warm and dry so that it will not be too unhealthy, and then maybe it won't be too bad. I wanted to put in a large window as well, but he prefers not to have one.'<sup>9</sup> It is not known whether this room failed to meet Vincent's requirements or whether his parents were unhappy about this rearrangement of their home, but after a

*9 Letter to Theo of 20 December 1883, inv. b 2250 V/1982: 'Hij wenschte dat de mangelkamer voor hem mocht worden ingericht. Wij vinden dat nu wel geen bizonder geschikt verblijf; maar we hebben er laten zetten een netten kachel. We laten er maken een soort houten voeten bank, daar de kamer een steenen vloer heeft. We laten haar verder wat opflikken en hebben er zelfs een ledikantje laten zetten, ook op een houten voeten bank. Opdat het niet ongezond zou zijn, nu zullen we haar eens goed warm en droog maken en dan kan het nog wel mee vallen. Ik had er nog een groot raam in willen brengen, maar dat heeft hij liever niet.'*



4 Rear of the vicarage at Nuenen, 1957. Van Gogh used the outbuilding on the right as his studio at the beginning of 1884. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

few months (it is not known exactly when) Van Gogh moved to a small outbuilding behind the vicarage (*fig. 4*), but that was not very suitable either. It was rather dark, and was probably difficult to warm (*fig. 5*). That the later occupants of the house used it as a henhouse says a great deal about its merits. In April 1884 Van Gogh made some rather uncomplimentary remarks about the 'geographical situation' of his new workplace, 'immediately adjoining the coal hole, sewers and dung pit' [444/363a], which made a dismal contrast to the studio he had had in The Hague. It was also too cramped to make studies from life, since he could not get enough distance between himself and the model. He was determined to find a better studio, and did so in May: 'two rooms – a big one, and a smaller one adjoining' [449/368], which he rented from a couple called Schafrat. This must have been yet another disappointment for Van Gogh's parents, for the Catholic Johannes Schafrat (1847-1924) was sacristan of the Church of St Clement, and thus worked for the other camp, as it were. For the time being Vincent continued to live with his parents and work in the studio, but in May 1885 he moved to the Schafrats', where he remained for the rest of his time in Nuenen. The house was demolished in 1936, but a photograph survives (*fig. 6*). The rooms that Van Gogh rented were on the left, with the three windows.



5 Interior of the outbuilding at the back of the vicarage, 1930-40. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



6 Sacristan's house, Church of St Clement, Nuenen. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



It is not certain that the house had remained unaltered since 1885, for there are several discrepancies between this photograph and a front elevation and ground plan of the house and of Van Gogh's rooms drawn by a friend and pupil, Anton Kerssemakers (1846-1924), in a letter of 1914 to the painter Johan Briedé (1885-1924) (fig. 7). This letter was an amplification of an article about Van Gogh that Kerssemakers had published in 1912. As he remembered it, the sacristan's house had two windows on each side of the front door, and a roof that was partly tiled and partly thatched. Van Gogh's two rooms, the larger one measuring 20 square metres and the other 15 square metres, took up half of the house. In 1926, Benno Stokvis was told by the sacristan's widow, Adriana Schafrat-van Eerd (1853-1930), that Van Gogh worked in the small room, which was rather dark. The large room, where his paintings hung, was his sitting-room, and he slept in the attic.<sup>10</sup> Kerssemakers, though, states that both rooms were used as the studio, and this is probably nearer the mark. Van Gogh kept his work and models' attributes in the large front room but worked in both, depending on 'where the light was best.'<sup>11</sup>

Eye-witness accounts also give a fair idea of the studio interior. Dimmen Gestel (1862-1945), the brother of the owner of the lithographic printing works where Van Gogh made the lithograph of *The potato eaters*, also spoke to Stokvis. Gestel took a few painting lessons from Van Gogh, and visited his teacher in his studio. In addition to paintings, the 'bohemian-looking' room contained 'a stack of drawings "as high as a table" drawn with lithographic crayon, almost all of them of peasant men and women working in the fields.'<sup>12</sup> Gestel had himself taken drawing lessons and was an amateur painter, and looking back on it he found it odd that an artist should sacrifice 'a royal-size sheet of paper' to that kind of study rather than use a sketchbook. The mention of large drawings of working peasants means that Gestel's visit must have taken place in the last few months of Van Gogh's stay in Nuenen (see *cats*. 180-192). His remark about lithographic crayon, incidentally, should not be taken at face value. It is certainly likely that some of the drawings were done in this medium, but most of the surviving sheets are conventional black chalk drawings.

The bohemian look of Van Gogh's studio is confirmed by Willem van de Wakker (1859-1927) and Anton Kerssemakers, who also took painting lessons from Van Gogh. Van de Wakker's main memory was of 'an odd collection of birds' nests.'<sup>13</sup> Kerssemakers recalled many more details in his article of 1912. 'One was amazed at the way all the available hanging and standing room was crammed with paintings, drawings in water-colour and chalk: heads of men and women whose negroid turned-up noses, protruding cheekbones and large ears were heavily accentuated, the rough paws calloused and furrowed; weavers and looms, women spooling yarn, people planting potatoes, women weeding, innumerable still lifes, certainly as many as ten studies in oils of the little old chapel at Nuenen [...].

'A great heap of ashes around the stove, which had never known a brush or stove polish, a small number of chairs with frayed cane bottoms, and a cupboard with at least

<sup>10</sup> Stokvis 1926, pp. 28-29.

<sup>11</sup> Letter of 23 June 1914 from Anton Kerssemakers to Johan Briedé at Rijswijk, inv. b 1423 V/1962: '[...] waar hij het beste licht had.'

<sup>12</sup> Stokvis 1926, pp. 36-38; the relevant passage is on p. 37: '[...] een stapel teekeningen "zoo hoog als een tafel", met lithografisch krijt geteekend, en bijna zonder uitzondering voorstellend boeren en boerinnen op het veld werkend.'

<sup>13</sup> Stokvis 1927, p. 12: '[...] een merkwaardige verzameling vogelnesten.'

Ant. Kerssemakers.

AGENT IN TABAK.  
EINDHOVEN. (Holland)

Telegram-Adres:  
ANT. KERSEMAKERS.  
Telefoon No. 440.

Eindhoven 23 Juni 1914

Den Heer Johan Briedé  
Rijswijk.

Voor mij nog mogelijk is volkome ik gaarne aan uwe aanvraag. Het is echter  
 bijna 30 jaren geleden zoudt mijne herinneringen (behalve de persoonlijke) wel  
 niet verdueren althans verzwagen zijn. Ik probeer hieronder met mij  
 nog voor den geest staat en moet u verder u maar met mijn arbijt  
 in de Graene zien te behelpen. De Kasten waren niet oud, met arbijt  
 hij had trouwen niet kostbaar in zijn bezit, alles getuigde van geldgebrek  
 doch hij wist zich met alles te behelpen, maakte fidel zelf of liet hij een  
 gewone timmerman alles maar maken volgens zijne aanwijzing, zals als  
 Ezel, schilderKisten, perspectief-  
 raam, streltje, alles! alleen  
 heeft hij eens een klein  
 schilderKistje van  
 schuurselt platen kon  
 en dat had heel  
 wat ingehad.

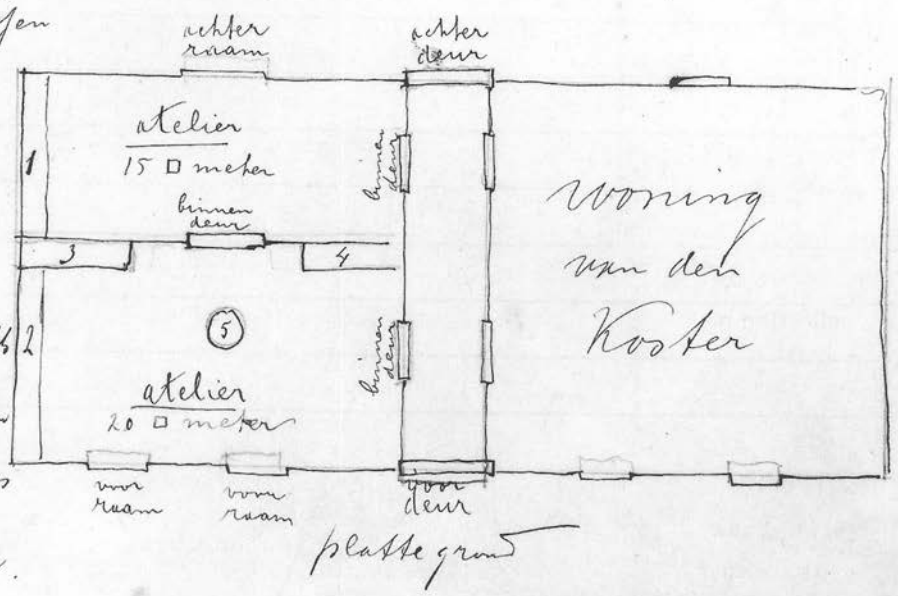


Aanzicht van buiten.

1. 2. Banken op  
manstongte waarop  
studies van van  
alles

3. 4 Kasten met  
wagelkasten, moeren  
klompen enz.

5 Kachel met een  
 berg van asch er  
 ond heen,  
 in alle hoeken  
 laerangereedschap  
 enz. enz.  
 vooral links en rechts  
 op de vloer en op  
 staalen teekening  
 studies, illustraties  
 vooral de Graphic  
 afin een rechte  
 wonsmelbael.



7 A page of the letter from Anton Kerssemakers to Johan Briedé, 3 June 1914.

30 different birds' nests, all kinds of mosses and plants brought back from the moor, some stuffed birds, a spool, a spinning wheel, a warming-pan, a complete set of farm tools, old caps and hats, grubby bonnets and hoods, clogs, etc. etc.

'His paintbox and palette had been made in Nuenen according to his directions, as well as a perspective frame; this consisted of an iron bar with a long, sharp point onto which he could screw a frame resembling a small window at whatever height he wanted. He said: "The painters of old used a perspective frame at times, why shouldn't we?">'<sup>14</sup>

Kerssemakers's letter of 1914 goes into further detail about the way the studio was fitted out. 'The cupboards were neither old nor antique, in fact he had nothing valuable. Everything bespoke a lack of money but he put everything to good use, made many objects himself or had them made by an ordinary carpenter working to his instructions, such as an easel, paintboxes, perspective frame, chair, everything! Only once did he order a small paintbox of lacquered tin from Schoenfeld of Düsseldorf, and that had already seen good service.'

Kerssemakers also described the objects in the studio (the numbers refer to those in the ground plan, fig. 7):

1. [and] 2. Benches at working height, with studies and all sorts of objects on them
  3. [and] 4. cupboards with birds' nests, mosses, clogs, etc.
  5. stove with a pile of ashes around it
- farm implements in every corner, etc. etc.  
everywhere on the floor and chairs drawings, studies, illustrations, mainly from *The Graphic*, in short a complete mess.'<sup>15</sup>

The only source for a comparison with Van Gogh's studio in Schenkstraat in The Hague is Van Gogh's own description.<sup>16</sup> This gives a picture, perhaps a little exaggerated, of a well-ordered and tidy working space, with everything neatly put away in folders and cupboards. Van Gogh's bachelor studio in Nuenen was more chaotic, but apart from that was very similar to the one in The Hague. Here, too, he had his studies of heads, figures and numerous details close at hand. The same applied to his collection of magazine illustrations, which were such an important source of inspiration.

The collection of costumes, headgear and shoes that Van Gogh had gradually put together in order to dress up his models would undoubtedly have been augmented in Nuenen with items of local clothing, although there is no firm evidence for this.

Then there was the collection of props to be used by his models and the miscellaneous objects that feature in his works, such as still lifes. He had none of these in The Hague, but had managed to lay his hands on what he needed in Nuenen, by Kerssemakers's account. Farming implements were scattered everywhere. Van Gogh's friend also speaks of 'a spool, a spinning wheel', but it is not clear whether these are two appliances or an uncertain description of just one. Van Gogh certainly had a spinning wheel, for in a postscript on the envelope of a letter to Van Rappard he announced that he had 'acquired' one in Nuenen [433/R40]. The warming-pan listed by Kerssemakers would

<sup>14</sup> Kerssemakers 1912.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Kerssemakers to Briedé, see note 11: 'De kasten waren niet oud, noch antiek, hij had trouwens niets kostbaars in zijn bezit, alles getuigde van geldgebrek doch hij wist zich met alles te behelpen, maakte veel zelf of liet bij een gewoon timmerman alles maar maken volgens zijne aanwijzing, zoo als ezel, schilderkisten, perspectiefraam, stoeltje, alles! Alleen heeft hij eens een klein schilderkistje van Schoenfeld, Dusseldorf laten komen van verlakt blik en dat had heel wat ingehad. [...]

'1. [en] 2. Banken op manshoogte waarop studies en van alles

3. [en] 4. kasten met vogelnesten, mossen, klompen enz.

5. kachel met een berg van asch er om heen

in alle hoeken boerengereedschap enz. enz.

overall links en rechts op de vloer en op stoelen teekeningen, studies, illustraties vooral de *Graphic*, afin een echte rommelboel.' The punctuation and capitals have been modified slightly.

<sup>16</sup> See the Introduction to Drawings 1, p. 36.

not have been one of the models' attributes but part of Van Gogh's own household effects. It is stretching the imagination too far to see this item featuring as an attribute in one of his drawings or paintings. Kerssemakers makes no mention of the old-fashioned oil lamp that Van Gogh was given by a weaver in the spring of 1884, which he almost certainly added to his collection of paraphernalia (see *cat.* 80).

It is not all that odd that Van Gogh owned a number of stuffed birds (see also *cat.* 91). More surprising, at first sight, is the number of birds' nests, but the explanation for this is found in Jules Michelet's *L'Oiseau* of 1852, in which a whole chapter is devoted to birds' nests. It opens with the statement that the author had in front of him the 'fine collection of French birds' nests' he had been given by a friend, and there is a reference to large collections of nests in Rouen and Paris.<sup>17</sup> Van Gogh set out to follow in Michelet's footsteps by diligently collecting the nests of various birds, some of which he bought for small sums from local children.<sup>18</sup>

17 The edition used here is *Paris 1882*, the relevant passages on pp. 267 and 271.

18 See, for example, letters 510/411, 536/425 and 539/428. Van Gogh sent Anthon van Rappard a basket of birds' nests of which he had duplicates; see letter 533/R58. In 1949, V.W. van Gogh spoke to residents of Nuenen who had collected nests for the artist as children and recalled being paid for them; see letter 435a.

19 See letters 434/358 and 545/434.

20 They measured approximately 44 × 34 cm, on the evidence of Van Gogh's own statement that they were the same size as the studies of heads that Theo had in Paris. Those works were F 130 JH 692 and F 141 JH 873, which Vincent sent to Theo in March 1885.

21 '1 lijst met raam gemaakt 1.00/2 planken gemaakt teeken 1.30.'

#### DRAWING AIDS

When he left The Hague in September 1883 Van Gogh took only the barest essentials with him. The rest of his possessions, all his 'studies, prints, books [and] painting materials' were stored in the attic of the house [410/343, 419/350]. He went back to The Hague in December of that year to pick up his belongings. Things got lost or damaged in transit, and, as Kerssemakers relates, Van Gogh had to have some replacements made in Nuenen.

The cash book of a Mr de Vries, a local contractor and carpenter, contains detailed entries specifying work done for the Van Gogh family, including several orders for Vincent. On 9 and 21 February 1884, for instance, he made two 'frames' for the 'young gentleman' costing 15 and 50 cents respectively. It is doubtful whether these were both picture frames, for it is known from Van Gogh's correspondence that he ordered strainers as well as simple frames.<sup>19</sup> Judging by the prices, this order was for a strainer and a frame. This is borne out by a large order that De Vries delivered to Van Gogh in November 1885, which included '42 frames' for Dfl. 6.50. In the same period Vincent told his brother that he intended taking '40 small frames' to Antwerp, where he moved shortly afterwards [545/434]. These were quite clearly strainers, in other words, not frames.<sup>20</sup>

On 8 March 1884 the cash book records: 'made 1 framework with frame 1.00/made 2 boards, drawing, 1.30', with the annotation 'son'.<sup>21</sup> Van Gogh pinned his sheets of paper to the boards, one of which had a thin ridge down one of the long sides, an impression of which was transferred to a few drawings (*cats.* 90, 91).

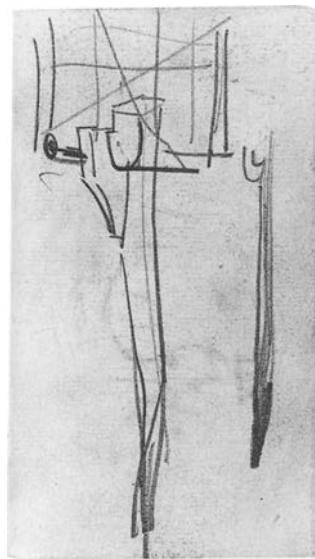
The 'framework with frame' is more puzzling. Nowhere else does De Vries lump separate items together, but describes each one separately, together with its price. This is very probably a reference to Van Gogh's new perspective frame, which evidently defied adequate description. The sum of 1 guilder, which was one of the highest single prices that De Vries charged the Van Gogh family in the period 1884-85, suggests that it was a

complicated object. The prices in the ledger for those years range from 15 cents for the 'small frames' mentioned above to 50 cents for the picture frame.<sup>22</sup>

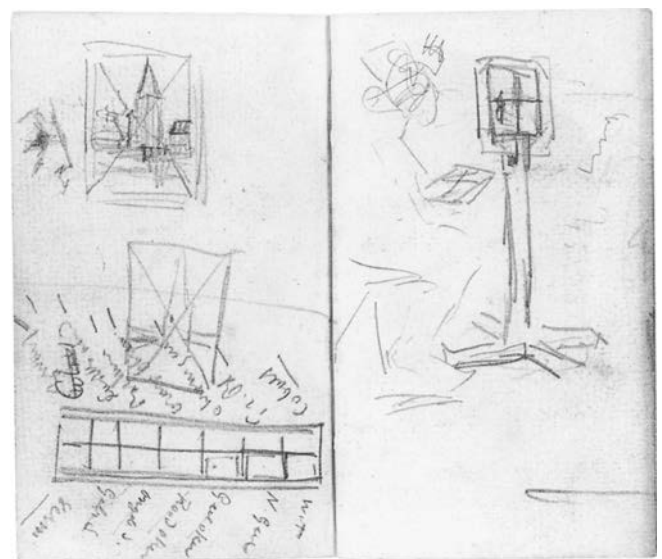
Van Gogh had learned from his experiences with the perspective frame he had used in The Hague, and now designed an improved version.<sup>23</sup> Seven pages in a sketchbook from the period show how he gradually refined his initial design (figs. 8-12). His final and most advanced Hague variant consisted of a large frame and two long and rather unwieldy legs that made it difficult to get the frame level. The apparatus was less sturdy with just a single leg, but it did have the advantage of being easier to carry and erect properly. Kerssemakers described it as 'an iron bar with a long, sharp point onto which he could screw a frame resembling a small window at whatever height he wanted'. Figures 10 and 11 show that Van Gogh had also designed a firm support in which the bar could stand, and he had this made as well, as is known from a letter to Kerssemakers in which he extolled the virtues of the frame. 'What I wanted to say about your new studies is that I think that the foregrounds, in particular, which all look too insubstantial to me and do not have enough space in them, would be greatly improved if you were to try out a perspective frame, because nothing is better for *teaching one to look*, and *teaching one to feel* the perspective. [...]

<sup>22</sup> The relevant pages of the cash book are reproduced in De Brouwer 1984; the pages for 1884 on pp. 26-27, and for 1885 on pp. 100-01.

<sup>23</sup> See the Introduction to Drawings 1, pp. 22-25.



8 Sketchbook sheet with a sketch of a perspective frame, 1884. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



9 Sketchbook sheets with sketches of a perspective frame, 1884. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

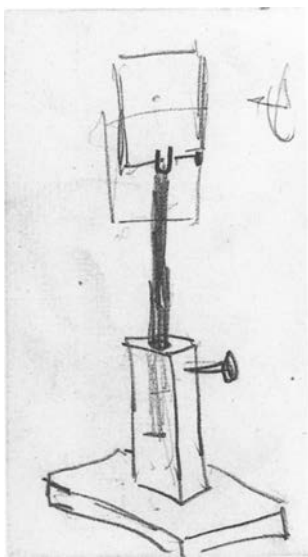
24 'Wat ik zeggen wilde in verband met Uw nieuwe studies is dat t r wille van de voorgronden vooral die steeds te onsolide mij voorkomen en maken er niet genoeg ruimte in komt, is dat het, stel ik me voor, heel goed zou wezen dat U het ook eens met een perspectiefraam probeeret. Want er is niets dat zoo leert kijken en de perspectief zo leert voelen. [...]  
'De oude schilders hebben het perspectiefraam altijd veel gebruikt, het is de kortste weg. En tenzij men de dingen afsluit, moet men als beginner wel in den war gebragt worden door allerlei dingen in de omgeving, waar men niet naar hoeft te zien, zelfs niet mag kijken. Ik kan daar ook niet te sterk dus op aan dringen. Ik wil U hier ook nog bij zeggen, dat hetzelfde model dat ik U gisteren liet zien,

'The painters of old always made great use of a perspective frame, it is the quickest way. And unless, as a beginner, one excludes certain elements, one is inevitably confused by all sorts of adjacent objects that one does not need to see, indeed *may not* even look at. So I cannot stress this point enough.

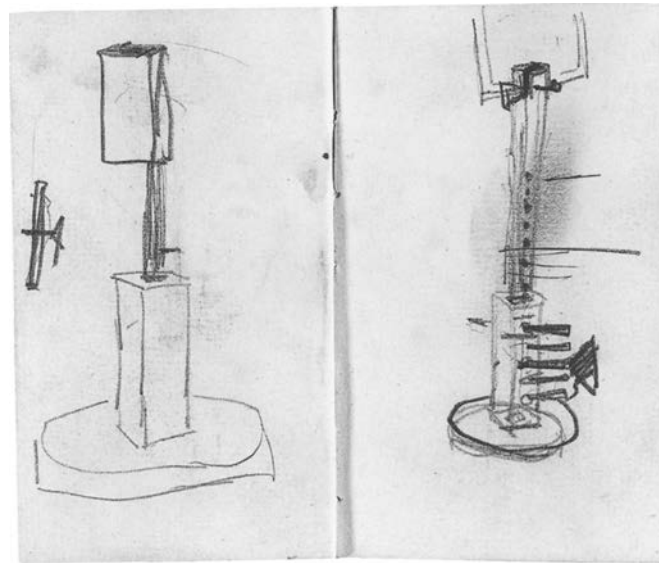
'I would also like to add that the version I showed you yesterday can also be used indoors if one mounts it in a *block* with a screw. In this way you can use it to draw or paint heads, and for figures out of doors. And I believe that it would be of such practical assistance to you, I believe that it would give you so many new ideas and enable you to experience so much more that it could help you progress a lot further on your own, that I would be very willing to come to you next time to help you get the hang of it, even if it took a whole day.

'So will you let me know if you would like me to order one for you here or prefer to make one yourself, which you can do with the aid of only a few screws. You can borrow mine to copy from, if you need it' (517/-).<sup>24</sup>

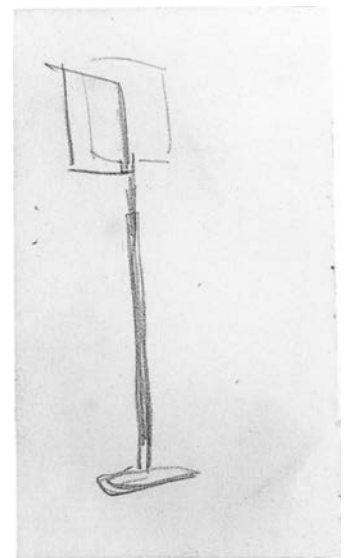
It is clear from Kerssemakers's description, incidentally, that the final version of the perspective frame differed from the drawings in the sketchbook. It was not mounted on



10 Sketchbook sheet with a sketch of a perspective frame, 1884. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



11 Sketchbook sheets with sketches of a perspective frame, 1884. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



12 Sketchbook sheet with a sketch of a perspective frame, 1884. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

top of the iron bar but against it, which made it easier to adjust and fix at different heights. There is also a sketch of that variant, although it was not made in Nuenen but at Auvers-sur-Oise in 1890 (fig. 13).<sup>25</sup> This indicates that Van Gogh was pleased with his Nuenen frame and was thinking of having a new one made in Auvers.

Some of the sketches show the frame strung with horizontal and vertical threads and two diagonals (figs. 8, 9). It can be deduced from many of Van Gogh's Hague drawings that his earlier frame had quite a few horizontal and vertical threads. He undoubtedly used his Nuenen frame a great deal, but now made sure that he erased the guide lines, with the result that they can only be detected in one or two drawings (see *cats.* 93, 199).<sup>26</sup> As far as can be seen, his main guides were the horizontal and vertical threads and the inner and outer edges of the frame, which were sketched into one of the Nuenen harvest

ook binnenskamers te gebruiken is – als men het vastzet in een blok door middel van een schroef.– En U kunt het dan ook gebruiken om koppen te schilderen of te teekenen en voor figuren buiten. En ik geloof dat het U zóó praktisch helpen zou, ik geloof dat U er zooveel nieuwe ideeën door zoudt krijgen en zooveel meer voelen, dat U Uzelf er een heel eind verder mee brengen kunt, dat – ik regt gaarne – de eerste keeren er eens voor tot U kom, al is 't een heelen dag, om U goed op dreef er mee te brengen.  
'Wil mij dus laten weten of ik er hier een voor U bestellen zal of dat U er t'huis een zelf wilt maken, wat U wel kunt met behulp van eenige schroeven alleen. Dan kunt U 't mijne als model krijgen als U 't noodig mogt hebben.'



13 Sheet of sketches, including a perspective frame (F 1637v JH 2082), 1890. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

scenes (*cat.* 199).<sup>27</sup> Many works from every stage of Van Gogh's career show that the edges of his perspective frame played a vital part in establishing the composition. Only rarely are there clear traces of the diagonals in the drawings from the Nuenen period.<sup>28</sup>

#### TECHNIQUE AND DRAWING MATERIALS

After years of experimentation Van Gogh had become very familiar with the properties of various drawing materials and had settled on the ones he preferred. The technique of his Hague drawings and prints was often unorthodox, with imaginative combinations of materials, most of them black. In retrospect he evidently felt that not all these experiments were equally successful, for in his later work one searches in vain for a material like natural chalk (or 'mountain chalk,' as he called it), which he had written about so enthusiastically in the spring of 1883 (see *cats.* 59-63).<sup>29</sup> In a few cases, too, he probably employed the lithographic crayon that is so common in the Hague drawings, although it is possible that this was another type of greasy chalk (*cats.* 189, 204).<sup>30</sup> If it is indeed lithographic crayon, which is what it appears to be under the microscope, it may have come from a stock that he had laid in when he made his lithograph of *The potato eaters* in Gestel's printing works. It is certainly significant that it was Dimmen Gestel who claimed that Van Gogh's studies were done with lithographic crayon.

#### PEN DRAWINGS

Van Gogh's earliest Nuenen drawings are in pen and ink or watercolour. He had used these techniques in The Hague, but from the second half of 1882 the pen figures less frequently. He took it up again in Drenthe, and used it in Nuenen for some of his most ambitious sheets on various types of wove paper (see *cats.* 69, 70, 74-76, 78-80, 86, 88-95).<sup>31</sup> In Drenthe he had also worked with the pen on laid paper (*cat.* 67), but this was probably because of a shortage of materials. The only drawings from the Nuenen period with the pen on laid paper are sketchy studies and a series of small heads (*cats.* 81, 108-118).

Van Gogh's pen drawings were prepared with the pencil, which he also used for the finish. All the ink he used is now brown, but in most cases it was originally black, which would have harmonised better with the pencil. Van Gogh almost invariably used iron-gall ink, which discolours from black to dark brown or brown and eats into the paper, as can be seen in most of the sheets.

Several drawings were made with pens of different thickness, and various passages were reinforced with the brush. It is known from a letter written in Arles that Van Gogh was using a reed pen at this time, as he later did in the south of France.<sup>32</sup> In the Nuenen drawings, however, it is difficult to say exactly when he used a reed, a quill or a metal nib. There are certainly none of the broad, flowing lines that are so characteristic of the reed pen in the drawings from the south of France. In Arles, Van Gogh concluded that his new reed pens were far better than the ones he had used in Nuenen.<sup>33</sup>

25 There is a similar sketch in F 1611v JH -, which is from the Auvers period and is also in the Van Gogh Museum.

26 See also *cats.* 180-192, note 13.

27 From which it can be seen that the sides of the wooden frame were four centimetres wide.

28 One such diagonal can be seen in F 1325 JH 903 in the Kröller-Müller Museum.

29 See also *Drawings* 1, p. 30.

30 In *Drawings* 1, p. 30, it is stated a little too dogmatically that Van Gogh never used lithographic crayon again after his Hague period.

31 The types of paper used by Van Gogh are also discussed in Heenk 1995, a dissertation that examines the characteristics of the sheets and the function of the drawings. It would have been a welcome addition to the literature if only the technical data were complete and reliable. The errors, however, are legion. Watermarks of which there are sufficient vestiges for identification are not recognised (*cats.* 96/162, the recto and verso of the same sheet, and *cat.* 177). Drawings on different kinds of blue paper are treated as a single category (see *cat.* 177). It is too readily assumed that sheets are from a sketchbook, while works that are quite clearly on paper from drawing pads are not recognised as such (*cats.* 69-76). *Cat.* 87 is on laid paper with the watermarks HFDC and a shield with a fleur-de-lys. It was later mounted on a sheet of wove with a different watermark, but Heenk states that the mount is the original support. Sheets where no watermark can be detected are lumped together with drawings with the mark VDL (*cats.* 183, 190, 194). The description of the watermarks is quite frequently incomplete (only the border inscription being mentioned in the case of the mark of a shield with a lion and scimitar surrounded by the



In May 1884, when he told Theo that he would be sending him a series of large landscape drawings (*cats.* 89-92), Van Gogh added: 'I have changed my technique somewhat since I made them, even though that was only quite a short time ago' [450/369]. The word 'technique' can be taken as referring to pen drawings of this specific type, and indeed there are no other sheets with such a high finish. During the remainder of his time in Nuenen, he used the pen less and less.

#### WATERCOLOURS

Van Gogh made watercolour drawings throughout his Nuenen period, although even they receded into the background during the months when he was concentrating on painting.

In The Hague he had developed the rather idiosyncratic technique of working with opaque but highly thinned watercolour. This was a variant of the 'aquarelle gouachée' he had read about in Armand Cassagne's manual,<sup>34</sup> and was the one used for the vast majority of the Nuenen watercolours. Several sheets, though, show that he was beginning to experiment with the medium. Two drawings of weavers, for instance (*cats.* 82, 84), are done in truly transparent watercolour, whereas *Man winding yarn* (*cat.* 87, *fig.* 14) is opaque throughout.

Some of these drawings are on watercolour paper, but Van Gogh really preferred a specific type of laid paper with the watermarks HFDC and a shield with a fleur-de-lys (*cats.* 77, 82-85, 87, 205).

#### PENCIL AND BLACK CHALK

Van Gogh mainly used pencil or black chalk for his studies of heads and hands between December 1884 and May 1885. The pencil was usually for anatomically correct drawings, which are so meticulous that they sometimes look a little academic and stiff. The black chalk drawings of the same subjects, on the other hand, are generally expressive (see *cats.* 97-106, 119-132). Van Gogh gradually abandoned the pencil, for black chalk was better suited to his spontaneous style of drawing, as shown by the figure studies done in the late spring and summer of 1885 (*cats.* 163-192).

Some of the pencil drawings were treated with milk, the object being to fix them and make the graphite dark and matt. This he did regularly in The Hague but less systematically in Nuenen.<sup>35</sup> One new departure was the use of milk to fix black chalk, as can be seen from the dried white residues on the large figure studies from the summer of 1885 (*cats.* 180-192). The application of milk to fix chalk as well as pencil was recommended in a manual by Armand Cassagne.<sup>36</sup>

Many of the Hague sheets drawn with lithographic crayon were treated with water, which dissolved the crayon and allowed the mixture to be worked as a sort of dark wash. Van Gogh came up with a variant of this technique for his drawings in ordinary black chalk. These, too, he treated with a liquid – either water or milk – and then set to work

words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT) and often erroneous (VDL is consistently written as VdL, and HFDC as HFDC). A drawing that is incontestably signed and annotated in Van Gogh's own hand is tentatively assigned to Willem van de Wakker (*cat.* 206). In many cases, finally, the techniques are often reported cursorily and even incorrectly. This list of inaccuracies covers only the Nuenen sheets in the Van Gogh Museum, but the dissertation is also unreliable for the remainder of the collection and for sheets in other museums. Although it is included in the present bibliography it has been used with great caution.

32 See letter 602/478.

33 Ibidem.

34 See Drawings 1, p. 26.

35 See Drawings 1, pp. 26-27.

36 Cassagne 1873, p. 42.

with the brush. This spread the chalk out in a thin layer, creating the effect of a delicate grey wash. Van Gogh then used the eraser to create lighter passages.

By far the majority of Van Gogh's pen drawings are on laid paper. He abandoned the heavy, rough watercolour paper he had been so fond of in The Hague, although he continued to favour paper with a rough surface. Most of the black chalk studies are also on laid paper. Van Gogh generally preferred sizable sheets of wove for the large figure studies he made in the summer of 1885; only a couple are on laid paper (*cats.* 189, 193). He also made a few experiments with black chalk on sheets of pink or blue laid paper (*cats.* 177-179, 195, 196).

#### MODELS

Van Gogh's greatest ambition was to make figured works, preferably with several people in action. By way of preparation he worked from the live model as often as circumstances and



14 *Man winding yarn*, cat. 87.

his purse permitted. In Nuenen, of course, he had to start by finding new models. This was not the only problem that he encountered in the first few months of his stay, for as noted above his studio was too small for model studies. The situation improved, however, when he set up his studio in the Schafrats' house.

His collection of costumes enabled Van Gogh to portray his models in a variety of guises and actions, for which he also used the farm implements and other attributes scattered around his studio. There can be no doubt, however, that he also did a lot of work out in the open air. First, though, he had to observe the peasants in order to understand precisely what it was that they did on the land. He must have made small sketches on loose sheets of paper or in his sketchbook, which he consulted later to put his models in the same poses. A number of pages in a Nuenen sketchbook contain preparatory sketches that could have served as the basis for larger studies (figs. 15, 16).

Van Gogh was well aware that drawing from the nude model would make it easier for him to depict the human figure. Although no nude drawings have survived from the Nuenen period, there is evidence that Van Gogh did make a few. A large number of works remained behind in the vicarage when Van Gogh left Nuenen. His mother moved out of the village in 1886 and gave her son's work to Schrauwen, a carpenter, for safe-keeping, and there it stayed when she settled in Leiden in 1889. Schrauwen kept the chests until 1903, when he sold them to two junk dealers, M. and J.C. Couvreur, who thus acquired 'a cartload of works by Van Gogh'. They included nude drawings, which so scandalised the wife of J.C. Couvreur that they were thrown away.<sup>37</sup> It is not known how many sheets there were, but it could not have been many. Even if Van Gogh had dared ask the peasant men and women of Nuenen to take their clothes off, few would have been willing to do so. It was not for nothing that in October 1884 he had toyed with the idea of taking lessons in nude drawing with the sculptor Jean Theodore Stracké (1817-1891) in Den Bosch, or at the academy in Antwerp.

Drawing from the nude may have been a problem in Nuenen, but in the late autumn and winter of 1884 he had no lack of villagers willing to pose for him clothed. There was almost no work to be done on the land when the weather was cold, so the virtually unemployed peasants were only too happy to earn a little on the side. By his own account, the industrious Van Gogh paid about one guilder a day for models, and the same amount for materials.<sup>38</sup> This means that his sitters must have posed for him almost the entire day, for it can be assumed that he paid them roughly the same as he had paid his models in The Hague: 'a few quarters for an afternoon or a morning' [273/238]. Willem de Wakker recalled that Van Gogh did not pay his models in cash but with packets of coffee that he bought in Eindhoven.<sup>39</sup> There may be a kernel of truth in this anecdote, but it is inconceivable that this unorthodox method of payment was the rule.

In December 1884 Van Gogh embarked on a series of studies of heads and hands (*cats.* 97-135) that continued until the spring of 1885. A few sketches show more of the body (*cats.* 133-135) or are studies of seated figures (*cats.* 136-138). These sheets, which were

37 Stokvis 1926, pp. 4, 5. The Couvreur brothers estimated that they originally had 60 canvases on strainers, 150 loose canvases, some 80 pen drawings and between 100 and 200 chalk drawings by Van Gogh; *ibidem*, p. 7.

38 See letter 474/386b.

39 Stokvis 1927, p. 12.

purely for Van Gogh's personal use, were exercises for a large figured painting he was planning to make in the not too distant future, although at that point he did not know what the subject was to be. The final outcome of these exercises was *The potato eaters*.

After completing that masterpiece in April 1885 he concluded that further study of the human figure was still necessary. He realised that his figures lacked volume, and this was brought home to him all the more forcefully by the harsh criticism he received from his brother Theo and from Anthon van Rappard. He hoped to solve the problem using a technique described by Delacroix, which he had read about in Jean Gigoux's *Causeries sur les artistes de mon temps* (see *cat.* 162). Delacroix first built up his figures with large ellipses, ovals and ovoid forms to establish the essential masses of a body, and only then got down to detail. Van Gogh began with some modest studies in May and June 1885 (*cats.* 163-174), but as the summer progressed he felt confident enough to make the large studies that Dimmen Gestel recalled (*cats.* 180-194). It is difficult to say whether the



15 Sketchbook sheet with a woman gleaning ears of corn, 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



16 Peasant woman gleaning ears of corn (F 1265a JH 834), 1885. Private collection.

results he achieved were due to Delacroix, but these large figures certainly display a great improvement in depicting the human form in a sculptural way. Almost all the actions are extremely convincing, and appear to have been captured very rapidly. Here too, though, the models were undoubtedly posed. The sheets were intended for a composite figured work in which they would be reduced in size (see *cats.* 180-192), but it was never actually executed.

Van Gogh often had problems finding models when the peasants were busy gathering in the harvest, and in September 1885 this led to an unexpected crisis. A woman who regularly posed for him became pregnant, and Vincent was wrongly suspected of being the father. If it is true that his models did occasionally pose in the nude, it is easy to see that this innocuous activity might have been seized on by the local gossips. In any event, he found himself at loggerheads with the Catholic clergy in Nuenen. One priest, in particular, urged his parishioners to stop posing for the vicar's son. The man was not very popular, and Van Gogh suspected that the affair would soon blow over, but there he was mistaken.<sup>40</sup> This revived his old idea of taking lessons in figure drawing, and was one of the reasons why he decided to leave for Antwerp at the end of November 1885.

<sup>40</sup> See letter 532/423.

## Note to the reader

Each catalogue entry consists of three sections: technical description, discussion and documentation. The latter is broken down into provenance, relevant letters by Van Gogh, literature and exhibitions. Reference is made only to those letters in which Van Gogh specifically mentions that particular drawing. The literature is restricted to publications that make a substantive contribution to our knowledge of the drawing. The other parts of the documentary section are as exhaustive as possible.

References to publications and exhibitions are given in abbreviated form. The full titles and exhibition details will be found at the back of the book.

Data on the provenance and exhibitions are based on the 1970 *œuvre catalogue* by J.-B. de la Faille. The museum archives, in the form of exhibition catalogues, archive cards, newspaper cuttings, annotations by Jo van Gogh-Bonger and V.W. van Gogh, and other documents, are the source for any supplementary information or corrections to De la Faille.

If it is known when Van Gogh sent a particular drawing to his brother, Theo is listed in the provenance as the owner from that year. Where such information is not available he is regarded as the owner from 1890, the year of Vincent's death. The same principle has been followed for the sheets that bear titles in French. Most were probably sent to Theo in Paris, but if there is no firm evidence for this the date of 1890 is retained.

Although, formally speaking, V.W. van Gogh was joint owner of the Van Gogh Collection from 1891, he is only listed in the provenance from 1925, the year in which his mother died.

Displays of works in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in the period when the collection was housed there (circa 1931-73) are not included in the list of exhibitions.

Wherever possible, Van Gogh's works bear the titles that he himself gave them. In all other cases they have been given concise, straightforward titles.

A distinction is made throughout the catalogue between transparent and opaque watercolour. The term 'gouache' has been avoided for technical reasons. For further information on this point see note 24 in the Introduction to Volume 1.

The material used for the signature is only specified if it differs from that in which the drawing was executed.

Inscriptions on the backs of the drawings are only recorded when they are considered relevant.

The present owner of the work is listed in the provenance section. By far the majority of the drawings are in the collection of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, but a small number belongs to the Van Gogh Museum itself. All the works in the Van Gogh Museum reproduced in the comparative illustrations are from the collection of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, as are the documents in the Museum. The works belonging to the Vincent van Gogh Foundation are on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum.

The quotations from the letters have been checked against the originals and corrected where necessary. They are followed by two numbers within square brackets. Where information from the letters is used in the text without quotation marks, the letter numbers will be found in a note. The first of the two numbers refers to Han van Crimpen and Monique Berends (eds.), *De brieven van Vincent van Gogh*, 4 vols., The Hague 1990, and the second to *The complete letters of Vincent van Gogh*, 3 vols., Greenwich (Conn.) 1958. All the quotations from the English edition have been checked by the present translator and revised where necessary.

The F-numbers in the texts refer to the relevant catalogue numbers in J.-B. de la Faille, *The works of Vincent van Gogh. His paintings and drawings*, Amsterdam 1970; the JH numbers to Jan Hulsker, *The complete Van Gogh: paintings, drawings, sketches*, New York 1980.

# Catalogue

The documentation in the catalogue entries  
was compiled by Monique Hageman, Fieke  
Pabst and Marije Vellekoop.

## 69-71 Winter landscapes

Van Gogh's parents moved from Etten to Nuenen in August 1882, and members of his family were soon telling him about the sights to be seen in this East Brabant village. He was particularly curious about a rustic churchyard with old wooden crosses, which he thought would make a very interesting subject.<sup>1</sup>

The old tower with the adjoining graveyard was all that remained of a church that may have dated back to the late 15th century. It fell into complete decay in the 18th century, and in 1803 the tower alone was rebuilt, albeit far shorter than the original structure, which accounts for its unusually squat appearance. The last remnants of the church itself were demolished in 1823. By the 1870s the tower was again in danger of collapse, and in January 1884 the bells were removed, depriving it of its sole remaining function. It was then pulled down over a period of several years, and Van Gogh himself saw the spire removed. It was finally levelled in 1885. A later date is wrongly given on a print of 1880 by August Sassen (*fig. 69a*; see also *cats. 159-161*).

The churchyard beside the picturesque tower became one of Vincent's first subjects after his arrival in Nuenen on 4 December 1883.<sup>2</sup> This can be deduced from the verso of catalogue number 69, which has Theo's Paris address, a five-cent postage stamp and a postmark with 'NUENEN' around the edge and '7 DEC 83' in the middle. This sheet was therefore executed at the very beginning of Van Gogh's Nuenen period, along with number 70, which is a slightly larger and more detailed treatment of the same subject. Van Gogh rolled both sheets up, using the one with the address as the 'cover', and sent them off to his brother. This is confirmed by a passage in a letter of 8 December from the Reverend Van Gogh (1822-1885) to Theo: 'Don't you think they're beautiful, those pen drawings of the old tower that Vincent sent you? It comes to him so easily.'<sup>3</sup>

The smaller version (*cat. 69*) is a 'close-up' of the other drawing, in which the base of the tower and its heavy buttresses are clearly recognisable, whereas they are little more than abstract shapes in the background of the variant. The larger sheet was probably done on the spot, for Van Gogh started with a preparatory drawing in pencil which he then worked

<sup>1</sup> See letters 259/226, 270/234 and 272/236.

<sup>2</sup> Originally it was thought that Van Gogh arrived in Nuenen on 5 December, but Dijk 1996, p. 103, has corrected this to 4 December.

<sup>3</sup> Inv. b 2248 V/1982.

<sup>4</sup> They are F 1232 JH 429, from the larger pad (the dimensions are identical to those of *cats. 70-71* and *74-75*), and F 1106 JH 460. The latter comes from one of the two pads. It measures 21.0 × 13.0 cm and still has its original top and right edges, where there are identical traces of glue, as there are on all four sides of F 1232 JH 429. There are no traces of red or blue pigment, which were probably lost when the paper was moistened or heated for attachment to new margins. I am grateful to Peter Kipp for his help in examining these drawings.

A winter scene now in a private collection (F 1687 JH 428) is probably another sheet from the large sketch-pad. It was not possible to examine it, but photographs and the dimensions given in *De la Faille* point in this direction.

<sup>5</sup> See the commentary in *De la Faille* under F 1127.



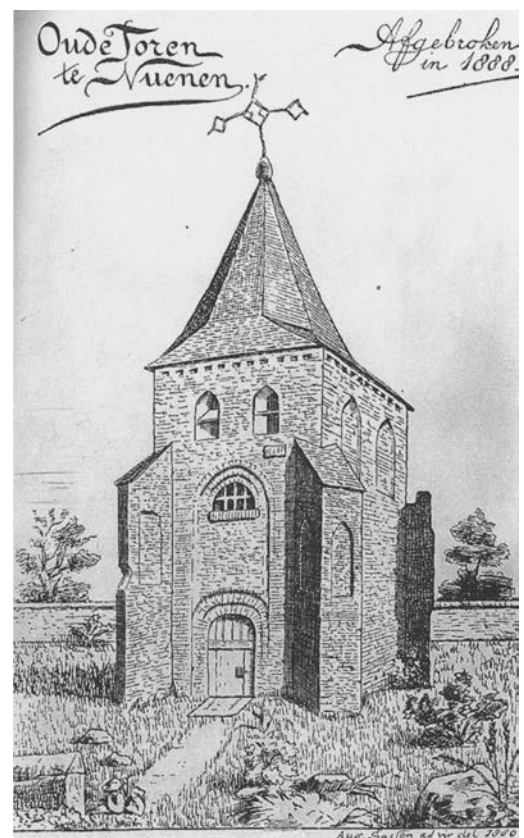
up with pen and ink, black chalk, white gouache and a brown wash. He probably used that one as the model for the other drawing, which has no preliminary sketch. It was executed directly with the pen and worked up here and there in pencil, which indicates that it was done in the studio. That is also why Van Gogh made no attempt to render the details of the tower. He had not actually observed it from the closer vantage-point and did not want to risk making mistakes with the perspective.

Both drawings are on sturdy, wood-pulp paper. It has darkened considerably with age, but is nevertheless of a good quality and has a smooth surface that is excellent for drawing with the pen. The same kind of paper was used for the smaller catalogue numbers 72 and 73, and the larger numbers 74-76.

These sheets have something else in common. Most of the edges bear traces of glue with red and blue pigment on top. This indicates that Van Gogh had bought two sketch-pads, both glued on all four sides and probably decorated with red and blue marbling. One measured 20.6 × 28.6 cm, and was used for catalogue numbers 70, 71 and 74-76. More than 2 centimetres were trimmed off the bottom of numbers 70 and 71. The second pad, from which numbers 69, 72 and 73 came, measured 15.9 × 25.4 cm. There are two drawings in the Kröller-Müller Museum that can also be traced to these sketch-pads.<sup>4</sup>

All are snow scenes, which places them in December, that being the only month in the winter of 1883-84 when snow fell.<sup>5</sup>

Catalogue number 71 is on the back of number 70. This small, black chalk sketch, which is stumped in the middleground, appears to be a composition sketch for another drawing, *Landscape with a church* (cat. 76).



69<sup>a</sup> Augustus Sassen, *The old tower at Nuenen*, 1880.

## 69 Churchyard in winter

DECEMBER 1883

Pen in brown ink, pencil, on wove paper

15.9 × 25.5 cm

Unsigned

Annotated on the verso:

Imprimé/Monsieur Th van

Gogh/25 Rue de Laval/Paris. At top right a five-cent stamp with the postmark: Nuenen/7 DEC

83/[...] 12

83/[...] 12

Inv. d 285 V/1962

F 1237 JH 433

### PROVENANCE

1883?-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 92, vol. 4, pl. CIII; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 262, 412; Leurs/Tralbaut 1957, pp. 59-60; De la Faille 1970, p. 441; Amsterdam 1987, p. 401, no. 2.203; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 92, 315-16, vol. 2, pl. CIII; Heenk 1995, pp. 100-01; Hulsker 1996, pp. 104-06.

### EXHIBITIONS

1914 Antwerp, no. 11? (possibly cat. 70); 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 121; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 43? (possibly cat. 70); 1929 Amsterdam, no. 28; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 20; 1930 Laren, no. 14? (possibly cat. 70); 1931 Amsterdam, no. 164.

## 70 Churchyard in winter

DECEMBER 1883

Pencil, pen and brush in brown ink, black chalk, heightened with opaque white paint, light brown wash, on wove paper

18.4 × 28.6 cm

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 71

Inv. d 284 V/1962

F 1236r JH 432

### PROVENANCE

1883?-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 92, vol. 4, pl. CIII; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 262, 412; Leurs/Tralbaut 1957, pp. 58-59; De la Faille 1970, p. 441; Amsterdam 1987, p. 401, no. 2.202; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 92, 315, vol. 2, pl. CIII; Heenk 1995, pp. 100-01; Hulsker 1996, pp. 104-06.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 297; 1914 Berlin, no. 10; 1914 Antwerp, no. 11? (possibly cat. 69); 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 58; 1920 New York, no. 19; 1925 The Hague, no. 82; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 43? (possibly cat. 69); 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 29; 1928 Paris, no. 31; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 27; 1930 Laren, no. 14? (possibly cat. 69); 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 14; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 167; 1947 Groningen, no. 32; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 43; 1948 Hilversum, no catalogue; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 200;

1955 Antwerp, no. 71; 1956 Haarlem, no. 28; 1964 Zundert, no. 10; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 73; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 94.

## 71 Landscape with a church

DECEMBER 1883

Black chalk on wove paper

18.4 × 28.6 cm, the framed scene 10.5 × 10.3 cm

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 70

Inv. d 284 V/1962

F 1236v JH 436

### PROVENANCE

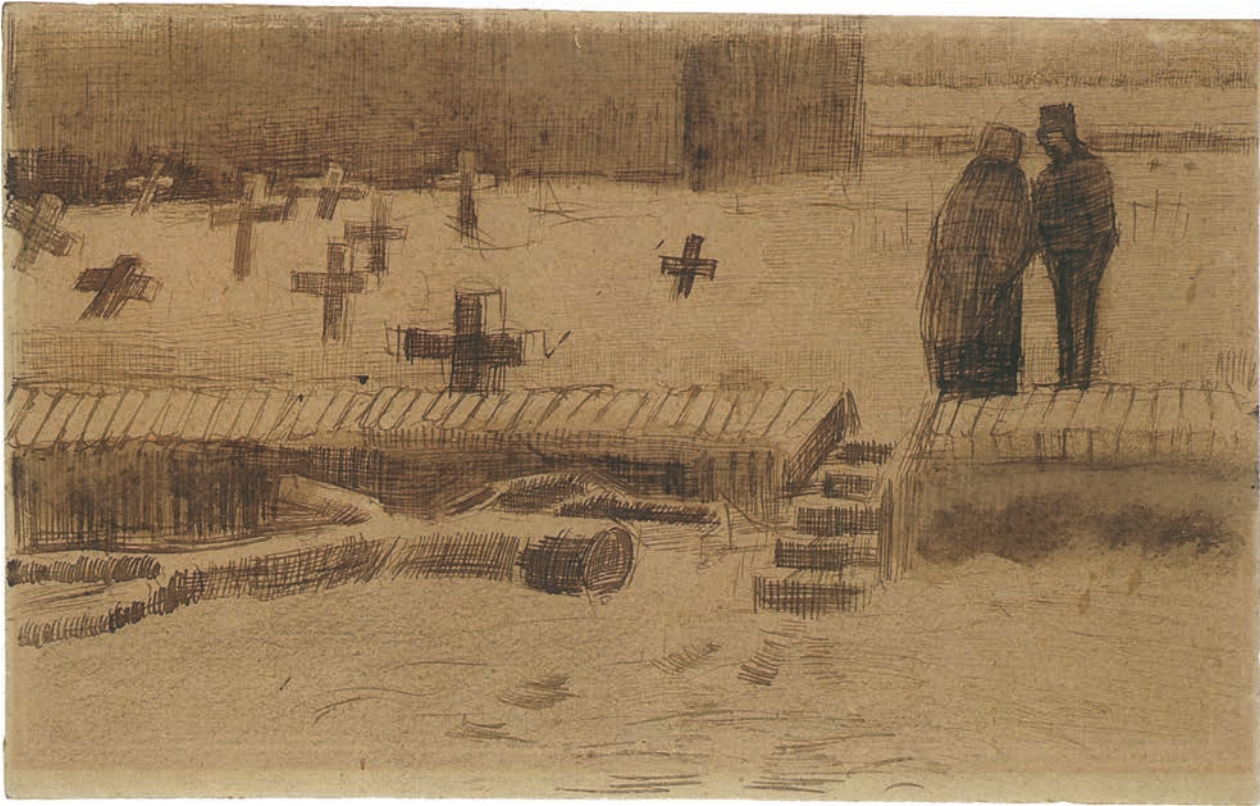
1883?-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1970, p. 441; Amsterdam 1987, p. 401, no. 2.204; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, p. 315, vol. 2, pl. CCXXV; Heenk 1995, pp. 100-02; Hulsker 1996, pp. 104-05.

### EXHIBITIONS

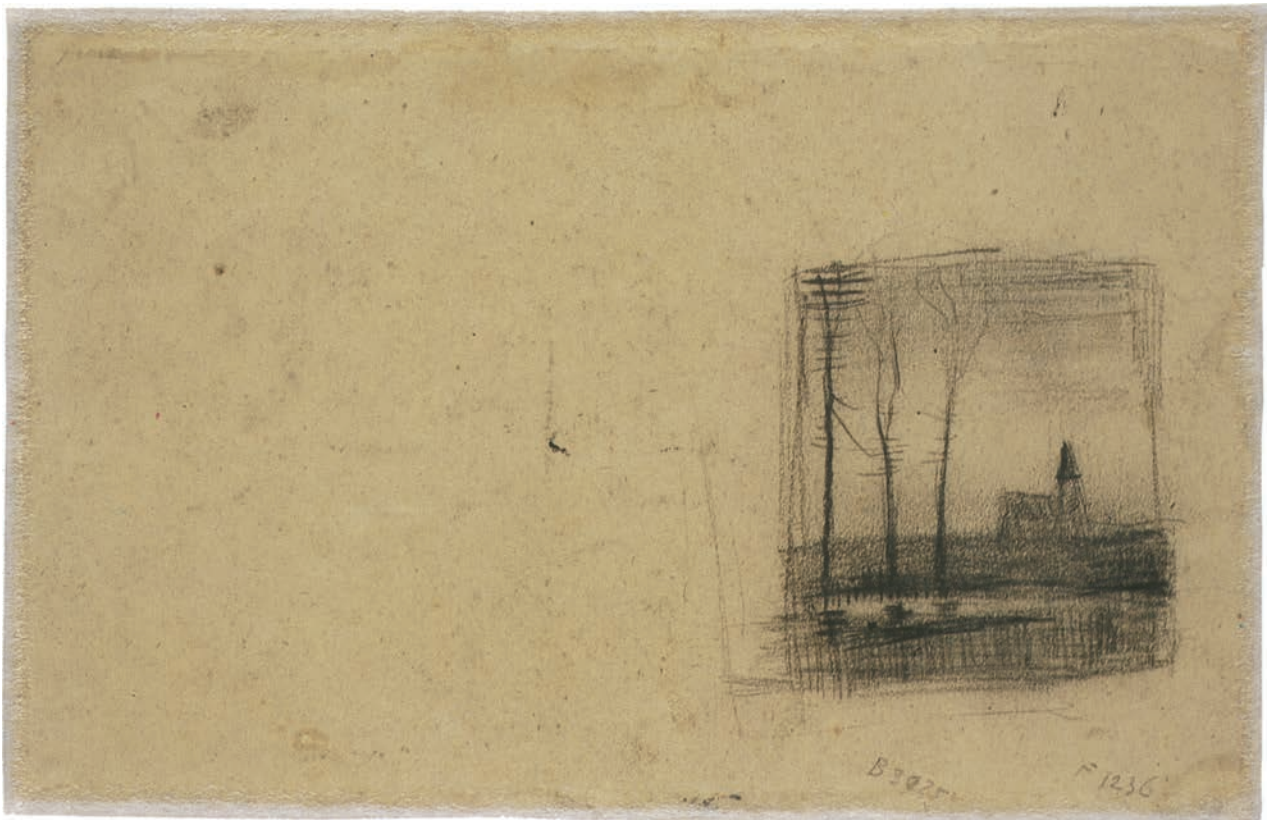
None.



69 Churchyard in winter



70 Churchyard in winter



71 Landscape with a church



72 Woman with a fork in a winter landscape



73 Figures in a winter landscape

## 72, 73 Winter landscapes

<sup>1</sup> The pen drawing of a woman in a snow-covered landscape mentioned above (fig. 72a) is on a sheet of paper that came from the large sketch-pad. See note 4 to cats. 69-71.

The winter landscapes of December 1883 (see *cats.* 69-71) include the scenes on the recto and verso of this sheet. None of them are very detailed; they are just rapid sketches in black chalk that could serve as models for later work.

The recto (*cat.* 72) shows a woman in a snow-covered field stooping over an implement. In a larger and more detailed pen-and-ink drawing of the same subject (fig. 72a), which is based on this sketch, it is revealed to be a fork with which she may be spreading manure.

The central scene on the back of the sheet (*cat.* 73) is of two children rolling a large snowball. To the left is a man, but again it is impossible to make out what he is doing apart from bending over something that is cursorily indicated with long lines, possibly a heap of manure.

At top right, in a framed scene set at right angles to the main one, a woman is walking along a path with a basket on her back. This too is set in the snow, as shown by the white of the path, the field and the roof of the distant cottage. The fact that Van Gogh filled this side of the sheet with two sketchy scenes underlines the rather unambitious nature of these two drawings.

The paper is of the wood-pulp type used for catalogue numbers 69-71 and 74-76. It comes from the same sketch-pad as number 69. On the left, right and lower edges are traces of glue topped with red and blue pigments from what appears to have been a marbling. The top edge is bare and has probably been trimmed, for the paper is exactly the same width as number 69 but a few millimetres shorter.<sup>1</sup>



72<sup>a</sup> *Winter landscape* (F 1232 JH 429).  
1883. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

72 Woman with a fork in  
a winter landscape

DECEMBER 1883

Black chalk on wove paper

15.6 × 25.5 cm

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 73

Inv. d 283 V/1962

F 1233r JH 430

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 91,  
vol. 4, pl. CII; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 262, 353, 412; De la  
Faille 1970, pp. 440-41;  
Chetham 1976, p. 31;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 400, no.  
2.198; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
pp. 91, 314, vol. 2, pl. CII;  
Heenk 1995, pp. 100-01;  
Hulsker 1996, pp. 104, 106.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 293; 1914-  
15 Amsterdam, no. 118; 1923  
Utrecht, no. 23; 1923 Rotterdam,  
no. 23; 1956 Haarlem, no. 27.

73 Figures in a winter  
landscape

DECEMBER 1883

Black chalk on wove paper

15.6 × 25.5 cm

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 72

Inv. d 283 V/1962

F 1233v JH 434

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1925-62 V.W.  
van Gogh; 1931-62 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 1970, pp. 440-41;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 400, no.  
2.199; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
p. 315, vol. 2, pl. CCXXIV; Heenk  
1995, pp. 100-02, 107; Hulsker  
1996, pp. 104-06.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

## 74 Winter garden

DECEMBER 1883

Pen and brush in brown ink,  
scraped, on wove paper

28.6 × 20.6 cm

Unsigned

Annotated at lower left: Jardin  
d'hiver

Inv. d 417 V/1962

F 1131 JH 427

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 on loan to  
the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam;  
1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation;  
1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk  
Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on per-  
manent loan to the Van Gogh  
Museum, Amsterdam.

### LITERATURE

Bremmer 1910, ill. on cover; De la  
Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 70, vol. 4,  
pl. LXXV; Vanbeselaere 1937,  
pp. 259, 322, 411; Leurs/Tralbaut  
1957, p. 48; De la Faille 1970, p.  
415; Amsterdam 1987, p. 401, no.  
2.201; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 128;  
Ködera 1990, p. 39; De la Faille  
1992, vol. 1, pp. 70, 289, vol. 2,  
pl. LXXV; Heenk 1995, pp. 102, 113-  
14; Hulsker 1996, pp. 103, 106.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 306; 1909-10  
Berlin, no catalogue; 1912 The  
Hague, no. 26; 1914 Antwerp, no.  
12; 1914 Berlin, no. 11; 1914-15  
Amsterdam, no. 99; 1923 Utrecht,  
no. 54; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 54;  
1925 Paris, unnumbered; 1927-28  
Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no.  
43; 1928 Paris, no. 45; 1929  
Amsterdam, no. 19; 1929-30 Rot-

terdam, no. 15; 1931 Amsterdam,  
no. 160; 1932 Manchester, no. 58;  
1947 Groningen, no. 27; 1947  
Rotterdam, no. 31; 1948-49 The  
Hague, no. 194; 1949-50 New

York & Chicago, no. 33; 1954-55  
Bern, no. 93; 1955 Antwerp,  
no. 62; 1965 Nuenen, unnum-  
bered; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 11;  
1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 12; 1975

Malmö, no. 16; 1976 Stockholm &  
Oslo, no. 16; 1976-77 Tokyo,  
Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 19; 1977  
Paris, unnumbered; 1988 Rome,  
no. 66.

Van Gogh was delighted with the beautiful garden behind his parents' house and regularly used it as a motif during his stay in Nuenen. His first essays were this *Winter garden* and the sheet he called 'Mélancolie' (*cat.* 75) of December 1883.

Here the garden is being prepared for winter by three women, presumably Van Gogh's mother and his sisters Wil and Lies. It is not possible to see precisely what they are doing, but the straw that has been wrapped around the four saplings or rose bushes in the foreground shows that steps are being taken to protect plants from the frost.

The old tower in the fields beyond was visible from the garden. It features in several drawings, including the two scenes of the garden in winter.

There are no traces of a preparatory pencil drawing, but given the complexity of the composition Van Gogh presumably laid down the main elements in a faint sketch which he later erased. He used two pens for the drawing proper, one slightly broader than the other. The ink in the bushes below the stooping woman on the right was worked with a barely moistened brush, as it was in the bending woman on the left. Van Gogh scraped off some of the ink in the branches of the trees in the left background in order to create the impression of snow.

The paper is of the deeply browned, wove type used for catalogue numbers 69-76, and comes from the same sketch-pad as numbers 75 and 76, which are identical in size, and the slightly smaller numbers 70 and 71 (see *cats.* 70, 71).

Van Gogh gave this and the following sheet a French title, in this case 'Jardin d'hiver'. This suggests that he sent the sheets to Theo in Paris in the hope that they were marketable, or at any rate that they would help build up his reputation.





74 Winter garden

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## 75 Melancholy

DECEMBER 1883

Pencil, pen in brown ink, on  
wove paper  
28.6 × 20.6 cm  
Unsigned  
Annotated at lower left:  
Mélancolie

Inv. d 87 V/1962  
F 1127 JH 426

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 on loan  
to the Stedelijk Museum, Amster-  
dam; 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

Bremmer 1910, no. 86; De la  
Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 69, vol. 4,  
pl. LXXIV; Meier-Graefe 1928,  
pl. 13; Vanbeselaere 1937,  
pp. 259, 322, 411; Leurs/Tralbaut  
1957, pp. 44-46; De la Faille  
1970, p. 414; Amsterdam 1987,  
p. 400, no. 2.200; Kōdera 1990,  
p. 39; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
pp. 69, 287-88, vol. 2, pl. LXXIV;  
Heenk 1995, pp. 102, 113-14;  
Hulsker 1996, pp. 103, 106.

EXHIBITIONS

1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 43; 1924  
Basel, no. 81; 1924 Zürich, no. 81;  
1924 Stuttgart, no. 6; 1925 The  
Hague, no. 58; 1927-28 Berlin,  
Vienna & Hannover, no. 42; 1928  
Paris, no. 44; 1929 Amsterdam,  
no. 17; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 13;  
1930 Laren, no. 17?; 1931 Amster-  
dam, no. 166; 1947 Groningen,

no. 26; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 30;  
1947-48 Alkmaar, no. 32; 1948-49  
The Hague, no. 192; 1953-54  
Bergen op Zoom, no. 26; 1955  
Antwerp, no. 65; 1957 Nijmegen,  
no. 19; 1957 Stockholm, no. 21;  
1962 London, no. 17.

The vicarage garden is also the subject of this drawing, which is yet another winter scene from December 1883. This time Van Gogh took up a position close to the hedge that can be seen in the background of *Winter garden* (cat. 74). He also selected a high vantage-point so as to include the fields beyond the garden and do more justice to the old church tower. Although it was also included in its entirety in the preceding drawing, it is now shown prominently for the first time.

The title of the scene, at bottom left, is 'Mélancolie', so like the *Winter garden* it was intended for the French market. It is known from his letters that Van Gogh suffered regular bouts of melancholia, and it had dominated his life in the months after he left Sien and her children in September. In this particular case, though, the title does not allude solely to a state of depression. There was a sort of melancholy in nature which Van Gogh described as 'a healthy kind, as in Millet's drawings' [389/324]. For him this was a form of melancholy that did not lead to despondence but to deep reflection that gives a greater insight into nature, life and humanity.<sup>1</sup> This drawing, with the rather clumsily executed, lonely black figure, the bare, snow-covered garden and the desolate tower standing in the fields should be interpreted in this abstract sense.

The wove paper is of the same discoloured type as five other sheets (see *cats.* 69-71), and given its dimensions came from the pad used for catalogue numbers 70, 71, 74 and 76. There are a few pencilled lines here and there that indicate that Van Gogh made little more than a cursory preliminary drawing, and one, moreover, which he used only as a very rough guide. As with the *Winter garden*, he used pens of differing thickness.

<sup>1</sup> See also letter 374/309.



75 Melancholy

## 76 Landscape with a church

DECEMBER 1883

Pencil, pen in brown ink, on  
wove paper  
20.5 × 28.6 cm  
Unsigned

Inv. d 10 V/1962  
F 1238 JH 435

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, pp. 92-  
93, vol. 4, pl. c111; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 262, 412; Leurs/  
Tralbaut 1957, pp. 51-52; De la  
Faille 1970, p. 442; Chetham  
1976, p. 31; Amsterdam 1987,  
p. 401, no. 2.205; De la Faille  
1992, vol. 1, pp. 92-93, 316, vol.  
2, pl. c111; Heenk 1995, pp. 100-  
02; Hulsker 1996, pp. 104-06.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 330; 1914-  
15 Amsterdam, no. 57; 1923  
Utrecht, no. 16; 1923 Rotter-  
dam, no. 16; 1924 Amsterdam,  
no. 126; 1926 Munich, no. 2111;  
1927-28 Berlin, Vienna &  
Hannover, no. 16; 1928 Paris,  
no. 17; 1929 Amsterdam, no.  
29; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 21;  
1930 Laren, no. 18; 1930-31  
Arnhem, Groningen,

Van Gogh must have started exploring the area around Nuenen soon after his arrival. It was on one of those forays that he came across this church at Gerwen, which he felt was a suitable subject for a drawing in his series of snow-covered scenes of December 1883 (see *cats.* 69-75).

The village of Gerwen lies two kilometres north-east of Nuenen. St Clement's church originally dated from the 15th century but was rebuilt in 1612 after a fire. The view is towards the choir. The spire, which stands directly in front of the nave and contains the entrance, rises above the north aisle. Running in front of the church is the road from Eindhoven to Lieshout, with a man and a woman in the foreground and two women a little further off.

The drawing as a whole gives the impression of being an accurate study done on the spot. Comparison with a photograph of the church, however, shows that Van Gogh made sketches that gave a rough idea of situation but proved inadequate for a faithful depiction of the building when he set to work back in the studio (*fig.* 76*a*). It can be seen from the photograph that the sanctuary had the form of a circular apse, while the



76<sup>a</sup> Photograph of the Church of  
St Clement, Gerwen, 1959. Nuenen.  
J.C. Jegerings photograph collection.



76 Landscape with a church

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Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 15; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 161; 1932 Manchester, no. 49; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 44; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 199; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 39; 1953 Zürich, no. 43; 1953 The Hague, no. 19; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 35; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 41; 1954-55 Bern, no. 110; 1955 Antwerp, no. 70; 1956 Haarlem, no. 29; 1964 Zundert, no. 11; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 21; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 22; 1971-72 Paris, no. 125; 1975 Malmö, no. 17; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 17; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 25; 1982 Amsterdam, no catalogue.

side aisle ended in a flat, gabled wall with a round window at the top. Van Gogh drew the choir as a sort of combination of that wall and the real choir, and in fact it is so dissimilar as to suggest that this is another church altogether. However, of all the other churches in the large area around Nuenen, none is an acceptable alternative to St Clement's.<sup>1</sup>

The sketches that Van Gogh made on the spot probably include catalogue number 71, which is a composition sketch for this drawing. The *Landscape with a church* is also drawn on the stiff, badly discoloured wood-pulp paper from one of the two sketch-pads that Van Gogh was using at the time (see *cats.* 69-71). It comes from the same pad as numbers 71, 72, 74 and 75.

<sup>1</sup> Nor is it the church at Tongelre, as has been suggested, or the one in Nuenen, as De la Faille believed in 1928 (*vol.* 3, pp. 92-93).

## 77 Lumber sale

On 31 December 1883 a lumber sale was held in Nuenen under the supervision of Mr Schutjes, the local public notary.<sup>1</sup> Van Gogh attended it, for in early January he told Theo that he had made a drawing of the subject, 'although it is just an impression' [422/351]. That 'impression' is usually associated with this watercolour drawing, but it is highly unlikely that Van Gogh would have referred to such a large, detailed and signed sheet in those terms. The drawing that Van Gogh made on 31 December 1883 or early in January 1884, which seems to be lost, must have been a different sheet, and probably served as the model for this watercolour. The latter dates from the first two weeks of January 1884, for in a letter to a friend in The Hague, the surveyor Philippe Furnée, who had written to Vincent in the middle of the month,<sup>2</sup> he mentions that he had made a lumber auction in that medium.

The auction was of three tree-trunks, which can be seen in the right foreground of the watercolour. Leaning against the building in the background, which is probably an inn or a café judging by the red animal on the signboard, are a number of planks which were probably also included in the sale. The notary is by the lefthand tree, standing on something that raises him above the crowd.

Other artists had depicted lumber auctions in the 19th century. Van Gogh may have been familiar with the subject from a watercolour of 1881 by Anton Mauve (1838-1888) which he could have seen in the latter's studio when he was taking painting and drawing lessons there at the end of that year (*fig. 77a*).<sup>3</sup>

Van Gogh was determined to become a figure painter, and compositions with several figures were his great ambition. Such works fall broadly into two types. The first contains a number of figures who are all clearly engaged in an activity, such as *Peat diggers in the dunes* (*fig. 44a*). The object here is to strike a compositional balance by establishing a sense of harmony between the figures while giving them a wide range of poses.

The second category features large groups of figures who are not involved in specific actions. Van Gogh first experimented with this type in September-October 1882 in The Hague with his watercolour *The poor and money* (*cat. 39*). It is a challenging artistic problem: the men and women

### JANUARY 1884

Charcoal or black chalk, transparent and opaque watercolour, on laid paper  
34.9 × 44.8 cm  
Watermark: HFDC  
Signed at lower left with the pen in brown ink: Vincent

Inv. d 367 V/1962  
F III3 JH 438

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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.

### LETTERS

423/351a, 505/408.

### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, pp. 65-66, vol. 4, pl. LXXI; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 257, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 407; Chetham 1976, p. 31; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 124-25, 401, no. 2.206; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 65-66, 284, vol. 2, pl. LXXI; Heenk 1995, pp. 106-07; Hulsker 1996, pp. 104-06.

### EXHIBITIONS

1897 Groningen, no catalogue; 1905 Amsterdam, no. 337; 1912 The Hague, no. 19; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 52; 1920 New York, no. 14; 1924 Amsterdam, no. 127; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 35; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna &

Hannover, no. 22; 1928 Paris, no. 24; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 14; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 11; 1930 Laren, no. 16; 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 8; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 151; 1947 Groningen, no. 22; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 26; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 190; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 30; 1953 Zundert, no. 41; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 83; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 34; 1954-55 Bern, no. 90; 1955 Antwerp, no. 75; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 38; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 16; 1957 Stockholm, no. 20; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 97; 1960 Enschede, no. 13; 1963 Paris, no. 31; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 69; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 69; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 67; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 88; 1971-72 Paris, no. 126; 1975 Malmö, no. 18; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 18; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 16; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 13; 1990 Otterlo, no. 84.

have come together with a common purpose, and perform few if any individual actions. Nevertheless, the artist has to give them some variety of poses and expressions while at the same time ensuring that the group remains a coherent, interlocking unit. Above all he has to avoid the impression of isolated figures that have too obviously been studied separately. Van Gogh never really mastered this kind of figure piece, but he did manage to find a moderately satisfactory solution to the problem in *The poor and money*. He studied the group on the spot and then put the composition together in his studio with the aid of figure studies. In the Nuenen *Lumber sale*, a successful and even harmonious sheet in the colouristic sense, the figures are an utter failure. Both individually and as a group they are little more than a bunch of woodentops. Their lifelessness is probably due to the lack of serviceable figure studies. What Van Gogh had brought with him from The Hague was not really suitable for a depiction of a Brabant lumber sale, and he had not yet got around to making studies of the local people. For the watercolour he had only his earlier, now unknown 'impression' to rely on, and that proved inadequate for the task of depicting the crowd successfully.

All the same, Van Gogh was not dissatisfied with the result, for he signed it and even found it worth mentioning in his letter to Furnée. In May 1885, when he was again working on some watercolours, he compared



77<sup>a</sup> Anton Mauve, *Lumber sale*, 1881.  
The Hague, Museum Mesdag.





77 Lumber sale

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<sup>1</sup> Amsterdam 1987, no. 13. *Streekarchief Regio Eindhoven-Kempenland, Nuenen Municipal Archives, appendices to the municipal accounts, inv. 2480 (1883), appendix no. 32.*

<sup>2</sup> Letter 423/351a.

<sup>3</sup> This connection was made in Amsterdam 1987, no. 15. For Mauve's watercolour see Fred Leeman and Hanna Pennock, *Museum Mesdag. Catalogue of paintings and drawings*, Zwolle 1996, no. 219.

the *Lumber sale* with the *Sale of building scrap* (cat. 161). He suspected that the latter was the better of the two, by which he must have been thinking of the group of figures, which is indeed far more convincing.

Van Gogh used the watercolour technique he had developed in The Hague. First he made a preparatory drawing in black chalk or charcoal, over which he painted in largely opaque, often very diluted watercolour, with transparent watercolour here and there. The colour composition of the sheet consists mainly of contrasts of red and green tones, as illustrated by the green tree-trunks with their pink sawn surfaces.

## 78 Weaver

Weavers and miners were two subjects that Van Gogh was determined to include in his repertoire when he embarked on his career as an artist. He first encountered the former in 1879-80 while on a long journey to Courrières, the village in the Pas-de-Calais in northern France that was the home of Jules Breton (1827-1906), the painter of peasant life whom Van Gogh idolised. In September 1880 he recalled that gruelling trip in a letter to Theo. 'Another thing that I saw on that journey was the weavers' villages. The miners and the weavers are still something of a race apart from other labourers and artisans, and I feel a great sympathy for them. I should be very happy if I could draw them some day, for these types, who have never or almost never been published, would then be brought before the eyes of the world. The man from the depth of the abyss, *de profundis* – that is the miner; the other, with his dreamy gaze, almost absent-minded, almost a sleep-walker, that is the weaver' [157/136]. The novice artist, who had hopes of becoming an illustrator, evidently thought that this little-depicted subject would bring him success. A little later, in Brussels, he even thought of going back to that 'country of the miners or weavers' to work from the live model [158/137].

Nothing came of this while he was living in Belgium, but his old fascination was reawakened in September 1882 when his sister Wil told him a little more about Nuenen, to which his parents had recently moved. She mentioned the local weavers, and Vincent immediately wrote asking for more information. Soon afterwards he told Theo that he was hoping to paint the subject, and almost a year later, in the summer of 1883, he considered moving to the Brabant village to do so.<sup>1</sup>

Given this background it is hardly surprising that Van Gogh devoted so much time to drawing and painting weavers when he finally arrived in Nuenen in December 1883. His enthusiasm was such that his father sighed in a letter to Theo of 5 July 1884: 'Vincent is still working away on weavers; it's a pity, one might say, that he did not choose a landscape for a change.'<sup>2</sup>

Van Gogh's eagerness was fuelled by his old idea that there was a hole in the market for scenes of weavers. He still knew of 'only a handful' of drawings of the subject [422/351], and some of those were by his friend

JANUARY 1884

Pencil, pen in brown ink, brown wash, heightened with white and pale pink, opaque water-colour, on wove paper  
26.3 × 20.6 cm  
Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 79 V/1962  
F 1122 JH 454

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 68, vol. 4, pl. LXXV; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 256, 280, 316, 411; De la Faille 1970, pp. 412-13; Zemel 1985, pp. 135-36; Amsterdam 1987, p. 402, no. 2.212; Den Bosch 1987-88, p. 148, no. 16; Van den Brink/Frijhoff 1990, passim; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 68, 286, vol. 2, pl. LXXV; Heenk 1995, pp. 103, 105-06; Hulsker 1996, pp. 108, 110.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 295; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 59; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 142; 1947-48 Alkmaar, no. 26; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 18; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 16.

<sup>1</sup> See letters 262/229, 358/295, 363/299, 376/311 and 380/315. On several occasions Van Gogh likened his own toil as an artist to that of a weaver, who has to keep an eye on all the threads of his fabric if he is to achieve a good result. See letters 272/236, 329/274 and 350/288; also 690/542.

<sup>2</sup> Inv. b 2253 V/1982.

<sup>3</sup> Van Rappard had made them in Drenthe in 1883. Van Gogh stated in letter 422/351 that when he visited his friend in Utrecht in December of that year he had seen a beautiful painted study from Drenthe. There can be little doubt that he also saw other works on that occasion.

<sup>4</sup> Van Gogh had acquired the engraving by Emslie that winter, see letter 433/R40. He told Van Rappard that it was 'a cotton mill,' but in fact it is a view of a wool finishing works (fig. 78b). In the right foreground is a small weaving machine. In late 1884, after completing his own series of weavers, Van Gogh discovered two wood engravings by Paul Renouard. In letter 483/393 he asked Theo to send him a print of unemployed weavers (which he wrongly described as a 'grève', strike). It was *La crise industrielle à Lyon – Sans travail* from *l'illustration* of 25 October 1884 (Van Gogh mistakenly gave the date as 24 October). It emerges from letter 485/388b that Theo had been unable to find a copy of the magazine. Vincent himself managed to get hold of another weaver's print by Renouard that was published in *l'illustration* of 18 October 1884: *La crise industrielle à Lyon – Un canut à son métier*. That print is now in his collection of magazine illustrations in the Van Gogh Museum (inv. t 165 V/1962).

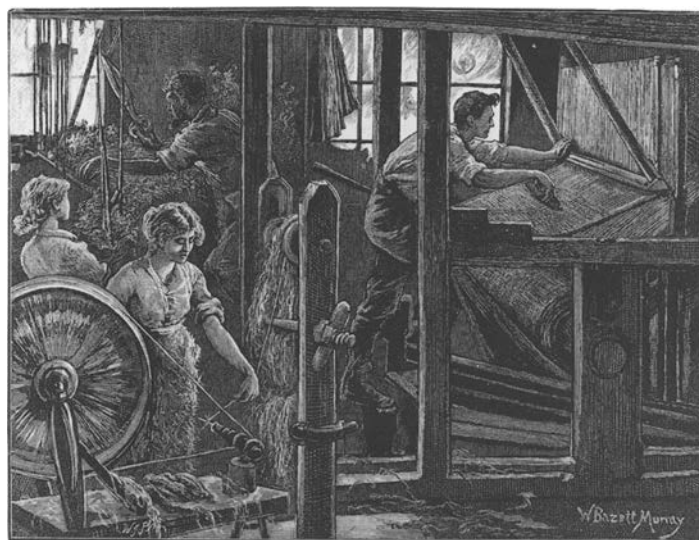
<sup>5</sup> There is no further information on F 1688 JH 482, which is known only from a poor photograph. Of the drawings of weavers not in the Van Gogh Museum, F 1109 JH 439, F 1119 JH 449 and F 1134 JH 481 are signed, and F 1108 JH 451, F 1110 JH 437 and F 1116av JH 499 are not.

<sup>6</sup> F 1120 JH 443 is not included here, because it is a letter sketch, as indicated by the size of the paper and the fact that

Anthon van Rappard (1858-1892).<sup>3</sup> There were also three prints of weavers in his collection of magazine illustrations (figs. 78a, b, 80a).<sup>4</sup>

The fruits of Vincent's efforts in Nuenen must have been quite considerable, for today there are no fewer than ten paintings and 16 finished drawings of the subject. One wonders how satisfied he was with the paintings, for not one of them is signed. He was evidently more pleased with the drawings, for he signed at least 11 of them.<sup>5</sup> Nine sheets – five pen-and-ink sheets and four watercolours – are in the Van Gogh Museum.<sup>6</sup> Only one of them, catalogue number 81, has no signature. Van Gogh must have considered that there was a market for the eight signed works.

The dating of the 16 drawings is not easy. The first mention of works with this subject comes in a letter from early January 1884. Vincent told Theo that he had made three watercolours of weavers. A few days later the number had risen to four.<sup>7</sup> It can be assumed that he had begun studying the subject in the last week of December 1883, a few weeks after arriving in the village. His fascination lasted a long time, for he was announcing new scenes of weavers up until August 1884.<sup>8</sup>



L'INDUSTRIE DU JUTE. — LE TISSAGE DES NATTES EN ANGLETERRE. — 1881 (p. 107).

78a W. Bazet-Murray and  
W.J. Palmer, *L'industrie du jute*:  
*Le tissage des nattes en Angleterre*, from  
*The Illustrated London News*, 28 May  
1881. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

It is rarely clear which work he is speaking of. There is usually no description, nor in most cases any mention of the medium. As a result, it is virtually impossible to date the works precisely. The style offers no clues, for the sheets cannot be arranged in any convincing chronological order, and nor do they provide any technical information that would clarify the dating. One possible lead is the accuracy with which the looms are depicted, but at best this only produces a chronological order, not a dating, for it is not known how quickly Van Gogh familiarised himself with the machines. The drawings that cannot be dated (*cats.* 80-86) are here arranged in the best possible sequence on the basis of the relative correctness of the looms.

The first scenes of weavers mentioned in the letters were watercolours, and they are here given the broad dating of December 1883-August 1884. It was some time before Van Gogh ventured to make his earliest pen drawings of the subject, mentioning them first in letters from late January. Those two sheets are catalogue number 79 and the drawing discussed in this entry.

*it was folded in four. In the 1953 edition of the correspondence it was reproduced with letter 429/355, and this was followed by the editors of the 1990 edition and by Hulsker in his œuvre catalogue. There is nothing in the letter itself to warrant this, and in fact it is unclear which letter it accompanied.*

*7 Letters 422/351 and 423/351a.*

*8 Letter 457/R47.*



78<sup>b</sup> Alfred Edward Emslie, *At work in a woollen factory*, from *The Illustrated London News*, 25 August 1883, p. 181. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

9 See Zemel 1985, *passim*.

10 Begemann's reminiscences were noted down by H. Nauta in 1927 and included in an account that was probably intended for Van Gogh's sister Lies. The document is now in the archives of the Van Gogh Museum under inv. b 7117 V/1996. Van Rappard accompanied Van Gogh on one of those visits to Begemann's mill.

11 One possible example is a small drawing of several weavers standing in front of a loom (F 1111 JH 483).

The latter can be dated quite closely thanks to a letter of around 24 January: 'The last study I made is the figure of a man seated in the loom, alone, the bust and the hands' [429/355]. When Van Gogh used the term 'study' he was generally referring to a painting, and there is indeed a canvas that matches this description (fig. 78c). The pen drawing is a faithful copy of the painting, and it can therefore be assumed that it was made at the end of January.

Van Gogh worked over a preparatory pencil study with pen and ink, and added a wash. The size deviates slightly from that of the other sheets, all of which measure approximately 30 × 40 cm. There is some heightening with white and with pale pink, which is a little surprising in a work that is otherwise uncoloured. The pink is in the bobbin with mending yarn at top right and in the woven cloth. It is not clear whether this is the original colour. Something similar can be seen in other scenes of weavers (see *cats.* 79, 86).

It emerges from a letter of March 1884 that Van Gogh had conceived the plan of making a series of pen-and-ink drawings of 'Brabant artisans' [436/359] (see also *cat.* 79), and he must have regarded the present sheet as part of that scheme. In that sense, his drawings and paintings of weavers fit into the old tradition of depicting crafts. However, it is too simplistic to describe Van Gogh's weavers simply as scenes of industrious textile craftsmen at work. On the evidence of the slightly ominous nature of many of these illustrations of workers swallowed up by their machines, Carol Zemel has opined that Van Gogh set out to depict the harsh reality he found in Nuenen. He had described the French weavers almost poetically as 'dreamy', comparing them to sleep-walkers, but the lives led by their Nuenen counterparts gave precious little reason for starry-eyed romanticism.<sup>9</sup>

This is a tenable hypothesis, although it is difficult to say how consciously Van Gogh was trying to express this idea. The works should certainly not be seen as some kind of social protest. Not all of them are bleak, for that matter. The man in the present sheet seems quite contented, while the drawing of an interior with a baby in a highchair (*cat.* 79) conjures up a sense of domesticity.

Van Gogh certainly wanted to convey a deeper message with his weaving scenes, as is clear from his reaction to Van Rappard's criticism that one of his drawings was insufficiently 'mechanic-like'. Van Gogh replied with a detailed explanation of the point of this study, which unfortunately is another one that cannot be identified. He had, he said, concentrated primarily on drawing the loom 'pretty carefully', only adding the small figure of the weaver later in order to bring the machine to life and hear it rattling. However accurately it was drawn, the work was not meant



78 Weaver

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to be a model of a loom; it was a 'mechanical drawing' with a 'je ne sais quoi' that would 'express that the thing is of oak made grimy by sweaty hands', and was intended to evoke the idea of the weaver toiling at his labour. Later, he said, he would try and improve on this with a true and more elaborate drawing in which the weaver would be the real centre of the composition [438/R44].

The looms in Van Gogh's drawings are indeed quite accurately depicted, but there is almost always something wrong with them. Van Gogh suspected at the outset that several drawings would be spoiled because many of the weavers' cottages were small, making it impossible for him 'to get far enough back to draw the loom' [422/351]. Louis Begemann (1836-1906), who owned a weaving mill in Nuenen, recalled that Van Gogh also painted weavers there. In order to get the right distance from his subjects he retreated to a corridor from which he could get a good view of the weaving room.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear from his remarks to Van Rappard that Van Gogh did not lie awake at night worrying about minor mistakes. Considerations like composition, colour and expression sometimes quite definitely take precedence over painstaking accuracy. All the same, there can be no doubting



78c *Weaver* (F 26 JH 450), 1884.  
Private collection.



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that Van Gogh wanted to avoid real blunders. Some of the sheets demonstrate his unfamiliarity with the workings of the loom, while others display a greater understanding. It is fair to assume that he depicted the looms more accurately the better he got to know them.

The drawing discussed here also contains errors. They suggest that Van Gogh studied the situation in the weaver's cottage and made a not very detailed preliminary drawing in pencil (which can still be seen in all the sheets), possibly supplemented with a few more sketches in pen or pencil.<sup>11</sup> He then worked the drawing up in his studio. The fact that he did not have a good idea of the construction of the loom, and that his sketches failed to provide the answer, is abundantly clear from this drawing, for the loom would never have worked. At upper right are pulleys with two leather straps which should be attached by cords to the heald shafts, here shown at bottom right. The shafts are raised and lowered by treadles (not visible in this drawing). The construction enables the weaver to part the warp threads to create a 'shed' (the even threads being raised and the odd ones lowered, and vice-versa) through which the shuttle with the weft thread is thrown to add a new thread, or 'pick,' to the cloth. In this drawing, however, the leather straps are not attached to the shafts but to the slay with which the weft was packed up against the previously woven cloth. It would therefore be impossible to weave with this loom. Nor is there a shed to be seen, despite the fact that the shafts are at different levels and should be parting the warp threads.

## 79 Weaver, with a baby in a highchair

LATE JANUARY-EARLY  
FEBRUARY 1884

Pencil, pen in brown ink,  
heightened with white and pale  
pink, opaque watercolour, on  
wove paper  
31.5 × 39.9 cm  
Signed at lower right: Vince[nt]

Inv. d 82 V/1962  
F IIII8 JH 452

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 67,  
vol. 4, pl. LXXII; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 256, 316, 411; Leurs/  
Tralbaut 1957, pp. 52-53; De la  
Faille 1970, pp. 408, 411; Zemel  
1985, pp. 124, 135; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 402, no. 2.210; Den  
Bosch 1987-88, pp. 147-48, no.  
15; Van den Brink/Frijhoff 1990,  
passim; Ködera 1990, p. 29;  
Amsterdam 1991, pp. 157-58;  
De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 67,  
285, vol. 2, pl. LXXII; Heenk 1995,  
pp. 103, 105; Hulsker 1996, pp.  
108, 110.

### EXHIBITIONS

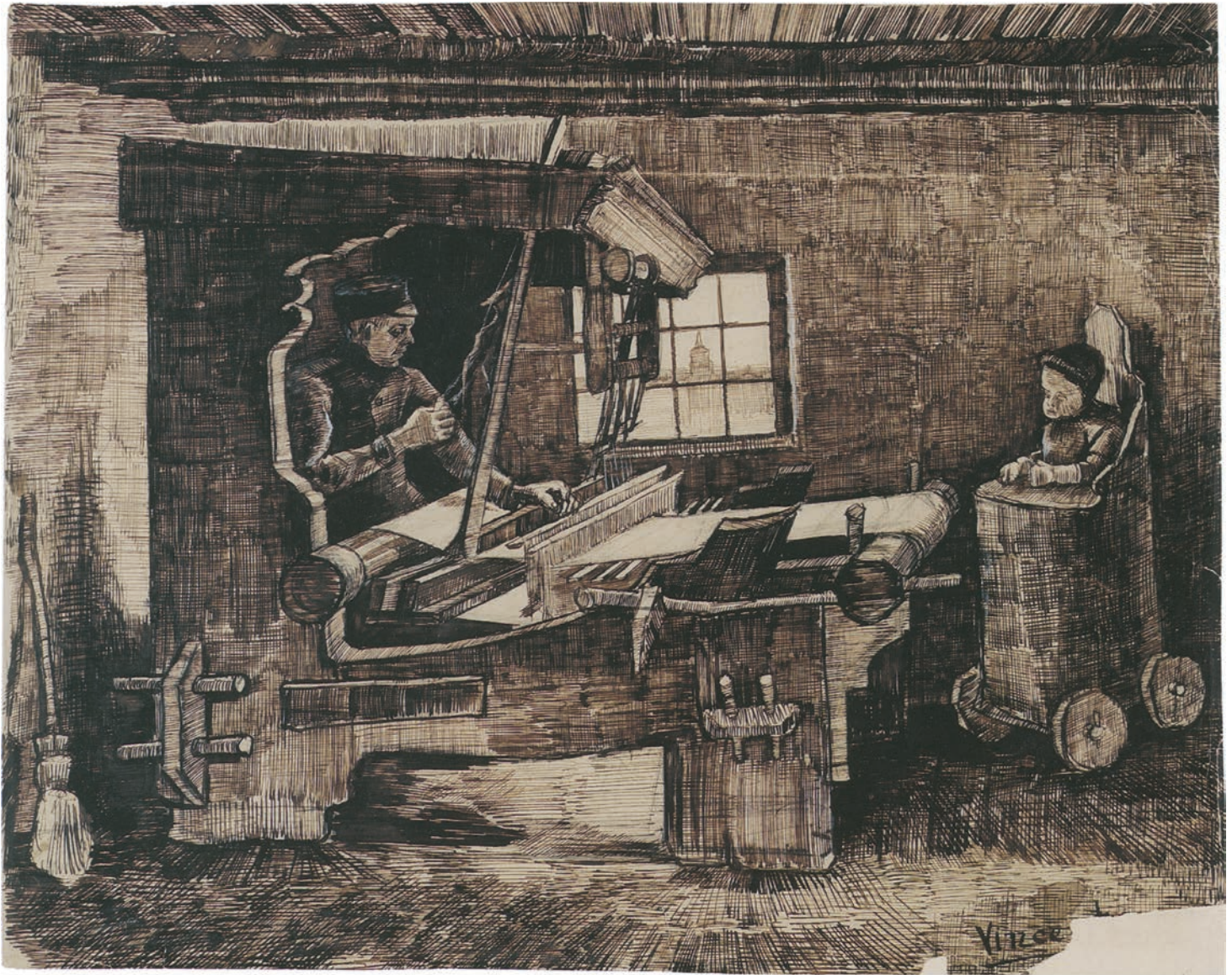
1905 Amsterdam, no. 303; 1914-  
15 Amsterdam, no. 64; 1947  
Groningen, no. 23; 1947  
Rotterdam, no. 27; 1947-48  
Alkmaar, no. 27; 1948-49 The

Van Gogh's reading often had a marked influence on his perception of a subject, and so it was with the weavers.<sup>1</sup> In Nuenen, for instance, he read a collection of short stories by H. Hollidee about country life in Brabant called *Etsen naar het leven* (Etchings from life).<sup>2</sup> It is said that he was particularly moved by the story 'Peer de Wever' (Pete the Weaver), and that it even inspired him to make a drawing, which he apparently presented to the woman who had lent him the book.<sup>3</sup> He certainly read it, for in a letter of 1889 he reminded his mother of another story called 'De pruuvers' (The tasters) [187/598]. There is no surviving drawing, however, which can convincingly be associated with the saccharine tale of Pete, a weaver of a saintly disposition.

Weavers appear in several works by George Eliot (1828-1880), which Van Gogh had read before he became an artist. They play minor roles in *Felix Holt* and *Scenes of clerical life*, but in *Silas Marner* the eponymous weaver is the hero.<sup>4</sup> In Jules Michelet's *Le peuple*, Van Gogh found a description that closely matched his own view of a weaver as someone 'with [a] dreamy air, almost absent-minded, almost a sleep-walker' [157/136].<sup>5</sup> The French author inveighed against the impersonal atmosphere in the modern, mechanical weaving mills of his day. In his eyes, the weavers of the past had enjoyed a much better life, doing their work in a serene, almost dreamy way.<sup>6</sup> Michelet's vivid image undoubtedly played an important part in Van Gogh's weaving scenes.

In the case of *Weaver, with a baby in a highchair*, however, it was Eliot's *Silas Marner* that was the immediate source of inspiration. For a long time Marner's life had been little more than a grinding treadmill, his sole consolation being his savings. When that money is stolen from him only bitterness remains. The turning-point in his life comes when he finds a child whose mother has died and whose father is unknown. The baby brings him the happiness he has never enjoyed before. A similar sentiment can certainly be felt in this domestic scene. It is remarkably intimate compared to Van Gogh's other depictions of weavers, and could easily serve as an illustration for *Silas Marner*.

It is a highly finished drawing, and it and a watercolour (fig. 79a) were probably made after a painting that Van Gogh described in a letter



79 Weaver, with a baby in a highchair

Hague, no. 191; 1953 Zürich, no. 22; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 23; 1954-55 Bern, no. 91; 1955 Antwerp, no. 76; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 39; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 88; 1956 Haarlem, no. 12; 1975 Malmö, no. 21; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 21; 1980-81 Amsterdam, no. 142; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 15; 1991 Amsterdam, no. 35.

<sup>1</sup> See Andrea Gasten, 'De poëzie van het weversbestaan. Enkele literaire invloeden bij Vincent van Gogh', in *Van den Brink/Frijhoff* 1990, pp. 97-103, with further references to the literature in note 5.

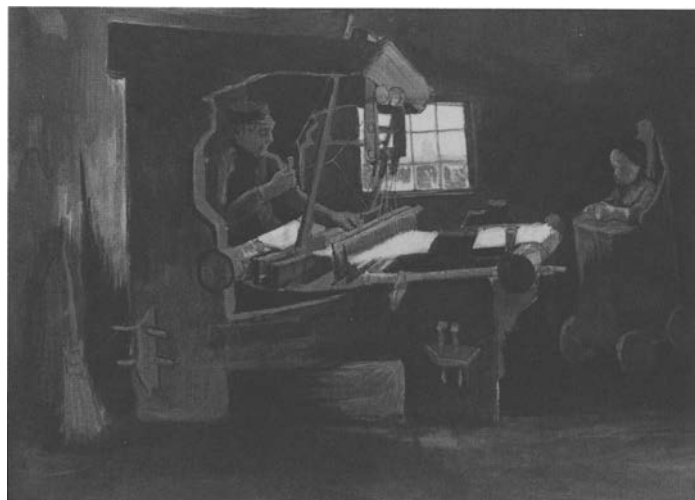
<sup>2</sup> H. Hollidee, *Etsen naar het leven*, Leiden 1881. I have used the second edition of 1883. The story 'Peer de Wever. Een herinnering uit het Noordbrabantsch dorpsleven' is on pp. 86-108. Hollidee is a pseudonym.

<sup>3</sup> *Stokvis* 1926, pp. 27-28.

of around 24 January 1884. 'I am painting a loom of old, greenish, browned oak in which the date 1730 is cut. Near that loom, in front of a little window that looks out on a green plot, there is a highchair with a baby sitting in it, looking for hours at the shuttle flying to and fro. I have painted that thing exactly as it was in reality, the loom with the small weaver, the tiny window and the highchair in the miserable little room with the loam floor' [429/355]. The painting has not survived, but the watercolour, in which a green field can indeed be seen through the window, and the pen-and-ink drawing precisely match this description. On the evidence of the letter both can therefore be dated to the end of January or beginning of February 1884.

The *Weaver, with a baby in a highchair* is executed in pen over a preparatory study in pencil. Van Gogh took great pains over the light entering the room. It is convincingly suggested by heightenings with opaque white watercolour on the windowsill, on the child's chest, in some of the threads on the loom and in the man's arms. There are touches of pink gouache in the bobbin at the top of the loom (see also *cat.* 78).

A very similar drawing shows a weaver rearranging the warp threads in the loom (*fig.* 79b). The room is the same, and the lighting effects once again play an important part in the composition. Both works are identical in the draughtsmanship of the extensive hatched passages, and the bold



79<sup>a</sup> *Weaver* (F 1119 JH 449), 1884.  
Whereabouts unknown.

signatures are also very alike. Van Gogh preferred to put his name at lower left, but the large shaded areas in both works forced him to use the lower right corner instead.

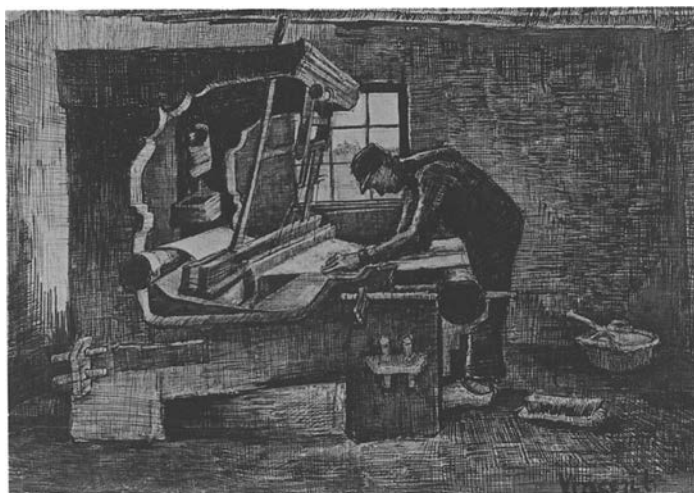
The Amsterdam drawing was badly damaged at some stage, and it still has a few repaired tears and a crease. Two pieces of paper are missing at lower right, one small and one large, the latter removing almost all of the last two letters of Vincent's signature.

See further catalogue number 78.

4 *George Eliot, Felix Holt, the radical, Edinburgh & London 1866; idem, Scenes of clerical life, Edinburgh 1858; idem, Silas Marner, the weaver of Raveloe, Leipzig 1861.*

5 *Jules Michelet, Le peuple, Paris 1846.*

6 *The connection with Michelet was made in Amsterdam 1990, nos. 2, 3.*



79<sup>b</sup> *Weaver* (F 1134 JH 481), 1884.  
Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

## 80 Weaver

JANUARY-AUGUST 1884

Pencil, pen in brown ink, on wove paper  
27.2 × 40.3 cm  
Signed at lower right: Vincent

Inv. d 83 V/1962  
F 1121 JH 453

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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

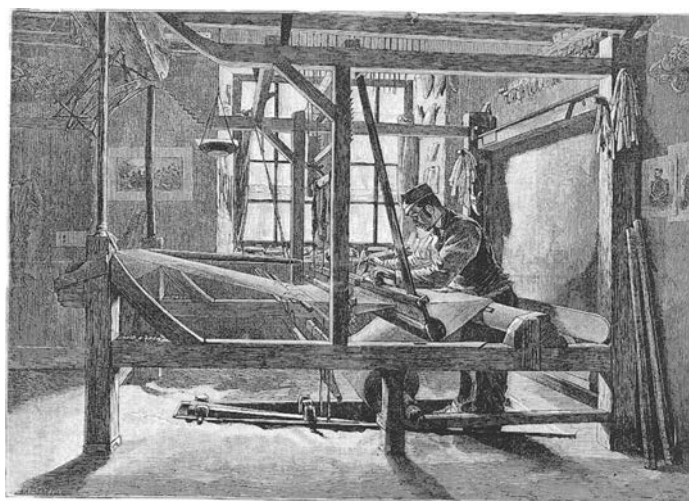
Lettres 1911, pl. XIX; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, pp. 67-68, vol. 4, pl. LXXIII; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 257, 281, 317, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 412; Amsterdam 1987, p. 403, no. 2.213; Van den Brink/Frijhoff 1990, passim; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 67-68, 286, vol. 2, pl. LXXIII; Heenk 1995, pp. 103, 105; Hulsker 1996, pp. 108, 110.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 313; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 72; 1923 Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1947 Groningen, no. 24; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 28; 1953 The Hague, no. 17; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 33; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 37; 1954-55 Bern, no. 92; 1955 Antwerp, no. 79; 1956 Haarlem, no. 13; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 53; 1958 Bergen,

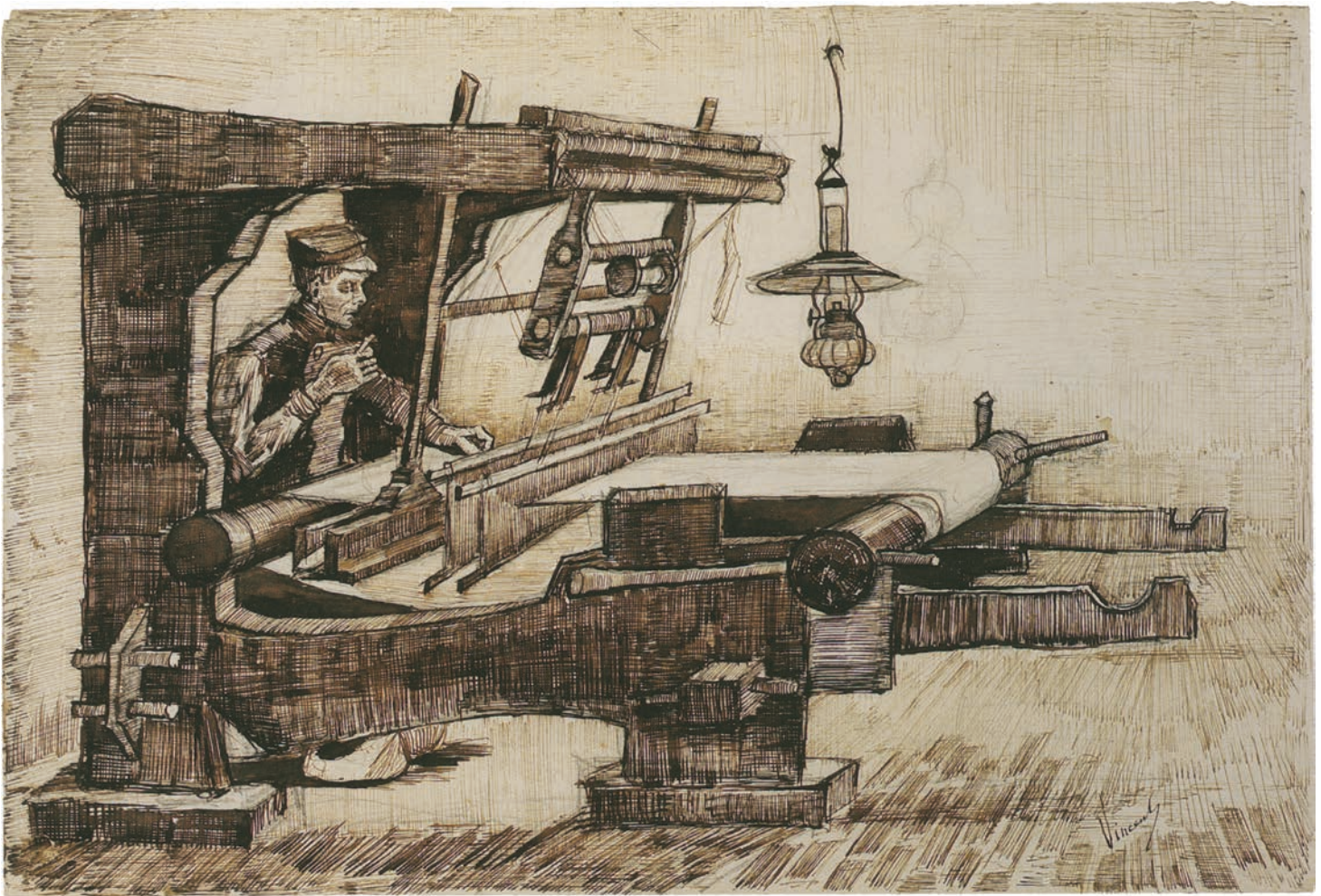
As explained in catalogue number 78, Van Gogh must at first have had no more than a very superficial idea of the construction and action of a loom, and that is also evident in this sheet. Some of the peculiarities of the other weaver scenes will also be discussed here.<sup>1</sup>

This drawing has the same deficiencies as the preceding sheet (*cat.* 79). Unlike number 78, the leather straps are now attached to the shafts, although they should be vertical rather than angled. The shafts themselves are at different levels, yet there is no sign of a warp shed. A more serious mistake in both drawings, however, is the position of the woven cloth. It should run from behind the slay, over the breast beam at the height of the man's stomach and be rolled up on the cloth beam by his knees. All of this is clearly illustrated in the print by Ryckebusch that Van Gogh had in his collection (*fig. 80a*). The loom that Ryckebusch depicted in such detail is of a slightly different type, but in essence it is very similar to those in Van Gogh's work. The woven cloth in the drawing then passes underneath the machine and the shafts, whereas in reality the latter should be connected



LES INDUSTRIES QUI DISPARAISSENT. — UN TISSERAND

80<sup>a</sup> Ryckebusch, *Les industries qui disparaissent, un tisserand*, from *L'illustration*, 10 September 1881, p. 177. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



80 Weaver

no. 54; 1975 Malmö, no. 20;  
 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 20;  
 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya,  
 no. 18; 1980-81 Stuttgart, unnum-  
 bered; 1981 Utrecht, no. 69;  
 1987-88 Manchester, Amsterdam  
 & New Haven, no. 106.

- 1 See also Rooijackers 1990, pp. 44-48.
- 2 They can, however, be seen, in cats. 82-86, either wholly or in part.
- 3 The supports also feature in F 29 JH 471, F 37 JH 501, F 1123 JH 455 (cat. 86), and in the sketch or letter sketch F 1124 JH 456. Extended supports also occur, of course, in the painting and the watercolour related to the drawing discussed here (figs. 80d, e).
- 4 Rooijackers 1990, pp. 45-46.

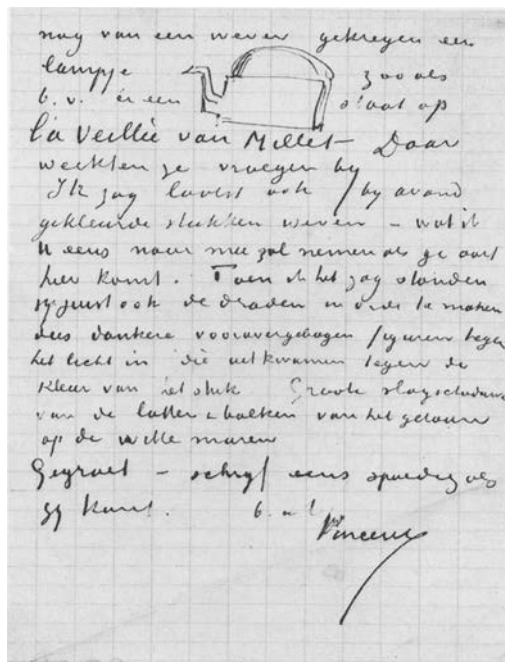
to the treadles with which the weaver operates the loom. That is not the case here, and in fact the treadles and the associated fulcrum points are missing altogether.<sup>2</sup> Once again, then, this is a machine that could not possibly work.

A drawing in the Kröller-Müller Museum shows how confused Van Gogh was about the way the cloth and the threads were mounted on the machine (fig. 80b). There the cloth passes right beneath the loom to emerge on the right over the warp beam, as if it were a single piece of cloth going round and round in the loom.

Another odd feature in the Van Gogh Museum drawing is that the supports under the warp beam are fully extended. That was only done if a section of the warp threads had to be dressed with paste to strengthen them and prevent fraying. The warp threads were wound off and the beam laid in the sockets at the ends of the supports. The wound-off section was then dressed. When the threads had dried they were separated with a large brush (paste pots and brushes can be seen in cats. 82-84, 86). The warp beam was then rolled back to the position shown in the drawing. Finally, the supports were pushed back home so that they would not get in the way in a cottage that was already cramped. Van Gogh would have been aware



80b Interior with a weaver (F 1110 JH 437), 1884. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.



80c Sketch in a letter to Theo of about 30 April 1884 (448/367). Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



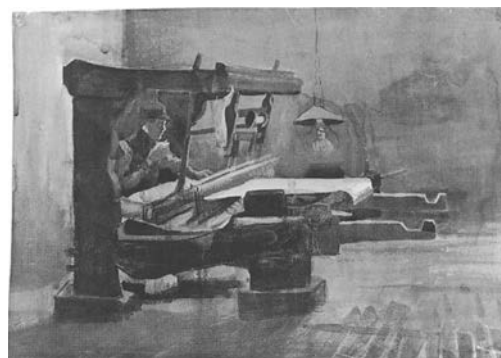
of all this, but it seems that he found the extended supports an attractive motif, for they can be seen in catalogue number 86 and in various scenes of weavers not in the Van Gogh Museum.<sup>3</sup> The sole support in number 85 may have been charming, but it made not the slightest contribution to the weaving process.

At the top of the loom in this drawing, near the lamp, there is a spool of yarn for repairing any broken threads. The dangling bundle of yarn served the same purpose, and usually consisted of threads that had already been strengthened with paste. The oil lamp is of a fairly modern design, and appears quite frequently in Van Gogh's Nuenen work, including another drawing of a weaver (*cat.* 86).<sup>4</sup> He also had an old-fashioned weaver's lamp, which he sketched in a letter to Theo (*fig.* 80c), but it does not feature in any of the weaving scenes. Van Gogh may have had a great liking for 'the *very old Brabant*' [468/382], eagerly ferreting out vestiges of it, but he never created scenes that no longer existed in reality.

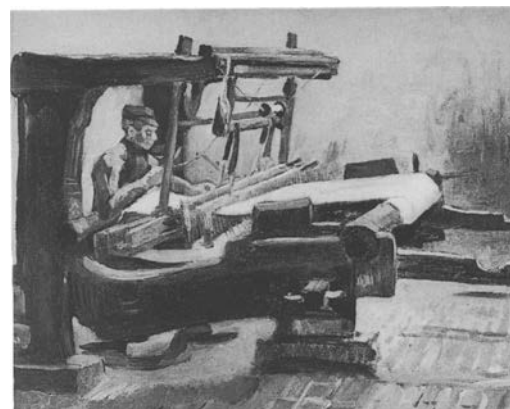
There is a watercolour in the Louvre with the same subject as this pen-and-ink drawing (*fig.* 80d). Both were probably made after a small painting (*fig.* 80e), although there the lamp is missing.

Leaving aside the mechanical defects, this is a very assured drawing in pen and ink over a preparatory study in pencil. There is no heightening at all, unlike most of the other finished drawings of weavers. A faint pencil sketch indicates that Van Gogh had originally planned the lamp a little more to the right, so this motif, at least, was altered back in the studio.

See further catalogue number 78.



80<sup>d</sup> *Weaver* (F 1108 JH 451), end 1884-1885. Paris, Musée du Louvre.



80<sup>e</sup> *Weaver* (F 162 JH 457), 1884. Whereabouts unknown.

## 81 Weaver

JANUARY-AUGUST 1884

Pencil, black chalk, pen and brush in brown ink, heightened with opaque white paint, on laid paper

21.3 × 34.8 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Inv. d 81 V/1962

F 1116 JH 462

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 66, vol. 4, pl. LXXII; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 256, 315, 411; De la Faille 1970, pp. 408, 411; Amsterdam 1987, p. 403, no. 2.215; Van den Brink/Frijhoff 1990, *passim*; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 66, 284-85, vol. 2, pl. LXXII; Heenk 1995, pp. 106, note 2, 124; Hulsker 1996, pp. 108-09, 112.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 301; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 98.

Although executed on a relatively large sheet of paper, this unsigned drawing of a weaver and his loom seen from the front is little more than a study, and is far less ambitious than the other scenes of weavers.

As an exercise in perspective it is a complete failure. Van Gogh appears to have observed the subject from two different levels. We look straight at the warp beam, at the bottom of the drawing, for nothing can be seen of the warp threads running to the shafts. The weaver is also viewed from low down, for if he had been drawn from normal eye level part of his face, at least, would have been hidden by the pulleys (to which the leather straps in the centre of the drawing are attached). Several parts of the loom, however, are shown from above, such as the slay and the bobbin box, which is attached to the loom on the left. Another odd feature is the window set so low down in the wall.

Many of the Nuenen looms had reached a venerable age, and this one is no exception, for written on the two uprights on either side of the weaver are 'ANNO' and '1711'. Attached to the loom above the bobbin box is a clog. Worn-out wooden shoes were generally not thrown away but were used for storage. One does service as a cutlery-holder in *The potato eaters*, for instance, and in an associated study (*cat. 146*).

This drawing is sketchier than the other pen-and-ink studies of weavers, where the scene is shaped with numerous strokes of the pen. Here, though, Van Gogh made extensive use of the pencil. This is the only one on laid paper, the surface structure of which Van Gogh exploited to achieve different shades of grey. He worked the study up with the pen and a few white highlights, and added some darker accents with black chalk.

See further catalogue number 78.



81 Weaver

## 82-85 Weavers

There were so many weavers in Nuenen that Van Gogh was able to study them for months without running out of models. There were around 440 weavers working in the municipality when he was living there,<sup>1</sup> and although not all of them would have come up to his standards as picturesque subjects, he certainly had a wide choice.

The cloth produced by the weavers was sent to textile mills for finishing before being sold. The weavers lived a miserable existence. They earned a pittance, and unfortunately required an assistant, generally a member of the family, to wind the bobbins that they needed each day for the shuttle. In January 1885, when describing a desolate winter landscape on a raw day in a letter to Theo, Van Gogh switched in mid-flow to a description of the weavers. 'It is also in harmony with the physiognomies of peasants and weavers. I don't hear the latter complain, but they have a hard time of it. A weaver who works steadily weaves, say, a length of 60 ells a week. While he weaves, a woman must spool for him, that is to say wind the yarn on the bobbins, so there are *two* who work and have to live from it. On that piece of cloth he makes a net profit of, say, 4.50 guilders a week, and nowadays when he takes it to the manufacturer he is often told that he cannot bring another piece for one or two weeks. So not only are wages low, but work is pretty scarce too. Consequently, there is often something hunted and restless about these people. It is a different spirit from that of the miners, among whom I lived during a year of strikes and many accidents. That was even worse, yet it is often distressing here too; the people are quiet, and literally *nowhere* have I heard anything resembling inflammatory speeches. But they look as despondent as the old cab horses or the sheep that are transported to England by steamer' [482/392].<sup>2</sup> It is certainly true that some of Van Gogh's weavers look downcast and exhausted, an example being the bent little man in number 82.

The four watercolours dealt with in this entry differ little in the accuracy with which the looms are depicted. Van Gogh's familiarity with the machines had advanced a stage further compared to the four pen-and-ink drawings just discussed. In catalogue numbers 83 and 84, for instance, the shed in the warp threads can be seen by the shafts. All four sheets show the fulcrum points of the treadles with which the weaver operated

<sup>1</sup> See Van der Heijden 1990, pp. 24-25, Zemel 1985, p. 130, and Frenken 1948, pp. 138-40.

<sup>2</sup> To put this weekly income of 4.50 guilders for a whole family into perspective, Van Gogh himself received roughly four times that amount from his brother to spend on himself alone.

<sup>3</sup> See Drawings 1, p. 26.

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the shafts. In numbers 82-84 there is a paste pot and brush for dressing the warp threads.

One striking feature of many of Van Gogh's early watercolours is that he worked mainly with opaque watercolour that was often highly diluted.<sup>3</sup> This was the technique he used for catalogue numbers 83 and 85. Number 84, and especially number 82, differ in that they were largely laid down with truly transparent watercolour. It is partly for this reason that number 82 looks a little thinner and less solid than other watercolours, which are usually rather heavier. Van Gogh was evidently experimenting more widely with opaque and transparent colours. The *Man winding yarn* (cat. 87) of the same period can be regarded as a gouache, in that it is almost entirely done in opaque pigments. Van Gogh always spoke of watercolours ('aquarel' in Dutch), regardless of the actual technique used. These four are reinforced locally with pen and brown ink that may have been black originally.

See further catalogue numbers 78 and 80.



82 Weaver



83 Weaver



84 Weaver





85 Weaver

## 82 Weaver

DECEMBER 1883-AUGUST 1884  
Pencil, transparent and opaque  
watercolour, pen in brown ink,  
on laid paper

34.2 × 45.3 cm

Watermark: HFDC

Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 80 V/1962

F 1107 JH 445

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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

Bremmer 1924, no. 27; De la  
Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 64, vol. 4,  
pl. LXX; Meier-Graefe 1928, pl.  
5; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 256,  
317, 410; Maytham 1961, p. 11;  
De la Faille 1970, p. 406;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 402,  
no. 2.207; Feilchenfeldt 1988,  
p. 128; Van den Brink/Frijhoff  
1990, passim; Otterlo 1990,  
pp. 37, 128; De la Faille 1992,  
vol. 1, pp. 64, 282, vol. 2, pl. LXX;  
Heenk 1995, pp. 103-04; Hulsker  
1996, pp. 106-07, 112.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 335; 1906  
Berlin, no. 63; 1923 Utrecht, no.  
21; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 21; 1924  
Amsterdam, no. 124; 1924 Basel,  
no. 85; 1924 Zürich, no. 85; 1924  
Stuttgart, no. 1; 1925 The Hague,  
no. 73; 1926 Munich, no. 2108;  
1927-28 Berlin, Vienna &  
Hannover, no. 23; 1928 Paris,  
nr. 25; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 13;  
1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen,  
Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 7;

1931 Amsterdam, no. 147; 1948-  
49 The Hague, no. 198; 1949-50  
New York & Chicago, no. 31;  
1953 Zürich, no. 21; 1954-55  
Bern, no. 89; 1955 Antwerp,  
no. 78; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 40;  
1957 Breda, no. 29; 1957  
Marseilles, no. 13; 1957  
Stockholm, no. 24; 1961  
Scarborough, no catalogue; 1963  
Paris, no. 28; 1965 Nuenen,  
unnumbered; 1965-66  
Stockholm & Gothenburg, no.  
66; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 87;  
1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia,  
Toledo & Ottawa, no. 12; 1968  
Liège, no. 12; 1975 Malmö, no.  
19; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no.  
19; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto &  
Nagoya, no. 15; 1990 Otterlo,  
no. 81.

## 83 Weaver

December 1883-August 1884  
Pencil, transparent and opaque  
watercolour, pen in opaque  
paint and brown ink, on laid  
paper

35.7 × 45.1 cm

Watermarks: shield with fleur-  
de-lys, and HFDC

Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 371 V/1962

F 1114 JH 444

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 66,  
vol. 4, pl. LXXI; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 257, 317, 411; De la  
Faille 1970, p. 408; Zemel 1985,

pp. 132-33; Amsterdam 1987,  
p. 402, no. 2.208; Van den Brink/  
Frijhoff 1990, passim; Otterlo  
1990, pp. 37, 128; De la Faille  
1992, vol. 1, pp. 66, 284, vol. 2, pl.  
LXXI; Heenk 1995, pp. 103-04;  
Hulsker 1996, pp. 106, 112.

### EXHIBITIONS

1920 New York, no. 1; 1929  
Amsterdam, no. 15; 1930-31  
Arnhem, Groningen,  
Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 9;  
1931 Amsterdam, no. 146; 1932  
Manchester, no. 47; 1937 Paris,  
no. 63; 1937 Oslo, no. 22; 1938  
Copenhagen, no. 6; 1946-47  
Liège, Brussels & Bergen, no. 18;  
1947 Paris, no. 18; 1947 Geneva,  
no. 18; 1948 Hilversum, no cata-  
logue; 1948-49 The Hague, no.  
196; 1953 Zundert, no. 42; 1953  
Hoensbroek, no. 81 or 82; 1955  
Antwerp, no. 80; 1957 Breda, no.  
30; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 17; 1961-  
62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo  
& Boston, no. 91; 1962-63  
Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas  
City, no. 91; 1967 Tilburg, no.  
18; 1988 Rome, no. 69; 1990  
Otterlo, no. 78.

## 84 Weaver

DECEMBER 1883-AUGUST 1884  
Pencil, transparent and opaque  
watercolour, pen in brown ink  
and transparent brown water-  
colour, on laid paper

32.5 × 45.2 cm

Watermarks: shield with fleur-  
de-lys, and HFDC

Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 85 V/1962

F 1125 JH 448

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, pp. 68-69, vol. 4, pl. LXXII;  
Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 257, 317, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 414; Amsterdam 1987, p. 402, no. 2.209; Van den Brink/Frijhoff 1990, passim; Otterlo 1990, p. 128; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 68-69, 287, vol. 2, pl. LXXII; Heenk 1995, pp. 103-04; Hulsker 1996, pp. 106-07.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 325; 1911 Amsterdam, no. 58; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 68; 1923 Utrecht, no. 4; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 4; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 18; 1928 Paris, no. 19; 1948 Hilversum, no catalogue; 1953 Zürich, no. 24; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 25; 1963 Paris, no. 27; 1979 Tokyo, Sapporo, Hiroshima & Nagoya, no. 57; 1990 Otterlo, no. 79.

85 Weaver

DECEMBER 1883-AUGUST 1884  
Pencil, transparent and opaque watercolour, pen in brown ink, on laid paper  
35.5 × 44.6 cm  
Watermark: HFD C  
Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d V/1962  
F III5 JH 502

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 66, vol. 4, pl. LXXI; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 257, 318, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 408; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 128-29, 405, no. 2.225; Van den Brink/Frijhoff 1990, passim; Otterlo 1990, pp. 37, 128; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 66, 284, vol. 2, pl. LXXI; Heenk 1995, pp. 103-04; Hulsker 1996, pp. 116-17, 122.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 323; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 54; 1923 Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 22; 1956 Haarlem, no. 11; 1957 Stockholm, no. 26; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 92; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 92; 1964 Zundert, no. 5; 1972 Haarlem, no catalogue; 1975 Malmö, no. 22; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 22; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 17; 1977 Paris, unnumbered; 1990 Otterlo, no. 77.

## 86 Weaver

JANUARY-AUGUST 1884

Pencil, pen in ink, heightened with white and pale pink, opaque watercolour, on wove paper  
30.5 × 40.0 cm  
Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 84 V/1962  
F 1123 JH 455

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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

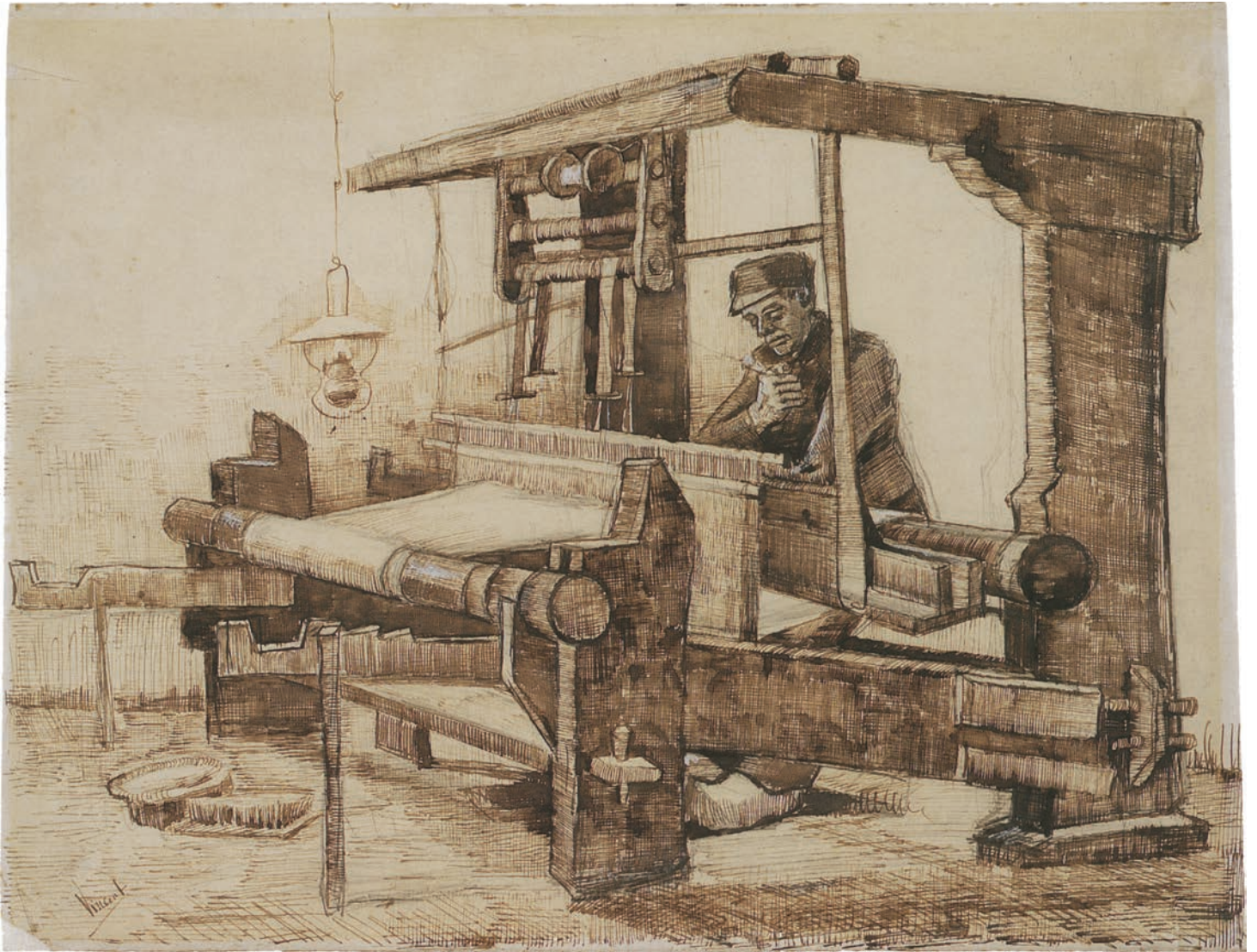
Bremmer 1910, no. 81; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 68, vol. 4, pl. LXXIII; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 257, 317, 411; De Gruyter 1961, p. 98, no. 20; Maytham 1961, p. 11; De la Faille 1970, p. 413; Zemel 1985, p. 132; Amsterdam 1987, p. 403, no. 2.214; Den Bosch 1987-88, p. 149, no. 17; Hulsker 1989, pp. 108-09; Van den Brink/Frijhoff 1990, passim; Otterlo 1990, p. 128; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 68, 287, vol. 2, pl. LXXIII; Heenk 1995, pp. 103, 105; Hulsker 1996, pp. 108-10.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 329; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 76; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 16; 1929-30

Van Gogh was becoming more confident about his drawings of weavers, and in the course of February 1884 he began to see them as a marketable series. It is not known which specific sheets he had in mind, but they would definitely have been signed ones (see *cat.* 78). Around 1 March 1884 he sent Theo a watercolour and five pen-and-ink studies of weavers.<sup>1</sup> They were followed a week later by a sixth pen drawing which cannot be identified, despite the accompanying description: 'a weaver – larger than the other five; the loom seen from the front – it will make this little series of drawings more complete' [436/359]. He felt that they would look best mounted on grey 'Ingres', the term he incorrectly used for laid paper. He regarded his weavers as a self-contained series that gave a good idea of his ability. Expanded with scenes of other Brabant handicraftsmen they would form a group for which he entertained some hopes. 'I would be rather disappointed if you sent these little weavers back. And if none of the people you know wanted them, I think that you might take them for yourself, as the beginning of a collection of pen-and-ink drawings of Brabant artisans. Which I should love to make, and which, assuming that I will be in Brabant for a while now, I would be very eager to do. On condition of making a series which must be kept together, I will price them low, so that even if I make many drawings of this kind they can be kept together. But I, for my part, will agree to whatever you think best' [436/359]. Van Rappard also received two drawings in March 1884, one of a garden in winter (see *cat.* 89), the other a weaver, the intention being that he should drum up some interest in his friend's work.

Van Gogh would undoubtedly have considered this particular sheet as one of the successful drawings. It is by far the most accurate as regards the loom. In other works parts are sometimes missing or depicted incorrectly, but here the construction of the machine and the way in which the threads and woven cloth are stretched on it show that Van Gogh had now mastered its workings. It is for that reason that this sheet is placed at the end of the series. The concentrated pose of the weaver, who is operating the shuttle box with his invisible left hand and is holding the picker stick with which he throws the shuttle through the box, is extremely convincing.



86 Weaver

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Rotterdam, no. 12; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 145; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 9; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 9; 1947 Groningen, no. 25; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 29; 1948 Hilversum, no catalogue; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 197; 1949 Hengelo, no catalogue; 1949 Gouda, no catalogue; 1953 Zürich, no. 23; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 24; 1955 Antwerp, no. 77; 1957 Stockholm, no. 25; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 98; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 71; 1960 Enschede, no. 14; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 93; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 93; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 70; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 70; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 47; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 10; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 11; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 13; 1968 Liège, no. 13; 1968-69 London, no. 21; 1969 Humlebaek, no. 7; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Columbus, no. 73; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 73; 1971-72 Paris, no. 127; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 44; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 51; 1975 Bern, no. 13; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 17; 1990 Otterlo, no. 82.

The draughtsmanship is also attractive. Van Gogh used two pens of differing thickness, and captured the man in his machine in great detail. The surroundings, on the other hand, are quite sketchy, which makes the scene easier to grasp than the other three signed pen-and-ink drawings (*cats.* 78-80).

See further catalogue numbers 78 and 80.

<sup>1</sup> See letter 434/358.

## 87 Man winding yarn

Spinning yarn, which was once an essential preparation for weaving, had become more or less outdated by the time Van Gogh arrived in Nuenen, and most weavers worked with machine-made yarn. It is known from his letters that Van Gogh painted figures at the spinning-wheel, and X-ray photographs have revealed two versions of the subject beneath other works.<sup>1</sup> It is more likely that they are posed scenes rather than documentary records of an everyday activity. In February 1884 Van Gogh had added a spinning-wheel to the collection of props that he used for staging a scene. His versions of the subject were prompted by a prize-winning painting by Van Rappard.<sup>2</sup>

As far as is known Van Gogh made no drawings of people spinning. Scenes that are interpreted as such turn out to be of a man or a woman winding yarn, as in this sheet and in catalogue number 179, a painting, and four other drawings. Among the latter is a smaller, fairly simple variant in the Kröller-Müller Museum (*fig. 87a*).<sup>3</sup>

A photograph taken in the 1920s shows the interior of a cottage with the weaver on the left and a woman winding yarn on the right (*fig. 87b*). The bobbin winder is clearly visible, as is the upright reel on the right on which the fibres were mounted. They were wound from the reel onto a large number of small bobbins. When wound, the bobbins were transferred to a box on the loom (visible in *cat. 81*) for the weaver to insert them into his shuttle as needed to form the weft thread of the fabric.

In June 1884, Van Gogh worked on a painting, now lost, of a man winding yarn by a window.<sup>4</sup> This drawing would have been made around the same time, and is accordingly dated May-June 1884. It is a very successful figure piece – the genre that Van Gogh valued above all others – as well as being a convincing depiction of the man's work. The composition and colour scheme are harmonious, and the atmosphere of the stuffy, dark interior with the light falling through the window is superbly rendered. This makes it all the odder that the drawing is not mentioned in Van Gogh's correspondence and has no signature. One possible explanation is that it was damaged at an early stage. Van Gogh drew it on a sheet of laid paper with the watermark HFDC, which is now pasted onto a stiff piece of wove paper. Down the right side are several crease marks

MAY-JUNE 1884

Opaque watercolour on laid paper, pasted onto wove paper  
44.8 × 35.4 cm  
Watermarks: shield with fleur-de-lys, and HFDC  
Watermark mount: Anc<sup>ne</sup>  
Manuf<sup>re</sup> Canson & Montgolfier  
Vidalon-Les-Annonay  
Unsigned

Inv. d 387 V/1977  
F 1140 JH 487

### PROVENANCE

?-1915 C. Dekker-Fortanier, Den Haag; 1915-? G.J. Dekker, Amersfoort; 1969-77 Galerie Kornfeld & Klipstein, Bern; 1977 bought by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Bern (Galerie Kornfeld & Klipstein), 8-9 June, no. 30; on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 73, vol. 4, pl. LXXIX; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 260, 323, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 418; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 128-29, 404, no. 2.224; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 73, 291, vol. 2, pl. LXXIX; Heenk 1995, pp. 106, 112-13; Hulsker 1996, pp. 114, 121.

### EXHIBITIONS

1966 Arnhem, no catalogue;  
1970 Frankfurt, no. 35; 1983-84 Amsterdam, no catalogue; 1988 Rome, no. 70; 1990 Otterlo, no. 85.

<sup>1</sup> See Van Heugten 1995, nos. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> See letter 451/R40.

<sup>3</sup> The other drawings are F 68 JH 495

(reproduced in letter sketch F 1136 JH 496), F 1139 JH 494 (reproduced in letter sketch F 1137 JH 493) and F 1290a JH 699. Both sketches have been associated with letter 452/370: F 1137 JH 493 by the editors of the 1990 Dutch edition of the correspondence, and F 1136 JH 496 by Hulsker. In the letter, though, Van Gogh speaks specifically of a woman spinning, whereas both sketches show a woman winding yarn. It is clear from the correspondence that Van Gogh was well aware of the difference between the two procedures, so neither of the sketches belongs with that letter. The painting is F 36 JH 698.

4 See letters 452/370 and 453/371.

5 Heenk 1995, p. 106, did not spot that the drawing is on laid paper with the watermark HFDC, and believed that it was drawn directly on the wove mount.

6 Van Gogh always pasted his magazine illustrations onto stiff paper mounts. There are hundreds of them, but not one is mounted in this way. All the prints are attached with dots of paste in the two upper corners or in all four corners.

7 She also owned Van Gogh's Weaver (F 29 JH 471), which is now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

and a tear. There are also retouchings which extend onto the mount.<sup>5</sup> The latter has the embossed stamp 'Anc<sup>ne</sup> Manuf<sup>re</sup> Canson & Montgolfier Vidalon-Les-Annonay', which is found on other works by the artist (*cat.* 33, for instance). It is unlikely that Van Gogh pasted the laid paper onto the mount himself, for it required a special skill to lay down such a large sheet without tearing it, trapping pockets of air or making the paint run.<sup>6</sup> That would mean that the retouching is not by Van Gogh. One acceptable hypothesis is that the drawing became damaged in Van Gogh's studio immediately after it was finished, making it impossible to sell, which is why it is unsigned. It could still come in handy as a study, though, and Van Gogh may even have had the idea of repeating it.

In contrast to most of Van Gogh's other watercolour drawings, this is a true gouache. The opaque watercolour was not thinned, as it so often is.

The first known owner was Clazina Dekker-Fortanier (1860-1915), who lived in The Hague.<sup>7</sup> It is not known how it came into her possession. After her death it remained in the family until 1969, when it was acquired by the Kornfeld & Klipstein gallery in Bern. It was auctioned in 1977 and was bought by the Vincent van Gogh Foundation.



87<sup>a</sup> Man at a bobbin winder (F 1138 JH 486), 1884. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.



87<sup>b</sup> Photograph of the interior of a weaver's cottage, 1920s. Nuenen, J.C. Jegerings photograph collection.





87 Man winding yarn

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## 88 The vicarage garden

MARCH 1884

Pencil, pen in brown ink, on  
wove paper  
20.0 × 23.4 cm  
Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 88 V/1962  
F 1132 JH 463

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1905  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1905-29  
H.C. Bonger, Amsterdam; 1929-43  
E.H. Bonger, Amsterdam; 1944-62  
V.W. van Gogh, 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

Van Meurs n.d., no. 12; Lettres  
1911, pl. XI; De la Faille 1928, vol.  
3, p. 71, vol. 4, pl. LXXVI;  
Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 263, 353,  
411; De la Faille 1970, p. 416;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 403, no.  
2.216; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
pp. 71, 289, vol. 2, pl. LXXVI;  
Heenk 1995, p. 114; Hulsker  
1996, pp. 108-09, 112.

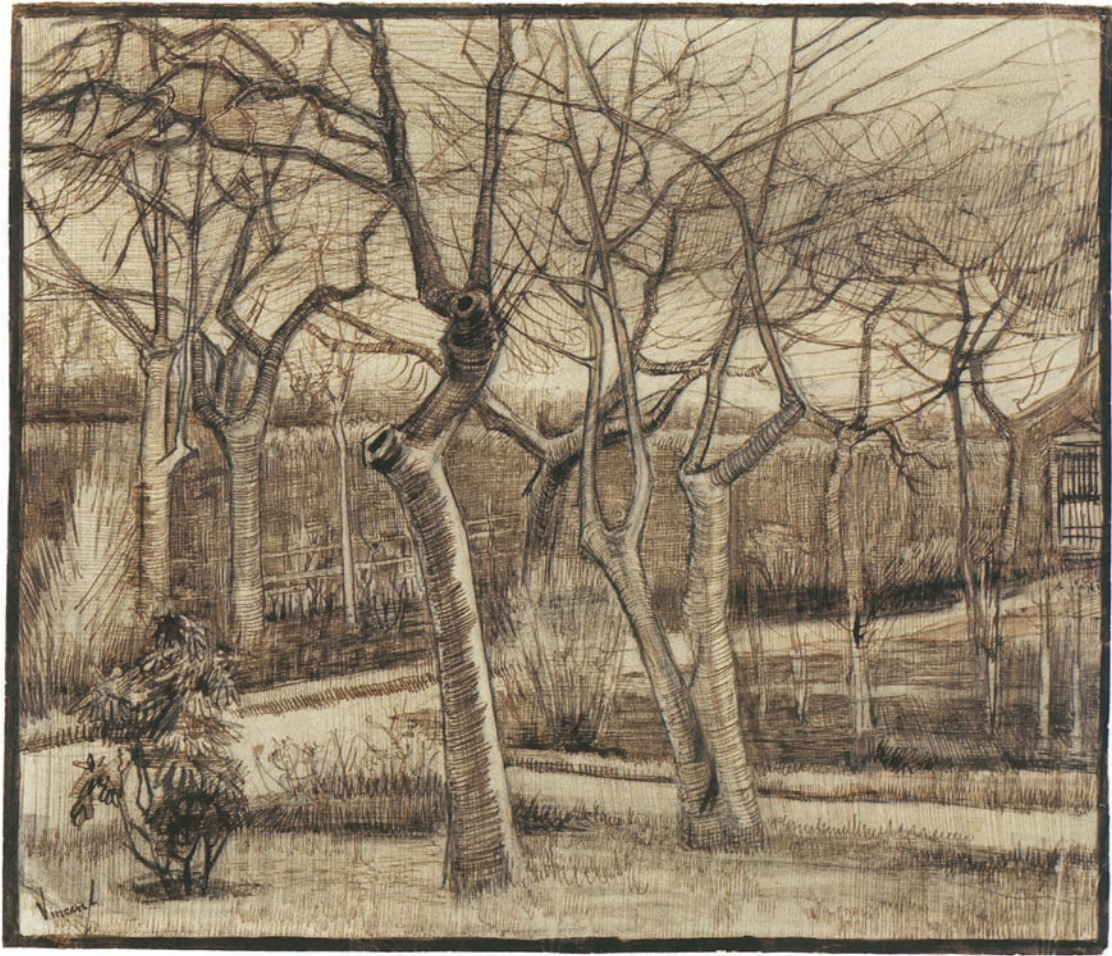
### EXHIBITIONS

1953 Zundert, no. 43; 1953  
Hoensbroek, no. 84; 1954-55  
Bern, no. 94; 1955 Antwerp,  
no. 61; 1956 Haarlem, no. 14;  
1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no.  
54; 1958 Bergen, no. 55.

This small, relatively detailed sheet also depicts a spot in the vicarage garden, where Van Gogh found so many attractive subjects. He went to great lengths to make the volume of the trees look convincing, a quality that a number of his drawings lacked (such as the slightly later *cat.* 95). He must have been satisfied with the result, for with the brush in ink he drew a border around the scene, as he did with several of his better efforts, and added his signature at lower left.

*The vicarage garden*, together with another drawing (*cat.* 95) and five paintings that belonged to Vincent's sister-in-law, Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, was sold or given to her brother Hendrik Christiaan Bonger (1859-1929) before 1905.<sup>1</sup> On his death they passed to his sister Elisabeth Hortense (Bep or Betsy) Bonger (1870-1943), who bequeathed them to her nephew Vincent Willem van Gogh (1891-1978).

<sup>1</sup> *The paintings were* F 229 JH 1176,  
F 243a JH 1106, F 309a JH 1312, F 576  
JH 1423, F 700 JH 1781.



88 The vicarage garden

## 89 Winter garden

### MARCH 1884

Pencil, pen in brown ink (originally black), on wove paper  
40.3 × 54.6 cm  
Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 365 V/1962  
F 1128 JH 466

### PROVENANCE

1884-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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.

### LETTERS

438/R44, 440/R43, 443/364, 444/363a, 447/366, 450/369.

### LITERATURE

Van Meurs n.d., no. 5; Vogelsang 1905, na p. 66; Lettres 1911, pl. xvi; Havelaar 1915, fig. 1; Bremmer 1918, pp. 17-19, no. 12; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, pp. 69-70, vol. 4, pl. LXXIV; Meier-Graefe 1928, pl. 12; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 259, 322, 411; Leurs/ Tralbaut 1957, p. 46; De Gruyter 1961, p. 97, no. 18; De la Faille 1970, p. 415; Chetham 1976, p. 31; Den Haag 1978, p. 99; Amsterdam 1987, p. 403, no. 2.218; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 201-02, no. 71; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 128; Otterlo 1990, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 69-70, 288, vol. 2, pl. LXXIV; Heenk 1995, p. 114; Hulsker 1996, pp. 110, 112.

One of the highlights of the oeuvre that Van Gogh created during his Dutch period is the series of six pen-and-ink drawings executed in the first half of March 1884. Not only is the draughtsmanship remarkably skilful and the compositions surprising and carefully thought out, but the suite has a restrained, slightly melancholy grandeur that is typical of much of Van Gogh's best work. Four of the sheets are preserved in the Van Gogh Museum. *Behind the hedgerows* (fig. 89a) was donated to the Rijksmuseum by Johanna van Gogh-Bonger in 1906. The sixth drawing in the series, a slightly different, upright version of this *Winter garden*, is in the collection of the Szépművészeti Múzeum in Budapest (fig. 89b).

It can be deduced from the artist's correspondence that there was almost certainly a seventh sheet in the series which has since been lost. Like the drawing discussed here and the one in Budapest it depicted the vicarage garden in winter. In the first weeks of March Van Gogh had sent Anthon van Rappard several drawings to give him an idea of his recent work. The latter was particularly impressed by 'a little winter garden', as Van Gogh affectionately called it [438/R44]. This pleased Van Gogh, who immediately sent him another version 'of the same subject', together with several other landscape drawings, listing the titles in the covering letter: 'Pollard birches, Avenue of poplars, Behind the hedgerows, the Kingfisher and Winter garden' [438/R44]. This brings the number of winter gardens to three. That this was not a slip of the pen on Vincent's part is clear from a letter he wrote to Theo in April, in which he told his brother that he was working on a painting of trees in blossom, adding a sketch of it in the letter (fig. 89c). He also announced the series of landscapes: 'The drawings you will get as soon as Van Rappard comes here on a visit include three of the same subject' [447/366]. This is a reference to the series he had sent Van Rappard in March. The letter sketch displays a very similar composition to the winter gardens in the Van Gogh Museum and the one in the Szépművészeti Múzeum, even though the latter is a vertical variant. There can be no doubt that the three drawings 'of the same subject' must have been very similar. There is not one surviving drawing that could be regarded as the third variant. The *Winter garden* (cat. 74) of a few months earlier was certainly made in the vicarage garden but has a very

different composition. Moreover, it is so modest compared to the large sheets of March 1884 that it is inconceivable that Van Gogh would have mentioned it in the same breath as the larger drawings. The fact that he gave it a French title, *Jardin d'hiver*, indicates that it was intended for a French public, and it was probably sent directly to Theo. The same applies to the wintry *Melancholy* (cat. 75), which cannot be identified with the unknown third winter garden for yet another reason, namely that Van Gogh would very probably have referred to that drawing by the title he had given it.

The letter to Van Rappard cited above was probably written in mid-March. Evidence that the series of large landscape drawings was made shortly before that is provided not only by the letter but by the fact that Van Gogh probably used his new drawing boards for the series. *Pollard birches* (cat. 90) and *The kingfisher* (cat. 91) definitely contain pencil lines caused by one of the two new boards, which he had received on 8 March.<sup>1</sup> This would mean that the drawings were executed in the second week of March.

The six surviving drawings measure approximately 40 × 53 cm, and all are on the same thin, fairly smooth wove paper which in many cases has now discoloured to a dirty yellow. Van Gogh started with cursory pencil sketches which he then worked up with the pen. Each has a pencilled border. The ink is iron-gall ink, which has eaten into the paper of the four drawings in the Van Gogh Museum.



89<sup>a</sup> *Behind the hedgerows* (F 1129  
JH 461), 1884. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 336; 1906 Berlin, no. 57; 1914 Berlin, no. 11; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 107; 1920 New York, no. 3; 1923 London, no. 6; 1925 The Hague, no. 85; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 28; 1928 Paris, no. 30; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 18; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 14; 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 10; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 165; 1937 Paris, no. 60; 1937 Oslo, no. 23; 1938 Copenhagen, no. 7; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 8; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Bergen, no. 13; 1947 Paris, no. 13; 1947 Geneva, no. 13; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 114; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 73; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 193; 1949 Hengelo, no catalogue; 1949 Gouda, no catalogue; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 32; 1951 Lyons, Grenoble, Arles/St. Rémy, no. 85; 1951 Amsterdam, no. 60; 1952 Basel, no. 69; 1952 Groningen, no catalogue; 1953 Zürich, no. 25; 1953 The Hague, no. 16; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 32; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 35; 1954-55 Willemstad, no. 34; 1955 Palm Beach, Miami & New Orleans, no. 34; 1955 Antwerp, no. 64; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 34; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 89; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 20; 1957 Stockholm, no. 22; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 99; 1960 Enschede, no. 15; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 112; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 94; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 94; 1964 Zundert, no. 6; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1965-66 Stockholm &

Gothenburg, no. 68; 1967  
 Wolfsburg, no. 89; 1967-68  
 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo &  
 Ottawa, no. 14; 1968 Liège, no.  
 14; 1968-69 London, no. 22;  
 1969 Humlebaek, no. 8; 1969-  
 70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis,  
 Philadelphia & Columbus, no.  
 75; 1970-71 Baltimore, San  
 Francisco & New York, no. 75;  
 1971-72 Paris, no. 128; 1972  
 Bordeaux, no. 45; 1972-73  
 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 52; 1978  
 The Hague, no. 15; 1980-81  
 Amsterdam, no. 140; 1982  
 Amsterdam, no catalogue; 1987-  
 88 Den Bosch, no. 71; 1990  
 Otterlo, no. 89.



89<sup>b</sup> *Winter garden* (F 1130 JH 465),  
 1884. Budapest, Szépművészeti  
 Múzeum.

This also means that the drawings were originally darker and not so brown. Iron-gall ink starts out black or a very dark brown but discolours to brown with age and can even fade completely. The pencilled lines provide further evidence that these drawings were once blacker. Van Gogh used pencil not only for the preliminary drawing but for various parts of the finished work as well. As the sheets are now, the graphite sits rather oddly with the brown ink, but combined with the original shade it would have contributed to a harmony of black and grey tones. Van Gogh enclosed a sheet of grey paper with the consignment of drawings he sent to Van Rappard, saying that they should be viewed against that background, so it too should be regarded as part of the same tonal scale.

Van Gogh sent the drawings to Van Rappard not just to give him an idea of his latest work but also in the hope that his friend would show them to art-lovers who might become interested in him. That did not happen, but Van Rappard did write saying that he liked the drawings [440/R43]. Van Gogh delightedly relayed this to Theo, with whom he was on very difficult terms at the time, mainly over financial matters [443/364]. When Van Rappard came to Nuenen for 'ten days or so' in May [450/369] he brought the drawings with him, and Van Gogh then sent them to his brother, presumably as a complete series of six or seven.

In documents dating from 1927 it is claimed that this *Winter garden* does not depict the vicarage garden but that of the house belonging to the Begemanns, 'Nune Ville', that stands to the right of the vicarage and also has a narrow, deep garden.<sup>2</sup> This identification is untenable. Not only is there no mention of the Begemanns' garden in Vincent's letters, but the resemblance to the vicarage garden is too close to be a coincidence. A photograph of it taken around 1930 may show different vegetation, but the winding path running down the garden, around the pond at the bottom, and back again, is unmistakable (*fig. 89d*).

The artist stood with his back to the house looking down the length of the garden, with the old tower in the background. In the foreground are some saplings or rose bushes wrapped in straw to protect them from the cold, as they are in catalogue number 74. Between the two trees with their contorted branches is Van Gogh's 'little black spook' [438/R44] – a rear view of woman well wrapped up against the cold and carrying a jug in her left hand.

Vincent confessed to Van Rappard: 'That garden sets me dreaming' [438/R44]. He made several studies of it, in addition to the three already mentioned, but then destroyed them. In the early spring of 1884 he made a painting of flowering fruit trees that is no longer known, which



89 Winter garden

<sup>1</sup> See the Introduction and cats. 90 and 93.

<sup>2</sup> In 1927, H. Nauta, a law student with a keen interest in art history, followed in Benno Stokvis's footsteps by conducting research in Nuenen. He recorded his findings in a letter to Vincent's sister Lies and in a report that was probably also intended for her (Van Gogh Museum archive, inv. b 5301 M/1994 and b 7117 V/1996). The identification with the Begemanns' garden was made by a 'Miss S. Begemann', a niece of Margot Begemann, who visited her aunt regularly. Margot lived in Nune Ville and was a good friend of Vincent's. The main reason for claiming it was the Begemann garden was that she recognised the crooked trees in the left of the drawing. The position of the old tower in the background was another clue. However, the two adjoining gardens had an almost identical view of this distant landmark, so that argument carries no weight at all.

to judge by the sketch in a letter had almost the same composition as this drawing (fig. 89c).

As was so often the case, the finished work deviates somewhat from the preliminary drawing. On the right are the erased remains of a tree, and a bush beyond the hedge on the left was originally larger. A number of crosses on graves to the left of the tower were not reinforced with the pen.



89c Sketch in a letter to Theo of April 1884 (447/366). Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



89d Photograph of the vicarage garden, ca. 1930. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



## 90 Pollard birches

Van Gogh often thought back wistfully to his days in Brabant while in the asylum in Saint-Rémy in 1889-90, and in a letter to his mother he reminded her of the beautiful birches of Nuenen [787/598]. It is tempting to associate his nostalgic musings of July 1889 with this Nuenen sheet of March 1884, which is dominated by a large group of pollard birches. It is one of seven pen-and-ink drawings of landscapes that Van Gogh made in the first half of March 1884 (see *cat.* 89).

Trees often play an important part in his work, indeed they are frequently the main subject. He had a particular fondness for pollard willows, oaks and birches, which feature prominently in some 20 drawings and paintings.<sup>1</sup> The annual pollarding produced short, sturdy trees with gnarled trunks and long, spindly branches pointing heavenward which were a striking element of the Dutch landscape. They had a character all their own, and it was one that greatly appealed to Van Gogh. Back in 1877 he spoke of drawing a pollard willow as if it were a living being [174/152], and he later likened a row of them to 'a procession of almshouse men' [282/242]. It is not hard to project anthropomorphic sentiments of that kind onto the expressive, somewhat tragic-looking pollard birches in this drawing. Tucked away on the right is a shepherd with his flock, which is a very common motif in art from the second half of the 19th century. On the left Van Gogh added a woman seen from behind who has a rake over her shoulder.

This sheet is a fine example of the way in which Van Gogh combined pencil with almost black ink (which is the colour it had originally; see also *cat.* 92). He used the graphite to add a slight hue to the sky and give more body to the canopies of the trees. There is some delicate heightening with white: a few lines below the woman and above the signature on the left, and two tiny strokes as highlights along the trunks of the birches in the centre background.

A horizontal pencil line running across the full width of the paper, four centimetres from the lower edge, was produced by an irregularity in Van Gogh's drawing board that accentuated the graphite. Something similar can be seen a few centimetres from the top edge of *The kingfisher* (*cat.* 91). He took delivery of new drawing boards on 8 March 1884, so

MARCH 1884

Pencil, pen in brown ink (originally black), heightened with opaque white watercolour, on wove paper

Horizontal pencil line, possibly part of a grid

39.5 × 54.2 cm

Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 364 V/1968

F 1240 JH 469

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-? J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; ?-1930 A.C. van Houten-van Gogh, Dieren; 1930-63 H.J. Calkoen, Velsen; 1963 bought by the Theo van Gogh Foundation; 1963-68 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1968 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1968-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

### LETTERS

438/R44, 440/R43, 443/364, 444/363a, 450/369.

### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 93, vol. 4, pl. CIV; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 263, 353, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 442; Amsterdam 1987, p. 404, no. 2.219; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 201, 204, no. 73; Otterlo 1990, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 93, 316-17, vol. 2, pl. CIV; Hulsker 1996, pp. 110-12.

### EXHIBITIONS

1958-59 Washington, New York, Minneapolis, Boston, Cleveland

& Chicago, no. 145; 1963 Amsterdam, no. 95; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 77; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 77; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 51; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 22; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 23; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 20; 1968 Liège, no. 20; 1968-69 London, no. 23; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Columbus, no. 76; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 76; 1971-72 Paris, no. 129; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 53; 1974 Florence, no. 11; 1975 Malmö, no. 23; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 23; 1980-81 Amsterdam, no. 139; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 73; 1990 Otterlo, no. 94.

this drawing must have been made then or a few days later. See catalogue number 89 for the dating.

The *Pollard birches* once belonged to Vincent's sister Anna (1855-1930). On her death it and one of Vincent's illustration scrapbooks passed to a friend of hers, the painter Hendrik Joan Calkoen (1894-1979). Both were acquired by the Theo van Gogh Foundation in 1963.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The earliest work is catalogue number 13. Other examples are F 31 JH 477; F 44 JH 962; F 195 JH 961; F 407 JH 1402; F 572 JH 1597; F 721 JH 1864; F 900 JH 47; F 947 JH 164; F 995 JH 56; F 1092 JH 270; F 1129 JH 461; F 1152v JH 665 (cat. 156); F 1240a JH 467; F 1243 JH 470 (cat. 95); F 1247 JH 953; F 1499 JH 1372; F 1678 JH 46. See also the letter sketches JH 48 in letter 173/151, JH 50 in letter 172/R1, and JH 58 in letter 174/152.

<sup>2</sup> The scrapbook is in the Van Gogh Museum archive, inv. t 1487 V/1968.



90 Pollard birches

## 91 The kingfisher

MARCH 1884

Pencil, pen and brush in brown ink (originally black), heightened with opaque white paint, on wove paper

40.2 × 54.2 cm

Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 775 M/1982

F 1135 JH 468

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1901 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1901-20 J.J. Polak, Rotterdam, bought by the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring 1901, for ca. Dfl. 150; 1920-69 H. Polak, Wassenaar; 1969-80 M.M.M. Polak-Leyden, Wassenaar; 1975-80 on loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; 1980-82 M.E. Polak, Hillegom; 1982 bought by the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

### LETTERS

438/R44, 440/R43, 443/364, 444/363a, 450/369.

### LITERATURE

Van Meurs n.d., no. 2; Lettres 1911, pl. X; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 71, vol. 4, pl. LXXVI; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 259, 322, 411; Leurs/Tralbaut 1957, pp. 48-51; De Gruyter 1961, p. 98, no. 19; De la Faille 1970, pp. 416-17; Amsterdam 1987, p. 403, no. 2.217; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 201, 203, no. 72; Otterlo 1990, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 71, 290, vol. 2, pl. LXXVI; Heenk 1995, p. 114; Hulsker 1996, pp. 110-12.

*The kingfisher* stands almost alone in Van Gogh's oeuvre. At first sight it appears to be a straightforward landscape, but the true subject, as we know from the title that Van Gogh gave the drawing in his letters,<sup>1</sup> is the small bird poised just above the tufted reeds in the foreground, caught in mid-dive.

Typologically it is only comparable to an early drawing of a marsh with a bird flying over it, and to the Paris canvas, *Wheatfield with a lark* (figs. 91a, b). The latter two works were probably inspired by a book by one of Van Gogh's favourite authors, Jules Michelet's *L'oiseau*.<sup>2</sup> *The kingfisher*, though, was undoubtedly based on a poem by Jules Breton which Van Gogh copied out for Anthon van Rappard<sup>3</sup> shortly after he had sent him the drawing.

*Automne* (à Jules Dupré)

La rivière s'écoule avec lenteur. Ses eaux  
Murmurent, près du bord, aux souches des vieux aulnes  
Qui se teignent de sang; de hauts peupliers jaunes  
Sèment leurs feuilles d'or parmi les blonds roseaux.

Le vent léger, qui croise en mobiles réseaux  
Ses rides d'argent clair, laisse de sombres zones  
Où les arbres plongeant leurs dômes et leurs cônes  
Tremblent, comme agités par des milliers d'oiseaux.

Par instants se répète un cri grêle de grive,  
Et lancé brusquement des herbes de la rive,  
Étincelle un joyau dans l'air subtil et bleu;

Un chant aigu prolonge une note stridente;  
C'est le martin-pêcheur qui fuit d'une aile ardente  
Dans un furtif rayon d'émeraude et de feu.

Although Van Gogh's landscape is more likely a winter than an autumn scene, its wistfulness echoes the mood of the poem. Some of the similarities, in fact, are almost literal. The river with old alders ('vieux aulnes') and grassy banks ('herbes de la rive') has become a pool of water with gnarled pollard willows, grass and tufted reeds. There are also tall trees, Breton's ('hauts peupliers'), and above all, of course, the kingfisher ('martin-pêcheur'), which breaks the melancholy mood of the poem with its piercing song and bright blue plumage. It adds a similar lively touch to Van Gogh's drawing, standing out brightly against a dark reflection in the water.

Van Gogh had various stuffed birds in his studio in Nuenen,<sup>4</sup> as did his friend Anton Kerssemakers (1846-1924), but it is not known whether either collection included a kingfisher. Vincent (or possibly Theo) did



91<sup>a</sup> *Marsh* (F 845 JH 7), 1881.  
Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine  
Arts.



91<sup>b</sup> *Wheatfield with lark* (F 310  
JH 1274), 1887. Amsterdam, Van Gogh  
Museum.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1900-01 Rotterdam, no. 28;  
1905 Amsterdam, no. 344a;  
1927-28 Rotterdam, no. 45; 1947  
Basel, no. 131; 1947-48 London,  
Birmingham & Glasgow, no.  
118; 1982 Amsterdam, no cata-  
logue; 1983-84 Amsterdam, no  
catalogue; 1985-86 Tokyo &  
Nagoya, no. 40; 1986 Osaka, no.  
7; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 72;  
1988 Rome, no. 67; 1990  
Otterlo, no. 91.

<sup>1</sup> See letters 438/R44, 443/364 and  
444/363a.

<sup>2</sup> Evert van Uitert, in *Amsterdam 1987*,  
*cat.* 39, p. 172, drew attention to  
Michelet's influence in connection with  
the Wheatfield with a lark.

<sup>3</sup> The poem was probably enclosed with  
letter 439/R42.

<sup>4</sup> *Kerssemakers 1912*.

<sup>5</sup> This stuffed bird is now in the Van  
Gogh Museum, inv. v 42 V/1978.

<sup>6</sup> *De Brouwer 1984*, p. 107.

have one later, in Paris, for he made a painting of it there (*fig. 91c*).<sup>5</sup> However, he probably had no need of a model for this sheet. His choice of a kingfisher simply shows that he found this striking bird attractive.

Van Gogh once again worked in ink over a preliminary pencil drawing which was rather vigorous and actually stands out in relief on the back of the sheet. He had at least two pens of differing thickness, and used the brush in ink to add heavier accents to the small tree in the left foreground and in the branches of the tall tree in the left background, and to put a border around the scene. The white that he used for the bird was also applied as heightening to the vegetation around the pool, evidently to suggest frost.

It is often said that the body of water is the pond at the bottom of the vicarage garden, but the two versions of the *Winter garden* clearly show that the vegetation there was not nearly as wild. Moreover, in the background is the Church of St Clement (not to be confused with St Clement's in Gerwen, see *cat.* 76), which on the evidence of the *Winter garden* could only be seen from the lefthand corner of the garden, looking lengthwise along the oval pond.<sup>6</sup> That would give the water a completely different appearance to the one in this drawing. Moreover, Van Gogh could never have seen a kingfisher by the pond in the vicarage garden, for it is not a bird that frequents standing water but seeks out the highly oxygenated streams and lakes that provide it with its diet of fish and crustaceans.

As was the case with the church at Gerwen (*cat.* 76), Van Gogh has taken some liberties with the building. Comparison with a photograph of St Clement's (*fig. 91d*), which was completed in 1872, reveals that its tower is octagonal and slender, whereas the one in the drawing is rather squat and appears to be square. Van Gogh also inserted more belfry windows than were actually visible. In addition, the openings in the roof are too high up and prominent. Despite all these discrepancies, there is no other church this could be. Van Gogh must have worked in the studio on the basis of the rough preliminary drawing and perhaps some loose sketches, and may even have put the entire composition together there: a stretch of water he had seen in or around Nuenen augmented with a church and a kingfisher.

The drawing originally belonged to Jo van Gogh-Bonger, who put it up for sale at Dfl. 150 at an exhibition held in the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring in 1901. It was bought by Jacques J. Polak (1840-1920), a Rotterdam textile merchant. His daughter-in-law Mrs M.M.M. Polak-Leyden lent it to the Van Gogh Museum in 1975. After her death in 1980



91 The kingfisher

the sheet passed to her son M.E. Polak, who offered to sell it to the museum in 1981. It was acquired in 1982 with the assistance of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation and the Theo van Gogh Foundation. See catalogue number 89 for the dating.



91<sup>c</sup> Stuffed kingfisher. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



91<sup>d</sup> Photograph of the Church of St. Clement, Nuenen, 1900. Nuenen, J.C. Jegerings photograph collection.



## 92 Avenue of poplars

Throughout his career, Van Gogh made paintings and drawings of avenues in autumn with one or more figures strolling along them. They include several avenues of poplars executed in Nuenen – three or four paintings and three drawings. All are of an autumnal effect tinged with melancholy. This particular drawing is Van Gogh's first experiment with the subject.<sup>1</sup>

There was an age-old tradition of depicting a row of trees in perspective, but Van Gogh had specific sources of inspiration for his variant. In the second half of February 1884, shortly before making this *Avenue of poplars*, he had been reading poems by François Coppée. He copied some of them out for Van Rappard and sent them to him at the beginning of March. One he found particularly moving: “Tristement” reminds me of a Poplar avenue by Hipolyte Boulenger, I think it is called “La Vallée de Josafat”. What an autumnal mood it has! [435/R41].<sup>2</sup>

It would be going too far to say that the poem by Coppée and Boulenger's autumn scene gave Van Gogh the idea for his *Avenue of poplars*, but the atmosphere he felt in both is very closely allied to that of his drawing. The Boulenger that Van Gogh was probably referring to is a panel now in Antwerp, *The Josaphatwetering at Schaarbeek* (fig. 92a). In Coppée's poem, a mournful woman walking down an avenue in autumn serves as a metaphor for deep sorrow.

### *Tristement*

Obsédé par ces mots, le veuvage et l'automne,  
Mon rêve n'en veut pas d'autres pour exprimer  
Cette mélancolie immense et monotone  
Qui m'ôte tout espoir et tout désir d'aimer

Il évoque sans cesse une très longue allée  
De platanes géants dépouillés à demi  
Dans laquelle une femme en grand deuil et voilée  
S'avance lentement sur le gazon blémi

### MARCH 1884

Pencil, pen in brown ink (originally black), on wove paper  
54.2 × 39.3 cm  
Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d II V/1962  
F 1239 JH 464

### PROVENANCE

1884-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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.

### LETTERS

438/R44, 440/R43, 443/364, 444/363a, 450/369.

### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 93, vol. 4, pl. cvii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 259, 322, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 442; Amsterdam 1987, p. 404, no. 2.220; Otterlo 1990, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 93, 316, vol. 2, pl. cvii; Heenk 1995, pp. 114-15; Hulsker 1996, pp. 110, 112.

### EXHIBITIONS

1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 2; 1926 London, no. 29; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 38a; 1928 Paris, no. 40; 1930 Laren, no. 12; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 163; 1932 Manchester, no. 51; 1947 Groningen, no. 33; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 45; 1948 Hilversum, no catalogue; 1948-

49 The Hague, no. 202; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 40; 1953 Zürich, no. 44; 1953 Zundert, no. 45; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 96; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 36; 1954-55 Bern, no. 111; 1955 Antwerp, no. 66; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 35; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 90; 1957 Breda, no. 28; 1957 Marseilles, no. 12; 1957 Stockholm, no. 23; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 107; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 70; 1960 Enschede, no. 23; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 113; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 100; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 100; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 24; 1968-69 London, no. 24; 1979 Tokyo, Sapporo, Hiroshima & Nagoya, no. 58; 1990 Otterlo, no. 93.

Ses longs vêtements lui faisant un sillage  
Traînent en bruissant dans le feuillage mort;  
Elle suit d'un regard la fuite d'un nuage  
Sous le vent déjà froid et qui chasse du nord

Elle songe à l'absent qui lui disait: je t'aime!  
Et, sous le grand ciel bas qui n'a plus un rayon,  
S'aperçoit qu'avec la dernière chrysanthème  
Hier a disparu le dernier papillon

Elle chemine ainsi dans l'herbe qui se fane  
Bien lasse de vouloir, bien lasse de subir  
Et toujours sur ces pas les feuilles de platane  
Tombent avec un bruit triste comme un soupir.

En vain – pour dissiper ces images moroses  
J'évoque ma jeunesse et ce splendide été  
Je doute du soleil, je ne crois plus aux roses  
Et je vais le front bas, comme un homme hanté

Et j'ai le cœur si plein d'automne & de veuvage  
Que je rêve toujours, sous un ciel pur et clair –  
D'une figure en deuil – dans un froid paysage  
Et les feuilles tombant au premier vent d'hiver.

The mood in Vincent's drawing is not so much intended to arouse a similar feeling of overwhelming sadness, but there is certainly a sense of melancholy, albeit of the 'healthy kind' (see *cat.* 75). A work that is closer in tone to Coppée's woman is an accomplished but far smaller sheet of a figure walking along an avenue of pollard birches and poplars.<sup>3</sup>

The man in this particular drawing is resting for a moment. In his right hand he has a hatchet, and lining the avenue on the left are the bundles of wood that he has cut. Faggots of this kind were used as firewood or for repairing farm and household implements. Unless cut on private property it belonged to the local municipality and was usually sold. Van Gogh signed his name on the bundle in the foreground.

This drawing, too, shows how Van Gogh deliberately explored the combination of grey pencil and the originally black ink. The branches of the trees consist largely of pencilled lines which have not been gone over in ink. There are a few unintentional splashes of paint: red at top



92 Avenue of poplars

<sup>1</sup> The other poplar avenues are the paintings F 45 JH 959, F 122 JH 522, F 123 JH 518 and possibly F 191a JH 950. The drawings are F 1241 JH 470 and F 1246 JH 520.

<sup>2</sup> In *Den Bosch* 1987-88, nos. 86, 87, this connection was made with F 122 JH 522 and F 123 JH 518, which were executed in the autumn of 1884.

<sup>3</sup> This drawing, F 1241 JH 470, is in a private collection.

left and a few light green spatters at the height of the man.

See catalogue number 89 for the dating.



92<sup>a</sup> Hyppolyte Boulenger,  
*The Josaphatwetering at Schaarbeek*, 1868.  
Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor  
Schone Kunsten.

## 93 Young man with a pipe

This drawing of a young man with a pipe in his mouth occupies a special position among the model studies that Van Gogh made in Nuenen. It is usually dated around the middle of the series executed between December 1884 and May 1885 (see *cats.* 97-106), but that is untenable. The drawings from that period are much brisker and more assured than this rather stiff effort. In general, too, they are smaller and are on laid paper, not on the watercolour paper used for this drawing. In addition, they fall into two distinct groups: pencil drawings in which one sees Van Gogh carefully searching for an anatomically accurate rendering of the heads, and drawings in black chalk, which are mainly expressive in nature. This sheet fits into neither category.

It was executed in pencil and worked up with transparent grey, brown and red watercolour on watercolour paper with a slight grain. From a technical point of view this is reminiscent of the model studies that Van Gogh made in The Hague in 1882 (cf. *cats.* 31-46).

However, there are several reasons why the sheet cannot be from the Hague period, some of them technical. The watercolour paper that Van Gogh preferred in The Hague, for instance, was usually (but not always) coarser than this sheet. The use of watercolour is also different in the Hague pencil drawings, where it takes the form of restrained, tenuous washes, as in the *Old man reading* (*cat.* 35) and two studies of a woman with a broom (*cats.* 37, 38). The watercolour passages in the Nuenen sheet are more pronounced than in the Hague studies. It is the work of a rather more skilled artist who captured his subject with greater self-confidence, using more generous and less wooden and tentative pencil lines.

What is also striking is that almost all of the Hague sheets have traces of a squared grid, which points to the use of a perspective frame with several horizontal and vertical lengths of twine. Here there is just one, thin vertical line down the middle of the sheet and a horizontal one just above the back of the chair. It seems that Van Gogh used a much simpler frame of the kind that left its traces in his Nuenen sketchbook, one with only a few pieces of string to guide him (*fig.* 93a; see also *cats.* 180-193). It was probably the frame delivered to him on 8 March 1884 by the contractor De Vries, as recorded in the latter's cashbook.<sup>1</sup> De Vries also supplied

MARCH 1884

Pencil and transparent watercolour, on watercolour paper  
Traces of a squaring  
39.9 × 28.4 cm  
Signed at lower right: Vincent

Inv. d 3 V/1962  
F 1199 JH 579

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 84, vol. 4, pl. xciii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 342, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 433; Amsterdam 1987, p. 409, no. 2.249; Otterlo 1990, p. 130; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 84, 306, vol. 2, pl. xciii; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, p. 132.

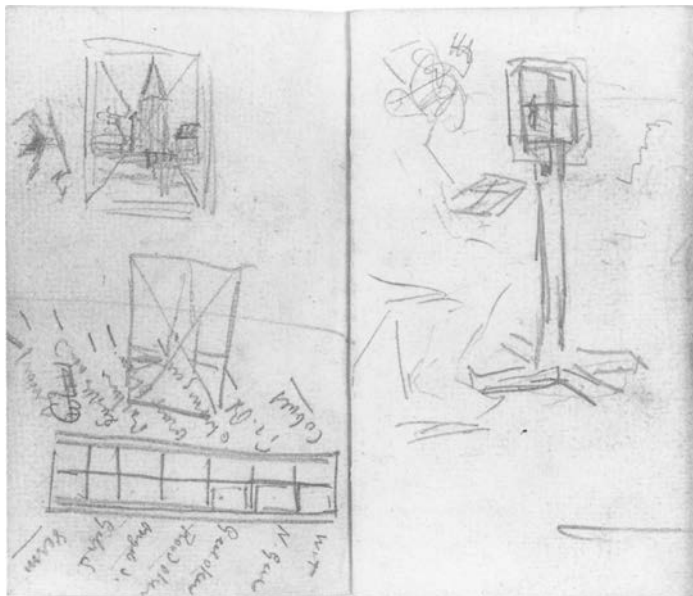
#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 315; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 63; 1923 Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 117; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 39; 1948 Hilversum, no. catalogue; 1954-55 Bern, no. 104; 1955 Antwerp, no. 103; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 50; 1956 Haarlem, no. 22; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 30; 1968-69 London, no. 32; 1990 Otterlo, no. 98.

<sup>1</sup> See the Introduction.

Van Gogh with two drawing boards, one of which left its mark on this drawing in the form of the pattern of the wood grain in the young man's jacket. This is also seen in a number of the Hague sheets (see *cat.* 28).

Since Vincent received his new materials in March 1884, that is the date now given to this drawing. That makes it a study from early in the Nuenen period, when Van Gogh had not yet abandoned his former method of drawing but was clearly a more skilful draughtsman.



93<sup>a</sup> Sheet from a sketchbook, 1884.  
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



93 Young man with a pipe

## 94, 95 Landscapes

<sup>1</sup> In connection with these two drawings and *Thatched roofs*, Pey 1990, p. 34, warns against leaping to the conclusion that the brown ink in Van Gogh's work was once black.

In April 1884, Van Rappard received another, slightly smaller package of drawings from his friend in Nuenen (see *cats.* 89-93). 'A few days ago I sent you three more pen-and-ink drawings, Little ditch, Pine trees in the fen, Thatched roofs; I thought you would like the subjects. As for the execution, I should have wished with all my heart that the direction of the pen scratches had followed the forms more expressively, and that the forces rendering the tone of the masses expressed their shape more clearly. I think you will admit that I did not systematically or intentionally neglect the composition of things, their shape, but I had to take a shot at it in order to get the effect of light and brown as well as I could – the atmosphere of the scenery as it was at that moment, the general aspect. For all three are special moments that one can observe around now' [445/R45]. *Thatched roofs* (fig. 94a) is now in the Tate Gallery, London, but the other two drawings are in the Van Gogh Museum. The letter to Van Rappard was written in April 1884, which was also the month the drawings were made.

They are on smaller sheets of the identical kind of wove paper as the previous four works, and although they are quite detailed they are a little less accomplished. *Pine trees in the fen*, in particular, displays a coarser kind of draughtsmanship indicating that it was done on location, as the above quotation suggests, with Van Gogh having to hurry to capture the effect he wanted. It is a spontaneous and charming drawing, but the forms of the trees are indeed rather flat.

He worked in ink over a preliminary drawing in pencil, using two pens, one fine, the other slightly thicker. Some of the branches in the crown of the foremost tree in the group on the left were reinforced with the brush.

The *Ditch* is a very successful composition and is rather more detailed. Van Gogh probably rated it more highly than the other work, for he drew a border around it with the brush in ink, just as he did with the ambitious landscapes he made in March, which were clearly intended for sale (*cats.* 89-93). This scene was also drawn with two pens of differing thickness and then enlivened with light green, opaque watercolour in the vegetation in the foreground and in the ditch itself. The few touches of opaque white colour in the water may have been intended as corrections.



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In his letter, Van Gogh speaks of 'the effect of light and brown', which indicates that the brown, iron-gall ink has not discoloured from almost black but indeed had a brown tint originally.<sup>1</sup>

The *Ditch*, like catalogue number 88, was part of the legacy left to Ir. V.W. van Gogh (Vincent's nephew) by his Aunt Betsy, Elisabeth Hortense Bonger (see *cat.* 88).



94<sup>a</sup> *Thatched roofs* (F 1242 JH 474),  
1884. London, Tate Gallery.



94 Pine trees in the fen



95 Ditch

## 94 Pine trees in the fen

APRIL 1884

Pencil, pen and brush in brown ink, on wove paper  
35.8 × 45.0 cm  
Unsigned

Inv. d 105 V/1962

F 1249 JH 473

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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.

### LETTER

445/R45.

### LITERATURE

Van Meurs n.d., no. 6; Lettres 1911, pl. vii; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 95, vol. 4, pl. cvi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 260, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 444; Amsterdam 1987, p. 404, no. 2.222; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 95, 320, vol. 2, pl. cvi; Heenk 1995, p. 114; Hulsker 1996, pp. 110-11, 114.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 305; 1906 Rotterdam, no. 60; 1907 Berlin, no. 113; 1908 Munich, no. 79; 1908 Dresden, no. 83; 1908 Frankfurt, no. 90; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 124; 1920 New York, no. 10; 1925 The Hague, no. 86; 1926 Munich, no. 2108; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 24; 1928 Paris, no. 26; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 30; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 22; 1930 Laren, no. 1; 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 16; 1931

Amsterdam, no. 162; 1947 Groningen, no. 34; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 47; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 117; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 75; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 195; 1949 Hengelo, no catalogue; 1949 Gouda, no catalogue; 1953 Zürich, no. 47; 1953 The Hague, no. 18; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 34; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 43; 1955 Antwerp, no. 69; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 36; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 91; 1956 Haarlem, no. 31; 1957 Stockholm, no. 4; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 83; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 83; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 62; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 62; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 43; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 2; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 2; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 2; 1968 Liège, no. 2; 1968-69 London, no. 25; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Columbus, no. 74; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 74; 1971-72 Paris, no. 131; 1975 Malmö, no. 24; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 24; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 26; 1990 Otterlo, no. 88.

## 95 Ditch

APRIL 1884

Pencil, pen in ink, heightened with opaque white and green paint, on wove paper  
42.3 × 34.5 cm  
Unsigned

Inv. d 366 V/1962

F 1243 JH 472

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1905 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1905-29 H.C. Bonger, Amsterdam; 1929-43 E.H. Bonger, Amsterdam; 1944-62 V.W. van Gogh, 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.

### LETTER

445/R45.

### LITERATURE

Bremmer 1904, ill. on cover; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 94, vol. 4, pl. cv; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 260, 412; De la Faille 1970, pp. 442-43; Amsterdam 1987, p. 404, no. 2.221; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 94, 317, vol. 2, pl. cv; Heenk 1995, p. 114; Hulsker 1996, pp. 110-11, 114.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 342; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 41; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 46; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 116; 1948 Hilversum, no catalogue; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 38; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 58; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 2; 1955 Antwerp, no. 68; 1956 Haarlem, no. 33; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 33; 1957 Stockholm, no. 3; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 86; 1960 Enschede, no. 3; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 63; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 63; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 61; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 82; 1971-72 Paris, no. 130; 1990 Otterlo, no. 87.

## 96 Part of a portrait of Anthon van Rappard

This upper part of a man's head is from a portrait of Anthon van Rappard, as the compilers of his *œuvre* catalogue established in 1974.<sup>1</sup> The correspondence with photographs of the artist is indeed very convincing (*fig. 96a*).

The dating of the work, however, is debatable. The portrait had not yet been identified in the 1970 edition of De la Faille, and it was suggested that it was executed in The Hague. Van Gogh and Van Rappard visited each other several times in that period, so Vincent would certainly have had the opportunity to make a drawing of his friend. A dating in that period, however, is untenable. The drawing is stylistically more advanced than the Hague sheets, and moreover paper with the watermark TS & Z was only used for drawings made in Nuenen.

In the catalogue of Van Rappard's *œuvre* it is assumed that the portrait was made in May 1884, during a visit to Van Gogh in Nuenen, and this was the line followed by Hulsker. It was recently suggested that the portrait was made as early as December 1883, when Vincent visited his friend in Utrecht.<sup>2</sup>

Although neither of those datings can be entirely ruled out, a third possibility is the most compelling. Van Rappard also visited his friend in Nuenen in October 1884, and could have posed for Vincent then. It is known from a letter written a little later that Van Gogh had begun taking an interest in portraiture at this time, mainly in order to earn money.<sup>3</sup> The two friends must have discussed all sorts of artistic questions during Van Rappard's visit, and may also have raised the subject of portraiture, prompting Van Gogh to ask his friend to sit for him.

It is a remarkable sheet in any event. The missing half, with the lower part of the head and presumably at least some of the neck, would certainly have been as large as the surviving fragment. It can be assumed that Van Gogh tore the paper across the middle, which would mean that the original sheet measured roughly 58 by 44.7 cm, which is the size of a full sheet of paper with this particular watermark (see *cats.* 180-192), making it the largest drawing of a head in Van Gogh's *œuvre*. That, too, indicates that it is not one of his many studies of heads, but was intended as a true portrait, making it the earliest likeness of a friend or relative in his

OCTOBER 1884

Pencil on wove paper  
29.0 × 44.7 cm  
Watermark: [TS] & Z (truncated  
by the lower edge)  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 162

Inv. d 115 V/1962  
F 1297r JH 491

PROVENANCE  
1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 105,  
no. 1297v; De la Faille 1970,  
p. 455; Amsterdam 1987, p. 404,  
no. 2.223; De la Faille 1992,  
vol. 1, p. 332, vol. 2, pl. CCXXVII;  
Heenk 1995, p. 102; Hulsker  
1996, pp. 114-15, 118.

EXHIBITION  
1905 Amsterdam, no. 77.

<sup>1</sup> Brouwer 1974, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Heenk 1995, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> See letter 472/386 of around mid-November 1884.

<sup>4</sup> Not even the likeness of Van Gogh's grandfather (cat. 18) qualifies as a truly independent portrait from life, for Van Gogh must have worked from a photograph.

<sup>5</sup> Heenk 1995, p. 102, identified only the 'Q' of the watermark. The 'Z', however, can also be made out below the black chalk of the man with a bundle of faggots on his back that is drawn on the reverse of the sheet. Heenk suspects that the portrait was made during Van Gogh's visit to Van Rappard in Utrecht, mentioned above, and suggests that he was given the sheet of paper by his friend. Since it is not known whether Van Rappard actually used this kind of paper, this hypothesis is little more than a shot in the dark.



96<sup>a</sup> Photograph of Anthon van Rappard, ca. 1880. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

œuvre. Even the Hague drawings of Sien Hoornik, with whom he was living at the time, are model studies, not portraits.<sup>4</sup>

It is conceivable that Van Gogh got the proportions of Van Rappard's face wrong as a result of working on such a large sheet of paper, and that that was why he destroyed the drawing. However, even if the resemblance was not entirely successful, it would have been odd for him to tear up the portrait of his friend and colleague for that reason. There is, though, another, more acceptable explanation. After he had made his lithograph of *The potato eaters* Van Gogh sent an impression to Van Rappard. The latter criticised it in such sarcastic tones in a letter of 24 May 1885 that Van Gogh was deeply hurt, and it led to the end of their friendship. Van Gogh would have attached little value to the portrait after that, and he actually used the reverse for various sketches (*cat.* 162). As will be explained in that entry, the drawing of two women reveals the method that Van Gogh was following in the spring and summer of 1885, and that too supports the theory that Van Rappard's likeness met its end some time between late May and early June 1885.

It is remarkable that Van Gogh chose wove paper with the watermark TS & Z for this portrait, for the only other times he used it was for the drawings of agricultural workers made in the summer of 1885.<sup>5</sup> He usually preferred paper with a slightly coarse texture for his pencil drawings, which is why he may have been slightly disappointed with the smooth wove paper on this occasion. He only took to it with enthusiasm for his later drawings in black chalk.



96 Part of a portrait of Anthon  
van Rappard

## 97-106 Studies of heads

<sup>1</sup> Kerssemakers 1912.

<sup>2</sup> Stokvis 1927, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> See the introduction to *Drawings 1*, p. 18, and cat. 46.

<sup>4</sup> A. Ysabeau, Lavater et Gall.

Physiognomonie et phrénologie rendues intelligibles pour tout le monde, Paris n.d.

‘One was amazed at the way all the hanging and standing room was crammed with paintings, drawings in watercolour and chalk, heads of men and women whose negroid turned-up noses, protruding cheekbones and large ears were heavily accentuated.’<sup>1</sup> This was how Anton Kerssemakers (1846-1924), a man from Eindhoven who received lessons in the basic principles of painting from Van Gogh, recalled the latter’s studio and the studies of peasant heads stored there. Willem van de Wakker (1859-1927), another of Van Gogh’s acquaintances and pupils from this period, told Benno Stokvis that Vincent did a lot of painting among the peasants, seeking out ‘the ugliest as his models’.<sup>2</sup>

Such remarks from the mouths of contemporaries, who can be assumed to have known the Nuenen peasants at first hand, provide yet further evidence that Van Gogh deliberately looked for striking physiognomies for his studies of peasant heads. He had clear ideas about country life. Peasants were coarse and uncultivated, but that was why they were so closely bound up with life and the cycle of nature, very much like animals. It was ‘a way of life quite different from that of civilised people like us’, and ‘in many respects so much better than the civilised world’, as Van Gogh put it when he was painting *The potato eaters* [501/404]. He saw an echo of his views in the work of Jean-François Millet (1814-1875), the French painter of peasant life, and in the biography by the latter’s exegete, Alfred Sensier (1815-1877). He also came across similar ideas in French literature.

That a person’s nature was expressed in his facial features was one of the key notions of the 19th-century theory of physiognomy, to which Van Gogh subscribed.<sup>3</sup> He had read a useful summary of the work of Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801) early on in his career,<sup>4</sup> and it was the latter’s teaching that prompted him to seek models for his peasant types who had ‘coarse, flat faces with low foreheads and thick lips, not sharp, but full and Millet-like’ [454/372]. Writings on physiognomy repeatedly referred to the similarity between facial expressions and the heads of specific animals. Van Gogh, too, saw parallels of this kind, but they contained no negative connotations as far as peasants were concerned. In his eyes this merely confirmed that, like animals, they were inextricably linked to nature.



Plenty of suitable models were prepared to pose for Van Gogh in Nuenen, and in order to make his intentions plain he exaggerated their features in his studies. The striking coarseness of the peasant heads struck a chord with his brother and some of the latter's friends in Paris, for in May 1885 Theo wrote to his mother about these heads. 'Some find great beauty in them, precisely because his characters are so genuine. For after all it is true to say, to some extent, that more peasant faces in Brabant display the harsh marks of toil and poverty than there are attractive faces.'<sup>5</sup>

Van Gogh himself referred to these studies as 'heads from the people', which shows that he regarded them as an extension of the series of illustrations in *The Graphic* called 'Heads of the people' [303/R22]. He explained to his brother that the heads were exercises to prepare him for more important work. He did not know precisely what form it would take, but he intended to extract the subject 'from the characters themselves' [479/391]. The outcome was to be *The potato eaters*. He was not so much interested in whether his studies of heads were 'mathematically correct', the main point was that they should convincingly capture 'the great expression [...]. In short, life itself' [504/408].

The project was to paint some 50 heads, but drawing was an integral part of it. Van Gogh said that he worked on his painted studies during the day, setting the evenings aside for drawing heads, undoubtedly because he would have been unable to judge colour correctly when working by lamplight. The drawings of heads fall broadly into two categories. Seventeen are autonomous studies, being neither preliminary studies for a canvas nor derived from another work.<sup>6</sup> The 11 works from this group in the Van Gogh Museum are discussed in this entry and under number 107.<sup>7</sup> Then there are 15 small sheets, mostly in pen and pencil, which are largely based on other works; the 11 in the Van Gogh Museum will be examined in the following entries (*cats.* 108-118).

The works discussed below all measure approximately 34 × 21 cm, with the exception of catalogue number 100, which has been trimmed all around. They are on identical laid paper with the watermarks VDL and a shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar and set within the inscription CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT. Van Gogh himself folded and tore the sheets in two or bought a sketchbook with folded sheets of paper.<sup>8</sup> Each drawing has one of these two watermarks.

As already noted, they are all autonomous works, not preliminary studies for paintings. The object was to record the peasants' features,

5 Letter dated 19 May 1885, inv. b 901 V/1962: 'Sommigen vinden er veel moois in, juist omdat zijn types zoo waar zijn, want het is toch een zekere waarheid dat men onder de boeren en boerinnen in Brabant er veel meer vind op wier gezicht de scherpe trekken van hard werken & ook wel van armoede zijn uitgedrukt, dan dat men er lieve gezichtjes onder vindt.'

6 The woman in F 1185 JH 595 also appears in a pen-and-ink drawing in the Kröller-Müller Museum, F 1178 JH 594. She is seen in profile in both, but there the similarities end. It is unlikely that the Amsterdam sheet was the model for the pen drawing.

7 The six works outside the Van Gogh Museum are F 1169 JH 631, F 1175 JH 645, F 1181 JH 679, F 1183 JH 596, F 1194 JH 588 and F 1194a JH 747. F 1194 JH 588 is the only watercolour. The style of F 1194a JH 747, which I only know from a photograph, looks highly suspect, and its dimensions – 23 × 17 cm – are very different from those of the other studies of heads. Further investigation will have to show whether it is a genuine Van Gogh. Heenk 1995, p. 139, also regards it as dubious, and draws attention to its lack of provenance, which only goes back to 1944.

8 See Heenk 1995, pp. 118-19.



97 Head of a young man



98 Head of a woman



99 Head of a woman



100 Head of a woman



101 Head of a young man



102 Head of a young man



103 Head of a young man with a pipe



104 Head of a woman

and although some are quite successful they were not intended for sale but were strictly for Van Gogh's own use.

It is impossible to identify the models. All that can be said is that one occasionally recognises the same person in different studies. The young man who posed for catalogue number 101, for instance, looks identical to the pipe-smoker of sheet 103. There is little variety in the clothing in the four drawings of men in the Van Gogh Museum. They are all wearing similar caps, and three have jackets. Only the boy in number 102 is in an apron.

The female heads present a more varied picture of the costumes worn in East Brabant. Some have a shawl (*cats.* 100, 104), the others a jacket, although it is difficult to judge in the case of number 98, for Van Gogh had trouble getting the torso right. They are also wearing three different types of cap (see *cats.* 108-118).

As noted, Van Gogh was aiming for expressiveness rather than 'mathematical' accuracy. This is very apparent in the black chalk studies, which are partly stumped (*cats.* 97-100). These are spontaneous works in which detail takes second place. The focus is on the facial expressions.

By contrast, a number of drawings show the artist taking considerable pains to be true to life. These are studies in pencil (*cats.* 101-104) which has been dulled and darkened with milk (white traces of this fixative can still be seen in *cat.* 102). Two further sheets that can be added to these four are of heads done entirely in pencil, with chalk being used solely for the deeper blacks in the clothing and background (*cats.* 105, 106). The faces of these peasants have generally been studied carefully, with quite close attention being paid to anatomical proportions and details. Catalogue number 105, in particular, is modelled in a realistic and, for Van Gogh, almost refined way. It is not surprising that the two groups are in different techniques, for pencil is ideal for cautiously exploring a subject before settling on the final form. Chalk is rather more forceful and definitive, and leaves the draughtsman less latitude for hesitation. In Van Gogh's studies of hands one finds a similar distinction between more precise pencil sketches and the more expressive sheets done in black chalk (*cats.* 119-132).

Although the heads are often dated to a particular month, careful examination shows that there is no basis for this in fact. As far as can be deduced from the letters, Van Gogh began painting and drawing heads in December 1884 and continued until May the following year. Similar concerted campaigns are quite common in his

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œuvre, and the resulting works, such as the weavers (*cats.* 78-86), cannot be dated precisely. The same applies to these studies of heads, which can only be given the broad dating of December 1884-May 1885.



106 Head of a woman



105 Head of a woman

97 Head of a young man

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

34.6 × 21.1 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 119

Inv. d 94 V/1962

F 1156v JH 582

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 76; Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 262; De la Faille 1970, p. 422; Amsterdam 1987, p. 408, no. 2.248; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 76, 295, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIII; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 132-33.

EXHIBITIONS

1954-55 Bern, no. 97; 1955 Antwerp, no. 100; 1956 Haarlem, no. 16.

98 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

34.6 × 20.9 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Inv. d 92 V/1969

F 1170 JH 630

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-69 V.W. van Gogh; 1969 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1969-73

on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 78, vol. 4, pl. LXXXVII; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 424; Amsterdam 1987, p. 407, no. 2.237; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 78, 299, vol. 2, pl. LXXXVII; Van Tilborgh 1993, p. 36; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 140-41.

EXHIBITION

1953 Zürich, no. 29.

99 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

33.8 × 20.7 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Inv. d 101 V/1962

F 1185 JH 595

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-71 with V.W. van Gogh, Laren; 1971-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 81; Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 429; Amsterdam 1987, p. 408, no. 2.244; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 81, 302, vol. 2, pl. CCXXXIII; Heenk 1995, pp. 118-19; Hulsker 1996, pp. 134-35.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

100 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

30.1 × 18.0 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Inv. d 102 V/1962

F 1186 JH 748

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 81; Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 430; Amsterdam 1987, p. 418, no. 2.302; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 128; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 81, 302, vol. 2, pl. CCXXXIII; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 164-65.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 269; 1910 Cologne & Frankfurt, no catalogue; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 119; 1923 Utrecht, no. 19; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 19; 1924 Amsterdam, no. 128; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 22a; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 153; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 37; 1955 Antwerp, no. 106.



## 101 Head of a young man

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Pencil on laid paper

34.7 × 21.6 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Inv. d 368 V/1962

F 1145 JH 581

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; after 1931-62 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. 3, p. 73, vol. 4, pl. LXXIX; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 340, 342, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 419; Amsterdam 1987, p. 408, no. 2.245; Otterlo 1990, p. 130; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 73, 292, vol. 2, pl. LXXIX; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 132-33.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 462; 1953 Zürich, no. 26; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 27.

## 102 Head of a young man

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Pencil on laid paper

Traces of fixative

34.6 × 21.5 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Inv. d 424 V/1962

F 1146 JH 580

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 74, vol. 4, pl. LXXIX; Meier-Graefe 1928, pl. 7; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 340, 342, 411; Van Gelder 1949, p. 9; De Gruyter 1961, p. 97, no. 17; De la Faille 1970, p. 419; Amsterdam 1987, p. 408, no. 2.246; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 158-62, no. 26; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 74, 292-93, vol. 2, pl. LXXIX; Van Tilborgh 1993, pp. 17-18; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, p. 132.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 331; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 62; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 33; 1928 Paris, no. 34; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 20; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 16; 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 11; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 122; 1947 Groningen, no. 28; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 32; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 203; 1955 Antwerp, no. 101; 1956 Haarlem, no. 15; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 21; 1957 Stockholm, no. 28; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 100; 1960 Enschede, no. 16; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 95; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 95; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 12;

1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 13; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 15; 1968 Liège, no. 15; 1971-72 Paris, no. 132; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 46; 1975 Malmö, no. 26; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 26; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 20; 1977 Paris, unnumbered; 1980-81

Amsterdam, no. 146; 1985-86 Tokyo & Nagoya, no. 17; 1986 Osaka, no. 24; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 26; 1988 Rome, no. 71; 1990 Otterlo, no. 99.

## 103 Head of a young man with a pipe

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Pencil on laid paper

33.3 × 20.7 cm

Traces of fixative

Watermark: VDL

Unsigned

Inv. d 89 V/1962

F 1147 JH 578

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 74, vol. 4, pl. LXXIX; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 340, 342, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 419; Amsterdam 1987, p. 408, no. 2.247; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 74, 293, vol. 2, pl. LXXIX; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, p. 132.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 315; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 97; 1923 Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1931

Amsterdam, no. 120; 1932 Manchester, no. 48; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 33; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 204; 1949 Hengelo, no catalogue; 1949 Gouda, no catalogue; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 28; 1955 Antwerp, no. 102; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 22.

## 104 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Pencil on laid paper

Traces of fixative

34.5 × 21.0 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Inv. d 8 V/1962

F 1224 JH 678

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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

Lettres 1911, pl. xx; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 89, vol. 4, pl. c1; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 278, 393, 412; De la Faille 1970, pp. 438-39; Amsterdam 1987, p. 413, no. 2.273; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 89, 312, vol. 2, pl. c1; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 150, 154.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 278; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 75; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 24; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 118; 1932 Manchester, no. 46; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 41; 1961-62

Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 98; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 98; 1964 Zundert, no. 9.

### 105 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Pencil and black chalk on laid paper

33.6 × 20.9 cm

Traces of fixative

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Inv. d 395 V/1962

F 1184 JH 597

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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

Lettres 1911, pl. xviii; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 81, vol. 4, pl. xc; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 342, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 429; Amsterdam 1987, p. 408, no. 2.243; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 159-62, no. 28; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 81, 302, vol. 2, pl. xc; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 134-35.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 332; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 67; 1923 Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1954-55 Bern, no. 103; 1955 Antwerp, no. 105; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 52; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 28; 1964 Zundert, no. 7; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 17; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 18; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa,

no. 17; 1968 Liège, no. 17; 1968-69 London, no. 33; 1969 Humlebaek, no. 10; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Columbus, no. 77; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 77; 1971-72 Paris, no. 135; 1977-78 The Hague, no catalogue; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 28; 1988 Rome, no. 72.

### 106 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Pencil and black chalk, grey wash, on laid paper

34.5 × 21.2 cm

Watermark: VDL

Unsigned

Inv. d 396 V/1962

F 1192 JH 544

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

#### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 82, vol. 4, pl. xc11; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 263, 341, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 431; Amsterdam 1987, p. 406, no. 2.232; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 82, 304, vol. 2, pl. xc11; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 126-27.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 273; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 36; 1956 Haarlem, no. 21; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 29.



107 Head of a woman

## 107 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on wove paper  
40.2 × 33.3 cm  
Unsigned

Inv. d 362 V/1962  
F 1182 JH 590

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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

Bremmer 1910, no. 82; De la  
Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 80, vol. 4,  
pl. xc; Meier-Graefe 1928, pl. 9;  
Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 342,  
411; De la Faille 1970, pp. 426,  
429; Amsterdam 1980-81, pp. 119,  
121, 126; Amsterdam 1987, p. 407,  
no. 2.242; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp.  
158-62, no. 27; Feilchenfeldt 1988,  
p. 128; Otterlo 1990, p. 130; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 80, 301-02,  
vol. 2, pl. xc; Van Tilborgh 1993,  
p. 16; Heenk 1995, p. 119;  
Hulsker 1996, p. 134.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 298; 1908  
Munich, no. 82; 1908 Dresden,  
no. 86; 1908 Frankfurt, no. 93;  
1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 89; 1920  
New York, no. 24; 1926 Munich,  
no. 2105; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna  
& Hannover, no. 21; 1928 Paris,  
no. 23; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 22;

In 1910, H.P. Bremmer (1871-1956) wrote an essay on this profile study of a peasant woman in his series *Moderne kunstwerken*. He dwelt at great length on the hideousness of this 'monstrous person', speaking of her 'dim-witted stare' and the 'heavy-boned coarseness in the structure of such a face', and to the 'brutishly heavy depiction' of the lower jaw and the sinewy neck, 'which is the product of hard drudgery and labour'.<sup>1</sup>

Van Gogh had great sympathy for the peasants of Nuenen, so he might have taken exception to Bremmer's harsh description, but it cannot be denied that the famous art educationist understood the artist's intentions perfectly. It is hard to think of another study of a peasant's head that expresses the harshness of rural life so forcefully. The woman is not



107<sup>a</sup> *Head of a woman* (F 1180 JH 545)  
December 1884-May 1885. Whereabouts  
unknown.

yet old, but her looks have been ravaged by sickness, malnutrition and back-breaking labour.

Like the preceding sheets (*cats.* 97-106), this is a study made for Van Gogh's personal use, but he clearly had greater aspirations for it. It is roughly twice as large as the other drawings of heads from the same period, with the exception of one sheet (*fig.* 107a).<sup>2</sup> Van Gogh used black chalk for the smaller sketches if he wanted to emphasise the expressiveness of a head, and pencil for more detailed studies. This black chalk drawing combines both aims very successfully. The focus is on the plasticity of the woman's head, but this in no way detracts from the expressiveness. As with the preceding studies of heads, there are no clues as to the precise date of this sheet. It is therefore assigned to December 1884-May 1885, although one suspects it was executed later rather than earlier in that period.

1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 18; 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 12; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 119; 1935-36 New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, San Francisco, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Chicago & Detroit, no. 98; 1937 Oslo, no. 24; 1938 Copenhagen, no. 8; 1947 Groningen, no. 29; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 36; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 119; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 74; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 205; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 35; 1953 Zundert, no. 44; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 85; 1953 Assen, no. 36; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 33; 1955 Antwerp, no. 104; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 51; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 92; 1956 Haarlem, no. 18; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 104; 1960 Enschede, no. 20; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 73; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 73; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 16; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 17; 1971-72 Paris, no. 134; 1974 Florence, no. 12; 1975 Malmö, no. 36; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 36; 1980-81 Amsterdam, no. 149; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 27; 1990 Otterlo, no. 97.

<sup>1</sup> Bremmer 1910, no. 82: '[...] monster-mensch, [...] botte staren, [...] knokelig zware ruwheid in den bouw van zoo'n gezicht, [...] dierlijk zwaar uitgebeelde [sonderkaak, en de pezige hals] die zóó geworden is onder hard zwoegen en werken.'

<sup>2</sup> I have not personally seen this drawing (Hulsker wrongly states that it belongs to the collection of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation in the Van Gogh Museum). According to De la Faille it measures 41.5 × 29 cm and is in black chalk. Judging by a photograph, Van Gogh may also have used pencil, and there is a wash in the background. The photograph also leads me to suspect that it is on laid paper, or at any rate on a sheet with a more pronounced surface structure than the drawing in the Van Gogh Museum.

## 108-118 Studies of heads

*1 On 5 April 1885 (letter 493/398), Van Gogh wrote: 'Here is yet another scratch of a man's head, and one of a still life with honesty.' The first of those two sketches is unidentifiable, but the second is F – JH 726, which is after a still life that Van Gogh later painted over. It measures 7.8 × 5.7 cm, so would easily have fitted into the envelopes Van Gogh used (most of the letters measure approximately 7 × 10 cm when folded). It seems fair to assume that the other 'scratch' was enclosed in the same envelope. The only one of the 15 drawings in this group that would have fitted into the envelope unfolded is cat. 116, and none of the others have fold-marks. The drawings in the group were therefore not enclosed in the letters, but accompanied them. The 'scratch' that Van Gogh refers to is accordingly omitted from the following discussion.*

*2 The following studies of heads that are not in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum may also have been sent to Theo: F 1148 JH 567; F 1174 JH 562; F 1193 JH 566; F 1193a JH 552. There is a sheet in the Kröller-Müller Museum, F 1178 JH 594, that displays some similarities to the pen drawings, but is so much larger at 17 × 13.5 cm that it probably cannot be counted as part of the group. The same applies to a small sketch in the Van Gogh Museum, F – JH 628, for on the back are fragments of Van Gogh's handwriting showing that it was once part of a letter.*

This series of 11 small pen-and-ink drawings belongs to a group of works that Van Gogh sent to his brother in the course of December 1884 and January 1885. In four letters written in those months he announced that 'scratches' or 'pen drawings' were on their way.<sup>1</sup> It is worth looking at those quotations in chronological order.

In mid-December he wrote a letter to Theo that opened with the words: 'Enclosed you will find a few scratches of the heads I am working on; I scratched them in a hurry and from memory' [477/389]. A few days later he announced: 'I'm working very hard on the series of heads from the people which I have set myself to make. I enclose a little scratch of the last one; in the evening I generally sketch them from memory on a little scrap of paper' [478/390]. In his next letter, which was written at the end of December, he wrote: 'In two or three days you will receive 12 little pen-and-ink drawings after studies of heads' [479/391], and finally, in January 1885: 'Enclosed are some more scratches of studies of heads' [482/392]. There are mentions of both drawn and painted heads in other letters, but none of them appears to refer to this kind of small drawing.

It seems from Van Gogh's words ('a few scratches', 'a little scratch', '12 pen-and-ink drawings', 'some scratches' and 'a scratch') that he sent around 20 of these small works to Theo. This figure should be treated with some caution, however, for the passage about the series of 12 is merely an announcement of an intention. There is nothing in the letters to confirm that they had actually been sent. Since only 15 drawings are known today which could have been in those consignments (and here, too, one has to be circumspect), some sheets must have been lost.<sup>2</sup>

Even though the works can be identified with some degree of certainty, it is almost impossible to say which ones were sent with which of the four letters. At most one can interpret the description 'pen-and-ink drawings' as meaning that the 12 sheets were more fully worked-up than the 'scratches'. That being said, it should not automatically be assumed that 'scratch' is meant disparagingly; Van Gogh uses the term 'krabbel' dozens of times in his letters, mainly in the sense of a small sketch.<sup>3</sup>

There are quite obvious differences in quality and status between the 15 studies of heads, although it is not easy to draw a hard-and-fast line



108 Head of a man



109 Head of a woman



110 Head of a woman

<sup>3</sup> Hulsker p. 136, and De la Faille under F 1149, list the works that must have been sent in the consignment, although without giving adequate reasons. Heenk 1995, pp. 117-18, states without further explanation that the five signed works in the Van Gogh Museum (cats. 108-112) are the only surviving works from the consignment.

<sup>4</sup> See note 2.

<sup>5</sup> For caps and other items of local costume see Van Breugel 1975, *passim*, and Den Bosch 1987-88, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> For the caps worn in Brabant see J. Spoorenberg, 'De geschiedenis van de pet. Een eerste verkenning', 't Gruun Buukske 14 (1985), pp. 20-23, 26-30, 54-60. Spoorenberg states that although Van Gogh's peasants are wearing different kinds of cap it is rarely possible to identify the type precisely.

<sup>7</sup> Gerard Rooijackers was very helpful in identifying the various caps, and he also pointed out the possibility that hair was sold to commercial travellers. For the latter see W.H.Th. Knippenberg, 'Haarteuten in Noord-Brabant en het kasboek van een Bergeijkse haarteut', in *idem* (ed.), *De Teuten. Buitengaanders van de Kempen (Kultuurhistorische verkenningen in de Kempen, vol. 5)*, pp. 166-84.

between the sheets that are just simple sketches and other, more ambitious works. Five of the heads, however (cats. 108-112) were obviously more important to Van Gogh, and stand apart from the rest. They are larger, measuring approximately 14 × 10 cm, and are very carefully executed in pen and ink over a preliminary drawing in pencil. All, moreover, are signed.

Although the study of a young peasant wearing a hat (cat. 113) is unsigned, it is close to the other five in size. It is trimmed on all sides, and would have been a little larger originally – certainly wider. The head is a little less detailed than the five signed drawings, but it is still quite a successful study and is roughly comparable to two slightly smaller pen drawings of the same woman (cats. 114, 115). Amid the pencilled scribbles on the verso of catalogue number 114 one can just make out a few figures, also in pencil (fig. 108a).

A slightly smaller work (cat. 116) that is closely related to the above three heads is included here with some reservations. Its size tends to suggest that it is a sketch that was enclosed with a letter rather than an autonomous drawing. However, this head on laid paper is more carefully detailed than a study that served as a letter sketch (fig. 108b). The latter sketch is on squared writing-paper, and was laid down with pencil and then rapidly worked up with the pen and brush in ink.<sup>4</sup> There is part of a border along the left edge of catalogue number 116. All the other edges appear to have been trimmed, so it can be assumed that the sheet was slightly larger originally, bringing it more into line with the series discussed here.

Two female heads (cats. 117, 118) with borders around them look rather slapdash, number 118, in particular, being little more than a rapid sketch. They have nevertheless been included here, for it is clear that Vincent not only valued the signed drawings, but regarded the larger group as a kind of series.

None of the sheets has been creased by folding, as is usually the case with sketches enclosed with letters. Since they would probably not have fitted in the envelope unfolded (the relevant letters were folded to a size of approximately 7 × 10 cm, so the covers would only have been marginally larger), Van Gogh must have sent them as separate flat or cylindrical packages.

It is not likely that all the twelve pen-and-ink drawings mentioned by Van Gogh were signed, for that would imply that seven have since been lost. Which belonged to which consignment is simply guesswork, so all eleven drawings are here given the fairly loose dating of December 1884-January 1885.



Van Gogh's interest in costumes and striking articles of clothing is also reflected in his studies of heads. For example, he quite obviously decided to show his models wearing different types of cap. Some of the women in his drawings from this period are wearing the fairly genteel gauze cap (*cats.* 104, 106, 111, 136, 137), a good illustration of which is found in a photograph of around 1930 (*fig.* 108c). Many are wearing a day-cap, a plainer variant that was worn while working (*cats.* 98, 99, 105, 107, 109, 112, 116-118, 138). The woman in catalogue number 110 has a morning-cap, which was worn in and around the house.<sup>5</sup>

Almost all the men in Van Gogh's drawings are wearing caps. These, too, had variations, although it is far more difficult to pinpoint them.<sup>6</sup> Only the young man in catalogue number 113 is wearing a hat, which was already rather old-fashioned at the time.

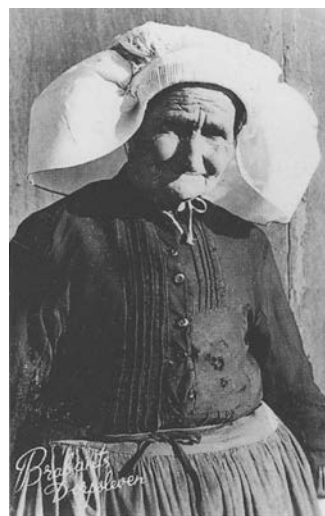
The woman who features in two sheets, against light and dark backgrounds (*cats.* 114, 115), is bareheaded. This is very unusual, for women never appeared in public like this, and wore a simple cap even at night. Van Gogh evidently wanted to depict something that was usually carefully concealed. Many women cut their hair short, leaving only a few locks on the forehead and back of the neck to protrude from under the cap. Hair was worn short mainly for reasons of hygiene (lice were a widespread problem), although there was also a financial consideration. Long hair



108<sup>a</sup> Verso of cat. 114.



108<sup>b</sup> Sketch accompanying an unidentified letter, 1884-85. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



108<sup>c</sup> Photograph of a woman with a net cap, ca. 1930. Nuenen, J.C. Jegerings photograph collection.



108<sup>d</sup> *Head of a woman* (F 65 JH 627), December 1884-January 1885. Whereabouts unknown.



111 Head of a woman



112 Head of a woman



113 Head of a man



114 Head of a woman



115 Head of a woman



116 Head of a woman



117 Head of a woman



118 Head of a woman



108<sup>e</sup> *Head of a woman* (F 156 JH 569),  
December 1884-January 1885.  
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

was bought up by commercial travellers called hawkers and sold on to wig-makers. It was a trade that had flourished since the 17th century and had given rise to a specialist group of traders known as hair hawkers.<sup>7</sup>

One can only guess at Vincent's intentions with these works, but he probably hoped that they would be considered attractive as magazine illustrations of the kind quite common at the time, such as Van Gogh's treasured 'heads of the people' in *The Graphic*. They were much the same size as the fairly small illustrations found in such periodicals. Vincent regularly reminded his brother of this potential source of income, and in October 1884 had urged him to get in touch with some editors. He also set his sights on this market with his lithograph of *The potato eaters* of April 1885.

There is no known model in oils for two of the drawings in this group, catalogue numbers 112 and 113. Number 109 is based on F 65 JH 627 (*fig. 108d*), as is the above-mentioned small letter sketch in the Van Gogh Museum (*fig. 108b*); number 111 reproduces F 156 JH 569 (*fig. 108e*), which in its turn was modelled on a sketchbook sheet (*fig. 108f*). Catalogue number 110 is based on F 154 JH 608 (*fig. 108g*), and drawing 108 on F 160a JH 563 (*fig. 108h*). Number 118 probably reproduces F 136a JH 548, while 117 is after F 47 JH 648. None of those paintings offers any pointers to a more precise dating. Quite the reverse, they owe their



108<sup>f</sup> Sheet from a sketchbook  
(JH 568), December 1884-January  
1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



108<sup>g</sup> *Head of a woman* (F 154  
JH 608), December 1884-January  
1885. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.



108<sup>h</sup> *Head of a man* (F 160a JH 563),  
1885. Private collection.

own dates to the existence of the sketches, and are also assigned to December 1884 or January 1885.

Apart from the degree of care lavished on them, there is little difference in technique between the drawings. Almost all of them were laid down in pencil and worked up with the pen and brush, and often given a wash as well. In some the pencil plays quite an important part, and here it should be borne in mind that the iron-gall ink would originally have been much darker than it is now, with the interplay of pencil and ink setting up a pattern of black and grey contrasts. An odd technique was applied in two of the drawings, catalogue numbers 108 and 109. Small stains or spots of ink were used to suggest the dim background. Vincent probably achieved this effect by dabbing vertically at the paper with a fairly coarse brush slightly moistened with ink. It is anyway not spattering, for the technique was applied in very limited areas. Van Gogh revised the profile of the woman in catalogue number 114. Raking light reveals his initial design beneath the dark passages. The drawings are all on laid paper, and a few remnants of the watermark suggest that it was of a crowned lion holding a scimitar and surrounded by the inscription *CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT*.

### 108 Head of a man

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pencil, pen, brush and coarse brush (?) in brown ink, brown wash, on laid paper  
14.8 × 10.4 cm, the framed scene  
14.0 × 10.4 cm

Watermark: remnant, possibly of a shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT (cropped at the lower left corner)

Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 274 V/1962

F 1198 JH 564

#### PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 83, vol. 4, pl. xciii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 341, 344, 411; Van Gelder 1949, p. 11; De la Faille 1970, pp. 432-33; Amsterdam 1987, p. 406, no. 2.236; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 83, 305, vol. 2, pl. xciii; Heenk 1995, p. 117; Hulsker 1996, pp. 129, 142.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 270; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 110; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 74; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 74; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 49; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 18; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 19.

### 109 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pencil, pen, brush and coarse brush (?) in brown ink, on laid paper  
15.4 × 10.2 cm, the framed scene  
14.3 × 10.2 cm

Watermark: part of a shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT (truncated along left edge)

Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 308 V/1972

F - JH -

#### PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-72 V.W. van Gogh; 1972 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1972-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

#### LITERATURE

Amsterdam 1987, p. 407, no. 2.241; Heenk 1995, pp. 117-18.

#### EXHIBITIONS

None.

### 110 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pencil, pen and brush in brown ink, brown wash, on laid paper  
14.2 × 10.4 cm, the framed scene  
13.2 × 10.0 cm

Watermark: illegible, truncated along left edge

Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 270 V/1962

F 1177 JH 609

#### PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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

Bremmer 1926, p. 81, ill. on cover; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 79, vol. 4, pl. lxxxix; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 341, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 426; Amsterdam 1987, p. 407, no. 2.240; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 79, 300-01, vol. 2, pl. lxxxix; Heenk 1995, p. 117; Hulsker 1996, pp. 136-37.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 269; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 47.

### 111 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pencil, pen and brush in brown ink, on laid paper  
15.8 × 10.4 cm  
Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 267 V/1971

F 1171 JH 570

#### PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-71 V.W. van Gogh; 1971 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1971-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

#### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 78, vol. 4, pl. lxxxvii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 261, 265, 341, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 425; Amsterdam 1987, p. 405, no. 2.228; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 78, 299, vol. 2, pl. lxxxvii; Heenk 1995, p. 117; Hulsker 1996, pp. 130-31, 142, 168.

#### EXHIBITION

1953 Zürich, no. 31.

### 112 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pencil, pen and brush in brown ink, on laid paper  
14.5 × 10.1 cm, the framed scene  
13.2 × 9.5 cm  
Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 273 V/1971

F 1173 JH 572

#### PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-71 V.W. van Gogh; 1971 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1971-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

#### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 78, vol. 4, pl. lxxxviii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 261, 341, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 426; Amsterdam 1987, p. 405, no. 2.230; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 78, 299-300, vol. 2, pl. lxxxviii; Heenk 1995, p. 117; Hulsker 1996, pp. 130-31.

#### EXHIBITION

1953 Zürich, no. 32.

### 113 Head of a man

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pencil, pen in brown ink, brown wash, on laid paper  
14.2 × 8.0 cm

Watermark: part of a shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT (cropped at the upper right corner)

Unsigned

Inv. d 275 V/1969  
F 1200 JH 560

PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91  
T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van  
Gogh-Bonger; 1925-69 V.W. van  
Gogh; 1969 Vincent van Gogh  
Foundation; 1969-73 on loan to  
the Stedelijk Museum,  
Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent  
loan to the Van Gogh Museum,  
Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 84,  
vol. 4, pl. xciv; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 265, 412; De la Faille  
1970, p. 433; Amsterdam 1987,  
p. 406, no. 2.235; De la Faille  
1992, vol. 1, pp. 84, 306, vol. 2,  
pl. xciv; Heenk 1995, p. 118;  
Hulsker 1996, pp. 128-29.

EXHIBITION

1953 Zürich, no. 35.

114 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pen and brush in brown ink,  
brown wash, on laid paper  
12.4 × 7.9 cm  
Unsigned

Verso: pencilled scribbles and  
two cursory figures

Inv. d 271 V/1969  
F 1150r JH 575

PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91  
T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van  
Gogh-Bonger; 1925-69 V.W. van  
Gogh; 1969 Vincent van Gogh  
Foundation; 1969-73 on loan to  
the Stedelijk Museum, Amster-  
dam; 1973 on permanent loan to  
the Van Gogh Museum,  
Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 74,  
vol. 4, pl. lxxx; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 261, 341, 411; De la

Faille 1970, p. 420; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 405, no. 2.226; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 74, 293,  
vol. 2, pl. lxxx; Heenk 1995, p.  
118; Hulsker 1996, pp. 131, 142.

EXHIBITION

1953 Zürich, no. 27.

115 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pen in brown ink on laid paper  
13.2 × 7.9 cm

Watermark: part of a shield with  
a crowned lion holding a scimi-  
tar, encircled by the words CON-  
CORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
(cropped at the upper left corner)  
Unsigned

Inv. d 310 V/1970  
F - JH 589

PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91  
T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van  
Gogh-Bonger; 1925-70 V.W. van  
Gogh; 1970 Vincent van Gogh  
Foundation; 1970-73 on loan to the  
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam;  
1973 on permanent loan to the  
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

Amsterdam 1987, p. 407, no.  
2.238; Heenk 1995, p. 118;  
Hulsker 1996, p. 134.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

116 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pencil, pen in brown ink, on laid  
paper  
8.2 × 6.7 cm  
Unsigned

Inv. d 268 V/1971  
F 1172 JH 571

PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91

T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van  
Gogh-Bonger; 1925-71 V.W. van  
Gogh; 1971 Vincent van Gogh  
Foundation; 1971-73 on loan to  
the Stedelijk Museum, Amster-  
dam; 1973 on permanent loan to  
the Van Gogh Museum,  
Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 78,  
vol. 4, pl. lxxxvii; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 261, 265, 341, 411; De  
la Faille 1970, p. 425; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 405, no. 2.229; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 78, 299,  
vol. 2, pl. lxxxvii; Heenk 1995,  
p. 118; Hulsker 1996, pp. 130-31.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

117 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pencil, pen in brown ink, on  
laid paper  
11.2 × 10.7 cm, the framed scene  
10.4 × 9.0 cm  
Unsigned

Inv. d 269 V/1962  
F 1149 JH 647

PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91  
T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van  
Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van  
Gogh; 1962 Vincent van Gogh  
Foundation; 1962-73 on loan to  
the Stedelijk Museum, Amster-  
dam; 1973 on permanent loan to  
the Van Gogh Museum,  
Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 74,  
vol. 4, pl. lxxx; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 261, 340-41, 411; De la  
Faille 1970, p. 420; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 406, no. 2.234; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 74, 293,  
vol. 2, pl. lxxx; Heenk 1995, p.  
118; Hulsker 1996, pp. 144, 150.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 453; 1914-  
15 Amsterdam, no. 73; 1923  
Utrecht, no. 13; 1923 Rotterdam,  
no. 13.

118 Head of a woman

DECEMBER 1884-JANUARY 1885

Pencil, pen in brown ink, on  
laid paper

14.4 × 10.0 cm, the framed  
scene 12.0 × 8.8 cm

Watermark: part of a shield with  
a crowned lion holding a scimi-  
tar, encircled by the words CON-  
CORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
(cropped at the lower left corner)  
Unsigned

Inv. d 272 V/1971  
F 1176 JH 549

PROVENANCE

December 1884-January 1885-91  
T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van  
Gogh-Bonger; 1925-71 V.W. van  
Gogh; 1971 Vincent van Gogh  
Foundation; 1971-73 on loan to  
the Stedelijk Museum,  
Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent  
loan to the Van Gogh Museum,  
Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 78,  
vol. 4, pl. lxxxviii;  
Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 261, 341,  
411; De la Faille 1970, p. 426;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 405, no.  
2.230; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
pp. 78, 299-300, vol. 2, pl.  
lxxxviii; Heenk 1995, p. 117;  
Hulsker 1996, pp. 130-31.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

## 119-132 Studies of hands

While living in The Hague, Van Gogh had made a point of ‘adding character and relief, especially to the heads, hands and feet’ of his figured works [324/270]. That was one of the reasons why he preferred working in a large format – it enabled him to observe the details of those parts of the body.<sup>1</sup> He also made separate studies of heads, but there are no known drawings of hands or feet from that period.

In December 1884, Van Gogh began making studies of heads in preparation for a composite figure piece, and he must have realised that hands would play a prominent part in a work of that kind. It is known that he was studying them from a passing reference in a letter of January 1885 ‘I am working all the time on various heads and the like – hands’ [483/393]. After he moved to Nuenen, Van Gogh bought John Marshall’s *Anatomy for Artists* in order to learn more about the structure of the body. It was an expensive book, as he mentioned in a letter of October 1884,<sup>2</sup> but it helped him a great deal in his study of the human figure and its various parts, and gave him a better insight into the musculature and the skeletal structure of the members, such as the hand. It is only in April of that year, when he was laying the groundwork for that planned figure piece, *The potato eaters* (fig. 119a), that it really becomes clear that individual studies of hands were an integral part of his preparations. ‘Though the ultimate picture will have been painted in a relatively short time, and for the greater part from memory, it has taken a whole winter of painting studies of heads and hands’ [501/404].

Only one such painted study of hands is now known (fig. 119b), but many more drawings have survived. There are 22 sheets which can be regarded as studies of hands from the Nuenen period. All of them are in the Van Gogh Museum, and they have been divided into three groups for the purposes of this catalogue.

Four works (cats. 141-143, 145) are directly related to *The potato eaters*, and will be discussed in a separate entry along with other studies for the painting. A hand holding a stick (cat. 139) is also discussed there, because there is a preliminary study for *The potato eaters* on the same sheet. Three drawings, numbers 133-135, include part of the figure as well as the hands, and are treated as a distinct group. The 14 remaining studies are dealt with in this entry.

<sup>1</sup> Letter 350/288.

<sup>2</sup> John Marshall, *Anatomy for Artists*, London 1883. See letter 466/381; Van Gogh had borrowed a French edition of the book at the very start of his career; see the introduction to *Drawings 1*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> De la Faille 1928, nos. 1160r and 1160v. Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 261, 268, 390, dates them May 1885.

<sup>4</sup> Heenk 1995, p. 123, also retains the dating to the Nuenen period.



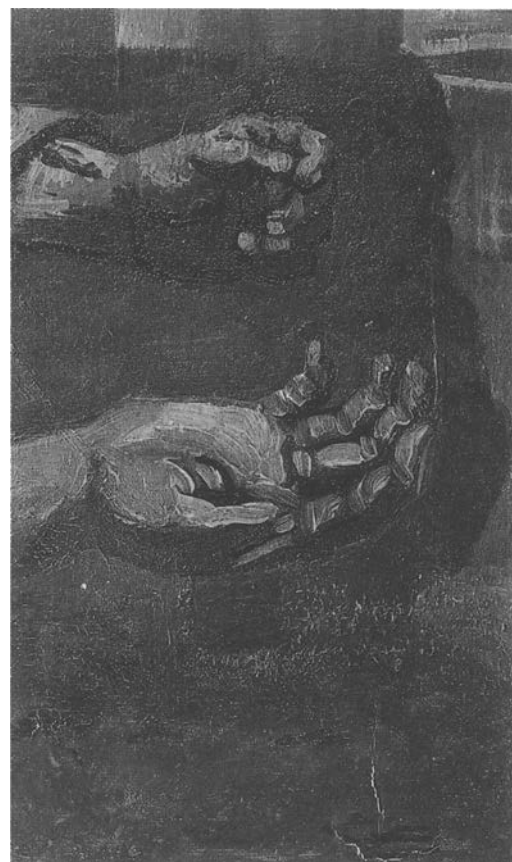
Most of them do not show hands engaged in any specific action.

Sometimes they hold a stick (*cats.* 122, 129) or an object which is difficult to make out (*cats.* 121, 130), but even then the action is anything but clear-cut. Only in number 119 is it obvious that two of the three hands are holding knives.

In addition to two hands, catalogue number 123 has a sketch of a woman's head. Numbers 126 and 127 are slightly different from the others in that they also show the model's entire forearm and part of the upper arm. In the first, 1928 edition of his oeuvre catalogue, De la Faille dated these two drawings to January 1885.<sup>3</sup> In 1970, the editors of the revised edition of his work were misled by their anomalous nature and moved them forward to Van Gogh's Antwerp period. They probably thought that they were academy studies, and assumed that Van Gogh had drawn them while living in Antwerp from the end of November 1885 to the end of February 1886. Hulsker later adopted that dating as well. It now turns out that De la Faille had been right all along. The sketches belong with the hands that Van Gogh drew between December 1884 and May 1885, in the period when he was also making studies of heads, and are an integral part of that group. They are very similar in style, and are on laid paper with identical watermarks and similar dimensions to the other sheets in the group. As far as is known, Van Gogh did not use that particular kind of laid paper while in Antwerp.<sup>4</sup>



119<sup>a</sup> *The potato eaters* (F 82 JH 764),  
1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh  
Museum.



119<sup>b</sup> *Study of hands* (F 66 JH 743),  
1885. Whereabouts unknown.



119 Three hands, two with knives



120 Four hands



121 Three hands



122 Hands with a stick



123 Two hands and a woman's head



124 Two hands

<sup>5</sup> Griselda Pollock was the first to make this distinction, in *Amsterdam 1980-81*, p. 207, but did not point out that the two groups were also done in different media. On that see Sjraar van Heugten, 'Detail studies,' in Van Tilborgh 1993, pp. 105-06.

Like the studies of heads, the sketches of hands fall into two groups. Some concentrate on anatomical accuracy and were done in pencil (*cats.* 128-132), while the others (*cats.* 119-127) are expressive works in black chalk (see further *cats.* 97-106).<sup>5</sup> Van Gogh also used the pen in two sheets: numbers 132 and 120, which are in pencil and chalk respectively. The ink has eaten into the paper in catalogue number 132, with the result that the outlines of the hands are visible on the other side of the sheet, number 131.

In catalogue number 120 Van Gogh used pen and ink not only to accentuate the hands but also to draw two small and very faithful copies of the larger chalk studies to the left of them.

Another feature that these drawings share with the studies of heads is that almost all are on half a sheet of laid paper with the watermarks VDL and a shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar and circumscribed by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT. Each sheet has one of these two watermarks (see *cats.* 97-106). Catalogue number 122 is on a full sheet, and has both.

119 Three hands, two  
with knives

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.1 × 34.6 cm

Watermark: shield with a  
crowned lion holding a scimitar,  
encircled by the words CONCOR-  
DIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 97

Inv. d 94 V/1962

F 1156r JH 613

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 76,  
vol. 4, pl. LXXXI; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 262, 340, 411; De la  
Faille 1970, p. 422; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 409, no. 2.253; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 76, 295,  
vol. 2, pl. LXXXI; Heenk 1995, p.  
120; Hulsker 1996, pp. 138-39.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

120 Four hands

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk, pen in brown ink  
(originally black), on laid paper  
20.8 × 34.6 cm

Watermark: VDL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 148

Inv. d 95 V/1962

F 1158r JH 626

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62

V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent van  
Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on loan  
to the Stedelijk Museum, Amster-  
dam; 1973 on permanent loan to  
the Van Gogh Museum, Amster-  
dam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 76,  
vol. 4, pl. LXXXII; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 262, 340, 411; De la  
Faille 1970, p. 422; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 411, no. 2.261; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 76, 295,  
vol. 2, pl. LXXXII; Heenk 1995, p.  
120; Hulsker 1996, pp. 140-41.

EXHIBITIONS

1947 Rotterdam, no. 35; 1956  
Haarlem, no. 17.

121 Three hands

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

34.2 × 21.3 cm

Watermark: shield with a  
crowned lion holding a scimitar,  
encircled by the words CONCOR-  
DIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 133

Inv. d 100 V/1962

F 1167v JH 623

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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 1970, p. 424;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 411, no.  
2.264; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
p. 298, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIII; Heenk  
1995, p. 120; Hulsker 1996,  
p. 140.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

122 Hands with a stick

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

34.7 × 42.4 cm

Watermark: shield with a  
crowned lion holding a scimitar,  
encircled by the words CONCOR-  
DIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 139

Inv. d 390 V/1962

F 1168v JH 664

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 78,  
vol. 4, pl. LXXXVI; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 268, 390; De la Faille  
1970, pp. 424-25; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 414, no. 2.283; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 78, 298-  
99, vol. 2, pl. LXXXVI; Heenk  
1995, pp. 119, 121, 123; Hulsker  
1996, pp. 146-47.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

123 Two hands and a  
woman's head

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

34.5 × 21.1 cm

Watermark: shield with a  
crowned lion holding a scimitar,  
encircled by the words CONCOR-  
DIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 156

Inv. d 90 V/1962

F 1152r JH 749

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 75,  
no. 1152 verso; De la Faille  
1970, pp. 420-21; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 415, no. 2.286; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 75, 294,  
vol. 2, pl. CCXXIII; Heenk 1995,  
p. 123; Hulsker 1996, pp. 164-65.

EXHIBITIONS

1923 Utrecht, no. 9; 1923  
Rotterdam, no. 9; 1929  
Amsterdam, no. 21; 1929-30  
Rotterdam, no. 17; 1931  
Amsterdam, no. 126; 1945  
Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1953-  
54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 29;  
1965 Nuenen, unnumbered.

124 Two hands

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.1 × 34.6 cm

Watermark: VDL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 155

Inv. d 78 V/1962

F 1153r JH 741

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 on loan  
to the Stedelijk Museum,  
Amsterdam; 1962 Vincent van  
Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on  
loan to the Stedelijk Museum,  
Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent



125 Two hands and two arms



126 Arm



127 Arm



128 Two hands



129 Two hands with a stick



130 Two hands



131 Three hands



132 Three hands

loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

#### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 75, vol. 4, pl. LXXXI; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 267, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 421; Amsterdam 1980-81, p. 126; Amsterdam 1987, p. 415, no. 2.287; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 75, 294, vol. 2, pl. LXXXI; Heenk 1995, p. 123; Hulsker 1996, pp. 163, 166.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1923 Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 127; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 34; 1954-55 Bern, no. 95; 1955 Antwerp, no. 107; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 23; 1957 Stockholm, no. 29.

### 125 Two hands and two arms

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.3 × 34.5 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Inv. d 392 V/1962

F 1155 JH 744

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 75, vol. 4, pl. LXXXI; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 266, 411; De la Faille 1970, pp. 420-21; Amsterdam 1987, p. 416, no. 2.290; Amsterdam 1991, p. 159; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 75, 295, vol. 2, pl. LXXXI; Heenk 1995, p. 123; Hulsker 1996, pp. 163, 166.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 34; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 30; 1954-55 Bern, no. 96; 1955 Antwerp, no. 108; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 53; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 24; 1957 Stockholm, no. 30; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 101; 1960 Enschede, no. 17; 1991 Amsterdam, no. 36.

### 126 Arm

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

20.8 × 34.4 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 127

Inv. d 56 V/1962

F 1160r JH 1005

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 76, vol. 4, pl. LXXXIV; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 268, 412; De la Faille 1970, pp. 474-75; Amsterdam 1987, p. 429, no. 2.368; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 76, 296, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIV; Heenk 1995, pp. 123, 270; Hulsker 1996, p. 218.

#### EXHIBITION

1931 Amsterdam, no. 124.

### 127 Arm

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

20.8 × 34.4 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 126

Inv. d 56 V/1962

F 1160v JH 1004

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 76, vol. 4, pl. LXXXIV; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 261, 268, 390; De la Faille 1970, p. 475; Amsterdam 1987, p. 429, no. 2.369; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 76, 296, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIV; Heenk 1995, pp. 123, 270; Hulsker 1996, p. 218.

#### EXHIBITIONS

None.

### 128 Two hands

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Pencil on laid paper

34.5 × 21.2 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Inv. d 91 V/1962

F 1154 JH 612

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 75, vol. 4, pl. LXXXI; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 267, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 421; Amsterdam 1980-81, p. 126; Amsterdam 1987, p. 409, no. 2.252; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 75, 294-95, vol. 2, pl. LXXXI; Heenk 1995, p. 120; Hulsker 1996, p. 138.

#### EXHIBITIONS

None.

### 129 Two hands with a stick

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Pencil on laid paper

21.3 × 34.5 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 141

Inv. d 96 V/1962

F 1159r JH 614

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 76, vol. 4, pl. LXXXII; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 267, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 422; Amsterdam 1987, p. 411, no. 2.262; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 76, 296, vol. 2,



pl. LXXXII; Heenk 1995, p. 120;  
Hulsker 1996, pp. 138-39.

EXHIBITIONS  
None.

### 130 Two hands

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Pencil on laid paper  
35.0 × 20.9 cm  
Watermark: VDL  
Unsigned

Inv. d 97 V/1962  
F 1162 JH 622

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 77,  
vol. 4, pl. LXXXIII; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 267, 411; De la Faille  
1970, p. 423; Amsterdam 1987,  
p. 411, no. 2.266; De la Faille  
1992, vol. 1, pp. 77, 297, vol. 2,  
pl. LXXXIII; Heenk 1995, p. 120;  
Hulsker 1996, p. 140.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1954-55 Bern, no. 99; 1955  
Antwerp, no. 110.

### 131 Three hands

December 1884-May 1885

Pencil on laid paper  
21.1 × 34.5 cm  
Watermark: shield with a  
crowned lion holding a scimitar,  
encircled by the words CONCOR-  
DIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 132

Inv. d 98 V/1962  
F 1164r JH 615

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 77,  
vol. 4, pl. LXXXII; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 262, 340, 411; De la  
Faille 1970, p. 423; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 412, no. 2.267; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 77, 297,  
vol. 2, pl. LXXXII; Heenk 1995,  
p. 120; Hulsker 1996, pp. 138-39.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1927-28 Berlin, Vienna &  
Hannover, no. 36; 1928 Paris,  
no. 37; 1954-55 Bern, no. 100;  
1955 Antwerp, no. 111.

### 132 Three hands

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Pencil, pen in brown ink (origi-  
nally black), on laid paper  
21.1 × 34.5 cm  
Watermark: shield with a  
crowned lion holding a scimitar,  
encircled by the words CONCOR-  
DIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 131

Inv. d 98 V/1962  
F 1164v JH 611

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 77,

vol. 4, pl. LXXXVI; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 262, 340; De la Faille  
1970, p. 423; Amsterdam 1987,  
p. 412, no. 2.268; De la Faille  
1992, vol. 1, pp. 77, 297, vol. 2,  
pl. LXXXIV; Heenk 1995, p. 120;  
Hulsker 1996, p. 138.

#### EXHIBITIONS

None.

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## 133-135 Studies of hands

Like the preceding sheets, these three studies of hands are datable December 1884-May 1885, but they differ in that the hands are not isolated but are part of a figure.

All three are virtually the same size. Two (*cats.* 133, 134) were probably drawn in one sitting with the model. In one the hands are resting in her lap, and in the other they are holding a small bowl of the kind seen in *The potato eaters* (*fig.* 119a).

The third study in which the hands are attached to a body shows a woman holding a small shovel of the kind used to remove cinders from the hearth. Van Gogh was interested in the hands, not the shovel, and did not depict it as far as the leading edge of the blade, with the result that it looks a little like a two-pronged fork.

These black chalk drawings are also on laid paper with the VDL watermark, or with a shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar and surrounded by the words *CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT* (cf. *cats.* 97-106, 119-132).



133 Lap with hands



134 Lap with hands and a bowl

### 133 Lap with hands

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

Traces of a dried liquid

21.3 × 34.2 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 121

Inv. d 100 V/1962

F 1167r JH 625

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 77, vol. 4, pl. LXXXV; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 268, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 424; Amsterdam 1987, p. 411, no. 2.263; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 77, 298, vol. 2, pl. LXXXV; Heenk 1995, p. 120; Hulsker 1996, pp. 140-41.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1923 Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1954-55 Bern, no. 101; 1955 Antwerp, no. 113; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 55; 1958 Bergen, no. 56; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 16; 1988 Rome, no. 73.

### 134 Lap with hands and a bowl

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

20.7 × 34.5 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Inv. d 93 V/1982

F 1165 JH 624

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1962-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; 1982 Vincent van Gogh Foundation.

#### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 77, vol. 4, pl. LXXXV; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 267, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 423; Amsterdam 1987, p. 412, no. 2.269; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 128; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 77, 298, vol. 2, pl. LXXXV; Heenk 1995, pp. 120-21; Hulsker 1996, p. 140.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1910 Berlin, no. 73?; 1955 Antwerp, no. 114; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 54; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 69; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 90; 1975 Malmö, no. 29; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 29.

### 135 Two hands with a hearth shovel

DECEMBER 1884-MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.2 × 34.6 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Inv. d 99 V/1962

F 1166 JH 751

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 77, vol. 4, pl. LXXXV; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 267, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 424; Amsterdam 1987, p. 416, no. 2.294; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 77, 298, vol. 2, pl. LXXXV; Heenk 1995, p. 123; Hulsker 1996, pp. 164-65.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1932 Manchester, no. 53; 1955 Antwerp, no. 112.



135 Two hands with a hearth shovel

## 136-138 Half-length female figures

<sup>1</sup> The painting reproduced here measures 36 × 27 cm; the other one is F 143 JH 546, measuring 36 × 26 cm.

<sup>2</sup> Van Gogh identified the young woman in *The potato eaters* in letters 532/423 and 576/W1. See also Van Tilborgh 1993, p. 21, note 47.



136<sup>a</sup> *Seated woman* (F 144a JH 704), 1885. 's-Hertogenbosch, Noordbrabants Museum (on loan from the Netherlands Office for Fine Arts, The Hague).

Three studies of Nuenen women (all now in the Van Gogh Museum) follow on directly from the groups of studies of heads and hands discussed earlier (*cats.* 97-107, 119-135). The seated women are shown from head to lap, and are in repose, with their hands in their lap. These are presumably studies in which Van Gogh set out to combine his recent exercises in depicting individual parts of the human anatomy. Two paintings, barely larger than the drawings, seem to have been made for the same purpose (*fig.* 136a).<sup>1</sup>

The drawings must have been executed some time after Van Gogh began on his studies of hands and heads (see *cats.* 97-106, 119-135), and for that reason are given the slightly narrower dating of February-May 1885. His interest in the coarse physiognomy of the Brabant women is very apparent. He did not always succeed in getting the relative proportions of the various parts of the body right, although that does not really detract from the expressive force of these studies. The woman's head in catalogue number 136, for instance, is too small in relation to her body, and her hands are huge. The right hand, which is even larger than the left one, also emerges from the sleeve at an impossible angle.

This woman with the labourer's hands is probably Gordina (Stien) de Groot (1855-1927), a young woman whom Van Gogh portrayed on several occasions, and included on the left in *The potato eaters* (*fig.* 119a). The older peasant woman seen from the side (*cat.* 137) also features in the painting as the figure on the right pouring coffee. If the people in the painting are indeed members of the De Groot family, as is generally assumed, then this second woman would be Stien's mother, Cornelia de Groot-Van Rooy (1825-1891). In fact, though, the only one of the five peasants around the table who has been firmly identified is Stien.<sup>2</sup>

The three drawings are in pencil, with some stumping. Catalogue numbers 136 and 137 were worked up with the pen in black, iron-gall ink that has faded to brown.



136 Seated woman



137 Seated woman





138 Seated woman

### 136 Seated woman

FEBRUARY-MAY 1885

Pencil, pen in brown ink, on laid paper

31.7 × 20.7 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Inv. d 429 V/1962

F 1189 JH 677

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 82, vol. 4, pl. xci; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 430; Amsterdam 1987, p. 412, no. 2.271; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 82, 303, vol. 2, pl. xci; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 150, 154.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 39; 1928 Paris, no. 41; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 23; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 123; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 38; 1948 Hilversum, no catalogue; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 201; 1949 Hengelo, no catalogue; 1949 Gouda, no catalogue; 1953 Zürich, no. 34; 1956 Haarlem, no. 20; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 71; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 92; 1975 Malmö, no. 25; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 25; 1977 Paris, unnumbered.

### 137 Seated woman

FEBRUARY-MAY 1885

Pencil, pen in brown ink, on laid paper

34.5 × 21.1 cm

Watermark: VDL

Unsigned

Inv. d 397 V/1962

F 1190 JH 676

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 82, vol. 4, pl. xci; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 264, 411; De la Faille 1970, pp. 430-31; Amsterdam 1987, p. 412, no. 2.272; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 164-65, no. 34; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 82, 303, vol. 2, pl. xci; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 150, 154, 171.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 454; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 96; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 121; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 35; 1957 Stockholm, no. 27; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 22; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 34.

### 138 Seated woman

FEBRUARY-MAY 1885

Pencil on laid paper

34.6 × 21.1 cm

Watermark: VDL

Unsigned

Inv. d 2 V/1962

F 1191 JH 547

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 82, vol. 4, pl. xcii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 263, 411; De la Faille 1970, pp. 430-31; Amsterdam 1987, p. 406, no. 2.231; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 82, 303, vol. 2, pl. xcii; Heenk 1995, p. 119; Hulsker 1996, pp. 126-27.

#### EXHIBITIONS

None.

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## 139, 140 Composition sketches for *The potato eaters*

Van Gogh spent a long time practising for a large figure painting by drawing heads and hands (*cats.* 97-106, 119-132). At the end of March and beginning of April 1885, prior to the first version of *The potato eaters*, which was painted between 6 and 13 April, he also made studies of details for his future composition (*cats.* 141-148). There are dozens of such sheets, but oddly enough only these two drawings, which also preceded that picture, can be regarded as composition studies.

<sup>1</sup> See letter 493/398.

Both are roughly the same size, and are in black chalk on identical sheets of laid paper. Catalogue number 139 occupies the lower half of a full sheet of paper with the watermark VDL and a shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar within the inscription CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT. Number 140 is on half a sheet with the mark VDL.

At first Van Gogh could not make up his mind whether to set the scene in the daytime or at night, by the light of a lamp.<sup>1</sup> The drawings, which explore both alternatives, illustrate his quandary.

In both painted versions of *The potato eaters* the composition contains five figures, with the girl in the foreground concealing part of the dish of steaming potatoes. These drawings show that Van Gogh had initially planned a more open composition, with a clearer view of the table, around which there are four people, not five. As far as can be made out there is little variety in the figures' actions, and in this the drawings differ from the painting (*fig.* 119a). All seem to be helping themselves from the dish in front of them.



139 Hand with a stick, and four  
people sharing a meal



140 Four people sharing a meal

139 Hand with a stick, and  
four people sharing a  
meal

LATE MARCH-EARLY APRIL 1885  
Black chalk on laid paper  
42.4 × 34.7 cm  
Watermarks: shield with a  
crowned lion holding a scimitar,  
encircled by the words *CONCORDIA  
RES PARVAE CRESCUNT*, and VDL  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 122

Inv. d 390 V/1962  
F 1168r JH 666

PROVENANCE  
1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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  
Lettres 1911, pl. xxvi; De la Faille  
1928, vol. 3, p. 78, vol. 4, pl. lxxxv,  
lxxxvi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp.  
268, 390, 411; Van Gelder 1949,  
pp. 9, 14; De la Faille 1970, pp.  
424-25; Chetham 1976, p. 32;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 415, no.  
2.285; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
pp. 78, 298, vol. 2, pl. lxxxvi; Van  
Tilborgh 1993, pp. 11, 19, 99, 101,  
no. 7; Heenk 1995, pp. 119, 121,  
123; Hulsker 1996, pp. 148, 152.

EXHIBITIONS  
1948-49 The Hague, no. 206;  
1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 32;  
1954-55 Bern, no. 102; 1955  
Antwerp, no. 97; 1957 Nijmegen,  
no. 27; 1957 Stockholm, no. 32;  
1962 Recklinghausen, no. 22d;  
1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1966  
Paris & Albi, no. 15; 1971-72 Paris,  
no. 133; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 47;  
1975 Malmö, no. 33; 1976  
Stockholm & Oslo, no. 33; 1988  
Rome, no. 75; 1993 Amsterdam,  
no. 7.

140 Four people sharing a  
meal

LATE MARCH-EARLY APRIL 1885  
Black chalk on laid paper  
20.9 × 34.6 cm  
Watermark: VDL  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 169

Inv. d 388 V/1962  
F 1227r JH 672

PROVENANCE  
1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 90,  
vol. 4, pl. xcix; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 266, 412; Van Gelder  
1949, p. 9; De la Faille 1970, p.  
439; Chetham 1976, p. 32;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 413, no.  
2.275; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129;  
De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 90,  
312, vol. 2, pl. xcix; Van Tilborgh  
1993, pp. 11, 19, 99, 101, no. 8;  
Heenk 1995, p. 121; Hulsker  
1996, pp. 148-49, 152.

EXHIBITIONS  
1905 Amsterdam, no. 459; 1909-  
10 Berlin, no catalogue; 1914-15  
Amsterdam, no. 50; 1923 Utrecht,  
no. 15; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 15;  
1927-28 Berlin, Vienna &  
Hannover, no. 30; 1928 Paris, no.  
32; 1947-48 Alkmaar, no. 41; 1953  
Zürich, no. 40; 1953 The Hague,  
no. 20; 1953 Otterlo &  
Amsterdam, no. 37; 1953-54 Saint  
Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no.  
40; 1954-55 Bern, no. 108; 1955  
Antwerp, no. 96; 1962  
Recklinghausen, no. 22b; 1965  
Marseilles, no. 4; 1993  
Amsterdam, no. 8.

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## 141-148 Studies for *The potato eaters*

The heads and hands that Van Gogh drew and painted between December 1884 and May 1885 were exercises in depicting parts of the body. Few of them can be regarded as true preparations for more ambitious works. They are studies, in other words, not preliminary studies. There are four drawings, however, which are quite clearly related to *The potato eaters* (cats. 142, 143, 145, 146). They are discussed here along with four other preparatory studies of details in that early masterpiece (cats. 141, 144, 147, 148). The detail studies and composition sketches were made at the end of March and beginning of April 1885 (see cats. 139, 140).

Catalogue number 141 shows four hands, of which the two at the bottom have nothing to do with the painting. The upper two are each holding a bowl, and although they do not precisely match the one in *The potato eaters*, they were very probably trial runs for that part of the scene. That is definitely the case with number 142, for there is a very close match between this sketch and the hand of the man holding out his coffee bowl on the right of the painting. There is no cat in *The potato eaters*, but the one in the study sheet may indicate that Van Gogh was toying with the idea of including some such domestic touch in the final composition.

Sheet 143 contains two hands holding forks seen from the front. Both were evidently preparatory studies for the front view of the hand with which Gordina de Groot, the young woman in a white cap on the left, is prodding a fork into the dish of potatoes. The third hand in this sheet cannot be identified convincingly, but it may have been a study for the left hand resting in the lap of the woman holding the pot. Her other hand, with which she is pouring coffee (or possibly chicory), is found in catalogue number 145, together with the knob at the top of the backs of the chairs at left and right in the picture, which was drawn at a 90-degree angle to the hand. To the left of the knob, lying on a table-top or chest, Van Gogh sketched something that looks like a hunk of heavy bread, which does not feature in *The potato eaters*.

In the background of the painting are the door, window and rafters of the peasant cottage. Van Gogh prepared for these elements with a rapid but reasonably detailed sketch (cat. 144). The door has a simple bolt that was already rather old-fashioned at the time, and several panes of glass at

<sup>1</sup> See cats. 151, 154 and 203, where the mirror is also to the left of the window, together with the comb-box in the case of cat. 203.

<sup>2</sup> Worn-out clogs were not thrown away but put to a new use as receptacles. See also cat. 81, where a clog has been attached to the loom.

<sup>3</sup> It reads: 'Maandag as'; and below that "' 8 daag Louw' ('Next Monday' and 'Louw " week', with the double quotation mark serving to repeat the word Monday). The latter is most likely a reference to De Louw, an inhabitant of Nuenen and probably a peasant, whom Van Gogh mentions in a passage that has always wrongly been regarded as part of letter 356/R37. See Vienna 1996, p. 162 and note 3.

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the top, some of them broken. To the right, between the door and the window, are the mirror and the comb-box that were usually hung up here in peasant cottages.<sup>1</sup> The mirror was generally placed very high up on the wall and angled forward to provide a full-length reflection. Below the window is a table, which was its normal position, as shown by several other drawings (*cats.* 151-154, 203).

Van Gogh made a few other sketches on this sheet after rotating it 90 degrees anticlockwise. The clearest is a small, framed drawing of the composition of *The potato eaters*. The function of this little sketch is unclear, but it may have been dashed off to give someone an idea of the canvas Van Gogh was working on. To the right is an impression of the large chimney-breast and the open hearth with a kettle hanging in it which was a central feature of peasants' cottages (see *cats.* 150, 204, 205). Below this Van Gogh made a very rough sketch of the torso and part of the head of what appears to be a seated woman with her hands in her lap.

Catalogue number 146 contains studies of the pendulum clock and the clog with cutlery seen at top left and right in the painting.<sup>2</sup> There is also a drawing of a spoon-rack, which was not incorporated in *The potato eaters*.

Other elements which did not make it into the final composition are the kettle and the plate with two forks seen in number 147. Van Gogh may have drawn them at an early stage, before he had finalised all the details of the painting.

On the verso of one of the studies of hands (*cat.* 120) is a very simple sketch of an oil lamp in front of a window (*cat.* 148). Although the situation is different in the painting, where the lamp is to the left of the window, this may be a hasty sketch that Van Gogh made inside a cottage with a view to his large painting. On the right of the sheet he jotted down a memo for an appointment.<sup>3</sup>

All of these drawings are on laid paper with the watermarks VDL or a shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT (cf. *cats.* 97-139).





141 Four hands, two holding bowls



142 Hand with a bowl, and a cat



143 Three hands, two holding forks



144 Studies of the interior of a cottage, and a sketch of *The potato eaters*



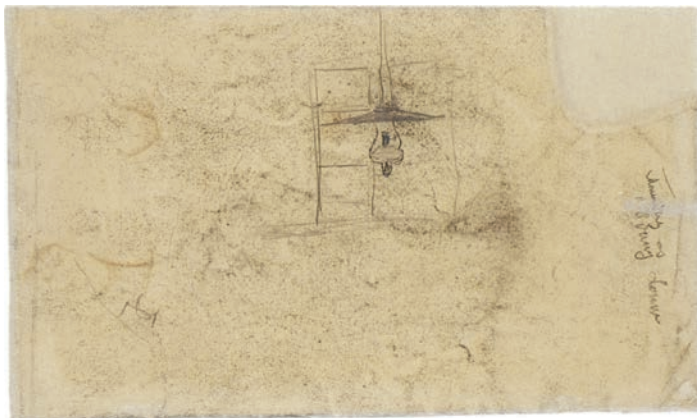
145 Hand with a pot, the knob of a chair and a hunk of bread



146 Clock, clog with cutlery and a spoon-rack



147 Plate with cutlery and a kettle



148 Lamp in front of a window

141 Four hands, two holding bowls

LATE MARCH-EARLY APRIL 1885

Pencil on laid paper

34.5 × 21.3 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 129

Inv. d 96 V/1962

F 1159v JH 742

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 76; Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 267; De la Faille 1970, p. 422; Amsterdam 1987, p. 411, no. 2.265; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 76, 296, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIII; Van Tilborgh 1993, pp. 103, 105, 107, no. 23; Heenk 1995, p. 121; Hulsker 1996, pp. 163, 166.

EXHIBITION

1993 Amsterdam, no. 23.

142 Hand with a bowl, and a cat

LATE MARCH-EARLY APRIL 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.2 × 34.4 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 157

Inv. d 393 V/1962

F 1229r JH 740

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 90, vol. 4, pl. c; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 267, 412; Van Gelder 1949, p. 11; De la Faille 1970, p. 439; Amsterdam 1987, p. 417, no. 2.299; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 90, 313, vol. 2, pl. c; Van Tilborgh 1993, pp. 13, 103, 105, 107, no. 27; Heenk 1995, pp. 120-21, 234, note 4; Hulsker 1996, pp. 163, 166.

EXHIBITIONS

1953 The Hague, no. 22; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 39; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 39; 1956 Haarlem, no. 26; 1962 Recklinghausen, no. 22f; 1965 Marseilles, no. 5; 1993 Amsterdam, no. 27.

143 Three hands, two holding forks

LATE MARCH-EARLY APRIL 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.3 × 34.6 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 144

Inv. d 389 V/1962

F 1161r JH 746

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 76, vol. 4, pl. LXXXIV; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 266, 411; Van Gelder 1949, p. 11; De Gruyter 1961, pp. 98-99, no. 22; De la Faille 1970, pp. 422-23; Amsterdam 1987, p. 416, no. 2.292; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 76, 296-97, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIV; Van Tilborgh 1993, pp. 13, 103, 105, 107, no. 26; Heenk 1995, p. 121; Hulsker 1996, p. 164.

EXHIBITIONS

1931 Amsterdam, no. 125; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 207; 1953 Zürich, no. 28; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 36; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 38; 1954-55 Bern, no. 98; 1955 Antwerp, no. 109; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 26; 1957 Stockholm, no. 31; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 103; 1960 Enschede, no. 19; 1960-61 Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg & Toronto, no. 114; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 96; 1962 Recklinghausen, no. 22g; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 96; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 72; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 72; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 48; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 14; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 15; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 16; 1968 Liège, no. 16; 1968-69 London, no. 31; 1969 Humlebaek, no. 9; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Columbus, no. 78; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 78; 1975 Malmö, no. 30; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 30; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 21; 1993 Amsterdam, no. 26.

144 Studies of the interior of a cottage, and a sketch of *The potato eaters*

MARCH-APRIL 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.3 × 34.6 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 143

Inv. d 389 V/1962

F 1161v JH 760

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 76, vol. 4, pl. LXXXIV; Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 266; Van Gelder 1949, p. 11; De la Faille 1970, p. 416, no. 2.293; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 76, 297, vol. 2, pl. LXXXIV; Van Tilborgh 1993, pp. 13, 103, 105, 107, no. 26; Heenk 1995, p. 121; Hulsker 1996, pp. 166-67.

EXHIBITIONS

1953 The Hague, no. 21; 1993 Amsterdam, no. 26.

145 Hand with a pot, the knob of a chair and a hunk of bread

LATE MARCH-EARLY APRIL 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.2 × 34.4 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Inv. d 391 V/1962  
F 1157 JH 739

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 76,  
vol. 4, pl. LXXXII; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 266, 411; De la Faille  
1970, p. 422; Amsterdam 1987,  
p. 416, no. 2.291; De la Faille  
1992, vol. 1, pp. 76, 295, vol. 2,  
pl. LXXXII; Van Tilborgh 1993,  
pp. 13, 103, 105, 107, no. 25;  
Heenk 1995, pp. 120-21; Hulsker  
1996, pp. 163, 166.

EXHIBITIONS

1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 31;  
1957 Nijmegen, no. 25; 1958-59  
San Francisco, Los Angeles,  
Portland & Seattle, no. 102; 1960  
Enschede, no. 18; 1962  
Recklinghausen, no. 22h; 1963  
Humblebaek, no. 71; 1964  
Washington & New York, no. 71;  
1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1966  
Paris & Albi, no. 13; 1967 Lille &  
Zürich, no. 14; 1988 Rome, no.  
74; 1993 Amsterdam, no. 25.

146 Clock, clog with cut-  
lery and a spoon-rack

LATE MARCH-EARLY APRIL 1885

Black chalk on laid paper  
34.5 × 21.0 cm  
Watermark: VDL  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 147

Inv. d 394 V/1969  
F 1349I JH 731

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-69

V.W. van Gogh; 1969 Vincent  
van Gogh Foundation; 1969-73  
on loan to the Stedelijk  
Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on  
permanent loan to the Van  
Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 115,  
vol. 4, pl. CXXX; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 267, 413; Van Gelder  
1949, p. 11; De la Faille 1970,  
p. 469; Amsterdam 1987, p. 417,  
no. 2.300; De la Faille 1992, vol.  
1, pp. 115, 346, vol. 2, pl. CXXX;  
Van Tilborgh 1993, pp. 13, 103,  
105, 107, no. 28; Heenk 1995,  
pp. 120-21; Hulsker 1996, pp.  
160-61, 166.

EXHIBITIONS

1955 Antwerp, no. 98; 1955  
Amsterdam, no. 49; 1975  
Malmö, no. 31; 1976 Stockholm  
& Oslo, no. 31; 1976-77 Tokyo,  
Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 34; 1993  
Amsterdam, no. 28.

147 Plate with cutlery and  
a kettle

Late March-early April 1885  
Black chalk on laid paper  
34.5 × 21.0 cm  
Watermark: VDL  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 146

Inv. d 394 V/1969  
F 1349V JH 732

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-69  
V.W. van Gogh; 1969 Vincent  
van Gogh Foundation; 1969-73  
on loan to the Stedelijk  
Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on  
permanent loan to the Van  
Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 115,  
vol. 4, pl. CXXX; Van Gelder

1949, p. 11; De la Faille 1970, p.  
469; Amsterdam 1987, p. 418,  
no. 2.301; De la Faille 1992, vol.  
1, pp. 115, 346, vol. 2, pl. CXXX;  
Van Tilborgh 1993, pp. 13, 103,  
105, 107, no. 28; Heenk 1995, p.  
121; Hulsker 1996, pp. 160-61,  
166.

EXHIBITIONS

1955 Antwerp, no. 99; 1993  
Amsterdam, no. 28.

148 Lamp in front of a  
window

Late March-early April 1885

Pencil on laid paper  
20.8 × 34.6 cm  
Watermark: VDL  
Unsigned  
Annotated along the bottom:  
Maandag as/” [quotation marks  
repeating the word ‘Maandag’] 8  
daag Louw  
Reverse of cat. 120

Inv. d 95 V/1962  
F 1158V JH -

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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 1970, p. 422;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 413, no.  
2.274; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
p. 296, vol. 2, pl. CCXXXII; Heenk  
1995, p. 120.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

## 149, 150 Women working indoors

Van Gogh's studies of the various parts of the human body culminated in April 1885 in his painting *The potato eaters*. Before he embarked on that complex work he evidently felt the need to experiment with figures in action. The weather was cold, so he decided to depict indoor activities. This led to a series of drawings and paintings in which women are seen mending clothes, cleaning vegetables or preparing meals.

The only clue to the dating is provided by a group of nine scenes of women doing their work by the light of a window. In March 1885, Van Gogh reported that he was concentrating on this specific variant of his domestic scenes. The four sheets in that group in the Van Gogh Museum are discussed in a separate entry (*cats.* 151-154).

Five other drawings of women at work indoors in which a window is not a key component of the scene are so close to that first group in subject matter, draughtsmanship, dimensions and type of paper that they too must have originated around the same time. The two in the Van Gogh Museum are *Woman peeling potatoes* and *Woman preparing a meal*. Given the fairly large number of scenes of women working around the house – 14 drawings and ten paintings – it is likely that all were executed in the period March-April 1885.<sup>1</sup>

Like several other of these figure pieces (such as *cat.* 153), the *Woman peeling potatoes* is little more than half-finished, which has the advantage of showing how Van Gogh set about drawings of this kind. Initially the scene was a little larger, but Van Gogh then drew a border around the section that had the strongest compositional impact. The point of the border, in other words, is not to make the work look finished, which is how it was used in some other drawings, but merely to define the image area (as in *cat.* 152). Van Gogh brushed away or erased everything that lay outside it.<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to say how far the drawing had progressed when the border was added, but Van Gogh certainly continued working on some passages afterwards. The hatching at upper left, for instance, extends as far as the border and no further. There are also corrections, although they may not have been made during this stage. The position of the woman's left arm was altered, and on the rim of the bowl of potatoes is a rudimentary sketch of a hand. It seems that Van Gogh had initially

<sup>1</sup> De la Faille dates the second drawing to the latter half of 1885, while Hulsker places it in May or June of that year, but there are no grounds for those rather late datings. The three other drawings in the group are F 1217 JH 700, F 1218 JH 701 and F 1290a JH 699. There are four comparable paintings from the same period: F 36 JH 698 (in the Van Gogh Museum), F 126a JH 655, F 145 JH 653 and F 365 JH 654.

<sup>2</sup> See also the sketch of a sower from the Etten period (*Drawings* 1, Appendix 1, no. 1.1, on pp. 242-43), which was made years earlier but follows exactly the same procedure.



149 Woman peeling potatoes

<sup>3</sup> Although this type of table appears in several of Van Gogh's Nuenen works it was unusual for Brabant, and was far more common in the province of Drenthe.

planned to show the woman taking a potato from the bowl in order to peel it. The background, with the chair and its rather coarse shadow, was left very sketchy. A square border at the height of the woman's knees may have been the start of another sketch, or perhaps some kind of reminder for the artist. Obscure details like this reveal the purpose of such drawings. They were nothing more than simple studies that were not intended to leave the studio but could be consulted when composing other works.

The *Woman preparing a meal* is a far more finished drawing in which some care was taken over the depiction of details and the rendering of light and shade. The woman is seated by the large hearth that was a central feature of Brabant cottages. She is frying something in a pan which is so heavy that it is attached by a chain to an anchorage point in the chimney. Other cooking utensils, a kettle and a pot, stand on the floor by the three-legged table.<sup>3</sup> Leaning against the wall on the right are an axe for chopping up firewood and a broom for sweeping cinders out of the hearth and any wood chips from the floor. The object hanging on the wall above them is probably the 'house blessing', a simple devotional print. A crucifix stands in the middle of the row of plates on the mantelpiece.

Van Gogh used white to highlight the fire in the hearth and to accentuate the table legs and the axe with the firewood. Both drawings are on the laid paper with the watermarks ED & C<sup>ie</sup> and PL BAS that Van Gogh used for so many of his drawings around this time.





150 Woman preparing a meal

149 Woman peeling  
potatoes

MARCH-APRIL 1885  
Black chalk on laid paper  
28.7 × 22.6 cm, the framed  
scene 25.0 × 19.3 cm  
Watermark: remnants of PL  
BAS, cropped at the bottom  
Unsigned

Inv. d 6 V/1962  
F 1208 JH 652

PROVENANCE  
1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 85,  
vol. 4, pl. xcvi; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 265, 412; De la Faille  
1970, pp. 434-35; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 412, no. 2.270; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 85, 308,  
vol. 2, pl. xcvi; Heenk 1995, p.  
127; Hulsker 1996, pp. 144-45.

EXHIBITIONS  
1905 Amsterdam, no. 328; 1912  
The Hague, no. 34; 1914-15  
Amsterdam, no. 65; 1947-48  
Alkmaar, no. 22? (possibly cat.  
153); 1956 Haarlem, no. 24; 1975  
Malmö, no. 28; 1976 Stockholm  
& Oslo, no. 28; 1976-77 Tokyo,  
Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 24.

150 Woman preparing a  
meal

MARCH-APRIL 1885  
Black chalk, heightened with  
opaque white paint, on laid  
paper  
20.4 × 37.1 cm  
Watermark: ED & Cie in a car-  
touche  
Unsigned

Inv. d 1 V/1962  
F 1215 JH 798

PROVENANCE  
1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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  
Bremmer 1926, no. 86; De la  
Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 87, vol. 4,  
pl. xcvi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp.  
278, 299, 392-93, 412; De la  
Faille 1970, p. 436; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 420, no. 2.318; Den  
Bosch 1987-88, p. 172, no. 41; De  
la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 87, 310,  
vol. 2, pl. xcvi; Heenk 1995, p.  
128; Hulsker 1996, p. 178.

EXHIBITIONS  
1905 Amsterdam, no. 300; 1914  
Antwerp, no. 10? (possibly cat.  
204); 1914-15 Amsterdam, no.  
108; 1924 Amsterdam, no. 122;  
1926 Munich, no. 2107; 1927-  
28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover,  
no. 19; 1928 Paris, no. 20; 1931  
Amsterdam, no. 157; 1932  
Manchester, no. 79; 1946  
Stockholm, Gothenburg &  
Malmö, no. 7; 1946  
Copenhagen, no. 6; 1948  
Hilversum, no catalogue; 1948-  
49 The Hague, no. 222; 1954-55  
Bern, no. 107; 1955 Antwerp,  
no. 94; 1956 Haarlem, no. 25;  
1961 Scarborough, no cata-  
logue; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no.  
41.

## 151-154 Women working by a window

In a letter of March 1885, Vincent told Theo about his latest experiment. It involved 'figures against the light of a window. I have studies of heads for it, against the light as well as turned toward the light, and I have worked several times already on the complete figure; spooling yarn, sewing, or peeling potatoes. Full face and in profile, but I don't know whether I'll get it right; it is a difficult effect. However, I think I have learned a few things from it' [489/396].

As already noted (see *cats.* 149, 150), this passage makes it possible to date a group of drawings and paintings. Ten of the drawings are of women doing domestic chores by the light of a window. Four are in the Van Gogh Museum and are discussed here.<sup>1</sup> There is good reason to believe that a fifth sheet (*cat.* 203), showing a woman shelling peas by a window, was executed in the late summer of 1885.

The two women sewing (*cats.* 151, 152), each against the backdrop of a bedstead curtain, are placed beside a window in order to create a chiaroscuro effect. In both cases the light falls on the table and on the front of the figures' faces, bodies and hands, leaving the remainder of the scene shrouded in gloom. The horizontal drawing is quite extensively worked up, and has a bold border that makes it look finished. The other, sketchier sheet, also has a border, but it is no more than a rough perimeter establishing the extent of the composition, as was the case with *Woman peeling potatoes (cat.* 149).

The *Woman peeling potatoes by a window (cat.* 153) also has a fairly cursory border, and the scene as a whole is little more than a superficial, unfinished sketch. The interplay of light and shade, which was the effect that particularly intrigued Van Gogh, is totally absent. Like the two women sewing, this figure is also seen against the backdrop of a bedstead curtain.

The *Woman cutting bread (cat.* 154) is the only drawing from this period in which Van Gogh achieved a true backlit effect. In order to heighten the extreme chiaroscuro even further, he worked the scene up with the pen and brush in black iron-gall ink, which has now faded to brown. As in many other drawings, this ink bit into the paper so deeply as to create an almost complete mirror image of the scene on the back of the sheet (*fig.* 151a). This fascinating example of iron-gall ink corrosion

<sup>1</sup> The five drawings not in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum are F 1203 JH 710, F 1206 JH 705, F 1207 JH 706, F 1207a JH 707 and F 1220 JH 703. Paintings with a similar effect are F 70 JH 715, F 70a JH 716 (both of which are of a head, not a figure, viewed against the light of a window), F 71 JH 719, F 72 JH 718, F 73 JH 717 (a woman seen against light entering through a doorway) and F 157 JH 712.



151 Woman sewing



152 Woman sewing



153 Woman peeling potatoes



154 Woman cutting bread

was actually accorded the status of a drawing in its own right in the 1970 edition of De la Faille's catalogue, in Hulsker, and in the 1987 catalogue of the collection of the Van Gogh Museum, all of which list the ghostly scene as a black chalk drawing.

The laid paper of catalogue number 152 has no watermark but is otherwise identical to the other sheets. They, like dozens more studies from the winter and spring of 1885, are on paper watermarked ED & C<sup>ie</sup> and PL BAS.



151<sup>a</sup> Verso of cat. 154.



### 151 Woman sewing

MARCH-APRIL 1885

Black chalk, heightened with opaque white paint, on laid paper 30.5 × 36.9 cm, the framed scene 28.0 × 34.3 cm  
Watermark: PL BAS  
Unsigned

Inv. d 4 V/1962  
F 1204 JH 708

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 85, vol. 4, pl. xcvi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 265, 271, 412; De la Faille 1970, pp. 434-35; Amsterdam 1987, p. 413, no. 2.277; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 85, 307, vol. 2, pl. xcvi; Heenk 1995, p. 127; Hulsker 1996, pp. 156, 158.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1953 Zürich, no. 37; 1975 Malmö, no. 27; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 27; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 23.

### 152 Woman sewing

MARCH-APRIL 1885

Black chalk on laid paper 28.0 × 20.3 cm  
Unsigned

Inv. d 5 V/1962  
F 1205 JH 711

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 85, vol. 4, pl. xciv; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 265, 271, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 434; Amsterdam 1987, p. 413, no. 2.278; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 85, 307, vol. 2, pl. xciv; Heenk 1995, p. 127; Hulsker 1996, pp. 156, 158.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 281; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 69; 1923 Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 40; 1928 Paris, no. 42; 1956 Haarlem, no. 23; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 72; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 93.

### 153 Woman peeling potatoes

MARCH-APRIL 1885

Black chalk on laid paper 30.4 × 23.2 cm, the framed scene 23.5 × 19.0 cm  
Watermark: PL BAS  
Unsigned

Inv. d 7 V/1962  
F 1210 JH 709

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 86, vol. 4, pl. xcvi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 265, 277, 392-93, 412; De la Faille 1970, pp. 434-35; Amsterdam 1987, p. 414, no. 2.279; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 86, 308, vol. 2, pl. xcvi;

Heenk 1995, p. 127; Hulsker 1996, p. 156.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 40; 1947-48 Alkmaar, no. 22? (possibly cat. 149); 1954-55 Bern, no. 105; 1955 Antwerp, no. 92.

### 154 Woman cutting bread

MARCH-APRIL 1885

Black chalk, pen in brown ink (originally black), brown wash, on laid paper 29.9 × 22.6 cm  
Watermark: remnants of ED & C<sup>ie</sup> in a cartouche, cropped on the right  
Unsigned

Inv. d 204 V/1962  
F 1219 JH 720

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 88, vol. 4, pl. xcvi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 271, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 437; Amsterdam 1987, p. 414, no. 2.281; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 88, 310-11, vol. 2, pl. xcvi; Heenk 1995, p. 127; Hulsker 1996, pp. 156, 158.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 309; 1906 Berlin, no. 68; 1910 Cologne & Frankfurt, no catalogue; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 211; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 38; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 56; 1958 Bergen, no. 57; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered.

# 155 Kettle over a fire, and a cottage by night

APRIL 1885

Black chalk on laid paper  
34.6 × 21.1 cm  
Watermark: VDL  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 124

Inv. d 78 V/1962  
F 1153v JH 733

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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 1970, p. 421;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 415, no.  
2.288; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
p. 294, vol. 2, pl. CCXXIII; Van  
Tilborgh 1993, pp. 103, 105, 107,  
no. 24; Heenk 1995, p. 121;  
Hulsker 1996, pp. 160-61, 166.

#### EXHIBITION

1993 Amsterdam, no. 24.

This detail study of a kettle of water suspended over a fire can be associated with the studies of women working indoors that Van Gogh made in March and April 1885 (*cats.* 149-154). He found drawings of this kind useful when it came to adding details to scenes, such as the one of a woman seated by the hearth and preparing a meal (*cat.* 150). He could also use them in the studio to produce a free variant of a specific composition. In the right background is a coffee-pot into which the boiling water will be poured. To the left is a storage jar, probably containing coffee or chicory – the roasted and ground root of the chicory plant that was a cheap substitute for coffee.

This drawing, with a study of hands and a woman's head on the verso (*cat.* 124) can be dated quite closely, thanks to the small bordered sketch of a cottage with a walking figure in the upper right-hand corner. It is quite a dark scene, and may well be connected with Van Gogh's plan to depict a cottage by night, which he probably formed in April 1885 (see *cat.* 156), so that is the date now given to this drawing.



155 Kettle over a fire, and a cottage by night

## 156 Two studies of a cottage

APRIL-EARLY MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper  
34.5 × 21.1 cm  
Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 123

Inv. d 90 V/1962  
F 1152v JH 665

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 75, no. 1152, vol. 4, pl. LXXVI;  
Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 277, 411;  
De la Faille 1970, pp. 420-21;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 414, no. 2.284; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 75, 294, vol. 2, pl. LXXVI;  
Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, p. 147.

### EXHIBITIONS

1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 122;  
1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 31; 1928 Paris, no. 33; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 29.

The subject of a humble, preferably rather dilapidated peasant cottage with a thatched roof of the kind also depicted in catalogue number 195 was a popular one with many painters in the latter half of the 19th century. It recurs in Van Gogh's oeuvre throughout his entire career. He regarded these 'nests of humans' [536/425] as eloquent symbols of peasant life.

In May 1885 he devoted an ambitious painting to the subject (*fig. 156a*). The two sketches of the same cottage on this sheet can be regarded as studies for that painting, and were therefore probably executed in April or early May of that year. The fact that the trees are still bare does not affect this dating, for they also have very few leaves in the painting.<sup>1</sup>

Van Gogh himself said that *The potato eaters* was painted in the cottage of the De Groot family, where he went each evening to work on the picture.<sup>2</sup> The idea of his May painting of 'a cottage by night' probably



156<sup>a</sup> *The cottage* (F 83 JH 777), 1885.  
Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

took shape during those evening walks [505/408]. Without his description of the painting one would probably be more inclined to say that it was a twilight scene. The lower of the two sketches, in which the cottage windows provide the only spots of light in the otherwise dark scene, also shows that the artist was in fact studying a night-time effect.

The top sketch, which views the cottage from a different angle and is closer to the scene in the painting, is just a bare outline. With its rapid and assured contours it demonstrates how Van Gogh laid the initial design down on the paper.

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<sup>1</sup> In *De la Faille* it is dated November 1885, without any further explanation, probably because of its autumnal air. *Hulsker* dates the sketch to March 1885, bringing it closer to the painting.

<sup>2</sup> See letters 497/401 and 502/405, among others.



156 Two studies of a cottage



157 Three people sharing a meal



158 Man and woman sharing a meal

## 157, 158 Figures sharing a meal

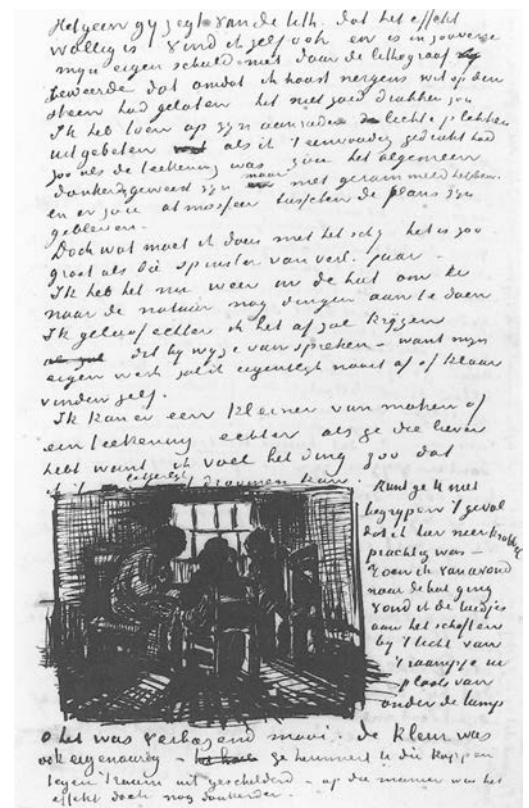
The subject of figures sharing a meal continued to preoccupy Van Gogh while he was painting his second version of *The potato eaters*. Returning on one occasion to the De Groots' cottage (see also *cats.* 139, 140, 141-148, 156), which was the setting for his first masterpiece, he found several members of the family eating a meal. At the beginning of May 1885 he gave Theo an enthusiastic account of the scene, and added a sketch (*fig.* 157a). 'Can you see how splendid the thing I scratch here was? When I went to the cottage tonight, I found the people at supper in the light of the small window instead of under the lamp. Oh, it was so beautiful! The colour was extraordinary too – you remember those heads painted against the window – the effect was like that, but even darker. So the two women and the interior were almost exactly the colour of dark green, soft soap. But the figure of the man to the left was just lit up by light streaming through a door farther on. So the head and hands became the colour of a 10-centime piece, namely dull brass. And where the light touched it, the blouse became of the most tender faded blue' [502/405].

He probably recorded the scene in the first of the two drawings discussed here (*cat.* 157), for the sheet has all the characteristics of a spontaneous sketch. It is laid down with swift, forceful strokes describing the large forms and the light and dark passages, but there is little detail. While working on *The potato eaters* Van Gogh had gradually come to realise that his figures lacked volume. Anthon van Rappard had told him so in no uncertain terms that May, as did Theo, albeit less bluntly (see *cat.* 162). Drawings like this one, in which the artist is quite clearly searching for the mass of a figure, indicate that he was really determined to solve this problem.

Much the same can be said of the agitated *Man and woman sharing a meal* (*cat.* 158). It is quite a radical experiment in the rendering of the human form, particularly in the design of the figures, and can therefore likewise be dated May 1885, the month in which Van Gogh began these exercises. The bodies of the man and woman, and to a lesser extent the table with the bowl from which they are eating, have no firm contours but are built up with a varied mass of chalk lines. This does give the figures something of the volume that Van Gogh was searching for, but



they lack firmness and a sense of mass. The heads, which have considerable detail, are curiously at odds with the rest, and betray the experimental nature of the sheet. It is doubtful whether Van Gogh considered the experiment successful, for in the late spring and summer of 1885 he continued focusing on the human figure, but there is no sheet that is really comparable to this one.



157<sup>a</sup> Sketch in a letter to Theo of early May 1885 (502/405). Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum

157 Three people sharing  
a meal

MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.2 × 34.4 cm

Watermark: VDL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 142

Inv. d 393 V/1962

F 1229v JH 775

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent  
van Gogh Foundation; 1962-73  
on loan to the Stedelijk  
Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on  
permanent loan to the Van  
Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

LETTER

502/405.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 90,  
vol. 4, pl. c; Vanbeselaere 1937,  
p. 267; Van Gelder 1949, p. 14;  
De la Faille 1970, p. 439;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 418, no.  
2.303; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
pp. 90, 313, vol. 2, pl. c; Heenk  
1995, pp. 121, 123; Hulsker  
1996, pp. 172-73.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

158 Man and woman  
sharing a meal

MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.0 × 34.6 cm

Watermark: shield with a  
crowned lion holding a scimi-  
tar, encircled by the words CON-  
CORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 176

Inv. d 48 V/1962

F 1332v JH 781

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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 1970, p. 466;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 419, no.  
2.307; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
p. 342, vol. 2, pl. cxxix; Heenk  
1995, p. 121; Hulsker 1996,  
pp. 174-75.

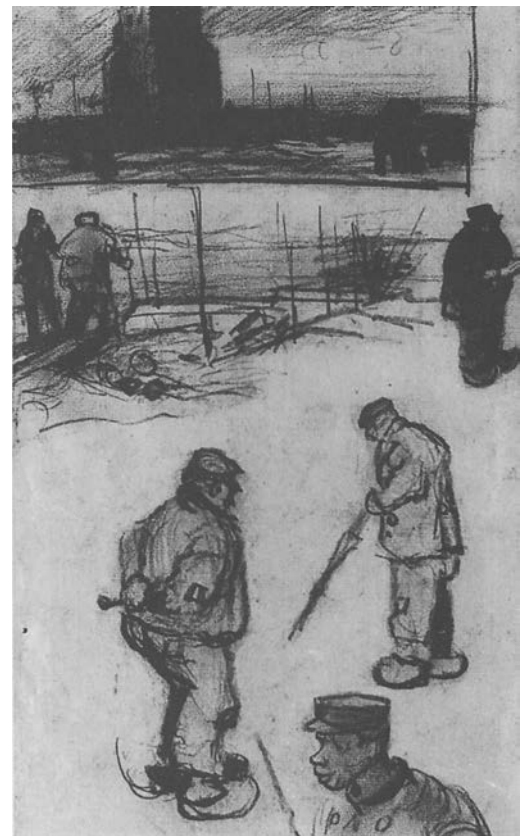
EXHIBITIONS

None.

## 159-161 Sale of building scrap

The old church tower in the fields outside Nuenen provided Van Gogh with new subject matter in May 1885 (see also *cats.* 69-71, 75). The village council had decided that the structure had served its purpose and should be demolished. This was done in stages, and by late 1885 it had been levelled almost to the ground. The scrap was offered for sale as each stage was completed. The first of those public sales took place on 11 May 1885, and Vincent described it to Theo. 'I have been hard at work on drawings these last few days. They are pulling down the old tower in the fields. So there was a sale of lumber and slates, and old iron, including the cross. I have finished a watercolour of it, in the style of the lumber auction, but better I think. I also had another large watercolour of the churchyard, but so far it has been a failure. Yet I have a good idea of what I wanted to put into it, and perhaps I shall get what I mean onto the third sheet of paper. And if not, then not. I have just sponged out the two failures, but I am going to try again. If you like, you can have the one of the sale' [505/408]. He later gave the watercolour the title *Vente pour cause de démolition* [509/410]. In addition to that drawing the Van Gogh Museum has a sheet with two preliminary studies (*cats.* 159, 160).

The bill of sale shows that Van Gogh gave a fairly accurate account of what was sold on May 11.<sup>1</sup> The various titles given to the watercolour down the years, however, pay little heed to his description. In the catalogue of the major retrospective exhibition of 1905 the scene was called *Sale of cemetery crosses at Nuenen* – a title supplied by Johanna van Gogh-Bonger herself.<sup>2</sup> There have been some minor variations in the wording since then, but in every case the emphasis was on the crosses. This, though, was a misconception, albeit an understandable one. In the left foreground, in addition to four beams, there are indeed two wooden crosses, one of which is being examined by a man and a woman. Lying on the ground on the right is the metal cross from the top of the spire. The sale, which realised a total of Dfl. 70.25, was in fact mainly of material from the demolished roof, and according to the bill of sale consisted mostly of lead, iron, beams, planks, rafters, roofing slates, a ladder, a door and just one cross. This was the iron cross mentioned by Van Gogh, which was bought by the burgomaster. The cemetery crosses were presumably left



159<sup>a</sup> *Sale of building scrap, study*  
(F1336r JH 767), 1885. Otterlo,  
Kröller-Müller Museum.

<sup>1</sup> Ton de Brouwer has done extensive research on the tower as it was in Van Gogh's day, and will be publishing a book on the subject later in 1997 (De Brouwer 1997). He very kindly supplied me with the information I needed. The bill of sale is now in the Repertoire van den Secretaris der Gemeente Nuenen o.a., no. 118.

<sup>2</sup> See Amsterdam 1905, no. 334. The list of titles that Jo van Gogh-Bonger compiled for the works in the exhibition is now in the Van Gogh Museum (inv. b 5423 V/1996). Initially she called this sheet Lumber auction, but then crossed that out and replaced it with the title given here. The study sheet discussed in this entry was included in the exhibition as no. 314, but retained the title Lumber auction, under which it was also exhibited at the Kunstverein in Cologne in 1910; see Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129, under F 1231.

<sup>3</sup> The other witness was the carpenter Theodorus de Vries.

<sup>4</sup> The letters are 509/410, giving the title, and 510/411.

over when the graves were cleared, and had been stored in the tower.

The only evidence that they were actually sold is provided by Van Gogh's drawing; in the bill of sale they were probably grouped with the beams.

That same document also makes it possible to identify some of the figures in the scene. The sale was supervised by the burgomaster, Jan van Hombergh, who is seen by the door to the tower in the watercolour, wearing a tall hat and with a piece of paper in his hand. Standing on a platform, resplendent in his uniform and holding a baton, is one of the two official witnesses, the village policeman Johannes Biemans.<sup>3</sup>

The two sketches in black chalk on the recto and verso of the same sheet were preliminary studies for the watercolour. Catalogue number 159 is a distant view of the scene. The tower dominates the composition, which has little in common with that of the watercolour. The drawing on the other side, catalogue number 160, is very similar to the watercolour. Against the backdrop of the sketchy tower is the same packed crowd of



159<sup>b</sup> *Sale of building scrap, study*  
(F 1336v JH 773), 1885. Otterlo,  
Kröller-Müller Museum.

people with Constable Biemans rising above it. On the left two figures are manhandling one of the crosses, a motif which found its way into the final composition in a slightly altered form. One difference between this study and the watercolour is that the burgomaster is nowhere to be seen. Van Gogh included him when he made the watercolour back in the studio, where he consulted other preliminary studies (*figs. 159a-d*), one of which (*fig. 159a*) shows the burgomaster with the sale list in his hand, the tower and its setting, a few potential buyers and the constable at the bottom. The verso is filled with sketches made on the spot, including the purchaser of the ladder, who is named in the bill of sale (*fig. 159b*). The other study sheet also came in useful when Van Gogh was composing the scene in his studio, particularly for the doorway leading into the tower (*fig. 159d*). The fact that it is empty is explained by the bill, for the door itself was included in the scrap sold on 11 May 1885.



159<sup>c</sup> *Sale of building scrap, study*  
(F 1112r JH 768), 1885. Otterlo,  
Kröller-Müller Museum.



159<sup>d</sup> *Sale of building scrap, study*  
(F 1112v JH 774), 1885. Otterlo,  
Kröller-Müller Museum.



159 Sale of building scrap



160 Sale of building scrap



161 Sale of building scrap

At the beginning of June Van Gogh sent his brother a chest marked 'V2'.<sup>4</sup> It is known from two of the letters that it contained 12 painted studies, the large paintings *Peasant cemetery* and *The cottage* (fig. 156a), a watercolour of the latter subject which has since disappeared, and the watercolour of the sale of scrap. The latter was given its French title in the first of those letters.

The title and signature indicate that Van Gogh hoped to find a buyer for the sheet. In the letter quoted at the beginning of this entry he said that he thought that it was an improvement on the *Lumber sale* of January 1884 (cat. 77), and it does indeed show that he had made considerable progress in the interim. The range of colour is carefully planned, and both the individual figures and the group as a whole are much more convincing than in the earlier watercolour. The rigidity of that work has been subtly avoided. Van Gogh depicted the crowd as a cohesive unit, and enlivened the scene by depicting three active figures on the left: a man walking and the man and woman looking at one of the crosses. The bright colours used for this trio makes it even more eye-catching.



## 159 Sale of building scrap

MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.1 × 34.7 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 160

Inv. d 9 V/1962

F 123IV JH 771

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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 1970, p. 440; Amsterdam 1987, p. 418, no. 2.306; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, p. 314, vol. 2, pl. CCXXIV; Heenk 1995, pp. 109, 122; Hulsker 1996, pp. 172-74.

### EXHIBITIONS

None.

## 160 Sale of building scrap

MAY 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.1 × 34.7 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 159

Inv. d 9 V/1962

F 123II JH 769

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925

J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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

Bremmer 1910, no. 83; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 91, vol. 4, pl. c; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 268, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 440; Amsterdam 1987, p. 418, no. 2.305; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 91, 314, vol. 2, pl. CCXXIV; Heenk 1995, pp. 109, 122; Hulsker 1996, pp. 172, 174.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 314; 1909-10 Berlin, no catalogue; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 48; 1923 Utrecht, no. 17; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 17; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 26; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 19; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 152; 1947-48 Alkmaar, no. 42; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 210; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 40; 1957 Stockholm, no. 35; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1975 Malmö, no. 35; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 35; 1980-81 Stuttgart, unnumbered; 1983-84 Hamburg, no. 445.

## 161 Sale of building scrap

MAY 1885

Black chalk or charcoal, transparent and opaque watercolour, on watercolour paper

38.0 × 55.4 cm

Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 36I V/1962

F 1230 JH 770

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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.

### LETTERS

505/408, 509/410, 512/413.

### LITERATURE

Bremmer 1924, no. 25; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, pp. 90-91, vol. 4, pl. c; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 269, 412; Leurs/Tralbaut 1957, p. 57; De la Faille 1970, p. 440; Amsterdam 1987, pp. 126-27, 418, no. 2.304; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 178-79, no. 45; Otterlo 1990, p. 131; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 90-91, 313-14, vol. 2, pl. c; Heenk 1995, pp. 106, 109, 122; Hulsker 1996, pp. 172, 174.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 334; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 44; 1923 Utrecht, no. 3; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 3; 1926 Amsterdam, no. 33; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 27; 1928 Paris, no. 29; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 25; 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 13; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 149; 1947 Groningen, no. 31; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 42; 1947-48 Alkmaar, no. 36; 1948 Hilversum, no catalogue; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 209; 1953 Zürich, no. 42; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 39; 1954-55 Bern, no. 109; 1955 Antwerp, no. 72; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 37; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 93; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 32; 1957 Stockholm, no. 34; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 106; 1960 Enschede, no. 22; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo &

Boston, no. 99; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 99; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 76; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 76; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 50; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 20; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 21; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 19; 1968 Liège, no. 19; 1968-69 London, no. 40; 1971-72 Paris, no. 137; 1975 Amsterdam, no. 123; 1976 Amsterdam, no. 21; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 45; 1990 Otterlo, no. 104.

## 162 Studies for figures carrying bundles of wood

JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper  
29.0 × 44.7 cm  
Watermark: [TS] & Z (cropped  
at the bottom)  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 96

Inv. d 115 V/1962  
F 1297v JH 795

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 105,  
no. 1297, vol. 4, pl. cxviii;  
Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 268,  
392, 413; De la Faille 1970, p.  
455; Amsterdam 1987, p. 419,  
no. 2.310; De la Faille 1992, vol.  
1, pp. 105, 332-33, vol. 2, pl.  
cxviii; Heenk 1995, p. 102;  
Hulsker 1996, p. 177.

### EXHIBITIONS

None.

When Van Gogh completed his lithograph after the first version of *The potato eaters*, he sent impressions to his brother Theo and Anthon van Rappard (1858-1892).<sup>1</sup> Both of them were critical. Van Rappard made a particularly close study of it, and was so scathing about all the elements of the figures that the friendship between the two artists reached a complete impasse.<sup>2</sup>

It is known from a letter that Vincent wrote around 11 May 1885 that Theo's remarks centred on the figures' torsos, which he considered less successful than the heads. Theo's precise comments are not known, but he probably drew his brother's attention to the very obvious flatness of the figures in the lithograph (*fig. 162a*). Whatever it was he said, Vincent could only agree with him. The emphasis on the heads, though, was deliberate, he maintained. Originally he had considered focusing more on the bodies, but then the scene would have become 'totally and utterly different' [505/408]. Notwithstanding his eloquent defence of the lithograph, Van Gogh must have realised that the human figure was not his strongest suit, and he accordingly started '*drawing figures*' again.

His study of the human figure was to dominate his work from May to August 1885, and did indeed consist chiefly of drawings. There are more than 90, mostly large sheets with figures at work, as against no more than a dozen paintings.<sup>3</sup> The drawings chart an impressive development. The first 'little figures' (*cats. 163-174*) are studied and almost exaggeratedly compact, and form a great contrast with the almost monumental, assured scenes of peasant men and women harvesting corn and lifting vegetables that were made later that summer (*cats. 180-193*).

A book by the French painter Jean Gigoux, *Causeries sur les artistes de mon temps* of 1885, helped give his figures a more convincing volume. He probably read it at the end of March or beginning of April of that year, and up until September he repeatedly mentioned a passage that had particularly struck him.<sup>4</sup> Gigoux recalled a method of drawing that Delacroix had explained to him, claiming that it was used by artists of classical times. The key was to build up the subject with large ovals, ellipses or ovoid shapes to indicate the various nuclei of the subject. This representation of the essential masses produced a more convincing result than

<sup>1</sup> On this see Van Heugten/Pabst 1995, pp. 74-78.

<sup>2</sup> See letter 507/R51a. Van Gogh sent Van Rappard's letter back by return of post, enclosing it with 508/R51, and later commented on it in letter 513/R52.

<sup>3</sup> It is not entirely certain which figured works were painted before *The potato eaters* and which afterwards, but the following paintings probably date from this



162 Two woman carrying bundles of wood  
and a man carrying a bundle of wood

period: F 126 JH 800, F 158 JH 792 and F 176 JH 799, all of them scenes of women doing domestic tasks, and F 94 JH 893, F 95 JH 827, F 95a JH 899, F 96 JH 878, F 97 JH 876, F 98 JH 901, F 139 JH 905, F 148 JH 908 and F 166 JH 850, all of which show figures working on the land.

4 He quoted from the book in letter 493/398 of 5 April 1885, without giving the title or the name of the author. He mentions it for the last time in letter 533/R58 of September of that year. See further letters 495/399, 497/401, 500/403, 505/408 and 522/418.

5 Gigoux 1885, p. 81: 'Les antiques prenaient par les milieux, au lieu que la Renaissance prenait par la ligne.'

6 Examination under the microscope reveals that it is quite clearly black chalk alone. Even using this aid it is difficult to say why the chalk lies so thinly on the paper, for the strokes are quite vigorous. Although the paper is a bit grubby here and there, the chalk does not appear to have been erased or rubbed.

working from the outlines, as the artists of the Renaissance did. 'The ancients worked from the middle, while in the Renaissance they worked from the contours', according to Delacroix.<sup>5</sup> Van Gogh planned to put this principle into practice in at least 50 figure studies, or even 100 if needs be, and in that respect the enterprise was very similar to his studies of heads (see *cats.* 97-107).

Generally speaking it is not easy to detect the application of this method in Van Gogh's work. The large forms with which he described the masses of his figures were merely a guide, and became obscured as the drawing progressed. Nor was the finished work an accretion of spherical shapes, for the procedure was merely intended to establish the proportions and volumes of the subject, not the final form.

The drawing discussed here gives some idea how Van Gogh set to work. On the left of the sheet is a small bordered sketch of a man carrying a bundle of faggots, and to the right is a larger scene of two women who also appear to have loads of wood on their backs. Even as a sketch the latter is unfinished, revealing how Van Gogh made his initial design. He set down the essentials of the women's bodies with strokes of black chalk which are so thin that they appear grey.<sup>6</sup> He then began reinforcing



162<sup>a</sup> *The potato eaters*, lithograph (F 1661 JH 737), 1885.

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the contours with black chalk, but evidently soon realised that there was little chance of turning it into a successful sketch and abandoned it.

On the other side of the paper is the upper half of Anthon van Rappard's portrait (*cat.* 96). As explained in that entry, it can be assumed that Van Gogh destroyed that drawing at the end of May or beginning of June 1885 by tearing it across the middle. He then used the sheet for his sketches of wood-carriers, which must accordingly be dated June 1885.

## 163-169 Small figure studies

Van Gogh told Theo in May 1885 that he had started drawing 'little figures' [505/408]. If this is to be taken literally as meaning smaller drawings, they would include 14 medium-sized sheets in the Van Gogh Museum, three of which are drawn on both sides. Their measurements range from approximately 28 × 22 to around 34 × 22 cm.

There are 25 similar works in other collections, the majority of them in the Kröller-Müller Museum.<sup>1</sup> Given the numbers involved, Van Gogh must have continued producing figure studies until well into June, and here they are therefore dated May-June 1885.

A feature common to almost all of these figures is their compactness. The drawing method with which Van Gogh was experimenting, building up the masses of his models with basic, spherical forms (see *cat.* 162), evidently soon resulted in stocky bodies of this kind. The small size of the paper would also have contributed to this effect, for Van Gogh had been drawing large figures with generous lines from the very outset of his career.<sup>2</sup> As the large Nuenen studies of peasant men and women at work also show, they enabled him to capture his models more convincingly and make them come alive.

The figures in six of the seven drawings discussed here do little more than pose (*cats.* 163-168). They are not engaged in any activity; Van Gogh's sole intention was to study the models from different angles.

The woman in catalogue number 169 is a little livelier than the others, and her pose appears to suggest that she is doing something with her hand, although exactly what is unclear.

The women are simply dressed, and wear a cap and a shawl, with the exception of the one in number 163. She is shrouded in a mourning shawl to mark the recent death of a member of her family. It was folded double and draped over the head, and was held closed at the front, as illustrated in the drawing. This distinctive item of apparel also appears in a photograph of around 1906 (*fig.* 163a).<sup>3</sup> Van Gogh made three more studies in which a woman is not wearing a mourning shawl but one that closely resembles it (*fig.* 163b).<sup>4</sup>

Catalogue numbers 164 and 165 are drawn on two sides of the

<sup>1</sup> There are 22 of these drawings in the Kröller-Müller Museum (15 sheets, seven drawn on both sides). The three others are in a private collection (F 1201 JH 778, 779, drawn on both recto and verso) and at an unknown location (F 1304 JH 847).

<sup>2</sup> See the Introduction to Drawings 1, p. 15, and *cat.* 19.

<sup>3</sup> On this type of shawl see Van Breugel 1975, pp. 28-29.

<sup>4</sup> All three are in the Kröller-Müller Museum. In addition to the drawing reproduced here they are the recto and verso of F 1195.



163 Woman with a mourning shawl



164 Woman with a shawl



165 Woman with a shawl



166 Woman with a shawl





167 Three studies of a woman with a shawl



168 Woman with a shawl



169 Woman with her left arm raised

<sup>5</sup> VDL also appears on full sheets together with the watermark of a coat of arms with a crowned lion holding a scimitar surrounded by the inscription CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT.

same sheet, as are numbers 167 and 168. The reverse of drawing 169 has a study of four people sharing a meal (*cat.* 140).

The drawings are executed in black chalk that has been stumped here and there. In six cases Van Gogh used half-sheets of laid paper with the watermark VDL. Only catalogue number 166 has the watermark of a lion with a scimitar in a shield with the border inscription PRO PATRIA EENDRAGT MAAKT MAGT. Full sheets of this paper have both watermarks.<sup>5</sup>



163<sup>a</sup> Photograph of a woman wearing a mourning shawl, circa 1906. Nuenen, J.C. Jegerings photograph collection.



163<sup>b</sup> *Woman with a shawl* (F 1196 JH 816), 1885. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

163 Woman with a mourning shawl

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

34.7 × 20.8 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Inv. d 24 V/1962

F 1197 JH 817

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 83; Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 411; De la Faille 1970, pp. 432-33; Amsterdam 1987, p. 420, no. 2.315; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 83, 305, vol. 2, pl. ccxxiv; Heenk 1995, p. 123; Hulsker 1996, p. 182.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 321; 1906 Berlin, no. 65; 1920 New York, no. 20.

164 Woman with a shawl

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

34.6 × 21.0 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 165

Inv. d 103 V/1962

F 1187r JH 812

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 81, vol. 4, pl. xci; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 271, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 430; Amsterdam 1987, p. 419, no. 2.312; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 81, 302-03, vol. 2, pl. xci; Heenk 1995, p. 122; Hulsker 1996, pp. 180-82.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 272; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 51; 1953 Zürich, no. 33.

165 Woman with a shawl

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

34.6 × 21.0 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 164

Inv. d 103 V/1962

F 1187v JH 813

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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 1970, p. 430; Amsterdam 1987, p. 420, no. 2.313; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, p. 303, vol. 2, pl. ccxxiii; Heenk 1995, p. 122; Hulsker 1996, pp. 180-82.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

166 Woman with a shawl

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

Watermark: shield with a

crowned lion holding a scimitar,

encircled by the words PRO

PATRIA EENDRAGT MAAKT MAGT

31.0 × 18.6 cm

Unsigned

Inv. d 104 V/1962

F 1188 JH 820

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 81, vol. 4, pl. xci; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 271, 411; De la Faille 1970, p. 430; Amsterdam 1987, p. 420, no. 2.314; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 81, 303, vol. 2, pl. xci; Heenk 1995, p. 123; Hulsker 1996, pp. 182-83.

EXHIBITIONS

1953 The Hague, no. 24; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 41; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 34; 1956 Haarlem, no. 19; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 70; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 91.

167 Three studies of a woman with a shawl

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.5 × 34.6 cm

Watermark: VdL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 168

Inv. d 116 V/1962

F 1298r JH 765

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 105, vol. 4, pl. cxviii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 275, 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 455; Amsterdam 1987, p. 419, no. 2.308; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 130; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 105, 333, vol. 2, pl. cxviii; Heenk 1995, p. 122; Hulsker 1996, p. 171.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 327; 1906 Berlin, no. 74; 1909-10 Berlin, no catalogue; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 103; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 128; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 51; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 213.

168 Woman with a shawl

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

21.5 × 34.6 cm

Watermark: VDL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 167

Inv. d 116 V/1962

F 1298v JH 766

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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 1970, p. 455; Amsterdam 1987, p. 419, no. 2.309; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, p. 333, vol. 2, pl. ccxxviii; Heenk 1995, p. 122; Hulsker 1996, p. 171.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

169 Woman with her left arm raised

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

34.6 × 20.9 cm

Watermark: VDL

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 140

Inv. d 388 V/1962

F 1227v JH 811

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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 1970, p. 439; Amsterdam 1987, p. 419, no. 2.311; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, p. 313, vol. 2, pl. ccxxiv; Heenk 1995, p. 122; Hulsker 1996, pp. 180-82.

EXHIBITIONS

None.

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## 170-174 Small studies of figures at work

At the end of June 1885 Van Gogh again told Theo that he was drawing figures. He felt that the way he had worked previously was inadequate for depicting the 'little peasants' convincingly [514/414]. He estimated that he would need to make more than 100 drawings before he had developed a style that would capture the essence of the agricultural workers of Nuenen.

The need to master the figures of peasants was made all the more pressing by the fact that harvest-time was approaching, and Van Gogh had planned to 'make a campaign both of corn harvesting and potato digging. At that time it is twice as hard to get models, and yet it is necessary, for I become more and more convinced that one cannot be too conscientious, that one must always exert oneself on what Daudet calls "the hunt for the model".' It is clear from this passage that his drawings at this time were in preparation for peasants harvesting crops, and he undoubtedly had his models take up the appropriate poses.

The five drawings covered in this entry are studies of that kind, and they are good illustrations of posed figures. They are rather stiff works in which the emphasis is on the rendering of the figure. The actions are rather cursorily described, certainly when compared to the large scenes of peasant men and women gathering in the harvest that were to follow shortly afterwards (*cats.* 180-192). The compactness of many of the small figures of May and June 1885 is also very marked in these five scenes of agricultural workers.

The four women and two men are probably all posing as peasants lifting potatoes. Two round objects on the shovel in catalogue number 170 certainly point in this direction. That is also the case with the man in number 174, who has already dug up some potatoes, and has a basket ready to take them. The woman in drawing 173 is digging a fork into the ground to loosen the tubers.

The figures were laid down with thick strokes of black chalk, which has been partly stumped. The outlines of catalogue numbers 172 and 173 were reinforced with the brush in black iron-gall ink which has now discoloured to brown.

The landscape in number 174, which has a horizontal format, plays a more important part than in the other sheets.

The women in catalogue numbers 172 and 173 are in virtually identical poses, while the woman in number 171 is very similar to them but is not bent over as far. Van Gogh made a painting that is probably based on these sheets (*fig. 170a*). Number 170 was also the model for a canvas (*fig. 170b*).



170<sup>a</sup> *Peasant woman lifting potatoes*  
(F 94 JH 893), 1885. Den Bosch,  
Noordbrabants Museum.



170<sup>b</sup> *Peasant woman lifting potatoes*  
(F 95a JH 899), 1885. Birmingham,  
England, Barber Institute of Fine Arts,  
University of Birmingham.



170 Peasant woman lifting potatoes



171 Peasant woman lifting potatoes





172 Peasant woman lifting potatoes



173 Peasant woman lifting potatoes



174 Peasant lifting potatoes

170 Peasant woman  
lifting potatoes

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

32.9 × 19.7 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words *CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT*

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 171

Inv. d 109 V/1962

F 1257r JH 829

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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

Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 272, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 448; Amsterdam 1987, p. 422, no. 2.326; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 96, 322, vol. 2, pl. cviii; Heenk 1995, p. 123; Hulsker 1996, pp. 184-85.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 311; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 91.

171 Peasant woman  
lifting potatoes

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

32.9 × 19.7 cm

Watermark: shield with a crowned lion holding a scimitar, encircled by the words *CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT*

Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 170

Inv. d 109 V/1962

F 1257v JH 830

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 96, nr. 1257, vol. 4, pl. cviii; De la Faille 1970, p. 448; Amsterdam 1987, p. 422, no. 2.327; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, p. 322, vol. 2, pl. ccxxvii; Heenk 1995, p. 123; Hulsker 1996, pp. 184-85.

EXHIBITION

1910 Cologne & Frankfurt, no catalogue.

172 Peasant woman  
lifting potatoes

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk, pen in brown ink (originally black), on laid paper

28.9 × 22.7 cm

Watermark: portion of ED & Cie in a cartouche, cropped on the left

Unsigned

Inv. d 110 V/1962

F 1258 JH 892

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 97, vol. 4, pl. cix; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 272, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 448; Amsterdam 1987,

p. 422, no. 2.328; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 97, 322, vol. 2, pl. cix; Heenk 1995, pp. 123, 126; Hulsker 1996, pp. 190, 198-99.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 455? (possibly cat. 182); 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 88; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 31; 1956 Haarlem, no. 32.

173 Peasant woman  
lifting potatoes

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk, pen in brown ink (originally black), on laid paper

28.7 × 22.6 cm

Watermark: remnants of PL

BAS, cropped on the left

Unsigned

Inv. d 108 V/1962

F 1256 JH 897

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 96, vol. 4, pl. cviii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 272, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 448; Amsterdam 1987, p. 422, no. 2.325; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 96, 322, vol. 2, pl. cviii; Heenk 1995, p. 123; Hulsker 1996, p. 200.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 319; 1906 Berlin, no. 62; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 66; 1923

Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 141; 1953 Zürich, no. 48; 1955 Antwerp, no. 81; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 41; 1975 Malmö, no. 38; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 38; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 28.

174 Peasant lifting  
potatoes

MAY-JUNE 1885

Black chalk on laid paper

22.5 × 32.1 cm

Watermark: ED & Cie in a cartouche

Unsigned

Inv. d 121 V/1962

F 1309 JH 855

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 107, vol. 4, pl. cxxiii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 275, 413; De Gruyter 1961, pp. 100-01, no. 27; De la Faille 1970, p. 457; Amsterdam 1987, p. 424, no. 2.337; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 107, 336, vol. 2, pl. cxxiii; Heenk 1995, p. 125; Hulsker 1996, pp. 192-93.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 333; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 81; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 38; 1928 Paris, no. 39; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 144; 1953 The Hague, no. 26; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 44; 1956 Haarlem, no. 39.

## 175, 176 Studies of a man

Among the small-scale figure studies that Van Gogh made in May and June 1855 are these two drawings of a bald, stocky man with the palms of his hands turned forward. De la Faille, in 1928, did not recognise them as being the same person, and for some unknown reason christened catalogue number 175 *The grave-digger* and number 176 *A young tramp*.

Vanbeselaere, who felt that there was a great sense of tragedy in these drawings, turned both men into grave-diggers.<sup>1</sup>

Neither the drawings nor Van Gogh's letters supply any clues as to the man's identity or occupation. Given his powerful physique (which cannot be solely due to Van Gogh's drawing style at this time; see *cats.* 163-169) and the odd position of the hands, which appear to be accustomed to carrying loads, one can only suspect that he did heavy work. On the back of catalogue number 176 are a man and woman eating (*cat.* 158).

<sup>1</sup> Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 392. The editors of the 1970 edition of *De la Faille*, who did not follow the titles given in the 1928 edition but did recognise the same person in the two drawings, suspected that the idea of a grave-digger was prompted by a passage in letter 522/418 about a resident of Nuenen nicknamed 'het rouw boerke.' This has been translated as 'the mourning peasant' in the past, but what is probably meant is 'the uncouth peasant.' The word 'rouw' has both meanings.



175 Stocky man



176 Stocky man

175 Stocky man

MAY-JUNE 1885  
Black chalk on laid paper  
34.6 × 21.1 cm  
Watermark: VDL  
Unsigned

Inv. d 286 V/1962  
F 1331 JH 759

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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

Lettres 1911, pl. xxiv; De la Faille  
1928, vol. 3, p. 112, vol. 4, pl.  
cxxvi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp.  
276, 392, 413; De Gruyter 1961,  
p. 101, no. 29; De la Faille 1970,  
p. 465; Chetham 1976, p. 33;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 417, no.  
2.295; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 130;  
De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 112,  
342, vol. 2, pl. cxxvi; Heenk  
1995, p. 122; Hulsker 1996, pp.  
166-67.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 274; 1910  
Cologne & Frankfurt, no cata-  
logue; 1923 Rotterdam, ex cata-  
logue; 1926 London, no. 41;  
1947-48 Alkmaar, no. 19? (possi-  
bly cat. 176); 1955 Antwerp, no.  
91.

176 Stocky man

MAY-JUNE 1885  
Black chalk on laid paper  
34.6 × 21.0 cm  
Watermark: shield with a  
crowned lion holding a scimi-  
tar, encircled by the words CON-  
CORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT  
Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 158

Inv. d 48 V/1962  
F 1332r JH 758

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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

Vogelsang 1905, p. 67; De la  
Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 112, vol. 4,  
pl. cxxvi; Vanbeselaere 1937,  
pp. 276, 392, 413; De la Faille  
1970, p. 466; Chetham 1976, p.  
33; Amsterdam 1987, p. 417, no.  
2.296; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
pp. 112, 342, vol. 2, pl. cxxvi;  
Heenk 1995, pp. 122-23;  
Hulsker 1996, pp. 166-67.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 312; 1914-  
15 Amsterdam, no. 90; 1931  
Amsterdam, no. 140; 1947-48  
Alkmaar, no 19? (possibly cat.  
175).



## 177-179 Studies of working figures on coloured paper

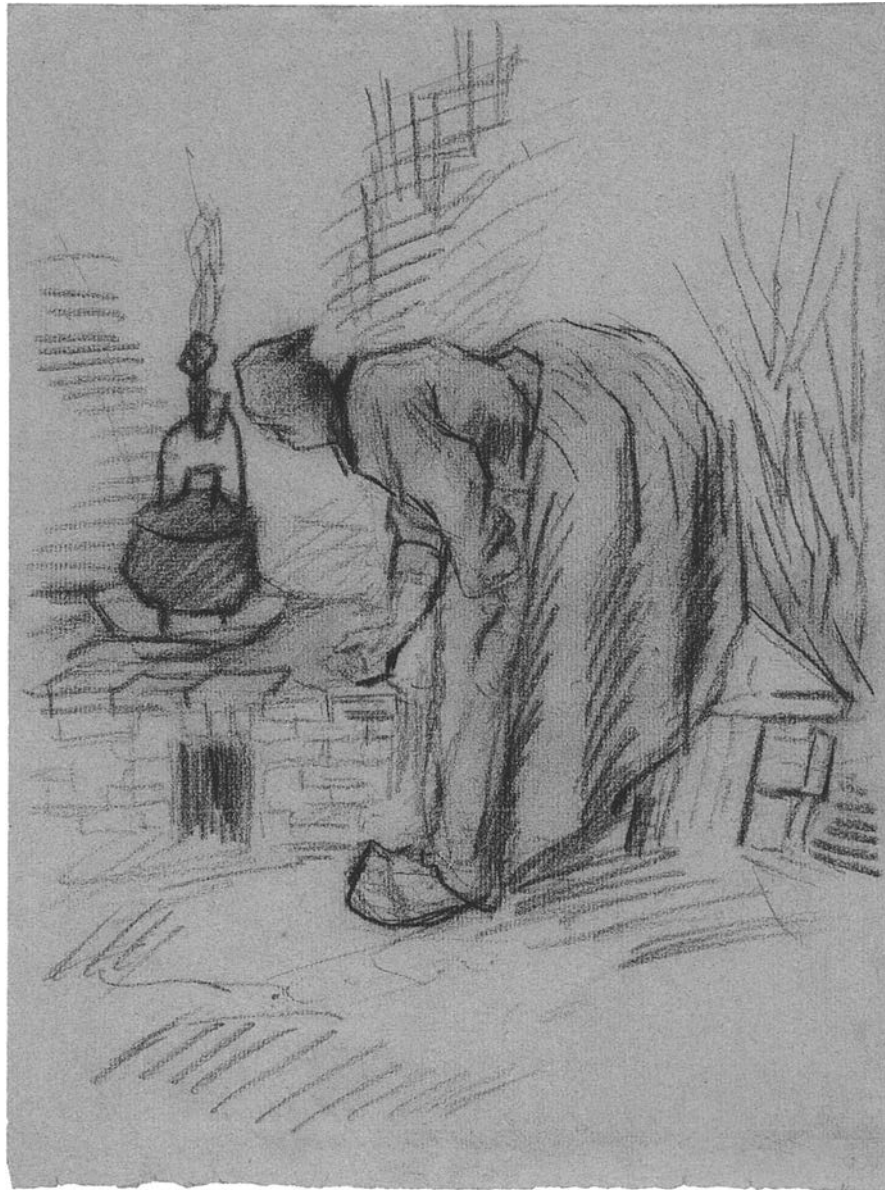
While in Nuenen, Van Gogh made a few experiments with drawings on coloured paper. There are two on pink sheets, *Peasant lifting potatoes* and *Woman winding yarn* (cats. 178, 179). The former has stitching holes, indicating that it was once part of a sketchbook.<sup>1</sup> The drawing of the woman is the only one with a watermark, a partially cropped AL in a banderole. Van Gogh also used grey-blue paper containing some red fibres for three scenes, one being the *Woman by a hearth* (cat. 177). The sheets in this group have two variants of the watermark ED & Cie.<sup>2</sup> Catalogue number 177 also has traces of stitching holes, this time along the lower edge, showing that it also came from a sketchbook. A grey-blue type of paper with the watermark PL BAS was used for two landscape drawings in the Van Gogh Museum (cats. 195, 196). It was probably of a lighter shade than the sheets to which the *Woman by a hearth* belongs, and has now lost almost all its original colour. A drawing in the Kröller-Müller Museum was made on a deeper shade of blue paper without any red fibres (fig. 177a).<sup>3</sup>

The latter drawing and two of the three figure pieces in the Van Gogh Museum – *Woman by a hearth* and *Peasant lifting potatoes* – are remarkable not only for being on coloured paper. They are done in a style that deviates markedly from that of most of the other figured works from the Nuenen period, and there are also considerable differences between them. The exceptional qualities of the drawings are due not to sketchiness or to any clumsiness on the draughtsman's part. Like catalogue number 158 they are deliberate experiments with form, and for that reason should probably be dated to the late spring or summer of 1885, when Van Gogh was trying to model his figures more convincingly. This undoubtedly led him down some strange byways from time to time. The *Peasant lifting potatoes*, who is loosening the ground with a fork, is remarkably squat and round, even compared to the small, plump figures discussed earlier (cats. 163-174). This is a clear attempt to impart more volume to the body; Van Gogh was not interested in the face, which lacks any detail. The field is indicated with plain chalk lines. There is only one other drawing in Van Gogh's Nuenen oeuvre that bears any comparison to the style of this sheet, and it too shows a man lifting potatoes with a fork (fig. 177b).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The fact that catalogue numbers 178 and 179 came from a sketchbook was first pointed out in Heenk 1995, pp. 127-28; see also note 3.

<sup>2</sup> The other works on this paper are F 1207 JH 706 and F 1217 JH 700. The red fibres are clearly visible under the magnifying glass and microscope. Although the two types of paper are very similar, there is a difference in the watermark ED & Cie, of which there is an open and a closed variant. In F 1217 JH 700 the letters are in a cartouche with openings on the left and right and at the top and bottom. This is the commonest variant, of which there are two forms, one slightly elongated in the vertical direction, and a flatter type. Van Gogh also used sheets of this paper as mounts for his magazine illustrations. There are 12 sheets of it in the Van Gogh Museum, six with this watermark and six with the associated watermark PL BAS. In cat. 177 and F 1207 JH 706 the letters ED & Cie are probably within a closed cartouche (both are partly cropped, so it is possible that the cartouche was originally open at the sides) that extends to a point at top and bottom. I am grateful to Peter Kipp for his help in examining this sheet and the other drawings in the Kröller-Müller Museum mentioned in this entry.

<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to make out the watermark in this sheet. Traces along the lower edge may be truncated capitals, but almost certainly not of the letters PL BAS. Given the diversity of watermarks



177 Woman by a hearth



178 Peasant lifting potatoes

and fibre composition of the paper, there is no reason to believe that the sheets are from the same sketchbook, as suggested in Heenk 1995, pp. 127-28 (see also note 1).

4 This drawing could only be studied from a photograph. According to De la Faille it measures 28 x 22 cm and is in all cases on grey paper. This agrees with the information given when the drawing was sold in the Regency Hotel in New York (no. 20) on 12 November 1989. Grey paper is unusual for Van Gogh, and it is possible that it was originally blue and has since severely discoloured.

Contrasting with the man's plumpness is the angularity and stiffness of the *Woman by a hearth*, who appears to be putting wood on the fire. She is depicted in a rudimentary way, tautly and with no more than a few rapid hatchings to indicate the folds of her garments. Here, too, the face lacks detail, and the setting is minimal. The hearth and the pot hanging from the unattached chain are rapid sketches, and the bundle of firewood on the right is barely identifiable as such. The head and torso are too small in relation to the extremely broad-beamed lower half of the body. A few other scenes of a woman in an interior, such as catalogue number 153, are somewhat similar in character but not as stiff. The equally faceless, sway-backed woman digger in the drawing in the Kröller-Müller Museum (fig. 177a) is also rather stiff, but there is more modelling of the clothing (which contains unusual hatchings). That woman has the same imposing lower half as the *Woman by a hearth*.



177<sup>a</sup> *Woman digging* (F 1253 JH 898), 1885. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.



177<sup>b</sup> *Man lifting potatoes* (F 1304 JH 847), 1885. Whereabouts unknown

The *Woman winding yarn* (cat. 179) is more in line with Van Gogh's other figure pieces from this period. The winder is of a different kind to the one being plied by the man in catalogue number 87, and looks a little like a spinning-wheel. However, it is clear that she too is winding yarn from the skein hanging from the back of the chair ready to be wound onto bobbins, and also from a very similar scene showing more of the interior (fig. 177c). There a woman is seated behind an identical apparatus with a skein of yarn hanging from her chair. On the left, moreover, is an upright reel, which was used for winding yarn and not for spinning.



177c *Woman at a bobbin winder*  
(F 1290a JH 699), 1885. Private collection.

177 Woman by a hearth

MAY-JULY 1885

Black chalk on grey-blue laid paper

30.3 × 22.6 cm

Watermark: remnants of ED & Cie in a cartouche, cropped on the right

Unsigned

Inv. d 112 V/1962

F 1287 JH 789

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 103, vol. 4, pl. cxvi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 277, 392, 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 453; Amsterdam 1987, p. 420, no. 2.316; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 103, 330, vol. 2, pl. cxvi; Heenk 1995, p. 128; Hulsker 1996, pp. 176-77.

EXHIBITION

1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 56.

178 Peasant lifting potatoes

MAY-JULY 1885

Black chalk on pale pink laid paper

30.2 × 22.7 cm

Unsigned

Inv. d 120 V/1962

F 1308 JH 844

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 107, vol. 4, pl. cxx; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 275, 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 457; Amsterdam 1987, p. 423, no. 2.336; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 107, 335, vol. 2, pl. cxx; Heenk 1995, pp. 127-28; Hulsker 1996, p. 190.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 318; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 94; 1955 Antwerp, no. 84.

179 Woman winding yarn

MAY-JULY 1885

Black chalk on pale pink laid paper

29.9 × 22.6 cm

Watermark: remnants of AL in a banderole, cropped on the right

Unsigned

Inv. d 114 V/1962

F 1290 JH 696

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 103, vol. 4, pl. cxvi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 277, 391, 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 454; Amsterdam 1987, p. 413, no. 2.276; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 103, 331, vol. 2, pl. cxvi; Heenk 1995, pp. 127-28; Hulsker 1996, pp. 154, 156.

EXHIBITIONS

1897 Groningen, no catalogue; 1905 Amsterdam, no. 456.



179 Woman winding yarn

## 180-192 Large studies of figures at work

In the summer of 1885 Van Gogh threw himself into the task of drawing agricultural workers, the majority of them peasant men and women at harvest-time. They are all on a large scale, the biggest sheets measuring some 58 × 45 cm, although many of the others are a few centimetres smaller, the edges having been trimmed. There are around 50 surviving works which can be regarded as a distinct, coherent group. Fourteen are in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum, including the half-sheet 192. Five are a little smaller but correspond to the larger drawings in their brisk draughtsmanship, the way in which almost the entire sheet is used, and in the choice of paper and drawing materials. The Van Gogh Museum has just one of the latter drawings (*cat.* 180).<sup>1</sup> Six sheets, which are also slightly smaller, have more detailed settings. One of them, F 1273 H 909, is in the Van Gogh Museum and is discussed in a separate entry (*cat.* 194).

<sup>1</sup> The other sheets are F 1252 JH 890, F 1262b JH 840, F 1281 JH 843 and F 1314 JH 861, and measure roughly 45 × 34 cm. They, too, are drawings in black chalk on wove paper, including several with the watermark TS & Z.

<sup>2</sup> Van Gogh's difficulty in obtaining models is discussed in the Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> See letters 510/411, 512/413 and 514/414.

Letters that Van Gogh wrote in July 1885 indicate that he was working on his large-scale figure studies at the time. In the course of September he began finding it increasingly difficult to persuade the Nuenen peasants to pose for him.<sup>2</sup> The drawings, not one of which can be dated more closely, were therefore executed in the period July-September 1885. Like the studies that preceded *The potato eaters*, these figures were in preparation for a painting of people working on the land. This can be deduced from a letter of mid-July 1885. A month earlier Van Gogh had announced that he would be sending Theo figure drawings so that he could show them to a Paris friend, the painter and lithographer Charles Serret (1824-1900).<sup>3</sup> He mentioned this several times in subsequent letters, and at one stage even spoke of a 'portfolio of studies from the model' [514/414], which he would only send when he had figures that he considered good enough. By July the promised consignment had still not materialised, but Van Gogh did make a very significant comment: 'I hope you will bring those figure studies back when you come, for I am going to add many others which I need for painting. I shall want them for figures that are definitely not larger than a span, say, or even less, so that everything in it will become even more concentrated' [521/417]. Here he was clearly referring to his large figures, for a span – the distance between the



tops of the thumb and little finger of a spread hand – is roughly 22 cm, which is about the size of his smaller figures (*cats.* 163-174). The ‘portfolio’ of studies was never sent to Theo, because Van Gogh needed the drawings for other works.<sup>4</sup>

It is clear, then, that Van Gogh was planning to paint a large canvas. Given the number of harvesting figures he drew it would very probably have been a harvest scene, which was one of the main subjects in the peasant genre that so fascinated Van Gogh. Painters of rustic life like Millet, Breton and Lhermitte – Van Gogh’s shining lights – had devoted prestigious works to the subject. Harvesting often symbolised summer in series of the seasons, or stood for the harvest months of July or August in cycles of the twelve months of the year. Van Gogh had reacted enthusiastically to one such series earlier in 1885: the twelve months that Léon Lhermitte had published as ‘Les mois rustiques’ in *Le Monde Illustré*. Vincent eagerly looked forward to every new instalment that Theo sent him.<sup>5</sup>

As it happens, Van Gogh had already made a stab at quite ambitious harvest scenes back in his Hague period: a large drawing (*fig.* 180a), which is probably lost, and a painting, both of peasants lifting potatoes.<sup>6</sup> He took up the subject again in Nuenen when the goldsmith Antoon Hermans (1822-1897) asked him to make designs for the decoration of his dining-room. Vincent painted scenes of the four seasons, with a *Corn harvest* symbolising summer, which has unfortunately not survived. A small sketch gives an idea of his initial design (*fig.* 180b), but it is very much the question whether he stuck to it.

4 See letter 527/420. When visiting Nuenen in August 1885, Theo did see several such studies in his brother’s studio, and Vincent later urged him to tell Serret about them (see letters 525/419 and 527/420).

5 It was a recurring theme in his letters from March 1885 onwards (letter 488/395). The last mention comes in his second letter to Theo from Antwerp, of 28 November 1885, in which he wrote that he had found Octobre but had not yet seen Novembre (letter 548/437).

6 The drawing is only known from a photograph. The painting is F 9 JH 385.



180a *Lifting potatoes* (F 1034 JH 372), 1883. Whereabouts unknown



180 Digger



181 Peasant woman digging



182 Peasant woman digging



183 Peasant woman lifting potatoes



184 Reaper



185 Reaper



186 Reaper





187 Reaper



188 Peasant woman binding sheaves



189 Peasant lifting beet



190 Digger



191 Digger in a potato field: February



192 Peasant with a fork

All the large, multi-figured works that Van Gogh made, no matter what the subject, show that he had great difficulty in giving the compositions a natural, unforced look. Most of the figures are flat and rigid, and as a rule it is all too apparent from the scene itself that it was put together using individual studies of models. Van Gogh would have been well aware of this, and the purpose of the many figure studies from the Nuenen period was to correct this defect.

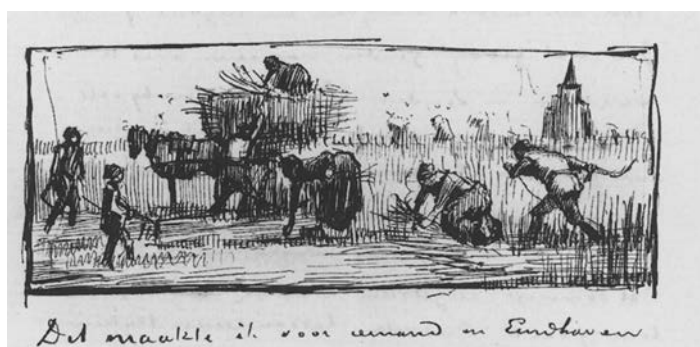
Although the subject of harvesting was undoubtedly one of Van Gogh's plans in Nuenen, it did not result in a large painting, his elaborate preparations notwithstanding. There are only a few small pictures of people harvesting. Later, in Arles and Saint-Rémy, he was to devote some of his most stunning paintings to the subject, but in them, interestingly, the human figure rarely plays more than a minor role.<sup>7</sup> Only in the scenes of olive-picking of December 1889 are the female harvesters depicted with any prominence.<sup>8</sup>

Most of the agricultural workers drawn in the summer of 1885 are gathering in corn, or lifting potatoes or beet. It is not always clear precisely what the men and women are doing. The women digging with spades (*cats. 181, 182*) are probably lifting potatoes or beets. The heavy digging of the fields, which was a bitter necessity for a peasant who could not afford a plough, was usually done by men. There is more certainty about the woman turning the earth with a fork, with a basket beside her (*cat. 183*), even if there is not a vegetable in sight. At lower left are the remains of an annotation of which the words 'de terre' can still be made out. This is almost certainly an 'arracheuse de pommes de terre' (potato digger), the title that Van Gogh also gave to catalogue number 194.<sup>9</sup>

7 The various versions of *The harvest* executed at Arles in 1888 show only tiny figures at work (in one painting: F 412 JH 1440, and four drawings: F 1483 JH 1439, F 1484 JH 1438, F 1485 JH 1540 and F 1486 JH 1527). In all the drawn and painted versions of a reaper, the man has a relatively modest place in the composition: F 1492 from Arles, and the reapers from Saint-Rémy, who are almost swallowed up by the ripe corn (paintings F 617 JH 1753, F 618 JH 1773 and F 619 JH 1692, and the drawing F 1564 JH 1754).

8 F 654 JH 1868, F 655 JH 1869 and F 656 JH 1870.

9 Since the woman is using a fork and not a spade, it is unlikely that she is planting. Compare *cat. 194* and some of the other drawings discussed there, where the figures are planting and obviously using spades. This, in other words, is not a 'planteuse de pommes de terre'.



180<sup>b</sup> Sketch in a letter to Theo of early August 1884 (456/374). Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

10 These peasant women planting beet are cat. 98 and F 1272a JH 822. The scenes are vertical and horizontal respectively, but there is such a close resemblance that they must have been made during the same posing session. Cat. 194, discussed elsewhere in this catalogue, also has an inscription stating that the woman is digging potatoes, but no month is specified.

11 Some of the comparable large figure studies outside the collection of the Van Gogh Museum are signed, but many of those signatures should be viewed warily. Almost all the drawings in question (with the exception of F 1262a JH 838) were originally in the collection of Hidde Nijland. Works that he owned often have inscriptions on the drawn side of the paper which were not written by Van Gogh. They include Nijland's own name,



180c Peasant with a fork, montage of two sheets. Top half cat. 192; bottom half F 1301v JH 886, Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

The reapers (*cats.* 184-187) are gathering in the wheat harvest. They are using a reaping hook to draw a bunch of stalks towards them which they then cut off with a short-handled scythe. The woman bending over in catalogue number 188 appears to have just finished binding up a sheaf of corn. The 'bisected' peasant (*cat.* 192), the lower half of whose body is in the Kröller-Müller Museum, is probably gathering up corn-stalks with a long forked branch (*fig.* 180c) of the kind used as a primitive fork or rake. Catalogue number 189 is annotated 'betteraves' (beets), and in the left foreground there is a row of these root vegetables. It is more difficult to make out what the workers are doing in numbers 190 and 180. They are certainly digging, but it is impossible to say whether they are lifting the harvest or turning the earth ready for planting or sowing a new crop.

That is clear, though, in catalogue number 191, which Van Gogh annotated at lower left: 'Bêcheur dans un champ de pommes de terre, février' ('Digger in a potato field, February'). The man is evidently turning over the field so that the potatoes can be planted. It is clear from this annotation that Van Gogh was thinking of making his own series of the months, with this activity representing February. There are two similar sheets with the same annotation at lower left: 'Planteuse de betteraves, juin'.<sup>10</sup>

Van Gogh regarded these peasant figures not just as studies for composite paintings, but 'as the beginning of a whole series of all kinds of labour in the fields' [522/418]. Here he was following in the footsteps of Jean-François Millet (1814-1875), who had made a similar series called *Travaux des champs*, which Van Gogh greatly admired and copied several times. Given the addition of the names of months on some of the drawings it seems that he was drawing inspiration from Lhermitte's cycle of the twelve months symbolised by rustic scenes.

It is doubtful whether the annotations indicate that Van Gogh regarded the drawings as marketable. However good the studies are, they all have the spontaneous, rather rough look of drawings that the artist made for his own use. It is also significant that not one of them is signed.<sup>11</sup> A more detailed scene like number 194, on the other hand, has a signature and is annotated in French, which makes it more likely that it was intended for sale. Van Gogh, after all, considered these studies as a 'beginning', that is to say as the forerunners of a true series. He may have felt that the drawings with titles were more successful than the others, but it is possible that the inscriptions were merely added in order to identify the activities for Theo and Serret.

Van Gogh explained to his brother, and urged him to pass this on to



Serret, that his figures were anything but correctly drawn by academic standards, but that this was deliberate. Above all, the peasants had to express ‘*action for action’s sake*’, and give the feeling that they really were doing heavy work. In his view he could only achieve this expression by occasionally doing violence to anatomical reality [522/418].

By far the majority of the more than 50 scenes are drawn with black chalk on sheets of wove paper with the watermark TS & Z. Van Gogh also applied liquid to most of the drawings (the only exceptions being *cats*. 187 and 192). The white residues on catalogue numbers 180, 182, 183, 188, 191 are traces of milk, but the liquid used on other works may simply have been water. Van Gogh used the milk, possibly diluted with water, as a fixative. He had started fixing his pencil drawings in this way back in The Hague. His method of applying liquid on both pencil and black chalk was based on advice he had read in a manual by Armand Cassagne, the *Guide pratique pour les différents genres de dessin*.<sup>12</sup> Now, though, the liquid had a second function, for it was also used as a wash. The black of the chalk was muted by the liquid here and there, giving the scene local grey tones. After the sheets had dried, Van Gogh used an eraser to create even lighter passages.

Catalogue number 182 served as the model for a painting (*fig. 180d*). When studying his models, for here too it is unlikely that he recorded any of the figures actually working in the fields, Van Gogh must have made regular use of his perspective frame. Although none of the works in the Van Gogh Museum has traces of a grid indicating that he had employed this aid, there are sheets in other collections with vestigial lines showing that he had used it.<sup>13</sup>

‘Atelier Vincent’ and ‘Port.[folio] Vincent’. Many of the ‘Vincent’ signatures are untrustworthy, and moreover appear in the lower right corner, whereas Van Gogh usually signed at lower left.

<sup>12</sup> For Van Gogh’s use of milk in his pencil drawings see the Introduction to volume 1, pp. 26-27. Cassagne also recommended a mixture of milk and water as a fixative for black chalk, see Cassagne 1873, p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> F 1312 JH 854 has clear traces of the pencilled lines of a grid at upper left. This sheet is rather unusual, for it was prepared with a pencil drawing which Van Gogh then went over with black chalk. That chalk is greasier than the kind generally used for other large figures from this period, and may be lithographic crayon. Van Gogh then reinforced the man’s outlines and the transitional lines between the mown field and the wheat with iron-gall ink. The latter was once black but has now faded to light brown. Traces of a grid can also be seen in F 1325 JH 903 and F 1314 JH 861.



180d *Woman digging* (F 95 JH 827), 1885. Whereabouts unknown.

## 180 Digger

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885

Black chalk on wove paper

Traces of fixative

44.5 × 28.0 cm

Watermark: TS [& Z], cropped on the right

Unsigned

Inv. d 122 V/1962

F 1310 JH 852

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 107; Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 458; Amsterdam 1987, p. 424, no. 2.338; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 107, 336, vol. 2, pl. CCXXVIII; Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, p. 192.

### EXHIBITIONS

1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 114; 1956 Haarlem, no. 40.

## 181 Peasant woman digging

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885

Black chalk, grey wash, on wove paper

Traces of fixative

52.7 × 42.5 cm

Watermark: TS & Z

Unsigned

Inv. d 106 V/1962

F 1250 JH 842

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 95, vol. 4, pl. CVII; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 271, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 444; Amsterdam 1987, p. 421, no. 2.322; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 95, 320, vol. 2, pl. CVII; Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, p. 190.

### EXHIBITIONS

1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 102; 1947 Groningen, no. 35; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 48; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 35; 1957 Stockholm, no. 36.

## 182 Peasant woman digging

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885

Black chalk on wove paper

Traces of fixative

55.7 × 41.0 cm

Watermark: TS & Z

Unsigned

Inv. d 171 V/1962

F 1255 JH 826

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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

Bremmer 1924, no. 26; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 96, vol. 4, pl. CVII; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 272, 390, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 447; Amsterdam 1987, p. 421, no. 2.324; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 190-93, no. 59; Feilchenfeldt

1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 96, 321-22, vol. 2, pl. CVII; Heenk 1995, pp. 124-26; Hulsker 1996, p. 184.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 317? (possibly cat. 172); 1909-10 Berlin, no catalogue; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 83; 1923 Utrecht, no. 56; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 56; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 134; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 26; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 16; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 15; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 45; 1955 Antwerp, no. 82; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 42; 1957 Breda, no. 31; 1957 Marseilles, no. 14; 1957 Stockholm, no. 37; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 108; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 73; 1960 Enschede, no. 24; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 101; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 101; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 78; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 78; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 52; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 24; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 26; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 22; 1968 Liège, no. 22; 1968-69 London, no. 43; 1971-72 Paris, no. 139; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 54; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 59.

## 183 Peasant woman lifting potatoes

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885

Black chalk on wove paper

Fixative discolouration around the figure

49.2 × 40.2 cm

Unsigned

Annotated at lower left:

[arracheuse de pommes?] de terre

Inv. d 107 V/1962

F 1251 JH 841

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 95, vol. 4, pl. cvii; Meier-Graefe 1928, pl. 8; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 271, 412; De la Faille 1970, pp. 444, 447; Amsterdam 1987, p. 421, no. 2.323; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 181-84, no. 49; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 95, 320-21, vol. 2, pl. cvii; Heenk 1995, pp. 124-25; Hulsker 1996, p. 189.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 285; 1910 Cologne & Frankfurt, no catalogue; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 86; 1923 Utrecht, no. 59; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 59; 1924 Basel, no. 82; 1924 Zürich, no. 82; 1924 Stuttgart, no. 3; 1925 The Hague, no. 59; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 35; 1928 Paris, no. 36; 1930 Laren, no. 11? (possibly cat. 194); 1931 Amsterdam, no. 135; 1947 Groningen, no. 36; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 49; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 123; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 76; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 212; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 44; 1954-55 Bern, no. 113; 1955 Antwerp, no. 88; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 45; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 94; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 57; 1958 Bergen, no. 58; 1961 Scarborough, no catalogue; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 23; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 25; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 21; 1968 Liège, no. 21; 1968-69 London, no. 44; 1971-72 Paris,

no. 138; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 48; 1975 Malmö, no. 37; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 37; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 27; 1980 Utrecht, unnumbered; 1980-81 Amsterdam, no. 158; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 49.

### 184 Reaper

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885

Black chalk on wove paper  
Fixative discolouration around the figure

44.6 × 56.3 cm

Watermark: TS & Z

Unsigned

Inv. d 419 V/1962

F 1316 JH 858

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, pp. 108-09, vol. 4, pl. cxxii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 273, 391, 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 459; Amsterdam 1987, p. 424, no. 2.339; Otterlo 1990, p. 131; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 108-09, 337, vol. 2, pl. cxxii; Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, pp. 192-93.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 344; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 115; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 133; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 27; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 15; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 14; 1947 Paris, no. 14; 1947 Geneva, no. 14; 1947 Groningen, no. 39; 1947

Rotterdam, no. 53; 1948 Hilversum, no catalogue; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 214; 1949 Hengelo, no catalogue; 1949 Gouda, no catalogue; 1954-55 Bern, no. 115; 1955 Antwerp, no. 86; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 43; 1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no. 58; 1958 Bergen, no. 59; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 104; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 104; 1968-69 London, no. 47; 1977 Paris, unnumbered; 1990 Otterlo, no. 109.

### 185 Reaper

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885

Black chalk, grey wash, on wove paper

44.8 × 56.4 cm

Watermark: TS & Z

Unsigned

Inv. d 172 V/1962

F 1317 JH 863

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 109, vol. 4, pl. cxxii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 273, 391, 413; De la Faille 1970, pp. 458-59; Amsterdam 1987, p. 424, no. 2.340; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 130; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 109, 337-38, vol. 2, pl. cxxii; Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, p. 194.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 290; 1909-10 Berlin, no catalogue; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 82; 1923 Utrecht,

no. 60; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 60; 1924 Basel, no. 83; 1924 Zürich, no. 83; 1924 Stuttgart, no. 4; 1925 Paris, unnumbered; 1925 The Hague, no. 60; 1926 Munich, no. 2108; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 138; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Bergen, no. 14; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 125; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 77; 1953 Assen, no. 40; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 48; 1954-55 Bern, no. 116; 1955 Antwerp, no. 87; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 44; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 95; 1956 Haarlem, no. 36; 1957 Breda, no. 32; 1957 Marseilles, no. 15; 1957 Stockholm, no. 38; 1975 Malmö, no. 43; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 43.

### 186 Reaper

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885

Black chalk, grey wash, on wove paper

42.0 × 52.4 cm

Watermark: TS & Z

Unsigned

Inv. d 363 V/1962

F 1318 JH 866

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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

Vogelsang 1905, na p. 62; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 109, vol. 4, pl. cxxii; Meier-Graefe 1928, pl. 11; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 273, 391, 413; De Gruyter 1961, pp. 101-02, no. 30; De la Faille 1970, pp. 458-59; Amsterdam 1987, p. 424, no. 2.341; Feilchenfeldt

1988, p. 130; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 109, 338, vol. 2, pl. cxxii; Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, p. 194.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 339;  
1909-10 Berlin, no catalogue;  
1920 New York, no. 32; 1923 London, no. 4; 1925 The Hague, no. 83; 1926 Munich, no. 2099;  
1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 15; 1928 Paris, no. 16; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 36; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 25; 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 20; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 139; 1932 Manchester, no. 56; 1947 Groningen, no. 40; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 54; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 126; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 78; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 215; 1953 Zürich, no. 51; 1953 Zundert, no. 47; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 89; 1953-54 Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Toledo, no. 48; 1954-55 Willemstad, no. 35; 1955 Palm Beach, Miami & New Orleans, no. 35; 1956 Haarlem, no. 37; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. III; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 72; 1960 Enschede, no. 27; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 105; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 105; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 79; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 79; 1965 Charleroi & Ghent, no. 53; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 25; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 27; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 24; 1968 Liège, no. 24; 1968-69 London, no. 46; 1969 Humlebaek, no. 12; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Columbus, no. 80; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 80;

1971-72 Paris, no. 140; 1972 Bordeaux, no. 49; 1972-73 Strasbourg & Bern, no. 55; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 32.

#### 187 Reaper

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885  
Black chalk, grey wash, on wove paper  
Traces of fixative  
56.3 × 44.3 cm  
Watermark: TS & Z  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 199

Inv. d 173 V/1962  
F 13191 JH 857

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 109, vol. 4, pl. cxxi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 273, 391, 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 460; Chetham 1976, p. 33; Amsterdam 1987, p. 424, no. 2.342; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 109, 338, vol. 2, pl. cxxi; Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, pp. 192-93.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 289; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 71; 1947 Groningen, no. 41; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 55; 1948 Hilversum, no catalogue.

#### 188 Peasant woman binding sheaves

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885  
Black chalk, grey wash, on wove paper  
Traces of fixative  
56.3 × 44.5 cm  
Watermark: TS & Z  
Unsigned

Inv. d 178 V/1962  
F 1266 JH 868

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 98, vol. 4, pl. cxi; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 272, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 450; Amsterdam 1987, p. 422, no. 2.329; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 98, 325, vol. 2, pl. cxi; Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, pp. 190, 194-95.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 316; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 80; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 86; 1953 Assen, no. 38; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 46; 1956 Haarlem, no. 34; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 30.

#### 189 Peasant lifting beet

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885  
Black (lithographic?) crayon on laid paper  
Traces of fixative  
53.1 × 42.8 cm  
Watermarks: ED & Cie in a cartouche, and PL BAS  
Unsigned  
Annotated at lower left: betteraves

Inv. d 117 V/1962  
F 1303 JH 860

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 106, vol. 4, pl. cxix; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 275, 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 456; Amsterdam 1987, p. 423, no. 2.333; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 106, 334, vol. 2, pl. cxix; Heenk 1995, p. 125; Hulsker 1996, pp. 192-93.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 287; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 92; 1947 Groningen, no. 38; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 52; 1953 Zürich, no. 50.

#### 190 Digger

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885  
Black chalk on wove paper  
Traces of fixative  
53.9 × 35.2 cm  
Unsigned

Inv. d 118 V/1962  
F 1305 JH 849

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 106, vol. 4, pl. cxix; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 275, 413; De la Faille

1970, p. 457; Amsterdam 1987, p. 423, no. 2.334; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 190-93, no. 60; Otterlo 1990, p. 131; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 106, 335, vol. 2, pl. cxix; Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, pp. 190-91.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 320; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 112; 1923 Utrecht, no. 1; 1923 Rotterdam, no. 1; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 34; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 24; 1937 Paris, no. 61; 1937 Oslo, no. 26; 1938 Copenhagen, no. 10; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 60; 1990 Otterlo, no. 108.

#### 191 Digger in a potato field: February

FEBRUARY, JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885  
Black chalk, grey wash, on wove paper  
Traces of fixative  
54.5 × 42.4 cm  
Watermark: TS & Z  
Unsigned  
Annotated at lower left: *Bêcheur dans un champ de/pommes de terre/février*

Inv. d 179 V/1962  
F 1302 JH 859

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 106, vol. 4, pl. cxix; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 275, 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 456; Amsterdam 1987,

p. 423, no. 2.332; Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 190-93, no. 61; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 106, 334, vol. 2, pl. cxix; Heenk 1995, pp. 124-25; Hulsker 1996, pp. 192-93.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 310; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 85; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 32; 1928 Paris, no. 33a; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 129; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 41; 1951 Lyons, Grenoble, Arles/St. Rémy, no. 86; 1953 Assen, no. 39; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 47; 1955 Antwerp, no. 83; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 36; 1957 Stockholm, no. 39; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 110; 1960 Enschede, no. 26; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 103; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 103; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 75; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 96; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 23; 1968 Liège, no. 23; 1968-69 London, no. 45; 1969 Humlebaek, no. 11; 1969-70 Los Angeles, Saint Louis, Philadelphia & Columbus, no. 79; 1970-71 Baltimore, San Francisco & New York, no. 79; 1975 Malmö, no. 40; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 40; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 61.

#### 192 Peasant with a fork

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885  
Black chalk on wove paper  
28.6 × 41.1 cm  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 197

Inv. d 123 V/1962  
F 1321V JH 885

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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 1970, pp. 460-61; Amsterdam 1987, p. 425, no. 2.345; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, p. 339, vol. 2, pl. ccxxix; Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996, pp. 192, 197.

#### EXHIBITIONS

None.

## 193 Woodcutter

JULY-SEPTEMBER 1885

Black chalk, grey wash, on laid paper

45.0 × 55.5 cm

Watermarks: shield with fleur-de-lys, and HFDC

Unsigned

Inv. d 181 V/1962

F 1327 JH 902

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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

Van Meurs n.d., no. 11; Lettres 1911, pl. XIV; De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 111, vol. 4, pl. CXXV; Meier-Graefe 1928, pl. 6; Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 413; De Gruyter 1961, p. 101, no. 28; De la Faille 1970, pp. 462, 465; Chetham 1976, pp. 33-34; Amsterdam 1987, p. 426, no. 2.350; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 130; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 111, 340, vol. 2, pl. CXXV; Heenk 1995, p. 125; Hulsker 1996, pp. 200-01.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 288; 1906 Berlin, no. 61; 1911 Hamburg, no catalogue; 1912 Dresden/Breslau, no. 24; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 106; 1921 New York, no. 33; 1924 Basel,

The *Woodcutter* is one of the most closely studied subjects in the series of working figures that Van Gogh made in the summer of 1885. It is also one of the few that does not depict the harvesting or planting of crops.<sup>1</sup> The subject may have been inspired by Léon Lhermitte's print of *The woodcutters*, which had greatly impressed Van Gogh in March of that year.<sup>2</sup>

The *Woodcutter* is a good illustration of Van Gogh's growing ability to capture a figure at work. In 1937, Walther Vanbeselaere was so moved by this scene that he wrote: 'He depicts the moment after the verdict, the inescapable and most fateful moment when, following the great sweep, the axe must fall. The fellow stands there in a pit, bareheaded, his neck unresisting and bent, legs sagging, like a villain before his victim, to whom he is administering the *coup de grâce*. We experience all the tragedy



193<sup>a</sup> Léon Lhermitte, *The woodcutters*,  
from: *Le Monde Illustré*, nr. 1457, 1885.

of the event, how life, which he is now butchering, will take its revenge on him with the same fatal, witless blow. The black chalk gives a surprisingly good account of the rough bark and the stricken wounds.<sup>3</sup>

The *Woodcutter* is a fascinating drawing, even without this dramatic interpretation. The hard physical labour is depicted very convincingly, and Van Gogh succeeded in creating a lively and balanced composition with a varied use of the chalk. Some of the lines above the man's head and shoulders show that the axe was initially in a more horizontal position.

As with his figures working on the land, Van Gogh stumped the black chalk in places and treated it with liquid, probably just water in this case, which mixed with the chalk to form a sort of grey wash (see *cats*. 180-192). When the sheet had dried out he used an eraser to lighten some of the passages. Unlike the scenes of peasants harvesting crops, which are on wove, this drawing is on a sheet of laid paper.

no. 84; 1924 Zürich, no. 84; 1924 Stuttgart, no. 2; 1925 The Hague, no. 72; 1926 Munich, no. 2108; 1927-28 Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no. 25; 1928 Paris, no. 27; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 38; 1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 27; 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 21; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 130; 1932 Manchester, no. 55; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 56; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 127; 1948 Bergen & Oslo, no. 79; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 217; 1953 Zürich, no. 52; 1954-55 Bern, no. 117; 1955 Antwerp, no. 90; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 47; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 37; 1957 Stockholm, no. 40; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 26; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 28; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 25; 1968 Liège, no. 25; 1968-69 London, no. 42; 1971-72 Paris, no. 141; 1975 Malmö, no. 45; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 45; 1980-81 Amsterdam, no. 157; 1990 Otterlo, no. 106.

<sup>1</sup> The other exception is F 1282 JH 906, a woman doing the dishes. A smaller sheet, F 1284 JH 907, shows a woman washing clothes.

<sup>2</sup> See letters 488/395 and 489/396. His copy of this wood engraving has not survived, or at any rate is no longer in his collection, which is now housed in the Van Gogh Museum.

<sup>3</sup> Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 392: 'Hij geeft het moment na de wilsakte; het onafwendbare en meest noodlottige moment waarop, na

den grooten zwaai, de bijl moet neerplofften. De vent staat daar in een kuil, blootshoofds, met willoozen, gekromden nek, doorgezakte beenen, als een misdadiger voor zijn slachtoffer, dat hij den genadeslag geeft. We beleven al de tragiek van het geval; hoe het leven, dat hij nu uitmoordt, met denzelfden fatalen en dommen slag zich op hem wreken zal. Het zwart krijgt geeft verrassend goed de substantie van de ruwe schors en de geslagen wonden.'



193 Woodcutter





194 Peasant woman lifting potatoes

## 194 Peasant woman lifting potatoes

AUGUST 1885

Black chalk, grey wash, on wove paper

Traces of fixative

39.7 × 45.3 cm

Signed at lower right: Vincent

Annotated at lower left:

arracheuse de pommes de terre

Inv. d III V/1962

F 1273 JH 909

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925

J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62

V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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

Van Meurs n.d., no. 4; Lettres

1911, pl. XIII; De la Faille 1928,

vol. 3, p. 100, vol. 4, pl. CXIII;

Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 277, 412;

De la Faille 1970, pp. 450-51;

Amsterdam 1987, p. 423, no.

2.331; Otterlo 1990, pp. 131-32;

De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 100,

326-27, vol. 2, pl. CXIII; Heenk

1995, p. 124; Hulsker 1996,

p. 202.

### EXHIBITIONS

1920 New York, no. 2; 1923

London, no. 2; 1927-28 Berlin,

Vienna & Hannover, no. 26;

1928 Paris, no. 28; 1929

Amsterdam, no. 32; 1929-30

Rotterdam, no. 23; 1930 Laren,

no. 11? (possibly cat. 183); 1930-

31 Arnhem, Groningen,

This *Peasant woman lifting potatoes* (her activity is identified by the annotation at lower left) is one of six drawings from the summer of 1885 in which Van Gogh gave more prominence to the landscape than in his other figure studies of this period (see *cats.* 180-192). They are also a little smaller than most of the scenes of farm labourers discussed so far.<sup>1</sup>

Van Gogh included such details as farmhouses (*fig.* 194*a*), the wheat and the sheaves in the field (*fig.* 194*b*), and in this particular case a landscape with a tree on the left and a windmill in the right background. The figures are proportionately smaller than the men and women in the other works, but are larger and more emphatic than those in the scenes with a wheatfield as the main motif (*cats.* 197-202).

It seems likely that these drawings were prompted by something that his brother had said. It emerges from a letter of late August that Theo



194<sup>a</sup> *Peasant with hoe* (F 1325 JH 903), 1885. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

had told Vincent that his figure pieces would be easier to sell if they had more detailed settings, instead of being large, rather empty studies. Vincent reacted by sending Theo ‘drawings of figures in their surroundings’ [531/422], which may be a reference to some of the detailed works. The *Peasant woman lifting potatoes* thus probably dates from August 1885.

Some of these drawings have a border, including the one in the Van Gogh Museum. Although they are fairly cursory, they do show that Van Gogh regarded these works as being a cut above the average figure study.<sup>2</sup> If these are indeed the ‘drawings of figures in their surroundings’ he spoke of, it seems that he was still not entirely convinced of their merits, for in the same letter he told his brother that he was not sure that they were worth framing.

In common with many of the model drawings from the summer of 1885 that lack detailed settings, white residues indicate that Van Gogh used milk both as a fixative and as a grey wash. To this he added a grey watercolour wash in some passages.



194<sup>b</sup> *Woman gleaning ears of corn*  
(F 1275a JH 873), 1885. Whereabouts  
unknown.

Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 17; 1947 Groningen, no. 37; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 50; 1947-48 London, Birmingham & Glasgow, no. 129; 1948 Hilversum, no catalogue; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 224; 1949 Hengelo, no catalogue; 1949 Gouda, no catalogue; 1953 Zürich, no. 49; 1953 Zundert, no. 46; 1953 Hoensbroek, no. 95; 1954-55 Bern, no. 114; 1955 Antwerp, no. 89; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 46; 1956 Haarlem, no. 35; 1957 Breda, no. 33; 1957 Marseilles, no. 16; 1957 Stockholm, no. 42; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 109; 1959-60 Utrecht, no. 74; 1960 Enschede, no. 25; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 102; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 102; 1963 Sheffield, no. 17; 1964 Zundert, no. 12; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered; 1965-66 Stockholm & Gothenburg, no. 74; 1967 Wolfsburg, no. 95; 1975 Malmö, no. 44; 1976 Stockholm & Oslo, no. 44; 1990 Otterlo, no. 120.

<sup>1</sup> Apart from the sheet discussed here they are: F 1272 JH 910 (42 × 44 cm) and F 1276 JH 900 (45 × 46 cm), and the slightly smaller F 1275a JH 873, F 1325 JH 903 and F 1326 JH 904, all of which measure approximately 32 × 45 cm.

<sup>2</sup> F 1272 JH 910 and F 1275a JH 873 also have borders.



195 Landscape with cottages and a mill



196 Landscape in stormy weather

## 195, 196 Landscapes on coloured paper

Among the handful of works that Van Gogh made on coloured paper during his stay at Nuenen (see *cats.* 177-179) are these two attractive landscapes. The paper was probably a light grey-blue originally, but has now faded almost to grey.

Van Gogh had already made several sketches of cottages in the spring of 1885 (*cats.* 155, 156), followed in May by the large painting that is one of the finest works of his early years (*fig.* 156*a*). The correspondence reveals that in June-August of that year he made several scenes with cottages.<sup>1</sup> In addition to this drawing of two cottages and a mill there are 12 paintings that can be allocated to this period (*fig.* 195*a*).<sup>2</sup> One of the artist's sketch-books also contains a scene of a cottage that is almost identical to the larger of the two buildings in this sheet (*fig.* 195*b*).

In view of the fact that it is on identical grey-blue paper, the other drawing must have been executed at the same time, and this is supported by the summery look of the leafy trees. The subject of trees in stormy weather was a traditional one much favoured by painters of the Barbizon School like Jean-François Millet (1814-1875) and Théodore Rousseau (1812-



195<sup>a</sup> *Landscape with a cottage* (F – JH add. 23), 1885. Private collection.

1867). Van Gogh had undoubtedly seen such works. While in The Hague he had tackled the theme in a painting and a drawing, and there is also a letter sketch with a convincing depiction of a storm (fig. 195c).<sup>3</sup> That is also the case with this Nuenen sheet; the force of the wind is made almost palpable by the lashing branches of the large trees, the smaller, bowed trees to the left of them, and by the clouds drawn with bold strokes of chalk and touched with a few white highlights.

The edges of this sheet, which were covered by a mount and are thus less discoloured, give a slightly better idea of the original colour of the paper. There is a magazine illustration from Van Gogh's collection in the museum which the artist pasted onto a sheet of light grey-blue paper with the watermark ED & C<sup>ie</sup> in a cartouche.<sup>4</sup> Each of the drawings discussed in this entry has parts of the watermark PL BAS, which belongs with ED & C<sup>ie</sup> in full sheets of paper. Originally they may have been the same colour as the illustration mount.

It also seems that the paper of the two landscapes came from the same large sheet, or at any rate from a sheet from the same mould. There is a narrow strip missing when one places them up against one another, but the vertical sheet has the lower parts of the capitals PL BAS and the horizontal drawing the upper parts of those letters. The chain-lines of the laid paper also make a close match.

1 That Van Gogh continued painting cottages first emerges in a letter of June 1885, 510/411. The last mentions of painted cottages come in letters from August of that year (528/415 and 529/R57).

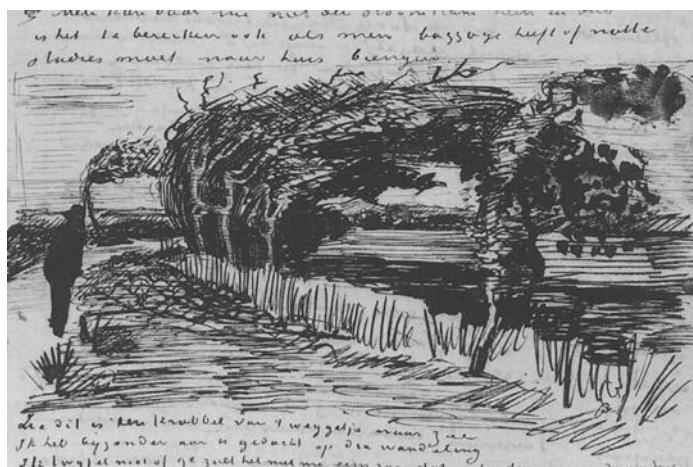
2 The painting reproduced here, F – JH add. 23, was discovered only a few years ago.

3 The painting is F 10 JH 384. The drawing is the recently discovered Landscape with a woman and child, fig. 65b under cat. 65 in Drawings 1.

4 Inv. t 756 V/1962. There are a further eight illustrations in the collection that Van Gogh pasted onto laid paper of a very similar shade. Six of those sheets have no watermark, the other two (t 563 V/1962 and t 98 V/1962) are marked EM THIERS.



195<sup>b</sup> Cottage on a sheet from a sketchbook (F 1344 JH 801), 1885. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.



195<sup>c</sup> Sketch in a letter to Theo of 29-30 July 1883 (456/374). Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum.

195 Landscape with  
cottages and a mill

JUNE-AUGUST 1885  
Black chalk on light grey-blue  
paper  
22.6 × 30.0 cm  
Watermark: remnants of PL  
BAS along the bottom edge  
Unsigned

Inv. d 53 V/1962  
F 1345 JH 802

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 114;  
Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 413; De la  
Faille 1970, p. 468; Amsterdam  
1987, p. 421, no. 2.320; De la  
Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 114, 345,  
vol. 2, pl. ccxxx; Heenk 1995,  
p. 128; Hulsker 1996, pp. 178-  
80.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 341; 1914-  
15 Amsterdam, no. 60; 1920  
New York, no. 35; 1923 London,  
no. 12; 1930 Laren, no. 2?; 1931  
Amsterdam, no. 169; 1945  
Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1947  
Groningen, no. 43; 1947  
Rotterdam, no. 58; 1948-49 The  
Hague, no. 219; 1953 Zürich,  
no. 54; 1956 Haarlem, no. 43;  
1957-58 Leiden & Schiedam, no.  
59; 1958 Bergen, no. 60; 1975  
Malmö, no. 41; 1976 Stockholm  
& Oslo, no. 41; 1980-81  
Amsterdam, no. 156.

196 Landscape in stormy  
weather

JUNE-AUGUST 1885  
Black chalk, heightened with  
white chalk, on light grey-blue  
laid paper  
29.7 × 22.6 cm  
Watermark: remnants of PL BAS,  
cropped on the right  
Unsigned

Inv. d 54 V/1962  
F 1346 JH 804

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 114;  
Vanbeselaere 1937, p. 413; De la  
Faille 1970, pp. 468-69; Amster-  
dam 1987, p. 421, no. 2.321;  
Den Bosch 1987-88, pp. 213-14,  
no. 80; Hulsker 1989, pp. 176,  
178-79; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
pp. 114, 345-46, vol. 2, pl. ccxxx;  
Heenk 1995, p. 128; Hulsker  
1996, pp. 178-80.

EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 340; 1914-  
15 Amsterdam, no. 53; 1920 New  
York, no. 26; 1931 Amsterdam,  
no. 168; 1947-48 Alkmaar, no. 20;  
1948-49 The Hague, no. 220;  
1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 80.



## 197-202 Harvesting wheat

When Theo van Gogh paid a visit to Nuenen at the beginning of August 1885, he took the opportunity of examining his brother's latest work. Vincent had specifically invited him to come to his studio, but warned him that he had little time to spare. 'I am rather busy today, as they are reaping the corn in the fields, for this lasts only a few days, as you know, and it is surely almost one of the most beautiful things' (525/419).

There are eight known drawings and a painting of the wheat harvest that must have been made that month. Six of the sheets are in the Van Gogh Museum, while the other three scenes belong to the collection of the Kröller-Müller Museum.<sup>1</sup>

The eight drawings fall into two groups. Three are devoted to the actual harvesting process. A man is reaping, and in two there is also a woman binding up the sheaves (*cat.* 197 and *fig.* 197a).<sup>2</sup> In all the others the reaping has been completed, and the scenes are dominated by the stooks of wheat; only in catalogue number 198 is there still a figure to be seen binding the sheaves together into a stook. The painting



197<sup>a</sup> *Wheatfield with a peasant man and woman harvesting* (F 1302r JH 917). Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.



197<sup>b</sup> *Stook of wheat* (F 193 JH 914). 1885. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum.

<sup>1</sup> The latter are F 193 JH 914, F 1322r JH 916 and F 1301r JH 1301.

<sup>2</sup> The third drawing, of a reaper alone, is F 1322 JH 916.

<sup>3</sup> F 561 JH 1480.

<sup>4</sup> The two drawings in the Kröller-Müller Museum are both on wove paper water-marked TS & Z.

<sup>5</sup> One of the sheets in the Kröller-Müller Museum has a border, F 1301 JH 917. Both drawings are signed, but as with the large figures in sketchy settings (see cats. 180-192, note 11) those signatures must be viewed with suspicion, for the two drawings came from the collection of Hidde Nijland.

<sup>6</sup> See also the Introduction.

(fig. 197b) shows just a single stook, and is a compositional innovation of which Van Gogh was to make a modern variant in Arles.<sup>3</sup>

The subject of a stook of wheatsheaves had an almost religious significance for Van Gogh. He considered rural life and work on the land to be a grand expression of the 'eternal, of which the sower and the wheatsheaf are the symbols,' as he wrote in 1888 from Arles to his friend Emile Bernard [630/B7]. It is no coincidence that he mentions the sower and the wheatsheaf in the same breath, for it is the sower who scatters the seed for each year's harvest, and thus symbolises new life, while the wheatsheaf, which is associated with the subject of the reaper (see also cat. 16), stands for the very last stage, and thus for life's end. It is this annually recurring cycle that filled Van Gogh with an awareness of the 'eternal.'

Theo probably saw *Wheatfield with reaper and peasant woman binding sheaves* (cat. 197) when he visited Vincent's studio, for in August the latter wrote: 'Since you left I have made another little picture of the harvest [...] – a reaper, a woman binding sheaves, and the mill, like those drawings you saw' [530/421]. The use of the word drawings means that there must have been at least one more sheet of a reaper, a woman binding sheaves and a mill. However, like the small painting already mentioned, it has vanished without trace.

All the drawings are in black chalk, which is partly stumped, and four are on laid paper and two on wove.<sup>4</sup> Only in number 199 was milk used as a fixative and grey wash; lighter passages were created using an eraser. Van Gogh seems to have regarded two of the drawings as rather better than the rest, for he added a firm border as a finishing touch (cats. 199, 200). The border of number 202 is little more than a careless framing device. Not one of the six, however, has a signature.<sup>5</sup> Catalogue number 199 contains lines that point to the use of a perspective frame.<sup>6</sup>



197 Wheatfield with reaper and peasant  
woman binding sheaves



198 Stooks and a peasant stacking sheaves



199 Stooks and a mill



200 Wheatfield with a stook and a mill



201 Stooks and a mill



202 Wheatfield with stooks and a mill

197 Wheatfield with  
reaper and peasant  
woman binding  
sheaves

AUGUST 1885  
Black chalk on wove paper  
28.6 × 41.1 cm  
Unsigned  
Reverse of cat. 192

Inv. d 123 V/1962  
F 1321r JH 915

PROVENANCE  
1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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.

LETTER  
530/421.

LITERATURE  
De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 110,  
vol. 4, pl. CXXIII; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 274, 391, 413; De la  
Faille 1970, pp. 460-61;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 425,  
no. 2.344; Den Bosch 1987-88,  
pp. 184-88, no. 56; De la Faille  
1992, vol. 1, pp. 110, 338-39,  
vol. 2, pl. CXXII; Heenk 1995,  
pp. 124, 126; Hulsker 1996,  
pp. 192, 202-03.

EXHIBITIONS  
1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 95; 1923  
Utrecht, no. 6; 1923 Rotterdam,  
no. 6; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 37;  
1929-30 Rotterdam, no. 26; 1931  
Amsterdam, no. 158; 1948-49  
The Hague, no. 216; 1956  
Haarlem, no. 38; 1987-88 Den  
Bosch, no. 56; 1990 Otterlo, no.  
102.

198 Stooks and a peasant  
stacking sheaves

AUGUST 1885  
Black chalk on laid paper  
19.7 × 32.8 cm  
Watermark: VDL  
Unsigned

Inv. d 49 V/1962  
F 1339 JH 912

PROVENANCE  
1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 113,  
vol. 4, pl. CXXVIII; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 274, 391, 413; De la  
Faille 1970, pp. 466-67;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 425, no.  
2.346; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
pp. 113, 344, vol. 2, pl. CXXVIII;  
Heenk 1995, p. 124; Hulsker  
1996, pp. 202-03.

EXHIBITIONS  
1905 Amsterdam, no. 308; 1914-  
15 Amsterdam, no. 104; 1927-28  
Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no.  
34; 1928 Paris, no. 35; 1956  
Haarlem, no. 41.

199 Stooks and a mill

AUGUST 1885  
Black chalk, grey wash, on wove  
paper  
Traces of a squaring  
Traces of fixative  
44.3 × 56.3 cm, the framed  
scene 39.3 × 54.2 cm  
Watermark: TS & Z  
Unsigned

Reverse of cat. 187

Inv. d 173 V/1962  
F 1319v JH 911

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 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 1970, pp. 460-61;  
Amsterdam 1987, p. 425,  
no. 2.343; Den Bosch 1987-88,  
pp. 184-87, no. 55; Otterlo 1990,  
p. 131; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1,  
p. 338, vol. 2, pl. CXXVIII; Heenk  
1995, pp. 124, 126; Hulsker 1996,  
pp. 192, 202.

EXHIBITIONS

1975 Malmö, no. 42; 1976  
Stockholm & Oslo, no. 42; 1976-  
77 Tokyo, Kyoto & Nagoya, no. 33;  
1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 55; 1990  
Otterlo, no. 107.

200 Wheatfield with a  
stook and a mill

AUGUST 1885  
Black chalk on laid paper  
25.0 × 34.3 cm  
Watermark: PL BAS  
Unsigned

Inv. d 51 V/1962  
F 1341 JH 918

PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 on loan  
to the Stedelijk Museum, Amster-  
dam; 1962 Vincent van Gogh  
Foundation; 1962-73 on loan to  
the Stedelijk Museum, Amster-  
dam; 1973 on permanent loan to  
the Van Gogh Museum, Amster-  
dam.

LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 114,  
vol. 4, pl. CXXVIII; Vanbeselaere  
1937, pp. 274, 391, 413; De la Faille

1970, p. 468; Amsterdam 1987, p. 425, no. 2.348; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 114, 344, vol. 2, pl. cxxviii; Heenk 1995, p. 126; Hulsker 1996, pp. 192, 203.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 452; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 156; 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 23; 1947 Groningen, no. 42; 1947 Rotterdam, no. 57; 1955 Antwerp, no. 74; 1980-81 Amsterdam, no. 160.

### 201 Stooks and a mill

AUGUST 1885

Black chalk, heightened with opaque white paint, on laid paper  
22.6 × 29.5 cm  
Unsigned

Inv. d 50 V/1962

F 1340 JH 913

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 113, vol. 4, pl. cxxviii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 274, 391, 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 467; Amsterdam 1987, p. 425, no. 2.347; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 130; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 113, 344, vol. 2, pl. cxxviii; Heenk 1995, p. 126; Hulsker 1996, pp. 192, 202-03.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 292? (possibly cat. 202); 1910 Cologne &

Frankfurt, no catalogue; 1920 New York, no. 31; 1924 Amsterdam, no. 121; 1929 Amsterdam, no. 39; 1930-31 Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden & Enschede, no. 22; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 154; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 218; 1949 Hengelo, no catalogue; 1949 Gouda, no catalogue; 1953 The Hague, no. 25; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 43; 1955 Antwerp, no. 73; 1956 Haarlem, no. 42; 1965 Nuenen, unnumbered.

### 202 Wheatfield with stooks and a mill

AUGUST 1885

Black chalk on laid paper  
30.1 × 45.7 cm, the framed scene  
25.0 × 34.2 cm  
Watermark: ED & Cie in a cartouche, and the figure 2  
Unsigned

Inv. d 52 V/1962

F 1342 JH 919

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 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. 3, p. 114, vol. 4, pl. cxxviii; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 274, 391, 413; De la Faille 1970, p. 468; Amsterdam 1987, p. 426, no. 2.349; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 114, 344-45, vol. 2, pl. cxxviii; Heenk 1995, p. 126; Hulsker 1996, pp. 192, 203.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 292? (possibly cat. 201); 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 49; 1953 Zürich, no. 53.



## 203 Woman shelling peas

In August 1885 Van Gogh briefly returned to the subject of women working at home by the light of a window, which he had first embarked upon in March-April 1885 (*cats.* 151-154). He wrote to his brother telling him that he was making 'studies of interiors' [530/421]. He sent Theo some drawings shortly afterwards, including his latest: a 'woman shelling peas' [531/422]. It can be assumed that he was referring to this drawing of a tired-looking woman annotated 'Ecosseuse de pois' at lower left. Van Gogh also added his signature and put a border around the scene, so he evidently felt that it was marketable, and hoped that Theo would find a buyer in Paris.

Technical and stylistic aspects of the drawing support this identification, and show that it was not one of the earlier variations on the subject. It is on a sheet of wove paper with part of the watermark TS & Z. Van Gogh used this paper mainly in the summer of 1885 for his



203<sup>a</sup> Detail of cat. 203.

### AUGUST 1885

Black chalk on wove paper  
42.2 × 26.7 cm, the framed  
scene 39.0 × 26.7 cm  
Watermark: TS [& Z], cropped at  
the upper left corner  
Signed at lower left, within the  
border: Vincent  
Annotated at lower left, outside  
the border: Ecosseuse de pois

Inv. d 369 V/1962  
F 1214 JH 702

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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.

### LETTER

531/422.

### LITERATURE

Bremmer 1910, no. 85; De la  
Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 87, vol. 4,  
pl. xcvi; Vanbeselaere 1937,  
pp. 278, 412; De la Faille 1970,  
pp. 436-37; Amsterdam 1987, p.  
414, no. 2.280; Den Bosch 1987-  
88, p. 170, no. 39; Feilchenfeldt  
1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992,  
vol. 1, pp. 87, 309, vol. 2, pl.  
xcvii; Heenk 1995, p. 127;  
Hulsker 1996, pp. 154-56.

### EXHIBITIONS

1900-01 Rotterdam, no. 9; 1905  
Amsterdam, no. 304; 1908  
Munich, no. 72; 1908 Dresden,

no. 76; 1908 Frankfurt, no. 83; 1909-10 Berlin, no catalogue; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 105; 1923 Rotterdam, ex catalogue; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 159; 1937 Paris, no. 131; 1937 Oslo, no. 25; 1938 Copenhagen, no. 9; 1945 Amsterdam, unnumbered; 1946 Maastricht & Heerlen, no. 24; 1946 Stockholm, Gothenburg & Malmö, no. 14; 1946 Copenhagen, no. 13; 1946-47 Liège, Brussels & Bergen, no. 17; 1947 Paris, no. 17; 1947 Geneva, no. 17; 1947-48 Alkmaar, no. 38; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 221; 1949 Hengelo, no catalogue; 1949 Gouda, no catalogue; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 36; 1953 Zürich, no. 38; 1953 The Hague, no. 27; 1953 Otterlo & Amsterdam, no. 45; 1953-54 Bergen op Zoom, no. 37; 1954-55 Bern, no. 106; 1955 Antwerp, no. 93; 1955 Amsterdam, no. 48; 1955-56 Liverpool, Manchester & Newcastle-upon-Tyne, no. 96; 1957 Nijmegen, no. 31; 1957 Stockholm, no. 41; 1958-59 San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland & Seattle, no. 105; 1960 Enschede, no. 21; 1961-62 Baltimore, Cleveland, Buffalo & Boston, no. 97; 1962-63 Pittsburgh, Detroit & Kansas City, no. 97; 1963 Humlebaek, no. 75; 1964 Washington & New York, no. 75; 1966 Paris & Albi, no. 19; 1967 Lille & Zürich, no. 20; 1967-68 Dallas, Philadelphia, Toledo & Ottawa, no. 18; 1968 Liège, no. 18; 1968-69 London, no. 48; 1971-72 Paris, no. 136; 1987-88 Den Bosch, no. 39.

large figures working on the land (*cats.* 180-192). It was thanks to those studies that he had made such great progress in rendering the volume of the human figure, which is well illustrated by this *Woman shelling peas*. Her predecessors were drawn with angular lines and heavy, dark passages, whereas here the style is spontaneous, varied and assured. The woman's hands, which perform the central action and are thus a crucial element in compositions of this kind, are more finely detailed than in his earlier efforts (*fig.* 203a).



203 Woman shelling peas

## 204 Woman by a hearth

AUGUST 1885

Black (probably lithographic)  
crayon, pink wash, on wove paper  
43.2 × 35.3 cm  
Unsigned

Inv. d 113 V/1962  
F 1288 JH 797

### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925  
J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62  
V.W. van Gogh; 1962 Vincent van  
Gogh Foundation; 1962-73 on loan  
to the Stedelijk Museum, Amster-  
dam; 1973 on permanent loan to  
the Van Gogh Museum, Amster-  
dam.

### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 103,  
vol. 4, pl. cxvi; Vanbeselaere 1937,  
pp. 277, 392, 413; De la Faille  
1970, p. 453; Amsterdam 1987,  
p. 420, no. 2.317; Feilchenfeldt  
1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992,  
vol. 1, pp. 103, 330, vol. 2, pl.  
cxvi; Heenk 1995, pp. 123, 129;  
Hulsker 1996, p. 178.

### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 322; 1914  
Antwerp, no. 10? (possibly cat. 150);  
1914 Berlin, no. 4; 1920 New York,  
no. 22; 1924 Amsterdam, no. 123;  
1925 The Hague, no. 79; 1927-28  
Berlin, Vienna & Hannover, no.  
20; 1928 Paris, no. 22; 1929  
Amsterdam, no. 33; 1930-31  
Arnhem, Groningen, Leeuwarden  
& Enschede, no. 18; 1955 Antwerp,  
no. 95; 1964 Zundert, no. 13; 1975  
Malmö, no. 34; 1976 Stockholm &  
Oslo, no. 34; 1976-77 Tokyo, Kyoto  
& Nagoya, no. 29.

This drawing of a woman poking the fire under a kettle with a pair of tongs is of a slightly later date than was assumed hitherto. De la Faille places it in May 1885, Hulsker a month later. There are various reasons for grouping it with the studies of interiors that Van Gogh was working on in August 1885.

In the first place, it is considerably larger than the studies of May and June (*cats.* 163-174). At that time, Van Gogh commenced his attempts to render the human frame more convincingly in quite small drawings, and only later progressed to much larger figure studies. Initially these had only minimal settings, and it was not until August that, on Theo's insistence, he began placing his models in more recognisable surroundings (see *cat.* 194). It was then, too, that his interest in interiors was revived (see *cat.* 203).



204<sup>a</sup> Peasant reaping (F 1312 JH 854),  
1885. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.



204<sup>b</sup> Woman by a hearth (F -  
JH 796), 1885. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller  
Museum.



204 Woman by a hearth

1 See the introduction to *Drawings 1*, pp. 27-29, and cats. 47-53 and 55-58. Cat. 189 may also be in lithographic crayon, but there the handling of line is firmer.

2 There is a drawing in that collection of a woman peeling potatoes at the hearth that is similar in composition to the drawing discussed here. Its authenticity, though, was recently queried for stylistic and technical reasons, and quite rightly so; see Heenk 1995, p. 130.

3 F 176 JH 799 is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

4 See note 1.



204<sup>c</sup> Cat. 204, before restoration.

Stylistically, this drawing with its flowing style is more directly related to the large figured works of earlier that summer (cats. 180-192) than to the drawings that preceded them (cats. 163-174). The similarity would have been even more marked if Van Gogh had not used a soft, greasy and slightly shiny chalk for this drawing, applying it in broad strokes. As a result, his handling of line is not as distinctive as usual, and this is particularly noticeable in the firewood behind the woman. Vincent used a similar drawing material for the *Sower* in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and that sheet, too, has a softness that sets it apart from most of the work from that period (fig. 204a). The material strongly resembles the greasy, soft and often rather shiny lithographic crayon that Van Gogh used so often in The Hague.<sup>1</sup> The paper, finally, is a solid wove, and it too is associated more with the agricultural labourers of the summer of 1885 than with their predecessors.

The Kröller-Müller Museum has a sketch which may have been a preliminary study made *in situ* (fig. 204b).<sup>2</sup> In New York there is a painting that corresponds quite closely to this drawing, although there the woman is seen obliquely from the front. That canvas may date from the same period, although it is not impossible that it was executed in the spring of 1885.<sup>3</sup>

The drawing has a pink watercolour wash in the head and upper torso. Van Gogh applied a liquid (probably ordinary water) to the black around the woman's bulky nether regions, which are shrouded in several layers of skirts, probably with the intention of achieving the effect of a dark wash. He had done the same in his earlier drawings in lithographic crayon,<sup>4</sup> and once again this caused the paper to blister. In this case it did so in radial creases around the woman's posterior. Material was lost from the peaks of those creases, baring the white paper. The resulting halo effect posed a serious threat to the woman's dignity (fig. 204c). Many of Van Gogh's drawings show signs of wear, but rarely is it so serious that it needs correction. In this case, though, the worn patches were far too insistent, and it was decided to restore the sheet. It is shown here in its restored state.

## 205 Woman by a hearth

Most of the watercolours from Van Gogh's Nuenen period are in a technique he had developed in The Hague. Although he invariably calls them watercolours in his letters, by far the majority were painted with an opaque paint that had been highly diluted. They can therefore be called 'aquarelles gouachées' – a form of watercolour that Van Gogh had learned about from a manual.<sup>1</sup> This drawing of a woman standing by the hearth in her cottage was done in that technique.

It is here assigned to the studies of interiors that Van Gogh was working on in August 1885 (see *cats.* 203, 204). There are two other related drawings from the same period (*fig.* 205a).<sup>2</sup>

Van Gogh worked over a cursory sketch in black chalk or charcoal. The woman is probably about to start cooking. A pot to the left of the



205<sup>a</sup> *Woman by a hearth* (F 1293  
JH 896), 1885. Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie  
Stuttgart.

AUGUST 1885

Black chalk or charcoal, transparent and opaque watercolour, on laid paper  
34.9 × 44.8 cm  
Watermark: HFD C  
Signed at lower left: Vincent

Inv. d 207 V/1962

F 1222 JH 895

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-62 V.W. van Gogh; 1931-62 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. 3, p. 89, vol. 4, pl. c11; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 278, 393, 412; De la Faille 1970, p. 438; Amsterdam 1987, p. 422, no. 2.330; Feilchenfeldt 1988, p. 129; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 89, 311, vol. 2, pl. c11; Van Tilborgh 1993, pp. 20-21; Heenk 1995, pp. 106, 111; Hulsker 1996, pp. 192, 198-99.

#### EXHIBITIONS

1905 Amsterdam, no. 326; 1909-10 Berlin, no catalogue; 1914-15 Amsterdam, no. 46; 1920 New York, no. 15; 1931 Amsterdam, no. 150; 1948-49 The Hague, no. 223; 1949-50 New York & Chicago, no. 37; 1963 Paris, no. 29; 1964 Zundert, no. 8.

<sup>1</sup> See *Drawings 1*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> The drawing not reproduced here is F 1223 JH 894.

hearth with something green in it is ready to be hung over the fire. As with the *Woman preparing a meal* (cat. 150), there is a broom by the hearth for sweeping cinders out of the hearth. In that earlier drawing there is also a devotional print known as a 'house blessing' above the broom, as there is here. The type of fireplace with the remarkably large chimney-breast is well illustrated in a photograph of around 1915 (fig. 205b).

The drawing is on laid paper watermarked HFDC, which Van Gogh preferred for his watercolours (compare cats. 82-85, 87).



205<sup>b</sup> Cottage interior with chimney-breast, ca. 1915. Nuenen, J.C. Jegerings photograph collection.





205 Woman by a hearth



206 A Sunday in Eindhoven

## 206 A Sunday in Eindhoven

This rain-soaked square is an impression of a Sunday in Eindhoven, as Van Gogh recorded in French at lower left. The location was recently identified as the city's Station Square.<sup>1</sup> Although very sketchy, the building in the background is nevertheless recognisable as the Neo-Classical structure built in 1866, which has since been demolished. Van Gogh probably made one or more sketches on the spot, as he often did, and used them to produce this sheet back in the studio. It is certainly not very likely that he would have tried to paint a watercolour in the open air on a rainy day. On more than one occasion (see *cat.* 76) he made mistakes with a view he no longer had in front of him. The station building may not be shown in all its detail, but the central section is quite true-to-life, as shown by a photograph (*fig.* 206a). At the bottom one can see the three entrances, and above them the windows below a cornice and an ornamental superstructure.

It is not possible to date this sheet closely. It is probably because of the fairly bright colour scheme that it is invariably dated to the second



206a Eindhoven Station, circa 1900. Nuenen, J.C. Jegerings photograph collection.

MAY-SEPTEMBER 1885

Transparent and opaque watercolour, pen in brown ink, on watercolour paper  
20.8 × 29.5 cm  
Signed and annotated at lower left: Un Dimanche à Eindhoven/Vincent

Inv. d 47 V/1969  
F 1348 JH 958

#### PROVENANCE

1890-91 T. van Gogh; 1891-1925 J.G. van Gogh-Bonger; 1925-69 V.W. van Gogh; 1969 Vincent van Gogh Foundation; 1969-73 on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; 1973 on permanent loan to the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

#### LITERATURE

De la Faille 1928, vol. 3, p. 115, vol. 4, pl. cxxix; Vanbeselaere 1937, pp. 258, 413; De la Faille 1970, pp. 468-69; Amsterdam 1987, p. 426, no. 2.351; De la Faille 1992, vol. 1, pp. 115, 346, vol. 2, pl. cxxix; Heenk 1995, pp. 106, 109-10; Hulsker 1996, pp. 210-11.

#### EXHIBITION

1953 Zürich, no. 55.

<sup>1</sup> Van Hoek 1996, pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Heenk 1995, p. 110, regards the colour scheme as highly unusual, and suggests that this and two other watercolours (F 1234 JH 954 and F 1705 JH 1028) are actually the work of Willem van de Wakker. There is no doubt at all, however, that *A Sunday in Eindhoven* is an autograph Van Gogh. Not only can it be related convincingly to other works in the use of colour, but it is signed and annotated by Van Gogh (and the handwriting is quite definitely his). In addition, it comes directly from the Van Gogh family collection.

<sup>3</sup> The word 'Un' in the annotation, which is jammed in between the edge of the paper and the word 'Dimanche', was added by the artist later.

half of 1885, when Van Gogh was also using a lighter palette in his paintings. However, comparison with the *Lumber sale* of January 1884 (cat. 77), which is also an outdoor scene, shows no startling difference in the hues. The most one can say is that there is a more striking use of contrasts, such as the man to the left of centre with his blue smock and bright red bundle.<sup>2</sup> On this slender evidence, and the dense foliage of the trees, the drawing is here dated May-September 1885, although it is still possible that it was made earlier.

The scene is in transparent and opaque watercolour, most of the latter being highly thinned. The outlines of some of the figures – the man, who is probably a tramp with all his worldly possessions slung on a stick over his shoulder, and the women in the centre with their long coats – were reinforced with the pen in brown ink. The right half of the drawing is now disfigured by several large stains. Brown oil paint was spilled onto the back of the sheet, and the oil migrated from the paint into the paper, turning brown with the passage of time. This unfortunate mishap had evidently not yet occurred when Van Gogh finished the sheet, for the signature and the annotation 'Un Dimanche à Eindhoven' show that he was pleased with the result and hoped that Theo would be able to sell it to one of his Paris customers.<sup>3</sup>



# Exhibitions

- 1897 GRONINGEN Groningsch Museum, March-April  
*[Title unknown]*
- 1900-01 ROTTERDAM Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 23 December-10 February  
*Tentoonstelling van teekeningen van Vincent van Gogh*
- 1904 ROTTERDAM Kunstzalen Oldenzeel, 10 November-15 December  
*Tentoonstelling van werken door Vincent van Gogh*
- 1905 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 15 July-1 September  
*Tentoonstelling Vincent van Gogh*
- 1906 ROTTERDAM Kunstzalen Oldenzeel, 26 January-28 February  
*Tentoonstelling Vincent van Gogh*  
BERLIN [unknown location], December  
*Zwölfte Kunstausstellung der Berliner Secession, Zeichnende Künste*
- 1907 BERLIN Ausstellungshaus am Kurfürstendamm, December  
*Vierzehnte Ausstellung der Berliner Secession, Zeichnende Künste*
- 1908 MUNICH Moderne Kunsthandlung, April  
*Vincent van Gogh*  
DRESDEN Emil Richter, April-May  
*Vincent van Gogh/Paul Cézanne*  
FRANKFURT Frankfurter Kunstverein, 14-28 June  
*V. van Gogh Ausstellung*  
THE HAGUE Kunstzalen C.M. van Gogh, dates unknown; AMSTERDAM Kunstzalen C.M. van Gogh, 3-24 September  
*Vincent van Gogh tentoonstelling*
- 1909-10 BERLIN Ausstellungshaus am Kurfürstendamm, 27 November-9 January  
*19. Ausstellung der Berliner Secession, Zeichnende Künste*
- 1910 COLOGNE Kunstverein, January; FRANKFURT Moderne Kunsthandlung Marie Held, February  
*[Title unknown]*  
BERLIN Cassirer, 25 October-20 November  
*III. Ausstellung. Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890*
- 1911 AMSTERDAM Larensche Kunsthandel, June  
*Tentoonstelling van schilderijen, aquarellen en teekeningen van Vincent van Gogh*  
HAMBURG Commeter, November  
*[Title unknown]*
- 1912 DRESDEN/BRESLAU Galerie Arnold, February  
*Ausstellung Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890*  
THE HAGUE Artz en De Bois, July-August  
*Tentoonstelling van teekeningen door Vincent van Gogh*
- 1914 ANTWERP Feestzaal, 7 March-5 April  
*L'art contemporain. Salon 1914/Kunst van Heden. Tentoonstelling 1914*  
BERLIN Cassirer, May-June  
*Vincent van Gogh 30. März 1853-29. July 1890. Zehnte Ausstellung*
- 1914-15 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 22 December-12 January  
*Teekeningen door Vincent van Gogh: uit de verzameling van mevrouw J. van Gogh-Bonger en den heer V.W. van Gogh*
- 1920 NEW YORK Montross Gallery, 23 October-closing date unknown  
*Vincent van Gogh exhibition*
- 1921 NEW YORK The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 3 May-15 September  
*Loan exhibition of impressionist and post-impressionist paintings*
- 1923 UTRECHT Vereeniging 'Voor de Kunst', 28 January-25 February  
*Vincent van Gogh. Teekeningencollectie van Mevr. J. van Gogh-Bonger*  
ROTTERDAM Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 15 March-2 April  
*Vincent van Gogh. Teekeningencollectie van Mevr. J. van Gogh-Bonger*  
LONDON The Leicester Galleries, December  
*Vincent van Gogh exhibition*
- 1924 AMSTERDAM Gebouw voor Beeldende Kunst, March-April  
*Vincent van Gogh tentoonstelling*  
BASEL Kunsthalle Basel, 27 March-21 April  
*Vincent van Gogh*  
ZÜRICH Kunsthaus Zürich, 3 July-10 August  
*Vincent van Gogh*  
STUTT GART Württembergischer Kunstverein, October-November  
*Ausstellung Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890*
- 1925 PARIS Galerie Marcel Bernheim, 5-24 January  
*Exposition rétrospective d'œuvres de Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890)*  
THE HAGUE Pulchri Studio, March-April  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1926 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 15 May-15 June  
*Vincent van Gogh tentoonstelling ter gelegenheid van het internationale jeugdfeest der S.J.I.*  
MUNICH Glaspalast, 1 June-early October  
*I. Allgemeine Kunst-Ausstellung*  
LONDON The Leicester Galleries, November-December  
*Vincent van Gogh exhibition*
- 1927-28 BERLIN Otto Wacker, 6 December-1 February; VIENNA Neue Galerie, February-March; HANNOVER Kestner Gesellschaft, 3-25 April  
*Vincent van Gogh. Erste grosse Ausstellung seiner Zeichnungen und Aquarelle*  
ROTTERDAM Museum Boymans, 23 December-16 January  
*Kersttentoonstelling in het Museum Boymans*
- 1928 PARIS Galerie Dru, 23 June-12 July  
*Aquarelles, dessins et pastels de Van Gogh (1853-1890)*
- 1929 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 19 October-17 November  
*Teekeningen en aquarellen door Vincent van Gogh*
- 1929-30 ROTTERDAM De Rotterdamsche Kring, 21 December-12 January  
*Teekeningen en aquarellen door Vincent van Gogh uit het bezit*

- van den heer Ir. V.W. van Gogh te Laren
- 1930 LAREN Openbare Leeszaal, 4-30 September  
*Teekeningen van Vincent van Gogh*
- 1930-31 ARNHEM De Korenbeurs, 12-26 December; GRONINGEN Pictura, Groote Societeit, 4-19 January; LEEUWARDEN Friesch Museum, 24 January-8 February; ENSCHEDE Openbare Leeszaal, 13-25 February  
*Tentoonstelling van teekeningen, aquarellen en schilderijen door Vincent van Gogh*
- 1931 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, May  
*Vincent van Gogh. Werken uit de verzameling van Ir. V.W. van Gogh, in bruikleen afgestaan aan de Gemeente Amsterdam*
- 1932 MANCHESTER Manchester City Art Gallery, 13 October-27 November  
*Vincent van Gogh. Loan collection of paintings & drawings*
- 1935-36 NEW YORK Museum of Modern Art, 5 November-5 January; PHILADELPHIA Philadelphia Museum of Art, 13 January-10 February; BOSTON Museum of Fine Arts, 18 February-15 March; CLEVELAND Cleveland Museum of Art, 25 March-19 April; SAN FRANCISCO California Palace of the Legion of Honor, 28 April-24 May; KANSAS CITY William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and Atkins Museum, 9 June-10 July; MINNEAPOLIS Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 20 July-17 August; CHICAGO The Art Institute of Chicago, 26 August-23 September; DETROIT Detroit Institute of Arts, 6-28 October  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1937 PARIS Les Nouveaux Musées, June-October  
*La vie et l'œuvre de Van Gogh*
- OSLO Kunstnernes Hus, 3-24 December  
*Vincent van Gogh. Malerier, tegninger, akvareller*
- 1938 COPENHAGEN Charlottenborg, January  
*Vincent van Gogh. Malerier, tegninger, akvareller*
- 1945 AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 14 September-1 December  
*Vincent van Gogh. Een documentaire tentoonstelling*
- 1946 MAASTRICHT Bonnefanten, 13-27 January; HEERLEN Raadhuis, 8-24 February  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- STOCKHOLM Nationalmuseum, 8 March-28 April; GOTHENBURG Göteborgs Konstmuseum, 3-26 May; MALMÖ Malmö Museum, 29 May-16 June  
*Vincent van Gogh. Utställning anordnad till förmån för svenska hollandshjälpen*
- COPENHAGEN Charlottenborg, 22 June-14 July  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1946-47 LIÈGE Museum voor Schoone Kunsten, October; BRUSSELS Museum voor Schoone Kunsten, 9 November-19 December; BERGEN Paleis voor Schoone Kunsten, January  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1947 PARIS Musée de l'Orangerie, January-March  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- GENEVA Musée Rath, 22 March-20 April  
*172 œuvres de Vincent van Gogh (1852-1890)*
- GRONINGEN Kunstlievend Genootschap Pictura, 25 May-15 June  
*Tentoonstelling van tekeningen en aquarellen van Vincent van Gogh uit de collectie van Ir. V.W. van Gogh*
- ROTTERDAM Museum Boymans, July-August  
*Vincent van Gogh. Tekeningen uit de verzameling van Ir. V.W. van Gogh*
- BASEL Kunsthalle Basel, 11 October-23 November  
*Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890*
- 1947-48 LONDON The Tate Gallery, 10 December-14 January; BIRMINGHAM City Art Gallery, 24 January-14 February; GLASGOW City Art Gallery, 21 February-14 March  
*Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890*
- ALKMAAR Stedelijk Museum, 25 December-18 January  
*Tentoonstelling van tekeningen door Vincent van Gogh, uit de collectie van Ir. V.W. van Gogh*
- 1948 HILVERSUM Goois Museum, 20 March-17 April  
*Tekeningen van Vincent van Gogh*
- BERGEN Kunstforening, 23 March-18 April; OSLO Kunstnernes Hus, 24 April-15 May  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1948-49 THE HAGUE Haags Gemeentemuseum, 12 October-10 January  
*Vincent van Gogh. Collectie ir. V.W. van Gogh*
- 1949 HENGELO Openbare Leeszaal, 29 January-1 March?  
*Tekeningen van Vincent van Gogh*
- GOUDA Catharina Gasthuis, 13 April-29 May  
*Tekeningen van Vincent van Gogh*
- 1949-50 NEW YORK The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 21 October-15 January; CHICAGO The Art Institute of Chicago, 2 February-16 April  
*Vincent van Gogh paintings and drawings. A special loan exhibition*
- 1951 LYONS Musée de Lyon, 5 February-27 March; GRENOBLE Musée de Grenoble, 30 March-2 May; ARLES Musée Réattu/St. Rémy Hotel de Sade, 5-27 May  
*Vincent van Gogh en Provence*
- AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 19 October-3 December  
*Rembrandt, Hokusai, Van Gogh*
- 1952 BASEL Kunstmuseum Basel, January-February  
*Rembrandt, Hokusai, Van Gogh*
- GRONINGEN Kunstlievend Genootschap Pictura, 12 April-12 May  
*Rembrandt, Hokusai, Van Gogh*
- 1953 ZÜRICH Kunsthaus Zürich, 24 January-1 March  
*Van Gogh. Zeichnungen und Aquarelle aus der Vincent van Gogh-*

- Stiftung im Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
- THE HAGUE Haags Gemeentemuseum, 30 March-17 May  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- ZUNDERT Parochiehuys, 30 March-20 April  
*Vincent van Gogh in Zundert*
- HOENSBROEK Kasteel Hoensbroek, 23 May-27 July  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- OTTERLO Kröller-Müller Museum, 24 May-19 July; AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 23 July-20 September  
*Eeuwfeest Vincent van Gogh*
- ASSEN Provinciehuys, 6-29 November  
*Vincent van Gogh in Assen*
- 1953-54 SAINT LOUIS City Art Museum of Saint Louis, 17 October-13 December; PHILADELPHIA Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2 January-28 February; TOLEDO The Toledo Museum of Art, 7 March-30 April  
*Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890*
- BERGEN OP ZOOM Stadhuis, 23 December-10 January  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1954-55 BERN Kunstmuseum Bern, 27 November-30 January  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- WILLEMSTAD Curaçaosch Museum, 19 December-15 January  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1955 PALM BEACH Society of the Four Arts, 21 January-13 February; MIAMI Lowe Gallery of the University of Miami, 24 February-20 March; NEW ORLEANS Isaac Delgado Museum, 27 March-20 April  
*Vincent van Gogh 1853-1890*
- ANTWERP Feestzaal, 7 May-19 June  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, June-September  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1955-56 LIVERPOOL The Walker Art Gallery 29 October-10 December; MANCHESTER Manchester City Art Gallery, 17 December-4 February; NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE Laing Art Gallery, 11 February-24 March  
*Vincent van Gogh. Paintings & drawings, mainly from the collection of Ir. V.W. van Gogh*
- 1956 HAARLEM Vishal, 21 July-29 August  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1957 BREDA De Beyerd, 2-24 February  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- MARSEILLES Musée Cantini, 12 March-28 April  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- NIJMEGEN Waag, 13 March-15 April  
*Tekeningen en aquarellen van Vincent van Gogh*
- STOCKHOLM Nationalmuseum, 5 October-22 November  
*Vincent van Gogh. Akvareller, teckningar, oljestudier, brev*
- 1957-58 LEIDEN Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal, 9 November-16 December; SCHIEDAM Stedelijk Museum, 21 December-27 January  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1958 BERGEN (Belgium) Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 22 March-5 May  
*Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890). Son art et ses amis*
- 1958-59 WASHINGTON National Gallery of Art; NEW YORK The Pierpont Morgan Library; MINNEAPOLIS The Minneapolis Institute of Arts; BOSTON Museum of Fine Arts; CLEVELAND The Cleveland Museum of Art; CHICAGO The Art Institute of Chicago [dates unknown]  
*Dutch drawings. Masterpieces of five centuries*
- SAN FRANCISCO The M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, 6 October-30 November; LOS ANGELES Los Angeles County Museum, 10 December-18 January; PORTLAND The Portland Art Museum, 28 January-1 March; SEATTLE Seattle Art Museum, 7 March-19 April  
*Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings*
- 1959-60 UTRECHT Centraal Museum, 18 December-1 February  
*Vincent van Gogh schilderijen en tekeningen, verzameling Ir. V.W. van Gogh*
- DORDRECHT Dordrechts Museum, 24 December-31 January  
*Bekoring van het kleine*
- 1960 ENSCHEDE Rijksmuseum Twente, 6 February-20 March  
*Vincent van Gogh. Tekeningen*
- 1960-61 MONTREAL The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 6 October-6 November; OTTAWA The National Gallery of Canada, 17 November-18 December; WINNIPEG The Winnipeg Art Gallery, 29 December-31 January; TORONTO The Art Gallery of Toronto, 10 February-12 March  
*Vincent van Gogh. Paintings-drawings. Tableaux-dessins*
- 1961 SCARBOROUGH Scarborough Art Gallery, 12-17 June  
*Dutch Graphic Art*
- 1961-62 BALTIMORE The Baltimore Museum of Art, 18 October-26 November; CLEVELAND The Cleveland Museum of Art, 5 December-14 January; BUFFALO Albright Art Gallery, 30 January-11 March; BOSTON Museum of Fine Arts, 22 March-29 April  
*Vincent van Gogh. Paintings, watercolors and drawings*
- 1962 LONDON Marlborough Fine Art Limited, May-June  
*Van Gogh's life in his drawings. Van Gogh's relationship with Signac*
- RECKLINGHAUSEN Kunsthalle Recklinghausen, 19 May-15 July  
*Idee und Vollendung*
- 1962-63 PITTSBURGH Carnegie Institute, 18 October-4 November; DETROIT Detroit Institute of Arts, 11 December-29 January; KANSAS CITY William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art, Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, 7 February-26 March  
*Vincent van Gogh. Paintings, watercolors and drawings*



- 1963 PARIS Institut Néerlandais, 28 February-31 March  
*L'Aquarelle néerlandaise au siècle dernier*  
SHEFFIELD Graves Art Gallery, 20 April-12 May  
*An exhibition of the works of Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings lent by Mr. V.W. van Gogh through the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam*  
AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 6 July-29 September  
*150 jaar Nederlandse Kunst. Schilderijen, beelden, tekeningen, grafiek 1813-1963*  
HUMLEBAEK Louisiana, 24 October-8 December  
*Vincent van Gogh. Malerier og tegninger*
- 1964 WASHINGTON The Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 2 February-19 March; NEW YORK The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2 April-28 June  
*Vincent van Gogh. Paintings, watercolors and drawings*  
ZUNDERT Parochiehuis, 28 May-8 June  
*Tentoonstelling van tekeningen van Vincent van Gogh*
- 1965 CHARLEROI Palais des Beaux-Arts, 9 January-9 February; GHENT Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 19 February-21 March  
*Vincent van Gogh. Schilderijen, aquarellen, tekeningen*  
NUENEN Gemeentehuis, 8-29 May  
*Vincent van Gogh. Schilderijen, aquarellen, tekeningen*  
MARSEILLES Musée Cantini, 17 May-15 August
- 1963 PARIS Institut Néerlandais, 28 February-31 March  
*L'Aquarelle néerlandaise au siècle dernier*  
SHEFFIELD Graves Art Gallery, 20 April-12 May  
*An exhibition of the works of Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings lent by Mr. V.W. van Gogh through the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam*  
AMSTERDAM Stedelijk Museum, 6 July-29 September  
*150 jaar Nederlandse Kunst. Schilderijen, beelden, tekeningen, grafiek 1813-1963*  
HUMLEBAEK Louisiana, 24 October-8 December  
*Vincent van Gogh. Malerier og tegninger*
- 1964 WASHINGTON The Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 2 February-19 March; NEW YORK The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2 April-28 June  
*Vincent van Gogh. Paintings, watercolors and drawings*  
ZUNDERT Parochiehuis, 28 May-8 June  
*Tentoonstelling van tekeningen van Vincent van Gogh*
- 1965 CHARLEROI Palais des Beaux-Arts, 9 January-9 February; GHENT Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 19 February-21 March  
*Vincent van Gogh. Schilderijen, aquarellen, tekeningen*  
NUENEN Gemeentehuis, 8-29 May  
*Vincent van Gogh. Schilderijen, aquarellen, tekeningen*  
MARSEILLES Musée Cantini, 17 May-15 August
- 1966 ARNHEM Gemeentemuseum Arnhem, 22 January-27 February  
*Zestig schilderijen en tekeningen van Vincent van Gogh uit het Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller te Otterlo*  
PARIS Institut Néerlandais, 28 January-20 March; ALBI Musée Toulouse Lautrec, 27 May-31 August  
*Vincent van Gogh. Dessinateur*
- 1967 LILLE Palais des Beaux Arts, 14 January-13 March; ZÜRICH Kunsthaus Zürich, 5 April-4 June  
*Vincent van Gogh. Dessins, aquarelles*  
WOLFSBURG Stadthalle Wolfsburg, 18 February-2 April  
*Vincent van Gogh. Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen*  
TILBURG Nederlands Textielmuseum, 21 April-1 August  
*Het textielambacht in de schilderkunst van de 16e tot de 20e eeuw*
- 1967-68 DALLAS Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 6 October-4 November; PHILADELPHIA Philadelphia Museum of Art, 17 November-31 December; TOLEDO The Toledo Museum of Art, 20 January-3 March; OTTAWA The National
- Expressionnisme Allemand 1900-1920
- 1965-66 STOCKHOLM Moderna Museet, 22 October-19 December; GOTHENBURG Göteborgs Konstmuseum, 30 December-20 February  
*Vincent van Gogh. Målningar, akvareller, teckningar*
- 1966 ARNHEM Gemeentemuseum Arnhem, 22 January-27 February  
*Zestig schilderijen en tekeningen van Vincent van Gogh uit het Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller te Otterlo*  
PARIS Institut Néerlandais, 28 January-20 March; ALBI Musée Toulouse Lautrec, 27 May-31 August  
*Vincent van Gogh. Dessinateur*
- 1967 LILLE Palais des Beaux Arts, 14 January-13 March; ZÜRICH Kunsthaus Zürich, 5 April-4 June  
*Vincent van Gogh. Dessins, aquarelles*  
WOLFSBURG Stadthalle Wolfsburg, 18 February-2 April  
*Vincent van Gogh. Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen*  
TILBURG Nederlands Textielmuseum, 21 April-1 August  
*Het textielambacht in de schilderkunst van de 16e tot de 20e eeuw*
- 1967-68 DALLAS Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 6 October-4 November; PHILADELPHIA Philadelphia Museum of Art, 17 November-31 December; TOLEDO The Toledo Museum of Art, 20 January-3 March; OTTAWA The National
- Gallery of Canada, 14 March-15 April  
*Vincent van Gogh. Drawings, watercolors*
- 1968 LIÈGE Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 3-30 September  
*Vincent van Gogh. Dessins, aquarelles*
- 1968-69 LONDON Hayward Gallery, 23 October-12 January  
*Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation Amsterdam*
- 1969 HUMLEBAEK Louisiana, 25 January-16 March  
*Vincent van Gogh. Tegninger og akvareller*
- 1969-70 LOS ANGELES The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 14 October-1 December; SAINT LOUIS City Art Museum of Saint Louis, 20 December-1 February; PHILADELPHIA Philadelphia Museum of Art, 28 February-5 April [only paintings]; COLUMBUS The Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, 5 March-5 April [only drawings]  
*Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings*
- 1970 FRANKFURT Frankfurter Kunstverein, 30 April-21 June  
*Vincent van Gogh. Zeichnungen und Aquarelle*
- 1970-71 BALTIMORE The Baltimore Museum of Art, 11 October-29 November; SAN FRANCISCO The M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, 11 December-31 January; NEW YORK The Brooklyn Museum,
- 14 February-4 April  
*Vincent van Gogh. Paintings and drawings*
- 1971-72 PARIS Orangerie des Tuileries, 21 December-10 April  
*Vincent van Gogh. Collection du Musée National Vincent van Gogh à Amsterdam*
- 1972 HAARLEM Frans Halsmuseum, 5 April-3 July  
*Van medicijnman tot medicus*  
BORDEAUX Musée des Beaux Arts, 21 April-20 June  
*Vincent van Gogh. Collection du Musée National Vincent van Gogh à Amsterdam*
- 1972-73 STRASBOURG Musée d'Art Moderne, 22 October-15 January; BERN Kunstmuseum Bern, 25 January-1 April  
*Vincent van Gogh. Collection du Musée National Vincent van Gogh à Amsterdam*
- 1974 FLORENCE Palazzo Strozzi, 11 May-30 June  
*Quarta biennale internazionale della grafica d'arte. La grafica dal realismo al simbolismo*
- 1975 MALMÖ Malmö Konsthall, 6 June-10 August  
*Vincent van Gogh. 100 teckningar och akvareller. 100 drawings and water colours*  
BERN Kunsthalle Bern, 5 July-17 August  
*Die Junggesellenmaschinen*  
AMSTERDAM Van Gogh Museum, 24 September-31 December  
*De verzameling engelse prenten van Vincent van Gogh*

- 1976 AMSTERDAM Rijksmuseum, 24 January-15 February  
*De notaris in de kunst/Le notaire dans l'art*
- STOCKHOLM Galleriet, Kulturhuset, 10 February-28 March; OSLO Munch Museet, 5 April-15 June  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1976-77 TOKYO The National Museum of Western Art, 30 October-19 December; KYOTO The National Museum of Modern Art, 6 January-20 February; NAGOYA The Aichi Prefectural Art Gallery, 24 February-14 March  
*Vincent van Gogh exhibition*
- 1977 PARIS Grand Palais, 4 November-3 December  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1977-78 THE HAGUE Pulchri Studio, 26 November-8 January  
*De Haagse Kunstkring. Werk verzameld 1891-1958*
- 1978 THE HAGUE Haags Gemeentemuseum, 15 September-27 November  
*Kunstenaren der idee. Symbolistische tendenzen in Nederland, ca. 1880-1930*
- 1979 TOKYO Odakyu Grand Gallery, 27 April-16 May; SAPPORO Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, 20 May-10 June; HIROSHIMA The Hiroshima Prefectural Museum, 15 June-1 July; NAGOYA The Aichi Prefectural Art Gallery, 12-30 September  
*Dutch painting from the century of Van Gogh*
- 1980 UTRECHT Centraal Museum, 7 June-20 July  
*Een schilderij centraal. Arbeiders op steenfabriek Ruimzicht van Anthon G.A. van Rappard*
- 1980-81 STUTTGART Württembergischer Kunstverein, 23 November-18 January  
*Van Gogh bis Cobra. Holländische Malerei 1880-1950*
- AMSTERDAM Van Gogh Museum, 13 December-22 March  
*Vincent van Gogh in zijn Hollandse jaren. Kijk op stad en land door Van Gogh en zijn tijdgenoten 1870-1890*
- 1981 UTRECHT Centraal Museum, 14 February-20 April  
*Van Gogh tot Cobra. Nederlandse schilderkunst 1880-1950*
- 1982 AMSTERDAM Van Gogh Museum, 5 July-18 November  
*Een nieuwe keuze uit de collectie tekeningen en prenten*
- 1983-84 HAMBURG Hamburger Kunsthalle, 11 November-8 January  
*Luther und die Folgen für die Kunst*
- AMSTERDAM Van Gogh Museum, 20 December-February  
*Presentatie aanwinsten Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh*
- 1985-86 TOKYO The National Museum of Western Art, 12 October-8 December; NAGOYA 21 December-2 February  
*Vincent van Gogh exhibition*
- 1986 OSAKA The National Museum of Art, 21 February-31 March  
*Vincent van Gogh from Dutch collections. Religion, humanity, nature*
- 1987-88 DEN BOSCH Noordbrabants Museum, 2 November-10 January  
*Van Gogh in Brabant. Schilderijen en tekeningen uit Etten en Nuenen*
- MANCHESTER Manchester City Art Gallery, 14 November-10 January; AMSTERDAM Van Gogh Museum, 24 January-13 March; NEW HAVEN Yale Centre for British Art, 6 April-29 May  
*Hard times. Social realism in Victorian art*
- 1988 ROME Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, 28 January-4 April  
*Vincent van Gogh*
- 1990 OTTERLO Kröller-Müller Museum, 30 March-29 July  
*Vincent van Gogh. Tekeningen*
- 1991 AMSTERDAM Van Gogh Museum, 1 March-26 May  
*De schilders van Tachtig. Nederlandse schilderkunst 1880-1895*
- 1993 AMSTERDAM Van Gogh Museum, 11 June-29 August  
*De aardappeleters van Vincent van Gogh*



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- AMSTERDAM 1987 Evert van Uiter and Michael Hoyle (eds.), cat. *The Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh*, Amsterdam 1987
- AMSTERDAM 1988-89 Louis van Tilborgh et al., exhib. cat. *Van Gogh & Millet*, Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) 1988-89
- AMSTERDAM 1990 Evert van Uiter et al., exhib. cat. *Vincent van Gogh. Paintings*, Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) 1990
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# Colophon

## EDITORS

Jan Robert  
Louis van Tilborgh  
Marije Vellekoop

## DOCUMENTATION

Monique Hageman  
Fieke Pabst  
Marije Vellekoop

## TRANSLATOR AND ENGLISH EDITOR

Michael Hoyle

## DESIGN

Cees de Jong  
Corine Teuben  
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## FRONT COVER

Detail of cat. 90, *Knotberken*, 1884.



Vincent van Gogh  
Drawings  
Volume 2  
Nuenen  
1883-1885  
Van Gogh Museum

Sjraar van Heugten  
Translated by  
Michael Hoyle

Complete series of  
drawings and paintings,  
8 volumes

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**VAN GOGH**  
MUSEUM

*Vincent van Gogh: Drawings. Volume 2: Nuenen 1883-1885*, the second in the eight-volume catalogue raisonné of Van Gogh's drawings and paintings in the collection of the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, examines the drawings the artist made during his two-year stay in the Brabant village of Nuenen.

It is his depictions of the Brabant landscape and the harsh life led by peasants there that characterise his *œuvre* of the period. During this time his paintings and drawings take on a new confidence and coherence they have previously lacked. He approaches drawing from a new angle, aiming to depict 'not a hand [...] but the gesture, not a mathematically correct head, but the grand expression'.

This volume contains dozens of studies of heads and hands, and several composition and detail sketches, which demonstrate this development and which show how he prepared for the masterpiece of his Dutch period, *The Potato Eaters*. As with Volume 1, the author Sjraar van Heugten provides a detailed technical analysis of each of the 140 full-colour reproductions of Van Gogh's drawings illustrated in this volume.

This complete catalogue of the Van Gogh Museum collection, to be published in eight volumes, reflects the most up-to-date research on the artist. Five volumes are devoted to the drawings and three to the paintings.

