

VINCENT VAN GOGH
377.1



Vincent van Gogh, Dutch, 1853-90
Wheat Field, 1888

Oil on canvas: 21¾ x 26¼ in. (55.2 x 66.7 cm.)

Gift of Mrs. Richard A. Cooke and family in memory of Richard A. Cooke, 1946 (377.1)

After a particularly hard winter in 1887-88, Vincent van Gogh traveled to the south of France, hoping the sun and warmth would restore his failing health. From February 20, 1888, to May 8, 1889, he lived in Arles, a small town on the Rhone River. In less than 15 months, the artist created about 100 drawings and watercolors and 200 paintings, a prolific flowering of creative genius unequaled by any 19th-century artist. Although prodigious, this production was carefully planned and focused. As van Gogh explained in his letters, he divided his work into a series of thematic paintings. The Academy's *Wheat Field* belongs to the "Harvest"

series, 10 paintings executed in the last half of June 1888.

Unlike other works in this series, which display dramatic perspectives accented with diagonals, this painting is constructed in distinct horizontal bands that lead the eye from the sheaves and stubble in the foreground to the rows of wheat in the midground, to the trees and buildings on the horizon line, and finally to the sky. Only the seemingly swaying sheaves in the foreground and the two distant trees disrupt the separate, brightly colored planes.

"Everywhere now there is old gold, bronze, copper, one might say, and this with the green azure of the sky blanchd with heat," van Gogh

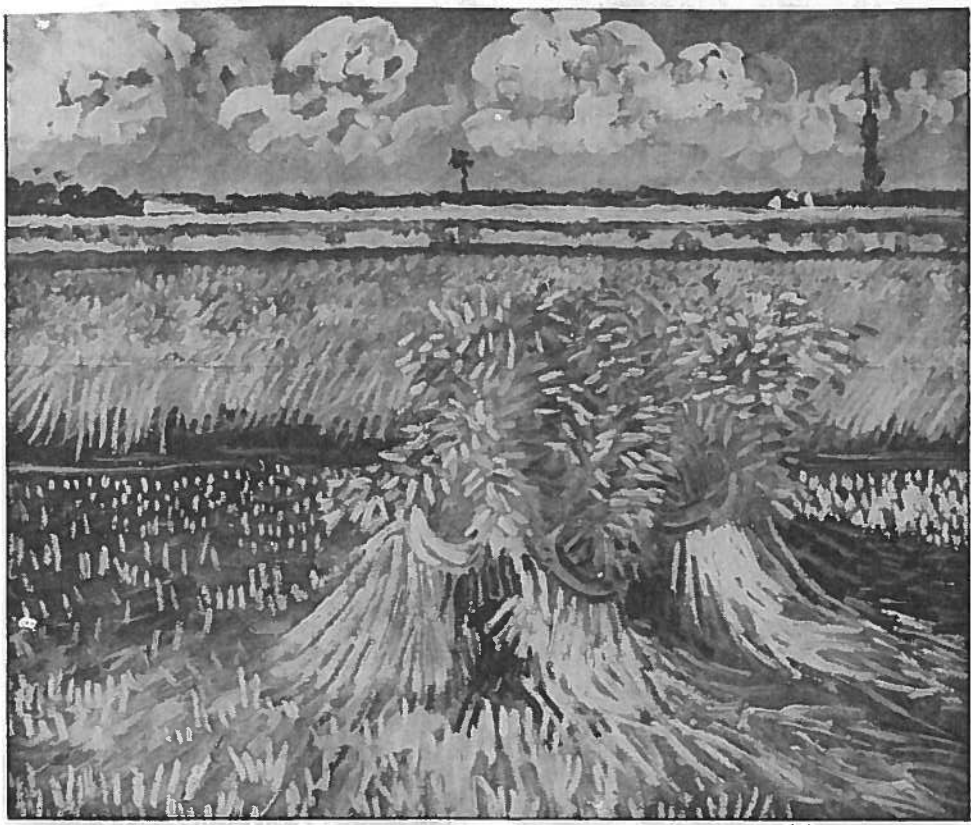
June. To accentuate what he termed the high yellow note, van Gogh used a complementary violet, setting up a vivid pulsating interplay in the lower half of *Wheat Field*. To create a deliberate abstraction of form, he used slashing strokes, dots,

and whorls to compose the elements of the painting. This abstraction can be seen in two van Gogh drawings (Staatliche Museen, Berlin, and private collection, Switzerland) based on the *Wheat Field*. During his summer in Arles, van Gogh evolved his mature style and left behind the dominating and restricting influences he had felt in Paris. His relieflike impasto, accentuated brushwork, and lightness of tones were breakthroughs. Van Gogh's construction of form by discrete

emotion-charged strokes and his use of color to suggest more than the appearance of reality introduced important elements into modern art.
c N, 9/39
—Roger A. Dell



Wheatfield, an oil painting by Vincent Van Gogh (1858–1890), is among the works to be discussed by Pamela Wilk during the Spotlight Tour on Post-Impressionism on Sunday, November 27. Gift of Mrs. Richard A. Cooke and Family.



Impressionist masterpiece, *Wheat Field*, by Vincent van Gogh, gallery 1 SEP88

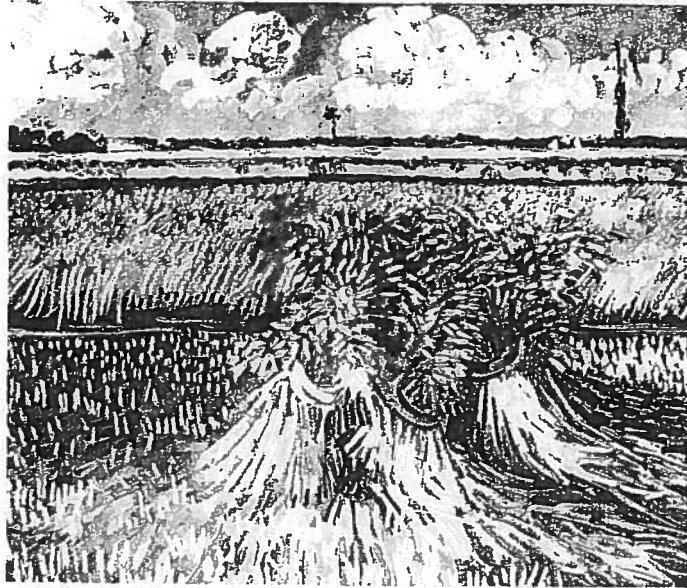
27 October: "Vincent van Gogh" by Dawn Dvorch, lecturer, Hawaii Pacific College. In his native Holland, van Gogh's paintings were characterized by somber colors, tortured forms and subject matter drawn chiefly from peasant life, After joining his brother Theo in Paris in 1886, van Gogh's style changed dramatically through his contact with the work of the impressionists. Turning to flower themes, views of Paris, portraits and self-portraits, he painted with the bright, high-keyed colors of the impressionists and even experimented with pointillist technique. In 1888 van Gogh went to the south of France and settled in Arles where—far from the influences of Paris—he evolved his own expressive style. His later paintings carried forth the innovations he had developed at Arles: emotion-charged brushwork, relief-like impasto, and the use of color to express something more than the simple appearance of reality.

Honolulu Academy of Arts

Landscapes Selected Works from the Galleries

Gallery #1

Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890)
WHEAT FIELD, 1888
oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Richard A. Cooke
and family in memory of
Richard A. Cooke, 1946 (377.1)



In many ways, all of Vincent van Gogh's work, including his landscapes, is a self-portrait. "I think what is alive in art is in the first place the painter, and in the second place the picture." Van Gogh was born in Holland to a family of ministers and art dealers. At the age of twenty-seven, after failing in missionary work, he decided he wanted to be a painter. His first paintings, the famous "potato-eaters" series, produced in northern Holland, are somber in tone, both visually and in subject matter.

Largely self-taught, van Gogh made an attempt at formal training in the Dutch style, but there emerged a tension between the inner being and the art process. In the early 1880s van Gogh went to Paris where he met the major Impressionists and, under their influence, began to lighten his palette. Leaving Paris, van Gogh traveled to Arles, in the south of France, where he discovered "the great sunlight effects," a marvel to someone from bleak northern Europe. Here he began to really see colors. There is a vibrance and vitality in his work. Rapidly executed, the paint is built up thickly, sometimes squeezed on directly from the tube. Shaped with color and vigorous brushwork, the paintings are extremely dynamic. In fifteen months at Arles, van Gogh produced 200 paintings and over 100 drawings. He wore a candle in his hat so he could work at night. He had become dependent on his brother Theo, an art dealer, and tried to get by on the equivalent of \$1.00 a day, sometimes making his brushes by chewing the ends of reeds, because he couldn't afford anything else.

Van Gogh's psychological problems, about which much has been written, worsened, and he committed himself to the asylum at St. Remy in Provence, not far from Arles. After his release a year later, in 1890, he went first to Paris and then returned to southern France where he ended his life. His last paintings express, in his own words, "sadness and extreme solitude."

The Academy's *Wheat Field* belongs to the "Harvest" series, ten paintings executed in June, 1888. The composition is arranged in horizontal bands, leading the eye from the sheaves in the foreground—built of thick, staccato brush strokes—to the fields of wheat in the middle ground, golden tones interspersed with bands of green, to trees and buildings on the horizon and finally to the blue sky accented with swirling white clouds. Van Gogh's own words describe the wheat fields of Arles in June: "Everywhere there is old gold, bronze, copper, one might say, and this with the green azure of the sky blanched with heat."

Gift of Mrs. Richard A. Cooke and family as a memorial
to Richard A. Cooke, 1946 (#377.1)
Oil on canvas, H 31" x W 36"

1853-90
Arles Period, 1888
Gallery 1

ARTIST: Born at parsonage of Groot-Zundert in Braubaut, March 30, 1853, exactly one year after the birth and death of older brother also named Vincent. Mother's grief over death of first Vincent is thought to have made the artist feel unloved and unwanted...all his life; turned to nature as substitute mother and his love is evidenced in his landscapes and still lifes. Also he identified with Dutch peasants and laborers who toiled in the soil. Works may be divided into 2 broad phases: first in Holland and Belgium, between 1880-1885...tend to be sombre and dark, accent on melancholy, loneliness, death, i.e. - "Potato Eaters." Second, in France, 1886-1890, tend to be colorful, brilliant with accent on joy, togetherness and heaven. Had a difficult, tortured personality; unsuccessful in love and business, he turned to art. Sustained psychologically and financially by his brother, Theo, for the rest of his life. In Paris, 1886-88, he met Lautrec, Pissarro, Degas, Seurat, Signac and Gauguin. In Arles 1888-89 a visit from Gauguin ended with Vincent trying to kill Gauguin and cutting off his own ear. "Sunflowers," "Portrait of Postman Roulin," "Wheatfield" in this period. In 1889, asked to be admitted to asylum in St. Remy; May 1890 went to Auvers, July 1890 he committed suicide. Considered Post-Impressionist master, influenced early 20th century paintings of Fauves in France and Expressionists of Brucke group in Germany.

SUBJECT: Horizontal composition in gold tones and green-blue. Foreground a shock of wheat (composed of sheaves of grain bound and propped together). Standing in stubble; behind - strip of uncut grain. Background narrow band of shocks in field, with alternating green and yellow bands of field receding to merge with distant strip of blue and green, accented by red and white buildings and one cypress tree at right. Green-

blue sky above, with white cumulus clouds stretching across picture. Frame: elaborate old gilt, antiqued to off-white.

MEDIUM & TECHNIQUE: Oil painting on canvas. Color laid on in thick bands in background; in foreground, vertical and slanting strokes. Clouds achieved with thick paint laid on nervous, swirling movement, typical of the artist. Van Gogh carried his paints and canvas to the scene and painted them instead of making sketches and painting in his studio which was the custom at that time.

STYLE: Arles period; style was direct, impatient; shaped with color; vigorous brush strokes, dynamic; squeezed paint from tube on painting. Typical of work in summer of 1888 in which he moves gaze from below upwards and time becomes one with space.

INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS: Ask children what kind of weather is shown...how can they tell? Point out how direction of brush strokes shapes the shocks of wheat, horizon, clouds. Rich textural feeling.

SIDE-NOTE: in his memory his family chose this painting because Mr. Richard Cooke was especially fond of Van Gogh's work.

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1853–1890

Wheat Field, 1888

Oil on Canvas

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From February 20, 1888, to May 8, 1889, Vincent van Gogh lived in Arles, France, a small town on the Rhône River, hoping the sun and warmth would restore his failing health. The Academy's *Wheat Field* belongs to the "Harvest" series, ten paintings he executed in the last half of June, 1888. Van Gogh developed his mature style in Arles, abandoning the dominating and restrictive influences he had felt in Paris. Here, distinct horizontal compositional bands lead the eye from the sheaves in the foreground to the rows of wheat in the middle ground, to the trees and houses on the horizon and the sky above. Pictorial energy, suggested by his accentuated brushwork and relieflike impasto, infuse the scene. Van Gogh's construction of form by emotion-charged strokes and expressive use of color—to suggest more than the appearance of reality—introduced important elements into modern art, which were adopted by later artists such as Henri Matisse.

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In February 1888, Vincent van Gogh moved from Paris to Arles, a small town on the Rhône River in the South of France. In Arles, all that had influenced him in Paris—Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, and Japanese prints—coalesced into a mature style marked by energetic, relief-like impasto and riotous, ebullient color. *Wheat Field* belongs to the artist's "Harvest" series, a group of ten paintings from the last half of June 1888. Distinct horizontal compositional bands lead the eye from the sheaves in the foreground to the rows of wheat in the middle ground, to the trees and houses on the horizon and the sky above. Like his friend and fellow Post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin, van Gogh emphasized personal expression over material reality, and in doing so anticipated twentieth-century Modernism.