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Mon cher Theo, ne m'en veux pas d'être venu tout d'un trait\*  
J'y ai tant réfléchi & je crois que de cette manière nous  
gagnons du temps. Serai au Louvre à <sup>plus tôt qu'il n'y faut</sup> partir de midi ou  
Réponse s.v.p pour savoir à quelle heure tu pourrais  
venir dans la salle carrée. Quant aux frais je te le  
répète cela revient au même. J'ai de l'argent de reste cela  
va sans dire et avant de faire aucune dépense je t'en  
te parler - Nous arrangerons la chose tu verras -  
Ainsi viens y le plus tôt possible. Je te serre la main  
b. + Vincent

## LOOKING OVER THE ARTIST'S SHOULDER

Inside Van Gogh's sketchbooks





*‘Sometimes there are sheets in a sketchbook which still say something, even though they’re only scratches’*

Letter from Vincent to Theo van Gogh, c. 11 July 1883

Few artists have dedicated themselves to their vocation as completely as Vincent van Gogh. His sketchbooks record the hours he spent drawing the people and landscapes around him, from Nuenen to Auvers-sur-Oise. This selection from his four sketchbooks hints at the range of subjects that he captured, as well as the scribbled notes that shed light on his life and work.

Windmills at Montmartre, pencil; (*right*) Church, pencil.  
St Catherine’s Church in Eindhoven is depicted.







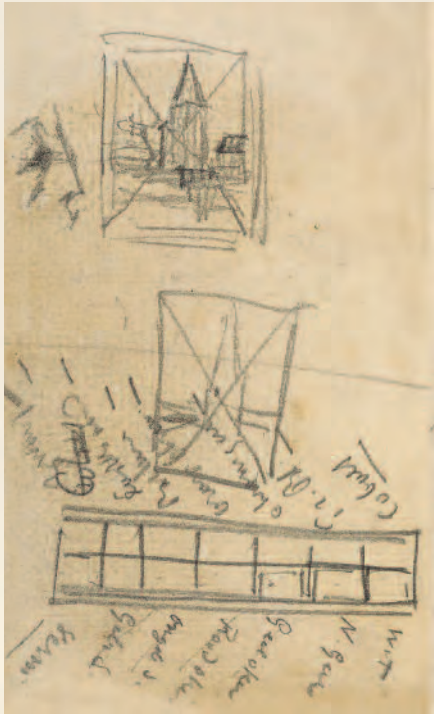
Mein Herz ist wie das Meer  
 Hat Sturm und Ebb und Fluth  
 Auch Gerlen findet du tief  
 Nur tief in meinem Gemuth

From left to right: Horse and carriage, pencil; Van Gogh's version of a poem by Heinrich Heine (*adapted as background detail*); Hen, pencil; Sower, pen and brown ink.



On or about 14 July 1885 Van Gogh wrote a long letter to his younger brother Theo expressing his passionate conviction that the future of art lay in painting, not historical figures, but everyday people such as those working in the fields around him at Nuenen. Painting and sketching outdoors in the wind and rain was arduous, but Van Gogh consoled himself with the thought that 'those who paint the life of the peasants or the common people, although they aren't counted among the men of the world – will still, however, perhaps endure better in the long run'.





From left to right: Two perspective frames and paint box, pencil; Artist in front of a perspective frame on a stand, pencil; Man drawing, black chalk.

The sketches on the left, dating from July 1885, may have been for Van Gogh's pupils. In the left-hand sketch of a perspective frame, he has indicated the height of the frame by adding an eye and nose. The colours of the paint box are noted down: 'black; cassel earth; bitumen; orange ochre; chrome yellow; Prussian blue; cobalt' on top and 'vermilion; burnt sienna; raw sienna; red ochre; yellow ochre; Naples yellow; white' below. Around the time that he made these sketches, Van Gogh wrote to his pupil Anton Kerssemakers, advising him to use a similar frame: 'For there is nothing like it *for teaching one to look and teaching one to feel perspective*'.





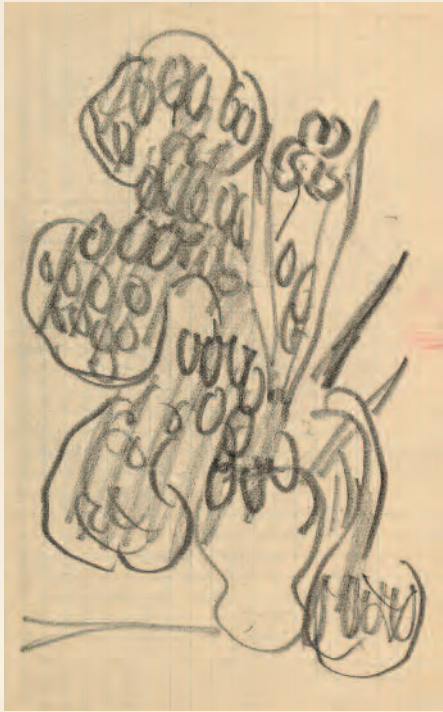


On 18 February 1886 Van Gogh wrote to Theo describing 'the female torso I finished today, which is much more distinguished in the modelling and less brusque than the first ones, where in spite of myself the figures have something of the peasant or woodcutter about them'. By the end of February 1886, Van Gogh was living with Theo in Paris, where he made several sketches of Montmartre, and of the Jardin du Luxembourg.

Plaster cast of a woman's torso, pencil;  
(right) Figures in a park, pencil.







These sketches of flowers date from 1890, shortly before Van Gogh's death. They recall his famous paintings from Arles and Saint-Rémy, and may have been preparatory studies for a series of etchings. Overleaf is a letter from Vincent to Theo announcing his abrupt arrival in Paris on or about 28 February 1886: 'Don't be cross with me that I've come all of a sudden. I've thought about it so much and I think we'll save time this way. Will be at the Louvre from midday, or earlier if you like. A reply, please, to let me know when you could come to the Salle Carrée.'

*From left to right: Irises, pencil; Sunflowers, pencil; Sunflowers, pencil; Portrait of a man, pencil and brown ink.*

