

Van Gogh in Paris: *A Dialogue with Modernism*



Sunflowers, In the Cafe: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin, Interior of a Restaurant, Garden with Courting Couples. © 2012 Van Gogh Museum, The Netherlands

The Hangaram Design Museum at Seoul Arts Center is hosting a grand exhibition that unveils Vincent Van Gogh's transformative journey as an artist in Paris.

The notion of art was the essence of living for Van Gogh. Undeterred by his inner agonies and misfortunes, he dedicated 10 years of his short life to thoughtfully painting works that reflected the spirit of life. From his first masterpiece, "The Potato Eaters", portraying human figures in somber earth tones, to his brightly-hued paintings of "Sunflowers", Van Gogh hints at his artistic genius. But despite a decade of painting, it was during his two years in Paris that this Dutch artist transformed into the renowned master we celebrate today. From the years 1886 to 1888, at the height of his creative period, Van Gogh created unparalleled works of art that demonstrated his ability to utilize bold colors as well as focus on the theme of modernity.

In this special exposition, a collection of 60 unique oil paintings from the Van Gogh Museum of Amsterdam are purposefully displayed to illustrate how this talented painter transformed his art techniques from a realist to a modernist style. A detailed analysis and comparison of the subject matters, colors, materials and styles of the paintings throughout the exhibit lead to a deeper understanding of the artist's progress into the world of modernism.

While in Paris, Van Gogh began experimenting with bright colors by applying them to paintings of flowers. "Vase with Carnations" (1886) and "Small Bottle with Peonies and Blue Delphiniums" (1886) both illustrate beautiful, vibrantly-colored flowers. Having developed a great appreciation for pure colors, Van Gogh then painted brightly colored Japanese prints in his neo-impressionist work "Portrait of Père Tanguy" (1887).

Van Gogh's experimentation with the style of pointillism is apparent in "Interior of a Restaurant" (1887), where he used distinct dots of pure color. One of Van Gogh's largest canvas paintings, "Garden with Courting Couples" (1887) is also on display here. This marvelous piece of pointillist art is yet another example of Van Gogh's progression as a neo-impressionist painter.



Aside from revealing Van Gogh's artistic development, the exhibit also provides insight into his personal life. Van Gogh is known for painting numerous self-portraits. The mere fact that 27 self-portraits were created in Paris alone perhaps suggests that he was not able to hire models. Interestingly, for the first time ever, a collection of nine self-portraits from Paris are all displayed together here. His "Self Portrait with Grey Felt Hat" (1887) is particularly attractive due to the haloing effect created by its unique brushstrokes.

The exhibit also has a unique display of radiographic images that reveal the previously disguised details of various paintings. For example, "In the Cafe: Agostina Segatori in Le Tambourin" (1887) is actually painted over a bust of a woman. Similarly, "Glass with Yellow Roses" (1886) is painted over a plaster cast of Michaelangelo's "Young Slave".

To appreciate Van Gogh's artistic journey in Paris (1886-1888), head to the Seoul Arts Center near Nambu Bus Terminal Station (line 3, ex. 5). The exhibition is being showcased until March 24th, 2013. Admission is ₩8,000 to ₩15,000. For an additional ₩3,000, obtain an audio guide in English or Korean to further enhance your experience. The audio guide provides a brief account of 25 paintings throughout the exhibit. For more information, visit www.vangogh2.com or call 02-1588-2618.

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