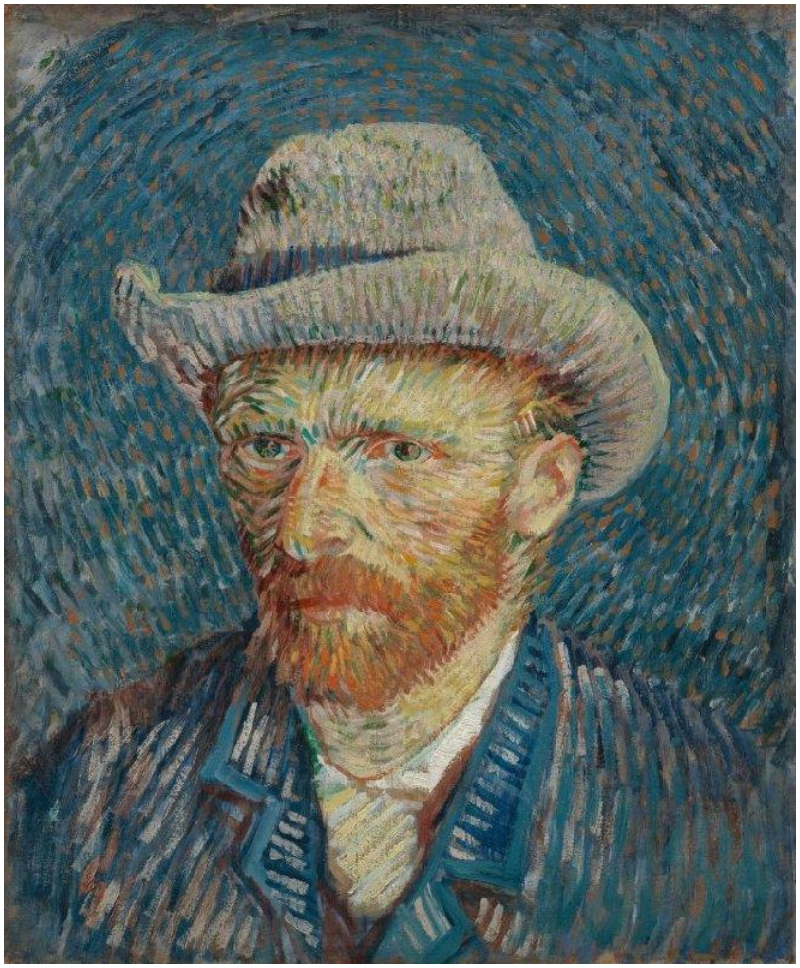
Stylistic, Aesthetic, and Thematic Representations of Ukiyo-e in The Post-Impressionist Movement: The Case of Vincent van Gogh

Daukšaitė, Marija

Stylistic, Aesthetic, and Thematic Representations of Ukiyo-e in The Post-Impressionist Movement: The Case of Vincent van Gogh



Student name: Marija Daukšaitė

Student number: s3960110

Supervisor: Dr. Doreen Müller

Word count: 14985

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION **2**

LITERATURE REVIEW – ISSUES OF TRANSCULTURALITY **7**

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND VINCENT VAN GOGH'S BIOGRAPHY **11**

JAPONISME MOVEMENT AND UKIYO-E CONTRIBUTION TO WESTERN ART 11

VAN GOGH'S BIOGRAPHY AND *JAPONISME* IMPACT 16

VAN GOGH'S ARTWORKS IN RELATION TO UKIYO-E PRINTS **23**

UKIYO-E IMPORTANCE IN VAN GOGH'S PORTRAITURE 23

NATURE AESTHETICS IN VAN GOGH PAINTINGS AND UKIYO-E ART 26

EVERYDAY LIFE SCENES AND THE ADOPTION OF JAPANESE ARTISTIC ELEMENTS 28

REINTERPRETATIONS OF JAPANESE ART BY VAN GOGH 30

CONCLUSIONS **32**

BIBLIOGRAPHY **35**

APPENDIX: IMAGES **38**

Introduction

Ukiyo-e 浮世絵 ("picture of the floating world") woodblock prints flourished in Japan during Edo period (江戸時代 *Edo jidai*, 1603–1868) when Japan was an isolated country. Once USA forcefully opened the country for worldwide trade various Japanese objects and art pieces were introduced to the West as a direct image of the exotic and still mysterious island nation. Meanwhile, through ukiyo-e art and its reproductions Western artists who were already developing innovative painting techniques, were introduced to different and novel ideas of how to capture the moment in art (Abou-Jaoude, 2016, 60). Both impressionist and post-impressionist movements were strongly impacted by Japanese art and specifically ukiyo-e, to the point that the fascination for Japan and the avid usage of compositional elements, techniques, subject matter, and themes common to ukiyo-e in Western art was named *Japonisme* (Eng. Japanism) (Naifeh and Smith, 2012, 555). Renowned artists like Monet, Manet, Degas, Cassatt, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Cézanne, and many more used a remarkable number of Japanese art elements in their own work (Genova, 2016, 3).

Through the movement of *Japonisme*, which was of immense orientalist nature, various painters including Van Gogh followed an orientalist and idealized version of Japan when creating their own works. Due to these noticed tendencies of painters borrowing Japanese art style and composition while also demonstrating aspects of Western hegemony and imperialist mentalities, from a macro-perspective *Japonisme* movement is often straightforwardly linked to orientalism. The obvious exoticization was tied to unequal power dynamics where Western painters imposed their ideas on subordinate orient consequently building the image of an "exotic primitive other". Thus, various artists who lived and painted between the 18th and 20th centuries are now being re-evaluated by utilizing orientalist framework created by Edward Said that paints orientalism negatively rather than positively (MacKenzie, 1995, 43). Since impressionists and post-impressionists are widely known for adopting Japanese art techniques, colour schemes and composition, they are also among those under scrutiny for their connection to orientalism.

This relatively recent scholarly need to meticulously examine artists regarding their orientalist mentalities and hegemonic stance toward "inferior Orient" leads us to the question – can we judge an individual artist by only forming a well-reasoned conclusion of a whole movement

or historical period? I would argue that analysing the orientalist nature of an artist by examining their artistic and historical surroundings is inadequate as each artist possesses their own individuality and intersubjectivity. Thus, to truly get to the root of the orientalist debate, it is necessary to analyse Van Gogh and his artworks on a personal level by considering his letters, personal values, and artistic interests. Analysing Van Gogh's paintings alongside his letters in relation to ukiyo-e art is crucial to get a more nuanced understanding of transculturality in the 19th century which evolved through the form of the *Japonisme* movement. Since even Van Gogh himself saw Japanese characteristics and features in his own works (Van Gogh Museum), analysis of Van Gogh's different genres of paintings can arguably lead to more in-depth comprehension on how much ukiyo-e expression was utilized in Western art as well as how the image and understanding of Japan was altered and reframed to appeal to the Western audience. The added wider framework can lead to a more nuanced understanding of whether Van Gogh succumbed to orientalist and imperialist mentality as well as give more complex meanings to transculturality and intersubjectivity within the 19th century context.

Hence, rather than simply exploring the more abstract ideological discourse on *Japonisme*, I will delve deeper into Van Gogh's interpretations of ukiyo-e styles, techniques, and subject matter evident in his artworks. By exploring the personal connection between Van Gogh's art and ukiyo-e prints, this thesis advocates for the necessity to take micro-perspective seriously when analysing an artist's attitude towards orientalist thought as it could vastly differ from what is noticeable from the macro-perspective. Thus, in this thesis I will not only analyse the historical background and artistic surroundings which Van Gogh was accustomed to, but I will also investigate the background of Van Gogh as well as his personal values which he likely displayed in his paintings. Since the main objective of this paper is to analyse the role and the importance of ukiyo-e art in Van Gogh's artworks, I will delve deeper into the elements of Japanese art representation visible in various paintings that I chose based on differing characteristics and genres. Through the analysis of individual works by Van Gogh we can discover new more in-depth approach to orientalism, Japanese exoticism, issues of transculturality and intersubjectivity. With this scholarly work I will attempt to do just that – move beyond the straightforward understanding that tends to equate Van Gogh's works with Japanese exoticism.

Literature overview

In the academic world there is an abundance of information regarding Van Gogh and his art. Scholarly works span from researching Van Gogh's life and hardships, letters, and his stylistic techniques as well as themes evident in his paintings. There are quite a few articles and books dedicated to in-depth analysis that explores the connection between Van Gogh's selected paintings and ukiyo-e art. However, there is a lack of scholarly articles that analyse imperialist, orientalist and transcultural ideas which are evident in Van Gogh's art works. Likewise, there are even fewer academic papers which would work with this framework while combining Van Gogh's letters and thoroughly explore his biographical context. Even the research that works with a broader frame of reference tends to focus on those paintings that showcase the most noticeable aspects of transculturality and artistic fusion.

Art historian Tsukasa Kōdera in a lot of his research analyses Van Gogh's paintings. One of his works specifically explores different ways in which Van Gogh exoticized Japan by delving deeper into various portrait analyses. The scholar investigates the subject matter and composition of the paintings. The focal point of the work is the aspect of exoticized and unrealistic views that Van Gogh had about Japan which he either learned through Japanese art and articles or through his own interpretations and projected ideals. Although his analysis is meticulous and brings forth refreshing ideas, the author does not investigate other genres of paintings and he does not mention borrowed techniques and only briefly discusses stylistic and compositional approaches that alludes to ukiyo-e. The scholar's focal point is the orientalising nature of the paintings, which is a common approach when analysing Van Gogh's art works. He emphasizes the *Japonisme* ideals that were implemented by Van Gogh in his paintings and how he redefined Japan to be a utopian world for an artist. Since the focus of the research was purely to examine orientalist narratives, the issue of transculturality seem to be partial and biased.

A different approach on analysing Van Gogh's paintings is evident in Yuxi Yi's article. The author delves deeper into the Zen aesthetics that are visible in both ukiyo-e and Van Gogh's art. Once again, the brief yet informative article gives a new point of view combining Van Gogh's paintings and Japanese aesthetics such as yūgen 幽玄 and wabi-sabi 侘び寂び. However, the article does not mention orientalism or *Japonisme* at all, which questions the research validity as these missing topics tend to define transculturality in the global context. Furthermore, though the article is well-written and has a hefty bibliography list, it is very short which makes the research itself lacking solidity and a wider frame of reference.

As I mentioned before, there is a handful of research done on Van Gogh and his paintings as well as the connection between him and Japanese art. However, a lot of the research, including the ones I mention above, lack broader themes and wider frame of reference. A lot of scholars that analyse Van Gogh hint at how the artist succumbed to orientalist and imperialist mentalities or briefly glance over his artistic endeavours which combined Western ideals with stylistic practices commonly seen in ukiyo-e prints all the while discrediting the possibility that other complexities could have been at play. The less nuanced point of view on the complex topic of transculturality simplifies the complex nature of globalization, whereas the tendency to narrow down analysis of Van Gogh's paintings to one or few themes seems to discredit Van Gogh's agency to his work. The aspect from which other scholars could benefit when analysing Van Gogh in relation to ukiyo-e is a framework that would combine various aspects of ukiyo-e motifs visible in different genres of painting as well as an in-depth exploration of the personal and impersonal historical context.

Structure

This thesis will primarily use previously written academic literature as well as Van Gogh's letters that mention Japan and ukiyo-e stylistic impact in painter's work. The letters and scholarly works will be used for credibility while making interpretations of Van Gogh's paintings in relation to ukiyo-e art. The paper will be divided into three chapters. The first one will be comprised of an extensive literature review that contextualize the theoretical framework of the research by exploring the existing issues on transculturality. The second chapter will delve deeper into the historical context behind Van Gogh's fascination with Japanese art which will help further deepen the knowledge on how Van Gogh understood ukiyo-e art and how he was able to incorporate its characteristics and techniques into his own work. This part will be divided into two sub-categories: historical context on Japanism and Van Gogh's relation to Japanism. The final chapter will analyse Van Gogh's artwork in relation to ukiyo-e and the chapter itself will be separated into four different parts where each part represents a category or genre of painting that incorporates ukiyo-e stylistic approaches, techniques, and themes in differing ways. The first part will analyse Van Gogh's portraiture. In this part both "Self-portrait dedicated to Gauguin" (Fig. 1) as well as "La Berceuse" (Fig. 2) portrait will be used as primary examples showcasing various Japanese art techniques Van Gogh incorporated into his work. The second part will examine close-up paintings of nature, both still life ("Sprig of Flowering Almond in a Glass") (Fig. 3) and living nature ("Almond Blossom")

(Fig. 4), which will provide concrete examples of specific aesthetics and composition approaches originating from Japan and specifically ukiyo-e. In the third part I will delve deeper into everyday life scenes depicted from the indoors (“The Bedroom”) (Fig. 5) and outdoors (“The Sower”) (Fig. 6) and analyse the connection between stylistic approaches in Van Gogh’s paintings and ukiyo-e art. The last part will look over the broader reinterpretations (which are sometimes called imitations or copies) of ukiyo-e art. I will investigate deeper meaning and correlations between ukiyo-e art and Van Gogh’s paintings by using examples of “Courtesan (after Eisen)” (Fig 7.) and “Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige)” (Fig. 8). Lastly, the paper will end with a brief conclusion.

Literature review – issues of transculturality

In the recent years the issue of transculturality has been a topic of interest for many scholars. Transculturality was developed by philosopher Wolfgang Welsh, who created the term "as a necessary cosmopolitan corrective to ethnocentrism and xenophobia" (Petersen, 2017, 12). According to Herren et al., transculturality rejects cultural comparisons and focuses on various tensions and incompatibilities between cultures, which is why it does not follow linear timeline (where the past precedes the present) that is common in Western historiography (Herren et al., 2012, 6). Transcultural discourse tends to evade straightforward understanding of transformation and merging of different cultural phenomena by trying to study the shift and movements within the context of globalization. What tends to be noticed when analysing transculturality between various mediums is the unmistakeable existence of colonialism, which seems to be the main Western political practice that propelled transculturality and made the contact between cultures noticeable. Before colonialism transculturality can be argued to have been negligible as cultural contact was being made only with bordering countries and regions. After the start of colonialism and globalization, the seemingly innocent study of "the other" was transformed into what we now know as orientalism. The scholarly discipline indisputably hints at Western hegemony, whereas orientalised subjects stand for inferiority and exoticism. Due to such historical context of transculturality, orientalism and imperialism are deeply rooted into the transcultural discourse. Equating transcultural movements between cultures that breach the borders of West and East to orientalism and Western hegemony brings forth issues in scholarly research related to art. Artworks that combine various cultural motifs and styles which stem from differing cultural backgrounds seem to be labelled as orientalist and imperialist because they are transcultural. In most cases this deduction is appropriate, however, the problem arises when orientalising nature of art becomes the only analysed viewpoint. I would argue that transcultural discourse needs to expand its framework to not only cover orientalist thought but would also incorporate artist's personal historical background.

One of the main arising problems in transcultural discourse is cultural appropriation. Many scholars point out the fine line between analysing transculturality and falling victim to appropriative practices. Recently, many academics have started discussions on whether specific artists or movements have appropriative roots and scholars attempted to find an answer on how to deal with the issue of cultural appropriation. Regarding this issue, Nelson's article on appropriation

skilfully explains the meaning of the term as well as provides a nuanced in-depth overview on appropriation while also giving suggestions on how to separate appropriated elements from the rest of the art. The main takeaway from his article is that appropriation is an "active, subjective, and motivated" process that distorts the primary connotations in order to adhere new meanings and symbolism (Nelson, Shiff, 2003, 162-164). Moreover, cultural appropriation is strongly linked to cultural exploitation, where a dominant culture uses the dominated culture's resources without any financial compensation (Rogers, 2006, 486). Thus, in the context of art, appropriation can be understood as a process of distorting an original image or element while exploiting it without giving credit. Furthermore, the process itself lacks mutual respect and the power dynamics are linked to dominant and dominated roles. What Rogers points out is that transcultural discourse does not always participate in degrading, appropriating, or homogenizing other cultures, as it sometimes showcases "cultural particularity, agency, identity, inventiveness, and resistance" (Rogers, 2006, 497). Viewing from a transcultural perspective, acts of appropriation can also be considered part of a culture, since essentialist model within a culture does not exist (Rogers, 2006, 478). What is crucial to highlight is that the easiest way in which appropriation can be defeated is if we revealed "the occluded motivating forces" of the appropriating process (Nelson, Shiff, 2003, 164). By showcasing how the deformation took place we shift from the narrative of appropriation, which tends to be impersonal, to interpretation that becomes personal and mutually engaging. Thus, if scholars critically look at cultural transformations, analyse appropriating practices by utilizing well-structured and unprejudiced interpretations as well as examine both sides of the exchange through transcultural discourse, the study should not succumb to cultural appropriation, homogenization or questionable (often orientalist) power dynamics. Regarding the art or artist that is being examined, what is essential to emphasise and to meticulously analyse is the act of distortion of a narrative that does not give proper credit, agency or homage to the origin as well as brings power dynamics into play. What will be evident later is that in Van Gogh's case he fully credited Japanese art, he seemed to integrate Japanese artistic elements and show homage to the art rather than exploit it for profit. Lastly, Van Gogh often showed appreciation and fascination towards ukiyo-e art that cannot fit the frame of dominating and dominated.

Another issue that the discourse raises is artistic authenticity and representation. There is a paradox of authenticity that is strongly linked to transcultural discourse, which states that authenticity ceased to exist in a post-modern society. As Richter highlights, authenticity of any

kind can only exist in a vacuum or in an isolated culture, a culture "that realizes its own alienation from 'the natural', 'the pure', and 'the unspoiled'" (Richter, 2008, 60). Hence, in postmodern society pure authenticity is impossible to reach due to transculturality and globalization. What we now call "authenticity" is simply a feeling of nostalgia for unattainable purity (Richter, 2008, 60). However, in the case of authenticity being powered by alienation, if we were to reduce the scale from a culture to an individual, one can argue that there is no individual that is not influenced by their surroundings and upbringing. This leads us to a logical conclusion that authenticity is an impossibility built on the notion of isolated purity. Though on a theoretical level the existence of authenticity seems to be paradoxical, the issue of authenticity in transcultural discourse problematizes the idea that ethnic minorities and various cultures are being appropriated and misrepresented at authenticity's expense. Various artists' works are being tagged authentic when they utilize cultural practices and styles from other cultures, which makes the works part of transcultural movement while the other cultures remain to be misunderstood and misrepresented. However, I would argue that in the postmodern world authenticity should be seen as a process rather than nostalgia inducing isolated purity. If we perceived authenticity as a "process indicating enduring relevance" instead of a label of unchanging meaning, then the problem of authenticity can be analysed through the lens of hybridity (Alexander, Sharma, 2013, 89). According to Alexander and Sharma, to evade cultural genocide, scholars should analyse the symbolism (either manipulated or unchanged) that showcase and preserve a culture's identity (Alexander, Sharma, 2013, 90). However, examining artwork through the lens of cultural symbolism is extremely difficult and complex, as individuals from outside and inside the culture can perceive the same identifying cultural markers differently. Though this method of analysis does not eliminate the issue of unjust and inauthentic representations of other cultures, it reveals acts of cultural domination, cultural struggle, and exploitation as well as exposes artist's personal motivations. They help explain various artworks within the context of hybridity, transculturality, and representation. Therefore, well-known issues of transculturality can be at least partially avoided if scholars examine the symbolism behind artworks, bring agency to the cultural practice which is behind the adopted symbolism, analyse cultural exchange without forgetting orientalism and hegemonizing practices of the West.

Lastly, another important issue that arises when analysing transculturality is the issue of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is an analytical approach of looking at human development as

"interactive rather than monadic", which means that each individual's subjectivity is inescapably linked to a dialogue between himself and "the other", no matter what that "other" is (Benjamin, 1990, 34). In other words, no one's mental life stays in a vacuum as everyone interacts and reacts in some way to their surroundings. In transcultural discourse intersubjectivity comes into play when scholars investigate a specific person rather than a whole culture or community. In the context of art, as argued by Minissale, intersubjectivity plays an important role in transforming art and in shaping the way cultures interact, connect and collide (Minissale, 2009, 183). Shapiro's argument is highly illustrative of the importance of an artist's personal history and background which goes beyond broad historical context and transcultural discourse. According to him, transcultural approach, though bridges the gap between cultures, discards an artist's own agency in telling their own story through their work (Shapiro, 2003, 280). Thus, discourse on intersubjectivity is crucial when analysing an individual and their work while framing them within the context of transculturality. While transculturality offers scholars an approach that is linked with cultural exchange and variously nuanced connections between different regions, intersubjectivity provides a more nuanced study on an individual. What needs to be emphasized here, however, is that interpreting artworks through an isolationist paradigm would be unjust, as intersubjective dialogue encompasses an artist's communication with the self as well as with the world (Minissale, 2009, 185). In other words, analysis of intersubjectivity in connection with other artists combined with transcultural discourse highlights the complexities of art in the context of globalization as well as provides new layers of depth in examining art through the eyes of the artist and their dialogue with the world. Hence, intersubjective discourse also has its issues and limits, because even though it gives more in-depth analysis of an individual's attitude towards his surroundings, the discourse does not detach itself from the human predisposition to be susceptible to those surroundings.

Since this thesis emphasizes Van Gogh and his work, I argue that his personal history, belief system, personal values, ideals and upbringing – everything that is part of subjectivity and intersubjectivity – is a necessary viewpoint to investigate in order to bring agency to Van Gogh's work and go beyond the attributed orientalist mentalities. By looking into his personal life and artworks from an intersubjective framework while simultaneously utilizing transcultural discourse I intend to argue that Van Gogh's adoption of Japanese art styles, colour schemes and composition goes beyond orientalism. However, by attempting to find a link that goes beyond orientalism I do

not intend to disregard orientalism, since intersubjectivity has its limits and Van Gogh could not escape certain prejudices. In this paper I aim to showcase that symbolism of Japanese cultural identity, though manipulated and merged with other practices and stylised in differing ways, is still evident in Van Gogh's works and they deserve more than being labelled as misrepresentative. As Juneja points out, with the help of transculturality, understanding art history and the comprehension of the diverse ways in which art can transcend itself and transform has made it possible to see the often appropriated and orientalised art and make it "hyper-visib[le]" (Juneja, 2011, 274). Meanwhile, the added approach of intersubjectivity and discursivity highlighted by Minissale and Shapiro brings forth the individual assessment of an artist's conscious and subconscious beliefs that connect any artist with their peers and surroundings. That is why through the extensive research of the personal and impersonal historical background surrounding Van Gogh's life, his letter analysis as well as with the help of the examination of selected works that fall under different genres, I want to challenge the common notions of transculturality by combining it with intersubjectivity. In this way this research will add a diverse way of reading Van Gogh's works that would not only breach the "West vs East" dichotomy but would also bring agency to his own work. In doing so, the research will inevitably make Van Gogh's paintings and the preceding Japanese art "hyper-visible" in the context of globalization.

Historical context and Vincent van Gogh's biography

Japonisme movement and ukiyo-e contribution to Western art

In order to properly understand Van Gogh's works and their relation to Japanese art, specifically ukiyo-e woodblock prints, there is a need to examine the historical and biographical contexts which framed Van Gogh's outlooks and strongly affected his artistic endeavours. Starting with *Japonisme* movement, it is crucial to note that ukiyo-e prints and various other Japanese art styles that became pinnacles of *Japonisme* in Paris and later the rest of Europe existed long before they reached the West. Ukiyo-e prints that we know today go back to mid-18th century, when three colours – red, green, and yellow – were incorporated into woodblock printing (Harris, 2012, 10). Before the vibrant colours took over and formed the essence of ukiyo-e art, woodblock printing technique, probably borrowed from China, was mostly used for printing Buddhist scriptures and from the beginning of 17th century was used to make black and white pictures which were designed

as illustrations (Harris, 2012, 10). After the three forementioned colours became commonly used in woodblock printing and ukiyo-e style was developed, ukiyo-e prints went through three different periods or phases. Prints from the first period (1765-1827) have softer colours which were produced in Japan due to the country's isolationist policy that made it almost impossible to use goods from outside of Japan (Van Tilborgh et al., 2018, 57). These prints, which refer to "pictures of the floating world", exclusively depicted hedonistic and pleasurable lifestyles of people living in and around Edo 江戸 (modern-day Tokyo), which is why the main themes were related to local entertainment like kabuki theatre and its actors, wrestling and public establishments such as restaurants, teahouses, and brothels with beautiful courtesans (Harris, 2012, 14). As the commercial publishing expanded and the Prussian blue pigment started to be imported to Japan, the second period (1828-1865) took shape, which is acknowledged as a phase that started to incorporate views of nature and landscapes as well as themes depicting heroes and warriors (Van Tilborgh et al., 2018, 60). During this period Utagawa school was established, which was the most well-known and influential ukiyo-e printmaker lineages of all time and which "produced more than half of all extant ukiyo-e prints" (Brooklyn Museum). Lastly, the third phase (1866-1887) of ukiyo-e prints have even brighter colour schemes due to the change of the pigments used for woodblock printing. These pigments, just like Prussian blue, were imported from Europe and were made of synthetic aniline which created the extremely vibrant primary and secondary colours like yellows and reds, purples and greens (Van Tilborgh et al., 2018, 63). During this ukiyo-e art period Japan ended its isolationist policy and opened its trade market to the world, which led to ukiyo-e art being used to satisfy the beliefs and demands made by the West.

What is important to note is that the forementioned ukiyo-e prints from different periods were of significantly different values once they reached the European market. The woodblock prints from the first period were the most valuable as the subtle colour schemes correlated best with Western art and the depicted themes corresponded well with the already existing notions of Japan, whereas the more vibrant coloured prints got less recognition in the public's eye. Such a varying popularity of different prints is noticeable when analysing Japanese print exhibitions that took place in Paris, where majority of exhibited ukiyo-e prints were from the first period (Van Tilborgh et al., 2018, 57). That being said, though ukiyo-e prints popularity in Europe largely depended on the period during which they were manufactured and the range of acceptance fluctuated depending on different themes, landscapes and colour schemes, it is argued that during

the Japanism movement westerners were drawn to ukiyo-e prints not because of their exoticism and innovativeness, but because they incorporated elements and techniques which originated in Europe (Fabbretti, 2022, 124). Compositional elements and techniques such as linear perspective and chiaroscuro which in Japan were developed throughout Edo period and were incorporated into mass-produced ukiyo-e prints originally came from Europe, possibly with the help of the Dutch merchants. It is worth noting, however, that impressionist and post-impressionist artists were drawn to more colourful prints possibly because they strived to reinvent Western art that has been imbued with the principles of Greco-Roman art that has existed for hundreds of years and was preferred by the bourgeoisie (Walker, 2008, 84). This art historical context leads scholars to believe that the seemingly ever-present consistency and static nature of Western art led 19th century artists to look for something new in different cultures. That is one of the reasons why Japanese art, which was innovative and new yet grasped the essence of Western techniques and taste, became the pinnacle of artistic change in Western art. This leads us to the question as to how exactly did the shift in Western art transpire? Here we must delve deeper into the artists who started the movement and the art dealers who increased the visibility of Japanese prints.

Though it is documented that ukiyo-e prints were part of influential people's (such as Kaempfer and von Siebold) collections in the second quarter of the 19th century, the first discovery of ukiyo-e art is attributed to Felix Bracquemond in mid-19th century Paris, when he came across a manga 漫画 volume drawn by Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾北斎 (1760-1849) that consisted of various sketches (Impey, 1984, 696). However, Bracquemond was not the only one responsible for the exponential growth in Japanese prints popularity in Europe. The World Fairs in London and Paris held in 1862 and 1867 respectively presented Japanese art to westerners and the exhibition was tremendously successful (Sosnowski, 2017, 8). Moreover, in 1867 Paris Exposition, Japanese culture, arts and crafts were showcased which ultimately helped bring popularity and recognition of Japanese culture to the West. After these world-renowned art exhibits various art dealers and collectors of Japanese goods such as Tadamasa Hayashi, Edmond de Goncourt and Siegfried Bing became known and influential to the point that their collected artworks and various publications started to frame Western understanding of what is Japanese culture (Sosnowski, 2017, 9). Since ukiyo-e prints were deemed as low art by Japanese government and society, they were relatively cheap and easy to export, which is one of the main reasons for there being abundance of them in Europe by the end of the 19th century. Due to ukiyo-e prints being seen to be of less value

than porcelain or other types of Japanese art, it is often speculated that Japanese woodblock prints were being exported together with porcelain as wrapping paper (Wiggins, "Vincent van Gogh"). However, this speculatory theory has been disproven by scholars specialising in Edo period art, as the myth is thought to have originated because of miscommunication and story alteration (Davis, 2021, 1-2). Since Japan during Meiji period (明治時代 *Meiji jidai*, 1868-1912) was primarily focused on modernization, woodblock prints from the first two periods were considered as cheap export products, which is why the biggest number of ukiyo-e prints are housed in the West (Meech-Pekarik, 1982, 93). Whereas Siegfried Bing, who had the largest collection in Europe, collected around 50.000 ukiyo-e prints, Tadamasa Hayashi exported over 150.000 art pieces to France (Sosnowski, 2017, 12).

However, such a growing popularity and interest in exporting Japanese woodblock prints to the West was not necessarily related to Western collectors' or European officials' desire to collect Japanese art. Instead of bourgeoise class influencing Western art and encouraging the craze for ukiyo-e prints, art dealers intrigued by Japanese culture as well as various innovative artists of the 19th century were the leading figures who made *Japonisme* possible and with the help of ukiyo-e styles and techniques started new art movements that took the Western world by storm. Various artists including Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Monet, Van Gogh, Degas, Pissarro, and many more were inspired by never-before seen Japanese woodblock prints. These artists who wanted to revolutionize European art and fought against the French Academy which praised Greco-Roman style of painting found solace in ukiyo-e prints (Ives, 1974, 14). April 15th, 1874 is considered to be the day when many forementioned artists decided to liberate themselves from the worn-out rules of traditional Western art by holding the first Impressionist exhibition in Paris (Musée d'Orsay). The exhibition had a variety of paintings on display that have traces of Japanese artistic elements. "Japanese prints' blatant flatness" was one of the main art techniques that were likened by impressionist artists who were trying to develop "peculiar flatness and static quality" in their own paintings (Ives, 1974, 17). Rather than continuing the old European tradition of showcasing three-dimensionality in art, by way of rebelling, impressionists adapted Japanese print techniques to minimize depth and generate a planar effect (Huang, 2022, 308). However, flatness is not the only thing European artists adopted from Japanese woodblock prints. Impressionists like Degas and Manet took inspiration from unconventional perspective, odd angles and unfamiliar poses which did not display chiaroscuro techniques in a way that were familiar to Europeans (Ives, 1974,

17). Meanwhile, ukiyo-e prints inadvertently encouraged Pissarro to experiment with cityscapes and helped him realise that his and his contemporaries' novel vision of art was reasonable and justifiable (Asian Art Museum). Lastly, impressionists who were primarily interested in painting landscapes admired and utilized Japanese printmakers' techniques which showcased skilful portrayal of natural phenomena like stark weather changes, rain, snow, and wind (Ives, 1974, 17). It is worth noting, however, that the forementioned stylistic choices, techniques, perspectives, and views which originated in ukiyo-e prints and are visible in impressionists' paintings are not the only ways in which Japanese culture spread throughout the West. Many mentioned artists not only adopted the unique painting techniques but also had an extensive collection of Japanese prints. Japanese prints were collected for multiple reasons – one of them being for the purpose of studying them in order to improve one's own work. Other reasons are likely to have been for financial gain and status in the community. For example, Monet is famously known for collecting a lot of ukiyo-e prints from the first period, which demonstrates both his taste for less vibrant, muted colour schemes, depictions of flatness as well as his wealth and status in the society (Van Tilborgh et al., 2018, 51). The usage of diluted colours in his own works proves that he was interested in older prints while his extensive collection showcases his status and sufficient financial means that led him to afford such valuable foreign goods. Similar conclusions regarding wealth, status and artistic taste can be made about Manet and Degas who had their own personal ukiyo-e print collections. The similitude that can be noticed between these impressionist painters is their unanimous fondness for ukiyo-e prints from the first period. While impressionists mostly looked at ukiyo-e prints from the first period for inspiration, post-impressionists utilised techniques and colour schemes associated with the second period of Japanese prints. For instance, Toulouse-Lautrec and Gauguin, just like Van Gogh, adopted vibrant colours which "ignored western principles of chiaroscuro modelling" and used intense outlines (Ives, 1974, 80).

For the sake of keeping the historical and cultural contexts concise, I will not go into further detail of how and why previously mentioned impressionists and post-impressionists were affected by ukiyo-e art or the reasons behind their Japanese print collecting habits. Instead, I will focus on analysing Van Gogh's life and his letters relating to Japanese culture and ways in which he incorporated Japanese artistic style and techniques in his own work as that is the primary goal of this paper. What is crucial to emphasize here is the fact that European cultural environment and especially Parisian scene made it incredibly easy for Japanese art to become an influential

foundation for creating new art movements in the West. Both impressionists and post-impressionists have been strongly affected by Japanese woodblock prints. That being said, while impressionist admired the faint coloured prints from the first period, post-impressionist like Van Gogh tended to favour more vibrant colour combinations and daring lines which were more often displayed in ukiyo-e prints from the second period.

Van Gogh's biography and *Japonisme* impact

Vincent van Gogh, born and raised in Southern Holland, is argued to have discovered ukiyo-e prints while he was residing in Antwerp as a student in Antwerp Academy during the winter of 1885-1886 (Walker, 2008, 83). In the beginning of his painting career, he most likely came across Japanese woodblock prints through various journals, books, and magazines mostly in forms of reproductions (De Leeuw, 1997, 311). His systematic large-scale collecting of authentic Japanese prints took place when he was living in Paris with his brother Theo. However, while other artists of that time collected throughout prolonged periods of time and with care, Van Gogh collected around 600 ukiyo-e prints during a couple of visits to a well-known art dealer Siegfried "Samuel" Bing (Van Tilborgh et al. 2018, 11; 212). Also, extensive examination of the collected prints and their wear and tear suggest that Van Gogh was not interested in what others referred to as more prestigious and valuable Japanese art. He bought more modern and recently manufactured prints from the second period that were not of the highest quality but resonated with Van Gogh through composition and vibrant colours (Van Tilborgh et al., 2018, 60). Before he started collecting Japanese prints mostly for poorly thought-out financial strategies, he was an avid collector of his beloved Western painting reproductions from a relatively early age. In one of his letters from 1875 addressed to his brother Theo he narrows down a list of Western prints and reproductions he has in possession in his small rental room in Paris. The list ranged from multiple Dutch Golden Age painters like Rembrandt and Ruysdael to Barbizon school painters like Jules Dupré and Jean-François Millet (De Leeuw, 1997, 11). Various artists from The Hague and Barbizon schools were among Van Gogh's favorite painters, while one of his favorite and inspirational artists was Rembrandt. Rembrandt is possibly the most frequently mentioned artist in Van Gogh's letters, as Van Gogh often compared other painters' styles and techniques to that of Rembrandt as well as brought up the Dutch Golden Age painter whenever Van Gogh encountered his sketches, etchings, or paintings. Van Gogh was reminded of the world-renowned artist even when he was going for

walks around Amsterdam: “Everything there reminds one of Rembrandt’s etchings” (De Leeuw, 1997, 44). While Rembrandt shaped Van Gogh’s artistic career and might have impacted the artist’s personal values, Rembrandt himself drew inspiration from oriental art. Though he did not have access to Japanese art, Rembrandt reshaped European art traditions while being inspired by Mughal dynasty miniatures (Akihiro, 2020, 48). The main change that he made in his paintings that was yet to be seen in European art was the incorporation of silent space that aided in displaying deeper emotions in a painting (Akihiro, 2020, 48). By the number of times Rembrandt is mentioned in Van Gogh’s letters it would not be far-fetched to assume that because of meticulous analysis of Rembrandt’s works Van Gogh could have understood the importance of oriental art in Rembrandt’s artworks. Consequently, this revelation could have impacted Van Gogh’s approach and opinion towards Japanese woodblock prints. However, this is only a scholarly speculation, as Van Gogh never explicitly mentioned any knowledge of Rembrandt being fascinated or interested in oriental art. Nevertheless, whether these speculations are correct or not does not change the fact that due to the vast cultural exchange during the late 19th century as well as the persistent fascination with Japanese woodblock prints in the artists’ circles Van Gogh would have encountered ukiyo-e prints one way or the other. Van Gogh’s desire to follow in Rembrandt’s footprints simply leads us to believe that troubled artist’s interest in oriental art (specifically ukiyo-e prints) might have had an even deeper emotional layer which unfortunately cannot be proven due to lack of evidence.

Most of the scholarly debates regarding Van Gogh’s tastes towards art and his life decisions are being analyzed with the help of his correspondence to Theo and other important people in his life. Just like with the possibility of Van Gogh having connected Rembrandt to oriental art, his letters not only showcase his collecting habits and his favorites in the art world but also tell a full story about his life – his struggles, motivations, beliefs, likes and dislikes. The only period of his life that remains to hold the most questions is when he lived in Paris with Theo from 1886 to 1888. Since Van Gogh’s biggest number of correspondences was addressed to Theo, when they lived together there was no need to send letters for communication purposes. Nonetheless, there are hundreds of letters in art historians’ possession located in Van Gogh Museum, which makes his life and beliefs easier to research and make educated conclusions on. What is easily noticeable after looking into Van Gogh’s early letters addressed to Theo is his strong connection to nature. According to him, nature is a gateway to understanding art and great painters not only acknowledge

nature, but also love and appreciate it (De Leeuw, 1997, 6). Even his mother recognized Van Gogh's unconscious allure towards nature and art which did not diminish throughout his life even when he became a religion fanatic (De Leeuw, 1997, 13; 36). Later when he was residing in Arles, he wrote a letter to Theo where he highlighted the "primitive" nature of Japanese printmakers, who based on Van Gogh's beliefs lived among nature and instead of being focused on trivial industrial aspects of life "studied a single blade of grass" (Walker, 2008, 88). Walker interprets these writing by Van Gogh as being part of the imperialist and hegemonic narrative that have existed in Van Gogh's cultural surroundings his whole life. Though I agree that in this letter Van Gogh ignorantly exoticizes Japanese artists while basing his knowledge off ukiyo-e prints which oftentimes displayed various landscapes, what deserves to be pointed out is that Van Gogh envied the Japanese for their immersion into nature which he dared to call "true religion" (De Leeuw, 1997, 410). As Walker once again points out, Van Gogh believed that the Japanese "religious sense was firmly grounded in nature and <…> [they] had a stable moral and spiritual relationship with nature" (Walker, 2008, 89). Though this belief is not entirely far-fetched knowing that nature is part of Shinto practices, the false idea that Japan was not actively modernizing the nation at the end of the 19th century is strikingly naïve and showcases how European mentality of portraying Japan as a mystifying "other" was part of Van Gogh's belief system. Nevertheless, one can argue that Van Gogh's love for nature, the search for spirituality and indifference towards politics and industrialization led him to believe that his beloved Japanese artworks came from a land where nature was celebrated while modern society was ignored. Maybe that is what he wanted to believe in order to find comfort and inspiration within Japanese woodblock prints (Walker, 2008, 89).

Other than being known for admiring nature, it is widely known that Van Gogh dreamed of creating a sanctuary where innovative painters of Van Gogh's time could live together, paint and exchange ideas. This desire is likely to have come from Van Gogh's personal values relating to escapism and the longing to be understood and loved in a community. His whole life Van Gogh had unsuccessful efforts to find romantic love and he lacked public's understanding and appreciation for his art, which leads us to believe that these shortcomings in his personal and professional life led him to seek out refuge in a self-established artist colony. The painter felt indifference towards reality and trivial everyday troubles from an early age. Before he started his painting career, Van Gogh was seeking refuge in religion by aiming to become a pastor, whereas later in life he had a strong belief that various paintings by his favourite artists like Millet and

Maris were "more real than reality itself" (Naifeh, Smith, 2011, 110; 285). Thus, Van Gogh's disposition to run away from reality by finding comfort in religion or in art is a reasonable contributor to him wanting to create a sanctuary for likeminded artists. To actualize this idea, he chose Arles – a small city in the South of France that reminded him of Japanese colourful prints. However, the question remains as to where the idea to create an artists' colony came from. Some scholars believe that Van Gogh exoticized Japan and Japanese culture to the degree that he imagined Japanese printmakers to live in artist colonies surrounded by nature and that exotic vision of Japan led him to pursue the idea of recreating the Japanese "utopia" (Wiggins, "Vincent van Gogh"). It is likely he has read various academic and non-academic literature about Japan and learnt that Japanese Buddhist monks, oftentimes called *bonze*, lived in secluded fraternities where they shared their knowledge amongst each other and devoted themselves to nature worship (Naifeh, Smith, 2011, 591). Other scholars argue that his eagerness to establish an artist colony was based on Dutch painters of the 18th century, when artist fraternities and colonies started to become common (Rapelli, Pallavisini, 2012, 92). The Hague, Barbizon and Oosterbeek schools of art are likely to have also impacted Van Gogh's desire to live in an artists' commune. Also, the fact that Van Gogh was unsuccessfully searching for camaraderie and love his whole life should not be downplayed as it could have had an equally logical reasoning for his artistic preferences. Hence, concluding that Van Gogh approached Japanese culture in an exoticizing way because he imaged artist colonies to be the norm in Japan might not be completely correct. Since Western painters, especially Rembrandt, were idolized by Van Gogh, it is equally likely that he projected his idols' conventions into other artworks and artists he deeply admired, which in this case are ukiyo-e prints. Instead of utilizing orientalist thought and exoticizing notions about Japan (which was a popular approach in the 19th century) he equated Japanese art to his admired Western painters by filling gaps of knowledge with what he deemed to be the norm. That being said, such viewpoint about Japan and its culture is still imperialist, naïve and ignorant. What I highlight here is that rather than internalising widely spread Western understanding about Japan Van Gogh chose to create his own vision of what he thought to be Japanese culture while basing his theories off of his own values, in this case being escapism and the desire to belong in a community. It is also worth noting that ukiyo-e prints were primarily created as advertisement for escapist places such as theatre or courtesan district (Screech, "Obtaining Images"). Such places with beautiful people were spaces that offered temporary escape from contemporary historical realities and daily stress. As Screech

puts it, ukiyo-e art primarily focused on "obscur[ing] the unattractive parts" (Screech, 2012, 301). By displaying these people and places Japanese woodblock prints contributed to the escapist mentality that spread throughout Japan. It is likely that Van Gogh recognized the escapist values that are deeply rooted into ukiyo-e art and, consequently, was inspired by Japanese woodblock prints to include these shared values into his own paintings and personal life. Therefore, the analysis of Van Gogh's life and his written letters make it evident that transcultural exchange between Van Gogh and Japanese woodblock prints illustrate a dialogue that goes beyond the stereotypical exoticization of Japanese people and their culture. Numerous letters written by Van Gogh to his brother Theo point out the importance of nature which Van Gogh later found in Japanese prints. Meanwhile, his desire to establish an artist commune stems not necessarily from a warped view of Japan, but rather is modelled by Western schools that did have artist colonies throughout 18th and 19th centuries and was a direct representation of Van Gogh's escapist values and the pursuit for brotherly love and understanding.

Lastly, other than the artist's fascination with nature and spirituality as well as his personal values relating to communal belonging and escapism, Van Gogh above all valued ordinary people. Van Gogh's intrigue in ordinary people and their lives is evident in his works and letters addressed to Theo throughout his life. He shared the same attitude of the French painter Millet regarding ordinary people, since they both believed that peasants were the best and most genuine part of humanity (Rapelli, Pallavisini, 2012, 20). That is a likely reason why Van Gogh always wanted to become a "painter of peasant life" (De Leeuw, 1997, xxix). He also deemed it necessary to depict people in the middle of an action, as his primary goal was to capture an emotion or the essence of what is being done. In one of his letters, he states that his aim is "not the drawing of a hand, but the gesture it is making", which makes it unsurprising that some of his paintings lacked realistic colour schemes yet always portrayed the soul of the surroundings (Rapelli, Pallavisini, 2012, 138). Thus, his depictions of daily lives of peasants vastly differs from the traditional Western art that highlighted the importance of Greco-Roman style. Since Van Gogh took part in the post-impressionist movement, his paintings showcase the inclination towards artistic revolution that was common among Western painters in the late 19th century. Van Gogh's tendency to break away from Western tradition and revolutionize art is yet another value that is evident in his paintings and letters. In June 1888 Van Gogh wrote to Bernard stating that he does not care "what the colours are in reality" as well as the same summer he points out to Theo that he tends to use vibrant colours

to express his own emotions (De Leeuw, 1997, 361; 390). Though other stylistic features and compositional elements will be analysed in the next chapter, what is clear from this example alone is that Van Gogh was not immune to impressionists' aspirations to dismantle traditional rules of Western art to the degree that his persistent efforts to revolutionize his own artworks can be classified as another personal value.

We can argue that the woodblock prints from Japan helped Van Gogh incorporate into his own artworks the essence of his own values, such as novel artistic ideas, nature, ordinary people, escapism, platonic love and understanding. Van Gogh's adoption of ukiyo-e print style, art techniques and colour schemes in his own paintings can be interpreted as a means of grounding his own work in a world that still valued well-established and static European art. Since both impressionists and post-impressionists faced similar challenges regarding acceptance of their new-found art movements, Pissarro's declaration that "these Japanese confirm my belief in our vision" (Ives, 1974, 17) seems to fit adequately to Van Gogh's personal experience concerning artistic expression, acceptance and finding comfort in Japanese woodblock prints. Due to the complex historical and cultural contexts, ukiyo-e prints rather than straightforwardly showcasing orientalist mentalities and exoticization practices became a medium for self-expression and a safe space for finding solace and understanding. Though ukiyo-e prints were not understood or praised by Van Gogh in the same way as various Dutch and Flemish artists' paintings, Van Gogh borrowed a lot of stylistic techniques and compositional elements from Japanese art. Furthermore, he not only adopted specific stylistic components from ukiyo-e prints, but also deeply acknowledged that those elements came from Japanese woodblock prints. In one of his letters, it is evident that the artist gave credit for his whole life's work to Japanese art, which had a significant impact on his painting style and at times his life decisions. After analysing the surrounding cultural environment in Europe (especially Paris) in the late 19th century it can be reasoned that Van Gogh's famous statement "All my work is based to some extent on Japanese art" (Van Gogh Museum) is strongly linked with the emotional and mental comfort that ukiyo-e art brought to the misunderstood artist. Giving Japanese woodblock prints credit to all Van Gogh's works is proof that Van Gogh himself acknowledged his tendency to adopt certain ukiyo-e artistic characteristics thus making him not part of cultural appropriation. Though there is no evidence that Van Gogh could have known about ukiyo-e prints and Japanese culture before he started living in Antwerp in the winter of 1885, his statement of Japan having influenced all his work can be easily interpreted as the well-deserved

and needed encouragement which he managed to attain later in life. Even if Van Gogh's paintings from the Dutch period was not connected in any way to Japanese woodblock prints or their techniques and styles, the comfort and motivation which Japanese art brought to the artist led him to believe that Japanese artistic mentality was within him from the very first brush stroke. Van Gogh was a troubled soul who unsuccessfully pursued love and camaraderie and managed to find some kind of solace in Japanese woodblock prints. His attachment to the idea of founding a sanctuary is argued to have come from Japanese culture, which further strengthened the bond between Van Gogh and ukiyo-e prints. The sanctuary became a physical manifestation of the artist's personal values relating to belonging and escapism which were encouraged through Van Gogh's personal interpretations of Japanese culture. Likewise, ordinary people as well as nature depicted in ukiyo-e prints were a component of Japanese woodblock prints that appealed to Van Gogh and nudged him to pursue his artistic goals and hold onto his values. Lastly, since ukiyo-e prints were in every way different from traditional Western art, they became pinnacles that lead the Western art revolution started by impressionists in 1874.

These complexities make scholars believe that stylistic techniques and various artistic elements that Van Gogh adopted into his own work from ukiyo-e prints cannot be simplified to being orientalised exotic visions of Japanese culture. Rather than framing his interest in ukiyo-e prints as being part of imperialist mentality or a pure fascination with the "Other" which was common in Europe in the late 19th century, it can be argued that for Van Gogh from being exotic novel pictures of the floating world Japanese woodblock prints gradually evolved into a mode of comfort that encouraged Van Gogh's faith and confidence in his own artistic vision as well as helped pursue his personal values. Thus, in this case, transcultural exchange between Van Gogh and Japanese art transcends straightforward orientalist mentalities and brings personal values into the picture. From the historical and biographical analysis, it becomes evident that, regarding ukiyo-e prints and Van Gogh, orientalism overlaps with transculturality whenever Van Gogh's personal values coincide with orientalist mentalities. However, the forementioned conclusions also to some extent correlate with orientalist thinking, as Van Gogh seemed to value ukiyo-e art whenever it was convenient for his self-expression, which means that to some degree Van Gogh succumbed to Western hegemony and utilized art by "the other" only for his personal gain. Looking at it from this point of view makes it apparent that Van Gogh likely did not value ukiyo-e for what it was

and partially contributed to Japanese art being orientalised, which demonstrates the limits of intersubjectivity and the power of surroundings.

Van Gogh's artworks in relation to ukiyo-e prints

Ukiyo-e importance in Van Gogh's portraiture

Having already analysed issues of transculturality and having examined the historical and cultural contexts as well as biographical elements of Van Gogh's life leads to the final part of the paper where I will focus on the analysis of Van Gogh's paintings and details through which we can discern ukiyo-e importance in the painter's art. As I mentioned before, to understand transcultural exchange between different cultures it is not enough to study the historical or biographical contexts as each artwork can display a new layer of dialogue between an influenced artist and an influential culture. It is evident that Van Gogh adopted a lot of stylistic techniques and compositional elements that were considered to be part of ukiyo-e art. However, he not only adapted and adopted various art techniques common to Japanese woodblock prints, but he also projected his beliefs and values onto Japanese prints and thus doing so he was impacted by what he interpreted as the Japanese norm. This makes it plausible that his paintings borrowed nuances from ukiyo-e prints which were visible to only Van Gogh himself.

Starting with portraiture paintings it is necessary to analyse Van Gogh's self-expression in his art. The self-portrait dedicated to Gauguin, also called "Self-portrait as Bonze" (Fig. 1) is argued to showcase the immense impact Japanese art and culture made on Van Gogh. As the name of the portrait shows, the art piece was made for Gauguin as part of their agreement to exchange self-portraits of each other. In his letter to Gauguin Van Gogh mentions the painting and states that he aimed to portray himself as a Japanese Buddhist monk "worshipping the Eternal Buddha" (Kōdera, 1984, 198). In the painting Van Gogh depicted himself as having slightly slanting eyes and shaved head, which were features he would have been aware of from the illustrations by Pierre Loti in *Madame Chrysanthème* (Naifeh, Smith, 2011, 625). The artist is known to have wanted to establish an artist fraternity and there is credible evidence which shows that his idea of secluded artist sanctuaries came from his projected ideals about Japanese printmakers. Thus, the portrait not only highlights his exoticized vision of Japanese people, but it also shows Van Gogh's aspirations to go through a personal artistic transformation into an idealized Japanese painter. Through the

painting it is as though he tells Gauguin about the transformation that awaits if he joins Van Gogh and moves to Arles (Naifeh, Smith, 2011, 625). Though there are scholars who believe that the painting exemplifies madness and presents Van Gogh as a "wary-eyed" "shaven-headed criminal", it is unanimously understood that the painter's eyes show longing and sadness (Meissner, 1993, 87-88). Despite the different interpretations of the painting, the Japanese cultural and artistic impact is easily discernible. Not only did Van Gogh attempt to imitate a Japanese Buddhist monk by making his eyes seem more slanting and portraying himself with a shaved head, but he also utilized colour schemes that were often used in Japanese woodblock prints. The bright turquoise background in combination with purple outlines of the brown jacket and vest holds visible similarities to various ukiyo-e prints, like prints depicting kabuki actors and courtesans wearing purple kimonos with brown undertones or landscape prints with turquoise water in the background. Prints like Utagawa Hiroshige's landscapes depicted in the series *One Hundred Views of Famous Places in Edo*, such as "The Shōhei Bridge Over the Kanda River and a Confucian Temple" (Fig. 9), and Utagawa Kunisada's kabuki actor portraits in *Mirror of Fashionable Relief Portraits in Fabric*, such as "An Actor in the Role of Ume no Yoshibei" (Fig. 10) (which were a part of Van Gogh's collection) are perfect examples of the colour schemes that were likely to have impacted Van Gogh's self-portrait since all the forementioned colours are easily distinguishable in the mentioned ukiyo-e print series. Also, Van Gogh's self-portrait holds strong similarities to the latter printmaker's depictions of kabuki actors, as both pieces of art portray the evidently slanted eyes, shaved cranial vertex and the colour palette is almost indistinguishable, especially the background, the only difference being the brightness of colour in each artwork.

Though Van Gogh throughout his life painted numerous self-portraits, he also enjoyed portraying other people in his works. From the start of his painting career when Van Gogh was still residing in the Netherlands, he used to depict peasants in his artworks and his aim was to become a "painter of peasant life" (De Leeuw, 1997, xxix). Once he moved to France, he continued painting various people including paint supply shop owner Julien-François Tanguy, model Agostina Segatori, Augustine Roulin and many more. What I argue to be worth analysing is Augustine Roulin's portrait called "La Berceuse" (Fig. 2) meaning "she who rocks the cradle". Though other mentioned models' portraits showcase ukiyo-e impact more straightforwardly, the portrait of Augustine Roulin highlights the subtle penetration of Japanese culture and ukiyo-e print style. Just like in the self-portrait, Van Gogh utilized vibrant complementary colours whose usage

can be traced to Japanese woodblock prints. What is most noticeable in the painting, however, is the wall that is painted with various flowers. The "floral arabesques" have been argued to come from Japanese woodblock prints depicting courtesans, kabuki actors, or other models in flowery kimonos (Rapelli, Pallavisini, 2012, 114). It is not surprising that Van Gogh chose to use a flower-rich design in this work, as he envisioned Roulin in this painting to play a role of modern-day Madonna who has many different flowers related to her (Locke, 2003, 206). Meanwhile, in his Japanese print collection Van Gogh had collected numerous ukiyo-e art depicting flowers and birds (called kachōga 花鳥画). A significant number of these types of prints have been noticed to have pinholes in them, which makes scholars believe that the prints were often pinned to the walls of Van Gogh's bedroom (Van Gogh Museum). Through these trivial actions and artistic choices, it is evident that Van Gogh found comfort in nature which is why he consequently found solace and understanding in Japanese woodblock prints. Thus, it is not surprising that when painting Roulin he decided to adopt the painting style commonly seen in Japanese prints. However, the background and colour schemes are not the only elements in the painting that alludes to Japanese art. Augustine Roulin's clothing momentarily suggests that she is wearing a kimono, though after a longer look the allusion dissipates.

What I argue is important to highlight is that Van Gogh's portraiture of any kind depicted subtle and obvious elements originating in Japanese woodblock prints. In his self-portrait dedicated to Gauguin Van Gogh portrayed himself as an idealized fantasy version of who he was by choosing to depict himself as a Japanese Buddhist monk. It was created not only as a dream-like fantasy but also as a way to promote his efforts of establishing a secluded fraternity for artists. However, it is necessary to note that the artist's portrayal of himself is orientalist and exemplifies exotic notions about Japan and Japanese culture that has been commonly talked about in various articles and journals in France at the time. While the self-portrait showcases an obvious link to Japanese art, La Berceuse painting subtly points out Japanese artistic importance. I find it crucial to emphasize that although Roulin was meant to embody a Western icon – The Virgin Mary – Van Gogh still added elements of ukiyo-e into the art piece, which allows to make an inference that ukiyo-e prints indeed penetrated every aspect of Van Gogh's life to some degree. Even Christianity could not escape the Japanese cultural impact.

Nature aesthetics in Van Gogh paintings and ukiyo-e art

As mentioned earlier in the paper, Van Gogh had a strong connection to nature from an early age. His attempts of finding comfort in nature and learning from it did not stop until the end of his life and his search for both life and art-related answers through nature is evident in his works throughout the years. The artist did not shy away from still life paintings or living nature, which is why both categories are equally important. Among still life paintings I argue that "Sprig of Flowering Almond in a Glass" (Fig. 3) profoundly captures motifs adopted from ukiyo-e prints. Regarding artworks of living nature, the painting called "Almond Blossom" (Fig. 4) showcase Van Gogh's artistry in subtly combining his own beliefs and ideas with Japanese woodblock print elements.

Starting with "Sprig of Flowering Almond in a Glass" what first captures the eye is the unique composition of the painting. The glass is situated asymmetrically to the left side while the almond branch is slightly tilting to the right side. Such a composition is an element commonly used in ukiyo-e prints, which leads scholars to believe that Van Gogh borrowed this compositional style from Japanese woodblock prints (Huang, 2022, 309). To a more trained eye this type of composition might look similar to Japanese flower arrangements (ikebana, 生花), which frequently uses the method of tilting branches and flowers to the side in order to achieve a more dynamic and lively appearance. The branch arrangement as well as the choice to use a subtle colour palette emphasizes Japanese values that celebrate minimalism, open space, and the circle of life (Ross, 2010, 216). Meanwhile the red line across the background wall in the painting is added to balance out the asymmetry (Huang, 2022, 309). Thus, the ikebana-like simplicity, the lack of decorative elements and "formal use of empty space" enhances the Japanese artistic presence in the artwork (Ross, 2010, 216). With this art piece it is evident that Van Gogh attempted to not only fully understand Japanese culture but also to portray its essence in his own work. This still life stands as evidence for his ever-present effort in comprehending everything that he read on Japan and its art as well as what he himself saw within each woodblock print.

The painting "Almond Blossom" subtly hints at Japanese art, as Van Gogh had already skilfully mastered Japanese style by the time he reached Saint-Remy asylum located in Province near Arles. What is most noticeable in the painting is the odd and unique angle from which the blossoming branches are depicted. Van Gogh positioned the almond blossom "against a cloudless, clear blue sky: higher than the asylum walls, higher than the encircling hills, higher than any

horizon looking to the "other hemisphere of life" where art, religion, and family all reunited" (Naifeh and Smith, 2012, 814). This kind of positioning of flowers and flowering trees is one of the main features in ukiyo-e prints that depict blossoms, birds, and branches in close-up (Mancoff, 2008, 41). Van Gogh's collected Japanese prints included works by known and unknown printmakers who positioned the birds and flowers against a gradient-coloured background, so it is not surprising that the Dutch artist borrowed this common element from ukiyo-e prints. His collected prints by Utagawa Hiroshige III such as "Cherry Blossoms and Shrike" (Fig. 11) or "Crab Apple and Brown-Eared Bulbul" (Fig. 12) were part of his extensive print collection and are examples of woodblock prints that have monochromatic backgrounds and lavishly decorated blossoming trees in the foreground. Meanwhile, an unnamed printmaker's work called "Cherry Blossom and Bird" (Fig. 13) from the series Famous Images of the Eastern Capital presents high-level of attrition which can be argued to have been caused because of Van Gogh's meticulous analysis of the print in various places of residence. Though the print has a distinguishable landscape background, it showcases another common element used in Japanese prints – firm linear boundaries. These boundaries in Japanese woodblock prints are highlighted in two completely differing ways and they both appear in Van Gogh's painting depicting almond blossoms. Firstly, the boundaries are drawn between the foreground elements and the background by making distinct contours of each branch and blossom (Mancoff, 2008, 41). Another way in which the notion of boundaries is created in both Van Gogh's painting and ukiyo-e prints is by showing only a part of the blossoming tree. This stylistic choice is not only linked to ukiyo-e prints but has been argued to be a deeply rooted Japanese art tradition that has been seen in Kanō school paintings (狩野派 *Kanō-ha*, 15th-19th c.) and Akita Ranga 秋田蘭画 (1773-1780) (Abe, 2021, 44). Thus, through the painting depicting almond blossoms, rather than succumbing to the well-known popularised public notions of what Japanese culture is, Van Gogh showed his meticulous understanding of ukiyo-e features regarding colour and composition, as well as displayed knowledge about firm linear boundaries that were of paramount importance in Japanese art tradition for hundreds of years.

In conclusion, whereas "Sprig of Flowering Almond in a Glass" showcases Van Gogh's comprehension of space and composition common in ukiyo-e prints, "Almond Blossom" is an art piece that celebrates the adoption of distinct contours also borrowed from Japanese woodblock prints. Spiritually, both paintings delve into the notions of impermanence and honour life. While the still life is argued to represent Japanese values that relate to transience, "Almond Blossom"

was a gift dedicated to his new-born nephew. Lastly, both the still life painting and the living nature artwork point out colour palettes and composition common in ukiyo-e prints and unusual to Western art tradition.

Everyday life scenes and the adoption of Japanese artistic elements

From his first years as an artist, Van Gogh strived to become a painter for the peasants, which is why he created lots of paintings that depict everyday trivial life of commoners. The range of objects and people he painted is vast – from his quiet bedroom to a bustling café at night, from dark peasants in the fields to colourful models, from boots of workers to vibrant flowering blossoms. All his paintings in a way depict everyday life and none of the paintings created later in life were able to escape the impact of Japanese art. In this section I will analyse the personal and private bedroom painting and an outdoor space that captures a working sower in the middle of a field. Though they are different in what they are depicting, they both highlight Van Gogh's skilful understanding of Japanese woodblock prints.

"The Bedroom" (Fig. 5) is one of the most well-known paintings produced by Van Gogh. Probably the thing that is firstly noticed is the seemingly odd and clearly exaggerated perspective of the room. Flatness or two-dimensionality are one the main attributes of Japanese prints, which evidently impacted Van Gogh's painting of his bedroom. The exaggerated perspective and flatness are portrayed because of the lack of shadowing, which is another feature common in ukiyo-e prints. As mentioned before, many impressionists and post-impressionists were eager to incorporate blatant flatness which was perceptible in Japanese prints, and Van Gogh was not an exception. In one of his letters addressed to Theo, where he explains the new painting idea of the bedroom, he writes that he left out the shadows of objects and the artwork is "painted in bright flat tints like the Japanese prints" (De Leeuw, 1997, 418). Thus, this letter should be read as factual evidence of Van Gogh's ingenuity and knowledge about various stylistic elements that make up the prints. What also enhances the exaggerated perspective and the notion of flatness is the fact that he simplified the forms and patterns of each object visible in the painting. Though it is not as clearly noticeable as the lack of shadows, the lack of meticulously painted decorations was another feature adopted from ukiyo-e prints. As Van Gogh mentioned in another letter addressed to Theo, Japanese printmakers were able to "do a figure in a few short strokes" (De Leeuw, 1997, 410). Since Van Gogh was astounded by the way Japanese artists seemed to be capable of capturing the moment

with few mere brush strokes, he tried to emulate similar feeling of mastery by "exaggerate[ing] the essentials [and] leav[ing] the obvious vague" (Ross, 2010, 218-219). Other than the odd perspective and simplification of objects, Van Gogh once again utilized a vibrant colour palette and used bold outlines to create firm boundaries between objects.

Van Gogh's paintings of the outdoors also combine the elements of meticulously studied Japanese woodblock prints. The painting known as "The Sower" (Fig. 6) is not the most original theme among Van Gogh's paintings. On the contrary, it was a frequently used theme which was strongly inspired by Biblical texts (Akihiro, 2020, 41). The painting depicts a sower and a dark trunk of a tree in the foreground while the background is reserved for the fields, the sunset and the odd-coloured yellowish green sky. As the day is about to end, the setting sun is painted on the horizon right above the head of the sower mid-work. Though this might look like an accident, it was completely intentional, since the sun transforms the sower into a religious saint (Sund, 1988, 669). The evidence of Van Gogh's desire to portray common people as saintly figures is written in one of his letters, where he states that he wants to "add a touch of the eternal" to everyone he paints (De Leeuw, 1997, 394). That being said, it is slightly odd that he gives the sower features and form that is frequently seen in ukiyo-e prints that depict courtesans. Some scholars believe that Japanese art gave Van Gogh hope, and they argue that that was one of the reasons why he clung to the ukiyo-e style and composition (Akihiro, 2020, 41). Meanwhile, his love for courtesans and kabuki actors wearing kimonos is obvious through his wide collection of Japanese prints. Many female and male models in Van Gogh's collected ukiyo-e prints had the same silhouette as the sower in the painting. The relatively broad torso in combination with slender yet widening lower body is a common sight among kimono wearers. Prints like "Crane's Head Plum Blossom" (Fig. 14) by Utagawa Kunisada or Kuniharu's "The Actor Arashi Rikaku II in the Role of Kyōningyō" (Fig. 15) depict similar looking figures with broader upper part of the body and slim yet widening lower part. Since the prints were in Van Gogh's possession and in one of his earlier works he copies a courtesan by Keisai Eisen, it is likely that he took inspiration from the Japanese silhouettes in order to paint "The Sower". Furthermore, since Van Gogh used graphic stylization common in ukiyo-e prints, it would not be far-fetched to assume that he stylized the sower in the same way Japanese printmakers would (Rapelli, Pallavisini, 2012, 106). Regarding other nuances of Japanese artistic importance, what is also worth mentioning is that the tree trunk seemingly appears out of nowhere and disappears into nowhere. As I analysed beforehand, close-ups of nature

are another common feature visible in ukiyo-e prints. Lastly, the distinct outlines once again emphasize the linear borders that were adopted from Japanese woodblock prints.

In conclusion, both "The Bedroom" and "The Sower" use graphic stylization, bold outlines to emphasize flatness and vibrant colours that not necessarily showcases the real world, but rather explain the emotion behind the art. Whereas "The Bedroom" seeks to explore the essence of what it means to capture the moment with few brushstrokes, "The Sower" symbolically references the Bible while using Japanese artistic elements in order to demonstrate Van Gogh's beliefs and hopes surrounding Japanese woodblock prints and their vision.

Reinterpretations of Japanese art by Van Gogh

While he was residing at Theo's apartment in Paris, Van Gogh was enamoured by Japanese woodblock prints. Since he had access to various genres and styles of ukiyo-e art, he dedicated his time in order to understand, utilize and perfect the style evident in Japanese prints and adopt it into his own works. For the purpose of studying the prints meticulously, he devoted part of his time into recreating works that would hint at his fascinations. In the year 1887 Van Gogh made three exceptionally Japanese-looking paintings that still had Western elements but also deeply incorporated various aspects that make up ukiyo-e art. The most famous painting of this kind is probably "Courtesan (after Eisen)" (Fig. 7) as it not only utilizes Japanese artistic techniques, but also displays a lavish woman in intensely decorated clothing. Another important work of the same artistic mastery is "Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige)" (Fig. 8).

Starting with the most notable work "Courtesan (after Eisen)", it is essential to point out that Van Gogh copied the female model not directly from Eisen's print, but from a reproduction that was featured on the cover of a magazine called *Paris Illustré* (Van Tilborgh, 2022, 27). Instead of keeping the courtesan figure as an isolated painting, Van Gogh decided to paint another composition in the background and isolate the courtesan by submerging her in vibrant yellow surroundings. Though the courtesan's representation is almost identical to Eisen's portrayal of her in his woodblock print, the background that consists of water, bamboo stems, frogs and cranes is completely fictional, as the flora and fauna are depicted in a wrong habitat (Van Tilborgh, 2022, 30). However, as the prints he saw between 1886 and 1888 when living in Paris was one of his first interactions with Japanese art, he wanted to study it as meticulously as possible, thus he created a fictional realm filled with various elements from other prints he had a likening for. For

example, the frog at the bottom of the painting is a direct copy from one of his collected educational prints of worms and insects by Utagawa Yoshimaru (Fig. 16) (Van Tilborgh et al., 182). Meanwhile, the cranes illustrated on the upper left corner come from "Geishas in a Landscape" by Sato Torakiyo (Fig. 17). He liked that print so much that he had it painted in the background of his self-portrait with a bandaged ear. Lastly, although the courtesan might look exoticized with the natural elements in the background composition, in reality the depicted animals allude to friendly teasing of her occupation, since the words "crane" and "frog" were used as common colloquialisms for prostitutes (Van Tilborgh, 2022, 31). This shows that Van Gogh did not see courtesans as mere exoticized oriental subjects which were portrayed as poetic or symbolized innocence in the West. Instead, it is likely that Van Gogh saw them as having like-minded souls and being human.

The other painting worth examining is "Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige)". After the in-depth analysis of other paintings and their stylistic and compositional fusion, it is evident that this painting also has some common elements frequently noticed in ukiyo-e prints. Firstly, since the painting is somewhat of a copy of a print by Hiroshige called "Sudden Evening Shower on the Great Bridge near Atake" (Fig. 18), the composition is indistinguishable. Just like Hiroshige did in multiple prints, Van Gogh used the bridge and the horizon as diagonal lines across his painting to hold the composition (Van Tilborgh et al., 2018, 132). Moreover, the outlines of the bridge and people are distinct, whereas the background is faint and obscure, which is stylistically the same as the print by Hiroshige. Once again, Van Gogh uses vibrant colours that correspond to but are much brighter than the ones Hiroshige used in his print. However, the biggest difference between "The courtesan (after Eisen)" and this painting is that this one has a decorative border filled with various stylized Japanese characters, imitations of seals and inscriptions (Van Tilborgh, 2022, 27). In reality, ukiyo-e seals mostly played a role of copyright, where each publisher had their own seal to prove their authenticity while some seals were used as censorship approvals, which allows the print to be made public (Lin, 2022, 25). These seals along with inscriptions were stamped on the front side of the print. However, in Van Gogh's reinterpretation where he covered the borders with Japanese characters, he paints the seal-like rectangles and squares on the borders, not the print-like painting. This seemingly minute detail highlights the probability that Van Gogh did not know what the seals or inscriptions meant neither stylistically, nor linguistically. Though he did lack some knowledge about Japan, its culture and ukiyo-e prints, his eagerness to learn and utilize every element of the prints is arguably endearing.

As we can see, while reinterpreting various ukiyo-e prints, Van Gogh utilized every inch of the canvas to study and learn as much as possible about the stylistic and compositional elements featured in the prints. He not only copied the prints but also added personal touches that showcase his devotion in trying to understand Japanese art. Whereas through the painting "Courtesan (after Eisen)" Van Gogh experiments with close-up depictions of Japanese women along with various objects of nature, the painting "Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige)" highlights Van Gogh's interest in Japanese characters and multi-shaped seals and inscriptions. Thanks to both interpretations of Japanese art, Van Gogh seems to have been able to somewhat master the art style and grasp the essence of Japanese woodblock prints without succumbing to common exoticization practices.

Conclusions

As I highlighted at the beginning of the paper, the vast number of issues within transculturality discourse makes it difficult to analyse Van Gogh's work and not succumb to straightforward exploration of orientalist thought and exoticization of Japan. Thus, in order to escape the frequently used narrative by scholars, I attempted to analyse the fusion between Van Gogh and Japanese woodblock prints from both transcultural and intersubjective point of view, which inevitably aided in finding a novel approach to the analysis of Van Gogh's paintings. While transcultural discourse helped narrow down the Japanese artistic elements which were stylistically and compositionally incorporated into Van Gogh's artworks, intersubjective discourse aided in creating a background knowledge on Van Gogh and his artistic peers at the end of the 19th century.

What is evident after the in-depth analysis of historical context of Europe at the end of the 19th century is that a vast number of artists strived to develop a revolutionary style that would surpass the Greco-Roman style which was present for hundreds of years. Because of this precarious European cultural environment regarding art, it is unsurprising that ukiyo-e art quickly gained popularity and started to be sold and collected in their thousands. Artists from impressionist and post-impressionist movements found ukiyo-e fascinating because of the visible difference in the art styles. Since revolutionizing art and making it more innovative was the main goal for many artists, they started learning from and utilizing various ukiyo-e artistic techniques in order to develop their own personal style. Another reason for Japanese woodblock prints becoming extremely popular is that a lot of impressionists and post-impressionists found solace and comfort

in Japanese woodblock prints. These prints were material evidence that justified what European painters were attempting to do.

That being said, Van Gogh seems to have gone against the grain in terms of choosing ukiyo-e prints to take inspiration from. He did not abide by the public's notions of what should be of higher value and took a completely different approach to viewing ukiyo-e prints and Japanese culture. He seemed to be interested in stylistic techniques, colour schemes and represented ideals which would satisfy and relate to his own beliefs. Also, unlike some of his peers, he quickly collected hundreds of ukiyo-e prints in bulk from one art dealer named Siegfried Bing. Once he collected a hefty number of prints, he started internalizing them by meticulously studying them in solitude. He managed to understand and learn various art techniques from Japanese art without proper teachings or further academic or non-academic readings about the prints or Japanese art in general. That is a probable reason why he does not seem to emphasize stereotypical notions about Japan which were common in Europe, especially France, during his life in his own paintings. Moreover, just as the vast majority of European painters seemed to be understood by Japanese prints, so was Van Gogh comforted by ukiyo-e art. The woodblock prints not only gave him temporary solace, but also encouraged him to create according to his own vision. Hence, it would be incorrect to state that Van Gogh was merely influenced in the artistic realm, since after studying his biography, it seems as though Japanese art managed to penetrate Van Gogh's heart and soul.

Regarding the artistic impact ukiyo-e art made on Van Gogh's personal artistic style, it is worth noting that in one of his letters he attributed all his work to have been influenced by Japanese art. Though the statement is technically wrong, as he could not have had the knowledge about Japanese prints before he moved to Antwerp in the winter of 1885, the hidden message behind the words tells us that Japanese prints helped Van Gogh believe in his work and his vision. As mentioned before, this complex relationship between Japanese prints and Van Gogh transcends orientalist mentalities and hegemonic thinking as it combines personal beliefs and values. From the analysis it can be concluded that Van Gogh shares orientalist and imperialist thought whenever his personal values overlap with orientalist mentalities.

Lastly, on a material level, ukiyo-e prints have immensely impacted the way Van Gogh showcased his artistic mastery and developed his personal style. What he seems to have utilized most in his paintings is the firm linear boundaries between different objects using bold outlines and distinct brush strokes. The vibrant and complementary colour palette is another element Van

Gogh adopted from Japanese prints, as the ones from the second period tended to have brighter shades and incorporated compatible colours that enhanced one another. Furthermore, flatness, otherwise called two-dimensional perspective, along with compositional elements often relating to asymmetry are other features easily distinguishable in both the prints and Van Gogh paintings. The aspects that are less obvious but equally important are the symbolic elements that point out the transformation of Van Gogh's personal beliefs, ideals and values. Some of the intentional and unintentional models played a role of saints while simultaneously showcasing pivotal attributes associated with ukiyo-e prints. Such artistic choices hint at Van Gogh's hopes of art surpassing religious beliefs. Lastly, his self-portrait reflects his own understanding of who he is or who he wants to become. Portraying himself as a Japanese Buddhist monk he associates his artistic potential to that of Japanese printmakers, which rather than being orientalist and hegemonic, is a flattering gesture of praise and affection. Due to his artistic choices, we can conclude that not only was Van Gogh extremely impacted by ukiyo-e prints through his work, but he also managed to transform himself mentally and alter the way he thinks thanks to Japanese woodblock prints. Van Gogh's personal values played an important role in the dialogue between him and ukiyo-e art. Nature, ordinary people and innovative art were three important Van Gogh's personal values which were visually visible in ukiyo-e art that directly impacted Van Gogh's artistic choices. Meanwhile, escapism which was the primary reasoning for manufacturing Japanese woodblock prints took the role of comforting Van Gogh, as he always proffered an imagined world to reality. Lastly, through personal interpretations and beliefs about Japanese culture Van Gogh fabricated ukiyo-e art to become objects of solace and understanding where the painter could belong.

Bibliography

Abe, Kuniko. "Travelling Images in the Global Context: A Case Study of the Short-Lived 18th century Akita Ranga Painting School in Japan." *Artl@s Bulletin*, 10:1 (2021), 26-46.

Abou-Jaoude, Amir Lowell. "A Pure Invention: Japan, Impressionism, and the West, 1853-1906." *The History Teacher*, 50:1 (2016), 57-82.

Akihiro, Ozaki. "The Meeting of Asia and The Netherlands: on Van Gogh's Challenge in Emulating Rembrandt." *Intercultural Relations* 2:8 (2020), 37-51.

Alexander, Amanda, and Manisha Sharma. "(Pre) determined Occupations: The Post-Colonial Hybridizing of Identity and Art Forms in Third World Spaces." *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* 33:1 (2013), 86-104.

Asian Art Museum. "Looking East: How Japan Inspired Monet, Van Gogh, and Other Western Artists". Accessed April 30, 2024.

Benjamin, Jessica. "An outline of intersubjectivity: The development of recognition." *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 7 (1990), 33–46.

Brooklyn Museum. "Utagawa: Masters of the Japanese Print, 1770–1900". Accessed April 24, 2024.

Davis, Julie Nelson. *Picturing the Floating World: Ukiyo-e in Context*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2021.

De Leeuw, Ronald. *The Letters of Vincent van Gogh*. London: Penguin Books, 1997.

Fabbretti, Elena. "Rethinking Ukiyo-e through the Eyes of Others," December 11, 2022, *The Fourth Tohoku Conference on Global Japanese Studies Precarity in an Inter-connected Northeast Asia*, Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan, 123-128.

Genova, Pamela A. "Introduction Japonisme and the Ambivalence of Theory" in *Writing Japonisme* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 2016), 3-33.

Harris, Frederick. *Ukiyo-e: the art of the Japanese print*. Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2012.

Herren, Madeleine, Martin Rüesch, and Christiane Sibille. *Transcultural history: Theories, methods, sources*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2012.

Huang, Xinyi. "The influence of Japanese Ukiyo-e on Western painting art in the 19th Century." *BCP Social Sciences & Humanities* 20 (2022), 304-310.

Impey, Oliver. "Japanese Export Art of the Edo Period and its Influence on European Art." Modern Asian Studies, 18:4 (1984), 685-697.

Ives, Colta Feller. *The Great Wave: The Influence of Japanese Woodcuts on French Prints*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1974.

Juneja, Monica. "Global Art history and the 'Burden of Representation'." *Global Studies: Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture* (2011), 274-297.

Kōdera, Tsukasa. "Japan as primitivistic utopia: van Gogh's japonisme portraits." *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 14:3/4 (1984), 189-208.

Lin, Jessica. "Musical Bonds of the Edo Society: Beauties of Different Classes as the Floating World Trio," in Jōruri Theater, Poetry, and Deluxe Ukiyo-e Prints, edited by Elena Varshavskaya, 21-27. Providence: Rhode Island School of Design, 2022.

Locke, Nancy. [Reviewed Work(s): Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Search for Sacred Art by Debora Silverman], The Art Bulletin, 85:1 (2003), 205-207.

MacKenzie, John M. *Orientalism: History, theory and the arts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.

Mancoff, Debra N. *Van Gogh's Flowers*. London: Frances Lincoln, 2001.

Meech-Pekarik, Julia. "Early collectors of Japanese prints and the Metropolitan Museum of Art." *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 17 (1982), 93-118.

Meissner, W. W. "Vincent: The self-portraits." *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 62:1 (1993), 74-105.

Minissale, Gregory. *Framing Consciousness in Art: Transcultural Perspectives*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2009.

Musée d'Orsay. "Paris 1874: Inventing impressionism". Accessed May 24, 2024.

Naifeh, Steven and Gregory White Smith. *Van Gogh: The Life*. New York: Random House, Inc., 2012.

Nelson, Robert S., and Richard Shiff. *Critical Terms for Art History*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Petersen, Anne Ring. *Migration into art*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.

Rapelli Paola, Alfredo Pallavisini. *Van Gogh*. Amsterdam: Prestel, 2023.

Richter, Virginia. "Authenticity: — Why We Still Need It Although It Doesn't Exist". In *Transcultural English Studies*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008).

Rogers, Richard A. "From cultural exchange to transculturation: A review and reconceptualization of cultural appropriation." *Communication theory* 16:4 (2006), 474-503.

Ross, Bruce. “Vincent Van Gogh’s Irises: Venturing Upon Dizzy Heights.” *Analecta Husserliana*, 106 (2010), 213–224.

Screech, Timon. “Obtaining Images: Art, Production and Display in Edo Japan,” YouTube, 57:20. Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, April 5, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SggSh-ehHN8

Screech, Timon. *Obtaining Images: Art, Production and Display in Edo Japan*. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.

Shapiro, Gary. *Archaeologies of Vision: Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Sosnowski, Leszek. "Objects and ideas: Japan and Europe in the nineteenth century." *Maska* 4:36 (2017), 7-20.

Sund, Judy. “The Sower and the Sheaf: Biblical Metaphor in the Art of Vincent Van Gogh.” *Art Bulletin*, 70 (1988), 660-676.

Van Gogh Museum. “Flowers and birds (kachōga)”. Accessed May 5, 2024.

Van Gogh Museum. “Inspiration from Japan”. Accessed January 3, 2024.

Van Tilborgh, Louis, et al. *Japanese Prints: The Collection of Vincent van Gogh*. Amsterdam: Thames & Hudson, 2018.

Van Tilborgh, Louis. *Vincent van Gogh and Japan*. Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2022.

Walker, Janet A. "Van Gogh, collector of “Japan”." *The Comparatist*, 32 (2008), 82-114.

Wiggins, Colin. “Vincent van Gogh: The colour and vitality of his works,” YouTube, 29:32. The National Gallery, March 11, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YV4YGUAHPJU

Yi, Yuxi. "An Analysis of the Status of Japanese Zen Art Aesthetics in Ukiyo-e from Katsushika Hokusai to Van Gogh." *American Journal of Art and Design* 8:1 (2023), 12-17.

Appendix: Images

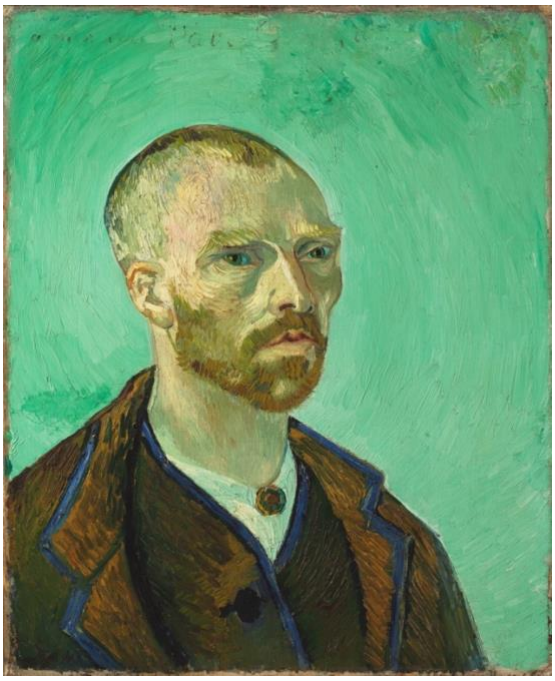


Fig. 1 - "Self-portrait dedicated to Gauguin" by Vincent van Gogh, 1888, Harvard Art Museums, <https://hvrd.art/o/299843>

Fig. 2 - "La Berceuse (Portrait of Madame Roulin)" by Vincent van Gogh, December 1888 - January 1889, Kröller-Müller Museum, <https://krollermuller.nl/en/vincent-van-gogh-la-berceuse-portrait-of-madame-roulin>

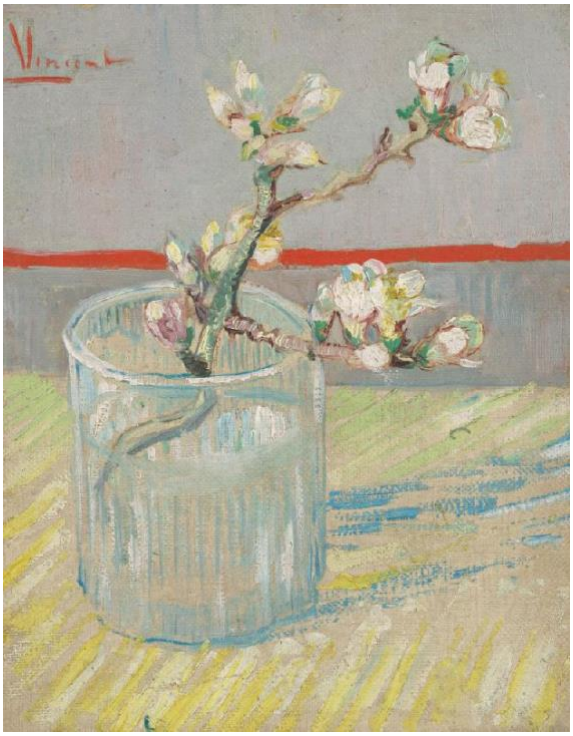


Fig. 3 - "Sprig of Flowering Almond in a Glass" by Vincent van Gogh, March 1888, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0184V1962#details>

Fig. 4 - "Almond Blossom" by Vincent van Gogh, February 1890, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0176V1962>

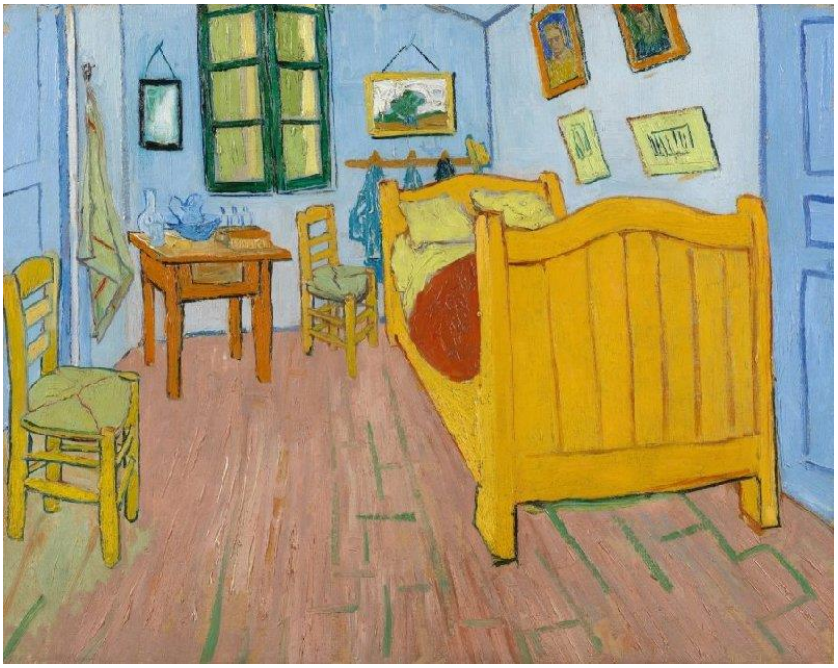


Fig. 5 - "The Bedroom" by Vincent van Gogh, October 1888, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0047V1962>

Fig. 6 - "The Sower" by Vincent van Gogh, November 1888, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0029V1962>

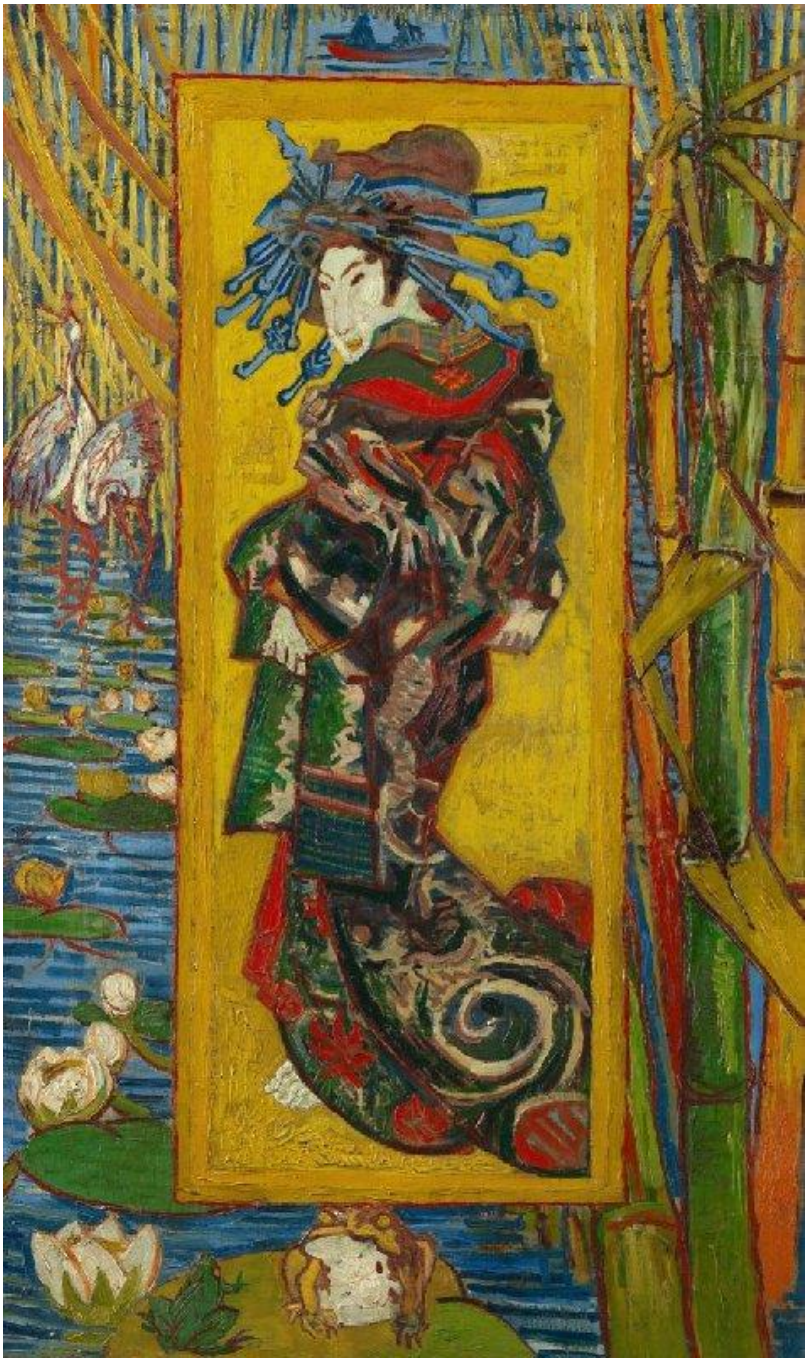


Fig. 7 - "Courtesan (after Eisen)" by Vincent van Gogh, October-November 1887, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0116V1962>

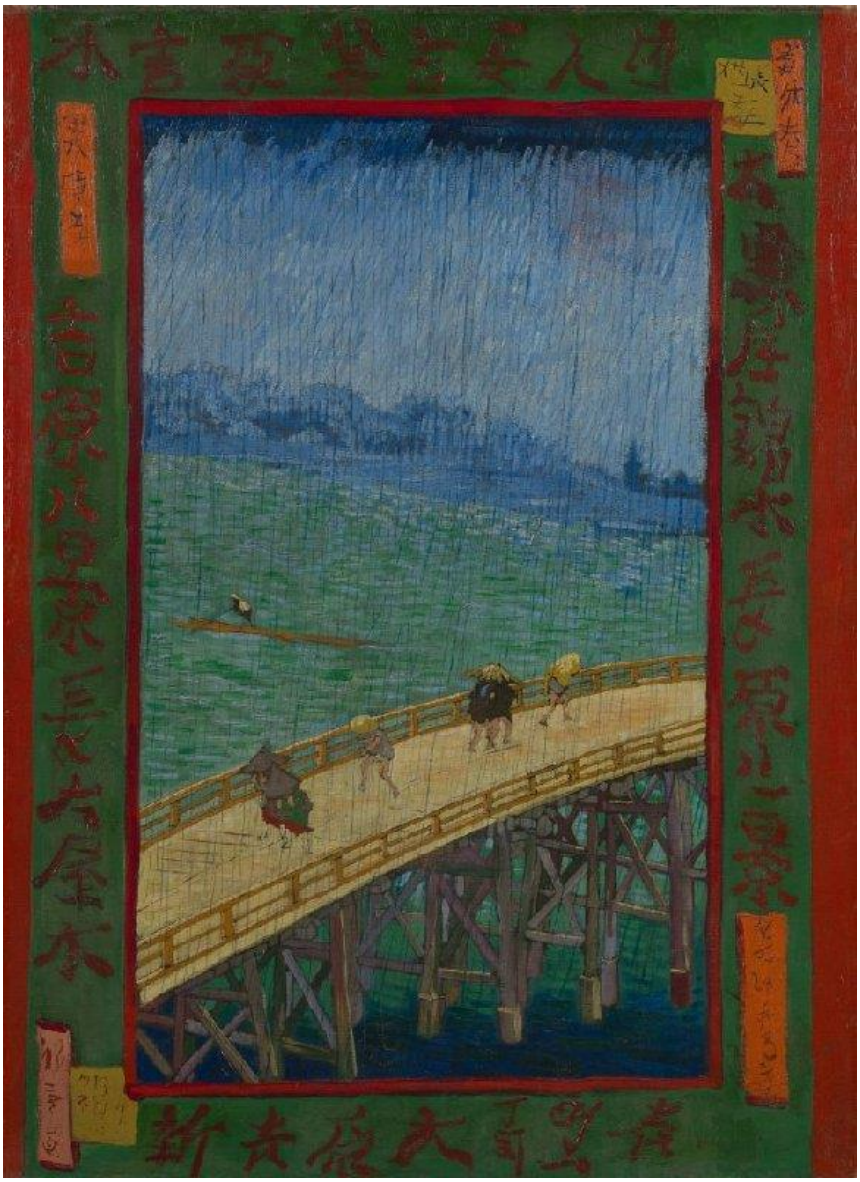


Fig. 8 - "Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige)" by Vincent van Gogh, October-November 1887, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0114V1962>

Fig. 9 - " The Shōhei Bridge Over the Kanda River and a Confucian Temple" by Utagawa Hiroshige, 1857, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/japanese-prints/collection/n0079V1962>

Fig. 10 - "An Actor in the Role of Ume no Yoshibei" by Utagawa Kunisada, 1859, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/japanese-prints/collection/n0280V1962>

Fig. 11 - "Cherry Blossoms and Shrike" by Utagawa Hiroshige III, 1871-1873, Van Gogh Museum, <*https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/japanese-prints/collection/n0110-005V1962*>

Fig. 12 - "Crab Apple and Brown-Eared Bulbul" by Utagawa Hiroshige III, 1871-1873, Van Gogh Museum, <*https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/japanese-prints/collection/n0110-002V1962*>

Fig. 13 – "Cherry Blossom and Bird" by unknown printmaker, 1870-1880, private collection. Picture taken from Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/00021>

Fig. 14 - "Crane's Head Plum Blossom" by Utagawa Kunisada, 1824-1825, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/japanese-prints/collection/n0150V1962>

Fig. 15 - "The Actor Arashi Rikaki II in the Role of Kyōningyō" by Kuniharu, 1853, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/japanese-prints/collection/n0133V1962>

Fig. 16 - "New Print of Insects and Small Creatures" by Utagawa Yoshimaru, 1883, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/japanese-prints/collection/n0476V1962>

Fig. 17 - "Geishas in a Landscape" by Sato Torakiyo, 1870-1880, The Courtauld Gallery Collection (Samuel Courtauld Trust), <https://gallerycollections.courtauld.ac.uk/object-g-2005-xx-1>

Fig. 18 - "Sudden Evening Shower on the Great Bridge near Atake" by Utagawa Hiroshige, 1857, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/japanese-prints/collection/n0081V1962>

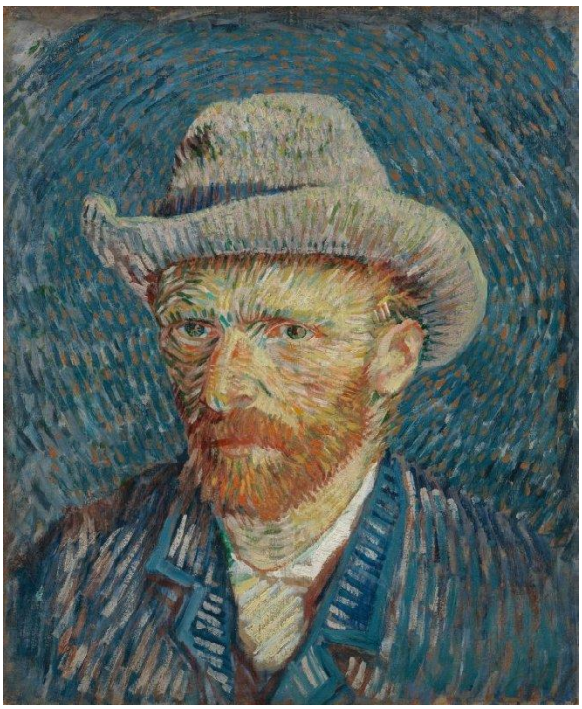


Fig. 19 - "Self-portrait with Grey Felt Hat" by Vincent van Gogh, September-October 1887, Van Gogh Museum, <https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0016V1962>