# Vincent Van Gogh

## Slide 1

Hi, today we’re going to look at the works of Vincent Van Gogh who was born in 1853 and died in 1890 at the age of 37.   Vincent Van Gogh never quite fit in anywhere and failed at a series of jobs before deciding to become a painter.  Vincent suffered from some type of mental illness; possibly bi-polar disorder or epilepsy.  Due to his troubles, he was very sympathetic and empathetic of other people, no matter what their plight.  This self-portrait is appropriately predominantly painted in blues, reflecting an all too common mood. Van Gogh was always studying the works and styles of other artists and this self-portrait also shows the influence of Seurat’s pointillism or divisionism technique.

## Slide 2

Next we’ll look at “Bedroom at Arles” from 1889.  Vincent moved from Paris to the south of France hoping to connect with other artists, and be inspired by the landscape there.  His favorite color was yellow and he found a little yellow house to rent.  This painting shows his bedroom from that house.  As usual, Van Gogh’s colors are vibrant and his texture is thick.  But look closely at the work – everything seems to be paired.  There are two doors, two chairs, two pillows, two portraits, two drawings and a double window.  Many scholars believe it expressed his desire for a relationship; whether it was for friends, companionship, or a lover.

## Slide 3

This might be the only work Vincent Van Gogh ever sold in his lifetime; although some scholars believe he actually gave it to Dr. Gachet for medical services rendered. It is a portrait of Dr. Paul Gachet from 1890, who was treating Van Gogh at the time of his death. It is a rather sad rendering as the doctor leans his head against his hand and looks out at the viewer with weary eyes. The flowering plant on the table is a foxglove and was believed to have had curative properties. One contributing factor to Van Gogh’s depression was his lack of success as a painter. There are two versions of this work; the other was auctioned at Christie’s in New York in 1990 for 82.5 million dollars!! One wonders if Van Gogh’s life would have had the same end result if he had been a successful artist, selling works during his lifetime…..One last side note: some scholars believe this work, currently located in the Musee d’Orsay in Paris, was actually a copy of the other version made by Dr. Gachet himself, who was an artist as well. Of course, the Musee d’Orsay lists the artist as Vincent Van Gogh.

## Slide 4

This image shows a church from a little town outside of Paris and was completed in June of 1890, just a month before Van Gogh’s death. He lived his last two months in this town while being treated by the aforementioned Dr. Gachet. In this two month period, Van Gogh produced an astounding seventy paintings and numerous drawings, which some scholars attribute to a manic phase followed by a deep depression that led to his suicide. Once again, Van Gogh’s expressive tendencies are apparent in this work; it was not an exact likeness of the church, though certainly recognizable, but rather an expression of the church. While not a large building, it has a sturdy, grounded foundation and welcoming stained glass windows. It also has that swirling, twisting sky, perhaps alluding to Van Gogh’s troubled state of mind and desire for a stabilizing influence.

## Slide 5

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The last image shows a typical Van Gogh landscape with an energized sky, cypress trees, and texture that juts off the canvas. While the cypress tree is a symbol of both death and eternal life and was featured prominently in his last works, this one seems more hopeful as he relies on cool greens instead of deep blues and includes quaint little homes.

Thanks for joining me on this brief look at the works of Vincent Van Gogh.

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