

# Vincent van Gogh à Auvers

— Death notice of July 29<sup>th</sup> 1890 —



Vous êtes prié d'assister aux Convoi, Service et Inhumation de

**Monsieur Vincent VAN GOGH**

ARTISTE PEINTRE

Décédé en son domicile, à Auvers-sur-Oise, le Mardi 29 Juillet 1890, dans sa  
37<sup>e</sup> année ;

Qui se feront le Mercredi 30 Juillet, à 2 heures  $\frac{1}{2}$  précises, en l'Église  
d'Auvers-sur-Oise.

On se réunira 2, place de la Mairie, à Auvers-sur-Oise.

*DE PROFUNDIS.*

De la part de : Madame veuve VAN GOGH, sa mère, et de Monsieur Théodore  
VAN GOGH, son frère.

Départs de Paris-Nord : 7 h. 25, 9 h. 25, 10 h. 25, 11 h. 25, 1 h. 25, ~~2 h. 25~~, 3 h. 25.

## JULY 1890 : VAN GOGH'S FUNERAL IN AUVERS-SUR-OISE

On 27 July 1890, the painter Vincent van Gogh tried to end his life by shooting himself in the chest. After two agonizing days, he died in his little attic room at the Auberge Ravoux in the presence of Theo, his brother, closest confidant and unflinching supporter.

On Wednesday 30 July, many friends and acquaintances of the artist had come to Paris and the surrounding regions to pay a last tribute to him.

Theo had tried to arrange for the funeral to be held in Auvers' Notre-Dame church which had been immortalized by Vincent a few weeks earlier, but the priest refused. A man who had not only committed suicide, but was also a Protestant, was not to have a religious service. Theo had to correct the death announcements, which had already been printed, by hand.

The ceremony therefore took place at the Auberge Ravoux, which was decorated with sunflowers, yellow dahlias and the artist's last paintings.

After the priest at Auvers refused the loan of the hearse, bier and ropes, his colleague at Méry-sur-Oise resolved the situation by supplying what was needed to transport Van Gogh's coffin from the Auberge Ravoux to the Auvers cemetery. The fields were drenched in dazzling sunlight. Doctor Gachet, Vincent's friend and doctor, made a moving speech before the sorrowful mourners.

Six months later, Theo died at the age of 33 in the Netherlands, where he was buried. He left behind his young wife, Johanna Bonger, and their son Vincent Willem van Gogh, who was barely a year old.

In 1914, Johanna had Theo's remains moved so that the two brothers could be reunited after death in Auvers-sur-Oise

*« He was [...] an honest man and a great artist; he had only two aims, humanity and art. It was art that he prized above everything and which will make his name live. [...]. His funeral was a crowning finale that was truly worthy of his great spirit and his great talent. »*

Emile Bernard, letter to the art critic Albert Aurier, Paris, August 2nd, 1890.

*« People must know that he was a great Artist, which often goes hand in hand with being a great Man. In time, he will be recognized and there will be many who regret that he left us so soon. »*

Theo van Gogh, letter to his sister Lies, Paris, August 5th, 1890.



Skylight of Van Gogh's room at the Auberge Ravoux

Letter of August 2nd, 1890

The painter Emile Bernard describes the burial of Van Gogh to Albert Aurier, art critic  
(full transcript)

My dear Aurier,

Your absence from Paris means that you have not heard the dreadful news which however I am obliged to tell you without delay: Our dear friend Vincent died four days ago.

I think that you will have already guessed the fact that he killed himself.

On Sunday evening he went out into the countryside near Auvers, placed his easel against a haystack and went behind the chateau and fired a revolver shot at him. Under the violence of the impact (the bullet entered his body below the heart) he fell, but he got up again, and fell three times more, before he got back to the inn where he was staying (Ravoux, place de la Mairie) without telling anyone about his injury. He finally died on Monday evening, still smoking his pipe which he refused to let go of, explaining that his suicide had been absolutely deliberate and that he had done it in complete lucidity. A typical detail that I was told about his wish to die was that when Dr. Gachet told him that he still hoped to save his life, he said, «Then I'll have to do it over again». But, alas, it was no longer possible to save him. . . .

On Wednesday 30 July, yesterday that is, I arrived in Auvers at about 10 o'clock. His brother, Theodore van Gogh, was there together with Dr. Gachet. Also Tanguy (he had been there since 9 o'clock). Charles Laval accompanied me. The coffin was already closed, I arrived too late to see the man again who had left me four years ago so full of expectations of all kinds. . . The innkeeper told us all the details of the accident, the offensive visit of the gendarmes who even went up to his bedside to reproach him for an act for which he alone was responsible. . . etc...

On the walls of the room where his body was laid out all his last canvases were hung making a sort of halo for him and the brilliance of the genius that radiated from them made this death even more painful for us artists who were there. The coffin was covered with a simple white cloth and surrounded with masses of flowers, the sunflowers that he loved so much, yellow dahlias, yellow flowers everywhere. It was, you will remember, his favorite colour, the symbol of the light that he dreamed of as being in people's hearts as well as in works of art.

Near him also on the floor in front of his coffin were his easel, his folding stool and his brushes.

Many people arrived, mainly artists, among whom I recognized Lucien Pissarro and Lauzet, the others I did not know, also some local people who had known him a little, seen him once or twice and who liked him because he was so good-hearted, so human. . .

There we were completely silent all of us together around this coffin that held our friend.

I looked at the studies; a very beautiful and sad one based on Delacroix's La Vierge et Jésus.



Convicts walking in a circle surrounded by high prison walls, a canvas inspired by Doré of a terrifying ferocity and which is also symbolic of his end. Wasn't life like that for him, a high prison like this with such high walls--so high. . . and these people walking endlessly round this pit, weren't they the poor artists, the poor damned souls walking past under the whip of Destiny? . . .

At three o'clock his body was moved, friends of his carrying it to the hearse, a number of people in the company were in tears. Theodore van Gogh who was devoted to his brother, who had always supported him in his struggle to support himself from his art, was sobbing pitifully the whole time.

The sun was terribly hot outside. We climbed the hill outside Auvers talking about him, about the daring impulse he had given to art, of the great projects he was always thinking about, and of the good he had done to all of us.

We reached the cemetery, a small new cemetery strewn with new tombstones. It is on the little hill above the fields that were ripe for harvest under the wide blue sky that he would still have loved... perhaps.

Then he was lowered into the grave. . .

Anyone would have started crying at that moment... the day was too much made for him for one not to imagine that he was still alive and enjoying it...

Dr. Gachet (who is an art lover and possesses one of the best collections of impressionist painting of the present day) wanted to say a few words of homage about Vincent and his life, but he too was crying so much that he could only stammer a very confused farewell. . . (the most beautiful way, perhaps).

He briefly outlined Vincent's achievements, stating how sublime his goal was and how great an admiration he felt for him (though he had only known him a short time). He was, Gachet said, an honest man and a great artist, he had only two aims, humanity and art. It was art that he prized above everything and which will make his name live.

Then we returned. Theodore van Gogh was broken with grief; everyone who attended was very moved, some going off into the open country while others went back to the station.

Laval and I returned to Ravoux's house, and we talked about him. . .

But that is quite enough, my dear Aurier, quite enough, don't you think, about this sad day. You know how much I loved him and you can imagine how much I wept. You are his critic, so don't forget him but try and write a few words to tell everyone that his funeral was a crowning finale that was truly worthy of his great spirit and his great talent.

With my heartfelt wishes

Bernard



Photography Erik Hesmerg - © Institut Van Gogh

Graves of Vincent and Theo van Gogh in the communal cemetery of Auvers-sur-Oise.

As a tribute to the bond of friendship and loyalty that united Vincent and Theo, the son of Doctor Gachet planted ivy from his father's garden over the two graves, thereby transforming them into one tomb.

In the weeks after the funeral, Theo received many messages of affection and condolence:

« *A great artist is dead* » - Eugène Boch, painter and friend of Vincent.

« *I was really so fond of the artistic soul that was your brother. He leaves behind a great vacuum among the young artists.* » Camille Pissarro, painter and friend of Vincent.

« *You know he was a true friend to me and that he was an artist, something that is rare in our age. We shall continue to see him in his artworks. As Vincent often said: The stone shall die, but the word shall remain.* » Paul Gauguin, painter and friend of Vincent.

« *My sincerest condolences Mr Van Gogh. Your brother was warm-hearted and a true artist.* » Ernest Quost, painter admired by Van Gogh.

« *Men such as he do not entirely die. He leaves behind a body of work that is a part of himself and which, one day, you and I are sure of it, will revive his name and revive it eternally.* » Albert Aurier, art critic and great admirer of Van Gogh's work.